Paradigmatic Criteria of “Leadership” in Islamic Thought:
Subject-formation at Sunnī, Shīʿī, and Šūfī Crossroads

Ali N. Moughania

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy under the Executive Committee of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2022
Abstract

Paradigmatic Criteria of “Leadership” in Islamic Thought:
Subject-formation at Sunnī, Shīʿī, and Ṣūfī Crossroads
Ali N. Moughania

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 Qurʾānic 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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, Shīʿī 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.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iii

Dedication ..................................................................................................................................... v

Preface ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 18

0.1 The Question .......................................................................................................................... 18

0.2 The “Empirical” Context: Islamic “Leadership” .................................................................... 19

0.3 Methodology and Sources ....................................................................................................... 23

0.3.1 Library and Archive ........................................................................................................... 24

0.3.2 “The Islamic” as a Discursive Tradition ........................................................................... 26

0.3.3 Training and “Voice” ......................................................................................................... 30

0.3.4 Historiography and Memory ............................................................................................. 34

0.4 Interpretive Framework .......................................................................................................... 44

0.4.1 Paradigm Theory ................................................................................................................. 44

0.4.2 Types of Authors ................................................................................................................ 45

0.4.3 Subject-formation ............................................................................................................... 46

0.5 Argument: “Leadership” and Subject-formation in Islamic Thought .................................... 53

0.6 “Library” Evidence ................................................................................................................ 55

0.6.1 Intellectual Technologies and Subject-formation .............................................................. 55
0.6.2 “Leadership” and Subject-formation ............................................................... 64

0.7 Outline of Chapters .......................................................................................... 67

Chapter 1: What’s in a Command? And Subject-formation ...................................... 69

1.1 Qurʾānic Moral Governmentality of Ulū al-Amr ............................................... 74

1.2 Sunnī Exegesis on the Obedience to Ulū al-Amr Verse ...................................... 81

1.3 Conceptual Technologies: The Obedience of Yazīd’s Soldiers .......................... 90

1.4 Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 96

Chapter 2: Leadership at the Periphery ................................................................. 100

2.1 Setting the Stage: Ulū al-Amr in Imāmī Shīʿī Exegetical Literature ................. 100

2.2 A Window into the Classical Reading: al-Ṭūsī’s al-Tibyān ............................... 103

2.3 Representative Survey of Early Imāmī Shīʿī Exegetical Literature on Obedience to Ulū al-Amr ................................................................................................... 108

2.3.1 Reports that Limit Ulū al-Amr to the Imāmī Imams Explicitly ......................... 110

2.3.2 Reports that Identify Ulū al-Amr with the Imāmī Imams but Do Not Explicitly Limit Ulū al-Amr to Them ........................................................................................................ 116

2.3.3 Reports that Specifically Name Ulū al-Amr ..................................................... 125

2.3.4 Miscellaneous Reports Featuring Distinct Qualities of Ulū al-Amr ............... 136

2.4 A Recent Shift: al-Ṣadr Entertaining Another Possibility ................................. 142

2.5 Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 148

Chapter 3: Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd and Infallibility-cum-Taṣwīb ........................... 150
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Complementing a Diachronic Survey of <em>Ulū al-Amr</em></td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 <em>Ulū al-Amr</em> as Ahl al-Hall wa al-‘Aqd.</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 A Genealogy of <em>Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd</em></td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Reconciling “Their <em>Amr</em>” of <em>Shārā</em> with “Our <em>Amr</em>” of Imamate</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Conclusion</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: The Axis of Excellence? Paradigmatic Requirements</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Setting the stage: ‘Alī, the Pivot Point of the Quern</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Shifting Emphasis in the Imam’s Role</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 The <em>Quṭb</em> in Şūfī Strands of Sunnī Thought</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1 The <em>Quṭb</em> in al-Tustarī’s <em>Tafsīr</em></td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī’s <em>Khatm al-Awliyā</em>’</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3 Subsequent Developments Consolidated in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s <em>Quṭb</em> and Immaculate Imam</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: The Mahdī in Modernity</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Leadership of Multiple Forms</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Qualities of the Mahdī</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Spreading Justice and Legal Interpretation</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 Presence-in-Absence</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Epistemological Technologies</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.1 Default Principle of Verification............................................................... 229
5.3.2 Practical and Theoretical Reason’s Technologies................................. 231
5.3.3 Qur’anic Exegetical Technologies............................................................ 233
5.3.4 Sunnah Authority Technologies............................................................... 238
5.4 Group Feeling (‘Ashabīyah) without Bigotry (Ta‘ṣṣub)............................ 240
5.5 Subject-forming Technology vs. Super-imposed Ideology........................ 246
5.6 Conclusion..................................................................................................... 249
Conclusions and Counterarguments ................................................................ 251
Conclusions.......................................................................................................... 251
Entertaining and Addressing Potential Counterarguments............................... 254
Bibliography....................................................................................................... 257
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 ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 95 AH / 713 CE).
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, Shīʿī 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 Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm 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 ḥawzah 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 ʿAlī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm and Jaʿfar al-Ḥakīm oversaw my customized, accelerated program of study in Najaf from September 2010 until June 2014. I benefited from conversations with Muḥammad ʿAlī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm in the Shaykh al-Ṭūsī Mosque, right outside the final resting place of Imam ʿAlī, 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 ʿAlī is buried next to Adam and Noah, and that Hūd and Šāliḥ are two additional prophets who neighbor him not too far away—in the aforementioned cemetery. Jaʿfar 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
Ībrāhīm Nūr al-Dīn, and the late Ḥasan Baḥr al-ʿUlūm. 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-ʿUlūm 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 Ībrāhīm Nūr al-Dīn’s residence, and later at the Lebanese madrasah, the weekly Baḥr al-ʿUlūm
office barrānīdīwān 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 Ḥaider, ‘Alī
al-ʿAydíbī, Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥīnī, Nazīh ‘Alāmah, Ṭalāl Qāzān, Qāsim Dāwūd, Aḥmad al-Durr,
Muṣṭafā Sa’d, ‘Abbās Ṭabājah, Ḥusayn Rumayfī, Riḍā Sulaymān, Bāqir Baḥṣūn, Qāsim Ḥijāzī,
ʿAlī Shaḥādah, Wāʾil al-Ḥājj, Nadīm Ḥāmid, ʿAlī Ayyūb, ʿAlī al-Khaṭīb, Jawād Niʿmah, Riyād al-Ḥujjah, Zayd Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Ḥaydar Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, Jihād al-Asadī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Najafī and the late Ḥāshim al-Amīn. In Jaʿfar 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 ʿAbbās al-Marayānī and ʿAbd ʿAlī 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 mubāḥahah (peer-led study sessions), I would like to mention Muḥammad Ḥusayn Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, ʿAlī 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 ʿAlī Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, the late Muḥammad Baḥr al-ʿUlūm, 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 ʿAbbās Kāshīf al-Ghiṭā, a notable heir of the Kāshīf al-Ghiṭā scholarly family, in the process. During that year, I also benefited from weekly lectures by Ḥāmad Kāshīf 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-Marājiʿ 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 Isḥāq al-Fayyāḍ, Bashīr al-Najafī, and the late Muḥammad Saʿīd 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-ʿUlūm, 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 Ḥamd al-Ishkiwārī’s ‘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 ḥawzah 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-ʿUlūm helped facilitate my travel to Iraq and Amjad Riyāḍ was kind enough to arrange my stay at the Najm al-Aʿimmah madrasah for that period. He also facilitated meetings for me to discuss my academic pursuits and relevant texts with hawzah 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-Istiqrāʾ, 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 hawzah teacher, apparently for the first (and hopefully the last!) time in my life. I mention this to highlight the unassuming reaction of Ghazwān al-Khuzāʾī 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-Aʾimmah*, 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 ḥawzah 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-ʿUlūm office and I was asked to translate in the meeting between Jaʿfar 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 Hammed, Nora Jacobsen Ben Hammed, 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 ʿAbd Allāh Shuʿaytū, the family of Muḥammad Zabad and Mariam Nasser, Ibrāhīm Ḥudruj, Maryam Śāliḥ, and the late Maryam Ṭabājah —Malak’s grandmother who we lost so soon after her late grandfather, ʿAbd 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 ʿĀmil (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 bedridden 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 ʿUsaylī, 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, Shīʿī 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 10\(^{th}\)-13\(^{th}\) 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, Shīʿī 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. “Shīʿī” 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 Shīʿī examples, regardless whether different descriptors are used to refer to the same substantive epistemic approach (e.g. "'irfān" for the mystical approach in Shīʿī 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’anic 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 "Ṣūfī" label is more widely accepted (and arguably mainstream, when it comes to sharīʿah-compliant Sufism) in Sunnī circles than is in Shīʿī circles (where even the label "irfān" is not as rooted in the reverent memory of Shīʿī circles as "Ṣūfīsm" is in Sunnī circles). It is also noteworthy that Muslims across the Sunnī/Shīʿī divide would identify with some of the experiences associated with “Ṣūfism”/“Irāfān” 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 “Shīʿī” often apply beyond Twelver Shīʿī circles, whenever there is substantial divergence among “Shīʿī” groups my usage of “Shīʿī” throughout this study refers to the Imāmī, Twelver Shīʿī, who represent the overwhelming majority of Shīʿism today.

⁴ To be discussed in Chapter 1:

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.

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 (*salāfīn* and *umarāʾ*) and is applied to the first two caliphs (Abū Bakr and ʿUmar), 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-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd*), and modernist works, allowing for, “different kinds of authority, particularly religious, moral and political, to be encapsulated within it.” 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. 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. 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 Shi’ī 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

---

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-hall wa al-āqad.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

this concept that the Imāmīs began to look deviant.” Of course, the point to be taken from this statement is the weighty emphasis on Imamate in Imāmī Shīʿīsm, not that the Imam is literally a Prophet. In this dissertation, I focus on the subsequent period, but attempt to follow the development of conceptual frameworks at Sunnī, Shīʿī, 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 Shiʿī 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.” 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 Shīʿī 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

---


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

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’anic 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 Ḥawzah al-ʿIlmiyah 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 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 *Sharīʿah 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 shariʿah-related histories of each, respectively. Messick further describes the difference between the two in terms of the “author-

---

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 Qurʾān 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

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 Qurʾān).

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.” 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.” This approach to texts is especially conducive in the historical anthropologist (or intellectual historian informed by ethnography) 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.” 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.
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.” 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.” 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.’” 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.”

Neither essentialist, nor nominalist, the object of an anthropology of Islam, being a “tradition,” ought to include and relate itself to its “founding texts.” For Asad, a tradition is made up of discourses that inform practitioners regarding the proper form and purpose of a given
practice, which naturally has a history, projected future and intervening/interconnected present.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{31} Asad concludes that Islamic traditions are, thus, not homogenous but that they, “aspire to coherence, in the way that all discursive traditions do.”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, 21.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 22.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 23.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} 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.”

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

28
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.” 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.” 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/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-ʿilmīyah* \(^{36}\) 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


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 Shīʿah Muslims pursuing traditional religious learning. The ʿḥawzah 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 ʿḥawzah al-ʿilmīyah 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 ʿḥawzah al-ʿilmīyah community has concentrated hubs of intellectual activity centered around historical holy sites, most notably the shrine of Imam ʿAlī in the holy city of Najaf, Iraq, and the shrine of Lady Fāṭimah Maʿṣūmah (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 ʿilmīyah” 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 ʿḥawzah community, and foster an atmosphere of intellectual rigor and spirituality. Members of the ʿḥawzah 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 ʿḥawzah scholar/student. To some extent, this even applies to written or oral license/authorization (*ijāzah*) of ijtihād 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 ʿḥawzah. To sum up a key point here, the word ʿḥawzah is used to describe: a specific local institution of traditional Twelver Shīʿah 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. 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. Still, at the very least, it can be said that playing it safe with regard to this methodical requirement speaks for itself. 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-ʿUlūm) 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 Shīʿī Islam. See:


Slightly disagreeing with Nakissa, I would argue that the notion of “innovation” is not synonymous to “bidʿah” (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 Shīʿī 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.”


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.” The parallel notion to historical memory in the Islamic tradition is *tawātur*, “a report so widely transmitted as to leave no possibility of

---

collusion to fabricate a lie.”

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.” 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 contested 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.”); 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 (tashāʿur).

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.
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 Shīʿī Islam’s formative period, exploring the contribution of Ibn Qiba al-Rāzī’s (writing before 285/898) to Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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,” 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

---


48 Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 123.
by “indisputable external evidence.” 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


Although these appeals arise in the context of discussions about the historicity of Imam-appointments in Shīʿism (nāṣṣ) 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 Muʿtazilah, 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 signs\(^{50}\) of the Prophet, may God bless him and his Family and grant them peace, other than the Qurʾān\(^{51}\), 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 signs\(^{52}\). 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 Jaʿfar ibn ʿAlī 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 Qurʾān. Also apparently implying that, while the Qurʾān’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. 

\(^{54}\) Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 161. 

\(^{55}\) Modarressi, *Crisis and Consolidation*, 154. 


Ibn Qiba provides a useful analogy on page 154. 

external/internal evidence overrules such claims to historicity (e.g. claims of those preferring others over ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib), Ibn Qiba 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].

A “special characteristic,” imaginably external evidence or internal incoherence/inconsistency can thus dispel the myth of a received narrative. Ibn Qiba 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.”

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

---

56 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 167.
57 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 167.
58 Tawqīf.
59 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 208.
This provides a historiographical point of caution in mining the Qurʾān for historical data. Thus, approaching the Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān as external evidence, as well as to derive internal evidence from it, for much of the Qurʾān there must be an interpreter of sorts, a “mutarjim,” who “expounds” it, “who knows and quotes what God intends.”

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 self-contradictory, vain contentions.” Ibn Qiba considers rivaling claims and invites his interlocutors to resolve internal inconsistencies. 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.

---

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Nī’ mah, 100.

60 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 210.

61 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 212.

62 For example, Ibn Qiba asks his Zaydī interlocutor to explain the alternative to the Imāmīyah requirement of nass and the non-Shīʿī requirement of Ahī al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd selection of the Imam.


63 Also, for example, “It is impossible for a living person to install a dead person as his successor and to delegate the Imāmāte 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.

Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Nī’ mah, 121.
falsehood." Ibn Qiba also makes an invitation to “test” claims about historical occurrences by comparing and contrasting the narratives in light of the recorded evidence, referring to the overall picture painted about the impact of certain personalities as external evidence of qualities they had.

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 [...]

Furthermore, Ibn Qiba refers to the “habit” of uncritically taking the word of transmitters as a culprit behind the rise of disagreement. 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.”

---

63 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 212.
64 Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Nī' mah, 103.
65 Ibid, 104.
66 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 219.
67 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 221.
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.” 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.” 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. From

---


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 Yaʾqūb Isḥāq al-Nadīm’s (d. ca 438 AH / 1047 CE), “direct connection between the Islamic Civilization’s appropriation of the ancient sciences and ʿAbd al-Malik’s reforms which were mainly centered around the order to translate the *dīwān*.”

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.”

---

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\textsuperscript{74} – data obtained from biographical dictionaries, fahāris, historical works, quotations in other works, catalogues of manuscripts and many other sources,” to that end.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{74} Historia de los Autores y Transmisores de al-Andalus.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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. “Ṣūfī”) 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.”

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

---

additional type of author: (5) The “analogical” author, who brings new life to a subversive author’s appeal, with updated relevance.\textsuperscript{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 […]”\textsuperscript{79} For, in the most relevant sense here, “Foucault was a thoroughgoing Ghazālian.”\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Iḥyāʾ 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.”\textsuperscript{80} One testament to this paradigmatic quality is that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} Wael B. Hallaq, \textit{Restating Orientalism : A Critique of Modern Knowledge} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 171-175.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Hallaq, \textit{The Impossible State}, 129.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
centuries later, the Shīʿī scholar Muḥsin al-Kāshānī (d. 1091 AH / 1680 CE) publishes his recension of Ghazālī’s text, mainly editing/replacing what conflict with the Shīʿī school of thought, which he claims Ghazālī had embraced at the end of his life.\footnote{Muḥsin al-Kāshānī (d. 1091 AH / 1680 CE), al-Mahājjaḥ al-Baydāʾ Fī Tahdīb al-Iḥyāʾ, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, vol. 1, 8 vols. (Beirut: Manshūrāt Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 1983 CE), 1.}

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.”\footnote{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-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=38988&site=ehost-live&scope=site, 17-18.} 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
of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{epimelešthai} * \textit{sautou}, “to take care of yourself,” “the concern with self,” “to be concerned, to take care of yourself.”\textsuperscript{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.

\textbf{C.2. Habitus}

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

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid, 18.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid, 19.
\textsuperscript{85} It appears that the usage of the word \textit{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 \textit{al-Ḥurūf}, al-Fārābī’s commentary on Aristotle’s \textit{Metaphysics}, he writes,

\textit{... وَأَوْلَى مَا يَفْعَلُ شَيْئًا مِن ذلِكَ يَفْعَلُ فِيهِ بِقُوَّةٍ ذَلِكَ وَإِمَّا نُشِئَت مَعْتَرَفَتْ هُدًى قَبْل ذلِكَ وَلا مَكْرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلِيلٌ...  }

\textit{[...] 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.}


Another early instance of \textit{malakah} usage in this sense is in \textit{Tahdhib al-Akhlaq wa Taṯṭīr al-Aʿrāq} by Aḥmad Miskawayh (d. 421 AH / 1030 CE) who writes,

\textit{وَتَبَّأَ أَيْضًا أنَّ الْهُيْثَةَ الَّتِي تَصْدَرْ عَنْهَا الأَفْعَالَ الْعَادَلَةَ مِنْ نَسِبَتِهَا إِلَى صَاحِبِهَا سَمِيتَهَا فَضْلَةً، وَإِذَا نَسَبَتِهَا إِلَى مِنْ يَعَالِهِ مَا سَمِيتَهَا عَدَالَةً، وَإِذَا}

\textit{اعْتِبَرَتْ بِذَلِكَ سَمِيتَهَا مَلَكَةَ نَفْسَانِیَةٍ [...]

Thus, it has also become clear that the condition (\textit{hayʾah}) 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). In the context of virtue/vice, these active conditions are, “certain kinds of choices, or not present without choice.” (1106a). 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). In a broader context, examples of habitus range from virtues/ves 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.

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*) […]


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.

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.”

Therefore, although habitus goes beyond the notion of habit, developing habits of sorts – including the experience and time associated with learning “habits” of mind – can be a stepping stone toward a habitus. 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.”

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), 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.


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.

which his own notion of *habitus*, a system of structured, structuring dispositions, explains those conditions of possibility. 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.

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). In the interest of coherence, then, I adapt a qualified version

---

95 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 52.
96 Ibid, 53.
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,

فَوَرَبّي السَّماءَ والأَرضَ إِنَّهُ لحََقٌّ ميثلَ ما أَنَّكُم تَنطيقونَ

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. 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.

