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**INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND
CIVILIZATION (ISTAC)**

**RELIGIO-SOCIAL ELEMENTS IN THE REVOLT OF
AL-MUKHTAR AL-THAQAFI AGAINST THE
UMAYYAD RULE**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND CIVILIZATION (ISTAC) IN PARTIAL
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Ba., *Futūḥ* Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*. Rev. comm. Riḍwān Muḥammad Ridwān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1303/1983).
- Ba., *Ansāb*. Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1st ed.(Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1417/1996).
- Dhahabī, *Duwal* Al-Ḥāfiẓ Shams al-dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Dhahabī, *Duwal al-Islām* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-‘Alamī li al-Matbū‘ah, 1405/1985).
- Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil* Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Ibn Al-Athīr. *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārikh*, 6th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabi, 1406/1986).
- Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah* Abū al-Fida’ al-Ḥāfiẓ b. Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1398/1978).
- Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah* ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1413/1993).
- Ibn Manzūr, *Mukhtasar* Muḥammad b. Makram b. Manzūr, *Mukhtasar Tārikh Dimashq li Ibn ‘Asākir* Rev. Māmoon al-Saghirji, 1st * ed. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1409/1989).
- Ibn Qutaybah, *Imāmah* Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh b. Muslim b. Qutaybah al-Dinawary, *Al-Imāmah wa al-Siyāsah: Tārikh al-khulafā’*. Rev. ‘Alī Shīrī, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Aḍwā’, 1410/1990).
- Mas‘udī, *Murūj* ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Mas‘udī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Ma’din al-Jawhar*. Rev. Muḥammad M. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijariyyah, 1384/1964).
- Shākir, *Tārikh* Maḥmūd Shākir, *Al-Tārikh al-Islāmī: al-Khulfa’ al-Rāshidūn wa al-‘Ahd al-Umawiyy*. 7th ed. (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1411/1991).

Suyūṭī, *History*

‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abī Bakr Jalāl al-dīn al-Suyūṭī, *History of The Caliphs*. Trans. H. S. Jarrett (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Oriental Press, 1970).

Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*

Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulūk*, 2d ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1408/1998).

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an effort to study the elements behind the religio-political insurrections against the Umayyad rule as well as the results of these insurrections. In other words the thesis endeavors to investigate and analyze the socio-political and doctrinal set up in the Iraqi region in which most of the Umayyad opposition took place. The religious and socio-political elements represent the corner stone in stirring severe opposition against the Umayyad rule. Chapter 1 is devoted to giving an illustration of the serious insurrections that threatened the very existence of the Umayyad rule such as, the insurrection of al-Khawārij and the insurrection in Makkah and Madīnah. Although the opposition to the Umayyad had spread from the Iraqi region to Hijāz, nevertheless, the investigation in this thesis has shown that there was a lack of harmony and coordination among these opponents to the *de facto* rule of the Umayyads.

Chapter two describes the socio-political development in the Iraqi region. It gives an historical background of the composition of this region in which the revolt of al-Mukhtār occurred. This chapter highlights the social interaction between the Muslim Arabs and non-Arab Muslims in the conquered Sasanian Empire, after the establishment of the garrison towns of Kūfah and Baṣrah. Furthermore, this chapter shows the unstable nature, [politically speaking], of the Kūfans and how they represented a source of trouble to Madīnah, in the period of ‘Uthmān and later onwards to Syria, the capital of the Umayyads.

Chapter three gives, in detail, a full account of the revolt of al-Mukhtār al-Thaqafī, which represents the case study in this thesis. Al-Mukhtār’s revolt can be seen as a combination of personal aspiration and genuine intention to

avenge the blood of Ḥusayn and his household. This revolt was the most dangerous that the Umayyad rule had ever faced. However, the lack of coordination and the absence of harmony coupled with the fickle nature of the Kūfans led to the ultimate failure and crush of this revolt. Ironically, its defeat was not brought about by the Umayyad troops but rather by the troops of ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr, the arch-enemy of the Umayyads.

The socio-political and religio-political factors are analyzed in depth in chapter four. The concept of *Mahdī* and other Shī‘ah doctrines are also considered in this chapter, likewise, the *mawālī* issue is analyzed.

My aim in this thesis is to highlight elements that led to sedition and to trace the steps of social conflict and consequently the outbreak of civil war, in the society, to see whether insurrections against a well established rule, can achieve their goals or do they only terminate in massacre and humiliation not only for the opponents but also for the whole community, located in the place of the insurrection.

