MORALITY AND IDEALISM:
ABU'L-FAZL BAYHAQI'S HISTORICAL THOUGHT IN TARIKH-I BAYHAQI

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of an eleventh-century Islamic historian's conception of history. Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi's work *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*, written in Persian, is an anomaly in the pre-modern historical literature that has been written in Persian or Arabic. Many scholars have written about the historical/historiographical importance of this text. The present study, however, offers a new, more accurate, and textually supported approach in studying this historical text. For this reason, chapter one provides an introduction to the subject. Chapter two explains the author's religious outlook and adherence to principles of morality, both of which provide the appropriate context to his historical thought. Chapter three, then, attempts a line-by-line analysis of a theoretical section Bayhaqi appended to the first "Preface" in the text. A careful analysis of this section has been overlooked by all Bayhaqi scholars. Finally, chapter four shows how ideal kingship, one of the major and much-discussed themes of the text, should be understood, not in isolation from the other themes of the text, but in light of Bayhaqi's understanding and presentation of history, which are equal to his understanding of the human being and his experience as an individual and an element in society.

It is the central argument of this thesis that though on the surface Bayhaqi's understanding of history is similar to some other intellectuals and historians who were contemporaneous with him, a careful study of the section appended to the first "Preface"
coupled with an analysis of his practice in writing history indicate that on a deeper level his conception of history was quite distinct from most medieval historians and intellectuals. His method, which is of his own making, calls for a philosophical understanding of the use of history in setting didactic examples from human experience. This concept of experience, which Bayhaqi emphasizes on numerous occasions and is understood properly only in the context of the section appended to the first "Preface," is the basis of his conception of history and a key to the understanding of his text. This same concept, however, is the most misapprehended theme in the modern scholarship on Bayhaqi.
To my parents
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many individuals have helped me from the outset of this project. My deepest gratitude, however, goes to my teacher, advisor, and a good friend, Professor Stephen F. Dale. From him, I learned a great deal during past two years of my studies at the Ohio State University. Besides the specifics that pertain to the scholar’s method, he taught me by his own example what it means to be a scholar and a historian. What is presented in this thesis is on many crucial levels shaped by the seminars I took with him, the private conversations we held on various topics pertaining to Islamic history, and his suggestions and comments on various drafts of the chapters. Professor Jane Hathaway’s research seminar on medieval chronicles provided the starting point of my interest to study Bayhaqi’s conception of history. Her critiques of my seminar paper, her subsequent intellectual support, as well as her comments on earlier drafts of this thesis helped immeasurably to improve the quality of and ultimately to successfully finish this undertaking. I am also grateful to Professor Richard Davis for his thorough reading of drafts of this thesis and his invaluable suggestions and comments. My colleague and friend, Ameneh (Saghi) Gazerani, whose field coincided with this inquiry provided me with instructive suggestions, shared her thoughts about the age and intellectual culture under discussion, and read and commented on various drafts of all chapters. My colleague John Curry read a draft of the first chapter and commented on it. My friend
Jennifer Chapman, also, read a draft of the first chapter and commented on it. I am thankful to my friend Jacopo De Martin for his generous assistance with the Italian scholar Filippo Bertotti’s book on Bayhaqi. Needless to state that all possible overlooked mistakes, misinterpretations, and/or over-interpretations are all mine, and I am solely responsible for them.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes. The transliteration system used in this thesis is based on that of *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>EI¹</td>
<td><em>Encyclopedia of Islam</em>, 1st ed.</td>
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<td>EIUr</td>
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What is a historian? He’s someone who teaches mistakes. While others say, Here’s how to do it, he says, And here’s what goes wrong. While others tell you, This is the way, this is the path, he says, And here are a few bungles, botches, blunders and fiascos... It doesn’t work out; it’s human to err (so what do we need, a God to watch over us and forgive us our sins?). He’s a self-contradiction (since everyone knows that what you learn from history is that nobody—). An obstructive instructor, a treacherous tutor. Maybe he’s a bad influence. Maybe he’s not good to have around...

―Graham Swift, Waterland
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is an essay about the meaning of history to an eleventh-century historian who flourished in the eastern Islamic world. Abu’l-Fazl Bayhaqi is mostly known among the historians of medieval Islam for his detailed narrative of a ten-to-eleven-year period which coincided with the reign of a Ghaznavid ruler—Mas’ud b. Mahmud—he served. The Ghaznavids (366-582/977-1186) were a Turkish dynasty that came to power in the eastern end of the ‘Abbasid caliphate (749-1258 C.E.) in the late tenth century C.E. By this time, the ‘Abbasid caliph in Baghdad had ceased to be much more than a spiritual authority in the Islamic world, and so the Ghaznavids were one of the several dynasties that came to exert their political autonomy in their respective domains while paying symbolic allegiance to the emblem of authority in Baghdad. Bayhaqi’s account of Mas’ud’s reign (421-432/1030-1041) is in fact the extant portion of a multivolume history of the Ghaznavid dynasty. This text, Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, is known widely for the meticulous approach of its author in ascertaining facts from myth, its proper attribution of the sources, its author’s endeavor to keep an emotional distance in matters and peoples about whom he had strong opinions, its minute description of Ghaznavid court life and the intrigues it involved, and finally its author’s critical evaluations of characters and situations presented. These characteristics are significant because they are for the
most part missing in the chronicles of other historians in this period and because they as well are mostly rare in the works of even many pre-modern Islamic historians. It must also be noted that the text is by far the most detailed account that has survived of the historical narratives that pertain to any period of the Iranian past. Indeed, scholars have consensually acknowledged that the text under review constitutes an outstanding anomaly in the pre-Mongol Persian historical tradition. Some scholars have even gone so far as to place it among the few historical masterpieces that exist in the world’s pre-modern narrative traditions.

In this chapter, we shall begin with a discussion of the scholarship on Bayhaqi. Then follow a brief biography of the author, the general characteristics of the text under study, and information pertaining to the author’s other known works; the political setting of his times; his social and intellectual milieu; and finally some of the sources that were known by him will be given. The remaining chapters will then attempt to analyze the author’s historical approach. For this reason, chapter two is devoted to the context of, and thus a major source of influence on, Bayhaqi’s thought while chapter three attempts to set down for the first time some of the most important aspects of his conception of history. The conclusion that is offered in chapter four is the sum total of Bayhaqi’s understanding of history and its function in human society.

*The scholarship on Bayhaqi:*

Besides a few introductory but nonetheless extremely important articles that have been devoted to Bayhaqi and his text,¹ works that have been published and pertain to *Tarikh-i
Bayhaqi may be divided into three distinct groups. Various editions and carefully edited excerpts of the text as well as studies that pertain to the structure and available MSS of the text form the first group while the second and third groups are secondary sources that treat the literary and linguistic value of the text, and its historical and historiographical significance. The largest concentration of these primary and secondary sources is by far in Persian. There has been no major translation of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi into English; Marilyn Robinson Waldman’s rendition of the text, as a reviewer puts it, “should be used with care”—in fact with extreme care. Though Persian- and English-speaking scholars who have written on Bayhaqi have often been familiar with some of the works in the other language, the scholarship at large suffers from a lack of consideration of the work done in the other language. To give an example, one scholar who writes in English devotes an entire article to show the fundamental differences that exist between Bayhaqi’s understanding of the past and that of Firdawsī (d. 410 or 416/1019 or 1025) as evidenced in the Shahnama without the least acknowledgement of a lengthy and important article on the subject written some twenty-two years before in Persian and conveniently available in two collections of essays in major research libraries. On the other hand, Iranian scholars who have in recent years written on various aspects of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi have by and large proved themselves ignorant of the important studies that have been carried out by two major Bayhaqi scholars namely, M. R. Waldman and Julie Scott Meisami. This is so even when Waldman’s monograph—regrettably still the only monograph in the English language that attempts to analyze the historical and historiographical value of this most important intentional document written in pre-modern/pre-Mongol Iran—has been translated into Persian and published in Iran as early
as 1996. The work of the Italian scholar Filippo Bertotti, *L’opera della storico persiano Bayhaqi*, has for the most part remained unknown to Bayhaqi scholars although Meisami in her book on Persian historiography uses it quite extensively.

Mostly due to the dual importance—literary/linguistic, and historical/historiographical—of *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* there have been numerous editions of it ever since W. H. Morley and W. N. Lees published the text for the first time in 1862. The most methodologically sound edition, however, is still ‘Ali-Akbar Fayyaz’s revised edition published posthumously in 1350 sh/1971. The latter spent off and on some twenty-five years, after his and Q. Ghani’s earlier edition of the text, in studies and research pertaining to Bayhaqi in order to produce this revised edition. Meticulous and scrupulous though Fayyaz seems to have been, his final work suffers from incomprehensible MS abbreviations, incomplete notes, and our lack of knowledge of his precise method in editing the MSS. The only glimpse that is afforded scholars who study Bayhaqi through Fayyaz’s edition of the latter’s method is his brief article on various manuscripts of the text presented right before his death in 1350 sh/1971. The publication of his monograph *Bayhaqi va tarikh* apparently was never materialized. In 1381 sh/2002, Fayyaz’s edition was reproduced in three volumes with complete explanatory notes and seven different indexes by Khalil Khatib Rahbar. This edition though extremely useful in explaining the meaning of many archaic words, idioms, proverbs and sayings, and abstruse sentences as well as commenting on the obsolete literary and grammatical points, and the verse that is contained in the text, nonetheless, was not able to rectify the problem with understanding Fayyaz’s abbreviations and method.
Sa'id Nafisi’s three-volume edition of the text along with copious notes\(^{16}\) is primarily based on the 1862 (Morley and Lees) edition and an early 1305 to 1307 A.H./1887-88 to 1889-1890 Persian edition by Sayyid Ahmad Adib Pishavari. In addition, Nafisi had in his disposal at least one Iranian and one Indian MSS,\(^{17}\) two sets of explanatory notes and commentaries, and his own research and in-depth understanding of medieval history and literature to help him produce his edition. This edition, as a result, complements that of Fayyaz’s if only for its notes and very occasionally valid alternative readings. Manuchîhr Danishpazhuh’s two-volume\(^{18}\) is also based on Fayyaz’s revised edition as well as the Pishavari, and the Fayyaz and Ghani editions. It contains explanatory notes and various indexes, some drawn from a reference book recently produced by Sayyid Ahmad Husayni Kaziruni.\(^{19}\) Finally, Ja‘far Mudarris Sadiqi’s 1377 Sh/1998 edition of the text\(^{20}\) is a nice starter edition since its lengthy glossary and introduction, its repositioning of certain sections, and its attempt to rid the text of its Arabic vocabulary and passages were meant to appeal to the young and the unspecialized audience. In the present study, we have relied primarily on the Fayyaz and Khatib Rahbar editions. The Nafisi, Danishpazhuh, Fayyaz and Ghani, and Mudarris Sadiqi editions were also consulted when necessary.\(^{21}\)

The authors of the secondary sources in Persian have for the most part preferred to treat the literary and linguistic value of the text. Beginning with Muhammad Taqi Bahar’s section in volume two of his indispensable Sabkshinasi on “Abu Nasr Mushkan and Tarikh-i Bayhaqi,”\(^{22}\) many Iranian scholars have devoted articles and books to aspects of Bayhaqi’s style and language.\(^{23}\) These scholars often pointed to the great significance of Bayhaqi in the historical development of Persian prose and in the
revivification of the Persian language in modern times. It must be noted that besides the intrinsic qualities of the prose itself, *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*, as a collection of 140 lines of Arabic and 327 lines of Persian poetry—used at various junctures by the author and mostly with appropriate attributions—is more often than not their only or oldest extant source. As such, poetry in *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* has been the subject of a few articles. Finally, the esthetic aspects of Bayhaqi’s super-narrative with its textured and layered sub-narratives have attracted the attention of literary scholars who have drawn comparison between *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* and aspects of the modern novelistic genre. Two scholars who have written in English have also conducted inquiries about these features of the text. Hence, scholars have analyzed from a literary and linguistic point of view various qualities of the text in quite extensive detail. Since any serious outline of these studies is simply beyond the scope of this inquiry, we have contented ourselves with just pointing the reader to these sources.

The third category of the scholarship on Bayhaqi has treated the historical and historiographical aspects of his text. Beginning with ‘Abbas Iqbal Ashtiyani’s article on the unusual historical method that is represented in the writing of *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*, scholars have consensually acknowledged that the text under review is a rare instance of the type of descriptive and personalized literature that for the most part is missing in pre-modern Islamic literary and historical traditions. In fact, far from describing merely the political and military history (as is the case of most medieval chronicles) of the reign of Mas‘ud, Bayhaqi set down, in his text, for instance, the customs, culture, and formalities of Ghaznavid court and the diverse aspects of the office of dabir or secretary in Divan-i Risalat or the Ghaznavid Secretariat (see below). His specific reference to and detailed
description of various tribes, nations, geographical locations, and even the climate of
certain regions, moreover, render the text an incomparable source on the historical
geography of the eastern Islamic world.\footnote{1} In medieval Persian—or perhaps also
Islamic—historical narratives, one seldom finds detailed description of individual
women, whether high or low, that would enable one to acquire a diachronic
understanding of the position of women in society. Tarikh-i Bayhaqi's account of
women, though far from satisfying the need of modern scholars, contains considerable
historical information. At least two articles have been devoted to the topic of women in
Tarikh-i Bayhaqi so far.\footnote{2} For these reasons, many scholars stated that Bayhaqi's history
constitutes an outstanding anomaly not merely in the pre-Mongol or pre-modern Persian
historical tradition, but also in the pre-modern Islamic literary and pre-modern world
historical traditions in general.\footnote{3} That the author was conscious of sifting facts from
fiction, and explicitly evaluating his oral and textual sources and gives their names and
titles as well as his attempt not to prejudice his audience concerning certain historical
figures and events about whom he had preconceptions have been, furthermore, discussed
in several articles.\footnote{4}

Yet, by far the most important studies of the author's historiography have been
carried out primarily in English and by two historians mentioned earlier, that is,
Waldman and Meisami.\footnote{5} Of these, Waldman's monograph deserves particular
attention.\footnote{6} It must be noted that the book suffers from two major shortcomings. First,
Waldman at times displays her absolute linguistic incompetence in understanding the text
she tries to interpret. This has been most forcefully pointed out by John R. Perry in his
review of the book.\footnote{7} Second, Waldman's application of her theoretical framework is
rather dogmatic. She dismisses the historical validity of the accounts contained in the entire medieval Islamic historical tradition and subscribes to the idea that the modern scholar, because of the nature of his intentional sources, can only write an intellectual history of medieval Islam or "the history of that for which they [i.e., the sources or the chronicles] are events in and of themselves—the history of images and representations of the past." In other words, as Richard W. Bulliet states in his review of the text, rather than considering the possibility that the modern scholar can "cast a broader net in accumulating historical data and to search in non-narrative sources for corroborations or challenges to the clearly distorted or partial impression conveyed by the chronicles," Waldman simply dismisses the methodological validity of any attempt to disentangle historical information that is contained in medieval Islamic chronicles. Her extreme approach is clearly shown in the monograph when she relies in her attempt to provide the historical background to the life and times of Bayhaqi on the works of scholars whose very methodologies she challenges.

With all the methodological problems that are present in Waldman's monograph on Bayhaqi, the book is indispensable for any serious study of pre-Mongol Persian historiography in general and Bayhaqi's understanding of history in particular. It is extremely important not only because it suggests a valid alternative approach in reading Islamic chronicles, but also for the sheer amount of analysis it provides on Bayhaqi's historiography. So far the book remains the only case study in English or Persian of the historiography of any pre-modern Persian historian. It studies in separate chapters the structure, themes, and language of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. For these reasons, it shall be quoted at various junctures in the present study.
Finally, Meisami's articles on aspects of *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* and her monograph on pre-thirteenth century Persian historiography attempt a convincing substantiation or sometimes restatement of some of what Persian scholars have previously presumed or stated in their works. For instance, the complexity of the text and its methodological innovation are substantiated by her analysis of several episodes and many passages from the original text. Certainly, there are as well many original arguments in Meisami's studies. Perhaps one of the most important of these is her thesis that "[f]or Bayhaqi, history begins with Islam; and by virtue of his analogical method his own history becomes a near-seamless interweaving of Islamic present and Islamic past." Meisami goes so far as to argue that to Bayhaqi pre-Islamic Persian history has nothing to offer and that there is in effect no or very little intellectual continuity between pre-Islamic Iran and the thought that is enshrined in *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*. This argument has been challenged in the present study (see the chapters below). Another major point Meisami advances in her studies is the degree to which Bayhaqi is critical of the Ghaznavid system under Mas'ud. This has traditionally been misunderstood (particularly by Waldman) due mostly to Bayhaqi's subtlety in criticizing the system of which he was an important element. Ideals of kingship and its contrast with imperfect reality have, furthermore, been discussed by Meisami in her articles and book. What she most convincingly has argued about *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* is finally that history is deliberately considered as the fusion of philosophy (or ethics) and rhetoric.

With what has been presented concerning the importance of *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* in understanding the Iranian past, it is obvious that Bayhaqi's text is the most important
source for the historians who have written on the Ghaznavids or the eastern Islamic world in medieval times. There is simply no comparable intentional or unintentional source that can be used for this region in this period. This is the reason that Bayhaqi's text figures in the works of traditional historians like W. Barthold, Muhammad Nazim, ‘Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkub, and Clifford Edmund Bosworth. But these historians often considered Bayhaqi's account in the context of all the sources available for this period, including Fürstenspiegel (andarz) literature, geographical works, and poetry. As a result, their accounts and analysis of the Ghaznavid period are generally considered valid unless and until some study convincingly contradict them. For this reason, they are, in the present study, referred to when appropriate in order to illustrate the character of the age and the region in which Bayhaqi flourished.

The author, the text, and the other known works of the author:

Abu'l-Fazl Muhammad b. al-Husayn al-Bayhaqi (commonly known as Abu’l-Fazl Bayhaqi) started his career as a secretary or dabir at the court of the Ghaznavid Mahmud (r. 388-421/998-1030) at the age of twenty-seven. Bayhaqi was born in 385/995 at Harisabad in the district of Bayhaq (Sabzavar) in the province of Khurasan, today a region in northeastern Iran and western Afghanistan, and died, after a life of service to the Ghaznavids, in Safar 470/August-September 1077 in the capital of their empire, Ghazna, today a small town in eastern Afghanistan. Of the first twenty-seven years of his life we know very little. It is highly likely that he came from a secretarial family since entrance to secretarial position was for the most part hereditary and since he calls his
father a “khvaja,” a word that means “lord,” “master,” and “owner,” and can at the same time be the honorific title of a vizier (e.g., khvaja-yi buzurg, the grand khvaja, meaning “the grand vizier”) and other dignitaries. He was educated in the Iranian city of Nishapur, an important center of learning at the time in the eastern Islamic world that was also in the vicinity of his birthplace, in presumably the skills required of a secretary. From his works it is clear that he mastered Persian (his native tongue) and Arabic at a very young age. His mastery of both languages and the subtlety in which he could write in either is indisputable. Moreover, it seems as though he spent much of his first twenty years in Nishapur itself and not in his birthplace. From 412/1021-22, when he started to work under the Head of the Secretariat (Divan-i Risalat) Abu Nasr Mansur b. Mushkan (d. 431/1039), until his death at the age of eighty-five, he lived in the Ghaznavid capital and was very close to the center of power—a unique position that allowed him to observe the important affairs of state. During his years of service to the Ghaznavids, he frequently traveled along with the sultans and important officials. This was the bureaucratic custom of the time since skilled secretaries were needed as the rulers and their courtiers visited different parts of the empire. For this reason, Bayhaqi observed much in the Ghaznavid territories and its peripatetic court. Much of his outlook on the Ghaznavids is, however, irretrievably lost to us since only six out of more than thirty volumes of his history of that dynasty—the most important work of his that we know of—are extant, and those with some major lacunae.

Scholars do not agree as to when Bayhaqi retired, whether willingly or otherwise, from his service to the Ghaznavid court. This is primarily due to the scant biographical information that is contained in the only four sources we have on his life: his Tarikh-i
Bayhaqi, his biographer Zahir al-Din Bayhaqi’s (Ibn Funduq) (d. 565/1169) Tarikh-i Bayhaq, Muhammad ‘Awfi’s (fl. late 6th/12th and early 7th/13th centuries) Jawami’ al-hikayat wa lawami’ al-riwayat, and Sadr al-Din al-Husayni’s (fl. 1180-1225) Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiya. From what we know, we may conclude that he witnessed the affairs of the Ghaznavid state under the reigns of the following ten rulers (see also Table 1):
Mahmud b. Sebuktigin (i.e., from 412/1021-22 to 421/1030), Muhammad b. Mahmud (i.e., his first brief reign in 421/1030) Mas‘ud I b. Mahmud (421-32/1030-41),
Muhammad (i.e., the second interregnum in 432/1041), Mawdud b. Mas‘ud I (432-40/1041?-448), Mas‘ud II b. Mawdud (440/1048), ‘Ali b. Mas‘ud I (440/1048-49), ‘Abd al-Rashid b. Mahmud (440-3/1049-52?), the usurper Toghril (443/1052?), Farrukhzad b. Mas‘ud I (444-51/1053-9), and Ibrahim b. Mas‘ud I (i.e., from 451/1059 to 470/1077).55

It is certain that he worked under Abu Nasr Mushkan for nineteen years and became “his assistant and protégé.”56 At the time of the latter’s death, he had the skills necessary and the recommendation of his master to become the new Head of the Secretariat. He himself reports that Mas‘ud I pointed to his youth as the primary reason for not appointing him in Abu Nasr’s place. He was at that time forty-six years old.
Bayhaqi, then, started as the deputy to the new Head of the Secretariat Abu Sahl Muhammad b. Husayn (or Hasan) Zuzani (d. c. 440-50/1050-59)—with whom he was not always on good terms—in the last year of the reign of Mas‘ud I. From this period to the reign of ‘Abd al-Rashid, our sources are not as forthcoming and explicit as one would hope. According to Ibn Funduq, Bayhaqi, in this span of time, served Mawdud but not Muhammad, Mas‘ud II, or ‘Ali—three of whom had very brief reigns.57 It is certain, however, that he was appointed Head of the Secretariat during the reign of ‘Abd al-
Rashid,⁵⁸ but shortly afterwards he was removed from that office and then imprisoned at the behest of the judge (qazi) of Ghazna “on the charge of having failed to pay the marriage portion (mahr) due to a wife” of his.⁵⁹ It is also reported that the reason for this imprisonment was “the machinations of his enemies.”⁶⁰ These two reported causes of his imprisonment might actually have been interconnected. When the Ghaznavid slave Toghril came to power, Bayhaqi was transferred to a fortress prison along with all the court servants and officials of ‘Abd al-Rashid. After the fifty-day ascendancy of Toghril, Bayhaqi was finally released when the house of Mahmud came back to power. Ibn Funduq speaks of Bayhaqi’s secretarial work under Farrukhzad,⁶¹ but the passing references we have in the extant portion of Bayhaqi’s history to the reign of Farrukhzad do not confirm this; they in fact shed doubt on the accuracy of Ibn Funduq’s statement. Sadr al-Din al-Husayni reports that towards the end of Farrukhzad’s reign Bayhaqi drafted a peace treaty between the Ghaznavids and the Saljuq Chaghri Beg.⁶² We may surmise that his secretarial work under Farrukhzad might have been that of one in an on-call advisory capacity and not in a formal secretarial position. Moreover, it is certain that toward the end of his life—and particularly during the reign of Farrukhzad—Bayhaqi devoted much of his time to composing his multi-volume history of the Ghaznavids. For this reason, he might not have had the necessary time to devote to full-time employment at court.

The most important and best-known of Bayhaqi’s works is the extant portion of his history of the Ghaznavids, which treats most, but not all, of the reign of Mas‘ud I. This text has come to be known as Tarikh-i Mas‘udi or simply Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. In the course of Persian literary history, the original multi-volume history of the Ghaznavids has
been referred to by several titles: *Tarikh-i Nasiri*, *Tarikh-i al-Mahmud*, *Jami‘ al-
tawarikh*, *Jami‘ fi tarikh Sebuktigin*, and *Tarikh-i al-i Sebuktigin*. The extant portion of
this monumental work is composed of volumes five to ten (comprising 945 pages in
Fayyaz’s most widely used critical edition). It is certain that volume ten is incomplete.
For at the outset of this volume the author clearly states his intention to write two
chapters—one on the history of Khvarazm, a semi-autonomous territory located in the
lowest basin of the river Jayhun or Bactrus, and the other on Jibal, which is essentially
the large mountainous region of the Iranian plateau west of Baghdad and east of
Nishapur, sometimes also called ‘Iraq-i ‘Ajam or Persian Iraq —and then deal with
Mas‘ud’s flight to India and his subsequent and unexpected end en route.63 Of these two,
only the chapter on Khvarazm is extant in the present text of volume ten. We also know
that the early portion of volume five is missing, but here we are less certain about the size
of this lacuna. This volume begins with the text of a letter (dated 3 Shavval 421 A.H.)
written to Mas‘ud by the court officials of Muhammad immediately after the latter’s
dethronement in Tiginabad, located west of present-day Qandahar, and confinement in
the nearby fortress of Kuhtiz.64 Thus, what we possess of the original volume five begins
with the nominal emergence and ascendancy of Mas‘ud as the supreme ruler of the
Ghaznavid empire.

Furthermore, there are three lacunae in volume eight. The first of these is located
at the beginning of this volume and seems in all likelihood to be a rather small one, that
is, between several lines and a few pages.65 According to the most recent discussions as
regards the second lacuna, the missing part is quite extensive and “embraces the chronicle
of no less than eleven months [i.e., from Rajab 424 A.H. to Jumadi II 425 A.H.].”66 The

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third lacuna is located at the end of this volume (and the beginning of volume nine), and it should also be somewhere between several lines and a few paragraphs. A comparison with the endings and beginnings of the other volumes suggests, finally, that there might be yet another lacuna of several lines to a few paragraphs at the close of volume six. The incomplete nature of the source under study will therefore inform the tentative discussion that follows in this essay.

Volumes one to five of Bayhaqi’s monumental work—no longer extant—constituted the history of the first four rulers of the Ghaznavid house, namely the founder Sebuktigin (366-87/977-97), Isma‘il b. Sebuktigin (387-8/997-8), Mahmud b. Sebuktigin, and Muhammad b. Mahmud. Bayhaqi states that he started his own independent account of the Ghaznavids from the year 409/1018-19 (i.e., covering the last twelve years of the reign of Mahmud). The years prior to that, he says, are covered in the History of a certain Mahmud Varraq, whom he commends for his reliability and scholarship (see below). There might be several reasons for compressing the reigns of these four Ghaznavid rulers, covering fifty-five years, into four to four and a half volumes while the eleven-year reign of Mas‘ud alone is extended to no fewer than six. For one thing, part of this fifty-five-year period (i.e., forty-three years) was covered in Mahmud Varraq’s “well-received” account. Hence, the author might not have felt the need to re-do the history of this period. Second, Bayhaqi arrived at Mahmud’s court in 412/1021-22. Even if he had had the keen interest he showed later to gather evidence for his future history, he might simply not have had the opportunity to collect extensive materials on the early part of the reign of Mahmud and the entire rule of his father. Third, it seems that sultans with brief reigns (e.g., Isma‘il and Muhammad) were not subjects of
particular interest to our author. Hence, their reigns might not have occasioned an
independent and/or long discourse in the form of a chapter or of a separate volume.
Finally, Bayhaqi’s most significant source for the pre-412 period was his trusted master.
Yet, Abu Nasr Mushkan could not have had much to relate concerning the first thirteen
years of Mahmud’s reign, for he himself entered Ghaznavid service only in 401. For the
post-401 period, even if Abu Nasr had had the same meticulous approach as Bayhaqi to
preserving and recounting details, he could not have provided as much information for
Bayhaqi’s use as the latter would for the period he himself witnessed, that is, the later
years of Mahmud and the kings who followed him.

