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# Divine sovereignty, morality and the state

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**Divine Sovereignty, Morality and the State: Maududi and His Influence**

## *Introduction*

The concept of divine sovereignty is immensely influential in Islamist discourse around the world as Zaman has noted in an important article published in this journal in 2015.[1] In the twentieth century, the most systematic articulation of the concept of divine sovereignty was Abul A'la Maududi's *ḥākimiyyat-i ilāhiyya,* elaborated and expanded in the course of almost six decades of writing and activism. Maududi may not have been the first one to coin the term *ḥākimiyyat-i ilāhiyya* [2] but his ideas have travelled widely such that not only have they become the norm of Islamist thinking but they also deeply infuse popular imagination in many pre-dominantly Muslim countries. This collection of articles brings together new scholarship on the generative influence of Maududi's notion of *ḥākimiyyat-i ilāhiyya* and its reception among both Sunni and Shii Islamist thinkers and activists. Engaging critically with the contours, circulation, variations and contestations of the notion of divine sovereignty this collection is the first major attempt at the conceptual and historical reconstruction of this important idea and its political life.

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[1] M. Q. Zaman, 'The Sovereignty of God in Modern Islamic Thought', *JRAS* XXV (2015), pp. 389-418. The special edition includes papers presented at a workshop jointly organised by King's College London and the University of Birmingham on 5 September 2019. The workshop was funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 724557).

[2] Zaman, 'Sovereignty of God', p. 405; Ebrahim Moosa, 'Shari'at Governance in Colonial and Postcolonial India', in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, (ed.) B. Metcalf (Princeton, 2009), pp. 317–325.

Like many popular ideas, *ḥākimiyyat-i ilāhiyya,* or sovereignty of God, appears deceptively simple and accessible. As with other such ideas, it brings together layers of meaning and associations that have allowed it to be meaningful to different constituencies in multiple contexts. Maududi's structured refutation of the modern state's sovereignty struck a chord with important debates within the Islamic tradition regarding legitimate and authoritative rule. At the same time, the concerns he highlighted about the need for moral limits to state and popular sovereignty spoke to problems pertaining to colonial, anti-co and neo-colonial impositions in the Muslim world. Starting with a disquiet about the potential ethical hazards of the idea of popular sovereignty, Maududi argued for recognizing the role this played in surreptitiously imposing and legitimising the authority of the state, devoid of any moral limits.[3] Articulated at a time when almost all the most developed democracies were also explicitly colonial, racist and brutal in their suppression of anti-colonial movements, the emphasis on moral limits was an important strategy for assessing the negative associations with popular sovereignty. With the re-emergence of nationalist and racially exclusionary visions of popular sovereignty today our engagement with his vision of divine sovereignty is driven by an attentiveness to the questions they raise for contemporary political ideas and their implications.

### *Legitimacy, Authority, Sovereignty*

Many scholars saw Maududi's articulation of divine sovereignty as an unthinking, reactionary response to modernity.[4] Political critics derided him for his reliance on pre-modern ideas to deal with modern problems. That Maududi drew explicitly on pre-modern Islamic history and

[3] H. Iqtidar, 'Theorizing Popular Sovereignty in the Colony: Abul Aʿla Maududi's 'Theodemocracy', *The Review of Politics* LXXXV (2020), pp. 595–617.

[4] F. Rahman, 'Currents of Religious Thought in Pakistan', *Islamic Studies* VII (1968), pp. 1–7.

philosophy is undeniable. Yet, he reworked those ideas in creative ways to address what he saw as key political problems of his day such as nationalism.[5] Often the similarity in approaches between Maududi and his critics, given their own reliance on a reworked vision of a premodern idea, democracy, was lost on these interlocutors. Thoughtful scholars have recognized that Maududi engaged with a range of philosophical ideas,[6] contested the particular institutional and political structures around him[7] and proposed more than a knee jerk reaction to modern governance structures.[8] In particular, his flawed but provocative reworking of long running ideas about God's sovereignty has generated important questions about Eurocentric conceptual impositions, opening up definitions of secularisation[9] and popular sovereignty precisely because Maududi refused to accept colonial epistemic hegemony while also engaging with European ideas.

Notwithstanding his wide-ranging engagement, Islamic ideas did provide the foundation for Maududi's framework. One important theme in Islamic thought that served as the intellectual hinterland for Maududi's discussion of divine sovereignty was legitimate authority of the ruler. Contemporary debates in Islamic thought seem to conflate legitimacy,

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[5] H. Iqtidar, 'Jizya Against Nationalism: Abul 'Ala Maududi's attempt at Decolonizing Political Theory', *Journal of Politics* (forthcoming 2021).

[6] J. P. Hartung, *A System of Life: Mawdudi and the Ideologisation of Islam* (Delhi and Oxford, 2014).

[7] S. V. R. Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York and Oxford, 1996); I. Ahmed, 'Genealogy of the Islamic State: Reflections on Maududi's Political Thought and Islamism', *JRAI* XV (2009), pp. 145–162.

[8] A. F. March, *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), pp. 75-113.

[9] H. Iqtidar, *Secularizing Islamists? Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan* (Chicago, 2011).

sovereignty and authority. Sovereignty connotes ultimate and absolute legislative power, legitimacy addresses lawfulness of rule, and authority is concerned with the ability to act, persuade and enforce obedience. We suggest here the value of parsing out the distinctive features of these concepts while remaining conscious of the fact that they remain inextricably linked in the Islamic tradition.

Starting with the question of what counts as legitimate rule in Islam, an important debate emerged from the very first civil war in early Islam. When ‘Alī, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad, became the fourth caliph in 656 his authority was immediately contested. The first challenge came from two prominent companions of Muḥammad, Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, together with ‘Ā’isha, one of Muḥammad’s wives, during the Battle of the Camel. A more serious threat came from the powerful governor of Syria, Mu‘āwiyya who did not recognise ‘Alī’s caliphate and challenged it in the Battle of Siffin. In the context of this battle, questions of what legitimate authority means in Islam were raised, among others by a group from ‘Alī’s camp that defected. During the stand-off, Mu‘āwiyya’s army put sheets of the Qur’an on their spears to signal their willingness to avoid bloodshed and to negotiate. While ‘Alī agreed, a group left his camp arguing that the leadership of the Muslim community cannot be subject to human arbitration. They became known as the Kharijites (*khawārij* – “those who depart”) and based their rejection of compromise on the slogan: *lā-ḥukm illā li-llāh* – judgement belongs to God alone. Later Muslim historians perceived it as one of the first articulations of the idea that leadership in an Islamic polity ultimately needs to reflect the will of God, but in what way exactly remained open to interpretation.[10]

[10] G. R. Hawting, ‘The Significance of the Slogan *lā ḥukm*[a] *illā lillāh* and the References to the *ḥudūd* in the Traditions about the *fitna* and the Murder of ‘Uthmān’, *BSOAS* XLI (1978), pp. 453-463.

