

Paradigmatic Criteria of “Leadership” in Islamic Thought:
Subject-formation at Sunnī, Shī‘ī, and Ṣūfī Crossroads

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Abstract

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The preoccupation of Islamic thinkers with the formation of moral subjects (themselves and others) motivated their deployments of different conceptual frameworks to satisfy paradigmatic moral requirements. These intellectual pursuits are portrayed as technologies involved in “caring for the self,” that is, in forming the subject/agent of the broader community. Reconstructing historical debates that draw on the works of a selection of Islamic authors, mainly between the 10th and 13th centuries CE, this dissertation addresses the related paradigmatic features of various forms of Islamic leadership (e.g. *ulū al-amr*, *mujtahid*, *ahl al-ḥall*, *imām*, and *quṭb*).

The Qur’ānic world of interconnected meanings related to *amr* (authority, command, matter...) and those vested with it assumes a concern for the morality, if not outright infallibility, and the intellectual merit of a leader. Through an analysis of types of authorship and terms of discourse, ḥadīth literature on verse 4:59 from the Shī‘ī tradition sheds light on the rise of various Sunnī strategies addressing the question of infallible juristic leadership (*taṣwīb al-mujtahid*). Another case of leadership appears in the Ṣūfī mystical strand of Sunnī thought, where the spiritual leader, or *quṭb*, may be seen as analogous to the Shī‘ī Imām in terms of moral excellence and presence-in-absence (*ghaybah*). My analyses of these distinct features and forms of leadership culminate with a case study on the Mahdī in modernity, an anticipated savior figure at the

crossroads of Sunnī, Shī'ī and Ṣūfī thought, in which the adapting of earlier lines of reasoning exhibits strategies for the purpose of subject-formation.

Each of these case studies demonstrates not only that the interpretive frameworks of Islamic thinkers were invested in moral subject-formation but also that a holistic reading of such thought can identify their authorial activity itself as one form among the different forms of leadership that revolve around subject-formation.

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Dedication

To one in distress, reaching for the one with no need...

Preface

To be grateful, to thank those who have done something worthy of thanks, whether expressed in action, in word, or merely held at heart, turns out to be an elusive task. As soon as one imagines that the acknowledgements have been duly made, a bit of reflection reveals subtler treasures that have barely been recognized, let alone seriously thanked. Rather than regarding acknowledgement/gratitude as an action to be achieved, a task to be checked off on a checklist, perhaps one should see “proper” thanks as a state of being, an experience of awe in the pursuit of thanking, of giving back, of “enriching” —only to realize that we not only have been, from the very beginning, but still are, encompassed by one uniquely endless sea of riches, through and through. Lest the reader may take this reflection to be a taste of the dissertation that follows, alas! It is just my way of acknowledging those whom I have not shown, but especially those I frankly *cannot* show, due thanks. “How can I truly thank you when being able to say, ‘thank you,’ calls for another, ‘thank you?’”¹ Any good in my work is yours and the shortcomings are all my own.

In my field of specialization, Islamic Intellectual History / Islamic Studies, at least in the United States, it is not as common as it is in experimental science fields for a publication to include multiple co-authors (unless it is an edited volume with individual chapters by different authors). So even though one’s advisor(s) and multiple professors one has studied with may be analogous to a laboratory’s principal investigator and collaborators of sorts from other laboratories in some ways, they are not conventionally acknowledged as co-authors. Regardless how justified this (lack of) convention may be, I take the opportunity provided by the acknowledgments section to first

¹My English rendering of words attributed to ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 95 AH / 713 CE).

‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn Zayn al-‘Ābidīn al-Sajjād, *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādīyah al-Kāmilah*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (d. 1980 CE) (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-A‘lamī lil-Maṭbū‘āt, n.d.), 162-165; 307-309.

recognize the more direct influences on my authorship of this dissertation. Besides this starting priority, the subsequent mention of individuals does not necessarily follow any particular order.

It should go without saying that even when I do not write out the formal title of an individual here, and generally speaking, I still mean to recognize such marks of learning, nobility, profession, or other merit, in contextually appropriate ways. Neither is disrespect intended by not stating those badges of honor, nor is honoring them meant to reinforce a sense of unhealthy pride. Thankfully, I have known many of these individuals up close for their humility, but they deserve much more celebration for their achievements and favor than my words do them justice.

The methodology and theoretical framework of this dissertation has been significantly shaped by graduate coursework with and publications by my doctoral advisor at Columbia University, Brinkley Messick. At the intersection of the Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies (MESAAS) department and the Anthropology department, his teaching has been a model of interdisciplinarity. His academic advising has also shown me a model for mentoring proximity, at times, and professional distance, empowering independence and creativity, at others. Chapters 2 through 5, as well as some of Chapter 1, have drawn on seminars and conversations at Princeton University (through the Inter-University Doctoral Consortium) with Hossein Modarressi, whose erudition and experience in both academic and traditional worlds of scholarship on Islam continue to inform and inspire my scholarly pursuits. In the critical stages of my research and writing, he also generously shared his knowledge with me during his office hours at Columbia and remains a treasured resource by correspondence. Najam Haider's welcoming advice upon entering the Columbia Religion department's Master's program, publications, as well as his comments during my dissertation defense, have had a lasting impact on my academic work. On that point, if the

concern for incorporating relevant social history into this dissertation's intellectual history is not fully addressed by my future research, then it should at least be granted that the present outline of my own social history contextualizes the layer of ethnography in this modest contribution to our field(s). But just as the bibliography of this dissertation opens up into the bibliographies of each entry, there are often stories waiting to be told in between the lines, and, indeed, some may remain entirely uncited (not in the plagiarizing sense though!). Hussein Abdulsater was so kind as to provide meticulous feedback on my chapter drafts throughout the writing process as well as insightful advice at the defense. Timothy Mitchell graciously agreed to join my committee and chair for the defense (despite my admittedly mediocre performance in his Theory and Methods course, early on in the MESAAS PhD program, at a time when I had been prioritizing other courses that were more focused on my specialization). For his reconciliatory suggestions (or as he would put it, in a spirit of good humor, "preventing a fight from breaking out!"), thoughtful reflections and words of praise, particularly after passing on the decision that the committee had approved my dissertation as submitted (with minor revisions), I am humbled at the redemption of sorts.

Although Wael Hallaq did not serve on the committee for my doctoral defense, the seed for part of Chapter 1 grew out of a seminar paper I wrote for one of his graduate courses that I attended at Columbia. In addition to drawing on his publications, which is evident in the theoretical framework I elaborate in the Introduction and subsequently, this dissertation has also benefited from his feedback on all chapter drafts. Of relevance here, I still recall the gist of a comment Hallaq made to me in his office following my successful Master's thesis defense in MESAAS — something to the extent of my performance being at the caliber of a PhD defense, but that I was (a bit too?) stubborn. I have tried to work on my stubbornness since then (to the extent that I can agree it is something to work on) and my arguments have indeed developed beyond even those

presented in the Prospectus proposal for my PhD dissertation. For what it is worth, while Hallaq may still disagree with my arguments here (albeit not necessarily my conclusions), I have benefited from his comments to hone my presentation throughout this dissertation as well as to entertain and address potential counterarguments in my Conclusion. Sudipta Kaviraj also shared thoughtful comments on my MA thesis, the content of which I drew on in writing Chapter 1, albeit with a significantly modified argument. It was during my first semester at Columbia, in a seminar with Hossein Kamaly, that I became interested in pursuing a doctoral project at the crossroads of Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī thought. But it was through the close readings in George Saliba’s seminars and his encouragement that I developed my initial sketches of al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī’s interventions vis-à-vis al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* into an analysis of competing conceptual frameworks.

I could not have expected to access the world of classical Islamic texts with such ease, let alone gain insight into the lived experience of their readership, if not for my years of traditional Islamic studies in the *hawzah* community of Najaf, Iraq. What began as my personal quest for deeper understanding following my Bachelor’s degree in engineering at the University of Michigan, and led me to explore questions of epistemology, ethics, intellectual history and legal theory, ended up being the beginnings of my doctoral “fieldwork” in retrospect (that is, I did not think of it in those terms at the time!). Muḥammad ‘Alī Baḥr al-‘Ulūm and Ja‘far al-Ḥakīm oversaw my customized, accelerated program of study in Najaf from September 2010 until June 2014. I benefited from conversations with Muḥammad ‘Alī Baḥr al-‘Ulūm in the Shaykh al-Ṭūsī Mosque, right outside the final resting place of Imam ‘Alī, and during walks down al-Ṭūsī street to the gates of the Wādī al-Salām cemetery, often several times a week. It is said that ‘Alī is buried next to Adam and Noah, and that Hūd and Ṣāliḥ are two additional prophets who neighbor him not too far away—in the aforementioned cemetery. Ja‘far al-Ḥakīm’s lectures and seminars on

epistemology and philosophy contributed to forming my grounding not only in the substantive issues discussed but also as entry points for writing on Islamic intellectual history. Accompanying him during his travel to the United States in 2010 and conversations with him on Islamic philosophy following daily classes in Najaf, over the subsequent years, have instilled in me a distinct appreciation for approaching Islamic thought with methodical subtlety and care. In Arabic language related studies, I benefited mainly from courses with Ḥusayn ‘Abd al-‘Abbās al-Jubūrī, Layth Āl Zāyirdhām, and the late Usāmah al-Naṣrāwī. In jurisprudence related studies, I benefited from readings with Zāmil al-Shuwaykhāt, ‘Abbās al-Mar‘ashī, Ḥāzim al-Ḥadrāwī, ‘Alī al-Dizfūlī, Ibrāhīm Nūr al-Dīn, and the late Ḥasan Baḥr al-‘Ulūm. Ḥāzim al-Ḥadrāwī and Ḥusayn al-Asadī also welcomed my inquisitive approach to studying the Islamic worldview(s), for which I am ever grateful.

The Baḥr al-‘Ulūm and al-Ḥakīm scholarly families, in particular, welcomed me into their circles and weekly intellectual/religious gatherings, which meaningfully impacted my experience of the Najafī *ḥawzah* tradition. Alongside the weekly gathering of Lebanese seminarians (I was born in America but am also of Lebanese heritage), first at Aḥmad al-Faqīh’s residence, sometimes at Ibrāhīm Nūr al-Dīn’s residence, and later at the *Lebanese* madrasah, the weekly Baḥr al-‘Ulūm office *barrānī/dīwān* gathering was one of my intellectual socialization experiences outside of class throughout the years I lived in Najaf. I especially recall lively intellectual discussions, often spurred by the questions of students, but that became opportunities for more advanced scholars to share their wealth of learning and experience. Among the many I am thankful to have interacted with in these types of gatherings, I recall, for instance, Yūsuf Ṣafī al-Dīn, Muḥammad Ḥaidar, ‘Alī al-‘Aydībī, Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥīnī, Nazīh ‘Alāmah, Ṭalāl Qāzān, Qāsim Dāwūd, Aḥmad al-Durr, Muṣṭafā Sa‘d, ‘Abbās Ṭabājah, Ḥusayn Rumaytī, Riḍā Sulaymān, Bāqir Baḥsūn, Qāsim Ḥijjāzī,

‘Alī Shaḥādah, Wā’il al-Ḥājj, Nadīm Ḥāmid, ‘Alī Ayyūb, ‘Alī al-Khaṭīb, Jawād Ni‘mah, Riyād al-Ḥujjah, Zayd Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, Ḥaydar Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, Jihād al-Asadī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Najafī and the late Ḥāshim al-Amīn. In Ja‘far al-Ḥakīm’s epistemology and philosophy seminars, a number of fellow attendees were actively part of my educational experience through their comments and objections, but I should at least mention my gratitude to ‘Abbās al-Marayānī and ‘Abd ‘Alī al-Nāṣirī for kindly providing me access to lecture recordings of sessions that I was not able to attend. On this note, just as my bibliography does not include many writings that I have benefited from indirectly, the teachers I mention here do not include several of those whom I continue to learn from mainly through their recordings. As for my more immediate peers, with whom I attended classes and participated in daily *mubāḥathah* (peer-led study sessions), I would like to mention Muḥammad Ḥusayn Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, ‘Alī Āl Yāsīn, Muḥammad al-Dihnīn and Muḥammad Khalīfah. I am also thankful for intellectual exchanges over lunch or otherwise with friends who came from Western countries to study in Najaf, such as Aous Asfar, Mohammed al-Saadi, Azhar Nasser, Mohammed al-Hilli, Bilal Hussain, Qasid Abbas, Basil and Yāsīn al-Haddad, Haziq Sheikh and Mohammad Reza Hemyari. Aous was a supportive mentor and friend, particularly during my first year in Najaf. Mohammed al-Saadi arrived the following year and we shared almost daily experiences together in Najaf over the next three years.

I should like to thank Muḥammad ‘Alī Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, the late Muḥammad Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, their broader family, and their office staff for accommodating me upon my initial arrival to Najaf. He arranged for my first year stay at the *Mahdīyah* madrasah, introducing me to ‘Abbās Kāshif al-Ghiṭā’, a notable heir of the Kāshif al-Ghiṭā’ scholarly family, in the process. During that year, I also benefited from weekly lectures by Aḥmad Kāshif al-Ghiṭā’ on the Prophet Muḥammad’s biography. It was also at the *Mahdīyah* madrasah that I interacted with a number of scholars both

from Najaf and passing through, such as the late ‘Abd al-Sattār al-Ḥasanī. Although it was short-lived, I value the memories from that first year with a distinct esteem, as it was quite a transition for me on multiple levels and I am forever grateful to all those who helped me in the process. I should also like to thank the Joint Committee of Grand Scholars in Najaf (*al-Lajnah al-Mushtarakah bayn al-Marāji‘ fī al-Najaf al-Ashraf*), which refers to the leading religious authority, ‘Alī al-Sīstānī, as well as the remaining grand scholars in Najaf, Muḥammad Ishāq al-Fayyāḍ, Bashīr al-Najafī, and the late Muḥammad Sa‘īd al-Ḥakīm. This committee’s evaluation, drawing on the recommendations of my advisors and teachers, helped secure my residence at the *Qawām* madrasah, next door, for my subsequent years in Najaf.

For my sponsorship throughout my studies in Najaf, not to mention the initial interview opportunity with my to-be advisor there, I am grateful for the support of the Imam Mahdi Association of Marjaeya (I.M.A.M.), based in my hometown of Dearborn, Michigan. When I sought their advice on taking such a journey in 2010, I was wholeheartedly encouraged by Mohammad Baqir al-Kashmiri and Haider Bahar al-Uloom (same name as the aforementioned Ḥaydar Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, related even, but not the same person). Al-Kashmiri and Bahar al-Uloom had both, hitherto, generously shared their knowledge with me by creating a sense of community and collective reflection, in addition to offering formal lectures at different venues. I also benefited immensely from a preparatory-*ḥawzah* program with Safdar Razi. Before that, I had been motivated by other renowned English speakers on Islam, such as Hassanain Rajabali and Ammar Nakshawani, all of whom humbly accepted the invitation of a younger me requesting that they speak about Islam at Fordson High School. I continue to draw on lessons from sermons by Hassan Qazwini and other Muslim community leaders on the concerns of Muslims as minorities and across the globe. But, in developing my intellectual interests, I have most profoundly tapped into the

mentorship of Haider Bahar al-Uloom, including his weekly seminars on Islamic thought in Dearborn, but especially guided readings in Arabic that he would recommend to me based on my questions, and which I passionately studied whenever I was not too preoccupied by my full-time Chemical engineering program at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor. I have also been honored by his confidence in me, whether in imparting wisdom, or trusting me with sensitive projects related to my research, such as translating Islamic works intended to capture the nuances of technical language. It was actually while rendering Aḥmad al-Ishkiwarī's *al-'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah (With Mahdī Eyes)* into English that the thought of analyzing its material for Chapter 5 of my dissertation occurred to me.

Whether at this earlier juncture or during my years of study at the *hawzah* of Najaf, what immeasurably facilitated my access to the available resources in Arabic was that I had already developed fluency in the language thanks to the wise insistence of my parents that my siblings and I spend a few years of our youth immersing ourselves in the Arabic context of our Lebanese heritage. In those years of residence in Lebanon, between 1998 and 2002, I was young enough to catch up with my classmates within a year of attending formal Arabic lessons after normal school hours. But I was old enough to have studied the language sufficiently, by the end of our stay in Lebanon, to continue honing my ability, relatively independently, throughout my life back in the United States. That being said, in the first year, I had the benefit of Samar al-Baṭal's superb coaching, and, later, was inspired by a number of teachers, such as Sihām Rajab, at what was then known as the Al-Mayadine School in the Hosh area of Tyre/Sour, Lebanon. Although I do not mean for these acknowledgments to be exhaustive, by any means, I do find it appropriate here to express my deep sense of gratitude for the friendship of that educational community, a noteworthy

example of which has been the family of Ghassan Farran and Ibtissam Samra, especially their son Wael, over the years.

In my time studying at Columbia, I have been fortunate to return to Najaf almost every year, over winter or summer breaks, up until the most recent Covid-19 outbreak. In the summer of 2016, Columbia's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) and the Middle East Institute (MEI) sponsored my six-week stay in Najaf to focus on advanced readings in Arabic and Islamic studies relevant to my graduate research. Coordinating with Haider Bahar al-Uloom, Muḥammad 'Alī Baḥr al-'Ulūm helped facilitate my travel to Iraq and Amjad Riyāḍ was kind enough to arrange my stay at the *Najm al-A'immaḥ* madrasah for that period. He also facilitated meetings for me to discuss my academic pursuits and relevant texts with *ḥawzah* teachers. Among the many helpful engagements that summer, in addition to meeting up with some of my previous teachers and peers, I benefited from discussions with Amjad Riyāḍ on an aspect of al-Ṣadr's *Manṭiq al-Istiqrā'*, Ḥasan al-Ghazālī on *Mughnī al-Labīb*, Ḥaydar Jāsim al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥillī on Islamic historiographical sources, and from seminars by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Sīstānī on methodology in approaching the study of religion. I fondly recall the advice and warm welcome of Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Khirsān and his family on this trip as well. One memorable (albeit somewhat embarrassing!) moment of that summer's stay showed me an example of humility, which I can hope to live up to, but, falling short of that, can at least learn from. Whether it was due to changing sleep patterns, exhaustion, illness, or some other explanation with a silver lining, I cannot say for sure, but despite taking the expected precautions, I inadvertently slept through an appointment with an honorable *ḥawzah* teacher, apparently for the first (and hopefully the last!) time in my life. I mention this to highlight the unassuming reaction of Ghazwān al-Khuzā'ī who, instead of storming out in frustration or otherwise snubbing me afterward, as one might expect, gracefully came over with a group of

students and knocked on my door to check on me. During my brief stay at *Najm al-A'imma*, I was enriched not only by its rigorous learning environment, but also by discussions with students and visitors from diverse backgrounds, including two visitors from the United States, Ali Aboukhodr and Younes Makki, who later became friends of mine.

About a year prior, in the summer of 2015, I participated in the *Najaf Retreat*, organized by the Mainstay Foundation, and have joined again in the following winter breaks of 2016, 2017 and 2018. These trips have been priceless opportunities to reconnect with and meet new *hawzah* scholars, visit historical sites, and help introduce a diverse group of participants to the *hawzah* experience from my perspective as a bridge between two worlds. For their sincere and admirable efforts, I appreciate the team of organizers and supporters who have made such programs possible. For this and other commendable work that I have benefited from by the Mainstay Foundation, among those I have known personally for many years, I thank Abathar Tajaldeen, Jalal Moughania, and Mohamed Ali Banoon. In particular, I should like to thank Hassan al-Hakim for his work on the ground and behind the scenes. Al-Hakim's broader family and network have been a vital resource throughout my years of study in Najaf and beyond. In the Summer of 2018, thanks to a sponsorship facilitated through his contacts, I was also privileged with the opportunity to make a once in a lifetime pilgrimage to the cradle of Islam in Mecca and Medina.

In a 2013 correspondence with Hossein Modarressi, he appeared to be surprised that I wished to travel from the *hawzah* of Najaf to study (traditional) Islamic sciences in the USA. But when I explained that my goal was to contribute to the bridge between the *hawzah* study of Islam and the (secular) academic study of it, he shared that this was what he had done years earlier as well, and recommended an MA in a topic like intellectual history as a bridge between science and

the humanities. It was during Roy Mottahedeh's visit to Iraq in 2014, while I was still studying at the *hawzah* of Najaf, that I began to more seriously plan for graduate studies back in the United States. Mottahedeh had been having a meeting with some of my teachers at the Baḥr al-'Ulūm office and I was asked to translate in the meeting between Ja'far al-Ḥakīm and Mottahedeh, among others. After the meeting, upon corresponding with Mottahedeh about potentially pursuing graduate studies on Islam, he recommended that I pursue them at Princeton because of Hossein Modarressi's presence there. In a correspondence with Seyyed Hossein Nasr, he had recommended that I either go to Qum for more advanced study, or come to the United Kingdom, Canada or the United States for graduate work in Islamic studies. While things did not exactly turn out as Mottahedeh suggested, and I was not able to go to Qum (beyond a short visit in the Summer of 2014), as Nasr proposed, I ended up with opportunities to draw on some of the best that the academic study of Islam had to offer both at Columbia and Princeton. For their responsiveness and openness at the time, and in appreciation of how things panned out in retrospect, I am thankful for the advice of these senior specialists, as well as more recently minted ones, such as Soloman Ali Hassan.

If this is not the suitable space to mention all of those who have, cumulatively, shared in my academic life and, by extension, its productions, from my humblest beginnings, then I should at least mention some of them who can be located in the context of my graduate studies. Besides the esteemed individuals noted earlier, my graduate studies at Columbia have also benefited from courses or colloquia with Robert Stalnaker, Josef Sorett, David Max Moerman, Katharina Ivanyi, Saeed Honarmand, Xan Holt and Mamadou Diouf. Upon my arrival at Columbia, the advice of several faculty members helped guide my academic trajectory. Some of them who come to mind are Wayne Proudfoot, Katherine Ewing, Michael Como, Muhsin Musawi, Hamid Dabashi, and the

late Peter Awn. As a Teaching Fellow appointed by Columbia's GSAS (2017-2022), in addition to drawing on the example of my professors, I have also appreciated learning from the approaches of several other faculty members, including Rachel McDermott, Matthew Keegan, Elaine van Dalen, Rym Bettaieb and Taoufik Ben-Amor. I should like to thank Elaine van Dalen for sharing feedback on my Prospectus proposal in her first semester at Columbia. I also thank a broader range of colleagues whose writings, comments, or other pieces of advice have contributed to molding my academic experience at Columbia and Princeton between 2015 and 2022. These individuals include, for instance: Omar Farahat, Mohammad Sadegh Ansari, Ibrahim El Houdaiby, Aseel Najib, Ebadur Rahman, Andrew McLaren, Mohamed Wajdi Ben Hamed, Nora Jacobsen Ben Hamed, Sohaib Khan, Verena Meyer, Navid Zarrinnal, Catherine Ambler, Karim Malak, Dana Lee, Quinn Clark, Fatima-Ezzahrae Touilila, Fidahussain Yamani, Mahmood Gharavi, Rami Koujah, Yasmina Raiani, Zain Shirazi, Thaer Theeb, Omar Abdel-Ghaffar, Saeed Ghadimi, Shabbir Abbas, Elias Taweel, John Halliwell, Max Shmookler, Sarah Hawas, Prashant Iyengar, Basma Radwan, Rana Baker, Hameem Rahman, Doha Tazi Hemida, Dominique Sirgy, Ilona Gerbakher, Awo (Yayra) Sumah, Arthur Zarate, Anna Reumert, Munevver Gulce, Shaunna Rodrigues, John (Nick) Tackes, and Jared Sacks. Indeed, I feel obliged to many of the students I have served as a Teaching Fellow as well. For there has often been a valuable feedback loop shuttling between and/or forming our collective reflections. Librarians, administrators, and others at various locations, have helped make life pleasant on good days and more bearable on others. At Columbia, Princeton, Leiden and the University of Pennsylvania, I should mention, for instance, Kaoukab Chebaro, Kelly Tuttle, Peter Magierski, AnnaLee Pauls, Silvia Vermetten, Astrid Benedek, Michael Fishman, Joanna Hertz, Charles Jester, Hollyann Kozlowski, Meryl Marcus,

Sandra Peters, Alyssa Pienciak, and Jessica Rechtschaffer, Thalyana Stathis, Edwin Torres, Sherry Wei, the late Sarah Jackman and the late Gregg Labita.

To all the communities of learning, institutions, and individuals that have supported me along the way, whether directly or indirectly, materially or sentimentally, I am forever indebted. But what I accomplish with this milestone is not only thanks to those who have helped me, it is also an achievement for the collective. If not, then this dissertation's contributions are, in any event, one of the ways I give back, however modestly, to Columbia, to Princeton, to my sponsors at the *hawzah* of Najaf, to William K. and Delores S. Brehm while at the University of Michigan, to my hometown community of Dearborn, to Fordson High School, this year celebrating its 100th anniversary, to those mentioned throughout this section and to many unsung heroes.

A comprehensive account of pertinent influences, perhaps even unconscious ones, will have to be postponed or written by others. Nonetheless, I should like to thank the fellow residents at the vicinities of where I have stayed, particularly my current neighbors, the family of Mehdi al-Rifai and Soha Saleh. I also owe a great debt of gratitude to community leaders and organizers in the New York City region, especially at the Imam Al-Khoei Benevolent Foundation, Al-Ghadeer Benevolent Foundation, and Masjid-e-Ali. I take this opportunity to mention, for instance, Fadhel Al-Sahlani, Maan Al-Sahlani, Rizwan Rizvi, Mohamed Jaafar, Hamid al-Bayati, Hatem Abu Shahba, Imad Haidar Ahmad, Walid Abushahba, Hussein Mhanna, Ahsan Abdul Rassoul, Bashir Krayem, Hassan Yaseen, and Ahmad Cheikhali, but there are many others for whose service to and leadership of the community I am thankful, not to mention the indirect indebtedness to many who have departed, such as the late Tilmiz Rizvi.

In transit to and from Najaf, I would usually stop for a few days (occasionally for months) in Lebanon to visit my sister's family, and in more recent years, my in-laws. I am ever grateful for their hospitality, confidence, and well wishes. The family of Wael Mroueh and Hanann Moughania have been both family and friends at various junctures in my journey. Adnan Nasser and Mona Hodroj have not only welcomed me into their family as a son-in-law since 2012, but have also entrusted me with their cherished daughter, Malak, who has chosen to patiently endure the distance from her parents as I pursued my graduate studies in the USA and to postpone pursuing her academic engineering goals in order to build a family with me. As much as our one-year-old son, Amiri Husayn, has filled our home with joy and light, if it were not for Umm Amiri Husayn's full-time passion in looking after him, then I can hardly imagine how I would be able to focus on my research and teaching. Malak still manages to be my valued interlocutor on content ranging from Middle East events, to Islamic studies, and, indeed, to Biomedical Engineering, in which she holds a Master's degree. Interestingly, Amiri Husayn is often an excellent listener to our conversations over dinner, and one of his playful activities is to check out the books in my library. I should like to thank my in-laws as well as the Ali and Amina Bazzi family for their relentless support and for opening their homes in Beirut to us during the Covid-19 pandemic (not to mention helping to introduce me to my wife-to-be years earlier). Despite the most recent stressful conditions in Lebanon, they still managed to shine in numerous ways, for which I am grateful. I appreciate the family friends who have reached out, each in their own way, with a helping hand when we were struggling with newfound challenges, such as the family of 'Abd Allāh Shu'aytū, the family of Muḥammad Zabad and Mariam Nasser, Ibrāhīm Ḥudruj, Maryam Ṣāliḥ, and the late Maryam Ṭabājāh —Malak's grandmother who we lost so soon after her late grandfather, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Ḥudruj.

My own grandparents, aunts, uncles, relatives, near and far, and friends, new and old, command my sincere appreciation for their support. I salute them and know that, regardless how our paths crisscross, the roots and values we share make even distant greetings and checking up on one another forms of reunion. Although I was born and raised in America, my Lebanese heritage and, with it, my family name, have privileged me with a legacy of scholarship and a history of globetrotting in pursuit of knowledge, from north Africa (Maghnia, present-day Algeria, according to one origins narrative), and the Levant, to Iraq, and back to the coast of Tyre/Sour (Tayr Debba, to be specific) and the southern hills of Jabal ‘Āmil (Bint Jbeil, to be exact). But my more recent family history — albeit still cultivating a dedication to learning and a passion for service — has centered around an honest living through artisanship and trade, from handicraft shoemaking in Beirut and assembly line manufacturing in Detroit, to gourmet pizza baking in Michigan and Lebanon. I recall my late maternal grandfather, Hassan Bazzi, as a generous soul, an example of sincere love for humanity, family, and good character, and of independence from political parties. For much of his bed-ridden illness, he would continue to read scripture, as if reciting from memory. I knew my late paternal grandfather, Abdel-latif Moughnia, to be a man of few words, but the few words that he left me in his Lebanese Arabic dialect, “Allah bi-ydabbir,” were ones of reassurance and optimism, recognizing a greater scheme of things beyond our individual agency. He passed away within a few months after I began my studies in Najaf. They are survived by my maternal grandmother, Alia al-Mīr, who continues to exude a spirit of motivational prayer despite her life struggles, and my paternal grandmother, Rasmīyah ‘Usaylī, whose own challenges have helped me reflect on counting our individual and collective blessings. My mother, Ahlam Bazzi, who earned her doctorate in Education after raising four children, and my father, Naji Moughania, who founded a business in Dearborn to support his family and community after escaping civil war in

Lebanon, have been much more than my parents. Being a best friend in childhood, Mama likely helped shape me the most early on. She was my first teacher before I could even remember it and still imparts valuable insights throughout life. Baba's work ethic, adaptability to changing circumstances, and love for knowledge and its seekers, has driven me to draw on his sacrifices and seek the noble academic opportunities that were not so readily accessible to him. I should dwell on the note that I cannot thank my parents enough rather than make a futile attempt at enumerating instances of their unremitting support throughout my life in this limited space... My siblings have been true friends, and, each in their own way, a role model for me. Their professions in life, thus, suit them —each is an educator, albeit in different fields. My older sisters, Suzanne and Hanann, had been part of my earliest learning community, and their creativity, ambition, and compassion inspires me still. I should like to thank Suzanne and my younger brother, Jalal, for recently spearheading the revival and revamping of the Alvinos legacy, the business my parents founded, and which enabled the dedication to learning and passion for service they instilled in us. But Jalal has accompanied me in my intellectual journey much more closely (not the least of which being my first trip to Najaf), on the one hand, and uniquely in the relevance of his insider-perspective publications, community service and example to my broader research, on the other. If in his youth he may have looked to my example, however imperfect, to follow in my footsteps, then it is more so true that for insights on a balance between academic, professional, and social life, I look to his.

In writing this segment, I have been torn between two options, each with a justifiable reasoning: avoiding the mention of individual names in order to avoid the regret of not having mentioned many other specific individuals at present and/or later; or providing a higher resolution sketch of my journey's landscape, one which mentions the names of many, if not most, but surely not all, of the significant personalities shaping my experiences. I decided to opt for the latter

because even an exhaustive, comprehensive attempt (which this is not) will still risk missing out a forgotten or perhaps unconscious influence of significance (if that is you, thank you!). Besides, this record would likely serve the writing of social histories —past, present and much yet to be written.

Introduction

0.1 The Question

What are the underlying frameworks that have motivated and/or justified obedience to “those vested with command/authority (*ulū al-amr*)”² in Islamic thought? How has historical memory conceived of competing conceptual frameworks as having been complicit in the formation of diametrically opposed subjects/agents? What types of legal theory interventions have been made by classical Islamic jurists in this regard and do they – despite their different strategies – reveal shared paradigmatic ideals of leadership? How deep do these roots go? How informative can these crossroads of classical Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī thought be in understanding modern subject-formation within each community’s tradition? These are the types of questions animating this project. Put more succinctly (albeit admittedly at the cost of theoretical precision): To what extent can an intellectual history be written that interprets conceptual interventions pertaining to paradigmatic features of leadership in Islamic thought as being concerned with influencing subject-formation of lasting relevance? To answer this question, I reconstruct a number of debates among influential Islamic thinkers mainly from the 10th-13th centuries CE, but with modern implications on understanding subject-formation. In the broader context of Islamic studies, this study is an applied investigation into the types of insights that arise at the crossroads of Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī thought, as opposed to emphasizing one particular approach to the Islamic experience alone.³

² A reference to Qur’ān 4:59.

³ Lest there be a misunderstanding that there are category mistakes in the way I use these labels, the following clarification is in order: The “Ṣūfī” epistemic approach (i.e. awareness via mystical experience/“tasting”) can be a different way to categorize than the ways “Sunnī” vs. “Shī‘ī” are often categorized (i.e. whether by legal schools, beliefs about God and the Imamate, or other measures). That leaves room for overlap with the application of the label “Ṣūfī” to both Sunnī and Shī‘ī examples, regardless whether different descriptors are used to refer to the same substantive epistemic approach (e.g. “*irfān*” for the mystical approach in Shī‘ī circles). Still, there is a way of prioritizing affiliation with these labels that justifies setting them off as distinct categories for a combination of

0.2 The “Empirical” Context: Islamic “Leadership”

The body of literature to which this study contributes is in a sense as diverse as the modes of reading that it is conducive to (e.g. in terms of methodology, theoretical framework, or reconstruction of intellectual history). Within the Islamic tradition, Qur’ānic conceptions of leading and being led are directly connected to verse 4:59,⁴ which prescribes obedience to a category of individuals known as *Ulū al-Amr*, or those vested with *amr* (often translated as “authority” or “command,” but as Chapter 1 will entertain, it should not be limited to such an interpretation). In her diachronic survey, Asma Afsaruddin argues that there is, “a clear trajectory of transformation and evolution in the primary meanings assigned to the critical Qur’anic phrase,” *Ulū al-Amr*.⁵ Based on exegetical references attributed to exegetes from the first two centuries of

socio-religious considerations. In a nutshell, and perhaps to state the obvious to many Islamic Studies specialists, to our contemporary sensibilities the “Sūfi” label is more widely accepted (and arguably mainstream, when it comes to sharī‘ah-compliant Sūfism) in Sunnī circles than it is in Shī‘ī circles (where even the label “‘irfān” is not as rooted in the reverent memory of Shī‘ī circles as “Sūfism” is in Sunnī circles). It is also noteworthy that Muslims across the Sunnī/Shī‘ī divide would identify with some of the experiences associated with “Sūfism”/ “‘Irfān” without using those labels but rather deeming their experiences as possibilities among a variety of manifestations associated with progressing in faith and good works. So there is arguably no category mistake, but there is a nuanced way of using these labels that must be understood in the context of the discussion and to some extent in light of our contemporary sensibilities using these labels. Lastly, although academic discussions using the label “Shī‘ī” often apply beyond Twelver Shī‘ī circles, whenever there is substantial divergence among “Shī‘ī” groups my usage of “Shī‘ī” throughout this study refers to the Imāmī (Imāmīyah), Twelver Shī‘ī, who represent the overwhelming majority of Shī‘ism today.

⁴ To be discussed in Chapter 1:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

O you who have faith! Obey God and obey the Messenger and *Ulū al-Amr* among you. And if you dispute regarding anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you have faith in God and the Last Day. That is better and more favorable in outcome.

Note on translation: Throughout this dissertation, I have selectively rendered certain excerpts (particularly in the first chapter) into English for the purpose of providing samples communicating my more direct reading of the Arabic content to the dissertation committee. I have otherwise left many excerpts/reports in their original Arabic, only paraphrasing/summarizing/commenting on their content in English. In a future publication for the wider public, drawing on this dissertation, I will likely minimize the Arabic content in-text and selectively render additional excerpts into English.

⁵ Asma Afsaruddin, “Obedience to Political Authority: An Evolutionary Concept,” in *Islamic Democratic Discourse: Theory, Debates, and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. M. A. Muqtedar Khan (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 49.

Islam, the phrase is understood to refer to, “people of knowledge and discernment,” those with a form of moral-legal authority, and early “military commanders” appointed by the Prophet Muḥammad. By the 3rd century AH / 9th-10th centuries CE, the phrase refers to “political” leaders (*salāṭīn* and *umarāʾ*) and is applied to the first two caliphs (Abū Bakr and ‘Umar), likely under the influence of sectarian debates. Afsaruddin proposes that an additional development takes place in late medieval works, identifying the phrase with the notion of “the people who loosen and bind” (*Ahl al-Hall wa al-‘Aqd*), and modernist works, allowing for, “different kinds of authority, particularly religious, moral and political, to be encapsulated within it.”⁶ Political expediency, in Afsaruddin’s view, explains why the notion of practically unqualified obedience to the ruler eventually became an acceptable view, and was not an impulse intrinsic to the Islamic tradition.⁷ Furthermore, the Arabic “*Ulū al-Amr minkum*” in verse 4:59 refers, “in a non-committal way to people who have (particularly moral) authority on account of personal qualities and aptitudes among their peers, and not on account of any kind of formal, especially political, appointment,” according to Afsaruddin.⁸ Taking this a step further, Afsaruddin posits that, “the concept of the caliph ruling, for all practical purposes, invincibly as God's deputy on earth (*khalifat Allah*) is exogenous to Islam.”⁹

While I concur with Afsaruddin in problematizing reductive readings of the Islamic tradition’s notion of authority (or, whenever distinct from it, leadership), I argue that Shīʿī conceptions of the *khalīfah/Imam* – even when conceived of merely at the periphery – can be modeled as arising, discursively, from a paradigmatically Islamic moral concern that prevents such

⁶ Afsaruddin, “Obedience to Political Authority: An Evolutionary Concept,” 49-50.

⁷ Ibid, 53.

⁸ Ibid, 54.

⁹ Ibid.

notions of caliph/*khalifah*/Imam from being deemed “exogenous to Islam.” Despite being a useful framework to consider historical developments, Afsaruddin’s account, thus, arguably requires some revision in light of synchronic, competing interpretations that come to light when examining classical Shī‘ī and Sunnī theories.

Revisiting the notion of “those in authority” as it relates to modern discussions on consensus (*ijmā’*), Muhammad Qasim Zaman draws attention to medieval and modern exegetes who have disagreed (i.e. not necessarily a diachronic development) on the matter and its connection to the notion of “those who loosen and bind,” *Ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*.¹⁰ While Zaman’s survey makes significant connections to broader legal theory implications, relevant to modern readings as well as classical paradigms, it can be complemented by the comparative dimension with classical Shī‘ī thought for a more comprehensive picture. Norman Calder’s unpublished dissertation had provided an entry point into comparative Shī‘ī-Sunnī legal theory and polemics but significant developments in classical Sunnī exegesis, legal theory and intellectual history are missing from his account, which mainly deals with Shī‘ī jurisprudence.¹¹ This dissertation aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the conceptual frameworks underlying Shī‘ī and Sunnī thought on verse 4:59 with a focus on the 10th-13th centuries CE.

Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds have argued that, “the Imāmī conception of the caliphate should be seen as an archaism rather than an innovation,” and that the, “Imāmīs did not raise the imamate to the level of prophecy: this was the level at which it had been born and at which the Umayyads had unsuccessfully tried to maintain it. It was only as the Muslim world at large rejected

¹⁰ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, “Revisiting ‘Those in Authority,’” in *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age : Religious Authority and Internal Criticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹¹ Norman Calder, “The Structure of Authority in Imāmī Shī‘ī Jurisprudence” (1980).

this concept that the Imāmīs began to look deviant.”¹² Of course, the point to be taken from this statement is the weighty emphasis on Imamate in Imāmī Shī‘ism, not that the Imam is literally a Prophet.¹³ In this dissertation, I focus on the subsequent period, but attempt to follow the development of conceptual frameworks at Sunnī, Shī‘ī, and Ṣūfī crossroads. As it turns out, I argue that they share striking paradigmatic features in the sources from the post-Umayyad period I examine. But, as I noted above in responding to Afsaruddin, although this was an absolutist model in some sense it had moral limits/scope and/or underpinnings (in theory!).

More recently, Afsaruddin has argued that, “While in the first two centuries of Islam these conceptions were much more malleable and closer to one another in terms of the emphasis on the imam’s personal attributes and service to Islam, specific historical circumstances would collude to lead to the emergence of a distinctive Shi‘i emphasis on charismatic, hereditary leaders whose infallibility and legitimacy derived primarily from lineal descent from the Prophet’s family and who thereby had access to privileged knowledge.”¹⁴ Again, I will not focus directly on revising readings of the first two centuries in this dissertation, but it will become clear upon examining the earliest extant reports of Shī‘ī literature identifying *Ulū al-Amr* in Chapter 2 that the element of lineage in Imāmī sources is better understood through a different lens with emphasis on Divine

¹² Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, no. 37 (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986 CE), 99; 105.

¹³ For to claim any individual receives the Prophet-specific *wahy* (revelation) would run counter to the commonly held Muslim teaching that Prophet Muḥammad is the Seal of All Prophets (based on Qur’ān 33:40).

¹⁴ Asma Afsaruddin, “Alternative Patterns of Legitimacy: Sunni-Shi‘i Debates on Political Leadership,” in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. Armando Salvatore et al. (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2018 CE), 235–52, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118527719.ch11>, 250.

selection (and which likely sets the stage for a revisionist account of the earliest centuries in a separate study).

The contribution of the present study, in part, aims to demonstrate the value of approaching Islamic studies at the crossroads of its diverse “sub-traditions,” rather than limit specialization to focusing on each one or the other in relative isolation. A close examination of key excerpts from works of lasting relevance on Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), theology (*kalām*) and/or Ṣūfī writings, related to verse 4:59, paints a nuanced portrait of the paradigmatic features at Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī crossroads, one that resonates with an argument connecting forms and features of “leadership” to morally-relevant subject-formation. At these crossroads, conceptual frameworks of infallibility and exemplary guidance culminate with the analysis of a specialized synthesis on the Twelver Shī‘ī Imam’s presence-in-absence (*ghaybah*).

0.3 Methodology and Sources

I approach relevant intellectual productions in a manner that is admittedly (at least sometimes), though by no means intentionally or consciously, impacted by the history of influence that has privileged certain authors and works over others in the respective academic spheres I have had the fortune to participate in. My training in various communities of learning (e.g. the University of Michigan, the *Hawzah al-‘Ilmīyah* of Najaf, Columbia University and Princeton University, in that order), has exposed me to a wide range of assumptions and approaches, but has also opened my eyes to this inescapable fact. For even if by an occasion of fate I gravitate toward the intellectual world of some hitherto unfamiliar school of thought, I am almost undoubtedly left without deep engagement with many others due to time/energy constraints and the immensity of surviving human intellectual output. This goes without mentioning lost history and discoveries yet to be made. It is obvious enough, then, that to formulate any reasonable, educated conclusions –

or educated questions for that matter – requires some assumptions and, indeed, disclaimers. One of these assumptions I find critical to bring to the surface here is that my citation of excerpts from authors (I mean even academic scholars, let alone the historical scholars being studied) and their respective works does not entail an appropriation of their entire intellectual genealogies or the implications of their theoretical interventions. Rather, I take such excerpts as points of entry into a discourse that recognizes those privileged authors and terms in my specific time and place. From Aristotle to Foucault, terms can be adapted or otherwise engaged with heuristically in order to enable an analytical intervention in a given dynamic sphere of discourse and hopefully learn something that settles well at home in the process. It is, then, quite possible to find insight in a notion or excerpt from the worldview of diverse thinkers without necessarily adopting their respective worldviews. This approach allows for bridge-building in ways that appear to be, otherwise, unsustainable, and makes intellectual enrichment practical when it may be, otherwise, unthinkable. This is all to say that there are may be many additional, valuable works to engage with, learn from, and appropriate, heuristically —it is just that our paths have likely not crossed sufficiently (yet).

0.3.1 Library and Archive

In his *Sharī‘ah Scripts*, Brinkley Messick synthesizes multiple strands of theorizing related to texts, from Bakhtin to Foucault to Asad, in order to appropriate and elaborate a methodology summed up in his distinction between the “library” and the “archive.” These major groupings of texts reflect the cosmopolitan and the “contingent” types of sharī‘ah-related histories of each, respectively.¹⁵ Messick further describes the difference between the two in terms of the “author-

¹⁵ Brinkley Messick, *Sharī‘ah Scripts : A Historical Anthropology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 21.

functions” as opposed to “writer-functions.” Drawing on Foucault’s concept of the “author” (having a distinctly discursive function) as opposed to other “writers,” Messick uses “functions” in the plural form to refer to distinct genres. Just as the library texts characteristically avoid the particularities of “the proper name,” even if a library text can be historicized that does not preclude the “atemporal” nature of its discourse. Moreover, just as a text from the archive is highly particular, its particularity pertains to the identities involved in their contents (e.g. parties in a litigation) and not in the identity of the document writer.¹⁶

While the relationship between library texts and archive texts is that of the general to the specific, the cosmopolitan to the contingent, Messick is careful to warn that, on the one hand, this is relative (i.e. movements back and forth between the library and archive are possible), and that, on the other hand, this relationship is not a return to the “great” and “little” traditions analysis of the 1950s. For, contrary to that trend of analysis, the library and the archive represent, “complementary textual domains,” and are, “co-constitutive of particular locales.”¹⁷ “Modeling” is a principle theme through which Messick thinks of the dialectical relationship between the library and the archive, “one that highlights the intertextual production and circulation of rules and related language.” In more specific terms, specialized library texts are models *of* (how practice informs theory) and *for* (how theory informs practice) particular archival genres.¹⁸

In my research, reflecting on the relative relationship between the Qur’ān and ḥadīth, on the one hand, and commentaries and theoretical readings of those sources, on the other, I extend Messick’s division of library and archive to the two aforementioned types of texts, respectively. Since the latter are library texts relative to a different archive, however, the referential description

¹⁶ Messick, *Sharīa Scripts : A Historical Anthropology*, 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 25-26.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 45.

library/archive, and the entailed “data” of concern, requires attention in each instance of use. Similar to how “secondary sources” may be regarded as “primary sources” depending on the scholarly question being explored, a text that is a library text, from one aspect, can be regarded as an archive text, from another depending on the function it has from that aspect. Commentaries and “constitutional law” discussions on verse 4:59 can, thus, be regarded as a contingent archive for the cosmopolitan library being quoted (i.e. the Qur’ān).

Inspired by the work of M. M. Bakhtin, Messick’s method is to, “read related texts together, to read across genres, and to read for discursive system.”¹⁹ This includes viewing other texts as an important *context* for a given text, viewing texts as “generative” elements within particular traditions, approaching texts with a “dialogic” conception of them as, “responding to and anticipating responses from other texts,” and a concern for, “how the several types of writings acted as interlocutors.”²⁰ This approach to texts is especially conducive in the historical anthropologist (or intellectual historian informed by ethnography)²¹ reading of Islam as a discursive tradition, which brings me to the next methodological point – understanding Islam as a discursive tradition.

0.3.2 “The Islamic” as a Discursive Tradition

In Talal Asad’s seminal article, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,” he first takes issue with the, “familiar representation of essential Islam as the fusion of religion with power.”²² Significant variations in the beliefs and practices of Muslims problematizes such an essentialist

¹⁹ Ibid, 41.

²⁰ Ibid, 41.

²¹ Disciplinary boundaries are fluid in light of this methodology.

²² Talal Asad, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam [1986],” *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1–30, 8.

reduction. One attempt to address this problem appropriates the Orientalist distinction between orthodox and non-orthodox Islam and adapts it to the categories of Great and Little traditions, thinking of “orthodoxy” as, “merely one (albeit invariable) form of Islam among many, distinguished by its preoccupation with the niceties of doctrine and law, claiming its authority from sacred texts rather than sacred persons.”²³ According to this reading, the correlated social structures, urban orthodoxy and rural/tribal heterodoxy, come to represent parts of a single system, “between whom an unceasing struggle for political dominance takes place.”²⁴ Asad describes the main difficulty with the aforementioned constructions as being that they rely on, “false conceptual oppositions and equivalences, which often lead writers into making ill-founded assertions about motives, meanings, and effects relating to ‘religion.’”²⁵ Asad implies that this reading does not guard against reproducing the old reductive contrasts between Islam and Christianity, and makes his invitation toward viewing Islam as a “discursive tradition.”²⁶

Neither essentialist, nor nominalist, the object of an anthropology of Islam, being a “tradition,” ought to include and relate itself to its “founding texts.”²⁷ For Asad, a tradition is made up of discourses that inform practitioners regarding the proper form and purpose of a given

²³ Ibid, 8.

²⁴ Ibid, 9.

²⁵ Ibid, 18.

²⁶ Ibid, 10.

“In approaching this issue, let us consider the following interconnected points: (1) Narratives about culturally distinctive actors must try to translate and represent the historically situated discourses of such actors as responses to the discourse of others, instead of schematizing and de-historicizing their actions. (2) Anthropological analyses of the social structure should focus not on typical actors but on the changing patterns of institutional relations and conditions (especially those we call political economies). (3) The analysis of Middle Eastern political economies and the representation of Islamic “dramas” are essentially different kinds of discursive exercise that cannot be substituted for each other, although they can be significantly embedded in the same narrative, precisely because they are discourses. (4) It is wrong to represent types of Islam as being correlated with types of social structure, on the implicit analogy with (ideological) superstructure and (social) base. (5) Islam as the object of anthropological understanding should be approached as a discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges.”

²⁷ Ibid, 20.

practice, which naturally has a history, projected future and intervening/interconnected present.²⁸ From this aspect, the discursive tradition of Islam includes the “classical” as well as the “modern” readings, and a practice is “Islamic” because it is sanctioned by the discursive traditions of Islam, even if it is only taught by, “an untutored parent.”²⁹ Orthodoxy, in Asad’s view, is distinctly about a relationship of power to truth and wherever, “Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust *correct* practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace *incorrect* ones,” there lies its domain.³⁰ Moreover, Asad focuses on the role of “reason and argument” in traditional practice, not in the form of formal debate and polemic, but in terms of, “the process of trying to *win someone over* for the willing performance of a traditional practice.”³¹ Asad concludes that Islamic traditions are, thus, not homogenous but that they, “aspire to coherence, in the way that all discursive traditions do.”³² However, Asad cautions that there can be no, “such thing as a universally acceptable account of a living tradition,” because a researcher’s “particular historical position” toward a tradition will impact the coherence that s/he finds or fails to find.³³

I draw on Asad’s characterization of Islam as a discursive tradition, not merely as an object of anthropology but as a category of analysis more generally. Within the broader discursive tradition, several Islamic traditions reside, each with its own discourses, corresponding practices and forms of argumentation. Thus, while Asad’s original formulation of Islam as a discursive tradition may not account for the role of formal debate and polemic in “traditional practice,” the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 21.

³⁰ Ibid, 22.

³¹ Ibid, 23.

³² Ibid.

“An anthropology of Islam will therefore seek to understand the historical conditions that enable the production and maintenance of specific discursive traditions, or their transformation—and the efforts of practitioners to achieve coherence.”

³³ Ibid, 24.

“Declarations of moral neutrality, here as always, are no guarantee of political innocence.”

discursive traditions within the tradition of Islam include intellectual/discursive traditional practices that do indeed entail a role even for formal debate and polemic. In the interest of being properly/ethically “initiated” into the discourse of the tradition in question – if not solely to more accurately/objectively access it – learning with/from, and not merely about, masters of Islamic studies within the tradition is pivotal to my research methodology. This includes both Messick’s dialogic approach to texts as well as being informed by lived experience among practitioners of the discursive tradition, gaining ethnographic insights informing a reconstruction of the tradition’s history (see next section).

Finally, although I draw on the substantive concept behind “Islam as a discursive tradition,” I generally avoid using the word “Islam” while describing discursive processes and instead opt for a construction including the word “Islamic.” This is not because, as a researcher, I claim to *prescribe* an ideal definition of “Islam” that should be distinguished from “Islamic” (mis)interpretations and (mal)practice. Rather, it is because I recognize *descriptively/analytically* that meaningfulness of such terms is demonstrated when it reflects the usage of an overwhelming majority of Muslims. If I have accumulated ethnographic insight in this regard, it informs that Muslims make a distinction between “Islam” as an ideal (i.e. whatever the Qur’ān truly means and whatever Prophet Muḥammad really meant, generally as well as when applied to specific contexts) vs. discursive (mis)interpretations vs. spatially-temporally-culturally specific (mal)practice. That is despite the plain fact that Muslims may provide different answers when asked to articulate what specific examples embody ideal “Islam” in thought and practice today.

This analytical distinction generally does not require me to take a prescriptive/normative position on what “Islam” is or is not in my research but it does require me to be sensitive to what an overwhelming majority of Muslims would take to be normative in my description/analysis. It

is critical to note that this lens not only clarifies how I draw on the notion of “Islam as a discursive tradition,” but also partially overlaps with the distinction Marshall Hodgson makes between the “Islamic” and the “Islamicate.”³⁴ The “Islamic” label is helpful to designate meaningful engagement with and application of the discursive tradition, as opposed to the thought/practice of Muslims that does not fit such a description and may be labelled “Islamicate,” or as I prefer, “cultural.”³⁵ As for the gray area in between the “Islamic” and the “cultural,” I find the lens of Islam vs. (mis)interpretations vs. (mal)practice more useful. In light of these terminological choices, when I make arguments regarding “Islamic” authors/thinkers, I have in mind those meaningfully engaging with the discursive tradition —not merely (or even always) those legally categorized as “Muslim.”

0.3.3 Training and “Voice”

“Empirically” speaking, this approach recognizes an inherent layer of inaccessibility to classical Islamic thought due to the limitations of historiography and hermeneutics. However, by virtue of this heritage not being in a vacuum, but instead being part of a discursive tradition still vibrant today, some level of inaccessibility can be ameliorated by a careful deployment of several traditional methods (i.e. studying with and learning from inheritors of the tradition, not merely about them). It goes without saying that my research does not necessarily become part of the

³⁴ As Hodgson wrote, “There has been, however, a *culture*, centred on a lettered tradition, which has been historically distinctive of Islamdom the *society*, and which has been naturally shared in by both Muslims and non-Muslims who participate at all fully in the society of Islamdom. For this, I have used the adjective ‘Islamicate’. I thus restrict the term ‘Islam’ to the *religion* of the Muslims, not using that term for the far more general phenomena, the society of Islamdom and its Islamicate cultural traditions.” Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974 CE), <https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/2027/heb.00894>, 58.

³⁵ If for no reason other than that it is a term which does not sound so close to “Islamic” as “Islamicate.” As for descriptions that attempt to locate non-Muslim authors in their Islamicate context, I would suggest labelling them based on their regional and/or lingua franca association (e.g. North African Greco-Arabic philosopher).

Islamic discursive tradition simply because I have been trained in traditional circles of learning associated with the *ḥawza al-‘ilmīyah*³⁶ in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq. Whether or not this research itself becomes part of the discursive tradition depends on several factors, only one of which is training within that sphere of scholarship. But in order to reasonably claim to have ethnographic

³⁶ Linguistically, “ḥawzah” can refer to a “region/area/side (nāḥiyah),” and is etymologically related to the notion of “collecting/acquiring/accumulating (ḥawz).” For instance, see: Ismā‘īl ibn Ḥammād al-Jawharī (d. 393 AH / 1003 CE), *Tāj al-Lughah wa Ṣiḥāḥ al-‘Arabīyah*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Ghafūr ‘Aṭṭār, 4th ed., vol. 3, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1987), 875-876.

Also consider section “6.3.5. The *ḥawza*” of the following *EI3* article:

Sebastian Günther, “Education, General (up to 1500),” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, ed. Kate Fleet et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Brill, 2017), https://referenceworks.brillonline.com:443/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/education-general-up-to-1500-COM_26134.

For a discussion of technical definitions that have been proposed for *al-ḥawzah al-‘ilmīyah* (the *ḥawzah* associated with knowledge/study/learning), or just *ḥawzah* for short, see:

‘Alī Aḥmad al-Bahādī, *al-Ḥawzah al-‘Ilmīyah fī al-Najaf: Ma‘ālimuhā wa Ḥarakatuhā al-Isḫāḥīyah*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Zahrā’ lil-Tibā‘ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, 1993), 86-94;

‘Adnān Farḥān Āl Qāsim, *Tārīkh Al-Hawzāt al-‘Ilmīyah Wa al-Madāris al-Dīnīyah ‘ind al-Shī‘ah al-Imāmīyyah*, 1st ed., vol. 1, 6 vols. (Beirut: Sharikat Dār al-Salām, 2016), 92-99. An additional four volumes are expected to be published.

While the discussions of technical definitions are informative, the following description (not a definition, but description informed by this author’s ethnographic insight) arguably better captures the range of references to the notion of “*ḥawzah*” among Twelver Shī‘ah Muslims pursuing traditional religious learning. The *ḥawzah* is a center of knowledge in the traditional Islamic context, a hub for seeking sacred learning that is meant not only to engage the intellect but cultivate the character of its community members. The *ḥawzah al-‘ilmīyah* is often translated as an Islamic “seminary” of sorts, but it is perhaps more accurately described as a scholarly community of masters and seekers of knowledge, in which membership and rank depend on both academic merit as well as upright character, including the observance of traditional etiquettes. When used to refer to such a collective network worldwide, the *ḥawzah al-‘ilmīyah* community has concentrated hubs of intellectual activity centered around historical holy sites, most notably the shrine of Imam ‘Alī in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq, and the shrine of Lady Fāṭimah Ma‘ṣūmah (d. 201 AH / 816 CE) in the holy city of Qum, Iran. Membership within that broader community would depend more on observing its leading scholars’ widely accepted approaches and norms than on studying in a particular location. But the phrase “*ḥawzah ‘ilmīyah*” or plainly “*ḥawzah*” can also refer to specific locations of learning in particular (not just the city hubs, but specific institutions within the city), such that there exist a plural “*ḥawzāt*” throughout the world, typically wherever there are qualified masters from within the tradition who oversee learning circles, teach traditional texts according to the etiquettes/norms of the broader *ḥawzah* community, and foster an atmosphere of intellectual rigor and spirituality. Members of the *ḥawzah* community are continuously evaluated by more senior scholars, peers and, potentially, qualified students, on their intellectual achievement and character, and so formal “degrees/certificates” are not traditionally regarded as the final word on a given community member’s credentials as a *ḥawzah* scholar/student. To some extent, this even applies to written or oral license/authorization (*ijāzah*) of ijthād because an individual’s intellectual and ethical performance would continue to be monitored throughout life for any serious lapses of method or character, potentially disqualifying the person from the aforementioned license/authorization or any other recommendation/endorsement affiliated with the *ḥawzah*. To sum up a key point here, the word *ḥawzah* is used to describe: a specific local institution of traditional Twelver Shī‘ah religious learning; a community of such learning centered around a holy shrine, including but not limited to the former; and/or the collective global community consisting of the former.

“insight” into the intellectual history of the tradition, one that informs readings of primary texts and the reading/writing of secondary texts, traditional training alongside the inheritors of the tradition – in one form or another – is *almost* indispensable to engagement with the textual dimensions of the tradition, let alone the oral dimensions.³⁷ Skilled engagement with the tradition is, in this view, analogous to skilled language acquisition, complete with its own world of nuance that requires immersive experience to fully absorb, let alone to fluently express.³⁸ Still, at the very least, it can be said that playing it safe with regard to this methodical requirement speaks for itself.³⁹ The relative ease of travel, the affordability of advanced telecommunications and the

³⁷ I write *almost* because many creative thinkers are bound to come up with ways to contribute to an intellectual discussion despite being completely foreign to its foundational texts and modes of transmission.

³⁸ This is not to say that the tradition is like language in its relatively static body of rules. Rather, the extent of the tradition’s dynamism is to be learned, as language is learned, through the immersive engagement with the tradition’s heirs/masters. While Aria Nakissa proposes an “epistemic shift” within the Islamic tradition (particularly in the context of the Sunnī al-Azhar and Dār al-‘Ulūm) from language-based conceptions of knowledge toward new conceptions modeled on the natural sciences, this is arguably a point of contestation within the tradition itself – at least within Shī‘ī Islam.

See:

Aria Nakissa, “An Epistemic Shift in Islamic Law: Educational Reform at al-Azhar and Dār al-‘Ulūm,” *Islamic Law and Society* 21, no. 3 (June 27, 2014): 209–51, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-00213p02>.

Slightly disagreeing with Nakissa, I would argue that the notion of “innovation” is not synonymous to “*bid‘ah*” (heretical innovation) in all contexts of the tradition, and creativity is closely tied not only to versions of *ijtihād* but also to different types of authorship. Making connections that had not yet been noted, deepening an understanding, renewing relevance to an earlier notion, and other types of developments were not modern inventions to the Islamic tradition. Moreover, limited forms of *ijtihād*, whether in Sunnī or Shī‘ī circles, entail an order of interpretation arguably giving rise to internal diversity *within* each legal school that is comparable to the diversity *between* the legal schools. With such diversity in practice, the process involved much more creativity than the mere application of rules. This is not to dismiss the existence of an epistemic shift, within specific circles of influence, but it is to problematize equating such a shift with dismissing the existence of a shared notion of creativity across the shift. In other words, 1) there are forms of a creativity shared across the epistemic shift; and 2) the epistemic shift is evident in the post-shift *insistence* upon particular forms of creativity that assume the yardstick of the natural sciences in order to recognize scholarship as making a valuable contribution. It is not about the utter *absence* of such creativity pre-shift. Hallaq makes the argument that such creativity was not absent. By doing so, he does not necessarily insist that such creativity is the only form of valuable scholarship.

³⁹ Of course, I realize that this goes up against a trend of anthropological thinking, but as Messick’s work demonstrates, things are changing. As Messick writes, “In contrast, at least until recently this type of thought represented unfamiliar terrain for mainstream anthropologists, researchers more attuned to the study of unconscious structures (Lévi-Strauss), commonsense assumptions (Geertz) or implicit dispositions (Bourdieu). From Boas’s time forward, “native theory,” as it later would be termed, has been viewed askance, as unreliable “secondary” material, even as positively “dangerous.””

Brinkley Messick, *Sharīa Scripts : A Historical Anthropology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 44.

availability of podcasts, electronic libraries, digitized manuscripts, and other resources have made such training (or at least being seasoned by experience) more practical than ever. My readings of primary sources, as well as studies from within the tradition, are informed by this training and, whenever in doubt on such readings, I maintain a bridge of communication with masters from within the tradition.⁴⁰

My training in various worlds of knowledge and craft, benefitting from traditional as well as modern systems of learning, and being an insider (e.g. a Muslim trained in the ḥawzah of Najaf) and an outsider (e.g. born and raised in the United States, mainly educated at American universities) at once, raise the questions of whether I take a descriptive or prescriptive approach to Islamic thought as my object of study and how my own “voice” is distinct from that of my interlocutors within the tradition. The answer(s) to these questions are by no means simple. Moreover, I do not claim to have a fully satisfying answer, as I realize that regardless of my conscious methodological choices, my natural voice may include vibrations that I myself am not fully aware of. However, to the extent that can be reasonably expected of any researcher, and in the interest of engaging with a wider audience – greatly minimizing shared normative assumptions – I have decided to engage with my object of study descriptively and analytically, in the sense that I distance many of my own prescriptive views from my reconstruction of debates within the

Bourdieu worries that, “Native theories are dangerous not so much because they lead research towards illusory explanations as because they bring quite superfluous reinforcement to the intellectualist tendency inherent in the objectivist approach.”

Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 19.

It appears – among other things – that Bourdieu assigns more apprehensiveness to native theories than to the theories of those studying the natives. What makes one more worrisome than the other? Should not the researcher’s reflexivity dissipate the illusory explanation regardless? Can the researcher trust his/her own assessment before being fully immersed within the native world, including the native theoretical world? Even granting Bourdieu’s warning partially, are not some native worlds themselves worlds of theory? By virtue of the defining feature of those worlds, then, they cannot be accessed without studying native theory.

⁴⁰ Detailing the content and pedagogical approaches of this training would warrant a separate treatment.

tradition. Thus, I do not attempt to make a claim regarding the ontological truth of one view or the other, as a philosophical or theological approach might. Rather, I draw on my training in Islamic studies, epistemology, philosophy, law and religion in order to best understand and reconstruct the views of the authors I consider. I employ the analytical and presentation skills honed by my engineering training not to adopt or reject one normative view within the tradition or another, but to allow the reader to better access another world of possibilities and make connections without which the internally consistent may appear incoherent. It should be clear, then, that this methodological choice differs from what would be expected of a work on jurisprudence or theology in the ḥawzah/seminary community, or even the secular disciplines of philosophy (where ontological truth claims are made) or law (where prescriptive claims are commonplace) in the academy. Granted, my methodological choices and their assumptions, which are summarized throughout this introduction, while bounded, are themselves prescriptive. Otherwise, to the extent that the distinction between a descriptive/analytical approach and a prescriptive one is not itself problematic, I adopt the former for the type of study at hand.

