

AL-GHAZĀLĪ AS A REPRESENTATIVE AND INITIATOR OF THE IDEALIZED ATTITUDE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CLASS OF RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS AND GOVERNMENT

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Abstract

There is no doctrinal approach for the nature of the relationship between the religious class (*‘ulamā’*) and government in Islam. From the early centuries of Islam onwards, there have been two different approaches. The first approach is to be a part of the governing mechanism, and the second is to be separate from the government. In Islamic tradition, the second approach is accepted as an ideal attitude because it has been supported by major scholars and Sufis from the early centuries on. Al-Ghazālī, who has a very important place in Islamic thought, also adopted this attitude and tried to behave consistently with it during his life. However, what distinguishes him from his predecessors is that he dedicated long passages to this issue in his major work, *Iḥyā’*. Al-Ghazālī’s attitude, because he is not only followed for his ideas but also for his personal life’s record (*manqiba*), plays an important role by idealizing this second approach. In this paper, I address the intellectual background and the socio-political structure that paved the way for al-Ghazālī’s thoughts and their emergence into the public stage.

Key Words: Al-Ghazālī, *‘ulamā’*, government, religious class and government

Introduction

It is possible to discuss the existence of a class that differs from the public in its religious knowledge and practice, although, theoretically, there is no clergy in Islam. This class is called ‘*ulamā*’ in the classical sociological analysis.¹ Without doubt, the religious class covers more area than that covered by the term ‘*ulamā*’. Inclusion in this class is ambiguous because it does not have any place in the doctrine. However, we can establish a criterion that the members should at least make their living from religion or should dedicate an important share of their daily lives to religious and scientific activities despite having another occupation. In this case, we meet a vast religious class that stretches from scholars, sheikhs, teachers to *muftis*. If the vast masses of people are to be considered, imāms, *madrassa* students, and Sufi disciples (*murīds*) are also included into this religious class.

Studies on the social role of the religious class in Islamic history² are rare, and these are mostly biographical in their nature. However, to understand the history of Muslim communities, it is of crucial importance to sort out the attitude of those authorities in the religious field towards various situations, whether these attitudes are same or different. Among these attitudes, the relationship between religion and politics is currently becoming an important subject-matter. The relationships between clergymen and political power constitute only a single part of this vast topic. Because it is difficult to conduct a thorough research that includes the entire tradition of Islamic thought, this study discusses only al-Ghazālī’s case by analyzing his thoughts on the relationship between the religious class and political power and the factors that feed these thoughts, that is, the approach towards addressing these issues, in Islamic tradition and the political practices of al-Ghazālī’s era.

In what follows, I argue that the idealized attitude of the religious class towards statesmen in the Islamic tradition is to refrain as much as possible from any relationship and to protect the glory of Islam

¹ See Na‘īmā Muşṭafā Efendī, *Nāimā Taribi* [*Tāriḫ-i Na‘imā*] (ed. Zuhuri Danişman; Istanbul: Zuhuri Danişman Yayınevi, 1967), I, 39-40.

² For an evaluation about the studies done in the West, dedicated to the ‘*ulamā*’ as social actors or class; see R. Stephen Humphreys, *İslam Tariḫ Metodolojisi: Bir Sosyal Tariḫ Uygulaması* [*Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*] (translated into Turkish by Murteza Bedir and Fuad Aydın; Istanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2004), 233-257.

and provide religious warnings in the case of association. This idealized attitude arose out of a reaction to the illegal practices of governors throughout history, and not from the basic religious texts. Al-Ghazālī is both representative and the initiator of this attitude, which is idealized by the religious class; thus, he is not an isolated and dissenting figure. In this regard, he was influenced by the attitudes of those scholars and Sufis who lived centuries before him, and he dedicated special chapters to this subject in his *Iḥyāʾ*.³ The fact that this issue is addressed in detail in such an important work as *Iḥyāʾ* led this attitude to become even more idealized after al-Ghazālī.

The Seljuq Age and al-Ghazālī

The political structure of the 11th century had a major effect on shaping its socio-economic structure. Similarly, the political structure had a significant influence on al-Ghazālī's thoughts on the relationship between the *ʿulamāʾ* and the sultans. Undoubtedly, not all of the thoughts of al-Ghazālī depend on the political-social structure that he witnessed. However, this structure strengthened the correctness and validity of the thoughts that had already been stated regarding the *ʿulamāʾ*-sultan relationship.

Al-Ghazālī lived in an era that can be called "the Seljuq Age." During this period, the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate was in Baghdād and the Fāṭimid caliphate was in Egypt. However, the hegemony of ʿAbbāsīds in the eastern Islamic world was symbolic because Baghdād, the center of the caliphate, was under the occupation of the Shīʿite Buwayhids. Meanwhile, the Ghaznavids represent the largest state in the eastern Islamic world. However, the Seljuqs had emerged as a new power in history, and they were at war with the Ghaznavids. Turkish and foreign historians have called the first half of the 11th century, in which there was no central authority, a "period of anarchy."³ After the defeat of Masʿūd in the battle of Dandanaqan (1040), the Seljuqs became the dominant power in the region. However, because of the old-age Turkish state tradition of portioning out the country among the heads of the dynasty (sultans) and the other autonomous princes (*maliks*), the anarchy partially continued.⁴ Rebel-

³ See Osman Turan, *Selçuklular ve İslâmiyet [Seljuqs and Islam]* (Istanbul: Turan Neşriyat Yurdu, 1971), 16; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *İslâm'ın Serüveni [The Venture of Islam]* (translated into Turkish by Alp Eker et al.; Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1993), II, 142-143.