Political struggles in early Islam revolved around different conceptions of who is entitled to lead the Islamic community – whether it is determined by close family ties to the Prophet Muḥammad (‘Alī), companionship with him (Ṭalḥa and Zubayr) or being of noble Arab descent and possessing military strength and political acumen (Mu‘āwiyya and the Umayyad clan). The Kharijites, however, offered a leadership model that defined the Islamic community as a moral community and rejected descent, family ties and hereditary succession as legitimate sources for assuming the office of the caliphate: for them the most meritorious Muslim (*al-afḍal*) should be elected as caliph.[11] This emphasis on moral righteousness became an important element of Islamic theories of legitimacy of rule,[12] even as the moral rigorism of the Kharijites who declared anyone not accepting their theological and political views an apostate and legitimate to be killed turned them into the *bête noire* of Islamic historiography and heresiography. Legitimate rule entailed piety and moral righteousness by the ruler rather than just a claim by birth right or descent.

That the legitimacy of a ruler is tied closely to acceptance of God’s sovereignty is a widely held idea in Islamic thought. However, the more complicated question to answer is how precisely is the ultimate cosmic and legal sovereignty of God that the Qur’an articulates

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[11] P. Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 2005), p. 57. Going back to Ignaz Goldziher, modern academic scholarship has attributed to the Kharijites the view that the most meritorious Muslim should be ruler “even if he were an Abyssinian slave.” This false attribution results from over-relying on Sunni heresiographies. In fact, the Kharijite maintained that only a free Muslim can become ruler. See Patricia Crone, ‘“Even an Ethiopian Slave”: The Transformation of a Sunnī Tradition’, *BSOAS* LVII (1994), pp. 59-67.

[12] W. B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York, 2013), pp. 48-70; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 1798–1939 (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 161–93.

operationalised in an Islamic polity and the vision of a moral community realised? This dilemma is articulated in a rebuttal to the Kharijite position that appears in *Nahj al-Balāgha* (Peak of Eloquence), a collection of sermons, letters and sayings attributed to ʻAlī that was put together in the 10th century. In this collection ʻAlī characterises the Kharijite slogan that judgement is God's alone as "a word of truth that leads to error (*bāṭil*)"[13] suggesting that the Kharijites conflate the issue of divine sovereignty at a transcendental level with the question of power and leadership (*imra*) in this world. This centrality of divine sovereignty at the discursive level coupled with an openness to the actual political arrangements in place allowed great institutional flexibility particularly in the relations between the *ʻulamāʼ* (scholars) and rulers, a relationship that is often seen, wrongly we think, as a proxy for the possibility of secular arrangements in an Islamic polity.[14]

Our interest here is not in evaluating these institutional and ideational arrangements for their compliance with liberal secular visions. Rather we discuss them here to showcase briefly the multiple sites of Islamic authority, the second concept often conflated with legitimacy and sovereignty, within a larger framing of God's sovereignty over all human life. A prominent example of the power relations that began to crystallise between political rulers and religious scholars in the early years of Islamic empires is Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (642-728) who openly criticised Umayyad caliphs and court officials for their misconduct but did not call for open revolt.[15] While the Umayyads might have sought to appropriate religious authority by presenting themselves as vicegerents of God (*khalīfat allāh*) and not just as successor of the Messenger of

[13] M. ʻAbduh (ed.), *Nahj Al-Balāgha*. Vol. 1 (Beirut, [n.d.]), p. 91.

[14] H. Iqtidar, 'The Islamic Secular: Comments for Professor Sherman Jackson', *American Journal of Islam and Society* XXXIV (2017), pp. 59–62.

[15] See W. M. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 27-28.

God (*khalīfat rasūl allāh*),[16] their claims to religious authority were challenged by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and other religious scholars. It is contested to what extent the Umayyad caliphs actually sought to assert themselves as the sole source of authority in the religious sphere[17]. Yet, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and the earliest private circles of religious scholars that emerged across the nascent Arab-Muslim Empire exhibited a distant relationship towards those in power and sympathised with revolts against Umayyad rule, in particular when they arose with the promise to restore a more moral sense of Islamic governance as embodied by the first caliphs.[18]

Over time distinct spheres of legitimate authority for different members of the Islamic community emerged where the community remained both an "a worldly society….and a particular moral cosmology"[19]. The 'Abbasid Revolution (661-750) that put an end to the Umayyad dynasty and was supported by those who supported a return (*dawla*) to the prophetic example and the rule of the first rightly-guided caliphs. The term *dawla* would later refer to a ruling dynasty and is the term used in modern Arabic for the state. The term denotes a polity that is temporal and temporary, as Hallaq points out:

> the term *dawla* essentially connoted a dynastic rule that comes to power in part of the world, Islamic or non-Islamic, and then passes away. This idea of rotation and of the

[16] G. R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate, AD 661-750*, 2nd ed. (London and New York, 2000), p. 13.

[17] See P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph* (Cambridge, 1986). For a different reading, see M. Q. Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early Abbasids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunni Elite* (Leiden, 1997). See also O. Anjum, *Politics, Law and the Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment*. (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 42-48.

[18] Anjum, *Politics, Law and the Community*, pp. 79-81.

[19] Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, p. 51.