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 learned 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,

\[\text{ابن شعبة الحرازي عن الحسن بن علي العسكري قال} \text{[رياضة الجاهل وَرَدُّ المعتادي عن عادتيهي كالمعجز.}\]


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-\(\text{\textasciitilde}{ta}\)\(\text{\textasciitilde}{abbud}\)) and servitude (al-\(\text{\textasciitilde}{\text{u}b\ddot{u}\text{i}y\text{a}h}\)) 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, qutb 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 Qurʾān is that it resonates with an accessibility the Qurʾān invites its readers toward, without sacrificing a holistic reading or dismissing the value proffered by generations of commentary on the Qurʾān. The approach here is, thus, a qualified version of what has been called tafsīr al-Qurʾān bil-Qurʾān, an attempt at which can be found in the multi-volume al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (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),

هوَ الَّذي أَنزَلَ عَلَيكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنَهُ آيَاتٌ مُّكَمَّاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذينَ فِي قُلوبِهِمِ الزَّيْغُ فَيْتَبَيعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِيْتَةَ وَابْتِغَاءَ التَّوْلِيهَ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَوْلِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذينَ يَسَاءُونَ لِلَّهِ وَالرّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنّا بِكُلٍّ مِّن ذَٰلِكَ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو أَلْبَابِ

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 ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40 AH / 661 CE), where in the context of addressing superficially perceived contradictions in the Qurʾān, ʿAlī 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 عقل تنتفع به […]

After hearing all of the questioner’s perceived contradictions in the Qurʾān, ʿAlī proceeds to address them. Toward the end of the report, ʿAlī 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 والضعف، ولأن منه ما يطاق حمله ومنه ما لا يطاق حمله إلا من يسهل الله له حمله وأعانه عليه من خاصة أوليائه […]


When I write that the approach I take is a qualified version of what has been called tafsīr al-Qurʾān bil-Qurʾān, 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 Qurʾān explain one another, as described in the aforementioned report attributed to ʿAlī.
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 in it, in pursuit of mischief and in pursuit of its taʾwil. But no one knows its taʾwil 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.

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/semblance between different matters. This can mean different things, depending on the context. In some contexts, mutashābih describes the consistency between the verses of the Qurʾān (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 Qurʾānic 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-Ṭabarānī, al-Mīzān Fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān, 20 vols. (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 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 taʾwil and its significance in Chapter 5 of this work.
107 Qurʾān 3:7.
The verse makes it clear that being among “those firmly grounded in knowledge (al-rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm)” 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 taʾwīl), 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 Qurʾān 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,

أَم خُلِقْتُمْ مِن غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الخَلِّيْقُونَ [...]

58
[...] 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,

أَمَّا أَتَّجَُّوا مِن دُونِهِ آلهَةً فَلَهُمْ بِهَا بُرَاهَّمُكُمْ [...]

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 god110, 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,

وَمَن يَدعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا آخَرَ لا يَهْرُنَّهُ إِلَّا فِي جَسَابَةٍ عَدَدَ رَيْبٍ إِنَّهُ لا يَتَقَلِّبُ الْكَافِرُونَ

108 Ibid, 52:35.
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] will not be felicitous. 113

112 Al-Kāfirūn (sing. al-Kāfir; an agent performing the act of kufr): 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’ānic contexts, which may at times overlap. Muhammad Husayn al-Ṭabarānī (d. 1981 CE) writes, “the apparent meaning of kufr in the Qur’ān is ‘covering up (al-satr),’ in a sense that is inclusive of the terminological usage of kufr [e.g. that demarcating boundaries for legal purposes] as well as the unqualified sense of kufr as opposed to unqualified faith…”


A much earlier reference within the exegetical tradition, attributed to the sixth Shīʿī Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 AH / 765 CE), quotes him describing five aspects (awjah; sing. wajh) of kufr in the Book of God (i.e. the Qurʾān): (1 & 2) the kufr of stubborn rejection (juḥād), 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 kufr of [in]gratitude toward blessings; (4) the kufr of abandoning that which God has commanded; and (5) the kufr of disassociation [from that which displease God].

[In the Qurʾān is ‘']

[In the Qurʾān is ‘’]

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] will not be felicitous. 113
This Qurʾānic 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.\textsuperscript{114} It is a Qurʾānic 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.

\textsuperscript{114} Qurʾān 23:117


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

\textsuperscript{113} Qurʾān 23:117

\textsuperscript{114} See also, for instance: Qurʾān 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. 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. 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),

أَفَمَن كانَ عَلىٰ بَيّينَةٍ مِن رَبّيهِ كَمَن زُيّينَ لَهُ سوءُ عَمَليهِ وَاتَّبَعوا أَهواءَهُم

---

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-husn wa al-qubh al-aqliyan) and/or textual arguments, such as Qur’an 4:98-99.

إِلاَّ المُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنِ الرَّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالوَلَّادَانَ لاَ يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حَيَّةً وَلاَ يَهْتُدوُنَ سَبِيلًا فَأُولِئِكَ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَن يَعفُو عَنْهُمْ وَكانَ اللَّهُ غَفورًا غَفِيرًا

See:
Al-Anṣārī (d. 1281 AH / 1864 CE), Farāʿ id al-Uṣūl, 23rd ed., vol. 1, 4 vols. (Qum: Majma’ al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 1438 AH), 575-576;
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?\textsuperscript{117}

Additional references\textsuperscript{118} 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,

\begin{quote}
قُل هَل نُنَبِّئُكُم بِالْخَسَرَانِ أَعْمَالًا

الذين ضل سعيهم في الحياة الدنيا وهم يحسبون أنهم يحسنون صنعًا
\end{quote}

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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{117} Qurʾān 47:14
\textsuperscript{118} See, for example, Qurʾān 6:43; 8:48: 9:37; 16:63; 27:24; 29:38; and 35:8.
\textsuperscript{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,

بِأَيَّامِ الْحَق ۖ إِنَّا نُزِّيِّحُكُمْ ۖ إِنَّا نَصْرُوهُمْۖ إِنَّا نَحْدِثُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ مَلَكُ إِلَّٰهِكُمْ مَلَكُكُمْۖ إِنَّهُ مَلِكُ عَزِّ الْأَزْوَاجِ ۖ إِنَّهُ مَلِكُ عَزِّ الْأَزْوَاجِ

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
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 verses\(^{122}\) and love of God in yet others\(^{123}\), 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,

\[\text{وَالمُؤمينونَ والمؤمناتُ بعضًا بعضاً أَولِييَّاً} \text{ بعضًا يأَمُرونَ بِإِلَّمَ وَمَعَهُ وَيَنهَونَ عَنَّى المَكَرَ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤُتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطَاعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسولَهُ أَوَلِييَّ نَحْيُونَ بِهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ}
\]

\(^{121}\) Ibid, 66:6
\(^{122}\) For example, Qur’an 8:24; 13:20-24; 16:30-32; and 20:75-76.
\(^{123}\) For example, Qur’an 3:31; 2:195; 2:222; 3:76; 3:134; 3:146; 3:159; 5:42; and 5:54.
\(^{124}\) For example, Qur’an 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 alms\textsuperscript{125}, and obeying God and His Messenger. They are those upon whom God will have Mercy. Truly God is Mighty, Wise.\textsuperscript{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 God\textsuperscript{127} and thereby forgetting themselves.\textsuperscript{128} Forgetting themselves is the opposite of caring for themselves, the antithesis of forming the prescribed moral subject.\textsuperscript{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,

\[ ...\]

Every individual among you is a shepherd/caretaker and every individual among you is responsible for his/her flock/subjects […]\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{125} Zakāt.
\textsuperscript{126} Qur’ān 9:71
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, 9:67
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, 59:19
\textsuperscript{129} See also Qur’ān 2:44.
\textsuperscript{130} See, for example:
Al-Bukhārī, \textit{Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī}, vol. 8, 104;
Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī (d. 261 AH / 875 CE), \textit{Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim}, vol. 6, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 8;
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 10\(^{th}\) and 13\(^{th}\) centuries CE, these archives reveal paradigmatic features of various forms of leadership (e.g. Ṣulṭān al-amr, mujtahid, ahl al-ḫall, imam, and quṭb). Chapter 1 describes the Qurʿānic 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 Shīʿī tradition, the following report also uses the same language of “care” (riʿāyah), allowing for two potential types of subject formation, as implied by the distinct consequences stated.

\(^{132}\) 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 reader. One of commonly cited library references on this is the ḥadīth attributed to Prophet Muḥammad, in which he states,

---

al-Bukhārī, Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī, vol. 1, 2;
morality, if not outright *infallibility*, and intellectual merit of a leading imam. Chapter 2 classifies exegetical ḥadīth literature from the Shīʿī 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 Quṭb is analogous to the Shīʿī 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, Shīʿī 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 jurists\(^{134}\) in tune with the Qurʾān 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-Kāfī, vol. 2, 104.

\(^{134}\) The categories of ṣāḥib/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.

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 “Sharīʿah world” 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 Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm 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 Shīʿat-ize (make Shīʿī) 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-Baydāʾ (the Pure Path) as Iḥyāʾ al-Iḥyāʾ (Reviving [al-Ghazālī’s] Reviving) and, perhaps more relevant here, Tahdhīb al-Iḥyāʾ (Refining [al-Ghazālī’s] Reviving). 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 (ʿawām) as well as the initiated (khawāṣ), al-Kāshānī states the subject-forming deficiency of al-Ghazālī’s Iḥyāʾ.

---

136 See Qurʾān 3:31; 5:48; 42:13; and 45:18. Addressees are described as each having been prescribed a shariʿah path as a test allowing for positive competition in doing good deeds. Disagreements are to be addressed by God beyond this world. Prophet Muhammad is told to follow his prescribed Sharīʿah and those who love God are told to follow Muhammad 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.)

أظهره في كتابه المسمى بسرّ العالمين وشهد به ابن الحوزي الخليلي – كان قد فاته بيان ركن عظيم من الإيمان، وهو معرفة الأئمة المعصومين الذين جاءت الوصية بتلمسانهم بالقرآن 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 ʿAbī ʿAbdullāh 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 Iḥyāʾ 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 ʿAbī ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad al-Jawzī al-Ḥanbalī, al-Mantāzam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿĀṭa, Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿĀṭa, and Naʿīm Zarzūr, 2nd ed., vol. 17, 19 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyyah, 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 “Sīḥṭ (grandson through one’s daughter)” of Ibn al-Jawzī. Taking this possibility seriously, and since Yūsuf, Sīḥṭ 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, Sīḥṭ 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 Muhammad regarding ʿAlī as mawla during the event of Ghadīr 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 Sīḥṭ Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanafī, Tadhkirat al-Khwāsī, ed. Ḥusayn Taqī Zādah, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols. (Beirut: Markaz al-Ṭibāʾah wa al-Nashr lil-Majmaʿ al-ʿĀlamī lī Ahī 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 Master\textsuperscript{139} of humans and genies – may the blessings of God shower upon him and them – to hold onto them along with the Qur‘ān […]\textsuperscript{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-moral\textsuperscript{141} 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 to\textsuperscript{142} Ulū al-Amr (those vested with the Amr\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{139} This is referring to Prophet Muḥammad.
\textsuperscript{140} al-Kāshānī, \textit{al-Maḥajjah al-Bayḍā’ fī Tahdhīb al-Iḥyā’}, vol. 1, 1.
\textsuperscript{141} For the purposes of this work, I do not delve into a distinction between the moral and the ethical.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{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 Qurʾān itself can be useful to consider as potentially connected. I am not so much claiming to present an exegesis of the Qurʾānic verse in question through other Qurʾānic verses, but more so drawing attention to potentially internalized connections made by those familiar with the entire Qurʾān.144 This serves as a window into the sharīʿah-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-Qurʾān bil-Qurʾān.
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 Qurʾān. 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 Qurʾānic verses. The demonstration that follows brings to the fore the connection of *Ulū al-Amr* to broader indications of the Qurʾānic Amr. If Qurʾānic usages of the same word (Amr) were internalized as meaningfully interconnected\(^{147}\), 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 Qurʾān,

---


\(^{147}\) This will become clear by noting the similar phrases/meanings in different verses of the Qurʾān, with each subsequent verse adding a different attribute or layer of meaning.
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 Qurʾān.

Verse 83 of the same chapter reads,

> وَايذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مّينَ الأَمنِّ أَوْ الخَوْفٍ أَذَاعُواْ بْهُ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَّا الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَّا أُولِي الأَمْري مِمْهُمْ لَعِلْمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبيطُونَهُ مِمْهُمْ وَلَوْلاَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لاَ بَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَليلاً

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.\(^{149}\)

---

\(^{148}\) Qurʾān 4:59

\(^{149}\) Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān, highlights the cosmological, metaphysical, physical, moral and/or legal domains of *Amr*. Chapter 7 reads,

\[
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثًّا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأيَّامِهَا إِنَّهُ خَلْقٌ وَأَمْرٌ تَبَارَكَ الْرَّحْمَانُ
\]

Indeed, your Lord is God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days\(^{151}\), 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.

\(^{151}\) In the sense of time periods, not necessarily equivalent to 24 Earthly hours.

\(^{152}\) Qurʾān 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,

وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا واحِدَةٌ كَلْمَةً بِالبصَّرِ

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 something\(^{154}\) related to His *Amr* unto whom He wills among His servants. As verse 2 reads,

يُنَزِّلُ المَلائِكَةَ بِإِلَٰهِي عَلَىٰ مَن يَشَاءُ مِن عِبَادِهِ أَن يَتْبَغَّوا أَنَّهُ لا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اِنْتَقِمُونَ

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 أَئِيآمًا يَهْدُونَ بِأيَمَريناَ وَأَوَحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فَغَلِبَنَّ الْحَيْبِرَاتِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَإِيَاتَ الزَّكَاةَ 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.\textsuperscript{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 “*lanāʾ ʿābidīn* (servants to Us / worshipping Us)” in a distinct sense. The *Amr* of God in relation to Imams appears again in Chapter 32,

\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{156}Qurʾān 21:73
\end{center}

When they had been patient and had conviction in Our signs, We appointed amongst them imams to guide [the people] by Our *Amr*.\textsuperscript{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 Qurʾān’s revelation and, “*khayr min alf shahr* (better than a thousand months).” Chapter 44 reads,

\begin{center}
\textsuperscript{157}Qurʾān 32:24
\end{center}

\begin{center}
إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كَانَ كَلاَمُنَا مُنْفِرَةٌ

فيَهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ
\end{center}
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 sending. 

Chapter 97, the Chapter of al-Qadr, sheds further light on the connection between the Qurʾān’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,

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. 

Coupled with verse 16:2, quoted earlier, a reader familiar with the entire Qurʾān would have potentially seen connections between those associated with Amr and the annually descending angels during Laylat al-Qadr. Rather, it is not far-fetcht that assume, in light of this interconnectedness, that sharīʿah-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 Shīʿī conceptions of a living Quṭb/Imam. 

---

158 Qurʾān 44:3-5
159 Qurʾān 97:3-4
160 See Chapter 4 of this work.
At least for the purposes of this chapter, however, it is likely that *sharīʿah*-minded subjects, familiar with the entire Qurʾān (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 Qurʾān 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 Qurʾān. 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*, *Shīʿī* 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 *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwil Āy al-Qurʾān* by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH / 923 CE). Al-Ṭabarī lists a number of interpretations for the intended “*Ulī al-Amr,*” who are to be obeyed, according to verse 4:59. These include: [1] *al-Umarāʾ* (commanders/governors); [2] *Ahl al-ʿIlm wa al-Fiqh* (those of knowledge and deep understanding; i.e. the ʿulamāʾ, the fiqhāʾ); [3] *Aṣḥāb Muḥammad* (the companions of Muḥammad); [4] Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Al-Ṭabarī then states his position on the verse, understanding *Ulū al-Amr* to mean commanders/governors,

وأولِ الأقوال في ذلك بالصواب قول من قال : هم الأمراء والولاة ، لصحة الأخبار عن رسول الله (ص) بِلأمر بطاعة الأئمة

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

إذا كان معلوما أنه لا طاعة واجبة لأحد غير الله أو رسوله أو إمام عادل ، وكان الله قد أمر بقوله: *(أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي منكم)* بطاعة ذوي أمرا ، كان معلوما أن الذين أمر بطاعتهم تعالى ذكره من ذوي أمرا 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.
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 us; 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-Ṭabarî 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-Ṭabarî 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-Ṭabarî, in his *Tashīl al-Naẓar wa Ta’jīl al-Zafar*, ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Māwardî (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-Māwardî’s *al-Aḥkām al-Ṣulṭānīyah*, however, makes it evident that obedience to this group is qualified,

\[
فَرَضَ عَلَيْنَا طَاعَةَ أُولِي الأَمْرِ فِيِنَا وَهُمْ الأَئِيمَةُ الْمُتَأَمَّرُونَ عَلَيْنَا. وَرَوَى هِشَامُ بْنُ عُرْوَةَ عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ:* (سَيَلَيْكُمْ بِعَدْيَيْنَا وُلاَةٌ فَسَيَلَيْكُمْ الْبَرَّ بِيَبْرُيْهِيَ، وَسَيَلَيْكُمْ الْفَاجِرُ بِيُفُجُوريَهِ، فَأَسْمِعُوهُمْ وَاعْتَبْرِؤُوهُمْ، فَإِنْ أَحْسَنُوا فَلَكُمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ وَإِنْ أَسَاءُوا فَلَكُمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ)*
\]

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

---


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 sharīʿah 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-Ahkām al-Salṭānīyah wa al-Wilāyīt al-Dīniyah, 2nd ed. (Sharikat Maktabat
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 Ashʿarī 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.

ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE) makes a passing remark in his Ghiyāth al-Uمام 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-Uمام seems to reveal al-Juwaynī’s more precise interpretation of those vested with Amr as the ‘ulamā’. Al-Juwaynī writes,

وَمَعَامِلَةِ الْعُلَمَاءِ فِي أَمْرٍ ما يَأْتِي وَيَذَرُ، فَإِنْهُمْ قُدْوَةُ الْأَحْكَامِ وَأَعْلَمُ النَّاسِ، وَوَرَثَةُ النَّبِيَّةِ، وَقَادِئَةُ الْأُمَّةِ، وَمَفَاتِيحُ الْهَدْى، وَمَصَابِيحُ الدُّجَى، وَهُمْ عَلَى الحَقِيقَةِ أَصْحَابُ 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 “ʿalā al-ḥaqiqah Aṣḥāb al-Amr” (in reality those to whom the Amr belongs) seems to indicate the same meaning as

168 Or truly.
169 Al-Juwaynī, Ghiyāth al-Uمام, 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 (maʿṣūm).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.
Know that when God says, “and Ulū al-Amr from among you,” in our opinion this indicates that the consensus (ijmāʿ) 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 [...].

