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A Preacher's Mirror: Mixing Advice and Panegyric in Ibn al-Ġawzī's *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī'*

El *Espejo* de un predicador: mezclando consejo y panegírico
en *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī'* de Ibn al-Ġawzī

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Abstract

This article examines the first chapter of *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' fī ḥilāfat al-Mustaḍī'* ("The Radiant Lamp: The Caliphate of al-Mustaḍī'"), a homiletic mirror for princes written by the Ḥanbalī scholar and preacher Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1201). As a work dedicated to the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaḍī' (r. 566-575/1170-1180), the *Miṣbāḥ* can also be read as an extended sermon to the caliph. Its first chapter, aimed at glorifying al-Mustaḍī's caliphate and the Abbasid dynasty, displays an eclectic mix of material drawn from the Qur'ān, *ḥadīths*, laudatory biographies (*manāqib*), and the Sunni discourse on the caliphate. At the same time, Ibn al-Ġawzī subtly embeds advice in his panegyric to al-Mustaḍī', most perceptibly in a section devoted to a genealogical legitimization of the Abbasid dynasty where he grafts the Abbasids onto a sacred line of prophets running through the Prophet Muḥammad. While Ibn al-Ġawzī musters a mix of anecdotes and *ḥadīths* to depict the Abbasid ancestors Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh as learned and pious Muslim sages, he also frames them as models of religious knowledge and ritualistic piety for al-Mustaḍī' to emulate. Ibn al-Ġawzī's careful blending of advice and panegyric is in line with his proposed strategies for admonishing rulers, as outlined in his preaching manuals. At a broader level, this article highlights the intersection between hortatory preaching (*wa'z*) and political thought in classical Islamic civilization.

Keywords: Ibn al-Ġawzī; Abbasids; caliphate; Islamic political thought; mirrors for princes; Muslim preaching; Islamic sermons; genealogical legitimization.

Resumen

El presente artículo examina el primer capítulo de *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' fī ḥilāfat al-Mustaḍī'* ("La lámpara radiante: El califato de al-Mustaḍī'"), un espejo de príncipes homilético, escrito por el erudito y predicador Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1201). Como obra dedicada al califa abasí al-Mustaḍī' (g. 566-575/1170-1180), *al-Miṣbāḥ* puede leerse también como un sermón extenso dirigido al califa. El primer capítulo, destinado a glorificar el califato de al-Mustaḍī' y la dinastía abasí, muestra una mezcla ecléctica de material extraída del Qur'ān, de los hadices, de las biografías laudatorias (*manāqib*) y del discurso sunnita sobre el califato. Al mismo tiempo, Ibn al-Ġawzī incorpora sutilmente consejos en su panegírico a al-Mustaḍī', perceptible, sobre todo en un epígrafe dedicado a la legitimación genealógica de la dinastía abasí, donde integra a los abasíes en una línea sagrada de profetas que se extiende hasta el profeta Muḥammad. Si bien Ibn al-Ġawzī reúne una mezcla de anécdotas y de hadices para describir a los antepasados abasíes Ibn 'Abbās y 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh como sabios eruditos y piadosos musulmanes, también los representa como modelos del conocimiento religioso y piedad ritual para que al-Mustaḍī' los emule. La cuidadosa combinación de consejos y panegíricos de Ibn al-Ġawzī está en consonancia con las estrategias que propone para amonestar a los gobernantes, tal y como se describe en sus manuales para predicadores. A nivel más amplio, este artículo destaca la intersección entre la predicación exhortatoria (*wa'z*) y el pensamiento político en la civilización islámica clásica.

Palabras clave: Ibn al-Ġawzī; abasíes; califato; pensamiento político islámico; espejos para príncipes; predicación musulmana; sermones islámicos; legitimación genealógica.

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1. Introduction

This article examines Ibn al-Ġawzī's (d. 597/1201) mixing of advice and panegyric in his mirror for princes *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍī' fī ḥilāfat al-Mustaḍī'* ("The Radiant Lamp: The Caliphate of al-Mustaḍī'"). The uniqueness of the *Miṣbāḥ* lies in its structure and organization, which bear the stamp of a hortatory preacher (*wā'iz*) who wished to induce in his reader an emotional movement from a feeling of pride at the beginning of the work to fear and anxiety at the end. The *Miṣbāḥ*'s structure also bears close resemblance to the structure proposed and followed by Ibn al-Ġawzī for hortatory preaching assemblies (*maḡālīs al-wa'z*). In that respect, the work can be read as an extended sermon to its dedicatee, the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaḍī' (r. 566-575/1170-1180), albeit in written form.

The present article focuses on the first chapter of the *Miṣbāḥ* entitled "A demonstration of the dignity of the caliphate and the felicitation of its incumbent" (*fī bayān šaraf al-ḥilāfa wa-tahni'at al-sultān bihā*). Through a close reading of this chapter, I argue that although it largely functions as a panegyric to the office of the caliphate and the Abbasid dynasty, Ibn al-Ġawzī also took care to embed advice in his words of praise to al-Mustaḍī'. This effort can be clearly discerned in a section devoted to a genealogical legitimation of the Abbasid dynasty where the author adduces reports and statements exalting the Abbasid ancestors Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687) and his son 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh (d. 118/736), but at the same time presenting these two figures as models of religious knowledge and ritualistic piety for al-Mustaḍī' to emulate.

Although medieval Islamic political thought has found expression in various genres, the mirror for princes genre has attracted the most attention in Western scholarship.¹ In her survey of scholarship on Arabic and Persian mirrors, Louise Marlow notes several recent developments in scholarly trends, two of which are relevant to this essay. First is the shift of focus from mirrors written by court secretaries and administrators to those written by authors from non-courtly backgrounds,

including religious scholars (*'ulamā'*).² Mirrors belonging to the homiletic variety, which place more emphasis on the ruler's moral and spiritual commitments than on practical matters related to governmental administration, have greatly benefited from this trend.³ The second development concerns rhetorical strategies. As more attention is being paid by modern scholars to the precariousness of counseling rulers, more work has been done on how mirror writers strove to "balance, within single texts, elements of praise with elements of counsel" to avoid persecution.⁴ My study of Ibn al-Ġawzī's *Miṣbāḥ* contributes to these developments by examining a homiletic mirror that remains understudied among scholars of Islam.⁵ In addition to showing how the work's first chapter attempted to balance praise and counsel, I also demonstrate how the art of hortatory preaching (*wa'z*), as embodied by Ibn al-Ġawzī, influenced the writing of mirrors and, by extension, political discourse in the medieval Islamic world.

2. Ibn al-Ġawzī and His Relationship with the Abbasid Caliphate

Abū l-Faraġ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ġawzī was born in Baghdad sometime between 508/1114 and 512/1118.⁶ Introduced to the study of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* as well as the Ḥanbalī school of law at

² Marlow, "Surveying Recent Literature", pp. 527-528.

³ On the homiletic tradition of mirrors for princes, see Meisami, *The Sea of Precious Virtues*, pp. vii, 330 (note n. 6); Marlow, "Advice and Advice Literature"; al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 97-99.

⁴ Marlow, "Surveying Recent Literature", p. 530. The precariousness of counseling rulers is exacerbated by the fact that increasingly brutal and arbitrary punishments had become the norm during the late Abbasid period, especially in light of the domination of militarized regimes such as the Seljuqs over the Middle East. On this, see Lange, *Justice*, pp. 25-98.

⁵ The *Miṣbāḥ* has only received scant attention in Western scholarship. See Almagor, "The Pious Man and the Ruler"; al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 98; Marlow, "Advice and Advice Literature" and "Performances of Advice and Admonition", p. 76; El-Hibri, *The Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 230; Van Renterghem, "L'admonestation au souverain". Besides Van Renterghem's article, no work to date in Western scholarship has closely analyzed the *Miṣbāḥ*'s contents, structure, and rhetorical strategies in much detail. More has been done in Arabic scholarship: for example, Ibrāhīm, *Ibn al-Ġawzī wa-kitābuhu* and al-Sirrī, "Ibn al-Ġawzī wa-l-wa'z al-siyāsi".

⁶ For medieval Arabic biographical accounts of Ibn al-Ġawzī, see Sibṭ ibn al-Ġawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. VIII, pt. II, pp. 481-503; Ibn Raġab, *Dayl*, vol. I, pp. 399-433. For modern biographical accounts, see Laoust, "Ibn al-Djawzī"; Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Qusṣās*, pp. 15-38; Swartz, *Medieval Critique*, pp. 3-32; Ibrāhīm, *Ibn al-Ġawzī wa-kitābuhu*, pp. 11-186.

¹ Most notably, Lambton, "Justice" and "Islamic Mirrors for Princes"; Leder, "Aspekte" and "Sultan Rule"; Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, pp. 148-164; Aigle, "La conception du pouvoir"; Marlow, "Advice and Advice Literature", "Performances of Advice and Admonition", and "Surveying Recent Literature"; Darling, "Mirrors for Princes"; Yavari, *Advice for the Sultan*.

a young age, he commenced his studies in *wa'z* before turning ten and began preaching in front of large crowds before the age of twelve.

Ibn al-Ğawzī's public fame in *wa'z* eventually caught the attention of the Abbasid state. After Ibn Hubayra (d. 560/1165) was appointed vizier by the caliph al-Muqtafi (r. 530-555/1136-1160), he actively cultivated relationships with traditionalist Ḥanbalī preachers to win over Baghdad's traditionalist-leaning populace. Through these efforts, Ibn al-Ğawzī was brought into the service of the caliphal court and given permission to hold public sermons in Ibn Hubayra's vizieral palace every Friday. Ibn al-Ğawzī's public career in preaching reached its peak during the reign of al-Muqtafi's grandson al-Mustaḍī, who acceded to the caliphal throne in 566/1170.

