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The Utilitarian Islamic Modernity of Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (1766–1835)

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The Utilitarian Islamic Modernity of

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Be a man whose foot is on the ground,

but whose mind is on the stars.

-Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār,

Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār ʿalā Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ 2:507

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A Note on Abbreviations, Transliteration and Conventions

This thesis features just one abbreviation for the title of one work by Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, which is mentioned frequently throughout; *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār ʿalā jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ*, rendered as *ḤJJ*.

Standard English transliteration has been used to render Arabic words and names. The 'al-' prefix has been included for in-text mentions, but omitted for shortened footnote citations. Historical figures who were primarily Turcophone have their names rendered according to modern Turkish convention, with the exception of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, owing to his greater involvement in the history of Arabophone Egypt than that of the Turcophone Ottoman world.

Introduction

In 1803, an Egyptian Islamic scholar with a talent for languages and little money set out across the sea, likely, in his mind, never to return to his homeland. This scholar, Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, spent some ten years traveling across the breadth of the Ottoman empire, forming connections with its leading thinkers and imbibing its intellectual culture. When he returned to Egypt, he rose to occupy the highest religious office of the land, in alliance with the new modernizing regime of the Albanian soldier-turned-statesman Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's journey was as much physical as intellectual, and serves as an apt metaphor for the significance of his role in the modernization of Egypt. Venturing out into the Ottoman lands in search of knowledge and teachers, he returned to Egypt bearing the reform program of an Ottoman Islamic modernity.

The story of modernity in Egypt and the broader Muslim world has traditionally been conceived to begin in 1798 with the French invasion of the country, and thereafter continued as a story of progressive European influence reshaping Egypt. Al-ʿAṭṭār, who was instrumental to Egypt's modern reform program in the 1830s, traveled widely across the Ottoman Empire and yet never set foot in western Europe, unlike his famous student Rifāʿa al-Ṭahṭāwī. While al-Ṭahṭāwī is remembered as an Egyptian Islamic scholar who went to France and grappled with Western science and philosophy, al-ʿAṭṭār was an Egyptian who traveled East instead of West, and grappled with the burgeoning indigenous modernity of the Ottoman world. This is not to say al-ʿAṭṭār was unfamiliar with the West; he was fluent in French and English, and had extensive contact with Frenchmen. However despite the opportunities these skills afforded him, the main

story of his intellectual life was his engagement with Ottoman thought, not Western; it was through the Ottomans that al-ʿAṭṭār engaged with questions of modernity.

The result of this trajectory was that al-ʿAṭṭār developed a number of 'modern' ideas on governance, social ethics, science, and the rationalization and bureaucratization of society similar to those of the contemporary West, but not exactly the same. Dallal has argued in *Islam Without Europe* for the indigenous development of modern Islamic thought in the 18th century, independent of Western influence;[1] al-ʿAṭṭār, despite considerably more contact with Europe than the figures cited by Dallal, represents a further addition to this intellectual trend.

The implications of this idea, also advanced by Gran in *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, the first major work on al-ʿAṭṭār, are significant; if al-ʿAṭṭār can be shown to have been inspired mainly by ideas from within the Ottoman world, it would reframe the story of Islamic modernization from a foreign-influenced process, to an indigenous one. This is not to say there was no Western element in Egypt's modernization; there undoubtedly was. But al-ʿAṭṭār was on the path to his own model, an 'alternative modernity' with Islamic characteristics, as Isa Blumi would term it in *Reinstating the Ottomans* with reference to the indigenous modernization projects of the late-Ottoman Balkans.[2]

This thesis seeks to describe and analyze the manifestations of modern thought in the life and works of Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār. I believe these to be influenced, significantly, by the writings and ideas of Ottoman *ʿulamāʿ* and political elites which al-ʿAṭṭār would have encountered during his journey. The thesis will also explore the content of al-ʿAṭṭār's political, legal and social thought, which was guided by a unique form of 'Islamic utilitarianism' which reaches across his writings

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[1] Dallal, Ahmad S. *Islam Without Europe: Traditions of Reform in Eighteenth-Century Islamic Thought*. Islamic Civilization and Muslim Networks. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018.
[2] Blumi, Isa. *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800–1912*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 11.

and the reforms he undertook as Shaykh al-Azhar. The thesis will also discuss al-ʿAṭṭār's

relationship with the post-classical tradition of Islamic scholarship and whether or not he can be

classified as a reformist – a question which has dominated the literature on him thus far.

These questions will be answered through a study of a selection of primary and early

secondary sources on al-ʿAṭṭār's life and career. Foremost among these are: the autobiographical

marginalia (*hawāmish*) written by al-ʿAṭṭār on a copy of al-Jabartī's history during his years

abroad, documenting his travels and opinions; the *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, al-ʿAṭṭār's short

book outlining his views on the caliphate as an Islamic institution, the various caliphates of

history, and Islamic political theory in general; and *ḤJJ*, al-ʿAṭṭār's two-volume magnum opus

devoted to legal theory. This thesis is also accompanied by a complete English translation of

al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, with considerable explanation from myself and the

combined work of three Arabic editors. The text can be read in the Appendix. The literature to

date on al-ʿAṭṭār has largely focused on his economic, social and historical context, rather than

his own writings; a criticism leveled by Khaled El-Rouayheb at the most significant work on

al-ʿAṭṭār to date, Peter Gran's *Islamic Roots of Capitalism* (1979).[3] The present study is, I hope,

an answer to El-Rouayheb's critique, focused first and foremost on a selection of al-ʿAṭṭār's

works which have gone largely unstudied in European-language scholarship. While Gran is first

and foremost a historian, focused on the historical context of al-ʿAṭṭār and his involvement in

particular trends, the present thesis is a work of Islamic studies, focused on the particular

concepts of Islamic political theory, legal theory and modernization articulated by al-ʿAṭṭār.

These three primary sources correspond to the three main sections of the thesis, those

being a biography of al-ʿAṭṭār the man, an exposition and analysis of his political writings and

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[3] El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*. First edition. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 7n.

career, and finally a description of al-ʿAṭṭār's approach to the Islamic legal scholarly tradition and how he has been received by it in succeeding centuries, all aimed at elaborating the construction and content of al-ʿAṭṭār's modern Islamic vision.

These sections address different questions and literatures, including the body of Western scholarship on al-ʿAṭṭār's biography, the Arabic literature on his political theory, and the long-running debate over the intellectual basis of his reformism. However, they do converge on what I hold to be the central ideas which stretch across al-ʿAṭṭār's work and life, those being the necessity for a revival of the broad-minded scholarship of the classical Islamic period in service of modern reforms, guided by his Islamic utilitarian philosophy seeking the maximum benefit for the maximum number of Muslims. The idea of an Islamic utilitarianism has previously been explored by Jon Hoover with reference to Ibn Taymiyya, Hallaq with reference to Rashīd Riḍā, and by Clark Lombardi as a longstanding and controversial strand of Islamic legal reasoning, but not yet to al-ʿAṭṭār.

Guided by his principles, ʿAṭṭār outlines in his writings the shape of an Islamic modernity, an 'alternative modernity' to that which crashed into Egypt in 1798, and one which had been developing indigenously for generations prior.

0.1 The Sources of Modernity

It is the contention of some of the main current writers on ʿAṭṭār and early 19th century Islamic thought that the dawn of modernity in the Muslim world, or Egypt at least, began not with the French occupation of Egypt from 1798–1801, but rather centuries earlier from

indigenous sources, even reaching back to the Ottoman conquest of 1517.[4] The contention that modernity emerged indigenously from multiple sources around the world, or in this case around the Ottoman Empire, is a significant one, and one that I believe is vindicated by the life and thought of al-ʿAṭṭār, whose vision for a new flourishing of Islamic civilization takes its references from that civilization, rather than outside it.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's alternative Islamic modernity might appear incongruous with Western modernity, typically considered 'modernity' as such. Secularism, equality, and representative government, considered pillars of modern life in the West of al-ʿAṭṭār's time and of today, find little connection to his thought. Al-ʿAṭṭār, and those around him, maintained belief in a religious law and polity, a fundamentally hierarchical order of human society, and autocratic political ideals alongside more 'conventional' markers of modernity such as scientific thinking and freedom of thought, without perceiving any contradiction.

What defines modernity? For the purposes of this thesis, I define the concept according to the schema of the Moroccan philosopher ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṭaha, as described by Wael Hallaq in his book *Reforming Modernity: Ethics and the New Human in the Philosophy of Abdurrahman Taha* (2019). Ṭaha conceives of a 'spirit of modernity' consisting essentially of a rational autonomous frame of mind capable of self-legislation without recourse to a higher authority; the subjection of all natural and human phenomena to rationalization; and the impulse towards the universalization of previously particular material and immaterial features of life across society and societies.[5] While the material realization of modernity first and most dominantly emerged in the West, its spirit, says Ṭaha, belongs in common to all of mankind and has been developed in

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[4] Gran, Peter. "Rethinking the Early Nahda." Lecture presented at the Qahwa and Kalam Lecture Series, The American University in Cairo, March 2, 2015. https://fount.aucegypt.edu/audiovisual_faculty_work/57/.
[5] Hallaq, Wael B. *Reforming Modernity: Ethics and the New Human in the Philosophy of Abdurrahman Taha*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2019, 80–82.

different ways and different societies across history, including Islamic civilization.[6] Al-ʿAṭṭār, I will argue in this thesis, manifested all these hallmarks of modernity in his thought.

Ṭaha's ideas resonate with the main line narrative of scholarship on al-ʿAṭṭār's legal-political framework, and his situation in the modernization of Egypt. Peter Gran set the stage with his description of al-ʿAṭṭār as a force for indigenous modernization in his *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*. The book is a thorough study on al-ʿAṭṭār and his times, conceiving of him as a fundamentally modern thinker, disappointed with the unsatisfying intellectual life of Cairo, whose reformism was inspired by his contact with French scholars during the 1798–1801 occupation, and the economic and social conditions of his age.

Gran returns decades later in *The Persistence of Orientalism* (2020) to reiterate that the conventional narrative of modern Egyptian history, conceived in the 'reformist–conservative' dichotomy, still fails to properly account for Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār and Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha. Gran suggests that the development of Egypt's modern society and economy took its course beginning from the Ottoman conquest of the country in 1517, rather than the French occupation of 1798, with al-ʿAṭṭār as simply one link in the chain of a centuries-long process.[7]

The Egyptian historian Aḥmad al-Shilaq has engaged most with Gran's ideas, arguing that the new direction which historians of modern Egypt must pursue, initiated by Gran, is to explain Egypt's process of modernization prior to the French invasion. If it can be shown that Egypt was on its own path to modernization prior to the French invasion, as is the goal of this new historical direction, then the whole narrative of modernization as a process emanating

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[6] Ibid., 79.

[7] Gran, Peter. *The Persistence of Orientalism: Anglo-American Historians and Modern Egypt*. First Edition. Middle East Studies Beyond Dominant Paradigms. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2020, 125.

outward from western Europe, which could not have emerged elsewhere due to the particular characteristics of that region, would be overturned.[8]

This idea has been explored by Isa Blumi in a study on the late-Ottoman Balkans, where al-ʿAṭṭār spent years during his travels. In a book chapter titled "Repositioning Agency and the Forces of Change", Blumi points out that the reforms of Muḥammad ʿAlī in fact predate 'modern' government reforms in Europe, throwing into question the direction of influence. "[What] constitutes 'modern forms of governmental practice' may not have originated from engagements with 'European' influences. Mehmet Ali initiated 'modern' governmental reforms in Egypt years before similar reforms were to emerge in Europe."[9] The significant suggestion here, and elsewhere in Blumi's work, is that "modernization" was a process being independently pursued in multiple places, possibly emerging from changing global economic and technological circumstances. From this perspective, "Modernity is [...] the product of human society in its various stages of development, going back to early epochs of history, Western or not," says Hallaq,[10] and modernizers like Muḥammad ʿAlī and other provincial Ottoman rulers, and the scholars like al-ʿAṭṭār who cooperated with their agendas, were not Europhiles but simply 19th century statesmen pursuing their own locally-derived modernization agendas.

I believe that al-ʿAṭṭār's reformism entirely lacked the ideological dimension which was to characterize later reform and modernization efforts, in which Europe's material strength was seen to derive from its social, political and philosophical systems, with the consequent belief that Islamic civilization was held back by its own respective immaterial characteristics. Despite

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[8] Shilaq, Aḥmad Zakariyyā al-. *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra: fī tārīkh al-fikr al-Miṣrī al-ḥadīth*. First printing. Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Karma, 2022, 13f.

[9] Blumi continues: "In this respect, the state centralization, military reform, and streamlined revenue- collection strategies that the Young Ottomans either inherited or copied from Egypt's administrative practices in Syria, Palestine, and Anatolia predate putative European bureaucratic innovations by a considerable margin. The chronology, therefore, is misleading at best." Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 64.

[10] Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 83.

al-ʿAṭṭār's many complaints against the narrow-mindedness of his fellow scholars, the capriciousness of contemporary Muslim rulers, and the material weakness of Muslims, he did not seek to Westernize Egypt, or Islamic civilization, because he did not perceive its foundations to be fundamentally flawed or at odds with the conditions of the modern world, which he would not have considered the exclusive product of Western civilization. Indeed, as I will argue, al-ʿAṭṭār would have seen Ottoman writers and leaders working towards Islamic modern forms on the basis of their own indigenous tradition, guided by Ṭaha's 'spirit of modernity'.

Despite the total lack of al-ʿAṭṭār writing to advocate for modernizing Egypt along Western lines, this has not stopped him from being portrayed as a liberal, progressive, even humanist thinker. This position is best represented by Christopher de Bellaigue in *The Islamic Enlightenment*, where al-ʿAṭṭār is said to have spent his career building on the "secular revelations he received in the [French] Institute of Egypt."[11] This view of the man was common after his death, says Gran, as many traditional Azharīs opposed to Muhammad Ali actively disliked al-ʿAṭṭār for his service to the Pasha, and imagined him to be an unrepentant Westernizer.[12]

Another narrative, advocated by many Egyptian authors and the Israeli historian Shmuel Moreh, is to describe ʿAṭṭār as an anti-Ottoman Egyptian nationalist, working for the total political independence of Egypt on the basis of a distinct nationhood. Moreh writes:

"From the remarks made by al-ʿAṭṭār, we can perceive the beginnings of a patriotic awareness in Egypt, instead of loyalty to the Islamic unity of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, these remarks also reveal his anger at the tyranny and oppressive policies of the Ottoman rulers, whom he accused of ignorance and of bringing about religious,

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[11] Bellaigue, Christopher de. *The Islamic Enlightenment: The Struggle Between Faith and Reason: 1798 to Modern Times*. London, England: Vintage Books, 2018, 26.
[12] Gran, *Persistence of Orientalism*, 115–116.

cultural and scientific deterioration. It seems that his awareness of the general decline of the Ottoman Empire encouraged him to return to Egypt and to serve the new regime of Muḥammad ʿAlī, helping him in his educational and scientific projects."[13]

On the question of al-ʿAṭṭār's ostensible nationalism, I must agree with Patrick Scharfe, and more broadly with Khaled Fahmy who sees the idea of Egyptian nationalism in the Muḥammad ʿAlī period as an anachronistic projection. Although al-ʿAṭṭār did indeed write frequently during his travels of his hope to return to Egypt,[14] was critical of Ottoman governors and did ultimately work with Muḥammad ʿAlī's de facto independent government, Scharfe contends that al-ʿAṭṭār was not hostile to the Ottoman Empire as a whole, but rather the uncontrollable foreign troops who destabilized Egypt during the years following the French withdrawal in 1801.[15]

Fahmy also argues that an Egyptian nationalist ideology to which al-ʿAṭṭār might adhere was still decades away even in the last years of the shaykh's life. Muḥammad ʿAlī, himself an Albanian and thoroughly Ottoman individual in his tastes and worldview, was no Egyptian nationalist, nor were his soldiers or civil servants.[16] From a nationalist perspective Muḥammad ʿAlī must appear as something of a failure, given that he never completely extracted Egypt (or Albania) from Ottoman suzerainty, but this would be to misunderstand the Pasha's goal, which was above all to secure permanent rule of Egypt for himself and his descendants; in this respect, he was eminently successful.[17]

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[13] Moreh, Shmuel. Introduction to al-Jabartī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-. *Al-Naṣṣ al-kāmil li-kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-āthār fī al-tarājim wa-l-akhbār*. Edited by Shmuel Moreh. Vol. 1, 5 vols. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2013, 1/12.

[14] Al-ʿAṭṭār writes as much at 1/301, 1/322, 1/335, and 2/280 as marginalia to al-Jabartī's *ʿAjāʾib*, to give just a few examples.

[15] Scharfe, Patrick. "Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere in Mehmed Ali Pasha's Egypt, 1801-1841." Doctoral thesis, Ohio State University, 2015, 108.

[16] Fahmy, Khaled. *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Cairo, Egypt: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002, 306f.

[17] Ibid., 311.

The way in which Muḥammad ʿAlī (and his colleague Ali Pasha)[18] could comfortably conceive of himself as pursuing an independent project in the governance and modernization of Egypt, while still seeking to remain within the cultural orbit of the Ottoman Empire is, I think, appropriate to extend to Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār as well. Indeed, al-ʿAṭṭār himself offers in *ḤJJ* a blunt negation of the Egyptian exceptionalism he found among the Azharī scholars, much less a nationalist discourse. After complimenting the logical works of the Mughal-era Indian scholars Abd al-Ḥakīm al-Siyālkūtī (d. 1657) and Mīr Zāhid Harawī (d. 1690), he writes:

> "I do not like the saying common in our lands, that there are none in this world more knowledgeable than the *ʿulamāʾ* of Egypt, for this would require complete examination of the entire situation, of which none is capable. As far as we know, the people from nearby lands are not [representative] of all people, so this is a reckless statement. [poetry:] *a person has not correctly reckoned his own merit / except by knowing the merit of every meritorious person* [by comparison]"[19]

As for Moreh's thesis of al-ʿAṭṭār's rejection of the Islamic unity of the Ottoman Empire, this is unfounded, at least as concerns the shaykh's matured political thought. While al-ʿAṭṭār did not mince words with regional Ottoman rulers, such as the Albanian pashas of Rumelia or Muḥammad ʿAlī himself, nowhere does he criticize the institution of the caliphate or the general

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[18] Blumi describes the absence of a nationalist agenda in Ali Pasha's statecraft:

"In the end, what is important to take from this period of expanded opportunities for Ali Pasha is the fact that **he did not pursue political separation. Rather, his actions enhanced his leverage in local affairs for the purposes of strengthening a place within the Ottoman bureaucratic universe still not affected by the reforms to take place after 1838. Ali Pasha, in other words, was firmly entrenched in the Ottoman world and hoped to cooperate with the Ottomans,** thus expanding with them. The agenda was to implement changes when necessary to strengthen their mutual position vis- à- vis different enemies. Often decisions made in Istanbul pushed these crucial allies at the empire's fringes in unanticipated directions." Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 51.
Blumi's description of Ali Pasha could as easily describe the outlook of Muḥammad ʿAlī for the majority of his reign. I would contend that al-ʿAṭṭār conceived of himself as a member of the Ottoman world and hoped to see it strengthened via localized reform projects such as those in the western Balkans and in Egypt.
[19] Aṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, ʿAṭṭār, Abū al-Saʿādāt Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-. *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār ʿalā jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ.* 2 vols. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 2009, 2:532.

Ottoman system, or call for its breakup along national lines. On the contrary, he takes up a spirited defense of the caliphate political system, and the ideal political unity of Muslims despite natural tribalism, as an Islamic imperative. Not only this, but in *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa* and *ḤJJ*, he lauds the Ottoman caliphate specifically and profusely. Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh Najm, the editor of a 2006 edition of al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla*, writes that the book is of major importance for showing that 19th-century Egyptians maintained considerable loyalty to the Ottoman Empire specifically for its status as the caliphate, despite their own government's rivalry with Istanbul.[20] His study of the text is largely a refutation of the nationalist narratives that the Ottomans had little popular support in Egypt, and that al-ʿAṭṭār was a nationalist himself.

0.2 Al-ʿAṭṭār's Movement to the Center

One long-term trend in the literature surrounding Hasan al-ʿAṭṭār has been his slow move from the periphery of historical narratives to the center. ʿAlī Mubārak, one of al-ʿAṭṭār's earliest biographers, wrote that his sole claim to fame was being the main teacher of al-Ṭahṭāwī;[21] a view alive and well decades later when Albert Hourani described him as "a precursor" of the latter.[22] ʿAbbās al-ʿAqqād was of the view that he was simply an apolitical scholastic, with no significant involvement in politics or the formation of modern Egyptian Islamic thought.[23] This is hardly tenable for one who rose to the politically-influential position of Shaykh al-Azhar, and whose writings display strong political opinions, as we will see.

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[20] Najm, Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh. *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa al-islāmiyya wa manāqib al-khilāfa: dirāsa wa taḥqīq*. First printing. Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Hidāya li 'l-nashr wa 'l-tawzīʿ, 2006, 21–22.

[21] Gran, *Persistence of Orientalism*, 113.

[22] Hourani, Albert. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798–1939*. 22nd printing. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 392.

[23] Taymūr Bāshā, Aḥmad. *Aʿlām al-fikr al-islāmī fī l-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīth*. Windsor, UK: Muʾasasa Hindāwī, 2017, 27.

The conception of al-ʿAṭṭār as a progenitor of modern Islamic thought and a significant thinker independent of al-Ṭahṭāwī began, I believe, with Aḥmad Taymūr Bāshā's *Aʿlām al-fikr al-islāmī fī 'l-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīth* at the turn of the 20th century. Al-ʿAṭṭār is the very first person profiled in this biographical dictionary of modern Islamic thinkers, and Taymūr Bāshā gives no entry to al-Ṭahṭāwī at all.[24] Gran's focused study on al-ʿAṭṭār was instrumental in bringing him to the fore, and he has since been featured prominently in works such as al-Shilaq's, which position him as the father of practically all strands of modern Egyptian thought. In *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, al-Shilaq devotes the first chapter in his history of modern Egyptian thought to al-ʿAṭṭār, completely separate from al-Ṭahṭāwī.[25] Meanwhile in the traditional sphere, al-Khafajī's *al-Azhar fī alf ʿām* (2009) praises al-ʿAṭṭār as one of the foremost scholars of modern times, citing him as a direct inspiration for the then-Shaykh al-Azhar Muḥammad Sayyid al-Ṭanṭāwī (d. 2010).[26]

I believe the reasons for al-ʿAṭṭār's framing as a footnote to al-Ṭahṭāwī are twofold. The first is the seemingly (to contemporary eyes) contradictory nature of al-ʿAṭṭār's ideas, which we today might ascribe to discrete ideological camps, which in his time were not necessarily separated. "In sum, since neither one of [Egypt's] two main cultural traditions [i.e. liberal and religious conservative] claimed him, this is very likely an important part of why he was forgotten," writes Gran.[27] Al-ʿAṭṭār believed in the caliphate, while also believing in a very modern utilitarian ethical principle. He was an enthusiastic proponent of science and technology while abstaining from the humanism of the European Enlightenment.

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[24] Ibid., 17–29.
[25] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 8.
[26] Khafajī, *Al-Azhar fī alf ʿām*, 2:51.
[27] Gran, *Persistence of Orientalism*, 115–6.

The second reason for al-ʿAṭṭār's marginalization is to fit into a teleological role as teacher to the 'Westernizerʾ al-Ṭahṭāwī. Given his travels to France and more extensive engagement with European philosophy, al-Ṭahṭāwī has long been a key in the narrative of the Westernization (equivalent with modernization) of Egypt. Al-ʿAṭṭār confounds this narrative by being a rather modern thinker in his own right, without drawing on Europe for his ideas; he is an anachronism in the conventional historical narrative of global modernization via the West.

Thus failing to be comfortably categorized or accounted for in historiography, al-ʿAṭṭār has been somewhat neglected – until recently.

0.3 Enlightened Conservatism

In a 2019 nine-volume work titled *Aʿlām al-Azhar al-sharīf*, the prominent contemporary Islamic scholar Usāma al-Azharī positions al-ʿAṭṭār at the center of the modern history of al-Azhar and Islamic thought, and attempts to resolve the difficulty of al-ʿAṭṭār's categorization through the invention of a new category altogether. "The scholars of al-Azhar are of two schools: conservatives and reformists," says al-Azharī. "But there is a third school which includes many people [...] these are the enlightened conservatives *(al-maḥāfiẓ al-mustanīr)*,[28] [who are] exemplified by Shaykh al-Azhar al-Imām al-Shaykh Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār…"[29] This school, a third alternative charting a middle course between the conservatives and reformists, is in comparison with those two schools "deeper and more profound in its thinking, with broader horizons, serving as the bridge between the sacred law and reality, between religion and the[conditions of the] age, working to build up civilization, and build bridges with various other civilizations."[30] Al-ʿAṭṭār's

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[28] Al-Shilaq offers a similar categorization of al-ʿAṭṭār as an "enlightened reformist" (*muṣliḥan mustanīran*), but does not develop the idea to the same extent as al-Azharī. Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 35.

[29] Azharī, Azharī, Usāma al-Sayyid al-. *Aʿlām al-Azhar al-sharīf*. Vol. 1. 9 vols. Alexandria, Egypt: Maktabat al-Iskandariyya, 2019, 1:151.

[30] Ibid., 1:151.

school "was possessed of a sublime and glorious nationalist thesis (*aṭrūḥa waṭaniyya jalīla wa sāmiyya*);[31] it called to civilization and to the soaring horizons of both the religious and applied sciences, and built bridges with various civilizations."[32]

Al-Azharī also flips the traditional narrative of al-ʿAṭṭār as a footnote to al-Ṭahṭāwī on its head; he writes that although some have said that one cannot understand the more significant figure of al-Ṭahṭāwī without the background of al-ʿAṭṭār, "the matter is the other way around, for al-ʿAṭṭār is the head of the school, creator of its vision, and it was he who drew the map on which Rifāʿa [al-Ṭahṭāwī] traveled."[33]

Al-Azharī's historical narrative of a third school of Azharī thought represents an admirable effort to break out of the conservative–liberal/traditionalist–reformist dichotomy identified by Gran, which is inadequate to accurately represent al-ʿAṭṭār, as well as other historical *ʿulamāʾ*. However, this 'school' is quite vaguely defined; seemingly more by what it is not than what it is. It is moderate between extremes, 'deeper and more profound' and supportive of 'civilization'; platitudes that could as easily be claimed by staunch reformists or conservatives.[34] I also argue in this thesis that al-ʿAṭṭār does not represent the beginning of any new tradition in Islamic scholarship, but is rather demonstrably the inheritor of 'modern' lines of thinking from among his Egyptian and Ottoman predecessors.

Al-Azharī has not yet written an extended explanation of the school of enlightened conservatism which ostensibly began with al-ʿAṭṭār. However, given what he has written on this idea, I believe it to be at least partially a back-projection from al-Azharī and a group of Azharī

[31] The idea of al-ʿAṭṭār as an Egyptian nationalist has been refuted already in this introduction.
[32] Azharī, *Aʿlām al-Azhar*, 1:152.
[33] Ibid., 1:151.
[34] Al-Azharī lists among the typical conservatives of al-Azhar shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shirbīnī (d. 1326/1907), ostensibly of a different 'school' from al-ʿAṭṭār (Ibid.), and yet al-Shirbīnī is cited by an editor of an edition of *ḤJJ* as being extremely helpful with the book's preparation (ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:535). Clearly he felt al-ʿAṭṭār's writings were worth reading, despite al-Azharī's categorization of the two as belonging to opposing camps.

scholars whom he represents, trying to justify the current official perspective of al-Azhar through the invocation of al-ʿAṭṭār as an imagined ideal Islamic 'moderate'. In a 2019 article documenting the life and reformism of al-ʿAṭṭār written by an Azharī scholar, the author trumpets al-ʿAṭṭār's "reformism" and "moderation" as a counterweight against "political Islam and terrorism". These are obvious anachronisms which would have been unknown to al-ʿAṭṭār, even if they are among al-Azhar's preoccupations today.[35]

If all that is meant by al-Azharī by the term 'enlightened conservatism' is a respect for the historical Islamic scholastic tradition, coupled with a practical adaptability to contemporary problems, and distance from ideological extremes, then practically every scholar in the history of Islam would seek to ascribe himself to this school, and a great many rightly could be. It is possible that the typology of 'conservative-moderate-liberal' devised by al-Azharī has more to do with modern Egyptian religious politics than that of al-ʿAṭṭār's time, and simply represents an attempt to legitimate the politics of al-Azharī (and affiliated Azharīs such as ʿAlī Jumuʿa) through connection to a venerable Shaykh al-Azhar of the 19th century. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that al-Azharī's conception of al-ʿAṭṭār represents a significant historiographical breakthrough positioning al-ʿAṭṭār at the center of Egypt's, and al-Azhar's modernization, which the present thesis develops further.

Simultaneous with al-Azharī's writings on al-ʿAṭṭār in the early 21st century, there has been a revival of Arabic writing on al-ʿAṭṭār and wide republication of his works. These works, recently published in modern, critical editions mainly by Azharī scholars, include: *Risāla fī ḥudūth al-ʿālam*, *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār alā al-sullam*, *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār alā al-Azhariyya*, *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār alā nukhbat al-fikr*, *Risāla fī majʿūliyyat al-māhiyyāt* and *Risāla fī madhhab*

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[35] El-Bendary, Mohamed Reda Ramadan. "Min Rawād al-azhar al-sharīf fī iṣlāḥ wa l-tajdīd al-shaykh Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār." *Majalla kulliyat al-dirāsāt al-islāmiyya wa l-ʿarabiyya li l-banāt bi-Kafr al-Shaykh* 3, no. 4 (2019): 446.

al-ṭabāʾiʿiyīn, to name a few. Al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, his sole work explicitly on Islamic political theory and a major source for this thesis, has been published at least four times in the past twenty years in Arabic. Two of these studies on al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla*, by Aḥmad al-Baghdādī in 2004 and ʿAḥmad ʿAbd Allāh Najm in 2006, are the most in-depth work on the shaykh's political philosophy to date.

Al-Baghdādī draws explicitly from Gran's work on the shaykh in framing his life and times, while offering a novel analysis of the *Risāla* itself. According to al-Baghdādī, the text represents a progression of Ibn Khaldūn's concept of *ʿaṣabiyya*, expanded by al-ʿAṭṭār to include economic as well as tribal bonds; a sort of proto-materialist theory of history.[36] Al-Baghdādī also (extremely briefly) prefigures ideas developed at length in this thesis, contending that al-ʿAṭṭār's Egypt built off of the Ottoman reform experience, and that al-ʿAṭṭār's interest in Western modernity was mediated by the modernization movement within the Ottoman Empire.[37]

I believe the best available explanation for the sudden burst of Arabic literature on and from al-ʿAṭṭār in the past two decades would be that Usāma al-Azharī might not be alone at al-Azhar in framing al-ʿAṭṭār as the forefather of the institution's current outlook. Perhaps the narrative of al-ʿAṭṭār as the founder of modern al-Azhar has been preceded by years of promoting the idea within the Azharī community, either by Usāma al-Azharī himself or his teachers, which are only now bearing fruit in the form of these publications.

0.4 Limitations of the Paradigm

On the whole, I believe the debate over ascribing al-ʿAṭṭār to one 'school' or another somewhat redundant. Al-ʿAṭṭār was his own man and he escapes easy categorization; he

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[36] Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 36.
[37] Ibid., 12–13.

advocated some positions of one modern camp, and some of another; this is no justification to frame him exclusively as one while ignoring his holistic outlook. I believe the discourse, both among Muslims and among the academics who observe them, is still colored with the liberal-conservative dichotomy which Gran decried, which presumes a progressive narrative of history, in which the liberals advance society towards something more like the West and the conservatives preserve its parochialism.

Attar certainly hoped to change Egypt and its intellectual culture, proclaiming that "the conditions of our country must change, and be renewed by what it lacks in knowledge".[38] This intended change, however, was not towards Europe; he possessed his own ideal, which was ultimately still what he saw to be the heights of Islamic civilization, whether in the example of great scholar-scientists of history, or the 'spirit of modernity' moving through the contemporary Ottoman Empire.

Just as Dallal paints the picture of Islamic thought in the 18th century as 'Islam Without Europe', al-ʿAṭṭār was still largely a Muslim apart from Europe. I would group al-ʿAṭṭār with the sort of 18th-century revivalists profiled by Dallal, if anyone, rather than with the nebulous definitions of 'conservative', 'liberal', or even 'enlightened conservative'. Al-ʿAṭṭār shared with the likes of Shāh Walī Allāh, al-Shawkānī, or his own teacher Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī a revivalist spirit and a drive to overcome the dead-end of the post-classical tradition.

A passage from Daniel Newman, written as part of an introduction to his translation of al-Ṭahṭāwī's account of his stay in Paris, is an accurate and succinct description of al-ʿAṭṭār's views on his relation with modernization:

"[His] views of the ways in which Islamic society should advance clearly prefigured the ideas formulated by such people as Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh or

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[38] Taymūr Bāshā, *Aʿlām al-fikr al-islāmī fī l-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīth*, 25.

indeed Rifāʿa al-Taḥtāwī. Like them, he believed that the answers lay not in blindly copying Europe, but rather in taking those things that could benefit their native societies and by rediscovering the wealth of Islamic culture and sciences, many of which were at the basis of modern European technology and inventions. He was very much a part of a traditional Islamic scholarly tradition, as his literary output clearly shows, and it is therefore difficult to see that he could have conceived of 'progress' as being rooted in anything other than Divine Law."[39]

I believe this is the most appropriate characterization of al-ʿAṭṭār's outlook, of those put forward thus far. This outlook also represents, in my view, nothing more or less than the orientation of Ottoman scholarship in the 19th and 18th centuries, working towards their own Islamic modernity.

0.5 Thesis Sections

The first section of this thesis traces the sources of al-ʿAṭṭār's thought through a biographical account of his life. In charting the course of his studies and his rise to power, I argue that al-ʿAṭṭār did not represent the founding of a new modern tradition or a rupture with the old, but was rather the inheritor of 'modern' ideas about law, government and Islamic scholasticism from his Egyptian teachers and Ottoman writers. He was also influenced by the example of contemporary Ottoman modernization projects in the Balkans and in Istanbul, under Selim III.

The second section is an exposition of al-ʿAṭṭār's political and legal philosophy, which I have described as 'Islamic utilitarianism'. His unique illiberal, theocentric formulation of the philosophy will be described, particularly with reference to his understanding of the caliphate; an

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[39] Newman, Introduction to *An Imam in Paris*, 37.

institution which he advocates managing strictly according to utilitarian calculus, at odds with conventional scholarly understanding. Al-ʿAṭṭār's application of his principles to his relationship with Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha and his government, which he served as Shaykh al-Azhar, will also be explored. Al-ʿAṭṭār's Islamic utilitarianism will be compared with that of contemporaries in the West, such as Jeremy Bentham, and shown to be grounded in the writings of Muslim scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya, Raghib Pasha and Ibn Khaldūn.

Lastly, the third section will address al-ʿAṭṭār's relation with the post-classical tradition, as found in his final major work, HJJ. Al-ʿAṭṭār was profoundly disturbed by the narrow-mindedness and venality of his age, and sought to restore Islamic intellectual culture to the dynamism of the classical age. It will be shown that al-ʿAṭṭār was a modernizer but not a modernist; rather, he was part of a broad movement in the Muslim world to overcome the rut of post-classical scholarship and restore the applied sciences and philosophy in the madrasa.

1. Across the Ottoman World: A Biography of Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār

This chapter narrates a biography of al-ʿAṭṭār, showing the sources of his reformism from his formation in Egypt, to his extensive travels across the Ottoman Empire. The content of al-ʿAṭṭār's thought on reform, the caliphate, Islamic law and the Islamic legal tradition were the product of his experiences and teachers, who imparted to him ideas of modernization then current in the Ottoman intellectual sphere.

There are a few novel points to make concerning al-ʿAṭṭār's biography. Firstly, there has long been confusion as to where exactly al-ʿAṭṭār was at various times in his decade-long voyage

through the Ottoman lands, and what he did there. Secondary sources writing on this have contained usually fragmentary data; this study provides a definitive account of al-ʿAṭṭār's travels. This study also brings to light \new information on al-ʿAṭṭār's visits to Cyprus, Izmir, Lebanon and Iraq. Connections between the modernization programmes of western Balkan Ottoman rulers and that of Muḥammad ʿAlī, and their possible connection via al-ʿAṭṭār during his years in the country, are also explored.

1.1 Early Life and Late 18th Century Cairo

Ḥasan bin Muḥammad b. Kutun al-ʿAṭṭār was born in 1180/1766 in Cairo to a Moroccan merchant family from Fez, which had migrated to Egypt in the previous generation.[40] As the name 'ʿAṭṭār' (lit. 'perfumer') would suggest, his father was a perfume merchant.[41] It was into the last decades of Ottoman rule in Egypt that al-ʿAṭṭār was born; a period viewed by many as a period of interminable civilizational decline. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Khafajī, in *al-Azhar fī alf ʿām,* describes the 300 years of Ottoman rule as

> "centuries in which the country witnessed oppression, ignorance, weakness and backwardness in all areas, it could not possibly have been any worse. All the three centuries were like their end: an evil state and a weakness of hope."[42]

This view of Ottoman Egypt was widespread in earlier generations of academic scholarship, and broadly tracks with the narrative of post-classical Islamic decline. Gran has pushed back against

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[40] The name 'Kutun' appears in a number of early secondary sources such as ʿAbd al-Ghanī Ḥasan's biography, however Qāsim reports the name as 'Kannūn'. In either case, the name does not appear to be of Arabic origin, suggesting at least partial Berber ancestry for al-ʿAṭṭār. See: Qāsim, Ḥasan. "Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī." In *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa al-islāmiyya wa manāqib al-khilāfa al-ʿuthmāniyya*. Āthār al-ʿallāma Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār 3. Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Iḥsān li l-Nashr wa l-Tawzīʿ, 2020, 9.

[41] Ḥasan, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ghanī. *Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār*. Nawābigh al-Fikr al-ʿArabī 40. Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif bi Miṣr, 1968, 20.

[42] Khafājī, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-. *Al-Azhar fī alf ʿām*. Second Edition. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Beirut, Lebanon: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1987, 2:324.

this dour perspective on Ottoman Egypt, arguing that the development of Egypt's modern society and economy took its course beginning from the Ottoman conquest of the country in 1517, rather than the French occupation of 1798.[43] Many academic scholars have argued against the idea of any intellectual decline in the 18th century whatsoever, pointing out the numerous writers and major works of the period. Al-Shilaq attributes the conducive intellectual environment of al-ʿAṭṭār's youth to the reforms of ʿAlī Bey al-Kabīr, a forerunner of much of the reform program Muḥammad ʿAlī would pursue decades later.[44] Marsot, in fact, claims that the innovations of Muḥammad ʿAlī's rule "were in fact carried over from previous regimes," namely that of ʿAlī Bey al-Kabīr.[45]

Al-ʿAṭṭār grew up among foreign migrants in the Maghribī quarter of Cairo, working as his father's apprentice in the spice trade. Despite this, he showed an extraordinary aptitude for scholarly pursuits and with his father's support, began studying at al-Azhar under the leading scholars of the day.[46] He made prodigious progress; al-ʿAṭṭār is reputed to have memorized the whole Qur'an extraordinarily quickly, and outstripped his peers in all subjects.[47]

Among al-ʿAṭṭār's main teachers during his time as a student at al-Azhar can be counted Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ṣabbān (d. 1206/1791), Muḥammad Amīr al-Kabīr al-Mālikī (d. 1232/1817), and the famous compiler of *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), himself described as a notable early modern Egyptian thinker.[48] al-ʿAṭṭār also studied extensively with Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿArafa al-Disūqī al-Mālikī (d. 1230/1815) with whom he studied the

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[43] Gran, *Persistence of Orientalism*, 125.

[44] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 21.

[45] Marsot, Afar Lutfi al-Sayyid. *Egypt in the Reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī*. Cambridge Middle East Library. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 21.

[46] El-Bendary, *Min Rawād al-azhar al-sharīf*, 456.

[47] ʿAbd al-Maʿbūd, Muḥammad. Introduction in al-ʿAṭṭār, Abū al-Saʿādāt Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-. *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār alā Nukhbat al-Fikr*. Edited by Muḥammad Saʿd ʿAbd al-Maʿbūd. Dār al-Iḥsān li l-Nashr wa l-Tawzīʿ, 2019, 16.

[48] For more on al-Zabīdī, see: Reichmuth, Stefan. *The World of Murtaḍā Al-Zabīdī (1732–91): Life, Network and Writings*. Oxford, England: The E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2009.

latter's famous work of Mālikī jurisprudence *Ḥashiya al-Disūqī*, as well as linguistic sciences.[49]

It is notable that al-ʿAṭṭār, who was of North African origin (and therefore likely Mālikī himself as a young man) and who seemingly studied under more Mālikī scholars than of any other school of law, ultimately adopted the Shāfiʿī school. The earliest direct evidence of the shaykh ascribing himself to Shāfiʿism comes in 1225/1811, before his return to Cairo, in a letter sent to a colleague in Jerusalem.[50] It seems reasonable to conjecture that al-ʿAṭṭār took up the Shāfiʿī school during his travels, but the cause of this shift is totally unknown to this point.

Al-ʿAṭṭār also studied under Ḥasan b. Ibrāhīm al-Zaylāʿī al-Jabartī (d. 1188/1774), father of the famous Egyptian historian and al-ʿAṭṭār's lifelong friend, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī. It might be reasonably conjectured that al-ʿAṭṭār and al-Jabartī met and began their friendship through studying under the latter's father.

Al-ʿAṭṭār read voraciously and according to al-Khafajī, "excelled due to his vast and deep reading of Arabic books […] he did not specialize in a specific science, or any particular art."[51] He began his career early, penning his first work on Arabic grammar in Dhū al-Qiʿda 1202 AH (August 1788) when he was just twenty years-old.[52] Despite his lack of specialization in jurisprudence, al-ʿAṭṭār was rewarded for his years of study with a license to issue fatwas (*iftāʾ*) at an exceptionally young age.[53]

Outside al-Azhar, al-ʿAṭṭār was constitutionally an aesthete. He befriended singers and poets, and enjoyed the ambiance of Maghribī coffeehouses. Friends such as the famous singer Khalīl Efendi al-Baghdādī and the poet Abū al-Ḥasan Ismāʿīl al-Khashshāb (d. 1815), a fellow

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[49] Hilāl, ʿImād Aḥmad. *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī min al-ṣaḥābī ʿUqba bin ʿĀmir ilā al-duktūr ʿAlī Jumuʿa*. Vol. 3. 7 vols. Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Kutub wal-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmiyya, 2015, 3:1588.
[50] Abu-Manneh, Butrus. "Four Letters of Šayḫ Ḥasan Al-ʿAṭṭār to Šayḫ Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī of Jerusalem." *Arabica* 50, no. 1 (January 2003): 89.
[51] Khafājī, *Al-Azhar fī alf ʿām*, 2:325.
[52] Abd al-Maʿbūd, Introduction to *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār alā Nukhbat al-Fikr*, 15.
[53] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1588.

student of al-Zabīdī, imparted to him a love of the arts he was to carry throughout his life, despite the poor economic circumstances of the age.[54] According to al-Shilaq, al-ʿAṭṭār befriended al-Khashshāb, along with al-Jabartī, at the beginning of the 1790s, when he also joined the Wafāʾiyya Sufi order.[55]

The economic situation of Egypt at the end of the 18th century was difficult, not least for scholars and poets. Marsot describes a hyperinflationary financial environment combined with a "state of quasi-permanent civil war" in Egypt from 1780 onwards. Famine struck the country in 1784, followed by plague in 1785, followed by another round of plague in 1791 (which killed al-ʿAṭṭār's teacher al-Zabīdī) and famine in 1792. This second famine was apparently so intense that the people of Cairo were reduced to cannibalism.[56] Institutions and higher cultural life inevitably suffered; Gran recounts the hardships of al-ʿAṭṭār and al-Jabartī in this period, struggling to find patrons which in earlier ages had provided their class with steady employment.