> successive change of dynasties is integral to the concept. Thus the community remains fixed and cannot come to an end until the end of the Day of Judgement, whereas *dawla* that governs it is temporary and ephermeral, having no intrinsic, organic or permanent ties to the community and its Sharī'a.[20]

The centrality of the community as both a moral/metaphysical and social entity then allowed the religious scholars significant leeway in establishing a distinct (but not separate in the way secular power is imagined) sphere of influence. Incorporating aspects of the Sassanid empire that Muslims had only recently overthrown the 'Abbasid caliphs declared themselves God's shadow on earth (*ẓill allāh fī-l-arḍ*) and claimed to embody divine sovereignty in their worldly realm. Yet this was a limited form of sovereignty for the ruler. When caliph al-Ma'mūn (786-833) instituted an inquisition (*miḥna*) to compel religious scholar to adhere to a particular doctrinal path, he faced the opposition of religious scholars, most famously Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (780-855), who placed clear limits to caliphal interference in matters related to *sharī'a* and its implementation.[21] However, it is important to note as Zaman argues that the scholars,

> in as much as it is possible to generalize about their views, did not seek to separate or divorce religion from the state, or to divest the caliph of any role in matter of law. The caliph's participation in religious life was not in competition with, or over and above that of, the emergent Sunni 'ulama', but in conjunction with them; and both the caliphs

[20] Ibid., p.63

[21] J. P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 124-129.

before and after the *Mihna* and the Sunni 'ulama' all along seem to have recognized this.[22]

When the ‘Abbasid caliphs lost their political authority and only retained nominal suzerainty with the fragmentation of their empire and the emergence of local dynasties, political authority was held by sultans. The ‘Abbasid caliphs bestowed this title to local governors or warlords whose power was based on their political and often military strength. Religious scholars had already carved out their autonomous sphere for authority and the new rulers relied upon for legitimizing their rule. “The discretionary authority”[23] of the sultan, known as *siyāsa* (meaning leadership and having assumed the meaning of politics in modern Arabic) included maintaining order and promoting the welfare of his people. Sultanic authority covered the temporal world and was often temporary, as dynasties rose and fell.[24] Indeed, the North African historian Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) saw the continuous change of dynasties and overturn of political power not as a divinely-guided process but as human-made dependent on social, geographical, economic, political and military factors.[25]

A vast and important body of works in ethics and “mirrors for princes” literature further institutionalised the distinction between religious legitimacy and political authority, establishing the importance of the second without directly challenging the first.[26] Maintaining

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[22] M. Q. Zaman, ‘The Caliphs, the ʿUlamāʾ, and the Law: Defining the Role and Function of the Caliph in the Early ʿAbbāsid Period’, *Islamic Law and Society* IV (1997), pp. 3-4.

[23] March, *Caliphate of Man*, p. 20.

[24] Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, pp. 63-67.

[25] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (Princeton, 2005).

[26] N. Yavari, *Advice for the Sultan: Prophetic Voices and Secular Politics in Medieval Islam* (London, 2014).

and implementing Islamic law was the domain of the religious scholars who exercised independent legal and adjudicative authority by issuing *fatwas* and acting as judges in *sharī'a* courts. The legal and judicial autonomy of the *'ulamā'* curtailed the sovereignty of the sultan who had to govern within the larger framing of Islamic law in order to make his rule legitimate in Islamic terms (*siyāsa shar'iyya*). Pre-modern Muslim polities were therefore characterised by a close interaction between political rulers and at least some of the religious scholars, while both acted autonomously in their respective spheres of action.

A third site of religious authority that could at times influence the legitimacy of rulers were the increasingly important Sufi orders that emerged as a new social force after the fall of the 'Abbasid dynasty in 1258. Sufi orders and Sufi saints began to play an increasingly important role in providing religious legitimacy to political rulers, using their popular appeal to garner wider support, or becoming themselves political and military actors and establishing ruling dynasties of their own.[27] The Safavids in Iran or the Mughals in India turned the charismatic authority and sainthood of these Sufi leaders as an important source for the religious legitimacy of their own rule. Moreover, many *'ulamā'* straddled the distinction between being a scholar, a jurist and a Sufi shaykh.

While the theological vantage point was different in the context of Shii Islam, similar arrangements emerged in the context of Twelver Shiism in particular. The notion of legitimate leadership revolved among Shiis around the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) and the leadership claims of 'Alī and his sons. They offered an alternative to the dynastic rule of the Umayyads and its perceived corruption of ideal notions of Islamic governance. Several male

[27] Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012), esp. pp. 23-55.

members of the Prophet's family became the focal points of unsuccessful revolts against the Umayyads. The most notable was the revolt of Ḥusayn (626-680), the son of 'Alī and the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima, who was slain by Umayyad forces with his entourage on the plans of Karbala, in southern n Iraq – an event crucial in the formation of a Shii identity that is annually remembered during the Islamic month of Muḥarram. Similarly the 'Abbasid revolution appealed to Shii sentiments of restoring the governance of the Prophet and the yearning of its supporters for a rightly-guided leader (*al-mahdī*).[28]

As several Shiis revolts against the Umayyads and 'Abbasids failed, their leadership turned to political quietism and charismatic authority. For the Twelver Shiis, political authority is not necessary for the Imam to hold his position. As a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, he partakes in the prophetic charisma, provides infallible guidance and is "the arc of salvation" of which other Muslims not recognising his authority are deprived of. This spiritualisation of the Imam's authority responded to the failure of Shii revolts and also meant an accommodation to the realities of their political marginalisation. Making the Imam recipient of divine inspiration and conceiving him foremost as a source of religious guidance, allowed for the consolidation of Shii communal identity despite its failure as a political project.[29] Early theological debates within Twelver Shiism addressed the question to what extent it is

[28] On the meaning of the term in early Islam, see S. Campbell, 'Millenial Messiah and Religious Restorer: Reflections on the Early Islamic Understanding of the Term Mahdi', *Jusur* XI (1995), pp. 1-11.

[29] M. G. S. Hodgson, 'How Did the Early Shī'a Become Sectarian?', *JAOS* LXXV (1955), pp. 1-13.

permissible to collaborate with an illegitimate government. The answer was not a resolute rejection but rather a pragmatic permission, based on certain conditions.[30]

The most important site of legitimising authority in the Islamic polity remained, at least conceptually, the Muslim community. Those such as the prominent and influential scholar Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) who is often seen as the intellectual precursor of contemporary jihadist movements[31] adopted a strict position against norms of conferring legitimacy upon rulers. He accepted political regimes that fall short of the ideal of the first rightly guided caliphs and exhibit more dynastic elements, or are based on political coercion and military strength. His infamous "Mardin fatwa" that called for *jihād* against the Mongols – who had by then converted to Islam – was not justified by the lack of religious commitment to Islam on their part, but by their failure to maintain the role of *sharī'a* in creating a moral community. In his reading of Ibn Taymiyya's thought Ovarmir Anjum argues that his contribution was in revitalising the idea that community of believers was "the site of political authority"[32]. The community and its relationship with *sharī'a* is the key, as Ovarmir goes on to argue that what this means is that "the Sharī'a- the source of legal and political norms- not the ruler, is the ultimate object of loyalty"[33]. This centrality of the community is emphasised by Hallaq again when he pushes us to consider the historical and sociological experience in addition to the ideas

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[30] See, for example, W. Madelung, 'A Treatise of the Sharif Al-Murtada on the Legality of Working for the Government (*Mas'ala fi 'amal ma'a al-sultan*)', *BSOAS* XLIII (1980), pp. 18-31.

