

Portrayals of the Later Abbasid Caliphs:
The Role of the Caliphate in Buyid and Saljūq-era Chronicles, 936-1180

THESIS

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Abstract

Decline paradigms have long dominated the modern historiography of the pre-modern Middle East. In particular, the alleged decadence of the Abbasid caliphate after its loss of military power in the middle of the 10th-century has been seen as an index of the “decline” of Islamic civilization generally. This judgment, however, has usually been taken without much actual reference to the later history of the Abbasids. A thorough examination of the primary sources of medieval Islamic history – Arabic chronicles – reveals a much more nuanced picture of the later Abbasid caliphate. While the caliphs lacked military power during the Buyid and Saljūq eras, they were not mere hostages of the secular powers in the eyes of the chroniclers. A close reading of each chronicler against his political background is necessary to understand this fully, however. The caliphs’ authority allowed them to bestow titles upon the rulers that they chose, and sultans were only legitimate when the caliphs had their names recited in the Friday prayer (*khutba*). The caliphs also exercised practical power, especially with the weakening of the Buyid amirate after 1000 C.E. With the caliph al-Qādir (d. 1030), the caliphs controlled judgeships, intervened in urban politics and led the struggle for religious orthodoxy. They were neither saved nor held hostage by the Saljūq sultan Tughril Beg who arrived in Baghdad in 1055. When the Saljūq sultanate fragmented in the 12th-century, the caliphs re-emerged as regional military leaders. Whereas previous caliphs had held authority but not military power, the caliph al-Muqtafī (d. 1160) united power and authority again through his victories in battle against the Saljūqs. Thus, the story of the later Abbasids is not a simple tale of decline.

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I. Introduction

Arabic chronicles are a crucial source for the study of the pre-modern Islamic world, and yet they are more than just depositories of facts, dates, and names. As Tayeb el-Hibri has shown, any understanding of these works should put them in context and understand their symbolism. El-Hibri's *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography* explains, among other things, how seemingly strange details of behavior or dreams were meant to communicate meaning to the readers of the chronicle of al-Ṭabarī, one of the most prominent early Muslim historians.¹ Even a truly perceptive understanding of Arabic chronicles provides a necessarily limited view of a given era. George Makdisi, a historian of medieval Iraq, has written to this effect: "Chronicles are not mirrors of the age; for these one must turn to biographical works, diaries, notebooks and the poetry of the age."² Chronicles, he continues, are "notoriously partial to political history; they deal with dynasties and political men... mainly, matters of power."³ As a rule, chroniclers were usually in the service of powerful patrons, most often as bureaucrats, so it was often a specific political dynasty that drew their greatest interest, admiration, and even criticism.

If chroniclers were mainly concerned with the commanding heights of power, where did that leave those who were partially or mostly bereft of power, especially military power? The later Abbasid caliphate was a central political and religious institution of the medieval Islamic world, perhaps *the* central political and religious

¹ El-Hibri, Tayeb. *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

² Makdisi, George. "The Marriage of Tughril Beg." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1970): 261.

³ *Ibid.*, 261.

institution, but it found itself in just this position by the middle of 10th century (the fourth century *hijrī*). Increasing instability in the empire brought about the dependence of the caliphs on provincial amirs and eventually the improvisation of a new political institution in the Abbasid capital of Baghdad: the chief amir (*amīr al-umarāʾ*). The first *amīr al-umarāʾ* was Ibn Rāʾiq, a commander of Khazar origin who was called to Baghdad in 324/936.⁴ While none of the initial amirs lasted long in his position, the chief amir soon surpassed the caliph himself in terms of military power, and this ended up being an irreversible turn of events. The Buyids, a powerful Daylamite dynasty from northwestern Iran with Shīʿa leanings, took Baghdad in 334/945 and soon did away with most of its rivals in Persia and Iraq. Muʿizz al-Dawla was declared the first Buyid *amīr al-umarāʾ*, and the military and political subordination of the caliphate was thus institutionalized.

Displaced as the major military power of the region, the Abbasid caliphate did not lose all of its significance by any means. While the chroniclers are primarily concerned with power, Makdisi uses the framework of “power and authority” to understand the role of the caliph in the Buyid era and under the Saljūq sultanate that followed.⁵ Chroniclers, especially those who are not associated with the caliph, devote less attention to the *power* of the caliph after 334/945, yet his *authority*, his centrality to the idea of legitimate government, remains intact and indispensable. Buyid chroniclers are less concerned with the caliph’s power over the judicial politics of the time, for example, but his ability to stabilize or destabilize the overall regime by means of his authority is of the greatest

⁴ Donohue, John J. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 334H./945 to 403 H./1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003, p. 5.

⁵ Makdisi, George. *Ibn ʿAqil et la resurgence de l’islam traditionaliste au XIe siècle*. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1963, p. 70-71.

interest. To this framework, a fresh examination of the period may yield a third factor, *influence*, albeit geographically limited. The Abbasids were a leading part of the social fabric of Baghdad and Iraq in a way that amirs and sultans (as the Saljūqs later styled themselves) could not be, so they were capable of keeping the peace in Baghdad or altering the socio-religious atmosphere even without a great deal of true power.

Experience showed the amirs that control over the caliphate, Baghdad and much of southwestern Asia was dependent on a presence in Baghdad and close surveillance over the caliphate.

Much of traditional Western historiography of the later Abbasid caliphate has seen the advent of the amirate as essentially the end of the caliphate and, indeed, as perhaps the harbinger of the decline of Islamic civilization generally. If the Islamic world's central political institution was little more than a travesty, this boded ill for the state of Islamic civilization. Despite the fact that the Abbasids continued to survive and to be closely associated with Baghdad until the fall of that city to the Mongols in 656/1258, the late Abbasid caliphate has received little attention, in contrast to the early caliphate. Culturally, the era has been labeled the "Renaissance of Islam,"⁶ but the political institutions of the time are viewed far less favorably. Thomas Arnold wrote in this vein early in the 20th century: "As the power of the Abbasids declined, soon after the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the essential features of the caliphate gradually disappeared, until there remained nothing but the name."⁷ This assertion conflicts with the views of Muslim contemporaries of the Abbasids, especially Sunnī '*ulamā*', who most

⁶ Mez, Adam. *Die Renaissance des Islams*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968.

⁷ Arnold, Thomas. *The Caliphate*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, p. 75.

emphatically did not view the caliphate as an empty shell. Arnold accuses these scholars of being wholly divorced from reality: “Whatever shape the course of external events might take, the faith of the Sunnī theologians and legists in the doctrines expounded in their textbooks remained unshaken.”⁸

The problem with this interpretation is that the *‘ulamā’* were not the purely religious figures one might imagine them to be. The scholars whom Arnold criticizes were very much involved in the political affairs of their times. Yusuf Ibish writes, regarding the devotion to the caliphate of the jurist al-Bāqillānī and others like him, “Could these jurists have been living in ‘ivory towers’ and theorizing? Were they completely blind to the political realities of their time? A quick review of their biographies clearly indicates that these men were active and responsible members of society. Without hesitation we can rule out the possibility that they were not aware of the contemporary events.”⁹ A study of the Buyid dynasty in Iraq has re-evaluated al-Māwardī, another Sunnī scholar who theorized the role of the caliphate. In the context of Buyid military decline, al-Māwardī’s “treatise is not one of mere speculation but an application of classical juristic theory to the contemporary facts.”¹⁰ A proper evaluation of the late Abbasid caliphate could put Muslim views of the caliphate into context and give insight into a period which revered the caliphate as an institution. Though this has hardly been attempted by historians, the caliphate of the Buyid era and after should be

⁸Ibid, p. 76.

⁹ Ibish, Yusuf. *The Political Doctrine of al-Baqillani*. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1966. p. 50.

¹⁰ Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*, p. 130.

approached on its own terms in order to understand the nature of Islamic politics and culture at that time.

The most important medium through which modern historians access the reality of the Abbasids and their time is the Arabic chronicle. Fortunately, a number of contemporary histories of the period have survived. Whereas al-Ṭabarī mostly relates narratives that had been passed down from previous times, the chronicler Miskawayh based his *Tarājīb al-umam* (*Experiences of Nations*) on his own experience as a Buyid bureaucrat (*kātib*). Hilāl al-Ṣābi', another Buyid bureaucrat and a convert to Islam, wrote a continuation of Miskawayh's chronicle as well as the *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* (*Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*). Among the later chronicles, those of Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-Jawzī are of great relevance to this topic. This essay will provide an overview and discussion of the chronicles in relation to the late Abbasid caliphate and will argue that a certain reading of the chronicles has produced an excessively narrow understanding of the position, whose fortunes varied over time. The chronicles themselves are grounded in the milieus and circumstances in which they were written, and each historian had access to certain records and certain experiences according to his position. A more critical and comparative reading of the chronicles within their contexts will allow a better understanding of the power, authority, and influence of the Abbasid caliphate in the Buyid and Saljūq eras.

II. The Beginning of the Amirate in Al-Ṣulī's and Miskawayh's Chronicles

As one of the first historians to write a chronicle based on personal experience, Miskawayh has been considered one of the greatest Arabic chroniclers. In the early 20th century, the prominent British historian D. S. Margoliouth praised him in the highest terms possible: "In the work of Miskawaihi Arabic historical composition seems to reach its highest point."¹¹ Abū 'Alī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Miskawayh (320/932 – 421/1030) was either a convert himself, despite the purported name of his father, or a descendant of recent converts,¹² like many who served in the Buyid bureaucracy. He served as a secretary and librarian to multiple Buyid viziers, including the vizier al-Muhallabī, about whom he wrote at length and with admiration. He eventually served under 'Aḍud al-Dawla, the most powerful of the Buyid amirs. As a librarian and bureaucrat, he must have had access to excellent archival materials and records. Miskawayh often criticizes the dynasty that he served for so long and has been admired for doing so, but ultimately he is proud of the virtues of the dynasty and its viziers.

While Miskawayh's account of the advent of the amirate c. 324/936 draws mostly upon the lost chronicle of Thābit b. Sinān (d. 365/976), another very different chronicle of that time has survived to the present day, albeit in fragmentary form. Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Yahya al-Ṣulī was primarily a poet and lived as a *nadīm* (boon companion) and tutor to the caliphs, and because of this, his chronicle *Kitāb al-awrāq* attained less fame among both his Muslim contemporaries and later Western historians than chronicles written by bureaucrats or Islamic scholars. For the Muslim '*ulamā*' of

¹¹ Margoliouth, D. S. *Lectures on Arabic Historians*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1972, p. 147.

¹² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Miskawayh," by M. Arkoun.

the time, al-Ṣūlī's reliance on the written texts in his library rather than on direct testimony was a "stain on his scholarly reputation."¹³ Modern scholars, echoing in part some medieval criticisms, criticize his excess of poetry and his predilection for the affairs of the court rather than the political and military history that Miskawayh and others focus on.¹⁴ It is largely Miskawayh's chronicle that Western historians have used to study the period.¹⁵ However, unlike Miskawayh, al-Ṣūlī was an insider and eyewitness to the events that he reports from the reigns of the caliphs al-Rāḍī (d. 329/940) and al-Muttaqī (323/944). Further, his concern for social and economic matters is a strength, making his work more of a "mirror of the age" than Miskawayh's, not less. Both chronicles have been translated, Miskawayh's into English and al-Ṣūlī's into French, and offer two competing views of the same crucial events that brought about the military dependence of the caliph on the *amīr al-umarā'*. While Miskawayh offers a later view focused on the rise of the Buyids, al-Ṣūlī writes as a contemporary close to the Abbasids. A comparison of the two chronicles shows not just the state of the caliphate during the crisis, but also illuminates Miskawayh's influential text itself.

Miskawayh's account of the reasons behind the creation of the *amīr al-umarā'* is quite dramatic, and his analysis is relatively sophisticated. Provincial amirs had by the 4th/10th century established political and economic control over much of the empire, and Miskawayh stresses that they had cut off funds from the capital: "Ibn Ra'īq cut off supplies from Wasit and Basrah, the Baridis [local rulers in Iraq] from Ahwaz; 'Alī b.

¹³ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "al-Ṣūlī," by S. Leder.

¹⁴ Waines, David. "The Pre-Buyid Amirate: Two Views from the Past." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (July 1977): 345.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 345.

Buwaihi had seized Fars and Ibn Ilyas Kirman.”¹⁶ Above all, this meant not the impotence of the caliphate itself, but of the caliphal vizierate. The vizier al-Karkhī was “unequal to his burden” and eventually forced to go into hiding, as Miskawayh relates.¹⁷ Financial necessity “compelled” the caliph al-Rāḍī to call for Ibn Rā’iq to come to Baghdad from Wāsiṭ to take the title of *amīr al-umarā’*.¹⁸ As for what was on offer to the amir, Miskawayh leaves no doubt in the title of his section on Ibn Rā’iq’s amirate: “Ibn Rā’iq’s assumption of control over the caliphate and all provinces of the empire” (*istīlā’ Ibn Rā’iq ‘ala’l-khilāfa wa sā’ir al-mamālik*).¹⁹ However, it is again the vizierate for Miskawayh which has been reduced to a title, not the caliphate itself: “From this time the power of the viziers ceased. The vizier no longer had control of the provinces, the bureaux or the departments; he merely had the title and the right of appearing on ceremonial days at the Palace....”²⁰ In effect, as one scholar puts it, the amirate simply united the function of the vizierate and the leadership of the army.²¹ Nonetheless, while Miskawayh does not view the amirate as the end of the caliphate, he does view it as the sign of a permanently subordinated caliphate, as the caliph is dominated by the amir in “all the provinces of the empire.”

In contrast, al-Ṣūlī does not perceive a permanent institutional change with the coming of Ibn al-Rā’iq. As an eyewitness to the situation (and the caliph al-Rāḍī’s

¹⁶ Miskawayh. *Tarājib al-umam*. Ed. and trans. by H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth as *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate*. Vol IV. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1921, p. 394.

¹⁷ Ibid., 394.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 395.

¹⁹ Ibid., Vol I, p. 351.

²⁰ Ibid., Vol IV, p. 396.

²¹ Busse, Heribert. *Chalif und Grosskönig: Die Buyiden im Iraq (945-1055)*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1969, p. 161.

former tutor), he found the general state of instability to be the dominant theme of his time, and no single figure, caliph or amir, could concentrate all power in his person. Al-Şūlī simply writes that Ibn Rā’iq was given robes of honor and that the minister for security in Baghdad was to be Lu’lu’,²² a slave who had long been the service of the Abbasids. The new chief amir took up residence in the palace of Mu’nis,²³ an Iranian eunuch and general who had been powerful in the reign of al-Muqtadir (d. 320/932), the father of al-Rāḍī. Although al-Şūlī certainly understands the progressive weakening of the caliph, the most prominent consequence of Ibn Rā’iq’s appointment seems to be the destruction of the Sajīs and Hujarīs, factions among the caliphs *mamlūks* (military slaves). While these soldiers were the personal troops of the caliph, they had become rebellious, so al-Rāḍī led the battle against them alongside Ibn Rā’iq. Ibn Rā’iq arrested the Sajīs, and al-Rāḍī ordered that those Hujarīs who do not surrender be put to death.²⁴ The destruction of the caliph’s personal armies did reduce the caliph’s autonomy in the long run, but al-Şūlī portrays it as a victory for the caliph in putting down rebellious elements. In this sense, Ibn Rā’iq was seen as restoring the power of the caliphate, not eroding it.

Miskawayh briefly mentions the conflicts among the Abbasid armies, but he uses the establishment of the amirate as a way to set the stage for the arrival of the Buyids. Immediately after describing Ibn Rā’iq’s arrival in Baghdad, Miskawayh writes about the rise of the Buyids and says that he will now show how “Ahmad b. Buwaihi... ultimately

²² Al-Şūlī, Muḥammad b. Yaḥya. *Akhbār al-Rādī billāh wa’l-Muttaqī billāh*. Trans. Maurice Canard. Algiers: Institut d’Études Orientales de la Faculté des Lettres d’Algiers, 1946, p. 146-7.

²³ Ibid., p. 148.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 154.

became sovereign of Iraq.”²⁵ After this point, Miskawayh has much less to say about the person of the caliph and seems to believe that only Buyid rule can re-establish proper order. “Thus the world was in the hands of usurpers,” he writes about the pre-Buyid amirate. “These persons had become provincial kings; whoever got control of a region regarded himself as its possessor and withheld the revenue from it.... Nothing remained in the hands of the Sultan [i.e., the caliph] and Ibn Ra’iq except the Sawad and [central] ‘Iraq.”²⁶ In this sense, the amirate clears the way for Buyid rule. As one Western historian has argued, Miskawayh projects the nearly complete subordination of the caliph of his own time (under ‘Aḍud al-Dawla) onto the circumstances of pre-Buyid Iraq.²⁷ Miskawayh says that the caliph received only whatever the amirs chose to give him as an allowance, but this was true only by the Buyid era.²⁸ In projecting his present onto the past, Miskawayh sees a more decisive break than what actually occurred, and while this serves his narrative well, his analysis is only partly true. If the rise of the Buyids is the great event of the age for Miskawayh, then the subordination of the caliphate can be explained swiftly and with reference to broader historical trends; the details of the caliph’s role are beside the point.

III. The Stabilization of Buyid Rule in Miskawayh’s *Tarājīb al-umam*

Unfortunately, al-Ṣūlī died in 335/947, so his chronicle breaks off with the deposition of the caliph al-Muttaqī just prior to the entrance of the Buyid Mu‘izz al-

²⁵ Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol IV., p. 396.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 413. The *Sawād* was the rich agricultural land of Iraq, especially the area near Baghdad.

²⁷ Waines. “The Pre-Buyid Amirate: Two Views from the Past,” p. 347.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 347.

Dawla into Baghdad and his installation as *amīr al-umarā'* (334/945). Interestingly, in these last years before Buyid rule, both chroniclers do devote attention to the maneuvers of the caliph and even those of his vizier, despite the fact that Miskawayh has already declared the latter an empty shell. For the most part, Miskawayh informs the reader that he relies on the history of Thābit b. Sinān (now lost), who *did* have access to the caliphal court as the physician of al-Rāḍī.²⁹ After the death of the powerful amir Bajkam, Miskawayh reports that a certain Ahmad b. Maimūn attained the rank of vizier under al-Muttaqī and that the influential Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Kufī previously a secretary of Bajkam, served under him.³⁰ Miskawayh describes the deposition of al-Muttaqī by the amir Tuzun, and quotes him at length from Thābit's account. If anything, this account is more sympathetic to the caliph than al-Ṣūlī's narrative: al-Ṣūlī strongly criticizes al-Muttaqī's attempts to enlist outside support against Tuzun, which he sought even as far away as Khurāsān.³¹ However, al-Ṣūlī continues to report much more about the quotidian aspects of life in Baghdad (e.g., judgeships and the supply of food) and the caliph's involvement than Miskawayh, who is focused on analyzing high politics. Miskawayh can respect the dignity of the caliphate – especially when it was threatened – even if the caliphate is not his main focus.

Shortly after the installation of al-Mustakfī as the successor to al-Muttaqī, the Buyid leader Mu'izz al-Dawla arrived in Baghdad, causing the amir and caliph to flee. When al-Mustakfī returned and exchanged loyalty oaths (sing. *bay'a*) with Mu'izz al-

²⁹ Khan, M. S. *Studies in Miskawayh's Contemporary History*. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1980, p. 211.

³⁰ Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol V. p. 12.

³¹ Al-Ṣūlī, Muḥammad b. Yaḥya. *Akhbār al-Rādī billāh wa'l-Muttaqī billāh*, p. 118-120.

Dawla, one of the latter's first acts was to depose the caliph nonetheless and to install the well-named al-Muṭī' ("the obedient [to God]"). It is instructive to note what Miskawayh does analyze in this episode and what he leaves unsaid. Significantly, Miskawayh does not analyze the conflicts that existed *among* the Abbasids and within Baghdadi society. It is clear that he knows the situation, but he refrains from analyzing it. He relates that al-Mustakfī made a "strenuous search for Abu Faḍl b. Muqtadir" (the future al-Muṭī') and "ordered his house to be razed to the ground."³² Miskawayh does not go into detail, but the house was apparently destroyed because of the rivalry between the descendants of al-Muktafī (whose name al-Mustakfī clearly meant to echo³³) and the sons of al-Muqtadir, who include al-Rāḍī, al-Muttaqī, and al-Muṭī'. A grandson of al-Muktafī later rebelled against al-Muṭī', and here too the political rivalry is passed over without comment from Miskawayh.³⁴ Another historian, al-Mas'ūdī (d. 346/956), reports that al-Mustakfī ordered a shake-up of the judiciary directed against Shī'a influence,³⁵ whereas the Buyids were Shī'as and took some steps toward improving the status of Shī'ism. Miskawayh does not apply his formidable power of analysis to any of this, preferring to focus of the flow of events from a Buyid perspective.

Roy Mottahedeh's study of the structure of loyalties in Buyid society describes how the omnipresence of oath-taking and of treachery was not always a contradiction, taking the case of Mu'izz al-Dawla and al-Mustakfī as an example. The treachery of al-Mustakfī in obtaining power, copiously described by Miskawayh, undermined his claim

³² Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol V. p. 82.

³³ Busse. *Chalif und Grosskönig: Die Buyiden im Iraq*, p. 24.

³⁴ Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol V. p. 191.

³⁵ Busse. *Chalif und Grosskönig: Die Buyiden im Iraq*, p. 26.

to loyalty, and his plots against the Buyids released Mu‘izz al-Dawla from the oath of loyalty.³⁶ Miskawayh reports that al-Mustakfī had “apparently” solicited the loyalty of some Daylamite commanders at a banquet organized by ‘Alam, the allegedly treacherous *qahramāna* (stewardess) of the caliph’s *ḥarīm*.³⁷ The deposition itself appears in Miskawayh’s text to have been an ugly affair in which the caliph’s palace is pillaged, and numerous people in his retinue were arrested, including the *qahramāna* and other women, Hashemites (descendants of the Prophet’s family), and the caliph’s vizier. Miskawayh does not elaborate on why these arrests were made and how these people might have been threatening, but even in this ambiguous case, he seems to show some sympathy for the dignity of the caliphate.

After the accession of al-Muṭī‘, the caliph was progressively deprived of his political and economic power, and the forty years of early Buyid era through ‘Aḍud al-Dawla (d. 372/983) marked a low point in the power and influence of the caliph, if not of his formal authority. The caliph did not entirely lose his role even in high politics; Miskawayh does state that in 341/952 al-Muṭī‘’s chamberlain (*ḥājib*) arranged the terms of peace between the Buyids and the Samanid rulers of Khurāsān.³⁸ However, Miskawayh mentions the caliph al-Muṭī‘ in just a handful of contexts. At this time, though not earlier, the caliph was given an allowance of 2,000 dirhams a day, as Miskawayh relates,³⁹ rather than subsisting on his personal possessions. It is difficult to know how much continuity persisted in the bureaucracy and governance between the pre-

³⁶ Mottahedeh, Roy. *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 54.

³⁷ Miskawayh. *Tarājib al-umam*. Vol V. p. 89.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 156.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 91.

Buyid and Buyid periods, but Miskawayh writes how many of the estates (*ḍīyā'*) of the caliph, his household, and some ministers who had been active both before and after the institution of the amirate were parceled out to the Buyids and their clients as land grants (sing. *iqṭā'*, sometimes translated as “fief”). To Miskawayh, this policy resulted in the “ruin of the land (*bilād*)” and the “corruption and disorganization of the army.”⁴⁰

Miskawayh’s objections, of course, result from the inefficiency of the system, which put the rich agricultural lands of the Sawād (central Iraq) beyond the reach of the bureaucracy, and he writes that agriculture regressed with the military in charge. His concern does not seem to be to defend the caliph, although the fact that the *iqṭā'*s were taken from such a venerable person might have added to the critique. A year later, Miskawayh relates, the position of the caliph was secured with the establishment of the crown estates (*ḍīyā' al-khidma*) as a sort of *iqṭā'* for the caliph himself.⁴¹

On another question of the rights and position of the caliph, Miskawayh is more sympathetic. Miskawayh discusses the role of the judges (sing. *qāḍī*) far less than his counterpart al-Ṣūlī, for whom the judges are both close friends and primary sources, and even in describing the Buyids Miskawayh hardly analyzes the situation. The increasing corruption of public offices under Mu‘izz al-Dawla at least draws his attention, and he relates the story of how one judge was appointed as chief judge by means of a bribe and without the consent of the caliph. While for years the chief judgeship had been in the hands of a single Hashemite family⁴² and was then held by a series of officials appointed

⁴⁰ Ibid., 100.

⁴¹ Ibid., 111.

⁴² Dā'ūd Jawdah. *al-Quḍāt Āl Abī al-Shawārib: quḍāt al-dawlah al-'Abbāsīyah khilāl al-'aṣrayn al-Turkī wa'l-Būwayhī*. al-Riyāḍ : Dār Ajā, 2000.

by the caliphs during in the early years of the amirate, judges (and other powerful people) later came to gain their positions through bribery. A scion of this same Hashemite family arranged a contract to pay the Buyid court 200,000 dirhams yearly in exchange for the chief judgeship. Al-Muṭṭīʿ refused to see him or send robes of honor, but Muʿizz al-Dawla sent the robes from his own palace. Miskawayh is clearly not neutral on the matter and mentions that the man was “ugly of visage and deformed.”⁴³ Without much commentary, he reports less than two years later that a new judge was installed, this time without a yearly payment or even a salary.⁴⁴ Miskawayh is not interested in the (presumably religious) politics that lay behind the caliph’s refusal to appoint this judge, but he approves of the caliph’s power over at least one facet of administration.

One dramatic sequence in the *Tarājīb al-umam* demonstrates both the authority of the caliphate and the close association between the people of Baghdad and the caliph. While theorists and statesmen alike believed that the delegation of authority was a normal part of Islamic government, one aspect of Islamic rule was quite sensitive, particularly for Sunnīs: the waging of holy war. The caliph was still universally acknowledged to have full authority over *jihād*, and both the Buyids and their rivals the Hamdanids of Mosul felt the need to formally ask his permission to engage in holy war and to justify themselves in correspondence with the caliph on this question.⁴⁵ After the death of Muʿizz al-Dawla in 356/967, ʿIzz al-Dawla succeeded his father as amir in Baghdad, and the war with the Byzantine Empire intensified. Miskawayh criticizes the incompetence

⁴³ Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol V. p. 200.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 212.

