

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF IBN TAYMIYYA

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is devoted to the study of the political thought of Ibn Taymiyya. The thesis consists of a short introduction to the development of Islamic political thought. The first chapter deals with the historical and social background to Ibn Taymiyya's writings and gives an account of his life and trials and the basis for his thought.

The second chapter discusses Ibn Taymiyya's concept of political authority and the system of government based on the rule of the sharī'a.

The third chapter deals with Ibn Taymiyya's concept of the ruler; his qualifications and the methods of his election.

The last chapter discusses the mutual duties of the ruler and the subjects.

In analysing his ideas, an attempt is made to show the contribution made by Ibn Taymiyya to the formulation of the Sunnite political theory.

The conclusion presents the results of this analysis of his political writings and their influence.

TABLE OF ABBREVIATION

<u>Al-Ahkām</u>	Al-Māwardī, <u>Al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyya</u>
<u>Al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf</u>	Ibn Taymiyya, <u>Al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf wa-al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar</u>
<u>Al-Arba'in</u>	Al-Rāzī, <u>Kitāb al-Arba'in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn</u>
<u>Al-Bidāya</u>	Ibn Kathīr, <u>Al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh</u>
<u>Dhayl</u>	Ibn Rajab, <u>Dhayl 'ala Tabaqāt al-Hanābla</u>
<u>Essai</u>	Laoust, <u>Essai sur les Doctrines Sociales et Politiques D'Ibn Taymiyya</u>
<u>Faḍā'ih</u>	Al-Ghazālī, <u>Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyya</u>
<u>Fatāwa</u>	Ibn Taymiyya, <u>Majmu' Fatāwa Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya</u>
<u>Al-Fisal</u>	Ibn Ḥazm, <u>Al-Fisal fī al-Milal wa-al-Ahwā' wa-al-Nihal</u>
<u>Al-Hisba</u>	Ibn Taymiyya, <u>Al-Hisba fī al-Islam</u>
<u>Al-Iqtisād</u>	Al-Ghazālī, <u>Al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād</u>
<u>Al-Kāfī</u>	Al-Kulaynī, <u>Al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-Dīn</u>
<u>Al-Kāmil</u>	Ibn al-Athīr, <u>Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh</u>
<u>Al-Khiṭaṭ</u>	Al-Maqrīzī, <u>Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār</u>
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<u>Al-Mudawwana</u>	Mālik, <u>Al-Mudawwana al-Kubrā</u>
<u>Al-Mughnī</u>	'Abd al-Jabār, <u>Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawhīd wa-al-'Adl</u>
<u>Al-Muwāfaqāt</u>	Al-Shāṭibī, <u>Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'a</u>
*	
<u>MRK</u>	Ibn Taymiyya, <u>Majmu'at al-Rasā'il al-Kubrā</u>

Nihāyat al-Iqdām

Al-Shahrastanī, Nihāyat al-Iqdām
fī 'Ilm al-Kalām

Al-Tāj

Al-Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Tāj fī Akhlāq
al-Mulūk

Tārīkh

Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-
Mulūk

Al-Umm

Al-Shāfi'ī, Kitāb al-Umm

INTRODUCTION

The bulk of Islamic political thought gradually evolved from three formulations. Firstly, the 'Mirrors for Princes' whose literature consists mainly of manuals of conduct for rulers. It is therefore concerned with the practice and not the theory of government; and it represents an assimilation of Islamic norms with the Sassanian tradition of kingship. The second, and most important formulation is that of Muslim jurists and theologians which expresses the religious ideal drawn heavily from the Qur'ān, sunna, ijmā' and the practice of the early period of Islam. The third formulation is based on Greek philosophy. For the purpose of this introduction only the first two formulations will be briefly considered.

When discussing Islamic political thought, one is aware of the influence of the literature of the 'Mirrors for Princes' or books of counsel for rulers. The classical 'Mirrors' were copied and translated and the materials found in them influenced many aspects of thought. Both the content and form of the 'Mirrors' reflect the convergence of Persian and Arab heritages. They deal mainly with court topics and they consist largely of precepts or generalisations exemplified by aphorisms and anecdotes.

The literature in the 'Mirrors' was introduced and made available to Muslims through the Arabic translations of Ibn al-Muqaffa' (106/724-139/757). Ibn al-Muqaffa' was

also the author of the first original Arabic works of adab (literature) and advice for rulers. The main motives behind Ibn al-Muqaffa's writings were to convey ethical teachings and to give counsel on practical expediency and etiquette.¹ Ibn al-Muqaffa's books al-Adab al-Kabīr and al-Adab al-Saghīr deal with the proper conduct of the ruler. He advises the ruler to base his rule and government on the sharī'a, which defines the rights and obligations of the subjects, and by doing so to secure his own obedience. He outlines the duties of the ruler, such as the proper selection of his ministers, top officials and employees and his personal supervision of their achievements and performance in order to reward or punish them accordingly. As for the qualities required in a ruler, Ibn al-Muqaffa emphasises the quality of justice and explains that only by applying justice can the ruler claim the obedience of his subjects. Other qualities are wisdom and knowledge and he suggests that the 'ulamā' and experienced men should be consulted.

'Mirrors for Princes' do not attempt a systematic

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1. For more information on the evolution of Islamic political thought see Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam, the introduction, and A.K.S. Lambton, "Islamic Political Thought" in the Legacy of Islam, edited by Joseph Schacht, p. 404.

treatment of the problems of government and state and society. They are also not concerned with constitutional law or political theory; they assume the existence of the state and show no interest in its form. The first attempt to deal with problems of government was made by Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798) in his book Kitāb al-Kharāj written at the request of Hārūn al-Rashīd. The book deals with economic aspects, in particular land tax. Abū Yūsuf introduces the book with an advice (waṣīyya) to the caliph reminding him of his responsibility to Allah for enforcing Islamic law and maintaining just government. He likens the caliph to a shepherd entrusted with a flock and emphasises his duty of looking after them. Abū Yūsuf provides a number of traditions by the Prophet in illustration of his views.¹

Another example of the 'Mirrors' is the Kitāb al-Tāj by al-Jāhīz² (160/776). It is a manual of etiquette

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1. See Abū Yūsuf, Kitāb al-Kharāj, p. 4.
 2. This book is also called Akhlāq al-Mulūk. It is edited by A.Z. Pasha. Al-Jāhīz also composed a treatise called Istihqāq al-imāma (the right to the imāmate) but, unlike Kitāb al-Tāj, it deals more with the theory of government. It discusses three categories of imāms: rasūl (messenger), nabī (prophet) and imām who is simply a leader or chief. He considers the rasūl as the highest of the three categories because he comprises the functions of the three (rasūl, nabī and imām), since the rasūl propagated the sharī'a and established the community. In this book also he emphasises the necessity of the government because in his view man by himself is incapable of attaining his welfare. He also expresses the view that both prophecy and the imāmate are demanded by reason and not by shar'. For further detail see this treatise in Rasā'il al-Jāhīz.

containing political and ethical counsels addressed to both rulers and courtiers. It is mainly concerned with conventional rules of appropriate behaviour of kings, with the Sassanian practices as models, but he also quotes many examples from the 'Abbāsīd courts. Al-Jāhiz also emphasises the king's duty to rule properly and to keep all the affairs of the state under his own control. He views certain qualities to be possessed by the ruler, the most important of which are generosity and compassion towards his subjects.¹

Also among the 'Mirrors' is a treatise called Kitāb al-Sultān by Ibn Qutayba (213/828-725/889) compiled in his famous work 'Uyūn al-Akḥbār. There are also other similar works by different authors and on the whole they conform to the same pattern and contain the same material as in the 'Mirrors' discussed above.²

Other 'Mirrors' of interest are those written in Persian during the rule of the Seljuq sultāns. Among these is the famous work, the Siyāsetnāmeḥ or Siyar al-Mulūk (the book of government or Rules for Kings) by Niẓām al-Mulk (408/1018-485/1092), the illustrious minister of

1. See Kitāb al-Tāj, p. 139.

2. Among these are often mentioned a treatise in al-'Iqd al-Farīd by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih; and Kitāb Baghdād by Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmed b. Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr.

the Seljuqs.¹ Nizām al-Mulk wrote this book (after he had been minister for thirty years) at the demand of Malikshāh. The book was written when the Seljuq sultāns were de facto rulers of the Islamic world while the caliph's power remained nominal. The book consists of his suggestions for reform especially with regard to dishonesty in collection of taxes, and abuses made by judges and military holders of estates. In this book also he deplores the practices of assigning more than one job to the same person and of employing heretics and non-Muslims at the expense of the educated Muslims, who remained unemployed. On the whole, the motive behind Nizām al-Mulk's book is to maintain the orthodox religion and to promote justice and the prosperity and stability of the Seljuq regime.²

The last book to be discussed in this brief survey of the 'Mirrors' is Naṣīhat al-Mulūk (Counsel for Kings) by al-Ghazālī (b. 450/1058). Al-Ghazālī first discusses the proper belief and the upright religious principles which the pious ruler must hold and by which he must be guided. He then moves to the 'Mirror for Princes', a section which contains ethical and practical precepts. The book consists of stories, sayings and anecdotes from

1. The book is translated into English by Hubert Darke, London, 1960.

2. Ibid., p. 1.

both Muslim and Sassanian origins. It is worth mentioning that al-Ghazālī in Nasīhat al-Mulūk conforms to the traditional form of writing 'Mirrors' and avoids discussing the nature, origin or role of the government as he does in other writings.¹

The works on 'Mirrors' do not constitute the main body of Islamic political thought since they deal mainly with the art of government and the rules of etiquette, not with the constitutional law or theory of government.

Islamic political thought followed the pattern of the two main differing views of Islam, the Sunnites and the Shī'ites. Two basic facts seriously considered by both is that there is no separation between religion and politics in Islam; religious and temporal affairs are complementary to each other and are intricately interwoven. Both groups in writing political theory seek to use the original sources, mainly the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet even though their interpretation and application of the texts differ. Ibn al-Nadīm in his Fihrist, under the heading 'The 'ulamā' and their books,' makes the assertion that the Shī'ites were the first to write on the question of the imāmate.² He mentions 'Alī b. Ismā'īl b. Maitham al-Tamār whose grandfather was a close companion

1. See Ghāzālī's book of Counsel for Kings: An English translation by Bagley, the introduction.

2. See Ibn al-Nadīm, al-Fihrist, p. 249.

of Caliph 'Alī. He wrote some works on the imāmate, the most important of which is Kitāb al-Imāma. Another Shi'ite, among the earliest writers on the imāmate, is Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (born 113/732 and died 200/816); according to Ibn al-Nadīm he was a contemporary of 'Alī b. Ismā'il (mentioned above).¹ He wrote several books on the imāmate among which are Kitāb al-Imāma, Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Nās fī al-Imāma (different opinions on the imāmate), al-Radd 'ala man Qāl bi-Imāmat al-Mafdūl (the refutation of the imāmate of the less meritorious) and others.²

The fact that the Shī'ites were the first to write on the imāmate had some influence on the historical development of Islamic political thought. Shi'ite writers discuss the question of the imāmate as a subject of theology. This is in accordance with their belief that the imāmate is an article of faith. The Sunnite scholars when they started writing on the imāmate in response to the Shī'ite claims also included the discussion of the imāmate as part of theology (uṣūl al-dīn).³ But the

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid. He mentions some other early Shi'ite writers and their books. See page 249.

3. Al-Ghazālī explains that the imāmate belongs to jurisprudence (fiqhiyāt) but that he included it in his book al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād because it became a tradition for scholars to do so. See al-Iqtisād fī al-I'tiqād, p. 105.

Sunnite jurists soon became aware of this problem and al-Shāfi'ī is said to have been the first jurist to discuss the imāmate in its proper context as part of jurisprudence (fiqh). He included a discussion on the qualifications of the imām in his book al-Umm.¹

Sunnite political thought at its outset was primarily focussed on the question of khilāfa; its origin and purpose. Though the exposition of the theory of khilāfa by most jurists was made in the perspective of the existing khilāfa, constant reference was made to the main sources of the sharī'a; thus the ideal theory portrayed by the jurists emerged as considerably different from the real practice.

The main sources from which the Sunnite theory emanated (the Qur'ān and the sunna) offer very few texts which are directly relevant to the theory of government. The Qur'ān decrees broad principles such as consultation (shūrā) and justice ('adl or qist) on which government should be founded; but such principles had to undergo an extensive elaboration to transform them into a theory, and even then they could only serve part of the theory and not the whole of it.

Next to the Qur'ān comes the traditions of the Prophet which, as far as the theory of the khilāfa is concerned,

1. Al-Shāfi'ī, Kitāb al-Umm, vol. I, pp. 143-44; also see Muḥammad Ra'fat 'Uthmān, Riayāsāt al-Dawla fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī, p. 32.

represent the major source; for they deal with the necessity of leadership for society and they also deal with issues like the Qurashite lineage, the ruler's responsibility towards his subjects and his accountability to Allah. The traditions also elaborate on the obligation of the subjects' obedience to the ruler which is also decreed by the Qur'ān. But as mentioned before, these texts (both from the Qur'ān and the tradition) are insufficient to build a comprehensive theory. Therefore the theory of the khilāfa is largely an outgrowth from the political circumstances of early Islam as well as from speculation which elaborated many forms of the doctrine which had no expression in actual historical facts.¹

It is generally accepted that the first systematic and most authoritative exposition of the Sunnite doctrine is the al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyya (the ordinances of the government) by al-Māwardī, which may be considered as the rationalisation of the conflict which existed between the theory and practice of khilāfa. This work of al-Māwardī is too well-known among scholars of Islamic

1. The Shi'ite theory of the divinely appointed infallible imām was never practised, nor was the Kharijites' theory of the pious non-Qurashite imām nor the Mu'tazilites' theories of the appointment of the imām during either peace or war.

studies to require an introduction. However, one may summarise the most important ideas of al-Māwardī for the development of subsequent Sunni political thought as follows:

The imāmate is obligatory by shar',¹ not reason, the method of appointment of the imām is election even if by one man; a duly elected imām cannot be deposed in favour of a worthier one, the existence of only one imām at a time, and the qualifications and duties of the imām.

Al-Ghazālī conformed to most of al-Māwardī's views but introduced some changes such as the view that an improperly constituted authority should be recognised to avoid anarchy and the disruption of social life. He also defines a new relationship between the Caliph and the Sulṭān.²

It is possible to say with perfect justice that the greatest contribution to medieval political thought is propounded by Ibn Taymiyya whose main originality lies in the fact that he shifted the focus of interest and attention from the khilāfa to the sharī'a and was able

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1. Al-Mawārdī does not say explicitly that the imāmate is obligatory by shar', but he implies this in his explanation of the nature of this obligation, as will be discussed in chapter two of this thesis.
 2. L. Binder, 'Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Islamic Government' The Muslim World, XIV (1955), pp. 229-41, for a full discussion of al-Ghazālī's theory.

to provide the theoretical basis for a moderate, dynamic and feasible system of government.

Ibn Taymiyya's political thought¹ can be traced in many of his writings, but the core of his political thought is found in four main works. The first and most important of these is his book Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya fī-Naqqd kalām al-Shī'a wa-al-Qadariyya (The path of the prophetic Sunna in the refutation of the views of the Shi'ites and the Qadarites). The date when Ibn Taymiyya wrote this book is not certain; the most likely date given is around 716/1317. It is a large book of four volumes written in refutation of the book of Minhāj al-Karāma fī Ma'rifat al-Imāma (The path of sanctity in the knowledge of the imāmate) by Ibn al-Muṭṭahhīr al-Ḥillī who explains in his introduction that he had written the book for the Mongol ruler of Persia, Oljeitu (d. 716/1316).

Minhāj al-Sunna gives a reasoned expression to a trend of opinion then current among the Muslims in Syria;

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1. The title of this thesis, "The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyya" should not give the impression that Ibn Taymiyya formulated a political theory of his own. As a jurist he elucidated the basic features and salient characteristics of Islamic political thought as mainly deduced from the Qur'ān, sunna, ijmā' and the precedents of the companions of the Prophet.

the revulsion of the majority against shi'ism. At the beginning of the first volume Ibn Taymiyya describes the pressure put on him by some people to write a refutation of Minhāj al-Karāma and to expose its heretical beliefs. Minhāj al-Sunna represents a thorough discussion of the sunnite doctrine of the caliphate richly documented with Qur'ānic verse, traditions, opinions of the four schools of law and historical precedents. The discussion covers the methods for the establishment of the caliphate and its purpose, the appointment of the caliph and his qualifications.

It is interesting to note that in the course of his refutation of Shi'ite beliefs, Ibn Taymiyya also refutes the views and beliefs of the Kharijites, of the Mu'tazilites and of other sects. The book also contains long sections on theological discussions and refutations. But because of the polemical nature of the book, discussions are lengthy, repetitive, full of digressions and not without inconsistencies which render it unsystematic, despite the invaluable material it contains.

The second most important book is al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iyya fī Iṣlāh al-Rā'ī wa-al-Ra'iyya (the policy of the sharī'a in the reform of the ruler and the ruled). Al-Siyāsa contrasts largely with Minhāj al-Sunna in its purpose, content and style. It is meant to be an advice to the ruler and therefore it deals mainly with the practical administrative rules of the government, and the mutual duties of the ruler and the subjects, unlike Minhāj al-

Sunna which is mainly theoretical discussion. In al-Siyāsa Ibn Taymiyya does not discuss the issue of khilāfa at all, neither does he discuss any other particular form of government. Nevertheless it contains some important theoretical discussions such as the obligation of the establishment of the political authority.

Though al-Siyāsa is meant to be advice for the ruler, it is different from the classical 'Mirrors' in that it does not deal with court etiquette or the personal behaviour of the ruler in particular. Ibn Taymiyya's main concern, as the title of his book perfectly indicates, is the reform of the subjects through the reform of the ruler and that is by the close observation and application of the sharī'a. This is clearly shown in the fact that in every issue he discusses, he presents the viewpoint of the sharī'a as found in the Qur'ān, sunna and ijmā', almost in a set pattern. Thus al-Siyāsa is different from Minhāj al-Sunna in that it is more precise, systematic and almost every word is directly relevant to the issue discussed.

The third important political work by Ibn Taymiyya is his book al-Hisba¹ fī al-Islām (Moral public inspection in

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1. Hisba comes from the verb ḥasaba (counted). Basically ḥisba is the act of counting or numbering. In the religious sense it is used for laying up for oneself a reward in the world to come. Ihtisāb al-amr means an action done for the sake of Allah. In Islamic history the word ḥisba is given to the action of the holder of power or his delegate in ordering good and forbidding evil. This official is called al-muhtasib. (See Lane's Arabic English Lexicon.)

Islām). The book presents a thorough discussion of the office of ḥisba (wilāyat al-ḥisba) which is mainly the ordering of good and forbidding of evil. It defines the areas of authority and powers of the holder of this office as well as his functions; which are mainly the supervision of the performance of religious duties such as the attendance of Friday congregational prayers. Other functions include settlement of minor disputes concerning deception and fraud in connection with weights and measures. But the most important section of the book deals with economic problems and their solutions such as state interference in private business, problems of monopoly, control of prices and so on. Al-Ḥisba is regarded as one of the few comprehensive books on economy by early Muslim jurists.¹ Al-Ḥisba also contains a few but important socio-political observations. Like al-Siyāsa, al-Ḥisba is very systematic, comprehensive and based entirely on the sources of the sharī'a.

The fourth book relevant to Ibn Taymiyya's political thought is his book al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf wa-al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar (the ordering of good and forbidding of evil). It is closely connected with his book al-Ḥisba and some of their material overlap. The date of neither book is known but it seems that both were written in the same period when social conditions were in urgent need of

1. See Muḥammad al-Mubarak's introduction of al-Ḥisba.

remedy. In al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf wa-al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar, Ibn Taymiyya defines what is meant by ma'rūf and munkar, as well as explaining what he means by the holders of power (Ulū al-amr). He discusses the conditions to be observed in applying al-amr wa-al-nahy (the ordering and forbidding) as well as the importance of just rule and the observation of public interest, maṣlaḥa. The importance of this book in Ibn Taymiyya's thought lies in the fact that Ibn Taymiyya considers al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar as the main motive behind the establishment of governments and thus discusses this issue not only in this book but in other books as well, such as his Fatāwa, Minhāj and al-Hisba.

Other treatises of less importance to his political thought are Risāla ilā al-Sultān al-Malik al-Nāṣir in which he discusses the ruler's duty of jihād and his responsibility to defend the Muslims' lands, and another treatise al-Risāla al-Qubruṣiyya addressed to King Sarjous of Cyprus in which he explains the status and treatment of the dhimmīs (Christians and Jews) in the Islamic state. Though the purpose of the treatise is to obtain the release of Muslims who were held as prisoners of war in Cyprus, the treatise discusses the status of the religious minorities in the Muslim state ever since the time of the Prophet.

Very little research has been done on Ibn Taymiyya's political thought. The first and the only scholarly work so far is by the French author, Henry Laoust, entitled,

Essai sur les Doctrines Sociales et Politiques d'Ibn

Taymiyya.¹ It is a great work but it deals with Ibn Taymiyya's thought in general. Ibn Taymiyya's political thought is treated in only a small section of the book. A translation of this work into Arabic was done by Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azzām.

Another book is The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyya by Qamar al-Dīn Khān published in 1973, but like the chapter written by Rosenthal about Ibn Taymiyya, he made extensive use of Laoust's work.²

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1. H. Laoust, "Essai sur les Doctrines Sociales et Politiques de Taqī al-Dīn Ahmed b. Taymiyya" Publications de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire, 1939.
 2. There are some books and articles on Ibn Taymiyya but they all deal with his biography and thought in general. Some unpublished theses on different subjects other than his political thought include:
 1. M.R. Sālīm, "The Agreement of Reason and Revelation" of Ibn Taymiyya; Ph.D. Cambridge, 1958.
 2. K. Shaddād, Ibn Taymiyya's Refutation of Aristotlean Logic, London, 1970.
 3. M. Murād, The Detention (miḥan) of Ibn Taymiyya, McGill University, 1964.
 4. S. al-Ḥaque, Ibn Taymiyya and his Projects of Reform, Ph.D. London, 1937.

This thesis, it is hoped, will add to the research done on Ibn Taymiyya's thought and will make known his contribution in an important field, Islamic political thought. The aim will also be to clarify some of the issues which have either been overlooked or misrepresented by other writers. Ibn Taymiyya's political thought deserves every attention for its significance lies in the fact that it is, unlike most Islamic writings on political thought, void of any political expediency. Indeed, his political thought seems to embody and manifest the Islamic ideal.

CHAPTER I

A GENERAL BACKGROUND TO IBN TAYMIYYA'S LIFE AND THOUGHT

The Historical Setting:

The historical background to Ibn Taymiyya's thought is long and complicated and even a summary of it will outrun the limits of this section. Only included here are historical factors which shed light on Ibn Taymiyya's thoughts and attitudes.

The weakness and disintegration of the Muslim world was the major factor which occupied the attention of the Muslims. The political unity of the Muslim world had long since begun to break up and the 'Abbāsid caliphs ruled their dwindling territories only nominally, whilst the de facto power lay with strong military leaders.

The Muslim world had been subjected to external aggression before, notably at the hands of the Seljuqs, and Syria had experienced the intrusion of the Crusaders but Ibn Taymiyya's own time is particularly influenced by the Mongol invasions which were, by all accounts, the most devastating of all. The Mongols started their invasion of the Islamic world in 616/1219.¹ Their conquests, according to historians, were of a scope and range never equalled. The Mongols were the most notorious

1. Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. 13, pp. 79-83.

invaders who wiped out or deported large numbers of the inhabitants of the places which they invaded; their record in killing was unsurpassed; more lives were said to have been lost, in a period of three years, than in any similar conflict of such duration.¹

The Mongol conquests continued with speed and brutality until they reached their climax in 656/1258 when under the leadership of Hūlegū they launched their attack against the capital of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, Baghdād. Certain internal factors helped the Mongols' conquest of Baghdād (656/1258). According to Ibn Kathīr, serious conflicts occurred between groups of Sunnites and Shi'ites in which the Shi'ites lost many lives and a great deal of property. This motivated the Shi'ites to encourage the Mongol attack on Baghdād and to collaborate with them against the Sunnites.² These historical events were recalled with bitterness and at great length by Ibn Taymiyya.

"Muslims had realised and experienced the fact that whenever they were faced with an enemy, they (the Shi'ites)³ collaborated with them against the Muslims. They collaborated with Chingis Khan, the king of the infidel Turks, and as for their collaboration with his son Hūlegū when he invaded Khurasān, Iraq and Syria, it is well known to everyone that

1. Saunders, The History of the Mongol Conquests, p. 55.

2. Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIII, p. 201.

3. Ibn Taymiyya calls them the Rafidites.

they supported him secretly and openly. The caliph's minister in Baghdād, Ibn al-'Alqamī who was a Shi'ite, conspired against the caliph and the Muslims. He reduced and weakened the Muslim army and made many intrigues until he enabled the enemy to enter and massacre thousands and thousands of the people. Islam had never witnessed a war similar to that of the Mongols...."¹

Baghdād was completely destroyed by the Mongols and the caliph al-Musta'ṣim was killed. The Muslim world remained without a caliph for three and a half years, after which al-Mustanṣir was acclaimed caliph by the Mamlūk sultān, al-Ẓāhir Baybars of Egypt in 659/1261. The capital of the caliphate was shifted to Cairo. Al-Mustanṣir made some efforts to recover Baghdād but he was killed in the attempt in 660/1261.² Thereafter, al-Ḥākim his son, was acclaimed caliph. It should be stressed that the caliphs who were set up by the Mamlūk sultāns enjoyed no real power. Mamlūk princes and army generals were able, by brute force, to establish their own authority over parts of the 'Abbāsīd empire. They continued to acknowledge the authority of the caliph by mentioning his name in official ceremonies and in rallying people for jihād against their enemies. By doing so, they aimed at making their rule legitimate.

1. Minhāj, vol. 3, p. 38.

2. Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIII, p. 233.

The Mongol aggression against the Islamic world continued and in 667/1269, they invaded Ḥarrān, Ibn Taymiyya's place of birth, and this caused his family to flee to Syria.¹ Ibn Taymiyya was then six years old but the memories of these events, together with what he read and heard about these wars, built in him a strong prejudice and hostility against the Mongols and whoever collaborated with them. This helps to explain the intensely hostile reaction Ibn Taymiyya displayed in confronting the Mongol invasion against Syria in 702/1303 and 712/1312.²

Besides the threat of foreign aggression, there were internal political problems within Ibn Taymiyya's own society. The struggle for power among the Mamlūk sultāns often culminated in deposition or murder; for out of the eleven sultāns under whose rule Ibn Taymiyya lived, seven were deposed and two murdered by powerful, ambitious princes and generals.³ In contrast, during this same

1. See Ibn Taymiyya's biography in Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd, p. 2.

2. See section on Ibn Taymiyya's public role in this chapter.

3. The sultāns deposed were:

1. al-Zāhir Baybars (658/1260),

2. Baraka Khan (676/1277),

3. Salamish (678/1280),

4. Manṣūr Qalā'ūn (678/1280),

5. Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad (693/1294),

6. Kitbugha (694/1295),

7. Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad (698-708/1299-1309).

The sultāns who were murdered were Ashraf Khalīl (689/1290) and Manṣūr Lajne (696/1297).

period (in fact for even longer than the period mentioned) there were only two caliphs, al-Ḥākim and after his death, his son al-Mustakfī, both of whom enjoyed long, stable but powerless terms of office, lasting about forty years each. This illustrates the real impotence of the caliphs.

Despite the political turmoil which dominated the Mamlūk rule for some time, the Mamlūk state remained strong and its achievements were great. They defeated the Mongols at 'Ayn Jālūt (658/1260) and though the Mongol threat against the Islamic world continued after the battle, the Mamlūks are to be credited with removing the aura of invincibility from the pagan Mongols. Some of the Mamlūk sultāns like Qalā'ūn (678/1280) and his son al-Ashraf Khalīl (689/1290) and before them al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn Qutuz (657/1259) and al-Zāhir Rukn al-Dīn Baybars (658/1260) are highly praised and their role in defending the Islamic world is glorified by medieval historians.¹ Similarly the Mamlūk sultāns' concern for the prestige of Islam and their attempt to apply its laws were generally acknowledged by Muslims.

1. See Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIII, p. 216.

The Social Conditions of his Time:

The social structure under the Mamlūks was a complex and hierarchical one. The ruling power at the top of the hierarchy was composed of "slave" soldiers mostly Turks and Circassians, and succession to power was a right exclusively monopolised by them. The rest of the society was denied the right of military service and hence was prevented from entering government.¹

The Mamlūk ruling class had very little in common with their subjects, the Syrians and Egyptians, whose origin and language were different from the Mamlūks. Thus the gap between the rulers and the ruled remained wide since the Mamlūks kept themselves isolated from the rest of the population. This ruling elite was called al-khāṣṣa and was composed of the sultān, higher ranking Mamlūk amīrs and officials.²

Next to the ruling class was the stratum of the notables or the most respectable and prominent leaders of the people. They were called al-a'yān; they included the most influential of the 'ulamā', the leading merchants

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1. Lapidus, Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages, p. 44, also al-Nadwī, Khāṣṣ bi-Ḥayāt Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya, p. 25.
 2. Lapidus, op. cit., p. 79. For more details on the composition and origin of this class see al-Makrīzī, Khīṭaṭ, vol. II, p. 236.

and the high ranking officials, especially the judges and preachers. This class did not enjoy great privileges or power; their influence was restricted to their spheres of action. The 'ulamā' acted as intermediaries between the ruling elite and the masses. They performed this role as a result of the prestige and religious influence which they enjoyed both among the ruling elite and the common people. The 'ulamā' supported the Mamlūk rulers and regarded them as the defenders of the territory against foreign aggression and the saviours of its spirit against heresies and rebels. In turn the Mamlūk rulers treated them with respect and consulted them in some affairs such as levying extraordinary taxes.

The common people (al-ʿamma) were at the bottom of the hierarchy. They were deprived of all advantages and possessed no power, wealth or proper education.¹ They included the traders and workers, the artisans and all people with minor occupations. The common people were exploited by the Mamlūks who levied heavy taxes to sustain the state. There was, too, a solidarity between the common people and the 'ulama'. This was shown in the support demonstrated by the masses in favour of Ibn Taymiyya during his troubles with his opponents in 693/1294. They rose up in protest against his persecution.² It is also

1. Lapidus, op. cit., p. 82.

2. See Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIII, p. 335.

interesting to know that the 'ulamā', for their part, also showed great sympathy with the masses; evidence of this was the opposition led by Muḥy al-Dīn al-Nawawī against the extra taxation imposed by Sultān al-Zāhir (658/1260-676/1277). Al-Nawawī even suffered exile from Damascus as a result of his stand on this issue.¹

It is worth mentioning that though there seems to have been generally no open struggle between the three classes, there existed some forms of intra-class confrontation; such as the struggle for power among the Mamlūk sultāns and amirs, the rivalry between the 'ulamā' of the different schools, and the disputes between the different sects, both between the Sunnites and the Shī'ites and between the Muslims and dhimmīs. It was these internal class relationships which influenced Ibn Taymiyya's thought and are reflected in his writings.

