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NĪSHĀPŪRĪ SCHOLARS IN THE FORMATION OF SUNNĪ SCHOLARSHIP IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

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Abstract

*The role of Nīshāpūrī medieval scholars in the tenth-eleventh century in the formation of Sunnī orthodoxy has been rarely discussed. The existing scholarship focuses primarily on the local history of Nīshāpūr and other parts of eastern Muslim world or emphasizes more on the contribution of Baghdādī scholars in the light of the formation of Sunnī legal schools, which in turn is deemed as Sunnī orthodoxy, than their counterpart in Nīshāpūr and other cities in the east. Therefore, this paper attempts to show how Muslim scholars from Nīshāpūr contributed to the advancement of Sunnī scholarship in the fifth/eleventh century through a closer study of intellectual strategies developed and employed by Nīshāpūrī scholars to cope with their local challenges. They built intellectual networking and attempted to integrate legal and theological scholarship in Islamic scholarship to deal with their local problems, which interestingly shaped their distinctive contribution in the light of Sunnī scholarship tradition. By means of this attempt of intellectual networking and harmonizing legal scholarship (*fiqh*) and theological scholarship (*kalām*), they were not only able to tackle local problems but also equipped with intellectual means to push doctrinal boundaries within Sunnī scholarship in the fifth/eleventh century.*

[Peran ilmuwan Nīshāpūr abad pertengahan dalam pembentukan ortodoksi Sunni di abad 10 – 11 masehi masih jarang dibahas. Kebanyakan sarjana yang ada lebih banyak memperhatikan sejarah lokal Nīshāpūr dan bagian

lain dari dunia muslim di timur atau menekankan pada kontribusi sarjana asal Baghdād dimasa puncak formasi mazhab Sunni, dimana lebih sering dianggap sebagai Sunni ortodoks daripada kawan mereka di Nishāpūr dan kota lain di timur. Oleh karena itu, artikel ini berusaha untuk menunjukkan bahwa sarjana muslim dari Nishāpūr berkontribusi pada pengembangan pemikiran Sunni di abad pertengahan melalui kajian mendalam pembangunan strategis intelektual dan karya dari sarjana Nishāpūr dalam mengatasi tantangan lokal. Mereka membangun jaringan intelektual dan berusaha mengintegrasikan hukum dan teologi dalam Islam dengan masalah lokalitas, yang mana kontribusi khasnya berpengaruh dalam tradisi teologi Sunni. Melalui usahanya ini, jaringan intelektual dan harmonisasi fiqh dan kalam, mereka tidak hanya mengatasi persoalan lokal tetapi juga melengkapinya dengan seperangkat intelektual untuk mendorong batas-batas dalam tradisi Sunni di abad pertengahan.]

Keywords: Nīshāpūr, Sunnī orthodoxy, Ismā'īlī Shī'a, kalām, fiqh, Shāfi'ī, Ḥanafī.

A. Introduction

The power of the 'Abbāsid caliphate in the tenth to early eleventh century was waning when at the same time Shī'ī political dynasties were triumphant in most of the Islamic world. Although the Umayyad dynasty in Spain (756-1039) was in power far to the west and some Sunnī dynasties like the Sāmānids (874-999) and Ghaznavids (976-1186) controlled Muslim lands in the east, Shī'ī political dynasties like the Fāṭimid, Qarmāṭid, Ḥamdānid, and Buwayhid were prominent and dominant in the central lands of the Islamicate world. The Shī'ī Ismā'īlī Fāṭimid Imāmate (969-1171) had ruled in Egypt and North Africa and the Shī'ī Imāmī Buwayhid dynasty (934-1055) ruled in 'Irāq and some Western Iranian regions. It is therefore not surprising when Marshall G.S. Hodgson designated this century as "the Shī'ī century"[1] and more

[1] Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilisation, vol. 1: The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 36. The Shī'a is a religious group within Islam who believes that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) is the successor of the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 13/632) as the leader of the Muslim community. After the death of 'Alī, the leadership is handed down to 'Alī's

specifically Louis Massignon called this period the "Ismā'īlī century" of Islam (le siècle ismaëlien de l'Islam).[2]

When the Saljūq bands overthrew Shī'ī Buwayhid rule in Baghdād in 447/1055, their main objective was to hold 'Irāq as a bastion against the Ismā'īlī Fātimids and their satellites in Syria and al-Jazīra (i.e. a region that covers a crossroad linking 'Irāq, Anatolia, Syria, Armenia, and Iran).[3] Soon after the Buwayhids were ousted, the Saljūqs established Sunnī institutions in order to face the challenges from the missionaries of the opposing groups, such as the Karrāmīs[4] and Ismā'īlīs.[5] These institutions introduced a new madrasa system and trained students to be scholars, *qāḍīs,* and administrators. The first madrasa, namely the madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya*, was built in Nīshāpūr in 450/1058 and the larger madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* was also established in Baghdād in 459/1067. Interestingly, these madrasas in the end were not only able to hamper the influence

descendants. The term "Shī'ī" refers to a person or a group of people who belongs to Shī'a group. For further information, see Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

[2] Louis Massignon, "Mutanabbi, devant le Siècle Ismaelien de l´Islam", in *Al Mutanabbi. Recueil Publié a l´Occasion de son Millénaire* (Beirut: Institut Francais de Damas, 1936), p. 1. The Ismā'īlīs is a branch of Shī'a Islam believing that the right sixth Imām is the Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 100/719), not his brother Mūsā b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 183/799), and the seventh imām is the son of Ismā'īl, namely Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl (d.128/746). For this reason, a group of Shī'a community who believes that Ismā'īl is the seventh Imām of Shī'a is called Ismā'īlī or the seveners. One of their main religious teachings is an emphasis on the esoteric (*bāṭin*) of Islam. For a further reading about Ismā'īlī, see Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[3] C.E. Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217)", in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, *vol. 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. by J.A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 43.

[4] The Karrāmīs are a group of people who follows a religious group in Nīshāpūr named Karrāmīya. The group was founded by Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869), whose teachings emphasized on mystical and literal interpretation of theology so that their opponents accused them of anthropomorphists. See Margaret Malamud, "The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan: The Karramiyya in Nishapur", *Iranian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1/4 (1994), pp. 37–51; C.E. Bosworth, "The Rise of the Karrāmīyah in Khurasan", in *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, ed. by C.E. Bosworth (London: Variorum Reprint, 1977), pp. 5–14.

[5] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, *1: The Classical Age of Islam*: p. 47.

of Ismāʿīlī missionaries but were also instrumental in fostering a "Sunnī Revival"[6] in the main lands of Islam. The lands of Islam ranging from the Mediterranean Sea to Central Asia were reunited under Sunnī-Islam[7]

[6] "The Sunnī Revival" refers to George Makdisi's account on the advancement of traditionalists' (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) triumph in the eleventh century after their initial victory over the rationalist movement (i.e. Muʿtazilīs) in the ninth century through traditionalism of al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) and Ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855). After a slight defeat in the tenth century, according to Makdisi, the Sunnī traditionalists revived and prevailed again in the eleventh century through different ways and forms. For example, the creed of the caliph al-Qādir (d. 422/1031) that affirmed and enforced a traditional stance of Islam, the policy of Tughril Beg that persecuted the Ashʿarīs, Niẓām al-Mulk's *madrasas* that taught only Islamic law, and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī who only taught Islamic law in the Niẓāmīya of Baghdād. For a further reading, see George Makdisi, "The Sunnī Revival", in *History and Politics in Eleventh-Century Baghdad*, ed. by George Makdisi (London: Variorum, 2010), pp. 155–68. Although I disagree with Makdisi's depiction of the traditionalist victory in the eleventh century, the term "Sunnī Revival" is still useful to depict the departure of the Muslim world from what so-called "Shīʿī or Ismāʿīlī Century" to the period when the Sunnī Saljūq Sultanate took control the capital caliphate in Baghdād, governed the majority of Muslim lands, and established Sunnī institutions of learning (*madrasas*) in the eleventh century.

[7] Sunnī Islam is a translation of the Arabic term *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa* (People of the Prophet's Sunna and the Community). The designation of the term varies depending on the context. First, the Sunnī could mean a group of Muslims who are not Shīʿī therefore they do not believe in the appointment of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib as the sole successor of the Prophet Muḥammad and do not recognize the leadership (*imāma*) of ʿAlī's descendants. Second, the term Sunnī could also refer to a group of Muslims who rely more on the *Sunna* (practice) or *Ḥadīth* (report) from the Prophet instead of an authority of *ʿaql* (speculative reasoning that usually used by theologians). Third, Sunnī Islam also designates *sharīʿa* (legal)-minded school of thought (*fuqahā'*) that differ from the mystical-minded school of thought (i.e. *Ṣūfī*). For more detail information, see Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, *1: The Classical Age of Islam*, pp. 276–9. In this article, the term Sunnī Islam is used inclusively to refer to non-Shīʿa group, people of tradition, or legal-minded people. However, when the Sunnī term is mentioned in the context of religious scholarship of the ninth and tenth centuries, it mainly denotes a group of people who advocated or followed certain Islamic legal schools that emerged at that time, such as Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī schools. For more detail information, see Richard C. Martin, *Islamic Studies: A History of Religions Approach* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996), pp. 10–1. As for the historical emergence of these schools, see Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997).

dominion.[8]

However, the supposed "Sunnī revival" was not smoothly achieved. There were internal social-intellectual dynamics and struggles within the Saljūq's administrative regions that led to the resurgence of Sunnī Islam. The threat of Ismāʿīlī missionaries, the emergence of heretical and mystical groups, sectarian conflicts in major cities like Nīshāpūr, and networking among Sunnī scholars in fact contribute significantly to the maturity of Sunnī orthodoxy.[9]

This article, therefore, will not discuss "Sunnī revival" in a broad sense but will focus on the role of Sunnī scholars in such revival. By looking closely at the city of Nīshāpūr in which religious scholars attempted to institutionalize religious disagreements and conflicts,[10] this paper will discuss how Nīshāpūrī scholars[11] achieved a high level

[8] Richard N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975), p. 226.