[31] Although his influence has varied over time, the current salience of his ideas for contemporary Islamists has to be read against the relative obscurity and marginality with which they were treated for most of the intervening centuries. See Y. Rapaport and S. Ahmed (eds.), *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times* (Oxford, 2010). See in particular contributions by K. El-Rouayheb and M. Hassan.

[32] Anjum, *Politics, Law and the Community*, p. 269.

[33] Ibid.

debated in juridical texts. He asks, "if Sharī'a is not the work of the Islamic ruler or Islamic state, then what and who made it? The answer is the… community…"[34]

Different forms of government - dynastic, tribal, more or less consultative- and different types of rulers -slaves, descendants of the Prophet, foreigners and even non-Muslims- could become legitimate, if the ruler was committed to establishing a moral community and collaborated with the *'ulamā'* to command the good and prohibit the evil (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahī 'an al-munkar*). In both contexts, commanding the good and prohibiting the evil became the responsibility of *'ulamā'* who acted as experts on behalf of the community. Hence, the political authority of a ruler was not just legitimised by mandate to command the good and prohibit the evil but equally circumscribed by its requirements and prohibitions. The *'ulamā'* also recognised that successful statecraft was not dependent on ruler being pious but on shrewd politics, effective administration and a powerful military and therefore retained an ambivalent attitude towards politics. God's sovereignty was maintained at a discursive level rather than through specific laws and with significant variation in the precise role of the *'ulamā'* and practices of ruler accountability to the moral community of the believers.

It follows then that an acceptance of the idea that just and legitimate rule requires adherence to *sharī'a* and the normative primacy of God were wide-spread ideas even as the specific interpretation of what adhering to *sharī'a* meant for particular rulers and regimes was contested and reworked in different contexts. Thus, in the period immediately prior to European domination of the Muslim world we see interesting variations on the theme of operationalising God's sovereignty in the state. Of the three main Islamic empires at the time, the Ottoman empire had instituted separate legal streams of state promulgated *qānūn*, as part of the discretionary authority of the sultan, and divinely decreed *sharī'a*, as interpreted by the

[34] Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, p. 52.

*'ulamā'*. The *'ulamā'* were further integrated into the state bureaucracy with state-sponsored educational institutions producing both religious scholars and bureaucrats. The highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire was the *shaykh al-islām*, appointed by the sultan. Despite the incorporation of some *'ulamā'* and their education into the state apparatus, the *'ulamā'* were not entirely under the control of the sultan and his authority was still curtailed by Islamic law. Prominent scholars sought to delimit his discretionary authority and independent scholars outside of the state bureaucracy enjoyed more freedom to criticise the injustice and moral impropriety of the ruler. In addition, Sufi orders were a particularly powerful socio-religious force in the Ottoman Empire.[35] While many Sufis enjoyed close ties to the Ottoman sultan and other members of the court bureaucracy and received their patronage, as social and religious actors leaders of Sufi orders were not entirely subordinated to the Ottoman state and possessed strong popular appeal.[36] Further, state management as well as social and economic leadership was not the exclusive preserve of Muslims as proposed by some contemporary Islamists, but Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims, formed important parts of the bureaucratic, economic and political elite.[37]

In Safavid Iran, imperial legitimacy was established through recourse to a range of ideas and practices that included the incorporation of Sufi mystical notions of kingship, elaborate displays of power and incorporation of Twelver Shii *'ulamā'* into the structure of power.[38]

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[35] J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350-1650* (Edinburgh, 2010).

[36] On efforts to place Sufi orders under state control in the 19th century see B. Silverstein, 'Sufism and Governmentality in the Late Ottoman Empire', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* XXIX (2009), pp. 171-185

[37] K. Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, 2008).

[38] A. J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London, 2009).

When the Safavids rose to power in Iran in the early 16th century, they declared Twelver Shiism as official state religion and employed Shii *'ulamā'* from other parts of the Arab world including Lebanon, to convert the mostly Sunni population of Iran and used the state's Shii identity as one of the means to consolidate their authority in the empire. Given the political patronage to the spread of Shiism there was a close relationship between the state and particularly the "imported" *'ulamā'*. However, the *'ulamā'* did not constitute a homogenous group with scholars exhibiting different intellectual interests and interpretations. Some prominent scholars were attracted to and made important contributions to mystical philosophy ('*irfān*), seeking to create a synthesis between mysticism, philosophy and Islamic theology and jurisprudence, while others demonstrated strong hostility towards both mysticism and philosophy and emphasises the jurisprudential authority of the *'ulamā'*. After the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722, Shii *'ulamā'* created the doctrinal foundation for a political economy of religious leadership that would make them independent of state patronage. When the Qajar dynasty assumed power in Iran in 1789, they faced a more consolidated scholarly class. Equally, Shii *'ulamā'* became more vocal in political matters, urging the Qajar shahs to engage in warfare as part of their obligation to pursue *jihād*, frustrating timid modernising reforms as anti-Islamic and becoming vocal opponents of economic concessions the Qajar shahs gave to European colonial powers.[39]

In the Mughal Empire, the discursive supremacy of God's sovereignty was established through the mobilisation of multiple symbols and sites of legitimacy including the portrayal of the king as a Sufi mystic, and a philosopher king. This was in large part due to the growing

[39] H. Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkley and Los Angeles, 1980).

influence of Sufi networks across Central Asia and into South Asia.[40] In operational terms the state made little direct attempt at managing and controlling *'ulamā'* as a group, and *sharī'a* imposition on every individual was very rarely relied upon to provide legitimacy to their rule.[41] Even more tellingly, there was considerable diversity in interpretations and implementations of the *sharī'a* such that the seventeenth century compendium *fatāwa-i 'ālamgīriyya* that was produced as part of the unusual attempt by the late Mughal emperor Aurangzeb to implement a form of Islamic law in his state, was "concerned precisely [with] the need to make judicial practice *less varied*…."[42]. Importantly, for different Islamic thinkers, the *sharī'a* itself signified different things.[43] The Mughal Empire was in one way very similar to the early Islamic empire of the 7th and 8th centuries: then as in the Mughal Empire, a small group of Muslims formed a state over predominantly non-Muslim populations. Not only this, but the Mughal Empire moved Islamic thought and practice quite decidedly into a context where none of the Abrahamic faiths held any prominence.