> "al-ʿAṭṭār emerged during a period in which the institutions of patronage which had served the eighteenth-century revival were breaking down with no new ones to take their place. Much of his youth was taken up with an unsuccessful quest for patronage, which was needed for al-ʿAṭṭār to continue his education. […] For al-ʿAṭṭār, the failure to succeed led to dissatisfaction with the existing intellectual life, then increasingly to rebellion against it."[57]

The perception of a society which had recently and dramatically declined in stability and affluence would have colored al-ʿAṭṭār's early life, laying the groundwork for a broader perception of the wider Ottoman world being in decline, and ultimately in need of reform.

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[54] Gran, Peter. *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840.* Middle East Studies Beyond Dominant Paradigms. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1998, 79.
[55] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 21.
[56] Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 15.
[57] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 77.

1.2 Al-ʿAṭṭār and His Teachers: Legacy and Questions

ʿAṭṭār is frequently cast as the beginning of modern Egyptian thought (or even the grandfather, to al-Ṭahṭāwī's fatherhood), although it can be reasonably argued that he was the continuation of trends of the preceding century, and the product of his teachers' influence. I propose that al-ʿAṭṭār would have, to a notable extent, seen himself as carrying on the work and worldview of his teachers. He would have seen himself as a successor to Amīr al-Kabīr for example, in promoting scientific and technological development in the country, condemning injustice, reforming al-Azhar and defending the Ottoman caliphate. He would have felt similarly about Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, a living epitome of Ottoman intellectualism.

Al-Shilaq describes al-ʿAṭṭār's two main shaykhs, Muḥammad al-Ṣabbān and Amīr al-Kabīr as "among the pioneering personalities of the reform movement", one working on hadith science and the other on raising the level of Maghribi culture in Cairo. He studied logic first under al-Ṣabbān, then switched to al-Disūqī after he died.[58]

The Mālikī scholar Muḥammad al-Sanabāwī al-Mālikī, better known by his nickname al-Amīr al-Kabīr, appears to have been al-ʿAṭṭār's primary and most influential teacher. Hailing from the town of Sanabū in Upper Egypt, but ancestrally from the Maghreb like al-ʿAṭṭār himself, Amīr al-Kabīr moved to Cairo as a child, where he showed an aptitude for Islamic learning. He began to study under the Azharī scholarship of the age, such as al-Sayyid al-Balīdī, Yūsuf Ḥifnī, and Ḥasan al-Jabartī, the last of whom he served as a close student for years.[59] Amīr al-Kabīr was, aside from his famous works in Mālikī *fiqh*, a language specialist.[60]

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[58] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 22.
[59] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 2:1139.
[60] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 17.

The details of the shaykh's studies are suggestive of connections with the later work of al-ʿAṭṭār; with al-Balīdī he studied the rational sciences, which were to be a preoccupation of al-ʿAṭṭār, who would write a gloss on al-Balīdī's book on logic. Ḥasan al-Jabartī was himself a teacher of al-ʿAṭṭār, suggesting that the latter met the former through Amīr al-Kabīr, or vice versa; what is more, ʿImād Hilāl reports that the elder al-Jabartī taught Amir not only *fiqh*, but engineering, astronomy, and philosophy; all unorthodox scholarly fields in which al-ʿAṭṭār was to distinguish himself in the 19th century. Amir also studied dialectics (*adab al-baḥth*) under Ḥifnī, which was again a focus of al-ʿAṭṭār's writings, uncommon in his milieu.[61] Amīr's extensive political career and connections also appear to have influenced the course of al-ʿAṭṭār's life, and will be discussed further in section 2.

The nature and significance of al-ʿAṭṭār's studies under Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, among the most famous and prolific writers of the entire Islamic world during the 18th century, has never been fully explored or considered. Al-Shilaq describes al-ʿAṭṭār as "the greatest of al-Zabīdī's students", and emphasizes that despite writing most of their works being in the form of commentaries and supercommentaries, are of immense value for their ideas which were ahead of their time, and in stark contrast to those of their contemporaries.[62]

The sources are thin on their relationship; apart from mention of al-Zabīdī in works on al-ʿAṭṭār, Reichmuth's account of al-Zabīdī makes only the most cursory mention of their connection. Al-Zabīdī himself does not mention al-ʿAṭṭār in his monumental *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, in which he lists hundreds of his own teachers, students and connections, because it was completed in 1774, when al-ʿAṭṭār was just eight years old.[63] All that can be said with any certainty is that al-ʿAṭṭār did in fact study under al-Zabīdī, lasting until the latter's death by the plague which

[61] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 2:1139.
[62] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 20.
[63] Reichmuth, *World of Murtaḍā Al-Zabīdī*, 54–59.

struck Egypt in 1791.[64] Al-ʿAṭṭār would have been 25 years-old at the time; if he began studying with al-Zabīdī as soon as he began studying at al-Azhar, he would have spent ten years or so with the shaykh. I contend that al-ʿAṭṭār displays influence from al-Zabīdī in the style of his largest work, *ḤJJ*, as discussed in section 3.

Zabīdī's mentorship of al-ʿAṭṭār is also significant as a vector for the introduction of ideas current in the wider Ottoman world, and the study of Ibn Taymiyya. El Shamsy describes the modern revival of interest in classical works emerging from a number of post-classical scholarly 'nodes' inspired by the works of Ibn Taymiyya, one being the school of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī[65] in the late 17th-century Hijaz, and another being Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī.[66] Al-Zabīdī, a student of al-Kūrānī's students, shared that school's great admiration for Ibn Taymiyya, frequently citing him, praising him as one of the greatest minds of Islam, and reproducing his Qurʾanic exegesis at length in his own writings.[67] Al-ʿAṭṭār, as a student of al-Zabīdī for some years, would have likely read this, and was undoubtedly familiar with Ibn Taymiyya's work.

Aside from referencing the shaykh at various points in *ḤJJ*, he also owned and wrote notes on a copy of Ibn Taymiyya's *Minhāj al-sunna*, now housed at Yale University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Unfortunately, I was not able to examine this manuscript. El Shamsy discusses al-ʿAṭṭār's frustration with the stagnancy of the post-classical Islamic scholarly tradition in connection with his reading of Ibn Taymiyya; this is a reasonable conjecture, to which I would simply add that al-Zabīdī, as al-ʿAṭṭār's teacher with the most documented interest in Ibn Taymiyya, was most likely the means by which he became familiarized with Taymiyyan thought, which influenced his later revivalist writing, most prominently in *ḤJJ*.

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[64] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 23.
[65] Al-Kūrānī is also cited frequently in *ḤJJ*.
[66] El Shamsy, Ahmed. *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020, 57.
[67] Ibid., 58.

1.3 The French Occupation (1798–1801)

The invasion and occupation of Egypt by Napoleon's army in 1798 changed the course of Egyptian history, and the life of Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, irreversibly. "For all the brevity of the occupation, and the relatively small number of ordinary Egyptians it affected," says de Bellaigue, "the country had been scored indelibly by the nation that most embodied the values of radical modernity."[68]

For al-ʿAṭṭār, the invasion was an immediate upheaval. For a man of 32 who had hardly, if ever ventured outside of Cairo, the occupation of the city following the Mamluk defeat at the Battle of the Pyramids (1798) meant flight, along with other scholars, to Upper Egypt. For years, al-ʿAṭṭār lived in unstable exile in Asyut, suffering not only the abrupt end of the Cairene intellectual and cultural life to which he had grown accustomed, but poverty, uncertainty and plague. Al-ʿAṭṭār loathed his time in Asyut, and said as much to al-Jabartī in Cairo through his letters.[69] Among other things, he describes in vivid detail the plague which ravaged Upper Egypt in 1801, which al-Jabartī included in his history of modern Egypt, *ʿAjāʾib al-Āthār*.[70]

Al-ʿAṭṭār eventually returned to Cairo, along with most of the city's *ʿulamāʾ*, once the political situation calmed. There, he began the relationship with French scientists and academics which was to define so much of subsequent perception of the shaykh. In Cairo, al-ʿAṭṭār found work teaching Arabic to French scholars, and an introduction to the applied sciences and political philosophy of the Enlightenment.

The Institut d'Egypte, an association of French scholars who had accompanied Napoleon's army into the East, offered a wealth of new information and ideas to Egyptian

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[68] Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, 17.
[69] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 90.
[70] Ayalon, David. "The Historian Al-Jabartī and His Background." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 23, no. 2 (1960): 243.

scholars. Along with learning the French language, al-ʿAṭṭār studied the sciences and engineering of the French, in exchange for teaching them Arabic; a task he was well-suited for, as a grammarian. The very fact that these foreigners, or at least the scholarly-minded among them, were interested in Islamic intellectualism while al-ʿAṭṭār's peers could hardly be bothered to extend their studies beyond the traditional Islamic *trivium*, astounded him.[71] According to Gran, among the French scholars al-ʿAṭṭār was most likely closest to a certain R. Raige (d. 1807), an Arabic translator.[72]

Ultimately, the shaykh called for Egyptians to copy the scientific innovations of the Europeans to advance like them in material terms. He was particularly taken with the printing press; a prelude to his promotion of the invention in Egypt decades later.[73] Despite the positive impression made on al-ʿAṭṭār by some exceptional Frenchmen, the shaykh noted his dissatisfaction with the dissolute behavior of the French troops garrisoned in Cairo.[74]

Al-ʿAṭṭār is often portrayed, contemporarily and in modern scholarship, as being overwhelmed by his contact with European civilization. The conventional narrative surrounding al-ʿAṭṭār is that his interest in the natural sciences, medicine and so on, was awakened by his dazzling experience with the French scientists at L'Institut d'Égypte between 1799 and 1801. According to Gesink, while tutoring French scientists in Arabic, al-ʿAṭṭār "absorbed [from them] the conviction of Western superiority in the scientific method."[75] The image cast of al-ʿAṭṭār in much Western scholarship is of a basically liberal and scientific spirit who escaped from the

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[71] Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, 16.
[72] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 248.
[73] Newman, Daniel. Introduction to Ṭaḥṭāwī, Rifaʿa Rāfiʿ al-. *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826–1831)*. Translated by Daniel L. Newman. Second Edition. London, England: Saqi Books, 2011, 36f.
[74] Ibid., 37.
[75] Gesink, Indira Falk. "Islamic Educational Reform in Nineteenth-Century Egypt: Lessons for the Present." In *Reforms in Islamic Education: International Perspectives*, edited by Charlene Tan, First edition. London, England: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014, 19.

Oriental obscurantism of his society, and became a leading light for secularism and modernization.

Al-Shilaq has done admirable work challenging this in pursuit of his overarching goal of finding indigenous foundations for Egypt's modernization. Late 18th century Cairo was not devoid of specialists in the scientific fields which would one day so attract al-ʿAṭṭār's interest: in the rational sciences like math, medicine, chemistry and astronomy, among the greatest of the age were the aforementioned Hasan al-Jabartī, Riḍwān Efendi al-Falakī, Aḥmad al-Damanhūrī, Aḥmad al-Sujāʿī, Muṣṭafā al-Khayyāṭ, and ʿUthmān al-Wardānī.[76] In short, he had ample access to study of the applied sciences years before the French invasion.

The significance of the intellectual profiles of Amīr al-Kabīr and al-Zabīdī, and their connections with al-ʿAṭṭār along with the whole previous generation of early modern Egyptian thinkers is as support for pushing back the beginning of the Nahda, and modern life in Egypt yet further before the arrival of the French in 1798. This argument, made by Gran and al-Shilaq, simply throws into context the evolution of scientific and political thought in Egypt prior to foreign intervention. Just as Gran has argued that even if not for the French invasion Egypt would still have achieved its own indigenous modernization, so might al-ʿAṭṭār have developed his interest in the applied sciences without French influence. While al-ʿAṭṭār was undoubtedly impressed by the scientific knowledge of the French, it would be incomplete to not cast him against the background of the long tradition of Islamic writings in these fields, active up to his own time, and in which he himself wrote.

In April 1803, about two years after the end of the French occupation, al-ʿAṭṭār set out from the Egyptian port of Dumyat for the Ottoman heartlands, leaving a country in chaos.[77] It

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[76] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra: fī tārīkh al-fikr al-Miṣrī al-ḥadīth*, 18.
[77] De Jong, F. "The Itinerary of Hasan Al-'ʿAṭṭār (1766-1835): A Reconsideration and Its Implications." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 28, no. 1 (1983): 99–128.

would be years yet until power was reconsolidated under Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, and in the meanwhile various Ottoman army factions struggled for control over one of the empire's richest provinces.

There are a number of theories explaining al-ʿAṭṭār's departure. De Bellaigue suggests that al-ʿAṭṭār left because he was unable to find patronage due to his soured reputation as a result of his connections with the French.[78] Al-Shilaq suggests that in setting out for Istanbul, he may have been specifically seeking to be closer to European civilization, still remembering the excitement of his time with L'Institut d'Égypte.[79] I believe this is most likely incorrect.

Before leaving, al-Jabartī entrusted al-ʿAṭṭār with a copy of his ongoing magnum opus, *ʿAjāʾib al-Āthār*, then up to its third volume. Al-Jabartī hoped that by sending the book with his friend on his travels, he would show it to rulers and *ʿulamāʾ* as he went, thereby growing al-Jabartī's reputation as a historian.[80] al-ʿAṭṭār's comments, written in the margins of this manuscript, are one of the main primary sources for the details of al-ʿAṭṭār's travels, along with a small number of letters and and notes at the beginnings of books.

Tantalizingly, the historian Ḥasan Qāsim mentions that al-ʿAṭṭār wrote an entire book about his years of travel, but neither the name of the book nor a copy of it has yet been discovered.[81] In the absence of that book, the chronology of al-ʿAṭṭār's travels is reconstructed as best as possible from the available sources.

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[78] Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, 17.
[79] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 31f.
[80] Moreh, Shmuel. Introduction to al-Jabartī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-. *Al-Naṣṣ al-kāmil li-kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-āthār fī al-tarājim wa-l-akhbār*. Edited by Shmuel Moreh. Vol. 1, 5 vols. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2013, 12.
[81] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 14.

1.5 Cyprus (1803)

A new discovery of this study has been that al-ʿAṭṭār stopped over in Cyprus on his way to Istanbul; a detail not mentioned in any earlier works dealing with the shaykh. In a marginal comment written on the *ʿAjāʾib*, al-ʿAṭṭār recounts how he wrote sections of his gloss on the treatise of al-ʿIṣām, beginning in Egypt, continuing it in Cyprus, then in Istanbul, Albania, and had still not finished by the time of writing the note in Jaffa.[82]

It appears that al-ʿAṭṭār spent only a short time in Cyprus – about a few weeks – but there may be significance to his visit there, just as there was in Izmir, or some of the smaller cities of the Levant where he stopped for short periods of time in later years. Further work by scholars more familiar with the context of late Ottoman Cyprus is needed, however it is possible to make a few inferences based on the historical circumstances of Cyprus in 1803.

The island at the time of al-ʿAṭṭār's visit in 1803 would have been somewhat tense; it had been four years since a previous uprising in 1799, and one year before the next in 1804. Both were precipitated by a major increase (about 50%) in taxation by rotating Ottoman governors who treated the island as a tax farm, and the habitual government seizure of foodstuffs for export, leaving little to eat for the lower classes.[83] The 1799 mutiny was led by Janissaries and Albanian soldiers, who murdered the local governor and tried to take control; the Ottoman Sultan entreated the "remarkable, brilliant but sometimes absurd and eccentric Englishman" Commodore Sir William Sidney Smith, stationed in the eastern Mediterranean, to intervene on

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[82] Jabartī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-. *Al-Naṣṣ al-kāmil li-kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-āthār fī al-tarājim wa-l-akhbār*. Edited by Shmuel Moreh. Vol. 1, 5 vols. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2013, 1/332.

[83] Hill, Sir George Francis. *A History of Cyprus, Volume 4: The Ottoman Province. The British Colony, 1571–1948*. Vol. 4. 4 vols. Cambridge Library Collection - European History. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 101, 105.

behalf of the Ottoman state; this he did, soundly crushing the mutineers and restoring Ottoman rule.[84]

In the context of al-ʿAṭṭār's wider writings, one can speculate on the impression he may have had of the island. Years later in Izmir, he vitriolically condemned the exploitative conditions of the Ottoman provincial economy; conditions quite similar to those of contemporary Cyprus. Hearing of the 1799 revolt would have only contributed to his harsh criticism of Albanian military men, who attempted to establish a new regime in Cyprus, and successfully did so in Egypt and the Balkans, to al-ʿAṭṭār's consternation. Additionally, the fact that Ottoman control over the island was only restored with the help of modern British military power could not but have confirmed his bitter indictment of the backwardness and incompetence of the Ottoman military, which was likewise restored to control over Egypt only through British help.

It is unknown whether al-ʿAṭṭār had any contact with local ʿulamāʾ during his stay in Cyprus; if he did, it would be a valuable addition to the construction of his intellectual biography.

1.6 Istanbul (1803–1804)

Al-ʿAṭṭār arrived in Istanbul from Cyprus sometime in mid-1803, and stayed there about one year and a half. He appears to have enjoyed his time in the imperial capital immensely; writing toward the end of his life, he reminisces: "I visited and lived there twice, and saw beauty, the joy of life, odd varieties of everything such as books not found in other countries, and freedom."[85]

Al-ʿAṭṭār rubbed shoulders with the Ottoman capital's rich and famous; he befriended leading scholars such as Mütercim Âsim Efendi (d. 1235/1819), who translated al-Jabartī's

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[84] Ibid., 102.
[85] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:150.

history into Ottoman Turkish; Topal Atâullah Mehmed Efendi (d. 1811), who would later serve twice as Shaykh al-Islām from 1806–1807 and 1807–1808, and his political ally Köse Musa Pasha; and he was under the direct patronage of Sultan Selim III.[86] In the scholarly circles of the imperial capital, al-ʿAṭṭār found colleagues more interested in the rational and natural sciences, which were his passion, than in his homeland. He studied medicine with the city's eminent Europeans, and praises the scholars of Turkey for their outstanding work in dialectics (*ādāb al-baḥth*).[87] What Egyptian interest did exist in the field emerged only in the second half of the 18th century, says El-Rouayheb, and was "stimulated by exposure to the keen attention given to the discipline in Ottoman Turkey." Al-ʿAṭṭār's own *ḥāshiya* on *Risāla al-Waladiyya* by Sāçaklīzāde, inspired by his engagement with the Ottoman dialectical tradition, became the standard textbook on the subject in Egyptian scholarly circles after his death.[88]

Most likely during his first stay in Istanbul, rather than his second, al-ʿAṭṭār reports receiving gifts of books from Ottoman viziers, implying that he had a cordial relationship with some of the powerful men of the Ottoman capital.[89] Among these books, *Safīnat al-rāghib* by Raghib Pasha (d. 1176/1763) was to prove influential in the development of al-ʿAṭṭār's utilitarian philosophy. It is most likely these generous viziers who al-ʿAṭṭār memorialized in a *maqāma* written years later, describing the rulers of Rum as "sound in politics and gracious in leadership (*ḥasan al-siyāsa wa faḍl al-riyāsa*) […] They are the princes of nobility and the most noble of princes…"[90]

Who exactly these viziers were is not difficult to surmise, given that Selim III made a concerted effort to limit the number of viziers in the empire, which had multiplied out of control.

[86] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 103f.
[87] Ibid., 145.
[88] El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century*, 66–67.
[89] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 1:299.
[90] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 19.

Per a 1797 decree, only 23 viziers could exist at a time, three of whom were to be the Grand Vizier and his subordinates.[91] Unless al-ʿAṭṭār was socializing with provincial governors who were simply visiting the capital, the "viziers" he references were most likely the Grand Vizier of the time, Kör Yusuf Ziyâuddin Pasha (r. 1798–1805) and his clique.

Among Ottoman scholars and elites al-ʿAṭṭār would have become acquainted with the flagship reform program of Selim III, the *Nizam-ı Cedid*, a plan primarily to reorganize the Ottoman army along European lines, but to establish a modern bureaucracy, bring in Western experts to technologically modernize the empire, and restore the printing press of İbrahim Müteferrika, among other projects.[92] "In sum, the New Army was a disciplined army, but it also promised an agenda for a new life, which resonated globally in the age of revolutions. This was an orderly, coordinated, precise, punctual, mechanical, and regularly monitored kind of life," which set the precedent for the breadth of rational and modern social systems which were to emerge in the empire over subsequent decades.[93] Such initiatives prefigured much of al-ʿAṭṭār's own reform efforts in Egypt decades later.

There is a possibility that al-ʿAṭṭār may have been further exposed to French Enlightenment thought while in Istanbul between 1803 and 1804. Shaw notes that in the years following the French Revolution, the French embassy in Istanbul translated into Turkish, printed in bulk and widely distributed the Constitution of the French Republic and the Declaration of the Rights of Man.[94] Even if this were the case, however, this does not appear to have had any meaningful impact on his political outlook, as will be elaborated in section 2.

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[91] Shaw, Stanford J. *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807*. Harvard Middle Eastern Studies 15. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971, 169.
[92] Ibid., 95, 182, 184.
[93] Yaycioglu, Ali. *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016, 51–52.
[94] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III*, 196.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's relationship with Atâullah Mehmed Efendi deserves further attention as well. According to al-Shilaq, he studied jurisprudence under the latter and considered him a teacher.[95] Given his key role in the succession crisis which saw Selim III assassinated during al-ʿAṭṭār's later visit to the capital, it seems more probable that al-ʿAṭṭār cultivated a relationship with this shaykh during his first stay in the city. He reportedly wrote a commentary on *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*; a text al-ʿAṭṭār would become famous for teaching at al-Azhar years later.[96] Perhaps some of his ideas on this text came from his Turkish shaykh.

Atâullah Efendi, "one of the most reactionary members of the Ulema", in Shaw's description, was an arch-enemy of Selim III's reform program.[97] This was not to say he was opposed to reform in itself; "quite the contrary," says Gran.[98] Atâullah's faction and al-ʿAṭṭār were simply opposed to "ceding national power to foreigners and deviating from indigenous traditions of reform [in favor of Westernization], as was the policy of Sultan Selim III. Al-ʿAṭṭār adopted this reformist trend himself upon his return to Egypt, where he worked in service to Muḥammad ʿAlī and his system."[99]

Al-ʿAṭṭār had his first contact with modern Ottoman intellectual culture in Istanbul during 1803–1804; what Erginbaş dubs an Islamic 'Enlightenment' and what we may term an Islamic modernity.[100] He would have become familiar with the Khaldūnian narrative of the decline of the empire from its golden age in the early 16th century then current among Ottoman intellectuals, and their rhetoric for reversing this trend.[101] This conviction that Islamic society was in a

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[95] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 26.
[96] İpşirli, Mehmet. "ATÂULLAH MEHMED EFENDİ, Topal." In *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 4:47. Istanbul: TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1991.
[97] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III*, 351.
[98] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 104.
[99] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 26.
[100] Erginbaş, Vefa. "Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context: İbrahim Müteferrika and His Intellectual Landscape." In *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East*, edited by Geoffrey Roper, Vol. 4. Islamic Manuscripts and Books. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014, 95.
[101] Ibid., 58.

precipitous decline would have matched with al-ʿAṭṭār's lived experience in Egypt, growing up in an environment notably less prosperous than the one before. He would carry this conviction through the rest of his life as a driving force behind his reformist agenda.

1.7 Albania (1804–1808)

Sometime between 1804 and 1806, al-ʿAṭṭār voyaged to Albania, where he remained until the spring of 1808. He stayed primarily in the northern Albanian city of Shkodër (*Ishkūdra* in Arabic), which at that time was "the center of culture in the new *pashalik* ruled by the Bushatli family from 1757 to 1831."[102] It has been suggested that the Bushatlis may have even invited him to live and teach there, as they did with a number of other Egyptian scholars in the same period.[103] The Bushatli family was representative of an empire-wide trend at the time of Albanian clan dynasties dominating Ottoman regional governments, not least of which Egypt itself under Muḥammad ʿAlī. In his travel notes, al-ʿAṭṭār notes his astonishment at the incredible power wielded by the Albanian pashas of the empire's European territories.[104]

While in Albania, al-ʿAṭṭār would have seen a Muslim country, and an Ottoman province at that, in the midst of a social transformation from a medieval to a modern system.

"The Bushatlis were zealous in modernizing the economy and education system in their *pashalik*, and established links with European powers, and made Shkodër into the largest city in Albania. It was in this context that the Bushatli family invited Islamic scholars from various countries to their lands, especially Egypt, with which they had a relationship

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[102] Arnāʾūṭ, Muḥammad Mūfākū al-. "Sanawāt Shaykh al-Azhar Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār fī Albāniyā." *al-Wafd*, February 25, 2012. https://alwafd.news/ألبانيا-فى-العطار-حسن-هر-الأز-شيخ-سنوات-167850/ودين-دنيا.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 3:313.

thanks to Muḥammad ʿAlī, who shared their ambition for independence from the Sublime Porte."[105]

The modernization programme of the Bushatlis in northern Albania and that of Ali Pasha in Yanya (southern Albania and northern Greece), which saw the construction of a modern bureaucracy under the nominal authority of Istanbul, was an inspiration both for Muḥammad ʿAlī, and for al-ʿAṭṭār.[106] Al-Arnāʾūṭ has posited that Muḥammad ʿAlī and his counterparts in the Balkans coordinated in a common project for modernization and effective independence from Istanbul.[107] Although political figures such as Muḥammad ʿAlī or Ali Pasha pursued modernization to advance their own power first and foremost, al-ʿAṭṭār, would have admired the modernization process in the western Balkans for its contribution to strengthening Muslims in general, and the Ottoman realm in particular.

Gran has speculated in *The Persistence of Orientalism* that al-ʿAṭṭār's connection with Albania and its history of modernization has been overlooked by earlier generations of scholarship, unwilling to consider the possibility that the shaykh and perhaps Muḥammad ʿAlī derived their model for modernizing Egypt not from France, but rather from inside the Ottoman Empire.

> "[This] is quite understandable. Details such as these, which may seem innocuous enough in themselves, would force the narrative to change, were they to be pursued. The upholders of the Nahda paradigm would have to abandon 1798 and go back to the eighteenth century and include aspects of Albania. This was not going to happen then, and one doubts it will happen now or anytime soon. Blind spots arise, I argue, when

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[105] Arnāʾūṭ, *Sanawāt Shaykh al-Azhar Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār fī Albāniyā.*
[106] Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 45.
[107] Arnāʾūṭ, Muḥammad Mūfākū al-. *al-Jāliyya al-makhfiyya: fuṣūl min tārikh al-Albān fī Miṣr min al-qarn al-khāmis ʿashr wa-ḥattā al-qarn al-ʿashrīn.* Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Shurūq, 2018, 65.

paradigm logic has the power to stand in the way of scholars pursuing common-sense lines of inquiry, with the result that various subjects such as that of Shaykh Hasan al-ʿAttar and the history of modern reform thought suffer accordingly."[108]

Gran's hypothesis of an Albanian model for Islamic modernization is intriguing and plausible. Unfortunately, the sources have not yet been able to definitively vindicate it. I was unable to find any statement of al-ʿAṭṭār to this effect, nor any historical sources on his time in Albania describing such a relationship between him and the Albanian pashas. For scholars endowed with language skills in Ottoman Turkish and Albanian, it would be a valuable line of research to travel to Albania and see what can be found in local archives on connections between al-ʿAṭṭār and/or Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha and local reform projects.

The shaykh learned both Turkish and Albanian while living in Shkodër,[109] and according to De Jong, Newman and Kılıç, took an Albanian wife and fathered children during his stay.[110] Hilāl contests this, claiming that al-ʿAṭṭār instead married in Istanbul - I suggest he may have married an Albanian *in* Istanbul, and then traveled with her to Shkodër, thereby resolving the confusion, although this cannot be said with certainty.[111] It seems that she died during his time in Albania or shortly after, but little of al-ʿAṭṭār's own writings survive on the topic. Years later, after he had resumed teaching at al-Azhar, his student Ibrāhīm al-Saqā recounts that a relative of al-ʿAṭṭār's deceased wife from Albania harassed him with a dagger during a lesson at the al-Azhar mosque and threatened to kill him.[112] It is unknown what circumstances surrounded

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[108] Gran, *Persistence of Orientalism*, 119.
[109] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1590.
[110] De Jong, *Itinerary of Hasan Al-'ʿAṭṭār*, 100; Newman, Introduction to *An Imam in Paris*, 38; Kılıç, Hulusı. "ATTÂR, Hasan b. Muhammed." In *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, 4:98. Istanbul: TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1991.
[111] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1590.
[112] Taymūr Bāshā, *Aʿlām al-fikr al-islāmī fī l-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīth*, 22.

al-ʿAṭṭār's first marriage, but judging by his interaction with his in-law, it must have been a painful subject which he was reluctant to discuss.

Al-ʿAṭṭār also continued his scholarly pursuits during his time in Albania, meeting with the local *ʿulamāʾ* to discuss the rational sciences (*ʿaqliyyāt*) which so interested him,[113] and teaching at a madrasa in the city's old downtown center.[114] He also reportedly had significant contact with the *ʿulamāʾ* of Ottoman Bulgaria, but there is little detailed information on this relationship.[115]

1.8 Istanbul (1808–1809)

From the spring of 1808 to the end of November 1809 at the latest, al-ʿAṭṭār stayed for a second time in Istanbul. De Jong's earlier work on al-ʿAṭṭār's itinerary places him in Istanbul until 1810 but, given new information on the shaykh's time in Izmir, he could not have been in Istanbul as late as the new year.

Al-ʿAṭṭār would have arrived in a city wracked with tension; Selim III had been deposed the year before by reactionary pashas and *ʿulamāʾ*, with many of whom he had personal relationships, and Selim's faction plotted his restoration to the throne. Al-ʿAṭṭār was undoubtedly present to these events, as he reports befriending the short-lived Shayk al-Islām Arapzâde Mehmed Ârif Efendi (d. 1826), who lasted about a month, and presenting him with a theological tract he had written while in Albania, vindicating the Ashʿarī position in theodicy. He writes in *ḤJJ* that:

"Debate on this question dragged on[endlessly] while I was in the land of Rūm, and some eminent people informed me [more fully] on this issue. Al-Khādimī discusses it in his

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[113] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 1:335.
[114] Arnāʾūṭ, *Sanawāt Shaykh al-Azhar Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār fī Albāniyā*.
[115] De Jong, *Itinerary of Hasan Al-'ʿAṭṭār*, 101.

commentary on *al-Ṭarīqa al-muḥammadiyya*, and I wrote there a treatise which I named 'Gift of the foreigner in verifying the victory of shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan' (*Tuḥfa gharīb al-waṭan fī taḥqīq naṣr al-shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan* [al-Ashʿarī]). I then went to Constantinople and gave it to the Shaykh al-Islām at that time, who was al-ʿAllāma ʿArab Zādeh, who wrote praising it."[116]

Arapzâde Ârif Efendi had been forcibly appointed as Shaykh al-Islām earlier that year at the behest of Bayraktar Mustafa Pasha, leader of the pro-Selim faction, as a means to curtail the power of Atâullah Efendi, who then occupied the post.[117] It seems reasonable to assume that, given his association with the reformist faction of the Ottoman elite, Ârif Efendi's views were broadly in-line with the *Nizam-ı Cedid* movement.

Despite this, al-ʿAṭṭār's connections with the reactionary wing of the Ottoman *ʿulamāʾ* appear more developed. As opposed to Ârif Efendi with whom he met perhaps only a few times, al-ʿAṭṭār was a student of the highly reactionary Atâullah Efendi, and likely continued his studies under him during is second stay in the capital.

Al-ʿAṭṭār also made efforts to study Western science and move in European circles during his second visit to Istanbul. He stayed at the house of a certain Ḥakīmbāshī, an Ottoman notable, and studied surgery with European doctors residing in the capital.[118]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's network of friendships is highly eclectic; on the one hand studying dissection, a discipline held as suspect by conservative *ʿulamāʾ* of the time, and with European disbelievers no less, all while remaining friends with some of the leading reactionaries of the Ottoman Empire.[119] I would say this is representative of al-ʿAṭṭār's utilitarian outlook which runs through

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[116] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:523f.
[117] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III*, 402.
[118] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 26.
[119] Khaled Fahmy has written at length on the classical, post-classical and early 19th-century scholarly views on human dissection, noting that the practice has been largely permitted. We know from historical sources, however,

his life and work. He saw the study of modern medicine and other applied sciences as a practical imperative for the Ottoman world, regardless of conservative scruples. On the other hand, he was a consistent critic of heavy-handedness and extravagant consumption in government – two vices for which Selim III's regime was widely condemned – and so found common ground with the reactionaries who resented the sultan's reforms. Erginbaş has posited the existence of an indigenous Ottoman "middle way" reformism, intermediate between radical European Enlightenment thought and a prioritization on orthodox Islamic faith;[120] I believe it is appropriate to ascribe al-ʿAṭṭār to this tradition, which saw him embrace modern scientific but not necessarily the Western manifestation of the spirit of modernity.

1.9 Izmir (1809–1810)

Al-ʿAṭṭār stayed for about four months in the western Anatolian city of Izmir, en route from Istanbul to Syria, and then ultimately back to Egypt. Across half a dozen notes, he expresses his consistent and profuse hatred for the city and its inhabitants, which has gone unnoticed in scholarship up to this point. While al-ʿAṭṭār often prayed for return to his homeland, in no other place did he express such vitriol. After one eulogy poem written in the margins of the ʿAjāʾib, al-ʿAṭṭār writes:

> "I wrote it in the city of Izmir while living there dangerously as a foreigner. For a poor man, it is a country where excess (faḍlā) is wasted, so people die hungry, and no one asks about them or takes care of them. May Allāh save us from it safely, for it is the worst of lands. I have toured most of Allāh's lands, and never found a town that resembled it in drought, high prices, and hatred of strangers, especially scholars, such that if Fakhr

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that there was considerable opposition to dissection among al-ʿAṭṭār's contemporaries, if not always for specifically *fiqhī* reasons. Fahmy, *In Quest of Justice*, 62–70.

[120] Erginbaş, *Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context*, 58–60.

[al-Dīn] al-Rāzī himself came to it, no one would even give him a glass of water, nor would they honor him for his knowledge; rather he would be treated like the most contemptible stranger. There is no power and no strength except with Allāh; I ask Almighty God to get me out of [Izmir] safely and to give its people what they deserve, *āmīn*."[121]

In another excerpt, al-ʿAṭṭār goes to the extent of writing an entire poem about the vices of Izmir:

"The author of the aforementioned treatise [i.e. al-ʿAṭṭār himself] has traveled widely and lived in many countries. He went to Islāmbūl, then to Rumelia (*Rūmaylā*) and resided for a time in Albania, then returned to Islāmbūl, then traveled to Izmir. He has never seen a town [...] more sinister (*ashʾam*), or more severe in its hatred of scholars and noble people, and which gathers in itself such reprehensible characteristics as could only be found in an entire region, let alone a single town, other than this one. The aforementioned has never experienced severity such as he experienced in this town. And from his words: 'if some of the scholars had given a legal judgment [*fatwā*] that it were forbidden [*ḥarām*] for people of knowledge and religion to live in that place, they would have been correct in doing so, and the evidence for this is apparent to anyone of sound mind who witnesses it for themselves.'

Woe is me! What is Izmir but an insignificant town / the punishment of Allāh is upon her forever.

Gathered in it is all shame as though / were it to be spread across the world, not one city would remain praiseworthy.

The noble and pious die there in hunger / while the accursed reprobate lives there in luxury.

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[121] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 2:194.

I lived there in oppression for seven months / I suffered sorrows, worries and grief.

I did not see anything pleasant / and saw neither honor nor sympathy from anyone.

I ate of my books there [instead], so may Allāh not bless their land / I forgot knowledge itself therein, may the Everlasting God destroy it.

So here I am, having left it in indignation / may Allāh's wrath and misery be upon it.

This town has no controlling ruler (*ḥākim ḍābiṭ*), rather the people are left to their own devices. So the strong kill the weak, and they kill one another in the markets and streets. And no one dares touch the killer or hold him; rather he kills while sitting, smoking, while people watch him, and no one can do anything to stop him. It is as though he were slaughtering a bird, or a chicken. There are many such disgraceful things, without limit, and Allāh has made them all the more grievous through drought and high prices, and the domination of some over the blood, honor and personal circumstances of others. There is no supporter, nor protector, nor enforcer of the divine laws; rather, people are left in chaos, doing as they please without inhibition or restraint, and selling as they wish without regulation or known prices (*misʿar*). In summary, there is no place in the world more comprehensive in reprehensible characteristics than this town. This being the case, it is forbidden (*ḥarām*) to live there for every scholar and religious person (*mutadayyin*), and it is obligatory to migrate."[122]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's extremely negative impression of Izmir, especially given his general lack of complaint about other Ottoman lands, is striking. Most of Anatolia at this time was effectively ruled by autonomous local noble families; in Izmir's case, the Katiboğlu dynasty.[123] Still, the province was not afflicted by warfare or any specifically harsh exploitation by the Katiboğlus

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[122] Ibid., 3:129.
[123] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III*, 215.

noted in historical record. A few salient points from al-ʿAṭṭār's complaints can perhaps be explained by referring to the general state of the core Ottoman lands at this time.

Firstly, al-ʿAṭṭār claims he was given no respect on account of his scholarly status. This could perhaps be explained by the generally low intellectual caliber and sincerity among provincial Ottoman *ʿulamāʾ* at this time, as detailed by Shaw in his history of the period, and described by al-ʿAṭṭār firsthand. In Shaw's description, by the late 18th century, many *ʿulamāʾ* of the Ottoman provinces were religiously illiterate and unscrupulous elites who bought their positions as tax farms. The problem became so noticeable and such a drain on public finances that early in his reign, Selim III and the Shaykh al-Islām Hamidizâde Mustafa Efendi attempted to clean the ranks of the *ʿulamāʾ* of ignorant and incompetent shaykhs.[124] This effort generated such intense backlash that the initiative was dropped altogether and never renewed.[125] By 1809, years after the forces opposing Selim's reformist agenda had triumphed, the public reputation of the *ʿulamāʾ* as an institution likely only further declined in provinces such as Izmir. Al-ʿAṭṭār, as a sincere and bona fide scholar of Islam, would have likely been the exception, rather than the rule among those who claimed to be a part of the *ʿulamāʾ*.

Secondly, al-ʿAṭṭār reports that Izmir suffered drought and high prices, and yet despite this; there is little concern for the poor; and that it existed in a state of general lawlessness. The reign of Selim III, which ended just two years prior to al-ʿAṭṭār's stay in Izmir, saw considerable immiseration of the average Ottoman subject. To pay for frequent wars against Russia and Austria, the government raised taxes, debased the currency and seized property when possible, all of which predictably impoverished many in the provinces. The 1790s and 1800s also saw the

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[124] Ibid., 79.
[125] Ibid., 84.

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empire as a whole plagued with bandit gangs, who undoubtedly had some presence in provincial capitals such as Izmir as well.[126]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's experience in Izmir likely contributed to his conviction that the Ottoman state in its current form was in need of drastic government reforms in the interest of general public benefit (*maṣlaḥa*). The shaykh had dodged much of the lawlessness which plagued Egypt for years during the 1800s by traveling abroad, but in Izmir was forced to endure dysfunctional governance up-close. The experience perhaps provided inspiration for his utilitarian political theoretical tract of the 1820s, *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, in which he prioritizes capable and effective rule as the primary source of legitimacy for an Islamic state.

1.10 The Levant and Iraq (1810–1814)

Al-ʿAṭṭār's prayers were answered in the spring of 1810, when he made his way out of Izmir to the Levant (on foot, according to Ḥasan), where he would spend the next four years traveling back and forth among the region's main cities.[127] He mainly stayed in Damascus, Jerusalem and Jaffa, but also stopped over in towns such as Hebron.[128]

His first stop was Damascus, a city he spoke fondly of in later years.[129] He stayed in the city twice between 1810 and 1812, accounting for almost two years of his time in the region. While there he lived at Madrasa al-Badriyya, a Ḥanafī institution which proved exceptionally conducive to focused scholarly writing.[130]

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[126] Ibid., 175.
[127] Ḥasan, *Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār*, 21.
[128] Taymūr Bāshā, *Aʿlām al-fikr al-islāmī fī l-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīth*, 18.
[129] Ḥasan, *Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār*, 102f.
[130] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 106.

While in Damascus, al-ʿAṭṭār wrote *Hashiyat al-nukhba fī ʿulūm al-ḥadīth,* his main work in hadith;[131] a second commentary on al-Marʿashī's *Risāla fī adab al-baḥth* in dialectics;[132] and in 1227/1812 completed his commentary on *Nuzhat Dāwūd*, a treatise on human anatomy and medicine by Dāwūd al-Antakī.[133] This last work was, in Gran's description, "the most important work on medicine in the Arab world in the early nineteenth century and is perhaps the first work by an Arab to discuss the modern study of anatomy."[134] The work obviously prefigured his later advocacy for the legal permissibility and public necessity of training surgeons through autopsies, an issue which aroused major controversy in Cairo in the 1830s. Al-ʿAṭṭār also taught *Sharḥ al-Azharīyya* to students in Damascus, and was undoubtedly progressing on his own supercommentary on the text, likely his most well-known work.[135]

Alongside teaching in Damascus, al-ʿAṭṭār dedicated himself to the study of Sufism under a local specialist in Akbarian thought, ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Yāfī (d. 1233/1818).[136] Little is known about al-Yāfī, or the fruits of al-ʿAṭṭār's studies with him; the latter writes only briefly about the relationship. Nonetheless, al-ʿAṭṭār demonstrates considerable familiarity with Akbarian thought in *ḤJJ*, in discussions of free will, the beatific vision, etc., suggesting he did study with him at some length.[137]

In May of 1810, al-ʿAṭṭār traveled from Damascus to Jerusalem, where he quickly befriended the city's leading *ʿulamāʾ*, primarily the city's Ottoman Ḥanafī mufti Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1282/1865–6) and the *naqīb al-ashrāf*, ʿUmar Efendi. Al-Ḥusaynī acted as his host, and the two became lifelong friends.[138]

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[131] Ibid.,107.
[132] El-Bendary, *Min Rawād al-azhar al-sharīf*, 466
[133] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 2:14.
[134] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 169.
[135] Ḥasan, *Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār*, 21.
[136] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 98.
[137] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:454, 2:465
[138] Abu-Manneh, *Four Letters of Šayḫ Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār*, 93

Al-ʿAṭṭār's two friends in Jerusalem appear to have harbored reformist tendencies, and were sympathetic to Muḥammad ʿAlī's regime; an appraisal which may have influenced the shaykh. Al-ʿAṭṭār recalls that they were readers and admirers of Raghib Pasha, just like his circle in the Ottoman capital,[139] and in 1832 they endorsed a fatwa against Sultan Mahmud II, cursing him for his weakness.[140] During the war, al-Ḥusaynī worked closely with Ibrāhīm Pasha in administering Jerusalem;[141] a Muslim scholar in the employ of Muḥammad ʿAlī's government not unlike his old friend al-ʿAṭṭār. Al-Ḥusaynī and his circle represents yet another example of Ottoman intellectuals pushing al-ʿAṭṭār towards reformism and support for Muḥammad ʿAlī's modernization project.