In terms of political and military gains, the reigns of al-Mustaḍī and his father al-Mustanḡid (r. 555-566/1160-1170) were a step back from efforts by preceding Abbasid caliphs to regain authority and lands lost to regional rulers in prior centuries.⁷ These gains stalled as internal court politics and intrigue beset their reigns. Both caliphs removed themselves from political and military affairs and allowed members of the court to run the show. In the absence of a strong overarching authority, the Abbasid court became a site of factions and conflicts that often implicated the caliphs themselves. Despite these developments, al-Mustanḡid and al-Mustaḍī were careful to appease the populace and the elites of Baghdad. Beginning with al-Mustanḡid's reign, annual ceremonies were held in which religious scholars, Sufis, Qur'ān reciters, and state dignitaries in attendance were "fed, honored, and given money". A similar ceremony took place during the first days of al-Mustaḍī's reign and resumed in the second half of his caliphate.⁸

A politically and militarily passive caliph himself, al-Mustaḍī extended Ibn Hubayra's policy of supporting the Ḥanbalīs. Ibn al-Ğawzī was a direct beneficiary of these efforts, regularly preaching in the traditionalist quarters of Baghdad with crowds often ranging in the thousands and with the caliph occasionally in attendance.⁹ Equally popular were the preaching assemblies

he held every Thursday in the courtyard of the new Rayḥānīyīn caliphal palace, which were attended by the caliph, members of his court, and the public.¹⁰

The *Miṣbāḥ* is one of two mirrors for princes authored by Ibn al-Ğawzī, the other being *al-Šifā' fī mawā'iz al-mulūk wa-l-ḥulafā'* ("The Cure: Admonitions of Kings and Caliphs"). The *Šifā'* is much shorter in length and contains a chapter on *ḡihād* (titled "On the virtues of *ḡihād*" [*fī faḍl al-ḡihād*]) whereas the *Miṣbāḥ* does not.¹¹ Not much is known regarding the composition of the *Miṣbāḥ* beyond the fact that it was written for the Abbasid caliph al-Mustaḍī. Ibn al-Ğawzī writes in the work's introduction that he has composed a book of virtues (*manāqib*) dedicated to the reign of al-Mustaḍī, containing reminders (*taḍkira*) and advice (*naṣīḥa*) that arise from sincere and sound belief, reports about the conduct of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and parts of exquisite admonitions (*mawā'iz*) by the righteous.¹² The *Miṣbāḥ* was certainly written during al-Mustaḍī's ten-year reign, most likely at the height of Ibn al-Ğawzī's preaching career. Its precise date of composition, however, is harder to ascertain. Nāḡiya Ibrāhīm, who published an annotated edition of the work in 1976, argues that Ibn al-Ğawzī composed the work shortly after al-Mustaḍī's accession to the caliphate in 566/1170, but the textual evidence she offers does not yield a conclusive picture.¹³ It is likely that the *Miṣbāḥ* was completed after al-Mustaḍī's son and successor Abū al-Abbās Aḥmad received the regnal title of "al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh" — since the title is mentioned in a list

¹⁰ Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣās*, pp. 31-32.

¹¹ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Šifā'*, pp. 69-71. More on this later.

¹² Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 84. Unlike the *Miṣbāḥ* which has a specified dedicatee, the *Šifā'* was written for rulers in general. In the *Šifā'*'s introduction, Ibn al-Ğawzī only tells us that since he had already written books of admonition for the masses, it now behooves him to write one for kings since they are the most in need of exhortation among humankind (*Šifā'*, p. 40).

¹³ Ibrāhīm, *Ibn al-Ğawzī wa-kitābuhu*, pp. 274-276. For instance, she concludes that the work was written before 567/1171, based on Ibn al-Ğawzī's own statement that he had composed a book titled *al-Naṣr 'alā l-Miṣr* in 567/1171 regarding Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's overthrow of the Fatimids and restoration of the *ḥuṭba* in Cairo to the Abbasids. Ibn al-Ğawzī claims to have presented the book to al-Mustaḍī in the same year. Ibrāhīm's conclusion is based on the assumption that Ibn al-Ğawzī must have presented the *Miṣbāḥ* together with *al-Naṣr 'alā l-Miṣr* to al-Mustaḍī at the same time. Since one cannot ascertain that Ibn al-Ğawzī did not personally meet the caliph on other occasions or that he presented both works to the caliph, Ibrāhīm's argument still does not rule out the possibility that Ibn al-Ğawzī could have written the book after 567/1171.

⁷ Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 142-203; and El-Hibri, *The Abbasid Caliphate*, pp. 193-245.

⁸ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. XVIII, pp. 163, 174, 191, 213-214, 219-220, 229, 238, 250. Brought to my attention in Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 194-195, 250 (notes n. 45-49).

⁹ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. XVIII, pp. 190-254.

of Abbasid caliphs located in the book¹⁴ — and before al-Mustaḍīr's death in 575/1180. When exactly al-Nāṣir received his regnal title remains unknown, a problem compounded by the fact that al-Mustaḍīr only declared him successor about a day or a week before his death.¹⁵ But since historical chronicles hardly provide details about al-Nāṣir's life before he became caliph, any attempt to provide a narrower range of dates for the *Miṣbāḥ*'s composition remains speculative.

3. Emotional Movement in the *Miṣbāḥ*

The title *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍīr fī ḥilāfat al-Mustaḍīr* is a wordplay on al-Mustaḍīr's regnal name which describes him as seeking light or illumination from God.¹⁶ This might hint at a work of panegyric about the caliphate of al-Mustaḍīr. But a quick scan of the book's chapter titles will make clear that we are dealing here with a mirror for princes:

- Chapter 1: On demonstrating the dignity of the caliphate and the felicitation of its incumbent
- Chapter 2: On instruction by way of reminding (*al-amr bi-l-taḍkīr*)
- Chapter 3: On the need for reminders
- Chapter 4: On men of renown who attended admonition sessions (*maḡālis al-taḍkīr*) and sought reminders
- Chapter 5: On reminding and admonishing the ruler
- Chapter 6: On the virtue of justice
- Chapter 7: On the censure of injustice
- Chapter 8: On what is incumbent upon the ruler in terms of self-conduct
- Chapter 9: On the governance and management of subjects
- Chapter 10: On the attainment of wealth and its spending
- Chapter 11: On select passages and reports about the conduct of caliphs (*siyar al-ḥulafā'*)
- Chapter 12: On the caliphs who exhorted

Chapter 13: On the caliphs who were exhorted
Chapter 14: On political leaders (*al-umarā'*) who exhorted

Chapter 15: On political leaders who were exhorted

Chapter 16: Exhortations (*mawā'iz*) and testaments (*waṣāyā*)

Chapter 17: On kings, *sultāns*, and men of power who became ascetics (*tazahhada*)

Yet as a homiletic mirror for princes, the *Miṣbāḥ* differs from most mirrors in its heavy emphasis on exhortation and admonition. Its focus is less on statecraft and more on soulcraft. The chapters on justice, proper ruler conduct, and the management of subjects and wealth only occupy about one-fifth of the entire book, and even here we only encounter general statements, including *ḥadīths*, advising the ruler to govern with forbearance, control his passions and anger, consult religious scholars, select the best man for official positions, and treat his subjects in ways he wants to be treated.¹⁷ We find no detailed discussions of the different functionaries in government, let alone details about the sixth/twelfth-century Abbasid court.¹⁸ This reminds us that although Ibn al-Ḡawzī was close to the caliphal court, he was not a member of it and thus not privy to the inner workings of government. The *Miṣbāḥ* is the work of a scholar-preacher, not a statesman.

While the *Miṣbāḥ* lacks depth and detail in its treatment of government, its originality derives mainly from its structure and organization. It is in its structure and organization that we can truly see Ibn al-Ḡawzī's stamp of authorship, one

¹⁴ Ibn al-Ḡawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 127.

¹⁵ Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir*, p. 70; Abū Šāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, vol. III, pp. 34-35; al-Ḍahabī, *Tārīḥ*, vol. XL, p. 34; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Bidāya*, vol. XII, pp. 304-305.

¹⁶ This is not the only title by which the work is known. See Sibṭ ibn al-Ḡawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, vol. VIII, pt. 2, p. 484, where the book is listed as a work of history and biographies under the title *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍīr bi-faḍā'il al-Mustaḍīr*; Ibn Raḡab, *Dayl*, vol. I, p. 404, where it is mentioned as *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍīr fī dawlat al-Mustaḍīr*, and at p. 419, quoting Ibn al-Qaṭī'ī, as *al-Miṣbāḥ al-muḍīr li-da'wat al-Mustaḍīr*. I have translated the title as "The Radiant Lamp: The Caliphate of al-Mustaḍīr", but one could also translate it as "The Radiant Lamp in the Caliphate of al-Mustaḍīr".

¹⁷ For example, "Whoever begins with his own soul and guides it will successfully govern the people" (statement attributed to Plato); "There is indeed no forbearance more beloved to God than the forbearance and compassion of an imam. Whoever conducts affairs based on forgiveness, [sound] well-being will come to him from above him. Whoever exacts justice for the people from himself, success will be obtained in his affairs" (statement from 'Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb); "The strong man is not one who is skilled at wrestling (*al-ṣar'a*). [The strong man is] one who controls himself in a fit of rage" (*ḥadīth*); "Whoever appoints a governor (*āmil*) from among the Muslims while knowing that there is someone else who is better than him and more knowledgeable than him in the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet has betrayed God, His messenger, and all the believers" (*ḥadīth*); "Whichever ruler is appointed over something in the command of my community but does not counsel and work hard for them the way he does so for himself, God will throw him down on his face in the Fire on the Day of Resurrection" (*ḥadīth*). Ibn al-Ḡawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 211, 213-214, 235-236, 240.

