

**Stød 6.9.016**

Advice literature, Court culture, Governance, Jurisdiction of the state, Max Weber, Military, state administration, Religion and state, Social Policies, Urban Policies

Āthār al-uwal, Organization of Rule

ʿAl-ʿAbbāsī ʿAl-Ṣafādī, ʿAbdallāh Abī Muḥammad

Beginning of 14th century

Mamluk Cairo

Al-ʿAbbāsī, also known as al-Ṣafādī, completed his work *The Ancestors’ School for the Organization of Dynastic Rule* (Āthār al-uwal fī tartīb al-duwal) in August 1309 (Rabī’ I. 709). It is dedicated to the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Dūshnīgīr (from Persian chāshnumī, i.e. taster, cupbearer) Baybars II al-Manṣūrī and documents the political uncertainties at his time. More important, it is a courageous plea to legitimize rule by good government.

The book was first printed in Bulāq in 1295/1878 and again ten years later on the margins of Jalāladdīn ʿAbdarrahmān al-Suyūtī, *Tārīḥ al-khulafāʾ wa-umārāʾ al-muʾminīn*, Cairo 1305/1888 (cf. Little, *Mamlūk Historiography*, 38ff.). Probably it was thought to be a historiography in view of the many anecdotes it contains, rather than a work of political advice literature. The contemporary edition (ʿUmayra, Beirut 1989/1409) is rudimentary and based on the Cairo manuscript only (cf. Brockelmann Suppl. II, 202). It does not document the author’s quotations or borrowings from advice literature or elsewhere, it is inattentive of linguistic matters and mainly interested in the "Islamic" character of the text.

Not much is known about the author, ʿAl-Ḥasan b. ʿAbdallāh Abī Muḥammad al-ʿAbbāsī (al-Hāshimī) al-Ṣafādī, since his writings are the only source of information.
He is author also of a short chronicle of the Mamluk rulers of Egypt, *Nuzhat al-mālik wa-l-mamlūk fī mukhtaṣar sīrat man wulliya Miṣr min al-mulūk* ed. Tadmuri 2003). As the book contains historical information concerning the year 717/1317, we may infer that the author died after that date (*Nuzha*, 7). The author mentions (*Nuzha*, 172) that he was sent in 694/1294-95 to the Sharqiyya province by the Wazir Ibn al-Khalīlī to oversee the state’s domains in Fāqūs (cf. Little, 38). Apparently he also wrote another book of political advice, *al-Tadhkira al-kāmila fī l-siyāsa al-mulūkiyya* (Shākir Muṣṭafā 3/210f.; Little, *ibid*.), which is lost. He is also the author of a poetic work, *al-Maqāmāt al-Jalāliyya* (Pomerantz 464) where he is introduced as Jalāl al-Dīn aš-Šafadī al-Barīdī. The addition al-Barīdī seems to refer to a position in the Mamluk post and intelligence service (Pomerantz, *ibid*). The *Ancestors’ School* of political advice confirms the author’s experience and corporative identity as an official in the service of the Mamluk rulers of Egypt.

Al-ʿAbbāsī, as we will keep referring to him here, structured his book in four parts, each containing ten or eight chapters. Our references point to page, part and chapter according to the modern edition.

A striking feature of the work is that it manifests what we may perceive as divided loyalties. Our translation of *duwal* (sing. daula) in the book’s title by “dynastic rule” instead of the usual “states” etc. is inspired by the peculiar contradiction between the author’s devotion to the Qala’unid dynasty and his allegiance with their political counterpart Djāshnikīr, the Mamluk emir and later Sultan. His work thus gives evidence of a political drama. At his time, al-Malik al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (r. 678/1279 – 689/1290) and his sons Khalīl al-Malik al-Ashraf (r 689/1290 – 693/1293) and particularly al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 689/1293-692/1296 as a child and 698/1299 – 708/1309 as a minor, and again 709/1310 – 741/1341) represent a hereditary succession to power. This kind of legitimacy was valued, even if it was not necessarily the unique principle of legitimacy (see Levanoni 380). Al-ʿAbbāsī praises the Qala’unids in his book (AA 233, ch.III/5) and refers to hereditary
succession by highlighting the importance of educating princes for their future responsibilities (AA 209, ch. III/1; AA 219f., ch. III/3). In contrast to this, Djāshnikīr, who was member of the Mamluk military oligarchy and one of the regent-rulers (steward, ustādār) of the young Sultan al-Nāṣir (1299-1309), embodied Mamluk factional rule and the resulting non-hereditary system of succession. It had given shape to the emerging Mamluk sultanate in the mid of the 13th century and prevailed from the late 14th to the 16th century. Djāshnikīr was assigned to the position of Sultan on behalf of the Burjī faction of Mamluk emirs, and Al-ʿAbbāsī not only dedicated his book to him (AA 373, IV/ch. 10), but also refers repeatedly to his leadership and qualities (AA 79f., ch. I/2; 128, ch. I/8; 233, ch. III/5). Yet the rule of Baybars II al-Malik al-Muẓaffar was short termed. Al-Nāṣir regained power in 1310, Baybars fled, was seized and killed. For the newly reinstalled Sultan al-Nāṣir who then reigned for 31 years, the book dedicated to a ruler he had eliminated might not have been of great interest. The author himself mentions in the introduction that he would donate his book to the ruler’s treasury (khizāna, AA 42).