Al-Rāzī dismisses the Imāmī Shīʿī 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,

وَنَحْنُ نَعْلَمُ بِلَمْ يُنَظِّرَ آنَا مَا زَمَانِهِمَا هَذَا عَاجُزُونَ عَنْ مَعْرِفَةِ الْإِمامَ الْمُعْصِمِينَ، عَاجُزُونَ عَنْ الْوَصُولِ إِلَيْهِمْ، عَاجُزُونَ عَنْ عِفْرَادُهُمْ

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

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-ʿaqd*. Chapter 2 and 3 demonstrate how Shīʿī interlocutors engage with their Sunnī counterparts on this verse’s implication of infallibility. This partly reveals a shared paradigm, even when the “central” Sunnī domain relegates Shīʿī 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.
177 Ibid.
178 For a contemporary example, see Tabāṭabāʾī’s *al-Mīzān* 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. ṭulamāʾ; 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 Shīʿī) 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 Shīʿī 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.”

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 ʿUqbah (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). There are thus, at least, two opposing schemes of obedience in

\[180\] Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, vol. 4, 381.
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 ***sharīʿah***-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’. 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,

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. 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:

For example:

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 “ṯāʾah” (obedience) and sticking to the “jamāʾah” (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 أعلني تحرض الناس أنحن مرقنا وأنتم ثبتم عليه أما والله لتعلمن لو قد قبضت أرواحكم ومتم على أعمالكم

أين مرق من الدين ومن هو أول بصلي النار

O ʿAmr 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.\(^\text{183}\)

Al-Ṭabarī recounts this as a prelude to ʿAmr ibn al-Ḥajjāj attacking Ḥusayn and his companions with the right flank of Yazīd’s army (commanded by ʿUmar ibn Saʿd). After some time of combat, “the first of Ḥusayn’s companions,” Muslim ibn ʿAwsajah, is said to have fallen.\(^\text{184}\) 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-Ṭabarī reports that one of Yazīd’s men by the name of Kaʿb ibn Jābir, after killing Burayr ibn Khudayr, 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.\(^{185}\) Kaʿb is quoted saying,

\[\text{فأبلغ عبيد الله إما لقيته } \text{باني مطيع للخليفة } \text{بأني مطيع للخليفة samo} \]

[…] So tell ʿUbayd 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,

\[\text{با رب إنا قد وفينا فل تجعلنا يا رب كمن قد غدر.}\]

O’ Lord, indeed we were loyal, so do not make us, O’ Lord, like those who have betrayed.\(^ {187}\)

In other words, Kaʿb 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 riyaḍah desensitizing the subject to the immoralities underlying their decisions. By such an account, al-Ṭabarī reinforces the image that the guise of sharīʿah-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

---


\(^{186}\) Al-Ṭabarī, Ṭārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk, vol. 4, 329.

\(^{187}\) Ibid, 330.
of ‘Āshūrā’. In his *Mızān al-Iʿtidāl*, al-Dhahābī (d. ca 748 AH / 1348 CE) reports that Abū Bakr ibn ‘Ayyāsh (d. ca 194 AH / 810 CE) relayed that Abū Isḥāq al-Sabīʿī (d. ca 127 AH / 745 CE) said,

كان شمر يصلى معنا ، ثم يقول : اللهم إنك تعلم أنني 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 فلنا كنا شرا من هذه الحمار [الشَّقَّاء].

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 tall donkeys.”

---

188 This is likely the correct word as opposed to “al-suqāh,” if the word “ḥumur” is a plural form of “himār” (donkey). For an “ashaqq” horse is a tall horse. The feminine form of “ashaqq” is “shaqqāʾ.” Hence, the non-āqil plural (e.g. donkeys) would be referred to as “shaqqāʾ.” See: Ismāʿīl ibn Ḥammād al-Jawhari (d. 393 AH / 1003 CE), *Tāj al-Lughah wa Sīḥāḥ al-ʿArabīyah*, ed. Ṭāhir ʿAbd al-Ghafūr Ṭāṭṭār, 4th ed., vol. 4, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-ʿIlm lil-Malāyīn, 1987 CE), 1503.

However, if the word “ḥumur” is a plural form of “aḥmar/hamrāʾ” (red), then it is possible that Shimr is describing the complexion of servants who served as “suqāḥ” (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 “aswād” (black), which referred to a mostly [intensely/darker] black complexion. On these distinctions, see: Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Dhahābī (d. ca 748 AH / 1348 CE), *Sīyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*, ed. Shu’ayb al-ʿArnaʿūṭ, 9th ed., vol. 2, 23 vols. (Beirut: Muʿassat 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.”\textsuperscript{189}

Ibn ’Asākir (d. 571 AH / 1176 CE) reports a similar account in his \emph{Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq}, but includes several additional figures in his chain of transmission.\textsuperscript{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 \emph{shari‘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 \emph{shari‘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 (\emph{tahdhīb/tazkiyah}), of


self-care, into its antithesis. 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 shari‘ah-minded sentiments, is not the same as one lacking such appeal. The latter was arguably doomed to be self-defeating in a shari‘ah-minded community, one in which the shari‘ah had become embedded as a way of life. For any chance at being effective, deviation from the shari‘ah morality would still have required at least lip-service to the shari‘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 “maʿrūf” assumed by the former peripheral view and the central domain is not assumed by the latter peripheral view. Sunnī and Shīʿī 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 sharīʿah (if only for lip service).

The historicity of this central domain for the temporality of ʿĀshūrāʿ is justifiable to the extent that the Qurʿānic, sharīʿah-minded world had taken its toll on a core sphere of influence within the broader community (at least if we assume the Qurʿānic 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 ʿĀshūrāʿ 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 sharīʿah-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

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 Qurʾān 4:59, it is arguably through a reconstruction of peripheral reception of this verse in Shīʿī 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 Qurʾān, 4:59, where the requirement of obeying Ulū al-Amr is spelled out,

ٌنا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ أَطِيعُواْ اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كَنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ الَّذِي خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلٌ

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 مّينَ الأَمْني أَوي الخَْوْفي أَذَاعُواْ بيهي وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إيلََ الرَّسُولي
وَإيلََ أُولِي الأَمْري مين ْهُمْ لَعَليمَهُ الَّذيينَ يَسْتَنبيطُونَهُ مين ْهُمْ وَلَوْلاَ

فضل الله عليكمَ ورحمةُ لأخبتحم السُّبْطان إلََ قليلاً

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 riḥāḍah,

¹⁹³ Qurʾān 4:59
¹⁹⁴ Qurʾān 4:83
honoring 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 ʿulamāʾ; 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 interlocuters 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 Shīʿī thinkers of their day. To what extent has a dialectic between the Sunni center and the Shīʿī periphery informed the paradigmatic feature revealed in Chapter 1? In this chapter, I compile a representative survey of early Imāmī Shīʿī exegetical literature on *Ulū al-Amr*, and then examine a more recent departure from the classical Shīʿī 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-Ţūsī’s *al-Tibyān*

As I will cite in the next section, extant Imāmī exegetical ṣaḥīḥ literature appears to portray *Ulū al-Amr* as specifically referring to the twelve designated Imams from Prophet Muhammad’s household/progeny (i.e. Imam ʿAlī, 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 (*maʿṣūm*), 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-Shāfīʿī (d. 204 AH / 820 CE), is reported to have said the following when commenting on verse 4:59,

[...] فأمراً أن يطيعوا أولي الأمر الذين أمروهم رسول الله، لا طاعة مطلقة، بل طاعة مستنذة، فيما لهم وعليهم، فقال: "فإنَّكم تنظرعون في شيء، فعليكم إذا اختلفتم في شيء، فعليكم أنه كيلاقن الله، إن شاء الله - إن شاء الله، كما قال في أولي الأمر، إلا أنه يقول: "فإن تنظرعون "، يعني - والله أعلم - في أمرهم، فأمرهم، فأمرهم، فأمرهم، فأمرهم، فعلى الله والرسول "، يعني - والله أعلم - إنك فاجئتم في شيء، فإن أثّر الله والرسول عنه إذا وصلتم، أو من وصل منكم إليه. لأن ذلك الفرض الذي لا متنازع عليه، لأن الذي لا متنازع عليه، عما كان يقولونه، ولا مثمومية إذا قضى الله ورسوله أمرًا أن يكون كلم الخير من أوليهم [*الأحزاب: 36.*]

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 Shi‘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 أبِ جعفر وأبِ عبد الله (ع) أُظم الأئمة من آل محمد صلى الله عليه وآله فلذلك أوجب الله تعالى طاعتهم بالاطلاق، كما أوجب طاعة رسوله وطاعة نفسه كذلك . ولا يجوز اتباع طاعة أحد مطلقا إلا من كان مصوصا مأمونا منه السهو والغلط ، وليس ذلك بحاصل في الامراء ، ولا العلماء ، وإنما هو واجب في الأئمة الذين ذلت الأدلة على عصمتهم وطهارتهم ، فاما من قال المراد به العلماء ، فقوله بعد ، للان قوله ( وأولى الأمر) معناه أطيعوا من له الأمر ، وليس ذلك للعلماء ، فإن قالوا : يجب علينا طاعتهم إذا كانوا معتقدين ، فإذا عدلوا عن الحق فلا طاعة لهم علينا . قلنا : هذا تخصيص لعموم اتباع الطاعة لم يدل عليه دليل . وحمل الآية على العلوم ، فبين يضج ذلك فيه أول من تخصيص الطاعة بشيء دون شيء كما لا يجوز تخصيص وجوب طاعة الرسول وطاعة الله في شيء دون شيء . قوله : ( فان تنازعتم في شيء فروده إلى الله والرسول ) فمعنى الرد إلى الله هو إلى كتابه والرد إلى رسوله هو الرد إلى سنته . وقول مجاهد ، وميمون بن مهاران
This excerpt from al-Ṭūsī directly follows his summary that *Ulū al-Amr* have been interpreted (by leading non-Shīʿī authorities) to be either the *umārāʾ* (commanders and governors) or the *ʿulamāʾ* (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 *umārāʾ* or the *ʿulamāʾ*; rather, they are necessary in the Imams whose immaculateneas and purity has been established by the evidence.”

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 *ʾismah* (immaculateness/infallibility) in the *Ulū al-Amr* (something some Sunnī scholars, such as

197 Translation from excerpt above.
Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, later argue\textsuperscript{198}, 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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{as well as} to \textit{Ulū al-Amr}) and given that the aforementioned Imams \textit{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 \textit{Ulū al-Amr}, and al-Juwaynī (d. 478 AH / 1085 CE), identifying \textit{Ulū al-Amr} with

\textsuperscript{198} Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, \textit{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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 Qurʾān—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 (\(\text{zāhir/zuhūr}\)) conventional usage accessible to one sufficiently familiar with Arabic language usage.  

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-ʿAyyāshī*. According to the recent Imāmī exegesis authority Muḥammad Ḫūsain al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1981 CE), Imāmī authorities have praised and passed down the exegesis work attributed to Muḥammad ibn Masʿūd ibn ʿAyyāsh (d. ca 320 AH / 932 CE), otherwise known as al-ʿAyyāshī, ever since it was written. In those (approximately) 11 centuries, according to al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 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.  

Finally, I have also included a limited number of references to *al-Iḥtiyāj* by al-Ṭabrisī (d. ca 6th century AH / 12th century CE), not as much as an authoritative reference 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 Shīʿī scholar, discussing them not in terms of his Shīʿī affiliation but in terms of a legal theory (\(\text{uṣūl al-fiqh}\)) on approaching constitutional texts.


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:

an elaborate application of the Qurʾānic cross-referencing approach to interpreting the multi-dimensional “Amr”\(^\text{204}\) (as seen in Chapter 1) and its bearing on the identity of Ulū al-Amr.\(^\text{205}\)

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


\(\text{204}\) See the category 4 report referenced from al-Iḥtijāj.

\(\text{205}\) Ulū al-Amr, according to this Qurʾānic 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:

This report includes the phrase, "He meant us, specifically (iyyānā '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 Jaʿfar [Muḥammad al-Bāqir] (d. 114 AH / 733 CE). The plural first person in Shīʿī hadīth 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


See also:
broader sense. The explicit and exclusive indication comes from the word “specifically (khāṣṣah).” Hence, when the report merely says, “He meant us (iyyānā ʿaná),” 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-Shāfīʿī. For while al-Shāfīʿī 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-Shāfīʿī in an earlier form circulating at the time. If the argument was known to al-Shāfīʿī 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-Shīʿī, it remains an early Shīʿī response to al-Shāfīʿī.

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 Shīʿī 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.
الحسن بن محمد عن علي بن الحسني بن علي القلني في الكافي عن

عن يزيد العجلاني قال سألت أنا جعفر - عن قول الله عز وجل: إن الله يأمركم أن تؤدوا الأمانات إلى أهلها وإذا
حكمتم بين الناس أن تحكموا بالعدل.» (النساء: 58) قال إبنا عن أن يؤدي الأول إلى الإمام الذي يغنه الكفث والعلم
والبتلاع. » (وإذا حكمتم بين الناس أن تحكموا بالعدل.» (النساء: 58) الذي في أيديكم ثم قال الناس: » (يا أيها
الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم.» (النساء: 59) إبنا عن خصاصة - أمر جميع المؤمنين إلى يلزم
القيامة ببطاعتنا - فإن حكمتم تنازعًا في أمر فرّقوه إلى الله وإلى الرسول وإلى أولى الأمر منكم كذا نزلت وكيف يلزمون
والنساء: 60) (أتطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم.» (النساء: 59) 208

الصدوق في كتاب هادئ عن علي [208]...

[الصدوق في كتاب هادئ عن علي ... فانشدكم الله عز وجل. أنعلمون حيث...
نزلت "يا أيها الذين آمنوا أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم." (النساء: 59). وحليت "إبنا وليكم الله ورسوله
والذين آمنوا الذين يقيمون الصلاة ويتون الزكاة وهم راكعون" [المائدة: 55]. وحليت "وهم يبتغون من دون الله ولا

208 Al-Kulaynî, al-Kāfî, vol. 1, 276. This report is almost identical to the latter part of the previous one, including the same exclusive description identifying Ulû al-Amr as the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt.
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 Shīʿī belief that the early Muslim community knew ʿAlī to be the designated trustee/guardian/successor of Muḥammad, despite ʿAlī 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

---

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).

الطربي في الاحتجاج عن علي] إنَّ الله ذو الجلال والإكرام لما خلق الخلق واختار خيرة من خلقه واصطفى صفوة من عباده
وأرسل رسولًا منهم وأنزل عليه كتابه وشرع له دينه وفرض فرائضه ، فكانت الجملة قول الله - جلَّ ذكره - حيث أمر فقال
: « أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولِي الأمر منكم » [النساء: 59]. فهو لنا أهل البيت خاصة دون غيرنا . فاقتنى على
أعقابكم وارتدتم ونقضتم الأمر ونكلتم العهد ومَّن تضرؤ الله شبيها ، وقد أمركم الله أن تردوا الأمر إلى الله وإلى الرسول وإلى أولي
الأمر منكم المستنبطين للعلم فاقترب أُمَّٰهم جَمَّدَم [...]

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 Shi‘ī tradition), seemingly allowing for an inclusion of Fāṭimah, Prophet

Muḥammad’s daughter, in addition to the Imams. Besides the commonly held Shi‘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 Explicitly 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 وأولئك الامر منكم ) [النساء: 59]؟ أوما علمتم ما جاءت به الآثار مما يكون وحدثت في أمتكم [عن] الماضين والباقين منهم عليه السلام ؟ أوما رأيتم كيف جعل الله لكم معاقل تؤون إليها ، وأعلاهما تحتون بجا من لدن آدم عليه السلام إلى أن ظهر الماضي عليه السلام ، كلما غاب علم بدأ علم ، وإذا فهم طلع نجم ؟ فلما قبضه الله إليه ظننت أن الله تعالى أبطل دينه ، وقطع السبب بينه وبين خلقه ، كان ما كان ذلك ولا يكون حتى تقوم الساعة ، وينظر أمر الله سبحانه وهم كارهون . وإن الماضي عليه السلام مضى سعيدا فقديما على منهاج آبائه عليه السلام حدو النعل بالنعل ، وفينبا وصيته وعلمه ، ومن هو خلفه ومن هو يسد مسده ، لا ينارعنا موضعه إلا ظلم 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.
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 Shīʿī 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 Hasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260 AH / 874 CE), apparently via a note in his handwriting.213 In the letter, he reminds the

---

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 Shiʿah regarding the, “khalaf (the posterity/descendant [of the eleventh Imam, Abū Muḥammad, Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (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, “Nāḥiyah (literally, ‘region/area/side,’ but in Twelver Shiʿī 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-khaṭṭīhi (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 ʿAmr Uthmān ibn Saʿīd al-ʿAmrī (d. ca 265 AH / 879 CE) and Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān al-ʿAmrī (d. ca 305 AH / 918 CE), both of whom had reportedly been designated trusted agents during Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī’s lifetime. For instance, see:
Al-Ṭūsī, al-Ghaybah, 290; 356; 362-363; and 366;
Shīʿah of how the situation at hand had already been anticipated in the Shīʿī 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-ʿAskarī 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 Qurʾān 33:21 and Prophet Abraham in Qurʾān 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-ʿAskarī’s lifetime. How was this meant to be understood by the early Twelver Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 ʿUthmān al-ʿAmrī is quoted as saying that a statement was issued (by the 12th Imam), “bi-khaṭṭin aʿrifuhu (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 ʿUthmān was sure to be associated with the 12th Imam. Either way, however, it was apparently not the handwriting of Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān 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).


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 Shīʿī circles, it is not far-fetched that an analogical application to the caliphate is being alluded to here by the 12th Imam. A scholarly Shīʿī 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.

\[\text{الكليني في الكافي عن } [\text{علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن ابن أبي عمير عن عمرو بن أذينة عن يزيد بن معاوية قال } ‘\text{علّي أبو جعفر}']\]

\[\text{ع: } [\text{أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولى الأمر منكم }][\text{ النساء: } 59] \text{ فإن خلفم تنازعوا في الأمر فוצרים إلى الله وإلى الرسول وإلى أولي الأمر منكم ثم قال كيفي يأمر بطيعتهم ويرخص في مازازتهم إنما قال ذلك للذين أذن اللهن }[\text{ فإن خلفم: }][\text{أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول }][214]^{214}\]

\[\text{Al-Kulaynî, } \text{al-}\text{Kāfī, } \text{vol. 8, 184-185.} \]

It is noteworthy that two similar reports appeared in category 1. However, because this report does not use the phrase, “\text{iynyā ʾanā khâṣṣah},” I have included this report in category 2.