¹⁸ Similar observations in Van Renterghem, "L'admonestation au souverain", pp. 296-297.

characterized by a “preacher’s touch”. To fully grasp this point, we must begin with the structure of the hortatory preaching assembly (*mağlis al-wa‘z*) as proposed and followed by Ibn al-Ğawzī himself. In his *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās wa-l-mudakkirīn* (“The Book of Storytellers and Reminders”), Ibn al-Ğawzī recommends that a *mağlis al-wa‘z* should start with (1) a recitation of the Qur’ān, a prayer, and the praise of God, appealing to the congregation’s spiritual sensitivities, followed by (2) an interpretation of the Qur’ānic verses recited and a didactic question-and-answer session, appealing to the intellectual interests of the audience. The assembly should end by (3) appealing to the audience’s moral concerns by way of an exhortatory sermon (*wa‘z*), which summons them to live by the prescriptions of the *ṣarī‘a* and warns those who are lax in these matters about the eschatological punishments that await them in the afterlife.¹⁹ A similar structure with minor variations can also be observed in Ibn Ğubayr’s account of Ibn al-Ğawzī’s *mağālīs al-wa‘z* when he visited Baghdad.²⁰ In his study of Ibn al-Ğawzī’s homilies, Merlin Swartz argues that this particular structure was characterized by “a kind of movement from the emotional/spiritual, to the didactic/reflective, to the practical/moral” — what I call an “emotional movement”, whereby an audience member experiences shifts in emotional states as the preaching assembly proceeds from beginning to end.²¹

The climax of the assembly was the exhortatory sermon or *wa‘z*, which usually consisted of pious harangues and vivid eschatological imageries and was “ultimately a call to repentance and moral reform”.²² The main emotion to be induced during the *wa‘z* segment was often fear (*ḥawf*), as attested by Ibn al-Ğawzī’s use of the term *muḥawwifāt* (in Swartz’s translation, “stories and exhortations that arouse fear in people”) in referring to the material to be delivered to the audience.²³ It was also usually during the *wa‘z*

segment of the assembly that intense emotional outbursts were observed, with audience members weeping, throwing themselves at the preacher, and even offering their forelocks to be shorn as a sign of repentance.²⁴

The emotional movement described by Swartz is also observed to some degree in the *Miṣbāh* if we follow the progression of the chapters from beginning to end. In the first chapter, the author elevates the caliph’s sense of pride by glorifying the office of the caliphate. Chapters 2-5 serve to reel the caliph in to pay attention to the admonitions and counsel that follow in the book. Then come the didactic chapters (6-15) where al-Mustaḍī’ is admonished about the importance of ruling justly and about governing himself and his subjects. Chapter 11, “On select passages and reports about the conduct of caliphs”, is the longest chapter and constitutes the heart of the *Miṣbāh*.²⁵ It consists of anecdotes and reports that depict caliphs from Abū Bakr to al-Mustaḍī’ in a pietistic fashion: being earnest in prayer, weeping excessively,²⁶ interacting with pious individuals, going on pilgrimages, and hearing *ḥadīths*. Hardly anything is mentioned about their political and military activities. These caliphal biographies function as didactic tools to guide al-Mustaḍī’ toward just and pious rule. In doing so, they aim to induce in the caliph a desire to emulate past caliphs, especially his Abbasid ancestors, or at least shame and guilt if he did not live up to their standards. This approach is in line with Ibn al-Ğawzī’s recommendations for novice preachers to invoke the virtuous conduct of past rulers when counseling rulers.²⁷

The *Miṣbāh*’s exhortative tone reaches its highest pitch at the end of the work, particularly in Chapter 16, “Exhortations and testaments” (*fīhi mawā‘iz wa-waṣāyā*). The chapter is saturated with Prophetic *ḥadīths* and sayings by prominent early Muslims lamenting the radical uncertainty of what happens after death and the fear of punishment in

¹⁹ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās*, pp. 137-140 (English translation, pp. 221-224); Swartz, “Rules”, pp. 228-229.

²⁰ Ibn Ğubayr, *Travels*, pp. 249-254.

²¹ I draw inspiration from Karen Bauer’s notion of an “emotional plot”, defined as “the specific series of emotions that lead the listener from one emotional state into another emotional state, achieving an emotional transformation” as the listener hears “different types of address in the Qur’an, such as promise and threat passages, exhortations, and stories”. See Bauer, “Emotion in the Qur’an”, p. 17.

²² Swartz, “Rules”, p. 230.

²³ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Kitāb al-Quṣṣās*, p. 140 (English translation, p. 224).

²⁴ Ibn Ğubayr, *Travels*, pp. 250-254; Swartz, “Rules”, pp. 233-235. For a discussion of these emotional responses, see Jones, *The Power of Oratory*, chapter 8.

²⁵ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāh*, pp. 279-500.

²⁶ Especially ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd ‘Azīz and Hārūn al-Raṣīd. The former not only wept, but also “used to gather jurists every night to remind each other of death, the Day of Resurrection, and the afterlife, and then weep as if there were a funeral in front of them”. Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāh*, pp. 321-322, 368. On weeping as a sign of piety in medieval Islam, see Jones, “He Cried and Made Others Cry”; Melchert, “Exaggerated Fear”, pp. 288-290.

²⁷ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Ṣayd al-ḥāṭir*, p. 410.

the afterlife.²⁸ One *ḥadīṭ* quoted has the Prophet pleading to God to help him bear the pangs of death (*sakarāt al-mawt*); one offers vivid detail about how people will sweat so profusely out of fear on the Day of Resurrection that their sweat will sink seventy cubits deep into the earth and rise up to their thighs or ears; while another one tells evildoers that their graves will close in on their corpses after death until their ribs start crushing one another.²⁹ Just as the exhortatory sermon at the end of preaching assemblies often produced dramatic and intense emotional outbursts among audience members due to feelings of fear, anxiety, and remorse, the pious harangues in this chapter aim to achieve a similar emotional, if not physical, effect on the caliph as he contemplates how his manner of rule will affect his fate in the afterlife.

In short, the *Miṣbāḥ* is structured quite similarly to Ibn al-Ġawzī's *maḡlis al-wa'z*. Besides structure, the *Miṣbāḥ*'s emotional movement also shares some parallels with the emotional movement one experiences in a Ġawzian *maḡlis al-wa'z* such that the work's dedicatee, al-Mustaḍī, is meant to go through an emotional rollercoaster in reading the work from beginning to end, as outlined above.

4. Analysis of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s First Chapter

The *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter, "On demonstrating the dignity of the caliphate and the felicitation of its incumbent" (*fi bayān šaraf al-ḥilāfa wa-tahni'at al-sulṭān bihā*), is a rich amalgamation of discourses dealing with the subject of the caliphate, encompassing the languages of theology (*kalām*), law (*fiqh*), *ḥadīṭ*, and laudatory biographies (*faḍā'il/manāqib*).³⁰ It can be broadly divided into three parts: (1) a brief discussion of the caliphate usually encountered in theological and legal treatises; (2) a genealogical legitimation of the Abbasid dynasty; and (3) a call for obedience to the caliph. In what follows, I will explicate the contents of the chapter and closely scrutinize how Ibn al-Ġawzī selected, manipulated, and reshaped his textual precedents to simultaneously praise and counsel al-Mustaḍī.

²⁸ Ohlander, "Fear of God"; Melchert, "Exaggerated Fear".

²⁹ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 693, 695-697. However, these sayings and utterances pale in comparison with what is presented in a parallel chapter of the *Šifā'* (pp. 113-119) where the reader is confronted with graphic descriptions of the inhabitants of Hell vomiting and choking on all the food consumed, crying until their intestines break, and undergoing other forms of otherworldly torments.

³⁰ On the *Miṣbāḥ*'s sources, see Ibrāhīm, *Ibn al-Ġawzī wa-Kitābuhu*, pp. 234-265.

4.1. Ibn al-Ġawzī's Conception of the Caliphate

Ibn al-Ġawzī's conception of the caliphate contains panegyric undertones, as observed in the opening lines of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter:

The caliphate is a deputyship on behalf of God (*ni-yāba 'an Allāh*) among His servants and lands and in the execution of His commands and ordinances, which were carried out by the prophets and, after them, by the caliphs. In the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, from the *ḥadīṭ* of Abū Hurayra related from the Prophet: "The Banū Isrā'īl were ruled by prophets. When a prophet died, another took his place. There will be no prophet after me, but there will be caliphs and they will be many".³¹

This statement functions simultaneously as a definition of the term *ḥilāfa* (caliphate) and as praise for the caliphal office. The caliph deputizes for God in the governance of humankind, but he only does so after the prophets of bygone eras have implemented God's laws and commands.³² The caliph is at once *ḥalīfat Allāh* (deputy of God) and *ḥalīfat rasūl Allāh* (successor to the Messenger of God). Succession to the Prophet does not preclude, but runs parallel to, the deputyship of God, as Aziz al-Azmeh has pointed out.³³

As the deputy of God, the caliph is also viewed as directly appointed by God to rule over humankind. Ibn al-Ġawzī cites two *ḥadīṭs* in support of this idea: "God does not appoint a caliph until He has passed His right hand over his forelock (*yamsaḥa Allāh nāṣiyatahu bi-yamīnihi*)" and "If God wants to put forward [literally: create, *yahluqu*] a man for the caliphate, He will pass

³¹ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 89.

³² This conception of caliphs as successors to the prophets was already in place during the late Umayyad period in the letters of the Umayyad court secretary, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d. 132/750). See al-Qāḍī, "Religious Foundation", pp. 244-248; and Rubin, "Prophets and Caliphs".

³³ al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 160. For an argument that suggests tension between these two titles, especially during the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, see Crone & Hinds, *God's Caliph*, pp. 4-23. It is more likely, however, that the Umayyad and early Abbasid caliphs used both titles as legitimation devices. For the case of the Umayyads, see al-Qāḍī, "Religious Foundation", pp. 244-251; and Rubin, "Prophets and Caliphs". For the early Abbasids, see Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, 128-129, citing a statement attributed to al-Māmūn: "The Commander of the faithful, by virtue of his position vis-à-vis the religion of God, the deputyship of the Prophet of God (*khilāfat rasūl Allāh*) and his kinship with him, is the foremost among those who follow his [sc. the Prophet's] *sunna*". Ibn al-Ġawzī's statement above is in continuity with such early legitimation efforts.

