

Statecraft in Turbulent Times: A Tenth-Century Arabic Mirror for Princes
(*Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa* by al-Wazīr al-Maghribī)

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For my parents

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Finally, I would like to conclude with few words by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), a medieval Muslim intellectual and author of the seminal work, *The Muqaddimah* (Prolegomena):

“...after all has been said, I am conscious of imperfections when I look at the work of scholars past and present. I confess my inability to penetrate so difficult a subject. I wish that men of scholarly competence and wide knowledge would look at the book with a critical, rather than a complacent eye, and silently correct and overlook the mistakes they come upon. The capital of knowledge that an individual scholar has to offer is small. Admission (of one’s shortcomings) saves from censure. Kindness from colleagues is hoped for. It is God whom I ask to make our deeds acceptable in His sight.”¹

¹ ‘Abd-ar-Rahman Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: an introduction to history*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. N. J. Dawood (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 9.

Abstract of Thesis

Statecraft in Turbulent Times: A Tenth-Century Arabic Mirror for Princes (*Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa* by al-Wazīr al-Maghribī)

Al-Wazīr Maghribī's *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa* is an ethico-political treatise that propounds some ideas and ideals of statecraft and sheds considerable light on the political milieu of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate two centuries before it completely collapsed at the hands of the Mongols in 1258AD. This little-known Arabic mirror for princes conjures up images of a hectic time very similar to that of the post-Arab Spring Middle East. Writing in a different time yet under similar contexts, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī al-Maghribī (370-418/981-1027), better known as al-Wazīr al-Maghribī, divided statecraft into three distinct, yet interdependent, categories in a bid to help the ruler to comport himself and to tailor his policies toward his courtiers and subjects, especially in volatile times. Unlike the works of medieval jurists that focused on maintaining the caliphate or at the very least the application of *Shari'a* and unlike the contributions of philosophers that mostly aimed at establishing far-fetched utopias, the medieval mirror for princes genre focused on the more pragmatic regulation of the affairs of the people and the polity. Yet, al-Maghribī's treatise has drawn little to no interest in academic circles. I hope this study of al-Maghribī's political thought can help fill this lacuna. This thesis offers a textual and contextual study of this didactic oeuvre, expounding on its language, themes and setting. It first sets the scene for understanding the background of al-Maghribī and his sundry contributions. Next, a detailed summary of the overarching themes, and a thorough analysis of the language and style of the text ensue. It also proffers a close textual reading of the Islamic overtones and Greek and Persian underpinnings articulated masterfully throughout this treatise. I then go on to pinpoint the mechanisms of statesmanship as put forth by al-Maghribī. Next, I situate this treatise into its temporal context by revisiting the eventful era in which al-Maghribī lived. Lastly, I offer a much-needed English translation of the Arabic text. This thesis draws heavily on primary and secondary sources in Arabic and English. Penned in a time very similar to that of the post-Arab Spring Middle East, this treatise could in fact serve as a guidebook for contemporary Muslims rulers as its practical advice and wisdom are just as applicable today as they were in the 4th/10th and early 5th/11th centuries.

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Table of Transliteration

<i>Arabic</i>	<i>Romanization</i>	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>Romanization</i>
ء	'	ل	l
ب	b	م	m
ت	t	ن	n
ث	th	ه	h
ج	j	و	w
ح	ḥ	ي	y
خ	kh	ة	h/t
د	d	ال	al-
ذ	dh	<i>Short Vowels</i>	
ر	r	َ	a
ز	z	ِ	i
س	s	ُ	u
ش	sh	<i>Long Vowels</i>	
ص	ṣ	َا	ā
ض	ḍ	ِي	ī
ط	ṭ	ُو	ū
ظ	ẓ	َا	ā
ع	‘	َا	ā
غ	gh	َا	double letter
ف	f	َا	an
ق	q	َا	in
ك	k	َا	un

A Note on Transliteration: Transliterations have been preserved intact in direct quotations. Table adapted from ALA-Library of Congress Romanization Tables: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/romanization/arabic.pdf>

Some Maxims from *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*

Below are some of the maxims that reverberate throughout al-Wazīr al-Maghribī's treatise:

- Do the sport that suits you well and do not ever overeat, and you will keep diseases at bay.
- There is no position more sublime than dignity. Nor is there an adornment better than the glamor of the powerful sages whose orders are readily obeyed. Nor is there a better embellishment than appraisal and gratitude.
- The ruler should never put off until tomorrow what he should do today.
- Responsibilities are closely tied to their respective timings. When it comes to salient tasks, procrastination is the most catastrophic trait that can bring about dysfunctions and give rise to the decline of empires.
- The crux of statecraft encompasses enforcing penalties and fulfilling rewards.
- A ruler is Allah's vicegerent who is entrusted with managing Allah's blessings, and, therefore, should grant the wayfarer and the pauper their rights and attend to their needs as necessary.
- Morals to rulers are like the organs to the body. If these organs are not functioning well or are incidentally idle, the whole body will be dysfunctional.
- The courtiers to the ruler are more akin to the tools to the craftsman. As some of these tools may need to be regularly maintained, overhauled and sharpened, so do the courtiers.
- A ruler whose decisiveness is only reserved to some of his subjects is not really a true statesman.
- Seditions are oftentimes sparked by the complaints of the weak and the malice of the rich.
- Knowledge perspicuously pinpoints others' experiences and allows for the preparation for calamities
- Bribery is the root cause of injustice and the fountainhead of corruption.
- A ruler should control his city as tight as a man would control his house; nobody can enter or leave except with his permission.

Introduction

Literary texts often reflect the socio-political conditions of the time in which they were written, and there exist texts that masterfully paint vivid pictures of the eventful 4th/10th century that coincided with the breakup of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. Among these texts is al-Wazīr al-Maghribī’s *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa* (Treatise on Statecraft). This treatise conjures up images of a chaotic milieu very similar to that of the post-Arab Spring Middle East, where many rulers felt the need to consolidate power as they struggled with foreign aggression and domestic dissent. Writing in a different time yet under similar contexts, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Maghribī (370-418/981-1027), better known as al-Wazīr al-Maghribī, proposed a three-pronged blueprint where he divided statecraft into three distinct, yet interdependent categories that help the ruler comport himself and tailor his policies toward his courtly elites and the subjects at large, especially in volatile times of instability.

By and large, the existing scholarship focuses excessively either on the works of philosophers who call for utopias or on the works of jurists who typically theorize for the revival of a utopian caliphate or at least the implementation of *Shari‘a*.² Unlike the works of jurists and philosophers, the pragmatic expediency in the mirror for princes³ makes them more realistic and reflective of the socio-political environment of their times. Al-

² To name but a few works of jurists, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Mawardī (d.450/1058), *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭaniya*; Abū Ya‘la Muḥammad ibn al-Farra’ (d. 458/1066), *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭaniya*, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiya (d.728/1328), *al-Siyāsa al-Shar‘iyya*. Among the philosophical contributions, the seminal works of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (339/950) and Avicenna (d. 427/1037) stand out.

³ Throughout this thesis, I use the terms ‘Mirror for Princes’ and ‘advice literature’ interchangeably.

Maghribī's *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa* is a perfect case in point because it demonstrates some ideas and ideals of statecraft, sheds considerable light on the volatile political milieu of the 4th/10th and early 5th/11th centuries and provides a nuanced look into its author's political expertise and prowess.

Living during that turbulent epoch, eminent jurists philosophers such as 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Mawardī (d.450/1058), Abū al-Hasan Muhammad ibn Yūsuf al-'Amirī (d.381/992), Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (259-339/870–950), and Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Sīna (Avicenna, 370-427/980-1037) explored these socio-political fluctuations at length in their seminal works. Although the contributions of such jurists and philosophers as al-Mawardī and al-Fārābī respectively are oft-researched, al-Maghribī's treatise has drawn less interest in academic circles.⁴ I hope that this study of al-Maghribī's political thought can help fill this lacuna.

This thesis offers a textual and contextual study of this salient treatise, elaborating on its language, themes and setting. It first sets the scene for understanding the background of al-Maghribī and his sundry contributions. Next, a detailed summary of the overarching themes, and a thorough analysis of the language and style of the text ensue. I also proffer a close textual reading of the Islamic overtones and Greek and Persian underpinnings articulated masterfully throughout this treatise. I then go on to pinpoint the mechanisms of statesmanship as put forth by al-Maghribī. Next, I situate this treatise into temporal context,

⁴ Samī al-Dahhān stated that a few parts of the two original manuscripts were rife with undecipherable phrases, which in turn delayed the editing and publishing of the treatise until 1948 (Cf. Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, *op. cit.*,49).

highlighting the socio-political environment in which al-Maghribī lived. Lastly, I offer a much-needed English translation of the Arabic text.

The original Arabic manuscript of *Kitāb fi al-Siyāsa* was edited by Sāmī al-Dahhān in Damascus in 1948. The treatise’s full title, as written on the two original manuscripts, reads, “This is a treatise on statecraft by the distinguished vizier Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Alī al-Maghribī (May Allah forgive him).”⁵ In 1982, Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad compiled al-Maghribī’s treatise along with one treatise by al-Fārābī and another by Avicenna, and published them as a book. He divided the book into sections; each has a main heading that corresponds to the section’s overriding theme(s).⁶ In this thesis, I rely mainly on al-Dahhān’s volume because it is more legible, readable and accessible.

Moreover, this thesis draws heavily on primary and secondary sources in both the Arabic and English languages. While it cautiously borrows from the works of Orientalists, it capitalizes on the Arabic works that thoroughly examine this literary genre and its luminaries. This commentary on al-Maghribī’s political philosophy and his views on the three divisions of statecraft (namely, the ruler, his courtly elite and his subjects and how to masterfully reign over them) helps us better understand a key period of Islamic history.

⁵ Al-Wazīr ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fi al-Siyāsa*, ed. Sāmī ad-Dahhān (Damascus: Al-Ma‘had al-Firansī bi-Dimashq lil-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabīyah, 1948), 49.

⁶ Al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Wazīr Al-Maghribī, *Majmū‘ fi al-Siyāsa li-Abī al-Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339 H), ‘Alī-Abī al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Maghribī (d. 418 H), lil-Shaykh ibn Sīnā (d. 428 H)*, ed. Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad (Al-Iskandarīyah: Mu’assasat Shabāb al-Jāmi‘ah, 1982), 39-60.

One the whole, since al-Maghribī penned his treatise at a time that bears much resemblance to the post-Arab Spring epoch, the treatise is highly relevant to the present dilemmas faced by much of the Middle East. It is not far-fetched to say that this treatise could in fact serve as a guidebook for Muslims rulers in the contemporary period. Its practical advice and wisdom are just as applicable today as they were in the 4th/10th and early 5th/11th centuries.

Chapter 1: The Man and His Background

I. Al-Maghribī's Life and Career

Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Maghribī, an acclaimed poet, a notable man of affairs, and an eminent intellectual, led a very eventful life. Born in Aleppo, Syria in 370 AH/981 AD,⁷ he belonged to a family of statesmen of Persian origin, whose forefathers trace their lineage back to the kings of Sassanid Persia. In his *History of Aleppo*, Ibn Al-‘Adīm offered a detailed biography of al-Maghribī, stating that his full name is ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn al-Murzibān ibn Mahān ibn Bazām ibn Balāsh ibn Fairūz ibn Yazdegerd ibn Bahrām Jūr.⁸ The nickname al-Maghribī should not be taken as an indication that Abū al-Qāsim was originally from *al-Maghrib* (Morocco) - a region of North Africa bordering the Mediterranean Sea. As a matter of fact, his grandfather held an office in the western (*gharbi*) part of Baghdad under the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, whence the nickname of the family was derived.⁹

Despite his affluent upbringing in royal courts where his father served, he showed deep interest in knowledge and literature from a tender age. He was remarkably smart. Before reaching the age of twenty, he had already authored a book on logic, entitled *al-Munkhal* (The Scrutinized Abridgement). In addition to acquainting himself with such great scholars

⁷ Ibn Al-Jawzī and al-Miqrizī stated that al-Maghribī was born in Egypt in 370 HA. (Cf. Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, *op.cit.*, 95, 114 respectively.

