

Non Arabic Papers

البحوث غير العربية

Al-Ghazālī and the Sources of his MS. *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīhat al-Mulūk*: The Greek and Persian Sources

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Prologue:

The rationale for this paper stems from a pressing need to clarify the intellectual makeup of al-Ghazālī's (Algazel) political advice to the rulers and state men. The Greek and Persian influences on the thought of the renowned Medieval Muslim theologians were clear. It is thus hoped that the conclusions reached here will lead to further investigations of possible traces of Greek and Persian ideas on political ideas of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, i.e. on his advice to the rulers and their ministries.

The status of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī as a distinguished Muslim theologian in the Middle Ages is unquestionable. His life and work, both religious and literary, show singular dedication to Islamic and philosophical subjects. His political treatise *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīhat al-Mulūk wa-l-Wuzarā' wa-l-Wulāh*, however, points to the unmistakably strong presence of Persian and Greek influences. This political work is living proof that Greek and Persian culture flourished in the Islamic east well into the eleventh century where works by Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle,¹ Euclid, Galen, and others and the wise speeches of the Persian kings and ministries were common knowledge to many of the Muslim scholars of the Eastern Islamic lands.

The influence of Greek and Persian classical authors on the thought of al-Ghazālī is a valuable issue. The majority of Muslim theologians derived their thought from the Islamic sciences, such as the holy Qur'ān, the Prophet's traditions, *fiqh* (canon law), *tafsīr* (theology and Quranic

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¹ Aristotle is the well known of Greek philosophers in the Medieval Islamic world. Some of his works were translated into Arabic and transferred from the east to Andalusia where Ibn Rushd (Averroès), the famous Muslim philosopher, studied them carefully. Some of these studies are: Ibn Rushd, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Shi'r*, ed. Charles Butterworth and Aḥmad A. Haridī (Cairo 1987); idem, *Talkhīṣ Kitāb al-Jadal le-Aristo*, ed. Muhammad S. Sālem (Cairo 1980); idem, *Talkhīs Kitāb al-'ibarah*, ed. Charles Butterworth and Aḥmad A. Haridī (Cairo 1981).

exegesis respectively), Arabic language, Arabic poetry, and others. On the other hand, the existence of classical culture in the Islamic society during the Middle Ages is evidence of the civilizational exchange between Greece, Persia and the Islamic world. Of course, it is a well-known fact to the historians, now as then, that Syrians and Byzantines served as cultural mediators between the Greek and Islamic worlds.

The Abbasid period witnessed the flourishing of Greek culture in the Islamic world following the wide translation movement from Greek into Arabic.² From the time of Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr to the time of al-Ma'mūn (136-218 AH./754-833 AD.) the translation movement peaked to unprecedented heights. Non-Muslim translators were encouraged to translate all kinds of books.³ So, there were many famous translators like Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (and others of his family), Yaḥyā ibn Baṭrīq, Thābit ibn Qurrah al-Ḥarrānī, 'Īsa ibn Yaḥyā, and others. These translators and their successors were keen on translating Greek, Persian, Syriac, and Coptic manuscripts.⁴ Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, for instance, translated about seven books by Hippocrates and thirty-nine by Galen into Arabic. He also translated into Syriac ninety-five by Galen, not to mention many books by Plato, Aristotle and others. He was so interested in hunting Greek manuscripts that he once had to look for one book by Galen all over Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Although his efforts produced only

² For example see: *Al-Maqālah al-Rābi'atu 'Ashar min Kitāb Tabāi' al-Ḥayawān al-Baḥrī wa-l-Barrī le-Aristo*, ed. A. M. Selīm (Cairo 1984); Aristotle, *Ars Poetica*, Arabic trans. Abī Bishr Mattah ibn Yunus, ed. Shukrī M. 'Ayyād (Cairo 1993); Abū Zayd Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq al-'Abbādī, *Kitāb Galenus fī al-Istqṣāt 'alā Ra'ī Hippocrates*, ed. Muhammad S. Sālem (Cairo 1987); Abū Zayd Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq al-'Abbādī, *Kitāb Galenus fī al-Nabd le-Tothrun le-l-Mota'limīn*, ed. Muhammad S. Sālem (Cairo 1986); Al-Ḥasan ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen), *Al-Shukūk 'alā Ptolemais*, ed. 'Abdul Ḥamīd Ṣabrah and Nabīl al-Sheḥābī (Cairo 1971); Ibn Bagah, *Ta'liqāt 'alā Kitāb Barī Armenias wa-'alā Kitāb al-'ibārah le-Abī Nassr al-Farābī*, ed. Muhammad S. Sālem (Cairo 1976).

³ Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of AL-GHAZĀLĪ* (Edinburgh 1963), repr. 1971, 25-26.

⁴ As for the translation of the Greek works into Arabic during the Abbasid period see: Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 26 ff.

half of his pursuit, he was happy to translate it into Arabic under the title *Kitāb al-Burhān*.⁵

Al-Ghazālī's biography:

Because al-Ghazālī lived in different countries such as Khorasān, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and he had plenty of writings, it will be useful to present briefly his biography to know how he lived and formed his culture.⁶ According to many scholars who investigated the life of al-Ghazālī, he is known as a famous Muslim theologian and thinker in the Middle Ages.

