Statecraft as Art and Practice in Islamic Civilization: The Image of the Muslim Ruler in Islamic Heritage

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Abstract: This paper may have been motivated at least partly by current conditions in the Arab world, particularly in some parts of the Middle East where the image of rulers has become a topic of discussion, both in everyday conversations and in the media. The status of rulers is an issue that appears in discussions dealing with different perspectives, political, religious, economic, and ethical. Arabic thought in the Middle Ages considered these various aspects and discussed them all rather extensively. Political polemics were used as a way to enter into a discussion of rulers and their image, leading subsequently to the adoption of Islamic law as the framework in which political and ethical issues were to be determined. In the present paper, we shed light on the intellectual framework in which the characteristics of rulers were discussed in the context of the Muslim caliphate. Our purpose is to determine the image of the ruler in medieval Arab thought from the religious-juridical and the political aspects as well as how this was reflected in actual practice.

Keywords: Arab world, Islam, islamic thought, Middle East, politics

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INTRODUCTION

The present article may have been motivated at least in part by current conditions in the Arab world, particularly in some parts of the Middle East, where the image of rulers has become a topic of discussion, both in everyday conversations as well as in the media. The status of rulers is an issue that appears in discussions dealing with various different perspectives, political, religious, economic and ethical.

Arabic thought in the Middle Ages took these various aspects into consideration and discussed them all rather extensively. Political polemics were used as a way to enter into a discussion of rulers and their image, leading subsequently to the adoption of Islamic law as the framework in which political and ethical issues were to be determined.

In the present paper we shed light on the intellectual framework in which the characteristics of rulers were discussed in the context of the Muslim caliphate. Our purpose is to determine the image of the ruler in medieval Arab thought from the religious-juridical and the political aspects as well as how this was reflected in actual practice. This requires first of all that we discuss how Muslim thinkers viewed policy.

STATECRAFT IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC THOUGHT

In medieval Islamic thought policy is usually associated with ethics, of which it is considered to form an integral part (Hovannisian, 1985; Mughniya, 1977; Rosenthal, n.d.).

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In modern times the terms "statecraft" and "policy" have a clear meaning, but among ancient Arabs the corresponding term (*siyāsa*) was semantically somewhat opaque and was used to denote various types of knowledge, science and social arts that would later receive names of their own (Mabuba, 1999).

Initially the word *siyāsa* apparently denoted "sovereignty and leadership" and only later came to mean "the activity of a politician or statesman," from where it evolved further to mean "performing something in a way that brings about improvement" (al Taqtaqa, n.d.), including the taming of animals, which may also be considered an action that "improves" them (Ibn Qutaybah, 1930). Consequently the term *siyāsa* has always had a positive connotation in Arab culture, of drilling and training, of good but strict treatment. Maxims on *siyāsa* as practiced by rulers usually urge them to treat their subjects fairly, as in the following saying, attributed to a wise man.

Etymologically the Arabic word *siyāsa* appears to be derived from the root *s y s*, the same as the Biblical Hebrew word *sus* ("horse"). The Arabic word was used among Arab tribes in connection with the taming of animals. The act of taming was called *siyāsa* while the tamer was called sāis (Bosworth, no date). From this the further meaning of "performing something in a way that brings about improvement" evolved, and eventually the associated verb sawwasa came to mean "to train, to subdue" in general (Al-Zamakhshari, 1994).

However, some Arab men of letters are of the opinion that the word is of non-Arabic origin and that its roots must be sought in Mongolian, in which the word jsa denoted the laws to which the Mongols adhered since the days of Genghiz Khan, whose laws were called "the great *yāsa*." These laws, some of which were in agreement with Islamic šaria but most of which were not, were formulated and written down by Genghiz Khan himself, who commanded that they be kept among his treasures and passed on to his descendants (Al-Qalqashandi, 1964; Lambton, 1988).

The original meaning of the word *siyāsa* in Arabic, in any case, was taming of animals, as shown by the numerous Arabic metaphors in which the word is used in relation to animals which have been tamed by mankind, for example sā is qird ("monkey tamer"), a phrase frequently used to denote the lowly status of this profession in contexts where the activity of members of this craft are compared with the policy of kings, in order to show the difference in status between the two, to the detriment of the former.