⁸ Ibn Al-‘Adīm. *Bughyat al-Talab fī Tarīkh Ḥalab (The History of Aleppo)*. Edited by Hamad Suhail Zakar. Vol. 5. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 2239-2241; Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 100.

⁹ Iḥsān ‘Abbās, *Al-Wazīr al-Maghribī Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī: Dirāsah fī sīratih wa-adabih ma ‘a mā tabaqq’a min āthārih*, 1st ed. (‘Ammān: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988), 7-8; Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 10; Moshe Gil, *History of Palestine, 634-1099* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 381.

as Abū al-‘Alāa’ al-Ma‘arī, he memorized the entire Quran and thoroughly studied the Prophetic traditions.¹⁰

As a family of statesmen, his father and forefathers were statesmen and held offices in several Muslim courts during the 4th/10th and through early 5th/11th centuries. At the time, Persians were very influential in the sundry courts of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, particularly during the 4th/10th century.¹¹ Al-Maghribī himself served in the courts of the Fatimid, the Buyid, the Uqaylid, and finally, the Marwanid dynasties, respectively. According to Hugh Kennedy, “his father ‘Ali abandoned Sa‘d al-Dawla, Sayf al-Dawla’s successor, for the lush pastures of the Fatimid court” in Egypt, where Abū al-Qāsim “was educated in the bureaucratic milieu and rose high in the administration of the Caliph al-Ḥākim.”¹²

In 400/1011, however, the sixth Fatimid caliph, al-Ḥākim bi-’Amr-Allāh, killed his father, uncle and his two brothers, then fled in disguise to Palestine, where he enticed the leader Jarrāhids al-Ḥasan ibn al-Mufarrij to mount a rebellion against the Fatimids.¹³ After the rebellion began to wane, he fled again (this time to Iraq), where he entered into the service of the Buyids. Shortly afterwards, the Abbasid Caliph suspected him to be a Fatimid fifth column, so al-Maghribī moved to Mosul where he entered the service of the Uqaylid

¹⁰ ‘Abbās, *Al-Wazīr al-Maghribī*, 3-5; Ibn Al-‘Adim. *Bughiat al-Talab*, 2536.

¹¹ Al-Maghribī, al-Wazīr ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn. *Adab al-khawāṣṣ fi ‘l-mukhtār min balāghāt qabā’il al-‘Arab wa-aḥbāruhā wa-ansābuhā wa-aiyāmuh*. Edited by Hamad al-Jāsir. (Ar-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Yamāma li-l-Baḥṭ wa-t-Tarjama wa-n-Nashr, 1980), 9-10.

¹² Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the age of the caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the sixth to the eleventh century* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 262.

¹³ Moshe Gil, *History of Palestine, 634-1099* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 381-383; al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 112-113.

emir Qirwāsh ibn al-Mukhallad as a vizier. Al-Maghribī maintained the vizierate position under Naṣr al-Dawla, the Marwanid ruler of Mayyaafārikīn until he died in 418/1027 at the age of forty-eight.¹⁴

II. Al-Maghribī's Works

Al-Maghribī was a towering polymath whose indulgence in politics significantly diminished his literary contributions. He possessed extensive knowledge of the Arabic language, literature, poetry and genealogy. His works include *Adab al-Khawāṣ* (Belle-letters of the Select Few) which was edited by Sheikh Ḥamad al-Jāsir in 1980 and *al-Īnās bi 'ilm al-Ansāb* (Introduction to the Science of Genealogy) and *al-Munkhal: Mukhtasar Islāh al-Mantiq* (The Scrutinized Abridgement) which is an abridged version of ibn al-Sikīṭ's *Islāh al-Mantiq* (The Correct Arabic Pronunciation Handbook).¹⁵ In addition to that, he conducted an exegesis of the Qur'an entitled *al-Misbāh fi Tafsīr al-Qurān al-'Azīm*. Thanks to his educational, political and familial background, he was deservedly dubbed as *al-Wazīr al-Maghribī* (the Western/Moroccan Vizier) and *Dhul-Wizāratayn/Dhul-Jalālatayn* (The Holder of Two Vizierates). The latter title refers, as per ibn Khaldūn, to “the wazirates of ‘the sword’ and ‘the pen’.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Gil, *History of Palestine*, 383; Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fi al-Siyāsa*, 107.

¹⁵ Khayr al-Dīn Al-Zarkalī, *Al-A'lām: Qāmūs Tarājim Li-Ashhar Al-Rijāl Wa-Al-Nisā' Min Al-'Arab Wa-Al-Musta'ribīn Wa-al-Mustashriqīn*, 15th ed., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm Lil-Malaīn, 2002), 245.

¹⁶ Abd-ar-Rahman ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: an introduction to history*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. N. J. Dawood (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), 195.

Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa is al-Maghribī's only political treatise in which he takes as his point of departure the statement of Abū Bakr al-Saddīq addressed to Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān, when the former dispatched Yazīd to the Levant to lead the Muslim army against the Byzantines. This treatise rightfully belongs to the 'mirror for princes' genre,¹⁷ for it was authored by a very experienced courtier and encapsulates a great deal of practical counsel, not to mention the Greek, Persian and Islamic overtones.

Composed in Arabic, Persian and Turkish mostly by jurists, philosophers and practitioners of politics, the mirror for princes¹⁸ genre contains "good advice on the art of ruling, sometimes based on ethical principles but more often on mere expediency."¹⁹ These works also synthesize pre-Islamic ideas - particularly Persian and Greek - with Islamic ethico-political thought and reveals the great emphasis placed on ethics, just rulership, and good governance.²⁰ Al-Maghribī's oeuvre is, therefore, emblematic of this mixture of ancient and Islamic notions of statecraft.

¹⁷ The 'mirror for princes' genre is also referred to as Advice-to-Kings literature and *Fürstenspiegel*. In Arabic, it is usually called *Marāya al-'Umara'*, *Adāb al-Mulūk*, *al-Daha'iyyat* or *al-Adāb al-Sultaniyyah*. Cf. 'Izz Al-Dīn 'Allām, *Al-Sulṭah wa-al-Siyāsa fī al-Adab al-Sulṭānī* (Al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Afrīqiyā al-Sharq, 1991), 19-23.

¹⁸ I use the term "mirror for princes" to broadly refer to "any form of writing that provides ethico-political advice to kings and courtiers on how to comport themselves and organize the state in order to maintain their power." (Cf. Nasrin Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 7.

¹⁹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), 81.

²⁰ Julie Scott Meisami, *The Sea of Precious Virtues: A Medieval Islamic Mirror for Princes* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah press, 1991), vii.

Al-Maghribī was indeed an erudite author and an astute statesman. Iḥsān ‘Abbās went as far as to describe him as “one of the shrewdest statesmen of the world”²¹ and “the mastermind of kings and states.”²² In actuality, ‘Abbās’s statements carry much weight, since al-Maghribī’s views on ensuring the resilience of the empire and the need for intelligence apparatuses were novel ideas at the time.

While other mirror for princes have been extensively studied and researched, al-Maghribī’s *Kitab fī al-Siyāsa* has received almost no attention in Western and classical Muslim scholarship. Even worse, many Western academics are not familiar with al-Maghribī, especially as a political thinker and man of affairs. This explains why he is not usually mentioned as an author of political wisdom works and references to him are very sparse.²³ The most frequently studied theoreticians of the “mirror for princes” literary genre are ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d. 757), al-Jāhiz (d.868), ibn Qutaiba (d.889), Tayfur (d.893), ibn al-Rabi‘ (d. 894), al-Māwardī (d. 1058), Kai Ka’us (b. 1020), Nizām al-Mulk (d.1092) and al-Ghazālī (d.1111).²⁴ Hopefully, the following commentary on the treatise and the English translation of the Arabic text will help fill this gap and bring to light a glimpse of al-Maghribī’s political thinking.

²¹ ‘Abbās, *Al-Wazīr al-Maghribī*, 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 6.

²³ Cf. Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 149-150.

²⁴ Cf. Joseph A. Kechichian and R. Hrair. Dekmejian, eds., *The Just Prince: A Manual of Leadership* (London: Sāqī, 2003), 45-57; Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought from the Prophet to the Present* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001); Gerhard Böwering, ed., *Islamic Political Thought: An Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

Chapter 2: The Dialectics and Didactics of *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*

1. Remarks on the Treatise's Language, Style and Audience

Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa is both a work of counsel (*naṣīha*) and a wisdom (*hikma*). While it offers practical guidance for rulers and statesmen, it evokes the wealth of knowledge produced by some of the civilizations that have come and gone. Insofar as the language is concerned, this tractate, with its aesthetically-refined prose, is short yet dense with advice and counsel to statesmen. Its prose is very accessible to the average reader and he rarely uses jargon or sophisticated terminology. When he makes references to classic sages or their specific works, he does that briefly. For instance, he made a reference to *The Testament* of Ardashīr ibn Bābak²⁵ but without elaborating on the purport of this seminal work or the specific quotations he referred to.²⁶ In so doing, gave the impression that testament was a well-known book of politics at the time. Nasrin Askari attests to this fact, declaring that “Ardashīr’s testament was a well-known Arabic work on statecraft and kingship, as a number of medieval authors refer to its significance” including al-Baldhurī (d. 279/892), Abū Alī Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) and Ibn al-Balkhī (fl. 498/1105–510/1116).²⁷

Moreover, the treatise is replete with maxims and proverbial sayings that carry much moral weight and offer historical and real-life examples that make al-Maghribī’s

²⁵ Ardashīr ibn Bābak is the author of the Testament (*Al-‘Ahd*) and the founder of the Sasanian dynasty. (Cf. Maria Vaiou, *Diplomacy in the Early Islamic World: A Tenth-century treatise on Arab-Byzantine relations: The book of messengers of Kings (Kitāb Rusul al-Mulūk) of Ibn al-Farrā’* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 277.

²⁶ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 74.

²⁷ Nasrin Askari, *The Medieval Reception of the Shāhnāma as a Mirror for Princes* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 153-154.

recommendations easily comprehended. Here are some examples: “The ruler should never put off until tomorrow what he should do today,”²⁸ “Morals to rulers are like the organs to the body. If these organs are not functioning well or are incidentally idle, the whole body will be dysfunctional,”²⁹ and “The courtiers to the ruler are more akin to the tools to the craftsman.”³⁰

Intertextuality and eclecticism are also quintessential features of the text that ostensibly attests to al-Maghribī’s multifaceted mentality and his vast knowledge of the protracted Islamic history. In addition to his personal and political experience, al-Maghribī relied on a religio-historical approach and an eclectic and intertextual methodologies to articulate the myriad underpinnings of political thought. His short political manual combines some interconnected elements of Greek, Persian and Islamic traditions, making them resonate anew, and offering a secular political thinking in quasi-religious clothing.

Capitalizing on the legacy of his forefathers, al-Maghribī made use of the Persian courtly tradition. Specifically, he referred to Ardashīr’s celebrated *Testament* in which the latter opined that those segments of population that are disinterested in politics are to be feared because they “are the enemies of empires and pose existential threats to rulers.”³¹

As a matter of fact, al-Maghribī’s invocation of this Persian sage’s directives is apropos because his *Testament* is noted for its encapsulation of the Sasanian view of

²⁸ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 63.

