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Challenging the Shiʿi Century: the Fatimids (909-1171), Buyids (945-1055), and

the Creation of a Sectarian Narrative of Medieval Islamic History

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Challenging the 'Shiʿi Century': the Fatimids (909-1171), Buyids (945-1055), and

the Creation of a Sectarian Narrative of Medieval Islamic History

By

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For mom and Frank

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Challenging the Shiʿi Century: the Fatimids (909-1171), Buyids (945-1055), and

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

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This dissertation focuses on two Shiʿi dynasties of the tenth century, the Fatimid caliphate (909-1171) of Egypt and North Africa and the Buyid Amirate (945-1055) of Iraq and Iran. It traces their rise to power from eighth and ninth-century missionary movements, the ways in which they articulated their right to rule, and reactions to their authority. By bringing the Fatimids and Buyids into a comparative framework, the goal of this dissertation is to challenge the notion of the 'Shiʿi Century,' a term used to describe this era, as a label that has needlessly narrowed analyses of this period into binaries of Sunni versus Shiʿi and privileged the urban, elite, Sunni textual tradition over experiences of medieval Muslims that are often discredited as 'heterodox.'

This dissertation focuses on three aspects of Fatimid and Buyid history that have never been studied together. First, it explores the role of eighth- and ninth-century non-Sunni missionary movements in the conversion and Islamization of

the non-urban peripheries of the Middle East, which led to the rise to power of the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties. Second, it analyzes the pragmatic ways that these two Shiʿi dynasties combined multiple forms of authority to articulate their legitimacy in a way that appealed to the heterogeneous populations of the tenth-century Middle East. Third, it compares tenth-century reactions to the rise of these two Shiʿi dynasties with depictions of them from the eleventh century and later, arguing that it was only in retrospect that the story of the tenth century was rewritten *ex post facto* as a sectarian narrative.

By comparing the Fatimids and the Buyids and focusing on contemporary Sunni depictions of these dynasties, this dissertation concludes that the significance of the Shiʿi identity of these two dynasties has been exaggerated. Rather than being only Shiʿi anomalies, these dynasties fit into existing processes in the development of Islamic society.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The tenth century was an era of tremendous social change in the Middle

East. Previous historians have posited that this period was when the Middle East

first became predominantly Muslim.[1] It was also the time when two Shiʿi

dynasties challenged the nominal unity of the Islamic world under the Sunni

Abbasid caliphate (750-1258): the Fatimids (909-1171) declared a rival Shiʿi

caliphate in North Africa and the Buyids (945-1055), a Shiʿi military dynasty from

Iran, conquered Baghdad, the seat of the Sunni Abbasids. It was an era when

Muslim communities were still in the process of forming concepts of Islamic

society and ideas of what it meant to be Muslim. Yet, despite the tremendous

complexity evident in this period, modern scholars often reduce the tenth century

to a narrative of sectarian conflict: a "Shiʿi Century,"[2] followed closely by a "Sunni

Revival."[3]

I argue that the existing narratives of the 'Shiʿi Century' and 'Sunni Revival"

are reductionist and teleological. They assume a fixed sectarian narrative from the

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[1] Richard Bulliet made this argument in *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Harvard University Press, 1979). While Bulliet's thesis is speculative, it has been largely accepted and will be discussed in further detail in chapter two. Bulliet discusses his methodology in detail in *Conversion*, 64-79.

[2] The "Shiʿi Century" was a phrase coined by Marshall G.S. Hodgson to describe the rise of the Fatimids and the Buyids in the tenth century and will be discussed in more detail below.   Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Volume 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 36.

[3] In general, the "Sunni Revival" is defined as the period in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when Sunni military regimes responded to the success of the Shiʿi dynasties of the tenth century by 'reviving' Sunni claims to dominance. It will be discussed in more detail below.

rise of Islam through to the late medieval period.[4] Further, I maintain that it is

impossible to understand the development of Islamic identity, Sunni or Shiʿi,

without reintegrating the tenth century into the overall narrative of the Islamic

past. By analyzing the Fatimids and Buyids together, viewing them within the

context of the non-urban missionary movements that brought them to power, and

relying on contemporary sources rather than later hostile accounts, this

dissertation reveals the complex process of how Islamic society absorbed new

converts and forged multiple types of Muslim identity. Conversely, I will also

demonstrate how it was the success of these non-Sunni movements and states that

led, after their fall, to the entrenchment of the Sunni position, the

institutionalization of Sunni Islam as 'orthodox', and the recasting of the tenth

century as a sectarian narrative.

I will begin this introduction with a brief overview of the history of the

Fatimid and the Buyid dynasties. Then, I will survey several bodies of secondary

literature relevant to the study of the Fatimids and the Buyids. First, I will discuss

the historiographies of the "Shiʿi Century," the "Sunni Revival," the Fatimids, and

the Buyids to provide a survey of the current state of the field. Second, I will

discuss two other major bodies of historiography that have not previously been

integrated into the study of the Fatimids and Buyids: debates about the

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[4] As will be discussed in detail below, other scholars have challenged the notion of the "Sunni
Revival" in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but the "Shiʿi Century" is still a fairly accepted
notion.

development of orthodoxy in Islam and broad conversations about authority,

legitimacy, and kingship in Islam. Following these discussions of historiography, I

will address the problems of the medieval source materials in addition to the

motivation for the selection of materials for this study and its method. Finally, I

will outline the structure of this dissertation with regard to its organization and

intent.

The Fatimids and the Buyids: A Brief Historical Overview

The Fatimid Caliphate arose out of an underground *daʿwa* (missionary)

movement spreading the Ismaʿili[5] message. The *da'wa* culminated in the military

conquest of North Africa. Details about the earliest origins of the movement

remain obscure. The origins of the movement remain difficult to study

conclusively due to the overall absence of accurate information about Shi'ism from

the eighth and early ninth centuries. Scholars of Isma'ili origins often speak of a

period of "proto-Ismaʿili"[6] origins that dates from the mid-eighth century.[7] It is

possible, however, to trace the portion of the Isma'ili *da'wa* that founded the

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[5] The Ismaʿilis never referred to themselves as "Ismaʿilis" during this period; they preferred terms such as "*ahl al-haqq*," the people of the truth," or "*daʿwat al-haqq*," the call to the truth. However, because they later accepted this term for themselves, I will use it here for simplicity's sake.
[6] The phrase "proto-Ismaʿili" is used to differentiate the earliest phase of the movement when concepts of different forms of Shiʿism were still in flux.
[7] Shiʿi movements during these periods were still in the process of forming and, in addition, faced persecution by Abbasids. Thus, there are not many sources dating from this early period. For a more detailed discussion of the problems of studying early Ismaʿili history as well as an outline of what is known about the pre-Fatimid Ismaʿilis, see Farhad Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis: Their History and Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 87-98.

Fatimid caliphate to ʿAbd Allah al-Mahdi (r. 909-934).[8] Al-Mahdi declared himself

to be the living Imam in 899,[9] thus setting in motion a course of events that led to

the foundation of the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa ten years later. During that

decade, the Ismaʿili *daʿwa*, which was active in parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Bahrain,

Yemen, and North Africa, began an armed rebellion against the Abbasid caliphate

on several fronts while al-Mahdi made his way from Syria to North Africa.[10] The

Fatimid caliphate was declared in 909 in North Africa when al-Mahdi's forces

conquered Qayrawan, the seat of the Aghlabid dynasty (r. 800-909),[11] which had

ruled in the name of the Sunni Abbasids of Baghdad.

The Fatimids in North Africa sought to expand their rule with the eventual

goal of overthrowing the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. During the caliphate of al-

Mahdi and his son and successor, al-Qaʿim bi-Amr Allah (r. 934-946), they

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[8] Like much of early Ismaʿili history, al-Mahdi's name is contested. In medieval heresiographical sources, he was known as ʿUbayd Allah, which was a derogatory diminutive form of ʿAbd Allah. Many modern scholars have adopted the name ʿUbayd Allah for the founder of the Fatimid dynasty with no pejorative intent. However, in keeping with the changing norms in the study of Ismaʿili history, I will use ʿAbd Allah al-Mahdi. Daftary discusses some of the details of the controversy regarding al-Mahdi's name in *Ismaʿilis*, 104-107.

[9] Al-Mahdi's declaration of his Imamate immediately caused a schism in the Ismaʿili *daʿwa*. A group known as the *Qarmatiyya* (named after their leader, a missionary named Hamdan Qarmat), did not recognize al-Mahdi as the living Imam and split off from the Fatimid-Ismaʿilis. The *Qarmatiyya* are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but details of their movement can be found in Daftary, *Ismaʿilis*, 115-126.

[10] For a detailed discussion of al-Mahdi's decision about where to found the Fatimid caliphate, see Shainool Jiwa, "The initial destination of the Fatimid Caliphate: the Yemen or the Maghrib?," *Bulletin for the British Society of Middle Eastern Studies* 13: 1 (1986), 15-26.

[11] The first Aghlabid Amir, Ibrahim I ibn al-Aghlab (r. 800-812) was appointed by the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid to hereditary rulership over the Maghrib in order to quell the frequent Berber rebellions in the region. The Aghlabids ruled nearly independently of the Abbasids but always recognized nominal Abbasid overlordship. For more information, see J. Schacht, "Aghlabids" or "Banuʿl –Aghlab," *EOI2*. Their first capital was al-Abbasiyya, three miles southeast of Qayrawan, named for their Abbasid overlords. For more information, see H. H. Abdul-Wahhab, "al-Abbasiyya," *EOI2*.

attempted to conquer Egypt several times without success.[12] During al-Qaʿim's

caliphate, the Fatimids also faced one of their biggest challenges: a prolonged

rebellion of Ibadi Khariji Berbers[13] led by Abu Yazid Makhlad b. Kaydad (d. 947), a

member of the Berber Zanata tribe, which lasted from 943 to 947. The third

Fatimid caliph, al-Mansur bi-llah (r. 946-953), defeated Abu Yazid's rebellion. But

the rebellion had nearly succeeded in conquering the nascent Fatimid caliphate.

However, after al0Mansur's the victory, the Fatimids successfully expanded across

North Africa into Egypt. Al-Mansur's son and successor, al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah (r.

953-975), conquered Egypt in 969 and founded the new Fatimid imperial capital of

Cairo, naming it "al-Qahira" (literally, 'The Victorious') to commemorate their

success.[14]

 While the Fatimids expanded across North Africa in the mid-tenth century,

the Buyid dynasty (945[15]-1055) conquered central Iraq. The Buyids were a tribe

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[12] For more details, Daftary, *Ismaʿilis*, 142-143.

[13] Abu Yazid followed Nukkari Ibadism, which is one of the main subgroups of Ibadi Kharijism and is considered one of the more 'moderate' forms of Kharijism. The Khariji movement originated during a battle between ʿAli b. Abi Talib (d. 661) and the forces of the first Umayyad caliph, Muʿawiya (d. 680). The progenitors of the Kharijis 'left' (the Arabic term '*khariji*' means 'one who leaves') ʿAli during the battle because they disagreed with his decision to engage in arbitration with Muʿawiya. Thus, the Kharijis tend to be considered quite hostile to Shiʿis. Later, it was a member of the Khariji movement who assassinated ʿAli. For more information, see Daftary, *Ismaʿilis*, 145-6 and Patricia Crone, *God's Rule - Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 54-64.

[14] Cairo was originally named "Mansuriyya," after the imperial capital founded by the Fatimid caliph al-Mansur in *Ifriqiya*. Like "al-Qahira," "Mansuriyya" also means "the Victorious."

[15] Dating the Buyid dynasty is complex. It is generally dated from 945, the year when the Buyid Amir Muʿizz al-Dawla conquered Baghdad, the seat of the Abbasid caliphate. However, the Buyid dynasty was begun as a triumvirate of three brothers. While the Buyid conquest of Baghdad may be the most significant aspect of Buyid rule in the view of central Islamic history, Baghdad was conquered by the most junior member of the triumvirate. It would be equally valid to date the

from Iran, just south of the Caspian Sea, with nominal ties to the Zaydi Shiʿism[16]

prevalent in the Caspian in the ninth century and a history of working as

mercenaries for local powers. The Buyid dynasty was founded as a triumvirate of

three brothers: ʿImad al-Dawla (d. 949), Rukn al-Dawla (d. 976), and Muʿizz al-

Dawla (d. 967).[17] ʿImad al-Dawla was the eldest brother and the senior member of

the triumvirate. He ruled from Shiraz while Rukn al-Dawla, the second oldest

brother, ruled from Rayy, and Muʿizz al-Dawla, the youngest, conquered Baghdad,

the seat of the Sunni Abbasid caliphate. However, instead of deposing the Sunni

Abbasid caliphs, the Buyids retained the position of the Sunni caliphate; their

control over the Sunni caliphs was one of the many ways in which they claimed

their own legitimacy.

Buyid dynasty from ʿImad al-Dawla's conquest of Shiraz in 934, since he was the oldest Buyid brother and Shiraz was his capital.

[16] Zaydi Shiʿism, also known as "Fiver" Shiʿism, is differentiated from the Ismaʿili Shiʿism of the Fatimids predominantly by a different view of the Imamate. While the Ismaʿilis follow a specific line of Imams from ʿAli b. Abi Talib through to the Fatimid caliphs, the Zaydis believe that any descendant of ʿAli and Fatima who has religious knowledge and is willing to lead his followers in rebellion can be considered the Imam. The name of their movement comes from Zayd b. ʿAli (d. 740), the grandson of the third imam, Husayn b. ʿAli (d. 680). For more information on the Zaydis, see Halm, *Shiʿism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 202-206. While the Buyids were Zaydi Shiʿis originally, after conquering Baghdad they converted to *Ithna ʿashari* or Imami Shiʿism (also known as "Twelver" Shiʿism), which was the predominant form of Shiʿism in Baghdad in the tenth century. The *Ithna ʿashari*s believe in a specific line of twelve Imams originating with ʿAli b. Abi Talib and ending with Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi (b. 869). The *Ithna ʿashari*s believe that the twelfth Imam went into hiding to avoid persecution from the ʿAbbasids. At first, he remained in contact with his followers. This period, from 874 to 941 is considered the "Lesser Occultation." However, in 941, the twelfth Imam entered a state of "Greater Occultation" that will only end when he returns to usher in the end of time. For more information about the *Ithna ʿashari*s, see Halm, 28-38. Also, it should be noted that the Buyids came to power in Baghdad a mere four years after the beginning of the Imam's greater occultation and the belief in the mystical departure of the last Imam (who is also often known as the "Hidden Imam") and narratives of his fate were very likely still being developed.

[17] These are their caliphal titles, by which they are best known in the history and historiography. Their names, however, were ʿAli b. Buya, Hasan b. Buya, and Ahmad b. Buya, respectively.

The best known of the Buyid rulers was ʿAdud al-Dawla (d. 983), who was

the son of Rukn al-Dawla and the appointed successor of ʿImad al-Dawla. As the

successor of ʿImad al-Dawla, ʿAdud al-Dawla ruled from Shiraz. However, unlike

his father and uncles, he understood the significance that Baghdad played as the

center of the Islamic world and he aimed to control it. After some complicated

infighting within the Buyid family,[18] ʿAdud al-Dawla became the *amir*, or military

commander, of Baghdad in 977. As amir, ʿAdud al-Dawla played a significant role

in the history of the Buyids; his blending of Sunni, Shiʿi, Zoroastrian, Arabic, and

Persian modes of authority in his claims to legitimacy demonstrates both the

process of Islamicization and the process by which new communities of Muslims

were incorporated into Islamic society.

The Fatimid and Buyid dynasties sparred with one another from their

imperial capitals while a clandestine Fatimid network of missionaries operated

within Buyid territories and Buyid spies were active in Fatimid domains. There

was not yet such a thing as "Shiʿi orthodoxy" and neither state held the monopoly

on defining Shiʿism. Both dynasties faced attacks by non-aligned Shiʿi movements:

the biggest threat to both was the *Qarmatiyya*,[19] an Ismaʿili millenarian

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[18] ʿAdud al-Dawla had been crowned the amir of Baghdad in March 975 when he forced his cousin, Bakhtiyar (whose caliphal title was ʿIzz al-Dawla), to abdicate. ʿAdud al-Dawla's father, however, did not approve of his son's actions and forced him to abdicated and restore his cousin to the throne, which he did in June 975. Once Rukn al-Dawla died in 976, ʿAdud al-Dawla marched on Baghdad again and retook the city in the summer of 977.
[19] For more information on the *Qarmatiyya*, see Wilferd Madelung's seminal article, "The Fatimids and the Qarmatis of Bahrayn," reprinted in *Mediaeval Ismaʿili History and Thought*, Farhad Daftary,

countermovement based in Bahrain and southern Iraq that had separated from the Ismaʿili Fatimids in the late ninth century.[20] But there were also several competing local Shiʿi powers during this time who intermittently allied with the Buyids and the Fatimids, such as the Hamdanids of Syria and Iraq (890-1004),[21] the Mazyadids of central Iraq (ca. 10th-12th centuries),[22] the ʿUqaylids of Iraq and the Jazira (990-1169),[23] and the Mirdasids in Aleppo (ca. 1024-1080).[24] However, despite the fact that the histories and claims to authority of these other smaller Shiʿi dynasties remain virtually unexplored,[25] this dissertation does not attempt to incorporate them into the broader discussion of the Fatimids and the Buyids

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ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21-74. Originally published in German as "Fatimiden und Bahrainqarmaten" (*Der Islam* XXXIV, 1959): 34-88.

[20] The *Qarmatiyya* and their relationship with the Fatimids have been long-contested. The *Qarmatiyya* are infamous within Islamic history for their sack of Mecca during the *hajj* in 930 when they massacred Muslim pilgrims and stole the Black Stone of the *Kaʿba*.

[21] The Hamdanids were a Taghlibi Arab tribe who rose to preeminence in the late ninth century with amirates centered in Mosul and Aleppo. Their most famous leader was Sayf al-Dawla, known because the famous Arab poet al-Mutanabbi (915-965) spent some time at his court. For more information on the Hamdanids, see M. Canard, "Hamdanids," *EOI2*.

[22] The Mazyadids were a Shiʿi Arab tribe that ruled a protectorate for the Buyid amirs while showing a great willingness to shift alliances for their own benefit. For more information on the Mazyadids, see G. Makdisi, "Notes on Hilla and the Mazyadids in medieval Islam," *JAOS*, LXXIV (1954), 249-62 and C.E. Bosworth, "Banu Mazyad," *EOI2*.

[23] The ʿUqaylids were a Shiʿi Arab tribe who sometimes served as nominal vassals of the Buyids. For more information on the ʿUqaylids, see H. Kennedy, "The ʿUqaylids of Mosul," in *Actas del XII Congreso de la U.E.A.I.* and C.E. Bosworth, "Ukaylids," *EOI2*.

[24] The Mirdasids were a Kilabi Arab tribe who controlled Aleppo after the Hamdanids. For more information on the Mirdasids, see Th. Bianquis and Samir Shamma, "Banu Mirdas," in *EOI2*.

[25] Hugh Kennedy devotes some space to these different minor dynasties in *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the 6th to the 11th century*, 2nd ed. (Pearson, 2004). For the Hamdanids, see Kennedy, 267-284; for the Mazyadids, see 294-297; for the ʿUqaylids, see 297-302; for the Mirdasids, see 302-306. There is also a very long and detailed dissertation, never published, on the Hamdanid dynasty: Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, "The Hamdanid Dynasty of Mesopotamia and North Syria 254-404/868-1014" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1981).

because none of them made universal claims to Muslim leadership, as the Fatimids and Buyids did.

The 'Shiʿi Century' and the 'Sunni Revival' in Secondary Sources

The narrative of the Shiʿi Century and the Sunni Revival—which posits a brief Shiʿi surge followed by the seemingly inevitable restoration of Sunni Islam—is both reductionist and teleological. It presents a misleading image of a unified medieval Islam that was and always would be predominantly Sunni and 'orthodox' while ignoring the lived experience of countless Muslims and falsely homogenizing Sunni Islam during an era when the different schools of Sunni jurisprudence (*madhhab*s) were still in fierce competition.[26] Marshall G.S. Hodgson coined the term "Shiʿi Century" to describe the rise of the Fatimids and the Buyids in the tenth century, but the term has been used more widely also to include the flourishing of Shiʿi movements in the late eighth and ninth centuries,[27] during a period when concepts of Sunni and Shiʿi Islam were still developing.

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[26] *Madhhab* is generally translated as "school of law" or "school of jurisprudence." Today, there are four schools recognized by Sunnis as 'orthodox' and equally valid interpretations of religious law: the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafiʿi, and Hanbali schools. This position of mutual acceptance, however, took centuries to develop and, during the tenth century, there was fierce competition among the scholars of the different Sunni schools of law. For more information on the different *madhhab*s, see J. Schacht, "Fikh," *EOI2*.

[27] H.A.R. Gibb, "Al-Mawardi's Theory of the Khalifa," *Islamic Culture* 11:3 (1937), 153-163. For an in-depth analysis of Gibb's argument about Sunni jurists and the political fragmentation of the Abbasid state, see Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, "A Window on Islam in Buyid Society" (Ph.D diss., Harvard University, 2003), 9-12.

Hodgson himself noted that, for this period, the term "Sunni" was, at best, confusing, "for it has been used, from the beginning, in special ways by those who wanted to use it exclusively for their own brand of orthodoxy."[28] Yet, despite this acknowledgement from the very scholar who coined the term "Shiʿi Century," the term "Sunni" is still generally used as a shorthand for Islamic 'orthodoxy' while all other Islams are "hyphenated Islams – Shiʿi-Islam, Sufi-Islam, and so on."[29] Thus, a myriad of different types of non-Sunni movements in the late eighth and ninth centuries, as well as the rise of two different types of Shiʿi states in the tenth century, all become dismissed as 'heterodoxy' and subsumed under the umbrella of the 'Shiʿi Century.'

The origin of the term "Sunni Revival" in modern scholarship comes from the Arabic phrase "*ihyaʿ al-sunna*" (the revivification of the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad).[30] In general, it is defined as the period in the eleventh and twelfth centuries when Sunni military regimes, from the Seljuks (1037-1194) to the Mamluks (1250-1517), responded to the success of the Shiʿi dynasties of the tenth century by 'reviving' Sunni claims to dominance. In modern scholarship, the term appears to originate in nineteenth-century discussions of the development of Islam

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[28] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam, Volume 1: The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 278.
[29] A. Kevin Reinhart, "On Sunni Sectarianism," as published in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 209.
[30] Stephennie Mulder, The Shrines of the ʿAlids in Medieval Syria: Sunnis, Shiʿis, and the *Architecture* of Coexistence (Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming 2013), 11-12.

in India,[31] but it later became popular in descriptions of the Sunni backlash against

the Fatimids.[32]

There have been several excellent critiques of the idea of the 'Sunni

Revival.' Richard Bulliet argued that what has been called the 'Sunni revival' was

actually the first stage in the creation of institutions to standardize and

disseminate the religious norms that would become the hallmark of later Sunni

Islamic history[33] and Jonathan P. Berkey noted that, "like many grand historical

themes, this one is perhaps a bit too neat and simple."[34] Most recently, Stephennie

Mulder observed that, even at the height of the so-called "Sunni Revival," the

sponsorship of ʿAlid shrines was incredibly popular. Furthermore, she argues that

these ʿAlid shrines "were clearly venerated, visited, and sometimes patronized by

both Shiʿis and Sunnis...and it could hardly be said that they were exclusively

'Shiʿi' spaces."[35] Despite these sound critiques of the "Sunni Revival," however, the

idea of a "Shiʿi Century" remains relatively unchallenged and the story of the tenth-

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[31] The first iteration of the phrase that I can find is in James Talboys Wheeler's *The History of India from the Earliest Ages: Vol 4, Part 1* (N. Trubner, 1876), 373. Wheeler identified the "Sunni Revival" as one of the stages of the development of Islam: Sunni, Shiʿi, Sufi, and a "Sunni revival," ix. In volume 4, part 2 of the same book (N. Trubner, 1881), Wheeler specifically linked the "Sunni Revival" in India with the policies of the Mughal Emperor Aurungzeb (r. 1658-1707).

[32] For example, in Nicola A. Ziadeh's *Urban Life in Syria under the Early Mamluks* (Greenwood Press, 1953), 119 and by H.A.R. Gibb in *An Interpretation of Islamic History* (Orientalia Publishers, 1957), 37. George Makdisi popularized the term in a 1973 article which argued that this "Sunni" revival should really be considered a "traditionist" revival and most modern discussions of the "Sunni Revival" cite his article. See Makdisi, "The Sunni Revival," reprinted in *Islamic Civilization 950-1150*, ed. D.S. Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Ltd, 1973), 155-168.

[33] Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (Columbia University Press, 1995), 127.

[34] Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 189-193.

[35] Mulder, 14.

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century is still predominantly told as a sectarian narrative, divorced from the overall history of the medieval Islamic world.

The Fatimids and Buyids in Secondary Sources

The study of the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties is often seen as only significant within the history of Shiʿism. Further, these two dynasties are nearly always studied in isolation—both from each other and from the overall narrative of medieval Islamic history—rather than exploring what these dynasties can reveal about the development of medieval Islamic society and different forms of Muslim identity overall. In this section, I will explore some of the recent trends in the study of the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties before turning to a closer examination of some more recent histories of these dynasties that analyze Fatimid and Buyid articulations of their authority.

Recent works on Fatimid history remain methodologically conservative, often focusing only on close textual analyses. In addition, while philosophical or theological studies of medieval Ismaʿili thought are popular,[36] recent historical works have tended to be narrow studies of significant Fatimid missionaries, such

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[36] Such as, for example, Paul Walker's *Early Philosophical Shiʿism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), *The Wellsprings of Wisdom: A Study of Abu Yaqub al-Sijistani's Kitab al-Yanabi* (University of Utah Press, 1994), *Abu Yaqub al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary* (I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1996), *Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani: Ismaili Thought in the Age of al-Hakim* (I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1999), Farouk Mitha's *Al-Ghazali and the Ismailis: A Debate on Reason and Authority in Medieval Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), and Arzina R. Lalani's *Early Shiʿi Thought: The Teachings of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

as close readings of the works of the Ismaʿili missionary al-Muʾayyad fi al-Din al-Shirazi (d. 1078) to determine his views of the ideal missionary. Al-Muʾayyad served as a Fatimid *daʿi*, or missionary, at the court of a very late Buyid amir, Abu Kalijar (d. 1048). However, rather than engaging with questions about al-Shirazi's unique perspective on these two dynasties and the changes occurring during his tenure at the Buyid court, the study focuses predominantly on questions of what was 'true' or 'ideologically driven' in his account.[37] Another study of al-Shirazi, while making an important effort to resuscitate views of Fatimid literature as 'propaganda,' comes from a literary perspective and focuses on how al-Shirazi expressed his faith in poetry.[38]

Recently, Sumaiya Hamdani published an in-depth study of the work of Qadi al-Nuʿman (d. 974), the first chief *qadi* of the Fatimid caliphate and, as she argued, the architect of the Fatimid policy of greater rapprochement and accommodation with their Sunni subjects during the caliphate of al-Mansur (d. 953). While her book remains largely a close reading of al-Nuʿman's works, she contextualizes his work within the rise of the Shiʿi states of the tenth century, the conflicts within the nascent Ismaʿili movement, and the many rebellions against Fatimid rule in *Ifriqiya*. Significantly, Hamdani criticized the assumption that the rise of Shiʿism was a consequence of political fragmentation, which assumes that

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[37] Verena Klemm's Memoirs of a Mission: The Ismaʿili Scholar, Statesman and Poet al-Muʾayyad fiʾl-Din al-Shirazi (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).
[38] Tahera Qutbuddin. Al-Muʾayyad al-Shirazi and Fatimid Daʿwa Poetry: A Case of Commitment in Classical Arabic Literature (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005).

the process of crystallization of Islam was a straightforward process that was complete by the tenth century. However, despite this insight and her argument that the Fatimids themselves were proof that the question of orthodoxy and heterodoxy was not yet resolved in the tenth century, she does not mention other Shiʿi movements of the era or acknowledge the significance of the Buyids in this process.[39]

The Buyids, on the other hand, tend to be viewed as a Persian Shiʿi interlude during the disintegration of the power of the Abbasid Caliphate.[40] There is both a clear nationalist conflation of Iranian and Persian history in the historiography of the Buyids and a tendency to see the Shiʿism of the Buyids as unremarkable due to their Persian origins. The conflation of Iranian and Persian history likely arises out of a nationalist effort to see the Buyids as part of a continuous line of Persian-Iranian leadership that can be traced from the ancient Achaemenid kings (550-330 B.C.E.) through to the modern state of Iran.[41] The idea of the inevitability of Persian, and in turn, Buyid Shiʿism also emerged from ideas of race in nineteenth-century Orientalism and the belief that the "Persian race" would be more inherently drawn to Shiʿi ideas. For example, Reinhart Dozy

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[39] Sumaiya Hamdani, Between Revolution and State: The Path to Fatimid Statehood (London: IB Tauris, 2006).

[40] Vladimir Minorsky coined the term "Iranian Intermezzo" to describe this period, which also included the rise of other Iranian Muslim dynasties (in addition to the Buyids) such as the Tahirids (821-873), Saffarids (861-1003), and the Samanids (819-999). See Minorsky, "The Iranian Intermezzo" in *Studies in Caucasian History* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1953).

[41] Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-1941), whose dynasty was overthrown by the Iranian Revolution in 1979, emphasized this link with the regnal name "Pahlavi," the name of the script used to write Persian in pre-Islamic times.

(1820-1883), a Dutch Orientalist, argued that the Arabs, with an innate love of liberty due to their nomadic origins, supported the 'election' of a successor to the Prophet Muhammad while the Persians were too accustomed to servitude to a king to understand this concept.[42] There were also earlier arguments, first articulated by Count Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882), that Shiʿism constituted an Aryan Persian rebellion against Arab Semitic Islam.[43] While these ideas were discredited nearly a century ago, echoes of the idea that Shiʿism is essentially 'Persian Islam' persist[44] and this tendency to view the Buyids only through the lens of Persian and Shiʿi identity continues.[45]

Modern studies of the Buyids which do not focus on their Persian heritage often concentrate nearly exclusively on political and administrative surveys of Buyid history.[46] These studies are important: they were the earliest attempts to determine how the new institution of the Amirate worked with the caliphate.

[42] Reinhart Dozy, as quoted in Julius Wellhausen, *The Religio-Political Factions in Early Islam* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1975 [1901]), 149-50.

[43] Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races, with Particular Reference to their respective influence in the civil and political history of Mankind (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1856).

[44] In 1948, Wladimir Ivanow's *Studies in Early Persian Ismaʿilism* (Bombay: Published by the Bombay Society, 1955 [1948]) argued that Shiʿism was not an exclusively Persian phenomenon and, as recently as 2004, Heinz Halm felt the need to debunk this argument in his surveys of Shiʿi history. See Halm, *Shiʿism*, 14-5 and *Shiʿa Islam: From Religion to Revolution* (Princeton, NY: Markus Wiener Pub., 1997), 16.

[45] For example, in Madelung, "The Assumption of the Title Shahanshah by the Buyids and the Reign of the Daylam," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28:2 (1969), H. Busse, "Iran under the Buyids," in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 4: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs,* ed. R. N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), and Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

[46] Mafizullah Kabir, The Buwayhid Dynasty of Baghdad, 334/946-447/1055 (Calcutta: Iran Society, 1964) and John J. Donohue, The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq, 334H/945 to 403H/1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

However, they are quite narrowly focused and do not engage with broader debates on medieval Islamic history.[47] There are also a few studies of social and intellectual history under the Buyids, such as Roy Mottahedeh's social history focusing on the bonds of friendship and patronage in Buyid society,[48] Joel Kraemer's excellent cultural history of the intellectual flowering under Buyid rule,[49] and Kambiz GhaneaBassiri's unpublished dissertation on the role of Islam in Buyid society focusing on eleventh-century theoretical works on justice in Islam.[50] However, the Buyids, as a ruling Shiʿi dynasty, are often afterthoughts in these studies.

There are no studies that broadly examine together Fatimid and Buyid articulations of their authority. There have, however, been two excellent studies of Fatimid claims to authority. Irene Bierman[51] and Paula Sanders,[52] in their analyses of Fatimid claims to authority, moved beyond using only textual sources and focused on the Fatimid use of public inscriptions and ritual to express their legitimacy. Bierman posited the existence of wider "contextual literacy," which

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[47] Kabir's work is from the 1960s and Donohue's, while published in 2003, it is a largely unrevised edition of his 1966 dissertation from Harvard University.

[48] Roy Mottahedeh, Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).

[49] Kraemer, Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986).

[50] GhaneaBassiri, "A Window on Islam in Buyid Society: Justice and Its Epistemological Foundation in the Religious Thought of ʿAbd al-Jabbar, Ibn al-Baqillani, and Miskawayh" (Ph.D. diss, Harvard, 2003).

[51] Irene Bierman, Writing Signs: the Fatimid Public Text (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[52] Paula Sanders, Ritual Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994).

allowed the Fatimids to address diverse audiences of Muslims in Cairo. For

example, in the early Fatimid era, exterior inscriptions on buildings addressed a

broader Muslim audience while the interior inscriptions appealed to a smaller

Ismaʿili audience. Bierman's work was one of the first studies to address how the

Fatimids contended with a diverse audience of Muslims. Sanders reconstructed

Fatimid political culture from its rituals and showed how the Fatimids engaged

with both Sunni and Ismaʿili audiences. Bierman and Sanders's work, while

pioneering, were too narrow in their focus. They provided excellent analyses of

Fatimid articulations of their legitimacy, but they did not connect these analyses

with larger processes in the development of Islamic society, such as the conversion

and Islamization of new Muslims, the development of institutions to spread and

police concepts of religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and the competition

between different forms of religious identity. For the Buyids, attempts to analyze

their articulations of authority have been predominantly focused on the Buyid use

of Persianate symbols to claim authority, concentrating especially on questions of

when and where the title of *Shahanshah* (King of Kings) was revived.[53]

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[53] These debates will be discussed in detail in chapter four. See H. F. Amedroz, "The Assumption of
the Title of Shahanshah by the Buwayid Rulers," *Numismatic Chronicle*, 4th series, 5, 1905, pp. 393-
99; C. E. Bosworth, "The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran and the Search for Dynastic
Connections with the Past," *Iran* 11, 1973, pp. 51-62; H. Busse, "The Revival of Persian Kingship
under the Buyids," in D.S. Richards, ed., *Islamic Civilization 950-1150*; M. Kabir, "The Assumption of
the Title Shahanshah by the Buwayhid Rulers," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* 4 (1959):
41-48; Wilferd Madelung, "The Assumption of the Title Shahanshah by the Buyids and 'The Reign of
the Daylam (Dawlat al-Daylam)'," Journal of Near Eastern Studies 28 (July 1969), 84-108 and 168-
183; Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh and D.S. Margoliouth
(London: Luzac & Co, 1937); G. C. Miles, "A Portrait of the Buyid Prince Rukn al-Dawlah," *American*

Overall, the Shiʿi identity of these two dynasties has dominated modern analyses of them. While the Shiʿism of the Fatimids and Buyids was an important aspect of their identity, viewing them as only important for the history of Shiʿism ignores the role that they played in Islamic history.

The Development of Concepts of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Secondary Sources

Historians who study the development of concepts of Islamic orthodoxy tend to focus on Sunni Islam. In part, this focus is due to the fact that, today, ninety percent of the world's Muslims now identify as Sunni.[54] However, the numerical dominance of Sunnism was not always assured. Divorcing the study of Islamic 'orthodoxy' from the study of the development of other types of non-Sunni Muslim movements results in an unbalanced view of the development of Islamic identities. Reintegrating the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties (and the missionary movements that brought them to power) into the overall narrative of Islamic history shows that the success of these Shiʿi movements in the ninth and tenth centuries led to the articulation and institutionalization of Sunni Islam in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Numismatic Society Museum Notes 11 (1964: 283-293; and Minorsky, "The Iranian Intermezzo" in *Studies in Caucasian History* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1953).
[54] "Mapping the Global Muslim Population, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life," last modified October 7, 2009, http://www.pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population%286%29.aspx

There are two broad approaches to defining the emergence of Sunni

orthodoxy, neither of which has considered the role played by non-Sunni

movements in this process: a *hadith*-centric or legal approach that tends to date

the emergence of Sunni orthodoxy to the ninth century, and an institutional or

social approach that argues that the emergence of Sunni orthodoxy cannot be

dated to before the eleventh century. The *hadith*-centric approach links the

dominance of Sunni Islam as 'orthodoxy' to the early ninth-century emergence of

different schools of Sunni law[55] and the argument that, by the early ninth century,

the ʿ*ulama'* had usurped caliphal authority over religious matters.[56] This

approach, however, inflates the importance of Sunni religious scholars in the lives

of non-urban and non-elite Muslims. Although there have been some recent

critiques of the *hadith*-centric approach from modern scholars who study *hadith*

and Islamic law,[57] their interventions have not connected the development of ideas

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[55] Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford University Press, 1950). Other scholars not working on the formation of orthodoxy seem to take Schacht's formula that the creation of the law schools can be equated with the existence of orthodoxy. For example, Leor Halevi, while not directly addressing the issue of the articulation of Sunni Islam, dates the emergence of a Sunni Islamic community to the ninth-century emergence of the schools of Islamic law and the demarcation of legal boundaries between "Muslims" and "non-Muslims." See Leor Halevi, *Muhammad's Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[56] Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[57] Two excellent examples: in *Constructive Critics, Hadith Literature, and the Articulation of Sunni Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Ma'in, and Ibn Hanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), Scott C. Lucas dated the emergence of Sunni orthodoxy to the later ninth-century, arguing that ideas of 'Sunni orthodoxy' should be linked with what he called the three fundamental principles of Sunni Islam: the paramount importance of the Companions, a general consensus on who could be considered a reliable hadith transmitter, and a shared historical narrative on the transmission of hadith. Christopher Melchert, in *Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th centuries C.E.*

about Sunni orthodoxy *within* the community of Sunni religious scholars to the spread of ideas about orthodoxy within the larger community of medieval Muslims.

The institutional or social approach corrects many of the problems of the *hadith*-centered approach and dates the articulation of Sunni orthodoxy later, to the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. This argument is based on an analysis of how ideas about 'orthodoxy' or, even, 'Islam' were institutionalized and spread. Richard Bulliet linked the development of Sunni Islam in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries with the creation of the core institutions and doctrines that have come to be considered 'Sunni,' such as the *madrasa*, the office of the *Shaykh al-Islam*, *futuwwa* organizations, Sufi orders, Ashʿari theology, and the acceptance of the idea of solving religious questions by seeking answers from the pious.[58] Jonathan Berkey made a similar institutional argument, that the rise of religious institutions, such as *madrasa*s, Sufi orders, and the various schools of law, after the eleventh century, unified concepts of 'orthodoxy' within the Islamic world. Johnathan Brown, focusing on *hadith* literature, criticized views that the very existence of *hadith* collections constituted a 'seal of orthodoxy' that was complete

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(Leiden: Brill, 1997), traced the career paths of the progenitors of the Sunni law schools in biographical dictionaries and argued that the emergence of the Sunni law schools was slightly later—the late ninth or early tenth century—due to the fact that a regular system of education and transmitting knowledge was responsible for the formation of the Sunni law schools.
[58] See Bulliet, Islam: The View from the Edge.

in the ninth century.[59] Rather, he argued that a concrete idea of Sunni Islam could

not have existed until after the canonization of Sunni *hadith* literature in the

eleventh century. This process, he argued, reinforced a sense of "Sunni

communalism" around the Sunni (Seljuk) political order and led to the

institutionalization of Sunni education, modes of patronage, and distinctive modes

of thought.

There has been some recognition in recent literature that the Sunni point of

view was, for centuries, just one point of view among many. Christopher Melchert

convincingly argued that, before at least the eleventh century, it was misleading

even to use the term "Sunni" to identify the "*ahl al-sunna*" because full Sunni self-

awareness and mutual recognition of other Sunni groups did not appear until the

eleventh century. By identifying a complex group of emerging religious scholars as

broadly "Sunni,"scholars falsely endorsed as fact what were actually context-laden,

polemical claims to Sunni identity as dominant.[60] Instead, Melchert used the term

'hadith folk' to identify the people who called themselves the "*ahl al-sunna*."[61]

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[59] Tarif Khalidi argues that the *Sahihayn* [the Sunni *hadith* collections of Muhammad al-Bukhari (d. 870) and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (d. 875), which are considered to be the two "*Sahih*" or "authentic"/"correct" collections of *hadith*] were the culmination of *hadith* scholarship and, thus, the 'seal of orthodoxy,' while Jonathan Brown contends in *The Canonization of Al-Bukhari and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Hadith Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3-7 that this "pays little attention to their role as a medium through which an ongoing process of institutional authorization and communal identification would take place."

[60] Melchert, "The Piety of the Hadith Folk," *IJMES*, 34:3 (Aug, 2002), 425-439.

[61] Melchert, "Hadith Folk," 434. Melchert dates the emergence of the 'hadith folk' as a distinct group to the end of the eighth century. They were important in the early Abbasid caliphate and the caliph Maʿmun tried to use the *mihna* to break their power. Most of the Abbasid caliphs from al-Mutawakkil onward, however, tried to co-opt them and were content to let them set religious

Kathryn Babayan, in discussing the rise of Islamic 'heterodoxy' in the post-Mongol age, also criticized the idea that there was any kind of established 'orthodoxy' before the tenth century. Rather, she argued that using terms such as 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' before the tenth century has led to a false "dichotomy between a mainstream and a margin at a time when the mainstream was still in the process of self-definition and exaggerated visions held serious possibilities for mainstream development."[62]

Overall, despite the acknowledgement that conversion to Islam and the elaboration of Islamic social institutions must be differentiated as separate steps in the creation of Islamic society,[63] there has still been a general tendency to ignore the popularity of non-Sunni movements among non-urban and non-educated Muslims and label them as simply 'heterodoxy' without considering the source of their popularity. Rather, as I will argue, the articulation and institutionalization of concepts of Islamic orthodoxy and the emergence of Sunni Islam as dominant in the eleventh and twelfth centuries cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the role that the success of the Shiʿi Fatimid and Buyid dynasties in the tenth-century played in the process.

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policies. Melchert also argues that, in the ninth century, only Muhtadi and Muʿtamid (through Muwaffaq) had any kind of specific religious policy after the *Mihna*. See Melchert, "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Muqtadir, AH 232-295/AD 847-908," *Islamic Law and Society* 3:3 (1996), 316-342.

[62] Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), xxiv.

[63] Bulliet, *Conversion,* 1-6.

Ideas of Islamic Kingship and Authority: The Secondary Sources

The Fatimids and Buyids are portrayed as Shiʿi 'others' within the overall narrative of medieval Islamic history. Scholars have accepted 'Abbasid use of polyvalent claims to power but ignored how the Fatimids and Buyids made similar appeals. Andrew Marsham and Aziz al-Azmeh both examined the pre-Islamic origins of many Islamic rituals of kingship,[64] but there has been an overall tendency to attempt to differentiate qualities of "pre-Islamic," "Shiʿi," or "Sunni" symbols of power, rather than viewing them as a coherent whole.[65] Recently, A. Azfar Moin argued that attempts to divide pre-modern Muslim identities neatly into categories of sect and doctrine assumed identities that were "more fixed and hegemonic than they historically were" and created an overly formal and textual model of religion and politics in pre-modern Muslim societies.[66] As Shiʿi polities, scholars often categorize the Fatimids and Buyids as using different modes of authority and identity from their Sunni counterparts. Thus, by labeling the

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[64] Andrew Marsham, in *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*: *Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), demonstrated the Sasanid and Byzantine roots of many of the rituals of kingship in the Abbasid state and Aziz al-Azmeh, in *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Polities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997) argued that the symbols of authority that are considered to be 'classically Islamic' are actually "highly elaborate reworkings" of earlier traditions that took place over centuries.

[65] For example, Anne F. Broadbridge, in *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). (2008), divides Mongol and Mamluk kingship into a continuum with Chingizid/"nomadic" ideologies on one end and "Islamic" ideologies on the other. Julie Meisami makes a similar argument in "The Past in Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia," *Poetics Today* 14: 2 (Summer 1993), 249-252 that there were "two separate and distinct narratives of the past" in Samanid historical writing, one pre-Islamic and Iranian and the other Arabo-Islamic.

[66] A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 5-7.

Fatimids and Buyids as Shiʿi, they are rendered fundamentally 'different' from Sunni empires.

Scholars have identified and accepted how the Abbasids used complex and seemingly contradictory rituals and symbols of power to blend Islamic and pre-Islamic modes of authority to appeal to a diverse population, such as adopting Iranian symbols of kingship and styling themselves as the 'Shadow of God on Earth,'[67] co-opting messianic ʿAlid/proto-Shiʿi[68] claims to authority,[69] and allying with urban Sunni religious scholars.[70] When the Fatimids and Buyids, however, attempted to blend different modes of medieval kingship, their attempts were portrayed as propagandistic.[71]

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[67] Marsham discusses this in detail in *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, especially pgs 183-185. Crone, in *God's Rule – Government in Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Columbia University Press, 2005), also discusses some of the ways in which the Abbasids co-opted aspects of Persian kingship in articulating their own authority.

[68] The term 'proto-Shiʿi' is used to differentiate the Shiʿi movements before, approximately, the mid-ninth century, when the concept of Shiʿism and different forms of Shiʿism was still in flux.

[69] Moshe Sharon, in *Black Banners from the East: The Establishment of the 'Abbasid State* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), argued that the Abbasids learned important lessons from earlier, failed ʿAlid movements in organizing their own *daʿwa*.

[70] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, in *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbasids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), argues that—rather than losing religious authority after the *Mihna* by al-Maʿmun—the Abbasid state was an active participant in the evolution of proto-Sunni trends, which he defines as maintaining the authority of *hadith*, commitment to the righteousness of the first community, holding Abu Bakr and ʿUmar in special reverence, and debating the historical merit of ʿUthman and ʿAli (but eventually decided, following Ahmad ibn Hanbal, that all four Rashidun Caliphs were legitimate and rightly guided: the order of the caliphate was the order of their religious merit). Overall, Zaman argues that, by the time of Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasids had allied themselves with proto-Sunni trends and abandoned the proto-Shiʿism of their rise to power. Marsham also discusses how the early Abbasids sought to co-opt the developing Islamic sciences. Marsham, 186.