M. Watt said about him: "*He was pioneering, constantly exploring the applicability of fresh ideas to a variety of subjects. To use a metaphor of his own, his thought is a vast ocean in which all but the most skilled navigators are liable to lose their way.*"⁷ He also said: "*Al-Ghazali has been acclaimed as the greatest Muslim after Muhammad, and is certainly one of the greatest. His outlook, too, is closer than that of many Muslims to the outlook of modern Europe and America, so that he is more easily comprehensible to us.*"⁸

D. MacDonald said: "*Al-Ghazzali becomes part of a stream of tendency, and shows his greatness in that, with the same views and starting-point as those around him, he has transcended all the other doctors of Islam and graven his name ineffaceably in the record of the toils and triumphs of the human mind.*"⁹

Born in the town of Ṭūs,¹⁰ Khorasān, in the year 450 AH./1058 AD., Abū Hāmid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Aḥmad aṭ-Ṭūsī came from a

⁵ 'Abdul Ḥalīm Montaṣer, *Tarīkh al-'Ilm* (Cairo 1990), 79-80.

⁶ As for the life of al-Ghazālī see these valuable studies, Duncan B. MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī, with especial reference to his religious experience and opinions," *JOAS* 20(1899), 71-132; Margaret Smith, *Al-GHAZĀLĪ the Mystic* (London 1944), repr. Lahore 1983; Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 19-24; Henri Laoust, *La politique de Gazali* (Paris 1970); R. M. Frank, *Al-Ghazali and the Ash'arite School* (London 1994).

⁷ Montgomery Watt, "The Study of Al-GHAZĀLĪ," *Oriens* 13/14(1960), 121.

⁸ Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, VII.

⁹ MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī", 115.

¹⁰ It is situated near the modern Mashhad in north-east Iran. See Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 20.

wool-making family (hence the al-Ghazālī surname).¹¹ On his deathbed, his father assigned the young lad and his brother Aḥmad to the care of a trusted Sufī friend to educate and bring them up. The friend was faithful, and taught them and cared for them till the money was all gone.¹² When the money left for their education and upbringing ran out, this friend decided to dispatch his charges to a school or college (*madrāsah*). There the young al-Ghazālī proved a brilliant student.¹³

After this stage of his study al-Ghazālī departed to Jurjān (Gurgān)¹⁴ to further study there on the hands of al-Imām Abī al-Qāsim Ismā'il ibn Mus'ad al-Jurjānī. After the end of this stage he returned to Ṭūs. He departed to Nishāpūr¹⁵ to study more the science of *al-kalām*. He accompanied there al-Imām Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Ḥuwainī. He was outstanding there in theology, philosophy, debates, logic, and other

¹¹ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'yyah*, ed. M. al-Ṭanāḥī and A. al-Ḥelw, IV (Beirut 1413), 102. Al-Dhahabī, Al-Ṣafadī and Watt said that "...al-Ghazālī or Ghazālīte, possibly meaning the man from Ghazāla, an other wise unknown village in the region of Ṭūs." (Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, ed. S. al-Arnā'wut and M. al-'Irqūsī, XIX (Beirut 1413), 343; Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafayāt*, ed. A. al-Arān'wut and T. Muṣṭafa, I (Beirut 2000), 213; Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 20.) I think that it is not right. Because the father of al-Ghazālī was a wool-maker. The labor of his father is known in Persian as *al-Ghazzāl*, such as *al-Khabbāz*, i.e. the bakery. (Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, XIX, 343; Al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, ed. A. al-Arnāwut and M. al-Arnāwut, IV (Damascus 1406), 11.) Therefore, his title *al-Ghazzālī* is derived from the name of the labor of his father's family. On the other hand, the birth place of al-Ghazālī was al-Ṭabarān not Ghazāla. (Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyyāt al-A'yān wa-Anbā' al-Zamān*, ed. E. 'Abbās, IV (Beirut, 1968), 218.)

¹² MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī", 75.

¹³ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'yyah*, IV, 102.

¹⁴ Jurjān is a Persian province, which had many cities such as Jurjān, Abskun, Dahistān, and Astarabāz. The city of Jurjān is the capital of the province which was a very big city. There two cities on this river of Jurjān. The eastern one was Jurjān and the western one was Bakrābāz. For more details see: Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq*, II, 688; Al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm*, ed. G. Twlymāt (Damascus 1980), 242.