Among the findings of this thesis is the confirmation of the assumption that, insurrection and mutiny against a well-established tyrannical rule, will not only lead to bloodshed, but to unprecedented aggression and suppression and consequently evolve into a worse situation in the society.

The absence of unanimity among Muslims about the undisputed leader, (after the period of the *Rāshidūn* caliphate), represents a main feature of the history of Muslims throughout, up to the present time.

It is fair to say however that, not only the political history of Muslims has shown this weak point but, that all nations, throughout the history of mankind

have witnessed, to a great extent, the same type of conflict and discord. Muslim history does though outshine all other non-Muslim nations in the field of civilization and thought.

INTRODUCTION

The first discord among the first generation of Muslims was because of politics, that is the caliphate. However, this clash or conflict became more conspicuous after the assassination of the third caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, on the eighteenth of Dhu al-Hijjah 35/657. In essence, the murder of the third caliph 'Uthmān exacerbated the political situation and gave birth to the varying political parties and schools of thought among the Muslim Ummah in early Islamic history. To be more precise, one can say that the formation of these various and diverse schools of thought took place after the battle of the Camel in 36 A.H. and the battle of *Ṣiffīn* after that. The battle of the Camel is the first actual battle in which Muslim fought each other, in war around ten thousand men were killed, among whom were two companions who were promised Paradise (*Mubashsharūn bi al-Jannah*). As a consequence of these political conflicts, the Muslim society of the time witnessed a severe division represented by the Khawārij, Shī'ah, Murji'ah and Mu'tazilah in addition to venomous tribal competition.¹ This perplexing situation entailed a political tension throughout the reign of the Umayyads, (except the two years of 'Umar II), and the whole of the reign of the 'Abbāsids. The reaction to this tyranny was extremely drastic and intolerant and was conspicuous in the thought and behaviour of some of the Islamic sects of the time.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that the whole of early Islamic history was replete with such discord. It is known that in the third and fourth century Islamic civilization reached its climax and was incomparable to earlier or later civilizations. The blooming Islamic civilization was renowned for its brilliant manifestations in

¹ Ahmad Mahmud Subhi, *Fi 'Ilm al-Kalam, Dirāsah Falsafiyah li-'Āra' al-Firaq al-Islamiyyah fi-Usul al-Din-al-Asha'irah*, 5th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Nahdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1405/1985), 8.

different spheres of life. In the third and first half of the fourth century, the four orthodox Madhāhib (Maliḳi, Ḥanafī, Shāfi'i, Ḥanbalī) were established and considered as major sources of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) among orthodox Muslims (*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*). Furthermore, eminent *Ḥadīth* scholars such as Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāūd, Ibn Mājah, Tirmidhī and Nasā'i emerged in the scientific arena and the science of *Ḥadīth* reached its final crystallization during this period. In the same manner in the field of Arabic language, History, Geography and Philosophy, emerged eminent scholars such as al-Farrā', al-Jāhīz, al-Sigistānī al-Balādhurī, al-Ya'qūbī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Kindī, Ibn Sīna and al-Farābī.² The time witnessed the image of the purest, soundest and most spiritual *Sūfism*, which was represented by the great *Ṣufī* masters such as al-Hārith al-Muḥāsibī, Abū al-Qasim al-Junayd and Sirrī al-Saygutī.³

From the aforementioned historical background, one can notice that, in the third and fourth century, Islamic society was a mosaic. Here, you could find the Orthodox Madhāhib, at the same time as you could find extremists, you could find the literalists, traditionalists and the extreme rationalists. The impact of predated doctrines and philosophies on some Islamic sects was particularly obvious. The reaction among Islamic sects such as Mu'tazilah, to the Christian and pre-dogmatic thought allowed them to take an extreme rational methodology in defending their beliefs. This attitude in turn caused the Mu'tazilah to deviate from the orthodox path and this in turn produced the anti-Mu'tazilah movement which was led at the outset of its emergence by the great and renowned Imām, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī.

² *Ibid.*, 11.

³ *Ibid.*

However, the nature and legitimacy of rulers in the Islamic state have been a controversial issue throughout Islamic history. Opposition and insurrections developed in the course of history from the early history of Islām. It will be therefore, better to highlight, in this introduction, the nature of Islamic state, in order to come out with a sound conclusion and judgment of insurrections against the Umayyad rule.