0.3.4 Historiography and Memory

In his recent article, “Facts or Fables,” Modarressi demonstrates that the medieval Islamic tradition had already – long before the modern period – articulated the concept of historical memory (as distinct from historical fact) and that, “theological discussions about the validity of religious and historical reports prompted Islamic theologians to devise standards to assess or validate facts transmitted through historical memory.”⁴¹ The parallel notion to historical memory in the Islamic tradition is *tawātur*, “a report so widely transmitted as to leave no possibility of

⁴¹ Hossein Modarressi, “Facts or Fables?: Muslims’ Evaluation of Historical Memory,” *Studia Islamica* 114, no. 2 (August 8, 2019): 205–18, <https://doi.org/10.1163/19585705-12341398>, 218.

collusion to fabricate a lie.”⁴² Modarressi outlines four elements Muslim scholars came up with, “as requirements in order to narrow down the scope of error and increase the credibility of a piece of historical memory as representative of the actual occurrence of an alleged fact.”⁴³ Briefly: (1) it must be demonstrated that the given piece of historical memory existed from the outset (the generation of the fact in question) and is not a later development; (2) it must represent what the reporters had individually witnessed in such a way that would be beyond dispute (e.g. substantiated in light of the discernment, sharp mind and sound judgment of the eyewitnesses); (3) it should not have been contested⁴⁴ by a rivaling account such that it does not stand the test of time (i.e. even when people with power popularize a false account, “in the long run no powerful government can wipe out an opposite way of thinking or historical account for ever.”⁴⁵); and (4) it must be widely accepted to such an extent as to eliminate the possibility that the agreement occurred in order to serve an ulterior motive, even if only by unconscious, spontaneous coordination of minds (*tashā‘ur*).⁴⁶ On this last requirement, the Islamic theologians varied widely in terms of what cross-section of the broader community’s agreement would fulfil or approximate fulfilling such a requirement. However, it might be suggested that a range of their views on this point can be interpreted as example-specific. That is, having certain examples in mind, different criteria were

⁴² Modarressi, “Facts or Fables?,” 212.

⁴³ Ibid, 211.

⁴⁴ I understand “contested” here to mean contestation in a way that is *unreconcilable* with the *tawātur* claim. Otherwise, some so-called “contestations” might be reconciled with a historical memory claim in light of the social and political context of the occurrence in question, for instance. Threats of persecution might have required that certain information only circulate within the sphere of an inner circle and a relevant *tawātur* would require wide transmission within the relevant circle with access, not every sphere of the broader public. This understanding is not based on reference to a specific authority but evident to me when reflecting upon the notion of *tawātur* and real-life scenarios. For instance, if any verified instances of *tawātur* are to exist, then it certainly does not prevent fringe or otherwise uninformed, feigning or propagandist individuals/groups from denying the established *tawātur*. This is because *tawātur* is only *tawātur* relative to those for whom it has been established as such. That being said, within the potential population for which *tawātur* on a given matter is to be established, the aforementioned conditions would need to be fulfilled.

⁴⁵ Modarressi, “Facts or Fables?,” 215.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 211-217.

put forth regarding how to fulfill this fourth requirement. Substantively, then, it is not about agreement across the entire community or a specific group or a cross-section in between, per se. It depends on the “fact” in question, who it was relevant to, who would have reasonably been expected to have access to it in light of the social and political atmosphere, for example, how it fits in a broader worldview of assumptions, etc.

Although Hossein Modarressi’s *Crisis and Consolidation* is primarily regarded as a work that surveys Shī‘ī Islam’s formative period, exploring the contribution of Ibn Qiba al-Rāzī’s (writing before 285/898)⁴⁷ to Shī‘ī thought, it is also a work that sheds light on a tradition’s approach to establishing historical events. By studying the tradition, Modarressi reconstructs the voice of an early Shī‘ī thinker who advances an argument not only about theology but about the writing of history. This is not to say that these ideas are novel, but rather that the classical quality of such a thinker’s approach, as a term of discourse, speaks to historiographical awareness and consolidation, perhaps even an intuitive methodological sense that some modern historians may have lost touch with.

Modarressi argues that it is the concept of “*mutawātir*,” a report (characterized by *tawātur*) which, “must be a sound and safe one, widely known and transmitted by groups of people in different places in each generation so that no possibility exists for the transmitters to collaborate and fabricate a lie,”⁴⁸ which gave way to the new concept of “consensus.” In a related vein, the concept of *akhbār al-āḥād* (non-*mutawātir* reports), “changed its meaning from the original sense, that is what is reported by individuals as against the entire community, to reports that are related by one or very few individuals,” only being accepted across the board if it were to be supported

⁴⁷ Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi‘ite Islam : Abū Ja‘far Ibn Qiba Al-Rāzī and His Contribution to Imāmite Shī‘ite Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, c1993), 133.

⁴⁸ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 123.

by “indisputable external evidence.”⁴⁹ As the following excerpts demonstrate, Ibn Qiba exemplifies appeals to:

[1] a report’s wide transmission beyond the [practical] possibility of collusion by its transmitters (*tawātur*);

[2] external evidence;

[3] internal evidence (e.g. the internal coherence and/or plausibility of the reported claim);

[4] reasonable reflection; and

[5] avoiding bigotry/prejudice.

Although these appeals arise in the context of discussions about the historicity of Imam-appointments in Shī‘ism (*naṣṣ*) as well as the birth of the twelfth Imam as a historical event, and sometimes closely tie into theological arguments for the existence of an Imam at all times, the former can be read separately for their value in a tradition’s historiography.

In what is reconstructed as a debate with the Mu‘tazilah, on the *historical* (not solely theological) existence of the twelfth Imam, Ibn Qiba writes,

Despite this his close associates communicate his existence and his commands and prohibitions, and they are, in our opinion, among those whose reports constitute indisputable proof, because they cut off any excuse [against their narration] by their great numbers, their differences in tendency, and the reassurance their reports engender. They reported this in the same way as they reported the Imāmate of his forefathers, peace be upon them, even though their opponents disagreed. This is just like the truth of the

⁴⁹ Ibid, 129.

supernatural signs⁵⁰ of the Prophet, may God bless him and his Family and grant them peace, other than the Qur'ān⁵¹, being proved by the narrations of the Muslims, even though their enemies among the People of Scripture [the Jews and the Christians], the Magians, the atheists, and the materialists disagreed on the existence of those signs⁵². This is not a point that can be obscure to the likes of you with what I know of your good deliberation.⁵³

Ibn Qiba, thus, refers to appeals [1] and [5] above to establish the historical event(s) in question.

In a reconstructed debate with the followers of Ja'far ibn 'Alī al-Ḥādī, Ibn Qiba further elaborates that, "If what they have narrated, with what we described of their status, were false, no report on this earth could be substantiated, and the whole [institution] of reports would collapse."⁵⁴ Thus, the methodological choice is between epistemically untenable, and otherwise impractical, skepticism, on the one hand, and accepting the historical value of what might be called a community's "memory," on the other hand.⁵⁵ Implicitly addressing exceptional cases in which

⁵⁰ This is referring at least to establishing the historicity of such claims of eye testimony to something beyond the typical natural order. As for interpreting them as "signs," or meaning "supernatural" in a particularly Divine way, that requires additional premises.

⁵¹ Implying that it was commonly accepted amongst the interlocutors that Prophet Muḥammad had many occurrences interpreted as "signs," besides the Qur'ān. Also apparently implying that, while the Qur'ān's historicity may have been established through a similar mechanism, it is different in that it is a living "sign," still accessible in ways that historical events are not.

⁵² Either in the sense of the historical phenomenon interpreted as a "sign" or in the sense of the interpretation itself.

⁵³ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 140-141.

[...] وأولياؤه مع هذا ينقلون وجوده وأمره ونهيه وهم عندنا ممن تجب بنقلهم الحجة إذا كانوا يقطعون العذر لكثرتهم واختلافهم في مهمهم ووقوع الاضطرار مع خبرهم ، ونقلوا ذلك كما نقلوا إمامة آبائهم عليهم السلام وإن خالفهم مخالفوهم فيها وكما تجب بنقل المسلمين صحة آيات النبي صلى الله عليه وآله سوى القرآن وإن خالفهم أعداؤهم من أهل الكتاب والمجوس والزنادقة والدهرية في كونها . ولبست هذه مسألة تشبهه على مثلك مع ما أعرفه من حسن تأملك .

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH / 991 CE), *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, ed. 'Alī Akbar Al-Ghaffārī (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1405 AH / 1984 CE), 61-62.

⁵⁴ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 161.

[...] ونظرنا في نقل الفريق الآخر فوجدناهم جماعات متباعدي الديار والأقطار ، مختلفي الهمم والآراء متغايرين ، فالكذب لا يجوز عليهم لنأي بعضهم عن بعض ولا التواطؤ ولا التراسل والاجتماع على تخرص خبر ووضع ، فعلمنا أن النقل الصحيح هو نقلهم وأن الحق هؤلاء ، ولأنه إن بطل ما قد نقله هؤلاء على ما وصفنا من شأنهم لم يصح خبر في الأرض وبطلت الاخبار كلها [...]]

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, 55.

⁵⁵ Ibn Qiba provides a useful analogy on page 154.

Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 154.

external/internal evidence overrules such claims to historicity (e.g. claims of those preferring others over ‘Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib), Ibn Qība writes,

Otherwise, there is no sense in abandoning a widely transmitted report whose narrators cannot be accused, and accepting a report that has no safeguard against the suspicion that the narrators colluded over it nor any special characteristic that validates [their narration].⁵⁶

A “special characteristic,” imaginably external evidence or internal incoherence/inconsistency can thus dispel the myth of a received narrative. Ibn Qība ends the letter with an invitation to reasonable reflection, this time to contemplate the stakes, “with the eye of fear and caution the consequences of unbelief and rejection of the truth.”⁵⁷

In a reconstructed debate with the Zaydīyah, Ibn Qība argues that the Qur’ān, as a source text, cannot be read merely in terms of its linguistic meanings, as there are many terms used in the Qur’ān with Divinely prescribed/coined⁵⁸ dimensions, such as, “al-salāt, al-zakāt, al-ḥajj and the like.” These require Divine instruction (either through the Qur’ān’s more straightforward verses or through the Prophet and Imams) to understand properly. Ibn Qība writes,

It is, then, not possible to trace the meanings of these things back to the language because in the first place you would need to know that nothing at all was in the words you were trying to interpret that depended on divine instruction in either the summary or the detailed understanding of it.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 167.

[...] وإلا فلا معنى لتترك خبر متواتر لا تحمة في نقله ولا على ناقله وقبول خبر لا يؤمن على ناقله تحمة التواطؤ عليه ، ولا خاصة معهم يثبتون بما ولن يفعل ذلك إلا تائه حيران . فتأمل - أسعدك الله - في النظر فيما كتبت به إليك مما ينظر به الناظر لدينه ، المفكر في معاده المتأمل بعين الخيفة والحذار إلى عواقب الكفر والجحود [...]]

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 60.

⁵⁷ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 167.

⁵⁸ Tawqīf.

⁵⁹ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 208.

This provides a historiographical point of caution in mining the Qur’ān for historical data. Thus, approaching the Qur’ān linguistically within the Arabic language, let alone attempting to derive meaning from etymological connections across different languages, has its limitations from the tradition’s perspective. Instead, to benefit from the Qur’ān as external evidence, as well as to derive internal evidence from it, for much of the Qur’ān there must be an interpreter of sorts, a “mutarjim,” who “expounds” it, “who knows and quotes what God intends.”⁶⁰

On internal evidence and reflection, Ibn Qiba writes that, “there will be, in order to understand their falsehood, no need of anything more than their own selfcontradictory, vain contentions.”⁶¹ Ibn Qiba considers rivaling claims and invites his interlocutors to resolve internal inconsistencies.⁶² Tawātur, argues Ibn Qiba, sets apart his historical claims from those of his interlocutors, as the mass-transmission of reports by numerous reporters is to such an extent that, “prevalent custom and reliable experience acknowledge that it cannot be all fabricated

فليس يجوز حملة على اللغة لأنك تحتاج أولا أن تعلم أن الكلام الذي تريد أن تتأوله ليس فيه توقيف أصلا ، لا في جملة ولا في تفصيله .

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 100.

⁶⁰ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 210.

[...] فدلونا يا معشر الزيدية على آية واحدة اختلف أهل العلم في تأويلها في القرآن ما يدل نصا وتوقيفا على تأويلها ، وهذا أمر متعذر وفي تعذر دليل على أنه لا بد للقرآن من مترجم يعلم مراد الله تعالى فيخير به ، وهذا عندي واضح .

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 100.

⁶¹ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 212.

[...] لم نحتاج في معرفة كذبهم إلى أكثر من دعواهم المتناقض الفاسد [الركيك].

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 103.

Also, for example, “It is impossible for a living person to install a dead person as his successor and to delegate the Imāmate to him. This is so clearly wrong that there is no need to say any more to prove its falsity.”

Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 217.

[...] ومن المحال أن يستخلف الحي الميت ويوصي إليه بالإمامة ، وهذا أبين فسادا من أن يحتاج في كسره إلى كثرة القول .

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 107.

⁶² For example, Ibn Qiba asks his Zaydī interlocutor to explain the alternative to the Imāmīyah requirement of *naṣṣ* and the non-Shī‘ī requirement of *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* selection of the Imam.

Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 237-238.

أفليس إمامته لا تصح إلا بالنص على ما تقوله الامامية ولا معه دليل معجز يعلم به أنه إمام وليس سبيله عندكم سبيل من يجتمع أهل الحل والعقد من الأمة فيتشارون في أمره ثم يختارونه ويبايعونه ؟ فإذا قال : نعم ، قيل له : فيكف السبيل إلى معرفته؟

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 121.

falsehood.”⁶³ Ibn Qiba also makes an invitation to “test” claims about historical occurrences by comparing and contrasting the narratives in light of the recorded evidence⁶⁴, referring to the overall picture painted about the impact of certain personalities as external evidence of qualities they had.⁶⁵

Lastly, Ibn Qiba points to psychological dimensions to the pursuit of knowledge more broadly, let alone establishing historical facts. Ibn Qiba writes that controversy surrounding the truth does not undermine the validity of one’s argument establishing a truth, for,

If the truth were only established by a proof on which there were agreement, no truth would ever be established [...]⁶⁶

Furthermore, Ibn Qiba refers to the “habit” of uncritically taking the word of transmitters as a culprit behind the rise of disagreement.⁶⁷ In one instance, Ibn Qiba exemplifies a lucid pursuit of evidence, indirectly highlighting the importance of avoiding bigotry/prejudice. As Ibn Qiba puts it, “If there is proof here that refutes what we said, let the Zaydites bring it forward. We have no grudge against the truth. Thank God.”⁶⁸

⁶³ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 212.

[...] ما يعلم بالعادة الجارية والتجربة الصحيحة أن ذلك كله لا يجوز أن يكون كذبا مولدا

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 103.

⁶⁴ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 103.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 104.

ووجدنا رواية الاخبار وحملة الآثار قد نقلوا عن موسى من علم الحلال والحرام ما هو مدون مشهور ، وظهر من فضله في نفسه ما هو بين عند الخاصة والعامة وهذه هي أمارات الإمامة فلما وجدناها لموسى دون غيره علمنا أنه الامام بعد أبيه دون أخيه .

⁶⁶ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 219.

لو كان الحق لا يثبت إلا بدليل متفق عليه ما صح حق أبدا

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 108.

⁶⁷ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 221.

إن اختلاف الامامية إنما هو من قبل كذايين دلسوا أنفسهم فيهم في الوقت بعد الوقت ، والزمان بعد الزمان ، حتى عظم البلاء ، وكان أسلافهم قوم يرجعون إلى ورع واجتهاد وسلامة ناحية ، ولم يكونوا أصحاب نظر وتميز فكانوا إذا رأوا رجلا مستورا يروي خيرا أحسنوا به الظن وقبلوه ، فلما كثر هذا وظهر شكوا إلى أئمتهم فأمرهم الأئمة عليهم السلام بأن يأخذوا بما يجمع عليه فلم يفعلوا وجرؤا على عادتهم [...]

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 110.

⁶⁸ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 226.

I benefit from Modarressi’s reconstruction of Ibn Qiba’s historiographical approach, not merely to understand sectarian debates, but rather to learn from the Islamic tradition in writing history. Ibn Qiba’s historiographical approach can arguably offer a framework in synchronic conversation with modern Islamic historiography, presenting viable alternatives to source-critical approaches that often arrive at conclusions diametrically opposed to those of received tradition or simply fail to reach “knowledge” at all. This approach informs my research in at least two ways: (1) it provides the backdrop for assumptions about the tradition’s development leading up to the period I focus on between the 10th and 13th centuries CE; and (2) it demonstrates a means of problematizing the boundaries between historiography, legal theory and epistemology, all of which play into my analysis of debates pertaining to leadership.

In his recent *The Rebel and the Imam in Early Islam*, Najam Haider proposes and models a way of thinking about early Islamic historical writing which assumes that early Muslim historians, “were more concerned with preserving the meaning of a given event than they were with recording its specific details. In practice, this focus meant that authors were free to embellish and elaborate narrative elements (within certain bounds) in order to endow an event with significance.”⁶⁹ Haider argues that there was a baseline for such elaboration – a shared, “core structure of an event or a biography that was familiar to the scholarly audience.”⁷⁰ Connecting this model to my methodological discussion above, *tawātur* would play a role at least in such a “core structure,” regardless of disagreement pertaining to its role in some narrative elements.⁷¹ From

فإن كان ههنا حجة تدفع ما قلناه فلتظهرها الزيدية ، فما بيننا وبين الحق معاندة ، والشكر لله .

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 113.

⁶⁹ Najam Iftikhar Haider, *The Rebel and the Imām in Early Islam : Explorations in Muslim Historiography* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 259.

⁷⁰ Haider, *The Rebel and the Imām in Early Islam*, 259.

⁷¹ Each case in question must be considered in light of the source material and historical memory.

another angle, however, my project in this work complements Haider's discussion in that it seeks to answer the question: Why were Islamic authors so concerned with preserving such meaning and why would they lead their readers on with such repurposing, embellishing, and possibly even creating reports conveying the importance of an event instead of recording its literal details? What made such techniques/strategies so central to their intellectual investments? The answer is a pivotal aspect of my thesis – a concern for subject-formation.

Proposing a model that explains why these Islamic authors (via their writings) function as they do is the common thread of this dissertation in addition to the types of “leading” that relate to verse 4:59's *ulū al-amr*. The type of explanation I propose arises out of the intellectual “library” most directly drawn on by these authors, despite conditioning (after being conditioned by) community-based considerations. This can be contrasted with approaches, suitable as they may be for their objects of study, that find more relevant explanations in the social conditions of authorship rather than in the contents authored. For example, in the context of explaining the rise of the translation movement, George Saliba presents his revisionist narrative that draws on Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Abī Ya‘qūb Ishāq al-Nadīm's (d. ca 438 AH / 1047 CE), “direct connection between the Islamic Civilization's appropriation of the ancient sciences and ‘Abd al-Malik's reforms which were mainly centered around the order to translate the *dīwān*.”⁷² Granted, Saliba studies al-Nadīm's work as a primary source in its own right and, in that sense, his explanation arises out of the historical object of study itself, but this is arguably a matter of layers referring to different objects of study —al-Nadīm in this case, “acts more as an intellectual historian who tries to explain historical events rather than a historian who simply records them.”⁷³ It is also because I

⁷² George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, Transformations (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007), 68.

⁷³ Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, 30.

draw my model from the more immediate intellectual repertoire of authors whose excerpts are studied here that I can postpone the development of more granular, region-specific, models of motivation, such as in the work of Maribel Fierro, who draws on, “data for al-Andalus collected in *HATA*⁷⁴ – data obtained from biographical dictionaries, *fahāris*, historical works, quotations in other works, catalogues of manuscripts and many other sources,” to that end.⁷⁵ These alternative approaches would surely complement the type of modeling I propose here — none can provide the most robust account alone — but to fully develop such contextual analysis “on the ground” would warrant additional studies beyond the contributions of this dissertation. Because the shared library content for authors in this study is so intertwined with their Muslim/Islamic identity, I opt to model their interventions (the “empirical” reconstructions throughout this dissertation) based primarily on that shared intellectual background rather than other factors, such as financial or political concerns.⁷⁶

0.4 Interpretive Framework

0.4.1 Paradigm Theory

Wael Hallaq’s theory of paradigms draws on a modified version of Kuhn’s “paradigm,” Foucault’s “order of things,” and, perhaps most influentially, Schmitt’s notion of a “central domain,” in terms of which matters beyond that domain are solved. However, for Hallaq, a central

⁷⁴ *Historia de los Autores y Transmisores de al-Andalus*.

⁷⁵ Maribel Fierro, “Why and What Did Legal Scholars Write in Medieval Islamic Societies?,” *Journal of Islamic Law* 2, no. 1 (May 27, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.53484/jil.v2.fierro>.

⁷⁶ In this vein, upon mentioning an author, and to avoid reducing the author to a perceived geographic and/or sectarian affiliation lacking nuance, I have generally opted not to apply these labels. This is especially important if one entertains how the labels (e.g. “Šūfī”) are sometimes taken to mean different things and/or have developed over time. The fact that an author often travelled in pursuit of knowledge and may have been affiliated with multiple localities is also an important consideration. More specific discussion of an author’s affiliations is better left to studies focusing on the social dynamics at play throughout the stages of a given author’s life.

domain, within a paradigm, does not merely dictate the terms of its relationship with the “peripheral domain.” Rather, since both the center and the periphery share a paradigm, they are in a dialectical relationship. Thus, Hallaq’s paradigm involves, “a system of knowledge and practice whose constituent domains share in common a particular structure of concepts that qualitatively distinguishes them from equivalent domains in other systems.”⁷⁷ That goes without saying that there remain distinct concepts and practices that make the periphery peripheral and the center central.

0.4.2 Types of Authors

In light of this framework, Hallaq proposes a categorization of different types of authors, characterizing the intervention exacted by each form of authorship: (1) The docile author, who knowingly or unknowingly serves the central domain. The critiques of this type of an author pertain to details, never really challenging the central domain’s defining features; (2) The dissenting author, who critiques the defining features of the central domain but does not challenge the core foundations of the governing paradigm. In a sense, the dissenting author reinforces the central domain even when arguing for the peripheral domain because s/he still has not challenged the paradigm; (3) The subversive author, who not only challenges the central domain’s discourse-defining features but challenges the foundational assumptions of the entire paradigm shared even by the peripheral domain; (4) The discursive author, who succeeds in subverting the paradigm and ushering in a different discursive formation. Beyond these four types, Hallaq describes an

⁷⁷ Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State Islam, Politics, and Modernity’s Moral Predicament* (New York : Columbia University Press, 2014), <http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio12458724>, 6-12.

additional type of author: (5) The “analogical” author, who brings new life to a subversive author’s appeal, with updated relevance.⁷⁸

0.4.3 Subject-formation

The activity of an author, like other forms of conscious or even unconscious iterative activity, can be modeled as having a subject-forming impact. Indeed, part of the argument I outline below is that the influential Islamic authors I consider have an analogue of this in mind – or at heart – while engaging themselves and their readership. I am not referring to the more obvious impact authors have on forming their *subject matter*, the topic of their discussion. Rather, I am referring to the operation of the authors on individuals engaging with their writing, not only by the mere acts of writing, reading and reflecting, but by the lines of reasoning invoked and emotional states conjured. Wael Hallaq has opened up a theoretical space for discussing the process of subject-formation as imagined within the Islamic context by framing discussions of its techniques as a sort of (anachronistic), “commentary on what Foucault called the technologies of the self [...]” For, in the most relevant sense here, “Foucault was a thoroughgoing Ghazālian.”⁷⁹ While the practices described there are largely part and parcel of the Qur’ānic ethos and Prophetic example, this emphasis on the much later role of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH / 1111 CE) highlights the systematic treatment proffered by his influential *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, “a virtuoso exposé of the art of religious practice and, indeed, of living the good life. It is paradigmatic. If one can say that the modern age is one overshadowed by Kantianism, then the several centuries of middle Islam were overshadowed by Ghazālianism.”⁸⁰ One testament to this paradigmatic quality is that

⁷⁸ Wael B. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism : A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 171-175.

⁷⁹ Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 129.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

centuries later, the Shī‘ī scholar Muḥsin al-Kāshānī (d. 1091 AH / 1680 CE) publishes his recension of Ghazālī’s text, mainly editing/replacing what conflict with the Shī‘ī school of thought, which he claims Ghazālī had embraced at the end of his life.⁸¹

C.1. Technologies of the Self

To clarify, in his seminar on “Technologies of the Self,” Michel Foucault characterizes a key objective of his life’s work as outlining, “a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves: economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine, and penology. The main point is not to accept this knowledge at face value but to analyze these so-called sciences as very specific ‘truth games’ related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves.”⁸² This insight not only serves as a reminder that *some* of and/or *some aspects* of our presumed knowledge is fallible, but that specific techniques/”technologies” have a role to play in the process, regardless of the truth/falsehood dichotomy. Foucault identifies four key types of these technologies, each associated with particular modes of training and modifying the skills and/or attitudes of individuals,

- (1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things;
- (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification;
- (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject;
- (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way

⁸¹ Muḥsin al-Kāshānī (d. 1091 AH / 1680 CE), *al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍā’ Fī Tahdhīb al-Ihyā’*, ed. ‘Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, vol. 1, 8 vols. (Beirut: Manshūrāt Mu’assasat al-A‘lamī lil-Maṭbū‘āt, 1983 CE), 1.

⁸² Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), <https://search-ebshost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=38988&site=ehost-live&scope=site>, 17-18.

of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.⁸³

Of primary concern here are the latter, the technologies of the self, and specifically those pertaining to the constitution of the self in relation to ethical concerns and/or codes of morality. Foucault relates such technologies of, “individual domination,” of, “how an individual acts upon himself,” to the Greek *epimelesthai* * *sautou*, “to take care of yourself,” “the concern with self,” “to be concerned, to take care of yourself.”⁸⁴ Through these technologies, these techniques, these practices, an individual exercises power over him/herself and forms him/herself into a subject with distinct dispositions.

C.2. *Habitus*

It is helpful to think of this subject-formation through a notion Aristotle invokes in the context of defining virtue/vice –*hexis* (ἕξις), in Greek, or, as it is rendered in Latin, *habitus*, and arguably analogous to *malakah*⁸⁵ in Arabic. One of the most important words in Aristotle’s

⁸³ Ibid, 18.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 19.

⁸⁵ It appears that the usage of the word *malakah* in this sense (or closely related to it) is extant starting with the work of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339 AH / 950 CE). In *al-Ḥurūf*, al-Fārābī’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, he writes,

[...] وأوّل ما يفعل شيئاً من ذلك يفعل بقوّة فيه بالفطرة و [بملكة أو بمكنة] طبيعيّة، لا باعتبار له سابق قبل ذلك ولا بصناعة. وإذا كرّر فعل شيء من نوع واحد مرارا كثيرة حدثت له ملكة اعتياديّة، إمّا خلقيّة أو صناعيّة.

[...] And the first that s/he does something of that [sort] sprouts from a potential that exists within him/her innately and by a natural [capacity or habitus], not due to prior habituation or skill/craft. If s/he repeats an act of the same type many times over, s/he acquires a habituated habitus (*malakah*) – either of the character type or the skill type.

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), 135.

Another early instance of *malakah* usage in this sense is in *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa Taḥīr al-A’rāq* by Aḥmad Miskawayh (d. 421 AH / 1030 CE) who writes,

وتبين أيضاً أن المهينة التي تصدر عنها الأفعال العادلة متى نسبت إلى صاحبها سميت فضيلة، وإذا نسبت إلى من يعامله بها سميت عدالة، وإذا اعتبرت بذاتها سميت ملكة نفسانية [...]

Thus, it has also become clear that the condition (*hay’ah*) from which just actions issue forth [can be considered from different aspects.] Once it is attributed to the doer, it is called a virtue. If it is attributed to

Nicomachean Ethics, a *hexis/habitus* is not a passive state, a shallow predisposition to feel something, a feeling or a habit, but an “active condition,” a deep-seated disposition, “in accordance with which we bear ourselves well or badly toward the feelings; for example, in relation to being angry, if we are that way violently or slackly, we bear ourselves badly, but if in a measured way, we bear ourselves well, and similarly in relation to other feelings.” (1105b).⁸⁶ In the context of virtue/vice, these active conditions are, “certain kinds of choices, or not present without choice.” (1106a).⁸⁷ Meaning, at least some forms of *habitus* do not conflict with the exercise of choice (thus upholding a sense of responsibility in the context of virtue/vice). Moreover, examples of *habitus* (“active condition”) do not only make up the “character” dimension of an individual, but also the “intellectual” dimension, “for in speaking of character we do not mean that someone is wise or astute, but gentle or temperate, but we also praise someone who is wise for an active condition of the soul [...]” (1103a).⁸⁸ In a broader context, examples of *habitus* range from virtues/vices of character and intellect to include acquired arts/skills such as housebuilding, harp playing, making “citizens good,” and, (might I add of particular relevance for my work here), leadership.⁸⁹

It is this broader context of *habitus* usage that allows for a general description of the process by which a *habitus* forms, for we take on different examples of *habitus* by, “being at work in them.”

the one being dealt with by it, it is called justice. And if it is considered in and of itself, it is called a self’s *habitus* (*malakah*) [...]

Aḥmad Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq wa Taṭhīr al-Aʿrāq*, ed. Ḥasan Tamīm (Iṣfahān: Intishārāt Mahdāvī, n.d.), 123.

However, the reader should note that my argument does not require – and to some extent presumes the absence of – this conceptual foil as a technical term in the early Islamic “library.” Rather, I argue that there are substantive indications of relevant meaning in the “library” and which can be modeled using the *habitus* foil.

⁸⁶ Aristotle (d. 322 BCE), *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs, Last Updated June 2012 (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Focus Publishing / An Imprint of Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), 52.

⁸⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 53.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 44.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 48.

In other words, “we learn by doing,” – from virtues/vices to arts, examples of habitus, “come into being from being at work in similar ways.”⁹⁰ Therefore, although habitus goes beyond the notion of habit, developing habits of sorts – including the experience and time associated with learning “habits” of mind⁹¹ – can be a stepping stone toward a habitus.⁹² In this view, the differences in those habits can influence a critical step in the process of subject-formation. “It makes no small difference, then, to be habituated in this way or in that straight from childhood, but an enormous difference, or rather all the difference.”⁹³

In the context of problematizing both subjectivism (i.e. a sort of “social phenomenology” that makes lived experience meaning explicit) and objectivism (i.e. a sort of “social physics” that attempts to establish “laws” independent of individual experience) for not sufficiently interrogating the “conditions of possibility” pertaining to a theorist’s assessment and approach (regardless whether they be subjectivist or objectivist),⁹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu proposes his theory in

⁹⁰ Ibid, 48-49.

⁹¹ Theoretically, in order for authorship interventions and any other conceptual exercise to be subject-forming, one must expand the notion of habit to the realm of thought as well. Howard Margolis defines a habit of mind as, “a habitual pattern of inference or way of seeing things.”

Howard Margolis, *Patterns, Thinking, and Cognition: A Theory of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 42. As Margolis argues, since on a physical level, whether it be this habit of mind pattern or a typical motor habit, the detectable location of the “habit” is in the neurophysiology of the brain, then we do not have reason to suppose the two are essentially different. Complementing Kuhnian thought on paradigms, Margolis, thus, proceeds to develop his theory regarding the role of habits of mind in paradigm shifts.

Margolis, *Patterns, Thinking, and Cognition*, 169-187.

Supporting this intuition, Ann Graybiel and Scott Grafton suggest that habits of mind can be created by cognitive pattern generators much as habits of action are generated.

Ann M. Graybiel and Scott T. Grafton, “The Striatum: Where Skills and Habits Meet,” *Cold Spring Harbor Perspectives in Biology* 7, no. 8 (August 1, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1101/cshperspect.a021691>.

⁹² As Aristotle writes, “Now since virtue is of two sorts, one pertaining to thinking and the other to character, excellence of thinking is for the most part, both in its coming to be and in its growth, a result of teaching, for which reason it has need of experience and time, while excellence of character comes into being as a consequence of habit [...]”

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 48.

⁹³ Ibid, 49.

⁹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 25-29.

which his own notion of *habitus*, a system of structured, structuring dispositions, explains those conditions of possibility.⁹⁵ As Bourdieu defines it, the habitus consists of,

[...] systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.⁹⁶

The notion of durability here is similar to the relative permanence in the Aristotelian usage of habitus, but Bourdieu is referring to dispositions giving rise to potentially unconscious outcomes, without mastery, clearly distinct from using habitus in the context of “active condition” as virtue/vice/skill. Moreover, the language Bourdieu uses (e.g. “all”, “always”) gives the impression that he is proposing a theory to explain *all* practice, including all notions taken for granted as commonsensical or self-evident. This reading would be self-defeating if its proposition is to be taken in an absolute sense (i.e. because, then, at least that proposition would have to be independent of its thinker’s habitus to hold true).⁹⁷ In the interest of coherence, then, I adapt a qualified version

⁹⁵ Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 52.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 53.

“Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.”

⁹⁷ Evaluating apparently commonsensical and/or self-evident notions would take into account the different types of such notions: phenomenal states; axioms of theoretical reason; axioms of practical reason; popular notions; etc... Some of these are arguably demonstrable with reference to more foundational self-evident notions, while others are demonstrable only by having each individual clearly “see” it for him/herself intuitively, whether as an axiom or an object of induction. This applies to axiomatic propositions as well as to propositions requiring induction or otherwise cumulative degrees of knowledge. Within Islamic studies, it would be a helpful exercise to reflect on the epistemic qualities implied by the Qur’ānic analogy in 51:23,

فَوَرَّبَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ مِثْلَ مَا أَنْتُمْ تَنْطِقُونَ

By the Lord of the sky and the earth, it is indeed right, just as [it is a fact that] you speak. For example, the fact of speaking is to be distinguished from mere sounds being projected and there is an immediately recognizable certainty in this regard, despite the difficulties of demonstrating it.

of Bourdieu’s model involving habitus.⁹⁸ While the Aristotelian notion of habitus presents a more relevant model when dealing with ethical subject-formation in the Islamic context, Bourdieu’s habitus coupled with Foucault’s technologies of the self can be helpful in modeling factors pertinent to habit-formation. In turn, habit-formation and other unconscious factors captured by Bourdieu’s habitus provide resistance to or in favor of Aristotelian habitus-formation. For the practical purposes of the ensuing analysis, then, my reference to subject-formation is modeled as a process influenced by two-fold habitus cultivation through or accompanied by “technologies of the self” deployment.⁹⁹

C.3. Agency

Besides dealing with a different context, the model here, thus, differs from Saba Mahmood’s in her *Politics of Piety* in that it embraces a qualified version of Bourdieu’s habitus while appropriating it within a more Aristotelian framework. Mahmood’s objection to Bourdieu’s lack of attention to the pedagogical process by which (an Aristotelian sense of) habitus is learned¹⁰⁰ is well taken but that does not preclude the utility of incorporating Bourdieu’s notion of habitus from another angle. In other words, Mahmood seems to focus on how habitus in the two senses is similar and then rightly objects to how Bourdieu mistreats an example of the Aristotelian notion, while I focus on how each respective sense of habitus is different and each can be helpful for

⁹⁸ The qualifier mainly pertains to the quantity judgment of the theory – I find a partial affirmation of the theory a helpful model while a universal affirmation is untenable and counterintuitive.

⁹⁹ The following maxim communicates a traditional Islamic perspective on how the foolish/ignorant ethical/intellectual character of a subject has a strong influence on the effectiveness of relevant disciplining exercise (*riyādah*) and emphasizes the extraordinary difficulty of breaking (at least such a person’s) habits. As the maxim goes,

[ابن شعبة الحراني عن الحسن بن علي العسكري قال] رياضة الجاهل وُرِدَ المعتادِ عن عادته كالمعجز.

Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn ibn Shu‘bah al-Ḥarrānī (fl. 4th century AH / 10th century CE), *Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl ‘an Āl al-Rasūl* (s), ed. ‘Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, 2nd ed. (Qum: Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1404 AH), 489.

¹⁰⁰ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, 2012 with new preface (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), 138-139.

different dimensions of the analysis. In line with Mahmood, however, I conceive of the subjects formed not as passive recipients of aggression whose only agency can be found in forms of resistance, but as agents whose agency, “must be explored within the grammar of concepts within which it resides.”¹⁰¹ This is illustrated by the analogy of, “a virtuoso pianist who submits him/herself to the often painful regime of disciplinary practice, as well as to the hierarchical structures of apprenticeship, in order to acquire the ability – the requisite agency – to play the instrument with mastery.”¹⁰² Hence, subject-formation can be agent-formation, and some non-resistance forms of agency can only be enabled in the context of subjectivity – as the agency enabled within the framework of Aristotelian habitus cultivation demonstrates. This is a helpful framework for understanding the emancipatory role of devotional practice (*al-ta‘abbud*) and servitude (*al-‘ubūdīyah*) in Islamic ethical subject-formation.

0.5 Argument: “Leadership” and Subject-formation in Islamic Thought

I am not making an ontological claim about the effective actualization of subject-formation as a result of what I model as subject-forming technologies. Rather, I find both senses of habitus helpful to conceptualize what I argue Islamic thinkers are dealing with in their writing – *subject-formation*. It is my contention that this interpretive framework of their interventions resonates with a reading of their “library” as well as their respective “archive” strategies. Because of this, I also argue that approximating an understanding of the substantive debates they intervene in, engaging with their lines of reasoning, and drawing on experiences of a tradition’s world that at least minimally – though significantly – salvage their habitus, are indispensable to a holistic historical account. This project is a modest methodological and “empirical” contribution to that end.

¹⁰¹ Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, 34.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 29.

Moreover, my reconstructions of debates pertaining to forms and features of what can be taken to mean “leadership” in Islamic thought not only resonate with a model of preoccupation with a concern for subject-formation, but also make the case for defining these forms of “leadership” in terms of subject-formation, such that in each context a “leader” is defined by his/her subject-forming capacity, starting from within by forming him/herself according to the relevant leading *habitus*. Thus, from *ulū al-amr* to *imam*, *mujtahid*, *quṭb* and author, each is a “leader” in the sense and to the degree of their *relevant* subject-forming capacity, regardless of any other position of authority they claim (or is claimed for them).

The model/theory proposed by this work emphasizes subject-formation’s centrality as motivating authorial interventions – lines of reasoning and conceptual frameworks, in particular – on the one hand, and in being the defining feature of various forms of leadership, on the other hand. In other words, the overarching arguments can be outlined as follows:

I. The preoccupation of Islamic thinkers with a concern for forming moral subjects (themselves and others) explains their deployment of competing conceptual frameworks to satisfy paradigmatic moral requirements. The evidence for this is two-fold: 1) The “library” of Islam appears to portray these intellectual pursuits as technologies intricately involved in “caring for the self,” forming the subject/agent of the broader community; and 2) The reconstruction of historically-specific “archives” of debates which draw on the works of authors mainly between the 10th and 13th centuries CE reveals the deployment of such technologies in devotional contexts.

II. The activity of these authors is one form among the different forms of leadership which are distinct from authority and revolve around subject-formation. The evidence for this is also two-fold: 1) The “library” of Islam appears to portray the all-encompassing form of leadership as revolving around subject-formation; and 2) The reconstruction of historically-specific “archives”

of debates which draw on the works of authors mainly between the 10th and 13th centuries CE reveals various forms of leadership that center on subject-formation, albeit related to the particular features in question for the respective form of leadership.

0.6 “Library” Evidence

The final section of this introduction paints the first component of these two arguments by drawing on key snapshots from the Islamic “library,” which is presumed to have informed the habitus of the authors dealt with in the subsequent case studies.

0.6.1 Intellectual Technologies and Subject-formation

The preoccupation of Islamic thinkers with a concern for forming moral subjects (themselves and others) explains their deployment of competing conceptual frameworks to satisfy paradigmatic moral requirements. The evidence for this from the “library” of Islam includes its apparent portrayal of these intellectual pursuits as technologies intricately involved in “caring for the self,” forming the subject/agent of the broader community. For example¹⁰³, the famous

¹⁰³ When I cite Qur’ānic verses without referring to exegetical literature, I am only claiming a bare minimum of what aspects of the verse are reasonably understood to mean – intentionally setting aside what might be more open to interpretation/controversy by the Qur’ān’s readers. Making connections by cross-referencing within the Qur’ān itself, then, allows for a reconstruction of what was/is likely internalized, if not brought to the fore, by reflective readers of the Qur’ān, generally speaking, who often committed significant portions of it to memory in addition to reciting it frequently. While this reading is somewhat at the surface, it is not superficial, for it recognizes Qur’ān 3:7’s caution regarding the two types of verses, the *muḥkam* and the *mutashābih*, and does not attempt to claim an interpretation of the latter without comprehensive reference to the former (see Chapter 5 of this work for a summary of these distinctions by an author from within the tradition). Therefore, this approach is foundational to avoiding both extremist readings, which superficially read the *mutashābih* verses without holistic reference to the *muḥkam* verses, on the one hand, or which take historically specific applications of a verse out of its suitable context. The assumption in my adoption of this approach to the Qur’ān is that it resonates with an accessibility the Qur’ān invites its readers toward, without sacrificing a holistic reading or dismissing the value proffered by generations of commentary on the Qur’ān. The approach here is, thus, a *qualified* version of what has been called *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bil-Qur’ān*, an attempt at which can be found in the multi-volume *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1981 CE). See:

Qur'ānic verse that indicates there are two types of verses, one to be navigated in light of the other, describes those who pursue a flawed framework as being unsound of heart (requiring care),

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ

مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو

الْأَلْبَابِ

Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān*, 20 vols. (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, n.d.)

This approach, in principle, appears to be acknowledged/taught in reports attributed to prominent figures in the early Muslim community. Perhaps most notably summarizing this principle, for instance, is a quote from a report attributed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40 AH / 661 CE), where in the context of addressing superficially perceived contradictions in the Qur'ān, 'Alī states, “Indeed, parts of the Book of God verify the other parts and do not bely the other parts, but you have not been bestowed with the sustenance of reason that you would benefit from [...]”

إن كتاب الله ليصدق بعضه بعضا ولا يكذب بعضه بعضا ، ولكنك لم ترزق عقلا تنتفع به [...]”

After hearing all of the questioner's perceived contradictions in the Qur'ān, 'Alī proceeds to address them. Toward the end of the report, 'Alī underlines that there is also knowledge beyond what is accessible to the more general reader/listener, saying, “The one with knowledge is not able to explain all knowledge to all people. That is because among them are the strong as well as the weak, and because some of it is bearable and some of it is unbearable except to those among God's select friends whom He eases it for and has helped to bear it [...]”

[...] وليس كل العلم يستطيع صاحب العلم أن يفسره لكل الناس لأن منهم القوي والضعيف ، ولأن منه ما يطاق حمله ومنه ما لا يطاق حمله إلا من

يسهل الله له حمله وأعانه عليه من خاصة أوليائه [...]”

Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH / 991 CE), *al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Hāshim al-Ḥusaynī al-Ṭahrānī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 254-270.

When I write that the approach I take is a *qualified* version of what has been called *tafṣīr al-Qur'ān bil-Qur'ān*, I mean that it is arguably less restricting in its claims (e.g. potentially internalized connections vs. definitive exegesis), and that it is open to didactic traditions on how parts of the Qur'ān explain one another, as described in the aforementioned report attributed to 'Alī.

It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Parts of it are *muḥkam* verses, which are the mother of the Book, while others are *mutashābih*. As for those in whose hearts is deviance, they follow what *tashābaha*¹⁰⁴ in it, in pursuit of mischief¹⁰⁵ and in pursuit of its *ta'wīl*¹⁰⁶. But no one knows its *ta'wīl* except God [;] and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, ‘We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.’ And none takes admonition except those who possess intellect.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ *Tashābaha*; the past tense verb related to *mutashābih*; linguistically, the word *mutashābih* is related to the past tense verb *tashābaha* and the noun *tashābuh*, which expresses the *similarity/resemblance* between different matters. This can mean different things, depending on the context. In some contexts, *mutashābih* describes the *consistency* between the verses of the Qur’ān (i.e. verse 39:23). However, in other contexts, such as in the verse quoted here, *mutashābih* arguably refers to a form of *ambiguity* which arises when the intended meaning of a Qur’ānic verse is not straightforward *in a stand-alone fashion*. At first glance, in such verses, there would be multiple possibilities that would seem *similar* to what must be right, leading to uncertainty. In this sense, the *mutashābih* verses (as opposed to what are called the “*muḥkam*” verses) are supposed to be clarified by understanding them with reference to the *muḥkam* verses, which are already straightforward. The deviant choose to go after the *mutashābih* verses without referring them back to the *muḥkam* verses and, thus, end up with twisted interpretations. See on this verse: Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *al-Mizān Fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān*, 20 vols. (Qum: Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, n.d.);

Nāṣir Makārīm al-Shīrāzī, *al-Amthal fī Tafṣīr Kitāb Allāh al-Munzal*, 20 vols., n.d.

¹⁰⁵ *Fitnah*; depending on the context, can refer to a test or conditions such as calamity, sedition, and temptation.

¹⁰⁶ This is a form of interpretation not generally accessible to the typical reader, as the verse indicates. More details on the usage of the word *ta'wīl* and its significance in Chapter 5 of this work.

¹⁰⁷ Qur’ān 3:7.

The verse makes it clear that being among “those firmly grounded in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūn fī al-ilm*)” or at least, “those who possess intellect (*ulū al-albāb*)” is at odds with having an unsound heart. Noteworthy here is that this language might be an indication of the substantive meaning for habitus before the word “malakah” had been adopted to mean so. That is, the phrase “firmly grounded in (*rāsikhūn fī*),” depending on the context, can indicate the durable condition of a habitus described earlier. Whether or not the firm grounding means something much deeper than habitus can be pursued in the exegetical literature. But the phrase, “those who possess (*ulū*)” in, “those who possess intellect (*ulū al-albāb*)” appears to be an even more straightforward analogue of habitus in this context. This is not to say that wherever “*ulū*” appears, it is a giveaway indication of habitus, for the word more generally refers to possession. But in particular contexts describing character traits and skills, the word “*ulū*” arguably well describes habitus possession. The verse, thus links states of the heart and/or the more durable habitus conditions of the self to the pursuit of conceptual frameworks. According to the verse, the “deviance” of hearts engenders flawed readings, mistaken conceptual frameworks or lines of reasoning (forms of *ta’wīl*), which in turn take the subject down a path of mischief, presumably consolidating the heart’s condition of deviance – a flawed subject formation.

Addressing the very notion of God’s existence, the Qur’ān poses questions, as if inviting the reader to formulate his/her own line of reasoning and “see” the argument(s) to its end him/herself. In a sequence of verses from surah 52, one verses reads,

[...] أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ [...]

[...] Were they created from nothing? Or are they [their own] creators? [...] ¹⁰⁸

Many other verses emphasize the importance of having “evidence/proof (burhān),” for theoretical claims. This is often accompanied by the possessive “your proof,” possibly indicating that it is in some sense subjective but that, nonetheless, a sincere attempt at communicating objective proof is being invited. For instance,

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ [...] ¹⁰⁹

Have they taken gods besides Him? Say, ‘Produce your proof! [...]’ ¹⁰⁹

Other verses speak of “gods” in a sense that can mean a person sometimes takes his own whimsical desires as a god ¹¹⁰, or takes religious leaders as lords besides God. ¹¹¹ So the principle in the verse is not addressing polytheists alone, but is rather indicative of a subject-forming intellectual technology across the spectrum. Another verse states,

وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّمَا حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 52:35.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 21:24.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 25:43; 45:23.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 9:31.

Whoever invokes besides God another god of which s/he has no proof, his/her reckoning will indeed rest with his/her Lord. Indeed the [unreasonably faithless]¹¹² will not be felicitous.¹¹³

¹¹² *Al-Kāfirūn* (sing. *al-Kāfir*; an agent performing the act of *kufir*); Although this word is has been translated variably as “infidels” (e.g. by George Sale), “unbelievers” (e.g. by A. J. Arberry), “disbelievers” (e.g. by M. M. Pickthall), “deniers of the truth” (e.g. by Muhammad Asad) and, “faithless” (e.g. by Ali Quli Qarai), I would argue that its rendering in English should better account for the nuanced valence the word can have in different Qur’anic contexts, which may at times overlap. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1981 CE) writes that, “the apparent meaning of *kufir* in the Qur’ān is ‘covering up (*al-satr*),’ in a sense that is inclusive of the terminological usage of *kufir* [e.g. that demarcating boundaries for legal purposes] as well as the unqualified sense of *kufir* as opposed to unqualified faith...”

[...] وظاهر الكفر في القرآن هو الستر أعم من أن يكون كفرا اصطلاحيا أو كفرا مطلقا في مقابل الايمان المطلق [...]

A-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 110.

A much earlier reference within the exegetical tradition, attributed to the sixth Shī’ī Imam, Ja’far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 AH / 765 CE), quotes him describing five aspects (*awjuh*; sing. *wajh*) of *kufir* in the Book of God (i.e. the Qur’ān): (1 & 2) the *kufir* of stubborn rejection (*juhūd*), with stubborn rejection having two aspects (i.e. rejecting the true Lord by resorting to insufficiently investigated/evidenced alternative claims; and rejecting what one knows to be true); (3) the *kufir* of [ingratitude toward] blessings; (4) the *kufir* of abandoning that which God has commanded; and (5) the *kufir* of disassociation [from that which displeases God].

[الكليبي عن] علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن بكر بن صالح عن القاسم بن يزيد عن أبي عمرو الزبير عن أبي عبد الله ع قال قلت له أخبرني عن وجوه الكفر في كتاب الله عز وجل قال الكفر في كتاب الله على خمسة أوجه فمنها كفر الجحود والجحود على وجهين والكفر بترك ما أمر الله وكفر البراءة وكفر النعم فأما كفر الجحود فهو الجحود بالربوبية وهو قول من يقول لا رب ولا جنة ولا نار وهو قول صنفيين من الرنادقة يقال لهم الدهرية وهم الذين يقولون: * (وما يهلكنا إلا الدهر) * [الجائية: 24] وهو دين وضعوه لأنفسهم بالاستحسان على غير تثبت منهم ولا تحقيق لشيء مما يقولون قال الله عز وجل: * (إنهم إلا يظنون) * [الجائية: 24] أن ذلك كما يقولون وقال: * (إن الذين كفروا سواء عليهم أأنذرتهم أم لم تنذرتهم لا يؤمنون) * [البقرة: 6] يعني يتوحيدهم الله تعالى فهذا أحد وجوه الكفر وأما الوجه الآخر من الجحود على معرفة [فهو الجحود على معرفة] وهو أن يجحد الجاحد وهو يعلم أنه حق قد استقر عنده وقد قال الله عز وجل: * (وجحدوا بها واستيقنتها أنفسهم) * * (ظلمًا وعلوًا) * [النمل: 14] وقال الله عز وجل: * (وكانوا من قبل يستفتيخون على الذين كفروا فلما جاءهم ما عرفوا كفروا به فلعنة الله على الكافرين) * [البقرة: 89] فهذا تفسير وجهي الجحود والوجه الثالث من الكفر كفر النعم وذلك قوله تعالى يحيي قول سليمان ع: * (هذا من فضل ربي ليبلوني أشكر أم أشكر ومن شكر فإنما يشكر لنفسه ومن كفر فإن ربي غني كريم) * [النمل: 40] وقال * (لئن شكرتم لأزيدنكم ولئن كفرتم إن عذابي لشديد) * [إبراهيم: 7] وقال * (فادكروني أشكركم واشكروا لي ولا تكفرون) * [البقرة: 152] والوجه الرابع من الكفر ترك ما أمر الله عز وجل به وهو قول الله عز وجل: * (وإذ أخذنا ميثاقكم لا تسفكون دماءكم ولا تحرجون أنفسكم من دياركم ثم أقررتم وأنتم تشهدون ثم أنتم هؤلاء تقولون أنفسكم وتحرجون فريقاً منكم من ديارهم تظاهرون عليهم بالإثم والعدوان وإن يأتوك أسارى ثفادوهم وهو محرم عليكم إخراجهم أفتؤمنون ببعض الكتاب وتكفرون ببعض فما جزاء من يفعل ذلك منكم) * [البقرة: 84-85] فكفرهم بترك ما أمر الله عز وجل به ونسبهم إلى الإمان ولم يقبله منهم ولم يفتعهم عنده فقال * (فما جزاء من يفعل ذلك منكم إلا خزي في الحياة الدنيا ويوم القيامة يردون إلى أشد العذاب وما الله بغافل عما تعملون) * [البقرة: 85] والوجه الخامس من الكفر كفر البراءة وذلك قوله عز وجل يحيي قول إبراهيم ع: * (كفرنا بكم وبدا بيننا وبينكم العداوة والبغضاء أبداً حتى تؤمنوا بالله وحده) * [المتحنة: 4] يعني تبرأنا منكم وقال يذكر إبليس وتبرأته من أوليائه من الإنس يوم القيامة * (إني كفرت بما أشركنتمون من قبل) * [إبراهيم: 22] وقال * (إنا اتخذتم من دون الله آوثاناً مودة بينكم في الحياة الدنيا ثم يوم القيامة يكفر بعضكم ببعض ويلعن بعضكم بعضاً) * [العنكبوت: 25] يعني يتبرأ بعضكم من بعض.

This Qur'ānic emphasis on evidence-based conceptual frameworks is the language it chooses to address humanity at large. In that sense, it is paradigmatic and those who arrive – through their own proof – at conclusions diverging from the “central domain” of Islam are “peripheral” relative to that center, but nonetheless share the paradigm.¹¹⁴ It is a Qur'ānic ideal, then, for the ethical subject to form him/herself intellectually according to evidence-based conceptual frameworks, lines of reasoning that constitute *burhān* in his/her view.

Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH / 941 CE), *al-Kāfī*, ed. ‘Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, 5th ed., vol. 2, 8 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1984 CE), 389-391.

In light of these nuanced usages, most relevantly the first three or four, I suggest an English rendering for *al-Kāfirūn* in this verse that highlights the *unreasonable* nature of the *kufr*, hence, “the unreasonably faithless.” Perhaps it goes without saying that this also serves as an instance to which the notions of *kufr* of ingratitude and *kufr* of abandoning God’s command may apply from different aspects.

¹¹³ Qur’ān 23:117

¹¹⁴ See also, for instance: Qur’ān 2:111; 27:64; 28:75; and 4:174.

However, while these verses appear to hone in on the principle of having evidence-based lines of reasoning, some might object that this falls short of explaining why competition arises in the process of advocating for some conceptual frameworks as opposed to others. Why would Islamic thinkers be so concerned with sharing their own subject-forming technology, as opposed to being satisfied with a sort of evidence-based, subjective, pluralism of sorts? At least when it comes to jurisprudential discussions, there are Islamic thinkers who would have approximated such a position, albeit with different theoretical formulations.¹¹⁵ Even in matters of faith, many would invoke Divine Justice to excuse those who – despite due diligence – arrived at different conclusions than those normative to them.¹¹⁶ However, in principle they would have still been driven to make their nuanced disagreements relevant to subject-formation, arguably because of the following verses. This first verse, for instance, can be understood as a warning against compound ignorance (being oblivious to one’s ignorance, mainly due to some moral lapse of their own),

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ كَمَن زُرِنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ

¹¹⁵ See Chapter 3.

¹¹⁶ Setting aside the question of how realistic such a scenario is, deeming the person in the hypothetical scenario excused would be argued either based on invoking rationally perceived good and evil (*al-ḥusn wa al-qubḥ al-‘aqliyān*) and/or textual arguments, such as Qur’ān 4:98-99.

إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا
فَأُولَٰئِكَ عَسَىٰ اللَّهُ أَن يَعْفُوَ عَنْهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفُورًا غَفُورًا

See:

Al-Anṣārī (d. 1281 AH / 1864 CE), *Farāʿid al-Uṣūl*, 23rd ed., vol. 1, 4 vols. (Qum: Majmaʿ al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 1438 AH), 575-576;

ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Riḍā Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ (d. 1350 AH / 1931 CE), *al-Nūr al-Sāṭiʿ fī al-Fiqh al-Nāfiʿ*, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-Ādāb, 1961 CE), 212; and

Jaʿfar al-Subḥānī, *al-Īmān wa al-Kufr fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 1 vols. (Qum: Muʿassasat al-Imām al-Ṣādiq, 1427 AH), 93-100.

Is s/he who stands on a manifest proof from his/her Lord like someone to whom the evil of his/her conduct is made to seem decorous, and who follow their desires?¹¹⁷

Additional references¹¹⁸ clarify that this “decorous” façade can lead an individual to actually “see” his (objectively) evil deeds as good deeds, often described as being under a satanic influence. Still, the understanding is that the individual is responsible for falling for the temptation and lapsing into the heedlessness that cultivates his loss of sound vision. Thus, for Islamic thinkers with these verses internalized, the importance of “getting it right” was not to be downplayed, even when their interlocutors appeared to have nominally evidence-based lines of reasoning. As another verse highlights,

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا

الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

Say, ‘Shall we inform you about the greatest losers in respect to works?

Those whose efforts go astray in the life of this world, while they reckon that they are virtuous in their works.¹¹⁹

As these references alone illustrate, the “library” of Islam portrays these intellectual pursuits as technologies intricately involved in forming the subject/agent of the broader community. The subject’s relationship to God depends on sincerely considering his/her lines of reasoning and conceptual frameworks, from the most basic fundamentals of his/her worldview to his/her practical devotion to God. Within the Qur’ānic vision, this has implications for the

¹¹⁷ Qur’ān 47:14

¹¹⁸ See, for example, Qur’ān 6:43; 8:48; 9:37; 16:63; 27:24; 29:38; and 35:8.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 18:103-104

hereafter, let alone the spiritual make-up of the subject/agent as a member of the broader community in day-to-day life. Therefore, this reading of the library supports the contention that the preoccupation of Islamic thinkers with a concern for forming moral subjects (themselves and others) explains their deployment of competing conceptual frameworks to satisfy paradigmatic moral requirements.

0.6.2 “Leadership” and Subject-formation

The authorship of the Islamic thinkers considered is one form among the different forms of leadership, which are distinct from authority, and which revolve around subject-formation. The evidence for this from the “library” of Islam includes its apparent portrayal of an all-encompassing sense of leadership as revolving around subject-formation. Consider, for instance, the following Qur’ānic verse,

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۖ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۗ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَبِئْسَ لَكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

O you who have faith! Take care of your own souls. He who strays cannot hurt you if you are guided. To God will be the return of you all, whereat He will inform you concerning what you used to do.¹²⁰

This verse not only urges each individual to lead his/her own soul down the path of guidance, it is prescribing this leadership in terms of “taking care” of one’s own soul first and foremost. However, this should not be understood to mean subject-formation is limited to oneself.

Another verse expands the sphere of subject-formation to one’s immediate circle. As the verse reads,

¹²⁰ Ibid, 5:105

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ

وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

O you who have faith! Safeguard yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [assigned] angels, severe and mighty, who do not disobey whatever God has commanded them, and carry out what they are commanded.¹²¹

Safeguarding from that danger requires diligent adherence to Divine prescriptions throughout one's life, and thus has a subject-forming trajectory. As the subject forms him/herself, s/he leads by example and/or employs technologies meant to aid in the subject-formation of his/her immediate sphere of influence (i.e. family). The fear of punishment presumably evoked by this verse is complemented by evoking hope for reward in other verses¹²² and love of God in yet others¹²³, each arguably meant to serve as a technology for the formation of the subject who is in a perpetual state of proximity to God through worship (e.g. remembrance, obedience, charity, etc.).¹²⁴

Going further, one verse describes how the (even broader sphere of the) faithful – male and female alike – effectively lead as guardians of one another when they promote virtue and prevent vice. As the verse states,

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۖ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ

وَرَسُولَهُ ۖ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

¹²¹ Ibid, 66:6

¹²² For example, Qur'ān 8:24; 13:20-24; 16:30-32; and 20:75-76.

¹²³ For example, Qur'ān 3:31; 2:195; 2:222; 3:76; 3:134; 3:146; 3:159; 5:42; and 5:54.

¹²⁴ For example, Qur'ān 51:56 and 15:99.

But the faithful men and the faithful women are protectors of one another, enjoining right and forbidding wrong, maintaining the prayer, giving the alms¹²⁵, and obeying God and His Messenger. They are those upon whom God will have Mercy. Truly God is Mighty, Wise.¹²⁶

These are ongoing acts of promoting the good and preventing evil, performed out of devotion and, hence, serving as technologies for ethical subject formation (i.e. on their own selves as well as on others). This is to be contrasted with descriptions of hypocrites – male and female – who are said to enjoin what is wrong and forbid what is right, forgetting God¹²⁷ and thereby forgetting themselves.¹²⁸ Forgetting themselves is the opposite of caring for themselves, the antithesis of forming the prescribed moral subject.¹²⁹ Both, nonetheless, paint a picture of leadership that revolves around a trajectory of subject-formation. Illustrating this in the words of the ḥadīth literature, it has been famously reported, that Prophet Muḥammad said,

كلکم راع وكلکم مسؤول عن رعيته [...]

Every individual among you is a shepherd/caretaker and every individual among you is responsible for his/her flock/subjects [...]¹³⁰

¹²⁵ *Zakāt*.

¹²⁶ Qur'ān 9:71

¹²⁷ Ibid, 9:67

¹²⁸ Ibid, 59:19

¹²⁹ See also Qur'ān 2:44.

¹³⁰ See, for example:

Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH / 870 CE), *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 1, 8 vols. (Istanbul: Dār al-Fikr lil-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1981 CE), 215;

Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 8, 104;

Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī (d. 261 AH / 875 CE), *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 6, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 8;

Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā'ī (d. ca 900 AH / 1495 CE), *'Awālī al-La'ālī*, ed. Muḥtabá al-'Irāqī, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Qum: Maṭba'at Sayyid al-Shuhadā', 1983 CE), 129.

As a general principle, then, all are leading caretakers responsible for their “subjects,” beginning with the subject closest to home.¹³¹ Therefore, the library portrays an all-encompassing sense of leadership as revolving around subject-formation, supporting the argument that the authorship of Islamic thinkers is one example among the different instances of leadership that revolve around subject-formation and are thus distinct from authority.¹³²

0.7 Outline of Chapters

The chapters of this dissertation represent case studies from the “archive” reconstructing substantive debates, thus contributing to intellectual history, on the one hand, and providing the second leg of evidence for the overarching arguments outlined above, on the other hand. Drawing on works by influential authors mainly between the 10th and 13th centuries CE, these archives reveal paradigmatic features of various forms of leadership (e.g. *ulū al-amr*, *mujtahid*, *ahl al-ḥall*, imam, and *qutb*). Chapter 1 describes the Qur’ānic world of interconnected meanings related to *amr* (authority, command, matter...) and the those vested with it assumes a concern for the

¹³¹ As an example from the Shī’ī tradition, the following report also uses the same language of “care” (*ri’āyah*), allowing for two potential types of subject formation, as implied by the distinct consequences stated,

[الكليبي في الكافي] عن علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن محمد بن يحيى عن طلحة بن زيد قال سمعت أبا عبد الله ع يقول إن رواة الكتاب كثير وإن رعاته قليل وكم من مستنصح للحديث مستغش للكتاب فالعلماء يحزهم ترك الرعاية والجهال يحزهم حفظ الرواية فراع يرعى حباته وراع يرعى هلكته فعند ذلك اختلف الراعيان وتغابر الفريقان

Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, 49.

¹³² Although I have not dealt with the question of “intention” directly in this dissertation, it is addressed indirectly, for my running assumption is that, in the minds of Islamic thinkers, intention is intertwined with one’s attentive exposure to knowledge from the “library” and the “archive.” This does not mean that every exposure to knowledge would be regarded as a positive influence on intention in their minds, but it does mean that a well-rounded exposure to the relevant Islamic library would be thought to impose questions of sincerity on the readers. One of commonly cited library references on this is the ḥadīth attributed to Prophet Muḥammad, in which he states,

إنما الأعمال بالنيات وإنما لكل امرئ ما نوى

al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 1, 2;

Abū Ja’far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, ed. Ḥasan al-Mūsawī al-Kharsān, 4th ed., vol. 4, 10 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1985 CE), 186.

morality, if not outright *infallibility*, and intellectual merit of a leading imam. Chapter 2 classifies exegetical ḥadīth literature from the Shī‘ī tradition on *ulū al-amr*, completing the paradigmatic picture of Chapter 1 and shedding light on the rise of various Sunnī strategies addressing the question of infallible juristic leadership (*taṣwīb al-mujtahid*) in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 considers a related case of “leadership” as it appears in the Ṣūfī mystical strand of Sunnī thought, where the spiritual leader or Qutb is analogous to the Shī‘ī Imam in terms of moral excellence and presence-in-absence (*ghaybah*). These features and forms of leadership culminate with Chapter 5’s case study on the Mahdī in modernity, an anticipated savior figure at the crossroads of Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī thought, where the repurposing of earlier lines of reasoning exhibits strategies the purpose of subject-formation.

Chapter 1: What's in a Command? And Subject-formation

Do not be fooled by their prayers and their fasting. For, indeed, a man might be attached to prayer and fasting to such an extent that if he were to abandon them then he would feel desolate. But, rather, test them when it comes to the truth of their words and delivering trusts.

—Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 AH / 765 CE)¹³³

If, as the “library” discussed in the Introduction suggests, Islamic jurists¹³⁴ in tune with the Qur'ān were wholly embedded (as a way of life) in the project of subject-formation for the very constitution of their *ummah* (community), then their agreements and disagreements, in theory and in practice, however limited, cannot be dismissed as inconsequential. Training through technologies of the self or (following Hallaq's chapter 5 of *The Impossible State*, the Arabic indigenous analogue) *riyāḍah*¹³⁵, a form of (spiritual) “exercise,” employed for the aim of self-care or refinement (*tahdhīb*), may have appeared similar across the spectrum of legal schools and mystical paths, but what were the driving forces for such theoretical disagreements with practical

¹³³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, 104.