119


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 Shīʿī sense) and employs the methodology of explaining Qurʿānic verses by cross-referencing other Qurʿānic 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.


منكم، قال: هي في علي وفي الأئمة جعلهم الله مواضع الأنبياء غير أنهم لا يحلون شيئا ولا يحرمونه. 218

في سماهم إلى آخرهم. (ع) 217

على 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 يحلون شيئا ولا يحرمونه. 218

الذي عرفهم أنتمكم وقادتمهم حين جحدهم الناس. 219

Although the report identifies the application of Ulū al-Amr in the persons of the Shi'i Imams, it does not explicitly limit the application to them.
218 Al-'Ayyāshī, Taṣfīr al-'Ayyāshī, vol. 1, 252.
الكليني في الكافي عن أحمد بن محمد عن علي بن الحكم عن الحسن بن أبي العلاء قال ذكرت لأبي عبد الله قولًا في:

الأوصياء إن طاعتهم مفروضة قال فقاتل نعمهم ألدبن قال الله تعالى *( أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولى الأمر وعمن يعمنكم الجنوديَ تكونون.)


221 Al-Kulaynî, al-Kāfī, vol.1, 189.
[...] وقال عزَّ وجَلَّ: *(أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولى الأمر منكم)* [النساء: 59] وقال عزَّ وجَلَّ: *(ولوْ رَذَّوه إِلَى الله وإِلَى الرَّسُول وإِلَى أولِي الأَمْر مِنْهُمْ)* [النساء: 83] فرَّت الأَمَرُ أمَرَ الناس إلى أولِي الأمر منهم الدين أمر بطاعتهم وبالغة إليهم فلما رجع رسول الله ص من حجة الوداع نزل عليه جبريل عَفْقَال* (بِا يأَبَّهَا الرَّسُولُ تَبْلُغُ ما أَنْرَلْ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُنَّ إِنَّمَا تَتْلَعَّبْنَ رَسُولُ الله وَالله يَعْصِمُكُم مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ الله لا يَهْدِي الْقُوُمَ الْكَافِرِينَ)* [المائدة: 67] فنادى الناس فاجتمعوا وأمر بسيمَرات فقم شُوَكُهُنَّ ثم قال* (يا أَيَّهَا النَّاسُ مَنْ وَلِيُّكُمْ وأَوْلِي بِكُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَقُلْ لَهُمْ شَفَائِي وَلَا تِفْعَلُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمْ رَبّي إِنَّمَا أَنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ عَلَى الْحَقِّ مِن نِّعْمَةٍ مِن رَبِّكُمْ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ دَينُ مَا كَانَ مِن قَبْلِهِ إِلَّا أَنَّ هَذَا إِنَّمَا هُوَ الْعِلْمُ الْأَكْبَرُ)[...]

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 ʿAlī as the guardian (mawlā) of the people.223

[الكُلِئْيِنَّ في الكافي عن] على بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن ابن أبي عمرو عن حمزة بن حكيم عن أبي عبد الله عَفْقَال فَلُذَّ إِن أَنْكُحَمَ النَّاسَ فَتَخْتَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِفَرْوَانِ الرَّسُولِ وَأُولِيَّ السَّمَاعِ وَأُلْوَى الْأَمَرِ مِنْهُمْ [النساء: 222]

223 Sunnī reports also generally confirm this event but interpret it differently.
This report sheds light not only on the citation of 4:59 as part of a Shi‘ī argument in the early ḥadīth literature, but also alongside a number of other verses that the Shi‘ī utilized in sectarian debates. Still, the report indicates a recognition of anti-Shi‘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 Shi‘ī
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

Besides the earlier representative reports that name them.
فكان عليّ والحسن والحسين وفاتحة ع فأدخلهم رسول الله ص نع الكعبة في بيت أم سلمة ثم قال اللهم إن لي كلّي
نبيًا أهلًا وقائلًا وعولائم أهلًا نبوي وICLES فأدخلت أم سلمة النبي من أهل البيت فقال إني إلى خير ولكن هؤلاء أهلتي وثليًا فلمنا
فليست رسول الله ص كان عليّ أول الناس بالناس لكونه ما بلى فيه رسول الله ص وإقامته لداني وأخذته بيد أم سلمة
ثم رأى رسول الله ص أنه إنالهم وداعًا و قال اللهم إن لي كلّي نبيي وأهل وث قلي وأناه وث يتيه وث قلي و
فقالت أم سلمة إن لي كلّي أهلي وإلي وث يتيه وث قلي و لم يكن ينطوي عليه ولم يكن يفعل أن يدجح تحديد بن عليّ ولا
العباس بن عليّ ولا [واحد] من ولده إذا كفق الحسن والحسن إن الله نباني وداعًا و كان أظل فيهما كما أظل فيهما
أمر بطاعتيك كما أمر بطاعتيك وبلع فتيد 값을 رسول الله ص كما يبلغ فيك وذاهب عن النبي كنا أذهبه علفًا فلم
يكن يجعله ذلك والله غزً ودخل يقول: * وأنوا الأرحام بغضهم أولي يبغض في كتاب الله * (الأحزاب: 6) فيجعلها في
ولده إذا كفق الحسنين أمر الله بطاعتيك كما أمر بطاعتيك وطاعة أبيك وبلع في رسول الله ص كما يبلغ فيك وفي أبيك وذاهب
الله عليه النبي كنا أذهب عنه وعن أبيك فلم صارت إلى الحسنين ع لم يكن أحد مهليه ينطوي عليه كنا كان هو يدعي علي أبيه وعلى أبيه لو أرادنا أن يصرفا الأمر عنه ولم يكون لينطوي فلا صارت حين أظلمت إلى الحسنين
فجزي تأولِ هذه الآية: * وأنوا الأرحام بغضهم أولي يبغض في كتاب الله * (الأحزاب: 6) فلم صارت من بعده الحسن
علي بن الحسن ثم صارت من بعده علي بن الحسن إلى محمد بن علي فقاتو رسول الله مبنى على النبي وداو نباني

See also:
I have included this lengthy report in its entirety, without excerpting, because it includes several features of what becomes known as the Imāmī Shīʿī 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, Hasan 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-Arhām (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, 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-Arhām are awlā with regard to one another. Hence,

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 Ḥasan 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 Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, in which he emphasizes the Divine amr/command, as opposed to age.


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

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.
Here one finds a report that includes a specific directive from the Prophet Muḥammad to his notable companion Jābir ibn ʿAbd 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 Shīʿah 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 الهلال: قال: سمعت عليا عليه السلام: يقول ما نزلت على رسول الله آية من القرآن
لا أقرأنيها واملأها علني فاكتسبها مخلي وعلمني تأويلها وتفسيرها وناسخها ومنسوخها ومتشابها ومتضمنها، ودعا الله لي أن يعلمني فهمها وحفظها فما نسبت آية من كتاب الله ولا علمها ناسخا علني فاكتسبها مخلي على ما دعا لي وما [نزل شيء] علمه


129
الله من خلال ولاء حرمة، أمر ولا يغيب، أو يكون من طاعة أو معصية إلا علمه وحققه، فلم أنس منه حرفًا واحدًا، ثم وضع يده على صدري ودع الله لي أن يملأ قلبي علمًا وفهمًا وحكمة ونورًا، وأنني شيطانًا وأني فتني شيء، لم أكن، فقالت: يا رسول الله آتوني النسبين فيما بعد؟ فقال: أيوسفر علىك النسبان ولا جهلًا، وقد أخبرني ربي أنه قد استجاب لي فيك وشركائك الذين يكونون من بعدك، فقالت: يا رسول الله ومن شركائي من بعدي؟ قال: الذين قرغم الله بنفسه ولي فقال: "أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم". قال: يا رسول الله ومن هم؟ قال: الأئمة فقلت: يا رسول الله ومن هم؟ قال: الأوصياء مني إلى أن يردوا على الحوض كلهم هاد مهتد لا يضرهم من خذلهم، هم مع القرآن، والقرآن معهم، لا يفارقهم ولا يفارقونه، وهم ينصرون أمتي، ومهم يتدرون ويمهم يدفع عنهم، وهم يستجاب دعاوهم، فقالت: يا رسول الله سمهم لي، فقال: ابنى هذا ووضع يده على رأس الحسن، ثم ابنى هذا ووضع يده على رأس الحسين، ثم ابنه يقول له: يا أبي وأمي أنت سمهم، فسماهم لرجل فيهم والله، يا أخا بني مهدى أمة محمد، الذي يملئ الأرض قسطا وعدلا كما ملأها جوهرًا وظلمًا، والله إني لأعرف من بيايع بين الركن والمقام، وأعرف أسماء أبائهم 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 Qurʾān, and – by the time of the compilation quoted – would have been known as none other than the commonly recognized Imams of Twelver Shiʿī Muslims. In addition, this report described the awaited "Mahdī ([messianic] guided one)" as one of those 12. As mentioned in an earlier footnote, the Shiʿī tradition does not consider the likes of this report,

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.

Here, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is portrayed as privately approving the belief that the Imams are Ulū
al-Amr but explicitly forbids Ibn Abī Yaʿfūr from (what seems to mean) going out, among the
people (general non-Shīʿī public), in the name of Jaʿfar, with such belief. If this reading is accurate,
the reasoning Shīʿī 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 Jaʿfar, for instance, was a claimant to the Imamate, let alone to

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 wali described by verse 5:55, in the synonymous or related sense of the “guardian”).

[الكلاسي في الكافي عن [محقق بن طهرن عن أحمد بن محمد عن صفوان بن طهرن عن جعفري أبو الأوسم قالت فثبت لأبي عبد الله ع أخبر بالإسلام في لا يسمع أحداً التنصير عن معرفة شيء من أنها الذي من قصر عن معرفة شيء ومنها فتثبت بيه ولا يقبله [الله] منه عامته ومن غرفتها وعملها بما صلحت له دينيه وقبل منه عمله ولم يطيعه بما هو في جمل شيء من الأمر جعله فقال شهادة أنه لا إله إلا الله والإيمان بأن محمد رسول الله ص والخروج بما جاء به من عهد الله وحقق في الأموال الأزمة والألوية أبى أمر الله عز وجل وحلف بما ولاية آل محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم فثبت له حل في الأولة شيء دون شيء فضل يعترف ليمن أخذ به قال نعم قال الله عز وجل: * ( يا أهلي أُمَّيَّة حاكمهم بالله وطاعة رسول الله وأولي الأمر همكم ) * [النساء: 59] وقال رسول الله ص من مات ولا يعترف إمامه مات مبعثة جاهليه وكان رسول الله ص وكان عليه ع وقال الآخرون كان مبعوثاً ثم كان الحسن عن ثم كان الحسن عن وقال الآخرون - شيء من معاوية وحسن عن ع ولايتعاء ولا سنة ولا سنة قال ثم سكت ثم قال أبديك فقال له حكم الأمور نعم لمجلعت فذاك قال ثم كان عليه عن ثم كان الحسن ثم كان محمد بن علي أنا جعفر وكانت الشيعة قبل أن يكون أبو جعفر ولم يعترف منشأه حفظهم وخلالهم وزيادته حتى كان أبو جعفر فقال لهم ويبين لهم منشأه حفظهم وخلالهم حتى صار الناس ينافجون إليههم من بعد ما كانوا ينافبون إلى الناس وهكذا يحكم الأمور

132
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 Shīʿī 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 ʿAlī [al-Bāqir] (d. 114 AH / 733 CE), who makes the Shīʿī legal system known to the broader Shīʿī community after a time in which the Shīʿī 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.

---

شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله وأن محمداً رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم، فإن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال من مات ولا يعرف إمامه فمات ميتة جاهلية، وفعله وفعله، 

(أطيعوا الله وأطيعوا الرسول وأطيعوا من أطيعكم من ولد أبيهم) 

[النساء: 59] فكان على ع ثم صار من نبذه - الحسن ثم من نبذه الحسنين ثم من نبذه علي بن الحسنين ثم من نبذه محمد بن علي ثم هكذا يكون الأمر إن الأرض لا تصل ع، إلا بإمام ومن مات، 

لا يعرف إمامه مات ميتة جاهلية، وأخلع ما يكون أخذته إلى معرفته إذا بلغت نفسيه قال وأهوه بيده إلى صدره يقول: 

جربيد، لقد كنت على أمر حسن [الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام،ือه من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكوفي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكولي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.

[الكولي في الكافي عن ع علي بن إبراهيم عن أبيه عن حبيب بن إبراهيم بن عمر المهاجري عن ابن أبيذينة عن أبان بن عباس عن سلمان عن يحيى بن أبي أناس عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، 

أذكروا في الصيام، وهو من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام، وأذكروا ما يكون من أعظم ما كتبه صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصيام.
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 (dāll).” 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 Qurʾānic teachings and guideposts in cases of disagreements over Qurʾānic 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

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

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

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 Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq who in turn quotes ʿAlī, 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,

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.

---

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 (maʾṣūmūn) and do not issue a command that would be disobedient to God. Another report compiled by al-Ṣadūq in ʿIlal al-Sharāʾiʿ also emphasizes infallibility/immaculacy (ʿismah) while connecting it to the reason why such an Imam is needed at all times. As the report states,

...
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. The quality that the, “rūḥ al-qudus (holy spirit) never parts with them and they never part with it,” is perhaps only superseded by the description that, “the Qurʾān never parts with them and they never part with it.” This would appear to convey whatever sense of immaculacy that the Qurʾān has — not only do they not intentionally part ways with the Qurʾān,

239 Further analysis of the meaning of ʿiṣmah in this report might delve deeper into potential linguistic differences between, “lā yudhnībūn,” and, “lā yaʿṣūn.” But the subsequent descriptions appear to suffice in conveying the highest form of ʿiṣmah imaginable.
240 A similar expression appeared in some of the reports quoted previously.
the Qurʾān 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 (awliyāʾ), as will be discussed in Chapter 4. In the Shīʿī 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.

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 Qurʾānic 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 Qurʾān and/or other Divine revelations), which appears in verses 16:43 and 21:7. Moreover, the remaining phrases also allude to interconnected Qurʾānic references, painting a picture of the multi-faceted legal-moral-cosmic leadership embodied in the Imams, according to the Shīʿī literature.

The excerpt from the report relayed is attributed to the first Imam, ‘Alî. 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 Ŭlū 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 Shi‘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).

Through direct engagement with representative excerpts from early Shīʿī exegetical literature related to verse 4:59, this section has demonstrated that the early Shīʿī literature, read holistically, presents Ulū al-Amr as referring to the 12 Imams commonly associated with Twelver Imāmī Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī exegetical literature, paying particular attention to the underlying themes noted earlier. This analysis does not require an explicit mention of infallibility/immaculateness (ʿiṣmah), 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 Qurʾānic commentary or ḥadīth dialogue to include supplicatory/visitation devotional literature reveals insights about the reception and (re)purposing of Qurʾānic 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī thought pertaining to verse 4:59.

Some recent leading Imāmī authorities have arguably entertained an alternative reading of *Ulū al-Amr.* 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 Qurʾānic verse used to support the Divine prescription of required precaution when in doubt (*wujūb al-iḥtiyāt sharʿ an*), Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (d. 1980 CE) finds an occasion to note two interpretations related to verse 4:59,

... وَيَحْمِلُ قَوْمٌ إِرَادَةَ النَّزَاعِ بَيْنَ الأُمَّةِ وَوَلِ الْأَمْرِ فِي الأَمْوَرِ الْعَالِمَةِ لَعْنَا وَرَدَّتْ بعْدُ قُوْلِهِ تِعَالَ ( أَطْبِعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَأَوَّلَيْنِهِ ثُمَّ عَلَى أَيْمَنِكُمْ وَأَيْمَنُوْنَ احْتَدِ ذِكْرَيْنِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فِي أَعْمَلِكُمْ وَأَعْمَلِنَّ فِيهِمْ الْإِخْرَاجُ ) يَكُونُ تَكِيدًا لِمُعْتَضُدِهِنَّ وَلَزَمًا لِحَكْمِ اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ فِي الْنَّزَاعِ. وَالْفَضْلُ فِي تَحْصُبِهِ الرَّسُولِ كَفْرًا إِلَى الله وَالرَّسُولِ وَلَا يَفْعَلُهُمَا إِلَّا مَعَ حُذُفِ أَوَّلِيْنِهِ فِي الْبَيْعَةِ وَلَا يُعْطِى الْأَمْرَ إِلَّا الْإِخْرَاجَ.

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 viable 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 Shīʿī community on verse 4:59, a serious departure from the classical position is prone to invite judgments of error and even excommunicating heresy (*takfir*) by some prominent scholars familiar with that heritage. Granted, some Shīʿī 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_t as misunderstandings and/or mistakes that were amended, but the general ethos among traditional Shīʿī scholars is that such departures — even if resulting from a misunderstanding, and/or are only fictitious tales with didactic aims — speak to the Shīʿī 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 - أن المنظور إليه النزاع في الكبريات والشبهات الحكيمة وفي مثل ذلك يكون المرجع الله والرسول فقط لا أولِ الأمر بما هو أولِ الأمر.

2 - أن المراد التنازع بين الأمة وأولِ الأمر من الأمة، فان المذكور في المفرع عليه الأمر بإطاعة أولِ الأمر منكم أي من الأمة فيتراد بذلك التنازع الذي قد يقع في شروط الولاة واختيارهم كبرويا أو صغرويا فتكون حلاً مثل هذا النزاع أيضاً منحصرًا في مراجعة الله والرسول ويكون أولِ الأمر حينئذ جزء من الأمة المتنازعة فتكون الآية من أدلة أن الولاية تحدد من قبل الله والرسول لا من قبل الناس أنفسهم، وبذلك تكون الآية متعارضة مسألة هامة من أصول المذهب وأجنبية بالمرة عن مسألة الاحتياط في الشبهات الفرعية.  

Al-Ṣadr’s passing reference to verse 4:59 can be regarded as a comment on al-Shāfī‘ī’s early response245 to the Imāmī understanding of Ulū al-Amr. Al-Ṣadr 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-Ṣadr address this question?

Al-Ṣadr 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

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 Shi‘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 Shi‘ī thought in which an earlier Sunnī line of reasoning is appropriated and repurposed to arrive at a Shi‘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-Shāfī‘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* (ṭāʿah), 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 sorts*\(^{247}\) 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-Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1981 CE) puts it in his *al-Mīzān fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*,

---

\(^{247}\) Can a distinction be made between “obedience (ṭāʿah),” 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, taʿāwun),” 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.
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 Shīʿī 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-madḥhab” (i.e. the principle within Imāmī Shīʿī thought that Imams are appointed by naṣṣ or Divine designation). Because al-Ṣadr allows for al-Shāfiʿī’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 Shīʿī ḥadīth literature surveyed as well as the (re)purposing of early argumentation in more recent Shīʿī commentary lend “archival” support to modeling authorial interventions by Islamic thinkers as being preoccupied with a concern for forming moral subjects.