Sometime at the end of 1810 or the beginning of 1811, al-ʿAṭṭār writes that he attempted to return to Egypt, but was forced to stay in Jaffa for reasons he does not explain. He found both the months-long delay and the city of Jaffa exceptionally unpleasant, going so far as to compare it to dreaded Izmir:

> "I say that Allāh made it easy for me to escape from Izmir, so I traveled from there to Damascus in Shām, and I stayed there a while before going to visit Jerusalem (*bayt al-maqdis*). I then went to Jaffa in order to return to my native homeland, Egypt, but was blocked and forced to stay there, grudgingly. I found it the ugliest of God's lands, and the lowest of spots. I ask Allāh to save me from it as He saved me from Izmir, quickly and promptly. Written in the month of Ṣafar, 1226 (1811)."[142]

Perhaps out of boredom, al-ʿAṭṭār wrote a great many comments on al-Jabartī's *ʿAjāʾib* while in Jaffa, documenting his travel itinerary, describing his experiences in Albania, and reflecting on

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[139] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 1:299.

[140] Abu-Manneh, Butrus. "Jerusalem in the Tanzimat Period: The New Ottoman Administration and the Notables." *Die Welt Des Islams* 30, no. 1 (1990): 16–17.

[141] A. Rustum, *al-Maḥfūẓāt al-malakiyya al-miṣriyya*, 4:129, doc 5915. As cited in Abu-Manneh, *Jerusalem in the Tanzimat Period*, 17.

[142] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 3:313.

the state of scholarship in the Levant. As with the contemporary Ottoman world generally, he despaired at the inadequacy and lack of curiosity of modern *ʿulamāʾ*, and pined for the glorious days of earlier generations. Describing his search for a rare book, he writes:

> "I think not one person in Syria transmits it because they are not the type of people to desire such things. Rather, the author [of the book] was unique among them, [...] now no one has reached a tenth of what he achieved, because the countries have changed; desire [for knowledge] has decreased, and ignorance has spread. Written by the poor writer Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, the Egyptian, the Azharī, in the city of Jaffa on the second day of Muḥarram, 1226, [...] May God return me safely to my homeland."[143]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's notes in Jaffa all end with prayers to return to his homeland soon, and beg the question: why did al-ʿAṭṭār want to return home as early as 1810? Egypt's instability – the most probable reason for al-ʿAṭṭār's departure – was still very much an issue, with Muḥammad ʿAlī's nascent regime struggling against the remaining Mamluk beys, not to mention a recent failed British invasion.[144]

I believe the most plausible explanation for al-ʿAṭṭār's attempts to return to Egypt was simply homesickness. It seems probable that he left Egypt without ever planning to return. To move to Istanbul and Albania for years on end, to marry and take up work in these places; these are not the actions of a man planning to return to his homeland in the near future. During al-ʿAṭṭār's second stay in Istanbul he rubbed shoulders with the elites of Mustafa IV's new reactionary regime, and could have easily found employment in the civil service or as a teacher at one of the city's many madrasas. He could just as easily have settled in Damascus or Jerusalem, where he was respected as a teacher and welcomed as a friend. Instead, he trended

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[143] Ibid., 2:280
[144] Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī*, 61–62.

southwards, towards Egypt. Perhaps al-ʿAṭṭār had developed the idea in his mind to try to reform and modernize the Ottoman world, starting with Egypt, but given that he spent some 15 years after returning without making any known effort to involve himself with Muḥammad ʿAlī's reforms, this cannot be asserted with any confidence.

After abandoning Jaffa, al-ʿAṭṭār returned to Damascus and remained there for some two years. Qāsim claims in *Dhayl tarikh al-Jabartī* that at some point while living in Damascus, he undertook trips to Beirut and Iraq, with no further details.[145] A trip to Beirut would hardly be surprising for al-ʿAṭṭār, given his love of travel and the short distance from Damascus. A voyage to Iraq on the other hand, given the considerable distance to Baghdad, is something else.

It is entirely possible that al-ʿAṭṭār did visit Baghdad, or some other city of Iraq, however it would be remarkable that this part of his itinerary is entirely absent from previous scholarship, and from al-ʿAṭṭār's own marginal comments. On the other hand, the lack of mention of Beirut or Iraq could simply be ascribed to the fact that *Dhayl tarikh al-Jabartī* was unknown or unavailable to earlier writers. As for al-ʿAṭṭār's lack of mention of these places, it bears remembering that the account of his travels which survives in his marginal notes makes no mention of Damascus whatsoever, a city where he lived for many months.

If al-ʿAṭṭār did in fact visit Beirut and Iraq, it would be worth investigating possible connections with contemporary scholarship or political leaders in these places. He would have visited a Lebanon under the rule of Emir Bashīr Shihāb II (r. 1789–1840), yet another late-Ottoman provincial ruler running a largely independent polity, who in fact allied with Muḥammad ʿAlī against the sultan in the 1830s. In Iraq, he would have seen the internecine struggles of the Georgian Mamluk dynasty which defined the 1810s in Baghdad. Further sources are needed to say anything definitive about al-ʿAṭṭār's time in Lebanon or Iraq.

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[145] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 10.

ʿAṭṭār performed the Ḥajj in the season of 1228 AH, or late 1813.[146] Little information survives of his time in the Hijaz, however the Ḥajj of 1813 was notably the first to take place after the military forces of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, led by his son Ibrāhīm Pasha, wrested control of the region from the Wahhabis and restored nominal Ottoman sovereignty. After his pilgrimage he returned via Jordan to Jerusalem for a few months, and according to Qāsim spent time in Amman and Hebron, visiting historic graves and befriending the local ʿulamāʾ, who would call on his aid years later as Shaykh al-Azhar.[147] He finally set out for Egypt once more in the spring.

1.11 Al-ʿAṭṭār's Return to Cairo (1814–1815)

Al-ʿAṭṭār arrived in Cairo from across Sinai sometime between April 12th and the end of May, 1814, based on the latest sources.[148] He had been absent for a decade, and the endless warfare he had left behind was now replaced with the ruthlessly-won peace and order of an Albanian adventurer with far-reaching ambitions to reshape the country. The British consul-general in Egypt Ernest Missett (d. 1820) remarked that "complete personal security" reigned in Egypt at this time, in sharp contrast to the rest of the Ottoman Empire; a fact that would not have been lost on al-ʿAṭṭār, who complained bitterly of the criminality of Izmir.[149]

The shaykh resumed teaching at al-Azhar, as he had prayed for, and settled down permanently in the Azbakiyya district after his long travels.[150] He was happily reunited with his old friend al-Jabartī, and their mutual friend, the poet Ismāʿīl al-Khashshāb. The three would frequently sit at al-Jabartī's house late into the night discussing literature and history, which

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[146] Abu-Manneh, *Four Letters of Šayḫ Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār*, 83.
[147] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 10.
[148] Abu-Manneh, *Four Letters of Šayḫ Ḥasan Al-ʿAṭṭār*, 84.
[149] Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 153.
[150] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 20.

appears to have been the introverted al-ʿAṭṭār's main social interaction for a time.[151] Difficult economic conditions and personal tragedy marred this happiness; in a letter to Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī in Jerusalem, he writes:

> "When I returned to Cairo, I became busy reading some books, and I married a wife with all the money that I had, selling in addition many things. When she came to live with me ... I had to work very hard to provide a living as my situation and the prevailing conditions are not unknown to you. I have no means to undertake except teaching which does not sell nowadays . .. consequently I encountered many hardships. She stayed with me one year before she passed away during labour.[152] I was in much grief for her departure and remained afterwards restless for some time as if out of my senses."[153]

ʿAṭṭār appears to have fallen into depression over the loss of his wife and financial hardship, all within the first couple years of his return to Cairo. Having been away for ten years, al-ʿAṭṭār found himself somewhat alienated from local scholarship, and had few friends. To make matters worse, his close friend al-Khashshāb died in 1815, about the time his wife would have died as well. The losses weighed heavily on him; al-Jabartī writes that around 1815 he gave up writing poetry except as a means to gain patronage, and became wracked with anxiety.[154] In a later letter to al-Ḥusaynī, he writes:

> "Due to the prevailing conditions I keep to my home and do not leave it except for going out to give my lesson at the al-Azhar Mosque, and soon after this I return to my home and stay there. This is my life; comfort nowadays is in solitude. [Indeed] your name is

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[151] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 4:239, 2:12–15.

[152] Ḥasan Qāsim mentions that al-ʿAṭṭār had a son named Ali, in my opinion most likely from his second wife who died in labor. If this is the case, al-ʿAṭṭār would have struggled at this time not only with the loss of his wife, but with raising a child alone while working full-time as a teacher at al-Azhar.
See: Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 15.

[153] Abu-Manneh, *Four Letters of Šayḫ Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār*, 86.

[154] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 233.

ever alive on my tongue and your image is present in my heart. Had I been able to write you morning and evening I would have done so. But two matters hinder me from doing it. Firstly, travellers are not always available, and secondly, which is more difficult, are the prevailing conditions, the account of which is too long [to state]. All that I can say is: There is no power and no strength save in God the Exalted and the Almighty."[155]

Despite his personal tragedies, it may be said that the 17 years between al-ʿAṭṭār's return to Egypt and his appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar were his most productive, in which he did the most reading, writing and teaching of his life. This was to ramp up significantly in the 1820s, with an attendant rise in the shaykh's public notoriety.

1.12 The Rising Star of Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (1816–1828)

Al-ʿAṭṭār's long teaching career at Azhar saw him steadily accumulate a cadre of devoted students, and a formidable reputation. Already soon after returning in the 1810s, al-Jabartī opined that the shaykh had no living peer in Egypt, and he stood out starkly from his Azharī colleagues for his unique background of study in the Ottoman lands.[156] He also reportedly became somewhat famous for his extensive travels.[157]

Despite his introversion and low profile, he proved a sensation in scholarly circles. His lectures attracted al-Azhar's students and even shaykhs en masse, so much so that students would skip lessons with other teachers in order to attend, much to the latter's chagrin. "He was, may God the Exalted have mercy on him, accepted by the elite and the common man, and beloved by every storyteller and neighbor," says Qāsim.[158] ʿUlamāʾ from "eastern countries" would travel

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[155] Abu-Manneh, *Four Letters of Šayḫ Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār*, 92.
[156] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 2:12–15.
[157] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 10.
[158] Ibid., 12.

long distances to study under al-ʿAṭṭār in Cairo for the rest of his life, attending his classes and seeking *ijāza*s.[159] Ibrāhīm al-Saqā, one of al-ʿAṭṭār's students acquired in Cairo, recounts how some Meccans heard about al-ʿAṭṭār's reputation and traveled to Egypt to live with and study under him, treating him as an enlightened Sufi guide.[160] He did not enjoy being a celebrity; only after persistent pleading did he agree to tutor them in the works of Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1566), the 16th century Shāfiʿī jurist.[161] Qāsim reports that not only Muslims, but "troops of Frankish Orientalists studying the Islamic sciences" congregated around al-ʿAṭṭār after his return to Cairo, whom he would teach in French and English.[162] Among these was the English Orientalist William Edward Lane, who stayed in Cairo between 1825 and 1828.

For many years, certainly preceding and including his tenure as Shaykh al-Azhar, al-ʿAṭṭār maintained a long-distance friendship with the secretary to the Sultan of Morocco, ʿAllama al-ʿArabī al-Damnātī, whom he taught theology and literature via correspondence.[163] Al-Damnati eventually traveled to Egypt and met with al-ʿAṭṭār, and gifted him a copy of *al-Rayḥāna* by Ibn al-Khaṭīb al-Andalūsī.[164] This connection may partly explain the unique and considerable attention given to the Moroccan sultanate in al-ʿAṭṭār's *Inshāʾ*, which otherwise advises on the bureaucratic protocol of diplomatic writing in a generic way, applicable for any foreign Muslim state.[165] Hilāl mentions that al-ʿAṭṭār's teacher, Amīr al-Kabīr, maintained a similar correspondence with the Moroccan sultan himself during his life;[166] Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī

[159] Ibid., 11.
[160] Taymūr Bāshā, *Aʿlām al-fikr al-islāmī fī l-ʿaṣr al-ḥadīth*, 22.
[161] Naṣṣār, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir, and Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Ṣādiq al-Ḥassānī. "Muqaddimat al-taḥqīq." In *Risāla fī majʿūliyyat al-māhiyyāt talīhā risāla fī madhhab al-ṭabāʾiʿīn*, 5–24. Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Iḥsān li l-Nashr wa l-Tawzīʿ, 2020.
[162] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 12.
[163] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 125.
[164] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 11.
[165] Aṭṭār, Abū al-Saʿādāt Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-. *Inshāʾ al-ʿālim al-ʿallāma al-ḥabr al-baḥr al-fahhāma dhī l-faḍl al-midrār*. Cairo, Egypt: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1886, 4f.
[166] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 2:1139.

reportedly did as well, according to Reichmuth.[167] It may be speculated that al-ʿAṭṭār and his friend were connected via his teachers and the sultan.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's most popular class at al-Azhar was a regular study of al-Bayḍāwī's Qur'anic exegesis, which he reportedly taught in a way strikingly different from that of his colleagues.[168] No gloss of his on Bayḍāwī survives, or more specific details on the content of these classes, however Gran asserts that they were a conscious continuation of al-Zabīdī's approach to teaching.[169] As mentioned previously, his teaching of *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī* may have been influenced by that of his teacher Atâullah Efendi, who wrote a commentary on the work.[170]

The late 1810s and 1820s also marked the blossoming of al-ʿAṭṭār's relationship with his most famous student, al-Ṭahṭāwī, renowned for his travels to France in 1826 as part of an Egyptian scientific mission. Al-Ṭahṭāwī was reportedly al-ʿAṭṭār's devoted disciple (*mulāzim*) from almost as soon as he returned to Egypt.[171] Other students included Ḥasan Quwaydar al-Khalīlī (d. 1262 AH), a specialist in language; Muḥammad ʿIyāḍ b. Saʿd al-Ṭanṭāwī (1225–1278/1810–1861); and the poet Muhammad b. Isma'il Shihāb al-Dīn (al-Shāfiʿī) (1210–1274/1795–1858). Al-Ṭanṭāwī studied and taught at al-Azhar, and later taught Arabic at the Institute of Oriental Languages in St. Petersburg. He trained a generation of prominent Russian orientalists. Shihāb al-Dīn took over *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* after al-ʿAṭṭār, and edited books at the *Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya*, and was a close companion of the Khedive Abbas I in his travels, and he died in Cairo.[172] These were among al-ʿAṭṭār's close students, whom he began teaching privately from home, mainly in the rational sciences, history, geography,[173] and other

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[167] Reichmuth, *World of Murtaḍā Al-Zabīdī*, ix.
[168] El-Bendary, *Min Rawād al-azhar al-sharīf*, 472.
[169] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 123.
[170] İpşirli, *ATÂULLAH MEHMED EFENDİ*, 4:47.
[171] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 27.
[172] El-Bendary, *Min Rawād al-azhar al-sharīf*, 457.
[173] According to Erginbaş, European Enlightenment thinkers saw geography as a "universalising discourse", collecting and classifying natural and social phenomena according to a scientific system (Erginbaş, *Enlightenment in*

subjects poorly covered by the al-Azhar curriculum.[174] He would have also "played an important role in introducing eastern Islamic logical and philosophical works [from the Ottoman milieu] to Egyptian students," in this period,[175] bringing the well-developed Ottoman tradition of dialectics to Egypt in the interest of promoting the rationalization of Islamic thought, and society.

The 1820s were al-ʿAṭṭār's most productive years as a writer, finishing writing the books he had begun during his long years abroad. His most comprehensive works on Arabic grammar, dialectics, politics were all completed at this time. One of his more successful works during his life was a collection of his late friend al-Khashshāb's verses, which became very popular among Egypt's men of letters.[176]

The decade, and al-ʿAṭṭār's whole scholarly career were crowned by the publication of his magnum opus, *ḤJJ*, in two volumes in 1828 and 1830, on which he presumably worked for years beforehand given their great length.[177] His work on Arabic morphology, *Majmūʿa fī ʿilm al-taṣrīf* was among the first books published at Boulaq, in 1825.[178] Al-ʿAṭṭār was clearly involved with Egypt's nascent printing industry from an early date, which proved valuable experience for his next major role as editor of Egypt's first newspaper, *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya.*

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the Ottoman Context, 72). Al-ʿAṭṭār's strong interest in geography as a student and teacher is suggestive, then, of both the rationalizing and universalizing tendencies which ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṭaha describes as essential to the spirit of modernity.

[174] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra,* 27.

[175] El Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century,* 139.

[176] Ayalon, *The Historian Al-Jabartī and His Background,* 242.

[177] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra,* 34.

[178] Ibid., 33.

1.13 Al-ʿAṭṭār's Following among the Pashas: *Al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* (1828–1830)

Al-ʿAṭṭār served as the first Arabic editor of *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, Egypt's first Arabic (and Turkish) newspaper, established by Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha in 1828. The early history of the newspaper is somewhat confusing but, the most likely case is that ʿAzīz Efendī was the first Turkish editor in 1828, then replaced by Abdurrahman Sami Pasha in 1830, a close advisor to Muḥammad ʿAlī. An Arabic translation of the paper was begun in 1829, first headed by al-ʿAṭṭār. He promptly appointed Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad as his deputy, and later successor with a generous salary.[179]

Gran has remarked on the current lack of explanation for how such a private person as al-ʿAṭṭār rose to such prominence upon his return to Cairo. He alludes to the support the shaykh received from Abdurrahman Sami Pasha (born ca. 1769), but notes that we do not know exactly what form this took.[180] I believe that by piecing together some pieces of information, we can explain at least in part the sequence of events which led to al-ʿAṭṭār even being considered for the *mashyakha* of al-Azhar, and how this was enabled through his connection with Sami Pasha.

First, a picture must be pieced together from the primary sources available on Abdurrahman Sami Necibzade Pasha. According to Deny, his father, Aḥmad Najīb, was a shaykh Turkish sources describe him as a *Moralī*, a native of Morea in southern Greece, and he most likely grew up in the Morean city of Tripolitsa (today known simply as Tripoli), where his father Aḥmad Najīb was a well-known shaykh.[181] He was reportedly a close friend of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha in his youth; a connection which would prove enormously beneficial in later years. Given

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[179] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 231.
[180] Gran, *Persistence of Orientalism*, 112.
[181] Deny, *Sommaire des Archives Turques du Caire*, 234.

these circumstances it seems likely that Sami Pasha was an Albanian, although this cannot be said definitively.

As with many of his friends and relations from his early life in Ottoman Rumelia, Muḥammad ʿAlī offered Sami Pasha tremendous personal advancement in his new regime in Egypt.[182] Even among these, however, Sami Pasha's position was extremely high in Muḥammad ʿAlī's state; according to Turkish records in Cairo, he was a permanent member of the Pasha's cabinet, from 1247 to 1257 (1831 to 1841) the *bash-muʿāwin* (a sort of 'chief of staff'), and the "second-hand man to the Viceroy [Muḥammad ʿAlī]."[183] His many letters are evidence enough of his authority; aside from his many letters to and from Muḥammad ʿAlī himself, a letter signed by him from 1247, for example, designates him as "head of the cabinet".[184] In a series of letters from 1832, he gives orders to (and jokes with) Ibrāhīm Pasha, Muḥammad ʿAlī's son and successor, during his campaign in Syria.[185] In 1250/1834-1835, he was involved in the administration of Upper Egypt.[186] From at least 1830, he also took up the Turkish editorship of *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* (or *Vekāʾiʿ-ı-Miṣriye* in Ottoman Turkish).

By all accounts Sami Pasha was tremendously interested in Sufism, and was a shaykh of the Cerrahi order. He was also a patron to al-ʿAṭṭār's own student and friend, the Egyptian poet Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad Ismāʿīl:

"his *dīwān* suggests that he became a Khalwatī Sufi, potentially a Cerrahi like his mentor. Sami Pasha may have even been his shaykh, because one of Shihāb al-Dīn's poems praise

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[182] For more on Muḥammad ʿAlī's lifelong connections with his hometown of Kavala and his countrymen, see: Lowry, Heath W., and İsmail E. Erunsal. *Remembering One's Roots: Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt's Links to the Macedonian Town of Kavala: Architectural Monuments, Inscriptions & Documents*. İstanbul, Türkiye: Bahçeşir University Press, 2011.
[183] Deny, *Sommaire des Archives Turques du Caire*, 95.
[184] Ibid., 257.
[185] Ibid., 653, 676.
[186] Ibid., 311.

Sami Pasha in quasi-mystical terms, calling him "the celestial sphere encompassing every meaning" (*al-falak al-muḥīṭ bi-kull maʿnā*)."[187]

All we know of Sami Pasha's later life is that at some point, he returned home to Greece and took up an administrative position in the city of Trikala, where he received a letter from the Khedival government in 1265/1848-1849.[188] Suffice to say, he was one of, if not the most trusted and enduring friend and advisor to Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, and undoubtedly someone with a significant ability to influence him.

Sami Pasha worked alongside al-ʿAṭṭār at the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* in its early years, making it tempting to assume that they met through this work. However, it is widely reported that al-Ṭahṭāwī was sent along with the Egyptian expedition to France in 1826 by Muḥammad ʿAlī at al-ʿAṭṭār's urging, meaning that the two men knew one another by that time at the latest. The most reasonable explanation for how al-ʿAṭṭār came to know Sami Pasha, then, is that they met through their mutual friend, Shihāb al-Dīn, sometime in the early or mid 1820s. The connection between the three men is made all the more obvious by the fact that soon after becoming the Arabic editor of the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, al-ʿAṭṭār appointed none other than Shihāb al-Dīn, his student and Sami Pasha's client, as his deputy and eventual successor as editor, with a generous salary.[189]

Al-ʿAṭṭār and Sami Pasha would have found much common ground; al-ʿAṭṭār would have learned that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Sami Pasha was a childhood friend of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, and a native of Ottoman Rumelia, where al-ʿAṭṭār had traveled years ago. Not only would they be able to speak to one another in Turkish, but perhaps even Albanian, which, according to Hilāl,

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[187] Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl. *Dīwān*. Cairo, Egypt: Maṭbaʿat Muḥammad Shāhīn, 1861, 60-61, 180.
[188] Deny, *Sommaire des Archives Turques du Caire*, 266.
[189] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 231.

the shaykh learned during his stay in Shkodër.[190] It is not difficult to imagine that, given their close friendship, Sami Pasha likely shared many of Muḥammad ʿAlī's hopes for the modernization of Egypt, and may have recognized similar ideals in al-ʿAṭṭār.[191]

The shaykh's earliest biographer, ʿAlī Mubārak tells us, based on interviews with al-ʿAṭṭār's own son and others who knew him personally, that:

> "[Al-ʿAṭṭār] had an elite/private connection (*ittiṣāl khāṣ*) with Sami Pasha, along with Bāqī Bey and Khayr Allāh Bey, and held over them the position of shaykh (*wa lahu ʿalayhim mashyakha*), and through them came to be connected with Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha. The latter then praised and exalted him, and came to know his virtue, and appointed him as Shaykh al-Azhar."[192]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's being taken as a religious authority by a group of modernization-minded political elites at the khedival diwan somewhat mirrors the position of İbrahim Müteferrika in the 18th century Ottoman court. Aḥmad Bey Ḥusaynī (d. 1914) notes that Muḥammad ʿAlī and al-ʿAṭṭār began meeting regularly prior to the latter's appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar.[193] [194] It is also worth noting that the Bāqī Bey and Khayr Allāh Bey mentioned by Mubārak were none other than Sami Pasha's brothers, who had also rode Muḥammad ʿAlī's success to prominent government positions in Egypt.[195]

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[190] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1590.

[191] Marsot notes that "Muhammad Ali believed in the value of specialists. He searched them out, learned from them and made use of that knowledge." Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 75. Al-ʿAṭṭār, aside from being a scholar of formidable Azharī credentials in the Islamic sciences, was deeply familiar with the elite intellectual culture and reform programs of the contemporary Ottoman Empire; a specialist knowledge and Ottoman pedigree Muḥammad ʿAlī would have likely found useful and attractive.

[192] Mubārak Pasha, ʿAlī. *Al-Khiṭaṭ al-Tawfīqiyya al-jadīda li-Miṣr al-Qāhira*. First Edition. Vol. 4. 6 vols. Cairo, Egypt: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya, 1888–1889, 4:40.

[193] Ḥusaynī, Aḥmad Bey al-. Sharḥ Umm al-musammā bi-murshid al-anām." Cairo, Egypt, MS Tārīkh Taymūr ʿArabī 1411. Egyptian National Archives, 37.

[194] Marsot notes that the Pasha enjoyed picking the brains of anyone he could who had traveled widely, especially those with knowledge of machines and science; al-ʿAṭṭār would have been an excellent candidate for this sort of friendly interrogation. Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 78.

[195] Deny, *Sommaire des Archives Turques du Caire*, 234.

Now, if Muḥammad ʿAlī came to admire al-ʿAṭṭār and see him as sharing his vision for the modernization of Egypt sometime before 1826, it begs the question of why, when shaykh al-ʿArūsī died and al-ʿAṭṭār was put forward as a candidate for his successor as Shaykh al-Azhar, the Pasha did not do in 1829 what he did in 1831; unilaterally appoint al-ʿAṭṭār as Shaykh al-Azhar without consulting the leading *ʿulamāʾ*. The short answer is that the Pasha likely would have been quite happy to see al-ʿAṭṭār become the Shaykh al-Azhar in 1829, but calculated it was better to avoid provoking the faction led by shaykh Muḥammad al-Mahdī at the time. I would speculate that al-ʿAṭṭār's appointment as Arabic editor of *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* the same year he was snubbed for the *mashyakhat al-Azhar* functioned as some kind of consolation to al-ʿAṭṭār.

As for its content and audience, the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* was an elite project from the very outset. Muḥammad ʿAlī, a European newspaper enthusiast, created the paper in direct imitation of the Western style and had its first copies distributed to the Katkhuda, his son Ibrāhīm Pasha, and other notables (*ʿuẓamāʾ al-dawla*) who were in turn instructed to distribute the paper within their circles.[196] ʿAbduh writes:

> "*Al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* was [initially] read in an exclusive milieu; it was a milieu of the highest-ranking civil servants, military leaders of the ruling house, and Egyptian Islamic scholars which was received as a gift and greeting from the government."[197]

The paper was mandatory reading for all sufficiently important government employees and the Pasha personally saw to the arrangement of its printing press and translation staff.[198] Readership was later expanded to well-connected students in the Islamic sciences (*ṭullāb al-ʿilm*) [that is to

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[196] ʿAbduh, Ibrāhīm. *Tārīkh al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya 1828–1942*. Third printing. Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1946, 36, 38.
[197] Ibid., 39f.
[198] Ibid., 60.

say, Azharīs] as propaganda in favor of the reigning system; copies were distributed free of charge.[199] Diwans of Egypt's provinces were entitled to regular copies, as was any civil servant paid at least 1,000 *qirsh* per month, as part of their status.[200] In its earliest decades, to receive a copy of the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* was a sign of elite status. A certain Ibrāhīm Effendī, who received a copy also received a letter from the Khedival diwan on 10 Dhū al-Qiʿda 1244 (13 May, 1829), instructing him how to handle it: "It is something delicate and fine; not something given away carelessly, but rather tenderly."[201]

The gazette was first and foremost a means for distributing Muḥammad ʿAlī's directives to local leaders across his domain, and promoting his political objectives; Sami Pasha was even explicitly instructed to do so in his capacity as editor.[202] The contents of the newspaper were mostly Egyptian news, with some foreign news. There was a particular focus on the activities of Muḥammad ʿAlī, his *majālis*, news from his various councils, the Khedival diwan, etc. The paper also described to Egyptians the benefits of astounding new technologies and sciences from Europe; a vocation for which Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār was eminently qualified as editor.[203]

If to be a recipient of the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* was a symbol of upper-class status, to manage that publication must have been doubly so. Al-ʿAṭṭār is not named as the author, but can be reasonably presumed as the author of the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*'s editorials in its first years. He opens the first issue with the following introduction, replete with religious vocabulary, hope for the material progress of Egypt, and praise for Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha:

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[199] Ibid., 40.
[200] ʿĀbidīn archives. document 38 in 19 Shawwāl 1263 AH, *madāris ʿarabī, daftar* 93 p. 111, 118. Sent from *dīwān al-madāris* to *dīwān al-māliyya*. As cited in ʿAbduh, *Tārīkh al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, 42.
[201] ʿĀbidīn archives, document 258, *daftar* 32, from the Khedival finance department to his eminence *al-Ḥāj* Ibrāhīm Effendī. (ʿAbduh, *Tārīkh al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, 41)
[202] ʿAbduh, *Tārīkh al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, 53.
[203] Ibid., 63.

All praise to Allāh the Creator of the nations, and may peace and blessings be upon the master of the Arabs and non-Arabs [Muḥammad], to begin: publishing current affairs is part and parcel of the society of the children of Adam, […] their harmony, their movements, customs, dealings, and associations which have come to be through their mutual interdependence, which is the result of attention (*intibāh*), foresight, certainty, and general jealousy, and [their being published] illuminates the circumstances of our present time. And this is clear to anyone of intelligence. [It is worth knowing also] the precise nature of current matters pertaining to the benefits of new technologies in agriculture and cultivation, their use, and how they shall bring ease and prosperity, and how to avoid and guard against what results thereby of hardship and harm. This is especially so in Egypt; rather it is the basis of the system and the arrangement of ease for its people. So his eminence our Effendi, *walī al-naʿm* [Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha], thought over how to arrange the conditions of the country and smooth them out, and to moderate and consolidate its people's affairs, and in the organization of the villages and cities, […] and he put into circulation the 'journal' with the intention that [readers] may send to it stories of their current circumstances, both in hardship and ease…

So the *walī al-naʿm* desired that the news be edited and curated to include what is useful, and for it to be distributed generally, along with some news from the *majlis* and the Khedival diwan, and news coming from the Ḥijāz, Sudan, and some other regions, […] It was by his noble order that these aforementioned matters were to be printed and distributed generally, may Allāh help us with it, and it has been famously named *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* ("Events of Egypt"), and to Allāh are the best intentions."[204]

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[204] Ibid., 63–65.

1.14 The Shaykh al-Azhar Succession Controversy (1829–1831)

There has been little discussion of the controversy which surrounded the appointment of Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār to the supreme religious office of Egypt. From the Arabic literature, mostly written by Azharī scholars, this may be deliberate, as a means of sidestepping the messy political aspect of the rectorship of al-Azhar to create a less problematic historical narrative. Imad Hilāl writes that some of the shaykhs were angered by al-ʿAṭṭār's selection for the position and hated him, and suggests it may have been because of his long absence from Egypt, or his preference for poetry over *fiqh*, or simply because he had been imposed on them by Muḥammad ʿAlī, and was the first ever to have been appointed in this fashion.[205] This is not exactly true; according to al-Jabartī, Muḥammad ʿAlī overruled the Azharīs (multiple times) in selecting the new Shaykh al-Azhar in 1812, a story worth reproducing here by way of comparison with al-ʿAṭṭār's path to the rectorship.

Upon the death of ʿAbd Allāh al-Sharqāwī in 1227 AH, Muḥammad ʿAlī informed the Azharīs that he would defer to their choice of successor. However, when they put forward al-ʿAṭṭār's teacher Amīr al-Kabīr as their first choice, the Pasha categorically forbade this.[206] He then ordered the Azharīs to convene a conference to select another candidate for the rectorship, whereupon they proposed a Shaykh by the name of Muhammad al-Mahdi; the Pasha then humiliated them once again by appointing the less popular Muhammad al-Shannawānī, who did not even teach at Azhar.[207]

It is unknown exactly why Muḥammad ʿAlī refused to allow Amīr al-Kabīr to succeed to the *mashyakha* of al-Azhar, however reading the details of his life allows some reasonable

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[205] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī,* 3:1592.
[206] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī,* 2:1141.
[207] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 166.

conjecture. Amir was a highly influential political player in late 18th and early 19th century Egypt, more powerful and involved than almost any other shaykh in the country, commanded a popular following, and may have appeared as something of a threat to the Pasha's autocratic rule. Under the Ottoman Mamluk regime, Amīr al-Kabīr was embroiled in the feuds between rival beys; he also organized a mass reading of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and held prayers for Ottoman victory over the Russian Empire in the Seventh Russo-Turkish War (1787–1792).[208] Before the French invasion, he received a considerable stipend directly from Constantinople, which combined with his activism during the war, suggests that the Ottoman authorities perceived him as a local ally in Egypt.[209] During the occupation Amīr al-Kabīr was courted by the French authorities, who recognized his political clout; he was given various honors and made a member of their diwan.[210] During the interregnum of the French withdrawal, he came into conflict with the Pasha while acting as a mediator between his nascent government and the Mamluk beys who still controlled Upper Egypt.[211] Hilāl describes Amir, along with Abdullah al-Sharqāwī and ʿUmar Makram as a triumvirate of independent power in the early period of Muḥammad ʿAlī's rule, able to credibly oppose him.[212]

In summary, Amīr al-Kabīr was powerful independent of Muḥammad ʿAlī's patronage or threats, and had challenged him before; to grant him authority over all of al-Azhar would hardly be wise from a *realpolitik* perspective. What is more, his close ties to Istanbul would hardly have endeared him to the Pasha, who was seeking as much practical autonomy from the Ottoman government as possible.

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[208] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī,* 2:1142.
[209] Ibid.*,* 2:1143.
[210] Ibid.*,* 2:1143.
[211] Ibid.*,* 2:1146.
[212] Ibid., 2:1147.

In what follows, credit must be given to Hilāl who provides most of the primary source material for constructing the narrative of al-ʿAṭṭār's rise to the sheikhdom (*mashyakha*).

Al-ʿAṭṭār was first considered for the position of Shaykh al-Azhar in 1245/1829, as a successor to Shaykh Muḥammad al-ʿArūsī,[213] although he was ultimately not selected at this time. As the sources have it, in the wake of Muḥammad al-ʿArūsī's death, the leadership of al-Azhar promptly sent a small delegation to the Khedival diwan to consult with the political authorities on appointing a successor. Muḥammad al-Amīr al-Ṣaghīr, a leading Mālikī shaykh, and Muḥammad al-Mahdī of the Ḥanafīs, his brother, were received by Ḥabīb Effendī, who managed Muḥammad ʿAlī's diwan. They informed him of al-ʿArūsī's death, and presented the names of three prominent Shāfiʿī shaykhs from whom the Pasha could select the next Shaykh al-Azhar. These three were Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Damhūjī (d. 1246/1831), Ḥasan b. Darwīsh al-Quwaysnī (d. 1254/1839), and Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār. A letter reply delivered by Ḥabīb Effendī from the Pasha, dated the 18th of Ṣafar, 1245 AH (August 18, 1829), reads as follows:

"I received your petition, via the presence of the most eminent and noble shaykhs, Shaykh al-Amīr and Shaykh al-Mahdī at our diwan. They informed us of the death of Shaykh al-ʿArūsī, may he be forgiven, and his passing to the everlasting abode, and that he had obligated the appointment of another shaykh to become rector of al-Azhar as his replacement. So I gave you [my choice] of the most qualified individual from among the eminent and pious scholars still with us, which were recommended for this position, and I sent this aforementioned information to you, which was delivered, and its content became known; you are thereby compelled by our command reaching you to visit the aforementioned eminent Shaykh al-Amīr and Shaykh al-Mahdī, and give them our

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[213] Al-ʿAṭṭār was not the first Shaykh al-Azhar to support Muḥammad ʿAlī's regime; al-ʿArūsī commissioned a historical treatise on the Pasha which praised the practice of conscription. Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 128–129.

profuse greetings, read to them our command, and make them understand that our dearest wish is ease for the jurists of the mosque, and its wellbeing.

If Shaykh Aḥmad al-Damhūjī is to take up the position of the late Shaykh al-ʿArūsī, then his advanced age necessitates that the two shaykhs be appointed to assist him in order to carry out [his] service to the most radiant mosque (*al-jāmiʿ al-aẓhar*),[214] or that they appoint someone else to stay with the aforementioned and assist him to fully carry out his duties to the mosque, and [ensure] the ease of the jurists…

However, if, when you propose his appointment, this is not agreeable to them; then [say to them that] Shaykh al-Quwaysnī is likewise [unsuitable], seeing as he is blind, and it is known that he does not want to be rector of the mosque, so he is out of contention.

As for Shaykh Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, who was mentioned in the petition along with "his known condition" (*ḥāluhu al-maʿlūm*); this condition, I believe, can be rectified by counseling, and that being so, he becomes suitable as rector of the mosque, [especially] for the sake of its good administration and service. So whoever of the two the two eminent shaykhs prefer, arrange for him a judgment from the foundations of the diwan, so that he may come down and settle in his place, and be known [as Shaykh al-Azhar]."[215]

It is clear from this letter that Muḥammad ʿAlī preferred Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār for the position as early as 1829. While al-Quwaysnī is disqualified entirely, for al-Damhūjī, the Pasha stipulates specific conditions for his accession which could counteract his defect of advanced age. As for al-ʿAṭṭār's defect, his "known condition" (a euphemism for homosexuality), Muḥammad ʿAlī attaches little concern to this claim, and provides little in the way of specific stipulations in light

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[214] This is of course a play on words by the Pasha (or rather his scribe, as he was famously illiterate), rhyming *aẓhar* (radiant) with *Azhar* (the name of the mosque).

[215] Wizārat al-Thaqāfa: al-Sijl al-Awwal min Dīwān al-Maʿiyya al-Sunniyya, p. 29–30, ʿAlī ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm: Mashyakhat al-Azhar, 1/206–207. As cited in Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1584).

of it. On the other hand, by making al-Damhūjī's appointment conditional on the appointment of Amīr al-Saghīr and al-Mahdī as his aides to 'assist' in the duties entailed by the *mashyakha* of al-Azhar, the Pasha must certainly have recognized the incentive he had given to the two shaykhs to choose the older candidate, and reasonably expected him as their final choice.

Al-Mahdī and Amīr al-Saghīr did ultimately choose al-Damhūjī as the next Shaykh al-Azhar, and, says Hilāl, "it is possible for us to attribute their choosing of al-Damhūjī to the fact that they did not want al-ʿAṭṭār, and this is clear from their remark in the petition on 'his known condition', just as is the fact that their choosing of al-Damhūjī would have meant that the two of them would become *wakīl*s for al-Azhar, and take [important] roles in its administration."[216] Indeed, that the two shaykhs accused al-ʿAṭṭār of being a homosexual is a strong sign that they were averse to his taking the *mashyakha*.[217] To point out that al-Damhūjī was aged, or that al-Quwaysnī was blind was not an attack on their character; to accuse al-ʿAṭṭār of sexual deviancy, and therefore impious character was something else entirely.[218]

As further proof of this point, it must be noted that al-Damhūjī passed away, according to Hilāl, in the evening of ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā, 1246 AH (May 22, 1831), just under two years from the date of Muḥammad ʿAlī's letter. "What is clear is that they were in a hurry to choose al-Damhūjī, and

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[216] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1585.

[217] I believe that this accusation against al-ʿAṭṭār was most likely slander; the only evidence for the claim, since repeated by Gran and de Bellaigue, are some poems he wrote mentioning beautiful men, and politically-motivated accusations leveled by rivals with every reason to hate him. The evidence to the contrary is that al-ʿAṭṭār married at least twice, fathered children, and was so attached to his second wife that he was plunged into debilitating depression by her loss.

[218] De Bellaigue also makes the bizarre claim that al-ʿAṭṭār was a homosexual as a result of supposedly being intensely misogynistic. The evidence for this claim is that al-ʿAṭṭār endorsed the hadith in which the Prophet Muḥammad says that "no people will succeed if their affairs are ruled over by women." Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, 30.

To consider this proof of a uniquely misogynistic personality is absurd and anachronistic. Even if the belief that women are unsuited for political leadership would be considered deeply misogynistic in de Bellaigue's modern-day France, for example, it would have been a matter of consensus for 19th century Egyptian Muslim jurists; indeed, it is fair to say that the hadith is accepted according to its apparent meaning by most Muslim jurists even today. If al-ʿAṭṭār's belief in the apparent meaning of this hadith is enough to make him suspect as a closeted homosexual, the same could be said about practically every one of his contemporaries, which is absurd.

quick to send the result of their choice to the Pasha", says Hilāl, who is of the view that the two shaykhs must have sent their final decision to Muḥammad ʿAlī by the first days of Rabīʿ al-Awwal (early September, 1829) at the latest, and more likely much sooner.[219]

With only al-ʿAṭṭār and al-Quwaysnī remaining, and al-Quwaysnī still blind, upon al-Damhūjī's death the Pasha reportedly directly appointed al-ʿAṭṭār as Shaykh al-Azhar on 4 Shawwāl, 1246 (March 19, 1831) "without any recourse to the shaykhs of al-Azhar or their consultation, as he had done previously."[220] For the sake of public appearances, the scholars of al-Azhar "unanimously" approved this appointment.[221]

There is one chronological issue which must be addressed, which is the timing conflict between the death of al-Damhūjī and the appointment of al-ʿAṭṭār. Hilāl writes that al-Damhūjī passed away in May 1831, while all sources on al-ʿAṭṭār give the date of his appointment in March of that year; two months prior to when al-Damhūjī ostensibly died. I would explain this by suggesting that the biographical sources on al-Damhūjī made a minor error somewhere over the years, and mistakenly wrote that he died on ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā (which takes place in the Islamic month of Dhū al-Ḥijja) rather than ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, which takes place at the end of Ramaḍān and the beginning of Shawwāl. This seems most likely, given that ʿĪd al-Fiṭr would have fallen just three days prior to al-ʿAṭṭār's appointment on the fourth of Shawwāl; a short period of time which matches with the circumstances of his being unilaterally and immediately appointed by Muḥammad ʿAlī before the Azharī leadership could rally behind al-Quwaysnī, or another candidate.