[9] Although the application of the term "orthodoxy (correct belief)" in Islamic context is contested by scholars of Islam, considering another term, which is "orthopraxy (correct practice)", might be more accurate to denote "the correct belief and practice" in Islam, I use this term to denote what Sunnī group considers "correct" belief and practice up to the tenth century. In this period, the Sunnī orthodoxy was associated with the traditional teachings of what Marshal Hodgson might call the "Sharīʿa-minded people." Their teachings, represented by al-Shāfiʿī's formulation of the Prophetic Sunna in his legal epistemology and Ibn Ḥanbal's teaching of the uncreatedness of the Qur'an, had been repressed under the Muʿtazilī regime of Caliph al-Ma'mūn (d. 218 /833) in the early ninth century. However, in the second half of the ninth century onward, the teachings of the "Sharīʿa-minded people" started to prevail and became the mainstream of Sunnī-Islamic doctrines in the form of Shāfiʿī, Ḥanbalī, Mālikī, and Ḥanafī schools. I argue that these legal schools, then, became "Sunnī orthodoxy" up to the tenth century because, in the following centuries, "Sunnī orthodoxy" was not only associated with Sunnī legal schools but theological and or mystical school as well. For a further reading of how a certain orthodoxy is formed and formulated, see Richard C. Martin and Abbas Barzegar, "Formations of Orthodoxy", in *Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism Bruce B. Lawrence:*, ed. by Carl W. Ernst and Richard C. Martin (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), pp. 179–202; Ma. Isabel Fierro (ed.), *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Islam* (Abingdon, Oxon; N.Y.: Routledge, 2014), pp. 257–74.

[10] John Walbridge, *God and Logic in Islam the Caliphate of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 143–4.

[11] Nīshāpūri scholars refer to the ulamā' who are originally from Nīshāpūr, who are trained in Nīshāpūr, or who pursue a career in Nīshāpūr.

of scholarship through their attempt in harmonizing, even integrating, religious sciences (mainly *fiqh* and *kalām*). This discussion in fact will provide a closer look at the contribution of the eastern part of the medieval Muslim world to the advancement and maturity of Sunnī orthodoxy.

B. Medieval Nīshāpūr: Potential Threats to Sunnī Establishment

The medieval city of Nīshāpūr was one of four major cities in the province of Khurāsān in addition to Marw, Herāt, and Balkh. It was the largest and the most important metropolis in the eastern part of Iran on the Silk Road. Nīshāpūr furthermore connected Baghdād, the capital city of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, with the three major cities on Khurāsān to the east and, beyond them, with India and China.[12] Not surprisingly Yāqūt al-Hamawī (d. 626/1229) in his geographical dictionary called Nīshāpūr "the gateway to the east".[13] Nīshāpūr became an international trading center and prospered greatly in the tenth century until the early eleventh century, during Sāmānids rule until the end of the Saljūq period.[14]

The strategic geographical position of Nīshāpūr not only gave economic benefits to the city but also attracted people from different religions, including Arab-Muslims, to come and spread their beliefs. Before the coming of Islam, the people of the city were Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, and Buddhists. Conversion to Islam came gradually and large-scale conversions occurred much later after the initial coming of the Arabs.[15] Initially, according to Jamsheed Choksy, Muslim population concentrated in cities like Nīshāpūr and Herāt, away from non-Muslim population. In 665, Ziyād b. Sufyān (d. 53/673) as the governor of ʿIrāq started to relocate Muslims to provincial areas such as Busht, southwest of Nīshāpūr, and Ustuva, northwest of Nīshāpūr. At this time, Marw had also a significant number of Muslim populations coming from Baṣra and

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[12] Jens Kroger, *Nishapur: Glass of the Early Islamic Period* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), p. 9.

[13] Charles K. Wilkinson, *Nishapur: Some Early Islamic Buildings and Their Decoration* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), p. 38.

[14] Kroger, *Nishapur*, p. 9.

[15] Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 15.

Kūfa. In 725, the Umayyad governor of Khurāsān, Asad b. ʿAbdullāh al-Qaṣrī (d. 120/738), brought sizable Muslim dwellers at Baruqan to Balkh as well, which made Muslim population in Balkh increasing.[16] Around 738, the chief *dehgān* (city inhabitants) in Herāt also converted to Islam.[17] However, it did not mean that Muslim population became a majority at this time, especially in Nīshāpūr. By then year 739, Zoroastrians were still the majority under the leadership of Wahram Sagis. In 750, when ʻAbbāsid came to power, about 8 percent of the urban population of Iran was Muslim.[18] This number, Choksy writes, had reached 50 percent by the middle of the ninth century.[19] At the end of the tenth century, the figure was staggering. The Muslim population in Iranian cities, including Nīshāpūr, was to around 80 percent. This was largely due to the mass "conversion of Zoroastrians—and some Jews, Christians, and Buddhists—between the eighth and tenth centuries".[20] One of Karrāmī leaders, Abū Yaʿqūb Ishāq b. Maḥmashādh (d. 383/993), is said to have converted 5000 thousands of Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews to Karrāmīya Islam through his eloquent preaching and evangelistic fervor in Nīshāpūr.[21] By the end of the eleventh century, the large majority of people in Nīshāpūr were Muslims, at least in urban areas.[22]

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[16] Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 39.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[18] Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ Press, 1979), p. 44.

[19] Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, p. 83.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Bosworth, "The Rise of the Karrāmīyah in Khurasan", p. 7.

[22] Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, p. 15. However, with regard to majority of people who lived outside urban areas, we know little about their conversion and religiosity. We can only know that the conversion process in rural areas went slower so that not many of them, considering their big number, were willing to adopt Islam. See Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View From the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 77. We are also informed that the most active and attractive religious movement in rural areas was Karrāmīya. C.E. Bosworth mentions that the founder of Karrāmīya, Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869), actively preached his ascetic, literal, and anthropomorphist understanding, especially related to the reality of the punishment in the graveyard (*ʻadhāb al-qabr*), to the peasants, weavers, and other poor classes in rural areas. He gained popularity and followers from those lower classes of

Muslims were interestingly not a single entity in Nīshāpūr. In addition to local groups like the Karrāmīya, there are two large Sunnī Islam groups, the Ḥanafīs[23] and the Shāfiʿīs.[24] Their leaders, either through an election by Nīshāpūrī patricians or an appointment by the dynasty in power,[25] filled key posts in the city ranging from a position of a *qāḍī* (judge), *shaykh al-islām* (the spiritual head of Islam), *khaṭīb* (Friday sermon preacher), and *raʾīs* (mayor of the city).[26] They also made centers of learning in their private houses, *madrasas*, or congregational mosques to maintain the continuity of Sunnī Islam in the city.[27] However, the strength of the Sunnīs was vulnerable to external and internal factors. There were at least three factors that could challenge and threaten the authority of Sunnīs in Nīshāpūr: first, the missionary operation of the Ismāʿīlīs; second, the existence of allegedly heretical and mystical groups; and third, a prolonged conflict between the Shāfiʿī and the Ḥanafī.

As mentioned above, the tenth to the very early eleventh centuries marked the so called Shīʿī century. The political domination of Shīʿas, however, largely took place in the central and western parts of the Muslims under the Fāṭimids, the Buwayhids, the Qarmaṭids, and the Ḥamdānids dynasties. Eastern areas were still under the control of

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society who were attracted to his messages and ascetic-pious way of life. See Bosworth, "The Rise of the Karrāmīyah in Khurasan", pp. 5–6.

[23] The Ḥanafīs are a group of people who follow a legal school called the Ḥanafī school, which was named after its founding jurist Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767). The students of Bu Ḥanīfa developed a method of deriving religious rulings and interpretations using principles taught by Abū Ḥanīfa, which was frequently considered more rational. The followers of the Ḥanafī school are called the Ḥanafīs. However, in the context of Nīshāpūr, the Ḥanafīs were not only followers of the Ḥanafī legal school but also a political faction in the city which often competed with another faction of patricians, especially the Shāfiʿīs, for religious and political posts.

[24] The Shāfiʿīs are the followers of the Shāfiʿī legal school. This legal school was named after its founder Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (204/820) by his students and followers who developed a more rigor method of deriving rulings and interpretations from religious sources based on principles taught by al-Shāfiʿī. Similar to the Ḥanafīs, the Shāfiʿīs also played a role as a political faction in the context of Nīshāpūr in addition to their association with the Shāfiʿī legal school.