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-ʿAqd and Infallibility-cum-Taṣwīb

3.1 Complementing a Diachronic Survey of Ulū al-Amr

Chapter 2 reconstructed a representative selection of early Šīʿī 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 Šīʿī Islam. The thematic morality in these descriptions resonates with the Sunnī lines of reasoning reconstructed in Chapter 1 and provides a backdrop for Sunnī-Šīʿī dialectic up through more recent times. Highlighting the conceptual frameworks advanced by Sunnī and Šīʿī 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 Ūlū al-Amr as Ahl al-Hall wa al-ʿAqd 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 Qurʾanic phrase,” Ulū al-Amr. 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 (salāfīn and umarāʾ) 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-ʿAqd), and modernist works, allowing for, “different kinds of authority, particularly religious, moral and political, to be encapsulated within it.”\textsuperscript{250} This chapter will hone in on the identification of Ulū al-Amr with Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd 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 10\textsuperscript{th}-13\textsuperscript{th} centuries CE), the latter position resonates better with the exegetical discursive tradition, in which multiple interpretations are presented before one is

\textsuperscript{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.”

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-ḍarūrāt tubīḥ al-mahzūrāt”) and matters of greater priority trump those of lesser importance when stuck between a rock and a hard place. 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.

---

252 For example, see:
Also see:
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.\textsuperscript{253}

Furthermore, the Arabic “\textit{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.\textsuperscript{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 (\textit{khalifat Allah}) is
exogenous to Islam.”\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{khalifat Allāh} per se,
but the requirement of absolute obedience even if it came to immoral commands and/or

\textsuperscript{253} See Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{254} Afsaruddin, "Obedience to Political Authority: An Evolutionary Concept," 54.
\textsuperscript{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 Shīʿī narratives) look back upon the conflict with the Khawārij. ʿAlī is reported to have described their slogan, “judgment is God’s alone (Lā hukma 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 ʿAlī’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

---


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. 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. Invoking the notion of *khalīfat Allāh* 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 (*jāʿil*) a deputy/viceroy (*khalīfah*) on Earth, interpreted as a reality that persists for as long as Earth exists. 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 Shīʿī (or "proto-Shīʿī" pro-ʿalids). 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 Shiʿī Islam onto the past, I would argue that the revision she proposes can be reconciled with “later” Shiʿī 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 Shiʿī 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 Shiʿī 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.

260 Qur’ān 2:30

261 For example, see the Shiʿī 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-Nī’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.\textsuperscript{262}

Chapters 1 and 2 explained how the notion of unqualified obedience to \textit{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 Shīʿī, arguably gives way to readings of \textit{Ulū al-Amr} as the individually infallible, successive Imams of the Twelver Shīʿī (Chapter 2) and (according to some Sunnī readings) the collectively infallible \textit{Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd}, which I examine next. The subsequent consideration of absolute obedience in light of scholarly “\textit{taṣwīb}” (explained below) adopted early on by Sunnī thinkers, draws attention to broader implications regarding substantive requirements for subject-forming leadership in Islam.

\textbf{3.2 \textit{Ulū al-Amr} as \textit{Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd}}

Some medieval Sunnī scholars, perhaps most influentially Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH / 1209 CE), have argued that the phrase \textit{Ulū al-Amr} in verse 4:59 refers to “the people who loosen and bind” (\textit{Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd}), those influential figures who mediate in the process of electing and potentially deposing the imam/caliph/ruler of the Islamic polity.\textsuperscript{263} Chapter 1 described al-
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,

وَلَمْ بْطِلْهُ وَجْبَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ ذَلِكَ الْمَعْصُومُ الَّذِي هُوَ الْمَرَادُ بِقُوْلِهِ : *(وَأُولِي الأمر)* أَهْلُ الْحَلِّ وَالْعَقْدِ مِنَ الْأُمَّةِ،

والذي يوجب القطع بأن إجماع الأمة حجة.

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. In doing so, he interprets Ulū al-Amr to be specifically the ‘ulamāʿ among Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-‘Aqd, having offered a distinct raison d’être for choosing the interpretation that they are the ‘ulamāʿ. As is clear from the excerpt, al-Rāzī employs this understanding of Ulū al-Amr to theorize for the authoritativeness (ḥujjīyah) of scholarly consensus (ijmāʿ). Al-Rāzī claims the infallibility (more than the mere authoritativeness) of Ulū al-Amr as a collective, and thus of their consensus (ijmāʿ).


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 ‘ulamāʿ 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 Ismā‘īlī Shi‘ī).


266 It would, thus, be reasonable to understand “authoritative (ḥujjah),” here, in the broader, linguistic sense – that is, a decisive argument of sorts – and not distinctly the term ḥujjah discussed in legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh), “that which establishes the matter it is referring to without reaching the level of certainty.” See: Muhammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar (d. 1964 CE), Uṣūl al-Fiqh, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Qum: Muʿassat al-Nashr al-Islāmī), 13-14.
In other words, by employing the notion of infallibility (ʿismah), al-Rāzī makes the case for ijmāʿ as a true reflection of reality—a window into the mind of God, in a sense. That is, for al-Rāzī, ijmāʿ 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 Qurʾānic 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 ‘ulamāʾ (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 ‘ulamāʾ as Ulū al-Amr. Al-Rāzī argues for infallibility (ʿismah), 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-ʾĀqd. For al-Rāzī, a mujtahid may err, individually, but Ulū al-Amr – as a collective – do not.267 This position, known as takhtīʿah, functional fallibility, as opposed to

---

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 hawzah 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, والذى يذهب إليه أن الله تعالى في كل واقعة حكما معينا وأن عليه دينًا ظاهرًا لا قاطعًا وأن الخطط فيه معدودة وقضاء القاضي فيه لا ينقض.

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 (*takhṣīs*) but categorically (*takḥassus*). 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. As al-Juwaynī writes,

> وأذا كان صاحب الأآمر مجتهدًا، فهو المتنوؤ، الذي يَتَشَبَّه الكافة في الجهاد، ولا يتبع، فَأَمَا إذا كان سلطان الزمان لم يَتَبَّع مَثْلَ الجِهَاد فَالمنطوقون العلماء، والسلطان يَتَخَذُّهُم وضُرِّعُهُم، وَفَوْقُهُم وَبَدْرُهُم، فَعالم الزمان في المقصود الذي يَحَوَّل، والغرض الذي نَتَوَلَّه كَتَبِي الزَّمان، والسلطان مع العالم كملكي في زمان النبي، مأمور بالانجهاد إلى ما يَنهيه إليه النبي، والقول الكائيف لتغطاء، الميليل لِلْخَافِه، أنَّ الأآمر بِالنبي مَنْهِيه، فإنَّ لم يَكن في العصر النبي، فالعلماء ورَتْلة الشريعة، والقائمون في إِمَّاتها مقام الأئتياء، ومن يُتَبِّع القول في مناصبهن أنَّ الرسل يتَوَقَّع في ذهَرهم تَبدِيل الأحكام بالنشش، وطوارئ الطُّلْون على فيَّكُم الفقهين، وتَغَيَّر الجهاداتهم يَعْتَر أحكام الله على المُستَعنين، فَتَصِير خواطرهم في أحكام الله تعالى حالة محل ما يَتَبَّعُ من قضائنا أُوْمِر الله تعالى بالنشش.

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 *takht’ah* are highly nuanced and would require a separate treatment.  
seeking verdicts.” There is thus a reality of the Divine law which changes according to the *ijtihād* 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 *ijtihād* changes the reality of the *sharīʿah*, 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 ‘ulamāʾ who are also *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd*, for al-Juwaynī sees the ‘ulamāʾ as practically having the absolute authority of Prophets in their absence. Still, for al-Juwaynī, not every individual among *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd* must have the skill of exercising *ijtihād*. In line with al-Bāqillānī (d. 402 AH / 1013 CE), al-Juwaynī writes,

> والَذِي يَنْصَرُ فِي مَسَاقِ هذَا الْكِلَامِ إِلَى الْفَصْلِ الأَوْلِ، الْمُنْطَويِ عَلَى ذِي كَرْيَهُ، إِلَى اسْتِرَاطِ مَا ذِكَرَهُ الْقَاضِي.

> فَلَا أَرَى إِلاَّ إِسْتِرَاطٍ كَانَ الْعَاقِدُ مَجْتَهَدًا وَجَهْهَا لَائِحًا، وَلَكِنِّي أَشْتَرَطَ أَنْ يَكُونَ الْمَبَايِعُ مَمْنُونٌ يُفْيِدُ مُبَايِعَتُهُ مُنَّةً وَإِقْتِمَالًا.

Here, al-Juwaynī does not require an individual among *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd* 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 ‘ulamāʾ 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 *ijtihād* (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

---

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, *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 المجتهدين منا كالأشعري والنافاخي أبي بكر ومن المعززة كأبي الليلة وأبي علي وأبي هاشم وتباعهم [...] 

\(^{272}\) 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-hall wa al-ʿaqd* (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.


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 Shīʿī scope of infallibility/immaculacy (ʿismah) in a number of respects. The Shīʿī Imam is widely believed by Imāmī Shīʿī 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 ‘ulamāʾ in their capacity as Ulū al-Amr – as a collective in consensus (ijmāʿ). 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 Shīʿī immaculacy/infallibility (ʿismah) 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 Shīʿī Imam). The wider sphere of required ʿismah 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,
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 muʾāmalāt 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 [infal]libility are informative, and so are his views on Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd (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-ʿAqd 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-ʿaqd,” transformed or (mis)applied due to historically contingent circumstances, next.

3.3 A Genealogy of Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd

The interpretation of Ulū al-Amr as Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd 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: Jaʿfar al-Subḥānī, Muḥādarāt fi al-Ilāhīyāt, ed. ʿAlī al-Rabbānī al-Gulpaygānī (Qum: Muʿassasat al-Imām al-Ṣādiq), 282-284; 363-370.
“*amr*” in the Qurʾān. In the context of describing those who are to enjoy that which is better and more enduring than all worldly pleasures, the Qurʾān commends the following attributes,

\[...\]

[...] 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 Qurʾān 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,

\[فَإِيَّا عُزِّتُ فَمَوَّلَّلُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُمْتَكِلِينَ\]

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].\(^277\)

\(^{275}\) Qurʾān 42:38.

\(^{276}\) According to an alternate reading: Once I have resolved [for you], put your trust in God […].

\(^{277}\) Qurʾān 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…

Although strands of Sunnī and Shi‘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 ʿAlī in sermons attributed to him, which are compiled in *Nahj al-Balāghah*. In one instance, ʿAlī states,

---

278 For instance, in Qurʾān 22:67, it appears to be clear from the context that “the *amr*” refers to the Divine *amr*, when it reads,

ٰلكِ ِأَمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَاهُ الْخَلْقِ مَنسَكَةً هُمْ ناَسِكُوهُ ۖ فَلْيُنْتِبِعُوْنَكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَادْعُ إِلَٰ رَبّكَ ۖ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَّىٰ هُدًى مُسْتَقِيمٍ

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 Shi‘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.
Here, ʿAlī 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). ʿAlī mentions that it would not be feasible for the Imamate to be bounded (tanʿaqid; 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-ʿaqd” 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 ʿAlī mentions, being, “the most knowledgeable amongst them regarding God’s Amr,” would indicate that ʿAlī was not only

---

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.\(^\text{280}\)

In a letter to Muʿāwiyah, ‘Alī appears to allude to the connection between \textit{shūrā} and the concept of \textit{ahl al-`aqd} (if not \textit{ahl al-hall wa al-`aqd}) once more, when he states,

\begin{quote}
إنه يبايعي القوم الذين بايعوا أبي بكر وعمر وعثمان - على ما بايعوهم عليه - فلم يكِل للشاهد أن يخرج - ولا لغليظ أن يبرء - وإبام الدوالي للمهاجرين والأنصار - فإن اجتمعوا على رجل وسموه إماما كان ذلك الله رضا - فإن خرج عن أمرهم الخارج - بطمغ أو بذخه زعده إلى ما خرج منه - فإن أبي قائلوه على إتباعه غير منبئ المصليين - وولده الله ما توكل - وغفرتي بما معاوتي لرب نظرت بعضك دون هواك - لتتجدي أبزا الدنس من دم عثمان - ولتعلمني أي كنست في غزوة عنه - إلا أن تنحكي - فتحن ما بدأ ذلك والسلام
\end{quote}

But, in this case, the emphasis appears to be on using the binding of Abū Bakr’s, ‘Umar’s and ‘Uthmān’s caliphates, which Muʿāwiyah 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 \textit{Amr}” were to be chosen, as ‘Alī suggests, then he would see it as revealing an immaculate/\textit{ma sūm} 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.

the aforementioned sermon). Rather, he merely refers to the precedent that Muʿāwiyah 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 Muʿāwiyah 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 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-ʿaqd.”

As a term, including “al-ḥall,” however, “ahl al-ḥall wa al-ʿaqd” 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-ʿAqīdah 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.
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 Muhāḍarāt

---

\textit{al-Udabāʾ wa Muḥāwarāt al-Shuʿarāʾ wa al-Bulaghāʾ} that Aḥmad ibn [Abī] Ṭāhir has said the following line of poetry,

\begin{center}
\begin{minipage}{\textwidth}
كُلُّهم سياد فمن تلق منهم فلت هذا أول بحل وعقد
\end{minipage}
\end{center}

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-Ashʿarī (d. 324 AH / 936 CE) is thought to have used the expression “\textit{ahl al-hall wa al-ʿaqd}” in the context of describing how ʿAlī came to power after ʿUthmān. Al-Ashʿarī first argues that Abū Bakr must be the imam after Prophet Muḥammad because the Muslims at least \textit{apparently} consented to Abū Bakr’s imamate/caliphate, forging a consensus (\textit{ijmāʿ}) – and, according to al-Ashʿarī, the authoritative quality of \textit{ijmāʿ} must be accepted in order to maintain (Sunnī) Islamic worldview assumptions.\textsuperscript{285} He continues to describe ʿUmar’s imamate as established because Abū Bakr appointed/designated him and “bound” (\textit{ʿaqada}) the imamate for him, choosing him for it. As for ʿUthmān, al-Ashʿarī says that his imamate was established through the “binding” (\textit{ʿaqd}) of those among a \textit{shūrā} group appointed/designated by ʿUmar. Interestingly, the phrase \textit{Ahl al-Hall wa al-ʿAqd}, in its entirety, is not used here, but the word “\textit{ʿaqd}” is and so is “\textit{shūrā}.” This particular “\textit{shūrā}” group, thus, appears not to have been synonymous with the


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.

\textsuperscript{285} As will be described later, even when the “periphery” acknowledges the said \textit{ijmāʿ} claimed by the “central domain” – if only for argument’s sake – it is granted as an \textit{ijmāʿ} regarding the \textit{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 (\textit{nāṣṣ}) via the Prophet Muḥammad. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.
broader category of Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd. It is regarding ʿAlī’s imamate, however, that al-
Ashʿarī does use the phrase, “ahl al-ḥall wa al-ʿaqd.” In one sense, ʿUmar’s selection of the limited shūrā group seems to mark a transition in how the Qurʾānic notion of shūrā became
associated with “binding” (ʿaqd) the imamate of “their amr” to a particular group of individuals. In another sense, the Qurʾānic 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-ʿAqd.

The term Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd also appears in an extant Shiʿī 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/Twelver Shiʿī requirement of nāṣṣ since the Zaydī position does not accept the Sunnī notion of “ahl al-ḥall wa al-ʿaqd” engaging in shūrā to choose the imam. 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 Shiʿī 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-ʿaqd.”

---


287 Modarressi, Crisis and Consolidation, 237-238.

288 Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni’mah, 121.


Then he says: It is well-known that theshūrā group is justified: “Surely, he who leaves the world
without appointing his successor will be cursed.” If they say: “Yes,” he answers them: “No, for they are saying: ‘Yes,’ while they do not say: ‘No.’”
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-ʾAqd* appears in *Tamhīd al-Awāʾil wa Talkhīṣ al-Dalāʾil* by Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 AH / 1013 CE). The author refers to, “the meritorious (afāḍil) of the Muslims who are among *Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʾAqd*, and those entrusted when it comes to this matter,” of electing/choosing the imam in the absence of *nāṣṣ*. For al-Bāqillānī, the prevalent sources in the domain of scholarly knowledge which he recognizes are an obstacle in the face of the Divine *nāṣṣ* alternative. *Nāṣṣ* 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 Shiʿī 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 authoritativeness of *ijmāʿ* and the issues about which he claims *ijmāʿ*).

Based on this approach, al-Bāqillānī, and perhaps Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324 AH / 936 CE) before him, argue that a single individual of influence

---


290 Al-Juwaynī refers to this attribution.
from among “ahl al-hall 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 shūrá, which naturally involves a discussion between multiple individuals, and Ahl al-Hall 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 “shūrá” to the caliphate, likely due to irregularities in the historical process of electing the early caliphs. Sunnī theorists 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.

\(^{292}\) Al-Juwaynī, Ghiyāth al-Umam, 71-72.

\(^{293}\) 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-ʿAqd. Furthermore, because ʿUmar 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-ʿAqd, or a more representative sample of it, making a distinction between comprehensive “their amr” Qurʾānic shūrā, on the one hand, and Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd, 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 Qurʾānic cross-references to reveal or infuse additional layers of meaning. Is there room, however, for a reconciliatory of this tension via a reorientation of the Sunnī-Shīʿī (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 Qurʾānic implications and potential tensions with historical developments. This is not to make a normative claim about the Qurʾān’s intended meaning, but to reconcile central-peripheral reception with the Qurʾān’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 Shīʿī discourse can be understood as appealing to an “Our amr” constellation of Qurʾānic 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 (ʿahd) the next imam (despite rejecting the Shīʿī claim that Prophet Muhammad did so), and Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd nominating the next imam. See: Al-Juwaynī, Ghiyāth al-Umam, 134.
that Imam is inaccessible would the Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī ḥadīth literature (Chapter 2), the Imāmī Shīʿī 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” Qurʾānic 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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). This is in sharp contrast with the description of the Imam’s function in Shīʿī thought, as illustrated by a number of reports compiled in al-Kāfī. In terms of some (not...
all) substantive requirements, the function of the Imāmī Shīʿī Imam is closer to the function of the various attempts to justify the authoritativeness of ījmāʿ, the infallibility of the mujtahid in a tašwīb framework or the infallibility of Ulū al-Amr in a takhṭīʿ 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 Imamī Shīʿī thought.