⁴⁵ Busse. *Chalif und Grosskönig: Die Buyiden im Iraq*, p. 146.

of this amir and only uses his birth name Bakhtiyār, possibly because of Bakhtiyār's later conflicts with Miskawayh's patron 'Aḍud al-Dawla. Since the amir was unable control the populace of Baghdad, let alone the Byzantines, people from as far away as Diyarbakır joined with the leading men of Baghdad to criticize the call for *jihād*.⁴⁶ People tried to enter the *dār al-khilāfa* (the caliph's palace) and were furious that al-Muṭī' was "incompetent to discharge the duties which God had enjoined upon the Imams [i.e., the caliphs]."⁴⁷

Things got even worse when Bakhtiyār attempted to actually undertake the *jihād*. Reasoning that the war was ultimately the caliph's responsibility, the amir imposed a fine of 400,000 dirhams on the aging caliph. His response, as recorded by Miskawayh, is memorable: "The Sacred War would be incumbent upon me if the world were in my hands and if I had management of the money and the troops. As things are, all I have is a pittance insufficient for my wants.... All you can claim from me is the name uttered in the *khuṭba* from your pulpits as a means of pacifying your subjects; and if you want me to renounce that privilege too, I am prepared to do so and leave everything to you."⁴⁸ This alleged outburst is at once a admission of weakness and an assertion of authority, as al-Muṭī' was quite aware of what he could control. After the caliph paid the fine, Bakhtiyār's ability to "pacify" his subjects was, in fact, paralyzed. Baghdad erupted in pillaging and even an army squadron was defeated by the rioters.⁴⁹ The Shī'a district of Karkh was burned, and Miskawayh does not state what allowed for an end to the conflict.

⁴⁶ Miskawayh. *Tarājib al-umam*. Vol V. p. 326.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 326.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 330.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 331.

The reader should not draw too many conclusions about the state of the caliphate under the Buyids from this episode, though. Miskawayh is not making a point here about the caliphate itself, but rather about Bakhtiyār. Bakhtiyār's disrespect toward the caliphate is emphasized to show the illegitimacy of his amirate, while the ferocity of the riots is emphasized as proof that such policies fail. 'Aḍud al-Dawla's subsequent reign is meant to contrast to such incompetence and disrespect for the authority and person of the caliph.

IV. 'Aḍud al-Dawla and the Caliphate in Miskawayh and Hilāl al-Ṣābi'

After suffering a "paralytic stroke" (*'illa min al-fālij*),⁵⁰ al-Muṭī' was forced to step down by the Turkish soldiers of Baghdad, former slaves of Mu'izz al-Dawla. Al-Ṭā'i' was installed as his successor and became an ally of the Turks, a circumstance which provided an opportunity for the caliphate to disassociate itself from the Buyids. Unfortunately for al-Ṭā'i', this period also coincided with the rise of the most powerful of the Buyid amirs, 'Aḍud al-Dawla, originally based in the Persian province of Fārs. Soon after al-Ṭā'i's accession to the caliphate, war broke out among the Turks, Bakhtiyār, and 'Aḍud al-Dawla, and al-Ṭā'i' fled Baghdad with the Turks. To make a long story short, 'Aḍud al-Dawla took Baghdad in the caliph's absence and established himself there. Miskawayh notes this development and mentions that a letter had been sent to the caliph attempting to enlist his support by swearing loyalty to him and convincing him of the treachery of the Turks.⁵¹ The Turks were no match for 'Aḍud al-Dawla, and although they were not captured, al-Ṭā'i' was forced to return to Baghdad. Miskawayh

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 354.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 354.

accompanied the amir as a bureaucrat in this period, and he records from personal experience the skillful strategies by which ‘Aḍud al-Dawla built up his legitimacy in Iraq, whether through court ritual or good governance.

While there is no contemporary history of the reign of ‘Aḍud al-Dawla other than Miskawayh’s, an excellent source for the court ritual of the time is the *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* (*Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*) by Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ (d. 448/1056), composed in the reign of the caliph al-Qā’im (r. 422/1031 – 467/1075). Court ritual provides a key to the self-perception of the Buyid regime as well as the Buyids’ perception of the caliphate. It had a powerful influence on chroniclers like Miskawayh, and Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ was a chronicler as well, as we will see. Like Miskawayh, Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ was a bureaucrat in the service of the Buyids, and he worked in the chancery in Baghdad under the Buyid vizier Fakhr al-Mulk.⁵² One of the most important sources for his work is his own grandfather Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Ṣābi’, who served under ‘Aḍud al-Dawla. (Interestingly, one of his maternal relatives was Thābit b. Sinān, the historian mentioned previously whose work is no longer extant.) Largely due to his grandfather Abū Ishāq, the model and outstanding personality of the *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* is ‘Aḍud al-Dawla, even though the book outlines the etiquette of the *Abbasid* court. Mostly passing over the more powerful caliphs of the late Buyid period, like al-Ṣābi’s contemporary al-Qā’im, the Buyid bureaucrat understandably finds a model in the most powerful Buyid.

⁵² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Hilāl al- Ṣābi,” by D. Sourdel.

For Miskawayh and al-Ṣābi' both, 'Aḍud al-Dawla provides a model of respect for the caliphate, even at a time when the caliphs were stripped of their power. Al-Ṣābi' recounts the behavior of 'Aḍud al-Dawla in Baghdad during the absence of Ṭā'ī' during the Turkish rebellion. While he took the unprecedented step of touring the caliphal residence, he denied himself the opportunity to enter the private quarters (*ḥaram*) of the caliph.⁵³ This combination of respect and great power won the amir great admiration. When admonished by one of his retinue that kissing the ground should only be done for Allah, he responds sharply, "Let him know that he is Allah's viceregent on earth!"⁵⁴ Interestingly, when the ceremony actually occurred, 'Aḍud al-Dawla arranged it so that no one could see him kissing the ground, and his regalia was so heavy that he was unable to reach the ground at all.⁵⁵

Instead of violating the inheritance of the empire, 'Aḍud al-Dawla claimed its symbols by making himself a central part of the caliph's court. Both Miskawayh and al-Ṣābi' recount the privileges granted to him that no amir had previously had. In the midst of his political narrative, Miskawayh observes that the caliph allowed the amir's name to be pronounced in the *khuṭba* in Baghdad immediately after his own – a right that had been granted elsewhere, but never in Baghdad – and that the amir gained the right to beat the drums during prayer time, which had also previously been a caliphal privilege.⁵⁶ By no means was the amir displacing the caliph, however. It would be more accurate to say that he was integrating himself into the court ritual as a privileged participant. 'Aḍud al-

⁵³ Hilāl al-Sābi'. *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*. Trans. Elie A. Salem. Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1977, p. 69-70.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 66.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁶ Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol V. p. 435.

Dawla took ever more superlative titles, such as *Tāj al-Milla* (crown of the Islamic community), but he remained within the tradition of the amirate. Al-Ṣābi' also describes how he altered court ceremony by being the first to meet the caliph on horseback in the *dār al-khilāfa*.⁵⁷ These sorts of changes raised the status of the amir within the framework of the traditions of the Abbasid empire, and Miskawayh and al-Ṣābi' celebrate this as a high point for the amir *and* the caliph.

Miskawayh and al-Ṣābi' both emphasize 'Aḍud al-Dawla's generosity to the person of the caliph as an important part of his political strategy and philosophy. Knowing that al-Ṭā'i' had only grudgingly joined him in Baghdad, the amir attempted to win him over with generosity, and Miskawayh describes his actions in this regard approvingly, using them as evidence of his legitimacy. He ordered that the caliph's palace be repaired and furnished with "various services" and thereby incurred a "vast expense." They entered Baghdad together on a boat on the Tigris, with the caliph's throne raised above the amir's. The crown estates were returned to al-Ṭā'i' after the depredations of recent years.⁵⁸ The caliph sent a formal letter to the provinces announcing "the re-establishment of the powers of the sultan, the obliteration of the traces of the civil war (*fitna*), and the general concord."⁵⁹ The word "sultan" here as elsewhere could mean either "legitimate government," which was the original meaning of the word,⁶⁰ or the person of the caliph himself, which is al-Ṣābi's usage throughout his *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa*.

⁵⁷ Hilāl al-Ṣābi'. *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*. p. 65.

⁵⁸ Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol V. p. 373.

⁵⁹ Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol II. p. 344.

⁶⁰ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Sulṭān," by J. H. Kramers.

One the other hand, adherence to the authority of the caliph and reliance on court ritual could also be constraining. Despite the Buyids' overwhelming military power, there were times when the caliph could not be cajoled into behaving as the Buyids wanted, and these events are recorded in the chronicles as well. Al-Ṭā'ī openly supported the Turkish enemies of the weak amir Bakhtiyār, as we have seen, but he also defied 'Aḍud al-Dawla on at least one crucial point. 'Aḍud al-Dawla sought to establish marriage links between himself and the caliph by marrying the caliph's daughter and having the caliph marry his own daughter. Miskawayh directly states the controversial aim of this plan: "His hope was that she might bear him a son, who should be appointed successor so that the Caliphate might come to the Buwaihid house and the monarchy and caliphate be united in the Dailamite house."⁶¹ 'Aḍud al-Dawla – as an amir – knew that he could never surpass the caliph in rank, but he could try to unite the amirate and caliphate in one family. Typically, Miskawayh says nothing about the feelings of the caliph toward this proposed marriage alliance, which were sure to have been hostile, and his chronicle ends before the story is over. However, the continuation of Miskawayh's chronicle by Abū Shujā' shows that the undertaking failed. Abū Shujā' relates that the caliph "disliked" his new wife after the marriage and "deprived her of her conjugal rights." 'Aḍud al-Dawla could do no more than to try to get the prominent *qāḍī* al-Tanūkhī to convince the caliph otherwise. When the *qāḍī* made excuses and refused to convince the caliph, al-Tanūkhī lost favor with the amir, but little else happened.⁶² The

⁶¹ Miskawayh. *Tarājib al-umam*. Vol V. p. 454.

⁶² Abū Shujā' al-Rūdhrawārī. *Dhayl tarājib al-umam*. Eds. and Trans. Amedroz, H. F. and Margoliouth, D. S. as *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate*. Vol VI. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1921, p. 14.

plan failed as a result of his policy of respect and decorum toward the caliph. There were limits to his control of the caliphate, not least because the Buyids themselves had helped to amplify its prestige.

The Abbasids were thus held in awe by the Buyid amirs and their entourages. Traditional historiography has often viewed the ascendance of the Shī‘a Buyids as an unmitigated humiliation for the Sunnī caliphate and as an irreversible break in the history of the caliphate. The Abbasids have often been characterized as mere puppets or hostages in the hands of their Buyid manipulators. Clearly, on the evidence of Hilāl al-Ṣābi’s *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa*, the Abbasids were not viewed with hostility by the Buyids and their administrators and were not treated as hostages. Correct behavior in the presence of the caliph, on the part of both amirs and bureaucrats, was a matter of the highest importance. The smallest details mattered, and so al-Ṣābi directs anyone in the presence of the caliph to use a toothbrush beforehand, guard his breath while in discussion with the caliph, and wear a proper “undergarment made of cotton to prevent perspiration,” in both summer and winter.⁶³ He advises that one should speak in a low voice and not speak on any topics that the caliph has not asked about. He illustrates this advice by recounting a story in which the caliph al-Muṭī‘ rebuked al-Muhallabī, the storied vizier of Mu‘izz al-Dawla, for speaking in a loud voice. Al-Muṭī‘ called the vizier a dog, and then ordered him out.⁶⁴ Even al-Muṭī‘, a weak caliph, cannot be characterized as a hostage.

⁶³Hilāl al-Ṣābi’. *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court.* p. 31.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 31.

Hilāl al-Ṣābi' does not envision a sharp break in the history of the caliphate as a result of the coming of the Buyids, either. He writes about the caliphate in ways that traverse conventionally accepted chronological divisions, and so he evinces little consciousness of a major historical break that diminished the Abbasids' glory. Though he writes little about the first period of Abbasid rule under al-Manṣūr or Hārūn al-Rashīd, his examples of model behavior within the Abbasid court freely mix tales of earlier caliphs like al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833) with early 10th-century caliphs and Buyid-era caliphs. When writing about behavior of chamberlains (sing. *ḥājib*), for example, he follows one anecdote about drinking in the presence of al-Mu'taṣim (d. 227/842) with two anecdotes from the Buyid era about the acceptable colors of dress in the presence of al-Muṭī'.⁶⁵ In fact, al-Ṣābi' does not even distinguish sharply between Buyids and Abbasids, particularly in the case of 'Aḍud al-Dawla. He criticizes the rudeness of impudent poetry in the presence of caliphs, but includes the example of al-Mutanabbī reading to 'Aḍud al-Dawla as well.⁶⁶ Al-Ṣābi' was, after all, a bureaucrat in contact with both courts, and the intended audience of his *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* was probably both Buyid and Abbasid bureaucrats. He freely moves between court etiquette on behalf of the caliph and etiquette for those approaching the caliph, and so he describes first how to write a letter addressing the caliph and then how to write on behalf of the caliph.⁶⁷ The book was thus useful for secretaries (*kātib*s) in the caliph's "Noble Service" (*al-khidma al-sharīfa*) or the service of the amirate.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 60-61.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 81-98.

The Buyids were Shī‘a, however, and the nature of their Shī‘ism has long been debated by historians. How could Shī‘as acknowledge the Abbasid caliphate for any reason but cynical power politics? Allegiance to a caliph was always bound up with religious adherence in this period, so the question of the Buyids’ religious beliefs is an important one for the caliphate. The French historian Claude Cahen writes that the Buyids set up “a sort of ‘Abbāsīd-Shī‘ī condominium, which freed the Shī‘īs from the obligation of a certain *taqiyya*,” but did not institute Shī‘a hegemony.⁶⁸ Hilāl al-Şābi and Miskawayh both show how the caliph was held in awe by the Buyids, and Claude Cahen has summed up Buyid behavior vis-à-vis the Abbasid caliphate by noting, “Deriving their official authority from the Caliphate, the Buwayhids behaved as though they believed genuinely in the legitimacy of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate.” He speculates further that – in lieu of the legitimate but hidden imam of Twelver Shī‘ism – “if the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph was not, strictly speaking, legitimate, at least, if he tolerated Shī‘ism, there was nothing discreditable in putting up with him,” and indeed, one might add, honoring him.⁶⁹ While it is difficult to know the Buyid amirs’ “true” beliefs, this is in many cases a moot point, because the key question is how they acted and affected their society. We will see the ways in which the Buyids did indeed promote Shī‘ism, but the imprisonment and humiliation of the Abbasid caliphs was not among them.

None of this has much to do with the actual power or influence of the caliph. It should be clear by now that neither Miskawayh nor al-Şābi’ intended to write much about the concrete role of the caliphate beyond its symbolism, even though al-Şābi’ especially

⁶⁸ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Buwayhids or Buyid,” by Claude Cahen.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

lived in a period that saw a far more powerful caliphs than those of previous decades. The caliphs did have an extra-symbolic role, which revived during the late Buyid era and will be outlined below; the *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa* contains some references to the revived caliphate, such as the administrative expansion under the caliph al-Qādir,⁷⁰ and the work itself may be a product of the caliphal court's increased importance. For Buyid bureaucrats, however, the caliph's authority and prestige were far more important than any concrete role in power politics, because the caliphate stabilized the empire and connected the amirs with a powerful tradition of ritual. Less can be learned from these writings about the caliphate in practice than one might hope, and a heavy reliance on writers such as Miskawayh produces a Buyid-centered view of the period. This is understandable, but it leaves the door open to reinterpretations of history from another viewpoint.

V. The Path to Revival under al-Ṭā'i' and al-Qādir in Late Buyid Chronicles

By the death of 'Aḍud al-Dawla (372/983), the caliphate had been stripped of almost all of its power, even as its authority and prestige perhaps increased. Miskawayh's chronicle ends during the reign of 'Aḍud al-Dawla, and the most famous chronicle of the following era was written by Hilāl al-Ṣābi' (*Ta'rīkh Hilāl al-Ṣābi'*). While small parts of this chronicle have survived up to the present day, the *Dhayl tarājib al-umam* by Abū Shujā' al-Rūdhrawarī (d. 488/1095) is an abridgement of some of the

⁷⁰ Hilāl al-Ṣābi'. *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*. p. 101-102.

lost portions al-Ṣābi's chronicle.⁷¹ Abū Shujā' was a vizier to the caliph al-Qā'im, but his information is taken from al-Ṣābi', so both of these works are still primarily focused on the history of the Buyids. Increasing conflict among the Buyids allowed for more room to maneuver on the part of the caliphs in these chronicles, as usual, and by the time of al-Qādir and his son al-Qā'im, the caliphate had taken on a host of political, religious, and administrative responsibilities. This of course runs counter to the idea that the caliphate remained purely symbolic after the start of the Buyid amirate.

No one Buyid amir ever again controlled as much of the empire as 'Aḍud al-Dawla, and the caliph had an increasing role in diplomacy within the Buyid family and with the rising Ghaznavids in Khurāsān, who were staunch Sunnīs. While al-Ṭā'i' never gained the power that his immediate successors did, he still conspired against the amir Ṣamṣām al-Dawla and eventually welcomed the latter's rival Sharaf al-Dawla into Baghdad.⁷² Al-Ṭā'i' pursued relations with the Ghaznavids as well, but as usual the contemporary Buyid chronicles are silent about the administration and religious politics of Baghdad, although al-Ṭā'i' is said to have had more bureaucrats working under him than even al-Rāḍī.⁷³ Al-Ṭā'i' was deposed in 381/991 by another Buyid amir, Bahā' al-Dawla. The amir may have considered al-Ṭā'i' to be a source of instability in Baghdad,⁷⁴ but Abū Shujā' only says that Bahā' al-Dawla sought to seize his possessions.⁷⁵ This act of disrespect toward the caliph draws a strong condemnation.

⁷¹ Hilāl al-Ṣābi'. *Ta'rikh Hilāl al-Ṣābi'*. Amedroz, H. F. and Margoliouth, D. S., eds. and trans. *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate*. Vol VI. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1921, p. 359.

⁷² Abū Shujā' al-Rūdhrawārī. *Dhayl tarājib al-umam*. Vol VI. p. 137.

⁷³ Busse. *Chalif und Grosskönig: Die Buyiden im Iraq*, p. 204.

⁷⁴ Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*, p. 101.

⁷⁵ Abū Shujā' al-Rūdhrawārī. *Dhayl tarājib al-umam*. Vol VI. p. 213.

Al-Qādir succeeded al-Ṭā'ī, and Abū Shujā' reveres him. He recounts that al-Ṭā'ī had tried to arrest the future caliph on the (apparently correct) suspicion that the latter desired the caliphate. Al-Qādir was saved by a prophetic dream and escaped.⁷⁶ In the description of the caliph's accession, Abū Shujā' celebrates him as one of the great Abbasids. He cites the poetry written by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (the Alid *naqīb* of Baghdad) for the occasion which gushed that al-Qādir "renewed the glories of the caliphate and illuminated its banners, clearing away the troubles of civil war (*fitna*)."⁷⁷ In fact, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī was an ally of al-Ṭā'ī and an influential personage in Baghdad who repeatedly clashed with al-Qādir. Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī had even explicitly pressed his own claims to the caliphate in certain verses of his acclaimed poetry.⁷⁸ Perhaps by quoting his poetry Abū Shujā' attempts to underline still further the regard in which the caliph was held. The chronicler went on to put the caliph in a class with three of the greatest Abbasid caliphs, al-Saffāh, the first Abbasid caliph, al-Manṣūr, the founder of Baghdad, and al-Mu'taḍid, a 9th-century caliph who re-established Abbasid power in Persia.

It is impossible to know whether Hilāl al-Ṣābi's original chronicle was just as laudatory, but al-Qādir was certainly revered by many Sunnīs. He reigned for forty years, longer than any preceding caliph, and was known particularly for his defense of orthodoxy. He expounded the Qādirī creed (*al-I'tiqād al-Qādirī*) and exerted a great influence over life in Baghdad. Abū Shujā's account and the surviving portions of Hilāl al-Ṣābi's chronicle end in the middle of his caliphate, just as his power was increasing,

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 153-154.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 218-219.

⁷⁸ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "al-Sharīf al-Raḍī," by Moktar Djebli.

and they do not discuss religious politics, but they note the caliph's appointments with increasing frequency, and there are a number of longer anecdotes involving al-Qādir. He had increasingly close relations with the Ghaznavids, often conducted through meetings with Khurāsānī pilgrims. The caliph was particularly active in opposing Abbasid pretenders and Alid claimants to the imamate even as far away as Jīlān and Khurāsān in northeastern Iran. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Uthmān al-Wāthiqī, a descendant of the caliph al-Wāthiq and pretender to the caliphate, was pursued between Baghdad and Khurāsān, and the caliph had to enlist the support of *qāḍīs* and rulers from various regions until the pretender was imprisoned by Maḥmūd of Ghazna.⁷⁹ This contrasts with the relatively tepid responses of al-Muṭī' to pretenders. To bolster his position still further, al-Qādir officially appointed his son al-Ghālīb as his heir in a ceremony attended by Khurāsānī pilgrims (390/1001).⁸⁰ "The notables (*ashrāf*), *qāḍīs*, witnesses (*shuhūd*), and jurists" were in attendance,⁸¹ an example of the ritual of the caliph's court that receives far more attention in chronicles more closely connected to the caliphate. Hilāl al-Ṣābi's chronicle does not celebrate this act in the way Abū Shujā' had celebrated the caliph's accession, but the act is still noteworthy. It took many years before the caliphate regained a regional military role, and none of the Buyid chronicles provide much information about the day to day workings of the caliphate, but its power, as portrayed in the chronicles of Abū Shujā' and Hilāl al-Ṣābi', had clearly increased by the time of al-Qādir.

⁷⁹ Hilāl al-Ṣābi'. *Ta'rikh Hilāl al-Ṣābi'*. Vol VI. p. 420-424.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 419-420.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 420.

VI. Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓam fī'l-ta'rīkh*, the Caliphate and the Buyids

A decidedly different point of view emerges from the chronicle of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), *al-Muntaẓam fī'l-ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam* (*The Ordered Collection: The History of Kings and Nations*). Though composed nearly two centuries after the accession of al-Qādir, the chronicle is nonetheless indispensable for our understanding of the caliphate in the Buyid and Saljūq eras because it provides a historical narrative centered on the Abbasids and the city of Baghdad and appears to draw on sources internal to the caliphate that have been preserved nowhere else. *Al-Muntaẓam fī'l-ta'rīkh* has not achieved the renown of the histories of Miskwayh and the later universal history of Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), in part due to Ibn al-Jawzī's focus on Baghdad over other regions. Modern European historians may also have taken exception to his traditionalist interpretation of Islam, but his strict adherence to the Ḥanbalī legal school (*madhhab*) is part of what makes him so reflective of the late medieval atmosphere of Baghdad and Iraq. For these reasons, Ibn al-Jawzī provides an instructive contrast to other chronicles, which were often more reflective of various amirs' or sultans' administrations.

Ibn al-Jawzī was the son of a coppersmith in Baghdad and rose to fame and power on the strength of his skill as a preacher (*wā'iz*). He eventually gained the privilege of regular preaching in the caliph's palace. The traveler Ibn al-Jubayr reports that Ibn al-Jawzī was allowed to enter the caliph al-Nāṣir's "*ḥaram*" (not *ḥarīm*) in 580/1184, where the caliph, his wives and others could observe from behind oriel windows (*manāẓir*), and that Ibn al-Jawzī used elaborate poetry and, surprisingly, even amorous metaphors to

make his theological points.⁸² As a staunch advocate of the Ḥanbalī legal school, he was close to other leading Ḥanbalīs, including caliphs and viziers. He was particularly close to the leading 12th-century caliphal vizier Ibn Hubayra. Ibn Hubayra invited Ibn al-Jawzī to preach in his own home weekly as a public presentation, a gesture that some scholars have interpreted as a move to strengthen the Ḥanbalīs politically.⁸³ Ibn al-Jawzī's son even married the Ibn Hubayra's daughter, while one of the vizier's freed slaves married the preacher's son.⁸⁴ Two caliphs in particular supported Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muqtafī (d. 555/1160) and al-Mustaḍī' (d. 566/1180), and with their sponsorship, his sermons became mass spectacles able to sway public opinion. When al-Mustaḍī' became sick and people began to arm themselves out of fear, the caliph called on Ibn al-Jawzī to calm the situation with a sermon, which he accomplished successfully.⁸⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī fell out of favor thereafter when the caliph al-Nāṣir (d. 622/1225) distanced himself from the Ḥanbalīs, and partly as a result of his intellectual rivalries, he was exiled to the Iraqi city of Wāsiṭ. He returned after a few years in exile – thanks largely to the efforts of the caliph's pro-Ḥanbalī mother Zumurrud – and died in 597/1201. He was buried near the tomb of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.⁸⁶

Of course, this political atmosphere is far removed from that of the Buyid amirate and the caliphate around the time of al-Qādir's accession. Nonetheless, a single-minded focus on contemporary Buyid chronicles results in an over-emphasis on the symbolic and

⁸² Leder, Stefan. *Ibn al-Gauzi und seine Kompilation wider die Leidenschaft*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1984. p. 1-5.

⁸³ Ibid.. p. 32.

⁸⁴ Ibid.. p. 33.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 40-42.

legitimizing role of the caliphate. Buyid chroniclers are interested in the *authority* of the caliphate in stabilizing their dynasty, not his *power* and *influence* in areas unconnected to Buyid power. Hilāl al-Ṣābi' and Miskawayh are simply not concerned with matters like factional politics, religious philosophy or the position of Shī'ism in Baghdad. In contrast, these matters, closely connected to the caliphate, are prime concerns of Ibn al-Jawzī, who makes the actions of the caliphs central throughout his narrative. In any case, once the extant portion of Hilāl al-Ṣābi's chronicle breaks off in 393/1003, Ibn al-Jawzī's chronicle *al-Muntaẓam fī'l-ta'rīkh* is one essential source to fill the gaps in our knowledge.