His statements support al-Malik al-Nāṣir as well as al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Baybars II Djāshnikīr. One may speculate that the author might have spent more time composing his work than the ca. six months that elapsed between the accession of Baybars II and the book’s completion, or he might have reused material composed earlier. He may thus have planned at some stage of this process to make al-Nāṣir his addressee. In any case, although he had obviously backed the wrong horse, he survived his master’s fall and continued his career. One reason for this may be his intellectual neutrality. The book advocates the concept of a strong sultan, personally engaged in all aspects of governance and political rule. This idea transcends the dichotomy between the dynastic and the non-hereditary sultanate. From this point of view, al-ʿAbbāsī’s work does not display political partisanship, but voices concerns that go beyond it.
The normative discourse on political rule and governance makes use of two modes (AA 45, *introduction*). One is the exposure of the foundations of sovereign rule and explication of beneficial and harmful practices and attitudes (*afkān*), and two is the extensively used illustrative mode of many historical exempla (*adhkār*). Particular attention is given to the Iranian tradition of kingship, and many terms of state administration – as usual in the Mamluk period – are of Persian origin. Some examples also refer to the early Islamic period as a model, and occasionally the Abbasid period is considered. The author however, who claims descent from ʿAbbās, the Prophet’s uncle, and presents himself as a distant descendant of Hārūn al-Rashīd, does not display particular attachment to ʿAbbasid heritage.

The book is particular in reflecting the requirements and conditions that allow responding to the need of regulating social affairs. For this end, the performance of political institutions must be secured by an appropriate administrative body and by granting recognition and material security for officials (AA 108, ch.I/6; 121, ch. I/8; 148, ch. II/2). This perspective may be correlated to the process of professionalization in medieval European history (Reinhard, 193). In al-ʿAbbāsī’s presentation, the political sphere exceeds the institutional agencies or alliances, which constitute power and may serve as a means of coercion or directive measures. It is much more the fabric that allows negotiating cooperation and conflict. The potential of religious authority to mobilize people against the ruler, for instance, or rebellion motivated by discontent, are seen as challenges that the ruler thwarts by political means or a kind of social engineering (AA 124f, I/ch. 8). Power thus consists in understanding and controlling the procedures that create balances and allow negotiation. The author’s personal insight in governmental procedures may be seminal in his respect, as he gives proof of his acquaintance with the chancery, finance inspection, post and intelligence services.

His concept of legitimate rule is complex and certainly contradictory. Comparison with May Weber’s three ‘pure’ types of legitimate rule (Max Weber, *Die Typen der
Herrschaft) may be helpful for understanding the composite character of al-ʿAbbāsī’s thought. In this vein, traditional authority relies on the sacral character of a habitually unquestioned, timeless or god given rule, or in the author’s words, a grace bestowed by God on whom he holds to be worthy (faḍlun ilāhiyyun yun’imu llāhu bihiʿalā man yaṣṭafihi min ḥalqihi; AA 57, ch. I/1). The author is paraphrasing here the Qur‘ān verse which argues against opponents to the Hebrew king Saul: “Allah has chosen him over you .... and grants his kingship to whom he wills” (inna Llāha -ṣṭafāhu ʿalaykum wa-zādahu baṣṭatan fī l-ʿilmī wa-l-jiṣmi wa-Llāhu yuʾti ṭulculkahu man yashāʿu, 2:247). Yet we may also recognize the idea of a legal authority based upon a system of rules and the eligibility of the appointed person to give directives. Legitimate authority (here the caliphate) is mandatory (wilāyaʿalā l-nās; AA 68, ch. I/2). The well-known formula, prevalent since the 11th century, according to which the ruler is God’s shadow on earth (al-sultān zillu llāh fī l-ard, AA 139, ch. II/1) therefore is not valid unrestrictedly, because unlimited power upends criticism and resistance, and is hazardous to both the ruler and those obliged to deal with him. It also breeds abuse of power (Abbès, 31). Obedience, moreover, is not just a univocal obligation of the ruler’s subjects, but a contractual, or at least reciprocal, relationship (kullu man ḥaqqaqa al-ṯā’ata li-ghairihī, taḥaqqaqat al-ṯā’atu li-nafsihī, AA 100, ch. I/5; cf. Leder, 105). The idea of a charismatic authority, finally, remains problematic in this context, yet may be associated with the exceptional dynastic sequence of exemplary rulers as advocated by the author.