1. Abū Zahra, Ibn Taymiyya, p. 145.

Family Background and Education:

Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmed b. Taymiyya¹ was born in Ḥarrān in Syria on Monday 10th Rabī' I 661/1263. He was a descendant of a family who for several decades enjoyed great prominence in learning and education especially in the religious field. His immediate ancestors were notable scholars. According to Ibn Khallikān,² Ibn Taymiyya's grandfather, Majd al-Dīn, was an eminent preacher and a jurisconsult who occupied the first place in his town for his learning and was highly distinguished for his piety. He was the author of a very important work (Muntaqa al-Akḥbār) on the classification of traditions. Al-Shawkānī

1. His full name is Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmed b. Shihāb al-Dīn Abī al-Maḥasin Abd al-Ḥalīm b. Majd al-Dīn 'Abd al-Salām b. Abī Muḥammad 'Abd Allah b. Abī al-Qāsim al-Khiḍr b. Muḥammad b. al-Khiḍr b. 'Alī b. 'Abd Allah b. Taymiyya. Taymiyya was the name of Taqī al-Dīn's great grandmother whose father had given this name after a place called Taymā' between Khaḍībar and Syria, where on his way to the pilgrimage he met a young girl whom he admired. It is also reported that this great grandmother was a preacher hence the family carried her name. See Ibn Shākir al-Kuṭbī, Fawāt al-Wafayāt, vol. 1, p. 63. Ibn Rajab, Dhayl 'ala ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanabla, vol. II, p. 161.
2. Ibn Khalikān, Wafayāt al-A'ẓyān, p. 96

wrote a commentary on this work which is still an important work of reference.¹ Some people even gave Majd al-Dīn the title of absolute scholar (al-mujtahid al-muṭlaq).²

Ibn Taymiyya's father, 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, was likewise a great scholar. He was a teacher in the Umayyad mosque at Damascus which was a great centre of learning. Later he taught in the Sukkariyya school of tradition.

Another important member of Ibn Taymiyya's family was his uncle Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 622/1255) who was a well known scholar.³ Ibn Taymiyya's mother, according to Ibn Kathīr was a pious woman (shaykha ṣāliha).⁴ Ibn Taymiyya's brothers Sharaf al-Dīn and Majd al-Dīn were also teachers of tradition.

Such a family background was largely responsible for the love of learning and the intellectual pursuits for which Ibn Taymiyya was noted. Ibn Taymiyya's family moved from Ḥarrān to Damascus when he was six years old to escape the Mongol invasion. This gave him the chance to be educated in Damascus which was a great centre of learning

1. Al-Shawkānī's commentary is called Nayl al-Awtār in eight volumes. See al-Nadwī, Khāṣṣ bi-Ḥayāt Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya, p. 34.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibn Rajab has a long biography on Fakhr al-Dīn. See Dhayl, vol. II, p. 151.

4. Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, p. 79.

and had a large number of notable scholars in all fields.¹

Ibn Taymiyya is said to have been taught by two hundred shaykhs among whom was Shams al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Maqdīsī, the first Ḥanbalite chief of justice (qādī al-quḍāt) of Syria. Ibn Taymiyya was taught the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth and the subtleties of the Arabic language. His study of Arabic grammar, poetry and prose was crucial in enabling him to master other fields. It is worth mentioning that Ibn Taymiyya made valid criticisms even of a famous book like that of Sībawayh on Arabic grammar.²

Ibn Taymiyya learned the Qur'ān by heart when he was very young, then devoted most of his time to the study of the interpretation of the Qur'ān. He himself said that he had read about one hundred books on the interpretation of the Qur'ān. This study of the Qur'ān enabled him to acquire an eminent position in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. Ibn Rajab credited him for his curious and exceptional ability to quote Qur'ānic verses to support his arguments and because of his vast knowledge of the Qur'ān he was able to point out several mistakes made by other interpreters.³ He seems to be aware of his leading

1. Ibn Rajab, Dhayl, vol. II, pp. 387-8; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī, al-'Uqūd, p. 2 and Abū Zahra, Ibn Taymiyya, p. 20.

2. Al-Nadwī, Khāṣṣ bi-Hayāt Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya, p. 127; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī, al-'Uqūd, pp. 2-4.

3. Ibn Rajab quoted al-Dhahabī's description of Ibn Taymiyya's knowledge, see Dhayl, vol. II, p. 389.

position in Qur'ānic interpretation; he says:

"God enabled me in this fort (qal'a) to know some of the meanings of the Qur'ān which most of the 'ulamā' wished to know but were unable to do so before their deaths...."¹

As for ḥadīth, he was famous for his incontestable erudition on tradition. Al-Dhahabī described him as the final authority on the knowledge of tradition, especially with regard to its authenticity and transmitters. He knew the six books² of the tradition so well that it could rightly be said that "any tradition which was unknown to Ibn Taymiyya is not a tradition...."³

It may be said that al-Dhahabī went too far in his statement. However, Ibn Taymiyya's knowledge and interest in the tradition is evident from the numerous books he wrote in fiqh and uṣul al-fiqh and from his heavy reliance on ḥadīth as a source of documentation for his opinions in almost all his works. The fact that he occupied the post of a ḥadīth teacher in Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Sukkarriyya and al-Madrasa al-Ḥanbaliyya is in itself evidence of his great knowledge of tradition.

1. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥadī, al-'Uqūd, p. 368.

2. These are Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dā'ūd, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nisā'ī, Ibn Māja. He also knew the musnad of Aḥmed Ibn Ḥanbal.

3. See Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥadī, al-'Uqūd, p. 25. Also Ibn Rajab, Dhayl, he reported al-Dhahabī, p. 390.

Besides the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth, Ibn Taymiyya was able to acquire knowledge in various fields. He was aware of the necessity of widening the field of his knowledge to match the needs of his time. His age was dominated by the Ash'arites' thought and their method of argument, which had special significance in places like Syria and Egypt where the Ash'arites enjoyed the support of the government due to the influence of Sulṭān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his sons who were Ash'arites themselves.¹

The Ḥanbalite school to which Ibn Taymiyya belonged, continuously engaged in polemics against the Ash'arites.² The Ḥanbalites are traditionally opposed to speculative theology. This made a dialogue between them and the Ash'arites who used logical arguments and rational explanations, very difficult.

For this reason Ibn Taymiyya was motivated to study kalām and logic and other subjects. The sources on Ibn Taymiyya do not tell us whether he received regular education in all these subjects and who his teachers were, but from his discussions and the books he wrote such as Naqd al-Mantiq it is evident that he managed to gain a thorough knowledge of these subjects by his personal reading. Among the subjects which he learned was history, especially that of Islam. This is again reflected in the

1. Al-Nadwī, Khāṣṣ bi-Hayāt Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya, p. 40.

2. As an example see Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, pp. 75-6.

great range and knowledge of the events, from the time of the Prophet to the fall of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty, which he illustrated frequently in his writings.

His Career:

Ibn Taymiyya never held any government post. The teaching posts he occupied were in private schools. The first post was that of a teacher in Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Sukkarriyya succeeding his father when he was twenty years old. According to Ibn Rajab, Ibn Taymiyya refused to accept the posts of chief justice and head of shaykhs (mashyakhat al-shiyūkh) which were offered to him.¹

He also became a teacher in al-Madrasa al-Ḥanbaliyya which was the oldest Ḥanbalite school in Damascus in 695/1296, succeeding Zayn al-Dīn al-Munajjā.

At the same time he was teaching the Qur'ān in the Umayyād mosque. He began this earlier in 684/1285.

This reluctance to hold government posts was probably so that he would be able to maintain his independent way of thought, uninfluenced by other 'ulamā' who were supporting the state, and free from pressure from the authorities.

1. Ibn Rajab, Dhayl, vol. II, p. 390.

His Role Against the Mongols:

Ibn Taymiyya's childhood memories of the Mongol invasion coupled with the drastic changes they wrought in the social life of Syria, developed in him a strong antipathy towards the Mongols. He was determined to combat them whenever the chance arose. Ibn Taymiyya's role in confronting the Mongols between 699/1300 and 702/1303 is a clear illustration of this.

In Rabī' I, 699/1300, the Muslim army was put on the alert to defend Damascus after the news was confirmed of the Mongols' advance towards Syria. On the 27th of the same month the Muslim army, led by Sultān Lājīn met the Mongols in Khazendar.¹ The Muslims were defeated in this battle and the Mongols made their way towards Damascus. The inhabitants started to leave Damascus and the city was in great panic and disarray. A group of notables decided to lead a delegation to meet Ghazān, the Mongol leader, and negotiate for peace.² Ibn Taymiyya headed this delegation which met the Mongol leader on the 3rd of Rabī' II in a place called al-Nabak.³ Ibn Taymiyya is described as having displayed remarkable courage in addressing Ghazān and reminding him of the peace and justice enjoined by both the Qur'ān and the traditions of

1. A valley near the Sālmīyya valley - the border of Syria.

2. Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, pp. 7-10.

3. A place situated between Damascus and Hims.

the Prophet.¹ Thereafter, Ghazān agreed to peace.

The amnesty which Ghazān granted to the delegation turned out to be a hollow promise. The forces of his deputy in Syria, Sayf al-Dīn Qabjaq, entered Damascus, surprised its people, massacred a large number of them, looted their property and took their women and children captive. Ibn Taymiyya and some of the notables who survived the massacre attempted to have another meeting with Ghazān but they were not allowed to see him. Later on in Jumāda I, Ibn Taymiyya succeeded in meeting Amīr Būlāi, one of Ghazān's chiefs in Damascus and was able to secure the release of a number of captives. Shortly after that, the Mongols having heard of the Egyptian forces' advance to protect Syria fled the country, leaving behind no responsible administration. Arjwash,² Ibn Taymiyya and a few others tried to maintain law and order and at the same time to urge people to jihād. This call for jihād proved effective in confronting the next Mongol threat.

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1. Ibn Taymiyya's biographers emphasised the courage with which Ibn Taymiyya addressed Ghazān. Ibn Rajab in Dhayl, vol. II, pp. 394-5, Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, pp. 7-10, Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd, pp. 117-118 give some details about the event. But a full account is given by al-Nadwī in the book Saviours of Islamic Spirit, vol. II, pp. 30-31.
 2. 'Alam al-Dīn Arjwash (d. 701/1302) one of the deputy amirs in Syria.

The second Mongol attack on Syria with which Ibn Taymiyya was closely involved was in 700/1301. The Syrians, shattered by their previous experience, started to desert the country when they received the tidings of the Mongols' approach. The situation became worse when the Mamlūk sultān showed reluctance to come with an army to defend Syria. Ibn Taymiyya met this situation by once more encouraging people to jihād and also he endeavoured to persuade the Mamlūks to go forward to meet the enemy.¹ He was able to convince the viceroy of Syria who had shown reluctance to come to grips with the enemy. The governor of Syria asked Ibn Taymiyya and other influential men to go to the sultān in Egypt and persuade him to join Syria against the Mongols. Ibn Taymiyya spent a week with the sultān and finally succeeded in inducing him to participate in the battle.²

Although this report is mentioned by most biographers, it is not without some exaggeration; for according to it, Ibn Taymiyya was the main cause for victory in this battle.

The Egyptian and Syrian forces mobilised and on the

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1. For further details of Ibn Taymiyya's role see Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, p. 7, Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd, p. 117.
 2. Al-Nadwī, Saviours of Islamic Spirit, vol. II, p. 30.

2nd Ramaḍān, 702/1303 they met the Mongols in Shaḡhab.¹ Ibn Taymiyya issued a fatwa that people should break their fast in order to be able to fight the enemy. Both the caliph and Sulṭān al-Nāṣir were present on the battlefield while Ibn Taymiyya insisted on taking his place in the front line; he encouraged the people and assured them of victory and he, himself, showed great courage in fighting. Eventually the Syrian and Egyptian armies were able to inflict a heavy defeat on the Mongols and kill and disperse most of their forces, returning victoriously to Damascus on the 5th of Ramaḍān. Ibn Taymiyya's efforts and role in this battle were highly esteemed and he was looked upon as the hero and mastermind of this victory.² No doubt Ibn Taymiyya's biographers have exaggerated his role in this battle to the extent

1. The battle is generally known by the name of Shaḡhab, a place near Marj al-Ṣuffar near Damascus where the Muslim army was stationed before meeting the Mongols.
2. Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd, pp. 177-8. For further details on Ibn Taymiyya's role in the battle see Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, p. 23 and Ibn Rajab, Dhayl, vol. II, p. 395.

that they have attributed all the victory to his efforts.¹

Ibn Taymiyya's Role as a Social Reformer:

Of particular importance to this study are Ibn Taymiyya's attempt at social reform. His reform activities represent a daily occupation. Several works have been written on this subject.² Some brief examples of his

1. Related to his role as a campaigner is the part played by Ibn Taymiyya in the expedition against the residents of Kasrawan and the Jurd hills in Syria. These were groups of Nuṣayrites, Ismā'ilites and Bāṭinites (all shi'ite sects) who rebelled against the authority and effectively collaborated with the Mongols against the Muslims. Ibn Taymiyya rallied a large number of volunteers and joined the governor al-Afram and his army in fighting these people to bring them under the authority of the state and correct their heretical beliefs. For these events see Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd, pp. 178-9; Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, pp. 11 and 31. See also Ibn Taymiyya's own account of his role in this event in Risāla ila al-Sultān al-Nāṣir fī Sha'n al-Tatar, p. 19. Ibn Taymiyya also wrote "al-Radd 'ala Ahl Kasrawān al-Rāfiḍa".
2. The most important of these works is by Sirāj al-Ḥaḡue, Ibn Taymiyya and his Projects of Reform, Ph.D. thesis, London, 1937.

reform activities are considered here.

In 700 A.H./1301 after the Mongols left Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya and a group of his followers made a tour of inspection through the city and destroyed all the places and equipment used for making and selling alcohol which the Mongol governor, Sayf al-Dīn Qabjaq, encouraged during his short administration of Syria. The group also punished those found drinking alcohol in accordance with the Islamic law.¹

Another incident which demonstrates Ibn Taymiyya's zeal for reform involved a rock which people in Damascus used to visit.² Ibn Taymiyya and his followers had the rock cut off and thus put an end to people's heretic practice.

Such activities met with the approval of some Damascenes and they came to recognise his "self acquired" authority and they resorted to him with their complaints. In 704/1305, a man called Mujāhid al-Qaṭṭān was brought before Ibn Taymiyya, charged with taking drugs, and dressing and behaving in an abominable manner. Ibn Taymiyya had the man punished and made him promise to renounce his immoral practices.³

Among Ibn Taymiyya's efforts to achieve social reform

1. See Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, p. 11.

2. The rock is situated near the Qulūṭ river in Syria.

3. Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, p. 30.

was his confrontation against some Sūfī orders whom he accused for practising sha'badha (magical tricks) to mislead the people.¹

Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī describes how Ibn Taymiyya continued his reform activities even in prison. In Egypt he converted the prison in which he was confined into an institute of religious study. He persuaded the prisoners to give up playing chess and other games and to spend their time in prayer, supplication (tasbīh) and other useful occupations. Moreover, people from outside the prison came to attend his lessons finding them more useful than some of the teaching in schools and religious circles.²

Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle and His Trials:

The job which Ibn Taymiyya had assigned for himself, namely that of correcting and denouncing whatever in his view was not in conformity with the sharī'a, brought him into direct confrontation not only with the groups he opposed but more important, with the state authority. This is clearly manifested in the trials and persecutions to which he was subjected. Ibn Taymiyya's persecution raises the question of the relationship between the Mamlūk authority and the 'ulamā' and the role the latter used to

1. See Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd, p. 194.

2. Ibid., p. 293.

play on the state polity.¹ This, however, is a question which requires a study by itself. Generally speaking the relationship between the 'ulamā' and the Mamlūk authority was one of cooperation, though Ibn Taymiyya himself remained an exception, as will be clear later.

The first troublesome incident of Ibn Taymiyya's career took place in Rajab 693/1294 when he, together with Zayn al-Dīn al-Farūqī (d. 703/1303), led a demonstration in protest against a Christian who was reported to have insulted the Prophet.² The Christian was a secretary to Amir 'Assāf b. Shihāb al-Dīn (d. 694/1295) and for that reason the viceroy did not take action against him. When the demonstrators met the viceroy to discuss the affair, he promised them that he would bring the Christian to trial. The crowds, however, were impatient when they saw Amīr 'Assāf and having argued with him some stoned him inflicting bodily injuries on him. The viceroy, annoyed at the consequences, had both Ibn Taymiyya and al-Farūqī whipped and confined in the Madrasa al-'Adhrawiyya.³ Although the event ended at

1. See Little, The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya, Middle East Studies, 4 (1973) pp. 311-327.

2. Ibn Taymiyya wrote a book on the incident called al-Ṣarīm al-Maslūl 'ala man Shatam al-Rasūl, Hayderabād, 1322.

3. For the details of the event see Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIII, pp. 335-6; Ibn Rajab, Dhayl, vol. II, p. 396.

this stage and Ibn Taymiyya was released from his confinement, the incident marked the starting of a new phase in Ibn Taymiyya's life, namely that of confrontation with the authority.

The second but most serious of all Ibn Taymiyya's troubles started in 698/1299,¹ the cause of which was the composition of his famous creed, al-'Aqīda al-Ḥamawīyya al-Kubrā, written in response to a question from the people of Ḥama,² about the relationship between God's Being and His attributes. In this creed he makes it clear that he prefers the method of the salaf in interpreting the attributes of God to that of the Ash'arite scholastic theology which was dominant in his own time. This caused much trouble to Ibn Taymiyya since several interrogatory councils were held in both Damascus and Cairo in which the creed was critically examined by leading qādls and 'ulamā' of the different schools.³

The first of these councils was held on the 8th of

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1. Ibn Rajab briefly describes the reaction against the Ḥamawīyya, that a group of people toured the market areas carrying the Ḥamawīyya with them and urging the people not to ask for Ibn Taymiyya's legal opinions. Ibn Rajab also reports that some "wulāt" defended the shaykh (Ibn Taymiyya) and the affair was settled.
 2. A place in northern Syria.
 3. See "al-Munāzara" in al-'Uqūd, p. 207.

Rajab, 705/1306, seven years after the composition of the creed, followed by another council on the 12th of the same month. Both councils were attended by leading 'ulamā' such as Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Hindī, the Shafi'ite qāḍī, Ibn al-Zamalkānī and others. The councils took a hostile stance but they did not come to any specific conclusion.¹

A third council was held on the 7th of Sha'ban; among those who attended it were Najm al-Dīn al-Ṣaṣarī, Ibn al-Zamalkānī and Ṣadr al-Dīn b. al-Wakīl. They continued the discussion of the attributes of God, besides other questions such as the concept of the Qur'ān as the Speech of God. According to Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī this council ended in favour of Ibn Taymiyya, for his creed was agreed upon and was declared to be in conformity with the views of the salaf.²

The investigation of Ibn Taymiyya's creed did not end in Damascus. Ibn Taymiyya was summoned to Cairo shortly after the third council and copies of his creed were ordered. This summons seems to have been the result of pressure from Ibn Makhlūf, the Malikite qāḍī al-quḍāt who was an enemy of Ibn Taymiyya and who was supported by al-Jashnigir the viceroy of Syria. On the 23rd of Ramaḍān

1. Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd, p. 204; also Murād, Miḥan of Ibn Taymiyya, p. 16.

2. Ibn Rajab, Dhayl, vol. II, p. 396; Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd, p. 206.

a council was held to question Ibn Taymiyya; this was attended by leading religious men and qadīs as well as the viceroy of Egypt, Sayf al-Dīn Salār (d. 710/1311). After long sessions of discussion, Ibn Taymiyya's beliefs on the question of God's Being, His istiwā' on the throne and the nature of His Speech were declared heretical.¹ This was announced by the Shafi'ite qadī Shams al-Dīn Ibn 'Adlān (d. 749/1348). Together with his two brothers who supported him and propagated his view, Ibn Taymiyya was consequently imprisoned, first in the tower of the citadel then transferred to the jubb where he spent one and a half years. His release was secured by the intervention of some notable Amīrs, especially Ḥusām al-Dīn Muḥannā b. 'Īsā (d. 735/1334).

This first trial or mihna of Ibn Taymiyya is always linked with his creed, al-Ḥamawīyya. However, another of his creeds, al-Wāsiṭiyya, was also a centre of discussion of the councils. It is obvious that both 'aqida (and presumably others such as al-Ba'labakiyya and Tadmuriyya) discuss similar issues in regard to the question of God's attributes. This is the reason that in the second council Ibn Taymiyya sent for the Wāsiṭiyya.

These trials not only reflect the differences that existed between Ibn Taymiyya and his fellow 'ulamā' but also show that Ibn Taymiyya's beliefs and doctrines found wide popular support to the extent that the state was

1. See Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī, al-'Uqūd, p. 252.

worried about his influence on the masses and considered him enough of a threat to imprison him.

The third of Ibn Taymiyya's trials took place in 707/1308 when a number of Sufis headed by Karīm al-Dīn al-Iblī¹ and Ibn 'Aṭṭa' (d. 709/1310) demonstrated and complained to the sulṭān that Ibn Taymiyya had insulted their leaders, Ibn 'Arabī and Ibn Sab'īn, and attacked their views on pantheistic Sufism. The sulṭān ordered a council to be set up to question Ibn Taymiyya on the accusations made against him by the Sufis. Ibn Taymiyya argued against their beliefs especially with regard to the question of 'ibāda (worship) and istighātha (appeal for help). Ibn Taymiyya made it clear that none should be called for help except God, that the Prophet should be looked for, for mediation and intercession only, not for direct help. The agitation of Ibn Taymiyya's detractors increased and their complaints against him became more frequent; an attitude which made the authorities in Cairo give him the choice between taking residence in Alexandria or Damascus with certain conditions, or imprisonment. His friends put pressure on him to choose residence in Damascus; but while he was on his way to Damascus he was summoned back and a group of judges decided on his imprisonment, to

1. Ibn Taymiyya earlier wrote a letter to Karīm al-Dīn al-Iblī and Naṣr al-Manbijī in which he denounced their following of Ibn 'Arabī's views.

serve the general good (maṣlaḥa). He was eventually put in prison, first in Ḥarat al-Daylam, the qādīs' prison, but was later transferred to Alexandria. But even in prison, groups of people used to visit him to study and discuss with him¹ and it seems that his popularity grew even more. His release from prison this time was the personal act of al-Malik al-Nāṣir soon after his resumption of power in 709/1310. Ibn Taymiyya was highly admired by al-Nāṣir and thus enjoyed great freedom in the first decade of his rule and engaged in teaching and preaching in both Egypt and Syria.

In 718/1318 however, a fourth crisis occurred. Ibn Taymiyya was asked by some people about divorce and he issued fatwas that were contrary to the divorce laws of the time. The sultān al-Nāṣir issued a decree which stated that Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas on divorce should be banned and that a council should be convened to interrogate Ibn Taymiyya. The first council was held in Ḥākim's palace in Jumādā I, 718 which resulted in confirming the decree of the sultān which banned Ibn Taymiyya's fatwas on divorce. The decision was then declared to the public. Ibn Taymiyya defied the sultān's decree and continued issuing his fatwas. This caused a second council to be

1. See detailed discussion of the events in Murād, "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial": A Narrative Account of his Miḥan, Islamic Culture, 1978, pp. 1-31.

held to remind him of the sultān's decree and to warn him against continuing his fatwas. Ibn Taymiyya insisted on his stand, arguing that he could not conceal knowledge. A third council was held in 720/1321 to settle the issue and it resulted in Ibn Taymiyya's imprisonment. After less than six months in prison Ibn Taymiyya was released by an order from al-Nāṣir himself in 721/1322.¹

The last of Ibn Taymiyya's persecutions was in 726/1327 on the question of visiting of tombs and intercession. Ibn Taymiyya had written his fatwa on this question seventeen years earlier; but it seems that his later troubles encouraged his enemies and opponents to examine all his fatwas with the intention of testing and judging their conformity with the common beliefs. The fatwa concerned was written by Ibn Taymiyya in an answer to a question from the people in Baghdād on whether it was legal to travel to visit the tombs of the prophets and whether it was correct to shorten the prayers during such a trip. Ibn Taymiyya's answer was that such deliberate trips for visiting tombs were forbidden and hence the shortening of prayer in them was duly forbidden. According to him it was an innovation, that such practice was unknown to the companions of the Prophet, and not recommended by the leading Muslim jurists. Ibn Taymiyya backed his

1. See Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, al-'Uqūd for further details:
p. 323.

argument by a verse from the Qur'ān and some traditions,¹ concluding that whoever believes that visiting of prophets' tombs is a kind of worship, is committing heresy. As in previous trials, a council of qādis and jurists was held to question Ibn Taymiyya on his fatwa; the council regarded his fatwa as denoting lack of respect to the Prophet and consequently sentenced Ibn Taymiyya to prison,² where he died two years later (728/1329).

1. Ibn Taymiyya dismisses most of the traditions on visiting the Prophet's grave as unauthentic and bases his argument on a few traditions that in his mind forbid the visiting of tombs; of these "No travel (with the intention of worship) should be made except for three mosques: the grand mosque - al-Masjid al-Ḥarrām -, the Prophet's mosque in Medīna and the Aqṣa mosque in Jerusalem..." Another tradition, reported by 'Āisha, the Prophet said "God curse the Jews and Christians who turned their prophets' tombs into mosques...." Ibn Taymiyya quotes several other traditions, see Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī, al-'Uqūd, pp. 334-40.
2. Many jurists in Baghdād, like Ibn al-Kutubī the Shāfi'ite, al-Baghdādī the Malikite and others supported his views on this question and defended them as being in conformity with the views of the salaf; but these 'ulamā' did not have as great an influence as those who opposed him.

These trials clearly indicate that it was Ibn Taymiyya's beliefs and his stand on certain doctrinal issues that caused his persecution. For this same reason his followers and friends and his two brothers suffered persecution as well.¹ It is also worth mentioning that Ibn Taymiyya faced such a hostile opposition from his opponents that on certain occasions they inflicted bodily harm on him.² But side by side with these enemies, there were his supporters and followers who used to defend and protect him. This group came not only from the common people but also from amongst the most influential men in the government as will be discussed later.

A close examination of these trials shows that there are other factors (besides his doctrinal stance) which led to the frequency of Ibn Taymiyya's detention. As shown earlier, Ibn Taymiyya asserts the right and duty of reforming Islamic thought in all fields, displaying his

1. On several occasions Ibn Taymiyya's followers were persecuted, see Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī, al-'Uqūd, pp. 202, 271, 330. Also Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, pp. 54-55; Murād, Ibn Taymiyya on Trial, Islamic Culture 1978, p. 24.

His brothers Sharaf al-Dīn 'Abd Allah and Zayn al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān were imprisoned with him. See Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī, al-'Uqūd, pp. 250-52.

2. Ibid., pp. 285-289.

dissatisfaction with the purely speculative and philosophical methods of argument, as well as those used by the literalists (al-ḥarfiyyūn) and the traditionalists (al-muqallidūn). Ibn Taymiyya, instead, endeavours to impose what in his view represents a surer method of knowledge. He similarly demonstrates his total disapproval and rejection of certain aspects of the practices of some groups and sets about reforming people's conduct.¹ The challenging and outspoken method he chose to deal with his opponents was a key factor in his trouble.

Another factor, mentioned by Ibn Kathīr, is that some theologians and jurists were jealous and envious of Ibn Taymiyya because of his position, and the growing popularity and respect which he enjoyed as well as his religious zeal.² The outcome of this factor becomes clearer when one bears in mind that these 'ulamā' enjoyed great influence with the authorities, and what is more relevant to Ibn Taymiyya's case, is that they formed the membership of the councils held for his interrogation and they were authorised even to issue

1. The details of this was dealt with under the section of his role as a reformer. See also Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, p. 35.

2. Ibid., p. 37.

sentences against him.¹

On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya himself participated in escalating the trouble against him. He refused to make the slightest deviation from his stand, rejected the conditions and options offered to him and showed his preference for imprisonment.² Likewise, he resisted genuine efforts from his supporters (both among the authority and the common people) to inflict punishment on his adversaries and thus put an end to his trouble.

1. Examples of these 'ulamā' were Ibn Makhlūf the Malikite qādī who was very influential, also Naṣr al-Manbijī who was the personal friend of Baybars al-Jāshenegir and who was a great supporter of Ibn 'Arabī's views on pantheistic monism. It is reported that Ibn Taymiyya wrote a letter to Naṣr al-Manbijī condemning the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī and accusing his supporters of misguiding people.
2. He wrote a letter in prison to the viceroy in Syria telling him that he was engaged in worshipping God and that he didn't want "royal money or cloth."

Ibn Taymiyya's Character:

The attempt in this section is to give some aspects and features of Ibn Taymiyya's character which may be helpful in understanding his work.

There are voluminous works on Ibn Taymiyya's biography, most of which is found in chronicles and biographical dictionaries. Some of this material is valuable first hand information written by Ibn Taymiyya's disciples and contemporaries. But most of these works are highly eulogistic in nature. Biographies by modern scholars rely heavily on these earlier sources. On the whole these biographies, although they contain details about Ibn Taymiyya's life, are only of secondary help in the evaluation of his character; for new insights maybe found by a close examination of his work.

Ibn Taymiyya was endowed with a very fine intellect and he utilized his brilliance and good memory in a persistent and fervent quest for knowledge and in educating himself in various fields. The education he received in his childhood formed the foundation for all his thought, and knowledge for which he dedicated all his life.

Ibn Taymiyya's writings show that he was mainly concerned with educating the masses as opposed to addressing the educated elite. A large number of his theological writings were addressed to the people of different areas to which his influence had spread. His main concern is

to revive the true faith, the sunna of the Prophet and the beliefs of the salaf. In propagating these doctrines and beliefs Ibn Taymiyya exerted great moral courage, unselfish devotion and firm endurance. It is his dedication to the cause of Islam and its purity which stand as a marking feature of his character.

An important factor behind Ibn Taymiyya's peculiar character is his independence. The reader of Ibn Taymiyya's work will notice his lack of bias in referring to the four schools of law and in selecting indiscriminately the correct opinion, in his view, which is closer to the Qur'ān and sunna and the view of the salaf. He even went as far as to choose opinions of his own which are different from all the opinions of the four schools. It is worth mentioning that though he is always known and described as a Ḥanbalite scholar, he never restricted himself to the opinions of the school of Ibn Ḥanbal. Despite his great respect for Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his school, Ibn Taymiyya refused to attribute his beliefs and views to Ḥanbalism and insisted to call them the views of the salaf only. He explained that he never propagated or recommended the following of the school of Ibn Ḥanbal or any other school. He showed his disapproval of blind adherence to the views of the schools and emphasised that concern should be with the main sources of the sharī'a (the Qur'ān, sunna, ijmā' and with the precedent of the salaf) and not with particular schools.



The fact that he refused to hold any office which was financed by the government confirmed his desire to remain independent and not to allow his integrity to be compromised. This is further proved by the fact that he refused to collaborate with al-Malik al-Nāṣir against their common enemies of the 'ulamā' and showed his reluctance to be an accomplice. This proves that his opposition to the fellow 'ulamā' was utterly unselfish, unmotivated by personal interest.

Ibn Taymiyya's defects are represented in his intolerance of other views than those of the ahl al-sunna and his uncompromising and contemptuous attitude towards his adversaries and detractors. Had he been more accommodating and compromising, he would have saved himself and his followers much trouble; but on the other hand, his strength lay principally in his very intransigence and in his courageous adherence to his views, regardless of political and social considerations.

The Theological and Juridical Basis for Ibn Taymiyya's
Political Thought:

Ibn Taymiyya's thought is best described by Merlin Swartz as "highly complex, multifaceted and subtly nuanced."¹ A proper study of such a thought requires a thesis by itself. For the purpose of this study, however, it seems most appropriate to outline its general characteristics and to give a brief summary of it.

The most conspicuous feature of Ibn Taymiyya's thought is that it is based mainly on the primary sources of the sharī'a, namely, the Qur'ān, sunna, ijmā' (consensus) and qiyās (analogical reasoning).