To be sure, Ibn al-Jawzī's sources for the early Buyid period are fairly sparse. *Al-Muntaẓam fī'l-ta'rīkh* is arranged by year, as is conventional in Islamic chronicles, and many of its entries for years during the reigns of al-Muṭī' and al-Ṭā'i' are as short as four lines. Like many later chroniclers, Ibn al-Jawzī includes "necrologies" of *'ulamā'* and political figures who died in that year, and the necrologies are usually longer than the narrative in the early Buyid era. Apparently lacking sources internal to the caliphate, he instead preserves information from Buyid sources such as Hilāl al-Ṣābi'. In one instance that echoes the *Rusūm dār al-khilāfa*, Ibn al-Jawzī approvingly cites Hilāl al-Ṣābi's tale of a disagreement between Mu'izz al-Dawla and al-Muṭī'. In this story, Mu'izz al-Dawla asked to tour the palace of the caliph (*dār al-khilāfa*) with at least ten slaves (*ghilmān*), the caliph refused his request and limited the number of slaves to two or three. When Mu'izz al-Dawla complained that he had previously made a triumphal entry with far more companions than that, the caliph responded, "This was a mistake, for... we fell in

their eyes from this, and our *hayba* weakened.”⁸⁷ As Roy Mottahedeh has written, *hayba* refers to “the salutary ‘awe’ or ‘dread’ which surrounds kingly authority by virtue of its threat of coercion,”⁸⁸ and this incident shows that the maintenance of the caliphate’s *hayba* remained one of its primary strengths.

In general, Ibn al-Jawzī’s coverage of the Buyid era prior to al-Qādir differs mainly in its details and underlying attitudes. He is more cognizant of the reality of Baghdadi life and politics than Buyid chroniclers and frequently mentions natural disasters and economic difficulties, as he does elsewhere in the chronicle. He outlines the appointment of notables in Baghdad more thoroughly than elsewhere; his chronicle parallels Miskawayh’s discussion of the conflict between the caliphs and the amirs over the appointment of the chief *qāḍī*, but also narrates the appointments of such officials as the leaders of the *ḥajj* and the two *naqībs*, leaders of the “notables” related to either ‘Alī on the one hand or the Abbasids on the other, though he is often vague about where the appointments came from.

Ibn al-Jawzī’s attitudes are revealed most obviously by his handling of local politics, especially when Baghdadi factional politics intersect with Buyid dynastic politics. The chaos that followed the accession of al-Ṭā’i‘ in 363/974 draws a good deal of his attention, involving as it does the caliph, *fitnas* in Baghdad, and Buyid politics. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, Sabuktikīn, the Buyid *ḥājib* of Turkish slave origin, had backed al-Ṭā’i‘’s claim to the caliphate originally, so when the Buyid amir Bakhtiyār “put

⁸⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī, Abū’l-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. *al-Munṭazam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*. Vol. 14. Beirut : Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 1992, p. 157.

⁸⁸ Mottahedeh. *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*. p. 184.

his hand into Sabuktikīn's *iqṭā'*s," as he puts it, the latter fled Baghdad with aid from the new caliph along with the other Turks, as Miskawayh notes as well. While Ibn al-Jawzī does not dwell on the caliph's participation in the failed rebellion, he does consider its consequences for Baghdad's factional politics. For one thing, he states bluntly that Bakhtiyār was supported by the Shī'a of Baghdad while the Turks were supported by the Sunnīs and that the "commoners" (*al-ʿamma*) overall supported the Turks.⁸⁹ The next year he describes how the *ʿayyārūn* – local militias common throughout the medieval Islamic world, but loathed by Ibn al-Jawzī – dominated the city in the chaos that followed the rebellion and tells the story of one of the *ʿayyārūn* who repented of his ways when reproached by a girl about to be sold into slavery.⁹⁰ This kind of Baghdad-centered history and local storytelling is quite removed from the dynastic politics of the Buyid chroniclers, but that does not make Ibn al-Jawzī's chronicle any less relevant either. Baghdad was after all the Islamic world's most important city at the time, and its population was probably around one and a half million in the 10th century.⁹¹ Ibn al-Jawzī was bound to the city of Baghdad – like its leading institution, the Abbasid caliphate – and thus his portrait of the times is different from that of the Buyid chroniclers.

VII. The Reigns of al-Qādir and al-Qā'im in Ibn al-Jawzī

The caliphate regained a great deal of autonomy when Bahā' al-Dawla (d. 403/1012), the leading Buyid amir, withdrew from Baghdad to Shiraz in 389/999.

⁸⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta'rikh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 14. 363 AH

⁹⁰ Ibid. 364 AH.

⁹¹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Baghdād," by A. A. Duri.

According to John Donohue, the move away from Baghdad “hastened the Buwayhid decline” because the unruliness of Baghdad required a constant presence there.⁹² This allowed for a revival of the caliph’s power, not just his authority, rather early in al-Qādir’s reign (r. 381/991 – 422/1031). Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Muntaẓam fī ‘l-ta’rīkh* is the best source for tracing this revival, which occurred mainly through the assertion of the caliph’s religious prestige, the countering of heresy, intervention in Baghdad’s sectarian politics, and control over the institution of the caliphate itself.

The caliph’s control over judgeships and mosques was always one of his core powers, even when the amirate was at its strongest. As a preacher himself, Ibn al-Jawzī was aware of the power of the *khaṭīb* who pronounced the *khuṭba*, the Friday sermon which named the ruler, and so he records the caliph’s appointments of *khaṭībs* to various Friday mosques.⁹³ The caliphs also had the power to add a new Friday mosque (*jāmi‘*) to the small number of existing Friday mosques. For example, al-Ṭā’i‘ gave his assent to build a Friday mosque in the neighborhood known as Qaṭī‘ at Umm Ja‘far. However, the initiative for this came from the Alid *naqīb* al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, not the caliph himself.⁹⁴ Al-Qādir, on the other hand, took the initiative to build a new Friday mosque in the district of Ḥarbīyya in 383/993. Ibn al-Jawzī describes how the caliph asked for *fatwās* (legal opinions) from the jurists about this project and gathered the necessary materials. The proposal had been brought to al-Muṭī‘, Ibn al-Jawzī relates, but he had refused to go

⁹² Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*, p. 109.

⁹³ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ‘l-umam*. Vol. 14. 386 AH

⁹⁴ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. *L’Introduction Topographique à l’Histoire de Baghdad*. Trans. Georges Salmon. Paris: Librairie Émile Bouillon, 1904. p. 150.

through with it.⁹⁵ Al-Qādir also shows increased involvement in the appointment of *qāḍīs*. In 390/1000, he appointed a series of *qāḍīs* to various neighborhoods of Baghdad, but also the Iraqi city of Wāsiṭ and the northern Persian province of Jīlān, a fairly distant region. Ibn al-Jawzī records a text of a lengthy letter of appointment from the caliph for the benefit of the latter judge.⁹⁶ More ominously, in 934/1004, Bahā' al-Dawla tried to appoint the Alid *naqīb*, a Shī'a and the father of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, as the chief *qāḍī* (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*). This would probably have meant the application of Twelver Shī'a law throughout the empire, but al-Qādir refused to invest him with the office in the caliphal palace, as was customary for *qāḍīs*, and the appointment failed.⁹⁷ By the end of his reign in 420/1029, the situation had changed, and the caliph chose a *qāḍī al-quḍāt* independently.⁹⁸ Al-Qādir was therefore able to use the existing powers of the caliphate over judgeships and mosques to assert himself and then to expand upon them.

Just as the Buyid chronicles reflect the concerns of the chroniclers as much as the reality they chronicle, so too does Ibn al-Jawzī display certain interests. Far more than the caliph's role in day to day administration, Ibn al-Jawzī is concerned to chronicle the ideological struggle between the Sunnī caliphate and the Isma'īlī Fatimid caliphate, based in Cairo. He is far more likely to record the caliph's involvement in local conflicts or *fitnas* if there is a Fatimid connection. This conflict, however, was not merely local, because the caliph was engaged in an ideological struggle with his Fatimid rival, al-Ḥākim (d. 411/1021), throughout the Islamic world. Whatever their Shī'a sympathies

⁹⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta'rikh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 14. 383 AH

⁹⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta'rikh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 17-19.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 201.

might have been, the Buyids were in competition with the Fatimids on the side of the Abbasid caliphs, and they were forced to deal with the problem as well. When a local leader in Mosul named Qirwāsh put al-Ḥākim's name in the *khutba* and "organized the Mosulis," the Buyids were forced to negotiate even as al-Ḥākim sent Qirwāsh more money as an incentive to back the Fatimids.⁹⁹ In response to such incidents, al-Qādir attempted to strengthen his propaganda efforts. In 402/1011, a document was written in the caliph's *dīwān* (chancery) condemning al-Ḥākim and the Fatimids in the strongest terms, calling them Kharijites and exonerating 'Alī from their "falsehood" (*bāṭil*). It was signed by the *qādīs*, *ashrāf* (descendants of the Prophet), jurists, and others and read throughout Baghdad.¹⁰⁰

Ibn al-Jawzī closely follows al-Qādir's correspondence with Maḥmūd of Ghazna (d. 421/1030), the Ghaznavid sultan of Khurāsān. Although these letters sometimes just recount Maḥmūd's conquests,¹⁰¹ the correspondence is often connected with their joint struggle against the Fatimids. Maḥmūd was active in stamping out *bāṭiniyya* (the heresy of advocating an esoteric meaning of the Qur'ān, associated with the Fatimids) in his territory and wrote the caliph about his efforts.¹⁰² In 416/1025, Maḥmūd sent the caliph robes of honor that he had received from "the ruler of Egypt," as Ibn al-Jawzī refers to al-Ḥākim. In response, al-Qādir gathered the notables of Baghdad, as well as the members of his court, and burned the robes in a bonfire in front of the Nubian Gate, one of the principal gates of the caliph's *ḥarīm*, as the commoners looked on and cursed the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 75-77.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 82-83.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 133-134.

¹⁰² Ibid., 194-195.

Fatimids.¹⁰³ Such spectacles drew Ibn al-Jawzī's attention because they combined a number of symbols of Sunnī Islam: the obedient sultan, the cursing of the "innovators," and the assertive caliph. In this sense, he provides a model of religio-political practice for his readers, something so many Islamic chroniclers sought to do.

Al-Qādir was known for his active participation in ideological struggles against all forms of heterodoxy, not just the Fatimid movement. In 420/1029, the *khaṭīb* of a mosque was arrested by al-Qādir for preaching an "abominable sect of Shī'ism." Al-Qādir then contacted the Alid *naqībs* and reproached the Buyids themselves for certain Turkish soldiers' support for the *khaṭīb*, and Ibn al-Jawzī reproduces the caliph's long letter.¹⁰⁴ Later that year, a *fitna* prompted the caliph to give a text to the *khaṭībs* of Baghdad to ensure the correctness of their *khuṭbas*. On a more ideological level, Al-Qādir frequently produced long theological statements, such as the Qādirī creed, which were then read to the notables of Baghdad. In al-Qādir's short biography in the *Tā'rikh Baghdād*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) writes that his book discussing "the virtues of [the caliph] 'Umār" and the "unbelievers of the Mu'tazila" was read aloud every Friday in Jāmi' al-Mahdī, a Friday mosques.¹⁰⁵ The Qādirī creed itself is not referred to by name in Ibn al-Jawzī's chronicle until the following reign, but al-Qādir is described as repeatedly described as holding public "sittings" in which he condemned all forms of "innovation," especially Mu'tazilism, which believed in free will and the createdness of the Qur'ān. In 420/1029, the same year that he asserted his control over

¹⁰³ Ibid., 171.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 198-200.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Alī. *Tā'rikh Baghdād aw madīnat al-salām*. Vol 4. Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1966, p. 37.

the *khaṭībs*, he gathered the notables of Baghdad three times to criticize the Muʿtazilites and those who invent false stories about the Prophet or his companions.¹⁰⁶ Al-Qādir was extraordinarily active in propagating Sunnī religious ideology.

As in the chronicle of Hilāl al-Šābiʿ, Ibn al-Jawzī briefly records the crowning of al-Qādir's son, given the *laqab* (regal title) of al-Ghālib, as his *walī al-ʿahd* (crown prince). The purpose of this, as noted above, was to enable al-Qādir to demonstrate his control over the institution of the caliphate, since recent caliphs had all been deposed by amirs. However, this son later died in al-Qādir's lifetime, and one of the caliph's last political acts was the appointment of another son, the future al-Qā'im, as a second *walī al-ʿahd* in 421/1030. This is an event whose formalities attract Ibn al-Jawzī's attention. The approaching death of the caliph was causing instability, a sure sign of his power in Baghdad, so the commoners (*al-ʿamma*) and the notables (*al-khāṣṣa*) were invited to the ceremony. Caliphs normally spoke from behind a curtain, and though al-Qādir was obviously weak, one of the Turkish soldiers of Baghdad asked for and received the privilege of seeing him and the ceremony of al-Qā'im's appointment (*wilāya*). The scene culminated in a tearful embrace of the caliph by one of his senior officials, Ibn al-Ḥājib Nuʿmān.¹⁰⁷ Thus the chronicler demonstrates both the love and awe in which the caliph was held.

More crises ensued just before al-Qādir died in 422/1031, and the Turkish soldiers of Baghdad began to demand the oath (*bayʿa*) payment that was customary at the beginning of a reign. They demanded the money not from the Buyid amir, as was

¹⁰⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa ʿl-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 197.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 205-206.

previously customary, but from the caliph himself, and they showed their openness to leadership on the part of the caliph by complaining about the amir Jalāl al-Dawla and his “rejection of their measures.”¹⁰⁸ They demanded the removal of his name from the *khutba*, at which point, an effort to avoid paying, the caliph referred to *his* oaths to the Buyids. The Turks refused to attend the ceremony when al-Qā’im took his oath as caliph, and they caused unrest until the caliph offered them three million dinars, in addition to various properties such as a *khān* (caravanserai) in northwest Baghdad.¹⁰⁹ In contrast, Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ cites the caliphal official Ibn al-Ḥājib Nu‘mān in estimating al-Muṭī’s and al-Ṭā’i’s yearly stipends at 300,000 dinars.¹¹⁰ The caliph’s financial resources must have expanded greatly, a development that the chronicler simply treats as a matter of course.

Al-Qā’im followed his father’s policies and expanded upon them in a number of ways. In 427/1035, he took strong steps against the usage of “Maghribī” (i.e., Fatimid) coinage. In an example of how the caliph’s administrative control could function, he forbade the *shuhūd* (official witnesses) from notarizing contracts – loans, purchases, or permits – made in Fatimid coinage.¹¹¹ Furthermore, he strongly reiterated his father’s religious ideology. He staged readings of religious lectures as al-Qādir had, and Ibn al-Jawzī provides the text of what he terms the “Qādirī creed” as it was read to the notables in 433/1041-1042. The creed is an important statement of 11th-century Abbasid ideology, and it is uncompromising in its Sunnism. First, the text insists on the literal meaning of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 210.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 218.

¹¹⁰ Hilāl al-Ṣābi’. *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court.* p. 28.

¹¹¹ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam.* Vol. 15. p. 253.

the Qur'ān and takes the literalist position in the famous debate over whether God's throne, as mentioned in the Qur'ān, is a metaphorical or literal throne. God is all-powerful and all-knowing, the text proclaims, and no one has "reached His essence employing *kalām*," which literally means "speech," but refers to rational theology. Condemning the Mu'tazilite doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān and the rational theologians *tout court*, the creed asserts that the truth cannot be reached by a "created device nor by a device of creators," and that everything described by God or his messenger is "true and not metaphorical."¹¹² Those who claim that the Qur'ān was created are "permissible of blood." Man must trust in God, have faith (*īmān*) and avoid matters which do not bring him closer to God. The creed commands the believers to love the Ṣaḥāba (the companions of the Prophet), up to and including the Prophet's wives and Mu'āwiya.¹¹³ Mu'āwiya (d. 60/680), the first Umayyad caliph, is still hated by the Shī'a today for his role as an opponent of 'Alī, among other reasons, and is not uncontroversial among Sunnīs either. Lastly, the text focuses on the necessity of the fulfillment of religious duties, especially prayer, arguing that whoever neglects prayer is as much an infidel (*kāfir*) as any other infidels. "This is the speech (*qawl*) of the people of the Sunna," it states,¹¹⁴ and so the Qādirī creed openly takes sides against the Shī'a. This is in contrast to other Abbasid caliphs, earlier or later, who took a more moderate or even ambiguous approach to Shī'ism, as did the caliph al-Nāṣir who reigned in the latter part of Ibn al-Jawzī's life, so it is easy to see the appeal of this document for the chronicler.

¹¹² Ibid., 280.

¹¹³ Ibid., 281.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 281.

Though al-Qā'im continued to advocate the strict Ḥanbalism of his father, his caliphate was even better known for the instability of the era and the coming of the Saljūqs in 447/1055. The early years of his reign were rocked by factional violence in Baghdad, but he was able to play the competing amirs against each other as the Buyids continued to weaken, a policy that allowed him influence throughout the empire. One of the most important developments that shaped the caliphate and imperial politics in this era was the early development of the caliphal vizierate. At the time that al-Qā'im succeeded his father, Ibn al-Jawzī writes that the caliph had four viziers, Ibn Ayyūb, Ibn Dārūst, Ibn al-Muslima, and Ibn Jahīr.¹¹⁵ The caliphal vizierate ended, as we have seen, with the coming of the Buyids, and it was revived under al-Qā'im. The crucial vizier of this period, Ibn al-Muslima (d. 450/1058), was known by the title *ra'īs al-ru'asā'* (leader of leaders), but the contemporary biographer al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī does refer to him as “vizier” and writes that “he gathered powers in himself which no one before him had gathered.”¹¹⁶ While the exact nature of his role is uncertain, it is clear that he was instrumental in regional politics. Ibn al-Jawzī pays particular attention to his investiture, the first such ceremony for any caliphal official in the Buyid era to appear in his chronicle. In 437/1045, Ibn al-Muslima was appointed, Ibn al-Jawzī writes, by the caliph for “supervision” (*naẓar*) in “matters of service” while in the company of the notables and received the symbols of the vizierate: the *ṭaylasān* (scholar's hood¹¹⁷), the inkwell

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 218.

¹¹⁶ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. *Tārīkh Baghdād*. Vol. 11. p. 391.

¹¹⁷ Dozy, Reinhart Pieter Anne. *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes*. Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969. p. 278-280.

(*duwāt*), and a seat of honor (*dast*).¹¹⁸ He gained great power and even independence from the caliph himself, as we will see in the case of Saljūq approach toward Iraq, which the *ra'īs al-ru'asā'* supported.

Another leading personality of al-Qā'im's independent power politics was Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058). A Basran judge and jurist by background, he performed a series of key diplomatic missions for the caliph. Ibn al-Jawzī refers to him by the honorary title *aqḍā al-quḍāt* alongside the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* as one of the notables and high officials when the Saljūqs entered Baghdad.¹¹⁹ In 423/1032, al-Māwardī was sent to negotiate the selection of a proper title for Abū Kālījār, a Buyid rival of the Buyid *amīr al-umarā'* Jalāl al-Dawla; Abū Kālījār wanted the title of "sultan." At the time, this title was reserved for the caliph only, and amir had to settle for *mālik al-umām* (king of the nations) after the transfer of a certain *iqṭā'* in Basra.¹²⁰ In 434/1043, Ibn al-Jawzī quotes al-Māwardī's own account of his successful mission to Jalāl al-Dawla's son, who had confiscated the *jawālī* taxes (a form of the *jizya*,¹²¹ or tax on non-Muslims), presumably from the whole region, which had been flowing to the caliph.¹²² A final example of al-Māwardī's important political and diplomatic role was his mission to the Saljūqs in 435/1043-1044. The Saljūq conquest of Rayy in northern Iran was an important move westward for the Saljūqs, and they were soon in contact with the Abbasids as well as the Buyids, even though they were still quite far from Iraq. With Rayy said to be in ruins, al-Qā'im wanted to be assured of the Saljūq leader Tughril Beg's "obedience" to the caliph

¹¹⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 302.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Vol. 16. p. 4.

¹²⁰ Ibid. Vol. 15. p. 225-226.

¹²¹ Cahen, Claude. "ḌJawālī." In *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993.

¹²² Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 285-286.

and to order him to treat the subjects (*ra'yya*) with respect.¹²³ As these missions show, al-Qā'im was now looking far beyond Baghdad to use his power and authority. The details of these endeavors do not always interest even a devoted observer of the caliphate like Ibn al-Jawzī, who was still more interested in the ideological struggle with the Fatimids, for example, than in the administration of the empire. Nonetheless, the details of his chronicle, as well as its underlying tone and assumptions, show a very energetic caliphate.

VIII. Sectarian and Factional Politics in Baghdad

While al-Qā'im looked to make an impact beyond the capital, it was always there that the caliph held the greatest power. With the weakening of the Buyid amirate, John Donohue writes, the result was that “the Caliph and the Hashimite-Sunni faction emerged as the dominant constants in the shifting of power” within the city of Baghdad.¹²⁴ The roots of this development, as Donohue points out, are to be found in the factional politics of Baghdad, where the caliph could exercise military force and assert his religious and political prestige. The special relationship between the Abbasids and Baghdad was certainly on display in the late Buyid era, and the city's sectarian and factional politics loomed large in this period.

A broad overview of Baghdad's geography is necessary to understand the city's factional politics, because sectarian violence (*fitnas*) was organized along neighborhood lines and bound to urban geography. Originally founded by the second Abbasid caliph

¹²³ Ibid., 289.

¹²⁴ Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*, p. 108.

al-Manṣūr, the neighborhood at the heart of early Baghdad was the “city of Manṣūr” (*madīnat al-Manṣūr*), also known as the “round city,” built on the west bank of the Tigris River. Later, the caliph al-Ma’mūn began to live in a palace on the east bank of the river built by Ja‘far b. Yaḥya from the Barmakid family of viziers.¹²⁵ This eventually became the caliph’s palace (*dār al-khilāfa*), and over time, the city’s center of gravity moved eastward, a trend that lasted into the 12th century. After growing rapidly into the 10th century, Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ records, judging by its thousands of baths, that the city’s population began to fall, and some districts were no longer inhabited by his time.¹²⁶ This occurred primarily in many formerly populous western districts,¹²⁷ although not all western districts.

The most populous western district was Karkh in the southwest, a thriving market center known for its Shī‘a sympathies that again and again plays a role in the factional politics and *fitnas* described by Ibn al-Jawzī. Northeast of Karkh was the district of Bāb al-Baṣra, a staunchly Sunnī district that absorbed much of the remains of al-Manṣūr’s “round city.” Farther north, the district of the Barāthā was known for its Friday mosque (*jāmi‘*), which was venerated by Shī‘as because it stood on a site where ‘Alī was said to have bathed.¹²⁸ This was the mosque whose *khaṭīb* was arrested in 420/1029 for Shī‘a extremism. Another *jāmi‘* in the neighborhood of Ruṣāfa, east of the river, was closely connected to the Abbasid caliphs, and caliphs from al-Rāḍī onward were buried here.¹²⁹

The two other traditional Friday mosques – an institution supervised by the caliphs –

¹²⁵ Le Strange, G. *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*. London: Curzon Press, 1900. p. 243.

¹²⁶ Hilāl al-Ṣābi’. *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*, p. 22-23.

¹²⁷ Duri, A. A. “Baghdād.” In *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993.

¹²⁸ Le Strange. *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*. p. 154-155.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

were the Jāmi‘ al-Manṣūr in the City of Manṣūr and the Jami‘ al-Qaṣr in caliphal palace, and more continued to be built. The shrines of two of the most revered Islamic jurists and the founders of two legal schools, Abū Ḥanīfa and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, were located in Ruṣāfa on the eastern bank of the Tigris and Kāzīmāyn on the western bank respectively, and both drew devoted Sunnī followings.

The Buyids left their mark on Baghdad as well. Mu‘izz al-Dawla built his palace on the eastern bank of the Tigris in the northern district of Shammāsiyya, north of Ruṣāfa. Ibn al-Jawzī sometimes refers to this palace anachronistically as the *dār al-Sulṭān*, just as he sometimes refers to the leading Buyid amir as the “sultan,” but it was in fact known as the *dār al-mamlaka* (“palace of the kingship”). The early Buyids undertook a number of public works, such as the founding of a hospital by ‘Aḍud al-Dawla, the ‘Aḍudī Bīmāristan built on the ruins of Hārūn al-Rashīd’s Khuld palace, and the building of a dyke by Mu‘izz al-Dawla. At the same time, the Buyids also profoundly affected the sectarian factional politics of Baghdad. Importantly, the Buyids allowed the public observance of Shī‘a rituals for the first time. Throughout his chronicle, Ibn al-Jawzī notes with obvious dismay whenever the public observance of ‘Āshūrā’, the Shī‘a day of mourning for Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, was allowed and given official backing. In 352/963-964, Ibn al-Jawzī describes the new Shī‘a observances of ‘Āshūrā’ and the festival of Ghadīr Khumm, which Shī‘a celebrate to commemorate Muḥammad’s appointment of ‘Alī as his successor, a festival of which Claude Cahen considers Mu‘izz al-Dawla to be the “creator.”¹³⁰ This was the first time it was celebrated publicly, prior even to Fatimid

¹³⁰ Ibid.

practice,¹³¹ and Ibn al-Jawzī writes, “On the night of Ghadīr Khumm, fires were lit, trumpets were blown, and drums were played. Then the people went to the Quraysh Cemeteries.”¹³² When the markets were closed in observance of ‘Āshūrā’ in 353/964, Ibn al-Jawzī writes that a *fitna* between Sunnīs and Shī‘as broke out near the Quraysh Cemeteries and in the Qaṭī‘at Umm Ja‘far, both in the northwest of Baghdad.¹³³ However, his information in these years is sparse, and he does not elaborate much on such conflicts.

The Buyids also promoted Shī‘ism through the patronage of shrines and Alid *naqībs*. The shrines of two Shī‘a imams, the seventh and the ninth imams of the Twelver Shī‘a line, were located in the Baghdadi district of Kāzīmāyn. The Buyids regularly gave gifts to these shrines, and the tombs of two amirs, Mu‘izz al-Dawla and Jalāl al-Dawla, were built nearby, although they were destroyed in sectarian violence in 443/1051.¹³⁴ On the other hand, the caliph al-Ṭā‘i‘ also preached at the mosque associated with this area,¹³⁵ so one should be wary of drawing sectarian lines too sharply. Another way that the Buyids added legitimacy to the Shī‘a cause was through their patronage of the Alid *naqībs* (leaders of the Prophet’s descendants through ‘Alī). With the coming of the Buyids, there came to be two *naqībs*, one Alid and one Abbasid. Claude Cahen writes that whereas the Abbasids had previously dominated the other members of the Prophet’s family, the Buyids organized the Alids into a parallel collective and made the Alids’

¹³¹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Ghadīr Khumm,” by L. Veccia Valeri.