It would appear that the shift in meaning of *siyāsa* from "taming animals" to "statecraft, policy" in Islam was prompted by the image, popular in the ancient Middle East, of the ruler as shepherd, and by the common expression al-rağul alā ahwat ğawādih ("the man on horseback") as symbol of political authority (Netton, 2014). In fact, early Islamic writings frequently compared the art of politics or *siyāsa* to the art of horsemanship, since both require of their practitioners skills of adroit maneuvering and retaining their position in power or on the horses back, respectively (Crone, 2004).

Abd al-amd al-Ktib in his "Epistle to Writers" borrowed the meaning of "taming of horses" (*siyāsat al-ayl*) and used it to discuss the world of practical politics. He compared the behavior of popular writers towards their patrons, peers and the public as acts of a "tamer of livestock" (*sāis al-bahma*), using various metaphorical expressions derived from the morals of "tamed riding animals" (*al-dawābb al-musawwasa*):

You certainly know that an observant tamer of livestock will seek knowledge of their character. Thus he will not stir up a headstrong mount when riding, will take care to stay away from the feet of a youthful one, will watch the head of one that is absent-minded, and will gently curb an obstinate ones whims on the road. If it perseveres he will give in a bit and loosen his leading rope. This description of *siyāsa* can also be applied to him who manages, tests and deals with people. Authors, thanks to their writings, their noble workmanship and charming stratagems, are even better able to deal gently with their friends and to assess their needs than the tamer of mounts that cannot reply, do not know what is right and do not understand speech except for that which their rider teaches them (Al-Qalqashandi, 1964; Al-Zankari, 2007).

The caliph Abd al-Malik b. Marwān is said to have defined *siyāsa* as "treating the upper classes with respect and sincere friendship, leading the hearts of the masses with fairness, and enduring the offenses of ones protégés" (Ibn Qutaybah, 1930).

Some writers divided politics into several types, depending on the social class concerned: "The most excellent people engage in politics (*yasāsūna*) demonstrating noble traits of character, people in the middle do so with desire mixed with terror, while the masses use only terror" (al Taqtaqa, n.d.)).

The following quote, ascribed to "wise men," expresses the flexible and changeable nature of statecraft, which suits itself to the requirements of the situation: "Statecraft means combining promises with threats, giving with withholding, and gentleness with attack. For people will not behave properly except through reward and punishment, enticement and

fright" (Huthzayl, 1985).

From the preceding discussion we conclude that statecraft is a kind of flexible and careful interaction with others, characterized by sophistication and good behavior, because people differ from each other in their nature and their rank, and circumstances change constantly. Examples of this view can be found in the texts quoted in the table below, ascribed to various medieval Muslim statesmen and theoreticians (Ibn Qutaybah, 1930): The word *siyāsa* is also associated

Table 1 *List of Variables*

Ascribed authorship	Text
Abd al-Malik b. Marwān	"Treating the upper classes with respect and sincere friendship, leading the hearts of the masses with fairness, and enduring the offenses of ones Protégés"
Abd al-Malik b. Marwān	"You all offer yourselves for this, but those among you who are suitable for it are only the possessors of a drawn sword, money that can be spent freely, and a sense of justice that soothes the heart"
Umar b. al-Ḥaṭāb	"Only those who are gentle but not weak are suitable for this thing, those who are strong but not violent"
Muāwiya b. Ab Sufyān	"I do not use the sword when the whip suffices, nor the whip when my tongue suffices. Even if I were connected the people by a hair, it would not tear; if they pulled it I would give it slack and if they gave slack I would pull it"
Unnamed scholars	"The best politician for his subjects is he who leads their bodies with their hearts, their hearts with their minds and their minds with their underlying desires and fears"
Aristotle	"If you take possession of your subjects with beneficence you will obtain their love, for when you ask with kindness it will have more permanence than if you use coercion"

with Islamic religious law, in the form of the phrase *al-siyāsa al-šariyya*, a juridical doctrine that emerged in the later Middle Ages that called for making civil and religious law consistent with the practical needs of policy-making (Vogel, 2004). Two of the most prominent religious jurists engaged in this endeavor were Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and his disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) (Vogel, no date) each of whom wrote a book on *al-siyāsa al-šariyya*, the former *al-siyāsa al-šariyya fī ilā al-rāī wal-raiyya* and the latter *al-uruq al-ukmiyya fī al-siyāsa al-šariyya*.