⁴ See ʿAlī ibn Nāşir al-Ḥusaynī, *Abbâru'd-Devleti's-Selçûkiyye [Akbâr al-Dawla al-*

lion and wars unfolded, particularly during the last years of the Sultan Tughrul Beg,⁵ in the first year of Alp Arslān's reign (1063).⁶ The period containing the three decades between 1063 and 1092, the year in which Alp Arslān's son Malik Shāh died, saw a relative stability, though rebellion and wars continued.⁷ In the meantime, the country fought wars with the neighboring countries.⁸ A struggle for the sultanate started among the sons of Malik Shāh upon his death in 1092 and continued until 1105.⁹ In the meantime wars erupted among other autonomous princes.¹⁰ About this period, Bundārī and Ibn al-Athīr both write that a serious anarchy occurred; rulers were weakened because of the wars and security of life and property ceased to exist.¹¹ With the death of Barkyārūq in 1105, Muḥammad Tapar became the sultan and stability returned.¹²

Al-Ghazālī, who was a live witness to this period and very close to the state, was born in Ṭūs in the region of Khurāsān in Iran in 1058. He became a student of al-Juwaynī at the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa of

Seljūqiyya) (translated into Turkish by Necati Lügali; 2nd edn., Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), 40-41. For the difference between *sultān* and *malik*, see Abdülkerim Özeydin, *Sultan Mubammed Tapar Devri Selçuklu Taribi* [*The Seljuq History in the Period of Sultan Muḥammad Tapar*] (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1990), 28.

⁵ ‘Alī ibn Nāṣir, *Abbār*, 13-14.

⁶ ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Shaybānī Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi l-tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1965-1966), X, 36-37. Sources write that Qutalmish, who rebelled against Alp Arslān, ravaged all of the villages in Ray. See ‘Alī ibn Nāṣir, *Abbār*, 21.

⁷ ‘Alī ibn Nāṣir, *Abbār*, 39, 43-44; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 53, 78-79, 118-119, 137-138, 147-149.

⁸ For the wars against the Ghaznavids and the Qarakhānids under the reign of Malik Shāh, see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 77, 92, 347-348.

⁹ Abū Ibrāhīm Qiwām al-Dīn Faṭḥ ibn ‘Alī al-Bundārī, *Zübdeṭü'n-Nusra ve Nubbetü'l-Usra: Irak ve Horasan Selçukluları Taribi* [*Zubdat al-nuṣra wa-nukbbat al-‘uṣrā: History of the Seljuqs of ‘Irāq and Khurāsān*] (translated into Turkish by Kıvameddin Burslan; Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1943), 85-86; ‘Alī ibn Nāṣir, *Abbār*, 52-53; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 224, 232-234, 244-245.

¹⁰ Al-Bundārī, *Zübdeṭü'n-Nusra*, 86, 233-234; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 262-264, 269, 279.

¹¹ Al-Bundārī, *Zübdeṭü'n-Nusra*, 91; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 369.

¹² Al-Bundārī, *Zübdeṭü'n-Nusra*, 236-237; ‘Alī ibn Nāṣir, *Abbār*, 53-54; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 287-387. When Tapar became sultan, this time his cousin Mangubars rebelled. See Ibn al-Athīr, *ibid.*, X, 398.

Nīshāpūr in 1080. With the help of his previous knowledge, al-Ghazālī was a bright student and achieved a scientific status that enabled him to write his earlier works. After his teacher died in 1085, al-Ghazālī went to the military post of Nizām al-mulk, which protected many scholars and litterateurs at that time. After spending six years there, he was appointed by the vizier as a professor at the Nizāmiyya Madrasa of Baghdād in 1091. According to the sources, his years of professorship in Baghdād made this young scholar more famous than the caliph, the sultans, and the religious elite. In 1095, al-Ghazālī resigned from his professorship, and at that time, he isolated himself for ten years. It is intriguing that this period of isolation occurred at a time of political anarchy with the throne wars of the Seljuqs. Al-Ghazālī first went to Damascus and then to Jerusalem. He next travelled to al-Ḥijāz for a pilgrimage. Finally, he returned to his homeland, Tūs.¹³ Al-Ghazālī became a professor in Nīshāpūr in 1106, this time with “the injunction of the sultan.”¹⁴ During this period, the Sultan Muḥammad Tapar was on the Seljuq throne. The sources state that it was Fakhr al-mulk ibn Nizām al-mulk, the vizier of Sanjar, the ruler (*malik*) of the region of Khurāsān including the city of Nīshāpūr, who invited al-Ghazālī.¹⁵ It is even stated that upon the proposal of the professorship, al-Ghazālī excused himself, preferring to devote himself to religious rituals. However, the vizier insisted, stating that the Muslim community must indeed benefit from such an authority as al-Ghazālī.¹⁶

It is thought provoking that al-Ghazālī return to his official duties after a long period of isolation and, particularly, after the indictment of *Iḥyāʾ*. According to al-Ghazālī’s own words, there are various reasons for his return. The injunction of the professorship was strict.¹⁷ Therefore, it is possible to contend that al-Ghazālī chose a way to

¹³ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (7th edn., Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1967), 103-106.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁵ Abū l-Qāsim Thiḡat al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Asākīr al-Dimashqī, *Tabayīn kabīb al-muftarī* (Damascus: Maṭba‘at al-Tawfīq, 1347 H.), 293-294; Abū l-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Alī Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tārikh al-mulūk wa-l-umam* (Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyya, 1359 H.), VIII, 170.

¹⁶ Abū ‘Abd Allāh Shihāb al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd Allāh Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), IV, 49.

¹⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh*, 121.

preserve a good relationship with the government or that he worried about the punishments given to the scholars before him. However, according to al-Ghazālī's own statement, he thought more practically and wanted to gain political support for the project of reform:

The time is the time of political anarchy, and the period is the period of falsehood. If you try to call people to the right path, today's men become your enemy. How can you resist them and live with them? This is only possible in a proper time and under the rule of a religious, powerful sultan.¹⁸

However, al-Ghazālī's second professorship represented a troublesome period. After the killing of Fakhr al-mulk, who had invited al-Ghazālī, al-Ghazālī's rivals successfully publicized propaganda against him, saying that al-Ghazālī insulted the al-Imām al-a'zām. Consequently, al-Ghazālī was summoned to the military post of Malik Sanjar. Al-Ghazālī excused himself, for he had sworn an oath during isolation that he would never go under the service of a sultan and never take salary from official duties.¹⁹ However, upon the strict order, he proceeded to the military post and appeared in the presence of the malik. Therein, Sanjar showed respect to al-Ghazālī and accepted his wish for isolation.²⁰ Thus, after a three-year professorship, al-Ghazālī returned to his homeland, Ṭūs in 1109. As will be seen, al-Ghazālī strove to keep his personal oath while abstaining from engaging in open conflicts. On the other hand, he did not hesitate to write letters to statesmen to support many scholars' cause for salary.²¹ In the last years of his life, he received another invitation for the professorship in the Niẓāmiyya Madrasa of Baghdād, but he rejected it.²² Al-Ghazālī died in 1111.²³

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Letters of al-Ghazzali* (ed. Abdul Qayyum; New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1992), 20.