This led to much fruitful debate, rethinking and reworking of ideas. The Mughal emperor Akbar famously inaugurated a new tradition, termed *tawḥīd-i ilāhī* which while playing on the significance of the idea of *tawḥīd* or "Oneness of God", aimed to reconcile a

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[40] A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York, 2012).

[41] S. Kaviraj, 'On the Enchantment of the State: Indian Tought on the Role of the State in the Narrative of Modernity', *European Journal of Sociology* II (2005), pp. 263-296.

[42] M. Q. Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 20.

[43] M. Alam, 'Sharia and Governance in the Indo-Islamic Context', in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, (eds.) D. Gilmartin and B. Lawrence (Gainsville, 2000), pp. 216-245.

range of religious traditions including Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Zoroastrian with Muslim Christian and Jewish ideas as part of his wider policy of *ṣulḥ-i kull* or universal peace.[44] Often understood as a form of tolerance, Akbar's interest was at least in part an assertion of imperial sovereignty. As with other Islamic empires the Mughal court contained high ranking non-Muslim courtiers, generals and advisers, such that the task of ruling was not conceived of as exclusive to Muslims.[45] God's sovereignty framed imperial legitimacy but did not demand of the ruler or the ruled exclusive allegiance to a particular mode of organizing the state or legal regimes. The state showed little interest in managing the *'ulamā'* closely, and their independence in Mughal India combined with a particularly fertile coming together of Shii, Sunni and a wide range of non-Abrahamic traditions meant that the *'ulamā'* in South Asia experimented with and developed many new ideas and institutions.[46]

Academic studies of Islamic thought have tended to rely disproportionately on jurisprudential and theological treatises. However, in our brief discussion here we have drawn upon scholarship that also recognizes the role of various literatures that deal with questions of politics and government. These include jurisprudential works and theological polemics but also manuals of practical philosophy, known as *adab* literature, mirrors for princes and panegyric poetry. Some scholars have also argued for moving beyond textual sources to studying cultural

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[44] M. Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200-1800* (Chicago, 2004), pp. 74-75.

[45] A contrast with England during the same period is instructive here. While the economic, political and economic elite of the Mughal empire included many non-Muslims, the English elite was being homogenised to exclude even Catholics. See R. Kinra, 'Handling Diversity with Absolute Civility: The Global Historical Legacy of Mughal *Ṣulḥ-i kull*', *Medieval History Journal* XIV (2013), pp. 251–295.

[46] B. Metcalfe, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900* (Oxford, 2002); F. Robinson, *Farangi Mahal and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (Lahore, 2002).

artefacts and state sponsored art as a means of extending our understanding of sovereignty and governance in Islamic thought and practice.[47] Discourses on politics, government and the state in Islamic jurisprudence approach political questions in terms of specific obligations: to install a ruler, to establish the limits of his power and to decide when it is permissible to rebel against a ruler. On a more mundane level, Islamic jurisprudence could also outline particular roles such as the mandate of the market-overseer (*muḥtasib*) and his role in implementing Islamic law on the market and imposing sanctions and penalties.[48] Theological treatises on legitimate government in Islam are usually of a polemical nature and written in response to particular debates. For instance, Sunni theological works written in the 'Abbasid period responded to Shii views on the Imamate and on the illegitimacy of the early caliphs.[49] An emphasis on legalistic and theological approaches as the main sources for reconstructing Islamic political thought provide only a limited understanding of the wider Islamic episteme.[50] Mirrors for princes texts built on pre-Islamic Iranian political literature by bringing together ethical concerns with the conditions of successful statecraft. Panegyric poetry provides useful information about how rulers presented their authority to the court and their subjects or how they wanted to be remembered.[51] Philosophical manuals on ethics incorporated Greek and Zoroastrian philosophy and an emphasis on achieving happiness (*sa'āda*) by balancing the physical,

[47] Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 170-210.

[48] K. Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action: Authority, Discretion, and Everyday Experiences in Mamluk Egypt* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 38-72.

[49] Anjum, *Politics, Law and the Community,* pp. 108-109.

[50] S. Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, 2016), pp. 120-129.

[51] T. Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams* (Berlin, 2011), pp. 317-322.

intellectual and spiritual needs of a human and the establishment of a just society. Indeed, the centrality of justice in all the different forms of Islamic writings is undeniable.[52]

This wider range of literature suggests rich and intellectually capacious ways in which the centrality of divine sovereignty in Islamic thought and practices was operationalised in different contexts. The legitimacy of political authority was conceptualised differently as a consequence and based on a variety of religious and philosophical sources: from the most rigoristic approaches that demanded the compliance of political rule with idealised conceptions of Islamic governance to more pragmatic adjustments that accepted the divergence of political realities from the ideal. Equally, despite efforts by dynasties to assert and to conceive the contrary, the sovereignty of the actual ruler was circumscribed by the *sharī'a*, its guardians, the '*ulamā'*, and implicitly by the collective socio-moral mandate of the Muslim community to command the good and to prohibit the evil.