Ibn Taymiyya in his aforementioned book states that if Gods laws (the *šarīa*) were properly obeyed there would not arise any conflict between rulers policies and the administration of justice ((Al-Mubarak, 1967; Sherwani, 1977; Vogel, 2004), in contrast to the prevailing view at the time that rulers were allowed to stray from the requirements of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) to a certain extent if this was necessary for the successful pursuit of policy. Ibn Taymiyya this made policy dependent on the laws of *šaria* (Khadduri, 1984). Vogel notes that according to Ibn al-Qayyim a just and beneficial policy must of necessity be part of šaria (Vogel, 2004).

Ibn Taymiyyas book was born of the difficult political situation and the lack of security that shook the Muslim world at the time. The destructive wars against the Crusaders and the Mongols took their toll, as did the corruption among the Muslim leaders. It was this last point that led Ibn Qaymiyya to declare that the subjects situation cannot be in order as long as the rulers are not in order. For this reason he presented his model for good governance under Islam, one that in his view was the most suitable for correcting the situation. We may therefore say that Ibn Taymiyya held the view that religion could reform policy, contrary to political philosophers in the West, who called for removing religion from politics and for adopting a Machiavellian approach. Ibn Taymiyyas declaration at the end of the introduction to his book can serve as a synopsis of his view on the relationship between policy and religion: "Since this verse made it incumbent to return what has been entrusted to you to the people and to rule with justice, these are what comprises just policy (*al-siyāsa al-ādila*) and virtuous rule".

In general we may say that among Muslim writers statesmanship and policy were closely connected to moral authority. They never considered detaching policy from ethics, since they believed that the latter was the basis for proper rule. In fact, no one separated the two before Machiavelli founded the field of political science (Sherwani, 1977).

Ibn Munqi (d. 584 AH) made a comparison of sorts between "canonical policy" (al-*siyāsa al-šariyya*) and "practical policy" (*al-siyāsa al-amaliyya*), the latter referring to the worldly affairs. He tried to reconcile between the two through the concept of justice, an element which he believed was shared by matters of religion and matters of this world, by the spiritual and the practical, the two aspects that embrace a Muslims life. He quotes the following maxim by a wise man: "Civilized life (*al-adab*) has two aspects, šaria and *siyāsa*. The *adab* of *šaria* consists of what leads to the performance of religious duties, while the adab of *siyāsa* is what helps the earth thrive. Both are based on justice, which means honest rule, building up the land, piety of the subjects and perfection of the privileged, for he who abandons his duty does wrong to himself and he who ruins the land does wrong to others".

It is worth noting, however, that the figure of caliph or king was not discussed by writers and scholars in the Middle Ages except as opposition protests (by groups such as *Shīites, Khawāriǧ, Abbasid* rebels, remnants of the Umayyads, etc.). The caliphate was discussed by opposition sects who broke away from the religious and political consensus in the Muslim world. It was a concept that was perceived as a kind of utopia that was dealt with in a theoretical scholastic style throughout Muslim history (Azma, 1987).

Thus, *siyāsa* was included in compositions of *adab* as a domain of knowledge which kings and imams were expected to master. It was believed that rulers could not form correct views or act in the right way if they did not learn, and that they could not mend their ways if they did not become acquainted with the fundamentals of reform and the counsel provided by writings on statecraft.

Consequently al-Ghazālī adopted the view that statecraft occupies a place of honor among the various fields of knowledge, and is one of the most noble crafts; it requires of those who pursue it greater perfection than required by any other craft (Al-Darini, 1986).

A number of writers are in seemingly mutual agreement that *siyāsa* should be considered a branch of practical philosophy, and consists of three parts: ethics, management of the household (Plessner, 1928) and policy (in the sense of "managing a city": *siyāsat al-mudun*).