Ibn Taymiyya shows paramount concern for the value of the Qur'ān as a source of doctrine and conduct. He believes that nothing should come above the Qur'ān because it is the speech of God. To him the Qur'ān comprises all the knowledge of the creeds ('aqā'id) not only in the form of commands, but also with all the explanations and proofs necessary for understanding it. The task of reason is to find out this knowledge and try to understand it.²

The influence of the Ḥanbalite attitude to the Qur'ān is obvious on Ibn Taymiyya's thought, though it could rightly be said that all Muslim schools of law and the different sects give the Qur'ān an uncontestable status within the sources of the sharī'a. However, Aḥmad b.

1. Merlin Swartz, "A Seventh Century (A.H.) Sunni Creed: The 'Aqīda Wāsiṭiyya", Humaniora Islamica, 1 (1973), pp. 91-131.

2. "Ma'ārij al-Wuṣūl" in Majmū'at al-Rasā'il al-Kubra, p. 183.

Ḥanbal's persecution for his stand on the problem of the creation of the Qur'ān made his school particularly associated with defending the Qur'ān against all that was deemed innovatory.

Ibn Taymiyya reflects the supremacy of the Qur'ān in all his thought; Laoust commenting on the place given by Ibn Taymiyya to the Qur'ān said that most of his writings could be considered as an interpretation of the Qur'ān; with the effect that he based the two books al-Ḥisba and al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iyya which include his social and political thought, on two verses of the Qur'ān.¹

As has been explained before, it is for the sake of the correct interpretation of the Qur'ān and the elevation of its methods above reason, that Ibn Taymiyya opposed most of his contemporary thinkers, wrote several books on the refutation of their thoughts and suffered their hostility for that.

The sunna of the Prophet occupies the second important place in the sources of Ibn Taymiyya's thought. According to him the sunna of the Prophet interprets, explains, substantiates and articulates the Qur'ān. But he makes it clear that its place is second to the Qur'ān. He says,

"The ahl al-sunna know that the truest speech is the speech of God, and that the best guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad. They prefer the speech of God to that of the best men (the prophet's) and they give priority to the guidance of Muḥammad over the guidance of anyone else..."²

1. Laoust, Essai sur Les Doctrines Sociales et Politiques d'Ibn Taymiyya, p. 73.

2. See Ibn Taymiyya's 'Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya, pp. 26, 27.

The importance of the sunna is clear from the fact that those who seriously adopt it as a basis of doctrine and faith are considered to be those who will be saved (al-firqa al-nājiya), according to a tradition in which the Prophet is reported to have foretold that "following his death the Muslim community would break up into seventy-three factions all of which would be consigned to hell on the Day of Judgement except one..."¹

This group among the Muslims is considered by Sunnite thinkers to be "ahl al-sunna". It excludes Shī'ites, Khārijites, Mu'tazilites and whatever group differs greatly from ahl al-sunna.

The third source for Ibn Taymiyya's thought is that of the consensus, ijmā' of the 'ulamā''. Originally, Ibn Taymiyya emphasised only the consensus of the Companions and so classified it into four² categories according to the degree of authority (ḥujja) of each.

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1. Tradition reported in Ṣaḥīḥayn, (bāb al-fitan).
 2. The four categories are:
 - a) ijma' iqrārī which is a statement on which all the Companions agree and it does not contradict a naṣṣ.
 - b) ḥujja or authority, that which is not known to all Companions but at the same time unopposed by any of them.
 - c). a statement known to all Companions but there was contradiction to it.
 - d) a statement which is not clear whether other Companions agreed to it or not.

Although Ibn Taymiyya approves of the tradition that the consensus of the community is true because the Umma never agrees on an error, he strictly puts the condition that any consensus in order to be an authority (ḥujja) and thus acceptable, must conform with the Book and the sunna and that it should never contradict them. He says that even sunna cannot abrogate the Qur'ān;

"A verse of the Qur'ān can only be abrogated by another verse, not by ijmā' or sunna..."

Ibn Taymiyya later admits and accepts the consensus of the 'ulamā' on the condition that it does not contradict the Qur'ān or sunna.¹

With regard to qiyās (analogy) Ibn Taymiyya considers it as one of the four main sources of Islamic law, but he

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1. Sirāj al-Ḥaḳue in an article titled "Ibn Taymiyya's Conception of Analogy and Consensus" claimed that Ibn Taymiyya rejects ijma' of others than the Companions simply because Caliph 'Umār told his judge, Shurayḥ, to follow consensus of the Companions in the absence of text, and because Ibn 'Abbās said if he could not decide something on the basis of the Qur'ān or sunna he used to resort to precedents of Abū Bakr and 'Umār. However, this does not show that Ibn Taymiyya rejects consensus of others. See the article by Sirāj al-Ḥaḳue in Islamic Culture, vol. 17, 1943, pp. 77-87.

defines it¹ and then classifies it into correct analogy (qiyās ṣaḥīḥ) which is the one that conforms with the sharī'a and bad analogy (qiyās fāsid) which contradicts the sharī'a.

Within conformity with these four sources of the sharī'a (Qur'ān, sunna, ijmā' and qiyās), individual opinion, in minor affairs² which are not covered by these four sources, is tolerated on condition that it does not contradict them.

In spite of the great respect felt by Ibn Taymiyya for the four schools of law (Ḥanafite, Shafi'ite, Malikite and Ḥanbalite) he still regards the validity of their views and legal opinions conditional on their conformity to the sharī'a (especially Qur'ān and sunna). He often

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1. "Qiyās" means the combination of two similar things and the differentiation of two dissimilar things. The first is called qiyās al-ṭard and the second qiyās al-'aks.
 2. On several occasions Ibn Taymiyya argues in favour of the infallibility of the judgement by the consensus of the Umma supporting his argument on the tradition previously quoted. But he also refers to the necessity for the rulers to resort to individual opinion in minor issues such as punishment of minor offences whose sentences are not specified by the sharī'a. See al-Siyāsa, pp. 119-120.

quotes with great admiration the advice of the four leaders of the schools of law to the people to follow whatever opinion is closer to the Qur'ān and sunna, and not to stick blindly to the views of their schools.¹

In this way Ibn Taymiyya develops an independent line of thought in which he gives himself the discretion to select freely from any school the opinion which he considers the closest to the Qur'ān and sunna. He goes even further than that in choosing his own opinions which may be different on occasion from those of the four schools, on the grounds that his views are the nearest to the Qur'ān and sunna.² Such an attitude makes him an independent mujtahid even though he never claims to be one.

Finally, one cannot adequately consider Ibn Taymiyya's thought without throwing some light on his attitude towards the salaf (early Muslims).³ He shows unfaltering and

1. For quotation from the four leaders of the schools of law, see Ibn Taymiyya's Fatāwā, vol. II, p. 386.

2. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī mentions around twenty issues in which Ibn Taymiyya chooses opinions which are different from those adopted by the four schools of law. See al-'Uqūd, pp. 321-24.

3. The word salaf means the ones that came before. Ibn Taymiyya means the first Muslim generation who lived during the time of the Prophet and the early Companions.

unreserved support for the views of the salaf. His preference for the salaf is again due to several references to the praise and prestige of the salaf by both the Qur'ān and the sunna. Also his conviction that because the salaf were closer in time to the Prophet's era, their experience is the most valuable and their knowledge is the closest to the truth. He makes this clear several times in his writings:

"It is by necessity known for whoever examines thoughtfully the Book, the sunna and whatever was agreed upon by all ahl al-sunna that the best of this community, in terms of deeds, sayings, beliefs and virtues, are the people of the first century, then those next to them and then those who followed them. This was confirmed by the Prophet in many ways... They are better than their successors in all virtues of knowledge, deed, belief, reason, faith, eloquence (bayān), worship; they were also more capable of interpretation and of solving problems than others. Whoever denies this denies known facts in Islam..."¹

One finds similar arguments for supporting the salaf infiltrated all through Ibn Taymiyya's work. It is for this reason that he was considered by his biographers as "the champion of the salaf." Some writers considered

1. Naqd al-Mantiq, p. 123.

him to be the founder of the salafiyya school.¹

However, it could be said that the salafiyya gained momentum through Ibn Taymiyya's constant and bold effort to propagate it and his frequent reference to it in his writings which culminated in his famous work "al-ʿAqīda al-Ḥamawīyya al-Kubra".²

It is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya's total devotion and strict adherence to the Qur'ān and sunna and the path of the salaf made him critical, sometimes even hostile to all the different sects and groups who, in his opinion, deviated from the mainstream of Islam.³ This attitude is clearly reflected in his thought.

1. Hiras, Ibn Taymiyya, al-Salafy, the introduction, p. 3.

2. Al-ʿAqīda al-Ḥamawīyya al-Kubra is a treatise composed by Ibn Taymiyya on the attributes of God, in an answer to a request made by the people of Ḥama' in 698/1299. It embodied the views of the salaf in the attributes of God which were different from the views of the scholastic theologians. This caused Ibn Taymiyya a lot of trouble as discussed before.

3. Ibn Taymiyya criticised and attacked all the sects (with the exception of ahl al-sunna). He attacked the Shi'ites, the Kharijites, the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites. He also attacked the different schools of thought such as the philosophers, theologians, the extreme literalists (al-ghulāt al-ḥarfīyūn) and the traditionalists (al-muqalidūn).

CHAPTER II

IBN TAYMIYYA'S CONCEPT OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

The fact that the nature of political authority in Islam and the method of establishing it are not clearly stated or defined in either the Qur'ān or the sunna; and the fact that the early successors of the Prophet - the four rightly guided caliphs - adopted different methods in establishing this authority, made the problem of political authority a subject of continuous controversy and difference of opinion among Muslim thinkers throughout the centuries. Indeed, the problem of political authority is the main reason behind the emergence of early schism in Islam.

The problem of political authority is usually discussed by Muslim jurists and thinkers under the name of the imāmate or the caliphate (al-imāma or al-khilāfa respectively).

The terms imāma and khilāfa are used interchangeably by Muslim jurists to refer to the government. The best example of this synonomous usage of the two terms is shown in Ibn Khaldūn's definition of the institution of the caliphate. He says:

"We have explained the meaning of the caliphate. It substitutes for the lawgiver in as much as it serves, like him, in preserving the religion and in exercising political

leadership in the world. The institution is called the caliphate or the imāmate. The person in charge of it is called the caliph or the imām."¹

Linguistically, however, the two words bear different connotations.² There is consensus among jurists that the leader of the community is called imām like the imām of prayer. It seems that because during the lifetime of the Prophet, his agents, deputies and wālīs in the different parts used to lead the people in prayer, the view prevailed, among the Companions, that the one who leads people in prayer is more worthy of leading the community in all affairs. Al-Ṭabarī shows that such a view was clearly manifested in the saqlfa meeting when

1. Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p. 191.
2. The word imāma is derived from amma which means aimed at, endeavoured after or pursued. Hence the imām is the person whose example is followed, an exemplar, object of imitation such as the head, chief leader, or the one with the authority over people. Therefore the imāma is the office of this imām.

The word khilāfa is derived from khalafa which means came after, replaced or succeeded another who perished or died. Khalīfa is the successor or vicegerent. For the meaning of the two words see Lane's Arabic English Lexicon, vol. I, p. 90, and Book I, part II, p. 793.

Abū Bakr was elected.¹ Ibn Khaldūn also explains this. He says:

"The leadership of prayer is the highest of all the state functions. This is attested by the circumstance that the men around Muḥammad deduced from the fact that Abū Bakr had been appointed Muḥammad's representative as prayer leader the fact that he had also been appointed his representative in the political leadership."²

But this view is not accepted by all jurists; as is shown in their arguments about the meaning of khilāfa. Ibn Ḥazm argues that the word khalīfa means a person who is nominated by his predecessor to succeed him. He explains that if a person takes the place of another without being nominated by him, then such a successor is called khālif not khalīfa.³ Therefore in his view the Companions called Abū Bakr khalīfa because they had heard his nomination from the Prophet. According to this, Ibn Ḥazm rejects the view that Abū Bakr was called khalīfa by deduction from his appointment by the Prophet for the leadership of prayer.⁴

1. Al-Ṭabarī, Tarīkh, vol. 3, p. 209.

2. See Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p. 219.

3. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 107.

4. Ibid., Ibn Ḥazm wants to show that Abū Bakr's appointment was by clear nass, and no doubt this is a reaction to the Shī'ite claims on the nass on the imāmate of 'Alī.

Ibn Taymiyya opposes the meaning of khalīfa given by Ibn Ḥazm and argues that khalīfa is the one who takes the place of another whether he is nominated by him or not.¹ He gives evidence of the use of the word khalīfa and its derivatives in both the Qur'ān and the tradition. He quotes a dozen Qur'ānic verses among which:

"Then We made you successors (khalā'if) in the earth after them so that We might see how you behave...."²

"And when your Lord said to the angels: I am going to place a successor (khalīfa) on the earth..."³

"And had We pleased, We could have set among you angels to succeed (yakhlifūn) you in the earth..."⁴

"And Moses said to his brother: Take my place (akhlifnī) among the people...."⁵

Ibn Taymiyya quotes several other verses to support his view that khilāfa simply means succession.⁶ He also

1. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 137.

2. Qur'ān, X:14.

3. Ibid., II:30.

4. Ibid., XLIII:60.

5. Ibid., VII:142.

6. These are: VI:166, XXXVIII:26, VII:69, VII:74, XXV:62, X:6, VII:129 and XXIV:45. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 137 and vol. III, p. 131.

gives evidence from the Prophet's traditions:

"One who provides the necessary equipment for the raider (al-ghāzī) is like the one who actually fights; and the one who takes the place of the fighter in his family (man khalafa fi ahlihi) with good faith is, likewise, as if he fights himself...."¹

Another tradition runs:

"O Allah! Thou art the companion in the travel and the khalīfa in the family. O Allah! Accompany us in our travel and be with our families."²

Ibn Taymiyya maintains that the meaning of the word khalīfa and its derivatives in the Qur'ānic verses and traditions quoted above refers to mere succession, the fact that one succeeded another, took his place whether the first nominated the second or not. He further explains that 'Umar did not nominate 'Uthmān in particular, nor did 'Uthmān nominate 'Alī; nevertheless they are called khulafā'. Similarly all the Umayyad and 'Abbasid rulers are called khulafā' though some of them were not nominated by their predecessors. In short khilāfa simply means succession.³

Jurists also discussed the issue of whether the khilāfa is a vicegerency of Allah. The issue was raised

1. Reported in Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, (bāb al-jihād).

2. Ibid. See also Ibn Taymiyya, Minhāj, vol. I, p. 137.

3. Minhāj, vol. III, p. 131.

in the caliphate of Abū Bakr when he refused the title of khalīfat Allah, and preferred to be addressed as the khalīfa of the messenger of Allah. Ibn Taymiyya like other jurists rejected the concept of vicegerency of Allah and argues that.... "no one can be successor of Allah because succession occurs when one is absent, and Allah is always present administering the affairs of His creatures. He does not need anyone else to act on His behalf..."¹

It is, however, suggested by Ibn Ḥazm that the titles khalīfa and imām when used in their absolute form must refer only to the head of the community, the Qurashite, who upholds the affairs of the Muslims. Any other use of these terms must be made specific, such as imām of prayer.²

A third title of the leader of the community is Amīr al-mu'minīn (the commander of the faithfuls or believers).³ It is claimed that this title is first used to address caliph 'Umar when the repetition of (khalīfat khalīfat Rasūl Allah) is found lengthy and clumsy.⁴ Amīr al-Mu'minīn continued to be the official title for the head of the community.

As mentioned before, the words khilāfa and imāma and

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1. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 137.
 2. Ibn Ḥazm, Fīṣal, vol. IV, p. 90.
 3. From this title is derived the name of the office 'Imarah.
 4. See al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, vol. V, p. 22. Also Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddīma, p. 227.

the titles imām and khalīfa are used interchangeably by Muslim jurists in their writings.¹ Ibn Taymiyya, however, does use the two titles synonymously. He also uses other titles such as amīr, sultān malik, wālī and ḥākim.²

Various questions are raised in connection with the problem of the imāmate such as, is the imāmate necessary and obligatory? If it is obligatory, what is the source of this obligation? and on whom does the obligation rest? To have a clear understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's answer to these questions and his treatment of the problem of political authority, it would be useful first to consider briefly the views of some of the important Muslim sects on the subject.

With regard to the first question, the necessity and obligation of the imāmate, there prevailed three different views. The first view is that the imāmate is

1. The heading used by jurists for writings on political authority is "al-imāma"; the reason given is that the Shī'ites were the first to write on the subject and they used the word imāma. When Sunnite and other jurists wrote in answer to them, they used the same title, al-imāma. See 'Uthmān, Riyasāt al-Dawla fī-al-fiqh al-Islāmī, p. 45.
2. Ibn Taymiyya does not only use these words synonymously but also simultaneously. See Minhāj, vol. III, pp. 32-36 and vol. I, p. 148. Al-Hisba, p. 78.

necessary and obligatory. This is the belief of the majority of the Muslims, namely all the Sunnites, all the Shī'ites, all the Murji'ites and all the Khārijites with the exception of the Najdites.¹ These groups, despite their general agreement, further differ in the details of the obligation as will be shown later.

The second view is that the imāmate is necessary and obligatory at certain times only. The holders of this view are two groups among the Mu'tazilites: the Hishāmiyya² who believe that the establishment of the imāmate is necessary and obligatory at times of peace and justice only. They argue that during times of dissension and crisis the imām may be disobeyed and hence more instability results.³ The other Mu'tazilite group includes the

1. Najdites are the followers of Najd b. 'Umair; see Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 87.

2. These are the followers of Hishām b. 'Amr al-Fuṭī. See al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa-al-Niḥal on the margin of Ibn Ḥazm's al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 92. Al-Shahrastānī also described Hishām as a Qadarite, see Nihayat al-Iqdām, p. 481.

3. This view is directed against the imāmate of 'Alī. See al-Baghdādī, Usūl al-Dīn, p. 272.

followers of Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm.¹ They maintain that the imāmate is obligatory in cases of chaos and instability only because, in their opinion, such a state of affairs could only be remedied by an effective imāmate.²

The third view denies the necessity of the imāmate altogether. This view is held by the Najdites. They argue that the establishment of the imāmate is not obligatory on people; what is obligatory on them is that they should attain and observe righteousness among themselves.³ It is obvious that the Najdites assume the existence of an ideal and perfect society where everyone adheres strictly to the moral values of religion and observes the rights of others. It appears, however, that the Najdites ultimately discovered the inadequacy and the drawbacks of their theory for they argue that if justice cannot be voluntarily restored then the establishment of the imāmate is only permissible (jā'iza). It is evident that the Najdites ignore the other main function

1. See al-Rāzī, Kitāb al-Arba'in, p. 427. There is a dispute about who originally held this view. Al-Aṣamm is also said to be holding the views of the Sunnites. See M.R. 'Uthmān, Riyāsat al-Dawla fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī, p. 99.
2. Al-Rāzī, Kitāb al-Arba'in, p. 427.
3. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fisal, vol. IV, p. 87.

and purpose of the imāmate, the administration of religious and temporal affairs of the Muslims; and they restrict the imāmate to the achievement of justice only.

Though the majority of the Muslims agree that the establishment of the imāmate is obligatory, they disagree on the source of this obligation, and on whom the obligation rests. It is worthwhile considering the two major different views held by the Sunnites and the Shī'ites on these issues since they represent a significant element in Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of political thought.

The Sunnites maintain that the source of obligation of the imāmate is the shar'¹ or the sam'². There are several reasons given by the Sunnites for their belief. According to al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī the shar' or the revealed law determines what is incumbent on the

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1. The word shar' originally means manifest, plain or open track or road or way; then it is used metaphorically to the divine way of religion. Here it means the revealed law.
 2. Sam' means what has been heard, what has been received by hearsay. Both shar' and sam' are used variantly in this connection to mean revealed tradition. See al-Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, p. 105; al-Rāzī, Kitāb al-Arba'īn, p. 426; Abū Ya'la, al-Aḥkam al-Sultaniyya, p. 3.

people, and not reason.¹ Others argue that the source of obligation is the shar' because the imām is supposed to administer legal affairs like the punishment of the wrongdoers and the rendering of people's dues which may not be demanded by reason.² The proof usually cited by the Sunnites on support of the obligation of the imāmate is the ijmā' (consensus). The agreement of the Companions of the Prophet, in the Saqīfa³ meeting, to choose Abū Bakr as caliph, is regarded by the Sunnites as an indisputable precedent in favour of the obligation of

1. Al-Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, p. 105. Al-Shahrastānī, Nihāyat al-Iqdām, p. 478. Abū Ya'la further adds that reason cannot tell what is obligatory or what is prohibited or permitted, See al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyya, p. 3.
2. See al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 271; al-Shahrastānī, Nihāyat al-Iqdām, p. 478. Also Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 87.
3. Saqīfa Banī Sā'ida; a place in Medina where the Anṣār met to discuss their affairs. It is the place where the Companions of the Prophet met after his death and discussed the problem of succession to the Prophet. There was a dispute in the beginning because the Anṣār wanted to appoint Sa'ad b. 'Ubada, but finally both Anṣār and Muhājirūn agreed to choose Abū Bakr. The agreement in principle on the necessity for a successor is the precedent.

the imāmate. This draws our attention to the strong position ijmā' occupies, and the significant role it plays in the sphere of politics especially in determining new issues for which a verdict of the Prophet could not be traced. Though ijmā' is the proof cited by most jurists for the obligation of the imāmate, al-Ghazālī goes beyond that and argues rationally to explain the basis of ijmā' (mustanad al-ijmā'). He says that the administration of the religious affairs is entrusted to the Prophet, the law-giver (ṣāhib al-shar') and adds that (after the Prophet) the management of the religious affairs cannot be achieved without an obeyed imām, therefore the appointment of the imām is obligatory.¹ Ibn Ḥazm maintains that the imāmate is obligatory by naṣṣ (text). He explains that the Prophet prohibited the Muslims from spending even one night without an imām and he orders the Muslims to render obedience to the Qurashite imām.² Muslim jurists also give as a proof of the obligation of the imāmate, the fact that it is necessary for warding off harm, and that it is indispensable for performing Allah's Commandments. The Sunnites believe that the obligation of choosing the imām rests on the people. It is a collective obligation

1. See al-Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, p. 105.

2. Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣāl, vol. IV, p. 102.

(fard kifāya).¹ Al-Māwardī specifies two groups to be particularly responsible: those qualified to make the choice (ahl al-ikhtiyār) and those eligible to be candidates.²

The other important view on the obligation of the imāmate holds that the source of the obligation is reason (al-ʿaql). This is the belief of most of the Shīʿites and most of the Muʿtazilites.³ But the two sects have different interpretations of this obligation. The Muʿtazilites argue that the imām is necessary for warding off harm (dafʿ al-ḍarar) and the warding off of harm is demanded by reason, therefore it is the duty of people to appoint for themselves an imām.⁴ The Shīʿites believe that it is incumbent upon Allah to appoint the imām. There are two main different views within the Shīʿites. The Ismaʿilites⁵ argue that it is incumbent on Allah to appoint the imām because the only way to know Him is through the teaching and guidance of the

1. Al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām, p. 3, also Abū Yaʿlā, al-Akām al-Sultāniyya, p. 19.

2. Al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām, p. 3.

3. Al-Tūsī, Talkhīṣ al-Shāfī, p. 55.

4. Al-Rāzī, Kitāb al-Arbaʿin, p. 426.

5. The Ismaʿilites are a group of imāmis who believe that the imām after Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq is his son Ismāʿīl.

Prophet or the infallible imām.¹ The Twelver imāmis,² on the other hand, reject this Isma'ilite view and explain that knowing Allah does not need an imām. In their view the imām is a grace (luṭf)³ to help people to perform their duties, to help the oppressed, establish justice and peace and forbid evil deeds. Moreover, the imām is necessary to preserve the shar' and conduct the religious affairs of the community. It is the beliefs and views of the Twelver imāmis that concern Ibn Taymiyya most; for in their refutation he presents his own views on the imāmate.

Ibn Taymiyya, unlike most of the jurists who discussed the problem of the imāmate, does not devote an exclusive work to the discussion of the imāmate. Most of his views on the subject are found in his refutation of the Twelvers' theory of the imāmate as presented by al-Hillī. Thus one notices that the method of his argument is different from that of the other jurists even though he conforms largely with the Sunnite views, as indicated by

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1. Al-Rāzī, Kitāb al-Arba'īn, p. 427.
 2. The Twelvers or Ithna 'ashriyya believe that the imām after Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is his son Mūsa al-Kāẓim and then to his son 'Alī al-Riḍa and so forth until the twelfth imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī the expected (al-Muntazar).
 3. Luṭf is that which helps in achieving obedience and avoiding disobedience. See al-Tūsī, Talkhīṣ al-Shāfi, p. 59.

the title of his book Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya. In his discussion of the obligation of the imāmate, he chooses to use the word imāra¹ rather than imāma. This is deliberate and it shows his concern with the issue of political authority in general rather than a specific form of it. In discussing the obligation of imāra, Ibn Taymiyya does not argue as the traditional Sunnites do, by raising the question of ijmā'; even though he approves of ijmā' and considers its authority to be binding. Ibn Taymiyya regards the establishment of imāra to administer people's affairs as one of the greatest religious duties; and believes that religion cannot be established without it. He approves of the saying attributed to caliph 'Alī that people must have leadership (imāra) be it pious or wicked (barra kānat amm fājira). The explanation is that the pious is the ideal but in its absence even the wicked leadership is necessary to execute the law and maintain peace and order and defend the land.²

Ibn Taymiyya emphasises the strong relationship

1. The word imāra generally means leadership, also used to mean government or political authority.
2. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 146.

between religion and political authority.¹ He explains that religion and political authority are so intimately interconnected and dependent on each other that if either of the two tries to exist separately people's affairs are damaged.² Moreover, he believes that the validity and understanding of religion become gravely compromised once the validity of political authority has been lost. It is to be noticed that Ibn Taymiyya is well aware of the fact that religion and politics are two distinct entities but at the same time the relationship between them is intricately interwoven. This mutual relationship proves to be necessary for both religion and the political authority. The political authority has the power to carry out the penal laws and the authority to supervise and enable the performance of religious duties such as jihād, pilgrimage, distribution of zakāt and so on.

Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya maintains the view that political authority needs religion because the revealed laws and moral values restrain, moderate and protect the political authority from tyranny, corruption and unbridled

1. Ibn Taymiyya in al-Siyāsa al-Shar'īyya uses variantly the terms imāra, sultān, wilāya and riyāsa to mean political authority or power. In his book Minhāj he uses the term imāma and khilāfa to refute the Shī'ite views.

2. See al-Siyāsa, p. 177.

ambition. This relationship between religion and politics is envisaged earlier by al-Ghazālī who refers to religion and political authority (al-sultān) as twins; he says,

"Religion is the foundation (uss) and the political authority is the guardian (ḥāris); anything without a foundation cannot stand just as anything without a guardian will be lost."¹

Ibn Taymiyya, having made clear the relationship between religion and the political authority, proceeds to argue in favour of the obligation of political authority. He presents two arguments. The first argument is a sociological one. He maintains that people's welfare (maṣlaḥa) cannot be fully accomplished except in a society because people need each other; and once they are in a society they must have a head (ra's).² He develops this argument further in another book when he says that man's maṣlaḥa is only realizable in society and by cooperation and mutual help which are needed to attain good and avoid

1. See al-Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, p. 106.

2. Al-Siyāsa, pp. 172-3.

harm.¹ It is for this reason, he says, that man is said to be sociable by nature. When men live in a society they need someone to command the good and prohibit the evil to whom everybody must submit.²

It is important to notice that Ibn Taymiyya has based his sociological argument on the concept of maṣlaḥa, a concept which plays a central role in Ibn Taymiyya's thought, and in the development of Islamic jurisprudence in general. It is difficult to trace with accuracy the first use of 'maṣlaḥa' by jurists. The words istiḥsān³

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1. Ibn Taymiyya shows that the need for living in the society is the maṣlaḥa, common interest of the people, which is different from the arguments of the Greek philosophers that it is because man is political by nature, or because of his search for security that he comes to live in society. It is probably this sociological argument which made Rosenthal remark that Ibn Taymiyya "combined a rigid attitude to a pure Islam with an open mind towards Greek Hellenistic political thought...." See Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam, p. 35. It is obvious, however, that Ibn Taymiyya's ideas are firmly based on an innately Islamic system of thought which springs from the concepts of the umma, brotherhood and unity of the Muslims.
 2. Al-Hisba, p. 3.
 3. Istiḥsān from istiḥsana: reckoned, counted or esteemed something as good, comely, pleasing.

and istiṣlāḥ¹ (from which maṣlaḥa is derived) are connected with the doctrine of qiyās and are used in relation to legal decisions for which there is no authority in the tradition. Mālik, the founder of the famous school of law, makes this clear when he says that in certain issues he has no evidence from those before him but that he sees it as good (lākinahu shay' un istaḥsanāhu).² Al-Shāfi'ī is critical of istiḥsān on the grounds that it may lead one to legislate. He says: ".... nor should any man make use of istiḥsān, for to decide by istiḥsān means initiating something himself without basing his decision upon a parallel example."³

Al-Ghazālī followed the same Shāfi'ite critical approach to istiḥsān; he wanted to systematize the concept of istiḥsān by restricting its use and putting conditions for it. He treats both istiḥsān and istiṣlāḥ in the same manner and says that unless they conform to the shar', then there is the danger of one getting involved

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1. Istiṣlāḥ from Istaṣlaḥa (and contrary to Istaḥṣada) regarding or esteeming a thing good, right, just.
 2. See al-Mudawwana by Mālik, vol. XVI, pp. 412, 428.
 3. See al-Shāfi'ī, al-Risāla, p. 70. Also a whole chapter, XIV, on Istiḥsān in the same book, p. 304. Another chapter on 'Ibtāl al-Istiḥsān' in Kitāb al-Umm, vol. II, pp. 267-77.

in legislating.¹ With regard to maṣlaḥa he thinks that the definition "the attainment of benefit and the removal of harm" is too general and suggests that maṣlaḥa must specifically deal with the preservation of five things: religion, lives, minds, properties and descendants and these five elements represent the purpose of the shar' according to al-Ghazālī.² Whatever helps to preserve these is a maṣlaḥa and whatever obstructs their attainment is a mafsada (corruption). Even with this restriction al-Ghazālī insists that the resort to maṣlaḥa must only be made in issues which are necessary, decisive, absolute (ḍarūra, qaṭ'iyya, kulliyya).³ In other words in issues which affect the whole community, the benefit (maṣlaḥa) of such issues is certain and indispensable.