¹⁵ Nishāpūr was one of the four important cities in the Persian province of Khorasān. It was called also the small Damascus. Because it was full of gardens, fields, farms, fruits, cheap and good meats, and its water. It occupied an important place in the trade of silk. For more details see: Al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm*, 233-234; Ibn Batūṭah, *Reḥlat ibn Batūṭah*, 432-433; Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mo'jam al-Buldān*, III (Beirut n.d.), 167-168.

sciences. He had the ability to respond to the debaters and the scholars the science of *al-kalām*.¹⁶

After the death of his teacher, al-Imām Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Huwainī, al-Ghazālī left Nishāpūr and went to al-Mu'askar to meet Niẓām al-Mulk, the Seljuk minister. Then, he became one of the members of the camp-court of Niẓām al-Mulk and he was distinguished there, too.¹⁷ He debated *al-mutakallimūn*, or rational theologians, and the *Imāms* and refuted their opinions. Therefore, in 484 AH./1091 AD., Niẓām al-Mulk who admired him, appointed him as a teacher in al-Niẓāmiyyah school (*al-Madrasah al-Niẓāmiyyah*) in Baghdad.¹⁸

In Baghdad, al-Ghazālī became a famous scholar and philosopher. He spent most of his time in teaching, reading and writing. He wrote there his work *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* (*The aims of the philosophers*).¹⁹ This time of his life was the flourishing time of his thought. Suddenly, in 488 AH./1095 AD. he left al-Niẓāmiyyah school in Baghdad and wore simple clothes and lived as an ascetic. In the same year, he traveled to Syria and Jerusalem.²⁰ During this period, in Damascus, he wrote his famous book *Ihyā' 'lūm al-Dīn*.²¹ In the next year 489 AH./1096 AD., he went on pilgrimage at Makkah.²² He returned to Syria and stayed in Damascus for ten years.²³ There, he spent most of his time at the Umayyad mosque, in the *zawyah* (educational place or corner) of al-

¹⁶Al-Serafinī, *Al-Muntakhab min Kitāb al-Siyāq li-Tārīkh Nishāpūr*, ed. K. Ḥaidar, I (Beirut 1414), 77; Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'yyah*, IV, 103-106.

¹⁷MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī", 78.

¹⁸Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'yyah*, IV, 103; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bedāya wa-l-Nehāya*, XII (Beirut n.d.), 127; Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafayāt*, I, 211. Cf. also MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī", 79.

¹⁹Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk wa-l-Wuzarā' wa-l-Wulāh*, ed. Muḥammad A. Damag (Beirut 1987), 16.

²⁰Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmel fī al-Tārīkh*, ed. 'Abdullah al-Qādī, VIII (Beirut 1415), 506-507. Cf. also MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī", 92-93.

²¹Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmel fī al-Tārīkh*, VIII, 507; Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-'Ibar fī Khabar man Ghabar*, ed. S. E. al-Minajjed, III (Kuwait 1984), 321; Al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, III, 383.

²²Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmel fī al-Tārīkh*, VIII, 507; Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-l-Wafayāt*, I, 211. Cf. also MacDonald, *The Life of al-Ghazzālī*, 93.

²³Al-Serafinī, *Al-Muntakhab*, I, 77; Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, XIX, 334.

Shaykh Nāssr al-Maqdisī, who was a Ṣūfī.²⁴ This means that this period was a turning point in his life especially when al-Shaykh Nāssr al-Maqdisī committed him to the care of his *zawyah* at the mosque after his death. This *zawyah* became known as al-Ghazālīyah. The story says that when al-Shaykh Nassr al-Maqdisī was dying the people asked him: Who will succeed you in your *zawyah* at the Umayyad mosque? He said to them: when you have buried me go back to the mosque and you will find there a Persian person.²⁵ But al-Ghazālī didn't stay there for a long time. He departed to Alexandria, Egypt. He stayed in Egypt for some time to visit the tombs of the good people and the Egyptian mosques. He also spent his time there in worship and austerity. He planned to go to Morocco to visit Sultan Yousuf ibn Tāshfīn.²⁶ But when the news of his death in 500 AH./1106 AD. reached him in Alexandria he canceled his idea.²⁷ After his spiritual journey to Egypt he went back to Baghdad. But he left Baghdad and went to Nishāpūr to teach there in its al-Nizāmiyyah school. After a short time of his staying in Nishāpūr he went to his birth place, Ṭūs. He had a school there beside his house for *al-fuqahā'*.²⁸ He also established a *khanqāh* (hostel or convent),²⁹ where some young disciples joined him in leading a communal Sufī life.³⁰ He lived there until his death in 505 AH./ 1111 AD.³¹ When he died he was fifty-five years old.³² It is probable that the time from the first visit of al-Ghazālī to Baghdad until his second visit to it completely made him a Sufī.

²⁴ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'yyah*, IV, 104.

²⁵ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'yyah*, IV, 104.

²⁶ Yousuf ibn Tāshfīn was the ruler of Morocco in 1070 AD. In 1086 AD., he crossed the sea to Andalusia to help the Muslims there. He shared in the battle of az-Zalāqah in 1086 AD. He died in Morocco in 1106 AD. See Ibn Abī Zar' al-Fāsī, *Al-Anīs al-Muṭrib bi-Rawḍ al-Qurtās fī Akhbār Mulūk al-Maghrib wa-Tārikh Madīnat Fās* (Al-Ribāt 1972), 140-143.

²⁷ Ibn Khallikān, *Wafīyyāt al-A'yān*, VII, 125. Cf. also MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī", 80-82, 99-100.