1. The Characteristics of the Islamic State

The political theory of Islām is extremely different from other theories in vogue in the present world in general. For the Islamic theory is based on spiritual and moral foundations and is, to a great extent, guided by divine revelation in addition to a sound independent reasoning (*ijtihad*). Yet it is not a theocracy⁴ as appeared to some political thinkers, for it does not confer Divine Rights on any elected or selected or hereditary class or clergy. It is also not like a socialist system or like a modern democracy but, is a system of government based on quite different principles and has its own genuine peculiarity and characteristics. Therefore, it varies from the contemporary secular systems in nature, function, structure and objectives. In the Islamic philosophy of politics, man is mere vicegerent of God, so he should submit to the divine guidance and put them into practice, willingly and happily. This is the meaning of Islām (full submission to God's Will), and this is enacted willingly as absolute obedience to the law revealed by Him.⁵

⁴ Theocracy: "a form of government in which God (or a deity) is recognised as the king or immediate ruler and his laws are taken as the statute book or kingdom, these laws being usually administered by a priestly order as his ministers and agents; hence [loosely] a system of government by a sacerdotal order claiming a divine commission." See, *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 2: 2166.

⁵ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 53.

The political theory of Islām is based on three main fundamentals; *Tawhīd* (Unity of God), *Risālah* (Prophethood) and *Khilāfah* (Caliphate). These three principles represent the ultimate reality of the universe, that it is originated, supervised and governed by one God (Allāh) who is the Creator, Master and Sovereign of the whole creation. His Will or Law (*sharī'ah*) has come down through His revelation to His messengers in the form of the scripture that contains the divine law. The messengers give the accurate meaning, interpretation and exemplar of it. Within this comprehensive legislation, man plays the role of representative (vicegerent) of Allāh on the earth and exercises the Divine Authority by virtue of the powers delegated to him by Allāh, within the limits prescribed by Him.

The Divine Revelation has come down to steer the life of mankind according to the dictates of Allāh and to unite the whole life within the objectives of the revelation. Islamic political theory does not recognize any dichotomy between religion and society, private and public, the state and society as it is well clear in western culture. For the principle of *tawhīd* (Unity of Allāh) means to unite the whole life in its very essence and contingent according to the full submission to Allāh.

In Islamic theory of governance, the state is only a political expression of an Islamic society, so, one cannot find an Islamic state unless there is already an Islamic society. Therefore, an Islamic state evolves from an Islamic society and not vice versa.

The ideological foundation of an Islamic state lies in the doctrine of *tawhīd*. The unity of Allāh, and oneness of human life as the comprehensive and exclusive

program of worship. This fundamental principle of belief has many consequences for an Islamic state such as:

(1) It is not secular. All life in Islam is religious being governed by the experience and practice of the Divine. Its function is to grasp, preserve and execute the religious law (*shari'ah*).

(2) An Islamic state is not a nationalistic state, because the ultimate allegiance is given to Allāh and His Prophet and thereby to the community of all believers ---the *Ummah*.

A Muslim can never confine himself to any national cause or frontier and say the nation is absolute, and an ultimate end in itself. In other words, there is no ethnocentrism in Islamic state. Therefore, the state is much more open and less discriminatory in its domestic laws and foreign policies. It would develop (institutionalized) international links with other Muslim states and would work toward the eventual unity of the Muslim *Ummah* and beyond. Ultimately there is nothing final even about the so-called Muslim world or Muslim nation, that is because, Islām is open to humanity, it is static in its principles and renewable in its branches.

(3) An Islamic state is not an absolute or sovereign entity. It is subject to the higher norms of the *shari'ah* that represent the Will of Allāh. There is a set of norms that limit the power of state for the Islamic state is not absolute.

(4) The Islamic State is not primordial; the primary institution in Islām is the *Ummah*. The state is only the political dimension of the collective endeavor of Muslims. The implementation of the *shari'ah* is left to the free conscience of the

believers or to informal means of social control.⁶ One can notice that, the Islamic society represents a pivotal point in the Islamic theory of governance, and the state is only complementary and representative of that society. To set forth this point, states come and go; Islamic society can and has existed without the structures of state for centuries. To recapitulate, the form of an Islamic state is determined by the aforementioned fundamentals of *tawhīd*, entailing the freedom, equality and unity of believers.

(5) The Islamic State is not a theocratic state.