¹³² Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ‘l-umam*. Vol. 13.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Le Strange *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*. p. 154-155.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

leaders powerful.¹³⁶ Early in his rule, Mu‘izz al-Dawla appointed Ibn al-Dā‘ī, a Zaydī Alid, as *naqīb* and is said to have indicated that he was fit for the caliphate.¹³⁷ The Buyids made no effort to topple the Abbasids but instead honored them, as we have seen, so the real importance of this story is to illustrate the high regard in which *naqībs* were held by the Buyids.

Later *naqībs* were Twelver Shī‘as, and they gained more and more prestige. One historian even writes that the Alid *naqīb* and poet al-Sharīf al-Raḍī received more honors from the Buyids than any figure in Islamic history.¹³⁸ His father Abū Aḥmad b. al-Mūsawī was likewise powerful. In 380/990-911, the same year that his palace was set on fire during sectarian violence between Karkh and Bāb al-Baṣra, Abū Aḥmad b. al-Mūsawī was appointed *naqīb* of the Alids, overseer of the *maẓālim* (tribunal for public appeals), and leader of the *ḥajj*.¹³⁹ These offices were later bequeathed to his children.¹⁴⁰ The Buyid amirs were so close to this family of *naqībs* that when Jalāl al-Dawla faced a rebellion by his Turkish troops in 424/1033, he fled to the palace of al-Murtaḍa, the brother of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and his successor as *naqīb*.¹⁴¹ The rise of the *naqīb* made a significant impact on Baghdadi factional politics and brought competition to the Abbasids in terms of religious prestige. For this reason, Claude Cahen notes that a key component of the “‘Abbāsīd-Shī‘ī condominium” of the Buyid era was that Shī‘as now

¹³⁶ Cahen, Claude. “Buwayhids or Buyid.” In *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993.

¹³⁷ Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*. p. 308.

¹³⁸ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “al-Sharīf al-Raḍī,” by Moktar Djebli.

¹³⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*. Vol. 14.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Vol. 15. p. 111.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 235.

had an “official organization.”¹⁴² In practice, having Shī‘a sympathies usually meant displaying sympathy for the descendants of ‘Alī.

However, the relationship between Shī‘ism and Sunnism in Buyid-era Baghdad was not characterized solely by peaceful competition among *naqībs* and caliphs, because sectarian *fitnas* erupted even at the height of Buyid power. At such times, the chronicles indicate that the caliphs could exercise a mainly symbolic influence over the populace, as when al-Muṭī‘ rebuked Bakhtiyār in 356/967. A turning point seems to have been reached in 398/1007 when Ibn al-Jawzī recounts a *fitna* which drew the attention of the caliph al-Qādir. Some Shī‘a jurists had insulted two *qāḍīs* while protesting the treatment of the Shī‘a scholar Ibn al-Mu‘allim, so a *fitna* broke out between the people of Bāb al-Baṣra and Karkh. When a Shī‘a began to chant the name of the Fatimid caliph, al-Qādir had him arrested and then sent his own slaves (*ghilmān*) to fight on the side of the Sunnīs. The Shī‘a *ashrāf* (descendants of the Prophet) were forced to ask for forgiveness in the caliphal palace.¹⁴³ From this point on, the caliph began to take a more active role in the sectarian politics of the city, as portrayed by Ibn al-Jawzī, although it may be that the chronicler is just better informed at this point. In 403/1013, the caliph became involved in a *fitna* when crowds marched to the caliphal palace demanding justice in a dispute with Christians.¹⁴⁴ It became increasingly common for incensed crowds to turn to the caliphate for validation in the midst of such conflicts.

¹⁴² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Buwayhids or Buyid,” by Claude Cahen.

¹⁴³ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ‘l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 59.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

The Sunnīs in general began to assert themselves more around this time. In 398/999, the Sunnīs set up Sunnī counterparts to the Shī‘a traditions of Ghadīr Khumm and ‘Āshūrā’. For the former, they celebrated Abū Bakr’s selection by Muḥammad rather than that of ‘Alī, and for the latter, they visited the shrine of the Umayyad-era hero Muṣ‘ab ibn Zubayr rather than that of Ḥusayn.¹⁴⁵ In 406/1015, a *fitna* resulted in the banning of public mourning during ‘Āshūrā’ after negotiations with the *naqīb* al-Murtaḍa.¹⁴⁶ The next year, the Shī‘a quarters of the Iraqi city of Wāsiṭ were burned, and the leading Alids and Shī‘a fled.¹⁴⁷ The weakening of the Buyid hold over Iraq clearly had consequences for the region’s sectarian politics, and the result was an often violent Sunnī renaissance.

Another kind of factional politics that developed during the reigns of al-Qādir and al-Qā’im involved the ‘*ayyārūn*, particularly those of Baghdad. The ‘*ayyarūn* are a vexed topic in modern historiography. These groups were predecessors to the mystical *futuwwa* organizations that were later organized by the caliph al-Nāṣir, but the origins and social meaning of the ‘*ayyarūn* are unclear. One scholar has argued that the ‘*ayyārūn* and *futuwwa* arose from prior Sasanid military groups that established themselves in major Islamic cities like Baghdad.¹⁴⁸ ‘*Ayyār* literally means “rascal,” while *futuwwa* is literally the honorable character of a young man, and both groups resembled the *aḥdāth* (young men) of Syria. They were associated with thieves and rogues (*shuṭṭār*) and considered by many, such as Ibn al-Jawzī, to be outside the law, but they often held

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 111.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 120.

¹⁴⁸ Zakeri, Mohsen. *Sasanid Soldiers in Early Muslim Society: the Origins of ‘Ayyārān and Futuwwa*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995.

extraordinary power. Claude Cahen has discussed these groups in a series of essays on the “popular and autonomous urban movements” of the region. Outside of Baghdad, as in Syria, the *aḥdāth* or ‘*ayyārūn* could be the dominant element locally, especially when they were back by powerful *sharīfs* or merchants. The crucial difference between the *shurṭa* (police) and these groups was only that the *aḥdāth* or ‘*ayyārūn* were recruited locally.¹⁴⁹ In Baghdad, the ‘*ayyārūn* were weaker than the caliphal court and the notable classes, but gradually, Cahen writes, their interests began to mingle with those of the notables.¹⁵⁰ Just as the *Thousand and One Nights* contains stories of *shuṭṭār* leading the Baghdadi *shurṭa* (police),¹⁵¹ *shuṭṭār* from among the ‘*ayyārūn* were active in the *shurṭa* during the siege of Baghdad in 552/1157.¹⁵² Prior to al-Nāṣir, they were very heterogeneous. Though Ibn Ḥanbal admired them and the majority of ‘*ayyārūn* in Baghdad were Sunnī,¹⁵³ there were Shī‘a as well as Sunnī ‘*ayyārūn*. In 422/1031, Ibn al-Jawzī reports that some Shī‘a ‘*ayyārūn* imposed levies on certain markets in order to finance an extravagant celebration of Ghadīr Khumm.¹⁵⁴ These social strata had an ambiguous position, but they were endemic to Baghdad and of decisive importance.

They were far more powerful in the later Buyid era than under the early Buyids. Under Aḥud al-Dawla, only the police and paid infantry were allowed to bear arms, and

¹⁴⁹ Cahen, Claude. “I.” *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l’Asie musulmane du moyen âge*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959. p. 245-246.

¹⁵⁰ Cahen. “II.” *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain*. p. 51.

¹⁵¹ Habicht, Christian Maximilian, ed. *Alf laylah wa-laylah min al-mubtada’ ila al-muntaha*. Vol. 9. Breslau, 1825. (Reprint. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa’l-Wathā’iq al-Qawmiyyah, 1998.) p. 194.

¹⁵² Cahen. “II.” *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain*. p. 42.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 47-48.

¹⁵⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa’l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 219.

this supported the general stability of the era.¹⁵⁵ While they were active throughout the Buyid era, *'ayyārūn* were most powerful around the time of al-Qā'im's accession. Two of their leaders stand out in particular, Ibn al-Mawṣilī and Abū 'Alī al-Burjamī. Ibn al-Mawṣilī was the *ra'īs* (leader) of the *'ayyārūn*, who led the pillaging of various markets and neighborhoods of Baghdad until he was captured and executed in 420/1029.¹⁵⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī devotes more attention to al-Burjamī, the *ra'īs* of the *'ayyārūn* who controlled much of Baghdad during the first three years of al-Qā'im's reign. While the Buyid-led Turkish soldiers later tended to flee to the caliph's *ḥarīm* in times of trouble, al-Qā'im had a great deal of trouble with the *'ayyārūn* early on, and the Baghdadi police needed the Turkish cavalry (*al-iṣbahalāriyya*) to keep order in the city.

In 424/1033, matters come to a head when, after al-Burjamī had plundered a number of locales including the Yaḥya Market in Shammāsiyya, the chief of police was killed at the Azaj Gate, not far from the caliph's palace. A group of cavalymen was then sent to arrest him in his villa outside of Baghdad, but they were defeated and mocked by the *ra'īs*.¹⁵⁷ Later, Ibn al-Nasawī was put in charge of the police, but he was forced to flee the city, and al-Burjamī showed his power by plundering a home connected to al-Murtaḍa, the powerful Alid *naqīb*.¹⁵⁸ Al-Burjamī reached the height of his power at the end of this year, when the people of Ruṣāfa cursed and attacked the *khaṭīb* of their Friday mosque. They took both the caliph and the Buyid amir out of the *khuṭba* and recited the

¹⁵⁵ Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*. p. 308.

¹⁵⁶ Cahen. "II." *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain*. p. 39.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 219.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 235.

khuṭba in al-Burjamī's name instead.¹⁵⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī does not really provide a sensitive account of the *'ayyārūn* and the reasons for their popularity, though he mentions in 425/1034 that they distributed funds and helped to rebuild the city. When the *ra'īs* of the *'ayyārūn* finally died, Ibn al-Jawzī simply says that al-Burjamī "the thief" had been betrayed by one of his powerful patrons and drowned.¹⁶⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī's fellow chronicler, Ibn al-Athīr, is more revealing when he writes that al-Burjamī was known for his honorable attitude toward women and those to whom he swore oaths and took under his protection.¹⁶¹ Such practices were classic *futuwwa* virtues and provided at least one element of this *'ayyār*'s popularity.

One of the most important questions surrounding the conflicts of the caliphate with the *'ayyārūn* concerns the structure of the Baghdadi police. There is good reason to believe that Ibn al-Jawzī assumed his readers understood the role of the caliph's administration in quelling the *'ayyārūn* without ever clearly outlining it. The most crucial passage in this regard is the obituary of Ibn Abī 'Alī, the chamberlain (*ḥājib*) of al-Qādir from 389/999 onward. The passage portrays the caliph's *ḥājib* as primarily responsible for control over the *fitnas* of Baghdad, as in 409/1018, when Ibn Abī 'Alī is said to have established *hayba* in Baghdad by evenhandedly arresting and killing troublemakers among both the Sunnīs and the Shī'a.¹⁶² He was killed in 415/1024 by the *'ayyārūn*, and when Ibn al-Jawzī names Ibn Abī 'Alī's successor, he refers not to a *ḥājib* but to the *ma'ūna*, which Cahen has defined as a broader characterization for the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 235.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 241.

¹⁶¹ Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh*. Vol. 9. Beirut : Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1967. AH 425

¹⁶² Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 15.

shurṭa.¹⁶³ Ibn al-Jawzī connects the caliph’s administration, especially *ḥājib*, with police functions as though it were something self-evident.

This role of the *ḥājib* is corroborated by a number of other references in Ibn al-Jawzī’s chronicle. This is particularly true for the career of Muḥammad ibn al-Nasawī, who was repeatedly appointed police chief (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*) in the reign of al-Qā’im. When he was first appointed in 421/1030, he was made “supervisor of the *ma’ūna*.” The caliph gave him the title *al-Nāṣih* (the counselor) and robes of honor, and he was made a *ḥājib* as well.¹⁶⁴ At the height of al-Burjamī’s power in 424/1033, Ibn al-Nasawī was appointed police chief by an unnamed vizier and *ḥājib al-ḥujjāb* (chief *ḥājib*).¹⁶⁵ It seems likely that this latter title refers to the caliph’s chief *ḥājib*, since the leading Buyid amir Jalāl al-Dawla was not in Baghdad, and his *ḥājibs* must have been attending to him in Persia. However, it is not always clear to whom Ibn al-Nasawī answered. Much later, in 448/1056 when the Saljūqs were already in Baghdad, Ibn al-Nasawī was approached for missions as police chief by the Saljūq vizier ‘Amīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī as well as by the caliphal vizier. ‘Amīd al-Mulk requested that he arrest the secretary of al-Basāsīrī, the Saljūqs’ enemy, while Ibn Muslima asked for the execution of a Shī’a “extremist.”¹⁶⁶ The Buyids also approached him for help in calming Baghdad, but there is strong evidence that Ibn al-Nasawī and the Baghdadi *shurṭa* were under the authority of the caliph.

¹⁶³ Cahen. “I.” *Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain*. p. 234.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 208.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 235.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 8.

IX. Al-Mawārdī's *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭaniyya*: Adapting the Caliphate

Having explored the history of the Abbasid caliphate through its most prominent chroniclers, we can now turn briefly to one of those jurists whose political theories have seemed mystifying to modern historians. Al-Māwardī, the jurist and diplomat for al-Qā'im, is among the most important of these politically engaged figures whose works have struck modern historians as somehow out of touch, and today he is best known for his political theory, not his political activities. Al-Māwardī's *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭaniyya* (translated as *The Laws of Islamic Governance*) gives a framework for Islamic government whose center is the caliphate. Given the military weakness of the caliphate, some historians have assumed that his system was mainly an ideal. While many aspects of his book are idealized, revisionist scholarship suggests that the work is nonetheless “an application of classical juristic theory to the contemporary facts.”¹⁶⁷

This is fortunate, because it would be difficult to explain why a man so deeply involved in contemporary politics would write a political treatise at odds with his own experience. Al-Māwardī's treatise begins with a discussion of the caliph (whom he calls the *khalīfa*, *imām*, or *sulṭān* interchangeably) and moves on to the different types of authority that can be delegated. The topics he discusses are generally of immediate relevance for the caliphs and amirs of his time: the physical and genealogical requirements of a potential caliph, the circumstances in which a caliph can be removed, the duties of an amir, etc. While the in-depth discussion of the physical disabilities that disqualify a man from the caliphate may strike a modern American reader as strange, this

¹⁶⁷ Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*, p. 129-130.

question was of crucial importance whenever a caliph was deposed. When al-Muttaqī was deposed just prior to the emergence of the Buyid amirate in 333/944, he was blinded. According to al-Māwardī, blindness disqualifies a man from the “imamate” completely.¹⁶⁸ Thus, there would be no danger of al-Muttaqī returning to his position.

If, as some scholars have maintained, the caliphate was an empty shell whose weakness indicated the political decline of Islam, then the caliph would not be able to fulfill his binding Islamic duties. However, al-Māwardī’s “idealistic” text outlines duties that the caliph was indeed fulfilling, broadly speaking. Al-Māwardī outlines ten duties of the caliph which do not need to be discussed in detail here, but the first three duties seem to be the most important: to guard Islam “in its original form” from innovation, to execute legal judgments, and to protect the territory of Islam and its sanctuaries (e.g., from criminality or outside invasion).¹⁶⁹ The caliphs of the era were clearly attempting to fulfill their duty in the first two cases, and while they lacked a powerful military to fulfill the third requirement on their own, al-Māwardī outlines in the course of his treatise the various ways in which power could be *delegated* to others, including amirs and viziers.

With regard to the amirate, al-Māwardī describes primarily the “provincial amirate” rather than the office of *amīr al-umarā’*. However, by the time he was writing, the leading Buyids had left Baghdad decades before in favor of Fārs, leaving only lower ranking figures in Baghdad. Some later chroniclers do not even apply the term *amīr al-umarā’* to Bahā’ al-Dawla, a relatively early amir, apparently because he was the first to

¹⁶⁸ Al-Māwardī, Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad. *al-Aḥkam as-sultaniyya: The Laws of Islamic Governance*. Trans. Asadullah Yate. London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1986, p. 31.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 27-28.

reside in Shiraz.¹⁷⁰ Al-Māwardī is certainly honest about the circumstances in which amirs could take power. At the outset of his discussion of the amirate, he writes that amirs may either be “freely contracted” or accepted “at times of conquest in compelling circumstances.” Once an amir is installed, the caliph has the right to surveillance, but not to dismiss or transfer him.¹⁷¹ Al-Māwardī advises the recognition of an amir who has seized power in a given province, saying that “necessity annuls conditions which are otherwise required.”¹⁷² Such amirs can then be convinced to obey to at least some laws. Whereas the people of Iraq once demanded that the caliph personally lead a *jihād* against the Byzantines, al-Māwardī defines an amirate of *jihād* for this purpose from which the caliph is mostly absent. The authority and power of the caliph are central to al-Māwardī’s philosophy, and the text defines numerous privileges of the caliph (e.g., the right to name imams in certain mosques¹⁷³ and to grant land¹⁷⁴). However, he has also absorbed into the heart of his political philosophy the idea of the amirate, which he views as a delegation of power from the caliph.

Al-Māwardī’s *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya* is still startlingly free of historical examples drawn from the writer’s own period. Generally, al-Māwardī prefers to cite models from the Prophet or the early caliphates, if any at all. Perhaps al-Māwardī avoids explicit discussion of contemporary practice is an effort to remain neutral, because the text was written “for members of the ruling elite in order to facilitate their understanding of the offices they held,” and not to “advance the political interest of any one office

¹⁷⁰ Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*, p. 108-109.

¹⁷¹ Al-Māwardī. *al-Aḥkām as-sulṭāniyya: The Laws of Islamic Governance*, p. 49.

¹⁷² Ibid., 55.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 150.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 270.

holder (such as the caliph).”¹⁷⁵ Surprisingly, a later Ḥanbalī revision of the text by Abū Ya‘la ibn al-Farrā‘ includes even fewer historical examples, such that one scholar considers it a sign of the Ḥanbalīs’ distrust of the caliphs’ moral stature, however much they preached obedience to them.¹⁷⁶ This is in contrast to the *Siyāsat-nāma* of the Saljūq vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), which is accessible as a historical source because of its wealth of examples drawn from various Persian states up to the Ghaznavids and the Saljūqs. While this means that the position of *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭaniyya* in the political landscape of the time is harder to trace, it does not detract from the work as an authentic expression of the 11th century Abbasid caliphate and its detailed political theory, from the appointment of amirs to the role of *naqībs* and the caliph’s *dīwān*.

X. Three Accounts of Chaos in Baghdad: al-Basāsīrī’s Invasion

The power vacuum created by the weakening of the Buyids in Iraq was an opportunity for the caliph to expand his power, but it also brought risks. Without a powerful military force for protection, the situation was very fluid, and Baghdad was vulnerable to invasion. The most powerful figure in Iraq under the last Buyid amir al-Malik al-Raḥīm, who came to power in 440/1048, was Arslān al-Basāsīrī, an amir of Turkish slave origin who had served under Bahā’ al-Dawla.¹⁷⁷ In 446/1054, the Buyid vizier took refuge in the caliph’s *ḥarīm*, fearing the Turkish soldiers of Baghdad, who

¹⁷⁵ Hurvitz, Nimrod. *Competing Texts: The Relationship between al-Mawardi’s and Abu Ya‘la’s al-Aḥkām al-sulṭaniyya*. Cambridge, MA: ILSP Harvard Law School, 2007. p. 40.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 25.

¹⁷⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Al-Basāsīrī,” by M. Canard.

were angry about their lack of pay and whose anger extended to al-Basāsīrī as well.¹⁷⁸

The various chronicles tell the story of what happened next differently, but all accounts agree that al-Basāsīrī increasingly came into conflict with the caliph and especially with his vizier Ibn Muslima. According to some accounts, the caliph then called on Tughril Beg (d. 455/1063) of the Saljūq dynasty, leader of the Oghuz Turks, who were then moving through Persia, for help against al-Basāsīrī. The Saljūqs arrived in Baghdad and imprisoned al-Malik al-Raḥīm, and a sequence of events began that resulted in the occupation of Baghdad by Fatimid supporters and the humiliation of the caliph, who was captured and removed from Baghdad (450/1058). In the course of the next year, Tughril Beg defeated and killed al-Basāsīrī, returned the caliph to Baghdad, and established Saljūq rule in Iraq and Persia. Though brief, the experience was traumatic for Sunnīs. The event was so important that it is given lengthy treatment in a number of Muslim sources, each according to its own viewpoint.

One account of al-Basāsīrī's occupation of Baghdad is nearly contemporary with the event itself, and this is particularly unusual in that few sources have survived from the early Saljūq period. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* is a collection of obituaries which were compiled up until the author's death in 463/1071. Like other biographical dictionaries, it was intended primarily as a guide for *ḥadīth* scholars to the transmitters of *ḥadīth*, not as a historical source.¹⁷⁹ Al-Khaṭīb's biography of the then-ruling caliph al-Qā'im is all the more remarkable in that the caliph was not yet dead, and it focuses on explaining how the caliph was captured and telling the story of al-Basāsīrī's

¹⁷⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 343.

¹⁷⁹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī," by R. Sellheim.

downfall, a fact that again shows the impact that this event had. Al-Khaṭīb had the greatest respect for al-Qā'im, who had appointed him as a teacher in the mosque of al-Manṣūr despite Ḥanbalī opposition.¹⁸⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī notes in his obituary of al-Khaṭīb that he was in the entourage of the caliph's vizier Ibn a-Muslima.¹⁸¹ Like Abū Shujā' in his discussion of al-Qādir, al-Khaṭīb first puts al-Qā'im in a class of the four greatest caliphs because he came to the caliphate "without shedding blood," in contrast to many of his predecessors, and then he proceeds to narrate the traumatic event.

Al-Khaṭīb, who must have written his account shortly after the event itself, says that the caliph wrote to Tughril Beg for assistance, and he implies that the motive of the "amir" (as he calls Tughril Beg, not "sultan") was to save Baghdad and the caliphate. Al-Basāsīrī had allegedly "resolved" to seize and plunder of the *dār al-khilāfa*, and this was what "roused" Tughril to go to Iraq.¹⁸² Once in Baghdad, Tughril Beg burned al-Basāsīrī's residence, but was forced to leave again in order to fight his brother Ibrāhīm Īnāl, an ally of al-Basāsīrī. Faced with rumors of Tughril's defeat, the vizier 'Amīd al-Mulk departed from Baghdad shortly thereafter with the remaining troops and weapons, leaving Baghdad defenseless. This was an error, al-Khaṭīb writes, and al-Basāsīrī entered Baghdad in 450/1058.

The religious aspect of the invasion is the central part of the story. Al-Khaṭīb reports how the invasion caused people to pray or prevented them from doing so, and he recounts that he himself was among those who prayed in the mosque of al-Manṣūr

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 129.

¹⁸² Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī. *Tārīkh Baghdād*. Vol 9. p. 407.

without even an imām before the amir’s arrival.¹⁸³ When al-Basāsīrī entered Baghdad, al-Khaṭīb writes how the Shī‘a of western Baghdad and “especially” Karkh flocked to al-Basāsīrī’s Egyptian (i.e., Fatimid) banners. The name of the “ruler of Egypt” was mentioned in the *khutba* at the mosque of al-Manṣur the next Friday, which was the greatest sacrilege possible for a Sunnī and was unprecedented. The caliph’s palace was stormed, and al-Qā’im was led out as prisoner in front of the people.¹⁸⁴ Al-Khaṭīb focuses in particular on the symbols that the caliph took with him, such as his sword and his clothing, perhaps to emphasize that the caliph remained legitimate and dignified. The vizier was not so lucky: al-Basāsīrī grabbed Ibn al-Muslima’s sleeve, which seems to be a sign of humiliation in Islamic chronicles, and he was executed. Al-Basāsīrī was eventually defeated by Tughril Beg, of course, and the account ends with the rebel’s head “hung in front of the *dār al-khilāfa*.”¹⁸⁵ The caliph returned to Baghdad, and his rule was once again “*mustaqīm*” (in order, upright), obviating the need to provide more biographical details. Only the catastrophic disturbance of the just order prompts al-Khaṭīb to provide historical details from al-Qā’im’s life.

A second, much later account is included in Ibn al-Jawzī’s *al-Munṭazam fī ta’rīkh*. His account of al-Basāsīrī’s occupation of Baghdād is interesting in that it is longer than al-Khaṭīb’s and more critical of nearly everyone but the caliph. Much of the story is taken directly from al-Khaṭīb’s account, including the wording, but he adds a great deal of detail, thereby providing more complex commentary on the events. Ibn al-Jawzī’s

¹⁸³ Ibid., 408.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 402.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 410.

description of the year in which the Saljūqs came to Baghdad (447/1055) begins with a *fitna* between the Ḥanbalīs and the Ash‘arīs (rational theologians who opposed the Mu‘tazilites), which resulted in a dispute between Ibn al-Muslima and al-Basāsīrī. Enraged, Ibn al-Muslima exclaimed that the amir had been in contact with the “ruler of Egypt,” but the caliph demurred, saying that it is not yet time for “his destruction.”¹⁸⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī then quotes al-Khaṭīb’s account of the Saljūqs’ arrival in Baghdad, citing al-Khaṭīb by name. He does add a description of Ibn al-Muslima’s meeting with the Saljūqs, where Tughril Beg swore that his only intention was the protection of the caliph, and Ibn al-Muslima agreed, saying, “God has given you the world.”¹⁸⁷ Though he writes in a different genre, Ibn al-Jawzī is likewise concerned to establish the religious legitimacy of events, and so this scene marks the beginning of the Saljūqs as a legitimate power.

However, once the Saljūqs were in Baghdad, the chronicler puts the blame for friction squarely on the shoulders of the new arrivals. In 448/1056, he writes that the caliph rebuked the sultan for the way in which his troops had quartered themselves in the people’s homes. The sultan is said to have responded with a grandiose statement of loyalty, and he cried with obedience when he received the caliph’s order (*tawqī‘*).¹⁸⁸ The ceremonies associated with al-Qā’im’s betrothal to Tughril’s niece that same year are another assertion of his legitimacy, and the marriage bound the two families formally. Ibn al-Jawzī describes the caliph’s mother’s visit to the *dār al-mamlaka*, the former

¹⁸⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ‘l-umam*. Vol. 15. 347.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 349.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. Vol. 16. p. 3-4.