3.5 Conclusion

Al-Bāqillānī situates the mujtahid in the substantive position of one who, in the tašwīb sense, infallibly defines the attributes and roles of Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd — 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 ʿulamāʾ as, “in reality those to whom the Amr belongs deserving so […]” alluding to 4:59’s Ulū al-Amr (see Chapter 1). Al-Rāzī, who does not adopt the tašwīb ontology/epistemology of scholars like al-Juwaynī, or al-Bāqillānī and al-Ashʿarī before him, but argues that the textual evidence (i.e. verse 4:59) makes the case for Ulū al-Amr infallibility (with his takhṭīʿ ah framework). Furthermore, his Ulū al-Amr are the ʿulamāʾ from ف َقَامَ بِعُلْعَدْلي عَيْنْدَ تحََيرُّي أَهْلي الْجَْهْلي وَتَحَْيييري أَهْلي الْجَْدَلي بِي لَنُّوري الْسَّاطيعي وَالشّيفَاءي النَّافيعي بِيْلْحَْقّي الأَبْلَجي وَالْبَيَانيَ اللَّئيحي مِن كُلّي مَخْرَجٍ عَلَى طَرييقي الْمَنْهَجي الَّذيي مَضَى عَلَيْه الصَّاديقُونَ مِن آبَِئيه عَلَيْه الحَقَّ هَذَا الْعَالَميي إيلاَّ شَقييٌّ وَلَا يَجَْحَدُه إيلاَّ غَوييٌّ وَلَا يَصُدُّ عَنْه إيلاَّ جَرييٌّ عَلَى الْجَلِّ وَعَلَ. 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 Shīʿī discussions on leadership during the ghaybah of the Imam.

among Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd. Thus, the ʿulamāʾ/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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 nasṣ 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 ʿulamāʾ whose views determine and appoint Ahl al-Ḥall wa al-ʿAqd and/or Ulū al-Amr are theorized as functionally infallible via taṣwīb. In these Sunnī conceptions, the Imāmī Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 *ʿulamāʾ*, 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

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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī counterparts — appeared to demonstrate a paradigmatic requirement of an infallibility-of-sort. 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 “Quṭb,” completing the circle of trends in Islamic thought at the crossroads of Sunnī, Shīʿī and Ṣūfī thought.

301 Ibn Abī Ṭālib, Nahj al-Balāghah, 501.
4.1 Setting the stage: ʿAlī, the Pivot Point of the Quern

أَمَّامَ اللَّهِ، لَنْ تَقْمِصْهَا بِنِّي أَبِي قَحَافَةِۚ وَإِنَّهُ لَيُعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لِمْ هَا مَنْ حَملَ القُطْبَ مِنَ الرَّحْيِ، يَنْحَدِرُ عَنِ السَّيْلِ، وَلَا يَرْقِى إِلَّٰمَّا...203

These words, attributed to ʿAlī, appear in the collection of sermons, letters and aphorisms known as Nahj al-Balāghah,304 compiled by the Imāmī Shīʿī 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 authority.305 306 In the excerpt, ʿAlī states that Abū Bakr put on the garb [of the caliphate] despite...
knowing that the position of ʿAlī relative to it is the position of the quṭb to the rahā (“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. 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, Shīʿī 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 awliyāʾ in the formative periods of Shīʿī 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 ʿAlī whichever way he turns.”

307 But, lest it should be tempting to assume Ṣūfīs were Shīʿī in disguise (and not only because “Ṣūfī” is a different way of categorizing Muslims that can cut across “Sunnī” and arguably at least some “Shīʿī”), 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 Şûfî trends). 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 Şûfî) Sahl al-Tustarî’s (d. ca 283 AH / 896 CE) Tafsîr, perhaps the first instance referring to the quṭb in a spiritual cosmology sense, in addition to key excerpts from (the Şûfî) al-Ḥakîm al-Tirmidhî’s (d. ca 320 AH / 910 CE) *Khatm al-Awliyâ*. For the latter, I examine the accounts in Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî’s *al-Maṭālib al-‘Āliyah min al-’Ilm al-Ilâhî*. I do not delve into (the Şûfî philosopher) Ibn ʿArabî’s (d. 638 AH / 1240 CE) elaboration that appears in his *al-Futûḥât al-Makkîyah* because I am more concerned with the reception of the underlying concept as synthesized in more traditional Sunnî scholarship, arguably better represented in Fakhr al-Dîn al-Râzî’s work. Given that they were contemporaries, it is quite

---

possible, nonetheless, that al-Rāzī and Ibn ʿArabī were drawing on shared references whenever Ibn ʿArabī was not unique in his development of the *quṭb* notion.  

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.

### 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 (*ʿisma),” 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 ʿArabī’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 ʿArabī’s impact might consider the extent to which his worldview goes beyond describing the *quṭb* as the primary aim of creation (*al-ghāyah / al-ʿillah al-ghāʾīyah*) — see the excerpts of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī below — to envision the *quṭb* as an encompassing acting cause (*ʿillah fāʿīlayh*) 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 ʿArabī’s ontological claims regarding the oneness of being (*wahdat 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 Shīʿī 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-Shāfī fī al-Imāmah, responding to Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Muʿtazili’s (d. 415 AH / 1025 CE) al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-ʿAdl,

Arguably, al-Murtaḍá was rejecting the valence Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār had presumed in levying his polemic against the Imāmīyah. Meaning, this was an unreasonable diversion on Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār’s end, as the discussion was on Imāmah, not cosmological dimensions of the


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 hadīth collections. Moreover, it is likely that al-Murtaḍā was avoiding an engagement of charitable reading in this case because it would have distracted from the core argument related to Imāmah. 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-Murtaḍā rejected).

Indeed, the quote referred to in Modarressi’s excerpt above and several similar quotations survive in the most reliable extant Imāmī hadīth literature. Moreover, while it is possible that some quotations are remnants of extremist/exaggerator (ghulāt) influence, it is arguable that such

---

314 For example,

Al-Kulaynī (d. 329 AH / 941 CE), al-Kāfī, vol. 1, 178-180:

315 Modarressi writes,
references survived due to there being acceptable interpretations\(^{316}\) of them that did not attribute Divine qualities to the Imams. The acceptability\(^{317}\) of the reports would provide an explanation for how mufawwidi\(d\)/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.

\[316\] 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.”

\[317\] 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 supernaturality of the Imams], as was the case during the time of the Imāms.”

\[318\] Is it possible that al-Murtadā — fully aware of the presence of such reports in prominent Shi‘ī hadith 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-Murtadā deny that Qāḍī Abd al-Jabbar’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 شاهد ...") That being said, there are indications elsewhere that show how al-Murtadā 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 Shi‘ī works such as al-Kulaynī’s al-Kāfī. Still, when al-Murtadā 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-Murtadā’s response to a question posed to him on a report in al-Kāfī,

... وَاخْتِبِي الْمَذَكُورُ بِظَاهِرِهِ يَقْطَنُ كَثَّيْرِ الْأَفْعَالِ بِالْفَزْءِ الْمُضَرِّعِ فِي كَتَابِ الْوَهْدِ، فَكُنَّ رَوَى هَذَا الْرِّجْلُ وَفَعْلَهُ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ ( رَحْمَةَ اللهِ عَلَيْهِمْ) فِي كَتَابِ الْوَهْدِ، وأَلْغَابُ الأَرْجَحُ قَالَ أَنْ يُمَكِّنُ هَذَا خِضْرًا مَّوْضُوعًا مَّدْسُوسًا، وَيَكَفُّ فِيهِ كَخَرَجَ عَلَى ضِرْبِ الْتَعْصِيفِ، وَهُوَ أَنْ يُكْونَ السَّلَاحِقَ ( عَلِىِّ الْسَّلَاحِ) سَلَّمَ عَنْ هَذِهِ الْسَّلَاحِقَ حَضْرَةً قَوْمٍ مِّنَ الْبَنَادِجَةِ، وَالْمُلْلَاحِدِينَ لِلْأَلْبَاهِيِّ الْذِّنَّ لا يُفْقِرُونَ بِالْمَقْدُورِ، وَالْمُسْتَحِيلِ، فَأَشْقَى ( عَلِىِّ الْسَّلَاحِ) أَنْ يُقْوِنَ أَنْ هَذَا لَيْسَ مَقْدُورً حَلَّلُهُ نَسِيحًا، وَفِي قَدَرِ الأَلْبَاهِيِّ الْذِّنَّ ( عَلِيِّهِ الْسَّلَاحِ) فَخَجُرُ عَالِيًّا ...


This is arguably not meant to single out al-Kulaynī or his al-Kāfī, but rather reflects a methodological point of caution al-Murtadā is drawing attention to that applies across the board despite his regard for his community fellows/colleagues (ašhāb) and the utility of their works. See:


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 Qurʾān 10:62,

> قوله تعالى: ألا إن أولياء الله لا خوف عليهم ولا هم يحزنون [62]

قال سهل: هم الذين وصفهم رسول الله صلَّى اللَّّ غَُفِ على وِسَلَم: « إذا رؤوا ذكر اللَّّ » وهم المجاهدون في الله السابقون إليه الذين

> توالت أعمالهم على المواقفة أولياء اللَّّ هم المؤمنون حقًا [اللفظ : 4]

وَقَالَ: اجتمع الخير كله في هذه الأربعة وِمَا صاروا أُبَادًا: إخلاص البطون، والاعتناء عن الخلق، وسهر الليل، والصمت.

\(^{319}\) Including, of course its variants with/without “al-,” and beginning with preposition, “bi-.”
قيل له: لم سمي الأبدال أبدالا؟ فقال: لأعم يبدل الأحوال، أخرجوا أبداعهم عن الحيل في سرهم، ثم لا يزالون يتقلون من حال إلى حال، ومن علم إلى علم، فهم أبدا في المزيد من العلم فيما بينهم وبين رحم.

قيل: الأوتاد أفضل أم الأبدال؟ قال: الأوتاد. قيل: وكيف ذلك؟ قال: لأن الأوتاد قد بلغوا وثبتت أركاهم، والأبدال يتقلون من حال إلى حال.

قال سهل: لقيت ألفا وخمسين صديق، فمنهم أربعون بديلا وسبعة أوتاد، وطريقهم ومذهبهم ما أنا عليه.

وكان يقول: أنا حجة الله عليكم خاصة، وعلى الناس عامة.

وكان من طريقه وسبرته أنه كان كثير الشكر والذكر، دائم الصمت والفكر، قيل الخلاف، سخته النفس، قد ساد الناس بحسن الخلق والرحمة والشفقة عليهم والنصبحة لهم، متسمكا بالأصل، غالبا بالفرع، قد حشي الله قلبه نورا، وأنطق لسانه بالحكمة.

وكان من خير الأبدال، وإن قلنا من الأوتاد فقد كان القطب الذي يدور عليه الرحمة، ولولا أن الصحابة لا يقاس يوم أحد لتصبحهم ورؤيتهم لكانا ك أحدهم، عاش حمدا وموت غرفا باليصرة رحمة الله عليه.[...]

In this piece, the compiler (apparently a devotee or admirer of al-Tustarī) quotes al-Tustarī describing the friends/allies of God (awliyā’ Allāh) and the spiritual hierarchy among them. The head of the hierarchy is the quṭb, who is the most pivotal among the awtād (sing. wātad or stake/peg). The awtād are described as having a rank of merit above the abdāl (sing. badal), who change from one spiritual state to another, while the awtād 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
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 qūṭb around which the quern (raḥā) revolves […]” It is unclear to what extent this scheme including abdāl, awtād and the qūṭb 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 qūṭb 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 qūṭb 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 qūṭb 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 “qūṭb” 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 *awliyāʾ* 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 *awliyāʾ* 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. Just as the compiler describes the subject-forming lead role of the qūṭb, 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-Awliyāʾ*

The arguable fluidity of the qūṭb 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-Awliyāʾ*—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,” both in the case of *khatm al-nubuwwah* (sealing/completing/perfecting prophet-hood [with Prophet...
Muḥammad) as well as in his seemingly novel argument for *khatm al-awliyāʾ* (sealing/completing/perfecting sainthood). He also draws attention to the leading *walī* (which is more or less the substantive meaning of a “quṭb”), at any given time, in the process. As al-Tirmidhī writes,

In this worldview, there are forty³²⁴ saintly figures (*siddīq*), all from Prophet Muḥammad’s “aʾl 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/khātim al-awliyāʾ*, a final saint as well as the Seal among these saintly figures,

---

³²⁵ Whether this is referring to their status as God’s aim in creating the world (*ʾillah ghāʾīyah*), 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 wali. In other words, the world is never empty of these essential saintly figures. But al-Tirmidhi clarifies that the progeny/household of the Prophet Muhammad referred to here is not one of ancestry in the conventional sense. Rather, he states the following in this regard,

فهؤلاء الأربعون في كل وقت، هم اهل بيته. و لست أعني (آل بيته) في النسب، اما هم اهل بيت الذكر. بعث رسول الله، صلى الله عليه و سلم، لإقامة ذكر الله، و ليبوّأ له مستقراً، وهو الذكر الخالص الصافي. فكل من آوى الى ذلك المثوى فهم آله. لست أرى الى قول رسول الله، صلى الله عليه و سلم، اهل بيتي امان لا يغيرون، اذا ذهبوا اتاهم ما يوعدون.

و انما صار هؤلاء الأربعون امانا للامة (لأن) بكم تقوم الأرض، و بكم 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، ففيهموته عن آخرين، و قد كثر الله عدهم حتى لا يحصون.

Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhi’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-Tirmidhi 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

---

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 innumerous blood descendants.\textsuperscript{327}

The following excerpt from al-Tirmidhī’s work offers a concise summary approximating the spiritual head (quṭb) concept discussed earlier, but clearly with similar language and function to that which appears in Shīʿī sources,

ولا تخلو الدنيا، في هذه الأمة، من قائم بالحججة، كما قال علي بن أبي طالب، رضي الله تعالى عنه، "اللهم، لا تخل الأرض من قائم بالحججة، كي لا تبطل ححج الله وبيئته." [...\textsuperscript{328}]

The author uses the word ḥujjah (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 ʿAlī here, who apparently makes a prayer\textsuperscript{329} 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 ḥujjaj (sing. ḥujjah) and bayyināt (sing. bayyinah, proofs/conclusive evidence) are never negated.

The reports referred to earlier in Shīʿī ḥadīth collections, such as al-Kāfī, use the same language in reference to the Shīʿī Imam. This similarity does not speak to be an adoption of Imāmī

\textsuperscript{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 Muhammad (as the Shīʿī claim), not everyone from the bloodline. Either way, the emphasis is on a spiritual function, not conventional genealogy.

\textsuperscript{328} Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, \textit{Khatm al-Awliyāʾ}, 360.

\textsuperscript{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-Muʿtazilī, \textit{Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah}, vol. 18, 347.
Shīʿī 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 ʿAlī. Whether this means the category “Sunnī” includes a broader spectrum of beliefs about a spiritual guide than is first expected,\textsuperscript{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 Shīʿī 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.\textsuperscript{331} A figurative interpretation, albeit apparently a necessity given the author’s background and several indications of praise for Abū Bakr and ʿUmar throughout the text, is nonetheless complicated by the following excerpt,

\[...\]

\[ان الولِ و الصدّيق حجة الله علی خلقه، و غیاث الخلق و أمانهم، لاتمام دعاء الله علی بصیرة. فهم في وقت الحاجة (الهم) أخير 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 أوّلهم، لحاجة الخلق اليهم ؟ أو لم يقل علي بن اب طالب، رضي الله عنه، في

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{331} Such as, “Imāmat al-wilāyah wa riyāsatihā.”

حديث جميل النخعي: "اللهم، لا تغل الأرض من قائم بالحججة. أولئك الأقلون عددًا، الأعظمون عند الله قدرًا، فقومهم معلقة بالمحل العليا، أولئك خلفاء الله في عباده و بلاده. هاه، شوقا إلى 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 وسلم: "مثل أمتي مثل المطر؛ لا يدري أرشه أم لاخ، خير أم أخرى". [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 ʿAlī 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 *khulafāʾ* (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 Shīʿī 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.

Another striking feature with similar resonances in Shi‘ī literature is the identification of this walīhujjah (approximately, substantively speaking, “qūṭ”) figure with the Mahdī at the end times.333 The following dialogical exchange appears in al-Tirmidhī’s Khatm al-Awliyāʾ.

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-awliyāʾ, 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 Shi‘ī Islam.
334 Al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, Khatm al-Awliyāʾ, 436.
Mahdī figure or some other wali 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) — and who authored one of the primary Ṣūfī texts mentioned by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH / 1111 CE), refers to the quṭb notion explicitly using the phrase in his Qūṭ al-Qulūb in at least three instances. Especially noteworthy here is Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’s reference “abdāl al-mulk” (the abdāl associated with rule), citing Jaʿfar 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 Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq’s reported statement,

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, khālifah/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/quṭb” 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 “quṭb” as stated at the beginning of this chapter).341

In his tafsīr compilation, Ḥaqāʾiq 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 quṭb to describe the “rawāsī (anchored/firm/[anchoring] mountains)” among

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 Shīʿī references, such as the Umm Dāwūd supplication, attributed to Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq,

the *awliyā’*.\(^{342}\) Commenting on Qur’ān 5:12,\(^{343}\) al-Sulamī says he heard Abū ʿUthmān al-Maghribī (d. 373 AH / 983 CE) say the following,

> سمعت أبا عثمان المغربي يقول: البدلاء أربعون والائمين سبعة والخلفاء من الأئمة ثلاثة، والواحد هو القطب، والقبط عارف بجميع
> ومشرف عليهم ولا يعرفه أحد ولا يشرف عليه وهو إمام الأولياء، والثلاثة الذين هم الخلفاء من الأئمة يعرفون السبعة، والسبعة الأئماء يعرفون الأربعين الذين هم البدلاء، ولا يعرفهم البدلاء، والأربعون يعرفون سائر الأولياء من الأمة ولا يعرفهم من الأولياء أحد فإذا نقص الله من الأربعين واحداً أبدل مكانه واحداً من أولياء الأمة، وإذا نقص من السبعة واحداً جعل مكانه واحداً من الأربعين وإذا نقص من الثلاثة واحداً جعل مكانه من السبعة فإذا مضى القطب الذي هو واحد في العدد، وبه قوام إعداد الخلق جعل بدلته واحداً من الثلاثة هكذا إلى أن يأذن الله في قيام الساعة.\(^{344}\)

In this excerpt, there are said to be forty *abdāl* (“*budalāʾ*” here), seven “*umanāʾ* (trustees),” three “*khulafāʾ*” among the “imams,” and the one [and only] is the *quṭb*.\(^{345}\) Of special concern here is the description of the *quṭb* as being aware of them all, overseeing them, while neither being known nor overseen by anyone else among the *awliyāʾ* — the *quṭb* is the “*imam* of the *awliyāʾ*.” Once a

---


\(^{343}\) Also see: Al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2, 216.