[25] Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, p. 64.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 62–9.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Sunnī Muslim authority, especially during the Sāmānids (819–999) and Ghaznavids periods (976–1186). Contemporary to Sāmānids and Ghaznavids that ruled in Nīshāpūr in tenth century, the major political power in western, central, and northern Iran was the Buwayhid dynasty during 934-1062 C.E.,[28] which initially belonged to the Zaydīs[29] but in a later period of their rule tended to lean towards the Imāmīya/the Ithnā ʿAsharīya (the twelver Shīʿa).[30] However, the bulk of Iranian Muslims were still adherents of Sunnī Islam until after 907/1501, when Shāh Ismāʿīl established the Ṣafawid dynasty and forced the Iranian people to convert to the twelver Shīʿism.[31]

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[28] David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 1988), pp. 22–3.

[29] This is the branch of Shīʿa that recognized the son of the fourth *imām* Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. 95/713), namely Zayd b. Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (d. 125/743), as the fifth *imām* of Shīʿa, instead of another son named Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 117/735). See Momen, *An introduction to Shi'i Islam*, p. 49.

[30] The founder of the Buwayhids, ʿAlī b. Būya (d. 338/949) and better known as *Imād al-Dawla* (the founder of the state), was originally from Daylam, an Iranian region on the south shore of the Caspian Sea. The Zaydī branch of Shīʿa's missionaries came to this region and persuaded the people of Daylam (Daylamīs) to convert to Zaydī Shīʿa in the second half of the third/ninth century. Therefore, *Imād al-Dawla* and his successors were Zaydī-Shīʿa by tradition because the Daylamī were converted to Islam by the Zaydī *dā'īs*. However, in a later period, the Buwayhids were leaning more towards the Imāmī Shīʿa. See Heribert Busse, "Iran under the Būyids", in *The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 4: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. by Richard N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 256. The Buwayhids' orientation towards the Imāmī Shīʿa can be seen among other things from an extensive building at the shrines of the Seventh and the Ninth Imāms (these two Imāms are not recognized by the Zaydīs). Also, the possible reason for the Buwayhids to be more leaning towards the Imāmī Shīʿa was that they were not the descendants of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the first Imām of the Shīʿa. The Zaydī would have required them to install one of the descendants of ʿAlī to be *imām* (spiritual and political leader) when the Buwayhids were in power. However, after they came to power, they did not want to give a power to the real descendant of ʿAlī. In this situation, the doctrine of the Imāmī Shīʿa was politically more attractive to them because their twelfth *imām* (leader) Muḥammad al-Mahdī was in occultation since 260/874. In the absence of the real *imām*, al-Mahdī, the Buwayhids could act on his behalf. See Momen, *An introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 75–6. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[31] Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797*, p. 120. The process of conversion from Sunnīsm to twelver Shīʿism was not an immediate, but it took another generation to be completed and successful. The twelver (Ithnā 'Asharīya) is the branch of Shīʿa that

The Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism was, therefore, certainly not a major political power in eastern Islam, especially in Iran, in the tenth to early eleventh century, nor was in a major population. Accordingly, the Fāṭimid dynasty, whose official ideology was Ismāʿīlī Shīʾism and was very strong in Egypt and North Africa, sent Ismāʿīlī missionaries (*dāʿīs*)[32] to this regions, including Nīshāpūr. The purpose was not only to convert the Sunnī and the twelver Shīʿa Muslims to Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism but also to gain political influence. Ismāʿīlism initially spread in the east like al-Jibāl, Khurāsān, and Transoxania regions through Arab *dāʿīs* around 260/873-4. Later in the tenth century, the Ismāʿīlīs established a headquarter of *daʿwa* (missionary)[33] in Rayy that was led by such influential *dāʿīs* like Khalaf al-Ḥallāj, Ghiyāth from Kulayn, and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī.[34] This *daʿwa* operation subsequently reached cities in Khurāsān around 290-300/903-913 through the efforts of Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Khādim.[35] Al-Khādim established himself in Nīshāpūr as the first chief *dāʿī* of Khurāsān. He was then succeeded by other prominent missionaries such as Abū Saʿīd al-Shaʿrānī in 307/919**,** al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Marwazī (the one who transferred the provincial seat of *daʿwa* from Nīshāpūr to Marw al-Rūdh

the *imām*s are not only limited to five (which was held by the Zaydīs) or seven (which was held by the Ismāʿīlīs) but up to twelve *imām*s. The last *imām*, namely Muḥammad al-Mahdī, was deemed to be in occultation and expected to return near to the end of the day. See Momen, *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam*.

[32] *Dāʿī* (its original plural form is *duʿāt,* but here I keep the term "*dāʿī*" plus the suffix "s" to denote the plural form) is literally used to call someone who summons. In the context of Ismāʿīlī-Shīʿa, the term is used to refer to Ismāʿīlī authorized representatives or propagandists who are assigned to carry out a missionary activity (*daʿwa*) of Ismāʿīlī understanding of Islam and convert people to Ismāʿīlīsm. See Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 515.

[33] *Daʿwa* is the activity that should be carried out by the *dāʿī,* which is to call somebody or a group of people to accept and adopt the Ismāʿīlī religious movement. In this regard, *daʿwa* can be understood as a mission, propaganda, or missionary activity of the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs* to call people to accept the religious and political leadership of the Ismāʿīlī's *imāms* and to adopt their teachings and doctrines. However, the term *daʿwa* is sometimes used to denote the entire hierarchy of ranks within the Ismāʿīlī leadership that is made for the purpose of conducting the missionary work. Therefore, the Ismāʿīlī movement itself is often simply called *al-daʿwa*, or formally *al-daʿwa al-hādiya* (the rightly guided mission). See *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 112.

and started as the chief of Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī* around 306/918), Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943), and Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī (d. around 365/975).[36] Another *dāʿī* that was sent directly from the Fāṭimids in Egypt to Khurāsān was Nāṣiri Khusraw (d. 481/1088), who according to Farhad Daftary, established his headquarters at Balkh in around 444/1052, from where he extended his *daʿwa* activities to Nīshāpūr and other cities of Khurāsān.[37] Those Ismāʿīlī missionaries not only brought their doctrinal views but also introduced Neoplatonic thought to the Muslim discourse.[38] For example, inspired by Neoplatonist's cosmology,[39] al-Sijistānī introduced a concept of *tawḥīd* (unity of God) that denies both anthropomorphist tendency (*tashbīh*) in Islamic theology, which was generally held by Karrāmī, and an extreme anti-anthropomorphist (*taʿṭīl*) orientation of theology, which was held by Muʿtazilī theologians. In al-Sijistānī's thought, God is described as "absolutely transcendent, beyond human comprehension, beyond any name or attribute, beyond being and non-being, and therefore unknowable".[40] This conception of God not only posed a challenge to theological groups like an anthropomorphist Karrāmīs and non-anthropomorphist Muʿtazilī but also to the Ashʿarīs who believed that God can be known rationally through his names and attributes.

Another threat to Sunnī's strength in Nīshāpūr was coming from

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[37] Paul Ernest Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism: the Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), p. 206.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 113. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

[39] The core idea of Neoplatonist philosopher, Plotinus, revolves around the concept of three hierarchical elements, which are the One, intellect or mind, and soul. The One is considered ineffable, simple, beyond being and non-being, non-intellective, and beyond rationality. The process of creation starts when the perfection of the One is overflowing and generating a simple being by means of emanation (*inbiʿāth*), just like the sun and its rays. The first simple being resulted from the emanation of the One is intellect, the universal intellect, and then followed by the second being, which is soul. Below the soul is the physical realm. A man in this hierarchical scheme is not merely a spiritual being because he has a physical element in the forms of body and not only a physical being because he has a spiritual element in the forms of soul. Man possesses both spiritual and physical elements of being. See Walker, *Early Philosophical Shiism*, pp. 37–8.

[40] Daftary, *The Isma'ilis*, p. 228.

groups thought to be heretical and mystical. The very early uprising that aimed to shake the stability of religious domination in Nīshāpūr was carried out by a heterodox Zoroastrian leader in Nīshāpūr, Bihafrid-i Mahfravardin from 747 until 749,[41] who came from Zūzan, about 200 kilometers southeast of the city of Nīshāpūr, attempting to syncretize Zoroastrian beliefs with Muslim doctrines. On the one hand, he argued that Zoroastrianism was the true religion and Ohrmazd was the one and the only power in the universe. On the other, he contended that some of Zoroastrian rituals and laws should be changed. Therefore, inspired by Muslim doctrines and practices, he introduced the idea of monotheism,[42] prophecy, revealed scripture, fixed daily prayers (i.e. seven but can be reduced to five daily prayers), and Zoroastrian's *qibla* (which is to the left side of the Muslim's *qibla*) to his new religious movement.[43] Bihafrid in turn not only challenged Zoroastrian religious establishment in the city of Nīshāpūr, but also threatened Muslim religious and political authority in the region. Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī (d. 137/755), the charismatic Muslim ruler in the Iranian land at that time, came to Nīshāpūr to squash his movement and kill him. However, his followers still survived in 748 and later on participated in other heretical movements such as Khurramīya.[44]

The other revolt was led by a Magi named Sunpad (or Sinbad, or Sunbādh), who rebelled in 136/754[45] and was finally defeated in 137/755.[46] He was not an ordinary villager but the chief (*ra'īs*) of

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[41] Choksy, *Conflict and cooperation*, p. 40.

[42] Bihafrid's monotheism is reflected in the recognition and praise of the unity of Ohrmazd without abandoning Zoroastrian dualistic belief, which is the belief in the power of good and the power of evil. See Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 147–8.