[71] While now outdated, in "The Revival of Persian Kingship under the Buyids," in D.S. Richards, ed., *Islamic Civilization 950-1150* (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Ltd., 1973), 58, H. Busse did ponder whether or not ʿAdud al-Dawla 'believed' his own claims to Sassanid descent, remarking: "We may proceed from the assumption that [ʿAdud al-Dawla] was convinced of the reality of his Sasanid descent, and

The Fatimids and the Buyids in Primary Sources: Source Selection and Methodology

In this dissertation, I assert that the Fatimids and Buyids have been isolated in modern secondary literature. As Shiʿi dynasties, they have been viewed in isolation from the overall narrative of medieval Islamic history. In part, the division between Sunni and Shiʿi dynasties in the secondary literature can be linked to the types of primary sources that have been used to study the two tenth-century dynasties:[72] chronicles written by Sunni scholars dating from after the

certainly to no less a degree than the Prophet Muhammad was convinced of the truth of his divine mission." Debates over the authenticity of the 'Alid genealogy of the Fatimid caliphs are fairly common. See, for example: Bernard Lewis, *The Origins of Ismaʿilism: A study of the historical background of the Fatimid Caliphate,* Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd, 1940; Wladimir Ivanow, *Ismaʿili Tradition concerning the Rise of the Fatimids*, London: Oxford University Press (1942); Heinz Halm, *Empire of the Mahdi*; "Statement on Mahdi's communication to the Yemen on the real and esoteric names of his hidden predecessors," Arabic edition edited and introduced by Husayn F. al-Hamdani in *On the Genealogy of Fatimid Caliphs*, Cairo: American University at Cairo School of Oriental Studies (1958); Farhad Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis: History and Doctrines*; S.M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismaʿilism*, Jerusalem and Leiden, 1983.

[72] The types of sources that survive from the tenth century has long been a problem for the study of early and medieval Shiʿism. Many of the early studies on Shiʿism were based on hostile or even heresiographical sources. In the 1930s, this began to change when scholars of early and medieval Shiʿism integrated newly emerging medieval Shiʿi sources into the study of Islamic history. Ismaʿili history was particularly improved after Wladimir Ivanow, Asaf Fyzee, Husayn al-Hamdani, and Zahid Ali publicized collections of Ismaʿili manuscripts that had been hidden within the Ismaʿili communities of South Asia. The availability of these Ismaʿili manuscripts, the foundation of the Ismaili Society of Bombay in 1946, and the creation of the Institute for Ismaʿili Studies (IIS) in 1977 improved scholarship on the Fatimids and medieval Shiʿism and led to a series of bibliographical works by scholars such as Wladimir Ivanow [*Ismaili Literature: a bibliographical survey* (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1933)] and Isma'il Poonawala [Isma'il Poonawala, *Bibliography of Ismaʿili Literature* (1977)] which have been more recently revised by Paul E. Walker [Paul E. Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire: Fatimid History and its Sources* (London: IB Tauris, 2002)] and Farhad Daftary [Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A bibliography of Sources and Studies* (London, IB Tauris, 2004)]. Part of the mission of the Institute for Ismaʿili Studies has been to make Ismaʿili manuscripts available to scholars; they are committed to the publication of primary sources in translation through their "Ismaʿili Texts and Translations" Series. Examples of their publications include as Hamid Hajji's *Founding the Fatimid State*, a translation of Qadi al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah al-Daʿwa*, Ayman Fuʿad Sayyid's *The Fatimids and their Successors in Yaman*, an edited edition of volume seven of

eleventh century, such as works by Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1201), Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233), Ibn al-ʿIdhari (d. after 1312), and Ibn Kathir (d. 1373). Unsurprisingly, these later urban Sunni sources characterized these movements—the Ismaʿili and Zaydi Shiʿi missions—and the rulers they produced—the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties—as heterodox. While recent historians have rejected outright heresiographical Sunni depictions of Shiʿism and these Shiʿi dynasties, the underlying assumption of a hostile sectarian binary between Sunni and Shiʿi identity in the tenth century persists.

Despite the recent influx of new Shiʿi sources to balance urban Sunni accounts,[73] several problems in the way that non-Sunni movements are integrated into the broader narratives of medieval Islam endure. First, Shiʿi texts continue to be read as 'heterodox' and 'propagandistic' while Sunni sources are viewed as normative. For example, while a historian of the Fatimid era deemed the tenth-century Sunni chronicler al-Tabari (d. 923) to be "the great historian of Islam,"[74] he called the prominent Fatimid author Qadi al-Nuʿman (d. 974) "the great

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Idris ʿImad al-Din's *Ayyun al-Akhbar*, James W. Morris' *The Master and Disciple*, a translation of Jaʿfar b. Mansur al-Yaman's *Kitab al-ʿAlim wa al-Ghulam*, Paul E. Walker's *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs*, a translation of several *khutba*s of the Fatimid Caliphs, and Paul E. Walker's *Master of the Age*, a translation of al-Kirmani's *al-Masabih fi ithbat al-imama*. Most recently, Shainool Jiwa published *Towards a Shiʿi Mediterranean Empire: Fatimid Egypt and the Founding of Cairo* (2010), which is a translations of the portions of the Mamluk historian al-Maqrizi's *Ittiʿaz al-Hunafa'* devoted to the reign of the Imam-Caliph al-Muʿizz. These texts generally contain a critical edition of the original source in Arabic as well as a translation and supplementary contextualizing material.
[73] Daftary explores the progress made in the study of Ismaʿili history in detail. See Daftary, *Ismaʿilis*, 1-33.
[74] Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 49.

propagandist"[75] and his master narrative of the rise of the Fatimids "the grand conspiracy theory of Fatimid origins."[76] I would suggest that neither al-Tabari nor al-Nuʿman's narratives can be taken at face value.   Rather, both offer important and distinct perspectives on the origins and development of Islamic society.

Second, modern historians often use later Sunni chronicles—dating to the eleventh through fourteenth centuries—to supplement studies of the tenth century without sufficient acknowledgement of how these sources recast the tenth century from a later context with more developed sectarian divisions. The direct result of the over-reliance on urban, Sunni textual sources written by religious scholars and the use of later Sunni chronicles and biographical dictionaries to supplement the tenth-century sources has been the production of an image of the tenth century that casts the rise of the Fatimids and Buyids in a misleadingly sectarian narrative.

In this study, I argue that tenth-century Muslim identity was more complicated than heterodox versus orthodox or Sunni versus Shiʿi. Rather, the success of these tenth-century non-Sunni movements that led to the entrenchment of the Sunni position, the institutionalization of Sunni Islam as 'orthodox,'[77] and the recasting of the tenth century as a sectarian narrative. Thus, in the selection of sources for this dissertation, I isolated sources from the tenth century in order to

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Bulliet, *View,* 127.

show a distinctly tenth-century perspective on the Fatimids and Buyids as Shiʿi

polities. It would be impossible to survey *all* of the tenth-century sources; I

prioritized sources produced by individuals living under Fatimid and Buyid rule. I

considered both sources sponsored by the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties as well as

sources written by independent individuals or members of groups opposed to

Fatimid and Buyid rule. Note, however, that later chronicles from after the

eleventh century are routinely used to supplement the tenth-century sources. I

too have found it impossible to avoid the later sources completely. Thus, I

compared and contrasted how later sources portrayed the Fatimids and Buyids

with the tenth-century depictions. This revealed the changing views of these Shiʿi

dynasties over time. In addition to later historical chronicles, the genres of text

represented in this dissertation include tenth-century historical chronicles,

biographical dictionaries, poetry, and Sunni religious manuals. Further, I also used

non-textual sources when possible, such as architectural remains (and

descriptions of architectural remains) in North Africa and Baghdad, public

inscriptions in North Africa and Iran, as well as numismatic evidence from the

Fatimid and Buyid administrations.

    In this dissertation, I do not attempt to cover the full breadth of Fatimid and

Buyid history. Chronologically, I focused on a period of approximately two

centuries, spanning the eighth century through the late tenth century. For both

dynasties, I begin with their origins in eighth- and early ninth-century missionary

movements and then turn their earliest histories as polities. For the Fatimid

caliphate, I focus on the period of the first four Fatimid caliphs, from 909 to 975,

from the advent of the Fatimid caliphate in North Africa through to the

establishment of their final capital city in Cairo in 969. For the Buyid amirate, I

examine the history of the dynasty from its rise to power in the 930s, to the

conquest of the Abbasid capital of Baghdad in 945, through to the death of the

third Buyid amir, ʿAdud al-Dawla (d. 983).

In the past, the Fatimids and Buyids have been studied in isolation, both

from each other and from the overall development of Islamic society. For example,

there are almost no published studies that examine the relationship between the

Fatimids and the Buyids.[78]   Thus, by analyzing the Fatimids and Buyids together

within their broader tenth-century context, I reveal what the rise of these two Shiʿi

dynasties from the peripheries of the Islamic world reveals about the development

of medieval Islamic society and the origins of concepts of Islamic sectarianism, as

well as suggesting a significant division between the concerns of most medieval

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[78] The exceptions tend to focus on diplomacy between the two dynasties. For example, their
diplomatic relationship was explored in an unpublished dissertation by Shainool Jiwa, but the focus
of Jiwa's study was on the religious policies of the Fatimid caliph al-ʿAziz (r. 975-996) and
diplomacy with the Buyids, the Byzantines, and the Umayyads of Spain. Jiwa, "A Study of the Reign
of the Fifth Fatimid Imam/Caliph Al-'Aziz Billah" (PhD Dissertation: University of Edinburgh, 1989),
parts of which are later published in "Fatimid-Buyid diplomacy during the reign of al-ʿAziz Billah
(365/975-386/996)," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 3 (1992): 57-71. In addition, Paul Walker discussed
some of the diplomatic competition between the two dynasties in "Purloined Symbols of the Past:
The Theft of Souvenirs and Sacred Relics in the Rivalry between the Abbasids and the Fatimids," in
Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung (London: I.B. Tauris,
2003), 364-387*.*

Muslims and the image of medieval Islam depicted in textual sources written by urban Sunni religious scholars.

Because these two dynasties have never before been studied together, scholars have ignored the broader effects of this 'Shiʿi century' on the creation of Islamic society. I argue that the main reason for this lacuna in scholarship is due to the fact that, even in the tenth-century sources, neither dynasty explicitly mentioned the other. This silence in the tenth-century sources is deafening: why did two powerful Shiʿi states that rose to power within a generation of each other avoid mentioning the other in their accounts of their own histories? The Fatimids and Buyids did know about each other: they interacted both officially and unofficially. The Fatimids sent missionaries into Buyid territory and both dynasties claim to have had spies and informants in the territories controlled by the other. They were in direct competition in Syria and for control over the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and both had relationships with the Byzantine Empire. The Fatimids and Buyids even exchanged official envoys, although we only know about them from later sources. Some of these events are alluded to in Fatimid and Buyid sources, but only in the most cursory manner.

Although the fact that Fatimid and Buyid sources do not mention their rivals could be an accident of what sources survive from the tenth century, I argue that the silence constitutes a deliberate choice by these two dynasties. None of the surviving sources that were sponsored by the Fatimids and the Buyids mentioned

the other, even in sources that were intended to be comprehensive histories of their own reigns. They did, however, discuss their competition with other, smaller, less significant dynasties. Their rivals and allies were usually mentioned by name, in great detail. In comparison, their portrayal of their interactions with each other was curiously terse. The words 'Fatimid' and 'Buyid' did not occur (and these are the medieval names that the dynasties used for themselves) and neither one mentioned the names of the leaders or officials of its rival. Further, I argue that the sources did not ignore each other merely due to the distance between Baghdad and Cairo: before the Fatimids conquered Egypt in 969, Buyid sources routinely mentioned the names of the previous Sunni ruler of Egypt and his officials. Yet, when forced to refer to the Fatimids, Buyid sources referred to the Fatimid ruler as simply *Sahib al-Maghrib*, the 'Lord of North Africa.' The Fatimids never mentioned the Buyid rulers during the tenth century.

The mutual silence between these two dynasties reveals the power struggle between the Fatimids and the Buyids. They were engaged in a complex game, only obliquely acknowledging the existence of the other. I argue that naming the other Shiʿi state was to grant it power and legitimacy. These two states were in direct competition for power and for the authority to define concepts of Shiʿism. Although other petty states fought for supremacy in the tenth century, the Fatimids and the Buyids both made broader claims to universal Muslim leadership. In this situation, even naming the other dynasty granted it too much power.

Modern analyses of the Fatimids and Buyids have replicated this silence in the medieval sources. If my assertion that the silence of the medieval sources represents a resounding and eloquent disavowal of the other's existence and power, then the implicit discourse of disavowal must be made more explicit. Once explicit, it must be factored into our scholarly analysis of early Islamic development. What would it mean to bring the Fatimids and Buyids into explicit dialogue? Considering that the primary sources are silent on the matter, how can the Fatimids and Buyids be brought into dialogue? This dissertation proposes a close reading of selected sources to discover for the first time how the Fatimids and Buyids together (in parallel, not as partners) engaged in state-building activities that contributed to the dialectical creation of orthodox Islam. Studying the Fatimids and Buyids in isolation misses the complex construction of religious and political authority occurring across the medieval Islamic world. The Fatimids and Buyids were not merely failed Shiʿi states.[79] This bias comes directly from antagonistic medieval Sunni histories written after the fall of these two states. Rather, an examination of the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties together reveals the complex process of how Islamic society absorbed new converts and forged multiple types of Islamic identity.

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[79] Brett makes a similar point, that the Fatimids tend to be viewed as foredoomed to failure. Brett, 10.

Organization

In this study, I posit a counternarrative of medieval Islamic history: I address the Fatimids as Buyids as negledted "edges"[80] not explored by scholars focusing on the urban, Sunni textual tradition of the medieval Islamic past. Bulliet argued that the view from the center, from the Sunni caliphal capitals, produced a false homogeneity of Islam. He called for the exploration of 'edges,' which he defined as any place where a Muslim converted or recommitted to Islam, in order to reveal the development of Islamic society over time. While Bulliet's concept of the edge significantly changed our view of the development of authority in the medieval Islamic world, his work remains very much an urban, Sunni-centric phenomena. Thus, in this dissertation, I explore a new edge: communities of non-urban Muslims who were drawn into Islam via non-Sunni movements emphasizing ʿAlid charisma and authority and which, in turn, expanded from their peripheries to conquer the Islamic world in the tenth century.

The analysis of the Fatimid and Buyid rise to power, local reactions to their rule, and their own hybrid articulations of legitimacy constitute the four core chapters of this work. These four facets of Fatimid and Buyid history reveal the extent to which these two Shiʿi dynasties proved pragmatic and flexible in their articulations of power and, despite the 'heterodoxy' of their states, local

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[80] This term and concept is borrowed from Richard Bulliet's book, *Islam: The View from the Edge.*

reactions—from Sunnis, Shiʿis, and others—cannot be categorized along Sunni-Shiʿi lines.

Chapter Two is a theoretical examination of the role that non-Sunni movements played in the conversion and Islamization of non-urban territories and how this, in turn, led to the Fatimid and Buyid rise to power. Both dynasties arose out of heterodox missionary movements in the non-urban spaces of the Middle East in the eighth and ninth centuries. In this chapter, I argue that the Sunni-centric narrative of Islamic history has ignored the experiences of non-urban Muslims drawn to Islam by non-Sunni missionaries and rendered their experiences as simply 'heterodox.' Moreover, this chapter challenges the notion that Sunni orthodoxy could be considered dominant by the eighth century, as many modern studies and medieval Sunni sources contend, if two massive Shiʿi states were able to rise to power on opposite sides of the Middle East in the tenth century.

In chapter three, I analyze how early Fatimid claims to authority changed as they began to define themselves in broad Muslim terms and not just as a Shiʿi dynasty. The earliest Fatimid rhetoric was hostile and aggressive toward non-Ismaʿilis, the Sunni majority. Fatimid rhetorical antagonism resulted in a series of rebellions that nearly conquered the dynasty during the reigns of the first two Fatimid caliphs, al-Mahdi and al-Qaʿim. These rebellions led the third Fatimid caliph, al-Mansur, to change Fatimid policies. Despite being a Shiʿi caliph, al-

Mansur began to mimic Sunni Abbasid claims to authority. Thus, rather than making narrow sectarian claims based on their Ismaʿili Shiʿism, the Fatimids blended Sunni and Shiʿi modes of authority and legitimacy to appeal to a heterogeneous local population.

Chapter Four examines Buyid claims to authority. Specifically, focusing on the third Buyid Amir in Baghdad, ʿAdud al-Dawla (d. 983), I argue that modern scholars have been too quick to ignore the innovative ways that the Buyids combined modes of authority—Sunni, Shiʿi, Zoroastrian, Arab, and Persian—in ways that do not fit neatly into the conceptual categories that are typically used to define religious and ethnic identity in this era. This study of Buyid articulations of authority reveal an Islamic world in the process of absorbing converts from a variety of pre-Islamic religious and ethnic backgrounds.

In chapter five, I compare Sunni reactions to the Fatimids and Buyids in the tenth century with later Sunni chronicles from after the eleventh century. Examining contemporary Sunni reactions as a whole reveals the diversity of responses to the foundation of these Shiʿi polities. Sunnis did not always oppose the Shiʿi Fatimids and Buyids. Shiʿis did not always support them. By comparing tenth-century Sunni sources with Sunni chronicles from after the eleventh century, I reveal how later Sunni authors have misled their readers, leading them to believe that sectarian conflicts were the defining problem of the tenth century. Rather, I

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show that conflicts within the Sunni community, on one hand, and within the Shiʿi community, on the other, were of foundational significance in the tenth century.

The final chapter concludes—in contrast to current scholarly opinion—that the tenth century was less sectarian than the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In this summation, an examination of the totality of the rise to power of the Fatimids and Buyids—from ninth-century missionary movements in the non-urban territories of the Middle East to their claims to universal rule of the Islamic world—will support the argument that the creation of a clear sectarian divide arose out of the victory of Sunni Islam in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Once the differences between Sunni and Shiʿi identity had become reified as a hardened binary division, the idea that this division had been primordial in Islam was projected back onto early Islamic history and the tenth-century rule of the Fatimids and Buyids.

Chapter Two: The Origins of Fatimid and Buyid Support: Heterodox Movements in North Africa, Yemen, and the Daylam and their Role in the Conversion and Islamization of the Middle East

The tenth-century Fatimid and Buyid dynasties both arose out of underground *daʿwa* organizations of the eighth and ninth centuries, oppositional missionary movements that were active on the peripheries of a Middle East that was not yet predominately Muslim. The Fatimids arose from the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* in southern Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and North Africa; the Buyids were converted to Islam by the Zaydi *daʿwa*[1] in Iran.[2] Both dynasties arose from the peripheries of the Islamic world, where recent converts sought to learn about their new religion and had little or no access to elite textual concepts of Islam and 'orthodoxy' as defined by urban religious scholars. This period is often viewed through the lens of a brief 'Shiʿi' victory over 'Sunni' orthodoxy that was violently opposed and quickly overturned. However, examining the origins and successes of the two dynasties that grew out of these early processes of conversion suggests the need to re-evaluate terms like heterodox and orthodox as well as Sunni and Shiʿi as fixed polar opposites during this period.

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[1] The Buyids were likely converted to Islam by the Zaydi *da'wa* in the Caspian but later 'converted' to *Ithnaʿashari* Shiʿism once they had conquered Baghdad.

[2] The Zaydi *da'wa* was also active in Yemen during this period, but – owing to the nature of the Zaydi movement where any descendant of ʿAli and Fatima with religious knowledge could declare himself to be the Imam, this part of the movement had a different leader and was fairly separate from the Zaydi *da'wa* of the Caspian Sea.

The standard view of medieval Islamic history presumes that Sunni Islam

was the established orthodoxy of the Islamic world by as early as the eighth

century.[3] While the precise dating of the emergence of Sunni Islam as Islamic

orthodoxy remains debated, the different dates are nearly always based on the

works of medieval urban Sunni religious scholars and do not consider the

institutional mechanisms required to articulate and spread concepts of religious

orthodoxy.[4] The emphasis on orthodoxy does not necessarily reflect the

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[3] As discussed in chapter one, there are debates in the field over dating the emergence and
consolidation of "Sunni orthodoxy." Most scholars date the emergence of Sunni orthodoxy to the
formation of the four major Sunni schools of Islamic law (Maliki, Hanafi, Hanbali, and Shafiʿi).
Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, in *God's Caliph*, argue that Sunni orthodoxy could be considered
dominant when the ninth-century ʿulama' began to challenge caliphal authority (as evidenced by
the *Mihna*, ca. 833-848).   Ignaz Goldziher, in his famous work, *Muslim Studies* (State University of
New York Press, 1967) dated the emergence of the Sunni *madhhabs* (and Sunni orthodoxy) to the
early ninth century. Scott C. Lucas, in *Constructive Critics, Ḥadith Literature, and the Articulation of
Sunni Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿin, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004)
agrees with this conclusion. He identified the articulation of Sunni orthodoxy with the transmitters
of *hadith*, and therefore dates the establishment of Sunni orthodoxy to the formation of the
canonical *hadith* collections of the ninth century. Christopher Melchert's more recent work on the
Sunni *madhhabs*, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E* (Leiden: Brill,
1997) dates the establishment of Sunni Islam as 'orthodoxy' to the late ninth century.
Another common approach links the domination of Sunni Islam with the Abbasid caliphate. For
example, M.A. Shaban, in *The Abbasid Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), argues that
the rise of the Abbasids assimilated all Muslims into a universal (Sunni) Muslim community and
Muhammad Qasim Zaman, in *Religion and Politics Under the Early Abbasids: The Emergence of the
Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), argued that the Abbasid caliph, working with a 'proto-Sunni
elite, established Sunni orthodoxy in the early ninth century.
[4] Overwhelmingly, the study of Islamic 'orthodoxy' has been dominated by scholars taking legalistic
or theological approaches that are overly-dependent upon the writings and concerns of urban
Sunni religious scholars.   To take a few well-known examples: Joseph Schacht dated the emergence
of Sunni orthodoxy to the early ninth century because this is when the major schools of Sunni
Islamic jurisprudence formed. Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1967), 60-67. Christopher Melchert, on the other hand, in *Formation of the Sunni
Schools of Law,* xxi-xxv, argued that the existence of these schools of law did not constitute
'orthodoxy' without a system of education for transmitting this doctrine. Fazlur Rahman's dating
of the emergence of Sunni orthodoxy (which he bases on Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari and al-Maturdi's
responses to Mu'tazilism and Shi'sm) is much later – in the tenth century – but his definitions of
orthodoxy remain insular and linked only with the theological debates about predestination and

experiences of Muslims who were not educated in the religious sciences and who did not live in the urban centers of the Islamic world. Instead, this view manufactures an Islamic world where all Muslims were as concerned as urban religious scholars with questions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy.   Although definitive proof about the processes of conversion and Islamization in the eighth and ninth centuries remains elusive, especially outside of urban centers, most medieval Muslims were not necessarily concerned with questions of 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy'. Some medieval Muslims moved to the developing Islamic cities to learn about their new religion,[5] but for communities of Muslims who remained on the peripheries, they sought teachers who could relate stories about the family of the Prophet, teach the basics of prayer, and interpret of the Qur'an.

Many non-Sunni movements were active in the eighth and ninth centuries, but this chapter focuses on the Isma'ili and Zaydi *da'wa*s in North Africa, Yemen, and the Caspian provinces of Iran (Daylam, Gilan, and Tabaristan)[6] because these were the military and religio-political movements that culminated in widespread political success with the victories of the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties. The sources

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free will. He asserts that Sunni Islam "can claim to represent 'original' Islam in an important sense." Fazlur Rahman, "Early Sects and Formation of Sunni Orthodoxy," *Revival and Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 30-68. While these ideas are certainly significant, it overwhelmingly represents the perspective of urban religious scholars.

[5] Nehemia Levtzion, "Comparative Study," in *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 15 and Richard Bulliet, *Islam*: *The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 69-79.

[6] The Isma'ilis were also active in southern Iraq, the Gulf, parts of Syria, and in Iran while the Zaydis were also active in Yemen and the Gulf. This chapter, however, focuses on these three geographic areas because these were the portions of these movements that led to the rise of the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties.

of the Ismaʿili and Zaydi *daʿwa*s reveal stories of medieval Muslims searching for religious knowledge from non-orthodox sources, such as seeking teachers while visiting religious shrines or revering fugitive Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet) who fled Abbasid persecution. For many Muslims, the Abbasid caliph and the emerging class of urban Sunni religious scholars did not have a monopoly on defining Islam.

The questions of how and when the Middle East became predominately Muslim and how those new Muslims learned about their faith remain without clear, definitive answers. Conversions to Islam happened in different ways and people converted to Islam for a myriad of reasons. Some conversions, especially in tribal areas, such as in Arabia and North Africa, occurred *en masse*, as a product of the Islamic conquests in the seventh century.[7] For example, during the conquest of North Africa by the seventh-century Muslim military leader ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs (ca. 573-664), the Berber tribes were considered to have accepted Islam when they submitted politically to Muslim forces. The situation was similar in Yemen; the tribes were considered to have accepted Islam when their leaders allied with the

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[7] Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: a History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*, 2nd ed. (New York: AMS Press, 1974) and Nehemia Levtzion, "Towards a Comparative study of Islamization" in *Conversion to Islam*, 6-7 and M.A. Shaban, "Conversion to Early Islam," in *Conversion to Islam*, 28-29. Bulliet has pointed out that the word '*aslama*' is not clear: it can be translated to mean either "surrender" or "convert" and argues that "the notion of religious conversion as a moral or spiritual act that could be taken independently of other political or social action may not have been widespread in seventh-century Arabia." In other words, surrender to Islamic forces constituted surrender to Islam. See, Bulliet, "Conversion Stories in early Islam," in M. Gervers & Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, eds, *Conversion and Continuity: indigenous Christian communities in Islamic lands, eighth to eighteenth centuries* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 124.

Muslim community.[8] Other conversions, such as in Iraq and parts of Iran, have

been linked with urbanization.[9] For example, in Iraq, the success of the Muslim

garrison cities of Kufa and Basra promoted conversion to Islam as non-Muslims

moved to the cities for economic reasons; the increased exposure to Muslim

populations at these sites often led to conversion.[10] Furthermore, experiences of

local populations with conversion to Islam were far from uniform.[11]

Specific data on the rate at which these conversions took place does not

survive, but Richard Bulliet provides the best theoretical framework yet for dating

the conversion of the Middle East to Islam.[12] Bulliet theorizes that Iran was

predominately Muslim by the tenth century and probably converted earlier than

other regions of the Middle East. His hypothesis, however, works best for Iran,

since it was largely based on a statistical analysis of Iranian biographical

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[8] G. Rex Smith, "The political history of the Islamic Yemen down to the first Turkish invasion (622-1538)," in *Yemen: 300 Years of Art and Civilization in Arabia Felix*, W. Daum, ed. (Innsbruk-Frankfurt-am-Main: Pinguin Verlag-Umschau Verlag: 1988), 129.
[9] Levtzion, "Comparative Study," in *Conversion to Islam*, 15 and Bulliet, *View*, 69-79.
[10] M.A. Shaban, ""Conversion to Early Islam," in *Conversion to Islam*, 28-9. Jamsheed K. Choksy also discusses this issue in *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim elites in medieval Iranian society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) as does Bulliet in *View*, 75-79.
[11] On the conversion experience in Iran, see Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, and Jessica A. Coope, *The Martyrs of Cordoba: Community and Family Conflict in an Age of Mass Conversion* (University of Nebraska Press, 1995). On conversion and Islamization in East Africa, Randall L. Pauwels has argued that "orthodoxy…has been associated with a supposedly purer immigrant Islam which later became adulterated by Africanisms" and criticizes scholars who have represented "any Islam which has accommodated local usages, practices, and perceptions…as being unorthodox." Pauwels, "The Medieval Foundations of East African Islam," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 11:2 (1978), 201-3.
[12] Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). He discusses his methodology in detail in chapter 6, "The Curve of Muslim Names," 64-79.

dictionaries.[13] For the rest of the Middle East, dates regarding conversion to Islam

remain largely speculative with a general agreement that the population of the

Middle East was majority Muslim by the end of the tenth century.[14]

Conversion, of course, cannot be completely equated with Islamization; the

question of the Islamization of the Middle East remains as problematic as the

conversion question. Broadly, 'Islamization' has been defined as the process by

which Muslim converts learned about Islamic practice and about what it meant to

be a Muslim.[15] Early conversions to Islam tended to be non-ecstatic; people

converted for social reasons, not necessarily for reasons of faith.[16] There was a

long process between the nominal acceptance of Islam and the Islamization of the

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[13] John Voll, in "Review: Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Winter 1981), 522-523 criticized whether Bullet's model could be extrapolated outside of Iran considering the fact that, in Syria and Egypt, there were still sizeable elements of the population that remained non-Muslim throughout the medieval period. Ira Lapidus had a similar critique in "Review: Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period," *American Historical Review* (Feb 1981), 187-188. In other territories, such as the coast of East Africa, Pauwels has argued that conversion and Islamization were not complete until much later – as late as the sixteenth century – and that, before the late thirteenth century, Islam only existed in scattered towns on the coast. Pauwels, 206-209.

[14] While speculative, Bulliet's theory has been largely accepted. For Iran, see Frye, "The Iranicization of Islam," in R.N. Frye, *Islamic Iran and Central Asia, 7th-12th centuries* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), 2-3. For Spain, see Coope, "Religious and Cultural Conversion," *Journal of World History* 4: 1 (April 1993), 50 and Thomas Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 22-23.

[15] Nehemia Levtzion discusses the process of Islamization in detail in her essay, "Toward a Comparative Study of Islamization," in *Conversion to Islam*, 1-23.

[16] Bulliet, "Conversion as a Social Process," in *Conversion*, 33-42. Further, answers to the question of what it meant to be a Muslim were not clear-cut in this era. While there were formal rituals of conversion, Coope has argued that – for Islamic Spain – Christian and Muslim sources do not focus on these moments of conversion. Rather, "authors…were more interested in the whole constellation of attitudes and practices that Christian and formerly Christian men had to adopt in order to be successful at the Islamic court. It is in connection with these cultural adaptations that questions arose as to the precise meaning of Muslim or Christian identity." Coope, "Religious and Cultural Conversion," 56.

Middle East,[17] which has not yet been analyzed. For example, in areas such as

North Africa and Yemen, where tribes converted *en masse*, individual Muslims may

have had little to no knowledge about Islam when they technically accepted Islam.

Further, there was no systematic mechanism directed by the caliphal

administration for bringing knowledge about Islam to these groups until at least

the eleventh century.[18] In other areas, such as the Iranian territory south of the

Caspian Sea, the hold of the caliph's authority was much more tenuous and it took

much longer for the Islam to penetrate into these areas. Many new converts to

Islam moved into emerging Islamic cities and learned about Islam from other

Muslims.[19]

Before the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the establishment of a system

of Sunni *madrasa*s that spanned the territory controlled by the Abbasid caliphate

and taught the basics of Sunni education, no one institution designed to teach

Muslims about Islam had a monopoly on Islamic education.[20] Until the emergence

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[17] HAR Gibb differentiates between three kinds of conversion during the first centuries of Islam: total conversion, formal adhesion, and enforced adherence. See H.A.R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1962), 5 as well as M.A. Shaban's discussion of Gibb's analysis in "Conversion to Early Islam" in *Conversion to Islam*, 25.

[18] According to D.T. Gochenour, Yemeni society was only superficially Muslim as late as the ninth century. Yemen only had centers of Islamic learning in the major towns: Sana'a, Janad, Aden, and Zabid. (D.T. Gochenour, "The Penetration of Zaydi Islam into Early Medieval Yemen," PhD Dissertation: Harvard University, 1984), 35. It was in the eleventh century when, spearheaded by Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092), the Seljuk vizier, a system of state-sponsored *madrasas* was created that aimed to educate and train bureaucrats.

[19] Bulliet, *View*, 67-79.

[20] George Makdisi's *The Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981) is the foundational work on the history of the *madrasa* in Islamic society. Makdisi argues that the *madrasa* developed out of a combination of mosques, where they were *halqa*s (teaching circles) devoted to instruction, and *khan*s, where students typically lived and would sometimes have study

of the *madrasa*, there were no systematic efforts by the Umayyad (661-750) or

Abbasid (750-1258) dynasties to propagate Islam outside of the military and

urban areas[21] and Islamic education was informal and not centrally directed. In

cities, mosques were the centers of learning. A distinct class of religious scholars

began to emerge in the eighth century,[22] but it was the *qussas*, popular preachers

or storytellers, that have been credited with teaching urban masses about Islam by

publically interpreting the Qur'an, telling stories about the Prophet, his

companions, and the ancient prophets, and preaching about the evils of sin.[23] Not

until the eleventh century, after the fall of the Buyids, did the Abbasids, under the

Seljuk amirs, begin to institutionalize Islamic education as a means of training

Sunni Muslim bureaucrats and standardizing Sunni concepts of orthodoxy. Nizam

al-Mulk (1018-1092), the famed *vizier* of the Seljuk amirs, founded a system of

state-sponsored *madrasa*s known as the *Nizamiyya* that spanned the territory of

the Abbasid caliphate and taught the basics of Sunni education.

circles. In general, the rise of the *madrasa* is not identified prior to the eleventh century, but Makdisi argues that it likely originated earlier in more informal institutions. Said Amir Arjomand, in a survey of the history of the *madrasa* identifies the late tenth century as the period when these *halqa*s developed into slightly more formal 'mosque-inn-college' complexes that, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries became the madrasa colleges of law that combined the functions of the mosque, inns or khans, and institutions of learning. Arjomand, "The Law, Agency, and Policy in medieval Islamic Society: Development of Institutions of Learning from the 10th to the 15th century," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41:2 (April 1999), 263.

[21] Levtzion, "Comparative Study," in *Conversion to Islam*, 8 and 17.

[22] Christopher Melchert, "The Piety of Hadith Folk," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34:3 (Aug 2002), 434.

[23] Khalil 'Athamina, "Al-Qasas: Its Emergence, Religious Origin, and Its Socio-Political Impact on Early Muslim Society," *Studia Islamica* 76 (1992), 54. Jonathan Berkey also has a detailed discussion of the origins of *qussas* and their role in early Islamic society in *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2011), 22-32.

The process whereby Muslims in non-urban areas learned about Islam after conversion remains largely unexplored and difficult to document definitively. The information about Islamization in urban areas suggests that, before the eleventh century, it was popular, individualistic, and not sponsored by the caliph. For non-urban areas, however, almost nothing is known about Islamization in the ninth and tenth centuries. Many of the missionary movements in non-urban areas tended to be, in part, political opposition movements; opposed to the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, they fled the Islamic cities to the non-urban periphery in order to avoid state control and organize resistance.

The main sources that address the process of Islamization are accounts of small religious movements in the non-urban hinterlands of the Middle East, areas such as the Maghrib, Yemen, and Iran. These territories were not only the areas hardest for the caliph to control, but they were also the regions where the penetration of Islam was the weakest. An important consequence of the penetration of these non-Sunni movements into remote, non-urban areas was the conversion of new groups to Islam and the Islamization of remote Muslim communities.[24]

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[24] Pauwels' study of East African Islam seems to confirm this hypothesis. Kharijis and different groups of Shiʿis were quite active in East Africa. This was, in part, to avoid persecution by the Abbasid state. But there was also extensive trade between East Africa and Oman between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Further, there is a tradition that Mogadishu was founded in the tenth century by "the seven brethren of al-Hasa." Al-Hasa, of course, was an oasis in eastern Arabia that was controlled by the Qarmatiyya leader Abu Tahir al-Jannabi from 899 until 1077 and declared independent from the Abbasid caliphate. Pauwels, 209-210.

Examining the activities of these heterodox movements that led to the rise of the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties on the peripheries of the medieval Middle East reveals the extent to which Sunni Islam cannot yet be considered dominant in the hinterlands in this era.[25] This false image of uniformity obscures the real and complex process by which Islamic society developed while simultaneously silencing the experiences of Muslims who lay outside this Sunni-centric narrative, rendering their experiences with Islam 'heterodox' or 'heretical'. By beginning with these heterodox movements on the fringes of the Abbasid empire, this chapter decenters the normative narrative of Islamic history and challenges the idea that there was a cohesive idea of Islamic orthodoxy at this early date.

The Ismaʿili Missionary Movement in North Africa and Yemen

Both North Africa and Yemen were considered to have technically converted to Islam during the era of the seventh-century Islamic conquests.[26] However, as the success of the ninth and tenth century Ismaʿili missionary

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[25] Bulliet, *View*, 8.

[26] For details on the conversion of Yemen during the lifetime of the Prophet, see G. Rex Smith, *Studies in the Medieval History of the Yemen and South Arabia* (Variorum Reprints, 1997), 129. According to Farhad Daftary, the Ismaʿili *da'wa* was active in Yemen as early as 881. Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis: Their History and Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118. As for the *Maghrib,* Arnold argues that Islam was first introduced to North Africa by the army of ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs in approximately 640. Arnold, 102. These conversions, however, were often considered to be "superficial" (possibly due to the fact that non-Arab practice of Islam was often seen as 'heterodox' or 'less pure' in general). There is a tradition associated with Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) that the Berbers apostatized twelve times before they finally accepted Islam (Levitzion, *Conversion to Islam*, 6).   Arnold noted that the Umayyad caliph ʿUmar II (d. 720) sent a contingent of Sunni jurists to North Africa in order to instruct the Berber armies there in the proper practice of Islam. Arnold, 314. There is a similar tradition about the superficiality of the conversion of the Yemeni tribes to Islam. Gochenour, 35-6.

movements in these regions demonstrates, much of this conversion was likely

nominal and these non-urban converts were not necessarily educated about the

details of 'orthodox' Islamic doctrine and practice. Further, the success of Ismaʿili

missionaries in these territories led to the eventual political domination of these

territories by the Fatimid caliphate.[27] Although these territories had been

controlled by the Umayyads and, later, the Abbasids, concepts of Sunni orthodoxy

do not appear to have penetrated these regions beyond the major cities such as

Qayrawan in North Africa or Sanaʿa and Aden in Yemen and it is likely that these

regions were not fully converted and Islamicized. The success of the Ismaʿili

daʿwa in these two regions, culminating in the rise of the Fatimid caliphate,

challenges the idea of Sunni dominance at this early phase in Islamic history.

In the eighth and ninth centuries, both North Africa and Yemen were on the

peripheries of the Islamic sphere and, as such, made ideal sites for anti-

government activity. Neither the Umayyads nor the Abbasids exerted effective

direct control over these territories. Although North Africa was conquered during

the early Islamic conquests, this was a temporary success. Much of the territory

was completely lost to caliphal control during a series of major Berber revolts

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[27] While the Fatimids declared their caliphate in the Maghrib in 909, it took longer for them to take
control of Yemen. However, their movements there were successful enough that, when the first
Fatimid caliph, al-Mahdi (d. 934) fled Syria in 899 and went to the Maghrib to found the Fatimid
caliphate, many Ismaʿili missionaries initially expected him to go to Yemen. For a detailed
discussion of this, see Shainool Jiwa's article, "The initial destination of the Fatimid Caliphate: the
Yemen or the Maghrib?," *Bulletin for the British Society of Middle Eastern Studies* 13: 1 (1986), 15-
26.

(740-743), after which most of western North Africa was controlled by several small Berber statelets ruled by tribal chieftains and Khariji imams.[28] Kharijism was a heterodox movement opposed to both Sunni and Shiʿi interpretations of Islam; Kharijism made inroads into North Africa as early as 719, when a Khariji missionary was sent to Qayrawan and converted several major Berber tribes by 740.[29] This Khariji activity led to the foundation of several smaller Khariji states, such as the Midrarids[30] and the Rustamids,[31] in addition to a longstanding non-Ismaʿili Shiʿi state, the Idrisids.[32]

In Yemen, before the foundation of the Yuʿfirid dynasty (847-997),[33] the first local dynasty to emerge during the Islamic era, information on Yemen's incorporation into the larger Abbasid caliphate is minimal: contemporary literary

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[28] Even in the ninth-century, there were significant conflicts between Berber populations and Arab elites. In Spain, the Berbers were more recent converts to Islam and did not necessarily speak Arabic. Resenting the privilege of the Arabs, their rebellions in Cordoba plagued the Umayyad government there until the mid-9th century. Coope, "Religious and Cultural Conversion," 52.

[29] The Ibadis of Basra sent Salma ibn Saʿid to Qayrawan. They claim to have converted major Berber tribes of Huwwara around Tripolia, Nafuris in Jabal Nafursa, and the Zenata in Tripolitania.

[30] The Midrarids were an outgrowth of non-Ibadi Kharijis, the Sufris, that arose out of the breakup of the Khariji community in Basra in 683-4. The first Sufri mission to North Africa is dated to the early eighth century and a *daʿi* named "Ikrima." While the precise date of their arrival in the *Maghrib* is unknown, they were in Sijilmasa by approximately 757-8 and Sufri teachings quickly spread among the remote Berber tribes of the western *Maghrib*.

[31] The Rustamids were a dynasty led by Ibadi Khariji imams who ruled the *Maghrib* from their capital of Tahert from 778-909.

[32] The Idrisids were a Moroccan dynasty and descendants of ʿAli who ruled from Fez from 789-985. Founded by Idris I, the dynasty had frequent civil wars after the rule of his son, Idris II. In 917, they were first forced to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Fatimids, though they retained Fez and much of its province. They were also frequent allies of the 'Umayyads of Spain.

[33] The Yuʿfirid dynasty was named for Yuʿfir b. ʿAbd al-Rahman who ruled from Yemen and maintained nominal allegiance to the Abbasids. For more information on the Yuʿfirids, see Smith, 130-131.

sources have not survived.[34] Like most of Arabia, the tribes of Yemen converted to

Islam *en masse* and joined the Muslim forces of the conquests.[35] Numismatic

evidence suggests that Yemen was fairly independent during the era of the first

caliphs (632-661), the Umayyad Caliphate, and the early period of the Abbasid

Caliphate. By the early ninth century, the Abbasids had lost control of Yemen and

began sending governors there to attempt to quell rising tribal unrest.[36] Several

indigenous Yemeni tribal dynasties rose to power in this period: the Ziyadids of

Zabid, the Dhu Manakh of the Southern Highlands, and the Yuʿfirids of Shibam.[37]

By 897, Zaydi forces had taken control of the Northern Highlands and created an

independent Zaydi imamate there that endured until 1962.[38] This was not a

territory in which the Abbasids exerted much control and Islamization was a

process that took centuries.[39]

      For the Yemen and the Maghrib, the surviving sources that discussed the

activities of the *daʿwa* are from within the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* and the early Fatimid

state:[40] ʿ*Alim wa al-Ghulam* (The Master and the Disciple) by Jaʿfar ibn Mansur al-

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[34] A. Grohmann, W.C. Brice, R.D. Burrowes, and P. Behnstedt, "al-Yaman,Yemen," *EOI2*.
[35] ʿAbd al-Muhsin Madʿaj M. al-Madʿaj, *The Yemen in early Islam 9-233/630-847, a political history* (London: Ithaca Press, 1988), 3-127.
[36] Gochenour, 36 and Smith, 131.
[37] Gochenour, 36.
[38] Wilferd Madelung, "Zaydiyya," *EOI2*. For a detailed discussion of the Zaydis in Yemen in the medieval period, see Gochenour, 35-55 and Smith, "The political history of the Islamic Yemen."
[39] A. Grohmann, W.C. Brice, R.D. Burrowes, and P. Behnstedt, "al-Yaman,Yemen," *EOI2* and Gochenour, 35-6.
[40] The Maghrib and Yemen were not the only two arenas where the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* was active in the late ninth century: the *daʿwa* maintained a presence in Khuzistan and southern Iraq and the imam lived in hiding in Salamiyya, Syria. From Salamiyya, the imam sent *daʿis* to preach in the areas that

Yaman,[41] the *Sirat Jaʿfar al-Hajib* (The Biography of Jaʿfar the Chamberlain) by

Jaʿfar al-Hajib (d. fl. tenth century)[42] and *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* (The Opening of the

Mission) by Qadi al-Nuʿman (d. 974).[43] Jaʿfar ibn Mansur al-Yaman (d. ca. 960)

was the son of Mansur al-Yaman (d. 914), who was famous for his role in

conquering Yemen for the Ismaʿili *daʿwa*. Jaʿfar al-Hajib was the chamberlain of

the first Fatimid caliph, al-Mahdi (d. 934), who made the trip from Syria to North

Africa with al-Mahdi. Al-Nuʿman was the first Fatimid chief *qadi* and, while his

history of the early *daʿwa* serves as a foundational narrative of the Fatimid state, it

relied heavily on the account of Abu ʿAbd Allah (d. 911), the Ismaʿili missionary

who conquered North Africa for the Fatimids.

The insights of these sources for Islamic history overall have often been

ignored because of the Shiʿi orientation of their authors. Their rejection presumes

that Sunni accounts of Islamic history are normative while Shiʿi accounts are

'biased'. In fact, both sets of sources contain ideological biases. Although these

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the Abbasid state either could not control or had no interest in controlling: non-urban regions of
the empire that had never been tightly controlled by a central caliphate. While many details of the
history of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* from before the foundation of the Fatimid Caliphate remain unknown,
by the late ninth century, the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* had spread from Khuzistan in southwestern Persia to
southern Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, the Jibal, Khurasan, Transoxiana, Sind, and North Africa. The
surviving sources, however, focus predominately on the activities of the *da'wa* with non-urban
Muslims in the Maghrib and Yemen.

[41] Jaʿfar ibn Mansur al-Yaman, *The Master and the Disciple: an early Islamic spiritual dialogue: Arabic
edition and English translation of Jaʿfar b. Mansur al-Yaman's Kitab al-ʿAlim wa'l-ghulam*, ed. James
W. Morris (London: IB Tauris, 2001).