His right hand over his forelock".³⁴ These *ḥadīths*, though forged, bring to mind the anointment of Biblical kings in ancient Israel whereby their heads would be covered with oil. Kings who have been anointed in this manner were believed to have been conferred "the spirit (*rūḥ*) of the Lord".³⁵ Since the *Miṣbāh* was intended for al-Mustaḍī', the citation of these two *ḥadīths* aims to exalt al-Mustaḍī' as a caliph appointed and anointed by God. Ibn al-Ğawzī also tells his reader that it is incumbent upon the people to "please God with what He is pleased with", that is in appointing a caliph whom He has chosen and made his deputy, for "He will not be pleased with anyone else as His deputy besides al-Mustaḍī'".³⁶ These statements serve overall to elevate the position of the caliphate as a divinely appointed office, in contrast to the jurists' contractual understanding of the office as a contract between the caliph and the Muslim community.³⁷

Ibn al-Ğawzī's idea of the caliphate as a successorship to prophethood is reinforced by a distinct hierarchy that places the caliphs third in rank after God and Muḥammad:

When [Muḥammad] reached forty years and a day old, God sent him to all of humankind, gave preference to him over all of creation, and put him in His place, for He said, "Those who pledge allegiance to you pledge allegiance to God" (Q. 48:10). He made him second to Him in terms of reverence (*ḥurma*), just as He said, "Advance not before God and His Messenger" (Q. 49:1), and in terms of obedience (*tā'a*), just as He said, "Obey God and obey the Messenger" (Q. 4:59). Then He made [Muḥammad's] successors (*ḥulafā'*) third [in rank], as He said, "and those in authority among you (*wa-ulī l-amr minkum*)" (Q. 4:59).³⁸

This passage contains a brief exegesis of Q. 4:59 that is indicative of Ibn al-Ğawzī's ideas concerning political authority. His placing of Muḥammad as second in rank only to God expresses a common Muslim theological belief. But immediately after, he equates "those in authority" (*ulī l-amr*) with the caliphs after Muḥammad (likely including the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs in addition to the Rightly Guided Caliphs) with a single stroke of the pen. Ibn al-Ğawzī's rhetorical move here goes against the current of Sunni political thought during his time. Unlike Šī'ī scholars, who often quoted Q. 4:59 to justify the necessity of the imamate, the imam's infallibility, and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib's succession to the Prophet,³⁹ most Sunni scholars were reluctant to point the verse solely to political leaders, let alone the ruling caliphs. Instead, they generally understood "those in authority" to refer to diverse groups of people, such as the religious scholars, commanders who took part in the Prophet's military expeditions, or Abū Bakr and 'Umar among other Companions. Even when "those in authority" came to be associated with political rulers (*al-salāṭīn*) in general after the third/ninth century, exegetes never glossed the phrase as referring to the ruling caliphs specifically.⁴⁰ In reading "those in authority" as *ḥulafā'*, however, Ibn al-Ğawzī posits the caliphate as a political institution with Qur'ānic sanction.

After delineating the role of the caliph in Islam, Ibn al-Ğawzī discusses the necessity of the caliphate, now referred to as the imamate (*imāma*).⁴¹ Like most Sunni jurists and theologians, Ibn al-Ğawzī states that "the imamate is necessary, in contrast to those who reckon that it is not".⁴²

³⁴ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāh*, pp. 129-130. This is despite the fact that Ibn al-Ğawzī himself lists these *ḥadīths* in his collection of forged *ḥadīths*, *Kitāb al-Mawḍū'āt*, vol. III, p. 302-304. Jonathan Brown has argued that earlier Sunni scholars allowed for laxity when it came to "discourse on manners, preaching and history because they saw these subjects as falling outside the true purviews of religion: law and ritual", but notes that Ibn al-Ğawzī's more stringent approach, which "admitted no distinction between laws and preaching", constituted a turning point in *ḥadīth* criticism. But Ibn al-Ğawzī did not always play by his own rules, as seen in his use of these two *ḥadīths*. For Brown's discussion, see his "Even If It's Not True It's True", especially pp. 20-25 on Ibn al-Ğawzī.

³⁵ Milgrom & Rabinowitz, "Anointing".

³⁶ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāh*, pp. 90-91.

³⁷ On caliphal contractualism, see Yücesoy, *Disenchanting the Caliphate*, pp. 37-38, 60-63.

³⁸ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāh*, p. 108.

³⁹ McDermott, *Theology*, p. 120; al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān, *Pillars*, vol. I, pp. 27, 29, 31-33; Ibn al-Hayṭam, *Advent*, p. 78; Gordon, "Obeying Those in Authority", pp. 72-96.

⁴⁰ Afsaruddin, "Obedience to Political Authority", pp. 37-42; Sirry, "Who Are Those in Authority?", pp. 2-7. Even Ibn al-Ğawzī did not interpret the verse in this manner in his work of Qur'ānic exegesis, where he lists four possible meanings for "those in authority": (1) military commanders (*umarā'*); (2) religious scholars (*ulamā'*); (3) the Companions of the Prophet (*aṣḥāb al-nabī*); and (4) Abū Bakr and 'Umar. See Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, vol. II, pp. 116-117.

⁴¹ The shift in terminology from caliphate (*ḥilāfa*) to imamate (*imāma*) bespeaks Ibn al-Ğawzī's sensitivity to the discursive conventions of how the caliphate is treated in theological treatises, since Sunni theologians generally referred to the caliph and caliphate as "imam" and "imamate" respectively. In court documents, the caliph is also addressed as "imam". See al-Šābi', *Rules and Regulations*, pp. 81-98. In the *Miṣbāh*, al-Mustaḍī' is usually referred to as *al-imām al-Mustaḍī' bi-Amr Allāh amīr al-mu'minīn*. Unless otherwise indicated, I will follow Ibn al-Ğawzī's wording.

⁴² Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāh*, p. 89.

In support of this claim, he puts forward a proof (*dalīl*), according to which human beings are in need of association with others (*muḥālaṭa*) by nature. But humans also tend toward injustice (*ẓulm*) and are thus in need of restraint (*wazʿ*). This restraint is required so that worldly and religious affairs are kept safe. Well-ordered religious affairs are not achieved except through well-ordered worldly affairs, which can only be obtained by the appointment of an imam who is obeyed, a point also made by other Sunni scholars such as al-Ġazālī (d. 505/1111) and Ibn Ḥaldūn (d. 808/1406).⁴³ Put more concretely,

the caliphate is the cause for the security of humankind in their bodily and religious [needs], and through it lives are protected, knowledge and good deeds obtained, livelihoods earned, and mutual transgressions (*taẓālum*) averted. If not for the protection of the caliph, prayers would not be possible, the worshipper would be unable to worship, the scholar would not be able to spread his knowledge, and the merchant would not be able to embark on his travels.⁴⁴

This passage stresses the necessity of the caliphate to maintain the various yet interconnected social functions of the community, such that a society without a caliph would simply break down. But fortunately for the Muslim community, Ibn al-Ġawzī claims, well-ordered worldly and religious affairs have been maintained since the creation of Adam, upon whom God bestowed prophethood. Since then, God has never left a period devoid of a prophet carrying out divine laws. And after sealing the line of prophets with Muḥammad, God made it incumbent upon humankind to have deputies (*nuwwāb*) to establish truth.⁴⁵

After proving the necessity of the imamate, Ibn al-Ġawzī proceeds with a discussion of the qualifications required of an imam and the methods of appointment. For qualifications, Ibn al-Ġawzī lists five: (1) religious knowledge (*ʿilm*); (2) profane knowledge (*maʿrifā*); (3) administrative skill (*tadbīr*); (4) the upholding of religious ordinances (*muḥāfaẓat ḥudūd al-šarʿ*); and (5) Qurayš lineage due to the *ḥadīṭ*, “The imams are from the Qurayš”.⁴⁶ Although Ibn al-Ġawzī does not elaborate on this list of requirements, it nonetheless reflects the political realities of his time and contains a modicum of advice for al-Mustaḍīʾ.

For one, the list reveals a significant emphasis on knowledge, but Ibn al-Ġawzī does not indicate further that the imam ought to possess the level of knowledge sufficient to qualify as a *muḡtahid* or even a *qāḍī*, as is usually encountered in most Sunni treatments of the imamate in juridico-theological writings.⁴⁷ There seems to be an implicit acknowledgement that al-Mustaḍīʾ — and, in fact, most caliphs of Ibn al-Ġawzī’s time — did not possess the requisite level of knowledge desired of an ideal caliph. However, knowledge can still be sought from religious scholars, as Ibn al-Ġawzī emphasizes repeatedly in the *Miṣbāḥ*, for indeed, “associating with people of knowledge and goodness brings benefits”.⁴⁸ This point echoes al-Ġazālī’s argument a century earlier that the caliphal qualification of *ʿilm* can be fulfilled through the Abbasid caliph’s “exploiting the talents of the scholars, appealing to them for help, and, in matters of obscurity and disagreement, choosing to follow the best and most knowledgeable men of the time”.⁴⁹ Although Ibn al-Ġawzī’s conception of the caliphate is largely panegyric in tone, his list of caliphal requirements can be read as a subtle plea for al-Mustaḍīʾ to seek the counsel of pious and knowledgeable scholars.

Noticeably missing from Ibn al-Ġawzī’s list of qualifications is courage pertaining to the caliph’s military capabilities (*nağda* or *šağāʿa*).⁵⁰ It would be apt now to return to a point made earlier regarding the chapter on *ğihād* in the *Šifāʾ* but which is absent in the *Miṣbāḥ*. The *Šifāʾ*’s chapter on *ğihād* consists of *ḥadīṭ* after *ḥadīṭ* extolling the merits of fighting *ğihād*.⁵¹ Since both works are organized

⁴⁷ For instance, al-Ġuwaynī, *Guide*, p. 235; Ibīsh, *Political Doctrine of al-Baḡillani*, pp. 97–98; al-Āmidī, *Ġāyat al-marām*, p. 324; al-Māwardī, *Ordinances*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 216–220, 372–391, 405–416; quotation on p. 219.

⁴⁹ Al-Ġazālī, *Faḍāʾih*, p. 173. Al-Ġazālī’s “delegation” of caliphal qualifications can be similarly observed in his discussion of competence (*kifāya*) and courage (*nağda*), as he argues that both qualifications are present in the Abbasid caliph but *kifāya* is fulfilled through the caliph’s consultation with a capable vizier and *nağda* through the Seljuq Turks who possess military might (*šawka*). See Hillenbrand, “Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik?”, pp. 83–84.