**Divine Sovereignty: New Role for An Old Idea**

What unifies these multiple strands of thought and historical experiences is a discursive supremacy of *sharī'a* as a moral framework guiding governance. In his ground breaking book *The Impossible State*, Wael Hallaq has brought together critical theory with deep historical knowledge of *sharī'a* debates to highlight the discursive role of *sharī'a* and the very different subjectivities it produces than what is called the "modern state". The institutional and discursive arrangements that came together in the form of the state that now pervades the world,

[52] L. Darling, 'Do Justice, Do Justice, For That is Paradise: Middle Eastern Advice for Indian Muslim Rulers', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East*, XXII (2002), pp. 1-19; L. Rosen, *The Justice of Islam* (New York and Oxford, 2000).

bears a very strong imprint of European ideas, capitalist development and colonial processes. For Hallaq, the rise of the modern nation-state in the colonial and post-colonial period constituted an unprecedented challenge to the moral autonomy of the *sharī'a* which was institutionally secured by the delicate division of labour between ruler, scholar and the community. The *sharī'a* was supported by the state but primarily *imposed* by and within the community. However, the modern state's absolute sovereignty over its citizens at an individual level, its approach to positive law that is not directly bound by moral categories, its claim to cultural hegemony and its bureaucratic mechanisms to enforce laws make the existence of an independent moral and legal system that the *sharī'a* represents near impossible. The role that the *sharī'a* played in pre-modern polities cannot easily be translated into the *modus operandi* of a modern state. Either Islam is nationalised and made subservient to the state as it happened in Turkey and many Arab countries. Or the religious scholars themselves assume political power, as it happened in Iran after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. However, in privileging the state as a vehicle of transformation, they are unable to sidestep the sovereignty of the state.[53]

Maududi's conception of *ḥākimiyyat-i ilāhiyya* has won immense influence precisely because it remains the most systematic attempt at reconciling the notion of God's sovereignty with the sovereignty of the modern state. As Iqtidar has argued,[54] Maududi's acceptance of key aspects of the state's sovereignty ultimately doomed his project's ability to transcend the contradictions he identified in the concept of popular sovereignty. Yet, his ideas provide a

[53] Khomeini famously stated that the government can even suspend the basic ritual pillars of Islam such as fasting or the pilgrimage to Mecca if it is in the interest of the state. See R. Namazi, 'Ayatollah Khomeini: From Islamic Government to Sovereign State', *Iranian Studies* LII (2019), pp. 121-122.

[54] Iqtidar, *Theorising Sovereignty*.

helpful window both into the limitations of liberal notions of state sovereignty and the possibilities of alternatives. Maududi continued in the tradition of combining different traditions of thought within a wider Islamic framework that has been a hallmark of the Islamic tradition.[55] This capaciousness of the Islamic tradition is often not recognized, particularly in the modern context where engagement is either seen as collusion or emulation. Maududi was unafraid to appraise, include and modify European ideas while retaining a strong link with the Islamic tradition. Like many who experienced the effects of European ideas through colonial exclusions, Maududi sought to understand the underlying assumptions and concepts that seemed to legitimise these. For him, a profound difference between European theory and the Islamic tradition that emerged from his studies was the separation of the moral from the political that was operationalised in ideas of secularism as well as popular sovereignty, placing the legislative power of humans above the divine.

He was correct in discerning that the emergence of the political and the religious as mutually opposed yet co-constitutive categories was a distinctive feature of European historical experience and intellectual tradition.[56] The emergence of sovereignty as the political will, absolute and indivisible, of the ruler, in the writing of Jean Bodin (1530-1596) often seen as the foremost philosopher of modern sovereignty, was linked closely to religious strife between Catholics and Protestant Huguenots in France. In his *Six Livres de la République* Bodin sought

[55] The coming together of Greek ideas and Islamic thought has received much attention. For Aristotle's influence in Islamic thought see, W. Hallaq, 1993, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford, 1993), xi-xx. For the inclusion of Greek thought more generally see P. Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 19-26.

[56] Talal Asad's scholarship has been immensely influential in opening up these lines of inquiry. See his *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, 2003) and most recently T. Asad, 'Thinking about Religion through Wittgenstein', *Critical Times* III (2020), pp. 403–442.

to locate undivided sovereignty away from religion so that a civil authority could stand above the fighting factions. Scholars of European intellectual history continue to debate the extent to which Bodin's ideas anticipated popular sovereignty and liberal democracy[57] but it is widely accepted that he sought to consolidate power in the monarch by bringing the church under the state's authority. He explicitly broke from the medieval view that the king was subject to divine to argue instead that kings had sovereign power in making laws for their people.

In doing so, Bodin responded to the complexity of the already transforming mercantile, colonial political economy of Europe as well as the religious strife with France taking away the role of the moral and political community in interpreting God's law for the king. Bodin's ideas were not free of mutual contradictions, but they were influential for many later thinkers in Europe including Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) whose visions of sovereignty were linked to but also different from Bodin's. The discipline of history of political thought does not provide any clear suggestions as to the precise relationship of the ideas of these thinkers with institutional arrangements of the modern state: did the thinkers recognize and articulate institutional changes already underway or did they define the direction of those changes? The relationship is most likely a dialectical one but because of the peculiarities of disciplinary origins and development the separation of intellectual history from social and economic history has led to an impoverished understanding of causal relationships. To say this is not to revert to a rigid structuralist approach that does not concede any role for individual creativity and inspiration for the thinkers. Rather, we can, as Robert Nichols has suggested, consider the effect of ideas by shifting from the current dominant focus on what caused a thinker to say something to why their argument seems to have succeeded, that is why

[57] R. Bourke, 'Introduction', in *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective*, (eds.) R. Bourke and Q. Skinner, (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 1-14.

an idea "appears feasible, converges with or finds appropriate support within social institutions and practices…"[58] In the case of sovereignty the "effect" that seems to have crystallised over time is the closer identification of sovereignty with the state, and a distinction between sovereignty and government. By the late 19th century the sovereignty of the state was to be curtailed not through divine law but popular will. Popular sovereignty then emerged in a competitive yet mutually reinforcing relationship with state sovereignty.

As enthusiasm for popular sovereignty grew particularly in the colonised world, Islamic thinkers grappled with the complexity of retaining links to their intellectual tradition and evaluating the legitimacy of ruling dynasties as well as alternatives to colonial rule. This led to an extremely generative period in Islamic thought, and to many significant re-interpretations of the Qur'anic concept of consultation (*shūrā*). 19th century Muslim reformers and intellectuals encountered European debates around constitutional and parliamentary government and located antecedents for such concepts in the Islamic tradition. The Young Ottoman reformer Namık Kemal (1840-1888) is usually accredited with undertaking the first attempt to identify *shūrā* with modern notions of popular sovereignty.[59] He argued that the executive authority of the rulers is based on "the authorization granted to them by the umma"[60], while *shūrā*, exercised by an elective consultative council, is necessary in order to separate legislative and executive authority within the state and to limit the excessive power of the sultan. Similarly, the Syrian modernist reformer 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1855-1902)

[58] R. Nichols, 'Context, Violence and Methodological Drift in the Study of Empire', in Critical Exchange: Empire and Its Afterlives. *Contemporary Political Theory,* XIX(2020), pp. 274–305.