²⁹ Ibid., 67.

³⁰ Ibid., 68.

³¹ Ibid., 74.

monarchy that deems “kingship and religion [as] twin ... religion is the foundation of kingship and kingship the protector of religion.”³² In that vein, al-Maghribī argues that “a ruler is Allah’s vicegerent who is entrusted with managing Allah’s blessings.”³³ Clearly, al-Maghribī offers a Persian-inspired conceptualization of the social contract in which the ruler is seen as God’s representative on earth who rules with a divine mandate and who is exclusively entrusted with ensuring the people’s welfare and harnessing their interests. While al-Maghribī considers the ruler to be held accountable only by God, he nonetheless argues that the ruler has a duty to administer justice and to preserve “the harmonious ordering of society.”³⁴

Besides its Persian overtones, al-Maghribī draws extensively from Islamic history where he employed a historical methodology in order to formulate the modalities of his practical council and to derive his numerous maxims on statecraft. In particular, he concluded his treatise with a quotation from the statement of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq which the latter addressed to Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān when the former dispatched Yazīd to the Levant, that was under the rule of the Byzantines. In the year 13/634, Abū Bakr appointed Yazīd as the military commander of the Muslim army dispatched to Syria to counter the menace of the neighboring Byzantine Empire. Under the command of Yazīd, Muslims were victorious and Syria became part of the burgeoning Islamic state.³⁵ Commenting on Abū

³² Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought from the Prophet to the Present* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 21.

³³ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 65.

³⁴ Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 419.

³⁵ Ibn al-'Athīr, Abu al-Hasan 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Wahid, *Al-Kāmil Fī al-Tārīkh*, ed. Abī Al-Fida' Abdullah Al-Qadī, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1978), 253-254.

Bakr's statement, Ibn al- 'Athīr remarked that "it is an example of the finest counsel that could be of much avail to rulers."³⁶ For the most part, al-Maghribī's treatise is a detailed elaboration on Abū Bakr's account. He also concluded his treatise by the following:

These are the nuances and some utterances [of Abū Bakr's statement]. We demystified some of its ambiguous phrases and explained them in terms easily comprehended by some rulers of our time, who are the main target audience of this treatise.³⁷

In addition to that, the treatise makes a few references to Islamic scriptural texts, terminology and concepts. In order to corroborate his argument about loyalty, al-Maghribī quoted a prophetic tradition to the effect that benevolence can help the ruler win over the hearts and minds of his people. The word "Allah" has been mentioned three times in reference to some religiously-inspired moral values such as piety and justice.

Moreover, pragmatism is one main feature of the mirror for princes genre,³⁸ and it is ostensibly reflected in this text. Al-Maghribī clearly refrained from using jurisprudential language and even viewed rulership as a secular domain which can to be regulated within an Islamic moral code. His counsel therefore carries no juristic significance. In so doing, he did not break away from other Muslim political thinkers and authors of advice literature

³⁶ Ibn al-'Athīr, *Al-Kāmil Fī al-Tārīkh*, 254.

³⁷ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 72.

³⁸ 'Izz Al-Dīn 'Allām, *Al- Ādāb al-Sulṭāniyyah: Dirāsa fī Binyat wa Thawābit al-Khiṭāb al-Siyāsī*, (Kuwait: 'Aālam al-Ma'rifah , 2006), 9.

and how they conceptualized the head of the state.³⁹ He penned his tractate as a statesman and not as a jurist.⁴⁰ While he did not divorce politics from ethics, he did not take issue with the Islamically-prohibited act of drinking alcohol. Surprisingly, he deems it necessary for the ruler's relaxation and elation.⁴¹ As such, He cares more for the ruler's comportment and well-being and less about the legality of drinking.

As it stands, Al-Maghribī's worldview drastically differs from that of jurists and theologians who deals with rulership through a purely Islamic legal lens, focusing on maintaining the institution of the caliphate or the application of *Shari'a*. Likewise, it differs from the worldview of the idealist philosophers who mostly aspire for a utopia. In actuality, political figures and theoreticians (al-Maghribī in this case) are rather pragmatic, amalgamating Islamic notions of government with non-Islamic ones and treating them all on equal footing.⁴² As 'Abdullah al-'Arwī bluntly put it, "the authors of the mirror for princes give no preference whatsoever to the revelation brought by the Prophet over the justice of Anusharvan or the rationality of Socrates."⁴³

³⁹ Ann K. S. Lambton, "Islamic Mirror for Princes," *Quaderno deU'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, no. 160 (1971): 419-42, accessed March 27, 2017; Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 150; Al-'Arwī, *Maḥmūd al-Dawlah*, 141-142.

⁴⁰ 'Izz Al-Dīn 'Allām differentiates between the authors of the mirror for princes genre and those of *al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iyyah* (lit. *Shari'a*-based rulership) literature. In addition to the Islamic sources, the former make optimal use of the political traditions of bygone nations particularly the Greek and the Persian civilizations while the latter make *Shari'a* their main, and sometimes only, reference. (Cf. 'Allām, *Al-Sulṭah wa-al-Siyāsa fī al-Adab al-Sulṭānī* (Al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Afriqiyyā al-Sharq, 1991), 30-34.

⁴¹ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 59.

⁴² 'Allām, *Al-Adāb al-Sulṭāniyyah*, 18.

⁴³ 'Abdullah Al-'Arwī, *Maḥmūd al-Dawlah*. 9th ed. (Al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 2011), 142.

On the whole, the didactic tone, homiletic rhetoric and narrative style make al-Maghribī's treatise a literary piece par excellence. While *adab* (belle letters) is arguably elitist,⁴⁴ this does not necessarily mean it is exclusive to the royalties and the political dignitaries. While used interchangeably with the word "ruler," al-Maghribī's usage of the word "*as-Sayis*" (the statesman) was meant to make his treatise accessible and beneficial to a wider audience including viziers, courtiers and other statesmen.

In this regard, Charles Bosworth argues that this advice manual was "probably intended for the Kurdish Marwanid local ruler of Dīyārbakr."⁴⁵ Similarly, Pieter Smoor suggested that the treatise was written for "the Marawānid ruler of Mayyaafārikīn, Naṣr al-Dawla Aḥmad ibn Marawān, who on many occasions had shown such a loyal protector of Abū 'l-Kasim."⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Sāmī al-Dahhān opines that the treatise was written for Naṣr al-Dawla, the ruler of both Mayyaafārikīn and Dīyārbakr.⁴⁷

As a matter of fact, the treatise ostensibly depicts the court and lifestyle of ibn Marawān. Ibn Khalikān (1978) subscribes to this notion, noting that al-Maghribī served as vizier in the princely court of Ahmad ibn Marawān who was "a very assiduous, shrewd

⁴⁴ Sharon Loree Allen. "Narrative, Authority and the Voices of Morality: An Internextual Journey of Key Themes in *The Thousand Nights and One Night*" and *Islamic Mirror for Princes*." Order No. 3475542, (Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2010), 7.

⁴⁵ Clifford Bosworth, "Al-Maghribī, al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, vol. 1: L–Z (Routledge, 1998), 488.

⁴⁶ Pieter Smoor, *The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition*, Vol. V (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1986), 1212.

⁴⁷ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 45.

and firm man of affairs who had enjoyed a great deal of delectation and buoyancy.”⁴⁸ Al-Maghribī served as a vizier in Naṣr al-Dawla’s court from 415/1024 and till his demise in 418/1027. Although Samī al-Dahhān stated that nothing in the wording or the content of this treatise tells of the exact date in which it was written, it is safe to suggest that this treatise was written as a practical guide for the Naṣr al-Dawla during al-Maghribī’s tenure as a vizier between 415/1024 and 418/1027.

As a mirror for princes, this ethico-political tractate is nonetheless addressed to sundry audiences including courtiers, secretaries, high-ranking elites, and even the educated classes of society. Al-Maghribī prefaces his manual with a word to his fellow theoreticians, advising them to keep their advice manuals concise and precise given that these works are mainly meant for “the great individuals who have a great deal to do and are quick to feel weary.”⁴⁹ Crone subscribes to this notion, stressing that these advice books also targeted a large swath of the educated citizenry at the time in the same way modern advice literature on how to achieve happiness or success in life are widely read. She ascribes this to the fact that the wisdom therein is expedient and general rather than technical.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Shams ad-Dīn ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A’yān wa anabā’ Abnā’ al-Zamān*, ed. Iḥsān ‘Abbās, vol. I (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 177.

⁴⁹ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 55.

⁵⁰ Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 150.

2. The Treatise's Structure and Main Themes

This tractate is composed of a preface (with no title), three chapters and an epilogue. In the preface, al-Maghribī made it very clear that he intended to keep his treatise short and his advice brief. For him, advice literature aimed at statesmen and those in positions of powers should be concise and precise, given the busy lifestyle of such individuals. The preface ends with a paragraph in which al-Maghribī succinctly propounds a prudential three-pronged approach to guide the ruler on how to: (1) comport himself; (2) deal with his courtiers; and (3) keep a tight rein on the subjects, especially in times of political upheaval.⁵¹ Each of the subsequent chapters addresses one of these three divisions of statecraft.

Statecraft, in al-Maghribī's opinion, concerns three types of governance (*siyāsa*): The Ruler's self-governance (*nafs*); the governance of the courtly elite (*Khāṣṣa*); and the governance of the common people (*'Amma*). The division of statecraft into three categories clearly conforms to the Aristotelian division of practical philosophy into ethics, economics and politics.⁵² Louise Marlow holds the same view, noting that:

The three 'governances' recur in the writings of the Kindian tradition, and would find expression in al-Khawārazmī's classification under 'practical philosophy' (*al-falsafa al-'amaliyya*) of three types of management (*tadbīr*): *tadbīr al-rajul nafsahu* 'a man's management of himself', the science of moral dispositions (*'ilm al-akhlāq*); *tadbīr al-Khāṣṣa*, management of the elite, that is, management of the household (*tadbīr al-manzil*); and *tadbīr al-'amma*, management of the common

⁵¹ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 56.

⁵² Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political*, 149-150.

people, that is, governance of the city, the community and dominion (*Siyāsāt al-madīna wa-l-umma wa-l-muluk*).⁵³

Generally speaking, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa* offers discourses on self-discipline, the art of statecraft, good governance, the ethics of power, foreign relations and security. In terms of the main points al-Maghribī touches upon, the first chapter advises the ruler as regard to eating, drinking, staying up late, answering the call of nature, exercising, piety, justice, God's remembrance as a pastime, punctuality, decisiveness, cultivating good manners, and being cognizant of the annals of earlier rulers.

When it comes to the courtiers, the second chapter expounds on the best practice to deal with them. For example, the ruler has, as per al-Maghribī's advice, to gently rectify their behavior, be decisive with them and follow their news. The third (and last) chapter is related to the subjects and how the ruler has to be aware of their different social classes, be decisive with them, and honor the best amongst them. The last paragraphs of this chapter details the ways by which a ruler can ward off conspiracies against him though establishing an intelligence apparatus to gather information on whatever developments and covert activities taking place in and around his empire. In the epilogue, he relates the account of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq which the latter addressed to Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān when he dispatched him as the military commander to the Levant. In the next chapter, I shall discuss in detail the primary discourses which al-Maghribī puts forth as effective tools for a well-rounded statesmanship.

⁵³ Louise Marlow, *Counsel for Kings: Wisdom and Politics in Tenth-Century Iran*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 73.