⁵⁰ Unlike, for example, al-Māwardī, *Ordinances*, p. 4 (where both *nağda* and *šağāʿa* are listed); al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 187 (where *šağāʿa* is listed); al-Ġazālī, *Faḍāʾih*, p. 163 (where *nağda* is listed); al-Āmidī, *Ġāyat al-marām*, p. 324 (where it is stated that the imam should be “proficient in matters of warfare, the managing of troops, and the protection of frontiers”).

⁵¹ This refers to the “lesser *ğihād*”, not the “greater *ğihād*” against one’s desires, since the chapter includes *ḥadīṭs* such as “Know that Paradise is beneath the shadows of the swords” and “Fighters who fight in the name of God and get their share of

⁴³ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 89–90; al-Ġazālī, *Moderation*, pp. 229–231; Ibn Ḥaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. I, pp. 385–390.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 134.

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 90.

⁴⁶ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 90.

rather similarly, the omission of the chapter on *ġihād* from the *Miṣbāḥ* seems puzzling: why include this chapter in a mirror addressed to rulers in general but omit it in one specifically dedicated to the reigning caliph? Keeping in mind Ibn al-Ğawzī's caliphal qualifications, my hypothesis is that al-Mustaḍī's tendency to withdraw from political and military administration colored Ibn al-Ğawzī's conception of what an ideal caliph should be — a ruler who religiously devoted time to pious pursuits even though he was inactive militarily and politically. If remaining removed from political and military affairs meant having more time on hand to attend preaching assemblies and sponsor pious public efforts, such a trade-off would not seem so detrimental after all. It might even be wiser to counsel the caliph to cultivate relationships with scholars than to goad him into costly military undertakings. Moreover, by Ibn al-Ğawzī's time, the Abbasid caliphs had long ceased to be concerned with fighting *ġihād* against unbelievers and were more concerned with their struggles with palace factions and other Muslim regional powers like the Seljuqs.⁵²

Regarding the methods of appointment, Ibn al-Ğawzī is equally terse. An imam can come to office via designation (*naṣṣ*) from the previous imam or via a contract from an assembly of electors (*in 'iqād iğtimā' ahl al-ḥall wa-l-'aqd 'alayhi*) — both methods listed in this order.⁵³ What we have here is the prioritizing of testamentary designation (*naṣṣ*) by an incumbent imam over election (*iḥtiyār*) as a means of installing an imam in office. While election remained the

ideal method of appointment for most Sunni jurists and theologians, testamentary designation began to be seen as the default method from the fifth/eleventh century onward, perhaps reflecting current Abbasid dynastic practices. The Ḥanafī theologian al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1099) cites the opinion of the "*ahl al-sunna wa-l-ğamā'a* in general" that if an incumbent caliph designates a successor at the end of his life, that successor becomes caliph. If this does not happen, it is then incumbent upon the people to appoint a suitable person for the caliphate.⁵⁴ In his theological treatise *al-Iqtisād fī l-i'tiqād*, al-Ğazālī states that there are three methods of investing a person with the imamate: a designation (*tanṣiṣ*) from the Prophet, a designation of a suitable successor from among the ruling imam's sons, and a delegation of authority (*tafwīd*) by a man who wields military power (*dū ṣawka*). No mention is made of election.⁵⁵

Overall, there are indeed many similarities between Ibn al-Ğawzī's conception of the caliphate and that of other Sunni scholars before and during his time. These similarities bear out in discussions pertaining to the necessity of the caliphate, the qualifications required of a caliph, and the methods of appointing a caliph. In some sense, this demonstrates that the Sunni discourse on the caliphate had achieved a high degree of crystallization and systematization by the sixth/twelfth century when Ibn al-Ğawzī was writing, with only a few points of contention such as the Qurayš requirement.⁵⁶ Yet the caliphate discourse was also a malleable one, as observed in Ibn al-Ğawzī's toning down of the knowledge (*ilm*) qualification and his omission of qualities (*nağda* or *ṣajā'a*) that pertain to the caliph's military capabilities. Such efforts show that this discourse could be tailored either to reflect certain political circumstances or to serve as a blueprint for a particular vision of rulership the author deemed ideal.

booty (*ğanīma*) receive in advance two-thirds of their reward in the afterlife and only one-third will remain (to their credit). If they do not receive any booty, they will get their full reward". Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Šifā'*, pp. 74, 76.

⁵² For further comparison, it is worth noting that the mirror for princes which drew most heavily from the *Miṣbāḥ* in terms of content, *al-Ğalīs al-ṣāliḥ wa-l-anīs al-nāṣiḥ* ("The Righteous Companion and the Intimate and Sincere Counsellor") by Ibn al-Ğawzī's grandson Sibṭ ibn al-Ğawzī (d. 654/1257), also a reputable hortatory preacher in his own right, contains a chapter on *ġihād* (*Ğalīs*, pp. 91-126) that is much longer than the one in the *Šifā'*. This exceptionally extensive treatment of *ġihād* in a mirror for princes could reflect Sibṭ's proximity to anti-Crusader efforts in Damascus, where he lived most of his life. Baghdad during and after Ibn al-Ğawzī's lifetime was hardly involved in such efforts. On Sibṭ's dependence on his grandfather's works in *al-Ğalīs al-ṣāliḥ*, see Kronholm, "*Aḵḵbarānā Jaddī*" and "Dedication and Devotion". In the Sunni discourse on the caliphate found in legal and theological treatises, most writers up to Ibn al-Ğawzī's time continued to list courage (*nağda* or *ṣağā'a*) on the battlefield as one of the caliph's required qualifications. See above, n. 50, for examples.

⁵³ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 90.

⁵⁴ al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, p. 189.

⁵⁵ al-Ğazālī, *Moderation*, p. 232. In his *Fağā'ih al-bāṭiniyya wa-fağā'il al-mustağhiriyya*, where election is acknowledged as the ideal method of appointment, he concedes the impossibility of an election achieved through the consensus of all Muslims, of all the electors (*ahl al-ḥall wa-l-'aqd*), or even of the inhabitants in the city where the imam lives. The only option remaining is the swearing of allegiance by a single person to the imam. See *Fağā'ih*, p. 158.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of the Sunni caliphate discourse from the fourth/tenth century onward, see Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, pp. 222-247; Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community*, pp. 107-136. On early strands of this discourse during the second/eighth century, see Yücesoy, *Disenchanting the Caliphate*, pp. 49-81.

4.2. Genealogical Legitimation of the Abbasid Dynasty⁵⁷

Most of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter is devoted to a genealogical legitimation of the Abbasids, written in the style of laudatory biographies (*manāqib*).⁵⁸ This section is where Ibn al-Ġawzī's attempt at embedding advice in panegyric is most evident, and it is thus worthwhile to devote more attention to it.

Ibn al-Ġawzī begins his genealogical account of the Abbasid family by highlighting the divine election of the Qurayš and the Banū Hāšim, to which both the Prophet and the Abbasids belong. He first grafts the Qurayš onto a sacred genealogy that begins with Adam, and then extends this prophetic genealogy to the Banū Hāšim using a *ḥadīṭ*:

God chose Ishmael from among the progeny of Abraham, the Banū Kināna from the descendants of Ishmael, the Qurayš from the Banū Kināna, the Banū Hāšim from the Qurayš, and me from the Banū Hāšim.⁵⁹

By Ibn al-Ġawzī's time, the right of the Qurayš to the caliphate had become a disputed issue among Sunni scholars. While most scholars listed Qurayš lineage as one of the qualities a caliph should possess,⁶⁰ some such as Abū l-Ma'ālī al-Ġuwaynī (d. 478/1085) argued that the lineage requirement can be dispensed with because it was inconsequential to a caliph's ability to govern and wage wars.⁶¹ Not only does Ibn al-Ġawzī list Qurayš lineage as one of the qualifications of the caliph, as mentioned above, here he doubles down on this qualification by tracing Hāšimite roots back to Adam. This gives the Abbasid line a primeval character such that Adam prefigures the future Abbasid caliphs who succeed the prophets in establishing divine rule among humankind in

the here and now.⁶² Such a discursive effort also speaks to the political landscape of the sixth/twelfth-century Islamic world. During a time when much of the Middle East was dominated by rulers of Turkish and, to a lesser extent, Persian origin, the Abbasid dynasty became charged with greater socio-religious significance given its descent from Muḥammad's clan, the Banū Hāšim. This very fact elevates the Abbasid caliph's religious standing in the eyes of Muslims even though he had now become one among many rulers in the Middle East jockeying for supremacy. Buyid and Seljuq attempts to forge marriage alliances between their daughters and the Abbasid caliphs demonstrate the lengths to which various groups would go in order to attach themselves to the Abbasid line.⁶³

After charting a divine and sacred genealogy for the Banū Hāšim, Ibn al-Ġawzī expounds on the virtues of Hāšimites who were Muḥammad's forefathers: Hāšim himself (d. c. 497), 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāšim (d. 578), and 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 570). Hāšim, whose actual name was 'Amr, is described as generous: during the years of drought, he crushed (*hašama*) bread to make broth (*tarīd*) for the people of Mecca and was called "Hāšim" from then on.⁶⁴ After Hāšim's death, clan leadership passed on to his brother al-Muṭṭalib, who assumed the right of supplying water and food to the pilgrims (*al-siqāya wa-l-rifāda*). Muḥammad's grandfather 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib took over leadership after al-Muṭṭalib's death.⁶⁵ At this point, Ibn al-Ġawzī inserts an account of how 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib dug the Zamzam well and acquired the right of *siqāya*.⁶⁶

The inclusion of the account of how the Banū Hāšim acquired the *siqāya* is in itself a mode of Abbasid legitimation. During the early years of Abbasid rule, the *siqāya* played a prominent role in the articulation of Abbasid legitimacy. It was claimed that the Abbasid patriarch al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 32/653) inherited it after the death of his father 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib.⁶⁷ The details are murky, but a tinge of anti-'Alid polemic can be detected in one report which claimed that he

⁵⁷ I borrow the term "genealogical legitimation" from Fred Donner, who defines it as a style of legitimation that centers on "ties of kinship (real or assumed)" and "rests on the assumption that the mere fact of membership in a particular kinship or ethnic group accords legitimate claim to special status". See Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, pp. 104-111, quotation at p. 104.