[...] عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ لَا تَعْتَرُوا بِصَلَاتِهِمْ وَلَا بِصِيَامِهِمْ فَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ رُبَّمَا لَهَجَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالصَّوْمِ حَتَّىٰ لَوْ تَرَكَهُ اسْتَوْحَشَ وَلَكِنَّ الْخَيْرَ لَهُمْ عِنْدَ صِدْقِ الْحَدِيثِ وَأَدَاءِ الْأَمَانَةِ

¹³⁴ The categories of *‘ālim/faqīh* often entail not only individuals with legal knowledge but scholars with a high caliber of moral character and committed practice to Islam as a holistic way of life. Moreover, many of the most influential jurists of this kind were also regarded as mystics (of sorts), some even polymaths, men (and women) of many hats.

¹³⁵ Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 105.

implications? At least part of the answer can be found in a concern regarding the bearing of such disagreements on subject-formation (community constitution, as Hallaq might put it). In light of the care dedicated to such disagreements, however inconsequential they may seem to a contemporary researcher, they were important because the governing mentality for the pursuit of knowledge was intricately involved with caring for the self, forming the subject of the broader community. Disagreements were not consequential merely because they would impact the material world, but also if they would impact the spiritual world. A person's state of heart and mind mattered, in form and content, because the “*Sharī‘ah* world”¹³⁶ was not only a physical world with physical effects – it was a metaphysical one with corresponding consequences. A prominent example of this concern arguably appears in Muḥsin al-Kāshānī’s (d. 1091 AH / 1680 CE) revision of *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn (Reviving of the Dīn’s Fields of Knowledge)* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH / 1111 CE). Al-Kāshānī’s attempt to Shī‘at-ize (make Shī‘ī) al-Ghazālī’s multi-volume work indicates a serious concern for the work’s influence on mind and soul, engagement with it being best modeled as a subject-forming *riyāḍah*. Al-Kāshānī described his recension *al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍā’ (the Pure Path)* as *Iḥyā’ al-Iḥyā’ (Reviving [al-Ghazālī’s] Reviving)* and, perhaps more relevant here, *Tahdhīb al-Iḥyā’ (Refining [al-Ghazālī’s] Reviving)*.¹³⁷ After praising al-Ghazālī’s work, noting the beneficial religious knowledge therein, its quality exposition, writing, and organization, and its utility for the general public (*‘awām*) as well as the initiated (*khawāṣ*), al-Kāshānī states the subject-forming deficiency of al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’*,

¹³⁶ See Qur’ān 3:31; 5:48; 42:13; and 45:18.

Addressees are described as each having been prescribed a sharī‘ah path as a test allowing for positive competition in doing good deeds. Disagreements are to be addressed by God beyond this world. Prophet Muḥammad is told to follow his prescribed Sharī‘ah and those who love God are told to follow Muḥammad in order to be further loved by God. (Good deeds as well as Divine love are understood as having worldly as well as otherworldly effects.)

¹³⁷ Muḥsin al-Kāshānī, *al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍā’ fī Tahdhīb al-Iḥyā’*, vol. 1, 3.

[...] إلا أن أبا حامد لما كان حين تصنيفه عاقي المذهب ولم يتشيع بعد، وإنما رزقه الله هذه السعادة في أواخر عمره — كما

أظهره في كتابه المسمى بسرّ العالمين وشهد به ابن الجوزي الحنبليّ — كان قد فاته بيان ركن عظيم من الإيمان، وهو معرفة

الأئمة المعصومين الذين جاءت الوصية بالتمسك بهم وبالقرآن من سيد الإنس والجان — صلوات الله عليه وعليهم [...]

[...] However, because when Abū Ḥāmid authored it he was [a follower] of a Sunnī *madhhab* and had not yet become Shīʿī — and God only blessed him with this success toward the end of his life, as he revealed in his book called *Sirr al-ʿĀlamayn* and Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanbalī testified to it¹³⁸ — he had missed explicating a major cornerstone of faith.

¹³⁸ At first glance, I would have taken “Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanbalī” most notably to be a reference to Abū al-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH / 1201 CE), the Ḥanbalī scholar of Baghdad. But, as of yet, I have not come across a reference to *Sirr al-ʿĀlamayn* in this ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī’s electronically searchable works. It is possible, however, that al-Kāshānī is referring to Ibn al-Jawzī’s testimony to al-Ghazālī’s supposedly Shīʿī change of heart, not in the context of discussing *Sirr al-ʿĀlamayn* necessarily, but perhaps elsewhere. Following up on this possibility, I would have expected ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī to make mention of such a thing when summarizing al-Ghazālī’s life in his work on history. But even though he criticizes aspects of al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* and describes his spiritual journey through the end of his life, Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanbalī makes no specific mention of a Shīʿī change in al-Ghazālī’s heart (unless, of course, al-Kāshānī is hinting at what he takes to be the implication of urging “sincerity,” which al-Ghazālī refers to when giving his last will of advice). See:

Abū al-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanbalī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā, and Naʿīm Zarzūr, 2nd ed., vol. 17, 19 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah, 1995 CE), 124-127.

It is, thus, likely that al-Kāshānī is referring to a different “Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanbalī.” Another prominent “Ibn al-Jawzī” would be the former Ibn al-Jawzī’s grandson through his daughter —hence known as the “Sibṭ (grandson through one’s daughter)” of Ibn al-Jawzī. Taking this possibility seriously, and since Yūsuf, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654 AH / 1256 CE), reportedly turned to Ḥanafī jurisprudence, at least apparently, one would have to understand the identifier “al-Ḥanbalī” in “Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanbalī” as referring to his grandfather’s affiliation. In any case, Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī does refer to *Sirr al-ʿĀlamayn* as al-Ghazālī’s work and quotes what may be understood as particularly Shīʿī talking points from that text. This includes a reference to the words of Prophet Muḥammad regarding ʿAlī as *mawla* during the event of Ghadir Khumm, as well as the Prophet Muḥammad’s deathbed request to write a will, which was met with negative reactions from a number of prominent companions. For instance, see: Yūsuf Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanafī, *Tadhkirat al-Khawās*, ed. Ḥusayn Taqī Zādah, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols. (Beirut: Markaz al-Ṭibāʿah wa al-Nashr lil-Majmaʿ al-ʿĀlamī li Ahl al-Bayt, 1433 AH), 356-357.

Whether or not al-Ghazālī authored *Sirr al-ʿĀlamayn* does not necessarily put to rest the question of adopting the Shīʿī narrative. For the reported content is already available in alternative Sunnī-compiled sources (see the footnotes in the aforementioned reference), and Sunnī authors have processed them within the framework of Sunnī worldview assumptions (e.g. the Sunnī claim of consensus that Prophet Muḥammad did not designate his successor and/or the integrity of the Prophet’s companions in such a way as to require any objectionable behavior reported about them to be reinterpreted in light of that presumed integrity). That is, the same core events might be acknowledged but

[That cornerstone is] knowing the infallible Imams; it was the will of the Master¹³⁹ of humans and genies – may the blessings of God shower upon him and them – to hold onto them along with the Qur’ān [...] ¹⁴⁰

A separate treatment is required to delve into the types of conceptual and ritual technologies al-Kāshānī deployed/removed in his version of the work. In this chapter, however, I test the aforementioned hypothesis by examining legal-moral¹⁴¹ imperatives related to an early event in Muslim history, as remembered by primary sources referenced by Sunnī as well as Shī‘ī authors (thus, representing the overwhelming majority of surviving Muslim narrative). By analyzing actions and rationalizing tactics employed in the quotes attributed to figures on the battlefield of Karbalā’, on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ 61 AH / 680 CE, the theoretical disagreement over compliance due to¹⁴² *Ulū al-Amr* (those vested with the *Amr*¹⁴³ or those to whom the *Amr* belongs) is mobilized in this “archive” as a subject-forming technology. This technology is portrayed as being partially responsible for the course of action taken on the battlefield (thus forming the soldier of a given side) or at least responsible for the justificatory tactic employed following the battle (hence, contributing to the imagined (im)moral sensibility of the subject’s rationalization). Put differently, rationalization/justification is itself portrayed as an act performed by a particular type of subject.

different interpretations/significance are layered onto those events. Hence, it is plausible that al-Ghazālī wrote comparable content to that which is in *Sirr al-Ālamayn*, even if not that specific text itself, without having adopted Shī‘ī views. This is not to say that exposure to alternative narratives/arguments would be comfortable for general Sunnī/Shī‘ī readership, but it is to highlight that finding content common to one narrative emphasized in a given text does not necessarily suffice to judge that such a text has been written by an author who adopts that associated narrative.

¹³⁹ This is referring to Prophet Muḥammad.

¹⁴⁰ al-Kāshānī, *al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍā’ fī Tahdhīb al-Iḥyā’*, vol. 1, 1.

¹⁴¹ For the purposes of this work, I do not delve into a distinction between the moral and the ethical.

¹⁴² A distinction can be made between “obedience to / compliance *due to*” and merely “compliance *with*” *Ulū al-Amr*. For the latter may be justified by overriding considerations even when no “right” to the former is due. I do not treat this distinction in detail here, however.

¹⁴³ The Arabic root AMR, and more specifically the noun *Amr*, has its own web of interconnected connotations in the Qur’ān, as I will attempt to highlight with references briefly later on; e.g. command, authority, matter, affair, thing, etc...

The picture painted is arguably that different types of acts require different types of subjects, and different types of subjects require different types of subject-forming technologies. I argue, then, that the author of the accounts frames the formation of the subject, in part, due to the reflexive performance of specific subject-forming patterns of practice. Iterative *rationalization*, not merely physical exercise, is can be modeled in this context as leading to habit/internalization, cultivating a habitus and thus forming the subject. Individuals may have performed *apparently* “the same” technologies of the self, such as prayer, fasting, obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*, etc... and ended up on opposite sides of the battlefield (or the legal/mystical community spectrum). However, the so-called “same” technologies could not have *substantively* led to diametrically opposed results, according to this reading of the accounts. Therefore, the technologies are meant to be understood as substantively different. Part of the difference is arguably modeled in a commitment to different forms of disciplined *rationalization*, resulting in the internalization of a conceptual framework.

Before presenting references to early exegetical works, some key usages of the root AMR in the Qur’ān itself can be useful to consider as potentially connected. I am not so much claiming to present an exegesis of the Qur’ānic verse in question through other Qur’ānic verses, but more so drawing attention to potentially internalized connections made by those familiar with the entire Qur’ān.¹⁴⁴ This serves as a window into the *sharī‘ah*-governed community, possibly explaining why subsequent generations of Islamic scholarship overwhelmingly opposed unqualified obedience to immoral commands by those claiming to be *Ulū al-Amr*.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ See my methodological note in the Introduction on the qualified version of *tafsīr al-Qur’ān bil-Qur’ān*.

¹⁴⁵ At least in theory, this was the ideal, as the coming references attest to.

1.1 Qur'ānic Moral Governmentality of *Ulū al-Amr*

Hallaq's "Qur'ānic Constitutionalism and Moral Governmentality" offers a short but significant take on the interconnectedness of the AMR root as it appears throughout the Qur'ān.

As Hallaq writes,

[...] As in the case with *ḥukm* and *ḥaqq*, *amr* is applied to a wide spectrum of meanings, ranging from an order to create the world *ex nihilo* to the most specific of commands about a narrowly defined behavioral or "legal" matter. Here as always, there is no terminological distinction between and among the cosmological, metaphysical, physical, moral or legal domains [...] ¹⁴⁶

In a sense, this observation summarizes what I am about to suggest concerning the appearance of *Amr* as a noun in various Qur'ānic verses. The demonstration that follows brings to the fore the connection of *Ulū al-Amr* to broader indications of the Qur'ānic *Amr*. If Qur'ānic usages of the same word (*Amr*) were internalized as meaningfully interconnected¹⁴⁷, then, at the very least, "those Vested with *Amr* / those to whom *Amr* belongs" (*Ulū al-Amr*), would have been assumed to be vested not only with a legal authority to be obeyed but some minimum moral qualification arguably justifying that authority. As such, obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* would not have been understood to be blind obedience (i.e. obedience irrespective of the qualifications of the one to be obeyed). Rather, either the obedience was to be limited within the scope of commands not known to be immoral or the *Ulū al-Amr* must have been known to be infallible.

The main verse in question reads as follows in chapter 4 of the Qur'ān,

¹⁴⁶ Wael Hallaq, "Qur'ānic Constitutionalism and Moral Governmentality: Further Notes on the Founding Principles of Islamic Society and Polity," *Comparative Islamic Studies* [Online], 8, no. 1-2 (July 8, 2014): 17-18.

¹⁴⁷ This will become clear by noting the similar phrases/meanings in different verses of the Qur'ān, with each subsequent verse adding a different attribute or layer of meaning.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ

بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

O you who have faith! Obey God and obey the Messenger and *Ulū al-Amr* among you. And if you dispute regarding anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you have faith in God and the Last Day. That is better and more favorable in outcome.¹⁴⁸

In this verse, those who have faith are commanded to obey God, on the one hand, and to obey the Messenger and *Ulū al-Amr*, on the other hand. The distinction between the obedience due on each of the two “hands” is arguably significant. That is, God designates obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* on the same “hand” as obedience to the Messenger. If disputes arise, the matter is to be *returned back to* God and the Messenger. I will refer to exegesis literature on this verse in the next section, but in this section my focus is on potential interconnected usages of the noun *Amr* throughout the Qur’ān. Verse 83 of the same chapter reads,

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْحَتْفِ أَدَّعَوْا بِهِ وَلَوْ رُدُّهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا

فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

When an *Amr* of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it; but had they referred it to the Messenger and to *Ulū al-Amr* among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it. And were it not for God’s grace upon you and His mercy, you would have surely followed Satan, [all] except a few.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Qur’ān 4:59

¹⁴⁹ Qur’ān 4:83.

Regardless of the other elements in this verse, it is clear that *Ulū al-Amr* are coupled with the Messenger here, as in the earlier verse. However, in this verse, the Messenger and *Ulū al-Amr* are both reference points to be *returned back to* (i.e. obeyed as reference points on questions, not merely as those who issue commands).¹⁵⁰

An assortment of other verses, listed here in sequential order as they appear in the Qur'ān, highlights the cosmological, metaphysical, physical, moral and/or legal domains of *Amr*. Chapter 7 reads,

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُعْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسْحَرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Indeed, your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days¹⁵¹, and then settled on the Throne. He draws the night's cover over the day, which pursues it swiftly, and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, [all of them] disposed by His *Amr*. Look! All creation and *Amr* belong to Him. Blessed is God, the Lord of all the worlds.¹⁵²

The latter part of this verse refers to how various cosmological systems are at the disposal of God's *Amr*. The *khalq* (creation) and the *Amr* belong to God. Another verse indicates that the latter can

¹⁵⁰ This connection has been used to argue that the latter part of verse 4:59 does not limit the obedience due to *Ulū al-Amr*. According to that argument, *Ulū al-Amr* are to be obeyed in an unrestricted sense, them themselves becoming reference points to knowing the will of God and the Messenger. On the question of obedience, consider the reference to the notion of "majority" here, as well as the highlighting of God's knowledge regarding who is most guided,

وَأَنْ تَطْعَ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ۗ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرَّرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۗ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَيَضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوَائِهِمْ بَعِيرٍ عَلِيمٍ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ [...]

Qur'ān 6:116-119.

¹⁵¹ In the sense of time periods, not necessarily equivalent to 24 Earthly hours.

¹⁵² Qur'ān 7:54

refer to an instantaneous form of bringing about existence (as opposed to the gradual form indicated by *khalq*). As verses 49-50 of chapter 54 read,

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ

وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ

Indeed, We have created everything in a measure,

and Our *Amr* is but one, like the twinkling of an eye.¹⁵³

Chapter 16 indicates that God sends down the angels with something¹⁵⁴ related to His *Amr* unto whom He wills among His *servants*. As verse 2 reads,

يُنزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاتَّقُونِ

He sends down the angels with the spirit of His *Amr* to whomever He wishes of His servants: ‘Warn [the people] that there is no god except Me; so be wary of Me.’¹⁵⁵

The descending of these angels with something related to God’s *Amr* may be related to the descending angels in chapter 97 toward the end of the Qur’ān, as I will note below.

God’s *Amr* appears in another verse that mentions how specific leaders, Imams, *guide* by His *Amr*. The verse in Chapter 21 reads,

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ

¹⁵³ Qur’ān 54:49-50

¹⁵⁴ *Al-Rūḥ*; often translated as “the spirit”.

¹⁵⁵ Qur’ān 16:2

We made them imams, guiding by Our *Amr*, and We revealed to them [concerning] the performance of good deeds, the maintenance of prayers, and the giving of alms (*zakāt*), and they used to worship Us.¹⁵⁶

In this verse, *Amr* belongs to God and, through/by it, a group of Imams are designated to act as guides. These Imams are inspired by God to perform good deeds, among other things. Yet, there is a clear indication that these Imams warranted God’s designation as having been “*lanā ‘ābidīn* (servants to Us / worshipping Us)” in a distinct sense. The *Amr* of God in relation to Imams appears again in Chapter 32,

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ

When they had been patient and had conviction in Our signs, We appointed amongst them imams to guide [the people] by Our *Amr*.¹⁵⁷

Here the designated Imams also guide through/by God’s *Amr*, but they appear to have only been designated as such in connection with achieving a threshold of patience and certainty. Thus, there is a suggestion that those having the *Amr* associated with God are deeply connected to, and rather become qualified by, moral attributes.

The subsequent verses I quote here hint at another dimension of the *Amr* as it appears in relation to *Laylat al-Qadr* (the Night of Ordainment), which has been described as the night of the Qur’ān’s revelation and, “*khayr min alf shahr* (better than a thousand months).” Chapter 44 reads,

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ

فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ

¹⁵⁶ Qur’ān 21:73

¹⁵⁷ Qur’ān 32:24

أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ

We sent it down on a blessed night; We have been warning.

Every definitive/wise *Amr* is made distinct on [that night],

[as] an *Amr* from Us. We have been sending¹⁵⁸

Chapter 97, the Chapter of *al-Qadr*, sheds further light on the connection between the Qur'ān's revelation and a specific night during which an *Amr* descends from and is issued by God. The description of this *Amr* seems to have cosmological and moral implications in a recurring fashion (i.e. as the present tense [*ta*]tanazzal, or “descend,” entails). Verses 3-4 read,

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ

The Night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months.

In it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, with/for every *Amr*.¹⁵⁹

Coupled with verse 16:2, quoted earlier, a reader familiar with the entire Qur'ān would have potentially seen connections between those associated with *Amr* and the annually descending angels during *Laylat al-Qadr*. Rather, it is not far-fetched to assume, in light of this interconnectedness, that *sharī'ah*-minded subjects would have seen *Ulū al-Amr* (whoever they may be) as part of a cosmic order – recipients of the *Amr* descending annually during *Laylat al-Qadr*. Hence, for every age there would be someone from *Ulū al-Amr* qualified as such. This possibility is likely related to Sunnī *ṣūfī* and Shī'ī conceptions of a living *Quṭb/Imam*.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Qur'ān 44:3-5

¹⁵⁹ Qur'ān 97:3-4

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter 4 of this work.

At least for the purposes of this chapter, however, it is likely that *sharī'ah*-minded subjects, familiar with the entire Qur'ān (reciting it frequently as a *riyāḍah*, if not memorizing it), would have internalized the interconnectedness between those to be obeyed for having *Amr* (*Ulū al-Amr*) and the inherent morality defining their eligibility and/or directives. In other words, the Qur'ān does not refer to the *Amr* with morally-*neutral* language. The language used to describe the place of *Amr* in the cosmos as well as in the life of human beings is part of the grand scheme of Divine guidance, a care for the morality of one's choice-making. Those vested with the *Amr*, the *Ulū al-Amr* to be obeyed, are connected through that *Amr* to the Divine *Amr* by which certain Imams (leaders) guide others. Those leaders had to be knowledgeable and patient, "leading" themselves properly, before leading others. Immoral commands and/or immoral commanders would likely have been seen as antithetical to the spirit of the interrelated usages of God's *Amr* in the Qur'ān. This conclusion will prove useful as a conceptual framework for understanding the predominant exegetical positions on the obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*, beginning with Sunnī thought, but segueing into the crossroads of Sunnī, Shī'ī and Ṣūfī thought in subsequent chapters. In other words, this framework forecasts a paradigmatic feature of "leadership" surviving in later manifestations of Islamic thought.

1.2 Sunnī Exegesis on the Obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* Verse

Before delving into the different interpretations of *Ulū al-Amr* in verse 4:59, it would be useful to distinguish between two analytically separate matters: [1] the implication of the verse in question; and [2] a fact known to be true regardless of the verse in question.¹⁶¹ In the exegesis literature, sometimes the latter is imposed on the former, conflating the two, as will become clear later in this chapter. The distinction, however, is instrumental in opening up to a wider range of viable interpretations.

One of the earliest and arguably most influential *tafsīr* works in the Sunnī world has been *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH / 923 CE). Al-Ṭabarī lists a number of interpretations for the intended “*Ulū al-Amr*,” who are to be obeyed, according to verse 4:59. These include: [1] *al-Umarā'* (commanders/governors); [2] *Ahl al-'Ilm wa al-Fiqh* (those of knowledge and deep understanding; i.e. the '*ulamā'*', the *fuqahā'*'); [3] *Aṣḥāb Muḥammad* (the companions of Muḥammad); [4] Abū Bakr and 'Umar. Al-Ṭabarī then states his position on the verse, understanding *Ulū al-Amr* to mean commanders/governors,

وأولى الأقوال في ذلك بالصواب قول من قال : هم الأمراء والولاة ، لصحة الاخبار عن رسول الله (ص) بالأمر بطاعة الأئمة

والولاة فيما كان طاعة وللمسلمين مصلحة. [...]

فإذا كان معلوما أنه لا طاعة واجبة لاحد غير الله أو رسوله أو إمام عادل ، وكان الله قد أمر بقوله: * (أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا

الرسول وأولي منكم)* بطاعة ذوي أمرنا ، كان معلوما أن الذين أمر بطاعتهم تعالى ذكره من ذوي أمرنا هم الأئمة ومن ولاه

¹⁶¹ To clarify, some may claim that a given verse means X. While X may be a true proposition, that does not necessarily mean that the verse in question means X.

المسلمون دون غيرهم من الناس ، وإن كان فرضا القبول من كل من أمر بترك معصية الله ، ودعا إلى طاعة الله ، وأنه لا طاعة
تجب لاحد فيما أمر ونهى فيما لم تقم حجة وجوبه إلا للأئمة الذين أَلزم الله عباده طاعتهم فيما أمروا به رعيتهن مما هو مصلحة
لعامة الرعية ، فإن على من أمره بذلك طاعتهم ، وكذلك في كل ما لم يكن لله معصية . وإذ كان ذلك كذلك كان معلوما
بذلك صحة ما اخترنا من التأويل دون غيره.

The worthiest of these positions in terms of veracity is the position of the one who said, “They are the commanders and governors,” because of the reliability of the reports attributed to the Messenger of God ordering obedience to the imams and governors in that which is an act of obedience [to God] and is in the interest of the Muslims. [...]

If it is known that there is no obligatory obedience due to anyone but God, His Messenger, or a just imam; and that when God said, “Obey God and obey the Messenger and *Ulū al-Amr* from among you,” He ordered obedience to those in charge of us¹⁶²; it thus became known that those whom He – exalted in praise – ordered obedience to from among those in charge of us are the imams and among the governors of the Muslims, not other people. Granted, it is an obligation to accept [the commands] from every person who orders the abandonment of disobeying God and invites to the obedience of God. Moreover, no obedience is due to anyone when s/he commands and forbids if there is no proof establishing the obligatory [status of the issue in question] except obedience due to the imams whom God has required His servants to obey when they command their subjects within the interest of the subjects overall. Indeed, those they command in that sense must obey them. [They must also be obeyed] in all that which is not an act of disobedience to

¹⁶² Those possessing our *Amr*.

God [in itself]. If the matter is as described, then it becomes known that the interpretation we have chosen is correct, not the others.¹⁶³

Al-Ṭabarī thus makes his selection based on external evidence from reports attributed to Prophet Muḥammad. Since Muḥammad ordered Muslims to obey commanders and governors so long as it served the interests of the Muslims and did not violate God’s commands, then the *Ulū al-Amr* mentioned in the verse must also be referring to the commanders and governors. Clearly, al-Ṭabarī understands obedience to this group to be a restricted form of obedience: The commanders and governors are only to be obeyed if their commands are not sinful.

Similar to al-Ṭabarī, in his *Tashīl al-Nazar wa Ta’jīl al-Zafar*, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardī (d. 450 AH / 1058 CE) quotes verse 4:59, indicating his interpretation that *Ulū al-Amr* are those in power (without defining the limits of obedience to them).¹⁶⁴ Al-Māwardī’s *al-Aḥkām al-Ṣultānīyah*, however, makes it evident that obedience to this group is qualified,

فَقَرَضَ عَلَيْنَا طَاعَةَ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ فِيْنَا وَهُمْ الْأَيْمَةُ الْمُتَأَمَّرُونَ عَلَيْنَا. وَرَوَى هِشَامُ بْنُ عُرْوَةَ عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ

اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: * (سَيَلِيكُمُ بَعْدِي وُلَاةٌ فَيَلِيكُمُ النَّبِيُّ بِيَرِّهِ ، وَيَلِيكُمُ الْفَاجِرُ يُفْجِرُوهُ ، فَاسْمَعُوا لَهُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا فِي كُلِّ مَا

وَافَقَ الْحَقُّ ، فَإِنْ أَحْسَنُوا فَلَكُمْ وَهُمْ ، وَإِنْ أَسَاءُوا فَلَكُمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ) *

So He required of us obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* from among us, and they are the imams who rule over us. Hishām ibn ‘Urwah reported that Abū Ṣāliḥ reported that Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of God, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “After me,

¹⁶³ Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH / 923 CE), *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān*, ed. Ṣidqī Jamīl al-‘Aṭṭār, vol. 5, 30 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, 1415 AH / 1995 CE), 207-208.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardī (d. 450 AH / 1058 CE), *Tashīl al-Nazar wa Ta’jīl al-Zafar fī Akhlāq al-Malik wa Siyāsat al-Mulk*, ed. Muḥyī Hilāl al-Sarḥān, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah, 1401 AH / 1981 CE), 145-146.

governors will rule over you. The righteous will rule over you with his righteousness and the corrupt will rule over you with his corruption, so listen to them and obey [them] in every matter that coincides with what is right. If they do good, then it counts in your favor and theirs, and if they do bad then [your obedience] counts in your favor and against them.”¹⁶⁵

Ulū al-Amr are, thus, only to be obeyed in matters that coincide with what is morally acceptable.¹⁶⁶

The area which is neither known to be sinful nor already known to be a *sharī‘ah* duty is the distinct domain of obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*, according to this reading of the report al-Māwardī cites. The sphere of *Ulū al-Amr*’s *command*, and not the moral character of the *commander*, is the emphasis here. While morality is still paramount in this case, instead of relying on the character of the *commander*, there is a cultivation of the moral character in the subject(s) being *commanded* via restricting obedience to commands within the morally acceptable sphere. For those subjects, *Ulū*

¹⁶⁵ ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭānīyah wa al-Wilāyāt al-Dīnīyah*, 2nd ed. (Sharikat Maktabat wa Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Awlādih, 1386 AH / 1966 CE), 5.

¹⁶⁶ Some might argue that many Muslims understood the Divine law to be essentially defining what is “morally acceptable.” Hence, it is lacking in precision to say that *Ulū al-Amr* are only to be obeyed in matters that coincide, “with what is morally acceptable.” For there is no “morally acceptable” except that which is defined by the Divine law and the Divine law requires obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*. However, I beg to differ for a number of reasons: (1) The wording of the report appears to be drawing on common knowledge regarding “what is right” before requiring obedience to *ulū al-amr*. So even if the objection’s assumption is granted – the law defines what is morally acceptable – there is a higher degree of legal/moral authority for the assumed common knowledge over the obedience due to *ulū al-amr*; (2) While the assumption that the law defines what is morally acceptable has its proponents (strands of Ash‘arī thought, for instance), this is not necessarily to deny a sense of morality prior to Divine legislation but rather a denial that there is Divine legislation which is known merely based on human reason’s sense of morality. Hence, there could be a sense of morality (albeit not a legally binding sense) prior to Divine legislation that is being spoken to in the language of “what is right.” This report (or the like), then, arguably comes to bestow a legally binding status on that moral sensibility; (3) Muslims who may have outwardly denied any sense of morality outside of Divine legislation would have been driven to accept the existence of Divine legislation and to obey it after recognizing it – otherwise, they would not have been recognized as Muslims. If they attempted to present internally consistent/coherent positions, they would have required an explanation for their acceptance of Divine legislation and for their obedience to it after accepting it. Such an explanation could not have referred to Divine legislation itself – without falling into circular reasoning, that is. Therefore, such Muslims would likely have made reference to intuition, human nature, or the like, at least for such foundational positions. Let their reference to the dictates of intuition, human nature, or the like, then, be part of “what is right,” as it appears in this report.

al-amr are only effectively so – relative to them – in so far as the commands of those commanders are within that moral sphere.

‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE) makes a passing remark in his *Ghiyāth al-Umam* that appears to reveal his interpretation of *Ulū al-Amr*. Al-Juwaynī highlights the need to comply with ruling authorities in order to safeguard the community’s interests. This is the case even when the ruler does not have all the qualifications required of an imam.¹⁶⁷ Yet, this does not necessarily mean al-Juwaynī understands *Ulū al-Amr* to be the commanders/governors. A close reading of al-Juwaynī’s *Ghiyāth al-Umam* seems to reveal al-Juwaynī’s more precise interpretation of *those vested with Amr* as the ‘*ulamā*’. Al-Juwaynī writes,

وَمَا أَلْقِيَهُ إِلَى الْمَجْلِسِ السَّامِيِّ: وَجُوبُ مُرَاجَعَةِ الْعُلَمَاءِ فِيمَا يَأْتِي وَيَذُرُّ، فَإِنَّهُمْ قُدْوَةُ الْأَحْكَامِ وَأَعْلَامُ الْإِسْلَامِ، وَوَرِثَةُ النَّبَوَّةِ،

وَقَادَةُ الْأُمَّةِ، وَسَادَةُ الْمِلَّةِ، وَمَفَاتِيحُ الْهُدَى، وَمَصَابِيحُ الدُّجَى، وَهُمْ عَلَى الْحَقِيقَةِ أَصْحَابُ الْأَمْرِ اسْتِحْقَاقًا [...]

And among that which I put forth to your elevated station is the following: The obligation of referring back to the ‘*ulamā*’ in what he does and does not do. For, indeed, they are the role models of the rulings, the authorities of Islam, the inheritors of Prophet-hood, the leaders of the community (*ummah*), the masters of the religion, the keys of guidance, the lamps in the darkness, and they are in reality¹⁶⁸ those to whom the *Amr* belongs deservingly so [...]¹⁶⁹

Although al-Juwaynī does not quote verse 4:59 or 4:83 here, the expression “‘*alá al-ḥaqīqah Aṣḥāb al-Amr*” (in reality those to whom the *Amr* belongs) seems to indicate the same meaning as

¹⁶⁷ For example:

‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE), *Ghiyāth al-Umam fī Iltiyāth al-Zulam*, 2nd ed. (Maktabat Imām al-Ḥaramayn, 1401 AH / 1981 CE), 327-328.

¹⁶⁸ Or truly.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 379.

“*Ulū al-Amr*.” This reading emphasizes the quality of *Ulū al-Amr* as ‘*ulamā*’, not merely the domain of their commands. As for the latter, and the subsequent sphere of obedience due to these ‘*ulamā*’, al-Juwaynī’s discussion in this section of *Ghiyāth* does not explicitly limit the sphere of obedience to the ‘*ulamā*’. But the context appears to indicate that obedience to the ‘*ulamā*’ is within the known *sharī‘ah* guidelines. What complicates this, however, is al-Juwaynī’s assertion that the reality of Divine guidelines changes according to the changes of the *ijtihād* practiced by the ‘*ulamā*’,¹⁷⁰ a point taken up by Chapter 3’s discussion of *taṣwīb*.

As the reader may have noticed, al-Ṭabarī conflates the analytical distinction I referred to at the beginning of this section. While maintaining the need to comply with the (restricted) orders of commanders and governors, in principle, it may not have been because they were the intended application of *Ulū al-Amr* in verse 4:59. *Ulū al-Amr* could be a different group altogether. Al-Juwaynī’s words can arguably be read within this rebuttal framework. For a more explicit disagreement with al-Ṭabarī’s interpretation of *Ulū al-Amr*, I turn to the influential Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH / 1209 CE). In his *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, al-Rāzī argues not only that *Ulū al-Amr* are the ‘*ulamā*’, but that they are specifically the ‘*ulamā*’¹⁷¹ who make up *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, and that their collective decision-making as such is infallible (*ma‘ṣūm*).¹⁷² Al-Rāzī’s line of reasoning is based on the notion that the verse commands obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* without qualifying it whatsoever. For God to require obedience without any apparent restriction means that the entity to be obeyed is infallible – because it is impossible that God would want something and not want it at the same time, from the same aspect. As al-Rāzī puts it,

¹⁷⁰ Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 380.

¹⁷¹ Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH / 1209 CE), *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, 32 vols. (Tehran: Shirkat Ṣaḥāfī Nawīn, ca 1980), 179.

والمراد من أولي الأمر العلماء في أصح الأقوال لأن الملوك يجب عليهم طاعة العلماء ولا ينعكس

¹⁷² Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 10, 144.

اعلم أن قوله : * (وأولي الأمر منكم) * يدل عندنا على أن إجماع الأمة حجة ، والدليل على ذلك أن الله تعالى أمر بطاعة أولي الأمر على سبيل الجزم في هذه الآية ومن أمر الله بطاعته على سبيل الجزم والقطع لا بد وأن يكون معصوماً عن الخطأ ، إذ لو لم يكن معصوماً عن الخطأ كان بتقدير إقدامه على الخطأ يكون قد أمر الله بمتابعته ، فيكون ذلك أمراً بفعل ذلك الخطأ والخطأ لكونه خطأ منهي عنه ، فهذا يفضي إلى اجتماع الأمر والنهي في الفعل الواحد بالاعتبار الواحد ، وأنه محال ، فثبت أن الله تعالى أمر بطاعة أولي الأمر على سبيل الجزم ، وثبت أن كل من أمر الله بطاعته على سبيل الجزم وجب أن يكون معصوماً عن الخطأ ، فثبت قطعاً أن أولي الأمر المذكور في هذه الآية لا بد وأن يكون معصوماً [...]]

Know that when God says, “and *Ulū al-Amr* from among you,” in our opinion this indicates that the consensus (*ijmā`*) counts as proof [for establishing the truth of claims]. The proof of this is that God Almighty ordered obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* in a definitive fashion [without any restriction or qualifier] in this verse. Whoever God orders obedience to in a definitive and decisive fashion [without any restriction or qualifier] must be infallible. For if he were not infallible, then, if he were to make a mistake, God would have ordered that one follow him. Thus, that would be a command to make the mistake. But a mistake is something one is forbidden from doing. Hence, the result is that commanding and forbidding would apply to the same action from the same aspect of consideration, which is impossible. So it is established that God Almighty has ordered obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* in a definitive fashion [without any restriction or qualifier]; it is also established that whoever God orders obedience to in a decisive fashion [without any restriction or qualifier] must be

infallible; therefore, it is definitively established that the *Ulū al-Amr* [as a unit] mentioned in this verse must be infallible [...]¹⁷³

Al-Rāzī dismisses the Imāmī Shī‘ī reading of *Ulū al-Amr* being the series of infallible Imams appointed by God because requiring obedience to them assumes that they are known and that they can be reached. Al-Rāzī states his conviction that,

ونحن نعلم بالضرورة أنا في زماننا هذا عاجزون عن معرفة الامام المعصوم ، عاجزون عن الوصول إليهم ، عاجزون عن استفادة

الدين والعلم منهم [...]

And we know – self-evidently¹⁷⁴ so – that we, in this time of ours, are incapable of knowing the infallible imam, incapable of reaching them¹⁷⁵, incapable of benefitting the *dīn* and knowledge from them [...]¹⁷⁶

Because al-Rāzī does not believe he has the ability to identify the infallible Imam or benefit from his knowledge, the *Ulū al-Amr* must be a different group – *Ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*.¹⁷⁷ Chapter 2 and 3 demonstrate how Shī‘ī interlocutors engage with their Sunnī counterparts on this verse’s implication of infallibility.¹⁷⁸ This partly reveals a shared paradigm, even when the “central” Sunnī domain relegates Shī‘ī readings to the “periphery.”

A common thread in the aforementioned exegetical readings from the Sunnī tradition is the underlying assumption of morality: either in the domain of *Ulū al-Amr*’s commands (i.e. only

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Or necessarily.

¹⁷⁵ It seems that the plural form is referring to the potential to interpret *Ulū al-Amr* not as an infallible unit but as multiple infallible imams.

¹⁷⁶ Fakhṛ al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥsīn al-Kabīr*, vol. 10, 144.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

[...] وإذا كان الأمر كذلك علمنا أن المعصوم الذي أمر الله المؤمنين بطاعته ليس بعضا من أبعاض الأمة ، ولا طائفة من طوائفهم . ولما بطل هذا وجب أن يكون ذلك المعصوم الذي هو المراد بقوله : * (وأولي الأمر) * أهل الحل والعقد من الأمة ، وذلك يوجب القطع بأن إجماع الأمة حجة .

¹⁷⁸ For a contemporary example, see Ṭabāṭabā‘ī’s *al-Mizān* and Makārim’s *al-Amthal* on verse 4:59.

within the sphere of the morally acceptable); or in *Ulū al-Amr*'s qualifications (i.e. '*ulamā*'; perhaps even infallible); or both. The preceding section which suggested a model for early internalized Qur'ānic readings resonates well with the morality-embedded Sunnī interpretations of these later generations. With this background in mind, I now turn to an "archive" of early Islamic historical memory, examining obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* as it manifests in relation to the memory of a particular episode – 'Āshūrā' 61 AH / 680 CE.

1.3 Conceptual Technologies: The Obedience of Yazīd’s Soldiers

The overwhelming majority of surviving Muslim memory (Sunnī and Shī‘ī) remember the murder of Ḥusayn (d. 61 AH / 680 CE) on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ as a tragedy. He was the Prophet Muḥammad’s prized grandson, known for his knowledge and iconic spirituality, as recounted in both Sunnī and Shī‘ī classical literature. In an apparent attempt to consolidate power and set an example for potential dissidents, Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah (d. 64 AH / 683 CE) had Ḥusayn and his vastly outnumbered fellows killed in the battle of Karbalā’. In addition to this news, by the end of the year 63 AH the people of Madīnah, where Prophet Muḥammad had found refuge early on and in which he is buried, had become convinced of Yazīd’s corruption in Damascus up close — corruption to such a disqualifying degree that one of the pious notables of Madīnah reportedly informed the people that he had, “come back from seeing a man [i.e. Yazīd] whom, I swear by God, even if I only had found these sons of mine [as supporters to fight him with] I would engage in a struggle [warring] against him.”¹⁷⁹ According to Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 310 AH / 923 CE) account, people rallied around this battle cry, prompting Yazīd to send an army to force them into submission. In the midst of the fighting on the outskirts, Yazīd’s army managed to enter the town from behind, wreaking havoc in the core of the city, and causing the fighters to retreat. When the commander of Yazīd’s army, Muslim ibn ‘Uqbah (d. 63 AH / 683 CE), entered Madīnah he called people to pledge allegiance to Yazīd, not as denizens or subjects, but as, “*khawal* (property/slaves)” of Yazīd —their lives, wealth, and families at his disposal (i.e. “legitimate” targets for pillaging and rape).¹⁸⁰ There are thus, at least, two opposing schemes of obedience in

¹⁷⁹ Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 4, 8 vols. (Qum: Maṭba‘at al-Istiḳāmah bil-Qāhirah, 1939 CE), 380.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 4, 381.

[...] فدخل مسلم بن عقبة المدينة فدعا الناس للبيعة على أنهم خول ليزيد بن معاوية يحكم في دماءهم وأموالهم وأهليهم ما شاء.

these early days as remembered in extant sources: [1] people, like Ḥusayn, who rejected obedience to those with Yazīd's qualifications and/or rejected some of Yazīd's commands; and [2] those who obeyed Yazīd in killing Ḥusayn and/or ravaging Madīnah.

While it may be argued that the soldiers carrying out Yazīd's orders had not been trained in *sharī'ah*-minded moral technologies, and thus their actions are explainable exclusively in materialistic terms, a few snapshots recounted here imply that early Islamic authors relaying the account tell a different story. Reports indicate that both sides performed the ritual prayer on the day of 'Āshūrā'.¹⁸¹ There is little reason to doubt that at least military discipline and peer pressure would have made ritual prayer in congregation a routine. But regardless of the actual fact of the matter, what concerns the argument of this chapter is that the historical writing reconstructing the account makes that out to be the case. Particularly, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH / 923 CE), quoting Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157 AH / 774 CE), reports that, on the day of 'Āshūrā', a man on Yazīd's side named 'Amr ibn al-Ḥajjāj called out,

يا أهل الكوفة الزموا طاعتكم وجماعتكم ولا ترتابوا في قتل من مرق من الدين وخالف الامام

O' people of Kūfah, stick to your obedience and your congregation and do not hesitate in killing those who have deserted the faith (*dīn*) and opposed the imam.¹⁸²

If 'Amr ibn al-Ḥajjāj's words are representative of an army-wide sentiment, those fighting Ḥusayn were remembered as at least claiming to have seen their obedience to Yazīd's chain of command as an act of faith. But, again, whether or not this account speaks to the reality on the ground of the

Also see:

Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, 5th ed., vol. 8, (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1980 CE), 189.

¹⁸¹ For example:

Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyá al-Balādhurī (d. 279 AH / 892 CE), *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir Al-Maḥmūdī, 1st ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Ta'āraf Lil-Maṭbū'āt, 1977 CE), 187.

¹⁸² Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 4, 331.

battlefield, al-Ṭabarī engages his readers by projecting the stark contrast on the battlefield as being due – at least in part – to competing conceptual frameworks regarding obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*. The words quoted here invoke iterative “*tā‘ah*” (obedience) and sticking to the “*jamā‘ah*” (group/congregation). Moreover, these words portray Ḥusayn and his fellows as heretics who deserve to be put to death because they have opposed “the imam” (i.e. Yazīd). In response to this statement, Ḥusayn is described to have said,

يا عمرو بن الحجاج أعلي تحرض الناس أنحن مرقنا وأنتم ثبتتم عليه أما والله لتعلمن لو قد قبضت أرواحكم ومتم على أعمالكم

أينا مرق من الدين ومن هو أولى بصلي النار

O ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥajjāj, is it against me that you incite the people? Is it us who have deserted while you have been steadfast on [the path of faith]? By God, indeed, once your souls are taken and you have died while engaged in your deeds, you will know which of us has deserted the faith and whom most deserves to burn in hellfire.¹⁸³

Al-Ṭabarī recounts this as a prelude to ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥajjāj attacking Ḥusayn and his companions with the right flank of Yazīd’s army (commanded by ‘Umar ibn Sa‘d). After some time of combat, “the first of Ḥusayn’s companions,” Muslim ibn ‘Awsajah, is said to have fallen.¹⁸⁴ The response of Ḥusayn lends credence to the argument that invoking the line of reasoning and/or conceptual framework was not significant merely for its form but also for its content. Its content is portrayed as serious enough for subject-formation not only on the battlefield but also in the encounter with death and beyond.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

See also:

Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 3, 193.

Al-Ṭabarī reports that one of Yazīd’s men by the name of Ka‘b ibn Jābir, after killing Burayr ibn Khuḍayr, Ḥusayn’s companion who was known as the “master of [Qur’ān] reciters (*sayyid al-qurrā*),” was scolded by his wife or sister, who promised never to speak to him again for doing so.¹⁸⁵ Ka‘b is quoted saying,

[...] فأبلغ عبيد الله إماماً لقيته * بأبي مطيع للخليفة سامع [...] .

[...] So tell ‘Ubayd Allāh [Yazīd’s governor over Kūfah] if you meet him –
–that I am obedient to the Caliph, all ears [...].¹⁸⁶

Later in life, he is described as having made the following supplication,

يا رب إنا قد وفينا فلا تجعلنا يا رب كمن قد غدر .

O’ Lord, indeed we were loyal, so do not make us, O’ Lord, like those who have betrayed.¹⁸⁷

In other words, Ka‘b claimed to be loyal to his imam, Yazīd, and prayed that God not treat him as He would treat those who betrayed Yazīd (and God, he would claim). Whether this individual and his likes truly believed they were in the right or not is arguably beyond the point. Repeating this rationalization is portrayed as having yielded the necessary *riyāḍah* desensitizing the subject to the immoralities underlying their decisions. By such an account, al-Ṭabarī reinforces the image that the guise of *sharī‘ah*-mindedness, coupled with the commonplace technologies of ritual prayer, supplication and sticking to the congregation, were the threshold to be overcome for this end.

This point is exemplified in reports by other authors describing Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan (d. 66 AH / 686 CE), one of the major figures responsible for killing Ḥusayn, following the battle

¹⁸⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 4, 329; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 3, 191-192.

¹⁸⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 4, 329.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 330.

of ‘Āshūrā’. In his *Mīzān al-I’tidāl*, al-Dhahabī (d. ca 748 AH / 1348 CE) reports that Abū Bakr ibn ‘Ayyāsh (d. ca 194 AH / 810 CE) relayed that Abū Ishāq al-Sabī‘ī (d. ca 127 AH / 745 CE) said,

كان شمر يصلى معنا ، ثم يقول : اللهم إنك تعلم أنى شريف فاغفر لي .

قلت : كيف يغفر الله لك وقد أعنت على قتل ابن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ؟

قال : ويحك ! فكيف نصنع ؟ إن أمراءنا هؤلاء أمرونا بأمر فلم نخالفهم ، ولو خالفناهم كنا شرا من هذه الحمر [الشَّعَاء].

قلت : إن هذا لعذر قبيح ، فإنما الطاعة في المعروف .

Shimr used to pray with us and then would say, “O’ God, indeed you know that I am noble, so forgive me.”

[To which] I said, “How will God forgive you when you have helped kill the grandson of God’s Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him?”

He then said, “Woe unto you! What are we to have done? Indeed, those commanders of ours gave us an *Amr* (order), so we did not oppose them. Had we opposed them, we would have been worse than these tall¹⁸⁸ donkeys.”

¹⁸⁸ This is likely the correct word as opposed to “al-suqāh,” if the word “ḥumur” is a plural form of “ḥimār” (donkey). For an “ashaqq” horse is a tall horse. The feminine form of “ashaqq” is “shaqqā’.” Hence, the non-‘āqil plural (e.g. donkeys) would be referred to as “shaqqā’.” See: Ismā‘īl ibn Ḥammād al-Jawharī (d. 393 AH / 1003 CE), *Tāj al-Lughah wa Ṣiḥāḥ al-‘Arabīyah*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Ghafūr ‘Aṭṭār, 4th ed., vol. 4, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-‘Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1987 CE), 1503.

However, if the word “ḥumur” is a plural form of “aḥmar/ḥamrā’” (red), then it is possible that Shimr is describing the complexion of servants who served as “suqāh” (water/drink carriers). “Aḥmar” was understood as a reference to some peoples from the Levant, the Roman lands and the Persian lands, and was distinguished: from “abyaḍ” (white), which referred to a, “wheat-like color with [somewhat] dark/black beauty features”; from “asmar” or “ādam” (tanned/brown), which referred to the, “color of people from India”; and from “aswad” (black), which referred to a mostly [intensely/darker] black complexion. On these distinctions, see: Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī (d. ca 748 AH / 1348 CE), *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arna’ūt, 9th ed., vol. 2, 23 vols. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1993 CE), 168.

I then said (qultu), “Indeed, this is an ugly excuse; for, indeed, obedience is only due in the [domain of the morally] acceptable.”¹⁸⁹

Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571 AH / 1176 CE) reports a similar account in his *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, but includes several additional figures in his chain of transmission.¹⁹⁰ Being a much earlier compilation, it is possible that al-Dhahabī benefited from Ibn ‘Asākir’s account, if not some other lost text. But since Ibn ‘Asākir’s account does not include the last statement by the reporter above, al-Dhahabī was likely quoting from a separate source or making his own comment. In any case, the use of the combination “kāna” along with the verbs “yuṣallī” and “yaqūl” implies a habitual frequency of prayer in the past followed by the subsequent supplication. Furthermore, the supplication quoted and attributed to Shimr gives insight into the rationalization technology that Shimr is portrayed as likely having trained himself to internalize. Given that the account portrays him as loud enough to be heard and recorded, this justificatory tactic is probably meant to be understood as having served to help find Shimr a space of *sharī‘ah*-legitimacy (at least in his own mind) despite the broad opposition to his decision. Abū Ishāq’s reply models the characteristic moral sentiment that lasts as the predominant understanding amongst Muslim *sharī‘ah* masters, both Sunnī and Shī‘ī: Obedience is either due to the morally infallible individual/group or it must be limited to the domain of morally acceptable commands. Different conceptual frameworks, thus, could partially form the subject in ways that morph the notion of refinement (*tahdhīb/tazkiyah*), of

If this latter reading is correct, Shimr may be making a racist (or otherwise condescending) comment, adding an additional layer of immorality to the reasoning he uses to justify killing Prophet Muḥammad’s prized grandson, Ḥusayn. This reading is supported by the use of the word “hā’ulā’,” a reference typically reserved for a plural including ‘āqil males (instead of the “hādhihi”), which appears in an edition of Ibn ‘Asākir’s account: ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571 AH / 1176 CE), *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. ‘Alī Shīrī, vol. 23, 70 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, 1995 CE), 189.

¹⁸⁹ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-‘itidāl fī Naqd al-Rijāl*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad Al-Bajāwī, 1st ed., vol. 2, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘ārif lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr, 1382 AH / 1963 CE), 280.

¹⁹⁰ ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. ‘Alī ‘Āshūr, vol. 25, 38 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001 CE), 128.

self-care, into its antithesis.¹⁹¹ The conceptual frameworks animated serve not only as potential drives for choosing sides on a battlefield but as justificatory tactics forming (and formed by) the subject in the aftermath. The subject/agent makes choices throughout life that contribute to the formation of his/her habitus and, in turn, subjectivity/agency. Iterative practices that the agent applies to him/herself can be physical, making a course of action more habitual, and – I propose here – they can be conceptual, making certain lines of reasoning more agreeable.

Through accounts by Islamic authors of history, the reader is led to conceive that even if material interests were the primary movers for Yazīd’s soldiers, they were still clothed with a garb of obedience to God. That is, some subjects/agents make an effort to justify their acts in the name of God. Others do not. Yazīd’s soldiers, in the snapshots presented here, appear to be subjects who yearn for a Divine cover for their choices, even if those choices are driven purely by materialistic considerations in actuality. The type of subject formed by iterative justificatory tactics, appealing to *sharī‘ah*-minded sentiments, is not the same as one lacking such appeal. The latter was arguably doomed to be self-defeating in a *sharī‘ah*-minded community, one in which the *sharī‘ah* had become embedded as a way of life. For any chance at being effective, deviation from the *sharī‘ah* morality would still have required at least lip-service to the *sharī‘ah*’s authoritative texts and principles.

1.4 Conclusion

Authors of early Islamic history, like al-Ṭabarī, give us a peek into their own time’s central domain, in terms of which matters of the periphery are resolved. For example, this central domain requires qualified obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*, one that is limited to the morally acceptable, or

¹⁹¹ See Qur’ān 29:69; 79:35-41; 83:14; and 91:1-10

requires that unqualified obedience be due to an infallible *collective* of *Ulū al-Amr*. Relative to this central domain, one peripheral view might argue that obedience is unqualified but that the *Ulū al-Amr* are *individually* (not merely collectively) infallible. Another peripheral view might argue, as Yazīd’s soldiers are portrayed arguing, that obedience is unqualified and that there is no morality beyond the very whim of the commander. The peripheral views are not always of the same paradigmatic standing, however. Both peripheral views are resolved in terms of the central domain from some aspect – otherwise, there could be no meaningful discussion – but the latter peripheral view (in this example) arguably challenges the paradigm shared by the central domain and the former peripheral view. That is, the substantive moral concern, the “ma‘rūf” assumed by the former peripheral view and the central domain is not assumed by the latter peripheral view. Sunnī and Shī‘ī scholars, arguably representing the central domain and the former peripheral view, shared such a paradigm. While the image portrayed of Yazīd’s army is forced to engage on the terms of the central domain when it comes to this particular question, it lacks the paradigmatic feature of substantive morality that the overwhelming majority of Islamic thought shares. Granted, it may share a broader sphere of paradigmatic features such as deference to *some* interpretation of the sharī‘ah (if only for lip service).

The historicity of this central domain for the temporality of ‘Āshūrā’ is justifiable to the extent that the Qur’ānic, *sharī‘ah-minded* world had taken its toll on a core sphere of influence within the broader community (at least if we assume the Qur’ānic framework outlined in the first section). But my point here pertains more to the world of these authors, the archive they recount for their own formation and that of their readers, than it does to the temporal world of ‘Āshūrā’ in 61 AH. They give us a sense of the kinds of practices they likely envisioned could lead to the formation of the type of subject employing *sharī‘ah-minded* sentiments as opposed to one lacking

such an appeal. Invoking lines of reasoning iteratively, in form, and of a particular substantive content, plays a part in this formation. Their excerpts arguably portray a dynamic relationship between iterative conceptual summoning and the newly-formed self, one that envisions reproducing a subject with a habitus to further justify those lines of reasoning and their entailed positions on the ground.

The snapshots presented in this chapter offer a window into the governing worldview and the ingrained, interconnected habitus of Islamic authors recording for themselves and their readers memories related to ‘Āshūrā’ and its aftermath. The moral technologies envisioned by such authors as forming and formed by the subject of this habitus range from ritual prayer and obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*, to the individual and social exercise of justifying the range of that due obedience. While the latter example is not as obviously a physical form of training, it nonetheless would have been thought to absorb mental energy and require the investment of time for elaboration and repetition. The significance of this moral technology is that its content, not only its form, is portrayed as having an influence on subject formation and agency outcomes. Arguably, then, such conceptual frameworks, including their invoked content, are not portrayed merely as political ideologies superadded to another more physical technology, but are rather thought to be part and parcel of a significantly different technology. This argument will be revisited in Chapter 5 following a holistic assessment of these “archives.” As for the more pertinent arguments of this work, this chapter has revealed an archive deploying moral technologies in devotional contexts, supporting the argument that – in their deployment of competing conceptual frameworks – Islamic authors are preoccupied with a concern for forming moral subjects. Furthermore, the reconstruction of this chapter’s historically-specific archives, revealing the *Ulū al-Amr* obedience form of “leadership,” with its substantively moral requirement, highlights it as not only centered around a moral subject-

formation for commander and follower, but also draws attention to the “leadership” of the authors animating this discourse, forming themselves and their readers along the way.

Chapter 2: Leadership at the Periphery

المؤمن علوي لأنه علا في المعرفة، والمؤمن هاشمي لأنه هشم الضلالة، والمؤمن قرشي لأنه أقر بالشيء المأخوذ عنا، والمؤمن عجمي لأنه استعجم عليه أبواب الشر، والمؤمن عربي لان نبيه صلى الله عليه وآله عربي وكتابه المنزل بلسان عربي مبين، والمؤمن نبطي لأنه استنبط العلم، والمؤمن مهاجري لأنه هجر السيئات، والمؤمن أنصاري لأنه نصر رسوله وأهل بيت رسول الله، والمؤمن مجاهد لأنه يجاهد أعداء الله تعالى في دولة الباطل بالتقية وفي دولة الحق بالسيف.

—Ja'far al-Ṣādiq¹⁹²

2.1 Setting the Stage: *Ulū al-Amr* in Imāmī Shī'ī Exegetical Literature

Although the reconstructions from Sunnī sources in the previous chapter shaped and continue to shape *central* interpretations and commentary on the notion of *Ulū al-Amr* in Qur'ān 4:59, it is arguably through a reconstruction of *peripheral* reception of this verse in Shī'ī circles that a full appreciation of underlying, subject-forming moral considerations begins to crystallize. The phrase “*Ulū al-Amr*” (albeit in its syntactically specific form) appears in two verses of the Qur'ān, 4:59, where the requirement of obeying *Ulū al-Amr* is spelled out,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ

بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

¹⁹² Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣādūq (d. 381 AH / 991 CE), *ʿItāl al-Sharāʿiʿ*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥr al-'Ulūm, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Najaf: Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydariyah, 1966), 467.

O you who have faith! Obey God and obey the Messenger and *Ulū al-Amr* among you. And if you dispute regarding anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you have faith in God and the Last Day. That is better and more favorable in outcome.¹⁹³

Another instance of the phrase “*Ulū al-Amr*” appears in verse 4:83, where *Ulū al-Amr* are made reference points,

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَدَّعَوْا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

When an *Amr* of safety or alarm comes to them, they immediately broadcast it; but had they referred it to the Messenger and to *Ulū al-Amr* among them, those of them who investigate would have ascertained it. And were it not for God’s grace upon you and His mercy, you would have surely followed Satan, [all] except a few.¹⁹⁴

Identifying this group of “those vested with the *Amr*” or “those to whom the *Amr* belongs” has held and continues to hold significance in various trends of Islamic thought because of the legal-moral weight that Qur’ānic prescriptions carry in the Islamic worldview and relevant practice. As sketched out in the Introduction and the previous chapter, systematic *obedience* to *Ulū al-Amr*, as well as the iteratively employed *conceptual* frameworks justifying it, are arguably important objects of study for Islamic thinkers due to their conceived bearing on subject-formation. Like other forms of repeated practices, Islamic authors appear to deal with obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*, and the lines of reasoning invoked repetitively in order to justify that obedience, as a *riyāḍah*,

¹⁹³ Qur’ān 4:59

¹⁹⁴ Qur’ān 4:83

honing a particular type of *tahdhīb/tazkiyah* (refinement), yielding a subject inclined toward a specific set of legal-moral decisions.

In Chapter 1, I identified a number of Sunnī interpretations for the *Ulū al-Amr* notion, modeled with an underlying assumption of morality regarding obedience to (or at least compliance with) *Ulū al-Amr*: morality is assumed either in the domain of *Ulū al-Amr*'s commands (i.e. the commands to be obeyed are only those within the sphere of the morally acceptable); or in *Ulū al-Amr*'s qualifications (i.e. the commands to be obeyed are only those issued by 'ulamā'; and perhaps only by an infallible [collective]); or both. This assumption, I argued, is paradigmatically characteristic of the Qur'ānic cross-references related to *amr* and, thus, the discourse animated in the words of the major Sunnī authorities discussed. But the discourse of such Sunnī authors, however self-contained it may appear, and to whatever extent it may appear dominant, influential and central in relation to the history of Islamic rule, cannot be divorced from interlocutors at the periphery, however marginalized they may be. For even when Sunnī theoreticians dominate the central domain due to their traditional influence on the masses and/or their historical connection to central sources of funding and chairs/pulpits, by definition they still share paradigms with the peripheral Shī'ī thinkers of their day. To what extent has a dialectic between the Sunni center and the Shī'ī periphery informed the paradigmatic feature revealed in Chapter 1? In this chapter, I compile a representative survey of early Imāmī Shī'ī exegetical literature on *Ulū al-Amr*, and then examine a more recent departure from the classical Shī'ī reading, both indicating a dialectic informing paradigmatic features of this leadership form in Islamic thought. The reconstructions provide additional archival cases in point for the arguments that Islamic authors viewed their disagreements as part of a subject-forming discourse, and that their interventions as authors functioned as one of the subject-forming versions of "leadership."

2.2 A Window into the Classical Reading: al-Ṭūsī's *al-Tibyān*

As I will cite in the next section, extant Imāmī exegetical ḥadīth literature appears to portray *Ulū al-Amr* as specifically referring to the twelve designated Imams from Prophet Muḥammad's household/progeny (i.e. Imam 'Alī, and eleven Imams from his children and subsequent generations of descendants through Prophet Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭimah). There are several indications that these individuals are regarded as immaculate (*ma ṣūm*), one of which being that the obedience due to them in this verse is unrestricted and on par with obedience to God's messenger. To situate this reading in the context of a broader Islamic discussion on the verse, it is informative to summarize a common Sunnī position. Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204 AH / 820 CE), is reported to have said the following when commenting on verse 4:59,

[...] فَأَمْرُوا أَنْ يُطِيعُوا أَوْلِي الْأَمْرِ الَّذِينَ أَمَرَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، لَا طَاعَةَ مَطْلُوقَةً، بَلْ طَاعَةٌ مُسْتَثْنَاءَةٌ، فِيمَا لَهُمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ، فَقَالَ: " فَإِنْ

تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ " [النساء: 59] ، يعني: إن اختلفتم في شيء. وهذا - إن شاء الله - كما قال في أولي الأمر،

إلا أنه يقول: " فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ " ، يعني - والله أعلم - هم وأمرؤهم الذين أمروا بطاعتهم، " فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ " ، يعني -

والله أعلم - إلى ما قال الله والرسول إن عرفتموه، فإن لم تعرفوه سألتهم الرسول عنه إذا وصلتكم، أو من وصل منكم إليه. لأن

ذلك الفرض الذي لا مُنَازَعَةَ لَكُمْ فِيهِ، لقول الله: " وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ

مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ [الأحزاب: 36].¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204 AH / 820 CE), *al-Risālah*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir, 1st ed. (Maktabat al-Ḥalabī, 1940 CE), 80-81.

In other words, if obedience due to *Ulū al-Amr* in this verse is unrestricted (as Imāmīs, for example, say), then why does the verse only refer the faithful back to God and the Messenger in the case of disputes? According to al-Shāfi‘ī, it is because the verse commands believers to settle their disputes by referring back to God and the Messenger (omitting any mention of *Ulū al-Amr*) that the obedience due to *Ulū al-Amr* must be a restricted form of obedience. That is, al-Shāfi‘ī proposes that the occurrence of dispute mentioned in the verse refers to disputes with the same *Ulū al-Amr* people were commanded to obey. Such disputes are then addressed by reference to the word of God and the Messenger —for there is no disputing the decree of God and the Messenger.

As an example of leading Twelver Shī‘ī authority discussing the identity of *Ulū al-Amr* in verse 4:59, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH / 1067 CE) writes the following in his *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*,

[...] وروى أصحابنا عن أبي جعفر وأبي عبد الله (ع) أنهم الأئمة من آل محمد صلى الله عليه وآله فلذلك أوجب الله تعالى

طاعتهم بالاطلاق، كما أوجب طاعة رسوله وطاعة نفسه كذلك . ولا يجوز إيجاب طاعة أحد مطلقا إلا من كان معصوما

مأمونا منه السهو والغلط ، وليس ذلك بحاصل في الامراء ، ولا العلماء ، وإنما هو واجب في الأئمة الذين دلت الأدلة على

عصمتهم وطهارتهم ، فاما من قال المراد به العلماء ، فقوله بعيد ، لان قوله (وأولي الأمر) معناه أطيعوا من له الامر ، وليس

ذلك للعلماء ، فان قالوا : يجب علينا طاعتهم إذا كانوا محقين ، فإذا عدلوا عن الحق فلا طاعة لهم علينا . قلنا : هذا تخصيص

لعموم إيجاب الطاعة لم يدل عليه دليل . وحمل الآية على العموم ، فيمن يضح ذلك فيه أولى من تخصيص الطاعة بشيء دون

شيء كما لا يجوز تخصيص وجوب طاعة الرسول وطاعة الله في شيء دون شيء . وقوله : (فان تنازعتم في شيء فردوه إلى

الله والرسول) فمعنى الرد إلى الله هو إلى كتابه والرد إلى رسوله هو الرد إلى سنته . وقول مجاهد ، وقتادة ، وميمون بن مهران

، والسدي : والرد إلى الأئمة يجري مجرى الرد إلى الله والرسول ، ولذلك قال في آية أخرى " ولو رده إلى الرسول وإلى أولي

الامر منهم لعلمه الذين يستنبطونه منهم " [النساء: 83] ولأنه إذا كان قولهم حجة من حيث كانوا معصومين حافظين للشرع

جروا مجرى الرسول في هذا الباب. [...] ¹⁹⁶

This excerpt from al-Ṭūsī directly follows his summary that *Ulū al-Amr* have been interpreted (by leading non-Shī‘ī authorities) to be either the *umarā’* (commanders and governors) or the *‘ulamā’* (erudite scholars). In opposition to those positions, al-Ṭūsī situates the recognized Imāmī understanding: *Ulū al-Amr* are none other than the immaculate Imams. There appear to be two lines of reasoning in al-Ṭūsī’s exegesis: [1] the reports attributed to the Imams indicate that this is the correct interpretation of the verse in question; and [2] the Qur’ānic language in this verse is unrestricted/unqualified and, thus, the *Ulū al-Amr* to whom obedience is due in such an absolute fashion must be, “immaculate, safeguarded from absentmindedness and error; and those [qualities] are not present in the *umarā’* or the *‘ulamā’*; rather, they are necessary in the Imams whose immaculateness and purity has been established by the evidence.”¹⁹⁷

It is, thus, possible to delineate two exegetical methodologies in al-Ṭūsī’s reading of the verse. One of the approaches relies mainly on the reports attributed to the Imams, from the get-go, in order to identify the intended meaning or application of the verse, without needing to make a claim about what the Qur’ānic language alone tells the reader about *Ulū al-Amr*’s immaculate nature. The second approach reads the Qur’ānic language alone to indicate the requirement of *‘iṣmah* (immaculateness/infallibility) in the *Ulū al-Amr* (something some Sunnī scholars, such as

¹⁹⁶ Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH / 1067 CE), *al-Tibyān fī Taḥsīn al-Qur’ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥabīb Qaṣīr al-‘Āmilī, 1st ed., vol. 3, 10 vols. (Maktab al-‘Ilām al-Islāmī, 1409 AH / 1989 CE), 235-236.