The term *siyāsa* can thus be seen to have been used in three ways in Arabic (Netton, 2014; Khalidi, 1994):

1. State policy (in the same sense as the terms usage in Modern Standard Arabic ("politics, policy").

2. Actions of rulers that do not conform to the demands of the *šaria*.

3. A craft or field of knowledge that aims at the preservation of the state and its interests.

Some scholars have pointed out that most Muslim writers used the term *siyāsa* in the first two of the aforementioned meanings, and that the third usage was restricted to *Ibn al-ṬTaqtaqǎ* (d. 709 AH) and *Ibn Ḥaldūn* (d. 808 AH) (Khalidi, 1994).

Ibn al-Ṭaqtaqǎ in his discussion of the "science of kings" noted that the Mongols (his book was composed during the Mongol rule in Iraq and Syria, for the purpose of gaining access to one of their rulers) did not show an interest in the same sciences as did their predecessors. Instead, they preferred fields of knowledge that enabled them to administer and protect their kingdom. He defines *siyāsa* as "the kings capital [in the financial sense]." He enumerates its benefits for the state and society: it helps the ruler conserve blood, preserve money, prevent evil, repress corruptors of the land, put a stop to injustice and it takes charge of ensuring that obligations are discharged.

What is obviously absent in Ibn al-Ṭaqtaqǎs explanation of the concept of *siyāsa* and policy is the *šaria*; he clearly believes that statecraft has laws of its own which do not necessarily conform to šaria, which calls for complete equality and justice in the treatment of ones subjects. This equality is absent in Ibn al-Ṭaqtaqǎs theory.

Ibn aldn, on the other hand, explicitly notes the incompatibility of *siyāsa* and šaria in his analysis of the way historians before him analyzed the way in which the first Umayyad caliph Muāwiya seized power.

ŠARIA AND *SIYĀSA*: ATTRACTION AND REPULSION

Our discussion of the concept of *siyāsa* in classical Islamic sources leads us to try to analyze the relationship between the šaria (as represented by the *ulamā*) and statecraft or *siyāsa* (as represented by the ruler, his court and his helpers).

The relationship between these two was changeable and unstable. At times the clerics opposed the ruler for doctrinal considerations, based either on the rulers refusal to implement the divine law or on his deviation from the central *sunnī* consensus. There can be no doubt that Muslim rulers (in particular the Seljuk sultans) were quite aware of the potentially influential role of clerics, whether in protecting their interests or in weakening their rule and preparing the

way for rebellion. This realization was natural in a society that was dominated by the major denomination of Islam, the *sunnī* creed. Rulers therefore always strove to keep the clerics near them, so much so that the latter often became part of the ruling regime itself, in which they occupied official positions and were entrusted with diplomatic and other missions.

Because rulers were aware of the benefits of allying themselves with the clerics for the purpose of warding off both external enemies and internal competitors, they gave their patronage to clerics belonging to two main currents in Islam:

1. The four orthodox schools of jurisprudence (*Šāfiī, Ḥanbalī, Ḥanafī and Mālikī*). Rulers strove to use clerics of these schools in order to give their acts of state Islamic legal sanction and to rule with more justice.

2. Ṣūfī mysticism, whose practitioners enjoyed great popularity among the masses. Rulers used the mystics aura of piety as a tool to convince the masses to join in the war against the infidel.

Islamic theologians believed that Muslim scholars were entrusted by God to elucidate His laws in every aspect of life with no exception, including the political sphere. Although they viewed the Umayyad caliphate overall as illegitimate, the consensus of opinion among clerics was that Muslims owed obedience to their ruler, even one who was unjust, in order to preserve the nations unity, prevent needless bloodshed and acts of sacrilege. However, at the same time they agreed that such rulers must be criticized and given advice. Some separatist theologians of the Umayyad period, on the other hand, suffered at the hands of the authorities and instead of calling for obedience declared that the regime should be attacked. The most prominent representative of the latter group in the Umayyad period was Abdullh b. Umar.

It may justly be said that the theologians of the Abbasid period were more neutral in their approach than their Umayyad predecessors. The reason for this lay in the fact that in the Abbasid period the clerics did not compete with the authorities and were not perceived as leaders in a practical sense, as was the case in the Umayyad period, when many men of religion had been companions or followers of the Prophet themselves, and were considered by many of their admirers to have a greater right to the caliphate than the Umayyad rulers.