In contrast to the political realities dominated by the interference of Mamluk emirs, al-ʿAbbāsī’s book tends to impart the impression of a neat separation between military and civil society. The two first parts of the book deal with the foundation and organization of rule, and the third part is dedicated to the symbolic representation of power, the arrangements of the ruler’s and his elites’ social affairs, leisure, sports and culture. The fourth part treats the military in some length, but a detailed exposé demonstrating city administration as the most adequate
means of defense and inner peacekeeping interrupts the sequence of chapters dealing with aspects of belligerence. It is the author’s intention (AA 45 *muqaddima*) to explain the principles of organizing the state (*qawāʿid al-mamlaka*), the subtleties (*asrār*) required for developing adequate policies (*siyāsa*), to describe the state’s administration (*tadbīr ad-daula*) and to expound a just practice (*taqrīr al-sīra al-ādila*).

The **first part** exposes rules and principles of kingship in ten chapters. It mentions the nature of sovereignty rather elusively as a bestowal and obligation. In consequence of God’s favor (see above), rulers have to abide by his law: “It is the duty of the (ruler) whom God favors with this benevolence and this rank that his humility before God increases, as well as his subordination (*inkisāruhu*) to and compliance with the law (sharia)”. For the mutual dependency between religion and political rule, he refers to the Iranian king Ardashīr’s legacy according to which the former is the fundament and the latter the guardian (cf. ‘Ahd Ardashīr, 53). The metaphor of the human body representing a natural configuration of society in which the ruler holds the position of its head (mind and spirit, *rūḥ*, AA 58f., ch. 1), similarly entails an obligation: He has to be a distinctly virtuous person, capable of guiding the less qualified (AA 59, ch. 1). Al-ʿAbbāsī further exemplifies good rule in two fields: Ethics and social policies, support and control of elites, especially scholars and religious authorities.