¹⁹⁷ Translation from excerpt above.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, later argue¹⁹⁸), and then use other evidence to identify the historical personalities who fit this description. When it comes to the second approach, al-Ṭūsī addresses an argument similar to, but slightly different from, the one attributed to al-Shāfi‘ī earlier: the *Ulū al-Amr* do not have to be immaculate because obedience to them is restricted (i.e. contingent on them being righteous or only within the sphere of righteous commands). Al-Ṭūsī’s argument responds saying that there is no evidence to support this restriction and that it runs counter to the apparently general language of the command to obey *Ulū al-Amr*, coupled with obeying the Messenger and with obeying God. As for the command to refer to God and the Messenger in the case of disputes, al-Ṭūsī understands this merely to mean that the Qur’ān and the Sunnah (Prophetic tradition) are the reference points (i.e. a matter of agreement across Shī‘ī and Sunnī schools of thinking). However, al-Ṭūsī points out that referring matters back to the *Ulū al-Amr* (which he understands to be the twelve Imams) is tantamount to referring things back to God and the Messenger, as evidenced by verse 4:83 (in which matters are referred back to the Messenger *as well as* to *Ulū al-Amr*) and given that the aforementioned Imams *immaculately* safeguard the message of the Messenger.

Both methodologies detectable in al-Ṭūsī’s discussion provide an intellectual context for understanding Sunnī exegetical interventions reconstructed in Chapter 1. By context, here, I am referring to the implied dialectic nurtured by a periphery’s engagement with the central domain – even though a given central domain does not quote the periphery’s literature directly. In other words, the views expressed by al-Māwardī (d. 450 AH / 1058 CE), qualifying the sphere of obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*, and al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE), identifying *Ulū al-Amr* with

¹⁹⁸ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 10, 144.

the *'ulamā'* who themselves reinterpret the sharī'ah, can be understood as responses to Shī'ī readings identifying *Ulū al-Amr* as the immaculate, exemplars of sharī'ah knowledge (the Imams).¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, the influence of the Shī'ī reading seems to make its most pronounced appearance in al-Rāzī's (d. 606 AH / 1209 CE) acquiescence regarding the infallibility of *Ulū al-Amr* in 4:59. Cross-references within the Qur'ān, familiar to avid readers of the book, as well as these central-peripheral dialectics, appear to have paved the way for the moral considerations regarding *Ulū al-Amr* obedience.²⁰⁰ What follows further demonstrates the plausibility of dialectic influence by reconstructing early Imāmī Shī'ī exegetical literature on *Ulū al-Amr*.

¹⁹⁹ It is not that the Shī'ī views are entirely ignored. If that were the case, the Shī'ī view would likely belong to a different paradigm. Rather, the Shī'ī views appear *marginally*, within the same paradigmatic discussion, yet arguably misrepresented and/or without full coverage, such as in the introduction to *Ghiyāth al-Umam* by al-Juwaynī. Beyond such engagement, I am arguing that Shī'ī views shaped (and were not only shaped by) contemporaneous Sunnī discourse. The evidence for this presented here is the apparently shared paradigms assumed, on the one hand, and the alignment of conceptual developments, on the other hand.

²⁰⁰ See Chapter 1.

2.3 Representative Survey of Early Imāmī Shī‘ī Exegetical Literature on Obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*

In this section, four categories of exegetical ḥadīth literature are compiled as they have survived in works associated with the earliest Imāmī ḥadīth compilations: [1] reports that limit *Ulū al-Amr* to the Imāmī Imams *explicitly*; [2] reports that identify *Ulū al-Amr* with the Imāmī Imams but do not *explicitly limit Ulū al-Amr* to them; [3] reports that specifically name *Ulū al-Amr*; [4] miscellaneous reports featuring distinct qualities of *Ulū al-Amr*. While *isnād* analysis is a useful clue to be taken into consideration when ascertaining the historicity of an original quotation, it suffices for the purposes of this chapter’s argument to reconstruct the relevant references as they are believed to have been accessible to scholars approximately between the 10th and 13th centuries CE. Hence, the presence of these reports in reputable early Shī‘ī ḥadīth collections traceable to the period in question makes an *isnād* analysis unnecessary. This representative survey lends strong support to the dominant Imāmī reading of *Ulū al-Amr* in verse 4:59 as being *limited* to the 12 Imams of Twelver Shī‘ī thought, assuming a ḥadīth-centric approach. This follows from the fact that categories 2 and 3 are qualified by category 1 and expounded further by category 4.

It goes without saying that the authorities being quoted in these reports are not necessarily clarifying the meaning signified by the words of the Qur’ān –for such signification is a convention of usage in the Arabic language, typically already understood by native speakers familiar with the context. Rather, the authority is arguably: either defining the sphere of instances/applications to which the conventional linguistic usage is being applied; or revealing a deeper layer of interpretation, such as by making cross-references and connections where they may be accessible but have not been sufficiently attended to, or by authoritatively identifying symbolic layers of

meaning. This does not preclude that, at times, the authority being quoted may clarify a linguistic usage that has been obscured over time or due to other factors, but it is arguably unnecessary, by default, so long as there is an apparent (*ẓāhir/ẓuhūr*) conventional usage accessible to one sufficiently familiar with Arabic language usage.²⁰¹

In addition to the main ḥadīth compilations of al-Kulaynī (d. ca 329 AH / 941 CE), al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH / 991 CE), and al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH / 1067 CE), references here include one of the earliest extant exegesis works in the Imāmī tradition with commentary on verse 4:59 – the ḥadīth-based *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*. According to the recent Imāmī exegesis authority Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī (d. 1981 CE), Imāmī authorities have praised and passed down the exegesis work attributed to Muḥammad ibn Mas‘ūd ibn ‘Ayyāsh (d. ca 320 AH / 932 CE), otherwise known as al-‘Ayyāshī, ever since it was written. In those (approximately) 11 centuries, according to al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Imāmī exegesis authorities have made no noteworthy criticism of the book’s credibility, despite the fact that the second volume of the two-volume manuscript has not yet been located, and that some copyists abbreviated the original chains of transmission for the reports.²⁰² Finally, I have also included a limited number of references to *al-Iḥtijāj* by al-Ṭabrisī (d. ca 6th century AH / 12th century CE), not as much as an authoritative reference²⁰³ but more so to locate

²⁰¹ See Chapter 5 for a brief synthesis and exposition of these distinctions in the words of a contemporary Twelver Shī‘ī scholar, discussing them not in terms of his Shī‘ī affiliation but in terms of a legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) on approaching constitutional texts.

²⁰² Muḥammad ibn Mas‘ūd al-‘Ayyāshī (d. ca 320 AH / 932 CE), *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, ed. Hāshim al-Rasūlī al-Maḥallātī, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Tehran: al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmīyah al-Islāmīyah), 4-5.

²⁰³ Because the chains of transmission for its reports were generally omitted, mainly because its contents were supposed to have been largely established through other means (e.g. consensus, rational argumentation, alternative sources, etc...). See:

Abū Manṣūr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ṭabrisī (d. ca 6th century AH / 12th century CE), *al-Iḥtijāj*, ed. Muḥammad Bāqir al-Kharsān, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Najaf: Dār al-Nu‘mān lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr, 1966 CE), 4.

an elaborate application of the Qur'ānic cross-referencing approach to interpreting the multi-dimensional "Amr"²⁰⁴ (as seen in Chapter 1) and its bearing on the identity of *Ulū al-Amr*.²⁰⁵

2.3.1 Reports that Limit *Ulū al-Amr* to the Imāmī Imams Explicitly

[عن تفسير العياشي] عن يزيد بن معاوية قال : كنت عند أبي جعفر عليه السلام فسألته عن قول الله " أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا

الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم " [النساء: 59] قال : فكان جوابه ان قال : " ألم تر إلى الذين أوتوا نصيبًا من الكتاب يؤمنون

بالحبت والطاغوت " [النساء: 51] فلان وفلان " ويقولون للذين كفروا هؤلاء أهدى من الذين آمنوا سبيلاً " [النساء: 51]

[ويقول] الأئمة الضالة والدعاة إلى النار هؤلاء أهدى من آل محمد وأوليائهم سبيلاً " أولئك الذين لعنهم الله ومن يلعن الله

فلن تجد له نصيرا أم لهم نصيب من الملك " [النساء: 52-53] يعنى الإمامة والخلافة " فإذا لا يؤتون الناس نقيرا " [النساء:

53] نحن الناس الذين عنى الله والنقير النقطة التي رأيت في وسط النواة " أم يحسدون الناس على ما آتاهم الله من فضله "

[النساء: 54] فنحن المحسودون على ما آتانا الله من الإمامة دون خلق الله جميعاً " فقد آتينا آل إبراهيم الكتاب والحكمة

وآتيناهم مئلاً عظيماً " [النساء: 54] يقول : فجعلنا منهم الرسل والأنبياء والأئمة فكيف يقرون بذلك في آل إبراهيم

²⁰⁴ See the category 4 report referenced from *al-Ihtijāj*.

²⁰⁵ *Ulū al-Amr*, according to this Qur'ānic approach, are not only to be obeyed, but are the recipients of the descending angels carrying the *Amr* on the blessed night of *Laylat al-Qadr*, and the Imams who guide others by God's *Amr* after having been qualified as distinctly patient and certain of God's signs.

For a more comprehensive compilation of reports, see:

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Riḍā Al-Qummī al-Mashhadī (d. ca 1125 AH / 1713 CE), *Tafsīr Kanz al-Daqa'iq wa Baḥr al-Gharā'ib*, ed. Ḥusayn Dargāhī, 1st ed., vol. 3-12, 14 vols. (Mu'assasat al-Tab' wa al-Nashr Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa al-Irshād al-Islāmī, 1407 AH / 1366 SH).

و[ينكرونه في آل محمد صلى الله عليه وآله " فمنهم من آمن به ومنهم من صد عنه وكفى بجهنم سعيراً " [النساء: 55] إلى قوله " وندخلهم ظلا ظليلا " [النساء: 57] قال : قلت قوله : في آل إبراهيم " وآتيناهم ملكاً عظيماً " [النساء: 54] ما الملك العظيم ؟ قال : أن جعل منهم أئمة ، من أطاعهم أطاع الله ، ومن عصاهم عصى الله ، فهو الملك العظيم قال : ثم قال : " ان الله يأمركم ان تؤدوا الأمانات إلى أهلها " إلى " سميعا بصيرا " [النساء: 58] قال : إيانا عنى ان يؤدي الأول منا إلى الامام الذي بعده الكتب والعلم والسلاح " وإذا حكمتم بين الناس ان تحكموا بالعدل " [النساء: 58] الذي في أيديكم ، ثم قال للناس " يا أيها الذين آمنوا " فجمع المؤمنين إلى يوم القيامة [يا] " أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم " [النساء: 59] إيانا عنى خاصة فان خفتم تنازعا في الامر فارجعوا إلى الله والى الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم ، هكذا نزلت وكيف يأمرهم بطاعة أولي الأمر ويرخص لهم في منازعتهم ، إنما قيل ذلك للمأمورين الذين قيل لهم " أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم " [النساء: 59]²⁰⁶

This report includes the phrase, “He meant us, specifically (*īyyānā ‘anā khāṣṣah*),” indicating that the *Ulū al-Amr* to be obeyed in this verse are none other than the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, presumably represented at the time by Abū Ja‘far [Muḥammad al-Bāqir] (d. 114 AH / 733 CE). The plural first person in Shī‘ī ḥadīth is typically understood as a reference to the rightful leadership of Prophet Muḥammad’s household, unless there is reason for it to be understood in a

²⁰⁶ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, 246-247.

See also:

Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī (d. ca 329 AH / 941 CE), *al-Kāfī*, ed. ‘Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, 4th ed., vol. 1, 8 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1984 CE), 205.

broader sense. The explicit and exclusive indication comes from the word “specifically (*khāṣṣah*).” Hence, when the report merely says, “He meant us (*īyyānā ‘anā*),” without the word “*khāṣṣah*,” as in the explanation of 4:58, the indication is not explicitly exclusive. That is, the latter case allows for a reading in which the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt are meant but not only they are meant – they would be clear instances to which the verse applies, but there are other instances besides them. As for the former case, in which the word “*khāṣṣah*” is used, it explicitly gives the indication of exclusivity, apparently in the *absolute* sense.²⁰⁷

Furthermore, the report appears to address the line of argument advanced by al-Shāfi‘ī. For while al-Shāfi‘ī took the verse to mean dispute with *Ulū al-Amr* was possible, and absolute deferral was to God and the Messenger alone, this report argues that it would be nonsensical for God to command them to obey *Ulū al-Amr* and simultaneously allow them to dispute with them (disobeying them). Rather, this report argues, in the case of a dispute, the deferral is to God and the Messenger – who commanded that obedience be God, His Messenger, and the designated *Ulū al-Amr*. It is likely that the report was addressing the substantive argument of al-Shāfi‘ī in an earlier form circulating at the time. If the argument was known to al-Shāfi‘ī then either he was unconvinced by it or his worldview commitments prevented him from accepting its implications. It goes without saying that even if the historicity of this report comes under question, although potentially not pre-Shāfi‘ī, it remains an early Shī‘ī response to al-Shāfi‘ī.

²⁰⁷ It is possible to argue that this exclusivity is only *apparently* in the absolute sense and that the expression could be merely referring to a *relative* sense of exclusivity (i.e. that God meant them specifically – at that time – as opposed to others who falsely assumed the position against their will). The implication of such a reading would be to allow for *Ulū al-Amr*, in principle, to refer to those besides the twelve Imams, so long as they are not excluded by the relative exclusion understood. This line of argument may serve the type of more recent Shī‘ī approach discussed later in this chapter. However, such a reading would require sufficient clues within and/or beyond the text to divert the indication away from its apparently absolute exclusivity to the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt.

[الكليبي في الكافي عن] الحسين بن محمد عن معلى بن محمد عن الحسن بن علي الوشاء عن أحمد بن عائذ عن ابن أدينة
 عن بريد العجلي قال سألت أبا جعفر ع - عن قول الله عز وجل * (إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا
 حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ) * [النساء: 58] قَالَ إِيَّانَا عَنِّي أَنْ يُؤَدِّيَ الْأَوَّلُ إِلَى الْإِمَامِ الَّذِي بَعَدَهُ الْكُتُبَ وَالْعِلْمَ
 وَالسِّلَاحَ * (وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ) * [النساء: 58] الَّذِي فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ ثُمَّ قَالَ لِلنَّاسِ : * (يَا أَيُّهَا
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء: 59] إِيَّانَا عَنِّي خَاصَّةً - أَمَرَ جَمِيعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِلَى يَوْمِ
 الْقِيَامَةِ بِطَاعَتِنَا - فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ تَنَازُعًا فِي أَمْرٍ فَارْجِعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ نَزَلَتْ وَكَيْفَ يَأْمُرُهُمُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ
 وَجَلَّ بِطَاعَةِ وَلَاةِ الْأَمْرِ وَيُرَخِّصُ فِي مَنَازِعَتِهِمْ إِنَّمَا قِيلَ ذَلِكَ لِلْمَأْمُورِينَ الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ : * (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي
 الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء: 59]²⁰⁸

[الصدوق في كمال الدين وتمام النعمة بإسناده إلى سليم بن قيس الهلالي عن علي ...] فأنشدكم الله عز وجل، أتعلمون حيث
 نزلت "يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم" [النساء: 59]. وحيث نزلت "إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ
 وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ" [المائدة: 55]. وحيث نزلت "وَمَا يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا

²⁰⁸ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, 276.

This report is almost identical to the latter part of the previous one, including the same exclusive description identifying *Ulū al-Amr* as the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt.

رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيَجْزَاكَ [التوبة: 16] . قال النَّاسُ : يا رسول الله ، أهذه خاصّة لبعض المؤمنين أم عامّة لجميعهم ؟ فأمر

الله - عزّ وجلّ - نبيّه - صلّى الله عليه وآله - أن يعلمهم ولاية أمرهم ، وأن يفترس لهم من الولاية ما فترس لهم من صلاتهم

وزكاتهم وصومهم وحجّهم . فنصّبني للنّاس بغدير خمّ [...] .

[...] فقام أبو بكر وعمر ، فقالا : يا رسول الله ، هذه الآيات خاصّة لعليّ؟ قال : بلى ، فيه وفي أوصيائي إلى يوم القيامة

. قال : يا رسول الله بينهم لنا ، قال : عليّ أخي ووزير ووارثي ووصيي وخليفتي في أمّتي وولي كل مؤمن بعدي ، ثم ابني

الحسن ، ثم ابني الحسين ، ثم تسعة من ولد الحسين واحد بعد واحد ، القرآن معهم وهم مع القرآن لا يفارقونه ولا يفارقهم حتى

يردوا عليّ حوضي [...] ²⁰⁹

The identification of the persons who are *Ulū al-Amr* here is likened to identifying the details of how prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage are performed. That is, although the concepts are generally understood, the details of how they should look in application are not. The report portrays the discussion on *Ulū al-Amr* to be one which was known to the immediate circle of Prophet Muḥammad's companions and, thus, serves to reinforce the Imāmī Shī'ī belief that the early Muslim community knew 'Alī to be the designated trustee/guardian/successor of Muḥammad, despite 'Alī prioritizing the wellbeing of the nascent community and avoiding an escalation of conflict with the caliphs who came to power. Clearly, this report does not allow for the reading that would deem *Ulū al-Amr* to be only *relatively* exclusive. For the report is claiming

²⁰⁹ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH / 991 CE), *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, ed. 'Alī Akbar Al-Ghaffārī (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1405 AH / 1984 CE), 276-277.

See also:

Ibn Abī Zaynab al-Nu'mānī (fl. early to mid 4th century AH / 10th century CE), *al-Ghaybah*, ed. Fāris Ḥassūn Karīm, 1st ed. (Qum: Muhr, 1422 AH), 74-76.

that the verse applies specifically/exclusively to ‘Alī and the remaining designated trustees of the Prophet (the 11 Imams). Moreover, the report portrays these *Ulū al-Amr* as inseparable from the Qur’ān, implying their immaculate/infallible character. This is a significant intervention arguably influences later Sunnī readings of the verse, as will become manifest in Chapter 3. It also goes without saying that this report appears to equate *Ulū al-Amr* (those possessing or vested with the *amr*) with *Wulāt al-Amr* (the guardians of the *amr*).

[الطبرسي في الاحتجاج عن علي] إنّ الله ذو الجلال والإكرام لما خلق الخلق واختار خيرة من خلقه واصطفى صفوة من عباده وأرسل رسولا منهم وأنزل عليه كتابه وشرع له دينه وفرض فرائضه ، فكانت الجملة قول الله - جلّ ذكره - حيث أمر فقال : « أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ » [النساء: 59]. فهو لنا أهل البيت خاصّة دون غيرنا . فانقلبتم على أعقابكم وارددتم ونقضتم الأمر ونكثتم العهد ولم تضروا الله شيئا ، وقد أمركم الله أن تردّوا الأمر إلى الله وإلى الرسول وإلى أولي الأمر منكم المستنبطين للعلم فأقررتهم ثمّ جحدتم [...] ²¹⁰

The usage of the word “*khāṣṣah*” again indicates an explicit exclusivity, but there is an additional emphasis on exclusivity with the expression, “and to the exclusion of others (*dūna ghayrinā*).” The report also appears to extend *Ulū al-Amr* to the sphere of Ahl al-Bayt (as understood in the Shī‘ī tradition), seemingly allowing for an inclusion of Fāṭimah, Prophet

²¹⁰ al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Ihtijāj*, vol. 1, 233-234.

Muḥammad's daughter, in addition to the Imams. Besides the commonly held Shī'ī belief that Fāṭimah is immaculate, such a reading might be supported by the following report attributed to the 12th Imam, quoted in the next category of reports.

2.3.2 Reports that Identify *Ulū al-Amr* with the Imāmī Imams but Do Not Explicitly²¹¹ Limit *Ulū al-Amr* to Them

[الطوسي في الغيبة عن الناحية بخطه ...] أو ما سمعتم الله عز وجل يقول : (يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الامر منكم) [النساء: 59] ؟ أو ما علمتم ما جاءت به الآثار مما يكون ويحدث في أئمتكم [عن] الماضين والباقيين منهم عليهم السلام ؟ أو ما رأيتم كيف جعل الله لكم معاقل تأوون إليها ، وأعلاما تهتدون بها من لدن آدم عليه السلام إلى أن ظهر الماضي عليه السلام ، كلما غاب علم بدا علم ، وإذا أفل نجم طلع نجم ؟ فلما قبضه الله إليه ظننتم أن الله تعالى أبطل دينه، وقطع السبب بينه وبين خلقه ، كلا ما كان ذلك ولا يكون حتى تقوم الساعة ، ويظهر أمر الله سبحانه وهم كارهون . وإن الماضي عليه السلام مضى سعيدا فقيدا على منهاج آباءه عليهم السلام حذو النعل بالنعل ، وفينا وصيته وعلمه ، ومن هو خلفه ومن هو يسد مسده، لا ينازعنا موضعه إلا ظالم آثم ، ولا يدعيه دوننا إلا جاحد كافر ، [...]

²¹¹ However, they may *apparently* limit them to the Imams. The distinction between *explicitly* and *apparently* here merely consolidates the conclusion with greater emphasis, in terms of the *matn* reading.

[...] ولولا ما عندنا من محبة صلاحكم ورحمتكم ، والاشفاق عليكم ، لكننا عن مخاطبتكم في شغل فيما قد امتحنا به من

منازعة الظالم العتل الضال المتتابع في غيه ، المضاد لربه ، الداعي ما ليس له ، الجاحد حق من افترض الله طاعته ، الظالم

الغاصب . وفي ابنة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم لي أسوة حسنة وسيردي الجاهل رداءة عمله ، وسيعلم الكافر لمن عقي

الدار [...] .²¹²

Although this report refers to verse 4:59 to make the argument that there must always be a member of the designated *Ulū al-Amr* to be obeyed on earth, to be referred to as beacons of guidance, it does not *explicitly* limit this group to the 12 Imams. Granted, the context makes it reasonable to assume that the report is drawing on a collective memory within the Shī'ī community regarding the interpretation of this verse and related reports to apply to the 12 designated Imams. Here the authority quoted is reportedly the incognito son of Ḥasan al-'Askarī (d. 260 AH / 874 CE), apparently via a note in his handwriting.²¹³ In the letter, he reminds the

²¹² Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH / 1067 CE), *al-Ghaybah*, ed. 'Ibād Allāh Al-Ṭihrānī and 'Alī Aḥmad Nāsiḥ, 1st ed. (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Ma'ārif, 1411 AH), 285-286.

²¹³ The context of the letter mentioned in the report is that a man referred to as Ibn Abī Ghānim al-Qazwīnī was engaged in a disagreement with a group among the Shī'ah regarding the, “*khalaf* (the posterity/descendant [of the eleventh Imam, Abū Muḥammad, Ḥasan al-'Askarī (d. 260 AH / 874 CE)]).” Ibn Abī Ghānim had mentioned that Abū Muḥammad passed away without having a *khalaf*. So they wrote a letter in this regard, describing their disagreement, and sent it to the, “*Nāhiyah* (literally, ‘region/area/side,’ but in Twelver Shī'ī writings related to the 12th Imam, it is commonly understood to be a reference to the point of access to the 12th Imam through his specifically designated representatives).” The report mentions that they received the response to their letter, “*bi-khaṭṭihi* (in his handwriting, or in the handwriting associated with him).”

There are a number of reports describing writings attributed to the 12th Imam that were written in the same handwriting, addressing issues throughout the tenure of the first two designated representatives, Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd al-'Amrī (d. ca 265 AH / 879 CE) and Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-'Amrī (d. ca 305 AH / 918 CE), both of whom had reportedly been designated trusted agents during Ḥasan al-'Askarī's lifetime. For instance, see:

Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghaybah*, 290; 356; 362-363; and 366;

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, 483.

Shī‘ah of how the situation at hand had already been anticipated in the Shī‘ī reports transmitted from previous generations and that the same worldview arguments regarding the requirement of a living Imam – if only behind the scenes – hold true. The corollary, he maintains, is that Ḥasan al-‘Askarī must have a spiritual heir and it is him.

The position of *Ulū al-Amr* cannot be claimed independent of this designated Imam – that is clear from this report. Whether or not *Ulū al-Amr* extend beyond the 12 Imams is not made explicit in this report, but there appears to be a hint that *Ulū al-Amr* may at least include Fāṭimah as well. While such a conclusion requires further evidence, it is noteworthy that in this report the 12th Imam finds in Fāṭimah, “the daughter of God’s Messenger,” a “beautiful example (*uswah ḥasanah*)” for him [to follow]. This description, the “*uswah ḥasanah*,” is the same language used to describe Prophet Muḥammad in Qur’ān 33:21 and Prophet Abraham in Qur’ān 60:4-6.

Regardless whether or not Fāṭimah is technically included in the *Ulū al-Amr* category, this report

But does “in the handwriting associated with him” mean that he used his own physical hand to write or that there was a single hand (e.g. perhaps a single scribe he relied on who lived a very long life) throughout this period? Some of the aforementioned reports mention that the same handwriting penned key statements during Ḥasan al-‘Askarī’s lifetime. How was this meant to be understood by the early Twelver Shī‘ī community? Was it to be taken to mean that the 12th Imam, as a child, during the life of his father wrote those statements too? Regardless whether it was the physical hand of the 12th Imam writing those statements, it is reasonable to assume that the early Twelver Shī‘ī community came to trust that the source of that handwriting was a reliable means of ascertaining the will of the Imam. The continuity in handwriting likely gave the sense of continuity in the institution of Imāmah despite the restricted access to the Imam. Delving deeper into this issue, including the presumed nature of contact between the specifically designated agents and the 12th Imam, would require a separate study. But, in one report, Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-‘Amrī is quoted as saying that a statement was issued (by the 12th Imam), “*bi-khaṭṭin a’rifuhu* (in a handwriting that I recognize).” This appears to imply that either it was the physical handwriting of the 12th Imam, or another hand that Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān was sure to be associated with the 12th Imam. Either way, however, it was apparently not the handwriting of Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān himself (i.e. if one might entertain that he wrote down what he felt inspired by the 12th Imam to write down, this report does not appear to support such a possibility). See:

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 483.

In any case, the continuity of handwriting was only one of the factors in the early community’s consolidation narrative —perhaps even a minor one. There are numerous other reports that describe miraculous occurrences attributed to the 12th Imam, but which were said to have appeared at the hands of these specifically designated agents, thereby verifying their claim to the post in the minds of pious community members. For example, see: Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Ghaybah*, 363.

makes her out to be an example for a member of that category to follow – similar to how one would follow the Messenger of God. Furthermore, the report describes Fāṭimah not only as such a great example for all in a general sense, but specifically for the 12th Imam who is writing. Although some might argue that the 12th Imam is merely looking to Fāṭimah’s example in a limited fashion, regarding a dispute over inheritance, such a position is difficult to maintain given the broad/unqualified language used in the letter. Moreover, just as Fāṭimah’s position regarding Fadak is interpreted as symbolic of the succession to Muḥammad in Shī‘ī circles, it is not far-fetched that an analogical application to the caliphate is being alluded to here by the 12th Imam. A scholarly Shī‘ī readership would have reasonably recognized the similarity between Fāṭimah’s efforts to safeguard her father’s legacy whether in public or behind the scenes, and the 12th Imam being busy with addressing the tyranny of his time behind the scenes.

[الكليني في الكافي عن] عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ أَدِينَةَ عَنْ بُرَيْدِ بْنِ مُعَاوِيَةَ قَالَ تَلَا أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ

ع : * (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء: 59] فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ تَنَازَعًا فِي الْأَمْرِ فَأَرْجِعُوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَإِلَى

الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ثُمَّ قَالَ كَيْفَ يَأْمُرُ بِطَاعَتِهِمْ وَيُرْحِصُ فِي مُنَازَعَتِهِمْ إِنَّمَا قَالَ ذَلِكَ لِلْمَأْمُورِينَ الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ : * (

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ) *²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, 184-185.

It is noteworthy that two similar reports appeared in category 1. However, because this report does not use the phrase, “*iyāna ‘aná khāṣṣah*,” I have included this report in category 2.

[عن تفسير العياشي] عن بشير الدهان عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال : قد عرفتم في منكرين كثير وأحببتم في مبغضين كثير وقد يكون حبا لله وفي الله ورسوله وحبا في الدنيا فما كان في الله ورسوله فتوابه على الله ، وما كان في الدنيا فليس في شيء ثم نفص يده ثم قال : ان هذه المرجئة وهذه القدرية وهذه الخوارج ليس منهم أحد الا يرى أنه على الحق ، وانكم إنما أحببتمونا في الله ، ثم تلا " أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم " [النساء: 59] ، " وما آتاكم الرسول فخذوه وما نهاكم عنه فانتهوا " [الحشر: 7] ، " ومن يطع الرسول فقد أطاع الله " [النساء: 80] ، " ان كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني يحببكم الله " [آل عمران: 31]²¹⁵

[عن تفسير العياشي] عن عمران الحلبي قال : سمعت أبا عبد الله عليه السلام يقول : انكم أخذتم هذا الامر من جدوه يعنى من أصله، عن قول الله " أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولى الامر منكم " [النساء: 59] ومن قول رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله : ما ان تمسكنم به لن تضلوا ، لا من قول فلان ولا من قول فلان .²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 167.

The latter part of this report, like others quoted throughout this section, appears to assume that *Ulū al-Amr* applies to the Imams (in the Imāmī Shī‘ī sense) and employs the methodology of explaining Qur’ānic verses by cross-referencing other Qur’ānic verses with the same or synonymous phrases. It is also noteworthy here that the report defines the application of *Ulū al-Amr* not merely in terms of truth-claims – as those are claimed by various groups – but in terms of having sincere love for the sake of God as opposed to worldly aims.

²¹⁶ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 251-252.

[عن تفسير العياشي] عن أبان انه دخل على أبي الحسن الرضا عليه السلام قال : فسأله عن قول الله " يا أيها الذين آمنوا

أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم " [النساء: 59] فقال : : ذلك علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام ثم سكت ، قال

: فلما طال سكوته قلت : ثم من ؟ قال : ثم الحسن ، ثم سكت فلما طال سكوته قلت : ثم من ؟ قال : الحسين ، قلت :

ثم من ؟ قال : ثم علي بن الحسين وسكت ، فلم يزل يسكت عند كل واحد حتى أعيد المسألة ، فيقول حتى سماهم إلى

آخرهم. (ع)²¹⁷

[عن تفسير العياشي] عن عبد الله بن عجلان عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام في قوله " أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر

منكم " [النساء: 59] قال: هي في علي وفي الأئمة جعلهم الله مواضع الأنبياء غير أنهم لا يجلون شيئاً ولا يجرمونهم²¹⁸

[عن تفسير العياشي] عن حكيم قال : قلت لأبي عبد الله عليه السلام : جعلت فداك أخبرني عن أولي الأمر الذين أمر الله

بطاعتهم ؟ فقال لي : أولئك علي بن أبي طالب والحسن والحسين وعلي بن الحسين ومحمد بن علي وجعفر أنا فاحمدوا الله

الذي عرفكم أئمتكم و قادتكم حين جحدهم الناس .²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 251.

Although the report identifies the application of *Ulū al-Amr* in the persons of the Shī‘ī Imams, it does not explicitly limit the application to them.

²¹⁸ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 252.

²¹⁹ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 252.

[الكليني في الكافي عن] أَحْمَدُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحَكَمِ عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ أَبِي الْعَلَاءِ قَالَ ذَكَرْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَ قَوْلَنَا فِي

الْأَوْصِيَاءِ إِنَّ طَاعَتَهُمْ مُفْتَرَضَةٌ قَالَ فَقَالَ نَعَمْ هُمْ الَّذِينَ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى * (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) *

[النساء: 59] وَهُمْ الَّذِينَ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ * (إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا) * [المائدة: 55]²²⁰

[الكليني في الكافي عن] مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدَ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدِ الرَّقِيقِيِّ عَنِ الْقَاسِمِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ الْجَوْهَرِيِّ

عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ أَبِي الْعَلَاءِ قَالَ قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَ الْأَوْصِيَاءُ طَاعَتُهُمْ مُفْتَرَضَةٌ قَالَ نَعَمْ هُمْ الَّذِينَ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ * (

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء: 59] وَهُمْ الَّذِينَ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ * (إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ

آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ) * [المائدة: 55]²²¹

[الكليني في الكافي عن] مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَبْدُ اللَّهِ عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ جَمِيعاً عَنْ

مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ عَنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ بْنِ جَابِرٍ وَعَبْدِ الْكَرِيمِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو عَنْ عَبْدِ الْحَمِيدِ بْنِ أَبِي الدَّيْلَمِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَ قَالَ [...]]

²²⁰ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, 187.

²²¹ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol.1, 189.

[...] وَقَالَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : * (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء: 59] وَقَالَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : * (وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ

إِلَى) * اللَّهُ وَإِلَى * (الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ) * [النساء: 83] فَرَدَّ الْأَمْرَ أَمْرَ النَّاسِ إِلَى

أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ أَمَرَ بِطَاعَتِهِمْ وَبِالرِّدِّ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَمَّا رَجَعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص مِنْ حَجَّةِ الْوَدَاعِ نَزَلَ عَلَيْهِ جِبْرِيلُ ع فَقَالَ * (يَا

أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ

الْكَافِرِينَ) * [المائدة: 67] فَتَنَادَى النَّاسَ فَاجْتَمَعُوا وَأَمَرَ بِسُمَّرَاتٍ فَمَمَّ شَوْكُهُنَّ ثُمَّ قَالَ ص يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ مَنْ وَابِعُكُمْ وَأُولَى بِكُمْ

مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ فَقَالُوا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ فَقَالَ مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَعَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ اللَّهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ [...] ²²²

In this report, the “*Amr*” in *Ulū al-Amr* is associated with the “*Amr*” of the people – apparently meaning, “the *affair*” of the people. They are identified by cross-referencing 4:59 and 4:83 as the points to be deferred to for addressing disputes and to be obeyed on par with obedience to God’s Messenger. The specific application of the verse at the time of Muḥammad is associated with the farewell pilgrimage, during/after which Muḥammad designates ‘Alī as the guardian (*mawlá*) of the people.²²³

[الكليبي في الكافي عن] عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ حَكِيمٍ عَنْ أَبِي مَسْرُوقٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع

قَالَ قُلْتُ إِنَّا نُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فَنَحْتَجُّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِقَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : * (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء:

²²² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol.1, 293-296.

²²³ Sunnī reports also generally confirm this event but interpret it differently.

[59] فَيَقُولُونَ نَزَلَتْ فِي أَمْرٍ السَّرَايَا فَنَحْتَجُّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِقَوْلِهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : * (إِنَّمَا وُيُّدِعُكُمْ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ) * إِلَى آخِرِ الْآيَةِ [المائدة]:

[55] فَيَقُولُونَ نَزَلَتْ فِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَنَحْتَجُّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِقَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : * (قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَى) *

[الشورى: 23] فَيَقُولُونَ نَزَلَتْ فِي قُرْبَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ قَالَ فَلَمْ أَدْعُ شَيْئاً مِمَّا حَضَرَنِي ذِكْرُهُ مِنْ هَذِهِ وَشِبْهِهِ إِلَّا ذَكَرْتُهُ فَقَالَ لِي إِذَا

كَانَ ذَلِكَ فَادْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْمَبَاهِلَةِ قُلْتُ وَكَيْفَ أَصْنَعُ قَالَ أَصْلِحْ نَفْسَكَ ثَلَاثًا وَأَطْنُهَا قَالَ وَصُمْ وَاعْتَسِلْ وَابْزُرْ أَنْتَ وَهُوَ إِلَى الْجَبَّانِ

فَشَبَّكَ أَصَابِعَكَ مِنْ يَدِكَ الْيُمْنَى فِي أَصَابِعِهِ ثُمَّ أَنْصَفَهُ وَابْدَأْ بِنَفْسِكَ وَقُلِ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْأَرْضِينَ السَّبْعِ عَالِمِ

الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الرَّحْمَنَ الرَّحِيمَ إِنْ كَانَ أَبُو مَسْرُوقٍ جَحَدَ حَقًّا وَادَّعَى بَاطِلًا فَأَنْزِلْ عَلَيْهِ حُسْبَانًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ثُمَّ

رُدِّ الدَّعْوَةَ عَلَيْهِ فُقُلْ وَإِنْ كَانَ فُلَانٌ جَحَدَ حَقًّا وَادَّعَى بَاطِلًا فَأَنْزِلْ عَلَيْهِ حُسْبَانًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ أَوْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ثُمَّ قَالَ لِي فَإِنَّكَ

لَا تَلْبَثُ أَنْ تَرَى ذَلِكَ فِيهِ فَوَاللَّهِ مَا وَجَدْتُ خُلُقًا يُجِيبُنِي إِلَيْهِ.²²⁴

This report sheds light not only on the citation of 4:59 as part of a Shī'ī argument in the early ḥadīth literature, but also alongside a number of other verses that the Shī'ī utilized in sectarian debates. Still, the report indicates a recognition of anti-Shī'ī (if not Sunnī) counterarguments, in the face of which intellectual engagement may come to a standstill. For example, the report indicates a counterargument identifying *Ulū al-Amr* as the military commanders. The companion of the 6th Imam, who is being asked for guidance here, complains that at times he utilizes all the arguments he has in his toolbox and yet is still faced with some form of a counterargument. In such a situation, this report resorts to a test/challenge of sincerity and spirituality where the Shī'ī

²²⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, 513-514.

interlocuter invites the other party to a *mubāhalah*, or a form of invoking God’s wrath upon the one who, “denies what is right and claims what is false.”

2.3.3 Reports that Specifically Name *Ulū al-Amr*²²⁵

[الكليبي في الكافي عن] عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ يُونُسَ وَعَلِيِّ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ يُونُسَ عَنِ ابْنِ مُسْكَانَ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَ عَنْ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : * (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء:59] فَقَالَ نَزَلَتْ فِي عَلِيٍّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ وَالْحُسَيْنِ وَالْحُسَيْنِ عَ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ يَقُولُونَ فَمَا لَهُ لَمْ يُسَمَّ عَلِيًّا وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِهِ عَ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَالَ فَقَالَ قُولُوا لَهُمْ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص نَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَمَ يُسَمَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ثَلَاثًا وَلَا أَرْبَعًا حَتَّى كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص هُوَ الَّذِي فَسَّرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ وَنَزَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ الرِّكَاءُ وَمَ يُسَمَّ لَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَرْبَعِينَ دِرْهَمًا دِرْهَمًا حَتَّى كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص هُوَ الَّذِي فَسَّرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ وَنَزَلَ الْحُجُّ فَلَمْ يَقُلْ لَهُمْ طُوفُوا أُسْبُوعًا حَتَّى كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص هُوَ الَّذِي فَسَّرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ وَنَزَلَتْ * (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * وَنَزَلَتْ فِي عَلِيٍّ وَالْحُسَيْنِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص فِي عَلِيٍّ مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَعَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ وَقَالَ ص أُوصِيكُمْ بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَأَهْلِ بَيْتِي فَإِنِّي سَأَلْتُ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْ لَا يُفَرِّقَ بَيْنَهُمَا حَتَّى يُورِدَهُمَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ فَأَعْطَانِي ذَلِكَ وَقَالَ لَا تَعْلَمُوهُمْ فَهُمْ أَعْلَمُ مِنْكُمْ وَقَالَ إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ بَابِ هُدَى وَلَنْ يُدْخِلُوكُمْ فِي بَابِ ضَلَالَةٍ فَلَوْ سَكَتَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص فَلَمْ يُبَيِّنْ مَنْ أَهْلُ بَيْتِهِ لَادَّعَاهَا آلُ فُلَانٍ وَآلُ فُلَانٍ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَنْزَلَهُ فِي كِتَابِهِ تَصَدِيقًا لِنَبِيِّهِ ص : * (إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا) * [الأحزاب:

²²⁵ Besides the earlier representative reports that name them.

[33] فَكَانَ عَلِيٌّ وَالْحُسَيْنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ وَقَاطِمَةُ ع فَأَدْخَلَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص تَحْتَ الْكِسَاءِ فِي بَيْتِ أُمِّ سَلَمَةَ ثُمَّ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ لِكُلِّ

نَبِيٍّ أَهْلًا وَتَقْلًا وَهَؤُلَاءِ أَهْلُ بَيْتِي وَتَقْلِي فَقَالَتْ أُمُّ سَلَمَةَ أَلَسْتُ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ فَقَالَ إِنَّكَ إِلَى خَيْرٍ وَلَكِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ أَهْلِي وَتَقْلِي فَلَمَّا

قُبِضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص كَانَ عَلِيٌّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِالنَّاسِ لِكثْرَةِ مَا بَلَغَ فِيهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص وَإِقَامَتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ وَأَخْذِهِ بِيَدِهِ فَلَمَّا مَضَى عَلِيٌّ

لَمْ يَكُنْ يَسْتَطِيعُ عَلِيٌّ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لِيَفْعَلْ أَنْ يُدْخِلَ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ وَلَا الْعَبَّاسَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ وَلَا [وَاحِدًا] مِنْ وُلْدِهِ إِذَا لَقِيَ الْحُسَيْنَ

وَالْحُسَيْنُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَنْزَلَ فِيْنَا كَمَا أَنْزَلَ فِيكَ فَأَمَرَ بِطَاعَتِنَا كَمَا أَمَرَ بِطَاعَتِكَ وَبَلَغَ فِيْنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص كَمَا بَلَغَ فِيكَ

وَأَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الرَّجْسَ كَمَا أَذْهَبَ عَنكَ فَلَمَّا مَضَى عَلِيٌّ ع كَانَ الْحُسَيْنُ ع أَوْلَى بِهَا لِكِبَرِهِ فَلَمَّا تُوُفِّيَ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ أَنْ يُدْخِلَ وُلْدَهُ وَلَمْ

يَكُنْ لِيَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ وَاللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ : * (وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ) * [الأحزاب: 6] فَيَجْعَلُهَا فِي

وُلْدِهِ إِذَا لَقِيَ الْحُسَيْنَ أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِطَاعَتِي كَمَا أَمَرَ بِطَاعَتِكَ وَطَاعَةَ أَبِيكَ وَبَلَغَ فِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص كَمَا بَلَغَ فِيكَ وَفِي أَبِيكَ وَأَذْهَبَ

اللَّهُ عَنِّي الرَّجْسَ كَمَا أَذْهَبَ عَنكَ وَعَنْ أَبِيكَ فَلَمَّا صَارَتْ إِلَى الْحُسَيْنِ ع لَمْ يَكُنْ أَحَدٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يَدْعِيَ عَلَيْهِ

كَمَا كَانَ هُوَ يَدْعِي عَلَى أُخِيهِ وَعَلَى أَبِيهِ لَوْ أَرَادَا أَنْ يَصْرِفَا الْأَمْرَ عَنْهُ وَلَمْ يَكُونَا لِيَفْعَلَا ثُمَّ صَارَتْ حِينَ أَفْضَتْ إِلَى الْحُسَيْنِ ع

فَجَزَى تَأْوِيلُ هَذِهِ الْآيَةِ : * (وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ) * [الأحزاب: 6] ثُمَّ صَارَتْ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْحُسَيْنِ

لِعَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ ثُمَّ صَارَتْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ إِلَى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ ع وَقَالَ الرَّجْسُ هُوَ الشُّكُّ وَاللَّهُ لَا نَشْكُ فِي رِبَّنَا

أَبْدًا. 226

²²⁶ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, 286-288.

See also:

Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 249-251.

I have included this lengthy report in its entirety, without excerpting, because it includes several features of what becomes known as the Imāmī Shī‘ī conception of Imamate. There appear to be different dimensions of the Imamate emphasized by reference to the verses or ḥadīths quoted. The report quotes verse 4:59 and identifies *Ulū al-Amr* with ‘Alī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn but not with Fāṭimah. The purity/immaculacy of Ahl al-Bayt in verse 33:33, and who never separate from the Book of God, is identified with the three, in addition to Fāṭimah, but to the exclusion of Prophet Muḥammad’s wife Umm Salamah (despite her being commended). The report uses the word “*awlā* (of greater right/priority),” alluding to a phrase in verse 33:6, in which the Prophet is described as being *awlā* with regard to the faithful than they are with regard to their very own souls and *Ulū al-Arḥām* (those of kinship relations) being *awlā* with regard to one another. After identifying the first three generations of *Ulū al-Amr*, immaculately inseparable from the Book of God,²²⁷ the report describes how subsequent applications of *Ulū al-Amr* (in the sense of *awlā al-nās bil-nās*) become manifest via the principle that *Ulū al-Arḥām* are *awlā* with regard to one another.²²⁸ Hence,

²²⁷ With Ḥasan taking precedence over Ḥusayn because of “*kibarih*.” While this “greatness” gives the indication of being “older,” to an Arabic speaker, clues in the text arguably allow for this greatness to refer more to a greatness of excellence than to age alone. For the description of being “*awlā*” in the sense that the Prophet was “*awlā*” does not deal with age per se. In any case, it is clear at least from this report that the age consideration – if it is intended here – is only considered after both Hasan and Ḥusayn have been deemed *awlā* than others in terms of their immaculacy as members of the designated Ahl al-Bayt in 33:33. As such, if age is intended, it is likely intended only as a shorthand identifier of the one appointed by God as the subsequent member of *Ulū al-Amr*, not as a substantive qualification for Divine selection.

In support of this reading, consider the following reported exchange with Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, in which he emphasizes the Divine *amr*/command, as opposed to age,

[...] وَكَانَ مِنْ قَوْلِهِ بِأَيِّ شَيْءٍ كَانَ الْحُسَيْنُ أَحَقَّ بِهَا مِنْ الْحَسَنِ فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع رَحِمَ اللَّهُ الْحَسَنَ وَرَحِمَ الْحُسَيْنَ وَكَيْفَ ذَكَرْتَ هَذَا قَالَ لِأَنَّ الْحُسَيْنَ ع كَانَ يَنْبَغِي لَهُ إِذَا عُدِلَ أَنْ يُجْعَلَهَا فِي الْأَسَنِ مِنْ وُلْدِ الْحَسَنِ فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لَمَّا أَنْ أَوْحَى إِلَى مُحَمَّدٍ ص أَوْحَى إِلَيْهِ بِمَا شَاءَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمَرْ أَحَدًا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ وَأَمَرَ مُحَمَّدٌ ص عَلَيْهِ ع مَا شَاءَ فَفَعَلَ مَا أَمَرَ بِهِ وَلَسْنَا نَقُولُ فِيهِ إِلَّا مَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص مِنْ تَبَجِيلِهِ وَتَضَدِّيْقِهِ فَلَوْ كَانَ أَمْرَ الْحُسَيْنِ أَنْ يُصَيَّرَ فِي الْأَسَنِ أَوْ يُنْفَلَهَا فِي وُلْدِهَا يَعْنِي الْوَصِيَّةَ لَفَعَلَ ذَلِكَ الْحُسَيْنُ وَمَا هُوَ بِالْمُتَّهَمِ عِنْدَنَا فِي الدَّخِيرَةِ لِنَفْسِهِ وَلَقَدْ وُلَّى وَتَرَكَ ذَلِكَ وَلَكِنَّهُ مَضَى لِمَا أَمَرَ بِهِ [...]

Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, 359.

²²⁸ This arguably does not conflict with other reports that purportedly quote the Prophet Muḥammad naming all the twelve Imams. For the Twelver Shī‘ī would argue, for instance, that: (1) the names only provided signposts that still

Ḥusayn and the subsequent *Ulū al-Amr* generations identify *awlā al-nās bil-nās* who happen to be nurtured from among their descendants and who are pure/immaculate instances of Ahl al-Bayt in verse 33:33. It is noteworthy here that the report explains the purity of verse 33:33 to be one free from the impurity of doubt. That is, this group is described as having impeccable awareness of God, rid of the heedlessness or ignorance that leads to sin. Furthermore, although this report outlines the process by which the broader community becomes aware of each subsequent generation of *Ulū al-Amr*, it only names them up to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 AH / 765 CE), who is being quoted.

[الصدوق في كمال الدين يقول] حدثنا غير واحد من أصحابنا قالوا : حدثنا محمد بن همام ، عن جعفر بن - محمد بن

مالك الفرازدي قال : حدثني الحسن بن محمد بن سماعة ، عن أحمد بن الحارث قال : حدثني المفضل بن عمر ، عن يونس بن

ظبيان ، عن جابر بن يزيد الجعفي قال : سمعت جابر بن عبد الله الأنصاري يقول : لما أنزل الله عز وجل على نبيه محمد

صلى الله عليه وآله " يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم " قلت " يا رسول الله عرفنا الله ورسوله ،

فمن أولو الامر الذين قرن الله طاعتهم بطاعتك ؟ فقال عليه السلام : هم خلفائي يا جابر ، وأئمة المسلمين (من) بعدي

أولهم علي بن أبي طالب ، ثم الحسن والحسين ، ثم علي بن الحسين ، ثم محمد بن علي المعروف في التوراة بالباقر ، وستدرکه

يا جابر ، فإذا لقيته فأقرئه مني السلام ، ثم الصادق جعفر بن محمد ، ثم موسى ابن جعفر ، ثم علي بن موسى ، ثم محمد بن

علي ، ثم علي بن محمد ، ثم الحسن بن علي ، ثم سمعي وكنيي حجة الله في أرضه ، وبقيته في عباده ابن الحسن بن علي ،

required identification and application to particular historical personalities; and (2) what an inner circle knew about the names, and successfully relayed to later generations, may not have been known to the broader community at all times, in the interest of protecting the lives of subsequent Imams due to the security situation.

ذاك الذي يفتح الله تعالى ذكره على يديه مشارق الأرض ومغاربها ، ذاك الذي يغيب عن شيعته وأوليائه غيبة لا يثبت فيها

على القول بإمامته إلا من امتحن الله قلبه للايمان ، قال جابر : فقلت له : يا رسول الله فهل يقع لشيعته الانتفاع به في غيبته؟

فقال عليه السلام : أي والذي بعثني بالنبوة إنهم يستضيئون بنوره وينتفعون بولايته في غيبته كانتفاع الناس بالشمس وإن تجللتها

سحاب ، يا جابر هذا من مكنون سر الله ، ومخزون علمه ، فاكتمه إلا عن أهله .[...]²²⁹

Here one finds a report that includes a specific directive from the Prophet Muḥammad to his notable companion Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. ca 78 AH / 697 CE) to keep the account concealed, “except when it comes to those who are its keepers.” This particular version/account of the exchange between them includes not only the prophecy that Jābir would live to see Muḥammad al-Bāqir (ca 57-114 AH / 677-733 CE), but also a naming of the twelve Imams and the *ghaybah* period. When Jābir asks the Prophet Muḥammad if the Shī‘ah would benefit from the 12th Imam during his *ghaybah*, the report records his reply in the affirmative, “Indeed, they are enlightened by his light and benefit from his guardianship (*wilāyah/walāyah*) during his *ghaybah* similar to how people benefit from the Sun even if it is covered by the clouds.”

[عن تفسير العياشي] عن سليم بن قيس الهلالي قال : سمعت عليا عليه السلام : يقول ما نزلت على رسول الله آية من القرآن

الا أقرانيها واملاها علي فاكتبها بخطي وعلمي تأويلها وتفسيرها وناسخها ومنسوخها ومحكمها ومتشابهها ، ودعا الله لي أن

يعلمني فهمها وحفظها فما نسيت آية من كتاب الله ولا علما أملاه علي فكتبته بيدي على ما دعا لي وما [نزل شيء] علمه

²²⁹ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 253.

الله من حلال ولا حرام، امر ولا نهي كان أو يكون من طاعة أو معصية الا علمنيه وحفظته فلم انس منه حرفا واحدا ، ثم وضع يده على صدري ودعا الله لي أن يملأ قلبي علما وفهما وحكمة ونورا لم أنس شيئا ولم يفتني شيء لم اكتبه ، فقلت : يا رسول الله أتخوفت علي النسيان فيما بعد ؟ فقال: لست أتخوف عليك نسيانا ولا جهلا ، وقد أخبرني ربى انه قد استجاب لي فيك وفي شركائك الذين يكونون من بعدك ، فقلت : يا رسول الله ومن شركائي من بعدي ؟ قال : الذين قرههم الله بنفسه وبي فقال : " أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم " [النساء: 59] الأئمة فقلت : يا رسول الله ومن هم ؟ فقال الأوصياء مني إلى أن يردوا على الحوض كلهم هاد مهتد لا يضرهم من خذلهم ، هم مع القرآن ، والقرآن معهم ، لا يفارقهم ولا يفارقونه ، بهم تنصر أمتي ، وبهم يمحطون وبهم يدفع عنهم ، وبهم يستجاب دعاؤهم ، فقلت: يا رسول الله سمهم لي ، فقال لي : ابني هذا ووضع يده على رأس الحسن ، ثم ابني هذا ووضع يده على رأس الحسين ، ثم ابن له يقال له علي ، وسيولد في حيا[با]تك فأقرأه مني السلام ، ثم تكمله إلى اثني عشر من ولد محمد ، فقلت له : بأبي وأمي أنت سمهم فسماهم لي رجلا رجلا فيهم والله يا أخا بني هلال مهدي أمة محمد ، الذي يملأ الأرض قسطا وعدلا كما ملأت جورا وظلما ، والله اني لأعرف

من يبايعه بين الركن والمقام ، واعرف أسماء آبائهم وقبائلهم وذكر الحديث بتمامه .²³⁰

In this report, as well, *Ulū al-Amr* are identified with the 12 Imams, described as immaculately inseparable from the Qur’ān, and – by the time of the compilation quoted – would have been known as none other than the commonly recognized Imams of Twelver Shī‘ī Muslims. In addition, this report described the awaited “*Mahdī* ([messianic] guided one)” as one of those 12. As mentioned in an earlier footnote, the Shī‘ī tradition does not consider the likes of this report,

²³⁰ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 253-254.

which describes Muḥammad naming the 12 Imams, to be conflicting with other reports that appear to leave the identification of a subsequent generation of *Ulū al-Amr* to the directly preceding generation of *Ulū al-Amr*.

[عن تفسير العياشي] عن ابن أبي يعفور قال : قلت لأبي عبد الله عليه السلام أعرض عليك ديني الذي أدين به ، قال : هاته، قلت أشهد ان لا إله إلا الله وأشهد أن محمداً صلى الله عليه وآله رسول الله ، وأقر بما جاء به من عند الله ، قال : ثم وصفت له الأئمة حتى انتهيت إلى أبي جعفر ، قلت [وأقر بك] ما أقول فيهم ، فقال : أتحاك ان تذهب باسمي في الناس ، قال أبان : قال ابن أبي يعفور : قلت له مع الكلام الأول : وأزعم انهم الذين قال الله في القرآن " أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم " [النساء: 59] فقال أبو عبد الله والآية الأخرى فاقراً قال : قلت له : جعلت فداك أي آية ؟ قال : " إنما وليكم الله ورسوله والذين آمنوا الذين يقيمون الصلاة ويؤتون الزكاة وهم راكعون " [المائدة: 55] قال : فقال : رحمك الله، قال : قلت : تقول رحمك الله على هذا الامر ؟ قال : فقال : رحمك الله على هذا الامر .²³¹

Here, Ja‘far al-Šādiq is portrayed as privately approving the belief that the Imams are *Ulū al-Amr* but explicitly forbids Ibn Abī Ya‘fūr from (what seems to mean) going out, among the people (general non-Shī‘ī public), in the name of Ja‘far, with such belief. If this reading is accurate, the reasoning Shī‘ī individuals would have appealed to with their interlocutors would have been drawing not on the authority of the claimant Imam (for interlocutors would have cast doubt on the veracity of the very claim that Ja‘far, for instance, was a *claimant* to the Imamate, let alone to

²³¹ Al-‘Ayyāshī, *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 327.

whether or not he was actually an appointed Imam), but on the substantive arguments they put forth, including cross-references from the Qur'ān. In this report, Ja'far assists Ibn Abī Ya'fūr by showing him how to cross-reference Qur'ānic verses (apparently *Ulū al-Amr* described by 4:59, in the sense of those who are deemed in charge of people's affairs, and *walī* described by verse 5:55, in the synonymous or related sense of the "guardian").

[الكليبي في الكافي عن] مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ صَفْوَانَ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنْ عَيْسَى بْنِ السَّرِيِّ أَبِي الْيَسَعِ قَالَ قُلْتُ

لَأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَ أَخْبِرَنِي بِدَعَائِمِ الْإِسْلَامِ الَّتِي لَا يَسَعُ أَحَدًا التَّفْصِيرُ عَنْ مَعْرِفَةِ شَيْءٍ مِنْهَا الَّذِي مَنْ قَصَرَ عَنْ مَعْرِفَةِ شَيْءٍ مِنْهَا

فَسَدَّ دِينَهُ وَلَمْ يَقْبَلِ [اللَّهُ] مِنْهُ عَمَلَهُ وَمَنْ عَرَفَهَا وَعَمِلَ بِهَا صَلَحَ لَهُ دِينُهُ وَقَبِلَ مِنْهُ عَمَلَهُ وَلَمْ يَضِيقْ بِهِ مِمَّا هُوَ فِيهِ لِجَهْلِ شَيْءٍ

مِنَ الْأُمُورِ جَهْلُهُ فَقَالَ شَهَادَةُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالْإِيمَانُ بِأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص وَالْإِقْرَارُ بِمَا جَاءَ بِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَحَقُّ فِي

الْأَمْوَالِ الزَّكَاةَ وَالْوَلَايَةَ الَّتِي أَمَرَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهَا وَلَايَةَ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ ص قَالَ قُلْتُ لَهُ هَلْ فِي الْوَلَايَةِ شَيْءٌ دُونَ شَيْءٍ فَضَّلَ يُعْرِفُ

لِمَنْ أَخَذَ بِهِ قَالَ نَعَمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : * (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء:

59] وَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَا يَعْرِفُ إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً وَكَانَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص وَكَانَ عَلِيًّا ع وَقَالَ الْآخَرُونَ كَانَ

مُعَاوِيَةَ ثُمَّ كَانَ الْحَسَنَ ع ثُمَّ كَانَ الْحُسَيْنَ ع وَقَالَ الْآخَرُونَ - بَرِيدَ بْنِ مُعَاوِيَةَ وَحُسَيْنَ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ وَلَا سَوَاءَ وَلَا سَوَاءَ قَالَ ثُمَّ

سَكَتَ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَزِيدُكَ فَقَالَ لَهُ حَكَمُ الْأَعْوَرُ نَعَمْ جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلِيًّا بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ ثُمَّ كَانَ مُحَمَّدَ بْنَ عَلِيٍّ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ

وَكَانَتْ الشِّيْعَةُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَعْرِفُونَ مَنَاسِكَ حَجَّتِهِمْ وَحَالَئِهِمْ وَحَرَامَتِهِمْ حَتَّى كَانَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ فَفَتَحَ لَهُمْ وَبَيَّنَّ

لَهُمْ مَنَاسِكَ حَجَّتِهِمْ وَحَالَئِهِمْ وَحَرَامَتِهِمْ حَتَّى صَارَ النَّاسُ يَحْتَاجُونَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَانُوا يَحْتَاجُونَ إِلَى النَّاسِ وَهَكَذَا يَكُونُ الْأَمْرُ

– وَالْأَرْضُ لَا تَكُونُ إِلَّا بِإِمَامٍ وَمَنْ مَاتَ لَا يَعْرِفُ إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً وَأَخْوَجُ مَا تَكُونُ إِلَى مَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ إِذْ بَلَغْتَ

نَفْسُ [كَ] هَذِهِ وَأَهْوَى بِيَدِهِ إِلَى خَلْقِهِ وَأَنْقَطَعَتْ عَنْكَ الدُّنْيَا تَقُولُ لَقَدْ كُنْتُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ حَسَنٍ.²³²

The confession of faith regarding the guardianship of *Ulū al-Amr* is considered, here, an article of faith on par with faith in the remaining contents of Muḥammad’s message from God. It is clear from the commentary of the authority quoted that this guardianship is described as the domain of *Āl Muḥammad*, the [spiritual and bloodline] progeny of Muḥammad. But it does not explicitly limit them to the 12 Imams of Imāmī Shī‘ī Muslims. The *amr* of *Ulū al-Amr* here is characterized as an affair/matter/command of religious knowledge, enabling followers to be independent from other schools when it comes to their Islamic legal system needs. This manifests clearly, as the report describes, at the time of Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī [al-Bāqir] (d. 114 AH / 733 CE), who makes the Shī‘ī legal system known to the broader Shī‘ī community after a time in which the Shī‘ī had not been acquainted with it. Implicitly, then, this legal leadership is not the only role of *Ulū al-Amr*, but is a key dimension of *Ulū al-Amr*’s qualifications, alongside fulfilling a moral/cosmic purpose without which the earthly realm would not exist [or be in a proper state, as the next report indicates], and being a cause to eradicate ignorance –one of otherworldly consequences.

[الكليبي في الكافي عن] عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ يُونُسَ عَنْ حَمَّادِ بْنِ عَثْمَانَ عَنْ عَيْسَى بْنِ السَّرِيِّ قَالَ قُلْتُ

لَأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع حَدَّثَنِي عَمَّا بُيِّنَتْ عَلَيْهِ دَعَائِمُ الْإِسْلَامِ إِذَا أَنَا أَخَذْتُ بِهَا زَكَى عَمَلِي وَلَمْ يَضُرَّنِي جَهْلُ مَا جَهَلْتُ بَعْدَهُ فَقَالَ

²³² Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, 19-21.

شَهَادَةٌ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص وَالْإِقْرَارُ بِمَا جَاءَ بِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَحَقُّ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ مِنَ الزَّكَاةِ وَالْوَلَايَةُ الَّتِي أَمَرَ

اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهَا وَوَلَايَةُ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ ص فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ص قَالَ مَنْ مَاتَ وَلَا يَعْرِفُ إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ :

* (أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء: 59] فَكَانَ عَلِيٌّ ع ثُمَّ صَارَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ - الْحَسَنُ ثُمَّ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

الْحُسَيْنُ ثُمَّ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ عَلِيٌّ بِنُ الْحُسَيْنِ ثُمَّ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ ثُمَّ هَكَذَا يَكُونُ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَا تَصْلُحُ إِلَّا بِإِمَامٍ وَمَنْ مَاتَ

لَا يَعْرِفُ إِمَامَهُ مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً وَأَخْرُجَ مَا يَكُونُ أَحَدُكُمْ إِلَى مَعْرِفَتِهِ إِذَا بَلَغَتْ نَفْسُهُ هَاهُنَا قَالَ وَأَهْوَى بِيَدِهِ إِلَى صَدْرِهِ يَقُولُ

حِينَئِذٍ لَقَدْ كُنْتُ عَلَى أَمْرِ حَسَنٍ .²³³

[الكليني في الكافي عن] عَلِيٍّ بِنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ حَمَّادِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ عُمَرَ اليمانيِّ عَنِ ابْنِ أُذَيْنَةَ عَنْ أَبَانَ بْنِ

عِيَّاشٍ عَنْ سُلَيْمِ بْنِ قَيْسٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ عَلِيًّا ص يَقُولُ وَأَتَاهُ رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ لَهُ مَا أُذِنِي مَا يَكُونُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ مُؤْمِنًا وَأُذِنِي مَا يَكُونُ بِهِ

الْعَبْدُ كَافِرًا وَأُذِنِي مَا يَكُونُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ ضَالًّا فَقَالَ لَهُ قَدْ سَأَلْتُ فَأَفْهَمَ الْجُؤَابَ أَمَا أُذِنِي مَا يَكُونُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ مُؤْمِنًا أَنْ يُعْرِفَهُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ

وَتَعَالَى نَفْسَهُ فَيَقِرَّ لَهُ بِالطَّاعَةِ وَيُعْرِفَهُ نَبِيَّهُ ص فَيَقِرَّ لَهُ بِالطَّاعَةِ وَيُعْرِفَهُ إِمَامَهُ وَحُجَّتَهُ فِي أَرْضِهِ وَشَاهِدَهُ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ فَيَقِرَّ لَهُ

بِالطَّاعَةِ فُلْتُ لَهُ يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِنْ جَهِلَ جَمِيعَ الْأَشْيَاءِ إِلَّا مَا وَصَفْتَ قَالَ نَعَمْ إِذَا أَمَرَ أَطَاعَ وَإِذَا نُهِىَ انْتَهَى وَأُذِنِي مَا يَكُونُ

بِهِ الْعَبْدُ كَافِرًا مَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّ شَيْئًا نَهَى اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَ بِهِ وَنَصَبَهُ دِينًا يَتَوَلَّى عَلَيْهِ وَيَزْعُمُ أَنَّهُ يَعْبُدُ الَّذِي أَمَرَ بِهِ وَإِنَّمَا يَعْبُدُ

الشَّيْطَانَ وَأُذِنِي مَا يَكُونُ بِهِ الْعَبْدُ ضَالًّا أَنْ لَا يَعْرِفَ حُجَّةَ اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى وَشَاهِدَهُ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِي أَمَرَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِطَاعَتِهِ

²³³ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, 21.