Interpreting various textual clues in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, scholars have quite
reasonably surmised that the portion of the work—no longer extant—that dealt with the
reign of Sebuktigin, the founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty (i.e., volume one) was called
or came to be known as Tarikh-i Nasiri after Sebuktigin’s honorific (lqab) Nasir al-Din
wa al-Dawla. This was also, as noted above, one of the titles of the entire work. The
portion that treated the period of Mahmud’s rule (i.e., volumes two to four) was referred
to as Tarikh-i Yamini, after Mahmud’s title Yamin al-Dawla wa Amin al-Milla. These
same volumes were also called Maqamat-i Mahmudi or Maqamat-i Bu Nasr-i Mushkan.71
We do not know of any subsidiary titles for volumes eleven to thirty (and possibly
beyond), which covered the nineteen years between Mas‘ud I’s death and the beginning
of the reign of Ibrahim: that is, the detailed or probably the day-to-day account of the
Ghaznavid state under Muhammad (i.e., his second term), Mawdud, Mas‘ud II, ‘Ali,
‘Abd al-Rashid, Toghril, and Farrukhzad. According to Nafisi no excerpts from these
later volumes have come down to us.72 Iqbal Ashtiyani, however, considers that there
exist in various histories and books written and compiled after the eleventh century sections from volumes fifteen to twenty.\textsuperscript{73} As regards the earlier one to four volumes, we do know that some passages have been quoted by later compilers and historians. These include Muhammad `Awfi in his Jawami’ al-hikayat, Minhaj al-Din b. Siraj al-Din al-Juzjani (fl. 7\textsuperscript{th}/13\textsuperscript{th} century) in his Tabaqat-i Nasiri, Muhammad b. ‘Ali Shabankariki (fl. c. 697-759/1298-1358) in his Majma’ al-ansab fi al-tawarikh, Hafiz Abru (d. 833/1430) in his Tarikh-i Hafiz-i Abru, and Sayf al-Din ‘Aqili (fl. 9\textsuperscript{th}/15\textsuperscript{th} century) in his Athar al-wuzara’. All these, as well as some other materials pertaining to this most important work of Bayhaqi have been compiled by Nafisi in his Dar piramun-i “Tarikh-i Bayhaqi.”\textsuperscript{74}

Besides a history of the Ghaznavids, Bayhaqi, according to Ibn Funduq, had a work titled Zinat al-kuttab.\textsuperscript{75} “No trace of this work remains,” according to Ghulam-Husayn Yusufi\textsuperscript{76} though Bosworth, in his history of the early Ghaznavids, concludes that one single quotation from Bayhaqi in Ibn Funduq’s Tarikh-i Bayhaq might in fact have come not from the lost parts of the multi-volume history but rather from Zinat al-kuttab.\textsuperscript{77} In any case, it is definite that this text was a manual on the art of insha’ (secretarial composition). Fath’ullah Mujtaba’i, in his article in Encyclopedia Iranica, considers Zinat al-kuttab “[t]he earliest work” written in Persian on the epistolary arts, collectively known as insha’.\textsuperscript{78} However, this book could in principle have been in Arabic, as Soheil M. Afnan has pointed out.\textsuperscript{79} It is nonetheless regrettable that this text is lost, particularly since Ibn Funduq extols it in glowing terms: that as of his time “there is no other comparable book on this craft [i.e., insha’].”\textsuperscript{80} Finally there are two other extant items that have been attributed to Bayhaqi. One is a chapter in a manuscript in Malik Public Library in Tehran, which contains 373 Persian words that secretaries were advised
to replace with their more appropriate Arabic equivalents. This chapter was first published by ‘Ali-Asghar Hikmat in his *Parsi-yi naghz*.” Nafisi has reproduced this chapter in his *Dar piramun*.” The other item attributed to Bayhaqi is four lines of Arabic poetry in Ibn Funduq, two of which he states Bayhaqi wrote while in prison during the reign of Togrul.”

*The political context:*

The Ghaznavids (366-582/977-1186) were a Perso-Islamic dynasty of Turkish slave origin, which came to power at the termination of the founder Sebuktigin’s vassalage to the Samanid dynasty (204-389/819-997) in the eastern Islamic world or what was then in part at the periphery of an eclipsed ‘Abbasid caliphate (749-1258 C.E.). After the Buyid takeover of Baghdad in 945 C.E., the ‘Abbasid caliphate had fragmented into various regional autonomies, two of which were the Samanids and the Ghaznavids. From this date on, the caliph in Baghdad functioned as a symbol of political legitimacy for the sovereign kingdoms that sprang up in various regions of the caliphate. At the height of its power under Mahmud (i.e., c. 421/1030), the Ghaznavid empire included diverse terrains from the Indian Punjab to central Iran (i.e., as far west as the ancient city of Rayy, near present-day Tehran). On the north-south axis, the empire stretched from the Oxus river and the city of Tirmidh, located in eastern Khurasan on the bank of the river Jayhun or Bactrus, to the lowest fringes of the Indus river valley. The vassal territories of the Ghaznavid state included Khuttal, Chaghaniyan, and Khwarazm on opposite sides of the river Oxus in the north; the Caspian region or provinces of Gurgan and Tabaristan in the
northwest; the Jibal regions under the Kakuyids of Isfahan (c. first half of 5th/11th-early 6th/12th centuries) in the west; the provinces of Kirman and Makran in the south; and the Indian territories between the Punjab and the Ganges river in the far southeast. The population of the empire was as diverse as its regions. Iranians, Arabs, Turks, and Indians; Sunnis, Shi’is, Sufis—Sufis could of course be either Sunni or Shi‘i—Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Hindus all were part of a social system or political entity at whose apex was the absolute authority of the Ghaznavid sultan. The sultan, in turn, was nominally the servant of the ‘Abbasid caliph. At the height of its glory, towards the end of Mahmud’s reign and at the beginning of Mas‘ud’s, the Ghaznavid empire was “the most powerful and extensive empire known in the Islamic world since the heyday of the ‘Abbasid caliphate [i.e., 945 C.E.]”84

The Ghaznavids were Turkish by ethnicity and Hanafi Sunni in religion or their ideological stance in an age that Marshall G. S. Hodgson identifies as “the Shi‘i century.”85 Hanafism is one of a handful of Sunni legal schools or madhabs that flourished in the Islamic world. The geopolitical significance of Ghaznavid Sunnism is understood properly when the religio-political as well as the military threat the ‘Abbasids faced from the west and east is taken into account. The Fatamids (297/909-567/1171) who were Shi‘i Ismal‘ili in their ideological outlook and had established themselves in North Africa and Egypt were seen by the ‘Abbasids to have instituted a counter caliphate in the west. In addition, various Carmatian cells in the Jibal as well as the de facto power of the Buyids (mid 4th/10th-mid 5th/11th centuries)—who were also of Shi‘i background—in Baghdad and the central Islamic lands had overshadowed the political efficacy of the office of ‘Abbasid caliph who had prior to this been the highest religio-
political authority in most of the Islamic world and Sunni Islam. The Ghaznavids who identified themselves with Sunnism came to be regarded particularly during the reigns of Mahmud and Mas‘ud as the upholder of the ‘Abbasid caliphate.

The Ghaznavids borrowed from the Samanids, and indirectly too from the Buyids and the ‘Abbasids, the Perso-Islamic theory of state (i.e., supreme kingship as a means of the organization of the state), the administrative personnel and culture, and the Turkish military slave system. In their understanding of kingship, the Ghaznavids saw the use of “arms and fear” as far more effective than a genuine regard for consultation and deliberations among their high-ranking officials. As such, an “atmosphere of suspicion” pervaded their relationship with their viziers and high administrators, who came entirely from the Iranian cultural sphere within the greater central and eastern Islamic world and were occasionally wary of their Turkic ethnicity.

The real founder of the Ghaznavid house—that is, as an independent political power in the east—was Sebuktigin’s eldest son but second successor, Mahmud, who is in later Islamic literature portrayed and idolized as an exemplary ruler. When Sebuktigin died in Sha‘ban 387/August 997 after twenty-one years of vassalage to a fatally weakened Samanid empire, he had fully exploited the internal conflicts of the state and emerged as an important power in the politics of the last hapless Samanid princes. It is difficult to understand why the dying Sebuktigin chose a younger son of his, Isma‘il, who had no experience of warfare and administration when compared to his half-brother Mahmud, as his successor in Ghazna. Mahmud, who was then the Samanid governor of the prosperous and socio-politically important province of Khurasan, marched to the Ghaznavid capital and with no difficulty deposed Isma‘il in Rabi‘ I 388/March 998. Thus
began the thirty-three-year career of a sultan who spent most of his life in active decision-making and war in various corners of the territories delimited above in order to secure an extended and politically independent empire. Mahmud as a military commander lost no battle. As a ruler he stabilized the regions he conquered mostly by means of political intimidation and military might. As the upholder of the Ghaznavid house, he failed miserably because (1) “he extended the area of his empire beyond the capacity of one person to control and keep intact.”88 (2) Because he did not institute nor allow his civil officers to develop “a machinery of imperial administration” that would function “on permanent and durable foundations.”89 The empire he founded was too dependent on “the military leadership and executive talent of its Sultan.”90 In the context of the medieval history of the Islamic world, this is of course not so unusual. (3) Because he at the very last hour disinherited his eldest son Mas’ud and nominated a younger son, Muhammad, who in the opinion of Mahmud himself was less fit to govern.

When Mahmud died in Rabi’ I 421/April 1030, a succession crisis ensued that reminds one of the earlier one in 387-88/997-98. This time, however, Muhammad’s trusted officials and some members of the Ghaznavid family, realizing that “Muhammad would never be able to hold the empire together,”91 defected to his elder brother. On his way from the far west of the empire to meet the army of Muhammad in eastern Khurasan, Mas’ud had triumphantly marched as far as Nishapur when he received the news that the army of Ghazna had deposed Muhammad in Tiginabad. Thus, he was declared the sultan of the Ghaznavid empire, and in this way began the career of a man that Tarikh-i Bayhaqi attempts to describe. Barthold has quite acutely summarized the entire reign of Mas’ud, and it is useful to quote him in extenso.
Mas'ud held the same high opinion of his power as Mahmud, and like him wished to decide everything according to his own judgement, but lacking his father's talents came to disastrous decisions, which he obstinately maintained, paying no heed to the advice of men of experience. The tales of Mas'ud's prowess in the chase and in battle show that he was distinguished by physical bravery, but all the more striking is his complete lack of moral courage; in the hour of misfortune he showed himself more pusillanimous than a woman. In cupidity he yielded nothing to Mahmud, and the overburdening of the inhabitants by forced levies was carried in his time to an extreme degree. During the reign of Mas'ud we see individual examples of the punishment "of petty thieves for the satisfaction of large ones"; but the robbers who divided their spoils with the Sultan could quietly continue their activity. Particularly notorious amongst these was Abu'l-Fadl Suri, the civil Governor of Khurasan, from whom the Sultan received large presents, which represented, however, only the half of what he succeeded in extorting from the inhabitants. The population was reduced to despair, and the aristocracy began to send letters and envoys to Transoxania to the "Leaders of the Turks" with prayers for help. These circumstances were turned to advantage not by the leaders of the Qara-Khanids themselves, however, but by the leaders of the Turkmens who had been in their service [i.e., the Oghuz and the Saljuqs].

This is the political character of the age and the personality of the ruler Bayhaqi tries to portray in his history. The most striking outward expression of some years of misgovernment was manifested at the end of Mas'ud's reign in Ramadan 431/May 1040, when the Ghaznavids' once formidable and awe-inspiring imperial army was heavily defeated at the hands of the unruly Saljuq family and their Turkmen followers at Dandanqan near Marv in Khurasan. The immediate result of this disgraceful defeat for the Ghaznavid empire was the loss of its most important province, Khurasan, and any lands that lay beyond in the west and northwest. But there soon emerged disaffected groups within the shrunken empire—now in effect reduced to what is in the present Afghanistan, and northern Pakistan and India—that sought to exploit the ensuing internal confusion. This defeat and the sociopolitical instability it caused in the state instilled such fear and despair in the Ghaznavid sultan that he could no more feel secure even in his capital. Despite the vehement protests of his advisors—including the vizier Ahmad b.
‘Abd al-Samad, who in these days found in Bayhaqi a sympathetic ear and a reliable character to whom to complain confidentially about the sultan’s istibdad (self-will)—he collected the Ghaznavid treasures and precious possessions and in Rabi’ I 432/November 1040 left for India only to be killed en route on 11 Jumada I 432/17 January 1041 at his nephew Ahmad b. Muhmmad’s instigation.

Mas‘ud’s death ushered in a period that historians refer to as the middle age of the Ghaznavids. This was a time of further political uncertainty and instability. It was only the combined reigns of Farrukhzad and Ibrahim (444-492/1053-1099) that reestablished the Ghaznavid state on a relatively firm basis. The succession crisis which was the symptomatic of the early Ghaznavids—and, in fact, of many Islamic and slave dynasties—was also an inherent feature of the period between Mas‘ud’s death and Farrukhzad’s accession. Since Bayhaqi wrote mostly during Farrukhzad’s reign, what we have stated above will help us contextualize the questions and ideas he had in mind when narrating his dynastic history.

*The social and intellectual milieu:*

Bayhaqi first and foremost was a secretary. In this capacity, he functioned for more than twenty-eight years. As we stated above, it is moreover highly likely that he was educated as a secretary and functioned as such even after his retirement. It is important therefore to stress that his Weltanschauung was that of neither the religious or non-religious scholar (‘alim, fazil, hakim) nor the littérature or man of letters (adib)—although as evidenced from the discussion below he was no doubt familiar with a range of religious and literary
texts with which both of these figures would have also been acquainted. This type of broad knowledge of variegated literature was, however, characteristic of a skilled secretary. This fact may be glimpsed from the advice the Iranian secretary 'Abd al-Hamid (d. 132/750), who was the secretary of the Umayyad caliph Marwan II b. Muhammad (126-132/744-750) and an important figure in the development of Arabic epistolary style, especially in the establishment of chancery style during the Umayyad period, gives to other secretaries some three centuries before the time of our author:

Begin with knowledge of the Qur'an and religious obligations; then proceed to Arabic, for that sharpens your tongue; then master calligraphy, the ornamentation of your writings. Get to know poetry, its rare words and ideas, and know also the battle-days of both the Arabs and Persians, their history and biographies, all of which serves to inspire you.94

'Abd al-Hamid expounds further, "[The secretary] should have examined every branch of knowledge and mastered it; if he cannot master it, he should acquire of it a measure sufficient for his needs."95 This type of broad curriculum for the lifelong education of the secretary is furthermore endorsed in Persian Fürstenspiegel (andarz) literature (e.g., the Qabusnama and Nasihat al-muluk).96 This is so (1) because the secretarial office was considered to function even as "the 'king's tongue' for those remote from him."97 Therefore, the best secretary was one who could show excellent literary qualifications and competence in handling all manner of diplomatic correspondence. (2) Because the secretary must have cultivated a whole array of moral qualities in himself such as trustworthiness, forbearance, prudence, courage and audacity, chastity, justice and fairness, capacity to keep secrets, loyalty, foresight, and moderation. A man of deeds and not words alone, when he had attained to the office of Head of Secretariat, he was vested with an uncertain but definitely limited degree of responsibility to comment on the
character, orders, and actions of the king and extend to him moral/ethical advice, always in the most courteous of manners and in absolute self-effacement. Finally, (3) because he ought to have technical knowledge of finance and various branches of administration in order to fill the appropriate positions when the king needed to appoint someone to those vacant places. Certainly not every secretary possessed these qualities, but Bayhaqi was a high-ranking secretary and at one point became the Head of the imperial Secretariat. As such, it is likely that he had many of these qualities; otherwise, he could not have gained the trust or the favor of the Ghaznavid monarchs.

Bayhaqi’s was an age in which of the dominance of the Iranian aristocracy in the political machinery of the Islamic “power state” of the eastern caliphate remained only a fading memory. In the governing body of the Ghaznavid empire, only the bureaucrats *(dabirs, also meaning “secretaries”)* continued to be supplied by the Iranian administrative dynasties. Secretaries as one of the four classes in Sasanid society had, of course, survived the Arab conquest of Persia. They, moreover, constituted “the core of the civilian administration *(divan)*” throughout the early Islamic centuries. Their role in transmitting the skills and the techniques of their office was in fact crucial to the management of an empire that stretched over several continents. By the Ghaznavid period, the offices of the administrator in general and the secretary in particular were the monopoly of the Iranian bureaucratic class. As we suggested above, Bayhaqi could have belonged to one of the big administrative families in Khurasan.

The early Ghaznavid Secretariat *(Divan-i Risalat)*, according to Nazim, was one of the five imperial Departments *(Divans).* The function of its Head, as Bosworth puts it, “was commensurate in importance with that of Vizier.” This Department was in
close contact with what Nazim has identified as the Department of Secret Service or Divan-i Shughli-i Ishraf-i Mamlakat. Bosworth calls the same the Barid and Ishraf systems or the elaborate network of intelligence officers, spies, and police both within and without the empire. The Secretariat included numerous clerks who occupied its various hierarchical positions. First and foremost of the Department’s responsibilities was to actively engage in the complicated process of drafting, copying, and translating the internal and diplomatic correspondence of the empire. The correspondence was written, depending on it readers, either in Persian or Arabic. If the response was in Arabic, then it had to be translated into Persian for the easy use and benefit of the court officials and the sultans. Thus, the tone and the wording of these communications in both of the two languages were matters of extreme significance. There were also secret reports and dispatches that had to be encoded and decoded. These were sent and received through the system of postal relay the Ghaznavids had borrowed from the Samanids and maintained throughout their empire and beyond. Like the other imperial Departments, the Secretariat was peripatetic. When the sultan was visiting a region or on a campaign, a group of skilled secretaries accompanied him. This provided the opportunity to both Abu Nasr Mushkan and Bayhaqi to observe many events recounted in *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*.

The fact that Abu Nasr, as the Head of the Secretariat, survived three sultans and a perilous succession crisis over thirty years of his active career (401/1011-12 to 431/1039-40) and at the end died honorably should perhaps by itself tell us something about the political skills, the tactfulness, and the judiciousness of the man who reared Bayhaqi for nineteen years and whom he, in turn, glorifies in his history. As H. Moayyad aptly puts it,
During his entire career, Abu Nasr appears to have enjoyed the highest esteem, trust, and support of his royal patrons, whom he served not only as an eloquent chief secretary in both Arabic and Persian, but also as a wise and even intimate counsellor. He was far-sighted, courageous, and in full command of the court’s tacit rules and requirements and aware of its hidden intrigues and pitfalls.  

Finally, we should note that in 419/1029 Sultan Mahmud offered Abu Nasr the post of vizier, which he refused. A general understanding of the example Abu Nasr set for our author, the upbringing and ancestry he might have had, and the training he could very well have received in Nishapur and later at the court of Mahmud leads us to a better understanding of the type of man he was. This, in turn, will aid us to better conceptualize his historiography. It must be noted that much of the biographical information provided here is based on educated suppositions, as the sources remain silent in regard to questions about which the modern scholar wish to know.

Authors and texts known to Bayhaqi:

Any serious discussion of the possible sources of influence on the author demands the type of scholarship that is beyond the purpose of this study. A comparative study of the text under review with the major sources that spurred its composition will without doubt shed light on many an aspect of the text that has remained obscure. But until then, what is presented here is a brief list of specific individuals and sources with whom we may be certain Bayhaqi was familiar. One must, however, be cautious of attaching too much importance to these individuals and materials, and depriving Bayhaqi of the authorship of the intellectual originality that is inherent in his text. Broadly speaking, there are at least six groups of texts with which Bayhaqi was familiar: first, various literary texts,
including those on the art of epistolary or insha’, and poetry; second, Fürstenspiegel
works which could technically be considered part of literature but whose purpose is too
didactic that sets it apart as a distinct literary genre; third, philosophical, more precisely
ethical or akhlaq, texts which are thematically closely related to Fürstenspiegel literature
but had a base in Graeco-Arabic philosophy (falsafa, hikmat); fourth, Islamic religious
texts such as the Qur’an, hadith collections, and commentaries on them; fifth, historical
literature of all kind including collections of khabars and narrative texts; and sixth, the
Persian epic or historical tradition. In regard to the explicit sources of Bayhaqi’s
historiography—his idea of history—it is the argument of this study that he was familiar
with and, on some level, intellectually influenced by (1) religious concepts, whether
Islamic or Zoroastrian; (2) ethical (akhlaq) texts; and (3) Fürstenspiegel works that were
not overtly Zoroastrian.

Specific individuals and sources that are either referred to in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi or we may infer Bayhaqi was familiar with include the following.

The individual who had by far the biggest impact on Bayhaqi as a person and a
secretary was Abu Nasr Mushkan. Bahar, an historian of the Persian language, considers
that the literary career of Abu Nasr exhibits the intrinsic characteristics that may very
well be construed as to have belonged to or by itself inaugurated a new era of Persian
prose. In this context, Bahar sees that Bayhaqi abides by the same prose conventions:
this is what Bahar means when he says that Bayhaqi’s prose is a masterful “imitation” of
Abu Nasr’s. That Bayhaqi’s style is very close to that of his teacher and that it may on
some level be considered an extension of the prose genre the latter adhered to could thus
be argued even based on the fragmentary information we have at our disposal concerning

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Abu Nasr’s style. Whether Abu Nasr could have produced or did produce a historical work and whether he had any thought as regards history writing that could have been incorporated in the composition of *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* are questions that due to the nature of our sources would, at least at this point, lead us to speculation.

There is a host of poets with whose works Bayhaqi was familiar. Some of these include for instance Arabic poets such as Abu’l-Hasan Muhammad b. ‘Umar al-Anbari and Mutannabbi, and the Samanid and Ghaznavid poets like Abu Hanifa Iskafi (fl. 5th/11th century), Abu Sahl Zuzani (d. c. 440-450/1050-1059), Abu al-Tayyib Muhammad b. Hatam al-Mas’abi (fl. 4th century A.H.), Abu Mansur Ahmad b. Ahmad Daqiqi (d. c. 366/976), Labibi (fl. 4th-5th century), Mas’ud Razi or Mas’udi Razi or Mas’udi Ghaznavi (fl. 5th/11th century), and Abu ‘Abdu’llah Muhammad b. Hasan Ma’rufi Balkhi (fl. 4th century). 104

There are several references in *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* that indicate the author was familiar with *Fürstenspiegel* literature. These include an analogy in the “Section on the Meaning of the World” that Bayhaqi says was given by the early Islamic scholar Ka‘b al-Ahbar (d. 32/652) and a reference to the Sasanid king Khusraw I Anushirvan (531-579 C.E.). 105

In a discourse he appended to the beginning of the reign of Mas’ud, Bayhaqi makes reference to Galen, that “greatest of the sages of his age” who had “no equal in treating manners (akhlāq)” of people. 106 Bayhaqi goes on to state that Galen has “treatises, very good, on knowing oneself, which there is much profit for the readers in [reading them].” Bayhaqi then gives a summary of Galen’s works on “knowing oneself” in order to support an argument he has advanced earlier. 107
It is regrettable that the scholarship on Bayhaqi has focused little on the centrality of core Islamic texts in his important history. The number of hadiths that are cited and Qur’anic verses that are quoted is in itself a testimony that the author never intended his account to be regarded a “secular” history.\textsuperscript{108} His was a Weltanschauung particularly marked by its pietistic features. There are references to denial of self and the fleeting and fallacious world, so much so that Waldman considers the author to be mystically minded.\textsuperscript{109} We must therefore carefully consider Bayhaqi’s use of this canonical literature in order to understand the harmony he felt existed among the principles of his faith, the eternal rules of kingship that had been inherited from the ways of the pre-Islamic Iranian monarchs, and the philosophical discourse with which he was familiar.

It is in this context that we may note the author’s familiarity with Qazi Abu’l-‘Ala’ Sa‘id b. Muhammad al-Ustuwa’i’s (d. 431/1040-1041) \textit{Mukhtasar-i Sa‘idi}, from which he apparently extracted the historical information pertaining to the Tabbani imams and their link with the founder of Hanafism Abu Hanifa (see below).\textsuperscript{110} The Qazi was appointed by Mahmud as the teacher of the young princes Muhammad and Mas‘ud. In the first forty years or so of the eleventh century, he was the most important Hanafi scholar of Nishapur. During the reign of Mas ‘ud, his advanced age and prestige made him “the Grand Old Man of Nishapur.”\textsuperscript{111}

According to the explicit statements of \textit{Tarikh-i Bayhaqi}, the author was familiar with Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (d. after 442/1050)—perhaps even personally, as the latter was a well-known scholar at the court of Mahmud and Mas‘ud—and admired his methodology. Before beginning an extended quotation from al-Biruni’s \textit{Mashahir-i Khvarazm}, he writes, “And he [sc. al-Biruni] was a man singular in his age [for his}
literature, virtue, geometry and architecture, and philosophy; and he would not write
anything vain.” Al-Biruni was a renowned scholar and polymath of this period (the late
Samanids and early Ghaznavids). He is commonly considered one of the two greatest
intellectual figures of his time in the eastern lands of the Muslim world—the other being
the famous physician and philosopher Avicenna (Ibn Sina). Al-Biruni’s prominence in
Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, it must be noted, is due to his expertise in history. Thus, he appears in
the text as an historian—and on a very different level as a very learned advisor to the
ruler of Khwarazm.

Another historian who is praised by the author is a certain contemporary of his,
Mahmud Varraq (fl. 5th/11th century), of whom we know nothing except the following
paragraph written by Bayhaqi.

And these conditions Ustad (master) Mahmud Varraq has expounded extremely well in
a History he has written in the year 405 [A.H.] that concerns several thousand years. He
has reported [his material] until the year 409 [A.H.] and stopped because I had started
[my history] from this year. This Mahmud is a reliable man and [his words are] well-
received, and in his commendation I have enlarged much. Up to ten to fifteen rare
works of his in every subject I saw. When his children heard of the news [presumably
about the inclusion of some parts of his work in Bayhaqi’s history], they called
on me and said, “We who are his children do not agree that you elaborate and extol the
words of our father any more than what you have.” And having had no recourse, I
stopped.114

Two brief references that Bayhaqi gives to Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Sabi’s (d. 384/994)
al-Kitab al-Taji fi akhbar al-dawla al-daylamiyya indicates a clear familiarity with this
book if not with the other works of this celebrated Arab writer.115 They show, moreover,
that he admired this particular work of Sabi, as he seems to advise the reader to read the
book. Sabi was the renowned chief secretary (*sahib diwan al-insha*) of the Buyid amir Mu‘izz al-Dawla whose elegant Arabic writings, particularly epistles and poems, were greatly admired by his contemporaries.