Buyid palace now occupied by the Saljūqs, where the caliph gave his new bride an *iqṭā'* worth 12,000 dinars.¹⁸⁹ This was followed by an elaborate description of a ceremony in the caliphal *ḥarīm*. Nonetheless, the Saljūqs are criticized for the disorderliness of their troops, who “were taking the turbans of the people,” even the turban of the Alid *naqīb*. Around the same time, it became apparent that the *dhimmīs* (protected religious minorities such as Jews and Christians) began violating dress regulations, a sure sign of the destabilization of the God-given order in Ibn al-Jawzī’s eyes.¹⁹⁰ There is some anxiety in his writing surrounding the religious legitimacy of the Saljūqs, even as their pageantry asserts it.

When the Saljūqs evacuated Baghdad and emptied it of its weapons, Ibn al-Jawzī’s writing is even more loaded with symbolism. For example, unlike al-Khaṭīb or the Buyid chroniclers, Ibn al-Jawzī is inclined to include natural occurrences with symbolic overtones, and he writes that an earthquake preceded the capture of al-Qā’im by exactly one month.¹⁹¹ Owls are often an omen of doom in Middle Eastern cultures, and Ibn al-Jawzī writes in 450/1058 that ten owls gathered in the courtyard of the *dār al-khilāfa*. Al-Khaṭīb’s story of prayer without an imām, included by Ibn al-Jawzī, is also in this vein. In describing al-Basāsīrī arrival, he includes even more details than al-Khaṭīb does about the Shī‘a of Baghdad, especially Karkh, rallying to the (Fatimid) white banners. For example, he notes that the call to prayer was changed to conform to Shī‘a practice. The *‘ayyarūn* – another favorite target of Ibn al-Jawzī’s criticism – are depicted

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 30.

plundering the caliph's palace alongside al-Basāsīrī,¹⁹² and Ibn al-Jawzī details the plundering that occurred throughout the city by the *'ayyarūn* and others.

Ibn al-Jawzī's description of the caliph's capture emphasizes the dignity of the caliph, who left his palace wearing the Abbasid black and with the symbols of the caliphate in hand: the mantle (*burda*), banner and sword of the Prophet.¹⁹³ He was surrounded by his retinue – including Hashemites, slaves, and women – who held Qur'āns raised on staffs, a tactic employed commonly by those seeking peace after a *fitna*. Thus, the defeated caliph still honorably asserted his legitimacy, and al-Basāsīrī could do no more than take him into custody, where the caliph is said to have written letters and poetry. He was taken to the Bedouin leader Mahārish in the city of Haditha, and Ibn al-Jawzī is at pains to affirm that this leader was “proper of belief.” Mahārish negotiated with Tughril Beg the following year for the caliph's return to Baghdad. Al-Basāsīrī held Baghdad for exactly one year, Ibn al-Jawzī writes, but the amir was defeated and killed by Tughril Beg thereafter in 451/1059.

A third account of al-Basāsīrī's occupation of Baghdad is that of 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), a more famous historian than either al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādī or Ibn al-Jawzī. According to Franz Rosenthal, his chronicle *al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rīkh* “represents the high point of Muslim annalistic historiography.”¹⁹⁴ While not much is known about Ibn al-Athīr's own life, his father was an official at the Zangid court in Mosul, which is why the chronicler's name means “son of the (court) favorite,” and Ibn al-Athīr is

¹⁹² Ibid., 34.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 31.

¹⁹⁴ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Ibn al-Athīr,” by Franz Rosenthal.

effusive in his praise for this dynasty. The dynasty's founder Zangī was the Turkmen *atabeg* of the Saljūq governor of Mosul. An *atabegs* was charged with guarding the “interests of his master's family,”¹⁹⁵ but the Zangids eventually established their own dynasty, just as the Ghaznavids emerged from the Samanids in Khurāsān. In contrast to the Samanids and Ghaznavids, though, the Zangids remained close allies of the Saljūqs. In this sense, Ibn al-Athīr's perspective is much closer to that of the Saljūqs. Certainly, his account of the rise of the Saljūqs is considered the best single narrative of the establishment of the Saljūq dynasty in the Abbasid Empire, despite the fact that it was written about a century and a half after the events. *Al-Kāmil fī l-ta' rīkh* was intended to be a “universal history,” and it covers most of the Islamic world, along with the Byzantines and other polities. Whereas Ibn al-Jawzī would not include a Byzantine emperor among the subjects his necrologies, Ibn al-Athīr does. Overall, he is less focused on Baghdad and the Abbasids, at least until Tughril Beg began to approach Baghdad. Much of what he writes about is not treated in detail in the other sources, such as the military struggle between Tughril Beg and his brother Ibrāhīm Īnāl, which was the distraction that allowed al-Basāsīrī to take Baghdad in the first place.

Ibn al-Athīr gives an account of al-Basāsīrī and the Saljūqs in Baghdad that is not based on al-Khaṭīb, and his interpretation of the events in Baghdad differs substantially. He adds an interesting anecdote from 446/1054, when al-Basāsīrī came into a conflict with Ibn al-Muslima. Al-Basāsīrī wanted to arrest two men from the al-Muḥallabān clan accused of raiding and break their power, but the vizier prevented him from doing so.

¹⁹⁵ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Atabak (Atabeg),” by Claude Cahen.

Al-Basāsīrī then prevented the dues of the mint (*dar al-ḍarb*) from reaching the caliph, the vizier, or the caliphal retinue, and he cursed the vizier's correspondence with the "Oghuz." The chronicler identifies these events as the cause of the rift between al-Qā'im and al-Basāsīrī.¹⁹⁶ Of this story, Ibn al-Jawzī includes only the part in which the ship of one of Ibn al-Muslima's relatives is seized, and the chronicler adds that al-Basāsīrī's "wild demands multiplied."¹⁹⁷ The context of his actions is missing, so the amir appears in an unnecessarily negative light. Another story unique to Ibn al-Athīr concerns the destruction of a Christian wine merchant's property by religious Sunnīs, an event that escalated into yet another conflict between the vizier and the amir.¹⁹⁸ Al-Basāsīrī successfully solicited the support of jurists in opposing Ibn al-Muslima, who supported the Sunnīs, and so al-Basāsīrī seems to have had reasonable grounds for frustration. Without necessarily imputing noble motives to Tughril Beg, he states that it was the caliph's vizier Ibn al-Muslima who insisted that Tughril Beg come to Baghdad because he wanted "to see the collapse of the Daylami [i.e., Buyid] regime."¹⁹⁹ Even though al-Basāsīrī must have been considered an enemy by all Sunnīs, Ibn al-Athīr included, Ibn al-Muslima is effectively blamed for the instability in Iraq prior to the arrival of the Saljūqs.

In Saljūq-occupied Baghdad, the chronicler's sympathies are on the side of the Saljūqs, and he probably draws on some sort of Saljūq sources throughout this account. Whereas Ibn al-Jawzī blames the tension between the Baghdadis and the newly arrived Saljūqs on the behavior of the latter, Ibn al-Athīr condemns the "Baghdad mob's

¹⁹⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, 'Izz al-Dīn. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*. Trans. D.S. Richards. London: Routledge, 2002. p. 94.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 344.

¹⁹⁸ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*. p. 98.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 99.

attacks on Sultan Tughril Beg's forces."²⁰⁰ Ironically, Tughril Beg found the inhabitants of Karkh "peaceful." However, Ibn al-Athīr does note one relevant mistake by Tughril Beg, which does not appear in Ibn al-Jawzī. When al-Malik al-Raḥīm was arrested, the caliph protested, but to no avail. Tughril Beg intended to dismantle the Buyid regime, and when he dispossessed the Buyid leaders of their *iqṭā'*s, Ibn al-Athīr notes that a great many of these men joined al-Basāsīrī.²⁰¹ Ibn al-Athīr demonstrates here more of a materialist understanding of political dynamics, in contrast to Ibn al-Jawzī. These kinds of analytical differences are to be expected, of course. Ibn al-Jawzī, as a preacher, inevitably had more religious influence, while Ibn al-Athīr was concerned with the exigencies of power.

While al-Basāsīrī is still represented as a usurper and, of course, as a pro-Fatimid Shī'a, he performs some good deeds that are certainly not mentioned elsewhere. He provides a home for the ninety year old mother of the caliph al-Qā'im (!) and "established pensions for scholars of Law, without special preference for any school."²⁰² Indeed, the populace of Baghdad are said to have supported al-Basāsīrī, "the Shiites for doctrinal reasons and the Sunnis because of the way the Turks treated them."²⁰³ Certainly, the caliph's vizier is represented in a much more negative light than al-Basāsīrī, and the vizier's execution is portrayed as something like just punishment. Ibn al-Athīr even contends that the caliph could have avoided conflict with al-Basāsīrī's occupying army in Baghdad, but Ibn al-Muslima inadvisably went on the offensive and

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 102.

²⁰² Ibid., 123.

²⁰³ Ibid., 121.

was defeated.²⁰⁴ (One small point of commonality between Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-Jawzī is that they both use the title “sultan” to describe Tughril Beg, the title he claimed, whereas al-Khaṭīb still uses “amir.”) In general, each of these historians writes from a very different perspective, and it should be once again clear that heavy reliance on any one source or perspective is not advisable. The social and political milieu in which the chronicler lived had a profound effect on his writing, and no reading of the chronicles should ignore this factor.

XI. Caliphs and Sultans in the Chronicles of Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-Jawzī

Once established in Baghdad, Sultan Tughril Beg tried to do what so many rulers had tried before: to marry the caliph’s daughter. Miskawayh gives only a cursory explanation of ‘Aḍud al-Dawla’s marriage to al-Ṭā’i’s daughter, but Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-Jawzī explain Tughril Beg’s attempted nuptials in much greater detail. The negotiations are especially prominent in Ibn al-Jawzī’s account of these years. Interestingly, Tughril Beg’s marriage has traditionally been seen by historians as stranger than ‘Aḍud al-Dawla’s marriage, probably because Miskawayh openly states the aim of ‘Aḍud al-Dawla’s marriage – to unite the two dynasties into one – whereas the Saljūq-era chroniclers leave that particular point unexpressed.

While the incident has been analyzed perceptively by George Makdisi,²⁰⁵ the “marriage of Tughril Beg” is nearly as important for what it reveals about the chroniclers’

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 123.

²⁰⁵ Makdisi, George. “The Marriage of Tughril Beg.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1970): 259-275.

attitudes as it is for what it reveals about the Saljūqs and the Abbasids. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, the affair began during al-Basāsīnī's invasion of Baghdad, when Tughril Beg held al-Qā'im's wife, Arslān Khātūn, in custody. The caliph asked that she be returned to Baghdad, but the sultan responded only with promises.²⁰⁶ Tughril Beg's own wife had died in the meantime, and he hit upon the idea of marrying the caliph's daughter. He was at this point nearly seventy years old and did not have long to live. His purpose, as Makdisi argues, was political, and that is why the politically-oriented chroniclers give it so much attention. Al-Qā'im sought to delay the marriage indefinitely through negotiations, just as al-Ṭā'i' had refused to consummate his marriage to 'Aḍud al-Dawla's daughter, and al-Qā'im largely succeeded, because the negotiations dragged on for years. The caliph and sultan exchanged envoys repeatedly in 453/1061. Arslān Khātūn returned to Baghdad with Tughril Beg's vizier, 'Amīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī (d. 456/1064), and the caliph was offered hundreds of thousands of dinars in exchange for the marriage. The caliph's counterproposals included a stipulation that Tughril be required to stay in Baghdad, a condition sure to elicit a refusal. The sultan's offers did no good, and Ibn al-Jawzī describes the caliph's humiliation: "The matter became repulsive to him in every aspect."²⁰⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī's narrative is highly repetitive. Scenes of the vizier al-Kundurī imploring the caliph to relent – and enraging him – occur over and over.

The caliph was, however, not able to avoid the marriage. In 454/1061, Ibn al-Jawzī reports that various *iqṭā'*s in Baghdad, Basra, and Wāsiṭ began to be transferred to

²⁰⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 65.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 67.

the caliph's *dīwān* and the caliph's clients. An agreement was eventually hammered out, in which a dowry of 400,000 dinars was promised in addition to the distribution of *iqṭā*'s and numerous other gifts to such figures as Arslān Khātūn and the caliph's son, the future caliph al-Muqtadī.²⁰⁸ Despite the celebrations that occurred afterward, Ibn al-Jawzī's account of this period contains ominous overtones and signs of the destabilization of the just order. That same year, he writes that a flood ravaged Baghdad and that the water even submerged the "prophetic staff," one of the symbols of the caliphate, twice. Corruption increased generally, and a Jewish man was seen drunkenly reciting the Qur'ān.²⁰⁹ None of these details appear in the account of Ibn al-Athīr, who writes simply that prices remained stable for the year.²¹⁰

Ibn al-Athīr's description of negotiations, on the other hand, is shorter, limited to the year 454, and while he does describe the caliph's hatred toward al-Kundurī, he emphasizes the honor that was bestowed upon Tughril Beg, not the humiliation of the caliph. Ibn al-Athīr writes that the caliph was assured that "the aim of this alliance is the bestowal of honors, not a [political] union."²¹¹ Despite the actions of the Buyid amirs of the past, Ibn al-Athīr writes of Tughril Beg's marriage, "This was such a thing as had never happened to the caliphs before, for the Buyids, despite their political dominance and their opposition to the beliefs of the caliphs [i.e., their Shī'ism], had never aspired to anything similar, nor had they constrained them to do such a thing."²¹² Although the Buyids most certainly *had* "aspired" to something similar, Ibn al-Athīr probably seeks to

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 72-75.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 74.

²¹⁰ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*. p. 140.

²¹¹ Ibid., 141

²¹² Ibid., p. 139.

emphasize how extraordinary Tughril Beg's achievements were in contrast to those of the Buyids, just as Buyid chroniclers trumpeted the privileges of their amirs.

In fact, his account displays some similarities with other accounts of marriages or attempted marriages between caliphs and amirs. Whenever such a marriage was attempted, some coincidence intervened to prevent the union of the amirate and the caliphate, as if it were some kind of boundary that should not be crossed, even in chronicles written by historians who were closer to the amirate than the caliphate. In this case, Tughril Beg became ill one month after the marriage, and he died a few months thereafter in 455/1063. Reporting the sultan's death, Ibn al-Athīr writes that Tughril Beg had once told of a dream in which he spoke to God in heaven. He asked for long life, but was told sternly that he would have no more than seventy years.²¹³ The marriage of Tughril Beg is the kind of story whose symbolic meaning far outweighs its literal significance, and Tughril Beg's dream underlines that he had reached a limit. For Sunnī chroniclers, even those sympathetic to the sultan, the Abbasid caliphate had a sacred authority that could not be broken. Any attempt to usurp the caliphate from the Abbasids, even by means of marriage, was therefore a dubious endeavor. As we will see, an even more direct attempt by Tughril Beg's grandson Malikshah to destroy the caliph's power was met with similar ill-fortune.

Though the rise of the Saljūqs and their establishment in Baghdad in some ways mirrors that of the Buyids, the Abbasid caliphate never returned to the weak position that it had held in the days of al-Muṭṭī'. The sheer scope of the demands that al-Qā'im was

²¹³ Ibid., 143.

able to place on Tughril Beg's marriage proposals shows the relative strengthening of the caliphate since the early Buyid era. Whereas al-Ṭā'ī had simply refused to consummate his marriage to Aḍud al-Dawla's daughter, al-Qā'im demanded and received hundreds of thousands of dinars and *iqṭā'*s throughout the empire. All amirs and sultans relied on the Abbasid caliphs for legitimacy, and the Saljūqs were not in a position to dictate terms to the caliphs. Only Tughril Beg spent a significant amount of time in Baghdad, while the other two most powerful Saljūq sultans, Alp Arslān and Malikshah, barely set foot in the city.²¹⁴ After Tughril Beg's death, the now sixty-two-year-old caliph al-Qā'im demanded the removal of al-Kundurī as the price for Alp Arslān's recognition as sultan in the *khutba*.²¹⁵ The vizier was killed in 456/1064, and the famous Nizām al-Mulk was appointed vizier in his stead. The caliph also attempted to hold on to the lands and wealth he acquired in the course of the negotiations with Tughril Beg. When 'Amīd al-Mulk demanded the "caliphal portion" back, al-Qā'im resisted, and though Ibn al-Jawzī's inadequate pronoun antecedents make it difficult to decipher his description of the episode, it seems that the caliph triumphed in the end.²¹⁶

Another sign that the caliphate had retained its power was that while Tughril Beg and Alp Arslān were subduing all *other* claimants to power, the caliphal vizierate reconstituted itself. Instrumental in this development was the Banū Jahīr, a family of merchant origin that first made a name for itself in the service of the Marwānid dynasty

²¹⁴ Makdisi. *Ibn 'Aqil et la resurgance de l'islam traditionaliste au XIe siècle*. p. 120.

²¹⁵ Makdisi, George. "al-Kundurī, 'Amīd al-Mulk Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr." In *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2nd ed. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993.

²¹⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 73.

of Diyarbakır.²¹⁷ In the service of the caliphs starting in 454/1062, Fakhr al-Dawla and his son ‘Amīd al-Dawla dominated the vizierate for a half a century. Though Ibn al-Jawzī obviously admires the family, he recounts the story of Fakhr al-Dawla’s brief, but ignominious removal from office early in his vizierate. In 460/1068, al-Qā’im became annoyed with the vizier’s presumptuous behavior and claimed that he had, among other “offenses,” bestowed robes of honor upon a Saljūq prince without asking permission from the caliph.²¹⁸ Since bestowing robes of honor was one of the primary ways that the caliph conferred legitimacy upon sultans and amirs, such an act meant that the vizier had played the caliph’s role in dynastic politics. His replacement, Ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, ran into resistance from the populace, though, on account of his participation in al-Basāsīrī’s revolt. People put up notices in the mosques cursing those who followed his orders, and Fakhr al-Dawla was re-appointed vizier in a triumphal procession to the *dār al-khilāfa*. A caliphal order denounced the “slander” of the vizier, and Ibn al-Jawzī quotes a poem beginning, “Justice has returned to its place....”²¹⁹ Ibn al-Athīr omits this story and writes that the vizier was only re-instated after his prospective replacement died.²²⁰ As in the case of other Ḥanbalīs such as Abū Ya‘la ibn al-Farrā‘, Ibn al-Jawzī’s advocacy for obedience to the caliphate did not entail support of caliphal autocracy or a belief in caliph’s infallibility. Ibn al-Jawzī, close to the vizier Ibn Hubayra in his own times, backed a powerful vizierate and sought to vindicate the Banū Jahīr in his chronicle.

²¹⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Djahīr (Banū),” by Claude Cahen.

²¹⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 73.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

²²⁰ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*. p. 163.

When the caliph al-Qā'im died in 467/1075, he had reigned longer than any preceding Abbasid caliph. The decline of his health coincided with natural disasters in Baghdad, an event that Ibn al-Jawzī symbolically links to the caliph's sickness. At the beginning of 467/1075, the caliph was bled by a doctor and regained his health, Ibn al-Jawzī reports, but this was followed by the terrible flood that struck Baghdad. Then an epidemic struck the whole region from western Persia to Palestine, resulting in 10,000 deaths.²²¹ The link is not explicitly stated, but it is unmistakable, because such natural disasters are conventionally reported at the end of a year's entry. Ibn al-Athīr reports no such flood for 467/1075. He does, however, posit a different, but equally metaphorical interpretation of the preceding year's events, in which an even greater flood struck Baghdad. Ibn al-Athīr writes that wine and female singers had become prevalent, but when a man broke a singer's lute strings in protest, he was beaten by the soldier accompanying her. After receiving a complaint, the caliph wrote to the sultan about the matter and asked that the taverns be shut down. Ibn al-Athīr writes, "The flood was God's reply before the arrival of any letter to the sultan."²²² Interestingly, this story portrays the Saljūqs in a negative light, in a manner reminiscent of Ibn al-Jawzī, despite the fact that Ibn al-Athīr is broadly pro-Saljūq. Such incidents show how similar such chronicles could be, even though their authors write in different styles and come from different backgrounds. Both chroniclers invest even natural occurrences with religio-political significance, and Ibn al-Jawzī does so with particular reference to the caliphate.

²²¹ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 161.

²²² Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*. p. 184.

These sorts of protests against the Saljūq military in Baghdad point to the relative weakness of their presence in Baghdad, in contrast to the Buyid era, where similar protests against Buyid soldiers are rarely recorded in the chronicles. While *fitnas* are recorded less frequently under Tughril Beg, the caliph seems to have maintained control of the city police. In 458/1065, the Alid *naqīb* led the Shī‘as of Karkh in mourning on ‘Āshūrā’. When a *fitna* broke out, some mourners were arrested by Saljūq soldiers, but the Shī‘as protested that the police chief (*ṣāhib al-shurṭa*) had authorized them to mourn. The caliph then ordered the Saljūq troops to release the Shī‘as who had been arrested.²²³ The police chief in this passage is connected to the caliph and at odds with the Saljūqs.

The Saljūq military official who administered a province was known as a *shihna*. In Ibn al-Jawzī’s chronicle in particular, the Saljūq *shihna* in Baghdad seems to have been under constant pressure by the population, and the caliph obviously retained his power over events in the capital. Baghdad is the only city dealt with extensively by Ibn al-Jawzī, so it is difficult to know the caliph’s role in other places, but whereas the Buyid amirs asserted their control over Baghdad’s urban factions, the Saljūq *shihna* appears relatively incompetent at keeping the peace in Baghdad after the death of Tughril Beg. In 478/1086, when the *shihna* tried to quell a *fitna*, a Hashemite was killed in the neighborhood Bāb al-Baṣra. Enraged, the people went to the caliph’s *dīwān* (governing council) and cursed the *shihna*. They closed their shops until the *shihna* was forced to reconcile with them.²²⁴ A little later, in 479/1086, when a soldier was killed in Karkh, the *shihna* raided and plundered the home of the Alid *naqīb*, where some of the suspects had

²²³ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 94-95.

²²⁴ Ibid., 242.

already fled. In response, the Sunnīs and the Shī‘a united against the *shihna*, and the other Turks arrested him until he returned what he had taken from the home of the Alid *naqīb*.²²⁵ Finally, in 482/1089, when the *shihna* was unable to halt a *fitna* between Bāb al-Baṣra and Karkh, he was forced to call for the aid of the caliph’s *ḥājib al-bāb* (chamberlain of the gate) and various *qādīs*, who used the authority of the caliph to calm the situation.²²⁶ Here again, the *ḥājib* appears to have some policing function. Nonetheless, this was not a particularly unstable time in Baghdad. Sometimes, *fitnas* were quelled by the caliph’s personnel alone, and at other times, the *shihna* was effective at keeping the peace. Still, it is surprising how ineffective the *shihna* was when he did intervene.

There is some evidence that the caliph maintained some measure of control elsewhere in Iraq as well. Ibn al-Athīr’s less localized historical orientation is helpful in this regard. In 464/1071, the *shihna* of Baghdad, Aytikīn al-Sulaymanī, temporarily deputized his son as *shihna*, and the son then killed one of the caliph’s palace *mamlūks* (military slaves). Determined to strike back, the caliph knew that al-Sulaymanī had been given the northern Iraqi city of Tikrīt as an *iqṭā‘* by the vizier Nizām al-Mulk. Al-Qā’im then wrote to the governor of the region, ordering him not to hand over the *iqṭā‘*. “In conformity with the commands of the caliph al-Qā’im,” Ibn al-Athīr writes, al-Sulaymanī was replaced as *shihna* by another commander, Sa‘d al-Dawla.²²⁷ What is interesting here is not only that the caliph could get the *shihna* of Baghdad removed, but also that he

²²⁵ Ibid., 255.

²²⁶ Ibid., 281-282.

²²⁷ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 174.

could issue effective orders to the governor of another city, even though military power was in the hands of the Saljūqs.

A second example of such involvement in Iraqi affairs comes from Ibn al-Jawzī in the reign of al-Muqtadī (d. 487/1094), the son and successor of al-Qā'im. In 479/1086, Ibn al-Jawzī writes, "The master craftsman (*'arīf al-ṣannā'*) ... and the craftsmen with him entered the *dār al-khilāfa* according to custom." They said that they had been unjustly punished by Ibn Zurayq the "supervisor (*nāẓir*) in Wāsiṭ," so the caliph removed Ibn Zurayq from his office.²²⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī obviously included the story to emphasize the caliph's magnanimity toward the *ra'īyya* (subjects, literally "flock") even in small matters. More importantly for our purposes, the story also shows that the caliph held administrative power over provincial cities, even though an Iraqi city like Wāsiṭ was held as an *iqṭā'* by the Mazyadids of Ḥilla in this period.²²⁹ It is difficult to discern what kind of *nāẓir* had been appointed in Wāsiṭ, but the appointment seems to have come from the caliph. Ibn al-Jawzī mentions other interventions in Iraqi politics that same year, such as when the Mazyadid ruler made an unsuccessful request to be received by the caliph's *dīwān*, and when the caliph distributed medicine to plague victims in Iraq. Such stories are even more difficult to interpret, but regardless, they show the caliph was still very much involved in Iraqi affairs and administration even at the height of Saljūq power.

More than anything else, the historians portray al-Muqtadī as a morally upright ruler who implemented a stricter enforcement of the *sharī'a* (sacred law). Both chroniclers are in full agreement about this. In fact, much of Ibn al-Athīr's obituary of al-

²²⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 256-257.

²²⁹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Wāsiṭ," by R. Darley-Doran.

Muqtadī is simply lifted from Ibn al-Jawzī. Speaking of the caliph's overall accomplishments, Ibn al-Jawzī praises the caliph's ban on ferries on the Tigris that carried women and men at the same time and his tightening of bathhouse regulations.²³⁰ This is echoed by Ibn al-Athīr, who also speaks of the caliph's expulsion of "singing girls and loose women" from Baghdad.²³¹ Al-Muqtadī's program of moral revitalization began early in his reign. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muqtadī struck a blow in 469/1077 for the *sharī'a* and against the Saljūq *shiḥna*. He closed down the "houses of sin" (i.e., the brothels), even though they were part of the *iqṭā'* of the *shiḥna*. The caliph compensated him with 1000 dinars, and the *shiḥna* received another sum from Nizām al-Mulk.²³² While this did not help relations with the Saljūqs, al-Muqtadī was able to assert his authority over Baghdad.