The association of virtues with practical policies is pertinent. In this vein, impartiality (*ʿadl*) as approved by the Quran and the Prophet’s sayings here means generally (*mutlaq*) the application of reciprocity and is defined in particular (*khāṣṣ*) by the rules of sharia (AA 70, ch. 2). It is a universal social principle (AA 71, ch. 2), which even evildoers must apply as soon as they organize (AA 69, ch. 2). Similarly, true and not deficient generosity (*karam*, AA 78, ch. 2) means unselfish assistance provided regardless of the beneficiary’s status or proximity to the ruler (AA 74, ch.
2). Mentioning different laudable historical examples of munificence offers opportunity to laud the addressee, al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Baybars II (see above; AA 77, ch. 2). Related to *karam* is the ruler’s accessibility and hospitality, organized by carefully arranged gatherings with his entourage, military commanders and scholars, as well as with common people (AA 88, ch. 3). Honesty is referred to as the substance of courage. Absolute honesty is an attribute of prophets only, and was politically relevant in the remote past, when prophets were kings (AA 111, ch. 7). More pragmatically, well-intentioned white lies are an admissible policy (AA 83f., ch. 2) in contrast to unfaithfulness. Thus, being attentive of people’s worries, merits and ranks is decisive for the art of governance. Removing injustice and helping the oppressed (*inṣāf al-mazlūm*) is a primary duty (AA 95, ch. 4). The Mamluk military is an important issue in this context. The accommodation in barracks outside of the city serves the protection of the civil population, which is both practically and historically approved (AA 96-98, ch. 4). The ruler’s success depends on his capacity of treating potential opponents, such as military leaders, neighboring kings, prisoners, and those seeking his help in an adequate and considerate manner (AA 99f., ch. 5). Equally important is attentiveness for the ranking of people with respect to descent (*nasab*) and social standing (*sharaf*) (AA 130-132, ch. 9). The ruler needs to observe these tenets for the management of the army, which should go beyond the formal control of legal matters. Promotion according to recognized merits only, inhibiting the encroachment and engagement in business of members of the army, as well restraining undue ambitions of military leaders figure among the recommended procedures (AA 107-110, ch. 6). It is consistent with the perspective of advice literature that the subjects’ obligation of paying obedience to the stipulations of the law tends to disappear behind a long catalogue of recommendable policies that rulers have to observe. However, the reciprocal relationship between ruler and his subjects is presumed, when the author mentions that the ruler is not entitled to demand their affective attachment (AA 90f, ch. 4).
Knowledge generally, and in all disciplines has a high value (AA 117f., ch. 7) the author suggests. A state with few scholars will not survive in peoples’ memories after the end of its day (AA 118, ch. 7; cf. Marlow 116), and the ruler’s material and moral support of scholars is necessary, as also history illustrates (ibid.). Sharia appears as the most eminent science (AA 117, ch. 7). The ruler should foster it and respect its custodians in consideration of their complimentary functions (AA 111, ch. 7; cf. Marlow 114). Scholars of sharia preserve the principles of the law (sharʿ), which the ruler guards and defends (AA 116, ch. 7). The relationship thus relies on mutual benefit, but is also precarious, when false scholars come into play. These approach common people by suggesting illegitimate innovation and claiming particular knowledge of secrets. The reason for such behavior is the scholars’ idleness, which the ruler has to prevent by occupying them. He also must control those who challenge the sharia on the ground of their rationality (ḥikma, falsafa), or even go so far as to allege that sharia is a human construct only (mawḍūʿa, 116f., ch. 7).

This conservative, statesmanlike attitude is also apparent in his warnings against false religious authority personified by ascetics and world renouncing pious (zuhhād, nussāk). Generally, the pious would deserve respect because they are the true kings (AA 120, ch. 8), venerated by people, protected by rulers. A good ruler (malik rashīd) listens to them and accepts their admonition, despite the rudeness of their preaching (AA 121, ch. 8). Among them one finds however people whose piety is pretended, as they pursue political ambitions (AA 124f., ch. 8, see translation 1). Others exaggerate their ascetic piety demonstrating political distance by ostentatiously keeping away from palaces and avoiding contact with rulers, in order to impress ordinary people. They tend to blame rulers as tyrants (arbāb al-zulm) and sinners (ʿusāt ahl al-dunya) whenever the rulers turn away from the pious. They agitate against the king then, accusing him of neglecting morals and religion.
The eight chapters of the second part explain how good rule should be organized and exercised. Consistent with warnings against the political interference of (false) religious authority, the author’s excursus on various types of rebels spells out the political dangers to public order. He warns against impunity for malignant servants of the state and explains how people react against injustice through armed robbery and other kinds of trouble making: They tend to gather likeminded people, and thus become seriously threatening. He recommends avoidance of such trouble by applying justice (inṣāf) that compensates the harm that they had sustained. For the reader, this passage appears unconnected and erroneously in the chapter on taxation (AA 164f., ch. 3). It corresponds better with the chapter on the ruler’s jurisdiction (mażālim, AA 168-176, ch. 4). Much emphasis is given to this institution, which has to be exercised by the ruler himself, as in the case of the Mamluk (min mulūk al-Turk) Sultan Baibars, or by his officer (mīrdād), who should also be the Sultan’s deputy (nā‘ib al-sultān). The ruler’s judicature must seek the assistance of a judge and has to consider the law (sharʿ). It should further be formalized by a proper administration (dīwān) keeping records of the cases. The persecution of any infringement of the ruler’s provisions is the task of this institution.