²⁸ Al-Ṣerafinī, *Al-Muntakhab*, I, 77.

²⁹ Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, XIX, 325; Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfī bi-l-Wafayāt*, I, 211.

³⁰ The Encyclopedia of Religion, s.v. *Ghazali, Abu Hamid Al-*.

³¹ Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'yyah*, IV, 106; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmel fī al-Tārikh*, IX, 146. Cf. also Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 17.

³² Al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, IV, 10.

Al-Ghazālī wrote a great volume of works about theology, logic, philosophy, Sufism, jurisprudence, literature and political thought.³³ Some of his famous works are: *Iḥyā' 'lūm al-Dīn*,³⁴ *Maqāṣed al-Falāsifah*,³⁵ *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*,³⁶ *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīhat al-Mulūk wa-l-Wuzarā' wa-l-Wulāh*, *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭinyah*,³⁷ *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*,³⁸ *Mezān al-'Amal*,³⁹ *Al-Muṣtaṣfā fī 'ilm al-Uṣūl*.

Al-Ghazālī addressed his work *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīhat al-Mulūk*, which is a political work speaking of the Medieval political Islamic thought, to Sultan Muhammad ibn Mulksah (d. 511 AH./1117 AD.).⁴⁰ This book deals with advice and many political topics such as chapter one which speaks about the political authority and its importance, the conditions of the just ruler, the right morals and behavior of the ruler with his people, and the qualities of the just Sultan.

- In chapter two, Al-Ghazālī also speaks about the ministers and the conditions of the ministers' choosing and their duties.
- The third chapter is about the Sultan's scribes, i.e. his secretaries, their qualities, morals, and how to choose them.
- The fourth chapter is about the kings and their determinations.
- Chapters five and six speak about wisdom and the wise men.
- The seventh chapter of this book speaks of the woman.

³³ About these works see A. J. Wensinck, *La pense de Ghazzali* (Paris 1940); Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 67 ff.; Montgomery Watt, "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to al-Ghazālī", *JRAS* (1952), 24-45; idem, "The Study of al-Ghazālī", 124-131; 'Abdul Raḥmān Badawī, *Mu'llafāt al-Ghazālī* (Kuwait 1977).

³⁴ (Beirut n.d.), 3 vols.

³⁵ Ed. M. Ṣabrī al-Kurdī (Cairo 1936.), 3 vols.

³⁶ Ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beyrouth 1927).

³⁷ Ed. 'Abdul Raḥmān Badawī (Kuwait n.d.).

³⁸ Ed. Kāmel 'Ayyād and Jamīl Ṣalībāh (Beirut 1973).

³⁹ Ed. Sulimān Dunyā (Cairo 1964).

⁴⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 92.

Al-Ghazālī and the Greek Culture:⁴¹

Although al-Ghazālī wrote many philosophical works such as *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (*The inconsistency of the philosophers*), it is notable that he cited many quotations from classical Greek writers, especially Aristotle and Socrates, and from the Persian history in his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*. In this book, he clearly used many quotations from the writings of the Greek and Persian philosophers, physicians, and historians. It is probable that he studied the philosophical Greek works during his stay in Baghdad through their translated versions or through the philosophical writings of al-Farābī and Avicenna (Ibn Sinā),⁴² who studied many classical Greek works, as M. Watt hypothesized.⁴³ Moreover, because al-Ghazālī knows well the Persian, it is probable that he read many Persian books, especially as he wrote his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk* in Persian.

Al-Ghazālī influenced deeply by the Greek thought and especially by the Neo-Platonism, and this influence is to be seen throughout his mystical writings.⁴⁴ This hypothesis may be supported by the fact that he strongly debated the Muslim philosophers and refuted their disagreed theories at this stage of his life. His two works *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah* and *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* indicate that he dedicated his efforts to study the philosophy well to confront the allegations of the Muslim theologians which disagreed with al-Ghazālī's opinions. One must expect that al-Ghazālī had to deal only with the Greek thought in his mystical and philosophical works.

⁴¹ See Tarek M. Muhammad, "The Intellectual Greek Influence on the Political Islamic Thought: The Case of al-Ghazālī", *Social Evolution and History* 7/2 (Moscow 2008), 57-80; Idem, "Aspects of Greek Wisdom in the Thought of Al-Ghazālī", in: V. Christides (ed.), *Cultural Relations between Byzantium and the Arabs* (Athens 2007), 157-165.

⁴² Avicenna/ Ibn Sinā was one of al-Ghazālī sources for the study of philosophy. About these issues see Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 113 f.

⁴³ The Encyclopedia of Religion, s.v. *Ghazali, Abu Hamid Al-*. As for the progress of philosophy in the Islamic world from the beginning to the time of al-Ghazālī see: Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, 34-57.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Al-Ghazālī the Mystic*, 105 ff.

Beside the Greek influence on the political thought of al-Ghazālī, the Persian one also is obvious in *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, which did not receive enough interest from the scholars such as his philosophical writings. Maybe the political advisory impression of this book in comparison to the other philosophical writings of his made the scholars pay little attention to it.

