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AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S CONTESTED REVIVAL:

IḤYĀ' 'ULŪM AL-DĪN AND ITS CRITICS IN KHORASAN AND THE MAGHRIB

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ABSTRACT

This study traces the trajectory of al-Ghazālī's *Revival of the Religious Sciences* or *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* from its composition to its controversial reception in Khorasan and al-Andalus in the first half of the 6th/12th century. It argues that that al-Ghazālī sought to revive Islamic religious sciences he portrays as dead by subordinating the "worldly sciences" of jurisprudence and theology to the "otherworldly science," a science largely but not entirely identical to Sufism. It then turns to al-Ghazālī's emergence from seclusion in 499/1106 to teach in Nishapur and to promote his agenda of "revival." This provoked a controversy that led to al-Ghazālī's leaving his position in Nishapur to retire definitively in his home city of Ṭūs three years later in 503/1109. Following this is an examination of the controversy over the *Iḥyā'* in North Africa and Muslim Spain, where the *Iḥyā'* was burned in 503/1109. This Maghribi controversy began with an uncompromising year-long campaign of seeking out and destroying of the *Iḥyā'*, instigated by the head *qāḍī* of Cordoba and sanctioned by the Almoravid regime. This study argues that this campaign gave way in later years to a more sophisticated critical acceptance of the book as prominent Maghribi scholars debated its ideas, apparently without fear of official censure, and the critiques of al-Ghazālī's Nishapuri enemies filtered into the Maghrib. The study ends by examining a second campaign against the *Iḥyā'* in the Maghrib in 538/1143, arguing that this was not an attack on al-Ghazālī's ideas as the campaign of 503/1109 had been, but a response to the fact that the *Iḥyā'* and al-Ghazālī had become powerful symbols of opposition to the Almoravid regime.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Early in the year 503 (mid-year 1109), the notables of the city of Cordoba gathered by the western gate of the courtyard of the city's main mosque to witness the burning of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) voluminous masterpiece, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, or *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. The book had been condemned by the chief judge of Cordoba, Ibn Ḥamdīn (d. 508/1114). The other jurists of the city supported his decision, and the order that the work be burned was endorsed by the Almoravid Sultan, `Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn (d. 538/1143). All available manuscripts were collected, and those suspected of owning the *Iḥyā'* were made to swear they did not possess a copy. The leather-bound volumes that had been so collected were doused in oil and ignited. The campaign against the *Iḥyā'* was pursued for the remainder of the year throughout Almoravid lands.

Over three decades later, in 538/1143, the Almoravid Sultan Tāshfīn b. `Alī (d. 540/1145) sent an edict to the people of Valencia ordering them to seek out and burn the works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. Two years before this, two prominent Andalusi Sufis, Ibn al-`Arīf, the leader of a group of Sufis known as the "Ghazālian order (*al-ṭarīqa al-ghazāliyya*)," and Ibn Barrajān, known as the "al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus," were summoned to the Almoravid capital of Marrakech for questioning. Ibn Barrajān was executed there, and Ibn al-`Arīf died on his return to al-Andalus under disputed circumstances. A year after the burning, in 539/1144, a revolt against the Almoravids

broke out in what is today Southern Portugal, led by a Sufi named Ibn Qasī, who is said to have made a show of reading al-Ghazālī in order to attract followers.

These events have impressed medieval Muslim historians and hagiographers and modern scholars alike. For Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, author of the 13th-century history of the Maghrib, *Naẓm al-jumān*, the burning of 503/1109 was a momentous event that led to the overthrow of the Almoravid empire at the hands of the Almohads, whose founder had been personally entrusted by al-Ghazālī to avenge the destruction of his masterpiece. For Maghribi Sufis, the burning of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* became a central narrative of their group identity. In fact, the book played a crucial role in the formation of a distinctly Maghribi Sufism, of which it became a symbol. Having defended the *Iḥyā'* against those who sought to destroy it became one of the defining marks of an authentic Sufi, and many Maghribi Sufis were portrayed as defenders of the work on the basis of their actual or legendary defiance of the campaign against it.

For modern scholars, the burning of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* in the Maghrib is a striking anomaly, given the prevailing understanding of the significance of al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī has been considered not only an orthodox Muslim thinker, but the Muslim thinker who *defined* orthodoxy in his day. In his *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya* he condemned the teachings of Isma'īlī Shiism. In *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, he condemned major doctrines of Muslim philosophers such as al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā. He wrote against antinomian Sufis, the so-called *Ibāḥiyya*. In his *Fayṣl al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa-l-zandaqa*, he spells out clear guidelines for determining who can be considered beyond the pale of the faith. His *Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl* was a definitive work of jurisprudence for centuries. As for

Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn, it has been seen for a very long time as the work that rendered Sufism orthodox, reigning in Sufi excess and breathing new life into a religion that threatened to ossify under the influence of an inflexible jurisprudence.[1] Given this understanding of al-Ghazālī, it was impossible to see what could be found in *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* to justify its destruction, and it was assumed that the event must be evidence for the intolerance of the Almoravid regime and of Maghribi Islam more generally.[2]

In recent years, a much more detailed picture has emerged of the history of the Maghrib and Maghribi religious currents in the medieval period. Vincent Cornell has written a history of Maghribi Sufism that casts Sufis not as ethereal mystics, but as men and women engaged in the social and political struggles of their day, and Sufism not as disengaged mystical speculation, but as a religious science intertwined with the other religious sciences. Cornell portrays the controversy over the *Iḥyāʾ* as a battle in a broader struggle over Arab ethnic privilege and over the adoption of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, a fundamental legal methodology that threatened to upset established legal precedent and practice in the Maghrib.[3]

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[1] Duncan MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzali, with especial reference to his religious experiences and opinions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 20, 1899, pp. 71-132, especially pp. 71-72; and Ignaz Goldziher, *Le dogme et la loi de l'Islam: Histoire du développement dogmatique et juridique de la religion musulmane*, Félix Arin (trans.), Paris: P. Geuthner, 1920, especially pp. 147-155.

[2] See, for example, Reinhart Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d-Espagne jusqu'a la conquête par les Almoravides (711-1110)* Nouvelle Edition Revue et mise à jour par E. Lévi Provençal, 3 vols., Leiden: Brill, 1932, vol. 3, pp. 157-158. The first edition was published in 1861.

[3] Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998, pp. 12-31.

While Cornell's study reveals much about the social and intellectual significance of Sufism in this period, and thus the broader milieu in which the controversy occurred, it does not explain the burning of 503/1109. Al-Ghazālī was one of the greatest thinkers in the *uṣūl* tradition, but he did not complete his landmark contribution to *uṣūl*, *al-Mustaṣfā min `ilm al-uṣūl*, until the year of the burning. The *Mustaṣfā* certainly did not arrive in the Maghrib from eastern Iran until after the campaign of 503/1109 had died down. Furthermore, there is evidence that the Maghribi debate over *uṣūl al-fiqh* had run its course by the time the debate over the *Iḥyā'* began. Al-Ghazālī's chief accuser, Ibn Ḥamdīn, was himself an *uṣūlī*, and *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*, though its fundamental structure was patterned on *uṣūl*,[4] is not primarily a work of *fiqh*.

Maribel Fierro, in a article on the history of opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus, examines not only the burning of 503/1109, but also the events of the 530s/1140s mentioned above: the extradition of Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-`Arīf in 536/1141, the Almoravid order of 538/1143 that the works of al-Ghazālī be sought out and burned, and the revolt of Ibn Qasī in 539/1144.[5] Fierro adds a good deal of complexity to previous discussions of the campaign against al-Ghazālī. She points out that not all Maghribi religious scholars opposed al-Ghazālī. In the same period in which his writings were attacked twice, Sufism was progressively integrated into the mainstream of the religious sciences in the Maghrib. Though Fierro, like Cornell, contributes to the understanding of

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[4] See Chapter I below.

[5] Maribel Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus" in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, Frederick De Jong & Bernd Radtke (eds.), Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1999, pp. 184-197.

the milieu in which the controversy occurred, she does not answer the question of why the *Iḥyā'* in particular was attacked and what objections were raised against it.

It has been suggested that a clearer understanding of the motives that lay behind the burning could be reached by looking at *Iḥyā 'ulūm al-dīn* itself.[6] Indeed, the long-standing assumption that the *Iḥyā'*'s significance is to have rendered Sufism orthodox has been discounted in recent years,[7] again opening the question of what the fundamental thesis of the work might be. No existing study, however, answers this question. For all that al-Ghazālī is one of the most important religious thinkers in the classical Islamic tradition and *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is his most important work, surprisingly little has been written about the *Iḥyā'* as a whole. Modern scholarly interests have focused on other questions, such as whether al-Ghazālī was really an Ash'arite,[8] whether or not his doctrine was influenced by the philosophical thought of Ibn Sīnā,[9] and the exact nature of

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[6] Mustapha Bensbaa, *Al-Sulṭa bayn al-tasannun wa-"l-tashayyu'" wa-l-taṣawwuf mā bayn 'aṣray al-murābiṭīn wa-l-muwaḥḥidīn*, Tetuan: Manshūrāt al-Jam'īya al-Maghribiyya li-l-Dirāsāt al-Andalusiyya, 1999. He asks rhetorically, "But wouldn't it benefit us, before we venture our own opinion on the matter, to examine the *Iḥyā'* itself as a book?" p. 82. However, his examination of the *Iḥyā'* is partial. He focuses on book 14, the *Book of the Lawful and Unlawful* (*Kitāb al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*), and the opinions that al-Ghazālī expresses in it on the subject of relations with the ruler as a possible source of controversy. To test his hypothesis, he examines the interaction of Sufis and pious religious scholars of the day with the Almoravid rulers. He points to instances of opposition to the Almoravids by Sufis that suggest inspiration from book 14 of the *Iḥyā'*, but admits that, given the influence on the *Iḥyā'* by other Sufi works, such parallels cannot conclusively prove that this influence came from al-Ghazālī's work. P. 86.

[7] George Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," in *Studies on Islam*, Merlin L. Schwartz (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 216-274, especially, pp. 242-248.

[8] Richard M. Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994. The findings of this study must be considered with caution. See Ahmad Dallal, "Al-Ghazālī and the Perils of Interpretation," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 122, no. 4, Oct.-Dec. 2003, pp. 773-787.

[9] Richard M. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī and Avicenna*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992.

his cosmology.[10] Such studies have often examined sections of the *Iḥyā'*, but this has taken the form of mining the work for passages relevant to the question at hand rather than treating it integrally and asking about its broader aims and theses.

One reason for this is that it has been accepted that al-Ghazālī himself provides an adequate description of his thought in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (*The Deliverance from Error*), a short and seemingly autobiographical work he wrote between 500/1106 and 503/1109. In it, al-Ghazālī presents himself as having unambiguously embraced Sufism and writes of the *Iḥyā'* as the expression of this conversion. As we will see in Chapter II, however, the *Munqidh* is a far more complicated and misleading text than has been realized. Without entering into the difficulties of the *Munqidh*, it can be said that the conclusions about the *Iḥyā'* drawn from it give no indication as to why it would have provoked controversy. The current understanding of the *Iḥyā'* in the field is of an encyclopedic, but otherwise unremarkable work of Sufism.

The first task of this study, therefore, is to examine the *Iḥyā'* anew. In the event, studying *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* with the aim of discovering its controversial aspects is a fruitful approach, revealing that al-Ghazālī intended for the work's title to be taken quite literally. As Chapter I shows, the fundamental assumption of the *Iḥyā'* is that the religious sciences in al-Ghazālī's day were dead and in need of reviving. This being the case, two fundamental questions must be asked of the book for the sake of understanding its broader aims and theses: Who "killed" the religious sciences and how? And what

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[10] Timothy J. Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and Eschatology of the Iḥyā'*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001.

does their revival entail? When the work is thus interrogated, it becomes clear that *Iḥyāʾ* *ʿulūm al-dīn* is a polemical work that stretched and perhaps burst the boundaries of orthodoxy in surprising ways.   Briefly, the *Iḥyāʾ* labels *fiqh* and *kalām* "worldly sciences" (*ʿulūm al-dunyā*) and seeks to subordinate them to what al-Ghazālī calls the "otherworldly science" (*ʿilm al-ākhira*).   What al-Ghazālī means by the otherworldly science seems on the main to be Sufism, but he never says so directly, and in those passages in which he briefly discusses the esoteric and theoretical aspects of this science, he does so in ways that could be taken to be philosophical.

The second chapter of this study grew out of a serendipitous discovery. A major hindrance to understanding the causes of the controversy in the Maghrib is a lack of sources that discuss the actual objections of Ibn Ḥamdīn and other Maghribi critics of the *Iḥyāʾ*. George Hourani has suggested that a little-read work of al-Ghazālī's, *al-Imlāʾ fī ishkālāt al-iḥyāʾ* (*The Composition on the Problems of the Revival*) was al-Ghazālī's response to his Maghribi critics.[11]   An examination of this work, however, reveals that it is in fact a response to another controversy over the *Iḥyāʾ* altogether, one that occurred in Nishapur where al-Ghazālī taught towards the end of his life from 499-503/1106-1109. A study of this work in conjunction with al-Ghazālī's Persian letters and passages scattered throughout some of his shorter works and his biographies show that, while the *Iḥyāʾ* was being burned at the western extremity of the Islamic world, al-Ghazālī was facing charges against the *Iḥyāʾ* at its eastern extremity.   This crucial and hitherto

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[11] George Hourani, "The Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," *Journal of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 79, no. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1959, p. 231; idem, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 104, no. 2, 1984, p. 297.

unknown chapter in al-Ghazālī's biography and reception history sheds important light on the *Iḥyā'* and his later works. Its study is an important step in moving beyond the misleading biography provided by the *Munqidh* and the vague and sometimes legendary accounts of his life given by `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī towards a more vivid biography that aids in the understanding of his thought.

The Nishapuri controversy shows that later Maghribi objections to the *Iḥyā'* were not unique. Some of the most detailed criticisms written by Maghribis were, in fact, re-phrasings of critiques originally made in Nishapur. These critiques reached the Maghrib through a Maliki from Sicily, Abū `Abd Allāh al-Māzarī, who participated in the controversy in Nishapur. His critiques reached Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī, an Andalusī living in Alexandria, who then passed them along to al-Andalus in a letter. The original objections that led to the burning of 503/1109 must be sought elsewhere.

Chapter III turns to a well-known source on the burning, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's *Naẓm al-Jumān*, comparing it to less extensive descriptions of the first burning to better determine its scope and duration. It then looks at a little-known surviving fragment of Ibn Ḥamdīn's critique of the *Iḥyā'* to determine what his actual objections were, to the extent this is possible from a fragment. Ibn Ḥamdīn's critique reveals that he objected less to specific elements of the *Iḥyā'* and more to the use made of its major thesis by Maghribi Sufis, who claimed epistemological superiority over the jurists as a result of knowledge gained through Sufi practice. Ibn Ḥamdīn implies that this is tantamount to claiming equality to Muḥammad. He attacked *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* because it was a source of

guidance and inspiration for Maghribi Sufis and was acting as a catalyst for a sudden flowering of Maghribi Sufism.

Though some scholars have depicted the campaign launched by Ibn Ḥamdīn as lasting for years if not decades, Ibn al-Qaṭṭān is explicit in saying that it had run its course by the end of the year it began, 503. After this, the evidence bears out Maribel Fierro's contention that the following decades saw the gradual acceptance of Sufism and of al-Ghazālī on the part of Maghribi religious scholars.

Chapter IV turns to the reprise of the campaign against al-Ghazālī and Sufis somehow associated with him and his writings over three decades later. Unlike Ibn Hamdīn, the Almoravid Sultan, Tāshfīn b. `Alī, did not attack the writings of al-Ghazālī for the ideas it promoted; these had long since had their impact on the Maghrib. Rather, he attacked al-Ghazālī because he and the *Iḥyā'* had become important symbols of opposition to the Almoravids.

The burning of 503/1109 had taken on a significance the Almoravids could never have foreseen, becoming one of the foci of Maghribi Sufi identity about which numerous legends circulated. The Almohads, who were on the verge of toppling the Almoravids, had circulated legends of their own, linking their founder, Ibn Tūmart, to al-Ghazālī and the burning of his work, hoping to appeal thereby to the Sufis and to be accepted as one of their own. This and other instances of overlap between the Sufis and Almohads in terms of their language of legitimacy and authority led the Almoravids to treat the Sufis as a potential fifth column, a judgment that was proved warranted by the revolt of Ibn Qasī in 539/1144.

This study traces the trajectory of al-Ghazālī's thought into the world, from the uncompromising vision of his *Programschrift*,[12] to his optimistic emergence from relative seclusion to revive the faith in 499/1106, to his retirement under duress three years later. In the Maghrib, the *Iḥyā'* functioned much as al-Ghazālī intended, providing a guide for a generation that flocked to Sufism and gave it a uniquely Maghribi stamp. Then, historical contingency endowed the work with a significance al-Ghazālī could not have foreseen, turning it into a field for the contestation of political legitimacy. This study aims not only to solve the mystery of the burning of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* in the Maghrib in the 6th/12th century, but to further our understanding of the life and thought of one of Islamic civilization's greatest thinkers.

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[12] Erika Glassen has characterized the *Iḥyā'* as a *Programschrift*. It is the best single word description I have found. A sprawling four-quarter, forty section book cannot really be called a manifesto, and any word that captures the magnitude of the *Iḥyā'* fails to capture its polemical nature. See Erika Glassen, *Der Mittlere Weg: Studien zur Religionspolitik und Religiosität der Späteren Abbasiden-Zeit*, Wiesbaden: Fritz-Steiner Verlag, 1981, p. 88.

CHAPTER I

THE STRUCTURE AND THESIS OF *IḤYĀʾ ʿULŪM AL-DĪN*

While the scattered references to the burning of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* in the Islamic West in the 6th/12th century have been subjected to increasingly sophisticated analysis, a major piece of evidence has remained marginal to studies of the dispute; that is, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* itself. Most studies of the burning characterize the *Iḥyāʾ* as a work of Sufism, some point out that it is critical of the jurists and theologians, but once this has been noted, attention quickly shifts to the specifics of Andalusi history in the search for the reason for the burning. Reinhart Dozy's examination of the burning, one of the earliest, is typical in this respect. He writes that the *Iḥyāʾ* is "not a heterodox book" and goes on to characterize it as advocating "an intimate, fervent, passionate religion, a religion of the heart." He notes that al-Ghazālī blames the religious scholars of his day for occupying themselves with trivial matters of law. The jurists of al-Andalus, whose "intolerance passed all bounds," were incensed by this apt critique of their practice and ordered the work burned.[1] Subsequent studies have added a great deal of detail and subtlety to our understanding of this burning and the circumstances in which it occurred. In one basic sense, though, they have tended to agree with Dozy. They regard the *Iḥyāʾ* as a magisterial but largely non-tendentious work of Sufism, and look to political, social,

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[1] Reinhart Dozy, *Histoire des Musulmans d-Espagne*, vol. 3, pp. 157-158.

and doctrinal history to explain why a book assumed to be uncontroversial in itself inspired controversy.[2]

This is understandable because most such studies have been devoted to broader themes. They examine the reception of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* within the history of Sufism in the Islamic West,[3] the history of opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus,[4] or the worldview of the religious scholars of al-Andalus.[5] Furthermore, when these researchers look to studies of al-Ghazālī's thought and writings, they find little that would give them insight into the broader aims and structure of the *Iḥyā'*.

Some of the earliest studies of al-Ghazālī's thought do focus on *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, celebrating the work and its author for having rescued Islam from the spiritually deadening legalism of *fiqh* and dry scholasticism of *kalām*, while reining in the excesses of antinomian Sufis.[6] From these early studies sprang the notion that al-Ghazālī's achievement was to render Sufism "orthodox." This understanding of the *Iḥyā'* still

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[2] An interesting exception to this is Mustapha Bensbaa, *Al-Sulṭa bayn al-tasannun wa-"l-tashayyu'"
wa-l-taṣawwuf.* He asks rhetorically, "But wouldn't it benefit us, before we venture our own opinion on
the matter, to examine the *Iḥyā'* itself as a book?" p. 82. However, his examination of the *Iḥyā'* is partial.
He focuses on book 14, the *Book of the Lawful and Unlawful* (*Kitāb al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*), and the opinions
that al-Ghazālī expresses in it on the subject of relations with the ruler as a possible source of controversy.
To test his hypothesis, he examines the interaction of Sufis and pious religious scholars of the day with the
Almoravid rulers. He points to instances of opposition to the Almoravids by Sufis that suggest inspiration
from book 14 of the *Iḥyā'*, but admits that, given the influence on the *Iḥyā'* by other Sufi works, such
parallels cannot conclusively prove that this influence came from al-Ghazālī's work; see p. 86.

[3] Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint.*

[4] Maribel Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus."

[5] Dominique Urvoy, *Le monde des ulémas Andalous du V/XIe au VII/XIIIe siècle*, Geneva: Librarie
Droz, 1978.

[6] Duncan MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzali," especially pp. 71-72. And Ignaz Goldziher, *Le
dogme et la loi de l'Islam*, especially pp. 147-155.

enjoys some currency, although it has been shown that Sufism had already gained widespread acceptance by al-Ghazālī's day and did not need to be brought into the mainstream.[7] This is an important correction but gives no alternative account of what it was about the *Iḥyā'* that made it one of the most influential works in the Islamic tradition.

Of course, al-Ghazālī is the author of several original and influential works; some of these have been taken to be more representative of his thinking and have consequently received greater attention. For instance, W. Montgomery Watt's study of al-Ghazālī's thought is based on al-Ghazālī's own account of his intellectual trajectory in his *Deliverance from Error*.[8] It takes little note of the *Iḥyā'*, focusing instead on al-Ghazālī's responses to contemporary schools of thought in works such as the *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, and *The Infamies of the Bāṭanites*. The result is an interesting view of the intellectual milieu of the later $5^{th}/11^{th}$ century, but it tells us little about the achievement of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī's most influential work.

In recent years there have been numerous studies that examine *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. However, these often devote little attention to the broader objectives and structure of the

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[7] George Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," especially, pp. 242-248. Makdisi is not entirely fair to Goldziher. Goldziher does not ignore al-Qushayrī's efforts to make Sufism more palatable as Makdisi suggests, but rather sees them as complementing al-Ghazālī's efforts. If al-Ghazālī inserted mysticism into juridical thought, then al-Qushayrī tempered antinomian Sufism and "aided in reestablishing the bridges that had nearly been cut between orthodoxy and Sufism." Goldziher, p. 147. MacDonald credits al-Ghazālī with both achievements. Still, Makdisi's larger critique is apt. We must recognize, of course, that the mere fact that al-Qushayrī argued for the orthodoxy of Sufism does not mean that his argument was successful to the extent that further efforts were not needed. As we shall see below, however, a careful reading of the *Iḥyā'* reveals that al-Ghazālī's efforts were different than those of al-Qushayrī, and furthermore, evidence from al-Ghazālī's own biography shows that Sufism had gained widespread acceptance in Seljuk lands in his day.

[8] W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazali*, Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1963.

book, and focus on narrower questions of influence and doctrinal detail. These questions include asking whether al-Ghazālī was really an Ash`arite[9], whether or not his doctrine was influenced by the philosophical thought of Ibn Sīnā[10], and the exact nature of his cosmology.[11] These are fascinating questions that have produced important insights into al-Ghazālī's thought, and the present study has benefited greatly from their conclusions. But the field still lacks a broad understanding of al-Ghazālī's aims in writing the *Iḥyā'* and the place of this work in the history of Sufi thought.

This chapter attempts to provide such an understanding. The aim here is to base my study of the reception of the *Iḥyā'* in al-Andalus and the Maghrib on a firmer comprehension of what that work represented. Of course, al-Ghazālī's masterpiece is an immense, encyclopedic work; a single chapter cannot hope to do it justice. I therefore focus on al-Ghazālī's own statements of objective, tracing how some of his aims are served by his rhetorical strategies and the overall structure of his work. As this is a study of reception, I take up of al-Ghazālī's originality in a general way for the sake of explaining why critics reacted to the *Iḥyā'* as they did and not to works upon which al-Ghazālī relied heavily, such as Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's (d. 386/996) *Qūt al-qulūb*. I do not,

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[9] Richard M. Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash`arite School*. The findings of this study must be considered with caution. See Ahmad Dallal, "Al-Ghazālī and the Perils of Interpretation."

[10] Richard M. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*.

[11] Timothy J. Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul*.

however, attempt to undertake the enormous task of assessing the originality of al-Ghazālī's treatment of individual points of doctrine.[12]

I begin with a close reading of lengthy passages of his *khuṭba*, or opening exhortation, which highlights the major themes of the *Iḥyā'* in order to give not only an overview of the themes of the work but also a sense of al-Ghazālī's presentation and rhetoric, which are also crucial for understanding the work's reception. I then discuss the structure of the work as a whole and the way it serves al-Ghazālī's objective of reordering the hierarchy of the religious sciences. Next I examine two of al-Ghazālī's major themes in greater detail. By looking at the first of the forty books of the *Iḥyā'*, the *Book of Science*, I show how he portrays the historical development of the place of

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[12] Many scholars have examined the influence of al-Ghazālī's predecessors and contemporaries on the *Iḥyā'* and I have found their conclusions quite helpful. That al-Ghazālī made original contributions to at least some of the topics that he treats in individual books is suggested by Michael Cook who points to his *Kitāb al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahī ʿan al-munkar* as a revolutionary contribution to the literature on this topic, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 427-428 and 446-450. In some cases, his thinking was not so original. Wilferd Madelung has demonstrated al-Ghazālī's debt to al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī in his treatment of ethics, first in *Mīzān al-ʿamal* and, via the *Mīzān*, in the *Iḥyā'*, "Ar-Rāġib al-Iṣfahānī und die Ethik al-Ġazālīs," *Islamwissenschaftliche Abhandlung*, Richard Gramlich (ed.), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974, pp. 152-163. As for al-Ghazālī's borrowings from other authors and their influence on his thought and work, Richard Gramlich's translations of seven books from the fourth quarter of the *Iḥyā'*, al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb* are rich in cross references that show al-Ghazālī's debt to these two authors as well as other Sufi writers, Richard Gramlich, *Muḥammad al-Ġazzālīs Lehre von den Stufen zur Gottesliebe: Die Bücher 31-36 seines Hauptwerkes eingeleitet, übersetzt und kommentiert*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1984, *Das Sendschreiben al-Qušayrīs über das Sufitum eingeleitet, übersetzt und kommentiert*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989, *Die Nahrung der Herzen: Abū Ṭālib al-Makkīs Qūt al-qulūb eingeleitet, übersetzt und kommentiert*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992. Margaret Smith has discussed the influence of Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibi (d. 243/857) on al-Ghazālī's thought in the *Iḥyā'* and elsewhere, "The Forefunner of al-Ghazālī," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1936, first quarter, pp. 65-78. For a chart comparing books of the *Iḥyā'* to corresponding books of *Qūt al-qulūb* as well as a graphic representation of the influence of different Sufi authors on al-Ghazālī, see Mustapha Hogga, *Orthodoxie, Subversion et Réform en Islam Ġazālī et les Seljūqides, suivi de textes politiques de Ġazālī*, *Études Musulmanes* XXXIV, Paris: Librarie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1993, pp. 201, 203. Further such references can be found in introductions of editions of individual books of the *Iḥyā'* written by Ridwan al-Sayyid, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-ʿilm, Kitāb qawāʿid al-ʿaqī'id, Kitāb al-ṣalā, Kitāb al-hajj-al-zakā-al-ṣawm, Kitāb al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām, Kitāb al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahī ʿan al-munkar, kitāb al-tawba, Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul, Kitāb al-mawt*, introductions by Ridwan al-Sayyid, Beirut: Dār Iqrā', 1983.

theology and jurisprudence among the religious sciences, and the role that he prescribes for them in the future. By looking at book 35, the *Book of Divine Unity and Reliance upon God*, I analyze his depiction of the esoteric "science of unveiling." Finally, I assess al-Ghazālī's role in the history of Sufi writings to show how *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* relates to the Sufi works that preceded it.

The *Iḥyā'* that emerges is not the simple and "orthodox" Sufi work that some have described.[13] Though we can, with some reservations, agree with Dozy that it is not a "heterodox" book, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* shows itself to be a contentious and polemical work. As its title itself suggests, its aim is no less than the *revival* of the religious tradition—a tradition that its author thus implies is dead.[14] By asking whom al-Ghazālī

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[13] For a discussion of the perils of describing al-Ghazālī's presentation of Sufism as "orthodox," see Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," pp. 216-274, especially, pp. 242-248. See also Hamid Algar, *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī: An Exponent of Islam in its Totality*, Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2001, esp. p. 40. Algar points out that al-Ghazālī's predecessors such as al-Qushayrī and Makkī had already rendered Sufism "orthodox." His description of al-Ghazālī's achievement as a blending of Sufism with the other religious sciences bears some similarity to mine, but he presents this as an uncontroversial union of Islam's inner and outer dimensions. He does not discuss the fact that the synthesis al-Ghazālī presents in the *Iḥyā'* is not a union of equals but rather the assertion of a hierarchy that places Sufism above the other religious sciences and makes it the primary vehicle for pursuing the genuine objectives of the religion. It should also be added that the term "orthodox" has different meaning in the context of Islam. There is no equivalent to a Church hierarchy that has the authority to deem a belief orthodox or heretical. What was at stake was rather the general acceptability of Sufism among a broad spectrum of Muslims. Both of these authors point to other predecessors of al-Ghazālī, such as Makkī, Qushayrī, and Kalābādhī, who criticized antinomian Sufis and who themselves wrote about Sufisim in full accordance with the Qur'ān and sunna. For an account of Sufism, especially in Khurasān through the early 11th century, that shows how interwoven Sufism was with other religious sciences at that time, see the Introduction of Rkia E. Cornell, *Early Sufi Women/Dhikr an-niswa al-muta'abbidāt aṣ-ṣufiyyāt*, Rkia E. Cornell (trans.), Louisville, Kentucky: Fons Vitae, 1999.

[14] On the significance of this title, see H. Bauer, "Zum Titel und zur Abfassung fon Ghazālī's Iḥjā," *Der Islam*, 4, 1913, pp. 159-160. Bauer suggests that al-Ghazālī's decision to entitle his work *Revival of the Religious Sciences* may have been based on his viewing himself as the "Renewer" (*mujaddid*) that God sends at the beginning of every century to renew his Religion. Bauer points out that al-Ghazālī describes the position of *mujaddid* in the *Deliverance from Error*, by saying, " Verily God the Exalted promised the revival of his religion at the beginning of every century (*wa-qad wa'ada allāh subḥānuhu bi-iḥyā' dīnihi 'alā ra's kul mā'a*). The wording is noteworthy as the term used in the hadith from which this tradition is taken is not "revival" (*iḥyā'*) but rather "renewal" (*tajdīd*). Clearly, the change in wording is intentional.

blames for the mortification of the religious sciences, and examining the cure he prescribes, we can provide a crucial missing piece of the puzzle of the burning of the *Iḥyā'* in the Islamic West in the 6th/12th century.

The Objectives and Strategies of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* as Revealed in al-Ghazālī's *khuṭba*

Many essential elements of the themes and structure of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* are foreshadowed in the exhortation, or *khuṭba*, with which al-Ghazālī begins the book. A careful reading of this highly polemical prelude to the work allows us to survey many of the book's key motifs and reveals the types of readers that al-Ghazālī has in mind as he writes and how he plans to appeal to them. Already here, his assertion of the objectives of religion, and his explanation of why they are not being fulfilled in his day can be discerned, along with his identification of the culprits for this state of affairs and those whose example offers a cure. In his *khuṭba*, as elsewhere in the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī often makes points crucial to his argument indirectly and very subtly, while he manages, nonetheless, to convey a sense of the urgency of his mission. In the detailed examination of the *khuṭba* that follows, I will focus on both al-Ghazālī's objectives in writing the *Iḥyā'* and the rhetorical means by which he seeks to further his agenda. A sense for both is needed to understand why his critics respond to him as they do.

Al-Ghazālī begins his *khuṭba* as follows:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Firstly, I praise God greatly and continuously, even if the praise of those
who praise is feeble and unworthy of His majesty.

Secondly, I invoke God's peace and prayers upon His Messenger, prayers that encompass along with the Lord of Mankind, the rest of the messengers.

Thirdly, I ask guidance from Him most high in that which he has delegated. To Him is my determination in writing a book on the revival of the religious sciences.

Fourthly, I dedicate myself to ending your self-satisfaction, Oh you detractor, boundless in your censure, from among the band of skeptics, excessive in your rebuke and fault-finding from among the ranks of the reckless nay-sayers. For the knot of silence has been loosened from my tongue and the obligation to speak out has been placed round my neck as a necklace of articulation. This was brought about by your persisting in blindness to the evident truth, along with your support of falsehood and adornment of ignorance. And by your incitement against anyone who brings about a slight departure from the customs of mankind (*al-khalq*) and deviates a trifle from the limitations of formalism (*al-rasm*) with regards to practice (*al-ʿamal*) in accordance with the dictates of science (*al-ʿilm*), desiring thereby to attain that which God most high has ordained in the way of the purification of the ego (*nafs*)[15] and the reform of the heart. These efforts aim to compensate for some of a life squandered in despair of achieving full redress and remedy and seclusion from those of whom the Lawgiver (*ṣāḥib al-sharʿ*, i.e. Muhammad), God's peace and prayers be upon him, has said, "The most severely punished of men on the day of the Resurrection will be the scholar (*ʿālim*) whom God, may he be praised, has not benefited through his knowledge (*lam yanfaʿhu allāh subḥānahu bi-ʿilmihi*)."[16]

Already in the normally formulaic opening lines of the work the reader is struck

by al-Ghazālī's departure from convention. It was mandatory for Arabic writing of the

age, especially expressly religious texts, to begin by invoking the name of God (the

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[15] This is a fitting translation for *nafs*, given al-Ghazālī's first definition of the term: "…the collectivity of the power of anger and passion in a person…This is the usage that prevails among the Sufis." This is the *nafs* that would have to be purified in order for the second definition of the term to come to the fore: "…this is the true person and his self (*nafs*) and essence." See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, Ṣidqī Jamīl al-ʿAṭṭār ed., Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 5 vols., 1999, III, 21, pp. 4-5.

[16] *Iḥyāʾ*, *khuṭba*, 1, p. 7.

basmala), followed by praising God (the *ḥamdala*) and invoking prayers and peace upon

Muhammad (*al-ṣalā*). Such openings are usually longer and more elaborate than al-

Ghazālī's. So terse was al-Ghazālī's opening that some of his readers noted that he

neglected to invoke peace and prayers upon Muhammad's Companions and family as

was customary.[17] Furthermore, these three items are normally separated from the rest of

the introduction by the phrase *ammā baʿd*, literally, "as for that which follows" or "to

come to the point," at which juncture the author states his aims in writing the work at

hand;[18] this is the case even in the majority of al-Ghazālī's own writings.[19] Here, they

are joined to the rest of the introduction by numbering first the praise of God, and then

the invocation of prayers upon Muhammad, and then continuing the numbered sequence

to include al-Ghazālī's request for guidance and his statement of objective in writing.

Finally, though it does not come across in my translation, al-Ghazālī alternates erratically

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[17] Al-Zabīdī notes this as one of two objections (*muʾākhadhāt*) that had been raised to this passage, the other being that al-Ghazālī did not explicitly extend his invocation of peace upon the rest of the prophets along with his invocation of prayers. Al-Zabīdī, al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn bi-sharḥ iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (no editor mentioned), second ed., Beirut: Dar al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2002, vol. 1, pp. 78-79.

[18] William Chittick translates *ammā baʿd* as "to come to the point," precisely because the phrase typically marks the point at which the author makes the transition from the formalities of dedicating praising God and his prophets and comes to his objectives in writing. See William Chittick, *Faith and Practice in Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Suri Texts*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 35, 59, 117, and 182.

[19] See, for example, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, Michael Mamura (ed.), Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1997, p. 1; *Mishkāt al-anwār*, David Buchman (ed.), Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998, p. 1; *Iljām al-ʿawām ʿan ʿilm al-kalām*, in *Majmūʿat rasāʾil al-imām al-Ghazālī*, 8 vols., Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya 1997, vol. 4, p. 41; *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, in *Majmūʿat rasāʾil al-imām al-Ghazālī*, 8 vols., Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1997, vol. 8, p. 23, or, for that matter, the opening of the books of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* itself. Throughout the remainder of the *Iḥyāʾ*, he works the theme of the book that he is introducing into his initial praise of God. See, for example, the *khuṭba* of the *Book of the Mysteries* (*asrār*) *of Purity* begins with: "Praise be to God who showed kindness to his servants (*talaṭṭafa bi-ʿibādihi*) and enjoined them (*taʿabbadahum*) to cleanliness…;" *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 3, p. 117. In this instance he goes beyond his usual practice.

between different styles that he employs in the *Iḥyā'*, switching abruptly from rhyming prose to a highly charged rhetoric and ending by blending the two.[20] By rushing through the traditional pious invocations, linking these directly to his mission statement, and writing in such a florid style, the author conveys a sense of the urgency of his task. This passage is designed to give the impression of near recklessness, as though the author were driven by a mission so imperative that he cannot be bothered to observe convention and wait until after the formalities to launch his attack.

It is not uncommon for an author of this period to claim that he has been compelled by others to write the work at hand, either by a questioner to whom he is responding or, as in this case, by the misdeeds of others that he seeks to correct.[21] By responding to a hypothetical critic as we have seen, al-Ghazālī creates a foil for himself in the ensuing exposition of his position: He has been forced to write *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* by carping critics who willfully ignore the truth and actively promote falsehood. Over the remainder of the *khuṭba*, he gradually clarifies the identity of this group and explains whom their carping has targeted.

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[20] As T.J. Winter observes, al-Ghazālī alternates between three styles in the *Iḥyā'*: the formal rhyming prose of his introductions, an unaffected prose used for exposition of doctrine and practices, and a highly rhetorical idiom designed to arouse the heedless. T. J. Winter, *Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Two Desires*, a translation of books XXII and XXIII of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1997, p. 4, n. A.

[21] Though he does not address them in the second person, al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) writes in his own *khuṭba* that he has been compelled to write his *Risāla* (*Epsitle*) by the acts of false, antinomian Sufis. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla*, Beirut: Dar Sader, 2001, p. 10-11. Al-Ghazālī at times portrays his writings as a response to an anonymous sincere questioner as in the case of his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* and, as we shall see in the following chapter, *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'*.

These unjust critics have attacked a group who undertake the "purification of their egos" and the "reform of their hearts," terms that most of his readers would have recognized as references to Sufi practices.[22] According to al-Ghazālī, the "reckless nay-sayer" has stirred up trouble against this group for their deviation from the customs and formalism of mankind. Al-Ghazālī's word for mankind, *al-khalq*, also means "creation" or "creatures," and conjures up the contrasting image of *al-khāliq*, the Creator, or God. It is likewise noteworthy that the word used for formalism is *al-rasm*, rather than the much more authoritative *al-shar`*, divine law, the word he uses below in reference to Muhammad.  Thus, in al-Ghazālī's opinion, these critics attack slight departures from mere human conventions and formalities by those who seek to act in accordance with the dictates of science ( *`ilm*) in accordance with God's commandments.

At the end of this section, al-Ghazālī gives us an idea of the identity of the "detractor" he addresses: the scholar whom God has not caused to benefit from his knowledge. What is implied here, and what becomes clearer in the remainder of the passage, is that the "detractors" whom al-Ghazālī is addressing are the religious scholars,

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[22] Many studies of Sufism focus on the "tasting" of the fruits of divine manifestation (*dhawq*), the annihilation of the ego in the overwhelming presence of God (*fanā'*), and the intoxication of spiritual ecstasy (*sukr*). However, al-Ghazālī and the Sufi literature that inspired him place more emphasis on the practices required to attain such experiences, or the "stations" (*maqāmāt*) along this road. These entail progressively purifying the ego of blameworthy character traits and reforming the heart. Though the ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*) of Sufis such as al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) are far more dramatic, the quiet cultivation of humility and the practice of asceticism were much more defining of what it meant to be a Sufi. Of this emphasis on praxis, Vincent Cornell has written, "…Islamic Ṣūfism is at heart a spiritual methodology and not a single philosophical system. As such, it may encompass a number of different attitudes and types of mystical doctrines…." Vincent Cornell, "Ḥayy in the Land of Absāl: Ibn Ṭufayl and Ṣūfism in the Western Maghrib During the Muwaḥḥid Era," in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, Lawrence Conrad (ed.), Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1996, pp. 133-164. As we shall see, al-Ghazālī announces that the *Iḥyā'* is a work of practice (*mu`āmala*) rather than the revelation of mystical truths (*mukāshafa*).

the `ulamā', (sing. `ālim). `Ālim literally means "knower", someone who possesses `ilm. The term `ilm means both "knowledge" and "science" and appears in the plural in the title of the book, *Revival of the Religious Sciences*. Al-Ghazālī is identifying as his opponent, thus, the religious scholars (`ulamā') who wrongly practice their science (`ilm), and receive no benefit from the knowledge derived from it. They, in fact, try to obstruct those who act in accordance with their knowledge (`ilm) as God has ordained. Here we see the first stirrings—apart from the title itself—of the most important and controversial theme of al-Ghazālī's *magnum opus*: the contestation of what constitutes `ilm.[23]

Another controversial element of the *Iḥyā'* also appears for the first time at the end of this passage. The hadith that al-Ghazālī cites there to make his point is weak (*ḍa`īf*), which is to say, possibly spurious. This is true of many hadith al-Ghazālī cites in *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* and the source of much criticism of the book.[24] Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1369), for example, devoted slightly over half of the lengthy entry in his biographical dictionary on al-Ghazālī to the hadith in the *Iḥyā'* for which he found no *isnād*, or validating chain of transmission; his list filled more than 100 pages in the edition

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[23] Nabih Amin Faris has translated `ilm in this passage as "knowledge," and has translated the title of the first book of the *Iḥyā'* as *The Book of Knowledge*. Indeed, in many instances of the word, it would be more elegant to translate `ilm as knowledge. However, as we shall see below (p. 42) al-Ghazālī explicitly writes that he has prefaced the entire *Iḥyā'* with the *kitāb al-`ilm*, and I will argue that the revival of the religious sciences— `ulūm—lies in redefining the concept if `ilm. To capture this critical reflection of the broader project in individual discussions of `ilm, I have, wherever possible, translated `ilm as "science," despite the occasional awkwardness caused by this translation.

[24] The edition of *Iḥyā `ulūm al-dīn* used for this study contains in its footnotes the study of the *Hadith* cited in the work by Abū Faḍl `Abd al-Raḥīm b. Ḥusayn al-`Irāqī (d. 806/1402-1403) entitled *Al-mughnī `an ḥaml al-asfār fī takhrīj mā fī al-iḥyā' min al-akhbār*. Unless stated otherwise, any assessment given of the quality of a *Hadith* comes from this work.

consulted for this study.[25] Many works have been written on the subject of al-Ghazālī's

use of weak hadith. As we shall see, this was a point held against him in the debate over

Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn in the 6th/12th century in both the Mashriq and the Maghrib.[26]

As the *khuṭba* progresses and al-Ghazālī sets out his aims more clearly, his words

must have further incensed the scholars, especially the theologians and jurists among

them:

> By my life, there is no cause for your persisting in arrogance but the
> disease that has become pervasive among the multitudes of men, yea has
> grown to encompass the masses and consists in their not realizing the
> gravity of the situation. They are ignorant of the fact that this is an
> affliction and that the matter is grave.[27] The other world (*al-ākhira*) is

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[25] Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi`iyya al-kubrā*, Cairo: `Isā al-Bābī al-Ṭalabī, 1968, vol. 6, pp. 287-389.

[26] In addition to the works of al-`Iraqī and al-Subkī listed above, Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al-Faraj al-Māzarī (d. 512/1118) also wrote a work on this topic, *al-Kashf wa-l-inbā' `alā-l-mutarjam bi-l-ihyā'*, see EI (2) vol. 6, p. 943. These efforts continue to this day: see Maḥmūd al-Ḥaddād, *Takhrīj aḥādīth ihyā' `ulūm al-dīn*, 8 vols., Riyad: Dār al-`āṣima li-l-nashr, 1987, and Muḥammad `Aqīl al-Mahdalī, *Al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-`ilm al-ḥadīth*, Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1998. It is clear from the *Iḥyā'* itself that al-Ghazālī did possess a great deal of sophistication in this science. He says that those who are in need of knowledge of hadith should study the collections of Bukhārī and Muslim,; see *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 42. Furthermore, in arguing for the controversial practice of listening to music for the sake of achieving closeness to God (*samā*) despite the fact that it has been condemned by the founders of the legal schools, al-Ghazālī himself appeals to the authority of hadith he points out are found in the collections of Bukhārī and Muslim; see *Iḥyā'*, II, 18, pp. 232, 233, 240, 241, and 247. He sometimes comments on the quality of the *Hadith* that he relates. For example, *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 36 in which he mentions that the hadith that he is relating is *mawqūf*, i.e. its *isnād* goes back to a companion but stops short of the Prophet, or I, 1, p. 62 in which he points out that a hadith is both *mawqūf* and *marfū*, or traceable to the Prophet. He even condemns Batinite interpretation of the Qur'ān by comparing it to fabrication of *Hadith* (*Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 40). That he recognized the fact that he was using weak hadith is demonstrated by the account of his student Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī (d. 546/1148), of his criticizing al-Ghazālī for his use of weak hadith. Al-Ghazālī admitted to this fault and told Abū Bakr to hold to only the sound hadiths; `Ammār Ṭālibī, *Ārā' Abī Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī al-kalāmiyya*, Algiers: al-Sharika al-Waṭaniyya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzī`, n.d., vol. I, p. 56. Why he was not more careful to avoid weak *Hadith* is a bit of a mystery. Stories in some of his biographies of his beginning to study the science of *Hadith* in the days immediately before his death, or that he died with the hadith collection of Muslim on his chest, have the ring of fictions designed to apologize for this weakness in his scholarship.

[27] At this point, al-Ghazālī resumes his rhymed prose which continues on and off for the rest of the passage.

approaching and this world (*al-dunyā*) is fleeting. The hour of death is near and the journey is long. Supplies are short, the danger is great, and the way is blocked. The keen sighted observer (*al-nāqid al-baṣīr*) knows that there is no response but sincerity in knowledge (*ʿilm*) and practice (*ʿamal*) in the face of God. Climbing the path to the other world (*al-ākhira*), abounding as it is in misfortunes, with neither guide nor companion, is arduous and exhausting. For the guides on the road are the scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) who are the heirs of the prophets. But this age is devoid of them, and there remain none but the imitators, most of whom have been overpowered by Satan and seduced by tyranny. Every one of them passionately pursues his fortune and has come to see right (*al-maʿrūf*) as wrong (*munkar*) and wrong as right, until the science of religion (*ʿilm al-dīn*) has been extinguished and the light of guidance has been obliterated throughout the four corners of the earth. They have caused mankind (*al-khalq*) to imagine that science (*ʿilm*) is no more than a ruling (*fatwā*) of the government, to which the judges (*al-quḍā*) resort in settling a lawsuit when the rabble riot. Or a theological debating point (*jadal*) with which a seeker of vanity arms himself to overcome his opponent and silence him with his arguments. Or a bit of embellished rhymed prose (*sajʿ*)[28] with which the preacher ingratiates himself to the common folk and wins them over.[29] They have not seen beyond these three any other way to capture for themselves forbidden vices and net their vain and ephemeral pleasures.[30]

At this point in his *khuṭba*, al-Ghazālī turns his foil, the *ʿālim* who misuses his *ʿilm*, from the instigator to the victim of the disease of error and misguidance, along with the rest of humanity. Curing this disease, which he begins to describe in the remainder of this passage, is the objective of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. According to him, the *ʿulamāʾ* have an ambiguous role in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease. On one hand, most of them are as deluded and in need of a cure as anyone else. If healed, they could play a critical

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[28] It is in just such a style that al-Ghazālī himself is writing this very passage!

[29] Discussing scholars of whom al-Ghazālī disapproves in the same breath as practitioners of lowly or disreputable professions is a tactic that al-Ghazālī often employs. See *Iḥyāʾ* I, 1, p. 53 in which he says that the word "wisdom" has been so corrupted by the "scholars of iniquity" (*ʿulamāʾ al-sūʾ*) that it is applied to doctors, poets, astrologers and even street jugglers..

[30] *Iḥyāʾ*, *khuṭba*, 1, p. 7.

role in treating others by being the guides they were meant to be. But all too often, they perpetuate the disease and seek to foil the efforts of those who would cure it. This ambivalence plays out in the *Revival* as an alternation between extending a hand to the scholars and, more often, attacking them viciously.

In beginning to describe the dimensions and details of the crisis, al-Ghazālī draws a distinction that later becomes central in his taxonomy of the religious sciences: the distinction between this world (*al-dunyā*) and the other world (*al-ākhira*). He takes this distinction from the Qur'ān 30:6: "They know the externalities of the life of the world (*al-dunyā*) but of the other world (*al-ākhira*) they are heedless." [31] In this Qur'ānic usage as in al-Ghazālī's *khutba*, *al-ākhira* plainly refers to the "hereafter;" but al-Ghazālī does not always use it to denote only the afterlife. Throughout the *Iḥyā'*, but especially in the *Book of Science*, this distinction marks a division of the religious sciences into worldly and otherworldly. `Ulūm al-ākhira* is used to refer to the sciences that have to do with the divine realm as experienced during earthly existence as well as after death. Using this distinction serves al-Ghazālī in two ways. First, these terms allow al-Ghazālī to appropriate Qur'ānic authority to promote the sciences and practices he advocates and demote the sciences whose prestige he attacks, as we shall see below. At the same time, these terms encapsulate both the carrot and the stick of his attempt to sway his reader to pursue the practices detailed in the second half of the *Iḥyā'*: the promise of the beatific

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[31] It is difficult to translate these two terms adequately. Of course, *al-ākhira* in some cases would be better translated as "the hereafter." In the text of the *Revival*, the two terms are usually used in reference to two types of science: `ulūm al-dunyā* and `ulūm al-ākhira*, which I have translated as "worldly sciences" and "otherworldly sciences." Though it may be less awkward stylistically to translate *al-ākhira* differently in different contexts, I chosen to convey the consistency in terminology over conveying variation in connotation.

vision in this life and the fear of punishment in the next, spelled out in terrifying detail in the final book of the *Iḥyā', The Book of Death and that Which Comes After.*

Al-Ghazālī reminds his reader of the approach of death in both the style and content of the remainder of this passage. Writing in rhymed prose, which gives a staccato feeling of imperative,[32] he warns his reader that death is near, the journey long, and the road difficult. This message would sound familiar to a Muslim reader, for it is a frequently recurring theme in the Qur'ān.[33]

Here too, al-Ghazālī slowly begins to reveal the remedy he has in mind. The perceptive observer knows that sincerity to God in knowledge and works will serve him in this crisis. The rightly guided party has already been subtly identified with the Sufis, and the reference here to sincerity to God is a further flag of identification. For sincerity (*al-ṣidq*) is a topic that al-Ghazālī addresses in book 37 of the *Iḥyā'* as one of the stages through which a Sufi must progress. It is the Sufis, thus, who are cast as keen-sighted (*baṣīr*), as opposed to the opponent scholar whose blindness has been described earlier in this passage.

Al-Ghazālī returns to the scholars—the guides on the path to the other world and heirs of the prophets—only to declare that, in truth, there are none in his time. His fallen age has only pale imitators of the true *'ulamā'*, and they are engrossed in worldly pursuits

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[32] "…*al-amr idd, wa-l-khaṭb jidd, wa-l-ākhira muqbila, wa-l-dunyā mudbira, wa-l-ajal qarīb, wa-l-safar ba'īd, wa-l-zād ṭafīf, wa-l-khaṭar 'aẓīm*…."

[33] Qur'ān 99 and 101 are two of many suras that urge listeners to take heed of the judgement that is to come and the punishment or reward that awaits.

and have confused right with wrong.[34] The result is that the science of religion (*'ilm al-dīn*) has been extinguished, and with it the light of guidance for those treading the path to the other world. Clearly, then, rekindling the light of guidance entails reviving religious science by refocusing it on the path to the other world rather than this world. This means wresting *'ilm* from the hands of those *'ulamā'* who have blotted out its true spirit and turned it to corrupt ends and returning it to the rightly guided, a party whose identity al-Ghazālī has begun to reveal.

At this point, al-Ghazālī finally names the targets of his criticism. Some scholars, he writes, would have the community believe that *'ilm* consists of no more than giving legal rulings—a clear reference to the jurists, or *fuqahā'*. Others suggest that *'ilm* lies in theological debate—a clear reference to the theologians, or *mutakallimūn*. These two groups serve as al-Ghazālī's *bêtes noires* in the *Revival*, especially in its first book, the *Book of Science*.

It must be remembered, or course, that al-Ghazālī himself was and remained both a jurist and a theologian. He held the prestigious chair of Shāfi`ī law at the Niẓāmiyya *madrasa* (college) in Baghdad and, later in his life, after having written the *Iḥyā'*, he returned to teaching law alongside Sufism, and wrote one of the most influential works of all time on jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), namely the *Kitāb al-mustaṣfā*. Though his rhetoric in the *Iḥyā'* often suggests otherwise (a couple of anemic statements about the

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[34] And seeing right, *al-ma'rūf*, as wrong, *al-munkar*, they are not able to undertake the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong, *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahī 'an al-munkar*, the subject of book XIX of the *Iḥyā'*.

importance of *fiqh* and *kalām* notwithstanding) his objective is not to eliminate jurisprudence or theology. Rather, he aims to return them to their proper jurisdiction.

Through a sophisticated play of terms, al-Ghazālī's *khuṭba* foreshadows the demotion that the first book of the *Iḥyā'* will make explicit.

> As for the science (*'ilm*) of the path of the other world, and that which the Righteous Forebears (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) pursued and which God, glory be to Him, in his Book called understanding (*fiqh*), wisdom, brightness (*ḍiyā'*), light (*nūr*), guidance, and reason, it has become occluded among mankind and been completely forgotten. As this was a fissure that had appeared in the edifice of religion, and a black situation, I saw the importance of devoting myself to composing this book, to reviving the religious sciences, to revealing the ways of the leaders (*a'imma*) who have gone before, and to making plain the branches of knowledge that the prophets and the Righteous Forebears deemed beneficial (*nāfi'a*).[35]

In this passage, al-Ghazālī gives a name to the science that he is advocating: *'ilm ṭarīq al-ākhira*, the science of the path of the other world, usually shortened to *'ilm al-ākhira*, the otherworldly science, in the remainder of the *Iḥyā'*. As we have seen earlier in the passage, al-Ghazālī warns that the other world is approaching and this world is fleeting. The perceptive realize that this life must be led with other world in mind such that salvation may be gained. This is the main goal of religion and is pursued through the otherworldly science, which must therefore be seen as the principle religious science. Of course, this implies that all other religious sciences are of lower status, i.e. that they deal with the affairs of this world, and thus, while not without religious significance, are nonetheless of secondary importance. This implied counterpart to the otherworldly

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[35] *Iḥyā', khuṭba*, 1, p. 7.

science, *'ilm al-dunyā* or the worldly science, is later introduced specifically and applied

to *fiqh* and *kalām*.