In al-ʿAbbāsī’s survey of state institutions, normative ethics largely give way to a pragmatic approach. The rationale of complying with practical requirements of good governance is what secures the ruler’s power. The author’s focus is diffuse, oscillating between the ruler’s and his clerks’ perspectives. His remarks on counselling (mashwara) are revealing in this respect, since he considers both aspects, providing counsel and making use of it. He is aware of the communicative and reflexive potential of counselling. “Counseling is a most noble art (ṣinā’a), because it is essential (nafsāniyya) and related to thought and (inner) energy (quwā)” in contrast to physical labor having no connection to the human spirit/essence. Rulers need to ponder the recommendations received from advisers in order to find their own opinion, and advisors must apply complete discretion and modesty (AA 148f., ch. II/2; cf. Abbès, 81).
Subordination is a moral obligation for the sultan’s servants and a necessity resulting from the ruler’s unrestricted power and waywardness (AA 139f., ch. 1; cf. AA 196, ch. 8). Yet competence, confidentiality and efficiency are most desirable qualities (AA 146, ch. II/2). Successful leadership on all levels of the state entails recognition of values, such as equitability and reasonability as well as the acknowledgement of realities. Corruption motivated by greediness is a common vice among servants, for example. Probably his experience as a clerk guides the author towards recommending appropriate remuneration because, as he argues, it obviates their need to care for additional income (AA 147, ch. II/2). Similarly, the ruler cannot rely on his spies (ʿuyūn), if there spending for informants is not covered (AA 177, ch. II/5). In order to secure the services of his office holders, the ruler must exclude that they depend materially or otherwise on others. In a similar vein, also wine drinking ambassadors are unreliable because of their lack of self-control (AA 192, ch. 7).

His praise of the ideal scribe at the state chancery or in administrative resorts (kuttāb al-rasā’il wa-l-dawāwīn) highlights, together with other more traditional requirements, the desirable capacity of combining (religious) tradition, reasoning and (empirical) proof (al-ḥujajaj al-naqliyya wa-l’-aqliyya wa-l-barāhiyn). Among the paragons of unequalled mastery, he names Saladin’s head of the chancery al-Qaḍī al-Fāḍil (d. 1193; AA 153, ch. 3). Competence here seems even more important than creed (AA 154, ch. 3). The metaphor of the gardener cultivating his plantation characterizes purpose and modus of the ruler’s administration. Both aspects implied, sustenance and control, are explicated for several administrative resorts, such as the army (AA 156, ch. 3), land- and income tax (kharāj, ṣadaqa), the treasury (AA 158, 160-162, ch. 3;) and postal and intelligence (ikhbār) services (AA 177, ch. 5). The author also explains the offices of the chamberlain (AA 187, ch. 6), the ambassador (AA 191, ch. 7) and the boon companion (AA 196, ch. 8). Rather outstanding is his insistence on the autonomy of budgetary control (dīwān al-nafaqāt; AA 160, ch. 3) overseeing the expenditure of the royal palace. He also insists that long distance communication, however costly it may be (AA 184, ch.
5), is essential for the functioning of the intelligence service and thus extremely relevant to the ruler who should be the first and possibly only one who receives information (AA 180, ch. 5). Another means to exercise control is avoiding the assignment of tasks to single individuals instead of making use of pairs who tend to monitor each other (AA 185, ch. 5).

Details on the required comportment, which companions of kings have to observe, are numerous and may indicate the author’s acquaintance with courtly manners. Comparison between customs among the Franks, Turks and Arabs of different regions sheds a critical light on the ostentatious codes of politeness used in the Near East (AA196-198, ch. 8).

The third part again contains ten chapters dealing with what we may interpret as the natural and political body of the king (cf. Ernst Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology. Princeton 1957), his physical appearance and attendants, the ceremonial representation of kingship, and the organization of his sociability and leisure. Demeanor and clothing express distinctiveness (AA 206, ch. 1), and his public appearances must be carefully styled as a representation of majestic position. Flags and the legend on coins also serve this purpose (AA 207f., ch. 1). His health and safety demand utmost attention, particularly poisoning must be prevented (AA 211f., ch. 1). Attendants and confidents (khawāṣṣ) need to tally the ruler’s nature (tibā) before all other physical and intellectual qualities required (AA 214, ch. 2). The ruler should not take pride in the large number of his sons, but rather educate them, expose them to hardships that prepare for future tasks, and he should require their docility. Only the apt and able (najāba) is to be appointed for succession after consulting the advisers. Succession of the incapable may cause great damage (AA 219-221, ch. 3). Likewise, he should restrict the number of his wives, as the female part of his family (ḥaram) is a delicate matter of honor, since equal and fair treatment (inṣāḥ) is impossible – jealousy even among his female slaves being a disturbing issue (AA 225, ch. 4) – and spending much time with women affects intellect and virility.
The ruler must respect the ḥaram of his officers and subalterns under all circumstance, as nobody could prevent him when seduced to wrongdoing (AA 225, ch. 4).