It is known that al-Ghazālī studied the Quranic and Islamic sciences. However, his quotations of the Greek writers mean that he studied many Greek sciences too, which contained non-Islamic ideas. It seems that al-Ghazālī didn't deal with these ideas as human heritage. He depended on Aristotle, whom he considered the final master of the Greek school,⁴⁵ as a wise man speaking of wisdom. Al-Ghazālī described him the wise man (*al-Ḥakīm*).⁴⁶ He attributed some wise sayings to him without saying from which sources he quoted them. So, it will not be easy to conclude from which works of Aristotle and other Greek writers he took his quotations.

In chapter one of his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk* al-Ghazālī spoke about justice and policy and he mentioned as an example the Persian kings and their policy. Aristotle is mentioned for the first time in this chapter. Al-Ghazālī said: "*Aristotle the wise was asked: Is it possible for someone to say that he is a king not Allah? Aristotle answered: The man who has these qualities, even if they were little, the science, justice, generosity, meekness, mercy and the matters related with it (because the kings were kings by the divine shadow), self-purity, increasing of wisdom and science, and sublimity of origin will be a king.*" Al-Ghazālī explained the meaning of "*the divine shadow (aḏ-Ḍell al-'Ilāhī)*" saying that it appears in sixteen things: "*Wisdom, science, sharpness of intelligence, realizing of the things and the complete picture, brilliance, knighthood, courage, intrepidity, waiting, the good morals, supporting the weak people, love of people, showing leadership, endurance, the good opinion and making the matters well, increasing the reading of the news and the biographies of*

⁴⁵ MacDonald, "The Life of al-Ghazālī", 84.

⁴⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 227.

the kings, examining the conditions of the state and the works which the kings depended on."⁴⁷

He added that Alexander the Great asked Aristotle: What is better for the kings: courage or justice? He said: If the ruler (*Sultan*) did justice, he will not need the courage.⁴⁸

Al-Ghazālī confirmed the required characteristics, which have to be in the ruler, either a king or a Sultan. It is probable that he addressed this advice to his Sultan Muhammad ibn Mulkshah with equivocation or he expressed what he supposed in a Muslim Sultan. So, he quoted many stories from the Ancient Greek, Persian, and Islamic history and philosophy. Al-Ghazālī returned to Aristotle in another place of chapter one of his book *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*. He said that Aristotle said: the good king among the kings is he who has a deep sight like the eagle and his people are like the eagles not like the cadavers.⁴⁹

Al-Ghazālī confirmed again the characteristic of justice. However, this time he cited Socrates who said, as al-Ghazālī narrated, the world is composed of justice. If the injustice came the world will neither be stable nor steady. Al-Ghazālī referred to the importance of justice when he quoted a story about Alexander the Great. The story said that Alexander one day walked riding in a parade when one of his majors said to him: God gave you a great kingdom. So, take many women to increase your children with whom you will be remembered. Alexander said: The remembering of the men is not by many children, but it is by the good behavior and justice.⁵⁰

Al-Ghazālī cited Alexander the great again to speak once more about justice. This time Alexander removed one of his employees from his job and put him in a low job. One day this one came to Alexander who asked him: what about your new work? He said to Alexander: men aren't

⁴⁷Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 227. Cf. Muhammad, "The Intellectual Greek Influence", 64-65.

⁴⁸Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 228.

⁴⁹Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 255. Cf. Muhammad, "The Intellectual Greek Influence", 67.

⁵⁰Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 228. Cf. Muhammad, "The Intellectual Greek Influence", 66.

honored by the works, but the works are honored by the men. This is by the good behavior, i.e. good administration and spreading of the justice and avoiding the wasting.⁵¹ Alexander added that the good king among the kings is that who replaces the bad deed by the good deed. And the evil king is that who replaces the good deed by the bad deed.⁵²

Al-Ghazālī speaks about another characteristic which must be in the king, i.e. wisdom (*al-'aql*). He quoted some wise speeches from Plato and Socrates. Al-Ghazālī mentioned that Plato said: "*the evidence of the victorious Sultan on his enemies is that he must be strong-willed and keep the silence, think well about his opinion and deed by his wisdom. He must be wise in his kingdom, noble and sweet in the hearts of his people, observe all of his deeds, and an expert at the deeds of his ex-kings.*" Al-Ghazālī repeated the same meaning, but this time through Socrates, whom he called the wise. Socrates said that the evidence of the king whose rule is continuous is that the faith and wisdom are living in his heart, to be loved in the hearts of his people and the wise men. And he has to seek the science to learn from the scholars, and his generosity has to be much, and his house has to be great to receive the nobles and to bring the men of letters in it, and to send the bad people far from his kingdom.⁵³

Finally, al-Ghazālī advised the *Sultan* to choose the good and honest emissaries. He cited a story about Alexander the great to confirm his advice. The story says: One day Alexander sent an emissary to the Persian king, Dara. When the emissary came back and gave the reply of the Persian king to Alexander, he suspected one word of the words of the letter and repeated it to the emissary. The latter said: "*O Majesty, I heard this word as it is, with my ears*". Then, Alexander ordered to write this word as he heard it and sent another message to Dara, by another emissary. When the emissary of Alexander reached Persia, Dara read the message of Alexander and requested a knife and removed that word from the message. Dara returned the message of Alexander to him with his

⁵¹Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 229-230.