[42] Jaʿfar al-Hajib, "Sirat Jaʿfar al-Hajib" in *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Egypt* 4:2
(1932).

[43] Abu Hanifa Nuʿman ibn Muhammad (Qadi al-Nuʿman), *Iftitah al-Daʿwa*, edited by Wadad Qadi
(Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafa, 1970).

sources cannot be taken at face value,[44] they are substantiated, in part, by accounts of the Shiʿi communities in these territories by other, non-Ismaʿili, chronicle sources. The type of information that can be derived from these sources, however, is broader portrayals of missionary activities in these territories. The Fatimid sources presented a clear demand from non-urban Muslim populations in North Africa and Yemen for experts to teach them about Islamic belief and practice. These stories could be self-serving for the Fatimids, but they did not specifically portray Muslims seeking out Ismaʿili or Shiʿi preachers and, therefore, appear genuine.

The Shiʿi sources reveal communities of Muslims with only basic information about Islam who openly sought teachers who could instruct them about the basics of Muslim faith and practice. North African tribal groups traveled to Mecca in order to hire teachers to bring back to their villages. For example, Abu ʿAbd Allah (d. 911), the Ismaʿili missionary who conquered North Africa for the Fatimids, reported that he traveled to North Africa after meeting a group of

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[44] For example, Fatimid sources claim that the first missionaries in North Africa were sent there by the sixth Shiʿi Imam, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq (d. 765). Jaʿfar al-Sadiq is recognized as an imam by both Ismaʿili and Twelver Shiʿis but revered for his religious knowledge by Sunnis and Shiʿis alike. Fatimid sources claim a direct link between these eighth-century missionaries and the late ninth-century movement that successfully established the Fatimid Caliphate. However, there is no substantiating evidence that Jaʿfar al-Sadiq dispatched these missionaries and, as one might imagine, the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* had clear motives to portray a direct link between their movement and the authority of the sixth imam.
Hamid Algar notes that "nearly all the early intellectual factions of Islam (with the exception perhaps of the Kharijis) wished to incorporate Jaʿfar al-Sadiq into their history in order to bolster their schools' positions." Algar, "Sunni Claims to Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq," in *Fortresses of the Intellect: Ismaili and Other Islamic Studies in Honour of Farhad Daftary*, ed. Omar ʿAli-de-Unzaga (London: IB Tauris, 2011), 77.

Kutama Berber in Mecca in 891-2.[45] The Kutama had traveled to Mecca for the *hajj*

and to seek out someone to instruct them in their faith. Once they realized that

Abu ʿAbd Allah was a teacher of Islam, the Kutama convinced him to accompany

them back to their territory. The Kutama emphasized that they valued teachers

and education, stressing that they did not want him to come to teach their boys

about Islam, but their *elders*.

Further, the early sources of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* show that shrines dedicated

to the Prophet Muhammad and his family were the best places to find these new

Muslims looking for information about their faith. While the *hajj* and ʿ*umra*, two

kinds of pilgrimage to Mecca, were activities that fell under the rubric of 'orthodox'

Islam, visiting the shrines of Muslim 'saints' was not.[46] Despite this, these

visitations (or *ziyara*s) were incredibly popular and it was often at these local

shrines that Ismaʿili missionaries sought out groups who would be open to their

teachings. For example, there are several accounts of Ismaʿili *daʿi*s who were

approached at ʿAlid shrines and 'converted' to Ismaʿili Shiʿism and, later, trained

as *daʿi*s.[47]

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[45] Al-Nuʿman, 31.
[46] Sunni religious scholars, on the whole, disapproved of Muslims visiting shrines and asking for 'intercession' on the final Day of Judgment.
[47] Three of the most famous Ismaʿili *daʿi*s of the ninth and tenth centuries, Mansur al-Yaman, Abu ʿAbd Allah, and Abu al-ʿAbbas, all describe this as the manner in which they were converted to Ismaʿili Shiʿism and made missionaries for the *daʿwa*.

Communities of Muslims far from urban centers[48] appealed to Ismaʿili

missionaries because they were far from state control but, in part due to their

distance from cities, they traveled to Mecca and to shrines dedicated to the *Ahl al-*

Bayt, the family of the Prophet Muhammad, in order to seek out expertise on Islam.

There, these non-urban converts to Islam found missionaries who were considered

'heterodox' from the perspective of the emerging Sunni textual tradition, but who

were valued by these new converts for their expertise on Islam. The non-Sunni

missionaries, regardless of their lack of 'orthodox' credentials, possessed sought-

after knowledge of *hadith* and theology. They could instruct the people about

Islamic faith and practice; there seemed to be little consideration as to whether or

not their doctrines would have been regarded as 'heterodox' by urban scholars.

The evidence above suggests that these non-urban communities were

receptive to different kinds of messages about Islam, but conversion would also

have been mixed with other social and economic issues. Far from having

information about 'orthodox' Sunni practice, many of these non-urban areas may

not have even had a local mosque for communal prayer and may have lacked

access to some of the most basic information about Islamic belief and practice.

Furthermore, without institutions for spreading knowledge about Islam, not much

may have changed in these non-urban communities by the tenth century. While

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[48] Abu 'Abd Allah sought out communities far from central state control. Before deciding to go to
the Maghrib with the Kutama Berber that he met in Mecca, he carefully questioned them about how
close their territory was from state control.

this is conjecture and, probably, a theory that is only one type of explanation, there

is evidence that suggests this as a possibility. For example, two *daʿis*

(missionaries) who were reportedly sent to North Africa in the mid-eighth century,

Abu Sufyan and al-Hulwani,[49] related that they went to small towns, Tala and al-

Nazur.[50] In these small towns, they built mosques, married local women, and grew

popular for their ability to relate stories about the family of the prophet and

interpret the Qur'an. While corroborating evidence may not survive – after all,

non-elite Muslims from the medieval period did not leave behind many sources – it

suggests that, for these Muslims in non-urban North Africa, they sought

connections with their faith through learning stories about the Prophet and basic

information about Islamic faith and practice. It is unlikely that they were primarily

concerned with textual Islam.

'Heterodox' missionaries played important roles in some of these non-

urban communities: building mosques, marrying into local families, teaching the

basics of Islamic practice, and preaching stories about the life and companions of

the Prophet Muhammad.[51] While urban areas had a variety of emerging experts

whom Muslims could consult for information about Islam,[52] these resources were

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[49] Al-Nuʿman, 26-29.
[50] These 'towns' are small enough that no record of them survives in contemporary geographical sources. I have also not been able to find reference to them in medieval Arabic geographies.
[51] Traveling merchants are also often given credit for spreading knowledge of Islam. Significantly, members of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* (including the Imam himself) often posed as merchants when they travelled.
[52] Bulliet, *View*, 67-79.

not always available outside of cities. Far from city mosques and emerging

religious experts, proto-Shiʿi 'heterodox' missionaries may have played a

significant role in filling this need and found fertile ground for their messages.

In the remote communities of North Africa and Yemen, missionaries were

heralded for their knowledge of *hadith*, the Qur'an, and their ability to tell stories

of family of the Prophet Muhammad. Ismaʿili missionaries held regular *majalis al-

hukum*, or 'sessions of wisdom', where they taught about Islam. Descriptions of

what occurred during these sessions do not survive, but information about the

recruiting and training of missionaries reveals the kind of education that they

provided to their followers. Recent converts listening to the new, compelling

information about Islam, their new faith, did not necessarily see these missionaries

as 'heterodox'. These populations were unlettered and did not have easy access to

urban debates about orthodoxy and heterodoxy. The arrival of non-Sunni

missionaries to their communities may have been their first introduction to the

complexities of their new faith: differences in doctrine were less significant than

learning stories of the Prophet's life and basic interpretation of the Qur'an.

By the late ninth century, the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* had systematized the

conversion and training of Ismaʿili missionaries. Unsurprisingly, new recruits for

mission work were selected for their knowledge about Islam and, in particular,

Shiʿism. To serve as missionaries, they were educated in *hadith* (traditions of

sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions) and theology.

Both Abu ʿAbd Allah, the Ismaʿili missionary who conquered North Africa for the Fatimids, and his brother Abu al-ʿAbbas (d. 911), were given funding for instruction in theology. Others, such as Mansur al-Yaman (d. 914)[53] and Abu al-Hasan ʿAli b. al-Fadl (d. 915), both famous Ismaʿili missionaries in Yemen, were educated by the missionaries who recruited them. This training in theology, interpretation of the Qur'an, and stories about the Prophet Muhammad, his Companions, and family, made the missionaries valuable authorities on Islam in non-urban areas of the Middle East.

Most of the direct knowledge of Ismaʿili missionary activity comes from late ninth and early tenth-century sources. But these sources also contain allusions to previous, nearly undocumented missionary activity, suggesting even earlier mission work that did not leave its own documentary evidence. For example, Abu ʿAbd Allah, sent to North Africa, and Mansur al-Yaman, sent to Yemen, were given directions for their own missionary activities that likely came from earlier, unnamed missionaries. Abu ʿAbd Allah specifically requested that the Kutama Berber take him to a place in North Africa known as "*Fajj al-Akhywar*," where he was told that there was an existing Shiʿi community. Abu ʿAbd Allah did not know where *Fajj al-Akhywar* was located specifically, just that it was in Kutama territory and Shiʿi-friendly. As this was not a location known to non-locals, the Kutama saw

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[53] Mansur al-Yaman is the *laqab* given to Ibn Hawshab.

it as proof that Abu ʿAbd Allah was from the same movement as Abu Sufyan and al-Hulwani, the Ismaʿili missionaries who were sent to North Africa in 762-3.

There was a similar story within the Ismaʿili movement in Yemen. There, Mansur al-Yaman recounted that the Imam sent him to find "ʿAdan Laʿa"[54] without identifying if it was a person or place. At first, Mansur al-Yaman believed that ʿAdan Laʿa was an individual, but after exploring Yemen, he realized it was a region known to be the home of Muslims who were crypto-Shiʿis[55] in Yuʿfirid territory.[56] When Mansur al-Yaman finally reached the people of ʿAdan Laʿa, they told him about another, earlier (unnamed) Shiʿi missionary who had gathered weapons and prepared the community to fight when the new missionary arrived.[57] Stories such as these do not prove that there was a direct connection between the eighth and ninth-century Ismaʿili movements,[58] but suggest the possibility of broader successes for these non-Sunni movements in non-urban areas of the

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[54] Al-Nuʿman, 15.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Gochenour, 43.
[57] Al-Nuʿman, 16
[58] This is a point of contention within Ismaʿili studies. S.M. Stern denies that there is continuity while Farhad Daftary argues the "one can clearly discern the guiding hands of an energetic and secret central leadership." For a summary of these debates, see Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 98. Michael Brett has challenged the veracity of all of this, arguing that there were multiple, independent Ismaʿili movements that united under the banner of the Fatimids after the successful establishment of the Fatimid caliphate. Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 29-31, 39, and 46.

Middle East and challenges the supposed dominance of Sunni orthodoxy and the Abbasid caliphate.[59]

The reaction of urban communities of Sunni religious scholars substantiates these accounts of Ismaʿili missionary success. The Sunni heresiographical response to the Ismaʿili movement was extreme; they felt that these non-Sunni movements could not just be ignored. By the tenth-century, Sunni heresiographers had created an entire 'black legend' to discredit Ismaʿili missionaries.[60] This legend alleged that an individual named ʿAbd Allah b. Maymun al-Qaddah was the progenitor of the Ismaʿili movement. According to this story, which became widely popular, Ismaʿilism was secretly a conspiracy to lead Muslims to unbelief and, eventually, to abolish Islam from within. In order to accomplish this, it was said that he organized a complex belief system centered around seven stages of indoctrination that culminated in atheism. According to the legend, he pretended to preach in the name of Muhammad b. Ismaʿil, the son of the seventh Ismaʿili

[59] North Africa, overall, was problematic territory for establishing 'orthodox' Islam. While the Ismaʿili sources show the Muslims of North Africa seeking out information about Islam in the eighth through tenth centuries, these areas were still considered problematically 'heterodox' in the twelfth century when Ibn Tumart (d. 1128) began preaching across North Africa to 'reform' heterodox forms of Islam that had spread among the Berber tribes.

[60] This legend is attributed to the Hashemite heresiographer and polemicist Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ʿAli b. Rizam al-Taʾi (known as Ibn Rizam) who lived in the tenth century outside of Kufa. Ibn Rizam's heresiography does not survive, but is preserved in later sources. Eighteenth-century Orientalists, such as Sylvestre de Sacy and Ferdinand von Hammer-Purgstall accepted this 'black legend' as the true history of the Ismaʿilis. Marshall G.S. Hodgson discusses the history of these legends in *The Secret Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizari Ismaʿilis Against the Islamic World* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005 [1955]), 1-27 while Farhad Daftary has offered a much more recent account of the origins and spread of these heresiographical accounts of Ismaʿili history (including criticizing Hodgson for perpetuating these views by calling his landmark work 'The Secret Order of Assassins') in *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismaʿilis* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1994), 8-48.

imam who was believed to be in a state of occultation and would return to usher in the end of times. Later heresiographers claimed that this ʿAbd Allah b. Maymun al-Qaddah sent out missionaries to Iraq, Yaman, Bahrayn, Rayy, Tabaristan, Khurasan, and Fars, and eventually North Africa, where one of his successors founded the Fatimid dynasty.[61] Chapter five will discuss post tenth-century sources that emphasize the sectarian identies of these dynasties.

In context, later Fatimid sources show missionaries filling a significant need: non-urban Muslims of the ninth and tenth centuries searching for knowledge of Islam and what it meant to be 'Muslim'. Focusing on the pre-Fatimid Ismaʿili missionary movement reveals significant information about more than just the Ismaʿili movement and the Fatimids. It provides a glimpse of the Islamization of the Middle East, of how Muslims who lived far from urban centers learned about Islam, and suggests that the Abbasid caliph and the emerging class of Sunni religious scholars did not have a monopoly on Islam and orthodoxy at this early date.

The Zaydi Missionary Movement in the Caspian Provinces of Iran (Daylam, Gilan, and Tabaristan)

Although the success of Ismaʿili missionary activities in North Africa and Yemen reveals the absence of formal mechanisms to teach non-urban Muslims

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[61] For an extensive discussion of the "Black Legend" of Maymun al-Qaddah, see Daftary, *The Ismaʿilis*, 101-107 and *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Ismaʿilis* 25-7.

about Islam, the success of Zaydi missionary activities in the Caspian provinces of

Iran reveals a related phenomenon: the absence of formal institutions to bring

Islam into these areas. As in North Africa and Yemen, in Iran, too, this gap was

filled by 'heterodox' movements. The prevalence and success of these movements

challenges the overall view of Sunni orthodoxy as dominant by the ninth and tenth

centuries and demonstrates that issues of orthodoxy and heterodoxy were not

central to non-urban Muslim converts.

Although North Africa and Yemen were exposed to Islam during the era of

the seventh-century Islamic conquests, the Caspian provinces of Iran did not begin

converting to Islam until the mid-ninth century.[62] This conversion has largely

been credited to Zaydi missionary movements. Like North Africa and Yemen,

Caspian Iran was a territory in which the Umayyads and Abbasids had difficulty

exerting control. The Caspian resisted the Islamic conquests, with the result that

Islam had not yet fully penetrated into the region by the ninth century.[63] ʿAlids,

descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through his cousin and son-in-law ʿAli ibn

Abi Talib (d. 661), were often persecuted by the Abbasids and sought refuge in the

Caspian as early as the eighth century. These ʿAlids, targeted by the Abbasids

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[62] Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, 91.
[63] While there were some inroads made into these territories during the first generation of Islam, the central Islamic state could not maintain tight control over them during the 'Umayyad period. In 650-1, during the caliphate of ʿUthman, Saʾʿd ibn al-ʿAs entered Gurgan and imposed tribute on its ruler and then moved west into Tabaristan, but many of the Caspian provinces were lost during the civil war between ʿAli and Muʾawiya. During the Umayyad period, the provinces were rebellious and often refused to pay tribute. In 716-7, Yazid b. al-Muhallab defeated the Turks in Gurgan.

because of their authority as members of the family of the Prophet, were often

welcomed by local leaders precisely because they made effective allies against the

Abbasids.[64] Possibly because of their experiences living in areas more directly

under Abbasid control, the first ʿAlids who fled to the Caspian do not appear to

have immediately attempted to convert the local population to Islam.[65]

Due to their remote location, the Caspian provinces provided a haven for

groups that were considered 'heterodox' during the early Islamic period.[66] Khariji

groups sought refuge in Tabaristan in the late seventh century and were welcomed

there by local rulers.[67] Although there are some claims that Tabaristan began to

adopt Sunni Islam during the early Abbasid period,[68] Shiʿi movements also spread

quickly in these provinces. There were Imami Shiʿi movements in eastern

Tabaristan: Amul, Astarabad, and Gurgan; Zaydi movements found supporters in

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[64] Vladimir Minorsky, *La domination des Daylamites* (Paris, 1932), 6.

[65] Patricia Crone, *God's Rule - Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 105-107.

[66] *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 4: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) has the most extensive information on the early Islamic history of the Caspian and Zaydi statelets that developed there, such as Abd al-Husain Zarrinkub's "The Arab Conquest of Iran and Its Aftermath," 1-56, Roy Mottahedeh's "The Abbasid Caliphate in Iran," 57-89, C.E. Bosworth's "Tahirids and Saffarids," 90-135, R.N. Frye, "The Samanids," 136-161, and W. Madelung's "The Minor Dynasties of Northern Iran," 198-249.

[67] The Kharijites had a tumultuous relationship with the local Ispahbad dynasty, which ruled Tabaristan in the late seventh and eighth dynasties, as did the Abbasid dynasty. While the Ispahbad ruler, Khurshid, supported the Kharijites for a time, he later had Kharijites killed when they tried to convert him. Later Ispahbads supported Zoroastrian rebels against the Abbasids in the name of Abu Muslim. The Abbasids did not conquer Tabaristan until 761. See Madelung, "ʿAlid Rule in Tabaristan," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, 198-200, Richard N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia: the Arabs in the East* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975), 116-119, and Crone, 105-107.

[68] Madelung, "ʿAlid Rule in Tabaristan," 200.

Ruyan and Lakar and spread westward into Daylam and Gilan.[69] The Zaydi

statelets of the Caspian lasted until the sixteenth century, when they 'converted' to

Imami Shiʿism under the Safavids.[70]

The Zaydi movements in the Caspian provinces proved particularly

successful. In the ninth century, several Zaydi dynasties claiming to be

descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through ʿAli b. Abi Talib and Fatima ruled

parts of Tabaristan. The most significant of these Zaydi dynasties was led by

Hasan b. Zayd (d. 884),[71] who was known by the title "al-Daʿi ila al-Haqq," which

means 'the one who calls to the truth'. He founded his dynasty in opposition to the

Sunni Abbasid caliph.[72] By 865, the Zaydi movement directed by al-Daʿi ila al-

Haqq controlled most of Tabaristan and expanded into central Iran.[73] Al-Daʿi ila al-

Haqq was succeeded by his brother, Muhammad b. Zayd, who took the same regnal

name as his brother. Muhammad b. Zayd was known as a popular Shiʿi ruler in the

province – he restored the shrines of ʿAli and Husayn that had been destroyed by

the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861) and sent gifts to other ʿAlids.[74] By

the late ninth century, supporters of the Zaydis of Tabaristan had penetrated deep

into Daylam and Gilan and were expanding: in 896, they conquered Nishapur

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[69] Ibid., 206.
[70] Crone, 106.
[71] Hasan b. ʿAli, who was from Rayy, claimed descent from ʿAli and Fatima through Hasan.
[72] Specifically, he fought with the Tahirids, hereditary governors for the Abbasids from 821-73 who governed the caliphal lands east of Iraq.
[73] From 867 onwards, they controlled Gurgan. They controlled Rayy (temporarily) in 864-5, 867, 870, and 872, in Zanjan, Qazvin (865-8), and Qumis (873-9). Madelung, "ʿAlid Rule in Tabaristan," 206.
[74] Madelung, "ʿAlid Rule in Tabaristan," 207.

briefly and had Muhammad b. Zayd's name put into the *khutba*, or Friday sermon, an act which expressed the Zaydi control over the region. By 900, they were attempting to conquer Khurasan. Ultimately, the Sunni Samanids (819-999), an independent dynasty that paid nominal allegiance to the Abbasids, stopped this expansion.

A second significant Zaydi movement in the Caspian was founded by an individual known as Hasan b. ʿAli al-Utrush, who had been a supporter of the two Daʿis ila al-Haqq. Al-Utrush won large portions of the Caspian back from Sunni Abbasid vassals and was a popular ruler – even al-Tabari, the famed Sunni Abbasid chronicler, who was born in a town ruled by al-Utrush's descendants, related in his history that "the people had never seen anything like al-Utrush's justice, his exemplary way of life, and the way he established truth."[75]

The Buyids were a product of these processes; a Caspian tribe converted to Islam at the hands of Zaydi missionaries. Medieval and modern histories of the Caspian provinces generally focus on the internal squabbles for power between rival groups there. While political rivalries were certainly significant, focusing on the political sparring obscures the significance of Zaydi missionary activity in the Caspian.

The two main sources that cover aspects of the eighth and ninth-century history of the Caspian and address the history of the Buyids are the surviving

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[75] Al-Tabari, 2297-2298.

fragments of the *Kitab al-Taji* (The Book of the King) by Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn

Hilal al-Sabi (925-994) and a much later history, the *Tarikh-i Tabaristan* (History

of Tabaristan) by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan Ibn Isfandiyar, which was compiled in

approximately 1216. The details of Ibn Isfandiyar's life remain a mystery, but Abu

Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Hilal al-Sabi was a non-Muslim who served the Buyid family in

Baghdad and wrote his history at the request of the Buyid Amir ʿAdud al-Dawla.[76]

There are also other later histories that mention a few details of the early history

of the Buyids in the Caspian, such as Hamadani's *Takmilat Tarikh al-Tabari* (The

Completion of the History of al-Tabari), Ibn al-Jawzi's *al-Muntazam fi Tarikh* (The

Organization of History) and Ibn al-Athir's *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* (The Complete

History), but the information that these sources provide is quite limited and comes

from a much later context. Finally, there are also a few devotional works on the

lives of the Zaydi imams who sought refuge in the Caspian.[77]

Although these sources were predominately concerned with the in-fighting

between the various political powers of the Caspian, they shed light on the process

by which the people of the Caspian – and the tribe that founded the Buyid dynasty

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[76] Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Hilal al-Sabi is known as a "master stylist of epistolary prose" for the collection of his letters composed in rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) which survives. He served the Buyid vizier al-Muhallabi in Baghdad and was then the head of the chancery for the Buyid Amirs Muʿizz al-Dawla and ʿIzz al-Dawla. Finally, he served the Buyid Amir ʿAdud al-Dawla. E.K. Rowson, "Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Hilal al-Sabi" in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol 2, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (New York: Routledge, 1998), 671-2. Al-Sabi's work will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four.
[77] Wilferd Madelung has published a collection of these biographical works: *Arabic Texts Concerning the History of the Zaydi Imams of Tabaristan, Daylaman, and Gilan* (Beirut: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, 1987).

– converted to Islam in the late ninth century. These sources, overall, focused on a group known as the Daylamites. Daylamites were the inhabitants of 'Daylam', one of the regions south of the Caspian Sea, and were well-known as mercenaries for various local rulers. The Buyids were Daylamites. The Daylamites had a reputation for being strong and 'warlike': they were considered a "numerous race, renowned for its extraordinary courage and its great endurance, and whose representatives had a good looking, commanding appearance, and handsome beards."[78]

The origin of the Daylamites is unknown: they were present in ancient Iranian history but probably not-Iranian. Polybius (ca. 200-118 BCE), the Greek historian, mentions the Delymaioi.[79] The Arab geographer al-Istakhri, who wrote in 951, argued that the Daylamite language was different from Arabic or Persian.[80] The tenth-century Buyid administrator, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Hilal al-Sabi, claimed that the original Daylamites were an ancient Arab tribe called the Bani Dhabba that had, over time, become Persianized as more Persians moved into Caspian region.[81] Overall, in addition to their 'warlike nature', medieval sources emphasized that the Daylamites had a long history of serving as mercenaries, first for Persian dynasties such as the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sasanians, and later for Muslim dynasties.

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[78] Minorsky, 2.
[79] Ibid., 3.
[80] Ibid., 2.
[81] Abu Ishaq al-Sabi, Muntazaʿ min Kitab al-Taji fir akhbar al-Dawla al-Daylamiyya, collected and edited by Wilferd Madelung in Arabic Texts Concerning the History of the Zaydi Imams of Tabaristan, Daylaman, and Gilan, 12.

Buyid sources emphasized three things about the Daylamite conversion to Islam: it was recent, done with full knowledge of Islam, and voluntary.[82] This semi-defensive posture suggests a later tension between urban religious scholars and the heterodox newcomers who had risen to power in the capital of the Sunni Islamic world. The sources are clearly trying to combat an accusation that the Daylamites – and by extension, the Buyids – did *not* convert voluntarily and were, instead, converted by force or that their conversion to Shiʿi Islam implied ignorance. Perhaps this defensiveness is evidence of the rift between the 'heterodoxy' more prevalent in non-urban areas and the Islam of the cities, which was much more strictly policed by emerging Sunni religious scholars.

As with the Ismaʿili missionary activities in North Africa and Yemen, Buyid sources suggest that the Zaydi missionaries in the Caspian were predominately concerned with teaching people the basics of Islam, such as the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, and 'religious duties'.[83] The Zaydi leaders were revered in the Caspian because of their direct link to the family of the Prophet Muhammad[84] and their religious knowledge. Later sources relate that the people of the Caspian were "constantly seeking the learning, piety, and ascetic life of the fugitive Sayyids [descendants of the Prophet] who had taken refuge amongst

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[82] Al-Sabi, 9.
[83] Al-Sabi, 15.
[84] Ibid.

them…and said, 'It is they who possess the characteristics of true religion.'"[85] The

Zaydis emphasized this authority based on membership in the family of the

Prophet by building shrines to other descendants the Prophet.[86] Furthermore,

they sent money to support other descendants of the Prophet in the Hijaz, Kufa,

and Basra.[87] Muhammad b. Zayd, the second "al-Daʿi ila al-Haqq" ('One Who Calls

to the Truth'), paid to repair ʿAlid tombs that had been destroyed by the Abbasid

Caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 861).[88]

The Muslim converts of the Caspian had an oppositional relationship with

the Sunni Abbasids. The Zaydi imams who settled in the Caspian had fled Abbasid

persecution and founded states that openly opposed the Abbasids. Furthermore,

the sources suggest that – at least in part – some converts were attracted to Zaydi

Islam because they opposed the Abbasid governors who ruled over them.[89] Once

in power, Hasan b. Zayd, the first Daʿi ila al-Haqq, considered supporters of the

Abbasids to be opposed to him politically: he killed anyone whom he considered to

be an Abbasid sympathizer.[90]

The Buyids are only one part of the story of the conversion of the Caspian.

When the Buyids began expanding out of the Caspian region (a process that led to

their conquest of Baghdad), they were likely recent converts. The dynasty was

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[85] Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Isfandiyar, *Tarikh-i Tabaristan*, 161.
[86] Ibid., 158.
[87] Al-Sabi, 21.
[88] Ibid., 22 and Ibn Isfandiyar, 47-8.
[89] Ibn Isfandiyar, 161.
[90] Ibid., 177.

named for three brothers, ʿAli, Hasan, and Ahmad, sons of "Buya," who was known

as a member of the Chirzil-avand clan from the village of Kiyakalich in Daylam.[91]

The relatively recent conversion of the Buyids to Islam can be surmised, in part,

from their names. The three Buyid brothers who established control over the

Abbasid Caliphate had Muslim names, ʿAli, Hasan, and Ahmad, while their father's

name was Buya. This implies that their conversion to Islam was relatively

recent,[92] which fits with what is known about the general conversion of the

Caspian provinces in the mid to late ninth century. Furthermore their names

revealed clear Shiʿi sympathies: all three brothers shared their names with

prominent Shiʿi imams.[93]

The people of the Caspian had a different relationship with Islam and the

Abbasid state than the peoples of North Africa and Yemen. The Caspian was much

later to accept Islam and it was clear that, in part, Zaydi Shiʿism was appealing

because it was seen as part of political opposition to the Abbasid caliph. Although

Muslim garrisons had existed in the Caspian, the Zaydi imams were accorded

greater authority because they came from the family of the Prophet. Furthermore,

it is clear from the available sources that the Abbasid caliphate had no policy for

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[91] Minorsky, 8. Also Al-Sabi, 13.
[92] Bulliet's argument in *Conversion in the Medieval Period* is based on the idea that the generation when a Persian-speaking family converted to Islam can be approximately pinpointed based on when their family first took Arabic Muslim names.
[93] 'Ali was the name of the first Shi'i imam, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, Hasan was the grandson of ʿAli, and Ahmad was the name of the Zaydi imam who established Islam in the Caspian.

trying to spread Islam in these territories, leaving them open to influence from 'heterodox' missionary movements.

The Buyids are not discussed in sources on early Zaydi history in the Caspian, but these sources provide the context in which they converted to Islam and developed their strategies for best articulating their legitimacy in a crowded field of claimants. In this context, it must have been evident that a combination of religious and political claims to legitimacy was often most successful.

Conclusion

The success of these non-Sunni movements on the peripheries of the Islamic world—North Africa, Yemen, and the Caspian—demonstrates the degree to which adherence to any form of Sunni 'orthodoxy' had not yet full penetrated the medieval Middle East. Viewed individually, the heterodox missionary movements have been portrayed as marginal movements on the outskirts of power. However, when viewed as part of a larger pattern of activity across the growing Islamic world, these movements appear as the vanguard of Islamic expansion after the end of the Islamic conquests. While emerging Sunni religious scholars may have had great influence over the Abbasid caliph and dominated concepts of 'orthodoxy' within the urban centers of the Abbasid caliphate, so-called 'heterodox' movements did much of the groundwork of converting non-urban

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populations in the North African, Yemeni, and Iranian hinterlands to Islam and teaching non-urban Muslims about what it meant to be Muslim.

Furthermore, as will be discussed in the following chapters, these 'heterodox' organizations were not powerless movements on the margins: by the early tenth century, both the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* and the Zaydi *daʿwa* produced groups of missionaries and converts who became the backbone of military organizations which would go on to conquer large swathes of territory in the Middle East and threaten the centrality of the Sunni Abbasid caliphs.

Chapter Three: The Early Fatimid Caliphate's Hybrid Claims for Legitimacy:

Appeals to a Diverse Muslim Audience and Competition with Imperial Rivals

> I observe the inhabitants of the cities; they pray against me in their
> mosques…. The lying apostate community, reneging on its
> intentions, deviating from the command of their Lord, suppose that
> it has been correct in what it claims about its caliphs whom they
> insist are the caliphs of the Lord of the worlds, such as a youth not
> yet mature, or like the boy lacking knowledge, or like the child who,
> according to their claim, governs Islam.

> -*khutba* given by al-Qaʿim bi-Amr Allah (d. 946)

While on campaign in Alexandria in 915, al-Qaʿim bi-Amr Allah (r. 934-
946), who would become the second Fatimid caliph, made the above remarks
during a *khutba*, the sermon given as part of the Friday prayer.[1] In this speech,
given only six years after the foundation of the Fatimid caliphate, al-Qaʿim
antagonized non-Ismaʿilis who did not support the Fatimids, calling them the
"lying apostate community" and accusing them of "deviating from the command of
their Lord." He singled out the currently reigning Abbasid caliph, al-Muqtadir (r.

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[1] Al-Qaʿim, *khutba*, in *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs: Festival Sermons of the Ismaili Imams*, Paul E. Walker, ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 2 (Arabic pagination) and 88-9 (English pagination). Paul Walker also translated these *khutba*s and, in this chapter, I am using his translations. I will cite both the Arabic and English.

908-932), who had controversially been appointed caliph at thirteen years old, for attack as the "youth not yet mature… lacking knowledge…who…governs Islam."

Unsurprisingly, this aggressive rhetoric did not sit well with the people of Alexandria. As discussed in chapter two, the pre-Fatimid Ismaʿili *daʿwa* had predominately appealed to non-urban Muslims, with the result that, once in power, the Fatimids faced multiple rebellions in *Ifriqiya* during the caliphates of al-Mahdi (r. 909-934) and al-Qaʿim (r. 934-946): from within their own *daʿwa* organization, from local Khariji movements, and from local Sunni religious scholars. Al-Qaʿim's hetoric recalled the Ismaʿili past as a revolutionary underground opposition movement working to overthrow the Abbasid caliphate and that did little to endear the Fatimids to the local population, which was not predominately Ismaʿili.

The series of North African rebellions culminated in a revolt in 943 directed by a local, messianic, Khariji leader allied with Sunni orthodox Maliki scholars in Qayrawan; this revolt nearly conquered the Fatimid caliphate. This Khariji rebellion, which occurred from 943 to 947 and was led by a figure named Abu Yazid (d. 947), was a watershed event for the Fatimids:[2] it revealed the depths of the dynasty's local legitimacy problems. The challenge of Abu Yazid and his subsequent defeat by the third Fatimid caliph, al-Mansur (r. 946-953), led to a fundamental transformation in Fatimid articulations of legitimacy: the Fatimid

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[2] Michael Brett discusses the significance of Abu Yazid's rebellion for the Fatimids and their historiography. Michael Brett, *The Rise of the Fatimids: The World of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the Fourth Century of the Hijra, Tenth Century CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 165-176.

caliph al-Mansur began attempting to mimic the claims to authority of the

Fatimid's greatest rival, the Sunni Abbasid caliph.

Originally, the Fatimids based their legitimacy on their claims to ʿAlid

descent and their position as the Ismaʿili Imams. Historians have generally viewed

Fatimid appeals through the lens of a Shiʿi polity distancing itself from its

revolutionary past and coming to terms with ruling over an 'orthodox' Sunni

majority.[3] But Fatimid claims to legitimacy were more complex than this:

beginning with the caliph al-Mansur, they successfully began to follow closely the

example of the Abbasid caliph, blending tropes of Abbasid authority, which was

itself built upon concepts from pre-Islamic kingship, with Arabo-Islamic history.

Fatimid appeals for authority have been analyzed in terms of the different

sorts of claims that they made to a Sunni or Shiʿi audience. Although these

analyses touch on aspects of how the Fatimids articulated their legitimacy, they

miss the fact that Fatimid appeals did not fit neatly into categories of 'Shiʿi' or

'ʿAlid' or even 'Islamic'. They made polyvalent, hybrid claims to authority that

were often contradictory. Embodying the sacred authority of the caliphate in a

form that had been fundamentally coined by the Sunni Abbasids required

combining aspects of the messianic leadership of the pre-Fatimid Ismaʿili *daʿwa*,

[3] Sumaiya Hamdani discusses how, after al-Mansur came to power, the Fatimids sought a policy of greater rapprochement with their Sunni population. Hamdani, *Between Revolution and State: The Path to Fatimid Statehood: Qadi al-Nu'man and the Construction of Fatimid Legitimacy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 55-92. Irene Bierman also discusses in the ways in which the Fatimids carefully constructed their public discourse to appeal to a wide variety of Muslims in *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

which was rooted in ʿAlid millenarianism, with the political trappings of sacred

kingship recognizable to a medieval audience, which were apparent in titulature,

ritual, architecture, and in the way that the Fatimids narrated their past.[4] These

sacred aspects of medieval Muslim kingship were performative.[5] By examining the

concrete ways that the Fatimids copied the authority of the Abbasid caliphate, it is

possible to reconstruct popular expectations of authority in the medieval Islamic

world and how these expectations superseded sectarian identities or orthodox

concepts of Islam.[6]

The evidence for the ways that the Fatimid caliphate articulated its

authority come from diverse sources. They include *khutba*s, or speeches, given by

the Fatimid caliphs themselves, in addition to evidence from coins, titulature, and

architecture. Other narrative sources, especially for Fatimid policies and the ways

that the Fatimids crafted a narrative of their past, are the *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* (The

Opening of the Mission) written by Qadi al-Nuʿman, the first chief qadi of the

Fatimid administration; the *Sirat Jaʿfar* (The Biography of Jaʿfar), written by Jaʿfar

al-Hajib, the chamberlain of the first Fatimid caliph al-Mahdi who accompanied

him on his flight from Syria to North Africa, and the *Sirat Jawhar* (The Biography of

Jawhar), written by Jawhar, who had been a eunuch in the Aghlabid palace before

[4] Azfar Moin identified this combination of "sainthood" and "kingship" in *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
[5] Stephennie Mulder discusses the performative aspects of devotional activities in *The Shrines of the ʿAlids in Medieval Syria: Sunnis, Shiʿis, and the Architecture of Coexistence* (Edinburgh University Press, *forthcoming* 2013), 8.
[6] Moin, 6-7.

serving the Fatimid administration during the caliphates of al-Mahdi, al-Qaʿim, al-Mansur, and al-Muʿizz.

Al-Qaʿim's Revolutionary Rhetoric

The Fatimids, however, only changed their rhetoric gradually. The earliest rhetoric of the Fatimid caliphate, enshrined in the surviving *khutba*s of the second Fatimid caliph, al-Qaʿim,[7] is aggressive and critical of non-Ismaʿilis. Al-Qaʿim had been raised within the Ismaʿili *daʿwa* and fled with his father from Syria to *Ifriqiya* to found the Fatimid caliphate. His rhetoric arose from the context of a minority missionary movement fighting the dominance of the Sunni Abbasid caliphate and he emphasized how non-Ismaʿilis had been led astray by their leaders, the Sunni Abbasids, whom he likened to apostates and hypocrites. However, while al-Qaʿim's attacks on non-Ismaʿilis were fairly direct, he did not focus the brunt of his attacks on targets that would have alienated his audience, such as the first three caliphs Abu Bakr (d. 634), ʿUmar (d. 644), and ʿUthman (d. 656). Although the first three caliphs were regarded as illegitimate by Shiʿis, they retained a religious cachet that would have been difficult for the Fatimids to challenge at the time.

When the Fatimids declared their caliphate in 909, it was the culmination of a long effort organized by their underground missionary organization and their earliest rhetoric reflected these revolutionary origins. The first Fatimid *khutba*s

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[7] Al-Qaʿim's name had important messianic meanings, which will be discussed below.

reveal a Fatimid caliphate critical of non-Ismaʿilis who did not acknowledge Fatimid authority. *Khutba*s by al-Mahdi do not survive; al-Qaʿim delivered the earliest extant Fatimid *khutba* as al-Mahdi's appointed successor. Attacks on enemies of the state were often a standard part of the *khutba*,[8] but al-Qaʿim condemned non-Ismaʿilis for continuing the follow the Abbasids and their agents. For example, in a fiery *khutba* given while on campaign in Alexandria in 915, al-Qaʿim said:

> Oh people, I reach out to this community of yours just as the
> Messenger of God, may God bless and keep him, reached out to the
> Jews and the Christians, who had with them the Torah and the
> Gospels, churches and synagogues. He, may God bless and keep him,
> summoned them to the fulfillment of the knowledge that was in the
> Torah and the Gospels but they would not believe it. So he imposed
> on them the sword and the poll-tax and captivity, plunder, and exile.
> In the same way I reach out to this community of yours which has
> taken your Qur'an in vain. You have thrown it behind your backs
> and sold it for a paltry price.[9]

Here, al-Qaʿim differentiated between Ismaʿili believers and non-Ismaʿilis, comparing non-Ismaʿilis with the *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book, meaning Jews

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[8] Tahera Qutbuddin, "Khutba: The Evolution of Early Arabic Oration," in *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms: Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs*, ed by Beatrice Gruendler and Michael Cooperson (Brill, 2008), 208.

[9] Al-Qaʿim, *khutba*, 2 (Arabic), 87 (English).

and Christians) of the Prophet's era. He declared that they had been led astray and, thus, proclaimed his intention to treat them harshly for failing to recognize the veracity of Fatimid claims to authority. For this, he rationalized putting them to the sword and imposing upon them the poll-tax, captivity, plunder, and exile. One might assume that the Fatimids would start from a more conciliatory position, but al-Qaʾim's rhetoric likened non-Ismaʿilis to non-Muslims.

Al-Qaʿim blamed the Sunni leaders of the Islamic world for leading astray the Muslim community. He portrayed those leaders as hypocrites and bad Muslims, condemned to hell:

> Oh people, truly you have fallen into an iniquitous blindness and a dark blackness, overwhelmed by a calamity that carries you into another calamity; it has led you astray by its heretical delusions and overcome you with its pernicious atmosphere. You are floating in its misfortune, drowning in its ideology, its doors locked against you, its reasons become obscure, the guide-markers of your religion obliterated, the works of your prophet effaced, the abomination among you obvious. And the acceptable is with you extinct. Where is it you are headed? To the hellfire from which you cannot withdraw? Will you therefore be among those rewarded or those punished?[10]

Al-Qaʿim accused Muslims who failed to recognize the authority of the Fatimids as having been led astray by "heretical delusions," perpetrated by the

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[10] Ibid., 3-4 (Arabic), 89-90 (English).

Sunni Abbasids. While al-Qaʿim did not directly mention the Abbasids, he declared that "the guide-markers of your religion [have been] obliterated, the works of your prophet effaced." This was a clear castigation of the Sunni Abbasid leadership of the Islamic world.

Al-Qaʿim also argued that those who did not support the Ismaʿili Fatimids should be considered apostates:

> I observe the inhabitants of the cities; they pray against me in their
> mosques…. The lying apostate community, reneging on its
> intentions, deviating from the command of their Lord, suppose that
> it has been correct in what it claims about its caliphs whom they
> insist are the caliphs of the Lord of the worlds, such as a youth not
> yet mature, or like the boy lacking knowledge, or like the child who,
> according to their claim, governs Islam.[11]

Again, al-Qaʿim had harsh invective for non-Ismaʿilis. They were the "lying apostate community, reneging on its intentions [and] deviating from the command of their Lord."

Furthermore, al-Qaʿim's emphasis on the activities of the "inhabitants of the cities" highlighted the new difficulties faced by the Fatimids as they established their authority over urban populations, having begun as a largely non-urban movement. While, as discussed in chapter two, Ismaʿili missionaries achieved

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[11] Ibid., 2 (Arabic), 88-9 (English).

success in non-urban areas, preaching in the cities posed a greater challenge. In non-urban areas, Ismaʿili missionaries were often the only source of knowledge about Islam—this knowledge granted them a great deal of authority.[12] In the cities, on the other hand, there were competing doctrines and direct competitors for religious authority.

Al-Qaim's passage above also contained clear allusions to the Abbasid caliph and his supporters. His reference to "a youth not yet mature" and "the boy lacking knowledge" and "the child who…governs Islam" were all direct references to the reigning Abbasid caliph, al-Muqtadir (r. 908-932). Al-Muqtadir's caliphate was controversial; he became caliph when he was only thirteen years old and was considered too young to rule, a puppet of his advisors.[13] Despite the fact that al-Qaʿim still did not call out the Abbasid caliph by name, his attack would have been clear to a tenth-century Muslim audience.

Although al-Qaʿim did not mention the Abbasid caliph by name, he had no such compunctions about listing earlier enemies of the ʿAlids:

O God, curse Your enemies, the people who disobey You among the ancients and the later comers: the nation of Noah in the two worlds

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[12] Richard Bulliet's *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) argues that the *'ulama'* had a great deal of authority among far-flung Muslim communities because of their ability to answer questions about Islam.

[13] The idea that al-Muqtadir was a puppet of his advisor is an oft-cited fact by modern historians. For a couple of recent examples, see, Janina M. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) 29 and Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: the Rise of the Fatimids* (New York: EJ Brill, 1996), 284.

....and the tyrants of the tribe of ʿUmayya and the tribe of Marwan, and Muʿawiya b. Abi Sufyan, who took from Your servants the rightful share of dinars and dirhams, and waged war with them against the Emigrants and Helpers. Curse ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs, ʿUtba b. Abi Sufyan, al-Walid b. ʿUtba, al-Walid b. Abi Muʾayt, and that lizard son of a lizard—namely Marwan b. al-Hakam—and al-Mughira b. Shuba, Ziyad b. Summayya, Ubaydallah b. Ziyad, al-Sulami, Dhu al-Kalaʾ, Hawshaba, al-Ashʾath b. Qays, ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwan, al-Hajjaj b. Yusuf, ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Muljam, and those who were faithless and deviant, the apostates, transgressors, and heretics, and those who put off [acknowledging ʿAli's succession] and those who refrained from going to war under the Commander of the Believers [i.e. ʿAli]. Oh God, let the truth and those who seek it triumph; subdue the false and its partisans.[14]

The people named in this *khutba* were predominately early enemies of ʿAli or the Umayyad successors of Muʿawiya b. Abi Sufyan (d. 680) and Marwan (d. 685).[15] This type of invective was fairly standard in early Shiʿi rhetoric, it had been pioneered by the Abbasids themselves, in their attacks on Umayyad

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[14] Al-Qaʿim, 5 (Arabic), 91-2 (English).

[15] Muʾawiya, of course, founded the Umayyad dynasty and spearheaded the rebellion against ʿAli b. Abi Talib. After ʿAli's assassination, Muʿawiya convinced ʿAli's son, Hasan, to abdicate in 661. Marwan I, also mentioned by al-Qaʿim, was the first Umayyad Caliph (r. 684-685), the cousin of ʿUthman b. Affan (d. 656), and fought against ʿAli during the "Battle of the Camel" (656). Marwan was known for his support of the brutal suppression of Muslims who opposed the succession of Yazid b. Muʾawiya, the second Umayyad caliph known for killing Husayn b. ʿAli (d. 680), the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala (680). ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs (d. ca. 663) was the Muslim general who conquered Egypt, but he was hated by Shiʿis: he incited ʿAli, Talha, and Zubayr against the Caliph ʿUthman but then, after Talha and Zubayr were killed in battle, he supported Muʾawiya and opposed ʿAli. ʿAmr occupied Egypt for Muʾawyia and the Umayyads by deposing the ʿAlid governor, Muhammad b. Abi Bakr (d. 658) and executing him.

sympathizers.[16] Al-Qaʿim harnessed existing hostility towards the Umayyads and respect for ʿAlids. The early Fatimid caliphs based their legitimacy on their claims to ʿAlid genealogy, but respect for the *Ahl al-Bayt*, especially descendants of ʿAli b. Abi Talib and the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, was not exclusively a Shiʿi prerogative.[17]

The rest of the individuals mentioned were known enemies of the ʿAlids: they had either fought against ʿAli during the Battle of the Camel (656) and the following civil war with Muʿawiya,[18] were Umayyad governors known for persecuting ʿAlids and proto-Shiʿis,[19] or were known generally for supporting the Umayyads and attacking ʿAli.[20] These Umayyads and ʿAlid enemies were not remembered fondly in Islamic history.[21] By the time of the Fatimid conquest of North Africa, the Umayyads had been established as enemies of the earliest Muslim

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[16] Jacob Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: an Inquiry into the Art of Abbasid Apologetics* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1986), 1-36.