[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 147–9.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 150–1. The Khurramīya is a syncretic religious group that has elements of Shīʿīsm and of a Zoroastrian-heretic movement called Mazdakism. Therefore, from a Muslim perspective, Khurramīya is viewed as a branch of Shīʿa and, from a Zoroastrian perspective, this group is seen as a form of Mazdakism. See *Ibid.*, pp. 279–81.

[45] Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation*, p. 40.

[46] Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia*, p. 128.

Nīshāpūr. He hosted Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī during Abū Muslim's return to Nīshāpūr as ruler in 748 and eventually joined Abū Muslim's revolutionary movement during that period (748-755).[47] After the murder of Abū Muslim by the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr, Sunpad renounced Islam and embraced a new form of Zoroastrianism. According to some sources, Sunpad came to believe in the divinity of Abū Muslim, who, he argued, had not really died but was hiding in "a fortress of brass with the *Mahdī*[48] and Mazdak[49]" and will return one day together with Mazdak as his vizier.[50] He preached to the Shīʿīs by telling them about the hidden *Mahdī*; to the Mazdakians by mentioning the existence of Mazdak, to Khurramīs by convincing them that Mazdak was a Shīʿite; and also to his the Zoroastrian followers by saying that the end of Arab rule was predicted in a Sassanian book.[51] He claimed to be the messenger of Abū Muslim and sought vengeance for him by killing a large number of Muslims until being defeated by the caliph al-Manṣūr's commander, Jahwar b. Marār al-ʿIjlī, in 755.[52]

In addition to these religious and military uprisings, there was a powerful heretical local religious movement in Nīshāpūr called the Karrāmīya, which was founded by Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869). However, better known for their emphasis on mysticism and literalist interpretation of theology so much, their opponents accused them of anthropomorphism.[53] To spread their doctrines, they

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[47] Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran*, p. 32.

[48] The *Mahdī* literally means "the divinely guided one." The *Mahdī* has been hidden, in occultation, expected to return to the world to restore religious purity and political order.

[49] Mazdak is a Zoroastrian magi who implemented ideas of a Zoroastrian-heretical ideas of Zardūsht and became the leader of a major revolt in Iraq and western Iran around 531-540. Due to this Mazdak's revolt, the religious group associated with Zardūsht heretical ideas was bettern known as Mazdakism. See Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran*, pp. 22–3.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[51] The book was probably the astronomical book,The Book of *Nativities* that had been translated into Arabic by Saʿīd b. Khurāsān-Khurra in the time of Abū Muslim after Sunpad requested it. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–9.

[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

[53] Malamud, "The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan", pp. 42–3.

established *khānaqāt*, centers for education, meeting, and missionary work that by the end of tenth century were adopted by Ṣūfī schools.[54] Their teachings were initially attractive to the poor who performed menial work in the northwest of the city[55] but later appealed to both urban and rural populations. In turn, this development was threatening the domination of the Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs in the city.[56] Furthermore, during the Ghaznavid rule in Nīshāpūr around the end of the tenth century and the early eleventh century, Karrāmī scholars named Abū Yaʿqūb Isḥāq b. Maḥmadāsh (d. 383/993) and his son Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Isḥāq were appointed as a chief (*raʾīs*) of the city. This appointment incited further enmity from the Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿī patricians.[57]

Lastly, the main issue that threatened to destroy the superiority of Sunnī Islam in Nīshāpūr was the prolonged conflict between the Shāfiʿīs, who generally happened to be the Ashʿarīs in theology,[58] and Ḥanafīs, who generally happened to be Muʿtazilīs in theology.[59] The seeds of

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[54] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[55] Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, pp. 12–3.

[56] Malamud, "The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan", p. 45.

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 45–6.

[58] The Ashʿarī is a theological thought or belief and an individual or a group of people that are associated and affiliated with *al-Ashʿarīya*, which is a theological school founded based on theological teachings of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936). This theological school in general advocates traditional understanding of religion such as the uncreatedness of the Qur'an, the acknowledgment of the attributes and names of God, and a more textual interpretation of the Qur'an. However, the school employs rational argument, which was usually used by the rationalist group Muʿtazila, to defend those traditional tenets of religion. See D. Gimaret, "Muʿtazila", *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (2012), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-ashari-abu-l-hasan-SIM_0780?s.num=8&s.rows=20&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=Abu+%E2%80%99L-%E1%B8%A4asan, accessed 9 Dec 2014. In the context of Nīshāpūr, since the general theological affiliation of the Shāfiʿīs is Ashʿarīya, I will use the term "Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī" to refer to this group of scholars. To understand better the relationship between Shāfiʿī legal school and Ashʿarī theological school in Nīshāpūr, see Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, pp. 36–7.

[59] The Muʿtazilī is a theological thought or belief and an individual or a group of people that are associated and affiliated with *Muʿtazila*, which is a rationalist theological school and movement founded by Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748) in Baṣra. Among theological doctrines that the Muʿtazilī scholars advocate are the createdness of the Qur'an, the absolute oneness of God, and rational interpretation of the Qur'an.

conflicts were planted sometime around 380/990 when a prominent Shāfiʿī preacher, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣābūnī, was assassinated.[60] According to Richard Bulliet, it occurred at the same time that "Nīshāpūr became the center of political maneuvering between the ruling Sāmānid dynasty in Bukhara and two subordinate dynasties in Khurāsān, the Simjurids and the Ghaznavids. The legal factions in Nīshāpūr became involved in that political maneuvering and the key posts in the city were often awarded to the faction favoring the dynasty temporarily in power."[61] The Simjurids backed the Shāfiʿī groups[62] while the Ghaznavids initially favored the Ḥanafī but then they also supported the Karrāmīya in Nīshāpūr.[63] They built an endowed *madrasa* for the Ḥanafī Qāḍī, Abū ʿAla' Ṣāʿid, but then appointed the Karrāmī leader, Abū Bakr b. Abū Yaʿqūb, as the *raʾīs* of the city.[64] This policy upset local religious and political leaders and pressed Maḥmūd of Ghazna to remove Abū Yaʿqūb from the office.

The peak of the dissension, however, occurred in the time of early Saljūq Sulṭānate (between 443/1051-447 /1055). ʿAmīd al-Mulk al-Kundurī (d. 456/1064), the vizier of the Saljūq Sulṭān Tughril Beg, who in his youth tried to build social mobility through Shāfiʿī professional circles, persecuted Shāfiʿī - Ashʿarī groups in that period.

It might be true that al-Kundurī began as a Shāfiʿī but since his social mobility was hampered by generational differences within Shāfiʿī circles, he decided to join the Ḥanafīs,[65] which he did with a view toward helping his social mobility and political career. When Saljūq force came to Nīshāpūr, they established al-Kundurī as vizier. This appointment

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They defend these theological tenets through a rational and dialectical arguments inspired mainly by philosophical traditions. See Gimaret, "Muʿtazila". Since the Ḥanafīs in Nīshāpūr generally happen to be affiliated with Muʿtazila theology, I will simply call them, the "Ḥanafī-Muʿtazilī" scholars. To understand more the relationship between the Ḥanafīs and Muʿtazila theology, see Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, pp. 36–7.

[60] Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, p. 32.

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] Richard W. Bulliet, "Local Politics in Eastern Iran under the Ghaznavids and Seljuks", *Iranian Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1–4 (1978), pp. 35–6.

[63] Malamud, "The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan", pp. 37–51.

[64] *Ibid.*

[65] Martin Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar: Abul-Qasim al-Qushayr i and the Lata'if al-Ish ar at* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 209.

was reasonable since the Saljūq Sulṭān, who came from Central Asia, was more familiar with the Ḥanafī rather than the Shāfiʿī legal school. During his tenure as a vizier, however, al-Kundurī oppressed Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī scholars. Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) and Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad al-Furātī (d. 446/1054) were imprisoned. Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and his fellows were forced into an exile. Abū Sahl al-Muwaffaq (d. 4561064) stayed in Nīshāpūr and went into revolt.[66]

The cause of the persecution is not exactly known. A popular Ashʿarī account maintains that it began when al-Kundurī, who was affiliated with hte Ḥanafī-Muʿtazilī groups, became jealous of the influence of Abū Sahl Muwaffaq, who was, at the age of 17, appointed as the chief of Shāfiʿī school of law *(madhhab*) in Nīshāpūr. He was concerned that Abū Sahl would threaten his position as vizier.[67] Bulliet has argued that the persecution was based on al-Kundurī's policy of "to divide and conquer".[68] Al-Kundurī sided with the Ḥanafī-Muʿtazilīs and persecuted the Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarīs. Furthermore, he ordered a condemnation of the Ashʿarī theological doctrines in Friday sermons, declared a prohibition of their religious and educational sessions, and commanded an arrest of their four prominent scholars as mentioned above (Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad al-Furātī, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, and Abū Sahl al-Muwaffaq).[69]

C. Intellectual Networking

In order to deal with the threats to the Sunnī establishment in Nīshāpūr, the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanafī scholars enhanced their intellectual credentials by studying and building an intellectual network with members of their schools in other regions, mainly Baghdād and Cairo. They not only acquired legal and theological knowledge from their Baghdādī or

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[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 40–1.

[67] Tāj al-Dīn ʻAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʻAlī Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʻīyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, ed. by Maḥmūd Muḥammad and ʻAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalw al-Ṭanāḥī, (Cairo: Maṭbaah ʻĪsā al-Bābī al-Halbī, 1967), p. 391. Also see Ismail Haji Abdullah, "The Influence of Imam al-Juwayni on the Theology of Imam al-Ghazali", Ph.D. Dissertation (Scotland: University of St Andrews, 1996), p. 16.