Bayhaqi’s rather passing reference to Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Yahya al-Suli’s (d. 335/947) *Kitab al-Awrq* shows that he did not approve of the latter’s conceited tone and language despite his mastery of “literature, grammar, and philology.” To Bayhaqi a rather modest tone, the effect and extension of the writer’s self-concept, is an essential characteristic of an accomplished writer and historian. Though al-Suli was a learned man, he did not exercise the necessary authorial modesty. Moreover, he was different from the others whom Bayhaqi quotes and extols, for insofar as our author was concerned there existed a degree of unwarranted self-pride in al-Suli’s writing that he did not detect in that of the others (e.g., al-Biruni and Varraq). Al-Suli was the boon-companion (*nadin*) of several ‘Abbasid caliphs whose writings, particularly history and poetry, won him recognition among important Arabic writers and historians, including al-Mas‘udi.

From general statements dispersed throughout Bayhaqi’s history, we can gather, furthermore, that he was familiar with the works on the history of the Samanids (“*akhbar-i Samaniyan,*”117 “*akhbar-i Nasr-i Ahmad az Samaniyan,*”118) and the early ‘Abbasids (“*akhbar-i Khulafa,*”119 “*akhbar-i Bu Muslim, sahib-i da‘vat-i ‘Abbasian*”120). He himself affirms that he has read many “books (kitab)”121 and “histories (tarikhha)”122—“especially reports (akhbar)”123—and “derived much benefit from them.”124 He, moreover, must have known, besides Varraq’s *History*, the works of the other Ghaznavid historians, notably Abu Nasr Muhammad al-‘Utbi’s (d. 427/1036 or
431/1040) *Tarikh al-Yamini* and Gardizi’s (fl. early 5th/11th century) *Zain al-Akhbar*. It must finally be noted that he may also have known the great work of al-Tabari and its translation into Persian by Bal‘ami.

It has also been suggested by Waldman that the eminent Arab writer and intellectual—historian, geographer, philosopher, and religious scholar—Abu‘l-Hasan ‘Ali al-Mas‘udi (d. 345/956) and Khalifah b. Khayyat (fl. c. 220/835-300/913) might have contributed to Bayhaqi’s conception of history. Most recently Meisami has suggested that the philosopher and historian Abu ‘Ali Ahmad Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) could also have contributed to the historiography that is peculiar to *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*. Our author was indeed very well read in the diverse literature of his times—particularly the *Fürstenspiegel*, the historical, the ethical if not abstract philosophical, and finally the poetical materials. How many other poets and prose writers he had quotes and how many other references he makes in the lost sections of his history remain a matter of speculation.

There is a direct verbal quotation from Abu Mansur ‘Abd al-Malik (Nishapuri) al-Tha‘alibi (d. 429/1038) in the “Chapter on Khvarazm,” which indicates that Bayhaqi found the latter a reliable source from whom he could orally transmit an historical report. As a statement on Tha‘alibi’s background, he states that he is “the author of *Yatimat al-dahr fi mahasin ahl al-‘asr* and many other books.” Al-Tha‘alibi was a prominent connoisseur and critic of Arabic literature and a prolific author of anthologies and works of literary scholarship.
Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d.c. 139/757) Akhbar-i muluk-i ‘Ajam is also cited early on in
the text to give historical credibility to a summary of the ways of the pre-Islamic Iranian
kings. Ibn al-Muqaffa’ was an important chancery secretary (katib), a major Arabic
prose writer, and an important translator of Pahlavi texts into Arabic. He was apparently a
disciple of ‘Abd al-Hamid and was of Iranian background. We can, based on what we
have stated of other references, infer that Bayhaqi liked this work. To what extent
Bayhaqi’s references to pre-Islamic Persian figures and events could have come from Ibn
Muqaffa’ is a question that no one has yet attempted to answer.

It is highly unlikely that a man like Bayhaqi was not familiar with at least part of
his contemporary Firdawsi’s (d. 410 or 416/1019 or 1025) epic poem, the Shahnama,
though there is certainly no explicit indication that he had. Abu’l-Qasim Firdawsi is
commonly acknowledged to be the greatest of Persian epic poets. His Shahnama is
generally considered a national “history” of pre-Islamic Iran.

*The framework of the present study:*

Modern scholars who have written about patterns of themes in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, the
author’s approach and method, and the relationship between these two have emphasized
the expository significance of the prefatory discourses the author has appended to the
beginning of his account of the reign of Mas’ud (in volume six) and of the history of
Khwarazm (in volume ten). These scholars studied the correlation they saw between
Bayhaqi’s ideas of the perfect man, kingship, and history as contained in these
introductory notes, and his presentation and practice of those ideas in the rest of his
narrative text. What these scholars have accomplished is extremely valuable and helps us understand the text in different and novel ways. The present state of exegesis, however, is far from comprehensive. In fact, mostly due to the still nascent scholarship on Bayhaqi, his contemporaries, and predecessors, we have a rather disjointed picture of the thought that gives substance to this most complex of the pre-Mongol Persian narrative histories.\textsuperscript{132} In Daniel’s words, “[T]he variety of interpretations given his accounts by modern scholars suggests that we are still far from knowing exactly how it [Bayhaqi’s language and, by extension, his text] should be read.”\textsuperscript{133} One may only refer to chapter four of Waldman’s monograph and the section devoted to \textit{Tarikh-i Bayhaqi} in chapter two of Meisami’s \textit{Persian Historiography} to witness the evolution of the analysis of Bayhaqi’s conception of history.

Taking all this into account, chapters two to four of the present study attempt a reexamination of the ideas that are presented in these same prefatory discourses at the beginning of volumes six and ten. The content of the first exposition in \textit{Tarikh-i Bayhaqi} is arranged under three sections (\textit{fasls}). The first two constitute a \textit{khutba} or exordium—also, in the present study, called “Khutba I”—while the third section structurally stands by itself.\textsuperscript{134} Lengthier and with a seemingly distinct thematic purpose, this section was, nonetheless, meant by the author to serve as a complementary piece to “Khutba I.”\textsuperscript{135} “Khutba II,” on the other hand, is an extremely brief discourse on historical method. The abstract thoughts Bayhaqi sets forth in these exordiums and the subsequent section appended to “Khutba I” are interconnected with a set of concepts that are not fully expounded in these prefatory discourses. These latter concepts are, however, distinctly and often forcefully communicated to the reader in the course of the narrative.
text. Hence, in the present study we also probe *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* in its entirety in order to inquire about various aspects of the thought that pervades it, the latter being the only link to a more complete understanding of the author’s conception and composition of the historical account at hand.


9 (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1991). In the present study, this book has not been used extensively due mostly to the present author’s lack of knowledge of Italian. For what I know of pertinent sections in this book, I am grateful to my friend Jacopo De Martin.

10 TB-F.

11 TB-F & Gh.


14 TB-F & Gh, vi, n. 1.

15 TB-Kh.

16 TB-N.

17 In his research on various MSS of *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*, Fayyaz (and Nafisi) concluded that there are two separate threads of MSS, one reproduced in the Iranian mainland and the other in the Indian subcontinent. See Fayyaz, “Nuskhaha-yi khatti,” 520; and Nafisi, “Dibacha,” TB-N, vi.

18 TB-D.


20 TB-M.

21 For those editions of *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi* not used in this inquiry and not cited here see Yusufi, “Bayhaqi.” At one time or other, the present author looked at one of the following collections of excerpts. However, he did not seriously consult them given the fact that various scholarly editions of the entire text render one independent of these excerpts. Muhammad Dabir Siyaqi, *Ba guzida: “Tarikh-i Bayhaqi”* (Tehran:
Kitabfurushi-yi Zavvar, 1351 SH/1972); Muhammad Ja'far Yahaqqi and Mahdi Sayyidi, 
Diba-yi khusravani: kutah shuda-yi "Tarikh-i Bayhaqi" (Tehran: Chap-i Diba, 1373 
SH/1994); Manuchihr Danishpazhuh, Dabir va sultan: baz nivisi-yi kitab-i "Tarikh-i 
Bayhaqi," asar-i Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi (Tehran: Mu'assissa-yi Farhangi-yi Ahl-i Qalam, 
1380 SH/2001); Ihsan Ishraqi, Bayhaqi tasvirgar-i zaman: guzina-yi "Tarikh-i Bayhaqi" 
(Tehran: Intisharat-i Sukhan, 1381 SH/2002); and Khalil Khatib Rahbar, Guzina-yi 

22 Sabkshinasi va tarikh-i tatavvur-i nasr-i Farsi, vol. 2 (Tehran: Kitabha-yi 
Parastu, 1337 SH/1958), 66-87; see also ibid., 62-66 and 87-95.

23 Maryam al-Sadat Ranjbar, Anva'fi'l dar "Tarikh-i Bayhaqi" (Isfahan: 
Intisharat-i Mani, 1379 SH/2000); Manuchihr 'Alipur, Pir-i parsa-yi Bayhaq (Tehran: 
n.p., 1376 SH/1997); H. 'Abdullahiyan, Janbaha-i adabi; S. Jahandida, Matn dar 
ghiyab-i ist'ara; Soheil M. Afnan, Persian Studies: Concerning Dari Persian (Beirut: 

24 Afnan, Persian Studies, 85-89 and 132-142.

25 Ziya' al-Din Sajjadi, "Tahqiq dar ash'ar va amsal-i Farsi-yi Tarikh-i Bayhaqi," 
Yadnama, Per. Sec., 273-332; Abu'l-Qasim Navid Habib'ullahi, "Ma'akhiz ash'ar-i 
'Arabi-yi Tarikh-i Bayhaqi va mu'arrifi-yi guyandagan-i anha," Yadnama, Per. Sec., 745-
777; and Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "The Poetical Citations in Bayhaqi's Tarikh-i 
Mas'udi," Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft Supplement 4 
(Twentieth Deutscherr Orientalistentag, Erlangen, 3-8 October 1977), ed. W. Voigt. 

26 Yusufi, "Bayhaqi;" idem, "Hunar-i nivisandagi-yi Bayhaqi," Yadnama, Per. 
Sec., 799-829; and S. Jahandida, "Tarikh-i Bayhaqi ba masaba-i dastan," Matn darr 
ghiyab-i ist'ara, 131-166.

27 Soheila Amirsoleimani, "Truths and Lies: Irony and Intrigue in Tarikh-i 
Bayhaqi" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Michigan, 1995); idem, "Truths and Lies: Irony 
and Intrigue in the Tarikh-i Bayhaqi," Iranian Studies 32, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 243-259; 
idem, "Women in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi," Der Islam 78, no. 2 (2001): 229-248; Waldman, 
Toward a Theory, 109-120

28 "Khvaja Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi."


30 Giti Fallah Rastigar, "Adab va ruzum va tashrifat-i darbar-i Ghazna az khilal-i 
Tarikh-i Bayhaqi," Yadnama, Per. Sec., 412-467; Muhammad-Mahdi Rukni Yazdi,
"Divan-i Risalat va a’in-i dabiri az khilal-i Tarikh-i Bayhaqi," Yadnama, Per. Sec., 233-272.


35 ‘Abbas Zaryab Khu’i’s study of Bayhaqi’s historiography, though very thoughtful, falls short of discussing the larger questions that pertain to Bayhaqi’s conception of history.


38 Waldman, Toward a Theory, 141. This theory was first advanced by Peter Hardy in his important study of pre-modern Indo-Muslim historians, Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1960). See also P. Hardy, review of Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography, by M. R. Waldman, History and Theory 20, no. 3 (October 1981): 334-344.


43 “The Past in Service of the Present.”

44 *Toward a Theory*, 100-103. For Bayhaqi’s linguistic subtlety see chapter two, n. 48.

45 “Dynastic History.”

46 “Dynastic History,” 72.


49 Other slightly different renditions of the name of this renowned historian include al-Shaykh Abu’l-Fazl Muhammad b. al-Husayn al-Katib al-Bayhaqi, al-Shaykh Abu’l-Fazl al-Bayhaqi, and Khvaja Abu’l-Fazl al-Bayhaqi.

50 About the Ghaznavids (366-582/977-1186) and their empire see further below in the introduction. For a quick reference see also C. E. Bosworth, “Ghaznavids,” in *Elr*.


53 Yusufi, “Bayhaqi,” in *Elr*.

The dates for the reigns of the Ghaznavids between Mawdud and Farrukhzad are from Bosworth, “Ghaznavids,” which seems to be more up-to-date than either of his works The Later Ghaznavids; Splendour and Decay: The Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India, 1040-1186 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), viii and 156-7; and The Ghaznavids.


Yusufi, “Bayhaqi;” Ibn Funduq, Tarikh-i Bayhaq, 177.

Yusufi, “Bayhaqi.”

Tarikh-i Bayhaq, 175.

Akhbar al-‘umara’ wa al-mulk al-Saljuqiyya, ed. Muhammad Nur al-Din (Beirut: Dar Iqra’, 1406 A.H./1986), 74; see also Yusufi, “Bayhaqi.” The Saljuqs were a semi-nomadic Turkmens who had migrated from central Asia westward into the Ghaznavid territory (i.e., the Khurasan province), which was also symbolically the ‘Abbasid territory. Their migration was in effect an invasion from which the Ghaznavids never recovered (see further below for details).

TB-F, 900-1.

Ibid., 1-4. The present-day Kuhtiz 15 kilometers west of Qandahar may be the location of this fortress. Cf. Bosworth, Later Ghaznavids, 152.

Ibid., 498.

Shahpurshah Hormasji Hodivala, Studies in Indo-Muslim History: A Critical Commentary on Elliot and Dowson’s History of India as Told by Its Own Historians, vol. I (Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Book Service, 1939; reprint, Lahore: Mataba al-Islami al-Saudi, 1979), 162; Yusuf Abbas Hashmi, “The Lacuna in Bayhaqi,” Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society XVI, pts. II & III (April-July 1968): 136-138; Fayyaz, “Nuskhaha-yi khatti,” in TB-F, xiii, where incidentally the author, writing some months or years (?) before final work on the completion of his revised edition of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, evidently gives the incorrect dates for this lacuna; and TB-F, 517, n. 3 where Fayyaz once again briefly speaks of the extent of this lacuna.

TB-F, 710-11; see also Fayyaz, “Nuskhaha-yi khatti,” xiii.
TB-F, 318.

Ibid., 342. Of Mahmud Varraq we know nothing other that this passing reference in Bayhaqi. See below, where the entire reference has been translated.

Ibid., 342.

For this latter title see Yusufi’s discussion in “Bayhaqi.”

“Bayhaqi.”


Tarikh-i Bayhaq, 175.

“Bayhaqi.”

The Ghaznavids, 64. Cf. Waldman, Toward a Theory, 44.

“Correspondence, II. In Islamic Persia.”

Persian Studies, 87.

Tarikh-i Bayhaq, 175.

(Tehran: n.p., 1329 or 1330 SH/1950 or 1951), 383-98.


Tarikh-i Bayhaq, 177-8; cf. Yusufi, “Bayhaqi.”

Bosworth, “Ghaznavids.”


Ibid., 62.


91 Ibid., 229.

92 *Turkestan*, 293.


97 Ahmad Tafazzuli, "Dabir, I. In the Pre-Islamic Period," in *Elr*.

98 Hashem Rajabzadeh, "Dabir, II. In the Islamic Period," in *Elr*.

99 *The Life and Times*, 130.

100 *The Ghaznavids*, 91-2.


102 Ibid.

103 Bahar, *Sabk-shinasi*, 66-87. For Abu Nasr Mushkan’s writings see, for instance, two letters he composed on behalf of Mas'ud I to the Qarakhanid Qadir Khan Yusuf and Kharasmsah Altuntash respectively in TB-F, 89-96 and 102-5.

TB-F, 485.

Ibid., 124.

Ibid., 124-5.


Toward a Theory, 104 and 125.

TB-F, 249.

Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 176-177.

TB-F, 906.


TB-F, 342.

Ibid., 244 and 486.

Ibid., 801; see also ibid., 802.

Ibid., 126.

Ibid., 486.

Ibid., 243.

Ibid., 486.

Ibid., 243.

Ibid., 243.

Ibid., 11 and 129.

Ibid., 243.

Ibid., 243.

Ibid., 243.

See Bosworth, “Gardizi,” in Elr.
126 Persian Historiography, 82.

127 TB-F, 909.

128 Ibid., 125-6.


131 TB-F, 111-130/TB-Kh, 149-62.


133 “Historiography III. Early Islamic Period.”

134 “Khutba” expressly denotes “preface” (see J. G. Hava, al-Faraid: Arabic-English Dictionary, 5th ed. [Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq, 1982], s.v. “kh.t.b.”; cf. LD, s.v. “khutba”; and Waldman, Toward a Theory, 57). It has moreover been translated as “exordium” (as mentioned above), “preamble,” and “excursus.” There are two khutbas in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. The first is located at the beginning of volume six and is a discourse on the reign of Mas‘ud. It has also been referred to as the “Khutba on Kingship” (Waldman, Toward a Theory, 81 and 152). The second is located in volume ten prior to a chapter (bab) on the history of Khwarazm. The latter is an exposition of the author’s historical approach and has been called the “Khutba on Historical Method” (Waldman, Toward a Theory, 57-8 and 196). For English translations see ibid., 152-160 and 196-97; Meisami, Persian Historiography, 80-81, 82-4, and 94; and Roger. M. Savory, “Abu’l-Fazl Bayhaqi as an Historiographer,” Yadnama, Eng. Sec., 85-8.

CHAPTER 2

RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK AND MORALITY:

THE AUTHOR’S THOUGHT IN ITS CONTEXT

It is impossible to speak of Bayhaqi’s historical thought without considering his religious outlook. He is fundamentally different, of course, in his conception and practice of history from his predecessors, who were for the most part concerned with religious history. Nevertheless, his is a moral history aimed at imparting lessons (s. 'ibrat, pand). To Bayhaqi, historical actions are shaped by human and divine wills and agencies. Of these, the former are traceable in that they can be documented, and the circumstances which impelled the human to take certain steps and under which he carried out his measures may be written down. The latter, however, are conceivable only to the extent that their outcome may be humanly discernable. Divine actions are, however, not illogical. They in essence extend reward and punishment to the human for his righteous acts and follies. They are the outcome of his actions even as they function to unleash certain processes by themselves. Hence, it is the human who is ultimately responsible for his incessantly changing pieces of good fortune and abasements. For this reason, he has a significant office. In order to act with righteousness and avoid wickedness, he must know
what is morally right and wrong, so that he will recognize right and wrong in his own
behavior. This is the situation of the human in history and in the present. This is one of
the most important premises of Bayhaqi in his history.

There are many sources of morality for the human, but history is one of the most
important. Since the system of values by which human acts are measured is to a great
extent divine, it is presumed to be to the same extent immutable. That is, what was right
or wrong in the past remains for the most part the same in the present. The function of
history is, in this context, to impart simulations of historical human and divine actions to
express the causes, circumstances, and results of good and evil human thoughts and
works. In the process, the eternal values that are at work in the matrix of time are
reinforced and illustrated by concrete examples. Thus, history is first the conjoined
account of human deeds and divine measures vis-à-vis those human deeds. In the second
place, because it shows human follies and righteous acts, and their results, it is a source
of morality. Bayhaqi goes even further. He claims that the causes of good works and
follies remain constant throughout history and in the present. Although the circumstances
under which the individual is made to decide what is right and wrong change, that which
drives him to do good and to perpetrate injustice is in no way historical processes. It is
rather changeless forces. To observe the workings of the causes of human behavior, one
may therefore look into the recorded past in the same way one may look at oneself and
others. Thus, there is much in history that one can learn in order to become a better
person. This is the core of his conception of history and will be discussed in detail in the
following chapter. Suffice it here to state our premise that illustrating morality by examples—morality, that is, not merely ethics in the modern secular sense we understand in our times—is the purpose of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi.

In the world the author inhabited, religion constituted the most significant part of anyone’s conception of morality. This is the primary source for the abstract thought enshrined in the text. On the next level, the author was clearly familiar with a range of Fürlenspiegel literature in Arabic and Persian, and of Graeco-Arabic philosophical works on ethics or akhlaq literature, both of which helped reinforce his understanding of the moral and the immoral. As stated in the introduction, Bayhaqi’s education, like most other secretaries’, was highly eclectic. This may in part account for the fact that he sees a great deal of consistency among these three sources. But although Fürlenspiegel literature and Graeco-Arabic ethical works are important sources for part of his thought, theological questions and religious attitudes dominate his intellectual preoccupations. Abstract religious concepts form the principal themes of the text. These also occasion Bayhaqi’s most significant intellectual borrowings. Furthermore, he uses the latter two sources, namely Fürlenspiegel literature and akhlaq literature, to illustrate the validity and universality of some of his religious concerns. That Bayhaqi was familiar with these sources has already been pointed out by scholars,¹ and Bayhaqi’s explicit references at various instances, particularly in “Khutba I,” leave no illusion about their thematic importance in the narrative text.² But despite the author’s constant reference to abstract religious themes, his citations of materials pertaining to major religious figures (e.g., prophets and others), his orthodox (and, from the modern point of view, dogmatic) assertions, and finally his seeing intimate, in fact inseparable, connections between
certain abstract religious themes and historical studies, scholars at large have played
down the religious material in Bayhaqi’s thought and writing. The reason for this has in
part been to contrast him with earlier hadith transmitters and compilers as well as
historians whose methodologies were inspired by their religious conviction (and who
wrote in Arabic). Yet, it is precisely a lack of interest in understanding the way the
author’s religious outlook is important in the context of his text that contributes to our
still nascent comprehension of what he was actually trying to accomplish. It is the aim of
this chapter, hence, to contextualize the author’s concept of morality as defined by his
particular religious standpoint.

Direct quotations found in the extant text of Bayhaqi’s history from the Qur’an
and hadith number around fifty. Though this number, when compared to the citations of
later historians, might be small, the exceedingly significant thematic relevance of a few
of these quotations—in contradistinction to their simply pious usage in later
histories—makes their substantive bearing on the narrative text unequivocal. These
include, for instance, the Qur’anic verse on kingship and authority, the famous hadith of
Muhammad concerning self-knowledge and the knowledge of God, and another equally
well-known hadith concerning the ideal relation between two believers (used to express
the ideals of consultation). In these and other citations from the core canonical literature,
it is the habit of the author to state his general observations in the form of what he and his
audience consider universal, unalterable truths. Then, the individual characters whose
stories are given in Bayhaqi’s narrative text illustrate the validity of these unchangeable
divine and societal laws, as in the story of the rise and transference of the Ghaznavid
kingship, the acts of certain individuals (e.g., Ibn Sammak and Qazi Abu’l-Hasan Bulani)
who are shown to have acquired a knowledge of God through a degree of self-renunciation and -knowledge, and the stories of and allusions to the kings (e.g., pre-Islamic Persian kings and the Samanid Nasr b. Ahmad) who sought wise and learned advisors to consult in order to reign with justice and moral principles. Then, there are laudatory references to the first two of the *rashidun* ("rightly-guided caliphs") and Muhammad’s wife ‘Ayisha, none of whom would have been praised in this way had the author been a Shi‘i. This is the most explicit dimension of the text which illustrates the author’s religious standing.

*Legal and theological orientation:*

As an intellectual who is not primarily or professionally occupied with questions of faith, Bayhaqi does not expressly provide a formal statement concerning the articles of his belief. He was an historian, after all, not a propagator of a given legal or theological school. Yet, Bayhaqi’s text is not devoid of references that may be used to construe his legal affiliation and even to suggest a broad framework for his possible theological orientation. Particular points that could lead one to construe these are for the most part assumed facts (often unintentional statements) in the text, and one who seeks to explain them needs to infer from a combination of implicit elements and very occasional explicit assertions that in one way or another have bearing on the author’s religious disposition. This method is by no means conclusive. Further studies should be devoted to this theme so that we may know more about the religious orientation of a major historian whose idea of history was intimately connected with his religious outlook and yet for whom our
biographical information remains extremely tenuous. Even then our knowledge of
Bayhaqi’s legal and theological affiliation might remain inconclusive for the simple fact
that not enough primary materials pertaining to his life are available.

Be that as it may, the inquiry presented in this section has been developed as
much as was feasible for any first attempt of this kind. The application of the method
explained here leads one to conclude that Bayhaqi was partial to the Hanafi school of law
(madhhab; i.e., in the sphere of fiqh) and that, in the realm of theology (kalam), as far as
a highly educated secretary in his position would have been inclined towards this or that
document, he may very well have stood in the theological overlap between the traditional
Hanafi doctrine of eleventh-century Nishapur and Khurasan, and the school of
Samarqand. The latter was sometimes referred to as the ahl al-sunna wa al-jama‘a and
al-sawad al-a‘zam and came later to be known as the Maturidiyya school of theology
after Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 333/944). That Bayhaqi’s position in
historiographically relevant theological questions (e.g., human and divine volition vis-à-
vis historical actions) is one of assumption validates the point that he, quite true to the
secretarial class, was not primarily concerned with the heated theological debates of his
time. Yet, as his was a highly moral understanding of life and human experience—for
instance, asceticism is, to him, an ideal way of life—he consciously or otherwise
incorporates certain abstract religious themes when speculating on philosophical
questions that pertain to any serious analysis of history. What leads one to surmise that
Bayhaqi was Hanafi and Maturidi will be explained in this section.
The fact that both the Samanids and the Ghaznavids made Hanafism the official legal rite of their respective empires, along with a consideration of the religious geography of Khurasan and the Ghaznavid empire—particularly that of Bayhaq, Nishapur, and Ghazna—and finally a close reading of Bayhaqi’s text make it likely that Bayhaqi was oriented towards this particular Islamic rite (that is, in the sphere of *fiqh*). First, in their empires the Samanids and the Ghaznavids favored, mostly for their own political agendas, the Hanafi school of law over Shafi‘ism and the Karramiyya sect, which were the other two possible alternatives in the eastern part of the Islamic world. As such, Bayhaqi as a Ghaznavid secretary and one who may have come from a secretarial family as a matter of course tended to consider Hanafism the “right religion.”\(^{10}\) He was working for a dynasty whose princes were educated by Hanafi scholars. There were tendencies towards the Karramiyya and Shafi‘ism among the Ghaznavids, but these, by the second half of Mahmud’s reign, had left few lasting imprints on the religious culture of the Ghaznavid house. This tells us something about the environment in which Bayhaqi spent most of his life working, influencing, and being influenced by others. Second, in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries Bayhaq housed no fewer than four religious groups: the Hanafis, the Shafi‘is, the Karramiyya, and the Twelver Shi‘is.\(^{11}\) These religious factions also existed in Nishapur and the other towns, including Ghazna, in the Ghaznavid dominions.\(^{12}\) Of these, Hanafism, tracing its roots back to the moderate Murji‘a of eastern Khurasan and Transoxania, was the longest standing and the predominant school of the eastern world. The geographer al-Muqaddasi (d. c. 391/1000), who visited the area right around the time when Bayhaqi was a youth, states that “[t]he majority of the people in the region are followers of Abu Hanifa”\(^{13}\)—Abu Hanifa (d. 150/767) being
the eponym of Hanafism. Hanafism’s only major rival in the domain of jurisprudence was the newly founded Shafi‘ism with its, in those times, inseparable Ash‘ari theological doctrine.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, Bayhaqi grew up, was educated, and worked in a predominantly Hanafi society. Further, it is conceivable that Bayhaqi’s entire family belonged to the majority in the district of Bayhaq and in the province of Khurasan who had traditionally and out of conformity adhered to Hanafism.\textsuperscript{15} Third, there are a number of laudatory references to Hanafism and the Hanafi jurists of Nishapur and elsewhere in \textit{Tarikh-i Bayhaqi} while one finds no single allusion to Shafi‘ism, even where there was as much reason for the author to include brief references to it. In fact, one cannot fail to note that the only positive reference made in the entire text to a legal school, or a theological doctrine for that matter, is to Hanafism—the case of Imami and Zaydi Shi‘ism is quite different and will be discussed below.