²⁰ Hüseyin Zerrinkub [ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīn Kūb], *Medreseden Kaçış: İmam Gazzâlî'nin Hayatı, Fikirleri ve Eserleri [Ferâr ez Madrasa: Dar Bâra-yi Zindagî wa-Andîsha-yi Abû Ḥâmid Ghazâlî]* (translated into Turkish by Hikmet Soylu; İstanbul: Anka Yayınları, 2001), 234-236.

²¹ See *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, 30, 40, 51-52, 54-55, 62.

²² *Ibid.*, 47-49.

²³ For al-Ghazālī's biography see Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Ghāfir ibn Ismāʿil al-Fārisī, *al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq li-tārīkh Nisābūr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1989), 73-75; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn*, 291-296; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, VIII, 168-170; Abū l-ʿAbbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*

Al-Ghazālī's Writings on Political Power

Al-Ghazālī produced two works that are closely related to politics: *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyya* and *Naṣibat al-mulūk*. The former work is also known as *al-Mustazhiri*, and was written to prove the legitimacy of the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mustazhir billāh against the propaganda of the Ismā'īlīs; this work represents a new understanding regarding the relationship between a weak caliph and a powerful sultan. Accordingly, the appointment of the caliph by the sultan does not harm the legitimacy of the caliphate.²⁴ *Naṣibat al-mulūk*, which was written in Persian, was dedicated to the Seljuq sultan Muḥammad Tapar or, according to a weaker narration, to his brother and the current malik of Khurāsān, Sanjar. This work is a typical example of the *siyāsāt-nāma* literature, which states the required manners of sultans in government issues.

In *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, which was penned by al-Ghazālī as a reform project,²⁵ there are particular sections dedicated to the relationship between 'ulamā' and sultans. Occasionally in these sections, al-Ghazālī touches upon his thoughts on the philosophy of politics expressed in *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyya*. However, he essentially criticizes the attitudes and behaviors of scholars and sultans. As understood from his statements, *Iḥyā'* was written during the period of isolation (1095-1105) that had begun after his resignation from madrasa.²⁶ The works of scholars such as 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak, Ḥārith al-

al-a'yān wa-anbā' abnā' al-zamān (ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968-1972), IV, 216-219.

²⁴ In particular, see al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭiniyya* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-'Arabiyya, 1964), 169-194. For al-Ghazālī's philosophy of politics, see Fahrettin Korkmaz, *Gazālī'de Devlet [State Theory of al-Ghazālī]* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1995). For the impact of the political and social conditions on al-Ghazālī's ideas, see H. Kübra Yücedoğru and Vejdi Bilgin, "On birinci Yüzyılda Siyasal Gerçeklik ve İslam Siyaset Düşüncesine Etkisi [Political Reality at the Eleventh Century and Its Effect on Islamic Political Thought]," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi [The Review of the Faculty of Theology, Uludağ Üniversitesi]* 17/2 (2008), 729-746.

²⁵ See Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī bayna mādihiyya wa-nāqidiyya* (Al-Manṣūra: Dār al-Wafā', 1988), 77-81; Sabri Orman, *Gazālī [al-Ghazālī]* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1986), 97-105.

²⁶ See al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl* (Bülāq: al-Maṭba'a al-Amīriyya, 1322 H.), I, 4. The issue is addressed in other sources as such. See Ibn 'Asākīr, *Tabyīn*, 293; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, VIII, 169.

Muḥāsibī, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, and ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī regarding mystical issues are among the chief sources of *Iḥyā’*.²⁷

Al-Ghazālī does not aim to criticize the current political system or oppose the rulers. In fact, he criticizes the ‘*ulamā’*’ class and thus sends an indirect message to the rulers. Although *Iḥyā’* appears to be a work written for the public masses, al-Ghazālī relates the publication of the work to the ‘*ulamā’*’ class and targets them in many places in it. At this point, we can claim that the work includes a substantial criticism of the scholar as a social actor and of the sultans in terms of their relationship to scholars. In the introduction to the work, ‘*ulamā’*’ were specifically targeted, for people need a guide to maintain their lives according to the true path. These guides are the scholars who are the successors of the prophets. However, according to al-Ghazālī, these scholars practically ceased to exist, while people under the guise of scholars remained. Most of these ‘scholars’ chased worldly interests.²⁸ We encounter al-Ghazālī’s criticism, if indirect, about power in the *Kitāb al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām*, a section of *Iḥyā’*. Here, al-Ghazālī frequently addresses issues such as the rulers’ lands, buildings, and public services, i.e., bridges and fountains, etc., as well as the salaries that the rulers provide, in terms of religious legitimacy (*ḥalāl*) and illegitimacy (*ḥarām*). The fifth (The Legitimate and Illegitimate Salaries and Gifts Given by Sultans) and the sixth (The Legitimate and Illegitimate Aspects of the Company with Unjust Sultans, the Religious Verdict about Attending Their Meetings and Showing Respect to Them) sub-sections are completely related to the rulers and the scholars who have close ties with them. The paper focuses on these two sub-sections.