وَفَرَضَ وَلَا يَتَّبِعُهُ فُلْتُ يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ صِفْتُهُمْ لِي فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّهَمُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِنَفْسِهِ وَنَبِيِّهِ فَقَالَ : * (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ) * [النساء: 59] فُلْتُ يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ جَعَلَنِي اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ أَوْضَحَ لِي فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص فِي آخِرِ خُطْبَتِهِ يَوْمَ قَبْضِهِ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَيْهِ إِنِّي قَدْ تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ أَمْرَيْنِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوا بَعْدِي مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا

- كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِزَّتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي فَإِنَّ اللَّطِيفَ الْخَبِيرَ قَدْ عَاهَدَ إِلَيَّ أَكْهَمًا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْخَوْضَ كَهَاتَيْنِ وَجَمَعَ بَيْنَ مُسَبِّحَتَيْهِ

وَلَا أَقُولُ كَهَاتَيْنِ وَجَمَعَ بَيْنَ الْمُسَبِّحَةِ وَالْوَسْطَى فَتَسْبِقُ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى فَتَمَسَّكُوا بِهِمَا لَا تَزَلُوا وَلَا تَضِلُّوا وَلَا تَقْدَمُوهُمْ فَتَضِلُّوا²³⁴

Although this report does not explicitly name *Ulū al-Amr* as the 12 Imams, it describes them in terms that fit well with the model of infallibility/immaculateness. For instance, not recognizing and obeying them are sufficient grounds for being deemed “misguided (*dāl*).” Furthermore, when asked for clarification, the authority quoted describes them as the close kin of Muḥammad who will not separate from the Book of God until they meet Muḥammad in the afterlife. Hence, they are not qualified and/or identified simply by being relatives of Muḥammad but by being embodiments of widely recognized Qur’ānic teachings and guideposts in cases of disagreements over Qur’ānic readings. Holding onto them is described, here, as a guarantee against [inadvertently] slipping and against misguidance, while failing to follow their lead is described as wandering into misguidance. In the context of these interconnected descriptions, then, the *Ulū al-Amr* referred to in 4:59 would likely have been understood as failsafe references for guidance. The broader picture of contemporaneous or subsequent Sunnī theoretical interventions interpreting this

²³⁴ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, 414-415.

verse with (some form of an) infallibility model, thus, should not be divorced from the backdrop of these early readings in Shī‘ī literature.

2.3.4 Miscellaneous Reports Featuring Distinct Qualities of *Ulū al-Amr*

[الكليبي في الكافي عن] عَلِيُّ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَمَّنْ ذَكَرَهُ عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ حُمْرَانَ عَنِ الْفَضْلِ بْنِ السَّكَنِ

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ع اعْرِفُوا اللَّهَ بِاللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولَ بِالرِّسَالَةِ وَأُولِيَ الْأَمْرِ [بِالْأَمْرِ] بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالْعَدْلِ

والإحسان.²³⁵

The implication of this report appears to be that there are substantive attributes/identifiers by which one is to recognize *Ulū al-Amr* (besides the reports of Divine appointment). That is, even within the Imāmī conceptual framework that anticipates Divine appointment/designation, there are still recognizable merits for those whom God chooses as *Ulū al-Amr*. The report quotes Ja‘far al-Šādiq who in turn quotes ‘Alī, enjoining the addressee to, “recognize God through God, the Messenger through the message, and *Ulū al-Amr* through [the enjoining of] what is right, justice and the doing of good.”

²³⁵ Al-Kulaynī comments on the report as follows,

وَمَعْنَى قَوْلِهِ ع اعْرِفُوا اللَّهَ بِاللَّهِ يَعْنِي أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ الْأَشْخَاصَ وَالْأَنْوَارَ وَالْجُوهَرَ وَالْأَعْيَانَ فَلِأَعْيَانِ الْأَبْدَانِ وَالْجُوهَرِ الْأَرْوَاحِ وَهُوَ جَلَّ وَعَزَّ لَا يُشْبِهُ جِسْماً وَلَا رُوحاً وَلَيْسَ لِأَخْدٍ فِي خَلْقِ الرُّوحِ الْحَسَّاسِ الدَّرَكِ أَمْرٌ وَلَا سَبَبٌ هُوَ الْمُتَفَرِّدُ بِخَلْقِ الْأَرْوَاحِ وَالْأَجْسَامِ فَإِذَا نَفَى عَنْهُ الشَّبَهَيْنِ شَبَهَ الْأَبْدَانِ وَشَبَهَ الْأَرْوَاحِ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ اللَّهَ بِاللَّهِ وَإِذَا شَبَّهَهُ بِالرُّوحِ أَوْ الْبَدَنِ أَوْ النُّورِ فَلَمْ يَعْرِفِ اللَّهَ بِاللَّهِ.

Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, 85. Also see:

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Šadūq, *al-Tawhīd*, 285-286.

[الطوسي في تهذيب الأحكام عن الصادق عليه السلام] [...] ربنا انك أمرتنا بطاعة ولاة أمرنا وأمرتنا أن [ن]كون مع الصادقين ، فقلت : أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم [النساء: 59] ، وقلت اتقوا الله وكونوا مع الصادقين [التوبة: 119] ، فسمعنا وأطعنا ربنا فثبت أقدامنا وتوفنا مسلمين مصدقين لأولياتك ولا تزغ قلوبنا بعد إذ هديتنا وهب لنا من لدنك رحمة انك أنت الوهاب ، اللهم إني أسألك بالحق الذي جعلته عندهم وبالذي فضلتهم على العالمين جميعا ان تبارك لنا في يومنا هذا الذي أكرمتنا فيه ، وان تتم علينا نعمتك وتجعله عندنا مستقرا ولا تسلبناه أبدا وتجعله مستودعا ، فإنك قلت مستقر ومستودع [الأنعام: 98] فاجعله مستقرا ولا تجعله مستودعا ، وارزقنا نصر دينك مع ولي هاد منصور من أهل بيت نبيك ، واجعلنا معه وتحت رايته شهداء صديقين في سبيلك وعلى نصرة دينك²³⁶

This report presents an additional instance equating *Ulū al-Amr* with *Wulāt al-Amr*, particularly in the context of a Ghadīr day prayer. Such examples demonstrate how commentary upon Qur'ānic verses can be mined beyond the specific genre of Qur'ānic exegetical ḥadīth and should also include supplication literature (alternatively, the Qur'ānic exegetical ḥadīth should include relevant reports of supplication literature). The “data” present in supplications/visitations is useful for understanding the reception as well as the (re)purposing of Qur'ānic and ḥadīth-related citations.

²³⁶ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, ed. Ḥasan al-Mūsawī al-Kharsān, 4th ed., vol. 3, 10 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1985 CE), 147.

[الصدوق في علل الشرائع يقول] حدثنا محمد بن موسى بن المتوكل رضي الله عنه قال : حدثنا علي بن الحسين السعد آبادي

عن أحمد بن أبي عبد الله عن أبيه عن حماد بن عيسى عن ابن أذينة عن أبان بن أبي عياش عن سليمان بن قيس قال سمعت

أمير المؤمنين " ع " يقول إنما الطاعة لله عز وجل ولرسوله ولولاة الامر وإنما أمر بطاعة أولي الأمر لأنهم معصومون مطهرون

ولا يأمرن بمعصيته .²³⁷

The language of this report not only equates *Ulū al-Amr* with *Wulāt al-Amr*, but explains that the reason for the Divine command regarding obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* is that they are infallible/immaculate (*ma 'ṣūmūn*) and do not issue a command that would be disobedient to God. Another report compiled by al-Ṣadūq in '*Ilal al-Sharā'i*' also emphasizes infallibility/immaculacy ('*iṣmah*) while connecting it to the reason why such an Imam is needed at all times. As the report states,

[الصدوق في علل الشرائع يقول] حدثنا محمد بن إبراهيم بن إسحاق الطالقاني رضي الله عنه قال حدثنا عبد العزيز بن يحيى

قال حدثنا المغيرة بن محمد قال حدثنا رجاء بن سلمة عن عمرو بن شمر ، عن جابر بن يزيد الجعفي ، قال : قلت لأبي جعفر

محمد بن علي الباقر عليهما السلام لأي شيء يحتاج إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وآله والامام ؟ فقال لبقاء العالم على صلاحه

وذلك أن الله عز وجل يرفع العذاب عن أهل الأرض إذا كان فيها نبي أو امام قال الله عز وجل وما كان الله ليعذبهم وأنت

فيهم وقال النبي صلى الله عليه وآله النجوم أمان لأهل السماء وأهل بيتي أمان لأهل الأرض فإذا ذهبت النجوم أتى أهل

السماء ما يكرهون وإذا ذهب أهل بيتي أتى أهل الأرض ما يكرهون يعني باهل بيته الأئمة الذين قرن الله عز وجل طاعتهم

²³⁷ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, '*Ilal al-Sharā'i*', vol. 1, 123.

بطاعته فقال (يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم) وهم المعصومون المطهرون الذين لا يذنبون

ولا يعصون وهم المؤيدون الموفقون المسددون بهم يرزق الله عباده وبهم تعمر بلاده وبهم ينزل القطر من السماء وبهم يخرج بركات

الأرض وبهم يمهل أهل المعاصي ولا يعجل عليهم بالعقوبة والعذاب لا يفارقهم روح القدس ولا يفارقونه ولا يفارقون القرآن ولا

يفارقهم صلوات الله عليهم أجمعين .²³⁸

While this report would fit under the category of reports that limit *Ulū al-Amr* to the Imāmī Imams explicitly, it makes sense to have it listed under the miscellaneous reports section for a couple of reasons: (1) limiting *Ulū al-Amr* to the Imāmī Imams is understood in light of the distinct features of these Imams, as opposed to a general reference to prior knowledge of who are meant by “us,” for instance; and (2) there are distinct features mentioned here that should be highlighted in the context of the other reports in this section.

The “*ahl al-bayt*” in the words attributed to Prophet Muḥammad in the report is explained as meaning, “the Imams,” but specifically the Messenger and *Ulū al-Amr* whom one is commanded to obey in verse 4:59. The report continues to describe their seemingly unique qualities, such as being infallible/immaculate.²³⁹ The quality that the, “*rūḥ al-quḍus* (holy spirit) never parts with them and they never part with it,” is perhaps only superseded by the description that, “the Qur’ān never parts with them and they never part with it.”²⁴⁰ This would appear to convey whatever sense of immaculacy that the Qur’ān has —not only do they not intentionally part ways with the Qur’ān,

²³⁸ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Ilal al-Sharā’i*, vol. 1, 123-124.

²³⁹ Further analysis of the meaning of *’iṣmah* in this report might delve deeper into potential linguistic differences between, “*lā yudhribūn*,” and, “*lā ya’ṣūn*.” But the subsequent descriptions appear to suffice in conveying the highest form of *’iṣmah* imaginable.

²⁴⁰ A similar expression appeared in some of the reports quoted previously.

the Qur'ān is with them in an unrestricted sense (as if by grace, regardless of their human limitations). Some of the remaining features attributed to the *Ulū al-Amr* here are often associated with God's friends (*awliyā'*), as will be discussed in Chapter 4. In the Shī'ī context, these effects/benefits of a Prophet's and an Imam's existence are framed as explaining why the existence of a Prophet and of an Imam are a necessity, thereby connecting the legal-moral dimension of the Imam's role to tangible effects in the natural world.

[الصدوق في من لا يحضره الفقيه عن المهدي عليه السلام] [...] السلام على الأئمة الدعاة ، والقادة الهداة ، والسادة الولاة ،
والذادة الحماة ، وأهل الذكر ، وأولي الأمر ، وبقية الله وخيرته وحزبه ، وعيبة علمه ، وحجته وصراطه ونوره ، ورحمة الله وبركاته

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This excerpt is from a visitation (*ziyārah*) greeting directed toward the Imams. Although there is no direct quotation of verse 4:59 at length, the phrase *Ulū al-Amr* is a clear reference to the Qur'ānic usage of *Ulū al-Amr* in verse 4:59. It also includes reference to the Imams as *Ahl al-Dhikr* (the people of the remembrance – often understood to be a reference to the Qur'ān and/or other Divine revelations), which appears in verses 16:43 and 21:7. Moreover, the remaining phrases also allude to interconnected Qur'ānic references, painting a picture of the multi-faceted legal-moral-cosmic leadership embodied in the Imams, according to the Shī'ī literature.

²⁴¹ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, 2nd ed., vol. 2, 4 vols. (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī al-Tābi'ah li-Jamā'at al-Mudarrisīn, 1404 AH), 610-611.

[الطبرسي في الاحتجاج عن علي عليه السلام...] قال السائل: من هؤلاء الحجج؟ قال: هم رسول الله ومن حلّ محلّه من

أصفياء الله الذين قرّنهم الله بنفسه ورسوله، وفرض على العباد من طاعتهم مثل الذي فرض عليهم منها لنفسه، وهم ولاة

الأمر الذين قال الله فيهم: «أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ» [النساء: 59] وقال فيهم: وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ

وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ» [النساء: 83] قال السائل: ما ذاك الأمر؟ قال - عليه السلام - :

الَّذِي بِهِ تَنْزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ فِي اللَّيْلَةِ الَّتِي يَفْرَقُ فِيهَا كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ [الدخان: 4]، من خلق ورزق وأجل وعمل وعمر وحياة وموت

وعلم غيب السماوات والأرض والمعجزات التي لا تنبغي إلا لله وأصفياه والسترة بينه وبين خلقه [...] ²⁴²

The excerpt from the report relayed is attributed to the first Imam, ‘Alī. Here, there arguably exists an instance of the methodology which assumes that (at least some) Qur’ānic verses can be explained through a web of interconnected and cross-referenced phrases and synonyms. In this case, the term *Amr*, the *Amr* possessed by *Ūlū al-Amr*, is explained as the *Amr* with which the angels descend on the night described in verses 44:4 and 97:4. It is described as related to the cosmic (annual) event in which every definitive/wise *Amr* is made distinct – including creation, sustenance, longevity, deeds, knowledge and miraculous demonstrations authorized by God to confirm the emissaries between Him and the rest of creation. Thus, this instance in the Shī‘ī literature portrays *Ulū al-Amr* as guardians of something far beyond political, legal and moral leadership alone. By referencing the usages of *Amr* throughout the Qur’ān, the report depicts *Ulū al-Amr* as keepers of a cosmic-moral system, as intermediaries ordained by God in the very order of nature, only one of their roles being described as objects of obedience (4:59 and 4:83).

²⁴² Al-Ṭabrisī, *al-Ihtijāj*, vol. 2, 375.

Through direct engagement with representative excerpts from early Shī'ī exegetical literature related to verse 4:59, this section has demonstrated that the early Shī'ī literature, read holistically, presents *Ulū al-Amr* as referring to the 12 Imams commonly associated with Twelver Imāmī Shī'ī Islam. This is despite the fact that individual reports may not make this exclusive application explicit and may not name all of the historical personalities it applies to in every instance. Moreover, the analysis of key features in these reports reconstructs a convincing backdrop for contemporaneous and/or subsequent Sunnī interpretations of *Ulū al-Amr* through some model of infallibility (to be discussed further in chapter 3). Fully appreciating how the interventions of Sunnī authors developed would be best informed by considering such a reconstruction of Shī'ī exegetical literature, paying particular attention to the underlying themes noted earlier. This analysis does not require an explicit mention of infallibility/immaculateness (*iṣmah*), for instance, but does require sufficient textual clues, including cross-referencing, that the features being painted substantively correlate to a notion of infallibility bearing resemblance with Sunnī conceptual frameworks applied to related discussions. This section has also demonstrated that, besides categorizing relevant reports in terms of how explicitly they identify the historical personalities intended by *Ulū al-Amr*, opening up to literature beyond the genre of Qur'ānic commentary or ḥadīth dialogue to include supplicatory/visitation devotional literature reveals insights about the reception and (re)purposing of Qur'ānic and ḥadīth citations.

2.4 A Recent Shift: al-Ṣadr Entertaining Another Possibility

The next chapter will discuss how Sunnī conceptual frameworks appear to develop in response to this Shī'ī literature, modeling a form of infallibility for *Ulū al-Amr* and the Islamic

legal specialist, if not the imam of a polity. But before moving on, in order to complete the picture of dialectic influence as it manifests in the modern period, I refer in this third section to a notable – albeit minority – position in Shī‘ī thought pertaining to verse 4:59.

Some recent leading Imāmī authorities have arguably entertained an alternative reading of *Ulū al-Amr*.²⁴³ This reading can be understood as a broader one, not applying only to the appointed Imāmī Imams, but also more generally. In his discussion on a Qur‘ānic verse used to support the Divine prescription of required precaution when in doubt (*wujūb al-iḥṭiyāt shar‘an*), Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (d. 1980 CE) finds an occasion to note two interpretations related to verse 4:59,

[...] ويحتمل قويا إرادة النزاع بين الأمة وولي الأمر في الأمور العامة لأنها وردت بعد قوله تعالى (أطيعوا الله والرسول وأولي

الأمر منكم فان تنازعتم في شيء فردوه إلى الله والرسول) فيكون تأكيدا لمزيد الطاعة ولزوم تحكيم الله والرسول في المنازعات ،

والوجه في تخصيص الرد حينئذ إلى الله والرسول فقط مع حذف أولي الأمر في التفريع رغم ولايتهم والأمر بإطاعتهم في المفرع

عليه يمكن ان يكون أحد افتراضين :

²⁴³ It is important to note that the more recent case in point here, al-Ṣadr, does not *adopt* this alternative possibility as his position, apparently. However, he seems to consider it as a *viabile* position, but whether he would accept it in light of the competing reasoning and/or ḥadīth-based counter-arguments requires closer examination. Because of the heritage of exegesis and ḥadīth literature in the Twelver Shī‘ī community on verse 4:59, a serious departure from the classical position is prone to invite judgments of error and even excommunicating heresy (*takfīr*) by some prominent scholars familiar with that heritage. Granted, some Shī‘ī scholars may refrain from relaying such accounts for pious reasons, such as to avoid unnecessary backbiting, especially if they believe the person in question to have repented or been misunderstood. Others may find it permissible or even necessary to relay such accounts in order to critique the heretical beliefs in question for subsequent generations, to set the record straight with academic rigor/integrity and related issues of overriding importance. The particulars of these sorts of controversies may be contested as misunderstandings and/or mistakes that were amended, but the general ethos among traditional Shī‘ī scholars is that such departures — even if resulting from a misunderstanding, and/or are only fictitious tales with didactic aims — speak to the Shī‘ī sensitivity to and gravity of the issue. For instance, see: Hossein Modarressi Tabataba’i, *Zamīn Dar Fiqh-i Islāmī*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Farhang-i Islāmī, 1362 SH), 222-223. (Footnote 84).

1 - ان المنظور إليه النزاع في الكبريات والشبهات الحكمية وفي مثل ذلك يكون المرجع الله والرسول فقط لا أولي الأمر بما هو أولي الأمر .

2 - ان المراد التنازع بين الأمة وأولي الأمر من الأمة ، فان المذكور في المفرع عليه الأمر بإطاعة أولي الأمر منكم أي من الأمة فيراد بذلك التنازع الذي قد يقع في شروط الولاية واختياراتهم كبرويا أو صغويا فيكون حل مثل هذا النزاع أيضا منحصرًا في مراجعة الله والرسول ويكون أولي الأمر حينئذ جزء من الأمة المتنازعة فتكون الآية من أدلة ان الولاية تحدد من قبل الله والرسول لا من قبل الناس أنفسهم ، وبذلك تكون الآية متعرضة لمسألة هامة من أصول المذهب وأجنبية بالمرّة عن مسألة الاحتياط في الشبهات الفرعية .²⁴⁴

Al-Şadr's passing reference to verse 4:59 can be regarded as a comment on al-Shāfi'ī's early response²⁴⁵ to the Imāmī understanding of *Ulū al-Amr*. Al-Şadr understands the referral back to God and the Messenger as an *emphasis* on the previously stated obedience due to them, giving them the final say in the case of conflict/dispute. Then why eliminate *Ulū al-Amr* from mention despite the fact that obedience to them is required? How does al-Şadr address this question?

Al-Şadr forwards two possibilities: [1] the disputes in question are in matters of Islamic legislation, which comes only from God and the Messenger in his capacity as a legislator, not from *Ulū al-Amr* in their capacity as *Ulū al-Amr*; or [2] the disputes in question pertain to disagreements between the community and the *Ulū al-Amr* over qualifications for those in positions of authority

²⁴⁴ Muḥammad Bāqir al-Şadr, *Buḥūth fī 'Ilm al-Uṣūl - Taqrīr Baḥth al-Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Şadr lil-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Shāhrūdī*, comp. Maḥmūd al-Shāhrūdī, 3rd ed., vol. 5, 7 vols. (Mu'assasat Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-Fiqh al-Islāmī Tibqan li Madhhab Ahl al-Bayt ()), 1426 AH / 2005 CE), 85-86.

²⁴⁵ In effect, that is, regardless whether he meant for it to be a response or not.

and related matters, which are also to be determined by God and the Messenger. The first interpretation falls in line with the familiar Imāmī position. The point is not that *Ulū al-Amr*'s sphere of obedience is being restricted by omitting their mention as referees along with God and the Messenger, but that the source of legislation is being located specifically in the word of God and the Messenger of God.

The second interpretation, on the other hand, offers an interesting caveat with an arguable departure from the dominant Imāmī reading. According to this second reading, al-Ṣadr posits that the *Ulū al-Amr* are a party in the dispute with the rest of the community. At first glance, it is tempting to see this as a sign of *Ulū al-Amr*'s fallibility. If *Ulū al-Amr* can be disputed with, then they can be disobeyed, and must not be immaculate. Entertaining this interpretation would be lending credence to a line of reasoning similar to that of al-Shāfi'ī discussed earlier. Nonetheless, while entertaining the second interpretation, al-Ṣadr finds an opportunity to reframe the settlement of disputes between *Ulū al-Amr* and the community. Al-Ṣadr argues that referring such disputes back to God and the Messenger means that the qualifications of *Ulū al-Amr*, those vested with authority, in theory and in practice, are to be determined by God and the Messenger. They are not matters left to the discretion of the community, but *designated* by God and the Messenger. Hence, al-Ṣadr uses the alternative interpretation of the verse to make a foundational point about the need for Divinely appointed leadership after Prophet Muḥammad (i.e. a principle of Shī'ī Islam). According to this second interpretation, although al-Ṣadr would understand, like al-Shāfi'ī, that the disputing parties include *Ulū al-Amr*, al-Ṣadr uses this premise to argue for a drastically different conclusion. This is arguably an instance of Sunnī influence on Shī'ī thought in which an earlier Sunnī line of reasoning is appropriated and repurposed to arrive at a Shī'ī conclusion.

Taking a step back to assess the extent of Sunnī influence present in this argument, does al-Ṣadr's second interpretation possibility necessarily limit the sphere of obedience due to *Ulū al-Amr*? Al-Shāfi'ī argues that because *Ulū al-Amr* are a party to potential dispute with the community, the sphere of obedience due to them must be restricted. Does al-Ṣadr make that correlation? I would argue that he does not. For even though al-Ṣadr takes into consideration the possibility that *Ulū al-Amr* are being disputed with, this understanding does not necessarily entail Divine *approval of* disputing with *Ulū al-Amr*. Al-Ṣadr's second interpretation possibility merely states that, when disputes with *Ulū al-Amr* arise regarding their qualifications and their authority in theory and in practice, the referees are the word of God and God's Messenger. Is the community justified in opposing the rightful *Ulū al-Amr* in some cases? That is another matter, arguably addressed in the unrestricted Qur'ānic language used when requiring obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*. Setting this reservation aside, however, even if al-Ṣadr is hinting at a broader understanding for the notion of *Ulū al-Amr* (i.e. one in which fallible individuals might be included as well), he uses this possibility to reaffirm the Imāmī requirement of Imāmah, albeit with a different take on the verse's interpretation.

The aforementioned comments of al-Ṣadr in his advanced legal theory seminar are significant because they open up prospects of treading an unfamiliar path in understanding *Ulū al-Amr* within Imāmī Shī'ī thought. Granted, the notion of obedience to an authority who is well-equipped, albeit not necessarily immaculate, is familiar even within Imāmī circles (i.e. obedience to the fallible commanders appointed by the Prophet or immaculate Imam, or obedience to the qualified legal expert (*faqīh*) during the *ghaybah* of the Imam).²⁴⁶ These forms of obedience are

²⁴⁶ For example, see:
Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, 330.

justified as required *obedience* (*tā'ah*), within Imāmī thought, despite the possibility for error because of the greater good safeguarded by that obedience, for instance. Others might argue that a *compliance* of sorts²⁴⁷ is required, taking the lesser of two evils when one is surely unavoidable, and not *obedience due to Divinely ordained authority* per se. However, the point to make here is that whether or not obedience/compliance can be due to some fallible authorities is one thing, and it being the apparent meaning of verse 4:59 is another. As the recent exegesis authority, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1981 CE) puts it in his *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*,

[...] وكذا من الممكن بل الواقع أن يجعل شرعا نظير هذه الحجية الظاهرية المذكورة كفرض طاعة امراء السرايا الذين كان ينصبهم عليهم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وكذا الحكام الذين كان يوليهم على البلاد كمكة واليمن أو يخلفهم بالمدينة إذا خرج إلى غزاة وكحجية قول المجتهد على مقلده وهكذا لكنه لا يوجب تقيد الآية فكون مسألة من المسائل صحيحة في نفسه أمر وكونها مدلولاً عليها بظاهر آية قرآنية أمر آخر. فالآية تدل على افتراض طاعة اولى الامر هؤلاء ولم تقيده بقيد ولا شرط وليس في الآيات القرآنية ما يقيد الآية في مدلولها حتى يعود معنى قوله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الامر منكم إلى مثل قولنا وأطيعوا اولى الامر منكم فيما لم يأمرنا بمعصية أو لم تعلموا بخطئهم فإن أمرؤكم بمعصية فلا طاعة عليكم وإن علمتم خطأهم فقوموهم بالرد إلى الكتاب والسنة فما هذا معنى قوله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الامر منكم . مع أن الله سبحانه أبان ما هو أوضح من هذا القيد فيما هو دون هذه الطاعة المفترضة كقوله في الوالدين ووصينا الانسان بوالديه حسنا وإن جاهداك لتشرك بي ما

²⁴⁷ Can a distinction be made between “obedience (*tā'ah*),” in which a person is motivated (by fear, hope, or love) to *obey* a command, not merely *perform* an act; and a “compliance of sorts (*muwāfaqah, ta'āwun*),” in which a person is motivated not to *obey* a command, but to merely *perform* an act? Acting *according to* a command would be obedience, while acting *in accordance with* a command could merely be a matter of this *compliance of sorts*.

ليس لك به علم فلا تطعهما الآية : العنكبوت - 8 فما باله لم يظهر شيئا من هذه القيود في آية تشتمل على أس أساس

الدين وإليها تنتهي عامة أعراق السعادة الإنسانية. [...]²⁴⁸

2.5 Conclusion

While the Imāmī ḥadīth heritage surveyed in this chapter does not apparently lend support to al-Ṣadr’s second interpretation possibility, al-Ṣadr’s brief but significant remarks bring new life to the discourse, demonstrating how Sunnī and Shī‘ī discourses continue to shape one another – if only in subtle ways that unfold through close readings. Drawing the distinction between the apparent meaning of verse 4:59, on the one hand, and the principle of compliance with administrative authorities, on the other hand, can be one of the intellectual fruits of the discussion yet to be treated analytically. In terms of Imāmī conceptual frameworks, although al-Ṣadr puts forward a potentially “unorthodox” reading possibility, he casts it in a way that serves one of the “*uṣūl al-madhhab*” (i.e. the principle within Imāmī Shī‘ī thought that Imams are appointed by *naṣṣ* or Divine designation). Because al-Ṣadr allows for al-Shāfi‘ī’s exception understanding to an extent, but then turns it into an Imāmī-conclusion argument, al-Ṣadr arguably makes it easier for the non-Imāmī to accept the Imāmī conclusion.

Relevant to the central arguments of this dissertation, the iteration of infallibility-related themes in the early Shī‘ī ḥadīth literature surveyed as well as the (re)purposing of early argumentation in more recent Shī‘ī commentary lend “archival” support to modeling authorial interventions by Islamic thinkers as being preoccupied with a concern for forming moral subjects.

²⁴⁸ Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, *al-Mīzān fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. 4, 20 vols. (Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī al-Tābi‘ah li-Jamā‘at al-Mudarrisīn bi Qum al-Musharrāfah), 391.

Furthermore, the substantive *content* of these interventions deals with *Ulū al-Amr* as objects of obedience and reference, thereby signifying “leadership” in which the one being led chooses to form him/herself through obedience and reference to the one leading. As for the *form* of these authorial interventions, they too resonate with an author’s attempt to consolidate his own formation as a moral subject, while inviting his readers to follow suit by engaging with his conceptual frameworks. It is noteworthy that this subject-forming function can define the form of “leadership” in question, regardless what authority may be presumed for the relevant “leader”. Authority may have a role to play in motivating obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* or engagement with an author’s text, but it does not define the “leading/being led” relationship. Hence, the activity of these authors is one form among the different forms of “leadership” which are distinct from authority and revolve around subject-formation.

Chapter 3: *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* and Infallibility-cum-*Taṣwīb*

3.1 Complementing a Diachronic Survey of *Ulū al-Amr*

Chapter 2 reconstructed a representative selection of early Shī‘ī ḥadīth literature relevant to the notion of *Ulū al-Amr*. Closely reading these excerpts revealed themes related to infallibility in the process of identifying *Ulū al-Amr* with the imam personalities recognized by Twelver Shī‘ī Islam. The thematic morality in these descriptions resonates with the Sunnī lines of reasoning reconstructed in Chapter 1 and provides a backdrop for Sunnī-Shī‘ī dialectic up through more recent times. Highlighting the conceptual frameworks advanced by Sunnī and Shī‘ī authors allows for analyzing the repurposing of similar lines of reasoning, serving the overarching arguments of this dissertation pertaining to the preoccupation of authors with subject-formation and forms of leadership revolving around subject-formation. In this chapter, further analysis of Sunnī interventions interpreting *Ulū al-Amr* as *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* and dealing with *taṣwīb al-mujtahid*, demonstrate the implicit preoccupation with infallibility (hinted to earlier, in one form or another) as one of the paradigmatic features of Islamic discussions on leadership.

Afsaruddin argues that there is, “a clear trajectory of transformation and evolution in the primary meanings assigned to the critical Qur’anic phrase,” *Ulū al-Amr*.²⁴⁹ Based on exegetical references attributed to exegetes from the first two centuries of Islam, the phrase is understood to refer to, “people of knowledge and discernment,” those with a form of moral-legal authority, and early “military commanders” appointed by the Prophet Muḥammad. By the third century AH, the phrase refers to “political” leaders (*salāṭīn* and *umarā’*) and is applied to the first two caliphs, likely under the influence of sectarian debates. Afsaruddin proposes that an additional

²⁴⁹ Afsaruddin, "Obedience to Political Authority: An Evolutionary Concept," 49.

development takes place in late medieval works, identifying the phrase with the notion of “the people who loosen and bind” (*Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*), and modernist works, allowing for, “different kinds of authority, particularly religious, moral and political, to be encapsulated within it.”²⁵⁰ This chapter will hone in on the identification of *Ulū al-Amr* with *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* and then return to the theme of infallibility as a paradigmatic feature of relevant discourse. Before doing so, however, a few analytical reservations on Afsaruddin’s diachronic survey are in order.

Afsaruddin’s survey is useful in illustrating early readings of *Ulū al-Amr* that problematize notions of *absolute* obedience being due to just any ruler assuming a position of authority. Verse 4:59, as Afsaruddin shows, has been read over the centuries with a range of interpretations in mind pertaining to the *Ulū al-Amr* category, some with greater emphasis on moral-legal qualifications (and qualifiers) than others. Although it can be argued that the modern demarcation of the “political” and the “religious” and/or “moral” should not be projected back onto the early Islamic world without emphasis on the modern baggage of such terms (e.g. being embedded in conceptions of the modern state and secularity), Afsaruddin’s substantive distinction stands: there is a moral-legal quality to the earlier readings of *Ulū al-Amr* that is arguably downplayed by or replaced with a consideration of temporal threats to the Islamic polity in later readings. However, is this analysis best modeled as an evolutionary development of the “*Ulū al-Amr*” phrase usage, as Afsaruddin posits, or is it more a matter of rivaling conceptions adopted synchronically? For the time period I draw on in this study (mainly 10th-13th centuries CE), the latter position resonates better with the exegetical discursive tradition, in which multiple interpretations are presented before one is

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 49-50.

adopted. Nonetheless, Afsaruddin's diachronic survey offers a useful framework outlining the range of meanings ascribed to *Ulū al-Amr* through the modern period.

Moreover, Afsaruddin rejects the notion that verse 4:59 is *prima facie* evidence of what might be construed as a “politically authoritarian” impulse intrinsic to Islam. But is practically unrestricted obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* a matter of “religious” obligation or “political” expediency? Afsaruddin argues that it is, “on account of political expediency that the notion of practically unqualified obedience to the ruler, legitimate or otherwise, progressively gained ground (but not without opposition) in certain quarters.”²⁵¹ However, this framing of the disagreement limits the array of answers addressing it. The legislation of “religious” obligation takes necessities/expediencies into account (as the famous adage goes, “*al-darūrāt tubīḥ al-maḥzūrāt*”) and matters of greater priority trump those of lesser importance when stuck between a rock and a hard place.²⁵² In other words, “political expediency,” when it is not corrupt, is entirely within the “religious” sphere of expected compliance. In that sense, the matter of obedience can be both a “religious” obligation and a matter of “political” expediency. What might be called the orientalist pitfall here, then, is not – as Afsaruddin seems to suggest – a matter of misconstruing obedience in 4:59 as unrestricted obedience. Rather, the problem lies in lacking a holistic reading that cross-references key Qur’ānic verses related to obedience – recognizing it as paradigmatically moral obedience, in some sense, even when otherwise unqualified (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation) – and that accounts for a diversity of paradigmatically “Islamic” views within the tradition. The

²⁵¹ Ibid, 53.

²⁵² For example, see:

Qur’ān 2:185; 4:28; 2:173; 5:3; 6:145; 16:115; 6:119.

Also see:

Muḥammad Jawād Mughnīyah (d. 1979 CE), *Fiqh al-Imām Ja’far al-Ṣādiq (‘)*, 2nd ed., vol. 4, 6 vols. (Qum: Mu’assasat Anṣāriyān lil-Ṭibā’ah wa al-Nashr, 1421 AH), 392-395.

phrase “politically authoritarian,” describing Islam, is indeed misleading but there is more to the problem than being a matter of unrestricted obedience. The notion of political authoritarianism is embedded in a web of concepts that do not aptly capture the interconnected moral-legal-political concepts, and the diversity of relevant views in theory and practice within the Islamic tradition.²⁵³

Furthermore, the Arabic “*Ulū al-Amr minkum*” in verse 4:59 refers, “in a non-committal way to people who have (particularly moral) authority on account of personal qualities and aptitudes *among* their peers, and not on account of any kind of formal, especially political, appointment,” according to Afsaruddin.²⁵⁴ Arguably more consistent with the former part of this statement, however, I would argue against Afsaruddin’s subsequent claim that, “the concept of the caliph ruling, for all practical purposes, invincibly as God's deputy on earth (*khalifat Allah*) is exogenous to Islam.”²⁵⁵ The previous chapters of this dissertation, particularly Chapter 1, lend support to the argument that a holistic reading of Qur’ānic cross-references reveals a moral-quality requirement when it comes to obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*, and on such terms absolute obedience is conceivably Islamic (i.e. as an extension of obedience to God and His messenger). That which is exogenous is arguably more a matter of obedience to those unfit for the position than it is a matter of unqualified, Divinely mandated obedience. Granted, foreign ideas might have morphed the notion of *Khalīfat Allāh* to gradually justify moral failings by caliphs, but in order to do so there would have had to have been fertile ground to build off of in a preexisting (arguably Qur’ānic) notion of God’s deputy on earth. The exogenous, then, was not the notion of *khalīfat Allāh* per se, but the requirement of absolute obedience even if it came to immoral commands and/or

²⁵³ See Chapter 1.

²⁵⁴ Afsaruddin, "Obedience to Political Authority: An Evolutionary Concept," 54.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

considering those lacking qualifications to be God’s deputy (as opposed to merely an expedient ruler of necessity). This distinction is arguably similar to how the overwhelming majority of Muslims (i.e. those represented by Sunnī and Shī‘ī narratives) look back upon the conflict with the *Khawārij*. ‘Alī is reported to have described their slogan, “judgment is God’s alone (*Lā ḥukma illā lillāh*),” as a true statement repurposed for falsehood.²⁵⁶ Paradigmatically, the statement was speaking the “language” of the times, but the *Khawārij* were understood as having morphed the notion into an argument against human arbitration. In ‘Alī’s quote, he responds to their presumed reasoning by basically stating that order which safeguards higher interests trumps chaos. Thus, the *Khawārij* were received as having morphed a preexisting, legitimate concept in the tradition, deploying it in a way that ultimately undermined their very survival.

In any case, to portray competing Islamic visions of rule as hovering between egalitarian and authoritarian models would be inaccurate and far from useful. The analysis I have so far presented complicates such a binary. As Chapter 1 arguably showed, the competing visions of Islamic rule share the paradigm of ideally sustaining Divinely prescribed moral-legal leadership but disagree over the conceptual framework by which that moral-legal leadership is sustained. Even the notion of Divine designation/appointment (*naṣṣ*) was not rejected as a matter of principle by Sunnī scholars.²⁵⁷ It was not rejected because it ran counter to the egalitarian nature of rule in

²⁵⁶ ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (d. 40 AH / 661 CE), *Nahj al-Balāghah*, comp. al-Sharīf Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Raḍī (d. 406 AH / 1015 CE), ed. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, 1st ed. (Beirut, 1967 CE / 1387 AH), 82.

ومن كلام له (ع) في الخوارج لما سمع قولهم " لا حكم إلا لله " قَالَ (ع) : كَلِمَةٌ حَقٌّ يُرَادُ بِهَا بَاطِلٌ - نَعَمْ إِنَّهُ لَا حُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ - وَلَكِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ يَقُولُونَ لَا إِمْرَةَ - إِلَّا لِلَّهِ - وَإِنَّهُ لَا بُدَّ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ أَمِيرٍ بَرٍّ أَوْ فَاجِرٍ - يَعْمَلُ فِي إِمْرَتِهِ الْمُؤْمِنُ - وَيَسْتَمْتِعُ فِيهَا الْكَافِرُ - وَيُبْلِغُ اللَّهُ فِيهَا الْأَجَلَ وَيُجْمَعُ بِهِ الْقِيَاءُ - وَيُقَاتَلُ بِهِ الْعَدُوُّ وَتَأْمَنُ بِهِ السُّبُلُ - وَيُؤْخَذُ بِهِ لِلضَّعِيفِ مِنَ الْقَوِيِّ - حَتَّى يَسْتَرِيحَ بَرٌّ وَيُسْتَرَاحَ مِنْ فَاجِرٍ .

²⁵⁷ I am using the notion of “Divine designation/appointment” to include Divinely revealed appointment directly by God as well as Divine appointment delegated to the infallible/immaculate Prophet’s discretion. That is, although the two can be distinguished analytically (especially if the sphere of infallibility/immaculacy comes into question), I refer to them both as “Divine designation/appointment” because, in effect, they are an expression of the Divine’s selection, once one can take for granted that the Prophet is infallible/immaculate.

Islam.²⁵⁸ Rather, as al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE) makes very clear, had the *naṣṣ* regarding a potential Imam been established, then that Imam would have to be followed without a doubt.²⁵⁹ Invoking the notion of *khalīfat Allah* by Umayyad and ‘Abbasid rulers, without some previously established *indigenous* Islamic concept – however morphed it became over time – is difficult to entertain. A number of Qur’ānic references may serve to explain the original sense of this linguistic construction. For example, in verse 2:30, God tells the angels that He is designating/appointing/setting/placing (*jā’il*) a deputy/viceroy (*khalīfah*) on Earth,²⁶⁰ interpreted as a reality that persists for as long as Earth exists.²⁶¹ The construction “*khalīfat Allāh*” would

²⁵⁸ In her 2016 article, Afsaruddin argues for reconsidering the content of early debates on substantive requirements for leadership, including the views of early Shī‘ī (or “proto-Shī‘ī” pro-‘alids). Afsaruddin claims, on the basis of some early sources, “that kinship was not an important factor in the earliest debates concerning legitimate leadership and that both sides emphasized the individual moral qualifications of the candidate for the office of the caliph.” Asma Afsaruddin, “Loyalty and Obedience to the Ruler: Religious Obligation or a Practical Necessity?,” *The Muslim World* 106, no. 2 (April 2016): 361–73, <https://doi.org/10.1111/muwo.12146>, 364-265.

While Afsaruddin is keen on reminding the reader to be careful not to quickly project present conceptions of Shī‘ī Islam onto the past, I would argue that the revision she proposes can be reconciled with “later” Shī‘ī thought, allowing for a more nuanced revision in the final analysis. While early debates may not have emphasized kinship as a *substantive* requirement for leadership, kinship was likely still viewed as shorthand for the *naṣṣ* claim from the *evidentiary* dimension. This is a “*thubūt* vs. *ithbāt*” criteria distinction. In other words, the later kinship arguments were likely cited as *evidence* nostalgic of a preexisting *naṣṣ* argument (regardless how general or specific the *naṣṣ* was), not attempting to establish a substantive criterion for the *actualization* of leadership qualification but reminding of a substantive *indicator* of the leadership identified and appointed by God. The prevalence of *naṣṣ* arguments in surviving Shī‘ī literature and the various episodes of internal strife reported in historical literature about the nascent Muslim community lend credence to this reading. In any case, a comprehensive revision of Shī‘ī Islam’s argumentation development in the formative period would require a separate study. But as an initial assessment, I have referenced some reports in support of this reading in Chapter 2.

²⁵⁹ Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 27.

لَوْ تَبَتِ النَّصُّ مِنَ الشَّارِعِ عَلَى إِمَامٍ، لَمْ يَثْبُكْ مُسْلِمٌ فِي وُجُوبِ الْإِتِّبَاعِ عَلَى الْإِجْمَاعِ، فَإِنَّ بَدَلَ السَّمْعِ وَالطَّاعَةِ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَاجِبٌ بِاتِّفَاقِ الْجَمَاعَةِ.

²⁶⁰ Qur’ān 2:30

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

²⁶¹ For example, see the Shī‘ī reading documented by al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH / 991 CE) in the context of Imamate claims: Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 4.

have, then, referred to a function that a human being fulfilled on Earth, on behalf of God, regardless whether that human being had been a Prophet or not.²⁶²

Chapters 1 and 2 explained how the notion of unqualified obedience to *Ulū al-Amr* is argued based on hermeneutical grounds in the apparent absence of qualifiers limiting the obedience due in verse 4:59. The unqualified obedience reading is indigenous, as such, provided the competing conceptual frameworks discussed thus far. The hermeneutical approach prevalent among heirs of the tradition, Sunnī and Shī‘ī, arguably gives way to readings of *Ulū al-Amr* as the individually infallible, successive Imams of the Twelver Shī‘ī (Chapter 2) and (according to some Sunnī readings) the collectively infallible *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, which I examine next. The subsequent consideration of absolute obedience in light of scholarly “*taṣwīb*” (explained below) adopted early on by Sunnī thinkers, draws attention to broader implications regarding substantive requirements for subject-forming leadership in Islam.

3.2 *Ulū al-Amr* as *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*

Some medieval Sunnī scholars, perhaps most influentially Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH / 1209 CE), have argued that the phrase *Ulū al-Amr* in verse 4:59 refers to “the people who loosen and bind” (*Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*), those influential figures who mediate in the process of electing and potentially deposing the imam/caliph/ruler of the Islamic polity.²⁶³ Chapter 1 described al-

²⁶² As a possibility to explore in a future study: Perhaps this would have been invoked in response to pro-‘Alid rebellions demanding the rule of a Divinely appointed Imam. The caliphs would conceivably have responded by asserting that the caliph in power was indeed the caliph appointed by God, albeit the “appointment” was a matter of predestination and not of recorded words from Prophet Muḥammad.

²⁶³ On *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, see:

Wael B. Hallaq, “Ahl Al-Ḥall Wa-Al-‘Aqd - Oxford Islamic Studies Online,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* (Oxford Islamic Studies Online), accessed May 11, 2018, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/print/opr/t236/e0033>;
Muhammad Qasim Zaman, “Ahl al-Ḥall wa-l-‘Aqd,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, June 1, 2007, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/*-COM_0027; and

Rāzī's reasoning behind why *Ulū al-Amr* must be infallible in light of the definitive requirement to obey them in verse 4:59. After explaining why he believes that the infallible *Ulū al-Amr* are not the successive Shī'ī Imāmīyah Imams, al-Rāzī is left with the option that the *Ulū al-Amr* are an infallible *collective* instead. As al-Rāzī writes,

[...] ولما بطل هذا وجب أن يكون ذلك المعصوم الذي هو المراد بقوله : * (وأولي الأمر) * أهل الحل والعقد من الأمة ،

وذلك يوجب القطع بأن إجماع الأمة حجة .²⁶⁴

Al-Rāzī explains his view that this interpretation falls within the spectrum of existing discursive positions on verse 4:59, thereby not constituting a breach of the broader community's views at his time.²⁶⁵ In doing so, he interprets *Ulū al-Amr* to be specifically the '*ulamā*' among *Ahl al-Hall wa al-'Aqd*, having offered a distinct *raison d'être* for choosing the interpretation that they are the '*ulamā*'. As is clear from the excerpt, al-Rāzī employs this understanding of *Ulū al-Amr* to theorize for the authoritativeness (*hujjīyah*) of scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*). Al-Rāzī claims the infallibility (more than the mere authoritativeness) of *Ulū al-Amr* as a collective, and thus of their consensus (*ijmā'*).²⁶⁶

Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Revisiting 'Those in Authority,'" in *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), <https://tcr2-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/getobject.pl?c.193:2.tcr2, 47-55>.

²⁶⁴ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥfīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 10, 144.

²⁶⁵ In the form of an objection to his interpretation, al-Rāzī describes four preexisting interpretations within the Muslim community about *Ulū al-Amr*: (1) The rightly guided caliphs; (2) the military commanders (based on some reports); (3) the '*ulamā*' who issue verdicts in legal matters and teach people their religion (this preexisting view being based on reports and the early exegetical commentators); and (4) the infallible Imams, as reported by the "rawāfiḍ" (a pejorative reference to the Imāmī Shī'ī).

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥfīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 10, 144-145.

²⁶⁶ It would, thus, be reasonable to understand "authoritative (*hujjah*)," here, in the broader, linguistic sense – that is, a decisive argument of sorts – and *not* distinctly the term *hujjah* discussed in legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), "that which establishes the matter it is referring to without reaching the level of certainty." See:

Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar (d. 1964 CE), *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī), 13-14.

In other words, by employing the notion of infallibility (*iṣmah*), al-Rāzī makes the case for *ijmā'* as a true reflection of reality —a window into the mind of God, in a sense. That is, for al-Rāzī, *ijmā'* is not merely as a legally reliable mechanism for determining the law when uncertainty persists. Rather, it actually reveals the reality based upon which Divine legislation has been made. This *hujjīyah*, according to al-Rāzī, is established through a Qur'ānic argument, but the argument is not simply making the case for an excusable form of evidence even when erring in reality —it is making the case for *infallible* evidence, assuming that erring was a theoretical possibility. The backdrop of this distinction brings into purview the assertion al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE) makes much earlier regarding the changing reality of Divine guidelines in light of the changes in *ijtihād* practiced by the '*ulamā'*' (see Chapter 1). While al-Rāzī does not appear to make the same ontological claim as al-Juwaynī (about reality changing due to changes in *ijtihād*), they arguably end up with the same epistemological claim to certainty regarding the verdicts of '*ulamā'*' as *Ulū al-Amr*. Al-Rāzī argues for infallibility (*iṣmah*), apparently meaning that there is a compatibility between the fixed ontological reality and the consensus reached by *Ulū al-Amr* / *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd*. For al-Rāzī, a *mujtahid* may err, individually, but *Ulū al-Amr* – as a collective – do not.²⁶⁷ This position, known as *takḥī'ah*, functional *fallibility*, as opposed to

الحجة لغة : " كل شيء يصلح أن يحتج به على الغير " [...]

[...] ب - ما عند الأصوليين ، ومعناها عندهم حسب تتبع استعمالها : " كل شيء يثبت متعلقه ولا يبلغ درجة القطع " أي لا يكون سببا

للقطع بمتعلقه ، وإلا فمع القطع يكون القطع هو الحجة ولكن هو حجة بمعناها اللغوي ."

Note: I reference this 20th century Imāmī author not from the aspect that he is a 20th century Imāmī author, but because of his dimension as a scholar of *uṣūl al-fiqh* whose text is one of those known to initiate ḥawzah students into that field in traditional circles of learning today. As such, it is reasonable to assume continuity of usage and/or sufficient rigor in distinguishing multiple usages of technical terms in this text.

²⁶⁷ The backdrop of al-Rāzī's thought here is established/confirmed by his stated position in his *al-Maḥṣūl*,

والذي نذهب إليه أن الله تعالى في كل واقعة حكما معيناً وأن عليه دليلاً ظاهراً لا قاطعاً وأن المخطئ فيه معذور وقضاء القاضي فيه لا ينقض.

Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, ed. Ṭāha Jābir Fayyāḍ al-'Alwānī, 2nd ed., vol. 6, 6 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1412 AH / 1992 CE), 36.

taṣwīb's functional infallibility, represents a nuanced contrast with that of the earlier scholar, al-Juwaynī. Al-Juwaynī's conception removes *ijtihād*-based error from the equation not *exceptionally* (*takhṣīṣ*) but *categorically* (*takhaṣṣuṣ*). Conceiving of *ijtihād* in a formative relationship with a changing ontological reality, al-Juwaynī's '*ulamā*' change the reality of Divine law by the very process assumed to be aimed at *discovering* it.²⁶⁸ As al-Juwaynī writes,

وَإِذَا كَانَ صَاحِبُ الْأَمْرِ مُجْتَهِدًا، فَهُوَ الْمُتَّبِعُ، الَّذِي يَسْتَتَبِعُ الْكَافَّةَ فِي اجْتِهَادِهِ وَلَا يَتَّبِعُ. فَأَمَّا إِذَا كَانَ سُلْطَانُ الزَّمَانِ لَمْ يَبْلُغْ مَبْلَغَ الاجْتِهَادِ فَالْمُتَّبِعُونَ الْعُلَمَاءُ، وَالسُّلْطَانُ نَجْدُهُمْ وَشَوْكُهُمْ، وَفُؤُهُمْ وَبَذَرَقُهُمْ، فَعَالِمُ الزَّمَانِ فِي الْمَقْصُودِ الَّذِي نُحَاوِلُهُ، وَالْعَرَضُ الَّذِي نُرَاوِلُهُ كَتَبِي الزَّمَانِ، وَالسُّلْطَانُ مَعَ الْعَالِمِ كَمَلِكٍ فِي زَمَانِ النَّبِيِّ، مَأْمُورٌ بِالِانْتِهَاءِ إِلَى مَا يُنْهِيهِ إِلَيْهِ النَّبِيُّ. وَالْقَوْلُ الْكَاشِفُ لِلْغَطَاءِ، الْمُزِيلُ لِلْحَقَاءِ، أَنَّ الْأَمْرَ لِلَّهِ وَالنَّبِيُّ مِنْهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِي الْعَصْرِ نَبِيًّا، فَالْعُلَمَاءُ وَرِثَةُ الشَّرِيعَةِ، وَالْقَائِمُونَ فِي إِثْمَانِهَا مَقَامَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ، وَمِنْ بَدِيعِ الْقَوْلِ فِي مَنَاصِبِهِمْ أَنَّ الرُّسُلَ يَتَوَقَّعُ فِي ذَهْرِهِمْ تَبْدِيلُ الْأَحْكَامِ بِالنَّسْخِ، وَطَوَارِيءُ الظُّنُونِ عَلَى فِكْرِ الْمُفْتِينَ، وَتَغَايُرُ اجْتِهَادَاتِهِمْ يُعَيِّرُ أَحْكَامَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْمُسْتَفْتِينَ، فَتَصِيرُ حَوَاطِرُهُمْ فِي أَحْكَامِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى حَالَةً مَحَلًّا مَا يَتَبَدَّلُ مِنْ قَضَايَا أَوَامِرِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى بِالنَّسْخِ.²⁶⁹

As relayed in this excerpt, al-Juwaynī considers the verdicts of '*ulamā*' to have a similar ontological quality to the abrogable Divine commands revealed to the Prophets. When the '*ulamā*' change their minds, according to *ijtihād*, "the verdicts of God change when it comes to those

²⁶⁸ Of course, the detailed positions taken on the notions of *taṣwīb* and *takhti'ah* are highly nuanced and would require a separate treatment.

²⁶⁹ Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 380.

seeking verdicts.” There is thus a reality of the Divine law which changes according to the *ijtihad* of the *mujtahid*, similar to how abrogation (*naskh*) supersedes earlier Divine commands.

Both al-Juwaynī and al-Rāzī, then, would agree that *Ulū al-Amr* do not err (at least in some sense) – albeit in different senses. The former argues that the very process of *ijtihad* changes the reality of the *sharī‘ah*, and thus, error is categorically out of the question. The latter cites the decisive, unqualified command to obey *Ulū al-Amr* in verse 4:59 as necessitating that their decrees fall in line with the preexisting reality of God’s moral-law. Al-Juwaynī would also concur with al-Rāzī’s identification of *Ulū al-Amr* with ‘*ulamā*’ who are also *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, for al-Juwaynī sees the ‘*ulamā*’ as practically having the absolute authority of Prophets in their absence. Still, for al-Juwaynī, not every individual among *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* must have the skill of exercising *ijtihad*. In line with al-Bāqillānī (d. 402 AH / 1013 CE), al-Juwaynī writes,

وَالَّذِي يَنْصَرِفُ مِنْ مَسَاقٍ هَذَا الْكَلَامِ إِلَى الْفَصْلِ الْأَوَّلِ، الْمُنْطَوِي عَلَى ذِكْرِ صِفَةٍ مَنْ يَعْقِدُ، إِلَى اشْتِرَاطِ مَا ذَكَرَهُ الْقَاضِي.

فَلَا أَرَى لِاشْتِرَاطِ كَوْنِ الْعَاقِدِ مُجْتَهِدًا وَجْهًا لَائِحًا، وَلَكِنِّي أَشْتَرِطُ أَنْ يَكُونَ الْمُبَايِعُ مِمَّنْ يُعِيدُ مُبَايَعَتَهُ مِنْهُ وَأَقْبَتَهَا.²⁷⁰

Here, al-Juwaynī does not require an individual among *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* to be a *mujtahid* but, rather, merely requires that his pledge be influential enough as to solidify power [for the imam he is pledging allegiance to]. But so long as ‘*ulamā*’ exist, they are in the station of the Prophets to al-Juwaynī, “loosening and binding,” the candidacy to the position of imam, based on their *ijtihad* (interpreting legal requirements, in theory and practice). Not surprisingly, in his *al-Maḥṣūl*, al-Rāzī places al-Bāqillānī on the spectrum of *taṣwīb* (assumption of functional infallibility) positions – with a view that argues against the existence of definitive Divine rulings prior to the

²⁷⁰ Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 72.

process of *ijtihād* itself.²⁷¹ Al-Bāqillānī’s position would, thus, also make *ijtihād*-“error” categorically nonexistent – similar, in this effect, to al-Juwaynī’s position. That is, there would be no error in the sense of incompatibility with the reality of Divine legislation because: (1) [either] there is no specific Divine legislation prior to *ijtihād* (al-Bāqillānī’s position); and[/or] (2) Divine legislation shifts according to *ijtihād* conclusions, analogous to abrogating the reality of Divine legislation (al-Juwaynī’s position). Al-Rāzī, al-Juwaynī, and al-Bāqillānī each arrive at a form of infallibility when it comes to *Ulū al-Amr*, albeit each is founded on different views of the relationship between the ontology of Divine legislation and the epistemology of *ijtihād* – different conceptual frameworks functioning to satisfy an arguably paradigmatic feature of the tradition’s discourse.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. 6, 34-35.

اختلفوا في تصويب المجتهدين في الأحكام الشرعية وضبط المذاهب فيه على سبيل التقسيم أن يقال المسألة الاجتهادية إما أن يكون الله تعالى فيها قبل الاجتهاد حكم معين أو لا يكون فإن لم يكن الله تعالى فيها حكم فهذا قول من قال كل مجتهد مصيب وهم جمهور المتكلمين منا كالأشعري والقاضي أبي بكر ومن المعتزلة كأبي الهذيل وأبي علي وأبي هاشم وأتباعهم [...]

²⁷² A thorough historical study of the origins to which *taṣwīb* theory can be traced goes beyond the purview of this dissertation. However, it is relevant to the following section of this chapter — on an Islamic genealogy of *Ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd* (those who loosen and bind) — to note that there appears to be a Judeo-Christian precursor drawing a connection between the two notions. Pertaining to the latter, it has been suggested that Jesus’ promise to Peter, “whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loosen on earth shall be loosened in heaven” (Matt. 16:19; 18:18) draws on rabbinical competence of making decisions on vows and other ritual questions, “Extending it to a monopoly on salvation.” That is, the notion of “loosing” and “binding” would have first been familiar to the Jews and early Christians for its application to permissive and forbidding decisions on matters of Divine law. It has also been suggested that, in the Jewish context, the “keys” of several Divine affairs had been given to man, from the absolution of vows to the power of the court in matters of festivals and the calendar. In time, one trend of rabbinical thought might have come to be characterized by the following statement, “Once the Torah had been revealed to Israel, God had, so to speak abdicated the right of interpretation and any decisions reached by the sages was binding upon Him as well.” See:

Ze’ev W. Falk, “Binding and Loosing,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25, no. 1 (1974): 92–100, <https://doi.org/10.18647/669/JJS-1974>, 100.

Also see:

Kaufmann Kohler, “Binding and Loosing,” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1902), 215.

Granted, these historical analogues do not necessarily capture the nuances that exist in each of the Islamic terms as they subsequently develop (e.g. there are different versions of *taṣwīb*). But the existence of these potential precursors underscores the importance of following up with comparative studies warranting separate treatment. On

It should be noted that this limited range of infallibility differs from the Imāmī Shī‘ī scope of infallibility/immaculacy (*‘iṣmah*) in a number of respects. The Shī‘ī Imam is widely believed by Imāmī Shī‘ī to be immaculate with respect to falling short of exemplary action (even inadvertently) in personal conduct, let alone in interpreting and safeguarding the Prophetic message. As for the infallibility advanced by al-Rāzī, it is limited to the *‘ulamā’* in their capacity as *Ulū al-Amr* – as a collective in consensus (*ijmā’*). Similarly, al-Juwaynī, and likely al-Bāqillānī, can be read as arguing for a practical infallibility when it comes to the process of *ijtihād*. However, contrary to Imāmī Shī‘ī immaculacy/infallibility (*‘iṣmah*) of the Divinely appointed Imams, these latter two trends in Sunnī thought do not claim that the *mujtahid* is immune to sin and error in his personal conduct (although what problematizes this distinction is that it is quite possible for a *mujtahid* to have a theoretical justification regarding how his personal conduct, in any given instance, is not sinful, even when another qualified *mujtahid* may disagree – within reason, similar to a defense that can be made to explain ambiguous conduct by an immaculate Shī‘ī Imam).²⁷³ The wider sphere of required *‘iṣmah* in contemporary Imāmī thought is read as accommodating for the emphasis on the Imam’s role, on behalf of God, in continuing the function of safeguarding,

this note, such investigations raise the question of whether verified Judeo-Christian precursors should be viewed discursively just as “Islamic” as the subsequent developments typically examined in Islamic studies.

²⁷³ For an example of Shī‘ī argumentation that was likely in circulation almost contemporaneous with al-Bāqillānī’s, see:

Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, 198-205;

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 5-10;

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nu‘mān al-Mufīd (d. 413 AH / 1022 CE), *Taṣḥīḥ I‘tiqādāt al-Imāmīyah*, ed.

Ḥusayn Dargāhī, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Mufīd lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, 1414 AH / 1993 CE), 128;

‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436 AH / 1044 CE), *Tanzīh al-Anbiyā’*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā’, 1409 AH / 1989 CE), 22, 183.

interpreting and applying the Prophetic message, while commanding the community's sense of absolute confidence in their judgments.²⁷⁴

Still, each of these conceptual frameworks appears to function as a mechanism for satisfying the paradigmatic requirement of a moral infallibility, providing intellectual and physical technologies (e.g. the various *'ibādāt* and *mu'āmalāt* conceptions and practices) for the formation of the moral subject. For even if an author, such as al-Bāqillānī, does not express his opinion regarding the interpretation of *Ulū al-Amr*, his views on *ijtihād* [in]fallibility are informative, and so are his views on *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd* (see below). In turn, because of his *taṣwīb* views, those qualified to practice *ijtihād* would be regarded by relevant followers as practically “infallible” in their assessments—including assessments of a practitioner's religious duties toward *Ulū al-Amr*, however defined. That is, this is regardless whether al-Bāqillānī views *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd* to be the intended *Ulū al-Amr* in 4:59 or not. Moreover, the *mujtahid* has a role to play in interpreting/defining the terms, roles and duties toward these categories. To complete the picture of paradigmatic connections between these conceptual frameworks, I entertain a potential Qur'ānic genealogy of the concept behind, “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd*,” transformed or (mis)applied due to historically contingent circumstances, next.

3.3 A Genealogy of *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd*

The interpretation of *Ulū al-Amr* as *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd* can be traced to the Qur'ānic link between the notions of “*shūrā* (counsel)” and the seemingly cross-referenced instances of

²⁷⁴ For a contemporary synthesis of early formulations arguing on the grounds of Divine favor (*lutf*) and the guarantee of communal confidence (*wuthūq*), see: Ja'far al-Subḥānī, *Muḥāḍarāt fī al-Ilāhīyāt*, ed. 'Alī al-Rabbānī al-Gulpaygānī (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Imām al-Ṣādiq), 282-284; 363-370.

“*amr*” in the Qur’ān. In the context of describing those who are to enjoy that which is better and more enduring than all worldly pleasures, the Qur’ān commends the following attributes,

[...] وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

[...] and those who answer [the call of] their Lord, maintain the prayer, and their affair (*amr*) is [by] counsel (*shūrā*) among them, and they spend from that which We have provided them;²⁷⁵

While readers of the Qur’ān would likely have distinguished “their” *amr* (i.e. attributed to human affairs) from “Our” *amr* (i.e. attributed to the Divine), including the associations of “Our *amr*” with the Imamate, such as in verses 21:73 and 32:24, “their *amr*” might have been cross-referenced with the form of “*amr*” lacking a pronoun (because there is no distinctly Divine association in “the *amr*” unless the context specifies it). For example, verse 3:159, addressing Prophet Muḥammad, states,

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۚ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۚ

فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

Thus, it is by a mercy from God that you have been gentle with them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have dispersed from around you. So pardon them, ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in the *amr*; and once you are resolved,²⁷⁶ trust in God [while proceeding]. Indeed, God loves those who trust in [Him].²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Qur’ān 42:38.

²⁷⁶ According to an alternate reading: Once I have resolved [for you], put your trust in God [...].

²⁷⁷ Qur’ān 3:159.

Depending on whether “the” *amr* referred to here is understood to be an *amr* of human affairs – not particularly the domain of Divine guidance – this verse conceivably would have connected *amr* (at least in human affairs) with the notion of *shūrā*. As for the connection between a *shūrā* collective of sorts to *Ulū al-Amr* in verse 4:59, that would have relied on reading the “*amr*” in *Ulū al-Amr* as being the domain of human affairs, not distinctly one related to an Imamate of Divine guidance. Using the approach to cross-referencing outlined in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, distinguishing between when “the *amr*” refers to “Our” *amr* and when it refers to “their” *amr* is critical for reconstructing Qur’ānic connections between *Ulū al-Amr*, Imamate, *shūrā*, etc...²⁷⁸ Although strands of Sunnī and Shī‘ī thought can be modeled as having adopted one of these readings as opposed to the other, respectively, a reconciliation between the two is not beyond reach, as I discuss toward the end of this chapter.

The aforementioned *shūrā* concept, when applied to the caliphate with a “their-*amr*” (Sunnī) lens, likely represents a precursor to the notion of *ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*, which is later adopted by the aforementioned Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī as a Sunnī interpretation for *Ulū al-Amr*. It may be argued that this concept is referred to by ‘Alī in sermons attributed to him, which are compiled in *Nahj al-Balāghah*. In one instance, ‘Alī states,

²⁷⁸ For instance, in Qur’ān 22:67, it appears to be clear from the context that “the *amr*” refers to the Divine *amr*, when it reads,

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنَسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوهُ ۖ فَلَا يُنَازِعُونَكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۚ وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ۚ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

Here, there is an explicit directive that no one is to dispute the *amr* – in reference to the Divine prescription of each community’s rites/rituals/laws. A Shī‘ī reading would see the *amr* of *ulū al-amr* to be along the same lines, part of the Divine program of relaying/interpreting/safeguarding the Divinely prescribed rites.