Twice in the text Bayhaqi refers to Abu ‘Usman Isma‘il Abd al-Rahman al-Sabuni (d. 449/1057), the prominent Shafi‘i preacher of Nishapur, appointed to that office by Mas‘ud in the year 426/1035.\textsuperscript{16} Though Bayhaqi, as is his habit, gives a brief description of Abu ‘Usman Isma‘il’s attainment when he first appears in the text, he does not state anything as regards the fact that the prominent Sabuni family in Nishapur in general or Abu ‘Usman Isma‘il himself belonged to the Shafi‘i school of law.\textsuperscript{17} This is rather uncharacteristic of the author. At least he does not do the same when it comes to Hanafi scholars. In addition, according to Khatib Rahbar, the boon companion of both Mahmud and Mas‘ud, the jurist Abu Bakr Hasiri was a Shafi‘i scholar.\textsuperscript{18} Although it is possible that Bayhaqi introduced Abu Bakr in the earlier volumes on the reign of Mahmud, in his and his son Abu’l-Qasim’s numerous appearances in the text one finds
not the slightest allusion to their being in any way affiliated with Shafi‘ism. In striking contrast, Bayhaqi goes to great lengths to show the prominence, wisdom, and foresight of Hanafi jurists, whom he explicitly identifies as such. Two striking examples would be Qazi Abu’l-‘Ala Sa‘id (d. 431/1040-41) and the Tabbani imams.\textsuperscript{19} When one reads through the author’s description of Hanafi jurists, one finds it difficult to resist the idea that, to the author, these individuals exhibit outstanding moral and intellectual qualities only because of their connection with Hanafism. This is not stated explicitly in the text but is nonetheless unintentionally conveyed. Thus, it is, for instance, to our author’s purpose to devote a separate discourse to the Tabbani family and illustrate that their line, by means of discipleship, is directly connected to Abu Yusuf (d. 182/798), one of Abu Hanifa’s most prominent students.\textsuperscript{20}

There are many episodes in \textit{Tarikh-i Bayhaqi} in which Qazi Sa‘id—the teacher and mentor of both Mas‘ud and Muhammad—is depicted as the embodiment of the virtues the author considers fit for his “perfect man.”\textsuperscript{21} Here, only one of these episodes will be adduced to provide yet another example of Bayhaqi’s tendency to extol Hanafi scholars. This episode is described as having taken place a day after the arrival of the Saljuq commander Toghril Beg in Nishapur in the year 429 A.H. Qazi Sa‘id, the most senior and eminent of the “patricians” of Nishapur\textsuperscript{22} is depicted as having reluctantly conceded to go and greet the triumphant Toghril Beg who had occupied Mas‘ud’s palace. “All the notables (\textit{a’yan}), except Qazi Sa‘id, had gone to receive him the day before.”\textsuperscript{23} He was persuaded finally and is said to have arrived at court along “with his children,
grandchildren, pupils, and a great retinue." The Qazi found the court in chaos. Toghirl Beg is shown to have stood up in his honor. Then, the Qazi is said to have admonished the newcomer in the following terms:

May the life of His Majesty be lengthened! This is the seat of Sultan Mas'ud whereon you are sitting. Things like this are stored in the unseen, and it is impossible to know what else might come to pass in the future. Be vigilant; fear God—exalted be His remembrance—extend justice; hearken unto the words of the wronged ones and the distressed; and do not yield that this army perpetrate injustice [in the city, in the land], for that would be a disgraceful tyranny. I, by coming [to you] this time, discharged my obligation to you, and I shall not come again, for I am occupied in acquiring learning and I do not do anything besides. If you turn to reason, this advice I gave suffices.25

The Qazi summarily presents to the ruler the gist of one of Bayhaqi’s central arguments in the text, what he considers to be known to the wise and the prudent (whose number is few). Here, the Qazi is portrayed as someone who has come very close to the author’s conception of the perfect man—who acts based on reason, is not driven by impulse, gives sincere advice, and worries about the welfare of the people—all because of his connection with religious studies and particularly Hanafism. Further, the Qazi is explicitly depicted as a man of learning and of immense reputation, who enjoys an enormous amount of public support, who nonetheless shuns attachment to the world, and who is a candid admonisher of the powerful, a usurper in this case.

Thus, what has been presented here in support of Bayhaqi’s disposition towards Hanafism—either by birth, convenience, conviction, or a combination of these—is in the text adducible. What follows concerning his theological orientation might not prove as incontrovertible, however.
Contrary to the majority of the early eleventh-century Nishapuri Hanafis, Bayhaqi's theological stance does not appear to be Mu'tazili although, as Waldman notes, he, a rationalist, could very well have been influenced by Mu'tazili intellectuals.\textsuperscript{26} There is only one instance in which the Mu'tazilism is mentioned in the text, and there the author equates it with unbelief and heterodoxy.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, numerous references to *qaza* (decree), *qadar* (predetermination), and *taqdir* (determination) in history preclude any consistency with the Mu'tazili concept of human free will. As stated above, there is no reference to any other current theological doctrine. The tangential connection Danishpazhuh sees with Ash'arism does not in the least connote an Ash'ari-minded author. The word *qadim* ("old," "ancient," "pre-eternal") occurs in the first sentence of the third section of the first exordium, where the author writes, "The greater philosophers of old (*qadim*) have said thus, that of the ancient (*qadim*) revelation God—exalted be His glory—sent to the prophet of [that] dispensation is this, that unto people He said, 'Know your own self, for when you attain unto the knowledge of your self you will have attained unto the knowledge of [all] things.' "\textsuperscript{28} The word *qadim* in its second occurrence could mean "ancient" in the sense of "pre-eternal," "ancient" in the sense of "old," or both. The first denotation, however, is strongly suggested by the context, and it is in this sense (which imparts the concept of the pre-eternity of the divine revelation and the word of God) that Danishpazhuh sees a connection with the Ash'ari doctrine of the pre-eternity of the word of God. It should be noted that the latter theory was developed in response to the Mu'tazili thesis as regards the creation (*khilqa*) or temporality (*huduth*) of the word of God.
Notwithstanding, one may still offer several reasons for rejecting the idea that Ash’ari theology is implicit in Bayhaqi’s thought. First, in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, bitter factionalism existed between, on the one hand, Shafi‘ism and Ash‘arism which, in these times, constituted a single legal-theological bloc in the eastern Islamic world, and, on the other, Hanafism of various theological persuasions (i.e., Mu‘tazili, traditional eastern Hanafi, and Hanafi of the school of Samarqand). Since it was surmised that in the sphere of fiqh, Bayhaqi oriented himself towards Hanafism, it is highly unlikely that he could consider Ash‘arism a valid theological understanding consistent with his legal orientation. At least, most Hanafis and Ash‘aris at the time did not think Hanafism and Ash‘arism were consistent with one another. We should note that where this key Ash‘ari term occurs the text does not suggest that its author favored this theological doctrine or the legal school that was inseparable from it. Second, schools of theological interpretation were “intellectual currents without concrete form.” They could influence while contradicting one another. It is, therefore, not inconceivable that in their arguments against the Mu‘tazila, traditional Hanafis and the followers of the school of Samarqand would appropriate an Ash‘ari term about which they had no dispute with the latter. For this reason, one may not argue for an Ash‘ari theology solely based on the occurrence of a single key term. The third reason that invalidates an Ash‘ari theology in Bayhaqi’s thought is provided by the inconsistencies between the two. Al-Ash‘ari’s position vis-à-vis human volition is the opposite of that expressed by Bayhaqi in the text. Al-Ash‘ari was a determinist. As Watt puts it, “The old fatalistic principle that ‘what misses one could not have attained to one and vice versa’ is mentioned in... the creed.” In al-Ash‘ari’s own words,
[T]here is on earth nothing either good or bad except what God wills, and that things exist by the will of God. Thus, it is written: ‘But ye will not so will except it be that God willeth,’ and thus the Muslims say: ‘What God wills is, and what He does not will is not’.  

They [sc. the promulgators of Ash’arism] assert that there is no creator except God, that the evil actions of human beings are created by God and the (good) works of human beings are created by God, and that human beings are not able to create anything.  

(They assert) that good and evil are by God’s decree and predetermination, and they believe in God’s decree and predetermination (both) of the good and the evil, of the sweet and the bitter.  

Fatalistic views such as these are characteristically opposed to Bayhaqi’s concept of human volition to perpetrate good or evil. This will be discussed further below. Suffice it here to say that it is only through the active agency of the human in history that writing history for the purpose of ‘ibrat or pand (teaching life lessons by imparting examples of human actions from the past) becomes meaningful.

Having ruled out any conscious incorporation of Mu’tazili and Ash’ari theologies in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, it is natural to turn to the third and fourth forms of theological doctrine available to an eleventh-century Ghaznavid secretary, namely, the traditional eastern Hanafi theology and the school of Samarqand, both of which also had a good number of followers in the Ghaznavid capital. In the first place, we shall consider the creed of the “most prominent Hanafite scholars” of late tenth- and early eleventh-century Khurasan who were not Mu’tazilis. Although modern scholars assume that the doctrine of these scholars was a slight augmentation of Abu Hanifa’s theology and that it shared a common ground with the Murji’a, the creed of only one such scholar is described in the available sources: that of none other than Qazi Sa’id. Madelung considers his creed to be “representative” of the traditional Hanafi doctrine of Nishapur and, by extension, the
entire province of Khurasan. Indeed, the Qazi’s immense reputation and influence, as well as his connection with the Ghaznavid dynasty, make his creed representative even of many Hanafis outside Khurasan. This creed was “based on the transmitted statements of Abu Hanifa and his disciples”:

The creed contains a long chapter against engaging in kalam and speculation (ra’y) in theology (usul al-din). It is thus incompatible with Maturidite doctrine, which expressly upheld kalam. While affirming predestination it strongly emphasizes that man has a choice (ikhtiyyar)…. While rejecting the doctrine that the Koran is created, it favors the affirmation that it is the speech of God without further specification.

It is true that the Qazi figures in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi and is extolled on numerous occasions, but there are clear similarities and differences between the theological concepts assumed in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi and this representative doctrine of pre-eminent Hanafi scholars of Nishapur and Khurasan. The commonalities include reconciling fate and choice, and rejecting the concept of the createdness of the divine utterance. Where there are differences (e.g., in rejection of speculation), Bayhaqi seems to be in agreement with the school of Samarqand.

The position of the school of Samarqand as regards human volition is the median between the Mu’tazila and Ash’arism. That God creates human acts was agreed upon by al-Maturidi, but he developed the doctrine of the use (isti’mal) of created acts in order to accommodate human choice (ikhtiyyar). Thus, he considered that the human has choice in using the “power” he is given to perform “sinful” or “righteous” acts. In his own approximate words, “The creating is the act of God and consists in the originating of the power in man, but the use of the originated power is the act of man, really and not metaphorically.” This is also clear in the words of al-Nasafi, who was a contemporary of Bayhaqi:
The acting-power [in people] exists along with the act [not before it]. It is the reality of the power by which the act comes to be. This name [acting-power] is used where the causes, instruments and limbs [involved in the act] are sound. [A person’s] being genuinely liable [to obey the law] depends on this acting-power; a person is not liable for [carrying out] what is not within his capacity.\(^{43}\)

By “power” or “acting-power,” these authors mean a special “power”—“apparently psychological or mental rather than merely physical”—inherent in every human being, which he “is commanded to use in a certain way, but which he may use either in obeying or in disobeying the command.”\(^{44}\) Hence, al-Nasafi writes the following concerning divine will vis-à-vis human will:

God is the creator of all the acts of human beings, whether [acts] of unbelief or faith, of obedience or disobedience. All these acts are by His will and volition, by His judgement, His decreeing and His determining. Human beings [perform] acts of choice for which they are rewarded or punished. The good in them is with God’s good pleasure, and the bad in them is not with His good pleasure.\(^{45}\)

The doctrine of isti ‘mal as evidenced here is far more intellectually oriented than Qazi Sa‘id’s creed, which provides no substantive argument for the consistency between predestination and choice. The doctrine of the school of Samarqand as whole also accommodates philosophical speculations as regards religious themes. These render the doctrine of this school closest to both the theological concepts enshrined in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi and the intellectual personality of its author.

It has been observed that Tarikh-i Bayhaqi is imbued with references that indicate the author’s presumption of the agency of divine will in human actions. The fact that the author, in his writing, factors in predetermination (qadar) and divine decree (qaza) has also been regarded by some scholars as a sign of the uncritical nature of his account and inquiry.\(^{46}\) The fact remains, however, that the author on several occasions alludes to what he means by destiny.\(^{47}\) One such example, which is the most explicit in the text, occurs
immediately prior to the account of the battle of Dandanqan. Here, what the author means by destiny and God’s will is explained in the direct speech he quotes from his master Abu Nasr. The speech itself is part of one of the last cordial conversations Abu Nasr held with Mas‘ud. By then (430 A.H.), some nine years into Mas‘ud’s reign, the Ghaznavid empire was in turmoil. A bureaucrat like Abu Nasr, who knew what a stable reign looked like and who was well-read in history and could compare problems in the present to aspects of past reigns, was alarmed at the gravity of the situation and gave his final assessment of matters to the sultan. We cite the last part of the conversation in extenso because it is extremely important for any understanding of Bayhaqi’s view of divine will in history and because the definition of destiny given here, along with other references that exemplify its usage by the author, has been neglected by scholars who have written about Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. This is Abu Nasr narrating the account:

I said [i.e., to Mas‘ud], “May my lord’s life be lengthened! There is yet another point, of which I am ashamed to speak of!” He [sc. Mas‘ud] said, “It must be told and expressed, as it will be heard with an agreeable hearing!” I said, “May my lord’s life be lengthened! It is evident that that which proceeds from these people [sc. the Seljuqs] in Khurasan, such as the wrongs [they perpetrate] and their perverseness (fasad), murdering of and mutilating people, and taking as lawful the unlawful women of the Muslims is in such that, in these past one hundred years, [no one] has reported [anything like it], nor has there indeed been [such a thing, i.e., in this past one hundred years or even further back], nor is it mentioned in the histories. With all this, in the wars they wage the victory is theirs. How reprehensible a nation are we that God, may His remembrance be exalted, has empowered these people over us and gives them aid and success. And the affairs of the world are dependent upon kings and divine law (shari‘at). And state (dawlat) and religion (millat) are two brothers who walk together [in the same path] and are inseparable from one the other. When God, exalted and glorified is He, withdraws His favor from a king, so that people like these overpower him, it is proof that God, the Exalted, is displeased with him. My lord should think how he holds his affairs with that Majestic and Heavenly Lord!” He said, “I know not anything that has been extended to someone or has been executed that had been contrary to the leave of God, the Exalted.” I said, “Praised be God! And this is contrary to the rules of propriety that I have done and still am doing, but this is from affection that I say [this]. My lord should further [lit., “better”] consider the relation between himself and God, exalted and glorified is He: If a pardon has to be sought, he should
seek it—and he should begin this very night—and should enter unto the presence of the Creator God in humility, and imploring, bow himself down to the earth, make vows, and express regret for that which may have been between him and God in times past, exalted and glorified is He, so that from the morrow he may see that its effect would be made manifest. For the prayer of kings, when it comes out of the righteous heart and correct belief, is not veiled [from God; i.e., it is accepted by God]. [my lord] should not take this servant in punishment for this boldness of speech—if he considers it so—as it is the command of his majesty [to give counsel].” When I said this, he said, “I have accepted to do this, and I have pardoned you, as you have said [that which you have] by my leave and returned the good of myself and that of my father unto you. Return, and whenever you desire, come and speak about matters like this, and give counsel unto me, as there is no ill opinion of you.” I bowed and returned. And I cherish the hope that God, exalted and glorified is He, may reward me for that which I said in this wise. I do not know whether or not it [sc. my counsel] was pleasing [unto the Sultan]. In any case, I discharged the responsibility from myself.49

Then, Bayhaqi writes that when he heard his master narrate the particulars of this conversation he reassured Abu Nasr in the following terms: “May my lord’s life be lengthened! You, [in this way], indeed discharged that which was your obligation and returned the benefaction [of Mas’ud and the Ghaznavids] and the responsibility you bore to the state.”50

This passage, which appears towards the end of the account of the reign of Mas’ud, should be read in the context of several allusions to destiny and the will of God which reflect the dynamics the author sees between, on the one hand, the unseen divine agency and, on the other, the misfortunes that befall the Ghaznavids in particular and human actions in general.51 What the author means in this specific case is clear. It is ultimately Mas’ud, as a king, who is to blame for the irreversible tragedies that occur in his empire. Because he directly or otherwise neglected certain indispensable moral principles, religious laws, and ultimately the exceedingly important principle of justice, the divine judgment came down upon him and his empire in the same way it had on innumerable occasions come down upon the kings and peoples of old. This is so because

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the foundation of the human world is set on the divine principle of reward and
punishment (i.e., justice). If one fails in his duty, one receives his share of divine
punishment in this world and the next. Since kingship and divine law or state and religion
are intimately connected with one another (an obvious reference to the well-known
saying that is related from the Sasanid Ardashir I about kingship and religion), it is the
duty of the king to uphold religion and dispense justice in society and observe a high
standard of morality and moderation in his own personal life (i.e., to be just to himself). If
the king discharges his office accordingly, his divinely ordained return is the perpetuation
of his rule and the stability, security, and prosperity of his empire. If not, his kingdom
will be taken away from him and given to a new people who can rule with justice and
according to divine law. Since Bayhaqi has already in the narrative text dwelled on the
wrongs perpetrated by Mas‘ud and the Ghaznavid administrative apparatus, the message
is unmistakable. The passage is, thus, indicative of the king’s responsibility to maintain
order in society, and implies that the fate of all within the geographical limits of the
empire is dependent upon the degree to which the person who maintains that empire
upholds religion and morality in his private life and in the public arena.

What is most pertinent to the discussion in this section is, however, the correlation
the author sees between divine and human actions. That the human has choice is self-
evident in light of the responsibility he bears for his actions. He is subject to reward and
punishment. Divine will and agency are thus not the negation of human choice. Rather,
they come into effect as a result of human freedom to act. Hence, it was because of
“divine determination” (taqdir) and a lack of “divine favor” (‘inayat-i Izad) 54—read:
divine punishment—that despite all the last-minute attempts on the part of Mas‘ud and
certain of his men in Dandanqan, he failed to defeat the Saljuqs. For otherwise, "[W]hat was it that was necessary to the office of kingship that Amir Mas'ud, may God be pleased with him, did not possess—of family and domestics, servants, statesmen, dignified men of sword and pen, incalculable army, elephants, innumerable beasts, and inestimable treasury?" Thus, when Bayhaqi states that "with human exertion (jahd) and endeavor (jidd) nothing may be accomplished" if there is no "favor" of God, he is emphasizing this divine principle of reward and punishment and is not in any way negating or denigrating the human agency in his own experience.\textsuperscript{55} The correlation the author sees between divine destiny and human choice is thus consistent with both the position of the traditional eastern Hanafi theology and that of the school of Samarqand. When it comes to speculation as regards the logic in this paradoxical theme, Bayhaqi seems to unintentionally express a tendency towards the school of Samarqand. Finally, there appears to be some connection between the doctrine of \textit{isti 'mal} and the author's emphasis on the knowledge of self (i.e., the knowledge of various powers within one which enables one to restrain them and thereby act in a particular way that is most wise for him to act), as is discussed in the following chapter.

As illustrated here, we are in no position to claim that Bayhaqi could have had any intellectual tendency towards either Mu'tazilism or Ash'arism. He was neither a pure determinist nor one who would go so far as a Mu'tazili would in arguing for choice. That he favored Hanafism or was a Hanafi in the sphere of theology seems to be highly probable. That he was a follower of the school of Samarqand as opposed to the traditional doctrine of Khurasani Hanafis may well be argued based on some similarities and dissimilarities that exist between some aspects of his thought, as discussed above, and the
known position of each school. But it should be noted that hairsplitting differences between two Hanafi theologies—the school of Samarqand and the traditional eastern Hanafi theology—might very well have been of little importance for a secretary who was not a member of the 'ulama'. Hence, we may surmise that the broad framework in which Bayhaqi could identify a theology consistent with some of his philosophical views would have been eastern Hanafism.

Further religious concerns in the text:

Besides divine will and the human role in human experience, there are still a number of salient and unexplored religiophilosophical themes in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. First and most conspicuous are the allusions to the twin concepts of human mortality and resurrection. The reader is reminded of human frailty and the transience of the world on numerous occasions, particularly in the tales of the fall and death of the great men in the Ghaznavid system, men such as ‘Ali Qarib; Mahmud’s last vizier Hasank; Mas‘ud’s high-ranking generals Asightigin Ghazi and Eryaruq; his first vizier Khvaja Ahmad b. Hasan Maymandi; Sultan Farrukhzad; Abd al-Jabbar, son of Mas‘ud’s second vizier; and Abu Nasr Mushkan. When an individual suffers a tragic fall, the emphasis in general is less on the causes of his sudden abasement and execution or on those primarily responsible—though these, if known, are never ignored—than on “the infidelity” of the world. For it is Bayhaqi’s conviction that a small degree of knowledge, of experience, leads one to recognize the impermanence of the world and the inevitability of one’s end. If, then, the intention of exertion and the consequence of endeavor are an impossible hope
against and a forgetful or neglectful outlook towards this universal law of generation and
decay, endeavor and the life spent for its sake are both in vain. This is why the historian
constantly reminds the reader of the end that is in store for everyone. As Bayhaqi writes:

And the work of a group of the offspring of Adam, may peace be upon him, is
extremely strange. For they kill one another for no reason and eat [one another] for
transient worldly possession. Then, they leave behind [that possession] and pass lonely
and with much suffering beneath the dust. What benefit is in this, or what wise person
would choose it?57

And there is no continuity to this passing world. We all are in a caravansary and pace
on one after the other. Here no one has a place. It is necessary to live in such wise that
[people] would pray [for one] after one’s death….
Time takes away all with which I have been entrusted.
No good in a thing taken away and returned….
And I have marveled at the greed and the dispute of one with the other and at so much
unbearable burden and suffering and calculation and evil consequence. For when death
approached, one would not be able to distinguish between the hungry mendicant in
misery and pain, and the rich one with great affluence and ease. A man is one whose
name lives on after death.58

Even when Bayhaqi speaks of the impersonal time (zamana) and the revolution of the
wheel of fortune (gasht-i falak), he is only concerned with the extremely limited time
assigned to the human in this world and the even more insignificant period in which he
might experience a rise of fortune. It goes without saying that the impersonal time and
fortune are under the decree (farman, qaza) of God, who has also ordained mortality for
the human.59

Man’s mortality is invoked only to direct the reader’s attention to the resurrection
and the judgment day in the next world. Waldman is correct in stating that Bayhaqi
“assumes the afterlife and takes the Day of Judgment for granted [and that] he mentions
them only rarely.”60 But instead of direct indication of the afterlife, the resurrection, and
the judgment day, he simply and quite frequently invokes this elementary and well-
understood Qur’anic concept by, for instance, subtly referring to the transience of this world. Brevity, when possible and necessary, is the author’s rule, and because his audience needed no elaboration as regards this theme he simply avoids elaboration. Thus, the word *qiyama* (resurrection, also afterlife and judgment day) is not repeated very many times in the text, but the concept of *qiyama* is invoked on many occasions, at least whenever the mortality of the human is spoken of or alluded to. For these two concepts form a single theme in much of Perso-Islamic literature and tradition. Still the author finds the theme consequential enough to state it in “Khutba I.” After making a point concerning self-knowledge, he explains:

Thus, when one has meditated, [one finds that] there is much benefit beneath this great and [yet] simple word and this brief statement [i.e., concerning self-knowledge]. For anyone who attained unto the knowledge of himself—that he is alive, and, at the end, shall perish through death, and, again, through the power (*qudrat*) of the Creator God, glorious be His glory, shall inevitably rise from the tomb—and acquired an understanding of his Creator and gained certainty that the Creator is not as the created, he has [no doubt] obtained the true religion and correct belief.61

The author here considers that knowledge of the inseparable themes of resurrection and mortality constitutes a greater and deeper knowledge of self. This theme of resurrection is, furthermore, unmistakably stressed in the stories of the Sasanid king Khusraw Anushirvan and his vizier Buzurgmihr, Mas’ud and Qazi Abu’l-Hasan Bulani, and the ‘Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid and the two ascetics (see below for further details).62

Thus, for instance, when Buzurgmihr is implored to counsel them before imprisonment, his advice to the wise (*hukama*) and the scholars (*‘ulama*) is that “your life is dependent on the decree (*farman*) of God. When you die, your return is to Him, and there will be in-gathering (*hashr*) and resurrection (*qiyamat*), and questioning and answering, and reward and punishment.”63
But mortality and resurrection are linked to two other closely related and very important Qur’anic themes, those of the fear of God and the purpose of human life. Of all who must be mindful of their evanescence and purpose in life, and fear the approaching hereafter, the men in power rank highest. They are, more than any, prone to forget, particularly if they are “young” and “voluptuous.”64 This is precisely what the account of Harun al-Rashid and the two ascetics is supposed to illustrate when Bayhaqi interpolates it immediately after the comparable story of Mas‘ud and the God-fearing Qazi Bulani. The single most important advice the two ascetics—one, albeit, a hypocrite and the other severe and sincere—whom Harun visits in Mecca give him is to fear God. The shortened version of the story is given below because apart from illustrating the stress Bayhaqi puts on this particular theme (i.e., fear of God) and the twin concepts discussed above it reveals the author’s subtle and implicit way of emphasizing certain themes.65

Ibn Sammak, the second of the two ascetics, is thus shown to have been in prayer on the roof of his house and in the dead of the night. He was weeping sorely and repeatedly reciting, “What! Did ye then think that We had created you for pastime…? (Q 23:117).” Then, having felt that some people were approaching, Ibn Sammak turns to some disguised guests (Harun and his advisor, Fazl Rabi‘) who had just entered his house without any previous notice. Then after customary salutations, he asks, “Why have you come at this time of night? Who are you?” “It is the Commander of the Faithful who has come to visit you,” replies Fazl. “It was more appropriate to let me come to you,” answers Ibn Sammak, “had you let me, I would have come, for it is not right to disturb people.” “It is the Caliph of the Prophet,” Fazl rejoins. “Obedience to him is obligatory to all Muslims. For God says, ‘Obey God and obey the Apostle, and those among you invested with authority’ ” (Q 4:62). “Does this Caliph tread the way of the twin Shaykhs (i.e., Abu Bakr and ‘Umar),” returns Ibn Sammak, “so that people would consider his decree equal to that of the Prophet?” “Yes!” Fazl replies. “I marvel at this,” retorts Ibn Sammak. “For in Mecca, which is the sanctuary, I do not see any sign of this. One may then reckon concerning the other places and regions.” Fazl kept quiet. “Give me some advice,” asks Harun, “for I came to hear your words that they may increase my awareness.” “O Commander of the Faithful,” replies Ibn Sammak, “fear God—that He is One, has no equal, and stands in need of no match. And know that you will be taken before Him in the hereafter (qiyaamat) and your situation will not be beyond two: you will be taken either to paradise or to hell. There is not a third to these two abodes.” Harun weeps miserably, in such a way that his face

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and clothing get wet. "O Shaykh, do you know what you say?" Fazl responds, "Is there a doubt that the Commander of the Faithful will go but to paradise?" Ibn Sammak, disregarding Fazl, turns to Harun and says, "O Commander of the Faithful, this Fazl is with you tonight yet shall not be with you tomorrow when the resurrection (qiyamat) is and will not speak in your behalf, and if he would he will not be listened to. Look at your body and have mercy upon yourself." Fazl is bewildered while Harun weeps, with such a weeping that everyone fears he might pass out. The story continues with some more advice on the part of Ibn Sammak concerning the responsibility of the caliph to extend justice (dad) and to do good (niku 'i) to people in this fleeting world. When given a sack of one thousand gold dinars so that he may be relieved from poverty, Ibn Sammak smiles and says, "What! I give advice to the Commander of the Faithful to protect himself from the fire of hell, and this man has come to put me into that very fire. Lo, take away this fire from before me, as we, the house, and the neighborhood shall presently turn to ashes." Thus, Ibn Sammak leaves the guests, and his maidservant leads Harun and Fazl out of the house. On the way back, Harun keeps repeating, "Man is this!" and afterwards he is said to have very frequently recalled this encounter.