The serviceable qualities of Mamluks (AA 229, ch. 5) deserve praise illustrated by Mamluk brigades of emirs and sultans of the past (AA 232-34, ch. 5). With respect to governance, he warns against favoring the dearest. Distinction only merits reward, competition among Mamluks can thus be furthered (AA 229f., ch. 5), servants should be controlled and organized by reasonable ranking (AA 234, ch. 5).

Excellent cuisine is a kingly privilege and displaying generous hospitality by offering excellent food a duty. Hospitality is a general practice according to the manners of different peoples, yet the sophistication displayed by food tasters and attendants (djāshnikīyya) and their ceremonial arrangements particularly demonstrate the functionality and significance of public meals at the court (AA 239-242, ch. 6). In contrast, courtly entertainment is less ceremonial and allows intimacy. Kings weighed down by the burden of their responsibilities relax in company, and the king’s leisure policy demands that companions avoid immersion in politics and personal affairs. In company, the king may share proper conversation or recitation of the Quran (AA 243-245, ch. 7), but listening to music and singing is a (most) superb form of recreation, as well as mental and intellectual stimulation (AA 247, ch. 8). Despite of music being used to treat melancholy, to quieten toddlers, to support hard work and caravanning camels (AA 248f., ch. 8), it remains a contested issue among religious scholars (AA 249f., ch. 8). In any case, listening to musical performances demands concentration and is an occasion of demonstrating connoisseurship (AA 252-254, ch. 8).

The beneficial effects of physical exercise generally receive much attention. The royal sport (riyāda mulūkiyya) polo (al-la‘b bi-l-kurra wa-l-jaukān) is distinct in terms of its many-sided activity, and as a team sport, it familiarizes with the experience of defeat and gain. The risk of injuries and accidents demands caution (AA 255-257, ch. 9). Chess is likewise competitive and invokes assertiveness (ghaḍabiyya),
trains the capacity of anticipation (taqdīr) and strategy, and at the same time, helps to cultivate self-composure. Playing chess with kings requires particular decency (AA 259-261, ch. 9). Hunting, which is approved and also regulated by the sunna (AA 262-264, ch. 10), is an activity worthy of kings, because it furthers the qualities of chivalry (furūsiyya), familiarizes with hardship and strengthens the inner force of assertiveness (quwwa ghadabiyya). Yet it is also the frugal contentment of the destitute (qināʾat al-ṣuʿūlūk), who has no other way to gain his livelihood. Thus hunting must be exercised with purpose and caution avoiding the damage of the sown, accidents, abuse of horses on stony ground (jandal) or getting lost in dangerous areas (AA 267f., ch. 10). Hunting is an exclusive practice when it comes to use predators or birds of prey, such as falcon, hawk, eagle, or dogs. The author offers a good range of expertise on many of the zoological and veterinary aspects as well as technical requirements and equipment of the hunt (AA 269 – 287, ch. 10).

The fourth part of the book, dedicated to belligerence, opens by stating that chivalry and bravery serve both religion and worldly affairs. The adherent moral values, such as pride and self-esteem (al-ʿizza li-l-nufūs al-abiyya) are tenets of religion (al-sharāʾī wa-l-diyānāt) in general, and equally general principles of politics, or as we may translate in this context, of policies (ḍawābiṭ al-siyāsāt). Chivalry comprises horse riding, weaponry and tactics of war (AA 289f., ch. 1). The ten chapters of this part treat the attributes and qualities of soldiers, cavalry, weaponry, civil and military administration as well as fortification of cities and border regions, tactics and rules of warfare, techniques of siege and naval war. Despite the importance and value assigned to the military, the author acknowledges the destructive effects of war, as well as its political causes. War is a disaster comparable to disease (ʿawārid min ḥawādh al-zamān ka-l-amrād; cf. Kadduri 173), which arises from conflict between religious communities (milla), from tribal strife, rebellion, or the expansive ambitions of states, possibly justified by the conceived illegitimacy of the conquered entity (daula jāʾira, AA 328f., ch. 8;
cf. Rosenthal, 74). Peace is preferable, and good civil administration is the best defense against conflict and aggression (AA 321ff., ch. 5). As a rule, cities under siege and territories under military pressure succumb in consequence of disunity. This is instrumental for conquest, when the attackers identify the nature of conflict among the enemy, motivated by religion, worldly interests or differences between descent groups. Such divides may be aggravated through agents creating factions (yu’allibu baynahum li-yufarriqa jam’ahum, AA 362, ch. 9).