Similarly, maṣlaḥa is developed by the Malikite, al-Shāṭibī (d. 590). He argues that maṣlaḥa should not be applied to the sphere of worship ('ibāda) because the law-Giver, al-Shārī' did not leave things concerning worship to be decided by people. He also explains that al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala (general interests) deal with the means (wasā'il) and not the ends (maqāsid) because the

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1. Al-Ghazālī says: man Istaḥsan faqad sharra'. See al-Muṣtaṣfa, vol. I, p. 274. Al-Ghazālī also maintains that man Istaṣlaḥa faqad sharra'a. See al-Muṣtaṣfa, vol. I, p. 315.
 2. Al-Ghazālī, al-Muṣtaṣfa, p. 287.
 3. Ibid., p. 296.

motive behind them is the lessening (takhfīf) of hardships.¹

Ibn Taymiyya also contributed to the systematization of maṣlaḥa. He discusses the issue of al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala in his collection of epistles: Majmū'at al-Rasā'il wa-al-Masā'il. He establishes a strong connection between istiḥsān and istiṣlāḥ. He says istiḥsān is to see something as good (rū'iyat al-shay' ḥasanan) and the good is the welfare (wa-al-ḥasan hūwa al-maṣlaḥa).² He disagrees with al-Ghazālī that maṣlaḥa should be rigidly connected with the five elements mentioned by him. To Ibn Taymiyya, al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala are intended to bring benefits and to prevent harm in both religion and worldly affairs in general. But he agrees with al-Ghazālī, however, that the application of maṣlaḥa must be done with great caution, otherwise, it may lead to legislation - a thing which Allah does not permit.³

Ibn Taymiyya is particularly concerned with the application of maṣlaḥa in the field of politics. He regrets that many rulers used the principle of maṣlaḥa but due to their ignorance used it contrary to the sharī'a

1. See al-Shāṭibī, al-I'tiṣām, vol. II, pp. 134-5; he wrote a whole chapter on Istiḥsān.
2. See Majmu'at al-Rasā'il wa-al-Masā'il, p. 22.
3. He also agrees with al-Ghazālī that to consider something as maṣlaḥa it must have an overwhelming benefit (manfa'a rājiḥa). Ibid.

and thus acted as legislators. Other rulers neglected important interests (maṣāliḥ) of the people on the grounds that the shar' does not deal with them. He contends that the shar' does not neglect maṣlaḥa. Whatever is thought of as maṣlaḥa is either considered by the shar' or it is not a maṣlaḥa at all.¹

Ibn Taymiyya having asserted that people's maṣlaḥa necessitates their living in a society, explains further that once people are in a society they need indispensably some form of leadership. This he derives from the Prophet's tradition: "If three (or more) are travelling they should choose one as a leader..." Another version of the tradition reported in the musnad of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal says, "It is not advisable for three to be in a desert without appointing one of them as their leader..."² Ibn Taymiyya remarks that the Prophet made obligatory the appointment of a leader in a small society as a reminder of that obligation in all societies.³

There are two points to be considered here. First, it is evident from the above remark that Ibn Taymiyya like Ibn Ḥazm⁴ considers the tradition to be a clear text (naṣṣ)

1. Ibid.

2. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad (bāb al-Imāra).

3. Al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iyya, p. 173.

4. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 102.

by the Prophet for the obligation of political authority and naturally the naṣṣ represents a stronger proof (ḥujja) than ijmā'. This is obviously the reason why he does not mention ijmā' in his discussion of the obligation of the political authority.¹ Second, Ibn Taymiyya makes it clear that it is the responsibility of the people to choose their leader and thus conforms with the Sunnite view as opposed to the Shī'ite's view that it is obligatory on Allah to choose the imām.

It is noteworthy that the sociological argument given by Ibn Taymiyya above establishes the necessity of political authority in all human societies irrespective of their belief in religions or not. He makes this clear in his book al-Ḥisba where he says, "All human beings must obey an authority; those who do not belong to the people of revealed books or who are not followers of any religion at all, still must obey their kings in whatever brings them worldly benefits (maṣāliḥ dunyāhum)..."² This argument resembles the argument made by the Mu'tazilites

1. See chapter on obligation of imāra in al-Siyāsa, p. 172.

2. See al-Ḥisba, p. 3. Ibn Taymiyya thus makes it clear that political organisation and human association can exist without religious aid. Rosenthal credited Ibn Khaldūn for his originality in holding this view.

See Rosenthal, Studia Semitica II, Islamic Themes, p.6.

that "thankfulness amounts among other things to recognising the necessity of the imāmate even before the message of the Prophet was revealed."¹ It also shows that the necessity of the imāmate could be known by reason since those who do not adhere to religions still have to establish political authorities and submit to them.

Ibn Taymiyya gives another argument in favour of the obligation of political authority. Like al-Baghdādī² and most other jurists, he believes that there are certain explicit religious duties such as al-'amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar (ordering good and forbidding evil), jihād (holy war), administering justice, performing pilgrimage and Friday prayers as well as the execution of penalties which cannot be accomplished except with power and authority (illā bi-al-qūwwa wa-al-imāra).³ Ibn Taymiyya is so concerned with emphasising the importance of the political authority that he quotes as evidence of his arguments proverbs that tend to highlight the significance and the indispensability of the political authority such as: "The sultān (ruler) is the shadow of Allah on earth," and "sixty years of a despotic ruler are better than a single night without authority..."⁴

1. Al-Sharastānī, al-Milal, vol. I, p. 153.

2. Al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 271. Also Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 87.

3. Al-Siyāsa, p. 173.

4. Ibid.

Despite Ibn Taymiyya's emphasis on the absolute necessity of the political authority, he explains that in Islam such authority must be established on a moral and noble basis so that it can realise its required objectives. He explains that the political authority must be meant to serve religious motives, and to seek nearness (qurba) to Allah - by manipulating this authority for His obedience and the obedience of His prophet.¹ Conversely, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that the quest for political authority for the sake of power or wealth is damaging and corrupting to both people's affairs and their religion. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya maintains the view that the purpose behind all authorities is that religion should be for Allah and that Allah's word should remain supreme, for this is the wisdom behind the creation of mankind. The Qur'ān says:

"And I have not created the jinn and the human beings except (for the sole purpose) that they should worship Me.." ²

The clear inference is, therefore, that according to most jurists and for that matter Ibn Taymiyya himself, the obligation of political authority is derived from its duty as the executor of the sharī'a.

1. Ibid., p. 174.

2. Qur'ān, LI:56 quoted by Ibn Taymiyya in al-Siyāsa, p. 180; al-Hisba, p. 2.

Ibn Taymiyya is remarkable in explaining that the exaltation of religious motives does not mean the neglect, by the authority, of people's worldly and material needs. The neglect of the worldly material affairs, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, would make the authority deficient and unreliable since people would come to realise that their interests are not safeguarded. The ideal method in his view is to promote worldly affairs which surely helps to establish religion.¹ This shows Ibn Taymiyya's pragmatic approach to the problem of political authority.

So far all the arguments mentioned are presented by Ibn Taymiyya in his books al-Siyāsa and al-Ḥisba. In Minhāj he argues more like a jurist whose sole concern is to clarify some basic religious and historical facts. Minhāj is written in refutation of the Shī'ite view of the imāmate and as such its style is highly polemical. He opens his discussion of the imāmate by a general statement that religion should not, due to ignorance, be misunderstood as a kind of politics whose aim is to serve worldly interests. Then he proceeds to a more specific discussion and refutation of the Twelvers' theory of the imāmate as presented by al-Ḥillī in his book Minhāj al-Karāma.

Ibn Taymiyya starts by refuting the position allocated by the Twelvers to the imāmate vis-a-vis religion. To the

1. See the full discussion in al-Siyāsa, pp. 174-180.

Twelvers the imāmate is an article of faith.¹ Ibn Taymiyya argues against this belief by producing evidence from both the Qur'ān and the sunna. He follows the traditional Hanbalite method of arguing by referring directly to the main sources of Islam as opposed to the rational or speculative methods. He examines the definition of the believers (mu'minūn) and its use in the Qur'ān to illustrate that the imāmate is not connected with the belief in Allah. He says that the believers according to the Qur'ān are:

"Those who believe in the unseen and establish prayer and spend of that which We have bestowed on them, and who believe in that which was revealed unto thee and that which was revealed before thee and are certain of the hereafter..."²

"They only are the true believers whose hearts feel fear when Allah is mentioned, and when the revelations of Allah are recited unto them, they increase their faith and who trust in their Lord. Those who perform the prayers and spend of what We have bestowed on them..."³

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1. Ibn Taymiyya quotes whole paragraphs of al-Ḥillī's book in Minhāj; also the full text of al-Ḥillī's book is published in a new edition of Minhāj al-Sunna edited by M.R. Sālim, 1971.
 2. Qur'ān, II:2 to 5.
 3. Qur'ān, VIII:2

"The true believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger and do not doubt, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah.... those are the sincere...."¹

These verses, Ibn Taymiyya argues, and many others give detailed descriptions of the believers but none of them mentions the imāmate as a component of belief or faith (īmān). Similarly, Ibn Taymiyya adds, the Prophet's tradition explain and define faith (īmān) without mentioning the imāmate. According to the tradition īmān is:

"To believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers and to believe in the Day of Judgement and in fate (qadar)."²

All these arguments are made by Ibn Taymiyya to refute the Twelvers' claim that the imāmate is an article of faith.³ Ibn Taymiyya does not accept even a lesser claim by the Twelvers that the imāmate is the most important

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1. Qur'ān, XLIX:15. All the above verses are cited by Ibn Taymiyya in Minhāj, vol. I, p. 17.
 2. Tradition reported in Muslim, Saḥīḥ, (bāb al-īmān) See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 25.
 3. For the details of Ibn Taymiyya's refutation that imāmate is an article of faith see, Minhaj, vol. I, p. 17.

requirement of religion and the noblest issue for the Muslims (aḥamm al-maṭālib fī aḥkām al-dīn wa-ashrāf masā'il al-muslimīn). He follows the same method of argument and contests that the imāmate is neither the most important requirement of religion nor is it the noblest affair of the Muslims. He concentrates his discussion on the basic principles of Islam and the definition of the Muslims as stated in the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet. He explains that belief in Allah and His messenger is the most important requirement of religion. The confession that there is no God but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah is the criterion by which Muslims are identified and defined.¹ The Prophet has made this explicit when he says:

"I have been ordered to fight people until they profess that there is no God but Allah and that I am the messenger of Allah; once they profess this they have protected their blood and property from me except if they violate its rights."²

The second important requirement of religion is the performance of prayer and the payment of the zakāt. The Qur'ān made clear the importance of prayer and zakāt for proving one's adherence to Islam; it says:

"When the prohibited months have passed, slay the

1. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 17.

2. Ibid, the tradition in Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, (bāb al-jihād).

idolators wherever you find them, take them (captives), besiege them, and prepare for them every ambush. But if they repent and establish the prayer and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Allah is forgiving, merciful."¹

Another verse says:

"If they repent and establish the prayer and pay the zakāt, they are your brothers in religion..²

Ibn Taymiyya, basing his argument on the above quoted verses and tradition, remarks that the Qur'ān and the Prophet's tradition have fully explained the requirements of religion but neither of them mentions the imāmate. If the imāmate is the most important requirement, its mention in the Qur'ān should be greater than anything else and the Prophet's explanation of it should be more. But the fact is that the Qur'ān very frequently refers to the unity of Allah, His names, His attributes, His angels, His Books, His commands and prohibitions and many other issues without mentioning the imāmate.³

Another argument made by Ibn Taymiyya is that the ultimate goal of the Muslims, happiness in the after-life,

1. Qur'ān, IX:5.

2. Qur'ān, IX:11.

3. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 23.

is not linked with the belief in the imāmate or the knowledge of it. For Allah says whoever obeys Him and His Prophet will be happy in the after-life while those who disobey Him will be tortured; no reference is made to the imāmate.¹ This discussion should not give the impression that Ibn Taymiyya is visualising a divorce between religion and politics, for his belief in the inter-relationship between religion and politics had already been made abundantly clear. It only shows Ibn Taymiyya's rejection of the Twelvers' concept of the imāmate and his belief that it is totally unfounded.

What is the imāmate, then, according to Ibn Taymiyya? To him, the imāmate is but kingship and authority (mulk wa-sultān). It is established by the agreement of the influential people who possess power; Ibn Taymiyya calls such people ahl al-shawka.² Ibn Taymiyya uses "ahl al-shawka" instead of ahl al-ḥall wa-al-'aqd. He does not give a precise definition of ahl al-shawka but from the

1. Ibid.

2. The word shawka originally means 'thorn' and it is used to signify a weapon; the phrase fulān dhū shawka means he is a possessor of a weapon, and has vehemence of might, strength or power; eventually it is used to signify influence and power. It is first used in this sense in the Qur'ān, VIII:7.

emphasis he puts on 'real power' (al-gudra al-hāṣila)¹ of ahl al-shawka one understands that he means by this group a stronger and more effective body than ahl al-hall wa-al-'aqd. Al-Ghazālī used this term before but again no precise definition is given by him. He uses shawka to mean power and influence and maintains that shawka gains strength by cooperation and solidarity and the increase in number of the followers. He further adds that shawka is only obtained by the agreement of the majority of the eminent people of the age (bi-muwāfaqat al-aktharīn min mu'tabarī kul zamān).² Both al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya regard ahl al-shawka to be instrumental in the establishment of the imāmate but they differ in some aspects as will be explained shortly.

Ibn Taymiyya supports the Sunnite view that whoever obtains power and authority by which he fulfils the purposes of the imāmate (maqāṣid al-imāma)³ will be among the holders of authority (ūlū al-amr) the obedience of whom Allah commanded unless they order disobedience to

1. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 142.

2. Al-Ghazālī, Faḍā'ih, p. 177.

3. Ibn Taymiyya includes in the purposes of the imāmate, the protection of the borders, distribution of wealth, administration of people's affairs, organisation of jihād, pilgrimage, Friday prayers. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 146.

Him.¹ Ibn Taymiyya argues that the purpose of the imāmate can only be realised by power and authority (qudra wa-sultān) which are possessed by ahl al-shawka. Therefore the support of ahl al-shawka is important for the fulfilment of the purposes of the imāmate. The same, Ibn Taymiyya argues, applies to kingship. No one can become king by the agreement of one or two or four unless the agreement of these involves the agreement of others who enable him to become king. Similarly all the institutions of imāra (army leadership), wilāya (governorship) and qaḍā' (judiciary) could not be established without power and authority.²

Ibn Taymiyya mentions two ways by which power and authority could be obtained. Either ahl al-shawka spontaneously render obedience to the one who aspires to take power, or if this obedience is withheld, then it could be procured upon seizure of power (by the new ruler) by qahr, suppression and oppression of ahl al-shawka.³ Ibn Taymiyya is firm and consistent in his demand for the support of ahl al-shawka even if this support is not given spontaneously.

Both al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya believe that the support of ahl al-shawka is indispensable for the

1. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 141.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 142.

establishment of the imāmate. But while al-Ghazālī thinks that the oath of allegiance by one possessor of shawka, who is obeyed and followed, is sufficient to establish the imāmate (because the agreement of this person means the agreement of the masses),¹ Ibn Taymiyya insists that the investiture must be made by the majority of ahl al-shawka and not by only one of them.² It is interesting that the two thinkers refer to the choice of Abū Bakr to illustrate their views. Al-Ghazālī holds that the imāmate of Abū Bakr was established the moment 'Umār swore allegiance to him (and not due to the allegiance of others) since 'Umār was capable of winning the agreement and the following of others.³ Ibn Taymiyya on the other hand thinks the opposite. To him Abū Bakr became imām because the majority of the Companions who possessed power swore allegiance to him and not due to 'Umār's action.⁴

Though the arguments by the two thinkers appear different, one finds on close examination that they lead to the same conclusion, that the support of ahl al-shawka (be it by one or many) is essential for the establishment

1. Al-Ghazālī, Faḍā'ih, p. 177.

2. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 142.

3. Al-Ghazālī, Faḍā'ih, p. 177.

4. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 142. More discussion of this point follows in the next chapter.

of the imāmate since it leads to the agreement and support of the masses.

It is in conformity with the above view that Ibn Taymiyya regards designation alone to be insufficient for the establishment of the imāmate and insists that it must be supported by ahl al-shawka.¹

Why does Ibn Taymiyya put great emphasis on power? Ibn Taymiyya maintains that true religion is established by the guiding Book and the helping sword (al-kitāb al-hādī wa-al-sayf al-nāsir). In other words power is necessary for the establishment of religion and the application of the sharī'a which is the main purpose behind all authorities, according to Ibn Taymiyya.² He quotes the Qur'ān to illustrate his view:

"Verily We sent Our messengers with clear proofs and revealed to them the scripture and the balance so that mankind may observe right measures and We sent down iron wherein is mighty power and uses for mankind and that Allah may know him who helps Him and His messenger though unseen - Allah is strong. Almighty..."³

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1. The discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's view on designation will be dealt with in the next chapter.
 2. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 142; al-Siyāsa, p. 24; al-Hisba, p. 2.
 3. Qur'ān, LVII:25.

Commenting on this verse Ibn Taymiyya says, "The Book is to explain Allah's commands and prohibitions; while the sword is to help and support them, whoever deviates from the Book is to be put right by the iron (faman 'adal 'an al-kitāb qūwima bi-al-ḥadīd).¹

Ibn Taymiyya's consistent emphasis on power is possibly dictated by the circumstances of his time; and as a pragmatic thinker he visualises the problem of political power from real experiences and historical lessons. During his time military power played an even more important role than usual in the political field. Powerful amīrs not only usurped power but literally jeopardised the stability of the state.² The struggle for power that took place shows that the victimised rulers did not enjoy enough support from the powerful and influential elements (ahl al-shawka, as Ibn Taymiyya calls them). Once the ahl al-shawka are alienated, they form a potential threat to the ruling power. In other words the support of ahl al-shawka minimises the instability of the state.

Another reason for Ibn Taymiyya's advocacy of the support of ahl al-shawka is that Syria had undergone foreign aggression, first from the Crusaders and then

1. See al-Siyāsa, p. 24.

2. See the section on the historical setting in chapter one.

from the Mongols which Ibn Taymiyya himself witnessed as has been explained in the previous chapter. The Mongol invasions are described as "the most brutal invasion in history"¹ and as a consequence of them the Muslim world suffered irrevocable harm. Thus in the view of Ibn Taymiyya, only a strong ruler who is backed by the powerful, eminent and influential people in his society would be capable of defending the Muslim lands, preserving their unity and providing a remedy for their ills.

Finally, an equally important reason for Ibn Taymiyya's stress on the importance of shawka is to invalidate the Twelver imāms' claim for the right to the imāmate. Ibn Taymiyya argues that the only factor behind the establishment of political authority is the support of ahl al-shawka which the imāms never enjoyed. Ibn Taymiyya refutes at great length the Twelvers' allegation that after the Prophet's death, Allah replaced the Prophet's mission (al-risāla) with the imāmate and appointed infallible imāms to lead the people so that His grace and mercy are never withheld.² He dismisses this allegation as false and argues that even according to the Twelvers themselves

1. Ibn al-Athīr, al-Kāmil, vol. XII, p. 234, also Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIII, p. 87.

2. For Ibn Taymiyya's full argument see Minhāj, vol. I, p. 32.

their imāms were oppressed, helpless and were unjustly treated. He adds that the Twelvers know that Allah has not granted their imāms any power or authority or responsibility or kingship (wilāyatan wa-lā mulkan).¹ In short they had never possessed political power or practised it. Caliph 'Alī was the only exception since he actually held power and is one of the rightly-guided caliphs.²

While refuting the Twelvers' theory of the imāmate, Ibn Taymiyya presents some important political views which reflect great insight. Among his major contributions to the development of medieval political thought of Islam is that he raises the question of the era of the Prophet. It is worth considering the fact that no great attention is given by early Muslim thinkers to the problem of political authority during the era of the Prophet. Theories and discussions of Islamic political thought have always been centred on the caliphate or imāmate. Though jurists and thinkers who wrote on these subjects resorted to the traditions of the Prophet to gain evidence to support their theories, they refrained from investigating the role of the Prophet himself in the field of politics. What is obvious,

1. Ibid.

2. But Ibn Taymiyya maintains that even the caliphate of 'Alī is not as perfect as the other rightly-guided caliphs because he did not enjoy similar support by ahl al-shawka; see Minhāj, vol. II, p. 134.

in fact natural, is for jurists and thinkers to deal with and examine first the era of the Prophet, the founder of the first Islamic state. The era of the Prophet is always regarded by Muslims as the ideal and perfect model; hence it ought to be the source of inspiration for all Islamic thought, including political thought. The fact that medieval thinkers did not take the era of the Prophet as the focus of the study of Islamic political thought shows that these medieval thinkers are reluctant to consider the Prophet as a ruler.

The question whether the Prophet was a ruler or not is not in itself a new one. For as early as the lifetime of the Prophet himself this question was raised. Ibn Hishām in his Sīra of the Prophet narrated a small incident which shows this. Before the capture of Mecca, Abū Sufyān was taken by surprise to see the Muslim army and he addressed al-‘Abbās, the Prophet's uncle saying: "The reign of your nephew has become great..." but al-‘Abbas corrected him, "Oh Abū Sufyān! it is the prophet-hood..."¹

Thus the issue is an old one, but what is new is its discussion by medieval jurists as the basis or source of

1. See Ibn Hishām, al-Sīra, vol. II, p. 404. For further discussion of this point see H.Y. al-Malāḥ, "The Government System of the Prophet Muḥammad", Ph.D. thesis, University of St. Andrews, 1971.

Islamic political thought.¹ Ibn Taymiyya seems to be one of the very few to deal with the era of the Prophet in this respect, though his discussion of it is brief and because of its polemic nature,² it shows his tendency to regard the era of the Prophet as only 'prophethood' nubūwwa as opposed to kingship, mulk. Nevertheless, it is significant that he raises this whole topic at all within the context of his treatment of the question of political authority.

He starts by putting forward a general argument that religion should not be misunderstood as a kind of politics and that prophethood should not be regarded as a just polity designed to serve temporal interests. He explains that the confusion people make between prophethood and polity is a result of ignorance, misconception of the reality of prophethood and the attachment of

1. The question of whether the Prophet is a ruler is discussed by modern thinkers like 'Alī 'Abd al-Rāziq in his book al-Islām wa-Uṣūl al-Ḥukm, Cairo, 1344 and by W.M. Watt in his book Muḥammad : Prophet and Statesman, Oxford, 1960.
2. Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of this point is highly polemical because it is directed against the Twelvers' claim for the divine hereditary right of the imāmate. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 3.

forgeries to it.¹ Ibn Taymiyya then moves on to give more specific differences between prophethood and polity.

According to him, the first and foremost difference between the Prophet and a king is that the Prophet is specially selected; he is chosen by Allah; he is neither elected by the people nor nominated or designated to the office by anyone nor did he inherit it from someone else.²

The purpose of prophethood, Ibn Taymiyya argues, is also different from mere kingship. Prophethood is primarily concerned with preaching the Oneness of Allah, and with the abolition of idol worship to deliver man from enslavement to that which he himself has created; and to establish proper communion between man and Allah and to guide people to the life of justice, wisdom and worship.³ Such a mission is therefore by no means restricted to polity or to merely temporal affairs.⁴

Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya holds that obedience to the Prophet is different in nature from the obedience due to the holders of political authority. He argues that

1. Ibn Taymiyya accuses the Bāṭiniyya and other Shī'ite sects of confusing prophethood with polity. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 3.

2. Ibid., p. 18.

3. For full discussion of the definition and purpose of prophethood see Ibn Taymiyya's Kitāb al-Nubūwāt, pp. 160-172.

4. Minhāj, vol. I, pp. 19-20.

the Qur'ānic verse,

"Obey Allah, obey the messenger and those who hold authority among you.... and if you differ in something refer to Allah and His messenger..."¹

restricts the obedience of rulers to the matters that conform with Allah's commands only. It also enjoins the people to refer, when they differ, to Allah and His messenger only, not to the holders of political authority.²

In contrast, Ibn Taymiyya explains, obedience to the Prophet is permanent, obligatory and binding on all people and at all times, during the Prophet's life as well as after his death. It is an obedience to all the matters which the Prophet specifically mentioned as well as to similar issues which may occur under the same categories at any time. This obedience to the Prophet is therefore in essence an obedience to Allah which is the cause of happiness and eternity in heaven; and as such it is different from the obedience rendered to ordinary rulers. It is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya is discussing moral obedience to prophethood which is no doubt different

1. Qur'ān, IV:59.

2. Ibn Taymiyya differentiates between absolute obedience to the Prophet and restricted obedience to rulers. See Minhāj, vol. I, pp. 18-20, also vol. II, p. 88.

from obedience to the political leaders. Ibn Taymiyya, however, is aware of the fact that towards the end of the Prophet's era, obedience to the Prophet grew wider and it was not mere moral obedience. As his power, influence and support became greater, obedience to him became both political as well as moral. But even such power and obedience do not make the Prophet a ruler according to Ibn Taymiyya, they only increased his obligations.¹

As for the functions and obligations performed by the Prophet, Ibn Taymiyya insists that they all come within the boundaries of his prophethood. He argues that the Prophet's adjudication between people, his enforcement of capital punishments, and his formation of armies... all these are inscribed in his prophethood and are not external to it.² He even rejects the view that such functions and obligations imply an imāmate embodied in prophethood. For, to him prophethood is by itself sufficient and capable of incorporating all functions, since the mission of the Prophet covers the purposes of the imāmate and exceeds them.³ It is thus obvious that Ibn Taymiyya rejects the idea of calling the Prophet imām even though he does not deny his

1. See Minhāj, vol. I, pp. 18-20.

2. Ibid., p. 19.

3. Ibid., p. 20.

political role.¹

The last argument which Ibn Taymiyya makes in distinction between prophethood and kingship is the succession to the era of the Prophet. The era of the Prophet, he maintains, is a perfect example of prophethood, characterised by piety, zeal and reverence to Allah. It is uncontaminated by lust for power or wealth or the concern for hereditary succession which are the characteristics of kingship.² This is shown, he explains, by the fact that the immediate succession to the Prophet

1. Ibn Taymiyya is certainly encouraged in this stand by the Prophet's tradition which says, "I have been given the choice to be sent as a prophet and king or as a servant and Messenger of Allah and I chose to be the servant and Messenger of Allah...."

Ibn Taymiyya thus differentiates between the Prophet Muḥammad who is only a messenger of Allah and other prophets like Solomon who were both prophets and kings. But according to al-Ṭabarī the Prophet Muḥammad, like Solomon and David had the task of governing the people and settling their disputes and not simply conveying the religious mission to them. See, Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, interpretation of the Qur'ānic verse XXX:VIII in vol. 23, p. 135.

2. See the full discussion in Minhāj, vol. II, pp. 160-165.

passed to none of his relatives. This seems to be the main purpose behind all Ibn Taymiyya's arguments of prophethood versus kingship. He wants to prove that since prophethood is different in almost all aspects from kingship, the succession to the Prophet must also be different from that of the kingship and therefore the Shī'ites' claim that the succession of the Prophet should go to 'Alī and his descendants is unfounded.¹

The last argument, if examined carefully, shows that Ibn Taymiyya implies that the Prophet had actually played the role of the ruler because the one who succeeded the Prophet did not succeed him as prophet but as the head of the community and its ruler.² The inference is that Ibn Taymiyya is not particularly keen to deny the political role of the Prophet. What seems to be an inconsistency and weakness in his arguments is due to his polemical refutation of the Shī'ite claim of the right of hereditary succession of the imāmate.

1. See Minhāj, vol. IV, pp. 124-25.

2. Ibn Taymiyya explains that as far as the Prophet's religious teaching is concerned, it does not need an imām to explain it. He explains that after the death of the Prophet, people ought not to learn their religion from imāms, but that the whole community including the imāms should learn directly from the Qur'ān and the sunna. See Minhāj, vol. III, p. 116.

Ibn Taymiyya examines the political authority after the Prophet. To him the era of the four rightly-guided caliphs is an ideal one. He associates it with the era of the Prophet and calls it prophetic succession (khilāfat al-nubuwwa).¹ In doing so he relies heavily on a number of traditions which restrict khilāfat al-nubuwwa to the first four caliphs and limits its period to thirty years. The most famous of these traditions says, "The prophetic succession is for thirty years then it becomes dominion (mulk)."² Another tradition says, "Follow my sunna and the sunna of the rightly-guided caliphs."³ Ibn Taymiyya also quotes several other traditions which indicate the order of succession of these four rightly-guided caliphs.³ He treats these traditions seriously and accordingly draws a line between the era of the first four caliphs which he calls khilāfat al-nubuwwa and what follows it which he terms mulk. But apart from the reference he makes to these traditions, he offers no explanation of the differences between khilāfat al-nubuwwa and mulk. However, one can infer from his discussion some differences between the two era.

First, he explains that the achievements made during

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1. See Minhāj, vol. IV, p. 113; vol. I, pp. 134-35; vol. III, p. 162.
 2. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, (bāb al-A'imma).
 3. Minhāj, vol. I, pp. 134, 138.

the time of the four rightly-guided caliphs are greater and more motivated by the service of Islam than those made under the other caliphs. Second, he believes that the four rightly-guided caliphs possessed a combination of personal qualities which were superior to the qualities possessed by the other caliphs and this is reflected in the performance and the achievements of both.¹ Finally, succession during the era of the rightly-guided caliphs was not made on hereditary basis, and it is obvious from Ibn Taymiyya's previous discussion of prophethood, that he regards hereditary succession as a symptom of kingship. The fact that succession became hereditary after the four rightly-guided caliphs confirms Ibn Taymiyya's belief that the prophetic succession was replaced by kingship.

As has been mentioned before, Ibn Taymiyya does regard the era of the four rightly-guided caliphs as a real manifestation of the Islamic pattern and an ideal political system. But strangely enough he never advocates the permanence of a single caliphate that rules the whole Muslim territory as is exemplified in the rule of these four caliphs. This attitude is unexpected in a thinker like Ibn Taymiyya in whose understanding of religion, the precedents of the early Companions of the Prophet come next to the primary sources of the sharī'a. For

1. Ibid., vol. II, p. 135 and vol. IV, p. 113.

his doctrine is always the adherence to the path of the salaf and in particular that of the four caliphs. As a matter of fact, all through his discussion of political authority Ibn Taymiyya refers to the precedents of the four rightly-guided caliphs and recommends the following of their example in administering Muslim affairs. But he has completely overlooked the question of the caliphate as an institution to be continued in the form it existed during the period of the rightly-guided caliphs.

A possible interpretation for Ibn Taymiyya's disregard of the question of the caliphate is that he witnessed the further fragmentation of the Muslim world and its exposure to external aggression which culminated in the fall of the capital of the caliphate and the Mongol take-over of the eastern Islamic world. This demonstrated to Ibn Taymiyya the difficulty and hazard of administering the whole Muslim territory by a single government. Ibn Taymiyya's neglect of the caliphate is thus justified bearing in mind that by his time the caliph generally exercised no real power at all, he was merely a nominal head of the community while effective power remained in the hands of the sultāns and amīrs. Thus, rule by one strong and powerful head over the whole Muslim community had long since ceased to exist.

Ibn Taymiyya is, moreover, encouraged in his tendency to ignore the issue of the single caliphate by the absence of a text which restricts the number of the governments in the Muslim community. He maintains that the Qur'ānic

verse which enjoins obedience to the rulers:

"Obey Allah, obey the Messenger and those who hold authority among you..."¹

does not limit the number of rulers to whom obedience should be owed.²

As a matter of fact, Ibn Taymiyya argues in favour of the idea of more than one imām and consequently more than one state, even in the earliest period of the caliphate; and before the end of the thirty years of prophetic succession. He holds the view that if 'Alī and Mu'āwya had established two governments it would have been better than fighting; he says,

"If, instead of fighting, 'Alī had ruled his subjects and Mu'āwya had ruled his, it would not have caused more damage than that which resulted from their fight..."³

1. Qur'ān, IV:59.

2. Minhāj, vol. II, p. 85. Ibn Taymiyya also quotes a number of traditions on the imāmate and argues that none of the traditions restricts the number of the imāms.

3. Ibn Taymiyya says this in his refutation of the Twelvers' claim that 'Alī was the lawful imām and that his imāmate was confirmed by text naṣṣ. See Minhāj, vol. II, p. 223.

Elsewhere he says,

"Those who allow the existence of two caliphs at a time regard both 'Alī and Mu'āwya as prophetic successors (khulafā' nubuwwa)."¹

Therefore, to him there could be as many rulers (and consequently as many governments) as necessity requires. This is a clear deviation from the classical view of the universal caliphate which seems unparalleled among other medieval thinkers. For all thinkers hold the view that there should be only one imām at a time, who presides over the affairs of the Muslim community.