2. The Purpose of the Islamic State

According to the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*, the fundamental goals and objectives (and the ultimate end) of the Islamic state is to establish, maintain and develop the religious virtues which Allāh indicates to, and invites His slaves to perform. This on the one hand, and on the other hand to prevent and eradicate the vices and evils which Allāh warns us against, namely, ungratefulness to Him and injustice to His creatures. Thus, attributes and qualities of modesty, goodness, virtue, justice, peace and prosperity, which Allāh encourages us to do, should be developed and enhanced by all means in the life of the people. While exploitation, injustice, obscenity and disorder which are detrimental to human society progress and its welfare, should be prevented, suppressed and discouraged by all possible ways and means.⁷

To achieve and maintain the ultimate goals of the divine revelation, the Islamic theory of governance culminated and crystallized in the institution of the

⁶ Hassan 'Abd Allah al-Turabi, *The Islamic State: Discourses on Muslim Perspective on a Resurgent Islam* (n.p.: n.d.), 2-3. See also, Tiḡānī 'Abd al-Qadir Hamid, *Usul al-Fikr al-Siyāsī fi al-Qur'ān al-Makki* (Oman: Dar al-Bashir li al-Nashr wal-Tawzi', 1995), 111-121.

⁷ Afzalur Rahman, *Islam: Ideology and the Way of Life*, new ed. (Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1995), 331.

caliphate through which many divine instructions can be performed and implemented. In the ensuing pages I will discuss such a term and I will set forth the historical divergence around it.

3. Characteristics of the Caliph

According to al-Māwardī (364/975-450/1059), the caliphate was established in order to continue the mission of the prophet in his responsibility as defender of Islām. Furthermore, he maintains that it is obligatory upon the Muslim *Ummah* that someone be placed in the position of caliph. He indicates the divergence among the scholars about the obligation of the caliphate, whether it is based on reason or revelation. Those scholars who support the view that, its obligation by reason inferred that; it is in the nature of the mature people to submit to a wise leader who will take the responsibility of preventing them from injuring one another. Moreover, he will settle quarrels and disputes among them, for without such rulers, men would live in anarchy and heedlessness like benighted savages.⁸ There are other scholars who have said that it is obligatory by revelation, they quote Qurānic verse and Prophetic *ḥadīth*. Revelation tells us that we must “obey God, the messenger and those in authority among you” (*Sūrat al-Nisā’ 4:62*). Furthermore, there is a *ḥadīth* which reports that the Prophet (may Allāh bless and give him peace!) said: “Other rulers after me will rule over you, the pious according to his piety, the wicked according to his wickedness. Hear them and obey all that accords with the truth. If they do good, it will count for you and for them. If they do evil, it will count for you and against them.”

⁸ Al-Māwardī, *al-Aḥkam al-Sultāniyyah wa al-Wilāyah al-Diniyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, nd.), 4-5. Hereafter abbreviated as *al-Aḥkam al-Sultāniyyah*.

However al-Māwardī defines the Imāmate as a substitute (*Khilāfah*) for the prophethood to safeguard religion and to steer, politically and socially, the human life.⁹ He laid down two conditions as required for the election or selection of the Imām. Firstly, in the absence of a caliph, the community should produce a group of candidates eligible for the position, *Ahl al-Ikhtiyār*, or those authorized to elect an Imām for the *Ummah*. They shall meet three conditions: (1) Justice, (2) Sufficient knowledge of Islām to enable them to determine the more qualified one to fill the office of Imām, and (3) broad and vast perception and wisdom enabling them to choose one most qualified to become Imām, and to be most capable to manage the affairs of the Ummah and protect its interests. Secondly, the group of electors to choose from among the candidates, *Ahl al-Imārah*, or those eligible to fill the office of Imām. They shall meet seven conditions: (1) justice with all its conditions, (2) have sufficient knowledge to enable him to practice *ijtihād*, (3) be healthy in hearing; vision or seeing and expression, (4) have all parts of the body intact, (5) have sufficient courage to protect the people and expel the enemy, (6) have sufficient perception to manage the life of the people and public interest, and (7) be of Qurashī descent.¹⁰

In addition, al-Māwardī and other jurists laid down some obligations that the elected or selected Imām should undertake seriously. These obligations are:

- (1) To maintain the religion according to the established principles and consensus of the first generation of Muslims. If an innovator appears or if some dubious person deviates from it, the *caliph* must clarify the proofs of religion to him, expound that which is correct, and apply to him the proper

⁹ *Al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyyah*, 5. See also Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 191.