Warrior qualities differ among peoples. Whereas Arabs are erratic (laysa lahum thabāt) and easily agitated, Turkic peoples are particularly brave and combine harshness against others with obedience for their chiefs. Warfare in general suits best the people of the north (AA 291ff., ch. 1). On the other hand, the virtue of true braveness, which includes patience and avoids precipitancy (AA 293f., ch. 2), is engrained in the Arabic tradition of raiding (ghazwa) and is highly valued in Persian tradition as well. The Assassins’ (hashīshiyya) confrontation of the Franks, their resistance against and alliance with Mamluk rulers who took advantage of the murderous attacks executed by Fedayeen, also merits laudable mention (AA 296-203, ibid.). In contrast to such mental requirements, horsemanship mainly demands control of the animal and its different paces, saddle, stirrup, as well as acquaintance with horse breeds (AA 304-10, ch.3). The chapter on weaponry offers detail on bow and arrow, swords, shields and lance (AA 312-320, ch.4).

City administration (wilāyat al-madīnah) is discussed in this context for two reasons. (1) For the necessity to entertain and expand its defensive fortifications and control partisan activity (ta’āṣṣub) among the inhabitants. Solidarity of descent groups, typical of people of the steppes (intisāb ahl al-barārī wa-l-falawāt) may be useful for practical solidarity, but any sort of particular group related esprit de corps (ʿaṣabiyya) is dangerous and destructive in an urban context (321f., ch.5). (2) For the necessity to thwart civil disturbance by good governance. Unemployment (baṭāla) is to be avoided by assigning proper occupation to each group (țā’ifa) of citizens. Moreover, the economic structure and public order of market spaces and the shops of craftsmen must be overseen, a trustworthy market inspection (ḥisba)
installed, fresh water supply must be granted, the waste water system as well as garbage disposal organized, route ways, in particular bridges repaired, mosques entertained, the poor and disabled supported. Proper urban administration requires capable staff (AA 322-324, ibid., see translation 2). Frontier towns deserve particular support of the populace fit for military service through subsidies and weapons (AA 325-327, ch. 6).

Warfare is explained at length (AA 325-355, ch. 7). For the obligation of a careful preparation for military operation, the Prophet is a model (AA 330). Various issues of warfare, such as intelligence and cautious forward moving are discussed, and many historical illustrations are given (AA 331-338). The duties of the military governor (wālī l-ḥarb) comprise keeping a well-trained army and restricting the unavoidable presence of rascals among the baggage. There are various means to strengthen the morale or spirit of the army, but if the pay is too low, they do not help. Likewise, provisions and equipment are an essential support for the army. (AA 339 341). The ruler himself should not participate at battle. Finally, recommendations concerning tactical questions such as squad formation and confronting the superior enemy, as well as an explication of war crime such as killing children and women (AA 348) are offered. Historical illustrations of wise military governors close the chapter.

The contingency of war (al-ḥarb sijālun wa-tārātun) that brings about momentary constellations of victory and defeat demands a serene attitude on the ground, utmost caution when the enemy is pursued and restraint in looting. The author reminds of the sharia rules of martial law, demands a good treatment of prisoners and reconstruction, if the conquered territory is meant to bear fruits (AA 356-360, ch.8).

Several tactics and devices used in besieging and defending fortified places are explained besides more subtle stratagems and ruses of aggression, such as disturbing the enemies logistics or bribing the merchants in order to cut supplies (AA 361-388, ch. 9; see also above). The perils of naval war appear outstanding
in the eyes of the author. He makes due with rather general recommendations (AA 370-373, ch. 10).

Translation one

Among them (clergy, *ahl al-dīn*) are different kinds of ruthless people (*ahl al-ghilaẓ*), practitioners of pious renunciation or fraud (read *mughālaṭa*) for other intentions. Some of them are obsessed by their ambition for leadership or power, and when it occurs that the ruler avoids them and shuts himself off from them because his disposition is opposed to theirs or because he is busy with entertainment and pleasure, they feel invoked to produce defamations against the king, his affairs and negligence of the law (sharia). They mobilize people for themselves with this, and possibly even many of them, whereupon they tell them yarn that incites their resolution to change the abominable (*taghyīr al-munkar*) and bring about the right (*nuṣrat al-ḥaqq*). If the king ignores their ado, it will gain weight and effect, and then might create a hazard. How many times have such things occurred in great countries or distant regions! (AA 124f. I/ch. 8). Another kind of such people ostentatiously practice excessive abstinence, renunciation, piety and dissociation from royal banquets, receptions and (festive) prayers. Their purpose is to gain followers from among the common people, and to show the approval, particularly if they are preachers (*ahl al-waʿẓ*). In their eyes, any tribute they receive is less than what they merit. If someone does not pay due attention to them, does not respect or visit them humbly kissing their hands, they curse him and let people know that he is one of those sinful, mundane people (*ʿuṣāt ahl al-dunyā*) and wrongdoers (*arbāb al-ẓulm*). The stratagem (*siyāsa*) of these people is to splash dirt in the world (*laṭṭakha bi-l-dunyā*) by all means, in order to ruin the affairs of the ones they attack so that people lose their faith in them.