Chapter 3: Mechanisms of Statecraft in Volatile Times

I. Rulers are People Too!

The first chapter of the treatise expounds on an often-neglected aspect of rulership, namely the human and his biological, moral and spiritual needs.⁵⁴ Statesmen, be they rulers, would-be rulers or high-ranking politicians and officials, are first and foremost human beings who have needs just like anybody else. Not only should al-Maghribī's ruler be physically fit but he has to be righteous as well. Per al-Maghribī, self-care encompasses both physical aspects such as eating healthy food, exercising, moderate drinking, staying up late and using a hammam bathhouse as well as moral values such as piety, justice, knowledge, decency, generosity, responsibility, leniency and courage. While the physical wellbeing could galvanize the ruler to renounce worldly attachment, his good manners are utilized as a medium to rally people around him and garner their loyalty and support in order for the city as a whole to revel in stability.

Physical wellbeing is very salient for rulers, especially in tumultuous times. Comfort breeds weakness and, by virtue of their luxurious lifestyles, rulers become weak with the passage of time and this too can be a destabilizing force that can give rise to the decline of the empire. Therefore, al-Maghribī encourages the ruler to “learn how to adapt to the scorching heat and the freezing cold,” to eat healthy but without excess and to abstain from binge drinking that “could render his rulership temporarily nonexistent.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Al-Maghribī's contemporary Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (870–950) stipulated some similar conditions that the ruler should meet. These include intelligence, knowledge, uprightness, justice and moderation in eating and drinking. (Cf. Abū Naṣr Muḥammad Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb arā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fādilah*, ed. Albir Nasrī Nādir (Bayrūt: Dār al-Mashriq, 1996), 127-128).

⁵⁵ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 57-58.

Moderation in drinking could “leave him drunk, yet conscious and elated” and intermittent drinking could “afford him the time to take care of the salient matters in his life.”⁵⁶ Arguing that catastrophic events oftentimes take place at night, al-Maghribī further urges the ruler to patiently and vigilantly stay up late and to get up early.⁵⁷ Along with morality, these qualities are very instrumental for good governance, and thus are necessary for maintaining stability and public order, particularly in times of large-scale instability.

Furthermore, this modality of self-discipline on the part of rulers indicates that political reform is a top-down process where the rising tides of the virtuous, strong ruler could lift all boats and encourages his courtiers and subordinates to follow suit. Al-Maghribī argues that the excellent ruler is “the one who starts by comporting his own self. Once he does that, he becomes in a better position to rectify the conduct of his courtiers and chief aides by inculcating in them morals that would eventually avail the citizens at large.”⁵⁸

In a similar vein, al-Maghribī advises the ruler to be aware of that human needs of his entourage. For instance, he vehemently warns the ruler against discomforting his courtly aides or finding faults with them. For instance, he maintains that “debating about their luxuries spoils their lives, and surveillance breeds boredom and frustration which could negatively impact their performance. Tolerating them could galvanize them to do well at their jobs and boost their loyalty.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 59.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

On another level, women, be they wives, daughters or mothers, could have a tremendous influence on the ruler, and by association the state at large. Interestingly enough, al-Maghribī did not mention how the statesman should regulate his relation with his household, i.e. his wife and offspring. While this may serve as an indication of lack of representation of women in this genre, using the word *nafsuhu* (his own self)⁶⁰ repeatedly demonstrates clearly that al-Maghribī was mainly concerned about how the ruler arranges his own life and comports his own self. Writing in times of duress, warmongering and upheaval, perhaps al-Maghribī wanted his treatise to be short and brief, and thus he solely focused on aspects that could help the ruler face any internal unrest and/or external offensives.

II. The Confluence of Ethics and Politics

As physical wellbeing is salient for statesmen, so are moral values. Ethics, Patricia Crone argues, is one branch of good governance that is considerably reflected in the way the ruler administers his own life.⁶¹ This rings true in al-Maghribī's treatise where he proclaims that "morals to rulers are like the organs to the body. If these organs are not functioning well or are incidentally idle, the whole body will be dysfunctional."⁶²

In actuality, the relationship between ethics and statecraft is given special importance in al-Maghribī's tractate. Considering ethics and politics as closely intertwined,

⁶⁰ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 57.

⁶¹ Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, 149-150.

⁶² Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 67.

al-Maghribī sees ethics as an integral component of statecraft. For instance, he calls upon the ruler to “make every effort to have a great deal of such moral virtues as knowledge, decency, leniency, generosity and courage.”⁶³ He also contends that the comportment of the ruler’s lifestyle encompasses having piety, fear of Allah, doing good deeds, remembering Allah’s blessings, gratefulness and gratitude.⁶⁴ In other words, the ruler has to be virtuous and upright to the best of his ability because lack of ethics on his part could easily draw the ire of his constituents and galvanize them to raise against him. This standpoint clearly conforms to the Sasanian theory of rule, i.e. welfare is the outcome of the ruler’s righteousness, and his injustice could bring the state to ruin.⁶⁵

Of all moral values, justice, al-Maghribī writes, is one that the ruler should aspire for, adding that the ruler “should be just to his people, benevolent to them. He should stay awake when they are asleep and do his utmost to protect them. It must not occur to him that rulership affords him comfort and opulence.”⁶⁶ Couching his advice in religious terms, al-Maghribī considered administering justice as a way for the ruler to show gratitude to God who made him a ruler over his respective people. He further refers to justice as a quality that is highly commended by the rank and file and can entices them to follow suit and show their obedience to the ruler. In that sense, justice ultimately buttresses the legitimacy of the ruler.

⁶³ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 64.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 61-62.

⁶⁵ Ann K. S. Lambton, "The Dilemma of Government in Islamic Persia: The "Siyāsāt-nāma" of Nizām al-Mulk," *Iran* 22 (1984): 57, accessed April 6, 2017.

⁶⁶ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 61-62.

For al-Maghribī, political ethics are needed mostly for pragmatic reasons. Justice, for instance, is seen as a political medium that earns the ruler the loyalty and admiration of his people. At a time when loyalties are won and lost, ensuring the prevalence of justice is not meant for justice's sake. Rather, it serves as a means to a greater end. Justice is key to good governance and the mainstay of an enduring rule. Subsequently, it should be applied to all subjects, irrespective of position, social status, and their relationship with the ruler or their adjacent and remote localities.

To ensure that justice is taking roots in the outlying parts of his empire, justice and equality should be equally applied to the ruler's kith and kin as well as other ordinary subjects. In that sense, justice is synonymous with the eradication of injustice, and thus it is conducive to welfare and prosperity. Antony Black argues that “[j]ustice and the prevention of oppression (that is, generally speaking, keeping royal administrators in check) will ensure an improved standard of living for all categories of commoners.”⁶⁷

As for the courtly elites, al-Maghribī urges the ruler to “nurture the good manners of his courtiers and entourage and rectify their behavior so that they could better perform their duties.”⁶⁸ Taking a top-down hierarchal form, virtuousness is a mechanism of statecraft as it is conducive to competence and good governance. For al-Maghribī, “the courtiers to the ruler are more akin to the tools to the craftsman.” Given that rulers are normal human beings who have myriad needs, they cannot govern on their own, no matter

⁶⁷ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 113.

⁶⁸ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 67.

how virtuous or powerful they are.⁶⁹ They are in need of upright and competent aides and functionaries who can help them successfully wield power and command over their respective populations. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the ruler to rectify them and inculcate good manners in them. However, the ruler “should not be overly concerned about the inculcation of good manners in his subjects” because it is close to impossible to have a virtuous populace.⁷⁰

In a nutshell, morality is not only indissolubly associated with politics but it is also a means to a greater end, i.e. to bring about competence and efficiency. Therefore, al-Maghribī’s ruler is both competent and just. While the ethical compass could help him garner the support and loyalty of the masses and bring about prosperity and stability, competence, on the other hand, could enhance his legitimacy and guarantee the efficiency of the bureaucracy. Hence, al-Maghribī enlisted a number of moral characteristics the courtiers, aides and civil servants should have in order to to efficiently do their jobs. For example, the tax-levying administrator should be “good-natured, impartial, even-tempered, warmhearted and articulate.”⁷¹ By the same token, justice is not a mere moral value but also serves as an effective governance mechanism.

⁶⁹ Ibn Zafar al-Ṣiqillī (1104-1170) offered counsel to that same effect in his *Sulwan al-Muta‘ fi ‘Udwan al-’Atba‘* (Cf. Kechichian and Dekmejian, *The Just Prince*, 102-103).

⁷⁰ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fi al-Siyāsa*, 67.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

III. The Intersection of Class and Statecraft

To better manage the affairs of his subjects, the ruler, al-Maghribī contends, should be cognizant of their different social classes. Running the affairs of the empire coupled with controlling and regulating the lives of the citizenry is a task of gargantuan proportion. The greater the empire's populations, the harder the task of controlling them becomes. The first step needed to better rule and coalesce the subjects, is to know their variant social classes and the cream of the crop amongst them. While the courtiers include the viziers, the guards, the usher, the tax-levying administrator, the army commander, the police commander, judges, the public inspector and messengers,⁷² the people of influence amongst the subjects include religious scholars, mystics and chieftains.⁷³ These are the men of affairs and influence and, if not tamed, they could be a parlous menace to the empire.

Moreover, knowledge of the sundry classes of the populace helps the ruler tailor the best way to control each class, particularly in times of political turmoil. For instance, the ruler should make optimal use of the most competent and educated individuals from the subjects by asking them to frequent his royal court and to hold subordinate positions of power.⁷⁴ In so doing, they will mostly turn into staunch supporters of him and this will leave little to no room for dissent. Like ibn al-Muqaffa' who advocated for a merit-based employment scheme,⁷⁵ al-Maghribī stipulates that appointments of these civil servants and

⁷² Cf. Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 70-72.

⁷³ Ibid., 77.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 24.

counselors should be primarily based on merit. Otherwise, the bureaucratic functions of the state will turn dysfunctional.

As a general rule of thumb, for those who repeatedly frequent the ruler's court, a stick-and-carrot approach is the most ideal way for the ruler to win over their hearts and minds. As for other middle-ranking subjects and beyond, administering justice is the best way to wield power and command over those unruly subjects, while also adding luster to his reign. In addition to that, he should also allow them to frequent his court and lend an attentive ear to their grievances and objections.

In this political treatise, al-Maghribī advocates a tripartite, top-down structure of statecraft that is composed of three descending forces: the ruler, the elite and the commoners. At the helm of this top-down order comes the ruler, with the entourage and the bureaucratic elite subordinate to him and finally the ordinary people subordinate to the latter. Given this hierarchy, the population is no longer seen as equal. Patricia Crone argues that these three categories mirror the three branches of practical Aristotelian philosophy, noting that *al-Siyāsa* is of three types: “of the self (i.e. ethics), of the household (i.e. economics in its original sense of household management), and of cities/the masses (i.e. politics).”⁷⁶

As such, the amelioration and reform processes should be gradual and start with the ruler himself, then his courtiers and political elite, and finally his subjects. In other words,

⁷⁶ Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political*, 149-150.

this refinement process follows a top-down approach. The ruler should firstly “understand how to organize his own way of living; and secondly how to behave towards the higher classes of society his empire,” and thirdly “how to restrain the masses, in view of their inclination to revolt.”⁷⁷

As a recurring feature of the political advice literature, such hierarchy is indicative of the drastic metamorphosis that the the Umayyads and the early ‘Abbāsids experienced, turning them into empires more akin to monarchical dynasties, mostly on the Persian model.⁷⁸ This quintessentially resulted in the introduction of Persian-inspired patrimonial polity⁷⁹ and courtly bureaucracy that served to cement this same class structure.⁸⁰ Consequently, the Islamic egalitarianism that existed in early Islam swiftly faded away, making room for social classes on the basis of status, background and/or affluence.⁸¹ In that sense, these social classes are theoretical rankings corresponding to a new reality that was taking root throughout the Islamic caliphate at that critical time.