Criticism of Government in Terms of Illegal Practices

Throughout the history of Islam, the sultanate regime has been a system that has been accepted without question. Criticisms within the borders of this regime are leveled at the governors, not at the system. The hopes are always that any negative practices will change with a

²⁷ See Abū Naṣr Ṭāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn ‘Alī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā* (eds. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥulw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī; Cairo: Maṭba‘at ‘Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964-1976), VI, 247; Mustafa Çağrıncı, “İhyā’ Ulūmi’-d-Dīn (Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn),” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA) [Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam]*, XXII, 10.

²⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1982), I, 2.

change in the governor. The fact that political power, until modern times, has not wanted to share its government with others has made the system immune to criticism, and the search for a different system arose under the influence of the West. Despite this general situation, we can contend that a spiritual power has been shaped in the Islamic world²⁹ and even that this power has occasionally struggled with political power. There are instances in which the struggle turns into a real conflict. We can say that it is not true that political and spiritual authorities always support and complete each other. (To the contrary, the spiritual authority has always felt obliged to correct the mistakes of the political authority.) The religious class has been annoyed by the illegal practices of the holders of power, both in their private lives and in the government of the country. The lack of any mechanism to control the practices of the government has increased this concern. Thus, we can contend that almost throughout all history, the religious class holding this concern has maintained a silent criticism of the government and has tried to keep the balance by building a spiritual authority.

Al-Ghazālī does not criticize the system directly, but he, without doubt, criticizes the holders of power. He sees this criticism as a duty of *‘ulamā’*. We can address al-Ghazālī’s criticisms under two sub-headings.

²⁹ Al-Ghazālī states that the real *amīr* is the one who rules with absolute authority over his lusts and passions. These people who are in the guise of rags are real sultans and amīrs (*Letters of al-Ghazzali*, 23). In particular, the great ascetics have been called “the sultans of the spiritual world.” When ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak was asked “who are people,” he responded “scholars,” and when he was asked “who are sultans,” he responded “ascetics.” (Abū Nu‘aym Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā’* (2nd edn., Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1967), VIII, 167). Sufyān al-Thawrī is known as “the sheikh and the sultan of scholars” or “the amīr of Muslims” (Abū Ḥāmid Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-‘Aṭṭār al-Nīsābūrī, *Evlīya Tezkireleri [Tadbkirat al-awliyā’]* (translated into Turkish by Süleyman Uludağ; Istanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2007), 219. There is no doubt that these statements are used in a spiritual/figurative manner. However, it is interesting that material titles are used. The term “sultan,” which has an important place in developing Sufi terminology, is used to either signify God or the Sufi masters. Sultān Walad, Amīr Sultān, Shāh Naqshband can be given as famous examples (Ethem Cebecioğlu, *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü [Dictionary of Sufi Terms and Idioms]* (Ankara: Rehber Yayıncılık, 1997), 651, 655).

Criticism of the Private Lives of the Holders of Power

The private lives of sultans and governors have always been a topic of interest for *'ulamā'* because the caliph must observe the religious rules according to the doctrine. However, the practice is not in parallel with the doctrine all of the time. In this regard, al-Ghazālī states that most of the palaces or residences of rulers are confiscated,³⁰ that they and their servants wear silk clothes, that their rooms have silk rugs and silver plates, and that they utter ugly, false, and curse words in their meetings.³¹

When we in fact examine the historical sources, we clearly see that the private lives of rulers have the potential to attract criticism from the religious perspective. From the Umayyad caliphates onwards, rulers demonstrate practices such as wearing silk clothes, using gold and silver, having singers and drinking alcohol in their private lives. Here, instead of continuous illegality as a general rule, we can talk about a state changing from one power to another. In other words, with an idealizing effort, we can neither claim that all of the caliphs and sultans are very pious people nor that they have illegal lifestyles. Although there are examples demonstrating both types, there are many examples of intermediate types, also. Hence, while some sultans practice very religious deeds, they also simultaneously engage in illegal practices.³² This contradiction that makes looking back difficult. Because it is customary for history books to praise a sultan after his death, we come across a portrait of very wise, just, and religious man. This tendency is normal because these works are dedicated to the dynasty. However, in the same work, it is possible to find negative characteristics and illegal practices from the same sultan.³³

Drinking alcohol as an illegal behavior dates back to the Umayyad

³⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, II, 143. History books give us some examples. Tughrul Beg, when he seized Nishāpūr, settled the palace of the government (*dār al-imāra*) and sat on the throne of the Sultan Mas'ūd; see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, IX, 459.

³¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, II, 144.

³² For the example of the 'Abbāsīd caliph Muktafī billāh (d. 295/908), see Saim Yılmaz, *Mu'tazid ve Müktefi Döneminde Abbāsiler* [*Abbāsids in the Period of al-Mu'tazid and al-Muktafī*] (Istanbul: Kayihan Yayınları, 2006), 369.

³³ As an example, for the information on Tughrul Beg and some evaluations, see Al-Bundārī, *ibid.*, 4-5, 25, 29; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, IX, 458, 463, 483. For a remark on Muḥammad Tapar, see al-Bundārī, *Zübdetü'n-Nusra*, 113-115. For a remark on Maḥmūd of Ghazna, see Ibn al-Athīr, *ibid.*, IX, 401.

caliphs.³⁴ If we take into account some information in classical sources and modern evaluations, we can say that this claim has truth in it.³⁵ The sources state that some ‘Abbāsīd caliphs³⁶ and some sultans such as Maḥmūd of Ghazna³⁷ and his son Mas‘ūd³⁸ drank alcohol. It is known that Alp Arslān,³⁹ who was a very beneficent man,⁴⁰ Barkyārūq,⁴¹ and Sanjar⁴² were alcoholics. Niẓām al-mulk’s recommendation in *Siyāsat-nāma* that sultans should be careful about their orders when they are drunk⁴³ is most likely an allusion to this fact. In addition, in the same work, it is interesting to see many details about how drinking meetings should be conducted, which demonstrate that this custom, drinking alcohol, existed.⁴⁴ Although he is known as a very religious man,⁴⁵ Niẓām al-mulk quit drinking during the last stage of his life.⁴⁶ Undoubtedly, al-Ghazālī’s ideas on drinking are not like those of Niẓām al-mulk. As vizier, Niẓām al-mulk managed alco-

³⁴ Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) narrates that most of the Umayyad Caliphs and the early ‘Abbāsīd caliphs drank alcohol – sometimes to the degree of addiction. See Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-tāj fi akblāq al-mulūk* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Amīriyya, 1332 H.), 151-153.