Al-Ghazālī lists "*fiqh*" among what he presents as Qur'ānic references to *'ilm al-*

ākhira in the above passage. It is no accident that he uses the word in its non-technical

meaning of "knowledge" or "understanding," rather than its more common, technical

meaning of "jurisprudence." Later in the *Book of Science*, he reveals that this is a

conscious strategy on his part to usurp the right of jurisprudence to its very name.

Drawing on a similar, earlier discussion by Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996),[36] whose

Qūt al-qulūb was one of the greatest influences on the *Iḥyā'*,[37] al-Ghazālī later calls *fiqh*

a science whose name has been changed. It originally dealt with the otherworldly

sciences and only later came to be restricted to jurisprudence.[38] This use of the word *fiqh*

reveals the first glimmerings of al-Ghazālī's campaign to present jurisprudence, not

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[36] Al-Makkī, p. 116 ff. Apparently Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) had also made use of the word *fuqahā'* to refer to Sufis rather than jurists. See T.J. Winter's translation of al-Ghazālī, *Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Two Desires*, p. 36, n. A.

[37] In the introduction to his German translation of *Qūt al-qulūb*, Richard Gramlich writes: "The *Iḥyā'* is essentially nothing but a reworking of the *Qūt*, adopting the latter's material, expanding or abbreviating it as needed, ordering it systematically and re-presenting it in a clearer formulation and a language that is easier to understand. Here and there the *Iḥyā'* corrects the *Qūt* and adds to it from other sources." *Die Nahrung der Herzen*, p. 19. Mustapha Hogga says much the same. He points out that Makkī often spreads his discussion of topics through several books rather than treating them systematically in single sections. Al-Ghazālī's genius in the *Iḥyā'* lay in the logical, even symmetrical structure of the book and his treatment of topics therein. Mustapha Hogga, *Orthodoxie, Subversion et Réform en Islam*, pp. 191-192 n. 3.

[38] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, pp. 35-36.

Sufism, as an innovation and a departure from the practice of the Prophet, the first Muslims, and even the Qur'ān itself.[39]

Al-Ghazālī uses this tactic frequently throughout the *Iḥyā'*: advancing his argument by re-defining or re-interpreting commonly accepted terms and definitions, while calling as little attention to his re-reading as possible. By the time he comes to his explicit claim that true *fiqh* has little to do with jurisprudence, he has already used the word *fiqh*, as he has in this context, to mean "understanding," or in the phrase *fiqh ṭarīq al-ākhira* to mean "science."[40] Through such tactics, al-Ghazālī surreptitiously prepares his reader for the plain statement of his position that is to come.

There is another important term which is conspicuous by it its absence from the *khuṭba*: It is striking that there is no direct mention of Sufis or Sufism, though there are clear references to Sufi practices and the men associated with them.[41] Al-Ghazālī does not overtly present *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* as a work of Sufism. He refers to Sufis in the third

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[39] For an illuminating discussion of the place of Sufism among the Islamic sciences, see William Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, pp. 166-167. Chittick acknowledges that Sufism emerged in the second or third century of Islam but insists that other scholars recognize that *fiqh* and *kalām* did as well. He writes on page 167, "On the basis of historical beginnings, there is no current of Islamic learning— certainly not jurisprudence or Kalām—that can call itself the original Islam, from which other currents have deviated."

[40] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 19.

[41] I will deal below with the arguments of scholars who claim that al-Ghazālī's true position is not that of a Sufi, but rather that of a philosopher. My own position on this question will have to emerge from future work. Al-Ghazālī is notoriously difficult to pin down, and I cannot hope to resolve the question of his true intellectual loyalties in the course of a single chapter. I take refuge in the fact that this is a study on the reception of al-Ghazālī's work; it is not especially controversial to characterize the overt rhetorical thrust of the *Iḥyā'* as I do. Whatever covert agenda al-Ghazālī may or may not have had, most of his contemporary readers understood *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* to be a work that advocated Sufism, even if some charged him with misunderstanding the science, or with dabbling in philosophy, Bāṭinism, or the writings of the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*.

person and does not speak as one of their number. He is sometimes critical of some Sufi

practices, but at times writes passionately in their defense.[42] One reason for avoiding

direct mention of Sufis may be that al-Ghazālī does not wish to present *'ilm al-ākhira* as a

science particular to Sufis or, worse yet, originating with them. Here we see it associated

with *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*, or Righteous Forebears, which is to say the first generations of

Muslims, as well as with all of the prophets and the Qur'ān itself. It is *their* path that has

been overgrown and forgotten among mankind. As al-Ghazālī presents it, the revival of

the religious sciences by which he hopes to clear this path is not a matter of advocating

the knowledge and practices of a particular faction within Islam, but rather the restoration

of the essence of Islam itself. It is adherence to the original aims of the faith that makes

the Sufis the elite among the religious scholars.

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[42] The clearest example is in the Book of the Marvels of the Heart, *Iḥyā'*, III, 21, pp. 17-24. Al-Ghazālī's practice of referring to the Sufis as a third party and not speaking as one of their number is not entirely unique; Kalābādhī also writes of the Sufīs as a third party in his *Kitāb al-ta'arruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*. However, as is clear from his title, Kalābādhī is writing expressly as a proponent of the Sufis, Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī, *The Doctrine of the Ṣūfīs*, Arthur John Arberry (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935. Al-Ghazālī writes as a proponent of the otherworldly science, which he never unambiguously equates with Sufism. When he does refer to Sufis, however, it is always to defend their practices and positions on the issues being discussed. In the passage cited here, he refers to them as representatives of the practices that he is advocating in the second half of the *Iḥyā'*, thus presenting them as, at least, allies. Despite this persistent caginess, the practices that al-Ghazālī advocates in the second half of the *Iḥyā'* are clearly identifiable as Sufi practices and the authorities that he cites in support of his arguments, aside from the prophets, Companions and founders of the legal schools are Sufis and ascetics claimed in retrospect by the Sufis. It is clear that his objective, in part, is to present the (Sufi) practices that he advocates as practices central to the religion as it was understood and practiced by the Prophet and the Companions, not practices particular to a sect within the religion. His advocacy of Sufism is thus presented as a restoration and not an innovation. The question of whether he harbored another agenda, or whether the otherworldly science is not fully synonymous with Sufism will have to be examined in greater detail in the future.

The Structure of the *Iḥyā'* and its Significance

Al-Ghazālī divides the *Iḥyā'* into four quarters of ten books each. This division

reveals fundamental objectives and strategies in the writing of the work. By looking for

parallels to this structure in writings contemporary to the *Iḥyā'*, and examining al-

Ghazālī's discussion of the work's four quarters as well as its reproduction in his

presentation of ritual purity (*ṭahāra*), it is possible to bring to light the underlying logic of

the work. Once this logic is understood, it is easy to see how al-Ghazālī's structure

works to convey his message and to allow his work's appeal simultaneously to different

audiences.

There is precedent for al-Ghazālī's division of the *Iḥyā'* into forty books. As

Annemarie Shimmel has pointed out, the number forty had a connotation of completeness

or comprehensiveness in Islamic literature. For example, collections of forty hadiths,

called a "Forty" or *arba'īn*, were compiled in the classical period.[43] Al-Ghazālī himself

highlights his choice of dividing the *Iḥyā'* into forty books by entitling one of his

synopses[44] of this work *al-arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, or *The Forty Concerning the Roots of*

Religion.

Comprehensiveness was certainly al-Ghazālī's aim in describing the revived

religion as he did. After arguing for the necessity of returning Islam to its origins by

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[43] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975, p. 94. This association of totality with the number 40 in the Islamic tradition also brings to mind its similar association in Genesis and Exodus: the 40 days and nights of rain in Noah's flood and the 40 years spent in the desert by Moses and the Israelites.

[44] Al-Ghazālī wrote two abridgements of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*: *The Alchemy of Happiness* (in Persian) and *The Forty Concerning the Roots of Religion*.

placing Sufism at the center of the religious sciences, al-Ghazālī provides a totalizing

vision of what this entails. Any facet of worship or personal life his reader could think of

is addressed in *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. Any question on the pillars of Islam, other religious

acts, the banalities of life such as eating, working, or traveling, marriage and friendship,

cultivating good traits of character, reforming bad traits of character, procreation and

death and everything in between, all such questions are addressed in the various chapters

of this work. When al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) writes that, "If all the books of Islam were

lost, the *Iḥyā'* would suffice for them,"[45] he is offering more than hyperbolic praise. He

is saying something quite substantial about the *Iḥyā'*, namely affirming al-Ghazālī's

success in presenting his vision of the faith in such an all-encompassing way as to eclipse

all other visions for those who accept *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* as their guide.

More profound is al-Ghazālī's division of the work into four quarters, covering

Acts of Worship (*al-'ibadāt*), Matters of Daily Life (*al-'ādāt*), Destructive Matters (*al-muhlikāt*), and Saving Matters (*al-munjiyāt*).[46] In brief descriptions of each quarter, al-Ghazālī presents a four-stage ascent from fulfilling the most fundamental requirements of

the religion to the experience of its most sublime mysteries.

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[45] In his translation of *Ayyuhā al-walad*, George Scherer gives al-Zabīdī's quote as, "Law *fuqidat kutub al-islam kulluhā, wa baqiya al-iḥyā', la-aghnā 'anhā*." *Oh Disciple*, Beirut: Catholic Press, 1951. In the edition of *Al-itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn* consulted for this study, the quote was, "*qīl innahu law dhahabat kutub al-islām wa baqiya al-Iḥyā' la-aghnā 'ammā dhahaba*." *al-Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, vol. 1, p. 37. Al-Zabīdī's does not give the source of his quote. Al-Zabīdī also quotes Ibn al-Subkī expressing much the same sentiment: "If the people had none of the books composed by the people of knowledge but the *Iḥyā'*, it would suffice them." *Ibid.* p. 37.

[46] Listed in *Iḥyā'* I, *khuṭba*, p. 7.

In discussing the first quarter, which falls under the jurisdiction of jurisprudence, al-Ghazālī promises to disclose the "secrets" and "subtleties" of the acts of worship, most of which he claims have been neglected by the juridical arts (*wa-akthar dhālik mimmā uhmila fī fan al-fiqhiyyāt*). Although this means that he claims greater authority for himself and the science that he is advocating than jurisprudence possesses, he is careful to warn that, "There are none among the scholars of the other world who has not" fulfilled the acts of worship.[47] This statement is an assertion that, whatever insight the otherworldly scholars might have into the hidden significance of the pillars of the faith, these fundamental legal requirements remain the bedrock of their practice.[48]

In the second quarter, al-Ghazālī promises to describe "the secrets of scrupulousness" in the course of interactions between men.[49] His word for "scrupulousness" is *wara`*, the term by which Sufis denote meticulously avoiding those technically permissible things that are in any way questionable.[50] The second quarter of the *Iḥyā'* thus aims at providing guidance on conducting everyday life in constant

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[47] *Iḥyā'*, I, *khuṭba*, p. 8.

[48] This is both a protestation of al-Ghazālī's own adherence to the legal requirements of the religion and a rebuke to antinomian Sufis who felt that their mystical insight allowed them to neglect "mere" external religious observance. Opposing antinomian trends in Sufism was not one of al-Ghazālī's major concerns in writing the *Iḥyā'*. As I have stated above, it was the stated impetus for his near-contemporary al-Qusahyrī (d. 465/1072) to write his *Risala*. `Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risāla*, p. 10-11.

[49] *Iḥyā'*, I, *khuṭba*, p. 8.

[50] See the discussion in al-Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, pp. 62-66. Cornell has defined *wara`* as "'scrupulousness' or 'pious caution' in the quest for ethical purity, especially with regard to eating food grown or prepared by others." Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 361.

mindfulness of the requirements of the religion, even with regard to matters that have no explicit religious dimension.

The last two quarters propose both ends and means that his reader would recognize as belonging to the Sufis. As usual, however, al-Ghazālī avoids linking his agenda explicitly with this group. The third quarter, he announces, will deal with blameworthy character traits of which the heart and ego must be purified, providing both a description of their symptoms and instructions for their cure. And the fourth quarter will deal with the praiseworthy traits, whose cultivation is desired by those drawn near to God and the Sincere ones so that they may be brought nearer to the Lord of the Worlds.[51]

The four quarters of the *Iḥyā'*, thus, represent a trajectory of ever deeper enactment of the demands of the faith, as seen from a Sufi perspective. This begins with performing the fundamental legal rituals that make one a Muslim, then moves to leading one's daily life in a spirit of scrupulous mindfulness of the ethical implications of the faith. Once this has been achieved, the practitioner of al-Ghazālī's science may undertake the gradual reform of his ego and heart by rooting out negative traits of character. The culmination of this path is the cultivation of praiseworthy character traits by which one is drawn close to God.

Al-Ghazālī says he has divided the *Iḥyā'* into four quarters mainly in order to follow divisions that exist in the otherworldly science. The first-order division of this science is into the science of unveiling (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*) and the science of practice (*ʿilm al-muʿāmala*). But al-Ghazālī claims he will not discuss the science of unveiling,

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[51] *Iḥyā'*, I, *khuṭba*, p. 8.

restricting the *Iḥyā'* to the science of practice alone. The science of practice is divided into two halves: an outward science (*`ilm ẓāhir*), devoted to physical acts, and an inward science (*`ilm bāṭin*),[52] devoted to interior actions of hearts. The exoteric science is further divided into acts of worship and acts of daily life, while the esoteric science is further divided into the blameworthy and the praiseworthy. In this manner, the four-part division of the *Iḥyā'* reflects the structure of the otherworldly science.[53]

This four-level division recurs frequently in discussions of doctrinal matters throughout the *Iḥyā'*. This is not a mere matter of style, but rather an expression of the unifying logic of the work. Examining one such instance will clarify the polemical objective and rhetorical effectiveness of this organizational device.

In the beginning of the *Secrets of Purity* (*kitāb asrār al-ṭahāra*), after citing numerous hadiths and passages from the Qur'ān in which ritual purity is praised and called the basis of religion and the key to prayer, al-Ghazālī insists that there is an internal component of purity in addition to the external. He writes,

> Those of understanding comprehend from these externalities that the most important of matters is the purification of the inmost essences (*al-asrār*). For it is not likely that he (i.e. Muhammad), God's peace and prayers be upon him, could have meant by his saying: "Cleansing (*al-ṭuhūr*) is half of faith," that the external structure be cleansed by pouring water and

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[52] *Ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* are often translated as "esoteric" and "exoteric." Though the otherworldly science does contain an esoteric dimension, it belongs to the science of unveiling which al-Ghazālī has said he will not discuss in the *Iḥyā'*. Here, he is writing about categories that exist within the science of practice: an outward science and an inward science, a science of the body and a science of the soul.

[53] *Iḥyā'*, I, *khuṭba*, p. 9.

plunging into it while ruining the internal and leaving it full of impurities and filth. How preposterous![54]

As his reader would know, the conditions of what constitutes bodily purity are stipulated by law, *fiqh*, and indeed it is the *fiqh*-determined requirements of purity that form the bulk of *kitāb asrār al-ṭahāra*. However, al-Ghazālī insists that this is only the superficial and less important dimension of purity. He lists the gradations of purity, starting with this external dimension and then moving beyond it.

Just as the otherworldly science is divided into four levels, so too are there four degrees of purity, rising from bare compliance with its exterior, *fiqh*-determined requirements to its complete interior realization:

> The first degree (*al-martaba al-ūlā*): The purification of the external (*al-ẓāhir*) from ritual impurities and other impurities and excretions.
>
> The second degree: The purification of the limbs (*al-jawāriḥ*) from crimes and offenses.
>
> The third degree: The purification of the heart from blameworthy (*madhmūma*) character traits and abominable vices.
>
> The fourth degree: The purification of the inmost essence (*al-sirr*) of all that is not God most high, which is the purity of the prophets (*al-anbiyāʾ*), God's prayers be upon them, and the Sincere ones (*al-ṣiddiqīn*).[55]

The first level of purity is the removal of ritual impurity (*al-aḥdāth*), a requirement for prayer, and thus parallels the first of the quarters of the *Iḥyāʾ* on Acts of Worship. This level is addressed by the basic requirements of *fiqh*, as are the concerns of the first quarter of the *Iḥyāʾ*. The second level of purity consists of purging of the limbs

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[54] *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 3, p. 117.

[55] *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 3, p. 117.

of crimes and offenses, which is to say, conducting everyday life in an ethical way. This parallels the quarter on Matters of Everyday Life. The third level of purity has to do with purification of the heart of blameworthy traits. Actions of the heart are the subject of the half of the *Iḥyā'* devoted to interior or psychological acts, and blameworthy traits are the subject of the third quarter. Progressive purification of the inmost essence of all that is not God, the final stage of purity, parallels the drawing near to God that is the subject of the final quarter on Saving Matters. Thus we see a progression from a superficial level of purity governed by jurisprudence to a full realization of purity achieved only by the Sincere ones, a name that al-Ghazālī uses time and again to refer to the Sufis.[56]

This is the underlying logic of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. In both its macro- and micro-structure, the work seeks to present *fiqh*, as we have seen here, and *kalām*, as we shall see below, as but the first stages of the realization of the full demands of Islam. This realization is to be achieved through Sufism. Yet the Sufi must understand *fiqh* and *kalām* as the enduring fundamentals of practice, not superficial sciences to be discarded as soon as some degree of esoteric understanding is attained.

The four-part structure also serves as a vehicle for al-Ghazālī's rhetorical strategy by allowing him to appeal simultaneously to different audiences of readers. He writes,

> I saw that the desire for seeking the knowledge of *fiqh* was sincere. This is
> a science that is popular among those who do not fear God, the lofty and
> exalted, and who use the status and prestige of *fiqh* for the sake of
> vainglorious display and winning competitions. *Fiqh* is arranged into four

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[56] Here again al-Ghazālī avoids direct use of the name "Sufi" and is careful to equate the fourth level of purity with the prophets as well. On the next page, he does refer explicitly to the Sufis in his discussion of supererogatory acts of cleanliness, confirming that these higher levels of purity are their domain. *Iḥyā'*, I, 3, p. 118.

quarters,[57] and since that which is dressed as the beloved will also be beloved, I thought that it was not unlikely that presenting the book in the manner of a book of *fiqh* might win some people over by gently luring their hearts.[58]

Al-Ghazālī could hardly have imagined that such an insulting description of *fiqh* would enjoy much success in gently luring the hearts of *fiqh*-minded readers. However, by presenting his vision of the religion as rooted in *fiqh* and achieving ends implicit in it but unattainable through it alone, al-Ghazālī offers an alternative *fiqh*, the *fiqh ṭarīq al-ākhira* mentioned above. Such a promise might well attract the sincere knowledge-seekers he describes: young men contemplating the study of jurisprudence.

The keenness of al-Ghazālī's psychological insight is revealed here and in several passages both in the *Iḥyā'* and in other works in which he discusses the means by which people are brought to their beliefs, both correct and incorrect.[59] This is an aspect of his writing that has been remarked upon.[60] Scholars have also pointed out that, in addition to

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[57] The "Roots of Jurisprudence" (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), that is, the sources to which a jurist turns in attempting to resolve a legal question, are four. These are, in descending order of authority, Qur'ān, *sunna*, *ijmā'*, and *qiyās*. See Wael Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī* uṣūl al-fiqh, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997. For a brief but interesting discussion of the four "roots" of jurisprudence and the transfer of the *uṣūlī* method to other religious sciences including Sufism, see Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, esp. pp. 12-23 and 360.

[58] *Iḥyā'*, I, *khuṭba*, p. 9.

[59] See for example *kitāb qawā'id al-'aqā'id*, in which al-Ghazālī discusses the best way to convince an innovator of the error of his ways, *Iḥyā'*, I, 2, pp. 92-93. In *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-mustsẓhiriyya*, al-Ghazālī discusses the character traits of various personality types that lead them to become partisans of the *bāṭiniyya*. See Richard McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error, an Annotated Translation of* al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl *and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī*, Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1980, pp. 165-168.

[60] Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 2000, p. 450; Richard Frank, "Al-Ghazālī on *Taqlīd*. Scholars, Theologians, and Philosophers," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften*, 7, 1992, p. 208.

being a medium for the exposition of ideas, al-Ghazālī's writings are also a deftly

wielded tool of persuasion.[61]   Indeed, he employs numerous tactics to win over multiple

audiences in addition to the *fiqh*-minded.

For instance, in the *Infamies of the Baṭinites*, al-Ghazālī discusses the classes of

men who are drawn to Isma`īlī Shiism.[62]   Among these are people who like to think of

themselves as belonging to an elite group in possession of arcane knowledge not shared

with the masses.   It would seem that al-Ghazālī tries to appeal to this same group by

holding out the promise of esoteric knowledge through the practices that he advocates in

the *Iḥyā'*.   When discussing his division of the otherworldly science into the science of

unveiling and the science of practice, he says that he will not discuss the science of

unveiling.   Nevertheless, he does not fail in his brief description to depict it in the most

tantalizing of terms.[63]   He seems to promise that if such readers follow the path that he

describes in the *Iḥyā'*, they, too, can belong to an elite with unmediated knowledge of the

Truth.   In fact, there are numerous passages in the *Iḥyā'* in which al-Ghazālī violates his

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[61]   Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Chicago, 1974, vol. 2, p. 191;   Richard Gramlich, *Muḥammad al-Ġazzālīs Lehre von den Stufen zur Gottesliebe*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1984, pp. 1-4.

[62]   *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya wa faḍā'il al-mustaẓhiriyya*, in McCarthy, pp. 165-168.   He makes a similar point about the Batinites in *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, pp. 39-40.

[63] " It is not permissible to entrust [the science of unveiling] to writing even though it is the utmost goal of the Aspirants (*al-ṭālibūn*) and that which is desired by the gaze of the Sincere Ones (*al-ṣiddīqūn*). The science of practice is the path to unveiling and the prophets (God's prayers be upon them) did not speak to men of anything but the science of the path and guidance along it.   As for unveiling, they did not speak of it except by symbols and gestures, and through analogy and generality, knowing of the deficiency of human understanding to bear such knowledge.   The scholars are the heirs of the prophets and there is no way for them but to follow the prophets and emulate their ways."   He thus suggests that he is in possession of knowledge similar to that held by prophets and that his reader, too, can come to hold this knowledge if he adheres to the science of practice.   *Iḥyā'*, I, *khuṭba*, p. 9.

self-imposed ban on discussing the science of unveiling, one of which we will examine below.[64]

The structure that al-Ghazālī chose for his *magnum opus* was an expression of his vision of the religious sciences revived. Al-Ghazālī presents, *fiqh* and *kalām* as playing a vital role in defining the foundations of proper belief and practice, but their jurisdiction ends after these foundations. To them belong the first, and possibly second stages of religious practice, but showing the way beyond these preliminary beliefs and practices, to fulfilling the highest aims of the religion in the third and fourth stages is the task of Sufism. This four-stage view of the religion is presented on a number of different levels, training the reader to understand and anticipate it.

The argument for this hierarchy of the religious sciences is very subtle. Al-Ghazālī usually avoids explicit mention of the Sufis and presents the implicit demotion of *fiqh* and *kalām* as a simple matter of fact rather than in the form of an attack on these revered sciences. However, once he has prepared his reader, al-Ghazālī makes an explicit case for this hierarchy. He makes his most aggressive use of polemic in his restructuring of the religious sciences in the first of the forty books of the *Iḥyā'*, the *Kitāb al-ʿilm* or the Book of Knowledge/Science.

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[64] Richard Gramlich writes that al-Ghazālī offers a "…work of mystical science for a broad circle, interspersed with hints for a smaller circle of initiates." He says further, when writing of al-Ghazālī's stated intention to avoid discussion of the science of unveiling: "But he doesn't adhere to this rule. It often seems as though his intent is to refer to this rule in order to whet the curiosity of his reader for the rule-breaking exposition that immediately follows." Gramlich, *Muḥammad al-Ġazzālī's Lehre von den Stufen zur Gottesliebe*, pp. 1-2.

The Contesting of *'ilm* in the *Book of Science*

The only individual book al-Ghazālī singles out for discussion in his *khuṭba* is the *Book of Science*. The first book of the *Iḥyā'* stands apart as a sort of manifesto, in which he contests the meaning of *'ilm*.[65] He tells his reader that he has prefaced the *Iḥyā'* (*ṣaddartu al-jumla*) with this book in order to determine what sort of knowledge is meant by the *Hadith* that reads, "Seeking knowledge (*'ilm*) is an obligation for every Muslim."

At the time in which al-Ghazālī wrote, the most prestigious of the religious sciences were *fiqh* and *kalām*. In the Iḥyā', he acknowledges this fact by explaining how these sciences came to predominate, and overshadowed the otherworldly science he is advocating. He gives two accounts of this obscuring of true *'ilm*: one that faults chiefly *fiqh*, and the other faulting *kalām*.

In the days of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, al-Ghazālī explains, the Caliph himself was, in addition to his expertise in the otherworldly sciences, an expert in law. He had no need of the jurists except in rare cases that required consultation. This left the scholars

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[65] Neither of the first two books of the *Iḥyā'*, the *Book of Science* and the *Book of the Fundaments of the Creed* (*Kitāb qawā'id al-'aqā'id*) have anything to do with the acts of worship that are the subject of the first quarter. They offer discussions of *'ilm* generally, and of the articles of the creed and the jurisdiction of *kalām*, thus setting the stage both methodologically and doctrinally for the rest of the book. The first and second books of the third quarter also form an introduction for the second half of the *Iḥyā'*. In the introduction to the first of these, the *Book of the Elucidation of the Marvels of the Heart*, al-Ghazālī writes: "We have finished the first half of this book with an examination of that which takes place in the limbs in the way of acts of worship and acts of everyday life. This is the outward science. We promised to elucidate in the second half that which takes place in the heart in the way of the attributes of destructive matters and saving matters. This is the inward science. It is necessary to introduce this with two books: a book on the elucidation of the marvels of the attributes of the heart and its habits and a book on the means of disciplining the heart and refining its habits. Then we will enter into elaborating the destructive matters and the saving matters." *Iḥyā'*, III, 23, p. 3. By contrast the second quarter begins with the rather mundane *Manners Related to Eating*, a book of table manners, and the fourth with the *Book of Repentance*, which al-Ghazālī calls the first step on the path of the Sufi Aspirant (*murīd*), thus acknowledging its primacy among the saving matters but also its belonging to the quarter of that title. This indicates that the more profound division for al-Ghazālī lay between the first half and the second rather than between the four quarters.

free to pursue the otherworldly science. The successors to the Rightly Guided Caliphs were not so qualified and had to seek the scholars' help with legal decisions. The scholars called upon were from the generation of the Successors (*tābi`ūn*). They did what they could to avoid the positions they were called upon to fill, such as judge (*qāḍī*) and jurisconsult (*muftī*) . They shunned even the service of the pious `Umar II.[66]   In the end, however, they were pressed into service, and through it they gained prestige. When others saw the status these scholars gained through the practice of *fiqh*, they engaged in scholarship themselves for the sake of status. Thus the equation was reversed. Instead of the rulers seeking out the scholars, the scholars began seeking out the rulers. The scholars, once proud in the indifference towards worldly matters, became obsequious in currying the favor of rulers.[67]

Al-Ghazālī offers a second explanation, which has to do with writing itself, and faults *kalām* for obscuring the true meaning of *`ilm*. In a passage drawn from *Qūt al-qulūb*,[68] al-Ghazālī explains that it was not until 120 A.H., after the death of the Companions and the Followers, that religious books began to be written. He points out that the Caliph `Umar was reluctant even to write down the Qur'ān. The first books may have been harmless enough, consisting of collections of customs of the Companions (*athar*) and prophetic tradition, and then the legal works of Mālik ibn Anas and Sufyān al-Thawrī. Even then a skepticism about writing books remained. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal

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[66] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 68.

[67] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 44.

[68] Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, pp. 127-128.

criticized Mālik for writing his *Muwaṭṭ'a*, saying this was an innovation not known to the Companions. The true fall from this pristine state of affairs, al-Ghazālī claims, came in the fourth/tenth century, when books of *kalām* began to appear and the practice of debating points of theology came into being. The otherworldly sciences were forgotten among the common people and the theological debater and the storyteller came to be called scholars. Only among the elite (*khawās*) were the otherworldly sciences and the distinction between *'ilm* and *kalām* preserved.[69]

Al-Ghazālī's task, then, is to reclaim *'ilm* from the jurists and theologians who have usurped it. He goes about this through subtle and unsubtle attacks on *fiqh*, *kalām* and the practitioners of these sciences of the kinds that we have seen intimated in his *khuṭba*. If he focuses more on attacking *fiqh* in the *Book of Science*, it is because he takes the opportunity to continue his attacks on *kalām* in the subsequent *Book of the Fundaments of the Creed* (*Kitāb qawā'id al-'aqā'id*).

In his *khuṭba*, al-Ghazālī implies that *fiqh* and *kalām* are worldly sciences by contrasting them to the otherworldly science. In the *Book of Science*, he makes this classification explicit. In keeping with his usual approach, his explicit demotion of *fiqh* appears with little fanfare in a section on the praiseworthy and blameworthy sciences. In a discussion of the divisions of the legal sciences (*sharī'a*), al-Ghazālī divides the branches of law (*furū'*) into two parts. Of the first he writes: "The first of these is related to the affairs of the world and is contained in the books of *fiqh*. Those entrusted with

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[69] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, pp. 75-76.

them are the jurists (*fuqahā'*), who are worldly scholars (*'ulamā' al-dunyā*)."[70] This

sentence effectively demotes the leading religious science of al-Ghazālī's day to a science

of the affairs of the world. As such, it is forever to be seen as secondary to the science of

the other world, whose precedence over this world is emphasized in the Qur'ān. The

second part of the branches of the law relates to the "matters of the other world," which

he says will form the content of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.

After this startling distinction, the elaboration of the sciences related to the *sharī'a*

is concluded without further comment. Only in the following section does al-Ghazālī

address his provocative classification of jurisprudence as a worldly science. He does so in

response to a hypothetical question: "Why did you adjoin *fiqh* to the worldly science and

the *fuqahā'* to the worldly scholars?"[71] He thus demonstrates that he is fully aware of the

gravity of his casually asserted demotion of *fiqh*.

Another tactic that al-Ghazālī employs to demote *fiqh* is to claim the founders of

the legal schools (*madhāhib*) as exemplars of the otherworldly science for whom

jurisprudence was a secondary concern. Al-Ghazālī tells his reader that al-Shāfi'ī (d.

204/820), Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795-96), Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal

(d. 245/855) and Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777-78)[72] had five attributes. Each was a

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[70] *Iḥyā*, I, 1, p. 22.

[71] *Iḥyā*, I, 1, p. 23.

[72] Al-Ghazālī lists them in this order. Sufyān al-Thawrī is not usually listed as one of the four founders of the surviving legal schools (*madhāhib*). An extinct law school, the *Thawriyya*, did see him as its founder and he was an early legal thinker. However, he is better known as a hadith transmitter, a commentator of the Qur'ān, and one of the "Eight Ascetics," much revered by later generations of Sufis for, among other things, his refusal to accept an office offered him by the `Abbāsids.   EI (2), Sufyān al-Thawrī, vol, 9., pp. 770-771.

worshiper of God (*ʿābid*), an ascetic, a scholar of the otherworldly sciences (*ʿāliman bi-ʿulūm al-ākhira*), a jurist in the affairs of men, and desirous of achieving the vision of the face of God through his *fiqh*. Four of these traits, he points out, have to do solely with the other world, while one, worldly *fiqh*, has to do both with this world and the other. According to al-Ghazālī, the jurists of his day are interested only in this single concern but equate themselves with the founders of the legal schools, though they cannot compare to them.[73] Then, to strengthen his argument, he describes the otherworldly pursuits of these great founding figures at length and concludes by saying that their deeds were the fruits of the otherworldly science, not of knowledge of obscure points of law.[74] Thus, according to al-Ghazālī, the jurists are not only unworthy heirs of the Prophet and the Companions; they are even unworthy heirs of the founders of the schools of law to which they adhere.

Al-Ghazālī uses a similar line of argument in a passage devoted to "what has been substituted among the names of the sciences." In it, he makes explicit an assertion implied in his *khuṭba* and elsewhere by his use of the word *fiqh* in its non-technical sense to mean "knowledge." In the present day, he says, *fiqh* has come to be restricted to the details of law, knowledge of obscure cases among *fatwā*s and judgements (*wuqūf*), and the technical means by which these rulings were reached. Originally, however, *fiqh* referred mainly to the otherworldly science. He writes:

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[73] *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 1, p. 29.

[74] *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 1, pp. 29-32.

> The term *fiqh* in the first age (*al-ʿaṣr al-awwal*) was used to refer to the science of the path to the other world, knowledge of the details of the defects of ego, the things that corrupt human action, keen understanding of the vileness of this world, dedication to rising to the grace of the other world, and fear's taking possession of the heart.[75]

By these two lines of argument al-Ghazālī aims to undo what he portrays as *fiqh*'s usurpation of the centrality of the otherworldly science. Going on the offensive, he usurps the right of the jurists to claim to act in the name of their founding fathers. He even questions their use of the established name of their own science.

Al-Ghazālī also has recourse to his four-level schema of the religious sciences in demonstrating that *fiqh* plays only a preliminary role in achieving the aims of the religion. In this case, he applies his model to the topic of scrupulousness (*waraʿ*) regarding the forbidden (*ḥarām*). This would normally be considered a topic that falls under the jurisdiction of *fiqh*, but, much as he did when discussing ritual purity, al-Ghazālī demonstrates that only the most superficial dimension of this matter—scrupulousness regarding all that is unambiguously forbidden—can be resolved by *fiqh*. The other three levels—scrupulousness regarding things of dubious lawfulness; scrupulousness regarding things which are lawful but may lead to things that are not; and shunning all that is not God—we are told, belong to the otherworldly science. Thus, as we have seen in al-Ghazālī's discussion of ritual purity and in the structure of the *Iḥyāʾ* as a whole, the otherworldly science is presented as the superior science that fulfills the

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[75] *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 1, p. 35.

highest aims of the religion, while the worldly sciences, in this case *fiqh*, can only assist with the preliminaries.[76]

As I have pointed out above, al-Ghazālī was himself a jurist and wrote important works of *fiqh* both before and after the wrote the *Iḥyā'*. He does preserve a role for jurisprudence. God, he points out, made human beings with desires from which spring conflicts, and jurists are needed to mediate these conflicts. He writes: "By my life, it (*fiqh*) does pertain to religion, not by itself but through the medium of the world. For this world is the sowing ground of the other, and religion cannot be practiced except through the world."[77] *Fiqh*, he adds, serves along with political rulers to guard religion; without these guards, religion would disappear.[78]

Even within these limitations, however, al-Ghazālī warns that too many people pursue *fiqh* to too great a degree. *Fiqh* is not an obligation upon every Muslim (*farḍ 'ayn*) but rather an obligation that can be fulfilled by a few people on the community's behalf (*farḍ kifāya*). Al-Ghazālī points out that medicine, too, is such an obligation, and yet there are many communities that have no Muslim doctor, but do have many jurists who are fully familiar with the minutiae of *fiqh*—a fact that he attributes to the desire of the jurists for fame and fortune. Pursuing *fiqh* to a degree that is not needed for the good

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[76] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 24. He takes up this topic again in a slightly modified form in the *Kitāb al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām, Iḥyā'*, II, 14, pp. 84-85. He reiterates this scheme also in one of his letters. Dorothea Krawulsky, *Briefe und Reden des Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazzālī: übersetzt und erläutert*, Freiburn im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1971, pp. 199-200.

[77] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 23.

[78] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 23.

of the community distracts jurists from tending to the afflictions of their heart, which is the practice of the otherworldly scholars. Treating the diseases of the heart is an individual obligation whose neglect will lead to destruction in the hereafter.[79]

Al-Ghazālī's treatment of *kalām* is similar to his treatment of *fiqh*. Its demotion is also presented as an afterthought rather than as the carefully crafted rhetorical assault that it is. After finishing the discussion of the praiseworthy and blameworthy sciences, he answers a hypothetical interlocutor who asks him why he did not include *kalām* and philosophy among these sciences. He explains that whatever useful evidence *kalām* has to offer is contained in the Qur'ān or *Hadith*. Whatever goes beyond this is either blameworthy disputation, which is an innovation, or the debates of different factions, which are meaningless and often have nothing to do with religion. Having dismissed *kalām*, he goes on to talk about philosophy at greater length.[80]

After this rather insulting treatment of *kalām*, al-Ghazālī does return to that science. The theologians, like the jurists, have a role to play. Much as the guards of the pilgrimage caravan are an unfortunate necessity, there to ward off Bedouin who may attack the caravan, so too are *mutakallimūn* an unfortunate necessity, whose duty is to protect the religion from blameworthy innovation.[81] Both, he says, play an important role in allowing religious duties to be fulfilled free of disturbance. However, much as a

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[79] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 24.

[80] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 27. His discussion of philosophy differs little from his discussion of philosophy in the *Deliverance from Error*. He says that mathematics and logic are acceptable, that the science of divinity is sometimes innovation and sometimes apostasy, and that physics is either false or of little value.

[81] Such as the innovation of the philosophers.

guard who does not go beyond guarding the caravan to being himself a pilgrim does not

truly participate in the *ḥajj*, so does a *mutakallim* who does not go beyond disputation and

defense against innovation have any part of the otherworldly science. Al-Ghazālī insists

that such as scholar is not to be counted among the scholars of religion.[82]

Though al-Ghazālī defines a valid role for disputation and debating (*jadal,*

mujādalah, munāẓarah),[83] he also points to it as one of the great vices of the theologians.

Much as excessive concern for the minutiae of law can be harmful to the jurist, so, too,

can debate sow the seeds of the theologian's own destruction by fostering in him

blameworthy traits. Much as drinking alcohol leads to other transgressions, so too does

debating lead to envy, arrogance, resentment, slander, self-justification, spying,

schadenfreude, hypocrisy, disregard for the truth and other vices. Some of these vices are

the very character flaws that the otherworldly science aims to cure; they are discussed in

the third quarter of the *Iḥyā'*.[84]

Al-Ghazālī lays out the limits of *kalām* much as he sought to limit the pursuit of

fiqh. He insists that revealing the truth of matters is not *kalām*'s concern; it serves no

purpose beyond safeguarding the articles of faith. Even this task, he tells us, is not an

endless one. Anyone who cannot be convinced to return to sound belief by 100 pages of

kalām cannot be returned to sound belief at all, having become too firmly rooted in

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[82] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 27.

[83] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, pp. 44-46. Al-Ghazālī says that as long at debate is undertaken in a spirit of cooperation and joint seeking that has as its aim the discovery of the truth rather than overcoming an opponent, it is praiseworthy.

[84] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, pp. 46-49.

innovation and too skilled in debate to be shaken from error. Al-Ghazālī has produced

just such a text in the form of his *al-Iqtiṣād fī-l-iʿtiqād*. This being the case, any effort

beyond the 100 page limit is a blameworthy distraction from the pursuit of the

otherworldly sciences.[85] Alas, such verbosity is all too frequently the hallmark of the

theologian. Al-Ghazālī tells us that the only way in which the *mutakallim* exceeds the

common believer is in his production of verbiage (*kalām*), from which his science, *kalām*,

gets its name.[86]

Though al-Ghazālī downplays his attacks on *fiqh* and *kalām*, presenting them as

discussions marginal to his broader exploration of the religious sciences, he is fully aware

of the ramifications of his treatment of these two disciplines. The *Book of Science* is

nothing less than an effort to define ʿ*ilm* in such a way as to make the otherworldly

science the guardian of its most important facets and to make *fiqh* and *kalām* second-tier

sciences, concerned with the mundane affairs of this world. After delivering his

preliminary attacks on these sciences, al-Ghazālī places a question in the mouth of a

hypothetical interlocutor:

> You have restricted the jurisdiction of the theologian to guarding the faith
> of the commoners from the confusions of the innovator, much as the
> jurisdiction of the guards of the *ḥajj* caravan is the protection of the goods
> of the pilgrims from the looting of the Arabs/Bedouins. You have
> restricted the jurisdiction of the jurist to preserving the laws by which the
> sultan restrains the evil of aggressive people against one another. These
> two ranks are inferior with relation to the science of religion. The scholars
> of the community (*umma*) famous for their excellence are the jurists and
> the theologians, for they are the most excellent of creatures in the view of

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[85] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, pp. 42-43.

[86] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 52.

God most high. How can you reduce their ranking to this lowly station with regard to the religious science?[87]

Having thus summarized his demotion of *fiqh* and *kalām*, al-Ghazālī defends his now explicit project.

He rejects the reliance on inherited knowledge (*taqlīd*) represented by reverence for the jurists and theologians, or by the reverence of these scholars for the eponyms of their legal and theological schools. Instead, he privileges a direct experience of the truth/God of the sort that is sought by Sufis, saying: "Know the truth (*al-ḥaqq*, one of the names of God) and you will know its people, if you are climbing the path of the truth."[88] But this is not the primary line of argument by which he seeks to justify his demotion of *fiqh* and *kalām*. Just as he avoided mention of the Sufis in his *khuṭba*, so too does he present himself in this passage as the defender of the original Islam of the Prophet and the Companions, rather than as a partisan of the Sufis—a faction within the faith.

Once al-Ghazālī has completed his demotion of *fiqh* and *kalām* in the first four chapters of the *Book of Science*, he turns his attention to explaining the practice of the otherworldly science in the remaining three chapters. He does not completely neglect jurisprudence and theology in this discussion, but he treats them as holding a lower rank within a hierarchy of religious sciences that has the otherworldly science at its apex.

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[87] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 28.

[88] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 28.

Scattered attacks on *fiqh* and *kalām* are to be found as well, but within an explication of the science that al-Ghazālī is advocating.

In writing of the etiquette of the teacher and student in chapter five, for example, he portrays the ideal student as an ascetic who aims to be drawn near to God through his pursuit of the otherworldly science. He says that such a student does not charge into studying the religious sciences, but first examines them all and contents himself with a small amount of each, saving his strength for achieving perfection in the otherworldly science, the most noble of them all. By this, he says, he means the science of practice and that which it leads to, namely the science of unveiling. The utmost limit of unveiling is the knowledge of God (*ma'rifat allāh ta'ālā*). This is not the conviction (*i'tiqād*) of the common people or the result of the investigations of the theologians. Rather, al-Ghazālī tells his reader, it is the fruit of a light that God casts into the heart of a purified servant. It is comparable to the secret that the Prophet said God placed in the breast of Abū Bakr. This being the case, al-Ghazālī says that he finds it strange that someone could hear a description of this secret from the Prophet and then dismiss discussions of equivalent knowledge as irrational hoaxes of the Sufis.[89]

This is the closest that al-Ghazālī comes in the *Book of Science* to directly identifying the otherworldly science with Sufism for reasons we have discussed above. Nevertheless, he leaves his reader with no doubt about the content of this science. His writing abounds with quotations from noted Sufis and ascetics such as Mālik ibn Dinār (d. 131/749), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 205/820),

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[89] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, pp. 52-53.

Yaḥya ibn Mu`ādh (d. 258/872), and Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), as well as from an anonymous "one of the Knowers" (*`ārifīn*), to give examples from but a single page.[90] Readers with some background in Sufi literature would have further recognized that the *Book of Science* in the *Iḥyā'* owes a tremendous debt to the *Book of Science* in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's work of Sufism, *Qūt al-Qulūb* (*The Nourishment of Hearts*). Furthermore, the practices that al-Ghazālī advocates, such as purifying the ego of blameworthy traits, are defining practices of the Sufis.

The final chapter of the *Book of Science* is devoted to the intellect (*al-`aql*), the vehicle for obtaining knowledge. His discussion of this defining human faculty is also divided into a four-part hierarchy, suggesting that this fundamental structure of the *Iḥyā'* has a basis in something other than a taxonomy of the sciences.[91] In this case, unlike the previously examined discussions of purity and the forbidden, al-Ghazālī is not presenting a graduated understanding of a religious imperative, but rather four levels of increasing keenness of an innate instinct or faculty (*gharīza*).[92] As was the case in his discussions of religious imperatives, the highest level of the intellect is the means of realizing otherworldly practice and insight.

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[90] *Iḥyā'*, I, 1, p. 60.

[91] The *Iḥyā'* is full of numbered lists and I do not mean to suggest that every four-part division of a topic is a reiteration of the four-level structure that I have identified. I do believe, however, that this is a case of al-Ghazālī applying this structure to a human faculty rather than the religious sciences or a matter of practice or belief. Al-Ghazālī thereby suggests that the four gradations of religious practice and belief are based on corresponding gradations of intellectual/spiritual discernment.

[92] Al-Ghazālī starts his discussion by claiming that there is disagreement over the meaning of the word "intellect" because the word is used to signify four different meanings. It is not until the end of his discussion that he makes it clear that these four meanings stand in a hierarchical relationship to one another. *Iḥyā'*, pp. 80-81.

The first level of the intellect, al-Ghazālī explains, is the faculty that separates human beings from the beasts by making them capable of understanding the theoretical sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-naẓariyya*) and mastering the concealed and contemplative disciplines (*tadbīr al-ṣanāʿāt al-khafiyya al-fikriyya*). The second level of intellect is the ability gained in childhood to distinguish between the possible and impossible, like the knowledge that two is greater than one. The theologians, he says, have called this axiomatic knowledge. The third level of the intellect is knowledge gained through experience, or empirical knowledge. As for the highest level of the intellect, it is the ability to think about consequences and thus subdue the appetites that drive man to seek immediate gratification. The first of these degrees, he says, is the root, the second the trunk, the third is the branch and the fourth the fruit. The first two are innate and the latter two acquired.[93]

The intellect can lead a believer to the same sense of urgency about the consequences of his actions in this world that al-Ghazālī conveys in his *khuṭba*, and cause him to purge his ego of blameworthy traits, and thus prepare for God's bestowal of knowledge of Himself upon him. Two of the three character defects he lists in relation to the fourth level of the intellect, excessive desire for sex and hypocrisy, are specifically addressed in books contained in the third quarter of the *Iḥyāʾ*.[94]

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[93] *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 1, pp. 80-81.

[94] *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 1, p. 83. Arguably the third trait mentioned, desire for power (*riyāsa*) is also covered, if not directly named, in the book on *Censuring Prestige and Hypocrisy* (*kitāb dhamm al-jāh wa-l-riyāʾ*).

There is also a suggestion that the intellect can lead beyond guiding practice to a direct knowledge of God. At the end of the chapter under discussion, al-Ghazālī addresses a hypothetical question as to why it is that some of the Sufis censure the intellect (ʿaql) and the rational (maʿqūl). He says that the Sufis do not censure the intellect as he has defined it, but rather censure the word as it was used by the theologians to refer to their practice of debate. He writes:

> No attention should be paid to him who says that [divine law] is understood through certainty itself (ʿayn al-yaqīn) and the light of faith (īmān), and not through the intellect, because we mean by intellect that which he means by certainty itself and the light of belief. And this is the inner attribute (al-ṣifa al-bāṭina) by which the human being is distinguished from the beasts, such that he grasps with it the realities of matters.[95]

This argument is almost certainly a response to Makkī, who contrasts the (inferior) intellect to the (superior) certainty (yaqīn) and faith (īmān) in the *Book of Science* of his *Qūt al-qulūb*.[96] In one passage, Makkī lists the intellect along with the theologians as something that the ancestors despised in favor of more worthy things.[97] The concept of

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[95] *Iḥyāʾ*, I. 1, p. 84.

[96] Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, vol. 2, pp. 77, 115, 118, 153. It is possible, of course, that al-Ghazālī had other Sufi thinkers in mind as well. He does criticize Makkī by name in certain passages and so could have referred to him by name if he was the sole representative of this school of thought. See Richard Gramlich, *Muḥammad al-Ġazzālīs Lehre von den Stufen zur Gottesliebe*, p. 5. But given his extensive borrowings from Makkī in the *Book of Science*, it seems likely that Makkī was foremost in his mind when he wrote this passage. There is one passage in which Makkī lists the intellect along with faith and certainty (and many other things) as concepts that have been lost in his day for want of people who aspire to them; *Qūt*, p. 132. This could point to either inconsistency on Makkī's part, or to a different understanding of the word "ʿaql" in this passage.

[97] "[The ancestors (al-sālafūn)] knew how to distinguish between sessions of remembrance and the storytellers, and to tell the difference between the scholars (ʿulamāʾ) and the theologians, between the science of the tongue and understanding of the heart (ʿilm al-lisān wa fiqh al-qalb), and between the science of certainty and the science of the intellect (ʿilm al-yaqīn wa ʿilm al-ʿaql)." *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 118.

certainty has been ranked in various ways in Sufi epistemology,[98] and even Makkī seems to use it in different ways.[99] However, Makkī's use of the full phrase *'ayn al-yaqīn*, or "certainty itself," is in contrast to knowledge received from other people and believed on their authority. *'Ayn al-yaqīn* is achieved through direct witnessing (*mushāhada*), those who attain it are the otherworldly scholars.[100]

This being the case, al-Ghazālī's equation of the intellect with the Sufi notion of *'ayn al-yaqīn* implies that his four-part gradation of the intellect culminates not only in Sufi practice but also in mystical insight. This implication is confirmed in book twenty-one of the *Iḥyā'*, *The Book of the Elucidation of the Marvels of the Heart*, where al-Ghazālī gives two meanings for the word "intellect." The second is the agent of knowledge, the first is the knowledge of the truths of matters whose location is the heart, which is the means by which God is known.[101]

With this, al-Ghazālī's contestation of the meaning of the word *'ilm* is complete. He has presented a history of the usurpation of the rightful centrality of *'ilm al-ākhira*, the otherworldly science, by *fiqh* and *kalām*, which he has demoted to worldly sciences. He has severely limited the role of *fiqh* and *kalām* among the religious sciences, describing them as unfortunate necessities and relegating them to playing only a preliminary part in fulfilling the highest aims of the religion, which are achieved through the otherworldly

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[98] See the discussion of Certainty (*yaqīn*) in Qushayrī, *Risāla*, pp. 215-219.

[99] See, for example, n. 92 above.

[100] *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 87.

[101] *Iḥyā'*, III, 21, p. 5.

science. He has attacked the character of the jurists and the theologians, and described the ideal student of religious sciences as one who pursues the otherworldly science. Finally, he has defined the intellect, the vehicle for obtaining knowledge, as a graduated faculty, whose highest level reveals the necessity of Sufi practice and mystical insight.

Al-Ghazālī's assertion of the otherworldly science's claim to represent the loftiest reaches of knowledge, the knowledge that the Prophet ordered every Muslim to seek, is carried out in a relatively understated way. Some of his most damning assessments of *fiqh* and *kalām* are given in passing or as though they were mere points of clarification. Although the *Iḥyā'* draws heavily from Makkī's Sufi work *The Nourishment of Hearts*, frequently cites well-known Sufis and ascetics as authorities on the subject at hand, and prescribes practices associated with the Sufis, al-Ghazālī is careful not to equate the otherworldly science that he is advocating with Sufism. He always refers to the Sufis as a third party, albeit one that he defends and with whose doctrines he sometimes endorses. By so doing, he is able to present the otherworldly science he advocates not as the practice of a particular faction within Islam, but as the heart of the religion of the Prophet, the Companions, and the founders of the legal schools.

Despite this indirect approach, the polemical thrust of al-Ghazālī's discussion, and its radical implications cannot be lost on his reader. The treatment of *`ilm* with which he prefaced *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* has as its objective nothing less than the reordering of the hierarchy of the religious sciences, such that Sufism stands at their summit. Such a "revival" was likely to earn its author enemies.

Glimpses of *mukāshafa*

As we have seen, al-Ghazālī rules out a discussion of the science of unveiling, or *'ilm al-mukāshafa*, even as he describes it in the most enticing of terms.[102] Nonetheless, there are passages in *Iḥyāʾ 'ulūm al-dīn* in which al-Ghazālī goes beyond listing the types of knowledge revealed through unveiling, and frankly discusses metaphysical and cosmological matters. Not infrequently, these discussions come immediately after repeating the prohibition against them.[103] Such passages are more frequent in the latter two quarters of the work, which are dedicated to the interior half of the science of practice, i.e., the methods of overcoming blameworthy character traits and the stages by which one is drawn closer to God.

These passages have helped to stoke the controversy that emerged in al-Ghazālī's day and continues to the present over the exact nature of the otherworldly science that he advocates in the *Iḥyāʾ*. In later works, such as *The Deliverance from Error*, al-Ghazālī openly declares his embrace of Sufism and repeats his rejection of philosophy. This is certainly the face of al-Ghazālī that many of his readers saw. However, in the *Iḥyāʾ*, he remains cagey about directly identifying the otherworldly science with Sufism. In passages in the *Iḥyāʾ*, and other works in which he discusses the understanding of cosmology or eschatology revealed through the science of practice, he presents his

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[102] See *Iḥyāʾ*, I, 1, p. 25 for a particularly lengthy description of the wonders revealed through *'ilm al-mukāshafa*.

[103] As Gramlich points out, *Muḥammad al-Ghazzālīs Lehre*, p. 2.

thought in a way that could be understood in terms of Neoplatonic or Avicennan philosophy.

One particularly noteworthy and, as we will see in Chapter II, controversial example of al-Ghazālī's discussion of *'ilm al-mukāshafa* is worth examining. This occurs in the first section of the *Book of Divine Unity and Reliance on God* (*Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul*).[104] This section gives a sense of the heavenly vision that al-Ghazālī hinted would be the fruit of the otherworldly science and the ways in which it could be interpreted. In it, he again resorts to his four-level structure to contrast otherworldly insight to the insight of the theologians, much as he contrasted otherworldly practice to the practice of the jurists in the first half of the *Iḥyā'*.

The *Book of Divine Unity and Reliance on God* falls in the quarter on Saving Matters in which al-Ghazālī discusses the means by which the climber on the path to the other world draws near to God. His readers would have recognized the topics he discusses in this quarter as being identical to the "states" (*aḥwāl*) and "stages" (*maqāmāt*) through which the Sufi seeker passes on the road to union with the Divine. In this book, al-Ghazālī presents the state of reliance on God (*tawakkul*) as resulting from a realization of divine unity (*tawḥīd*). Unity means that everything ultimately stems from God and that the fates of human beings are thus ultimately in His hands, whether they acknowledge this or not. Since *tawakkul* cannot be understood without first explaining

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[104] In *The Book of the Forty in the Roots of Religion* (*Kitāb al-arba'īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*), al-Ghazālī refers the reader back to this section of the *Iḥyā'* for a discussion of his cosmology, which indicates that he regarded its content as having special importance. This passage from the *Book of the Forty* is translated by Timothy Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul*, p. 156.

the full, otherworldly dimensions of *tawḥīd*, al-Ghazālī says it is necessary to violate his

injunction against discussing *ʿilm al-mukāshafa*. He writes:

> And this [i.e. *al-tawḥīd*] stems from the science of unveiling. But some of the sciences of unveilings are related to actions (*al-aʿmāl*) through mystical states (*bi-wāsiṭat al-aḥwāl*) and the science of practice cannot be complete without them. Therefore we will not explain anything beyond the extent to which it is related to practice. For Divine Unity is a vast ocean without a shore.[105]

This discussion of unveiling, then, is essential for explaining the practice of reliance on

God, and will be no longer than is absolutely necessary to clarify this aspect of the

science of practice.