The caliph's regulations concerning Christians and Jews were viewed as an integral part of his moral program. In 478/1086-7, al-Muqtadī issued a decree ordering the demolition of Jewish homes located near Friday mosques.²³³ Dissimulation – the attempt of *dhimmīs* to pass as Muslims – was another common concern in these years, and Ibn al-Jawzī meticulously notes the caliph's efforts to prevent it, down to individual cases. In 484/1091, al-Muqtadī issued strict regulations requiring that *dhimmīs* wear the *ghayyār* (clothing for non-Muslims), *zunnār* (a waist belt for non-Muslims),²³⁴ and lead dirhams emblazoned with the word "*dhimmī*". As a result, one of the caliph's leading

²³⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 166.

²³¹ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 272.

²³² Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 184.

²³³ Ibid., 242-243.

²³⁴ Lane, Edward William. *Arabic-English Lexicon*. Vol 6. Lahore: Islamic Book Centre, 1978. p. 2316.

bureaucrats, Ibn Mawṣilāyyā, is said to have converted to Islam.²³⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī's discussion of these decrees is, of course, not a simple matter of a chronicler reporting what happened. Any number of administrative measures may have been passed over by the chronicler by virtue of their sheer ordinariness, but since Ibn al-Jawzī is concerned with the conformity of *dhimmīs* to law as an index of social order, al-Muqtadī's implementation of these rules earns a special notice.

Concomitant with this program of moral revitalization was a program of urban renewal, pursued by both the caliphs and the sultans. Tughril Beg rebuilt Karkh after taking Baghdad,²³⁶ perhaps a way to conciliate it after the defeat of al-Basāsīrī, and Malikshah was also active in patronizing building projects in Baghdad, as we will see. Nizām al-Mulk built the famous Nizāmiyya *madrasa* (school), and the rival vizier Tāj al-Mulk built a Tājiyya *madrasa*. There was, in effect, a rivalry between the Abbasids and the Saljūqs in patronizing building projects, and al-Muqtadī was particularly active in this regard. Ibn al-Jawzī credits him with a range of building projects throughout Baghdad, especially on the eastern side. He “erected astounding buildings inside the palace,” Ibn al-Jawzī writes. This marks a new theme in his writing, because Ibn al-Jawzī does not mention similar building projects in the Buyid era, other than religious architecture, and even in that domain, al-Muqtadī excelled: the Jāmi‘ al-Qaṣr (the Friday mosque adjoining the caliphal mosque) was completed in 475/1083.²³⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī gives the caliph credit for the development of a number of neighborhoods, among them a “Muqtadiyya” quarter

²³⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 292.

²³⁶ Ibid., 62.

²³⁷ Ibid., 224.

of Baghdad, which was located among the neighborhoods south and east of the palace, most of which had also been built by al-Muqtadī.²³⁸ In 479/1086-7, the caliph cleared the streets of mud, bought houses for slum dwellers in Muqtadiyya and demolished their huts. That same year, Ibn al-Jawzī mentions a *khān al-khalīfa* (caravanserai of the caliph) near the palace.²³⁹ The next year, al-Muqtadī showed both his beneficence and his control over the administration of Baghdad by abolishing various “taxes and the *mukūs*.”²⁴⁰ The *mukūs* were a common kind of customs duty that were widely considered unjust across the Islamic world,²⁴¹ and had been instituted in Baghdad by Tughril Beg.²⁴² This decree combined al-Muqtadī’s urban reforms with the moral revitalization that he advocated, so it is not surprising that Ibn al-Jawzī records it. For his part, Ibn al-Athīr gives the caliph credit for the flourishing of Baghdad, and al-Muqtadī is judged positively for his promotion of cleanliness. He credits the caliph with revitalizing a range of neighborhoods.²⁴³ In contrast to Buyid chroniclers, Ibn al-Athīr shows great interest in the daily life of Baghdad.

The authority of the caliph over the Islamic community is without parallel for Ibn al-Jawzī, but even in matters of power, the image that emerges from his chronicles is that of the caliphs and sultans as peers. Both engaged in building projects, intervened in religious affairs, and tried to keep the peace. Ibn al-Jawzī shows the caliph’s diplomatic role in the realm of high military politics in the case of the battle of Manzikert in

²³⁸ Le Strange. *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*. p. 283.

²³⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 258-260.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 267.

²⁴¹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Maks,” by W. Björkman.

²⁴² Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 142.

²⁴³ Ibid., 272.

463/1071, which famously opened Anatolia to Saljūq penetration. Prior to the battle, a truce (*hudna*) had been mediated by the caliph al-Qā'im. When war resumed, the Byzantine emperor (or the "King of Rome," as Ibn al-Jawzī calls him) was defeated and taken captive. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that the emperor had staked his hopes before the battle on peace negotiations through the caliph.²⁴⁴ Ironically, Ibn al-Jawzī has the emperor refer to the caliph as *khalīfat Allāh* (deputy of God), so that the Christian emperor is doctrinally correct in his understanding of the Islamic caliphate. So, while the account is in certain ways idealized, it is revealing of how Muslims of the time saw the caliphate, and it was not an unrealistic view.

Ibn al-Athīr, on the other hand, does not quite view the caliph as a full partner of the Saljuqs. The caliph is offstage for most military events, which the chronicler treats at length. However, the caliphate increased in importance in the early Saljūq period, despite the long shadow of the sultans. "The caliphate was more important than it had previously been," Ibn al-Athīr writes about the reign of al-Muqtadī.²⁴⁵ Even for this Saljūq-centered writer, the caliphs were neither sham rulers, nor were they purely symbolic. According to Ibn al-Athīr, the caliph intervened in Saljuq affairs, appointed administrators, held *iqṭā*'s, and had a role in supervising succession to the sultanate. The Abbasid caliph (and his vizier) brought about the Saljūq regime, and he became a leading arbitrator of the dynasty as it disintegrated. And when the dynasty lost control of Persia, the caliphate remained, as powerful as it had been in centuries

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 127.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 272.

XII. The Crisis of Malikshah's Entrance into Baghdad and its Aftermath

Under Malikshah, the Saljūq sultanate reached the height of its power, and like Tughril Beg and 'Aḏud al-Dawla before him, Malikshah began to consider ways to take direct control over the caliphate. Since Tughril Beg's attempt to marry the caliph's daughter had been so costly, Malikshah decided to take a different tack. Already in 475/1082, al-Muqtadī had agreed to marry Malikshah's daughter, but the process of negotiation and preparation again dragged on for years. The chroniclers do not state how early the sultan's plans to marry his daughter to al-Muqtadī had become a plan to co-opt the Abbasid caliphate, or if the marriage had been designed to accomplish that aim from the beginning. However, Ibn al-Athīr notes in 479/1086-7 without explanation that Malikshah transferred various Iraqi *iqṭā*'s to agents (sing. *wakīl*) of the caliph, such as the revenues of the canal,²⁴⁶ and one modern scholar writes that this was an attempt to win over the caliph's administration in preparation for his moves against al-Muqtadī.²⁴⁷ In the same year, Malikshah staged a triumphal entry into Baghdad. For Ibn al-Athīr, the occasion was notable for the activities of Nizām al-Mulk and the honors bestowed upon him, and a report from someone in the vizier's entourage is probably his source. Ibn al-Jawzī's account is from the point of view of Baghdad, where the festivities were preceded by a letter trumpeting Malikshah's conquests, including the recent conquest of Antioch. Ibn al-Jawzī reports that a pavilion was set up outside the *dār al-mamlaka* for the soldiers and that not a single soldier was quartered in a commoner's home. The

²⁴⁶ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 229.

²⁴⁷ Hanne, Eric. *Putting the Caliph in His Place*. Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007. p.123.

sultan patronized shrines and began building a canal for Najaf, a critical Shī‘a shrine city.²⁴⁸ Clearly, the sultan was on a charm offensive, but he did not yet reveal his intentions.

The caliph married Malikshah’s daughter in 480/1087, an occasion celebrated by both chroniclers for its pageantry. Later that year, Malikshah’s daughter gave birth to a son, known as Abū’l-Faḍl Ja‘far b. al-Muqtadī. The honeymoon, however, did not last long, because the bride’s Turkish entourage was soon thrown out of the caliphal palace. Malikshah’s daughter began to complain that the caliph was “shunning” her, and she returned to her father, with her young son in tow, after less than two years of marriage.²⁴⁹ This only played into Malikshah’s hands, and the sultan continued his efforts to win over the Baghdadi populace. He and Niẓām al-Mulk held another festival in Baghdad in 484/1092, in which the Tigris was lit up by candles and torches on boats, and the people of Baghdad went to the river carrying candles as well. Though this was a part of Malikshah’s effort to undermine the caliph, Ibn al-Jawzī still finds the ceremony impressive and includes a poem honoring the occasion.²⁵⁰ In 485/1092, Malikshah and the other leading lights of the Saljūq dynasty, such as Niẓām al-Mulk and Tāj al-Mulk, intensified their building projects in Baghdad. The sultan built markets, palaces, and began the construction of the Jāmi‘ al-Sulṭān (the Friday mosque of the sultan),²⁵¹ perhaps as an answer to the caliph’s newly completed Jāmi‘ al-Qaṣr.

²⁴⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa’l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 259.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 281.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 294-295

²⁵¹ Ibid., 298.

Events began to move quickly when Nizām al-Mulk was murdered by an Isma‘īlī “Assassin.” Accompanied by the four-year-old Ja‘far b. al-Muqtadī, Malikshah had set out for Baghdad with the intention of “disordering the rule of al-Muqtadī,” according to Ibn al-Jawzī, and he was informed of Nizām al-Mulk’s death upon his arrival. Tāj al-Mulk was made vizier, and the caliph received a message that he was to leave Baghdad at once. When he asked for a month’s time, he was told, “You cannot delay a single hour.” The caliph was given ten days through Tāj al-Mulk’s mediation, but Malikshah died a few days later.²⁵² Though Ibn al-Jawzī does not so say explicitly, the sultan’s intention had been to depose al-Muqtadī and to make Ja‘far b. al-Muqtadī caliph, thereby uniting the Abbasid and Saljūq dynasties. Once again, this project failed, and the timing was again impeccable, paralleling the way in which Tughril Beg had died shortly after marrying the caliph’s daughter. There can be no doubt that Ibn al-Jawzī intended to emphasize how ill-omened such attempts were, and the dramatic timing of the sultan’s deaths became a typical trope of the chronicler’s moral lessons.

Ibn al-Athīr omits any mention of these events or the threats against al-Muqtadī. He was, after all, connected to the Zangids, a Saljūq offshoot. Ibn al-Athīr admired Malikshah greatly, and declared, “No goal eluded him, and his days passed in general security, all-embracing peace and uninterrupted justice.”²⁵³ Ibn al-Athīr did not want to tarnish the great sultan’s reputation with an account of his final intrigue against the Abbasids. This is in contrast to Ibn al-Jawzī, who admired Malikshah personally but

²⁵² Ibid., 299.

²⁵³ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 259.

expressed doubts about the sultan's orthodoxy in his obituary.²⁵⁴ In any case, Malikshah's death brought about serious instability among the Saljūqs, and both chronicles record al-Muqtadī's role in the struggles that followed. When Turkan Khātūn, the powerful wife of Malikshah, asked that the *khuṭba* be said in her son Maḥmūd's name, marking his official appointment as sultan by the caliph, the caliph assented on the condition that Tāj al-Mulk be made his vizier and that another amir lead the army. Turkan Khātūn tried to refuse these conditions, but the caliph argued that the *sharī'a* required it, and the famous Islamic theologian al-Ghazālī wrote to her in support of the caliph.²⁵⁵ Tāj al-Mulk was eventually defeated and executed by supporters of a rival candidate to the sultanate, Barkyārūq, but the episode nicely illustrates the impact of the caliphate and its legitimacy in purely political terms. Similarly, when Tutush, another son of Malikshah, wrote to the caliph requesting that the *khuṭba* be said in his name in Baghdad, the caliph issued a spirited response, writing that Tutush would never be recognized, not even if he "took the world under [his] possession and the treasure houses of Isfahan," even if "none [his] brothers remained."²⁵⁶ Barkyārūq's name was inserted in the *khuṭba* only after he had sent the requisite money for the *bay'a* (oath).²⁵⁷

Al-Muqtadī died in 487/1094, shortly after recognizing Barkyārūq, and he had been the third in a line of effective caliphs. The Abbasids were by then linked to the Saljūqs in a relationship that was seen as mutually beneficial. Another coincidence of timing in the deaths of the sultan, caliph, and viziers was noticed by the chroniclers and

²⁵⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. 309-314.

²⁵⁵ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 262.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 165.

²⁵⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 17. p. 10.

taken as another sign of the bond among them. When the pattern repeated itself a few decades later, with the death of al-Muqtadī's successor al-Mustazhir in 512/1118, Ibn al-Athīr writes, "It is a strange coincidence that when Sultan Alp Arslān died, al-Qā'im bi-Amr Allāh died after him, and when Sultan Malikshah died, al-Muqtadī bi-Amr Allāh died after him, and when Sultan Muḥammad died al-Mustazhir Billah died after him."²⁵⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī reports a similar cluster of deaths following the demise of the caliph al-Muqtafī in 555/1160.²⁵⁹ The caliphs and sultans mirrored each other. Each drew strength from the other, and for the chroniclers, even their deaths reflected that.

XIII. The Religious Power and Influence of the 11th Century Caliphate

The intervention of al-Ghazālī in Saljūq high politics is just one glimpse into the dynamic intellectual atmosphere of the time. The later Abbasid caliphate was a time of religious conflict and creativity in religious thought. Conflicts occurred both within Sunnism and between Sunnism and Shī'ism, while eleventh century Baghdad was home to many of Islam's greatest thinkers. Baghdad was a major center for the Ḥanbalī revival, and it also hosted major thinkers from the opposing stream of A'ṣharī theology (orthodox theology defended by rational means), including al-Baqillanī (d. 403/1013) and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). The Abbasids played a major role in this religious history, and religious conflicts had more than spiritual consequences, because by Saljūq times religious conflict within Sunnism was at the heart of politics as never before. While this conflict meant a new kind of factional politics, the caliph could bring to bear the power

²⁵⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, 'Izz al-Dīn. *al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta'rīkh*. Vol. 10. Beirut : Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1967. p. 535.

²⁵⁹ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 17. p. 144.

over religious affairs that he had developed since Buyid times, including appointments to judgeships, the office of *naqīb* and other positions.

One of the surest powers that any caliph had was the appointment of judges, which was simultaneously of religious and administrative importance. As we have seen, even al-Muṭṭaʿ was able to retain control of appointments to the post of *qāḍī al-quḍāt* (chief judge). In practice, the Abbasids and Buyids were forced to share power over judgeships. Ibn al-Jawzī reports in 356/967 that two judges were appointed *qāḍī* in Baghdad, but neither was given full authority over the whole city. One *qāḍī* administered western Baghdad as well as the Buyids' *dār al-mamlaka* on the eastern side, while another *qāḍī* administered the rest of eastern Baghdad.²⁶⁰ Not coincidentally, eastern Baghdad also included the caliphal palace, so this probably meant that Baghdad was being divided into two spheres of influence. While Baghdad was not normally divided this way, this episode does show how the Buyids and Abbasids shared power. The time of ʿAḍud al-Dawla marks once again a high point of the amirate; he appointed a chief *qāḍī* who lived in Fārs and sent representatives to administer Baghdad.²⁶¹ This was exceptional, though, and the Abbasids' embrace of Ḥanbalīsm and Ḥanbalī judges near the end of the reign al-Qādir marked a “radical realignment” of the schools of law in Baghdad.²⁶² As we have seen, the Abbasids always prevented the appointment of Shīʿas as chief *qāḍī*.

²⁶⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk waʾl-umam*. Vol. 14. 356 AH.

²⁶¹ Miskawayh. *Tarājīb al-umam*. Vol V. p. 438-439.

²⁶² Donohue. *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq*, p. 299.

The caliphs held power over the administration of justice, but this was still a contested domain. Under the Buyids, the cities of Shīrāz and Rayy had autonomous judgeships, so while the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* was in Baghdad, this official did not normally appoint judges in Persia.²⁶³ This arrangement is confirmed in the Saljūq era by Ibn al-Jawzī, who writes that a *qāḍī* was appointed by the sultan in 515/1121 “to the judgeship in all lands except Iraq, in deference to the *qāḍī al-quḍāt*.”²⁶⁴ Within Iraq, the caliph did exercise his rights, and so Ibn al-Jawzī records in 485/1092 that the *qāḍī* of Wāsiṭ was summoned to Baghdad and dismissed.²⁶⁵ No Ḥanbalī judge attained the post of chief *qāḍī* until the end of the 11th century, however, despite the fact that the caliphs made the appointments. In 420/1029, Ibn Mākūlā, a Shāfi’ī who had been appointed *qāḍī* of Basra by a previous chief *qāḍī*, was appointed *qāḍī al-quḍāt* by al-Qā’im.²⁶⁶ He was succeeded by al-Damghānī in 447/1056, just after the Saljūqs first entered Baghdad. He was a Ḥanafī backed by – though not appointed by – the Saljūq vizier al-Kundurī.²⁶⁷ Predictably, Ibn al-Jawzī criticizes him, going so far to call him “easy of morals,” gluttonous and overweight.²⁶⁸ He writes that al-Damghānī attempted to secure his son’s succession in office by distributing money. The caliph instead turned to another *qāḍī*, Abū Bakr al-Shāmī, and the people “rejoiced.”²⁶⁹

²⁶³ Ibid., 300-301.

²⁶⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*. Vol. 17. p. 193.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. Vol. 16. p. 301.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 201.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 261.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 259-262.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 240.

The latter was far more to Ibn al-Jawzī's liking, since al-Shāmī was a Ḥanbalī and a protégé of Abū Ya'la b. al-Farrā'.²⁷⁰ Ibn al-Farrā' was one of the leading lights of the Ḥanbalī movement of 11th century Baghdad, and his career is indicative of *qāḍīs* of the time. A member of the circle of the vizier Ibn al-Muslima, he was appointed *qāḍī* of the caliph's *ḥarīm* in 447/1055.²⁷¹ He was later appointed to the judgeships of Ḥarrān and Ḥulwān in modern-day Turkey and Iran respectively, a sign of how broadly defined "Iraq" was when it came to appointments from the chief *qāḍī* in Baghdad. His son wrote the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (Lives of the Ḥanbalīs), which described the Ḥanbalī revival of the time, and Ibn al-Farrā' himself wrote a Ḥanbalī version of *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭaniyya*. One of Ibn al-Athīr's most startling statements of his own religious viewpoint is his obituary of Ibn al-Farrā'. Echoing A'sharī criticisms, he writes that Ibn al-Farrā's books contain "evidence of unadulterated anthropomorphism" (*tajsīr*) and cites a Ḥanbalī scholar who allegedly said, "Abu Yala al-Farra has covered the Hanbalites in shit that no water can clean off."²⁷² Ibn al-Athīr, like the Saljūqs, backed the rational theology of the A'sharīs, while Ibn al-Jawzī followed the Abbasids in backing the Ḥanbalīs. The two leading chroniclers of Saljūq times were thus utterly at odds religiously, even if both stayed within the bounds of Sunnism.

Despite the turbulence of these controversies, the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* and other *qāḍīs* remained powerful and respected figures. It should be pointed out that al-Damghānī's son did eventually take his father's post. The family held the position for most of the 12th

²⁷⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 17. p. 27.

²⁷¹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Ibn al-Farrā'," by H. Laoust.

²⁷² Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 159.

century, into the reign of al-Mustaḍī' (d. 575/1180), but to describe them only as *qāḍīs* would distort their role. The family was close to the Abbasids, and the post of *qāḍī al-quḍāt* carried sufficient prestige for them to take on a number of missions, whether diplomatic or administrative. The chief *qāḍī* could act temporarily as the caliph's vizier as well. This was the case at the beginning of reign of al-Mustarshid (d. 529/1135), when the second al-Damghānī chief *qāḍī* was deputized to give the oath to the caliph, a ceremony traditionally led by the vizier.²⁷³ Another member of the family began as a *qāḍī* in Karkh, but then became *ḥājib al-bāb* (chamberlain of the gate), one of the most important officials in the palace.²⁷⁴ Since the caliph's leading *ḥājib* appears to have had a role in keeping the peace in Baghdad, perhaps his experience in Karkh was thought beneficial. Ibn al-Raṭbī, another politically active *qāḍī* who went on numerous diplomatic missions, held the same position in 410/1116.²⁷⁵ Further details are difficult to ascertain, but it is clear that *qāḍīs* often took on roles that were political, not simply judicial.

Religious politics meant more than judgeships, however. Conflicts between the Ḥanbalīs and A'sharīs, who were associated with the Shafī'ī legal school (*madhhab*), permeated the politics of the time. Although Isma'īlī Shī'ism remained a threat, the Abbasids were not as involved in fighting it as the Saljūqs, who fought the "Assassins" in Persia. The Sunnī-Shī'a conflict had been of far greater significance in Buyid-era Baghdad than any conflicts within Sunnism, but by the Saljūq era, the rivalry between

²⁷³ Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta' rīkh*. Vol. 10. p. 536-537.

²⁷⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 226.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 146.

A‘sharīs and Ḥanbalīs was more important. *Fitnas* began to occur between these two groups, even though they had previously been almost exclusively between the Sunnīs and the Shī‘as. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, in 470/1087 a student from the Niẓāmiyya *madrassa* went into a major market and started calling the Ḥanbalīs *kuffār* (infidels) and throwing bricks, which unleashed a *fitna* that gave Niẓām al-Mulk, a resident in the area, quite a scare.²⁷⁶ A few years later, an A‘sharī teacher from the same *madrassa* became involved in an argument with Ḥanbalīs and led a group of men to attack the home of Ibn al-Farrā’, a member of the caliph’s inner circle.²⁷⁷

Such disputes became a focal point of regional politics, and the Abbasids and Saljūqs were often at odds, though it was mainly their viziers that became involved. In Ibn al-Athīr’s account of the 470 *fitna*, no one is identified as the culprit until the following year, when “the party of Niẓām al-Mulk” accused the caliph’s vizier Fakhr al-Dawla and the caliph’s palace eunuchs (*khudum*) of stirring up trouble.²⁷⁸ Niẓām al-Mulk asked that the vizier be dismissed, and so Fakhr al-Dawla was replaced by Abū Shujā‘ al-Rūdhrawārī, the chronicler who wrote a continuation of Miskawayh’s *Tarājīb al-umam*. While Ibn al-Athīr writes that while Fakhr al-Dawla reconciled with Niẓām al-Mulk, he did not regain his position. The friction between Niẓām al-Mulk and the Banū Jahīr did not end there, however. ‘Amīd al-Dawla, Fakhr al-Dawla’s son, was dismissed from the vizierate in 476/1083, and Ibn al-Athīr writes that ‘Amīd al-Dawla had taken up residence near the Niẓāmiyya and beat drums at prayer at prayer time so as to drown out

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 191.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 207.

²⁷⁸ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 195.

the call to prayer. He was given “an enormous sum of money which persuaded him to stop that.”²⁷⁹ Though Ibn al-Jawzī does not mention this, it is the cause of the vizier’s deposition.

The Nizāmiyya *madrasa*, of course, was Nizām al-Mulk’s major contribution to the religious politics of Baghdad, and while the school is sometimes seen as the prototype of the medieval *madrasa*, a groundbreaking article by George Makdisi on institutions of learning in Baghdad has put it in its wider context, which was a flourishing intellectual scene in Saljūq-era Baghdad.²⁸⁰ This is something that was obviously a part of Ibn al-Jawzī’s everyday life. The longest-standing institutions of learning were the major mosques, the *jāmi*’s. The caliph appointed the teachers as well as the prayer leaders of the three main mosques of Baghdad, all of which exerted a great influence.²⁸¹ Obviously, control over the *khaṭībs* brought with it the power to confer political legitimacy, or stated differently, the power to officially “appoint” a sultan. The teachers at these mosques were appointed for life, and they led study circles known as *ḥalqas*. One student reported that class sizes were so large that the mosque employed assistants to relay the words of the teacher to the students.²⁸² Other institutions included the “shrine college” of the jurist Abū Ḥanīfa and *madrasas* founded by Ḥanbalīs such as Ibn al-Farrā’ or the theologian Ibn ‘Aqīl, among many others. Makdisi argues that although the Nizāmiyya was unique

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 209.

²⁸⁰ Makdisi, George. “Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. Vol. 24, No. 1 (1961): 1-2.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁸² Ibid., 6.

in having living quarters for its own students, it was not any larger than the shrine college of Abū Ḥanīfa, and the endowments of the two were similar.²⁸³

Furthermore, because of the degree of his involvement in the intellectual affairs of Baghdad, the caliph was drawn into disputes among scholars, including accusations of heresy. The most famous such case in Saljūq-era is Ibn ‘Aqīl, a Ḥanbalī scholar whose testimony is frequently cited by Ibn al-Jawzī. Ibn ‘Aqīl, a professor at the Jāmi‘ al-Manṣūr, began to admire the Islamic mystic al-Ḥallāj and was soon accused of Mu‘tazilism. He went into exile, but returned in 465/1072. Though al-Qā’im had not attempted to arrest him, Ibn ‘Aqīl signed a full and binding (in the case of recidivism) retraction of any heretical beliefs in the caliph’s *dīwān*.²⁸⁴ Thus, the caliph was not formally charged with maintaining orthodoxy, but in practice, he managed doctrinal disputes.

As for the Nizāmiyya itself, though the Saljūq vizier was the guiding force behind it and appointed its professors during his lifetime, Makdisi shows that the caliph had a hand in its affairs from its founding.²⁸⁵ Another sign of the caliph’s involvement in the Nizāmiyya comes from its most famous exponent, the A‘sharī theologian al-Ghazālī. He writes in his autobiographical work *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* that when he decided to give up his post as the leading professor at the Nizāmiyya and live as a *ṣūfī* in Syria, he had to take precautions so that “the caliph and a group of my associates did not learn of my decision.”²⁸⁶ Al-Ghazālī, the jurisconsult of the Nizāmiyya, co-operated with the

²⁸³ Ibid., 44-45.

²⁸⁴ Makdisi. *Ibn ‘Aqil et la resurgence de l’islam traditionaliste au XIe siècle.* p. 120.

²⁸⁵ Makdisi. “Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad.” p. 32-36.