[17] Stephennie Mulder has an excellent discussion of this in the introduction to *The Shrines of the 'Alids in Medieval Syria,* 5-19. However, she notes that "while it could be said that both Sunnis and Shiʿis revere the *ahl al-bayt*, it cannot also be said that reverence for the Prophet's family played an equal role in the religious ritual, history, or self-imagination of the two sects." Mulder, 15.

[18] Such as ʿUtba b. Abi Sufyan, Muʿawiya's brother, Dhu al-Kalaʿ (Abu Sharahil al-Humayri), Hawshaba (Hawshab b. Takhma al-Alahani Dhu Zulaym), and al-Ashʿath b. Qays.

[19] Such as al-Walid b. Utba (Medina) who was remembered by Shiʿis for harassing Husayn b. Ali, the Prophet's grandson; al-Mughira b. Shuba (Kufa); and ʿUbaydallah b. Ziyad (Iraq).

[20] Al-Walid b. Abi Muʿayt blamed ʿAli for the assassination of 'Uthman and sought revenge, Ziyad b. Summayya was an Umayyad commander who killed one of ʿAli's supporters when he refused to curse ʿAli, al-Sulami, whose full name was Abu al-A'war 'Amr b. Sufyan al-Sulami, was a close ally of Mu'awiya and a general in his army. Most significantly, ʿAbd al-Rahman b. Muljam was the Khariji who assassinated the caliph and Shiʿi imam ʿAli b. Abi Talib.

[21] Although some sources contend that Sunni reactions to Shiʿi political success involved invoking blessings upon Mu'awiya, the first Umayyad caliph. Accounts of these kinds of events seem to come nearly exclusively from later sources, a phenomenon that will be discussed in chapter five.

community within Abbasid rhetoric.[22] Al-Qaʿim's focus on the persecutors of the

ʿAlids was significant because he gave this *khutba* while he was on campaign in

Alexandria and Egypt, a known refuge for ʿAlids.

The first two Fatimid caliphs largely based their authority on their claimed

descent from the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter, Fatima (d. 633),[23] and

ʿAli ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), and aggressively attacked Muslims who did not support

their authority. However, ʿAlid genealogy was not sufficient to establish the

Fatimids as genuine competitors of the Abbasids. Although ʿAlid genealogy

possessed a tremendous amount of religious cachet, medieval kingship—even

medieval Islamic kingship—required elaborate rituals and ceremonial.[24] The

rebellion of Abu Yazid, in which local Kharijis allied with Sunni Malikis in an

attempt to overthrow the Fatimids, revealed the serious legitimacy problems of

the Fatimids.

Thus, beginning with the Fatimid caliph al-Mansur, the first of the Fatimid

caliphs to be born in *Ifriqiya*, the Fatimids made clear attempts to imitate the

authority of the Abbasid caliphate,[25] which were continued by his son and

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[22] Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory*, 1-36.
[23] Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, was the namesake of the Fatimid dynasty.
[24] Clifford Geertz, in "Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power," has argued that royal charisma is derived from "connection between the symbolic value individuals possess and their relation to the active centers of the social order," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983): 122 and 124-125.
[25] This shift in Fatimid approach to rule has been discussed by earlier scholars of Ismaʿili history. Sumaiya Hamdani argued that, after the rebellion of Abu Yazid, the Fatimids embraced a policy of greater rapprochement with their Sunni subjects. S. Hamdani, 31. Irene Bierman examined Fatimid polyvalent appeals: their public discourse was broadly 'Islamic' and acceptable to all Muslims, but

successor, al-Muʿizz li-Din Allah (r. 953-975). These changes were incredibly

successful. Although popular rebellions nearly overthrew the Fatimid dynasty in

944, the Fatimids had conquered Egypt by 969 and established a triumphal new

capital city, Cairo, from which they held power for another two centuries.

The Fatimid caliph al-Mansur began attempting to represent the authority

of the Abbasid caliphate in distinct ways (some of which were continued by his

successor, al-Muʿizz). He borrowed his regnal name from the famous second

Abbasid caliph. He founded a Fatimid capital city that self-consciously imitated the

Abbasid capital of Baghdad.[26] He (and his son) began to perform the rituals of the

caliphate that were expected by a medieval Muslim population. And he (and his

son) sponsored histories that narrated the Fatimid rise to power in a manner that

likened the Fatimids to the earliest Muslim community under the Prophet

Muhammad.

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contained secret cues that would be recognized as Ismaʿili to followers of the *da'wa*. Irene Bierman,
in *Writing Signs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) also discussed how their appeals
changed again during the reign of al-Hakim bi-ʿAmir Allah. Finally, Michael Brett, in *The Rise of the
Fatimids* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), analyzed how, after the rebellion of Abu Yazid, the Fatimids re-
narrated the story of their mission as a cosmic struggle where Abu Yazid was the "Dajjal," which
was the figure of the 'Anti-Christ' from Muslim/Christian/Jewish eschatology who will appear in
human form at the end of the world as the apocalyptic opponent of Jesus. The figure of the Dajjal
does not appear in the Qur'an but is mentioned in apocalyptic works and *hadith*. *EOI3*, "Dajjal."
Defeating Abu Yazid as the Dajjal allowed the Fatimids to write a new story of their history: "As the
Dajjal, Abu Yazid was not simply a rival from an alternative Islam, challenging for the throne. He
was the Great Enemy whose predestined victory and equally predestined defeat opened the way to
the consummation of the divine purpose." Brett, 169-176.

[26] Baghdad was built by the second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur, as part of his project to establish his
authority and legitimacy as caliph. For a detailed discussion of the origins of Baghdad and its
significance for Abbasid rule, see Jacob Lassner, *The Shaping of Abbasid Rule* (Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 1979), chapters 7 and 8.

Fatimid Use of Regnal Titles and Architecture to Mimic the Authority of the Abbasid caliphate

One of the ways that the Fatimids epitomized the authority of the Abbasid caliphate was through use of titles. Their clear shift away from the messianism of the *daʿwa*, which was most clearly done with regnal titles, has been studied before.[27] To summarize: before the advent of the Fatimids, the *daʿwa* preached the appearance of a messianic Redeemer: the return of the Ismaʿili imam who would usher in the final messianic era, a time of peace and justice.[28] Thus, the first Fatimid caliph took the regnal name of "al-Mahdi," which literally meant "the Rightly-Guided of God."[29] However, al-Mahdi, as the first Fatimid caliph, redefined the expectations of the Ismaʿili movement and began to transfer the messianic expectations of the *daʿwa* onto his son, al-Qaʿim. Al-Mahdi did this first by giving al-Qaʿim a regnal title with messianic meaning; it meant 'the rising' and, in a tradition attributed to Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, it was said that the Qaʿim was a figure who would arise and set the stage for the return of the Imam.[30]

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[27] Brett, *Rise*, 107-8 and 115-120.

[28] Farhad Daftary, "Earliest Ismaʿilis" in *Shiʿism: The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 33*, ed. Etan Kohlberg (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2003), 265.

[29] Scholars have debated whether or not al-Mahdi's genealogical link with Muhammad b. Isma'il was forged. Heinz Halm argues that al-Mahdi's genealogy was entirely forged in order to provide him with the legitimacy to rule and credits these attempts to revise his genealogy to the rebellions that later rocked the *da'wa*. Halm, 158. Medieval heresiographers certainly asserted that it was. But, as will be discussed in the next chapter for Buyid claims to Sasanian genealogy: the truth of these claims were not significant. The important part was how these dynasties were trying to embody earlier forms of authority and legitimacy.

[30] Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism* (New York: SUNY Press, 1981), 62-66.

Second, al-Mahdi shifted the messianism of the movement onto al-Qaʿim with the names that were used to refer to them both in Fatimid *khutba*s. According to Ismaʿili prophecies, the returning Mahdi should bear the name of the Prophet Muhammad himself,[31] which was Abu al-Qasim Muhammad b. ʿAbd Allah. The use of the Prophet's name was an important signifier. Although al-Mahdi's original given name has been debated,[32] after his ascendance to the caliphate, he had his name read in the *khutba* as "ʿAbd Allah Abu Muhammad" and presented his son as "Abu al-Qasim Muhammad."[33] Thus, when al-Qaʿim's patronymic was appended, his full name became "Abu al-Qasim Muhammad b. ʿAbd Allah;" the same as that of the Prophet Muhammad. By giving al-Qaʿim this name, al-Mahdi diverted the messianic expectations of the movement onto his son and successor.[34]

Scholars have focused on the ʿAlid claims of the Fatimids, but the ways that the Fatimids also tried to embody the power and authority of the Abbasid caliphs have been ignored because these claims do not fit expectations of a Shiʿi dynasty. Thus, al-Mansur's choice of regnal title has not been discussed by modern scholars, despite the fact that this choice by the Fatimids was equally as important as their use of ʿAlid claims to power. Al-Mansur selected his regnal name in 946 when he became caliph—during the period he was under siege by the Khariji rebel Abu

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[31] Halm, Empire of the Mahdi, 154.
[32] Wladimir Ivanow believes that his name was deliberately corrupted by anti-Ismaʾili chroniclers. See Wladimir Ivanow, *Ismaʾili Tradition concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 77.
[33] Before this point, al-Qaʿim's name had been given as ʿAbd al-Rahman.
[34] Halm, 155.

Yazid. Al-Mansur literally means "the victorious," and perhaps the best known

holder of this title was the second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur (r. 754-775).

The histories of the two Mansurs had significant parallels. The Abbasid al-

Mansur also came to power in the midst of multiple rebellions[35] and was

remembered as the true founder of the Abbasid caliphate:[36] he consolidated

Abbasid power, established a stable bureaucracy based on a salaried army and an

efficient system of taxation, and founded the new Abbasid capital city of

Baghdad.[37] The Fatimid al-Mansur's reign paralleled his Abbasid namesake: he

came to power in the midst of local rebellions, which he defeated. He consolidated

Fatimid power and founded a new capital city, Mansuriyya, named after himself,[38]

which copied Baghdad, the Abbasid capital, in its circular layout.

The Abbasid capital of Baghdad was symbolic of Abbasid rule over the

Islamic world and their defeat of their competitors; it has been called an '*imago*

mundi' or 'image of the world'.[39] It was constructed in a circular pattern with its

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[35] ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAli, who was the uncle of al-Mansur, challenged al-Mansur's claim to the caliphate and led an armed rebellion. Al-Mansur had to obtain support from Abu Muslim who brought an army from Khurasan to fight 'Abd Allah's army. While Abu Muslims' forces were victorious, there were tensions between al-Mansur and Abu Muslim and al-Mansur had him assassinated in 755. Finally, al-Mansur also faced major ʿAlid uprisings during the beginning of his term: this most significant began in 762 and was led by Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah – beginning in Media, it spread northward.
[36] The Abbasid caliphate was founded by al-Mansur's predecessor, known as al-Saffah, 'the bloodletter'.
[37] *EOI2*, "al-Mansur."
[38] Mansuriyya was south of Qayrawan and served as the Fatimid capital from 948 until 973, when al-Muʿizz moved to Cairo. See Daftary, 147, for more info.
[39] This argument is best made in Charles Wendell's "Baghdad, Imago Mundi and Other Foundation-Lore," *IJMES* 2:2 (April 1971), 99-128.

four gates oriented on points midway between the cardinal directions—a perfect

geometric form, which the Fatimids imitated in their construction of Mansuriyya,

Cairo, and in their coinage. [40] In Baghdad, each gate represented aspects of Abbasid

superiority. The Khurasan Gate faced north-east; the gate itself came from Syria

and was claimed to be of Pharaonic origins, but more likely implied the Byzantine

construction.[41] The Kufa gate faced south-west, towards the holy city of Mecca; the

gate came from the Muslim garrison city of Kufa, constructed on the order of the

Umayyad governor of Iraq. The Sham Gate, which looked north-west, was made in

Baghdad itself. There is no record of the origin of the Basra Gate, which faced

south-east, but its name implies that it was from the Muslim garrison city of

Basra.[42] The provenance of both the Khurasan and Kufa gates demonstrated

Abbasid superiority over other major empires: the Byzantines and the Umayyad

caliphs of Syria (and, later, implied superiority over the Umayyads of Spain).

The design of the city itself presented the Abbasid caliphs as the successors

to the great emperors of the pre-Islamic world.[43] The avenues from the four gates

led directly through the city, dividing the city literally and conceptually into the

four quarters of the earth. The caliphal palace and the congregational mosque of

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[40] Sherif Anwar and Jere L. Bacharach, "Shiʿism and the Early Dinars of the Fatimid Imam-caliph al-Muʿizz li-din Allah (341–365/952–975): An Analytic Overview," *Al-Masaq*, 22: 3 (December 2010), 264 and 277-8.
[41] The Arabic term *firʿawn*, Pharaonic, was most often used broadly to mean 'tyrant or oppressor' and was likely intended to indicate the Byzantines. Wendell, 116.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 119.

the Abbasid caliph stood at the center of the crossroads.[44] Both the Byzantine and

Sasanian emperors used domed palaces and churches to show their closeness to

the powers of heaven; likewise, the Abbasid palace-mosque complex in Baghdad

was crowned with an impressive dome.[45] Thus, the domed Abbasid palace in the

center of their imperial city built to represent the world symbolically represented

the Abbasid view of themselves as dominating the crossroads of the world.[46]

The Fatimids copied the Abbasid imperial capital of Baghdad with their

own rival capitals. Of the first four Fatimid caliphs, only al-Qaʿim did *not* build a

capital city of his own. Al-Mahdi, al-Mansur, and al-Muʿizz built Mahdiyya,[47]

Mansuriyya,[48] and al-Qahira (Cairo), respectively, as palace cities separate from

the existing commercial centers (in *Ifriqiya*: Qayrawan; in Egypt: Fustat).[49] These

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[44] Ibid., 117.

[45] This was also an aspect of the Abbasids trying to compete with their previous Syrian Umayyad rivals – Muʿawiya's palace in Damascus, although it does not survive, was known for its impressive dome. Ibid., 117-8.

[46] Ibid., 120.

[47] Al-Mahdi founded his capital of Mahdiyya in 921. Mahdiyya was not located far from the former Aghlabid capital of Qayrawan, but it was directly on the Mediterranean Sea, which was significant for Fatimid naval competition with the Byzantines. Mahdiyya was built on the water. It was located on a spur projecting into the sea and there was a defensive wall constructed to protect this city. The gates of Mahdiyya, which were made from massive iron plates and decorated with lions, was considered a technical marvel. Mahdiyya contained two palaces, one for al-Mahdi and the other for his son and successor, al-Qa'im, in addition to houses for his courtiers, administrative buildings, underground storage for food and water, and one mosque. The treasury (*bayt al-mal*) and the Fatimid mint (*sikka*) were also contained within the precepts of Mahdiyya. For more detailed information about Mahdiyya, see Halm, 214.

[48] The construction of Mansuriyya was commissioned by the Fatimid caliph al-Mansur in 946. Mansuriyya was located very close to Qayrawan – only approximately half a mile away; al-Mansur had ordered it built on the site of his camp from the victorious battle with Abu Yazid. Mansuriyya itself means "The Victorious City." Reflecting the plan of Baghdad, Mansuriyya was also a round city, with the palace of the Caliph at the center, and the city containing a mint (*sikka*) and extensive storage. For more information about Mansuriyya, see Halm, 342-3.

[49] Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), 40.

capitals, like the Abbasid capital of Baghdad and the Umayyad capital of *Madinat al- Zahra*[50] in Spain, were intended to confer topographically the idea of the caliph as the center of a distinctly Islamic sacred landscape. Like Muslim shrines, these Islamic imperial capitals crafted a polyvalent web of religious and political associations.[51] The caliph in his triumphal capital was considered the earthly incarnation of the Creator and all three Fatimid cities placed the palace of the caliph in a physically exalted position.[52]

Cairo, and its two Fatimid predecessors—Mahdiyya and Mansuriyya in *Ifriqiyya*—followed existing patterns for imperial cities copied from Baghdad and Cordoba, which, in turn, had followed pre-Islamic precedents, such as the Sasanid capital of Ctesiphon. The Umayyads built their capital city, *Madinat al-Zahra*, as a challenge directed to the competing Fatimid and Abbasid caliphs, an "ideological construct" that adapted elements from their rivals in an effort to articulate Umayyad legitimacy.[53] In fact, the name "*Madinat al-Zahra*" itself was intended to directly challenge the Fatimids who were named after the Prophet's daughter Fatima, known as Fatima *al-Zahra*.

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[50] While Fatimid competition with the Abbasids was largely symbolic during the early years of the Fatimid caliphate, their competition with the Umayyads of Spain was much more direct. The Fatimids sent their missionaries into Umayyad-controlled Spain. In 917, the Umayyads sent supplies and military support to Berber groups in North Africa who were resistant to the Fatimids. For more extensive information of this Umayyad-Fatimid competition, see Janina Safran, "Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus: A Study in the Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy," *IJMES* 30: 2 (May 1998), 184-5.

[51] Mulder, 15.

[52] Sanders, 41.

[53] Janina M. Safran, *The Second Umayyad Caliphate: The Articulation of Caliphal Legitimacy in al-Andalus.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (2000).

Al-Qahira (Cairo), Egypt, the last and best-known of the Fatimid capitals, was built to mimic and surpass the Abbasid city of Baghdad. The name of the city itself, "al-Qahira," was "The Victorious," to commemorate the Fatimid victory over Egypt. Like Baghdad, Cairo was designed as a round city with four gates, with roads that symbolically divided the city into the 'four corners of the world.' Established by the fourth Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz, Cairo was originally called Mansuriyya; it shared the architectural style and layout of its earlier namesake in *Ifriqiya*.[54] Later sources recount that the caliph al-Muʿizz himself drew the plan for the palace; while this claim seems unlikely, it suggests the central significance of the city's plan to the Fatimid caliph's project of embodying the sacred power of the caliphate.

Fatimid victory in Egypt and the foundation of Cairo represented a great triumph for the Fatimid caliphs, both literally and figuratively against their rivals. The Fatimid court poet, Ibn Haniʿ (d. ca. 973), expressed the feelings of the court about the establishment of Cairo:

> We are brought by noble camels in pilgrimage to the sanctuary
> [*haram*] of the imam, across vast expanses of desert
> Our dust-covered locks are anointed by our coming to kiss the
> corner [of his palace]

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[54] Sanders, 40.

Will Paradise be permitted to me, now that I have seen one of its

open doors?[55]

As evident in Ibn Haniʿs poetry, the Fatimid capital city was imbued with

spiritual meaning. This perception is confirmed by the fact the caliph al-Muʿizz

carried the coffins of his ancestors, the first three Fatimid imams, with him from

Ifriqiya to Cairo in order to re-inter their bodies in the new Fatimid capital.[56] The

palace city of Cairo housed the palaces of the caliph and his successor, the

renowned Fatimid library, and the new Fatimid *madrasa*, al-Azhar, where the chief

Fatimid missionaries delivered lectures.[57]

Caliphal Authority as Symbolic Performance: the *Khutba*s of al-Mansur and

al-Muʿizz

In their transition from a millenarian movement to Muslim caliphs, the

Fatimids adopted known symbols of the authority of the Abbasid caliph in

Baghdad. Ritual was an important way that royal authority was crafted. For the

medieval Islamic state, the *khutba*, or Friday sermon, was one of the key

ceremonies, symbolic of the caliph's role as the leader of the Muslim community.

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[55] Ibn Haniʿ, *Diwan* (Cairo, 1933), no 9: lines 12, 13, and 15 as translated by Sanders, 41.
[56] Maqrizi, *Khitat*, 1: 407.
[57] Sanders, 43.

The Muslim audience had clear expectations about its structure and style.[58] Public Shiʿi *khutba*s were not known before the Fatimids but, over time, the Fatimid caliphs used the public ritual of the *khutba* as a key symbol of their authority. In doing so, the Fatimids followed pre-existing conventions for the *khutba* and mimicked the trappings of Abbasid authority.

By the Abbasid era, the *khutba* consisted of at least six formulaic elements. It began with a "*tahmid*" (exaltation) introduction that usually consisted of the name (*basmala*) and praise (*hamdala*) of God, followed by the testimony of faith (*shahada*), the glorification of God (*subhana*), an entreaty for God's aid (*istiʿana*), and the invocation of blessings on the Prophet Muhammad (*salawat*).[59] It ended with a prayer for forgiveness, which usually involved the phrase "I say these words and beg forgiveness from God for myself and for all believing men and women."[60]

Al-Qaʿim's *khutba*s possessed none of these formulaic elements, but Fatimid rhetoric changed after his reign. Al-Mansur gave his first recorded *khutba* in Mahdiyya[61] (the Fatimid capital built by and named after al-Mahdi) while the

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[58] From pre-Islamic times, a "*khutba*" was considered to be some form of "official discourse" that was extemporaneous and delivered orally to a large public audience. These qualities mean that not many *khutba*s have survived and the ones that have survived tend to be short and fragmentary. However, Tahera Qutbuddin argues that the *khutba*s did survive due to the value placed on the *khutba* as oratory: Arabs endeavored to memorize and transmit *khutba*s that were considered to be extraordinary. Thus, while the surviving *khutba*s are fragmentary, they still provide "an approximate picture of the typology and characteristics of the genre in its early stages." See Qutbuddin, 180 and 186-8.

[59] Ibid., 205-6.

[60] Ibid., 205.

[61] Al-Qa'im was dead, but the new Fatimid caliph al-Mansur hid this fact until stability was restored to the capital.

Fatimids were under siege by Abu Yazid's forces. Comparisons between the earlier *khutba*s of al-Qaʿim with the later *khutba*s of al-Mansur and al-Muʿizz reveal that the *khutba*s of the Fatimid caliph al-Mansur conformed to expected patterns whereas the *khutba*s of al-Qaʿim did not.

Al-Mansur's *khutba* from 947 reflects how the Fatimid caliphs shifted the form of their rhetoric to conform with audience expectations of a caliphal *khutba*. It began with a traditional *tahmid* introduction praising God and contained the Muslim testimony of faith and the invocation of the Prophet Muhammad:

> In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God who created the heavens and the earth, and made the darkness and the light; yet those who do not believe regard others as equal,[62] a god worshipped and a lord praised. We take none other than Him as God and we do not associate with Him anything.

> Praise be to God who 'holds up the heaven that it not fall to the early other than by His leave'; truly God is kind and compassionate with the people'.[63]

> God is Great! God is Great! There is no god but God. And God is great. Praise be to God!

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[62] Qur'an 6:1.
[63] Ibid., 22:65.

....I bear witness that there is no god but God, alone, without associate, and I testify that Muhammad was His servant and His chosen messenger....God bless him among those who were first and those who were later. [Bless also] his family, the pure and the chaste, the chosen legatees, the most distinguished rightly guided ones.

....May God protect us and you through devotion and employ us and you in doing what He wants and is pleasing to Him.[64]

It is noteworthy (although not surprising) that al-Mansur also sought blessings for the family of the Prophet. While praising the *Ahl al-Bayt* has often been identified as a specifically Shiʿi trait, as discussed above, the family of the Prophet was revered by all Muslims.

In the second *khutba* of the same speech, these *tahmid* portions are clear:[65]

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, the one who unifies by His overlordship, the one who is alone in His absolute unity, the First, eternal, the Living, everlasting. I praise Him with His praises, all of them for the least of His favors and for the great, a praise requiring praise for praise, for the good fortune from Him and the guidance.

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[64] Al-Mansur, *khubta*, 13-15 (Arabic), 101-3 (English).

[65] As mentioned above, the "tahmid" in the introduction to the *khutba* generally consisted of the name (*basmala*) and praise (*hamdala*) of God, followed by the testimony of faith (*shahada*), the glorification of God (*subhana*), an entreaty for God's aid (*isti'ana*), and the invocation of blessings on the Prophet Muhammad (*salawat*).

And I testify that there is no god but God, alone, without associate, in fidelity to His absolute oneness and in acknowledgement of His lordship.

I bear witness that Muhammad and His servant, chosen by Him, and messenger whom He sent. His prophesy is complete with revelation and the announcement of the proof is in the truth of his message, may God bless and keep him and raise high his renown, give him peace and honor.[66]

Although this *tahmid* does not contain an entreaty for God's aid (*istiʿana*), the introduction conforms very closely to the other conventions for the *khutba* mentioned above. There is a clear invocation of God's name (*basmala*) and praise of God (*hamdala*) along with an equally clear testimony of faith (*shahada*) with the glorification of God (*subhana*) and invocation of blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (*salawat*). The other *khutba*s of al-Mansur have similar openings that follow the expected conventions of the opening of the *khutba*.

During the reign of al-Mansur, Fatimid *khutba*s began to follow expected conventions more closely. This development became more evident in the formulaic pattern with which the Fatimid caliphs ended their *khutba*s. As mentioned above, the convention from Abbasid times was for the *khutba* to end with a prayer for forgiveness, which usually incorporated the phrase "I say these words and beg

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[66] Al-Mansur, *khutba*, 14-15 (Arabic), 103-4 (English).

forgiveness from God for myself and for all believing men and women."[67] The first *khutba* of al-Qaʾim contained no such prayer for forgiveness, but, rather, ended with an attack on the Umayyads.[68] Al-Qaʾim's second *khutba* also ended with an attack instead of any kind of prayer for forgiveness:

> Fight, may God have mercy on you, the partisans of error, jackals of
> greed, moths of the fire, and pursue them to the ends of the earth,
> the extremities of the land, on every horizon, until God makes right
> the truth and wrong the false, even though the polytheists abhor it.[69]

Attacks upon state enemies were fairly common in early Islamic *khutba*s, but the Abbasid convention was that the *khutba* should close with a prayer for forgiveness.

Beginning with al-Mansur, the Fatimid *khutba*s adopted this formulaic prayer for forgiveness at the end of their speeches. They did not follow the precise pattern of Abbasid *khutba*s, but the similarity is evident; the Fatimid *khutba*s nearly always used phrasing very close to this:

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[67] Qutbuddin, 205.
[68] Al-Qaʾim, *khutba,* 5.
[69] Ibid., 7 (Arabic), 94 (English).

O God, forgive the believers, male and female, and the Muslims, men

and women, the living among them and the dead.[70]

This prayer for forgiveness, with minor differences in phrasing, is found in

four of al-Mansur's six surviving *khutba*s.[71] It is also found in the two surviving

*khutba*s from al-Muʿizz.[72] Conforming more directly to existing formulas for

*khutba*s allowed the Fatimid caliphs to embody the authority of the Abbasid

caliphs and conform to audience expectations of the caliphate.

Combating Criticism from Sunni Jurists: The Fatimids as Ideal Muslim Rulers

The Fatimid caliphs who ruled after al-Qaʿim were pragmatic: to combat

critiques from local religious scholars, they contended that they better fulfilled the

expectations of the Muslim caliph, attacking local Sunni Abbasid proxies for anti-

Islamic behaviors. This type of rejoinder would have been particularly resonant in

North Africa, an area dominated by the Sunni Maliki school of jurisprudence. The

very strict Maliki doctrine required 'commanding the right and forbidding the

wrong,' an injunction that included a rule by Malik (d. 795) making it the duty of

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[70] Al-Mansur, *khutba*, 17 (Arabic), 105-6 (English).
[71] In addition to the above, see also Mansur, *khutba*s, 32, 40, 42 (Arabic).
[72] Al-Muʿizz, *khutba*, 40 and 42 (Arabic).

every Muslim to confront any leader transgressing the bounds of Islam.[73] Although

this injunction was placed upon all Muslims, the Malikis particularly emphasized it.

Such dutiful confrontations are clear in the earliest rhetoric of the Fatimids.

For example, al-Qaʿim's *khutba*s criticized subordinates of the Abbasid caliph for

failing to follow even the basic precepts of Islam, with a particular abhorrence of

"wine, women, and song:"[74]

> And yet among them [the Abbasids] a woman brings them wine from
> every valley and region on the backs of horses and in the bottoms of
> ships….You have seen their governors of cities, how one of them
> mounts the wooden planks of the Prophet's *minbar* (pulpit) to
> preach to the people but does not preach to himself. Instead, he
> descends from that position and inquires of those in that land for
> male and female singers, *tunbur* and *ʿud* players,[75] thieves, short
> change artists, and shavers of weights so that those can be brought
> to serve him. God curses the unjust and prepares for them a blazing
> fire. That man is someone who neither commands the good nor
> prohibits the bad.[76]

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[73] For a more extensive discussion of the significance of rebuking leaders for sinning against Islam, see Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 73-82. In his more popular book on this topic, Cook also has an extensive discussion of the importance of the state's role in "forbidding wrong" as a significant means of constructing its own legitimacy, especially in sectarian contexts. See Cook, *Forbidding Wrong in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 65-72.

[74] Ibid.

[75] There are many kinds of *tanburs*, but the term generally refers to a stringed instrument similar to a long-necked lute. The *ʿud* (more commonly transliterated as *oud*) is similar to the traditional lute.

[76] Al-Qa'im, *khutba*, 3 (Arabic), 89 (English).

Al-Qaʾim accused the Abbasid agents who controlled the holy city of Medina, the site of the Prophet Muhammad's tomb, of preaching while patronizing (and thereby condoning) the activities of female singers, musicians, and thieves. In this statement, he directly charged that "that man," the official who led the sermon in Medina in the name of the Abbasid caliph, "is someone who neither commands the good nor prohibits the bad." This charge was a direct strike at the Malikis of North Africa and their strict doctrine of "commanding the right and forbidding the wrong." It asserted the clear argument that the Fatimids were better Muslims than these Abbasid appointees.

The *khutba*s of al-Mansur and al-Muʿizz emphasized Fatimid enforcement of Islamic ritual and legal obligations. Al-Mansur's *khutba* in 947 for ʿ*Eid al-Adha*, The Feast of the Sacrifice,[77] expounded on the Fatimid view of the significance of the holiday and its obligations:

> Most truly this day of yours is a sacred day during a sacred month,
> made more significant than other days, a day of the greater
> pilgrimage, in which God, the hallowed and exalted, tested Abraham
> his friend. He was redeemed in it from slaughtering his son, may God
> bless them both, and God imposed on the whole people of Islam the
> obligation of pilgrimage to His sacred house, which He made a refuge

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[77] ʿ*Eid al-Adha* commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. While Christians and Jews believe that it was Isaac who Abraham brought to Mount Arafat, Muslims believe that it was his son Isma'il (Ishmael).

for the people and a place of safety.[78] So draw closer to God the Exalted in it by means of what He has commanded you to do. The most worthy of what brings you to Him is the female of the camel, and the female of cattle, and the ram of sheep. Steer clear of sick animals and those with defects in the eyes or ears, and those of them deformed by excess in its creation or missing something. They will not be accepted on your part. This is in accord with the practice of your Prophet, may God bless him and keep him and his family.[79]

Al-Mansur repeated this address during the *khutba* for ʿ*Eid al-Adha*, in 948, with more detail about the significance of ritual slaughter:

From livestock of the smaller animals—the most excellent of all livestock being the female of the camel, the female of bovines, and the ram of sheep—he who sacrifices the young of a goat, for that he will not be rewarded, but for a young ram he will be. All animals slaughtered prior to the prayer are permissible meat, and after the prayer are an acceptable sacrifice. The perfection of the sacrificed animal is soundness of eyes and ears. Avoid the sick one and the deformed, either in having extra limbs or not having some. Sharpen the blade for this purpose and treat the animal gently while slaughtering. 'So when they are down slaughtered on their sides, eat of them and feed he who is readily satisfied and the indigent; in that

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[78] Reference to Qur'an 2: 125.
[79] Al-Mansur, *khutba*, 19 (Arabic), 108 (English).

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way have We made animals subject to you that you may render thanks.'[80]

These addresses show the Fatimids focusing on legal issues in order to combat accusations of heresy aimed against them by local religious scholars.[81]

Once in power, the Fatimids appealed to a diverse population of Muslims. For the first time, they were expected to take into account the diversity of urban populations. Thus they attempted to undermine the authority of local dissenters, such as the Sunni ʿ*ulama'* of *Ifriqiya*, by emphasizing how the Fatimids followed the traditions of the Prophet as their Sunni predecessors had not. In the *khutba*s, this theme appeared as an emphasis on how the Fatimid caliphs closely followed the dictates of Islamic law. In the Fatimid-sponsored historical narratives, the theme is manifest in portrayals of the Aghlabids as rank hypocrites and violators of Islamic law.

Fatimid historical narratives composed after the defeat of the rebellion of Abu Yazid focus predominately on how the Fatimids embodied the spirit of the caliph, acting as ideal Muslim leaders should. Rather than asserting Fatimid authority by referring to its foundations in the Shiʿi Imamate or in Fatimid claims

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[80] Ibid, 29 (Arabic), 121-122 (English).
[81] The last section in Qur'an 22:36. It is very possible that, in these explanations of the legal ritual requirements of the ʿEid sacrifice, the Fatimids were highlighting similarities between the way that Sunnis and Shiʿis commemorated the ʿEid holiday. The Maliki scholar, al-Qayrawani, actually highlights the same rules for ritual slaughter in his treatise on Maliki *fiqh*. Al-Qayrawani, *al-Risala*, ed. Mahmoud Matraji (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar El-Fikr, 1994), 29.1e.

to be ʿAlids, the historical narratives present the Fatimids as superior to the Abbasid caliphs. The Fatimids are more appropriate successors to the legacy of the early Islamic community because they *act* as better Muslims. In his historical narrative, Jawhar, the Fatimid eunuch, portrayed the Fatimid caliphs as deeply concerned with the norms of Islamic practice, most of which would have been completely compatible with Sunni law. For example, Jawhar related how, when he traveled east with al-Qaʿim, that caliph scrupulously ensured that he did not break any precepts of Islamic law:

> "O Jawhar, do not eat any meat other than the permissible meat that
> we provide for you from our kitchen, for all that is sold in the
> markets of the army is foul, because the soldiers commit
> impermissible acts and have found ways to perpetrate plunder."[82]

 Al-Qaʿim's commentary on Islamic law appeared in Jawhar's narrative as a direct address, further emphasizing the significance of his moral stance. Jawhar added that al-Al-Qaʿim punished Fatimid soldiers who broke these aspects of Islamic law by pillaging the belongings of those who had surrendered.[83]

Further, the collection of extant legal, diplomatic, and personal letters from the Fatimid caliphs that is included with Jawhar's biography emphasizes the

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[82] *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar*, 32 (English) and 17 (Arabic pagination). Hamid Haji translated the *Sirat al-Ustadh Jawdhar* as *Inside the Immaculate Portal* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012) and, in this chapter, I am using his translations. I will cite both the Arabic and English.
[83] Ibid.

Fatimids' attempts to fulfill the highest expectations of ideal Muslim rulers. For example, most of the letters are concerned with the efficient and effective administration of Fatimid territory. They include orders from al-Mansur punishing provincial governors for failing to protect caravans from marauders;[84] missives about the need to prosecute fraud;[85] directives about the need to make regular inspections of coinage to prevent corruption;[86] letters about the importance of arbitrating disputes fairly[87] and punishing provincial governors who abused the people under their jurisdiction;[88] accounts of the importance of respecting the sanctity of mosques;[89] as well as letters about punishing unscrupulous tax collectors[90] and state officials for drinking.[91] In other words, this correspondence, predominately about conducting the business of an Islamic state, showed the Fatimids following the best norms for the behavior of Muslim leaders.

In their narratives about the founding of the dynasty, tenth-century Fatimid authors contrast Fatimid attempts to follow the best examples of Islamic rule with

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[84] Ibid., 64 (English) and 54 (Arabic)
[85] Ibid., 86 (English) and 81 (Arabic).
[86] Ibid., 91-2 (English) and 87-8 (Arabic).
[87] Ibid., 98-9 (English) and 96-7 (Arabic).
[88] Ibid., 102 (English) and 100-1 (Arabic).
[89] Ibid., 106-7 (English) and 106 (Arabic). In this example, the problem was that the director of Fatimid storehouses in Mahdiyya had, apparently, been storing supplies in a mosque near his home. Al-Mansur was shocked and ordered al-Ustadh Jawdhar to correct this: "Write to him [the director of Fatimid storehouses] that he should not approach mosques and that he should not store (anything) in them, because the advantage gained from doing so would not compensate the harm resulting from it. Respecting mosques brings great merit and an immense reward, while disrespecting them brings the opposite."
[90] Ibid., 122-4 (English) and 125-127 (Arabic).
[91] Ibid., 127 (English) and 131 (Arabic).

examples of the Aghlabids as manifest violators of Islamic legal norms who have

failed to teach the standards of Islamic faith and practice to the people of North

Africa. Jaʿfar, in his memoir, tells an astounding story about one of his encounters

with the Muslims of North Africa during his journey with al-Mahdi. While on the

journey, al-Mahdi sent Jaʿfar to find a lamb to slaughter to celebrate ʿEid al-Adha:

> I went to look for [a lamb] and a local inhabitant offered me one,
> inciting me to come to his house. I went with him, and he took me
> into his house where I found a dog on a strong chain, with reddened
> eyes (ready to attack). The owner said to me that it was then two
> months that he had been feeding it with dates. He kept it chained so
> that it could not move—its skin had become tight on it because of
> the great amount of fat. It appears that the local people eat dogs,
> applying to them the name of lambs. So the dog jumped upon me on
> its chain—a dog fearsome as a lion when it attacks. I was sure that it
> would break the chain, tearing my stomach. So I fled for all that I was
> worth, out of the house, despairing of my life, while the owner was
> shouting (to return), but I did not dare to do this. I felt terror
> stricken until I entered the house of al-Mahdi half-mad, with hands
> on my heart. When he saw me much frightened, with pale face, he
> asked me, who was chasing me? I replied: "My lord, curse be upon
> the people of this town!"[92]

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[92] *Sirat Jaʿfar*, 116-7.

According to Jaʿfar, the Muslims of North Africa had been so poorly taught by the Sunni Aghlabids that they did not understand that eating dogs was forbidden! In addition, Jaʿfar's story can be compared to the Fatimid *khutba*s discussed above: the Fatimid caliphs scrupulously emphasized the ritual obligations of slaughter when celebrating *ʿEid*, while the people of North Africa thought that it was appropriate to substitute dog in place of lamb for the same celebration. Both the *khutba*s and Ja'far praise Fatimid practice, the former explicitly, the latter implicitly. This is a clear castigation of the leadership of the Sunni Aghlabids, who had failed to teach the Muslims of *Ifriqiya* about the basic precepts of Islamic faith and practice.

Further, there was more to Ja'far's story than his shock at the practices of rural North African Muslims. The issue of eating dog was a significant one for Muslims. The Malikis, who were the dominant group of Sunnis in *Ifriqiya* and had enjoyed the support of the Sunni Aghlabids, were known as the only Sunni school of jurisprudence that allowed Muslims to own dogs and keep them in the house.[93] Some Maliki jurists even argued that dogs were not intrinsically impure, only that they frequently came in contact with impurities.[94] This belief led sometimes to the practice amongst Malikis that Muslims could eat the meat caught by hunting dogs,

[93] Al-'Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari*, 4: 426 as cited in Anver Munaver Emon, "Negotiating between utility and purity in medieval Islamic law: a case study of the dog in early Islamic legal debates," MA Thesis, University of Texas (1999), 48.
[94] Abu Bakr b. al-ʿArabi, *ʿAridah*, 1-2: 135-136 as cited in Emon, 81-3.

even if they had eaten from it.[95] Despite the differences in opinion about the

impurity of dogs, the question of the uncleanliness of dogs is a major issue in Sunni

law and the Malikis held a relatively lax position.[96] Thus, Jaʿfar's story about

Muslims trying to feed him dog was also a castigation of the Sunni Malikis of

Qayrawan.

Representing the Sacrality of the Earliest Muslim Community through

Narration of the Past

For medieval Muslims, stories about the past did not necessarily reflect the

'truth' of the past, but were one of several ways that people made sense of their

place in sacred history and crafted a distinct notion of the Islamic past.[97] The

Fatimids sponsored historical narratives of their own rise to power in order to

propagate an image of themselves and their dynasty that would be recognized as

legitimate—and even sacred—by an audience of medieval Muslims. These

narratives included well-worn tropes from Islamic history: presenting the

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[95] Malik b. Anas, *Muwatta*, 25.2.5a-8.

[96] For more information on Muslim attitudes about dogs overall, see Richard C. Foltz, *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures* (Oneworld, 2006), 129-143.

[97] Ruth Morse, in *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), reminds her readers of the important fact, often forgotten, that the medieval audience had different expectations from a text than modern readers. Historical texts were not necessarily written with the goal of conveying information and historical narratives were evaluated for cogency and literary proficiency before they were judged for veracity. Further, the audiences of medieval histories were expected to possess the education required to strip historical accounts of their rhetorical flourishes to reveal the underlying truth, which were often didactic lessons drawn from the canvas of history.

Stephennie Mulder has discussed the ways in which medieval Muslims experienced sacred history "through contact with holy places, by means of *ziyara*." Mulder, 234-240.

Fatimids as the legitimate successors of the earliest Muslim community, and using 'miracles' to demonstrate how the Fatimids were chosen by God.[98]

A major theme in narratives of Fatimid origins was identifying and interpreting the signs of God's support of the Ismaʿili/Fatimid mission.[99] In the conquest literature, one of the signs of God's support was the tremendous amount of booty amassed by the Muslim forces. Thus, in his account of the Fatimid conquest of North Africa, al-Nuʿman emphasized it. For example, describing how Abu ʿAbd Allah's forces defeated the Muzata Berbers, al-Nuʿman wrote that so much booty was taken that prices collapsed: a camel previously worth twenty dinars was now sold for one dinar or traded for five onions.[100] Readers and auditors would recognize this focus on booty as a clear sign of God's support for the Fatimid cause and of their moral superiority over their enemies.

Other historical accounts emphasized the Fatimids as the legitimate heirs of the earliest community of the Prophet Muhammad by repeating the idea that al-Mahdi, in particular, and the Fatimids overall, were supported both by God and even by Abbasid officials. The memoir of al-Mahdi's chamberlain, Jaʿfar, focused on

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[98] For a detailed discussion of these tropes, see Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 124-155.

[99] Sumaiya Hamdani noted in passing that al-Nuʿman's *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* "commemorated the achievements of the Ismaʿili imam and his *awliyaʿ* in his own time. And just as early *futuh* constructed a paradigm of Islamic triumph, so also did the *Iftitah* of Ismaʿili Shiʿi triumph," but did not explore this topic further. See Sumaiya Hamdani, *Between Revolution and State: The Path to Fatimid Statehood* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 95.

[100] Qadi al-Nuʿman, *Risalat Iftitah al-Daʿwah: risalah fi zuhur al-daʿwah al-ʿUbaydiyah al-Fatimiyah*, ed. Wadad al-Qadi (Bayrut: Dar al-Thaqafah, 1970), 108-9. Translations from *Iftitah al-Daʿwa* are my own.

this theme. In recounting the tale of al-Mahdi's perilous journey from Salamiyya, Syria to the Maghrib, pursued by Abbasid forces, Jaʿfar repeatedly emphasized how al-Mahdi narrowly avoided capture. These 'near misses' implied God's support of al-Mahdi's cause and there were many: al-Mahdi narrowly missed being captured by the army of the governor of Salamiyya in Salamiyya;[101] al-Mahdi only avoided being discovered in Tiberias because a local missionary met him on the road to warn him to not enter the town;[102] the governor of Ramla, who was a supporter of al-Mahdi, received orders to arrest al-Mahdi while the imam was staying with him—but warned al-Mahdi to flee the town;[103] when al-Mahdi was traveling in North Africa, Berbers attacked and looted his caravan but did not realize who he was;[104] the Aghlabids arrested one of al-Mahdi's missionaries in Qayrawan (Abu al-ʿAbbas, who was the brother of Abu ʿAbd Allah), but the prisoner refused to reveal al-Mahdi's whereabouts;[105] during the journey, al-Mahdi forced his caravan to continue on to Sijilmasa, despite the fact that his household wanted to remain longer in Tuzar. Later, it was revealed that a messenger who had al-Mahdi's description had reached Tuzar on that very day;[106] finally, al-Mahdi was eventually captured by the governor of Sijilmasa after one of his servants betrayed

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[101] Jaʿfar al-Hajib, "Sirat Jaʿfar," in *Bulletin of The Faculty of Arts of the University of Egypt* 4:2 (December 1936), 110-1. Translations from the *Sirat Jaʿfar* are my own.
[102] Ibid., 111-112.
[103] Ibid. 112.
[104] Ibid., 115.
[105] Ibid., 116.
[106] Ibid.,118-9.

him under torture,[107] but he was rescued by Abu ʿAbd Allah.[108] In these episodes where al-Mahdi repeatedly escaped Abbasid officials, Jaʿfar highlighted how, at nearly every turn, al-Mahdi was saved because other Abbasid officials supported him: they warned him and saved him. Thus, Fatimid authors explicitly claimed that officials working for the Abbasid state supported al-Mahdi and the Ismaʿili movement. Implicitly, Fatimid authors insinuated that Abbasid officials recognized the Abbasid caliphs as illegitimate. Such positions, set out in the respected Muslim historiographical genres of memoir, must been seen as aggressive counters to the Sunni Abbasid historiography from this period.