    Tawḥīd is a concept understood by all Muslims as one of the five pillars of Islam

and rests in the profession of faith (*shahāda*), the declaration that "there is no god but

God and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God." Al-Ghazālī resorts to a by now familiar

structure to argue that the common understandings of *tawḥīd* are only the first stages of

its full understanding. He says that the profession of faith has four layers: a husk (*qishr*),

a husk of the husk, a kernel (*lubb*) and a kernel of the kernel.[106] In this case, al-Ghazālī's

aim is to demonstrate the limitations of the authority of the theologians to interpret

tawḥīd, much as he has demonstrated the limitations of the jurists' authority to interpret

purity and the forbidden.

    Once again, we see al-Ghazālī's four-part progression from the mere letter of the

profession of faith, to its spirit, to a partial esoteric understanding of the profession of

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[105] *Iḥyāʾ*, IV, 35, p. 210.

[106] This is the order in which al-Ghazālī lists the levels of insight into *tawḥīd*. If he had listed them in order of increasing profundity, the list would have read, "the husk of the husk, the husk, the kernel and the kernel of the kernel," but al-Ghazālī apparently preferred to maintain a syntactic parallel.

faith, to its complete understanding. The outermost stratum of belief, the husk of the husk, is that of the hypocrite who declares that "there is no god but God" without paying heed to the meaning of the utterance. The second, the husk, is that of the common people who believe the profession of faith in their hearts without any deeper reflection on its meaning. The third, the kernel, is that of those who are drawn near to God (*al-muqarrabūn*), seeing in the apparent multiplicity of the world the unity of the creator from whom this multiplicity stems. The fourth and deepest understanding, the kernel of the kernel, is that of the man whose ego has been annihilated and who does not regard himself as separate from God. This is the stage of the Sincere (*ṣiddiqūn*).[107]

In this case, the outer layers are the domain of *kalām*. Al-Ghazālī tells us that members of all of these four strata are declarers of God's unity (*muwaḥḥidūn*). The *tawḥīd* of the first will spare him the sword and spear in this world. The *tawḥīd* of the second will spare him punishment in the world to come, provided that his soul is not weakened by sin. But there are strategies, he says, that aim to weaken and loosen the covenant of the declaration of faith, which are called blameworthy innovation (*bid'a*), and there are strategies that aim to prevent this, which are called *kalām*. One who knows these strategies is called a theologian, and his jurisdiction is the most superficial two layers of *tawḥīd*. Lest there be any doubt that the kernel of *tawḥīd* belongs to the otherworldly science and not to *kalām*, he goes on to describe the realization of the *tawḥīd* of the third level—that of those drawn near to God, the *muqarrabūn*—as follows:

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[107] *Iḥyā'*, IV, 35, p. 210.

He does not see any agent in reality except One, and reality has been
unveiled to him as it is (*kamā hiyya 'alayhi*), not because he entrusted his
heart to a covenant on the basis of an understanding of the utterance (*lafẓ*)
of the truth, for that is the level of the commoners and the
mutakallimūn.[108]

Having defined the boundary between the jurisdiction of *kalām* and that of the

otherworldly science, al-Ghazālī expands upon the significance of the full understanding

of *tawḥīd* grasped by those drawn to God. He does this by discussing *tawḥīd* in terms of

a chain of causes that ultimately goes back to God. This is a journey that passes from the

visible world of daily experience, which he refers to as the world of "dominion" or *mulk*,

to the spiritual world of "sovereignty" or *malakūt*, via an intermediary world of

"almightiness" or *jabarūt*.[109] The image that he uses is that of an investigator who

searches for the cause of a page being blackened by ink. He is led through a series of

intermediary causes (ink, a pen, a hand, and so on) that leads ultimately to a vision of

God, the ultimate causer of all causes.[110]

The allegory ends with Qur'ān 57:3: "He is the first and the last, the manifest and

the hidden," which al-Ghazālī interprets in terms of emanation and return: all events in

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[108] *Iḥyā'*, IV, 35, p. 210.

[109] These terms have been understood and translated in different ways by different scholars. I am
venturing no more than a basic understanding of *mulk*, *malakūt*, and *jabarūt*, as the physical world of
perception, the spiritual world of the divine and an intermediate world that allows passage between the two.
See Kojiro Nakamura, "Imām Ghazālī's cosmology reconsidered with special reference to the concept of
jabarūt," *Studia Islamica*, 80, 1994, pp. 26-49. A. J. Wensinck understood these concepts in Neoplatonic
terms and translated them accordingly in his, "On the Relation between Ghazālī's Cosmology and his
Mysticism," *Mededeelingen ther Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, Afdeeling Letterkunde, Ser.
A LXXXV, 1933, pp. 183-209. *Mulk* and *malakūt* are used in the Qur'ān but their Qur'ānic usage sheds
little light on the way al-Ghazālī uses them here. See Nakamura, p. 31.

[110] This is an image that al-Ghazālī has used in shorter discussions of the same issue, such as *Iḥyā'*,
IV, 31, p. 7, and IV, 35, p. 212. The image of a pen blackened by ink might well have occurred to an
author engaged in such a lengthy composition.

the material world emanate from God in their order, one by one (*ṣadara minhu al-kull ʿalā tartībihi wāḥidan baʿda wāḥidin*), and the journey of those who travel to Him ends in His presence (*wa-huwa al-ākhir bi-l-iḍāfa ilā sair al-sā'irīn ilayhi fa-innahum lā yazālūna mutaraqqīn min manzilin ilā manzilin ḥatā an yaqaʿ al-intihā' ilā tilka al-ḥuḍūr*). He is hidden to those engrossed in the material world and manifest to those whose inner vision He opens. This, al-Ghazālī insists, is the meaning of the *tawḥīd*, "of those climbing the road of *tawḥīd* of [the contemplation of] divine acts; I mean he for whom the Unique Actor has been unveiled."[111]

In this passage, thus, al-Ghazālī goes beyond allusions to the types of things that are discovered through the science of unveiling and directly discusses details of a cosmology revealed through this science. If the theologians and the common people understand only the two most superficial levels of *tawḥīd*, this is the frank if symbolic discussion of the understanding of the elite. The structure of this progression provides a theoretical underpinning for the four-part division of the *Iḥyā'* itself.

There are some scholars who point to this passage as evidence of an underlying philosophical agenda in al-Ghazālī's writing. His terminology may be one element that awoke their suspicion. The terms *mulk* and *malakūt* are Qur'ānic, *mulk* referring to human as well as divine sovereignty and *malakūt* to divine sovereignty alone. They are used also in al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb* in a discussion of mystical insight similar to al-

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[111] Ibid. p. 216. *Fa-hākadhā kāna tawḥīd al-sālikīn li-tarīq al-tawḥīd fī-l-fiʿl: aʿnī man inkashafa lahu ʿan al-fāʿil wāḥid.*

Ghazālī's.[112]   However, various combinations of these terms, along with the word

jabarūt, have also been used by the philosophers al-Farabī, Ibn Sīnā, and the Brethren of

Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*), which has led some to claim a philosophical inspiration for al-

Ghazālī's cosmology.[113]   Certainly the gradations that lie between the seeker and God

could be seen as suggestive of a Neoplatonic, emanationist model of the cosmos.   Al-

Ghazālī's concluding statement, that God is the first and the last in that all beings

emanate from him (*ṣadara minhu*) and return by stages to his presence, could also be

taken as equivalent to the Neoplatonic concept of emanation and return.[114]

These sorts of passages led Ibn Tufayl (d. 581/1185), Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198-

99),[115] and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1327)[116] to claim that al-Ghazālī harbored a secret

philosophical doctrine.   Some modern scholars have agreed whole-heartedly,[117] though

the most detailed such reading,[118] has been shown to have overstated its case.[119]   Other

modern scholars have flatly denied that the author of *The Confusion of the Philosophers*

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[112] Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 87.

[113] Wensinck, "On the Relation between Ghazālī's Cosmology and his Mysticism," pp. 186-192.

[114] On the idea of emanation and return, see Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, esp. pp. 28-30.

[115] For excerpts of the relevant passages, see Gianotti, pp. 19-22.

[116] For an excerpt of the relevant passage, see Dallal, "Al-Ghazālī and the Perils of Interpretation."

[117] See Wensinck, "On the Relation between Ghazālī's Cosmology and his Mysticism," and Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī and Avicenna*, op. cit. and *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*, op. cit.

[118] Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*,

[119] See Dallal, "Al-Ghazālī and the Perils of Interpretation."

could himself have subscribed in any way to philosophical ideas.[120]   Their readings, too,

have been called into question.[121]   Other scholars have taken intermediate positions.[122]

As we have seen, al-Ghazālī can be intentionally elusive in his writing, making it

difficult to prove conclusively from internal evidence alone that the otherworldly science

he advocates in the *Iḥyā'* is fully synonymous with Sufism.[123]   Not directly identifying

the otherworldly science with Sufism allowed al-Ghazālī to present the revived religious

sciences as universal rather than factional.   But it also left him open to criticism from

both those opposed to Sufism and those Sufis who suspected al-Ghazālī of portraying

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[120]   Montgomery Watt, "A Forgery in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt?*"   *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1949, 5-22.

[121]   Hermann Landholdt, "Ghazālī and 'Religionswissenschaft': Some notes on the *Mishkāt al-anwār* for Professor Charles J. Adams," *Asiatische Studien* XLV, 1, 1991, pp. 19-72, Jules Janssens, "Al-Ghazzālī's *Tahāfut*: Is it Really a Rejection of Ibn Sīnā's Philosophy?" *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 12:1, 2001, pp. 1-17.

[122]   Having culled all of the relevant passages from all of al-Ghazālī's writings, Gianotti has concluded that, though al-Ghazālī's conception of the afterlife may have been non-corporeal like that of Ibn Sīnā, his approach to the question was psychological, focusing on the experience of realities, and taking no interest in how matters stood ontologically.   He sees such speculation as a distraction from the practice of religion in preparation for death.   See *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul*, pp. 175-176. Lazarus-Yafeh, after a very detailed and careful analysis of all of al-Ghazālī's writings, suggests that he was deeply influenced by philosophy but recognized the danger that it posed to religion.   He found in Sufism an vehicle within the Muslim tradition for pursuing the ideas and insights of Neoplatonic philosophy.   See *Studies in al-Ghazzali*, pp. 265-283.   I find such approaches more fruitful.   Al-Ghazālī himself often states that he is more concerned with substance than with terminology.   `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī says that al-Ghazālī gave permission to those who took issue with his grammar or phrasing to correct it, as his aim was content and its correction and not form and its embellishment (*fa-mā kāna qaṣduhu illā al-maʿnā wa-taḥqīqahu dūna al-alfāẓ wa-talfīqihi*) al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, vol. 6, p. 211. There is ample overlap between the conceptual universes of Sufism and Neoplatonic philosophy and it could well be that al-Ghazālī's treatment of the two was ecumenical.   In addition to its rhetorical utility, *ʿilm al-ākhira* may well have been an accurate expression of al-Ghazālī's own religious vision that he saw as not fully synonymous with any existing school of thought.

[123]   Gianotti writes: "…al-Ghazālī's terminology is highly self-conscious, at times plainly evasive, often equivocal and ambiguous, sometimes even contradictory…."   Ultimately Gianotti believes that much of this confusion can be solved by sorting al-Ghazālī's various statements by genre.   Within each genre, a greater consistency prevails.   *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul*, p. 7.

himself as a Sufi in bad faith, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. Ibn Rushd wrote of

him: "Indeed, with the *Ashʿarīs* he is an *Ashʿarī*, with the Sufis a Sufi and with the

philosophers a philosopher."[124] Given the ambiguities that abound in al-Ghazālī's

writings, the question of his true intellectual and spiritual loyalties may never be resolved

to the satisfaction of all.

This is a study concerned with reception, that is, readers' perceptions of al-

Ghazālī's thought; thus, it is not our concern here to try to resolve this question. It is

enough to point out that *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* contains passages that could be read as

indicative of a philosophical stratum to his thinking and a philosophical agenda in writing

Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn. This charge was leveled against him by major thinkers in the Islamic

tradition, as we have seen above, and also by his critics in the Maghrib, as we shall see in

coming chapters.

Al-Ghazālī's Achievement

In the preceding discussion, I have frequently noted al-Ghazālī's debt to Abū

Ṭālib al-Makkī. If anything, I have understated the case. Ideas as central to al-Ghazālī's

main argument as the distinction between worldly scholars and otherworldly scholars

were taken from *Qūt al-qulūb*.[125] This fact was not lost on medieval and early modern

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[124] Ibn Rushd, *Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory*, Charles E. Butterworth (trans. & ed.), Provo, Brigham Young University Press, 2001.

[125] In the introduction to his *Book of Science*, Makkī writes that among the many topics he will discuss is the distinction between worldly scholars and otherworldly scholars. He then goes on to discuss this topic in numerous passages, Makkī, p. 76.

scholars. Al-Subkī notes that al-Ghazālī relied on al-Makki and al-Qusahyrī.[126] Al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790-91) called *Qūt al-qulūb* the basis of the *Iḥyā'*.[127] Ibn Taymiyya went so far as to say: "Indeed al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* is rendered superfluous by the *Kitāb al-riʿāya* of al-Muḥāsabī and *Qūt al-qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī."[128]

A-Ghazālī admitted this himself. Though he doesn't mention his influences by name,[129] he has the following to say about the originality of the *Iḥyā'*:

> People have already composed books about some of these topics but this book [*iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*'] is distinguished from them with regard to five matters:
>
> First: By clarifying what they have obscured and expanding on that which they have summarized (*ḥall mā `aqadūhu wa kashf mā ajmalūhu*)
>
> Second: By arranging what they have dispersed and ordering what they have divided.
>
> Third: By being succinct in where they have been long-winded and specifying what they have established.
>
> Fourth: By omitting what they have repeated and stating precisely what they have composed.
>
> Fifth: By bringing to light ambiguous matters that are difficult for the comprehension of men which have never been presented in any books.

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[126] Al-Subkī, p. 247. Richard Gramlich has interspersed his translation of books 31-37 of the *Iḥyā'* and his translations of al-Qushayrī, and al-Makkī with references to al-Ghazālī's borrowings from these two authors and is the best source for tracking down citations of such passages. See n. 12 above for full references.

[127] Al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn bi-l-sharḥ iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*, vol. 12, p. 102.

[128] *Inna kitāb al-Iḥyā' li-l-Ghazālī yughnī `anhu Kitāb al-riʿāya li-l-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsabī wa Qūt al-qulūb li Abī Ṭālib al-Makkī.*  Quoted in Bensbaa, *Al-Sulṭa bayn al-tasannun wa-"l-tashayyu`" wa-l-taṣawwuf mā bayn `aṣray al-murābiṭīn wa-l-muwaḥḥidīn*, p. 87.

[129] He never cites any of the authors that he quotes but he does give a list of Sufi authors that he read in Baghdad before dedicating himself to the pursuit of Sufism given in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl, Majmū` rasā'il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-`ilmiyya, 1994, vol. 8, pp. 57-58.

> Even if all of them have happened to coincide in using a single method it is not objectionable that each of the climbers (*sālikīn*) should individually perceive a matter on his own, which his colleagues had not noticed. Or perhaps they had not failed to notice it but forgotten to mention it in books. Or perhaps they did not forget but rather someone dissuaded them from revealing it. These are the traits of this book being as it is a unifier of the common points of these sciences (*ma'a kawnihi ḥāwiyan li-majāmi' hādhahi-l-'ulūm*).[130]

Much of this is simply to say that al-Ghazālī wrote more clearly than his predecessors. But he also claims to have made explicit what others have obscured or left vague. What does he bring out that his predecessors either did not see or did not say? For this we need to survey quickly the history of Sufism and Sufi apologetics.

It is difficult to pinpoint the emergence of Sufism as such. Later Sufi writers trace its origins to the earliest Muslims and to Muhammad himself. However, they also say that the science of Sufism (*'ilm al-taṣawwuf*) emerged first among the second and third generations of Muslims. While there is no consensus among modern scholars as to who might be considered the first Sufi, it is generally agreed that Sufism emerged in the first half of the third/ninth century.[131] Efforts of systematization of Sufism as a religious science began in the latter half of the same century.

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[130] *Iḥyā'*, I, *khuṭba*, pp. 8-9.

[131] One theory comes from Christopher Melchert, "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C. E.", *Studia Islamica*, vol. 83/1, 1996, pp. 51-70. Melchert followed up on Massignon's assertion that Sufism owed nothing to non-Islamic sources but rather emerged from the Islamic ascetic tradition. He defines the distinction between asceticism and mysticism in Weberian terms, as a distinction between those who emphasize God's transcendence and those who emphasize his imminence. By examining the figures covered in `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī's (d. 412/1021) *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, he locates the point at which the descriptions of subjects fit the second ideal type more than the first. The first figure to fall into the second category, he finds, is Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245-245/860-861). Melchert's argument is attractive, among other reasons, because it gives a concrete definition of what a Sufi is. However, this Weberian definition is likely overly simplistic. As Vincent Cornell has pointed out to me, the only explanation for the concern of Ascetics for purifying their body is concern that it be a worthy vessel for God, a concern based on a belief in God's imminence. Alexander Knysh does not feel

The first such effort was carried out by Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910), the nephew of the early Sufi/ascetic al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867), in the late 3rd/late 9th-early 10th century. Writing in an era in which there were campaigns against Sufis,[132] al-Junayd was concerned to reign in excesses of some Sufis of his day. Though he admired Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875), a "drunken" Sufi, and lectured on his ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥiyyāt*), al-Junayd advocated "sober" mysticism. Furthermore, he counseled political quietism to his followers.[133] It has been suggested that al-Junayd wrote in a deliberately obscure style that would throw off any but the most determined non-initiates among his readers as he elaborated upon new terminology and schema for discussing Sufi states (*aḥwāl*). His style was clearly not so obscure as to prevent his doctrines from having a major influence on subsequent generations of Sufis who gave him honorific titles such as the Master of Masters (*shaykh al-mashāyikh*).[134] More than

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that Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī fits the category of Sufi and instead suggests that the first full-fleged Sufi is Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867). For Knysh, the distinction between asceticism and mysticism, that is, between *zuhd* and *taṣawwuf*, lies more in practice than in outlook. He sees in al-Saqaṭī a transition from ascetic concerns with "avoidance of sin and meticulous compliance with the religious and social conventions of the age, to a fully-fledged mystic immersed in the contemplation of God and, therefore, totally oblivious of the world around him." Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000, p. 51. For our purposes, disagreement over personalities is not as important as general agreement over the time period in which Sufism is seen as agreement over the time period in which Sufism emerged: the first half of the third/ninth century.

[132] The Inquisition of Ghulām Khalīl in 264/877 in which some 70 Sufis were imprisoned. See Rabia Harris, introduction to al-Qushayrī, *The Risalah, Principles of Sufism*, Rabia Harris (trans.) Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2002, pp. xxvi-xxix.

[133] Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 53-54.

[134] Melchert argues that al-Junayd was careful to write in an opaque fashion for the sake of throwing off potential critics. He was so successful in his efforts, according to Melchert, that a more elderly Sufi, Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907) was unable to understand follow discussions of Sufism, couched in al-Junayd's terminology. Knysh more or less agrees with Melchert on this point Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000, pp. 53-54. Vincent Cornell has suggested to me that this obscurity is due not to an intentional effort made by al-Junayd to render his ideas opaque to

an obscurer of Sufi doctrine, al-Junayd brought together the various strands of Sufi thought of his day into a single system with a unified terminology.[135]

Later Sufis continued al-Junayd's efforts, justifying the legitimacy of their doctrines and practices through appeal to Qurān and *Hadith*. One of these was Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), who asserted the place of Sufism among the religious sciences and even its primacy among them. In his *Kitāb al-lumaʿ fī-l-taṣawwuf* or *Book of Flashes in Sufism*, he refers to the *Hadith* that al-Ghazālī also uses according to which the scholars are considered the heirs of the prophets. He divides the scholars into three classes: *Hadith* scholars, jurists, and Sufis. He goes beyond placing Sufism on equal footing with other religious sciences. He calls the Sufis the moral exemplars of the Muslim community and the scholars with direct access to the divine truth: the elite (*al-khāṣṣa*) among the Muslims. He then goes on to discuss the states and stages of the Sufi path, define Sufi terminology, and criticize the mistakes of some Sufis in both doctrine and practice. He thus defines what Sufism consists of as a doctrine and marks the frontiers of acceptable Sufi practice and discourse—two essential steps for Sufism to emerge as a self-conscious discipline and religious science.[136]

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the uninitiated, but rather to the complexity of the ideas expressed. For a discussion of the complexities of mystical discourse in pagan, Christian and Islamic writings, see Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*.

[135] Arberry writes that al-Junayd was, "The most original and penetrating intellect among the Sufis of his time," who "took within his ranging vision the whole landscape of mystical speculation stretching below him, and, with an artist's eye brought it to comprehension and unity upon a single canvas." This synthesis of Sufi thought, "…formed the nucleus of all subsequent elaboration." A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950, p. 57.

[136] For the last two paragraphs, see Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2000, pp. 118-120.

Another critical development in identifying the Sufis as a group was the writing of collective biography, similar to that that existed for other groups such as Companions of the Prophet and hadith scholars. A pioneer in this field was Abū `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021), whose influential *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, or *Generations of the Sufis*, a collection of biographies and selections of sayings of 105 Sufis, appears to have been an abridgement of his much larger lost work *History of the Sufis*. This work influenced later writers of collective biographical works and hagiographies which played a role in the self-definition of the Sufis as a group.

A synthesis of the efforts of these and other Sufi writers was written by `Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072). His *Risāla*, or *Epistle*, completed in 438/1046, begins with a collection of biographies, continues with definitions of Sufi terminology, then gives a list of discussions of Sufi stages (*maqamāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*) and finishes with discussions of other characteristics of the Sufis. He goes so far as to assert that "God has made this group [the Sufis] the elite among his friends, caused them to excel all the rest of His servants except the prophets and messengers…."[137] This classic introduction to Sufism has held up to this day. With this work, Sufism was established as a mature science with its own technical terminology, established body of venerable forebears, parameters for acceptable and unacceptable practice, and bold representatives willing to assert its superiority over the other religious sciences.[138]

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[137] Al-Qushayrī, p. 2.

[138] Jawid A. Mojaddedi argues that al-Qushayrī wrote his *Risāla* with the express purpose of arguing for the full compatibility of Sufism with the *sharī`a*; "Legitimizing Sufism in al-Qushayri's *Risala*," *Studia Islamica*, vol. 90. 2000, pp. 37-50. He writes that al-Qushayrī created a diachronic community of Sufis

Al-Ghazālī's own biography demonstrates his predecessors' success in making Sufism acceptable as a religious science. He studied with Sufis in addition to jurists and theologians. His patron, Niẓām al-Mulk was inclined towards Sufism.[139] Al-Ghazālī's brother Aḥmad (d. 517/1123 or 520/1126) had a similar education and devoted himself to Sufism before al-Ghazālī did. When al-Ghazālī left teaching to wander the Levant and the Hijaz, this same brother took over his position at the Niẓamiyya *madrasa* in Baghdad.[140] After *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* earned al-Ghazālī a reputation as a Sufi, he was still invited to teach at the Niẓāmiyya in Nishapur by the Seljuk vizir, Fakhr al-Mulk (d. 500/1106) as well as being invited to return to the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad in 504/1110.[141]

Al-Ghazālī's achievement, then, was clearly not bringing Sufism into the mainstream or rendering it "orthodox;" Sufism was already widely accepted in Seljuk lands in al-Ghazālī's day. In the quote given above, al-Ghazālī declares that he has

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who acted in full accordance with the *sharī'a*, excluding the controversial al-Ḥallāj, and excluding mention of al-Basṭāmī's scandalous ecstatic utterances (*shaṭhiyyāt*); see pp. 42-45. He quotes al-Qushayrī as writing of the collective biography he offers, "The purpose of mentioning them in this place is to indicate that they are unanimous about the veneration of the shariah, [that they] are characterized by traveling the paths of religious discipline (*ṭuruq al-riyāḍa*), and remain steadfast in following the *sunna* without abandoning any religious customs (*ādāb diyāna*)." See p.p. 48-49. Thus, al-Qushayrī clearly undertook the task some scholars claim al-Ghazālī undertook in the *Iḥyā'*. Mojaddedi states that, "thematic chapters in the *Risāla* begin with citations from the texts of revelation (Qur'an and hadith), followed by al-Qushayrī's own introduction to the topic." See p. 50. Al-Ghazālī also follows this practice. Clearly, al-Ghazālī was significantly influenced by *al-Risāla*, but also sought to go beyond it. If al-Qushayrī argues for the harmony of Sufism with the *sharī'a*, and thus its legitimacy as a religious science, al-Ghazālī argues for its pre-eminence as a religious science.

[139] Erica Glassen, *Der Mittlere Weg*, p. 73.

[140] For a dissenting, if unsubstantiated, rejection of the claim that Aḥmad took over for Abū Ḥāmid, see Nasrullah Pourjawadi, "Ahmad et Muhammad al-Ghazālī: Influence réciproque," Ghazālī: *La Raison et le Miracle*, Paris: Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987, A. M. Turki (ed.), pp. 163-168.

[141] This is revealed in a letter that al-Ghazālī wrote to Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Qiwām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Isḥāq, turning down the position. Dorothea Krawulsky, *Briefe und Reden des Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī*, pp. 130-136.

brought out ideas implicit in the writings of his predecessors. Al-Sarrāj and al-Qushayrī had said that the Sufis are the elect of the scholars of religion. Al-Makkī had said that Sufism was the primary concern of the Prophet and the Companions and that its position was gradually usurped by the worldly sciences. Al-Ghazālī pushes these claims to their logical conclusion and insists that Sufism should be more than a respected science among the religious sciences: it is the central religious science that determines the place of all the others.

A comparison of the title of al-Ghazālī's work to that of al-Makkī's is instructive in this regard. The full title of al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb* is *The Nourishment of Hearts in the Beloved Works and the Description of the Way of the Sufi Aspirant (*al-murīd*) to the Stage of Divine Unity.* It is a work of Sufism addressed to a Sufi audience. Al-Ghazāī, however, takes pains to avoid overtly identifying his project with that of the Sufis, even if his authorities, influences and subject matter betray his true loyalties. His otherworldly science is not the domain of a faction within Islam, but rather the science that was the primary pursuit of the Prophet and the Companions that has subsequently been eclipsed. He insists that this science must again become the pinnacle of the hierarchy of religious sciences, and determine the correct practice of all of the other sciences. In this lay the "revival" of the religious sciences.

And indeed, later generations recognized the broader authority of the *Revival* and its mission to reorder the hierarchy of the religious sciences as a whole. Al-Ghazālī's first biographer, `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī (d. 529/1138) says that anyone who studies the *Ihyā'* or one of its synopses such as *al-Arba`īn*, "will know the place of man vis-à-vis the

disciplines (*funūn*) of *'ilm*."[142] Al-Subkī (d. 771/1369) gives one of al-Ghazālī's honorific titles as, "he who gathered the fragments of the sciences".[143] Al-Ghazālī claimed authority over all of the religious sciences in the name of Sufism.

Al-Ghazālī's innovation lies, then, in insisting on a program that is only—or mainly—implied in the works of other Sufi authors.[144] Al-Makkī put his *Book of Science* at the end of *The Nourishment of Hearts*, where it serves as a somewhat disordered, after-the-fact justification for the practices discussed in the first thirty chapters. Al-Ghazālī begins *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* with a *Book of Science* to serve as a carefully conceived statement of, and argument for, the agenda of the work that follows. If the systematizers of Sufism had succeeded in winning acceptance in the mainstream of Islamic thought, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* represents a Sufi bid for supremacy among the religious sciences. Far from being a meek expression of an orthodox Sufism, al-Ghazālī's greatest work is a bold, polemical attack on the leading religious sciences of his day and an assertion of the primacy of Sufism described in terms that could be read as tinged with philosophy. It would be surprising to look back on the reception of the work and discover that *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* had not provoked controversy.

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[142] "*Man ta'ammalahā 'alima maḥall al-rajul min funūn al-'ilm*." Reproduced in al-Subkī, vol. 6, p. 206.

[143] "*jāmi' ashtāt al-'ulūm*," Al-Subkī, vol. 6, p. 191.

[144] This was certainly not his only innovation in the *Iḥyā'* and I do not mean to suggest that it was the only innovation to which al-Ghazālī was referring in the quote cited above.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIVAL IN ACTION: AL-GHAZĀLĪ IN NISHAPUR

While the *Iḥyā'* was being consigned to the flames in the Maghrib at the western

extremity of the Islamic world in 503/1109, al-Ghazālī and his thought were the subject

of a controversy in Khorasan, at the eastern extremity of the Islamic world. The stakes

were at least as high in Khorasan, if for no other reason than that al-Ghazālī was present

there and had to answer the charges brought against him.

After abruptly leaving his post at the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad in 488/1095 and

wandering the Levant and Hijaz for two years, al-Ghazālī spent nine years in Ṭūs, in

Khorasan, quietly pursuing his agenda of reviving the religious sciences. His return to

teaching in the nearby city of Nishapur in 499/1106 touched off a storm of controversy.

Bitter enemies set aside their differences and united to oppose him. Various aspects of

his doctrines, stemming from disparate works, were debated and condemned within

scholarly circles. Other charges were made against him more publicly and *fatwā*s were

issued against him. The campaign culminated with al-Ghazālī's denunciation before the

Seljuk "King of the East" (*malik al-sharq*), Sanjar.

Vague references to this conflict exist in well-known sources but lack the detail

needed for a fuller narrative. There are, however, two rather neglected sources that help

flesh out the details of this controversy: al-Ghazālī's Persian letters, which seem to date

exclusively from after his return to Khorasan in 490/1097, and his response to his critics

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in *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'*. Once the information found in these and the better known

sources is assembled, a clear picture of this tumultuous period emerges, which sheds light

in turn on the reception of al-Ghazālī's thought in other regions. Connections between

the Khorasani controversy and al-Ghazālī's critics elsewhere will be explored in

subsequent chapters.

Hints of Controversy in *al-Siyāq li-ta'rīkh Naysābūr* and *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*

Vague discussions of this campaign against al-Ghazālī are found in biographies of

him and in two of his works stemming from this period: *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, and

Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa-l-zandaqa. When considered together, they leave no

doubt that a controversy arose when al-Ghazālī came to Nishapur; they also yield some

unique information about what was at stake. This section will consider evidence from

al-Ghazālī's biography and from his book *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*. Evidence from

Fayṣal al-tafriqa is less abundant and informative and will be considered along with

evidence from al-Ghazālī's Persian letters in the next section.

The first biography of al-Ghazālī, and the one that provided the kernel of

subsequent biographies, is that of his contemporary and acquaintance `Abd al-Ghāfir al-

Fārisī (d. 529/1135) in his *al-Siyāq li-ta'rīkh Naysābūr*.[1] This account gives evidence of

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[1] This study relies on a full reproduction of `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī's biography of al-Ghazālī included in the biography of al-Ghazālī in Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi`iyya al-kubrā*, vol. 6, pp. 204-214. The portion of `Abd al-Ghāfir's work containing al-Ghazālī's biography has been lost. Although `Abd al-Ghāfir was a contemporary of al-Ghazālī and indeed met him, not all of the information that he gives is accurate. He writes, for example, that al-Ghazālī went on pilgrimage immediately upon leaving Baghdad (p. 206). By al-Ghazālī's own account in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, however, his declaration that he was leaving Baghdad to go to on pilgrimage was a ruse and he in fact went first to the Levant. He went on pilgrimage at the end of his second year of wandering, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī; see *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, in *Majmū` rasā'il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, 7 vols., Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyya, 1997, vol. 7, p. 61. `Abd al-

criticism beginning with al-Ghazālī's return to teaching in Nishapur in 499/1106. Before

this point his works circulated without provoking opposition.[2] But once he answered the

summons of Fakhr al-Mulk to return to teaching at the Niẓāmiyya of Nishapur, `Abd al-

Ghāfir writes of the frequency with which, "…his staff was struck with opposition,

attacks on him, refutation of what he did not or did, and slander and condemnation of

him."   Those responsible for these attacks are described as "confused men"

(*mukhalliṭūn*), but no hint is given as to their identity.[3]

Some light is thrown on the nature of their critiques by a later passage in the

biography, which almost certainly refers to the same events. In it `Abd al-Ghāfir lists

three objections to al-Ghazālī's writings: imperfections in his grammar; use of

expressions in Persian regarded as ugly (*mustabsha`a*) in his "*kīmiyā' al-sa`āda, wa-l-*

`ulūm;"[4] and his commentaries (*sharḥ*) on some sūras of the Qur'ān and other issues

(*masā'il*) in ways not in keeping with the prescriptions of the law (*marāsim al-shar*`) nor

with "the exoteric aspects of the tenets of Islam" (*wa ẓawāhir mā `alayhi qawā`id al-*

Ghāfir also claims that al-Ghazālī spent ten years wandering in the Middle East, while Dorothea Krawulsky has demonstrated on the basis of al-Ghazālī's Persian letters that he returned to Ṭūs much earlier than previously thought. See Dorothea Krawulsky, *Briefe und Reden des Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī*, p. 54. In addition to factual errors in `Abd al-Ghāfir's account, al-Subkī himself questions whether the whole of the entry that he reproduced was in fact written by `Abd al-Ghāfir, as I have pointed out above (Chapter I, n. 26). I will return to this point below. For a comparison of data given in ten biographies of al-Ghazālī, see Krawulsky, p. 51.

[2] Al-Subkī, vol. 6, p. 207.

[3] *Wa-kam quri`a `aṣāhu bi-l-khilāf, wa-l-wuqū` fīhi, wa-l-ṭa`n fīmā yadharuhu wa-ya'tīhi, wa-l-si`āya bihi, wa-l-tashnī` `alayhi.* Al-Subkī, vol. 6, p. 208.

[4] I do not know what *al-`ulūm* refers to. One would think that it is a reference to the *Iḥyā'* were it not referred to as a work containing objectionable Persian phrases. Perhaps it was simply an error in the manuscript.

islām).[5] The third of these charges is the most serious, and in defending al-Ghazālī, `Abd al-Ghāfir seems to suggest that it was the basis of a campaign against him.

`Abd al-Ghāfir writes that it would be more correct to say that al-Ghazālī should not have written such commentaries, because common men (*al-ʿawāmm*), might not be secure in their understanding of the creed, could be led astray by them, "and attribute this to the statements of the schools of the Ancients (*madhāhib al-awāʾil*: i.e., the Greek philosophers)."[6] But he insists that there was nothing incorrect in al-Ghazālī's commentaries, given that the law (*al-sharʿ*) points symbolically (*ramaza*) to most of what he discussed, "and Sufis (*mashāyikh al-ṭarīqa*) point to these matters both symbolically and openly." Therefore, he concludes, "[i]t is not necessary to relate this to anything other than what accords [with the law] and it is not appropriate that a person rely on it for the sake of refutation if he is able to demonstrate a valid meaning for it that accords with fundamental principles."[7]

It seems reasonable to conclude that this discussion relates to the attacks on al-Ghazālī mentioned earlier in the biography, and that both passages describe a campaign

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[5] Al-Subkī, vol. 6, p. 211. A further objection is also raised, if indirectly, namely al-Ghazālī's use of weak hadith. It is stated in the biography that al-Ghazālī studied the hadith collections of Bukhārī and Muslim at the end of his life and that he would have gone on to preeminence in this field if death had not cut short his study. This is almost certainly intended as apology for al-Ghazālī's notorious use of weak hadith in the *Iḥyāʾ*. As I have pointed out above (Chapter I, n. 26), al-Subkī notes that this account has been inserted after the notice of al-Ghazālī's death, which is unusual, leading him to conclude that this story is a later interpolation; al-Subkī, p. 215. I agree with his assessment. The three points above also come after the notice of al-Ghazālī's death, however, they do not belong to the account of al-Ghazālī's life, but rather to the assessment of his writings. Assessing the writings of a subject after concluding his biography is not uncommon, as al-Subkī's own biography of al-Ghazālī demonstrates.

[6] Al-Subkī, vol. 6, p. 212.

[7] Al-Subkī, vol. 6, p. 212. *Fa-lā yajib ḥamluhu illā ʿalā mā yuwāfiq wa-lā yanbaghī an yataʿallaq bihi fī al-radd ʿalayhi mutalliq, idha amkanahu an yubayyin lahu wajh-an fī ṣiḥḥa yuwāfiq al-uṣūl.*

against him, focused on, among other things, symbolic/esoteric interpretations of the Qur'ān and other matters that his critics found outside the bounds of the law and dogma. Furthermore, though `Abd al-Ghāfir mentions the attribution of al-Ghazālī's thought to the "Ancients" as a hypothetical possibility, this can be read as at least a suggestion that some accused him of philosophical influence.

This possibility finds support in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*. The *Munqidh* is al-Ghazālī's most frequently studied and translated work, and has usually been taken to be a straightforward account of his intellectual development; indeed, many treat the *Munqidh* as the definitive exposition of al-Ghazālī's thought.[8] There are, however, two studies that suggest another understanding of the *Munqidh*, recasting both its agenda and the context in which it was written. Eric Ormsby has drawn attention to al-Ghazālī's use of his discussion of the philosophers to respond to his own critics who accuse him of transmitting philosophical ideas.[9] This passage reads as follows:

> A certain faction (*ṭā'ifà*) of those whose minds are not firmly grounded in the sciences, whose vision has not been opened to the furthestmost reaches of the schools of thought (*aqṣā ghāyāt al-madhāhib*), have objected to some words dispersed in my writings on the secrets of the sciences of religion (*`ulūm al-dīn*). They have alleged that these words are from things said by the Ancients (*min kalām al-awā'il*, i.e. the Greek Philosophers), although some of them were born of my own reflection—it is not unlikely that a hoof should fall where another has trodden! Some of them are found in books of scripture, and the sense of most of them (*ma`nāhu*) is found in the books of Sufism. And even assuming that none of these words were found except in the books of the philosophers, these

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[8] The most thorough of such studies, and, for many, still the defining work on al-Ghazālī's thought, is W. Montgomery Watt's *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī*, Edinburgh.

[9] Eric Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute over al-Ghazālī's* "Best of all Possible Worlds," Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 209.

statements are rational in themselves, supported by proof, and none of them diverge from the Book and the Sunna; so why is it necessary to forswear and relinquish [them]? And if we were to open this door and took to repudiating every truth arrived at previously by the mind of one whose thought is false, we would have to repudiate much of the truth. We would be forced to repudiate all of the verses of the Qur'ān, the reports of the Prophet, the accounts of the forebears and the words of the wise and the Sufis. The author of the "Brethren of Purity" refers to them in his book, citing them for support, gradually drawing the hearts of fools by means of them to his falsehood. This would degenerate to the point that the agents of falsehood would wrest the truth from our hands by putting it down in their books.[10]

This defense against the charge of a covert philosophical agenda is not a central part of the *Munqidh*; rather, it is presented as an aside at the end of al-Ghazālī's discussion of the philosophers, the second of the four schools of the "seekers" (*sālikūn*). However, given the correspondence between this passage and the charges of philosophy implied in `Abd al-Ghāfir's biography, this apparent digression takes on a greater significance in the work as a whole. Furthermore, this is not the only passage that suggests the *Munqidh* may be more than a simple account al-Ghazālī's journey through the major schools of thought of his day.

Ormsby writes that the *Munqidh* as a whole can be seen as having an apologetic purpose. Recalling Ibn Rushd's oft-cited claim that al-Ghazālī tries to be all things to all people,[11] Ormsby suggests that, in the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī attempts "…to show a conscious and consistent pattern to his life, to portray even his doubt and breakdown as

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[10] *Al-Munqidh*, pp. 45-46. The translation is my own. For the likely identity of the passage that al-Ghazālī defends here against the charge of philosophical influence, see n. 69 below.

[11] See p. 67 above for this quote from *Faṣl al-maqāl fī mā bayn al-sharī`a wa-l-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl*.

meaningful episodes within a significant order of experience."[12] This, he claims, is a

response to critics who have charged that al-Ghazālī is "…an inconsistent, elusive and

mercurial thinker—a chameleon who assumed the coloration of his immediate

intellectual milieu."[13]

Indeed, there is something too neat about al-Ghazālī's self-presentation. At the

end of the *Munqidh*, he portrays himself as having arrived decisively at the school of

Sufism. However, in *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*, as we have seen in Chapter I, he declares his

allegiance not to Sufism, but to the less specific "otherworldly science," writing of the

Sufis sympathetically, but as a third party. A more complex view of the *Munqidh* begins

to emerge: far from being the simplest and clearest presentation of al-Ghazālī's thought,

al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl seems to be a carefully crafted, subtly rhetorical work harboring

a latent agenda in addition to its overt aim of calling its reader to follow the path to Truth

as al-Ghazālī has.

Josef van Ess, in his re-examination of the *Munqidh*, reaches conclusions similar

to Ormsby's, writing that, "…there is no doubt that the *Munqidh* is nothing but a grand

apology."[14] Where Ormsby suggests that al-Ghazālī is addressing a general perception

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[12] Eric Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in al-Ghazālī's *al-Mundiqh min al-ḍalāl*,"in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams*, Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little eds., Leiden: Brill, 1991, p. 147.

[13] Ormsby, "Taste," p. 146.

[14] Josef van Ess, "Quelques remarques sur le *Munqid min aḍ-ḍalāl*," *Ghazālī: La raison et le miracle: Table Ronde UNESCO 9-10 décembre 1985*, Paris: Éditions Maisonneuve et Larose, 1987, p. 63. This is an insightful article and deserves to be republished in a less obscure venue. In addition to the points that I cite below, van Ess shows that the "four school" approach that al-Ghazālī uses to account for the epistemological options of his day was used at the latest in 494/1101 by `Umar Khayyām, whom al-Ghazālī knew and from whom he likely adopted the schema (pp. 65-66). A close reading of the *Munqidh*, building

that his thought and career have been erratic, van Ess specifies: "[In the *Munqidh*]

Ghazālī explains and justifies his taking up teaching again."[15] This is an astute

observation. In his introduction, al-Ghazālī lists among the questions that he will answer

in his work "…what turned me away from disseminating knowledge in Baghdad in spite

of the abundance of students, and what induced my return to [teaching in] Nishapur after

a lengthy period."[16] And indeed, he returns to this matter at the end of the *Munqidh*.

Van Ess notes that `Abd al-Ghāfir's biography also confronts al-Ghazālī's decision to

abruptly abandon his post in Baghdad and his decision, eleven years later, to return to

teaching. The two accounts are similar enough that van Ess suggests that al-Ghazālī first

recounted the story told in the *Munqidh* to `Abd al-Ghāfir, and that `Abd al-Ghāfir may

have been the anonymous friend to whom al-Ghazālī then addresses his book.[17]

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on the insights of Van Ess and Ormsby, would yield a very different understanding of the much loved, much cited, and much translated text. I hope to undertake such a study in the future, re-examining several of al-Ghazālī's later works in light of the findings of the current study.

[15] van Ess, "Quelques," p. 63.

[16] *Munqidh*, p. 24.

[17] Josef van Ess, "Quelques," p. 63. The parallels are certainly striking on the level of broad rhetorical objective and even wording. Both `Abd al-Ghāfir and al-Ghazālī refer to the ascription of philosophical influence, using the same term for philosophers: "*al-awā'il*," "the Ancients," not *al-falāsifa*, or *al-qudamā'*, the term for "Ancients" used by Ibn Rushd in *al-Faṣl al-maqāl*, see *Averroës: Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory*, p. 4 (bilingual edition). In the passage of the *Munqidh* cited above, we see al-Ghazālī claim, like `Abd al-Ghāfir, that objectionable passages in al-Ghazālī's work are found in both scripture and the writings of the Sufis.  `Abd al-Ghāfir, too, tries indirectly to justify al-Ghazālī's return to teaching, emphasizing that the vain, arrogant, and fame-seeking man he had known, and who taught in Baghdad, was gone, and the Ghazālī who had returned to teach in Nishapur had truly reformed his character and seemed by comparison like one who had awakened from madness (al-Subkī, p. 208). What explains these parallels? It seems unlikely that `Abd al-Ghāfir based his entry on the *Munqidh*. If he had, he would have written that al-Ghazālī's first destination upon leaving Baghdad was the Levant, as the *Munqidh* states, not Mecca (the itinerary of the *Munqidh* is repeated in one of al-Ghazālī's letters); Dorothea Krawulsky *Briefe und Reden*, p. 147. Two possibilities remain. One, suggested by van Ess, is that al-Ghazālī first presented a version of the narrative of the *Munqidh* to `Abd al-Ghāfir during one of the late-night conversations that al-Fārisī describes (al-Subkī, p. 209). The other (and they are not mutually

Van Ess is better able to contextualize the *Munqidh* by reading it in light of the information contained in al-Ghazālī's Persian letters. Specifically, he points to the jurists of Nishapur denouncing al-Ghazālī to Sanjar, the ruler of the eastern part of the Seljuk Empire, for transgressions found in several of his writings, including the *Munqidh*. As van Ess's main concern is a re-appraisal of the *Munqidh*, he limits himself to a few remarks about these events, which are certainly the ones to which both `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī's biography and *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* refer. In order to spell out the scope of this controversy—who was involved, when and where it occurred, and what was at stake—we shall now turn to these letters, which offer both a description of his activities in Ṭūs and his return to teaching, as well as an account of the controversy he encountered in Nishapur. Yet the letters tell only part of the story. A largely unexamined source, al-Ghazālī's own *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'* offers a fuller understanding of the doctrinal points contested in this controversy.

Al-Ghazālī's Years in Ṭūs and his Return to Teaching in Nishapur

Al-Ghazālī's Persian letters contain abundant detail on the controversy alluded to in `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī's biography and *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*.[18] However, they must be used with caution. Much of the description of the controversy is contained not in

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exclusive) is that al-Fārisī had the same circumstances, criticisms and even written refutations in mind when writing his biography that al-Ghazālī had in mind when writing the *Munqidh*.

[18] For this chapter I have consulted the German translation of the letters by Dorothea Krawulsky, *Briefe und Reden*. The study contained in her introduction has also proven useful. Krawulsky only rarely gives the Persian for words that she translates. In some cases I have consulted the Persian and was able to find clearly recognizable Arabic cognates which I have given in parentheses. `Abbās Iqbāl (ed.), *Makātīb-i fārsī-i Ġazzālī ba-nām-i faḍā'il al-anām min rasā'il Ḥujjat al-Islām*, Tehran, 1333.

al-Ghazālī's letters themselves, but in background information and commentary provided by the compiler of the letters. When the accounts of the two authors are compared, several contradictions emerge.

As we shall see below, there are many instances in which the compiler has misidentified the letters he introduces and in which his account of the precipitating events differs from the accounts al-Ghazālī provides in the letters. The editor of one of the editions of the Persian letters, `Abbās Iqbāl, points out that the compiler mentions "ties of kinship" as one of the things that compelled him to act to preserve al-Ghazālī's letters. Iqbāl has further analyzed the compiler's language and concluded that he could not have been too far removed in time from al-Ghazālī, leading him to speculate that the complier may have been his grandson.[19] The content of his commentary also suggests a relatively short distance in time. In one passage, for example, the compiler describes asking others for assistance in providing the context for one of al-Ghazālī's letters. The account they give is inconsistent with the letter and cannot be correct, but does recall certain actual events in al-Ghazālī's life.[20] Here it seems that the compiler draws his information from an older generation with dim memories of Ḥujjat al-Islām, perhaps men who knew an older al-Ghazālī in their youth or men one generation removed from al-Ghazālī. It also seems likely that the compiler was a Ṭūsī, which would make the suggestion that he was

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[19] Krawulsky reports this observation of Iqbāl, *Briefe und Reden*, p. 9, which refers to a passage in the compiler's introduction to the collection as a whole, *Briefe und Reden*, p. 62.

[20] This is a letter written to the father of one of al-Ghazālī's students that the compiler identifies as a qāḍī from the Maghrib. This is clearly not the case, but the account that he gives recalls the story of another of al-Ghazāī's students from former days, namely the Andalusi Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, who will be discussed in chapter III. For a detailed discussion of the letter, see n. 61 below.

a relative of al-Ghazālī's plausible, though there seems to be no evidence to point to his specifically being a grandson.[21]

Despite the compiler's apparent distance from events, reconciling the contradictions between the commentary and the letters is not a simple matter of accepting al-Ghazālī's account and dismissing the compiler's. There are also instances in which al-Ghazālī seems to leave out certain details and perhaps misrepresent the facts in order to present his case more sympathetically. Reconciling these contradictions requires closely reading both accounts, determining whether the compiler's version is plausible, whether al-Ghazālī would have had a motive for a slightly different presentation, and whether other sources shed any light on the question, then coming to as well-informed a determination on the likely course of events as possible. In what follows, I will attempt to reconstruct al-Ghazālī's period of seclusion in Ṭūs and his return to public life in Nishapur by collating the portrayal of this period in the letters themselves with that of the compiler and occasionally referring to the biography of `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, and *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa-l-zandaqa*.

When al-Ghazālī arrived in Nishapur in Dhū' al-Qa`da 499/July 1106, he was coming from Ṭūs, where he had been living since at least 490-91/1097-98.[22] He often

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[21] It is not possible to claim this with certainty, but especially in his comments on letters pertaining directly to the controversy, he seems to write from a Ṭūsī perspective, writing, for example, about the celebrations of the Ṭūsīs when al-Ghazālī returned from having successfully defended himself at the court of Sanjar; *Briefe und Reden*, p. 79.

[22] This contradicts the account of `Abd-al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, who writes that al-Ghazālī stayed in Syria for ten years after he left Baghdād; al-Subkī, p. 206. As I pointed out in n. 1 above, he also reports that al-Ghazālī performed the pilgrimage before going to the Levant, which contradicts al-Ghazālī's own account in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*. He was wrong on this detail of the years between Baghdad and Nishapur as well. The *Munqidh* is not explicit about the date, but states that, after his time in the Levant and the

refers to his time in Ṭūs as time spent in seclusion (*'uzla, khalwa*), but it was not time

devoted exclusively to solitary spiritual exercises. Al-Ghazālī tells us that he was able to

devote himself to these practices only sporadically because of the distractions of "the

events of the age, concerns of the children, and the necessities of earning a living."[23] The

phrase "events of the age" certainly refers to a host of issues, as Ṭūs had its share of

misfortunes in this period: drought and extreme cold led to famine,[24] there was political

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pilgrimage, al-Ghazālī returned to his homeland (*waṭan*) in order to look after his children. Here, he writes, he spent ten years devoting what free time he had to spiritual exercises before returning to teaching in Nishapur; *al-Munqidh*, pp. 61-62. If "homeland" is taken to be Ṭūs, and if he left his position in Baghdad in Rajab 488/July 1095 and spent two years in the Levant and the Hijaz before returning to Ṭūs, then that would indeed leave approximately ten years before he was called to teach in Nishapur in 499/1106. That he was in Ṭūs in 490/1097 at the latest is suggested by a letter that he wrote to Kiyā Mujīr al-dawla `Alī ibn Ḥusayn of Ardastān. In the letter, al-Ghazālī congratulates him on his appointment as Sanjar's wazīr in 490/1097 (Krawulsky gives the common era year as 1096, which is possible, but only 13 days of 490 H. fell in 1096 C.E.). Though the date of his dismissal from this office is disputed, it seems likely that it occurred in the same year. Al-Ghazālī takes the opportunity of the congratulatory letter to request better treatment for Ṭūs, and it is clear that he is writing from that city. *Briefe und Reden*, intro. pp. 32-33 and pp. 143-150, esp. p. 149. However, his student Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī writes of meeting al-Ghazālī for the first time in Baghdad in Jumāda II, 490/May-June, 1097, and of studying with him long enough to read all of his works with him, to have heard him read from the *Iḥyā'*, and to form enough of a bond with him to ask him for a *fatwā* in support of the Almoravids' seizure of power from the *ṭā'ifa* kings, and a letter further elaborating on the matter and recommending Ibn al-`Arabī and his father to Yūsuf b. Tashfīn.  Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, *al-`Awāṣim min al-qawāṣim*, `Ammār Ṭalibī (ed.), Maktaba Dār al-Turāth, Cairo, 1997, p. 24. It is impossible to say with certainty how long Abū Bakr studied with al-Ghazālī, but it would seem to have been at least a month or two. At the time when al-Ghazālī wrote his *fatwā*, `Abd Allāh Ibn al-`Arabi, Abū Bakr's father, had not yet received an *'ahd* from the Abbasid Caliph for the Almoravid Sultan Yūsuf b. Tashfīn that he, `Abd Allāh, had requested.  The *'ahd* was finally issued on 12 Rajab, 491/15 July 1098.  Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, *Kitāb shawāhid al-jilla* reproduced in *Thalātha nuṣūṣ `arabiyya 'an al-barbar fī al-gharb al-islāmī*, Muḥammad Ya`lá (ed.), Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas-Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, Madrid, 1996, p. 293. All we can say with certainty is that the letter had to have been written before then. Adding to the confusion is al-Ghazālī's statement in the letter that he is pressed for time as he is about to leave, not for Khurasān, but for the Hijaz. Perhaps he had to lie about his destination on his second exit from Baghdad as he did on his first; or maybe he did, in fact, go first to the Hijaz. The journey from Baghdad to Khorasan, possibly undertaken with his family, must have taken at least several months. So it is possible that Krawulsky's dating of the letter in question is slightly off and that al-Ghazālī arrived in Ṭūs at some point in 491/1098.

[23] *Munqidh*, p. 62.

[24] See Krawulsky's introduction, *Briefe und Reden*, p. 27. For the effects in Ṭūs itself, see Briefe *und Reden*, p. 65.

unrest,[25] and the injustice of a tyrannical official led al-Ghazālī, apparently voluntarily, to leave the city for a year.[26] But al-Ghazālī was concerned with more than the harsh physical and political conditions of Ṭūs; he was also deeply concerned with the spiritual state of his age. His letters reveal that al-Ghazālī's time in Ṭūs was also spent actively promoting the agenda of his manifesto, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*.

This promotion took many forms. The most general of these lay simply in infusing all of these letters with the spirit and ideas of the *Revival*. The German translator of the letters, Dorothea Krawulsky, has filled her notes with instances of discussions drawn from the *Iḥyāʾ*.[27]

There are other ways in which al-Ghazālī furthered his agenda more actively. For one, he recruited younger scholars to his cause. In one letter, he addresses a young acquaintance who has just completed the study of *fiqh* and *belles lettres*. He tells him that he should not be satisfied with having fulfilled the collective duty (*farḍ kifāya*) of studying *fiqh*, but should go on to fulfill the individual duty (*farḍ ʿayn*) of pursuing the

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[25] There were ongoing battles between various contenders to power in Seljuk lands as well as assassinations carried out by Bāṭinites; see Krawulsky's introduction, *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 27-29. For political unrest in Ṭūs, see *Briefe und Reden*, p. 149. The letter is quite vague, referring to self-interested and conflicting words that have won over the notables of the region because of greed and stubbornness and which have led to difficulties and deadlock. The letter ends by stating the common desire of all in the region that a universally trusted person be sent back to them. Al-Ghazālī suggests that if the recipient of the letter, the newly named *wazīr* Mujīr al-Dawla, complies with his requests, the prayers of the pious of Ṭūs on his behalf will be secured.

[26] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 152. Al-Ghazālī writes that he left Ṭūs to be rid of the sight of a cruel tyrant to whom nothing is holy. After a year, unspecified necessity forced him to return and he found the injustice as he had left it and that the torture of the people had been multiplied. There is little further information that would allow for speculation about who this tyrant could be, where al-Ghazālī spent that year, or what other factors might have led him to leave the city for a year.