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ - إِنَّ أَحَقَّ النَّاسِ بِهَذَا الْأَمْرِ أَقْوَاهُمْ عَلَيْهِ - وَأَعْلَمُهُمْ بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ فِيهِ - فَإِنْ شَغَبْتَ شَاغِبْتُ اسْتُغْتَبَ فَإِنْ أَبِي فُوتِلَ -
وَلَعَمْرِي لَئِنْ كَانَتْ الْإِمَامَةُ لَا تَنْعَقِدُ - حَتَّى يَخْضُرَهَا غَامَةُ النَّاسِ فَمَا إِلَى ذَلِكَ سَبِيلٌ - وَلَكِنْ أَهْلُهَا يَخْضُمُونَ عَلَى مَنْ غَابَ
عَنْهَا - ثُمَّ لَيْسَ لِلشَّاهِدِ أَنْ يَرْجِعَ وَلَا لِلْغَائِبِ أَنْ يَخْتَارَ - أَلَا وَإِنِّي أَقَاتِلُ رَجُلَيْنِ - رَجُلًا ادَّعَى مَا لَيْسَ لَهُ وَآخَرَ مَنَعَ الَّذِي
عَلَيْهِ أَوْصِيكُمْ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ - فَإِنَّهَا خَيْرٌ مَا تَوَاصَى الْعِبَادُ بِهِ - وَخَيْرٌ عَوَاقِبِ الْأُمُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ - وَقَدْ فُتِحَ بَابُ الْحَرْبِ
بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ أَهْلِ الْقِبْلَةِ - وَلَا يَحْمِلُ هَذَا الْعِلْمَ إِلَّا أَهْلُ الْبَصَرِ وَالصَّبْرِ - وَالْعِلْمَ بِمَوَاضِعِ الْحَقِّ - فَاْمَضُوا لِمَا تُؤْمَرُونَ بِهِ وَفَقُوا
عِنْدَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ - وَلَا تَعْجَلُوا فِي أَمْرِ حَتَّى تَتَّبِعُونَا - فَإِنَّ لَنَا مَعَ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ تُنْكَرُونَهُ غَيْرًا²⁷⁹

Here, ‘Alī begins by noting the qualifications of those with the greatest right regarding “this *amr*” (of the caliphate and/or the Imamate) —those most capable of carrying it out and those most knowledgeable of “God’s *Amr*” in regards to it. The statement may be read as a pragmatic delineation of qualifications, regardless of whether or not there has been a Divine appointment (seemingly, the “their-*Amr*” lens entertained earlier). ‘Alī mentions that it would not be feasible for the Imamate to be bounded (*tan‘aqid*; in the binding sense) if it were a requirement that the (entirety of) the general public be present. But, rather, he continues, “its people” (i.e. we might project the term “*ahl al-‘aqd*” onto the description here; that is, the “people” who “bind” the Imamate) rule over those who are absent from the event (of binding the Imamate). “Neither can the individual who is present go back [on his binding], nor can the individual who is absent choose [otherwise],” he continues. The second qualification ‘Alī mentions, being, “the most knowledgeable amongst them regarding God’s *Amr*,” would indicate that ‘Alī was not only

²⁷⁹ Ibn Abī Tālib, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 247-248.

concerned with avoiding chaos but optimizing successful rule (regardless whether there was a Divine appointment recognized or not). Another noteworthy point here is that there is no clear indication that “loosening” was theoretically entertained alongside the “binding.” To the contrary, ‘Alī’s phrase, “neither can the individual who is present go back,” if anything, would hint at the absence of loosening.²⁸⁰

In a letter to Mu‘āwiyah, ‘Alī appears to allude to the connection between *shūrā* and the concept of *ahl al-‘aqd* (if not *ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*) once more, when he states,

إِنَّهٗ بَايَعَنِي الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ بَايَعُوا أَبَا بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَ وَعُثْمَانَ - عَلَى مَا بَايَعُوهُمْ عَلَيْهِ - فَلَمْ يَكُنْ لِلشَّاهِدِ أَنْ يَحْتَارَ - وَلَا لِلْغَائِبِ أَنْ
يُرَدَّ - وَإِنَّمَا الشُّورَى لِلْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ - فَإِنِ اجْتَمَعُوا عَلَى رَجُلٍ وَسَمَّوْهُ إِمَامًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ لِلَّهِ رِضًا - فَإِنِ خَرَجَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِمْ
خَارِجٌ - بَطَّعْنِ أَوْ بَدَعَةٍ رُدُّوهُ إِلَى مَا خَرَجَ مِنْهُ - فَإِنِ أَبِي قَاتَلُوهُ عَلَى اتِّبَاعِهِ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ - وَوَلَاهُ اللَّهُ مَا تَوَلَّى - وَلَعَمْرِي
يَا مُعَاوِيَةَ لَئِن نَّظَرْتُ بِعَقْلِكَ دُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ - لَتَجِدَنِي أَبْرَأَ النَّاسِ مِنْ دَمِ عُثْمَانَ - وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ أَيُّ كُنْتُمْ فِي عُزْلَةٍ عَنْهُ - إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّجَعِي

فَتَجَنَّ مَا بَدَأَ لَكَ وَالسَّلَامُ²⁸¹

But, in this case, the emphasis appears to be on using the binding of Abū Bakr’s, ‘Umar’s and ‘Uthmān’s caliphates, which Mu‘āwiyah acknowledged, in order to make the case for his own caliphate as an extension of the same logic. That is, here ‘Alī does not discuss whether these individuals were necessarily the most capable or most knowledgeable (conditions he mentioned in

²⁸⁰ If this is the case, then there are at least a couple of possibilities to consider as explanations for why such a function is not mentioned or emphasized: (1) because if the most knowledgeable individual regarding “God’s *Amr*” were to be chosen, as ‘Alī suggests, then he would see it as revealing an immaculate/*ma šūm* individual appointed by God, thereby negating the need for “loosening”; or (2) because the risk of sedition in “loosening” would be considered a greater evil than the evil of an unqualified ruler. However, the difficulty with the latter is that there may be scenarios in which there is no risk of sedition, or in which the sedition is in fact the lesser of the two evils.

²⁸¹ Ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 366-367.

the aforementioned sermon). Rather, he merely refers to the precedent that Mu‘āwiyah had presumably accepted as legitimate (otherwise, he would have been fought by *them*) and argues that the same group of people (apparently the majority of Muhājirūn and Anṣār) that pledged allegiance to the previous rulers, and as a result of which, “neither was the one present allowed to choose [otherwise], nor was the one absent allowed to reject [the choice made],” had also pledged allegiance to ‘Alī along the same lines. When coupled with ‘Alī’s clear statement of his qualification for the post relative to Abū Bakr (see Chapter 4), it would appear that this letter to Mu‘āwiyah can best be read in light of the “Our *Amr*” vs. “their *Amr*” model. However, this is not because of the contrast between one reading proposing a Divine appointment and another denying it, necessarily. Rather, it is because of the contrast between dealing with “their *Amr*” in the way ‘Alī proposes as being informed by the most knowledgeable regarding of God’s *Amr* (“Our *Amr*”), and dealing with “their *Amr*” based on whatever internal logic has been accepted via status quo precedent. In any case, here too there is no reference to the “*al-ḥall*” part of “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*.”²⁸²

As a term, including “*al-ḥall*,” however, “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*” makes one of its earliest extant appearances in a work compiling the creed attributed to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH / 855 CE). In the context of describing imamate requirements, the compiler of *al-‘Aqīdah* appears to quote Ibn Ḥanbal stating,

²⁸² The reasoning for its absence in this case is likely due to the absence of relevance. If ‘Alī was trying to argue with his opponent by extending the logic of the previous precedent, in order to avoid further conflict, then describing a “loosening” mechanism may have been counter-productive at this particular juncture. That it, neither was the “loosening” present in the previous precedent, nor would introducing it at this early stage allow ‘Alī to stabilize his rule more efficiently.

[...] الإمامة لا تجوز إلا بشروطها النسب والإسلام والحماية والنبوت والمحدث وحفظ الشريعة وعلم الأحكام وصحة التنفيذ

والتقوى وإتيان الطاعة وضبط أموال المسلمين فإن شهد له بذلك أهل الحل والعقد من علماء المسلمين وثقاتهم أو أخذ هو

ذلك لنفسه ثم رضيه المسلمون جاز له ذلك.²⁸³

In this excerpt, the imamate qualifications *alone* do not authorize a person to claim the imamate. Rather, the ‘*ulamā*’ and trustworthy Muslims among *Ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*, “the people who loosen and bind,” who have the influence to make and break in such matters, must attest to the person’s qualifications for him to be authorized. However, when a person claims such qualifications and takes over without invitation, going over the heads of *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, the excerpt considers his imamate authorized *if* the Muslims subsequently consent to it. Hence, even the latter scenario requires the approval of *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* – at least to the extent that they represent/influence the will of the Muslim masses. Nonetheless, because this creed may have been relayed via paraphrasing, even assuming it had been done entirely in good faith, it is possible that the phrase “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*” was a later term used to explain what was understood as the substantive analogue of an earlier concept.

However, what may lend credence (albeit not conclusive) to the aforementioned attribution is that another third-century case also uses the language of “loosening and binding (*ḥall wa ‘aqd*)” in a similar sense. This appears in a line of poetry attributed to Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (d. 280 AH / 894 CE). Citing an example of describing a people who are all leaders/chiefs (*ru’asā’*), al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī (d. 502 AH / 1108 CE) reports in his *Muḥāḍarāt*

²⁸³ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH / 855 CE), *al-‘Aqīdah Riwāyat Abī Bakr al-Khallāl* [d. 311 AH / 923 CE], ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ‘Iz al-Dīn al-Sīrawān, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dār Qutaybah, 1408 AH / 1988 CE), 124.

al-Udabā' wa Muḥāwarāt al-Shu'arā' wa al-Bulaghā' that Aḥmad ibn [Abī] Ṭāhir has said the following line of poetry,

كلهم سيد فمن تلق منهم قلت هذا أولى بحلّ وعقد²⁸⁴

The line describes a people, each individual among whom is a master/chief in his own right — such that whoever among them one meets leaves the impression that he is more worthy, “to loosen and bind (and/or to be the object of loosening and binding).”

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324 AH / 936 CE) is thought to have used the expression “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd*” in the context of describing how 'Alī came to power after 'Uthmān. Al-Ash'arī first argues that Abū Bakr must be the imam after Prophet Muḥammad because the Muslims at least *apparently* consented to Abū Bakr's imamate/caliphate, forging a consensus (*ijmā'*) – and, according to al-Ash'arī, the authoritative quality of *ijmā'* must be accepted in order to maintain (Sunnī) Islamic worldview assumptions.²⁸⁵ He continues to describe 'Umar's imamate as established because Abū Bakr appointed/designated him and “bound” (*'aqada*) the imamate for him, choosing him for it. As for 'Uthmān, al-Ash'arī says that his imamate was established through the “binding” (*'aqd*) of those among a *shūrā'* group appointed/designated by 'Umar. Interestingly, the phrase *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-'Aqd*, in its entirety, is not used here, but the word “*'aqd*” is and so is “*shūrā'*.” This particular “*shūrā'*” group, thus, appears not to have been synonymous with the

²⁸⁴ Al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Rāghib al-Iṣbahānī (d. 502 AH / 1108 CE), *Muḥādarāt al-Udabā' wa Muḥāwarāt al-Shu'arā' wa al-Bulaghā'*, ed. 'Umar al-Ṭabbā', 1st ed., vol. 1, 2 vols. (Beirut: Sharikat Dār al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam lil-Ṭībā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1999 CE), 203.

A special thanks to Hossein Modarressi for this reference, which I agree apparently attributes the line to Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭāhir (not Aḥmad ibn Ṭāhir as this printed edition mentions). The “Abī” was likely dropped inadvertently as there is apparently no renowned poet by the name Aḥmad ibn Ṭāhir mentioned in the sources I have available.

²⁸⁵ As will be described later, even when the “periphery” acknowledges the said *ijmā'* claimed by the “central domain” – if only for argument's sake – it is granted as an *ijmā'* regarding the *apparent* matter-of-fact administration, of minimizing damage to a nascent community, not an endorsement of superior qualifications or a denial of Divine appointment/designation (*naṣṣ*) via the Prophet Muḥammad. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

broader category of *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*. It is regarding ‘Alī’s imamate, however, that al-Ash‘arī does use the phrase, “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*.”²⁸⁶ In one sense, ‘Umar’s selection of the limited *shūrā* group seems to mark a transition in how the Qur’ānic notion of *shūrā* became associated with “binding” (‘*aqd*) the imamate of “their *amr*” to a particular group of individuals. In another sense, the Qur’ānic activity of *shūrā* could then be used for that purpose among the broader movers-and-shakers who become known as *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*.

The term *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* also appears in an extant Shī‘ī reference prior to the early 4th century AH / 10th century CE. Ibn Qiba al-Rāzī asks his Zaydī interlocutor to confirm the Zaydī position on the Imāmīyah/Twelve Shī‘ī requirement of *naṣṣ* since the Zaydī position does not accept the Sunnī notion of “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*” engaging in *shūrā* to choose the imam.²⁸⁷ In another instance, Ibn Qiba engages his Zaydī interlocutor by asking for the Zaydī response to a (Sunnī) argument about the possibility that Prophet Muḥammad left this world without appointing a successor. He does so in order to repurpose the same Zaydī argument as a defense of the Imāmī Shī‘ī position about the Imams after Ḥusayn being appointed specifically (as opposed to the Zaydī position, which does not specify particular individuals). In the course of posing his question, Ibn Qiba makes use of the word “*shūrā*” as an activity occurring among “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Ash‘arī (d. 324 AH / 936 CE), *al-Ibānah ‘an Uṣūl al-Diyānah*, ed. Fawqīyah Ḥusayn Maḥmūd, 1st ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1397 AH / 1977 CE), 257-258.

وثبتت إمامة علي بعد عثمان بعقد من عقد له من الصحابة من أهل الحل والعقد [...]

²⁸⁷ Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 237-238.

أفليس إمامته لا تصح إلا بالنص على ما تقوله الامامية ولا معه دليل معجز يعلم به أنه إمام وليس سبيله عندكم سبيل من يجتمع أهل الحل والعقد من الأمة فيتشاورون في أمره ثم يختارونه ويبايعونه؟ فإذا قال: نعم، قيل له: فيكف السبيل إلى معرفته؟

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 121.

²⁸⁸ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 124.

ثم يقال له وللزيدية جميعا: أخبرونا لو خرج رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم من الدنيا ولم ينص على أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام ولا دل عليه ولا أشار إليه أكان يكون ذلك من فعله صوابا وتديرا حسنا جائزا؟ فإن قالوا: نعم، فقلنا لهم: ولو لم يدل على العترة أكان يكون ذلك جائزا فإن قالوا: نعم، قلنا:

The way these references are made to appear seamlessly familiar indicate that they have been coined earlier.

An early discussion on *Ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* appears in *Tamhīd al-Awā’il wa Talkhīṣ al-Dalā’il* by Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 AH / 1013 CE). The author refers to, “the meritorious (*afādil*) of the Muslims who are among *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, and those entrusted when it comes to this matter,”²⁸⁹ of electing/choosing the imam in the absence of *naṣṣ*. For al-Bāqillānī, the prevalent sources in the domain of scholarly knowledge which he recognizes are an obstacle in the face of the Divine *naṣṣ* alternative. *Naṣṣ* claims are marginal (or made out to be) in his purview of thinking and the inherited narrative of the central domain does not allow for overhauling counter-narratives. As such, al-Bāqillānī theorizes for the election/choice (*al-ikhtiyār*) of imam, not as an *a priori* claim citing Divine providence (as would an Imāmī Shī‘ī argument, for example), but as an after-the-fact model fitting the “data” of a received narrative, in the absence of acceptable evidence to the contrary (i.e. given his assumptions about the authoritative nature of *ijmā’* and the issues about which he claims *ijmā’*). Based on this approach, al-Bāqillānī, and perhaps Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī (d. 324 AH / 936 CE)²⁹⁰ before him, argue that a single individual of influence

ولو لم يدل فأى شيء أنكرتم على المعتزلة والمرجئة والخوارج؟ وقد كان يجوز أن لا يقع النص فيكون الأمر شورى بين أهل الحل والعقد، وهذا ما لا حيلة فيه، فإن قالوا: لا ولا بد من النص على أمير المؤمنين صلوات الله عليه ومن الأدلة على العترة، قيل لهم لم؟ حتى إذا ذكروا الحجة الصحيحة فنقلها إلى الإمام في كل زمان، لأن النص إن وجب في زمن وجب في كل زمان، لأن العلل الموجبة له موجودة أبداً، ونعوذ بالله من الخذلان.

²⁸⁹ Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 AH / 1013 CE), *Tamhīd al-Awā’il wa Talkhīṣ al-Dalā’il*, ed.

‘Imād al-Dīn Aḥmad Ḥaidar, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyah, 1414 AH / 1993 CE), 467.

فإن قالوا فإذا فسد النص على إمام بعينه فكيف طريق إثبات الإمامة وبماذا يصير الإمام إماماً قيل لهم إنما يصير الإمام إماماً بعقد من يعقد له الإمامة من أفاضل المسلمين الذين هم من أهل الحل والعقد والمؤمنين على هذا الشأن لأنه ليس لها طريق إلا النص أو الإختيار وفي فساد النص دليل على ثبوت الإختيار الذي نذهب إليه.

²⁹⁰ Al-Juwaynī refers to this attribution,

وأقرب المذاهب ما ارتضاه القاضي أبو بكر، وهو المنقول عن شريحنا أبي الحسن - رضي الله عنهما - وهو أن الإمامة تثبت بمبايعة رجل واحد من أهل العقدة.

Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 69.

from among “*ahl al-ḥall wa al-‘aqd*” suffices for the pledge of allegiance (*bay‘ah*) making the imamate binding.²⁹¹ While al-Bāqillānī argues that this is due to the lack of evidence requiring a particular number, his conceptual framework draws on and functions to accommodate the historical precedent of Abū Bakr as a single individual selecting ‘Umar as caliph, for instance. Al-Juwaynī also allows for a single individual to suffice but he emphasizes that the historical precedent(s) justifying that conclusion must have been ones in which that single individual *substantively* sufficed to consolidate power for and *obedience* to the caliph.²⁹²

This final point problematizes the association between the Qur’ānic notion of *shūrā*, which naturally involves a discussion between multiple individuals, and *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, which, as we have seen, might not require more than one member to execute the category’s function of “binding” the contract of imamate (based on a number of authoritative Sunnī readings examined here, if only in a qualified fashion).²⁹³ This tension is arguably linked to (mis)applying the Qur’ānic “*shūrā*” to the caliphate, likely due to irregularities in the historical process of electing the early caliphs. Sunnī theoreticians had a precedent in Abū Bakr’s selection of ‘Umar to allow for the

²⁹¹ Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd al-Awā’il wa Talkhīṣ al-Dalā’il*, 467-468.

[...] الدليل عليه أنه إذا صح أن فضلاء الأمة هم ولاة عقد الإمامة ولم يبق دليل على أنه يجب أن يعقدها سائرهما ولا عدد منهم مخصوص لا تجوز الزيادة عليه والنقصان منه ثبت بفقد الدليل على تعيين العدد والعلم بأنه ليس بموجود في الشريعة ولا في أدلة العقول أنها تتعقد بالواحد فما فوقه. فإن قيل ألا جعلتم العقد إلى كل فضلاء الأمة في كل عصر من أعصار المسلمين قيل له أجمع أهل الاختيار على بطلان ذلك ولعلمنا بأن الله قد فرض علينا فعل العقد على الإمام وطاعته إذا عقد له وأن اجتماع سائر أهل الحل والعقد في سائر أمصار المسلمين بصقع واحد وإطباقتهم على البيعة لرجل واحد متعذر ممتنع وأن الله تعالى لا يكلف فعل المحال الممتنع الذي لا يصح فعله ولا تركه ولعلمنا بأن سلف الأمة لم يراعوا في العقد لأبي بكر وعمر وعثمان وعلي حضور جميع أهل الحل والعقد في أمصار المسلمين ولا في المدينة أيضا وأن عمر رد الأمر إلى ستة نفر فقط وإن كان في غيرهم من يصلح للعقد فوجب بهذه الجملة صحة ما قلناه ويوضح ذلك أيضا أن أبا بكر عقدها لعمر فتمت إمامته وسلم عهده بعقده له [...]

²⁹² Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 71-72.

نَمْ أَقُولُ: إِنْ بَايَعَ رَجُلًا وَاحِدًا مَرْمُوقًا، كَثِيرُ الْأَتْبَاعِ وَالْأَشْيَاعِ، مُطَاعٌ فِي قَوْمِهِ، وَكَانَتْ مَنَعَتُهُ تُفِيدُ مَا أَشْرَفْنَا إِلَيْهِ، انْعَقَدَتِ الْإِمَامَةُ. وَقَدْ يُبَايِعُ رَجَالًا لَا تُفِيدُ مُبَايَعَتُهُمْ شَوْكَةً وَمُنَّةً قَهْرِيَّةً، فَلَسْتُ أَرَى لِلْإِمَامَةِ اسْتِثْرَارًا. وَالَّذِي أَجْزَأُهُ لَيْسَ شَرْطَ إِجْمَاعٍ، وَلَا اخْتِكَامًا بَعْدَ، وَلَا قَطْعًا بِأَنَّ بَيْعَةَ الْوَاحِدِ كَافِيَةٌ.

²⁹³ This is not to say that there are no other Sunnī views – al-Juwaynī refers to other views in his discussion, but the point is that these authoritative views uncover an analytically telling tension.

imamate to be contracted even if only by one member of *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*.²⁹⁴ Furthermore, because ‘Umar selected a limited group (of six individuals) to engage in a *shūrā* about his succession, as opposed to having a *shūrā* among the broader category of *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, or a more representative sample of it, making a distinction between comprehensive “their *amr*” Qur’ānic *shūrā*, on the one hand, and *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*, on the other hand, is in order.

3.4 Reconciling “Their *Amr*” of *Shūrā* with “Our *Amr*” of Imamate

It is the aforementioned tension that can explain the range of verse 4:59’s *Ulū al-Amr* interpretations, contingent on whether the “*amr*” in “*Ulū al-amr* among you” is “their *amr*” or “Our *amr*,” with each reading having a constellation of Qur’ānic cross-references to reveal or infuse additional layers of meaning. Is there room, however, for a reconciliation of this tension via a reorientation of the Sunnī-Shī‘ī (central-peripheral) dialectic? Resolving the tension may reside in reading verse 4:59’s “*Ulū al-Amr*” with multiple layers of meaning, each having its own Qur’ānic implications and potential tensions with historical developments. This is not to make a normative claim about the Qur’ān’s intended meaning, but to reconcile central-peripheral reception with the Qur’ān’s internal cross-referencing. I argue that the answer resides in resolving the tension into a disagreement about different spheres of leadership – one an “Our *amr*” Imamate (with a capital I), the other a “their *amr*” administrative imamate/caliphate (with a lowercase i). Chapter 2’s Shī‘ī discourse can be understood as appealing to an “Our *amr*” constellation of Qur’ānic references for an all-encompassing, Divinely appointed Imamate. Arguably, only when

²⁹⁴ An (arguably unsuccessful) attempt to resolve this tension manifests in the way Sunnī theoreticians distinguished between an imam appointing/designation (‘*ahd*) the next imam (despite rejecting the Shī‘ī claim that Prophet Muḥammad did so), and *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* nominating the next imam. See: Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 134.

that Imam is inaccessible would the Shī'ī reference to *Ulū al-Amr* entertain al-Ṣadr's ("their *amr*") framework for instance (see Chapter 2). As for the Sunnī discourse up through this chapter's discussions, it can be modeled as appealing to an "Our *amr*" sphere at times (e.g. *Ulū al-Amr* as somehow infallible) and a "their *amr*" sphere at others (e.g. the imams/caliphs being chosen through *shūrā*), with the latter being the primary mode of appeal. Confirming the analysis of this chapter, thus far, when the infallibility requirement is not pronounced in one sphere, it appears in the other, revealing infallibility as a paradigmatic feature for conceptual frameworks regarding leadership (at some level, after Prophet Muḥammad).

If the disagreement between early Sunnī and Imāmī Shī'ī over the principle of imamate has been portrayed as one over the same type of leadership, then it has arguably been miscommunicated and/or intently misrepresented. In light of early Shī'ī ḥadīth literature (Chapter 2), the Imāmī Shī'ī view arguably required infallibility of the Imam, regardless whether he was actually in the caliph/imam (lower case) position of "their *amr*" or not. For the Imam's role (with a capital "I") was more than simply administrative – it was "Our *amr*" Qur'ānic Imamate of Divine guidance. In terms of this dissertation's argument, the Imam was responsible for subject-formation, maintaining his own cultivation of leading attributes and influencing the subject-formation of others, regardless of administrative authority. Arguably, Sunnī legal authorities did not require the infallibility of the Islamic polity's imam because they did not conceive of the imamate function in the same way as the Imāmī Shī'ī literature described it. An example of this appears in al-Bāqillānī's words, which go as far as to describe this administrative imam as an, "agent on behalf of the community, representing it."²⁹⁵ If this imam is not an extension of Prophet Muḥammad's infallible

²⁹⁵ Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd al-Awā'il wa Talkhīṣ al-Dalā'il*, 476.

guardianship role, on behalf of God, as the Imāmī Shī'ī Imam is conceived, then he need not be infallible. Al-Bāqillānī summarizes an imam's administrative roles and describes him as being held accountable and corrected by the broader community if he errs (i.e. at least if his practice conflicts with his theory).²⁹⁶ This is in sharp contrast with the description of the Imam's function in Shī'ī thought, as illustrated by a number of reports compiled in *al-Kāfi*.²⁹⁷ In terms of some (not

وأما ما يدل على أنه لا يجب أن يكون معصوماً عالماً بالغييب ولا بجميع الدين حتى لا يشذ عليه منه شيء فهو أن الإمام إنما ينصب لإقامة الأحكام وحدود وأمر قد شرعها الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم وقد تقدم علم الأمة بما وهو في جميع ما يتولاه وكيل للأمة ونائب عنها وهي من وزائه في تسديده وتقويمه وإذكاره وتبنيه وأخذ الحق منه إذا وجب عليه وخلعه والاستبدال به متى اقترب ما يوجب خلعه فليس يحتاج مع ذلك إلى أن يكون معصوماً كما لا يحتاج أميره وقاضيه وجابي خراجه وصدقاته وأصحاب مسائله وحرسه إلى أن يكونوا معصومين وهو فليس يلي بنفسه شيئاً أكثر مما يليه خلفاؤه من هذه الأمور [...]

²⁹⁶ Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd al-Awā'il wa Talkhīṣ al-Dalā'il*, 477-478.

فإن قالوا فلماذا يُقام الإمام قيل لهم لأجل ما ذكرناه من قبل من تدبير الجيوش وسد الثغور وردع الظالم والأخذ للمظلوم وإقامة الحدود وقسم الفيء بين المسلمين والدفع بهم في حجبهم وغزوهم فهذا الذي يليه ويقام لأجله فإن غلط في شيء منه أو عدل به عن موضعه كانت الأمة من وزائه لتقويمه والأخذ له بواجبه

²⁹⁷ Al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, 198-205.

For example,

[الكليبي عن] مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنِ الْحَسَنِ بْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ عَنْ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ غَالِبٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع فِي خُطْبَةٍ لَهُ يَذْكُرُ فِيهَا خَالَ الْأَيْمَةِ ع وَصَفَائِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَوْضَحَ بِأَيْمَةِ الْهُدَى مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِ نَبِيِّنَا عَنْ دِينِهِ وَأَنْبَلَجَ بِهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ مَنْهَاجِهِ وَقَتَحَ بِهِمْ عَنْ بَاطِنِ تَبَايَعِ عِلْمِهِ فَمَنْ عَرَفَ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ مُحَمَّدٍ ص وَاجِبَ حَقِّ إِمَامِهِ وَجَدَ طَعْمَ خَلَاوَةِ إِيْمَانِهِ وَعَلِمَ فَضْلَ طَلَاوَةِ إِسْلَامِهِ لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى نَصَبَ الْإِمَامَ عَلِمًا لِحَلْفِهِ وَجَعَلَهُ حُجَّةً عَلَى أَهْلِ مَوَادِّهِ وَعَالِمًا وَأَلْبَسَهُ اللَّهُ تَاجَ الْوَقَارِ وَعَشَّاهُ مِنْ نُورِ الْجُبَّارِ بِمُدِّ سَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ لَا يَنْقَطِعُ عَنْهُ مَوَادُّهُ وَلَا يُنَالُ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا بِجَهَةِ أَسْبَابِهِ وَلَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَ الْعِبَادِ إِلَّا بِعَرَفْتِهِ فَهُوَ عَالِمٌ بِمَا يَرِدُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ مُلْتَبَسَاتِ الدُّجَى وَمُعْتَبَاتِ السُّنَنِ وَمُسْتَبْهَاتِ الْفِتَنِ فَلَمْ يَزَلِ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى يَخْتَارُهُمْ لِحَلْفِهِ مِنْ وَرَثَةِ الْحُسَيْنِ ع مِنْ عَقِبِ كُلِّ إِمَامٍ يَصْطَفِيهِمْ لِذَلِكَ وَيَجْتَبِيهِمْ وَيَرْضَى بِهِمْ لِحَلْفِهِ وَيَرْضِيهِمْ كُلَّمَا مَضَى مِنْهُمْ إِمَامٌ نَصَبَ لِحَلْفِهِ مِنْ عَقِبِهِ إِمَامًا عَلِمًا بَيْنًا وَهَادِيًا نَبِيًّا وَإِمَامًا قِيمًا وَحُجَّةً عَالِمًا أَيْمَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ حُجَّجَ اللَّهُ وَدُعَاتُهُ وَرِعَاتُهُ عَلَى خَلْفِهِ يَدِينُ بِهَدْيِهِمْ الْعِبَادُ وَتَسْتَهْلِكُ بِنُورِهِمُ الْبِلَادُ وَيَنْمُو بِرِكَتِهِمُ الْبِلَادُ جَعَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ حَيَاةً لِلْأَنَامِ وَمَصَابِيحَ لِلظُّلَامِ وَمَفَاتِيحَ لِلْكَوَالِمِ وَدَعَائِمَ لِلْإِسْلَامِ جَزَتْ بِذَلِكَ فِيهِمْ مَقَادِيرُ اللَّهِ عَلَى مَحْتَمِهَا فَلَا إِمَامَ هُوَ الْمُنْتَجَبُ الْمُرْتَضَى وَالْهَادِي الْمُنْتَجَى وَالْقَائِمُ الْمُرْتَجَى اصْطَفَاهُ اللَّهُ بِذَلِكَ وَاصْطَنَعَهُ عَلَى عَيْنِهِ فِي الدَّرِّ حِينَ ذَرَاهُ وَفِي الرِّبِّيَّةِ حِينَ بَرَّاهُ ظُلْمًا قَبْلَ خَلْقِ نَسَمَةٍ عَنْ يَمِينِ عَرْشِهِ مَخْبُوءًا بِالْحِكْمَةِ فِي عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ عِنْدَهُ اخْتَارَهُ بَعْلَمِهِ وَانْتَجَبَهُ لَطْفِهِ بِقِيَّةٍ مِنْ آدَمَ ع وَخَيْرَةٍ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ نُوحٍ وَمُصْطَفَى مِنْ آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَسَلَالَةٍ مِنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَصَفْوَةٍ مِنْ عِزَّةِ مُحَمَّدٍ ص لَمْ يَزَلْ مَرْغَبًا بَعَيْنِ اللَّهِ يَحْفَظُهُ وَيَكَلِّفُهُ بِسِرِّهِ مَطْرُودًا عَنْهُ حَبَائِلُ إِبْلِيسَ وَجُنُودَهُ مَدْفُوعًا عَنْهُ وَفُؤُوبُ الْعَوَاسِقِ وَتُؤُوثُ كُلِّ فَاسِقٍ مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُ قَوَارِفُ السُّوءِ مُبْرَأً مِنَ الْعَاهَاتِ مَحْجُوبًا عَنِ الْآفَاتِ مَعْصُومًا مِنَ الرُّلَاتِ مَعْصُومًا عَنِ الْفَوَاحِشِ كُلِّهَا مَعْزُوفًا بِالْحِلْمِ وَالرِّبِّ فِي تِقَاعِهِ مَنْسُوبًا إِلَى الْعَفَافِ وَالْعِلْمِ وَالْفَضْلِ عِنْدَ انْتِهَائِهِ مُسْتَدًا إِلَيْهِ أَمْرٌ وَالِدُهُ صَامِتًا عَنِ الْمُنْطِقِ فِي حَيَاتِهِ فَإِذَا انْقَضَتْ مُدَّةُ وَالِدِهِ إِلَى أَنْ انْتَهَتْ بِهِ مَقَادِيرُ اللَّهِ إِلَى مَشِيئَتِهِ وَجَاءَتِ الْإِرَادَةُ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِيهِ إِلَى حَبِيئِهِ وَتَلَعَ مُنْتَهَى مُدَّةِ وَالِدِهِ عَ فَمَضَى وَصَارَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَقَلَّدَهُ دِينَهُ وَجَعَلَهُ الْحُجَّةَ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ وَقِيمَهُ فِي بِلَادِهِ وَأَيْدَهُ بِرُوحِهِ وَأَتَاهُ عِلْمَهُ وَأَنْبَأَهُ فَضْلَ بَيَانِهِ وَاسْتَوْدَعَهُ سِرَّهُ وَانْتَدَبَهُ لِعَظِيمِ أَمْرِهِ وَأَنْبَأَهُ فَضْلَ بَيَانِ عِلْمِهِ وَنَصَبَهُ عَلِمًا لِحَلْفِهِ وَجَعَلَهُ حُجَّةً عَلَى أَهْلِ عَالَمِهِ وَضِيَاءً لِأَهْلِ دِينِهِ وَالْقِيمَةَ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ بِهِ إِمَامًا لَهُمْ اسْتَوْدَعَهُ سِرَّهُ وَاسْتَحْفَظَهُ عِلْمَهُ وَاسْتَحْبَاهُ حِكْمَتَهُ وَاسْتَرْعَاهُ لِدِينِهِ وَانْتَدَبَهُ لِعَظِيمِ أَمْرِهِ وَأَخْبَاهُ بِهِ مَنَاهِجَ سَبِيلِهِ وَفَرَّضَهُ وَحُدُودَهُ

all) substantive requirements, the function of the Imāmī Shī‘ī Imam is closer to the function of the various attempts to justify the authoritativeness of *ijmā‘*, the infallibility of the *mujtahid* in a *taṣwīb* framework or the infallibility of *Ulū al-Amr* in a *takḥī‘ah* framework within Sunnī thought. As for the function of the Sunnī imam, it is analogous to the function of an administrator appointed by the Imam (with a capital “I”) as understood by Imāmī Shī‘ī thought.²⁹⁸

3.5 Conclusion

Al-Bāqillānī situates the *mujtahid* in the substantive position of one who, in the *taṣwīb* sense, infallibly defines the attributes and roles of *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*—those who, in turn, choose the imam. Perhaps it is this theoretical precedent that al-Juwaynī has in mind when he makes his statement describing the ‘*ulamā‘*’ as, “in reality those to whom the *Amr* belongs deservingly so [...],”²⁹⁹ alluding to 4:59’s *Ulū al-Amr* (see Chapter 1). Al-Rāzī, who does not adopt the *taṣwīb* ontology/epistemology of scholars like al-Juwaynī, or al-Bāqillānī and al-Ash‘arī before him, but argues that the textual evidence (i.e. verse 4:59) makes the case for *Ulū al-Amr* infallibility (with his *takḥī‘ah* framework). Furthermore, his *Ulū al-Amr* are the ‘*ulamā‘*’ from

فَقَامَ بِالْعَدْلِ عِنْدَ تَحْيِيرِ أَهْلِ الْجَهْلِ وَتَحْيِيرِ أَهْلِ الْجَدَلِ بِالنُّورِ السَّاطِعِ وَالتَّيْفَاءِ النَّافِعِ بِالْحَقِّ الْأَبْلَجِ وَالتَّبَيَّنِ اللَّائِحِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَخْرَجٍ عَلَى طَرِيقِ الْمَنْهَجِ الَّذِي مَضَى عَلَيْهِ الصَّادِقُونَ مِنْ آبَائِهِ عَ فَلَيْسَ يَجْهَلُ حَقَّ هَذَا الْعَالَمِ إِلَّا شَقِيٌّ وَلَا يَحْجُدُهُ إِلَّا غَوِيٌّ وَلَا يَصُدُّ عَنْهُ إِلَّا جَرِيٌّ عَلَى اللَّهِ جَلٌّ وَعَلَا

Note the expression “God’s *amr*,” in association with the Imam in this framework and how his attributes and effects are of cosmic proportions.

²⁹⁸ Another paper/chapter would explore the role Sunnī discourse on imamate shaped Imāmī Shī‘ī discussions on leadership during the *ghaybah* of the Imam.

²⁹⁹ Al-Juwaynī, *Ghiyāth al-Umam*, 379-380.

وَمَا أَلْقِيَهُ إِلَى الْمَجْلِسِ السَّامِيِّ: وَجُوبٌ مُرَاجَعَةُ الْعُلَمَاءِ فِيمَا بَأْتِي وَيَذَرُ، فَإِنَّهُمْ فُدُوهُ الْأَحْكَامِ وَأَعْلَامِ الْإِسْلَامِ، وَوَرِثَةُ النَّبِيِّ، وَقَادَةُ الْأُمَّةِ، وَسَادَةُ الْمِلَّةِ، وَمَقَاتِيخُ الْهُدَى، وَمَصَابِيخُ الدُّجَى، وَهُمْ عَلَى الْحَقِيقَةِ أَصْحَابُ الْأَمْرِ اسْتِحْقَاقًا [وَدَوُو] النَّجْدَةِ مَأْمُورُونَ بِإِتْسَامِ مَرَاتِبِهِمْ، وَافْتِصَاصِ أَوْامِرِهِمْ وَالْإِنْكَفَافِ عَنْ مَرَاجِرِهِمْ. وَإِذَا كَانَ صَاحِبُ الْأَمْرِ مُجْتَهِدًا، فَهُوَ الْمُنْبُوخُ، الَّذِي يَسْتَنْبِغُ الْكَافَّةَ فِي اجْتِهَادِهِ وَلَا يَتَّبِعُ. فَأَمَّا إِذَا كَانَ سُلْطَانُ الزَّمَانِ لَمْ يَبْلُغْ مَبْلَغَ الْاجْتِهَادِ فَالْمُنْبُوغُونَ الْعُلَمَاءُ، وَالسُّلْطَانُ نَجْدَتُهُمْ وَسَوْكُتُهُمْ وَفُؤُوتُهُمْ وَبَدْرَقَتُهُمْ، فَعَالِمُ الزَّمَانِ فِي الْمَقْصُودِ الَّذِي تُحَاوِلُهُ، وَالْعَرَضِ الَّذِي تُزَاوِلُهُ كَنَبِيِّ الزَّمَانِ، وَالسُّلْطَانِ مَعَ الْعَالَمِ كَمَلِكٍ فِي زَمَانِ النَّبِيِّ، مَأْمُورٌ بِالْإِنْتِهَاءِ إِلَى مَا يُنْهِيهِ إِلَيْهِ النَّبِيُّ.

among *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*. Thus, the ‘*ulamā*’/*mujtahidūn* – individually, according to *taṣwīb* views, and collectively, according to some interpretations of 4:59 – retain a sphere of infallibility, theorized by each scholar via a distinct conceptual framework. The Sunnī scholars considered here, along with their Imāmī Shī‘ī counterparts referenced in Chapter 2 or in the margins here, converge on a form of infallibility envisioned for the primary leadership personality/entity following Prophet Muḥammad.

Imāmī Shī‘ī thought compiled in extant form by al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH / 941 CE) and al-Ṣadūq (d. 381 AH / 991 CE), for example, is invested in the *naṣṣ* requirement because filling that position is regarded as an extension of the Prophetic mission, Divinely safeguarded, and commanding absolute obedience as *Ulū al-Amr*.³⁰⁰ Significant instances of Sunnī thought, such as in al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī, may not explicitly identify *Ulū al-Amr* as being infallible, but the ‘*ulamā*’ whose views determine and appoint *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd* and/or *Ulū al-Amr* are theorized as functionally infallible via *taṣwīb*. In these Sunnī conceptions, the Imāmī Shī‘ī view of an infallible/immaculate Imam competes with the Sunnī view of the *mujtahid* (via *taṣwīb*), and *not* the Sunnī view of the Islamic polity’s administrative imam. For later scholars, such as al-Rāzī, who reject *taṣwīb* but likely realize the Imāmī Shī‘ī vision of primary leadership after Prophet Muḥammad as a challenge to Sunnī thought, there is an attempt to reinforce Sunnī legal theory

³⁰⁰ The reader may wonder why I have prioritized two (presumed “traditionists”) to represent Imāmī views, while focusing on theologians/jurists to represent Sunnī views. There are a number of comments I may offer to address this concern: (1) Although I recognize a development in the sophistication of elaborating *kalam* conceptual frameworks over time, it appears to me that the outlines of Shī‘ī creed are presented along with their basic arguments in the ḥadīth literature. The compilers of such literature had a role in crafting the conceptual frameworks through systematizing the titles of sections, ordering, picking/choosing which reports to include, splitting up reports, etc... Treating this phenomenon thoroughly, however, would warrant a separate study. But the takeaway is that they functioned as theologians in this sense —the difference was that they were quoting arguments in the wording of the ḥadīth reports as opposed to more philosophical/theological terms; (2) I am choosing Shī‘ī figures whose writings were likely already in circulation by the time of the Sunnī authors I refer to; (3) I only mean to offer examples and did not intentionally filter out Shī‘ī authors who are more readily recognized as *mutakallimūn*.

epistemology by interpreting verse 4:59 as evidence justifying the authoritativeness of *ijmāʿ* as legal evidence. It is this reading of verse 4:59's *Ulū al-Amr* that leads al-Rāzī to conclude that the primary authority following Prophet Muḥammad is the *ijmāʿ* of the *ʿulamāʿ*, the infallible *Ulū al-Amr* once they function together as *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd*. Pressures outside the Sunnī collective formation, thus, induce the adoption of conceptual frameworks particularly suited to privilege a perceived infallibility of that collective formation (i.e. via *ijmāʿ*). A model aptly explaining why a Sunnī scholar would promote such a conceptual framework is that he views it as subject-forming, and in turn, community-forming —completing the cycle.

Each of the reconstructions attempted in this chapter represent a metatext or commentary on verse 4:59, including its association with devotional obedience to *Ulū al-Amr*. The analytical points discussed support this dissertation's argument that Islamic thinkers utilized different conceptual frameworks to address shared concerns pertaining to paradigmatic leadership requirements – particularly infallibility here. The activity of these authors, who emphasize substantive requirements of *Ulū al-Amr*, the *mujtahid*, *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd*, and the imam/Imam, also sheds light on the centrality of forming the qualified leader(s), who facilitate(s) a distinct subject-formation for individuals making up the broader community. In turn, this lends support to the argument that these authors engaged in one of the different forms of subject-forming “leadership” by honing intellectual technologies for their own formation as well as that of their persuaded readers.

Chapter 4: The Axis of Excellence? Paradigmatic Requirements

آلَةُ الرِّيَاسَةِ سَعَةُ الصَّدْرِ

— ‘Alī³⁰¹

Chapter 3 included a genealogy of the notion of “*Ahl al-Ḥall*”/*shūrā* in the Islamic context, raising questions and attempting to reconcile relevant Sunnī and Shī‘ī frameworks by drawing on a seemingly Qur’ānic distinction between “Their *Amr*” and “Our *Amr*.” The previous chapter also examined key Sunnī reconstructions identifying *Ulū al-Amr* with “the people who loosen and bind” (*Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd*), which — in light of their competing Shī‘ī counterparts — appeared to demonstrate a paradigmatic requirement of an infallibility-of-sorts. As metatexts in relation to Qur’ān 4:59, these reconstructions represent deployments of intellectual technologies in devotional contexts, thereby providing “archival” consistency with the theoretical model proposed by this dissertation —both the argument pertaining to functioning with a concern for forming moral subjects and the argument characterizing the activity of Islamic authors as one of the subject-forming forms of “leadership.” The present chapter reconstructs writings associated with more mystical modes of Islamic writing, highlighting the subject-forming “leader” figure of the “Qutb,” completing the circle of trends in Islamic thought at the crossroads of Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī thought.

³⁰¹ Ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, 501.

4.1 Setting the stage: ‘Alī, the Pivot Point of the Quern

أما والله، لقد تقمصها ابن أبي قحافة³⁰²، وإنه ليعلم أن محلي منها محل القطب من الرحي، ينحدر عني السيل، ولا يرقى إليّ

الطير³⁰³ [...]

These words, attributed to ‘Alī, appear in the collection of sermons, letters and aphorisms known as *Nahj al-Balāghah*,³⁰⁴ compiled by the Imāmī Shī‘ī al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406 AH / 1015 CE), and are one of the earliest references using the Arabic word “quṭb” (pivot point; sometimes translated, “pole” or “axis”) to speak of a form of (Islamic succession) authority (e.g. traditionally understood to be the “caliphal” authority) or at least the more prior right/position relative to authority³⁰⁵.³⁰⁶ In the excerpt, ‘Alī states that Abū Bakr put on the garb [of the caliphate] despite

³⁰² Or فلان in some versions. For example, see:

‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, *Nahj al-Balāghah: Muṣawwarah min Nuskhah Makḥṭūṭah Nādirah min al-Qarn al-Khāmis*, comp. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406 AH / 1015 CE), ed. Maḥmūd Al-Mar‘ashī, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-‘Uzmā al-Mar‘ashī al-Najafī (ra), 1406 AH), 9.

³⁰³ ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd al-Mu‘tazilī (d. 656 AH / 1258 CE), *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, ed. Muḥammad Abū Al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 1st ed., vol. 1, 20 vols. (Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1378 AH / 1959 CE), 151.

³⁰⁴ For the purposes of this study, it suffices that the quote is traceable to literature in circulation during the period of this study’s focus. However, for attempts at tracing this quote and the remaining contents of *Nahj al-Balāghah* to their earliest references, see:

‘Abd al-Zahrā’ al-Ḥusaynī al-Khaṭīb, *Maṣādir Nahj al-Balāghah wa Asānīduh*, 4th ed., vol. 1, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Zahrā’, 1988), 327.

For a summary of discussions regarding the compiler and author of *Nahj al-Balāghah*’s content, see: Moktar Djebli, “Nahdj al-Balāgha,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill, April 24, 2012), https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/nahdj-al-balagha-SIM_5752?s.num=0&s.rows=20&s.mode=DEFAULT&s.f.s2_parent=encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.start=0&s.q=n%28nahdj+al+balagha%29.

³⁰⁵ As the Mu‘tazilī Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd takes it to mean figuratively —far from the Imāmī Shī‘ī claim of actual authority or designation/appointment by God. In addition to his commentary directly following the excerpt, see: Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd al-Mu‘tazilī, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 9, 307.

³⁰⁶ I do not mean that the signifier alone had gained such a valence by this time, but that the context carries this basic understanding applying to authority. This is not to say that the elaborate technical/theological understanding of the Imamate is evident from this usage alone. But it is an early application using the phrase قطب in the context of discussing Islamic successorship authority/priority.

One potential precursor that may be referring to the concept of a pivot point or axis, as it pertains to ‘Alī’s guidance/leadership, albeit without using the word “quṭb” is a reported quote of Prophet Muḥammad about ‘Alī.

knowing that the position of ‘Alī relative to it is the position of the *quṭb* to the *raḥá* (“quern”). He appears to be protesting, as he appeals to the familiarity of the quern’s mechanical operation to demonstrate how pivotal his position is to the type of authority that Abū Bakr has taken on like one would put on a shirt. Being such an early allusion to the leading position (succeeding Prophet Muḥammad —call it what you may), using the word “*quṭb*” would, thus, likely not have been entirely absent from the minds of later Sunnī authorities with Ṣūfī dispositions who spoke of the “*quṭb*” at the head of their spiritual hierarchy.³⁰⁷ Notable trends of Ṣūfī or otherwise “mystical” Islam arguably thought/think of the “*quṭb*” figure as a *spiritual* “caliph,” inheriting spiritual leadership, not the temporal/political authority. In this chapter, I argue that emphasizing or introducing such a form of caliphate/imāmah reveals a paradigmatic moral requirement across Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī thought —the need for a physical (embodiment) exemplar of formidable guidance, who functions as a “leader” in the subject-forming sense discussed throughout this dissertation. Thus, the “*quṭb*” case study reconstruction of this chapter provides further “archival” consistency with this dissertation’s theoretical model.

One way into this discussion would be to track the development/manifestation of ideas associated with *wilāyah/walāyah* and *awliyā’* in the formative periods of Shī‘ī and Sunnī Islam

There are different versions with a similar meaning but one of the versions apparently taken for granted by Sunnī authorities such as al-Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī reads, “O’ God, make what is right turn about with ‘Alī whichever way he turns.”

اللهم أدر الحق مع علي حيث دار

Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfá min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*, ed. Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ramaḍān, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam lil-Ṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, n.d.), 623; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥfīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 1, 205.

³⁰⁷ But, lest it should be tempting to assume Ṣūfīs were Shī‘ī in disguise (and not only because “Ṣūfī” is a different way of categorizing Muslims that can cut across “Sunnī” and arguably at least some “Shī‘ī”), it is befitting to remember that extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. Most of those associated with the “Ṣūfī” label maintained the major tenets of Sunnī Islam, rejecting *naṣṣ* (Divine designation/appointment of the Prophet’s successor) claims, defending the leadership of the early matter-of-fact caliphs and abiding by one of the (at least) four major schools of Sunnī legal practice.

(particularly Ṣūfī trends).³⁰⁸ The approach adopted in this chapter, however, sketches an outline to hone in on the crystallization of the “quṭb” concept as it manifested through the writings of authors toward the end or directly following the formative period. Excerpts from the original Arabic writings are arguably necessary to fully unfold the nuances present (or absent) from conceptions in the transition period as well as the fully developed period (with respect to the usage of the word quṭb). For the former, I consider an excerpt from (the Ṣūfī)³⁰⁹ Sahl al-Tustarī’s (d. ca 283 AH / 896 CE) *Tafsīr*, perhaps the first instance referring to the quṭb in a spiritual cosmology sense, in addition to key excerpts from (the Ṣūfī) al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s (d. ca 320 AH / 910 CE) *Khatm al-Awliyā’*. For the latter, I examine the accounts in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyah min al-‘Ilm al-Ilāhī*. I do not delve into (the Ṣūfī philosopher) Ibn ‘Arabī’s (d. 638 AH / 1240 CE) elaboration that appears in his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* because I am more concerned with the reception of the underlying concept as synthesized in more traditional Sunnī scholarship, arguably better represented in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s work. Given that they were contemporaries, it is quite

³⁰⁸ See:

Aiyub Palmer, *Sainthood and Authority in Early Islam: Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s Theory of Wilāya and the Reenvisioning of the Sunnī Caliphate, Sainthood and Authority in Early Islam: Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s Theory of Wilāya and the Reenvisioning of the Sunnī Caliphate* (Brill, 2019), <https://brill-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/view/title/55681>;

Shayesteh Ghofrani, "Comparative Analysis of Wilāya in the Formative Period of Shi‘ism and Sufism," Order No. 10114676, University of Exeter (United Kingdom), 2014. <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/1792787795?accountid=10226>;

Rebecca Masterton, "A Comparative Exploration of the Spiritual Authority of the Awliya' in the Shi'i and Sufi Traditions," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 32, no. 1 (Winter, 2015): 49-74, <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/1688306136?accountid=10226>;

Vincent Joseph Cornell, "Mirrors of Prophethood: The Evolving Image of the Spiritual Master in the Western Maghrib from the Origins of Sufism to the End of the Sixteenth Century" (Los Angeles, University of California, Los Angeles, 1989), <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/dissertations-theses/mirrors-prophethood-evolving-image-spiritual/docview/303681271/se-2?accountid=10226>.

³⁰⁹ The parentheses are meant to indicate that there may be room to contest how these labels apply and in what sense they apply.

possible, nonetheless, that al-Rāzī and Ibn ‘Arabī were drawing on shared references whenever Ibn ‘Arabī was not unique in his development of the *quṭb* notion.³¹⁰ In this chapter, I do not intend to present a revision of current scholarship as far as the formative period is concerned but rather focus on filling a gap in closer readings of the subsequent period through Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s synthesis.³¹¹

4.2 Shifting Emphasis in the Imam’s Role

In early Shī‘ī thought, a shifting emphasis in the role of the Imam, from the political to the spiritual, can inform the discussion on how Sunnī Ṣūfī thought developed the *quṭb* concept. Modarressi argues that in the formative period of Shī‘ism, different roles of the Imam were reconsidered/emphasized, from the political role to the religious figurehead to the centerpiece of the universe. Contemporaneous with popularizing the idea of the, “Imām’s divine protection against sin and error (*iṣma*),” Modarressi explains another development during the transitional period of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq’s (d. 148 AH / 765 CE) time,

[...] The extremists emphasized the supernatural qualities of the Imām, maintaining that he was the centerpiece of the universe: “If the earth were left without an Imām for even

³¹⁰ For a study considering Ibn ‘Arabī’s influence on Moroccan Sufism, see: Cornell, “Mirrors of Prophethood: The Evolving Image of the Spiritual Master in the Western Maghrib from the Origins of Sufism to the End of the Sixteenth Century,” 568-570.

Further study on Ibn ‘Arabī’s impact might consider the extent to which his worldview goes beyond describing the *quṭb* as the primary aim of creation (*al-ghāyah* / *al-‘illah al-ghā’iyah*) — see the excerpts of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī below — to envision the *quṭb* as an encompassing acting cause (*‘illah fā‘iliyah*) of sorts. I write “might consider” because such a study would likely require interpretive decisions when characterizing distinctions between types of causes in light of Ibn ‘Arabī’s ontological claims regarding the oneness of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).

³¹¹ Complementing/revisiting the formative period would require a related but separate treatment, potentially an article or even another dissertation.

one minute, its entire structure would collapse.” The result, nevertheless, was the same—a downgrading of the political aspect of the institution of Imāmate.³¹²

This deemphasis of the political was short-lived of course, but what remained is arguably the spread of notions related to other dimensions to the Imam’s existence. Modarressi hints in a footnote that the towering Imāmī Shī‘ī authority al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍá (d. 436 AH / 1044 CE) rejected attributions of scripture (or readings of scripture) that ascribed Divine qualities to the Imams. As al-Murtaḍá states in his *al-Shāfi fī al-Imāmah*, responding to Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Mu‘tazilī’s (d. 415 AH / 1025 CE) *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-‘Adl*,

[...] فأما ما حكاه عن بعضهم من أنه "لولا الإمام لما قامت السماوات والأرض ولا صح من العبد الفعل" فليس نعرفه قولا

لأحد من الإمامية تقدم ولا تأخر، اللهم إلا أن يريد ما تقدم حكايته من قول الغلاة ، فإن أراد ذلك فقد قال: إن الكلام مع

أولئك ليس بكلام في الإمامة ، وأحال به على ما مضى في كتابه من أن الإله لا يكون جسما ، على أن من قال بذلك من

الغلاة – إن كان قاله – فلم يوجب من حيث كان إماما ، وإنما أوجبه من حيث كان إلها وصاحب الكتاب إنما شرع في حكاية

تعليل من أوجب الإمامة ، وذكر أقوال المختلفين فيها ، وفي وجوبها وما احتيج له إلى الإمام [...] .³¹³

Arguably, al-Murtaḍá was rejecting the valence Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār had presumed in levying his polemic against the Imāmīyah. Meaning, this was an unreasonable diversion on Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s end, as the discussion was on Imāmah, not cosmological dimensions of the

³¹² Hossein Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi‘ite Islam: Abū Ja‘far Ibn Qība Al-Rāzī and His Contribution to Imāmīte Shī‘ite Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1993), 9-10.

³¹³ ‘Alī ibn Al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍá, *al-Shāfi fī al-Imāmah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Zahrā’ al-Ḥusaynī al-Khaṭīb and Fāḍil al-Mīlānī, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 4 vols. (Qum: Mu‘assasat Ismā‘īlīyān, 1410 AH), 42;

‘Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-Hamadhānī al-Asad Ābādhī (d. 415 AH / 1025 CE), *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-‘Adl*, ed. Ṭāha Ḥusayn et al., vol. 20, 20 vols. (al-Dār al-Miṣrīyah lil-Ta‘līf wa al-Tarjamah, n.d.), 18.

Imam's existence. He was, thus, not commenting on whether or not such a statement had any trace or acceptable related ideas in the major Imāmī ḥadīth collections. Moreover, it is likely that al-Murtaḍá was avoiding an engagement of charitable reading in this case because it would have distracted from the core argument related to Imāmāh. For although it is apparently factual that such a statement (taken verbatim) did not represent a Shī'ī position, it is possible to speculate that Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār might have come across certain reports in Shī'ī texts and assumed a *ghulāt* reading of them to be a mainstream Shī'ī position (thereby relaying the statement al-Murtaḍá rejected). Indeed, the quote referred to in Modarressi's excerpt above and several similar quotations survive in the most reliable extant Imāmī ḥadīth literature.³¹⁴ Moreover, while it is possible that some quotations are remnants of extremist/exaggerator (*ghulāt*) influence,³¹⁵ it is arguable that such

³¹⁴ For example,

[الكليني عن] عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ عَنْ مَنْصُورِ بْنِ يُوسُفَ وَسَعْدَانَ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ عَنْ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لَا تَحُلُو إِلَّا وَفِيهَا إِمَامٌ كَيْمَا إِنْ زَادَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ شَيْئاً رَدَّهُمْ وَإِنْ نَقَصُوا شَيْئاً أَمَّهُ لَهُمْ؛
[الكليني عن] عَلِيُّ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَيْسَى عَنْ يُوسُفَ بْنِ ابْنِ مُسْكَانَ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ عَنْ أَحَدِهِمَا ع قَالَ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَدَعْ الْأَرْضَ بِغَيْرِ عَالِمٍ وَلَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ لَمْ يُعْرِفِ الْحَقُّ مِنَ الْبَاطِلِ؛
[الكليني عن] مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يُحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ عَنِ الْقَاسِمِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي حَمَزَةَ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَجَلٌ وَأَعْظَمُ مِنْ أَنْ يَبْزُقَ الْأَرْضَ بِغَيْرِ إِمَامٍ عَادِلٍ؛
[الكليني عن] الْحُسَيْنُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ مُعَلَّى بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ الْوَشَائِئِ قَالَ سَأَلْتُ أَبَا الْحَسَنِ الرِّضَا ع هَلْ تَبْقَى الْأَرْضُ بِغَيْرِ إِمَامٍ قَالَ لَا قُلْتُ إِنَّا نُرَوِّى أَنَّهَا لَا تَبْقَى إِلَّا أَنْ يَسْحَطَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ قَالَ لَا تَبْقَى إِذَا لَسَاخَتْ.

Al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH / 941 CE), *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, 178-180;

[...] بأبي أنتم وأمي ونفسي وأهلي ومالي ، من أراد الله بدأ بكم ، ومن وحده قبل عنكم ، ومن قصده توجه بكم موالي لا أحصي ثناءكم ولا أبلغ من المدح كنهكم ، ومن الوصف قدركم ، وأنتم نور الأخيار ، وهداة الأبرار ، وحجج الجبار ، بكم فتح الله وبكم يختم وبكم ينزل الغيث ، وبكم يمسك السماء أن تقع على الأرض إلا بإذنه وبكم ينفس الهم ويكشف الضر [...]؛

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 2, 615;

[الصدوق:] حدثنا أبي رضي الله عنه قال : حدثنا الحسن بن أحمد المالكي ، عن أبيه عن إبراهيم بن أبي محمود قال : قال الرضا عليه السلام : نحن حجج الله في خلقه ، وخلفاؤه في عبادته ، وأمناؤه على سره ، ونحن كلمة التقوى ، والعروة الوثقى ، ونحن شهداء الله وأعلامه في بريته ، بنا يمسك الله السماوات والأرض أن تزولا ، وبنا ينزل الغيث وينشر الرحمة ، ولا تحلو الأرض من قائم منا ظاهر أو خاف ، ولو خلت يوما بغير حجة لماجت بأهلها كما يموج البحر بأهله .

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, 202-203.

³¹⁵ Modarressi writes,

references survived due to there being acceptable interpretations³¹⁶ of them that did not attribute Divine qualities to the Imams. The acceptability³¹⁷ of the reports would provide an explanation for how *mufawwiḍah/ghulāt* had something to go off of in making their arguments (as opposed to relying solely on fabricated reports).³¹⁸ In any case, the point to be made here is about the lasting effect of this shift in emphasis from the political to the spiritual/cosmological role of the Imam.

“The period of the Minor Occultation was especially marked by the tireless efforts of the Mufawwida to establish themselves as the true representatives of Shi’ism and their doctrine as the middle path between extremism and shortcoming. To this end, they missed no opportunity and failed no chance. They continued assiduously to spread countless quotations on the authority of the Imams, some of which, despite all efforts of the masters and scholars of Qum, penetrated the Shi’ite hadith. Tampering with the material in books written by reliable authors and inserting new material into them had been done successfully by heretics in the periods of the two Imams, Muhammad al-Baqir and Ja’far al-Sadiq, and the option was still available to all conflicting groups.”
Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 42-43.

³¹⁶ Perhaps in line with Modarressi’s characterization that,

“The absolute majority of the rank and file and many of the scholars stand somewhere between the two trends [of supporters and rejectors of the supernatural of the Imams], as was the case during the time of the Imāms.”
Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 50.

³¹⁷ In that there was room to accept the wording albeit with some reinterpreting.

³¹⁸ Is it possible that al-Murtaḍá — fully aware of the presence of such reports in prominent Shī’ī ḥadīth compilations — was sketching his own view of Imāmī orthodoxy by repudiating such beliefs (that is, the beliefs assumed by reading such reports in a cursory fashion with *ghulāt* beliefs in mind)?

While it is possible to speculate, generally speaking, there is no convincing indication of such an attempt here specifically. Not only does al-Murtaḍá deny that Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār’s particular quotation is a statement/position taken by “any Imāmī,” past or present, he even casts doubt on it being a statement made by the *ghulāt* (when he writes, إن كان قاله). That being said, there are indications elsewhere that show how al-Murtaḍá is more than willing to critique reports he considers problematic (in terms of their apparent meaning at first glance), even if they appear in prominent Shī’ī works such as al-Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfī*. Still, when al-Murtaḍá expresses the high likelihood that a given report is a forgery (e.g. a fabricated report or portion of a report was added into a manuscript), he attempts to offer a reconcilable interpretation of the content so long as the report is not definitively a fabrication. Consider, for instance, al-Murtaḍá’s response to a question posed to him on a report in *al-Kāfī*,

[...] وهذا الخبر المذكور بظاهره يقتضي تجويز المحال المعلوم بالضرورات فساده وإن رواه الكليني (رحمه الله) في كتاب التوحيد ، فكم روى هذا الرجل وغيره من أصحابنا (رحمهم الله تعالى) في كتبهم ما له ظواهر مستحيلة أو باطلة ، والأغلب الأرجح أن يكون هذا خيرا موضوعا مدسوسا . ويمكن فيه تخريج على ضرب من التعسف ، وهو أن يكون الصادق (عليه السلام) سئل عن هذه المسألة بحضرة قوم من الزنادقة والملحدن للأنبياء الذين لا يفرقون بين المقدور والمستحيل ، فأشفق (عليه السلام) أن يقول أن هذا ليس بمقدور لأنه يستحيل ، فيقدر الأغبياء أنه (عليه السلام) قد عجزه تعالى [...]

‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍá, *Rasā’il al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍá*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī and Mahdī Rajā’ī, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Qum: Dār al-Qur’ān al-Karīm, 1405 AH), 410-411.

This is arguably not meant to single out al-Kulaynī or his *al-Kāfī*, but rather reflects a methodological point of caution al-Murtaḍá is drawing attention to that applies across the board despite his regard for his community fellows/colleagues (*aṣḥāb*) and the utility of their works. See:

Al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍá, *Rasā’il al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍá*, vol. 2, 331-333.

A special thanks to Hussein Abdulsater for raising the possibility that sparked this footnote.

4.3 The *Quṭb* in Ṣūfī Strands of Sunnī Thought

It is this juncture in particular that will appear to be increasingly informative to the development of the *quṭb* notion within Ṣūfī strands of Sunnī thought. I am not concerned with the chronological primacy and intellectual rights of the underlying concept as much as I am concerned with demonstrating the newfound recognition/need of/for this concept to the thinkers involved. To make this point, I closely read excerpts from writings associated with the following Sunnī authorities from the transitional formative period to the arguably consolidation period (regarding the *quṭb* cosmology): 1) Sahl al-Tustarī (d. ca 283 AH / 896 CE); 2) al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca 320 AH / 910 CE); and 3) Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH / 1210 CE), who provides insights into the appropriation of thought that appears to precede his own in this regard.

4.3.1 The *Quṭb* in al-Tustarī's *Tafsīr*

An electronic search of Sahl al-Tustarī's *Tafsīr* reveals a single hit for the word *Quṭb*³¹⁹ in the entire work. As the work states in commenting on Qur'ān 10:62,

قوله تعالى: أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ [62]

قال سهل: هم الذين وصفهم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: « إذا رؤوا ذكر الله » وهم المجاهدون في الله السابقون إليه الذين

توالت أفعالهم على الموافقة أولئك هم المؤمنون حقا [الأنفال : 4]

وقال: اجتمع الخير كله في هذه الأربعة وبها صاروا أبدالاً: إخماس البطون، والاعتزال عن الخلق، وسهر الليل، والصمت.