³⁵ See Ünal Kılıç, *Tartışmaların Odağındaki Halife Yezid b. Muaviye [In the Center of Debates: The Khalīfa Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiya]* (Istanbul: Kayıhan Yayınları, 2001), 397-404; See İsmail Hakkı Açıken, *Devlet Geleneği Açısından Hişam b. Abdülmelik [Hisbām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik in terms of State Tradition]* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2001), 236-237, 254, 256.

³⁶ Abū l-Fidā’ ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *el-Bidāye ve’n-Nibāye: Büyükle İslām Tarihi [al-Bidāya wa-l-nibāya]* (translated into Turkish by Mehmet Keskin; Istanbul, Çağrı Yayınları, 1994), X, 256-257.

³⁷ Abū ‘Alī Qiwām al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭūsī Niẓām al-mulk (as Niẓāmü’l-Mülk), *Siyāset-Nāme [Siyāsat-nāma]* (ed. Mehmet Altay Köymen; 2nd edn., Istanbul: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1990), 56.

³⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, IX, 482.

³⁹ ‘Alī ibn Nāşir, *Abbār*, 21; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 10, 75.

⁴⁰ Abū l-Qāsim Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab fi tārīkh Ḥalab* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), IV, 1978.

⁴¹ ‘Alī ibn Nāşir, *Abbār*, 54.

⁴² See Al-Bundārī, *Zübdetü’n-Nusra*, 241, 247. For a modern study that addresses the issue of some Seljuq sultans’ alcohol addiction, see Fatih M. Şeker, *Selçuklu Türklerinin İslam Tasavvuru [The Perception of Islam in the Seljuq Turks]* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2011), 152-153.

⁴³ Niẓām al-mulk, *Siyāset-Nāme*, 111.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 114, 145-155.

⁴⁵ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 208-209; Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Bughyat*, V, 2498.

⁴⁶ *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, 75-76.

hol as a state protocol and does not include anything negative about it in his work. Both in his *siyâsat-nâma* and in his letters, al-Ghazâlî specifically mentions that rulers must keep away from drinking alcohol.⁴⁷

Criticism of the Financial Practices of the Holders of Power

Al-Ghazâlî attached special importance to the financial practices of rulers. The first reason for this importance is that he wanted to offer a juridical verdict about salaries and gifts received from rulers. The second reason was to provide a religious warning (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rûf*) against injustice.

According to al-Ghazâlî's statements, the sultans racketeer the Muslim people, seize their belongings or take bribes. All incomes depending on these illegal activities are *ḥarâm*.⁴⁸ In addition, the sultans either coercively force workers to cultivate their own lands or pay them their wages from *ḥarâm* goods.⁴⁹ Moreover, the sultans confiscated people's lands or goods in the name of philanthropy.⁵⁰ Al-Ghazâlî states that the contemporary rulers are addicted to worldly desires and riches.⁵¹ Consequently, he says that the fortunes of some partially come from *ḥarâm*, while others totally depend on it.⁵²

One of the important sources of income for the sultan and his army in the Seljuq age was looting. Normally, the lands of non-Muslims should have been looted. However, contrary to Islamic law, the Muslim lands were also being looted because of the irregularity of soldiers⁵³ or sometimes upon the will of the sultans.⁵⁴ There were cases in which money was taken as a substitute for loot.⁵⁵ It is possible to see many examples of confiscation, which al-Ghazâlî saw as one of the sultans' ways of earning money.⁵⁶ Islam accepts the right of own-

⁴⁷ Al-Ghazâlî, *al-Tibr al-masbûk fî naşîhat al-mulûk* (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1988), 65; *Letters of al-Ghazzali*, 75.

⁴⁸ Al-Ghazâlî, *Iḥyâ'*, II, 135.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 135.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 152.

⁵¹ Al-Ghazâlî, *al-Tibr al-masbûk*, 71.

⁵² *id.*, *Iḥyâ'*, II, 136.

⁵³ See Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kâmil*, IX, 611, 613; X, 79-80.

⁵⁴ See *Ibid.*, IX, 375, 399, 463, 483, 488, 507; X, 68, 99-100, 103, 220.

⁵⁵ See al-Bundârî, *Zübdetü'n-Nusra*, 4-5; Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kâmil*, IX, 458, 497, 510.

⁵⁶ See al-Bundârî, *ibid.*, 90, 113-115; Ibn al-Athîr, *ibid.*, IX, 401, X, 116, 207, 264; Ibn al-Adîm, *Bughyat*, V, 2485. Ibn al-Athîr specifically states that Alp Arslân did not

ership as a fundamental right.⁵⁷ In early times, confiscation began to be used as a punishment for state officials who illegally acquired state goods. Over time, confiscation became an important source of income for the treasury, a practice that continued until modern times in the form of the confiscation of the goods of the rich or even the public.⁵⁸ Such practices reached a peak during the fight for the throne between Barkyārūq and Muḥammad Tapar in 1099-1104. There was much bloodshed at that time. The sultans and maliks levied new taxes because they could not regularly collect the land tax. Moreover, the sultans and maliks seized the lands of the public and distributed them to their commanders.⁵⁹

Another financial practice of the sultans that was criticized is the distribution of treasury goods without any standards or measures. The example given by al-Ghazālī shows that these practices had already existed for a long time ago.⁶⁰ These practices inevitably resulted in several serious consequences. Al-Ghazālī addresses the juridical aspect of this subject first, and then analyzes the attitudes of ‘*ulamā*’.

Consequences of the Rulers’ Ways of Incomes

Al-Ghazālī, with a very idealist manner, ponders over the consequences of the sultan’s illegal income. It appears that al-Ghazālī had a

commit any murder or confiscation. This stress indicates that his case was different from the customs of the period. See Ibn al-Athīr, *ibid.*, X, 75.