[27] "In their content, the letters and discourses are closely related to al-Ghazālī's masterpiece, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*." *Briefe und Reden*, p. 11.

highest of the sciences: *'ilm al-ākhira*. He tells the young man that *fiqh*, which follows

the Quarter of Acts of Worship (*rub' al-'ibādāt*) is the norm and measure for those

occupied with worldly sciences and the common people. This clear reference to the first

quarter of the *Iḥyā'* implies al-Ghazālī's assumption that the addressee of the letter is

familiar with the work.[28]

In addition to recruiting young scholars to the cause of reviving the religious

sciences, al-Ghazālī also used his influence to promote like-minded scholars to prominent

positions. In a letter to Fakhr al-Mulk (d. 500/1106), *wazīr* of Sanjar, al-Ghazālī writes

that, though one might think that a judgeship is a position that deals with worldly affairs

and should therefore be given to a worldly candidate, the opposite is the case. Since a

judge sits in the place of the Prophet, it is essential to appoint a candidate who will be

worthy of this position and will do nothing in his office that would shame him on the day

of judgment, i.e. a pious man. Al-Ghazālī has just such a man in mind for a position in

Jurjān, a man without parallel in piety and exemplary in having transformed his life.[29]

A later letter to Ḍiyā' al-Mulk, *wazīr* of Sultan Muhammad, from the year

500/1107 also refers to a man from Jurjān, almost certainly the same man described in the

letter to Fakhr al-Mulk. This is al-Ghazālī's friend and companion of 20 years, Ibrāhīm-i

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[28] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 186-189. The recipient of the letter is one Abū al-Maḥāsin Mas'ūd b. Muḥammad ibn Ghānim, who was born in Nishapur on Rabī' II 464/1071 and grew up in Ṭūs. His father Muḥammad b. Ghānim was one of the court poets of Niẓām al-Mulk. Mas'ūd wrote a book praising Mu'īn al-Mulk, the deputy *wazīr* of Sanjar. He lived in Heart and died there in Rabī' I 553/1158. As we know the birth date of the recipient, 464/1071, we can fairly safely assume that he completed his studies before al-Ghazālī's return to teaching in 499/1106, at which point he would have been 35. *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 38-39.

[29] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 105-107.

Sabbāk (d. 513/1119),[30] who, al-Ghazālī writes, accompanied him from Ṭūs, through Nishapur, Baghdad, Syria, and the Hijāz. Having been al-Ghazālī's companion during the crisis in Baghdad and the years during which the *Iḥyāʾ* was written, and having earned al-Ghazālī's favorable description, it is clear that he would have been a fellow-traveler in the spiritual sense as well. Promoting the career of a close friend could simply be a matter of personal loyalty, but al-Ghazālī is also clear in arguing for his qualifications in terms of his scrupulousness (*waraʿ*) and piety (*taqwā*).[31] Promoting Ibrāhīm-i Sabbāk would advance a friend but also a comrade.[32] As the letter to Fakhr al-Mulk makes clear, al-Ghazālī's larger aim is to promote Otherworldlyscholars to religious posts such as that of *qāḍī*.

Beyond recruiting and promoting initiates, al-Ghazālī also sought to broaden his audience by distilling the prescriptions of the *Iḥyāʾ* into smaller tracts and letters, and by writing *Kīmiyāʾ al-saʿāda* to reach an audience literate in Persian but not Arabic. Although he clearly understood that the elite he addressed would not follow his example of leaving positions of power and prestige for a life of piety and spiritual cultivation, he did hope to spur them on to modest efforts in this respect. He seems to have been a sort

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[30] Krawulsky cites Thābitī, the editor of one of the editions of the letters, who claims that the two must be identical. She further notes that two death dates are given in the sources. On the basis of the second letter dating from 500 in which he is mentioned by name, she is able to rule out the earlier death date of 492/1098, and confirm the later date of 513/1119. *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 26-27.

[31] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Makātīb-i fārsī-i Ghazzālī*, p. 33.

[32] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 116-117.

of spiritual advisor to some Seljuk officials in this period.[33] In this capacity, he worked

to spread the influence and prestige of the revival he advocated, to gain the patronage of

prominent officials, and also to influence officials in both worldly and

otherworldlyaffairs.

A striking example of this occurs in a letter written to Fakhr al-Mulk between

490/1097 and 500/1106, which reveals a mentor-disciple relationship between the two

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[33] When reading one of al-Ghazālī's lengthy admonitions of a Seljuk official, it is striking to consider how little resemblance the lives led by his addressees bore to the life that he admonished them to lead. Consider the following advice to Tāj al-Ma`ālī Abū al-Qāsim `Alī Mu`ayyad al-Dīn Mu`īn al-Mulk, a member of the influential `Amīdī family of Khorasan, *wazīr*'s representative from 490/1096-511/1117, first under Fakhr al-Mulk and then under his son, Muḥammad b. Fakhr al-Mulk:

> Salvation in the Other World was attached to two conditions: abstaining from seeking grandeur and refraining from evildoing. Everyone who strives after command or authority, whose striving after grandeur is plain, and everyone who devotes himself to entertainment, the pleasures of youth and people of no understanding, he has been marked by evildoing. To hope for salvation without fulfilling its requirements is pure arrogance. And to deny that these are the conditions for salvation is to accuse the Qur'ān of lying. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 161.

It is difficult to take such a passage at face value when it is addressed to a man who came from a prominent family in the administration of the Seljuks, and who himself went on to a very successful career in various administrative offices, propelled, no doubt, by the very ambition for glory, authority and command that al-Ghazālī condemns. If al-Ghazālī was aware that this was how matters stood, why would he bother writing such a passage? More puzzling still is the question of why rulers devoted to acquiring power solicited such condemnations of their lives and pursuits? And yet, again and again in his letters, we find al-Ghazālī giving advice to rulers that, if it were taken, would have to entail their leaving office. And in fact we find evidence that such admonitions were expected of him. In an address to Sanjar, al-Ghazālī writes that discourses of Muslim Scholars before the *Malik-i Islām* conventionally consist of four parts: 1) prayer, 2) praise, 3) advice, 4) asking that a wish be granted. Al-Ghazālī's advice, in this instance, is like his advice to rulers in other letters: turn away from the world and towards God. *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 68-69. Other anecdotes also support the view that such royal admonition was a convention. When al-Qushayrī and al-Juwaynī appeared before Niẓām al-Mulk, he rose to greet them. When the Sufi al-Fāramadhī came to him, Niẓām al-Mulk actually ceded his chair to him. When asked why, he said that religious scholars (*ulamā'*) offer obsequious praise (also part of the formula that al-Ghazālī cites above!) while al-Fāramadhī openly upbraids him for his mistakes and tyrannical measures. For a statesman who wants to lead a righteous life, it is necessary to spend time in the vicinity of pious men. See Erika Glassen, *Der Mittlere Weg: Studien zur Religionspolitik und Religiosität der späteren Abbasiden-Zeit*, Wiesbaden: Fritz Steiner Verlag, 1981, pp. 73-74. These are interesting words from a man who came to embody *Realpolitik* to later generations. It is tempting to dismiss such admonitions as empty formalities. And yet, as we shall see below, al-Ghazālī exerted real effort in spreading his doctrine among the ranks of the Seljuk administration, indicating that he did not see his admonitions as mere gestures. Perhaps grand admonitions were necessary to achieve minor victories. In the letter quoted above, al-Ghazālī closes with a more realistic suggestion: Mu`īn al-Mulk should, at the very least, give up wine. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 163.

men.[34] In many letters that al-Ghazālī wrote to officials, the lengthy admonitions that make up the majority of the letter seem to be a requisite prelude to a request coming at the end of the letter, sometimes for intervention for the people of Ṭūs, sometimes for help for a friend, sometimes to encourage the donation of alms. In this instance, there is no such request; the letter was written solely to provide instruction to a disciple.

The opening address shows that there was a good deal of intimacy between al-Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Mulk. He writes that honorific addresses such as *amīr*, Sword (*ḥusām*), and Order (*niẓām*) are mere titles, and quotes a *Hadith* that says, "I and the believers of my community are free of dissimulation." He further writes that the true princes are those who possess both the exterior and interior traits of a prince, though they may not be recognized as such, while one who is recognized as a prince but lacks the inner essence of princedom is in fact a prisoner.[35] Thus, Fakhr al-Mulk's earthly rank is

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[34] This letter may possibly have been written in Nishapur. The letter mentions *Kīmiyā' al-sa`āda*, which al-Ghazālī tells us was written before his return to teaching, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-mustaṣfā min `ilm al-uṣūl*, Najwā Ḍaww (ed.), Beirut: Dar Ehia al-Tourath al-Arabi, 1997, vol. 1, p. 14. Bouyges suggests that the book was written shortly before al-Ghazālī's return to teaching, Maurice Bouyges, *Essai de chronologie des œuvres de al-Ghazali (Algazel)*, Michel Allard (ed.), Beirut: Recherche de l'Institut de Lettres Orientales 14, 1959, p. 60. I see no way of determining this with any certainty. Since Fakhr al-Mulk held the office of *wazīr* during almost exactly the same period as al-Ghazālī's first post-Baghdad period in Ṭūs, 490/1096-500/1106, this cannot be used either to further narrow the range of dates of composition. As Fakhr al-Mulk was assassinated on 10 Muḥarram 500/9 September 1106, the letter could have been written in the two months between al-Ghazālī's assuming his post in Nishapur in Dhū al-Qa`da 499/July 1106 and Fakhr al-Mulk's death the following year. The letter, however, indicates a relationship that was not likely to have sprung up in a mere two month period, and so is also relevant to a discussion of the relationship between the two men during the Ṭūs period. For Krawulsky's discussion of the dating, see *Briefe und Reden*, p. 26

[35] This, too, is a convention of sorts, but al-Ghazālī takes it to a greater extreme here than elsewhere. When addressing Sanjar, for example, he also says that he will dispense with formality and obsequious praise, but with the excuse that one so magnificent does not need to have his magnificence pointed out any more than the sun requires that its enormity and brightness be noted. That is to say, he uses the opportunity of dispensing with obsequious praise to dispense obsequious praise. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 69.

discounted; he is addressed as a member of a fellowship of would-be otherworldly amirs standing below al-Ghazālī in a relationship of disciple to mentor.

The letter differs from most letters written to Seljuk officials. Most admonish them to think of the world to come and to comport themselves accordingly in this world. This letter certainly urges Fakhr al-Mulk to rule over the "armies" of his passion, anger, and cunning, and thus to become a true prince; but even that introductory admonition has the tone of encouragement to one already converted. The remainder of the letter deals with metaphysical and cosmological matters of how this world relates to the Other World. In effect, it offers theoretical instruction to a disciple seeking the Other World rather than stern warning to a ruler.

This particular letter also contains more material drawn from the *Iḥyāʾ* than most. For example, al-Ghazālī explains that the will of God is at work in all events witnessed in the world and that the true reality is not the physical one that we see, but the divine one that will become clear to us after death. This idea is much the same as the allegory, discussed in Chapter I, of the chain of causes leading from a blackened sheet of paper through ink, a pen and a hand ultimately to God, which is found in *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul*.[36] Though he does use the allegory of the pen in a simplified form in another letter to a man identified by the compiler as "one of the great ones,"[37] al-Ghazālī resorts to a different image to make the same point in this letter. He writes of the relationship of

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[36] See below, p. 126 for a brief discussion of this passage. See also Chapter I.

[37] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 169.

this world to the Other World as the relationship of a reflection in a mirror to the world facing the mirror, much as he discusses this matter in *Kitāb al-ṣabr wa-l-shukr*.[38]

Unlike the young student discussed above, whose familiarity with the *Iḥyā'* al-Ghazālī assumes, Fakhr al-Mulk is not referred to al-Ghazālī's masterpiece for further instruction in these matters. Rather, he is referred to a Persian synopsis of the *Iḥyā'*, namely *Kīmiyā' al-saʿāda*, to quiet the doubts of his heart and learn how things truly stand.[39] It seems likely that *Kīmiyā' al-saʿāda* was written for precisely such an audience: not Persian religious scholars who expected to read religious texts in Arabic, but rather the non-Arabophone Seljuk ruling class. This and the admonition found in the other letters points to the likelihood that al-Ghazālī had a master-disciple relationship with other Seljuk officials, though none of the letters testifies to such a relation as plainly as this letter to Fakhr al-Mulk. Sanjar's *wazīr* was intimately acquainted with al-Ghazālī's thought and agenda and counted the author of *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn* as his spiritual mentor.

As we have seen, al-Ghazālī's years of retreat in Ṭūs were not spent solely in solitary contemplation of the themes he explored in *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*. During this period, he actively recruited new practitioners of the Otherworldly science, sought to promote existing practitioners to prominent positions, and acted as a mentor to Seljuk officials in

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[38] For Krawulsky's discussion of this point, see *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 226-227. For the passage in the letter, see ibid., pp. 100-101. For the passage in the *Iḥyā'*, see *Iḥyā'*, vol. 4, book XXXI, p. 88.

[39] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 105.

their own pursuit of these sciences.[40] Given this activity, we must infer that Fakhr al-Mulk, *wazīr* to the *malik al-sharq*, and, as we have seen, spiritual disciple of al-Ghazālī, appointed his mentor to the Niẓāmiyya in Nishapur in 499/1106 not simply as a renowned scholar of *fiqh*, but as the author of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* and a proponent of the otherworldly science. This inference is supported by al-Ghazālī's descriptions of his return to teaching.

Al-Ghazālī's portrayal of the circumstances under which he returned to teaching vary from account to account. In one, he makes no explicit mention of Fakhr al-Mulk's role in appointing him.[41] In another, al-Ghazālī writes of Fakhr al-Mulk commanding him to return to teaching over his strong objections that the age is not ready for his

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[40] I have relied only on material from datable letters to show that al-Ghazālī actively promoted the agenda of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* first in Ṭūs and then in Nishapur. There are other letters that also show such active promotion but cannot be dated with any certainty to either of these periods, and may in fact belong to the final period of al-Ghazālī's life in Ṭūs from 503/1109-505/1111. These testify to more of the same sorts of activities and also two other types of promotion not found in the datable letters from the first period in Ṭūs or from Nishapur. These are: giving advice and encouragement to men who have taken up the otherworldly science (*Briefe und Reden*, pp. 189-190 and 191-194) and soliciting money for Otherworldly scholars. To the latter goal, al-Ghazālī writes to convince a man of means to give alms specifically to the pious and not to mere beggars as a way to cure his illness (*Briefe und Reden*, pp. 167-171), exhorts others to give alms (*Briefe und Reden*, pp. 171-173), and discusses the conditions under which it is acceptable to take money from rulers (*Briefe und Reden*, pp. 201-203). This is interesting, given that he had taken a vow never himself to accept money from rulers (see page 96 below) and given that he expressly forbids taking money from rulers in another letter (*Briefe und Reden*, p. 206).

[41] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 77. This is in a passage that the compiler identifies as a dedication to the book *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, which al-Ghazālī wrote for Sanjar in 503/1109. It seems almost certain that the compiler misidentified this passage. Al-Ghazālī wrote two works for Sanjar. One is a transcript of a discourse that al-Ghazālī held before the *Mālik al-sharq* when called to defend himself against the charges of his enemies in Nishapur (we will come to this in detail below), and that Sanjar asked him to write down. The other is *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, a work written in gratitude for some wild game that Sanjar sent to al-Ghazālī from a hunt. This passage makes no mention of wild game or *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, but does relate the circumstances under which al-Ghazālī was summoned before Sanjar and repeats Sanjar's request that al-Ghazālī write down the dialogue that he held on that occasion. Therefore, it seems safe to conclude that this passage is, in fact, a foreword to the transcript of the discourse and not to *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. On the authenticity of the latter work, see Particia Crone, "Did al-Ghazālī Write a Mirror for Princes? On the authorship of *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*," *Jerusalem Studies of Arabic and Islam*, 10, 1987, pp. 167-191.

thought.[42] In yet another, the order coincides with a desire to return to teaching that al-Ghazālī had reached independently, and is portrayed as God's will.[43]

Al-Ghazālī varies his depiction of his return to teaching in Nishapur because of the subject's sensitivity. It was an act that could be seen as self-serving and hypocritical, coming from a man who had dramatically left a very prestigious—and very similar—position in Baghdad, and savagely criticized religious scholars in a manifesto written immediately after this break. Furthermore, though there is no mention of it in the *Munqidh*—and this is almost certainly a conscious omission—al-Ghazālī mentions in two of his letters a vow that he took at the tomb of Abraham in Hebron never again to appear before a ruler, never again to take money from a ruler, and never again to engage in disputation.[44] His return to teaching meant taking money from the founder of the trust of the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa, if indirectly. It would also lead to his violating the first and, to some degree, the third clauses of the vow as well, as we shall see below.[45]

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[42] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 75. This is in al-Ghazālī's testimony before Sanjar in 503/1109.

[43] *Munqidh*, pp. 75-76.

[44] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 66 in a letter to Sanjar and p. 135 in a letter to Niẓām al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Qiwām al-dīn al-Ḥasan b. `Alī b. Isḥāq

[45] Josef Van Ess makes this point in, "Quelques remarques," pp. 60-61. As we shall see, controversy that arose upon al-Ghazālī's return to teaching in Nishapur led to his appearing before Sanjar, the Seljuk *Malik al-Sharq*; threatened to entangle him again in disputation; and led him to write a response to his critics that verges on being a written disputation. As for the first, as Van Ess points out, he could say that his compensation for teaching came from a *waqf* and not directly from a ruler, but the source of the *waqf* was, of course, Niẓām al-Mulk.

Justifying this return to teaching is one of the stated objectives of *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*,[46] it seems al-Ghazālī was called upon to explain his decision, likely by his critics and perhaps by his own conscience.[47] It is this that led Josef van Ess to claim that the *Munqidh* is nothing but a grand apology for al-Ghazālī's return to teaching.[48] Certainly, al-Ghazālī's explanation is carefully crafted to show his reluctance and his noble intentions in going to Nishapur, and to deny that his return to teaching was a return to the scholarly practice he turned his back on in Baghdad. The *Munqidh* is the most detailed description of the circumstances of the return to teaching, but the evidence it contains, like that of all of the descriptions, must be understood in its rhetorical context.

Some basic elements seem reliable in the various accounts of al-Ghazālī taking up his post at the Niẓamiyya Madrasa in Nishapur. For one, al-Ghazālī saw his return to teaching as a portentous event because it offered an opportunity to advance his agenda of reviving religion. In fact, he took it as a sign that he was the *mujaddid*, the Renewer of

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[46] "You have asked me, oh brother in religion…what turned me away from dispensing knowledge (*ʿilm*) in Baghdad despite my many students and what caused me (*daʿānī*) to return to Nishapur after such a length of time." *Munqidh*, pp. 23-24.

[47] We cannot know whether knowledge of the vow was widespread; he did not feel it necessary to address this point directly in the *Munqidh*, but if he brought it up in two letters, it seems likely that it was something that he must have divulged from time to time. Certainly, though, there must have been questions about why, if he had found it imperative to abruptly and dramatically leave his post at the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad, it was suddenly acceptable to him to take a position at the Niẓāmiyya in Nishapur.

[48] Van Ess, p. 63, and see above, pp. 82-84.

the faith that a hadith promises God will send at the beginning of every century.[49]   In the

Munqidh, he writes of his decision,

> I consulted in this with all of the wise men of vision (*arbāb al-qulūb wa-l-mushāhadāt*) and they concurred that this was a sign (*ishāra*) that I should leave seclusion and emerge from the convent (*al-zāwiya*).   To this were added many repeated (*mutawātira*)[50] dreams of the pious (*al-ṣāliḥīn*) attesting that this movement was a beneficial and proper start, which God—may he be praised!—ordained for the beginning of this century. For God—may he be praised!—promised the revival of his religion (*waʿada…bi-iḥyāʾ dīnihi*) at the beginning of each century.[51]

Al-Ghazālī's word choice is telling here.   He does not write that God has promised

renewal (*tajdīd*) of his religion as the *Hadith* reads,[52] but rather *revival* (*iḥyāʾ*) of his

religion.   He saw himself as the *mujaddid* of the sixth Islamic Century insofar as he was

the author and exponent of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.[53]

Of course, his chair in Nishapur was in law, as it had been in Baghdad.[54]   But just

as al-Ghazālī's duties in Baghdad extended beyond teaching *fiqh* to the defense of the

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[49]   Many later Muslim scholars concurred with him in his self-assessment.   See Aḥmad al-Wansharīsī, *al-Miʿyār al-muʿrib wa-l-jāmiʿ al-muʿrib ʿan fatāwā ahl ifrīqiya wa-l-andalus wa-l-maghrib*, Muḥammad Ḥajī (ed.), 13 vols. Rabat: Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs,1981, vol. 10, p. 9.

[50]   The word al-Ghazālī uses for repeated, *mutawātira*, is a term used to describe *Hadith* transmitted in multiple chains.   He seems to be claiming a similar authority for the claims of his dream interpreters.   For the importance that al-Ghazālī attaches to the authority of hadith that are *mutawātira*, see *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa-l-zandaqa, Majmūʿ rasāʾil al-imām al-Ghazālī*, vol. 3, pp. 91-92.

[51]   *Munqidh*, pp. 75-76.

[52]   *Munqidh*, p. 76.

[53]   Hans Bauer draws attention to the wording in this passage in his "Zum Titel und zur Abfassung von Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ*," *Der Islam*, 4, 1913, pp. 159-160.

[54]   George Makdisi points out that al-Ghazālī's position at the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad was that of a specialist in Shāfiʿī law, despite the claims of some that he was appointed to uphold Ashʿarite theology against the propaganda of the Ismāʿīlīs.   See George Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," pp. 232-233.

faith, as attested by works such as *Faḍā'iḥ al-bāṭiniyya*, so too did his duties in Nishapur

extend beyond instruction in jurisprudence. In a forward to a transcription of a discourse

given in his own defense before Sanjar and written down later at Sanjar's request,[55] al-

Ghazālī writes that he was ordered to come to Nishapur to dedicate himself to the

spreading of science and the religious law. He adds that noble and insightful men stood

by him and convinced him that this was the beginning of the revival of science and

religious law.[56] Thus, in his mind at least, teaching law and reviving religious science

were both part of his assignment.[57]

It can be inferred from al-Ghazālī's descriptions of his coming to Nishapur that he

enjoyed the continuing support of Fakhr al-Mulk. This extended beyond the simple fact

of his appointment. In his address to Sanjar in 503/1109, al-Ghazālī says he had told

Fakhr al-Mulk that the present age would not tolerate his thought, to which Fakhr al-

Mulk had replied that Sanjar was a just king and that he, Fakhr al-Mulk, would stand by

al-Ghazālī.[58] In the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī writes that his return to teaching to combat the

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[55] See n. 41 above.

[56] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 77. *Makātīb-i fārsī-i Ġazzālī*, p. 11, *bi-ifāḍat `ilm ve-nashr sharī`at* and *iḥyā' `ilm ve-sharīa`at*.

[57] It would seem that he aimed to revive the law as well. Certainly his work on *uṣūl al-fiqh* that stems from this period: *al-Mustaṣfā min `ilm al-uṣūl* was groundbreaking and immensely influential. Al-Ghazālī arranged his subject matter in a unique way and, more importantly, insisted on the centrality of logic to *uṣūl al-fiqh*. The result was the incorporation of logic into legal theory. See Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, pp. 39 and 134-143. Based on our discussion of *fiqh* in the framework of the *Iḥyā'* in Chapter I, we might speculate that he intended to revive *fiqh* by placing it within its proper context, namely that of a worldly science subordinate to the otherworldly science. A further possibility is discussed in n. 86 below.

[58] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 75.

weakness of faith of his age required a sultan who was pious (*mutadayyin*) and victorious, which further suggests the authorities' backing for his undertaking.[59]

Al-Ghazālī's letters show that, once he assumed his position at the Niẓamiyya in Nishapur, he continued to promote the agenda of the *Iḥyā'* much as he had in Ṭūs. There are two letters in which he wrote to fathers of his students to urge them to allow their sons to continue their studies. The fact that he had students implies a date after al-Ghazālī's return to teaching. In the first letter, al-Ghazālī writes to the father of a young student, presumably his own, asking that the father not demand his son's return home, but rather allow him to pursue piety and perfection in the sciences with his considerable and rare talents.[60] In the second, al-Ghazālī exhorts a man who seems to be a high government official to allow his son, evidently already advanced in the study of *fiqh* as he is referred to as a qāḍī, to continue his studies with him—al-Ghazālī. He even urges the father to imitate his son in turning away from the world. The tone of the letter indicates al-Ghazālī's assumption that the father will be difficult to persuade of the merit of otherworldly pursuits rather than worldly ones.[61]

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[59] *Munqidh*, p. 75. Certainly, al-Ghazālī would have had other motives for making this claim, namely reminding Sanjar, before whom he was standing in judgment, of his obligation to protect him. Fakhr al-Mulk, who had been assassinated three years earlier in 500/1106, could not confirm or deny al-Ghazālī's claim. But the relationship between al-Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Mulk, revealed in the letter analyzed above, lends credibility to al-Ghazālī's claim that Sanjar's *wazīr* had offered him support if he encountered criticism.

[60] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 194-196. Knowing what al-Ghazālī considers to be perfection in the sciences, it seems reasonable to assume that he is referring to the Otherworldly sciences.

[61] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 173-183. This is a difficult letter to interpret in some ways, mainly because the rather extensive background narrative given by the compiler seems impossible to reconcile with the content of the letter. This is the only Arabic letter in the collection, which could be taken as evidence in support of the compiler's claim that the recipient and his son were Maghribis, a claim that, if it were true,

These letters to fathers of al-Ghazālī's students in Nishapur could suggest that fathers were beginning to question the wisdom of allowing their sons to study with al-Ghazālī. Not every father dreams of his son becoming a world-renouncing ascetic, especially not in families of elevated social status, and this was what al-Ghazālī was encouraging his students to do. He had taken the position at the Niẓāmiyya as a venue, provided by God, to promote the agenda of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* with the support of the Seljuk authorities. This undertaking quickly became a source of controversy surrounding him. Even fathers with little understanding of the fine points of the religious sciences may have considered insisting that their sons break off their studies with al-Ghazālī.

The Controversy in Nishapur

Al-Ghazālī's return to teaching in Nishapur in 499/1106 resulted in a campaign against him and his writings that led him to ask to be relieved of his duties in Nishapur

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would be of especial interest for this project. But there are problems with this claim. The initial introduction by the compiler says that this letter is addressed to a *qāḍī* from the Maghrib. Though the son of the recipient is referred to as a qāḍī, the recipient is addressed as al-Shaykh Mu'tamid al-Mulk Amīn al-Dawla. This title sounds more like that of an official in the Seljuk state than a *qāḍī*, and the abundant admonitions in the letter sound much like the admonitions that al-Ghazālī addresses to Seljuk officials in other letters. The compiler provides a rather convoluted story to explain the letter, beginning with a note of doubt: "As I heard…." He writes that, when al-Ghazālī was still in Baghdad, the son, *qāḍī* Marwān, came to Baghdād, presumably from the Maghrib, to be named by the Caliph as successor to his father as *qāḍī*— hence his assumption that the recipient of the letter was also a *qāḍī*. Marwān enlisted the influence of al-Ghazālī to try to win this concession from the Caliph. The Caliph said that he would not give an office to one he did not know, and therefore conferred the office on the son. The son, upset that he had thus robbed his father of his office, turned to al-Ghazālī who, concerned that the Caliph would find out the true background of the event, wrote a letter to the father without mentioning anything that had occurred. This story makes little sense in its own right and does not fit the letter at all (though one could speculate that it was inspired by the story of Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī and his father, whom we shall encounter in Chapter III). Why would a Maghribi, or anyone else for that matter, come to Baghdad to have the office of *qāḍī* conferred upon him by the Caliph? Al-Ghazālī's admonitions to spurn this world in favor of the world to come belong to his post-Baghdad period. Furthermore, he writes of Marwān as his student and the apple of his eye. The letter almost certainly belongs to the period after al-Ghazālī returned to teaching. With such grandiose titles, al-Shaykh Mu'tamid al-Mulk Amīn al-Dawla is almost certainly a Seljuk official, and the fact that the letter was written in Arabic—the only such letter in the collection—likely indicates that the recipient was Iraqi.

only three years later. Reconstructing this controversy from the Persian letters is no easy task. The information on it is evenly divided between the compiler's commentary and the letters themselves. Where the sources overlap, they sometimes agree with and sometimes contradict one another. In the case of a contradiction, neither source can be given preference over the other without further investigation. Al-Ghazālī's descriptions of events aim partly to defend him against his accusers, and he may in places have crafted an account that casts him in a more favorable light at the expense of complete accuracy. The fact that the compiler clearly had some of the facts wrong and plainly misidentified some of the letters[62] means that the unique information he conveys must also be treated with caution, and preferably accepted only when other evidence confirms it. Adding to the difficulty, as we shall see, is the presence of another unspoken issue underlying the entire controversy. The partial account given here requires the addition of a missing piece to be fully understood.

As we shall see, al-Ghazālī's accusers had him summoned before the Seljuk *malik al-sharq*, Sanjar, in 503/1109 to answer charges they brought against him. At Sanjar's request, al-Ghazālī wrote down the discourse he gave in his self-defense. His foreword to that discourse summarizes his version of the controversy.

He writes that he was ordered in 499/1106, after twelve years of retreat, to come to Nishapur in order to promote science and the *sharī'a*. Noble and insightful men encouraged him, assuring him that this would be the cause of a revival of science and the *sharī'a*. (This is an echo of his account in the *Munqidh.*) He answered the summons, and

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[62] See n. 41 above and n. 64 below.

the splendor he brought to his position attracted students from throughout the world. The result was that those who envied him turned to deceit in order to discredit him. They altered the texts of *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* and *Mishkāt al-anwār*, replacing some of his words with words of unbelief (*kufr*). They brought the altered manuscripts to him for his signature, verifying that they were accurate (*ijāza*). Fortunately, he discovered the ruse and refused to sign.[63]

This account appears in a document delivered to Sanjar after al-Ghazālī had already secured his acquittal, but there is reason to suspect that it was consciously constructed to convey al-Ghazālī's utter innocence of any wrongdoing. Though the order of events it presents makes better sense than the account given by the compiler, as we shall see below, it is inaccurate in that it omits crucial information about the campaign against al-Ghazālī. It does so by casting what seem to have been very real objections to his earlier writings as false accusations based on passages fraudulently inserted by his enemies.

The attempts to alter the texts of *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, and *Mishkāt al-anwār* could not have been the beginning of the campaign against al-Ghazālī. As we have seen above, the *Munqidh* was itself written in no small part as a defense against his critics. If this very text played a role in an attempt to discredit al-Ghazālī, that effort must have come after the controversy had been in process for some time.

Furthermore, there is reason to question al-Ghazālī's assertion that his envious enemies had no recourse but to fraudulently insert objectionable passages into his texts.

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[63] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 77-78.

Though it is impossible to prove that such an incident did not occur, it is clear that very real objections were raised against one of the two books that he mentions here. Some of al-Ghazālī's other writings were also criticized. Evidence of this is found in another letter, again obviously misidentified by the compiler,[64] in which al-Ghazālī gives a supporter instructions on how to defend several passages from *Mishkāt al-anwār* and *Kīmiyā' al-sa'āda* against his critics. Given this evidence of actual critiques of al-Ghazālī's writings, it must be asked why his enemies would have had to resort to forgery to tarnish his reputation.

The letter begins with a restatement of the supporter's question, which lists three critiques and mentions that others exist. The passages in question from *Mishkāt al-anwār* are two: one claims that, while "There is no god but God" is the divine unity (*tawḥīd*) of common men, the divine unity of the elite is "There is no he but He;" the other asserts

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[64] The compiler gives as background to the letter an account of al-Ghazālī's return to Ṭūs from Sanjar's court. At this point, two of his enemies came to him and asked which *madhhab* he adhered to. Al-Ghazālī answered that in the rational sciences (*'ulūm 'aqliyya*), he followed rational proof (*ma'qūlāt-i burhān*) and in the legal sciences he followed the Qur'ān but not the tradition of any of the Imams, neither al-Shāfi'ī nor Abū Ḥanīfa. His enemies took this as a further opportunity to try to attack him, not, according to the compiler, on the basis of any of these statements, but rather on the basis of passages in some of his books. They sent their critique to him, the compiler writes, and the letter in question was his response to them. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 79. Though such an encounter likely did occur at some point (see p. 112 below), it was not the impetus for writing the letter the story introduces.

The letter that follows is clearly a response not to a hostile critic, but rather to someone asking al-Ghazālī for advice on how to defend certain passages from *Mishkāt al-anwār* in disputes with his critics. Before going into the specifics on how to justify some of his statements, al-Ghazālī writes to his defender that there are certain types of people that one can expect to cure of the disease of miscomprehension and others that one cannot. Therefore he should engage only persuadable opponents. This is clearly not a letter written to a hostile correspondent. *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 79-98. That al-Ghazālī had supporters who offered to dispute his opponents in his place is attested to in a description of his summons to the court of Sanjar. A group described by the compiler as "imams from Ṭūs" went to the court of Sanjar where they described themselves as al-Ghazālī's students and offered to dispute his enemies who were lobbying Sanjar to compel al-Ghazālī to debate them. See *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 67-68. It seems plausible that al-Ghazālī would solicit such support in order to avoid public debate in keeping with his vow discussed above, namely never again to engage in *munāẓara*.

that God is the true light. [65] The passage in question from *Kīmiyā' al-saʿāda* states that the human soul is a stranger in the world, originating from a higher world to which it longs to return. This is an assertion, his critics say, that one also hears from the philosophers.[66]

These are no forgeries, but rather genuine passages from the two works in question, and al-Ghazālī makes no effort to disown them or dismiss them as forgeries. Rather, he defends them as his own. Given the clear misidentification of the letter by the compiler, there is no reason to accept his claim that the letter was written after al-Ghazālī's return from Sanjar's court to Ṭūs. It seems more likely that this critique was made earlier, while he was still in Nishapur.

The evidence for this is strengthened by a passage in the letter in which al-Ghazālī defends the claim that the human soul is a stranger in the world and longs to return to a higher world. When repeating the critique he is rebutting, he gives a further detail not found in his first summary of his critics' position. His critics have said that this idea comes from both the philosophers *and* from Christians.[67] Al-Ghazālī's subsequent rebuttal follows very closely the passage from the *Munqidh*, a portion of which was

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[65] "*fa-idhan 'lā ilāha illa allāh' tawḥīd al-ʿawāmm wa 'lā huwa illa huwa' tawḥīd al-khawāṣṣ.*" *The Niche of Lights/Mishkāt al-anwār: A parallel English-Arabic text*, David Buchman (ed. and trans.), Provo, Utah: Brighan Young University Press, 1998, p. 20, and "*al-nūr al-ḥaqq huwa allāh taʿālā wa-inna ism al-nūr li-ghayrihi majāzun maḥḍun la ḥaqīqata lahu.*" Ibid. p. 3. Given that the passages in question from *Mishkāt al-anwār* are genuine passages, there is no reason to believe that the passage in question from *Kīmiyā' al-saʿāda* is a forgery either. Al-Ghazālī certainly does not treat it as such.

[66] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 79.

[67] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 95.

quoted above,[68] in which al-Ghazālī rejects the charge of philosophical influence. Both the charges and the arguments made in refuting the charges are nearly identical, and it seems almost certain that both refer to the same critique. The critique would thus date to before the writing of the *Munqidh*, while al-Ghazālī was still teaching in Nishapur.[69]

Besides responding to critiques of *Mishkāt al-anwār* and *Kīmiyā' al-sa`āda*, al-Ghazālī's letter also invokes *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*. At the end of his defense of the claim that the human soul is a stranger in the world, he refers his reader to the *Iḥyā'*, *Kīmiyā' al-sa`āda*, and *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* for a fuller explanation of this question.[70] The *Iḥyā'*

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[68] See pp. 80-81 above.

[69] When the full passages in both the letter and the *Munqidh* are considered, the parallels are all the more striking. In the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī writes only of accusations of philosophical and not Christian influence. However, in both passages, he attacks those who know the truth through men rather than knowing the truth and knowing through it the men of truth, and he uses the Christians as an example in both. In the letter, he writes that the Christians say that "There is no god but God and Jesus is the spirit (*rūḥ*) of God." *Briefe und Reden*, p. 95. In the *Munqidh*, he writes that the Christians say that "There is no god but God and Jesus is the Messenger of God." *Munqidh*, p. 44. In both cases he says that the statement is true and that it is only the weak minded who reject it merely because Christians are asserting it. (One wonders whether the difference in wording between the two passages might not be due to a scribal error at some point. It is hard to tell which is the more likely original. That Jesus is the spirit of God sounds more authentically Christian, that he is the Messenger of God sounds more acceptable to a Muslim and therefore a better illustration of al-Ghazālī's point.) In both the letters and the *Munqidh* al-Ghazālī quotes `Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to bolster his argument, saying: "Do not recognize the truth through men. Rather, recognize the truth and you will know the men of truth." *Munqidh*, p. 45, *Briefe und Reden*, p. 96. In both cases, he makes the argument that if the criterion for falsehood were the messenger and not the content, the heretics and innovators could cause scholars to lose possession of all that is true by asserting it themselves.
　　Al-Ghazālī does return to certain favorite arguments, quotes, and examples over and over in his writings to make similar points. However, the number of parallels between these two passages allows us to go beyond merely noting thematic similarities to infer that both the passage in the letter and the passage in the *Munqidh* are written in response to the same critique. Furthermore, if the "forgeries" of al-Ghazālī's critics were actually one and the same as these critiques of genuine passages in the *Munqidh* and *Kīmiyā' al-sa`āda*, refuted not only in this letter but also in the *Munqidh*, then their critique must also predate the *Munqidh*. This does not only cast new light on the letters, but on the *Munqidh* as well.

[70] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 96. Al-Ghazālī describes *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*, *Kīmiyā' al-sa`āda*, and *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* as representing respectively a simplified (*basīṭ*), intermediate (*wasīṭ*), and concise (*wajīz*) explanation of the Otherworldly science and the knowledge (*ma`rifa*) of the esoteric secrets of religion. See *Mustaṣfā*, vol. 1, p. 14.

also makes its presence felt in the defense of the claim that the declaration of divine unity

of the elite is *la huwa illā huwa.* In this passage, al-Ghazālī draws on his discussion of

book XXXV of the *Iḥyā', tawḥīd* in *kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul,* which was discussed

extensively in Chapter I. He uses the same image to represent the four levels of

understanding of *tawḥīd*: that of a seed of grain with a husk of a husk, a husk, a kernel,

and a kernel of a kernel, representing the four degrees of insight into divine unity. Unlike

the discussion of *tawḥīd* in the *Iḥyā',* al-Ghazālī here abandons the four-part structure that

the image conjures and describes six levels of realization of *tawḥīd.*[71] This discussion in

the letter will take on greater significance when we examine *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'*

below.

It can be concluded, then, that the campaign against al-Ghazālī in Nishapur began

some time before his summons to the court of Sanjar and involved actual critiques of

Mishkāt al-anwār and *Kīmiyā' al-saʿāda.* These critiques centered on questions closely

related to important themes in *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn.* None of these letters gives evidence of

critiques of *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl,* but it is not unlikely that this book's didactic,

apologetic, and subtly polemical character also attracted criticism.[72]

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[71] Al-Ghazālī's discussion of gradations of understanding of *tawḥīd* in the letter aims to show that there is such a profound difference between the commoners who merely pronounce the *shahāda* without truly understanding its import and the elite who have become so fully absorbed in the consciousness of God's all-encompassing Oneness that a different formulation of the *shahāda* is required to do justice to the understanding of *tawḥīd* of this latter group. To further emphasize this distinction, al-Ghazālī adds two more levels.

[72] Josef van Ess points out further that the *Munqidh* had a didactic character. It aims to deliver its reader to the truth from the error in which the majority of men exist. This in itself would certainly have offended many, especially those who objected to his larger project. Van Ess, "Quelques," p. 60.

In the same foreword to his discourse held before Sanjar, al-Ghazālī goes on to accuse his accusers of a second forgery. He writes that word of the first deception reached the *Ra'īs-i Khorāsān*, who had the forger permanently banished from Nishapur. The forger then went to the camp of Sanjar and slandered al-Ghazālī, but with no results. Finally, al-Ghazālī writes, an attempt was made to discredit him by going to Sanjar with a work on *uṣūl al-fiqh* from al-Ghazālī's youth, *al-Mankhūl min taʿlīq al-uṣūl*, which he claims had been maliciously altered already thirty years previously. He writes that his opponents, again acting out of envy, had tried to discredit him long ago by inserting pages slandering Abū Ḥanīfa into the work.[73] A charge of slandering Abū Ḥanīfa would have carried more weight with the Seljuk rulers, who were themselves Ḥanafīs.

The second charge of forgery is as suspect as the first. As Josef van Ess points out, *Kitāb al-Mankhūl min taʿlīq al-uṣūl* truly *is* an anti-Ḥanafī work in which al-Ghazālī goes so far as to say that Abū Ḥanīfa did not merit the title *mujtahid*. The book remained known as such, and in a later century, one Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Sattār al-Kardarī (d. 642/1244) felt moved to refute these passages in the *Mankhūl*.[74]

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[73] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 78.

[74] Van Ess, p. 60. Van Ess consulted *al-Mankhūl min taʿlīq al-uṣūl*, Muḥammad Hītū (ed.), Damascus, 1390/1970. The passage in which al-Ghazālī claims that Abū Ḥanīfa was not worthy of being called a *mujtahid* is on p. 471 of this edition. Van Ess writes that the Ḥanafīs sometimes exaggerated or invented their charges, giving as a possible example of such invention the Ḥanafī charge that al-Ghazālī had accused Abū Ḥanīfa of turning the law on its head—an accusation he could not find in the text. In fact al-Ghazālī does make that charge later in the *Mankhūl*, writing that "Abū Ḥanīfa, may God have mercy on him, turned the *sharīʿa* inside out, jumbled its method, and altered its rules" (*wa ammā Abū Ḥanīfa raḥmahu allāh, fa-qad qalaba al-sharīʿa ẓāhiran li-baṭan, wa shawwash maslakahā, wa ghayyara niẓāmahā*). *Mankhūl*, p. 500.

It is possible that the only copies of the *Mankhūl* to come down to posterity were the ones that had been so altered. However, if al-Ghazālī had been aware for thirty years of the existence of this forgery, it would seem likely that he would have taken measures to suppress the forged version and to promote the circulation of the correct text. In all his years of teaching *fiqh* in Baghdad and Nishapur, one would think that he would have given numerous *ijāza*s for correct copies, which would thus be more likely to have been copied and passed on. Furthermore, at the end of the chapter of the *Mankhūl* in which he criticizes Abū Ḥanīfa (and also, to a much lesser extent, Malik Ibn Anas), al-Ghazālī rejects the notion that he is driven to his criticism by fanatical partisanship for al-Shāfiʿī and fury at Abū Ḥanīfa. It seems unlikely that a forger would have had the presence of mind so embellish his forgery.[75]

In contrast to Ghazālī's claim to be a victim of malicious interpolations in his work, the compiler of the letters says nothing about forgeries. He writes that, shortly after coming to Nishapur in his youth to study, al-Ghazālī collected excerpts from his notes on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, entitling the result *al-Mankhūl min taʿlīq al-uṣūl*. He concluded the book with two pages on the shortcomings of the Ḥanafī *madhhab*, including material taken from chapters on ritual purity (*ṭahāra*), prayer (*namāz*), compulsion (*ghaṣb*), and

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[75] "Perhaps the reader of this chapter will think that we are fanatical partisans of al-Shāfiʿī, furious at Abū Ḥanīfa due to the our long-windedness in the arrangement of this chapter. Nonsense! We are nothing if not even-handed judges, limiting ourselves to a small portion of abundant [examples]." (*Wa laʿalla-l-nāẓir fī hadha-l-faṣl yaẓunnunā nataʿaṣṣab li-l-Shāfiʿī, mutaghayyiẓīn ʿalā Abī Ḥanīfa, l-taṭwīl al-nafs fī taqrīr hadha-l-faṣl. Wa hīhāt, fa-lasnā fīhi illā munṣifīn wa muqtaṣidīn, muqtaṣirīn ʿalā al-yasīr min al-kathīr….*) *Mankhūl*, p. 504.

theft (*sariqa*).[76]   Although the compiler takes pains to portray al-Ghazālī, whom he

reverently calls *Ḥujjat al-Islām* (the Proof of Islam), in the most favorable possible light,

it does not occur to him to claim that these two pages in *al-Mankhūl* are fabrications of

al-Ghazālī's enemies. He simply takes it for granted that al-Ghazālī wrote some anti-

Ḥanafī material in his youth.[77]

As a young Shāfi`ī student in Nishapur in the second half of the 5th/11th century, it

is entirely likely that he would have done so. The city was divided by a bitter rivalry

between Shāfi`īs and Ḥanafīs dating at least to the late 4th/10th century and continuing

until Shāfi`ī-Ḥanafī violence became one of the leading factors in the city's destruction in

557/1162.[78]   It is not surprising that a young Shāfi`ī would become involved in this

dispute by adding some partisan commentary to a book on law.

The compiler claims that the discovery of the anti-Ḥanafī material in *al-Mankhūl*

led to the campaign against al-Ghazālī in Nishapur. This is not credible for two reasons.

First, as we have seen above, the claim that al-Ghazālī had slandered Abū Ḥanīfa was the

last charge brought against him, and the one that finally proved effective in making

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[76] All of which accords with the text of the *Mankhūl* as it has come down to us. See *Mnnkhūl*, pp. 500-504.

[77] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 63.

[78] According to Richard Bulliet, there is evidence from the late 3rd/9th century of rivalry between the followers of the legal traditions of Kūfa and Madīna. In the beginning of the 4th/10th century, one finds people described in biographical dictionaries as "fanatics" (*muta`aṣṣib*), the very description al-Ghazālī denies applies to him and his motives in criticizing Abū Ḥanīfa.  See n. 75 above.  More concrete evidence of the Shāfi`ī-Ḥanafī factionalism does not begin to appear until the late 4th/10th century. See *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972, pp. 31-32. For the remarkable story of the gradual destruction of Nishapur between 548/1153 and 557/1162, initially by Ghuzz tribesmen but finally and definitively through Shāfi`ī-Ḥanafī violence, see pp. 76-81.

Sanjar summon him for a hearing. Second, the compiler claims that the Ḥanafīs were joined in their campaign by Shāfi`īs and a Malikī from the Maghrib; but these are unlikely allies in a campaign to defend the honor of Abū Ḥanīfa, especially in a city so sharply divided by *madhhab* partisanship as Nishapur.[79]

This astonishing claim that some Nishapuri Ḥanafīs and Shāfi`īs joined together to confront al-Ghazālī cannot be simply dismissed. On the contrary: an author close to the events in time and probably location would certainly have been aware of this sectarian division in Nishapur, and would have realized the implications of such a claim. The scenario of an alliance between Ḥanafī and Shāfi`ī jurists is plausible. There is evidence that al-Ghazālī's enemies were principally jurists. In *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa-l-zandaqa*, he writes that his enemies' accused him of diverging from the teaching of the Ash`arī school even though their expertise lay in *fiqh*, making them unqualified to rule in matters of *kalām*.[80] Furthermore, there is evidence that jurists of the competing schools did ally under certain conditions despite their bitter rivalry. Nishapuri Ḥanafīs and Shāfi`īs came together at times in the face of threats to their common interests as "patricians" of the city, to use Richard Bulliet's term.[81]

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[79] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 63.

[80] *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa-l-zandaqa*, in *Majmū` rasā'il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, 7 vols., Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyya, 1997, vol. 3, pp. 75 and 92.

[81] Though they ultimately pursued their rivalry to the point of destroying the very city that both parties sought to dominate, Shāfi`īs and Ḥanafīs united in the face of common threats, such as violent uprisings by the populist Karrāmiya, or in making decisions regarding the defense or surrender of the city before an invader. See *Patricians of Nishapur*, p. 39 and p. 46.

There is also evidence that, in political life, al-Ghazālī was not simply a good Shāfi`ī partisan, his youthful writing of *al-Mankhūl* notwithstanding. In his account of al-Ghazālī's hearing before Sanjar, the compiler tells us that a group of distinguished *imām*s came to Sanjar's court before al-Ghazālī's arrival there and demanded that al-Ghazālī be compelled to debate them. It was not his fellow Shāfi`īs of Nishapur who came to his defense, but rather a group of his students from Ṭūs, who offered to debate in al-Ghazālī's stead.[82]

Additionally, in introducing one of the letters analyzed above, the compiler relates a story that casts doubt on al-Ghazālī's *madhhab* affiliation. According to his account, when al-Ghazālī returned to Ṭūs from Sanjar's court, two of his enemies asked which *madhhab* he adhered to. Al-Ghazālī replied that in the rational sciences (*`ulūm `aqliyya*) he followed rational proof (*ma`qūlāt-i burhān*) and in the legal sciences he followed the Qur`ān but not the tradition of any of the Imams, neither al-Shāfi`ī nor Abū Ḥanīfa.[83] A somewhat different version of this encounter is related in Dawlatshāh Samarqandī's (d. 892/1487) *Tadhkirat al-Shu`arā'*.[84]

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[82] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 67-68. See above for a fuller description, n. 64.

[83] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 79.

[84] Dawlatshāh al-Samarqandī, *The Tadhkira-tu 'sh-Shu`ará (Memoirs of the Poets) of Dawlatsháh bin `Alá'u `d-Dawla Bakhtísháh al-Ghází of Samarqand: Edited in the original Persian with prefaces and indices by Edward G. Browne*, London/Leiden 1901 (Persian Historical Texts, Vol. 1). Cited in *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 17-19, and Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings (*Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*)*, 2nd edition, F.R.C. Bagley (trans.), London: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. xvii-xviii. The differences between the two accounts involve the identities of the questioners and the location of the encounter. Krawulsky has shown that the details of the encounter given in *Tadhkirat al-Shu`arā'* cannot be correct. Furthermore, as I have written above (n. 64), the compiler cites this exchange as background for a letter which clearly has no relation to the exchange, and so likewise, this account is suspect in its details. While such issues as the identity of the questioners thus cannot be answered, what concerns us here is simply the

The question suggests that al-Ghazālī's *madhhab* affiliation was in doubt; al-Ghazālī's answer confirms that there was good reason for this. But there is no basis for this in his writings. Though the *Iḥyā'* is not a partisan Shāfiʿī work, when al-Ghazālī demonstrates that the *imām*s devoted themselves first and foremost to the Otherworldly science, he lists the Imām al-Shāfiʿī first and gives him a far longer entry than any of the other Imāms.[85] None of his other writings from the post-*Iḥyā'* period give any evidence that he has left the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*. What seems more likely is that al-Ghazālī is being asked about his loyalties within the context of sectarian politics in Nishapur, not about his preferred legal tradition and methodology.

Al-Ghazālī strengthens this impression in his answer. He does not feel the need to give his position vis-à-vis the Mālikī or Ḥanbalī schools, despite the fact that he also criticized the Imām Mālik in the *Mankhūl*. He knows what information his questioners are seeking: is he a Shāfiʿī partisan or a Ḥanafī partisan? He seems, therefore, to have distanced himself from both factions, which makes plausible the claim of the compiler that he had enemies in both camps.[86]

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basic fact that such an encounter is attested to in two sources and that in both of them al-Ghazālī is asked about his *madhhab* affiliation, answering that he is neither a Ḥanafī nor a Shāfiʿī. This kernel of the narrative seems reliable, given its double attestation.

[85] *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*, vol. I, pp. 29-32.

[86] This exchange suggests another reason for the Nishapuri jurists' opposition to al-Ghazālī. As we have seen above, in the foreword to the transcript of his discourse before Sanjar, al-Ghazālī writes that his advisors assured him his return to teaching would lead to a revival of science and the sharīʿa. Clearly the revival of science refers to the promotion of the agenda of the *Iḥyā'*, but in what did the revival of the sharīʿa lay? This exchange could provide a clue. Before stating that al-Shāfiʿī and Abū Ḥanīfa have no claim over him, al-Ghazālī says that he follows rational proof in the rational sciences. One of al-Ghazālī's greatest contributions to the field of uṣūl al-fiqh is his insistence on the centrality of logic to that science in *al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl*. See Wael al-Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, pp. 39 and 134-143. See also Ahmad Zakī Mansūr Ḥammād, *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's Juristic Doctrine in al-Mustaṣfā min*

Along with charges that al-Ghazālī himself names, the compiler says that al-Ghazālī's enemies accused him of being a Zoroastrian (*madhhab-i majūs*), because he called God the true light in *Mishkāt al-anwār*, and the Zoroastrians speak of light and darkness. He further writes that al-Ghazālī's enemies incited a Maghribi against him by claiming that al-Ghazālī had defamed Mālik b. Anas and the Qāḍī Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), and spoken about their mistakes.[87] The Maghribi spread evil rumors among the great men of the empire.[88] This is information that finds corroboration elsewhere.

Krawulsky has suggested that the Maghribi in question was a Sicilian named Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al-Faraj (d. 510/1116-17 in Isfahan) discussed in Ibn al-Jawzī's *al-Muntaẓm fī ta'rīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*.[89] Ibn al-Jawzī tells us that he

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`ilm al-uṣūl with a Translation of al-Mustaṣfā min `ilm al-uṣūl, Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1987, pp. 15 and 264. Al-Ghazālī introduces his discussion of logic by writing, "This introduction is not part of the science of *uṣūl*, nor one of its specific pre-requisites. Rather, it is a pre-requisite for all of the sciences, and whoever has not mastered it is not trustworthy in his sciences to begin with (*wa-man la yuḥīṭ bi-hā fa-lā thiqata lahu bi-`ulūmihi aṣlan*)." *Al-Mustaṣfā*, vol. 1 p. 21. It is possible that al-Ghazālī was equally engaged in setting *fiqh* on a new footing and that his groundbreaking masterpiece of *uṣūl al-fiqh* also created enemies for him in Nishapur. Another possibility to be considered is that part of al-Ghazālī's mission in Nishapur was a bridging of the Shāfi`ī-Ḥanafī divide. This would make sense of the above exchange. It would also fit the thesis of Erika Glassen that al-Ghazālī assisted Niẓām al-Mulk in trying to heal violent sectarian divisions in Baghdad, and that *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* was written in part to spell out a new vision of the religion that would transcend sectarianism. See Erika Glassen, *Der mittlere Weg*, where the thesis is argued throughout the book; see her summary, pp. 177-180 for a brief overview. Promoting a more tolerant view of various theological factions is certainly the thrust of *al-Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa-l-zandaqa*.

[87] In fact he did criticize Mālik b. Anas in the *Mankhūl*; see p. 500. There are numerous discussions of al-Bāqillānī in the *Mankhūl*. I have not yet come across criticism of him, but it is quite possible that this claim is also based on a passage in the *Mankhūl*.

[88] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 63.