[68] Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, p. 72.

[69] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʻīyah al-Kubrá*, 3: 390–1.

Cairo teachers but also established intellectual credentials. With these knowledge and credentials, they decided not to stay in Baghdād or Cairo but return to Nīshāpūr and attempt to cope with problems and challenges there.

In the Ḥanafī intellectual circles, the majority of Ḥanafī scholars who pursued an academic career in Nīshāpūr were students of Ḥanafī scholars in Baghdād. These included Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nīsābūrī Qāḍī al-Ḥaramayn (d. 351/962),[70] Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Shāhawayh al-Fārisī (d. 361/971-2), Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Jaṣṣās al-Rāzī (d. 370/981), and Abū Sahl al-Zujājī al-Ghazālī al-Faraḍī (d. n.d).[71] As Table I shows, all of them taught law in Nīshāpūr and they were students of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 340/952).[72]

In addition to these scholars, especially from the intellectual lineage of Abū al-Ḥasan Qāḍī al-Ḥaramayn who studied under Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī in Baghdād, some prominent Ḥanafī figures played a crucial role in Nīshāpūr. Qāḍī al-Ḥaramayn had a student named Abū al-Haytham ʿUtba b. Khaythama al-Tamīmī (d. 406/ 1015), who used to serve as a judge (*qāḍī*) in Nīshāpūr as well.[73] One of Abū Haytham's students was Abū al-ʿAlā' Ṣāʿid b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 431/1040),[74] a very prominent Ḥanafī scholar in Nīshāpūr. He used to hold a *qāḍī* position as well. His youngest son, Abū Muḥammad ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ṣāʿid (d. 486/1093),[75] became *qāḍī* as well and married to a daughter of another prominent Ḥanafī scholar, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh al-Nāṣiḥī (d. 447/1055).[76] Abū Muḥammad ʿUbayd Allāh's brother-in-law, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Abū Muhamad ʿAbdullāh al-Nāṣiḥī (d. 484/1091), was

[70] ʻAbd al-Ghāfir ibn Ismāʻīl Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr Al-Muntakhab Min Al-Siyāq* (Qum: Jamāʻah al-Mudarrisīn, 1943), p. 117.

[71] Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.*, pp. 126–7.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

[73] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī records that Abū al-Haytham studied under Qāḍī al-Ḥaramayn. However, there is a typo in writing Qāḍī al-Ḥaramayn's name. He writes "Abū al-Ḥusayn," instead of "Abū al-Ḥasan." The correct one is "Abū al-Ḥasan" Qāḍī al-Ḥaramayn. See Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr Al-Muntakhab Min Al-Siyāq*, p. 605.

[74] *Ibid.*, pp. 400–1.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 465.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 435; Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, p. 205.

also a very influential Ḥanafī figure in Nīshāpūr.[77]

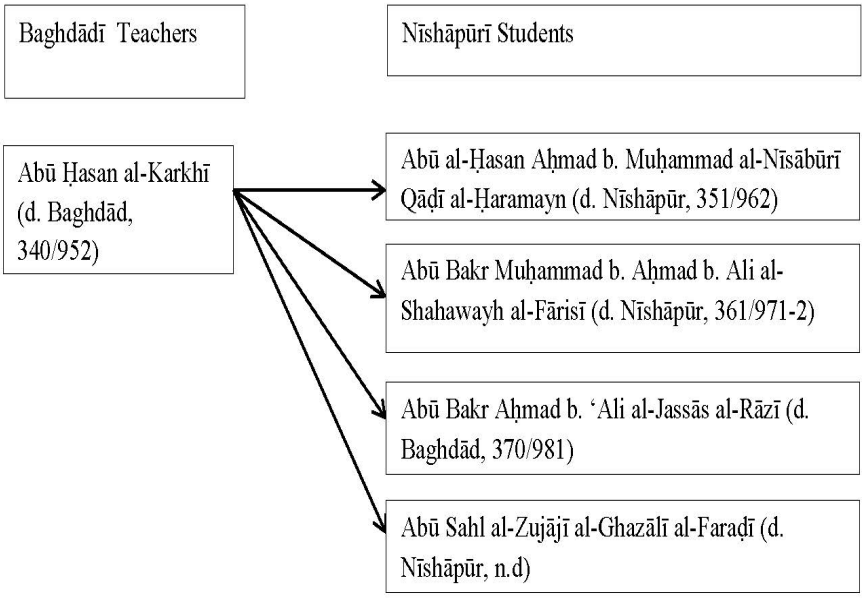


Table 1. The Ḥanafī Network of Nīshāpūr.

Similarly, the Shāfiʻīs of Nīshāpūr are also connected to Baghdādī or Cairo Shāfiʿī scholars. The main figure who taught Nīshāpūrī Shāfiʻīs was Ibn Surayj (d. Baghdād, 306/918). He was considered the actual consolidator of the Shāfiʻī legal school by modern scholars.[78] Ibn Surayj and his student, the Egyptian Abū Isḥāq al-Marwazī (d. 340/951), had a number of students from Nīshāpūr. These students then taught and spread Shāfiʻī thought in Nīshāpūr and its surroundings. Among the students of Ibn Surayj were Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Shuʿayb b. Ibrāhīm al-Bayhaqī (d. 324/935-6),[79] Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Sanjānī al-Marwazī (d. mid 320s),[80] and Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Husayn al-Fārisī (d. 350).[81] Among Abū Isḥāq al-Marwazī's

[77] Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr Al-Muntakhab Min Al-Siyāq*, p. 75.

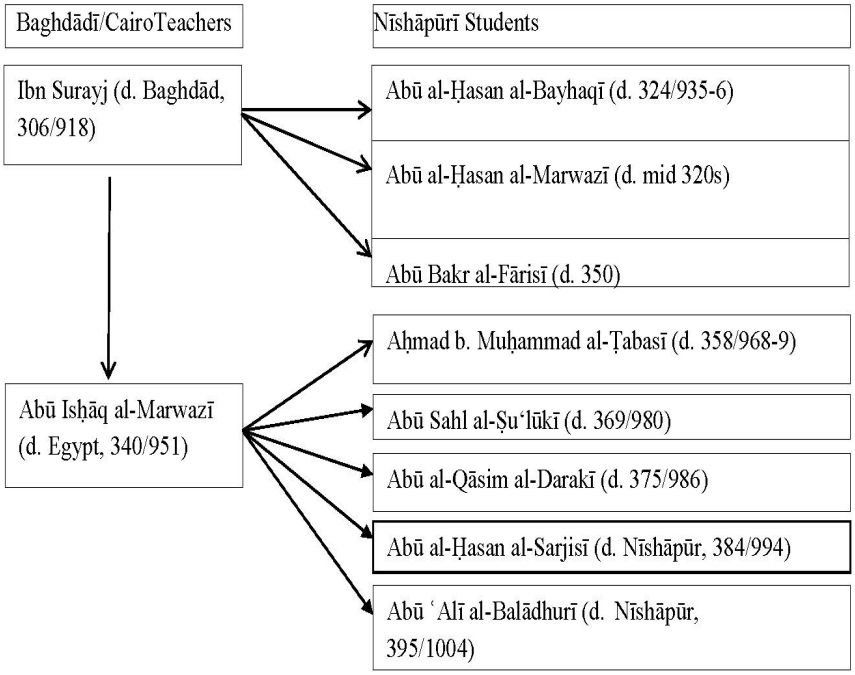
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[79] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʻīyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, p. 173.

[80] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 444–5.

[81] Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʻīyah* (Baghdād: al-Maktabah al-ʻArabīyah, 1356/1937), p. 23.

students were Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭabasī (d. 358/968-9),[82] Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 369/980),[83] Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbdullāh al-Dārakī (d. 375/986),[84] Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sarjisī (d. Nīshāpūr, 384/994),[85] and Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Balādhurī (d. Nīshāpūr 395/1004).[86]



[82] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, p. 44.

[83] Abū Zakarīyā Muḥyiddīn b. Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-Asmā' Wa-al-Lugḥāt*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1977), pp. 241–3; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, pp. 167–73.

[84] Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah* (Baghdad: al-Maktabah al-'Arabīyah, 1937), p. 31; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, pp. 330–3.

[85] al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah*, p. 32.

[86] Muhammd b. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, vol. 27, ed. by 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1987), p. 325; al-Dimashqī Ibn Kathīr, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā' al-Shāfi'īyīn*, ed. by Aḥmad 'Umar Hāshim and Muḥammad Z. Muḥammad Gharb (Cairo: Madrasah al-Thaqāfah al-Dīnīyah, 1993), p. 335. See also the description of Abū Isḥāq al-Marwazī's students in Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.*, pp. 103–4.