⁵²Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 256. Cf. Muhammad, "Aspects of Greek Wisdom in the Thought of Al-Ghazālī", 163.

⁵³Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 246-248. Cf. Muhammad, "Aspects of Greek Wisdom in the Thought of Al-Ghazālī", 163.

response in which he advised him to choose well the honest emissaries, who could speak and behave honestly on behalf of the king. Dara told Alexander that the word was not his words. Therefore, he removed it from the message. Dara wished to cut the tongue of the dishonest emissary of Alexander. When the second emissary of Alexander came back to Alexander, the latter reads the response of Dara and knew the truth. Then, Alexander brought the dishonest emissary and said to him: ‘*Glory to God! Do you think that I sent you (to Dara) to repair your affairs and spoil our affairs?*’ Finally, he ordered to cut his tongue from its root.⁵⁴

Thus, al-Ghazālī showed the main characteristics, which have to be in the ruler or the Sultan and stressed the justice and the good behavior. He depended on Aristotle, Socrates, Alexander the Great, and Plato to confirm his political opinions.

Al-Ghazālī spoke about another issue, the wisdom and the wise men who advised their Sultan. In the fifth chapter of *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, al-Ghazālī cited the Greek writers, such as Aristotle, Socrates, Galen and Hippocrates, several times. So, this chapter is classified the second of the Greek quotations after the first chapter. He gave many examples to declare the importance of wisdom for the king.

He cited Socrates, who called him the wise, too. The wise Socrates said: "*Five things by which the human harms himself: the deception of the friends, keeping away from the scholars, self-contempt, the endurance of the silly people, and the following of desire*". But Hippocrates said: "*five things the human cannot become full of them: an eye from seeing, female from male, an ear from listening, fire from firewood, and scholar from science*."⁵⁵

Al-Ghazālī presented two wise sayings here quoted from Galen and Aristotle. Galen said that: "*seven things bring forgetting: the rough speech, cupping on the neck vertebra, urinating in the stagnant water, eating the acids, looking for a dead face, the long sleeping, the long looking to the ruined places*. Galen also said in his book about the drugs:

⁵⁴See Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 262-263. Cf. Muhammad, "The Intellectual Greek Influence", 68.

⁵⁵Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 325.

forgetting happens from seven things: the phlegm, the high laugh, eating the salty foods, eating the fat meat, much sexual intercourse, staying up at night with tiredness, and all the cold foods and refreshments, because their eating is harmful and brings forgetting."⁵⁶

The second wise saying here is from Aristotle, who was asked: "*How is the trusted friend? And how is the compassionate companion?*" He said: "*the noble friend is the compassionate and the old companion is the merciful, and the arrangement of the wise men is better.*"⁵⁷

Besides Socrates, Hippocrates, Galen and Aristotle, al-Ghazālī mentioned in this chapter a story about Alexander the Great, too. Al-Ghazālī said that Alexander was asked: "*Why did you dignify your teacher more than your father?*" He answered: "*because my father is the cause of my evanescent life, and my teacher is the cause of my permanent life. If the matters were done by God's will, the endeavor is forbidden and leaving it is a thankful thing.*" He also said: "*if the time didn't follow you, follow it according to its will. The human is a slave of the time and the time is the enemy of the human. And every breath of the human's breathing takes him far from life and approximates him from death.*"⁵⁸

As for the rest of the Greek quotations on which al-Ghazālī depended on, there are three paragraphs that are attributed to Euclid, Galen and Aristotle, besides some stories about Alexander the Great. Al-Ghazālī dealt with every Greek writer separately. When he spoke about the policy of the ministers and their behavior in chapter two, he cited Aristotle. He told his Sultan about the bad results of the war and advised him not to wage a war. He told him that the worst minister is he who persuades his king to wage a war although he can make peace. As for this issue, Aristotle said the following: Everything that was made without war

⁵⁶Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 326-327. Cf. Muhammad, "Aspects of Greek Wisdom in the Thought of Al-Ghazālī", 164.

⁵⁷Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 326.

⁵⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 322-323. Cf. Muhammad, "Aspects of Greek Wisdom in the Thought of Al-Ghazālī", 164; Ibid, "The Intellectual Greek Influence", 70-71.

or violence to the others is better than the thing which was done by the war, by you.⁵⁹

In chapter three, al-Ghazālī spoke about the scribes of the Sultan and their characteristics. He cited the Greek physician Galen whom he called "the wise Galen". Al-Ghazālī spoke of the importance of the scribes and the characteristics, which must exist in them. Galen here said that *'the pen is the physician of the speech.'* Alexander the Great also said: the world is under two things: the pen and the sword, and the sword is under the pen. Al-Ghazālī means that the Sultan has to prefer the diplomacy more than the war, and he has to write his message to the others perfectly, especially if he will send them to other kings. He thought that by the sweet or good word the Sultan can do everything not by the war. So, he stressed the importance of the pen, the languages, and the scribes.⁶⁰

Al-Ghazālī spoke of the honor of the wisdom and the wise men in chapter six of *al-Tibr al-Masbūk*. He cited Euclid when he said that one day a person asked Euclid: "*will you repose or destroy your spirit?*" Euclid answered: "*I'll be reposed when I bring out the malevolence from your heart.*"⁶¹

Thus, these quotations from the classical Greek writings proved that the Greek wisdom played a vital role in the composition of al-Ghazālī's political advice.