[89] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 16. I defer to Krawulsky's rendition of his name as Abū al-Faraj, though the spelling in the edition of Ibn al-Jawzī that I consulted gave his *kunya*, certainly erroneously, as Abū al-Fūj.

traveled to Iraq and Khorasan and then to India, made enemies among a number of Imāms and claimed that al-Ghazālī was a heretic (*mulḥid*), referring to him as "al-Ghazālī the Zoroastrian" (*al-Ghazālī al-majūsī*) whenever he mentioned him.[90] As we have seen, there is reference in the letters to Nishapuris making the charge that al-Ghazālī was a Zoroastrian.

Further information about this man is found in Maghribi source: al-Dabbāgh's *al-Maʿālim al-imān fī maʿrifat ahl al-qayrawān*.[91] This source gives the full name of the Sicilian: Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī Faraj al-Māzarī, known as al-Dhakī. Al-Dabbāgh also writes of al-Māzarī's opposition to al-Ghazālī: "He died in Isfahan after 500, a year after he became involved in conflicts over the claims of al-Ghazālī. He was one of those who rose up against him, but he (i.e. al-Ghazālī) was protected from them and they did not reach him."[92]

Some of this information works against the hypothesis that al-Māzarī was the Mālikī who participated in the campaign against al-Ghazālī in Nishapur. Al-Māzarī's death in 510/1116-17 would if fact be seven years after the events of 503/1109 rather than a single year, and al-Dabbāgh's entry suggests that this conflict took place in

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[90] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓm fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, R. Krenkow (ed.), Ḥaydarābād: Maṭbaʿt Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1357-1360, vol. 9, p. 190.

[91] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Dabbāgh, *Maʿālim al-imān fī maʿrifat ahl al-qayrawān*, Muḥammad Māḍūd (ed.), Tunis: al-Maktaba al-ʿAtīqa and Cairo: Maktabat al-Khāniyya, first ed., 1968, vol. 3, pp. 202-203. This entry is cited in Saʿd Ghurāb, "Ḥawl iḥrāq al-murābiṭīn li-iḥyāʾ al-Ghazālī, *Actas del IV coloquio Hispano-Tunecino (Palma de Mallorca, 1979)*, Madrid, 1983, p. 138.

[92] "*wa tuwufīya bi-iṣbahān baʿd al-khumsamāʾa, sanatan baʿd an jarat lahu ḥurūb fī muṭālabat al-Ghazālī—wa kāna aḥad al-qāʾimīn ʿalayhi hunāka, walakin ḥumiya minhum wa lā yaṣilū ilayhi.*" *Maʿālim al-imān*, p. 203.

Isfahan. However, the fact that the eastern source gives an exact death date while the western sources either give no death date or refer to his death occurring at some point after the year 500,[93] suggests that the Maghribis' knowledge of al-Māzarī's life in Mashriq was quite vague. Al-Dabbāgh's entry writes of al-Māzarī being one of those who rose up against al-Ghazālī and of al-Ghazālī being protected from his enemies. This fits well with the campaign of the Nishapuri *fuqahā'* against al-Ghazālī and his acquittal by Sanjar, and thus al-Māzarī must be the Maghribi referred to in the letters.

Al-Māzarī is also a likely candidate for the man al-Ghazālī accuses of forgery. As we have seen above, al-Ghazālī writes that the *Ra'īs-i Khorāsān* permanently banished the "forger" from the city, leading him to go to the camp of Sanjar, where he spread his slander of al-Ghazālī to no effect.[94] Certainly the *Ra'īs-i Khorāsān* would find it easier to permanently banish an outsider than a native Nishapuri, especially a religious scholar from the patrician class with important family ties. The slander of al-Ghazālī at Sanjar's court fits with the compiler's claim that the Maghribi spread evil rumors among the great men of the empire.

That the *Ra'īs-i Khorāsān* banished one of al-Ghazālī's key persecutors is further evidence that he enjoyed the backing of important Seljuk officials in his activities in

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[93] Al-Qāḍī `Iyāḍ gives no death date, *Tartīb al-Madārik wa taqrīb al-masālik li-ma`rifat a`lām madhhab Mālik*, Sa`īd Aḥmad A`rāb (ed.), Tetuan: al-Maktaba al-Maghribiyya, 1403/1983, vol. 8, pp. 101-102. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Makhlūf also gives his death date as "after 500," *Shajarat al-nūr al-zakiyya fī ṭabaqāt al-Mālikiyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-`Arabiyya, 197- (reprint of 1349 h. edition, Cairo: al-Maṭba`a al-Salafiyya), p. 125.

[94] Al-Ghazālī reports that the forger was unsuccessful in his attempt to turn Sanjar against him; *Briefe und Reden*, p. 78. The compiler, on the other hand, reports that his efforts led Sanjar to summon al-Ghazālī to his court; ibid., p. 63.

Nishapur. This would have been crucial given that he seems to have enjoyed little popular support in Nishapur. The *Ra'īs-i Khorāsān* at this time, was Abū Muḥammad Manī` ibn Mas`ūd al-Manī` who held the titles *Ra'īs-i Khorāsān, Tāj al-Dīn, Nāṣir al-Mulk* and *Majd al-Dawla.*[95] He was a member of the Manī` family, originally from Marv al-Rud, and his grandfather, Abū `Alī Ḥassān al-Manī` (d. 463/1071), served Niẓām al-Mulk in Nishapur as both *Shaykh al-Islām* and *Ra'īs.*[96] It would seem that Abū Muḥammad Manī` supported al-Ghazālī as the appointee to the Niẓāmiyya of Niẓām al-Mulk's son, Fakhr al-Mulk, against his enemies, leaving them with no choice but to go directly to Sanjar.

The charge that al-Ghazālī had slandered Abū Ḥanīfa resonated with Sanjar, a Ḥanafī himself, where other such charges seemingly had not. According to al-Ghazālī's account, before he was actually summoned to Sanjar's court, a group of his supporters came to speak in his defense, perhaps the group of his students from Ṭūs discussed above.[97] Their defense swayed Sanjar, who summoned al-Ghazālī, partly to hear him respond to the charges but also partly out of a desire simply to meet the man.[98] Al-

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[95] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 221-222.

[96] For brief discussions of Abū `Alī Ḥassān al-Manī`, see Bulliet, *Patricians of Nishapur*, pp. 65, 68, and 74. On the office of *Shaykh al-Islām*, see ibid., pp. 51-57 and 65, and on the office of *ra'īs*, see pp. 66-68

[97] Al-Ghazālī writes simply of a group of pious men without identifying them as his students, though it seems likely that the two groups are the same. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 78.

[98] The compiler writes that al-Ghazālī's defenders came to Sanjar's court after al-Ghazālī had already been summoned and sent a letter to Sanjar asking that he not be forced to come to the court and thereby break his vow at the tomb of Abraham not to appear before Sultans. *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 67-68. Al-Ghazālī writes in the foreword to the transcript of his discourse before Sanjar that the group of pious men appeared in Sanjar's court before he had summoned al-Ghazālī. Their appearance in court lead Sanjar to

Ghazālī began his journey from Ṭūs[99] to Sanjar's court in Turūgh, but stopped in Mashhad to write to Sanjar and ask that he be excused from having to appear before him in order not to break the oath he had taken at the tomb of Abraham never again to appear before rulers.[100] Sanjar denied this request, and so, in 503/1109, al-Ghazālī held his discourse before Sanjar.[101]

The text of his discourse is reminiscent of his Persian letters to other Seljuk officials, consisting mainly of admonition to lead a godly life and to use a worldly office of great power to secure an even more magnificent domain in the afterlife by acting justly. As in the case of the letters, following what seems to be an expected formula,[102] al-Ghazālī comes to the matter at hand only at the end of his discourse. He recounts the story of his summons to teach in Nishapur, emphasizing Fakhr al-Mulk's insistence that he come despite his objections that the age was not ready for his words. He recalls Fakhr al-Mulk's assurance that the King, Sanjar, is just and will stand by him. He pays scant

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summon al-Ghazālī out of a desire to meet so pious a man, hear his words, and profit from his prayers. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 78. The truth seems to lie somewhere in between. Al-Ghazālī certainly felt it necessary to defend himself from the charge that he had slandered Abū Ḥanīfa, a charge addressed at some length in his discourse before Sanjar; he had clearly not been fully absolved. *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 75-76. However, he could not have departed fully from the truth in his foreword, since, after all, Sanjar was to read it and would recognize flagrant falsehoods. The compiler further writes of Sanjar rising to greet al-Ghazālī, embracing him, and having him sit to the side of the throne. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 68.

[99] The compiler writes of al-Ghazālī's "return" to Ṭūs from the court of Sanjar, which might imply that he already resided there, though it could simply refer to the return of a native son to his city. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 79.

[100] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 65-67.

[101] Al-Ghazālī writes in his request to be excused from appearing before Sanjar that he is 53 years old, which, given that he was born in 450/1058, places the audience in 503/1109.

[102] Al-Ghazālī begins his discourse by saying that such discourses consist of four points: prayer, praise, advice, and a request. *Briefe und Reden*, p. 69.

attention to most of the charges that have been made against him, noting that his writings are novel and difficult and that he is prepared to explain them to anyone who questions them. But he expresses his outrage that anyone should have accused him of slandering Abū Ḥanīfa. Anyone, he says, who claims that his writings contain anything but the highest praise for him is a liar. He ends his discourse by asking to be freed from his teaching duties in Nishapur and Ṭūs so that he can withdraw to seclusion as the age will not bear his words.[103]

According to the compiler, Sanjar's response was effusive. He denied the request to leave teaching and insisted that the discourse be written down so that all scholars of Iraq and Khorasan might read it. He told al-Ghazālī that he would have a school built for him and that all scholars would be required to appear before him once per year to have clarified to them everything that was unclear. If they differed from al-Ghazālī, they would have to be patient until he convinced them of his view.[104]

According to `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, al-Ghazālī spent his final years in Ṭūs. This fact is confirmed by another letter,[105] so it would seem that he did not return to Nishapur to teach, though the request that he be excused from teaching in both Nishapur and Ṭūs might suggest that he had some sort of dual appointment. As we have seen, al-

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[103] *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 75-76.

[104] *Briefe und Reden*, p. 76.

[105] In 504/1110, al-Ghazālī rejected a summons to return to teaching at the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad. In his letter, al-Ghazālī writes of earning his living from the revenue of a small piece of land in Ṭūs and of not wanting to leave his children in order to go to Baghdad. He says that even if it were possible to bring Baghdad to Ṭūs, he would not want to take the post. He further speaks of having 150 students in Ṭūs, so it is clear that he continued to teach in his final years in his native city. See *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 134-136.

Ghazālī did write down his discourse with a foreword. The claim that he was appointed an arbiter of correct belief in the Seljuk lands can be attributed to the enthusiasm of the compiler, but Sanjar was clearly impressed. Sanjar later went hunting and sent al-Ghazālī a gift of wild game. Al-Ghazālī reciprocated by writing *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* for Sanjar.[106] With that, the controversy seems to have ended.

The foregoing story, pieced together from al-Ghazālī's Persian letters and the commentary of the compiler of those letters, makes clear that Nishapuri Ḥanafīs and Shāfi`īs overcame their bitter rivalry and formed a common front against al-Ghazālī. The outstanding question at this point is: what led them to do so? The hypothesis I will advance here is that opposition to al-Ghazālī on the part of the *`ulamā'* of Nishapur was opposition to the agenda of *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*. As we have seen, al-Ghazālī actively promoted this program during his period of relative seclusion in Ṭūs, and continued to do so upon his return to teaching in Nishapur. He counted Fakhr al-Mulk among his disciples. Given this relationship and al-Ghazālī's descriptions of his summons to Nishapur, it is clear that Fakhr al-Mulk called upon al-Ghazālī not only as a brilliant scholar of *fiqh*, but also as a proponent of the otherworldly science. Fakhr al-Mulk appointed him to the Niẓāmiyya so that he might be able to promote his agenda in an official capacity.

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[106] This story of Sanjar sending game to al-Ghazālī is told by way of introduction to a text that the compiler claims is a dedication to *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*, which, as I have shown above (n. 41), is in fact a foreword to the transcript to al-Ghazālī's discourse before Sanjar. *Briefe und Reden*, pp. 76-77. For Krawulsky's argument that *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* was written for Sanjar and not Sultan Muḥammad ibn Malikshāh, see ibid., pp. 20-25.

This hypothesis is strengthened by the accounts of the critiques of al-Ghazālī contained in the letters. One of the three works mentioned as targets of criticism is *Kīmiyā' al-sa`āda*, which al-Ghazālī describes as a medium-length treatment of the otherworldly science. One of the two critiques of *Mishkāt al-anwār* is of its discussion of *tawḥīd*; in defending it, al-Ghazālī draws on images and discussions from *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul* (book XXXV of the *Iḥyā'*) thus highlighting the connection between his opponents' criticism of *Mishkāt al-anwār* and an important passage in the *Iḥyā'*.

Further validation of this hypothesis comes from a little-noted work al-Ghazālī wrote during this period, namely *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'*. I will argue that this work was written in response to the controversy in Nishapur. It reveals a critique about which the letters and other sources are silent but which, according to al-Ghazālī's own description, received more attention among scholars than the public critiques of *Mishkāt al-anwār*, *Kīmiyā' al-sa`āda*, or *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*.  Not surprisingly, what riled the scholars was  *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*.

Al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'

Al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā' (*The Composition on the Obscurities of the Revival*) has been assessed in terms of authenticity and date of composition,[107] taken as a source

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[107] Hava Lazarus-Yafeh dates the *Imlā'* to the period between al-Ghazālī's return to teaching and his death, i.e. 499/1106-505/1111. See her *Studies in al-Ghazzālī*, p. 48. Maurice Bouyges restricts the range to 499/1106-503/1109. See his *Essai de chronologie des œuvres de Al-Ghazālī (Algazel)*, pp. 74-78; George Hourani, "The Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," p. 231; idem, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," p. 297. W. Montgomery Watt has argued that the glossary of Sufi terminology found in the beginning of the *Imlā'* is a later insertion. As Asín Palacios noted, the same glossary is found, word for word, in Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-`Arabī's *al-Futuḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Miguel Asín Palacios, *La espiritualidad de Algazel y su sentido cristiano*, Tomo IV: *Crestomatía Algazeliana*, Madrid, 194, p. 82. Watt writes that Ibn al-`Arabī would hardly have found these definitions to his liking if they did represent the thought of al-

for analysis of al-Ghazālī's cosmology[108] and his articulation of theodicy,[109] and

summarized in Spanish.[110]   But, the specific rhetorical aims of the *Imlā'* and the

circumstances of its composition have never been determined. In light of the preceding

analysis of al-Ghazālī's Persian letters, it is now possible for the first time to date the

Imlā' more accurately and to understand it in its proper context. *Al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-*

iḥyā', in turn, casts a very different light on the controversy revealed in the letters.

As the various titles associated with this work reveal,[111] the *Imlā'* is a defense

against criticisms of the *Iḥyā'*. George Hourani has sought to contextualize the work by

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Ghazālī and so writes that they must either be falsely ascribed to al-Ghazālī or simply represent accepted definitions in his day. In either case, he adds, they do not represent al-Ghazālī's thought. I do not know on what basis Watt suggests that Ibn al-`Arabī found al-Ghazālī's thought distasteful. See Watt's "The Authenticity of Works Attributed to al-Ghazālī, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1952, p. 42.

The *Imlā'* was preserved to our day through its being inserted out of order by al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī into his commentary on the *Iḥyā'*, namely *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn* vol. 12, pp. 105-133. Given the disorder of the text, Watt writes, extraneous material could easily have slipped in. However, the glossary is listed in the *khuṭba* of the *Imlā'*, among the material that al-Ghazālī will cover in that work, so if it was slipped in, it was carefully integrated into the work. Al-Zabīdī does sometimes read al-Ghazālī with reference to the thought of Ibn al-`Arabī, explaining for example, his *`ālim al-jabarūt* (accurately, it seems to me) as synonymous with the *barzakh*, or isthmus, between the material world and the divine world. The glossary could have been inserted by al-Zabīdī or someone else as a further effort in this vein. See *Itḥāf*, p.x. Furthermore, Watt points out that few of the terms in the glossary actually come up in the *Imlā'*. The one argument that I see for accepting the glossary as authentic is the possibility that it represents a further attempt by al-Ghazālī to win acceptance for his thought by explicitly associating his position and, by extension, the otherworldly science, with the accepted science of Sufism, as he does in *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, backing away from the ambiguous stance vis-à-vis Sufism found in the *Iḥyā'*.

[108]   Masataka Takeshita, *Ibn `Arabī's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought*, Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1987, p. 92.

[109]   Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, see index, p. 302 for numerous citations.

[110]   Miguel Asín Palacios, *La espiritualidad de Algazel*, pp. 81-117.

[111]   The exact title al-Ghazālī gave this work, if he gave it a title at all, is not certain. There are several titles associated with it: *al-Imlā' fī* (or *`alā*) *ishkālāt* (or *mushkilāt* or *mushkil*) *al-iḥyā'*, or *al-Radd `alā munkirīn ba`ḍ alfāẓ iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*, or *al-ajwiba al-muskita `an al-as'ila al-mubhita*, or *al-intiṣār li-mā fī-l-iḥyā' min al-asrār*.  See `Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Mu'allafāt al-Ghazālī*, Kuwait: Wikālat al-Maṭbū`āt, 2nd ed. 1977.

suggesting that it is a response to the best known incident of an organized campaign

against *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, namely the one that occurred in al-Andalus and the Maghrib

in the first half of the 6th/12th century.[112]   However, the *khuṭba* of the *Imlā'* leaves little

doubt that al-Ghazālī wrote this work in response to the Nishapuri controversy revealed

in his letters.

The beginning of the *khuṭba* reads:

> You have asked—may God gladden you at the degrees of knowledge such
> that you may ascend their ladder, and bring near to you the stages of
> intimacy (*walāya*)[113] such that you may attain its nobility—about some
> points in the composition entitled *The Revival* which were difficult for
> men of limited understanding and little knowledge. Their darts and arrows
> enjoyed no royal favor (*lam yafuz bi-shay' min al-ḥuẓūẓ al-malakiyya
> qidḥuhu wa-sahmuhu*).[114] I showed my sorrow at the contempt shown for
> [*The Revival*] by the populace, the commoners, the ranks of the plebeians,
> and the foolishly deluded, and at those who frighten the people of Islam to
> the extent that they slandered my work (*ṭa'anū 'alayhi*) and prohibited its
> being read and studied (*wa nahaw 'an qirā'atihi wa-muṭāla'atihi*). They
> issued capricious *fatwā*s without insight, repudiating and opposing it
> (*aftaw bi-mujarrad al-hawā 'alā ghayr baṣīratin bi-iṭṭrāḥihi wa-
> munābadhatihi*). They linked its author to perdition and leading others
> into perdition, and they repudiated its readers and those who adopted it as

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[112]   George Hourani, "The Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," p. 231, and idem, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," p. 297.

[113]   For an extensive discussion of this word, or words, see Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. xvii-xxi. Cornell discusses the twin terms *wilāya* and *walāya*. Citing classical discussions of these terms among Sufis and non-Sufis, he concludes that what we conceive of as "Muslim sainthood" encompasses both terms: by virtue of his proximity to, or intimacy with God (*walāya*), the *walī allāh*, or saint, possesses authority among men (*wilāya*). The terms are close enough to one another in meaning that some authors draw no distinction between them and some invert the definitions given above. I have read the ا - ل - و   –   ة - ي   as *walāya* and translated it as "intimacy". I think that this is in keeping with its context and also in keeping with al-Ghazālī's caginess about declaring his advocacy of Sufism that we have seen in the *Iḥyā'*, though, as we shall see below, he is more direct in associating himself with Sufism in the *Imlā'* than he usually is in the *Iḥyā'*. Some of his readers would certainly have read this word as a reference to sainthood.

[114]   That this word should be read as "*malakiyya*", in the sense of "royal", rather than "*mulkiyya*", "proprietary", is clear.

a departure from the *sharī`a* and a lack of balance (*wa-nabadhū qurrā'ahu wa-muntaḥilīhi bi-zayghin fī-l-sharī`a wa-ikhtilāl*).[115]

As we shall see in the next chapter, the campaign against the *Iḥyā'* in the Maghrib proceeded with the blessing of the Almoravid Sultan, Yūsuf b. Tashfīn, and so it *did* find royal favor. Therefore, even if news of the burning of the *Iḥyā'* in the Maghrib in 503/1109 did reach Khorasan before al-Ghazālī's death in 505/1111, which seems unlikely, the *Imlā'* could not have been written in response to this event. It seems certain that al-Ghazālī wrote the *Imlā'* in response to the campaign against him and his thought in Nishapur, and that the royal favor in question was that of Sanjar, the *Malik al-sharq*.

This means that *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'* was written after al-Ghazālī's appearance before Sanjar in 503/1109, probably shortly thereafter while the Nishapuri controversy was still a topic of discussion. The date of composition is thus 503/1109-505/1111, with the earlier end of this range being more probable than the later. Al-Ghazālī addresses the work to a questioner, much as he does in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍallāl* and *Fayṣal al-tafriqa*. Like these two works and unlike his letters, al-Ghazālī composed the *Imlā'* in Arabic and intended it as a part of his corpus. While the *Munqidh* and the *Fayṣal* served as oblique responses to al-Ghazālī's critics, the *Imlā'* directly addresses their critiques, point for point.[116]

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[115] *Imlā'*, p. 13.

[116] In the *Imlā'* (p. 19), al-Ghazālī is quick to point out that by responding to the critiques of his detractors, he is not engaging in debate (*jidāl*). As we know from his letters, this is in keeping with the vow he took at the tomb of Abraham. It could well be that al-Ghazālī responded to his critics indirectly through works like the *Munqidh* and the *Fayṣal* also in order to avoid breaking his vow forswearing *jidāl*.

In many respects, *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'* gives information about the Nishapuri controversy that supports and augments the information found in the letters and other sources. In addition to denouncing al-Ghazālī to Sanjar, we learn that al-Ghazālī's opponents wrote *fatwā*s against his thought and writings, and prohibited the reading and study of the *Iḥyā'*. This latter measure may account for al-Ghazālī's letters to fathers of his students, trying to convince them not to force their sons to break off their studies with him. But in an important way, the account al-Ghazālī gives here cannot be easily reconciled with the account that emerges from the letters: in the *Imlā'*, he claims that the entire controversy was based on opposition to *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*; but this work is not mentioned in the letters as having attracted controversy at all.

Another passage of the preface of the *Imlā'* hints that there were other points of contention beyond those found in the *Iḥyā'*. These are mentioned in passing in al-Ghazālī's introduction to the critiques of the *Iḥyā'* that he will be refuting in the *Imlā'*:

> We have responded to you—with the power of God and His strength and after asking Him for guidance—regarding that about which you asked, especially the specification you desired on the allegory (*al-mathal*) in which the pens were mentioned. For it happened that this is the most controversial matter in the book (*ashhar mā fī-l-kitāb*) and that which flowed most from the mouths of prominent men and companions (*wa akthar taṣarrufan 'alā alsinat al-ṣudūr wa-l-aṣḥāb*). It reached the point that this allegory became the greeting upon entry to gatherings and the talk of the session. Your request gladdened us, and were it not for our being occupied and pressed for time, we would have added to this composition of ours further clarifications of those matters which have been counted as problems, and which were confusing and bewildering to weak intellects. We seek protection in God from Satan. We take refuge with Him from the insolence of the jurists of the age (*wa-nasta'ṣim bihi min jur'at fuqahā' al-*

zamān). We implore him to increase our virtue (*al-iḥsān*). Verily He is the Generous, the Benefactor. [117]

The reference to the "further clarifications" al-Ghazālī would have included had time permitted could be taken as a reference to such issues as the critiques of *Mishkāt al-anwār*, *Kīmiyā' al-saʿāda*, or *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* examined above, and possibly other critiques not mentioned in the available sources. But al-Ghazālī's clear assertion here is that the *Iḥyā'*, specifically the allegory of the pens from *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul*, was the main focus of the Nishapuri controversy. This being the case, a brief recounting of this allegory is necessary before examining the criticisms it elicited.

The allegory is given to clarify al-Ghazālī's conception of *tawḥīd*, understanding of which is necessary to attain the state of Reliance upon God (*tawakkul*). It describes the progress of a *sālik* (lit. "traveler") from the physical world (*ʿālam al-mulk wa-l-shahāda*) to the divine world (*ʿālam al-malakūt*) via an intermediary world (*ʿālam al-jabarūt*), and concurrently through the four levels of *tawḥīd* that al-Ghazālī identifies. The *sālik* first sees a paper blackened with ink and seeks to find the cause of this blemish. He interrogates the paper, then the ink, then the pen, then the hand that held the pen and so on through a chain of causes that leads to God, the causer of causes, and to a mystical vision of the divine pen, sketching its designs on the hearts of men. [118]

This allegorical account of al-Ghazālī's cosmology, which strays in to the restricted realm of Unveiling (*mukāshafa*), serves to explain the knowledge of *tawḥīd* that

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[117] *Imlā'*, pp. 13-14.

[118] *Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn*, vol. IV, pp. 210-216.

is the foundation of the state (*ḥāl*) of reliance upon God (*tawakkul*). Beyond this, it portrays the cosmological underpinnings of al-Ghazālī's privileging of the otherworldly science over the worldly sciences, allowing the former science its unmediated perception of the divine. Finally, it is al-Ghazālī's strongest argument for the demotion of theology to the status of a worldly science, portraying *kalām*—also known as the "Science of Divine Unity" (*ʿilm al-tawḥīd*)—as unable to grasp the most profound, inner dimensions of divine unity, the very object of its study. The allegory of the pens is a central passage of the *Revival*; discrediting it would discredit much of al-Ghazālī's program of reviving the religious sciences.

Our attempt to understand the Nishapuri critics is limited by the fact of having access only to al-Ghazālī's rebuttal and not their original critique. Al-Ghazālī claims, after all, to be responding not even directly to his critics, but to a questioner seeking clarification about their objections. The tone of outrage that slips into his writing from time to time makes clear that al-Ghazālī aims to defend his manifesto and not merely to give clarification to a student of his thought, but it remains impossible to know how accurately he is representing the objections of his critics. There can be little doubt that a written refutation or *fatwā* of the Nishapuri critics would cast a very different light on the controversy. Nonetheless, the *Imlāʾ* does provide a good general sense of the level of sophistication of al-Ghazālī's Nishapuri opponents and their objections to the *Iḥyāʾ*. Even their choice of passages to critique reveals that these critics had a complicated enough understanding of al-Ghazālī's project of revival to find a central and vulnerable point in the *Iḥyāʾ* to attack.

Al-Ghazālī's discussion of the eleven points addressed in the *Imlā'* follows the order in which they are introduced in *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul*.[119] They are not grouped according to theme and do not reflect any attempt on the part of al-Ghazālī's critics to organize their critique for the sake of rhetorical effectiveness. Rather than address each of these eleven points separately, I shall group the critiques by theme in order to clarify the more general objections of al-Ghazālī's critics and the tactics they used to discredit him.

Not all of the objections are of equal gravity. Points eight and nine, for example, simply try to find internal inconsistencies. They point out that the *sālik* regresses from the fourth level of those declaring divine unity (*muwaḥḥidūn*) to the third, and charge that this contradicts al-Ghazālī's earlier claim that one who arrives at the highest level of insight does not regress.[120]

The other critiques are graver, aiming at demonstrating not inconsistency, but affronts to central tenets of the faith. Points three through seven focus on al-Ghazālī's description of the *sālik*'s passage through the three "worlds" and increasingly profound insight into the divine, thus amounting to a direct assault on the possibility of divine insight that is at the heart of his otherworldly science. Points four and six suggest that

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[119] In the edition of the *Imlā'* consulted for this study, the eleven points are not discussed in the order that they appear in the *Iḥyā'* or, for that matter, the order in which they are introduced in al-Ghazālī's *khuṭba*. I hope that this chapter will make the case that the *Imlā'* is an important work in al-Ghazālī's corpus, and that the need for a reliable edition of it is recognized.

[120] *Imlā'*, pp. 14, 34.

aspects of al-Ghazālī's allegory amount to anthropomorphism.[121] Points three and seven

charge al-Ghazālī with blurring the distinction between his *sālik* and the prophets. In his

response to point seven, al-Ghazālī explicitly disassociates himself from the doctrine of

"acquisition of prophethood" (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*), which implies that his critics charged

him with holding precisely this doctrine.[122]

Points two and eleven attack the otherworldly science generally and al-Ghazālī's

vagueness and evasions in describing it. The second point asks how it is that adherents of

the otherworldly science can claim that "revealing the secret of the divinity is unbelief"

(*ifshā' sirr al-rubūbiyya kufr*). If there is legal basis for the otherworldly science, why

should any part of it not be divulged? His critics demand to know the legal foundation

for this science.[123] Point eleven asks why al-Ghazālī discusses the status of these

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[121] *Imlā'*, pp. 14, 37-38.

[122] *Imlā'*, pp. 14, 32.

[123] *Imlā'*, pp. 14, 30, 39-40. Here too, al-Ghazālī's critics seem to have resorted to semantic quibbles in an attempt to reduce the utterance to nonsense, by reading *kufr* not as "unbelief," al-Ghazālī's clear intention, but as "concealing," thus reducing the statement to "revealing the secret of the divinity is concealing." But accompanying this is the much more substantial critique discussed above. It is difficult in this question to disentangle the critique of al-Ghazālī's antagonists, from the concerns of al-Ghazālī's addressee, from al-Ghazālī's own rhetorical objectives in reproducing the question. However, it would seem that the objection is not to Sufism as such, but to al-Ghazālī's formulation of the otherworldly science. The summary reads:

> And what is the meaning of the saying of those concerned with this matter that revealing the secret of the divinity is unbelief? where is the legal basis of what they have said? For belief and unbelief; guidance and error; proximity, distance and sincerity and the rest of the stages of intimacy with God (*sā'ir maqāmāt al-wilāya*) and the descending levels of transgression, these are legal derivations and Prophetic rulings.

The questioner would seem to accept the very Sufi concept of *wilāya*, "intimacy with God," but insists that its determination is the domain of *fiqh*. If this is a more or less verbatim reproduction of the position of al-Ghazālī's critics, then their objection would not seem to be to Sufi concepts and categories *per se*, but to the elevation of Sufism to the position of primary and indispensable science among the religious sciences, that is, its portrayal as the otherworldly science that determines the place and importance

"concealed' (*maknūna*) sciences in ambiguous and puzzling expressions if it is the case that they are permitted by the "Lawgiver" (*shāriʿ*). Both of these points aim to question the legitimacy of the otherworldly science and to imply that al-Ghazālī is hiding an unsound doctrine behind equivocations.

Without a doubt, the most serious objection is to al-Ghazālī's distinguishing between four degrees of *tawḥīd*. Al-Ghazālī devotes as much space to his response to this objection as he does to the other ten combined.[124] His critics have said that the term *tawḥīd* in itself negates division of any sort. This central tenet of the faith permits only a narrow range of understanding, the transgression of which can easily diverge into polytheism (*shirk*) on one side, or agnosticism (*ilbās*)[125] on the other, and both of these amount to unbelief (*kufr*). All of the other ten points are significant, but serve as footnotes to this direct assault on a central component of al-Ghazālī's overall project.

In his lengthy reply to this central criticism, al-Ghazālī argues that much as one must distinguish the *tawḥīd* of angels and prophets from that of men, so, too, can the *tawḥīd* of different groups of men be distinguished.[126] He goes on to reaffirm his demotion of the *mutakallimūn*,[127] and to introduce still further gradations of *muwaḥḥidūn*

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of the worldly sciences of *fiqh* and *kalām*. Again, given the difficulty of determining the voice in which a given statement is spoken, it is impossible to push such speculation further at this point.

[124] *Imlāʾ*, pp. 19-30.

[125] Asín Palácios (p. 94) translates *ilbās* as "ateísmo." I take *ilbās* to be more non-committal and closer to "agnosticism."

[126] *Imlāʾ*, p. 19.

[127] *Imlāʾ*, pp. 28-29.

within the four ranks. The conclusion of his defense of ranking the *muwaḥḥidūn*

suggests that his critics reject the epistemological basis for the otherworldly science as

well as its cosmological basis; that is, they reject the possibility of unmediated insight

into the divine. Faced with this fundamental critique, al-Ghazālī tries to silence his

opponents with a shrill verbal onslaught, since there is no way of convincing an opponent

of the reality of an insight that cannot be fully explained those who do not share it:

> And if you were to deny that God bestowed knowledge of Himself (*al-ma'rifa bihi*) on any of his creatures, how overwhelming would be your scandal and how great the mourning for you that you have subjected mankind to inquisition by your standard, measured them by your measure, and preferred yourself above the rest. There is no cause for your denial, if it is so, except that you imagine that no one has been blessed with that with which you have not been blessed, or that no one can be designated for mystical knowledge for which you have not been designated.[128]

Without the validation of *ma'rifa*, al-Ghazālī's cosmology cannot be asserted, his four-

part ranking of the *muwaḥḥidūn* cannot be maintained, and the exoteric authority of the

mutakallimūn would be restored, along with that of the *fuqahā'*. This is the ultimate aim

of al-Ghazālī's Nishapuri opponents.

There are certainly other passages of the *Iḥyā'* that could be attacked; other critics

found other targets.[129] There are, however, few passages quite as central as this one.

Furthermore, the assertion of multiple, progressive, and simultaneously valid

understandings of *tawḥīd* provides a very tempting target. Even the most unsophisticated

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[128] *Imlā'*, p. 30.

[129] We shall see this in the next chapter.

religious scholar would recognize the paradox inherent in the assertion that essential
Oneness could be construed in many ways.

There is another document that sheds light on additional critiques of the *Iḥyā'*, to which
al-Ghazālī refers in the introduction to the *Imlā'*, but says he will not have time to refute.
This is the critique of al-Ghazālī written by Abū `Abd Allāh al-Māzarī, entitled *al-Kashf
wa-l-anbā' `an al-mutarjim bi-l-iḥyā'*, that Tāj al-Dīn al-Subki excerpts and rebuts in his
Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi`iyya al-kubrā.[130] Because there were three notable Maliki religious
scholars living in the first half of the 6th/12th century named Abū `Abd Allāh al-Māzarī,
the question of which of them is the author of the critique to which al-Subkī responds has
long been debated.[131] As we have seen above, there was a Maghribi Maliki named Abū
`Abd Allāh al-Māzarī, known as al-Dhakī, who participated in the campaign against al-
Ghazālī in Nishapur. Between this fact and similarities between the content of *al-Kashf*

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[130] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 240-252.

[131]   Asín Palacios was the first scholar to take note of the fact that there was more than one Abū `Abd
Allāh al-Māzarī. He translates the biography of Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. `Alī b. `Umar al-Tamīmī
al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141) and a mention of Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī Muslim b. Muḥammad al-
Māzarī al-Qurashī al-Iskandarānī (d. 1135/530) in another biography and argues that the first is the al-
Māzarī who wrote the critique of al-Ghazālī; "Un faqīh siciliano, contradictor de al-Ġazzālī (Abū `Abd
Allāh de Māzara)," *Centenario della nascita di Michele Amari*, Palermo, 1910, vol. 2, pp. 217-223.
Though he does not cite Asín Palacios as his source, Henri Laoust identifies the same al-Māzarī as the
author of the critique cited by al-Subkī; "La Survie de Ġazālī d'après Subkī," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*,
vol. 25, 1972, p. 154. Sa`d Ghurāb adds to the list Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al-Faraj al-Māzarī,
known as al-Dhakī, and points to the above cited entry from al-Dabbāgh, according to which he was
involved in conflicts with al-Ghazālī. Despite this, he writes that it is impossible to know for certain which
of the three was the author of the critique cited by al-Subkī. Oddly, he criticizes Asín Palacios for
declaring Ibn Abī al-Faraj to be the author of the critique, while Asín Palacios in fact identifies the critic as
al-Tamīmī al-Māzarī; "Ḥawl Iḥrāq al-Iḥyā'," pp. 137-138.

wa-l-anbā' and critiques of al-Ghazālī noted in the *Imlā'* and the *Munqidh*, it is possible to identify al-Māzarī al-Dhakī as author of the critique excerpted in al-Subkī.

Al-Māzarī begins his critique with the admission that he has not read the *Iḥyā'*. He writes that he has, instead, relied on discussions with al-Ghazālī's students and companions, which allows him to criticize al-Ghazālī's doctrine as though he had seen it with his own eyes. This claim not to have actually read the *Iḥyā'* fits with the assertion in the letters that the Maghribi was incited against al-Ghazālī by his enemies, who claimed that he had defamed Mālik b. Anas and the Qāḍī Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī.[132]

Several of al-Māzarī's charges against al-Ghazālī are attested to in the letters, the *Imlā'*, or the *Munqidh*. He claims that al-Ghazālī borrowed from the philosophers, a charge rebutted in the *Munqidh* as well as in a letter discussed above. He writes that he was influenced by the *muwaḥḥidūn*, a major point of contention in the Nishapuri campaign that al-Ghazālī responds to in the *Imlā'* as well as one of his letters.[133] He

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[132] The obvious weakness of making this connection is that al-Māzarī refers to al-Ghazālī's students and companions as the source of his information, not his enemies. Still, the case for al-Māzarī al-Dhakī being the Maliki who participated in the Nishapuri controversy and the author of *al-Kashf wa-l-anbā' `an al-mutarjim bi-l-iḥyā'* is a strong one. One possibility is that al-Ghazālī's Nishapuri enemies received their information from students in his class who reported back to them. That this may have been the case is further suggested by al-Ghazālī's claim, discussed above, that a man came to him with an altered copy of the *Munqidh* asking for an *ijāza* as a student would do. As for companions, this may be a reference to al-Ghazālī's fellow *fuqahā'* in Nishapur.

[133] Interestingly, al-Subkī, in his rebuttal of al-Māzarī, clearly does not know exactly what al-Māzarī is referring to by the term *muwaḥḥidūn*, writing that if he means those who declare God's unity, then all Muslims are *muwaḥḥidūn*. If he means those who have attained to the stage of reliance upon God (*ahl al-tawakkul*), these are the greatest of the Sufis. If he means the pantheists, then he was in error, as al-Ghazālī condemned this doctrine numerous times in the *Iḥyā'*; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. VI, p. 246.

charges al-Ghazālī with having been influenced by Sufis,[134] and by those who use allegorical interpretations (*aṣḥāb al-ishārāt*). This last charge may well be an early reference to a more extensive critique that al-Subkī cites later of al-Ghazālī's being influenced by the Brethren of Purity, an accusation, as we have seen, that al-Ghazālī seems to defend himself against indirectly in the *Munqidh*. Or it could be a charge of batinite influence, a school al-Ghazālī famously refutes in the *Munqidh* and elsewhere.

The last of al-Māzarī's charges cited by al-Subkī is that al-Ghazālī claims to hold beliefs that cannot be written of in books. If these tenets are false, al-Māzarī writes, then they should indeed not be written of. If they are true, and this is clearly what al-Ghazālī is claiming, then why should they not be written? This is a clear reference to al-Ghazālī's claim *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul* that "revealing the secret of the divinity is unbelief" (*ifshā' sirr al-rubūbiyya kufr*), a point to which he responds in the *Imlā'*. These parallels between al-Māzarī's critique and issues known to have been at stake in the Nishapuri critique make it clear that both stem from the same controversy.

The criticisms unique to al-Māzarī's refutation include the claim that al-Ghazālī was better versed in law than in theology, and that his theological views were contaminated by his reading of philosophy, with its privileging of reason over revelation. He accuses him of having been influenced specifically by Ibn Sīnā and by the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, as mentioned above. He claims that al-Ghazālī's knowledge of Sufism came from Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. He writes that al-Ghazālī is lax in citing the

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[134] Asín Palacios reads the term *al-mutaṣawwifa* as "false Sufis," writing that if al-Māzarī had simply meant Sufis, he would have written *al-ṣufiyya*. This distinction seems unwarranted. It would seem that al-Māzarī objected to Sufism *tout court*; "Un fiqīh siciliano," p. 226.

sources of his hadith, writing simply that he took them from Mālik or al-Shāfiʿī, for example. He criticizes al-Ghazālī for claiming prophetic precedent for the practice of cutting one's nails beginning with the index finger, and for claiming legal consensus for the position that an adult who dies in ignorance of God's eternity dies a Muslim. In fact, writes al-Māzarī, the majority of jurists are of the opposite opinion, which is a basis for not trusting in al-Ghazālī. This is all of al-Māzarī's critique that al-Subkī reproduces and rebuts. There could be more that al-Subkī chose not to respond to, but there is reason to believe that all his main points are here.[135]

Al-Māzarī's critique is interesting for several reasons. For one, it strengthens van Ess's claim that *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* is nothing but a great apology. This is true not only in the case of points al-Ghazālī addresses specifically as critiques of his thought, such as the charge of philosophical influence, but also in cases in which he takes positions against schools of thought without mentioning that he had been accused of adhering to them, such as the Brethren of Purity. Secondly, it shows that the venerable critique of al-Ghazālī's use of weak hadith was present from the very beginning. Finally, there are important parallels between al-Māzarī's critique and the critique of another Maghribi critic of al-Ghazālī, as will be seen in the next chapter.

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[135] As we will see in the next chapter, Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī criticized al-Ghazālī in terms so similar to al-Māzarī that there can be no doubt that he drew most if not all of his ideas from his fellow Maliki, whether directly or indirectly. There are a couple of minor points from al-Māzarī's critique that al-Ṭurṭūshī does not mention (the fingernail trimming, for example) and there are a couple of points in which al-Ṭurṭūshī expands on al-Māzarī's critique or gives it greater emphasis (his critique of al-Ghazālī's use of hadith for example) but al-Ṭurṭūshī adds nothing major to the points found in al-Subkī's discussion of *al-Kashf wa-l-anbāʾ*, which suggests that al-Subkī discusses everything of note.

It remains to explain how the *Imlā'* can be reconciled with the Persian letters. How could the *Iḥyā'* have been the central concern of al-Ghazālī's critics, as the *Imlā'* asserts, and yet not come up in the account of the controversy found in the letters? As I have begun to argue above, the two versions may be the result of a distinction between the private objections of the Nishapuri *'ulamā'* and their public objections. Their genuine concern was with al-Ghazālī's project of reviving the religious sciences according to the agenda of the *Iḥyā'*, but their public objections were calibrated to have a better chance of turning the Seljuk authorities against al-Ghazālī.

As we have seen above, al-Ghazālī's opponents were thwarted in their attempts to have him sanctioned. His spiritual disciple, Fakhr al-Mulk, had sent al-Ghazālī to Nishapur in full knowledge of what he stood for religiously, perhaps even, precisely because of his agenda of reviving the religious sciences. His return to teaching was heralded by some as the coming of the centennial "Reviver," not Renewer in this case, of the religion. Attempts to censure al-Ghazālī on the basis of doctrinal positions found in works such as *Mishkāt al-anwār*, and *Kīmiyā' al-sa'āda* failed and led to the banishment of one of his critics by the *Ra'īs-i Khorasān*. Finally, al-Ghazālī's critics, Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, and even Malikī, denounced him for having slandered Abū Ḥanīfa in his youth, succeeding thereby in capturing the attention of the Ḥanafī Seljuk ruler.

Just as the charge of having slandered Abū Ḥanīfa was leveled for its efficacy rather than its relevance to the true concerns al-Ghazālī's Nishapuri opponents, so too were objections to more marginal texts made to the authorities because the *Iḥyā'* was off-limits. Al-Ghazālī had been brought to Nishapur to revive the religious sciences, and the

Seljuk authorities would brook no opposition to his mission. His enemies were left with no choice but to try to drive a wedge between al-Ghazālī and his patrons by pointing out objectionable passages in other works. It is telling that one of the main passages that they objected to was one in *Mishkāt al-anwār* that also proposed a distinction between Muslims in terms of their comprehension of *tawḥīd*. Unable to overtly criticize the *Iḥyāʾ*, it would seem that they chose a passage from another work that paralleled the passage in the *Iḥyāʾ* to which they most objected.

Conclusion

Two years after abruptly leaving his chair at the Niẓamiyya in Baghdad, al-Ghazālī returned to his home city of Ṭūs. Far from dedicating his time exclusively to the solitary pursuit of spiritual perfection, he devoted himself to promoting the agenda of his manifesto, begun during the first two years of his new life and completed some time after his return to the city of his birth.[136] *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* informed its author's writings as well as his actions in this period. He used his influence to promote the fortunes of like-minded comrades, recruited young scholars to the otherworldly science, and cultivated

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[136] It is difficult to know with certainty when al-Ghazālī completed the *Iḥyāʾ*. That he had at least drafts by some sections when he returned to Baghdad in 490/1097 is confirmed by Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī, who says that when he was al-Ghazāī's student in Baghdad, beginning in Jumāda II, 490/May 1097, he studied all of his books with him (*qaraʾtu ʿalayhi*) but writes that he heard (*samiʿtu*) the *Iḥyāʾ*. The distinction must be significant. Hourani accepts that the *Iḥyāʾ* was completed after al-Ghazālī's return to Ṭūs, but writes that there is no way to know when during his nine-year stay there he would have finished; see his "The Chronology of al-Ghazālī's Writings," pp. 229-230. Arguments for a later date of completion seem to be the sheer length of the *Iḥyāʾ*. However, there is evidence of books of similar length being written in this period in a matter of months. George Makdisi writes that Ibn ʿAqīl's *Kitāb al-funūn*, a work of 267 folios that came to almost 800 printed pages, was written in a period of about four months. Makdisi points out that Ibn ʿAqīl wrote some 200 works of this type—almost one hundred and sixty thousand pages. If this was the norm for some *ʿulamāʾ* of this period, it would not be surprising to find that al-Ghazālī, also a fairly prolific writer, completed the *Iḥyāʾ* shortly after his return to Ṭūs. See George Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," p. 218.

the discipleship of some Seljuk officials through letters and a Persian synopsis of the *Iḥyā'*, namely *Kīmiyā' al-sa`āda.* When, just before the beginning of the new century, Fakhr al-Mulk summoned him to return to teaching at the Niẓāmiyya in Nishapur, al-Ghazālī compromised a vow he had taken at the tomb of Abraham in Hebron and returned to teaching in an official capacity. He was encouraged in this by men who told him that it was he whom God was sending to be the *mujaddid,* or Renewer, of the sixth Islamic century, insofar as he was the Reviver of the religion, that is, the author and proponent of the *Revival of the Religious Sciences.* It was precisely this that led Fakhr al-Mulk to appoint him and to promise him support, and under these circumstances, as al-Ghazālī tells us in the *Munqidh,* he and his supporters had a great deal of optimism that he could transform the religious landscape.

As `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī tells us, al-Ghazālī's return to teaching in Nishapur quickly stirred controversy. The bitter divide between Ḥanafīs and Shāfi`īs was bridged to oppose the man who sought to "revive" religion by demoting the reigning religious sciences, *kalām* and *fiqh,* as worldly sciences, and subjecting them to some version of Sufism called the otherworldly science. A campaign against the *Iḥyā'* raged among the religious classes through *fatwā*s and sermons to the commoners and through campaigns to stop the *Iḥyā'* from being taught. Limited in their ability to attack al-Ghazālī directly due to his official patronage, his critics sought out questionable passages in works of his that did not enjoy official approval. One in particular, a passage in *Mishkāt al-anwār* that was a variation on one of the most offensive themes in the *Iḥyā',* was especially attractive to al-Ghazālī's enemies. Al-Ghazālī responded to these critiques obliquely through

publicly disseminated works such as *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* and *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa-l-zandaqa*, as well as responding directly to their charges in letters to his supporters.

Although Fakhr al-Mulk, al-Ghazālī's disciple and patron, had been assassinated shortly after al-Ghazālī took up his new post in Nishapur, the would-be Reviver was not without protection. His enemies' attempts to discredit him through critiques of passages in *Mishkāt al-anwār*, *Kīmiyā' al-saʿāda*, and *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* resulted in the banishment of one of their number by the *Ra'īs-i Khorasān*. Attempts to bring the same charges directly at the court of Sanjar also met with failure. Al-Ghazālī's enemies resorted to a new tactic. Rather than try to obtain al-Ghazālī's official censure on the basis of his doctrines, they made Sanjar question him by presenting evidence that al-Ghazālī had, some thirty years previously, slandered Abū Ḥanīfa, a charge sure to gain the attention of the Ḥanafī Seljuks.

It was not in the interest of al-Ghazālī's accusers to emphasize their objections to *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*, given that this work enjoyed official favor. Neither was it in al-Ghazālī's interest to risk an official inquiry into his doctrines before Sanjar, a man unlikely to be as sophisticated as his *wazīr*s, such as Fakhr al-Mulk, or other Persian administrators. He preferred to dismiss the passages attacked by his enemies as forgeries, rather than defend them before Sanjar as he had defended them to sympathetic scholars in his Persian letters. He contented himself with focusing on the charge of having slandered Abū Ḥanīfa in passages in the *Mankhūl*, dismissing these, too, as forgeries. He won acquittal before Sanjar, maintained official favor, and was even summoned to teach again

at the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad in 504/1110, a summons that he rejected. He made sure, however, to refute the charges of his enemies in writing not intended for official eyes. He defended his manifesto in an Arabic treatise, to ensure that his enemies' efforts would come to nothing, and that *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* would influence the course of the religion for generations to come—as indeed it did.[137]

Though the major criticisms raised in the Nishapuri controversy did not immediately vanish, as we shall see in the following chapter, the objections of al-Ghazālī's critics experienced an unusual fate that neither he nor they could have foreseen. Most of the eleven points of objection to *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* quickly faded from memory, with one exception. The tenth point, a marginal objection that elicited a short, one-paragraph response from al-Ghazālī in the *Imlā'*, took on a life of its own. The criticism of al-Ghazālī's formulation of theodicy, the claim that this is the best of all possible worlds, or, as the synopsis of this position came to read, "There can be nothing more wondrous than that which is" (*laysa fī-l-imkān abda' mimmā kān*), was taken up again and again by scholars over the next eight centuries.[138] It was not the last time that the power of contingency and unforeseen consequences made their presence felt in the course of the reception of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn.*

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[137] On the diffusion of the *Iḥyā'*, including numerous abridgements, Shiite, Ibāḍī, Zaydi, and even Christian versions, as well as numerous individuals who knew large portions of the work by heart, see Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, pp. 450-459.

[138] See Eric Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought, passim.*

For all that al-Ghazālī was acquitted by Sanjar and for all the success his masterpiece has enjoyed down to the present day, there is an important sense, in which his reaction to his critics represents a retreat from the most radical aspirations of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, that foreshadows the way the work would be received by posterity. As we have seen, there is an ambiguity in the way the al-Ghazālī portrays his ambition in promoting the otherworldly science over the worldly sciences. In some passages of the *Iḥyā'*, al-Ghazālī spells out a minimal role for *fiqh* in treating the practical issues of local Muslim communities, and for *kalām* in combating actual instances of heresy. He condemns any exercise of either science for strictly academic purposes, insisting that such practice is a distraction from the otherworldly science whose pursuit is mandatory for anyone with the intellectual capacity for either *fiqh* or *kalām*. Such passages, with their practical guidelines for implementation of the program of the *Iḥyā'*, suggest an optimism that Islam can in fact be revived according to his criteria, and that the otherworldly science can become the principal focus of the majority of Muslims. In other passages, however, he seems to recognize that his vision of the religion will always remain that of the minority, quoting the hadith, "Islam began as a stranger and will return to being a stranger as it began." This tension in the work cannot be resolved.

When al-Ghazālī set out for Nishapur in 499/1106, he and his supporters in Ṭūs seem to have been optimistic that the *Iḥyā'* could be a blueprint for transforming the society at a whole; he seems to have gravitated towards the more ambitious vision of the work's potential. He and his supporters were quite sure that his return to teaching was proof that he was, in fact, the *mujaddid* of the sixth century hijri insofar as he would use

his position at the Niẓāmiyya to revive religious science. By 503/1109, that enthusiasm was gone, and al-Ghazālī told Sanjar in the course of his self-defense that the age would not bear his views. This could be taken as a ploy to provoke Sanjar to act to prove the contrary, but there is reason to believe that al-Ghazālī really meant what he said, and that he had moved towards the other pole of this tension in the *Iḥyā'*: he saw his grander vision as one that would only be fully realized by a smaller circle of "strangers."

In the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī's first attempt at apology, there is no longer any promotion of the otherworldly science, with its broad claims to merge the higher, otherworldly functions of *fiqh* and *kalām* with Sufism, and to have precedence over the worldly functions of these sciences. Rather, the *Munqidh* advocates Sufism as a science among the religious sciences, one that leads to certainty where *kalām* cannot, to be sure, but clearly lacking the far-reaching authority of *'ilm al-ākhira*. When pleading his case before Sanjar, al-Ghazālī chose not to stand or fall with the science he came to Nishapur to promote. Rather, he painted his opponents' critiques as forgeries, sparing himself the risk of having to account for his positions and hopefully win approval for them. He achieved acquittal but not vindication.

It has been demonstrated that the *Iḥyā'* became hugely influential in the centuries after al-Ghazālī. But *fiqh* and *kalām* were able to retain their prominence, such that over a century later, Muḥī al-Dīn Ibn al-`Arabī (whose *laqab* must surely derive from the title of al-Ghazālī's masterpiece)[139] could lament that the *fuqahā'*,

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[139] An observation made to me in 2000 by Irfan Shahid.

…covet the goods of this world, studying *fiqh* out of vanity in order that they be noticed and spoken of, and so that they may take pleasure in arguments and vain controversies. Such are those who attack the men of the other world, those who fear God and receive science from him. These jurists attempt to refute a science that they do not know and of whose foundations they are ignorant.[140]

For all the success of the *Iḥyā'*, the fundamental cause of the mortification of the religious sciences that al-Ghazālī sought to reverse was unchanged. The radical implications of the book were forgotten even as it became one of the most widely read works of Islamic religious science.

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[140] Quoted from Vincent Lagardère, *Les Almoravides: Le Djihad Andalou (1106-1143)*, Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1998, p. 238.

CHAPTER III

IḤYĀ' 'ULŪM AL-DĪN IN THE MAGHRIB: THE BURNING OF 503/1109, ITS CAUSES, AND ITS IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

By the time al-Ghazālī completed *Iḥyā' 'ulum al-dīn* at the end of the 5th/11th century, Sufism was a mature religious science in the Muslim east. Numerous works of Sufi doctrine and collective biography were in circulation, Sufis were revered by politically powerful men such as Niẓām al-Mulk, and Sufi hostels seem to have been widespread.[1] In the Muslim west,[2] by contrast, Sufism was still in its infancy. After an initial blossoming in the 4th/10th century under Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931) who wrote several treatises and gathered a group of followers, there are only scattered references to

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[1] Al-Ghazālī stayed in the *ribāṭ* of Abū Sa`īd across from the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa in Baghdad upon his return from wandering in the Levant and the Hijaz; Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, *Qānūn al-ta'wīl*, Muḥammad al-Sulaymānī (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990, p. 111. `Abd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī writes that al-Ghazālī taught in a madrasa and a *khānqāh* near his house in Ṭūs; al-Subkī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi`iyya al-kubrā*, vol. 6, p. 210.