⁵⁷ Servet Armağan, *İslâm Hukukunda Temel Hak ve Hürriyetler [Fundamental Rights and Freedoms in Islamic Law]* (2nd edn., Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1992), 158-163.

⁵⁸ Confiscation was used very effectively, even in the last period of Ottoman State, and was completely abolished with Tanzimāt. See Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü [A Lexicon of Ottoman Historical Idioms and Terminology]* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1993), II, 626; Cengiz Tomar, “Müsadere [Muşādara/Confiscation],” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA) [Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam]*, XXXII, 65-66; Tuncay Öğün, “Müsadere: Osmanlılar’da [Muşādara: In the Ottoman Period],” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA) [Turkish Religious Foundation Encyclopedia of Islam]*, XXXII, 67-68.

⁵⁹ Özaydın, *Sultan Muhammed Tapar Devri*, 37. After Muḥammad Tapar came to the throne, he saw the seriousness of the situation and cancelled some taxes; see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 527; Özaydın, *ibid.*, 153.

⁶⁰ For an example of the correspondence between Hārūn al-Rashīd and Sufyān al-Thawrī, see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*’, II, 353-354. For an example of such practices in the Seljuqs, see al-Bundārī, *Zübdetü’n-Nusra*, 241, 247.

very strict attitude. For instance, he says that practices such as shopping in markets,⁶¹ crossing bridges, and drinking water from fountains, if they are constructed by illegal income, are not allowed. In regard to the rituals, al-Ghazālī appears to be stricter: one should not perform prayer in a seized land or in a mosque that is built with seized materials, even if it is Jum‘a prayer.⁶² I believe that this statement of al-Ghazālī is influenced by his predecessors, such as Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083). When the Nizāmiyya Madrasa of Baghdād was constructed, it was determined that the first professor would be Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī. However, he did not show up for the lesson. Supposedly, a child asked him how he could come to a building that was constructed in a seized land, leading him to choose not to attend.⁶³ Later, Abū Ishāq had no choice other than to teach, but he never performed his prayers in the mosque of the madrasa concerned. We can see similar behaviors in the ‘*ulamā*’ *al-salaf* (the first generation of Muslim scholars) such as Sufyān al-Thawrī,⁶⁴ ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak,⁶⁵ Bishr al-Ḥāfi,⁶⁶ and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.⁶⁷

According to al-Ghazālī, one should not engage in a commercial relationship with the sultan because most of his goods are *ḥarām*, and one should not be his representative in shopping. It is also strictly forbidden to buy a young slave (*gbulām*), silk fabric, or horse, which are certain to be used in sinful or unjust ways. Similarly, it is forbidden to buy and sell items to or from governors, state officials and servants who are at the sultan’s service because their salaries are derived from *ḥarām* sources.⁶⁸

Al-Ghazālī particularly addresses the issue of receiving salary or gifts from the sultan. Whether ‘*ulamā*’ have an official duty or not, one of the important sources of livelihood for the ‘*ulamā*’ class was these salaries and gifts. Al-Ghazālī states that the predecessors’ (*salaf*) attitude had changed from abstaining from accepting any duty or

⁶¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*’, II, 150.

⁶² *Ibid.*, II, 152.

⁶³ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 55; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 29, 31; Zerrinkub, *Medreseden Kaçış*, 89.

⁶⁴ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā*’, VII, 40; Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Evllya Tezkireleri*, 221.

⁶⁵ Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *ibid.*, 211.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁶⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*’, II, 149-150.

salary to accepting these incomes on behalf of the poor. However, this case could only be valid for the time of the righteous caliphs, during which the treasury was maintained by means of *ḥalāl* methods. The proper attitude for the time of al-Ghazālī was to refute any salaries or gifts.⁶⁹

The books that tell the life stories of the predecessor ‘*ulamā*’ and the ascetics explain that abstaining from accepting any salary or gift from a sultan is a moral virtue. These explanations provide a basis for al-Ghazālī’s thoughts. For instance, when Dāwūd ibn Nuṣayr al-Ṭā’ī (d. 165/781) died, the funeral speech stated, “he did not accept gifts from sultans and amīrs.”⁷⁰ According to the narrations, this man refuted Hārūn al-Rashīd when he visited him. Then, upon the request of his mother, he accepted the caliph and preached to him. However, he rejected the ring worn by the caliph as a gift.⁷¹ In this regard, the sources also narrate the words and manners of scholars such as Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq,⁷² Sufyān al-Thawrī,⁷³ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,⁷⁴ al-Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyāḍ,⁷⁵ Abū ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Awzā‘ī,⁷⁶ Yūsuf ibn al-Asbāt,⁷⁷ and Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Muẓaffar al-Shāmī, who did not accept any salary, though he was officially the head of the judicial system (*qāḍī l-quḍāt*).⁷⁸

Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī was aware of the problems caused by the verdict that salary and gifts cannot be accepted. There was the issue of the livelihood of the ‘*ulamā*’ class on the one hand, and the necessity of obtaining a salary both to maintain the religious sciences and to solve the juridical and educational problems of the public. In this paradoxical situation, al-Ghazālī holds an approach that can be called “pragmatic.” For example, if someone works for the sake of the public, he or she has the right to obtain his or her salary from the treasury (*bayt al-māl*). These people include those who are busy with scientific activities, teachers, and *mu’adhbhins*, etc. If these

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 136-139.

⁷⁰ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, VII, 337.

⁷¹ Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Evlīya Tezkireleri*, 257.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 52.

⁷³ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, VI, 378.

⁷⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāt al-ṣafwa* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, n.d.), 352-355.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 242-246.

⁷⁶ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, VI, 140.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, VIII, 242.