The foregoing information is just one new addition to a wealth of sources describing the opposition al-ʿAṭṭār faced in his teaching career at al-Azhar. The most commonly cited reason

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[219] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1585.
[220] Ibid., 3:1591.
[221] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 13.

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for this is al-ʿAṭṭār's ostensible liberalism, which will be dissected and challenged later in this study. I believe there is a case to be made for more personal and political, rather than strictly ideological grounds for the opposition of a great many Azharī *ʿulamāʾ* to al-ʿAṭṭār's leadership, not least among those directly involved in the succession controversy: the two brothers Amīr al-Saghīr and Muḥammad al-Mahdī, and Ḥasan al-Quwaysnī.

1.15 Personal Opponents of Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār

Muḥammad al-Mahdī was a prominent Ḥanafī shaykh of the early 19th century, from a prominent scholarly family. His mother was the daughter of the muftī of the Ḥanafīs in the previous generation, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī al-Harīrī (d. 1220 AH), while his father was the famous Amīr al-Kabīr, who taught al-ʿAṭṭār among others. We know from written evidence that he was a prominent Azharī shaykh by at least July 1822, when his name appears with many others on a document giving "*sharʿī* witness to the soundness of the kingdom of *al-Ḥāj* Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, protector of the Egyptian realms…" along with a similar document written the following year.[222]

He took over as leader of the Ḥanafīs in Egypt immediately after the death of Ḥasan al-Jabartī in 1774, likely owing to his close relationship with the Pasha.[223] Despite this, he had little interest in Islamic scholarship, writing neither books, letters or fatwas, instead occupying himself with the political and economic influence he wielded as Shaykh al-Ḥanafiyya, and a range of business enterprises run jointly with Muḥammad ʿAlī's son, Ibrāhīm Pasha. According to al-Jabartī, he "made the acquaintance of important people, and through his good conduct with them, and the beauty of his words, he obtained much property."[224] He was, on the whole, a man

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[222] Mahkama al-Bab al-ʿĀlī: wathiqa raqm: 0465–000818–1001, p. 220–221. (Hilāl 1346)
[223] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1347.
[224] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 4:233.

of the establishment in Muḥammad ʿAlī's Egypt: a landed aristocrat, a businessman, and, says Hilāl, "an ally of Muḥammad ʿAlī in all affairs, along with his brother Amīr al-Saghīr al-Mālikī, who paralleled his life in many ways."[225]

Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Mālikī, better known as Amīr al-Saghīr, was a Mālikī Azharī shaykh and a son of the more famous Amīr al-Kabīr. As a young man, he studied under his father, and pursued the rational sciences.[226] These facts make it all but certain that he and his younger brother al-Mahdī would have known Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār from their youth, studying at al-Azhar under the same teachers at the same time. Also like Muḥammad al-Mahdī, Amīr al-Saghīr was involved in Egyptian politics from a young age; during the French occupation, he played a major role fighting French forces as part of the resistance movement in Lower Egypt, even while French authorities held his father hostage.[227] His image as a hero in the jihad against France likely explains his rise to prominence in the post-French period, and he succeeded his father as Shaykh al-Mālikiyya.[228] Like his brother, he had little interest in writing on the Islamic sciences, so it is fair to say, given their prominent positions, that they were appointed for their political, rather than scholarly credentials.

As for Ḥasan b. Darwīsh al-Quwaysnī, his contempt for al-ʿAṭṭār is more well-known. Scharfe describes him as the "archrival" of al-ʿAṭṭār, and holds that he despised him for being appointed as Shaykh al-Azhar while he had the better claim.[229] Indeed, al-Quwaysnī would have appeared to many as the heir-apparent to the *mashyakha* of al-Azhar; he was a lifelong Azharī, and rose to become Shaykh al-Shāfiʿiyya later in life.[230] Nevertheless, like the sons of Amīr al-Kabīr, he wrote very little. The shaykh was blind from birth and a Sufi of the Ṣuramātiyya

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[225] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1351.
[226] Ibid., 3:1440.
[227] Ibid., 3:1444f.
[228] Ibid., 3:1441.
[229] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 246f.
[230] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1602.

order, prone to ecstatic mystical outbursts.[231] He had mass popular support, not least because of his famous anti-prostitution campaign and willingness to stand up to Muḥammad ʿAlī.[232] He was buried in 1254/1839 at a massive funeral next to shaykh ʿAlī al-Bayyūmī.[233] [234]

Based on the sources, I believe it is possible to construct a narrative of personal opposition to Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār from the established elite of al-Azhar, both surrounding his appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar, in the case of the sons of Amīr al-Kabīr, and during his tenure in that position, led by al-Quwaysnī. All of these figures were opposed to al-ʿAṭṭār on practically every level.

The sons of Amīr al-Kabīr were, as mentioned previously, al-ʿAṭṭār's peers from youth, and yet distinctly disinterested in scholasticism, evident in their almost nonexistent contribution to scholarship. Al-ʿAṭṭār, on the other hand, was of a bookish personality and exceptionally gifted in the Islamic sciences, and his continuing interest in them is evidenced in his prodigious writings across a range of subjects. While the two brothers were from eminent scholarly lineages and wealthy landowners, and seemingly appointed to prominent positions for these reasons, al-ʿAṭṭār was from a working class background and rose to prominence on his own merit, without patrons until the intervention of Muḥammad ʿAlī.

During the French occupation, their paths diverged sharply: while Amīr al-Saghir actively battled the French, and saw his father (and al-ʿAṭṭār's teacher) Amīr al-Kabīr imprisoned, al-ʿAṭṭār fled to Upper Egypt, and upon returning to Cairo developed warm relations

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[231] Ibid., 3:1603.
[232] Ibid., 3:1605–1608.
[233] Ibid., 3:1609.
[234] Al-Quwaysnī's association with al-Bayyūmī are indicative of his popular, lower-class following. ʿAlī al-Bayyūmī (d. 1183/1769) was the eponymous founder of a splinter sect of the Khalwatiyya known as the Bayyūmiyya, hugely popular among poor Egyptians. Al-Bayyūmī emphasized the spiritual importance of poverty, citing a Shīʿī hadith from Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, and criticized the wealthy elite. Al-Jabartī, along with the rest of the upper class, more inclined towards elite Sufi orders such as the Wafāʾiyya, dismissed them as uncultured rabble.
See: Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 47–49.

with the occupiers. Al-ʿAṭṭār then left the country in chaos in 1803, while the two brothers remained, involved in the political reconstitution of Egypt under Muḥammad ʿAlī, going so far as to support him in the ʿUmar Makram affair of 1807. AlʿAṭṭār returns years later as a major scholar, having written a dozen treatises in as many different fields, while they themselves have written little to nothing, and becomes so popular at al-Azhar that he draws students to his lectures from those of other teachers.

As Hilāl suggests, it was likely a very easy decision for Amīr al-Saghīr and Muḥammad al-Mahdī to attempt to block al-ʿAṭṭār from becoming Shaykh al-Azhar after al-ʿArūsī. They would have likely poisoned their students against him as well, as they were far better connected in Egypt than he was, given their long tenure at al-Azhar and talent for political networking.

Essentially, it appears likely that much of the initial opposition to al-ʿAṭṭār's leadership of al-Azhar was not necessarily based upon any perception of him as a liberal or Westernizer, but rather due to the personal relationships between the shaykh and prominent members of the Azharī elite. Although opposition to al-ʿAṭṭār on ideological grounds would develop later in his tenure, such as from shaykh al-Bājūrī, it would be inaccurate to describe al-ʿAṭṭār as much of a reformist before 1831, which is to say practically his entire life.

1.16 *Mashyakha* (1831–1835)

Al-ʿAṭṭār's years holding the position of Shaykh al-Azhar (*mashyakhat al-Azhar*) were some of the most active of his life, despite his advanced age. Unfortunately for him, they were also the years in which he faced the greatest challenges from the *ʿulamāʾ* class.

Opposition to al-ʿAṭṭār's new leadership at al-Azhar was immediate and unrelenting from his first day in office. His unilateral appointment by Muḥammad ʿAlī led many Azharīs to see al-ʿAṭṭār as a symbol of the regime's oppressiveness, says Scharfe.

"When he assumed office as Shaykh al-Azhar in 1246/1831, protests broke out in the neighborhoods surrounding the mosque. In what may have been a humbling moment, al-ʿAṭṭār was compelled to send a petition to the Divan-ı Hidivi requesting that the pasha's troops not intervene to put down the tumult by force, which would have squandered any goodwill he had left at al-Azhar."[235]

Despite his detractors, al-ʿAṭṭār doggedly pursued a campaign of academic and administrative reform at the institution where he had spent most of his adult life. Gran opines that al-ʿAṭṭār had harbored the ideas of his reform campaign for years prior, but was only able to act on them openly once he had securely joined the upper class through his appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar.[236] Immediately after taking office, al-ʿAṭṭār set about revising and expanding the al-Azhar curriculum, most importantly by introducing study of the material sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-kawniyya*) such as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, engineering, medicine and so on, along with the occult sciences.[237] Qāsim opines that "his *mashyakha* somewhat resembled that of shaykh Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Damanhūrī who preceded him," as al-Damanhūrī was also a practitioner and proponent of the sciences at al-Azhar.[238] The full significance of al-ʿAṭṭār's new curriculum will be discussed in section 3. He also appointed some of his students such as al-Ṭahṭāwī and al-Ṭanṭāwī – who shared his reformist outlook – to teach hadith and literature at al-Azhar, respectively. The latter subject was not taught at all prior to his tenure.[239]

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[235] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere,* 240.
[236] Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 171.
[237] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 13.
[238] Ibid., 13.
[239] El-Bendary, *Min Rawād al-azhar al-sharīf*, 469.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's administrative reforms were marred by controversy. As part of a wider project to reorganize al-Azhar's and Egypt's *waqf*s under a centralized administration, al-ʿAṭṭār occasionally assigned important *waqf*s away from hereditary management. The year after taking office in 1247/1831-2, al-ʿAṭṭār's newly-appointed head of the Maghribi *riwāq*, a certain Ibn al-Ḥusayn, was accused of mismanaging his waqfs, which he had been granted by al-ʿAṭṭār over the children of the recently deceased waqf manager.[240] Al-ʿAṭṭār was thus seen as acting nepotistically; a reputation no doubt aggravated by his appointment of al-Ṭahṭāwī and al-Ṭanṭāwī to teaching positions.

Also among al-ʿAṭṭār's critics was Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī, a major Shāfiʿī scholar who came to serve as Shaykh al-Azhar about a decade after al-ʿAṭṭār.[241] al-ʿAṭṭār's relationship with al-Bājūrī seems to have been complex. Ḥasan Qāsim reports that al-Bājūrī was among al-ʿAṭṭār's students; it is possible that this is the case during the 1814–1831 period of al-ʿAṭṭār's life, but al-Bājūrī was already a young adult by the time al-ʿAṭṭār left Egypt, and so could have easily studied with him then as well.[242] Either way, al-Bājūrī was a noted critic of al-ʿAṭṭār's reforms after his appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar, a situation uncomfortable for both if there had previously existed the goodwill of a teacher-student relationship between the two men.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's efforts to reform and clean up al-Azhar were in some ways prefigured by the activities of Amīr al-Kabīr. Although he never reached the *mashyakha* of al-Azhar for political reasons, he was appointed as *nāẓir* of its *awqāf* in 1220/1805-6, and reportedly made considerable efforts to improve the mosque as a teaching institution, where he himself had studied and taught.[243]

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[240] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 240.
[241] Spevack, Aaron. *The Archetypal Sunni Scholar: Law, Theology and Mysticism in the Synthesis of al-Bājūrī*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014, 13.
[242] Naṣṣār, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 22.
[243] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 2:1140.

For all of his efforts, al-ʿAṭṭār faced constant sabotage from opponents among the *ulamāʾ*, from his major projects to the everyday banalities of managing a madrasa; he reports that people would even steal his shoes while he was in meetings, forcing him to walk barefoot in humiliation. Al-Ṭahṭāwī writes that al-ʿAṭṭār would confess his frustration to him, and withdrew inside himself.[244]

ʿAṭṭār passed away in office on the 22nd of Dhū ʾl-Qiʿda, 1250 / 21st of March, 1835. Even death, however, was not the end of his ordeals. When his rival al-Quwaysnī took over as Shaykh al-Azhar after his death, he declared that al-ʿAṭṭār had embezzled al-Azhar's funds and had no right to bequeath his personal possessions to his son Asʿad, born in 1831 to al-ʿAṭṭār's third wife, a slave.[245] He even threatened to sell the mother. Al-ʿAṭṭār's personal library was looted from his home by shaykhs after his death, such that Muḥammad ʿAlī had to order that no shaykhs were to enter the house; but by then, much had already been lost.[246]

In any event, al-ʿAṭṭār's funeral was a major public event attended by Egypt's top political leadership; a testament not only to his position as Shaykh al-Azhar, but his considerable following in elite circles.[247]

1.17 Al-ʿAṭṭār's New Curriculum for al-Azhar

ʿAṭṭār was concerned by what he saw to be a turning away in the modern period from the breadth of study which characterized classical Islamic civilization. While in the 19th century, al-ʿAṭṭār complains, many had no knowledge whatsoever of the natural sciences, in the classical period to study these along with the religious sciences was a matter of course.

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[244] Bellaigue, *Islamic Enlightenment*, 32.
[245] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 22.
[246] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 29.
[247] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 21.

"Whoever contemplates what we have written and what has been mentioned regarding the the biographies of prominent imams, will know that they had - with their feet firmly established in the *sharʿī* sciences and religious rulings - tremendous knowledge of other sciences, and a complete understanding of their totalities and parts."[248]

In his view, there was not nearly enough study in modern times of these "other sciences," which presented considerable utilitarian benefits for the Ummah. In *Risāla fī madhhab al-ṭabāʾiʿīn* (Treatise on the Doctrine of the Naturalists), al-ʿAṭṭār compares theology, natural science and mathematics, noting that the first is of little practical utility, the second causes "little harm and great benefit," and the third is "beneficial and useful in all cases."[249] He took efforts to change this state of affairs.

Many articles and chapters on al-ʿAṭṭār have described his reforms at al-Azhar in imprecise terms, listing the new subjects which were taught with no further details. In *Dhayl tarikh al-Jabartī,* Ḥasan Qāsim transmits a list of specific titles which al-ʿAṭṭār added to the Azhar curriculum in various disciplines. These included:

- *Wasīla Ibn al-Hāʾim*, *al-Muqniʿ*, and *al-Maʿūna* by Ibn al-Hāʾim al-Misri (d. 815/1412) on mathematics

- *Manẓūma al-Yāsamīniyya* by Ibn al-Yāsamīn (d. 1204) on algebra

- *Daqāʾiq al-ḥaqāʾiq* on mathematics by Sayf al-Din al-Amidi (d. 631/1233)

- *al-Daqāʾiq* by Sibṭ al-Maridīnī (d. 1506) on astronomical calculations

- *al-Munḥarafāt* by Sibṭ al-Maridīnī on grammar

- *al-Lumaʿa* on calendrical calculations (no author found)

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[248] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:247.
[249] ʿAṭṭār, *Risāla fī madhhab al-ṭabāʾiʿīn*, 85.

- *al-Mūjaz fī al-ṭibb* on medicine by Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 1288), with the commentary of Ibn al-Amshāṭī (d. 902/1496), titled *al-Munjaz fī sharḥ al-mūjaz*

- *Qānūn Ibn Sīnā* by Ibn Sina (d. 427/1037) on medicine and pharmacology

- *Kāmil al-ṣināʿa al-ṭibbiyya* by ʿAlī b. al-ʿAbbās al-Mājūsī (d. 982–994) on medicine, with an unnamed versification (*naẓm*)

- *ʿAyn al-ḥayāt fī ʿilm istinbat al-miyah* by Aḥmad al-Damanhūrī (d. 1778) on geology and hydrology

- *al-Taṣrīḥ bi khulāṣa al-qawl al-ṣaḥīḥ* on surgery an unknown commentary on *al-Qawl al-ṣaḥīḥ fī ʿilm al-tashrīḥ* by al-Damanhūrī

- *Bahjat al-manṭūq wa 'l-mafhūm* by Muḥammad b. Sāʿd al-Anṣārī (d. 1348) (better known as Ibn al-Akfānī) on Islamic numerology/lettrism and talismans

- *Ikhtirāq al-āfāq* on magic squares (*ʿilm al-awfāq*) by al-Damanhūrī

- A section from *Inshāʾ al-ʿAṭṭār* by al-ʿAṭṭār himself, dealing with legal documentation.[250]

This list is remarkable both for its specificity and for its contents. Al-ʿAṭṭār's assignment of *Qānūn Ibn Sīnā* at 19th century al-Azhar is a new chapter in the history of Islamic civilization's longest-running medical textbooks. It is also striking that al-ʿAṭṭār assigned books offering instruction in the occult sciences such as lettrism, talismans and magic squares at one of the world's strongholds of Sunni orthodoxy. It has been pointed out by some academics that study of the occult was an integral part of classical Islamic intellectual life. It seems that al-ʿAṭṭār either simply saw these subjects as a natural part of an Islamic scholarly education, or consciously sought to reintroduce their study as a part of his broader project to revive classical Islamic intellectualism in modern times. It is noteworthy that al-ʿAṭṭār diverges widely from Ibn Khaldūn, one of his most significant influences, in this endorsement of occultism. While Ibn

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[250] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 13f.

Khaldūn expressed skepticism and condemnation towards occult practices,[251] evidently al-ʿAṭṭār felt they ought to be studied by the students of al-Azhar.

It is also suggestive that despite his respect for the modern technical advancements of Europeans, and al-ʿAṭṭār's own translation of European technical manuals, all the assigned texts are from Muslim authors, and many in fact from the classical period. This is consistent with al-ʿAṭṭār's intellectual project to revive the heritage (*turāth*) of classical Islamic civilization in the modern period. It may have also been an effort to circumvent the prejudices towards foreign and unorthodox books among his contemporaries, of which he complained bitterly.

The authors of the assigned texts, mainly from Egypt and the Maghrib, seem likely to be representative of what al-ʿAṭṭār might have studied in his youth with the previous generation of Egyptian scholars of the rational sciences, and the community of Maghribi specialists in these sciences present in Egypt since the 17th century, as noted by El-Rouayheb.[252] This would have further emphasized to al-ʿAṭṭār's critics that the curriculum was continuous with earlier generations of Azharī scholarship.

Al-Damanhūrī, assigned multiple times on the list, is the strongest precedent for al-ʿAṭṭār's project. Ḥasan Qāsim opines that al-ʿAṭṭār's *mashyakha* "somewhat resembled that of shaykh Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Damanhūrī who preceded him" with regards to al-ʿAṭṭār's introduction of various non-religious sciences into the al-Azhar curriculum.[253] The idea that al-Damanhūrī was an inspiration for al-ʿAṭṭār is compelling, and their similarities are undeniable. Al-ʿAṭṭār was too young to have met al-Damanhūrī, but his teachers knew him personally and al-ʿAṭṭār evidently read a number of his works. Like al-ʿAṭṭār, he was an Egyptian religious

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[251] Ibn Khaldūn was concerned first and foremost with the social instability enabled by the practice of magic. For more on this, see: Asatrian, Mushegh. "Ibn Khaldūn on Magic and the Occult." *Iran & the Caucasus* 7, no. 1/2 (2003): 73–123.

[252] El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century*, 131.

[253] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 13.

scholar who delved deep into medicine and other applied sciences, and eventually became Shaykh al-Azhar.

Intriguingly, al-Damanhūrī reportedly studied *Wasīla Ibn al-Hāʾim*, *al-Muqniʿ*, *al-Maʿūna, al-Munḥarafāt, Qānūn Ibn Sīnā, Kāmil al-ṣināʿa al-ṭibbiyya* and *al-Mūjaz*; all books which al-ʿAṭṭār specifically assigned.[254] Given the overlap between al-Damanhūrī's studies and al-ʿAṭṭār's curriculum, it may be that the latter was reintroducing an earlier curriculum, or parts of it, which had fallen out of use since al-Damanhūrī's time – more research would be needed to verify this. Either way, it would have been easy for al-ʿAṭṭār to make the case that he was simply introducing a classical Arabic scientific course of study to al-Azhar, rather than introducing something totally new and foreign.

I believe al-ʿAṭṭār's choice of authors was also a deliberate attempt to construct for Azhar students a certain ideal scholar on which to model themselves. Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī was an expert in *fiqh*, philosophy and astronomy; Ibn al-Nafīs was a polymath, specialist in Shāfiʿī *fiqh*, and one of the greatest Arab medical writers of all time; Ibn al-Akfānī was a Kurdish Ḥanafī jurist who worked as a doctor in Cairo while writing on mathematics and astrology; Sibṭ al-Maridīnī was not only a jurist and master astronomer, but taught astronomy at al-Azhar mosque in the 15th century.[255] Al-Damanhūrī would have embodied this scholarly ideal of marrying the religious and applied sciences as a more proximate example, a Shaykh al-Azhar still in living memory. I believe al-ʿAṭṭār conceived of himself as a man of this type, which would not be unfair given the breadth of his writings. I suspect he may have especially admired

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[254] Dār al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣriyya. "Al-Imām Aḥmad Bin ʿAbd al-Munʿim Bin Ṣiyām al-Damanhūrī." Fatwā authority. Dār al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣriyya, 2017. https://web.archive.org/web/20170416044849/http://dar-alifta.org/AR/ViewScientist.aspx?sec=new&ID=19&LangID=1.

[255] Zirkilī, Khayr al-Dīn b. Muḥammad al-. *Al-Aʿlām*. Fifteenth printing. Vol. 7. 8 vols. Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-ʿIlm lil-Malayīn, 2002, 8:70, 7:54.

Ibn al-Amshāṭī, a 15th-century Cairene scholar who specialized in medicine and the arts of war, and traveled widely throughout his life; a man after his own heart.[256]

Through his assignment of these texts, and his sending of Azharī students to work as engineers at Muḥammad ʿAlī's Citadel, and his patronage of the Abū Zaʿbal Medical School, al-ʿAṭṭār hoped to cultivate a new generation of scholarship with broad horizons and technical skills to build for the Ummah an Islamic modernity.

2. The New ʿAṭṭārian Order: Utilitarianism, the Caliphate and Reform

2.1 Islamic Utilitarianism

Hasan al-ʿAṭṭār was the advocate of what I would term 'Islamic utilitarianism', adapting the term from the ethics of the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (d. 1832). Both men argued for an ethical calculus which maximizes benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) and minimizes harm (*mafsada*) to be applied at the individual and societal level. Both also arrived at the same conclusions regarding political legitimation as a result of their similar philosophies, rejecting dynastic claims to the divine right of kings and caliphs, respectively. Al-ʿAṭṭār diverges sharply from Bentham, however, in emphasizing the precedence of mankind's eternal benefit in the afterlife, that is to say through obedience to God according to His *sharīʿa*, even when this might conflict with material benefit.

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[256] Ibid., 7:163.

Attar and Bentham were near exact contemporaries, dying within a few years of one another. Given that Bentham's main text outlining his philosophy was published in 1780 and al-ʿAṭṭār was reportedly capable of reading English, it is possible that the latter was familiar with Bentham's ideas.[257] However, I think it more likely that al-ʿAṭṭār had no knowledge of Bentham or his conception of utilitarianism, and the similarity of their contemporaneous ideas, while intriguing, is coincidental.

The basic principle of Bentham's utilitarianism – the maximization of benefit – is outlined at the beginning of his landmark work, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789):

> "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do […] They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think […] By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words to promote or to oppose that happiness. I say of every action whatsoever, and therefore not only of every action of a private individual, but of every measure of government."[258]

Happiness or benefit is, in Bentham's description, ultimately pleasure itself, opposed by harm, which is ultimately pain:

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[257] Armitage has remarked that Bentham's followers made great efforts to translate and spread his works, and that "[by] the time of Bentham's death his acolytes had indeed spread his ideas from the Americas to Bengal and from Russia to New South Wales, by way of Geneva, Greece and Tripoli." Still, to establish influence of Bentham on al-ʿAṭṭār would require a specific reference by the latter to the former.
Armitage, David. "Globalizing Jeremy Bentham." *History of Political Thought* 32, no. 1 (2011): 66.
[258] Bentham, Jeremy. "Of the Principle of Utility." In *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, First edition. London: T. Payne & Sons, 1780, 1–2.

"By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered…"[259]

Attar for his part 'comes to the same thing' in his own description of utilitarian ethics, although entirely from within the Islamic tradition.[260] In *ḤJJ* he writes:

"Benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) is pleasure (*ladhdha*) or what leads to it, while harm (*mafsada*) is pain (*ʾalam*) or what leads to it, and both of these have their worldly and otherworldly forms."[261]

Attar's caveat of "otherworldly forms" of pleasure is what distinguishes his philosophy from the more materialist focus of Bentham, and what gives it its Islamic character. While material pleasures are to be sought as a general rule, one must be "careful of those of the hereafter, for these are the true pleasures neither preceded nor followed by pain, and without compare. The people of heaven find the pleasure of drinking without thirst, and the pleasure of food without hunger."[262] The world is thus, in al-ʿAṭṭār's conception, about obtaining worldly pleasure, within the boundaries set by God to achieve the eternal pleasures of heaven. The distinction is also that between the foundation of Western modernity, which is essentially materialist, and that of the Islamic modernity for which Ṭaha advocates, which is essentially ethical.[263] The *telos* at which al-ʿAṭṭār's nascent modern Islamic project is aimed is salvation, to which mastering the material world is only incidental, rather than the end in itself.

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[259] Ibid., 2.
[260] Gran has argued that this outlook was guided by a particular 19th century strand of Māturīdī theology which he acquired during his travels in the Ottoman Empire. Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*, 132.
[261] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:319.
[262] Ibid., 2:511.
[263] Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 77–78.

Even should the potential material benefit of an action or worldly law greatly outweigh its worldly harm, it is not to be acted upon if it contradicts the limits set by the *sharīʿa*. Al-ʿAṭṭār cites al-Ghazālī, criticizing the lack of attention to *maṣlaḥa* (according to his utilitarian understanding of the concept) in the early Islamic tradition:

"We say: The difference between us [and Mālik] is that we have paid attention to a great principle which Mālik ignored – we have given precedence to the consensus of the Companions on the issue of *maṣlaḥa*, and every *maṣlaḥa* which we know definitely happened in their time, RA, and what they forbade and ignored. We know definitively that theft continued and became widespread in the time of the Companions, and that they were not punished harshly for this, nor were their tongues cut off for idle chatter despite an abundance of idle chatter, nor did they expropriate the property of the rich despite an abundance of rich men and desperate need. Everything [the Companions] forbade, we forbid as well. Mālik did not draw attention to this principle…"

Attar then recounts a story in which ʿUmar threatens to appropriate the excessive wealth of Khalid b. al-Walīd and ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, but ultimately does not, using the story to argue that public benefit can never serve as a pretext to expropriate the rich, because theft is explicitly forbidden in the *sharīʿa*.[264]

The English Utilitarians and al-ʿAṭṭār converge as well on madrasa education. Zaman recounts the debate between 'Orientalists' and 'Anglicists' (many among them Utilitarians, such as James Mill) within the colonial administration of India over the funding of native schools; the former supporting the traditional Islamic subjects, and the latter seeking to displace them with "useful instruction" in applied sciences. The debate, says Zaman, prompted Indian *ʿulamāʾ* to

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[264] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:328.

implicitly adopt Utilitarian reasoning in arguing for the 'usefulness' of madrasa education.[265] In

contrast to the Indian scholars, al-ʿAṭṭār began to consider madrasa education (at al-Azhar) in

terms of its utility without any external influence, extolling the study of the natural sciences over

theology for their greater practical utility, and introducing a considerable number of scientific

manuals to the curriculum at al-Azhar, as mentioned in the previous section.

      Al-ʿAṭṭār's rational utilitarianism extended into his approach to Islamic law. For actions

not explicitly mandated or forbidden in the *sharīʿa*, "the judge of good and evil actions is the

rational mind, encompassing benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) and harm (*mafsada*)," he writes.[266] In *ḤJJ* he

argues in support of the validity of *tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ*; acting on more convenient rulings from

outside one's own *madhhab*. He endorses the practice, albeit with some restrictions to avoid the

religious chaos which could emerge if every layman felt himself entitled to mix and match legal

opinions according to his own convenience.[267] While easier rulings should be provided to people

whenever possible, they cannot violate the clearly-defined prescriptions of the *sharīʿa*; even if

acting upon these is difficult, they can be considered pursuant to the greater, delayed *maṣlaḥa* of

divine felicity.[268]

      Al-ʿAṭṭār's Islamic utilitarianism is not universalistic; *maṣlaḥa* is not considered for

mankind in a universal sense, but for Muslims first and foremost, at the expense of disbelievers,

whose lives, and consequently pleasure and pain, are of lesser value than those of Muslims. He

approvingly recounts a story written by al-Ṣalāḥ al-Ṣafadī, in which a sinking ship of Muslims

and disbelievers argue over who will be thrown overboard that the rest may survive.[269] The

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[265] Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. "Religious Education and the Rhetoric of Reform: The Madrasa in British India and Pakistan." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 2 (1999): 298–299.

[266] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 1:83.

[267] Ibid., 2:441–442.

[268] Ibid., 2:121.

[269] Notably, this is an example of utilitarian ethical reasoning which al-Ghazālī specifically rejected in *al-Mustaṣfā*. See: Lombardi, Clark B. *State Law as Islamic Law in Modern Egypt: The Incorporation of the Sharīʿa into Egyptian*

Muslim captain devises a clever system for determining victims, which sees all the Muslims survive at the expense of their disbelieving shipmates.[270]

The concept of *maṣlaḥa*, on which al-ʿAṭṭār's utilitarianism is founded, is not his own invention; it was a part of Islamic legal theory, invoked even by al-Subkī and al-Maḥallī, on whose work al-ʿAṭṭār's *ḥāshiya* is written. Utilitarian reasoning on the basis of *maṣlaḥa*, writes Lombardi, was a topic of debate dating back to the classical period, notably refuted by Ibn Qudāma among others.[271] According to Hallaq, *maṣlaḥa* was a minor and controversial doctrine in medieval *fiqh*, rejected in most cases because of its lack of explicit justification in the foundational texts.[272] There were exceptions to this: Zaman has written at length on the radical centrality of *maṣlaḥa* to the legal reasoning of the Ḥanbalī Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 1316),[273] and the idea of an 'Islamic utilitarianism' has been previously ascribed to al-Ghazālī,[274] and to Ibn Taymiyya by Jon Hoover. He writes that:

> "Ibn Taymiyya's diverse interventions reflect a religious utilitarianism ever seeking the most effective way to point readers toward what he believed to be in everyone's best interest – full obedience to God – and he supports this with a theology of God's utilitarian activity working toward that same goal."[275]

I believe that al-ʿAṭṭār's utilitarianism was the product of influence by Ottoman thinkers such as Ibrahim Müteferrika and Raghib Pasha, as well as possibly Ibn Taymiyya, whose political

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Constitutional Law. Studies in Islamic Law and Society 19. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishing, 2006, 38.

[270] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:331.

[271] Lombardi, *State Law as Islamic Law*, 31.

[272] Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, 112–113, 214.

[273] Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 110–112.

[274] Khayati, Islah. "Elements of Utilitarianism in Al-Ghazali's Thought." State Islamic University, Walisongo Semarang, 2015. https://eprints.walisongo.ac.id/id/eprint/4316/1/104111024.pdf.

[275] Hoover, Jon. "Foundations of Ibn Taymiyya's Religious Utilitarianism." In *Philosophy and Jurisprudence in the Islamic World*, edited by Peter Adamson, 1:145–68. Philosophy in the Islamic World in Context. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019, 168.

writings he may have encountered via the same network of Ottoman elites in Istanbul.[276]

Al-ʿAṭṭār was, we know, a reader of Ibn Taymiyya's work and counted among his teachers some of Ibn Taymiyya's greatest proponents of the 18th century. It may be that he imbibed some of Ibn Taymiyya's utilitarian perspective from his readings, or from his teachers. Al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla* also bears significant similarity in its content and utilitarian arguments to Ibn Taymiyya's *Risāla fī 'l-khilāfa*; a point that will be explored later in this section.

If *maṣlaḥa* was not the original creation of al-ʿAṭṭār, it might well be asked what is novel in his use of the concept, and why he has been described here as an Islamic utilitarian. Firstly, al-ʿAṭṭār stands at the beginning of the modern trend to put *maṣlaḥa* at the very center of Islamic legal theory, a framework reproduced (with modifications) by Muḥammad ʿAbduh, Rashīd Riḍā, and a host of other modern jurists, where before, as noted by Hallaq, the concept had been marginal to mainstream legal thought. Secondly, al-ʿAṭṭār's particular definition and deployment of the term *maṣlaḥa* bears a striking similarity with that of the contemporary English Utilitarian school – hence the name. Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār expanded *maṣlaḥa* from a legal doctrine to a general philosophy of utility, evident in his actions as Shaykh al-Azhar and advisor to Muḥammad ʿAlī, and his writings on law, science, government and society.

2.2 The Rational and Hierarchical Ordering of Society

Al-ʿAṭṭār's utilitarian approach to politics, law, society and religious education, seeking the widest public benefit by any means possible, occasionally conflicted with established traditions. Al-ʿAṭṭār conceived of a rational ordering of society, in which every person was

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[276] For more on the appreciation for Ibn Taymiyya's political theory among Ottoman elites, see: Terzioğlu, Derin. "Ibn Taymiyya, al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya, and the Early Modern Ottomans." In *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750*, 177:101–54. Islamic History and Civilization. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishing, 2021, 101–154.

bound to contribute to economically productive activities, rather than live off of the pious charity of others, and justified a hierarchical order of social relations on utilitarian grounds.[277] [278] In a passage from *ḤJJ*, in which he gives his own thoughts and quotes at length from *Safīnat al-Raghib*, al-ʿAṭṭār evinces a utilitarian and anticlerical perspective surprising from a religious scholar:

> "The various trades and industries are necessary to the survival of the human species, and if abandoned by everyone, everyone would be in sin, because [work] is a collective obligation. Because of this, it is said that man is civilized by his very nature, and therefore the abandonment of work runs contrary to the system of the world itself. To God is the arrangement of the ordinary causes with which judgment and public interests (*maṣāliḥ*) are connected, […] And the Lord has not divided mankind by way of equality, but rather by way of disparity, for had He made them all equal, none would serve the other, and none would be content in serving the other. So disparity was made the reality between them that they might cooperate and be kind to one another. Thus, the rich employ the poor in hard work for wages, and the richer poor [ie the bourgeoisie] in tiring travel, bringing the goods needed by the poor from distant lands."[279] [280]

Al-ʿAṭṭār shows here a markedly hierarchical view of human relations, with men created fundamentally unequal, and bound teleologically into the roles of servant and master so as to

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[277] This is another position al-ʿAṭṭār shares with Bentham. Francis writes that the latter held there to be a "physical impossibility of absolute equality and independence" among men, and that "subjection rather than independence is the natural state of man." Francis, Mark. "The Nineteenth Century Theory of Sovereignty and Thomas Hobbes." *History of Political Thought* 1, no. 3 (1980): 521.

[278] It is also a position shared with İbrahim Müteferrika, whom I believe to have been another major influence on al-ʿAṭṭār, described in the next subsection. Müteferrika warned in his writings that mingling of the classes, stratified by nature, is a prescription for anarchy. Erginbaş, *Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context*, 91.

[279] Aṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:527.

[280] Although this passage is al-ʿAṭṭār's own writing, it is highly similar to a separate passage from *Safīnat al-Raghib* in "Chapter Twenty-One on the Elite of Mankind" which justifies a hierarchical system of class relations as necessary for economic production and specialized trades, and as a consequence of men's inherent inequality combined with mutual interdependence. See: Raghib Pasha. *Safīnat al-Raghib wa-dafīnat al-maṭālib*. Cairo, Egypt: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Khidīwiyya, 1282, 240.

produce a productive, functional society. It has been speculated by El-Bendary that during the French occupation of Egypt, al-ʿAṭṭār became inspired by the ideals of the French Enlightenment by reading the Napoleonic Code.[281] It is certainly possible that al-ʿAṭṭār did read the Napoleonic Code during this time, or that he read the Constitution of the French Republic and the Declaration of the Rights of Man while in Istanbul, as noted in section 1, but given what he writes in *ḤJJ* in 1830, the influence of French Enlightenment thought on his overall outlook could have only been rather limited. He does not appear to put much stock in *Liberté, Égalité*, or *Fraternité*.

ʿAṭṭār continues, now quoting from Raghib Pasha:

"Raghib [Pasha] says in *Kitāb al-dharīʿā*: 'Earning in this material world, even if it is legally neutral in one respect, is obligatory in another, and that is because it is not possible for a person to preoccupy themselves with worship except by removing the necessities of his life [from his immediate consideration], so their removal becomes obligatory, along with whatever is necessary for the fulfillment of that obligation. If one has no means of removing his necessities [from immediate consideration] except through taking the labor of the people, then he must compensate them, otherwise he would be oppressing them. So whoever relies on the labor of others for his food, clothing, dwelling and so on – he must absolutely compensate them according to what he gains from them. This is why he who identifies himself as a Sufi is reviled; he is willfully unemployed, he has no knowledge that can be taken from him, nor any righteous deeds in [service of] the religion which may be imitated. Rather, he makes his stomach and genitals his concern, for he takes benefit from the people and constricts their livelihood, providing no benefit in return. There is no utility in their ideals except wasting water and raising prices. As for

[281] El-Bendary, *Min Rawād al-azhar al-sharīf*, 491.

avoiding taking the sultan's money and trying to help the needy, this is a higher station than what was mentioned before [i.e. Sufism], because it combines many virtues and has been the preoccupation of many great scholars. Many of these have been knowledgeable in commerce, such as Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, Imam Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Bukhārī, ʿAbd Allāh b. Mubārak, and their likes. Ibn ʿAsākir mentioned in his *History of Damascus* that Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ once said to ʿAbd Allāh b. Mubārak, 'You order us to be ascetic, modest and eloquent, and yet we see you coming loaded with commercial wares from Khurasan to the Haram; how is this the case while you order us otherwise?' So Ibn al-Mubārak said: 'O Abū ʿAlī, I do this to protect my face, to ennoble my honor, and to seek help in obedience to my Lord. I do not see a right of God except that I rush to fulfill it.'"[282]

This passage is an excerpt from *Safīnat al-Raghib,* by Koca Muhammad Raghib Pasha (d. 1763), an Ottoman official who governed Egypt from 1744 to 1748, and served as Grand Vizier from 1757 until his death. Aside from his political career, he was a reputable scholar of Islam; al-Jabartī describes him as "among the noblest of scholars and the noblest of governors both… who brought both things together and was a master of the rational and transmitted sciences, and tertiary and foundational issues (*furūʿ wa-uṣūl*)."[283] His book, coincidentally very similar to *ḤJJ* in content and scope, was highly regarded among Ottoman elites in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, not only in Istanbul but in the provinces as well. Given its popularity among late Ottoman elites and huge range of (often obscure) topics, from heresiography to exegesis to letter magic, the book is highly deserving of future study as a wide window into the world of late

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[282] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:527.
[283] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 1:299.

Ottoman religious thought.[284] [285] Al-ʿAṭṭār, commenting on the quote included above from al-Jabartī, describes how he came to possess a copy:

> "I say, the aforementioned *Safīnat al-Raghib* is a huge volume which was given to me by the head of the viziers of Rūm,[286] and it has a very prodigious reputation among the governors of Islāmbūl, and is abundant in *awqāf* and other places. I read it while I was residing in Islāmbūl, [...] I also saw the aforementioned *Safīna* in Jerusalem at the *waqf* of Ḥasan Effendī, the captain (*naqīb*) while I was residing in Jerusalem. Thus were the governors (*wazīr*s) previously; most of them were scholars! As for now, most of them cannot read or write, or recite the *Fātiḥa* correctly. Time has been reversed and ignorance has become the norm. We belong to Allāh and to Him do we return."[287]

Raghib Pasha's, and by extension al-ʿAṭṭār's main criticism against Sufis in the quoted passage is that they are a net drain on society; they consume resources while providing nothing of value in compensation. He repeats this criticism of false Sufis years later in *ḤJJ*, remarking "How many people have we seen dressed up in righteousness, a trap to devour people's money unjustly? [And yet] others shy away from facing this reality."[288] The criticism is significant in that unlike, for example, contemporary Wahhābī critiques of Sufi religious practices as corrupted deviations from true Islam, Raghib Pasha's primary issue is with Sufis as a counter-productive economic class inimical to a rational capitalistic mode of production.[289] The focus is indicative of

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[284] Raghib Pasha, *Safīnat al-Raghib*, 1282.

[285] Raghib Pasha could also be portrayed, like Müteferrika, as an early modernizer: among his main projects as Grand Vizier was improving the efficiency and regulation of the Ottoman bureaucracy and judiciary, respectively, and ultimately faced considerable backlash in his time from threatened Ottoman elites.
See: Kocić, Marija. "The Problem of 'Albanian Nationalism' during the Reign of Koca Mehmed Ragib Pasha (1757-1763) in the Light of the Venetian Report." Research paper. The Modernization of the Western Balkans. Belgrade, Serbia: Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, 2016, 83, 88.

[286] I believe this was most like Kör Yusuf Pasha, the Grand Vizier from 1798 to 1805.

[287] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 1:299.

[288] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:193.

[289] It is worth noting here that despite his critique, just like al-ʿAṭṭār Raghib Pasha was a member of a branch of the Khalwati Sufi order; in fact there is evidence that he promoted the order in Egypt while serving as governor.

a utilitarian bent I believe to be characteristic of al-ʿAṭṭār's approach to politics, law, science, and religion, and of his fundamentally modern and critical subjectivity. The principle of critique which is essential to the spirit of modernity, writes Hallaq, describing the philosophy of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṭaha, entails rationalization (*taʿqīl*), "the act of subjecting all natural phenomena, social institutions, and history and all else to rational scrutiny".[290] Al-ʿAṭṭār, in critiquing irrational and unproductive social structures propped up by tradition, participates in the construction of an independent Islamic modernity.

2.3 İbrahim Müteferrika and the Ottoman *Nizam-ı Cedid* Movement

ʿAṭṭār bears a striking similarity, in the course of his life and in his intellectual *oeuvre*, to the 18th century Ottoman scholar İbrahim Müteferrika (d. 1747), whose thought influenced generations of Ottoman elite thinkers as part of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* (New Order) movement, and, I would conjecture, Hasan al-ʿAṭṭār, who joined their network during his time in Istanbul.

Müteferrika was a Hungarian convert to Islam who made a career for himself in the Ottoman civil service. Aside from his official work, he wrote on politics and history, ardently calling for the reform and revitalization of the Ottoman state through imitation of the rising European powers. His writing fits into a reformist current of Ottoman political thought which dated back to at least 1699, when the Empire was defeated by European powers and forced to sign the Treaty of Karlowitz.[291] In his book *Usulu 'l-hikem fi nizami 'l-umem*, Müteferrika called for Muslims to imitate Europeans in their military technology and tactics on utilitarian grounds.