[2] This study accepts Vincent Cornell's assertion that all of the Muslim or Islamic west is best conceived of as a single cultural entity, especially in this period in which al-Andalus was ruled from Marrakech; Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. xxiv. As we will see, the debate over *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* was engaged in on both sides of the Straits of Gibraltar. Andalusi *fuqahā'* won support for the burning from `Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn, who lived in North Africa, and their verdict was enforced in North Africa as well as al-Andalus. Maghribi *fuqahā'* such as Qāḍī `Iyāḍ served as judges in al-Andalus, and major Andalusi jurists, such as Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī and Ibn Rushd died on the other side of the Straits of Gibraltar. Clearly, Andalusis possessed a separate identity, and we find that Andalusi biographical dictionaries are very conscious of who was Andalusi and who was not. But Andalusis, while in the Mashriq, sometimes referred to themselves as Maghribis, which expressed the reality of the broader cultural unity of this zone, as well as the shared travel route to the Mashriq. The terms Islamic west, Muslim west, *al-Maghrib*, and Maghribi will be used to refer to the region generally. Al-Andalus will be used to refer specifically to al-Andalus, and al-Maghrib al-Aqṣā' will be used to refer to an area that roughly corresponds to modern day Morocco.

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Sufis in the sources over the next nearly two centuries.[3] Then, in the third and fourth

decades of the 6th/12th century, Sufism emerged as a major force in the Maghrib. By the

middle of the 6th/12th century, we find Sufis such as Ibn Barrajān, Ibn al-`Arīf, and Ibn

Qasī writing mystical treatises of great originality, as well as a Sufi order, the *murīdūn*,

led by Ibn Qasī, mounting a revolt against the Almoravids. By the beginning of the

7/13th century, Maghribi works of collective hagiography begin to appear. This rapid

transition has not been adequately explained.[4]

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[3] Opinions vary widely over the question of whether Ibn Masarra can be considered a Sufi. Asín Palacios' assertion that his doctrines were based on the writings of Pseudo-Empedocles has been refuted; see S. M. Stern, "Ibn Masarra, Follower of Pseudo-Empedocles—An Illusion," in F. Zimmerman (ed.) *Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Thought*, London: Variorum, 1983, article V, pp. 325-337. However, there are still some who claim that he was a Neoplatonist philosopher; see E. Tornero, "Noticia sobre la publicación de obras inéditas de Ibn Masarra," *Al-Qantara*, XIV, 1993, pp. 47-64. There is evidence that Ibn Masarra did make claims that go beyond what is normally thought of as Sufi thought. In a refutation of Ibn Masarra's thought, Abū `Umar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1037), himself a Sufi, wrote that Ibn Masarra claimed to be a prophet.  Some Mashriqi ascetics, such as Abū Sa`īd Ibn al-A`rābī, also wrote refutations of his thought. See Maribel Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus, pp. 178-184. Claude Addas maintains that Ibn Masarra was a Sufi, pointing to influence on his writings by the early Mashriqi Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī, as well as favorable mention of his doctrine by Muḥī al-Dīn Ibn al-`Arabī.  See Claude Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn `Arabī," *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, S.K. Jayyusi, (ed.), Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1992, pp. 917-919. Alexander Knysh suggests that Ibn Masarra be seen as an early Sufi thinker, most of whose thought was not adopted by the main current of Sufism as it later developed. This seems a fruitful approach. See Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 113-115.

[4] Maribel Fierro writes that, in the absence of monographic studies, it is still not possible to determine whether the florescence of Sufism in the first half of the 6th/12th century in the Maghrib was due to developments that occurred during the previous century, or whether it was due to the introduction of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*. Her personal hypothesis is that it was due to the developments of the 5th/11th century, especially the teachings of Abū `Umar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1037).  She points to extensive discussions and polemics in this period over the qualities of saints, such as their ability to perform miracles, and also to an encounter between Ibn Ḥazm (456/1064) and a Sufi named Muḥammad b. `Isa al-Ilbīrī. Ibn Ḥazm saw al-Ilbīrī preaching and wanted to refute his doctrines but was afraid to do so lest he be attacked by al-Ilbīrī's reverential audience; the encounter shows that Sufism not only existed, but also had a popular audience. See Maribel Fierro, *La Religion*, in *Historia de España vol. VIII/1: Los Reinos de Taifas: Al-Andalus en el siglo XI*, Ramón Menéndez Pidal (ed.), Madrid: Espasa Calpe, S. A., 1994, p. 437. For a more extensive treatment of her view of al-Ṭalamankī's role in the development of Andalusi Sufism, see Maribel Fierro, "The Polemic about the *karāmāt al-awliyā'* and the Development of Ṣūfism in al-Andalus (Fourth/Tenth-Fifth/Eleventh Centuries), *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. LV, 1992, pp. 236-249. Vincent Cornell writes that Sufism arrived in Morocco at the beginning of the 5th/11th century, approximately two and a half centuries after it appeared in the Muslim east and a century after it appeared in al-Andalus; *Realm of the Saint*, p. 4. Cornell, too, portrays the development of Sufism in the Maghrib as

This chapter will argue that a group of Maghribi Sufis that formed at the beginning of the 6th/12th century played an important role in this transition by adopting *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* as its authoritative guide. This group emerged in response to newly heightened tensions between ascetically minded religious scholars who were suspicious of political authorities on one hand, and jurists who benefited from the increased status and influence of the *fuqahā'* under the Almoravid regime, on the other.

It has long been recognized that the *fuqahā'* enjoyed exceptional power and status under the Almoravids. It has also been recognized that there were some religious scholars who objected to this new symbiosis between religious and political authority. These two trends among religious scholars—seeking proximity to political authority on one hand and shunning it on the other—had long been in tension with one another. When, under the Almoravids, those among the jurists who sought proximity to the rulers achieved it as never before, it provoked a reaction among those who had long condemned such a relationship.

Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn gave the ascetics a set of arguments to use against politically connected jurists through its distinction between worldly scholars and otherworldly scholars. It further gave a theoretical basis to their claim for the epistemological superiority of their science, and a set of practical guidelines for the practice of Sufism.

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gradual and organic, emphasizing influence across the Straits of Gibraltar rather than between the Maghrib and Mashriq. At the same time, he points to the important influence of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm l-dīn* on the development of Maghribi Sufism, as well as the role of other Mashriqi Sufi thinkers, such as al-Sulamī, al-Isfahānī, and al-Qushayrī; *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 3-31. I differ from Cornell only in suggesting that the *Iḥyā'* had a more dramatic impact on Maghribi Sufism. Certainly, it landed in fertile soil, prepared by many years of Sufi thought and practice. But, as I will argue, there is good evidence that the catalyst for the sudden florescence of Sufism in the mid 6th/12th century was *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*.

When the *Iḥyā'* was burned in 503/1109 in response to the activities of this group, it gave them a cause and a greater sense of group identity, which was still evident in the first major works of Sufi biography over a century later. Certainly there had been Sufis in the Muslim west for over a century before the burning of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*, but through their adoption of the agenda of that work and their collective experience of championing it in the face of opposition, a specifically Maghribi sense of Sufi identity was formed.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the political and religious milieu of the Maghrib under the Almoravids out of which sprang the Sufis who championed the *Iḥyā'* and the jurists who called for its burning. Following this will be an examination of the sources for the burning of 503/1109 to determine their reliability and the scope of the campaign they describe. Next will come a discussion of the motives of the *fuqahā'* who led the campaign, focusing on the surviving fragment of the refutation of the *Iḥyā'* by Ibn Ḥamdīn (d. 508/1114), the *qāḍī al-jamā`a* of Cordoba who ordered the burning. We then will look at the role of the *Iḥyā'* and the memory of its burning in the formation of Maghribi Sufi thought and identity by examining references to al-Ghazālī's masterpiece in the early 7th/13th century Maghribi hagiography *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the reception of the *Iḥyā'* in the Maghrib among the *fuqahā'* in the years following the burning.

Religious Scholars and Political Authority under the Almoravids

By the late 5th/11th century, *fiqh* and its practitioners had long enjoyed prestige in all Muslim societies as evidenced by al-Ghazālī's descriptions of the *fuqahā'* in the *Iḥyā'*. Furthermore, the *fuqahā'*, as guardians of the law, had always had an important

relationship with political power. Rulers appointed judges and other officials from among their ranks, and the population often looked to the *fuqahā'* to represent their interests to the rulers. This was as true in al-Andalus as anywhere else.[5] Such was the influence of Andalusi *fuqahā'*, especially those who attained the rank of *qāḍī*, that when the central authority collapsed and a so-called *ṭā'ifa*, or factional, period ensued, it was sometimes *qāḍī*s who stepped in to assume political power.[6] An example of this is the `Abbādid dynasty that ruled the *ṭā'ifa* state of Seville: it was founded in 1023 by Muḥammad b. Ismā`īl b. `Abbād (d. 433/1041), who had himself been a *qāḍī*.

Under the Almoravids, however, the *fuqahā'* came to enjoy an even greater degree of influence. The Almoravid movement was founded by a *faqīh*, `Abd Allāh b. Yāsin (d. 451/1059). Yūsuf b. Tahsfīn (d. 500/1106), the Almoravid ruler who led the Almoravid conquest of al-Andalus, is said to have consulted regularly with the jurists.[7] Almohad era sources go so far as to claim that his successor, `Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn,

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[5] For an analysis of the appointment of officials to the legal and law enforcement apparatus in the *ṭā'ifa* period, and discussion of which officials were likely to be appointed from among the ranks of the *fuqahā'*, see Christian Müller, *Gerichtspraxis im Stadtstaat Córdoba: Zum Recht der Gesellschaft in einer mālikitisch-islamischen Rechtstradition des 5./11. Jahrhunderts*, Leiden: Brill, 1999.

[6] This happened several times in Andalusi history. The most famous of these periods was the one that followed the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate at the at the beginning of the 5th/11th century, ushering in nearly a century of rule by the "Party Kings," or *mulūk al-ṭawā'if*. There were also brief *ṭā'ifa* periods at the end of the Almoravid and Almohad periods. For a study of *quḍāt* who emerged as rulers when these power vacuums occurred, see Maribel Fierro, "The *Qāḍī* as Ruler," *Saber religioso y poder politico en el Islam: Actas del simposio internacional (Granada, 15-18 octubre 1991)*, Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1994, pp. 71-116.

[7] In his letter to Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn, al-Ghazālī writes that `Abd Allāh Ibn al-`Arabī had told him that Yūsuf honored "*ahl al-`ilm*" and followed the prescriptions of their *fatwā*s. See Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, *Kitāb shawāhid al-jilla*, p. 310.

never made a decision without first consulting the *fuqahā'*.[8] Though this deference to the *fuqahā'* doubtless reflects genuine piety on the part of these two rulers, their publicizing of this fact was also a shrewd tactic to gain political legitimacy.

Because of their partiality towards the *fuqahā'*, and because of the ruling Party Kings were unable to halt the conquests of the Christian states from the north, many jurists of al-Andalus aided the Almoravids in taking power north of the Straits of Gibraltar. Two *qāḍī*s of Granada, Ibn al-Qulay`ī (d. 498/1104) and Ibn Sahl (d. 486/1093), betrayed the ruler of that *ṭā'ifa*, Ibn Buluqqīn (ruled 465-482/1073-1090), to the Almoravids,[9] while a *faqīh* of Seville, Abū Qāsim al-Hawzanī (435/1043-512/1118) aided their conquest of that city.[10]

The *fuqhā'* were rewarded for their loyalty. The Almoravids divided al-Andalus into three districts, each of which was under the supervision of a *qāḍī al-quḍāt*, who oversaw a judicial hierarchy of the land and had administrative as well as legal responsibilities. Vincent Lagardère has noted that the terminology for the appointment of a *qāḍī* changed in this period. Previously there had been a word specific to the appointment of a judge as: *istināba*. Under the Almoravids, the same terms were used for the appointment of a *qāḍī* that were used for appointing any other functionary in the

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[8] María Jesús Viguera Molíns, *Parte segunda: Historia Polítítica, Historia de España vol. VIII/2: El retroceso territorial de al-Andalus, Almorávides y Almohades, siglos XI al XIII,* Ramón Menéndez Pidal (ed.), Madrid: Espasa Calpe, S. A., 1997, p. 55.

[9] `Abd Allāh b. Buluqqīn, *Mudhakkarāt al-amīr `Abd Allāh: ākhir mulūk banī zīrī bi-gharnāṭa al-musammā bi-kitāb "al-tibyān",* E. Lévi-Provençal (ed.), Cairo: Dār al-ma`ārif, 1955, pp. 125-127. For the story of another *qāḍī* who tried subtly to usurp the throne using the same tactics, see ibid., p. 172.

[10] Sa`īd A`rāb, *Ma` al-Qāḍī Abī Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī,* Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1987, p. 11.

administration: *taqlīd* or *tawliya*.[11] Furthermore, Almoravid *fuqahā'* were paid directly

from the state treasury.[12] This suggests that the *quḍāt* were fully integrated into the

Almoravid administration. Al-Marrākushī writes that the *fuqahā'* in this period achieved

a position whose like they had not enjoyed since the conquest of al-Andalus.[13]

　　We can assume that, in the eyes of these jurists, such a relationship between

religious and political authority enjoyed divine sanction. It was absolutely proper that

rulers should defer to the guardians of the divine law in making decisions. Al-Ghazālī

himself provided a *fatwā* in support of the Almoravid seizure of power in al-Andalus

from the Party Kings,[14] and, as we have seen, even after his retreat from the world,

continued to correspond with political rulers, exhorting them to greater justice and piety.

Furthermore, the religious scholars who benefited from their closeness to the rulers saw it

as fully proper that the rulers should support religious scholars in their noble pursuit of

knowledge. As Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, one of the leading Andalusi religious scholars of

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[11] Vincent Lagardère, "La haute judicature à l'époque Almoravide en al-Andalus," *al-Qantara*, vol. 7, 1986, p. 137.

[12] For a discussion of the authority of the *quḍāt* and their relations to the state in the Almoravid period, see Rachid El Hour, "The Andalusian Qāḍī in the Almoravid Period: Political and Judicial Authority," *Studia Islamica*, vol. 90, 2000, pp. 67-83.

[13] `Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī, *al-Muʿjib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, Muḥammad Saʿīd al-`Aryān and Muḥammad al-`Arabī al-`Alamī eds., Casablanca: Dār al-Kutub, seventh edition, 1978, p. 253.

[14] Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, *Shawāhid al-jilla*, pp. 302-315.  See also María J. Viguera, "Las cartas de al-Ghazālī y al-Ṭurṭūshī al soberano Almorávid Yùsuf b. Tāšfīn," *Al-Andalus*, XLI, 1977, pp. 341-374, and E. Lévi-Provençal, "Le titre souverain des Almoravides et sa légitimation par le Califat `Abbāside," *Arabica*, vol. 2, 1955, pp. 265-280.

the Almoravid period, put it, "What an aid political power is to gaining knowledge!" (*wa-ni`ma-l-`awn `ala-l-`ilm al-ri'āsa*).[15]

However, not all religious scholars welcomed the new position of their class vis-à-vis the Almoravid rulers. Some saw it as a grave compromise of the sanctity of divine law. Wariness of trafficking with political authority had a long tradition among religious scholars. There had long existed a reluctance to hold offices appointed by rulers in al-Andalus, not to mention in the Mashriq. In particular, many jurists who were offered the position of *qāḍī al-jamā`a* refused to accept the appointment. In fact, a convention arose among jurists whereby it was expected of prospective appointees that they initially refuse the office before accepting it, presumably to maintain the appearance of independence of the ruler and reluctance to hold authority.[16] However, there was a minority of religious scholars who were genuinely scrupulous about their contact with power; such a jurist would be described in the biographical sources as *munqabiḍ*, or "withdrawn" from the ruler.

For some of these *munqabiḍūn*, this took the form of avoiding any action that could be construed as seeking favor with the ruler, and, at times, acting in ways that demonstrated their disregard for political authority. In other cases, this took the form of refusing to hold any official position, draw an official salary, or even enjoy the hospitality

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[15] *Qānūn al-ta'wīl*, p. 116.

[16] Christian Müller, *Gerichtspraxis*, p. 138.

of one who did receive his money from the regime.[17] Many of those described in biographical dictionaries as *munqabiḍūn* are also described as *zuhhād* or ascetics.[18] Many scholars today see this group as a forerunner of the Sufis that emerged as a major presence in the 6th/12th century.[19]

While men like Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī welcomed the closer relation between religious and political authority, those with an inclination to *inqibāḍ* were horrified by it. An example of this reaction is found in the story of `Abd al-`Azīz al-Tūnisī (d. 486/1093), a *faqīh* and *zāhid* originally from Málaga and later of Aghmāt. After seeing too many of his students use the knowledge he had imparted to them to win official appointments, he stopped giving instruction in *fiqh*, as he had come to see himself as the equivalent of "a man who sells weapons to thieves" (*ṣirnā bi-ta`līminā lahum ka-bā'i` al-*

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[17] See Manuela Marín, "*Inqibāḍ `an al-sulṭān*: *`Ulamā'* and Political Power in al-Andalus," *Saber religioso y poder político en el Islam: Actas del simposio internacional (Granada, 15-18 octubre 1991)*, Madrid: Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional, 1994, pp. 127-139.

[18] See Manuela Marín, "*Inqibād `an al-sulṭān*," pp. 129-130 for examples of *zuhhād* described as *munqabiḍ*, but see pp. 133 and esp. 139 for a discussion of the fact that many *zuhhād* did not shun holding legal and administrative office, and can be found visiting the politically powerful. Marín does, however, claim that the most ascetic and pious religious scholars were *munqabiḍ*, so if not all *zuhhād* were *munqabiḍūn*, most *munqabiḍūn* were *zuhhād*. See also idem, "*Zuhhād* de al-Andalus (300/912-420/1029)," *Al-Qantara*, XII, 1991, pp. 439-469.

[19] *Zuhd*, or asceticism, continued to play an important part in Sufi practice, and al-Ghazālī devoted book 34 of the *Iḥyā'* to poverty and asceticism. Vincent Cornell has characterized early Maghribi Sufis as practitioners of a heroic piety and asceticism rather than proponents of a particular metaphysical doctrine; *Realm of the Saint*, p. 4. This suggests that early ascetics were proto-sufis. But more work needs to be done on the relationship between self-identified *zuhhād* and Sufis. Did the first group transform into the second? Did Sufis and ascetics continue to exist side by side? Is *zuhd* simply part of the spectrum of Sufi practices? Hopefully future research will address these questions.

silāḥ min al-luṣūṣ).[20] He later found that his students were inadvertently committing usury out of ignorance of *fiqh* and so took up instruction of *fiqh* again.[21]

A similar revulsion at the exploitation of *fiqh* for worldly gain is found in a poem by the Andalusi poet Abū Ja`far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad known as Ibn al-Bannī:

> Hypocrites! You have gained recognition like a wolf who moves in the darkness of the night.

> The Doctrine of Mālik has made you masters of the world, and you have used the name of Ibn al-Qāsim [one of the main compilers of Maliki law] to gather all your riches.[22]

Clearly, these are the opinions of a poet and not a religious scholar, but his verses speak to a more generalized sentiment with which the objections of the *munqabiḍūn* would have resonated.

The differing attitudes towards political power held by these two groups brought them into conflict with one another. Some of the *munqabiḍūn* avoided contact with fellow religious scholars who were less scrupulous about profiting from political authorities. Manuela Marín tells the story of an ascetic, Abū Bakr b. Mujāhid al-Ilbīrī,

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[20] Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Kitāb al-ṣila*, Ibrahīm al-Abyārī (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, al-Maktaba al-Andalusiyya, vols. 11-13, 1989, vol. 2, p. 549. Given his death date, this decision could have come during the *ṭā'ifa* period. However, in *al-tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, it is specified that he came to this insight when he was in Morocco and encountered his Moroccan students who had used the knowledge of *fiqh* he imparted to them to gain positions as *qāḍī*s, preachers in mosques (*khuṭabā'*), professional witnesses (*shuhūd*), and the like; Abū Ya`qub Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf wa akhbār Abī al-`Abbās al-Sabtī*, Ahmed Toufik (ed.), Rabat: al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya, Jāmi`at Muḥammad al-Khāmis, Manshūrāt Kulliyyat al-Ādāb wa-l-`Ulūm al-Insāniyya bi-l-Rabāṭ, Silsilat Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt, no. 9, 1997, p. 93.

[21] *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, p. 93.

[22] Quoted and translated by Ronald A. Messier, "Re-Thinking the Almoravids, Re-Thinking Ibn Khaldun," *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2001, p. 66. The Arabic is found in al-Marrākushī, *Mu`jib*, p. 253.

who accepted an invitation to visit and share a meal with another religious scholar, Abū

`Ubayd Qāsim b. Khalaf al-Jubayrī (d. 371/981 or 378/988) living in the Caliphal palace

city, *Madīnat al-Zahrā'*. When chastised afterwards by his companions for eating a meal

financed ultimately by money from the Caliph, he answered that he had calculated the

cost of the meal and would donate that sum to the poor. This, he said, was preferable to

making an ostentatious display of his principles and offending a man of knowledge.[23]

The story suggests, however, that other ascetics would have been more forthright about

their disdain for those who used their knowledge to gain wealth and influence.

There is evidence, too, of scholars who rejected asceticism and practices later

associated with Sufism, persecuting those who accepted them. Examples of this are

found in the debate over the miracles of saints (*karamāt al-awliyā'*) in the 5th/11th century,

and in the trial of the early Sufi Aḥmad al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429/1038) in Zaragoza in

425/1034.[24] It would be expected that the tensions between these two groups would

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[23] Manuela Marín, "*Inqibāḍ `an al-sulṭān*," p. 138. It should be noted that Muḥammad b. Isḥāq Ibn al-Salīm, who chastised his friend, Abū al-Qāsim Aḥmad b. Yūsuf, for working in the Caliphal library, later became *mushawwar* and then *qāḍī* of Cordoba. Full and consistent *inqibāḍ* seems to have been an ideal much compromised.

[24] In the late 4th/10th century and early 5th/11th there were debates in al-Andalus over the miracles of saints and also the nature of miracles performed by prophets generally and Muḥammad specifically. At issue was the question of the boundary between prophets, whom God had selected to be his messengers, and saints, who had achieved their proximity to God and their resulting ability to perform miracles through their own efforts. The concern of those who denied *kaāmāt al-awliyā'* was that the boundary between prophets and saints could be eroded, resulting in a belief in *iktisāb al-nubuwwa*, or the acquisition of prophecy, a doctrine al-Ghazālī was accused of holding in Nishapur, as we saw in Chapter II, and also in the Maghrib as we will see below. Al-Ṭalamankī was a defender of the miracles of saints, and seems to have called for a renewal of religion in a way Fierro finds comparable to al-Ghazālī's "revival." The sources are vague about the exact cause of his being accused of heresy (*khilāf al-sunna*) in Zaragoza in 425/1034, but it seems to have been a result of his holding these positions. Fierro further speculates that he may have held the position that the *imām* should be the most excellent Muslim, and gives evidence that he may have gathered a group of followers. In this respect, she sees him as a forerunner of Ibn Barrajān and Ibn Qasī. See Maribel Fierro, "The Polemic about Karāmāt al-Awliyā'," pp. 15-33.

sharpen if the aspects of each group that most offended the other were magnified. The more ascetic scholars would react against the more worldly and ambitious *fuqahā'* gaining even more wealth and power under the Almoravids. Scholars who objected to mysticism would be alarmed when at least some of the ascetics of al-Andalus began to move in the direction of full-fledged Sufism, claiming privileged knowledge not shared by other religious scholars, in addition to their claims of greater sanctity. Such was the situation in the Maghrib when the *Iḥyā'* was introduced.

The Burning of *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* in 503/1106

The sources for information on the controversy can be divided into two categories: those that discuss the burning but not the motives of the burners, and those that discuss the objections of al-Ghazālī's critics but say nothing about the burning. We will begin here with an analysis of the facts of the burning before going on to discuss the motives behind it.

The most widely accepted and detailed account of the burning of the *Iḥyā'* in al-Andalus is given by the Almohad court historian Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (d. after 646/1248[25]) in the surviving fragment of his history of the Muslim west, *Naẓm al-jumān*. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's father had been a member of the Almohad court and leader of the Almohad

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[25] The authorship of *Naẓm al-jumān* was attributed by both medieval and modern scholars to the father of the actual author, also named Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, about whom there is ample biographical information and whose death date is 628/1231. It was eventually realized that there is discussion in the text of al-Murtaḍā, the final Almohad Caliph to rule in Marrakech from 646-665/1248-1266, and that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān *père* could thus not be the author. There is no known death date for Ibn al-Qaṭṭān *fils*, the author of *Naẓm al-jumān*, but his death must have occurred after al-Murtaḍā assumed the throne in 646/1248. See the discussion of Muḥammad `Alī Makkī in his introduction to the book; Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān li-tartīb mā salafa min akhbār al-zamān*, Maḥmūd `Alī Makkī (ed.), Beirut, Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1410/1990, pp. 9-11.

ideological corps known as the *ṭalaba*. Ibn al-Qaṭṭān himself served the final Almohad

caliph to rule over Marrakech during the twilight years of the regime. His *Naẓm al-*

Jumān is a highly partisan history, focusing even in its treatment of the pre-Almohad

period on the career of Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohads, and the first stirrings of

the Almohad movement, giving lesser attention to the undertakings of the then ruling

Almoravids.[26] The account it gives of the burning of the *Iḥyā'*, roughly a century and a

half after the event, is presented to serve the overtly partisan aim of discrediting the

Almoravids. To the same end, the legend of Ibn Tūmart's role in the history of the

burning is appended to the account.

However, despite the author's bias and his rhetorical aim in recounting the

burning, the account in *Naẓm al-jumān* is remarkably reliable. Several of the major

elements of his narrative find substantiation in sources contemporary with the burning,

lending credibility to the unverified elements. There are other less extensive accounts,

written before and after *Naẓm al-jumān*, that differ somewhat in tone, but there is nothing

in them that contradicts Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's version of events. It is thus worthwhile to quote

his short account and examining it in detail before proceeding further, in order to

establish the basic facts of the case.

> At the beginning of the year 503 (1109), `Alī b. Yūsuf decided to burn the
> book of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī—may God most high have mercy on
> him—called *The Revival*, based on the consensus of the *Qāḍī* of Cordoba,

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[26] Maḥmūd `Alī Makkī writes in his introduction that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān was a fanatical partisan of the
Almohad state he served, who sought to emphasize the accomplishments of the Almohads and to mask
their failures. He engaged in cheap flattery of the state and avoided the truth of many matters. Much of his
history should thus be understood as political and religious polemic in favor of the Almohads and against
the Almoravids and Fatimids; see Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-jumān*, p. 48.

Abū `Alī b. Ḥamdīn,[27] and the *fuqahā'* of the city. It was burned, as is, in the courtyard of the city's mosque at the western gate after its leather-bound volumes were doused with oil (*uḥriqa…`alā hay'atihi bi-julūdihi ba`da ishbā`ihi zaytan*). All of the notables of the population were present for this. His written decrees were circulated throughout his realm (*wa nafadhat kutubuhu ilā jamī` bilādihi*) ordering that it be burned wherever it was found. Copies of it that the Ghazālians relied upon were taken from the hands of their owners (*ukhidhat minhu nusakh min aydī aṣḥābihā kānā mu`awwal al-ghazāliyya `alayhā*). Among these was the book of Maymūn b. Yāsīn, whom `Alī b. Yūsuf threatened to summon, in response to which he sent it to him, and he lost the book in question. Among them was the book of Ibn al-`Arabī, which he had carried himself to the Green Peninsula (*al-jazīra al-khaḍrā'*) and was then ordered to immerse it in water such that its ink ran (*umira bi-ḥālihi fī-l-mā'*). Most of the ink ran and he lost the rest (*fa-ḥalla mu`ẓamanu wa faqada sā'irahu*). The burning of what had been purchased of [the book] in the land of the Maghrib continued for the rest of that year.

And I said: Those ignorant men's burning of this great book whose like has never been composed was the cause of the extinction of their kingdom, the scattering of their members, and the tearing out of their roots by the hand of this noble prince (*al-amīr*), manifester of the truth (*al-qā'im bi-l-ḥaqq*), proclaimer of the *sunna*, reviver of science (*al-muḥyī li-l-`ilm*). May God most high grant victory to his banner (*naṣara allāh ta`āla liwā'ahu*) and crush his enemies.[28]

The final paragraph of this passage makes clear the author's intent in writing it: to present the burning of the *Iḥyā'* as an inexcusable crime that brought about the demise of the Almoravid state. Immediately following this passage is a story that links Ibn Tūmart to the event by presenting him as the instrument of al-Ghazālī's revenge on the regime

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[27] The editor fills in missing data here to correctly identify the Ibn Ḥamdīn who ordered the burning, giving the name as Abū [`Abd Allāh Muḥammad b.] `Alī b. Ḥamdīn. As Sa`d Ghurāb notes, medieval sources often refer simply to Ibn Ḥamdīn, or supply the additional detail that he was the *qāḍī* of Cordoba. Because three members of that family served as *qāḍī al-qudāt* in Cordoba in the Almoravid period, both medieval and modern scholars have often misidentified the Ibn Ḥamdīn in question. Ghurāb demonstrates that the *qāḍī* who presided over the burning must have been Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. `Alī b. Ḥamdīn; see Sa`d Ghurāb, "Ḥawl iḥrāq al-murābiṭīn li-iḥyā' al-Ghazālī," pp. 141-144.

[28] Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 70-71.

that attacked his masterpiece; this is a legend we will return to in Chapter IV. But a close examination of the major elements of this narrative reveals that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's account of the controversy is mainly sound, even if the conclusion he draws from it is not.

The date Ibn al-Qaṭṭān gives for the burning is the most convincing one given in the sources. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, in his *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, is the only author who gives a different date.[29] In a short narrative, he writes that a muezzin of Alexandria named Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-ʿAbdarī[30] dreamt in the month of Muḥarram or Ṣafar of the year 500/September-October 1106 that the sun rose in the west. Some interpreters told him that this was the sign of a blameworthy innovation (*bidʿa*) occurring there. Some days later, a boat arrived and reported "the burning of the books of the Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī in Almería."[31] The account seems mainly to serve as a vehicle for relating a miraculous dream. This does not in itself allow us to discount it, but, unlike Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's account, it lacks details that lend it a feeling of social reality. It gives no indication of who was involved in the burning or the circumstances under which it occurred, and offers little that can be verified

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[29] In the edition of al-Wansharīsī's *Kitāb al-Miʿyār* consulted for this study, the year given for the burning is 507/1113; Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Wansharīsī, *al-Miʿyār al-muʿrib wa-l-jāmiʿ al-mughrib ʿan fatāwa ahl ifrīqiya wa-l-andalus wa-l-maghrib*, Muḥammad Ḥajjī, (ed.), Rabat, Beirut: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shuʾūn al-Islāmiyya/Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1401/1981, vol. 12, p. 186. This would seem to be either an error on the part of the editor, or an error in the manuscript consulted for the edition. The editors of the 1954 edition of the 19th century history of the Maghrib, *Kitāb al-istiqṣā* cite al-Wansharīsī, writing that the *Miʿyār* gives the date of the burning as 502 or 503; al-Shaykh Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Khālid al-Nāṣirī, *Kitāb al-istiqṣā li-akhbār duwal al-maghrib al-aqṣā*, Jaʿfar al-Nāṣirī and Muḥammad al-Nāṣirī eds., Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, 1954, vol. 2, p. 75.

[30] No death date is given.

[31] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya l-kubrā*, vol. 6, p. 217

independently. It contradicts most of the other sources in reporting that al-Ghazālī's

"books" had been burned, not the *Iḥyā'* specifically.[32] Clearly, in the absence of further

evidence for the account in al-Subkī, the date given in *Naẓm al-jumān* must be

preferred.[33]

Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's linking the burning to Ibn Ḥamdīn is also accurate. The role of

the *qāḍī al-jamā`a* in leading the campaign against the *Iḥyā'* is attested in the later

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[32] There is a connection between Almería and the burning. A religious scholar of that city, `Alī b. Muḥammad b. `Abd Allāh al-Judhāmī (d. 509/1115-16), ruled in favor of the book and called for the punishment of the burner, Ibn Ḥamdīn, and compensation for the owners of the books burned. He wrote a fatwā to this effect, which was signed by other religious scholars of the city. See Muḥammad al-Manūnī, "Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn fī manẓūr al-gharb al-islāmī ayyām al-murābiṭīn wa-l-muwaḥḥidīn," *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī: dirāsāt fī fikrihi wa `aṣrihi wa ta'thīrihi*, Rabat: al-Mamlaka al-Maghribiyya, Jāmi`at Muḥammad al-Khāmis, Manshūrāt Kulliyyat al-Ādāb wa-l-`Ulūm al-Insāniyya bi-l-Rabāṭ, Silsilat Nadawāt wa Munāẓitāt, no. 9, 1988, p. 129. Al Manūnī cites Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu`jam fī aṣḥāb al-qāḍī al-imām Abī `Alī al-Ṣadafī*, F. Codera (ed.), Madrid, 1885, entry no. 253, and idem, *Takmilat al-ṣila*, `I. and `A. Ḥusaynī eds., Cairo, 1955-56, entry no. 1841. There is a further account of this event, clearly drawn from from Ibn al-Abbār, found in al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila li-kitābay al-Mawṣūl wa-l-ṣila*, Iḥsān `Abbās (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1965, volume V, part I, p. 308, entry no. 604. The account does not mention a burning in Almería specifically, and does not suggest that the burning took place in 500/1106. It is entirely likely that news of the campaign against the *Iḥyā'* in al-Andalus would have reached Alexandria on ships from the port of Almería, but the year given in Ibn al-Qaṭṭān is embedded in an account that is more convincing on the whole.

[33] Madeline Fletcher has preferred the date found in al-Subkī because it ties in with a complicated account she has given of the burning. This account places al-Ghazālī in Alexandria in 500/1106, where he had come after the death of his patron, Fakhr al-Mulk, earlier that year. This was a stopover on his way to the Maghrib to seek the patronage of Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn, a journey attested to in another legendary account. While in Alexandria, he heard of the burning and entrusted Ibn Tūmart with taking vengeance against the Almoravids. Fletcher thus accepts two accounts of al-Ghazālī's connections to the Maghrib dismissed by most scholars as legends, even as she contradicts one of these very legends as it is preserved: Ibn Tūmart is said to have been with al-Ghazālī in Baghdad, not Alexandria, when he heard of the burning; see Ibn Simāk (attributed), *al-Ḥulal al-mawshiyya fī dhikr al-akhbār al-Marrākushiyya*, Suhayl Zakkār and `Abd al-Qādir Zamāma eds., Casablanca: Dār al-Rashād al-Ḥadītha, 1399/1979 p. 104. Fletcher's account is an ambitious attempt to unite all of the various narratives that relate to the reception of the *Iḥyā'* in the Islamic West into a single, comprehensive account. As we saw in Chapter II, however, al-Ghazālī did not leave Nishapur when Fakhr al-Mulk died, but rather stayed and dealt with the controversy his teachings provoked before retiring to Ṭūs for the final two years of his life. He may well have gone to his grave in 505/1111 before news of the burning of the *Iḥyā'* in al-Andalus in 503/1109 reached Khorasan. He certainly never traveled to Alexandria in hopes of meeting Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn in 500/1106, and he never returned to Baghdad to have been able to meet Ibn Tūmart. This having been established, little of Fletcher's larger argument can be sustained. See Madeline Fletcher, "Ibn Tūmart's Teachers: The Relationship with al-Ghazālī," *Al-Qantara* XVIII, 1997, pp. 305-330. These twin legends are certainly interesting, and their existence is of historical interest for the period in which they likely circulated. We will return to them in Chapter IV.

biographical dictionaries of Ibn al-Abbār and al-Marrākushī.[34] More importantly, Ibn

Ḥamdīn's hostility to the *Iḥyā'* is confirmed by a refutation he wrote of that work, a

fragment of which is preserved in al-Dhahabī's *Siyar a`lām al-nubalā'*, and will be

analyzed below.[35] There was opposition to the burning of the *Iḥyā'* in Almería, which

led to exchanges between Ibn Ḥamdīn and the religious authorities of that city.[36] This

suggests that, as per Ibn Qaṭṭān's account, the controversy was not limited to Cordoba.

Finally, as we shall see, the reference to a group of partisans of al-Ghazālī known as "the

Ghazālians" (*al-ghazāliyya*) finds an echo in the refutation of Ibn Ḥamdīn. All in all, Ibn

al-Qaṭṭān's account seems quite plausible.

The opportunity should be taken here to clarify a common misunderstanding. It is

often claimed that the copy of the *Iḥyā'* of Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī (d. 546/1148) was

ordered to destroy was one he had copied from al-Ghazālī himself, and carried back from

the Mashriq.[37] Abū Bakr did study with al-Ghazālī in Baghdad in 490/1097,[38] but the

could not have been the first to introduce *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* to the Islamic West.   Abū

Bakr does not list the *Iḥyā'* among the books he brought back to al-Andalus, and, in fact,

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[34] See Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu`jam fī aṣḥāb al-qāḍī al-imām abī `Alī al-Ṣadafī*, entry no. 253, op. cit., and idem, *Takmilat al-ṣila*, entry no. 1841, and al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila li-kitābay al-Mawṣūl wa-l-ṣila*, vol. V, part I, p. 308, entry no. 604.

[35] Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a`lām al-nubalā'*, Shu`ayb al-Arnā`ūt and Ḥusayn al-Asad eds., Beirut: Mu'assasāt al-Risāla, 1981, vol. 19, pp. 332-334.

[36] See n. 32 above.

[37] See, for example, Muḥammad al-Manūnī, "Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn fī manẓar al-gharb al-Islāmī," p. 126.

[38] Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, *al-`Awāṣim min al-qawāṣim*, p. 24

it is almost certain that al-Ghazālī had not finished his masterpiece when the two parted

ways towards the end of 490/1097.[39]

One final and important detail in Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's account must be noted: the

duration of the campaign he describes. He is explicit in writing, "The burning…in the

land of the Maghrib continued for the rest of that year." As we shall see in Chapter IV,

there was a second order that the works of al-Ghazālī be destroyed, issued by Tāshfīn b.

`Alī b. Yūsuf in 538/1143.[40] Some have taken this as evidence of a 35-year-long

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[39] In his *Sirāj al-murīdīn*, Abū Bakr gives a list of the books he brought back from the Mashriq and the *Iḥyā'* is not among them. It could be argued that he omitted the *Iḥyā'* because he wished to distance himself from al-Ghazālī and the controversy surrounding him. But he lists four other books by the man he refers to reverently in his writings by the Persian term for "teacher," *daneshmand*; these are al-Ghazālī's *Miḥakk al-naẓar fī-l-manṭiq, mi`yār al-`ilm, Tahāfut al-falāsifa,* and *al-Iqtiṣād fī-l-i`tiqād.* It could be argued that he listed these books, but distanced himself from anything having to do with Sufism like the *Iḥyā'.* But he does list al-Qushayrī's Sufi Qur'anic exegesis, *Laṭa'if al-ishārāt,* indicating that he had no qualms about admitting to studying works of Sufism.

In fact, it is unlikely that al-Ghazālī had completed the *Iḥyā'* at the point when he and Abū Bakr parted ways towards the end of 490/1097 after some six months of study. Abū Bakr did indeed hear al-Ghazālī recite or discuss some of the *Iḥyā'.* He writes, "I studied the bulk of his books with him (*qara'tu `alayhi jumlatan min kutubihi*), and heard (*sami`tu*) his book that he entitled *al-Iḥyā' li-`ulūm al-dīn* (*sic*);" *al-`Awāṣim min al-qawāṣim,* p. 24. Al-Dhahabī uses similar wording (possibly based on Ibn al-`Arabī) and writes explicitly that the *Iḥyā'* was "heard" because it had not yet been written: "He (al-Ghazālī) returned to Baghdad and his book *The Revival,* among others, was heard from him (*sumi`a minhu*). For he discoursed on it then, and then he enumerated his works (*fa-qad ḥaddatha bi-hā idhan, thumma sarada taṣānīfahu*);" al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a`lām al-nubalā',* vol. 19, p. 330. Coupled with the evidence from *Sirāj al-muridīn,* this distinction between "studying" al-Ghazālī's books and "hearing" the *Iḥyā',* must be seen as significant, indicating that in the latter half of 490/1097, the *Iḥyā'* was still not finished such that Abū Bakr could have brought a copy of it back to al-Andalus if he had wanted to. It is entirely likely that he would have bought a copy of the *Iḥyā'* when it became available in al-Andalus, which could then have been destroyed during the campaign against it.

[40] See Muḥammad al-Manūnī, "Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn fī manẓar al-gharb al-islāmī," p. 126, quoting from Ḥusayn Mu'nis, "Nuṣūṣ siyāsiyya `an fatrat al-intiqāl min al-murābiṭīn ilā l-muwaḥḥidīn," *Majallat al-Ma`had al-Miṣrī li-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya fī Madrīd,* no. 3, 1374/1955, p. 113.

campaign against *Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn* under the Almoravids;[41] but Ibn al-Qaṭṭān contradicts such a position, writing specifically of a one-year campaign.

Several other sources give short accounts of the campaign against the *Iḥyā'* that differ in some respects from Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's. Two of these predate *Naẓm al-jumān*: al-Tādilī's (d. 617/1220) *Kitāb al-tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, and Ibn Ṭumlūs's (d. 620/1223) *al-Madkhal li-ṣināʿat al-manṭiq*. The anonymous *al-Ḥulal al-Mawshiyya*, compiled in 785/1383 and attributed to Ibn Sīmak, draws on *Naẓm al-jumān* while adding some detail. Al-Marrakushī's *al-Muʿjib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, from the first quarter of the 7th/13th century, postdates Ibn al-Qaṭṭān but does not seem to rely on his account. None of these offer as comprehensive an account of the burning as *Naẓm al-jumān*, but several contribute some details. Some of these accounts depict a more menacing Almoravid campaign against the *Iḥyā'*, but none of them differs from Ibn al-Qaṭṭān in the essential facts.

Three of these sources describe specific measures taken against owners of the *Iḥyā'*. In *al-Ḥulal al-mawshiyya*, we read that Ibn Ḥamdīn "…went too far in [condemning the *Iḥyā'*] and declared all of those who had read it to be unbelievers (*fa-innahu bālagha fī dhālika ḥattā kaffara jamīʿ man qara'ahu*)."[42] This charge that Ibn Ḥamdīn practically declared partisans of the *Iḥyā'* apostates is verified by al-Dhahabī's description of passages from the Cordoban *qāḍī*'s refutation of the *Iḥyā'* as we shall see

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[41] See, for example, Madeline Fletcher, "Ibn Tūmart's Teachers," p. 327. As we shall see in Chapter IV, the edict of 538/1143 is a response to a set of concerns particular to the final years of Almoravid rule rather than evidence of an uninterrupted continuation of the campaign begun in 503/1109.

[42] Ibn Sīmāk (attributed), *al-Ḥulal al-mawshiyya*, p. 104.

below. Al-Marrākushī also describes a more fervent campaign in his *al-Muʿjib*, writing that,

> When the book of Abū Ḥāmid—may God have mercy on him—entered the Maghrib, the Commander of the faithful (*amīr al-muʾminīn*) ordered that it be burned. He made harsh threats—of spilling blood and extortion of money—against whomsoever was discovered with any part of it, and the command became harsher in this regard (*wa taqaddama bi-l-waʿīd al-shadīd—min safk al-dimāʾ wa istiʾṣāl al-māl—ilā man wujida ʿindahu shayʾ minhā, wa ishtadda al-amr fī dhālik*).[43]

Ibn Ṭumlūs, in his *al-Madkhal l-ṣināʿat al-manṭiq,* writes of ʿAlī b. Yūsuf's proclamation being read from lecterns (*manābir*) throughout the Almoravid lands, of the defamation of the *Iḥyāʾ,* and of questioning those who had copies of the *Iḥyāʾ.* People were afraid to admit to having read or acquired the book and the gravest of threats were made.[44]

All three of these sources portray a zealous campaign against the *Iḥyāʾ.* Ibn Ḥamdīn and the Almoravids strongly condemned the book's partisans, questioned those suspected of owning the book, and made grave threats in hopes of extracting all copies that had circulated in the Maghrib until then. It must be noted, however, that none of these sources tells of these threats being carried out. Even al-Marrākushī's alarming description of extortion and the spilling of blood refers only to threatened actions, not actual ones.

There are numerous references to the *Iḥyāʾ* and the campaign against it in the first major work of collective Sufi biography in the Maghrib, al-Tādilī's *Tashawwuf ilā rijāl*

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[43] Al-Marrakushī, *al-Muʿjib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib*, p. 255.

[44] Ibn Ṭumlūs, *al-Madkhal li-ṣināʿat al-manṭiq/Introducción al arte de la lógica por Abentomlús de Alcira*, Miguel Asín (ed. and trans.), Madrid: Imprinta Ibérica, 1916, p. 12 (Arabic).

al-taṣawwuf. These confirm that the burning in Cordoba was followed by confiscation of the *Iḥyā'* in Fez[45] and its burning in Marrakech.[46]

The biographical dictionaries of Ibn al-Abbār and al-Marrākushī also allude to the burning in a way that confirms the scope and severity of the campaign described above. When Ibn Ḥamdīn called for the burning of the *Iḥyā'*, one Abū al-Ḥasan al-Barjī of Almería (d. 509/1115), who was in favor of the book, called for the punishment of the burner, and held him liable for the price of the books burned. When prompted, he wrote a fatwā to this effect, to which other *fuqahā'* and *mashāyikh* put their signatures. Ibn Ḥamdīn wrote to the *qāḍī* of Almería, calling for the dismissal of whomever had signed the fatwā.[47] For the moment, there are two elements of this narrative to note. The first is that al-Barjī calls for compensation for the price of the books burned; he says nothing about compensation for any other property confiscated or physical punishment exacted. Secondly, the only punishment he potentially faces for his open defiance of this official policy is dismissal from office. Al-Barjī outlived Ibn Ḥamdīn by a year, and there is no mention of him being officially declared an unbeliever (*takfīr*) and suffering the consequences of such a declaration.

We have seen that even the highly partisan account of *Naẓm al-jumān* tells only of a one-year campaign of confiscation and burning of the *Iḥyā'*. The harshest measure it

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[45] Yūsuf al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, p. 96. We will return to this incident later in the chapter, when discussing the reaction of Sufis to the campaign.

[46] Yūsuf al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, p. 145.

[47] See the above cited Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Muʿjam fī aṣḥāb al-qāḍī al-imām abī ʿAlī al-Ṣadafī*, entry no. 253; idem, *Takmilat al-ṣila*, entry no. 1841; al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila li-kitābay al-Mawṣūl wa-l-ṣila*, vol. V, part I, p. 308, entry no. 604.

mentions against any single owner of the book is the threatened summons of Maymūn b. Yāsīn. We find his description of a relatively mild and short-lived campaign, despite the fact that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān narrated the story of the burning of the *Iḥyā'* to discredit the Almoravids, and had every incentive to exaggerate the event for the sake of magnifying their crime. Other accounts go further in highlighting the zeal of the Almoravids in their campaign against the *Iḥyā'*, but none of them describes more than stern threats, and none of them reports any of these threats being carried out.

Mostapha Bensbaa has pointed to a curious fact, which is that none of the accounts cited here give any specific indication as to why Ibn Ḥamdīn and his allies among the *fuqahā'* of Cordoba objected to the *Iḥyā'*.[48] This lack of interest in the motive of the burners in most of the sources is conspicuous. It can be explained, though, by the fact that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān and many of the others recorded the event for the purpose of discrediting the Almoravids, and this objective is not served by a discussion of the doctrinal issues at stake. A similar argument can be made for accounts in *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-Taṣawwuf*: the objective there is to convey the valor of the opponents of this attack on an important pillar of Maghribi Sufism, not to explore the doctrinal dimensions of the confrontation. However, while it is true that the sources that discuss the burning say nothing about the motives of the burners, there is a source that sheds light on the Ibn Ḥamdīn's objections to the *Iḥyā'*, namely the surviving fragment of his refutation of that work.

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[48] Mostapha Bensbaa, "Iḥrāq kitāb 'al-iḥyā' li-l-ghazālī wa-`alāqātuhu bi-l-ṣirā` bayn al-murābiṭīn wa-l-muwaḥḥidīn," *Multaqā al-Dirāsāt al-Maghribiyya al-Andalulsiyya: al-tayyārāt al-fikriyya fī-l-maghrib wa-l-andalus*, Tetuan, 1995, pp. 357-366; idem, *al-Sulṭa bayn al-tasannun wa-"l-tashayyu`" wa-l-taṣawwuf*, pp. 80-88.

Ibn Ḥamdīn and the Ghazālians of Cordoba

Scholars have long been aware of references in other sources to Ibn Ḥamdīn having written refutations of the *Iḥyāʾ*.[49] The fragment that remains of one of them sheds light not only on his objections to the *Iḥyāʾ*, but also on the Maghribi partisans of that work. In fact, it can be said that Ibn Ḥamdīn is concerned primarily with the group that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān calls the Ghazālians, and only secondarily with the *Iḥyāʾ* from which they drew their inspiration. Al-Dhahabī begins his extended quotation from Ibn Ḥamdīn's refutation as follows:

> The *qāḍī al-jamāʿa* Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Ḥamdīn the Cordovan said: "One of those who preach is among those who used to adhere to the provisions of fiqh (*inna baʿḍa man yaʿiẓ miman kāna yantaḥil rasm al-fiqh*) and then renounced it (*thumma tabarraʾa minhu*), enamored with Ghazalian law (*shaghafan bi-l-shirʿa al-ghazāliyya*) and the Sufi sect (*al-niḥla al-ṣūfiyya*). He composed a tract (*kurrāsa*) that embodies the expression of fanatical partisanship (*tashtamil ʿalā maʿnā al-taʿaṣṣub*) for the book of Abū Ḥāmid, the imam of their heresy (*imām bidʿatihim*).[50]

Ibn Ḥamdīn's main target is a man he accuses of being among those who renounced their former practice of *fiqh* and embraced Sufism and the doctrine of al-Ghazālī in particular. The phrase "among those" is significant, as it suggests a trend and not an errant individual.

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[49] See al-Ṭāhir al-Maʿmūrī, *al-Ghazālī wa-ʿulamāʾ al-maghrib*, Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1990, p. 27. Al-Maʿmūrī, who cites Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *fihris Ibn ʿAṭiyya*, Muḥammad Abū al-Ajfān and Muḥammad al-Zāhī eds., Beirut, 1400/1980. Ibn ʿAṭiyya was a student of Ibn Ḥamdīn and writes of having read his teacher's refutation of al-Ghazālī. Saʿd Ghurāb quotes Ibn ʿAṭiyya as saying he had read two epistles of Ibn Ḥamdīn refuting al-Ghazālī, and Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ writes that he had seen some epistles of and refutations of al-Ghazālī by Ibn Ḥamdīn, adding that he heard some of them; Saʿd Ghruāb, "Ḥawl iḥrāq al-murābiṭīn li-iḥyāʾ al-Ghazālī," p. 145.

[50] al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, vol. 19, p. 332.

It is not clear what Ibn Ḥamdīn meant by renouncing *fiqh*. *Fiqh* and Sufism are

not mutually exclusive pursuits. Vincent Cornell has characterized the Sufism of a

slightly later period in the Maghrib as "juridical Sufism," or "… a type of mysticism

epistemologically subservient to the authority of religious law…. This praxis oriented

approach … conceives of Sufism more as a methodology than as a metaphysical

doctrine."[51] He has further shown that many early Andalusi Sufis of the 11th century

were *fuqahā'* and specifically proponents of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.[52] The *Iḥyā'* itself is written

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[51] Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 67.

[52] Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 12-19. Cornell has, in fact, identified the introduction of *uṣūl al-fiqh* to al-Andalus as one of the key issues at stake in the controversy over the *Iḥyā'* in the Maghrib and over Sufism more generally. This hypothesis follows from his insights concerning sainthood, a phenomenon intimately related to Sufism. A man or woman did not come to be viewed as a saint because of ineffable qualities that defy description or analysis, but rather because they played an important role in the social struggles of their time, and were recognized for their efforts. Cornell has noted that some early Sufis championed *uṣūl al-fiqh* over what he characterizes as the insular Malikism of al-Andalus, dominated by ethnically Arab jurists. He has also noted that a disproportionate number of Sufis memorialized in al-Tādilī's *Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf* were non-Arabs. From this he derives the hypothesis that the struggle over the *Iḥyā'* and Sufism more generally was linked with a struggle for greater ethnic equality and a legal methodology open to all who master its principles. Cornell argues convincingly that *uṣūl al-fiqh* was championed by early 5th/11th century Andalusī Sufis such as Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭalamankī (see n. 24 above) and Aḥmad al-Ilbīrī "al-Uṣūlī" (d. 429/1037; see *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 15-17. But by the time the *Iḥyā'* arrived in al-Andalus, the issue seems to have been settled, as evidenced by the fact that Ibn Ḥamdīn himself is described as an *uṣūlī* in Ibn Bashkuwāl's *Kitāb al-ṣila*; see Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Kitāb al-ṣila*, vol. 3, p. 831. Cornell was not the only scholar to point to the *uṣūl-furū'* debate as a source of the controversy. In this respect, he follows the thesis of Ignaz Golziher. In his introduction to Ibn Tūmart's *A'azz mā yuṭlab*, Goldziher advances the thesis that the *fuqahā'* of the Almoravid period made legal decisions based on precedent in the Mālikī *madhhab*, and thus studied *furū' al-fiqh* to the exclusion of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. He argued that the *fuqahā'* turned against the *Iḥyā'* because it attacked their exclusive preoccupation with *furū'*. This is based on a misreading of the *Iḥyā'*. Al-Ghazālī may have used some examples of especially obscure and trivial legal cases to illustrate his point that the *fuqahā'* were too often obsessed with legal marginalia while neglecting the stipulations of the otherworldly science that would gain them salvation, but his objective was not to promote *uṣūl* over *furū'*. His objective was to promote the otherworldly science over the worldly science. Al-Ghazālī was also the author of the immensely influential work of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl*, but the book that was the source of controversy was the *Iḥyā'*, not the *Mustaṣfā*. Ignaz Goldziher, *Le Livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumart, Mahdi des Almohades: Texte Arabe accompagné de notices biographiques et d'une introduction*, Imprimerie Orientale Pierre Fontana: Algiers, 1903, pp. 22-43. Another scholar who has adopted Goldziher's thesis is Frank Griffel; see his *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam: Die Entwicklung zu al-Ġazālī's Unteil gegen die Philosophie und die Reaktionen der Philosophen*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2000, p. 362. Ethnic tension was certainly an issue at times in al-Andalus; see James Monroe, *The Shu'ūbiyya in al-Andalus: the Risāla of Ibn García*

largely in this spirit. Though we have seen that al-Ghazālī demoted *fiqh* to the status of a "worldly science," he devoted the *Iḥyā'* to the "science of practice" rather than the "science of unveiling." Indeed, the first two quarters of the *Iḥyā'* deal with largely *fiqh*-derived guidelines for leading a life in scrupulous accordance with the "otherworldly science."