[59] S. Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton, 1962), pp. 283-336.

[60] N. Kemal, 'And Seek Their Counsel in the Matter [Qur'an, Sura 3, Verse 159]', in *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, (ed.) C. Kurzman (Oxford and New York, 2002), p. 145.

presented both the *sharī'a* and "the will of the people (*irādat al-umma*)"[61] as means to limit the power of the ruler. The Egyptian modernist reformer Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) argued that *shūrā* is a general Islamic requirement. While the institutional form consultation can take is not specified and can vary dependent upon historical circumstances, as a fundamental principle of governance, "consultation is religiously obligated (*wājib shar'ī*)."[62] Reformers like Kemal, 'Abduh or al-Kawākibī did not see a contradiction between divine sovereignty and democratic consultation, as the spheres of executive and judicial power had already been separated by arrangements dating back to the 10th century, perhaps in more profound ways than in the "modern state" as argued by Wael Hallaq.[63] They did not deny the autonomous sphere of the *sharī'a* and its role in providing the necessary legal framework to create a moral community and making political authority Islamically legitimate. They were more interested in curtailing ruling powers that were often in collusion with or controlled by colonial powers, as well as making governance more effective and presented consultative forms of government not only as compliant with the *sharī'a* but as mandated by it.

It is within this wider *milieu* that included new debates engendered by the revolutionary potential of the takeover of the state by Russian Communists to transform society in a dramatic manner, that Maududi sought to operationalise divine sovereignty within the modern state with its extended bureaucratic reach. The contributions in this volume seek to enhance academic debates on Maududi's concept and its receptions in the wider Muslim world by vastly expanding the *context* within which his ideas can be assessed. Despite a profound critique of

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[62] M. 'Abduh, 'Fī al-shūrā', in *al-A'māl al-Kāmila li–l-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh*, Vol. 1, (ed.) Muḥammad 'Imāra (Beirut, 1993), p. 385.

[63] Hallaq,*The Impossible State*, pp. 37-72.

Orientalism that many scholars within Islamic Studies accepted and found inspirational, much research has tended to remain bounded within a framework that takes Western intellectual traditions as the yardstick against which Islamic traditions are measured.[64] Scholars who seek to speak from within the tradition and highlight differences have, in some instances, felt the value of their scholarship denigrated due to the apparent loss of "objectivity".[65] Somewhat paradoxically, Orientalist scholarship also seeks to reconstruct Islamic ideas through deep engagement with only and primarily Islamic resource. This development is linked to the somewhat mistaken view about juridical debates as representing "authentic" Islamic voices. The extension of contexts in this collection includes moving beyond the dominant view of Islamic ideas as if produced in isolation from other traditions of thought in a hermetically sealed and insular manner and demonstrating the engagement with other traditions including Communist and non-Abrahamic ideas as well as variations within the Islamic tradition.

Here it might be useful also to point out the corrective that this collection offers to the emphasis on Sayyid Quṭb as the key proponent of *ḥākimiyyat*. Sayyid Quṭb was certainly central in popularising the concept in the Arab world. However, Euro-American academic research has tended to see the Arabic speaking world as the primary site of Islamic thought and has underestimated the influence of ideas from other parts of the Muslim world. Approached with the view that an argument for divine sovereignty is an ideational precursor for

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[64] See, for example, M. H. Kerr, *The Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966).

[65] A. Chaudhry, 'Islamic Legal Studies: A Critical Historiography', in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law* (eds.) A. M. Emon and R. Ahmed (Oxford, 2017), pp. 5-43. For a critique of the solutions proposed by Chaudhry while sharing the concerns raised by her see S. Siddiqui, 'Good Scholarship/Bad Scholarship: Consequences of the Heuristic of Intersectional Islamic Studies', *JAAR* LXXXVIII (2020), pp. 142–174.

contemporary jihadist movements much of this scholarship has seen Quṭb as providing the ideological foundations for "radical Islamism."[66] Some have complicated this with a consideration of the development of his thought[67] and his intellectual complexity by pointing out at his extensive literary interests[68] or the Sufi roots of his political vision.[69] The most innovative reading of Quṭb's thought is by Roxanne Euben who has argued for recognizing the parallels between early Islamist thinkers and members of the Frankfurt school of critical theory who also articulated a critique of modernity.[70]. Critically for our purposes here many scholars have not explored the influence of Maududi's ideas on Quṭb although they have recognized that Quṭb's conceptualisation of *ḥākimiyyat* was shared by other modern Muslim thinkers of a variety of intellectual orientations.[71] Other scholars mention the possible influence of Maududi.[72] By discussing different editions of one of his most influential work, *Social Justice*

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[66] J. Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (London, 2018); A. A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (London, 2005).

[67] W. Shepard, 'The Development of the Thought of Sayyid Quṭb as Reflected in Earlier and Later Editions of "Social Justice in Islam"', *WdI* XXXII (1992), pp. 196-236.

[68] A. A. Musallam, 'Prelude to Islamic Commitment: Sayyid Quṭb's Literary and Spiritual Orientation, 1932-1938', *The Muslim World* LXXX (1990), pp. 176-189.

[69] O. Carré, *Mysticism and Politics: A Critical Reading of* Fī ẓilāl al-qur'ān *by Sayyid Quṭb* (1906-1966) (Leiden, 2003).

[70] Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton, 1999).

[71] See, for example, S. Khatab, *The Power of Sovereignty: The Political and Ideological Philosophy of Sayyid Qutb* (London, 2005). Although Khatab lists several works by Maududi in the bibliography, his book does not contain a single reference to him.

[72] Carré, *Mysticism and Politics.*

*in Islam* (*Al-ʻAdāla al-Ijtimāʻiyya fī al-Islām*, first published in 1948), Shepard shows that Sayyid Quṭb added sections mentioning this concept as central to an Islamic socio-political order in editions published from 1953 onwards[73]. Others such as Calvert point in particular at the role of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī (1914-1999), a close associate of Maududi who translated his works into Arabic from the 1950s onwards (see al-Azami in this issue).[74] Some like Euben do recognize the importance of Maududi's ideas for Quṭb's thought but have not developed this further.[75] Maududi's influence on Quṭb, particularly in relation to the concept of *ḥākimiyyat*, appears profound even as it remains somewhat under researched.