Criticism of exploitative Sufi shaykhs is nothing new, however the formulation of Raghib Pasha's critique cited by al-ʿAṭṭār, emphasizing the net drain on the economy represented by a full-time Sufi shaykh, is perhaps novel. See: Hathaway, Jane. "Rewriting Eighteenth-Century Ottoman History." *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (2004): 40.

[290] Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 81.

[291] Menchinger, Ethan L. "Intellectual Creativity in a Time of Turmoil and Transition." In *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, edited by Armando Salvatore, Roberto Tottoli, Babak Rahimi, M. Fariduddin Attar, and Naznin Patel, 460. Wiley Blackwell Histories of Religion. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018.

He was also greatly interested in science, writing some treatises of his own, was a geographer, and opened the Empire's first Arabic printing press with Yirmisekizçelebizade Efendi, which published books in history, geography and lexicography. This all happened in the much-celebrated 'Tulip Era' (*lale devri*) of the early 18th century.[292]

Müteferrika's ideas enjoyed a revival in the late 18th century when an aggressively pro-reform faction formed at the Ottoman court in response to the Empire's defeats by Imperial Russia in 1774 and 1792. Ahmed Resmi (d. 1783), Ebubekir Ratib (d. 1799) and Ahmed Vasif (d. 1806) were scribes who had contributed to the restructuring policies of Abdülhamid I, and then again under the even more reformist Selim III (r. 1789–1808), author of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* reform program.[293]

The parallels between Müteferrika and al-ʿAṭṭār are striking. Both took up government jobs in the Ottoman world, worked towards military modernization to restore a balance of Muslim military power with the West, wrote scientific treatises, were involved in early printing presses, and had interests in the same non-religious academic subjects. There is no evidence that al-ʿAṭṭār was directly inspired by Müteferrika, but other scholars have considered the idea, and it is suggestive that almost the exact reform agenda al-ʿAṭṭār (or rather Muḥammad ʿAlī) pursued in Egypt had happened in Istanbul just decades before he visited. Menchinger notes that Müteferrika's ideas only grew in influence over succeeding generations, with the revival of interest in his work as part of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* movement coinciding precisely with the period in which al-ʿAṭṭār lived in the Ottoman capital.[294] Al-ʿAṭṭār would have presumably seen the popularity of Müteferrika's work during his two stays in Istanbul, and it seems fair to say that he

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[292] Ibid., 462.
[293] Ibid., 466.
[294] Ibid., 467.

was strongly influenced by the intellectual life of contemporary Ottoman elites, no doubt significantly the work of Müteferrika.

I would not be the first to draw a connection between Müteferrika and al-ʿAṭṭār's Egypt; al-Baghdādī briefly suggests that al-ʿAṭṭār's Egypt built off the reform experience of the Ottomans,[295] and Menchinger writes that although the *Nizam-ı Cedid* came to a halt in Istanbul with the deposition and assassination of Selim III in 1807, the reform programme was appropriated by Muḥammad ʿAlī and applied in Egypt.[296] In his telling, the Pasha "used a similar model [to the *Nizam-ı Cedid*] in the early 19th century to found a European-style army, reform taxation, administration, and the land tenure system, and create a professional bureaucracy. He was helped in this endeavor by a number of figures, like the scholar Hasan al-ʿAṭṭār."[297] Al-ʿAṭṭār would have been well-suited to the task of reproducing the *Nizam-ı Cedid* programme in Egypt, having spent years under the patronage of Selim III in Istanbul, and moving "in circles that, while not opposed to reform, resented Selim's methods".[298]

Essentially, both Muḥammad ʿAlī and al-ʿAṭṭār appear to have been familiar with the Ottoman modernization movement inspired by Müteferrika, and attempted to implement it, according to their roles, in 19th century Egypt. Recognition of this shared inspiration may well have been a cause for the Pasha's enthusiastic embrace of al-ʿAṭṭār upon his introduction by Sami Bey, described in section one. The copying of Ottoman Tulip Era policies under Muḥammad ʿAlī could possibly allow his reign to be considered an 'Egyptian Tulip Period'.

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[295] Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 12.
[296] Muḥammad ʿAlī in fact named a new European-style army created in 1815 the *Nizam-ı Cedid*, explicitly copying the bygone example of Selim III. Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī*, 126.
[297] Menchinger, *Intellectual Creativity*, 467.
[298] Ibid.

2.4 Al-ʿAṭṭār on Islamic Weakness

Al-ʿAṭṭār's was deeply concerned with the material weakness of Muslims as compared with Europeans, whose superiority in science, technology, and military tactics made a deep impression on the young al-ʿAṭṭār in 1798. In a note written years after the fact, he laments the inability of Mamluk troops to defeat French forces even while vastly outnumbering them:

"Among the strangest things one hears is that all those soldiers who came with the vizier to extract the province of Egypt from the hands of the French, joined by people from the country and Egyptian Mamluks, besieged Bayt al-Afī, which was in Azbakiyya, garrisoned by about 200 Frenchmen for about 30 days, but they were unable to take it. The French Christians took from them a rampart at Kūm al-Rīsh at Barakat al-Riṭlī, after which most of the soldiers crowded onto it, and they were not able to extract it. So how were they unable to extract that great province? This is the utmost degree of incompetence and weakness; may God have mercy on the one who said (in full):

A lion unto me / but an ostrich in war."[299]

He also notes with contempt how the Ottoman army of Yūsuf Ẓiyā Pasha was unable to retake the country except with the aid of the English. This concern for the material and technological weakness of Egypt and the wider Ottoman realm appears to have been a motivating factor for much of al-ʿAṭṭār's scientific reformism. He pursued the study of applied sciences himself, and when given the authority, pressed the Egyptian *ʿulamāʾ* to do the same, with the aim of improving the technological base of the Ottoman realm. Al-ʿAṭṭār speaks glowingly of how he came to study 'Frankish' weapons of war; through scientific experimentation, he writes:

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[299] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 3:105.

"strange secrets are revealed to the astute, and upon them many insights are built in the science of pulling weights, the science of tricks, and the creation of wondrous machines. It happened in our time that I was brought books from the land of the Franks, which had been translated to Turkish and Arabic, in which were many techniques, and minute operations. I familiarized myself with it, and saw that these techniques were developed from principles of engineering and the natural sciences, from potentiality to action. The books spoke of war machines, and combustion engines; they paved the way therein, with rules and fundamental principles, to an exact science, split into many sub-disciplines…"[300]

Likewise, as Shaykh al-Azhar al-ʿAṭṭār was most likely behind a decree from the Pasha in 1249/1834 which mandated that Azharīs who studied military engineering at the Citadel's *mühendishane* would receive high salaries; higher than regular Azharīs. Scharfe holds that "since many of his students went into government service, he may also have pursued a strategy of bringing Azharīs into the *mühendishane*, especially at a time (ca. 1249/1834) when he was particularly energetic in promoting reform."[301] Years prior in 1831, archival documents show that he collaborated with the supervisor of the Būlāq press, Abdülkerim Efendi to train (another) fifty Azharīs to work at the press as printers and typesetters.[302]

The purpose of developing an indigenous class of modern military and civilian engineers and printers was obviously utilitarian, intended to grow the country's military and productive capacity in the ultimate pursuit of *maṣlaḥa*. The fact that these workers were drawn from the mass of young aspiring scholars of the sacred law at al-Azhar was an acceptable cost in the interest of creating a modern economy and civilization for Islam.

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[300] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:506.
[301] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 225f.
[302] Ibid., 228.

2.5 Injustice and Public Welfare

Despite his elitist personality, al-ʿAṭṭār demonstrates marked concern for the common man in his vicious criticisms of the depredations of the various military regimes which occupied Egypt during his lifetime, especially during his self-imposed exile from the country. Writing in the margins of his copy of *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, al-ʿAṭṭār condemns in no uncertain terms the entire Ottoman army of Husrev Pasha which reoccupied Egypt after the French withdrawal.

"This group has been like this for a long time, when they met the disbelievers who were weaker than the Muslims, they were the opposite of how Allāh described the Companions of the Prophet, when He said: 'harsh against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves.' Then, after this group came to be established in Egypt at the hands of the English, who expelled the French from [the country] in peace, they acted harshly, transgressed the limits [of Allāh], innovated new oppressions, persecuted Muslims, and brought about debauchery and iniquity beyond description. May Allāh destroy them."[303]

Husrev Pasha was widely unpopular in Egypt; "a bloodthirsty, rapacious man" in Marsot's description.[304] However al-ʿAṭṭār's criticism extended to Muḥammad ʿAlī's government as well, which rose to power on a wave of mass support. In 1809 or 1810, he prays that "Allāh return me to my homeland, Egypt, and destroy those who displaced its people and disperse them soon."[305] By this time the French, British, Ottoman and Mamluk armies had been 'dispersed' from Egypt for years, meaning this could only refer to Muḥammad ʿAlī's regime, which he would ironically come to serve in later years.

Two years later in 1811, al-ʿAṭṭār writes:

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[303] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 3:105.
[304] Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī*, 38.
[305] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 2:14.

"I ask Him, Glory be to Him, to scatter the outrageous tyrants (*ṭāghiyya*) who have transgressed the boundaries [of Allāh] and who have in Egypt committed oppressive acts (*maẓālim*) never perpetrated even by the Magians (*al-majūs*) and the Jews. May Allāh destroy them as He did ʿĀd and Thamūd. *Amīn, amīn, amīn.*"[306]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's designation of Muḥammad ʿAlī as a *ṭāghūt*, a term used in the Qur'an to describe the most execrable tyrants such as the Pharaoh of Moses, is harsh and direct; one certainly cannot ascribe him to the quietist tradition of Islamic scholarship. His repeated criticisms suggest a concern for the general public, long-suffering under successive exploitative regimes. This last comment also came a year and a half after the exile of ʿUmar Makram by Muḥammad ʿAlī, marking the nadir of relations between the latter and the Egyptian *ʿulamā*'.[307]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's firm and open criticism of oppressive governance could perhaps be the influence of his teacher, Amīr al-Kabīr. The latter was not fond of the Mamluk elite (or perhaps the elite class in general) which caused chaos in Egypt in the years leading up to the French invasion, and criticized their depredations against the Egyptian population. While Muḥammad ʿAlī struggled for control of Egypt in the early 19th century and the Mamluks planned their recapture of the city from Upper Egypt, Amīr al-Kabīr took the opportunity to levy exorbitant taxes on the families of the beys which had remained in Cairo, effectively expropriating their wealth and properties.[308] Muḥammad ʿAlī, who perhaps still envisioned some reconciliation with the Mamluks, or was simply alarmed at the *ʿulamā*' taking forceful and independent political action, rebuked Amir and his co-conspirators, which led Amir to condemn the Pasha in even harsher terms.[309] In any event, Amir's distaste for the pillaging of the Mamluks may have

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[306] Ibid., 3:313.
[307] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 164.
[308] Which in turn had been expropriated from the Egyptian public, to a large extent.
[309] Hilāl, *Al-Iftā' al-Miṣrī*, 2:1145.

prefigured al-ʿAṭṭār's own condemnation for the various military authorities of Egypt during his lifetime.

ʿAṭṭār was generally disappointed with the conditions of his age, intellectual, political, and moral. Politically, aside from the successive governments of Egypt, he also found occasion to criticize the lavish lifestyles of the Albanian governors of the empire, and indirectly the Katiboğlu dynasty for their mismanagement of Izmir.

As he aged, al-ʿAṭṭār appears to have moderated his rhetoric. He writes at the end of his life in *ḤJJ* against the legality of rebellion (*khurūj*) against Muslim rulers, even if they are corrupt.

> "Al-Taftāzānī says in his *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid*, commenting on the source text, that 'the leader is not dismissed for immorality and injustice,' even if he is clearly corrupt. Immorality has been widespread among the leaders and princes since the Rashidun caliphs, and [yet] the Salaf would obey them and congregate for Friday prayers and Eid prayers with their permission, and did not countenance rebellion against them."[310]

Although al-ʿAṭṭār does not elaborate further, it might be inferred that he forbade rebellion for the same utilitarian objectives as the authors of the *matn* and *sharḥ* on which he wrote this passage, Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, respectively: peace, order, and the public welfare of the Muslim nation.

Al-ʿAṭṭār lived in a time of, from his perspective, crushing oppression and immorality. Despite this, he was, by 1830 when he wrote this, a political pragmatist and an old man who was no stranger to the chaos of insurrection and war. He had seen the jihad against the French occupation, in which Amīr al-Kabīr was imprisoned; Muḥammad ʿAlī's war with the Mamluks; the insurrection and counter-insurrection against Selim III in Istanbul; and potentially the

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[310] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:483.

military strife of the Georgian Mamluk dynasty in Iraq. As a young man he grew up in a time of upheaval and financial distress caused by the feuding of the Mamluk beys, with disastrous effects on the arts and sciences which he experienced personally, and which as an older man he held to be essential to Egypt going forward. Elsewhere in HJJ he writes about the greater utilitarian value of the lives of soldiers over civilians, in the sense that the safety, happiness and pleasure of the Muslim Ummah is guaranteed by the strength of its armies to repel foreign invasions; internecine strife would of course see Muslims killing one another to the benefit of the disbelievers.[311] [312] Given this, al-ʿAṭṭār's position on accepting the rulers as they come is unsurprising.

2.6 ʿAṣabiyya and the nature of the caliphate: al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*

Al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa al-islāmiyya wa manāqib al-khilāfa al-ʿuthmāniyya* (Treatise Confirming the Islamic Caliphate and the Virtues of the Ottoman Caliphate), is an important source on the shaykh's political theology, which has gone largely unstudied in European languages. The work has, however, been the subject of at least four modern Arabic studies, each providing a critical edition of the text with a brief introduction and analysis. Unfortunately, I was only able to acquire copies of three studies on the work, by Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Baghdādī in 2004, Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh Najm in 2006, and by Muḥammad ʿAbd

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[311] Ibid., 2:331.

[312] This utilitarian argument against rebellion was also made by Ibn Taymiyya, who argued that the detriments of insurrection always exceed those of leaving a tyrant in office. Hoover, *Foundations of Ibn Taymiyya's Religious Utilitarianism*, 146.

al-Qādir Naṣṣār in 2020; the remaining study is from a publisher which has since shut down permanently, making it difficult to find.

The treatise, some 40 pages-long, is an apologia for the institution of the caliphate as an Islamic obligation, a utilitarian refutation of the requirement of Qurayshī descent for eligibility as caliph, and a brief account of five historical caliphates, concluding with a defense of the Ottoman caliphate as a legitimate and virtuous Islamic state.

Of all al-ʿAṭṭār's works, none is so overlooked as his *Risāla* on the caliphate (excepting some works which remain unstudied in libraries in Syria), despite its easy availability in four editions. I believe the text is ignored by most scholarship on al-ʿAṭṭār, which frequently casts him as a liberal reformer or humanist in European languages, and as an Egyptian nationalist in Arabic; both narratives which are not served by a text endorsing the Ottoman caliphate as an ideal form of government.

For political reasons, many Egyptians today downplay their country's historical association with Turkey, and so ignore the Risala. The only Arab author, to my knowledge, who gives it any attention is Ahmad Najm, who uncoincidentally happens to teach Turkish language and literature at Ain Shams University. He is enthusiastic to discover an Egyptian who praised and defended the Ottoman caliphate.[313]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla* fits within a genre of apologetic works for the institution of the caliphate, typically in premodern times against Shīʿī criticism.[314] The text also represents a considerable departure from al-ʿAṭṭār's younger radicalism; Scharfe notes that:

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[313] Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 58f.
[314] Although al-ʿAṭṭār is highly critical of Shiism in both his *Risāla* and *ḤJJ*, the former is to a considerable extent an effort to advocate a historical narrative more sympathetic to the Alids than was typical in Sunni historiography. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 22.

"Like Ibn al-ʿAnnābī, alʿAṭṭār stresses the importance of effective *siyāsa* in order to apply sacred law. His comments are made in general terms, and the manuscript is undated, although it may have been written in the late 1820s, when there was a spate of political writings (e.g., by Ibn al-ʿAnnābī and others). In any case, this is a far cry from his earlier denunciations of 'tyrants who exceed all bounds.' [...] By contrast, his defense of the Ottoman caliphate even includes a section justifying the Umayyad caliphate, which succeeded ʿAlī. If this was sincere, al-ʿAṭṭār's religio-political views must have changed drastically over time."[315]

Although the work is nominally focused specifically on the institution of the caliphate, in truth it is a book on Islamic political theory in general, as well as Khaldūnian historical theory. Ibn Khaldūn is al-ʿAṭṭār's main reference in his *Risāla*; he opens the treatise with a quotation from the *Muqaddima* defining the office:

"To begin, the scholars have described the caliphate as a deputyship (*niyāba*) representing the bringer of the *sharīʿa* (peace and blessings of God be upon him), 'for the preservation of the religion and the political administration (*siyāsa*) of the mortal world (*dunyā*), and he who takes it up is called the caliph (*khalīfa*) and leader (*imām*)...'"[316]

Like Ibn Khaldūn and the Sunni mainstream, al-ʿAṭṭār describes the caliph as the (theoretically) universal political authority for all Muslims, whose appointment is a communal obligation, and to whom obedience is due from the elite in exchange for just governance, per the Shāfiʿī literature on the subject.[317] While acknowledging Ibn Khaldūn's major influence, "al-ʿAṭṭār was

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[315] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 239.
[316] ʿAṭṭār, *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa,* 1.
[317] Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq,* 24.

not a prisoner to his ideas," and according to al-Baghdādī progresses the concept of ʿaṣabiyya beyond Ibn Khaldūn in his *Risāla*.[318]

At the base, al-ʿAṭṭār's concept of ʿaṣabiyya is largely the same as Ibn Khaldūn's; groups of people held together by ʿaṣabiyya – shared identity, interests and energy – are able to build powerful states, which then fall to ruin by later generations with dissipated ʿaṣabiyya. His novel idea is, in al-Baghdādī's description, to conceive of ʿaṣabiyya not simply as a force which holds together tribal groups, but unrelated peoples on the basis of material conditions. "*ʿAṣabiyya* is, according to [al-ʿAṭṭār], more likely the result of economic and political factors."[319] The idea of al-ʿAṭṭār as the author of a sort of proto-Marxist materialist theory of history is intriguing, but cannot be fleshed out in any great depth based only on the content of this *Risāla*.[320] Al-Baghdādī is not necessarily wrong, and indeed the content of al-ʿAṭṭār's other writings supports the idea, such as his contempt for unproductive classes of Sufis and pragmatic approach to law and politics, but more sources would need to be uncovered to take the point much further.

The guiding purpose of government in all forms, both for al-ʿAṭṭār and the English utilitarians represented by Bentham, is to maximize the benefit and happiness of the governed. In Bentham's final major work and a crystallization of many of his main ideas, *Constitutional Code* (1820–1832), he writes that: "The right and proper end of government in every political community, is the greatest happiness of all the individuals of which it is composed, say, in other words, the greatest happiness of the greatest number."[321] Al-ʿAṭṭār, for his part, endorses the

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[318] Ibid.*,* 17f.
[319] Ibid., 36.
[320] İbrahim Müteferrika also conceives of a largely sociological theory of political order, with political life and history driven by inequalities in wealth and power and the drive of subordinates to overcome them. Like al-ʿAṭṭār, he was a reader of Ibn Khaldūn. Erginbaş, *Enlightenment in the Ottoman Context*, 85–86.
[321] Bentham, *Constitutional Code*, 5. As cited in Peardon, Thomas P. "Bentham's Ideal Republic." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue Canadienne d'Economique et de Science Politique* 17, no. 2 (1951): 185.

same principle at the beginning of his *Risāla*, with a priority on eternal, rather than material happiness.

> "[The] caliphate bears responsibility to give due consideration to the divine law, and to [the Muslims'] best interests (*maṣāliḥ*), otherworldly and worldly. All the conditions of the world which return to the Legislator (*al-Shāriʿ*) are expressions of best interests in the Hereafter, and that is because the purpose of created beings lies not in their [material] world alone (*dunyāhim faqaṭ*). This [world] is ultimately futile and false; its final end is death and annihilation. [...] Rather, their purpose is their religion which has been ruled for them (*maqḍā bihim*) as a means towards their [eternal] felicity (*saʿāda*) in their [lives in] the Hereafter. So the divine laws (*sharāʾiʿ*) came to carry them towards [felicity] in all of their varied states of being, including kingship (*mulk*)."[322]

Government, in al-ʿAṭṭār's conception, exists to preserve the *maṣlaḥa* of the governed, the proximate cause of which are worldly sources of happiness, and the ultimate cause of which is salvation, achieved through adherence to divine law.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's utilitarianism is also on display in his rejection of Qurayshī lineage (*Qurayshiyya*) as a requirement for eligibility as caliph; dissenting from the majority opinion, and from Ibn Khaldūn. He cites al-Bāqillānī as a classical support for this point of view, and replicates his line of argument in the *Risāla*; first denying the Imāmī Shīʿī claim of the caliphate's restriction to the Prophet's family, and then progressing to a denial of its restriction to the Prophet's extended tribal family, i.e. Quraysh.[323] [324]

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[322] ʿAṭṭār, *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, 1–2.
[323] Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq,* 31.
[324] Najm writes that al-ʿAṭṭār misrepresents al-Bāqillānī's view on this issue; see Appendix, p. 166.

The concept of a supernatural blessing inhering in the Prophet's immediate family, as held by the Shīʿa, or in his extended family as held by the Sunni mainstream, even if true, has no greater benefit for Muslims as all divine laws must, says al-ʿAṭṭār.

"If we delved (*baḥathnā*) into the wisdom of the stipulation of Qurayshī lineage, and its underlying legal purpose, [we would discover that] it is not limited to the blessing (*tabarruk*) of [genealogical] connection with the Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, as is the well-known explanation. Even if this connection is real and the blessing obtained, the blessing is not among the underlying purposes of the Sharīʿa, as is known. It must be the case, then, that there be a greater interest (*maṣlaḥa*) sought in the stipulation of the [Qurayshī] lineage, intended by its being thus legislated."[325]

Al-ʿAṭṭār seeks, in his rejection of *Qurayshiyya*, Ṭaha's rationalization (*taʿqīl*) of government, dispensing with what he holds to be pious fictions. Al-Shilaq remarks on the lack of pietism or care for the ostensible sanctity of the institution of the caliphate in the *Risāla*. The text's discussion of the relevant issues in a rational, logical way, rather than with pious reverence and religious emotion, is indicative of the fundamentally modern character of al-ʿAṭṭār's writing, says al-Shilaq.[326] Whatever its sanctity, the institution of the caliphate is not immune from rational critique and modernization towards the utilitarian benefit of mankind. In short, al-ʿAṭṭār seeks a modern caliphate.

In al-ʿAṭṭār's view, the requirement of Qurayshī descent is essentially context-specific proxy for the broader requirement of *kifāya*, or capacity, which is absolute as a necessity to maintain Muslim unity, and which is his supreme principle for political leadership. *Qurayshiyya* was a requirement for leadership in the early Islamic period owing to the reality of *ʿaṣabiyya*,

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[325] ʿAṭṭār, *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, 5f.
[326] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 34.

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and the fact that Quraysh, as the tribal grouping with the strongest degree of ʿaṣabiyya and the strongest claim on pan-Arab leadership, was the only group capable of uniting all Arab Muslims under a single functional state. While Ibn Khaldūn and al-Bāqillānī understood *Qurayshiyya* to have a connection with *kifāya* for these reasons, al-ʿAṭṭār takes the idea a step further and eliminates *Qurayshiyya* entirely as a requirement, seeing it purely as a function of *kifāya*.[327] The stipulation of Qurayshī descent which once existed was, al-ʿAṭṭār says,

> "to protect against dispute in ʿaṣabiyya and domination. Just as we know that the divine law does not specify rules [only] for a [specific] generation or age or *Umma*, so we know that [the requirement of *Qurayshiyya*] is [in truth a part of the requirement] of capacity (*kifāya*). Thus we refuted [its being stipulated] and propounded the underlying reason (*al-ʿilla*) that included the intended purpose of [the stipulation of] *Qurayshiyya*, which is the existence of ʿaṣabiyya."[328]

Kifāya in a potential leader need not include *Qurayshiyya* specifically, but it must necessarily include whatever context-specific conditions are expected by the political elites, the 'people of loosening and tightening' (*ahl al-ḥall wa al-ʿaqd*). Who these elites are is unrestricted, defined only by their power to choose and preserve a caliph. The *ahl al-ḥall wa al-ʿaqd*, al-ʿAṭṭār writes, "are not specified by a number and the agreement of other lands [in their choice of caliph] is not required. If loosening and tightening is concentrated in one person, such that his obedience alone [can make on a caliph], then that is sufficient."[329]

Although not mentioned by al-ʿAṭṭār, he shares his position of prioritizing *kifāya* over *Qurayshiyya* in pursuit of utilitarian objectives with Ibn Taymiyya. According to Terzioğlu, "The sole criterion that Ibn Taymiyya articulates for legitimate rulership is that rulers service the

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[327] Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 32.
[328] ʿAṭṭār, *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, 8.
[329] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:487.

Muslim community by upholding the sharia and protecting public order" for the general benefit of the Muslims.[330] This position is yet another indication of possible influence by Ibn Taymiyya on the 19th century Egyptian scholar, with whom he also shared an understanding of the historical progression of the caliphate system.

Al-ʿAṭṭār also shares his view of dynastic political legitimation as simply a particular instantiation of the universal principle of capability with Jeremy Bentham, once again demonstrating the similarity between their two strains of utilitarian thought. Writing on the political theory of Sir Robert Filmer (d. 1653), an English philosopher famous for his defense of the divine right of kings, Bentham describes dynastic legitimation as a "habit of subjection" which "once formed, nothing is easier than to transfer it from one object to another. Without the previous establishment of domestic government, blood only, and probably a long course of it, could have formed political government."[331] Bentham here defends the doctrine of the divine right of kings as a useful institution to accommodate human nature in matters of government, while dispensing with Filmer's own pietistic justifications for the doctrine based on Biblical sources; precisely as al-ʿAṭṭār defended the doctrine of *Qurayshiyya* for its contingent practical utility, while utterly discounting its basis in the Qur'an or hadith corpus.

2.7 Hierohistory and the 'end' of the caliphate

ʿAṭṭār also differs from Ibn Khaldūn, albeit in writings aside from his *Risāla*, in asserting that the caliphate was replaced by 'tyrannical kingship' (*mulk ʿaḍūḍ*) after the short reign of Hasan, while Ibn Khaldun had a favorable view of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates.[332] This

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[330] Terzioğlu, *Ibn Taymiyya, al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya, and the Early Modern Ottomans*, 105.
[331] Bentham, Jeremy. "Civil Equality." In *La Jeunesse de Bentham, La Formation de Radicalisme Philosophique*, edited by Élie Halévy, Vol. 1. Paris: F. Alcan, 1901, 418–420.
[332] Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 22.

belief derives from a hadith in which the Prophet prophesies that the caliphate after him will last just thirty years before devolving into *mulk ʿaḍūḍ*, which is cited by al-Jabartī in *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār* and affirmed by al-ʿAṭṭār in his marginal notes.[333] Despite the development of his political views later in life, al-ʿAṭṭār appears to have never discarded this belief, still citing it in his final major work, *ḤJJ*, in about 1830.[334]

This change from a righteous caliphate to tyrannical kingship initiated by Muʿāwiya is further developed in the *Risāla*, and explained as a return to the norm rather than a new development.

> "The [Muslim leadership] then agreed to pledge allegiance to Muʿāwiya in the middle of the year 41 AH, when people had forgotten the matter of prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and the supernatural, and returned to *ʿaṣabiyya* and wrestling with one another (*taghālib*) [for power]."[335]

ʿAṭṭār sees *ʿaṣabiyya* as an immutable force in human society and history which was temporarily interrupted by the hierohistory (sacred history) of the Prophet and the Rashidun caliphs. In these miraculous circumstances, when God intervened overtly in human affairs through a Prophet, the normal sociological forces which govern human affairs were suspended. The world thereafter reverted to its normal system, and the caliphate to 'tyrannical kingship'. The Umayyad caliphate, for example, is framed by al-ʿAṭṭār as the resumption of Banū Umayya's rise to power which had begun in the pre-Islamic period, owing to their powerful *ʿaṣabiyya* and material resources. Those factors, which had empowered them before Islam, now empowered them again after the regular laws of history came back into effect following the prophetic period.[336]

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[333] Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-āthār*, 1:14.
[334] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:214.
[335] ʿAṭṭār, *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa,* 13.
[336] Al-Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 37f.

All subsequent caliphates are therefore not 'true' caliphates in a hierohistorical sense, but rather simply Islamic states. Nonetheless, the caliphate in the sense of political leadership for Muslims serves an important utilitarian function, al-ʿAṭṭār therefore supports the Ottomans. This perspective prefigures that of the late-19th century Egyptian thinker Muṣṭafā Kāmil, who wrote in 1898 that the Ottoman caliphate was not an Islamic necessity, although it was a necessity for the welfare of the Muslims and of mankind.

> "The perpetuity of the Ottoman state is a necessity for the human race, as is the perpetuity of its Sultan for the peace of the nations of the West and East. God has willed that mankind be preserved from mutual destruction and from protracted religious wars, through the protecting power of the sublime [Ottoman] state, and the perpetuity of its Ottoman Sultan."[337]

The closest precedent for al-ʿAṭṭār's ambiguous position on the two forms of caliphate is that of Ibn Taymiyya, in his *Risāla fī 'l-khilāfa*. The Damascene polymath distinguishes between "the caliphate of prophecy" (*khilāfat al-nubuwwa*) which will last just thirty years, and all other potential caliphates. These other caliphates may still be legitimate, and Ibn Taymiyya "permits calling kings 'caliphs' as well, even if they do not attain the perfection of the prophetic caliphate."[338]

ʿAṭṭār likewise suggests two caliphates: the Rashidun "prophetic caliphate", which operates outside the laws of history by virtue of its adjacency to "prophecy and the supernatural", and the historical caliphate, which is subject to the same material and sociological forces of history as all states. Al-ʿAṭṭār does not discuss the Rashidun caliphs at any length whatsoever in his Risala because they were the result of divine intervention into history, and have no relevance

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[337] Kāmil, Muṣṭafā. *Al-Masʾalat al-sharqiyya*. First edition. Cairo, Egypt: Maṭbaʿat al-Ādāb bi-Miṣr, 1898, 15.
[338] Hoover, *Foundations of Ibn Taymiyya's Religious Utilitarianism*, 163.

to the regular human institution which he is describing. The Ottomans are ambiguously a 'historical caliphate' ruling many centuries since the end of the prophesied, hierohistorical caliphate, and yet al-ʿAṭṭār sincerely endorses them as a righteous Islamic polity; if not legitimated by Prophetic reports, the Ottomans were, for al-ʿAṭṭār, legitimated by their competence to rule and their practical benefits for the Ummah.

Al-ʿAṭṭār rejects the Shīʿī belief that the imam must be the best of the community, saying this is an 'rationally repugnant' (*qabīḥ ʿaqlan*) position that is "self-evidently wrong".[339] Despite this, he does cite a Qurʾanic verse in support of his position, which reads: "Who then is more worthy to be followed: the One Who guides to the truth or those who cannot find the way unless guided?"[340] It may be inferred based on the context that what al-ʿAṭṭār means to say is that someone more capable of a task, whether guiding to the truth or leading a government, is absolutely more appropriate to be followed than someone less capable, in conformity to his general emphasis on *kifāya* as the overriding qualification for political leadership. Therefore, whoever has the power to rule should rule, and

Al-ʿAṭṭār's outlook on the caliphate is essentially utilitarian. *ʿaṣabiyya* is an unavoidable fact of human existence, and outside the supernatural interlude of the Prophet and his immediate caliphs, Muslims must live in the world as it is, under whatever governments best serve their interests. For al-ʿAṭṭār, *kifāya* is the supreme principle of political leadership, superseding lineage and other factors not directly related to governance.

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[339] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:487.
[340] Qurʾan 10:35.

2.8 The Significance of al-ʿAṭṭār's Apologetics for the Caliphate

In his study on the *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, Najm offers a list of factors which make the treatise significant. He argues for the *Risāla*'s importance by noting that: "This is the first treatise in the Arabic language by an Arab author comparing between the Ottoman caliphate and the other caliphates, and affirming the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphate, and its qualification to be considered as an Islamic caliphate"; it was written by an Egyptian Arab during the reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī, whose government was in intense conflict with the Ottoman state, voiding the possibility that al-ʿAṭṭār wrote the treatise as self-serving flattery to the Ottomans,[341] and that it explains the high esteem in which the Ottoman caliphate was held by Egyptians even at the end of the 19th century, when direct Ottoman rule was a distant memory.[342]

He also argues that the *Risāla* refutes the view of some Orientalist scholars, such as Thomas Arnold, that public consciousness of the caliphate as an important Islamic institution was only cultivated by Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) following his defeat by Russia. "[The proof of this is that] the Muslims of Egypt, a quarter of a century before the accession of Sultan Abdülhamid II, believed that the Ottoman state was the genuine Islamic caliphate and that its sultan was the caliph of [all] Muslims, for they were writing treatises defending the Ottoman caliphate and praying on its behalf."[343]

I cannot assess the claim that al-ʿAṭṭār's treatise is the first by an author to compare the caliphates, however I would add that it would have been significant as a political statement in Muḥammad ʿAlī's Egypt, where according to Marsot, the Pasha felt threatened by a public sentiment strongly in favor of the Ottomans.[344] An endorsement of the Ottoman caliphate as a

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[341] Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 20.
[342] Ibid., 21f.
[343] Ibid., 22.
[344] Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 136.

righteous Islamic government simultaneous with the Pasha's efforts to distance himself from Istanbul as much as possible would have been interpreted as a note of protest from al-ʿAṭṭār, a major scholar of the 1820s, if not yet the Shaykh al-Azhar. Although al-ʿAṭṭār supported Muḥammad ʿAlī's reforms and was aware of the dysfunction in Istanbul, in an ideal world he would have preferred (capable) Ottoman rule in Egypt, and was certainly opposed to any move for *de jure* Egyptian independence.

2.9 Oppression in the Name of Islam and Defending the Ottomans

It is quite clear that al-ʿAṭṭār's political views underwent a profound shift between his early and later life, and require further investigation. The basic problem is resolving the shaykh's practical and theoretical views on caliphates; he condemned the oppression and injustice of many Ottoman rulers, not to mention the earlier caliphates lambasted in his *Risāla*, and meanwhile offered his *apologia* for the Ottoman Empire and the institution of *khilāfa* in general. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, at the end of his life he forbade rebellion against Muslim rulers.

It may be argued that the simplest explanation would be al-ʿAṭṭār betrayed his principles as he grew older and was offered more prestigious positions by the reigning power, selling out his youthful indignation for comfort and power. However, this would ignore the crucial fact that even in his *Risāla*, al-ʿAṭṭār condemns the earlier caliphates as corrupt regimes, all while vindicating their *de jure* claims on the allegiance of Muslims. He cites the murder of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī by the Umayyads, their desecration of Mecca and Medina, the torture and killing of untold thousands by Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, and degradation of the Companions; the licentiousness of the

Abbasids, the oppression of the Miḥna, and the spread of lawlessness under their rule; and the blatant oppression and heresy of the Fatimid regime.[345]

In al-ʿAṭṭār's conception, the sacred nature of the caliphate is innocent of the depredations of the various dynasties which have held it across the centuries; one can be an oppressor and a heretic, without ceasing to be the caliph in a practical sense.[346]

I believe that al-ʿAṭṭār was in fact a sincere advocate for the caliphate as an institution, and the Ottoman caliphate in particular. Naṣṣār points out that the *Risāla* must have been written after 1815, as it is absent in an *ijāza* document listing all of al-ʿAṭṭār's works up to that year.[347] During the latter part of his life in Cairo – amid Muḥammad ʿAlī's scheming for as much functional autonomy from the caliph as possible – it would hardly have served to advance his career.[348] As evident throughout his travel writings, he was well-aware of the shortcomings of the wider Ottoman realm, from the immorality of Izmir to the religiously-illiterate Albanian pashas, but saw, ultimately, a utilitarian necessity behind a nominally united Muslim state.

His scientific approach did not detract from his emotional attachment to the Ottoman state; indeed al-ʿAṭṭār demonstrates an enduring and personal attachment to the Ottoman Empire right to the end of his life. In the second volume of *ḤJJ*, al-ʿAṭṭār comments on a passage, saying:

"At the time I wrote this *ḥāshiya*, conditions were disturbed by a war between our sultan, the Sultan Maḥmūd [II], may Allāh grant him victory, and *qirāl al-muwassaq* [Hans Karl

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[345] ʿAṭṭār, *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, 28–32.
[346] Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 22.
[347] Naṣṣār, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir. "Taḥqīq." In *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa al-islāmiyya wa manāqib al-khilāfa al-ʿuthmāniyya*, 9–22. Āthār al-ʿallāma Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār 3. Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Iḥsān li l-Nashr wa l-Tawzīʿ, 2020, 24.
[348] I was told anecdotally by Dr. Peter Gran, cited often in this thesis, that some other scholars of his generation who worked on al-ʿAṭṭār believed the *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa* to be little more than an attempt by al-ʿAṭṭār to ingratiate himself with the Ottoman government as a means of gaining employment in Istanbul. I believe this possibility can be safely ruled out.

von Diebitsch],[349] may Allāh abandon him. It is a great war which continues to this day; so we ask Allāh to grant victory to the party of Islam and to destroy the wretched disbelievers by His grace and generosity. Because of these momentous events, and disturbing and confusing discourses which scattered our thoughts, we became lethargic after finishing the introductory sections for lack of convenient time to continue. Allāh has command of all things, before and after."[350]

Al-ʿAṭṭār wrote *ḤJJ* between 1828 and 1830, during the Ninth Russo-Turkish War (1828–1829). At the outbreak of this war, al-ʿAṭṭār would have been an old man, in the last decade of his life, in the midst of writing his magnum opus. He had not been outside Egypt in decades, and otherwise fully occupied with his teaching at al-Azhar, his editorship at *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* and the writing of his life's greatest work. Rather than showing reasonable disinterest in a conflict far away and which did not directly concern Muḥammad ʿAlī's Egypt, al-ʿAṭṭār instead recounts that he was so distressed and depressed by the plight of "our" sultan that he found himself completely unable to work. This is hardly fitting for a man portrayed by Moreh as an ardent Egyptian nationalist.

I believe al-ʿAṭṭār should be taken at his word, and his prayers for the victory of the Ottomans, and through them Islam in general, taken as sincere. There was little political incentive for al-ʿAṭṭār to give such attention to news of Ottoman wars, or to offer prayers for a sultan who ruled Egypt in name alone, and yet that is what he wrote. If there is one piece of information which complicates this interpretation, it is that al-ʿAṭṭār was Shaykh al-Azhar

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[349] There are multiple explanations of whom al-ʿAṭṭār is referring to as *qirāl al-muwassaq*, however I believe the most likely candidate is the German-born field marshal of the Russian Imperial Army, Hans Karl von Diebitsch (d. 1831), given that he was the main Russian commander in the war in question, and was named Karl, which approximates *qirāl*. The other possibility is that *qirāl* is an Arabization of the Slavic *kral* or *korol*, meaning 'king', in which case al-ʿAṭṭār would be referring to the contemporary Russian monarch, Tsar Nicholas I.
The word *muwassaq* is, I believe, most likely the Ottoman Turkish *musık* or *musak*, meaning laden/loaded.
[350] Aṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:150.

leading up to and during Muḥammad ʿAlī's war with the Ottomans. Before the war, the highest-ranking *ʿulamāʾ* of Istanbul gathered to issue a collective fatwa condemning Muḥammad ʿAlī for his disobedience to the caliph, calling on him to surrender to Ottoman caliphal authority.[351] The *ʿulamāʾ* of al-Azhar subsequently wrote a refutation of this fatwa, which Muḥammad ʿAlī claimed they did without his instigation, although he was glad of their support.[352] Unfortunately I was unable to find the text of this Azharī refutation, or whether or not al-ʿAṭṭār himself signed it. Seeing as he had written a defense of the Ottoman caliphate some years prior, however, it seems unlikely.[353]

The course of al-ʿAṭṭār's life is indicative of a trend which spanned the 19th century, and saw the institution of the caliphate lose much of its worldly importance, while simultaneously growing in spiritual authority. Laurence in *Coping with Defeat* argues that the loss of vast Ottoman territories to the Europeans – and we might add, to independent-minded provincial rulers such as Muḥammad ʿAlī – ironically precipitated the rise in prestige of the title of caliph over the 19th century. The Ottoman government, lacking political authority over most of the world's Muslims, invested more heavily in religious authority by way of compensation.[354] The separation of the caliph's worldly and spiritual jurisdictions was officially recognized as early as 1774 in the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which saw the Ottoman sultan recognized as the "Supreme Caliph" of all Muslims in Russia, while acknowledging their legal sovereign to be the Russian Tsar.[355] Al-ʿAṭṭār, in affirming the Ottoman caliph as the true leader of the Muslim

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[351] Barakāt, Dāwūd. *Al-Baṭal al-fātiḥ Ibrāhīm wa-fatḥuhu al-shām 1832*. Windsor, UK: Muʾasasa Hindāwī, 2014, 39–40.

[352] Ibid., 46.

[353] On the debate between the *ʿulamāʾ* of Istanbul and Cairo over the issue of the caliphate, al-Wardī comments that "this contest over the rules of the *sharīʿa* between the Sultan and Muḥammad ʿAlī reminds us of the 'theological' controversy and conflict which has occurred across the ages of Islamic history, whereby every faction of Muslims takes the evidences from the *sharīʿa* which benefit them in war, and ignore everything else." Wardī, ʿAlī al-. *Lamaḥāt ijtimāʿiyya min tārīkh al-ʿirāq al-ḥadīth*. Vol. 2. 8 vols. Baghdad: Dār al-Warrāq li l-Nashr, 1969.

[354] Laurence, *Coping with Defeat*, 77.

[355] Ibid., 82.

Ummah while in practice accepting (willingly or unwillingly) the temporal supremacy of Muḥammad ʿAlī's regime, especially in his capacity as Shaykh al-Azhar, in a sense set a precedent for this separation in Egypt as well.

This line of thinking matches up with al-ʿAṭṭār's theory of *ʿaṣabiyya* as well. He writes that the government should belong to whoever is in a dominant political position with strong *ʿaṣabiyya* and is capable of organizing a state whose authority the people will recognize. In al-ʿAṭṭār's Egypt, this was undoubtedly Muḥammad ʿAlī and his military regime of Albanians, who triumphed over their rivals in 1805 and had uncontested control over the country by the time al-ʿAṭṭār returned. If the caliphate should belong to the group which best fits these criteria, what then about rulership of a country which the caliph's authority is too weak to control? For al-ʿAṭṭār, *kifāya* is the ultimate requirement for political leadership; a view which formed the basis for his ambiguous support for Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha.