One of the most significant ways that the Fatimids claimed supremacy over their rivals was by retelling the story of the rise of the Fatimids in a form that paralleled the narratives of the original Islamic conquests. These helped the Fatimids personify the authority of the earliest Muslim community. In *Iftitah al-Daʿwa*, al-Nuʿman presented the rise of the Fatimids as a metaphorical reprise of the Islamic conquests.[109] It was logical for the Fatimids to pattern their rise to power in the *Maghrib* in this way, for it would have been instantly recognized by a broader Muslim audience. Borrowing the patterns of the conquest narratives

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[107] Ibid., 123-4.
[108] Ibid., 124-6.
[109] For more information on the *topoi* of *futuh* literature, see Albrecht Noth's formative work, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study,* 2nd ed, in collaboration with Lawrence I. Conrad and translated by Michael Bonner (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc) as well as Fred Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing,* Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc. (1998) and Hugh Kennedy, "Remembrance of Things Past," the forward to *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In*, Philadelphia: Da Capo Press (2007).

would help those who heard the story reach the conclusions that the Fatimids

sought: to equate the Fatimid victory with the authority and legacy of the Prophet

Muhammad. Al-Nuʿman did not emphasize aspects of Fatimid legitimacy that

would have only appealed to an Ismaʿili audience, such as the links between the

Fatimid caliphs and the family of the Prophet Muhammad. Neither did he make a

direct argument for Fatimid authority. Instead, he likened the Fatimid conquest of

North Africa in the tenth century to the Islamic conquests of the seventh

century.[110]

     The early Islamic conquest narratives (*futuh)* are a genre of literature

describing the Islamic conquests of the seventh and early eighth centuries. Al-

Nuʿman drew upon well-known *topoi* from the conquest literature, such as the

cosmic battle of a poor but pious Muslim army confronting the extraordinarily

wealthy but morally-corrupt powers of late antiquity,[111] to portray the Fatimids as

the legitimate heirs to the authority of the Prophet. The similarity between al-

Nuʿman's history and stories of the Islamic conquests placed the Fatimid victory

over the Aghlabids, clients of the Abbasid caliph, within the larger symbolic frame

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[110] Furthermore, al-Nuʿman did not focus his narrative on the first Fatimid Caliph al-Mahdi and his perilous journey from Syria to North Africa. Focusing on the Imam would have, of course, appealed to an Ismaʿili audience. But it would have had less rhetorical traction with a broader Muslim audience which needed to be convinced of the legitimacy and authority of the Fatimid Imam-Caliph. Instead, he focused his account on the *daʿi* who conquered the *Maghrib*, Abu ʿAbd Allah, who had an already established reputation for piety in *Ifriqiya*.
[111] Thomas Sizgorich, "Do Prophets Come with a Sword?," *The American Historical Review* 112:4 (Oct 2007), available from http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/112.4/sizgorich.html, (accessed on 1 May 2009), 3.

of the Islamic struggle against unbelief while reminding people of their recent victory over the Khariji rebel Abu Yazid.

The early hero of the Ismaʿili missionary movement in North Africa was Abu ʿAbd Allah (d. 911), the missionary who won the allegiance of the Kutama Berber and conquered the *Maghrib* for the Fatimids. Thus, instead of emphasizing the authority of the Fatimid caliphs, al-Nuʿman presented Abu ʿAbd Allah as an ideal Muslim, especially in contrast with the Aghlabid amirs. Later in his narrative, al-Nuʿman symbolically transferred the authority of Abu ʿAbd Allah to the Fatimid caliphs.[112]

Within the existing conquest literature, such as in the accounts of Ibn ʿAbd al- Hakam (d. 871), Ibn Aʿtham (d. 926), and al-Tabari (d. 923),[113] the Byzantines and Sassanids are often portrayed as trying to tempt the Muslim armies with gifts and wealth or to overawe them with depictions of their own luxury.[114] Similarly, al-Nuʿman depicted the Aghlabids as trying to use their tremendous wealth to ensnare the population of North Africa and defeat the righteous Fatimid armies. Al-Nuʿman related time and again how Ziyadat Allah used the Aghlabid fortunes to try to defeat the Fatimids, but always failed. He repeatedly passed out gold coins,

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[112] The role of Abu ʿAbd Allah was also quite complex. While he brought victory to the Fatimids, he later rebelled against the first Fatimid caliph, al-Mahdi, and was assassinated. Yet, al-Nuʿman could not simply denigrate Abu ʿAbd Allah: he was the hero of the Kutama Berber, the backbone of the Fatimid military, and fairly universally acknowledged for his piety and asceticism. Thus, al-Nuʿman both praised Abu 'Abd Allah's leadership and castigated his rebellion against al-Mahdi.
[113] Sizgorich, 9.
[114] Ibid., 8. Sizgorich links Roman practices of gift-giving to long-standing Byzantine diplomatic practices when dealing with their Arab tribal clients. See also Hugh Kennedy's discussion of the conquests.

weapons, and robes of honor in order to attract support. In the force that Ziyadat

Allah first sent against Abu ʿAbd Allah, Nuʿman described the vastly larger and

better prepared Aghlabid forces:

> [Ziyadat Allah] sent out the army with him and gathered troops
> reaching 40,000 men, between cavalry and infantry. The dispatch of
> such a big and powerful force of the Aghlabids was not known before
> their coming to *Ifriqiya*. He sent with him many loads of money,
> robes of honor, and weapons….He ordered Ibn Habashi to give
> generous gifts to the tribes on his way and win over their chiefs with
> the loads and the robes of honor.[115]

This kind of description of the Aghlabid forces harkened back to tropes

used in the conquest literature at the time of the earliest Islamic conquests, such as

the victory of the small, ill-equipped Muslim army against the full might of imperial

Persia at the Battle of Qadisiyya (636).[116] Not only were the Aghlabid forces

showered with money and supplies, but Ziyadat Allah also provided money to use

to seduce the tribes of *Ifriqiya*. Al-Nuʿman's depiction of Ziyadat Allah's need to

resort to bribery with his own troops implied serious legitimacy problems for the

Aghlabids. Despite all this, the troops of Ziyadat Allah were, of course, defeated by

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[115] Al-Nuʿman, 169.
[116] For a discussion of the Battle of Qadisiyya (636) in the Islamic historical memory, see Kennedy, 108.

the pious forces of Abu ʿAbd Allah. These victories despite overwhelming odds

implied divine support, just as it did in the *futuh* literature.

In al-Nuʿman's account, despite mounting losses, Ziyadat Allah did not

change his strategy of lavishing money and gifts upon the people of *Ifriqiya*. His

largesse, says al-Nuʿman, was a response to the growing rumors of Abu ʿAbd

Allah's piety, and did not reflect his own licentiousness. While his money could

silence the criticism against him, it could not bring victory. That was a sure sign of

his corruption as a leader:

> [Ziyadat Allah] called to the towns by profusely giving gifts to the
> infantry and the cavalry and he sent parties of men to the chief
> towns and garrisons. He ordered the members of his family, all his
> courtiers, and his men to head out with him. A great army gathered
> to him. People came to him from everywhere to request gifts and he
> began to sit under a dome in Raqqada called the Dome of the Parade.
> Dinars were poured forth in front of him. The people of the towns
> were reviewed before him and he gave them gifts. If one passed him
> that pleased him, scoop by scoop he would pick up dinars with a
> plate in front of him that was wide enough for about fifty dinars. And
> he would give these to him. The news that he was giving [gifts] with
> a plate spread and people came to him from all directions.[117]

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[117] Al-Nuʿman, 199.

Al-Nuʿman frequently repeated these descriptions of Ziyadat Allah's attempts to buy the loyalty of the people of *Ifriqiya*; they became a refrain within the story of the Fatimid conquest. But no matter how many times Ziyadat Allah distributed gold to the tribes of *Ifriqiya*, his money could not overcome the piety of the Fatimids, just as the Byzantines had not been able to bribe the Muslim armies of the earliest conquests.

Al-Nuʿman's goal was not only to establish the legitimacy and authority of the Fatimid Imam and caliph, but it was to do so in opposition to the Abbasid caliph, who was the ultimate rival for leadership of the Islamic world. But the Fatimids were reluctant to attack the Abbasid caliphs directly. Instead, al-Nuʿman attacked the Aghlabids, while reminding his audience that the Aghlabids were the representatives of the Abbasids in North Africa.

So, for example, al-Nuʿman expressly linked Aghlabid Ziyadat Allah with the Abbasid caliph, thereby tarnishing the reputation of the Abbasids with Ziyadat Allah's corruption and vice. The links could be complex and extensive. In one example, al-Nuʿman reported that an envoy from the Abbasid Caliph al-Muktafi (r. 902-908) came to Ziyadat Allah, bestowed gifts and robes of honor, and presented a letter to be read aloud from the mosques. In this letter, al-Muktafi praised Ziyadat Allah extensively:

> I have already told you of the situation of Ziyadat Allah b. ʿAbd Allah
> in terms of friendship, sincerity, and adherence to the Commander of

the Faithful, and pursuing his path, imitating his example, abiding by his obligation, following his oath, his good conduct, kindness to the subjects, and establishing justice….Whoever's conduct follows the example of Ziyadat Allah, his relationship is certain, and his tie is close with the Commander of the Faithful.[118]

Not only did al-Nuʿman describe al-Muktafi as praising Ziyadat Allah. He also claimed that the Abbasid caliph had praised Ziyadat Allah as a good Muslim and as a sincere friend of the Abbasids. Thus, al-Nuʿman thereby attacked the Abbasid claim to be the legitimate leaders of the Islamic world.

Conclusion

The Fatimid articulation of their right to rule was more complex than a Shiʿi state attempting to rule over a Sunni majority. Fatimid rhetoric may have begun as aggressive and hostile towards non-Ismaʿilis, but after the rebellion of Abu Yazid—which saw Khariji rebels allying with 'orthodox' Maliki Sunni religious scholars in Qayrawan—the Fatimid caliph al-Mansur made drastic changes to how he performed the role of the Fatimid caliph. In this, al-Mansur sought to copy the Abbasid caliphs and embody their sacred power in a way that would more effectively resonate with local populations. The next chapter will argue that the

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[118] Ibid., 196.

Buyids also made these types of practical, polyvalent appeals that do not fit into a simplistic binary of Sunni-Shiʿi hostility.

Chapter Four: ʿAdud al-Dawla's Hybrid Forms of Authority as Buyid Amir

When ʿAdud al-Dawla returned to Baghdad, "the Caliph al-Taʿi went out to meet him with the whole of the resident army and all the nobles and commoners. His entry took place on June 30th [979]. He passed along the Western side [of Baghdad] with his army in perfect order after a series of arches had been erected which stretched between his camp…to the palace at the other end of town where he took up his quarters….An order was issued by the Caliph al-Taʿi to his deputy ministers in the public mosques of Baghdad that ʿAdud al-Dawla's name should be mentioned from the pulpits immediately after his own. Letters to this effect were dispatched to them and it was further ordered that drums should be beaten at his gate at prayer times. These are two distinctions attained by ʿAdud al-Dawla and by no other monarch who had preceded him."

-*The Experience of Nations*, al-Miskawayh[1]

ʿAdud al-Dawla (d. 983), a Persian Shiʿi tribal leader, entered Baghdad in 979 and was appointed the *Amir al-Umara*, prince of princes, by the Sunni Abbasid caliph al-Taʿi (r. 974-991).[2] ʿAdud al-Dawla arose from an obscure tribe in the

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[1] Ahmad ibn Muhammad Miskawayh, *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate: Original Chronicles of the fourth Islamic century*, trans. and ed. D.S. Margoliouth (Oxford: Blackwell, 1920), 2: 395-6 (Arabic) and 5: 435 (English). Miskawayh's original chronicle *Tajarib al-Umam* (The Experience of Nations), was edited and translated by the renowned scholar D.S. Margoliouth (d. 1937). In this chapter, I will be using Margoliouth's translations and citing both the Arabic and English editions of the text.
[2] ʿAdud al-Dawla had been crowned the amir of Baghdad once before, in 975, but infighting within his own tribe had forced him to abdicate after less than three months. He first became Amir in

isolated mountains of northern Iran. However, like the Fatimids, he attempted to

use every means at his disposal to claim authority to rule, whether it meant

drawing upon Arab, Persian, Sunni, Shiʿi, or pre-Islamic Zoroastrian symbols. He

sponsored historical narratives that not only portrayed him as an ideal Muslim

ruler, but also fabricated Arab origins for his Persian tribe. Simultaneously, he

claimed the pre-Islamic Persian title of *Shahanshah* and descent from the

Zoroastrian Sasanid dynasty that had ruled Iran before the Islamic conquests. At

the same time, ʿAdud al-Dawla emphasized the Arab heritage of his Sasanid

ancestor and, when he visited the ancient Persian city of Persepolis, the amir left

Arabic inscriptions there to commemorate his royal glory. While highlighting his

Persian identity, he also patronized the work of a famous Arab poet; this poetry,

however, dwelt on Arab feelings of alienation in a Persian environment. He

professed Shiʿi Islam and supported Shiʿi scholars, but maintained the prestigious

position of the Sunni Abbasid caliph in Baghdad and took a title, *al-Amir al-ʿAdil*,

the Just Prince, that was well-known as the title of the Sunni hero ʿUmar b. al-

Khattab (d. 644), who was notorious as the persecutor of Shiʿis and the conqueror

of Persia.

Baghdad in March 975 when he forced his cousin, Bakhtiyar, to abdicate. However, ʿAdud al-Dawla's father, Rukn al-Dawla, who outranked ʿAdud al-Dawla in the Buyid hierarchy, did not approve of his son's actions and ordered him to restore his cousin to the throne. Thus, in June 975, ʿAdud al-Dawla once again left Baghdad in the control of his cousin. After ʿAdud al-Dawla's father died in 976, ʿAdud al-Dawla waited less than a year before beginning his march to retake Baghdad from his cousin. By the summer of 977, ʿAdud al-Dawla had defeated his cousin again, but it took him another year to subdue his cousin's allies (and kill his cousin on the field), and another year before ʿAdud al-Dawla was able to return to Baghdad.

Arab. Persian. Islamic. Zoroastrian. Sunni. Shiʿi. ʿAdud al-Dawla claimed all

of these types of authority. His appeals do not fit neatly into the conceptual

categories that are typically used to define religious and ethnic identity in this era.

The hybridity of Buyid appeals to authority and legitimacy reveals the flexibility of

Muslim identity during this pivotal period of Islamic history. This hybridity also

parallels a similarly flexible identity apparent in the Fatimid state, discussed in the

previous chapter.

ʿAdud al-Dawla embodied the spirit of a tenth-century Islamic world that

was only just becoming predominately Muslim and grappling with the influx of

converts with a motley assortment of pre-Islamic identities. He was a second-

generation Persian Muslim who was highly educated by the skilled advisors of his

father and uncle. From nothing, his father and uncle, who were probably the first

generation in their tribe to be born Muslim[3] and who did not even speak Arabic,[4]

had conquered the heartlands of the Islamic world. In this chapter, I analyze the

hybrid forms of legitimacy and authority created by the Buyid amir ʿAdud al-

Dawla. I then argue that his opportunistic use of these apparently incompatible

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[3] As discussed in chapter one, we do not know when the Buyids converted to Islam. But we can surmise that it occurred in the generation of ʿAdud al-Dawla's grandfather. His name, Buya, was not an Arabic or Islamic name, but his sons, ʿAli, Hasan, and Ahmad (who are better known by their caliphal titles, ʿImad al-Dawla, Rukn al-Dawla, and Muʿizz al-Dawla, respectively), all had Arabic, Islamic names, indicating that they were the first generation who were born Muslims. For more information on using Arabic names to pinpoint conversion dates, see Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Harvard: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 18-32.

[4] Joel L. Kraemer, Humanism in the renaissance of Islam: the cultural revival during the Buyid age (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 53-4.

forms exemplifies the fluidity of Islamic cultural and sectarian identity during this era.

The Buyids were the first Persian, Shiʿi dynasty to conquer Baghdad after the rise of Islam, but their appeals to authority do not fit neatly into categories of "Persian" and "Shiʿi," a problem of fit that has been missed by previous scholars, who have only viewed them through those two categories.[5] The Buyids successfully blended tropes from pre-Islamic Persian kingship with Arabo-Islamic history and, despite the fact that they were Shiʿi, they used important concepts from Sunni history to legitimize their claims to leadership. The success of the Fatimids and Buyids in making these hybrid claims to authority reveals the

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[5] Within Iranian history overall, there has often been a nationalist conflation of Iranian and Persian history and, as a part of this, an attempt to see the Buyids as part of a continuous line of Persian-Iranian leadership that can be traced from the ancient Achaemenid king Cyrus the Great (r. 559-530 BCE) through to the modern state of Iran. Most recently, Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-1941), whose dynasty was overthrown by the Iranian Revolution in 1979, tried to emphasize this link by choosing the regnal name "Pahlavi," the name of the script used to write Persian in pre-Islamic times. Further, his son and successor, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1941-1979) had a gala at the ancient site of Persepolis from October 12-16, 1971 to celebrate the 2,500 years of continuous Iranian monarchy dating from Cyrus the Great to his own rule.
Within the historiography of the Buyid dynasty, this tendency to view the Buyids predominately as a Persian, Shiʿi state continues. Wilfred Madelung refers to the Buyids as the "resurgence of the Persian national consciousness in "The Assumption of the Title Shahanshah by the Buyids and the Reign of the Daylam," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 28:2 (1969), 84. H. Busse repeatedly focuses on the Iranian nature of Buyid rule saying, for example, that the conquest of the Buyids led to the Islamic world being "united under the rule of an Iranian dynasty" in H. Busse, "Iran under the Buyids," in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 4: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs,* R. N. Frye, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 250. Joel L. Kraemer, citing Busse, also refers to the Buyids as presiding "over the rebirth of an Iranian political ideology" in *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 36. These kinds of analyses are not limited to the Buyids, of course – other Persianate dynasties receive similar treatment, such as the Tahirids, which C.E. Bosworth refers to as the beginnings of a resurgence of a Persian national feeling and culture" in "The Tahirids and Saffarids," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 90. Furthermore, these more nationalist readings of Buyid history have predominately focused on the Buyid use of Persianate symbols to claim authority, concentrating especially on questions of when and where the title of *Shahanshah* was revived.

flexibility of Islamic identity, as new generations of Muslims adapted to their new faith and, in turn, affected the development of Islamic society. These hybrid claims, which have never before been examined, reveal a much more flexible concept of sectarian identity and challenge the reification of the oft-repeated simple binary of the Sunni-Shiʿi split.

A variety of sources survive from ʿAdud al-Dawla's era of rule: public inscriptions, panegyric poetry, and historical narratives. In 954, while he was the Amir of Fars, ʿAdud al-Dawla had public inscriptions carved at the Palace of Darius at Persepolis, which had been built by the Achaemenid dynasty in the sixth century B.C.E. He also sponsored poetry by the famous Arab poet, al-Mutanabbi (d. 965), who visited his court in Shiraz in 965 and was received there as a celebrity.[6]

ʿAdud al-Dawla sponsored two historical treatises while serving as the *Amir al-Umara* in Baghdad: the *Tajarib al-Umam* (*The Experience of Nations*) by Miskawayh (932-1030)[7] and the *Kitab al-Taji* (*The Book of the Crown*) by Abu Ishaq al-Sabi (b. 925). Miskawayh's *Tajarib al-Umam* is the only fully extant history of the Buyids sponsored by their own dynasty; it can be considered an official historical narrative of Buyid rule. The chronicle began with ancient Persian history and continued through to the reign of the Caliph al-Taʿi (r. 974-991) and the death

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[6] For a more extensive discussion of Mutanabbi's time at ʿAdud al-Dawla's court, see Margaret Larkin, *Al-Mutanabbi: Voice of the Abbasid Poet Ideal* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008): 84-95.
[7] Miskawayh's life and theory of history is discussed in detail in M.S. Khan's *Studies in Miskawayh's Contemporary History (340-369 AH),* published for CMES at the University of Chicago by University Microfilms International (1980) and "Miskawayh and the Buwayhids," *Oriens* 21/22 (1968/1969), 235-247.

of the Amir ʿAdud al-Dawla. For his section on the reign of ʿAdud al-Dawla,

Miskawayh drew on a veriety of evidence, including interviews, documentary

sources, and previous historical narratives. Miskawayh was a Persian courtier who

served ʿAdud al-Dawla, but he wrote his history in Arabic. He was born in Rayy to a

Persian family who likely converted to Islam from Zoroastrianism. After moving to

Baghdad, he served as a secretary and librarian under a series of powerful Buyid

viziers in Baghdad, Rayy, and Shiraz: Abu Muhammad al-Muhallabi (d. 963),[8] Abu

al-Fadl b. al-ʿAmid (d. 970),[9] and Abu al-Fath b. al-ʿAmid (b. 948-9).[10] His most

significant patron was the Buyid amir ʿAdud al-Dawla.

Only parts of Abu Ishaq al-Sabi's *Kitab al-Taji* survive, although his work is

often quoted by other medieval Arabic chroniclers. Like Miskawayh, al-Sabi was a

Persian courtier who served ʿAdud al-Dawla and wrote his history in Arabic. Al-

Sabi's background, however, remains more obscure. He was a Sabian,[11] a member

of a Gnostic sect that is poorly understood still today. His father, Hilal, was a

famous doctor in the service of Tuzun (d. 945), a Turkish general who nominally

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[8] Al-Muhallabi was best known as Muʿizz al-Dawla's vizier. He was a writer and a poet who wrote in Arabic and Persian and ran an extensive *majlis* (circle) of poets and scholars that Abu ʿAli al-Tanukhi compared with the assemblies of the Barmakids, famous eighth and ninth-century bureaucrats who served the Abbasids. He died while leading a campaign in Oman. For more information on al-Muhallabi, see Kraemer, *Humanism*, 54-5.

[9] Abu al-Fadl ibn al-ʿAmid was best known as the vizier of Rukn al-Dawla and, as mentioned below, a tutor for ʿAdud al-Dawla in Fars.

[10] Abu al-Fath ibn al-ʿAmid was the son of Abu al-Fadl ibn al-ʿAmid and served as the vizier of Rukn al-Dawla and briefly as the vizier of Muʿayyad al-Dawla.

[11] The term 'Sabian' refers to two groups and, as such, is ambiguous: first, disciples of Judeo-Christian baptizing sects and, second, Harranian astrolators, which are the remnants of Greco-Roman Paganism. Both groups are considered to be Gnostic. For more information, see "Sabiʿa," *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd ed.

served the Abbasid caliph in the decade before the Buyids took control,[12] and al-Sabi was educated in the sciences like his father.[13]

For ʿAdud al-Dawla and the Buyids, a hybrid appeal to authority was necessary: the Buyids ruled over a vast empire with a heterogeneous population. They originated in the Daylam, just south of the Caspian Sea, but at the height of their power they controlled wide swaths of what is now Iraq and western Iran.[14] In the west, they controlled parts of eastern Syria, although they were in competition with the Byzantines (330-1453), the Fatimids (909-1171), and the Hamdanids (890-1004) for these territories. Overall, Buyid power was most secure in the three areas conquered by the original three brothers of the Buyid triumvirate:[15] Rayy, which was just south of the Daylam, Shiraz, the capital of Fars province in the south, and Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid caliphate. Daylam, Fars, and Iraq, however, were very different contexts: the populations of these areas had vastly different experiences with the Muslim conquests and, later, Sunni Abbasid rule.

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[12] Tuzun nominally served under the caliph al-Muttaqi. However, when al-Muttaqi fled Baghdad in 944 and allied with other local leaders, Tuzun coaxed him to return to the capital. When he arrived, Tuzun kissed the ground in front of the caliph, then had him arrested and blinded. For more information on Tuzun and his arrest of al-Muttaqi, see Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980): 46-7.

[13] "Al-Sabi," *EOI2*.

[14] Although they were in constant competition for these territories with the Samanids, the Saffarids, the Ziyarids, and other minor local dynasties.

[15] The first generation consisted of three brothers: ʿImad al-Dawla, Rukn al-Dawla, and Muʿizz al-Dawla. ʿImad al-Dawla was the eldest brother and the senior member of the triumvirate. ʿAdud al-Dawla was the son of Rukn al-Dawla, the governor of Rayy, but his uncle ʿImad al-Dawla, who died without sons, appointed him as his successor in Fars.

In Daylam, where the Buyids originated, the population had been heavily

Zoroastrian with a contentious relationship with the central Abbasid state.[16]

Rebellions in the ninth century led to conflict between the Zoroastrian and Muslim

populations, which increased the popularity of anti-Abbasid ʿAlid leaders such as

Hasan b. Zayd (d. 884).[17] Fars was similar; the conquests there had been long and

bloody, there were frequent rebellions against Muslim rule, and power struggles

for land and water rights.[18] In Iraq, however, the speed at which the Muslim

military conquered and settled the area meant that there were few rebellions by

the Zoroastrian population against Muslim rule. Muslim and Zoroastrian nobles

and intellectuals often interacted at the Abbasid court and local Zoroastrians

quickly began moving into Muslim areas to profit economically from the new

settlers.[19]

ʿAdud al-Dawla took an active role in combining multiple forms of authority

to appeal to the heterogeneous population over which he ruled. The original

members of the Buyid triumvirate were all born in the Daylam, but ʿAdud al-Dawla

was born in Isfahan in 936 and was educated in Fars in "sound methods of

administration, the way to maintain a realm, and the art of statesmanship."[20] His

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[16] Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 22-3.
[17] Ibid., 40-1.
[18] Ibid., 45.
[19] Ibid., 30-1.
[20] Miskawayh, 2: 281-2.

teacher was a polymath named Abu al-Fadl ibn al-ʿAmid (d. 970),[21] who ʿAdud al-

Dawla always referred to as, simply, "*al-Ustadh al-Raʾis*," the Chief Master.[22] In

addition to his instruction in administration and statesmanship, ʿAdud al-Dawla

would have been educated in the religious sciences (the traditions of *hadith* and

fiqh), theology (*kalam*), and philology (*lugha*), as well as in belles-lettres (*adab*).

Thus, ʿAdud al-Dawla would have been familiar with the major religious, historical,

and literary works of his era.[23] In fact, ʿAdud al-Dawla was widely praised for his

education by contemporaries (and near-contemporaries). For example, Abu

Sulayman Sijistani (d. ca. 1000), a famous Sunni philosopher and *hadith* collector,[24]

referred to ʿAdud al-Dawla as:

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[21] Abu al-Fadl b. al-ʿAmid was from Qum, a Shiʿi center, and Kraemer argues that he was likely an Imami Shiʿi. His grandfather had worked in the market, but Ibn al-ʿAmid's father had joined the secretarial class – he served as a vizier for several different Daylamite leaders (Washmgir b. Ziyar, Mardawij al-Jili, and Makan b. Kaki) before serving the Samanids in Khurasan. It was the Samanids who gave him the honorarium "al-ʿAmid," which meant "the reliable." Ibn al-ʿAmid served Rukn al-Dawla for thirty-two years. He was known as "the second Jahiz" due to his skill as a epistolary writer. Al-Thaʿalibi wrote that Ibn al-ʿAmid was keenly interested in philosophy and sciences and read extensively from the works of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. He was also educated in the Arab religious sciences and, although he tended more towards politics, ethics, mathematics, and engineering, his Qurʾanic exegesis and knowledge of different recitations of the Qurʾan were renowned. He was particularly famous for his memorization of the *diwans* (collections) of famous poets of both the *Jahiliyya*, the era before Islam, and the Islamic age. Ibn al-ʿAmid was killed during an expedition to the Jabal in an attempt to pacify a Kurdish leader there. For an extensive discussion of Ibn al-ʿAmid's biography and reputation, see Kraemer, *Humanism*, 241-255.

[22] "Ibn al-ʿAmid," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. Ibn al-ʿAmid once, in a letter to ʿAdud al-Dawla, referred to him as "the sublime amir" due to his education in the arts and sciences. Al-Thaʿalibi, *Yatima*, III: 169 as quoted in Kraemer, *Humanism*, 28.

[23] For an extensive discussion of *majalis* and education in the tenth century Buyid world, see Kraemer, *Humanism*, 55-58.

[24] See Kraemer, Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani and His Circle (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

the most deserving in all creation of praise and of prayer for
endurance of his rule, especially by the people of learning and
culture; for he has invigorated them, enhanced their enterprise, and
has given free reign to their tongues to promulgate what each of
their sects professes, without dissimulation (*taqiyya*), so that it may
reveal what it claims and proclaim what it believes. And it may
discriminate the true from the false, secure that one will not assail
another with the tongue of religious fanaticism.[25]

Furthermore, ʿAdud al-Dawla was an active participant in the crafting of his

own image and legacy. He was involved in the composition of the historical

chronicles about his reign: when Abu Ishaq al-Sabi wrote the *Kitab al-Taji*,, ʿAdud

al-Dawla required him to bring weekly drafts of his work so that the amir could

correct any errors or add any missing information.[26]

ʿAdud al-Dawla was not, of course, the only tenth-century leader making

complex claims. Past attempts to analyze these kinds of polyvalent appeals to

authority, however, have predominately focused on identifying cultural 'tropes'

and separating, for example, the symbols of 'Islamic' or 'Persian' appeals.[27]

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[25] Sijistani, *On the Specific Perfection of the Human Species*, in Badawi's edited appendix to the *Siwan al-hikma* (Vessel of Wisdom), 386, as quoted in Kraemer, *Humanism*, 28-9.
[26] Miskawayh, 3: 22-3. Yaʿqut, *Irshad al-Arib* I: 333. M.S. Khan has a detailed discussion of the composition of the *Kitab al-Taji* in "A Manuscript of an Epitome of al-Sabi's Kitab al-Tagi," *Arabica*, 12:1 (Feb 1965), 27-44, and Madelung discusses ʿAdud al-Dawla's role in the composition of the *Kitab al-Taji* in "Abu Ishaq al-Sabi and the ʿAlids of Tabaristan," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 26: 1 (Jan. 1967): 18.
[27] See chapter three above on Fatimid scholarship. On Buyid scholarship, for example, Julie Meisami, in her analysis of Samanid historical writing in the late tenth century, argues that there were "two separate and distinct narratives of the past" in Samanid historical writing, one pre-

Although this approach can be useful in literary analysis, it has two drawbacks. First, it divorces the rhetorical appeals from their historical context by implying that the categories of identity were mutually exclusive or contradictory. Second, it obscures the processes of cultural hybridization that I see as central to this era.[28]

When examined in their broader tenth-century historical context, the dynamic and nuanced combinations of appeals used by ʿAdud al-Dawla reveal that these pre-Islamic/Iranian and Arabo-Islamic tropes coexisted, mutually reinforced each other, and were in the process of blending during the tenth century. Although these tropes had clear (and important) historical antecedents, they were being

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Islamic and Iranian and the other Arabo-Islamic, which reflected the two distinct constituencies to whom the Samanids needed to appeal: the old *dihqan* class of Transoxiana and Khurasan, as well as the Arab descendants of the military forces and immigrants and Arabized Iranian converts to Islam. Meisami characterizes the 'Iranian' mode as being predominately concerned with genealogical legitimacy while the 'Islamic' histories focused on the "personal and moral fitness of the ruler." While Meisami's work challenges earlier notions that medieval Islamic chroniclers merely regurgitated *akhbar* (stories of the past) without inserting their own opinions into the narrative, her division of tropes into conflicting "Islamic" and "Iranian" modes belies the processes of social and cultural synthesis at work during this era. See Julie Meisami, "The Past in Service of the Present: Two Views of History in Medieval Persia," *Poetics Today* 14: 2 (Summer 1993), 249-252. Anne F. Broadbridge, in *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (2008), takes a similar approach in dividing Mongol and Mamluk kingship into a continuum with Chingizid/"nomadic" ideologies on one end and "Islamic" ideologies on the other. See Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[28] Cogent analyses exist of the pre-Islamic origins of Muslim kingship. Andrew Marsham, in *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*: *Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), demonstrated the Sasanid and Byzantine roots of many of the rituals of kingship in the Abbasid state, but he only focused on the Abbasid state in the eighth and ninth centuries, so missed the important ways that new converts to Islam, such as the tenth-century Buyids, interpreted and melded Islamic forms of identity with their pre-Islamic cultural histories. Aziz al-Azmeh, in *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian, and Pagan Polities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997): x-xv, argued that the symbols of authority that are considered to be 'classically Islamic' are actually "highly elaborate reworkings" of earlier traditions that took place over centuries. His analysis, while excellent, focuses on broader trends and is not at all interested in the specific ways that symbols of authority were developed or in local innovations.

combined in new ways as more and more non-Arabs converted to Islam and became a part of Islamic society. Thus, in this chapter, by analyzing the dynamic (and sometimes seemingly contradictory) claims to authority made by ʿAdud al-Dawla, I aim to avoid portraying these different cultural and religious identities as static or isolated and, instead, to recapture the dynamic and nuanced combinations of ideology as it was being adapted in the tenth century.

ʿAdud al-Dawla's Patronage of Historical Narrative

ʿAdud al-Dawla and the Buyids sought the authority to lead the Islamic world during a time when the field of contenders was extremely crowded. The Buyids did not, necessarily, have better claims to authority than other local dynasties and, because they could not claim to be from the family of the Prophet, their claims were markedly weaker than those that could be put forth by the Abbasids (or the Fatimids in North Africa). Thus, one of the major ways in which the Buyid chroniclers sought to claim Buyid supremacy was to showcase how the dynasty was favored by God or fate and how ʿAdud al-Dawla could be considered an ideal Muslim king. These topoi were, of course, well-known in Islamic historiography.[29] Moreover, the concept of divine favor revealing itself through

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[29] For a detailed discussion of these tropes, see Chase Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 124-155.

omens, coincidences, and dreams to portend the ascendance of a king had a long

tradition in Sasanian historiography.[30]

Miskawayh's anecdotes of fate favoring the Buyids focused on the first

generation of Buyid amirs: ʿAdud al-Dawla's father, Rukn al-Dawla (d. 976), and

his two uncles, ʿImad al-Dawla (d. 951) and Muʿizz al-Dawla (d. 967). Miskawayh's

chronicle of the rise to power of ʿImad al-Dawla noted that ʿImad al-Dawla had an

especially auspicious horoscope[31] and that 'coincidences' favored his expeditions.

Miskawayh related an especially interesting story about fate favoring Rukn al-

Dawla, ʿAdud al-Dawla's father. After the death of ʿImad al-Dawla, Rukn al-Dawla

had to defend the Buyid possession of Rayy, the Jibal, and Isfahan from opposing

armies. Rukn al-Dawla found himself encamped near Isfahan in a precarious

position: his troops were about to flee because they were surrounded by enemies

and provisions were scarce. On the verge of surrender, Rukn al-Dawla dreamt that

he was riding his horse named "Firuz" (*firuz* means 'victory' in Persian) In the

dream, he sat on the horse overlooking the battlefield and watched his enemies

flee before him. As this was happening, he noticed on the ground a turquoise ring,

which he took and put on his finger. Rukn al-Dawla was certain that this dream

was a good omen, as both the Persian name for the horse "*Firuz*" and the word for

turquoise, "*firuzih*," mean victory in Persian. Then, the next day, the dream came

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[30] Choksy, "Sacral Kingship in Sasanian Iran," *CAIS: The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies,* accessed 15 September 2012, http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/History/Sasanian/sacral_kingship.htm. Published in the *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 2 (1988), 35-52.
[31] Miskawayh, 1: 277 (Arabic) and 4: 315 (English).

true. The enemy fled and, as Rukn al-Dawla rode out to watch them retreat, he found a turquoise ring on the ground.[32]

This story was significant in a tenth-century context for two reasons: first, it implied that God favored the Buyids, and specifically ʿAdud al-Dawla's father. Second, it can be interpreted as a Persianization of a story told about the Prophet Muhammad's signet ring. According to tradition, the prophet gave his signet ring, which was engraved with the text "*Muhammad Rasul Allah*" (Muhammad is the Prophet of God), to Abu Bakr (d. 634), his successor and the first caliph of the Islamic community, and it was later passed on to his successors: first to ʿUmar (d. 644), and then to ʿUthman (d. 656). However, ʿUthman, under whose rule the Islamic world was split by civil war for the first time, accidentally dropped the ring into a well in Medina. ʿUthman's loss of the ring has often been interpreted as the point at which he lost authority in the eyes of the Islamic community.[33] The story of Rukn al-Dawla can be interpreted as the Buyids finding the signet ring of the Prophet, both implying that they were favored by the Prophet and God, and that caliphal authority had passed to the Buyids.

In addition to showing that the Buyids were favored by God, it is evident that Miskawayh aimed to portray ʿAdud al-Dawla as an 'ideal Muslim ruler',[34] a

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[32] Ibid., 2: 141-2 (Arabic) and 5: 147-149 (English).

[33] Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Caliphs: The Biblical Foundations of the Umayyad Authority," in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 97-8.

[34] If we examine the trajectory of Miskawayh's history of the Buyids, one could argue that the goal of Miskawayh's entire contemporary history was to establish ʿAdud al-Dawla as the greatest and

concept heavily derived from pre-Islamic Persian theories of state.[35] In Sasanid

theories of kingship, the ideal king "was concerned with the orderly and just

government of the world." As the earthly representative of the Zoroastrian deity

Ahura Mazda,[36] the king was expected to protect his territory and enforce the law

by defending Iran militarily and forcing his subjects to follow his will.[37] Chaos and

strife delegitimized the king: it was considered to be a sign that his kingship did

not originate from god.[38] These concepts of ideal leadership were adopted by the

Abbasid caliphs as they also assumed many features of Sasanian bureaucracy.[39]

     These pre-Islamic ideals of ideal kingship are evident in the earliest works

on ideal Muslim kingship. Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ (d. 756), a courtier who served the

Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur (d. 775), wrote the earliest surviving works on ideal

kingship. Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ was born in Fars, translated many works from Pahlavi

Persian into Arabic, and wrote several works on politics and kingship, such as

Risala fi al-Sahaba (an administrative treatise) and *al-Adab al-Kabir* (a mirror for

princes). Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ, while not considered a part of the *Shuʿubiyya* movement,

can be seen as a precursor to it.[40] His writings stressed that the ideal Islamic king

most legitimate ruler of the Buyid confederacy. Miskawayh's history ends in 979, the year of ʿAdud al-Dawla's death, while Miskawayh lived until approximately 1030.
[35] Lambton, "Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship," 96. Further, Bosworth, "Heritage," has an extensive discussion of the Persian influence on Abbasid rule and culture. See pgs. 51-3.
[36] Lambton, "Justice," 97.
[37] Choksy, "Sacral Kingship."
[38] Ibid.
[39] Frye, *Golden Age,* 151-3 and Bosworth, "Heritage," 51-3.
[40] The *Shuʿubiyya* refers to a predominately Persian movement that opposed the superiority of Arabs in early Islamic society. The term comes from Qur'an 13: 49, "Oh men, We have created you

maintained stability, paid the army a regular salary, remained informed of

developments in his territory, and established religious orthodoxy. He was God-

fearing, competent in politics and administration, and closely supervised his

appointed officials to guard against corruption. Al-Jahiz (d. 868-9), who wrote

more than a century after Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ, emphasized similar qualities: the ideal

Muslim ruler must possess outstanding intellectual and moral qualities, exemplary

religious knowledge, and virtue. He should be the most excellent (*afdal*) of the

community. The *Kitab al-Taj*,[41] an early mirror for princes, which was wrongly

attributed to al-Jahiz but which scholars have dated to the mid-ninth century,

argued that the ideal Muslim leader was owed obedience if he was just, generous,

and compassionate.[42] These traits echo the requirements of sacral kingship as

found in Sasanid Iran.[43]

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from a male and a female and We have made you into groups (*shuʿub*) and tribes (*qabaʾil*) that you may come to know each other; truly, the nobles among you before god is the most righteous among you; truly God is the All-knowing, the All-seeing." It was a predominately Persian movement, though there are references to Aramaeans, Copts, and Berbers within it. Based on the scholarship of I. Goldziher, the *Shuʿubiyya* movement was first identified as a political movement opposing the Arabs who were experiencing a rebirth of Persian national consciousness (see Golzdiher, *Muslim Studies i*, 137-163). H.A.R. Gibb, however, contested the idea that the *Shuʿubiyya* was anti-Islamic based on the fact that none of the figures associated with the *Shuʿubiyya* were involved in rebellions against Abbasid power (see Gibb, "The Social Significance of the Shuʿubiya," *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, 62-73).   Finally, Roy Mottahedeh argued that the *Shuʿubiyya* were not a unified movement or at all anti-Islamic but, rather, a predominately literary movement. See Mottahedeh, "The Shuʿubiyya Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran," *IJMES* 7: 2 (April 1976), 161-182.

[41] Not to be confused with Abu Ishaq al-Sabi's *Kitab al-Taji*.

[42] For detailed discussions of the political views of Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ, al-Jahiz, and the *Kitab al-Taj*, see Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 43-68.

[43] Choksy, "Sacral Kingship."

Al-Mawardi (d. 1058), although writing after Miskawayh's composition of the *Tajarib*, shows how the ideal qualities of an ideal Muslim leader remained fairly stable over time. In *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya* (The Ordinances of Government), which was probably written for the Caliph al-Qadir (r. 991-1031) or al-Qaʿim (r. 1031-1075),[44] al-Mawardi argued that the Imam had ten public duties: to maintain religion, settle disputes, protect Islamic territory, punish those who violated religious law, supply the frontiers with provisions and forces for defense, wage *jihad* against non-Muslims, collect taxes, fix stipends and charges upon the treasury, appoint trustworthy advisors who were not corrupt, and personally oversee the affairs of government.[45] In Miskawayh's history of the Buyids, these ten qualities of an 'ideal' Muslim leader appear in descriptions of ʿImad al-Dawla and ʿAdud al-Dawla.

If, as presented by medieval Muslim scholars like Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ and al-Jahiz, the qualities of an 'ideal' Muslim ruler involved maintaining religion, protecting Islamic territories by defending the frontiers, collecting taxes and properly allotting the budget, appointing trustworthy advisors, and personally overseeing the affairs of government, Miskawayh emphasized ʿAdud al-Dawla's fulfillment of these tasks and implied that ʿAdud al-Dawla was a more legitimate ruler than the Abbasid caliph, who had let Baghdad fall into chaos. Miskawayh

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[44] Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 43-68.
[45] List summarized and excerpted from Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, 43-68

praised ʿAdud al-Dawla while reminding his audience that he was not flattering the amir, but truthfully chronicling his qualities:

> his success in preserving his dominions, protecting the boundaries, suppressing foes, his anxiety to increase cultivation, his severity with disturbers of the peace, the way he extinguished the flames of the Kurds and Bedouins, and restored the empire to its former regime,… Some reader of this section of my book who did not witness his career, may imagine that I have been gratuitously eulogizing, claiming for him more than the real extent of his attainments and height of his virtues. I swear by Him who bade us utter the truth and forbade us to say anything else, that it is not so.[46]

ʿAdud al-Dawla preserved security, protected the people, defeated his enemies, made the lands more productive, and restored the empire to its glory. Miskawayh's list nearly mirrors the qualities of an ideal Muslim leader that were presented by Ibn al-Muqaffaʾ and al-Jahiz.

One of the most significant roles of a Muslim leader was defending the Islamic territories from incursion, waging *jihad* against non-Muslims, and protecting the borders. In this, Miskawayh portrayed ʿAdud al-Dawla as an able defender of the Islamic domains and maintainer of security within them. He also contrasted ʿAdud al-Dawla's own successes with the failures of the Abbasid caliph

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[46] Miskawayh, 2: 282-3 (Arabic) and 5: 302 (English).

and ʿAdud al-Dawla's Buyid predecessors, Muʿizz al-Dawla and Bakhtiyar (d. 978),

who had been unable to stop Byzantine offensives and had failed to protect the

Muslims who lived near Byzantine territories. For example,

> News had come that the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus had built a
> city in Caesarea, which is near Islamic territory, and transferred his
> family thither, in order to be near those Islamic towns which he
> wished to annex…information reached him that the inhabitants of
> these towns were miserably weak, having no champion nor
> protector, and no food left, so that the people of Tarsus were
> reduced to eating dogs and carrion, and that every day a thousand
> funerals left the place. [When the Byzantines conquered Tarsus,] the
> Emperor turned the Public Mosque of Tarsus into a stable for his
> horses, and removed the lamps that were there to his own city. He
> burned the *minbar* [pulpit]….The old inhabitants returned and
> entered the allegiance of the Emperor, many of them adopting the
> Christian religion.[47]

Not only had the caliph and ʿAdud al-Dawla's predecessors failed to protect the

people living on the Byzantine border and allowed them to be conquered, but the

Byzantine Emperor defiled the local mosque by using it as a stable for his horses,

and the people there converted to Christianity to ensure their security under

Byzantine rule. These were failures of the highest degree. Furthermore,

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[47] Ibid., 2: 210-11 (Arabic) and 5: 225 (English).

Letters reached the government to the effect that the Byzantines had been raiding Nisibin, had got possession of the place and burned it, killing the men and taking the children captive. A number of people then came to Baghdad from Diyar Rabiʿa and Diyar Bakr, summoning the Muslims to arms in the public mosques and in the streets. They declared that the road lay open to the Byzantines and that there was nothing to prevent their invading the speakers' homes, which were continuous with Iraq.[48]

ʿAdud al-Dawla's Sunni predecessors failed to defend the Abbasid realm from the Byzantines, reducing the Muslims along the Byzantine border to eating carrion to survive. The people who did not convert to Christianity came to Baghdad to try to rouse the Abbasid state to protect them against the Byzantine threat, but their pleas came to naught.

In contrast, Miskawayh highlighted ʿAdud al-Dawla's deft control of the Byzantines. The Byzantine Emperor sent two envoys to ʿAdud al-Dawla, "both of them humble rivals for his favor, outbidding each other in their endeavors to gratify him, and racing for the prize of his protection….Nothing like this had ever happened before; it was one of the glories of ʿAdud al-Dawla."[49] In addition, once ʿAdud al-Dawla put his own realm in order, he waged *jihad* to expand his territories:

[48] Ibid., 2: 303 (Arabic) and 5: 326 (English).
[49] Ibid., 2: 397 (Arabic) and 5: 436 (English).