Table 2. The Shāfiʿī Network of Nishapur

Interestingly, one of the greatest Shāfiʿī scholars in the eleventh century, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (419/1028-478/1085), was a Shāfiʿī intellectual of Ibn Surayj and Abū Isḥāq al-Marwazī. He studied law under his father, Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. Yūsuf al-Juwaynī (d. 438-9/1046-7), and two other teachers, Abū ʿAlī Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Marwarrūdhī (d. 462/1070)[87] and Abū Qāsim al-Fūrānī (d. 463/1071).[88] From these three teachers, his connection with Ibn Surayj and Abū Isḥāq al-Marwazī can be traced through two lines of intellectual transmission. First, from his father side, he was connected with Abū Ṭayyib al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 404/1013) and Abū Bakr al-Shāshī (d. 417/1026) because his father studied under these two Shāfiʿī scholars. Abū Ṭayyib al-Ṣuʿlūkī and Abū Bakr al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī learned legal knowledge from Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 369/980) and Abū Zayd al-Marwazī (d. 371/982).[89] The last two scholars studied law under Abū Isḥāq al-Marwazī (d. 340/951) and al-Marwazī himself was of the students of Ibn Surayj. Second, from the side of two other teachers (i.e. Abū ʿAlī Ḥusayn al-Marw al-Rūdhī and Abū Qāsim al-Fūrānī), Imām al-Ḥaramayn's lineage was also still connected with Ibn Surayj since the two above teachers studied law under Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (366/977), who was in fact one of direct students of Ibn Surayj.[90]

In addition, there were lines of Shāfiʿī intellectual descents in Nīshāpūr that did not originate with Ibn Surayj or al-Marwazī, for instance, ʿAbdullāh b. Muḥammad b. Ziyād al-Nīsābūrī (before 164/877) and Ibn Khuzayma were disciples of an earlier generation of Egyptian Shāfiʿīs, especially Abū Ibrāhīm Ismāʿīl b. Yaḥyā al-Muzanī (d. 264/878) and Abū Muḥammad al-Rabīʿ b. Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Murādī (d. 270/884).[91]

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[87] Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr Al-Muntakhab Min Al-Siyāq*, p. 305.

[88] al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah*, p. 56; Abū 'Abbās Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayat al-A'yan wa Anbā' Abna' al-Zamān*, vol. 3, ed. by Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1968), p. 132.

[89] al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-Asmā' wa-al-Lugḥāt*, vol. 1, p. 234.

[90] al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah*, pp. 56–7; Khallikān, *Wafayat al-A'yan wa Anbā' Abna' al-Zamān*, vol. 3, p. 132.

[91] al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah*, p. 98.

In addition to the intellectual networking in the field of legal scholarship, the development of Islamic theology shows an analogous connection. The student of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936), Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bāhilī, who was a contemporary of the famous Ashʿarī theologian al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) in Baghdād, taught two Nīshāpūrī Ashʿarī theologian Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. Furāk (d. 406/1015)[92] and Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Isfarā'īnī (d.418/1027).[93] Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'īnī transmitted the Ashʿarī theological teachings to his student, Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Iskāf al-Isfarā'īnī (d. 452/1060).[94] From Abū al-Qāsim, the authority of the Ashʿarī theology was then inherited by his student, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (419/1028-478/1085).[95]

[92] Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, p. 1; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, p. 127–35.

[93] For a teacher-student relationship between al-Ashʿarī and his students, see Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, p. 369. For the biography of Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'īnī, see al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-Asmā' Wa-al-Lughāt*, vol. 1, p. 225; al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Shāfi'īyah*, p. 45; Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr Al-Muntakhab Min Al-Siyāq*, pp. 151–2.

[94] al-Fārisī, p. 522; al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Fuqahā' Al-Shāfi'iyīn*, ed. Anwār al-Bāz, vol. 2 (Egypt: Dār al-Wafā', 2004), p. 49.

[95] Tāj al-Dīn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Alī Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 4, ed. by Maḥmūd Muḥammad and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalw al-Ṭanāḥī, (Cairo: Maṭba'ah 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Halbī, 1967), p. 99.

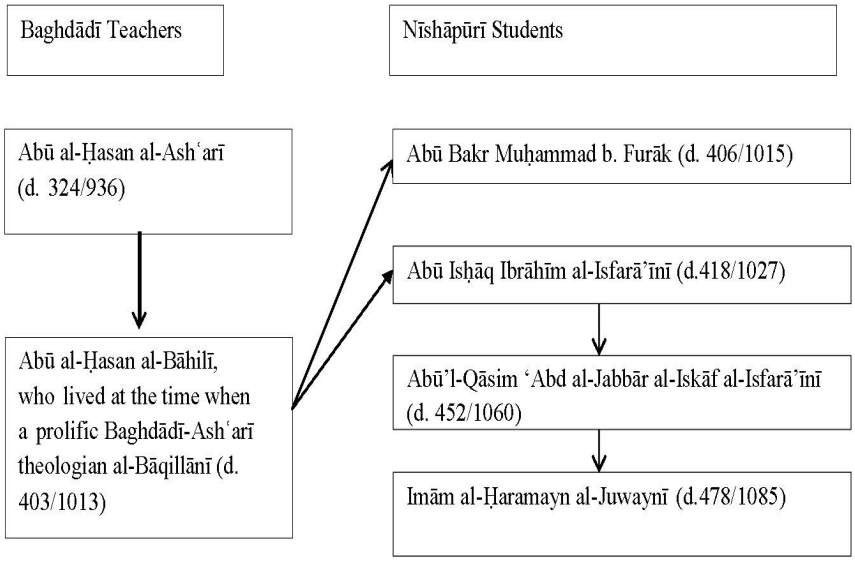

Table 3. The Ashʿarī Network of Nīshāpūr.

The more obvious connection is also apparent in the context of institutions of learning in both cities, especially at the time when Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 486/1093) became a vizier of Saljuq Sulṭānate. He built the madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* in Nīshāpūr in 450/1058,[96] and then established and completed the building of another madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* in Baghdād in 459/1067.[97] The inception of these two madrasas, and their affiliates in other cities was initially perhaps based on pious motives (i.e. as a charity for supporting religious scholars and for common good).[98] However, considering the close relationship between the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk and the *'ulamā'* of those *madrasa*s and prevalent sectarian conflicts in society, it was more evident that the inception of those madrasas was actually to gain a full support and loyalty of religious scholars (*ulamā'*) through

[96] *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 124.

[97] George Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad", in *Religion, Law and Learning in Classical Islam* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1991), pp. 31–3.

[98] See Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 95.

financial and political patronage[99] and to restore a balance of power in society.[100] Furthermore, in a larger context, the establishment of those madrasas also helped to enable the Muslim world in the Saljūq territory to be united under Sunnī orthodoxy through a spirit of corps (*en sprit de corps*) of the Sunnī scholars, who were endowed with administrative and teaching positions in those madrasas.[101]

The madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* in Nīshāpūr was led by Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī and the madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* in Baghdād was led by Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083).[102] Although the curriculum of both madrasas was the same considering both were designed to teach the Shāfiʿī legal school, the difference between the two was also apparent. In madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* of Baghdād, the Ashʿarī theology was not really welcomed and promoted since the opposition from external groups, especially Ḥanbalī scholars, towards Ashʿarī theology was very strong[103] that made legal scholars, including Shāfiʿī scholars, afraid of taking and expressing the Ashʿarī theological thoughts. Moreover, most of the teachers were not among

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[99] George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), p. 40.

[100] Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, p. 74.

[101] Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilisation*, vol. 2: The Expansion of Islam In The Middle Periods (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 47–8; Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia*, p. 228.

[102] The chair position in madrasa *Niẓāmīya* of Baghdād was initially offered to Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī and he rejected it. The position was then taken by Abū Naṣr b. al-Ṣabbādh (d. 477/1084) and he served in the position for about twenty days. The tenure of Abū Naṣr was short because Niẓām al-Mulk kept persuading Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī to assume the chair position and finally he accepted it. In the end, Niẓām al-Mulk replaced Abū Naṣr b. al-Ṣabbādh with Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī. See Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad", pp. 32–3.

[103] When the (Shāfiʿī) Ashʿarī scholar from Nīshāpūr, Abū Naṣr ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120), was authorized to speak in madrasa *Niẓāmīya* around 469/1076 while Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī was the chair. The Ḥanbalīst and other traditionalist group, which were constituted the strongest religious group in Baghdād, opposed Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī because his sermon was mixed with Ashʿarī theological contents. This event triggered a riot in the city that lasted for about two years. And several people were killed. Niẓām al-Mulk finally decided to withdraw Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī from Baghdād. See *Ibid.*, p. 47; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 4, pp. 234–5; ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *The Annals of the Saljuq Turks: Selections from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh of Ibn al-Athir*, trans. by D.S. Richards (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), p. 193.

the Ashʿarīs, including Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī.[104] Meanwhile, in madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* of Nīshāpūr, the Ashʿarī theology was quiet welcomed and appreciated although it might not be taught formally in madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya*.[105] Some of the *Niẓāmīya*'s teachers taught Ashʿarī *kalām* in their private educational sessions, including the chair of the *Niẓāmīya*, Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. Some students took an instruction of theology (*akhadha 'anhu al-kalām*)[106] directly from Imām al-Ḥaramayn or read his theology book, *Kitāb al-Irshād* (*qara'a 'alayhi al-Irshād*) in front of him. One of Imām al-Ḥaramayn's most influential students in the field of theology was Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, al-Ṭūsī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).[107]

D. Contextualizing Sunnī Scholarship in Nīshāpūr

The intellectual connection with Baghdādī and Cairo scholars might equip Nīshāpūrī scholars with intellectual credentials and knowledge so that they were grounded in the mainstream of Sunnī orthodoxy and tradition. They could use their legal-theological knowledge and credentials

[104] Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī was not an Ashʿarī, even used to say that his books on *uṣūl al-fiqh* were written to oppose the Ashʿarīs, "These are my books on *uṣūl al-fiqh* wherein I profess doctrines opposed to those of the Ashʿarīs." See George Makdisi, "The Juridical Theology of Shāfiʿī: Origins and Significance of Uṣūl Al-Fiqh", in *Religion, Law and Learning in Classical Islam* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1991), p. 29.