It is unlikely, therefore, that the phrase "renouncing *fiqh*" means that the man in question condemned *fiqh* as a religious science. It is more likely that he accepted and championed al-Ghazālī's subordination of *fiqh*, as a worldly science, to the otherworldly science. We find further confirmation that it was the demotion of *fiqh* as a worldly science that offended the *fuqahā'* in al-Tādilī's *al-tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf.* Here the author writes of the virtues of the *Iḥyā'* concluding that, "none condemn it except the *'ulamā' al-dunyā*, whose faults are apparent."[53]

The broader trend of "renouncing *fiqh*" that this man belongs to may well be the long-standing practice of *al-inqibāḍ 'an al-sulṭān*, now given an additional Ghazālian justification, and linked to explicitly Sufi doctrines and practices. The case of al-Tūnisī discussed above, who briefly stopped teaching *fiqh*, presents another possibility, not of condemning *fiqh*, but of renouncing its exploitation for worldly gain. Thus, Ibn

and Five Refutations, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies, vol. 13, 1970. But the role of ethnicity in a given dispute is difficult to determine and should probably not be inferred without direct evidence; see Luis Molina, "Un árabe entre muladíes: Muḥammad b. `Abd al-Salām al-Jušānī," *Estudios Onomástico-Biográficos de al-Andalus*, vol. VI, 1994, pp. 337-351.

[53] Al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, p. 36. Of course this statement does not refer directly to the controversy of 503/1109 and was written over a century after this event. A century of polemic and accretion of legend lay between al-Tādilī and the burning. Nonetheless, it seems impossible to believe that such a central part of al-Ghazālī's rhetoric like his elevation of the *'ulamā' al-ākhira* above the *'ulamā' al-dunyā* would not have played a role in this confrontation between the partisans of the *Iḥyā'* and their opponents among the *fuqahaā'* such as Ibn Ḥamdīn.

Ḥamdīn's target may likewise have stopped teaching *fiqh*, or may once have held an official position in the government's legal apparatus and renounced it as corrupting. Such actions and attitudes would amount to an indirect accusation of those who continued to practice *fiqh* in an official capacity, like the *qāḍī al-jamāʿa* Ibn Ḥamdīn.

That Ibn Ḥamdīn refers to the Sufis as a distinct group, *niḥla*, is also important. This is one of the first references to a group of Sufis in the Maghrib, linked, as we shall see below, with practices such as *dhikr*. There had been Sufis in the Maghrib, specifically in al-Andalus, since the 10th century. The followers of Ibn Massara in this century may well have been Sufis, but they were an early group, many of whose practices seem to lie outside of those that later came to be associated with Sufism. There is no record of them performing *dhikr*, for example.[54] More importantly, though, Ibn Massara's school disappeared, while the group referred to here contributed to the emergence of an enduring tradition of Maghribi Sufism.[55]

Ibn Ḥamdīn also writes of this man as a member of a second group, not identical with the first; one that "preaches," the "heresy" whose "*imām*" is Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. We have seen that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān wrote of a group oppressed in the campaign against the *Iḥyāʾ*, whom he refers to as "the Ghazālians" (*al-ghazāliyya*). Likewise, Ibn Ḥamdīn writes here of a group united by adherence to the *Iḥyāʾ*, calling al-Ghazālī their "*imām*." Certainly, Ibn Ḥamdīn saw them as a coherent group, and Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's appellation "*al-*

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[54] See n. 3 above for a more extensive discussion of Ibn Masarra. These observations follow the Alexander Knysh's assessment of Ibn Masarra; see his *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, pp. 113-115.

[55] For a discussion of Ibn Masarra and the characterization of his doctrine, see Maribel Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus," pp. 178-184.

ghazāliyya" suggests that this perception a group, united by doctrine derived mainly from the *Iḥyā'* was widespread

This group's active effort to spread the doctrine of the *Iḥyā'* is striking. Though Ibn Ḥamdīn will go on to criticize their more private practices, there can be little doubt that it was their public preaching and circulation of writings popularizing the doctrine of the *Iḥyā'* that offended him most. We find another example of such activity in the Sufi and *faqīh* Abū al-Ḥasan `Alī Ibn Ḥirzihim, who, after initially disapproving of the *Iḥyā'*, had his students copy the *Iḥyā'* once a year to aid in its diffusion.[56]

It is important to notice that Ibn Ḥamdīn focuses on the tract (*kurrāsa*) written by this man, which "embodies the expression of fanatical partisanship for the *Iḥyā'*." Though he later goes on to attack "the book of Abū Ḥāmid," the offensive contents of the tract are at least as great a source of his outrage. We can infer that his response focuses on those aspects of the *Iḥyā'* that are highlighted in the tract. It is even possible that he has never read the *Iḥyā'* firsthand.[57]

Ibn Ḥamdīn's objections to "the book of Abū Ḥāmid" become clear as his refutation continues:

> How repugnant are its transgressions and the deceptions of its lines (*ayna huwa min shuna` manākīrihi wa maḍālīl asāṭīrihi*) which are contrary to religion! He claims that this comes from the science of practice which leads to the science of unveiling, which comes upon them bearing the secret of the divinity (*sirr al-rububiyya*). Its veil is not lifted [to any], and

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[56] Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 24. Cornell cites Abū al-`Abbās Aḥmad Ibn al-Qāḍī al-Miknāsī, *Jadhwat al-iqtibās fī dhikr man ḥalla min a`lām madīnat Fās*, Rabat, 1974, vol. 2, p. 466.

[57] Much as `Abd Allāh al-Māzarī wrote his critique of the *Iḥyā'* without having read the *Iḥyā'*, as we have seen in Chapter II.

none achieves knowledge of it except the those to whom the obscurity of its error extends itself (*illā man tamaṭṭā ilayhi thabaj ḍalālatihi*) revealing to them its signs and enjoining upon them its stipulations. Abū Ḥāmid has said, "the least part of this science is giving credence to it, and the least of its punishments is that the one who condemns it not receive any of its benefit (*wa adnā naṣīb min hadhā l-ʿilm al-taṣdīq bihi, wa aqall ʿuqūbatihi an lā yurzaq al-munkir minhu shay'an*)." His first statement renounces his second (*fa-a'raḍa qawluhu ʿalā qawlihi*). And he does not devote himself to reading any of the Qur'ān (*wa lā yashtghil bi-qirā'at qur'ānin*) or the writing of a hadith (*wa lā bi-katb Hadithin*) for this would prevent him from putting his head in the sleeve of his cloak (*li-anna dhālik yaqṭaʿuhu ʿan al-wuṣūl ilā idkhāl ra'sihi fī kumm jubbatihi*) and wrapping himself in his robe *(wa-l-tadaththur bi-kisā'ihi)* and hearing the address of the Truth which says, "Leave the path trod by the righteous forebears (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) and do as I command!"[58]

Ibn Ḥamdīn's objection to the Ghazālian doctrine championed by this group is plain. First, he rejects its claim to possess a superior epistemology that, in his eyes, purports to supersede the Qur'ān and the hadith. Furthermore, Ibn Ḥamdīn finds that his opponents make no effort to rationally justify this claim of epistemological superiority. Indeed, this doctrine asserts that understanding can come only through practice, and thus cannot be explained to those who do not accept its premises and thus have the "veil" between themselves and true knowledge lifted. Those who reject it can only be enjoined to accept it and pitied if they do not. Ibn Ḥamdīn's description of the Ghazālian draws a sarcastic comparison between him and Muḥammad, who began to receive revelation while in the cave of Mount Ḥirā', wrapped in his cloak. He implies by this that al-Ghazālī and his followers believe they can, like Muḥammad himself, access "the secrets of the divinity" without the mediation of the Qur'ān and hadith. In fact, he suggests, they

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[58] Al-Dhahabī, *siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 19, p. 332.

are instead led to abandon the way of Muḥammad and his companions, "the righteous forebears."

The excerpt from Ibn Ḥamdīn's refutation quoted by al-Dhahabī ends with a pointed attack on Sufis. He charges them with lacking the training needed to address the question of the nature of the divinity, training, of course, that only religious scholars like him are qualified to provide. Again, he mocks the Sufis' practice of *dhikr*, insinuates that their religious zeal is empty, and claims that they see it as a means to receive revelation identical to Muhammad's, quoting God's address to Muhammad in Qur'ān 74 and 73:

> Sufis lean towards the divine sciences, not the sciences that require instruction (*tadhhab al-ṣūfiyya ilā al-ʿulūm al-ilāhiyya dūn al-taʿlīmiyya*). Thus the Sufi sits with his heart empty, feverish in his concentration, and perpetually reciting "Allāh, Allāh, Allāh." And he directs his heart and does not devote himself to reciting the Qur'ān or with the writing of a hadith. And he says, "when one reaches this point he must seek isolation in a dark room and be wrapped in his cloak and at this time he will hear the address of the Truth: 'Oh thou enveloped in thy cloak (*al-mudaththir*)!' and, 'Oh thou wrapped up in thy rainment (*al-muzammil*)!'"[59]

It is not clear how long Ibn Ḥamdīn's refutation was. Al-Dhahabī makes clear that he did not reproduce all of the original text, writing, "…and then the *qāḍī* maligned and cursed and declared apostasy and went beyond all boundaries; we seek protection in God from [such] passion (*thumma inna al-qāḍī aqdhaʿa wa sabba wa kaffara wa asrafa. Naʿūdhu bi-llāh min al-hawā*)."[60] At the very least, this corroborates the report that some "Ghazālians" were declared unbelievers even if al-Dhahabī makes no mention of book burning.

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[59] Both addresses are used with respect to the Prophet in the Qur`an, sūras 74 and 73 respectively.

[60] Al-Dhahabī, *siyar aʿlām al-nubalā'*, vol. 19, p. 332.

We cannot draw firm conclusions about the totality of Ibn Ḥamdīn's critique of *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* from a fragment of his refutation, quoted selectively by al-Dhahabī in part to voice some of his own criticisms of al-Ghazālī.[61] Nonetheless, those inferences that can be drawn about the *qāḍī*'s Andalusi opponents are sound, and they lead to some tentative conclusions about his critiques of the *Iḥyāʾ*'s doctrines. The adherents of al-Ghazālī's *opus* in the Maghrib—recognized as a coherent group by Ibn Ḥamdīn and others—saw themselves as possessing privileged knowledge derived from *mukāshafa* or unveiling, which they achieved through *muʿāmala*, or Sufi praxis. One of their group, like many who embraced the *Iḥyāʾ* and became Sufis, first became a *faqīh* and then "renounced" *fiqh*, that is, declared it subordinate to the otherworldly science and perhaps resigned from an office he held. This man composed a tract based on the *Iḥyāʾ*, and he and other members of the group openly spread the doctrine of the *Iḥyāʾ* through preaching.

Ibn Ḥamdīn found this activity an affront, to say the least, and further objected to doctrines fundamental to the *Iḥyāʾ*, perhaps having encountered them only through the tract. He objected to the claim to privileged knowledge gained through *mukāshafa*, the fruit of *muʿāmala*. He denounced those who claim this epistemological superiority as lacking knowledge of the fundamental tenets of the religion, the Qurʾān and hadith. He

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[61] A comparison between al-Subkī's extract of al-Ṭurṭūshī's letter to Ibn Muẓaffar and the full text (which will be examined below) demonstrates the need for caution in drawing conclusions on the basis of fragments. Al-Subkī gives a brief synopsis of al-Ṭurṭūshī's criticisms, but omits mention of al-Ṭurṭūshī's intention to re-write the *Iḥyāʾ* omitting al-Ghazālī's errors. This is important evidence of al-Ṭurṭūshī's admiration of the *Iḥyāʾ* on a certain level.

mocked them for asserting a claim, absurd at best and blasphemous at worst, to be able to access God's truth directly, as though they were prophets.

This critique of the *Iḥyā'*—or as much of it as we can glean from the surviving fragment—is much less sophisticated than the Nishapuri critique al-Ghazālī refuted in *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'*. It addresses little that couldn't be gleaned from the first few pages of the *Iḥyā'*, and little that is unique to that work rather than general to Sufism as such. In attacking the *Iḥyā'*'s four-part structure with its bid to elevate the otherworldly science above the worldly, the Nishapuris struck at the central and unique thesis of al-Ghazālī's project. By attacking al-Ghazālī's plainest articulation of his cosmology as well as his theodicy in book 35 of the *Iḥyā'*, they showed a their detailed knowledge of his work. There is none of this in Ibn Ḥamdīn. But he does charge, like the Nishapuris though in less refined terms, that al-Ghazālī's doctrine, and Sufism more generally, amount to a claim of the acquisition of prophecy (*iktisāb al-nubuwwa*), even if he, unlike the Nishapuris, does not use the term. Though Ibn Ḥamdīn's knowledge of the *Iḥyā'* seems to be much more superficial—perhaps even second-hand—and his critique less sophisticated, he and the Nishapuris share a fundamental concern. Sufism claims a superior *'ilm* that gives it precedence over the more established and prestigious religious sciences, *kalām* and especially *fiqh*.

But it is important to note that the contexts of their respective objections differ. There is no evidence that the Nishapuris attacked Sufism as such. Sufism was well established in Khorasan, and Nishapur itself had been home to one of the greatest exponents of Sufi doctrine, Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. The Nishapuris were fighting a

battle against the more radical claims of the *Iḥyāʾ*: multiple truths, and a hierarchy of religious sciences that entailed a demotion of *fiqh* and kalām. By contrast, Ibn Ḥamdīn does seem to have been fighting against the early spread of Sufism beyond individual practitioners or small circles of initiates in al-Andalus. His response to the *Iḥyāʾ* is to reject Sufism, as he sees it expressed, altogether.

It should be clear by now why the *Iḥyāʾ* played such a central role in the formation of a Maghribi Sufism. In the Maghrib, Sufism took hold initially among ascetic religious scholars reacting against jurists who collaborated with political authority. Al-Ghazālī's championing of the *ʿilm al-ākhira* over the *ʿulūm al-dunyā* provided a perfect way to formulate a case against politically connected *ʿulamāʾ*. And the *Iḥyāʾ* is a clearly organized compendium of Sufi knowledge.[62] But most importantly, for people who found the idea of Sufism compelling but lacked a strong indigenous Sufi tradition or nearby teachers of the science to tell them what it entailed, the *Iḥyāʾ* offered a comprehensive practical guide to following the Sufi path.

More than the veiled references to cosmology found in some of its pages, the detailed descriptions in the *Iḥyāʾ* of how to conduct one's daily affairs in accordance with the otherworldly science would have been immensely useful to a fledgling movement like that of the early Sufis of the Maghrib. The *Iḥyāʾ* would have told them how to uphold the five pillars of their faith in a Sufi manner, but also how to eat, travel, and conduct

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[62] The clear organization of the *Iḥyāʾ* has often been emphasized as a feature that made it one of the most influential works in Islamic religious sciences. In contrast, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb*, which was a major influence on the *Iḥyāʾ*, did not enjoy nearly the same popularity, due, at least in part, to its less rationally organized structure.

business, friendships and marriages within the framework of a life devoted to the *ākhira*.

No other work of Sufism available at this time provided such a comprehensive guide to a

Sufi outlook as well as way of life. Al-Ghazālī collected and rationalized the fruits of

centuries of eastern Sufi thought and presented it as a package to the emerging Maghribi

Sufi movement that was, at just that time, asking what it meant in both theoretical and

practical terms to be a Sufi. It is thus not surprising that the *Iḥyā'* had a greater impact in

the Islamic west where Sufism was in its infancy than in the Islamic east where Sufism

was already well developed.

That this was so is confirmed by the first great work of collective hagiography

devoted to saints of the Maghrib, al-Tādilī's *Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣwwuf.* As

Fernando Rodríguez Mediano points out, both al-Tādilī and many of his subjects looked

to *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* as the authority when it came to both the theory and practice of

Sufism.[63] In his introduction, al-Tādilī writes:

> I excluded the sciences of Sufism from this book and limited myself to
> presenting the notices of men. For *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* by the Imam Abū
> Ḥamid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī, may God have
> mercy on him, is the final word on the subject (*huwa al-muntahā fī
> hādhā*).[64]

A statement by the renowned Maghribi Sufi Abū Madyan (d. 594/1198) claims that there

is no more exemplary a standard-bearer of Sufism than the Berber saint Abū Ya`zā, and

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[63] Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, "Biografías Almohades en el *Tašawwuf* de al-Tādilī," *Estudios Onomástico-Biográficos de al-Andalus*, vol. X, 2000, pp. 167-193. On the *Iḥyā'* in particular, see pp. 174-178.

[64] Al-Tādilī, *Tashawwuf,* p. 36.

no book of Sufism the equal of the *Iḥyā'*.[65] A Sufi named Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad

b. Ibrāhīm al-Hawwārī (d. mid-late 6th/12th century) copied the *Iḥyā'* and practiced all of

the invocations, supplications, and supererogatory prayers (*al-adhkār wa-l-ad`iya wa-l-*

awrād) found in that book without exception.[66] Sufis from the Muslim east also looked

to the *Iḥyā'* as a *summa* of accumulated Sufi knowledge, in addition to its more radical

claims for the superiority of Sufism as a science. For the emerging Sufi movement of the

Muslim West, however, it came not as an ordering of a well-known heritage of Sufi

thought and practice, but as a revelation of this heritage to a region wherein it was not as

widely known.

Through its burning, the *Iḥyā'* provided a center to the emerging Sufi movement

of the 6th/12th century politically as well as substantively. The burning of their revered

authoritative guide provided Maghribi Sufis with a focal point for group identity. This

can also be discerned in the *Tashawwuf.* Vincent Cornell has found that of the 316 total

subjects covered in al-Tādilī's work, no fewer than 25 are said to have been defenders of

al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn.*[67] Some exemplary resistance stories are offered. For

instance, al-Tādilī writes that when an edict from `Alī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn reached Fez,

ordering that copies of the *Iḥyā'* be confiscated and that all who lived in the city take an

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[65] Al-Tādilī, *Tashawwuf,* p. 214.

[66] Al-Tādilī, *Tashawwuf,* p. 270.

[67] Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, p. 107.

oath that they did not possess a copy, Abū al-Faḍl Yūsuf b. Muhammad al-Naḥwī (d. 513/1119) wrote a fatwā declaring that compliance was not obligatory.[68]

Other accounts of opposition to the burning of the *Iḥyā'* in the *Tashawwuf* may be of questionable value as historical accounts, but show the importance of championing the *Iḥyā'* against its enemies as a central trope in Maghribi Sufi identity. These include the case of Abū Muḥammad `Abd Allāh al-Malīj, who prayed for the death of all the *fuqahā'* who ordered the burning in Marrakech and saw his prayer answered within a month.[69] It also includes the celebrated case of Ibn Ḥirzihim (d. 559/1164), who is said to have studied the *Iḥyā'* for a year before coming to the conclusion that it should be burned. When he slept after reaching this conclusion, he dreamt that he was ordered whipped, and when he woke he found the marks of the whipping on his back, as a result of which he reversed his decision.[70]

Through its substantive and rhetorical utility as well as its symbolic value, the *Iḥyā'* took on such an importance in the Maghrib that, according to Rodríguez Mediano, it became a symbol of Sufism itself.[71] The account in the *Tashawwuf* that best illustrates this is that of the Tunisian Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Mḥyū, who as a youth went to see `Abd al-Salām al-Tūnisī to ask him which religious science he should study. Al-Tūnisī told him to go to the book market and buy the first book he found in the hand of

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[68] Al-Tādilī, *Tashawwuf*, p. 96.

[69] Al-Tādilī, *Tashawwuf*, p. 145.

[70] Al-Tādilī, *Tashawwuf*, p. 169.

[71] Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, "Biografías Almohades en el *Tašawwuf* de al-Tādilī," p. 177.

the seller crying out his wares. He did so, paying four dirhams for the book, and returned to al-Tūnisī. The book in question was a volume of the *Iḥyā'*, and was taken as a sign that he should study Sufism. Ibn Mḥyū memorized its contents.[72]

The *Iḥyā'* among the *Fuqahā'* Following the Burning

If the burning of the *Iḥyā'* under the Almoravids in 503/1109 became a defining event for Maghribi Sufis and a carefully nurtured collective memory, the *fuqahā'* seem fairly quickly to have put the burning behind them. In the following years, the debate moved beyond wholesale rejection. Several jurists wrote critiques of the *Iḥyā'*, but their point of departure does not seem to have been Ibn Ḥamdīn's condemnation of Sufism and its claim of privileged knowledge. After 503/1109 different jurists focused on various, more subtle points of the *Iḥyā'*. At some point, the western critique that began in Cordoba came to be influenced by the eastern critique that began in Nishapur.

The bridge between east and west in this case seems to have been Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 520/1126), an Andalusi who traveled to the Mashriq in 476/1083, living first in the Levant and then taking up residence in Alexandria in 490/1097.[73] A letter of his has been preserved in which he agrees that the *Iḥyā'* should be burned. The addressee of the letter, `Abd Allāh Ibn Muẓaffar, has never been identified. Given the fact that al-Ṭurṭūshī lived until 520/1126, it could have been written at any point between the

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[72] Al-Tādilī, *Tashawwuf*, p. 179.

[73] For an extensive study of the life and writings of al-Ṭurṭūshī, see Maribel Fierro's study at the beginning of her edition of Abū Bakr al-Ṭurṭūshī *Kitāb al-ḥawādīth wa-l-bida` (El libro de las novedades y las innovaciones) Traducción y estudio*, Madrid, 1993.

burning of 503/1109 and al-Ṭurṭūshī's death seventeen years later. Because the letter

addresses the legality of burning the *Iḥyā'*, it has been assumed that it must have been

written in response to the campaign against the *Iḥyā'* in the Muslim west, as there is no

evidence of the *Iḥyā'* having been burned anywhere else. Based on the substance of al-

Ṭurūshī's critique, however, we can now also see that his letter was influenced by the

campaign in Nishapūr.

Al-Ṭurṭūshī's critique is based on a far more sophisticated tradition of reading of

the *Iḥyā'* than that of Ibn Ḥamdīn. He writes at the end of the letter that he intends to re-

write the *Iḥyā'*, removing from it all of its errors,[74] a task he indeed seems to have

undertaken.[75] Thus he seems to have read al-Ghazālī's masterpiece and even admired it.

The errors he lists, however, make it clear that his main objections to the work were

largely formed by an account of the Nishapuri critique that reached him. The most

probable source seems to be a man who openly declared he had never read the *Iḥyā'*,

namely Abū `Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī al-Faraj al-Māzarī, known as al-Dhakī (d.

516/1122). As we saw in Chapter II, the Maghribi Maliki mentioned by the compiler of

al-Ghazālī's letters as the tool of al-Ghazālī's Nishapurī critics is almost certainly this al-

Māzarī, who died in Isfahān, and of whom Ibn Nājī wrote that he clashed with al-

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[74] Sa`d Ghurāb, "*Hawl iḥrāq al-murābiṭīn li-iḥyā' al-Ghazālī*," p. 162.

[75] Al-Ṭurṭūshī seems to have followed through on his intention. Muḥammad al-Manūnī wrote of a manuscript in *al-Khizāna al-Malikiyya* in Marrakech of a book by al-Ṭurṭūshī entitled *Kitāb al-asrār wa-l-ʾibar*, which seems to be al-Ṭurṭūshī's reworking of the *Iḥyā'*. The manuscript was not available to the public as of early 2002, so for now all that can be read of it is the four-page excerpt published by al-Manūnī; "Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn fī manẓūr al-gharb al-islāmī," pp. 135-137.

Ghazālī.[76] When al-Ṭurṭūshī's critique is compared with the portions of al-Māzarī's critique that have been preserved, and with al-Ghazālī's response to his critics in *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-Iḥyā'*, the influence is unmistakable.

In his letter, al-Ṭurṭūshī says that al-Ghazālī adulterated the religious sciences with the aims of the philosophers and the symbols of al-Hallāj, and that he spoke evil of the *fuqahā'* and the *mutakallimūn*. He charges him with not having understood Sufism and with lying about the prophet, a reference, it seems, to the use of weak hadith. At least one implication of the charge of using philosophical doctrines is clarified later when al-Ṭurṭūshī accuses him of claiming that prophethood is an acquisition (*iktisāb*) achieved through reform of the character, discipline of the soul and mastery of one's appetites. This is tantamount to asserting that the Prophet achieved his status through his own efforts rather than God conferring prophethood upon him. To so describe the prophet, he says, is in line with the schools of philosophy and the *ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, or Brethren of Purity. He warns that al-Ghazālī tries to seduce his reader by promising to write of the science of practical religion behind which lies the science of unveiling whose expression is not permitted in books, or by writing that it is of the secret of destiny whose divulgence has been prohibited (*aw yuqāl hādhā min sirr al-qadar alladhi nuhīnā 'an ifshā'ihi*). This, al-Ṭurṭūshī tells us, is the practice of Batinites.[77] We find a further critique in the

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[76] Cited in Sa`d Ghurāb, "*Hawl iḥrāq al-murābiṭīn li-iḥyā' al-Ghazālī*," p. 138.

[77] Al-Wansharīsī, vol. 12, pp. 186-187.

published fragment of *Kitāb al-asrār wa-l-ʿibar*, which seems to be al-Ṭurṭūshī's correction of the *Iḥyāʾ*, namely of al-Ghazālī's treatment of *tawḥīd*.[78]

All of these points are also discussed in some form in al-Māzarī's critique. Al-Māzarī writes that he will limit himself to a critique of some of al-Ghazālī's personal qualities, his book, and some phrases dealing with the doctrine of the *muwaḥḥidūn* (a clear reference to *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul*), philosophical doctrines, Sufi doctrines, and those who use esoteric allegories. He accuses al-Ghazālī, on the basis of what he had heard from his students, of being influenced by the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, and philosophy, specifically Ibn Sīnā. He writes that he was unable to establish where al-Ghazālī got his knowledge of Sufism, but had been given to understand that he relied on Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. He accuses al-Ghazālī of citing hadith without giving their *isnād*, and instead simply saying "Mālik says," or "al-Shāfiʿī says." Finally, he says that al-Ghazālī has claimed that some of the theses of his own doctrine cannot be written of in books. If these theses are in fact in erroneous, al-Māzarī writes, al-Ghazālī is correct in saying they shouldn't be written; but if they are correct, then why, he asks, shouldn't al-Ghazālī try to explain them to others?![79]

Given that both al-Māzarī and al-Ṭurṭūshī were Maghribi Mālikīs residing in the east, it is easy to imagine how they could have been in communication. Mālikī students

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[78] Al-Manūnī, p. 136.

[79] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfiʿiyya l-kubrā*, vol. 6, pp. 240-242. Al-Subkī misidentifies the al-Māzarī in question, claiming that he was a student of al-Ṭurṭūshī who, al-Subkī claims, preceded him in his refutation; ibid., p. 242. In fact, the reverse is the case. For an analysis and a Spanish translation of both al-Māzarī's critique and al-Subkī's refutation of it, see Miguel Asín Palacios, "Un faqīh Siciliano, contradictor de al Ghazzālī, pp. 216-244.

in various eastern cities could have passed al-Māzarī's critique on to al-Ṭurṭūshī, or the two could have been in direct correspondence. Until the manuscript of *Kitāb al-asrār wa-l-ʿibar* becomes available, it will be impossible to judge definitively; but at the very least it can be said that al-Ṭurṭūshī was an unoriginal critic of al-Ghazālī. It seems distinctly likely that he, like al-Māzarī, had not read the *Iḥyāʾ* at all, at the time he wrote the letter.

That al-Ṭurṭūshī's letter is contained in al-Wansharīsī's *Kitāb al-Miʿyār* suggests that his letter was known in the Maghrib. Whether it was through al-Ṭurṭūshī or another source, other elements of the Nishapuri critique became known in the Maghrib as well. Two of Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī's many critiques of al-Ghazālī demonstrate this. One suggests familiarity with the Nishapuri campaign, the other of confirms it. The first is his critique of the philosophical influence on al-Ghazālī's thought. He writes, "Our *shaykh* Abū Ḥāmid entered into the core of philosophy (*dakhala fī baṭn al-falsafa*); then he wanted to extricate himself but could not."[80] The second case is his critique of al-Ghazālī's formulation of "theodicy", an apparently minor issue in the Nishapuri controversy. Interestingly, Abū Bakr attributes his awareness of this issue to Iraqi critics:

> Our master (*shaykhunā*) Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī has said something stupendous for which the Iraqis have criticized him. And, as God is my witness, this is indeed occasion for criticism! For he said, "There is nothing in the divine omnipotence more wonderful than this world in its perfection and its wisdom".[81]

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[80] Quoted here from Eric Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 102, who in turn takes the quote from Ibn Taymīya, *bayān muwāfaqat ṣarīḥ al-maʿqūl li-ṣarīḥ al-manqūl*.

[81] Quoted in Eric Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 60 from *al-itḥāf*, p. 442.

This suggests that some elements of the Nishapuri critique reached Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī through his Iraqī contacts, likely those cultivated during his studies there, without mention of their Nishapuri origin. It seems that at least some of the Nishapuri critiques had been taken up by religious scholars in Baghdad.

The ongoing critical discussion of the *Iḥyā'* among Andalusi scholars does not contradict Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's description of an official campaign against the *Iḥyā'* that lasted only one year. Although Abū Bakr made such criticisms of al-Ghazālī in his later writings, he never repudiated his former teacher. On the contrary, he continued to refer to him reverently and even affectionately as "our master" or by the Persian title for teacher, *daneshmand*. Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī was a central figure in what Vincent Lagardère has called *la haute juridicature* of al-Andalus under the Almoravids. He came from a prominent family of Seville, as did many important *quḍāt*;[82] he was appointed *mushawwar*, or legal consultant to the court, in Seville shortly after his return to al-Andalus from the Mashriq in 495/1102; and he went on to be appointed *qāḍī al-quḍāt* in Seville in 528/1134.[83] If his *daneshmand* were the subject of an unrelenting campaign under the Almoravids, Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī could not have held the positions he did

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[82] Rachid El Hour, "Cordoba frente a los Almoravides: Familias de cadies y poder local en al-Andalus," *Revista de instituto egipcio de estudios Islámicos en Madrid*, 1997, vol. XXIX: *Las ciudades del Andalus: Cordoba*, pp. 181-210.

[83] Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-jumān* p. 34.

while periodically recalling his studies with al-Ghazālī with fondness in his writings such

as *Qanūn al-ta'wīl*, *Shawāhid al-jilla*, or *al-ʿAwāṣim min al-qawāṣim.*[84]

Rather, as both Saʿd Ghurāb[85] and Maribel Fierro[86] have argued, the reception of

Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn in the Almoravid period took the form of an ongoing critical dialogue,

with some Maghribi religious scholars criticizing various aspects of al-Ghazālī's writings

and others defending him. An illustration of the ongoing debate over al-Ghazālī is found

in an exchange between the Cordoban *qāḍī al-jamāʿ* and grandfather of Averroes, Ibn

Rushd al-Jadd (d. 520/1126) and the theologian Muḥammad b. Khalf b. Mūsā al-Anṣārī

al-Ilbīrī (d. 537/1142-43). Al-Ilbīrī was, like al-Ghazālī, a Shāfiʿī and an Ashʿarī, who

wrote poetry in praise of al-Ghazālī's former teacher al-Juwaynī. He seems also to have

been inclined to Sufism, as he wrote a abridgement (*mukhtaṣar*) of al-Muḥāsibi's *Kitāb

al-riʿāya.*[87] He also wrote a refutation of al-Ghazālī entitled *al-Nukat wa-l-amālī fī al-

radd ʿalā al-Ghazālī*, in which he is known to have criticized al-Ghazālī's treatment of the

soul (and perhaps other issues as well).

Ibn Rushd al-Jadd found many gross errors (*saqaṭāt kathīra fāḥisha*) in his

refutation, and called his attention to some of its faulty passages (*nabbahtuhu ʿalā baʿḍ al-*

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[84] Frank Griffel writes that both *al-ʿAwāṣim min al-qawāṣim* and *Qānūn al-ta'wīl* are re-workings of al-Ghazāl's ideas for a Mālikī audience. Citing ʿAmmār Ṭālibi, Griffel further writes that Abū Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabī cites over a dozen of al-Ghazālī's writings in his *al-ʿAwāṣim min al-qawāṣim*, a work he wrote in 536/1141, and took 28 passages in that same book from *Maqāṣid al-filāsifa*; see Frank Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam*, pp.383- 384.

[85] Saʿd Ghurāb, "Ḥawl iḥrāq al-murābiṭīn li-iḥyāʾ al-Ghazālī," p. 149.

[86] Maribel Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus," pp. 192-197.

[87] Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila li-kitābay al-mawṣūl wa-l-ṣila*, vol. 6, Iḥsān ʿAbbās (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1973, pp. 193-195.

mawāḍiʿ al-fāsida minhu) so that he could avoid future mistakes. Al-Ilbīrī took his suggestions badly and wrote to Ibn Rushd al-Jadd a verbose and blustering response supporting his previous claims and justifying his errors.[88] Had it remained the case throughout the Almoravid period that those found in possession of the *Iḥyāʾ* could expect fines and physical punishment, we would not find a major Andalusi *faqīh* and one-time *qāḍī al-jamāʿa* of Cordoba defending al-Ghazālī. Ibn Rushd al-Jadd may well be exaggerating the extent to which his critique of al-Ilbīrī was couched as friendly advice. Nonetheless, their exchange seems to have been a strictly academic debate over a controversial scholar, not a heated polemic over a condemned heretic.

Not only did this *qāḍī al-jamāʿ* of Cordoba take issue with another scholar's refutation of al-Ghazālī, he also seems to have accepted one of the key assertions of Sufism and of al-Ghazālī, even if he does not refer to it as such. In one of his fatwās, Ibn Rushd al-Jadd writes of the knowers of God (*al-ʿārifūn bi-llāh*) and the knowers of God's rulings (*al-ʿārifūn bi-aḥkām Allāh*), a distinction similar to al-Ghazālī's division between otherworldly and worldly scholars. Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, like al-Ghazālī, gives the former precedence over the latter.[89] Clearly, Sufism was gaining acceptance among at least some of the *fuqahāʾ*.

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[88] Abū al-Walīd Ibn Rushd al-Jadd, *Masāʾil Abī al-Walīd Ibn Rushd (al-Jadd)*; Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb al-Tijānī (ed.), Casablanca: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, 1992, 2 vols., vol. 1, p. 346.

[89] Discussion is found in Maribel Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism in al-Andalus," pp. 194-195.

Conclusion

When *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* arrived in the Maghrib, it found a receptive audience with a more pressing need for its arguments and guidance than al-Ghazālī's Mashriqi readers had had. The sorts of scholars the *Iḥyā'* denounces as worldly were in ascendance as never before under the Almoravids, while more ascetic scholars were looking for more radical ways of distancing themselves from and criticizing the *haute juridicature*. The *Iḥyā'* provided the emerging Sufi movement with arguments in support of their practices and against those of the self-important *fuqahā'*, as well as a practical guide to Sufi practice.

Sufi groups adopted the *Iḥyā'* as their guide, spreading its message through public preaching, copying the *Iḥyā'* to speed its dissemination, and writing their own works inspired by it. These Sufis came to be identified with the *Iḥyā'*, and action against them took the form of destroying the book from which they drew their inspiration. The attack on the spreading Sufi trend and its major source of inspiration was lead by Ibn Ḥamdīn, who, as *qāḍī al-jamā'a* of Cordoba, would have been highly offended by the *Iḥyā'*'s attack on "worldly scholars." The Almoravids supported the decision of this important constituent. Throughout the course of the year 503, a campaign began in Cordoba and spread elsewhere in the Almoravid lands in which a public display was made of burning the *Iḥyā'* in the presence of major jurists and other notables. Threats were made against any who might think to conceal a copy, and some were made to swear oaths that they did not possess the book. By Ibn al-Qaṭṭān's account, the campaign was over by the year's end.

Debate over the *Iḥyā'* continued in the following decades. Scholars such as al-Ilbīrī joined Ibn Ḥamdīn in writing refutations of the *Iḥyā'*. But this was no longer an expression of an enforced orthodoxy of the *haute juridicature* and an obliging regime; no less a figure among the Andalusi *fuqahā'* than Ibn Rushd al-Jadd criticized al-Ilbīrī's critique. Furthermore, Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī, another major Andalusi *faqīh* who served for years as *mushawwar* in Seville and briefly as *qāḍī al-jamā`a* of that city, frequently alluded to his studies with al-Ghazālī because of the prestige attached to having studied with such a luminary. This is not to say that he was uncritical of his former teacher, but his criticism was limited to certain aspects of al-Ghazālī's thought; it was not a total rejection.

At some point Ibn Ḥamdīn's direct attack on al-Ghazālī's Sufism was joined by critiques that filtered from Nishapur through the Mashriq to the Maghrib, lending new issues to the ongoing debate over the *Iḥyā'*. As we have seen, the Nishapuri controversy that came to a head in 503/1109 was largely forgotten as al-Ghazālī's thought came to be accepted in the Mashriq. The same process of acceptance of the *Iḥyā'* seems to have been underway in the Maghrib as well, and it may well have led to the forgetting of the Maghribi burning of 503/1109; as we have seen, the event was not discussed in historical accounts until a century later. However championing the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* in the face of the campaign became a defining feature of Maghribi Sufi identity, and the memory of the campaign against the book was kept alive by this group. The Sufi narrative of the persecution of the *Iḥyā'* was appropriated for use as political propaganda several decades later. Ironically, when the memory of the burning was brandished for

this purpose, it was not directed against the jurists who had refuted the *Iḥyā'*, but against

the Almoravids, who seem merely to have rubberstamped the *fuqahā'*s ruling.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTROVERSY OVER AL-GHAZĀLĪ IN THE WANING YEARS OF THE ALMORAVIDS

In Jumāda I 538/November 1143, the beleaguered Almoravid sultan Tāshfīn b. `Alī issued an edict from the frontier fortress Karnaṭā[1] to the people of Valencia. It urged them to pray, to pursue *jihād*, to practice justice, to uphold the Mālikī *madhhab*, to prohibit the drinking of wine—and to destroy heretical books, especially those of al-Ghazālī. These books were to be searched out and burned if found, and those thought to be concealing them were to take an oath they did not possess them.[2]

Two years before this edict was issued, in 536/1141, two major figures in Andalusi Sufism, Ibn Barrajān of Seville and Ibn al-`Arīf of Almería, were extradited to Marrakech for interrogation. Ibn Barrajān was executed there, and his body was thrown

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[1] The edict begins, "From our residence in Karnaṭah" (*min munākhinā bi-karnaṭah*). Karnaṭah is not a known toponym. Darío Cabanelas argues that the word refers to one of the fortresses constructed to the south of Marrakech in order to contain the Almohad threat known as *ḥiṣn* (fortress) *karnaṭā*. He writes that the impression of this being a fortress is strengthened by the use of the work *munākh* for residence: Dozy lists as meanings for *munākh*, house, castle, and resting spot; see "Notas para la historia de Algazel en España," *Al-Andalus* XVII, 1952, pp. 225-227. Tāshfīn can be considered "beleaguered" because after 534/1140 the Almoravid position had begun to collapse as many tribes began to defect to the Almohads, including branches of the Almoravids' own Ṣanhāja tribe residing in the north, and divisions had begun to emerge in the Army; see Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of al-Andalus*, London and New York: Longman, 1996, p. 184. At the time that this epistle was written, the city of Ceuta was under attack by the Almohads; see Halima Ferhat, *Sabta des origins au XIVe siècle*, Rabat: le Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, 1993, p. 146. The following year, a dozen revolts were launched in al-Andalus against Almoravid rule, beginning with that of Ibn Qasī, which was doubtless the very scenario Tāshfīn hoped to ward off through the measures listed in this letter. For brief accounts of each of these revolts beginning with Ibn Qasī's, see Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Kitāb a`māl al-a`lām*, E. Lévi-Provençal (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Makshūf, 1956, pp. 248-264.

[2] Darío Cabanelas, "Notas," pp. 223-232.

on a garbage heap outside the city. Only the intervention of Ibn Ḥirzihim, one of the leading Sufis of the Maghrib then residing in Marrakech, insured that Ibn Barrajān received a proper burial.[3] Ibn al-`Arīf also died that year before he was able to return to Almería, although sources differ over whether his death was natural or resulted from a poisoned eggplant fed to him through the connivance of Ibn Aswad, the *qāḍī* of his native Almería.[4] Ibn Barrajān was known as "the al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus," while Ibn al-`Arīf led a group of Sufis known as *al-Ṭarīqa al-Ghazāliyya*.[5]

In 538/1144, a revolt against Almoravid rule broke out around the city of Silves in what is today southern Portugal, led by a Sufi named Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151) and his followers known as *al-Murīdūn*. It is reported that when Ibn Qasī set out to attract his followers, he made a show of reading al-Ghazālī's writings.[6] In fact, clear influence of

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[3] Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 25-26, and al-Tādilī, *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, p. 170.

[4] According to al-Tādilī, the *qāḍī* of Almería, Ibn Aswad, told the Almoravid Sultan, `Alī b. Yūsuf, frightening stories about Ibn al-`Arīf such that the Sultan summoned him to Marrakech. Once he arrived, Ibn al-`Arīf convinced the Sultan of his innocence and was allowed to leave, much to Ibn Aswad's dismay. The *qāḍī* asked about Ibn al-`Arīf's favorite food, and was told it was eggplant. He had one prepared and poisoned it. Ibn al-`Arīf ate it, died, and was buried in Marrakech; see *al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*, no. 18, p. 120. Ibn al-Abbār alludes to this story, though, in the version he tells, Ibn al-`Arīf was poisoned at sea, while crossing the Straits of Gibraltar. Ibn al-Abbār gives more credence to the story that he died of an illness in Ceuta. Ibn Bashkuwāl gives the precise date of his death (2 Ṣafar, 536/27 September, 1141) but is evasive about the cause; see Claude Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn `Arabī," p. 922.

[5] See Muḥammad al-Amrānī's introduction in Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn wa iqtibās al-nūr min mawḍi` al-qadamayn*, Muḥammad al-Amrānī (ed.), Asfi: Maṭba`a IMBH, 1997, p. 47, n. 3. Amrānī cites Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Mu`jam fī aṣḥāb al-imām Abī `Alī al-Ṣadafī*, p. 15.

[6] Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Ḥulla al-siyarā'*, Ḥusayn Mu`nis (ed.), Cairo: Dār al-Ma`ārif, 2nd edition, 1985, vol. 2, p. 197.

al-Ghazālī's thought is to be found in Ibn Qasī's surviving book, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*

(*The Book of the Doffing of the Two Sandals*).[7]

The summons of Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-`Arīf to Marrakech in 536/1141, the

order of 538/1143 that the works of al-Ghazālī be burned in Almoravid lands, and the

revolt of Ibn Qasī in 538/1144 are often studied in conjunction, and rightly so. They are

also linked by many scholars to the burning of *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* in 503/1109. This

connection, too, is doubtless correct, but the exact link between these events of the

530s/1140s and the burning thirty years earlier is unclear

The simplest way to connect the two clusters of events is to view them as a single

event, representing bookends of some 35 years of an uninterrupted Almoravid campaign

against *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* specifically and Sufism more generally, but this cannot be the

case.[8] For, as we have seen in Chapter III, the campaign launched by Ibn Ḥamdīn lasted

only a single year, and the following several decades saw the development of a more

complex discussion of al-Ghazālī's writings among Maghribi religious scholars.

Mashriqi critiques of the *Iḥyā'* became known, and prominent jurists like Abū Bakr Ibn

al-`Arabī and Ibn Rushd al-Jadd publicly lent their qualified support to al-Ghazālī's

thought. Furthermore, there are striking differences between the events of 503/1109 and

those of the 530's/1140's. The first specifically targeted the *Iḥyā'* and the ideas it

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[7] David Raymond Goodrich, "A 'Sufi' Revolt in Portugal: Ibn Qasi and his "Kitāb Khal` al-Na`layn." (Arabic Text), Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1978, p. 43, and Amrānī, introduction to *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, pp. 177-179 and 405-406.

[8] Madeline Fletcher understands them in this way, writing, "The Almoravid attitude towards al-Ghazālī remained implacably inimical for forty years;" see Madeline Fletcher, "Ibn Tūmart's Teachers," p. 327.

represented, as attested by the accompanying refutation of the *Iḥyā'* written by Ibn
Ḥamdīn, the architect of the first burning. In contrast, the edict of 538/1143 does not
even specify which of al-Ghazālī's works should be burned. Thus, although this second
instance of Almoravid action against al-Ghazālī and his partisans cannot be unrelated to
the first, it is not simply a continuation of it either.

Any attempt to identify the reasons for the renewed friction between the
Almoravids and Sufis in the final years of that dynasty has to consider the ways in which
both groups had changed. As we have seen in Chapter III, the early Maghribi Sufis who
first read al-Ghazālī were so influenced by the *Iḥyā'* that they became mere imitators of
it, and wrote "tracts" expressing their partisanship for that work's agenda rather than
original works of their own. Ibn Ḥamdīn thus hoped that his order to burn the *Iḥyā'*
could uproot nascent Maghribi Sufism by destroying its main source of inspiration. But
the next generation of Sufis created a Sufism with an original Maghribi flavor. Surely it
would have been futile to think that this wide-spread and indigenous Maghribi Sufism
could be destroyed by destroying the writings of al-Ghazālī in 538/1143.

The position of the Almoravid regime had also changed significantly over the
intervening 35 years. In 503/1109, the Almoravids were the unchallenged masters of
both shores of the Straits of Gibraltar, having delivered al-Andalus from the Christians
and abolished the unpopular and non-canonical taxes, or *maghārim*, imposed by the Party
Kings. By the 530's/1140's, the situation had been reversed completely. The Christians
were again on the march, the *maghārim* had been reimposed, and, most importantly, the
Almoravids were fighting a losing battle against the Almohads, who eventually captured

Marrakech in 541/1147.[9] Again, in 503/1109, the Almoravids indulged Ibn Ḥamdīn, *qāḍī*

al-jamā` of Cordoba and a key constituent, by agreeing to order the destruction of a book

that posed no real danger to their regime. In 538/1143, on the other hand, they acted in

the face of a perceived imminent threat from Maghribi Sufism.

This chapter will argue that the edict of 538/1143 was not an attack on the ideas

of the *Iḥyā'*, but rather an attack on al-Ghazālī as a symbol of Maghribi Sufism. This is

not to say that the Almoravids feared Sufism in its own right; there is evidence, in fact,

that Tāshfīn b. `Alī, who issued the edict, was himself attracted to Sufism. The

Almoravids had grown wary of Sufism because its language of legitimacy and authority

had become entwined with that of their opponents, the Almohads. They were wary of al-

Ghazālī because he had become a symbol of opposition to them for both the Almohads

and Maghribi Sufis.

The chapter will begin by exploring the link between Ibn Tūmart and al-Ghazālī,

to demonstrate that their connection was a later invention for the sake of propaganda, and

had no basis in significant shared thought or a historical meeting. The legend of their

meeting was one of half a dozen legends linking major Almoravid or Almohad figures to

al-Ghazālī, which drew their power from their connection to a genre of similar narratives,

both factual and legendary, that had grown up among Maghribi Sufis. They were

circulated in the service of the propaganda war fought between the Almoravids and

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[9] For an overview of the dire situation in al-Andalus in the late Almoravid period, see Muḥammad al-Amrānī's introduction in Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, pp. 35-40. Not only had the Almoravids re-imposed the *mahgārim*, they at times put Christians in charge of collecting these taxes.

Almohads—a war in which the Almohads eventually prevailed. I will then turn to the major Sufis of the period, Ibn al-ʿArīf, Ibn Barrajān, and Ibn Qasī to show that their thought, while perhaps owing some debt to al-Ghazālī, was original and innovative in its own right. Almoravid opposition to them was due to their use of a language of authority deployed more famously and effectively by the Almohads, and to their links to al-Ghazālī, a symbol of opposition to the regime who had been claimed by the Almohads.

The Relation of Ibn Tūmart to al-Ghazālī

The story of the meeting of Ibn Tūmart and al-Ghazālī is recounted by the Almohad historian Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, who calls it a "curious tale" (*ḥikāya ṭarīfa*). One day, as Ibn Tūmart sat in al-Ghazālī's study circle in a Baghdad madrasa, a man from the Maghrib entered. Al-Ghazālī asked how the *fuqahāʾ* of Cordoba had received the *Iḥyāʾ*, and the man reluctantly told him that they had convinced the Sultan of the Maghrib and al-Andalus to burn it. Al-Ghazālī made a supplication to God that the Almoravids' kingdom be rent as they had rent the *Iḥyāʾ* and that their dynasty disappear as they had burned it. Ibn Tūmart, known then as Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Sūsī, rose and asked that al-Ghazālī request that this be accomplished by his hand, but al-Ghazālī ignored him. When a second Maghribi arrived and confirmed the account of the first, al-Ghazālī repeated his supplication. This time, when Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Sūsī called out, "By my hand, God willing!" al-Ghazālī specified, "O God, Achieve it [the destruction] by his hand!" (*allāhumma ijʿalhu ʿalā yadihi*). And so Abū ʿAbd Allāh, now called Ibn Tūmart, went

forth from Baghdad to the Maghrib knowing that the supplication of God cannot be turned back.[10]

As most scholars have acknowledged, this story of al-Ghazālī's investiture of Ibn Tūmart is chronologically impossible. Ibn Tūmart arrived in the Mashriq nearly ten years after al-Ghazālī had returned definitively to Khorasan. It is entirely likely that news of the 503/1109 burning of the *Iḥyā'* in Cordoba did not reach Ṭūs until after al-Ghazālī had died in 505/1111. And yet the existence of this story, recounted not only in Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, but also in numerous historical sources, requires an explanation. The one suggested most frequently is that this connection between the two men, though legendary, springs from an actual affinity in their doctrines. The affinities proposed to date, however, are tenuous at best.

The trend of looking for al-Ghazālī's influence on the thinking of Ibn Tūmart begins in 1903 with Ignaz Goldziher. He writes that most of the sources confirm this influence and claim that Ibn Tūmart's uprising was due either to al-Ghazālī's direct teaching, or his "profound knowledge of apocalyptic books" (a reference to a legend linking the two men that will be discussed below), or the Almoravids' burning of al-Ghazālī's writings.[11] Goldziher denies that al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart could have met[12] and even notes that their thought had little in common: Ibn Tūmart had no interest in *mukāshafa*, their legal methods were absolutely different, and they disagreed in points of

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[10] Ibn al-Qaṭṭān, *Naẓm al-Jumān*, pp. 72-73.

[11] Ignaz Goldziher, *Le Livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumart,* p. 5.

[12] Goldziher, *Le Livre*, pp. 9-11.

theology.[13]   Nonetheless, he insists that their theological doctrines were fundamentally similar, and that these represent an actual connection between Ibn Tūmart and al-Ghazālī that gave rise to the legendary connections.

This claim of shared theological doctrine is based on a misreading of the *Iḥyā'*. Goldziher seizes upon al-Ghazālī's critique of the *fuqahā'* over their obsession with legal minutiae, and claims that he, like Ibn Tūmart, was opposed to the study of *furū' al-fiqh*, and advocated *uṣūl al-fiqh* in its place.   It was the resistance of the *fuqahā'* of the Maghrib to *uṣūl* that led them to call for the burning of the *Iḥyā'*, in Goldziher's view, and Ibn Tūmart's opposition to *furū'* and championing of *uṣūl* made him an heir of al-Ghazālī in the Maghrib.[14]

As we saw in Chapter I, al-Ghazālī's critique of the *fuqahā'* was not aimed at convincing them to practice *fiqh* in a different way.   Rather, he criticized what he saw as an inappropriate focus on *fiqh* and *kalām*, which he characterized as worldly sciences, and sought to subordinate them to the otherworldly science, which, despite some ambiguity in al-Ghazālī's presentation, was taken in the Maghrib to mean Sufism. Though there is still considerable debate over the exact nature of Ibn Tūmart's thought, championing the otherworldly science was clearly not his objective in writing *A'azz mā*

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[13] Goldziher, *Le Livre*, pp. 19-20.

[14] His argument for the confluence between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Tūmart on this point is made over the course of the second section of his introduction, Goldziher, *Le Livre*, pp. 22-43. He seems to be using the term "theology" rather loosely, as his argument revolves around *fiqh* rather than *kalām*. I gather it should be understood in this context to mean simply religious science.

yuṭlab, which most scholars agree is concerned with legal methodology.[15] Furthermore,

as we have seen in Chapter III, opposition to the *Iḥyā'* was led by Ibn Ḥamdīn, who was

himself an *uṣūlī*, and who objected not to al-Ghazālī's legal thought, but to his Sufism.

This being the case, the connection between the thought of the two men posited by

Goldziher is untenable.

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[15] There are scholars who argue that Ibn Tūmart was not the author of a coherent doctrine, and scholars who claim that he was. The most comprehensive argument for the first school of thought is made by Maribel Fierro. Her first treatment of this issue is in *La Historia de España vol. VIII**, Parta Sexta: La Religión*, pp. 443-448. (In this article, she goes so far as to suggest that not only Ibn Tūmart's meeting with al-Ghazālī, but the entire journey to the Mashriq was an invention, p. 443.) She draws some further conclusions in "Le mahdi Ibn Tūmart et al-Andalus: l'élaboration de la légitimité almohade," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, vol. 91-92-93-94, 2000, pp. 107-124. Her argument is two-fold. First, she examines the "Book of Ibn Tūmart," casting doubt on the claim that it was written by Ibn Tūmart, and suggesting that its content did not remain the same throughout Almohad history. She further argues that there is no discernible coherence to the work. Modern scholars, she points out, have found in it Ash`arite, Mu`tazilite, Shiite, Kharajite, and philosophical strains of thought. Then she turns to the religious politics of the various Almohad caliphs to examine the doctrine in practice. She finds that each had significantly different religious inclinations and policies, which suggests that, even if Ibn Tūmart did have a coherent doctrine, it played only a small role in guiding the Almohad caliphs. Vincent Cornell carefully studied Ibn Tūmart's *A`azz mā yuṭlab*, and concluded, long before Fierro's work, that it does contain a coherent thesis; see his "Understanding is the Mother of Ability: Responsibility and Action in the Doctrine of Ibn Tūmart," *Studia Islamica*, vol. 66, 1987, pp. 71-103. Cornell argues that Ibn Tūmart was concerned to put legal rulings on a sound footing. This was to be achieved by making sure that legal rulings were based on hadith whose authenticity is attested by multiple chains of transmission (*ḥadīth mutawātir*) rather than hadiths that are transmitted by a single chain (*ḥadīth āḥād*). Tilman Nagel agrees with Cornell that Ibn Tūmart was mainly concerned with certainty in legal rulings, but casts Ibn Tūmart's doctrine in a more radical light, claiming that it resulted in nothing less that the "destruction of the *sharī`a*;" see his "La destrucción de la ciencia de la *šarī`a* por Muḥammad b. Tūmart," *Al-Qantara*, vol. XVIII, no. 2, pp. 295-304, and "Le Mahdisme d'Ibn Tūmart et d'Ibn Qasī: une analyse phénoménologique," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, vol. 91-92-93-94, 2000, pp. 125-135. Nagel claims that Ibn Tūmart rejected even the *ḥadith mutawātir* as a source of certain knowledge. Such hadith are a theoretical construct insofar as an individual instance of a *ḥadīth mutawātir* is indistinguishable from a *ḥadith āḥād*. The status of being *mutawātir* can only be conferred upon an aggregate of hadiths, and there is no universally agreed-upon standard for conferring this status. Furthermore, the hadiths are often contradictory and require commentary to be understood. Nagel argues that Ibn Tūmart advocates a type of radical Mālikism that sees knowledge preserved not in traditions, but in the continuous practice of the community going back to the time of the Prophet, much as Mālikism looks to the practice of Medina for its precedent. Ibn Tūmart points out, for example, that while the Iraqis argued over the exact definition of a unit of weight used by the Prophet, the *madd*, the same unit of weight remained in uninterrupted use in Medina. The danger he sees in the exercise of *fiqh* is thus that this living and sound practice of the community will be lost behind a cloud of legal sophistry. Further study will be required before a consensus is reached on the thesis of *A`azz mā yuṭlab* and its influence on later Almohad ideology.  For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that there is agreement between Cornell and Nagel that Ibn Tūmart's main concern in writing *A`azz mā yuṭlab* was to find a sound basis for legal rulings. This is not al-Ghazālī's concern in writing *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*.