We have to take into consideration that the Syriac translators played the first role in reaching this Greek classical culture to the Islamic world. On the other hand, the diplomatic relations between Byzantium and the Islamic state, either the Umayyad or Abbasid caliphates, helped towards the reaching of the Greek culture to the Medieval Islamic world. Besides these factors, the encouragement of the Muslim caliphs for the translation in Baghdad and their generosity with the scholars, the writers, the poets, the historians, the theologians, and others gave a strong push in the

⁵⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 278.

⁶⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 283-290. Cf. Muhammad, "Aspects of Greek Wisdom in the Thought of Al-Ghazālī", 164.

⁶¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 354. Cf. Muhammad, "The Intellectual Greek Influence", 70.

Islamic world to conceptualize and study well the Greek writings and developed their sciences, either the intellectual or practical sciences.

Al-Ghazālī and the Persian Culture:

The Persian influence, which is normal for a Persian person, is obvious on al-Ghazālī's political advises. He used many stories and sayings of the Persian kings to stress the quality of justice. He considered that the justice was the basis of kingship. He said: *If the Sultan was just, the world will be thriving and if he was unjust, the world will be devastated.*⁶²

The book of *al-Tibr al-Masbūk* reflects clearly that al-Ghazālī knew well the history of the ancient Sassanid Persian kings, where he spoke many times about Hormizd I (?-274 AD.), son of Shapur,⁶³ Ardshir II (?-383 AD.),⁶⁴ son of Shapur II Huyah Sonba (The penetrator of the shoulders 310-379 AD.), Yazdegerd I (the sinner 363-421 AD.),⁶⁵ Bahram Joor (391-439 AD.),⁶⁶ and Khosrau Anushiravan (500-579 AD.).⁶⁷ Sometimes he spoke about Shahanshah of Persia without any proper name. On the other hand, he spoke also about some Persian state men such as Buzrjumhur and Younān.⁶⁸ Al-Ghazālī narrated many stories about these Persian kings and their state men to clarify that the ideal ruler is who applies justice, saves his people, and uses honest and wise ministers.

Al-Ghazālī said to the ruler, *“you must know that making the land inhabited and its devastation are being by the kings. If the Sultan is fair, the regality will be flourished and his people will be saved, as they were in the times of Ardshir II (?-383 AD.), Aphridon (?), Bahram Joor (391-439 AD.), and Khosrau Anushiravan (500-579 AD.). If the Sultan is*

⁶² Muhammad, "The Intellectual Greek Influence", 67.

⁶³ See Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 294.

⁶⁴ See Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 173-174, 254-255, 274.

⁶⁵ See Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 241-242.

⁶⁶ See Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 173-174, 243, 273.

⁶⁷ See Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 173-174, 198-205, 218, 230-231, 235-238, 274, 278, 300, 351.

⁶⁸ See Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 203, -204, 218-219, 224, 235, 246, 280, 318-320, 323-324, 349-351.

*unfair, his regality will be destroyed, as happened in the times of al-Dahāq (?), Aphrasiāb (?), and Yazdegerd the sinner (363-421 AD).’’*⁶⁹

One day, as al-Ghazālī said, Khosrau Anushiravan pretended that he was sick and sent his trusted messengers to walk around his regality to bring ripened milk from a devastated village to cure him, according to physicians’ advice. They obeyed him and then they came back saying: ‘*we did find neither ruined place, nor ripened milk.*’ Then, Anushiravan delighted and thanked his God, and said, ‘*I did it to check my reign and my viceroys and to find any devastated place to construct it.*’⁷⁰

Al-Ghazālī’s admiration with Khosrau Anushiravan is obvious so that he called him *al-malik al-‘ādel*, the fair king. He narrated another story about Khosrau Anushiravan to show that the safety and justice spread all over his kingdom during his reign. One day, a man sold a part of his land to someone. Later, the purchaser found a treasure in this land. Then, he went to the seller, telling him the story and asked him to take his treasure. However, the seller refused and told him that he sold to him the land including that treasure. Therefore, both of them went to Khosrau Anushiravan to judge between them. Khosrau asked them, ‘*have you any sons?*’ One of them said, ‘*I have a son,*’ and the other said, ‘*I have a daughter.*’ Then, Khosrau said, ‘*I suggest marrying the son to the girl, and then you will spend this treasure for their wedding and for their children.*’ Al-Ghazālī commented on this story saying ‘*if the two men were in the time of unfair king, a conflict would be done between them for the treasure.*’⁷¹ He added that, however, during the time of Khosrau, if any one found a quantity of gold in a place, no one could move it from its place except its owner.⁷²

Al-Ghazālī added that one day the king of India sent a messenger to Khosrau Anushiravan saying to him ‘I am worthy of your kingdom, not you. So, send to me *kharāj* of your regality. During the next day, Khosrau gathered his state men and asked the Indian messenger to enter to listen to Khosrau reply. Khosrau ordered to bring a box, which he

⁶⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 173-174.