Until the period that preceded the 5th/11th century *Sunnī* political thought was divided into two parts: The Ḥanbalī approach, which was extreme in its insistence on the need to return to the model provided by the earliest Muslim caliphs, and the *Šāfi* view, which focused mainly on the features needed for just government. At the beginning of the 5th/11th century the two currents approached one another, preparing the ground for a rapprochement between clerics and rulers. The Seljuk state was the first to have made a conscious effort to integrate the clerics and to treat them with overt generosity. At the same time the Seljuk rulers tried to impose a unified school of jurisprudence on their state through the *šaria* schools that they founded, in order to better confront the Shiites and their supporters. The clerics thus made their peace with the regime and became its promoters and propagandists. The leading *Šāfiī* jurists in the Seljuk period (5th/11th century) became officials of the state in their capacity as teachers in the *Nizāmī* schools in Baghdad and elsewhere, while the sultan and the princes under his control continued to adhere to the Ḥanafī creed and founded schools for its adherents. These two dominant schools of jurisprudence, the Šāfiī and the Ḥanafī, provided the regime with significant support.

The book *Siraj al-mulūk* (The Lamp of Kings) was one of the earliest works of political exhortation that examined the problematic relationship between statecraft and *šaria*. In it *al-Ṭurṭūšī* related that in his perusal of the behavior of nations of the past and the laws which they created for the purpose of running the state he found that these laws were of two kinds: ordinances (*ahkām*) and policies (*siyāsāt*). The former concern tenets that have to do with what is permitted and forbidden, rules of commerce, marriage, divorce and the like. These were all laws that nations accepted without the need for Allahs guidance and were implemented by "the servants of fire and the priests of the pantheon" as well. Policies were the means by which the people ensured that the ordinances were obeyed and infractions punished. He added that nations pursued these policies with justice and thoroughness. Although he goes on to criticize the beliefs of the nations of the past he clearly admires the policies which they pursued in order to implement the so-called "ordinances."

Statecraft thus takes precedence over *šaria* because it affects the welfare of the state and the regimes stability. This is reflected in a well-known saying which appears in *adab* literature: "The kings throne can survive unbelief but not injustice."

The same idea was also expressed by al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), who explains that although Islam and unbelief are mutually contradictory ways of life, and although one of them is true and the other false, both provide a possible style and system of government.

Other scholars, such as Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256) and al-Sabkī (d. 771/1370) maintained that šaria was above statecraft. In fact, the former stated that *šaria* is the perfect *siyāsa* while the latter argues that statecraft is useless and harmful if it is not founded on Islamic law, for *šaria* is the only way to ensure that all problems in human society can be solved.

The problematic nature of the relations between clerics and rulers is highlighted in several works of *adab* composed in different historical periods. Thus Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) spoke of the dangers inherent in the encounter between a strong-headed sultan or king and a cleric, whereby the latter in his view becomes false, because his knowledge is subordinated to the ruler and is transformed into a tool in the service of worldly political interests.

Another famous saying is the following, which some transmitters of *ḥadīt* ascribe to the Prophet himself: "There are two (kinds) of people who if they are righteous so are the people and if they are corrupt so are the people: Scholars and princes." This statement shows how crucial religious scholars were for society and the state, since they held a position in which they functioned as quasi overseers of the rulers actions, by means of their counsel and their instructions on how deviations could be corrected.

Al-Sabkī criticized those clerics who did hesitate to treat the *šaria* with contempt and occasionally even ruled against the founders of the Islamic schools of jurisprudence, in that they permitted rulers to perform acts that were forbidden to ordinary people. He also criticized clerics who aspired to use their knowledge in order to achieve worldly status by constantly seeking the company of the rulers, although the latter, he notes, scorned those who fawned to them, because a scholar who did not follow in his predecessors footsteps in his rulings was certain to lose his judicial knowledge.

Al-Ġazālā believes that a certain distance must be maintained between Islamic jurists and rulers, for the formers sake. In fact, he prefers that they keep away from men of state under all circumstances. Coming into the rulers presence is according to al-slamic jurists and rulers, for the formers sake. In fact, he prefers that they keepwhen the ruler belongs to the class of "kings who have attracted [Gods] wrath," rulers into whose presence one can only come after prostrating oneself, thus honoring and glorifying the oppressor.