\(^{344}\) “*Qāla al-Qāsim* [...].”

\(^{345}\) This last phrase is worded to emphasize the singularity of the *quṭb* apparently. Alternatively, the syntax could be indicating that each of the *khulafāʾ*, singularly, is called the *quṭb*. But the next sentence appears to support the former reading.
quṭb passes on, “one of the three [khulafāʾ] is made his replacement, as such, until God gives permission for the Hour [that is, the Day of Judgement] to occur.”

ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (d. 465 AH / 1072 CE) uses the word quṭb in his commentary on Qurʾān 2:143, apparently describing (at least some of) the inwardly directed mystical/Ṣūfī sub-community (“ḥādhihi al-tāʾifah”) as a collective quṭb 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 agreements but the quṭb sub-community as being impeccable in their thought/judgment. As al-Qushayrī writes,

وَكَذلكَ جَعَلْناكُمْ أُمَّةً وسُطاً لِتَكُونُوا شُهَداءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُم شَهِيدًا وَماً جَعَلَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقُبُوطُ إِلاَّ لِتَنْتَهُوا مِنْ بَعْضِ الرَّسُولِ مِنْ يَتَّبَعُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْبَةً وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ هُمْ الأَكْبَرَ إِلاَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِيَدِهِ مَلِكُ عَسَى نَفْسَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (143)

النَّاسِ أَرْؤُوهُ زَجْجٍ (143)

The middle of the path, the ummah, makes these the ummah of the believers. This ummah is the path of the believers. As long as this ummah is made its replacement, as such, until God gives permission for the Hour [that is, the Day of Judgement] to occur.”

346 See Chapter Three of this dissertation.
This description surely raises questions about whether disagreement is theoretically possible in the *quṭb* sphere (assuming there can be more than one member of the *quṭb* 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 *quṭb* 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.

وَمِنْ خَلْقِنَا أُمَّةٌ يُهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَيُعْلِدُونَ ( ١٨١ )

أُجْرِيَ الْحَقِّ - سَبِّحَهُ - سَبِّهُ بِأَبَا يَخْلُقُ الْبُسِيِّطَةُ مِنْ أَهْلِهِمْ الْغَيَّاثِ وُجْمَدُوا الْحَقَّ فِي الْظُّهُورِ، وَفِي مِعْنَاهُ قَالَوا:

إِلَيْهِ مَنْ كَانَ قَطِبَ فَمَنْ ذَا يَدِيرِهَا؟

In a follow up work, known by the title *al-Imlāʾ alá Mushkil al-Iḥyāʾ* among other titles,\(^{349}\) and which appears as part of some printed editions of his *Iḥyāʾ 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-Imlāʾ alá Mushkil al-Iḥyāʾ* where al-Ghazālī describes those who condemned some of the “ilmāʾ (dictation)” called “al-Iḥyāʾ,” who forbid others from reading it, accused “mumlīhi (the one who dictated it)” of misguidance and misleading 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,

> ولَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَّا الرَّسُولي وَإِلَّا أُولِي الأَمْر مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِيمَهُُ الَّذِي يَسْتَنْبَطُونَهُُ مِنْهُمُ

...[ 

> ولكن الظالمين في شقاق بعد

--


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-Intisār līmā Waqaʿ fi al-Iḥyāʾ min al-Asrār*, see: Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Imlāʾ alá Mushkil al-Iḥyāʾ*, ed. Abdelmoula Hagil, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 2020), 76-88.


350 Qurʾān 4:83.

351 Qurʾān 22:53.
ولا عجب فقد تؤدي أدلاء الطريق، وذهب أرباب التحقيق، ولم يبق في الغالب إلا أهل الزور والفسوق متشهرين بدعوى كاذبة منهم، متضمنين بحكايات مزخرفة، مترأين بصفات متهمة، متطهرين بظاهر من العلم فاسدة، متظاهرين بمحيط غير صادق، كل ذلك لطلب دنيا أو محبة أثناء، أو مغالبة نظراء، قد ذهبوا في سبيلهم بالبر، وتألفوا جميعا على النكر، ودعمت النصائح بينهم في الأمر، وتصافوا بأسرهم على الخديعة والذرك، إن نصحهم العلماء أغرى بهم وإن صمت عنهم العقلاء أزردوا عليهم، أولئك الجهلاء في علمهم، القراة في طولهم، البخلاء عن الله عز وجل بأنفسهم، لا يفلحون ولا ينجح تابعهم، ولذلك لا يظهر عليهم مواريث الصدق، ولا يسطرون حولهم أنوار الولاية، ولا يخفق بين أيديهم أعلام المعمرة، ولا يسبر عوراتهم لباس الخشية، لأغم لم ينالوا أعوان الإقامة، ومراتب النجاة، وخصوصية البدلاء، وكرامات الأوتاد، وفوات الأوطاد، وفوات الأفزاع،، وفي هذه أسباب السعادة وتنمية الطهارة، أجل، لو عرفا أنفسهم لظهر لهم الحق، وعلموا علة أهل الباطل، وداه أهل الضعف، ودعا أهل القوة، ولكن ليس هذا من بضائعهم، حجزوا عن الحقيقة بأربعة: بالجهل، والإصرار، ومحبة الدنيا، وإظهار الدعوة، فالجهل أوزتهم السكينة، والإصرار أوزتهم النهاة، ومحبة الدنيا أوزتهم طول الغفلة، وإظهار الدعوة أوزهم الكبرياء، والإعجاب والرياء [...]

Such critics, says al-Ghazālī, have neither attained the benefits of the *qutb*, nor a host of other mystical spiritual states. In the context of describing different degrees of experiencing the Oneness of God (*al-Tawḥīd*), al-Ghazālī mentions the fourth degree, which is experienced by the *qutb,*

353 While some printed editions have “aqṭāb” (sing. *qṭb*) here, it is either a typo or due to variations in manuscripts. Either way, the reference to the *qṭb* concept is being made.
Here, al-Ghazālī tells the reader that the familiar qūṭb, awṭād, and budalāʾ among the awliyāʾ experience God’s Oneness in a distinct sense, referred to as the fourth degree—tawḥīd al-siddīqīn. The slightly lesser level of awliyāʾ experience the third degree of Oneness, tawḥīd al-muqarrabīn, and includes such spiritual figure stations as the nuqabāʾ, nujabāʾ, shuhadāʾ, and šāliḥūn. Notably, there are no specific numbers mentioned, except for keeping the qūṭb 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 aʿlam),” 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-Imlāʾ ʿalá Mushkil al-Iḥyāʾ, 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. 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 Shīʿī notion of the immaculate/infallible (maʿṣūm) 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. Such a discursive move arguably makes this case particularly informative as one at the crossroads of Sunnī, Ṣūfī, and Shīʿī thought.

In the first volume of his multi-volume *al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliyah min al- Ḩilm al-Ilāhī*, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī discusses several lines of reasoning to draw attention to God’s existence. 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.

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 *qutb* by the Ṣūfīs and the immaculate Imam by the Shīʿīs. In the eighth volume, while discussing a less traditional

---

argument for identifying true prophets (by virtue of their spiritual influence on others, bringing them closer to excellence, as opposed to the traditional iʿjāz/miracle argument), 359 al-Rāzī writes,

...[...] then this type of people are also different from each other in perfection and imperfection, and there is no doubt that there is a person in them, who is the best among them, who is the strongest in both the theoretical and practical power. Then it is the spiritual who name him the Pole of the World. They were right in saying that what is highest in the human race, is the human who possesses the power to benefit the divine light from the angels, and possesses the power to manage the world on the straight way, and the best way. Then that single human is the best of those present in that era. 360 It was expected that this human be the basis for the spiritual on the one hand, and the practical on the other hand. Moreover, no one else is like this human.

The reference mentions that two alternative manuscripts have the word الوقت here instead.

359 In his Muhassal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta’akhkhirīn, mentioning it as al-Jāhiḍ's preferred argument and endorsed by al-Ghazālī in al-Munqidh, Fakhr al-Rāzī argues that if one has [compelling excellence in] character, actions, judgments, 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 Maʿālim Uṣūl al-Dīn, where he argues that if one is excellent and brings others 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-ʿĀliyyah, al-Rāzī goes on to describe how he views this approach featured in the Qur'ān. See: Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Muhassal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta’akhkhirīn min al-ʿUlamāʾ wa al-Ḥukamāʾ wa al-Mutakallimīn, ed. Ṭāḥa ʿAbd al-Raʿūuf Ṣaʿd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyah, n.d.), 208; 213; Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Maʿālim Uṣūl al-Dīn, ed. Ṭāḥa ʿAbd al-Raʿūuf Ṣaʿd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azhariyah, n.d.), 93-94; Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliyyah Min al-ʿIlm al-Ilāhī, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, 1st ed., vol. 8, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1987), 103-114.

360 The reference mentions that two alternative manuscripts have the word الوقت here instead.

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 quṭb of the world, in Ṣūfī 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,

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 Śūfīs call him. Al-Rāzī then notes that a group among the Imāmī Shi‘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 (*ghāʾib*).” Al-Rāzī states that he agrees with all of these descriptions of the personality in question (seemingly assuming it is also in line with Śūfī 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.⁶⁶² 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 (*ghāʾib*) because people do not know the identity of this most excellent being. However, there is a nuanced difference between this notion of being “*ghāʾib*” and the Shi‘ī view of the 12th Imam being “*ghāʾib*” —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 *ghāʾib*). 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 *nāṣṣ* describing

---

⁶⁶² 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 *maʾṣūm*), not merely a relatively best excellence that is anything less than *maʾṣūm*. 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 *ʿiṣmah* 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 *takhfīʿah* 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 *ʿiṣmah* upon the best out of His grace, for example.
the specific name/lineage of such a figure in the Sunnî 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 Shi‘ī understanding would disagree with this last point as well.

فثبت هذا: أن كل دور لا بد وأن يحصل فيه شخص موصوف بصفات الكمال. ثم إنه لا بد وأن يحدث في هذه الأدوار المتلاحقة: دور يحصل فيه شخص واحد يكون هو أفضل من كل أولئك الذين كل واحد منهم صاحب دور، 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، والهادي إلى الحقائق. وتكون نسبته إلى سائر أصحاب الأدوار كنسبته الشمس إلى سائر الكواكب. ثم لا بد وأن يحدث في أصحاب الأدوار إنسان، هو أقرهم إلى صاحب الدور، في صفات الفضيلة. فيكون ذلك الشخص بالنسبة إليه، كالقمر بالنسبة إلى الشمس، وهو الإمام القائم مقامه، المقرر شريحته. وأما الباقون فنسبته كل واحد منهم إلى صاحب الدور الأعظم، كنسبية كوكب من الكواكب السيارة إلى الشمس. وأما عاوم الخلق فهم بالنسبة إلى أصحاب الأدوار مثل حوادث هذا العالم بالنسبة إلى الشمس والقمر وسائر الكواكب. ولا شك أن عقول الناشئين تكمل بأنوار عقول أصحاب الأدوار، وتقوي بقوة. فهذا كلام معقول مرتبط على الاستقراء الذي يفيد القسط واليقين.

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’ah (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 awliyāʾ 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 Shīʿī and Ṣūfī Sunnī elements of this leader behind the scenes into full bloom, shedding light on striking similarities between the incognito quṭb and the Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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.
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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī view of the al-Imām al-Maʿṣūm (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

---

Some readers might wonder if it is possible to entertain the conspiracy theory again here. Perhaps al-Rāzī is a Shīʿī practicing an elaborate form of *taqiyyah* (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 Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī views, but while insisting on rejecting Shīʿī applications of those principles.
cosmology of awliyāʾ allows for the replacement of the living qūṭb such that the world is never rid of one, even if no one knows who he is, while the Imāmī Shīʿī 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 Shīʿī 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 qūṭb, 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-ʿAqīdah al-Mahdawīyah, is a contemporary scholar of Islamic studies in the ḥawzah al-ʿilmīyah of Najaf, Iraq and the book itself has been adopted by a research center (Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Takḥaṣṣuṣīyah fī al-Imām al-Mahdī) sponsored by a foremost grand religious authority of Twelver Shīʿī Muslims, ʿAlī 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-mafḥūm wa al-miṣdāq; The latter being the instance to which the concept applies – the practical example corresponding to the concept. See: Muhammad Rıdı al-Muzaaffar, al-Manṭiq, ed. ʿAlī Shīrvānī (Qum: Muʿassasah-yi Intishārāt-i Dār al-ʿIlm, 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 Shīʿī, 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 Shīʿī thought, al-Ishkiwarī paints a vivid image of the Mahdī’s anticipated and leadership of presence-in-absence,

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
plesethem.” 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 Qurʾān 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.”

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 Qurʾān’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-Mashhādī’s al-Mazār, Duʿāʾ al-Nudbah (from which the excerpts above are drawn) is reported to be recommended as a weekly practice – on Fridays – as well as annually on three other days of significance – Eid (ʿĪd) al-Fiṭr, Eid al-

370 Muṣṭahabb; religiously recommended, indicating an official legal status based on the sanctioning of an infallible authority (the Qurʾān, the Prophet or the Imāms).
371 Celebrating the successful fast of the month of Ramadān; the 1st of Shawwāl.
Adhā\textsuperscript{372}, and Eid al-Ghādir\textsuperscript{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 worship\textsuperscript{374}, 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

\textsuperscript{372} Celebrating the successful pilgrimage to Mecca; the 10\textsuperscript{th} of Dhū al-Ḥijjah.

\textsuperscript{373} Celebrating the appointment of 'Alī as the first Shīʿī Imām when the Prophet Muḥammad famously declared him to have an analogous authority over the Muslims as Muḥammad himself had (\textit{man kuntu mawlāhū fa ḥādhā ἁliyyun mawlāhū ...}); the 18\textsuperscript{th} 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:


\textsuperscript{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-ʿAqīdah 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 Wāʾil said: The Commander of the Faithful, Imam ʿAlī, looked at Imam Ḥusayn and said,

إن ابني هذا سيد كما سمى رسول الله ( صلى الله عليه وآله ) سيّداً، وسيخرج الله من صلبه رجل بِسم نبيّكم يشبهه في الخلق والخلق، يخرج على حين غفلة من الناس، وإماتة للحقّ، وإظهار للجور، واللهي لو لم يخرج لضربت عنقه، يفرح بخروجه أهل السماوات وسكّانها، وهو رجل أجلى الجبين، أقنى الأنف، ضخم البطن، أزيل الفخذين، بفخذه اليمنى شامة، أفلج الثنايا، وهو رجل أغلب السماء وسکانها، وهو رجل أجمل الجبين، أفنى الأنف، ضخم البطن، أزيل الفخذين، بفخذه اليمنى شامة، أفلج الثنايا، وهو رجل أغلب السماء وسکانها، وهو رجل أجمل الجبين، أفنى الأنف، ضخم البطن، أزيل الفخذين، بفخذه اليمنى شامة، أفلج الثنايا، وهو رجل أغلب السماء وسکانها، وهو رجل أجمل الجبين، أفنى الأنف، ضخم البطن، أزيل الفخذين، بفخذه اليمنى شامة، أفلج الثنايا، وهو رجل أغلب السماء وسکانها، وهو رجل أجمل الجبين، أفنى الأنف، ضخم البطن، أزيل الفخذين، بفخذه اليمنى شامة، أفلج الثنايا، وهو رجل أغلب السماء وسکانها، وهو رجل أجمل الجبين، أفنى الأنف، ضخم البطن، أزيل الفخذين،

This son of mine is a master (Sayyid) just as the Messenger of God [Prophet Muhammad] called him a master; and God will bring out a man from his
descendants whose name will be the name of your Prophet [Muḥammad], resembling him in features and character; he mobilizes 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 beheaded; the people of the heavens and its dwellers will be delighted by his advent. He is a man of a broad forehead, a [slightly] elongated nose with a curve midway and a fine tip, a [proportionately] sizeable abdomen, [powerful] heavily built thighs [without contacting each other]; on his right thigh there is a beauty spot; his front teeth are spaced; he fills the earth with justice just as it has been filled with injustice and tyranny.

Such descriptions of the Mahdī’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 ṣubih; from his loins.
376 al-Khaṭṭiq; his physical features.
377 al-Khulūq; 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 (ẓuhūr). 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 (ẓāhir), thus ending the period of ghaybah, before he mobilizes his movement (yakhruj). See: Muhammad Taqī al-Mūsawī al-Iṣfahānī (d. ca 1348 AH / 1929 CE), Mikyāl al-Makārim fī Fawā’id al-Duʿāʾ Lil-Qāʾim, ed. ‘Alī ʿĀshūr, 1st ed., vol. 1, 2 vols. (Beirut: Muʿassasat al-Aʿlamī lil-Maṭbūʿāt, 2001), 82.
380 Khurūjih; his mobilization.
381 Ajlā al-jabīn.
382 Aqnā al-anf.
383 Ḍakhm al-bāṭin; 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-thanāyā; having a slight gap between the front teeth, regarded as a sign of beauty.
388 Al-Ishkiwarī, al-ʿAqīdah 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 Shīʿī ḥadīth literature. This idea of spreading justice is quoted in the contemporary text al-ʿAqīdah 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 ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī said: I was at the Prophet’s [place] in the house of Umm Salamah. Then God revealed this verse,

إِنَّا يَرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَذْهِبَ عَنكُمُ الْرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًۭا

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 ʿAlī and had him sit behind his back; and he said,

---

389 Qurʾān 33:33
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,

水肿 إلى خبر

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 (ʿitrah) and blessed progeny (dhurīyah) by repelling all impurity away from them.” Then he said,

يا جابر لأنغم عرتني من خمي ودمي، فأخي سيّد الأوصياء، وابني خير الأسباط، وابنتي سيّدة النسوان، ومنّا المهدي

O Jābir, [that is] because they are my close kin (ʿitrah), of my own flesh and blood. For my brother [ʿAlī] is the master of the guardians (awṣiyāʾ); 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 أئمّة أبرار، والتاسع قائمهم يملأ الأرض قسطاً وعدلاً كما ملئت جوراً، يقاتل على التأويل

as well as the Mahdī is from among us.