Aside from the fact that Ibn Sammak—just like Qazi Sa'id—displays some of the qualities that the author considers to be characteristic of the perfect man (e.g., detachment from the vanities of the world, courage to admonish a ruler who falls short of the ideals of his office, and deeds equal to words, that is, to act upon that which one bids others to do), the underlying theme of this encounter between Harun and Ibn Sammak is none other than the fear of God. Even when Ibn Sammak speaks of justice he makes it clear that it is the fear of God that inculcates in a powerful person such as a ruler the concept of dispensing justice. This anecdote is cited immediately after the account of Mas'ud and Qazi Abu'l-Hasan Bulani of Bust. Mas'ud, having learned about the latter's poverty, gives two sacks, each containing a thousand misqals of gold, to Abu Nasr to be given in alms to the Qazi and his son. But they both very honorably reject the royal bequest. When Abu Nasr insists, they say that resurrection (qiyamat) is fast approaching and they fear the reckoning of the hereafter. Extremely affected by this behavior of the Qazi and his son and in tears, Abu Nasr says, "May God bestow His good unto you! You two are
indeed great men!” Bayhaqi then writes that for the rest of the day Abu Nasr was
preoccupied with this encounter. The day after, when informed by Abu Nasr of the Qazi’s
response, Mas‘ud is said to have remained bewildered. The account and the story about
Harun and the two ascetics interpolated afterwards show that Mas‘ud did not even
comprehend the situation let alone draw a lesson from a pious man’s rejection of the
world out of the fear of God—something Abu Nasr is shown to have taken note of.

If anything, the fear of God serves to inspire a purposeful life. The purpose of Ibn
Sammak’s repetition of the Qur’anic verse is precisely to make a point in that regard.
That is, not only is the creation at large not “for pastime,” but the life of the human in this
world is purposeful. But what does Bayahqi consider to be the “purpose” of the human in
this life? It will be recalled from the passage quoted above concerning self-knowledge
that endeavor to gain a knowledge of self in the present life is said to lead one to the
knowledge of God. At one level, self- and divine knowledge are respectively considered
the most important endeavor in which one may engage in this world, and the highest
attainment to which one may aspire. Gaining self- and divine knowledge is an explicitly
religious theme that is found in Islam and Zoroastrianism. Bayhaqi himself shows this,
and it will be further discussed in the following chapter. Suffice it here to state that this
theme (i.e., to come to the recognition of the existence of God and thus to worship him) is
in complete harmony with the purpose of life set forth in the Qur’an. At another level, a
general knowledge of God and worship of him are assumed by Bayhaqi. What is not
taken for granted, however, is being a “good” human being. Hence, exerting oneself to
cultivate the qualities of the wise and the prudent is another loftiest goal of the individual
in this life. These qualities are, moreover, universal characteristics that are expressed in various religions. A speech by Buzurgmihr, who, like Qazi Saʻid and Ibn Sammak, is the embodiment of human perfection, illustrates a number of these changeless virtues:

I charge you to recognize God, the Mighty, the Glorious, in His Oneness and to obey Him. Know that He perceives your good (nikay) and reprehensible (zisht) acts, knows that which you have in the heart, and your life depends on His decree. When you die, your return is to Him, and there will be in-gathering and resurrection, questioning and answering, and reward and punishment.

Speak goodness (niku‘i) and do good work (nikukari), for when God, the Mighty, the Glorious, created you, He created you for (doing) good (niki). Beware lest you perpetrate evil (badi), and avoid evil ones (badan), as the evildoer (badkunanda) has a short life.

Be pure, and keep your eye and your ear and you hand and your private part away from the prohibited and the possession of men.

Know that death is the mansion of life. Even if you live a long life, you must proceed to that place.

Do ye wear the raiment of modesty, for it is the raiment of the righteous (abrar).

Make “telling the truth” your practice, as it shall make you true [before men], and men like the tellers of the truth, and the teller of the truth shall not die. And keep away from telling lies, for the liar, even if he gives the right testimony, shall not be accepted.

Envy is the cause of the diminishing of the body, and the envier never has peace, for he shall constantly be in war with the determination (taqdir) of God, exalted be His name, and envy kills men before their appointed term.

The greedy possesses no ease because he seeks that which he may not have [eternally] been given.

Keep away from women, as they take away the possession and destroy the houses. And any one who wishes his woman to remain pure, let him not seek the women of others.

Do not seek faults in men, for no one is without fault. Anyone who becomes ignorant of his own faults, he is the most ignorant of men.

Good nature (khuy-i nik) is the greater of God’s gifts, exalted be His glory. And keep away from evil nature (khuy-i bad), for that is a heavy chain on the heart and on the foot. The evil natured (badkhu) is always in great toil, and men are pained by him. The good natured (nikukhuy) would acquire both this world and the next, and will be praised in both worlds.

Any one of you who is greater in age, him do ye honor more greatly and keep his respect and do not disobey him.
Do not rely on hope alone, so much so that you withdraw your hand from work. While those who built cities and villages and structures and canals (qanat) and worried after this world, they left behind all these and are gone and these things have faded away.

This that I said suffices, and I know this: that our reunion shall be on the day of resurrection (qiyamat). 68

It is likely that the source of this speech was a piece of Fürstenspiegel literature, and as is clearly evident from the quotation itself, the moral values Buzurgmihr calls his wise and scholarly companions to observe are strands of religious teachings—Zoroastrian, Christian, or Islamic. What is more striking is the presumed uniformity of these moral or religious teachings. What was valid to Buzurgmihr and what he preached to his disciples are valid universal moral principles. These are, at the least, consistent with the virtues Bayhaqi has in mind for his audience. Of concern to the particular theme of this section is, finally, the fact that the individual has the choice to develop in himself certain indispensable virtues. This must, in fact, be his lifelong preoccupation. To make better of oneself is one’s highest aim in life. Because in this way, the purpose of the human is, in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, indicated to be his conscious drive to acquire virtues, wherever individuals, and particularly those in power, fail to uphold these norms and standards, they are by one means or another criticized by the idealist author. Mas‘ud and Abu Sahl are two cases in point.

*The author and the doctrinal others:*

As stated above, direct and explicit references to the author’s religiosity are rare in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. Even though it is part of his method to speak of the characters of those
who appear in his history, on no occasion does Bayhaqi offer a direct moral picture of himself as an almost omnipresent character. Limited as we are—by his language and presentation of himself—to evaluating his personality based on the values and virtues he so cherishes in others, we nevertheless are in a position to conclude that he was not a self-righteous man. There is at least one instance where he criticizes himself for having failed to live up to the principles he so admired that others, that is, the learned, must others possess.

And in some matters fault was mine, and the turn of trial was come, and when still youthful I entrapped myself in a cage, and mistakes were made, until I fell and rose, and much ease and trial I witnessed, and twenty years have passed [i.e., since the death of Abu Nasr], and I am still in its difficulty, and all have passed.69

On some occasions (e.g., on the deaths of Hasanak and Abu Nasr), he sympathizes with his characters when they fall short of the virtuous life and human perfection. Striking in some ways might be the scenes of drinking parties wherein Bayhaqi partakes. But drinking, though prohibited by some legal and theological schools, was not censured by all authorities in medieval Islam. The school of Samarqand, for instance, approved of the drinking of “wine made from dates.”70 Likewise, in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi drinking is the norm of the court and high culture. It is the lack of moderation in drinking (or in anything) that is criticized, as it displays the immodesty that is in one’s inner self. Finally, parallel to the stories of Ibn Sammak and Qazi Bulani, there is an episode in which Bayhaqi, having occupied himself all day long with the secretarial work of the vizier Ahmad ‘Abd al-Samad, refuses to take from him a sack of “silver, gold, and robes.” But then his refusal is nothing other than the good manners of a cultured secretary. It is not complete detachment from worldly riches. So when the vizier insists, he concedes to “the

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decree of my lord”: the silver, five thousand dirhams, and the robes (five sets) were given to a relative of Bayhaqi’s who was to take them to him.\textsuperscript{71} The picture one forms of the author, as a result, is that of a person who, though he aspired to very high moral standards, had fallen well short of them, and yet he does not particularly try to conceal them.

Where Bayhaqi’s conception of religious others is concerned, he is sometimes quite verbal and expresses his particularly polarized views. On the one hand, he makes certain that the Khariji,\textsuperscript{72} the Mu‘tazili, the Zandiqi, the Dahri,\textsuperscript{73} and even the Zoroastrian (Gabr; pl. Gabrakan) are understood to be following “defective” doctrines while on the other hand Christianity (as in din-i ‘Isi-yi pighambar) but particularly some early leaders of Shi‘a Islam are extolled.\textsuperscript{74} There is no indication of the author’s attitude towards the Jewish communities that lived within the Ghaznavid empire, although a story about the compassion and mercy Moses showed to a lamb when he was yet a shepherd is related in order to establish that it was this particular act of mercy on his part that made firm his prophethood.\textsuperscript{75} When the memories of historical characters with questionable religious standing—that is from the point of view of an eleventh-century Ghaznavid secretary and his audience—are invoked (that is, Babak Khurramdin, Abu’l-Hasan Afshin, Abu Muslim Khurasani, and the Saffarid Ya‘qub Lays), the descriptions are generally brief, illustrative of some pertinent point at hand, and without particular reference to these figures’ religious orientations. It should be noted that of these four individuals the last two are in fact paradigmatic figures in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. Bayhaqi points out without any elaboration, for example, the fall of Abu Muslim after the triumph of the ‘Abbasid revolution was identical to that of ‘Ali Qarib after Mas‘ud’s victory over Muhmmad.
Afshin, however, is referred to by the caliph al-Mu’tasim and Ahmad b. Abi Dawud as “half-infidel” (nimkafar) and “untouchable” or “unclean” (murdar, sag). This might seem to be consistent with the author’s apparent lack of sympathy towards anything remotely connected with Zoroastrianism. But on the other hand, as we shall see in the following chapter, Bayhaqi consciously incorporates some pre-Islamic Persian moral principles into his thought.

There is only one instance in which Sufism (in the sense of either “mystic speculation” or a way of life encompassing asceticism, pietism, and mystic speculation) is mentioned in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, and this is when the author writes that after the episode with Qazi Bulani, whenever Mas’ud saw a “Sufi (mutisavvif), or a ‘long-mustached one’ (suhan-sablat) who had put a trap of deceit or had put on a cloak—the heart, indeed, darker than the cloak—he [sc. Mas’ud] would laugh and say to Abu Nasr, ‘May the evil eye be away from the Bulanis!’” This reference tells as much about the author’s attitude towards Sufism as it does about Mas’ud’s view of the Sufis. It seems it is hypocrisy and the unconventional way of religiosity and life that are at issue here. When Qazi Sa’id and some prominent Hanafi and Shafi’i scholars of Nishapur queried the great eleventh-century Sufi of Nishapur, Shaykh Abu Sa’id b. Abi’l-Khayr Mayhani, they were concerned with these same issues. It was, too, his nonconformity with the understood norms of piety and his seeming insincerity that were mentioned in the indictment sent to the sultan at Ghazna, who in turn “gave the Hanafi and Shafi’i imams a free hand to inflict [on the Shaykh] the ultimate penalty of the Shari’ah.” This seems to illustrate a general attitude of the Ghaznavids, and thus the Ghaznavid administrative apparatus, towards Sufism. If, thus, one agrees with Bosworth that the Ghaznavid attitude towards
organized Sufism in their empire was characterized at once by respect and suspicion, this would reinforce Bayhaqi’s view of the Sufis as indicated in the reference above. Yet, as evidenced by the stories of Ibn Sammak and Qazi Bulani, Bayhaqi is unquestionably in favor of sincere asceticism (*zuḥd*). Austerity is one of the moral qualities he cherishes in his perfect man. He, however, knows too well that not many can achieve it. This is also shown by the worldliness of the insincere ascetic (*zahid*)—one Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ‘Umari—who Harun visits prior to Ibn Sammak. He, after all, takes the sack of gold *dinars* that Ibn Sammak so vehemently rejects.81 Bayhaqi’s master Abu Nasr is another case in point. Throughout the text, he embodies many of the virtues Bayhaqi seeks to find in people. But the author makes it clear that austerity was not something Abu Nasr cherished.82 Thus, although Bayhaqi may not have viewed Sufism favorably, he certainly approved of asceticism as a way of life.

There is no explicit indication that Bayhaqi in his history condemned Sevener or Isma‘ili Shi‘ism, but it would have been extremely unusual for a Ghaznavid official who served under Mahmud—known for his persecution of the Isma‘ilis—to have harbored any admiration for this particular Islamic sect. As Bosworth puts it,

[t]he Isma‘ilis were suspect because of their religious and social radicalism, their wide intellectual appeal, and above all for their political linkage with the Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo. In Persia and Transoxania the Isma‘ilis seem to have aimed especially at converting the ruling classes to their doctrines. The Ghaznavid Sultans [therefore] were anxious to demonstrate their orthodoxy and their support for the Abbasids; the happy outcome of the execution of the Fatimid *da‘i* [sc. teacher] Taharti was that ‘when the affair of Taharti was ended in this way, a report of the matter was sent to the Caliph’s court; in this way, the sword silenced the tongues of the censorious ones [sc. the Isma‘ilis], and praise for what he (sc. Mahmud) had done was heaped on him’.83

This was the general political aura in a society which flourished in a “Shi‘i century” through its active support of the ‘Abbasids’ feeble opposition to the Fatimids of Egypt.
Where, therefore, Qarmatis and Egyptians (Misriyan) are mentioned in the text, the references are highly charged and politicized and are more illustrative of Ghaznavid politics than they are of the author’s personal view of their Isma‘ili doctrine. Still, because Bayhaqi makes an attempt to redeem Hasanak from “the trumped-up charge of heresy”—i.e., the accusation of being a Qarmati—one may conclude that his position towards extremist doctrines like Severen Shi‘ism was not any different from that of the Ghaznavids. 84

The other two sects of Shi‘ism (i.e., the Zaydis and the Imamis), on the other hand, occupy an unmistakably prominent position in Bayhaqi’s history. Besides drawing explicit parallels among the widely recognized martyrdom of Husayn b. ‘Ali at the hand of the Umayyad commander ‘Ubayd’ullah b. Ziyad, the tragic death of Zayd b. ‘Ali, and the execution of Hasanak, Bayhaqi portrays portrayal of ‘Ali b. Musa al-Rida in very positive terms in an anecdote that he relates to explain, at least on one level, why Tahir b. al-Husayn, Fadl Sahl, and ‘Ali b. Abi Sa‘id were respectively called Dhu al-Yamanayn, Dhu al-Riyasatayn, and Dhu al-Qalamayn. 85 In another story from early ‘Abbasid times, the sagacious vizier Yahya b. Khalid al-Barmaki is said to have counseled his son Fazl in the following terms when Harun al-Rashid appointed him governor of “Khurasan, Rayy, the mountainous region of Khvarazm, Sistan, and Transoxania” to quash the ‘Alid Yahya’s rebellion in Gurgan, Tabaristan, and the mountainous terrains of Gilan or, alternatively, to compromise with him: “O Son, this is a great work that the Caliph has assigned to you and a consummate state for this world that he bestowed upon you. However, it is a work with a great punishment (uqubat) for the hereafter, for you are to destroy an offspring of the Prophet, may peace be upon him.” 86 The fact that the
Ghaznavids, on their part, showed respect and deference to non-Ismaili Shi'ism might reinforce Bayhaqi's attitude towards it. As Bosworth also notices, in *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*, the sultans use as diplomatic envoys the educated and respected *sayyids* (Shi'i descendants of the prophet) while the *naqib* (leader and spokesman of the of the Shi'is, “a semi-official position vis-à-vis the central government”) of the 'Alids in Nishapur was allowed to play a major role in support of Mas'ud the first time the Saljuq Toqhril occupied the city. It was he who harbored the *sahib-barid* (the central intelligence officer) of Nishapur in time of crisis and so was a recipient of a special message from the sultan.

Yet, the prominence of the image of non-Ismaili Shi'ism in the text does not mean that the author was himself a Shi'i. For this seems to be related more to the phenomenon R. D. McChesney identifies as “ahl al-baytism”—“the special reverence for the immediate family of the Prophet Muhammad”—than to Shi'i religious disposition. It is true that, as McChesney himself states, “even this view is too broad and ignores the class, economic, regional, ethnic, and family loyalties that shaped the individual’s world view and thus his choice of spiritual traditions and perspectives,” but to the extent one can learn about Bayhaqi's “class, economic, regional, ethnic, and family loyalties,” one tends to see in him more respect and distant devotion towards the 'Alids than veneration to the extent of a Shi'i believer. Such is the case when he considers the 'amid (civil governor) of Khurasan Abu'l-Fazl Suri's reconstruction of and endowment to the shrine of 'Ali b. Musa al-Rida as part of his “good works” and refers, in passing, to his own visitation or pilgrimage (*ziyarat*) of the shrine in the year 431 A.H. just before the battle of Dandanqan.
Conclusions:

The purpose of this chapter has been as much to set forth Bayhaqi's concept of morality, as defined by his particular religious outlook, as to penetrate to his inmost—to the extent this is possible through a careful study of his work—in order to learn about his intellectual personality in the sphere of his religion. What we have learned is that he, on one level, had hardly a religious or ideological stand distinct from that of the dynasty he served. He was a Hanafi from the legal standpoint, and it has been argued that he very well could have oriented himself towards the theological school of Samarqand. He condemned the heterodoxies—the doctrines of those whom he calls the Zandiqi and the Dahri, and perhaps also of the Sevener Shi'is—the radical doctrine of the Kharijis, the "extreme" rationalism of the Mu'tazilis, and apparently the religion of pre-Islamic Persia, Zoroastrianism. On the other hand, he extols some of the most important figures of Sunni and non-Isma'ili Shi'i Islam. This stance of Bayhaqi is in agreement with what is known to have been the official Ghaznavid position in religious matters.93 This is the general and most notable side of Bayhaqi's religious outlook.

But in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, as evidenced from the discussion above, there are certain religious ideas that go beyond the author's possible political prudence and/or conformity to the religious norms of his time and place. If Bayhaqi's personal attitude towards certain sects and religious groups, on the one hand, and his adherence to Hanafism and the theological school of Samarqand, on the other, can be explained as typical or not distinctly unusual of a Ghaznavid secretary, his making certain abstract religious ideas
the central themes of his history cannot. In fact, writing a dynastic history whose underlying themes are to show the fragility of human life and his prosperity and to illustrate that every individual receives his inescapable due—whether in the form of reward or punishment both in this world and the next—in order to inspire in the reader to fear God and to aspire him to a virtuous and purposeful life, this tells us that to the author religion or these universal human questions were a personal and intellectual preoccupation. As it shall be seen in the following chapter, Bayhaqi's ideas of the perfect man and the role of knowledge in acquiring perfection in life are in tune with the religious themes he emphasizes throughout his history. In fact, they explain each other. We shall return in chapter four to the conceptual relation that exists between Bayhaqi's religious outlook and his concept of human idealism, and the implication these two have on understanding and writing of history. In a very general way, this chapter has also attempted to show the general religious or moral culture that was prevalent in Bayhaqi's time.

1 Waldman, *Toward a Theory*; and Meisami, "Dynastic History."

2 TB-F/TB-Kh.

3 Waldman, *Toward a Theory*.

4 For the formative period of Islamic historiography see T. Khalidi, "History and Hadith," *Arabic Historical Thought*, 17-81; and Gibb, "Tarikh," 124.

5 TB-Kh, 151 (Q 3:26), 154, and 158.

6 Ibid., 159-61. Whether observations are secondary to the author's possible preconceptions is not the point here, of course.

7 TB-F, 237, 241, 308, and 676. NB: 'Ayisha is referred to, albeit in al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf's speech, as "the Mother of the Faithful" ('um al-mu'minin) (241). There is also an
allusion to Abu Bakr (and Muhammad) in the fourth line of Abu Hanifa Iskafi’s ode cited in volume seven (361).

8 Our most important source is, of course, Bayhaqi’s own text, which is rich in detail. It is, however, unfortunate that most scholars who have written on him—particularly in English—have not used these minute details in innovative ways.

9 Wilferd Madelung, “al-Maturidi,” in *EI²*; and idem, “Maturidiyya,” in *EI²*.

10 TB-Kh, 254-5.

11 Bosworth, “Bayhaq,” in *EIr*.


14 For a thorough discussion of this see Bulliet, “Hanafi and Shafi‘i” in *The Patricians*, 28-46.

15 To extrapolate strictly based on the religious landscape of Bayhaq and/or Nishapur is in fact to advance a tenuous argument, for at least Abu’l-Hasan Muhammad Bayhaqi (d. 324/936) provides an instance where an individual from Bayhaq received his education in Nishapur and yet became “a jurist who helped promote the spread of the Shafi‘iite school of Islamic law in Khorasan;” see Heinz Halm, “Bayhaqi, Abu’l-Hasan Mohammad,” in *EIr*.

16 TB-Kh, 706 and 884.

17 For the Sabunis’ prominence in Nishapur, see Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, 178-9; and Bulliet, “Sabuni-Furati,” in *The Patricians*, 134-42.

18 TB-Kh, 336, n. 17.
See TB-F, 249-50, 263-67, and 693-96 for both the prominent role the Tabbanis had in the Ghaznavid system and their eulogistic treatment by Bayhaqi. Qazi Abu'il-'Ala Sa'id appears in the text very regularly; see index in TB-F, s.v. "Sa'id."

TB-F, 249; cf. TB-Kh, 245.

For the author's idea of the perfect man and the virtues he considers the latter should possess, see the following chapter.

For a definition of this term see Bulliet, *The Patricians.*

TB-Kh, 884.

Ibid.

Ibid., 885.


TB-F, 117.

TB-D, 157; cf. TB-F, 118.


Bulliet, *The Patricians,* 34.

See, for instance, al-Nasafi (from the school of Samarqand), in William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Creeds: A Selection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 81, no. 6, where it is written, "God is speaking with a Speech which is a pre-eternal attribute for Him."


*Free Will,* 142.

Thought (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), 315. In the following quotations, the interpolations that are in the brackets are the present author's while those in parentheses are Watt's.


38 Ibid., 114.

39 Ibid., 114-15.

40 Ibid., 115 and n. 23.


43 In Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 82, no. 12.


45 In Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 81-2, no. 11.

46 Iqbal Ashtiyani, "Khwaja Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi."

47 See, for instance, TB-F & G, 249, 536, 572, and 576. See also ibid., 1-2.

48 TB-F/TB-Kh, 913-914. The most explicit comment Bayhaqi ever makes as regards the way, more precisely the language, in which a writer should write is the following passing remark in volume ten which tells us much about his attitude in composing his history: "And caution (ihtiyat) must be observed by the writers (nivisandagan) in what they write, for it is possible to deny an oral statement but it is not possible to deny a written statement. That which is written cannot be taken back." TB-Kh, 1104.

49 TB-Kh, 913-14.
50 Ibid., 914.

51 See n. 46.

52 For this principle of reward and punishment, see the following chapter.

53 TB-Kh, 1031, n. 6. Note that the lines quoted from Firdawsi are in substance identical with what is related of Abu Nasr.

54 TB-Kh, 1097.

55 Ibid.

56 TB-F, 66-8, 234-6, 307-10, 466-67, 480-4, 617-19, and 794-802. Bayhaqi also inserts stories in various places that are concerned with the mortality of the human. Very often Mas`ud himself is referred to as the “Martyr-Sultan” (Sultan-i Shahid), foreshadowing the fragility of his rule and existence.

57 Ibid., 247/TB-Kh, 244.

58 TB-F, 466. The line of poetry quoted is from Ibn al-Rumi (d. 276 or 283 or 284/889 or 896 or 897), the third/ninth century Arabic poet of Baghdad whose origin was both Byzantine and Persian.

59 TB-F, 307-8; see also for lines quoted from Rukaki (d. 329?/940-941?) the most important of fourth/tenth century Persian poets, 309-310.