[105] For example, after being withdrawn from Baghdād, Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī was welcomed in Nīshāpūr and even assumed a leadership position within Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī circles until he died in 514/1120. He used to study under Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, the most influential Ashʿarī scholar in the city and the chair of madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya*, day and night in a variety of religious sciences. In addition, Tāj al-Dīn Abū al-Fatḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) used to study the Ashʿarī theology under *al-Niẓāmīya*'s teacher and librarian clerk named Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, who was also a student of Imām al-Ḥaramayn and gave a commentary on the letter's theological book, *Kitāb al-Irshād*. See Moufid Nouri, "The Scholars of Nishapur, 700-1225", Ph.D. Dissertation (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh, 1967), pp. 500–2; Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, p. 1069.

[106] The term *akhadha* signifies a private mode of learning, not an institutional mode of leaning, between a teacher and a student. See a further information on this mode of learning in Kevin Jaques, *Authority, Conflict, and the Transmission of Diversity in Medieval Islamic Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 24. *Ibid.*, pp. 123–35.

[107] Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Zuḥaylī, *al-Imām al-Juwaynī: Imām al-Ḥaramayn* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1986), pp. 84–92.

that they acquired from Baghdād or Cairo to establish an authority within Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī or Ḥanafī-Muʿtazilī intellectual circles. However, such a connection only was inadequate in thinking about the challenges and problems that existed in Nīshāpūr.

They needed to contextualize their knowledge and credentials to resist and deal with challenges from other religious groups such as the Ismāʿīlīs, Karrāmīs, and local heretical religious movements that were potential to shake the domination of Sunnī (i.e. Shāfiʿī and Ashʿarī) in Nīshāpūr.

The philosophical (neoplatonic) approach to Islamic thought introduced by Ismāʿīlī missionaries required a more rational or rationalized theology and law in order to defend Sunnī teachings. The ascetical approaches of the Karrāmīya challenged both the Shāfiʿīs and the Ḥanafīs to provide their own versions of ascetical teachings that did not contradict Sunnī orthodoxy. Meanwhile, the prolonged internal conflict between the Shāfiʿīs and Ḥanafīs also forced each of them to establish their adherence to traditional Sunnism and their ability to counter the threats posed by groups such as the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa and the Karrāmīya. Although the influence of Baghdādī and Cairo scholars on their Nīshāpūrī fellows was quite apparent, Nīshāpūrī scholars were, nevertheless, forced to develop their own relatively independent approaches to be more influential than those of their Baghdādī and Cairo teachers. They had to synthesize Islamic legal, theological, and ascetical thoughts in ways that were the direct results of the context of Nīshāpūr's intellectual environment.

In the fifth/eleventh century, the leadership of Ḥanafī scholarship in Baghdād declined and moved to the east, Khurāsān and Transoxania.[108] The development of Ḥanafī legal school in the east, which one of its centers was Nīshāpūr, was to some extents due to the contribution of Ḥanafī scholars from Nīshāpūr who studied in Baghdād and their intellectual descendants. Abū al-ʿAlā' Ṣāʿid, who was an intellectual descendent of Qāḍī al-Ḥaramayn, played a crucial role in the development of Ḥanafī scholarship and defending Sunnī establishment in Nīshāpūr. He utilized his Ḥanafī credentials and legal knowledge to appeal the

[108] Makdisi, "Muslim Institutions of Learning in Eleventh-Century Baghdad", p. 17.

Ghaznavid ruler to support his educational cause and to confront his religious opponents like Karrāmī leaders. As a result, around the year of 390/1000, the Ghaznavid ruler in Nīshāpūr, Naṣr b. Sabuktakīn, founded a madrasa for him to teach primarily Ḥanafī legal thoughts. The madrasa was named madrasa *al-Ṣā'idī*.[109] In addition, when he was accused of being a heretic Muʿtazilī (which was probably true) by the Karrāmī leader Abū Bakr Muḥammad Maḥmashād around 400/1010, he confronted Abū Bakr Muḥammad with arguments proving that the Karrāmī's teaching was anthropomorphic. After a long battle in Ghaznavid's court, Abū al-ʿAlā' Ṣāʿid won and the Karrāmī movement, which was initially supported by Ghaznavid ruler in Nīshāpūr, gradually lost the support and its power was withering away.[110] After the death of Abū al-ʿAlā' in 431/1040, his intellectual and political legacy was continued by his family members, including his son Abū Muḥammad ʿUbayd Allāh and the brother of his daughter-in-law, Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Nāṣiḥī, who both used to hold a *qāḍī* position in Nīshāpūr.

However, a more serious and systematic attempt to contextualize intellectual credentials and knowledge that Nīshāpūrī scholars acquired from Baghdādī or Cairo teachers appeared within the community of Shāfiʿī scholars. The Shāfiʿī applied different approaches and strategies to deal with religious and socio-political challenges in Nīshāpūr.

First, in order to be able to compete with Ḥanafī scholars in religious scholarship, some Shāfiʿī scholars who studied with Baghdādī or Cairo teachers in the fourth/tenth century held educational sessions in their private houses, madrasas, mosques, *khānaqāhs*, or stores to teach the Qur'an, *ḥadīth*, and Shāfiʿī law. In this period, theology (*kalām*) was not commonly taught in Nīshāpūr. For example, Abū Ḥasan al-Bayhaqī (d. 324/935-6) taught those religious sciences to Shāfiʿī students.[111] Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭabasī (d. 358/968-9) stayed for a while in Nīshāpūr to teach and dictate *ḥadīth*.[112] Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 369/980) had a

[109] Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, pp. 250–1.

[110] *Ibid.*, pp. 203–4.

[111] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, p. 173.

[112] *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 44.

madrasa[113] in which he taught *fiqh* (Islamic law), convened *ḥadīth* lesson on Friday evenings, and became the head of Shāfiʿī scholar community for about 32 years.[114]

This educational activity of Shāfiʿī scholars continued to run in the fifth/eleventh century. They wanted to ensure that Shāfiʿī students and young scholars were rooted in the foundational sciences of Islam so that they compete with the Ḥanafī s in the mastery of those traditional sciences (i.e. the Qur'an, *hadīth*, and *fiqh*). The son of Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī, Abū Ṭayyib al-Ṣuʿlūkī (d. 404/1013), who studied *fiqh* under his father[115] continued the teaching activity of his father in the madrasa of al-Ṣuʿlūkī. He taught several students, including Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī (d. 438-9/1046-7).[116] Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī himself then taught the subject of *fiqh* and issued legal opinions at his home.[117] The son of Abū Muḥammad, namely Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, learned the foundational religious sciences from his father then pursued his own way in knowledge seeking and his own career in teaching and educating Shāfiʿī scholars. The peak of Imām al-Ḥaramayn's career was when he was appointed as the chief of madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* by the Saljūq vizier, Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 486/1093). In the madrasa, he was responsible to hold educational sessions (primarily on *fiqh*) and manage the student affairs for about 30 years.[118] Furthermore, to ensure that the Shāfiʿī students in the madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya* grounded more firmly in the science of tradition (*ḥadīth*), Abū Sahl Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Hafṣī al-Marwazī (d. 465/1072) was hired to teach *ḥadīth*. He was considered the most

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[113] ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī indicated that Abū Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī had a madrasa when he mentioned that Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Muzakkī (d. 474) was buried behind the madrasa of Sahl al-Ṣuʿlūkī. Imām Abū Saʿīd al-Qushayrī prayed for him in the madrasa of al-Ṣuʿlūkī as well. See Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr Al-Muntakhab Min Al-Siyāq*, p. 61.

[114] al-Nawawī, *Tahdhīb al-Asmā' wa-al-Lughāt*, vol. 1, pp. 241–3; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 3, pp. 167–73.

[115] al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah*, pp. 40–1.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[117] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

[118] Tāj al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 5, ed. by Maḥmūd Muḥammad and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalw al-Ṭanāḥī, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿah ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Halbī, 1967), pp. 171–6.

authoritative scholar of *ḥadīth* alive at that time because he studied (*sami'a*) *ḥadīth* of the Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī from al-Kushmayhānī (d. 389/998) in Marw, who was a student of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Farbarī (d. 320/932) who heard *ḥadīth* directly Imām al-Bukhārī (d. 256/810).[119]

The general tendency of madrasas to teach the foundational subjects (the Qur'an and *Ḥadīth*) and Shāfiʿī law was not exclusive to madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya*. This also applied to other Shāfiʿī as well madrasas such as the madrasa of Ibn Fūrak, madrasa of Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'īnī, and madrasa *al-Bayhaqī*.[120] The only exception was probably the madrasa *al-Bayhaqī* to which Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī went to study not only legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) but also principles of theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*) under Abū al-Qāsim al-Iskāf al-Isfarā'īnī.[121] In other words, the subject of theology was also offered in the madrasa *al-Bayhaqī*. However, the main subjects taught in the madrasas were foundational subjects and Shāfiʿī school of law. Teaching these subjects enabled Shāfiʿī scholars and students to compete and deal with other legal schools, especially the Ḥanafī legal school, because knowledge and competence in those subjects could make them more confident that they were more grounded in Sunnī orthodoxy than their opponents.