³¹⁹ Including, of course its variants with/without “al-,” and beginning with preposition, “bi-.”

قيل له: لم سمي الأبدال أبدالاً؟ فقال: لأنهم يبدلون الأحوال، أخرجوا أبدانهم عن الحيل في سرهم، ثم لا يزالون يتقلبون من

حال إلى حال، ومن علم إلى علم، فهم أبدا في المزيد من العلم فيما بينهم وبين ربهم.

قيل: الأوتاد أفضل أم الأبدال؟ قال: الأوتاد. قيل: وكيف ذلك؟ قال: لأن الأوتاد قد بلغوا وثبتت أركانهم، والأبدال يتقلبون

من حال إلى حال.

وقال سهل: لقيت ألفا وخمسمائة صديق، فمنهم أربعون بديلا وسبعة أوتاد، وطريقهم ومذهبهم ما أنا عليه.

وكان يقول: أنا حجة الله عليكم خاصة، وعلى الناس عامة.

وكان من طريقه وسيرته أنه كان كثير الشكر والذكر، دائم الصمت والفكر، قليل الخلاف، سخي النفس، قد ساد الناس بحسن

الخلق والرحمة والشفقة عليهم والنصيحة لهم، متمسكا بالأصل، عاملا بالفرع، قد حشى الله قلبه نورا، وأنطق لسانه بالحكمة،

وكان من خير الأبدال، وإن قلنا من الأوتاد فقد كان القطب الذي يدور عليه الرحي، ولولا أن الصحابة لا يقاس بهم أحد

لصحبتهم ورؤيتهم لكان كأحدهم، عاش حميدا ومات غريبا بالبصرة رحمة الله عليه. [...]³²⁰

In this piece, the compiler (apparently a devotee or admirer of al-Tustarī) quotes al-Tustarī describing the friends/allies of God (*awliyāʾ* Allāh) and the spiritual hierarchy among them. The head of the hierarchy is the *quṭb*, who is the most pivotal among the *awṭād* (sing. *watad* or stake/peg). The *awṭād* are described as having a rank of merit above the *abdāl* (sing. *badal*), who change from one spiritual state to another, while the *awṭād* are fully “matured” and firmly grounded spiritually. The compiler at this point in al-Tustarī’s *Tafsīr* uses the word *quṭb* to describe al-Tustarī

³²⁰ Sahl al-Tustarī (d. ca 283 AH / 896 CE), *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, ed. Muḥammad Bāsil ‘Uyūn al-Sūd, 1st ed., vol. 1, 1 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 1423 AH / 2002 CE), 77.

as the supreme walī (pl. *awliyā*). Describing Sahl al-Tustarī, he writes that, “he was among the best of the *abdāl*, and if we say [that he was] one of the *awtād* then he was the quṭb around which the quern (*raḥā*) revolves [...]” It is unclear to what extent this scheme including *abdāl*, *awtād* and the quṭb was commonly held amongst mystical/ascetic strands of Sunnī Islam, at this point, beyond the merely intuitive thought that there *could be* someone who is the best among existing *awliyā*. The casual usage of the word quṭb in this context is conceivably prior to a strictly technical usage, however. Given that it is not even al-Tustarī himself using the word, but rather the compiler of the text, it is plausible that using the word quṭb in a more technical spiritual hierarchy sense developed or at least became prevalent only after al-Tustarī’s time.

The excerpt quoted above highlights how the hierarchy to which the quṭb concept belonged or would belong to was one that entailed a distinct type of “formation.” The *abdāl* are described as engaging in very particular practices/exercises/technologies that are believed to include or yield “all goodness” and are the means by which *abdāl* become *abdāl*: having empty stomachs (presumably through fasting and/or eating lightly); retreating away from creatures (at least at heart, but seemingly physically as well, depending on the reading/situation); staying up at night (in worship); and silence (at least from useless talk, but seemingly even some useful talk, depending on the reading/situation). Reading how the compiler characterizes the “quṭb” here, which comes to the fore via his praise of al-Tustarī, one uncovers additional technologies being promoted and/or cultivated habitus being idealized: being plentifully appreciative and remembering [of God]; constantly silent and pensive; little [to be found] disagreeable; generous; leading other people by his [example of] good manners, mercy, compassion with them and [sincere] advice for them; hanging on to the root [principles]; putting the branches [of prescribed practice] into action; and God has filled his heart with light and had him speak with wisdom.

Accounting for different ranks/degrees of *awliyā*’ each with a different degree of steadfastness, underscores an assumed concern —the importance of being formed in a particular way (because it has spiritual consequences). In other words, the mention of exercises and/or desirable traits to cultivate or recognize in the context of an *awliyā*’ hierarchical conceptual framework is well-explained by a concern for forming moral subjects (regardless what specific standard of “morality” is adopted in the conceptual framework advanced). Furthermore, here, even the compiler takes on the role of an author of sorts, crafting the narrative of what constitutes the ideal subject/agent through his comments on al-Tustarī’s reported sayings.³²¹ Just as the compiler describes the subject-forming lead role of the qutb, so does he take on a lead authorial role in shaping the reader’s framework and motivation to embody the archetype constructed.

4.3.2 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s *Khatm al-Awliyā*’

The arguable fluidity of the qutb usage in al-Tustarī’s *Tafsīr* at this formative juncture is further consolidated by a careful reading of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s *Khatm al-Awliyā*’ —this time because of the term’s absence. This does not, however, reflect an absence of the intuitive concept and its presence in al-Tirmidhī’s cosmology. For al-Tirmidhī is invested in making the case for the meaning of “*khatm*,” not [only] to mean “final” but to mean “seal/completion/perfection,”³²² both in the case of *khatm al-nubuwwah* (sealing/completing/perfecting prophet-hood [with Prophet

³²¹ A key example distinguishing between authority and leadership (in the sense I use it here). For if the author is thought of as an authority merely by virtue of being designated the “author” even when not distinctively “leading,” the same cannot be said of a compiler or scribe. But the compiler can at times take on the leading role and may become an “author” of sorts (in the “leading,” not authoritative sense), as in this excerpt from al-Tustarī’s *Tafsīr*.

³²² Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca 320 AH / 910 CE), *Khatm al-Awliyā*’, ed. ‘Uthmān Ismā‘īl Yaḥyá, vol. 1, 1 vols. (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kāthūlīkīyah, 1422 AH), 341-342.

Muḥammad]) as well as in his seemingly novel argument for *khatm al-awliyā'* (sealing/completing/perfecting sainthood). He also draws attention to the leading *walī* (which is more or less the substantive meaning of a “qūṭb”), at any given time, in the process. As al-Tirmidhī writes,

ثم لما قبض الله، عز و جل، نبيه، صلى الله عليه و سلم، صير في امته اربعين صديقا. بهم تقوم الارض؛ و هم آل بيته. فكل ما مات واحد منهم، خلفه من يقوم مقامه. حتى اذا انقرض عددهم، و أتى وقت زوال الدنيا - ابتعث الله وليا، اصطفاه و اجتباها، و قربها و أدناها، و اعطاء ما أعطى الاولياء، و خصه بخاتم الولاية. فيكون حجة الله يوم القيامة، على سائر الاولياء، فيوجد عنده بذلك الختم صدق الولاية، على سبيل ما وجد عند محمد، صلى الله عليه و سلم، من صدق النبوة. فلم ينله العدو؛ و لا وجدت النفس سبيلا الى الأخذ بحظها من الولاية. فاذا برز الاولياء يوم القيامة و اقتضوا صدق الولاية و العبودية - وجد الوفاء عند هذا الذي ختم الولاية تماما. فكان حجة الله عليهم و على سائر الموحدين من بعدهم؛ و كان شفيعهم

يوم القيامة. فهو سيدهم: ساد الاولياء، كما ساد محمد، صلى الله عليه و سلم، الانبياء. [...]³²³

In this worldview, there are forty³²⁴ saintly figures (*ṣiddīq*), all from Prophet Muḥammad’s “*āl al-bayt* (progeny/household),” and upon whom the upkeep of the world relies.³²⁵ Whenever one of them passes away, there is another to replace him in serving his station’s function. Al-Tirmidhī refers to a *khatam/khātīm al-awliyā'*, a final saint as well as the Seal among these saintly figures,

³²³ Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-Awliyā'*, 344.

³²⁴ See also:

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-Awliyā'*, 434.

³²⁵ Whether this is referring to their status as God’s aim in creating the world (*‘illah ghā’īyah*), or their role as acting intermediaries on behalf of God (performing roles similar to how angels do), and the extent of the latter, are apparently matters of interpretation unless other evidence corroborates one reading to the exception of the others.

who is a Divinely chosen *walī*. In other words, the world is never empty of these essential saintly figures. But al-Tirmidhī clarifies that the progeny/household of the Prophet Muḥammad referred to here is not one of ancestry in the conventional sense. Rather, he states the following in this regard,

فهؤلاء الاربعون في كل وقت، هم اهل بيته. و لست أعني (آل بيته) في النسب، انما هم اهل بيت الذكر. بعث رسول الله، صلى الله عليه و سلم، لإقامة ذكر الله، و ليبيؤاً له مستقراً، و هو الذكر الخالص الصائبي. فكل من آوى الى ذلك المثوى فهم آله. ألا ترى الى قول رسول الله، صلى الله عليه و سلم: اهل بيتي امان لامتي، فاذا ذهبوا اتاهم ما يوعدون.

و انما صار هؤلاء الاربعون اماناً للامة (لأن) بهم تقوم الارض، و بهم يستسقون الغيث. فاذا ماتوا اتاهم ما يوعدون. و لو كان (النبي عليه السلام) يعني به اهل بيته في النسب لكان يستحيل ان لا يبقى منهم احد، فيموتوا عن آخرهم، و قد كثر

الله عددهم حتى لا يحصون.³²⁶

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's argument for considering "*āl al-bayt*" to be shorthand for those who are the people of the spiritual household of God's remembrance, a spiritual reference point, and not the bloodline of the Prophet Muḥammad, is that this group is defined by its spiritual function which is restricted to a group of a finite number. As al-Tirmidhī argues, had the intended *āl al-bayt* been the bloodline descendants of the Prophet, then it would be (practically) impossible to have the scenario in which they become extinct, for they are so numerous; but the intended *āl al-bayt* are a limited number (i.e. forty, as mentioned above) and once the last of them passes away, a Divine

³²⁶ Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-Awliyā'*, 345-346.

promise is fulfilled; hence, (to uphold the Divine promise and hold true to the limited number of such saints) *āl al-bayt* must not mean innumerable blood descendants.³²⁷

The following excerpt from al-Tirmidhī's work offers a concise summary approximating the spiritual head (qutb) concept discussed earlier, but clearly with similar language and function to that which appears in Shī'ī sources,

ولا تخلو الدنيا، في هذه الأمة، من قائم بالحجة، كما قال علي بن أبي طالب، رضي الله تعالى عنه، "اللهم، لا تخل الأرض

من قائم بالحجة، كي لا تبطل حجج الله وبيئاته." [...]³²⁸

The author uses the word *hujjah* (proof/authoritative case) to refer to the spiritual function of a living saint. In a sense, God makes a case against all other creatures through this walī who excels in spirituality despite the odds. Al-Tirmidhī refers to the words of 'Alī here, who apparently makes a prayer³²⁹ that God not rid the earth of one who makes the case (against all others, by virtue of his spiritual excellence), so that God's *hujaj* (sing. *hujjah*) and *bayyināt* (sing. *bayyinah*, proofs/conclusive evidence) are never negated.

The reports referred to earlier in Shī'ī ḥadīth collections, such as al-Kāfī, use the same language in reference to the Shī'ī Imam. This similarity does not speak to be an adoption of Imāmī

³²⁷ But it does seem that al-Tirmidhī is mainly trying to *deemphasize* bloodline and not necessarily eliminate it as a shorthand to identify those fulfilling the essential function. For the finite number could be a select group from among the bloodline progeny of Prophet Muḥammad (as the Shī'ī claim), not everyone from the bloodline. Either way, the emphasis is on a spiritual function, not conventional genealogy.

³²⁸ Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-Awliyā'*, 360.

³²⁹ However, the commonly reported version of this report would not translate as a prayer. So there is likely a scribal error here. See:

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd al-Mu'tazilī, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 18, 347.

[...] اللهم بلى، لا تخلو الأرض من قائم لله بحجة، إما ظاهرا مشهورا، وإما خائفا مغمورا، لئلا تبطل حجج الله وبيئاته. [...]

Shī‘ī theology, for al-Tirmidhī was Sunnī, but it likely reflects a worldview that found an expression of its experience in words associated with as traditional a reference as ‘Alī. Whether this means the category “Sunnī” includes a broader spectrum of beliefs about a spiritual guide than is first expected,³³⁰ or that there were more prior ways to identify than such categories which were consolidated at a later stage, my primary concern here is why such a conceptual framework is advanced. It appears that there was an underlying need for not just any leader in spirituality, but an exemplar, exemplary enough to be a ḥujjah, establishing a case against all others who would not live up to the standard. Whether in Shī‘ī thought or in examples of Sunnī thought such as al-Tirmidhī’s, this was a reference point, a standard of saintly qualities, even if not a publicly known figure.

It is interesting to note that al-Tirmidhī uses particularly distinct political language, if only figuratively, in reference to this spiritual leader.³³¹ A figurative interpretation, albeit apparently a necessity given the author’s background and several indications of praise for Abū Bakr and ‘Umar throughout the text, is nonetheless complicated by the following excerpt,

[...] ان الولي و الصديق حجة الله على خلقه، و غياث الخلق و أمانهم، لانهم دعاة الى الله على بصيرة. فهم في وقت الحاجة

(اليهم) أخرى ان يكونوا. و قد بعث الله الرسل في الفترة و العمى و دولة الباطل، حتى نعش الحق و زهق الباطل. فماذا يكبر

في الصدور ان يكون في آخر الزمان من يوازي أولهم، لحاجة الخلق اليهم؟ او لم يقل علي بن ابي طالب، رضي الله عنه، في

³³⁰ Depending on the reader’s exposure or conviction, I am assuming that there are different “first impressions” one may have about what Sunnism is or ought to mean. Some think of sectarian identity in terms of beliefs, others in terms of ritual practices, others still in terms of communal affiliation, etc... and some in terms of a combination of the aforementioned. Depending on one’s time/place/context, “border areas” between identities may seem more or less blurred.

³³¹ Such as, “Imāmat al-wilāyah wa riyāsatiḥā.” Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-Awliyā’*, 367.

حديث كميل النخعي: "اللهم، لا تخل الارض من قائم بالحجة. اولئك الأقلون عددا، الأعظمون عند الله قدرا، قلوبهم معلقة
 بالمحل الاعلى، اولئك خلفاء الله في عباده و بلاده. هاه، شوقا الى رؤيتهم!"؟ و مما يحقق ما قلناه، ما حدثنا صالح بن عبد
 الله الترمذي عن ابن عمر، رضي الله عنهما، قال: قال رسول الله، صلى الله عليه و سلم: "مثل امتي مثل المطر؛ لا يدري أوله
 خير أم آخره" [...]³³²

This excerpt begins by describing how there is a need for such figures, particularly emphasizing that need at the end of days, inquiring why anyone should think such a proposition is anything far-fetched. Then al-Tirmidhī quotes ‘Alī once again, but this time with words describing the *hujjah*-type as, “the fewest in number, the greatest of value in the eyes of God [...] Those are the ones who are the *khulafā*’ (sing. *khalīfah*; caliph/successor/vicegerent/deputy/representative) of God regarding His servants and His lands.” If this excerpt were to be presented to a learned Imāmī Shī‘ī reader, it would likely be indistinguishable from his community’s commonly held narrative regarding the Imams appointed by God (for spiritual as well as temporal leadership). The difference here is that al-Tirmidhī locates this “caliphate” in a spiritual sphere that is harmonious with the temporal succession (legitimate to al-Tirmidhī) that unfolded on the ground following Prophet Muḥammad. This competing interpretive move, and thus the invocation of such a rivaling conceptual framework, promotes the constitution of subjects loyal to the political status quo (in general), while locating more deeply constitutive “leadership” in the spiritual *hujjah* described. It is the latter that arguably reveals the paradigmatic feature at stake —the need for a living “leader” of impeccable guidance.

³³² Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-Awliyā*, 430.

Another striking feature with similar resonances in Shī'ī literature is the identification of this *walī/hujjah* (approximately, substantively speaking, “quṭb”) figure with the Mahdī at the end times.³³³ The following dialogical exchange appears in al-Tirmidhī's *Khatm al-Awliyā'*,

قال له قائل: فهل يجوز ان يكون في هذا الزمان من يوازي ابا بكر و عمر رضي الله عنهما؟

قال (الشيخ): إن كنت تعني في العمل فلا؛ و ان كنت تعني في الدرجات فغير مدفوع . و ذلك ان الدرجات بوسائل القلوب؛

و قسمة ما في الدرجات بالاعمال. فمن الذي حرز رحمة الله تعالى عن اهل هذا الزمان، حتى لا يكون فيهم سابق و لا مقرب

و لا [مجتبى] و لا مصطفى؟ ا و ليس المهدي كائنا في آخر الزمان؟ فهو في الفترة [الفتنة] يقوم بالعدل فلا يعجز عنه. ا و

ليس كائن في الزمان من له ختم الولاية؟ و هو حجة الله على جميع الاولياء يوم الموقف. كما ان محمدا، صلى الله عليه و

سلم، آخر الانبياء. فاعطي ختم النبوة، فهو حجة الله تعالى على جميع الانبياء. فكذلك هذا الولي الذي هو آخر الاولياء في

آخر الزمان.³³⁴

Is al-Tirmidhī referring to a special spiritual leader who upholds justice in the period between his day and the rise of the Mahdī at the end of time? Or is he identifying the Mahdī with khātam/khātim al-awliyā', as the final statement appears to imply? These questions may remain open-ended, but the implied need being satisfied by such appeals remains the same: there is a paradigmatic requirement of sorts for an exemplary guide to make the case against all others, whether he is the

³³³ See Chapter Five of this dissertation for more on the Mahdī in Twelver Shī'ī Islam.

³³⁴ Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Khatm al-Awliyā'*, 436.

Mahdī figure or some other *walī* figure. Without using the word “quṭb,” al-Tirmidhī still appears to theorize for the idea of a quṭb among the awliyā’, even a khātim/khātam of awliyā’.

4.3.3 Subsequent Developments Consolidated in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *Quṭb* and Immaculate Imam

The quṭb position in Ṣūfī cosmology appears to have been developed more explicitly/specifically using the word “quṭb,” growing in casual usage and conceptual sophistication over time. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386 AH / 996 CE), who was influenced by one of Sahl al-Tustarī’s last surviving companions/disciples — Abū al-Ḥasan Ibn Sālim (d. ca 350s AH / 960s CE)³³⁵ — and who authored one of the primary Ṣūfī texts mentioned by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH / 1111 CE)³³⁶, refers to the quṭb notion explicitly using the phrase in his *Qūt al-Qulūb* in at least three instances.³³⁷ Especially noteworthy here is Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’s reference “abdāl al-mulk” (the *abdāl* associated with rule)³³⁸, citing Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 AH / 765 CE) for precedence in the usage of the word “abdāl” in connection with matters of rule. As a side comment connected to a discussion justifying obedience to (even corrupt) ruling authorities, maintaining the status quo as a greater good or lesser of two evils so long as they maintain prayer, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī relays Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq’s reported statement,

³³⁵ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar*, ed. Abū Ḥājar Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd Ibn Basyūnī Zaghlūl, vol. 2, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, n.d.), 109.

³³⁶ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Mundqīdh Min al-Dalāl wa al-Mūṣil ilā Dhī al-‘Izzah wa al-Jalāl*, ed. Jamīl Ṣalībā and Kāmil ‘Ayyād (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, n.d.), 131.

³³⁷ For instance, see:

Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Makkī (d. 386 AH / 996 CE), *Qūt al-Qulūb fī Mu‘āmalat al-Maḥbūb wa Wasf Ṭarīq al-Murīd ilā Maqām al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Bāsīl ‘Uyūn al-Sūd, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1997), 129; 200; 208.

³³⁸ It is also likely there is a play on “*mulk*” vs. “*malakūt*” (see Qur’an 67:1; 6:75; and 36:83) to signify temporal as opposed spiritual/cosmic types of *abdāl*, and by extension, khalīfah/quṭb.

[...] يعني أبدال الملك. كما حدثنا عن جعفر بن محمد الصادق أنه قال: أبدال الدنيا سبعة، على مقاديرهم يكون الناس في

كل زمان من العباد، والعلماء، والتجار، والخليفة، [وال]وزير، وأمير الجيش، وصاحب الشرطة، والقاضي وشهوده.³³⁹

One of the spheres of *abdāl* in these words attributed to al-Ṣādiq is the “*khalifah*,” which brings to mind the interesting hypothesis that the usage of “*abdāl*,” and “*khalīfah/qaṭb*” in the spiritual context drew on this reference to Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq’s words in the seemingly more mundane³⁴⁰ temporal sphere (if not the much earlier suggestion associated with ‘Alī’s reported usage of “*qaṭb*” as stated at the beginning of this chapter).³⁴¹

In his *tafsīr* compilation, *Ḥaqā’iq al-Tafsīr*, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 412 AH / 1021 CE) quotes Abū al-‘Abbās Ibn ‘Aṭā’ (d. ca 311 AH / 923 CE) commenting on Qur’ān 27:61, using the word *qaṭb* to describe the “*rawāsī* (anchored/firm/[anchoring] mountains)” among

³³⁹ Al-Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, vol. 2, 208.

³⁴⁰ Granted, in the Islamic worldview, the boundaries between temporal and spiritual can be porous. But, at least relatively speaking, competing conceptual frameworks within Islamic thought put more or less emphasis on the spiritual excellence required of those executing temporal functions.

³⁴¹ Compare this to the outline of God’s friends that appears in some Shī‘ī references, such as the Umm Dāwūd supplication, attributed to Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq,

[...] اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى الْأَوْصِيَاءِ وَالشُّعَدَاءِ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَأَيِّمَةِ الْهُدَى ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى الْأَبْدَالِ وَالْأَوْتَادِ وَالسُّتِيحِ وَالْعُبَادِ وَالْمَخْلُصِينَ وَالرُّهَادِ وَأَهْلِ الْجِدِّ وَالْأَجْتِهَادِ ،
وَاصْصُصْ مُحَمَّدًا وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِهِ بِأَفْضَلِ صَلَوَاتِكَ وَأَجْزَلِ كَرَامَاتِكَ وَبَلِّغْ رُوحَهُ وَجَسَدَهُ مِنِّي حَيَّةً وَسَلَامًا وَزِدْهُ فَضْلًا وَشَرَفًا وَكَرَمًا حَتَّى تُبَلِّغَهُ أَعْلَى دَرَجَاتِ أَهْلِ
الشَّرَفِ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ وَالْأَفْضَلِ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مَنْ سَمَّيْتُ وَمَنْ لَمْ أَسْمَعْ مِنْ مَلَائِكَتِكَ وَأَنْبِيَائِكَ وَرُسُلِكَ وَأَهْلِ طَاعَتِكَ وَأَوْصِيَائِكَ صَلَوَاتِي إِلَيْهِمْ
وإلى أَوْلِيائِهِمْ وَاجْعَلْهُمْ إِخْوَانِي فِيكَ وَأَعْوَانِي عَلَى دُعَائِكَ ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَشْفِعُ بِكَ إِلَيْكَ وَبِكَرَمِكَ إِلَى كَرَمِكَ وَبِحُجُودِكَ إِلَى جُودِكَ وَبِرَحْمَتِكَ إِلَى رَحْمَتِكَ وَبِأَهْلِ
طَاعَتِكَ إِلَيْكَ [...] .

Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH / 1067 CE), *Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid*, ed. Ḥusayn al-A‘lamī (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-A‘lamī lil-Maṭbū‘āt, 1998), 560-561.

the *awliyā*'.³⁴² Commenting on Qur'ān 5:12,³⁴³ al-Sulamī says he heard Abū 'Uthmān al-Maghribī (d. 373 AH / 983 CE) say the following,

سمعت أبا عثمان المغربي يقول : البدلاء أربعون والامناء سبعة والخلفاء من الأئمة ثلاثة ، والواحد هو القطب ، والقطب عارف بهم جميعا ومشرف عليهم ولا يعرفه أحد ولا يشرف عليه وهو إمام الأولياء ، والثلاثة الذين هم الخلفاء من الأئمة يعرفون السبعة ، والسبعة الأئمة يعرفون الأربعين الذين هم البدلاء ولا يعرفهم البدلاء ، والأربعون يعرفون سائر الأولياء من الأمة ولا يعرفهم من الأولياء أحد فإذا نقص الله من الأربعين واحدا أبدل مكانه واحدا من أولياء الأمة ، وإذا نقص من السبعة واحدا جعل مكانه واحدا من الأربعين وإذا نقص من الثلاثة واحدا جعل مكانه من السبعة فإذا مضى القطب الذي هو واحد في العدد ، وبه قوام إعداد الخلق جعل بدله واحدا من

الثلاثة هكذا إلى أن يأذن الله في قيام الساعة.³⁴⁴

In this excerpt, there are said to be forty *abdāl* (“*budalā*” here), seven “*umanā*” (trustees),” three “*khulafā*” among the “imams,” and the one [and only] is the *qutb*.³⁴⁵ Of special concern here is the description of the *qutb* as being aware of them all, overseeing them, while neither being known nor overseen by anyone else among the *awliyā*’ —the *qutb* is the “*imam of the awliyā*’.” Once a

³⁴² See:

Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī (d. 412 AH / 1021 CE), *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, ed. Sayyid 'Imrān, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2001), 94.

Also see:

Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 216.

“Qāla al-Qāsim [...]”

³⁴³ وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا [...]

³⁴⁴ Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, 173.

³⁴⁵ This last phrase is worded to emphasize the singularity of the *qutb* apparently. Alternatively, the syntax could be indicating that each of the *khulafā*’, singularly, is called the *qutb*. But the next sentence appears to support the former reading.

qutb passes on, “one of the three [*khulafā*]’ is made his replacement, as such, until God gives permission for the Hour [that is, the Day of Judgement] to occur.”

‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (d. 465 AH / 1072 CE) uses the word *qutb* in his commentary on Qur’ān 2:143, apparently describing (at least some of) the inwardly directed mystical/Ṣūfī sub-community (“hādhihi al-ṭā’ifah”) as a collective *qutb* relative to the broader community. Al-Qushayrī seems to take the reference to “ummah (community)” in the verse as applicable in a relative sense, such that there is a sub-ummah within the broader ummah and that distinctions apply to each relative ummah accordingly. On this point, he describes the broader ummah as being infallible when it comes to their collective agreements³⁴⁶ but the *qutb* sub-community as being impeccable in their thought/judgment. As al-Qushayrī writes,

وَكذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا

لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

بِالنَّاسِ لَرُؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ (143)

الوسط الخيار، فجعل هذه الأمة خيار الأمم، وجعل هذه الطائفة خيار هذه الأمة فهم خيار الخيار. فكما أن هذه الأمة

شهداء على الأمم في القيامة فهذه الطائفة هم الأصول، وعليهم المدار، وهم القطب، وبهم يحفظ الله جميع الأمة، وكل من

قبلته قلوبهم فهو المقبول، ومن ردت قلوبهم فهو المردود. فالحكم الصادق لفراساتهم، والصحيح حكمهم، والصائب نظرهم

³⁴⁶ See Chapter Three of this dissertation.

عصم جميع الأمة (عن) الاجتماع على الخطأ ، وعصم هذه الطائفة عن الخطأ في النظر والحكم ، والقبول والرد ، ثم إن بناء

أمرهم مستند إلى سنة الرسول صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ . وكل ما لا يكون فيه اقتداء (بالرسول) عليه السلام فهو (عليه) ردّ،

وصاحبه على لا شيء.³⁴⁷

This description surely raises questions about whether disagreement is theoretically possible in the *qutb* sphere (assuming there can be more than one member of the *qutb* sub-community) and how to reconcile disagreement with the notion that this group is impeccable in its assessments. Perhaps al-Qushayrī means that they are infallible in their collective judgments if the category in question includes more than one individual. But, if one extends the logic apparently functioning here, there would ultimately be a singular axis around which that inward community itself revolves, thereby (in theory) eliminating the scenario of disagreement in their judgments. In line with this, al-Qushayrī's comments on Qur'ān 7:181 seem to indicate that the *qutb* category can but does not necessarily have to include more than a single individual —what matters is that the world is not rid of the category entirely,

وَمَنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ (181)

أجرى الحقّ - سبحانه - سنّته بألا يخلي البسيطة من أهل لها هم الغياث وبهم دوام الحق في الظهور ، وفي معناه قالوا :

إذا لم يكن قطب * فمن ذا يديرها؟

³⁴⁷ 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (d. 465 AH / 1072 CE), *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm Basyūnī, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2000 CE), 132-132.

فهدايتهم بالحق أنهم يدعون إلى الحق ، ويدلون على الحق ، ويتحركون بالحق ، ويسكنون للحق بالحق، وهم قائمون بالحق؛ يصرفهم الحق

بالحق أولئك هم غياث الخلق ؛ بهم يسقون إذا قحطوا ، ويمطرون إذا أجدبوا ، ويجابون إذا دعوا.³⁴⁸

In a follow up work, known by the title *al-Imlā' 'alā Mushkil al-Iḥyā'* among other titles,³⁴⁹ and which appears as part of some printed editions of his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī also makes reference to the *qutb* concept. These references are casual, passing mentions, indicating that the idea is familiar to his intended audience (regardless whether or not they themselves have mystical experiences relevant to the concept). One instance appears at the beginning of *al-Imlā' 'alā Mushkil al-Iḥyā'* where al-Ghazālī describes those who condemned some of the “imlā' (dictation)” called “*al-Iḥyā'*,” who forbid others from reading it, accused “*mumlihi* (the one who dictated it)” of misguidance and misguiding others, and he responds by dismissing their censorship as being out of place and reflective of their lack of character and credentials. As al-Ghazālī writes,

[...] وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ³⁵⁰

ولكن الظالمين في شقاق بعيد³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Al-Qushayrī, *Latā'if al-Ishārāt*, vol. 1, 591-592.

³⁴⁹ For a recent edition of this text that relies on various manuscripts, one of which was reportedly copied as early as 611 AH / 1214 CE and titled *al-Intiṣār limā Waqa' fī al-Iḥyā' min al-Asrār*, see:

Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Imlā' 'alā Mushkil al-Iḥyā'*, ed. Abdelmoula Hagil, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2020), 76-88.

Also consider the manuscripts available to the team who published the following edition:

Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, ed. al-Lajnah al-'Ilmīyah bi Markaz Dār al-Minhāj lil-Dirāsāt wa al-Taḥqīq al-'Ilmī, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Introduction), 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Minhāj, 2011), 83-93.

³⁵⁰ Qur'ān 4:83.

³⁵¹ Qur'ān 22:53.

ولا عجب فقد ثوى أدلاء الطريق ، وذهب أرباب التحقيق ، ولم يبق في الغالب إلا أهل الزور والفسوق متشبهين بدعوى كاذبة منمقة، متصنعين بحكايات مزخرفة، مترائين بصفات متهممة، متظاهرين بظواهر من العلم فاسدة، متقاطعين بحجج غير صادقة ، كل ذلك لطلب دنيا، أو محبة ثناء ، أو مغالبة نظراء ، قد ذهبت المواصلة بينهم بالبر، وتألفوا جميعا على النكر، وعدمت النصائح بينهم في الأمر، وتصافوا بأسرهم على الخديعة والمكر؛ إن نصحهم العلماء أغروا بهم ، وإن صمت عنهم العقلاء أزدروا عليهم ، أولئك الجهال في علمهم، الفقراء في طولهم، البخلاء عن الله عز وجل بأنفسهم، لا يفلحون ولا ينجح تابعهم؛ ولذلك لا يظهر عليهم مواريث الصدق، ولا تسطع حولهم أنوار الولاية، ولا تحفق بين أيديهم أعلام المعرفة، ولا يستر عوراتهم لباس الخشية، لأنهم لم ينالوا أحوال النقباء، ومراتب النجباء، وخصوصية البدلاء ، وكرامات الأوتاد، وفوائد القطب، وفي هذه أسباب السعادة وتممة الطهارة. أجل، لو عرفوا أنفسهم لظهر لهم الحق، وعلموا علة أهل الباطل، وداء أهل الضعف، ودواء أهل القوة؛ ولكن ليس هذا من بضائعهم، حججوا عن الحقيقة بأربعة: بالجهل، والإصرار، ومحبة الدنيا، وإظهار الدعوى. فالجهل أورثهم السخف، والإصرار أورثهم التهاون، ومحبة الدنيا أورثتهم طول الغفلة، وإظهار الدعوى أورثهم الكبر والإعجاب والرياء [...] ³⁵²

Such critics, says al-Ghazālī, have neither attained the benefits of the *qutb*³⁵³, nor a host of other mystical spiritual states. In the context of describing different degrees of experiencing the Oneness of God (*al-Tawhīd*), al-Ghazālī mentions the fourth degree, which is experienced by the *qutb*,

³⁵² Al-Ghazālī, *al-Imlā' 'alá Mushkil al-Ihyā'*, 102-104.

³⁵³ While some printed editions have “aqṭāb” (sing. qutb) here, it is either a typo or due to variations in manuscripts. Either way, the reference to the *qutb* concept is being made.

وهي توحيد الصديقين: وأما أهل المرتبة الرابعة فهم قوم رأوا الله سبحانه وتعالى وحده، ثم رأوا الأشياء بعد ذلك به، فلم يروا

في الدارين غيره، ولا اطلعوا في الوجود على سواه [...]

وأهل هذه الرتبة على الجملة في حال حصولهم فيها صنفان: مریدون، ومرادون. فالمریدون في الغالب لا بد لهم من أن يجلوا في

المرتبة الثالثة وهي توحيد المقربين، ومنها ينتقلون، وعليها يعبرون إلى المرتبة الرابعة [والله أعلم. وأما المرادون فهم في الغالب

مبتدؤون بمقامهم الأخير، وهي المرتبة الرابعة وتمكنون فيها]. ومن أهل هذا المقام يكون القطب، والأوتاد، والبلاء، ومن

أهل المرتبة الثالثة يكون النقباء، والنجباء، والشهداء، والصالحون، والله أعلم [...]³⁵⁴

Here, al-Ghazālī tells the reader that the familiar *quṭb*, *awṭād*, and *budalā* among the *awliyā* experience God's Oneness in a distinct sense, referred to as the fourth degree —*tawḥīd al-siddīqīn*.

The slightly lesser level of *awliyā* experience the third degree of Oneness, *tawḥīd al-muqarrabīn*, and includes such spiritual figure stations as the *nuqabā*, *nujabā*, *shuhadā*, and *ṣāliḥūn*. Notably, there are no specific numbers mentioned, except for keeping the *quṭb* in the singular, as opposed to the other categories which are pluralized nouns. Interestingly, al-Ghazālī ends with the humble “and God knows better (wa Allāh a‘lam),” perhaps (assuming the quality of the aforementioned description demands more than a merely rhetorical usage of that phrase) to indicate that he does not boastfully claim to have first-hand knowledge of all such details but so he has taken for granted from the words of previous mystics.

³⁵⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Imlā* ‘*alā Mushkil al-Iḥyā*’, 185-186.

One gets the sense from these elaborations/developments that there is an underlying shared understanding of the *quṭb* notion, but variations in surrounding organizational details.³⁵⁵ Arguably, the shared sense is systematized with more theoretical sophistication over time but without compromising internal consistency that allows for highlighting a paradigmatic feature when compared with other trends of Islamic thought. This point is exemplified in the synthesis provided by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, where a highly developed theoretical framework for the apparently shared understanding of *quṭb* in mystical circles makes an authoritative appearance. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī refers to the notion as an established feature of the Ṣūfī worldview and makes an explicit comparison between it and the Imāmī Shī‘ī notion of the immaculate/infallible (ma‘ṣūm) Imam. What is more intriguing, however, is that al-Rāzī presents an argument for this notion, as if appropriating it for his own purposes despite being more a Sunnī theologian/jurist than a Ṣūfī.³⁵⁶ Such a discursive move arguably makes this case particularly informative as one at the crossroads of Sunnī, Ṣūfī, and Shī‘ī thought.

In the first volume of his multi-volume *al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyah min al-‘Ilm al-Ilāhī*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī discusses several lines of reasoning to draw attention to God’s existence.³⁵⁷ Among the categories of arguments he presents is the category that coincides with the tastes of spiritual practitioners and masters of extrasensory perception (*aṣḥāb al-riyāḍāt wa arbāb al-mukāshafāt*), clearly a reference to those who affiliate with Ṣūfism (in a sense that is perhaps better understood

³⁵⁵ If one assumes that there must be some form of reconciliation and internal consistency among these elaborations, perhaps some details were not essential and depended on the variables of time/place.

³⁵⁶ This is not to agree with the suggestion that there were rigid boundaries between such affiliations but to acknowledge that certain personalities either identified more closely with or became associated more prominently with certain descriptors than others.

³⁵⁷ For a relatively recent dissertation focusing on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyah*, see: Nora Jacobsen Ben Hammed, “Knowledge and Felicity of the Soul in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī” (Ph.D., United States -- Illinois, The University of Chicago, 2018), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2111347475/abstract/734B77CC4C994C72PQ/1>.

as primarily a *ṣūfī*/*ʿirfānī*/mystical approach to awareness/epistemology, as opposed to an emphasis on a socio-political or even theological affiliation). After some prerequisite remarks, al-Rāzī states the following argument,

[...] ثم لما تأملنا في ضبط صفات الكمال، وجدناها محصورة في ثلاثة أنواع: الاستغناء، والعلم، والقدرة. ثم من المعلوم أن هذه الصفات الثلاثة لا تحصل للإنسان على سبيل الكمال، بل إنما تحصل له بمقدار القوة البشرية، والطاقة الإنسانية. فنشاهد أن أصناف أهل العالم، وإن كانوا كثيرين إلا أن الصنف الواحد من تلك الأصناف أكملهم في هذه الصفات، ثم في ذلك [الصنف] يوجد أشخاص كثيرون إلا أنه يحصل فيهم شخص واحد هو أكمل أولئك الأشخاص، وحينئذ يكون ذلك الشخص هو أكمل الأشخاص الموجودين في عالم الدنيا، وهو المسمى عند أهل التصوف بقطب العالم،^[١] وفي لسان الشيعة بالإمام المعصوم. ثم هؤلاء الأفاضل الذين لا يوجد منهم في الدور الواحد إلا الفرد الواحد، إذا قوبل بعضهم ببعض، فسوجد في كل ألف سنة أو أقل أو أكثر: شخص واحد هو رئيسهم الأكبر، وإمامهم الأعظم، وذلك هو النبي الكامل صاحب الوحي

والتنزيل.³⁵⁸

Al-Rāzī presents an argument for the existence of a supremely excellent human being, in terms of independence, knowledge and ability. As he puts it, it is a matter of fact that beings differ in this regard and whoever is relatively most excellent is the one referred to as the *quṭb* by the *Ṣūfis* and the immaculate Imam by the *Shīʿīs*. In the eighth volume, while discussing a less traditional

³⁵⁸ Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliyah min al-ʿIlm al-Ilāhī*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, 1st ed., vol. 1, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1407 AH / 1987 CE), 260.

argument for identifying true prophets (by virtue of their spiritual influence on others, bringing them closer to excellence, as opposed to the traditional *i 'jāz*/miracle argument),³⁵⁹ al-Rāzī writes,

[...] ثم إن هذا الصنف من الناس مختلفون أيضا في الكمال والنقصان، ولا شك أنه يحصل فيهم شخص واحد، هو أفضلهم

وأكملهم [فعلى هذا قد ثبت أنه لا بد وأن يحصل في كل دور شخص واحد هو أفضلهم وأكملهم] في القوة النظرية والعملية.

ثم إن الصوفية يسمونه بقطب العالم. ولقد صدقوا فيه، أنه لما كان الجزء الأشرف من سكان هذا العالم الأسفل هو الإنسان،

الذي حصلت له القوة النظرية التي بها يستفيد الأنوار القدسية من عالم الملائكة، وحصلت له القوة العملية التي يقدرها بها

على تدبير هذا العالم الجسماني على الطريق الأصلاح، والسبيل الأكمل. ثم إن ذلك الإنسان الواحد هو أكمل الأشخاص

الموجودين في ذلك الدور³⁶⁰ كان المقصود الأصلي من هذا العالم العنصري، هو وجود ذلك الشخص. ولا شك أن المقصود

بالذات هو الكامل. وأما الناقص فإنه يكون مقصوداً بالعرض [فتبت: أن ذلك الشخص هو الكامل وثبت: أن ذلك

³⁵⁹ In his *Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta'akhhirīn*, mentioning it as al-Jāhīz's preferred argument and endorsed by al-Ghazālī in *al-Munqidh*, Fakhr al-Rāzī argues that if one has [compelling excellence in] character, actions, judgements, and conduct, then taken altogether this is surely only present in true Prophets, p. 208. However, on p. 213 he seems to affirm that the core reliable argument for Prophet Muḥammad's message is the traditional Qur'ān miracle argument while the other arguments are complementary and/or supplementary. This differs from what he presents in his *Ma'ālim Uṣūl al-Dīn*, where he argues that if one is excellent *and brings other to excellence* then he is a true Prophet, p. 93-94. Here he appears to prefer this argument over the traditional miracle one. In *al-Maṭālib al-Āliyah*, this is essentially the argument presented but is expanded upon substantially with arguably additional nuances. I imagine that al-Rāzī considered his latter attempt as providing a more robust theoretical framework for the earlier argument adopted by al-Jāhīz, as it can be considered an application of al-Rāzī's more elaborate argument. In the following section of *al-Maṭālib al-Āliyah*, al-Rāzī goes on to describe how he views this approach featured in the Qur'ān. See:

Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta'akhhirīn min al-'Ulamā' wa al-Ḥukamā' wa al-Mutakallimīn*, ed. Ṭāha 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sa'd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azharīyah, n.d.), 208; 213;

Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Ma'ālim Uṣūl al-Dīn*, ed. Ṭāha 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sa'd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azharīyah, n.d.), 93-94;

Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-Āliyah Min al-'Ilm al-Ilāhī*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, 1st ed., vol. 8, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1987), 103-114.

³⁶⁰ The reference mentions that two alternative manuscripts have the word الوقت here instead.

الشخص] هو القطب لهذا العالم العنصري، وما سواه فكالمتبع له. وجماعة [من] الشيعة الإمامية، يسمونه بالإمام المعصوم. وقد يسمونه بصاحب الزمان. ويقولون بأنه غائب. ولقد صدقوا في الوصفين أيضاً، لأنه لما كان خالياً عن النقائص، التي هي حاصلة في غيره، كان معصوماً من تلك النقائص. وهو أيضاً صاحب الزمان، لأننا بينا: أن ذلك الشخص هو المقصود بالذات في ذلك الزمان، وما سواه فالكل أتباعه. وهو أيضاً: غائب عن الخلق لأن الخلق لا يعلمون أن ذلك الشخص هو أفضل أهل هذا الدور [وأكملهم وأقول ولعله لا يعرف ذلك الشخص أيضاً: أنه أفضل أهل الدور] لأنه وإن كان يعرف حال نفسه إلا أنه لا يمكنه أن يعرف حال غيره، فذلك الشخص لا يعرفه غيره، وهو أيضاً لا يعرف نفسه. فهو كما جاء في الأخبار الإلهية أنه قال تعالى: "أولياي تحت قبائي، لا يعرفهم غيري."³⁶¹

This excerpt begins with the familiar argument that the most perfect human being, relatively speaking, must exist. But then argues that this person, who is best of all in terms of thought and practice and called, “the *qutb* of the world, in Sūfī terms,” is not only privy to intellectual holy lights from the angelic world but also to practical power enabling him to manage/sustain the physical world in the best and most excellent fashion. It is possible that al-Rāzī is referring not only to the managerial skills of a temporal ruler here but also cosmological powers like those of angels who are part of the natural order God manages the world through. Al-Rāzī continues to argue that, since God aims to bring about perfection/excellence, the main aim for the creation of this material world is to bring about the existence of this excellent/perfect individual. All other imperfect beings, thus, do not fulfill the main purpose for the creation of the world. In this sense,

³⁶¹ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyah*, vol. 8, 105-106.

they are to be understood as non-essential aims, side effects of sorts (apparently with emphasis on the value of the *quṭb*, not on devaluing others). Hence, the world revolves around this pivot point, this perfect “quṭb” as the Ṣūfīs call him. Al-Rāzī then notes that a group among the Imāmī Shī‘ī call him the immaculate Imam; they call him “the master of the age (*ṣāhib al-zamān*)”; and they say that he is “absent/vanished/hidden/incognito/in occultation (*ghā’ib*).” Al-Rāzī states that he agrees with all of these descriptions of the personality in question (seemingly assuming it is also in line with Ṣūfī thought) and then proceeds to make an argument justifying each attribute. He agrees that the perfect personality is immaculate/infallible because he does not have the flaws/deficiencies present in others.³⁶² He also agrees with “the master of the age” description because he finds it to be synonymous with being the essential aim of God’s creation in that time frame —everyone else following him because he is the most excellent human being. Lastly, he agrees that this personality is hidden/incognito (*ghā’ib*) because people do not know the identity of this most excellent being. However, there is a nuanced difference between this notion of being “ghā’ib” and the Shī‘ī view of the 12th Imam being “ghā’ib” —for the Twelvers, the prominent understanding is that they know the name and genealogy of the 12th Imam but that the Imam generally conceals his personal identity in daily life during the period in which he is in this state of *ghaybah* (being *ghā’ib*). For al-Rāzī, on the other hand, the hidden nature of the *quṭb* is such that people may not even theoretically know who it is (as presumably there is no *naṣṣ* describing

³⁶² This argument seems to depend on the premise that all possible gradations of existence are actualities, such that in any given plane of existence there must also exist human absolute excellence (at least *ma’ṣūm*), not merely a relatively best excellence that is anything less than *ma’ṣūm*. If that is the assumption being made, then al-Rāzī’s argument would seem to merely draw attention to the maximum human excellence on the gradient, which necessarily has the at least a degree of immaculate/impeccable quality. It could also be that al-Rāzī is thinking of *’iṣmah* in the sense that the best human in existence at any given juncture becomes the standard, thus infallible by definition (but, at first glance, this would not seem to fit well with his *takḥṭi’ah* position). Alternatively, al-Rāzī might argue, as Imāmī theologians do, that “the best” actually existent is the one eligible for God’s special care and thus God necessarily bestows *’iṣmah* upon the best out of His grace, for example.

the specific name/lineage of such a figure in the Sunnī view). To underscore this difference more definitively, al-Rāzī adds (perhaps his personal view here, as the word “I say (*aqūl*)” in the aforementioned quote would indicate) that such a personality may not even know whether or not he himself is the best of all people in that age – for even if he knows himself, he cannot know the state of others to compare himself to. It goes without saying that the mainstream Shīʿī understanding would disagree with this last point as well.

فثبت بهذا: أن كل دور لا بد وأن يحصل فيه شخص موصوف بصفات الكمال. ثم إنه لا بد وأن يحصل في هذه الأدوار المتلاحقة: دور يحصل فيه شخص واحد يكون هو أفضل من كل أولئك الذين كل واحد منهم صاحب دوره، وفريد عصره، وذلك الدور المشتمل على مثل ذلك الشخص، إنما لا يوجد في ألف سنة، أو أكثر، أو أقل، إلا مرة واحدة، فيكون ذلك الشخص هو الرسول الأعظم، والنبي المكرم، وواضع الشرائع، والمهدي إلى الحقائق. وتكون نسبته إلى سائر أصحاب الأدوار كنسبة الشمس إلى سائر الكواكب. ثم لا بد وأن يحصل في أصحاب الأدوار إنسان، هو أقربهم إلى صاحب الدور، في صفات الفضيلة. فيكون ذلك الشخص بالنسبة إليه، كالقمر بالنسبة إلى الشمس، وهو الإمام القائم مقامه، المقرر شريعته. وأما الباقيون فنسبة كل واحد منهم إلى صاحب الدور الأعظم، كنسبة كوكب من الكواكب السيارة إلى الشمس. وأما عوام الخلق فهم بالنسبة إلى أصحاب الأدوار مثل حوادث هذا العالم بالنسبة إلى الشمس والقمر وسائر الكواكب. ولا شك أن عقول الناقصين تكمل بأنوار عقول أصحاب الأدوار، وتقوي بقوتها. فهذا كلام معقول مرتب على الاستقراء الذي يفيد القطع واليقين.³⁶³

³⁶³ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Matālib al-ʿĀliyah*, vol. 8, 107.

In this final segment, al-Rāzī describes the human being who is closest in excellence relative to the Prophet Muḥammad as, “al-Imām al-qā’im maqāmah, al-muqarrir sharī’atah (the Imam who is established in his station [in his place], who secures his sharī’ah).” At the end of the excerpt, al-Rāzī assesses the overall picture he has painted, approving of it as, “reasonable; organized according to induction that yields decisiveness and certainty.” The careful argumentation, elaboration and reassuring language al-Rāzī employs to synthesize the Ṣūfī view of the *quṭb* underscore not only an arguably paradigmatic appeal to a guide of impeccable guidance at the crossroads of Islamic thought, but also herald al-Rāzī himself as a subject-forming author. By employing these commonplace tools of authorship in the devotional context of a theological work, al-Rāzī’s interventions are conceivably organic to the constitution of his readers’ intellectual frameworks (at least).³⁶⁴

Al-Rāzī’s excerpts demonstrate that the Ṣūfī notion of the *quṭb* came to mean more than merely the best of the *awliyā’* or a spiritual exemplar *ḥujjah*. As the most excellent being on the physical plane of existence, the *quṭb* came to be understood as the main purpose for the existence of the cosmos. Al-Rāzī brings the Shī’ī and Ṣūfī Sunnī elements of this leader behind the scenes into full bloom, shedding light on striking similarities between the incognito *quṭb* and the Shī’ī Imam. Describing this personality as the Imam who is established in the station of Prophet Muḥammad seems to present political overtones, feeding into an Imāmī Shī’ī narrative, but such a reading must be reconsidered in light of the Sunnī assumptions al-Rāzī’s scholarship takes for

³⁶⁴ While there is a general phenomenon here that likely applies in most discursive contexts where there is intellectual engagement, I am drawing attention to the specific type of subject-formation that arises in the context of Islamic thought crossroads. It is a critical juncture that seemingly has the most potential to highlight theoretical similarity as it does to underline bold boundaries of difference in application/practice. I am not merely drawing attention to intellectual formation but a specific sort of intellectual formation with potentially polarizing side effects.

granted.³⁶⁵ Again, here, the excerpts can be explained well by proposing that there is a much more at stake here than petty disagreements in matters of theology —the attention to these delicate formulations, ones with cosmic repercussions, speak to profound anxiety/motivation driving these authors to formulate elaborate theories about spiritual leadership. It goes beyond sectarian divisions and political authority to require an exemplar of guidance that does not go wrong, on the one hand, and that exists on this physical plane of existence, on the other hand.

4.4 Conclusion

The argument of this chapter is subtle, but to put it more plainly: Reconstructing references to the *quṭb* concept over the 9th through the 13th centuries CE reveals elaborations/developments in theorizing to satisfy a paradigmatic feature of leadership in Sunnī Ṣūfī as well as Shī‘ī worldviews —there was a need for a physically living exemplar of guidance, around which the spirituality of all community members (and even the cosmos, according to some) revolved. This chapter has not been a rehearsal of Ṣūfī cosmology related to the *quṭb* (the “pivot point” [for the quern of existence]) or the Imāmī Shī‘ī view of the al-Imām al-Ma‘ṣūm (the immaculate Imam) as much as it has been a humble attempt at analyzing the assumptions in between the lines and how they reveal a shared substantive requirement of “leading” in an Islamic worldview. The Sunnī Ṣūfī

³⁶⁵ Some readers might wonder if it is possible to entertain the conspiracy theory again here. Perhaps al-Rāzī is a Shī‘ī practicing an elaborate form of *taqīyah* (precautionary secrecy). But how could one ever prove such an implausible thing? Al-Rāzī’s sectarian affiliation is evident throughout his writings and is by no means ambiguous – he is Sunnī through and through. It appears to be much more reasonable to simply be open to a greater range of diversity within the more traditional modes of expression in Islamic thought and practice. There were, thus, classical Sunnī jurists like al-Rāzī who upheld frameworks theoretically similar to their Shī‘ī counterparts, but with distinct interventions in theory or application that set them apart. Al-Rāzī brought ideas that made sense to him closer to home, to his own Sunnī circles, knowing how they may come off as Shī‘ī views, but while insisting on rejecting Shī‘ī applications of those principles.

cosmology of *awliyā'* allows for the replacement of the living *quṭb* such that the world is never rid of one, even if no one knows who he is, while the Imāmī Shī'ī notion of the Twelfth immaculate Imam's long life during his incognito occultation (*ghaybah*) guarantees the persistent presence-in-absence of the immaculate "leader" behind the scenes. The exemplary nature of the envisioned leader behind the scenes in these similar but distinct cosmologies reveal a more profound perceived need in the Islamic worldview —continuity of impeccable guidance after Prophet Muḥammad. The Imāmī Shī'ī *naṣṣ* argument, as political as the emphasis on it may have been at different stages in the formative period, shifted into a Divine recipe for immaculate leadership (in terms of legal matters as well as spirituality/morality) beyond the seat of temporal leadership. The Sunnī Ṣūfī spiritual *khilāfah* scheme, including its *quṭb*, arguably had the same function for spiritual guidance, best modeled as a primary concern due to the preoccupation of Islamic thinkers with forming moral subjects (themselves and others). Outlining these cosmologies, referencing earlier thinkers or schools of thought/practice with relevant points on such frameworks, using language to propose the gravity of what is at stake, and similar interventions, positioned authors engaged in these activities to partake in at least one of the subject-forming forms of "leading" —distinct from authority and pivoting around subject-formation.

Chapter 5: The Mahdī in Modernity

This chapter's purpose is two-fold: First, empirically, it is a case study of contemporary technologies related to the Mahdī as a leader figure (and which, in line with the dissertation's argument, would likely be envisioned as subject-forming by Islamic authors). This also reconstructs contemporary discourse on Mahdī-related themes, often engaging with medieval primary sources and interlocutors; Second, theoretically, the case study is allowed to speak its own mind³⁶⁶ regarding the distinction between conceptual frameworks as subject-forming technologies, on the one hand, as opposed to ideologies being superimposed on otherwise ideologically-neutral subject forming technologies, on the other hand. These objectives are achieved by engaging directly with the excerpts and strategies employed by the author of a contemporary text on the Mahdī, one which synthesizes and displays familiarity with terms of discourse within and beyond the Islamic scholarly community.

Aḥmad al-Ishkiwarī, the author of *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, is a contemporary scholar of Islamic studies in the *ḥawzah al-‘ilmīyah* of Najaf, Iraq and the book itself has been adopted by a research center (Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Takhaṣṣuṣīyah fī al-Imām al-Mahdī) sponsored by a foremost grand religious authority of Twelver Shī‘ī Muslims, ‘Alī al-Sīstānī. Careful examination of the book reveals not only a methodological approach to treating and addressing questions related to the Mahdī concept and application³⁶⁷, but also iteratively evoked tactics/technologies for the formation of a subject anticipating and interacting with a version of the Mahdī concept. The choice

³⁶⁶ To the extent possible given the limitations of translation/interpretation and incompatibility of categories/terms due to nuanced differences arising from historic-specificity.

³⁶⁷ From the pair of terms *al-mafhūm wa al-miṣdāq*; The latter being the *instance* to which the concept applies – the practical example corresponding to the concept. See: Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, *al-Mantiq*, ed. ‘Alī Shīrvānī (Qum: Mu’assasah-yi Intishārāt-i Dār al-‘Ilm, 1382 SH), 71.

of this book for the present analysis was not an inevitably exclusive one but an option recommended and endorsed by an established authority in a major trend of Islamic thought, the Twelver Shī'ī, whose worldview emphasizes Mahdī anticipation as subject-forming.

5.1 Leadership of Multiple Forms

Quoting excerpts from a famous supplication referring to the Mahdī in Twelver Shī'ī thought, al-Ishkiwarī paints a vivid image of the Mahdī's anticipated and leadership of presence-in-absence,

هو طامس آثار الزيف والأهواء، وقاطع حبائل الكذب والافتراء، هو جامع الكلمة على التقوى، هو باب الله الذي منه يؤتى،

هو وجه الله الذي إليه يتوجّه الأولياء، هو السبب المتّصل بين الأرض والسماء، هو صاحب يوم الفتح، وناشر راية الهدى،

ومؤلف شمل الصلاح والرضا، هو المنتظر لإقامة الأمت والعوج، هو المرتجى لإزالة الجور والعدوان، هو المدّخر لتجديد الفرائض

والسنن، هو المتخیر لإعادة الملة والشريعة، هو المؤمّل لإحياء الكتاب وحدوده، هو محيي معالم الدين وأهله، هو قاصم شوكة

المعتدين، وهادم أبنية الشرك والنفاق، ومبيد أهل الفسوق والعصيان، وحاصد فروع الغي والشقاق [...]

He is the one, “who will efface all traces of deviance [in belief] and hedonism [in action],” the one, “who will spring the traps of lies and fabrication [with the truth].” He is the one who, “shall unify all people upon the fear of God.” He is, “the gateway to God that is the only way one can approach him.” He is, “the focal point to which God’s friends turn their attention.” He is, “the lifeline linking the [denizens of] earth to [God] on high.” He is, “the master of the Day of Conquest and the one who shall raise the banner of guidance.” He is the one, “who will combine people’s scattered interests into what is best for them and what

pleases them.” He is, “the awaited one who shall straighten [even the last vestiges of] crookedness, [no matter how] small or imperceptible.” He is the one, “upon whom we rest our hopes so that he will end injustice and oppression.” He is the one, “who has been preserved [by God] to renew the directives and recommendations found in the Qur’ān and the Prophet’s example.” He is the one, “upon whom we rest our hopes so that he will revive the Book [of God] and the injunctions set forth therein.” He is the one, “who will revive Islamic symbols and [through them revive] Muslims.” He is the one, “who will crush the military might of the transgressors.” He is the one, “who will demolish the edifices of polytheism and hypocrisy.” He is, “the destroyer of the corrupt, [and] the sinful.” He is the one, “who will cut down errancy and division.”^{368, 369}

Thus, the Mahdī figure here is portrayed as a guide who will unite people to have a subject-forming reverence for God; a legal authority reviving the Qur’ān’s intended prescriptions; and an imam in action, not merely one with authority but one who will actively dissolve error and division. The Mahdī figure, summarized in these terms, captures in a single personality the various forms of leadership discussed in earlier chapters. In al-Mashhadī’s *al-Mazār, Du‘ā’ al-Nudbah* (from which the excerpts above are drawn) is reported to be recommended³⁷⁰ as a weekly practice – on Fridays – as well as annually on three other days of significance – Eid (‘Īd) *al-Fiṭr*³⁷¹, Eid *al-*

³⁶⁸ Aḥmad Al-Ishkiwārī, *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah: Ishkāliyyāt Wa Mu‘ālahājāt*, 2nd ed. (Najaf: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Takhaṣṣuṣīyah fī al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1434 AH), 38.

³⁶⁹ Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far al-Mashhadī (d. 6th century AH), *Al-Mazār*, ed. Jawād al-Qayyūmī al-Iṣfahānī, 1st ed. (Qum: Mu‘assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1419), 579;

Rizwan Arastu, *al-Nudbah: a Devotional Elegy for the Prophet Muḥammad and His Family*, (Dearborn, MI: Islamic Texts Institute, Inc., 2009), 80-85.

³⁷⁰ *Mustahabb*; religiously recommended, indicating an official legal status based on the sanctioning of an infallible authority (the Qur’ān, the Prophet or the Imāms).

³⁷¹ Celebrating the successful fast of the month of Ramaḍān; the 1st of Shawwāl.

*Aḍḥā*³⁷², and *Eid al-Ghadīr*³⁷³. The moral technology of supplication weekly and annually, as well as the subtle lines of reasoning embedded in the prayers (here and in the remainder of the supplication) are compelling factors likely envisioned as leading to subject-formation.

In other words, reconstructing these prescribed techniques by retrieving them from these archives paints a more vivid image of intentional acts undertaken by a practitioner, iteratively performed upon him/herself, in order to embody the qualities (including thought patterns) prescribed. Coupled with the earlier analysis of the trans-historical Islamic library on the matter of consistency in worship³⁷⁴, these archives indicate that the Islamic thinkers advocating for these practices thought they were techniques effective as moral technologies for subject-formation. Each case study of this dissertation, confirms this interpretation of the intellectual history, for each details the techniques (including summoned lines of reasoning), and argues that the emphasis on lines of reasoning in addition to otherwise non-intellectual practices assumes that those authors/transmitters were convinced of the efficacy of such techniques in subject-formation.

While al-Ishkiwarī does not quote the entire supplication, reference to remaining segments of the supplication reveal an appeal to paradigmatic features of the subject-forming leader, one at the crossroads of Shīʿī, Sunnī and Ṣūfī thought. Particularly in the genre of supplication, these descriptions expectedly engage a devotee not only physically but emotionally and intellectually as well. This interpretation of the archive is not merely informed by the surviving texts describing

³⁷² Celebrating the successful pilgrimage to Mecca; the 10th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah.

³⁷³ Celebrating the appointment of ʿAlī as the first Shīʿī Imām when the Prophet Muḥammad famously declared him to have an analogous authority over the Muslims as Muḥammad himself had (*man kuntu mawlāhū fa hādihā ʿAlīyyun mawlāhū...*); the 18th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah. The Implication of the statement is disputed by Sunnī Muslims, although the event itself is generally acknowledged as factual. For instance, consider the variety of references throughout the following study:

ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad al-Amīnī al-Najafī (d. 1390 AH / 1970 CE), *Mawsūʿat al-Ghadīr fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab*, ed. Markaz al-Ghadīr lil-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīyah bi Ishrāf Āyat Allāh al-Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Hāshimī al-Shāhrūdī, 5th ed., 14 vols. (Qum: Muʿassasat Dāʿirat Maʿārif al-Fiqh al-Islāmī, 2009 CE).

³⁷⁴ See the Introduction and Chapter 1, in particular.

such prescriptions, but by the lived experience of traditional communities that engage with these supplications religiously at major pilgrimage sites, at local mosques and at home, in groups and in solitude, and with yearning and tears. I, for example, have witnessed this reaction of practitioners first hand in holy sites in Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia, in communities spread across the Middle East and the United States, and several readily accessible through recordings available online (with relevant keyword searches).

5.2 Qualities of the Mahdī

5.2.1 Spreading Justice and Legal Interpretation

Under a section on “Distinct Features of the Mahdī,” *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah* quotes descriptions of the Mahdī as a legal, spiritual and social justice leader of universal (not merely global) proportions, describing his physical attributes in the process,

It has been reported that Abū Wā’il said: The Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Alī, looked at Imam Ḥusayn and said,

إن ابني هذا سيد كما سماه رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) سيّداً ، وسيخرج الله من صلبه رجلاً باسم نبيكم يشبهه في الخلق والخلق، يخرج على حين غفلة من الناس، وإمامة للحق، وإظهار للجور، والله لو لم يخرج لضربت عنقه، يفرح بخروجه أهل السماوات وسكانها، وهو رجل أجلى الجبين، أفنى الأنف، ضخم البطن، أزيل الفخذين، يفضده اليمنى شامة، أفلج الثنايا، ويملأ الأرض عدلاً كما ملئت ظلماً وجوراً

This son of mine is a master (*Sayyid*) just as the Messenger of God [Prophet Muḥammad] called him a master; and God will bring out a man from his

descendants³⁷⁵ whose name will be the name of your Prophet [Muḥammad], resembling him in features³⁷⁶ and character³⁷⁷; he mobilizes³⁷⁸ at a time when people are absentminded, what is right is being put to death, and tyranny is made manifest. [I swear] by God that if he does not mobilize [at that point], then he would be beheaded³⁷⁹; the people of the heavens and its dwellers will be delighted by his advent³⁸⁰. He is a man of a broad forehead³⁸¹, a [slightly] elongated nose with a curve midway and a fine tip³⁸², a [proportionately] sizeable abdomen³⁸³, [powerful] heavily built thighs [without contacting each other]³⁸⁴; on his right thigh there is a beauty spot³⁸⁵; his front teeth are spaced³⁸⁶; he fills the earth with justice just as it has been filled with injustice and tyranny.^{387, 388}

Such descriptions of the Maḥdī's unifying character do not appear to be incomprehensible phrases to be repeated verbatim without reflection. Had they been empty of intellectually subject-forming intent, one would not expect for the language used to be so specific and vivid. Rather, I argue that

³⁷⁵ *Min ṣulbih*; from his loins.

³⁷⁶ *al-Khalq*; his physical features.

³⁷⁷ *al-Khuluq*; character/manners.

³⁷⁸ *Yakhruj*; He comes out; Likely referring to the beginning of an armed resistance (*khurūj bi al-sayf*), to be distinguished from the mere advent of his public appearance (*zuhūr*). See next footnote.