2.10 Muḥammad ʿAlī and the Shaykh al-Azhar

Al-ʿAṭṭār's relationship with Muḥammad ʿAlī was among the most consequential of his life; through the Pasha he reached the zenith of his career, was able to implement the changes he longed to see at al-Azhar, and saw his political principles tested. For al-ʿAṭṭār, his support for and cooperation with Muḥammad ʿAlī was essentially a utilitarian tradeoff, sacrificing some principles in favor of others, in service of general benefit to the Muslim Ummah.

Muḥammad ʿAlī's view of al-ʿAṭṭār

Muḥammad ʿAlī benefited first and foremost from having al-ʿAṭṭār as an Islamic stamp on his reforms. Shilaq writes:

"The new system required those who could speak on its behalf, defending its actions and the shar'ī legality thereof; al-ʿAṭṭār was a pillar [of the system] in this way, especially given that the general climate [at that time] was conducive to what he liked."[356]

al-ʿAṭṭār might be accused of selling out to worldly power, if not for the fact that he agreed with these policies, most of them at least. The two men undeniably shared an orientation towards modernizing the country along lines similar to those of the Balkan Albanian *pashalik*s.

In 1831 MA established the *Majlis al-Mashwara*, and appointed al-ʿAṭṭār at its head.[357] There, "he was united with al-ʿAṭṭār in a shared vision, as a result of their common interest in science, wisdom (*ḥikma*), and progress."[358] Muḥammad ʿAlī, over the course of his reign, established half a dozen councils of Egyptian notables, which were in theory to advise him on the governance of his empire.

By all accounts, he deeply and sincerely respected al-ʿAṭṭār for his scholarly acumen, and his modern Islamic vision.[359] He sought out his counsel, lavished titles, positions and money on him, and on the whole treated him as a close ally. "Muḥammad ʿAlī loved, praised and respected [al-ʿAṭṭār] for his knowledge, sophistication, integrity and popular fame. Such was his prestige that if he attended a gathering, people would stand up to greet him in homage and reverence," writes Qāsim.[360] ʿAṭṭār was paid extraordinarily well. Muḥammad ʿAlī raised the yearly state

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[356] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 27.

[357] The practice of creating such councils was not an innovation on Muḥammad ʿAlī's part; his contemporary the Ottoman Sultan Selim III even established a council by the exact same name (*Mejlis-i Meshveret*) in 1789 to assess the causes of the empire's decline. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III*, 73.

[358] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 28.

[359] Marsot contends that the Pasha "was torn by his desire to remain an Ottoman, and his desire to create an empire. He despised the Egyptians, and while he understood Arabic perfectly, he would only speak Turkish. He [...] looked upon himself as Ottoman" (Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 97). In light of these facts, Muḥammad ʿAlī would have preferred al-ʿAṭṭār, a thoroughly 'Ottomanized' Egyptian fluent in Turkish and even his native Albanian, over almost any other Egyptian.

[360] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 12.

stipend to the Shaykh al-Azhar to 125 pounds upon al-ʿAṭṭār's accession, a tremendous and unprecedented amount.[361]

A man who had struggled to make ends meet for most of his life, ʿAṭṭār enjoyed a considerable upgrade through his association with the Pasha.

"The new administration [of Muhammad Ai] consisted of a nucleus of men, the *wali*'s family and retainers who formed an inner circle, and a large outer circle of Egyptians who were coopted to work for the government and enjoyed a share of the profits, a share they stood to lose were the government to be overthrown. That cooption of Egyptians started the process of Egyptianization of the government in the country."[362]

Al-ʿAṭṭār was eventually made a part of that outer circle of Egyptians, although descriptions of the respect in which the Pasha held him, and his following among members of the 'inner circle' such as Sami Bey and other pashas, suggests he could perhaps be considered to straddle the line.

As mentioned by Marsot, al-ʿAṭṭār was one of the foremost drivers of the government's Egyptianization process, and the construction of a bureaucratically modern state. His *Inshāʾ*, likely his most commercially successful work, was a manual on diplomatic protocol, intended to train the bureaucratic corps for the modern (and newly Arabophone) Egyptian state. The book opens with profuse praise for Muḥammad ʿAlī, of dubious sincerity.[363] The book was an important step in the creation of Egypt's bureaucracy, as Arabic became the primary language of administration, not to mention arts and culture, after the abandonment of Ottoman Turkish.[364]

For Muhamamd Ali, ʿAṭṭār was also a way to break the power of the *ʿulamāʾ*. He presided over the centralization of waqfs under government control, the centralization of

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[361] Ibid., 13.
[362] Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī*, 59.
[363] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 28.
[364] Ibid., 27.

religious authority under Azhar, and split the Egyptian ʿulamāʾ against themselves, with the traditionalist faction deprived of the authority of the *mashyakha*, and the embattled reformists gathered around al-ʿAṭṭār.

This strategy was right out of Muḥammad ʿAlī's playbook going back decades, all the way to his masterful playing of different factions against one another in his rise to power amid the chaos of post-French Egypt. It is also worth remembering that Muḥammad ʿAlī had supported and been supported by al-ʿAṭṭār's most stalwart opponents just two years before his appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar; he certainly knew what he was doing, elevating the Quwaysni faction one year, then the (much weaker) al-ʿAṭṭār faction the next. The management of power balances would have certainly been on his mind with al-ʿAṭṭār; especially given the shaykh's inflexibility on issues of doctrine and refusal to endorse the legality of his pseudo-state.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's view of Muḥammad ʿAlī

For all the Pasha's lavish patronage and goodwill towards al-ʿAṭṭār, it was not sincerely reciprocated, and marred by al-ʿAṭṭār's own internal conflicts. Ḥasan Qāsim writes:

"Muḥammad ʿAlī did not fear anyone among the *ʿulamāʾ* except for him, while [al-ʿAṭṭār] held that Muḥammad ʿAlī did not deserve to rule, and that his rule was not in accordance with the divine law. For that, he hated and abhorred him, and did not go to visit him [to solicit favors] even a single time."[365]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's appraisal of Muḥammad ʿAlī was complicated. On the one hand we find praise for the Pasha in al-ʿAṭṭār's writings, and he certainly supported his reforms; "It was Meḥmed ʿAlī's ambition to impose a centralized and rational order upon his realm," writes Peters, as it was

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[365] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 12. Naṣṣār notes that it was common for ʿulamāʾ to go visit Muḥammad ʿAlī at the citadel to solicit favors, and it was this kind of visit to which Qāsim was referring.

al-ʿAṭṭār's.[366] On the other hand, al-ʿAṭṭār had written with bitter hatred against the new regime during his travels, and even appears to have maintained some of this hatred despite the Pasha's adoration of him.

I would say that al-ʿAṭṭār never accepted the *de jure* validity of Muḥammad ʿAlī's rule, even if he did accept it as a *de facto* reality. As demonstrated by his *Risāla*, al-ʿAṭṭār was a committed proponent of the Ottoman caliphate and would have been unhappy to see Muḥammad ʿAlī dragging Egypt out of the orbit of Istanbul, and yet perhaps saw this as a necessity, or at least an unavoidable reality as a means to modernize the country. Whatever his affinity for the Ottomans, the disastrous reigns of sultans such as Selim III and Mustafa IV was an irrefutable evidence of their lack of *kifāya*; the bedrock of legitimacy in his own system of thought. Al-ʿAṭṭār almost certainly disliked the Pasha on a personal level; his views on illiterate Ottoman Albanian soldier-governors are well-documented.[367] However he would have found much to like in the Pasha's reform agenda, building Egypt into a modern, powerful country within the Ottoman realm.

Al-ʿAṭṭār of course benefited tremendously from Muḥammad ʿAlī's rule. As mentioned previously he was paid extravagantly well, gained prestige as editor of the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya* and Shaykh al-Azhar, and gained the power to realize the reforms he longed to see. He was able to put men of his own mindset into high places, a process which long outlasted the few years of his *mashyakha*. He played a leading role in the creation of the Meclis-i Ali in 1250/1834, which was a council of merchants, bureaucrats and ʿulamāʾ with judicial and administrative functions,

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[366] Peters, Rudolph. "'For His Correction and as a Deterrent Example for Others': Meḥmed ʿAlī's First Criminal Legislation (1829-1830)." *Islamic Law and Society* 6, no. 2, The Legal History of Ottoman Egypt (1999): 173.

[367] Despite being illiterate until the age of 47, Muḥammad ʿAlī held education in extremely high regard, zealously advising all of his children to study as much as they possibly could. Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali,* 90.

and was uncoincidentally filled with Azharīs sympathetic to himself.[368] Al-Azharī is of the view that al-ʿAṭṭār was the initiator of a major school of thought within the Azhar tradition; of course this would have been impossible without a younger generation to continue his work after his death.

If this narrative of al-ʿAṭṭār's position appears conflicted, I believe it is because al-ʿAṭṭār himself was likely greatly conflicted by his situation. In a way, his service to the Pasha was symbolic of 'differentiation' (*tafṣīl, tafrīq*) between religion and rationality, which ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṭaha considers a hallmark of the spirit of modernity. As a man of over 50 years in age, he found himself serving the government of a tyrant in violation of his lifelong principles, while simultaneously being enabled by said service to actualize a range of other principles dear to his heart. Muḥammad ʿAlī's regime was deeply unpopular for its brutality and mass-enslavement of the peasant population for agricultural projects and military service. The Pasha may have been somewhat too 'utilitarian' even for al-ʿAṭṭār; in 1824 he ordered a mass-hanging of innocent elderly and disabled people to deter a rebellion, pointing out that "they were useless and could not perform any [productive] task."[369] Al-ʿAṭṭār may have felt compelled, to make *tafṣīl* between his religious rejection of oppression, evidenced throughout his life, not to mention his lack even of recognition for the legitimacy of Muḥammad ʿAlī's state, and his rational reasons to support his regime as a vehicle for the emergence of a material and intellectual Islamic modernity. This inner conflict would have no doubt contributed to the depression the shaykh experienced in the last years of his life.

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[368] Sami Pasha, Amīn. *Taqwīm al-nīl*. First Edition. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Cairo, Egypt: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya, 1928, 2:424.
[369] Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 40.

2.11 The Bureaucratization of Islamic Law

One of al-ʿAṭṭār's most significant reforms as Shaykh al-Azhar was towards the centralization and bureaucratization of Islamic legal authority in Egypt under al-Azhar. Khedival archives report that he visited the Pasha's executive council to discuss "certain reforms within al-Azhar" (*cami-i mezkurde bazı nizametına dair*), one result of which was an edict forbidding independent [of al-Azhar] preachers and Qurʾān reciters, issued by the Divan-ı Hidivi in 1250/1835 in the name of the Shaykh al-Azhar. As though to give it his personal stamp, exceptions were made for certain shopkeepers – namely perfume sellers (*ʿaṭṭār*).[370] "Although the matter in question may seem minor," says Scharfe, "the decree gave sweeping powers to the Shaykh al-Azhar to control public religious practice virtually everywhere in Egypt."[371]

This episode, which aroused the fury of al-ʿAṭṭār's enemies, is significant for the precedent it set for the legal jurisdiction of the Shaykh al-Azhar. For the first time, "the Shaykh al-Azhar exercises legal and disciplinary power over Egyptian Islam in general, rather than merely serving as a religio-political advisor to the ruler or as an administrator limited in power to the mosque-*madrasa* itself."[372] In effect, al-ʿAṭṭār as the Shaykh al-Azhar became the head of a centralized religious administration with supreme authority within a state. Religious practice, like the economy and the army, was now subjected to the management of a bureaucracy, in this case al-Azhar, headed by a state-appointed shaykh. This development is a manifestation of two principles of Ṭaha's theory of modernity: the rationalization all social institutions (*taʿqīl*), and of universality (*mabdaʾ al-shumūl*). According to Ṭaha, one of the foundations of modernity is the universalization of the authority of features and values previously particular to a single cultural

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[370] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 243.
[371] Ibid., 242.
[372] Ibid., 243.

community, enabled by the enhanced reach and generalizing power of modern states and technology.[373] In this case, the Islamic legal judgments, intellectual culture and claims to authority of al-Azhar were universalized within Muḥammad ʿAlī's domain, catapulting al-ʿAṭṭār to the status of a universal 'modern' religious official, and setting the stage for al-Azhar's current claims to global Islamic authority.[374]

Another instance where al-ʿAṭṭār flexed his supreme authority as Shaykh al-Azhar was in response to a scandal at the new Abū Zaʿbal Medical School, recently established by Muḥammad ʿAlī. A student had attempted to murder a French physician conducting an autopsy on the grounds that it was sacreligious to mutilate a body in this way. Al-ʿAṭṭār issued a fatwa condoning autopsies and surgical study, calling for a change of attitudes at al-Azhar in the name of public benefit.[375] Al-ʿAṭṭār had himself participated in autopsies decades prior in Istanbul, and written in 1813 in his *Sharḥ al-Nuzha* in support of human dissection for scientific purposes.[376] Much to the consternation of his conservative colleagues, al-ʿAṭṭār's fatwa stood, and there were no further interruptions to studies at Abū Zaʿbal.

In this process of centralizing Islamic authority under an Azharī bureaucracy, al-ʿAṭṭār knowingly or unknowingly contributed to the gradual dissociation of the Egyptian *ʿulamāʾ* from their Ottoman counterparts in subsequent generations – a major step, in Laurence's view, to the establishment of "a clergy outside the caliphate's spiritual chain of command."[377] This does not

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[373] Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 82.

[374] Zeghal, Malika. "The 'Recentering' of Religious Knowledge and Discourse: The Case of al-Azhar in Twentieth-Century Egypt." In *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, edited by Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 107-. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007, 108–109, 122–124, 127–128.

[375] El-Bendary, *Min Rawād al-azhar*, 470.

[376] Fahmy, Khaled. *In Quest of Justice: Islamic Law and Forensic Medicine in Modern Egypt*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018, 68.

[377] In this quotation, Laurence is actually describing the contemporary Indian Islamic schools of Deoband and Aligarh, however I believe the comparison is apt. Laurence, *Coping with Defeat*, 84. For more on the global trend of the disaggregation of Islamic religious authority over the 19th century, see pp. 77–116.

contradict al-ʿAṭṭār's sincere support for the caliphate, however. It would have also been rather difficult for al-ʿAṭṭār to have not regarded the post of the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam somewhat cynically, given his experience; in the eleven years he spent traveling the empire, the post changed hands ten times in the course of political struggles; over the course of his entire life from 1766 to 1835, it changed hands at least fifty times. It would not have been difficult for al-ʿAṭṭār to have conceived of himself as a loyal subject of the caliph, even while moving Egypt out from under the authority of the shaykh who was supposedly his chief religious advisor; the institution was irreparably politically compromised. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṭaha remarks as well that 'differentiation' (*tafṣīl*, *tafrīq*) is one of the key methods of the modern principle of critique, meaning to separate church and state, morality and religion and religion and rationality, among other examples.[378] Regardless of al-ʿAṭṭār's internal conflict on the matter, he actively supported Muḥammad ʿAlī's government as it 'differentiated' its political authority from the religious authority of the Ottoman caliph in Istanbul, contributing to the emergence of what Ṭaha would describe as an Islamic modernity.

2.12 *Fatāwā* on Criminal Law, Endowments and Modernizing the Courts

Fragments of al-ʿAṭṭār's legal activities as Shaykh al-Azhar appear scattered in the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*.[379] In an 1831 criminal case dealing with inheritance, for example, a woman dies leaving no heirs, which by law entitles the state treasury (the *bayt al-māl*) to her estate; her

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[378] Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 81.
[379] Although al-ʿAṭṭār was undoubtedly capable of issuing legal judgements, the (lack of) archival evidence suggests he did not do so frequently. I was unable to find record of any other cases involving al-ʿAṭṭār than those described here. Following his appointment as Shaykh al-Azhar in 1831, he was most likely preoccupied with reforming al-Azhar and advising Muḥammad ʿAlī and other prominent figures in his regime, rather than working as a common judge.

neighbors, however, however, conspire to keep it for themselves. Their competing claims lead them to be caught by the authorities, and they are imprisoned for criminally obstructing the state from inheriting her property. Al-ʿAṭṭār intervenes, freeing the imprisoned but stipulating that they bring forward their claims officially, in a *sharīʿa* court.[380]

The case is perhaps representative of the public resistance to the attempts of Muḥammad ʿAlī's regime to regiment, organize, 'modernize' and involve itself in all areas of life.[381] Although the local actors were competing with one another, none wanted to involve the state, and preferred to resolve the matter informally, among themselves. Al-ʿAṭṭār shows himself as an agent of the state and its regimentation; he does not take a side in the dispute, at least from what can be gathered from the text, but rather simply advocates for its resolution through official bureaucratic channels – the rationalization (*taʿqīl*) of society, in Ṭaha's terminology. This would have been consistent with the overall goals of Muḥammad ʿAlī's new legal code, *Qānūn al-Filāḥa*, which was to centralize power in the state courts and minimize room for individual judgment in sentencing in favor of fixed penalties, according to Peters.[382]

One *fatwā* of al-ʿAṭṭār's survives regarding the status of a *waqf* in Palestine. Scharfe suspects that given the energetic reform activity of al-ʿAṭṭār's last years as Shaykh al-Azhar, and the intimate connection between that position and the management of Egyptian *waqf*s, he must certainly have had a hand in the compilation of Muhammad Ali's landmark register of all *waqf*s in the country, bringing all under state supervision.[383] I believe this is correct, and telling of al-ʿAṭṭār's relations with his class, i.e. the *ʿulamāʾ*.[384]

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[380] al-Waqāʾiʿ al-miṣriyya. "Ḥawādith al-dīwān al-miṣrī." *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, November 23, 1831, no. 319. Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya.

[381] Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991, 153–54.

[382] Peters, *For His Correction*, 171–172.

[383] Scharfe, *Muslim Scholars and the Public Sphere*, 252.

[384] Contributing the the Pasha's project to appropriate *waqf*s to state control would have appeared to al-ʿAṭṭār's Azharī colleagues as treason of the highest order; many shaykhs depended for their livelihoods and lifestyles on lucrative *waqf* revenues, or functioned as wealthy landlords. The Shaykh al-Azhar, as the symbolic leader of Egypt's

In this lone *fatwā*, the shaykh asserts the *waqf*'s validity and independence from state control, in defiance of the state's overall project of *waqf* consolidation.

The *waqf* in question was a piece of agricultural land in the area of Hebron, Palestine, which was given to the Companion Tamīm al-Dārī b. ʿAws and his descendants in perpetuity by the Prophet Muḥammad shortly after the Battle of Tabuk in 9/630. After Muḥammad ʿAlī's armies conquered the Levant in 1831, however, his administration wasted no time in expropriating the local *waqf*s as was being done in Egypt. Al-Dārī's descendants, who had managed the *waqf* continuously for over a millennium, consequently petitioned al-Azhar for a *fatwā* ruling that they be allowed to keep the *waqf* as per the Prophet's command, noting that they possessed the original *waqf* document endowing the land to them, along with a series of *fatwā*s from scholars and decrees from various authorities across the centuries confirming their rights. Hasan al-ʿAṭṭār, as Shaykh al-Azhar and head shaykh of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* was asked for a *fatwā*, along with Aḥmad al-Tamīmī (d. 1264 AH), head shaykh of the Ḥanafīs.[385]

Al-Tamīmī, for his part, offers a brief response confirming the rights of the family, and notes that "the *ʿulamāʾ* have confirmed the disbelief of whoever deprives the sons of Tamīm of their *waqf*," and suggestively signs his name as "al-Tamīmī al-Khalīlī (i.e. from Hebron) al-Dārī".[386] Obviously, the shaykh had a vested personal interest in the fate of the *waqf*.

Al-ʿAṭṭār on the other hand provides a considerably longer response, characteristic of his overall approach to questions of religious scholarship. It reads as follows:

"Praise be to God.

ʿulamāʾ, was expected to advocate to the government on behalf of their collective interests, not least financial; al-ʿAṭṭār flipped the script by siding with the government against the *ʿulamāʾ*, and depriving them of their financial power and independence. Their bitter hatred for the shaykh is unsurprising, from a class perspective.

[385] Hilāl, *Al-Iftāʾ al-Miṣrī*, 3:1382.

[386] Ibid., 3:1383.

Muḥammad the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, gave to Tamīm al-Dārī what is mentioned according to the following narration: 'this is what Muḥammad the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, gave to Tamīm al-Dārī and his companions: he gave them *Bayt al-ʿaynayn*, the house of Ibrāhīm and *Hibrī*. I give this to them and their descendants forever and in perpetuity, and who wrongs them has wronged God.'

Then the governor (*walī*) Abū Bakr, may God be pleased with him, wrote to them, the text of which is: 'this is the writing of Abū Bakr – he who has succeeded upon the earth after the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him – for *Bayt al-ʿaynayn*, no corruption shall there be upon them, the country of *Hibrī* and Hebron, *Bayt al-ʿaynayn* and the house of Ibrāhīm, so who hears and obeys must not transgress them whatsoever; whoever changes or replaces what the Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, gave them, then upon him is the curse of God, the angels and the people altogether.' So ends the text.

Anta: linguistically refers to giving, and *antaytukum*: I give you (pl.); the most noble Messenger addressed them in their own language, as he addressed each tribe of the Arabs in their dialect. It has reached me that the writing [i.e. Abū Bakr's writing] remains in your hands to this day.

Sealed,

the impoverished Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār, servant of knowledge at al-Azhar."[387]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's *fatwā* is on the one hand the legal judgment of a linguist: his sole commentary on the source texts is to explain their unfamiliar vocabulary, as though he were giving a lecture at al-Azhar, or exactly as he writes in his scholastic glosses. At least as a writer, al-ʿAṭṭār was far

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[387] Ibid., 3:1599.

more interested in questions of language than law. The *fatwā* is also, however, an example of al-ʿAṭṭār's *ijtihādī*, proto-Salafi approach. As far as al-ʿAṭṭār is concerned, the original words of the Prophet and of Abū Bakr can be understood in their clear and plain-sense meaning, and possess a legal authority absolutely superior to any contemporary actor's, such as Muḥammad ʿAlī's *waqf* administration.

In another case, the "*muʿāwin* Bey" (at this time Abdurrahman Sami Bey) recounts a bizarre story told to him by the shaykh of the Dāwūdiyya neighborhood, in which al-ʿAṭṭār intervenes. As told in the *Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, an eccentric woman is distraught by the death of her brilliantly intelligent dog Samūra (reportedly capable of understanding Arabic and Turkish), and decides to bury her in the cemetery of her original master, her friend from whom she inherited the dog. The woman enlists the help of her doorman and two Islamic jurists (who charge a fee) to deceive the graveyard keeper, exhume the grave of her deceased friend, and bury Samūra alongside her. The woman and her accomplices are hauled before a judge and reprimanded for their criminal actions; the woman is judged weak-minded and imprisoned for a few days; the doorman is flogged, and the two jurists, scholars of Islamic law who ought to know better, are harshly disciplined by the Shaykh al-Azhar, i.e. al-ʿAṭṭār.[388]

Putting aside the unusual nature of the case, it is a useful example for much of what concerned al-ʿAṭṭār during his tenure as Shaykh al-Azhar. As in the contemporary Ottoman Empire, many Egyptian Muslim scholars were ignorant of Islamic law, and sought their positions more out of greed for *waqf* revenues than a sense of religious duty. Al-ʿAṭṭār writes frequently on the ignorance and venality of scholars in his day, and the example of two neighborhood *fuqahāʾ* who actively abetted the interment of a dog in a human cemetery for a few coins would have

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[388] al-Waqāʾiʿ al-miṣriyya. "Ḥawādith al-dīwān al-khidīwī." *al-Waqāʾiʿ al-Miṣriyya*, December 3, 1831, 323 edition. Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya.

surely stood out in his mind as one of the most absurd degradations of the modern ʿulamāʾ class, and an affront to the rational, scientific order of society he sought to foster.

ʿAṭṭār was also central to the process of legal codification in Muḥammad ʿAlī's Egypt. Ḥasan Qāsim writes:

"Shaykh al-ʿAṭṭār was the first to introduce the science of documentation (ʿilm al-tawthīq) at al-Azhar. He had looked into the matter and found that those working to document court proceedings were typically common men and riffraff, unfamiliar with proper legal documentation, with little ability in Arabic writing, and as such their documentation was always distorted. So shaykh al-ʿAṭṭār sought to rectify this shameful state of affairs in the Egyptian courts, and put his book on legal documentation [*Inshaa al-ʿAṭṭār*] into the curriculum at al-Azhar, and suggested to Muḥammad ʿAlī that he not appoint any legal notary in the courts unless he was a student from al-Azhar who had specialized in this art. Legal documentation improved as a result, and was preserved from error and clumsiness."[389]

The second part of this book was part of what he assigned to Azhar students for legal documentation.[390] al-ʿAṭṭār's Insha was also reportedly printed repeatedly in Cairo, Istanbul, and Bombay over the 19th century.[391]

In my opinion, there seem to be two books titled *Inshāʾ al-ʿAṭṭār*, or perhaps two versions of the same book. One is a small book of less than 50 pages on diplomatic protocol, going over the proper composition of an official letter to a foreign sovereign and so on, which survives in a number of manuscripts. The other, cited by Ḥasan Qāsim, seemingly has at least 176 pages based

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[389] Qāsim, *Dhayl tārīkh al-Jabartī*, 14.
[390] Ibid., 15.
[391] Kilic, *ATTÂR, Hasan b. Muhammed*, 4:98.

on his citations. For further studies on al-ʿAṭṭār's thought, it would be well-worth the trouble for any researcher to try to acquire a copy of this second, much more substantial *Inshāʾ*.

3. Al-ʿAṭṭār's Magnum Opus: *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, Decadence and Revival

3.1 Decadence and Degeneration

Al-ʿAṭṭār was profoundly disappointed by the prevailing intellectual conditions of his age, seeing it as a sad decline from the standards of the classical period. In an extended passage in *ḤJJ*, he laments the narrow-mindedness and stagnation of Cairo after his return in 1814. Al-ʿAṭṭār writes with admiration that scholars of earlier generations were well-read

> "even in the books of those who differ in fundamentals of creed and tertiary issues [ie books written by Shīʿīs][392] [...] More amazing than that is that they delved into books beyond the pale of Islam entirely; I happened upon a work by al-Qarāfī in which he refutes the Jews and the doubts they cast in the Islamic *milla*, using nothing but the content of Torah and other revealed texts, with such mastery that the reader would imagine he had memorized these books. Thus, they were free to cultivate their tongues and sophisticate their natures through elegant poetry and lectures. [...]
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> What has happened between [the age of various great scholars] and the time into which we have now fallen, makes it known that, compared to them, we are like the mere common rabble of their time. [...] So, it must certainly be the case that if we were asked a

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[392] Al-ʿAṭṭār read the works of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and would have likely read those of many more Shīʿī authors given their strength in philosophical topics. Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, 26.

question pertaining to the mysteries of theology, we dismiss it as 'the words of philosophers', and do not look into it; or if we are asked a question on legal methodology, we say 'we do not see this in *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ*, so it is baseless [or not even worth asking]; or if one were to add a literary point to a gloss, we say 'this is from the people of falsehood (*ahl al-baṭāla*)', and so on. And so, the excuse has become uglier than the sin.[393] If a group of us gathers together, the discourse is like that of the common people, and likewise our discussion of hadith; if someone makes a literary quip there, we might not even realize it, and if we do notice it we will vehemently condemn it and turn away from the one who said it, as though he had done something heinous, and were totally lacking in decency and politeness."[394]

It is a consistent theme of al-ʿAṭṭār's writing that past generations of Islamic scholarship and civilization are a vindication of his prescriptive ideas for the present. This is hardly unusual among Muslim scholars, who almost uniformly praise the earliest generations of Muslims (the *salaf*) as better than themselves, but it is noteworthy in al-ʿAṭṭār's case because his ideal differed considerably from that of his contemporaries. Rather than being a defense of conservatism, al-ʿAṭṭār's invocation of righteous earlier generations casts them as forerunners of the Islamic 'spirit of modernity' for which he agitated in the early 19th century. Abū Ḥanīfa and his like, for example, were industrious and self-sufficient, unlike modern parasitic Sufis;[395] al-Qarāfī was learned in Jewish dogmatics, unlike modern narrow-minded scholars who scorn anything not found in *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ*; the old scholars were natural scientists as well as jurists and

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[393] What al-ʿAṭṭār means is that, the lack of intellectual inquiry, excused as orthodoxy, has become worse than any sin which might attach to some original work.
[394] Aṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:247.
[395] Ibid., 2:527.

theologians, as opposed to those of today who are hardly even very strong in the religious sciences.

Al-ʿAṭṭār also complains of the preoccupation of his contemporaries with appearances, judging ideas more by their source than their content. He cites a story in which the 10th-century philosopher al-Fārābī is unfairly judged by the Hamdanid ruler of Aleppo, Sayf al-Dawla, for his Turkish clothing as the launch point for a passage on this problem.

> "The time we are in now has come to this, in which people are presumed to have beliefs which they do not, and people are judged based on their physical appearance and clothing… let us recall what *Ḥujjat al-Islām* al-Ghazālī said in his book *al-Munqiḍ min al-ḍalāl* that usually those weak in reasoning know truth through men, rather than men through truth, while the wise man knows the truth [by himself]...
>
> Some perfectly sound words in our works on the secrets of the religious sciences have been rejected by those who have not even mastered the sciences of their pulpits, and whose minds were not opened to the ultimate objectives and insights of their legal schools. They claimed that these words were from the ancients and their dangerous ideas, and yet the hoof does not fall far from the other hoof… Some of them are found in the books of *sharīʿa*, and most of their meanings are present in the books of the Sufis – granted, found in their books only [and not in the open]. So if this kind of talk is considered in itself, supported by evidence, and does not contradict the Book and the Sunna, then it need not be abandoned or rejected. For if we opened this door and embarked upon what it entails, and abandoned every truth dubbed dangerous and false in our time, we would abandon a great deal of truth. This consequently leads to perfidious people (*mubṭilūn*) extracting the truth from our hands and putting it in their books.

The very least of being a scholar is that one is distinguished from the common man, and does not spurn honey even if he finds it in the cup of a blood-drawer (*ḥajjām*). He does not assume it to be blood simply because of its mere presence inside the cup, but rather examines its attributes for those which are absent in honey. The circumstances [in which the substance is found] do not negate its characteristics, and it need not be considered extracted blood.

This false delusion prevails over most of the people God creates, so no matter what you may cite from someone of whom they have a good opinion, they will accept it, even if it is totally false. Of course, if you cite something from someone of whom they have a bad opinion, they will reject it, even if it is true. Thus, always do they know truth through men, but never men through truth."[396]

Al-ʿAṭṭār's advocacy for the adoption of useful ideas regardless of their sources once again evinces his utilitarian ethos, and is captured by a reformist rhetorical device coined by İbrahim Müteferrika and current in al-ʿAṭṭār's circles in Istanbul. *Muqabele bi' l-misl* or 'reciprocation' was a legal precept used in Müteferrika's work and developed by the statesman Ahmed Vasif to justify the imitation of non-Muslim ideas, technology and military tactics as a means of strengthening the Ottoman caliphate and Muslims generally.[397] His critique of obscurantist attitudes towards unorthodox sources of knowledge also speaks to his aspiration to progress Islamic intellectual culture from fideistic minority to critical, autonomous majority, as Ṭaha would put it.[398]

The dismissal of ideas based solely on their unorthodox sources by the 19th century Egyptian *ʿulamāʾ* was likely an obstacle close to home for al-ʿAṭṭār, who was known to read

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[396] Ibid., 2:192–3.
[397] Menchinger, *Intellectual Creativity*, 467.
[398] Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 80.

European scientific works and philosophical tracts by Ibn Sīnā, al-Fārābī and Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.[399] It may have also informed the design of his new curriculum at al-Azhar, central to his project to reform the institution, described in section 1.

3.2 Al-ʿAṭṭār's Methodology of *taḥshiyya*: *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār alā jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* and other works

Al-ʿAṭṭār's style of *taḥshiyya* (gloss writing) is a break with much of the post-classical *ḥāshiya* tradition in that he devotes little attention to linguistic explanations and wrote a content-based, rather than language-based *ḥāshiya*. It was a common criticism of the post-classical *ḥāshiya* tradition, at al-Azhar in particular, that its writers were overly focused on marginal linguistic debates, ignoring the more significant ideas of the *matn* or *sharḥ* themselves. In the post-classical tradition, writes El Shamsy, to master a text meant to have complete comprehension of each word and its place in a sentence.[400]

Al-ʿAṭṭār was deeply frustrated with the traditional learning system of al-Azhar which focused on linguistic content, and so went against it in *ḤJJ* and in other texts. Al-Shilaq writes that al-ʿAṭṭār's *ḥāshiya* on the grammar text *al-Azhariyya* is not just a critique of the commentator, but of his own shaykh, Amīr al-Kabīr. "Generally, the critical outlook of al-ʿAṭṭār [...] began to reevaluate what the previous generation had written and criticize their persistence in using the language of the past and nothing else."[401] Although al-ʿAṭṭār does offer definitions of terms used in the *matn* and *sharḥ*, these are usually brief, and far less common than his extended

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[399] Al-ʿAṭṭār was even well-read in ancient Greek philosophy, as demonstrated in *Risāla fī madhhab al-ṭabāʾiʿīn*. See: ʿAṭṭār, Risāla fī madhhab al-ṭabāʾiʿīn." In *Risāla fī majʿūliyyat al-māhiyyāt talīhā risāla fī madhhab al-ṭabāʾiʿīn*, edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Naṣṣār and Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Ṣādiq al-Ḥassānī, 54–55. Cairo, Egypt: Dār al-Iḥsān li l-Nashr wa l-Tawzīʿ, 2020.
[400] El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics*, 35–37.
[401] Shilaq, *Min al-nahḍa ilā al-istināra*, 23.

discussions on the content of these texts themselves. His extended passages on language, common especially in the first volume of *ḤJJ*, are meta-analyses on the function of language itself and its ambiguity, among other things.[402] He writes in despair of the post-classical fixation on *ḥāshiya*s and their narrow horizons in *ḤJJ*:

> "We were ordered to transmit from them [earlier generations] without inventing anything for ourselves, and what a shame it is that we have come to this; instead, we limited ourselves in looking to a restricted set of books, written by the later generations and derivative [of the early generations' work], which we repeat endlessly throughout our lives. Our souls do not aspire to look into anything else, as though the sum of all knowledge were confined to these books."[403]

One such book alluded to here by al-ʿAṭṭār would have undoubtedly been *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* by Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), the base text for *ḤJJ*. *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* was a textbook of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in madrasas for centuries during the post-classical period, and the subject of numerous commentaries. By taking on an authoritative work itself already explained by centuries of scholarship, providing a novel approach and grappling with the *matn* directly, al-ʿAṭṭār would have made the implicit case for a modern reappraisal of traditional juristic thinking, unbounded by authoritative interpretations.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's rejection of the post-classical *taḥshiyya* methodology is all the more significant given that he himself was primarily known as an Arabic language specialist, who had authored some of the most authoritative works on grammar in his day, and studied under al-Azhar's top language specialists who exemplified the features of post-classical scholasticism. El Shamsy cites a passage from al-Disūqī, al-ʿAṭṭār's teacher, as a prime example of "the

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[402] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 1:429.
[403] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:247.

scholastic preoccupation with classification and definition."[404] The fact that al-ʿAṭṭār then, of all people, would write a ḥāshiya almost totally dispensing with linguistic commentary would have struck contemporaries as a statement by al-ʿAṭṭār on what the priorities ought to be for modern commentators on classical texts.

I would also contend that al-ʿAṭṭār's *tahshiyya* style is a direct inspiration from his teacher, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī. One of the defining features of al-Zabīdī's style in *Tāj al-ʿArūs* and *al-Muʿjam* is his colorful mixing of the main content of his work with personal anecdotes, opinions, and commentary on the issues of his day, inside a work which should ostensibly not be tied to a particular time. Al-ʿAṭṭār for his part in *ḤJJ* takes much the same tack, interjecting throughout the book with his observations and concerns for Egypt, al-Azhar, Muslim scholarship, and Muslim civilization in the early 19th century. Al-ʿAṭṭār takes advantage of a passing mention of bribery in *ḤJJ* to launch into a critique of how common bribery and bending the law had become in Muḥammad ʿAlī's Egypt:

> "Bribery has now become so widespread that it is almost considered an everyday matter which merits no serious reproach, nor is it anything worth exposing. There is no power except with God the Most High, the Great."[405]

Al-Baghdādī remarks that al-ʿAṭṭār's *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, in large part a history of various caliphates, is replete with colorful contemporary historical anecdotes, with unclear connections to the main thread of the book.[406] I would say this is another example of al-ʿAṭṭār's 'Zabīdīan' style.

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[404] El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics*, 38.

[405] al-ʿAṭṭār, Abū al-Saʿādāt Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-. *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār alā Nukhbat al-fikr*. Edited by Muḥammad Saʿd ʿAbd al-Maʿbūd. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Dār al-Iḥsān li l-Nashr wa l-Tawzīʿ, 2019, 2:187.

[406] Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 28.

While al-ʿAṭṭār and al-Zabīdī are hardly the only writers to ever let their own opinions and interests color their writing, al-Zabīdī's style was highly unusual in 18th century Cairo, and still very much so one generation later in al-ʿAṭṭār's day. The fact that the two men had an intellectual relationship for years as teacher and student, and that their work and ideas show significant overlap already, as discussed in section 1, is highly suggestive of al-Zabīdī's influence on al-ʿAṭṭār. The shaykh would have undoubtedly read al-Zabīdī's works, famous in the author's own lifetime, and could have attempted to copy his much beloved style in his own writings.

There is a possibility that *ḤJJ* was also inspired, to some extent, by Ibn Taymiyya's *Minhāj al-sunna*. In al-ʿAṭṭār's personal copy of the work he notes that he finished reading and commenting on it in 1244/1828-1829; precisely the time in which he began writing the book.[407] Ibn Taymiyya is only directly referenced a handful of times through the two volumes, however his advocacy for bypassing the postclassical tradition to access classical sources directly for new *ijtihād* is reproduced by al-ʿAṭṭār for a modern context.

3.3 Legal Methodology and *Turāth* Revival

Al-ʿAṭṭār was deeply disturbed by the post-classical trend of regarding the Islamic scholarly tradition as effectively infallible. He argued that no scholar, no matter how authoritative, was above criticism and revision by later generations, and that to imagine otherwise was to invite stagnation. The divine law, argues al-ʿAṭṭār, must change to accommodate new realities according to the reasoning of contemporary *mujtahid*s, albeit within carefully defined limits. In ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṭaha's theorization, al-ʿAṭṭār embodied, in this impulse, the first principle of the spirit of modernity, which is the 'principle of majority.' While

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[407] El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics*, 55.

the premodern mind submits without question to external higher authority without critical scrutiny, while the modern mind chafes under this lack of autonomy.[408] The modern mind seeks *taḥqīq* (direct verification or self-realization of the truth), a concept invoked by al-ʿAṭṭār in the following passage and which El-Rouayheb has remarked became "a central concept in [later] Islamic scholarly culture."[409]

Following a quote from Ibn Khalīl in *ḤJJ*, decrying the ignorance of modern teachers, al-ʿAṭṭār writes:

> "I say: I wish this speaker had lived until today, that he could see what the teachers say in their lessons, or rather what the authors of our era transmit pertaining to theology. For they have taken what is small and simply written *ḥawāshī* and *shurūḥ* on them, first and foremost. Their souls do not aspire to what the verifiers (*muḥaqqiqūn*) of this art [perceived] in their books; even if one of them were to come across a plainly obvious truth, or a definitive proof, he would not change what had already settled in his mind, even if it contradicted the truth. He would say 'I am not more just (*aʿdil*) than what I saw in that book.'"[410]

Putting his words into practice, al-ʿAṭṭār then proceeds to offer a critique of al-Dawānī's formidable commentary on *al-ʿAqāʾid al-ʿaḍūdiyya*, arguing against the theory of God's knowledge of particulars.[411]

In his study of jurisprudence and legal theory, al-ʿAṭṭār made the effort to read the writings of early authors such as Imām al-Shāfiʿī without the mediation of interpreters, which was highly unusual for his day. By the 19th century, it was common for Shāfiʿī scholars to hardly

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[408] Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 80.
[409] El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century*, 28.
[410] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:455.
[411] Ibid., 2:455.

consult the school's early texts, or even any works which predated the school's most recent masters, who held a monopoly on interpreting its heritage.[412]

The basic thrust of al-ʿAṭṭār's social commentary in *ḤJJ* is the need for renewal of the dynamism which characterized the classical period. To that end, al-ʿAṭṭār quotes extensively from eclectic classical sources in *ḤJJ* and argues for the mutability of Islamic law according to varying times and places.

Just like his approach to the caliphate, al-ʿAṭṭār's legal theory and campaign against post-classical stagnation are guided by the utilitarian principle of *maṣlaḥa*. This, he writes, was readily apparent to the earliest generations of Muslims as the overriding purpose of the *sharīʿa*, but it has been obscured somewhat by the development of complex legal concepts in intervening centuries.

> "The Companions – may God be pleased with them – were satisfied in establishing rulings with understanding of benefits (*maṣāliḥ*), and they did not pay attention to the various conditions which jurists of later ages have considered, such as *qiyās*, the legal root and branch (*al-aṣl wa 'l-farʿ*), since the ultimate objective (*maqṣūd*) of the divine laws is to realize benefits (*maṣāliḥ*), as is known through inference (*istiqrāʾ*). [...] Imām al-Ghazālī says: 'If it is necessary to pursue benefits, then it is necessary to change the rulings to match the changing of the people and times, different countries, and ever-changing interests (*maṣāliḥ*).' And this necessitates changing the divine law. […] We believe that it is impossible for any reality to be devoid of the judgment of God the Exalted, for the religion has been perfected."[413]

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[412] El Shamsy, Ahmed. "The Hashiya in Islamic Law: A Sketch of the Shāfiʿī Literature." *Oriens* 41 (2013): 293.
[413] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:327.

Al-ʿAṭṭār here bears considerable similarity with another 'Islamic utilitarian' and Azharī, Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935). The latter, along with trumpeting the principle of *maṣlaḥa* as a guide for Muslims in modern times, promoted the Salafi idea of returning solely to the Qur'an, Sunna and consensus of the Companions, dispensing with the elaborate legal doctrines of the past millennium which, he claimed, made full adherence to the law impossible for the lay Muslim.[414] Halevi describes him as taking "a utilitarian approach to the sacred law" in order to legalize the many new technologies of the early 20th century.[415]

In a sense, his comparison with al-ʿAṭṭār is apt, however to say that they shared a common religious orientation would miss a key distinction between the shaykh and Riḍā. According to Hallaq, later reformists such as Riḍā and his teacher Muḥammad ʿAbduh paid only lip service to Islamic legal values, subordinating even the Qur'an and Sunna to *maṣlaḥa*. "The revealed texts become, in the final analysis, subservient to the imperatives of these concepts," he writes.[416] Zaman notes that Riḍā invoked the *maṣlaḥa* advocacy of the medieval scholar al-Ṭūfī as a precedent for his own agenda. He argues, however, that Riḍā diverged substantially from al-Ṭūfī, in allowing even clear-cut areas of divine law, such as matters of worship (*ʿibadāt*), to be subject to *maṣlaḥa*-guided reasoning, which the latter rejected.[417] Al-ʿAṭṭār for his part, similar to al-Ṭūfī, refused to sacrifice traditional Islamic legal concepts in the name of *maṣlaḥa*, even if he did consider it the supreme principle of the law.