⁵⁸ Pellat, "Manāqib".

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 91, 93.

⁶⁰ For example, al-Māwardī, *Ordinances*, p. 4; al-Ġazālī, *Faḍā'ih*, p. 162 and *Moderation*, p. 232; al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, pp. 187-188; al-Āmidī, *Ġāyat al-marām*, p. 325.

⁶¹ Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate*, pp. 103-107; Hallaq, "Caliphs, Jurists and the Saljūqs", pp. 38-41. Writing after the fall of the Abbasid caliphate in 656/1258, Ibn Ḥaldūn came to a similar conclusion that linked Qurayš descent to political competence (*kifāya*) and group solidarity (*aṣabiyya*). See *The Muqaddimah*, vol. I, pp. 396-401.

⁶² al-Azmeh, "Monotheistic Monarchy", p. 284.

⁶³ See, for instance, Makdisi, "The Marriage of Tughril Beg"; Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place*, pp. 59, 96-97, 115-116.

⁶⁴ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 94.

⁶⁵ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 95-96.

⁶⁶ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 96-97. This story is also in Ibn Hišām's rendition of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīra*. See Ibn Hišām, *Life of Muḥammad*, pp. 62-63.

⁶⁷ Berg, "Abbasid Historians' Portrayals of al-'Abbās", pp. 16-17.

received it from his half-brother Abū Ṭālib in return for settling a debt.⁶⁸ In a report recorded by Ibn Sa'd, drinking from the *siqāya* of the family of al-ʿAbbās is considered *sunna*.⁶⁹

After ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Ibn al-Ğawzī continues with a short section on the Prophet's father ʿAbd Allāh. Here, we are given the story about how a woman named Fāṭima bint Murr noticed the light of prophethood (*nūr al-nubuwwa*) on a young ʿAbd Allāh's face and asked him if he wanted to sleep with her in exchange for a hundred camels. ʿAbd Allāh declined and went home to lay with his wife Āmina instead. The next day, he decided to take Fāṭima up on her offer but Fāṭima refused and said, "I am not, by God, a person of doubtful character. But I saw the light of prophethood on your face and wanted it inside me. God, however, willed that He should place it wherever He wished".⁷⁰ Ibn al-Ğawzī reads this story as ʿAbd Allāh's being protected from fornication (*fāḥiṣa*), and thus the Prophet was born of him. The inclusion of a story about the light of prophethood is also apt given al-Mustaḍī's regnal name describing him as seeking light from God.

The following section, comprising reports about Muḥammad's life, is surprisingly brief and largely serves as a transition to a longer section on the Abbasid family. Ibn al-Ğawzī includes a brief account of Muḥammad's life, including his childhood, his marriage to Ḥadija, and his attainment of prophethood at the age of forty, followed by several Qur'ānic verses affirming Muḥammad's dignified rank in Islam and his status as the seal of the prophets.⁷¹

We now arrive at the crux of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter: a long section on the Abbasid family titled "A Mention of Some of The Virtues of al-ʿAbbās" (*ḍikr nubḍa min faḍā'il al-ʿAbbās*). This section contains numerous *ḥadīṭs* and reports attesting to the virtues of the three Abbasid ancestors: al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 32/653), his son ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-ʿAbbās (d. 68/687), and grandson Alī ibn ʿAbd Allāh (d. 118/736).

Ibn al-Ğawzī begins this section by noting that among the children of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, God honored three with Islam: Ḥamza, al-ʿAbbās, and Ṣafiyya.⁷² There is a tinge of anti-Šīʿī polemic in this statement as Alī's father Abū Ṭālib remained a

pagan until his death and is therefore missing from the list. During the time of the Abbasid Revolution, al-ʿAbbās's conversion to Islam and Abū Ṭālib's remaining a pagan even till death became polemical ammunition for the Abbasids against the ʿAlids.⁷³ However, al-ʿAbbās's Islamic credentials were not beyond reproach either as he had fought on the side of the Meccans against the Prophet at the Battle of Badr (2/624), an embarrassing episode which posed a problem for early Abbasid legitimists. Šīʿī polemicists included al-ʿAbbās among the *ṭulaqā* (Meccans who had not yet converted to Islam when Muḥammad's conquest of Mecca took place) and invalidated his Abbasid descendants' claim to the caliphate, claiming that the caliphate was forbidden to the *ṭulaqā* and their sons.⁷⁴

Perhaps anticipating the thorny nature of Badr for the purposes of Abbasid legitimation, Ibn al-Ğawzī invokes another battle for which al-ʿAbbās had earned some degree of fame: the Battle of Ḥunayn (8/630). In Ḥunayn, al-ʿAbbās's role in fighting alongside the Prophet was safely affirmed and lauded by the early sources. Certain traditions even attributed the Prophet's victory to al-ʿAbbās's perseverance and loud voice.⁷⁵ Al-ʿAbbās's pivotal role in Ḥunayn is affirmed in the *Miṣbāḥ*: "People fled from the Messenger of God while al-ʿAbbās held his ground (*ṭabata*)". However, Ibn al-Ğawzī takes things a step further and blows Ḥunayn out of proportion by adding, "And thus God established the caliphate among his descendants" (*fa-ṭabbata Allāh al-ḥilāfa fī wuldihi*).⁷⁶ Badr might have marred al-ʿAbbās's reputation in Islam, but Ḥunayn, on the other hand, is framed as the event that not only affirmed his place in the eyes of God, but also obtained the caliphate for his Abbasid descendants.

In Ibn al-Ğawzī's panegyric gestures to al-Mustaḍī, not only is the caliphate viewed as bestowed upon al-ʿAbbās's descendants by God, it was also promised to them via an endorsement of designation (*naṣṣ*) from the Prophet to al-ʿAbbās. Supporting this idea are several *ḥadīṭs*:

1. *Ḥadīṭ* on the authority of Ğābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh: "I heard the Prophet say, 'There will certainly be among the descendants of al-ʿAbbās kings who will assume authority of my community and through whom God will strengthen the faith'".

⁶⁸ al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, vol. III, pp. 15-16.

⁶⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. IV, p. I, p. 17.

⁷⁰ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 102-105. On this story, see Rubin, "Pre-existence and Light", pp. 83-86.

⁷¹ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 105-108.

⁷² Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 109.

⁷³ Sharon, *Black Banners*, p. 97.

⁷⁴ Ibn al-Hayṭam, *Advent*, pp. 84-86.

⁷⁵ Görke, "al-ʿAbbās".

⁷⁶ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 110.

2. *Ḥadīṭ* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, quoting al-‘Abbās: “O Messenger of God, what is there for us in this affair?” [The Prophet] said, “To me is prophecy and to you the caliphate. By you it will begin and by you it will be sealed”.
3. *Ḥadīṭ* on the authority of Ibn Rizq: “The Prophet said to al-‘Abbās, ‘I will grant intercession to those who love you, not to those who loathe you’”.⁷⁷

The claim that the Prophet had designated al-‘Abbās as his successor became official court doctrine during the caliphate of al-Mahdī (r. 158-169/775-785) in response to Šī‘ī claims of the Prophet’s designation of ‘Alī as his successor.⁷⁸ But as Abbasid caliphs and propagandists moved toward cultivating a more “orthodox” image in alliance with the proto-Sunni ‘*ulamā*’, they did not dwell too much on this doctrine and instead affirmed Abū Bakr as the rightful successor of the Prophet, followed by ‘Umar, ‘Uṭmān, and ‘Alī. Nevertheless, the idea of al-‘Abbās being conferred the caliphate via a Prophetic *naṣṣ* remained a frequent motif in Abbasid propaganda and panegyric poetry alluding to the Abbasid dynasty’s kinship with the Prophet.⁷⁹ The same can be said of the *Miṣbāḥ*, which uses accounts of al-‘Abbās being conferred a *naṣṣ* to link the caliphate of the Abbasids to the Prophet.

Although the section is entitled “A Mention of Some of The Virtues of al-‘Abbās”, Ibn al-Ġawzī’s main focus is on al-‘Abbās’s son Ibn ‘Abbās, whose biographical section occupies most of the *Miṣbāḥ*’s first chapter. A total of twelve reports — a mix of *ḥadīṭs* and anecdotes — are selected with the aim of portraying Ibn ‘Abbās as a paradigmatic figure of religious knowledge (*‘ilm*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*). In Muslim sources, Ibn ‘Abbās’s scholarly expertise in different fields of knowledge has been imbued with an aura of myth and legend, often presented as preordained during his infancy involving certain rites of initiation by the Prophet.⁸⁰ In accordance with this mode of representation, Ibn al-Ġawzī presents several reports of the Prophet praying to God to endow Ibn ‘Abbās with sacred knowledge:

1. *Ḥadīṭ* on the authority of Abū Saḥīl ibn Mālīk: “The Messenger of God prayed for

‘Abd Allāh ibn al-‘Abbās and said, ‘O God, bless him and spread [knowledge] from him (*unṣur minhu*)!’”

2. *Ḥadīṭ* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās: “The Messenger of God was in the house of Maymūna [wife of the Prophet and also Ibn ‘Abbās’s aunt] and I placed the water for the night ablution for him. Maymūna said, ‘O Messenger of God, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās has placed this here for you’. [The Prophet] said, ‘May God instruct him in religion (*dīn*) and teach him Qur’ānic exegesis (*tāwīl*)’”.
3. *Ḥadīṭ* on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās: “The Messenger of God embraced me and said, ‘O God, teach him wisdom (*ḥikma*)!’”
4. Report on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās: “I saw Gabriel twice and the Messenger of God prayed for wisdom for me twice”.⁸¹

These reports conform to the “*schemata* of election and institution” in that they portray Ibn ‘Abbās’s eminent religious stature in the Islamic tradition as guaranteed by the Prophet and Gabriel since he was a child.⁸²

Ibn al-Ġawzī also goes at lengths to portray Ibn ‘Abbās as a polymath in different branches of knowledge during his adulthood, referring to him as *al-baḥr* (“the ocean [of knowledge]”) and *al-ḥabr* (“the sage”). The most significant of these branches is Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr* or *tāwīl*), and Ibn al-Ġawzī presents five reports in support of Ibn ‘Abbās’s exegetical abilities, with the following line repeated twice: “What an excellent interpreter of the Qur’ān is Ibn ‘Abbās (*ni‘ma tarġumān al-Qur’ān Ibn ‘Abbās*)!”⁸³ In addition to Qur’ānic exegesis, Ibn al-Ġawzī mentions Ibn ‘Abbās’s sagacity in other fields of knowledge. With respect to *ḥadīṭ*, the young Ibn ‘Abbās is described as a child prodigy, having narrated from the Prophet 1,660 *ḥadīṭs* in the thirteen years he spent with him.⁸⁴ Perhaps the most telling anecdote about Ibn ‘Abbās’s range of knowledge is one in which he held a gathering for people waiting outside his house to consult him on different matters. The narrator Abū Ṣāliḥ

⁸¹ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 110-113.