³⁷⁹ Some would understand this to mean that the Imam must mobilize his armed resistance at that point because if he does not then his enemies will assassinate him. This may be hinting at how the Imam is publicly identified (*zāhir*), thus ending the period of *ghaybah*, before he mobilizes his movement (*yakhruj*). See:

Muḥammad Taqī al-Mūsawī al-Iṣfahānī (d. ca 1348 AH / 1929 CE), *Mikyāl al-Makārim fī Fawā'id al-Du'ā' Lil-Qā'im*, ed. 'Alī 'Āshūr, 1st ed., vol. 1, 2 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī lil-Maṭbū'āt, 2001), 82.

³⁸⁰ *Khurūjih*; his mobilization.

³⁸¹ *Ajlā al-jabīn*.

³⁸² *Aqnā al-anf*.

³⁸³ *Dakhm al-baṭn*; This could be referring to the muscular anatomy of his abdomen area that is proportional to the remainder of his strong build.

³⁸⁴ *Azyal al-fakhidhayn*.

³⁸⁵ *Shāmah*.

³⁸⁶ *Aflaj al-ṭhanāyā*; having a slight gap between the front teeth, regarded as a sign of beauty.

³⁸⁷ Ibn Abī Zaynab al-Nu'mānī (fl. early to mid 4th century AH / 10th century CE), *al-Ghaybah*, ed. Fāris Ḥassūn Karīm, 1st ed. (Qum: Muhr, 1422 AH), 222-223.

³⁸⁸ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-'Aqidah al-Mahdawīyah*, 44.

the use of eloquent language, with comprehensible and precise descriptions, assumes that the intended readership will engage with it intellectually, arguably contributing to subject-formation through the conceptual framework summoned with every reading, recollection, or resemblance noticed in examples from daily life. Moreover, promises of a joyful and peaceful future engage anticipatory emotion and thus the corresponding subject-forming mechanism. Perhaps more directly, however, the physical visualization of the Mahdī through distinct features has the potential to evoke subject-forming behavior not only in moments of silent reflection but in every instance of paying attention to a stranger’s features in anticipation he may be the Mahdī in disguise. The last phrase in the aforementioned quote is arguably the most iteratively evoked phrase describing the Mahdī figure throughout the Sunnī and Shī‘ī ḥadīth literature. This idea of spreading justice is quoted in the contemporary text *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah* (a book of about 200 Arabic pages) alone some 10 times, referencing primary sources, in the context of different reports describing the Mahdī. In another description of the Mahdī’s role, a legal authority emerges,

It has been reported that Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī said: I was at the Prophet’s [place] in the house of Umm Salamah. Then God revealed this verse,

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

Indeed God desires to repel all impurity away from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.³⁸⁹

So then the Prophet called for Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and Fāṭimah, and had them sit before him. Then he called for ‘Alī and had him sit behind his back; and he said,

³⁸⁹ Qur’ān 33:33

اللَّهُمَّ هُوَلاءَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِي فَأَذْهَبْ عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْسَ وَطَهِّرْهُمْ تَطْهِيراً.

O God, these are the People of my Household, so repel all impurity away from them and purify them with a thorough purification.

Then Umm Salamah asked, “And am I with them, O Messenger of God?” Then he said to her,

إِنَّكَ إِلَى خَيْرٍ

You are [headed] toward that which is good. [Implication: But you are not with them in particular.]

Then I said, “O Messenger of God, indeed God has honored this pure group of close kin (*‘itrah*) and blessed progeny (*dhurīyah*) by repelling all impurity away from them.” Then he said,

يا جابر لأنتهم عترتي من لحمي ودمي، فأخي سيّد الأوصياء، وابني خير الأسباط، وابنتي سيّدة النسوان، ومنا المهدي

O Jābir, [that is] because they are my close kin (*‘itrah*), of my own flesh and blood. For my brother [‘Alī] is the master of the *guardians* (*awṣiyā*); my two [grand]sons are the best of grandchildren/descendants (*al-asbāt*); my daughter is the leader (*Sayyidah*) of all women; and the Mahdī is from among us.

Then I said, “And who is the Mahdī, O Messenger of God?” Then he said,

تسعة من صلب الحسين أئمة أبرار، والتاسع قائمهم يملأ الأرض قسطاً وعدلاً كما ملئت جوراً، يقاتل على التأويل

كما قاتلت على التنزيل

Nine from the progeny (*ṣulb*) of Ḥusayn are righteous Imams; the ninth is the Qā'im [Rising One, the Mahdī] among them, who fills the earth with fairness and justice just as it has been filled with tyranny; he fights over the interpretation [of scripture] (*al-ta'wīl*) just as I have fought over the revelation [of scripture] (*al-tanzīl*).^{390, 391}

The reference to *ta'wīl* is reminiscent of the Qur'ānic verse 3:7, in which two types of verses are outlined, one to be understood within the intertextual Qur'ānic context of the other. As the verse states,

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ

مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو

الْأَلْبَابِ

It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Parts of it are *muḥkam* verses, which are the mother of the Book, while others are *mutashābih*. As for those in whose hearts is deviance,

³⁹⁰ 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Khazzāz al-Qummī (d. 400 AH / 1009 CE), *Kifāyat Al-Athar Fī al-Naṣṣ 'alā al-A'imma al-Ithnay 'Ashar*, ed. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Khū'ī (Qum: Maṭba'at al-Khayyām, 1401), 66.

³⁹¹ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 52.

they follow what *tashābaha*³⁹² in it, in pursuit of mischief³⁹³ and in pursuit of its *ta'wīl*³⁹⁴. But no one knows its *ta'wīl* except God and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, ‘We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.’ And none takes admonition except those who possess intellect.³⁹⁵

Thus, the Mahdī is being identified as a legal authority with access to the proper understanding the Prophet Muḥammad’s revelation, an understanding that enables him to resolve disagreements and unite the world on his platform. Other reports indicate that his main form of combat will be intellectual.³⁹⁶ This also blurs the distinction between the legal leadership of *ulū al-amr* and the spiritual mastership of a Quṭb with special access to Divine prescriptions.

³⁹² *Tashābaha*; the past tense verb related to *mutashābih*; linguistically, the word *mutashābih* is related to the past tense verb *tashābaha* and the noun *tashābuh*, which expresses the *similarity/resemblance* between different matters. This can mean different things, depending on the context. In some contexts, *mutashābih* describes the *consistency* between the verses of the Qur’ān (i.e. verse 39:23). However, in other contexts, such as in the verse quoted here, *mutashābih* arguably refers to a form of *ambiguity* which arises when the intended meaning of a Qur’ānic verse is not straightforward *in a stand-alone fashion*. At first glance, in such verses, there would be multiple possibilities that would seem *similar* to what must be right, leading to uncertainty. In this sense, the *mutashābih* verses (as opposed to what are called the “*muḥkam*” verses) are supposed to be clarified by understanding them with reference to the *muḥkam* verses, which are already straightforward. The deviant choose to go after the *mutashābih* verses without referring them back to the *muḥkam* verses and, thus, end up with twisted interpretations. See on this verse: Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *al-Mīzān Fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān*, 20 vols. (Qum: Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, n.d.);

Nāṣir Makārīm al-Shīrāzī, *al-Amthal Fī Tafṣīr Kitāb Allāh al-Munzal*, 20 vols., n.d.

³⁹³ *Fitnah*; depending on the context, can refer to a test or conditions such as calamity, sedition, and temptation.

³⁹⁴ This is a form of interpretation not generally accessible to the typical reader, as the verse indicates. More details on the usage of the word *ta'wīl* and its significance below.

³⁹⁵ Qur’ān 3:7

³⁹⁶ For example,

It has been reported the Sulaymān ibn ‘Īsá said,

بلغني أنه على يدي المهدي يظهر تابوت السكينة من بحيرة طبرية حتى يحمل فيوضع بين يديه بيت المقدس، فإذا نظرت إليه اليهود أسلمت إلا قليلا منهم، ثم يموت المهدي.

[News has] reached me that the Ark of Tranquility [*Tābūt al-Sakīnah*; likely refers to what is known as “the Ark of the Covenant”] will appear at the hands of the Mahdī from Lake Tiberias; It will be carried and put before him in Jerusalem. Once the Jews look at it, they will become Muslim – [all] but a few of them. Then the Mahdī will die.

5.2.2 Presence-in-Absence

The only other description that clearly rivals the justice promoter image in the book at hand is that referring to the Mahdī's presence-in-absence, his *ghaybah*. The “*ghaybah*” is mentioned in *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah* at least 13 times, referencing primary sources. Including in-text discussion and footnotes, the transliterated word “*ghaybah*” appears over 100 times in *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah* – almost every other page, on average. The Mahdī's *ghaybah* is at times coupled with his objective of spreading justice. For example,

‘Alī ibn Mūsá Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664 AH / 1266 CE), *al-Tashrīf bil-Minan fī al-Ta’rīf bil-Fītan (al-Malāḥim wa al-Fītan)*, 1st ed. (Mu’assasat Šāḥib al-Amr, 1416 AH), 150. On the Ark of Tranquility and its connection to the biblical Ark, see commentary on Qur’ān 2:248.

It has also been reported that the Mahdī will make his case by showing evidence relevant to each group of people he addresses. As one report quotes, he will say,

[...] أجيئوا إلى مسألتي ، فإني أنبئكم بما نبتتم به وما لم تنبئوا به . ومن كان يقرأ الكتب والصحف فليسمع مني ، ثم يتدئ بالصحف التي أنزلها الله على آدم وشيث عليهما السلام ، ويقول أمة آدم وشيث هبة الله : هذه والله هي الصحف حقا ، ولقد أرانا ما لم نكن نعلمه فيها ، وما كان خفي علينا ، وما كان أسقط منها و بدل وحرف ، ثم يقرأ صحف نوح و صحف إبراهيم والتوراة والإنجيل والزبور فيقول أهل التوراة والإنجيل والزبور : هذه والله صحف نوح وإبراهيم عليهما السلام حقا ، وما اسقط منها وبدل وحرف منها هذه والله التوراة الجامعة والزبور التام والإنجيل الكامل وإنما أضعاف ما قرأنا منها. ثم يتلو القرآن فيقول المسلمون : هذا والله القرآن حقا الذي أنزله الله على محمد صلى الله عليه وآله ، وما اسقط منه وحرف وبدل . [...]

Ḥasan Ibn Sulaymān al-Ḥillī (d. ca 9th century AH / 15th century CE), *Mukhtaṣar Baṣā’ir al-Darajāt*, 1st ed. (Najaf: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Ḥaydarīyah, 1950 CE), 184-185.

Another report indicates that most of the world will accept the Mahdī's leadership without any bloodshed,

حدثنا عبد الله بن مروان عن الهيثم بن عبد الرحمن قال حدثني من سمع عليا رضي الله عنه يقول إذا بعث السفيناني إلى المهدي جيشا فحسب بهم بالبيداء وبلغ ذلك أهل الشام قالوا لخليفتهم قد خرج المهدي فبايعه وادخل في طاعته وإلا قتلناك فيرسل إليه بالبيعة ويسير المهدي حتى ينزل بيت المقدس وتنقل إليه الخزائن وتدخل العرب والعجم وأهل الحرب والروم وغيرهم في طاعته من غير قتال حتى تبنى المساجد بالقسطنطينية وما دونها ويخرج قبله رجل من أهل بيته بأهل المشرق يحمل السيف على عاتقه ثمانية أشهر يقتل ويمثل ويتوجه إلى بيت المقدس فلا يبلغه حتى يموت .

Nu‘aym Ibn Ḥammād al-Marwazī al-Khuzā‘ī (d. ca 228 AH / 843 CE), *al-Fītan*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993 CE), 216.

It has been reported that Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī said: The Messenger of God said,

المهدي من ولدي، اسمه اسمي، وكنيته كنيتي، أشبه الناس بي خلقاً وخلقاً، تكون به غيبة وحيرة تضل فيها الأمم، ثم يقبل

كالشهاب الثاقب يملأها عدلاً وقسطاً كما ملئت جوراً وظلماً.

The Mahdī [is] from among my progeny, his name is my name, and his *kunyah*³⁹⁷ is my *kunyah*. In terms of features³⁹⁸ and character³⁹⁹, he is the closest in resemblance to me amongst [all] people. There will be a *ghaybah* and a puzzlement⁴⁰⁰ associated with him, during which communities⁴⁰¹ will go astray. Then he will come like a penetrating star⁴⁰²; he fills it with justice and fairness just as it has been filled with tyranny and injustice.”^{403,404}

Throughout *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, al-Ishkiwarī makes ample reference to primary sources compiled between the 10th and 13th centuries, describing the Mahdī’s presence-in-absence, and his incognito or hidden-in-plain-sight status. Addressing what he refers to as misconceptions (*shubuhāt*) regarding the Mahdī’s *ghaybah*, al-Ishkiwarī draws on primary sources to evoke a number of subject-forming lines of reasoning explaining the *ghaybah* phenomenon. In a section titled, “Some Pearls of Wisdom Behind the *Ghaybah*,” al-Ishkiwarī cites seven strategies for coming to terms with the Mahdī’s presence-in-absence. In summary, these strategies are to justify the *ghaybah* as:

³⁹⁷ A *kunyah* is a kind of epithet starting with *Abū* (literally, “Father of”), for a man, or *Umm* (literally, “Mother of”), for a woman. But if someone’s *kunyah* is “Abū ‘Abd Allāh,” for example, that does not necessarily mean his son’s name is ‘Abd Allāh. He may not even have a son at all for that matter. Conversely, sometimes a person becomes known by a *kunyah* only after s/he has a child, in which case the *kunyah* would be associated with the name of her/his child.

³⁹⁸ *al-Khalq*; his physical features.

³⁹⁹ *al-Khuluq*; character/manners.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ḥayrah*.

⁴⁰¹ *al-Umam* (sing. *ummah*); communities or nations.

⁴⁰² *Shihāb thāqīb*.

⁴⁰³ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, 286.

⁴⁰⁴ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 45.

1. A means for the awaited Mahdī to avoid pledging allegiance to any tyrannical ruler.
2. An expression of the Mahdī's vigilance⁴⁰⁵, as he attempts to safeguard his life and the community at large in order to accomplish his mission.
3. A means of testing people and cleansing them.
4. An expression of walking in the footsteps of the prophets [of old].⁴⁰⁶
5. A means of giving a chance for people to choose the path of faith, despite having parents who had rejected it unreasonably.
6. A means of allowing the opportunity for all types of people to take the reins of power, so that they would not be able to claim they could do a better job than the Mahdī.
7. A matter of hidden wisdom, only to be revealed after the Mahdī appears publicly.

The requirements of this dissertation do not allow for a detailed treatment quoting primary sources on each of these points but for the sake of demonstrating an example, the following reports explain that last justificatory strategy,

For it has been reported that ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Faḍl al-Hāshimī said,

سمعت الصادق جعفر بن محمد عليهما السلام يقول: (إنَّ لصاحب هذا الأمر غيبة لا بدَّ منها يرتاب فيها كلُّ مبطل)، فقلت:

ولمَّ جُعِلت فذاك؟ قال: (لأمر لم يؤذن لنا في كشفه)، قلت: فما وجه الحكمة في غيبته؟ قال: (وجه الحكمة في غيبته وجه

⁴⁰⁵ “Fear” similar to how it is used Qur’ān 28:18 and 28:21, in a way that fits with the Immaculate personality being described. Fear of God has many degrees and is not limited to fear of “sins” (in the legal classification sense). Fear can also be understood as a reference to observance of precautions related to the object of fear. Hence, when one is “fearful” for the fate of his/her mission to serve God by serving humanity and guiding the misguided, s/he becomes vigilant in action.

⁴⁰⁶ For example, the life of Joseph in Egypt where people did not know him to be a prophet or the son of Jacob (Qur’ān 12); and the long life of Noah (Qur’ān 29:14).

الحكمة في غيبات من تقدّمه من حجج الله تعالى ذكره، إنّ وجه الحكمة في ذلك لا ينكشف إلّا بعد ظهوره كما لم ينكشف

وجه الحكمة فيما أتاه الخضر عليه السلام من خرق السفينة، وقتل الغلام، وإقامة الجدار لموسى عليه السلام إلى وقت افتراقهما

I heard [Imam] al-Ṣādiq, Ja‘far son of Muḥammad, saying, “The master of this *amr* will have a *ghaybah* – one that is inevitable, in which every falsifier becomes skeptical.” Then I said, “Why is that, may I be sacrificed for your sake?” He replied, “For a reason that we have not been granted permission to reveal.” Then I said, “So, [if we cannot know the ultimate reason, then] what is the wisdom behind his *ghaybah*?” He said, “The wisdom behind his *ghaybah* is the wisdom behind the *ghaybahs* of God Almighty’s *hujaj* who preceded him. Indeed, the wisdom in that is not revealed until after his [public] appearance, just as the wisdom of al-Khiḍr’s actions – [when he] made a hole in the boat, slew the boy, and erected the wall for Moses – was not revealed until the time they were about to part ways.^{407, 408}

Employing this final strategy not only portrays the *ghaybah* as a recognizable theme in the chapter of the Cave (*Kahf*) in the Qur’ān but also paints the Mahdī figure as a *Khiḍr* of sorts – one who does the work of God on earth incognito. The Qur’ān does not even mention *Khiḍr* by name, but merely refers to him as a servant of God.⁴⁰⁹ This strategy can be read in at least two different ways: [1] “plugging” the Mahdī figure into a *Khiḍr*-template, a recognizable Qur’ānic theme; or [2] understanding the Mahdī as part of a network of *Khiḍr*-type activity behind the scenes.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*), 482.

⁴⁰⁸ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 139-140.

⁴⁰⁹ Qur’ān 18:65.

5.3 Epistemological Technologies

5.3.1 Default Principle of Verification

Besides justificatory strategies addressing questions raised about the Mahdī in modernity, examples of which appeared in the preceding section, al-Ishkiwarī's subject-forming strategies extend to the epistemological framework pronounced and assumed throughout his discussions. This approach is not unique to al-Ishkiwarī, of course, and that is precisely why this case study provides a valuable window into a major trend of subject-formation within contemporary Islamic thought. *Al-'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah* begins by establishing a “default principle” (*aṣl*), to be referred to in all cases of hesitation/doubt whether it be related to beliefs or practices, philosophy or law, facts of the natural world or facts of the Divine legislation. Is it to verify or to take things lightly? As al-Ishkiwarī argues,

والحقّ أنّ الأصل هو عدم التسليم بسهولة، وعدم التسامح وعدم الانقياد، فالأصل الجاري هو أصالة التفحص والتحقيق والاختبار والتدقيق، وأصالة التوقّف للترويّ والتأمّل، وأصالة التفكير والتعلّم والتحقّظ، فالأصل هو الاحتياط وليس الترخيص، والبساطة والتسامح والركون لكلّ داع، والتعجّل والذوبان السريع ورخص الثمن، فلا ينبغي له الدخول في صفقة معاوضها ومبيعتها تافه أو محفّر، وضعف بضاعة المفكر إنّما لوهن دليله، وإمّا لضعف معطياته وخسّتها، وإمّا لموهوميّة فكره.

فعن علي عليه السلام: (كُنْ فِي الْفِتْنَةِ كَأَنَّ اللَّبُونَ لَا ظَهْرَ فَيَرْكَبُ وَلَا ضَرْعَ فَيُحْلَبُ)

The correct *default principle* is the former – one must not give in easily, take matters lightly and obey rashly. The *default principle* that should be deferred to is the principle of precaution – verification, investigation, examination, and inspection; the principle of

pausing to consider matters carefully and contemplate; the principle of reflecting, learning and reservation. The *default principle* is precaution; not permissibility, simple-mindedness, taking things lightly, inclining toward just any person who calls out, hastiness, melting away quickly, and being cheap. One should not enter a deal in which the compensation and that which is being sold is trivial or abased. The weakness of a thinker's intellectual merchandise is due either to the flimsiness of his/her evidence, to the weakness and meekness of his/her givens, or to the spurious nature of his/her thought.

It has been reported that Imam 'Alī said,

In the midst of wrongdoing⁴¹⁰, be like an adolescent camel who has neither a back for riding nor an udder for milking.^{411, 412}

My interpretation of this appeal in context is that it is not meant for the reader to merely pass over as an alternative point of view. The sequence of the discussion and arguably the substance of the argument is crafted as an ultimatum, forcing the reader to take a position. It is not presented as a valid view among other ethically plausible positions. The reader who intently engages with the invitation of the author is a subject applying the intellectual moral technology of reflection on him/herself as the object. The author writes in a fashion that arguably assumes the reading subject performing this technique of reflection upon him/herself will take a subject-forming position either while reading and/or later on upon recollection. I understand that author to be assuming that so long as the reader chooses to engage thoughtfully and does not become absentminded easily, the consequence is some sort of subject-formation – in cases of doubt, having a disposition to be a

⁴¹⁰ *Fitnah*.

⁴¹¹ 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-Balāghah: Khūṭab al-Imām 'Alī (Sermons of Imam 'Alī)*, comp. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406 AH / 1015 E), ed. Muḥammad 'Abduh, vol. 4, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 3.

⁴¹² Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 20-21.

strict “verifier,” or to be a strict “risk-taker.” While this might be dismissed as speculation if it were to be claimed ontologically without experimental evidence, as a matter of interpreting this specific archive it is the author’s ultimatum (or systematic treatment, depending on one’s assumptions) that justifies this reading.

The choice to err on the side of caution when in doubt leads the discussion into valid epistemic channels. In this vein, the arguments and the iterative, perhaps internalized, invocation of them are the moral technologies forming the modern subject of Mahdī devotion. These technologies are employed to build up the anticipation and vision of the Mahdī, as well as address threatening lines of reasoning. In the following subsections, I highlight some key points raised by al-Ishkiwarī regarding each of the epistemic channels. An exhaustive treatment would require a separate study in addition to an annotated translation of *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*.

5.3.2 Practical and Theoretical Reason’s Technologies

Distinguishing between the moral technologies at play corresponding to each faculty of reason, al-Ishkiwarī writes the following,

ثمَّ إنّ حديث الوعي الديني غير حديث المعرفة، فالأول يتكئ أساساً على الإيمان والإذعان والتسليم وانعقاد القلب والطمأنينة، وقد تتفق هذه الحالة حتّى عند غير العالم ويتولّد من العقل العملي، وسبل تنشيط هذا العقل يكون عن طريق الدعاء والأذكار والأوراد، والعبرة والاتعاظ وتهديب النفس والتجنّب عن المحرّمات والمكروهات، والعمل بالمستحبات، بينما الأخير منتج العقل النظري فهو وليد إعداد المقدمات النظرية وتنظيمها. وهو رهن مواد الأقيسة وصورها، وتحصل عن طريق حضور المحافل العلمية والدرس. ومن هنا نرى أنّ بعض المستشرقين يملك من المعلومات عن الدين الإسلامي الشيء الكثير، ولكنّه لا يملك رصيلاً

في دائرة العقل العملي، فما يملكه من سمنة وتضخم في العلم من دون وجود مسحة روحية ومعنوية مردّه إلى تفعيل العقل

النظري دون العملي.

To speak of religious awareness is one thing and to speak of knowledge⁴¹³ is another thing. The former rests on faith, conviction, submission, attaching one's heart [to something], and [a sense of] assurance⁴¹⁴. This state can occur even to one who is not a scholar. It arises from the [faculty of] *practical reason*⁴¹⁵. This [faculty of the] intellect is energized through supplication⁴¹⁶, invocations [remembering God]⁴¹⁷, [regimens of] devotional acts⁴¹⁸, moral lessons, admonitions, mastering oneself⁴¹⁹, avoiding sins and unrecommended⁴²⁰ acts, and performing recommended acts [of devotion]. As for the latter, it is the product of *theoretical reason*⁴²¹. For it is the outcome of setting up and organizing theoretical premises. It depends on the content and form of syllogisms. It is acquired by attending gatherings of learning and through study. It is in light of this that we can find some orientalists to have abundant information about the Islamic faith but do not have a share in the sphere of *practical reason*. The fleshy and inflated knowledge that such an orientalist possesses, without having a spiritual and moral feel to it, is due to engaging *Theoretical reason* without similarly engaging *practical reason*.⁴²²

⁴¹³ *Ma 'rifah*.

⁴¹⁴ *al-Ṭuma nīnah*; contentment and tranquility that is associated with being reasonably sure.

⁴¹⁵ *al-'Aql al-'amalī*; According to some definitions, it is the intellect's capacity not only to understand propositions related to what actions should be taken but also the capacity to urge action according to those propositions.

⁴¹⁶ *Du 'ā'*.

⁴¹⁷ *al-Adhkār* (sing. *dhikr*).

⁴¹⁸ *al-Awrād* (sing. *wird*).

⁴¹⁹ *Tahdhīb al-nafs*; disciplining oneself, taming one's desires.

⁴²⁰ *Makrūhāt* (sing. *makrūh*).

⁴²¹ *al-'Aql al-naẓarī*; Speculative Reason; It is the intellect's capacity to understand propositions about the world. According to some definitions, this would include the *understanding* even of propositions about what acts should/should not be done.

⁴²² Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 62.

Thus, from al-Ishkiwarī's insider perspective, the moral technologies employed to yield a subject with ideal dispositions are technologies engaging both practical as well as theoretical reason. The content and form of the syllogisms employed are iteratively invoked, even if only internalized as givens after some time, to yield a subject characterized by conscious faith and knowledge. It is noteworthy that these moral technologies are promoted as a matter of tradition and that al-Ishkiwarī's comments here are novel only in the sense that they discuss matters in a more contemporary analytical framework. After discussing the scope and limitations of each faculty of reason, al-Ishkiwarī moves on to discuss the Qur'ān as an epistemic source.

5.3.3 Qur'ānic Exegetical Technologies

Al-Ishkiwarī begins with a summary of arguments for the miraculous, inimitable quality of the Qur'ān, aiming to establish the Qur'ān as a reference point arrived at through sound reason. The author then delves into technical points distinguishing the integrity of the Qur'ān as an epistemic source, on the one hand, and establishing the methodology for approaching the Qur'ānic text, on the other hand. For example, al-Ishkiwarī outlines that the Qur'ān should be generally understood according to the customary rules of communication practice by reasonable individuals and endorsed by the tacit approval of the Divine law-giver. As al-Ishkiwarī writes on this point,

أَنَّ الْقُرْآنَ مِنْهُ مَا هُوَ نَصٌّ صَرِيحٌ، وَمِنْهُ مَا هُوَ ظَاهِرٌ، بِمَعْنَى يَحْتَمِلُ إِرَادَةَ الْخِلَافِ مِنْهُ، بِيَدِ أَنََّّهُ بِحَاجَةٍ إِلَى الْقَرِينَةِ الَّتِي مَعَ فَقْدَانِهَا

يَحْمِلُ عَلَى مَا هُوَ الظَّاهِرُ لِلسَّيْرَةِ الْعَقْلَائِيَّةِ الْمَمْضَاةِ مِنَ الشَّارِعِ، وَلِلتَّحَاكِمَاتِ الْعَرْفِيَّةِ فِي الرَّجُوعِ إِلَيْهِ، وَمِنْهُ مَا هُوَ مُتَشَابِهٌ يَحْتَمِلُ

أَكْثَرَ مِنْ مَعْنَى.

ثم إنَّ كلاً من النصّ والظاهر هو من محكم القول، ولا تحفظ ولا خلاف في الاعتماد على النصّ، وأمّا الظاهر فهو معتمد أيضاً، لأنَّ النبيّ صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم لم يأتِ بطريقة مختصرة لإفهام مقاصده وإيصالها، وإنما تكلم مع قومه بما هو متعارف عندهم من طرق وأساليب للتفاهم والتخاطب، وإلاّ لبانت لنا طريقته لو كانت، فإنّه قد تكلم بلسان عربي مبين، وحثّهم على التدبّر ولزوم العمل بما في الكتاب، ولزوم عرض الروايات على الكتاب، [...]

Considered separately, different parts of the Qur'ān have different degrees of explicitness in indicating their meaning: [1] Some parts of the Qur'ān are *explicit*⁴²³; [2] Other parts of the Qur'ān are *apparent*⁴²⁴ [but not *explicit*], which means that it is possible for another meaning to be intended, but such a possibility would require a clue [from the context or otherwise, in order to be adopted]. In the absence of such a clue, the meaning is assumed to be the apparent one. This is justified based on it being the practice of reasonable individuals⁴²⁵, which has been *endorsed*⁴²⁶ by the Divine Legislator⁴²⁷. Moreover, common sense⁴²⁸ judgments⁴²⁹ refer back to the apparent meaning [of expressions]; [3] Yet other parts of the Qur'ān are *mutashābih*⁴³⁰, allowing for more than one meaning.

Both the explicit and the apparent types of verses belong to the *muḥkam*⁴³¹ category. There is no reservation or disagreement regarding the reliability of *explicit* indications of

⁴²³ *Naṣṣ ṣarīḥ*; The explicit, outright word.

⁴²⁴ *Zāhir*.

⁴²⁵ *al-Sīrah al-'Uqalā'īyah*.

⁴²⁶ *al-Mumqāh*.

⁴²⁷ *al-Shāri'*.

⁴²⁸ *al-'Urfi*; Customary; related to the common way of using language.

⁴²⁹ *al-Taḥākumāt*.

⁴³⁰ See earlier footnote.

⁴³¹ Depending on the context, this can mean exact, coherent, or carefully done. It is likely that the usage of *muḥkam* here is juxtaposed with *mutashābih*, in which case *muḥkam* would arguably be a description that applies to verses which are straightforward *in a stand-alone fashion*, while *mutashābih* verses would require reading in light of the *muḥkam* verses to be properly understood.

meaning. As for *apparent* indications of meaning, they are also reliable for the purpose of understanding the Qur'ān. For Prophet Muḥammad did not invent a new method of communication in order to convey and deliver his aims. Rather, he spoke with his people based on their customary methods and styles of understanding and communicating. Had he adopted a different approach, then it would have become clear to us. For, indeed, he spoke in a clear Arabic language; he urged them to contemplate the Qur'ān; and he required them to put its teachings into action and to evaluate [alleged] reports [of his words, actions or silent approvals] by measuring them up against the Qur'ān. [...] ⁴³²

By establishing this mode of reading the Qur'ānic text (and the ḥadīth as well for that matter), the persuaded reader proceeds to make a methodological choice that repeats in every instance of reading scripture. The subject formed by this iteratively practiced technology of reading differs from the mystic who trains his/her mind to read for symbolic meaning by default. This is not to say that the customary legal-minded reading al-Ishkiwarī is referring to does not allow for figures of speech and symbolism, but it is to say that this mode of reading does not depart from customary rules of language usage unless there is a context clue, for instance.

In a similar vein, al-Ishkiwarī describes approaches to Qur'ānic exegesis and uses the aforementioned word “*ta'wīl*” to distinguish legitimate and illegitimate forms of interpretation. To summarize al-Ishkiwarī's discussion, the word “*ta'wīl*” can be used in different senses, some broader than others. When it is used in its more specific senses, it is used as opposed to the more generally accessible *exegesis* (*tafsīr*). For *exegesis* relies on common sense understanding of

⁴³² Al-Ishkiwarī, *al- 'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 67-68.

*apparent meanings*⁴³³, contemplation and *sequence of speech signification*⁴³⁴ to understand the Qur'ān and its instances of application. In the face of this reading, there is another form of reading that is learned from the reports of the Ahl al-Bayt (specifically, those appointed by God as Imams, according to Twelver Shī'ī belief). This *ta'wīl* (i.e. the *ta'wīl* as opposed to *exegesis*) includes two types of information: [1] identifying *applicability*⁴³⁵, in which instances of application are identified by Ahl al-Bayt's reports, without limiting the *generality*⁴³⁶ of an exegetical reading of the verses; and [2] the specific sense of *ta'wīl*, in which the ultimate meaning of the verses are identified through Ahl al-Bayt's exclusive knowledge (i.e. the *generality* of the exegetical reading of the verses is not maintained).⁴³⁷ This tree of possibilities is pivotal for understanding the strategies employed for the purpose of Mahdī-related subject-formation.

For based on this range of what can be called “*ta'wīl*,” the Qur'ān's verses can sometimes have a *generality* that applies in some sense to the Mahdī personality and at other times can be exclusively identified as referring to the Mahdī by citing Ahl al-Bayt's specific *ta'wīl* authority. For example, al-Ishkiwarī writes the following on Qur'ān 37:10,

[...] إِلَّا مَنْ خَطَفَ الْحَطْفَةَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ

[...] except one who snatches a fragment as a piercing flame pursues him.⁴³⁸

Al-Ṣadūq has reported that [Imam Ja'far] al-Ṣādiq said,

⁴³³ *Zuhūr*.

⁴³⁴ *Al-Dalālah al-Siyāqīyah*.

⁴³⁵ *Al-Jary wa al-intibāq*.

⁴³⁶ *Umūm*.

⁴³⁷ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 69-77.

⁴³⁸ Qur'ān 37:10

أما والله ليغيبنَّ عنكم مهديكم حتى يقول الجاهل منكم: ما لله في آل محمد حاجة

Indeed, [I swear] by God, your Mahdī will be hidden from you until the ignorant among you will say, “God has no need⁴³⁹ for the progeny of Muḥammad.”⁴⁴⁰

It is also reported that he said,

ثم يقبل كالشهاب الثاقب فيملأها عدلاً وقسطاً كما ملئت جوراً وظلماً

Then he will come like a penetrating star⁴⁴¹; he fills it with justice and fairness just as it has been filled with tyranny and injustice.⁴⁴²

This is all in addition to the chapter of *al-Qadr*; the gist of verses indicating the inevitability of the [Mahdī's] advent; the verses regarding [proactively] waiting [for it]; the verses discussing the nature of the conflict between right and wrong; and the verses discussing that final stop on humanity's [journey]. These indicate that the idea of the Mahdī is a Qur'ānic one, regardless whether the approach [to reading the text] is: *exegetical*, known through contemplation and the *sequence of speech signification*; or *ta'wīl*-derived [in a broad sense], known through the reports of Ahl al-Bayt either in the sense of *applicability* or in a sense of *ta'wīl* [exclusively identifiable by them].⁴⁴³

Whether taken in the sense of an exegetical *generality* that applies to the Mahdī or taken in the sense of an exclusive form of *ta'wīl* referring solely to the Mahdī, the reading of these verses becomes a moral technology forming a particular type of subject. The conceptual framework

⁴³⁹ Perhaps the person would think that since the Mahdī is not publicly identifiable then there is no Mahdī, there is no guided one from the progeny of Muḥammad to wait for. Thus, there is no Divine plan to be fulfilled by Muḥammad's progeny.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, 342.

⁴⁴¹ T: *Shihāb thāqib*.

⁴⁴² Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, 342.

⁴⁴³ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 77.

justified through *applicability* and/or *ta'wīl* makes the Mahdī a Qur'ānic concept and/or application for such a subject/agent.

5.3.4 Sunnah Authority Technologies

Al-Ishkiwarī moves on to discuss the differences between the Qur'ān and the Sunnah (the words, practice and tacit approvals of Prophet Muḥammad, generally speaking), how to establish the authoritative quality of the Sunnah, and addressing critiques to the Sunnah's epistemic instrumentality. Particularly noteworthy is al-Ishkiwarī's application of the discussion to the Mahdī ḥadīth reports. In this context, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 AH / 1406 CE) arises as a Sunnī authority criticizing the authenticity of the Mahdī-related reports accepted by the overwhelming majority of Sunnī as well as Shī'ī thought. Addressing Ibn Khaldūn's objection, al-Ishkiwarī writes,

The answer to this is two-fold:

- 1- So long as the claim to *tawātur*⁴⁴⁴ regarding the reports about the Mahdī holds its ground in effect,⁴⁴⁵ then there is no harm in entertaining unreliability when it comes to individual reports. In his *al-Idhā'ah*, al-Qinnawjī [(d. 1307 AH / 1890 CE)] has said,

لا شكَّ في أنَّ المهدي يخرج في آخر الزمان من غير تعيين لشهر وعام لما تواتر من الأخبار في الباب وأنفق عليه

جمهور الأمة سلفاً عن خلف إلا من لا يعتدَّ بخلافه

[...]

⁴⁴⁴ Wide-scale transmission beyond the [practical] possibility of collusion to lie by its transmitters.

⁴⁴⁵ *Al-Tawātur wa law ijmālan*. This appears to be a reference to “*al-tawātur al-ijmālī*” —knowledge that at least some of a given set of reports have surely issued from their purported source. See: Al-Muzaffar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, vol. 3, 82.

إن الشيخ صاحب الكفاية لم يتضح له تواتر الأخبار معنى، وإنما أقصى ما اعترف به "أنها متواترة إجمالاً" وغرضه من التواتر الإجمالي هو العلم بصدور بعضها عنهم (عليهم السلام) يقينا . وتسمية ذلك بالتواتر مسامحة ظاهرة .

إنكار ذلك جرأة عظيمة في مقابلة النصوص المستفيضة المشهورة البالغة حدّ التواتر

There is no doubt that the Mahdī will mobilize at the end of time – [but there is no evidence to claim that he will mobilize in a specific month and year. There is no doubt about this] for the reports in this regard are [*mutawātir*]; the mass of the community⁴⁴⁶ is in agreement on it, [the agreement being passed down from one generation to the next]⁴⁴⁷; [all agree on it] except for those⁴⁴⁸ whose disagreement is inconsequential.

[...]

To deny that would be [an expression of] grave insolence in the face of the abundant⁴⁴⁹, famous⁴⁵⁰ textual reports – [reports] which reach the threshold of *tawātur*.⁴⁵¹

2- The originator of the misconception – Ibn Khaldūn, that is – has said,

وهي كما رأيت لم يخلص منها من النقد إلا القليل

As you have come to see, none of the reports [about the Mahdī] are spared critique save a few [...]⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁶ *Jumhūr al-ummah*.

⁴⁴⁷ *Salafan ‘an khalaf*; [apparently, more commonly expressed *khalafan ‘an salaf*; that is, succeeding generation relaying from preceding generation].

⁴⁴⁸ *Man lā yu ‘taddu bi khilāfih*; That is, such individuals who disagree are either not scholarly authorities, or they have not had sufficient exposure to the sources in question and/or their disagreement does not harm the overwhelming evidence they are up against, even if they are scholarly authorities.

⁴⁴⁹ *al-Mustafīdah*.

⁴⁵⁰ *al-Mashhūrah*.

⁴⁵¹ Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Khān al-Qinnawjī (d. 1307 AH / 1890 CE), *al-Idhā‘ah Li-Mā Kāna wa Mā Yakūnu Bayna Yaday al-Sā‘ah*, ed. Bassām ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jābī, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2000 CE), 182-183.

⁴⁵² ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 AH / 1406 CE), *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, 4th ed., vol. 1, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.), 322.

This is an admission that there is no critique of some of [those reports about the Mahdī]. So what excuse do they have not to take the reports that are free from critique after his own admission in this regard.

Even if [for argument's sake] we are to accept Ibn Khaldūn's [assessment of] unreliability and authenticity, then we say the following: Indeed, he deemed four reports to be authentic out of a total of twenty three reports that he mentioned about the Mahdī.⁴⁵³

But this is not the last engagement with Ibn Khaldūn's critiques, for he will appear again with an objection to the Mahdī notion based on sociological realities on the ground in his day. What is of theoretical concern for this dissertation, however, is the strategy of the contemporary appropriation of Ibn Khaldūn's ḥadīth analysis in order to rebut Ibn Khaldūn's argument. An exhaustive analysis would examine each objection and response in order to detect variations in strategy, but it suffices for the demonstrative purposes of this case study to bring one such strategy to the reader's attention. For the modern subject awaiting the Mahdī, the contemporary synthesis incorporating objections from medieval authors allows for a (re)reading of that earlier literature by a newly formed subject, equipped with an eye for addressing objections that perhaps earlier readers lacked. For, indeed, their eyes have been trained differently – they have been formed differently due to the moral technologies they engage with.

5.4 Group Feeling (*'Aṣabīyah*) without Bigotry (*Ta' aṣṣub*)

As stated in the previous section, Ibn Khaldūn's objection to the Mahdī notion was not limited to the ḥadīth analysis of Mahdī-related reports. Rather, he also regarded the Mahdī as a

⁴⁵³ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al- 'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 97-98.

figure whose actuality comes under question according to his sociological analysis of potentially Mahdī-harboring communities. In the extended prolegomena to his multivolume work on history, Ibn Khaldūn fits the plausibility of a future Mahdī advent within his framework for the rise and fall of dynasties, a cycle that would reach its climax by harnessing the group feeling (*‘aṣabīyah*) of fellow descendants from the line of Fāṭimah, the daughter of Prophet Muḥammad. By applying his theory, he predicts that any future Mahdī (if the prophecy is true and arises from natural patterns) would be bound to emerge from within the midst of regions with strong networks of Fāṭimī descendants, whether they be from the line of Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī or Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī. Ibn Khaldūn writes,

والحقّ الذي ينبغي أن يتقرّر لديك أنّه لا تتمّ دعوة من الدين والملك إلاّ بوجود شوكة وعصبية تظهره وتدافع عنه من يدفعه
 حتّى يتمّ أمر الله فيه [...] وعصبية الفاطميين، بل وقريش أجمع قد تلاشت من جميع الآفاق ووجد أمم آخرون قد استعلت
 عصبيتهم على عصبية قريش، إلاّ ما بقي بالحجاز في مكّة وينبع بالمدينة من الطالبين من بني حسن وبني حسين وبني جعفر
 وهم منتشرون في تلك البلاد وغالبون عليها وهم عصائب بدوية متفرّقون في مواطنهم وإماراتهم وآرائهم [...]

And the truth that you should take away [from this] is that no call toward a religion or [reign of power] can be successful unless power and [group spirit]⁴⁵⁴ are available to support it [to victory] and defend it against those who reject it until God's will with regard to them is fulfilled. [...] The group spirit of the Fāṭimids and, indeed, that of all the Quraysh, has disappeared from all over. Other communities have appeared whose group spirit has gained the upper hand over that of the Quraysh. The only exception are the remaining Ṭālibids, Ḥasanids, Ḥusaynids, and Ja‘farites in the Ḥijāz – in Mecca – and al-

⁴⁵⁴ *al-‘Aṣabīyah*.

Yanbu‘ in Medina. They are spread over these regions and are preponderant there. They are Bedouin groups that are of diverging hometowns, dominions and opinions [...] ⁴⁵⁵

Hence, the grounds are simply not conducive to the Mahdī’s rise, according to Ibn Khaldūn’s view of natural conditions required for the rise of dynasties.

Al-Ishkiwarī presents Ibn Khaldūn’s objection and then responds with the following,

Firstly: The intrusion ⁴⁵⁶ of a scholar of history upon a specialization which is not his own – by deeming a [ḥadīth] report to be unreliable – is the utmost abomination ⁴⁵⁷. ⁴⁵⁸ It is even more abominable to accept [as authoritative] the statement of an intruder [upon an area which is not his/her specialization].

Secondly: This theory [of Ibn Khaldūn] itself requires evidence to be proven before it can be used to refute ⁴⁵⁹ something else.

Thirdly: It also requires evidence to prove its generalizability ⁴⁶⁰.

Fourthly: Is this theory adequate in explaining the movement of Prophets and Messengers?

Fifthly: It conflicts with the intuitive principle in Islam that views [unjust group spirit] ⁴⁶¹ as an abomination. ⁴⁶²

The reader thus follows a rebuttal consisting of criticizing Ibn Khaldūn for overstepping the bounds of his specialization, doubting the generalizability of Ibn Khaldūn’s sociological principle,

⁴⁵⁵ Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 1, 327.

⁴⁵⁶ *Tatafful* [...] ‘alā [...].

⁴⁵⁷ *Ghāyat al-qubḥ*.

⁴⁵⁸ The author is assuming that Ibn Khaldūn is not a specialist in ḥadīth studies.

⁴⁵⁹ Sure, Ibn Khaldūn can argue that he sees a pattern which his theory provides an explanation for, but this is not decisive proof that can refute other possibilities and matters his theory does not account for.

⁴⁶⁰ ‘*Umūmīyah*.

⁴⁶¹ *al-Ta‘aṣṣub*; Here used in the sense of group feeling/spirit that is regardless of *what is right*.

⁴⁶² Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 102.

questioning the extension of Ibn Khaldūn’s theory to Divinely ordained movements, and objecting to Ibn Khaldūn’s appeal to bigotry (*ta’assub*) for his theory despite the condemnation of bigotry in Islam. Perhaps Ibn Khaldūn might defend his theory by explaining that he is not recommending bigotry but merely describing what he reads as natural patterns that arise out of group feeling (which may or may not involve outright bigotry). Still, that would not address all of al-Ishkiwarī’s concerns. Regardless, these rebuttal strategies may or may not repeat enough to be considered moral technologies contributing to subject-formation. However, another concern makes this particular rebuttal of relevance to the discussion on subject-formation. In this final section of the chapter, I argue that Ibn Khaldūn’s notion of group spirit, with some modification, in the final analysis, can apply to the rise of an anticipated savior figure – provided an intervention by al-Ishkiwarī.

Ibn Khaldūn’s projection draws on the trends of dynastic rise and fall up until his day, relying heavily on (“actual” or) imagined blood relations to conjure the strongest sense of group feeling, but arguably can be adapted in light of modern subject formation that hones dispositions of group feeling in a more nuanced fashion. In other words, the sophistication of subject formation in modernity has conceivably provided alternatives to the role of blood relations in conjuring the group feeling required to bring about the rise of a group to power. Put differently, imagined blood relations have come to take on more elaborate dimensions of abstraction, albeit with similar effects to classical blood relations, warranting a revisiting of Ibn Khaldūn’s Mahdī-related prediction in light of modern subject formation. Persisting paradigmatic features of leadership at Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī crossroads, which this dissertation has tracked in cases between the 10th and the 13th centuries CE, provide the backdrop for modern Muslim subject-formation as it relates to Mahdī-figure anticipation. The resulting dispositions are significant in that they represent the basis for a

shared group feeling to be harnessed for a potential Mahdī movement, one that transcends (“actual”) blood relations to be more in line with an abstract, spiritual family.

This is not an invocation of city-dwelling-group feeling, which Ibn Khaldūn would consider weaker than Bedouin group feeling.⁴⁶³ Rather, it is a group feeling not confined by Ibn Khaldūn’s Bedouin/city-dweller dichotomy; it extends the abstraction of group feeling, justified by modernity’s subject-formation pervasiveness, in a globalized fashion. It is Ibn Khaldūn’s emphasis on deteriorated subject-formation in his reasoning that provides the basis for this reinterpretation/modification of his theory. For Ibn Khaldūn reasons that the comforts and luxuries of power do away with Bedouin character – not merely yielding urban life but also shedding off the resilience and group-feeling solidarity of the Bedouin. While Ibn Khaldūn’s observation might hold true, his explanation is problematic because it insinuates that deterioration of group feeling is the unavoidable consequence of luxury. In the final analysis, however, Ibn Khaldūn is precise only in characterizing that the cause for consolidation or deterioration of group feeling is directly linked to subject-formation. Whether luxury is a moral technology deteriorating group feeling or not is a question that depends on what other moral technologies are at play – what other character traits have already been cultivated and are being continuously maintained.⁴⁶⁴

Moreover, this abstraction is further justified by al-Ishkiwarī’s chapter 7 on “The Savior of the World Across Different Faith Traditions.” In that chapter, for instance, al-Ishkiwarī writes,

⁴⁶³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, vol. 1, 140.

⁴⁶⁴ Extending Hallaq’s critique from a recent lecture at an Ibn Khaldūn symposium in Istanbul. See: Wael Hallaq, “Affluence and Ethics from Ibn Khaldūn to Modern Capitalism” (5. Uluslararası İbn Haldun Sempozyumu, “İktidar, İktisadi Kalkınma ve Ahlak: Açmazlar ve Zorluklar” üst başlığıyla 27-28 Nisan tarihlerinde Başakşehir Yerleşkimizde düzenlendi., İstanbul: Ibn Khaldūn University, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRJs9_5fFbk.

ولكنّه مع اتّفاقهم على لابدئية المنتقد اختلفوا في مصداقه، هل هو العزيز، أم المسيح، أم هو من نسل الرسول صلى الله عليه

وآله وسلم، أم من نسل إبراهيم الخليل عليه السلام.

ومنشأ هذا الاختلاف هو الاختلاف في تأويل النصّ الديني بعدما كان متعرّضاً إلى الصفات العامّة على ما تقدّمت الإشارة

إليها، فحمل النصّ على أشخاصٍ خاصّين ليس ببعيد إذا كان ذلك بسبب العوامل السياسية، والتعصّب، والحبّ، والتأثر

العاطفي، والسعي إلى تسجيل المفاخر لأديانهم بعدما نصّت البشائر السماوية على كون المصلح ذا صفات عالية وكمالات

رفيعة جداً.

However, despite their agreement on the inevitability of a savior, [the concept of a savior], they disagree over [who that savior is,] the application of [that concept]. Is it Ezra⁴⁶⁵ or the Messiah? Is it someone from the lineage of the Messenger [of God, Prophet Muḥammad], or someone from the lineage of Abraham, God's friend?

The basis of this disagreement is the disagreement over interpreting the religious text – for the religious text outlines *general* descriptions, [much like] those referred to earlier. The application of [a given] textual description to specific persons is not a far-fetched occurrence when brought about by factors such as political [motivations], bigotry, love, emotional influences, and seeking to score points of pride for one's religion after [realizing that] glad tidings of Divine origins spelled out that the [savior]⁴⁶⁶ would have exalted attributes and intensely high forms of excellence.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ *al-'Uzayr*.

⁴⁶⁶ *Al-Muṣliḥ*; the reformer.

⁴⁶⁷ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-'Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 180-181.

While the title of the figure may differ, the anticipated reformer with the substantive qualities of bringing about justice and leading with the utmost forms of excellence, is a shared fatherly figure for a community of global proportions. By adopting a modified version of Ibn Khaldūn's theory, with group feeling extended in this fashion, al-Ishkiwarī would likely not mind considering group feeling to play a role in the rise of the Mahdī.

5.5 Subject-forming Technology vs. Super-imposed Ideology

Early on in this dissertation,⁴⁶⁸ I entertained a model that reads Islamic authors as viewing iteratively invoked lines of reasoning not to constitute full-fledged subject-forming technologies but, rather, merely viewing such lines of reasoning as ideologies super-imposed on other physical subject-forming technologies. The difference between the two models is that the first reads Islamic authors as viewing content to have an impact on a deeper core of a subject/agent as opposed to a superficial one that would dissipate with the subsiding of the physically subject-forming practices. One argument favoring the former model was that their portrayal of diametrically opposed behavior in subjects with competing lines of reasoning iteratively invoked (such as Yazīd's forces vs. Ḥusayn's forces in Karbalā'), fused with apparently the same physical practices of prayer and the like, fits more aptly with the assumption that the lines of argument themselves have the deeper efficacy. Another argument would appeal to the depiction of defectors who leave one camp to join another (such as Ḥurr ibn Yazīd who leaves Yazīd's camp at the last minute to join Ḥusayn)⁴⁶⁹. Such examples would suggest that the content's value and not merely the form of an argument iteratively invoked, were viewed as having an efficacy that is not replicated merely by iterative

⁴⁶⁸ See Chapter 1.

⁴⁶⁹ Chapter 1.

invocation of a physical form. However, I argue that a third interpretive model, reconciling the former two, better explains the outlook of authors from the “archive”: proposing that content deemed to be true (or content otherwise harmonious with human nature, *fiṭrah*), iteratively invoked, is subject-forming, while false content (or content otherwise unharmonious with the *fiṭrah*), iteratively invoked, is merely superimposed on physically subject-forming technologies. This interpretation fits well with textual evidence from the library of the authors examined in this dissertation, including Qur’ānic references.⁴⁷⁰

A final exercise of this dissertation is to bring to the forefront a contemporary insider analysis of this theoretical question, posed by al-Ishkiwarī in the context of identifying factors that lead the masses to be fooled by false claims. For the sake of demonstration, I will quote only two of the seven factors al-Ishkiwarī lists,

[...]

[2] الفقر، لكنَّ نفس الفقر ليس منشأً، وإمَّا المنشأ هو الإحساس بالفقر، والمظلومية، والحرمان وتسجيله واحتسابه على

المؤسسة الدينية، أو اعتبار أنَّ المؤسسة السياسية هي المؤسسة الدينية، أو الإحساس الموهوم النفسي.

[...]

⁴⁷⁰ For example, see:

Qur’ān 30:30; 39:53; and 75:14-15.

These verses appear to assume that there is an innate human nature surviving whatever damage may result from iterative invocations. This can be juxtaposed with verses indicating that those with truthful claims and consistent upright behavior are resilient in the face of typical causes of worldly fear and sorrow. For example, see:

Qur’ān 41:30; and 46:13.

[5] الهدم المنهجي للشخصية في الأفكار والمعتقد والقيم والسلوك، وذلك عن طريق التكرار والتقليد واستعمال أسلوب العقل

الجمعي، والانقياد الأعمى، والتلقين، وخلق روح التمرد على الروافد الفكرية.

[...]

[2] Poverty. But poverty itself is not the cause. Rather, the cause is: to feel poor, oppressed and deprived; to record it and blame it on the religious establishment; or to consider that the political establishment is the religious establishment; or [the cause is] an illusionary psychological feeling.

For, indeed, to feel poor – with a negative outlook – can be a cause for the infiltration of this thinking. This is done either: by pumping in masses of wealth and buying people’s souls; or by having poverty be an assisting factor in developing phony spiritual connections – even if only having a numbing effect; or by being incapable of fighting poverty [by eliminating] the natural causes [of poverty] – causing the person to seek out supernatural means, or natural means, in order to overcome [the effects of] poverty or to search for a patron to fight poverty, like a knight in shining armor.

[...]

[5] Systematic destruction of one’s personality – thoughts, beliefs, values and conduct. That is done by repetition, [blind] following, employing the tactic of the

herd mentality⁴⁷¹, blind compliance, indoctrination⁴⁷², and creating a spirit of rebellion against [true] intellectual sources.

[...] ⁴⁷³

This contemporary Islamic authority is clearly stating that false ideologies can fool the masses when coupled with such physical subject-forming technologies. Do the said factors lead to destruction beyond repair? Perhaps the notion of “systematic destruction of one’s personality” gives that impression. However, since the context is one of addressing a problem by identifying its causes, it is more likely that the author understands the false ideologies as being superimposed on the physical subject-forming technologies and not that the false ideologies are subject-forming on their own. Presumably, once such physical pressures are reversed, one would not be more attached to one ideology or another except due to inherently appealing features, such as truth. Thus, with true content, subject-formation due to iterative invocation is conceivable because of the natural affinity toward the true content. The recognition of true claims and systematically approaching matters in light of them affords a form of immunity, as al-Ishkiwarī argues.⁴⁷⁴

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has treated a case study on a text with technologies of subject-formation related to the Mahdī in Modernity, which in turn served as a case study for the broader thesis of this dissertation: Reconstructing Islamic thought debates on forms of leadership reveals paradigmatic features at Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ṣūfī crossroads, conceptual differences between which

⁴⁷¹ *al-‘Aql al-jam‘ī*; In a different context, this term might be used in the sense of collective intelligence.

⁴⁷² *al-Talqīn*.

⁴⁷³ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 202-203.

⁴⁷⁴ Al-Ishkiwarī, *al-‘Aqīdah al-Mahdawīyah*, 205-206.

can be modeled as intellectual subject-forming moral technologies or ideologies superimposed on physical subject-forming moral technologies. This archival reconstruction has demonstrated the two central contentions of this work by showing: the fact that and the means by which influential Islamic authors use conceptual frameworks/lines of reasoning in devotional contexts where they expectedly serve a subject-forming function; and that the discussions of leadership forms coalescing in the Mahdī of modernity reveal the centrality of subject-formation in an overarching, paradigmatic definition of “leadership,” wherever distinct from authority. Therefore, the concern of Islamic thinkers with forming moral subjects (starting from within) provides a convincing model explaining their employment of competing conceptual frameworks to satisfy paradigmatic moral requirements, on the one hand, and their authorial activity is one form among the different forms of this leadership which are distinct from authority and revolve around subject-formation, on the other hand.

The paradigmatic features of subject-formation related to the Mahdī in modernity forecasts future work on case studies supporting these findings and expanding the categorization of subject-forming strategies. Tentative implications of these findings relate to the classification of strategies employed, realizing their interdisciplinary and lasting relevance to understanding texts and communities interacting with those texts (in this study it has been about authors and readers but future research can examine how those texts are transformed into speeches, podcasts, short clips, art, ritual, etc...).

Conclusions and Counterarguments

Conclusions

In fairness to the content analyzed throughout this dissertation, a final conclusions section seems to me not only inevitably reductive but abusive to the aims of direct engagement with reconstructed material in each chapter. The conclusions section at the end of each chapter faces a similar dilemma, albeit perhaps to a lesser degree. There are also nuanced methodological interventions in the Introduction, and in footnotes, which would not be suitably conveyed if merely summarized here. But conclusions must be accounted for, even if only to coherently reign in the most representative threads of analysis in this dissertation. With this disclaimer, some of the key conclusions I can summarize are as follows:

-There were paradigmatic features shared by competing conceptual frameworks advanced by excerpts from Islamic authors examined between the 10th and 13th centuries CE. In particular, reconstruction of Chapter 1's historically-specific archives reveals *Ulū al-Amr* obedience as a form of "leadership," with a substantively *moral* requirement: either in the domain of *Ulū al-Amr*'s commands or in *Ulū al-Amr*'s qualifications or both. Potentially internalized Qur'ānic cross-references resonate well with the morality-embedded conceptual frameworks of Sunnī authors from this period. Based on the Qur'ānic references, it was not the notion of God's caliph requiring absolute obedience that would have been regarded as exogenous to the discursive tradition, but the requirement of absolute obedience even to immoral commands and/or from those lacking the Qur'ānic qualifications to be God's deputy, that would likely have been regarded as exogenous.

-Holistic surveying of Twelver Shī'ī (Imāmī) ḥadīth literature in Chapter 2 lends credence to the notion that the emphasis in the earliest extant sources identifying *Ulū al-Amr* was not on blood-

line/lineage in and of itself but on Divine selection, substantively based on whatever factors explain Divine action (e.g. humanly recognizable good/wisdom). Lineage would, thus, be better understood in such reports as an identifying feature only after the fact of Divine selection as people were directed to identify/recognize the Divinely intended *Ulū al-Amr* by the extent of their substantive merits as well.

-The classical Shī'ī reading arguably distinguished the absolute obedience to, and implied infallibility of, *Ulū al-Amr* of verse 4:59 from the lesser-of-two-evils compliance with administrative/military authorities expected more generally and lacking an implication of infallibility. But al-Ṣadr entertains another reading by repurposing a Sunnī line of reasoning to make the Shī'ī conclusion that *Ulū al-Amr* are to be identified by *naṣṣ* or Divine appointment.

-Chapter 3 discusses Sunnī conceptual frameworks that were notably distinct when compared to one another, let alone when contrasted with the Shī'ī notion of infallibility. For some, pressures outside the Sunnī collective formation of this period (but likely with earlier precursors as well) appear to have induced the adoption of conceptual frameworks particularly suited to privilege a perceived infallibility of that collective formation (i.e. via *ijmā'*). The diverse interventions, whether *by exception* or *by category*, can be modeled as sharing the attempt to eliminate error, thereby marking the development (if not uncovering of) a shared paradigmatic feature in Islamic thought on a form of “leadership” after Prophet Muḥammad.

-The Sunnī Ṣūfī cosmology of *awliyā'* allowed for the replacement of the living *quṭb* such that the world is never rid of one, while the Imāmī Shī'ī notion of the Twelfth immaculate Imam's long life during his incognito existence guaranteed the persistent presence-in-absence of the immaculate “leader” behind the scenes. The conceptualized exemplary nature of these envisioned leaders

reveals a more profound perceived need in the Islamic worldview that cannot be summed up in infallibility —continuity of impeccable guidance after Prophet Muḥammad.

-The moral technologies envisioned by Islamic authors as forming and being formed by the subject of their habitus ranged from ritual prayer and *Ulū al-Amr* obedience to the individual and social exercise of justifying the range of that due obedience. The significance of the latter moral technology is that its content, not only its form, is envisioned as having an influence on subject/agent-formation. Such conceptual frameworks, then, were arguably not conceived merely as political ideologies superadded to a physical exercise of sorts, but were arguably thought of as being essential to a different subject-forming exercise. Using the “library” Qur’ānic concept of resonance with human nature (*fiṭrah*) as an indicator of truth/falsehood, however, may better account for how these Islamic authors viewed the relationship between iterative invocation of conceptual content and otherwise physical technologies in different “archival” instances.

-Islamic authors used conceptual frameworks/lines of reasoning in devotional contexts where they likely expected them to serve a subject-forming function. Discussions of “leadership” forms, coalescing in the Mahdī of modernity, reveals the centrality of subject-formation in an overarching, paradigmatic definition of “leadership” (wherever distinct from authority). This arguable preoccupation provides a model for their employment of the aforementioned conceptual frameworks to satisfy paradigmatic moral requirements, on the one hand, and a model for considering their authorial activity as one form among the different forms of subject-forming “leadership.”

Entertaining and Addressing Potential Counterarguments

One potential counterargument pertains to demonstrating the link between conceptual frameworks and subject formation. Has this dissertation gone beyond merely asserting a link to actually showing convincingly that the link exists, and in a way specific enough to these case studies to be interesting? What specific modalities or mechanisms convincingly yield the supposed subject-formation? If one is to conclude that there is such a link, then a more convincing approach would thoroughly explore the variety of techniques at play.

Addressing this concern, I must underline my methodological choices in this project. It is crucial not to conflate the following two intellectual activities: (1) the writing of intellectual history regarding the ideas of historical actors; and (2) assessing the truth of the claims or presumed beliefs of those historical actors. In reference to a specific instance, the former exercise is more descriptive/analytical, while the latter is more prescriptive. The reality of subject-formation is not directly addressed here —this dissertation has aimed to be descriptive/analytical. It has modeled the interventions of historical actors as being motivated by a concern for subject-formation. As for an exploration into the actual mechanisms of subject-formation and testing relevant claims about their efficacy, that would be a prescriptive exercise requiring interdisciplinary research likely drawing on and/or embarking on new experiments in brain-related studies.

Another potential counterargument might raise a concern when it comes to the robustness of the model this dissertation proposes. If the Sunnī authors are modeled as developing different conceptual frameworks out of intellectual tensions surrounding the collectives they belong to and functioning to consolidate community formation via perceived subject-forming influence, then how does one explain the fact that Sunnī communities are not always divided along the lines of such frameworks? Sure, Sunnī communities may be divided along the lines of Ash‘arī vs. Mātūrīdī,

in terms of *kalām*, for instance, or Ḥanafī vs. Mālikī or Shāfi‘ī or Ḥanbalī, in terms of *fiqh*, but even granting such intellectual disagreements as being thought of as subject-forming and community-dividing, there are other theoretical disagreements that do not yield similar divisions. Had the model proposed been valid, one would expect conceptual framework differences of all kinds to engender — at least gradually — intense debate by authors convinced that their differences were subject-forming, and subsequently community-forming. For instance, the differences over *taṣwīb* and *takḥī’ah* discussed in Chapter 3 do not appear to be behind any significant ripples in the broader Sunnī community even after many centuries, let alone at the time such disagreements arose. Some may argue, then, that it makes more sense to explain their disagreements in the very specific terms of their social context as opposed to an overarching, seemingly essentialist, purportedly intellectual and psychological disposition.

This objection is, admittedly, partially valid. Conceptual *disagreements* among these types of Islamic authors may not necessarily yield parallel *divisions* in actuality. However, the potential for divisions exists, on the one hand, and, more importantly for my argument, the *perceived* potential expectedly exists —based on the “library” repertoire of these Islamic authors (see the Introduction) — on the other hand. Taking a step back, entertaining the model proposed in this dissertation requires a bit of rethinking the scope of community formation. The direct sphere in which the model proposed explains the behavior of the disagreeing Islamic authors is in the sphere of their more immediate intellectual communities. This means includes their peers, students, and others likely influenced. Only secondarily and indirectly does the model apply to the broader public. With this scope in mind, the disagreements do conceivably yield divisions, let alone that they are arguably perceived to do so by the Islamic authors in question.

As for the intermediaries through whom subject-formation is conceived to extend to the broader public, the orator (*khaṭīb*) has arguably been understood to serve in the capacity throughout Islamic history. An exhaustive account of such mediation and its manifestations would of course require a separate study. Regarding the suggestion to, instead, explain Islamic author disagreements in the more contingent terms of their social context, I also accept this partially. My claim has not been that modeling the behavior of these Islamic authors can be fully accounted for by reference to their shared, broader intellectual “library” alone. I have hoped to demonstrate through the debate reconstructions in this dissertation that there are layers to their libraries and that some of these layers can be described as more contingent, “archival” reflections of a sectarian social context. That being said, I do not claim that this suffices for an exhaustive account either. Instead, I argue that analyzing the intellectual history in this way reveals a model that an Islamic-minded author takes to be paradigmatic. Hypothetical departures from it can be reasonably explained as exceptions with convincing, historically contingent explanations. The fully robust, granular accounts examining influential social realities more closely will have to wait for many future studies enriched by the insights of scholars from multiple disciplines.

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A note on referencing “editors”: The process of *taṣḥīh* (including checking extant manuscripts and evaluating them when making edits, as well as some explanatory notes) by many of these editors, let alone the process of *taḥshiyah* and *ta’līq* (exegetical footnotes, sometimes developing into a book of its own), by some of them, problematize the insufficient “editor” characterization. These *muṣaḥḥihūn*, *muḥashshūn*, and *mu’alīqūn* are authors of metatexts to varying degrees, not merely editors.

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