In *ḤJJ*, al-ʿAṭṭār affirms largely classical understandings of various terms and concepts in *uṣūl al-fiqh*. "The scholarly majority (*jumhūr*) has affirmed the validity of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), such as in the consensus which emerged on the caliphate of Abū Bakr, which was

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[414] Hallaq, Wael B. *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 215.
[415] Halevi, Leor. *Modern Things on Trial: Islam's Global and Material Reformation in the Age of Rida, 1865–1935*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2019, 19.
[416] Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, 254.
[417] Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age*, 111–112.

derived analogically from his leadership in prayer." *Qiyās* is valid even when based on isolated reports (*khabar wāḥid*), he writes.[418] *'Urf,* or cultural custom, is affirmed by al-ʿAṭṭār as a valid source of law, albeit inferior to sources more directly related to the revealed texts.[419] Its jurisdiction, he writes, is in areas of life neither directly or analogically addressed by the Qur'an or the example of the Prophet.[420]

The penultimate section of *ḤJJ* al-ʿAṭṭār devotes to *ijtihād*, a legal concept he champions for utilitarian purposes. "It is necessary that *ijtihād* remain permissible until the Day of Resurrection,"[421] he writes, although this does not necessarily mean that *mujtahid*s will always be available. Ahmad Atif Ahmad highlights al-ʿAṭṭār as the terminal representative of the Ashʿarī position in a debate over the destiny of the *sharīʿa* which spans a millennium. The Ashʿarīs, says Ahmad, contended that the 'fatigue of the *sharīʿa*,' i.e. the dissolution of the traditional study of the *sharīʿa* through the variegations of history, was both possible and perhaps even likely on a long enough historical timeframe.[422] By the 13th/19th century, writes al-ʿAṭṭār, the "accumulation of weighty events" and the proliferation of contradictory views had so weakened the intellectual culture of Islam that "It is possible for an age to be devoid of a *mujtahid*—this being held against the Ḥanābila."[423] Al-ʿAṭṭār was thus supportive of *ijtihād* as a practical imperative, but nonetheless skeptical of its universal availability in all times and places – a concern rejected by other *ijtihād* advocates such as Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Shawkānī (d. 1834) and Rashīd Riḍā.[424]

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[418] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:229.
[419] Ibid., 2:13.
[420] Ibid., 2:328.
[421] Ibid., 2:210.
[422] Ahmad, Ahmad Atif. *The Fatigue of the Shari'a*. First Edition. Palgrave Series in Islamic Theology, Law and History. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 6.
[423] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:438. This translation is by Ahmad Atif Ahmad, per the following footnote.
[424] Ahmad, *Fatigue of the Shari'a*, 124.

In support of *ijtihād*, al-ʿAṭṭār endorsed the validity of mixing *madhhab*s (*tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ*), as described in section 2. Al-ʿAṭṭār writes:

> "Al-Shurunbālī the Ḥanafī transmitted from Sayyid Bādshāh in *Sharḥ al-Tajrīd* that it is permissible to act on the most convenient rulings (*tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ*) among the *madhhab*s; indeed, there is no legal impediment to doing so, as a person may take the path which is easiest for him provided there is nothing to the contrary. Ibn Amīr al-Ḥāj said that the hardships and strict conditions imposed upon someone seeking to move from one *madhhab* to another exist to prevent people from doing *tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ*. If they were at liberty to do so, the common man would take the ruling of the *mujtahid* whose judgment would be easier in every issue, not knowing what is forbidden to him by intellect or law."[425]

According to Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim, al-ʿAṭṭār is part of a longstanding tradition of Islamic legal pragmatism; he cites al-ʿAṭṭār as an example of a jurist who, under al-Disūqī's influence, took a permissive stance on *tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ*. The practice was opposed by a wide swathe of medieval jurists, including al-Ghazālī, Ibn Ḥazm, and Ibn Taymiyya, but endorsements of *tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ* began to outnumber them many times over beginning in the sixteenth century. "Although opposition to *tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ* never ceased to exist throughout the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods, there was a noticeable discursive shift, with an increasing number of jurists recognizing the existence of a vibrant debate," writes Ibrahim.[426] Al-ʿAṭṭār comes after this discursive shift, firmly in support of *tatabbuʿ al-rukhaṣ* as part of his utilitarian

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[425] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:441–442.
[426] Ibrahim, Ahmed Fekry. *Pragmatism in Islamic Law: A Social and Intellectual History*. First Edition. Middle East Studies Beyond Dominant Paradigms 9. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2015, 76.

ethos. Ibrahim describes al-ʿAṭṭār as a "pragmatic eclecticist" in the sense of being willing to draw from eclectic legal sources to better serve immediate practical needs.[427]

The concept of *ijmāʿ* constitutes a major divergence between al-ʿAṭṭār and later Muslim 'utilitarians' such as Rashīd Riḍā. Riḍā is skeptical of the concept of consensus (*ijmāʿ*), arguing that the "only conceivable and credible consensus is [...] that of the Companions," with the significant implication that the historical Islamic legal tradition is essentially non-binding with the authority of *ijmāʿ* as traditionally conceived.[428] Al-ʿAṭṭār by contrast devotes a chapter of *ḤJJ* to elaborating and defending *ijmāʿ*. He outlines the arguments of those who question the doctrine, positing that it is physically impossible to even pose a single legal question to all the jurists of the Islamic world, much less get them to give the same view on it. In response he warns that the doctrine of *ijmāʿ* is essential not only to affirm what the law is, but to refute that which it is not; without *ijmāʿ*, there would be no grounds on which to oppose even the most obvious heresies.[429] Elsewhere in the book, al-ʿAṭṭār categorically rejects the practice of *istiḥsān* as merely following one's whims to arrive at a desired outcome in Islamic law; in effect appointing oneself as a legislator in place of God.[430]

Al-ʿAṭṭār concedes the physical impossibility of gathering all the *ʿulamāʾ* of the world together and having them agree on a ruling, but instead opts for a more practical definition of *ijmāʿ*, at the local level.

"Yes, questions of consensus took place among the Companions of the Messenger of God, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him – noble people living together or close to one another; and this is the ultimate aim (*muntahā al-gharaḍ*) in the conception

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[427] Ibid., 80–81.
[428] Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, 216.
[429] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:229.
[430] ʿAṭṭār, *Ḥāshiyat al-ʿAṭṭār alā Nukhbat al-fikr*, 2:395.

of consensus. This is what Imām al-Ḥaramayn says, which we have reproduced here regardless of its length, because consensus is a great pillar of the religion, and the Imām, may God have mercy on him, has removed the veil from it and healed the hearts through his commentary, with graceful expressions and elegant meanings."[431]

The limitation of *ijmāʿ* then, to "noble people living together or close to one another", is merely practical, rather than epistemological. *Ijmāʿ* may be established in any community of Muslim scholars participating in a common discourse, and should ideally reach across the Ummah. Al-ʿAṭṭār affirms *ijmāʿ* as a universal doctrine (and universalism is essential to Ṭaha's spirit of modernity) limited only by its extensibility and generalizability.[432]

While seeking to take Islamic law in new directions, al-ʿAṭṭār maintained a commitment to traditional legal concepts as a guard against unprincipled chaos. Once again, he finds his position intermediate between those of outright reformists and typical conservatives, and as always guided by utilitarian imperatives. Practical expediency and *maṣlaḥa* should be served in all cases, but never at the cost of the greater *maṣlaḥa* of eternal felicity.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the introduction of this thesis, Hasan al-ʿAṭṭār and his voyage at the dawn of the 19th century are symbolic of contemporary Egypt's modernization along Ottoman lines, rather than European. This included Muḥammad ʿAlī's activities as the ruler of Egypt, as well as, for this study, those of Hasan al-ʿAṭṭār as a late-Ottoman Egyptian intellectual working alongside him.

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[431] ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:230.
[432] Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 82.

Al-ʿAṭṭār sought to see Egypt modernized not through imitation of France, but through following the course of modern Ottoman thinkers, and by drawing on Islamic sources for a modern state and society.

According to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṭaha's theorization of global modernity, emerging independently in various societies including the Ottoman world, al-ʿAṭṭār was a modern mind in every sense. He sought to progress Islamic intellectual culture to a state of rationally autonomous majority, reevaluating the post-classical tradition and breaking from the acceptance of doctrine on faith alone, as described at length in *ḤJJ*; he sought to universalize the authority of al-Azhar and the state into modern bureaucratic systems, working with the modernizing regime of Muḥammad ʿAlī; and he sought to subject all natural and social phenomena to rational scrutiny, critique and rationalization, as demonstrated across his many writings and activities.

In section 1 of this thesis, I demonstrated that the sources for al-ʿAṭṭār's modern subjectivity and reform program were rooted primarily in Islamic sources, rather than European. Furthermore, he is not the father or even grandfather of modern thought in the Islamic world, but rather a vector of the 'spirit of modernity' inheriting the ideas of other thinkers, contemporary and historical. His Egyptian teachers such as Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī and Amīr al-Kabīr imparted to him the continuation of an indigenous train of modern Islamic thought, drawing on the works of Aḥmad al-Damanhūrī and Ibn Taymiyya. These were complemented by his modern influences in the Ottoman lands, such as Atâullah Efendi, Raghib Pasha, İbrahim Müteferrika, and his friend Ṭāhir al-Ḥusaynī. The reform programmes of the Bushatlis, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha and Sultan Selim III's *Nizam-ı Cedid* would have also left an enduring influence on the young shaykh as he wound his way back Egypt after ten years abroad. This section also elaborated on the process by which al-ʿAṭṭār rose to prominence on his own merit and under Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha's

patronage, despite the schemes of personal enemies, and the content of his new curriculum for al-Azhar as a part of his wider project to revive the dynamism and vitality of the classical Islamic tradition.

In section 2, I explained al-ʿAṭṭār's Islamic utilitarianism which runs throughout his life and work, tracing its likely sources and influences in the history of Islamic thought to Raghib Pasha and Ibn Taymiyya. I argued that this Islamic utilitarianism, a fundamentally modern philosophy, differs from the more famous English utilitarianism of Bentham in that it is essentially theocentric and ethically bounded, in contrast to the latter's materialism, as theorized by Ṭaha. Guided by this philosophy, he sought to break Muslims out of a decline in material strength brought on by narrowmindedness and excessive scholasticism.

I also described al-ʿAṭṭār's application of this utilitarian ethos to his political theory on the caliphate, and his career in the regime of Muḥammad ʿAlī. In *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, al-ʿAṭṭār sought to rationalize and modernize the caliphate and government in general towards the realization of *maṣlaḥa* for the Ummah, defined as their benefit, happiness and pleasure; proximately in this life, and ultimately in the next. This ultimate end of government and the society it governs is to be achieved by the rule of the capable, rather than the divinely-ordained. This ethos, founded in the precedent set by writers popular in contemporary elite Ottoman circles, also guided al-ʿAṭṭār to a pragmatic approach to law and government, allowing him to accept the detriments of Muḥammad ʿAlī's rule in favor of its positives. Al-ʿAṭṭār is a model of an idealistic scholar forced to live in an unideal world, and his writings and actions reflect this. To support Muḥammad ʿAlī in his modernization drive despite his oppressiveness and efforts to escape Ottoman suzerainty was an imperfect course of action, yet the alternatives, such as

attempting to foment a revolt or foreign invasion against him, plunging Egypt back into the chaos of the 1800s, would have been far more harmful.

In section 3, I discussed al-ʿAṭṭār's approach to legal theory and the Islamic scholarly tradition, arguing that here too he sought the realization of an Islamic modernity, breaking from a stiff post-classical tradition. Islamic law, writes al-ʿAṭṭār, must change to accommodate modern circumstances and *maṣāliḥ*, within the boundaries of revelation, submission to which is mankind's supreme *maṣlaḥa*. He rejects the obscurantism of his peers, arguing that truth rationally demands acceptance regardless of its provenance, and that the tradition must do so or risk subordination to false doctrines mixed with truths deemed unacceptable. I argued as well that al-ʿAṭṭār's very methodology of commentary in *ḤJJ*, he offers a critique of the post-classical *ḥāshiya* tradition, asserting that direct engagement with revealed and early scholarly sources is both possible and useful, no matter how ostensibly authoritative.

This thesis has added, I hope, a few notable contributions to the field. These include new information on al-ʿAṭṭār's life and travels and an explanation of his rise to power. The *Risāla fī taḥqīq al-khilāfa*, a notable text in the 19th century history of Islamic political theory and historiography, has also been translated and analyzed for the first time outside the Arabic language. This study also marks the first effort to describe a coherent political philosophy for al-ʿAṭṭār, based on Khaldūnian historical thought and utilitarianism. Al-ʿAṭṭār's magnum opus, *ḤJJ*, has also been examined and analyzed as a landmark work of post-classical legal theory, both critical and modern in its method. The implications of al-ʿAṭṭār's new curriculum for al-Azhar are also documented and discussed.

ʿAṭṭār escapes easy categorization. While his contemporary Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī, for example, could be dubbed by Spevack "The Archetypal Sunni Scholar", al-ʿAṭṭār represents no

archetype except himself. Al-ʿAṭṭār was, like many talented scholars and civil servants from across history, obliged by historical circumstances to put his talents to work for an autocratic regime which he personally disliked, but saw as an engine for progressing the Muslim world to modern forms of political, bureaucratic and technological organization, and for realizing his principles. These principles, a commitment to the revival of classical Islamic heritage, a pragmatic Islamic utilitarianism and a hope for the unity and power of Islamic civilization, guided al-ʿAṭṭār's life and career.

Attar's influence was widespread and overlaps divergent strains of thought in Egyptian intellectual history, with none sure quite how to appraise him; he cannot be categorized in the dominant paradigm and need not necessarily be. He should simply be conceived as a brilliant mind who identified the problems of his day and tried his best to address them, drawing selectively from the heritage of Islamic civilization and particularly the Ottoman Empire. As Ṭaha writes, "Modernity represents the rising up of any umma (community, "nation") to assume the duty of fulfilling the obligations of an age, this making it the charge of the age to the exclusion of others. It has the responsibility to undertake these obligations for the purpose of the full realization of humanity."[433] Al-ʿAṭṭār, then, might be considered a modern man who rose up to fulfill the obligations of his age, however we might appraise them today.

Al-ʿAṭṭār's 'Islamic modernity' might appear strange to a modern reader. Modernity is often assumed to consist of as a bundle of connected institutions and ideas, but for al-ʿAṭṭār and those around him, this was not necessarily the case. The scientific method, industrial machinery, utilitarian cost-benefit analysis, bureaucracy and a centralized state are all represented as positive modern developments in al-ʿAṭṭār's writings; despite his obvious familiarity with European

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[433] Ṭaha, *al-Ḥadātha wal-muqāwama*, 20, as cited in Hallaq, *Reforming Modernity*, 78.

Enlightenment thought, he did not see democracy, secularism or equal rights as necessary consequents of the foregoing, or as concepts worth universalizing in Islamic societies.

Much research remains to be done on al-ʿAṭṭār, his contemporaries and his age. Research into his time in Cyprus, Lebanon and Iraq would be valuable, if further sources can be discovered. As an extension of this study into al-ʿAṭṭār's political outlook, other researchers might investigate how his ideas described here were adopted and adapted by al-Ṭahṭāwī. Finally, only the surface of al-ʿAṭṭār's works have been scratched by academic scholarship; the shaykh wrote voluminously on language, logic, and metaphysics, even in *ḤJJ*, which was only studied in this thesis as it pertained to a small range of topics.

Attar was an ambiguous and conflicted figure in his own time, and has remained so in scholarship for some two centuries since. This study has, I hope, contributed to an accurate portrayal of his vision for a modern iteration of Islamic civilization, with which he himself would be satisfied.

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Appendix: Treatise on Confirming the Islamic Caliphate and Virtues of the Ottoman Caliphate

Risāla fī Taḥqīq al-Khilāfa al-Islāmiyya wa Manāqib al-Khilāfa al-ʿUthmāniyya

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A Treatise Confirming the Islamic Caliphate and the Virtues of the Ottoman Caliphate

By Shaykh al-Azhar Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 1250/1835)

Translated by Ian Greer

Translator's Introduction

This translation was made from a manuscript of the text currently housed at the Egyptian National Archive in Boulaq, Cairo. Later, three modern edited versions of the text prepared by Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir Naṣṣār, and Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh Najm were consulted; their contributions and insights have been cited in the footnotes.

The page numbers of the original manuscript are preserved in the translation, represented as [#] in the text.

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In the name of God, the most Compassionate and Merciful,

All praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, may the peace and blessings of God be upon our master Muḥammad, and upon his family, Companions and followers.

VERIFYING THE MATTER OF THE ISLAMIC CALIPHATE

To begin, the scholars have described the caliphate as a deputyship (*niyāba*) representing the bringer of the *sharīʿa* (peace and blessings of God be upon him),

"for the preservation of the religion and the political administration (*siyāsa*) of the mortal world (*dunyā*), and he who takes it up is called the caliph (*khalīfa*) and leader (*imām*). His

being called an *imām* [explicitly] resembles that of an *imām* of prayer, insofar as he has followers who take him as their model [of emulation]."[434]

For this reason, it is called the greater imamate (*al-imāma al-kubrā*). His being named caliph is due to his succeeding (*yakhluf*) the Prophet in [leadership of] his nation (*Umma*), and so the caliphate bears responsibility to give due consideration [2] to the divine law, and to [the Muslims'] best interests (*maṣāliḥ*), otherworldly and worldly. All the conditions of the world which return to the Legislator (*al-Shāriʿ*) are expressions of best interests in the Hereafter, and that is because the purpose of created beings lies not in their [material] world alone (*dunyāhim faqaṭ*). This [world] is ultimately futile and false; its final end is death and annihilation.[435] God says: "*Did you then think that We created you as a frivolity?*"[436]

Rather, their purpose is their religion which has been ruled for them (*maqḍā bihim*) as a means towards their [eternal] felicity (*saʿāda*) in their [lives in] the Hereafter. So the divine laws (*sharāʾiʿ*)[437] came to carry them towards [felicity] in all of their varied states of being, including kingship (*mulk*). So it is managed according to the methodology of religion, and not dismissed as an auxiliary (*maḥūṭan*) issue in the view of the Legislator. Rule is for the bringers of the *sharīʿa*, which are the Prophets,[438] and whoever rises to their station, which are the caliphs.

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[434] This definition of a caliph is a quote from the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn. See: Ibn Khaldun. Muqaddima. Alexandria, Dar Ibn Khaldun, n.d., p. 134.

[435] al-ʿAṭṭār also discusses this issue in *ḤJJ*:

"I say that the issue is controversial, for he spoke in *al-Minhāj* of the obligation of legislating a ruling that does not necessitate any benefit. Al-Badakhshī, the commentator, said it is because God's actions and His judgments are not justified by purposes, and it was not said that the action, not the purpose, is in vain. According to the philosopher/wise man (*al-ḥakīm*) it is impossible, so it is refuted that if what is meant by frivolity is empty of the purpose, then this is an inference from the thing itself and if I want something else, it must be proved so that we can talk about it. It may be said that the rulings (*aḥkām*) of God Almighty depend on taking care of the interests (*maṣāliḥ*) of His servants out of grace and benevolence, not by obligation, as the Muʿtazila maintain. For these interests are the consequential fruits and ends for which there are no motive causes." ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 1:134.

[436] Qurʾān 23:115.

[437] Baghdadi: The *sharaʾi* are whatever God sent on the tongues of His Messengers. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 52f.

[438] Al-Baghdādī suggests that al-ʿAṭṭār chose to mention Prophets rather than Messengers here, as the former is more general. A Prophet is anyone who receives revelation from God, while a Messenger is a Prophet sent with a Book, i.e. a law. A Prophet may be responsible for preserving the law of an earlier Messenger.
al-Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 53.

So, the appointment of an *imām* is obligatory,[439] and its obligation is known in the divine law by consensus of the Companions [3] and the followers (*tābiʿīn*) of the Companions of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of God be upon him), who at his death took up the initiative of pledging allegiance to a [new] *imām*, and to submit decision making (*taslīm al-naẓar*) to him in their affairs, and it was likewise [the case] in every era after that.

If an Imam is appointed, obedience to him is mandated upon all of creation, as per what [God] the Exalted says: "*Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.*"[440] So whoever contradicts him has contradicted God and contravened Him (*ḥādahu*),[441] and it is a communal obligation (*farḍ kifāya*) for the 'people of loosening and tightening' (*ahl al-ḥall wa al-ʿaqd*)[442] to pledge allegiance to him.

Some of the Shīʿa claim that [selecting an imām] is not something delegated to public consideration and decision, but rather that it is an authority passed down by its possessor to the Companions of the Prophet. [They hold] that the Imam must be infallible (*maʿṣūm*) against major and minor sins, and that ʿAlī [Ibn Abī Ṭālib] was specified by the Prophet (blessings and peace of God be upon him). They derive this from sources which they have fabricated, unknown to all masters of the Sunna [4] and the transmitted sources of the Sharīʿa. Most of them are fabricated or disliked (*maṭʿūn*) in their path [of transmission].

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[439] Al-Mawardī writes: "Imamate consists of succession after the Prophet, to guard the religion and to politically govern the world. Its establishment is obligatory by consensus…" see Mawardi p5. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 30.

[440] Qurʾān 4:59.

[441] *Hada* is to contravene, differ from, or contradict. See: al-Qurtubi, *al-Jami' al-ahkam al-Qur'an*, 5/3033. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 54.

[442] Cf. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 21-22.

Many verifiers (*muḥaqqiqīn*) have denied the requirement [for eligibility as caliph] of being from Quraysh – such as the great imam Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) –[443]which they ventured to prove through both transmitted and intellectual means.[444]

Of the transmitted proofs there is [the Prophet's] statement (peace and blessings of God be upon him): "Listen and obey, even if the ruler (*walī*) over you is an Abyssinian slave with a raisin mark [on his head] (*zabība*)."[445] Likewise, ʿUmar [Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb], may God be pleased with him, said: "If Sālim, the *mawlā* of Ḥudhayfa were alive, indeed I would have appointed him [*lawalaytuhu*]".[446] [447]

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[443] Najm writes that al-ʿAṭṭār is misrepresenting al-Bāqillānī's position: "In reality, al-Bāqillānī did stipulate that the imam be from Quraysh, as he wrote in one of his books that 'The imam who must be obeyed must necessarily have the following characteristics: that he be of genuine Qurayshī descent; that he have religious knowledge to the level of a judge; that he be a man of insight in matters of war, capable as a commander and in guarding the frontiers; and that he protects what is good and preserves the Ummah.' See: *al-Tamhīd fī 'l-radd ʿalā 'l-mulḥida al-muʿṭila wa 'l-rāfiḍa wa 'l-khawārij wa 'l-muʿtazila*, Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, Cairo, 1947, 181. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 31.

[444] See al-Bāqillānī. Al-*Tamhīd*, pp. 182 and 184. Cf. Al-Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 31.

[445] For this particular wording, see: Zabīdī, Murtaḍā al-. *Mukhṭaṣar Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. First printing. Mansoura, Egypt: Maktabat al-Īmān, 1994, 525.

The hadith is narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* with a different wording. Credit goes to al-Baghdādī (*Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 55f) for finding this.

Considering that this precise wording appears only in a book written by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, who was an important teacher to al-ʿAṭṭār, it is reasonable to conjecture that the latter took the hadith from this exact book, or learned it from al-Zabīdī directly.

[446] Salim was not from Quraysh, but Umar had a very high opinion of him. He supported Umar in making Abu Bakr the first caliph.

The Prophet once listed him, along with three other Companions, as the four best men from whom to learn the Qur'an (Bukhārī 3475).

"His origin is from Isṭakhar in Khurasan, and he was a reciter of the Qur'an, and was martyred on the day of Yamama while carrying the flag of the mujahidin, in the year 12/632. It is said that his mawla Abu Hudhayfa b. 'Aqab b. Rabi'a b. Abd Shams b. Abd Manaf died with him." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 56.

Naṣṣār notes that in the full report, narrated by Aḥmad (129), ʿUmar speaks of two men, Sālim and Abū ʿUbayda b. Al-Jarrāḥ. Naṣṣār, *Taḥqīq*, 30.

[447] Ibn Khaldūn's commentary on the hadith of the Abyssinian slave is that it is for dramatic effect, a literary expression; not a suggestion that the caliph need not be of Qurayshī descent. His explanation of the hadith of ʿUmar cited here is that it is the saying of a Companion, not the Prophet, and so not worth considering as evidence on the issue. See *Muqaddima* pp. 136–138.

Cf. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 32.

Of the intellectual proofs: if power and *ʿaṣabiyya* were to disappear from Quraysh, then so would their capability (*kifāya*) [to serve as caliphs],[448] and calling for dropping this as a requirement would be dissenting from the consensus (*ijmāʿ*).

That capability [i.e. competence] is a requirement [for the caliphate] is obvious, for He, glory be to Him, [5] has made the caliph His deputy in matters of worship, that he may carry [the Muslims] to their best interests and turn them away from what is harmful to them. He is charged with this, and is not charged with anything except by He who has power over him. The judge ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406)[449] speaks about this, and says that

> "The *sharʿī* rulings, all of them, must necessarily have underlying purposes (*maqāṣid*) encompassed by a ruling and legislated on their behalf. If we delved (*baḥathnā*) into the wisdom of the stipulation of Qurayshī lineage, and its underlying legal purpose, [we would discover that] it is not limited to the blessing (*tabarruk*) of [genealogical] connection with the Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, as is the well-known explanation. Even if this connection is real and the blessing obtained, the blessing is not among the underlying purposes of the Sharīʿa, as is known. It must be the case, then, that there be a greater interest (*maṣlaḥa*) sought in the stipulation of the [Qurayshī] lineage," intended [6] by its being thus legislated.[450]

If we probed and broke down the issue, we would not find it except in consideration of *ʿaṣabiyya*, [with Qurayshī lineage] working as a protective measure eliminating dissent and

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[448] Najm writes that Ibn Khaldūn only has four established conditions for the caliphate: "knowledge, justice, capability, and soundness of faculties [i.e. sight, hearing] necessary for thinking and action. And there is a difference of opinion on the fifth condition, which is Qurayshī lineage." See: Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, Dar al-ʿAwda, Beirut, 1981, 152. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 31.

[449] That al-ʿAṭṭār mentions Ibn Khaldūn at the beginning of this treatise suggests that it is his methodology of historical and political analysis that he employs here.

[450] al-ʿAṭṭār shows here his fundamental political pragmatism, and his conception of the *sharīʿa* as something ultimately pragmatic. This stipulation *must* have a purpose for the worldly benefit of the Muslims; *tabarruk* is insufficient.

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sectarianism (*firqa*) by its presence in the one so invested [with the caliphate]. The Islamic nation (*milla*) and its people may then accept him and fall into their ranks (*laffa*) under him. This is because Quraysh are the most haughty and lordly (*anif*) of all of Muḍar and those their origin,[451] and the most dominant among them. They have over the rest of Muḍar an excess of pride (*ʿizza*), *ʿaṣabiyya* and nobility, and the remaining Arabs concede this to them, and accept their dominance.

So if it were the case that command were given to other than them, dissension and disunity [*iftirāq*] of the word [of Islam] would take hold from their disagreement, and refusal to be led, and no Muḍar tribe other than them would be able to rebuke them for their dissent, nor lead them to detestable acts (*karh*).[452] So the community would fall into disunion, and the word [of Islam] would be distorted; the divine law takes precaution against this by zealously guarding their concurrence, eliminating dispute and dissolution among them, [7] and reminding them of their common kinship (*al-laḥma*)[453] and *ʿaṣabiyya* to provide excellent protection against dissension. The command is with Quraysh because they are capable of guiding the people with the stick of domination to do what is required of them, without fear of dissent, nor of sectarianism, for they are responsible (*kafīlūn*) thereby for its defense, and preventing people from [contesting] it.

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[451] Muḍar is an ancient Arabian tribal grouping named for Muḍar bin Niẓār, to which many Arab tribes trace their descent, including Quraysh.
Al-Baghdādī writes: *anif Mudar*: that is, those who have a certain lordliness and nobility over Mudar, are called *anif al-qawm*, i.e. their masters. As for Mudar, his lineage traces back to Adnan, and from him tribes proliferated such as Qays, Ilyās, and Quraysh. See: Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-ʾaʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshā*, 1:336–360, as cited in Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 58.
[452] The word in the text is *karh*, meaning in this case hated things such as war, violence, etc. Cf. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 58.
[453] *Laḥma* in this case is a somewhat rare term denoting kinship. What al-ʿAṭṭār means here is that the divine law reminds the disputing tribes of their common origin, or flesh (*laḥma*) as a means of defusing conflict. Cf Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 58.

Thus, [the caliphs'] Qurashī descent is stipulated for this office [of the caliphate], as they are people of powerful *ʿaṣabiyya* capable of organizing the *milla* and the unity of the word [of Islam]. Their word was organized by unity of Muḍar, and the other Arabs honored them, and other nations were led to [submit to] the rulers of the *milla* when their soldiers marched their feet upon the furthest lands (*qasiyat al-bilad*), as happened in the days of the [Islamic] conquests and continued afterwards in two states[454] until the command of the caliphate withered away, and the *ʿaṣabiyya* of the Arabs faded away.

Quraysh's numbers and dominance over the *buṭūn*[455] of [8] Muḍar is well-known from the history of the Arabs, as is their obsession [with power]. Ibn Isḥāq (d. 151/767) mentioned this in *Kitāb al-Siyar*,[456] along with other [writers], so if it is established that *Qurayshiyya* is stipulated, it is to protect against dispute in *ʿaṣabiyya* and domination.

Just as we know that the divine law does not specify rules [only] for a [specific] generation or age or *Umma*, so we know that [the requirement of *Qurayshiyya*] is [in truth a part of the requirement] of capacity (*kifāya*). Thus we refuted [its being stipulated] and propounded the underlying reason (*al-ʿilla*)[457] that included the intended purpose of [the stipulation of] *Qurayshiyya*, which is the existence of *ʿaṣabiyya*. So, we have stipulated that he who would manage the affairs of the Muslims be from the *qawm* that is first in strength, dominating in

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[454] The Umayyad and Abbasid states. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 59.

[455] A level of Arab tribal allegiance. ʿAbd Manāf, for example, is a *baṭn*. See: Qalqashandi, Subh al-Asha, Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 40.

[456] A major early work of Islamic political theory.
Najm: "Ibn Isḥāq writes on the virtue of Quraysh that "when God repelled the Abyssinians from Mecca during the Battle of the Elephant, and smote them as He did with humiliation, the Arabs glorified Quraysh and said 'they are the people of God, for God killed on their behalf and saved them from their enemies.'" See: Ibn Hishām 1/47. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 33.

[457] Baghdādī writes: "His use of the term *al-ʿilla* here is not precise, for he means by it *hikma* or *maslaha*, and the two are terminologically distinct. *Al-illa* is a disciplined, apparent description on which a ruling is built. As for *hikma*, it is in some cases a subtle matter or something discretionary/arbitrary, not disciplined/precise." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 60.

ʿaṣabiyya over their contemporaries such that they are followed, who unite all by their word in good protection.

THE RASHIDUN CALIPHS

The caliphate [directly] after the Prophet was held by Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, [9] may God be pleased with him, according to the choice of the people of loosening and tightening, and the pledge of allegiance to him from them.[458] ʿUmar al-Fārūq succeeded him by appointment, then ʿUthmān [Ibn ʿAffān], then ʿAlī, both being chosen and given allegiance.[459] These are the Rāshidūn caliphs.

THE UMAYYAD CALIPHS

Banū ʿAbd al-Manaf held more aptitude and honor than any other clan of Quraysh, such that no one among the remaining clans could stand against them. Their *fakhdh*s[460] were Banū

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[458] al-ʿAṭṭār's account of the Rashidun caliphs is quite brief, however he provides some additional details in *ḤJJ*:
"The Companions, may God be pleased with them, gathered after [the Prophet's] death, peace be upon him, at Saqīfa Banū Sāʿda. The Anṣār said to the Muhājirūn, 'from us an amir and from you an amir', to which Abū Bakr, may God be pleased with him, replied: 'from us are the amirs, and from you the viziers', protesting their request with reference to the Prophet's saying, peace be upon him: 'the imams are from Quraysh'. So the opinion of the Companions, after consultation and review, was settled on the succession of Abu Bakr, and they agreed on that, and they pledged allegiance to him, and after that, the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī, may God be pleased with him, pledged allegiance. At a gathering of witnesses, [Abū Bakr] was thus titled 'caliph of the Messenger of God'…"
ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:491.
[459] On the conventional Sunni belief that the first four caliphs were ordered according to virtue, al-ʿAṭṭār writes in *ḤJJ* that "there is a difference of opinion as to whether this ordering is definitive or speculative…" He later quotes Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī's argument that Abū Bakr was the best of the Muslims, and quotes a hadith to this effect, suggesting his agreement. As for the superiority of ʿUthmān over ʿAlī or vice versa, al-ʿAṭṭār outlines the views of a number of ʿulamāʾ such as Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī, Mālik b. Anas, and Abū Bakr b. Khuzayma on the issue and abstains from sharing his own opinion.
ʿAṭṭār, *ḤJJ*, 2:490–91.
[460] A *fakhdh* is a unit of traditional Arab tribal allegiance, below a *baṭn* and above a *faṣīla*. Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-ʾaʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshā*, 1:308–309, as cited in Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 40.

Umayya and Banū Hāshim, all the living of whom belong to ʿAbd Manāf and attribute their lineage (*yansabūn*) to them. Quraysh recognized this and asked for their leadership, as Banū Umayya were greatest in number of Banū Hāshim and strongest in manpower (*awfar rijālan*), and they had before Islam well-known noble descent from Ḥarb ibn Umayya [b. Abd Shams b. Abd Manaf], who was their leader in the Sacrilegious Wars.[461] It happened one day that Quraysh went out to do battle [with Hawāzin]. Ḥarb was leaning against the Kaʿba, when some boys (*ghilma*) rushed to him, [10] calling "o uncle, quickly save (*adrik*) your people (*qawm*) [before it's too late]!" So he came to them in his *izār* and met them among the hills (*al-rubā*); he beckoned to them with the hem of his robe that they may come to him, and so both parties came [and made peace], after there had been anger and strife between them.[462]

The nobility of ʿAbd Manāf continued in ʿAbd Shams, and Banū Hāshim. When Abū Ṭālib perished, his son [ʿAlī] was migrating with the Messenger of God, peace and blessings of God be upon him, and Ḥamza [b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib] (d. 3/625) besides, then after him ʿAbbās (d. 32 AH) and many from Banū Muṭṭalib, and others of Banū Hāshim. With the air empty (*khulā al-jaw*) in the place of Banū Hāshim at Mecca, the leadership of Banū Umayya strengthened (*istaghlaẓat*) in Quraysh. They took the sheikhdom (*mashyakha*) of Quraysh from the other *buṭūn* at Badr, where the great ones of ʿAbd Shams, ʿUtba and Rabīʿa and al-Walīd and ʿUqba b. Abū Muʿīṭ[463] and others all perished.

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[461] The Sacrilegious Wars (*Ḥarb al-fijār*) were a series late 6th century battles between Quraysh and Hawāzin in pre-Islamic Arabia. The battles were so named because they took place during the sacred months of the Arabian calendar in which warfare was prohibited.
The battles took place about 20 years after the Year of the Elephant (571). Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 61.

[462] This is likely referring to an incident remembered as the third *fijār*. A beautiful woman from the tribe of Qays Banī ʿĀmir was harassed by a group of Qurayshī youths, who ultimately managed to expose her naked body in public, provoking fighting between the two tribes. A full war was averted through the diplomatic efforts of Ḥarb b. Umayya. Mawlā, Muḥammad Aḥmad Jād al-. *Ayyām al-ʿarab fī 'l-jāhiliyya*. Cairo, Egypt: ʿIsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1942,502.

[463] Utba b. Rabiʾa b. Abd Shams b. Umayya was the father of Hind and the grandfather of Muawiya. Rabiʾa - most likely Shayba b. Rabiʾa, was the brother of Utba, killed by Hamza at Badr. "Al-Walid b. Utba b. Rabiʾa was killed by ʿAlī at Badr, and was the uncle of Muʿāwiya. ʿUqba b. Abī Muʿīṭ b. ʿAmr b. Umayya was among the harshest

Thus, Abū Sufyān (d. 31-34/651-654) became independent (*astaqal*) [in carrying all] the nobility of Banū Umayya, and moved to the forefront of Quraysh. He was their leader at [the Battle of] Uḥud (3/625), [11] and their chief at [the Battle of] Aḥzāb (5/627),[464] and what followed. When the conquest [of Mecca] took place, ʿAbbās said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) that that night when Abū Sufyān surrendered, he was known, and was his friend, "O Messenger of God! Abū Sufyān is a man who loves pride, so make mention of him." So he [the Prophet] said: "Whoever enters the house of Abū Sufyān is safe..."[465]

So they surrendered. The shaykhs of Quraysh later complained to Abū Bakr of their inferiority [in status] to the first Muhajirūn, and how they had heard ʿUmar saying he would no longer take their counsel. Abū Bakr then apologized to them and said "surpass (*adrakū*) your brothers through jihad."

He thus exhorted them to [join in] the Wars of Apostasy,[466] where they served admirably, to the benefit of Islam, and put the Bedouin Arabs (*aʾrāb*) to indignity (*ḥīf*) and flight. Then ʿUmar came and launched them against Rome, and Quraysh desired to launch an invasion (*nafīr*) into the Levant, and so most of them were [12] there. Yazīd bin [Abū] Sufyān exploited the Levant, and the effects of his governorship (*wilāya*) lasted long until he perished in the Plague of

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opponents of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and harm committed against him. He was captured at Badr and then beheaded." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 63.

[464] The Battle of Aḥzāb ('the parties') is another name for the Battle of Khandaq, or the Trench, which was a siege of Muslim-ruled Medina by Meccan-led forces.

[465] The complete phrase is "Whoever enters the house of Abū Sufyān is safe, whoever lays down arms will be safe, whoever locks his door will be safe." (Sahih Muslim 1780c, Abū Dāwūd 3021, ʿAbd al-Razzāq 9739, Ibn Abī Shayba 36900).

The point of the story is that the specific mention of Abū Sufyān is practically redundant, as anyone who remains in his own home, let alone Abū Sufyān's, is promised safety. Singling out Abū Sufyān was a clever appeal to the man's pride, demonstrating the Prophet's social and psychological tact.

In this case, al-ʿAṭṭār is citing the hadith to illustrate the prideful nature of Banū Umayya.

[466] The campaigns launched by Abu Bakr against a faction of Muslims who refused to pay zakat after the death of the Prophet, and thereby were excommunicated from the faith.

Emmaus in the year 18 AH.[467] So his brother Muʿāwiya assumed the position, and ʿUthmān approved of this after ʿUmar [had passed away].

Thus, [Banū Umayya's] leadership over Quraysh in [the age of] Islam was connected to their leadership before the conquest [of Mecca], the dye of which was not dissolved and their era unforgotten during the days of Banū Hāshim's preoccupation with the matter of prophecy, and [Banū Umayya] saw the material world slip from their hands, because of their rejection of direct revelation and proximity to God through His Messenger.

People still know Banū Umayya for this; look to the saying of Ḥanẓala bin Ziyād the scribe to Muḥammad bin Abī Bakr (d. 38/658),[468] who said that "If this matter [of leadership] comes to a struggle, Banū ʿAbd Manāf shall prevail."[469]

When ʿUthmān died, and the people argued over ʿAlī, the soldiers of ʿAlī were greatest in number [supporting him] for the caliphate, and [attesting to his] virtue, [13] except for the remaining tribes (qabāʾil) from Rabīʿa,[470] Yemen, and others. The multitudes of Muʿāwiya were Qurayshī soldiers of the Levant, the valor (shawka) of Muḍar. Bit by bit, they descended to the frontiers (thughūr) of Sham during the conquest, and their ʿaṣabiyya was most serious and valor most sharp (amḍā shawka). Everything was ruined by the Khawārij/Kharijites[471] and their works, until Muʿāwiya took power (malaka) and took power from Hasan (d. 40/661) for himself.

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[467] The Plague of Emmaus (Ar. *Amwās*) was a bubonic plague epidemic named for a town in Palestine which struck early Islamic Syria in 18/639, killing much of the local Syrian Christian population, and the new Muslim garrisons. A number of Companions died from it. Dols has argued that the death of so many Muslim commanders from the plague allowed Muʿāwiya to quickly rise through the ranks in the region, and paved the way for the rise of the Umayyad dynasty. See:
Dols, M. W. (1974). "Plague in Early Islamic History". *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. **94** (3): 371–383.
[468] He was appointed governor of Egypt by Ali in 37/657, but was captured and killed by the army dispatched by Muawiya to Egypt. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 66.
[469] Najm: "This is incorrect, as the one who said this was Ḥanẓala b. Al-Rabīʿ b. Ṣayfī al-Tamīmī, who was a Companion known as 'Ḥanẓala al-Kātib' ('the scribe') because he was among the scribes of the Prophet, peace be upon him." Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 38.
[470] Rabi'a is the second of the two main branches of Arabian tribes, the counterpart of Mudar, discussed previously.
[471] Originally the rebels who revolted against Ali, and later developed into the Ibadi sect. from Shahrastani Milal wal Nihal.
Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 67.

The [Muslim leadership] then agreed to pledge allegiance to Muʿāwiya in the middle of the year 41 AH, when people had forgotten the matter of prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and the supernatural, and returned to ʿaṣabiyya and wrestling with one another (*taghālib*) [for power].[472]

Banū Umayya was specified for supremacy over Muḍar and the rest of the Arabs, and Muʿāwiya at that time was the greatest of them, so the caliphate did not escape him, and none had any part in it (*lā sāhamahu*)[473] but him, so it became his inheritance; his affairs prospered, and his leadership strengthened.

His era (ʿahd) was well-documented, and he remained in his authority (*sulṭāna*) and the caliphate for twenty years,[474] exercising political power, and no one [14] of his people (*qawm*) had more hand in it than he, whether among the people of nomination (*tarshīḥ*) the children of Fāṭima (d. 11 AH),[475] Banū Hāshim or the family of Zubayr (d. 64/684)[476] and their likes. He bought off the heads of the Arabs and the lords (*qurūm*) of Muḍar with indulgence and appearances (*bi l-aghḍāʾ wa l-iḥtimāl*) and patience in the face of wickedness and detestable

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[472] What al-ʿAṭṭār is suggesting here is that the heroic age of the Prophet ended at this point, and the world returned to its materialistic, immoral default state. This is consistent with his nostalgic pining for past glories elsewhere in his writings. Islamic civilization was 'disenchanted' after the Prophet.
This point also saw Khaldunian forces return to power; the charismatic power of the prophet-king faded from the earth, and he was replaced with venal, worldly people who ruled as oppressive kings (*mulk ʿaḍūd*). ʿAṣabiyya overcame the transcendent ideal.