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[ʿAdud al-Dawla's] thoughts were directed to the reconquest of
Egypt especially, and after that to the territory of the Unbelievers,
Byzantines, and such that lie beyond them. He resented the
neighborhood of rebellious Nabataeans and being defied by petty
local chieftains, persons who took refuge in the reeds, lagoons, and
marshes; he ought, he felt, to exterminate them.[50]

Miskawayh presented ʿAdud al-Dawla as understanding his role as the
defender of Islam. Miskawayh also emphasized the other ways that ʿAdud al-Dawla
conformed to qualities of a good Muslim ruler. For example, he gave money to
charity[51] and sent generous gifts to Mecca and Medina.[52]

In addition to being a strong Muslim leader who was able to defend the
Islamic lands from attack, Miskawayh emphasized ʿAdud al-Dawla's skill as an
administrator. ʿAdud al-Dawla had learned "sound methods of administration" and
"the art of kingcraft" from Chief Ustadh Ibn al-ʿAmid[53] and he was often consulted
by the other Buyid leaders for assistance. Even before taking power from his
predecessor, Bakhtiyar, ʿAdud al-Dawla set his cousin's affairs in order for him. For
this, ʿAdud al-Dawla received the title "The Doubly Competent" from the Caliph al-
Taʿi,[54] which may have been a verbal attack on Bakhtiyar's weak leadership.
Furthermore, Muʿizz al-Dawla had instructed Bakhtiyar to follow his cousin ʿAdud

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[50] Ibid., 2: 409 (Arabic) and 5: 448 (English).
[51] Ibid., 2: 406 (Arabic) and 5: 445 (English).
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid., 2: 281-2 (Arabic) and 5: 301 (English).
[54] Ibid., 2: 303 (Arabic) and 5: 325 (English).

al-Dawla's counsel in matters of administration, but Bakhtiyar ignored this advice (to his peril).[55]

Miskawayh portrayed ʿAdud al-Dawla as the leader who saved Iraq from a period of chaos and corruption that began during the reign of the Abbasid caliphs, who had lost their ability to lead the empire and maintain order.[56] For example, Miskawayh related that, in 919, under the Caliph Muqtadir (r. 908-932), rioting broke out in Baghdad after the price of bread rose precipitously. Mobs plundered shops and then assembled at the gate of the caliphal palace. The people attacked the public mosques of Baghdad, breaking the pulpits and interrupting public worship. Their rioting did not stop until al-Muqtadir ordered the shops and storehouses that belonged to high-ranking members of the court to be opened and wheat and barley to be sold at a reduced price.[57] In 940 and 941, just before the

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[55] According to Miskawayh, when Muʿizz al-Dawla, Bakhtiyar's father, was about to die, he charged Bakhtiyar to obey Rukn al-Dawla, his uncle, and his cousin ʿAdud al-Dawla, "who was his senior and a more skilled administrator." Bakhtiyar failed in both of these respects and, according to Miskawayh, "his realm became disordered, he was compelled to rely on lesser individuals whom he had elevated, incompetent to manage a village or to mediate between two individuals, still less between government and a mutinous army. His affairs, therefore, went rotten, root and branch." Miskawayh, 2: 234-5 (Arabic) and 5: 249-250 (English).

[56] Miskawayh emphasized that the Abbasid caliphs were not actually ruling but were controlled by unscrupulous advisors. The Abbasid caliph no longer selected their own successors. Instead, their advisors and viziers had seized that power. For example, Miskawayh related how the vizier to the caliph Muktafi (r. 902-908), ʿAbbas b. Hasan, hand-selected the caliph Muqtadir (r. 908-932) to succeed him because he could be easily controlled. The advisors wanted to ensure a pliant caliph who would not interfere with their management of the imperial bureaucracy. Thus, the vizier appointed a minor as caliph because his youth and inexperience would make him easy to control. While he was making his decision, one of his advisors asked: "Why should you introduce a man who will govern and knows our resources, who will administer affairs himself, and regard himself as independent? Why not deliver the empire to a man who will leave you to administer it?" Thus, al-Muqtadir became caliph at thirteen years old. Ibid., 1: 3 (Arabic) and 4: 2 (English).

[57] Ibid., 1: 72-75 (Arabic) and 4: 79-83 (English).

Buyids conquered Baghdad, Miskawayh again reported rioting in Baghdad when prices rose and the Rufil and Buq Canals burst their banks because they had not been properly maintained.[58] The prices for foodstuffs in Baghdad were so high that, according to Miskawayh, "the people ate grass and there were numerous deaths; so many that several people were buried in one grave without washing or prayer."[59] Mobs attacked the homes of the wealthy and the city devolved into civil war, with factions attacking infrastructure (such as bridges and the prison).[60] The violence was so great that the caliph, his family, and many of the leading citizens abandoned the city.[61]

The reign of al-Muqtadir (r. 908-932), the Sunni Abbasid caliph who was appointed as a minor and was generally considered to be controlled by his advisors, has been characterized as the Abbasid caliphate at its weakest. The period tremendous territorial losses, corruption, sectarian rebellions. Al-Muqtadir was actually dethroned twice before finally being assassinated. Miskawayh, as a courtier, had great respect for skilled bureaucrats and courtiers who could effectively run an administration. His history emphasized the 'good management' of state affairs when he witnessed it and judged harshly poor administrations led by greedy and corrupt bureaucrats. His praise of good administration, however, was never aimed at the tenth-century Abbasids; he emphasized how the Abbasid

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[58] Ibid., 2: 8-9 (Arabic) and 5: 8-9 (English).
[59] Ibid., 2: 8 (Arabic) and 5: 9 (English).
[60] Ibid., 2: 24 (Arabic) and 5: 26 (English).
[61] Ibid., 2: 29 (Arabic) and 5: 31 (English).

caliphs were, at best, uninvolved and, at worst, drunkards.[62] This was particularly effective when contrasted with his portrayal of ʿAdud al-Dawla's competence as an administrator.

As the historian of the Buyids, Miskawayh implicitly argued that it was, in fact, the Buyid takeover that saved Baghdad from chaos: the people of Baghdad celebrated the arrival of the Buyids and ʿAdud al-Dawla was the greatest of the Buyid amirs and the savior of the Abbasid caliph.[63] Miskawayh emphasized how the Abbasid caliph sought ʿAdud al-Dawla's protection. During the civil war between ʿAdud al-Dawla and his cousin, Bakhtiyar, the Caliph al-Taʿi fled Baghdad and did not return until ʿAdud al-Dawla had taken the capital.[64]

ʿAdud al-Dawla's first meeting with the Caliph al-Taʿi illustrated that, while he was willing to show some deference to the Abbasids, he was also a powerful leader in his own right:

> A throne had been set in front of him [Caliph al-Taʿi] for ʿAdud al-
> Dawla, who kissed the ground before him. He then sat down on the
> throne and the pair were surrounded in the water by *zabzabs* [a type
> of boat] and barges while the army marched on the bank of the

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[62] Ibid., 1: 288 (Arabic) and 4: 326-327 (English) has an anecdote about the Caliph al-Qahir drinking all night and being too drunk to attend to his duties.
[63] One of his first orders was to have the caliph's palace repaired and renovated, filled with new furnishings, and more servants hired for the palace. All of this was paid for by ʿAdud al-Dawla himself and he gave the caliph money, clothing, furniture, horses, slaves, and instruments and reconfirmed the caliph's possession of "the estates of the service," which had been withdrawn under Muʿizz al-Dawla and Bakhtiyar. Ibid., 2: 343-4 (Arabic) and 5: 372-3 (English).
[64] Ibid.

Tigris. So the Caliph entered his Palace and established himself on

his throne.[65]

ʿAdud al-Dawla kissed the ground before him, the traditional act of respect required before the caliph, but also sat upon a throne on the same level with the caliph and had the two of them paraded together before the army and the population of Baghdad. Not only was this a clear signal that ʿAdud al-Dawla was now in power, but it emphasized his support by the Sunni Abbasid caliph.

In addition to public support, Miskawayh underscored the fact that ʿAdud al-Dawla received unprecedented powers from the Abbasid caliph.

An order was issued by Caliph al-Taʿi to his deputy ministers in the public mosques of Baghdad that ʿAdud al-Dawla's name should be mentioned from the pulpits immediately after his own. Letters to this effect were dispatched to them, and it was further ordered that the drums should be beaten at [ʿAdud al-Dawla's] gate at prayer-times. These are two distinctions attained by ʿAdud al-Dawla and by no other monarch who had preceded him in ancient or in modern times.[66]

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[65] Ibid., 2: 344 (Arabic) and 5: 373 (English).
[66] Ibid., 2: 396 (Arabic) and 5: 435 (English).

The beating of drums at prayer times was one of the privileges of the

Abbasid caliph, along with the announcement of his name in the Friday *khutba*.[67]

Granting this privilege to ʿAdud al-Dawla when it had been denied to earlier Buyid

leaders was another sign of how the relationship between ʿAdud al-Dawla and the

caliph was different and the caliph favored ʿAdud al-Dawla.[68]

As *Amir al-ʿUmara*, the commander of commanders, Miskawayh stressed

ʿAdud al-Dawla's competence as an administrator. ʿAdud al-Dawla delegated

responsibilities to able administrators. In particular, he ensured that Iraq was

administered competently and made sure that, despite floods and natural

disasters, the territory remained adequately supplied.[69] In addition, ʿAdud al-

Dawla postponed the collection of the *kharaj* tax because it had been so

mismanaged under Bakhtiyar's supervision: under Bakhtiyar and Muʿizz al-Dawla,

the taxes were levied before the crops were harvested, which caused the farmers

hardship. ʿAdud al-Dawla postponed the collection of taxes until after the harvest[70]

and reformed the system of taxation:

> A sound system of taxation was imposed on the public, arbitrary
> additions and chicanery being abolished. Attention was paid to

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[67] Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), 24.
[68] After the end of the Buyid era, this privilege became more widespread. The caliph would order a salute of drums and military music (*nauba*) outside the homes of some of the most powerful men of the state during prayer time as a sign of their station. See J.A. Boyle, *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, 70.
[69] Miskawayh, 2: 406 (Arabic) and 5: 445-446 (English).
[70] Ibid., 2: 407 (Arabic) and 5: 446 (English).

appeals, and rectification encouraged. Duties were removed from
the pilgrim caravans, the various forms of outrage and violence to
which they had been subjected stopped.[71]

Furthermore, ʿAdud al-Dawla ended corruption in his territory, which was
portrayed as a welcome relief after the abuses of Bakhtiyar's reign and the
Abbasids. He took great care to have his subordinates treat his subjects fairly,
ordering his generals to treat the inhabitants of conquered areas kindly and
distribute money to the poor.[72] He also tried to end the brigandage endemic to the
areas outside the capital.[73]

One of ʿAdud al-Dawla's biggest concerns, after taking power from
Bakhtiyar, was to restore order and grandeur to the Abbasid capital of Baghdad:

ʿAdud al-Dawla ordered the houses and streets of Baghdad to be
rebuilt, as they had been injured partly by arson, partly by
demolition. They were a mere heap. He began with the public
mosques, which were in an absolutely ruinous condition, spending a
vast sum on them. Such of the buildings as were beyond repair were
demolished by his order and replaced with solid erections, which
were raised high, furnished, and decorated. He ordered the
remunerations of the managers, muezzins, prayer-leaders, and
readers to be regularly paid, and allowances to be provided for the

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 2: 390 (Arabic) and 5: 428 (English).
[73] Ibid., 2: 397. (Arabic) and 5: 436 (English).

strangers and poor who took refuge in them; all this had been neglected and unthought-of. Next he ordered the restoration of such suburban mosques as were out of repair, and restored their trust-funds.[74]

ʿAdud al-Dawla's building program and periodic works restored Baghdad to its previous glory, thereby demonstrating that he was more qualified than both his Buyid predecessors and the Abbasid caliphs to lead the Islamic world.

ʿAdud al-Dawla's Arabization of Persian Kingship

ʿAdud al-Dawla and the Buyids did not have a prestigious royal heritage. Competing with the power of the Abbasid caliph (and with other local leaders) required ʿAdud al-Dawla to embody another form of royal authority. In a society where kingship was considered sacred, there was a special, sacral quality to bodily taking the place of a previous sovereign.[75] Royal conventions, such as visiting the palace of a past king, were often used by successors in order to appropriate the power attributed to that past authority.[76] Royal ceremonial, or processions, allowed the king—or ʿAdud al-Dawla, in this case—to claim the power and authority of previous kings by physically embodying their royal role. It was "the

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[74] Ibid., 2: 404-5 (Arabic) and 5: 443-444 (English).
[75] Clifford Geertz, in "Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power," has argued that royal charisma is derived from "connection between the symbolic value individuals possess and their relation to the active centers of the social order," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983): 122.
[76] Al-Azmeh, 12-3.

occasion on which the worldly and the political were transposed into the mystical and religious."[77]

Kings are made, not born, and elaborate rituals and ceremonies were two of the ways that royal authority is crafted.[78] Thus, in 954, ʿAdud al-Dawla visited the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian Palace of Darius at Persepolis[79] and had the Pahlavi inscriptions there read to him by a Zoroastrian priest. Persepolis, which is located northeast of Shiraz in Fars, was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenids in the sixth century B.C.E. and the symbolic seat of the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian concept of Persian kingship.[80] Before he departed, ʿAdud al-Dawla left his own inscriptions there that noted his visit and a recent military victory.

ʿAdud al-Dawla's visit to Persepolis is traditionally interpreted merely as a sign of Buyid "interest in their Iranian roots."[81] Two important aspects of his visit, however, deserve attention: first, ʿAdud al-Dawla's visit is a transparent attempt to embody the authority of the Sasanid dynasty and, second, he left his own inscriptions there in Kufic Arabic, not in Pahlavi Persian. ʿAdud al-Dawla's visit to Persepolis cannot merely be attributed to his interest in the Persian past; it must be read as a clear effort to embody ancient Iranian kingship by physically taking

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[77] Ibid., 31.
[78] Geertz, 124-125.
[79] Persepolis was built by the Achaemenid shah Darius the Great (r. 522-486 BCE).
[80] ʿAdud al-Dawla was not the only Persian ruler who sought to use the pre-Islamic Zoroastrian past to bolster his own legitimacy. Persepolis was the site of the celebration thrown by the twentieth-century Iranian leader, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1941-1979), to celebrate 2500 years of Persian monarchy.
[81] John J. Donohue, "Three Buwayhid Inscriptions," *Arabica* 20:1 (February 1973): 77.

the place of the Sasanian kings. Visiting the palaces and monuments associated

with ancient Persian kings allowed him to acquire the royal glory of those kings.

Royal glory, or *farr*,[82] was a special quality possessed by Persian kings that

originally meant "life force" or "splendor" and, over time, came to mean "victory"

and "fortune."[83] *Farr* was the symbolic source of legitimacy for Iranian rulers.[84] It

was believed to originate from Ahura Mazda and then to have been transferred

over time from the god to the Sasanids.[85] This divine lineage gave the Sasanian

king omnipotent powers and absolute authority over the world.[86]

By visiting Persepolis, ʿAdud al-Dawla took possession of his realm

symbolically and embodied the authority of two pre-Islamic Zoroastrian dynasties,

the Achaemenids and Sasanids.[87] During his visit, he left two inscriptions of his

own to mark his visit. The first said:

> In the name of God. The illustrious Prince ʿAdud al-Dawla
> Fannakhusrah son of al-Hasan was present here in the year 344 H.
> after coming away victorious from the conquest of Isfahan, the
> capture of Ibn Makan, and the defeat of the army of Hurasan. He

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[82] "*Farr*" is the Zoroastrian concept of "royal glory." In the Avesta, *farr* is a magic force often depicted as fire or descending from the heavens. It was considered both a guarantee and a sign of success. During the Hellenistic period, *farr* became more closely associated with royal fortune. For more information, see "*Farr(ah)*" in the *Encylopaedia Iranica*.

[83] Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia: the Arabs in the East* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975): 8.

[84] Frye, Heritage of Persia, 40.

[85] Choksy, "Sacral Kingship."

[86] Ibid.

[87] Geertz discusses the significance of royal processionals as a part of the ceremonial that 'created' kings by allowing them to mark their territory. Geertz, 125.

ordered that there be brought before him one who read the
inscriptions on these ruins.

The second said:

> The Prince Abu Shujaʾ ʿAdud al-Dawla, God strengthen him, was
> present here in Safar of the year 344H. and the writing on these
> ruins was read to him. It was read by ʿAli b. al-Sarri the secretary
> from Karkh and Marasfand al-Mubad al-Kazaruni.[88]

When ʿAdud al-Dawla had these inscriptions carved at Persepolis in 954, he
used the caliphal title "ʿAdud al-Dawla," although he did not officially receive that
title from the Caliph al-Mutiʾ (r. 946-974) until 962. Furthermore, ʿAdud al-Dawla
did not use his father's title, Rukn al-Dawla (d. 976), instead referring to him as "al-
Hasan."

The unique aspect of these inscriptions, is the fact that ʿAdud al-Dawla had
them carved in Arabic script, in Kufic calligraphy. ʿAdud al-Dawla was, of course,
educated in Arabic. But he was among the first generation of Buyid leaders to
speak Arabic—his father and two uncles did not. Leaving this Arabic inscription in
Fars, where the commemoration of military victories had been common in Sasanid
and Achaemenid times, suggests a deliberate choice about how ʿAdud al-Dawla
wanted to portray his own power in a rapidly changing Islamic society.

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[88] Donohue, "Three Buwayhid Inscriptions," 74-80.

Furthermore, ʿAdud al-Dawla brought Zoroastrian priests to Persepolis with him, to read aloud the inscriptions there, both the ones from previous kings and his own. In his own inscriptions, he celebrated his recent victories in Khurasan. These were key aspects of the ritual: in addition to divine favor, the Sasanid shahs needed victory in battle along with acclamation of the Zoroastrian priesthood and the nobility to confirm their royal status.[89]

With these inscriptions, ʿAdud al-Dawla stressed the continuity of his rule not only with the Sasanid dynasty, but also with the Abbasid caliphs, who modeled their symbolic claims to kingship on Sasanid rituals. While Abbasid claims to authority were grounded in Islamic doctrines, the Abbasid caliphs adopted aspects of Sasanid rituals to articulate their own legitimacy. For example, the language and ritual of Sunni Abbasid accession oaths recalled the rhetoric used in the accession of Sasanid kings.[90] Furthermore, Baghdad, constructed as the Abbasid imperial capital in 762, was built on a round plan and oriented to the points of the compass. The city itself "was an architectural expression of legitimate Islamic world rule in Iranian style" that harkened back to the palace cities of the first Sasanids.[91]

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[89] Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*, 4.
[90] Sasanid accession rituals were recorded in the Paikuli inscription (ca. 293), which commemorates the accession of the Sasanid shah Narseh I (r. 293-302) and his victory over his nephew, Bahram III. The inscription related how Bahram III was crowned without the consent of the Iranian nobility and, therefore, had to be deposed by the Iranian nobility (in a coalition led by Nasreh). Thus, after his victory, Nasreh had an assembly of nobility formally recognize him as the *Shahanshah*. For an excellent interpretation of the Paikuli inscription, see Marsham, 4 and for a discussion of how Abbasid rituals followed Sasanian precedents, see Marsham, 208-209.
[91] Ibid., 197.

By visiting Persepolis and having a Zoroastrian priest read aloud the inscribed exploits of former pre-Islamic Iranian shahs, and then by leaving an Arabic inscription detailing his own victories and rule, ʿAdud al-Dawla affirmed his own place in the continuum of historical rule between the pre-Islamic and the Islamic and brought these two traditions together by emphasizing his Sasanian roots in an Arabo-Islamic form. Framing his Sasanian roots in an Arabo-Islamic form allowed ʿAdud al-Dawla to use the past to create a viable form of Buyid kingship for the present in a way that directly competed with the legitimacy of the Abbasid caliphs.

In addition to Arabizing his embodiment of the heritage of Persepolis, ʿAdud al-Dawla attempted other Arabizations. He Arabized the history of the Buyids, the Daylamites, and even the Sasanians, from which ʿAdud al-Dawla claimed descent by forging a false genealogy for the Daylamites as an Arab tribe: the long-lost arm of the Banu Dhabba,[92] and by linking ʿAdud al-Dawla with Bahram Gur, a Sasanid shah with extensive Arab connections. Al-Sabi crafted a false Arab heritage for the Buyids by creating a narrative of the presence of Arabs in Daylam from ancient times and the close relationship between the Arabs and the Persians there.[93] He claimed that one of the original tribes of the Daylam was

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[92] C.E. Bosworth also noted the forged connection between the Banu Dhabba and the Daylamites, noting that this claim was critiqued by later Seljuk chroniclers, "Heritage," 54.
[93] Abu Ishaq Ibrahim b. Hilal sl-Sabi, *Muntazaʿ min Kitab al-Taji fi akhbar al-Dawla al-Daylamiya*, in *Arabic Texts Concerning the History of the Zaydi Imams of Tabaristan, Daylaman, and Gilan*, ed. Wilferd Madelung (Beirut, 1987), 12-3. All translations from al-Sabi's Kitab al-Taji are my own.

an Arab tribe originally from Oman called the "Banu Dhabba," which al-Sabi described as "the strongest and bravest Arabs."[94] Al-Sabi recounted how the Persians of Daylam mixed with the Banu Dhabba to create a group of Daylamites of mixed ethnic heritage. He emphasized the closeness of Persians and Arabs in the Daylam: they were in close contact for trade, farming, and work, and they eventually intermarried and had children. Thus, after a time, al-Sabi argued, "they blended together and began to resemble each other. Today, there is no difference between them in language, characteristics, morals, or customs."[95] Although al-Sabi noted that the Arabs of the Daylam eventually became highly Persianized as more Persians moved into the region. This emphasis on the early mixing of Arabs and Persians in the Daylam buttressed ʿAdud al-Dawla's hybrid identity. Furthermore, by creating a link between the Banu Dhabba and the Daylamites, al-Sabi helped to revitalize the reputation of the Daylamites, who were often seen as "crude and unruly warrior bands…viewed with aversion and hatred by the more civilized population of the countries they invaded."[96]

The Banu Dhabba, however, were an interesting clean for al-Sabi to choose for the creation of an Arabized Daylamite past. There were some legitimate bases for this choice: the Sunni chronicler, al-Tabari (d. 923), had noted that one of the three sons of Dhabba b. Udd, the eponymous progenitor of the Banu Dhabba, had

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[94] Al-Sabi, 12.
[95] Ibid., 13.
[96] Madelung discusses contemporary views of the Daylamites and Abu Ishaq al-Sabi's attempts to redeem them. "Abu Ishaq al-Sabi and the ʿAlids of Tabaristan," 20.

settled in the Daylam,[97] so al-Sabi could base his claims upon the authority of the famous chronicler. In addition, the Banu Dhabba in Oman were known for their connections with Persians on the Omani coast in pre-Islamic times.[98] The Banu Dhabba also had some impressive Islamic credentials: they were known as one of the Arab tribes that did not need to be converted to Islam by force: they converted after a delegation from the tribe visited Medina to meet with the Prophet Muhammad.[99]

From a Shiʿi perspective, however, the Banu Dhabba was controversial because it was best known as one of the tribes that stood against the fourth caliph, ʿAli b. Abi Talib (d. 661), in the first *fitna* (civil war).[100] Furthermore, the Banu Dhabba was recorded as having fought against ʿAli during the Battle of the Camel (656).[101] Al-Sabi, selecting a tribe known for standing against the Caliph ʿAli does not fit in with standard narratives of Shiʿi identity.

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[97] Tabari, 2365-2370.

[98] Abdullah Abu Ezzah, "The Political Situation in Eastern Arabia at the Advent of Islam," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 9 (1979), 56.

[99] Ibid., 55.

[100] The first *fitna* was the first 'civil war' (loosely translated) within the Islamic community, precipitated by the murder of the third caliph 'Uthman (d. 656). It lasted for all of the caliph ʿAli's reign and ended when Muʿawiya (d. 680) assumed the caliphate (which began the 'Umayyad dynasty, 661-750). As the first imam, ʿAli plays a significant role in Shiʿi beliefs and those who stood against him in the first *fitna* are especially reviled. The cursing of Muʿawiya was common among Shiʿis in Baghdad during the Buyid era. – the caliph al-Muʿtadid (r. 892-902) had promoted the cursing of Mu'awiya in order to combat *Qarmatiyya* influence in southern Iraq. For a discussion of anti-Muʿawiya activity in Baghdad under the Buyids, see Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 334 H./945 to 403 H./1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future* (Leiden: Brill, 2003): 49-50 and Newman, *Formative Period*, 17.

[101]"Banu Dhabba," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol 2.

ʿAdud al-Dawla's creation of a false genealogy linking him to the Sasanid shahs has been oft-cited as one of the main pieces of evidence that the Buyids represent a resurgence of Persian national identity.[102] This argument, however, is based on a superficial analysis of ʿAdud al-Dawla's selection of Bahram Gur as his predecessor.[103] I argue that Bahram Gur was a strategic choice made by ʿAdud al-Dawla to Arabize Buyid and Sasanian history: Bahram Gur was an important symbol of harmony between Arabs and Persians because he was allegedly suckled and raised at the court of an Arab tribe, the Lakhmids at Hira; the Lakhmid king helped him win back his throne when it was usurped.

The Lakhmids were independent Arab clients of the Sasanians on the border with Arabia. The Sasanian Bahram Gur was the son of Yazdgerd I (r. 399-420), who sent him to be suckled and raised with the Lakhmids. When Yazdgerd died, Bahram's older brother (and the heir to the Sasanid throne) was assassinated and a pretender was put on the throne. Bahram Gur, however, returned to

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[102] On genealogical polemic in pre-modern history, the Buyids were not the first to manufacture genealogies to legitimize their authority. The Tahirids claimed descent from the Arab tribe of Khuzaʿa and created a Persian genealogy linking them to the hero Rustam; the Saffarids claimed descent from the Sasanian king Khusraw II to Faridun and Jamshid; and the Samanids claimed to be related to the general Bahram Chubin. Later, the Ghaznavids claimed descent from a daughter of Yazdigirid III, the last Sasanid shah.

[103] For example, Busse argued that ʿAdud al-Dawla selected Bahram Gur as his descendant because of his association with lions. Both ʿAdud al-Dawla and Bahram Gur had legends about lions associated with them. The *Shahnameh* related that Bahram Gur finally won the leadership of the Sasanids after defeating two lions who guarded the royal crown and robe, while ʿAdud al-Dawla's Daylamite clan was called "*Shirdil Awandan*" – "*Shirdil*" meant "Lionheart" and ʿAdud al-Dawla named his oldest son Shirdil. Busse, 61.

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Ctesiphon with an Arab army and forced the pretender to abdicate.[104] Claiming Bahram Gur as his ancestor allowed ʿAdud al-Dawla to position himself as a figure who brought together the Arab and Persian traditions.

Bahram Gur was a popular figure in Abbasid Baghdad. The famous Islamic chronicler al-Tabari related Bahram Gur's life in great detail in his own chronicle. Accordint to al-Tabari, Bahram Gur was educated at the court of Mundhir b. Nuʿman, the Lakhmid king of Hira.[105] There, Bahram Gur was raised by three nurses: two Arabs, and one Persian. Later patricipation of both Arabs and Persians in raising Bahram Gur was considered a sign of both nations' contribution to his greatness. When Mundhir b. Nuʿman helped Bahram Gur win back his throne, al-Tabari presented this aid as an act of unselfish assistance that was rewarded when Islamic forces won control over Persia.[106]

Bahram Gur was, thus, an important symbol of Persian-Arab cooperation. But, of course, Bahram Gur was also a famous Sasanid shah and possessed the attributes of kinship that ʿAdud al-Dawla attempted to embody in his adoption of

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[104] For more information on Yazdgerd, see Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Iran (224-651 CE): portrait of a late antique empire* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2008), 58-67.

[105] From ca. 300 to ca. 600 CE, Hira was the capital of the Lakhmid tribe. It is located three kilometers south of Kufa. The Lakhmids were semi-independent clients of the Sasanids. Mundhir is said to have ruled ca. 418-452. For more information, see "Lakhmids," *EOI2.*

[106] Busse, 54-6, discusses how the Abbasids used Persian motifs to argue that "Islam was the national destination of the Persian nation." His interest, however, is focused predominately on how ʿAdud al-Dawla adopted some motifs of Persian kingship and how to interpret whether or not the Buyids legitimately saw themselves as actually descendants of the Sassanids. For example, Busse writes, ""We may proceed from the assumption that he was convinced of the reality of his Sasanid descent, and certainly to no less a degree than the Prophet Muhammad was convinced of the truth of his divine mission." Busse, 58.

the title "*Shahanshah*" and his visits to Persepolis. Bahram Gur was much loved in the Arabic and Persian tradition. He was known as "Gur," the Onager, because of his love of hunting the animal.[107] Bahram Gur's reputation as a skilled hunter can also be linked with ʿAdud al-Dawla's efforts to portray himself as an ideal king. Hunting skill was an important trait of Persian kings because they were seen as possessing actual physical perfection, which allowed them to aid Ahura Mazda in the cosmic battle against evil. The hunt was seen as an allegory in the victory of the king over the evil forces that opposed him.[108] Hunting scenes are one of the most common kinds of scenes portrayed on the extant Sasanian rock reliefs and on surviving silver vessels.[109]

In the late eleventh century, Omar Khayyam (1048-1131) immortalized Bahram Gur in one of his famous *rubaiyyat*:

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The courts where Jamshid gloried and drank deep:
And Bahram, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his head, and he lies fast asleep.[110]

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[107] The significance of Bahram Gur's hunting prowess can also be linked with hunting motifs on Sasanian silver, where skill in the hunt was seen as a sign of the king's status.

[108] Choksy, "Sacral Kingship."

[108] Omar Khayyam, Verse 17 of the *Rubaiyyat*. *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam: A Critical Edition*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald, and ed. Christopher Decker (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 137.

[109] Choksy, "Sacral Kingship."

[110] Omar Khayyam, Verse 17 of the *Rubaiyyat*, as translated by Fitzgerald, 137.

This poem was, of course, written after the death of ʿAdud al-Dawla and after the fall of the Buyids. But it reflects Bahram Gur's reputation as bringing together the Arab and Persian traditions: the "Lion" refers to the Persians whereas the "Lizard" is a clear reference to Arabs, whom the Persians commonly referred to as "lizard-eaters."[111]

ʿAdud al-Dawla's Use of Honorary Titles in Creating Hybrid Forms of Authority: *Shahanshah* and *al-Amir al-ʿAdil* (The Just King)

ʿAdud al-Dawla used formal titles to signal his own role as a bridge between Arabo-Islamic and Persian identity. During his tenure as governor in Fars, ʿAdud al-Dawla assumed several titles: in 961-2, he adopted the title *al-Amir al-ʿAdil* (the Just King) on coins; in 962, he received the *laqab* ʿAdud al-Dawla from the Abbasid caliph al-Mutiʿ (d. 974);[112] by 965, he adopted the title of *Shahanshah*.[113] The Buyid

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[111] Richard Bulliet, in *Islam: The View from the Edge*, discusses the prevalence of *hadith* regarding lizard eating. These *hadith* were often contradictory, with some portraying the Prophet Muhammad prohibiting the eating of lizard and other saying that the Prophet just preferred not to eat lizard. Bulliet argues that this debate in the *hadith* reveals the conflicts between Persian and Arab culture during the era after the conquests: *hadith* where the Prophet sanctioned the eating of lizards revealed Arab attempts to defend themselves against arguments from Persian elites that the Arabs were 'lizard-eating barbarians'.

[112] For many of the petty dynasties of Iran, the Abbasid caliph was the source of important honors and titles, which were often given in return for presents of money and luxury items. It has been argued that the sheer number of titles granted by the caliph during the tenth century "cheapened" the position of the caliph. Bosworth, "The Titulature of the Early Ghaznavids," *Oriens* 15 (Dec 31, 1962): 213.

[113] There has been much scholarly debate over which was the first group to revive the title "*Shahanshah*," which of the early Buyids claimed the title, and when ʿAdud al-Dawla adopted the title. H.F. Amedroz, who was one of the first scholars to write about the Buyids in English, used numismatic evidence to date the first use of the title "*Shahanshah*" to Musharrif al-Dawla (r. 1021-1025); Vladimir Minorski argued that it was Baha al-Dawla (ʿAdud al-Dawla's son, r. 998-1012)

use of the title *Shahanshah* has been discussed by many scholars, but ʿAdud al-

Dawla's motivations for combining this title with the title "*Al-Amir al-ʿAdil,*" which

was most often associated with the second caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khattab (d. 644), has

been ignored.

Jus as ʿAdud al-Dawla's decided to leave Arabic inscriptions at the Palace of

Darius in Persepolis, so he deliberately blended religious and cultural tropes in his

choice of titles. His adoption of the title "al-Amir al-ʿAdil" appears to be at odds

with the Shiʿi identity of the Buyids; the ninth-century historical chronicles, such

as those by Ibn Saʿd (d. 845), Baladhuri (d. ca. 892), and al-Tabari (d. 923), all

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who was the first to take the title, while G.C. Miles argued that Fakhr al-Dawla (r. 976-980 and 984-997) was to first (in 983-4). Adam Mez was the first to argue that ʿAdud al-Dawla was the first to claim the title.

Most of these arguments are from nearly a century ago and are based on numismatic evidence. Mafizullah Kabir argued that the Buyids, and ʿAdud al-Dawla in particular, were the first to claim the title; he based this on the use of the title in fragments of the *Kitab al-Taji*, Ibn al-Jawzi's later use of the title, numismatic evidence, and al-Mutanabbi's use of the title in a poem dedicated to ʿAdud al-Dawla from 965. Because of al-Mutanabbi's use of the title in 965, Kabir argued that it was then, while he was the ruler of Shiraz, that ʿAdud al-Dawla formally adopted the title, although the Abbasid caliph had probably not invested him with the title (if the Abbasid caliph could ever invest someone with the title of *Shahanshah*). Miles later revised his earlier argument based on new numismatic sources portraying Rukn al-Dawla as the first to claim the title "*Shahanshah*" on a coin issued in 962 where he was shown as a king with a crown and an inscription in Pahlavi calling him *Shahanshah*. Wilferd Madelung was the first scholar to deal with the other Persian groups of the tenth century who used the title *Shahanshah*. As mentioned above, Mardawij b. Ziyar, the founder of the Ziyarids, claimed the title in 934.

Madelung also convincingly argues that it was ʿImad al-Dawla, the founder of the Buyid dynasty, who was the first to use the title "*Shahanshah*." This claim was only mentioned in one source, al-Nuwayri's *Nihayat al-Arab*, which was written in the fourteenth century. Madelung, however, argues that – despite the lack of epigraphical or numismatic evidence to support it – this claim is credible because Nuwayri's main source for Buyid history was the now lost *Tar'ikh al-Duwwal al-Munqatiʿa* by Ibn Zafir, which, in turn, relied heavily on Abu Ishaq al-Sabi's *Kitab al-Taji*, which was sponsored by ʿAdud al-Dawla. Only fragments remain from the *Kitab al-Taji*, but Madelung argued that ʿAdud al-Dawla would have had a political interest in claiming that the title *Shahanshah* had been first adopted by his uncle, ʿImad al-Dawla, since ʿAdud al-Dawla was his appointed heir. ʿImad al-Dawla's use of the title would legitimize ʿAdud al-Dawla's claim to the title.

referred to the second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khattab, by the title "al-Sultan al-ʿAdil"

due to his reputation in Sunni historiography as one of the standards of religious

behavior, after the Prophet Muhammad.[114] Thus, ʿAdud al-Dawla's choice of a title

that would refer to the Caliph ʿUmar, best known for his feud with the fourth

caliph and first Imam ʿAli b. Abi Talib, was a striking choice for a Shiʿi ruler. It has

not been commented upon by scholars before. Busse and Kraemer both note the

use of this title, but attribute it only to the fact that "justice was a much praised

virtue of the Persian kings."[115] However, in light of the fact that the Caliph ʿUmar

was also known in the chronicles as both the founder of the "Arab body politic"

and the quintessential Arab leader[116] who vanquished the Sasanian dynasty, it

seems much more likely that ʿAdud al-Dawla selected this title because linking

himself with the Caliph ʿUmar allowed him to accomplish three important

rhetorical goals: embodying the memory of the Muslim leader who was often

depicted in the chronicles as the quintessential Arab or Bedouin;[117] linking himself

with the Caliph ʿUmar's reputation as a great political leader and the founder of

many of the institutions of the first Islamic state; and reclaiming the authority of

the Muslim ruler most associated with the conquest of Iran.[118]

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[114] Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010): 77, 83, and 89.
[115] Busse, "Revival of Persian Kingship under the Buyids," 62. And Kraemer, *Renaissance*, 45, who attributes it to "justice being a highly acclaimed virtue of the Iranian monarch."
[116] El-Hibri, 84.
[117] Ibid., 87.
[118] Ibid., 78.

One of the main themes of the biographical accounts of the caliph ʿUmar found in the ninth-century chronicles was an emphasis on the Arabism of the second caliph and his victory over the Persian Sasanid Empire.[119] This emphasis on the Arab ʿUmar's conquest of the Persians was stressed through the frequent use of "Arab imagery and literary expressions in…descriptions of Muslim battles on the Persian front," which depicted ʿUmar as the founder of the Arab-Islamic state and its champion over Persian forces.[120] These chronicles emphasized the Arab pedigree of the caliph ʿUmar by idealizing his relationship with the Bedouin and by relating stories of his asceticism that feature his disapproval of the general richness of Persian luxuries.[121] The motivation for these portrayals lay in a desire to romanticize the Arab ancestry of the Abbasid caliphs during an era of increasing Persian influence.[122]

Adopting a title associated with the caliph ʿUmar allowed ʿAdud al-Dawla to embody ʿUmar's reputation for administrative acumen and thus symbolically to dominate the leader responsible for the Islamic conquest of Iran. In the eighth and ninth-century chronicles, ʿUmar was best known for his skills as an administrator and as the founder of many of the institutions of Islamic rule.[123] This reputation was, in turn, linked with the name of Ibn ʿAbbas (d. 687), the progenitor of the

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[119] Ibid., 84.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid., 84-5.
[122] Ibid., 87.
[123] Ibid., 79.

Abbasid dynasty,[124] and adopting it as a part of his own legacy allowed ʿAdud al-Dawla to compete with the reputation of the Sunni Abbasid caliph who was nominally the leader of the Islamic world. Within the Persian territories, ʿUmar was closely associated with the conquest of Iran; the Islamic chronicles portrayed the Islamic victory as the "inevitable judgment of history for the Sasanid state,"[125] which was seen as having fallen due to vanity and overconfidence.[126] Despite the fact that Persia was conquered after the death of the caliph ʿUmar, he symbolically represented an Arabo-Islamic culture that was portrayed as having won an epic struggle with Persian culture in the conquests.[127] By using ʿUmar's title, ʿAdud al-Dawla co-opted his memory and united the Persianate and Arabo-Islamic sides of history.

ʿAdud al-Dawla's Patronage of Poetry: Blending Arabo-Islamic and Persianate Cultural Idioms

While he was the governor of Fars, ʿAdud al-Dawla made a deliberate effort to embody both Persian and Arabo-Islamic forms of legitimacy. One significant way that he did so was by inviting the renowned Arab poet al-Mutanabbi (d. 965), whose very name meant 'one who pretends to be a prophet,' to his court in Shiraz to write panegyric in his name. Panegyric played an important role in justifying the

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid., 89.
[126] Ibid., 97.
[127] Ibid., 84.

authority and privilege of a ruler in medieval Islamic society.[128] The king's claim to

authority was rooted in mythic precedents and, as such, required the maintenance

of a mythology to display the king's mythic role.[129] The praise hymns of poets

allowed a king to build his image and counter rivals.[130] Furthermore, during the

era of political instability in which ʿAdud al-Dawla rose to power as the authority

of the Abbasid caliph was on the wane, panegyric was a tool by which military and

political success could be spun into "the myth of ideology of legitimate rule."[131]

Al-Mutanabbi's poetry about ʿAdud al-Dawla framed the symbols of Persian

kingship, such as ʿAdud al-Dawla's association with lions, within the long legacy of

Arabic poetry in the Arab and Islamic tradition. Al-Mutanabbi was born in Kufa

and is often said to have come under Shiʿi influence there (either Zaydi or

Qarmati). He was best known as the panegyrist of Sayf al-Dawla (d. 967), the

Hamdanid ruler of Aleppo, whom al-Mutanabbi portrayed as the personification of

an ideal Arab ruler. Al-Mutanabbi remained at the court of Sayf al-Dawla from 940-

948, later spent some time in Egypt as the panegyrist for the Ikhshid ruler Kafur

(d. 968), and eventually made his way to Iran where he was first received by Abu

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[128] Samer Ali, *Arabic Literary Salons in the Islamic Middle Ages: Poetry, Public Performance, and the Presentation of the Past* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010): 84-5.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., 85.
[131] Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002): 180.

al-Fadl ibn al-ʿAmid (d. 970), the Buyid vizier to Rukn al-Dawla in Arrajan, before

arriving in Shiraz in 965 to stay at the court of ʿAdud al-Dawla.[132]

The poem "The Gap of Bavvan" was dedicated to ʿAdud al-Dawla and his

two sons and features common symbols of Persian nobility, such as the lion and

the sun, to describe ʿAdud al-Dawla and his sons. In the poem, al-Mutanabbi says:

> Never before have I seen two sturdy lion cubs
> Like his two cubs swift as two colts
> More strongly contesting nobility of origins
> Or more like a noble father in appearance.[133]

And then:

> You were the sun dazzling every eye
> So how now can two others shine?
> May they live the life of the two moons
> Giving life by their light and not envious of each other.[134]

The use of common symbols of Persian sovereignty in al-Mutanabbi's praise poetry

for ʿAdud al-Dawla is not surprising. However, al-Mutanabbi also deploys themes

of conflict or at least discomfit between Arab and Persian culture in this poem

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[132] R. Blachere and Ch. Pellat, "al-Mutanabbi," *EOI2*.
[133] Al-Mutanabbi, "Gap of Bavvan," lines 37-38. Mutanabbi has been translated by several scholars. For the translation here, see Arthur Wormholdt, *The Diwan of Abu Tayyib Ahmad ibn al-Husayn al-Mutanabbi* (ABC International Group, Inc.), 511.
[134] Al-Mutanabbi, "Gap of Bavvan," lines 42-43, as translated by Wormholdt, 511.

about the splendor of the Gap of Bavvan. Bavvan was a glade that al-Mutanabbi

passed through on his way to Shiraz. It was known as a place of great natural

beauty and was considered by some medieval geographers to be a garden

paradise.[135] In this environment, al-Mutanabbi expressed his feelings of alienation

as an Arab traveler in a Persian land:[136]

But an Arab man there is
A stranger in face, hand, and tongue
Playgrounds to jinn, if Solomon roamed there
He would take along an interpreter[137]

Margaret Larkin interprets this poem as portraying "a clear tension

between Arab and Persian culture, which results in verses that sometimes verge

on being disrespectful of the latter."[138] As an Arab, al-Mutanabbi felt isolated in

Fars. When he referred to Solomon's need of an interpreter in Persia, al-Mutanabbi

alluded to a Qur'anic verse that described Solomon's ability to understand all the

languages of the world and even speak to *jinn* and birds.[139] Here, al-Mutanabbi

implied that the Persians themselves were *jinn*, which could be considered a

compliment, but was still fairly audacious, considering that the poem was

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[135] Larkin, 87.
[136] Ibid., 89.
[137] Al-Mutanabbi, "Gap of Bavvan," lines 2-3. Here, I preferred Margaret Larkin's translation. See Larkin, 87.
[138] Ibid., 89.
[139] Qur'an 27: 16-17. Larkin, 90.

dedicated to ʿAdud al-Dawla.[140] In this poem, however, al-Mutanabbi represented himself as "the standard-bearer for the dominant Arab culture"[141] and exaggerated the alienation that he felt visiting a place where political power was held by non-Arabs while contrasting the Gap of Bavvan with Damascus:

> If this were Damascus, my reins would be diverted
> By someone with kettles white as china, skilled at making *tharid* stew
> Who uses aloe wood to kindle a fire for guests,
> Whose smoke is fragrant with perfume
> You dwell with him with a brave heart
> And depart from him with a timorous one[142]

In this section of the poem, al-Mutanabbi described scenes of Arab hospitality in Damascus and likened Arab hospitality to Muslim hospitality through his reference to *tharid* stew. The references to "kettles white as china" referred to a metaphor for a generous man, "in whose kettles can be seen the white hump of the camel cooking in the stew. The owner does not just feed his guests some weak stew, but slaughters a camel to enrich it."[143] The scene emphasized al-Mutanabbi's feelings of isolation and insecurity in a Persian environment: "If this were

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[140] Larkin, 90.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Al-Mutanabbi, "Gap of Bavvan," lines 10-12, as translated by Larkin, 87.
[143] Ibid., 91.

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Damascus, he would know what to expect; not so, here, in this Persian garden."[144]

Furthermore, mentioning *tharid,* a stew made of bread and meat which was known

as the Prophet's favorite meal, brought together the Arabic and Islamic imagery.[145]

The Prophet's great-grandfather is credited with introducing *tharid* stew to

Syria.[146]

Although al-Mutanabbi stressed his feelings of alienation in a Persian

environment, at the end of the poem he described how the presence of ʿAdud al-

Dawla brought him comfort there:

I said: When I see Abu Shujaʿ[147]

I forget about everyone else and this place

For people and the world are [but] a road

To one who has no match among men.[148]

Although these lines follow the familiar formulae of Arabic panegyric, they are

rendered more powerful by the fact that the eighteen lines before them emphasize

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[144] Ibid..