(In contrast to this), one finds among the deprived (*fuqarā*) people who hide and veil their need and detest asking for help, even if they were to die. “The unaware would think them rich, due to their abstinence (*taʿaffuḥ*). You will recognize them by their features. They do not ask insistently. Whatever charity you give, God is aware of it” (Quran 2:273). The king’s quest for this kind of people and his delight in finding
one of them should be like the ignorant man’s joy about a problem that was solved or darkness that was illuminated (for him). Beneficence for them should be plenty and respite (tawṣiʿa) for them also (AA 127, l/ch.8).

Translation two

Likewise, [the governor = wālī al-madīna] deters inhabitants (ahl al-balad) from being unoccupied, because this induces malignance and corruption. Instead, every group (ṭāʾifa) has to be devoted to one of the many occupations or to one field of work belonging to the useful agencies (fann min al-maṣāliḥ al-ʿāʾida), from which they and the community (madīna) benefit. (…)

The governor of the town (wālī al-balad) has the obligation, as part of (his responsibility for) the public good (maṣāliḥ), to oversee its improvement and adornment and to direct the reconstruction of the damaged or decayed (buildings), because delapidation is death and construction life. The one who designs and organizes (the city’s places; wādiʿ uhā wa-murattibuhā) should allot specialized markets (an yufrida kulla sūqin ʿalā juddatihi), in order that bad and cheap (khasīs) products do not mingle with the good and valuable (nafīs). Yet if the city is large, foodstuff should be sold at many places in order to facilitate the daily provision of the people. He should also take care that unclean crafts, such as tanners, dyers, gaffers, limekins, brick-kins, soap works, are to be placed at the outskirts of the city. He should as well control the dimension of the spaces they occupy including the elevation of their arcades and roofs, so that the pathway is not blocked and no damage is done to passersby.

He entrusts one who is trustworthy in terms of religion, reliability and respectful appearance with the market inspection. He takes care to decree weight and measure units. He regulates the matters of the citizenry from among the salespersons and merchants, and does not admit unjust treatment of anyone. He sanctions, whenever he has notice of it, everyone that cheated or sold something at loss.
He supervises the cleaning of the streets and large squares of dirt and filth, if done on the expenses of the treasury, or instructs people to clean their plots. He surveys the quality of water and its maintenance. He prevents the damage of latrines, drainpipes, channels or conduits, because water supply sustains life, and if it rots, the bodies become putrid because of the maladies that they catch. Moreover, bad water affects the souls and the morals according to the experts of medicine and mental dispositions (tabā‘i’). In consequence of rotting water, also the vapors and airs that surround the bodies turn bad.

He engages in the restoration of viaducts and sewers or canals, in maintaining its courses and environs and protecting them from those who install (illegal) junctions and steal. All this is part of the necessary responsibilities (al-ḥuqūq al-lāzima ‘alā) of the kings in their cities.

He takes care of the restoration of mosques and their adjunct buildings, of the payment of salaries, the requirements of their servants (maṣāliḥ qaumatihā) and pious assemblies. He also oversees caravansaries and the hospitals and shelters for the poor.

In general, he engages in correcting or repairing the wrong or broken, and in the renewal of what was effaced (dathara). He surveys the condition of the weak, poor and those who cannot earn their livelihood, as well as those who do not find an occupation. He imposes on them what keeps them alive.

All this (has to be undertaken) after selecting governors and appointing capable officials such as the judge, the governor, the market inspector, the chairmen of the markets, ombudsmen of the crafts, chiefs or elders of the lanes (durūb), and the contact persons (aṣḥāb) of residential neighborhoods (AA 322-24, IV/ch. 5).

Bibliography


Stefan Leder