⁷⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 253.

people do not obtain their salaries from the treasury, scientific activities and developments will cease. Thus, the *‘ulamā’* must receive their salaries. In addition, the sultans must present special gifts to the *‘ulamā’*. In this case, other people aspire for knowledge and thus science progresses. Al-Ghazālī does not see the government of the world by a king as something contrary to religion. Religious matters and government are like twins: one cannot live without the other. Religion is protected through the means of scholars and politics is protected by soldiers. The people who attend to these jobs have the right to obtain their salaries from the treasury. Undoubtedly, if the sultan is unjust, he must be dismissed. However, because it is very difficult to dismiss the sultan, the required action is to obey him as long as he is in power.⁷⁹ In this sense, a scholar who undertakes an official job can accept a salary and gifts. However, if he or she helps the ruler in political practices, frequently attends his gatherings, or facetiously praises him, he or she will have committed a sin.⁸⁰

The Quality of the Relationship between Scholars and Power

Al-Ghazālī finally comes to the issue of the position of a scholar towards the governor. The conclusion from the above statements is that scholars must keep away from rulers and restrict their relationships to the level of “commanding right (*al-amr bi-l-ma‘rūf*).”

Criticism Concerning the Typology of the Scholar

Al-Ghazālī is aware of that there are many names among the Companions (*al-ṣaḥāba*) and the Successors (*al-tābi‘ūn*) who receive salary and gifts from “unjust imāms/sultans.” However, these scholars did not compromise with the sultans on religious issues. If necessary, these scholars strictly opposed the sultans.⁸¹ In the subsequent period, we must discuss a deep change in the *‘ulamā’*-sultan relationship: in the time of the *salaf*, the rulers were very happy and honored if important religious scholars accepted their gifts. These predecessors did not refrain from criticizing the rulers for their wrong actions, even if they accepted the ruler’s gifts. These scholars did not help the rulers in unjust deeds and did not attend their gatherings. The predecessors of al-Ghazālī gave the gifts presented to them to the

⁷⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, II, 140.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 141.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, II, 136-137.

poor. According to al-Ghazālī, the sultans of his day gave gifts to people whom they can use, who legalize their practices, praise them in gatherings, and purify them.⁸² Without a doubt, this change did not instantly begin in the time of al-Ghazālī; rather, it goes back to the first centuries of Islam. For example, al-Ḥasān al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) criticized the reciters when he saw them waiting by the gates of the sultans' palaces. He told them that they were losing their prestige and that they should stay at home to regain it.⁸³ We can see the same attitude in scholars such as Muḥammad ibn Wāsi',⁸⁴ Abū Ḥāzim Salama ibn Dīnār,⁸⁵ and the Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.⁸⁶

The change in the character of the 'ulamā' class necessitates a typology: (1) "scholars of the hereafter" who do not compromise their religion, even if they interact with sultans; and (2) "scholars of the world" who, with their fatwās, legalize the unjust practices of sultans and accompany them.⁸⁷ Before al-Ghazālī,⁸⁸ we can see this typology in al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ (d. 803).⁸⁹ This typology is also found in one of the sources of *Iḥyā'* and *Qūt al-qulūb*.⁹⁰ The term *the scholar of the world*, which is coined as a critical term, is very old. Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778) stated that society becomes right if sultans and reciters are right. He maintained that the worst ailment for a society is corrupt scholars.⁹¹ Criticisms towards the 'ulamā' class can also be found in the sayings of scholars such as Mālik ibn Dīnār,⁹² al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ,⁹³ Yūsuf ibn al-Asbāt,⁹⁴ and Abū Naṣr Yaḥyā ibn Abī Kathīr.⁹⁵

⁸² *Ibid.*, II, 139.

⁸³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣīfat al-ṣāfiya*, III, 236. For al-Ḥasān al-Baṣrī's advice to Sa'īd ibn Jubayr regarding this issue, see Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Evlīya Tezkireleri*, 70.

⁸⁴ Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, II, 351.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 243-244.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 194.

⁸⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 146-148.

⁸⁸ For a statement that the criticism of scholars was already present before al-Ghazālī, see W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazālī* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 109-111.

⁸⁹ Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, VIII, 92.

⁹⁰ Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Aṭīyya al-Makkī, *Kūtu'l-Kulūb [Qūt al-qulūb]* (translated into Turkish by Muharrem Tan; 2nd edn., Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2004), II, 40.

⁹¹ Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, VII, 5-6.

⁹² Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Evlīya Tezkireleri*, 84.

⁹³ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣīfat al-ṣāfiya*, II, 241; Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Evlīya Tezkireleri*, 124.

The Relationship between Power and the Duty of Commanding Right

According to al-Ghazālī, in an environment where considerable changes are observed in comparison with predecessors, both in terms of character and relationships, the worst event is for a scholar to be in the presence of a sultan. It is appropriate for the sultan to visit the scholar, while it is best to lack any relationship.⁹⁶ Initially al-Ghazālī narrates many hadīths and the sayings of his predecessors, in which being in the presence of the sultan is criticized.⁹⁷ In fact, to support al-Ghazālī's ideas, there are many sayings narrated from his predecessor 'ulamā' that recommend cutting ties with rulers. Wahb ibn Munabbih said to 'Atā' al-Khurāsānī "Keep away from the doors of the sultans! There is *fitna* in those places. If you received a worldly good from them, you compromise your religion in proportion."⁹⁸ Muḥammad ibn Wāsi',⁹⁹ Sufyān al-Thawrī,¹⁰⁰ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,¹⁰¹ Ḥātīm al-Aṣamm,¹⁰² and Maymūn ibn Mihrān¹⁰³ speak similar words. Al-Ghazālī states that he himself had experienced this negative case:

After I left the presence of the sultan, I spiritually examined myself. Although I talked to them harsh and rejected their bad wishes, I saw humiliation in my soul.¹⁰⁴

In the past, some scholars did not approve of meeting with rulers, even if the excuse was to tell the truth. For instance, Sufyān al-Thawrī did not accept the seal to govern the Muslim community according to the Qur'ān and the Sunna when al-Mahdī, the new caliph, gave it to him. For Sufyān al-Thawrī, anyone who is in a relationship with the sultan inevitably tends to him. In Sufyān al-Thawrī's words, one who goes swimming cannot keep from getting wet. Sufyān al-Thawrī does not worry that the sultans persecute him because he says the truth, but he worries that his heart leans on them and does not see their

⁹⁴ Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, VIII, 239.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 67.