Several traditions quote the Prophet as urging the believers to refrain from sitting at the rulers gatherings, for example: "A man who enters into the sultans presence with his religion will leave with no religion." Al-Suy devoted an entire monograph to traditions that call for keeping ones distance from the ruler, entitled Mā rawāhu al-asātīn fī adam al-maǧī ilā al-salātin.

In addition to these, a number of pious men and clerics are reported to have warned their disciples to stay away from people in power. However, others have promoted close relations with rulers, giving as their reason the need to give counsel to those who govern, in line with the following statement attributed to the Prophet: "The Prophet said]: Religion is advice. He was asked: To whom, o Messenger of God? He replied: To God and His Messenger, to the leaders of the Muslims and to the people-at-large."

Absolute rulers will not tolerate opposition to his authority by jurists or theologians, who usually urge rulers to act piously rather than in accordance with their desires.

For all the reasons given above the image of the "man of the court" who works side-by-side with the ruler is usually perceived as ignominious, as one who is completely submissive to the master on whom his welfare depends, as depicted by the vizier Ibn al-Furāt, who one day said to his confidants: "I wish for a man who believes neither in God nor in the Day of Reckoning, who will obey me without question and carry out my orders, one who if he achieves what I prescribe to him, I will bestow manifest favors on him and enrich him."

THE NATURE OF THE MUSLIM LEADER OR *IMĀM*: THE CENTRAL ISSUE IN COMPOSITIONS ON STATECRAFT AND ETHICS

The concept of the *"imamate" (imāma)* occupies an important position in writings on Islamic statecraft and principum specula ("Mirrors for Princes") literature from the end of the second century AH to very late times. In contrast, during the period of the Prophets Companions Islam was not perceived in terms of a state but rather as the faith that "sealed" all other faiths and whose adherents formed a nation only in the spiritual and social sense, one whose existence did not depend on any specific type of political organization. The Arabic term *al-dawla* or *state* as a political concept emerged only following the victory of the Abbasid revolution, when historians began to speak of "the Umayyad state", "the Abbasid state" and so on *(al-Ǧābirī)*.

The issue of who will lead the Muslim nation as imm arose after Muammads death. Since the Prophet was perceived

as representing Gods rule on earth by conveying His message to humankind, there arose the question of the traits which were necessary for the man who could lead the Muslim nation now that its founder was gone. None of the Prophets sons survived his father, thus opening the possibility for many different persons to be considered as replacement (*khalīfa*, caliph) (Watt, 1968).

Many writers and legists discussed the issue of *imāma* in Islam, including the characteristics which were required of the nations leader, who had the responsibility to manage its abilities and resources.

Various legal experts and others provided differing views on the traits required of a model leader, depending on their preferred school of theology and jurisprudence. Ibn aldūn wrote that no human society can survive without a leader to give it direction and to enforce the laws which guarantee the peoples safety and rights. He adds that humans are by nature social creatures, and as such need a king in order to have the foundations for building their lives. This idea was already current among the ancient Greeks and was later adopted by many Muslim thinkers in the Middle Ages.

The concept of imamate (in the religious-legal sense, which also encompasses the practical political aspects of government) is perceived by many thinkers as the practical political aspect of the succession to the Prophet, with respect both to maintaining the faith and governance in the temporal world. A famous saying states: "The king and religion are twin brothers, either of which cannot be complete without the other. Islam is the prince (*amīr*) and the sultan is its guard (*hāris*): whatever has no prince is doomed and whatever has no guard is lost" (al-Mward, 1985). According to most jurists and Islamic scholars the imamate (*imāma*) is obligatory, since leadership (*riāsa*, a synonym of *imāma*) is a characteristic of all human societies, subject to its own laws and customs.

According to al-Mward the imamate implies treading Gods righteous path and the establishment of a kind of political charter formulated by the imm and ratified by the nation.

Ibn Ḥaldūn argues that the caliphate or imamate has the aim of preserving religion and administering worldly affairs in place of the Lawgiver, which is why the ruler is called a caliph (literally: deputy) or an *imam* (literally: leader). Later generations called the ruler "sultan" (sulṭān), because there were so many distinct centers of political and military power that the original intention of the position was lost and the people were forced to pledge allegiance to every usurper.