[145] The Prophet once spoke of his wife, ʿAʾisha's, superiority over other women by comparing her to *tharid*: "The superiority of ʿAʾisha over [other] women is like the superiority of *al-tharid* over other food." Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqat,* 1: 393 as quoted in D.A. Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of ʿAʾisha Bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 162. Spellberg also notes that *tharid* is mentioned as the Prophet's favorite food in the following sources: Ibn Saʿd, 8: 79 (twice); al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari,* 5: 29; Muslim, *Sahih Muslim,* 6: 138; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad,* 3: 156, 264; 6: 159; al-Tirmidhi, *Sahih al-Tirmidhi,* 5: 265; ʿAbd Allah al-Darimi, *Sunan al-Darimi,* 2: 106; and Abu ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Nasa'i, *Sunan al-Nasaʿi,* 7: 63.

[146] Spellberg, 162.

[147] ʿAdud al-Dawla's name.

[148] Al-Mutanabbi, "Gap of Bavvan," lines 19-20, as translated by Larkin, 92.

al-Mutanabbi's feelings of alienation.[149] Al-Mutanabbi further stresses the supremacy of ʿAdud al-Dawla over all other patrons:

> I trained myself in poetry on them,
> Just as one first learns to charge with a lance that has no point.[150]

All of al-Mutanabbi's patrons before ʿAdud al-Dawla were merely there for him to learn to write panegyrics dedicated to the greatest of patrons, ʿAdud al-Dawla. He makes ʿAdud al-Dawla the hero of the poem. He is the one who saves al-Mutanabbi from feelings of alienation in a Persian land.[151] Although this poem highlights themes of Arab alienation in a Persianate land, by the end, al-Mutanabbi acknowledges ʿAdud al-Dawla's supremacy.

The relationship between poet and patron has been sometimes portrayed as fairly mercenary. After all, the patron paid the poet for his panegyric. Panegyric, however, played an important role in medieval Arabic society by extolling the virtues of kingship:[152] the public recitation of the panegyric "amounts to a public renewal of faith in the state while reminding the sovereign of the duties of his high office."[153] Furthermore, by placing this poem in conversation with ʿAdud al-Dawla's later choice of Bahram Gur as his pre-Islamic Sasanid 'ancestor', we see

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[149] Ibid.
[150] Al-Mutanabbi, "Gap of Bavvan," line 21, as translated by Larkin, 93.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Sperl, "Islamic Kingship and Arabic Panegyric Poetry," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 8 (1977), 34.
[153] Ibid.

that ʿAdud al-Dawla was concerned about melding ideas from Persian and Arab heritage.

Conclusion

The claims made by ʿAdud al-Dawla might appear to be contradictory, but it is clear that, in the tenth century, they were not. Rather, ʿAdud al-Dawla seamlessly blended these multiple forms of identity to create a hybrid vision of his own authority. These appeals were a synthesized appeal to the heterogeneous population over which the Buyids ruled.

Although the Buyids have largely been considered to be a Persian Shiʿi dynasty, a closer examination of their rhetoric reveals that they blended different forms of Persian, Arabic, Islamic (both Shiʿi and Sunni), and pre-Islamic symbols in order to appeal to a diverse population, many of whom were fairly recent converts to Islam. ʿAdud al-Dawla sponsored historical narratives that portrayed him as an ideal Muslim king and claimed that the Persian Buyid tribe, the Daylamites, were a lost Arab tribe. Simultaneously, he claimed the ancient pre-Islamic Zoroastrian Persian title of *Shahanshah* but declared that his ancestor was the Sasanid shah best known for being raised by Arabs. He patronized Arabic poetry, but that poetry highlighted Arab feelings of alienation in a Persian environment, which only he had the power to ease. He visited the ancient site of Persepolis and had a Zoroastrian priest read him the Pahlavi inscriptions there, but left his own inscriptions in

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Arabic. He professed Shiʿi Islam, but maintained the prestige and position of the Sunni Abbasid caliph and choose titles that harkened back to the Sunni hero, the second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khattab. As discussed in the previous chapter, a parallel process was at work in the Fatimid realm: rather than fitting neatly into the category of 'revolutionary' Shiʿis who were unwilling to compromise with Sunnis, the Fatimids attempted to embody the authority of the Sunni Abbasid caliphs. Rather than being unwilling to compromise with an overwhelming Sunni majority, Fatimid and Buyid appeals to authority and legitimacy reveal the fluidity of religious identity in the tenth century when Muslims were still in the process of defining what it meant to be Muslim. The next chapter will discuss the ways in which local tenth-century Sunni sources portrayed the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties, and then compare contemporary depictions with Sunni portrayals from the eleventh century and later.

Chapter Five: Sunni Reactions to the Fatimids and Buyids and Later Sunni Portrayals of the 'Shiʿi Century'

> *Whenever the Batinis [Shiʿis] have appeared they have had a name or a nickname, and in every city and province they have been known by a different title; but in essence they are all the same. In Aleppo and Egypt they call them Ismaʿilis; in Qum, Kashan, Tabaristan and Sabzvar they are called Shiʿites; in Baghdad, Transoxiana, and Ghaznain they are known as Qarmatis, in Kufa as Mubarakis, in Basra as Rawandis and Burqaʿis, in Rayy as Khalafis, in Gurgan as The Wearers of Red, in Syria as The Wearers of White, in the West as Saʿidis, in al Ahsa and Bahrain as Jannabis, and in Isfahan as Batinis; whereas they call themselves The Didactics and other such names. But their whole purpose is only to abolish Islam and to lead mankind astray.*

> - *Siyasat-nama* (The Book of Government) by Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092)

Nizam al-Mulk[1] (1018-1092), vizier to the Sunni Seljuk amirs (1037-1194) in the period immediately following the fall of the Shiʿi Buyid amirate in Iraq and Iran, wrote a mirror for princes to guide Sunni rulers. In the quotation above,

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[1] Nizam al-Mulk's full name was Abu ʿAli al-Hasan b. ʿAli b. Ishaq al-Tusi – "Nizam al-Mulk" was a *laqab* or nickname which meant "the order of the state." He served as the vizier of the Seljuk Alp Arslan (d. 1072) but, after the assassination of Alp Arslan, Nizam al-Mulk was the ruler of Seljuk domains in all but name. Nizam al-Mulk is closely associated with the foundation of the *Nizamiyya*, a series of colleges dedicated to teaching Sunni law (predominately of the Shafiʿi legal school and Ashʿari *kalam*) that spread to act as a bulwark against the spread of Shiʿi ideas. See H. Bowen and C.E. Bosworth, "Nizam al-Mulk," *EOI2*.

taken from his *Siyasat-nama*,[2] he reduced the diversity of religious identity in the Islamic world to a binary of Sunni versus Shiʿi: all non-Sunni movements were identified as Shiʿi "batinis" out to "abolish Islam and to lead mankind astray." Less than a generation after the fall of the Buyid amirate, while the Fatimid caliphate still ruled from Cairo, it was already possible to see the process by which the history and historiography of the tenth century was being rewritten *ex post facto* as a sectarian narrative.

This constructed narrative of sectarian conflict from the eleventh century and later is significant because it has persisted. Modern scholars, as discussed in chapter one, have continued to view the tenth century only through the lens of Sunni-Shiʿi conflict, as a "Shiʿi Century" inevitably overcome by the "Sunni Revival."[3] This sectarian binary portrays Sunni Islam as original and normative. All other forms of Islam are reduced to heterodoxy. Further, it presumes a primordial hostility between Sunni and Shiʿi Islam and diminishes the complexity of medieval Muslim identity.

For example, an early twentieth-century work on Buyid history explains that:

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[2] Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasat-nama*, trans. Hubert Darke, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul (1960), 238.
[3] The term "Shiʿi Century" was coined by Marshall G.S. Hodgson, who described it as the period of "Fatimid and Buyid preeminence" in the tenth century. See Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Volume 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 36. The "Sunni Revival" is the term used to characterize the eleventh and twelfth-century response to this "Shiʿi Century" by Sunni military regimes. George Makdisi popularized the term in "The Sunni Revival," reprinted in *Islamic Civilization 950-1150*, ed. D.S. Richards (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer Ltd., 1973), 155-168.

The Mahdite Shiʿahs, the Karmathians and the Fatimids…continued the Kharijite struggle against the Caliphate, an indication that the old Islamic regime was at an end. The revival of the essentially old oriental ideas in Shiʿism at the expense of Islam constitutes the distinguishing feature of the spiritual movements of the 4th/10th century.[4]

This analysis classifies all Shiʿi millenarian movements, the *Qarmatiyya* (which were an offshoot of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa*), the Fatimid Ismaʿilis, and the Kharijis (which were a diverse movement in their own right and also generally anti-Shiʿi) as essentially the same. This characterization is actually *broader* than Nizam al-Mulk's already quite broad definition of 'batinis' from the eleventh century. Like Nizam al-Mulk's definition of 'batinis', it reduces a diverse range of tenth-century Muslim movements to a single characteristic: not Sunni. Further, it implies that all of these non-Sunni movements could be considered anti-Islamic because they were mixing pre-Islamic "old oriental ideas" with Islam.

Although the above example dates to the 1930s, analyses that further the sectarian narrative of the tenth century are still common. Here, an article written on the early Ghaznavids (963-1186) for the *Cambridge History of Iran* in the mid-1970s reduces the complex political history of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries to simple sectarian conflict:

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[4] Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh and D.S. Margoliouth (London: Luzac & Co, 1937), 59.

It would not have been difficult for the sultan [Mahmud of Ghazna]

to find a plausible pretext for meddling in Buyid affairs: ...the Buyids

were Shiʿis, and as long as they held Baghdad, the Abbasid caliph

could not be considered a free agent.[5]

The Sunni ruler Mahmud of Ghazna (d. 1030) certainly rationalized his invasion of

Buyid territory in the name of 'saving' the Abbasid caliph from the Shiʿi Buyids, but

the above description oversimplifies the actual political situation in Baghdad and

the concerns of Mahmud of Ghazna. First, there had been many periods where the

Abbasid caliph could not be considered a 'free agent', such as the "Samarran

captivity" (861-870),[6] when the caliph was held captive by his own slave soldiers,

or even the amirate of Ibn Raʿiq (d. 942), who seized power in 936 and made

himself the *de facto* regent of the Abbasid caliph al-Radi (r. 934-940). Second,

although the Buyid amirs served as political rulers in Iraq and Iran, that does not

mean that the Abbasid caliphs themselves were completely powerless.[7] Mahmud

of Ghazna may have found it useful to depict himself as the defender of Sunni

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[5] C.E. Bosworth, "The Early Ghaznavids," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Volume 4: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 176.
[6] The "Samarran captivity" refers to a time period when the slave soldiers of the caliph held the Abbasid caliphs captive in a new Abbasid capital, Samarra, located to the north of Baghdad. During this period, the slave soldiers decided who would be caliph. This is the period to which scholars often date the beginning of the decentralization of the Abbasid caliphate.
[7] Eric J. Hanne, in *Putting the Caliph in His Place: Power, Authority, and the Late Abbasid Caliphate* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), argues that modern scholars have relegated the Abbasid caliphate after the rise of the Buyids "to the status of cameo appearances" when, according to Hanne, the caliphs during this period were "far from inconsequential puppets brought out for state occasions and religious ceremonies."

orthodoxy, but his motivations were not nearly so simplistic and cannot

necessarily be taken at face value.

More recent examples of this tendency to see the tenth century only

through the lens of a narrative of sectarian conflict are difficult to identify because

the study of the dynasties of the "Shiʿi Century" has become marginalized in

modern scholarship on the medieval Middle East. As discussed in chapter one, the

Fatimids and the Buyids tend to be studied in isolation from each other and from

broader developments in Islamic history. In addition, there has been almost no

research on the Buyids in the past thirty years[8] and recent studies on the Fatimids

are nearly exclusively funded by the Institute for Ismaʿili Studies (IIS), which was

established by the Agha Khan, the Imam of the Nizari Ismaʿilis. Scholarship on the

Fatimids published by IIS is excellent, but its primary goal in studying Fatimid

history is to shed light on Ismaʿili religious history. Thus, much of this scholarship

inadvertently contributes to the misconception that the history of these dynasties

is only important for Shiʿi history.

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[8] Roy Mottahedeh's study of the bonds of friendship and patronage in Buyid society, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press) is from 1980 and Joel Kraemer's intellectual history of Buyid society, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden: E.J. Brill) is from 1986. The 2003 publication date of John J. Donohue's *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq, 334H/945 to 403H/1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) makes it look recent, but it an unrevised edition of his 1966 dissertation from Harvard University, published on the occasion of his retirement. The most recent studies are from Eric J. Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place: Power, Authority, and the Late Abbasid Caliphate* and Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, "A Window on Islam in Buyid Society" (Ph.D diss., Harvard University, 2003). Hanne's work is excellent, but focuses on the caliphate, not the Buyids, and does not even begin until 991 with the Buyid amir Baha' al-Dawla. GhaneaBassiri's dissertation also did not focus on the Buyids but on eleventh-century theoretical works on justice in Islam.

In this chapter, I trace the origins of the narrative of medieval sectarian

conflict in Islam in order to challenge the notion of a unified tenth-century Sunni

response to the rise of these two Shiʿi dynasties. I accomplish this task by

examining contemporary Sunni responses to the tenth-century Fatimids and the

Buyids, and then contrasting them with portrayals in Sunni sources dating to the

eleventh century and later. The post tenth-century Sunni sources depict this period

as one of sectarian conflict. The tenth-century Sunni sources, however, written by

Sunni religious scholars and officials living under Fatimid and Buyid rule, are not

predominately concerned with the Shiʿi identity of these two Shiʿi states. They

focus instead on conflict between the different Sunni schools of jurisprudence[9] and

on the disintegration of Abbasid power.

The Shiʿi Dynasties of the Tenth-Century: A Traveler's Perspective

It was common for medieval religious scholars to travel extensively within

the Islamic world.[10] They followed a tradition of travel in pursuit of religious study,

known as the *rihla* or *talab al-ʿilm* (the search for knowledge). It was not enough

simply to read a book; acquiring knowledge required studying with the author

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[9] Today, there are four accepted Sunni schools of jurisprudence, the Shafiʿi, Maliki, Hanafi, and Hanbali schools. Sunnis accept all four schools as authoritative but this was not always the case. In the tenth-century, there was still a rivalry between these Sunni schools of jurisprudence. It was not until the eleventh century and later that they were reconciled. Christopher Melchert discusses the origins and development of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence in *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law.*

[10] As Houari Touati put it, in *Islam & Travel in the Middle Ages,* "Muslim men of letters of the Middle Ages were mad for travel." Touati, 1.

directly, or someone who had learned the book from the author.[11] Thus, travel by scholars to study with other scholars was relatively common.[12] Often, these scholarly travelers wrote accounts of their journeys to provide blueprints for later travelers seeking a similar path.

From the years 965 to 985, during the period when both Fatimid and Buyid power was approaching its zenith, a highly-educated Muslim from Jerusalem known as al-Muqaddasi (d. ca. 1000)[13] journeyed across the Islamic world and wrote an account of his travels: *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi maʿrifat al-aqalim* (The Best Divisions for the Classification of Regions). Al-Muqaddasi visited both Fatimid Cairo and Buyid Baghdad and was keenly interested in different types of Muslim belief and practice.

Al-Muqaddasi's religious identity has been contested. He did not identify himself in his work as either Sunni or Shiʿi. Due to his extensive travels, modern scholars have been quick to assume that he was secretly an Ismaʿili missionary who served the Fatimid caliph. There is little evidence to support this assertion.[14]

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[11] Ibid., 8.

[12] There were, of course, other kinds of travel, such as the *hajj* to Mecca, or *ziyaras* to religious shrines, in addition to medieval Muslims who traveled to trade or for preaching. For an in-depth discussion of this phenomena, see Sam I. Gellens, "The Search for Knowledge in Medieval Muslim societies," in *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, eds. (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1990), 50-68.

[13] His full name was Muhammad ibn Ahmad Shams al-Din. Al-Muqaddasi was his *laqab*, nickname, which meant 'one from Jerusalem'. The Arabic name for Jerusalem, which is "al-Quds," however, means "The Holy."

[14] Basil Anthony Collins, who translated al-Muqaddasi's work and wrote a biography of him, asserts that there is no actual evidence that al-Muqaddasi was Ismaʿili. *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions: A Translation of Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Maʿrifat al-Aqalim* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing

In a sense, al-Muqaddasi himself personifies the diversity of tenth-century Muslim

religious identity. Although there have been efforts to definitively classify al-

Muqaddasi (and other medieval Muslims) as falling on one side or the other of a

Sunni-Shiʿi binary, these efforts can be seen as another example of how later ideas

of Islamic sectarianism deform analyses of the tenth century. Al-Muqaddasi states

that his own goal is to be remembered for providing a resource for "devout and

upright people," from kings, nobility, judges, and jurists to commoners, elites,

travelers, and merchants, who might draw on his travels for entertainment or

profit.[15]

     Al-Muqaddasi's tenth-century Islamic world features diversity of Muslim

religious identities. In his travels, he identified many types of Muslims: Shiʿis,

Kharijis, Murjiʿa, Muʿtazilis, Hanafis, Malikis, and Shafiʿis as well as Muslims who

followed different types of religious authorities and who read the Qur'an in

different ways.[16] He marveled at the variety of religions represented in the Islamic

cities. He related that Baghdad was inhabited by Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews,

in addition to several kinds of Muslims, noting that Baghdad's Muslims were

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Ltd, 1994), xxi. Also Collins, *Al-Muqaddasi: The Man and His Work* (Ann Arbor: Department of Geography, University of Michigan, 1974), vi.

[15] Al-Muqaddasi, *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi Ma'arifat Al-Aqalim* in *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 3, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1906), 1-2. Al-Muqaddasi's *Ahsan al-Taqasim* was translated by Basil Anthony Collins as *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*. In this chapter, when citing translations of al-Muqaddasi, I will be citing de Goeje's Arabic text and using Collins' translations. In these cases, I will cite both the Arabic and English editions of the text. Al-Muqaddasi in Collins, 1-2 (English).

[16] Al-Muqaddasi, 37-43.

mostly Sunnis who adhered to the Hanbali school of jurisprudence.[17] In Fatimid

Cairo, al-Muqaddasi also identified a broad population of Muslims and non-

Muslims, which included both Sunnis and Shiʿis.[18] According to al-Muqaddasi,

these different groups of Muslims lived together and intermingled.[19] He did not

mention sectarian disputes in Fatimid Cairo or Buyid Baghdad.[20]

Al-Muqaddasi was sometimes critical of Muslim religious practices, but his

disapproval was reserved for non-urban Muslims, whom he found to be ill-

informed and, at times, heretical. He did not describe their unorthodox practices,

but singled out the non-urban Muslims of Arabia and Yemen in particular as

"fanatical heretics."[21] As an elite, educated, urban Muslim, al-Muqaddasi's distaste

for non-urban religious practices is hardly surprising. In comparison with his

portrayal of 'heterodox' practices, he did not label Shi'ism as 'heterodox'. He

identified four general differences between Sunni and Shiʿi religious practices, but

did not offer any judgment of these variations. He simply noted that Shiʿis

permitted *mutʿa* (temporary marriage),[22] allowed triple repudiation to divorce,[23]

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[17] Ibid., 114.
[18] Ibid., 181.
[19] Ibid., 37-43.
[20] He did, however, mention disputes in Mecca between Sunnis and Shiʿis. He claimed that the origins of this conflict were economic, rather than religious. Ibid., 94.
[21] Ibid., 96 in Collins, 82.
[22] *Mutʿa* is a form of marriage allowed by Shiʿis that has a "built-in time limit." The practice has been traced to pre-Islamic tribal traditions where it was often a temporary alliance formed between a stranger seeking protection from a tribe that was not his own. For a discussion of the history of *mutʿa*, see Shahla Haeri, *Law of Desire: Temporary Marriage in Shiʿi Iran* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1989), especially pages 49-64 where Haeri discusses the historical background of *mutʿa* and the differences between the Sunni and Shiʿi views of the practice.

believed that one could purify the feet for prayer by rubbing water on them (rather than requiring a full washing),[24] and that Shiʿis used the phrase "*hay ʿala khayr al-ʿamal*" (come to the best of works) in their call to prayer.[25] He did not mention any conflicts caused between Sunnis and Shiʿis due to these differences.

Al-Muqaddasi lamented the disintegrating fortunes of the Sunni Abbasid caliphs, describing their decline and its effect on Baghdad:

> Every heart yearns for [Baghdad]; every battle is fought over it, and every hand is raised to defend it. It is too renowned to need description, more glorious than we could possibly portray it, and is indeed beyond praise….However, the authority of the *khalifs* declined, the city deteriorated, and the population dwindled. The City of Peace is now desolate: the Mosque alone is frequented on Fridays, and otherwise the whole place is deserted.[26]

In his description of Baghdad, he made the significance of the city clear: it was the seat of the Abbasid caliphs. He noted their decline, but did not actually mention the

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[23] A divorce made by triple repudiation was not accepted under all forms of Sunni law. Ibn Taymiyya wrote the most famous refutation of the doctrine of triple repudiation in divorce. Abu Zahra discusses Ibn Taymiyya's arguments in *Ibn Taymiyya*, 414-27. For a discussion of the different kinds of medieval Islamic divorces, see Yossef Rapoport, *Marriage, Money, and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 97-8.

[24] The issue of whether the feet could be considered ritually pure by rubbing water on them rather than by a full washing was one of the major disagreements between the Sunni schools of jurisprudence and the Shiʿis. The Shiʿis allow the feet to be purified via rubbing with water while Sunnis usually require washing. For a more in-depth discussion of this issue, see Farhad Daftary, *Medieval Ismaʿili History & Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 123-124.

[25] Al-Muqaddasi, 40.

[26] Al-Muqaddasi, 119 in Collins, 100.

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Buyid amirs directly. Instead, he commented that the "Daylamites" (the tribal group to which the Buyids belonged) control Baghdad and had ended the political power of the caliphs.[27] It is worth noting, however, that al-Muqaddasi did not mention that the Daylamites were Shiʿi, that there had been sectarian disputes in the city, or that there were public Shiʿi rituals observed there. He was eager to comment about the decline of Baghdad overall, but his primary concern was not an issue of whether or not the city was controlled by Sunnis of Shiʿis.

In comparison with the decline of Baghdad, al-Muqaddasi praised the development of the new Islamic city of Cairo/Fustat:[28]

> Fustat is a metropolis in every sense of the word; here are together
> all the departments of government administration, and moreover, it
> is the seat of the Commander of the Faithful.....Its name is renowned,
> its glory increased; for truly it is the capital city of Egypt. It has
> superseded Baghdad, and is the glory of Islam, and is the
> marketplace for all mankind. It is more sublime than the City of
> Peace [Baghdad]. It is the storehouse of the Occident, the entrepot of
> the Orient, and is crowded with people at the time of the Pilgrimage
> festival. Among the capitals there is none more populous than it, and
> it abounds in noble and learned men. Its goods of commerce and
> specialties are remarkable, its markets splendid and handsome.

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[27] Ibid., 131 in Collins, 110.

[28] Fustat was the main Islamic city of Cairo, founded by ʿAmr b. al-ʿAs (d. 664) during the seventh-century Islamic conquests. The Fatimids founded their capital, Cairo, in 969, as a royal enclosure for the caliphs to the north of Fustat. Over time, the two settlements grew together into one city. Al-Muqaddasi's praise of Fustat/Cairo is likely the source for the claim that he was a crypto-Shiʿi.

Nowhere in the realm of Islam is there a mosque more crowded than here, nor people more handsomely adorned, no shore with a greater number of boats.[29]

In this description of Fustat/Cairo, al-Muqaddasi did not mention the Fatimids by name, nor did he refer to the fact that the rulers of Cairo were Shiʿi. Significantly, he did refer to the ruler of Cairo as the "Commander of the Faithful." Al-Muqaddasi based his estimation of the city, however, on its economic status: Cairo had a rich, active market based on trade with both Europe and the Middle East, and the people were richly dressed. The religious dimension of al-Muqaddasi's assessment had no obvious sectarian element: the mosques were crowded and the city was an important stop on the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. In comparison, he did not mention active markets in Baghdad, saying that "the Mosque alone is frequented on Fridays, and otherwise the whole place is deserted."[30] Al-Muqaddasi bewailed the Abbasid decline, but his lamentation did not focus upon (or even mention) the fall of the Abbasid caliph as a Sunni regime. Instead, he praised Cairo as the new capital of the Islamic world without noting that the caliph there was Shiʿi or even mentioning the sectarian dimension of that success.

Al-Muqaddasi was only one of many travelers during the tenth century, but his observations were significant. He was interested in the variations between

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[29] Al-Muqaddasi, 197 in Collins, 166.
[30] Ibid., 120 in Collins, 100.

different types of Muslim identity, but he neither mentioned the sectarian

identities of the Fatimids or the Buyids, nor mentioned sectarian violence in

Baghdad or Cairo. As an educated, urban Muslim, he reserved his disapproval for

non-urban Muslims who likely had no means of learning about 'official' or

'orthodox' Islam of any variety. For al-Muqaddasi, seemingly, Islam's fate was

linked with government power and economic success, which could be achieved, as

in Cairo of the Fatimid Shiʿis, without regard to sectarian differences.

Local Sunni Reactions to the Fatimids in the Tenth Century

The reactions of tenth-century Sunnis to life under Shiʿi Fatimid rule also do

not support a simple binary conflict between Sunnis and Shiʿis. Rather, tenth-

century local Sunni reactions to the Fatimids differed significantly between Sunni

Malikis and Sunni Hanafis. Further, these reactions changed dramatically over time

as the Fatimids distanced themselves from their millenarian origins and embraced

their new status as Muslim caliphs ruling over a diverse population.

As discussed in chapter three, the first two Fatimid caliphs, al-Mahdi and al-

Qa'im, had contentious relationships with the non-Ismaʿilis over whom they ruled.

Both al-Mahdi and al-Qa'im had been born in Syria and lived through the period

when the pre-Fatimid Ismaʿili *daʿwa* fled the persecution of Sunni Abbasid agents.

The rise to power of the third Fatimid caliph, al-Mansur (r. 946-953), and his

successors, however, ushered in a new era for the Fatimids. Al-Mansur had been

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born in *Ifriqiya* under Fatimid rule and, unlike his father and grandfather, likely

found it easier to imagine himself in the role of caliph, a position of sacred

authority that his predecessors had crafted through symbolic ritual.

Tenth-century Sunni reactions to Fatimid rule were not monolithic, but

differed according to school of jurisprudence. The population of Qayrawan and

Raqqada, in contemporary Tunisia, was diverse. The majority of the Arab

population identified as Sunnis who followed the Maliki school of Islamic

jurisprudence, although there was also a significant Sunni Hanafi minority.[31] Under

Sunni Aghlabid rule, the Sunni Malikis and Hanafis had relied upon a close

relationship with the state, holding religious posts as judges, market inspectors,

prayer leaders, and so forth.[32] There was also a Shiʿi minority, most of which

identified as Zaydi Shiʿi, a denomination in competition with the Ismaʿili

Fatimids.[33]

There are three tenth-century Sunni accounts of life in Fatimid *Ifriqiya*,

written by Maliki Sunnis, two of which lived under Shiʿi Fatimid rule. First, al-

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[31] Wilferd Madelung and Paul E. Walker, *The Advent of the Fatimids* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 3-4.
[32] The Aghlabids liked to play the Sunni Hanafi and Maliki populations against each other. Paul Walker, *Exploring an Islamic Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 25.
[33] At this early period in Fatimid rule, the main difference between Isma'ili and Zaydi Shiʿism would have been in the identity of the Imam. A local Shiʿi named Ibn al-Haytham (d. fl. 10th century) converted from Zaydi Shiʿism to Isma'ili Shiʿism after the advent of the Fatimid caliphate. Ibn al-Haytham traced his own family back to al-Haytham b. ʿAbd Allah, a Zaydi Shiʿi Kufan from the Banu Minqar (of Tamim) who emigrated to *Ifriqiya* in 711-2 with the Umayyd governor Yazid b. Hatim. Ibn al-Haytham also mention other Shiʿi families, such as the Banu al-Marwarudhi (or al-Marwadhi), which traced its arrival in *Ifriqiya* back to the Jund of Khurasan who likely settled in *Ifriqiya* in the mid-eighth century. See Madelung, "The Religious Policy of the Fatimids toward their Sunni Subjects in the Maghrib," in *L'Egypte fatimide; son art et son histoire; actes du colloque organize a Paris les 28, 29, et 30 mai 1998.* (1999): 97.

Khushani (d. 981) was a Sunni Maliki living in Qayrawan when the Fatimids

conquered the city. In 923, fourteen years after the advent of the Fatimid caliphate

in *Ifriqiya*, he left Qayrawan for Sunni Umayyad Spain where he served at the

Umayyad court[34] and composed a biographical dictionary devoted to Sunni Maliki

scholars.[35] Second, Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani (922-996) was a tenth-century

Sunni Maliki living under Shiʿi Fatimid rule. He was the head of the Sunni Maliki

school of jurisprudence in Qayrawan and was known as "Malik the Younger" after

Malik b. Anas (d. 795), the progenitor of the Sunni Maliki school of jurisprudence.

During his life under Shiʿi Fatimid rule, al-Qayrawani continued to teach, deliver

religious rulings (*fatwas*), and write about Sunni Maliki religious law.[36] He wrote

two major works: a *Risala* (Message), which was a summary of the Sunni Maliki

view of religious law and practice composed as a response to the first Fatimid

Ismaʿili book of religious law, Qadi al-Nuʾman's *Daʿaʾim al-Islam* (The Pillars of

Islam), and *Kitab al-Jami*ʿ[37] (The Compendium), which was an abridgement of a

ninth-century North African treatise on Sunni Maliki law.[38] Finally, ʿArib b. Saʿd (d.

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[34] Walker, Exploring an Islamic Empire, 133-134.

[35] Muhammad b. Harith b. Asad al-Khushani, *Kitab tabaqat ʿulamaʾ Ifriqiya*, ed. M. Ben Cheneb (Paris, 1915).

[36] H.R. Idris, "Ibn Abi Zayd al-Kayrawani," *EI2*.

[37] The *Kitab al-Jami*ʿ has been published as *The Madinan View: on the sunnah, wisdom, courtesy, battles and history*, Abdassamad Clarke, ed. and trans. (Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd, 1999).

[38] Sahnun ibn Saʿid ibn Habib al-Tanukhi (ca. 776-855), who was a Maliki jurist in Qayrawan. Sahnun was appointed the *qadi* of *Ifriqiya* by the Aghlabid amir Muhammad ibn Abu al-ʿAbbas. Sahnun travelled to Egypt to study under students of Malik, the progenitor of the Maliki school of law. Sahnun predominately studied under ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn al-Qasim in Egypt and he wrote *al-Mudawwanah al-Kubra* to summarize the answers that Ibn al-Qasim gave to his questions. For more information, see "Sahnun," *EOI2*. Al-Qayrawani's *Kitab al-Jami*ʿ was a summary of Sahnun's work

ca. 980), was a Sunni Maliki who was a contemporary of al-Khushani living in Sunni Umayyad Spain.[39] He wrote a continuation of al-Tabari's historical chronicle.[40]

Overall, these three tenth-century Maliki Sunni authors portrayed Sunni opposition to Shiʿi Fatimid rule as limited to the period before al-Mansur's caliphate, when the relationship between the Shiʿi Fatimids and non-Ismaʿilis was most contentious.[41] The first Fatimid caliph, al-Mahdi, had outlawed the teaching of Sunni doctrine and the issuance of Sunni legal decisions (*fatwas*) which, unsurprisingly, caused Sunni opposition. However, the third Fatimid caliph, al-Mansur, reversed this policy and appointed some Sunni Malikis to government posts. Once the Fatimids reversed their anti-Maliki policies, Sunni Maliki opposition decreased tremendously. In other words, it seems that source of the Sunni Maliki opposition to the Shiʿi Fatimids was not general sectarian hostility, but the very specific threat to the economic livelihood and political power of Sunni Maliki religious scholars living under Shiʿi Fatimid rule.

The hypothesis that tenth-century Sunni opposition to the Fatimids in *Ifriqiya* was based in economic and political considerations rather than doctrinal

that included his own thoughts on several topics, including questions of innovation, different sects in Islam, and some historical chapters. See, Clarke, "Translator's Introduction," *A Madinan View*, 15-16.

[39] Walker, Exploring an Islamic Empire, 133-134.

[40] ʿArib b. Saʿd al-Qurtubi, *Silat taʾrikh al-Tabari*, ed. M.J. Goeje (Leiden, 1897).

[41] Sumaiya Hamdani, "The Dialectic of Power: Sunni-Shiʿi Debates in Tenth-Century North Africa," *Studia Islamica* 90 (2000), 7-11. Madelung, "Fatimid Policy," 101.

conflict is furthered by evidence of conversion by Sunnis to Ismaʿili Shiʿism. The

tenth-century Sunni Maliki scholar al-Khushani recorded the names of Sunni

religious scholars who converted to Ismaʿili Shiʿism in his biographical

dictionary.[42] While some Maliki Sunnis converted, most of the Sunni converts came

from the Sunni Hanafi school of jurisprudence.[43] Al-Khushani identified six Maliki

Sunnis and eleven Hanafi Sunnis in Qayrawan who had converted to Ismaʿili

Shiʿism.[44] Most of the Hanafi converts went on to serve in the Fatimid

administration as religious judges.[45] This success suggests that their conversions

were based in economic and political concerns about obtaining posts in the

Fatimid administration, rather than based in sectarian hostility.

Local tenth-century Sunni sources appear more concerned with conflicts

between the Sunni Malikis and Sunni Hanafis that predated the takeover of *Ifriqiya*

by the Shiʿi Fatimid, than with Fatimid policies more generally. For example, in

909, before the first Fatimid caliph al-Mahdi had arrived in Qayrawan, one of the

Ismaʿili missionaries who ruled in his name[46] publically executed two Maliki

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[42] Muhammad b. Harith b. Asad al-Khushani, *Kitab tabaqat ʿulama' Ifriqiya*, ed. M. Ben Cheneb (Paris, 1915), 223-226.
[43] Madelung argues that this was due to the fact that the Hanafis had allied with the Aghlabid state and been favored by it and, thus, wanted to continue that relationship with the Fatimid state. Madelung, "Fatimid Policy," 98.
[44] These lists of Sunni converts can also be found in the Isma'ili Shiʿi source from the tenth-century, Ibn al-Haytham.
[45] Madelung, "Religious policy," 98.
[46] The missionary ruling in al-Mahdi's name at this time was Abu al-ʿAbbas (d. 911). His brother Abu ʿAbd Allah (d. 911), who was credited with conquering *Ifriqiya* for the Fatimids, had been ruling in al-Mahdi's name but Abu al-ʿAbbas took over when his brother traveled to Sijilmasa to rescue al-Mahdi, who was being held under house arrest by the Midrarids.

scholars[47] for criticizing ʿAli b. Abi Talib and claiming the Muʿawiya (d. 680) was more excellent than ʿAli.[48] Yet, even this execution of Sunni Malikis at the hands of the Shiʿi Fatimid state was explained by contemporary Sunni sources as a result of Sunni Maliki-Hanafi competition. Al-Khushani, the Sunni Maliki scholar living under Fatimid rule, wrote that the Maliki Sunnis had attacked Fatimid Shiʿi beliefs because they feared being closed out of the networks of state power.[49] ʿArib b. Saʿd, the contemporary Sunni Maliki scholar living in Sunni Umayyad Spain, blamed the execution on the Sunni Hanafis, saying that their attacks on the Sunni Malikis had led to their execution by the Shiʿi Fatimids.[50] Al-Khushani and ʿArib b. Saʿd both composed their accounts of this incident while living in Sunni Umayyad Spain, so it is unlikely that their portrayals were influenced by fear of Fatimid reprisals.

Al-Qayrawani, the tenth-century Sunni Maliki religious scholar who wrote extensively while living under Shiʿi Fatimid rule, revealed how different groups of Muslims living in *Ifriqiya* under the Fatimids coexisted. Al-Qayrawani was critical

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[47] Ibrahim b. al-Birdhawn and Abu Bakr b. Hudayl

[48] Madelung discusses the incident in detail in "Fatimid Policy," 99. Khushani, 281-2 and 299. Ibn ʿIdhari, *Bayan al-Mughrib*, Vol. 1 ed. G.S. Colin and E. Levi-Provencal (Beirut: Dar al-Assakafa, 1948), 155.

[49] Al-Khushani, 281-2 and 299.

[50] Only portions of ʿArib's history survive,. Notably, his assessment of the Hanafi-Maliki conflict was quoted in Ibn ʿIdhari, I: 155, which was composed in the fourteenth century. It is significant that even the fourteenth-century source preserves some of the inter-Sunni conflicts of the tenth century, while also portraying this period within a larger sectarian narrative (as will be discussed below).

of Shiʿis—he listed them among the groups of Muslims who had 'erred',[51] which also included the Murjiʿa.[52] Significantly, the Murjiʿa was a philosophical/theological group that did not identify as Sunni or Shiʿi and that was later considered to be within the pale of acceptable (if debatable) belief by Sunni religious scholars. Al-Qayrawani did, however, single out the Shiʿis as "Rafida,"[53] a common medieval slur for Shiʿis meaning 'deserters' or 'defectors' that referred to the Sunni view of the Shiʿi rejection of the rule of Abu Bakr (d. 634), the first successor to the Prophet Muhammad as the leader of the Muslim community.[54]

Al-Qayrawani did not openly criticize Fatimid religious policies in his writings (that might have been dangerous for him while living under Fatimid rule), but this did not mean that he approved of Fatimid Shiʿi religious polices. His religious manual implicitly criticized some Fatimid Shiʿi positions. For example, he emphasized that the best of the Muslims were Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthman, *followed by* ʿAli, and argued that Muslims should not prefer one of the first four caliphs over another.[55] This assertion was a clear, if somewhat coded, rebuttal to

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[51] Al-Qayrawani, *Madinan View,* 17-18.
[52] The Murjiʿa was a theological school that opposed the Kharijites. While the Kharijites believed that committing any kind of grave sin rendered one a non-Muslim, the Murjiʿa opposed this view: they held that only God had the power to judge who was truly a Muslim and who was not. They believed that all Muslims should consider other Muslims as a part of the community.
[53] Al-Qayrawani, *Madinan View,* 17-18.
[54] The precise origins of 'Rafida' are debated, but this is the most common explanation. Shiʿis believe that the Prophet Muhammad designated his cousin and son-in-law, ʿAli, who is also the first Shiʿi Imam, as his successor. Etan Kohlberg, "The Term 'Rafida' in Imami Shiʿi Usage," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99: 4 (Oct.- Dec., 1979): 677-679.
[55] Al-Qayrawani, *Madinan View*, 23. And al-Qayrawani, *al-Risala*, Mahmoud Matraji, ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar El-Fikr, 1994), 1.10a-c.

the Shiʿi belief that ʿAli was the only legitimate leader among the first four caliphs.

Not unexpectedly, even when he did not overtly criticize Fatimid Shiʿi beliefs, al-

Qayrawani did outline the Maliki views on religious issues. For example, he

described the proper format of the call to prayer for Sunnis, including the formula

"prayer is better than sleep,"[56] but he did not openly state that it was done in any

other way (as it was by the Shiʿi Fatimids). He also discussed the benefit of the

Sunni *tarawih* prayers,[57] which had been outlawed by the first Fatimid caliph, al-

Mahdi. Finally, he outlined the Sunni Maliki method for dating the end of the

Ramadan fast,[58] which differed from the Shiʿi Fatimid practice.

 There were some ways in which Sunni Maliki and Shiʿi Fatimid religious

law agreed. Al-Qayrawani did not point out these similarities himself, but he

outlined the same prescriptions for ʿ*Eid* sacrifices that the Fatimid caliphs had

explained in their *khutba*s. For example, al-Qayrawani discussed how it was not

acceptable to sacrifice an animal that was sick, lame, emaciated, or only had one

eye;[59] this point was made multiple times by the Shiʿi Fatimid caliphs in their ʿ*Eid*

*khutba*s, when they forbade the sacrifice of sick animals or animals with defects for

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[56] The Sunnis used the phrase "prayer is better than sleep" in the call to the dawn (*fajr*) prayer, while Shiʿis did not.

[57] *Tarawih* prayers where special, superogatory prayers done during the night during Ramadan. They could be done with an imam in the mosque or alone at home. Al-Qayrawani, *al-Risala*, 23.16a-c.

[58] Al-Qayrawani, and Malikis, believed that Ramadan should end when the new moon was sighted, either that was after twenty-nine or thirty days. Although, if the new moon could not be seen because of clouds, Ramadan could be ended thirty days after the last new moon had been sighted. Ibid., 23.2a.

[59] Ibid., 29.1e.

the ʿ*Eid*.[60] The *khutba*s of the Shiʿi Fatimid caliph al-Mansur were probably given at approximately the same time as when al-Qayrawani was writing his *Risala*. Therefore, it is likely that the Fatimids were trying to make the point that both Shiʿi and Sunni ritual slaughter were governed by the same rules.

Most significantly, al-Qayrawani neither advocated attempting to overthrow the Shiʿi Fatimid caliphs nor argued that Sunni Malikis could not live under Shiʿi Fatimid rule.[61] The question of whether or not Muslims could live under 'non-Muslim' rule was a contentious issue in tenth-century Sunni discourse. Yet the Sunni al-Qayrawani, while living under Shiʿi Fatimid rule, argued that Muslims may *not* oppose a Muslim ruler for being oppressive or unjust. They must continue to fight in his army, perform the pilgrimage (*hajj*), pay religious taxes (*zakat*), and pray the Friday prayers and the ʿ*Eid* prayers behind him.[62] According to al-Qayrawani, Muslims were even required to fight for an unjust Muslim ruler.[63] He devoted an entire section of his discussion of Maliki law to "crimes against Islam," but he did not mention anything to do with Shiʿism or the Shiʿi practices favored by the Fatimids.[64] Al-Qayrawani implicitly considered Shiʿi rule to be

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[60] Al-Mansur, *Khutba*, in *Orations of the Fatimid Caliphs: Festival Sermons of the Ismaili Imams*, Paul E. Walker, ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 19 and 29 (Arabic pagination).
[61] Maliki doctrine stated that Malikis could not live under 'non-Muslim' rule. For a detailed discussion of this doctrine, see Khaled Abou El Fadl, "Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities: The Juristic Discourse on Muslim Minorities from the Second/Eighth to the Eleventh/Seventeenth Centuries." *Islamic Law and Society*, 1 (1994): 141-187.
[62] Al-Qayrawani, *Madinan View*, 24.
[63] Al-Qayrawani, *al-Risala*, 30.2g.
[64] Ibid., 37.

legitimate 'Muslim' rule and not anti-Islamic, even if he did not agree with Shiʿi

Fatimid practices.

Relations between the Shiʿi Fatimids and the Sunni Malikis were

contentious during the early years of the Fatimid caliphate. But, as the Fatimids

transitioned from an underground missionary movement to ruling as a medieval

state willing to work with different types of local religious leaders, the Sunni

Malikis became more accommodating. By the reign of the third caliph al-Mansur (r.

946-953), Sunni Malikis were serving the Fatimid state and were not restricted in

their public practice. These tenth-century local Sunni sources from North Africa

reveal a Sunni community that was much more threatened by competition with

other schools of Sunni jurisprudence than by conflict with the Shiʿi Fatimids.

Contemporary Sunni Sources on the Fatimids and the Later Sunni Response:
A Comparison

There is a striking difference between how local tenth-century Sunni

sources depicted life under Shiʿi Fatimid rule and the way that sources from after

the tenth century portrayed the same period. Although this section will not offer a

comprehensive analysis of descriptions of Shiʿi Fatimid rule from the eleventh-

century and later, it will provide a survey of some of the significant later sources

used by scholars to supplement the tenth-century sources. This sample shows that

the sources composed or compiled after the tenth-century portray Shiʿi Fatimid

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rule in clearly sectarian terms: claiming that the Fatimids cursed the first three

caliphs, persecuted local Sunnis, and engaged in antinomian practices. This

comparison reveals how the story of the 'Shiʿi Century' as a sectarian narrative of

Sunni-Shiʿi conflict was a later construction.

The most significant non-contemporary Sunni source on Fatimid Shiʿi rule

is the fourteenth-century historical chronicle *al-Bayan al-Mughrib*[65] written by the

Sunni Ibn ʿIdhari (d. after 1313).[66] Ibn ʿIdhari portrayed the Shiʿi Fatimids in very

clear terms of sectarian conflict: he claimed that the Shiʿi Fatimids publically

cursed the first three caliphs, violently persecuted local Sunnis, and that the Shiʿi

Fatimid caliphs cursed the Prophet Muhammad and his family, abandoned

religious law, and had sexual relations with women who were forbidden to them,

such as their own daughters.[67]

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[65] The full title of which is al-Bayan al-mughrib fi (ikhtisar) akhbar muluk al-Andalus wa al-Maghrib.
[66] Little is known of Ibn ʿIdhari's personal biography. He was a military leader (*qaʿid*) under the Sunni Marinid dynasty in Fez (the Marinid capital). The Maranid dynasty, founded by a Berber dynasty of the Zanata tribe, ruled the *Maghrib* from approximately the mid-thirteenth century until the mid-fifteenth century. The Marinids restored Maliki Sunni Islam (a process which had begun under the Sunni Almohad dynasty, which ruled from 1121-1269). The Almohad movement (the name of which comes from the Arabic al-Muwahhidun, meaning the supporters of divine unity) was begun by a militant Sunni reformer named Ibn Tumart (d. 1130) and eventually ruled large portions of North Africa and Spain. The Almohads, who saw themselves as applying the theology of al-Ghazali (d. 1111), were not opposed to the spreading Sufi movements in the Maghrib, but persecuted non-Muslims during the early phase of their conquest of North Africa and were militantly Sunni (of the Maliki *madhhab*). For more information on Ibn ʿIdhari, see J. Bosch-Vila, "Ibn ʿIdhari," *EOI2*; on the Marinids, see Maya Shatzmiller, "Marinids," *EOI2*; and on the Almohads, see Maya Shatzmiller, "al-Muwahhidun," *EOI2*.
[67] ʿAbd al-Jabbar, *Tathbit dalaʿil al-nubuwwa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karim Uthman, Beirut, 1966-8, pp. 342, 601 and Ibn ʿIdhari, *Bayan,* I: 216.