60 Toward a Theory, 93.

61 TB-F, 118-19/TB-Kh, 154.

62 TB-F, 426, 670-2, and 672-78.

63 TB-F, 426.

64 TB-F, 336/TB-Kh, 406.

65 See n. 48.

66 TB-F, 675-77/TB-Kh, 737-8. The translation provided here is only an approximate rendition.

67 TB-F, 677-78/TB-Kh, 739.
68 TB-F, 426-7/TB-Kh, 473.

69 TB-Kh, 933.

70 Al-Nasafi, in Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 84, no. 33.

71 TB-F, 888/TB-Kh, 988.

72 “Khariji,” i.e., “of or relating to and/or a follower of a puritanistic movement that started in the year 657 or 658 CE mostly by the withdrawal of a large number of partisans of the fourth Caliph ‘Ali from Kufah, who subsequently joined one dissenter ‘Abd’ullah b. Wahb al-Rasibi.” These who “went out” from the camp of ‘Ali did so because of the outcome of an arbitration that took place after the battle Siffin in Safar 37/July 657. The movement survived for several centuries, especially in the eastern regions of the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphates (and even, in an altered form, into modern times) and influenced many an intellectual who considered himself to be within the community of the faithful and not from among the “deserters,” as the Kharijis came to be called. Since the Kharijijis never possessed “a uniform body of doctrines,” it is difficult to summarize their heterodoxy. See G. Levi Della Vida, “Kharijites,” in *EJ*² for some of their political and religious theories. The word “Khariji,” however, came to denote, among other things, “extrinsic,” “heretic,” “rebel,” and “pretender.” Bayhaqi’s use of the word “Khariji,” in this context, could either be an expression of his popular understanding of the Kharijijis or a reference to their ferocious application of the principle of *isti‘rad*, or religious murder, and successful guerrilla warfare. For references see TB-F, 117 and 519/TB-Kh, 153 and 630.


74 TB-F, 117, 425, and 473.

75 Ibid., 258-9; see also “Juhud” (Jews) in a line quoted in ibid., 236.

76 Ibid., 214 and 217.

77 For these two senses of Sufism, see Bulliet, *The Patricians*, 41.

78 TB-F, 672/TB-Kh, 735.
79 See Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 193, where he formulates "the dynasty's attitude" towards the Sufis in part by his particular reading of this passage.


81 TB-F, 672-75.

82 See, for instance, the last episode in Abu Nasr's life, described, as usual, quite vividly in volume nine, under the year 431 A.H., where Abu Nasr refuses to contribute his personal horse and camels to Mas'ud's army. The episode is described in such a way as to show Abu Nasr's attachment to these possessions. His "indignity" (sabuki) and abasement are particularly shown when he tries to convince Mas'ud not to ask him to contribute while the author makes the implicit point that Abu Nasr did not ultimately take with him to the grave any of his possessions (TB-F, 791-95/TB-Kh, 926-29). As Danishpazhuh suggests, this episode could very well have intrigued a covert conspiracy "to poison" Abu Nasr. This, however, is more a matter of speculation than supposition. See Manuchiihr Danishpazhuh.

83 The Ghaznavids, 199; the explanatory additions in the brackets are the present author's, in the parentheses Bosworth's.

84 Meisami, "Exemplary Lives," 357.

85 TB-Kh, 232, 237, 242-43; and 190-92.

86 Ibid., 640-1.

87 The Ghaznavids, 194-99; TB-Kh, 8 and 15; cf. TB-Kh, 487-88.

88 TB-Kh, 885, 936, and 942; cf. TB-Kh, 19, 437, 883-4, where the 'Alids are shown to possess considerable political weight at the local and caliphal levels. They were, using Bulliet's term, part of the "patriciate" of Nishapur. See also TB-Kh, 181 and 423, where Bayhaqi speaks of an 'Alid poet in the court of Mas'ud.


90 Ibid., 34.

91 TB-Kh, 638-39.

92 Ibid., 870. The phenomenon of "ahl al-baytism" also explains Bulliet's reference to the increase in the popular usage of names such as 'Ali, al-Hasan, and al-
Husayn in Nishapur and by extension in the entire province of Khurasan in this period. See The Patricians, 14.

CHAPTER 3
MAN, KNOWLEDGE, AND IDEALISM

Scholars who have analyzed the section Bayhaqi appended to “Khutba I” have generally discussed the obvious and refrained from the broader questions that pertain to the thematic necessity he saw in speaking of the knowledge of self, the methods to acquire it, and the relevance of all this to understanding and writing of history.¹ These scholars’ explanations are often characterized with (1) either restating in almost identical vocabulary what Bayhaqi himself states, (2) or avoiding certain lines and paragraphs in the section for which these scholars have no explanations in order to reconcile and stress certain themes, (3) or ultimately discussing in one way or another most of the threads of thoughts presented by Bayhaqi and yet not avoiding imparting to their readers their own confusion and misunderstanding of Bayhaqi. For instance, Waldman, who devotes an entire section of her monograph to the themes encapsulated in this section of *Tarikh-i Bayhaqi*, concludes that though “[t]he themes of the khutbah [i.e., “Khutba I” and the appended section to it] reverberate in the account of Masʿud [i.e., in the entire narrative text],” they nevertheless display the “confusion” and “rambling” of a secretary whose philosophizing is “awkward” and pretentious.² When she attempts to explain the importance attached to the concept of self-knowledge, without furnishing either solid textual or contextual evidence, she surmises that this concept is an unmistakably “Sufi”
notion borrowed and haphazardly adapted by the author in the text.³ The basis for such misunderstanding is ultimately the unsubstantiated assumption on the part of Waldman that all or most of the abstract ideas presented in this section of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi are borrowings in the form of un-attributed “quotations” or “citations” from major Sufi and adab works.⁴ Even Meisami’s yet most careful and analytical reading of the section avoids a detailed paragraph-by-paragraph explanation of this terse and elusive discourse which is in every respect the most important and nonetheless the most misapprehended section in Bayhaqi’s history.

Meisami’s thoughtful conclusion that to Bayhaqi “[h]istory plays an important part in the acquisition of virtue”⁵ and hence the human’s drive to acquire self-knowledge necessitates “contemplating both past and present”⁶ is by far the most textually supported and convincing reading of the section. But when discussing this complex discourse on self-knowledge, not only does Meisami not go into detail to explain how “contemplating past and present” from Bayhaqi’s point of view may be instrumental for an individual to acquire self-knowledge and why self-knowledge is in the first place relevant in and to history, her treatment reduces the thematic value of a discourse whose improper understanding and interpretation in modern scholarship has prompted one historian to rightly conclude that modern Bayhaqi scholars “are still far from knowing exactly how it [i.e., Tarikh-i Bayhaqi and its “subtle and deceptively plain language”] should be read.”⁷ In fact, it is not an overstatement to note that scholars by and large have thus far considered this section an anomalous discourse whose bearing on the rest of the text is nil, and its existence having more to do with a pretentious secretary’s haphazard cut and
paste method in writing a history than his understanding of the discreet threads of
thoughts he was juxtaposing beside one another and any larger thematically rational
dynamic that could be between this section and the rest of the text.

For this reason, this chapter is devoted to a minute reading of this section
appended to “Khitba I” and the first part of “Khitba II” which must be read along with
it. Apart from a few interpretive divergences that exist between Meisami’s reading and
that offered in this chapter, what is presented here is a first serious attempt to understand
what Bayhaqi meant by deploying complex religious and philosophical terms, concepts,
alogies, and arguments that pertain to themes seldom, if ever, connected to
understanding and writing of history. What our analysis illustrates is less the picture of a
secretary whose conception of history was directly shaped by one or other classical
Islamic intellectuals—what both Waldman and Meisami affirm—than that of a man who
was an intellectual in his own right and indeed so original in his idea of history that the
extant portion of his work is still considered to have “no peer among the works”
classified under the rubric of Persian historiographical tradition and with “precious few in
any other historiographical tradition.”

_The concept of knowledge:_

The concept of knowledge is important to Bayhaqi’s historical thought. In his text, “he
who knows” is by one means or another extolled whereas “he who fails” in an
undertaking or in life is shown to be devoid of necessary understanding. Knowledge, to
the author, begins and ends with the knowledge of self. No wonder, therefore, that the
author devotes a considerable portion of “Khutba I” to self-knowledge and explains exactly what he means by it, how it may be attained, and how central this is in understanding and writing history. The general premise of his argument is that self-knowledge means knowing about one’s changing inner conditions as well as one’s position in the universe and in time (past, present, future). If one gets to know these features of oneself, one makes sense of the universe in its entirety and above all one’s position vis-à-vis God’s eternal stand towards humanity. This latter stage of knowledge, according to our author, is in effect the human’s goal, his highest aspiration, in life. It is presumed to connote perpetual happiness. It is attainment of “right religion and correct belief.”

The process of moving from self-understanding to outer-understanding was taught by the “greatest” of the ancient sages and philosophers of old (hukama). They, in turn, related this knowledge, this universal truth, not on their own authority but from the divine revelation that had come to the prophet of their time, by whom Bayhaqi probably means Zoroaster. This same law was, moreover, confirmed by Muhammad when he taught “he who knows his self (naʃs) has verily known his God.” The process from self-inquiry to absolute knowledge is possible only because the human possesses the power of discrimination. This is sometimes called tamiz; at other times, it is referred to as khirad or ‘aql (both meaning literally intellect or reason). Since this power of differentiation is unique to the human and the author considers it to have been expressed in its fullest capacity in the minds of the wise and the prudent—among whom are men of every class, philosophers (e.g., Aristotle and Galen), rulers (e.g., Ardashir I, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and Sebuktigin), and prophets (e.g., Khizr, Moses, and Muhammad)—whenever it is shown

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through the actions and speech of some character, it is praised in glowing terms. If there is a protagonist in Bayhaqi’s history, that protagonist is none other than human reason, prudence, and wisdom, all denoted by in the recurrent word *khirad*, its synonyms and derivatives.

But what exactly does Bayhaqi mean by the knowledge of self? In what ways does he consider it to be the beginning and the end of all learning? How does it facilitate and bring about human felicity? And above all, if it is the epitome of all learning, in what ways does it encompass history, that is, a branch of learning that pertains, under the rubric of time, to the particular in the other? The remainder of this chapter attempts to answer these questions.

3.1 *The workings of the human emotional forces, and mind and spirit*

The section Bayhaqi appended to “Khutba I” begins with an allusion to the well-known Hippocratic concept of four humors within the body, whose proportional balance and imbalance were commonly acknowledged in the Muslim and non-Muslim scientific circles of the time to affect one’s physiology as well as behavior. We know that by the eleventh century Greek humoral medicine and natural philosophy had gone through many stages of development, first, outside and, later, inside the Islamic world. Galen, in particular, had drawn connections between the four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) and the Empedoclean—and later Aristotelian—concept of four elements (earth, water, air, and fire). Connected to the concepts of humors and elements, “the microcosmic form of the macrocosmic,” was the ancient concept of four qualities (dry, wet, cold, and hot). The Galenic theory of four temperaments (sanguine, choleric,
melancholic, and phlegmatic)—that “there are four different kinds of healthy equilibrium”—was the final stage of the development of a particular understanding of the human body and soul, and the universe.\footnote{13} What mattered most in this view of the human and the cosmos was order and balance. It taught that there were forces within the individual and outside in the world, but so long as these were kept in a state of equilibrium, inner and outer tranquility of the individual would be securely established. Bayhaqi invokes these concepts when he emphasizes the importance of the equilibrium of the “four things” that compose the human body or self (\textit{tan}).\footnote{14}

The greatest stress, however, is laid on the functional distinction of faculties or souls within the human: faculties such as the power of reason and speech (\textit{guvvat-i khirad va sukhan}) which ought to work closely with the power of resolution (\textit{guvvat-i 'azm}) in order to quell the power of anger (\textit{guvvat-i khashm}) and the power of desire (\textit{guvvat-i arizu}). In terse and elusive language which veils his precision and great specificity, the author sets forth the particulars of each faculty, three of which correspond to or produce three souls (s. \textit{nafs}). We shall deal last with the faculty with which he commences this part of his discourse and considers most important, that is, the power of reason and speech, which corresponds to the rational soul (\textit{nafs-i guyanda}). The power of anger is located in the heart (\textit{dil}) and gives rise to a soul with a similar name, the \textit{nafs-i khashmgiranda} (soul that earns wrath), commonly translated as the irascible soul. The function of this conjoined power and soul in the individual is to impel one “to guard one’s honor and reputation, not to remain passive against tyranny, and to avenge oneself when injustice is perpetrated towards one.”\footnote{15} It is analogous to the army of a king—the king being the rational soul (see below). The army is, first and foremost, an instrument in
the hand of the king to meet certain goals and perform certain works. As such, the power of anger or the irascible soul must also be obedient to the rational soul. The latter, in turn, accomplishes certain tasks, including keeping the power of desire in check, just as the army, as the arm of the king, guards and controls the subjects.

The locus of the power of desire is, on the other hand, the liver (jigar). It produces the concupiscent soul (nafs-i arizu, desiring soul), whose function is to produce diverse appetites in the individual. The three examples given are the appetites for food, drink, and the opposite sex. By the terms of the above analogy, this power and soul constitute the “subjects” of the king. Just as the latter must at all times remain obedient to and fear the king and his army, the concupiscent soul must function under the higher-ranking powers’ absolute control.

The power of reason and speech has two loci in the human: “the head (sar) in association with the heart (dil).”\textsuperscript{16} This faculty has three states (s. jaygah, daraja), namely perception and imagination (takayyul), discrimination and memory (tamiz tavanad kard va nigah dasht), and comprehension and memory (fahm tavanad kard va tigah dasht).\textsuperscript{17} The task of the power of perception and imagination is to perceive the world—both within and without—and communicate it to the next state. Its function is analogous to a “just and truth-telling witness”\textsuperscript{18} who testifies before an authority. Its outward organs include the eye and the ear, described as the “watch” and the “spies” of the individual in “Khutba II.”\textsuperscript{19} Its inward locus is the heart, which is in intimate contact with the mind. Thus, it is the heart that receives that which is seen and heard, forms a preliminary impression of the perceptible, and finally communicates it to the mind.\textsuperscript{20}
The power of discrimination and memory, located in the head, has the office of clearly differentiating between perceived things—between “truth and falsehood, the commendable and reprehensible, and the possible and impossible”\textsuperscript{21}—and keeping a record of its rulings. As such, its function is analogous to that of a “judge” (an “unimpeachable, equitable judge”) who rules between two or more parties.\textsuperscript{22} This is by far the most important power within the human. Its working sets apart the wise from the ignorant, the moderate from the impulsive.

Comprehension and memory, finally, constitute the third state of the power of reason and speech. Their responsibilities include apprehension of what discrimination has produced and storing that apprehension. This last state is, like the first state, located in the heart. Hence, depending on the judgment of the power of discrimination, the heart, by the very act of apprehension, “gains or loses strength” and thus comes to know “happiness (\textit{shadi}) or grief (\textit{gham}).”\textsuperscript{23} The working of the three states of the power of reason and speech in the head and heart gives rise to the \textit{nafs-i guyanda} (speaking or rational soul), which is analogous to a king. Just as a king must possess consummate justice, and powerful authority and governance, and must exercise, at the same time, compassion and, above all, moderation, the rational soul, too, must possess penetrating judgment, must be in absolute control of the powers of anger and desire, and must manage them with wisdom and temperance. In a word, the rational soul must conduct the individual on the golden path of moderation.\textsuperscript{24}

Bayhaqi deems it so critical to emphasize the necessity of maintaining equilibrium among these three powers that he repeats this theme several times. In this scheme, equilibrium, he writes emphatically, means that the concupiscent and irascible
souls are checked and controlled by the rational soul. If one of the two prevails over the rational soul, there will be loss in the individual’s rational soul—and, hence, loss in the individual’s humanity—“to the extent of the prevailing” that occurs over the rational soul.⁵ For this reason, Bayhaqi introduces another extended analogy, which he attributes to “the sages” or “the philosophers” of the past. In this analogical scheme, the individual self is a “house,” in which a “human being” (reason), a “lion” (wrath), and a “swine” (desire) must live together. He makes it clear that desire and wrath are both inherently the “great enemies” of and more powerful than reason. The frail human is physically weaker than both the lion and the swine. Just as it is through reliance on calculation that he stands the chance of overcoming the lion and the swine and of bringing about symbiosis in the house, so the equilibrium that is most practical in the individual self may be achieved by means of the tight control of the power of reason. Bayhaqi goes on to enumerate three paradigmatic characters that result from the prevailing of one of the powers within the individual: “the wise and self-restraint—or self-possessed—man” (mard-i khiradmand-i khvishtandar) who is also described as “the virtuous and perfect man with consummate wisdom” (fazil va kamil-i tamam khirad), the lion man whose wrath knows no mercy, and finally the swine man who is given to passion and pleasure.⁶ Both the lion and the swine man are driven not by their reason but by impulse, and therefore they are in possession of beclouded minds and make numerous mistakes in life. They are, in brief, capricious and erratic characters.

With the above description, Bayhaqi is quick to point out that there are reasons for the divine endowment of the powers of anger and desire and of their corresponding souls within the individual. For nothing in the world is without a purpose: “in all that the
Creator God has created there is a public and manifest good.”27 Here, Bayhaqi restates
the functions of the two essential, yet somewhat despised and, in any case, degraded
faculties and adds that had the power of anger not existed within the human, “no one
would have extended protection to even one’s own household and guarded one’s own
possessions” while the absence of the power of desire would have resulted in “the total
destruction of humanity and the world.”28 Therefore, the individual needs to consider
these two powers as “beasts of burden,” whose driver is the power of reason. As such and
in order to benefit from them, the latter should “drive” them according to its will, should
keep them “tame” and “submissive” with all means necessary, should “bridle” them and
“tie” them to the “stable,” “for if they break loose, they destroy both themselves and the
driver.”29 Although their origins are purposeful, these two powers, if not restrained
properly, are “the most formidable” of the individual’s “enemies.” The reason lies
primarily in the fact that they exert influence in and on the psyche—in the individual’s
“heart and soul”—and hence things pertaining to their affairs (e.g., how to restrain their
influence on the mind in crucial moments of excitement) are sometimes rather subjective
and unclear to the intellect. They can, moreover, impel one through their intrinsic power
to take certain unreasonable actions. Since they are essentially emotions, they are, in
comparison with reason, far more difficult to contain. They are, in Bayhaqi’s words, far
“more powerful.”31 So they may “devise schemes and make the individual consider them
friends just in the same way reason is.” In this way, he will “do some reprehensible thing
while considering it commendable and perpetrate injustice while understanding that he
has extended justice.”32
Bayhaqi emphasizes the fact that the power of reason and speech is the noblest faculty in the human because he considers the rational soul identical with the human spirit or ruh (also nafs, i.e., nafs par excellence). In Islamic philosophy in general, the rational soul (Per. nafs-i guyanda, nafs-i guya; Ar. al-nafs al-natiqa), too, is considered identical to the human spirit. It is precisely for this reason that the loss of the rational soul or its power in the human is equated with the loss of his humanity. It is also significant that most of the psychological problems Bayhaqi points to in his discussions of the internal powers or souls of the human in “Khutbas I and II” are, in his understanding, essentially “spiritual” in nature. If one is driven by the irascible or concupiscent soul, one in fact suffers from an internal, psychological, and ultimately spiritual imbalance. This we shall discuss further below. Suffice it here to say that by knowledge or self-knowledge Bayhaqi, on one level, means an understanding, as elucidated here, of the workings of and the dynamic among one’s emotional forces, and one’s mind and spirit in the course of one’s lifespan. This we may very well call Bayhaqi’s primitive psychology. It is embedded in the ethical (akhlaq) literature of the time, and he seems to consider it, to some extent, attainable universally by all humans.

3.2 The human in contradistinction to the animal

Having described his understanding of the human psyche, Bayhaqi goes on to identify two distinctions between the human and the animal. For “should you look at the composition of man, you will note that animals are in that identical with him.” The difference between the two lies in the human’s capacities “to know” and “to act upon his acquired knowledge.” In other words, the human can learn—far more than the
animal—and can utilize that which he learns in his daily life. But human learning, whose particulars Bayhaqi takes pains to set forth in the first part of the section, is possible only because the human has the faculty of reason and speech, and this faculty learns only by means of experience (tajriba). It has first to observe, hear, or else get a sense of the perceptible and its properties by means of encounter. Only then will it comprehend it. What Bayhaqi means by the human’s capacity to know is, hence, his ability to know by means of experience. It is for this same reason that experience is, on numerous instances in various places in the text, equated with knowledge, and age—betokening much acquired experience/knowledge and thus wisdom in the individual—is regarded as an extremely important quality for high office. Age also connotes foresight, forbearance, and many other accidental (and moral) qualities of the wise and the prudent. In contrast, Bayhaqi considers many of the depravities and devastating events he records in his history to be the direct result of Mas’ud’s mistakes, which he attributes to Mas’ud’s youth and inexperience.

Knowledge and action are, moreover, the reasons the human, contrary to the animal, incurs “reward and punishment” both in this world, by means of human and divine agency, and in the hereafter. It is crucial to see through the author’s presentation of the individual at this juncture. What he means by the human’s unique ability to know and to act is his endowment with the rational soul or the human spirit. For the process of cognition, the mental records that are kept of one’s experience with a particular phenomenon for one’s future use, and the process whereby they may be evoked and used
in one’s actions reside in the conjoined power and soul that he then identifies with the *ruh*. Furthermore, this ultimately bespeaks the intimate relationship between the powers of cognition and action in the human.

As seen in the previous chapter, Bayhaqi operates in an assumed system of values. He also communicates to an audience that essentially shares his religion and, broadly speaking, his worldview. When he speaks of the human’s ability to know and to act upon his knowledge, and his liability, his being subject, to divine and societal systems of justice, he assumes to a great extent that his audience understands what is morally and ethically right and wrong. Morality and ethics, in this context, are part of the inherited and/or shared knowledge that anyone raised in that society would acquire. It is in the context of this mutual understanding between the author and his audience that he states, “It is incumbent upon the individual, endowed with this station [the station of humanity, i.e., endowed with the ability to know, to act, etc.], to restrain his self so that perchance he may tread the way that is most commendable, and to know to what degree there is distinction between good and evil, so that he may seek that which is more commendable and shun that which is more reprehensible.”39 What he means is that the individual who has come to an understanding of his distinct and noble “station,” his endowments, and the spiritual and social consequences of his actions will control his impulsive self in order to abide by that which is dictated by the multi-layered social system of values, which consists of such smaller corpora of values as religion, cultural norms of propriety (*adab*), and, to a certain extent, the secular law of the society.40 Parenthetically we may add that Bayhaqi sees no major inconsistencies among what modern readers might see as different canons of values and, in any case, considers conforming to them all far more
advantageous to the individual and society than nonconformity.\textsuperscript{41} It is, moreover, imperative for that individual to further familiarize himself with what has been consistently considered good and evil in this system and according to these corpora of values. Such acquired understanding will then further help the power of discrimination to gain keeness in recognizing, without the least illusion, what is good and evil in one’s own as well as others’ behavior. This latter recognition is both the validation and the extension of an already acquired knowledge. The accumulated knowledge must, finally, impel one to implement it in one’s daily life. In \textit{Tarikh-i Bayhaqi}, therefore, the individual who is confounded about a given course of action, does not know whether something is right or wrong, or does not act upon his understanding of what rightness is, is considered a failure by the author. This is certainly most appreciable in such characters as Abu Sahl and Mas‘ud.\textsuperscript{42}

But what exactly does Bayhaqi mean by knowledge, that is, besides and beyond the knowledge of (1) religion, cultural norms of propriety, civic law—needed for the individual to understand moral right and wrong—and (2) the psychology of human self that enables him to make sense of his emotions and endeavor to control the faculties that produce them?

3.2.1 Knowledge

As one may already note from the two categories of learning we discussed above, at the heart of Bayhaqi’s definition of knowledge (\textit{‘ilm, danish}) rests his preoccupation with understanding the human being. Thus, the third category of learning that is identifiable in his text is not altogether unexpected. It is history. It pertains to human behavior and
society over the fixed variable of time. Here, Bayhaqi stresses the study of “the actions and conditions of people” (ahval-i marduman)—both those contemporary to the inquirer and those past, both their individual lives and their state and situation as a whole—and emphasizes the enormous bearing the analysis of “the reports of those past” (akhbar-i guzashtagan) and “the acts of the contemporary world” (kar-i zamana-yi khvish) has on the individual. But Bayhaqi’s definition of history, both contemporary and otherwise, is so broad that it defies the conventions of various historical genres of his time. In evaluating his conception of history, one should at once consider what he specifically states in the section and how he practices it in the course of narrating the history of the reign of Mas‘ud. His explanation and practice indicate that by actions and conditions of people, he means the works of not merely the great man (e.g., Mas‘ud and his courtiers) but as many men as the historian studies; the detailed description of their personalities, moral characters, and if possible even their private lives (i.e., their psychology and behavior); interactions among individuals and groups; aspects of culture (e.g., accounts of customs, ceremonies, and rites); and finally the workings of society as a whole. What he considers the actions and conditions of people comes very close to a sort of primitive ethnography or sociology, when considered from a modern point of view, and a type of history, when considered from a pre-modern point of view, that has rarely been written in a pre-modern society. Bayhaqi’s conception of history is in effect the embodiment of the other two categories of learning and much besides. It is in effect an attempt to produce a simulation of human experience. Thus, the core of what he calls knowledge is an understanding of (1) oneself, (2) the prevalent system of values, and ultimately (3) history in its broadest sense as defined by Bayhaqi’s exposition and practice.
What holds together these otherwise disparate intellectual inquiries is the ultimate aim of the author: to help himself and his reader acquire self-knowledge. In this way, his all-inclusive study of the human being (i.e., his psychology and behavior, his collective actions and conditions, all in the context of morality and his position vis-à-vis the Creator God) turns to an all-inclusive exposition that imparts self-knowledge. Just as one’s own aspirations and daily struggles evolve as one learns from failures, successes, changes, and chances, the actions and conditions of others, both in the present and in the past, impart “experience.” Once seen, heard, or read by the individual, processed by the power of discrimination, and retained in the two previously described memories (see above), the experience of others becomes the experience of the individual. It functions precisely in the same way. In fact, the individual acquires a significant body of knowledge that he might otherwise not be able to acquire in his own lifespan, or that would be available to him only through much arduous travail. Since, as explained above, Bayhaqi’s philosophical contemplation defines knowledge in its essence as experience, by extending the definition of experience from that which one learns directly to that which one learns by means of report and distant observation, he shows the consistency that exists among these diverse intellectual inquiries. In brief, he responds in abstract terms to some of his modern critics who charge him with “digressions” and “prolixity.”