Second, in addition to the formal educational session in the madrasas, the Shāfiʿī teachers also gave an instruction of the Ashʿarī *kalām* their private educational sessions. This instruction mainly aimed to equip Shāfiʿī scholars with a necessary tool to resist their theological opponents such as the Karrāmī, Muʿtazilī, or Ismāʿīlī theologians. Imām Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), one of the most prominent Ṣūfīs in Nīshāpūr, took an instruction in the discipline of theology (*akhadha 'ilm al-kalām*) from Ibn Fūrak.[122] Interestingly, the word

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[119] Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, p. 65; Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, p. 57.

[120] See the list of madrasas in Nīshāpūr made by Richard Bulliet in Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur*, pp. 249–55.

[121] See Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. al-Ḥasan al-Isnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah*, ed. by 'Abdullāh al-Jabūrī (Baghdād: Ri'āsat Dīwān al-Awqāf, 1970), p. 91; Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Ṭabaqāt Aa-Fuqahā' al-Shāfi'īyah*, vol. 1, ed. by Muḥammad 'Umar 'Alī (Cairo: Maktabah al-Thaqāfah al-Dīnīyah, 1990), p. 237.

[122] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 4, p. 154. In the footnote of the book *Tārīkh Nīsābūr al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq* of ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī, based on various

akhadha (to take an instruction) seemed to denote an informal or private mode of learning.[123] Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Imām Haramayn al-Juwaynī mastered (*ḥaṣṣala*) discipline of theology from his teacher, Abū al-Qāsim al-Iskāf al-Isfarā'īnī, when we studied in the madrasa *al-Bayhaqī*.[124] In addition, when he was there, he had an opportunity to read theological works of the reputable Ashʿarī theologian, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) outside al-Isfarā'īnī's sessions.[125] He used to reflect on this moment, "I do not say a word in *kalām* until I memorized twelve thousand pages of the *kalām* of Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī".[126] Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī not only studied Ashʿarī theology from his teachers, he also taught this subject in a private mode of learning outside madrasa *al-Niẓāmīya*'s sessions. He taught *kalām* among others to Abū Saʿd b. Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Mu'dhdhin (d. 532/1137), Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 512/1118), and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).[127] The underlying important question with regard to the phenomena of Shāfiʿī scholars teaching theology is that, why did they need to bring and teach the subject of theology?

In this regard, the story of Ibn Fūrak of why he studied the discipline of *kalām* is the best illustration. He said, "I was in Iṣbahān

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sources, the editor mentioned that al-Qushayrī read to Ibn Fūrak until he mastered (*qara'a ʻalayhi hattā atqana*) the discipline of *uṣūl*. The term *uṣūl* here referred to the theology of Ashʿarī because in the last line, the editor quoted al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī saying, "He (al-Qushayrī) knows *al-uṣūl* (principle of theology, or *uṣūl al-dīn*) in the school of al-Ashʿarī and knows *furūʻ* (branches of religion, or *fiqh*) in the school of al-Shāfiʿī." In addition, al-Qushayrī also frequently attended the session of Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'īnī to listen to his lesson (*qaʻada li-yasmaʻa darsahu*) on *al-uṣūl* (Ashʿarī theology). From the term used to denote the mode of learning between al-Qushayrī and Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'īnī (since the word *dars* was used in the phrase "*qaʻada li yasmaʻa darsahu*"), there was a possibility that the session was conducted in madrasa of *al-Isfarā'īnī*. See Fārisī, *Tārīkh Nīsābūr al-Muntakhab min al-Siyāq*, pp. 512–3 Footnote No. 1104.

[123] See Jaques. Although Jaques studied the use of different modes of learning, including *akhadha*, in the context of *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Shuhba, it also applies to other *Ṭabaqāt* works, including the *Ṭabaqāt* of al-Subkī.

[124] See also Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʻīyah al-Kubrá*, vol. 5, pp. 169–70.

[125] Mohammad Moslem Adel Saflo, *Al-Juwaynī's Thougth and Methodology with a Translation and Commentary on Lumaʻ al-Adillah* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2000), p. 19.

[126] Zuḥaylī, *al-Imām al-Juwaynī*, p. 60.

[127] Zuḥaylī, *al-Imām al-Juwaynī*, pp. 84–92.

and paid a visit to a jurist. I heard a statement saying that "the (black) stone (in the Kaʿba) is Allah's right hand on earth (*anna al-ḥajara yamīn Allāh fī al-arḍ*). "I asked the meaning of that statement to the jurist. Unfortunately, he did not give a satisfying answer. Then I was advised to go to a scholar of theology. Then I asked the same question and he gave a satisfying answer. Then I said to myself that I had to know this knowledge. Then I studied *kalām*."[128] In the case of Ibn Fūrak, this story was an illustration of the insufficiency of legal discipline (*fiqh*) to answer theological questions that made him go to study theology. The study of *kalām* was even necessary because he faced a formidable theological opponent from Abū ʿAbdullāh b. Karrām and his Karrāmī students.[129] In order to meet their theological claims and challenges, Ibn Fūrak needed to master the discipline of theology.

The reason of the insufficiency of *fiqh* seemed to be applicable to other Shāfiʿī scholars who studied and taught Ashʿarī theology in Nīshāpūr in the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh century, like Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'īnī, Abū Qāsim al-Isfarā'īnī, and Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī. By mastering Ashʿarī *kalām*, Shāfiʿī scholars aimed to be able to refute their theological adversaries. Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, for instance, employed his knowledge of theology to refute not only Karrāmī and Muʿtazilī theologians, but also Ismāʿīlī[130] theologians through his book *Kitāb al-Irshād*.[131]

Third, in addition to challenges from fellow legal scholars and theological opponents, Sunnī scholars in Nīshāpūr also had to deal with mystical groups and individuals that taught mystical and ascetical aspects of Islam, like Karrāmī scholars and Abū Saʿīd b. Abī al-Khayr (d. 440/1049), who taught an ecstatic form of *taṣawwuf* (Islamic mysticism).[132] To response to this kind of challenge, Shāfiʿī scholars represented by

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[128] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah al-Kubrá* vol. 4, p. 129.

[129] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[130] Imām al-Ḥaramayn used the term Bāṭinīya to refer to the Ismāʿīlī group.

[131] 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd Allāh Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād ilá qawāṭi' al-adillah fī uṣūl al-i'tiqād*, ed. by Muḥammad Yūsuf and 'Alī 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Mūsa (Cairo: Maṭba'a al-Sa'āda, 1950), p. 37.

[132] See a brief discussion about Abū Saʿīd b. Abī al-Khayr and his ecstatic form of Sufism in Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar*, pp. 74–5; Bulliet, *Islam*, p. 157.

Abū Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī studied and taught Sufism that did not deviate from Sunnī orthodoxy.[133] Furthermore, although Imām al-Ḥaramayn's *taṣawwuf* works and students were unknown, he was reported to have practiced and taught this spiritual aspect of Islam.[134] In other words, the spiritual practice and teaching of the Sunnī scholars, especially reflected by the Shāfiʿīs, functioned, among other things, to resist mystical and ascetical practices and teachings of their opponents in Nīshāpūr.

E. Concluding Remarks

Nīshāpūr as one of major cities in eastern Muslim world provided both challenges and opportunities for Sunnī scholars in the tenth/eleventh century. They were encountered with heretical religious movements, oppositions from different legal and theological groups, and challenges from mystical groups and individuals that threatened Sunnī establishment in Nīshāpūr.

In order to deal with these problems and challenges, Sunnī scholars took two main strategies. First, they made an intellectual networking with a larger Sunnī scholarship in Baghdād, Cairo, or other cities, like Marw, where Sunnī teachers who had a connection with Baghdādī or Cairo teachers resided. This networking gave them necessary knowledge and credentials in Sunnī scholarship. Second, the Sunnī scholars contextualized the knowledge and intellectual credential that they acquired from their teachers to respond and deal with problems and challenges in Nīshāpūr. There were three ways of contextualizing their knowledge and credentials. First, the Sunnī scholars, both the Ḥanafīs and Shāfiʿīs, were competing to be more grounded in the traditional and legal scholarship by teaching the students the Qur'an, *ḥadīth*, and legal knowledge in their madrasas, mosques, or private houses. Second, they adopted the discipline of theology and taught them in their educational sessions. This phenomenon especially appeared within the Shāfiʿī intellectual community. They needed to master the discipline of theology (*kalām*) in order to refute their theological opponents, ranging from Karrāmī,

[133] ʻAbd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin Qushayrī, *Al-Risala al-Qushayriyya Fi 'ilm al-Tasawwuf* (Cairo: Maktaba wa Maṭbaʻa Muḥammad ʻAlī Ṣabīḥ wa Awlāduh, 1966), p. 51.

[134] Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʻīyah al-Kubrá* vol. 5, p. 180; al-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Shāfiʻīyah*, pp. 61–2.

Muʿtazila, to Ismāʿīlī theologians. Third, the Sunnī scholars, especially the Shāfiʿīs, also developed a distinct mystical teaching that was different from what had been available in Nīshāpūr at that time. Their mystic and ascetical teaching was considered not deviating from Sunnī orthodoxy as opposed to ecstatic mysticism of Ibn Abī al-Khayr or anthropomorphic asceticism of Karrāmī scholars.

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