These types of attacks were fairly common Sunni heresiographical condemnations of medieval Shiʿis. In general, when such accusations appear in historical chronicles (as opposed to in heresiographies), scholars ignore the claims of antinomian practices but accept the 'tamer' accusations. For example, while modern scholars do not accept claims that the Fatimid caliphs abandoned religious law and had sexual relations with their daughters, they do accept claims that the Shiʿi Fatimids cursed of the first three caliphs.[68] However, none of the tenth-century Sunni sources mentioned above—al-Khushani, ʿArib b. Saʿid, or al-Qayrawani—accused the Shiʿi Fatimids of publically cursing the first three caliphs. Further, the local tenth-century Sunni sources all emphasized conflict between local Sunni groups, such as the Malikis and Hanafis, as more significant than Sunni conflict with the Fatimid Shiʿis.

Sunni sources dating to after the tenth-century narrate conflicts between the Sunni Malikis of Qayrawan and the Shiʿi Fatimid administration differently than do the tenth-century Sunni sources. For example, the story reported in the tenth-century Sunni sources al-Khushani and ʿArib b. Saʿid about the execution of two Sunni Maliki scholars by the Shiʿi Fatimids in 909 also appears in history by Abu Bakr al-Maliki (d. 1148), a twelfth-century Sunni Maliki scholar living in Qayrawan. Both al-Khushani and ʿArib b. Saʿid blame the Sunni Hanafis for this

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[68] The later Fatimid caliphs, most notably al-Hakim, did allow the cursing of the first three caliphs. Irene Bierman discusses this in *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 77.

incident and explain it in terms of Sunni Maliki competition with the Sunni Hanafis in tenth-century *Ifriqiya*. In post tenth-century sources, the account of these two Sunni Malikis changes dramatically. The twelfth-century Sunni Abu Bakr al-Maliki[69] portrays this incident as part of a broader narrative of sectarian conflict, the martyrdom of two Sunni Malikis who refused to compromise their beliefs in the face of Shiʿi Fatimid oppression. Al-Maliki relates that the two Sunni Maliki scholars had been ordered into the presence of the first Fatimid caliph, al-Mahdi, and commanded to testify that the Fatimid caliph was the Messenger of God. When they refused, according to al-Maliki's twelfth-century account, their execution was ordered directly by al-Mahdi.[70]

Comparing how local tenth-century Sunni sources portrayed life under Fatimid Shiʿi rule with post-eleventh century Sunni depictions of this same period reveals how the story of Fatimid Shiʿi rule of North Africa was recast within a narrative of sectarian conflict. The tenth-century Sunni accounts were not predominately concerned with the Shiʿi identity of the Fatimid caliphs once the Fatimids showed that they were willing to accommodate Sunni religious practice and employ Sunni religious scholars in administrative positions. The sources that date to the eleventh century and later were composed during a period of much

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[69] The Fatimids lost effective control over *Ifriqiyya* soon after they moved their capital to Cairo in 969.

[70] Al-Maliki, *Riyad al-Nufus*, Bashir al-Bakkush, ed. (Beirut, 1981/3) II: 49. Madelung traces the origin of the twelfth-century hagiographical version of the death of the two Maliki scholars to Abu ʿAbd Allah Muhammad b. Khurasan, a mysterious Sunni preacher known for his anti-Fatimid stories. Madelung, "Religious Policy," 100.

greater sectarian conflict when Sunni Islam was institutionalizing and beginning to define itself as a coherent 'orthodoxy' opposed to all forms of Shiʿi 'heterodoxy'. Thus, in these later sources, we can actually trace the rewriting of tenth-century Shiʿi Fatimid rule as part of a narrative of sectarian conflict.

Local Sunni Reactions to the Buyids in the Tenth Century

As with the Shiʿi Fatimids, the reactions of tenth-century Sunnis to living under Shiʿi Buyid rule in Baghdad cannot be reduced to a simplistic binary conflict of Sunni versus Shiʿi. And as with the Fatimids, the discourse of sectarianism did enter later, in retelling tenth-century events. There were clear differences between the ways that tenth-century Sunnis in Baghdad portrayed Shiʿi Buyid rule, and the ways that Sunni sources dating to the eleventh century and later portrayed this same period. Although Baghdad was the seat of the Sunni Abbasid caliphate, tenth-century Sunni sources did not portray opposition to the takeover of the Shiʿi Buyid dynasty in terms of Sunni opposition to Shiʿi rule. Rather, tenth-century Sunni sources depicted Shiʿi Buyid rule as a reprieve for the people of Baghdad, an end to the chaos and civil war that had plagued the city.

As discussed in chapter four, the Buyids identified as a Shiʿi dynasty, but did not base their claims to authority on the possession of special religious status (as the Fatimids did, claiming to be ʿAlids). Further, the Shiʿi Buyid amirate was

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predominately a military-administrative position,[71] far more concerned with

reestablishing enough stability over Sunni Abbasid territories to collect tax-

revenue[72] and eliminate external threats, such as from the Hamdanids in Mosul,

the Baridis in Basra, the Kurds in the Jibal, and the Qarmatiyya in Bahrain, in

addition to the Musafirids, Ziyarids, and Samanids in Iranian territory.[73] While the

Buyids were a Shiʿi dynasty,[74] they did not attempt to control or police the

religious activities of the Muslims of Baghdad,[75] which would have been

counterproductive to their goal of establishing their authority. The first Buyid

amir, Muʿizz al-Dawla, did not even speak Arabic and his knowledge of Shiʿi

doctrine and practice was likely quite superficial.[76] After his death, his son and

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[71] Donohue, 4.

[72] The Buyids were known for establishing a system of taxation in Iraq, called the *iqtaʿ* system, which was later expanded to Iran, Syria, and Egypt by other dynasties. Under this system, a form of tax farming, the government paid military officers and some other soldiers through granting them the right to collect taxes on parcels of land. The peasants paid their land tax not to the government directly, but to their *muqtaʿ* or *iqtaʿdar* (the holder of the *iqtaʿ*). See Tsugitaka Sato, "Peasants," in *Medieval Islamic civilization: an encylopedia*, vol. 2, ed. Josef W. Meri and Jere L. Bacharach (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 598-9.

[73] It is not always possible to identify the sectarian allegiances of these groups. The Hamdanids and the Qarmatiyya identified as Shiʿi and the Samanids were clearly Sunni. The Ziyarids are thought to have been Sunni. The allegiances of the other groups in this list were not clearly tied to their sectarian identity.

[74] While the Buyids always identified as Shiʿi, their allegiance within Shiʿism appears to have shifted in the period before the conquest of Baghdad. As discussed in chapter two, the Buyids were likely converted by Zaydi missionaries in the Daylam and, as such, the Buyids originally identified as Zaydi Shiʿis. However, at approximately the time when they conquered Baghdad, the Buyids shifted their allegiance to *Ithnaʿashari* Shiʿism. It has been suggested that the reason for this was pragmatic: while the Zaydis had living Imams who could challenge Buyid authority, the last *Ithnaʿashari* Imam was 'hidden' in a state of occultation and, as such, could pose no direct political threat. However, it is likely also possible that the Buyids became *Ithnaʿashari* Shiʿis due to the predominance of *Ithnaʿashari* Shiʿis in their new territories.

[75] Donohue asked whether it made any difference to the caliph "whether power resided with a Buwayhid amir or with a Seljuk sultan." Donohue, xiv.

[76] Kraemer, 53-4.

successor Bakhtiyar/ʿIzz al-Dawla's tenure of rule ushered in a power struggle

within the Shiʿi Buyid family, leading to the eventual conquest of Baghdad by

ʿAdud al-Dawla. ʿAdud al-Dawla was an educated Persian Shiʿi Muslim, taught by

some of the most respected scholars of the tenth-century, yet even he did not

attempt to enforce Shiʿi practice in Baghdad. Rather, as discussed in chapter four,

ʿAdud al-Dawla pragmatically combined several medieval forms of authority to

appeal to the widest possible audience.

Although the Shiʿi Buyids appointed many Shiʿis to positions in their

administration,[77] the fact of Shiʿis working in the bureaucracy of the

administration in Baghdad, even under the control of the Sunni Abbasid caliphs,

was not a new phenomenon. Further, the Shiʿi Buyids neither attempted to purge

Sunnis from the administration nor, as has been claimed, attempted "to topple

Sunni Islam."[78] The Shiʿi Buyids had nominal control over the Sunni Abbasid

caliph, but they restored order to a city that had been ravaged by years of

intermittent civil wars, rioting, and famine, and the Shiʿi identity of the Buyid

amirs did not prevent them from working with the Sunni Abbasid caliph. Viewing

the Sunni caliphate as a pawn of sectarian rivalries misses the very real way that

individual caliphs maintained both the power of the caliphal institution,[79] and the

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[77] Ibid., 41.
[78] Surprisingly, Kraemer makes this contention. Ibid.
[79] Hanne argues that the Abbasid caliphs after the rise of the Buyids should not be relegated "to the status of cameo appearances." Rather, according to Hanne, many of the caliphs during this period

complex relationships forged by the Shiʿi Buyid, which had more to do with power

and legitimization than religion.[80] Tenth-century Baghdad probably had a

population of between half a million and 1.5 million people[81] and was quite

diverse.[82] Religiously, the majority of the Muslims of Baghdad were likely Sunnis,[83]

although Baghdad also had a sizeable Shiʿi majority, most of whom identified as

Ithnaʿashari/Imami Shiʿi.[84]

Local tenth-century Sunni appraisals of the Shiʿi Buyids do not even express

opposition to Buyid rule. There are two tenth-century Sunni accounts of life under

Shiʿi Buyid rule, both written by Sunnis living in Baghdad. First, Hilal ibn al-

Muhassin al-Sabi (969-1056),[85] who was born a Sabian, a member of a Christian

sect, but converted to Islam.[86] Hilal al-Sabi served the Shiʿi Buyid vizier[87] Fakhr al-

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were "far from inconsequential puppets brought out for state occasions and religious ceremonies." Hanne, 10.

[80] Hanne emphasizes that these alliances were only *nominally* built on religious feelings – for example, figures such as Mahmud of Ghazna did not acknowledge the Abbasid caliph out of piety but because he needed the referent power afforded to him through this relationship in order to legitimize his own position (which was built upon coercive power). This is illustrated in al-Basasiri's abrupt shift in loyalties from the Buyids and Abbasids to the Fatimids when he conquered Baghdad for one year in 1056. Confessional loyalty had less to do with these decisions than realistic analyses of power relationships and the need to 'back the right horse.' Hanne, 91-95.

[81] A.A. Duri, "Baghdad," *EOI2* is the source of the higher estimate and J. Lassner, "Massignon and Baghdad: the complexities of growth in an imperial city," *JESHO* 9 (1966), 8 and 10 is the source of the lower estimate.

[82] Kraemer, 46.

[83] Ibid., 41.

[84] The terms "*Ithnaʿashari*" (which literally translates to "Twelver" and is linked with the number of Imams followed by this group of Shiʿis) and "Imami" are often used interchangeably.

[85] Not to be confused with Abu Ishaq b. Hilal al-Sabi (925-994) who wrote the *Kitab al-Taji* about Buyid rule, and was discussed in chapter four. Abu Ishaq b. Hilal al-Sabi was Hilal ibn Muhassin al-Sabi's grandfather.

[86] Ibn al-Jawzi relates that he converted "after a dream in which the Prophet appeared and instructed him in the tenets of Islam" in about 1008. It is recorded that he was the first of his family

Mulk (d. 1016) early in his career and, during the early years of the caliphate of the

Sunni Abbasid al-Qaʿim bi-Amr Allah (r. 1031-1075), he wrote a treatise on the

rules and protocols of the Abbasid court, *Rusum Dar al-Khalifa* (Traditions of the

Caliphal Court).[88] While Hilal al-Sabi did not openly declare his sectarian identity,

his writings commanded a tremendous degree of respect for the Sunni 'Abbasid

caliph and the opening of his treatise suggests the likelihood of a Sunni identity. He

opened his work with a prayer for the consolidation of the caliphate, referred to

the Sunni Abbasid caliph al-Qaʿim as "the best and most illustrious," "the unrivaled

imam," and "the great and undisputed vicegerent of Allah,"[89] and asserted that "the

caliphate derives from the prophethood; it enjoys thereby the highest and noblest

degree of dignity and excellence."[90]

The second tenth-century Sunni account of life under Shiʿi Buyid rule was

written by a Sunni religious scholar: Abu ʿAli al-Muhassin b. ʿAli al-Tanukhi (941-

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to become a Muslim. E.K. Rowson, "al-Sabi, Hilal ibn al-Muhassin" in *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol 2, Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 672.

[87] Fakhr al-Mulk was the vizier for the Buyid amir Baha' al-Dawla (d. 1012).

[88] He also wrote two other major works: a History, of which only the section covering the years 999-1003 survives, and a book of Viziers, but the only surviving section deals with three of the viziers of al-Muqtadir (d. 932). The surviving fragment of his history has been published as *Ta'rikh* in H.F. Amedroz and D.S. Margoliouth, eds. and trans., *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate* (Oxford, 1920) and his book of viziers is available in Arabic: *Tuhfat al-ʿumara' fi ta'rikh al-wuzara'*, A.A. Farraj, ed. (Cairo, 1958).

[89] Hilal al-Sabi, *Rusum Dar al-Khalifah*, Mikhaʿil ʿAwwad, ed. (Baghdad: al-ʿAni Press, 1964), 2-3. Ellie Salem translated Hilal al-Sabi's *Rusum* as *The Rules and Regulations of the Abbasid Court* (Beirut: The American University of Beirut Press, 1977) and, in this chapter, I will be using Salem's translations. Salem, 9.

[90] Al-Sabi, *Rusum*, 6 in Salem, 11.

994).[91] The Sunni al-Tanukhi began his career in the bureaucracy of the Shiʿi Buyid

amirs as a religious judge in Iraq and Iran, although he earlier held various

positions as a *muhtasib* (the supervisor of weights and measures) at the mint in

Ahwaz (a city in southwestern Iran), as a religious judge (*qadi*) in some areas of

Khuzistan (a province in southwestern Iran) and Wasit (in central Iraq), and finally

served as a secretary (*kuttab*) in the government departments related to justice

(*hukm*) and religious endowments (*waqf*) of the Shiʿi Buyid administration in

Baghdad.[92] Al-Tanukhi wrote his history of tenth-century Baghdad society, entitled

Nishwar al-muhadarah wa akhbar al-mudhakarah (Conversations and

Recollections),[93] while living in Baghdad and serving in the Shiʿi Buyid

administration.

Neither of these two tenth-century Sunni authors living under Shiʿi Buyid

rule conveyed any distress about living under a Shiʿi administration. Instead, they

were concerned about popular religious movements led by Sufis and the general

decline of Baghdad as the capital of the Muslim world. Neither of these two

contemporary Sunni witnesses to Shiʿi Buyid rule even mentioned the Shiʿi

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[91] For more information about al-Tanukhi's philosophical and theological works, which drew
heavily upon early Islamic philosophy as well as Greek and Hellenistic philosophy, see Nouha
Khalifa, *Hardship and Deliverance in the Islamic Tradition: Theology and Spirituality in the Works of
Al-Tanukhi* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).
[92] See H. Fähndrich, "al-Tanukhi," *EOI2*.
[93] Abu ʿAli al-Muhassin b. ʿAli al-Tanukhi, *Nishwar al-muhadarah wa akhbar al-mudhakarah,*
Abboud al-Shalji (Bayrut: Matabi' Dar Sadir, 1971). "Nishwar al-Muhadarah" literally means
something like "chewing the cud of conversation." Tanukhi's *Nishwar al-muhadarah* has been
translated by D.S. Margoliouth as *The Table-talk of a Mesopotamian Judge* (London: Royal Asiatic
Society, 1922). I will be using Margoliouth's translations in this chapter.

identity of the Buyid amirs, local sectarian violence, or the public practice of Shiʿi

religious rituals.

Unsurprisingly, the tenth-century Sunni bureaucrat Hilal al-Sabi's account

of the rules and protocols of the Sunni Abbasid court focuses predominately on the

need to treat the Abbasid caliph with respect and emphasizes how the Shiʿi Buyids

and their administrators did so. Hilal al-Sabi's work was a history of the rules and

procedures of the Sunni Abbasid caliphate from the days of the early Sunni

Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (r. 786-809) until the tenure of al-Qaʾim, the

reigning Sunni Abbasid caliph. Hilal al-Sabi emphasizes that, even under the

control of the Shiʿi Buyid amirs, the Sunni Abbasid caliph still commanded

tremendous respect. He relates a story of how al-Muhallabi (d. 963), the vizier of

the first Shiʿi Buyid amir Muʿizz al-Dawla, raised his voice in the presence of the

Sunni Abbasid caliph al-Mutiʿ. The caliph was incensed, evicted al-Muhallabi from

his presence, and forbade him from visit his court.[94] Hilal al-Sabi makes it clear

that al-Muhallabi did not have the same type of authority as the Sunni Abbasid

caliph, despite the fact that he served the Shiʿi Buyid amir and was tremendously

powerful in his own right. Al-Muhallabi was chastened; he could not effectively

serve the Shiʿi Buyid amir without access to the Sunni Abbasid caliph and begged

to be readmitted to the caliph's court, saying: "I am a servant; I neither intended to

misbehave nor to offend; but as my voice is loud, my speech is loud too. When I am

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[94] Al-Sabi, *Rusum*, 42-3 in Salem, 31.

dismissed in this manner [from your court], my prestige will decline, my influence will cease, and my friends will desert me."[95]

Although Hilal al-Sabi's *Rusum* includes anecdotes of life at the Sunni Abbasid court during the tenure of the Shiʿi Buyid amirs, the goal of his work was to record the rituals and protocols required to pay due respect to the sacred authority of the caliph. He never mentioned the Shiʿi identity of the Buyid amirs, but anecdotes such the above story of the vizier al-Muhallabi and the caliph al-Muti' demonstrated the continuing sacred authority of the Sunni Abbasid caliph, which had not been eclipsed by the Shiʿi Buyid amirs.[96] The Shiʿi Buyid amirs had some measure of military power in Baghdad, but the Sunni Hilal al-Sabi's work highlights how this power was still very much dependent on the authority of the Sunni Abbasid caliph.[97]

The tenth-century Sunni religious official al-Tanukhi evinces a different perspective on life under the Shiʿi Buyid amirs. Like Hilal al-Sabi, he does not even mention the Shiʿi identity of the Buyid amirs, but he did decry the deterioration of the knowledge and authority of religious scholars who served the state and lamented the growing popularity Sufi movements, both of which he blamed on the

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[95] Ibid.
[96] This view of the tenth century as one of decline can be seen in the translation of the title of one medieval history of the Buyids as "The Eclipse of the Abbasid caliphate." See *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate: Original Chronicles of the fourth Islamic century*, trans. and ed. D.S. Margoliouth (Oxford: Blackwell, 1920).
[97] Hilal al-Sabi also highlighted how the Shiʿi Buyid amirs treated the Sunni Abbasid caliphs with tremendous respect and, in turn, received extensive privileges and robes of honor symbolic of the sacred authority of the caliph. Al-Sabi, *Rusum*, 128-131.

"lowering of the caliphate"[98] and the lack of knowledge of Islamic law by religious officials.[99] Al-Tanukhi described these two issues as interrelated and blamed them on the Sunni Abbasids, whom he accused of selling religious offices and appointing unqualified candidates to religious offices, leading to disrespect towards all Sunni religious officials.[100] According to al-Tanukhi, corrupt, ignorant religious officials were more common than honest, educated ones. He lamented, "the times are wrong, and our profession is spoiled."[101]

Al-Tanukhi related that many contemporary Sunni religious officials did not even know the most basic dictates of Sunni religious law. For example, he complains that the man who called the Muslims to prayer (*muezzin*) in the main Sunni mosque of Basra had to be chastised for making the call to prayer (*adhan*) while ritually impure or while wearing the same sandals that he had worn into the latrine, both of which would nullify the public prayer.[102] In these complaints, the Sunni al-Tanukhi gives no indication that the Shiʿi Buyids had any role in appointing or supervising these Sunni religious positions, which had traditionally been the responsibility of the Sunni Abbasid caliph and his administration.

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[98] Tanukhi, *Nishwar,* 114.
[99] Ibid. Tanukhi claimed that the caliphal vizier, Ibn al-Furat, had appointed an unknown Basran haberdasher to a judgeship because he owed him a favor.
[100] Tanukhi, *Nishwar*, 114. Tanukhi claimed that the caliphal vizier, Ibn al-Furat, had appointed an unknown Basran haberdasher to a judgeship because he owed him a favor.
[101] Tanukhi, *Nishwar*, 118 in Margoliouth, 128.
[102] Tanukhi, *Nishwar*, 162.

In a further example of the low state of Sunni religious officials in Baghdad, the tenth-century Sunni al-Tanukhi relates a story about a religious judge in Baghdad. According to al-Tanukhi, this religious judge neglected his own father, who was a poor box-maker living in the streets of Baghdad. Another local religious judge named Abu Qasim Juhani, who had a low opinion of his colleague, questioned the man's father, surprised that he was in such a low position considering the status of his son. The father decried his son as undutiful and cursed him. Juhani queried the father of the Sunni religious judge about his religious knowledge, asking him in turn if he knew the Qur'an by heart, if he knew anything of the different readings of the Qur'an, or if he had studied anything of history, legend, Arabic literature, or poetry. The father said that he knew enough of the Qur'an to say his prayers but had no knowledge of any of the other fields. Juhani then asked him if he knew anything of the sciences and their branches[103] or if he had been educated in Arabic grammar, meter, or logic. When the father of the religious judge replied no to each question, Juhani exclaimed to the audience that had been drawn to the exchange,

> "God exalt you, Waki' [the man's son, the religious judge] is a
> mendacious person, who dabbles in learning and literature, and I
> cannot trust him not to make false statements about the prophet and

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[103] In the context of the medieval Islamic world, the sciences and their branches would have implied disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, physics, alchemy, chemistry, cosmology, and geography.

the sciences, and when this old gentleman dies, not to invent a chain of tradition, commencing 'My father told me' or 'My father informed me,' ascribing to him all sorts of falsehood....Hence I wished to record this old gentleman's declaration that he has no connection with this sort of subject, in order that his son may not after his death make any such claim concerning him; and to know besides the badness of his character as displayed in his unfilial conduct, and his unmanliness in leaving his father in such a condition."[104]

Al-Tanukhi's story provides an interesting snapshot of popular religious knowledge in tenth-century Baghdad. This man was the son of a Sunni religious scholar living in one of the largest cities of the medieval Islamic world. Despite this, his only knowledge of Islam was enough of the Qur'an to say his prayers. He knew nothing of different readings of the Qur'an, history, legend, literature, poetry, grammar, metre, logic, or any of the sciences. Notwithstanding al-Tanukhi's lamentation of the decline of standards of religious officials, if this son of a Sunni religious scholar knew so little of 'orthodox' Islam, how much could the average Muslim have known?

In addition to lamenting the corruption and decline of Sunni religious officials in the Sunni Abbasid bureaucracy, the tenth-century Sunni al-Tanukhi was deeply concerned with the rise of popular religious movements in Baghdad. Al-Tanukhi did not necessarily identify these movements as either Sunni or Shiʿi, but

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[104] Tanukhi, *Nishwar*, 161-162 in Margoliouth, 176-178.

characterized them as led by Sufi *shaykh*s,[105] whom al-Tanukhi accused of

deceiving the people with tricks.[106] During the tenth century, Sufis were not yet

considered 'orthodox Muslims' by Sunni religious scholars[107] and al-Tanukhi filled

his history with accounts of the popular religious figures whom he considered to

be tricksters and heretics.[108] In one example, al-Tanukhi related a story of a Sufi

from Anbar who claimed that, if a man obeyed God, all things would obey him. To

prove this assertion, the Sufi would offer to plunge his hand into boiling oil without

experiencing pain.[109] Al-Tanukhi did not believe the Sufi's claims; he forced him to

demonstrate his ability to put his own hands into boiling oil without injury.

Shockingly, al-Tanukhi related that the Sufi performed the feat without injury or

pain. However, al-Tanukhi remained unconvinced: he claimed that this ability was

a known skill of the people of Anbar.[110]

Like Hilal al-Sabi, al-Tanukhi never mentioned local strife in Baghdad

caused by sectarian conflict or the Shiʿi orientation of the Buyid amirs. From these

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[105] Tanukhi did claim that Sufis could win Shiʿis over to there cause easily because their beliefs were similar. Ibid., 87.
[106] Ibid., 171-172.
[107] The twelfth-century Sunni scholar, al-Ghazali. is considered to have reconciled Sufi Islam within the Sunni 'orthodox' tradition. See Jonathan P. Berkey, *Formation of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 231.
[108] Tanukhi was particularly critical of the Sufi *shaykh* al-Hallaj (d. 922), who was most famous for his execution for heresy on the order of the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir. Al-Tanukhi related a long story of how al-Hallaj deceived the people: the Sufi *shaykh* had a house with a secret compartment "containing a large garden wherein were various trees, fruits, flowers and aromatic herbs, some in season, others out of season, being preserved, covered and kept alive with various devices" in order to convince people that God would provide him with anything that he wished. Tanukhi, *Nishwar*, 81 and 85 in Margoliouth 87 and 92.
[109] Tanukhi, *Nishwar*, 171.
[110] Ibid.

two tenth-century Sunni authors living under Shiʿi Buyid rule and writing about their experiences, the most significant issue facing contemporary Baghdad was the overall deterioration of the city due the weakening power of the Sunni Abbasid caliphs. This decline had not been caused by the Shiʿi Buyids, nor did it destroy the sacred power of the Sunni Abbasid caliph; the Buyids were just the most recent victors in a series of conflicts between the different ethnic groups that had served within the Abbasid military. Neither the contemporary Sunni witnesses al-Tanukhi nor Hilal al-Sabi saw these conflicts through a lens of sectarian conflict and neither author described the Shiʿi Buyids in terms of their Shiʿi identity.

Contemporary Sunni Sources on the Buyids and the Later Sunni Response: A Comparison

There are several significant differences between the ways that tenth-century Sunni sources depict Shiʿi Buyid rule and the way that Sunni sources dating to the eleventh century and later portray this period. As with the Fatimids, this section will provide a sample comparison of the differences between the tenth-century Sunni accounts of Shiʿi Buyid Baghdad and the later historical chronicles often used to supplement the tenth-century sources. This sample reveals that, while tenth-century Sunni sources were not primarily concerned with sectarian identities, the sources composed or compiled after the tenth century portray the era of the Shiʿi Buyids in very clear sectarian terms. Most notably, the

later sources claim that Baghdad suffered massive sectarian riots caused by the public practice of Shiʿi religious rituals sponsored by the Shiʿi Buyids. As with the Fatimids, comparing the sources from two periods reveals how the tenth century was later constructed as a sectarian narrative of Sunni-Shiʿi conflict.

Three oft-cited post eleventh-century Sunni historical chronicles discuss the history of the Shiʿi Buyids in Baghdad: *al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Umam* (An Categorized Collection of the History of Nations) of Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1201), a Hanbali Sunni religious scholar known to be fervently anti-Shiʿi;[111] *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* (The Complete History) by the Sunni scholar Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233); and *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihayah* (The Beginning and the End) of Ibn al-Kathir (d. 1373), a Shafiʿi Sunni religious scholar. In comparison with the tenth-century Sunni sources, later Sunni chronicles emphasize the Shiʿi identity of the Buyids as the defining characteristic of their rule, giving the impression that Buyid policy decisions were greatly informed by the rulers' Shiʿi orientation, that the Sunni Abbasid caliph was held hostage by the Shiʿi Buyid amirs, and that sectarian violence was rampant in Baghdad.

The twelfth-century Sunni author Ibn al-Jawzi is the source of many of the reports of sectarian violence in tenth-century Baghdad. He relates that Sunni-Shiʿi riots in the years 949, 951, 959, 960, 962, and 964[112] disturbed the city. Further,

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[111] Farhad Daftary, Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 180.

[112] Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam fi al-tarikh* (Beirut, 1992), 6: 394.

he claims that the Shiʿis of Baghdad vandalized mosques in the cities with curses

against the first Umayyad caliph Muʿawiya (d. 680) and other important Sunnis.[113]

Strikingly, none of these incidents are reported in the tenth-century sources,

neither the Sunni sources discussed in this chapter nor in the sources sponsored

by the Buyids themselves that were discussed in chapter four. While it is possible

that Buyid-sponsored sources would not want to mention Sunni-Shiʿi conflict, the

tenth-century Buyid-sponsored sources *did* mention civil unrest in Baghdad, but

the tenth-century sources identified the source of conflict in Baghdad as power

clashes between the military, the Buyid amirs, and other local challengers for

power, conflicts which did not fall along Sunni-Shiʿi lines. Further, neither of the

two tenth-century Sunni accounts by Hilal al-Sabi or al-Tanukhi mentioned any

sectarian violence in Shiʿi Buyid Baghdad.

Sunni chronicles dating to the eleventh century and later are the sole source

for Buyid sponsorship of public Shiʿi ritual in Baghdad. Ibn al-Kathir's fourteenth-

century chronicle reports that the first Buyid amir in Baghdad, Muʿizz al-Dawla,

ordered public commemorations of *ʿAshura*[114] beginning in 963[115] and, in the next

year, the day of Ghadir Khumm.[116] *'Ashura* is the tenth day of Muharram, the first

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[113] Ibid., 7: 10; Also in Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi al-taʾrikh*, C.J. Tornberg, ed. (Leiden, 1851-76) 8: 179.
[114] For more information on ʿAshura, see M. Ayoub, "Asura," *Encyclopedia Iranica*.
[115] Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam*, 7: 15-16; Ibn al-Athir, 8: 407; Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya* (Cairo, 1992), 11: 243.
[116] Ibn al-Kathir 9: 259; Ibn al-Jawzi, 14: 151. The commemoration of Ghadir Khumm is also reported in Ibn al-Jawzi's thirteenth-century chronicle. For more information on Ghadir Khumm, see Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi, "Gadir Komm," *Encyclopedia Iranica.*

month of the Islamic calendar, when Shiʿis commemorate the martyrdom of the

Imam Husayn b. ʿAli (d. 680) and Ghadir Khumm is the site at which Shiʿis believe

that the Prophet Muhammad designated the first Imam, ʿAli b. Abi Talib (d. 661),

as his chosen successor during his last pilgrimage to Mecca in 632. According to

the thirteenth and fourteenth-century Sunni sources, the public practice of these

new Shiʿi rituals so incensed Baghdad's Sunni community that they instituted

counter rituals: a pilgrimage to the tomb of Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 692)[117] to combat

ʿAshura, and a celebration of *Yawm al-Ghar* (the Day of the Cave)[118] to counter the

celebration of Ghadir Khumm.[119]

Both of these choices of counter-rituals would have been particularly

antagonistic toward Shiʿis but, strikingly, none of the tenth-century sources—

neither the contemporary Sunni sources nor the Buyid-sponsored sources—

mentioned them. Neither public celebrations of Shiʿi rituals nor the Sunni counter-

celebrations appear in the tenth-century sources. Although it could be argued that

tenth-century sources might avoid mentioning sectarian rioting, there would be no

reason for the tenth-century sources—especially those sponsored by the Buyids—

to avoid mentioning religious rituals sponsored by the Buyids. There may very

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[117] Ibn al-Zubayr opposed the second Umayyad caliph, Yazid (d. 683), and declared a counter-caliphate in Mecca to him. His father was reviled by Shiʿis for opposing ʿAli b. Abi Talib during the "Battle of the Camel" (656). H.A.R. Gibb, "ʿAbd Allah b. al-Zubayr," *EOI2*.
[118] "The Day of the Cave" commemorated the day when the Prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakr (d. 634) hid in a cave from their enemies during their *hijra* (journey) to Medina. The *hijra* was the event in 622 when the Muslims living in Mecca traveled to Medina to establish their first community. It is the date upon which the Islamic calendar begins.
[119] Ibn al-Kathir 9: 259, Ibn al-Jawzi, 14: 151.

well have been public Shiʿi rituals in Baghdad during the tenth-century, but their absence from the tenth-century sources suggests that these rituals were probably small, not sponsored by the Shiʿi Buyid state, and not as significant as portrayed by the Sunni sources written after the fall of the Buyid dynasty.

The post tenth-century Sunni sources portray the Shiʿi identity of the Buyids as the primary motivation for all government decisions. For example, Muʿizz al-Dawla, the first Buyid amir in Baghdad, deposed the Sunni Abbasid caliph al-Mustakfi eleven days after conquering Baghdad. The twelfth-century Sunni chronicler Ibn al-Athir uses the deposition as evidence that the Buyids pursued a Shiʿi religious agenda. Ibn al-Athir claims that Muʿizz al-Dawla had wanted to appoint an ʿAlid to the caliphate but was warned by advisors that an ʿAlid caliph would have the power to challenge Shiʿi Buyid authority on religious grounds.[120] According to the Sunni Ibn al-Jawzi's thirteenth-century account, Muʿizz al-Dawla considered two ʿAlid candidates: Abu al-Hasan, a Zaydi Imam in Yemen, and the Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz. However, neither of these candidates were viable: the Zaydi Imam had died nine years before Muʿizz al-Dawla conquered Baghdad and it is extremely unlikely that the Buyids would have wanted a Fatimid caliph in Baghdad. Worse, Ibn al-Jawzi did not correctly identify the Fatimid caliph reigning in 945, who was al-Mansur. Instead, Ibn al-Jawzi named the Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz, who did not come to power until 953, eight

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[120] Ibn al-Athir, 8: 148-9.

years after Muʿizz al-Dawla conquered Baghdad.[121] In short, Ibn al-Jawzi's account of tenth-century sectarianism is unreliable. We cannot trust it to provide even basic facts of chronology, much less an informative analysis of Sunni-Shiʿi relations under the tenth-century Buyids.

Neither of the tenth-century Sunni sources discussed the decision by Muʿizz al-Dawla to depose the Abbasid caliph. The story was mentioned in Miskawayh's Buyid-sponsored history, but he attributed the decision to political motivations without religious overtones.[122] The Sunni sources dating to the period after the fall of the Buyids were more concerned with the Shiʿi identity of the Buyid amirs than the contemporary sources.

Contemporary Sunni sources reacting to the Shiʿi Buyid control over Baghdad and the Sunni Abbasid caliph do not appear to be predominately concerned about the Shiʿi identity of the Buyids. These contemporary sources emphasize other local problems, such as popular religious movements and the overall decline in religious knowledge among experts. Not until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries do accounts of Buyid history begin to emphasize the sectarian nature of their reign.

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[121] Donohue, 14-15.
[122] Ibid., 15.

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Conclusion

In the tenth century, the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties were not seen primarily through the lens of their Shi'i identity, even by contemporary Sunni witnesses. Tenth-century Sunnis reporting on life under the Fatimids and the Buyids were more concerned with intra-Sunni competition, the overall decline of Abbasid power, and other types of popular religious movements. Only in the sources dating to after the tenth century, in the historical chronicles often been used by modern scholars to supplement the tenth-century sources, do the two dynasties appear to be defined nearly exclusively by their Shi'i identity.

The reason for these changing perspectives on the Fatimids and the Buyids was the institutionalization of Sunni identity in the eleventh century. This process, in large part, occurred under the direction of Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092), the famous Sunni vizier to the Seljuks, whose quotation about the "batinis" opened this chapter. Nizam al-Mulk founded a system of state-sponsored *madrasa*s known as the *Nizamiyya* that spanned the territory of the Abbasid caliphate and sought to systematize the basics of Sunni education. The standardization of Sunni education led to a homogenization of Sunni identity overall and, coupled with the abhorrence for all "batinis" evident in Nizam al-Mulk's quotation above, led to the rewriting of the tenth century *ex post facto* as a sectarian narrative.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The tenth century has been traditionally known as the "Shiʿi century" due to the rise to power of two Shiʿi dynasties: the Ismaʿili Fatimids (909-1171) of Egypt and North Africa and the *Ithna'ashari* Buyids (945-1055) of Iraq and Iran. In this dissertation, I have argued that this view of the tenth century reduces the tremendous diversity of medieval Muslim identity to a false binary of Sunni versus Shiʿi. It overestimates both the development of a Sunni Islamic orthodoxy by the tenth century and its significance in the lives of most medieval Muslims. By examining the Fatimid and Buyid dynasties together, I have challenged this traditional sectarian narrative of medieval Islamic society. My aim has been to delineate the process by which historians have miscategorized the nature of medieval Muslim identity.

In the place of the sectarian narrative, I have offered a counter-narrative, a glimpse at a tenth-century Islamic world from within, using Shiʿi sources. This reveals a medieval Islamic world in which most Muslims did not have access to elite concepts of Sunni Islamic orthodoxy defined by urban religious scholars. Rather, this dissertation documents instead the creation of an "edge"[1] where non-Sunni religious missionaries appealed to communities of Muslims on the non-urban peripheries of the Islamic world and converted new Muslims by

[1] This term is borrowed from Richard Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

emphasizing ʿAlid charisma and authority. Shiʿi missionary activity, in turn, led to the rise of two Shiʿi dynasties that dominated the tenth-century Islamic world. Further, contrary to most depictions of these two Shiʿi states, both the Fatimids and the Buyids articulated their authority in pragmatic, polyvalent ways that combined Sunni, Shiʿi, and pre-Islamic modes of authority, adopting methods of defining their legitimacy in complicated, not strictly sectarian (and sometimes non-sectarian) ways. Finally, I have shown how it was only after the fall of these Shiʿi dynasties that their histories were recast in a sectarian narrative by sources composed *ex post facto* by urban Sunni religious scholars in the eleventh centuries and later. Thus, I have suggested that the narrative of the "Shiʿi Century" needs revision. Despite the dominance of the Fatimids and the Buyids, both Shiʿi dynasties, medieval Islamic identity in this period and for these two dynasties was much more complicated than a Sunni-Shiʿi binary. Only with the consolidation and institutionalization of Sunni Islam in the eleventh century and later did Sunni authors rewrite the history of the tenth century as a sectarian narrative.

The Process of Crafting a Sectarian Narrative about the Tenth Century

> "My community will be divided into seventy-three sects. All of them
> will be in the Fire except one."

> -*hadith* attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632)

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Medieval Sunni heresiographers often quoted the above *hadith*, which

appears in the *Sahih Muslim*,[2] a collection of sayings attributed to the Prophet

Muhammad compiled by a Sunni traditionist named Muslim b. al-Hajjaj (d. 874) in

the ninth century. Muslim b. al-Hajjaj was born in Nishapur, in northeastern Iran,

and was reported to have traveled to Iraq, Arabia, Syria, and Egypt to collect

traditions of the Prophet.[3] Although he gathered these traditions in the ninth

century, his collection did not become widely accepted until the eleventh century,

when Sunni religious scholars from different schools of jurisprudence began to

agree upon a common set of sources that could be considered authoritative.[4] The

process of *hadith* collection and canonization is prime example of the process by

which medieval Muslim identity was defined; it mirrors the process that I have

traced in this dissertation. Although religious scholars collected particular

traditions of the Prophet Muhammad in the ninth century, they were only defined

as 'orthodox' and canonized by a unifying Sunni community in the eleventh

century.[5] That *hadith* canonization was part of the Sunni response to the Shiʿi

challenge of the tenth century.

This *hadith* in particular was transmitted on the authority of ʿAbd Allah b.

ʿUmar (d. 683), the son of the second caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khattab (d. 644), who has

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[2] *Sahih Muslim*, no. 976.
[3] G.H.A. Juynboll, "Muslim b. al-Hadjdjadj," *EOI2*.
[4] Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of Al-Bukhari and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunni Hadith Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3-7, 209-210, and 240-246.
[5] Ibid.

traditionally been reviled by Shiʿis as one of the Companions of the Prophet who

usurped the authority of ʿAli b. Abi Talib (d. 661). The existence of this *hadith* and

its specification of one 'correct' type of Islam and seventy-two heretical forms led

medieval Sunni heresiographers to attempt to identify all seventy-two 'erring'

sects.[6]

Only a few surviving works of Islamic heresiography (*firaq*) date to the

early tenth century. These tenth-century heresiographies often quote now lost

ninth-century sources.[7] However, one of the earliest and best-known of the

medieval Sunni heresiographies was *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* (The Differences

Between the Sects), written by an eleventh-century Sunni religious scholar[8] in

Nishapur named al-Baghdadi (d. 1037).[9] Al-Baghdadi's list of deviating sects

includes Shiʿis, such as the Zaydis, Ismaʿilis, and *Ithna'ashari*s (although al-

Baghdadi further subdivides these groups), as well as groups who believed in the

divinity of ʿAli b. Abi Talib (d. 661), the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet who

was considered the first Shiʿi Imam by all three of the major Shiʿi groups. Al-

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[6] Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters* vol. 2 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 277-279.

[7] Sean Anthony provides a useful discussion of the genre of heresiography in *The Caliph and the Heretic: Ibn Saba' and the Origins of Shiʿism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 139-142, as does *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbasids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 20-21.

[8] Al-Baghdadi was born into a Hanbali family but later switched his allegiance to the Shafiʿi school of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence.

[9] A.S. Tritton, "al-Baghdadi," *EOI2*.

Baghdadi's list also includes groups with minor differences in religious practices[10] and groups that would be later accepted into the fold of what could be considered orthodox Sunni, such as the *Murjiʿa*, a theological designation for those Sunnis who believed that only God had the ability to judge sin.

Modern scholars have long considered these heretical classifications contrived.[11] As evident in al-Baghdadi, the medieval Sunni heresiographies often went to elaborate measures to identify precisely seventy-two erring sects. However, scholars have not challenged the underlying assumption of this *hadith*: a clear divide between a fixed, original concept of Sunni Islamic 'orthodoxy' and a heterogeneous assortment of wrong doctrines and practices that could be easily dismissed as 'heterodoxy'. But this emphasis on sectarian division ignores the evidence, which I have presented in this dissertation, that medieval Muslim identity was not so rigidly categorized.[12] It silences the diversity in medieval Islamic identity, and fails to explain how these 'orthodox' Sunni conceptions of Islam would have been policed or enforced before the existence of institutions for this purpose.

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[10] Such as the Rashidiyya, who al-Baghdadi identifies as a group who believed that a full share of the *zakat* (tithe) should only be taken on lands watered by rain and lands watered by springs, canals, and rivers should only have to pay a half-share. Al-Baghdadi, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, 82 (A), 104E.

[11] Ayoub, 277. Also Kate Chambers Seelye, Intro to *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, 4-5.

[12] A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 5-7. Moin noted that the "intellectualist view of Islam [as] neatly divided into Sunnism and Shiʿism, with Sufism overlapping, treats Muslim cultures as rigid whiles to be understood on the basis of scriptural sources, great scholars, and their respectable writings. This view, although easy to grasp and convenient to work with, is innocent of the actual workings of culture and historical change."

This *hadith* has suffered a historiographical fate similar to the two Shiʿi

dynasties of the tenth century discussed in this dissertation. Despite being

repeatedly cited as evidence of the early date of Sunni orthodoxy, the *hadith*

actually reveals the opposite: a diversity of medieval Muslim identity not

dominated by fixed, Sunni textual concepts of Islam, not defined by urban religious

scholars, not in thrall to the Sunni legitimacy achieved only in the eleventh century

and later. Further, consider the path travelled by this *hadith*—as it went from

being a supposedly seventh-century saying of the Prophet, which was collected in

the ninth century, and then was accepted as canonical by Sunnis, and further

elaborated in the eleventh century. The path is itself a snapshot of the process by

which later Sunni religious scholars developed a unified concept of Sunni

orthodoxy and rather successfully projected it backwards to the birth of Islam.

A More Complex Vision of Medieval Islamic History and Identity

In this dissertation, I have taken a broad view of the tenth century, one

which encompasses both the Fatimids in North Africa and the Buyids in Iraq and

Iran. I have traced the rise to power of these dynasties from the non-Sunni

missionary movements of the late eighth and ninth centuries. And I have shown

the ways in which each dynasty made use of and responded to both the Islamic and

pre-Islamic past to articulate its own authority. These two dynasties were not, of

course, operating in a vacuum. They interacterd with one another in ways that

reflect familiar political rivalries of this period and pre-modern world history. The Fatimids maintained their extensive network of missionaries, which were active in Buyid territory, and the Buyids claimed to have spies operating in Fatimid domains. Further, these two dynasties were not the only claimants to leadership in the tenth century. As mentioned, the Buyids maintained the position of the Sunni Abbasid caliph in Baghdad to bolster their own position and to rival the Fatimid caliphs. Furthermore, there was *another* rival caliphate—a second Sunni caliphate in Spain[13]—that I did not discuss in this dissertation and which truly does not fit into the idea of the tenth century as a "Shiʿi Century."

Traditionally, in modern scholarship on the tenth century, each of these dynasties and caliphates tends to be studied in isolation. In this dissertation, by examining two of these tenth-century Shiʿi states together for the first time, I have tried to show what taking a more expansive, inclusive view can reveal about the development of Islamic society. Furthermore, in addition to analyzing these two dynasties together, I also linked their rise to power with eighth and late ninth-century missionary movements in the peripheries of the Islamic world and evaluated how medieval Islamic reactions to them had changed over time. This, as I have argued, exposed the diversity of medieval Islamic identity and the fact that tenth-century Sunni authors did not respond to these Shiʿi states in the same

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[13] In Islamic Spain, in 929, twenty-years after the advent of the Fatimid caliphate and sixteen years before the Buyids conquered Baghdad, the second Sunni Umayyad dynasty declared a rival caliphate to compete with both the Shiʿi Fatimids and Sunni Abbasids.

manner as the Sunni authors from the eleventh century and later. By focusing on competing definitions of Islam and political legitimacy, as well as the historiographical variations of responses to this competition, this dissertation reveals both a concept of medieval Islamic identity that cannot be reduced to Sunni versus Shiʿi in the tenth century and demonstrates how later concepts of orthodoxy and heterodoxy cannot be understood without reintegrating the "Shiʿi Century" into the overall narrative of Islamic history.

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