Viewed as the precursor of this genre, ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d. 757) was cognizant of the geopolitical realities of his time. He, therefore, adopted from the Persian traditions some political practices and modalities of statecraft that were not not only fit for this new

⁷⁷ Smoor, *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1212.

⁷⁸ ‘Allām, *Al-Ādāb al-Sulṭāniyyah*, 20.

⁷⁹ Antony Black defines ‘patrimonialism’ as “a system of government in which the ruler is permitted to regard the state as his and his family’s benefice ... and the people are regarded as clients under his protective and distributive patronage.” (Cf. Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 18).

⁸⁰ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 18.

⁸¹ Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1.

reality but could also give rise to a stable political order. Louise Marlow attests to the fact that “certain hierarchical aspects of Islamic political culture were indeed linked to Persian models of kingship.”⁸² According to Marlow, the social ranking of the elite and the common people is a Persian model that came to be “a standard form of social description in many medieval Muslim communities.”⁸³

Moreover, this top-down hierarchy was probably derived from the Greek political philosophy. Perhaps al-Maghribī was influenced by Plato's *Republic* or by neo-Platonic Muslim philosophers such as his contemporary Abū Nasr al-Farābī (870–950) who espoused a very similar top-down approach for city building in his works and clearly “sneak[ed] in his Platonic Republicanism by talking of hierarchical individuals and hierarchical roles from the noble to the ignoble.”⁸⁴ After all, this top-down hierarchy requires reform and amelioration to come from the top. It thus places all responsibility on the ruler to make or break the trajectory of his state.

IV. Soft and Hard Power in Statecraft: Carrots, Sticks or both?

The ruler-subject relationship has always been the subject of negotiation. When they suffer under the yolk of a tyrant ruler, subjects have a strong propensity for rebellion and dissent. To thwart this revolutionary tendency and to prevent them from rising against him in volatile times, al-Maghribī opines that currying favor with the influential courtly

⁸² Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 66.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸⁴ Muqtedar Khan, "The Islamic State," in *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, ed. Maurice Kogan and Mary E. Hawkesworth, 2nd ed., Vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2004), 268.

elite and intelligentsia is the surest way to control them. He also believes that justice and acquaintance with the grievances of the masses are the best policy to win over their hearts and minds, and also the best means to keep dissent at bay. Love and fear can thus help the statesman garner the loyalty of the people and earn their goodwill.

Combining clemency with severity is a skill the ruler should cultivate in order for him to rein any unruly subjects and to maintain order and security in the corners of his empire. By using a mixture of carrots and sticks (i.e. soft and hard power), the ruler can especially manage the affairs of the lower social classes. The stick should be used to not only to punish the malefactors and those who relentlessly wreck havoc in the land, but also to deter others who may be inclined to do the same. According to al-Maghribī, the ruler needs to “use fierce force such as brutal killing and protracted imprisonment to crack down on debauchers and robbers, for they are like thorns pricking tender plants and only by eliminating these thorns, the plants can grow and flourish.”⁸⁵

While keeping the use of the force card close at hand, the carrot, on the other hand, should be used to abundantly reward those who abide by the laws and exhibit loyalty to the ruler. Implicit in this counsel is the notion that leniency and cruelty are two complementary tools of statesmanship. Accordingly, security will prevail in every nook and cranny of the empire. Eventually, it is safety and security that are conducive to stability which is very instrumental for ensuring the longevity of the ruler’s tenure in power and the welfare of the broader populace.

⁸⁵ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 75.

V. Resilient Power and the Need for Intelligence and Security

In troubled times, rebellion and uprisings are likely to take place. In his treatise, al-Maghribī offers his valuable insights on how to keep revolt and foreign intervention at bay. Administering justice, using soft and hard power, and establishing professional intelligence apparatus are some the recommendations al-Maghribī advises the ruler to abide by. At any cost, the ruler needs to win over the hearts and minds of the courtiers, the men of influence and the general public because “seditions are often sparked by the complaints of the weak and the malice of the rich.”⁸⁶

Insofar as realpolitik and geopolitik are concerned, the quest for a resilient empire requires the ruler to have entrenched security and intelligence apparatus. Intelligence and Security agencies can help the ruler fortify his state, reign the unruly subjects in the outlying corners of his state, and thus keep domestic rebellion and foreign aggression at bay. Bearing the tumultuous political milieu in mind, al-Maghribī recommends the ruler to closely oversee his guards, quoting the following words from Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq:

Disperse your guards and try as much as possible to surprisingly oversee them while on duty. If you find anyone of them fail to keep careful watch in his position, then punish him. ... Do not ever be afraid to discipline them. Failing to punish them can enrage the people because they will see the double standards in imposing punishments on everyone but granting amnesty to some guards.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 76.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

It is worth noting here that al-Maghribī's view of having such intelligence agencies was a timely innovation in the 4th/10th century. Seemingly, he premised his advice on Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq's statement to his army commander in the Levant, Yazīd bin Abī Sufyān. Quoting the communiqué of Abū Bakr to Yazīd is quite apropos because Abū Bakr instructed him how a competent military commander should deal with his soldiery and be vigilant for conspiracies and menace of his adversaries.⁸⁸ Al-Maghribī's counsel bear much resemblance to that of Abū Bakr. For instance, Abū Bakr advised to Yazīd to stay up late in the company of his associates in order for him to be fully acquainted with every iota of news and other developments around him.⁸⁹ Al-Maghribī offer somehow similar piece of advice, urging the ruler to become accustomed to staying up late and to intermingle with men of influence in order to keep abreast of the latest news.⁹⁰

As for his courtiers, it is the ruler's duty to inculcate good manners in them and to rectify their misconduct because "the courtiers to the ruler are more akin to the tools to the craftsman. As some of these tools may need to be regularly maintained, overhauled and sharpened, so do the courtiers."⁹¹ As such, they will not fall in the trap of corruption. Al-Maghribī further proposes four characteristics that the ruler should have with regard to his courtiers: (1) he should be benevolent to them; (2) he should forgive their minor shortcomings; (3) he should not subject their private lives to close surveillance during their service; and (4) he should reassure them he does not mind having mediocre aides because

⁸⁸ Ibn al-'Athīr, *Al-Kāmil Fī al-Tārīkh*, 253-254.

⁸⁹ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 80.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60; 75; 77; 78.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

competent ones are hard to find.⁹² As a realist, al-Maghribī was aware that there is always a gap between theory and praxis and that the ruler is not infallible but he needs the counsel of his advisors and the help of his courtiers. Likewise, his courtiers and guards are human and thus are open to make mistakes and infelicities. Allowing them a second chance can help the ruler win over their hearts and minds and help them learn lessons from their shortcomings.

Besides overseeing the guards and the courtiers, al-Maghribī calls for the integration of religion and polity by advising the *'Ulama* to cooperate with the ruler and to frequent his court, urging the ruler to earnestly be on good terms with them. Given their influence and distinguished positions, these people of influence can easily spark domestic rebellion and undermine the stability of the state. He writes:

Mystics and scholars (*'Ulama*) should not distance themselves from the ruler.⁹³ ... [and the ruler should] draw men of influence, scholars and chieftains to his court. The ruler should build rapport, honor, eat and drink with each and everyone of them. He should not limit his cordiality and geniality to his courtiers. Rather, he ought to extend that warmth to these men of influence in a bid to eschew any dissatisfaction or rancor.⁹⁴

Briefing the ruler on the latest developments in his state can help him make better decisions. Writing his *Sulwan al-Muta' fī 'Udwān al-'Atbā'* (Consolation for the Ruler in

⁹² Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 69-70.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

Face of the Hostility of Subjects) two centuries after al-Maghribī, Muhammad ibn Zafar al-Ṣiqillī (1104-1170) maintained that for an alert ruler to skillfully confront challenges in times of political unrest, he needs to be well prepared, perceive facts for what they are, quickly correct his mistakes and always have full knowledge that could prevent him from making disastrous decisions because “lack of knowledge may therefore force a leader to commit the most egregious errors.”⁹⁵ To prevent the downfall of his state, al-Maghribī advises the ruler to be:

fully aware of everything going on not only in his capital city but in all cities in his kingdom by controlling their ports of entry. He should stay abreast of not only those who enter or depart his kingdom, but also of all correspondences sent to his subjects including merchants and others. He should control his city as tight as a man would control his home. Nobody can enter or leave except with his permission.⁹⁶

Not only should the ruler make his court easily accessible to complainants, but he ought to constantly dispatch trustworthy intelligence personnel to keep him abreast of the living conditions of the subjects who inhabit the corners of his empire because “these disenfranchised subjects can be more akin to an infected organ in the way that it can, unless it is swiftly cured, infect the rest of the body.”⁹⁷

In actuality, al-Maghribī is heavily influenced by the Persian tradition. For instance, he references Ardashir’s directives in his *Testament (al-‘Ahd)*, where Ardashīr advises that the ruler should not disregard those middle classes who show no interest in power positions

⁹⁵ Joseph A. Kechichian and R. Hrair. Dekmejian, eds., *The Just Prince: A Manual of Leadership* (London: Sāqī, 2003), 22-24.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

⁹⁷ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 76.

and distance themselves away from his court. Like bitter foes, these people are very inimical to rulers and empires.⁹⁸ The intelligence apparatus is further entrusted with “following the news and fishing around for the secrets of not only those near and far from him but also of those allies and foes who neighbor his kingdom” which include “their military capabilities and any war plans they may have in the making.”⁹⁹ Such recommendations speak to a very turbulent time in which states were constantly threatened and attacked by neighboring powers, and power struggles constantly shaped and reshaped the map of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. Hence, al-Maghribī’s views on having an intelligence apparatus was a novelty in the 4th/10th century Islamic political thought.

VI. Keeping Foreign Aggression at Bay: A Foreign Policy Blueprint

At a time when foreign aggression was commonplace, foreign relation becomes as important as managing the internal affairs of the state. In his short treatise, al-Maghribī puts forth robust foreign policy guidelines that can help the ruler ward off any external intervention or aggression. For example, one way to ensure the longevity and resilience of the empire is by entering into alliance with neighboring empires. This will make the ruler’s empire seem powerful and on equal footing with neighboring powers. As rulers who have a lot in common, they are “as needy to each other as subjects to one another.”¹⁰⁰ However, he should be circumspect in his cooperation with other empires. As a sign of muscle-flexing, “he should lavishly welcome their messengers and make all efforts to embellish

⁹⁸ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 74.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

and adorn this court and throne. This will serve as an indication of his sumptuous generosity and warm welcome for them.”¹⁰¹

It should be noted that this cooperation is only limited to the rulers of these adjacent empires and their messengers. Importantly, the subjects must not get in contact with foreign messengers. Lest they may hatch conspiracies in collaboration with any dissidents in order to overthrow the ruler, foreign messengers and visitors are seen as an existential threat to the very existence of the empire. To block all ways for them to meddle in the internal affairs of the empire, these foreign messengers and diplomats “should be put under surveillance during their stay so that they cannot intermeddle with anyone from the courtly elite or from the rank and file with the exception of those known to, and trusted by, the ruler.”¹⁰²

In a turbulent milieu where survival is only for the fittest, military preparedness, al-Maghribī writes, becomes a vital necessity. With the help of his intelligence agency, the ruler should be fully aware of the military capabilities and the war plans of both his friends and foes, particularly those of the adjacent empires. Otherwise, “if his neighbors were to attack him abruptly, it would be too late for him to regret his failure to spend abundantly to familiarize himself with their clandestine [war] plans.”¹⁰³ Clearly, al-Maghribī here sketches security and foreign policy blueprints that could enable the ruler to shield his empire from internal and external threats.