[473] Baghdādī writes: "Attar was very precise in his wording here, so as to encompass two meanings: that no one rivaled him in his caliphate, nor did anyone share it with him." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 68.

[474] al-ʿAṭṭār's description of Muʿāwiya possessing the sultanate and the caliphate at once is perhaps significant. The concept of a sultanate representing worldly political power held separately from the office of the caliphate developed in the Abbasid period, long after Muʿāwiya. In light of al-ʿAṭṭār's assertion elsewhere in his writings that the Rightly Guided Rashidun caliphate ended with Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, who famously devolved the office to Muʿāwiya, I believe al-ʿAṭṭār is indicating that the imperfect political reality of Islam, in which worldly power is separated from the caliphate, began in Muʿāwiya's reign.

[475] i.e. Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, who did not challenge Muʿāwiya's rule.

[476] Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām b. Khuwaylid, the Companion and prominent political player in the years after the death of the Prophet. His son ʿAbd Allāh ruled a rival caliphate out of Mecca until he was defeated by Marwān and his son ʿAbd al-Malik in 73/693. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 68.
Najm writes that the family in question consisted of Zubayr's sons ʿAbd Allāh, ʿUrwa, Mundhir, Muṣʿab, Khālid, Jaʿfar, ʿAmr, ʿUbayda and Ḥamza. Apart from ʿAbd Allāh's major counter-caliphate against the Umayyads, Muṣʿab was killed by ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān during ʿAbd Allāh's rebellion. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 40.

things (*makrūh*). His forbearance was unsurpassed, his cabal (*ʿiṣāba*) could not be dislodged, and his feet (*aqdām*) never slipped.

He remembered that he joked to ʿAdī bin Ḥātim (d. 66-68/685-687) one day, about the company of ʿAlī.[477] So ʿAdī said to him: "By Allāh, indeed the hearts with which we hated you are [still] in our breasts, the swords with which we fought you are on our shoulders, and if you give us even an inch of treachery, we will surely condemn you for evil; even if the throat drops and the death rattle (*ḥashraja*) rings in the chest (*ḥīzūm*), it would be easier for us than hearing insults against ʿAlī. Then the scent of the sword (*shamm al-sayf*),[478] o Muʿāwiya, the sword will be sent (*yubʿath*)." So Muʿāwiya said: "these are words of truth, so write them down." So he kissed him (*aqbala ʿalayhi*) in kindness, regaled him with conversation and showed him generosity and [15] forbearance.

After him, the caliphs of Banū Umayya took over, until their state was succeeded by the Abbasid state.[479]

THE ABBASID CALIPHS

Know that the beginning of this state was with the Ahl al-Bayt upon the death of the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of God be upon him), when they saw themselves to be

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[477] ʿAdī bin Ḥātim bin Abdullah bin Saʿd, son of the famous poet Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī, was a Companion who converted to Islam after the the conquest of Mecca, and fought in ʿAlī's army at the Battle of the Camel, Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān. Died in Kufa.

[478] Baghdādī writes: *Shamm* in this context, usually meaning to smell, means to test. From it comes the expression "we smelled (i.e. tested) them, and then we fought them" (*shaamamnaahum thumma naawashnaahum*). Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 70.

Naṣṣār writes that this exchange is reported in historical works, and the best available on it is in *al-Iktifāʾ bi akhbār al-khulafāʾ* by the 13th-century author Abū Marwān ʿAbd al-Malik al-Tawzirī, most recently published by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1/162. Naṣṣār, *Taḥqīq*, 36.

[479] The Umayyad caliphate lasted from 40-132/661-750, and consisted of 14 caliphs, beginning with Muawiya and ending with Marwan b. Al-Hakam, who was killed in Egypt during the Abbasid Revolution. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 70.

more deserving of [political] command (*amr*) and the caliphate, more than any others in Quraysh.

In truth, ʿAbbās said to ʿAlī during the illness of the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of God be upon him) from which he died, "come with us to him, that we may ask him who is to take up this matter [of leadership]; if it be with us, then to inform us of that, or if it is with other than us, then we can inform him and he can nominate us in his place." So ʿAlī said to him: "If he refuses it to us, the people will not give it to us after [his death]."[480]

In truth as well, the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said in his sickness in which he died, "Bring [a pen] that I may write for you a writing such that you will never stray after it", and they argued with him [16] on this, quarreling, and the writing was never finished.[481]

Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687) would say "disaster (*razziyya*); it was all a disaster, what occurred between the Messenger of Allāh (peace and blessings of God be upon him) and that dissension and clamoring (*laghaṭ*) of theirs,"[482] such that many Shīʿīs concluded that the Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him), in his sickness, had recommended ʿAlī [as his successor].

This is incorrect according to what is reliable, and ʿĀʾisha (d. 57–58/676–677) denied this inheritance (*waṣiyya*), and her denial is sufficient. This remained well-known to Ahl al-Bayt and their partisans (*shīʿihim*), and the People of Traditions (*ahl al-athār*) transmitted that ʿUmar said one day to Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687) "indeed your *qawm* (meaning Quraysh) did not want that you (meaning Banū Hāshim) should combine both prophethood and caliphate, so they clashed with them (*fataḥamū ʿalayhim*)." Ibn ʿAbbās denied this, and asked his permission to speak, and so spoke of what angered him, and it became evident from their discussion that they knew that

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[480] See this hadith in Ibn Hishām 2/307.
[481] Bukhārī 114 and Muslim 1637.
[482] This is narrated with a slight difference in wording in Bukhārī 4432.

[17] the Ahl al-Bayt maintained in their souls some [desire for] command of the caliphate and [grievance that] they had been turned away from it.

Likewise in the story of the *shūra*,[483] a group from among the Companions were partisans of ʿAlī, and believed him more deserving than the other [candidates to be elected as caliph]. When someone else was chosen instead, they resented it and sympathized with him. Among these were Zubayr (d. 36/656), ʿAmmār bin Yāsir (d. 37/657), Miqdād bin al-Aswad (d. 33/657) and others; despite their firm footing in the religion and their eagerness for friendship, this group (*qawm*), did not go beyond confidential talk (*najwā*) with sighs and regrets. Then, when denunciation and slander of ʿUthmān [bin ʿAffān] spread across the very horizons,[484] it was ʿAbd Allāh bin Sabāʾ (d. 59 AH), known as Ibn al-Sawdāʾ [ʿson of the black woman'][485] who was among those most deeply involved in partisanship/Shīʿism for ʿAlī. He was not satisfied [simply] with slandering ʿUthmān and the group that preferred him over ʿAlī, considering the former to be an illegitimate ruler.

So ʿAbd Allāh bin ʿĀmir (d. 58–59/677–678)[486] brought him out from Basra and joined him in Egypt, and gathered around him a group of his like [18] and they tended towards

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[483] "He means by this story the events which ended with the selection of ʿUthmān to assume the caliphate. The events began with ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's selection of the six Companions guaranteed paradise to choose who would succeed him: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, Imām ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Zubayr b. Al-ʿAwwām and Ṭalḥa b. ʿAbd Allāh. See: source." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 73.

[484] ʿUthmān's caliphate was objected to by a number of Companions, and he was accused of favoring Banū Umayya in his administration and the apportionment of conquered lands.

[485] According to Sunni heresiography, ʿAbd Allāh bin Sabāʾ was a crypto-Jew posing as a Muslim, working to undermine Muslim unity through the promotion of Shiism. He is cited by some Sunnis as evidence for the nefarious origins of Shīʿī doctrine. For more on the historical image of this figure, see:
Anthony, Sean. *The Caliph and the Heretic: Ibn Sabaʿ and the Origins of Shīʿism*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishing, 2011.

[486] "'ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmir b. Kurayz b. Rabīʿa b. Ḥabīb b. ʿAbd Shams al-Qurashī was counted as one of the Companions due to his vision of the Prophet, peace be upon him. He was the uncle of ʿUthmān and the cousin of the Prophet. He governed Basra and other places on behalf of ʿUthmān, and then for Muʿāwiya for three years, and he accomplished great conquests (*futūḥāt*)." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 74.

extremism (*ghuluw*) in that, and reproduced (*antaḥāla*) their corrupt doctrines in him, such as [those of] Khālid bin Muljam, Sūdḥān bin Ḥamdān, Kināna bin Bishr, and others.[487]

There then [came to pass] the pledge of allegiance to ʿAlī, the Battle of the Camel (36/656), and that of Ṣiffīn (37/657),[488] the divergence (*inḥirāf*) of the Kharijites in their rejection of [ʿAlī] and his rule in the religion. The Shīʿīs were tempted to join the war between Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī and to pledge allegiance to his son Ḥasan.

[Ḥasan, however,] left the matter [of caliphate] to Muʿāwiya, so the Shīʿīs of ʿAlī were angry with him, and began to secretly conspire about the right of Ahl al-Bayt [to leadership] and their sympathy for them. They were angry with Ḥasan and what he had done, and so wrote to Ḥusayn calling upon him (*bi l-duʿā lahu*) [to claim leadership], but he refused and promised them the destruction of Muʿāwiya. So they went to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya (d. 81 AH) and pledged allegiance to him in secret, seeking for [him to claim] the caliphate when he was able. He appointed a man over each country, and they took their positions. By political maneuvering, Muʿāwiya restrained them from straying into disobedience, and uprooted the disease [19] when any among them did, as he did with Ḥijr bin ʿUdayy (d. 51/671)[489] and his companions. He tamed the insubordination (*shammās*) of Ahl al-Bayt and forgave them for their claim of precedence and [preeminent] right [to leadership], and did not irritate or reprimand any of them (*tathrīb ʿalayhim*) for it until he died.

Yazīd [b. Muʿāwiya] (d. 64 AH) then took power, which provoked the rebellion (*khurūj*) and murder of Ḥusayn which are well-known.[490] It was one of the most heinous incidents in all

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[487] Baghdādī writes that these men played an important role in inflaming intra-Muslim conflicts at this time, leading to the Battle of the Camel. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 75.

[488] Battles fought between the forces of ʿAlī and his opponents, Ṭalḥa, Zubayr and ʿĀʾisha at the Battle of the Camel, and Muʿāwiya at the Battle of Ṣiffīn, respectively.

[489] A Companion who fought at the Qādisiyya, the Battle of the Camel and Ṣiffīn. He later became a dissident against Muʿāwiya, and was killed on his orders near Damascus. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 45.

[490] Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya took power in 60/680, and ordered the killing of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī at Karbala the next year.

of Islamic history, by which hatred was magnified and the Shiites were plunged deep into their [heresy], heaping denunciation and slander upon whoever assumed (*tawallā*) [the caliphate] or [whoever among Ahl al-Bayt] avoided it. They then blamed themselves for how they had squandered [the possibility of] Ḥusayn's rule, having called him then not aiding him, and deeply regretted it.

They felt that there was no penance (*kaffāra*) to be made for this [betrayal] except to be avenge his sacrifice (*al-istimāta dūn thāʾirihi*), and so named themselves the Penitents (*al-tawwabīn*)[491] and rebelled in his name, led by Sulaymān Ibn Ṣurad al-Khuzāʿī and a group of ʿAlī's chosen (*jamāʿat min khiyār ʿAlī*).[492] Ibn Ziyād (d. 67 AH)[493] was forced out of Iraq, [20] and met him [at the border of] the Levant. [Ibn Ziyād's army] advanced and attacked him, until Sulaymān and many of his companions were killed. This was in the year 65/685.[494]

Then Mukhtār bin Abī ʿUbayd [al-Thaqafī] (d. 67/687) rebelled,[495] and he called to Muḥammad bin al-Ḥanafiyya as we described earlier, and zealotry (*taʿaṣṣub*) for Ahl al-Bayt spread widely, among the elites and the common folk, beyond the bounds of the truth. The sects of the Shiites diversified, differing as to who was most deserving of command from among Ahl al-Bayt. Each faction pledged allegiance to its master in secret. Kingship was established for

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[491] Najm: "The Companion Sulaymān Ibn Ṣurad al-Khuzāʿī rose to lead the faction of the Penitents, who felt guilty over having called on Husayn RA to join them in Iraq, swearing allegiance to him as the Commander of the Faithful, only to then abandon him to meet his Lord as a martyr. This faction fought many battles in penitence for Ḥusayn's murder. This faction had no discernable difference in creed from the generality of Muslims; they simply saw themselves as paying penance for their guilt in Ḥusayn's death." Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 45f.

[492] Sulaymān led this Shīʿī movement alongside Musayyab b. Najba b. Rabīʿa al-Fazārī, which rebelled and called for vengeance for the death of Ḥusayn. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 77.

[493] ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād b. Abīhi was the governor of Khurasan, then Basra. He was partially guilty for Ḥusayn's death and attacked by the people of Basra, forcing him to flee to the Levant. He was killed by Ibrāhīm b. Al-Ashtar in Mosul in 67 AH. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 46.

[494] The Battle of ʿAyn al-Warda, located on the modern Syrian-Turkish border, saw Umayyad forces bring an end to the Penitents movement.

[495] A pro-ʿAlid rebel who struggled against the nascent Zubayrid caliphate in Iraq, killed while fighting against Ibn al-Zubayr's brother and commander Muṣʿab. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 77.

Banū Umayya, while these Shiites masked (*ṭawā*) the beliefs in their hearts, and covered them up in their myriad sects and manifold dissension (*kathrat ikhtilāfihim*).

Then Zayd bin ʿAlī bin Ḥusayn (d. 122/740) grew up, and studied under Wāṣil bin ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748), Imām of the Muʿtazila in his time. Wāṣil was hesitant to insult ʿAlī in the Battle of Ṣiffīn and the Camel, and [Zayd] transmitted this from him. He broke from his brother Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/733)[496] in taking [21] his grandfather to be in error, but Zayd did concur with his belief in the superiority (*afḍaliyya*) of ʿAlī over his companions. He held the pledge of allegiance to the two shaykhs [Abū Bakr and ʿUmar] to be valid, unlike what the Shiites hold, and he saw that neither of them wronged ʿAlī. [His allies] called him to rebel (*khurūj*) in Kufa in the year 121 AH. A mass (*ʿāmma*) of Shiites gathered around him, and some abandoned him when they heard him praising the two shaykhs and saying that they had not wronged ʿAlī. They were incredulous, and rejected his call, and so became known as the Rejectors (*rāfiḍa*) as a result. Then he fought Yūsuf bin ʿUmar (d. 127/745)[497] and Yūsuf killed him and sent his head to Shām, and crucified his corpse (*ṣalaba shilwahu*) at Kunāsa.[498]

His son Yaḥyā [b. Zayd b. ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn] (d. 125 AH) succeeded him in Khurasan when he rose to [leadership], rebelling there at the instigation of the Shīʿa in the year 125 AH. Naṣr bin Sayyār (d. 131/748) fell upon him with Sālim bin Aḥwar al-Māzanī (d. 125/743);[499] they killed

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[496] The fourth Imām according to Twelver and Ismaʿīlī theology.

[497] "The cousin of al-Ḥajjāj, he governed a number of states on behalf of Banū Umayya. He was killed in the prison of Yazīd b. Al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān in the Levant in 127/745." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 79.

[498] Kunāsa was an area on the outskirts of Kufa. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 80.

[499] Najm mentions that al-ʿAṭṭār wrote his name incorrectly; his name was Sālim b. Aḥwaz, not Aḥwar. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 48.

him and sent his head to al-Walīd [b. ʿAbd al-Malik] (r. 87–96), and crucified his corpse [22] in

Juzjan.[500] [501]

So the Zaydites became extinct in Juzjan, and the Shiites established themselves in their

place, waiting for their command and supplicating for them, calling out for deliverance (*riḍā*) for

the family of Muḥammad,[502] while not saying who they prayed for [by name], out of concern for

[his persecution by] the people of the state (*dawla*). The partisans of Muḥammad bin

al-Ḥanafiyya were more numerous than the partisans of Ahl al-Bayt, and they held that after

Muḥammad bin al-Ḥanafiyya, command ought to pass to his son Abū Hishām ʿAbd Allāh (d.

98/716).[503] They often used to blame Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 99/717),[504] so while

traveling [ʿAbd Allāh] came upon Muḥammad bin ʿAlī bin ʿAbd Allāh bin ʿAbbās (d. 125/744)

at his home in Ḥumayma, one of the works of Balqāʾ.[505] He went down to [the village], but was

overcome by disease; as he died, he bequeathed command [of the Abbasid movement] to him.

[ʿAbd Allāh] had been one of the most prominent Shiites in Iraq and Khurasan, and so when he

bequeathed his leadership to Muḥammad bin ʿAlī, upon his death, the Shiites accepted [him],

pledging allegiance to him in secret. He thus sent out a great call to them reaching the very

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[500] Naṣr b. Sayyār al-Laythī al-Kinānī was the last Umayyad governor of Khurasan during the reign of al-Walīd. As mentioned by al-ʿAṭṭār, Yaḥyā b. Zayd rebelled against his governorship in Juzjan, so Naṣr sent an army of 3,000 men against him, led by Sālim b. Aḥwar, which defeated, beheaded and crucified him. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 80.

[501] "Yaḥyā's body remained crucified until Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī took over the city during the Abbasid Revolution. Abū Muslim brought down the body, prayed over him, and had him buried." Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 48.

[502] Najm writes that *riḍā* here refers to ʿAlī al-Riḍā b. Mūsā al-Kāẓim, the eighth imam according to Twelver belief. I believe my translation, supported by al-Baghdādī and Naṣṣār, is more plausible, as ʿAlī al-Riḍā lived his entire life in the Abbasid period, while this section is primarily concerned with the path of the Abbasids to power, rather than their reign. In the context, it would make little sense to refer to ʿAlī al-Riḍā, not to mention the fact that al-ʿAṭṭār refers to every other person in the *Risāla* by a clearly identifiable name. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 49.

[503] The correct name is Abū Hāshim, as opposed to Abū Hishām. This is most likely a typographical error by al-ʿAṭṭār.

[504] The Umayyad caliph who succeeded al-Walīd and preceded ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.

[505] Balqāʾ is a place between Damascus and Wadi al-Qura in the Hijaz mountain chain. Ḥumayma is located in present-day southern Jordan. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 81.

horizons at the head of the Hijri century,[506] [23] in the days of ʿUmar bin ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 99–101/717–720).[507]

The common folk of Khurasan responded [to his call], and he dispatched captains (*nuqabāʾ*)[508] to them, and their matter/command circulated there. Muḥammad [bin ʿAlī] died in the year 124 AH (742 CE), and bequeathed the [Abbasid] cause to his son Ibrāhīm [bin Muḥammad] (d. 132/749) and was proclaimed Imām. He sent Abū Muslim [al-Khurāsānī] (d. 137/755)[509] [to lead the revolution in Khurasan] by virtue of his authority (*wilāya*), but then [the Umayyad caliph] Marwān bin Muḥammad (r. 127–132)[510] arrested the Imām Ibrāhīm, and imprisoned him in Khurasan.[511] He languished there a year [before dying in 132/749].[512]

Abū Muslim took possession of Khurasan, then moved with force on Iraq, and took possession of it [as well], all of which we have mentioned prior.[513] They brought down the rule of Banū Umayya and annihilated their state, and the caliphs of Banū ʿAbbās assumed their place.[514]

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[506] That is, around the year 100 AH.

[507] The much-celebrated Umayyad caliph compared with the Rashidun caliphs for his wise, just and pious rule.

[508] Al-Baghdādī writes that "Al-Attar was apt in using this word, as the captain (*naqīb*) is his nation's witness, its guarantor and trustee, and it is he who is assigned to call his people to faith. They have been likened here to the captains of the children of Israel, and the captains of the pledges of Aqaba and Mecca before the Hijra." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 82.

[509] A Persian general, one of the main leaders of the Abbasid Revolution. He was executed by the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr in 137/755. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 82.

[510] The final Umayyad caliph, deposed by the Abbasid Revolution and murdered in Egypt.

[511] According to Blankinship, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad was imprisoned in Harran, rather than Khurasan, which would certainly make more sense given that at the time Khurasan was occupied by revolutionary Abbasid forces, while Harran was an Umayyad stronghold. Given the obvious nature of this error, it is most likely that this was a simple mistake on al-ʿAṭṭār's part. The story of Ibrāhīm's tenure as hidden Imām of the Abbasid movement, betrayal and imprisonment has been detailed in the following article: Blankinship, Khalid Yahya. "The Tribal Factor in the ʿAbbāsid Revolution: The Betrayal of the Imam Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 4 (1988): 589–603.

[512] Blankinship concludes that Imām Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad was betrayed to the Umayyad authorities by Qurayẓ b. Mujāj as part of a struggle within the Abbasid movement over persecution of Muḍarī tribal elements, launched at the prerogative of Abū Muslim. This suggestion that tribal, rather than ideological allegiances were the overriding concern of the early Abbasid leadership certainly conforms to al-ʿAṭṭār's *ʿaṣabiyya*-centric understanding of caliphal history as articulated in his *Risāla*.
See: Blankinship, *The Tribal Factor in the ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, 600f.

[513] Naṣṣār notes that the exact phrasing of this sentence (all of which we have mentioned prior) is typical of Ibn Khaldūn. Naṣṣār, *Taḥqīq*, 40.

[514] Their caliphate endured in Baghdad from 133–656/750–1258, comprising 37 caliphs, before the institution migrated to Cairo. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 82.

THE FATIMID CALIPHS[515]

These caliphs trace their lineage to Ḥusayn bin ʿAlī, may God be pleased with him. They were Shīʿa who possessed the caliphate, and among them were the Ismāʿīlīs, who say that the Imam [of all Muslims] is from the sons of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 AH),[516] [specifically] his son Ismāʿīl,[517] [24] and that the Imam after Ismāʿīl is his son Muḥammad al-Maktūm (d. 198 AH), and after Muḥammad al-Maktūm his son Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 240 AH),[518] and after Jaʿfar his son Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb (d. 270/883), then his son ʿUbayd Allāh (d. 322 AH). They hoped for the appearance of a state for themselves, and called people towards this.

Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī (d. 298 AH) answered their call, and he established for ʿUbayd Allāh [al-Mahdī] the Fatimid state in the Maghrib, for which he sought aid from the Kutama [Berber] tribes, and then conquered Egypt and founded Cairo. The Fatimid caliphate was then assumed by their sons for an era, and they took control over much of what had been in the grasp of the Abbasid state, until rule over the [Arab] East became divided between them.

The Abbasids rejected their claim to ʿAlawī lineage, as attested by many famous people, some of whom include the two Sharīfs, al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015)[519] and Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044)[520] and Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 406/1015).[521] In the year 420 AH, in the days of al-Qādir [bi

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[515] That al-ʿAṭṭār mentions the Fatimid caliphs, and not, for example, the Almohads, indicates some degree of Egypt-centrism. I do not think it is very great though, and certainly not evidence of nationalism, considering that the number of states claiming the caliphate through history is relatively small.

[516] The sixth imam according to Twelver and Ismāʿīlī creed.

[517] Ismāʿīlī sources claim that Ismāʿīl survived his father by many years, initiating the Ismāʿīlī line of imams. Non-Ismāʿīlīs claim he died as a young boy and was buried in the Baqīʿ Cemetery in Medina in 143 AH.

[518] Najm points out that this is a mistake by al-ʿAṭṭār. The Ismāʿīlīs hold that the Imam after Muḥammad al-Maktūm was Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad, known as al-Muṣaddiq, not al-Ṣādiq. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 53.

[519] There is a footnote about this guy in the Sabri book, author of Nahj al-Balagha I believe.

[520] The two Sharīfs were sons of Ṭāhir Abī Aḥmad al-Ḥusayn b. Mūsā b. Muḥammad, and descendants of the Prophet via the Shīʿī Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim. Their real names were Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. Mūsā and ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn b. Mūsā. They were major figures in Arabic literature.

[521] One of the great Shāfiʿī jurists of his day. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 84.

Allāh] (r. 381–422/992–1020),[522] the judges [25] recorded this and spread it around (*al-anḥāʾ*) in order to turn a blind eye to them [i.e. to turn away from the Fatimids].[523]

THE OTTOMAN CALIPHS

The Ottoman caliphs came to command of the Islamic caliphate when the Sultan Selim I (r. 918–926/1512–1520) was given the pledge of allegiance by the Abbasid caliph, and the caliphate transferred to them,[524] with whom it has remained, passed down as an inheritance and claim to the allegiance [of all Muslims], one by one, until today.

They took power over (*wa qad dāna lahum*) the Turks, Slavs[525] and Arabs; Syria, Egypt, and the Maghrib. Their call echoed over the East and West, and they struggled [in *jihād*] in the path of God at His command, fought the disbelievers, and protected the religion for many centuries and admirable ages. They had in those days righteousness, positive effects, and virtues the like of which were never seen in earlier states and times. It is because of them that the command of the Islamic caliphate has not weakened, as it did in Baghdad among the [26] oppressed (*mustaḍʿafīn*) Abbasids who did not [truly] command or reign (*lā yuḥillūn walā yaʿqidūn*), as some have said.

> *A caliph in a cage,*   *between a manservant and a courtesan,*
>
> *He says what they tell him,*   *as one speaks to a parrot.*[526]

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[522] Al-Baghdādī: "His caliphate saw the murder of the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi Amr Allāh and the weakening of the Fatimid state, and some of the Levant became disloyal to him." Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafāʾ*, 272–276, as cited in Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 85.

[523] The Fatimid caliphate endured from 297–567/909–1171, and was ruled by a total of 14 caliphs.

[524] Following the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, by the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil ʿalā Allāh III.

[525] Naṣṣār clarifies that these were the peoples of the Balkans, today known by various names, such as Serbs, Croatians and Bulgarians. Naṣṣār, *Taḥqīq*, 42.

[526]   *Khalīfa fī qafs*   *bayn waṣīf wa bughā*
Yaqūl mā qālā lahu   *kamā taqūl li babaghā*
According to al-Baghdādī, this poem is a reference to the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861), who lived under the domination of his Turkish slave soldiers. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 87.

The enemies took over and infiltrated all remaining areas (*aknāf*) until [Abbasid] rule came to an end when the Tatars fell upon Baghdad and murdered the caliph,[527] and violated the sanctity of the [Islamic] nation (*milla*), and its state and authority.

Likewise, the condition (*ḥāl*) of the Fatimid caliphs in Egypt degraded to the worst of states when [Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd al-Majīd] al-Ẓāfir (r. 544–549/1149–1154) took over at the end [of their caliphate] when he was just 17 years-old. He was soon after murdered by his vizier,[528] who appointed his five year-old son al-Fāʾiz [bi Naṣr Allāh] (r. 549–555/1154–1160) [to the position], and carried him on his shoulders and demanded the pledge of allegiance to him from the nation (*qawm*). Everyone did this in a great shout, which frightened the boy, leading him to urinate on the vizier's shoulder. Thus did the Islamic caliphate decline [27] to such a nadir that it was held by small children. Likewise, the caliphate in al-Andalus became a plaything claimed by every village shaykh without even a fraction of [legitimate] command over the Muslims, such that the poet said:

> *The factions have proliferated in every locale,*
>
> *in which there is [nought but] a 'commander of the believers' and a pulpit.*[529]

This state of affairs continued until the Islamic caliphate ceased to be accompanied by power, authority, rule and enforcing ability (*tanfīdh*), in both religious and worldly life. The East almost became like al-Andalus, with no sultan for Islam therein.[530]

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[527] Al-Baghdādī writes that "This was in the reign of the caliph al-Mustaʿṣim bi Allāh Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh b. Al-Mustanṣir, who reigned from 640–656/1243–1258. The Tatars killed him after they had taken control of Baghdad and destroyed it." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 87.

[528] Al-Zafir bi Amr Allāh was assassinated in April, 1154, by his vizier, Naṣr bin ʿAbbās. About one year prior, Naṣr had assassinated the previous vizier, Ibn al-Sallār, in support of al-Ẓāfir. The latter's caliphate lasted only five years in total.

[529] Al-ʿAṭṭār is referring to the Taifa period of political fragmentation and chaos which followed the precipitous decline of the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba. He may also be referring to the Almoravid and Almohad movements which succeeded the Taifa period and which politically reunited the western Islamic world, and claimed the office of the caliphate.

[530] It is unclear what al-ʿAṭṭār meant by this, precisely. There were undoubtedly many sultans in the Islamic east after the Mongol invasions, so perhaps al-ʿAṭṭār is suggesting that there was no 'real' sultan worthy of the name in the region.

That is, [until] God aided by His spirit this glorious Islamic band from the house of ʿUthmān, reinforced the religion and its position, revived Islam and its strength, and gave life to the caliphate, making it as glorious, prestigious, and powerful as it had ever been. They warred against the enemies of Islam for years and years, shedding blood in God's name, and they preserved [28] for Islam the holy lands of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem; where revelation was sent down, where angels descend, the Ummah's [first] direction of prayer, and home to the graves of Prophets.

Likewise among their virtues is that they gave life to the Sunna, and death to innovation (*bidʿa*), honored the People of the House (*ahl al-bayt*), and did not violate the sanctuaries (*ḥurmāt*) of the Muslims or bring about misguidance. They are the closest people in their works to the Pious Predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) and the early generations of righteous and pure people; they do not resemble the caliphs of Banū Umayya or Banū ʿAbbās or the Fatimids, for these either committed evil in matters of religion and worldly concern, or else called others to do so.

The Umayyad state would curse ʿAlī from the pulpits; he who was the husband of the Inviolate (*al-baṭūl*) [Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ] and the nephew of the Messenger, and he of whom it was said [by the Prophet] "he whose master I am, ʿAlī is his master".[531] It was [under this government] that Ḥusayn [ibn ʿAlī] was murdered, [29] may God be pleased with him, that Zayd ibn ʿAlī was crucified at Kunāsa, that Medina was brought to shame (and this was dared against the Mothers of the Believers, wives of the Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him),

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[531] Source: Muḥammad Yūsuf al-Kandahlawī. *Ḥayāt al-ṣaḥāba*, vol. 1, etc. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 89. And from Naṣṣār: Tirmidhī (3713), Ibn Mājah (121), Ibn Abī Shayba (32072), Aḥmad (641). Naṣṣār, *Taḥqīq*, 43.

and that the Kaaba was brought to ruin. One hundred thousand died slow deaths in the prison of al-Ḥajjāj (d. (and according to you, the state of al-Ḥajjāj was among the worst of all states).[532]

They dared to transgress against the People of the House of Prophethood [Medina],[533] all while being so close to them and aware of their rights, so much so that someone said about what happened to them at the hands of the Umayyads that:

> *"there is no one alive who we know / from Dhū Yamān, Bakr, or Muḍar[534]*
>
> *who bears responsibility for their blood / like [the Umayyads] do in facilitating their slaughter."[535]*

This is how some of their caliphs were; they neither honored the Muhājir nor protected the Anṣārī, they destroyed the Kaaba,[536] and they enslaved the Companions and shackled the necks of the free.[537]

The Abbasid state was no different, beginning its activities by murdering [30] the men of the Umayyad state. Carpets were laid out for al-Saffāḥ (r. 133–136/750–754)[538] on their bodies, and food was eaten. They took the servants of God as slaves, and distributed God's money among themselves;[539] they drowned Daylamite and al-Ghurghanite alike, and kept the company

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[532] Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf was an Umayyad governor who ruled Iraq for twenty years with infamous cruelty. He killed ʿAbd Allāh b. Zubayr during his rebellion against the Umayyads.

[533] Al-Baghdādī cites the example of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya, who sent an army led by Muslim b. ʿUqba to Medina in 63/682 to punish them for their lack of loyalty. Muslim's army killed civilians and violated the sanctity of the holy city. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 90.

[534] These are ancient and prominent Arabian tribes.

[535] Najm writes that these verses are from a *qaṣīda* written by Daʿbal al-Khuzāʿī (d. 246). Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 60.

[536] This took place in 73/692 at the hands of Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (d. 95/713).

[537] al-ʿAṭṭār's outspoken criticism of the Umayyads is parallel in modern times by his condemnation of the depredations of rulers within the 19th century Ottoman Empire.

[538] Abū al-ʿAbbās ʿAbd Allāh al-Saffāḥ (literally 'the slaughterer') was an Abbasid caliph so named for orchestrating the massacre of the old Umayyad elite at the dawn of the Abbasid caliphate.

[539] Al-Baghdādī writes that al-ʿAṭṭār's wording is a reference to a hadith, reported by Ibn al-Jawzī as follows: "Khabīb b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Zubayr would say, citing the Prophet, that 'when the sons of Abū al-ʿĀṣ reach thirty men, they will take the servants of God as slaves, and distribute God's money among themselves.'" ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *Sīra ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz*, 1:33–35, as cited in Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 91f.

of drunken and perverted poets, and their close friends such as Ibn Abī Maryam al-Madīnī, and Zilzal al-Ḍārib and Barḍūma al-Zāmir.[540]

They imprisoned the likes of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and Mālik (d. 179–795) in this Umma, all while you see them honoring Bakhtīshūʿ[541] and his ilk, giving them power (*wikāla*), sharing their company and giving them license [to patronize the translation of] a thousand books of sophistry or Manichaeism, all while crucifying anyone who wrote a versified ode to the People of the House of Prophethood, as was done to ʿAbd Allāh bin ʿAmmār al-Barqī (d. 254).[542] The grave of Manṣūr bin Zabarqān al-Nimrī[543] was even exhumed, and still people dare to put forward various hadiths of sycophancy and fawning [towards the Abbasids].

[31] Their caliphs and judges also brought about the Fitna of belief in the createdness of the Qurʾan,[544] by which [some] of the imams of the Muslims tasted the colors of humiliation and were made to fill the prisons. [They authored] other innovations and misguidance besides, such that the Muslims became divided into sects by their creeds.

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[540] Al-Baghdādī reports that these were various courtiers of the Abbasid caliphs. Hārūn al-Rashīd had a group of singers which included a man named Zilzal, and another named Barḍūma al-Zāmir. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 92.
[541] Bakhtīshūʿ b. Jirjis al-Naṣrānī (d. 191–200 AH), described by al-Dhahabī as 'the filthy one' was an Assyrian Nestorian court physician who served in the Abbasid court, patronized by the Barmakid family. His name meant "servant of the Messiah" [i.e. Jesus] in Assyrian. Al-ʿAṭṭār's hostility towards him can likely be attributed to the Barmakids' infamous reputation as patrons of heretics and deviants. His father, Jibrīl bin Bakhtīshūʿ, had been the physician of the caliph al-Manṣūr, trained at the medical college of Jundishapur.
Naṣṣār, *Taḥqīq*, 44.
[542] Al-Barqī was a poet of the Abbasid period, who made his living writing praise poetry for Abbasid leaders. He also wrote an entire *dīwān* of poetry praising the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt. When the caliph al-Mutawakkil discovered this, he ordered al-Barqī's tongue to be cut out. He died of his injuries some days after the incident. Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 62.
[543] Najm writes his name as al-Namīrī. He was a poet in the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd, who wrote praise poetry for him. He had political sympathies for the 'Alid political cause and wrote poetry on their behalf. When al-Rashīd discovered this he ordered him to be killed, however the man had coincidentally already died, whereupon he said "I want him dug up and burned." Najm, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 60.
[544] The *Miḥna*, a theological 'inquisition' during the reigns of al-Maʾmūn and al-Muʿtaṣim to enforce belief in the Muʿtazilī doctrine of the createdness of the Qurʾan among the Abbasid caliphate's scholarly class.

Different schools of thought emerged, such as the Jabrites,[545] the Rawandites who worshiped the caliphs themselves,[546] and the Qarmatians[547] who looted the Ḥajj caravans and absconded with the Black Stone,[548] and so on, with [innumerable] corruptions in the land.

As for the Fatimid state and its caliphs from the sons of Ḥusayn, may God be pleased with him; there came to pass in its time such ordeals to behold for the people of Islam as never happened before at the hands of heretics or rebels against God Himself. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) says that among [the Fatimid caliphs] were those who commanded the people to prostrate to them, as the most audacious blasphemy against the Prophets; even the very best of them was still a vile Rejectionite (*rāfiḍī khabīth*).

[32] Al-Bāqillānī says that ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī (r. 909–934) was a Bāṭinite/esotericist so zealous in uprooting (*izāla*) the nation of Islam (*milla*) that he executed the jurists and scholars. [Shams al-Dīn] al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347) says that al-Qāʾim bin al-Mahdī (r. 934–946) was even more evil than his father, and that they preached knowledge of unseen realities and sainthood. Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) says that when al-ʿAzīz (r. 975–996)[549] was climbing the pulpit one day, he saw a paper on which was written:

> *We (grudgingly) accept oppression and cruelty / but not disbelief and stupidity,*
>
> *If you were truly given knowledge of the unseen / then tell us who wrote this letter!*[550]

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[545] A predestinarian Islamic theological school.

[546] Followers of Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Isḥāq (d. 298/910) who eventually splintered into sub-sects over the details of the caliphs' divinity.

[547] An Ismaʿīlī sect founded by Ḥamdān b. Qarmaṭ (d. 293/906) which established a state in Bahrain.

[548] Footnotes explaining all these heretical sects and their relations with the Abbasid government.

[549] Niẓār al-ʿAzīz bi Allāh, the fifth Fatimid caliph.

[550] This short poem was a slogan of Sunnis from Fatimid Egypt, mocking the Fatimid caliphs who claimed to have knowledge of the unseen (*ʿilm al-ghayb*).

All of this happened in the previous caliphal states, and yet we hear of nothing of this in the state of the Ottoman caliphs.[551] They have risen up like a lighthouse for the religion, and given might to the affairs of the Muslims. Among the virtues of this blessed Ottoman state is the conquest of the city of Constantinople, for which Muslim kings struggled [33] in times ancient and modern. Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, Maslama bin ʿAbd al-Malik bin Marwān (d. 120 AH),[552] [Harūn] al-Rashīd, al-Maʾmūn, and al-Muʿtaṣim all sent armies towards it, and other caliphs besides, and yet all of them were unable to do it, until God decreed a clear conquest at the hand of the Sultan Muḥammad [Mehmet] Khan II al-ʿUthmānī the Conqueror (al-Fātiḥ).[553]

So it was that it was he who was meant in the hadith in which [the Prophet], may God's peace and blessings be upon him, says: "you shall conquer Constantinople, so let us bless the prince and army which carry it out."[554] That is the blessing of God, which He gives to whom He wills.

Likewise among the virtues of this state is that it has preserved the sanctity of Islam in an age where Islam has become weak and strange among its enemies like whiteness amidst the blackest darkness.

[34] God saved [the Ottoman state] in the realm of the unseen, and made Islam more severely in need (and desire) of it. He made it different from other states, and gave it command of Islam, and there is no enemy which can overcome it by numbers or strength.[555]

The proof of this is that at its appearance, Islam had no enemy equal to Persia and Rome. The king of Persia was ruler over the two Iraqs, Khorasan, and Transoxiana. The king of Rome

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[551] Despite his overall support for the Ottoman caliphate, he did have extensive criticism for individual Ottoman governors and officials, decrying them as ignorant brutes. That is not to cast doubt on his sincere support for the caliphate as an Islamic institution in general, and the Ottoman caliphate in particular.

[552] An Umayyad commander who led innumerable attacks on Byzantine territory.

[553] There is a footnote from al-ʿAṭṭār here adding al-kabīr al-ʿaẓīm here, i.e. 'the great and magnificent'.

[554] Musnad Aḥmad, 18565.

[555] This is an interesting comment from al-ʿAṭṭār, given the humiliations the Ottoman state did in fact suffer from foreign enemies during his life.

ruled the Levant and Roman provinces beyond, and many nations which spread beyond the horizons.

Then, God prepared for Islam the 'imminent conquest' (*al-fatḥ al-qarīb*), so Persia and many provinces of Rome were conquered at the hand of Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqās (d. 55 AH) and Khālid ibn al-Walīd (d. 21 AH) and Abū ʿUbayda [ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Jarrāḥ] (d. 18 AH)[556] [35] and others among the Companions. So the air was cleared of enemies, their thrones tripled[557] in the East and West, and the conquests rolled on through the provinces, such that under the Rashidun caliphs, not a day went by except that more conquests were made.

A path was paved for their successors in the Islamic nation (*milla*) after them for centuries to come. They managed the affairs of the Muslims without contest; none could prevail over them, nor could anyone challenge them (*yakhruj ʿalayhim*) except from among themselves. What is more, they would send out summer campaigns (*ṣawāʾif*)[558] every year to battle the Romans and Greeks.[559] They warred and took what they wanted.

Then time struck its beat. [Our] condition came to its current state. Sparrows became like eagles, and the enemies of God were endowed with strength and immunity, and they attacked from East and West, on land and sea, in hordes countless and beyond reckoning.[560]

[36] So God chose someone to rise to meet these difficulties on Islam's behalf. So God gives victory and defeat to the parties (*aḥzāb*) whom He wishes, and empowered this [Ottoman] state with His own spirit. It rose to the challenge and struggles in the essence of God (*fī dhāt*

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[556] These three were among the principal commanders of the early Islamic conquests.

[557] Al-Baghdādī says that this is an expression meaning to increase and strengthen, not to be considered an exact multiplication. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 101.

[558] Al-Baghdādī writes that *Ṣawāʾif* were "campaigns which would set out from the Levantine frontiers [against Byzantium] in the age of the conquests of the righteous caliphs. There were other campaigns which set out in winter, called *shawāti*, and in spring which were called *rabīʿiyya*." Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 102.

[559] Hamish in the manuscript: *wa ghayrihim*, instead of Greeks.

[560] By 'sparrows who became like eagles' and attacked the Muslims from all sides, al-ʿAṭṭār is referring to the process by which Europeans, who had once been weak by comparison, in the modern period surpassed Muslims in military and technological power and invaded their lands.

Allāh) unto eternity, which on its most righteous days approaches the lineage (*nasab*) of Ḥunayn[561] and Badr.[562] It preserves the Islamic nation (*milla*) and protects its honor, and its beacon rises among its bannermen (*khāfiqīn*) – so may God glorify its victory, as the sun and moon illuminate the day and the night.

Āmīn.

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[561] Al-Baghdādī points out that the Battle of Ḥunayn (8/630) was the last major battle between the Muslims and the polytheists in the Hijaz during the Prophet's lifetime. I might develop this observation further by speculating that al-ʿAṭṭār may have been comparing the Ottomans to the Muslims at Ḥunayn to suggest that the former, like the latter, will win a final victory for Islam. Baghdādī, *Dirāsa wa taḥqīq*, 103.

[562] The Battle of Badr was a cultural obsession of the *ʿulamāʾ* and elites of late Ottoman Egypt, and the subject of a large number of poems and treatises. The battle was held up as the very archetype of moral conduct, to which al-ʿAṭṭār is here connecting the Ottoman Empire.