عندما قالتت على التأويل

Then he said, “O Jābir, because they are my close kin (ʿitrah), of my own flesh and blood. For my brother [ʿAlī] is the master of the guardians (awṣiyāʾ); 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,
Nine from the progeny (*ṣulb*) of Ḥusayn are righteous Imams; the ninth is the Qāʾim [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-taʾwil*) just as I have fought over the revelation [of scripture] (*al-tanzīl*).\(^{390,391}\)

The reference to *taʾwil* is reminiscent of the Qurʿānic verse 3:7, in which two types of verses are outlined, one to be understood within the intertextual Qurʿānic context of the other. As the verse states,

\begin{align*}
\text{هو الَّذي أنزَلَ عَلَيكَ الكيتابَ مينهُ آياتٌ مُُكَماتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الكيتابي وَأُخَرُ مُتَشابهاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذينَ في قُلوبهُم زَيغٌ فَيَتَّبيعونَ ما تَشابَهَ مِنِهُ ابتيغاءَ الفيتنَةي وَابتيغاءَ تََويليهي وَما يَعلَمُ تََويلَهُ إيلاَّ للَّهُ وَالرّاسيخونَ فيي العيلمي يَقولونَ آمَنّا بيهي كُلٌّ مين عيندي رَبّينا وَما يَذَّكَّرُ إيلاّ أُولُو الأَلبابي}
\end{align*}

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* in it, in pursuit of mischief and in pursuit of its *taʾwil*. But no one knows its *taʾwil* 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.

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. This also blurs the distinction between the legal leadership of *ulū al-amr* and the spiritual mastery 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 Qurʾān (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 Qurʾānic 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: Muhammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzān Fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 20 vols. (Qum: Muʾassasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, n.d.); Nāṣir Makārim al-Shīrāzi, *al-Amthal Fī Tafsīr 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 *taʾwil* and its significance below.

395 Qurʾān 3:7

396 For example, It has been reported the Sulaymān ibn ʿĪsā said,

[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 Mahdi’s presence-in-absence, his ghaybah. The “ghaybah” is mentioned in al-‘Aqidah al-Mahdawiyah at least 13 times, referencing primary sources. Including in-text discussion and footnotes, the transliterated word “ghaybah” appears over 100 times in al-‘Aqidah al-Mahdawiyah – almost every other page, on average. The Mahdi’s ghaybah is at times coupled with his objective of spreading justice. For example,

It has also been reported that the Mahdi will make his case by showing evidence relevant to each group of people he addresses. As one report quotes, he will say,


Another report indicates that most of the world will accept the Mahdi’s leadership without any bloodshed,


---


It has also been reported that the Mahdi will make his case by showing evidence relevant to each group of people he addresses. As one report quotes, he will say,


Another report indicates that most of the world will accept the Mahdi’s leadership without any bloodshed,
It has been reported that Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī said: The Messenger of God said,

المهدي من ولدي، اسمه اسمي، وكنيته كنيتي، أشبه الناس بي خلقاً وخُلُقاً، تكون به غيابة وحيرة تضل فيها الأمم، ثمّ يقبل كالشهاب الثاقب يملأها عدلاً وقسطاً كما ملئت جوراً وظلمًا.

The Mahdī [is] from among my progeny, his name is my name, and his kunyah\(^{397}\) is my kunyah. In terms of features\(^{398}\) and character\(^{399}\), he is the closest in resemblance to me amongst [all] people. There will be a ghaybah and a puzzlement\(^{400}\) associated with him, during which communities\(^{401}\) will go astray. Then he will come like a penetrating star\(^{402}\); he fills it with justice and fairness just as it has been filled with tyranny and injustice.\(^{403,404}\)

Throughout al-ʿAqīdah al-Mahdawīyah, al-Ishkiwarī makes ample reference to primary sources compiled between the 10\(^{th}\) and 13\(^{th}\) 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 ʿAbd Allāh,” for example, that does not necessarily mean his son’s name is ʿAbd 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 thāqib.

\(^{403}\) Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī al-Ṣadūq, Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Nī mah, 286.

\(^{404}\) Al-Ishkiwarī, al-ʿAqīdah 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 vigilance, 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].

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 explains that last justificatory strategy,

For it has been reported that ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Faḍl al-Hāshimī said,

سمعت الصادق جعفر بن محمد عليه السلام يقول: (إنَّ لصاحب هذا الأمر غيبة لا بدَّ منها يرتاب فيها كلّ مبطل)، فقلت: وَمَّ جَعَلْتُ فَذَاكَ؟ قال: (لأمر لم يؤذن لنا في كشفه)، قلته: فما وجه الحكمة في غيبته؟ قال: (وجه الحكمَة في غيبته وَجَهٌ.

---

405 “Fear” similar to how it is used Qurʾān 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 (Qurʾān 12); and the long life of Noah (Qurʾān 29:14).
I heard [Imam] al-Ṣādiq, Jaʿfar 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 Qurʾān but also paints the Mahdī figure as a Khiḍr of sorts – one who does the work of God on earth incognito. The Qurʾān 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 Qurʾānic theme; or [2] understanding the Mahdī as part of a network of Khiḍr-type activity behind the scenes.

---

408 Al-Ishkiwarī, al-ʿAqīdah al-Mahdawīyah, 139-140.
409 Qurʾān 18:65.
5.3 Epistemological Technologies

5.3.1 Default Principle of Verification

Besides justificatory strategies addressing questions raised about the Mahdi in modernity, examples of which appeared in the preceding section, al-Ishkiwari’s subject-forming strategies extend to the epistemological framework pronounced and assumed throughout his discussions. This approach is not unique to al-Ishkiwari, 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-ʿAqīdah 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-Ishkiwari argues,

والحقّ أنَّ الأصل هو عدم التسليم بسهولة، وعدم التسامح وعدم الانقياد، فالالأصل الجاري هو أصالة التفحّص والتحقيق، والتوقّف للترويّ والتأمل، وأصالة التفكّر والتعلّم والتحفّظ، فالأصل هو الاحتياط وليس الاتخاذ، والبساطة والتسامح والكون لكلّ داع، والتعجل والذوبُ السريع ورخص النعم، فلا ينبغي له الدخول في صفقة معاوضها، ومبيعها تأهّ أو معتّر، وضعف بضاعة المفكّر إمَّا لوهن دليله، وإمَّا لضعف مستطباته وخشنتها، وإمَّا لمهموميّة فكره.

فِين علیه السلام: (كُنْ في الْفَتْنَة كَايِن الْلَّهُونَ لَا ظَهَرَ فِرْعَاوَنَ ولا ضَرَّعَ فِي خَلْقِهِ)

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 ʾAlī 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.
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-ʿAqīdah 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,

إِنْ حُدِيثَ الوعي الديني غير حديث المعرفة، فَالأَوْلَى يَتَّبَعْ أسَاسًا على الإيمان والإذعان والتسليم وانعقاد القلب والطمأنينة، وَقَدْ تَتَفَقُّ هذه الحالة حتَّى عند غير العالم وتُولَّد من العقل العملي، وسِيْل تشبيط هذا العقل يكون عن طريق الدعاء والأذكار والأوراد، والعبارة والأنعاس وتدبيِب النفس والتجْبَب عن المحرَّمات والمكروهات، والعمل بالمستجَبَات، بينما الأخير منتج العقل النظرِي فهو وُلِدِ إِعداد المقدِّمات النظرية وتنظيمها، وَهَوَهُ رِيح مَواد الأقبيسة وصورها، وَحُصِّل عن طريق حضور المحافل العلمية والدرس. وَمَن هَا نُنَرَى أَنَّ بعض المستشرقين يملِّكُون من المعلومات عن الدين الإسلامي الشيء الكثير، ولكنه لا يملك رصيدًا.
To speak of religious awareness is one thing and to speak of knowledge\textsuperscript{413} is another thing. The former rests on faith, conviction, submission, attaching one’s heart [to something], and [a sense of] assurance\textsuperscript{414}. This state can occur even to one who is not a scholar. It arises from the [faculty of] \textit{practical reason}\textsuperscript{415}. This [faculty of the] intellect is energized through supplication\textsuperscript{416}, invocations [remembering God]\textsuperscript{417}, [regimens of] devotional acts\textsuperscript{418}, moral lessons, admonitions, mastering oneself\textsuperscript{419}, avoiding sins and unrecommended\textsuperscript{420} acts, and performing recommended acts [of devotion]. As for the latter, it is the product of \textit{theoretical reason}\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 \textit{Theoretical reason} without similarly engaging \textit{practical reason}\textsuperscript{422}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Maʿrifah}.
\item \textit{al-Ṭuma nīnah}; contentment and tranquility that is associated with being reasonably sure.
\item \textit{al-ʿAql al-ʿamalī}; 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.
\item \textit{Duʿāʾ}.
\item \textit{al-Adhkār} (sing. dhikr).
\item \textit{al-Awrād} (sing. wirkāt).
\item \textit{Tahdhīb al-nafs}; disciplining oneself, taming one’s desires.
\item \textit{Makrūhāt} (sing. makrūḥ).
\item \textit{al-ʿAql al-naẓārī}; Speculative Reason; It is the intellect’s capacity to understand propositions about the world. According to some definitions, this would include the \textit{understanding} even of propositions about what acts should/should not be done.
\item Al-Ishkiwārī, \textit{al-ʿAqidah al-Mahdawīyah}, 62.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
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 Qurʾān as an epistemic source.

5.3.3 Qurʾānic Exegetical Technologies

Al-Ishkiwarī begins with a summary of arguments for the miraculous, inimitable quality of the Qurʾān, aiming to establish the Qurʾān as a reference point arrived at through sound reason. The author then delves into technical points distinguishing the integrity of the Qurʾān as an epistemic source, on the one hand, and establishing the methodology for approaching the Qurʾānic text, on the other hand. For example, al-Ishkiwarī outlines that the Qurʾān 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, 

آنَ القرآن منه ما هو نصّ صريح، ومنه ما هو ظاهر، بمعنى يجعل إرادة الخلاف منه، بيد أنه بحاجة إلى القرينة التي مع فقدانها يحمل على ما هو الظاهر للسيرة العقلانية الممضاة من الشارع، وللتحاكمات العرفية في الرجوع إليه، ومنه ما هو متشابه يحمل أكثر من معنى.
Considered separately, different parts of the Qurʾān have different degrees of explicitness in indicating their meaning: [1] Some parts of the Qurʾān are explicit; [2] Other parts of the Qurʾān are apparent, 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 individuals, which has been endorsed by the Divine Legislator. Moreover, common sense judgments refer back to the apparent meaning [of expressions]; [3] Yet other parts of the Qurʾān are mutashābih, allowing for more than one meaning.

Both the explicit and the apparent types of verses belong to the muḥkam 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-ʿUqalāʾīyah.
426 al-Mumḍāh.
427 al-Shāriʿ.
428 al-ʿUrft; Customary; related to the common way of using language.
429 al-Tahākumāt.
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 Qurʾān. 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 Qurʾān; 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 Qurʾān. […] 432

By establishing this mode of reading the Qurʾānic 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 Qurʾānic exegesis and uses the aforementioned word “taʿwīl” to distinguish legitimate and illegitimate forms of interpretation. To summarize al-Ishkiwarī’s discussion, the word “taʿwīl” 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-ʿAqidah al-Mahdawīyah, 67-68.
apparent meanings\textsuperscript{433}, contemplation and sequence of speech signification\textsuperscript{434} to understand the Qurʾān 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 Shīʿī belief). This taʾwīl (i.e. the taʾwīl as opposed to exegesis) includes two types of information: [1] identifying applicability\textsuperscript{435}, in which instances of application are identified by Ahl al-Bayt’s reports, without limiting the generality\textsuperscript{436} of an exegetical reading of the verses; and [2] the specific sense of taʾwīl, 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).\textsuperscript{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 “taʾwīl,” the Qurʾān’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 taʾwīl authority. For example, al-Ishkiwarī writes the following on Qurʾān 37:10,

\[إِلَّا مَن خَطِيفَ الخَطْفَةَ فَأَتَبَعَهُ…\]  

[...] except one who snatches a fragment as a piercing flame pursues him.\textsuperscript{438}  

Al-Ṣadūq has reported that [Imam Jaʿfar] al-Ṣādiq said,  

\textsuperscript{433} Zuhūr.  
\textsuperscript{434} Al-Dalālah al-Siyāqiyyah.  
\textsuperscript{435} Al-Jary wa al-inṭibāq.  
\textsuperscript{436} 'Umūm.  
\textsuperscript{437} Al-Ishkiwarī, al-ʿAqīdah al-Mahdawiyyah, 69-77.  
\textsuperscript{438} Qurʾān 37:10
Indeed, [I swear] by God, your Mahdī will be hidden from you until the ignorant among you will say, “God has no need for the progeny of Muḥammad.”

It is also reported that he said,

 ثمَّ يقبل كالشهاب الثاقب فيملأها عدلاً وقسطاً كما ملئت جوراً وظلمًا

Then he will come like a penetrating star; he fills it with justice and fairness just as it has been filled with tyranny and injustice.

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 Qurānic one, regardless whether the approach [to reading the text] is: exegetical, known through contemplation and the sequence of speech signification; or taʾwīl-derived [in a broad sense], known through the reports of Ahl al-Bayt either in the sense of applicability or in a sense of taʾwīl [exclusively identifiable by them].

Whether taken in the sense of an exegetical generality that applies to the Mahdī or taken in the sense of an exclusive form of taʾwīl 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.
441 T: Shihāb thāqib.
443 Al-Ishkiwarī, al-ʿAqīdah al-Mahdawīyah, 77.
justified through applicability and/or taʿwīl makes the Mahdī a Qurʾānic 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 Qurʾān 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 Shiʿī thought. Addressing Ibn Khaldūn’s objection, al-Ishkiwarī writes,

The answer to this is two-fold:

1- So long as the claim to tawātur regarding the reports about the Mahdī holds its ground in effect, then there is no harm in entertaining unreliability when it comes to individual reports. In his al-Idhāʿah, 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 واتَّفق عليه

جمهور الأمَّة سلفاً عن خلف إلاَّ من لا يعتد بخلفه

[...]
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,

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 yuʿtaddu bi khilāfīh; 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.
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 (ʿAṣabīyah) without Bigotry (Taʿaṣṣub)

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-ʿAqidah al-Mahdawiyyah, 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 (ʿaṣabīyah) 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 Ἄlī or Ḥusayn ibn Ἀlī. Ibn Khaldūn writes,

وَالحقّ الذي ينبغي أن تَتَقَرَّر لديك أنَّه لا تتمُّ دعوة من الدين والملك إلاَّ بوجود شوكة وعصبية تظهره وتدافع عنه من بذله.

حتى يتم أمر الله فيه [...] وعصبية الفاطميين، بل وقريش أجمع قد تلاشت من جميع الأفق ووجد أمم آخرون قد استعملت عصبيتهم على عصبية قريش، إلاَّ ما بقي بالحجاجز في مكة ويبني بالمدينة من الطالبين من بني حسن وبي حسین وبي جعفر وهم منتشرون في تلك البلاد وغالبون عليها وهم عصابات بدوية متفرقة 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 Jaʾfarites in the Ḥijāz – in Mecca – and al-

454 al-ʿAṣabīyah.
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 […] 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 intrusion⁴⁵⁶ of a scholar of history upon a specialization which is not his own – by deeming a [ḥadīth] report to be unreliable – is the utmost abomination⁴⁵⁷.⁴⁵⁸ 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 refute⁴⁵⁹ something else.

**Thirdly:** It also requires evidence to prove its generalizability⁴⁶⁰.

**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,

---

⁴⁵⁶ *Taṭafful [...] ’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 Ṣ̱Umūmīyah.
⁴⁶¹ *al-Taʾṣṣub*; Here used in the sense of group feeling/spirit that is regardless of what is right.
questioning the extension of Ibn Khaldūn’s theory to Divinely ordained movements, and objecting to Ibn Khaldūn’s appeal to bigotry (ta‘ṣṣub) 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, Shi‘ī and Şūfī 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. 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.

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,

---

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 Ezra\textsuperscript{465} 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]\textsuperscript{466} would have exalted attributes and intensely high forms of excellence.\textsuperscript{467}

\textsuperscript{465} al-ʿUzayr.
\textsuperscript{466} Al-Muṣliḥ; the reformer.
\textsuperscript{467} Al-Ishkiwārī, \textit{al-ʿAqīdah al-Mahdawiyyah}, 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, 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). 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, fitrah), iteratively invoked, is subject-forming, while false content (or content otherwise unharmonious with the fitrah), 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,

[[...]]

الفقر، لكنَّ نفس الفقر ليس منشأ، وإنَّ المنشأ هو الإحساس بِلفقر، والمظلمية، والحُرَمان 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.
[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 mentality\textsuperscript{471}, blind compliance, indoctrination\textsuperscript{472}, and creating a spirit of rebellion against [true] intellectual sources.

[...]\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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, Shīʿī and Ṣūfī crossroads, conceptual differences between which

\textsuperscript{471} al-ʿAql al-jamʿī; In a different context, this term might be used in the sense of collective intelligence.
\textsuperscript{472} al-Talqīn.
\textsuperscript{473} Al-Ishkiwarī, \textit{al-ʿAqīdah al-Mahdawīyah,} 202-203.
\textsuperscript{474} Al-Ishkiwarī, \textit{al-ʿAqīdah 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 Shīʿī (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 Shīʿī reading arguably distinguished the absolute obedience to, and implied infallibility of, Ulū al-Amr of verse 4:59 from the lesser-of-two-ills 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 Shīʿī conclusion that Ulū al-Amr are to be identified by nāṣṣ or Divine appointment.

- Chapter 3 discusses Sunnī conceptual frameworks that were notably distinct when compared to one another, let alone when contrasted with the Shīʿī 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 ijmāʿ). 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 awliyāʾ allowed for the replacement of the living quṭb such that the world is never rid of one, while the Imāmī Shīʿī 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 (fitrah) 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 Ashʿarī vs. Māturīdī,
in terms of *kalām*, for instance, or Ḥanafī vs. Mālikī or Shāfiʿī 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 *takhṭiʾah* 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.
A note on referencing “editors”: The process of taṣḥīḥ (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 taḥšiyah and taʿlīq (exegetical footnotes, sometimes developing into a book of its own), by some of them, problematize the insufficient “editor” characterization. These muṣahḥīḥūn, muḥashshūn, and muʿalliqūn are authors of metatexts to varying degrees, not merely editors.


Al-Hamadhānī al-ʿAsad ʿAbd Allāh (d. 415 AH / 1025 CE), ʿAbd al-Jabbār ibn ʿAḥmad. *Al-Mughni fī Abwāb al-Tawbīḥ wa al-ʿAdl*. Edited by Tāḥā Ḥusayn, Ibrāhīm Maḍkūr, Sulaymān Dūnūyā, 258


Al-Mawardi (d. 450 AH / 1058 CE), ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad. Al-Abkām al-Sulṭāniyyah wa al-Wilāyāt al-Dinīyah. 2nd ed. Sharikat Maktabat wa Maṭbaʿaṭ Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa Amlādīh, 1386 AH / 1966 CE.


Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204 AH / 820 CE), Muḥammad ibn Idrīs. *Al-Risālah*. Edited by Aḥmad Shākir. 1st ed. Maktabat al-Ḥalabī, 1940 CE.


262


https://search-ebscohost-