¹⁰¹ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 77.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 78.

Chapter 4: Revisiting the Eventful Era of al-Maghribī

A superficial reading of al-Maghribī's treatise reveals his skepticism towards the loyalty of the subjects, and warns against their innate tendency to dissent. However, this interpretation is far from true, as there exist valid reasons that demystify the motives behind this warranted skepticism. In fact, al-Maghribī's treatise should be understood against the backdrop of his eventful life and the political developments of his turbulent era. Perhaps al-Maghribī was influenced by his own life experiences and political expertise. Shortly after the sixth Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr-Allāh killed his father, he left Egypt and fled to Palestine. There, he sparked a war between Jarrāhids and the Fatimids.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, engineering plots and military coups was very common owing to the feeble grip of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate during the 4th/10th and early 5th/11th centuries.

As a prolific poet and a long-time practitioner of politics, al-Maghribī penned this little-known ethico-political treatise in order to advise rulers on how governing should be conducted in their volatile milieus. In fact, the advice al-Maghribī offered to the ruler of Mayyaafārikīn, Naṣr al-Dawla Ahmad ibn Marawān, was to the point and very suitable for the turbulent political milieu in which Naṣr al-Dawla came to power. This treatise offers a lens through which the nuances of political reactions to endogenous and exogenous threats can be explored. Writing about the history of the time, Hugh Kennedy stated that conspiracies and coups were commonplace and the leading and influential citizens played major roles in these power struggles.

¹⁰⁴ Gil, *History of Palestine*, 381.

More specifically, a statesman called Sharwa ibn Mamma collaborated with the leading citizens of Āmid to hatch a conspiracy that led to the murder of the Mayyaafārikīn ruler al-Hasan ibn Marwān (d. 387/997) who tried to forcefully assert his authority on the city of Āmid. Although it was Sharwa ibn Mamma who secured the succession of al-Hasan's brother Sa'īd (who later became known as Mumahhid al-Dawla), again it is Sharwa who plotted to assassinate the very same emir and assume power in his place.¹⁰⁵

Oddly enough, this time Sharwa's efforts were to no avail because the chieftains propelled the people to oppose him and asked the assassinated ruler's brother Abū Naṣr, who later became known as Naṣr al-Dawla, to assume power. More importantly, Sharwa was "opposed by many of the townspeople who suspected him of wanting to turn the city over [to] the Byzantines, and it was the shaykhs of the city who obliged him to surrender to Abū Naṣr who had him [Sharwa] executed."¹⁰⁶ Therefore, it was the power of the people and the Kurdish tribesmen that brought Naṣr al-Dawla to office. To recruit a vizier, Naṣr al-Dawla turned to al-Maghribī, who was "an outsider from a family of professional bureaucrats."¹⁰⁷ Al-Maghribī served as a vizier from 415/1024 until his death in 418/1027.

Al-Maghribī lived in the later half of the 4th/10th century and in the early 5th/11th centuries. The 4th/10th century in particular marked a watershed in the history of Islam, witnessing the gradual but steady disintegration of the mighty 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 260.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁰⁸ Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 15.

Therefore, revisiting al-Maghribī's time can significantly demystify his uneasy attitudes toward the subjects. Sāmī al-Dahhān succinctly depicts the political state of affairs that was prevalent during that century:

The far-fledged, unified Islamic state was dismembered into smaller territories ... each ruled by an emir who is solely connected to the Caliph in Baghdad by means of title and the mention of his name in [Friday] sermons. ... The Caliph's palace was a venue for hatching plots and conspiracies. The Caliph was surrounded by servants, emirs, and viziers who can succinctly construct, in the existence of a playwright or author, an oxymoronic plot for a play or a face of high literary merit. If a shrewd statesman were to sketch a political treatise that reflects these grotesque developments, this treatise will be a seminal work posited to stand the test of time and be published widely.¹⁰⁹

While Persian political practices found their way to the Muslim seats of government with the 'Abbāsīd revolution, the more pragmatic 'mirror for princes' genre reached its zenith with the slow breakup of the 'Abbasid caliphate and the rapid turnover of dynasties. Antony Black reiterates this same conclusion:

The Iranian tradition of patrimonial monarchy was transmitted to all later Muslim dynasties via the 'Abbasid political culture expressed in these [advice-to-kings] texts. This, as much as Islamic teaching, would determine how state officials and ordinary people regarded political authority and the ruler-ruled relationship.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 28-29.

¹¹⁰ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 30.

At the time, many non-Arab dynasties controlled a large swaths of the Islamic world and were only nominally affiliated with the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate.¹¹¹ As these dynasties fiercely clamored for power, statesmen resorted to Persian concepts of government to better tighten their grip on these territories and thwart any foreign aggression. Ibn Khaldūn (732/1332-808/1406) attributes this breakup to the diminishing group feeling (‘*Aṣabiyyah*) among Arabs starting from the reign of al-Mu‘tasim and his son, al-Wāthiq. They attempted to hold sway “with the help of Persian, Turkish, Daylam, Saljūq, and other clients. Then, the (non-Arabs) and their clients gained power over the provinces.”¹¹²

Nominally affiliated to the caliph in Baghdad, these competing dynasties vied for power. Ultimately, the Daylamids controlled the seat of the Abbasid caliphate and ruled their now-idle caliphs. The Daylamids were followed by the Saljūqs and finally the Tatar seized power from the Saljūqs, murdering the caliph and wiping out every trace of the caliphate.¹¹³ Much infighting occurred amongst these dynasties and this proffered ample chance to adopt more effective techniques of rulership from other traditions. Some of these courtiers capitalized on their practical knowledge of statecraft and penned tractates on the art of ruling. It is during that time that this political advice literature enjoyed common currency in the courts of these warring dynasties.¹¹⁴ Since most courtiers are descendants

¹¹¹ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 28.

¹¹² Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, 124.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Clifford E. Bosworth, "An Early Arabic Mirror for Princes: Ṭāhir Dhū l-Yamīnain's Epistle to His Son ‘Abdallāh (206/821)," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29, no. 1 (1970): 26, accessed March 3, 2017; Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, *op. cit.*, 108.

of Persian families, more often than not, they were courtiers and diplomats themselves. They therefore consulted the Persian heritage and thus came up with a hybrid Perso- and Graeco-Islamicate political philosophy.

Furthermore, from the 3rd/9th century and through the 5th/11th century, there was also a relentless attempt to revive Persian consciousness, especially in the eastern part of the Muslim world.¹¹⁵ This resurgence of Persian tradition materialized either through writing in Persian, as it was the case with Ferdowsī (940–1020), who penned an epic of Persian kings called *Shahnāmeḥ*, or through the *Shu‘ubite* movement¹¹⁶, which produced works that, by and large, found fault with Arabs and eulogized non-Arabs - particularly the Persians.¹¹⁷ Again, it is the secretaries who served in the courts of the numerous dynasties that broke away from the Caliphate spearheaded such initiatives and, given their acquaintance with the Persian legacy, they produced a huge volume of treatises and political wisdom works.¹¹⁸ Seyyed Hussein Naṣr attests to this fact, noting that Persian and persianized Muslims “were able to integrate within the universal perspective of Islam many elements of their pre-Islamic past, which thus became completely Islamized.”¹¹⁹ By the 4th/10th century, Perso-Islamicate ethics and statecraft literature were deeply integrated into

¹¹⁵ Cf. Alireza Shomali, and Mehrzad Boroujerdi, "On Sa‘di’s Treatise on Advice to Kings," in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince*, ed. Mehrzad Boroujerdi (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 45-46.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 45.

¹¹⁷ Watt, *Islamic Political Thought*, 83.

¹¹⁸ Louise Marlow maintains that some Persian authors tend “to exaggerate the debt of Islamic governmental practices to Sasanian administrative norms,” and thus their works should be received with considerable caution. (Cf. Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism*, 66).

¹¹⁹ Seyyed Hossein Naṣr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (ABC International, Inc., 2001), 152.

the broader realm of Islam.¹²⁰ Such explanations ostensibly hearken to the Persian underpinnings of al-Maghribī's political thinking.

Formulated in prescriptive rather than descriptive terms, al-Maghribī's treatise should be understood against the backdrop of the aforementioned political turmoil and pernicious power struggles. While al-Maghribī places much emphasis on the ruler's self-discipline and wellbeing, at the same time he aims to make the ruler well-prepared for any conspiracy hatched by dissidents or rivals. While he does not think that the subjects at large are highly likely to rebel, he still eloquently warns that their tremendous power can be a potential destabilizing force. As such, they should be controlled through soft-power carrots, hard-power sticks or a combination of both. For al-Maghribī, a powerful intelligence apparatus, the prevalence of justice, currying favor with the courtly elite and the clergy, and winning over the hearts and minds of the rest of the population are the surest strategies for a resilient power that can stand the test of volatile times.

¹²⁰ Said Amīr Arjomand, "Perso-Islamic Political Ethics in Relation to the Sources of Islamic Law," in *Mirror for the Muslim Prince*, ed. Mehrzad Boroujerdi (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 84.

Conclusion

Literary works are the outcome of their own milieus and al-Wazīr al-Maghribī's *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa* is no different. This ethico-political treatise sheds considerable light on the religio-political milieu of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate more than two centuries before it completely collapsed at the hands of the Mongols in 1258 AD. Written by an experienced statesman, this didactic tractate serves as a blueprint that helps the ruler craft his policies towards his own life, his courtiers and the citizenry at large, especially in times of instability.

The treatise also attests to the pre-Islamic roots of the medieval ethico-political advice literature that are adroitly woven in the corpus of Islamic political thought. While the works of medieval jurists focused on the establishment of a caliphate or at the very least on the application of *Shari'a* and works of medieval philosophers mostly aimed at establishing a far-fetched utopia, the contributions of theoreticians and notable statesmen like al-Maghribī focused on the more pragmatic regulation of the affairs of the people and the polity in the time in which they were written. As such, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa* exquisitely paints a vivid picture of the eventful 4th/10th and early 5th/11th centuries and spelt out how statecraft was conducted at this turbulent epoch.

In his sole political oeuvre, al-Maghribī offers a nuanced perspective on statecraft at times of political upheaval. To help the ruler realize an ideal form of government and to insure that the empire can stand the test of time, al-Maghribī divides statecraft into three distinct, yet interdependent categories: one is related to the ruler himself, another to the courtiers and the third to the subjects. Al-Maghribī believed in the tremendous power of

the people who could take to the streets or hatch plots to overthrow the ruler. Embedded in their psyche is the tendency to revolt against tyranny, the subjects are as much of a destabilizing force to the very existence of the empire as the influential elite, the religious scholars and the neighboring rival empires.

Wise as he was, al-Maghribī's suggests the ruler should use a carrot and stick approach (i.e. soft and hard power) that could surely prolong the lifetime of the empire and bring about the contentment and welfare of the citizenry at large. The empowerment of the influential figures in the empire as well as making optimal use of their knowledge and expertise is the ideal way to foster their loyalty and affiliation. Equality, attending to the needs of the weak and allowing a room for the dissidents to voice their complaints and concerns helps the subjects at large to feel they live in an empire to which they truly belong. Consequently, the populace becomes the bulwark that prolongs the ruler's tenure. Cooperation with adjacent empires is a yet another way to subdue the subjects and to consolidate the ruler's power. All in all, it is the ruler who can make his empire an outfit that fits all of his subjects, regardless of their rankings and localities.