⁸² Gilliot, “Portrait ‘mythique’”, pp. 133-146. I borrow the phrase “*schemata* of election and institution” from Berg, “Ibn ‘Abbās”, p. 134.

⁸³ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 114, 119. Similar reports in Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. II, p. 120; Balādufī, *Ansāb*, vol. III, p. 30. For Ibn ‘Abbās’s role in Qur’ānic exegesis, see Berg, “Ibn ‘Abbās”.

⁸⁴ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 118-119.

⁷⁷ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 122-123.

⁷⁸ Sharon, *Black Banners*, p. 86.

⁷⁹ Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, pp. 46-47.

⁸⁰ Gilliot, “Portrait ‘mythique’”.

reports, "I saw people gather until the path became too narrow for them, for no one could come and go". Abū Šālih then went in to notify Ibn 'Abbās of the situation, whereupon Ibn 'Abbās instructed Abū Šālih to inform those who wanted to ask him about the Qur'ān and its different readings (*hurūf*) to enter. After Ibn 'Abbās was finished with this group, Abū Šālih was again instructed to call in another group of people who wanted to consult him regarding the exegesis of the Qur'ān. The process continued with the lawful and unlawful (*al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*), religious ordinances (*al-farā'id*), Arabic language (*al-'arabiyya*), poetry (*al-ši'r*), and the oddities in speech (*al-ġarīb min al-kalām*), a list that runs the gamut of knowledge in the Islamic intellectual tradition.⁸⁵

In addition to Ibn 'Abbās's religious knowledge, Ibn al-Ğawzī also includes reports praising his piety and generosity. For instance, when Ibn 'Abbās lost his vision temporarily, he refused treatment because he would have had to refrain from prayer for five days.⁸⁶ Regarding his generosity, Ibn al-Ğawzī cites an anecdote in which Ibn 'Abbās wrote to Mu'āwiya with a poem denigrating him for his miserliness.⁸⁷

After Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn al-Ğawzī's account of the Abbasid family shifts to Ibn 'Abbās's son 'Alī. Ibn al-Ğawzī points out that 'Alī "was the most handsome of the Qurayšites on the face of the earth and the one who performed the most prayers among them", hence his nickname "'Alī al-Saġġād".⁸⁸ In medieval Muslim sources, *al-saġġād*, meaning "the Prostrator", is often mentioned in relation to 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh due to his steadfast piety.⁸⁹ Ibn al-Ğawzī also cites a report claiming that "'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-'Abbās

used to do one thousand prostrations every day".⁹⁰ If his father is portrayed as the paradigmatic figure of knowledge, 'Alī represents the virtue of ritualistic piety. 'Alī's piety is also said to have earned him the respect of the Qurayš. According to one report, whenever 'Alī went to Mecca the Qurayš would suspend their meetings and attend 'Alī's meeting to honor him.⁹¹ Having recognized 'Alī's outstanding piety, Ibn al-Ğawzī emphasizes his role in the divinely elected genealogy of the Abbasids by calling him "the father of the caliphs and imams" from whom "God brought forth the caliphs of excellence".⁹²

As focused as Ibn al-Ğawzī is on the virtues and merits of al-'Abbās, Ibn 'Abbās, and 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh, there are still hints of advice and admonition embedded in his panegyric of the Abbasid family. This can be clearly seen in his accounts of Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh: the former, given his scholarly expertise in various branches of Islamic learning, is held up as the paradigmatic figure of religious knowledge; while the latter, renowned for his steadfast commitment to prayer, is revered as an exemplar of ritualistic piety. In his study of Ghaznavid panegyric poetry, Roy Mottahedeh argues that "panegyric not only memorialises the 'good deeds' shown by rulers, but it also holds rulers up to a standard by 'external prodding'".⁹³ Ibn al-Ğawzī's laudatory accounts of Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh can be considered one such "external prodding" for al-Mustaḍī. The author's recounting of the religious merits of these two figures are undoubtedly meant as praise for the Abbasid family, but it could have also been intended as a reminder to al-Mustaḍī that the Abbasid line is imbued with the virtues of religious knowledge and ritualistic piety and that he ought to emulate the qualities of his ancestors to continue this legacy, even if this entails seeking religious knowledge from scholars. Invoking virtuous exemplars of the past could prove to be more effective in reforming rulers than admonishing him directly on how he should act.⁹⁴

⁸⁵ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 115-117.

⁸⁶ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 114-115.

⁸⁷ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 119. This runs counter to the common depiction of Mu'āwiya as a generous ruler in the Islamic tradition. See El-Hibri, "Redemption of Umayyad Memory", pp. 242, 249. This poem is also encountered in the biographical entry on the Companion 'Abd Allāh ibn Ğa'far (d. c. 80/699) in Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīḥ madīnat Dimašq*, vol. XXVII, p. 285. Here, 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr (d. 73/692) accuses 'Abd Allāh ibn Ğa'far of being excessive in his distribution of money to the people of Medina, to which the latter responds with this poem. See also al-Balāḍurī, *Ġumal min Ansāb al-aṣrāf*, vol. VIII, pp. 414-415, for a different version of the poem, attributed to "a man from Baġila" and directed at the Umayyad caliph Hišām ibn 'Abd al-Malik (r. 105-125/724-743). I am grateful to one of the reviewers for directing me to these sources.

⁸⁸ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 120.

⁸⁹ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. V, p. 230; al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, vol. III, p. 70.

⁹⁰ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 120-121. Due to 'Alī's rigorous prayer habits, many sources refer to him as "Ḍū l-Ṭafināt" ("the one who has calluses", due to excessive amounts of daily prayers). See Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. V, p. 230; al-Balāḍurī, *Ansāb*, vol. III, p. 70.

⁹¹ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 121.

⁹² Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 120-122.

⁹³ Mottahedeh, "Finding Iran", p. 135. See also Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, pp. 43-46.

⁹⁴ Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*; Marlow, "Surveying Recent Literature", p. 530; al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 89-90; Yavari, *Advice for the Sultan*, p. 7.

This rhetorical strategy is in line with Ibn al-Ġawzī's recommendations for preachers who intend to admonish rulers. As he tells us in his preaching manuals, since rulers have become less tolerant of being admonished and more arbitrary in meting out punishments, it would be a grave mistake to speak harshly to them as one would during the days of al-Manṣūr and Hārūn al-Rašīd. Instead, one should proceed with tact (*talattuf*), admonish by way of allusion (*išāra*), and avoid direct criticism (*taṣrīḥ*) of the ruler. To make sure that one's admonition is truly effective in appealing to the ruler's emotional and moral sensitivities, Ibn al-Ġawzī recommends pursuing an eclectic approach by mixing advice with praise and warning. Statements about the rewards pertaining to justice should incorporate words of caution against injustice in the gentlest way possible. One can also "mix admonition with a mention of the merits of rulership (*faḍl al-wilāya*)" by adducing examples of just rulers from the past.⁹⁵ Although Ibn 'Abbās and his son were not rulers, their respective learned and pious legacies served the purposes of a writer who expected his ideal caliph to uphold knowledge and piety while in office.⁹⁶

4.3. Balancing Obedience and Virtuous Rule

The final part of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter emphasizes the importance of obedience to the caliph. Ibn al-Ġawzī begins this part with an encomium to the caliphate with reference to several Qur'ānic verses:

We have mentioned that the caliphate is a deputyship on behalf of God, and this suffices as an honor. God has called the ruler (*sultān*) a king (*malik*) just as He called Himself a king, for He said regarding His own claim, "the King, the Holy" (*al-malik al-qud-dūs*; Q. 59:23).⁹⁷ And He said regarding the right of

the ruler, "Truly God has raised up Saul for you as king" (Q. 2:247). This is because the subjects of the ruler are in the position of being owned [*(fī maqām mamlūk)*] and, because of this, [God] said, "Indeed I found a woman"⁹⁸ ruling over them" (Q. 27:23). Then He ordered humankind to be obedient to the ruler just as He commanded obedience to Himself and to His Messenger, for He said, "Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you" (Q. 4:59).⁹⁹

Besides reiterating the caliph's deputyship of God, Ibn al-Ġawzī elevates rulers to a level almost on par with God in the sense that they share the same title of *malik* with God and thus act in a mimetic fashion vis-à-vis God in ruling over humankind. His quoting of Q. 59:23 also hints at the sacred nature of the caliphal office, an idea not foreign to panegyric poetry and court documents.¹⁰⁰ The quoting of the *ulī l-amr* verse (Q. 4:59) for the second time in the chapter brings Ibn al-Ġawzī's notion of political obedience into sharper relief. Here, he suggests that obedience to rulers is Qur'ānically sanctioned, a point accentuated by a total of eight statements, including six *ḥadīṭs*, mostly detailing the eschatological consequences of disobedience toward rulers.¹⁰¹ In

goes on to cite two Qur'ānic verses about God's kingship (Q. 59:23) and divinely sanctioned rulership (Q. 2:247) respectively, it is unlikely that he is placing the caliph on par with other kings. Rather, his intention here seems panegyric, as a rhetorical effort to imbue the caliphate with a divine aura. After all, as al-Azmeh argues, the caliphate was "treated as a form of kingship" in juridical treatises, "fulfilling the functions naturally performed by kingship in human society and claiming the prerogatives of kingship among which obedience was paramount". See al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 106-109, 163-164, quote on p. 107.