Vincent Cornell is more cautious, writing of al-Ghazālī's "indirect" influence on Ibn Tūmart. He notes that al-Ghazālī emphasized the imperative of commanding right and forbidding wrong (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*), and that Ibn Tūmart was zealous in undertaking this practice.[16] He observes that both the *Iḥyāʾ* and *A ʿazz mā yuṭlab* begin with a Book of Knowledge.[17] Like Goldziher, he suggests that the emphasis in the *Iḥyāʾ* on a return to the original focus of the religion and especially the correct understanding of *tawḥīd* influenced Ibn Tūmart toward the focus on *tawḥīd* from which his movement took its name, *al-Muwaḥḥidūn*.[18]

At most, such parallels suggest that marginal elements of al-Ghazālī's thought influenced marginal elements of Ibn Tūmart's thought. The two Books of Knowledge share little apart from a title. Al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb al-ʿilm* seems as concerned with science (*ʿilm*) as with knowledge (*ʿilm*), arguing, as we have seen, for a reordering of the hierarchy of religious sciences and for criteria for certain knowledge derived from logic at a lower level and Sufism at a higher level. His concern with knowledge is first and foremost a concern with knowledge of God, with an insistence that legal and theological knowledge are secondary concerns. Ibn Tūmart in his *kitāb al-ʿilm* is concerned with achieving certainty for the sake of sound legal rulings.[19]

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[16] Cornell, "Understanding is the Mother of Ability," pp. 89-90.

[17] Cornell, "Understanding is the Mother of Ability," p. 91.

[18] Cornell, "Understanding is the Mother of Ability," pp. 99-100.

[19] See n. 15 above.

As we have seen in our discussion of *Kitāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-tawakkul*, al-Ghazālī's

presentation of *tawḥīd* is derived from his Sufi vision. None of those who have studied

Ibn Tūmart's thought have suggested that he shared this vision of all existence stemming

from the One, and of the believer striving to attain a realization of being a part of this

unity. Ibn Tūmart's emphasis on commanding right and forbidding wrong may possibly

owe a debt to al-Ghazālī. The treatment of this subject in *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn* is much

longer and more comprehensive than anything that had gone before it.[20] But Ibn Tūmart

could not be considered a "Ghazalian" on this basis alone.

Tilman Nagel claims similarities between the theological doctrines of al-Ghazālī

and Ibn Tūmart.[21] Ibn Tūmart, he writes, sees all of the cosmos as governed by the

knowledge of God, which is the basis of *tawḥīd*. He claims that this knowledge appears

like a light of certainty in the heart of the believer. For al-Ghazālī, he notes, certainty

also exists as a light in the heart of the believer. Similarly, both saw creation as a

structure determined by God's justice. He notes, however, that there are significant

divergences between the thought of the two men, such as al-Ghazālī's insistence on the

use of Aristotelian logic in legal reasoning in his *Mustaṣfā*, which is in direct opposition

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[20] The revolutionary nature of al-Ghazālī's treatment of *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar* is confirmed by Micahel Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, pp. 427-468. Cook points out that al-Ghazālī's treatment of the subject is longer than anything that had preceded it by an order of magnitude (p. 427), and his treatment is original and well ordered, as is typical of his writing (pp. 446-447). Most importantly, he presents the duty as much more far-reaching than any of his predecessors, both in terms of who is required to undertake it and who should be subjected to it. Al-Ghazālī writes that both women and slaves should command right and forbid wrong, and that, once one has corrected all the wrongs in one's own city, one should venture forth to see to the affairs of peasants, Bedouin, Kurds and Turcoman (pp. 449-450). It seems plausible that Ibn Tūmart's uncompromising approach to *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar* could have been inspired by al-Ghazālī.

[21] Nagel, "Le Mahdisme d'Ibn Tūmart et d'Ibn Qasī," p. 130.

to Ibn Tūmart's legal doctrine.[22] According to both Nagel and Cornell, *fiqh* was the focus of Ibn Tūmart's thought. This difference of emphasis should put to rest any claim of Ibn Tūmart's being a Ghazalian.

Even the apparently shared notion of certain knowledge existing as a light in the heart of a believer is not as significant as Nagel suggests. For Ibn Tūmart, this would seems to be a faculty existing naturally in all people. (Nagel suggests that it was this element of Ibn Tūmart's thought that led to the Almohads' patronage of philosophers such as Ibn Rushd.[23]) For al-Ghazālī, this light is cast by God into the breast of the believer who has undertaken to "polish" his heart through spiritual exercises. The conviction that al-Ghazālī *must* have influenced the thought of Ibn Tūmart has led to the discovery of influence in faint or even misleading parallels.

If the legend of the meeting of Ibn Tūmart and al-Ghazālī did not arise in order to give a personal dimension to a doctrinal affinity between the two men, then what accounts for its existence? The closest Goldziher comes to explaining the genesis of this story is to note that some "impartial oriental writers" considered the episode to be "popular legend."[24] But the stories connecting Ibn Tūmart to al-Ghazālī did not simply arise spontaneously in the popular imagination; they were fabricated. Tilman Nagel is correct in saying that "the occurrence of [Ibn Tūmart's] having met al-Ghazālī, the most famous scholar of the era, is no more than a legend, elaborated for the sake of his

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[22] Nagel, "La destrucción de la ciencia de la *šarī`a*," pp. 301-302.

[23] Nagel, "La destrucción de la ciencia de la *šarī`a*," p. 301.

[24] Goldziher, *Le Livre*, p. 10.

legitimation as a reformer."[25] More specifically, this legend was authored and spread by the Almohads for the purpose of gleaning for the founder of their movement some of the aura of righteousness that adhered to Sufi champions of the *Iḥyā'* in the face of the Almoravid campaign against it. If such a propagandistic basis for the existence of these stories can be persuasively shown, there will no longer be any need to look for the origin of the legend in tenuous parallels between the very dissimilar religious agendas of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* and *A'azz mā yuṭlab*.

Legends of al-Ghazālī's Relation to Notable Maghribis

It might be easy to dismiss a single legend linking Ibn Tūmart to al-Ghazālī as a fiction of little historical significance, were it not one of half a dozen narratives linking Ibn Tūmart, Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn, and other notable figures of the period to al-Ghazālī. This group of stories is part of a larger genre discussed in Chapter III, linking prominent Sufis to al-Ghazālī or the *Iḥyā'*. Together they tell the story of a propaganda struggle in which both the Almoravids and Almohads tried to capitalize on the Sufi historical accounts and legends surrounding al-Ghazālī for the sake of appropriating his legitimacy for their respective regimes.

In addition to the legend of al-Ghazālī's anointing of Ibn Tūmart, there is another oft-cited legend linking al-Ghazālī to the Almoravid Sultan Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn (d. 500/1106). According to this legend, al-Ghazālī was so impressed by what he heard

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[25] Tilman Nagel, "Le Mahdisme d'Ibn Tūmart et d'Ibn Qasī," p. 130.

about the righteous Yūsuf that he set out for the Maghrib to meet him, but turned back in Alexandria upon hearing of his death.[26]

It can be no mere coincidence that both dynasties circulated stories linking their founders to al-Ghazālī, or that both stories echo those told by Maghribi Sufis linking some of their number to the author of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*. Al-Ghazālī had come to stand for Sufism itself, and numerous Sufis were linked, factually or fictively, either with al-Ghazālī personally (as in the case of Ibn Ḥirzihim) or with resistance to the campaign against him under the Almoravids (such as al-Naḥwī). It is plausible to argue that these sorts of accounts spread widely enough, and were sufficiently effective at conferring prestige upon their subjects, that the Almohads and Almoravids both attempted to circulate stories of their own in hopes of legitimating their founders among Sufis and their sympathizers.

It is difficult to date these stories, but the fact that the Almoravids circulated one suggests that both had their origins before the fall of the Almoravid regime beginning in 541/1147. Although it is impossible to know with certainty which was circulated first, the most plausible scenario is that the Almohads were the first to attempt to link their founder to al-Ghazālī, leading the Almoravids to follow suit in order to counter the Almohad effort. As the villains of the burning story, it is unlikely that the Almoravids

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[26] Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, vol. 6, p. 199. Subkī relates this story very briefly in the context of his telling of al-Ghazālī's travels after leaving his post at the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad. He injects a note of skepticism before telling of al-Ghazālī's intention to go to the Maghrib, writing that, "It is said…." Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn's death was in 500/1106, at which point al-Ghazālī had just begun teaching in Nishapur. He had been in Khorasan at this point for nearly ten years and remained there until his death. Even if he had an interest in traveling to the Maghrib to meet Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn, which is unlikely, he never acted on it.

achieved much success, though, ironically, their story is the one that comes closer to having a basis in fact.[27] That the Almoravid legend failed to convincingly link Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn to al-Ghazālī is confirmed by the nature of the other legends they circulated after the fall of their empire.

There are two stories linking the Almoravids to al-Ghazālī with a more apologetic tone. According to one, `Alī b. Yūsuf indeed brought about his own destruction by ordering the burning of the *Iḥyā'* in 503/1109, but he did so unwittingly. Al-Subkī writes that the Almoravid sultan, a just and pious ruler, was made to believe that al-Ghazālī's writings contained philosophy. He ordered his books burned. As a result, many wrongs (*manākir*) appeared in his land, and the army gained control of him. He himself saw the need for a more effective ruler and prayed to God to send someone who could lead the Muslims properly, which He did, in the form of the Almohad Caliph `Abd al-Mu'min. `Alī's misfortunes continued until his death.[28] Clearly this legend dates from after the Almohads' victory, and was likely circulated either by the Almoravids who continued to

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[27] This is the case in that al-Ghazālī did write a letter and fatwā in favor of their regime in the late 5th/11th century. The fatwā and letter to Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn were preserved by Abū Bakr Ibn al-`Arabī in his *Kitāb shawāhid al-jilla*. It was his father who solicited them from al-Ghazālī; see *Tres textos Árabes sobre Beréberes en el occidente Islámico*, pp. 302-315. I have dealt with them in a study I hope to publish soon. I argue that al-Ghazālī's objective in writing these documents was not so much to express his admiration for Yūsuf b. Tāshfīn, but to assist Abū Bakr and his father `Abd Allāh in regaining their status and property lost when `Abd Allāh's patron, the Party King of Seville al-Mu`tamid b. al-`Abbād, was overthrown by the Almoravids.

[28] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi`iyya al-kubrā*, vol. VI, p. 219.

rule in the Balaeric Islands or by refugees from the Almoravid ruling family in other parts of the Muslim world.[29]

Another strange story involves the Ṣanhāja, the Berber tribe from which the Almoravids emerged. The account is found in al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, who writes that he found it in *Kitāb bahjat al-nāẓirīn wa uns al-`ārifīn* by Muḥammad b. `Abd Allāh b. `Abd al-`Aẓīm al-Zamūrī. Al-Zabīdī writes that one day al-Ghazālī informed a servant that he was going to die, instructing him to dig his grave and summon the people for his funeral but to leave his body for three men who would prepare his body and conduct the burial services. When he died, the servant did as he was told, and three men arrived, prepared al-Ghazālī's body for burial, and presided over his funeral before disappearing. A "voice" (*hātif*) informed some righteous Iraqis who attended his funeral that the three men were members of the Ṣanhāja tribe from the Azmūr on the Atlantic coast of al-Maghrib, which a journey to the region confirmed.[30]

This tale could well be an effort on the part of some Ṣanhāja to disassociate themselves from the Almoravids, as not all of the Ṣanhāja were members of the Almoravids' Lamtūna clan. And some of the Ṣanhāja broke with the Almoravids and

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[29] An entry in Ṭāhir al-Ṣadafī's *al-Sirr al-Maṣūn fī mā ukrima bihi al-mukhliṣūn* is devoted to an Almoravid "prince," referred to as Abū `Abd Allāh b. Wābūr al-Murābiṭ al-Mutalaththim (sic), who is described as having fled without his money or family to Mecca. It is possible that such a person could have responded to the legend of al-Ghazālī's investiture of Ibn Tūmart by presenting his own version of events. See Ṭāhir al-Ṣadafī, *al-Sirr al-Maṣūn fī mā ukrima bihi al-mukhliṣūn*, Halima Ferhat (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1998, pp. 118-119.

[30] Al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, vol. 1, p. 15. The account is also mentioned in Duncan Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzali," pp. 107-108.

allied themselves with the Almohads even before the fall of Marrakech.[31] Spreading such a legend could have been part of their effort to augment their connection to the Almohads.

The story of Ibn Tūmart's being entrusted with taking vengeance on the Almoravids is not the only one linking him to al-Ghazālī. There is a more supernatural account of their meeting, according to which al-Ghazālī alone possessed the esoteric knowledge necessary to read a coded book passed from `Alī Ibn `Alī Ṭālib to the sixth Shiite Imam, Ja`far al-Ṣādiq. According to this tale, al-Ghazālī had learned the signs of the *mahdī* and that the fate of the Maghrib was in his hands. He recognized Ibn Tūmart as the *mahdī* and taught him esoteric sciences.[32]

Another post-Almoravid legend claims that the Almoravid loyalist Qāḍī `Iyāḍ condemned al-Ghazālī and died suddenly in the bath house when the latter prayed for his death.[33]  That `Iyāḍ died over 30 years after al-Ghazālī was not a fact that the tale's author thought would damage the story's credibility. This suggests that it stems from the later years of the Almohad reign when the particulars of `Iyāḍ's life had been forgotten.  Invocation of al-Ghazālī's condemnation clearly remained potent, however.  The story likely represents an attempt to discredit a man who was revered as a saint after his death, authored influential works such as *Kitāb al-shifā bi-ta`rīf ḥuqūq al-muṣṭafā*, led the city

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[31] Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal*, p. 184.

[32] Goldziher, *Le Livre*, pp. 15-18.

[33] Al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, p. 38. Al-Zabīdī quotes the story from al-Sha`rānī's *Ṭabaqāt*.

of Ceuta in revolt against the Almohads, and denounced their doctrine as heresy. This impression is strengthened by another rumor spread to discredit him. It was claimed that he secretly practiced Judaism, which was known because he didn't leave his home on Saturdays, claiming that he was writing *Kitāb al-shifā*.[34]

The fact that the Almohads and Almoravids both sought to claim the imprimatur of al-Ghazālī for their respective regimes shows how potent a symbol he had become in the Maghrib due to the efforts of the Sufis, who had claimed his endorsement both for themselves as a group and for some of their individual members. It is this legitimation effort, rather than any significant doctrinal affinity, that is responsible for Ibn Tūmart being linked to al-Ghazālī.

The fact that the Almoravids also tried to link themselves to al-Ghazālī shows that, among at least some members of the regime, there was no objection to al-Ghazālī's thought, and perhaps no memory of having ordered the burning of 503/1109. Once al-

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[34] Halima Ferhat, *Sabta des origines au XIVe siècle*, pp. 146-156. On veneration of `Iyāḍ, see p. 147, and on his role in the revolt against the Almohads, see pp. 154-156. On accusations of crypto-Judaism and having been cursed by al-Ghazālī, see p. 155. The claim that he was a crypto-Jew is also mentioned in al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-sāda al-muttaqīn*, p. 38. It is unclear whether al-Qāḍī `Iyāḍ found in favor of burning the *Iḥyā'* as some have claimed. That he did so is mentioned in al-Sha`rānī's *Ṭabaqāt* and Ibn `Imād's *Shadharāt al-dhahab*. But al-Sha`rānī mentions this in conjunction with the story that al-Ghazālī caused `Iyāḍ's death; see al-Sāyiḥ, "Mawqif al-qāḍī `Iyāḍ min al-imām al-Ghazālī," *Dawrat al-qāḍī `Iyāḍ*, Marrakech, Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1981, vol. 2, p. 249. Al-Sāyiḥ has written that `Iyāḍ also criticized Sufism generally and al-Ghazālī specifically in his *Kitāb al-shifā*, but Frank Griffel has also shown that he was actually influenced by al-Ghazālī's *Fayṣal al-tafriqa* in that same work in his definition of the grounds for a declaration of apostasy; see *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam*, p. 382. Qāḍī `Iyāḍ's son writes in *al-Ta`rīf bi-l-qāḍī `Iyāḍ* that `Iyāḍ suggested that if the *Iḥyā'* were abridged and limited to what it has to say about *`ilm*, it would be a useful work. His interlocutor, one Abū Muḥammad b. Manṣūr, encouraged him to do so and said that none in their land but `Iyāḍ would be able to produce such an abridgement; see Abū `Abd Allāh Muhammad b. `Iyāḍ, *al-Ta`rīf bi-l-qāḍī `Iyāḍ*, Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-l-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, n.d., p. 106. Halima Ferhat describes an effort on the part of `Iyāḍ's son to rehabilitate his father's reputation in *Sabta des origins au XIVe siècle*, p. 155. The story may thus be an effort to make up for `Iyāḍ's actual condemnation of the work (which is not to say it is necessarily untrue), or it may reveal a more ambivalent attitude towards the *Iḥyā'*.

Ghazālī had been successfully claimed by the Almohads, however, his writings and everyone associated with him became a significant threat to the Almoravids, which blurred the distinction between the Almohads and the Sufis. There were other grounds for the conflation of the two groups as well.

Maghribi Sufi Thought and Authority in the Late Almoravid Period

As we saw in the previous chapter, when the *Iḥyā'* arrived in al-Andalus at the beginning of the 6th/12th century, it attracted a following, spawned imitators who wrote "tracts" based on its principles, and accelerated the spread of Sufism in the Islamic West. The group Ibn al-Qaṭṭān refers to as "the Ghazalians," who followed what Ibn Ḥamdīn referred to as "Ghazalian law," seem to have been doctrinaire adherents to the *Iḥyā'*. If they wrote any original works of Sufism, these have not survived.

Thirty years later, the situation had changed dramatically. The three Andalusi Sufis of this period who concern us here, all authors of surviving works of Sufism, were still associated with al-Ghazālī, much as an earlier generation of Maghribi Sufis had been. Ibn al-ʿArīf led a group in Almería known as "the Ghazalians,"[35] and Ibn Barrajān was known as "the al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus." One of Ibn Qasī's first acts when he formed his Sufi order was to make a public display of reading al-Ghazālī, presumably to

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[35] An obvious question that arises is: What is the connection between the group Ibn al-ʿArīf led and *al-Ghazāliyya* mentioned by Ibn al-Qaṭṭān? Numerous scenarios could be posited. One possibility is that Ibn al-Qaṭṭān took the name of the *ṭarīqa* led by Ibn al-ʿArīf in the final years of the Almoravid period and projected it back to the events of 503/1109, before the group formally existed. It is also possible that *al-Ghazāliyya* was a group that came into existence in Almería very shortly after the arrival of the *Iḥyā'* in the Maghrib, and that Ibn Ḥamdīn's order represented an attack by the religious establishment of Cordoba on a movement that was both more vibrant and more accepted in Almería. Either claim would be speculative. There is little additional data to work with, such as the names of other members of the *ṭarīqa*.

demonstrate that he was a *bona fide* Sufi.[36]   A study of the Sufi works written by the three men, however, reveals that none of them can be described as a mere imitator of al-Ghazālī, unlike the Ghazalians one generation earlier.   The originality of each of these three Sufi thinkers is attested by Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn `Arabī (d. 638/1240), who cited each of them in his work, and went so far as to write a commentary on Ibn Qasī's *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*.[37]   Destroying their access to the *Iḥyā'* would not have stymied these thinkers. A different connection between the Almoravids' second attack on the *Iḥyā'* and their attack on prominent Sufis must be sought, namely because in the intervening decades, Sufism had become indigenous to the Maghrib.

A brief survey of the major surviving works of Ibn al-`Arīf, Ibn Barrajān, and Ibn Qasī shows that, while some influence of al-Ghazālī can be demonstrated, each had absorbed other influences and moved in original directions.   What led to the persecution of Ibn al-`Arīf and Ibn Barrajān was not their Sufi writings, but rather two other factors. The first was their symbolic association with al-Ghazālī, whom the Almohads, as we have seen, had successfully claimed as their own.   The second was the language of Sufi

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[36] Ibn al-Abbār, *Kitāb al-ḥulla al-siyarā'*, vol. 2, p. 197. Ibn al-Abbār writes: "He dedicated himself to reading the books of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī publicly (*fī-l-ẓāhir*), seeking to attract people of that persuasion (*ahl hādha al-sha'n*), and secretly (*fī-l-bāṭin*) inciting them to sedition (*fitna*) and summoning them to revolt (*wa dā`iyan ilā al-thawra*)."

[37] See Muḥammad al-Amrānī's introduction in Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, p. 21. A fourth Maghribi Sufi frequently cited by Ibn al-`Arabī is Abū Madyan (d. 594/1198).  For a discussion of his career and a bilingual edition of his doctrinal works and poetry, see Vincent Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan: The Works of Abū Madyan Shu`ayb*, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1996. On Ibn al-`Arabī's commentary, see David Raymond Goodrich, "A 'Sufi' Revolt in Portugal," p. 29.  According to Goodrich, Ibn al-`Arabi was very critical of Ibn Qasī in his commentary and in his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyya*, but refers to him approvingly in other works; see ibid. pp. 49-52.

authority, a language shared by the Almohads and invoked by Ibn Qasī in a bid to found a
Sufi-led polity.

Ibn al-ʿArīf was the leader in Almería of a group known as "*al-ṭarīqa al-
ghazāliyya*,"[38] a prolific correspondent with other religious figures of the period, both
Sufis and non-Sufis,[39] and the disciple of Ibn Barrajān.[40] In addition to fragments of
some of his letters, a treatise entitled *Maḥāsin al-majālis* has survived. At first glance,
this work seems to be a short, simple treatise on the stages (*maqāmāt*) on the mystic path,
much like Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj's *Kitāb al-luma'*, or the discussion of the stages by al-
Qushayrī in his *Risāla*. In fact, however, Ibn al-ʿArīf's work contains an innovation not
found in these two works. Rather than simply describing the ten stages he discusses, Ibn
al-ʿArīf takes the opportunity to point out deficiencies in nine of them, stating that the
only true goal of the Sufi is God, which is achieved in the stage of love (*maḥabba*).[41] All

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[38] Al-Amrānī, "Introduction," p. 47. Al-Amrānī cites Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Muʿjam fī aṣḥāb al-imām Abī
ʿAlī al-Ṣadafī*, p. 15.

[39] Fragments of letters he wrote to al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ have survived; see Paul Nwyia, "Note sur quelques
fragments inédits de la correspondence d'Ibn al-ʿArīf avec Ibn Barrajān," *Hesperis: Archives Berbères et
bulletin de l'Institute des Hautes Études Marocaines*, vol. XLIII, 1955, p. 209.

[40] Asín Palacios claimed in a 1914 study that Ibn al-ʿArīf was the leading figure in Andalusi Sufism
and the master of Ibn Barrajān. The true relations between Ibn al-ʿArīf, Ibn Barrajān, and Ibn Qasī were
clarified by Paul Nwyia on the basis of Ibn al-ʿArīf's letters. In the fragments of three letters to Ibn
Barrajān, Ibn al-ʿArīf refers to him as his "*shaykh*," "*imām*," and "venerable master," (*kabīrī*),
demonstrating that, in fact, it was Ibn Barrajān who was Ibn al-ʿArīf's master. See Paul Nwyia, "Note sur
quelques fragments inédits," p. 219. In a later article, Nwyia likewise demonstrates that, while Ibn al-ʿArīf
corresponded with Ibn Qasī and some of his lieutenants, he did not meet Ibn Qasī himself until his thought
was well developed, expressing admiration for his writings and confidence that he had fully grasped
Sufism; see idem, "Rasā'il Ibn al-ʿArīf ilā aṣḥāb thawrat al-murīdīn fī al-andalus," *al-Abḥāth*, XXVII,
1978-79, pp. 45-46.

[41] Ibn al-ʿArīf, *Maḥāsin al-majālis: The Attractions of Mystical Sessions*, William Elliott and Andan
K. Abdullah (trans.), England: Avebury Publishing, 1980, pp. 64-74.

of the other stages may be necessary, but can also become impediments that keep the aspirant trapped at the level of the commoners.[42]

This innovation was not original to Ibn al-`Arīf. B. Halff has demonstrated that *Maḥāsin al-majālis*, in fact, borrowed heavily from two works of Shaykh `Abd Allāh al-Harawī al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1088), sometimes reproducing them word for word. Despite its being derivative, the *Maḥāsin* enjoyed great popularity.[43] If nothing else, it shows that Andalusi Sufis of this period were well familiar with the full scope of eastern Sufi literature, and were by no means solely dependent upon the writings of al-Ghazālī for inspiration.

Ibn Barrajān, the "al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus," was a more original thinker and author, and can in no way be construed as an imitator of his namesake. He is the author of three surviving works: two Qur'ān commentaries and a commentary on the names of God. Denis Gril has dealt briefly with the less well-known of the two works of *tafsīr*, entitled *Kitāb al-īḍāḥ fī-l-tafsīr*, focusing on what Ibn Barrajān refers to as the "higher reading" of the Qur'ān (*al-tilāwa al-`ulyā*).[44] Nothing in Gril's analysis suggests

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[42] Ibn al-`Arīf, *Maḥāsin al-majālis*, p. 78. As the translators point out in their introduction, other Sufi authors, such as al-Sarrāj and al-Qushayrī, also distinguish between the common understanding of stages of approach to God and the understanding of the elite who have actually arrived. They note, however, that this perspective is not methodically applied in these earlier works, as indeed it is in *Maḥāsin al-majālis*, where pursuing this insight is the main point of the exercise; *ibid*. p. 15.

[43] Claude Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism," p. 926.

[44] Denis Gril, "La 'lecture supérieure' du Coran selon Ibn Barraǧān," *Arabica*, vol. XLVII, 2000, pp. 510-522.

anything more than superficial resemblance to al-Ghazālī's thought.[45] He points rather to the influence of the early Mashriqī Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) and the Andalusī Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931).[46]

A more fruitful comparison can be drawn between Ibn Barrajān's commentary on the names of God and al-Ghazālī's own contribution to this genre. If Ibn Barrajān's thought followed al-Ghazālī's closely, one would expect to find important similarities between the two works. But there is a striking difference between Ibn Barrajān's commentary on the names of God and those of other authors, namely that he does not limit himself to discussing ninety-nine names. He refers to the hadith that limits the number to ninety-nine, but writes that many more than this are found in the Qur'ān, and that he has written about more than 130.[47] In contrast, al-Ghazālī explicitly considers and rejects the possibility of there being more than ninety-nine names.[48] Ibn Barrajān's discussion of each name is divided into three parts: 1) a study of the root of the name and its various meanings, 2) the appearance of the name in the Qur'ān and its use in hadith, 3) instructions to the reader on how to imbue himself with the power of the name and

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[45] Gril points to several discussions of gradations of profundity in reading the Qur'ān and in human inspiration. Some of these are four-level gradations that could recall al-Ghazālī's four part division of *tawḥīd*, or of *wara'*. See "La 'lecture supérieure'," p. 517. But such gradations of insight or profundity are fairly common, and Ibn Barrajān's invocation of them does not serve the same function as al-Ghazālī's, namely to elevate the otherworldly science above *fiqh* and *kalām*.

[46] Denis Gril, "La 'lecture supérieure'," p. 521

[47] Ibn Barrajān, *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā (Commentario sobre los Nobres más bellos de dios)*, Purificación de la Torre (ed.), Madrid: Fuentes Arábico-Hispanas, 24, 2000, p. 3. In fact, Ibn Barrajān seems to discuss 146 names.

[48] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God*, David Burrell and Nazih Daher, (trans.), Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1992, pp. 167-176.

acquire its attributes. It is on this third concern—*ta'abbud*, or devotion—that the majority of the work is focused. The discussion of devotion associated with the name *shahīd*, for example, runs to 104 folios, while discussions of the first two aspects of the names are limited to a folio or two.[49] Clearly, the main objective of Ibn Barrajān's commentary is Sufi spiritual guidance.

Al-Ghazālī's *al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* on the subject of God's names has quite a different emphasis. Richard Frank describes is as essentially a "theoretical and doctrinal" work of *kalām*.[50] Frank demonstrates that the *Maqṣad* is inspired in part by al-Qushayrī's commentary on the 99 names, *al-Taḥbīr fī-l-tadhkīr*, sometimes quoting or paraphrasing that work.[51] However, al-Ghazālī departs significantly from al-Qushayrī's objective of highlighting the spiritual significance of the names. His specific objective is "setting forth a formally ordered conception of God as creator and propounding a rather elaborate theoretical vision of God's action in the universe and on human beings…."[52] Structurally, the section of the work devoted to discussion of the names is comparatively short and divided into two parts, one defining

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[49] See Purificación de la Torre's introduction to Ibn Barrajān, *Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, pp. 35 and 42-45.

[50] Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, p. 10.

[51] Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, p. 16.

[52] Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, p. 15.

the name and another devoted to "counsel" (*tanbīh*), though even here the content is sometimes devoted to theoretical discussion rather than spiritual advice.[53]

Here again, we have to conclude that there is little resemblance between Ibn Barrajān's work and that of al-Ghazālī. Ibn Barrajān's writings are more ambitious than those of Ibn al-`Arīf and seem to be quite original; they are certainly not derived from the writings of al-Ghazālī. As for his designation as "the al-Ghazālī of al-Andalus," we can speculate that it grew out of the role that al-Ghazālī played in Maghribi Sufism as the archetypal Sufi. It was as one of the leading Sufi thinkers and masters of his age, not as a doctrinaire Ghazalian, that Ibn Barrajān earned the right to be so named.

The late Almoravid-era Sufi with the strongest affinity to al-Ghazālī's thought is Ibn Qasī. He is said to have attracted followers by making a show of studying the works of al-Ghazālī,[54] and there is clear evidence of borrowings from al-Ghazālī in his work *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*. However, it is also clear that there are other influences on his thought, some from non-Sufi sources and some from other Andalusi Sufis, and that he was another original Sufi thinker along with Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-`Arīf.

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[53] Richard Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System*, p. 15, n. 30. Frank writes that in some of the sections devoted to counsel, al-Ghazālī discusses philosophical doctrine.

[54] The claim that Ibn Qasī's appeal to al-Ghazālī was cynical has to be taken with a grain of salt. As we shall see, parts of Ibn Qasī's *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn* were genuinely influenced by al-Ghazālī's writings. It is interesting, however, that Ibn al-Abbār ascribes to Ibn Qasī the same strategy that this study ascribes to the Almohads: linking his movement to al-Ghazālī in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of those inclined to al-Ghazālī's writings, i.e., Sufis.

Khal` al-na`layn is a work devoted mainly to esoteric topics of the science of "unveiling" (*`ilm al-mukāshafa*), not Sufi practice (*mu`āmala*).[55] In other words, its focus is the opposite of that of the *Iḥyā'*. It is divided into four sections: 1) Topics of the Divine Kingdom (*al-malakūtiyyāt*), 2) Heavenly Topics (*al-firdawsiyyāt*), 3) Muḥammadan Topics (*al-Muḥammadiyyāt*), and 4) Merciful Topics (*al-raḥmāniyyāt*). The work thus covers mainly eschatology and cosmology, themes largely eschewed by al-Ghazālī in the *Iḥyā'*.[56]

Modern scholars have pointed to al-Ghazālī's influence on Ibn Qasī in a general sense, and especially the influence of the *Iḥyā'*.[57] Again, this seems to be a case of focusing on similarities while overlooking far more fundamental differences. True, a very important borrowing from al-Ghazālī has been found. Near the end of his book, in his discussion of the "Night of Power" (*laylat al-qadr*), Ibn Qasī lifts two paragraphs verbatim from al-Ghazālī's *Ma`ārij al-quds fī madārij ma`rifat al-nafs*.[58] However, al-Ghazālī is only one source of inspiration for the work.

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[55] Muḥammad al-Amrānī's study in his edition of Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, pp. 177-179.

[56] Raymond Goodrich, "A 'Sufi' Revolt," pp. 32-34.

[57] Raymond Goodrich, "A 'Sufi' Revolt," pp. 43-45, and also Muḥammad al-Amrānī's study of Aḥmād Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, pp. 46-50.

[58] This discovery was made by Goodrich in 1978 ("A 'Sufi' Revolt," p. 43) and also independently by Muḥammad al-Amrānī again in 1997 (Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, pp. 405-406).

Ibn Qasī was also inspired by the neo-Platonist *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* in writing *Khal`al-na`layn*,[59] as well as Ibn Masarra.[60] There is also evidence of Christian syncretism in the work. Ibn Qasī writes that Muḥammad will share his "pulpit" (*minbar*) with Jesus and John the Baptist in the hereafter. Ibn `Arabī wrote of the practice of Ibn Qasī placing two men by the side of the man giving the Friday sermon (*khuṭba*), which seems to be derived from this belief.[61] Ibn `Arabī, who received his copy of *Khal` al-na`layn* from Ibn Qasī's own son in Tunis in 590/1194, mentions two other sources of inspiration. He claims that Ibn Qasī's spiritual masters were Khalaf Allāh al-Andalusī and Ibn Khalīl of Niebla, and accuses Ibn Qasī of plagiarizing Khalaf Allāh's "revelations."[62] Despite Ibn Qasī's plain borrowings from al-Ghazālī, he, like Ibn al-`Arīf and Ibn Barrajān, must be considered a wide-ranging and original Sufi thinker and not a pale imitator of *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn*, such as the author of the "tract" criticized by Ibn Ḥamdin thirty years earlier.[63]

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[59] Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, pp. 85-86, and also Goodrich, "A 'Sufi' Revolt," pp. 46-48. Goodrich points out that, while Ibn al-Abbār stressed al-Ghazālī as Ibn Qasī's source of inspiration, Ibn al-Khaṭīb emphasized the Ikhwān al-ṣafā' in his *A`māl al-a`lām*, ibid. p. 16.

[60] Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, pp. 86-87, and also Goodrich, "A 'Sufi' Revolt," p. 45. Goodrich writes that Ibn `Arabī claimed that Ibn Qasī's image of hell as a black snake was taken from Ibn Masarra.

[61] Goodrich, "A 'Sufi' Revolt," p. 45.

[62] Goodrich, "A 'Sufi' Revolt," p. 17. Very little is known about these two men, but Ibn `Arabī's claim of plagiarism implies an even wider circle of original Sufi thought than the three figures examined here.

[63] Goodrich also declares that Ibn Qasī's thought was original, with the caveat that not enough is known about Andalusi Sufi thought in this period to make this claim with complete confidence; "A 'Sufi' Revolt," pp. 45-46.

We have concluded that the Almohads' conscious effort to connect Ibn Tūmart to al-Ghazālī was motivated by the symbolic value of al-Ghazālī rather than doctrinal affinity between the two men. Likewise one has to conclude that the public links between al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-`Arīf, Ibn Barrajān, and Ibn Qasī were based on the fact that these men were accomplished Sufis and that al-Ghazālī was the symbol in the Maghrib of Sufism itself. They were not linked to al-Ghazālī because of their faithful adherence to his thought. As we saw in Chapter III, the first order that the *Iḥyā'* be burned was an attempt by Ibn Ḥamdīn to uproot a Sufism newly arrived in al-Andalus. However, the second order that the works of al-Ghazālī be destroyed cannot have been an attack on Sufi doctrine as such, which by now had become widespread and taken on original Maghribi forms. Rather, it was an attack on a potent symbol of opposition to the Almoravid regime, invoked by both prominent Sufis and the Almohads. The edict of 537/1143 was an attack on both groups.

There was a second, and perhaps more important overlap between the thought of the Almohads and Maghribi Sufis. When the same Ibn Qasī led the first of a series of revolts that spelled the end of Almoravid rule in al-Andalus beginning in 538/1144, the titles he claimed for himself as ruler were *mahdī* and *imām*, the same titles held by Ibn Tūmart.[64] Furthermore, both groups portrayed themselves as small minorities who adhered to the correct practice of Islam, calling themselves *ghurabā'* or "strangers" in their age, a reference to a hadith that reads, "Islam began as a stranger and shall return to

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[64] See Tilman Nagel, "Le Mahdisme d'Ibn Tūmart et d'Ibn Qasī," pp. 125-135. Numerous other authors have also written on the fact that both men claimed these titles. Nagel notes that Ibn Khaldūn also took note of this fact, and wrote that Ibn Tūmart was successful while Ibn Qasī was not because Ibn Tūmart was able to harness his claim to tribal power, p. 126.

being a stranger as it began."[65] This language of political authority shared by Sufis and

the Almohads could not have been lost on the Almoravids. The trope of the "stranger"

had been in circulation for some time in al-Andalus, and there is reason to think that talk

of the leadership of a *mahdī* and *imām* also predated the revolt of Ibn Qasī and the

Murīdūn.

There is some question as to whether it was the Almohads or the *Murīdūn* who

first referred to their leader as *mahdī* and *imām*. It has been suggested that Ibn Qasī was

the first to claim these titles.[66] But evidence for this claim is not convincing, whereas

there is reference in *A 'azz mā yuṭlab* to the figure of the *mahdī* arriving in the time of

"alienation" (*ghurba*), which suggests a claim to be *mahdī* made during Ibn Tūmart's

lifetime.[67]

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[65] *Bada'a al-Islām gharīban wa saya'ūdu gharīban kamā bada'a*; see Maribel Fierro, "Spiritual Alienation and Political Activism: The *Ġurabā'* in al-Andalus during the Sixth/Twelfth Century," *Arabica*, vol. XLVII, 2000, pp. 246-248 (on Ibn Tūmart), and 254-257 (on Ibn Qasī).

[66] Fierro, "Le mahdi Ibn Tūmart et al-Andalus," pp. 109-110. Fierro cites two Portuguese studies which base their argument for the precedence of Ibn Qasī's adoption of the titles *mahdī* and *imām* on numismatic evidence. Ibn Qasī had dirhams minted in 539/1144 that carried the inscription, "*Allāh rabbunā wa-Muḥammad nabiyyunā wa-l-mahdī imāmunā*." The Almohads minted coins bearing an almost identical inscription, but because Almohad coins do not typically carry a date, it is impossible to tell whether their coins were minted before or after Ibn Qasī's. The Portuguese scholars suggest that Ibn Qasī's came first, because his inscription is more correct than that of the Almohads, who, instead of saying that Muḥammad was their *nabī* (prophet), claimed that he was their *rasūl* (apostle or messenger). Muḥammad, they argue, can appropriately be referred to as "our prophet" (*nabiyyunā*) but not "our apostle" (*rasūlunā*) as per the Almohad formulation, because he was sent by God and can therefore only appropriately be referred to as "the apostle of God" (*rasūl Allāh*). They argue that the Almohads did not mint coins until after the conquest of Marrakech in 541/1147, and that, when they did, they adopted the incorrect formulation in order to distinguish themselves from Ibn Qasī. Fierro rejects this thesis, because she finds implausible the argument that the Almohads did not mint coins until after the conquest of Marrakech in 541/1147. The articles cited by Fierro are: A. Sidarus, "Novos dados sobre Ibn Qasi de Silves e as taifas almorávides no Gharb al-Andalus," *I Jornadas de Silves Actas. Silves (3 e 4 Setembro 1992)*, Silves, pp. 35-40, and M. Telles Antunes and A. Sidarus, "Maid um quirate cunhado em Beja em nome de Ibn Qasi e Abu Talib al-Zuhri," *Arquelogia Medieval*, vol. 1, pp. 221-223.

[67] Fierro, "Spiritual Alienation," pp. 246-247.

There is evidence of talk in Sufi circles of claims to the titles of *mahdī* and *imām* long before Ibn Qasī's revolt in 538/1144. In a letter apparently written between 524/1130 and 529/1135 to Abū al-Walīd b. Mundhir, one of the lieutenants of Ibn Qasī, Ibn al-`Arīf discusses the idea of the *mahdī*. Ibn al-`Arīf's writings suggest that he was a political quietist, so it is not surprising to find him rejecting the idea of looking for political change led by a *mahdī*.[68] He writes, "Slander of dynasties (*al-qadḥ fī duwal*) and the expectation of a *mahdī* who will reform them is not a position taken by one of sound judgment, and none but a weak-minded Muslim holds such a view." He then goes on to recount how the yearning of the Muslims for a *mahdī* in the past led to destruction under the Abbasids and the Fatimids.[69] That Ibn al-`Arīf responded to the question or comment of a fellow Sufi about hopes for the political leadership of a *mahdī* against the Almoravids strongly suggests that this idea was current in Sufi circles before the outbreak of the revolt of the *murīdūn*.

Furthermore, as Vincent Cornell notes, Ibn al-`Arīf, in his correspondence with his spiritual master Ibn Barrajān, refers to the Sevillian Sufi as the "Supreme Guide of those who lead souls to the ways of salvation [and] the Imam who possesses the benediction of Muḥammad as his legitimate representative." As Cornell suggests, this reference hints at more than spiritual authority.[70] Whether it was or not, such language

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[68] See Muḥammad al-Amrānī's study in Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, p. 58.

[69] Quoted in the introduction to Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, p. 59.

[70] Vincent Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, pp. 20-21.

would have seemed threatening to the Almoravids, given the other convergences between the Almohads and the Sufis.

That the Almoravids were concerned about these convergences is confirmed by the summons of Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-`Arīf to Marrakech in 536/1141. Later sources suggest that the Almoravids arrested Ibn al-`Arīf and Ibn Barrajān because they feared they might raise a revolt like that of the Almohads.[71] Ibn Barrajān in particular was accused by the Almoravids of being the acknowledged *imām* of 130 villages around Seville, and this charge seems to have been the chief cause of his execution.[72] Though the accusation appears to have been false, it does show that the Almoravids were aware that there were discussions of Sufi political authority in the person of an *imām* or *mahdī* and were prepared to take measures against leading Sufis to prevent a Sufi revolt from emerging. It was their misfortune to have arrested the wrong Sufi: the revolt of Ibn Qasī broke out three years later.

Conclusion

Maghribi Sufism in the late Almoravid period was very different from what it had been thirty years earlier. Though the occasional Sufi had appeared in the Maghrib over the previous two centuries, at the beginning of the 6th/12th century, Sufism was not widespread there. Only after the introduction of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' `ulūm al-dīn* did a

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[71] Maribel Fierro, "Opposition to Sufism," p. 196.

[72] Other studies suggest that al-Sha`rānī claimed that Ibn Barrajān *was* the *imām* of 130 villages. Al-Amrānī clarifies the passage, pointing out that al-Sha`rānī does not claim that this was in fact the case, but rather that the Almoravids accused him of this, a charge al-Sha`rānī rejects as slander. See Muḥammad al-Amrānī's study in Aḥmad Ibn Qasī, *Kitāb khal` al-na`layn*, p. 60.

passionate but derivative Sufism began to spread. By the 530's/1140's, the Maghrib was home to a vibrant and original Sufism whose main thinkers and writers were to provide inspiration to their countryman, the brilliant Sufi theoretician Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn `Arabī. Al-Ghazālī was still revered as the author of the Maghrib's foundational Sufi document, to the extent that he was seen by some as the symbol of Sufism itself. The most prominent Sufis of the region were recognized by being associated with al-Ghazālī in name, even as their thought moved in new and original directions, and into terrain not covered in the *Iḥyā'*.

Al-Ghazālī was also associated with a critical shared memory of Maghribi Sufi identity: the burning of the *Iḥyā'* in 503/1109 on the initiative of the *qāḍī al-jamā`* of Cordoba, Ibn Ḥamdīn, and with the authority of the Almoravid regime. This was an attack on Sufism as such, which Ibn Ḥamdīn rejected totally and hoped to uproot from the Maghrib by destroying the work upon which Maghribi Sufis relied to justify and guide their practice. Sufis stood up to this campaign, and those who opposed the burning or aided in disseminating the condemned work became heroes of Maghribi Sufism whose actions were memorialized in the early 13th century in works of hagiography such as al-Tādilī's *Kitāb al-tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf.* Numerous legends also grew up around the event.

Such was the potency of this shared memory in Sufi circles that the Almohads sought to capitalize on it by associating their founder, Ibn Tūmart, with the burning, casting him as nothing less than the agent of al-Ghazālī's vengeance against the Almoravids. The Almoravids also tried to associate their revered early leader Yūsuf b.

Tāshfīn with al-Ghazālī. Despite the fact that al-Ghazālī had actually written to Yūsuf, this attempt at counter-propaganda seems to have failed. The sharing of the trope of championing al-Ghazālī against the Almoravids between the Sufis and Almohads had the effect of blurring the distinction between these two groups in the eyes of the Almoravids. This resulted in the order of 538/1143 that the people of Valencia destroy the works of al-Ghazālī—an order that was likely never carried out in the chaos of the final years of Almoravid rule of al-Andalus.

A further factor that led to the conflation of the Sufis and the Almohads into a single threat was a language of political dissent and authority shared between the two. Both the Almohads and Ibn Qasī portrayed themselves as strangers of the age (*al-gharīb fī al-zamān*), lonely adherents to the essence of God's revelation among a majority that had gone astray.[73] They promised a return to the correct faith and an end to the alleged corruption of the Almoravids through the leadership of a *mahdī* who would act as *imām* to a new polity. Ibn Qasī does not seem to have been the first Sufi to suggest that one of their own kind could lead as a *mahdī*. Nor were the Almoravids completely surprised to find a Sufi leading a revolt against them, calling himself *imām*; they had arrested and executed Ibn Barrajān a few years earlier on charges of making precisely this claim for himself. Ibn Qasī's association with al-Ghazālī and that of Ibn al-`Arīf were doubtless additional factors that aroused the suspicion of the Almoravids.

Thus the reprise of the campaign against al-Ghazālī in 538/1143, the preceding summons of Ibn Barrajān and Ibn al-`Arīf, and the subsequent revolt of Ibn Qasī had little

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[73] Al-Ghazālī appeals to this hadith as well in the *Iḥyā'*.

to do with the thought of al-Ghazālī and everything to do with the discourse of Maghribi political legitimacy and authority. Ironically, the first burning of 503/1109, an event quickly forgotten by the *fuqahā'* who called for it, and likely little understood by the Almoravid rulers who ordered it, became a symbol to which opponents of the regime rallied thirty years later. Thus there is continuity between the two events, though not the simple continuity that many have suggested. The unforeseen consequence of the burning of 503/1109 was that al-Ghazālī became a very real threat to the Almoravids in the 530s/1140s, against which they felt compelled to act on their own accord.

CONCLUSION

This study began with the premise that in order to understand the Maghribi controversies over al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, it is first necessary to understand the *Iḥyā'* itself. Understanding the *Iḥyā'* means understanding why al-Ghazālī insisted that the religious sciences needed reviving, whom he charged with their mortification, and what their revival entailed. This premise has largely been vindicated.

Al-Ghazālī harkens back to Islam's pristine origins, when Muḥammad and his companions and immediate successors understood and practiced the religious sciences as they were meant to be understood and practiced. The passionate pursuit of these Righteous Forbears, in al-Ghazālī's portrayal, was the otherworldly science, a science whose practical aspect, *'ilm al-mu'āmala*, guided life in this world in such a way as to guarantee salvation in the next. This science of practice was informed and also validated by another science, *'ilm al-mukāshafa*, a science "unveiled" to the otherworldly scholar who pursued *'ilm al-mu'āmala* at its highest levels.

The Righteous Forbears, as al-Ghazālī has it, also recognized another class of religious sciences, namely the worldly sciences, which, in their day, meant chiefly *fiqh*. Jurisprudence was necessary for maintaining social order and also provided guidance for the fundamental practices of *'ilm al-mu'āmala*. However, its pursuit was seen as an unwelcome distraction from the otherworldly science.

But there was power and prestige to be gained from interpreting and applying the law, and many religious scholars flocked to its study, not as an unfortunate necessity, but

as an end in itself. Later, a new worldly science, *kalām*, emerged to counter the danger of the spread of incorrect belief. *Kalām* came with its own practices that could be used for gaining wealth, prestige, and the attention of the politically powerful, especially public theological debate, and these too attracted the ambitious. Over time, al-Ghazālī claims, the religious sciences became identified exclusively with the worldly sciences, and the otherworldly science became an overgrown path, trodden by a few "strangers" among a Muslim community fixated on practicing the worldly sciences for worldly gain. With this, the religious sciences died.

In *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, al-Ghazālī combines a powerful polemic for the return to the otherworldly science with exhaustive description of what that science entails in practical terms. This practice has four levels of progressive profundity: starting with the practice of the fundamental acts of the faith in keeping with the otherworldly science, the devotee progresses to the correct conduct of daily life, then to the reform of the ego to purge it of blameworthy traits, then to the cultivation of praiseworthy traits. These four levels of enactment of the otherworldly science are mirrored in the four-quarter structure of the *Iḥyā'* as a whole. They also structure the discussions of individual points of doctrine and practice such as purity (*ṭahāra*), scrupulousness (*wara'*), and divine unity (*tawḥīd*).

The practice al-Ghazālī argues for is clearly that of the Sufis, even if he does not unequivocally identify his otherworldly science with Sufism. As for the knowledge that is "unveiled" to advanced practitioners through *'ilm al-mukāshafa*, its provenance is less clear. It seems quite likely that al-Ghazālī's conception of the cosmological vision that

mu'āmala yields and through which it is validated is derived from Neoplatonic philosophy.

This understanding of the *Iḥyā'* is quite different from the still prevailing view that it was an uncontroversial work seeking merely to create a version of Sufism in keeping with normative Islam. *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* in fact emerges as a highly polemical work with unconventional aspects bound to cause controversy among several audiences. These would include the jurists and theologians, highly respected religious scholars who saw themselves and were seen as arbiters of religious truth. Al-Ghazālī sought to cast them as impious usurpers and to demote them to second-tier religious scholars. Those who were sensitive to the dubious provenance of the cosmological and eschatological truths that al-Ghazālī unveiled to his readers in a few short passages of the *Iḥyā'* were also bound to be alarmed.

This new understanding of the *Iḥyā'* goes a long way towards explaining the controversy al-Ghazālī faced when he returned to teaching in Nishapur in 499/1106. His critics clearly had a sophisticated understanding of the *Iḥyā'* and its agenda: they focused on a passage that contained instances of both his four-part gradation of religious truth and his use of philosophical concepts to describe his cosmology. Their critique aimed to tar al-Ghazālī with the brush of philosophy and to undermine the structure that allowed him to elevate the otherworldly scholars above the worldly.

Ibn Ḥamdīn, responding at roughly the same time in Cordoba, seems to have been a less sophisticated reader of the *Iḥyā'*. The surviving fragment of his refutation demonstrates that he understood and rejected the basic premise of the work. He attacked

the notion that the religion contained an interior truth that could give its guardians, the Sufis, precedence over the jurists, the guardians of the exterior truth. But if Ibn Ḥamdīn saw and understood the four-part structure of the *Iḥyā'* that provides the work with its underlying logic, he does not mention it, at least in the fragment that survives of his refutation. Nor does he seem to have caught the scent of possible philosophical influence.

As for Tāshfīn b. `Alī's edict of 538/1143, this was not an attack on al-Ghazālī's agenda of reviving the religious sciences. Rather, it was an attack on a thinker who had emerged as one of the most potent symbols of opposition to the Almoravid regime, an arbiter of power and worker of miracles and not the author of a carefully crafted argument against the prevailing hierarchy of the religious sciences. This status was an unforeseen result of the burning of 503/1109, which came to stand for both the corruption of the Almoravid regime and the sanctity of the men who challenged the burning. Al-Ghazālī became a symbol wielded first by Maghribi Sufis, who posed little real threat to the Almoravids, and later by the Almohads, who claimed al-Ghazālī's sanction for a powerful tribal confederacy that overthrew the Almoravids. The Almoravids first tried in vain to forge their own link to al-Ghazāl; ironically, they had a better claim to his sanction than the Almohads. Later, they lashed out at this symbol of opposition to their regime as they attacked both their Sufi and Almohad enemies.

This approach to the *Iḥyā'* has been fruitful in unexpected ways. By reading al-Ghazālī's *magnum opus* with an eye to discovering its controversial aspects, this study has revealed

a polemical and innovative work that can no longer remain one of the great unread masterpieces of the classical Islamic intellectual heritage. Not only has it shed new light on al-Ghazālī's thought, but it has uncovered a new chapter of his biography as well. This revision takes us well beyond al-Ghazālī's self-serving self presentation in *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* and the legend-filled biography of al-Subkī. Al-Ghazālī's Persian letters and *al-Imlā' fī ishkālāt al-iḥyā'* reveal his passionate efforts to enact the agenda of the *Iḥyā'* with the backing of two of the Sanjar's *wazīr*s and also his resignation when these efforts were defeated by his enemies. This provides a much richer background against which to read his later works, especially those in which he alludes to the controversy, such as *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* and *Fayṣl al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa-l-zandaqa.*

The presence of philosophical elements in the *Iḥyā'* provides further evidence for the argument made by scholars such as Lazarus-Yafeh, Frank, Landholt, Nakamura, Jansen, and Griffel that the author of *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* made use of important elements of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy in his own thought. More importantly, though, the discovery of the Nishapuri controversy provides historical evidence that this borrowing was recognized and opposed in al-Ghazālī's day. This, combined with the broader understanding of the *Iḥyā'* could lead to a re-formulation of our understanding of al-Ghazālī's use of philosophical concepts.

Many who have approached this issue have insinuated that al-Ghazālī was a philosopher presenting himself in bad faith as a Sufi. But surely the vast majority of *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn* was not written merely to provide camouflage for the few passages in

which he utilizes philosophical concepts. Al-Ghazālī must be taken seriously as a Sufi thinker, though perhaps one who reformulated certain aspects of that science. It seems likely that, much as al-Ghazālī made logic indispensable to *fiqh* and *kalām*, so too, he might have imported some elements of Neoplatonic cosmology and metaphysics into Sufism. It may be that his writings, especially *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, did lead philosophy to wither away in Islamic civilization as a self-standing science, but only after some of its central elements were absorbed into other religious sciences: logic into *fiqh* and *kalām*, and Neoplatonic eschatology and cosmology into Sufism. But this is a discussion that requires further elaboration.

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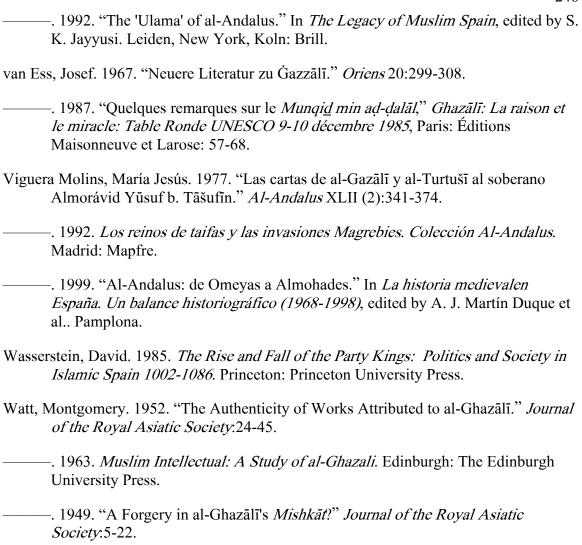———. 2000. *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History, Themes in Islamic Studies*. Leiden, Boston, Koln: Brill.

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