As it stands, this thesis is a textual and contextual study of a 10th-century Arabic mirror for princes and a translation of its Arabic text. It situated al-Maghribī's treatise in his historical context, pinpointed its Islamic, Greek and Persian underpinnings, and elaborated on the overarching themes and subtopics that constitute the very thrust of statecraft. The English translation makes the ideas of al-Maghribī very accessible to Western readers and researchers who can utilize it as a point of departure for future studies.

As a text that minutely details the societal and political milieu of its time, al-Maghribī's instructive tractate offers a realistic blueprint, that, if followed by current Muslim rulers, could assist them significantly in realizing the welfare, freedom and justice for their constituents. The structural and thematic presentation of the ideas and ideals of statecraft can further serve as a valuable set of signposts to guide contemporary Muslim intellectuals and political thinkers, especially in the post-Arab Spring Middle East.

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Appendices:

(1) The English Translation of the Arabic Text

The following English translation¹²¹ of al-Maghribī's text is my own and I tried my best to render the Arabic text into simple English accessible to academic researchers and non-specialists alike.

Below is the English translation:

In the name of Allāh, the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful

When penning a treatise on statecraft, one should make it short and to the point, for it is meant to avail the great statesmen who are occupied with lots of tasks and are quick to feel weary. Nonetheless, the best characteristic the laity in general and the ruler in particular should have is the affinity for knowledge, the quest for learning it, and drawing themselves closer to the people of knowledge. Surely, this is a clear indication of their very human essence and a quality that can earn the ruler the love of his subjects. Besides, knowledge perspicuously pinpoints others' experiences and allows for the preparation for calamities. In fact, the accounts of the predecessors are indicative of insights and decisions whose overtures were perspicuous to them. Yet, they were not aware of the consequences of such decisions. By closely studying their history and how their decisions turned out and came to much avail, we learn salient lessons and become cognizant of the solid premises of their views, the outcomes of their decisions and what is in between.

¹²¹ Al-Maghribī, *Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa*, 55-82.

Statecraft is of three categories: (a) How the ruler¹²² manages his own life and rectifies himself; (b) how he controls his courtly elite;¹²³ and (c) How he reigns over his subjects.¹²⁴ The virtuous statesman, however, is the one who starts by comporting his own self. Once he does that, he becomes in a better position to rectify the conduct of his courtiers by inculcating in them good manners that would eventually avail the subjects at large. As a result, reform and uprightness gradually and steadily take root in the empire.

I. On the Ruler's Comportment and Self-Governance

One way the ruler can comport himself is by taking care of his physical health because his body is the receptacle for his very self.

The first thing he needs to do is to learn how to adapt to the scorching heat and the freezing cold. In this life, the human being travels constantly and thus becomes vulnerable to perils and transformations. When the ruler lives in the lap of luxury and leads a life of ease, hardships easily take their toll on him and thus can easily turn him incompetent and unjust.

Eating healthy food is a yet another way for the ruler to take care of his physical health. Savory food enhances his appetite and digestion, and vice versa. Therefore, he should only eat food that is pleasing to the taste, and only when he fully digests what he has eaten before, and

¹²² Al-Maghribī uses the term *al-Sultān* (lit. the sultan, the leader, the ruler) and *al-Sā'is* (lit. the statesman) interchangeably. Therefore, I opt to solely use the term 'ruler' throughout the translation of the Arabic text.

¹²³ For the term *al-Khāṣṣa* (lit. 'the selected few; the courtly elite; the courtiers; the entourage), I mainly use the terms 'courtiers' or 'courtly elite'.

¹²⁴ Al-Maghribī uses the term *al-Ra'iyya* (lit. 'the flock; the ruled; the subjects) and *al-'Amma* (the common people) interchangeably. In translation, I mainly use the term 'the subjects'.

his stomach becomes empty and craving for food. Sā'id¹²⁵ once said: Do the sport that suits you well and do not ever overeat, and you will keep diseases at bay.

It is wise to have either one or two homogenous types of food. Mixing different types of food takes their taste away. A wise ruler should abide by this piece of advice and spare other types of food, which are mostly used to adorn tables, for his company and associates. It is equally wise that he should not overeat until he feels satiated. Once food fills up the stomach, its walls stretch causing heartburn.

Insofar as drinking is concerned, it is wise that he should not drink to excess; otherwise he will become unconsciously drunk and experience hangover. Rather he may drink to reach elation and serenity. Binge drinking is the worst thing a sultan can do because it could render his rulership temporarily nonexistent. Therefore, he should only drink a specific amount with no excess. From this amount, he may drink abundantly at the beginning of the drinking session to order to energize himself and incite his vigilance. Then he may revel in drinking the remainder intermittently to carry on with his drinking bout until it comes to a close, leaving him drunk, yet conscious and elated. His state of insobriety should, by no means, end up diminishing his reverence and esteem in the sight of his entourage and servants.

Similarly, it is wise that he drinks intermittently and sporadically, dedicating a specific day for it. In so doing, he would eagerly quest and wait for reveling in drinking. Not only will this maximize his drinking pleasure but it will afford him the time to take care of the salient matters in his life as well. Lest he may behave improperly when drunk, he should allow only

¹²⁵ Abī al-‘Aala’ Sā'id ibn Sahl al-Kātib was a Christian physician and the brother of the archbishop of Nasibis (*Cf. Al-Maghribī, Kitāb fī al-Siyāsa, 139-140*).

those close to him to his drinking bout. Likewise, he should allow the fewest number of servants that he cannot do without.

Patiently staying up late is one of the most virtuous traits kings should ever have. On the contrary, the inability to overcome the desire to fall asleep is a rather repugnant characteristic. A ruler should not only stay awake during the first quarter of the night, but he also should get up very early so there is time to be made optimal use of. In return, he should take naps during the day because there is less fear that a calamity may strike and, if this were to happen, there is a high chance of fixing it on the spot, if not preventing it altogether. At night, catastrophic disasters may take place, and, therefore, the innate nature of being awake and alert exists in such beasts of prey used for protection as dogs and geese.

The hummum bath (*hammām*), where the ruler takes shower and answers the call of nature, is a yet one more thing he needs to have in order to maintain his health. Kings are more in need of baths than their respective subjects owing to the latter's continuous movement and laborious works. Whosoever [of these kings] wants to cleanse his body, he should go to the bathtub for as long as he could, and then showers with fresh water to allow his skin pores to dry up, to retain the normal temperature of his body and to avert any possible decomposition. When he finishes, he ought to be cautious not to eat or drink before he rests and takes a nap so that he can relieve his body of tumult or disorder he has experienced while taking the bath. Such disorder is serious and conducive to a myriad of ailments.

Doing sports is one of the optimal ways that can well maintain one's health. Therefore, the ruler should exercise and do sports to the best of his ability. Playing with scepters, however, is the number-one sport for kings. Besides its sportive merits, it helps him master quick movements and quelling.

To better discipline himself, the foremost trait the king has to have is piety and fear of Allah the Almighty. He should spare no time to secretly do good deeds that may avail him before his Lord [in the Hereafter]. Then he needs to remember Allah's blessing bestowed upon him, namely raising his position, lowering that of his people, and making him their king. It is He the Almighty Who made him superior and made them inferior. Hence, he should be humbly grateful. As a way to show his gratitude, he should be just to his people, and benevolent to them. He should stay awake when they are asleep and do his utmost to protect them. It must not occur to him that rulership affords him comfort and opulence. In actuality, he is the one who is more entitled to exert the most tedious efforts.

Pleasures are either physically embarking on salient undertakings or contemplating with one's heart and mind. In fact, the virtuous statesman knows no comfort or pleasure except for a reasonable extent that is taken out of his busy work time. He has to strike a balance between such pleasures and the aromatic remembrance [of Allah], the excessive observance of good deeds, and then gaining the pleasure of a more high-ranking sultan, if any.

There is no position more sublime than dignity. Nor is there an adornment better than the glamor of the powerful sages whose orders are readily obeyed. Nor is there a better embellishment than appraisal and gratitude. These are the very pleasures of wise statesmen that make up for their diligence and tirelessness. If they manage to maintain matters of paramount importance, they attain the [material] pleasures, which are secondary in significance, without prejudice to their duties and responsibilities. As such, they get the best of both worlds.

The ruler should never put off until tomorrow what he should do today. Responsibilities are closely tied to their respective timings. When it comes to salient tasks, procrastination is

the most catastrophic trait that can bring about dysfunctions and give rise to the decline of empires.

The ruler has to do his best to garner the loyalty of both the courtly elite and the masses. Such loyalty should be earned by virtue of their love for him, and not of their fear from him. When their loyalty is love-driven, they act as his bulwarks. Conversely, when their loyalty is driven by fear, he becomes in need of guarding himself from them. There is a world of difference between these two types of loyalty: While the former makes the people serve as guards for him, the latter requires him to vigilantly keep a watchful eye on them. The eschewal of fear-invoked loyalty does not necessarily mean that the ruled will have no fear and awe towards him. Rather, it means that they may be afraid of him, yet assured of his justice and safely secure from his injustice and transgression. Put differently, it is more akin to how a son fears his father owing to the age difference or as a sign of reverence, and while knowing that his father wants what is in his best interest.

The crux of statecraft encompasses enforcing penalties and fulfilling rewards; rewarding good doers and punishing evil doers; always honoring pledges; employing subordinates for their competence and not only for their own sake; and finally being vigilant for news coming from far and near localities. Whoever abides by these tips and comprehends their very essence, he will masterfully be cognizant of the core of statecraft. And in Allah the Almighty, trust is always put.

A ruler should make every effort to have a great deal of such moral virtues as: Knowledge, decency, leniency, generosity and courage. Leniency entails him to know all information and hunt for all details of important and trivial matters. Decency, however, should make him shun sources of income that are favored by his people. His livelihood should come

from sources suitable for his majesty and high status but without prejudice to his faith or his good manners. Nor should he unjustly infringe upon the rights of any of his people in a bid to secure his living.

Repeatedly warning wrong-doers and forgiving them once or twice are yet other reflections of his clemency. However, if this lenient attitude comes to no avail, he needs to impose the punishment in order to deter them and to allow justice to take its course. As such, the punishment is not meant for revenge or aggression.

When it comes to generosity, he should never delay payments, break his promises or let down those who seek his assistance. His rulership and powers suffice him and make up for his largesse. As a rule of thumb, a ruler is Allah's vicegerent who is entrusted with managing Allah's blessings, and, therefore, should grant the wayfarer and the pauper their rights and attend to their needs as necessary. Otherwise, he runs the risk of being dethroned and having his fortunes appropriated.

His courage galvanizes him to feel deep in his heart that cowards should never help him manage his life or rule his people, for if both his enemies and allies find out about this vulnerability, they will seize the opportunity, abuse his kindness and dare to defy him. His overriding preoccupation should be preparing warriors and amassing weapons, horses and other necessary equipment.

Once he masters these essentials of statecraft, he should embark on learning lessons from the history of his predecessors so that he may avoid their mistakes and benefit from their accomplishments. Therefore, this pursuit is a touchstone of political statecraft.

II. On the Governance of the Courtly Elites

Know that conducting the affairs of the courtiers and courtly elites significantly differs from managing the affairs of the ordinary people. The latter revolves around garnering the people's loyalty, utilizing sticks and carrots, and paving the way for justice to take its course. Yet, the ruler should not be overly concerned with the inculcation of good manners in his subjects because this is a very hard nut to crack. Contrarily, he should nurture the good manners of his courtiers and entourage and rectify their behavior so that they could better perform their duties. In fact, morals to rulers are like the organs to the body. If these organs are not functioning well or are incidentally idle, the whole body will be dysfunctional.