⁷⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 185-186.

⁷¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 198-199.

⁷² Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 200.

opened to take out another box and opened it, too. He took out a wisp of *kabar* (a desert plant, i.e. a reference to the ruins) and said to the Indian messenger, 'is there *kabar* in your country? He replied, yes, we have a lot. Then, he said to him, 'go back to your king and say to him, 'he must construct his country at first, because it is ruined...He added, if you went around my country asking *kabar*, you never find it, and if I knew that there is *kabar*, I'll crucify the ruler of the territory in which *kabar* is found.⁷³

It is notable that, when Khosrau Anushiravan became Shahanshah, his minister Younān, whom al-Ghazālī called him the wise Younān, advised him to spread justice all over his kingdom and to avoid injustice.⁷⁴ Younān said to Anushiravan '*do not obey the evil men, and if you did, your regality would be destroyed, your people would be disunited, and your name would be ugly in the world.*'⁷⁵ Younān advised Khosrau Anushiravan saying, '*O Shahanshah, you have to have four qualities: wisdom, justice, patience, and shyness.*'⁷⁶

Al-Ghazālī narrated more stories about the justice of Khosrau Anushirvan among his people. One of them is that Anushirvan ordered his companions to ascend a high place in his country and if they saw a house without rising smoke, (i.e. with no cooking), they asked its residents to tell them what about their social and economic conditions. In case the companions of Anushirvan knew that the residents of the house had a hardship, they had to tell Anushirvan to relieve their hardship and anxiety.⁷⁷ Al-Ghazālī added that Anushirvan appointed a ruler on one of his territories. To show his loyalty, this ruler sent the annual *kharaj* of his territory to Anushirvan with extra amount 3000 *dirhams*. Then, Anushirvan ordered him to return this amount to the people and ordered to crucify the ruler.⁷⁸

⁷³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 201-202.

⁷⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 218.

⁷⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 200-201.

⁷⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 235. cf. also idem, 349-350.

⁷⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 230-231.

⁷⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 231.

Al-Ghazālī gives another example about the fair ruler, which is that Bahram Joor divided his day into two parts, the first for the compliance of the requests of his people, the second for his rest.⁷⁹

According to al-Ghazālī, Buzrjumur advised the king to keep his regality well and likened him with the gardener who removes the harmful grass of the land to save the basil or plants.⁸⁰

For justice, al-Ghazālī also advises the ruler to be intelligent, to know everything about his state men, and to choose the honest and good ministers. He gives many examples about these qualities from the history of the Persian kings, especially Ardshir II who knew everything about his ministers and state men and whether they slept with their wives or with their slave girls.⁸¹ Ardshir advises that the king has to keep four persons: *‘The honest minister, the scribe who well-knows every thing, the merciful chamberlain, and the close friend advising him.’*⁸²

Returning to Khosrau Anushirvan, al-Ghazālī stimulates the ruler to choose the honest ministers, where Anushirvan said, *‘the worst minister is he who motivates the Sultan to wage the war although the making of peace is possible. In addition, every king has an ignorant minister, he is like the non-rainy clouds.’*⁸³

Al-Ghazālī advises the ruler not work in business as the merchants because this act will weaken his reign and disfigure his reputation. As usual, al-Ghazālī uses the Persian cultural heritage to confirm this advice. As he said, the minister of Hormizd son of Shapur sent to Hormizd telling him that he bought pearls, corundum, and expensive jewels with 100.000 *dinars* from the treasury, and there is a merchant wanted to purchase them with many benefits. Then, Hormizd chided him and refused what he did, which would harm the kingdom.⁸⁴

Conclusion:

⁷⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 230.

⁸⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 246.

⁸¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 254-255.

⁸² Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 274.

⁸³ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 278.

⁸⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk*, 294.

Although al-Ghazālī is one of the famous Muslim theologians in the Middle Ages, he studies the classical Greek sciences and used them to refute the philosophical theories of the other Islamic theologians.

He used also the Persian cultural heritage to confirm his advises to the Muslim ruler to be fair, merciful, and judicious with his people. The intellectual advantages of al-Ghazālī referred to his assimilation to the foreign cultures, which in the end contributed to the formation of his political ideas. This evidence proves that al-Ghazālī was different from the theologians of his time.

Al-Ghazālī proves that the Greek and Persian cultural heritage was used by the Muslim writers, especially who lived in the Eastern lands of the Caliphate.

In addition, it is clear that al-Ghazālī cited not only the Greek philosophers, but also the works of the Greek physicians, mathematicians, and historians beside the Persian history to support his advisory sayings.