Some thinkers even go as far as to declare the existence of more than one imām as fatal to the Muslim community. Al-Baghdādī argues that if two imāms are accepted as permissible, then this opens the door for anyone who is fit for the imāmate to aspire to be an imām in his locality or in the area of his relatives and this leads to the invalidation of the obligation of the imāmate altogether.² Ibn Ḥazm raises the same argument as that of al-Baghdādī and adds that the consequence of having too many imāms is discord and conflict which lead

1. Ibid.

2. See al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, pp. 274-5.

to the destruction of both religion and the world.¹

It is here that Ibn Taymiyya departs from al-Baghdādī, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Māwardī, al-Ghazālī and other earlier jurists, who believe that there should be one caliphate at a time headed by one imām. Ibn Taymiyya refutes the obligation of having only one caliphate but does not make explicit what alternative form of government he visualises. He avoids using the terms caliphate or imāmate and replaces them by the term "wilāya" which he applies to government as well as to an office. He devotes little attention to the form of government; his main concern is with the application of the sharī'a. Thus his role in this respect is that of a reformer who introduces reform according to sharī'a rather than that of a revivalist who aims at re-establishing the caliphate system in its totality. This concern for the application of the sharī'a is compatible with Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of the purpose of government. The purpose of all wilāyāt (and for that matter the purpose of the whole world) is to serve religion and worship Allah.² The

1. Ibn Ḥazm justifies his view with two verses from the Qur'ān, III:105 and VIII:46, and argues that Allah forbids dissension and quarrel; and the existence of more than one imām certainly leads to this. See al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 88.

2. See al-Siyasā, p. 22.

wilāyāt must create the suitable atmosphere for the performance of religious duties and must make sure that the sharī'a prevails. Once he makes this clear, he devotes little attention to the discussion of the form or structure of the government (wilāya).

Wilāya to Ibn Taymiyya is a kind of trust (amāna). He derives this meaning from the verse:

"Verily Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and if you judge between people to judge between them with equity..."¹

Ibn Taymiyya argues that this verse is addressing the holders of authority, wulāt al-umūr. They have been ordered to give trusts to those who are entitled to them and to adjudicate between people with justice. Trusts according to Ibn Taymiyya comprise two main things: administrative responsibilities and economic affairs (wilayāt wa-amwāl). The fulfilment of these two, Ibn Taymiyya explains, besides the fair adjudication between people, is the essence of good government and just polity.²

He also provides other examples regarding wilāya as a trust (amāna). He mentions the Prophet's tradition in which he addressed Abū Dharr about the imāra:

"It is a trust (amāna) and on the Day of Judgement

1. Qur'ān, IV:58.

2. Al-Siyāsa, p. 3.

it would be a shame and disgrace except for those who fulfil its duties..."¹

According to another tradition:

"When the amāna is wasted (ḍuiyy'at) then wait for the Day of Judgement (al-sā'a). When the Prophet was asked, 'how is the amāna wasted?' he answered, 'when the government (al-amr) is entrusted to the unqualified, the unworthy.'"²

Ibn Taymiyya does not go any further in discussing the form of the government he conceives. All his concern is with the application of the sharī'a. Ibn Taymiyya's attitude is in fact well-justified if the absence in the sharī'a of a specific form of government is to be understood as a flexibility on the part of the lawgiver to make possible the application of the Islamic principles of government at all times and circumstances. The scant attention he gives to the discussion of the theory of the caliphate is an indication of his disapproval of restricting the government to a particular form. The title of his book al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iyya fī Islāh al-Rā'i wa-al-Ra'iyya shows that he does not intend to reconstruct a new form of government or even to recommend one. He simply aims at reforming the existing one according to

1. See Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, (bāb al-imāra).

2. Ibid. Both traditions quoted by Ibn Taymiyya in al-Siyāsa, p. 9.

the sharī'a. He also shows great concern with the society on which the rule of the sharī'a can prevail.

The implications of Ibn Taymiyya's concepts of society and the umma are enormous and to grasp them fully one would need to devote a special study to the subject. For the purpose of this discussion, however, brief remarks will be made with the objective of throwing light on the kind of society he visualises as suiting the government of the sharī'a.

Ibn Taymiyya builds a dynamic concept of society, the transcendental form of which is the umma. The umma, Ibn Taymiyya holds, is not simply a community in being, whatever the common factors may be, nor one in intent and feeling, but it is a community of act.¹ The common factors which form the identity of the community in the view of most Muslim thinkers, cannot provide the justification of the community according to Ibn Taymiyya. The justification of the community must be sought in terms of value. In other words, faith must be understood as implying a commitment and self-engagement in realising the ends. Instead of a community built on faith and common identity only, Ibn Taymiyya promotes it to a dynamic community striving to attain the same ends and destiny. It is a community that transcends geographical or historical considerations. Thus the society founded

1. See al-Fārūqī, 'Urūba and Religion, pp. 244-51.

on this umma is both dynamic and ubiquitous.¹

This community of ends, destiny and action implies that one should transcend one's self to engage in the affairs of man and of the world in general to change things for the best. It is an obligation on each person to act according to his capacity to achieve the same end.² Personal limitation through impaired capability is provided for. The Prophet says:

"If you notice an evil change it with your hand, if you cannot, then with your due advice; and if you cannot, then with your heart, but that is the weakest faith..."³ Ibn Taymiyya holds every member of the community personally responsible, within his capacity and sphere of influence, for all the other members as well as for the community as a whole. The Prophet says when all members of the community are aware of their responsibility and perform their duty by "... love, compassion and sympathy with each other, they resemble a single body; when one of its organs suffers, the whole body is affected and responds to this suffering with fever and insomnia."⁴

1. Ibid., p. 246.

2. See al-Amr bi-al-Ma'ruf, p. 15. See also M.R.K. p. 312.

3. Ibid. The tradition reported in Muslim, Ṣiḥāḥ (bāb al-imān).

4. The tradition is reported in Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ (bāb al-adab).

The Prophet also said:

"A member of the community is to another as a part of a mutually reinforced construction is to another; each one supporting the other..."¹

Moreover, the Qur'ān emphasised the solidarity of faith and the fraternity of the members of the community in several verses among which:

"O you who believe, take not the Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends of one another. He of you who takes them for friends is one of them. Allah guides not the unjust people..."²

"Only Allah is your friend and His Messenger and those who believe, those who establish prayer, pay the zakat and bow down to Him..."³

"The believers are brothers, so make peace among your brothers, and keep your duty to Allah that mercy may come to you..."⁴

Having this society Ibn Taymiyya expects the government

1. Tradition reported in Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ (bāb al-adab).

2. Qur'ān, V:51.

3. Ibid., V:55.

4. Ibid., XLIX:10. Ibn Taymiyya cites other verses in favour of the solidarity and brotherhood of the Muslims, see M.R.K., p. 312.

based on the sharī'a to function. Though he does not give details of the form of the government he visualises, he makes it clear that it must be just, equitable ('ādila); because only just governments persist; he quotes the sayings:

"Allah helps the just state even if its people are infidels and He does not help the unjust state even if its people are believers..."¹

Another saying runs as follows:

"The world perpetuates (al-dunīyā tadūm) with justice and infidelity and does not perpetuate with injustice and belief..."²

It is thus obvious that Ibn Taymiyya accepts the existence of more than one state. It is also noticed that he advocates a very high degree of cooperation between the subjects and rulers, and even more between the whole Muslim community at large, with the purpose of protecting the Muslim territory and defending its faith. Thus it is possible that Ibn Taymiyya may have conceived the ideal Muslim community as a confederation of states.³ This

1. See al-Hisba, p. 81.

2. Ibid.

3. Laoust seems to have reached a similar deduction but does not elaborate on the principles of brotherhood and solidarity on which the whole concept of confederation rests. See Laoust, Essai, p. 258.

would mean that the politically independent states based on and guided by the sharī'a and tied together by religious unity, brotherhood and solidarity, would act as essentially part of a whole.

This stand of Ibn Taymiyya is dictated by the historical reality of the Muslim world for centuries before Ibn Taymiyya's time and ever since. The Muslim world could no longer be united under the banner of one caliphate; and a confederation may possibly prove to be more conducive to the achieving of this unity. It is worth mentioning that the theory of confederation is not developed further by medieval Muslim thinkers who succeeded Ibn Taymiyya. For even Ibn Khaldūn concentrates his analytical study of government on the caliphate just like other thinkers before him.¹

The influence of Ibn Taymiyya's views in this matter was felt several centuries later in the writings of modern reformists like Muḥammad 'Abduh who maintains that political reform is inherent in the nature of Islam; and that early Muslims adopted institutions and methods that fitted their time and circumstances; and since Islam is a timeless religion, so it must allow for various forms to fulfil the true aims of its principles.² In other words, there is no obligation to stick to the one particular form of government (caliphate) adopted earlier.

1. See Ibn Khaldūn's theory of khilāfa, Muqaddima, p. 190.

2. See Rashīd Riḍa, Tarīkh al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh, vol. II, p. 200.

CHAPTER III

IBN TAYMIYYA'S CONCEPT OF THE RULER

Ibn Taymiyya puts great emphasis on the ruler. But before embarking on a discussion of the ruler's qualifications and selection, he emphasises the necessity of having one. He argues that the Prophet urged the appointment of a leader in a small society as an indication of the absolute importance of leadership in large societies.¹ Like most Sunnites he prefers a despotic ruler to not having a ruler at all, as will be fully explained later.

The reason for Ibn Taymiyya's genuine concern for the ruler is because he believes the ruler reflects his society and is to a great extent responsible for its behaviour. He expresses this view several times. He says:

"If the rulers are good, the people will be good; and if they are corrupt then the people will also be (duly) corrupt."² He repeats the same meaning in another book,

"... when such rulers are good, people are also good..."³

1. See the full discussion in chapter two.

2. See al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf, p. 68; al-Hisba, p. 104.

3. Al-Siyāsa, p. 170.

It is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya attributes the decline and deterioration of the Islamic world in his time to the weakness and corruption of the ruler. Hence he considers the reform of the ruler as a fundamental step towards reforming society. The question of who the rulers are is important because it helps to comprehend Ibn Taymiyya's attitude in dealing with their qualifications and functions. All jurists consider rulers to be the masters of affairs (Ulu' al-amr) mentioned in the Qur'ānic verse¹ and obedience of whom is enjoined on the Muslims. Ibn Taymiyya's definition of Ulu' al-amr is not different from that of most Sunnites. He says:

"They are the masters of authority who order the people and forbid them. They include those with power and authority (al-qudra wa-al-sultān) and the people of knowledge and opinion (ahl al-'ilm wa-al-kalām). Thus Ulu' al-amr are two categories: princes and scholars (al-umarā' wa-al-'ulamā') who include kings and shaykhs (scholars)."²

It is difficult to tell from the above definition whether he means that the umarā' and the 'ulamā' should jointly administer political authority. One does come across some ambiguous statements by Ibn Taymiyya, which seem to indicate the concept of combined authority such as, "... in all other wilāyāt, if the maṣlaḥa cannot be

1. Qur'ān, IV:59.

2. See al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf, p. 68; al-Hisba, p. 104.

achieved by one person a group of persons should be appointed..."¹ Laoust seems to have gleaned the impression that Ibn Taymiyya means the combined authority of the 'ulamā' and the umarā' and hence comments that "in Ibn Taymiyya's thought the sovereignty is diffused."²

However, Ibn Taymiyya's statements quoted above are not sufficient ground on which to base the view that he advocates a diffused sovereignty. It seems that for Ibn Taymiyya the ideal Ulū al-amr are not two groups but people in whom the qualifications of the two are combined. At least once he expresses this view:

"Ulū al-amr have been interpreted as people who possess real power like army commanders; and they have also been interpreted as learned, knowledgeable, religious people. Both interpretations are correct. The qualities of these two were perfectly combined in the four rightly-guided caliphs. They were perfect in knowledge, justice, policy making and holding of authority even though some of them were more perfect than others..."³

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 18.

2. Laoust, Essai, p. 202.

3. See Minhāj, vol. II, p. 135. Ibn Taymiyya explains that Abū Bakr and 'Umar were more perfect than 'Uthmān and 'Alī; and that after these four such qualities were never perfectly combined in any other caliph apart from 'Umār b. 'Abd al-'Azīz.

But as will be clear later, this ideal does not normally occur, according to Ibn Taymiyya's own judgement, and he is more concerned with offering practical solutions to the existing problems. However, it is not easy to say with certainty what relationship Ibn Taymiyya visualises with regard to the two components of Ulū al-amr (the umarā' and 'ulamā').

Looking at the problem from a different perspective, one gets the impression that Ibn Taymiyya is advocating more authority for the 'ulamā' and attempting to win the power of veto for them. But rather than a veto which deals with legislation, it is a veto that deals with scrutinizing administrative laws to ensure their conformity with the sharī'a, and to see to it that the sharī'a itself is applied. Thus the authority Ibn Taymiyya seeks for the 'ulamā' is instructive and supervisory in nature as opposed to legislative or administrative power. What supports this view is the fact that Ibn Taymiyya does not require the ruler to possess the quality of ijtihād (independent judgement) and accepts his taqlīd (imitating or following the opinion of other jurists).¹

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya's own experience of rejecting the posts offered to him by the Mamlūk authorities while he continued to advise the Mamlūk rulers and issue legal opinions (fatāwa), illustrates further his intention that

1. See al-Siyāsa, p. 19.

the authority he pleads for the 'ulamā' is the authority as consultants of trustworthy information and reliable opinion; not authority in the sense of wielding real administrative power.¹

So much for the relationship between the 'ulamā' and umarā'. Let us consider Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the ruler's qualifications, the conditions and methods of his selection. The qualifications of the ruler are thoroughly discussed and developed by most theorists. The tendency among early jurists is to draw a long list of moral, intellectual and physical qualifications to be fulfilled by the holder of the office.² According to al-Ghazālī the qualifications must be supported by a nass or must be derived from the great necessity and interest (maṣlaḥa) of the people.³

There is considerable agreement among medieval jurists on the qualifications and conditions of the ruler. The majority of the 'ulamā' agree at least on what al-Ghazālī classified as the natural, unacquired qualities (khalqīyya lā tuktasab). These are: maturity, mental sanity ('aql),

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1. See chapter I for his relationship with the Mamluks.
 2. See M.R. 'Uthmān, Riyāsat al-Dawla fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī. He discusses the qualifications of the imām as presented by medieval theorists in over a hundred pages - from 119 to 221.
 3. See al-Ghazālī, Faḍā'ih, p. 191.

freedom (non-slave), male, Qurashite lineage and soundness of physical organs.¹ The acquired qualities are courage, competence (kifāya), knowledge and piety (wara'). With the exception of the last stipulation (wara') which al-Ghazālī puts instead of 'adāla (probity or justice), these qualities are similar to those presented by al-Māwardī and al-Baghdādī before him.² As a matter of fact most of the Sunnite jurists who wrote on this subject later repeated the same qualifications.³ The qualifications required by the Shī'ites and Khārijites differ in some major aspects from those of the Sunnite jurists. The Shī'ites require the infallibility of their imām and they accept the imāmate of a child.⁴ The Khārijites on the other hand over-emphasise the qualities of probity and justice and they

1. Ibid.

2. Al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām, pp. 4, 5; al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl, pp. 275-77.

3. Ibn Ḥazm conforms to these qualifications except for the soundness of physical organs. He says, there is no harm in electing the blind, dumb, or the limbless or someone with any other physical defects as long as he possesses the other qualifications. He argues that there is no nass from the Qur'ān, sunna, ijmā' to forbid this. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 167.

4. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 110.

reject the conditions of freedom (hūriyya) and the Qurashite lineage by accepting the imāmate of the slave and the non-Qurashite.¹

However, general agreement of Sunnite jurists on the ruler's qualifications is further hampered by the degree of emphasis they placed on each of these qualities. This is clearly shown in Ibn Taymiyya's peculiar exposition of this question. To start with, Ibn Taymiyya does not draw up a list of qualifications which are to be fulfilled by the ruler. His requirements are modest and they reflect his pragmatism in dealing with this problem. But one should also remember that part of his discussion is written in refutation of the Shī'ites' concept of the infallible imām (and therefore it is bound to be sceptical of attributing too many qualities to the ruler.)

As mentioned earlier, maṣlaḥa as a theme plays a decisive role in Ibn Taymiyya's political discussions. This is clearly manifested in his handling the question of the qualifications of the ruler. The qualification of the ruler (and indeed of every official) should be laid

1. See Shahrastānī, al-Milal, on the margin of Ibn Ḥazm's al-Fiṣal, vol. I, p. 158. More details of the Shī'ites' and the Khārijites' theories on the ruler will be given in the course of the discussion.

down to serve the maṣlaḥa.¹ At the time of electing the ruler, priority must be given to the candidate who possesses the qualifications needed to serve the urgent needs and interests of the community. Thus if the community is facing foreign aggression, a strong and courageous ruler should be appointed to defend the community and protect its territory. On the other hand, if the community is suffering from social injustice, malaise and corruption, a pious and just ruler is to be appointed. The same criterion must be applied in the selection of all employees in the different offices of the government.²

Al-Māwardī used maṣlaḥa before in connection with the selection of the ruler; but whereas he resorts to maṣlaḥa in cases of preference between equally qualified candidates only, Ibn Taymiyya suggests that selection should always be based primarily on maṣlaḥa.³ This

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1. See the first four chapters of al-Siyāsa where maṣlaḥa is strongly linked with the election and selection of the ruler and employees.
 2. Al-Siyāsa, pp. 18, 19.
 3. Ibn Taymiyya provides several examples of the Prophet's and the four rightly-guided caliphs' policies of appointing their employees according to the maṣlaḥa of the community even though there were more virtuous men than those appointed. These examples will be cited in the course of the discussion of the qualifications of the ruler.

emphasis on maṣlaḥa by Ibn Taymiyya arises from his belief that the function of the ruler is to serve people's interests and he goes even further to say that the whole sharī'a is revealed to fulfil people's maṣāliḥ and reduce any harm or damage to them.¹

What induced Ibn Taymiyya to champion the idea of selection of the ruler and officials according to maṣlaḥa is his awareness of the difficulty of finding a ruler (or a wāḥid) who satisfies all the requirements described earlier. Nevertheless, there are qualities whose possession by the ruler as well as by officials Ibn Taymiyya regards preferable.²

1. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 147.

2. In discussing the qualities required, Ibn Taymiyya recommends them in every holder of office (wilāya). He refers to the official as wāḥid and sometimes uses (al-mutawāḥid al-kabīr) to refer to the ruler. The qualities discussed here are meant to apply to the ruler as well as his employees. Other requirements which are necessary for the election of the ruler only will be discussed under 'conditions of the ruler'.

The Qualities of the Ruler:

The first qualities discussed by Ibn Taymiyya are what he calls the pillars of the wilāya (arkān al-wilāya). These are power and trust (al-qūwwa wa-al-amāna).¹ As is always the case with Ibn Taymiyya, he prefers to present what he considers to be the truth in terms of the Qur'ān, the traditions of the Prophet and the precedents of the Companions. He derives the qualities of qūwwa and amāna from the Qur'ānic verses:

"One of the two women said: O my father! hire him! for the best (man) that you can hire is the strong, the trustworthy."²

"That this is in truth the word of an honoured messenger, Mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne; (one) to be obeyed, and trustworthy."³

"And when he had talked with him he said: Lo! Thou art today in our presence established and trusted."⁴

Ibn Taymiyya cites these verses to vouch for the truth of his assertion of the importance of these two qualities. In explaining these two qualities, Ibn Taymiyya shows that

1. See al-Siyāsa, p. 12.

2. Qur'ān, XXVIII:26.

3. Ibid., LXXXI:19, 20, 21.

4. Ibid., XII:54.

qūwwa can carry several meanings. Qūwwa in war refers to courage, and the knowledge of the techniques of fighting.¹ Qūwwa in adjudication between people refers to the knowledge and understanding of what is meant by justice in the Qur'ān and sunna; and it also refers to the ability to execute judicial laws.² It is thus obvious that Ibn Taymiyya's concern is with moral courage as he explicitly stated elsewhere.³

This same meaning of moral courage is expressed earlier by Ibn Ḥazm who insists that the ruler must be morally courageous (shujā' al-nafs). He argues that levity and weakness debar one from becoming a ruler; and he quotes a Qur'ānic verse and a tradition in support of his view.⁴ Al-Ghazālī's discussion of this quality is

1. See al-Siyāsa, p. 12.

2. Ibid., p. 13.

3. Ibn Taymiyya explains that courage (which is implied in his stipulation of qūwwa) does not mean bodily strength, but the strength of heart, in other words, *moral* courage. See al-Ḥisba, p. 93; al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf, p. 55.

4. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣāl, p. 166. He quotes the Qur'ān II:282 to show that if a person is weak or of low understanding he cannot be in charge of the Muslims' affairs. He also quotes the tradition in which the Prophet forbade Abū Dharr, a pious Companion, from seeking the leadership or responsibility of the wilāya, because he was weak.

fuller than both that of Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Taymiyya. He considers it the first of the acquired qualities and calls it najda.¹ He explains that najda does not simply mean courage; it also indicates the possession of a strong and well-equipped army and a large number of followers. It likewise means the ability to fight the infidels and suppress and crush dissension and aggression; the imām, according to al-Ghazālī, may plan and organise all these but it is not necessary that he takes part in the fighting itself.² Al-Ghazālī certainly has in mind the example of al-Mustāẓhir during whose rule real power was in the hands of the Seljuq amīrs.³

Despite his emphasis on the importance of qūwwa, Ibn Taymiyya makes it clear that moderation is necessary

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1. Najda from najada, to overcome or prevail over; the dictionary meaning of najda is courage, vigour, fight, aid; a meaning well represented in al-Ghazālī's exposition.
 2. See Faḍā'ih, pp. 182-84.
 3. Al-Mustāẓhir is the 'Abbāsīd caliph (born 470/1078) and acclaimed caliph in 487/1094. He ruled for twenty four years, until his death in 512/1118. Real power during his rule was in the hands of the Seljuqs who defended his authority against the claim of the Faṭimid caliph al-Mustanṣir bi-Allah supported by the Bāṭiniyya. Al-Ghazālī's elaboration on the qualities of the imām is no doubt intended to highlight the status of al-Mustāẓhir against his rival.

to avoid austerity. He gives the example of the Prophet, the perfect model of the just leader. Though the Prophet is the courageous fighter (al-Qattāl) he is also the smiling and the gentle one (al-daḥūk). He is the prophet of mercy and battles (nabī al-rahma, nabī al-maḥama) as he described himself.¹ The umma founded by the Prophet shares similar characteristics. It is portrayed in the Qur'ān as

"... humble toward believers, stern toward disbelievers..."²

and

"... hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves..."³

The Prophet employed Abū Bakr who was lenient and 'Umār who was firm as his chief deputies and agents, with whose cooperation the just and upright state was established.

In the prophetic succession (khilāfat al-nubuwwa) such a synthesis was also observed, particularly by the first two caliphs. Abū Bakr, being lenient, employed 'Umar as his chief agent and constantly consulted him; he also employed Khālīd as one of his deputies. Thus Abū Bakr's rule emerged as exemplary and his achievements were great. Especially noteworthy was his fighting and

1. See Minhāj, vol. III, p. 162.

2. Qur'ān, V:54.

3. Ibid., XLVIII:29.

suppressing of apostates in which he displayed remarkable resolution and firmness.¹ Likewise, when 'Umar became caliph, because he was firm, he chose as his agents lenient men like Abū 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrāḥ and Sa'ad b. Abī Waqqāṣ and thus combined in his rule firmness and leniency.

Ibn Taymiyya's intention in this seems to be to achieve moderation by synthesising different characteristics; he says,

".... Firmness (shidda) by itself damages (tafsid) and leniency (līn) by itself also damages. Therefore one must mix both (yakhlut) in order to adjust one's affairs (ya'tadil amruh).²

The second quality is that of amāna (trust). Ibn Taymiyya uses the word amāna in an abstract sense³ to mean honesty, truthfulness and sincerity which is shown by the fear of Allah (as opposed to the fear of man), and the close observation of His commands. This meaning, Ibn Taymiyya derives from the Qur'ānic verse:

".... So fear not mankind, but fear Me. And barter not My revelations for a little gain. Whoso judges not

1. Minhāj, vol. III, p. 162.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibn Taymiyya also uses the word in a concrete sense to mean wilāya as discussed earlier. See chapter II.

by that which Allah has revealed, such are the disbelievers."¹

Amāna to Ibn Taymiyya means righteousness, piety and probity.

Thinkers are unanimous in their demand of this quality, even though they use different terminology to refer to it. Al-

Baghdādī for example uses both words, 'adāla'² and wara''³.

He explains that the imām must possess at least as much of this quality as would qualify one to be a credible

witness.⁴ Al-Māwardī, likewise, uses the word 'adāla

which he defines broadly to include honesty, chastity,

abstemiousness, incorruptibility, self-restraint and

truthfulness.⁵ The same meaning is expressed later by

Ibn Ḥazm who requires the imām to be "forward in his

affairs, aware of his religious obligations, God-fearing

and unproclaiming of corruptions."⁶ Perhaps the most

elaborate exposition of this quality is made by al-Ghazālī.

Like al-Baghdādī he calls it wara' and describes it as

the most prominent, the most deserving and estimable

quality. He argues that it is a personal quality which

1. Qur'ān, V:44.

2. 'Adāla covers a wide range of meanings all connected with uprightness and moderation.

3. Wara' means piety and self-restraint.

4. Baghdādī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 277.

5. Al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām, p. 66.

6. Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, pp. 166-7.

is self-acquired and cannot be gained or obtained by the help of other people as the case with other qualities; it is the origin of all qualities, the absence of which upsets the achievement of the imāma.¹

Thus the two pillars of wilāya (al-quwwa wa-al-amāna) mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya coincide largely with those portrayed by the other jurists. He departs from them in the degree of emphasis he puts on these qualities. While the majority of jurists regard these qualities as conditions (shurūṭ)² and insist on their fulfilment by the imām, Ibn Taymiyya calls them simply qualities (khiṣāḥ).³ This does not mean that he detracts from the importance of these qualities; it only shows his practical approach to the question. He does not want to put down as conditions in theory things which he might be compelled to abandon in reality. He makes allowance for human limitations, since

1. Al-Ghazālī, Fadā'ih, p. 187.

2. Some jurists even declare that the imāmate is not permissible for those who do not satisfy these conditions, see Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 166; also see al-Baghdādī, p. 277. Al-Ghazālī divides them into two groups: the six unacquired qualities are indispensable; and the four acquired only to be considered. See Fadā'ih, p. 180.
3. See al-Siyāsa, p. 13. He also refers to them elsewhere as ṣifāt, p. 18.

he is well aware of the difficulty of combining all the necessary qualities in one person. He therefore postulates an extensive but disciplined use of maṣlaḥa to solve the problem.

Ibn Taymiyya agrees with other jurists that the most qualified (al-aṣḥaḥ)¹ should be appointed not only for the leadership of the community but also for every position. At the same time he considers the possibility of not finding the aṣḥaḥ and so he recommends the selection of the best available (al-amthal fa-al-amthal)² according to the general interest. He argues that for the army leadership it is in the interest of the community to appoint the strong and courageous, rather than the weak and pious if the two qualities cannot be combined in one. The best example in this regard was set by the Prophet himself. He appointed Khālīd b. al-Walīd to command the army instead of Abū Dharr because Khālīd was stronger even though Abū Dharr was more pious.³ Similarly the Prophet appointed 'Amr b. al-'Ās and Usāma b. Zayd as army commanders for the sake of an overwhelming interest (maṣlaḥa rājiḥa)⁴ even though there were better men in terms of knowledge and belief. The caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar

1. Ibid., p. 4.

2. Ibid., p. 11.

3. Ibid., p. 15.

4. Ibid., p. 16.

followed the same policy of making appointments according to the maṣlaḥa adopted by the Prophet.

Ibn Taymiyya develops further and emphasises a particular aspect of the quality of amāna, 'adāla, wara' discussed above; and that is the quality of justice ('adl), in the strict sense of fairness and impartiality. He first stresses the importance of justice by giving evidences from the Qur'ān:

"Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance so that people may apply justice...."¹

"Surely Allah commands you to give trusts to their owners and if you judge between mankind you judge justly."²

"If then they have recourse unto you, judge between them or disclaim jurisdiction. If you disclaim jurisdiction, then they cannot harm thee. But if you judge, judge between them with equity. Allah loves the equitable."³

So much for the relevant texts.⁴ But what is justice

1. Qur'ān, LVII:25.

2. Ibid., IV:58.

3. Ibid., V:42.

4. Ibn Taymiyya also mentions several traditions by the Prophet in support of the quality of justice such as "The most beloved of all creatures to Allah is the just imām, and the most unbeloved is the unjust one." reported in Musnad of Ibn Ḥanbal, (bāb al-imāra), see al-Siyāsa, pp. 22-23.

according to Ibn Taymiyya? To him justice is conformity to and the application of the revealed law. He argues that Allah has commanded the Prophet to rule according to justice and at the same time He commanded him to rule according to what He has revealed. This means that justice is what Allah has revealed and what Allah has revealed is justice.¹ In other words just rule is rule according to the shar'. He makes it clear that whoever rules or adjudicates between people must do so according to Allah's laws and not according to any human legislation. He adds that Allah's laws vary in the different revelations (the Old and New Testaments and the Qur'ān), but all of them are just laws and every people must abide by and rule according to their own revealed laws.² He applies the concept of rule in accordance with Allah's laws (shar') in general so that it is an individual duty to rule in this way in all circumstances of place and time. People must observe justice even with their enemies as in Allah's address to the Prophet:

"O you who believe! Be steadfast witnesses for Allah in equity and let not hatred of any people seduce you that you deal unjustly. Deal justly that which is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to Allah. Allah Knows what you do."³

1. See Minhāj, vol. III, p. 31.

2. Ibid.

3. Qur'ān, V:18.

This commitment to justice, Ibn Taymiyya explains is not only obligatory in cases of particular or personal affairs (al-umūr al-mu'ayyana). Its obligation is even more strict in ruling the common affairs of the community (al-umūr al-mushtaraka bayn al-umma).¹ These common affairs must be managed according to the laws of Allah and the sunna of the Prophet and not to legislation by kings, governors, princes or the like. He holds that those who regard as legal (istahālū) the rule that is not in accordance with Allah's laws are unbelievers (kāfirūn).² He supports his argument by a verse from the Qur'ān:

"Who so judges not by that which Allah has revealed: such are disbelievers..."³

This argument based on the above verse, that those who do not conform to Allah's law are infidels, has made some scholars associate Ibn Taymiyya's political thought with that of the Khārijites.⁴ But it is interesting to note that Ibn Taymiyya himself criticises the Khārijites on this issue (and thus provides a ready answer for his own critics). He explains that the Khārijites regard

1. See Minhāj, vol. III, p. 32.

2. Ibid.

3. Qur'ān, V:44; also other verses quoted by Ibn Taymiyya, V:45, 47.

4. See Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islām, p. 52; also Laoust, Essai, p. 282.

those who deviate from the laws revealed by Allah or refuse to rule according to them as infidels. To Ibn Taymiyya, however, these deviants are only disobedient people (uṣṭāḥ) like those who disobey other revealed laws. The true infidels in Ibn Taymiyya's view are those who deny these laws altogether or refuse to recognise their validity and rely on their own judgement or their human legislation. Thus the association of Ibn Taymiyya's thought with that of the Khārijites is a weak assertion which is not supported by any special evidence.