⁹⁸ Most exegetes claim that this woman refers to Bilqīs, the queen of Sheba in the Bible.

⁹⁹ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 130-131. This passage bears such striking similarities with a statement on the unique position of kings found in the fourth/tenth-century mirror for princes, *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, attributed to al-Māwardī that it is likely abridged from this very statement. The passage in *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* is translated in Marlow, *Counsel for Kings*, vol. I, pp. 114-124. I am grateful to Louise Marlow for bringing this to my attention.

¹⁰⁰ al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, p. 161. For an example, see al-Šābi', *Rules and Regulations*, p. 10, where the word *muqaddasa* is used in relation to the caliphal office. In addition, Abbasid court secretaries from the fifth/eleventh century onward began referring to the caliph using the formula "the most sacred, prophetic presence". See El-Hibri, *The Abbasid Caliphate*, p. 199.

¹⁰¹ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 131-134. *Ḥadīṭs* include: "Whoever obeys me has obeyed God; and whoever disobeys me has disobeyed God. Whoever obeys my commander (*amīr*) has obeyed me; and whoever disobeys my commander has disobeyed me"; "Whoever separates from the community an

⁹⁵ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Atf*, pp. 36-38; *Ṣayd al-ḥāṭir*, pp. 409-411; *Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ*, p. 143 (English translation, pp. 228-229).

⁹⁶ As mentioned above, even the biographies of actual ruling caliphs up to al-Mustaḍī focus on anecdotes of caliphs engaging in pietistic acts such as praying, weeping, fasting, and engaging with scholars and ascetics.

⁹⁷ Ibn al-Ġawzī's juxtaposition of the terms *sultān* and *malik* alongside *ḥilāfa* is intriguing. *Sultān* here seems to refer to rulers in general, not specifically to rulers like the Seljuq Turks who adopted *sultān* as a royal title. It could even refer to the Abbasid caliph himself, which was sometimes the case in historical writings, court documents, and panegyric poetry. See Kramers & Bosworth, "Sultān"; Tor, "Sultan". The presence of the term *malik* is also quite puzzling, especially given the *ḥadīṭ*, "The caliphate after me will last for thirty years, then it will become kingship (*mulk*)" (on which see Zaman, *Religion and Politics*, pp. 50-52, 170-178; Su, "The Early Shi'i"; Liew, "The Caliphate Will Last for Thirty Years"). But since Ibn al-Ġawzī

panegyric poems inserted throughout the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter, it is written, "O imam of guidance (*imām al-hudā*), in you religion seeks refuge (*bika i taṣama al-dīn*)" and "[one's] faith is not received [by God] except through love of you".¹⁰² The overall message to be hammered into the mind of the reader is clear: disobedience to the caliph entails separating from the Muslim community, thereby casting oneself out of the faith.

Yet Ibn al-Ğawzī's call for obedience to the caliph does not imply that obedience is unconditional. He reminds al-Mustaḍī' that as much as his caliphate is the greatest of favors (*awfā l-ni'am*) from God, it also demands the greatest gratitude (*ṣukr*) to God. Quoting al-Manṣūr's testament to al-Mahdī, the author specifies how al-Mustaḍī' 's gratitude to God can be achieved: "Perpetuate favor with gratitude, power (*qudra*) with forgiveness (*afw*), obedience (*tā'a*) with mutual affection (*tā'aluf*), and victory (*naṣr*) with humility (*tawāḍu'*). And know that nothing makes the caliph righteous except God-fearing piety (*taqwā*) and justice (*'adl*)".¹⁰³ Another way to show gratitude to God is by listening to exhortations and counsel, as he tells al-Mustaḍī' later in the *Miṣbāḥ*.¹⁰⁴

Ibn al-Ğawzī's advice for al-Mustaḍī' to rule with justice and piety counter-balances the passages emphasizing obedience. Insofar as subjects owe the caliph obedience, obedience is conditional upon the caliph's personal and political conduct. In a way, this mirrors Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's (d. 241/855) position that although rulers are owed obedience, "there is no obedience in disobedience to God".¹⁰⁵ The caliph's piety became a contested terrain when Sunni discourses on the caliphate started to crystallize in the fifth/eleventh century. For instance, Sunni thinkers like al-Ğuwaynī prioritized a caliphal candidate's competence in governance (*kifāya*) over his piety (*wara'*) because competence guaranteed political stability, whereas piety did not.¹⁰⁶ Yet the idea of a pious ruler guaranteeing a righteous community of believers by way of moral contagion is precisely what Ibn al-Ğawzī envisions for an ideal caliphate, as can

be seen in a quotation from al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād (d. 187/803): "If my prayers cannot be answered except when they are offered regarding the imam, then if I [only] did them for myself they will not offer me recompense. But if I prayed for the imam, then the well-being of the imam guarantees the well-being of the worshippers and the lands".¹⁰⁷ As the righteousness of the caliph is said to guarantee the well-being of the *umma*, exhorting the caliph to rule with piety and justice would go a longer way in bringing about the moral and spiritual reform of the *umma* than advising him on concrete administrative and military matters.

5. Conclusion

There is no denying the overall panegyric tone of the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter. While the caliph's status as God's deputy and successor to the Prophet had become widely acknowledged by Ibn al-Ğawzī's time, the sheer number of Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīths* he cites to support al-Mustaḍī' 's claim to this status is very telling of his efforts to bolster the caliph's religious legitimacy. The same goes for his genealogical legitimization of the Abbasid caliphate, which musters a mix of anecdotes and *ḥadīths* to depict Ibn 'Abbās and 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh as learned and pious Muslim sages, thus framing the Abbasids as a dynasty imbued with piety and knowledge. The chapter's closing passages not only call for obedience to the caliph, but also stress his role as a pillar of faith.

Panegyric need not preclude advice, however. Advice is peppered throughout the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter in subtle ways. In listing caliphal requirements that emphasize knowledge instead of military capabilities, Ibn al-Ğawzī could be subtly urging al-Mustaḍī' to consult religious scholars and to continue attending sermons. Counsel is even embedded in passages where the panegyric tone is at its most elevated. The laudatory accounts of Abbasid ancestors like Ibn 'Abbās and his son 'Alī are held up as mirrors for al-Mustaḍī' to reflect on his own commitment to knowledge and piety. Similarly, insofar as one should obey the caliph due to his central role in one's faith and membership in the *umma*, the caliph should also do his part by ruling virtuously.

All in all, Ibn al-Ğawzī's embedding of advice in his panegyric to al-Mustaḍī' gives the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter a sense of balance that speaks to the politics of the late Abbasid peri-

inch will die a pagan death"; and "Whoever withdraws his hand from obedience [to a ruler] will find no argument [in his defense] when he meets God on the Day of Resurrection. And whoever dies without having sworn the oath of allegiance [to a ruler] will die a pagan death".

¹⁰² Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 128, 133.

¹⁰³ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, pp. 159-162.

¹⁰⁵ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. IX, p. 124.

¹⁰⁶ Siddiqui, *Law and Politics*, pp. 248-249.

¹⁰⁷ Ibn al-Ğawzī, *Miṣbāḥ*, p. 136.

od. Louise Marlow has argued that this was a common rhetorical strategy employed by many mirror writers to avoid offending their royal recipients.¹⁰⁸ However, since the *Miṣbāḥ* can be read as an extended sermon to al-Mustaḍī, as demonstrated above, we can conjecture that this was how Ibn al-Ġawzī might have preached to al-Mustaḍī if he did so in person: glorifying the caliph's position in Islam while reminding him of the need to consult scholars, praising his ancestors while establishing them as standards for him to emulate, and stressing the subjects' obedience to him while reminding him of the need to rule with justice and piety.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, just as emotional movement is observed in Ibn al-Ġawzī's *maḡālis al-wa'z* and the *Miṣbāḥ* as a whole, it is also present in the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter. Al-Mustaḍī is first glorified as a God-appointed caliph, then educated about the virtues of his learned and pious ancestors, and finally admonished about the importance of ruling with justice and piety to earn his subjects' obedience. As seen above, a Ġawzian *maḡālis al-wa'z* moves from an "emotional/spiritual" segment devoted to worship, to a "didactic/reflective" segment devoted to religious education, to a "practical/moral" segment devoted to "a summons to decision and action".¹¹⁰ In the *Miṣbāḥ*'s first chapter, the didactic section containing anecdotes about al-Mustaḍī's ancestors is situated mid-point in the chapter, followed by a call to action for him to rule in a just and pious fashion. Just as the *Miṣbāḥ* can be read as an extended sermon to al-Mustaḍī, its first chapter can be read as a mini sermon in its own right.

For Ibn al-Ġawzī, such an approach was well suited to the late Abbasid period when ruling regimes frequently meted out brutal and arbitrary punishments, resulting in heightened social insecurity.¹¹¹ As he writes in *Ṣayd al-ḥāṭir* ("The Hunt for Fleeting Thoughts"), gone were the days when rulers the likes of al-Manṣūr and Hārūn al-

Raṣīd welcomed and even rewarded harsh rebuke. Rulers in his own day had become less tolerant of such language.¹¹² In light of these developments, an approach to preaching that embeds advice in panegyric and carefully manages the emotions of the ruler might not only ensure the safety of the preacher, but could also prove to be more effective in getting the ruler to listen and ultimately reform his ways.

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¹⁰⁸ Marlow, "Performances of Advice and Admonition," pp. 69-70; "Surveying Recent Literature", p. 530. This strategy was not limited to the Islamic world. For examples from Byzantium, see Angelov, "Byzantine Imperial Panegyric". For Renaissance Italy, see Hankins, *Virtue Politics*, pp. 98-99, 230.

¹⁰⁹ Thus far, we have no account of Ibn al-Ġawzī preaching directly to a ruler in person. The extant accounts mention the Abbasid caliph being in attendance at the sermons he delivered to a general audience. In the preaching assemblies conducted in the courtyard of the caliphal palace, the caliph usually listened in from his belvederes overlooking the courtyard.

¹¹⁰ Swartz, "Rules", p. 230.

¹¹¹ Lange, *Justice*, pp. 25-98.

¹¹² Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Ṣayd al-ḥāṭir*, pp. 409-411.

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