Clearly speaking from an assumed and implicit system of moral values, Bayhaqi consistently refers to two divergent ways of life: the way that leads to all good and the one that ends in the exact opposite. These ways of worldly life have “signs” (nishaniha), through which one may discover their ultimate ends. These signs can only be detected through experience and a preliminary knowledge of morality. Therefore, the aspects of
knowledge shown above, among other things, impart these signs. One’s responsibility is to compare and collate (muqabila kunad) that which was found good or evil in others’ actions and conditions with one’s own state and affairs. That which is good for others remains the same, as does that which is contrary to the rules of propriety or is categorically evil. The reason for this elaborate system of expanding one’s experience by means of distant observation and reports and this drive to find in others noble characteristics, on the one hand, and faults and errors, on the other, is that self-observation, as pointed out earlier, is essentially subjective. It is much easier to see these qualities in others, and then compare and collate them with one’s own situation than to seek to find good and bad in oneself directly. “A certain sage has said this in enshrouded mystery” and with more eloquence:

I see that man only sees the vice of the other,
Blind is he as to the vice that is in him.
Concealed are to one one’s own vices
While manifest is to one the vice of one’s brother.\textsuperscript{45}

3.2.2 Action: the concept of knowledge extended

Bayhaqi belongs to that class of thinkers who conceive at least two planes of knowledge.\textsuperscript{46} First, the individual obtains certain abstract concepts which he comes to hold as universal truths. This abstract knowledge is itself acquired through intellectual experience. It includes, for instance, some principles of morality, but also why these principles are to be upheld, that is, the causes that impel one to exercise them. On the next plane, which is by far the more important, the individual practices what he holds as truths, that is, he manifests in himself and in his conducts that which he considers
unimpeachable and universal principles. On this plane, he becomes the embodiment of what he has already intellectually acquired and believes in. Here he exerts himself to implement in his everyday interactions and life those principles of morality, for instance. The ultimate result of this plane is also deduction of abstract ideas about the influence on one’s character, life, and ultimately happiness (jam‘iyyat) of upholding or not upholding certain of these concepts. This cyclical process from abstract knowledge to practical exertion to abstract knowledge is a perpetual one. The process itself yields the type of knowledge that lies beyond the understanding of those who have never experienced it. It is one of the distinguishing qualities of the truly wise and prudent. Hypocrites, on the other hand, are those who have acquired a certain body of abstract knowledge and preach it even though others cannot see its manifestation in their characters. Bayhaqi names just a few classes of people who belong to the latter group, but he seems to emphasize that they come from all classes of intellectuals—“philosophers,” “physicians,” doctors of religion, and “wise and sagacious individuals”—and they ought to be accepted as facts of life, that is, there will always be certain individuals who will not act upon what they advise others to do.\footnote{47}

It is the argument of the author that those who never attained the first stage of learning—“the ignorant,” so to speak—are excused for not upholding certain universal truths (e.g., containing their impulsive selves) fully recognized by the learned community. These are, after all, the vulgar (jam‘i nadan).\footnote{48} They ought to be educated. “But those who know,” that is, those who have attained the first stage of learning, are in no way excused. For these have developed a certain understanding of “the depths (ghawr) and ends (ghayat)” of “things (karha).”\footnote{49} They, for example, know what it means to
uphold morality in their lives. All they have to do is to act upon what they preach, to cultivate in themselves a firm “power of resolution” (quvvat-i ‘azm) in order to act upon what they hold as unalterable truths. They must also develop a habit of considering the end or result of things or actions (hazm). If they do these two things, they will “with their own reasoning [come to the conclusion that they must] be single-mindedly intent upon attaining unto happiness (jam‘iyyat) and must repress the rage of impossible passion (arizu-yi muhal).”50 This is the way to attain the second stage of knowledge. This is also the method of “the wise, resolute, and farsighted man” (mard-i khiradmand-i ba ‘azm va hazm).

Stipulation of another means of acquiring ultimate knowledge:

3.3 Consultation

In the last part of his section, Bayhaqi speaks of the importance and necessity of consultation for those who do not have the kind of resolution and foresight that would facilitate the process of turning abstract thoughts into concrete actions. This theme is so important that the author cites three different authorities to further illustrate his point. First, Muhammad is quoted as saying, “The believer is the mirror of the other believer”—meaning the true believer would not hesitate to tell the other believer about his faults and merits. The hadith also implies that one who is not certain about certain issues should consult the other believer—a sincere and farsighted soul, that is. So much for the indisputable religious authority. Then, a summary of Galen’s treatises on “treating dispositions” (mu‘alijat-i akhlaq) is given which, in effect, attaches the same degree of

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importance to consultation or a “sincere and wise friend who is, as well, excellent in character.” The office of the virtuous and sincere counselor-friend is “to scrutinize” the recipient’s “actions, conditions, habits (‘adat),” and ultimately “morals (akhlq)” and “make known unto him with no apprehension what he sees as commendable and reprehensible in his conduct.”

Galen is further described as saying that among all classes of people, kings most need consultation. The reason is simple. The office of king is vested with significant authority: “for their [sc. the kings’] decrees are like cutting swords [that is, they are decisive, and their results often severe]; no one has the spirit to counter them; and if they err, it would only with great difficulty be possible to rectify the wrong done.” The third authoritative source is a summary of Akhbar-i muluk-i ‘Ajam—the translation of Ibn Muqaffa‘—which at once gives further credibility to the universal validity of Galen’s statement and extends further the already discussed concept of consultation. The latter concept is thus broadened to the extent that it is no longer merely a measure for the treatment of one who is not possessed of resolution and foresight, but is assumed to be essential to kingship. Thus, Bayhaqi explains that “the greatest and most virtuous” of the pre-Islamic Persian kings “had the habit” of consultation. That is, they had with them “day and night … wise men from among the wisest men of the time” who “would make known unto them that which was commendable and reprehensible from the actions, conditions, habits, and decrees (farmanha) of those emblems of authority.” Examples of that which is morally wrong are reprehensible desire (shahvat-i ... zisht), wrath (hishmat ... randan), rage (satvat), and having recourse to coercion such as “the spilling of blood and extirpation of households.” In other words, what was and in Bayhaqi’s time still is
morally wrong is what a king—the source of insurmountable power in society—does when compelled by his impulsive self, when his power of reason is no longer in charge of his thoughts and actions, and/or ultimately when he cannot bring himself to act upon what he considers morally right.

Bayhaqi could, at one level, mean that authority, or too much authority at any rate, tends to corrupt the individual, that is, the rational soul of the individual, and therefore he has to be checked by rational counselors. It seems, however, that his primary concern is that whoever possesses significant power—no matter how rational that individual may be—stands in need of consultation and absolute clarification of what is rational and what is impulsive for him to do, since neither he nor anyone else can afford a mistake in his actions, which have far-reaching implications. Furthermore, extreme measures by those in positions of power are viewed with some degree of skepticism.\textsuperscript{57} They ought in any case to be scrutinized by others around them who are reputed for their wisdom.

\textit{Akhbar-i muluk-i ‘Ajam} is the most extensive of the three sources Bayhaqi cites to illustrate the significance of consultation.\textsuperscript{58} This summary even illustrates the function of advisors in court, the result of their advice, and finally the socio-psychological reasons for their office, which in effect checks the otherwise unlimited power of the king. The function of advisors is thus explained as preventing the king from acting on impulse. They might not be able to forestall the psychological imbalance of the king, as that is to a great extent inherent in and the responsibility of the individual himself. But they could and did, as much as their office allowed, take precautionary measures to prevent the king from acting upon his impulse. They would attempt to show him “the good and shameful
nature” of his works and/or extreme measures he would take on certain matters. They would “narrate to him parallel stories (hikayat) and reports (akhbar) of previous kings”: how they had acted on comparable occasions, how they are remembered by posterity, and how the wise and the learned regard their deeds. They would, finally and perhaps most importantly, “admonish him on the way of religious or divine law (shar’),” which is the corpus of abstracted morality we described above as one of the three categories of learning in Bayahqi’s thought (see above). The outcome of their work was that the king would then “elicit the situations in question in accordance with his own understanding,” his “anger and rage would subside,” and finally he would extend “that which was necessary in accordance with justice (ma’dilat) and righteousness (rasti).” In brief, the function of the advisors was to prevent all the private and public actions of the ruler that were considered morally reprehensible, and that by the mere act of dispensing their own reasonability. The socio-psychological reason for kingly consultation is finally given: when the king is impulsive, he is indeed sick in mind and in desperate need of well-qualified counselors who operate just like physicians.

Here and in the last substantive paragraph of the section under study, a delicate analogy is used, which, following Bayhaqi, we may describe as both apparent and subtle. It is apparent because it draws a comparison between the body (jism, tan) and the soul or spirit (ruh, nafs). Just as the body is affected by divers sicknesses (s. bimari), the spirit (read: nafs-i guyanda or the rational soul), too, is susceptible to maladies (s. afat). People consult physicians in order to find cures for their physical illnesses. People, in similar fashion, should seek advice from physicians of dispositions (ruh ra tabiban va mu’alijan guzinand; lit., physicians and healers of the spirit) in order to find treatment for or to
prevent internal psychological maladies. For after all, the spirit is far “more important” than the body: the spirit is “great and noble” while the body is “base and little.”\(^{62}\) Psychological maladies beset the individual when he is no longer in possession of his impulsive self, that is, when his rational soul no longer contains the other faculties or souls in him. In such instances, the individual—be he king or otherwise—stands in need of a physician who can remedy (\(\text{‘alaf}\)) the maladies. Finally, just as physicians of the body have in their possessions “common and rare medicines and herbs,” the physicians of dispositions, too, have at their disposal “medicines.” These are their “reason” (\(\text{khirad}\)) and their “intellectually” or “morally authenticated experience” (\(\text{tajarib-i pasandida};\ i.e., knowledge\)) which was either acquired directly throughout their lives or gained by studying the past.\(^{63}\)

This body-soul analogy is subtle in that it implies, in the context of the previous references, that wise advisors—particularly the court counselors of a king—function even as competent physicians. Whenever they see that the advisee is set to take extreme measures impelled by strong feelings—either anger (antagonistic drive) or desire (passionate impulse)—or that his conduct is in some way contrary to the rules of rationality and norms of propriety, they must exercise their limited authority and attempt to induce him to the way of reason so that perchance they, working, in effect, in his behalf, might bring order to a chaotic psyche and maintain the arrangement of things outside of him that might, nonetheless, be affected by his actions. For internally any arrangement among various faculties other than what we have explained above is a cause of excess and a psychic malady. Moderation or psychic health is what reason dictates, not emotions. Externally speaking, excess or injustice is what emotions impel one to do in
one’s personal or public life whereas moderation (righteousness or justice) is the crystallization of the injunctions of reason. The affected individual, therefore, is one who is in any case not “the wise and just man” (mard-i khiradmand-i ‘adil; i.e., the perfect man). He is bereft of consummate knowledge. That is precisely the reason that he desperately needs advisors who can impart to him rules of reason and infallible knowledge. If the affected individual is a king, then his works affect the greatest number of people and disturb the peace and even the order of the realm. Therefore, he is, of all people, the most in need of maintaining his psychic health and upholding morality, and because no one may take the risk of his being in the least unreasonable, consultation for him and his office is an indispensable requirement.

Conclusions:

In this chapter, we made an attempt to analyze what Bayhaqi, as an historian, meant by appending a section to “Khutba I” that is imbued with (1) philosophical or ethical (akhlaq), (2) religious, and finally (3) Fürstenspiegel concepts and terminology. No serious attempts have been made to explicitly establish the philosophical and Fürstenspiegel connections because, on the one hand, they seem somewhat secondary to the understanding of the section and the author’s overall historiography, and, on the other, they are, to the specialized reader, quite discernable. We did not, in this chapter, even try to explicitly link some of what Bayhaqi presents in the section to his particular religious outlook. This should without further elaboration be understood in the context of the extensive argument we presented in the previous chapter. It must be noted, however, that the author’s cross-reference to these three classes of intellectual discourses is
epitomized in explicitly quoting Galen, Muhammad, and Ibn Muqaffa' as authorities for part of his argument in this section. The section by itself is, however, far too complex to be assigned to any one of these intellectual and ideological discourses.

Far from the reductionist understanding of the discourse which considers it an essay on the qualities of the ideal king, the purpose and function of the section is to set down the qualities Bayhaqi considers indispensable for the "virtuous man"—be he king or no. Thus, he writes at the outset of the section:

Since I am finished with the Khutba [sc. “Kutba I”], I saw it necessary to compose yet another section, that it would be useful to both kings and others, so that each class may partake of it according to the measure of its learning. Therefore, I shall start with elucidating what the qualities (sifat) of “the wise and just man” (mard-i khiradmand-i 'adil) are, so that it would be appropriate to be called him “virtuous” (fazil) and what the qualities of “the men of tyranny” (mardum-i sitamkar) are, so that they would of necessity be called “ignorant” (jahil). And so that it would be established that one whose reason (khirad) is mightier (qavitar), people are more eager to praise him while the one whose reason is less in degree, he is taken lightly in the eyes of people.66

Thus, Bayhaqi’s preoccupation with knowledge, in its broadest sense, and morality ought to be understood in a context far broader than that of a discourse whose immediate purpose was to set down the qualities of the perfect king.

To be sure, the section, on one level, may very well be read as a discourse on ideals of kingship. These have been pointed out by such scholars as Waldman and Meisami.67 Indeed, an idea such as Bayhaqi’s emphasis on consultation is best understood in this context. But on yet another level, the section, as the author himself states, presents a distinct (and novel) way of looking at the human, his situation and prospects, and his intellectual and moral responsibilities in the world. While it assumes a certain amount of understanding on the part of the audience of the prevalent system of values and morality, it sets down the particulars of selfnowledge, which it defines as
the knowledge of the inner dynamics of oneself, and one’s and others’ “actions and conditions.” We argued that what Bayhaqi means by these may very well be called his primitive (1) human psychology and (2) ethnography or sociology. It is far more than history in its classical Islamic sense. Bayhaqi, moreover, considers that every human being has the intellectual capacity which enables him to cultivate these aspects of self-knowledge in himself or learn from these sources of knowledge in order to become a better human being. Then, there is the concept of acting upon what one learns of one’s general past and present experience, of one’s psychological balance and imbalance (i.e., psychological experience), and of one’s religion, cultural norms of propriety, and civic law (i.e., moral and ethical experience). This, broadly speaking, is what Bayhaqi considers knowledge (‘ilm, danish). He recommends it to every individual. Kings are more strongly encouraged to conscientiously endeavor to attain to it. For them, the whole stipulation of another means of acquiring knowledge is made: that of consultation. Although the author recommends consultation to everyone, kings, he stresses, are in need of it far more than any. For kings and others, the result of attainment to this ultimate knowledge is a higher degree of inner piece and faith, and thus salvation. This is what the author considers true human felicity in life or, in his words, “attainment unto right religion and correct belief.” Finally, after his death, the individual’s salvation is definite while, in this world, he leaves behind “good memory” (nam-i nik) of himself. This is Bayhaqi as an history teacher and an intellectual. The historiographical aspects of this section, which gives us the picture of Bayhaqi as purely an historian in work, will be discussed in the following chapter.
1 See Muhammad-Taqi Danishpazhuh, “Bayhaqi-yi filsuf,” *Yadnama*, Per. Sec., 174-81; Waldman, *Toward a Theory*, 83-6; and Meisami, “Dynastic History,” 67-71, “The Past in Service of the Present,” 266-7, *Persian Historiography*, 82-3. It must be noted that most scholars who have written on Bayhaqi have avoided discussing this section of the text altogether. Even when the author’s historiography has been the subject of their inquiries, these authors had recourse only to a part of “Khutba II” which explicitly addresses the question of authentic historical vis-à-vis fictional reports and Bayhaqi’s other sporadic but nonetheless historiographically-relevant comments. Such is the case for instance of Sir H. M. Elliot, *The History of India*, ed. John Dawson, vol. 5 (Calcutta: Susil Gupta, Ltd., 1952), 49-50; Iqbal Ashtiyani, “Khvaja Abu’l-Fazl Bayhaqi,” 75-85; Roger Savory, “Abu’l-Fazl Bayhaqi as an Historiographer,” Engl. Sec., 84-111; A. Zaryab Khu’i, “Tarikh-nigari-yi Bayhaqi,” 27-35; Yusufi, “Guzarishgar-i haqiqat,” 3-49; Danishpazhuh, “Muqaddima,” TB-D, 23-32; and Khatib Rahbar, “Bayhaqi va *Tarikh-i Mas’udi*,” TB-Kh, xvi-xxi.

2 *Toward a Theory*, 83-6.

3 Ibid., 84.

4 Ibid., 84.

5 *Persian Historiography*, 83.


7 Elton Daniel, “Historiography, III. Early Islamic Period,” in *Elr*.

8 Ibid.

9 TB-Kh, 154.

10 Ibid. In the opinion of the present author, the sages in question are Zoroastrian *mawbads*, the revelation is Zoroastrianism, and the prophet is Zoroaster. I am thankful to my colleague and friend Ameneh (Saghi) Gazerani for pointing out that had Bayhaqi meant a prophet in the Abrahamic line he would not have been so purposefully vague here in his reference to a prophet of old. Moreover, by “hukama,” he could not mean Greek philosophers, for in Islamic historiography, Greek philosophers are not connected with any prophets, or if in some rare instances they are, it is with the Israelite prophets or the greater Israelite cultural and intellectual sphere that they are associated.

11 Ibid.

12 George Sarton, *Galen of Pergamon* (Lawrence, Kansan: University of Kansas Press, 1954), 52.
13 Ibid., 52-3.

14 TB-Kh, 154. See also Mansour Shaki, “Elements,” in *Elr* where the author explains how the Greek concept of four elements were assimilated into Persian culture.

15 TB-Kh, 155.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. For a definition of *takayyul* see *LD*, s.vv. *“takayyul”* and *“khiyal.”*

18 TB-Kh, 155.

19 Ibid., 1098.

20 The present author is indebted to Ameneh (Saghi) Gazerani for helping him with the location of three “states” of the power of reason and speech.

21 TB-Kh, 155.

22 Ibid., 155 and 1098.

23 Ibid., 1098.

24 The concepts of moderation (*miana-ravi*) and proportion (*andaza*) in thought and conduct, often equated with refinement, are rooted in the bigger concept of *adab.* To see how these have traditionally been viewed and accommodated in Persian literature, see Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, “Adab,” in *Elr.*

25 TB-Kh, 155-6. For a discussion of what makes the human different from the animal (i.e., the humanity versus the bestiality within an individual), see the section below in this chapter.

26 Ibid., 157 and 155.

27 Ibid., 157.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 158.

31 Ibid., 157.
32 Ibid.


34 This is illustrated in the narrative text, the most striking episode of which is Abu Nasr’s private discourse with Mas‘ud after the battle of Dandanqan, when he tells the king that his psychological imbalance is in effect a spiritual imbalance (TB-Kh, 913-914).

35 Ibid., 156.

36 See for instance ibid., 161, where the word *pir* (the aged one) is in effect an equivalent of the word *khiradmand* (the sage, the wise).

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 156.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 This is consistent with the general understanding on the part of many medieval Muslim intellectuals that tyranny is far better than anarchy.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., 156 and 157-8.


45 TB-Kh, 156; the author of these Arabic lines is anonymous.

46 Another medieval Muslim historian who conceives of two states of knowledge is Ibn Khaldun. See *The Muqaddimah*, 351-2, where he differentiates between “[t]he original knowledge” “attained previous to the possession of the attribute” by the individual and “knowledge as a ‘state’ ” when he comes to possess the attribute.
In this context, it is, of course, the kings who are in “positions of power,” but throughout the narrative text the author is indeed concerned with any person in a position of significant authority, be it a grand vizier (Khvaja Hasan Maymandi), a minister and advisor (Abu Sahl), or even a simple man, himself a subject who is in position of power vis-à-vis certain other subjects.

Parenthetically we may note that, given the importance Bayhaqi attaches to “the ways” of pre-Islamic kings, one may be hesitant to accept that for him “the Iranian past (even as prehistory) has no worthwhile lessons to provide,” that for him, “history begins [only] with Islam,” that he totally rejects “the value of the [pre-Islamic] Iranian past” (J. S. Meisami, “The Past in Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia," *Poetics Today* 14, no. 2 [Summer, 1993]: 271and 272).

It is important to note that Bayhaqi’s use of verb tense changes from simple past and past progressive (e.g., *‘adat dashtand* and *bikhuftand*) as he gives a summary of *Akhbar-i muluk-i ‘Ajam*, and hence he becomes purposely somewhat vague when he construes his statements after “So when a desire overtakes/would overtake him...” with subjunctive verbs (e.g., *bijunbad* and *khvahad ... biranad*), which in this context can mean either that these actions were taken in the past or that they should be taken whenever necessary.
62 TB-Kh, 159.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 154.

65 Fazil is the transliteration of the Persian pronunciation of the Arabic word fadil, which is the active participle of fadala from f.d.l. This is just one of many instances, in Bayhaqi’s history, where the author uses words that are different derivatives of f.d.l. It must be noted, therefore, that “Fadl” or “excellence,” which is the base noun of the root f.d.l., is of three sorts, (1) “that of kind” (essential quality), (2) “that of species” (essential quality), and (3) “that of individual” (accidental quality). The third, the one that concerns us here, is that which makes one “virtuous” or “exceptional.” Fadil is thus applied to an individual as “a possessive epithet,” meaning “possessing fadl or excellence.” It denotes “[1] one who is erudite, excellent in learning, or else [2] virtuous.” See Edward William Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, s.vv. “f.d.l,” “fadl”.

66 TB-Kh, 154.

67 Waldman, Toward a Theory, 80-86; Meisami, Persian Historiography, 82-84.

68 TB-Kh, 154.
CHAPTER 4

IDEAL KINGSHIP AND CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, it was stated that the concepts of ultimate knowledge and moral idealism, discussed by Bayhaqi in the section he appended to “Khutba I,” cannot be understood properly if their application and meaning are reduced to the context of his discourse on the ideal king. We argued that the presence of these concepts in Bayhaqi’s history and the thematic importance attached to them show an attempt on the part of the author to synthesize various intellectual discourses of his time and place—three of which we identified as ethical (akhlq), Fürstenspiegel, and religious—in order to answer some of the universal questions that pertain to the human, his experience, and his prospects in the world. We also argued that, more than any of the other two, it is the religious discourse and religion as a moral and intellectual source that have the biggest share in shaping the author’s intellectual preoccupation as well as his idea of composing an history. We did not discuss the particular correlations that exist between these concepts of knowledge and morality, and Bayhaqi’s idea of history. This shall be undertaken in the second part of this concluding chapter. But we did state that the general themes of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi, which we assumed to be in effect the concepts that preoccupied its author, transcend the particulars and intricacies of the period the book tries to depict. The book, we stated in the introduction, pertains to the detailed history of a ten-to-eleven-year
period of early Ghaznavid history or the reign of the fifth Ghaznavid sultan. Even the original history that Bayhaqi composed was by all account a chronologically limited and a geopolitically focused one. It was a dynastic history after all. But the fact that it has acquired wide readership, that is, from at least the fifteenth century on, is to be credited to its author’s ability to speak of something that transcends the particulars of his time and place. It is in fact to be credited to his being an history teacher, a moral instructor, whose lessons are taught by means of narrating historical accounts—stories that by themselves may or may not have any significant relevance for Bayhaqi’s audience in the past five centuries or so. It is Bayhaqi’s generalizations about the human’s situation in the world that make the text accessible to those for whom the Ghaznavid period has long lost its historical meaning and importance. This is basically what we argued so far.

Bayhaqi was a secretary and a dynastic historian, but he was no court historian. He was not patronized by a ruler or in fact by anyone as far as we know. Furthermore, his audience is clearly composed of, on the one hand, kings, princes, and high officials, that is, secretaries like himself, and, on the other, learned men of any background, that is, religious or non-religious scholars and the littérateurs or men of letters. This is yet another reason to read his text outside the context of his sections and discourse on the ideals of kingship. But as the concept of the ideal king is part of the author’s thought on the perfect or virtuous man—that is, the ideal king is an example of an ideal, virtuous, and perfect man—we shall consider below his discussion of the ideals of kingship as a framework that will further illustrate how these variegated concepts are reconciled in the mind of the historian in order to come up with his concept of human idealism or perfection. Thus, the first part of this chapter will treat Bayhaqi’s understanding of
kingship in society and of its presentation in history. Just as is the case with his understanding of human idealism and morality, Bayhaqi's understanding of kingship is assumed to be in effect the consequence of his intellectual preoccupation.

**Ideal kingship:**

Bayhaqi devotes a part of the section he wrote on the “meaning of the world” in volume seven to a discussion of *imarāt* (emirate, kingship). In this terse and condensed discourse, he refers to three authorities in order to illustrate the centrality of the office of king to society. First, he quotes a *hadith* of Muhammad:

> It is reported: “A man came to the Prophet, may God bless and bestow peace upon him and his house, and said, ‘What an evil thing is *imarāt* (power, empire, kingship)!” He, may peace be upon him, returned then, ‘What a blessing (lit., an excellent thing) is *imarāt* if acquired (lit., if the ruler acquires it) with its rights and legality! And [ alas!] where are its rights and legality?””

This *hadith* is cited to illustrate two separate points: one, that kingship, contrary to the opinion of some radical and self-righteous men in society, is not, from the standpoint of Islam’s central figure, an evil thing. It is in fact in essence a good, profitable social institution. A stipulation, however, is made, and we shall return to it below (see pp. 123-124). Then, the other two quotations, one from the early Islamic figure Ka‘b al-Ahbar and the other from the Sasanid king Khusraw Anushirvan, follow:

The similitude of the king and people is like unto a pavilion tight to a beam [or column], risen high while its ropes are stretched down and tied to fixed tent poles. The Islamic pavilion is sovereignty (*mulk*), the beam the king, the ropes and the poles the subjects. Thus, when [the structure] is observed that which is principal is the beam, for the pavilion is held and erected high by it. When it is shaken and fallen, there remains no pavilion, nor ropes, nor poles.²
Do ye not stay in a place wherein there is no victorious and powerful king, no equitable judge, no perennial rain, no competent physician, and no running water. If all these exist but the victorious king does not, all these things shall be nonexistent. These affairs circle round the king even as the revolution of the globe on its axis, and verily the axis is the king.  

It has been observed in the introduction that in Ghaznavid society, just as in most premodern Islamic societies, the king occupied the top of the social pyramid while the mass of his subjects remained at the very bottom. To compare the king with the beam of a pavilion and the axis of a globe thus seems, at one level, to be observing the normative practice of the time and stating the obvious. But Bayhaqi’s aim in these and other references to the centrality of the office of king is not so much to describe the prevailing social order as to express the social role of the individual upon whom the maintenance of the social order rests. For as Waldman states, “It is axiomatic for Bayhaqi that a strong … ruler is needed … for [the] security and stability” of society. “A strong ruler” is, in other words, the equivalent in modern times of having a powerful state. In order to avoid chaos and anarchy and in order to maintain the security, stability, and prosperity of society, a strong ruler—in Bayhaqi’s words, “a sharp-minded (shahm), competent (kafi), powerful, and majestic (muhtasham) man” —at the top of the social pyramid is indispensable, just as a powerful state, in its modern sense, insures the security of its citizens, the stability of its social institutions, and the development of its economy.