¹⁰ *Al-Ahkām al-Sultāniyyah*, 6.

rules and penalties. This is necessary, so that religion may be protected from injury, and the community will be safeguarded from error.

- (2) To execute judgement given between litigants and to settle disputes between contestants so that justice may prevail and so that none commit or suffer injustice.
- (3) To defend the lands of Islam and to protect them from intrusion, so that people may earn their livelihood and travel at will without danger to life or property. To enforce the legal penalties for the promotion of God's commandments from violation and for the preservation of the rights of his servants from injury or destruction.
- (4) To maintain the frontier fortresses with adequate supplies and effective force for defense so that the enemy may not take them by surprise, commit profanity there, or shed blood, either of a Muslim or an ally.
- (5) To wage just war (*Jihād*) against those who, after having been invited to accept Islām, persist in rejecting it, until they either become Muslims or enter the pact (*dhimmah*) so that God's truth may prevail over every religion.
- (6) To collect the booty and alms in conformity with the prescriptions of the Holy laws, or as defined by explicit texts by *ijtihād*, and this without terror or oppression.
- (7) To determine the salaries and other sums due from the treasury, without extravagance and without parsimony, and to make payment at the proper time, neither in advance nor in arrears.

- (8) To employ capable and trustworthy men and appoint sincere men for the tasks which he delegates to them and for the money which he entrusts to them so that the task may be discharged competently, and the money honestly safeguarded.
- (9) To concern himself directly with the supervision of the affairs and scrutiny of conditions. This to enable him to personally govern the community, safeguard the faith and not resort to delegation in order to free himself either for pleasure or for worship, for even the trustworthy may be forced to betray and the sincere may unknowingly deceive.¹¹

4. Political Opposition in Islam

In this part of this section I would like to discuss the issue of opposition when it culminates in political parties. Of course this will lead us to the legality of opposition, whether it takes the shape of political parties or otherwise, in the Islamic state. To elaborate this cause, one should trace Islamic history, back to the time of the Prophet, and the period of the rightly guided caliphs in order to come up with a valid conclusion.

I find that, The Qur'ān and *Sunnah* are silent about the formula or shape of government in Islām, but they give outlines in which they focus on the concept of *shūrā* as a main pillar in the Islamic constitution of the state. It seems that, the Holy Prophet, in his terminal illness indicated a desire to settle this issue, as it implicitly seems from his he desire to write something on this issued to spare the Muslim society from any sedition or conflict.¹² But he later, deliberately and intentionally

¹¹ Tamara Sonn, "Political Authority In Classical Islamic Thought," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 13 (1996), 13-16.

¹² Tabari, *Tarikh*, 2: 228.

dropped this idea and left it open for the community to settle by mutual consultation, since he left among them the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* which are quite enough to guide them along the straight path. Now, let us elaborate and examine the formula of governance in early Islamic history. The Holy Prophet himself became the first ruler and head of the Islamic State, so he was a statesman as well as a Prophet. He did not come to that office by popular selection or election, but was chosen by the Almighty God, the absolute sovereign. The Qur'an charges the Prophet to consult his companions (*Āli 'Imrān 3:159*). Therefore the Prophet decided all matters relating to the state by consulting his companions, those very sincere people who had dedicated themselves to the cause of Islām and sacrificed everything for the sake of their faith. So, they became the first members of his consultative body. The consultative committee during the time of the Prophet included the great companions from among the *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* who enjoyed the full confidence of the first generation. The whole community trusted, respected and honoured them, they accompanied the Holy Messenger in his all campaigns and expeditions. Aḥmad Abū Sin mentions some names of the members of such committee, among the names he mentions; Ḥanzah, Ja'far, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Alī, Ibn Mas'ūd, Salmān, 'Ammār, Ḥudhayfah, Abū Dharr, al-Miqdād and Bilāl. He adds that, Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān was the secret trustee of the Prophet.¹³ One can refute here the ridiculous and spurious claim of Montgomery Watt in which he describes the Prophet at Madīnah as a weak leader, further he considers the Prophet merely a one of the tribal leaders.

¹³ Aḥmad Ibrahim Abū Sin, *Al-Idārah fi al-Islām*, 6th ed. (Dubai: Dār al-Khiraḥ li al-Nashr, 1996), 78. Hereinafter abbreviated as *Al-Idarah*.