Ibn Taymiyya, likewise, discusses at great length the prohibition of injustice and provides texts from the Qur'ān and tradition in support of his arguments.¹

But despite this emphasis, Ibn Taymiyya reminds us of the discrepancy between the ideal of justice and what is realistically possible. He stresses that there is no foolproof method of seeing that the quality of justice is satisfied in the candidate. He says:

"If we suppose that justice is a condition to be satisfied by every holder of authority (mutawallī) so that no one should be obeyed unless he is just, then it

1. For his discussion of injustice see al-Siyāsa, p. 43 and Minhāj, vol. 2, p. 87. He explains the prohibition of injustice by the sharī'a but maintains his disapproval of armed rebellion to remove injustice.

is known that the condition of justice (ishtirāṭ al-‘adl) in the rulers is not greater than that which is demanded in witnesses. The witness gives information which is unknown to the people (in the court) and unless he is really just, he may give false information. But in the case of the wālī, whatever he orders, people can tell whether it is in conformity with Allah's revealed laws or not."¹

Ibn Taymiyya argues that external justice (al-zāhir) (as demonstrated by words and actions) has inevitably been accepted in verdicts.² He mentions that this is the only way in which the quality of justice can be judged in reality. This method of judging the quality of justice may not be totally satisfactory, but he makes it clear that it is the only method available. All these points about the difficulty of judging the quality of justice, and the degree of obligation of justice are hints by Ibn Taymiyya to show later that the absence of justice should not cause rebellion against the ruler.³ Ibn Taymiyya summarises his discussion on this quality by saying that the justice required in the ruler is similar to that which is required in the credible witness.

1. Minhāj, vol. II, p. 88.

2. Ibid.

3. More discussion on this comes under the 'mutual duties of the ruler and subjects' in the next chapter.

Ibn Taymiyya discusses briefly two more qualities; these are competence (kafā'a) and knowledge ('ilm).¹ He explains that kafā'a is the ability to administer properly and that it can be fulfilled by the mutual help of more than one employee. To display kafā'a one can either use force (qahr wa-rahba) or use peaceful persuasion (ihsān wa-rahba), in carrying out one's duties.² This quality received scant discussion by even the jurists who put it as a condition to be fulfilled by the ruler. Al-Baghdādī says that the imām should know the different facets of polity (wujūh al-siyāsa) and proper administration (ḥusn al-tadbīr) which include the right choice of employees.³ Ibn Ḥazm says it is preferred (yustahab) that the wālī should be aware of his duties, capable of achieving them in the appropriate manner.⁴ Al-Ghazālī elaborates on this quality. To him kafā'a involves two things: proper management and administration (intizām al-tadbīr); and the consultation of knowledgeable and experienced people.⁵ He gives a detailed explanation of these two points with specific reference to the imāmate of al-Mustazhir. It is

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1. 'Ilm here refers particularly to religious knowledge of the Qur'ān and tradition.
 2. See al-Siyāsa, p. 18.
 3. Al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl, p. 277.
 4. Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 167.
 5. Al-Ghazālī, Faḍā'ih, pp. 185-87.

probably due to the fact that kafā'a is attainable by the help and cooperation of others that theorists do not put strong emphasis on it.

The last quality to be discussed here is that of 'ilm (learning or knowledge). There is a difference of opinion among jurists regarding this condition. Al-Baghdādī's view that the ruler should be a mujtahid (capable of forming an independent legal opinion) seems to be acceptable to the majority of the 'ulamā'.¹ Al-Ghazālī does not require ijtihād in a ruler. He argues that the conditions of the imām are either known by a nass or dictated by maṣlaḥa. But, he continues, there is no nass except for Qurashite descent; all other conditions are decided on according to necessity. In his view ijtihād

1. Al-Ghazālī says anyone who denies the condition of ijtihād will not be violating any nass, he will only be deviating from the view of the preceding 'ulamā'; Faḍā'ih, p. 191. Ra'fat 'Uthmān says that the majority of the 'ulamā' (jamhūr al-'ulamā') agree on the necessity of ijtihād. He also says ijtihād implies the knowledge of Arabic language, thorough knowledge of the interpretation of the Qur'ān and of what is abrogated; a thorough knowledge of what the 'ulamā' have agreed on (ijmā') and knowledge of uṣūl al-fiqh. See 'Uthmān, Riyāsat al-Dawla, pp. 133-4.

is not essential in a ruler if he possesses the quality of wara' which enables him to consult the learned.¹ He further explains that there is no difference, in effect, between the opinion reached by one's own judgement and the following of the same opinion issued by the most learned men of one's age. Al-Ghazālī then explains that if preference is to be made between a mujtahid and a non-mujtahid, it is obvious that the mujtahid should be chosen. But if the imām who is already acclaimed (and who gained enough shawka to sustain his rule) is a non-mujtahid, no attempt should be made to depose him and replace a mujtahid. Such action only breeds dissension which is against the maṣlaḥa of the people.²

Though Ibn Taymiyya says that if either 'ilm, 'adl or kafā'a is lacking disruption occurs,³ he does not make clear his personal view on the question of 'ilm, in the sense of ijtihād; he simply mentions the views held by the 'ulamā' on the subject.⁴ But from his previous discussions of the application of maṣlaḥa in the selection of officials and from the example he has given of the Prophet's appointment of his army commanders according to maṣlaḥa, even though there were more learned and pious men than

1. See al-Ghazālī, Fadā'ih, pp. 191-93.

2. Ibid.

3. See al-Siyāsa, p. 18.

4. Ibid., p. 19.

those whom he appointed, one can deduce that he shares with al-Ghazālī the view that the ruler should not necessarily be a mujtahid. What confirms this view is his constant appeal to the ruler to consult the learned people.¹

Finally, one may conclude this section on the qualities of the ruler by the remark that Ibn Taymiyya is constantly aware of the fact that the combination of all moral and intellectual qualities is an ideal which is hard to attain in reality. He even contests that such qualities, apart from the four rightly-guided caliphs, were only united in 'Umār b. 'Abd al-'Aziz.² Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya's concept of the ruler is that the ruler is not necessarily perfect. He is an ordinary Muslim who is enhanced with greater responsibilities which he can achieve best with the help and cooperation of other Muslims. He says,

"The ruler and the subjects must cooperate with each other and in this respect the ruler is like the leader of the caravan, the imām of prayers and the guide in pilgrimage who leads the people but who can be corrected by them when he errs."³

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1. Ibid., p. 170. Ibn Taymiyya makes it clear that the ruler can practice taqlīd, the following of the opinion of the learned people.
 2. See Minhāj, vol. II, p. 135.
 3. Minhāj, vol. III, p. 116.

This is a direct criticism of the Twelvers' theory of infallibility¹ which Ibn Taymiyya refutes polemically. The imāmis believe that justice and the protection of the oppressed can only be achieved by an infallible imām who is the only guide of the community who can preserve the shar' and interpret the law. A fallible person according to them cannot be entrusted with these tasks because he is liable to commit mistakes and so mislead the people.² Ibn Taymiyya strongly rejects this claim; to him there is no evidence for such a claim and he argues at great length to refute this. Neither the imām nor his agents or officials are required to be infallible. In fact no person is infallible; even the Prophet cannot know the hidden realities (bāṭin) of every matter. That is why he employed al-Walīd b. 'Aqba whom the Qur'ān later

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1. Infallibility according to the Shī'ites results from two things: God's grace (luṭf Ilāhī) and self-discipline (tahdhīb nafsī). It is a power which renders a person unliable to err or deceive. It is an indispensable condition for prophets and imāms who are unexpected to commit a sin whether small or grave neither before their prophethood and imāmate nor after them. See al-Ṭusī, Talkhīṣ al-Shāfī, vol. I, p. 61.
 2. Ibn Taymiyya gives verbatim sections of al-Hillī's arguments. See Minhāj, vol. III, pp. 116-7, 270-74.

described as wicked (fāsiq).¹ Similarly the Prophet adjudicated between people according to what appeared to him to be the truth; but it became evident that sometimes the truth is not what was manifested. Therefore one has to use one's independent judgement (ijtihād).² He says that after the Prophet, infallibility is only realisable in the consensus (ijmā') of the umma as the Prophet himself explained when he said "My umma shall never agree on an error..."³ Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that Allah has ordered the people to obey Him and His messenger and those in authority; but if they differ in something they should refer to Allah and His messenger only. If the imāms are infallible, he argues, Allah would have ordered the people to refer to them as well.⁴ Thus it is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya rejects the Shī'ite theory of infallibility altogether; he is also critical of the Sunnite qualifications of the imām as presented by the traditional jurists. His own treatment of the question is modest, practical and tinged with his

1. See Minhāj, vol. II, p. 88.

2. See Minhāj, vol. III, p. 163.

3. He produces other traditions in favour of infallibility of the umma. See Minhāj, vol. III, p. 273.

4. Ibid., p. 116.

political realism.¹

Conditions for the Election of the Ruler:

In dealing with the conditions, Ibn Taymiyya is more emphatic. He makes it clear that they are indispensable. The conditions he discusses are three: The ruler must be chosen after the consultation of the people, he must win the support of ahl al-shawka and he must be a Qurashite. It is remarkable that the first two are not discussed by earlier jurists as conditions at all.

With regard to the first conditions, the consultation of the people, Ibn Taymiyya does not discuss it in great detail.² He relies on a saying attributed to Caliph 'Umar which runs, "If anyone swears allegiance to another without consulting the Muslims, neither man should be acclaimed."³ Also he takes as a precedent the example of Caliph 'Umar who appointed a consultative council of six

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1. This is clearly shown by his argument that selection should be made according to the need; and that if there is no qualified person, the unqualified should be appointed and efforts should be made by all people to reform their affairs. See al-Siyāsa, p. 19.
 2. He discusses consultation in detail as one of the duties of the ruler, but his discussion of consultation as a condition in the choice of ruler is brief.
 3. The saying cited by Ibn Taymiyya in Minhāj, vol. II, p. 86.

men and entrusted them with the responsibility of choosing one of them as caliph.¹ 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf, one of the six men of the council, was said to have spent three days consulting the people in the choice between 'Uthmān and 'Alī until in the end he gathered that the people were more inclined to the choice of 'Uthmān which he ultimately declared.² Ibn Taymiyya further explains that 'Umar advised the council that anyone who tried to make the investiture (bay'ā) without consulting the Muslims should be killed.³ Ibn Taymiyya interprets caliph 'Umār's order as a warning against social disruption; the person who attempts to make the investiture without consulting the Muslims will cause disunity and disagreement among the Muslims and therefore he must be killed. This, he argues, conforms with the Prophet's tradition that "whoever creates disunity and divides the Muslims after they have been united must have his head chopped off."⁴

The above quoted tradition and the example of caliph 'Umar provide sufficient precedent to make the consultation of the people a "condition" in the choice of the ruler, according to Ibn Taymiyya. The precedent itself may not seem strong, but the implication behind it is undoubtedly

1. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 143.

2. Ibid.,

3. Ibid., vol. III, p. 172.

4. Muslim, Saḥīḥ (bāb al-fīṭan)

very significant. The consultation of the people means that their opinion is represented in the political authority through their free and voluntary participation in the choice of the ruler. It also means that the ruler is expected to enjoy some degree of support and cooperation from those who choose him. As a consequence there will be some political stability which is the corner stone for any achievement. Ibn Taymiyya's emphasis on this condition shows his great insight and pragmatism.

The second condition is the support of the ahl al-shawka. This is closely linked with the first condition; but the emphasis here is on a particular section of the Muslims; the influential, the holders of effective power. The importance of the ahl al-shawka is already discussed under Ibn Taymiyya's concept of political authority.¹ The gist of his arguments is that the support of the ahl al-shawka is indispensable for the appointment² of the ruler and the sustainment of his political authority. It is worth mentioning that except for al-Ghazālī none of the earlier theorists stress the importance of the ahl al-shawka in this respect; and even al-Ghazālī does not

1. See chapter II.

2. Ibn Taymiyya even regards the designation to the imāmate to be null without the support of ahl al-shawka; further discussion of this point will be made under the appointment of the ruler.

discuss it separately as a condition, but as a prerequisite of the quality of najda.¹ Ibn Taymiyya, thus, stands in clear contrast to earlier thinkers with regard to these two conditions. Among later thinkers, however, Ibn Khaldūn develops this further in his theme of 'aṣabiyya or group solidarity.²

The last and perhaps the most controversial of all conditions is that of the Qurashite descent. Muslim sects are not unanimous in requiring that the imām must be a Qurashite by descent.³ All the Sunnites, the Shī'ites,⁴ most of the Murji'ites and some of the Mu'tazilites agree that the imām must be a Qurashite. The Khārijites, most of the Mu'tazilites and some of the Murji'ites deny the obligation of the Qurashite descent and hold that any Muslim who can rule the people according to the Qur'ān and sunna can be the imām, no matter whether he is a Qurashite, an Arab or a slave.⁵ An extreme Mu'tazilite

1. See al-Ghazālī, Faḍā'ih, p. 182.

2. See Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, pp. 154-156.

3. The Qurashites are the descendants of al-Naḍr b. Kināna b. Khuzayma b. Mudrika b. al-Yās b. Muḍar b. Nazar b. Ma'bad b. 'Adnān. See al-Baghdādī, Usūl, p. 276.

4. The Shī'ites restrict the condition further and hold the imāmate to be in the descendants of Alī only.

5. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 89.

group, the Dirāriyya,¹ reject this condition outright and argue that if two candidates, one a Qurashite and the other not, compete for the imāmate, the non-Qurashite should be given priority because it will be easy to depose him if he deviates from the correct objectives.²

Most jurists who have written on the imāmate regard Qurashite descent as a condition. Their evidence is the nass by the Prophet and the ijmā' of his Companions. The advocates of the condition of Qurashite descent often quote a number of similar traditions; amongst them are the following:³

"This affair must be amongst Quraish as far as there are two (of them) left...", a tradition reported by Abū Hubaira.⁴

"People are the followers of Quraish in this affair, the Muslims among them are the followers of the Muslims and the infidels are the followers of the infidels...", a tradition reported by b. 'Umār.⁵

1. The Dirariyya are the followers of Dirār b. 'Amr al-Ghaṭafānī. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 89.

2. Ibid. Also see al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl, p. 275.

3. These and other traditions are quoted by Ibn Taymiyya in Minhāj, vol. II, p. 85 and vol. III, p. 165.

4. Muslim, Saḥīḥ (bāb al-imāra).

5. Ibid.

"People are the followers of Quraish in good as well as in evil...." a tradition reported by Muslim.¹

As for the ijmā', the concession made by the Ansār, in the Saqīfa meeting, when Abū Bakr related the tradition, is understood as an agreement by the Companions on the obligation of the Qurashite descent. Al-Ghazālī adds to the ijmā' of the Companions, the ijmā' of the past generations before his time to keep the imāmate amongst the Quraish, and the fact that no non-Qurashite contested for it.²

Opinions differ with respect to Ibn Taymiyya's attitude towards the necessity (and obligation) for the Qurashite lineage. Some scholars like Laoust regard this condition to be "incompatible with the egalitarian spirit of Ibn Taymiyya which aims at breaking the pre-eminence of the clergy or the clan of a family...."³ Laoust then likens Ibn Taymiyya to the Khārijites in this respect and concludes that "for Ibn Taymiyya it is practically impossible to restrict the right of being caliph amongst Quraish..."⁴ Other scholars, like Abū Zahra⁵ and al-

1. Ibid.

2. See al-Ghazālī, Fadā'ih, p. 180.

3. See Laoust, Essai, p. 294.

4. Ibid., p. 295.

5. Abū Zahra, Ibn Taymiyya, p. 343.

Mubarak¹ maintain the view that Ibn Taymiyya, like all Sunnites, believes in the necessity of this condition. However, a closer examination of Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of this question would enable a fair judgement on the issue to be made.

Ibn Taymiyya is known for his strict adherence to the main sources of the sharī'a from which he derives his evidence and support for all his arguments. He devotes special attention to the sunna about which he believes the Muslims have diverse opinions. The question of the Qurashite lineage, like other controversial problems, receives his careful attention. He makes it clear that this condition is supported by nass. He says,

"The fact that khilāfa lies with the Quraish is an established element of religion and the sharī'a, confirmed by texts which are known and transmitted by the Companions. This does not hold good for the claim (either) that khilāfa is restricted to one particular family within the Quraish or that it could be given to non-Qurashites for such claims as (these) are not supported by any text..."²

Elsewhere he says:

"Many texts by the Prophet confirm that the imām

1. Muḥammad al-Mubārak, al-Dawla wa-nizām al-Ḥisba 'ind Ibn Taymiyya, pp. 40-41.

2. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 140.

should be from Quraish.." ¹

He repeats the same once more,

"No doubt it has been confirmed by legal decree (ḥukm shar'ī) that the imāmate is the exclusive right of the Qurashites..." ²

Ibn Taymiyya bases the above statements on the traditions, quoted above, to which he refers frequently. ³ Moreover, many comments scattered through his writings indicate his belief in the condition of Qurashite lineage for the office of the caliph. Refuting al-Ḥillī's allegation that Usāma claimed the right to the office of caliph and protested at the choice of Abū Bakr, Ibn Taymiyya replies that such an allegation is false, first because Usāma loved Abū Bakr and was unlikely to oppose or protest at his being chosen and second because Usāma was not a Qurashite and was therefore unfit for the caliphate and it would never have occurred to him to aspire to occupy the office... ⁴ He expresses the same view in his defence of Caliph 'Umar, who was said to have

1. Ibid., vol. IV, p. 232.

2. Ibid., vol. II, pp. 259-60.

3. Ibn Taymiyya reproduces the group of traditions concerning the Qurashite lineage several times in his books; for the purpose of this discussion see Minhāj, vol. II, p. 85 and vol. III, p. 165.

4. Minhāj, vol. II, p. 178.

wanted to designate Sālim, the client of Abū Hudhayfa, as caliph. Ibn Taymiyya says:

"'Umār and all other Companions knew that the imāmate was reserved for the Quraish as had been confirmed by various traditions from the Prophet. How could it be thought that 'Umār would designate a non-Qurashite?"¹

He explains further that though Sālim was one of the best Companions and one who used to lead them in prayers during the life of the Prophet, 'Umār could make use of his services in only two ways: either, he could employ him in any important job or he could consult him on various matters on which Sālim was well-suited to help. But Sālim could never be designated caliph.²

From the evidence mentioned so far, it becomes obvious that Ibn Taymiyya argues in favour of the Qurashite condition.³ This attitude of his does not only

1. Ibid., vol. III, p. 165.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibn Taymiyya makes his view very explicit in another book. He says: "... Quraish has been singled out for the imāmate (khuṣṣa Quraishan bi-ann al-imāmata fihim) as the zakat is prohibited for the banī Hāshim in particular. The reason is that since the clan of Quraish is better (than other clans) it becomes obligatory (wajab) that the imāmate should be in the best of clans. This does not mean that everyone of them must be an imām; it is known that only some of them will..." See Īdāh al-dilāla fī 'imūm al-Risāla, p. 20.

result from his absolute trust in the Prophet's traditions, but also from what seems to be his conviction of the superiority of the Quraish above other Arab clans. This is clear from his statement:

"There is no doubt that the family of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) has a right over the community which is not shared by others, and so is worthy of more love and support than the other families in the Quraish. On the other hand, the Quraish deserves more love and support than the rest of the Arab tribes; while the Arab race is worthy of more love and support than the rest of the human race."¹

Ibn Taymiyya defends his stand on the preference for the Quraish over the rest of the Arabs by claiming that it is the belief (madhhab) of the majority (al-jamhūr); that it is reported by great jurists like Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and others; and above all that it is confirmed by the Prophet's traditions:

"Allah Has chosen the Quraish from Kināna, He chose Banī Hāshim from the Quraish and He chose me from Banī Hāshim."²

and:

"People are of different quality (ma'ādin); those

1. Minhāj, vol. II, p. 259.

2. Ibn Sa'ad, Ṭabaqāt (bāb faḍl Quraish)

who were best during the pre-Islamic era were (also) those who were best after Islam, provided that they comprehended."¹

This discussion should not give the impression that Ibn Taymiyya is unaware of the fact that in Islam preference between people is according to their piety. He approves of this principle and often quotes the Qur'ān:

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. The noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Allah is Knower, Aware...."²
and the tradition:

"There is no difference between an Arab and a non-Arab except for piety..."³

Ibn Taymiyya then indulges in a long discussion to solve the logical contradiction in which he finds himself entangled, that is, the contradiction between his belief in the superiority of the Quraish and view of preference according to piety. He holds that the virtue of descent (faḍilat al-nasab) is a group virtue, which means that a whole race or clan is better than another. But this does not mean that everyone in the first group is better than

1. Ibid.

2. Qur'ān, XLIX:13.

3. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ (bāb al-taqwa).

everyone else in the second group. But in general the good expected from the preferred group is more than that in the second.¹

Ibn Taymiyya explains the difference between the virtue of descent and the virtue of piety (faḍilat al-taqwa). He says that the virtue of descent is a virtue of cause and probability (faḍilat sabab wa-zann) which is a general indication. People can only distinguish between each other by some indications, they need marks such as descent (nasab) to enable and guide them to find the most virtuous among them.²

1. He explains that it is certain to find in the best quality (al-ṣanf al-aḥḍal) that which you cannot find in the lesser quality (al-maḥḍūl); his evidence is that in Banī Hāshim is the Prophet who is better than anyone else in Quraish or other races. Similarly one finds in Quraish the four rightly-guided caliphs who have no like among the rest of the Arabs and non-Arabs. And finally you find in the Arabs the first group of Muslims (al-Sābiqūn al-awwalūn) the like of whom are not found in non-Arabs. But he adds that it is possible to find in the lesser quality (al-maḥḍūl) those who are better than some in the best quality (al-aḥḍal). See Minhāj, vol. II, pp. 260-61 for further details.

2. Minhāj, vol. II, p. 261.

As for the virtue of piety, it is a virtue of truth and ultimate aspiration (faḍilat haqīqa wa-ghāya). Ibn Taymiyya adds that Allah knows what things are really like, therefore He favours people according to their degree of piety; He does not need marks or indications. Ibn Taymiyya makes it clear that Allah's praise of people, His reward and punishment are based entirely on the merit of piety and sincerity of belief; not on descent. But, he argues, this does not contradict the fact that in reality some clans are better than others.¹

Finally, one may conclude the discussion on Ibn Taymiyya's attitude towards the Qurashite condition by mentioning his criticism of those who deny preference on the grounds of descent. He says such a view which denies the necessity of preference according to descent is called the belief of the shu'ubiyya (madhhab al-shu'ūbiyya); and he dismisses their arguments as "weak sayings of innovators" (qawl ḍa'īf min aqwāl ahl al-bida').²

All the previous discussion illustrates beyond doubt that Ibn Taymiyya supports the condition of the Qurashite lineage. He demonstrates his support by the effort he makes to explain and justify the reason behind the condition, unlike other jurists who simply enumerate the condition and refer to its source. Laoust's comments that, "la dernière

1. Ibid., p. 260.

2. Ibid.

des conditions requises, le lignage ʔuraisite, est aussi incompatible avec l'esprit égalitaire d'ibn Taymiyya..."¹ and that "... pour ibn Taymiyya, l'impossibilité pratique de vouloir limiter aux ʔuraisites le droit au califat,"² are without any evidence. Laoust also produces no special proof for his assertion that Ibn Taymiyya was influenced particularly by the Khārijites.³ Laoust must keep in mind the fact that, no matter how 'egalitarian' Ibn Taymiyya may seem in his eyes, he never deviates from what he believes to be an authentic tradition or true sunna of the Prophet. The case of the Qurashite lineage is no exception.

Ibn Taymiyya's exposition of the qualifications of the ruler is both original and realistic.

The Appointment of the Ruler:

Assuming that qualified candidates are available, there are some procedures through which the imām is chosen. This is also an area where opinions are diverse. However,

1. Laoust, Essai, p. 294.

2. Ibid., p. 295.

3. Ibid., p. 294.

there are three main views on this issue:

1. The appointment of the imām by nass.
2. The choice of the imām by ahl al-hall wa-al-'aqd, (bay'ah).¹
3. Designation by the preceding imām ('ahd).

The Appointment by nass

According to this view, the choice of the imām is confirmed by a clear text, nass. The holders of this view are the Shī'ites and a small minority among the

1. The best definition of bay'ah is given by Ibn Khāldūn. He says: "The bay'ah (oath of allegiance) is a contract to render obedience. It is as though the person who renders the oath of allegiance made a contract with his amīr, to the effect that he surrenders supervision of his own affairs and those of the Muslims to him, and that he will not contest his authority and that he will obey him by executing all the duties with which he might be charged whether agreeable or disagreeable.... The bay'ah is from bā'a to sell (or buy)... bay'ah is a handshake; something like the action of buyer and seller." Muqaddima, p. 209.

Sunnites.¹ The Shī'ites and particularly the Twelver imāmis developed the issue of appointment by nass into a theory and so it became particularly associated with them.

The imāmis believe that the imāmate of 'Alī is

1. Ibn Ḥazm mentions that there is a group (ṭā'ifa) among the Sunnites who believe that the Prophet made a clear nass on the imāmate of Abū Bakr; but no specific names are given by him for those who held such views. See al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 107. However Aḥmād b. Ḥanbal and al-Ḥassan al-Baṣrī are mentioned among those who believe that the imāmate of Abū Bakr is confirmed by a nass from the Prophet, but these two jurists do not hold that nass is the only method for the appointment of the imām; they agree with the majority of the Sunnites that the imāmate is also confirmed by the choice of ahl al-ḥall wa-al-'aqd. See 'Uthmān, Riyāsat al-Dawla fī-al-Fiqh al-Islamī, p. 225.

confirmed by texts from both the Qur'ān¹ and the traditions² of the Prophet.

1. The imāmis build their theory on some verses among which are: "Your friend can only be Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, who establish prayer and pay the zakat while they are bowing (in prayer)." V:55 and "O you who believe, whoso of you becomes a renegade from his religion, Allah will bring people whom He loves and who love Him, humble toward believers, stern toward disbelievers, striving in the way of Allah which He gives unto whom He will. Allah is all embracing, all knowing." V:54.
2. There are also a number of traditions, accepted by all Shī'ites, which they often quote in support of the imāmate of 'Alī by nass. Among these traditions: "He is my caliph so listen to him and obey...." Another one runs, "He whose mawlā I am, 'Alī is his mawla too (man kuntu mawlāh fa-'Alī mawlāh...) For more texts see al-Ṭūsī, Talkhīṣ al-Shāfi, vol. II pp. 45-46.

According to the imāmīs, the wilāya of 'Alī is like prayer, fasting and pilgrimage in that it is commanded by Allah. The Prophet ought to have explained it to the people in the same way as he did with the other obligations but he did not do so¹ hence Allah revealed the verse:

"O Messenger, Make known that which had been revealed unto thee from thy Lord; for if you do not, you will not have conveyed His message. Allah will protect you from mankind. Allah guides not the disbelieving folk...."²

The imāmīs further claim that the imāmate of all their twelve imāms are confirmed by texts and not only that of 'Alī. This means that the imāmīs deny the people any role or participation in the choice of the imām. They give several reasons for holding the belief that the imāmate could only be by naṣṣ and not by choice of the people (ikhtiyār).³ Whatever arguments have been put forward by the supporters of the appointment of the imām by naṣṣ, it has always remained only a theory; for no imām in history has come to power as a result of naṣṣ (in the Shī'ite sense of the term).

1. Kulaynī, Uṣūl al-Kāfī, Kitāb al-Hujja, vol. II, p. 48.

2. Qur'ān, V:67

3. See Abd al-Jabār, al-Mughnī; he mentions nine arguments for the imāmīs' rejection of the appointment by ikhtiyār, p. 297.

Appointment by Ikhtiyār:

The second method of appointing the imām is that of the choice (ikhtiyār) by the people. This is the method generally approved of by the Sunnites and other groups such as the Mu'tazilites,¹ and it is the first method which was put into practice by the Muslims. The traditional method was that the group known as ahl al-ḥall wa-al-'aql² swore the oath of allegiance to the imām and then other people followed their choice. This group of ahl al-ḥall wa-al-'aql was considered as the representatives of the people in choosing the imām. But the definition of this group and how it was authorised to play this role is not made clear by early jurists; even though some jurists like al-Māwardī try to lay down conditions for the membership of this group while other jurists try even to specify the number of ahl al-ḥall wa-al-'aql who ought to choose the imām.³ Al-Māwardī mentions three conditions to be considered in ahl al-ikhtiyār (the people with the right to choose). These conditions are 'adala,⁴ 'ilm in

1. See al-Baghdādī, Usūl al-Dīn, p. 279.

2. Al-Baghdādī calls this group ahl al-ijtihād.

3. Al-Baghdādī, Usūl, p. 280.

4. By 'adāla is meant the same uprightness of character described earlier. See al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām, p. 6; also al-Mughnī by Abd al-Jabār, p. 267.

the sense that they know what conditions should be fulfilled by the imām so that they make their choice accordingly; and finally wisdom and good judgement so that they will be able to choose the right person.

As for the number of those who make the choice, again opinions are diverse. Al-Ash'arī, according to al-Baghdādī, holds that one man who is qualified and pious can make the contract with the qualified candidate and this contract should be binding on the rest of the community.¹ The Mu'tazilites maintain that the contract of the imāmate, like that of marriage, must be concluded by a minimum of two men.² But the generally accepted view among the Sunnites is that the imāmate is established by the 'ulamā' of the community without specifying their number.³

The basis on which the contract is established is the rule according to the sharī'a by the imām, and the absolute obedience by the people as long as he maintains that.⁴ The final step in the process of the investiture of the imām is the oath of allegiance paid by the people. This is in essence a ratification of the appointment of the imām which is already made and the contract which is

1. Al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl, p. 280.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. See 'Uthmān, Riyāsat al-Dawla fī-al-Fiqh al-Islāmī, p. 237.

concluded by the ahl al-hall wa-al-'aqd. This shows that the role of the common people in the appointment of the ruler remains of secondary importance bearing in mind the fact that jurists never made clear how the group of ahl al-hall wa-al-'aqd is authorised to represent the people and act on their behalf.

The Appointment by Designation ('ahd)

This is the method which is applied most in practice. It is the designation of the imām by his predecessor. The precedent is the designation of 'Umār by Abū Bakr; an action which is accepted by the Companions and thus considered by later Muslims as approved by ijmā'. Another precedent is the designation of one of the six members of the consultative council appointed by 'Umār.¹ This is also accepted in theory by Muslim jurists but it is seldom put into practice.

This method, 'ahd, was transformed into hereditary succession.² The designation of Mu'āwiya of his son

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1. The council was formed of 'Uthmān, 'Alī, 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Awf, Ṭalḥa al-Zubayr and Sa'd; after consultation 'Uthmān was chosen caliph.
 2. The designation by Alī of his son al-Ḥasan is the first precedent. This is one of the reasons which made Ibn Taymiyya describe 'Alī's rule as neither khilafat nubuwwa nor mulk.

Yazīd was accepted by the Muslims and the example was followed by other caliphs who likewise designated their sons. Later jurists defend the designation of one's son or father arguing that no suspicion of the imām is justified in this connection since he is entrusted to look after the affairs of the Muslims; and the designation of one's son might be motivated by the desire to promote public interest.¹

Thus, early jurists approve of 'ahd irrespective of any criticism of individual choice. Ibn Ḥazm even considers appointment by 'ahd to be the best of all methods (awaluhā wa-afdāluhā wa-aṣaḥuhā) because it safeguards the continuity of the imāmate and prevents chaos and disruption.²

The Imāmate by Coercion (qahr)

This view is held by the Sunnites. It is accepted by jurists to avoid dissension in the Muslim community. A person who seizes power by force and declares himself to be the imām, should be recognized and obeyed. This view is attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.³ Among later jurists al-Ghazālī strongly supports the appointment by qahr. Al-Ghazālī makes it clear that if a Qurashite who possesses

1. Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, p. 210.

2. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 169.

3. See Abū Ya'la, al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyya, p. 23.

shawka aspires to the imāmate and is able to win the support and obedience of the people, his imāmate is confirmed (in'aqadat) by virtue of his power and competence; and therefore he must be obeyed.¹

Ibn Taymiyya generally conforms to Sunnite views on the methods of appointing the imām, but he has his own arguments as will be shown in the course of the discussion.

With regard to the appointment by nass, Ibn Taymiyya discusses at great length the differences among the Shī'ite sects concerning the nass on most of the imāms. He considers these differences as evidence for the lack of authenticity of the Shī'ite claims. He describes the Shī'ite claims as the most grave lies and forgeries (min a'zam al-kadhib wa-al-iftirā').²

Ibn Taymiyya refutes the Shī'ite allegation that the Sunnites do not believe in the imāmate by nass. He mentions that there are two views among the Sunnites on the nomination of Abū Bakr. One view holds that the nomination of Abū Bakr is implicit (khafī).³ The holders of this view⁴ deduced from the fact that Abū Bakr had

1. Al-Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, p. 107.

2. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 147.

3. See Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣāl, vol. IV, p. 107.

4. Ibn Taymiyya mentions among these al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, some of the traditionists (ahl al-ḥadīth) and the Bayhasiyya of the Kharijites. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 134.

been appointed the representative of the Prophet as prayer leader, the belief that he had also been appointed his representative in political leadership.¹

The second view holds that there is clear evidence (naṣṣ jalī) on the appointment of Abū Bakr.² This is attested, according to those who maintain this view, by the fact that the Companions of the Prophet agreed unanimously to call Abū Bakr the khalīfa of the Prophet. Ibn Ḥazm supports this view arguing that linguistically the word khalīfa means the successor who is nominated by the person before him.³ He explains that such a title is not given to Abū Bakr because he represented the Prophet in leading the prayer because he was never called khalīfa then. Moreover, other Companions, like 'Alī, 'Uthmān and Ibn Umm Maktūm, represented the Prophet during his absence in battles, but none of these was called khalīfa for those tasks. Therefore it is certain that the Companions agreed to call Abū Bakr khalīfa because the Prophet had designated

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1. Ibn Ḥazm disapproves of this view. See al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 108.
 2. Ibn Taymiyya mentions among the holders of the clear naṣṣ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Abū Ya'la, some of the ahl al-ḥadīth and some Mu'tazilites and Ash'arites. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 134.
 3. See discussion on the meaning of khalīfa, in the beginning of this chapter.

him successor in the political leadership (wilāyat al-umma).¹ Ibn Ḥazm also quotes two traditions (riwāyah, khavar) which he describes as authentic evidence on the appointment of Abū Bakr by nass: one is the story that a woman asked the Prophet, "What shall I do if I returned and could not find you?" anticipating the Prophet's death. The Prophet said to her, "See Abū Bakr then." The other evidence is the report by 'Ā'isha that the Prophet before his death said to her, "I was thinking to send for your father and brother in order to write a designation ('ahd) so that no one else claims the right (to the imāmate); knowing that neither Allah nor the believers will accept anyone but Abū Bakr."²

Ibn Taymiyya mentions many other traditions provided by the Sunnite supporters of the appointment by nass. Ibn Taymiyya reproduces all the arguments and evidence mentioned above to challenge the Shī'ites' assertion that the Sunnites do not believe in the imāmate by nass. But he does not himself believe that the Prophet designated Abū Bakr or any other Companion.³ Ibn Taymiyya is a great champion of the popular election of the ruler and thus he

1. Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, p. 108.

2. Ibid.

3. This is an example of Ibn Taymiyya's polemical discussions. See Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of the Shī'ite's claims on the nass on the imāmate of 'Alī. Minhāj, vol. I, pp. 136-37.

shows great reservation while discussing the Sunnites' view of the appointment by naṣṣ.

Ibn Taymiyya strongly approves of the appointment by the people (ikhtiyār). The significance of ahl al-shawka in the eyes of Ibn Taymiyya had already been made clear. The appointment of the imām must be made by ahl al-shawka. But unlike some of the Sunnites, he does not limit the number of ahl al-shawka who should choose the imām. He only insists on the majority. He says that Abū Bakr deserved the imāmate and became an imām because the Companions who held power and authority swore their allegiance to him. But if only 'Umar and a few others had sworn allegiance to him while the majority of the Companions refused to do so, he would not have become the imām.¹ On the other hand, the reverse is also true. When the majority of ahl al-shawka give their support, the abstaining of one or two does not affect the establishment of the imāmate; that is why Abū Bakr became imām even though Sa'd b. 'Ubāda refused to swear allegiance to him. He summarises his view by saying, "... so whoever thinks that he will be an imām by the agreement of one or two or four is mistaken; likewise, whoever thinks that the abstaining of one or two or ten would do any harm is also mistaken..."² This shows that Ibn Taymiyya is not ready

1. See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 142.

2. Ibid.

to make any concession in his demand of the appointment of the imām by the majority (jamhūr) of ahl al-shawka.

The consistency of his attitude is further made obvious from his discussion of the second method, the appointment of the imām by 'ahd. Ibn Taymiyya does not object to 'ahd overtly; in fact he endorses the historical precedent that the existing caliph may designate a successor, but he makes it clear that 'ahd is by itself insufficient to make someone imām. Such an appointment by 'ahd must be backed by the ahl al-shawka. He illustrates his view by giving the example of Caliph 'Umar and 'Uthmān.¹ Most jurists believe that 'Umar became imām because Abū Bakr had designated him to the office. Ibn Taymiyya departs from them on this point. To him 'Umar did not become imām because Abū Bakr designated him; he became imām because of the allegiance and obedience of the ahl al-shawka to him. He explains that if the ahl al-shawka had refused to swear allegiance to him, the designation of Abū Bakr would have been nullified.²

Similarly he maintains the same view with regard to the appointment of 'Uthmān. Contrary to the allegation of al-Ḥillī that 'Uthmān was appointed by some of the six members of the council which was designated by 'Umar, Ibn

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

Taymiyya holds that 'Uthmān was chosen by the consensus of ahl al-shawka. He argues that if only 'Abd al-Raḥmān had appointed him, while 'Alī and other Companions refused, 'Uthmān would not have become imām. As a matter of fact, 'Abd al-Raḥmān consulted the Muslims and especially the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār leaders who all agreed on 'Uthmān. Therefore Ibn Taymiyya believes that all Muslims swore allegiance to 'Uthmān.

This is exactly contrary to what al-Māwardī believes. He holds that in the case of 'ahd, the agreement of the ahl al-ikhtiyār is not essential; the imāmate could be concluded without it.¹ He mentions the fact that jurists have disagreed on whether the agreement of the ahl al-ikhtiyār is a condition in the case of 'ahd, and says that the correct thing in his view is that appointment by 'ahd is correct and valid without the support of ahl al-ikhtiyār. The evidence in his view is that "Umar's bay'a was not dependent on the agreement of the Companions. And because the imām has more right (in this issue than anyone else) his designation is the binding one and the one to be carried out..."²

Ibn Taymiyya disproves the view held by al-Māwardī (that designation alone is sufficient) by citing a more concrete example, in which he shows that the opposition

1. Al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām, p. 7.

2. Ibid.

of ahl al-shawka can in fact obstruct the designation to be carried out. He says that 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz chose to designate al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad but the ahl al-shawka did not agree with his choice, and they even chose, instead, a less qualified person.¹ All this shows that Ibn Taymiyya believes that the ahl al-shawka are essential for the sustaining of the imāmate and for enabling it to fulfil its purposes. Furthermore, he also emphasises that they are vital for establishing it in the first place.

Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the last method, qahr, confirms further his consistency in showing the importance of ahl al-shawka. He reports with approval a saying attributed to Ibn Ḥanbal that "... he who becomes caliph by people's agreement, and he who overcomes people by his sword and becomes imām and is called the Commander of the Faithful, the payment of zakāt to him is permissible (jā'iza) be he pious or wicked..."² He does not elaborate on this method probably because he is in favour of the choice by ahl al-shawka rather than a take over of power by one of them; even if this one is capable of commanding the support of the rest.

Generally Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the ruler, his qualities and the methods of his appointment conforms to a considerable degree with the Sunnites' views, and

1. Minhāj, vol. I, p. 146.

2. Ibid., p. 142.

covers more or less the same issues raised by other jurists. But he is to be credited for the invaluable observations which he makes such as the consideration of maṣlaḥa, the emphasis on shawka and the need for compromise. These observations suggest the lines along which a solution should and could be reached for problems that might crop up.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUTUAL DUTIES OF THE RULER AND THE SUBJECTS

There is no great difference of opinion among Muslim thinkers regarding the duties of the ruler and the subjects. They agree in the main functions of maintenance of the sharī'a, the enforcement of its laws and the administering of people's affairs in accordance with it.¹ Differences among thinkers lie on the emphasis they lay on the details of these functions. Some thinkers like al-Baghdādī and Ibn Ḥazm referred to these duties generally when they discussed the obligation of the imāmate.² But al-Māwardī

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1. Some of the Muslim groups such as the Hishāmiyya and some Khārijite groups regard the establishment of justice as the only function of the imāmate and hence formed the theory that the imāmate can be dispensed with if people observe justice and righteousness among themselves. See chapter one for details.
 2. Both al-Baghdādī and Ibn Ḥazm mention religious duties such as the arrangements for congregational prayers, pilgrimage and jihād. They also mention legal and social duties like establishment of justice by applying penal laws and endorsement of marriage contracts. See al-Baghdādī, Uṣūl al-Dīn, p. 272; Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 87.

and al-Ghazālī developed and expanded these duties further.

Al-Māwardī assigns ten duties to be performed by the ruler. These are: The preservation of the shar' against any distortion or innovation, the establishment of justice, especially in settling disputes, the safeguard of internal security, the enforcement of the penal laws (ḥudūd), the protection of the borders, the performance of jihād, the collection of alms and other dues, like fay', the distribution of wealth, the selection of qualified officials and the personal duty and responsibility of supervising all public functions.¹

Al-Ghazālī on the other hand tackles the subject differently. He divides the functions (wazā'if) of the ruler into educational ('ilmiyya) and practical ('maliyya). He holds that the educational functions (al-wāz'if al-'ilmiyya) are the foundation and the origin of all other functions.² He explains in great detail what he means by the two functions giving several examples from the Prophet and the Companions. But instead of specifying

1. Al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām, p. 12.

2. Al-Ghazālī, Faḍā'ih, p. 195. There is a great deal in common between the duties of the ruler mentioned in this book and those mentioned in another book by al-Ghazālī called Naṣiḥat al-Mulūk (Counsel for Kings), under the heading "The Branches of the Tree of Faith...", he repeats the same ten (principles) and uses the same arguments; see p. 12.

the duties of the ruler he ends up by prescribing rules of moral conduct and behaviour as well as additional qualities to be found in the ruler. He says the ruler must not order his subjects to do things which he himself does not perform, he must be patient in listening to people's complaints, must be lenient in treating his subjects, must be humble and many other rules of behaviour which can hardly be considered as functions (wazā'if).¹

Ibn Taymiyya discusses the mutual duties in great detail. The issues he raises conform largely to those discussed previously by other thinkers. His contribution lies on the practical and realistic approach with which he deals with the subject. This is shown by the order in which he discusses these duties, the emphasis he puts on each of them and the level of achievement he demands from the ruler. In assigning the duties of the ruler Ibn Taymiyya takes into consideration two factors: maṣlaḥa² and capacity (istiṭā'a).³ He maintains that the ruler

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1. In his book al-Iqtisād, al-Ghazālī is more specific in summarising the religious and administrative duties of the ruler. See al-Iqtisād, pp. 107-108.
 2. See chapter two, the section on maṣlaḥa.
 3. Istiṭā'a: From istaṭā', means he was able to do or accomplish a thing; istiṭā'a, the ability or capability of doing a thing. See Lane, Arabic English Lexicon, Book I, part V, p. 189.

and the subjects should serve the maṣlaḥa of the community within the limits of their istiṭā'a. Ibn Taymiyya repeatedly emphasises the consideration of istiṭā'a. He explains that Allah has commanded people to do what is in their ability. He produces evidence from both the Quran:

"So keep your duty to Allah as best you can..."¹

"Allah takes not a soul beyond its scope..."²

and the tradition:

"If I order you anything do what you can."³

If the ruler endeavours to achieve the maṣlaḥa of his people according to his ability, then he is not held responsible for that which is unattainable. This is because, Ibn Taymiyya adds, Allah does not ask man to achieve anything beyond his capacity; even in matters of worship He asks people to do what is possible, He never made obligatory what is impossible to achieve, or prohibited what is indispensable. Therefore, the rulers, judges and all other officials are required to do what is

1. Qur'ān, LXIV:16.

2. Ibid., II:286.

3. Muslim, Saḥīḥ (bāb al-Adab, Ahkām)

in their capacity.¹

Ibn Taymiyya assigns some duties to the ruler and others to the subjects, but due to the high level of cooperation which he envisages between the ruler and the subjects in every sphere, the duties of the ruler and those of the subjects are not sharply demarcated. He says:

"The imām is not the God of people so that he does not need them and he is not the Messenger of God to them so that he mediates between people and God. He and the subjects are partners (shurakā') who mutually cooperate for the welfare of religious and temporal affairs...."²

This emphasis on cooperation dominates all the discussion of the mutual duties of the ruler and his subjects. Indeed it is the basis for all his arguments.

The Duties of the Ruler:

The primary duty is the protection of the shar'. This duty is of paramount importance and Ibn Taymiyya, like other thinkers, believes that it must receive full attention. As a matter of fact Ibn Taymiyya does not regard the protection of the shar' to be the duty of the ruler alone. In his view the whole umma is responsible

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1. Ibn Taymiyya refers to istiṭā'a many times in his works. See al-Siyāsa, pp. 11, 12, 13, 138, 169, 170, 171; al-Hisba, pp. 8, 9, 61 and Minhāj, vol. I, p. 147.
 2. Minhāj, vol. III, p. 116; al-Siyāsa, pp. 10-11.

for the protection of the shar'.¹ This is the main arguments which he uses to refute the Shī'ites' claim of the infallibility of their imāms. According to the Shī'ites, the imām is the only protector of the shar' and therefore he must be infallible. Ibn Taymiyya refutes this Shī'ite belief in a lengthy discussion of twelve points² in which he presents his greatest counter argument which runs as follows:

Before Islam, when a religion was distorted after the death of its prophet, a new prophet was sent to redress and reform it. But Muḥammad is the seal of prophets. If a distortion occurs, no new prophet will be sent. The infallibility of the prophethood should be replaced by the infallibility of the umma.³ It is the duty of the people in general to eradicate any distortion or innovation. He adds that the Prophet said, "My umma will never agree on an error," and this means that whenever someone innovates or distorts the religion, there will be someone else who

1. Ibid., p. 270; also vol. II, p. 91.

2. Ibid., pp. 270-273. It is in this regard that Ibn Taymiyya launches his attack against the twelve imāms especially the expected imām whom he describes as "far from being infallible he is a tyrant and an infidel (ḡalūm wa kafūr).\" See Minhāj, vol. I, p. 24.

3. Ibid., p. 273; also vol. II, p. 91.

corrects him.¹

The role of the ruler in this respect, Ibn Taymiyya explains, is that of the imām of prayer; the people praying behind him (al-ma'mūn) follow his example while praying. But if he forgets (sahā) they should remind him, and if he digresses (zāgh) they should stop following him.² In other words it is a collective responsibility in which the ruler bears a greater share only due to his position in the administration. Ibn Taymiyya maintains this view with regard to all other duties. This is illustrated by his emphasis on the next duty of the ruler, which is the selection of his officials.

This duty is strongly connected to the first one. Since the subjects are also responsible for the protection of the shar' and the carrying out of the duties of the government, Ibn Taymiyya places the selection of officials among the ruler's most important duties. He devotes the first four chapters of his book al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iyya to this.

The ruler must make sure that the offices of the government are held by the right persons. Two factors, according to Ibn Taymiyya, help to achieve this: the ruler must be aware of the purposes of the wilāya so that he chooses the right person for every post. And he must

1. Ibid., vol. III, p. 272.

2. Ibid., p. 116.

be guided by public interest, maṣlaḥa.¹ The ruler should employ in every post the most fit person (al-aṣlah). He narrates the incident of the keys of Ka'ba to illustrate his view. He says that al-'Abbās, the Prophet's uncle asked the Prophet to entrust him with the keys of the Ka'ba, previously held by Banū Shayba. The Prophet was about to grant him his request when the Qur'ānic verse,

"Surely Allah commands you to give trusts to their owners and if you adjudicate between people to adjudicate with justice."²

was revealed to order the keys to be returned to Banū Shayba. Ibn Taymiyya deduces from this that Banū Shayba were the most suited persons (al-aṣlah) for holding the keys. Therefore it should be the rule that for every job the most fit (al-aṣlah) should be employed.³ The Qur'ān emphasises the importance of this further. It says:

"O you who believe! Betray not Allah and His Messenger, nor knowingly betray your trusts."⁴

Ibn Taymiyya explains that if the ruler favours a man (by employing him in an office) because of a relationship between them, or because of friendship, or of belonging

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 20.

2. Qur'ān, IV:58.

3. Al-Siyāsa, p. 4.

4. Qur'ān, VIII:27.

to the same locality or of belonging to the same school of thought (madhhab) or the same racial origin like Arab, Persian and Turk, or because of a bribe received in kind or service or for any other cause; or because of a grudge against the most qualified, this ruler has committed betrayal to Allah, His Messenger and the believers.¹ Traditions by the Prophet elaborate the meaning intended by the verses quoted above. One tradition says:

"He who is entrusted with any affair of the Muslims, and employs a man knowing that there is a better man for this job, then he is treacherous to Allah and His Messenger..²"

The tradition is later echoed in a saying by Caliph 'Umar that "whoever is in charge of the affairs of the Muslims and employs a man because of his friendship or relationship with that man, he is disloyal to Allah, His Messenger and the Muslims."³

Basing his arguments on the Qur'ānic verses, the traditions and the saying of Caliph 'Umar, Ibn Taymiyya draws the criterion according to which the selection of officials should be made. First, as explained above, the ruler must select impartially the most qualified and fit person (al-aṣḥāḥ)⁴ for every post. Second, if no one is

1. Al-Siyāsa, pp. 6-7.

2. The tradition in Ḥakīm, Ṣaḥīḥ (bāb al-imāra); also see al-Siyāsa, p. 5.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 4.

perfectly qualified for a particular job, then the ruler should choose the best among the available (al-amthal);¹ for he is only asked to do what can possibly be done. It is obvious that the ruler cannot choose every official in his government; he only chooses the top senior officials like the ministers of his cabinet, the army commanders and the governors of the regions. These senior officials are, in turn, responsible for choosing their junior officials; everyone in his own field.² Like the ruler, they must be guided by maṣlaḥa and must make the selection with utmost impartiality. When the officials are correctly selected, Ibn Taymiyya explains, then it is the duty of everyone to do his best within the limits of his capacity to achieve, collectively, the purposes (maqāsid) of government. And here lie the rest of the duties.

Ibn Taymiyya mentions repeatedly that the main purpose, maqṣūd, of government is that "Allah's word triumphs and religion be to Allah...."³ In other words the maintenance and the application of His laws. Ibn Taymiyya realises that such a purpose can only be achieved by performing both temporal (material) and religious duties.

1. Ibid., p. 11.

2. Ibid., pp. 5, 16, 18.

3. He repeats this several times in his works. See al-Hisba, p. 2, al-Siyāsa, p. 24 and MRK, al-Waṣīyya al-Kubra, p. 289.

He is enough of a realist to consider the material well-being and prosperity of the people as a prerequisite for their spiritual elevation.¹ He starts by discussing the duties of the ruler in the temporal affairs. He considers two main duties: the distribution of wealth and the punishment of aggressors.² He also considers, briefly, the ruler's duty of consultation.

The distribution of wealth is among the primary duties of the ruler, but the subjects also share part of the responsibility. It is a mutual duty of both, according to Ibn Taymiyya, therefore he discusses them together. In dealing with the distribution of wealth, Ibn Taymiyya's approach is that of a jurist. He derives his ideas on the subject from the Qur'ān and the sunna, especially with regard to the sources of the wealth and the means of its distribution. He considers wealth as a kind of trust (amāna). He derives this from the Qur'ān:

".... And if one of you entrusts (something) to another, let him who is entrusted deliver up that which is entrusted to him (according to the pact between them) and let him observe his duty to Allah."³

As discussed earlier Ibn Taymiyya interprets amānāt as comprising both wilāyāt and amwāl; the achievement of

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 22.

2. Ibid.

3. Qur'ān, II:283.

these two represent the just polity and the good government according to Ibn Taymiyya. The responsibility of wilāyāt (which includes the assignment of jobs and selection of officials has already been discussed.¹ As for the amwāl, he divides them into private and public wealth and discusses them separately.

The private wealth covers money put in deposits, investments by partnership or proxy, debts and rents. Transactions of this nature inevitably involve some disputes between the dealers. Ibn Taymiyya first re-emphasises the importance of honesty in personal relations especially in rendering dues to their owners, and paying one's debts; he produces several evidence from both the Qur'ān and the tradition.² Ibn Taymiyya holds that it is the mutual duty of the ruler and the subjects to pay to each other what they are required to. The ruler and his deputies must give to people what is due to them of the wealth. The state officials who collect the money (jubāt al-amwāl) must hand it over to those in authority (dhū al-sultān).³ The subjects on the other hand must pay to the money collectors what they ought to pay even if the ruler is unjust.⁴

1. See chapter two of this thesis.

2. He quotes Qur'ān, LXX:19-30 and IV:105 and several traditions. See al-Siyāsa, p. 26.

3. Al-Siyāsa, p. 27.

4. Ibid., p. 28.

The distribution of wealth should be made according to the laws of the sharī'a. The Prophet himself made it clear that he followed the orders given to him by Allah for distributing wealth and did not do it according to his own choice. The rulers and their agents therefore should follow the rules of the sharī'a in distributing wealth. They are simply proxies (wukalā'), deputies (nūwāb) and trustees (umanā'), not the real owners of wealth; hence they have not the right to distribute wealth according to their own whims.¹ This is particularly important in the distribution of public wealth.

Ibn Taymiyya refers to public wealth as al-amwāl al-sultāniyya² by which he obviously means money belonging to the Muslim community as a whole and it is put under the authority of the ruler to distribute it among the people and spend it for the general service and benefit of the community. The public wealth, al-amwāl al-sultāniyya, covers ghanīma,³ fay'⁴ and ṣadaqāt.⁵ There are other

1. Ibid., p. 29.

2. Ibid., p. 30.

3. Ghanīma is booty. See Ibn Taymiyya's definition in al-Siyāsa, p. 30.

4. Fay' : land or money obtained from unconditional surrender in conquests which are deliberately made ('unwatan). See al-Siyāsa, p. 38.

5. Ṣadaqāt: mainly zakāt which is a right of the poor to be paid annually from the excess of wealth, and money given for charity. See al-Siyāsa, p. 37.

sources of public wealth such as jizya, paid by the Jews and Christians, ransoms from enemies and gifts to the Muslim authority from other non-Muslim countries.¹ Also wealth of the Muslims whose direct owners cannot be identified.² It is the duty of all subjects to pay voluntarily their due to the authority. But if they refuse to do so, it is the duty of the ruler to collect it by force and to punish them if necessary, to make sure that they do.³ This is because the purpose of wealth (from the different sources) is to help people to worship Allah. Allah Has created human beings to worship Him and He has created wealth to help them in worshipping Him. Therefore wealth should be collected and distributed for this purpose. If the ruler wants to collect the wealth to transfer it for his own personal benefit, then neither his agents nor the subjects should cooperate with him because such cooperation would be a cooperation in evil and aggression (ta'āwun 'ala al-ithm wa-al-'udwān) instead of cooperation in good and piety (ta'āwun 'ala al-birr wa-al-taqwa).⁴

It is a common belief among the Muslims that public wealth by right belongs to Allah and hence to the Muslim

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 40.

2. Ibid., p. 41.

3. Ibid., p. 44.

4. Ibid., pp. 48-49.

community. Therefore Ibn Taymiyya explains that the distribution of this wealth must be according to the rules laid down by the sharī'a.¹ The Prophet himself

1. Ibn Taymiyya discusses in detail those entitled to wealth, from the different sources, mentioned in the Qur'ān.

Those specified for ghanīma, according to the Qur'ān:

"And know that whatever you take as spoils of war, a fifth thereof is for Allah, and for the messenger, and for the kinsman (who hath need) and the orphans and the needy, and the wayfarer...." VIII:41.

Those who are entitled to share in the fay' are enumerated in the verse:

"That which Allah gives as spoil to His messenger from the people of the townships, it is for Allah and His messenger, and for the near kin and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer; that it becomes not a commodity between the rich among you..." LIX:7.

As for the ṣadaqāt:

"They are only for the poor and needy and those who collect them and those whose hearts are to be reconciled and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of Allah, and (for) the wayfarers... a duty imposed by Allah...." IX:60

made this very clear. It is reported that a man asked the Prophet to give him something from the charity money (ṣadaqa) and the Prophet replied:

"Allah does not accept the distribution of the ṣadaqa by a prophet or anyone else; He divided the ṣadaqa between eight categories of people. If you belong to one of these categories, I will give you...."¹

The ruler, besides distributing wealth among those specified in the Qur'ān, has the discretion to use some of the wealth for establishing social services giving priority to urgent necessities such as army expenditure, payment of soldiers, jurists and all government employees. He also can use the money in protecting the borders, providing more equipment for the army and in the construction of roads, bridges, canals and so on.²

As an ideal umma, the umma wasat, the ruler and his subjects must endeavour to the best of their abilities to utilise the wealth for the general good of the community, following the example of the Prophet and his Companions. The wealth must be spent in the establishment of religion and the worldly needs of the people; and this is the only way of reforming people's religious and temporal affairs.³

It is significant that though Ibn Taymiyya emphasises

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 37.

2. Ibid., p. 53.

3. Ibid., p. 63.

the importance of the material prosperity of the people, he makes it clear that it is not an end in itself; it is simply a means to enable the Muslims to worship Allah and this is the ultimate goal of the government. All this discussion is presented in his book al-Siyāsa al-Shar'īyya. In his book al-Ḥisba, however, he offers a more comprehensive view of managing the state economy.

Al-Ḥisba by Ibn Taymiyya is regarded as being among the few books by early Muslims on economy.¹ The book reflects an approach which is too advanced for the time of Ibn Taymiyya. Though the general discussion supports free or private enterprise, Ibn Taymiyya presents valuable insights on state interference pointing to the circumstances and limits to such interference. Ibn Taymiyya also discusses some modern economic issues such as supply and demand (al-'ard wa-al-ṭalab), monopoly (iḥtikār), effective but fair control of prices (tarkīz al-as'ār) and many other issues concerning production of consumer goods and other important commodities. Ibn Taymiyya, basing his discussion on the main sources of the sharī'a and the opinions of the four schools of law, presents some solutions for the economic problems dominating his time. This is not to claim that Ibn Taymiyya has produced a full-fledged economic theory,

1. Al-Ḥisba, see the relevant section from p. 10 to 43.

for after all he is not an economist. Rather, his contribution in this field should be regarded as offering some guide lines on which a workable theory could be constructed.

The ruler's judicial duty is among his major responsibilities. This is obvious since the establishment of justice is the primary function of governments. Ibn Taymiyya commenting on the verse, "And if you judge between mankind judge justly..."¹ says that judgement (ḥukm) between people involves two spheres of action: punishment of offences that affect the community in general; and offences that affect the individual alone.²

The ruler's duty towards the punishment of offences that endanger the community in general, is given great attention by Ibn Taymiyya. These offences include highway robbery, theft and adultery. They also include the abuse of public wealth.³ The duty of the ruler is to find out these offences whenever they occur and punish those who commit them even if no complaints were made by the people against the offenders. This is because such offences are infringements of Allah's laws (ḥudūd Allah) and He has prescribed the punishment for them.

The enforcement of the punishment is an act of obedience to Allah, the reward of which is success and

1. Qur'ān, IV:58.

2. Al-Siyāsa, p. 67.

3. Ibid.

prosperity.¹ Therefore the sentences against the offenders must be fair and in accordance with the laws laid down in the Qur'ān and practised by the Prophet. The law should apply indiscriminately to all offenders. No intercession or bribery should delay the enforcement of these punishments. If the ruler refuses to carry out these punishments while he is able to do so, he is cursed by Allah, the angels and the people. Moreover, Allah will not accept any of his deeds. Because intercession and bribery are the main hindrances to the execution of the law, Ibn Taymiyya devotes a long discussion to each.

Ibn Taymiyya relates several traditions reported against intercession, the most famous of which is a tradition reported by 'Ā'isha² that the Prophet himself refused to accept intercession made on behalf of a prominent Qurashite woman who committed theft. The Prophet explained that he would have applied Allah's laws against his own daughter had she committed the offence. The Prophet explained the danger of discrimination in executing Allah's laws and added that such bias caused the destruction of the Israelites.³

Similarly bribery is strictly prohibited. No money should be accepted by the ruler, whether for

1. Ibid., p. 72.

2. The tradition reported in the Sahīḥayn (bāb al-shafā'a)

3. See al-Siyāsa, pp. 68-69.

himself or for the public treasury, in replacement of the prescribed punishment. Such money is regarded as malicious bribery (suht khabīth); and if the ruler accepts this, Ibn Taymiyya argues, he will be committing two offences: the curtailment of the law (ḥudūd) and the acceptance of bribery, thus neglecting his duty and committing an offence.¹ Bribery, Ibn Taymiyya adds, opens the door for deceit and forgery. It leads to the degradation, moral weakness and contempt of the ruler. Moreover it encourages avarice and corruption among the subjects and hence destroys the very essence of authority and government.²

The second type of offences are the crimes which affect individual rights in particular. These include murder, bodily injuries, insults and so on.³ In these offences, retaliation is permissible by the Qur'ān and the sunna. The duty of the ruler is to enable this retaliation to take place within the framework of justice. For example, the retaliation for murder should be inflicted on the murderer himself, not upon his relatives. Again the ruler must see that the law applies to all people equally irrespective of their origin or status. The details of these punishments are provided by both the

1. Ibid., p. 72.

2. Ibid., p. 74.

3. Ibid., p. 153.

Qur'ān and sunna and the choice of retaliation or forgiveness is given. The main function of the ruler is to safeguard the judgement according to the sharī'a.¹ The judiciary is by necessity independent in Islam since Allah is the Legislator, and the supremacy and impartiality of applying the law is an obligation; any interference in the law with the intention of changing it, modifying it or obstructing its application is strictly prohibited.

The ruler must make sure that the sharī'a laws are strictly applied without any change or modification. In cases of offences such as adultery, highway robbery and theft, the punishment is stated in the Qur'ān and more elaboration of it is found in the sunna of the Prophet and the precedents of the four rightly-guided caliphs. Provided that thorough investigation is made to distinguish between real crimes and false accusations,² and enough evidence is provided to confirm the offence, the ruler must see to it that the sentences are executed strictly and without pity which may lead to the abolition of the punishment.