**Travels, Variations and Contestations of Divine Sovereignty**

This special issue seeks to expand the conversation initiated by Zaman on the place of divine sovereignty in modern Islamic thought by highlighting two important concerns articulated by all four essays included here. First, all four essays build on what Said called traveling theories to engage with the traffic in ideas across different spheres and especially the peripatetic itineraries of Maududi's concept of *ḥākimiyyat*. Second, and relatedly, all the essays foreground variations in interpretations of divine sovereignty and the multiple intellectual hinterlands that were mobilized in the process. This special issue includes contributions that engage with the writings of Maududi himself and the reception of his ideas by Islamists in Iran and the Arabic-speaking world. Scholarship has often adopted a sectarian view and has investigated

[73] Shepard, 'The Development of the Thought of Sayyid Quṭb', pp. 204-205; 220.

[74] Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb*, pp. 157-158. See also G. Krämer, *Gottes Staat als Republik: Reflexionen zeitgenössischer Muslime zu Islam, Menschenrechten und Demokratie* (Baden-Baden, 1999), pp. 218-219.

[75] Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, pp. 55, 75, 189.

conceptualisations of *ḥākimiyyat* in Sunni Islamism alone. Scholars have observed obvious connections between Sunni and Shii Islamists: how the term *ḥākimiyyat* is mentioned in the 1979 Iranian Constitution[76] and how the works of Sayyid Quṭb have been translated by leading activists of the Iranian revolution into Persian.[77] Contacts between Sunni and Shii Islamists that date back to the late 1940s are mentioned[78] but have not been fully explored. The emergence of "a *lingua franca* of political Islam... across sectarian lines"[79] after World War II has been observed but the reception of Sunni Islamist ideas in Shii political theory has not been fully investigated. Fuchs' article in this special issue shows the close connections and sympathies that existed between leading members of the Pakistani *Jamāʿat-i Islāmī*, the party founded by Maududi, and the new political elite of post-revolutionary Iran, providing a more nuanced picture of how Sunni Islamists positioned themselves initially towards the new Islamic Republic of Iran. Scharbrodt discusses the initial reception of Sunni Islamist thought, the notion of *ḥākimiyyat*in particular, among early Shii Islamist ideologues and activists in Iraq in the 1950s and 1960s. His contribution illustrates the central role Iraqi Shii Islamists played in translating the ideological repertoire of political Islam into Twelver Shiism before similar debates emerged in Iran.

The articles also cover the different aspects of the ideational expanse of Islamist thought, using the concept of *ḥākimiyyat*as a reference point. Iqtidar discusses an early work

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[76] Zaman, 'Sovereignty of God', p. 417.

[77] Y. Ünal, 'Sayyid Qutb in Iran: Translating the Islamist Ideologue in the Islamic Republic', *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studie*s I (2016), pp. 25-60.

[78] R. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 180-181.

[79] E. Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, *Revolution and Its Discontents: Political Thought and Reform in Iran* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 90.

of Maududi, *Parda*, published in 1939 in which he espouses a socially conservative view on gender relations and rejects gender equality. By linking his critique of gender equality as capitalist homogenisation with his understanding of gender segregation as an implication of divine sovereignty Iqtidar highlights the importance of Marxist ideas in the global south. That these ideas were put to multiple often contradictory uses does not detract from the generative impact of Marxist ideas. Moreover, Iqtidar gestures towards the ways in which many Muslim thinkers found Marxist ideas to be particularly hospitable to long running concerns regarding equality and justice in Islam. Scharbrodt covers the early reception of Sunni Islamist thought by Iraqi Shii activists in the late 1950s and 1960s and shows how both political context and the extent of internal contestation among *'ulamā'* in these periods shaped their discourses. Al-Azami explores the reception of Maududi's concept of *ḥākimiyyat* by discussing the critique of al-Nadwī, the key figure in disseminating his ideas within the Arab world, written in 1980. By highlighting the ideas that al-Nadwī shared with Maududi despite his criticism, al-Azami seeks to demonstrate the depth of ideas about the legal sovereignty of God. This helps to also explain the ready purchase of the notion of divine sovereignty even among Muslims who reject Islamist politics and such parties. In some contrast, through a focus on the organisational and ideational links as well as later rifts between representatives of the Iranian government and senior members of the *Jamā'at-i Islāmī* that Fuchs details we glimpse the difficulties inherent in operationalising the concept of divine sovereignty in contemporary polities.

This special issue also seeks to expand disciplinary boundaries by bringing together perspectives from Islamic Studies, intellectual history and political theory to open up potential spaces for discussing Islamist concepts such as *ḥākimiyyat* in political theory. Scharbrodt's and Fuchs' contribution employ an intellectual history approach of Islamic Studies by identifying intellectual and discursive trajectories, personal and organisational connections and contextualising shifts and transformations in ideologies and views historically. Iqtidar and al-

Azami place Maududi's interventions within a global intellectual context to also raise some normative questions. Iqtidar's contribution illustrates Maududi's extensive engagement with Marxist philosophy and his use of its critique of capitalist society and the commodification of women therein to re-state a socially conservative view of gender relations. She argues for a sharper delineation of precise value of equality in contemporary polities, not to negate its worth but to reinvigorate our engagement with it. Al-Azami embeds Maududi's concept of *ḥākimiyyat*in pre-modern Islamic political thought to counter the common notion that this concept is a modern innovation but also to challenge assumptions that theoretical debates around sovereignty have a uniquely European provenance.

Zaman's article provides the initial inspiration for this special issue, and we are very pleased that he agreed to provide a discussion of the various articles in the end. The articles included in this special issue illustrate in what diverse ways Islamist thinkers in different regions and with different sectarian backgrounds re-appropriated and re-interpretated classical concept of Islamic political thought to address the unprecedented challenge the emergence of the colonial and post-colonial nation-state posed. It is also clear that Islamist thought and its conceptualisation of divine sovereignty and of the nature of an Islamic state are not uniform. These different approaches are determined by historical context, by sectarian background and, perhaps most importantly, by the eclectic engagement with both pre-modern political concepts and the rich repertoire of 20$^{th}$ century thought from multiple sites which many of the discussed thinkers incorporate. What this special issue hopes to illustrate in particular is how these conversations and reception histories traverse different parts of the Muslim world, cross sectarian boundaries between Sunnis and Shiis and creatively engage with intellectual traditions outside of Islam and respond to ever-changing political contexts. All this attests to the capaciousness of Islamic thought more generally and its 20$^{th}$ century iterations more specifically.