²⁸⁶ Al-Ghazālī, ‘Abū al-Ḥamid Muḥammad. *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, Ed. F. Jabre, Beirut 1969. p. 37.

caliph politically, so it has even been speculated that one reason he left Baghdad was that he feared the consequences of Saljūq dynastic conflicts, which he and the caliph were both involved in.²⁸⁷ In any case, the caliph's influence over the Nizāmiyya grew, and by the early 12th century, he had sole responsibility for appointing its professors.

One final example of the religious institutions of Baghdad is worth noting. The office of the *naqīb*, famously patronized by the Buyids, did not recede with the fall of the Buyid amirs. Rather than suppressing the Alid *naqībs* for their Shī'a connections, the caliphs instead raised the status of the Abbasid *naqībs*. In 389/999, al-Qādir appointed a new Abbasid *naqīb* and gave him the title *naqīb al-nuqabā'* – *naqīb* of *naqībs* – in an attempt to raise his status over the prestigious Alid *naqīb*, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.²⁸⁸ The Alid *naqīb* was not immediately shorn of his privileges either. The Buyids had given the Alid *naqībs* of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī's al-Musawī family two further offices: *ṣāhib al-mazālim* (head of the appeals court) and *amīr al-ḥajj* (commander of the pilgrimage).²⁸⁹ In 456/1064, after the Saljūq entrance into Baghdad, al-Qā'im appointed an Alid *naqīb* and confirmed him as in these two posts.²⁹⁰ The normal duties of both *naqībs* involved supervising the legal issues of those of the Prophet's lineage, because the *naqīb* was meant to “protect people of noble lineage from being subjected to the authority of those whose lineage and nobility is not equal to theirs,” as al-Māwardī puts it.²⁹¹ In practice, they probably also supervised certain potentially lucrative endowments; Ibn al-Jawzī lists

²⁸⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “Al-Ghazālī,” by Montgomery W. Watt.

²⁸⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 15. p. 14.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 14. 380 AH.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 16. p. 89.

²⁹¹ Al-Māwardī. *al-Aḥkam as-sultaniyya: The Laws of Islamic Governance*, p. 49.

Abū Barakāt al-Musawī as the *naqīb* of the shrine of Sāmarrā.²⁹² It is likely that the *naqībs* in Baghdad had similar endowments, and even that lesser *naqībs* were subject to the authority of their more famous relatives.

In the succeeding decades, the Abbasid *naqīb* became one of the most politically active officials in Baghdad, rivaling the vizier and chief *qāḍī*. The Abbasid *naqībs* were particularly favored by the caliphs as diplomats. In the negotiations over Tughril Beg's proposed nuptials, the *naqīb* Ṭirād ibn al-Zaynabī was sent as one of the caliph's first envoys.²⁹³ In 471/1078-1079, he was sent to Isfahan by the vizier 'Amīd al-Dawla to talk with Nizām al-Mulk in order to secure 'Amīd al-Dawla's vizierate. Another *naqīb*, Abū'l-Ḥusayn b. al-Zaynabī (d. 512/1118), was, according to Ibn al-Jawzī's obituary, *naqīb* of both the Alids and the Abbasids for a time, and the caliph sent him on missions to the *mulūk al-aṭraf* ("kings of the fringes," an expression perhaps suggestive of how Baghdadis viewed the outside world).²⁹⁴ No Abbasid *naqīb* was ever more powerful than Alī b. Ṭirād al-Zaynabī (d. 538/1144), who was involved in many of the political conflicts of the early 12th century. As the caliph's military power emerged in Iraq, 'Alī b. Ṭirād conducted diplomatic missions as *naqīb*. He became the vizier of al-Mustarshid (d. 529/1135) and was a key figure in the unstable reign of al-Rāshid (d. 530/1136). Finally, he was al-Muqtafi's (d. 555/1160) vizier until the caliph grew distrustful and removed him. Even after his fall, the Abbasid *naqībs* retained their place among the Baghdadi notables and the caliph's inner circle. The office of the Abbasid *naqīb* was another

²⁹² Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*. Vol. 16. p. 253.

²⁹³ Ibid., 65-66.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., Vol. 17. p. 253.

institution closely connected to the caliphate through which the caliphs asserted their prestige and authority, and the office proved to be politically important.

XIV. Al-Mustarshid and Dubays b. Sadaqa, the Caliph's Enemy

The late Saljūq period in the 12th century saw the re-emergence of the caliphate as a military power in Iraq. The caliphate's overall revival began under al-Qādir and was not negatively affected by the Saljūqs, but when the Saljūqs began to war among themselves, this provided even more opportunities to the caliph. Ibn al-Jawzī relates that during the fighting after the death of Malikshah the *khutba* in Baghdad was said in the name of the caliph al-Mustazhir only, and no Saljūq or any other amir was mentioned.²⁹⁵ This was possibly the first time that this had happened since the era of 'Aḍud al-Dawla. The caliph who succeeded al-Muqtadī was al-Mustazhir (d. 512/1118), who was not yet sixteen years old when his reign began. The reign was characterized by political instability among the Saljūqs. Al-Ghazālī dedicated his *Kitāb al-Mustazhirī* against the Isma'īlī "Assassins" to the young caliph, probably in an effort to get him to work with the Saljūqs.²⁹⁶ The Banū Jahīr remained ensconced in the vizierate for most of his reign. 'Amīd al-Dawla fell from power dramatically in 493/1100 as a result of the intrigue of Niẓām al-Mulk's son, Mu'ayyad al-Mulk. According to Ibn al-Athīr, 'Amīd al-Dawla employed a Saljūq *mamlūk* (military slave) who ultimately betrayed him.²⁹⁷ The real political consequences of Saljūq instability, however, were still to come.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 80.

²⁹⁶ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "al-Mustazhir," by Carole Hillenbrand.

²⁹⁷ Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rīkh*. Vol. 10. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1967. p. 298.

The reign of al-Mustarshid (d. 529/1135) brought a military revival of the caliphate unlike anything since the early 10th century. An ambitious military ruler in Iraq, Dubays b. Şadaqa of the Mazyadid dynasty, began a long conflict with al-Mustarshid that ultimately strengthened the caliphate, even though it ended in the deaths of both Dubays and the caliph. Regarding the origins of the conflicts, Ibn al-Jawzī writes that the Mazyadid dynasty had roots that stretched deep into the Buyid period, but the first conflicts he notes were in the time of al-Mustaẓhir. Dubays had inserted the name of the Saljūq Muḥammad rather than that of the sultan Barkyāruq in the *khutba* in Ḥilla, and the caliph fined his properties in Baghdad 10,000 dinars.²⁹⁸ There was nonetheless a *modus vivendi* until the reign of al-Mustarshid, when Dubays harbored the caliph's brother Abū'l-Ḥasan, a potential pretender. In 512/1118-1119, al-Mustarshid sent the *naqīb* 'Alī b. Ṭirād, but Dubays insisted that the caliph's brother was an honored "guest."²⁹⁹ The next year, Abū'l-Ḥasan had gained power in Wāsiṭ and was even levying taxes.³⁰⁰ In this case, Dubays did send troops to arrest Abū'l-Ḥasan upon the caliph's request, but Dubays had not become an ally of the caliph. In 516/1122, al-Mustarshid invited the Saljūq sultan Maḥmūd to stay in Baghdad and protect it from Dubays' raiding. When that did not work, al-Mustarshid continued his diplomacy by "ordering" ʿĪl-Ghāzī, an amir in Syria, to remove Dubays.³⁰¹ The caliph did not receive any outside help. To make matters worse, the Mazyadids were Shī'as, and Ibn al-Jawzī reports that the

²⁹⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, Vol. 17. p. 208.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 162-163.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 171.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 192-197.

companions of the Prophet (*al-ṣaḥāba*) were cursed in Ḥilla at this time.³⁰² Thus, the chronicler makes the case that the *causus belli* was clear.

Since the Saljūqs were unable to provide much military aid at this time, the caliph was forced to start planning his own military action. He had already used his own troops to suppress groups of *‘ayyarūn* who Ibn al-Jawzī says were marauding throughout Iraq.³⁰³ The chronicler does not say how al-Mustarshid formed his army, but his account of the caliph’s departure from Baghdad emphasizes his religio-political legitimacy. In 516/1123, Ibn al-Jawzī notes, the caliph undertook preparations for battle wearing the *burda*, the mantle of the Prophet, and the *ṭarḥa*, a muslin shawl associated with *qāḍīs* (similar to the *ṭaylasān*).³⁰⁴ Dubays’ army, on the other hand, demonstrated its dangerous infidelity by the presence of military musicians, while the only sounds emerging from the caliph’s army were those of the Qur’ān, prayer, and weeping.³⁰⁵ The caliph defeated Dubays in battle and returned triumphantly to Baghdad. The event is recorded in detail, and al-Mustarshid obviously embodies for Ibn al-Jawzī many of his ideals of the caliphate: the ability to suppress the rebellions of the Shī‘a and *‘ayyarūn*, the application of the *sharī‘a*, and independence from outside control.

In 525/1131, Dubays was captured by Zangī, the atabeg of Mosul, whom the Saljūqs had installed as *shihna* of Iraq in part to counter the growing power of the caliph. While Zangī might have been expected to do away with Dubays, he instead made Dubays one of his top lieutenants. This put the historical patrons of Ibn al-Athīr’s family in

³⁰² Ibid., 209.

³⁰³ Ibid., 185-186.

³⁰⁴ Dozy. *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les Arabes*. p. 254-255.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 216.

conflict with Ibn al-Jawzī's patrons, the Abbasid caliphs, so the subsequent struggle provides a useful contrast between Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Athīr. Since the former is closely connected to the Abbasids and the latter to the Zangids, their views of the situation differ sharply. In discussing the conflict, Ibn al-Jawzī continues to focus on the caliph's (in his view) just struggle against Dubays while Ibn al-Athīr narrates the "movements of the main players" in more value-neutral language.³⁰⁶ Ibn al-Athīr does reproach al-Mustarshid for his "coldness" in the negotiations with al-Zangī. In an effort to strengthen his position, al-Mustarshid had the *khutba* in Baghdad recited in the name of Sanjar, the Saljūq sultan of eastern Persia, not Mas'ud, the ruler in the western part of the empire. When he set out for battle, though, he was vastly outnumbered by the combined Saljūq and Zangid forces. He was defeated in battle and taken into Saljūq custody. Sanjar demanded that the caliph be returned to Baghdad, and both Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-Jawzī state that the caliph was killed by a group of *Bāṭinī* assassins (i.e., Isma'īlī Shī'as) on the way to Baghdad in 529/1135.³⁰⁷ Modern scholarship has conjectured that the Saljūqs likely instigated the murder, even if they did use *Bāṭinī* assassins.³⁰⁸ Whoever was responsible for the caliph's murder, Ibn al-Jawzī obviously sympathizes with the caliph and devotes a long obituary to him; earthquakes are attributed to his death. Ibn al-Athīr implies to some degree that the caliph was responsible for his downfall. The difference in the two accounts should not, of course, be surprising. Like all of the chronicles that have been examined, Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-

³⁰⁶ Hanne. *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p.161.

³⁰⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, Vol. 17. p. 298-299.

³⁰⁸ Hanne. *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p.165.

Jawzī write against a specific social and political background. While some views are shared by the chroniclers of the late Saljūq era, such as an understanding of the Abbasids and Saljūqs as linked dynasties, these two chronicles often have very different interpretations of the same events regarding the relations between the caliphate and sultanate.

The caliph had been defeated by the Saljūqs and their allies, but the setback was temporary. Far from being subdued, the Abbasids increasingly expanded their military power and regional influence over the succeeding decades. The Saljūqs became unstable, and the revival of the caliphate contributed to the weakening of the sultans. The institutions associated with the caliphate were one reason why it became stronger after al-Mustarshid's death. Having developed under al-Qā'im and in the early Saljūq period, the caliph's court and administration survived serious tests by the 6th century *hijrī* (12th century C.E.) and achieved a maturity that would serve the caliphs well over the next century and a half. Before examining the Abbasid's full-fledged military revival after the death of al-Mustarshid, an overview of these institutions will be provided in order to examine how the caliphate's power was structured and practiced.

XV. *Dār al-Khilāfa*: the Caliph's Palace and Court

At the heart of any monarchy is the palace and the royal family, and this is particularly true for the later Abbasids. The *dār al-khilāfa* (the caliph's palace) was the central feature of Baghdad's urban landscape, and the Abbasids used it to full advantage throughout the course of their later history. As we have seen in the case of Baghdad's

urban politics, the presence of the Abbasids and the absence of the Buyids in the capital had a major impact. The caliphs inevitably became the arbiters of city politics by virtue of the *dār al-khilāfa*. In order to understand the caliph's presence in Baghdad, the terms used to refer to his domains should be defined. While the caliph had his palace (*dār*), the chroniclers speak of his *ḥarīm* even more frequently. The *ḥarīm* was not his "harem," because the "women under [the Abbasid caliphs'] control" were referred to as the *ḥuram*.³⁰⁹ The *ḥuram* denoted the women and children of a particular man, whether slaves, wives, or relatives, and did not refer to a specific place. As a place, Ibn Jubayr refers to the women's quarters where Ibn al-Jawzī preached to the caliph al-Nāṣir as the caliph's *ḥaram*,³¹⁰ but the chroniclers do not mention it much.

The caliphal *ḥarīm*, on the other hand, is mentioned continuously by chroniclers like Ibn al-Jawzī, and that is because it was more than just the caliph's residence. It was broadly synonymous with the *dār al-khilāfa*, and one modern writer has described it as being simultaneously "a stage set for the representation of caliphal power," "the administrative center of a vast empire," and "a residence for the caliphal family."³¹¹ The *ḥarīm* was all this and more, because it was a large area of the city, including administrative offices and residential areas. According to Yāqūt, a geographer writing in the reign of al-Nāṣir, the *ḥarīm* constituted one third of the area of eastern Baghdad.³¹² The two main east gates of the *ḥarīm* were the Bāb al-ʿĀmma (Commoner's Gate) and

³⁰⁹ El-Cheikh, Nadia Maria. "Revisiting the Abbasid Harems." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall, 2005), p. 6.

³¹⁰ Leder, Stefan. *Ibn al-Gauzi und seine Kompilation wider die Leidenschaft*. p. 1.

³¹¹ El-Cheikh. "Revisiting the Abbasid Harems." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*. p. 7.

³¹² Le Strange. *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*. p. 264-265.

the Bāb al-Nūbī (Nubian Gate), also known as the Bab al-‘Ātaba (Gate of the Threshold), and the south gate was known as the Bāb al-Marātib (Gate of Degrees). The Bāb al-Nūbī and the adjacent Bayt al-Nūbī (Nubian House) were where many of the most important public events of the later Abbasid dynasty occurred. Many of the notables of the Abbasid palace and administration (*arbāb al-dawla*, “lords of the dynasty”) lived within the walls of the *ḥarīm*, as did some of the “lowest of orders of the Baghdad populace.”³¹³ For example, in 556/1161, Ibn al-Jawzī reveals that the chief *qāḍī* Ibn al-Damghānī lived near the Bāb al-‘Āmma, as had the vizier Fakhr al-Dawla one century earlier,³¹⁴ and that the famous vizier Ibn Hubayra lived next to the caliphal *dīwān*, where he worked.³¹⁵

If the Abbasid caliphs had a special relationship to the city of Baghdad, the *ḥarīm* was nearly synonymous with the caliphate. Whenever there is a threat of instability, Ibn al-Jawzī conventionally writes, “The people moved their wealth to the *ḥarīm*.” Only rarely do the Baghdadis seek protection in the Buyids’ or the Saljūqs *dār al-mamlaka*. Conversely, when the caliph was threatened, he relied on the *ḥarīm*, especially notables known as the *arbāb al-dawla*. In 515/1121-1122, in the midst of his struggle with Dubays, al-Mustarshid levied a special tax on only the houses and stores of the *ḥarīm*. The levy proved unpopular, however, and the money was soon converted into a forced loan.³¹⁶ The *ḥarīm*’s proximity to the caliphate

Nonetheless, as in the case of other monarchies, the caliph’s family itself, including the harem, played a major role in politics. While the Abbasids did have some

³¹³ Ibid., 276.

³¹⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*, Vol. 16. p. 155.

³¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. 18. p. 146.

³¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. 17. p. 192.

high profile marriages, the caliph's women were generally slave girls (sing *jāriya*), and they gained the higher status of an *umm walad* (mother of a child) after giving birth. Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-Jawzī always identify the caliph's mother in their biographies of these caliphs, and these were very often of Armenian or Rūmī (Byzantine, particularly Anatolian Greek) origin. The harem women of the later Abbasid period never gained the political dominance that Ottoman harem women at times had, but they were clearly involved in politics. Abbasid women were certainly wealthy, and much of what emerges about them relates to their ownership of *iqṭā*'s. It was considered one of the signs of Bahā' al-Dawla's beneficence that he provided al-Ṭā'i's wife with sufficient *iqṭā*'s until she died.³¹⁷ More unusually, a *ribāṭ* (an urban Ṣūfī monastery) was founded by the caliph al-Muqtadī's mother.³¹⁸ One of the palace women got caught up in the tensions between the Saljūqs and the Abbasids in al-Mustarshid's reign. In 526/1132, the caliph criticized the intrigue of the "Mustazhirī lady" to her eunuch and then confiscated her "horses and villages" and "dissolved her *iqṭā*'s."³¹⁹ This woman, known by the Turkish title *khātūn* (lady) and probably al-Mustazhir's wife from the Saljūq family, was also condemned by the sultan. When he wrote to her again revealing plans to "destroy the [Abbasid] dynasty," al-Mustarshid found the letter and vowed to fight. The women of the palace thus held substantial resources, but they were ultimately responsible to the caliph, even if they were of Saljūq origin.

³¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. 14. 381 AH.

³¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. 17. p. 210.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 272.

One of the most dramatic episodes to occur in the *dār al-khilāfa* is known as the “Umm Abī ‘Alī plot.” Ibn al-Athīr writes that the caliph al-Muqtafī became sick in 555/1160, and it had become obvious that his *walī al-‘ahd*, the future al-Mustanjid, would succeed him. This prompted action on the part of one *umm walad*, a “favorite” of al-Muqtafī. She distributed money and *iqṭā*’s to the amirs of the caliph’s army and came up with a plan to kill al-Mustanjid. She gave knives to slave girls in the harem and told them to kill him, since they were the only ones who had access to him there. A young eunuch who relayed news to al-Mustanjid heard this and informed al-Mustanjid who was able to prepare himself for the attack. Umm Abī ‘Alī was then imprisoned along with her son, and the slave girls were killed, some by drowning.³²⁰ As in other polygamous imperial dynasties in other times and places, it was imperative for a woman of the Abbasid harem to have her son chosen as the next caliph. Apparently, such a woman could also command enough resources to gain the cooperation of the dynasty’s military leaders.

The leading appointed position in the harem was the *qahramāna* (stewardess), and the most famous *qahramāna* lived in the reign of al-Mustakfī and was known as ‘Alam. She was the mother-in-law of a secretary in the caliph’s service, and Miskawayh calls her “all powerful at al-Mustakfī’s court.”³²¹ As stated previously, her attempt to win the loyalty of various Buyid commanders for the caliph at a banquet worried Mu‘izz al-Dawla and prompted him to depose the caliph. For her part, ‘Alam was blinded and had

³²⁰ Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī l-ta’rīkh*. Vol. 10. p. 256-257.

³²¹ Miskawayh. *Tarājib al-umam*. Vol IV. p. 79.

her tongue cut out.³²² Other *qahramānas* were not as powerful, but they did manage to avoid ‘Alam’s tragic downfall. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that when Fakhr al-Dawla was removed from the vizierate, he was aided by the *qahramāna*. She spoke in his favor to the caliph and secretly gave him 10,000 dinars, a substantial sum.³²³ A final indication of the *qahramāna*’s power and that of the harem generally is found in the marriage negotiations between al-Muqtadī and Malikshah. Just as al-Qā’im had issued costly demands in exchange for his daughter’s marriage to Tughril Beg, Malikshah and his daughter made unprecedented demands as well. Malikshah’s daughter was to bring her Turkish entourage into the palace, and the caliph was asked to not have any wife or concubine but her.³²⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī adds that the caliph was to have no *qahramāna* either.³²⁵ Since Malikshah’s daughter wanted to have control over the resources of the palace, she could brook no rivals. One would expect, perhaps, that Ibn al-Jawzī would look askance at centers of power that were not religiously sanctioned, such as those of the Abbasid household. True, he omits the Umm Abī ‘Alī plot, but he certainly does not ignore the presence of the *qahramāna* or the harem women either. The caliphal residence, the *ḥarīm* associated with it, and the women of the palace all played a role in the functioning of the caliphate that could not be ignored.

³²² Ibid., 105.

³²³ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*, Vol. 16. p. 111.

³²⁴ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*. p. 204.

³²⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*, Vol. 16. p. 223.

XVI. The Caliph's Viziers and Administration: Institutions and Evolution

The vizierate was a crucial institution of the Saljūq-era caliphate, and it is a good example of how the coming of the Saljūqs did not mean that the caliphate returned to a position of powerlessness. In fact, the inception of the Saljūq dynasty in Iraq was one more stage in a series of transformations that culminated in the 12th century. Thus, although al-Mustarshid could be defeated militarily, the development of independent caliphal institutions had begun long before his reign, and so one military defeat did not prevent them from reaching maturity.

The caliph's *dīwān* did not cease to exist under after the coming of the Buyids. The caliphs had no viziers, but they did have *kātib*s (secretaries, literally "writers" of official documents). The most important *kātib* of the era was 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Ḥājib al-Nu'mān (d.421/1030). His father had served as a *ḥājib* under the Buyid vizier al-Muhallabī, and he entered the service of al-Tā'i' as *kātib*.³²⁶ While the caliph had multiple secretaries in his service, the sense here is that Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān took on some of the roles of the vizier. Interestingly, when al-Tā'i' tried to arrest al-Qādir in 379, he sent his *kātib*.³²⁷ The two men must have reconciled, because when al-Qādir became caliph, Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān was made his *kātib*. Ibn al-Jawzī and Hilāl al-Ṣābi' both use him consistently as a source on the caliphate. The latter writes that Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān set the style of the caliph's official correspondence. Furthermore, he adds, "When Bahā' al-Dawla took control of Persia, caliphal correspondence was resumed from the glorious

³²⁶ Ibid., Vol. 15. p. 210.

³²⁷ Abū Shujā' al-Rūdhrawārī. *Dhayl tarājib al-umam*. Vol VI. p. 153-154.

residence.”³²⁸ In other words, the Buyid amirs had been issuing orders in the name of the caliph, but the caliph regained the right to issue his own orders in the second half of the Buyid amirate. This put Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu‘mān in a powerful position.

While Ibn Ayyūb ‘Amīd al-Ru’asā’ was the first true caliphal vizier since the beginning of the Buyid era, he was deposed at Buyid request in 437/1045.³²⁹ Ibn al-Muslima was appointed vizier and was active in shaping the vizierate, as noted above. According to Ibn al-Athīr, he had sufficient influence to determine the *nāẓir* (supervisor) of Wāsiṭ.³³⁰ His downfall and execution have already been described, but the caliphal vizierate did not vanish with his death, despite the chaotic circumstances. Interestingly, Ibn al-Athīr, with his eye for practical politics, provides the details of how this occurred, but not Ibn al-Jawzī. In 453/1061, Ibn Dārūst, a former merchant in the service of the Buyid amir Abū Kālījār, received the post of vizier on the condition that he make a payment and that he not receive any *iqṭā’*’s, as was customary.³³¹ A year later, he was dismissed for his inability to guarantee Jewish tax farmer’s revenue from the caliph’s *khāṣṣ* (personal possessions).³³² This single *iqṭā’* was worth 100,000 dinars, a substantial sum, in contrast to al-Muṭī’s and al-Tā’i’s yearly revenues of 300,000 dinars. Granted, the *bay’a* (oath) payment of 3 million dinars by al-Qā’im in 421/1030 was larger, but the dismissal of Ibn Dārūst provides evidence that the caliphate continued to command great wealth in the Saljūq era. This wealth, whether in *iqṭā’*’s or other forms, was managed by the viziers.

³²⁸ Hilāl al-Ṣābi’. *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*. p. 101-102.

³²⁹ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*. p. 59.

³³⁰ Ibid., 104.

³³¹ Ibn al-Athīr, ‘Izz al-Dīn. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 134.

³³² Ibid., 140.

The appointment of Fakhr al-Dawla marked the start of a more effective vizierate. Its duties ranged from the maintenance of order in Baghdad to oversight of the mint in Baghdad, which “came into the hands of the caliph’s agents” in 462/1069-1070, Ibn al-Athīr reports.³³³ Fakhr al-Dawla’s vizierate was also a much more characteristically Saljūq-era vizierate, and it is striking how intertwined the Abbasid and Saljūq vizierates became. Just as the feud between the caliph al-Mustarshid and his brother resembled a feud among Saljūq princes, so too did the Abbasid and Saljūq viziers begin to resemble each other. The Saljūq *dīwān* itself was based on the Abbasid system,³³⁴ and the rivalry between Nizām al-Mulk and Fakhr al-Dawla meant that both were continuously involved in each others’ affairs. In 466/1073-1074, the distrust for Fakhr al-Dawla grew to such a point that the al-Qā’im issued an order transferring a number of *iqṭā’*’s from the clients (*ḥawāshī*) of the caliph to Saljūq amirs.³³⁵ Thus, the caliph’s clients jockeyed for position over the same *iqṭā’*’s as the clients of the Saljūqs and held the same class status. Accordingly, despite their rivalry with each other, the viziers of both the sultans and the caliphs were similar in status, and this meant that marriage ties could be formed between them. Even after Nizām al-Mulk had demanded the removal of Fakhr al-Dawla for his alleged role in the 470/1082 *fitna*, the two viziers reconciled to the point that Nizām al-Mulk gave his Abbasid counterpart his granddaughter in marriage.³³⁶ When ‘Amīd al-Dawla was dismissed from the vizierate, he and his father Fakhr al-Dawla departed for Diyarbakır. He fought with Malikshah’s soldiers and was credited with the conquest of

³³³ Ibid., 166.

³³⁴ Lambton, Ann K. S. *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia*. Albany, NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988. p. 28.

³³⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*, Vol. 16. p. 154.

³³⁶ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 197.

Mosul.³³⁷ The Banū Jahīr had served a local Iraqi dynasty before entering the caliphal service, and so by successfully serving the Saljūqs, too, they proved themselves to be consummate participants in the Islamic political world of the time.