⁹⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 142.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 142-143.

⁹⁸ Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, IV, 29-30.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 352.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, VII, 28.

¹⁰¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*, II, 356.

¹⁰² Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, VIII, 74.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, IV, 85.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 142.

wicked deeds.¹⁰⁵ Al-Ghazālī thinks similarly, if in a different context: al-Ghazālī holds that a scholar should not take money from the sultan, even with the intention of giving it to the poor. Otherwise, those who are not aware of the truth may receive the impression that the sultan's property is *ḥalāl* and that they may accept it.¹⁰⁶ In the meantime, al-Ghazālī holds that being in the presence of the sultan and close to him functions to legalize his actions in the eyes of the public.¹⁰⁷

It is inevitable that scholars and the ruler occasionally meet each other. In that case, the ideal option is for the sultan to visit the scholar. Sufyān al-Thawrī says, “the best sultan is the one who sits with scholars and learns from them; while the worst scholar is the one who visits the sultans”.¹⁰⁸ It is interesting that Niẓām al-mulk repeats this saying in his *naṣīḥat-nāma*.¹⁰⁹ The sources state that scholars such as Muḥammad ibn Aslam, Aḥmad ibn Ḥarb,¹¹⁰ and Abū Ḥasan Kharāqānī¹¹¹ rejected the invitations of rulers. However, these types of actions should be avoided if refraining from being in the presence of a sultan or rising in front of him disturb the social order.¹¹² Al-Ghazālī considers the sultan to be necessary for the social order. He recommends that the scholar keep away from actions that may harm this order.

In conclusion, al-Ghazālī holds that it is undoubtedly allowed to greet the sultan, to rise in his presence and to treat him well when the sultan visits. If the visit takes place when no one is present, it is preferable not to rise. In this way, the scholar shows the glory of religion and the unworthiness of cruelty.¹¹³ This attitude is important; for al-Ghazālī holds that the sinfulness of the sultan is a result of the sinfulness of the scholar. For him, the scholars at that time had lost a status that had inspired caution in the sultans. If the scholars possessed their

¹⁰⁵ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’*, VII, 40-42.

¹⁰⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, II, 148-149.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 145, 150.

¹⁰⁸ Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Evlīya Tezkireleri*, 223.

¹⁰⁹ Niẓām al-mulk, *Siyāset-Nāme*, 76. Furthermore, for Niẓām al-mulk's appreciation of these scholars, see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, X, 209.

¹¹⁰ Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, *Evlīya Tezkireleri*, 275-276.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 592, 598-599.

¹¹² Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, II, 145.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, II, 145.

former honor, the sultans would not have committed such cruelties.¹¹⁴

Al-Ghazālī dedicated a special chapter to the issue of scholars' religious warnings to sultans. Accordingly, the scholars must warn the sultans by informing them of the sinfulness of their actions, advising them, speaking to them strictly, or stopping them by force if they observe any evil deeds. Only the first two of these methods can be applied to the sultans. Using force against the sultan is not allowed because it triggers chaos. If strict warnings such as "you cruel man who has no fear of God!" do not cause chaos and do not increase the cruelty of the sultan, they are allowed and even recommended. However, if one is not sure of the possible effects, he must not speak these words. At this point, a scholar does not worry about his own life. The predecessors warned the holders of power, accepting even death, if necessary. Al-Ghazālī mentions that the ḥadīths state that the most valuable *jibād* is to tell the truth in the presence of a cruel sultan.¹¹⁵ The examples given in *Iḥyā'* regarding the issue of commanding right (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf*) to the sultans are interesting. Among these examples is Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī, who breaks the wine jar belonging to the caliph Mu'taḍid. The caliph, who is known for his cruel character,¹¹⁶ eventually forgives him.¹¹⁷

Al-Ghazālī, however, returns to the issue of the corruption of the *'ulamā'* in giving their religious warnings to the rulers. According to al-Ghazālī, greed in his time is the biggest obstacle to scholars telling the truth. Even if the scholars would be willing to tell the truth, their attitudes and actions contradicted them. Al-Ghazālī relates the corruption of the public to the corruption of the rulers, and the corruption of the rulers to the corruption of the scholars. Consequently, the corruption of social ethics is related to the *'ulamā'*, whose hearts are full of lust for world.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

The relationship of the religious class, who has held a respectable status throughout Islamic history, to government differs from one period to the next. From the scholars who preceded al-Ghazālī on-

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 150.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 343.

¹¹⁶ Yılmaz, *Mu'tazid ve Müktefi Döneminde Abbâsîler*, 268-269.

¹¹⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 356. Al-Ghazālī provides similar examples in his *naṣīḥat-nāma*; see *al-Tibr al-masbūk*, 19-21.

¹¹⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 357; id., *al-Munqidh*, 129.

wards, the praiseworthy attitude of a scholar towards a sultan or a governor is to refrain from any relationships, even with the excuses of official duty, or a visit, etc. If any relationship is established, it is necessary that religion not be compromised. Al-Ghazālī's predecessors' practices and words on this subject are collected in long sections in his *Iḥyā'*. These narrations are transmitted to the next generations as an idealized stance. Al-Ghazālī says that he primarily criticizes the type of scholar, following the example of his predecessors. However, this criticism clearly includes rulers, as well. The relationship between the two classes is important because, as al-Ghazālī believes, the corruption of the '*ulamā'*' is the result of their relationship with government.

The government can easily tend toward illegal actions and no control mechanism has developed, which over time has led to the emergence of "the spiritual sultan" concept, especially among organized Sufi groups. It is possible to see the difference between the material/political and spiritual authority that can be observed in Sunnī Islam as an indication of the disturbance of the religious class because of the actions of the government and the lack of any solution to these actions. The sultanate of the spiritual world stipulates that the social structure, not the political structure, is to be reformed. The sultan is included in the reform project because he is a part of society. I believe that new studies on the development and manifestations of the idea of the spiritual authority, as observed in al-Ghazālī, will provide us with more insights regarding the attitude of the religious class towards government.

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