The issue of the imamate thus became a bone of contention among jurists, intellectuals and statesmen, each of whom expressed views consistent with their own personal and sectarian theories.

On this issue al-Shahrastānī says: "The greatest dispute within the nation is the dispute about the imamate, for no sword in Islam has been unsheathed over a religious principle more often than about the imamate in all times." The post of *imām* is of great religious importance in Islam, since it bestows on its possessor an honor that is second only to that of the prophets. Many sayings praise the virtues of the position of *imām/halīfa*. In fact, all theories of statecraft in Islam begin with the basic premise that a Muslim regime must be based on šaria; therefore the science of statecraft in Islam cannot be independent or based on independent thinking, but is a branch of theology. In Islam religion was always connected to statecraft, and the latter was always connected to ethics.

The Iḥwān al-ṣafā ("Brethren of Purity") also agreed that the dispute concerning the nature and status of the imamate was one on which Muslim clerics were less in agreement than on many others, in fact one which has never been settled. They stress the vital importance of the *imām* as the administrator of the affairs of men and the state, collecting taxes, protecting the faith, defending Muslims and their lands from the enemy, and championing the cause of the oppressed against those who do them wrong. The ruler is also responsible for the implementation of religious law. The political leader or *imām* in Islam is considered responsible for both public and private aspects of the running of society, in sacred and secular matters. According to Ibn Taymiyya "just statecraft and successful leadership" (*al-siyāsa al-ādila wal-wilāya al-ālia*) are based on two foundations: security for the people and just rule. Ibn Qayyim al-Ğawziyya was of the view that "careful perusal of the šaria ensures that ruler will govern with justice and correctness, since just statecraft is a branch of shar statecraft, which makes those who know its purposes dispense with any other." He thus believes that statecraft was basically a matter of *šaria*.

Numerous Islamic thinkers and clerics have stressed the need for a leader (*imām*) who expresses the nations consensus. They contend that the basic need which he fulfills is to prevent his subjects from falling into the iniquity that is widespread in this world, including the uncontrollable hostility among people with conflicting passions and inclinations and the ruin of religion due to the excesses of the powerful. An *imām* thus serves as the shepherd and the protector of his subjects interests.

Writers of the *adab* genre provided detailed enumerations of the traits which a man needed in order to become the caliph of the Muslims. Among the more prominent of these traits are the following: physical health, intelligence and

perceptiveness, love of learning and deductive ability, and possession of various moral virtues.

Rulers are required by writers and jurists obligated to observe Gods laws just like their subjects.

In the Specula literature we find that kings are said to promote science and literature and to make them flourish. They attract scholars and intellectuals and craftsmen and encourage them to write and devote themselves to the various fields of knowledge. This approach is appropriate for the readers of such literature, who are naturally members of the upper classes of society, either a caliph, sultan or prince, or a senior official in the state administration. Such readers are quite literate and interested in obtaining knowledge, due to their work and their social status.

CONCLUSION: THE MUSLIM WORLD TODAY

A look at the relations between rulers and subjects in the Muslim world of today reveals a state of furious conflict between the two parties. This conflict takes place behind the scenes in some parts of the Muslim world and is overt and increasingly evident in others. It is a conflict that arose due to the contradictory views of Islamic legists and theorists of political science who, as we saw above, can be divided into two schools, one of which favors rebellion against oppressive rulers and believes that every available means should be taken to incite the downtrodden public to fight against the ruler, who for them symbolizes evil incarnate and the opposite of faith and piety; the other school calls on the people to obey the ruler and to refrain from attacking him, instead urging them to advise him and cooperate with him in order to improve the life of the country and its residents. Numerous debates on this issue with representatives of both of these schools can be found in interview programs on various television stations, depending on the specific channels views and political leanings.

The divisions and internal strife which the Muslim world is experiencing today are clearly affected by how modern Muslim civilization views its heritage. Its two branches, religion and literature/philosophy, provide the Islamic peoples with an image of the ruler, whether positive or negative, in every country of the Muslim world.

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