Ibn Taymiyya maintains that the execution of the penal laws (ḥudūd) is like jihād, a kind of worship (min al-ʿibādāt), and it is a mercy from Allah to prevent

1. Ibid., p. 155.

2. Ibid., p. 159.

evil. Therefore the ruler in applying these punishments must also be motivated by concern and mercy for the people with the effect of curtailing their evil deeds, and warding off harm from them; like the father who is harsh towards his son to reform his manners, and the doctor who prescribes bitter medicine to cure his patient. As long as the ruler applies the punishments with the intention of reforming his subjects and obeying the commands of Allah, his efforts will be rewarded and his actions accepted.¹ On the other hand, if the ruler imposes these punishments due to personal grudges and prejudice against his subjects or to display his authority so that he may be exalted, then his reward will be contrary to his motives.²

Another duty of the ruler is consultation.³ As mentioned earlier, Ibn Taymiyya considers mutual cooperation between the ruler and his subjects to be the foundation on which the whole government and the system of the entire community rest. Consultation is one of the most effective means of bringing forward this cooperation. Ibn Taymiyya explains this in detail giving evidence from the Qur'ān,

1. Ibid., p. 105.

2. Ibid., p. 106.

3. The importance of this duty is explained earlier under the conditions of electing the ruler, see chapter III.

sunna and the precedents of the earlier caliphs.¹

Consultation is ordered by Allah in the Qur'ān:

"It was by the mercy of Allah that you were lenient with them. For if you had been stern and fierce of heart, they would have dispersed from round about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them upon the conduct of affairs...."²

Another verse on consultation:

"And those who answer the call of their Lord and establish prayer and whose affair is a matter of counsel and who spend of what We have bestowed on them..."³

The sunna of the Prophet is full of examples of consultation. He consulted his Companions in matters where no revelation is made, such as the details of affairs of war; such consultation softened the hearts of his Companions and represented to them an example to be followed.

The four rightly-guided caliphs, and especially the first two, used to consult people and cooperate with them in administering the affairs of the community. Caliph 'Umar emphasised the need for consultation and made it a condition for electing the ruler. He appointed a

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 169.

2. Qur'ān, III:159.

3. Qur'ān, XLII:38.

consultative council of six to choose the caliph after him.

The ruler must follow the counsel given to him if it is in conformity with the Qur'ān, sunna or ijmā'. If different opinions are given to him, he should choose the nearest one to the sources of the sharī'a. If he cannot decide which is the closest to the main sources of the sharī'a, then he must follow the counsel of the person in whose knowledge of religion he has trust.¹

It is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya's main concern is with the application of consultation in principle rather than with specific procedures or institutions. He leaves it open, as in the Qur'ān, for whoever is capable of giving advice to be consulted.

Ibn Taymiyya then discusses the ruler's religious duties. Since the ruler's main duty is the preservation of religion, it follows that the performance of religious functions are his primary responsibilities. Ibn Taymiyya devotes special attention to two religious duties, namely prayer and jihād.

Prayer, according to all Muslims, is the most important religious function. It is described as the pillar of religion ('imād al-dīn).²

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 170.

2. Ibid., p. 21.

The importance of prayer is understood from the place it enjoys in both the Qur'ān and the tradition. Prayer forbids evil doing and helps people to perform obedience to Allah. The Qur'ān says:

"Recite that which hath been inspired to you of the scripture, and establish prayer. Lo! Prayer preserves (one) from lewdness and iniquity, but verily remembrance of Allah is more important. And Allah knows what you do..."¹

The Qur'ān often refers to prayer as a great task performed by the devoted and the sincere. It also associates prayer with endurance of hardships and patience. It says:

"Seek help in patience and prayer; and truly it is hard save for the humble-minded...."²

The reference to prayer and its association with good deeds is scattered all through the Qur'ān.³

The Prophet made it clear that in prayer lies the whole importance of religion; Ibn Taymiyya explains that it is the best of all good deeds (a'raf al-ma'rūf).⁴ The one who maintains prayers maintains religion and the one

1. Qur'ān, XXV:45.

2. Ibid., II:45.

3. Ibid., II:43, 45; IV:102, 103; VI:162; VII:70; XXIX:45 and XLVIII:29.

4. See al-Hisba, p. 10.

who abandons it destroys religion. It is for this reason that the Prophet made a link between the performance of prayer and other duties. He advised one of his agents:

"O Mu'ādh; the most important of all affairs according to me is prayer...."¹

Similarly Caliph 'Umar emphasised the importance of performing prayer. He reminded his agents that the performance of prayer is the most important duty and it follows that whoever neglects it would neglect his other duties even more.²

It is important to note that until the beginning of the Umayyad time, the caliphs themselves used to lead people in prayer. Later caliphs restricted themselves to the leadership of Friday congregations and 'Īd prayers, and they employed men to lead the rest of the prayers. It is also the duty of the ruler to appoint public inspectors (muḥtasibūn) one of whose duty is to supervise attendance at prayers, and to punish those who refuse to do so.³

Another important religious duty of the ruler is jihād. It is described as the hump (sanām) of religion; next in importance to prayer. Though it is not one of the

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 21.

2. Ibid.

3. Al-Hisba, p. 9.

five pillars of Islam; the 'ulamā' agreed that jihād is more rewarding (afḍal) than pilgrimage and the lesser pilgrimage (al-ḥajj wa-al-'umra) and also more rewarding than voluntary prayer (ṣalāt al-tatawū') and voluntary fasting.¹

Ibn Taymiyya traces the revelation on jihād. It was first made permissible after the Prophet moved to Medina:

"Sanction is given to those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory..."²

Jihād is made obligatory later when the following verse was revealed:

"Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful to you, but it may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you. Allah Knows, you know not..."³

The obligation of jihād is further confirmed in the Medinese chapters; those who performed⁴ the jihād were

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 130.

2. Qur'ān, XXII:39.

3. Ibid., II:216. Ibn Taymiyya cites more verses on jihād in his Risāla ila al-Sultān al-Nāṣir fī Sha'n al-Tatar, p. 9.

4. Ibn Taymiyya explains that if a Muslim is unable to fight then it is his duty to contribute by his wealth, if he has any. See Risāla ila al-Sultān al-Nāṣir fī Sha'n al-Tatar, p. 13.

glorified, praised and promised the best of rewards. On the other hand, those who deflected and refused to strive for the cause of Allah were accused of hypocrisy and were warned of severe punishment.¹

Ibn Taymiyya also gives an exposition of the traditions on jihād explaining its merits and the place it occupies in relation to other religious duties.² He also explains fully the types of jihād ordained on the Muslims such as jihād against the pagans who wronged the Muslims, jihād against the pagans who obstructed the smooth mission of the Muslim preachers and propagators and jihād against the infidels who broke their covenants with the Muslims.³

Muslims agree that jihād should also be waged against any group of Muslims who reject any of the principal laws of Islam. An example of this is the jihād waged by Abū Bakr against the tribes who refused to pay the zakāt, and the jihād waged by 'Alī against the Khārijites who seceded from the main body of the Muslims.⁴ Whenever the situation necessitates jihād, it is the duty of the ruler to organise the people, equip the army and declare the jihād. If he

1. Al-Siyāsa, p. 127.

2. Ibid., p. 130.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., pp. 134-5.

refuses to do so, his punishment will be humiliation and loss of power.¹ Ibn Taymiyya does not particularly discuss whether the ruler himself ought to lead or take part in the actual fighting. The precedent of the Prophet and the four rightly-guided caliphs is that they themselves took part in fighting. Al-Ghazālī, however, makes it clear that it is not necessary for the ruler to participate in the battlefield if he is confident of the leadership of his army commanders and the sufficiency of his army.²

Similarly, the ruler must make sure that jihād is carried out according to justice and in conformity with the sharī'a; thus there should be no unjustified aggression on the part of Muslims; the Qur'ān says:

"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loves not the aggressors...."³

Likewise, there should be no fighting against allies or against those with whom the Muslims have covenants and above all there should be no killing of women, children or the aged men.⁴

1. See Risāla ila al-Sultān al-Nāṣir fi Sha'n al-Tatar, p. 14.

2. Al-Ghazālī, Fadā'ih, p. 184.

3. Qur'ān, II:190.

4. Ibn Taymiyya provides a tradition by the Prophet in which he forbade his people to kill women, children or aged men. See al-Siyāsa, pp. 132-3.

Ibn Taymiyya explains that jihād must be justly waged because the motive behind it is that the Word of Allah remains supreme (an takūn kalimat Allah hiya al-‘ulya) and that the whole religion remains with Allah. Therefore people who do not obstruct the fulfilment of this purpose should not be fought.¹ Ibn Taymiyya maintains that if jihād is performed in its proper sense, then nothing by way of virtue or reward is similar to it. For it symbolises all kinds of worship since it demonstrates love and reverence to Allah, submission to His cause as well as devotion in His worship.²

It is no wonder that in his advice to the ruler, Ibn Taymiyya puts great emphasis on the duty of jihād. There was urgent need for jihād during his time to defend the country against Mongol aggression. Ibn Taymiyya's negotiations with the Mamluk authorities regarding jihād against the Mongols have been well covered by historians and by Ibn Taymiyya's biographers.³

The last religious duty of the ruler is to organise

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. See Risāla ila al-Sultān al-Nāṣir fī-Sha'n al-Tatar. Also the section on Ibn Taymiyya's confrontation of the Mongols in chapter one of this thesis. See also Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, vol. XIV, p. 25; Ibn Rajab, Dhayl, vol. II, p. 395; Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, al-‘Uqūd, pp. 118, 120, 177.

the collection and distribution of the zakāt. The importance of zakāt is evident in both the Qur'ān and the sunna. It is often linked with prayer, and the people who carry out both duties sincerely are described as the true believers. But the zakāt is not only an act of obedience and submission to Allah, it is also a token of recognition of the political authority. Thus, refusal to pay the zakāt is disobedience to Allah, an act of apostasy; and a rebellion against the authority of the state. Therefore it is the duty of the ruler to see that zakāt is collected and distributed in the manner decreed by the sharī'a.¹

All the religious duties of the ruler are implied by the concept of al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar (the ordering of good and forbidding of evil) which is the essence of religion. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the state is established primarily to order good and forbid evil, which covers all types of activities and duties. Ibn Taymiyya believes that the reform of people's temporal as well as religious affairs is only possible through al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar. Thus it is the duty of all Muslims to apply this concept and cooperate to build the community whose distinctive

1. The duty of zakāt has been discussed before under the ruler's duty of distributing the wealth at the beginning of this chapter.

characteristic is the ordering of good and forbidding of evil, as described in the Qur'ān:

"You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind. You enjoin right conduct and forbid evil and you believe in Allah...."¹

The ordering of good and forbidding of evil is enjoined on the Muslims by many verses of the Qur'ān and further illustration of it is covered by tradition. It is an obligation on the community (fard 'ala al-kifāya). Those who perform it are praised, but if no one does it, the whole community is held blameworthy. This duty can be achieved by action, words or even silent disapproval.²

Ibn Taymiyya places great importance on al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar. He wrote a book³ on this subject in addition to composing several passages about it dispersed all through his other works. He regards

1. Qur'ān, III:110.

2. The tradition by the Prophet says, "Whoever among you witnesses an evil deed (munkar), should change it by his hand; if that is not possible then by his tongue (words); if that is also not possible, then he must disapprove of it in his heart which is the lowest rank of faith..." Reported in the Ṣaḥīḥayn, (bāb al-īmān).

3. The book is 'Al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf wa-al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar,' edited by al-Munnajid, Beirut, 1976.

al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar as "the most obligatory, the most virtuous and best of deeds..."¹ provided that it is both "sincere" for the sake of Allah and "correct" in accordance with the sunna of His prophet. Therefore this concept is of particular importance to his political thought.

Ibn Taymiyya mentions three requirements to be observed in performing al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar. Firstly, the knowledge of what is "ma'rūf" and what is "munkar" and the ability to distinguish between the two. Secondly, the use of gentleness (rifq) in applying it and thirdly, patience and endurance of any possible harm which may result from the reaction of the recipients.² Ibn Taymiyya holds that people should not refrain from performing this duty because of the difficulty of fulfilling these requirements. Such abstinence is in itself disobedience (ma'siya).³ Thus it is a central concept and in its wider context comprises the whole religion. In a narrower sense, however, it refers to the supervision of the performance of religious duties; and of the moral conduct of the people in general. The

1. Al-Hisba, p. 69.

2. Ibid., p. 72.

3. Ibid., p. 100. See also Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Amr bi-al-Ma'rūf wa-al-Nahy 'an al-Munkar, pp. 28-29 and 42.

duty of the ruler is not simply to order the good and forbid the evil but to urge his subjects to do the same. The institution of al-hisba is established for this purpose. The muhtasib is the government official who deals with small affairs which are not usually taken to court such as disputes in weights, measures, and other problems related to fraud and deception in food. He also supervises attendance at prayer especially Friday congregation.¹

On the whole it could be said that Ibn Taymiyya, like all jurists, assigns to the ruler both religious and temporal duties. But it is important to notice that he does not hold the ruler solely responsible for the achievement of any of these duties. The extensive mutual cooperation between the ruler and the subjects reduces the ruler's duties to that of a supervisor, at most an organiser.

The Duties of the Subjects:

As mentioned before, the subjects share all the duties of the ruler. In addition, the subjects have two more duties: giving advice to the ruler and rendering obedience to him. The giving of counsel is ordered by the Prophet; The tradition runs:

"Three of your deeds are more acceptable to Allah than all other deeds: To worship Him without a partner,

1. See al-Hisba, pp. 9-15.

to be united by the bond of Allah and never to disunite, and to give counsel to the holders of your affairs..."¹

Another tradition runs as follows:

"Religion is the counsel (al-dīn al-naṣīḥa)," repeated three times, and when the Prophet was asked as to whom the counsel is due, he answered, "To Allah, His Messenger, the rulers of the Muslims and the common people..."²

Moreover, the duty of giving counsel is implied in the ruler's duty of consultation. It is understood that since the ruler is required to consult his people, it follows that it is the duty of his subjects to give him proper counsel, everyone according to his ability. Also the duty of al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar makes it the responsibility of all people (the ruler included to correct each other through advice and admonition.³

1. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, (bāb al-aqḍiya), also see al-Siyāsa, pp. 173-4.

2. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, (bāb al-īmān).

3. Though Ibn Taymiyya explains that al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar is the main responsibility of ūlū al-amr, the 'ulamā' and umarā', he also believes that everyone must command and forbid; even if one is alone one must command oneself to do good and forbid evil. Thus to him ordering of good and forbidding of evil is a necessity and he believes that it must be done in accordance with the Qur'ān and sunna. See al-Hisba, p. 102.

The second and most controversial duty of the subjects is that of obedience to the authority. There is a consensus, in principle, among Muslim jurists on obedience to authority because it is a command by Allah. The Qur'ānic verse says:

"Obey Allah, obey the Messenger and those who hold the authority among you..."¹

This verse is often interpreted in the light of the verse preceding it which enjoins the rendering of dues to their owners and the rule according to justice.² Thus the verse cited above is strongly connected with it; the people must render their obedience to the holders of authority who rule justly and render trusts to their owners. Some interpretations even suggest that the holders of affairs (ūlū al-amr) in the verse refers only to those of them who command the good and who are themselves righteous leaders (umarā' ḥaqq) not the unjust ones (umarā' al-jūr).³ Thus the connection between the justice of the rulers and the obedience of the subjects, is established. This view contrasts apparently with that of Ibn Taymiyya.

Commenting on the interpretation of the Qur'ānic verse, Ibn Taymiyya argues that obedience to the ruler is not absolute. The verse makes clear that obedience to

1. Qur'ān, IV:59.

2. The verse concerned is IV:58.

3. See al-Zamakhsharī, Tafsīr al-Kashāf, vol. I, pp. 523-4.

Allah and His Messenger is absolute by repeating the verb "obey". But obedience to the holders of authority is not absolute, it is an obedience restricted to conformity with the sharī'a; that is the reason, Ibn Taymiyya explains, the order "obey" is not repeated in the case of the holders of authority.¹ This is mainly directed against the Shī'ites' claim of absolute obedience to their rulers.

Ibn Taymiyya explains that obedience is in essence an obedience to the command itself not to the ruler who issues it. People should examine the command given by the ruler and decide on its conformity or otherwise with the sharī'a; then they either render their obedience or withhold it according to the judgement reached. According to this criterion, Ibn Taymiyya holds that all commands which result in obedience to Allah must be obeyed even if the ruler who issues them is wicked (fāsiq). On the other hand, any commands which are contrary to the sharī'a involving disobedience (ma'siya) to Allah and His Messenger, must be disobeyed even if the ruler who issues them is a just ruler (ʿādil).² This shows that the interest of Ibn Taymiyya is centred basically and entirely on the observance of the rule of the sharī'a.

Besides the Qur'ān, the obligation of obedience is

1. Minhāj, vol. II, p. 86.

2. Ibid.

strengthened further by several traditions by the Prophet, among them:

"It is the duty of the Muslim to listen and obey in matters which he likes or dislikes unless he is ordered to disobey Allah; (in which case) he has neither to listen nor to obey."¹

Another tradition:

"No obedience in sin."²

The first speech by Abū Bakr after his election set the boundaries of obedience of rulers. He said:

"Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger. If I disobey the laws of Allah and that of His Messenger, I have no more right to your obedience."³

It is thus clear that obedience to the ruler is obligatory but at the same time conditional. This is also understood from the contract signed by the ruler and the people. The oath of allegiance which people swear to the ruler at the time of his election to power

1. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ (bāb al-jihād, also in bāb al-bay'a) cited by Ibn Taymiyya in Minhāj, vol. I, p. 150.

2. Ibn Taymiyya quotes other traditions such as:
"Whoever orders you to disobey Allah, do not obey him" and "No obedience to a creature which involves a disobedience to the Creator..." See Minhāj, vol. II, p. 86, also vol. I, p. 150.

3. Al-Ṭabarī, Tarīkh, vol. I, p. 182.

is made on the condition that the ruler follows and applies the sharī'a. However, this term of the contract remains theoretical. In reality, Muslims are faced with a dilemma. The ruler who is expected to be just, pious and the guardian of their interests in accordance with the sharī'a, in some cases turns out to be a tyrant, wicked and negligent of their interests. Two problems present themselves: the subject's obligation of obedience to the tyrannical ruler, and the possibility of his removal from office without creating dissension. Jurists did not present a satisfactory solution for either of these problems.

With regard to the obligation of obedience to the unjust ruler, there are three views.¹ First that people should render their obedience to him if he orders obedience to Allah. The second view is that he should be totally disobeyed. The third view is to differentiate between the ruler and his governor, if the governor becomes wicked (fasāqā) then it is possible to depose him without creating dissension. Ibn Taymiyya shares with the majority of jurists the first view which says that the ruler's commands should be obeyed only if they

1. See Minhāj, II, p. 86.

conform with obedience to Allah.¹

The question of obedience raises its antithesis, the problem of disobedience and rebellion against unjust rulers. There exists among Muslim groups different attitudes towards this problem.² At one extreme are the Khārijites who recognised the duty of the subjects to obey the ruler, but if this ruler deviated from the sharī'a, or committed a sin, then a revolt should be staged to depose him. This uncompromising attitude became the major characteristic of the Khārijites' political thought. At the other extreme is the Shī'ite view of absolute, unquestionable obedience to their divinely chosen infallible imāms, who, as Ibn Taymiyya explains, with the exception of 'Alī, remained imāms in theory only as far as political power is concerned. The Shī'ites' attitude towards the Sunnite caliphs is that of hostility,

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1. Neither Ibn Taymiyya nor the jurists before him elaborate on the issue of disobedience to the rules and laws that do not conform with the commands of Allah; and the consequences of this disobedience.
 2. See article by Muḥib al-Ḥasan, "Medieval Muslim Political Theories of Rebellion Against the State," Islamic Culture, 18 (1944), pp. 36-44.

resistance and even rebellion.¹

The Sunnites endeavour to establish a compromise between the two extremes. Thus they advocate a conditional obedience which is restricted to the laws that conform with the sharī'a. For orders which do not conform with the sharī'a, the Sunnites tolerate a disobedience that does not amount to rebellion. The Sunnite jurists build this view on a number of traditions, among which is:²

"After me you will witness events and bad deeds (by the rulers). When the Prophet was asked, 'What do you order us to do?' he replied, 'Render to them what you ought to render, and ask Allah for your rights.'..."³

Another tradition says:

"Whoever sees an evil deed (munkar) by his ruler, must be patient, for the person who secedes from the group (al-jamā'a) will meet his death like the people of the age of ignorance (jāhiliyya)."⁴

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1. Muḥib al-Ḥasan, "Medieval Muslim Political Theories of Rebellion against the State", Islamic Culture, (1944), pp. 36-44.
 2. Ibn Taymiyya mentions a large number of traditions on forbidding rebellion against rulers. See Minhāj, vol. II, pp. 87-88, vol. I, p. 150.
 3. Reported in Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ (bāb al-imāra).
 4. Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ (bāb al-fitan).

Depending on these traditions jurists strongly oppose rebellion against unjust rulers on the ground that rebellion leads to the breaking down of authority which results in anarchy and civil war which are greater evils than injustice.

It is worth mentioning that earlier jurists admit the possibility of the ruler's forfeiture of office. Al-Māwardī mentions that the imām loses office as a result of heresy, lack of probity, loss of liberty or infirmity of mind or body.¹ But he offers no suggestion on how this termination of office could be brought about. Ibn Ḥazm goes further than al-Māwardī by stating that if the imām deviates from the main stream by not leading people in accordance with the Qur'ān and the sunna, he must be opposed and punished for doing so; and if it is not possible to avoid harm except by deposing him, then he must be deposed and another imām installed. But like al-Māwardī, he makes no attempt to explain the procedure for this punishment and deposition.² Nevertheless both al-Māwardī and Ibn Ḥazm are to be credited with admitting the necessity to depose the unjust imām.

Later jurists were so obsessed with the fear of anarchy that they ended in tolerating the rule of tyranny. Al-Ghazālī argues that if there is no properly constituted

1. Al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām, pp. 14-16.

2. Ibn Ḥazm, al-Fiṣal, vol. IV, p. 102.

authority, it does not mean that people can do without a government. He says:

"It is known that to feed on a dead animal is forbidden, but death is worse than that.... which is better: to dismiss judges, abolish other responsibilities and stop contracting marriages and other social services... or to tolerate and acknowledge the authority defective as it is? It is the duty of wise people to choose the lesser evil...."¹

Ibn Taymiyya, like al-Ghazālī and most Sunnite jurists, opposes rebellion against the ruling authority. The main point of his argument is that rebellion generates civil war and dissension and endangers the unity and integrity of the community as a whole. This is the general argument given by most jurists. But Ibn Taymiyya in discussing this issue, examines the problem analytically, presenting the point of view of the Qur'ān, the tradition and the historical experiences.

Ibn Taymiyya explains that lawful fighting is originally fighting for the sake of Allah, so that His word remains supreme; and this fighting is decreed by Allah in the Qur'ān such as the fighting of infidels, the fighting of innovators like the Khārijites who seceded from the Muslim community and declared war against the

1. Al-Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, pp. 107-8 and Faḍā'ih, p. 167.

Muslims, the fighting of offenders like the highway robbers who endanger the security of the people in general and finally the fighting of the aggressor group (al-fi' a al-bāghiya).¹ Lawful fighting does not include fighting against unjust rulers. Ibn Taymiyya further illustrates that according to the Qur'ānic verse:

"And if two parties of believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them. And if one party of them does wrong to the other, fight that which does wrong till it returns unto the ordinance of Allah, then if it returns make peace between them justly and act equitably, Allah loves the equitable..."²

fighting is not the first solution even against aggressors. Allah orders the peaceful settlement (iṣlāḥ) first, but if after the settlement one of the fighting groups starts aggression again, then it must be fought. But, Ibn Taymiyya argues, this does not mean that anyone who continues to do injustice should be fought. The injustice of the rulers is different than that of the highway robbers, in that the rulers do not start the fighting, they only deprive people of their rights of wealth, jobs and so on. Moreover, when people fight unjust rulers,

1. Minhāj, vol. II, p. 87.

2. Qur'ān, XLIX:9.

they fight them to get their rights. Thus, it is fighting for worldly gain not for the sake of religion, so that Allah's word may rule supreme. Therefore any fighting which is not purely for the sake of Allah and His religion is unlawful.¹

Ibn Taymiyya supports his argument by a number of traditions all of which according to him clearly forbid rebellion against unjust rulers; of these traditions:

"The best of your imāms are those whom you love and who love you and for whom you pray and who pray for you; and the worst of your imāms are those whom you hate and who hate you and whom you curse and who curse you... When the Prophet was asked: 'O Messenger of Allah should we fight them?' he answered, 'No, as long as they pray...'"²

Ibn Taymiyya mentions several other traditions all of which forbid fighting against unjust rulers. Ibn Taymiyya illustrates his view further by concrete historical examples. He maintains that except for the fighting of the Khārijites by 'Alī, all other battles between the Muslims, such as the battle of the Camel and Ṣiffin, were unjustified. All

1. Minhāj, vol. III, p. 37.

2. The tradition reported in Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, (bāb al-imāra).

3. Ibn Taymiyya quotes some traditions and repeats them several times in Minhāj, vol. I, pp. 148-150; vol. II, pp. 87, 210 and vol. III, p. 37.

Muslims realise that these wars resulted in bloodshed and destruction of the Muslims. Those who took leading parts in the battles, like Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr and 'Ā'isha regretted the fact that they did, since no good resulted from the fighting.¹

It is evident that armed resistance against unjust rulers is totally unacceptable to the Sunnite jurists; Ibn Taymiyya is no exception. But the problem is that jurists did not offer a comprehensive theory of peaceful deposition of a tyrannical ruler. With so much importance and great emphasis put by Ibn Taymiyya on the role of the ahl al-shawka in establishing and sustaining the political power, it seems strange that he does not advise the ahl al-shawka to use the same prerogative in removing from office the unjust ruler. It is evident that Ibn Taymiyya is not unaware of the power of the ahl al-shawka to depose by legal means, the unjust ruler. But it seems that the political instability and external aggression in his own time compelled him to ignore the question altogether and concentrate simply on obedience for the sake of unity. The main reason seems to be the absence of any text or precedent by the salaf of deposing the ruler. This represents a weakness in his political thought. For though on the whole Ibn Taymiyya's contribution in many issues on Islamic political thought is obvious, on the

1. Minhāj, vol. II, pp. 185, 210.

question of deposition of the ruler, he harks back to the view held by his predecessors that the subjects should render their obedience to the wicked, tyrannical rulers and should not wage war against them.

CONCLUSION

The classical formulation of the khilāfa was propounded by al-Māwardī at a time when the sultān controlled all power and the caliph was only a nominal head. Other jurists also overlooked this waning influence of the khilāfa and continued to formulate their theories on the same pattern as al-Māwardī, whose own formulation remained authoritative until Ibn Taymiyya took the bold step of shifting the interest from the khilāfa to the sharī'a.

This is the main contribution of Ibn Taymiyya to Islamic political thought. Earlier jurists, by concentrating on the institution of the khilāfa as a symbol of unity, had neglected the sharī'a. Ibn Taymiyya became aware of the need to preserve the sharī'a as the ideal law and constitution of the umma. His reforming zeal was aimed at the restoration of the sharī'a to secure the survival of Islam in its pristine purity. This he tried to achieve by going back to the sunna of the Prophet, by recognising the importance of the ijmā' of the 'ulamā' as the voice of the umma and by advocating administrative reform. He totally ignored the problem of the khilāfa as a form of government and concentrated on other issues.

He stated the basic fact that Allah has created the universe to serve Him, and that religion and politics

should not be separated, since otherwise great harm occurs to both. He denied the obligation of having only one imām governing the whole community and emphasised the solidarity of all the autonomous states in preserving the unity of the community.

Ibn Taymiyya discussed the khilāfa only in one work when he wrote his Minhāj al-Sunna in refutation of the Shī'ite theory of the imāmate and even in this he did not adhere to the classical Sunnite view of the khilāfa but produced his own version of it. While all jurists take the khilāfa as the starting point for the discussion of Islamic political thought, Ibn Taymiyya takes the whole issue further back and introduces the era of the Prophet which led to the establishment of the khilāfa itself. He explains the Prophet's role and functions and differentiates between nubuwwa and mulk. He recognises the Prophet's political functions as complementary to his mission. Ibn Taymiyya's aim is to show that the Prophet's status was not that of ordinary kings and by doing so to refute the Shī'ites' claim to the right of hereditary succession of their imāms. It is especially significant that he introduces the era of the Prophet in investigating the origin and nature of Islamic political authority.

When he moves to discuss the khilāfa itself, he again treats it in a different way from the classical one. The khilāfa is only that of the four rightly-guided caliphs. This he links with the Prophet's era and calls

it khilāfāt al-nubuwwa which to him continued only for thirty years, as mentioned in tradition. What followed that is according to him mulk, even though people continued to call it khilāfa.

In discussing the khilāfa (and any other political power) he emphasises as indispensable the support of ahl al-shawka for both establishing and maintaining political authority. This concern for ahl al-shawka is not emphasised by jurists before Ibn Taymiyya who legitimised the mere designation by the previous caliph and thus approved of the choice by one man, which ultimately led to hereditary rule and the formation of dynasties.

Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the khilāfa (and for that matter his discussion of political thought in general) is characterised by political realism and pragmatism. His views on the choice of the ruler, his qualifications and functions show this. His concept of maṣlaḥa with regard to these issues helps to offer many solutions. The ruler should be chosen who would best serve the public interest of the community. He need not be infallible as the Shī'ites' imām, nor a possessor of all ideal qualities as the orthodox Sunnite caliph. Ibn Taymiyya's expectations are modest, for he views the ruler as working in harmony and cooperation with his subjects to achieve together the purposes of the state rather than as being solely responsible for the achievement of all goals.

The functions of the state and the duties of the ruler are according to Ibn Taymiyya, primarily religious, aimed at worshipping Allah. The fulfilment of these require abilities in both religious and temporal affairs. Thus Ibn Taymiyya regards the material prosperity of the people as a prerequisite for their spiritual elevation.

Ibn Taymiyya, by close and careful examination of the sources of the sharī'a, deduces the basic general principles on which a comprehensive political theory may be built. His own formulation suggests that of a confederation in which all the autonomous states are constructed on the basis of consultation and justice and guided by the sharī'a as their constitution. The main responsibility of all is to cooperate to protect Muslim territory against external aggression and to defend its faith against heresies and innovations. The political realism, moderation and flexibility with which Ibn Taymiyya treats his discussion of political thought, render his system of government a dynamic one, feasible at any time of history, and this is the very essence of the sharī'a itself.

It is no wonder then that the influence of Ibn Taymiyya's political thought has never been extinct. In medieval times the influence of his ideas, even on the great thinker Ibn Khāldūn, has been detected. But what is more important is his influence on later centuries and on modern and contemporary times. The most remarkable influence of Ibn Taymiyya was felt in the Wahhābī movement

in the 18th century. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1791) from Najd, studied the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and through his relationship with Muḥammad b. Sa'ūd (1768), the amīr of Najd, was able to impose his creed which was mainly based on and drawn from Ibn Taymiyya's teachings of restoring Islam to its original purity. Though Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's attempt ended in founding the Sa'ūdī dynasty, his zeal gave an inspiration for reform in various parts of the Muslim world; the most important of which was the Sanūsī Brotherhood in 1837 in the Eastern Sahara, and some other movements in India.

Ibn Taymiyya's influence has special importance for modern reformists, in particular for those who are concerned with the purification of Islam, in both belief and practice, from innovations and heresies. Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849) and later his disciple Rashīd Riḍā and their school reflect clearly in their teaching the call for following the way of the salaf and adopting the sharī'a. Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya's teachings influenced the modernists of various Muslim countries and the contemporary salafiyya movements and schools which realised the necessity of reform and advocated the establishment of an Islamic state governed by al-siyāsa al-shar'iyya.

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