But to construe Bayhaqi’s description of kingship as absolutism or despotism is not only to apply these terms, in their modern senses, anachronistically but also to miss one of the major themes of the text and the author’s understanding of this particular theme. For in the first place, to Bayhaqi there existed no other practicable and legitimate form of governance besides the Perso-Islamic form of kingship, and the latter, like all
medieval kingships, elevated one person and a group immediately associated with him to the top of the social pyramid and vested him with the authority needed to maintain every aspect of society. This was the prevailing practice and the norm of Islamic societies in medieval times, and it must be seen as such in the context of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. Only in this way can the author’s discourse on this theme be understood properly. In the second place, there are various shades of kingship in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi. Depending on the qualities and practices of the king, the kingship associated with him may be, for instance, despotic or just and ideal. By “despotism” (istibdad) and “despotic” or “despot” (mustabidd), the author means a certain obstinacy and willfulness in governance that characterized the reigns of certain kings (e.g., both Mas‘ud and Mahmud). Istibdad’s antonym, it must be noted, is mushawara, or consultation, meaning these kings did not allow their advisors to really participate in the process of political decision-making. By “justice” (‘adl, dad) and “just” (‘adil), on the other hand, the author means the exercise of certain indispensable qualities that must be characteristic of every reign. As we shall see below, these ideals of the office, if upheld accordingly, made kingship a far more desirable form of governance than any other political system an eleventh-century intellectual could conceive.

Because everything in society depends on the way in which it is maintained and because its maintenance is in principle the job of one person, the personal qualities of that person, the ruler, are of extreme import. For in the case of a king—and in fact of any great man—there exists no separation between his personal qualities and life, and his public acts. For this reason the qualities Bayhaqi sets down for the ideal king pertain to both spheres of his life. These include “continence and virtue” (‘iffat), “practicing and
upholding religion” (diyanat), “subtle considerations and precise thinking” (andisha-yi barik), “leading a good [i.e., moral] life” (nikusirat), “power and prowess” (dirazi-yi dast, lit., long-handedness), “triumph and victory over the foe,” “justice which [he would] dispense in conformity with the decrees of God,” “the cleanness [or purity] of his time” (pakizagi-yi ruzigar, meaning the absence or scarcity of crimes and disorder in that period), and finally “good works” or “benefactions” (from nikukirdar, meaning “doer of good” and “benefactor”) and “good and lasting signs” (nikuasar, meaning signs on diverse aspects of the kingdom and people’s lives). Apart from the power and ability to subdue civil strife (fitna) and secure the empire from outside attacks, the qualities enumerated above are in tune with those of the perfect man—“the wise and just man who is worthy of the name ‘virtuous’”—enunciated in the section appended to “Khutba I” and explained in chapter three. For these characteristics are in fact considered to be the consequence of the individual’s rationality, self-restraint, and moderation. They are, in essence, the result of the proper working of the rational soul and its proper symbiotic functioning with the impulsive self. The outcome in society of these qualities in the ruler, on the other hand, must be self-evident in light of our discussion so far. “People will have ease (rahat) and security (imani), and that land prosperity, abundance (barakat), and civil florescence (abadani),” and there will be social order and the rule of law everywhere (qa’idaha-yi ustuvvar minahad).

The excellent qualities outlined here befit of the office of the individual upon whom the tranquility of an empire rests. It is, furthermore, this social capacity of the ruler that is the author’s point when he draws a comparison between the office of the prophet and that of the king. For both these figures function as God’s vicegerents on earth by
virtue of their qualities (their acquired qualities, that is), are at the very top of the social pyramid, and hence contribute directly and significantly to the preservation of the social order and organization. Bayhaqi writes:

Know thou that God, exalted be He, has conferred upon Messengers, may God’s blessings be upon them all, a power (quvvat) and upon kings another power. He has, moreover, made it incumbent upon the peoples over the surface of the earth to adhere to these two powers and through them come to find the Straight Path of God. Thus, anyone who considers these [sc. two powers] to be from Celestial Sphere and Stars and Signs of the Zodiac, he would [in his imagination] render the Creator nonexistent and would be a Mu‘tazili and a Zindiqi and a dahri, and his place shall be in hell—we take refuge with God from [the evil of] abandonment.

The author thus makes it clear that the ideal king, just like the prophet, is among the divinely elect who run human society. He is, in Bayhaqi’s own words, “the true deputy [of God]” (gumashhta-yi bihaqq) and “the chosen of the Creator God” (pl. barguzidagan-i afaridigar). He is “confirmed and assisted” in every respect by the unseen and divine power. He is “obeyed” in society because of the will of God, and he obtains “a group of men—his helpers and servants—who suit him” through the favor and grace of the divine Fashioner of the world. Parenthetically it must be noted that even when describing the office of prophet, Bayhaqi emphasizes its social and organizational significance (e.g., to mobilize a group of devout disciples, to conquer and establish a great empire, and to sustain its cultural florescence a long time, if not perpetually). The emphasis is thus “the singularity and uniqueness” (from yigana, meaning “peerless and singular”) of the responsibilities of the individuals upon whom people as a collective rely.

But the prophet and the king occupy their unique stations because of the acquired qualities they possess and manifest, and because through those qualities people at large find “ease,” “security,” “prosperity,” “abundance,” and “civil florescence.” But whereas
the case of the prophet is not discussed at such great length and his infallibility is taken to be axiomatic, the king, according to direct references in the text, is not immune from falling short in his duties towards God—he is too worldly after all—in sustaining those essential and unique qualities enumerated above (and in the previous chapters), and hence in carrying out his public responsibilities. In other words, the king's sustaining a perfect character not only is not taken for granted but is considered to be an extremely difficult job all by itself. For this reason, it is imperative for people “to scrutinize the actions and conditions (ahval) of kings,” whether those past or still in power, so that their states and the degree to which they fulfill the accidental qualities of their office may be made apparent. If they display the signs of perfection that kingship requires, they are then indisputably “the recipients of divine confirmations” (mu'ayyad) and hence “successful” (muvaffaq) in their doings. If not, they are then but “usurping Khariji[s]”—“usurping” (mutighallib) because they have in effect appropriated a significant and consequential role in society that does not belong to them. 13 Hence, the reign of the pretender is characterized by “tyranny” (sitamkar) and “evil” or “reprehensible works” (badkirdar). The people are therefore required to conclude towards which of the two radical extremes particular kings lean. Whereas the outcome of their scrutiny of the past kings is knowledge and understanding, the result of their study of the character and works of the ruling king must be either to wholeheartedly “obey him” and help carry out his injunctions or to openly “contend with him” (jahad bayad kard) and rid society from his misrule. 14
The enormity of the office of king hence requires a certain standard of practice whose fulfillment would be apparent to people who carefully consider and study the reigns of individual kings. The conspicuous accidental characteristics of each reign, as a result, form a “criterion” (mizan) that “would determine” which kings have been “benefactors” or “doers of good” (nikukirdar) and which “malefactors” or “doers of evil” (badkirdar). This is an elaborate system which allows the learned among the people to analyze statesmanship in the past and in their own times. On the other hand, there are as well the inscrutable “determination” (taqdir) and “decree” (qaza) of God, which confer “sovereignty” on those who are competent and well qualified for the office of sovereign, even as the well-known Qur’anic verse on kingship (3:26) states:

Say: ‘O God! Owner of Sovereignty! Thou givest sovereignty unto whom Thou wilt, and Thou withdrawest sovereignty from whom Thou wilt. Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt. In Thy hand is the good. Thou art powerful over all things.’

Bayhaqi’s understanding of this verse is that kingship is given to those who are capable of upholding its ideals, and is, by implication, taken away from those who are mere “pretenders.” The fulfillment of the requirements of the kingly office is so important that it is, moreover, the reason for the transference of kingship, not only from one individual to another but from one dynasty to another. For by divine determination of the kingly power, God in effect protects the “universal welfare” or “good of the people on earth.”

In light of what has been presented here, we may now look at the way in which two of the “greatest” and “most virtuous” (fazil) of kings of the past are presented by the author in “Khutba I.” They are Alexander the Macedonian (i.e., Alexander the Great) and Ardashir the Persian (i.e., the Sasanid Ardashir I). Bayhaqi’s comments on Ardashir
are strikingly brief, particularly when compared with a page-long discussion of
Alexander’s habits and works. Contrary to Meisami’s reading, Bayhaqi does not
“dismiss” Ardashir, nor does he “diminish” his “achievement by attributing it to divine
 providence.”18 In fact, by attributing Ardashir’s works to divine providence, he makes of
him a paradigmatic figure who, along with other ideal rulers (e.g., the “twin Shaykhs,” or
the first two of the rashidun caliphs, and the Ghaznavid Sebektigin) must be emulated.

The greatest things related concerning him are that he restored the bygone state
(dawlāt) of the Persians and laid down a way (sunna) of [ruling in accordance with]
justice (’adl) amidst the kings—and after his death a group [from among the kings]
followed after that way. And by my life, these were great [deeds]. Yet, God, to Him
belong might and majesty, had brought the end of the term of the “kings of small
nations” (muluk-i tava’if); hence that work was accomplished for Ardashir with such
ease.19

Far from suggesting “that the Iranian past can provide only negative examples,”20
Bayhaqi here, in his own particular style and way, is saying that Ardashir was one of the
few kings who upheld the irrevocable principle of justice. In fact, if a king in Perso-
Islamic tradition is said to have upheld justice during his reign, then he had acquired the
ideals of kingship.21 It means that he was a perfect man. For justice in kingship means
perfection in statesmanship. This, at least, is the case for Bayhaqi. Furthermore, by
attributing Ardashir’s works to God, he in effect suggests that the king was the recipient
of divine confirmation and that he belongs to the small category of kings who attained
kingship “with its rights and legality”22—for it was God, after all, who had brought an
end to the sovereignty of the “petty kings,” that is, the Parthians, or Arsacids, who ruled
Iran from roughly 200 B.C.E. to 220 C.E. Finally, by stating that Ardashir established “a
way of justice,” the author in effect is stating that his ways of maintaining his empire,
contrary to Alexander’s, were long-lasting.

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Alexander’s case is, however, quite different. He is presented only to be dismissed, and that not without reason. For Bayhaqi presents Alexander in such a way that he seems to lack some of the most important qualities a perfect ruler must possess. For one, he was driven by his impulsive self. He was no rational man. Secondly, he was not a “maintainer” of an empire. He was a skilled military commander who could conquer large territories but not a keeper or preserver of the societies he overtook, nor one who could sustain order and security within an overstretched empire.

Alexander was a man whose dominion (sultani) grew in power after a fire-like fashion, attained ascendancy for but very few days, and then turned to ashes. His similitude in those great kingdoms he overtook and in the civilizations of the world he explored is as one who passes through [different] places for the purpose of touring and entertainment (tamaasha). And his action in subduing those kings he subdued, even as he demanded that they submit and regard themselves as his lessers, was precisely like having taken a weighty oath [with himself] and upheld it so that it may not be dishonored. What gain [is there] in going looking about round the world! The king must be a maintainer (zabii). For when he appropriates a kingdom (mulk) and a land and cannot maintain them and immediately lays his hand on another country and in this wise proceeds [onwards] and leaves them [sc. the annexed territories] abandoned, he would then be totally giving everyone the occasion to say that he is impotent (‘ajiz).

The greatest signs (asar) of Alexander, which have been recorded in books, are regarded to be that he killed Darius, who was the King of Persia, and Fur, who was the King of Hindustan.23 With each of these two persons, it is considered that he made a slip, very hideous and grave. His slip with Darius was that, [while] at war in Nishapur, he, in the likeness of a messenger, betook himself to the army of Darius. They recognized him and sought to seize him, yet he [was able to] flee. And Darius was killed by his own trusted [vassals], and [thus] the affairs [of his kingdom] fell into a great commotion. But the slip with Fur was that when the war between them [had] started and been fixed and [it had become] protracted, Fur asked Alexander [to enter] a [one-to-one] combat [with him], and they engaged and fought one the other. And it is not right (rava) that the king should choose these hazards.

Alexander, [however], was a shrewd (muhtal) and cunning (gurbuz) man.24 Before he came nigh Fur, he [had] devised a stratagem to kill Fur, in that a clamor was vigorously raised from the direction of the army of Fur, and Fur became anxious and [turned and] looked in that direction. Thus, Alexander gained the opportunity and struck and killed him. Therefore, Alexander was a man of length (tul) and breadth (‘arz) and clamor (bang) and lightning-flash (barq) and thunderbolt (sa‘iqah), even as the cloud in spring and summer is, that passed over the kings of the earth, poured down, and disappeared. Thus verily he was the summer cloud that dissipates fast.
After him, five hundred years that the sovereignty (mulk) of the Greeks endured and was extended over the surface of the earth was upheld by reason of one [single] provision and policy (tadbir) that Aristotle, the master (ustad) of Alexander, designed. He said, “The kingdom must be divided between the [lesser] kings, so that they will be occupied with one another and not turn to Greece.” They are [therefore] called the “kings of small nations” (muluk-i tava’if).\(^{25}\)

Alexander was irrational because he is shown to have conquered lands and subdued kings for sport, self-gratification, and the fulfillment of his personal ambitions and vow. His decision to proceed with his campaigns was not in the least based on “subtle considerations and precise thinking” (andisha-yi barik), in other words. For the welfare of the subjects of an empire requires the king to make his first priority the application of measures that would ensure the stability of the social order and the security of the populations. But Alexander is depicted as having “abandoned” the lands he conquered and to have compulsively kept conquering further territories. Alexander’s irrationality is furthermore illustrated in the way he would endanger his own life at various stages of his expeditions in the east. He was thus reckless even in his military actions. In brief, the qualities that have been ascribed to Alexander do not bear any affinity with those enunciated for the ideal king or the perfect man. He was “shrewd” and “cunning” but not “just” or “confirmed” by God’s help and assistance—as Ardashir was. Even the extension of Hellenism to and its endurance in Iran and other eastern territories are ascribed not to Alexander’s wisdom and foresight but to the application of the wise Aristotle’s counsel. Thus, any credit that is given to Alexander as one of the “greatest” and “most virtuous” of kings is not because he was a perfect man, an ideal ruler, but because he, at least in one instance, heeded the advice of someone wise and experienced.
If one from among the two “greatest” and “most virtuous” of the kings of the past is so imperfect and impulsive, then from this one may surmise how rare is an ideal ruler who acquires his sovereignty through “its rights and legality” and can sustain a just kingship throughout his reign. This is the second point of the hadith quoted by Bayhaqi in the section devoted to kingship (see above). The rarity of just kings in history is also alluded to when Bayhaqi states that only “a group” of the kings who followed Ardashir abided by his established “way” of justice. The theme is, furthermore, alluded to and thus with subtlety stressed when Ibn Sammak asks whether Harun follows “the way of the twin Shaykhs” and then immediately answers his own question in the negative. This theme is ultimately brought home throughout the narrative text when both Muhammad and Mas‘ud are contrasted to Mahmud, and all three from Sebuktigin who is celebrated as “the Just Amir” (amir-i ‘adil). Though in Tarikh-i Bayhaqi Sebuktigin figures only occasionally, he is never recalled without discernable reverence and Bayhaqi’s apparent self-designated appellation for him, “the Just Amir.” In one instance, the mercy he showed to a gazelle, when he was still not an amir, is compared to the pity Moses showed to a lamb still prior to his first revelation. On another occasion, he is described to have dreamed of the prophet Khizr who prophesied that he would become “a great and renowned man ... with powerful men in his entourage.” In evident contrast, neither Mahmud, nor his sons, nor their successors (e.g., Farrukhzad and Ibrahim) are described as having been “just” or named with that title. Although they are all praised on various occasions, the reader must make a distinction between the praiseworthy qualities ascribed
to them for the purpose of abiding by the norms of propriety and those of the ideal king or the perfect man. This is at least what the author who wrote with at times extreme subtlety and even purposeful ambiguity expected his audience to do.\textsuperscript{29}

To conclude, the office and qualities of ideal king are described in “Khatba I” and the section devoted to imarat, and they are illustrated in the rest of Tarikh-i Bayhaqi because of the exceedingly important function of king in maintaining order in society. Any account of the past of a society cannot ignore the most consequential of its institutions, that is, kingship, and a discussion and treatment of ways that pertain to its maintenance. For in that way, the historian has as well discussed and treated the ways that pertain to that society’s prosperity, security, and florescence. For this reason, Bayhaqi, in his history, speaks of the necessary qualities of ideal or just king. We have argued that these qualities show that by the ideal or just king Bayhaqi means a type of the perfect man: there are certainly other types. In fact, anyone, in any social capacity (e.g., as a scholar, secretary, and the littérature or man of letters), can be a perfect man provided that he has the necessary characteristics (i.e., ultimate knowledge and morality) Bayhaqi speaks of. In an astonishingly contrast to the contemporary eleventh-century intellectual discourse, the historian attaches so much importance to these qualities that he calls for an open rebellion against the tyrant or unjust or ultimately imperfect ruler. The determining “criterion” that would enable people in general and the learned in particular to learn about the moral and intellectual standing of a king is none other than the personal qualities of that king and his public works, which are in effect the outcome of his qualities. This criterion is provided by history for the past kings, and by personal or collective observation, and contemporary history for the ruling king. What is thus

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presented by Bayhaqi is, therefore, an exposition on how kingship as a way of understanding individual kings as well as the people or society these kings ruled should be presented in historical accounts. Political history must, in other words, be about the acquired qualities and actions of kings, their officials, and their empire as a whole. Political history must, as an unimpeachable criterion, help the reader decide which king in history was just and which unjust. These are the standards of a history that pertains to politics or statesmanship as far as Bayhaqi is concerned.

Concluding remarks:

The question that rises at this point is that, besides kingship, how the concepts of knowledge, and of human perfection and morality may be relevant to an historian’s conception and writing of the past.

We noted in the previous chapter that at the core of Bayhaqi’s conception of knowledge rests his concern with an understanding of the human. This is what he calls self-knowledge. It is the knowledge of the human. Self-knowledge may be acquired through a combination of ways, we said: an awareness of (1) one’s own psychological dynamics (i.e., the balance and imbalance of the mental and emotional forces within oneself), and (2) one’s own actions and conditions (i.e., one’s just or unjust actions towards oneself and others), as well as (3) a knowledge of “the actions and conditions” of others, both past and contemporary. This latter source of self-knowledge we defined as Bayhaqi’s primitive psychology, and ethnography or sociology, for in fact his conception of “the actions and conditions of people” encompasses an inquiry into (a) the detailed
personalities and moral characters of individuals involved, and (b) the works of these individuals, groups, and ultimately society as a whole, as well as aspects of culture, and the interaction and workings of all these in a single sociopolitical unit or entity. The correlation that exists between this knowledge of “the actions and conditions of people,” on the one hand, and one’s own aspects of self-knowledge, on the other, is deep and intimate. The study of others, the study of history—that is, the type of history that Bayhaqi defines—helps one to understand oneself. In other words, self-knowledge is impossible without this self-others correlation. This correlation, moreover, explains the idea of ‘ibrat or pand in “the actions and conditions of people.”

Because history functions as a means to acquire self-knowledge, it must pertain to diverse aspects of human experience. The scope of history is thus broadened exceedingly: it includes political and military, personal and psychological, cultural, moral and philosophical, and finally social history. Bayhaqi’s own narrative text is an example of this history or account of the “actions and conditions of people.” Because history pertains to human experience and functions in effect as the reader’s own experience (see chapter three), it must be authentic and factual, or not tainted with myths and impossible human actions and conditions. This is the meaning of the entire—and much discussed—“Khutba II,”²⁰ in which Bayhaqi sets down the necessity for the historian of scrutinizing his oral and written sources, and dismisses the fictional, ahistorical, tales of adulterated histories. Again, the practice of Bayhaqi illustrates this. He provides the names of all the historical sources—whether oral or textual—of his Ghaznavid drama. In fact, much of the account is written based on his own eyewitness experience in court. Finally, because history must teach both events and concepts, the particular as well as the general, it must as well
impert the connections that exist between events and concepts, and must furthermore emphasize the meaning and broader ramifications of these concepts. It must show the causes or the reason why of upholding certain universal moral principles. This is what has sometimes dismissively and reductively been referred to as Bayhaqi’s attempt to make history as an illustration of moral lessons, of what later came to be compiled and formalized in important Fürstenspiegel texts (e.g., Qabusnama and Siyar al-muluk).\(^{31}\)

The question that rises at this juncture is that to what extent this historiographical theory is the product of Bayhaqi’s own mind. To what extent he was incorporating the concepts “that were generally current in the intellectual milieu of his time?” To what extent his thought on how to conceive and write history is “dictated” by “the intellectual worldview of his time?”\(^{32}\)

We should note that the concept of history as a moral tale is not a creation of Bayhaqi’s mind. The concept of ‘ibrat or pand existed in the intellectual milieu of the eleventh- and pre-eleventh-century Muslim world. It, in fact, goes back to several centuries before. It exists in the Qur’an’s reference to the human past, for instance. Such other concepts as justice (‘adl, dad), “the paucity of just kings in the historical record” and in reality, and finally the transience or “the ‘faithlessness’ of time and the world,” too, were current in the intellectual milieu of the time. Their origins indeed go back to centuries, or possibly a longer period of time, before Bayhaqi. However, we should credit Bayhaqi for a remarkable intellectual assimilation of these concepts and the thoughtful synthesis he was able to produce in the form of his two philosophical sections and two philosophical “Khutbas.” Bayhaqi’s understanding of “the depth and end” of these
prevalent concepts was so thorough that his historical production which is based on the intellectual assimilation of these concepts bears witness to this. He was able to produce a type of history that has rarely been produced before.

Besides his broad and remarkable synthesis, and his creativity in applying these synthetic philosophical principles in history writing, Bayhaqi's originality lies as well in his attempt to provide a philosophical base for the argument as regards the function of history as a moral tale. He is who provides a substantiation of the idea of history as 'ibrat or pand. It does not matter whether the argument of human knowledge via experience is originally his. It matters that he, as an historian, understands it and applies it to argue that the idea of history as a moral account that teaches self-knowledge is a philosophically valid argument and must be taken to account. This has been presented in no other pre-modern Islamic exposition on the theory of history. This has as well by and large been completely ignored by the current scholarship on Bayhaqi.

Finally, by portraying that just kings are few in history and reality, Bayhaqi is, in effect, also stating that perfect and virtuous men are few in history and reality. The fact that major players in the Ghaznavid drama (e.g., Hasanak, Abu Nasr Mushkan, Mas'ud’s first vizier Maymandi, and Mas 'ud’s second vizier), who are also mostly from the educated class, fall short of the idealism conceived by the philosopher historian is to be considered against the rarity of the virtuous man, no matter what social function he happens to have. It is these major players’ inability to live a perfect life that also, besides Mas'ud’s own imperfections, contributes to his tragic downfall, which is to be equated with the downfall and devastation of the Ghaznavid empire or the sociopolitical unit that is called the Ghaznavid state. Even the author’s portrayal of himself indicates that he
considers the perfect man a rare phenomenon. Hence, Bayhaqi’s drive to teach
mistakes—personal, political, and moral failures—becomes meaningful in light of the
paucity of virtuous human beings. Thus, the historian teaches mistakes, human mistakes,
including his own, in order to make an example (‘ibrat, pand) of these for his audience,
so that perchance some from his audience will learn about the moral frailty they inherit
and try to endeavor to acquire perfection that is true felicity both for them and for others.
This is yet another novel explanation of the idea of history as ‘ibrat or pand, which is not
seen in the intellectual milieu of Bayhaqi’s time.

1 TB-Kh, 515/TB-D, 572.
2 TB-Kh, 515; cf. Waldman, Toward a Theory, 99.
3 TB-Kh, 515-16; cf. Waldman, Toward a Theory, 100.
4 TB-Kh, 515. In this reference, according to both Daneshpazuh and Khatib
Rahbar, shahm could also denote “courageous” (see ibid., 605, n. 14, and TB-D, 572, n.
6).
5 LD, s.v. “istibdad.”
6 TB-Kh, 153.
7 Ibid., 154.
8 Ibid., 152.
9 See n. 73 in chapter two.
10 TB-Kh, 153.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 152.
13 See n. 72 in chapter two.
14 TB-Kh, 153.

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15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 151.

17 Ibid.

18 "The Past in Service of the Present," 266 and 267; and idem, Persian Historiography, 83.

19 TB-Kh, 151.


21 In fact, if an individual is reported to have been just or equitable, it means that he had acquired human—that is, intellectual, moral, etc.—perfection in life, it means that he was, in the philosophical sense, a "perfect" or "virtuous (fazil) man." Cf. Numerous references in the Qur'an to "justice" (i.e., being "just" to oneself and to others); Khvaja Abu 'Ali Hasan Tusi (Nizam al-Mulk), "Andar mazalimgah nishast-an-i padishah va 'adl va sirat-i niku varzidan," Siyar al-mulk (siyasa-nama), ed. Hubert Darke (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intisharat-i 'Ilmi va Farhangi, 1372 SH/1993), 18-29; 'Unsur al-Ma'ali Kaykavus, "Dar a'in vas shart-i padishahi," Qabusnama, 228-239; Encyclopedia of Qur'an; and EJ. See also chapter three in the present study where justice is defined as "moderation."

22 TB-Kh, 515.


24 Both of these qualifying adjectives cover a spectrum of meanings from bad to favorable.

25 TB-Kh, 150-51/TB-D, 150-52. "Kings of small nations" (muluk-i tava'if) is generally rendered in English as "tribal" or "petty kings." The writers of the early centuries of Islam referred to the Seleucid and Arsacid periods as "muluk-i tava iif" or "muluk al-tawa iif," meaning "[the age of] petty kings" or "princelings." I am thankful to Professor Jane Hathaway for pointing out that "In the context of Islamic Spain, it is typically translated 'party kings,' meaning 'kings of different (political) parties' or 'factions.' " I am thankful also to Professor Richard Davis for stating that "the characterization of Alexander the Macedonian is virtually identical in the two [sc. Firdawsi's Shahnama and Bayhaqi's reference to him]." See Richard Davis, Columbus,
Ohio, to Ranin Kazemi, Columbus, Ohio, 21 July 2005, transcript in the hand of Ranin Kazemi.

26 TB-Kh, 738.

27 See for instance TB-D, 313-19.

28 TB-D, 315.

29 See n. 48 in chapter two.


32 The present author is thankful to Professor Richard Davis for raising these extremely important questions. Richard Davis, Columbus, Ohio, to Ranin Kazemi, Columbus, Ohio, 21 July 2005.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Period</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sebuktigin</td>
<td>366-87/977-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isma'īl b. Sebuktigin</td>
<td>387-8/997-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahmud b. Sebuktigin</td>
<td>388/998-421/1030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad b. Mahmud</td>
<td>421/1030 (1st brief reign)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mas'ud I b. Mahmud</td>
<td>421-32/1030-41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muhammad b. Mahmud</td>
<td>432/1041 (2nd interregnum)</td>
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<td>Mawdud b. Mas'ud I</td>
<td>432-40/1041-448</td>
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<td>Mas'ud II b. Mawdud</td>
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<td>'Ali b. Mas'ud I</td>
<td>440/1048-49</td>
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<tr>
<td>'Abd al-Rashid b. Mahmud</td>
<td>440-3/1049-52?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The usurper Toghril</td>
<td>443?/1052?</td>
</tr>
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<td>Farrukhzad b. Mas'ud I</td>
<td>444-51/1053-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ibrahim b. Mas'ud I</td>
<td>451/1059-492/1099</td>
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**TABLE 1: THE EARLY GHAZNAVID RULERS**
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