Foremost among the things a ruler should do in this regard are the following: keeping his courtiers and entourage knowledgeable, occasionally checking on them and rectifying their misconduct even if they are stalwart and sagacious. The courtiers to the ruler are more akin to the tools to the craftsman. As some of these tools may need to be regularly maintained, overhauled and sharpened, so do the courtiers. As a statesman, the ruler should be very vigilant and keep checking on his courtly associates, as needed, in order to make sure they are upright and immune to corruption.

What is also needed in this regard is that if his courtiers and subordinates can do without him and can exquisitely handle the matters he entrusted them with, he should not be disinterested in following up with them. In fact, he should realize that he is duty bound to oversee and direct them. In this respect, he is more akin to a masterful craftsman who entrusts his apprentices with some crafts but he oversees them to make sure their artifacts are not defective. This is a very salient matter worthy of much consideration and due attention. He

should employ his courtiers by virtue of their genuine sincerity and fidelity rather than his own whims. To this end, he may use four techniques:

First, he should be benevolent to them because [Prophet Muhammad said] “hearts are naturally inclined towards those who are benevolent to them.” When he checks on them, he should resolve their issues before they even ask for his assistance. This would clearly show his genuine solicitude and concern. Taking the initiative to help them out even with slight efforts is better than offering tremendous help on their request.

Second, he should give them a second chance by forgiving their shortcomings.

Third, he should not surveil them during their tenures in order not to spoil their comfort and delight. Everyone has guilty pleasures, and investigating and debating about such pleasures would spoil their lives, not to mention that surveillance breeds boredom and frustration which could negatively impact their performance. Tolerating them could galvanize them to do well at their jobs and significantly boost their loyalty and affinity for him.

Fourth, he should reassure them that he does not mind having lots of thickheaded companions. Very few people are both competent and trustworthy. Therefore, if these two characteristics were to be found in one individual, then he will be a valuable treasure:

The message scribe should be reliable and eloquent, for good words can move many people and help win over their hearts. Besides, he should be well-versed in different scientific disciplines. So when asked, he has timely answers about what he sends and receives.

The usher should be cheerful, buoyant and lovable so that he could either pleasantly escort visitors or kindly turn them away. To do so, he should be cognizant of people's social classes and ranks. Besides, he has to manage and conclude the visits at their designated time.

The tax-levying administrator should be good-natured, impartial, even-tempered, warmhearted and articulate. He should be constantly investigated about his income and outlay.

The army commander should be a courageous knight who is experienced, assertive and well-acquainted with weaponry. He should check on his soldiery to know who is present and who is absent. For the most part, he should keep them very close to the ruler's door to menace other rulers' messengers and his enemies' spies.

The police commander should be awe-inspiring, harsh, and venerable. He should not have a sense of humor. He should fiercely crack down on suspects and track them, and surveil their whereabouts. Besides, he should be trustworthy, truthful, upright and soft in transactions. He should not tolerate those who delude and disregard his warnings because his cautionary statements help regulate everything.

The judge should be knowledgeable, wise, virtuous and content.

The public inspector should be truthful, trustworthy, upright and cognizant of different ways of living, tactics of deceit and the very interests of the body politic. People's injustices are of two types: Overt injustices, such as public indecency and the like, which are handled by the police commander, and covert injustices which are handled by the general inspector.

Perhaps the latter type is more serious than the former because they are secretly perpetrated and very hard to find out about.

The selected messenger should be well-lettered, credible and silver-tongued. He should have a very retentive memory to memorize what to say and what is to be said to him. He should be reliable and far from distorting or twisting messages.

III. On the Governance of the Common People

The subjects are the ones whose congregation affords the kingdom its expansion. The more people exist in the kingdom, the more spacious and bigger it becomes. Ruling the subjects and rectifying their behavior is a daunting task given their big number and the difficulty involved in distancing them away from corruption. If the ruler were to retaliate against them when they rise up and revolt, it would result in ruining the [empire's] infrastructure and undermining the pillars of his rulership. The ruler should do his utmost to refrain from the use of force given its catastrophic consequences.

The ruler's decisiveness is to be manifested in his good governance and in uniting his subjects to obey him despite their differing views. While harshness and use of force do not go far in rectifying them, misplaced clemency and extreme leniency do not work for them either. Reward could spoil some of them, and so does humiliation.

The first thing the ruler should do regarding managing the affairs of the subjects is to know their classes and the cream of the crop amongst them. He should ask the latter, with the exception of the disabled and the incompetent, to serve him and work in his court. Mystics and scholars should not distance themselves from the ruler save those who are fully dedicating their

time to the worship of Allah the Almighty and those who are known to isolate themselves from the rank and file. He should leave alone those with whom the subjects intermingle such as Abī ‘Alī b. Abī al-Haysh, and he should not speak ill of them. Rather, he should seek the blessings of their supplications for him.

As for others who set examples for others, the rulers should widely employ them and show them his very justice. As a rule of thumb, those people should not distance themselves from the courts of rulers or from frequenting their palaces. Otherwise, this could engender much harm as Ardashīr stated in his book “The Testament (*al-‘Ahd*)”.

Those whom the rulers ask to frequent his court enjoy some rights; the ruler has to keep abreast of their latest news, safeguard their prestigious positions, rank them in different positions and specify the allocation of each and every one of them in accordance with his tendency towards good and evil or right and wrong.

Similarly, the ruler should abundantly reward the best among the lower classes, repress the wicked amongst them and show justice to those obedient to him by showering them with rewards that make them even more obedient. By the same token, he ought to crack down on those who refrain from his obedience and oppress them in a bid to deter others who may do the same. Then, complete justice should be served in a way that everyone should receive fair treatment. At this stage, he should pave the way for uprooting injustice and inculcating the love for the ruler in the hearts and minds of the ruled.

The ruler is also to maintain order on the outskirts of their neighborhoods and secure their routes in order to safeguard their sources of livelihood, and thus their shops will yield

profits. He should use fierce force such as brutal killing and protracted imprisonment to crackdown on debauchers and robbers, for they are like the thorns in the side of tender plants and only by eliminating these thorns, the plants can grow and flourish. Meanwhile, he should show kindness to the weak and spare them the overburden of power positions that abuse or use them.

The ruler should be cognizant of the fact that seditions are oftentimes sparked by the complaints of the weak and the malice of the rich. His justice and good governance should be applied equally, if not more, to other subjects as they apply to all of his kith and kin. A ruler whose decisiveness is only reserved to some of his subjects is not really a true statesman. The disenfranchised subjects can be more akin to an infected organ in the way that it, unless it is swiftly cured, can infect the rest of the body.

Furthermore, the ruler must not tolerate bribery taken by his officials and courtly companions, for bribery is the root cause of injustice and corruption.

Ensuring the loyalty of subjects in the far-flung corners of the country can be achieved by two things: By allowing complainants to frequent his court and by constantly dispatching trustworthy intelligence personnel. One more salient thing, which we briefly underscored earlier, is to draw men of influence, scholars (*'Ulama'*) and chieftains to his court. The ruler should build rapport, honor, eat and drink with each and everyone of them. He should not limit his cordiality and geniality to his courtiers. Rather, he ought to extend that warmth to these men of influence in a bid to eschew any dissatisfaction or rancor.

The ruler has to be on good terms with other rulers in the neighboring powers. They are as needy to each other as subjects to one another, for people's need to cooperate with each other is a fact of life. Therefore, he should lavishly welcome their messengers and make all efforts to embellish and adorn this court and throne. This will serve an indication of his generosity and warm welcome for them. However, he must not ask them to stay longer, because this involves a great deal of harm. During their stay, they should be guarded in order not to intermeddle with anyone from the courtly elite or from the rank and file with the exception of those known to, and trusted by, the ruler himself.

The ruler should be fully aware of everything going on in his capital city and in all other cities in his kingdom by controlling their ports of entry. In so doing, he will stay abreast of not only those who enter or depart his kingdom, but also of all correspondences sent to his subjects including merchants and others. He should control his city as tight as a man would control his house. Nobody can enter or leave except with his permission.

Moreover, he should occupy his mind with following the news and looking for the secrets of not only those near and far from him but also of those allies and foes who neighbor his kingdom. He ought to be aware of their military capabilities and any war plans they have in the making. Hence, he should do so at any cost, even if they have to spend huge amounts of money. If his neighbors were to attack him abruptly, it would be too late for him to regret his failure to spend abundantly to familiarize himself with their clandestine plans. And Allah is the Grantor of success.

(2) Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq's Statement to Yazīd bin Abī Sufyān

Epilogue

We [al-Maghribī] thought it would be very befitting to conclude this commentary with the account of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (May Allah be pleased with him), which is addressed to Yazīd bin Abī Sufyān when Abū Bakr appointed him as the commander of the troops dispatched to the Levant. This utterance truly epitomes superb eloquence and splendid counsel. It reads as follows:

Take the initiative and shower your soldiery with your generosity and promise them more. If you were to give them a speech, then do so briefly because the longer the speech gets, the faster they will forget what you said first. Comport yourself, and your people will follow suit. (People usually draw themselves closer to their ruler by doing what he does.)¹²⁶ Never miss praying when the prayer's fixed time is due. (Let someone to call your troops for prayers, and then go ahead and lead the congregational prayer with those who wish to pray behind you.)

When the messengers of your enemies come to you, then be generously hospitable to them and, as possible, shorten their stay so that when they leave, they know nothing about your army or any weakness therein. Host these messengers in the presence of a huge crowd of your soldiery and do not allow anyone to speak with them. Instead, be the only one to talk to them.

¹²⁶ Words between brackets are al-Maghribī's additions to Abū Bakr al- Ṣiddīq's statement.

Your private life should not be the same as your public life because this can considerably bewilder you. When you seek counsel, explain your issue in detail and without any concealment so that you can get definite advice. If you were to know about a weakness in your enemy, then do not reveal it until you make use of it. Stay up late in the company of your courtly companions because this can keep you abreast of the latest news.

Disperse your guards and try as much as possible to surprisingly oversee them while on duty. If you find anyone of them fail to keep careful watch in his position, then punish him. Divide their night duties into shifts, making the first shift longer than the rest because it is the closest to the daytime and thus easier to perform. Do not ever be afraid to discipline them. Failing to punish them can enrage the people because they will see the double standards in imposing punishments on everyone but granting amnesty to some guards. Do not cling to punishments (because even the lightest penalty is painful). Do not be quick to resort to punishment (if you can adequately do without it). Do not leave your soldiers unwatched over because this could corrupt them. Do not spy on them because this could slanderously disclose their shortcomings.

Do not allow in your court those who speak ill of others. Instead, seek the company of those known for loyalty and truthfulness. Abide by friendliness when you meet people. Do not be coward so that your people will not follow suit. Do not sacrifice the lives of Muslims when you are in jeopardy. Similarly, do not delude them to possibly obtain some gains. You should neither hasten to fight a battle if it does not seem due nor lag behind when fighting takes place. Take good care of the weak and the needy amongst

you. Eat in public and do not eat in your homes. Never betray those with whom you made a treaty. Do not feel secure from your enemy's danger even if it is far away.

These are the nuances and some utterances [of Abū Bakr's statement]. We demystified some of its ambiguous phrases and explained them in terms easily comprehended by some rulers of our time, who are the main target audience of this treatise. And peace be unto you!

This concise treatise on statecraft was completed by the distinguished vizier Abū al-Qāsim al-Husayn ibn 'Alī (May Allah forgive him).