Another caliphal vizier, Abū Shujā‘, proved less adaptable and was dismissed in 484/1091. Ibn al-Jawzī explains the vizier’s removal in vague terms. He writes that “associates of the sultan” had complained and cites the common stance of Nizām al-Mulk, Malikshah, and al-Muqtadī, all of whom are said to have been unsatisfied with the vizier.³³⁸ Ibn al-Athīr’s description of the incident is more plausible. He writes that a specific “associate” of the sultan had been offended, an important Jewish *wakīl* (agent) of the sultan, and he had complained to the sultan. In fact, Ibn al-Athīr states that this incident was the cause of one of al-Muqtadī’s crackdowns against *dhimmī* behavior,³³⁹ which transforms this action into a strike of sorts against the Saljūqs. Ibn al-Athīr does follow Ibn al-Jawzī’s account in recounting how Abū Shujā‘ scoffed at Saljūq conquests in Khurāsān on the grounds that the rulers there were Muslims. Ibn al-Jawzī obviously admired this degree of orthodoxy, so perhaps that is why he glossed over the details of the case. The chroniclers still do not record much about day-to-day administration in the caliph’s *dīwān*, but such incidents capture the imagination of the chroniclers, because they involved religio-political conflicts at the summit of the Islamic polity.

The caliphal *dīwān* was divided into the *dīwān al-zimām* (control) and the *dīwān al-inshā‘* (correspondence), concepts that derive from earlier Abbasid history. The *dīwān*

³³⁷ Ibid., 215.

³³⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*, Vol. 15. p. 154.

³³⁹ Ibn al-Athīr. *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks*, p. 248-249.

al-inshā' composed all diplomatic correspondence, while the *dīwān al-zimam* handled the record-keeping, such as records relating to tax collection. According to al-Māwardī, the *zimām* is "the guardian of the *bayt al-māl*," that is the caliphal treasury.³⁴⁰ The money collected was kept in the *makhzan* (treasury). A caliphal order could be called a *khaṭṭ*, but it is far more common in Ibn al-Jawzī for the caliph to issue a *tawqī'*, which literally refers to a signature. *Tawqī'*s were brief statements affixed to the backs of letters or statements sent to the caliph.³⁴¹ More formal documents were drawn up in the *dīwān al-inshā'*, if necessary.

A good example of how the *dīwān* worked can be gleaned from a time of chaos. Just before al-Mustarshid was murdered, he wrote to his *ustādh al-dār* (majordomo), asking that the documents of the *zimām* and the *makhzan* be put in safekeeping.³⁴² When he was murdered, the Saljūqs and the new caliph al-Rāshid feared the discontent of the people. They opened the Bāb al-Ḥujra, a grand reception hall for viziers built by al-Mustarshid,³⁴³ and people were allowed to carry bags of records and deeds out.³⁴⁴ These were the documents of the *dīwān*, and they probably recorded debts, property, and other such issues. By this point, the Abbasids seem to have had a large bureaucracy. It is difficult to know the extent of the caliphate's resources at any given time, but increasingly, other rulers approached the Abbasids seeking *iqṭā'*s. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that when the sultan and caliph both wanted to appease Dubays, the caliph al-Mustazhir granted him such *iqṭā'*s as Anbar and Fallujah in central Iraq, while the sultan provided

³⁴⁰ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Dīwān," by A. A. Duri.

³⁴¹ Hilāl al-Ṣābi'. *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa: The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court*. p. 90.

³⁴² Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, Vol. 17. p. 295.

³⁴³ Le Strange, G. *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate*. p. 259.

³⁴⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, Vol. 17. p. 301.

him with Wāsiṭ and Basra.³⁴⁵ The caliphate was by the reign of al-Mustarshid a major power in a very conventional way, and this meant both military power and a formidable administration.

The vizierate was not the only office in the caliph's administration, however. The Abbasid caliphs had always had *ḥājibs* (chamberlains), and these officials continued to play the role of envoys of the caliph throughout the Buyids and Saljūq periods. In fact, when the caliphal vizierate was abolished, and the *amīr al-umarā'* was established, the position of *ḥājib al-ḥujjāb* (chief *ḥājib*) was created as an analogue.³⁴⁶ First and foremost, the *ḥājibs* supervised those who came to meet the caliph, but their role extended far beyond that. They were considered to be among the most important officials. For example, in his account of al-Muqtadī's accession, Ibn al-Jawzī lists the various occupants of only three offices: vizier, chief *qāḍī*, and *ḥājib*.³⁴⁷ The relationship of the *ḥājib al-bāb* to Baghdad's urban politics in the Buyid period has already been discussed. Most *ḥājibs*, however, appear in the chronicles as diplomats and were sent as far as Mecca or Khurāsān.

Other posts came into existence over the years, with a number of offices emerging in the early 12th century. One major figure was the *ṣāḥib al-makhzan* (treasurer), which does not appear before the 12th century. In 512/1118, al-Mustarshid executed his father's *ṣāḥib al-makhzan* for having withheld funds from him before his accession as caliph.³⁴⁸ The *ṣāḥib al-khabar* (chief of intelligence) is mentioned much more rarely, while the

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 208.

³⁴⁶ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "Ḥāḍib," by C. E. Bosworth.

³⁴⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, Vol. 16. p. 116.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., Vol. 17. p. 129-130.

ustādh al-dār (majordomo) is not a major figure until the rise of ‘Aḍud al-Dīn, who dominated the caliphate in the years just prior to al-Nāṣir’s accession in 575/1180.

XVII. The Two Courts (*al-Ḥaḍratayn*): Relations of the Caliphs and Sultans

The Abbasids never ruled without recognizing the role of local dynasties, not even at the height of their power, so the caliphs’ formal relations with subsidiary dynasties were always a matter of great importance. The historians of the Buyid and Saljūq eras put great stress on the rituals and protocol of these relations, since the legitimacy and stability of the existing dynasties depended upon such details. The bestowal of titles and the ceremonies that often went with them attract the attention of medieval writers time and time again.

The most practically important as well as the most ritualized aspect of the relations between the caliph and amirs or sultans was the bestowal of titles (sing. *laqab*). Along with inclusion in the *khutba*, a ruler needed a proper title for legitimate appointment. Otherwise, the ruler would be vulnerable to rebellion. For this reason, negotiations could drag on interminably, and any dispute could trigger a crisis. In his *Siyāsat-nāma* (*Book of Government*), the vizier Nizām al-Mulk includes a story which highlights the importance of bestowing titles sparingly. The narrative concerns the Ghaznavid sultan Maḥmūd and his relations with the caliph al-Qādir. According to the text, al-Qādir initially only granted Maḥmūd one title, Yamīn al-Dawla. When the sultan complained that other rulers had received more, al-Qādir replied that a man requires only a single title “suitable to his rank.” The sultan’s *ḥājib* remained in Baghdad for six

months without success. In response, Maḥmūd is said to have sent a woman to steal a charter of title from a neighboring ruler. The trick succeeded, and the caliph eventually relented and gave Maḥmūd a second title, Amīn al-Milla.³⁴⁹ Nizām al-Mulk criticizes the alleged debasement of titles in his own time and considers al-Qādir to have been a model of correct behavior. While the story was meant primarily for instruction, it does show how titles could cause conflicts, even between close allies like Maḥmūd and al-Qādir. The power to bestow titles was not an empty one, but was in fact of vital political importance.

Similarly, proper protocol in meetings between the caliph and his counterpart was essential from the point of view of the chroniclers. The effect of many of Ibn al-Jawzī's description of formal rituals, whether they were between the caliph and the sultan or concerned the caliph alone, was to assert the legitimacy of the actors in these rituals. One of the key moments in Ibn al-Jawzī's chronicle is the first meeting of Tughril Beg and al-Qā'im in 447/1058, when the Saljūqs first arrived in Baghdad. Whereas some had said that Tughril Beg would plunder the *dār al-khilāfa*, Ibn al-Jawzī portrays a series of rituals in which Tughril Beg shows himself an obedient servant of the caliph, at least in ritualistic terms. The most elaborate description of a ceremony between the caliph and the sultan took place in 449/1057. The caliph was seated on a very high throne in the Courtyard of Peace (*ṣaḥn al-salām*), while smaller thrones were prepared for the sultan and Ibn al-Muslima. First, the caliph spoke to Ibn al-Muslima and praised him. Then, the Saljūq vizier 'Amīd al-Mulk entered the courtyard and kissed the ground. Professing

³⁴⁹ Nizām al-Mulk. *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*. Trans. Hubert Darke. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. p. 149-156.

his loyalty to the caliph, he said, “I am the caliph’s servant, slave, and the placeholder of his rule....”³⁵⁰ The caliph responded by bestowing seven robes of honor on the sultan, who wore them all at once. When Tughril Beg tried to kiss the ground, his crown prevented him from doing so. Tughril Beg was given the title “King of East and West” in the presence of the Baghdadi notables and 500 of his own Turkish slaves.³⁵¹ The resonances of this ceremony with that of ‘Aḏud al-Dawla and the caliph al-Ṭa’i’, in which the amir was unable to kiss the ground because of the weight of his regalia, are unmistakable. In both cases, the ruler is presented as absolutely obedient to the caliph, but unable to bow down fully before the caliph as a result of his justly earned honors. This narrative, as much as any other, shows that Ibn al-Jawzī was not hopelessly biased against the Saljūqs, as some have claimed, because he clearly asserts their legitimacy. The episode also show how all actors involved, both the Abbasids and the Saljūqs, understood the importance of proper rituals in legitimizing a still young regime.

XVIII. New Independence: al-Rāshid, al-Muqtafī and the Vizier Ibn Hubayra

Al-Rāshid (d. 530/1136), the successor to al-Mustarshid, had a brief and unstable reign that lasted only a year. Shortly after al-Mustarshid’s death, Ibn al-Jawzī reports that the Saljūq *shihna* was cursed and attacked by the populace.³⁵² In a desperate attempt to maintain stability, the *shihna* asked that people send in complaints (*maẓālim*) and

³⁵⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa ’l-umam*, Vol. 16. p. 19.

³⁵¹ Ibid., Vol. 17. p. 20-21.

³⁵² Ibid., 296.

promised that they would be answered.³⁵³ Al-Rāshid, though, was at odds with the Saljūqs, who still wanted an indemnity from the war with al-Mustarshid. The caliph was able to deploy military forces against the Saljūqs, but this only destabilized the situation further. Since al-Rāshid was unable to provide stability, both the Saljūq sultan Mas‘ūd and the Baghdadi notables were determined to find an alternative. The *naqīb* and former vizier ‘Alī b. Ṭirād suggested another Abbasid, who was to become al-Muqtafī (d. 555/1160), and who was also married to the *naqīb*’s daughter.³⁵⁴ ‘Alī b. Ṭirād was then able to return to the vizierate.

Al-Muqtafī’s reign did not start well. Mas‘ud tried to maintain the support of the populace by not quartering his soldiers in people’s homes, but according to Ibn al-Jawzī, the *dār al-khilāfa* was emptied of most of its riches, from horses to silver to slaves.³⁵⁵ However, this situation did not last long. In 534/1139-1140, al-Muqtafī dismissed ‘Alī b. Ṭirād, who then fled to the sultan.³⁵⁶ Al-Muqtafī did not yet engage in much military activity, but the later chronicler al-Bundarī does state that he built up an army of *ghulāms* (slaves), most of them of Armenian and Greek origin, rather than Turkish origin.³⁵⁷ This laid the groundwork for the caliph’s future military successes.

The watershed event of al-Muqtafī’s reign was the appointment of ‘Awn al-Dīn b. Hubayra (d. 560/1164) as vizier, a position that he held continuously until his death. According to Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Hubayra had risen to the position of head of the *dīwān al-zimām* by the time he was appointed in 544/1149, and he had distinguished himself

³⁵³ Ibid., 300.

³⁵⁴ Hanne. *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p.166.

³⁵⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munʿazzam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa ʾl-umam*, Vol. 17. p. 314.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., Vol. 18. p. 34.

³⁵⁷ Hanne. *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p.172.

particularly in his ability to station soldiers outside Baghdad,³⁵⁸ where they made less trouble than when they were inside the city. Ibn Hubayra had military skill unusual for a bureaucrat, but the first major campaign of his vizierate was a siege of Tikrit, a city in northern Iraq, led not by Ibn Hubayra but his son Abū'l-Badr. Ibn al-Athīr relates that Abū'l-Badr soon quarreled with one of the leading *ghulāms*. Before he could make an arrest, though, the *ghulam* had conspired with the ruler of Tikrit, and Abū'l-Badr was imprisoned.³⁵⁹

Despite that less than auspicious performance, Ibn Hubayra went on to major victories in the coming years. When the ruler of Tikrit, Mas'ūd, advanced on Baghdad, Ibn Hubayra defeated him and was given the title “Sulṭān al-‘Irāq Malik al-Juyūsh” (Sultan of Iraq, Sovereign of the Armies) in 549/1154.³⁶⁰ Even more significantly, the caliph gave shelter to Sulaymānshāh, a rival to the Saljūq sultan Muḥammad II. The Saljūqs had been considerably weakened by the capture of Sanjar, the supreme sultan, in 548/1153, so the caliph felt confident enough to oppose Muḥammad II. The caliph removed his name from the *khuṭba* in 551/1157 and recognized Sulaymānshah. According to Ibn al-Jawzī, though not Ibn al-Athīr, the caliph stipulated the nature of their relationship so that the sultan promised not to interfere in Iraq at all.³⁶¹ While the Saljūqs had not harbored pretenders to the caliphate, al-Muqtadī now supported a pretender to the sultanate who was dependent upon Abbasid military support. The result

³⁵⁸ Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī 'l-ta' rīkh*. Vol. 11. p. 146.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 189.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 195-196.

³⁶¹ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta' rīkh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, Vol. 17. p. 106.

was a siege of Baghdad in which the Saljūqs were defeated, and Abbasid control of Iraq was confirmed.

In his account of al-Muqtadī's reign, Ibn al-Athīr reports a number of incidents that showed just how far the caliph's reach now went. In 553/1158, the caliph supported an attack on the ruler of Khūzistān in western Persia. Then, he sent Mankūbars al-Mustarshidī (that is, the former *ghulām* of al-Mustarshid) on a military expedition Jabal in northern Persia, and an assignment that Mankubars carried out successfully.³⁶² The caliphate's military power increased continuously in the course of al-Muqtadī's reign until full military independence was achieved. In this sense, the caliphate is less ambiguous and easier to interpret from his reign until the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 655/1258. Under al-Muqtadī's death, Ibn al-Athīr writes, "He was the first who possessed Iraq alone... since the beginning of the days of the Daymalīs [the Buyids] until now."³⁶³ This assessment has perhaps been one reason why many scholars have assumed that the Abbasids were an empty shell in the years that intervened since the "days of the Daymalīs." However, Ibn al-Athīr was referring only to sole possession of Iraq, and he is correct that al-Muqtadī's reign marked a turning point. The caliphate was no longer exceptional in the sense of George Makdisi, who argued that the Abbasid caliphate in the Buyid and Saljūq eras lacked military power, but was the sole source of legitimate authority. With the reign of al-Muqtadī, power and authority increasingly came to be united in the caliphate. Needless to say, this does not pose a problem for Sunnī chroniclers, who reacted positively to the Abbasids' military role.

³⁶² Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī'l-ta'rīkh*. Vol. 11. p. 239.

³⁶³ Ibid., 256.

XIX. The Reigns of al-Mustanjid and al-Mustadi': the Rule of the Officials

Even though regional power was gradually accruing to the caliphate, this did not mean that all power accrued to the person of the caliph. Of course, the vizier Ibn Hubayra was still a powerful man. He was aging, though, and other power centers began to emerge. The leading caliphal official in the reigns of al-Mustanjid and al-Mustadi' was 'Aḍud al-Dīn, the *ustādh al-dār* (majordomo of the palace). When al-Mustanjid was threatened by the Umm 'Abī 'Alī plot just prior to taking power, he looked to 'Aḍud al-Dīn to help save his life.³⁶⁴ 'Aḍud al-Dīn had long been a familiar personality in the palace. He was descended from Ibn al-Muslima and had inherited the office of *ustādh al-dār* from his father in 549/1154-1155.³⁶⁵ In the course of al-Mustanjid's reign, 'Aḍud al-Dīn gradually extended his control over the institutions of the caliphate, largely through a series of arrests recorded by Ibn al-Jawzī. In 558/1162, he arrested Ibn Ja'far, the head of the *dīwān*, and then Ibn al-Abqī, the Abbasid *naqīb*.³⁶⁶ When Ibn Hubayra died in 560/1164, the *ustādh al-dār* arrested the vizier's two sons and took possession of his home.³⁶⁷ The caliph did not appoint a new vizier for two years, but 'Aḍud al-Dīn had amassed quite a bit of power.

The events of al-Mustanjid's reign reported by Ibn al-Athīr are surprisingly different, given that both chroniclers lived during this era. Ibn al-Athīr does repeat an interesting comment by Ibn al-Jawzī that the governors (*aṣḥāb al-wilayāt*) were

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 257.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 200.

³⁶⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭaẓam fī ta'rikh al-mulūk wa 'l-umam*, Vol. 17. p. 155.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 164.

confirmed in their provinces (*wilayāt*) at the beginning of al-Mustanjid's reign.³⁶⁸ These terms refer to the military governors of the provinces of Iraq that the Abbasids now ruled alone. However, the two chroniclers provide different information after that. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that Ibn Ḥamdun, the commander-in-chief (‘Amīd al-Juyūsh), was “appointed to the *muqāṭi‘āt*.”³⁶⁹ This apparently refers to the *iqṭā‘*’s under Abbasid control. For his part, Ibn al-Athīr focuses on events outside of Baghdad. Because the Abbasids had removed most of the autonomous local dynasties of Iraq from power, al-Mustanjid's focus shifted to his own clients. For example, he forcibly removed Mankūbars, the *iqṭā‘* holder (*muqṭa‘*) of Basra, from his position in 559/1163-1164. However, this weakened his position there, and he was forced to send troops to defend the province.³⁷⁰ Another discrepancy between the two chroniclers involves a false accusation by Ibn Hubayra against one of al-Mustanjid's boon companions. Because Ibn al-Jawzī was close to the vizier, he refuses to name Ibn Hubayra as the culprit.³⁷¹ Here, as elsewhere, both the personal loyalties and the geographical and topical focuses of the chroniclers contribute to producing two very different narratives.

In 563/1167, al-Mustanjid appointed a new vizier, Ibn al-Baladī, and predictably, he became involved in a power struggle with ‘Aḍud al-Dīn. Ibn al-Baladī persecuted the *ustādh al-dār*, and the conflict reached its climax in 566/1170. In that year, according to Ibn al-Athīr, the caliph tried to send an order (*khawṭ*) to the vizier ordering him to arrest ‘Aḍud al-Dīn. The order was never delivered to the vizier because it ended up in the

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 130.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 132.

³⁷⁰ Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī l-ta’rīkh*. Vol. 11. p. 239.

³⁷¹ Hanne. *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p.192-193.

hands of ‘Aḍud al-Dīn, who then conspired with the amir Qaymāz to assassinate the caliph.³⁷²

Ibn al-Jawzī mentions nothing of all this, and the explanation for this discrepancy can perhaps be found in the religious politics of the time. Al-Mustanjid had altered the religious atmosphere of Baghdad considerably, and this has an effect on how Ibn al-Jawzī views the caliph. Previously in favor, Ibn al-Jawzī was no longer close to the caliph, because al-Mustanjid favored mystical preachers such as the Persian ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī, rather than Ḥanbalīs like Ibn al-Jawzī.³⁷³ It has been suggested that Ibn al-Jawzī was too scared to give the true account of al-Mustanjid’s death,³⁷⁴ but it may also be that the chronicler had negative feelings toward that caliph and did not wish to taint the succession of al-Mustaḍī’, a friend and patron.

Al-Mustaḍī’ (d. 575/1180) brought the Ḥanbalī *madhhab* back into favor and was close to Ibn al-Jawzī, as noted previously. Ibn al-Jawzī writes that he abolished the *mukūs* (customs duties), an act widely regarded as a sign of a ruler’s virtue, as was the case with al-Muqtadī, and he adds that the caliph “did justice which has not been seen in our lifetimes.”³⁷⁵ The caliph appointed ‘Aḍud al-Dīn as his vizier, but the amir Qaymāz, who was becoming more powerful, forced the caliph to remove him. “The caliph could not contradict him,” Ibn al-Athīr writes.³⁷⁶ In the end, the demise of Qaymāz was brought about by a popular uprising,³⁷⁷ while ‘Aḍud al-Dīn was killed by a *Bāṭinī*

³⁷² Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī l-ta’rīkh*. Vol. 11. p. 321-322.

³⁷³ Leder. *Ibn al-Gauzi und seine Kompilation wider die Leidenschaft*. p. 34.

³⁷⁴ Hanne. *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, p.198.

³⁷⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Munṭazam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa l-umam*, Vol. 17. p. 191.

³⁷⁶ Ibn al-Athīr. *al-Kāmil fī l-ta’rīkh*. Vol. 11. p. 375.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 424-426.

assassin. Their deaths cleared the way for the personalized rule of al-Nāṣir, who became caliph in 575/1180 and ended the power of such officials. Al-Nāṣir attempted to unite power and authority in his own charismatic rule, something that had not been possible in the Buyid and Saljūq eras.

X. Conclusion

While the chronicles of Miskawayh, Ibn al-Athīr, and Ibn al-Jawzī are not fully formed “mirrors of the age,” an understanding of their ideologies, symbolism, and background can help to create a fuller picture of the role of the Abbasid caliphate in its later stages. Some of these chronicles, especially the Buyid chronicles, are interested in very specific aspects of the caliphate and provide only brief glimpses of other aspects. The caliph’s authority as the leader of the Islamic community was a central part of the politics of medieval Islam; this authority was challenged by the amirs or sultans, but it could also be used to their benefit. Chroniclers like Miskawayh and Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ reflect the fact that the Buyid dynasty actually sought to amplify the authority and prestige of the caliphate so long as the amir had a leading role at the caliph’s court. ‘Aḍud al-Dawla, the most powerful Buyid amir, claimed numerous privileges – such as the right to have his name pronounced in the *khutba* of Baghdad – that no amir had ever had before. If historians use only these sources to reconstruct the role of the caliphate, though, the result is a one-sided picture that focuses on the caliph’s authority, but not his power and influence in actual practice.

An examination of the caliphate that uses other sources in conjunction with the chronicles gives a more varied and concrete understanding of the caliphate. The Abbasids often led the empire in their religious and legal capacities, and they also had a crucial role in the communitarian and power struggles of the capital. They had contacts, power, and influence at multiple levels of society, from the *‘ayyarūn* to the amirs, although the chronicles are primarily interested in only the highest levels of power. Even at the highest level, al-Māwardī’s political theory found a place for the caliph that was neither far removed from reality nor a travesty of his ideal role. The Muslims of the time recognized that the amirs and not the caliphs held the greatest military power, but it was not incomprehensible to them that the “Commander of the Faithful” would accept the military power of others to stabilize the empire.

The Saljūq dynasty, especially in its later period, brought more opportunities to the caliphate, and the chronicles reflect the caliph’s increased power since the Buyid era. The historian Ibn al-Athīr was connected to a dynasty that had been at odds with the caliphate, and yet as a Sunnī he admires the Abbasids and describes their social and political role more concretely than most previous chroniclers. Ibn al-Jawzī’s chronicle, written as it was by a close companion of the Abbasid caliphs, marks the revival of the caliphate in an even more dramatic fashion. Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn al-Athīr differ not only in their attitudes toward the sultans and caliphs, but even more in their views of the religious conflict between the A‘sharīs, backed by the Saljūqs, and the Ḥanbalīs, backed by the Abbasids. Politically, there was some distance between them, but the relations of the caliphs and the sultans did not draw the same disparate reactions that religious

conflict did. Medieval Arabic chronicles were written in the context of controversies like this, and they were not simple sets of facts, dates, and events. That said, a close reading of the chronicles still reveals the Abbasid caliphate to have been a resilient institution that survived its military subordination and defended its authority, power, and influence for centuries.

Appendix A: The Reigns of the Abbasid Caliphs, 279-656/892-1258

Al-Mu‘taḍid: 279 – 289/892 – 902
Al-Muktafī: 289 – 295/902 – 908
Al-Muqtadir: 295 – 320/908 – 932
Al-Qāhir: 320 – 322/932 – 934
Al-Rāḍī: 322 – 329/934 – 940
Al-Muttaqī: 329 – 333/940 – 944
Al-Mustakfī: 333 – 334/944 – 946
Al-Muṭṭī: 334 – 363/946 – 974
Al-Ṭā’i: 363 – 381/974 – 991
Al-Qādir: 381 – 422/991 – 1031
Al-Qā’im: 422 – 467/1031 – 1075
Al-Muqtadī: 467 – 487/1075 – 1094
Al-Mustazhir: 487 – 512/1094 – 1118
Al-Mustarshid: 512 – 529/1118 – 1135
Al-Rāshid: 529 – 530/1135 – 1136
Al-Muqtafī: 530 – 555/1136 – 1160
Al-Mustanjid: 555 – 566/1160 – 1170
Al-Mustaḍī: 566 – 575/1170 – 1180
Al-Nāṣir: 575 – 622/1180 – 1225
Al-Zāhir: 622 – 623/1225 – 1226
Al-Mustanṣir: 623 – 640/1226 – 1242
Al-Musta‘ṣim: 640 – 656/1242 – 1258

Appendix B: Major Viziers of the Abbasid Caliphs, 381-575/991-1180

‘Alī b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥājib al-Nu‘mān (d. 421/1030)³⁷⁸
Ibn al-Muslima Ra‘īs al-Ru‘asā’ (d. 550/1058)
Fakhr al-Dawla b. Jahīr
Abū Shujā‘ al-Rūdhrawārī (d. 488/1095)
‘Amīd al-Dawla b. Jahīr (d. 493/1100)
Za‘īm al-Ru‘asā’ b. Jahīr
Abū ‘Alī b. Ṣadaqa
Abū Naṣr b. Nizām al-Mulk
Anūshirwān b. Khālīd
‘Alī b. Ṭirād (d. 538/1144)
Ibn Hubayra (d. 560/1164)
Ibn al-Baladī (d. 566/1170)
‘Aḍud al-Dīn (d. 573/1177)
Qaymaz (d. 570/1174)
Ibn al-‘Aṭṭār (d. 575/1180)

³⁷⁸ Strictly speaking, a *kātib* (secretary) and not a vizier.

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