

Following these pages, which in no way question the legitimacy of “the love of wealth and boasting of its accumulation,” al-Ibshīhī still does not conclude his chapter by addressing the subject of money and those who love it but presents a long passage on treasures, precious stones, gold, silver, etc., that is taken from Ibn al-Zubayr’s *Kitāb al-Dhakhā’ir wa-al-Tuḥaf*. Interestingly enough, he begins his passage by noting—this also to be found in *Akhbār Makkah* by al-Azraqī (d. 222/837)¹²³—that the treasure that the Prophet Muḥammad was said to have found in the cave of the Ka’bah when he conquered Mecca was said to have been 70,000 ounces or the equivalent of 1,990,000 dinars; and then he continues by elaborating the various treasures obtained during the wars with the Persians and the Byzantines. The whole chapter maintains a serious and even admiring tone, and there is no critique whatsoever of money and wealth. Only at the very end of the chapter on wealth and money does al-Ibshīhī cite a (single) poem stating that all the goods of this world (*dunyā*) are doomed to perish (*a-laysa masīru dhālika lil-zawāl?*).¹²⁴ So, in seventeen pages of praising wealth and money, al-Ibshīhī cites only this one short poem representing a different voice, and in all likelihood simply to serve as segue to the next and much shorter chapter praising poverty.

Al-Ibshīhī begins his chapter on the praise of poverty with the Quranic verse “No indeed; surely Man waxes insolent, for he thinks himself self-sufficient,”¹²⁵ which is for him an indication that wealth (*ghinā*) is condemnable if it leads to tyranny and disobedience of God. Al-Ibshīhī then goes on to cite some of the numerous *aḥādīth* in which the Prophet is said to have valued poverty and the poor—as in the well-known but disputed hadith: “O my God, let me die as a poor man and not as a rich one, and gather me in the group of the poor/*fī jamrati al-masākīn*.”¹²⁶ But unlike his section on wealth and money (except for the last poem), al-Ibshīhī vitiates his praise of poverty by compiling statements like: “One of the prayers of the first Muslims (*salaf*) was: ‘O God, I take refuge with you from the humiliation of poverty and the vanity of wealth.’”¹²⁷ In other citations in his chapter “In praise of poverty,” al-Ibshīhī indirectly reassures his readers that it is not possessions and money that are evil but only money gained through illegitimate means¹²⁸ and that poverty is grace from God which he only bestows on those nearest him, on his *awliyā*: “The Prophet has said: ‘Poverty is one of the

¹²³ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd ibn ‘Uqbah al-Azraqī. Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:280.

¹²⁴ “هب الدنيا تقاد إليك عفواً \ أليس مصير ذلك للزوال” Ibid., 2:284.

¹²⁵ “كلا إن الانسان ليطغى إن رآه استغنى” Sūrat al-‘Alaq 6–7. English translation: Arberry, *Koran Interpreted*.

¹²⁶ Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:286. See also Ibn Taymiyah, *Aḥādīth al-Quṣṣāṣ*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṣabbāgh (Riyadh [?], 1972), hadith no. 50, p. 101.

¹²⁷ “اللهم إني أعوذ بك من ذل الفقر وبطر الغنى” Al-Ibshīhī, *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, 2:289.

¹²⁸ “وقيل مكتوتٌ على باب مدينة الرقة: ويل لمن جمع المال من غير حقة” Ibid., 2:289.

graces of God, for he only bestows it on those closest to him.”¹²⁹ In Mamluk times the term *walī* was used for “saintly” people who were said to have special powers by virtue of their special relationship to God, so a Mamluk reader of al-Ibshīhī’s book might very well understand this hadith the other way around, meaning that if God hadn’t chosen him for poverty then it was because he was not a *walī* of God but just an ordinary believer. Not everybody, al-Ibshīhī seems to be saying here, can be a “saintly” person and have to lead an impoverished existence. Significantly enough, al-Ibshīhī concludes his chapter on poverty by citing a Bedouin (*a’rābī*): “He who has been born in poverty will have wealth render him arrogant; he who has been born in wealth will only be humble with more wealth.”¹³⁰

The last of these three chapters is one discussing begging and the correct treatment of beggars. In this last chapter, which is quite long (14 pages), we find statements like the famous hadith “*Itū al-sā’il wa-law kāna ‘alā farasin*/Give to the beggar, even if he is on horseback,” but al-Ibshīhī gives over much space to condemnations of begging.

If we recall the small amount of space that he gives to asceticism/*zuhd* in the penultimate chapter of his book and how in the middle of a reflection on corruption in the chapter on the qadis he severely condemns Sufis as charlatans who rob the naïve populace,¹³¹ we can see that al-Ibshīhī was certainly no advocate of voluntary poverty as the way of God. In my view, his book quite clearly represents the mentality of “middle-class” men of some wealth: merchants, craftsmen, shopkeepers. I think it safe to assume that he wrote his book with a public in mind that was very much like the notables of al-Maḥallah, where he and his father had been imams.

Coming now to the third and final *adab*-encyclopedia that I want to highlight in this article, the mentality or ideology of Yūnus al-Mālikī’s *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* with respect to money and poverty differs again from that of al-Nuwayrī’s work and from that which we can find in al-Ibshīhī’s *Kitāb al-Mustaṭraf*, and I am very much tempted to attribute this variation to the differing social background of al-Mālikī.¹³² In fact, al-Mālikī’s attitude toward wealth and money, as well as poverty

¹²⁹ "الفقر موهبة من مواهب الله، فلا يختاره إلا لأوليائه." Ibid., 2:286.

¹³⁰ "وقال أعرابي: من ولد في الفقر أبطره الغنى، ومن ولد في الغنى لم يزد إلا تواضعاً." Ibid., 2:290. Bedouins, who at all times knew poverty very well, have generally not valued this state. Pre-Islamic Bedouin poetry, which forms a considerable part of many classical *adab*-encyclopedias, generally praises wealth.

¹³¹ Ibid., 1:321–24.

¹³² Given the fact that al-Mālikī is cited in none of the biographical dictionaries and that this is probably why Ḥājji Khalīfah cites only the title of the book and the author’s name without indicating his date of death; and given the numerous passages which differ both grammatically and lexically from the norm of the Arabic *koīné*; and given the naïve character of the work—we



and asceticism, is very much a petit bourgeois one. The attitude that al-Mālikī (or whoever might have written the book or parts of it)¹³³ adopts toward wealth and poverty is unlike al-Nuwayrī's Arab Muslim "gentleman"'s attitude or al-Ibshihī's "middle-class" one in which contentment is privileged. In al-Mālikī's book, terms such as *riḍā* and *qanā'ah* (contentment) form the basis of a wise and virtuous man's behavior. Typical aphorisms or proverbs are: "He who is content with what is bestowed [by God] is also patient in the moment of distress,"¹³⁴ or, "The best wealth (*māl*) is that which makes you richer, and better than that is the one that suffices you,"¹³⁵ or, "O how ugly is servility if one is in need and how ugly is arrogance if one needs no help. It is said: The fruit of contentment is peace [of the soul]: ثمرة القناعة الراحة."¹³⁶

Th *Kanz al-Madfūn* clearly does not advocate a mendicant life without work; it cites the following proverb, "Better than begging is facing the difficulties of life,"¹³⁷ and it states that one has to earn one's money in an honest way without begging: "The best subsistence is the one which is not stained when gained and which is not sullied by the ignominy and servility of begging."¹³⁸ Although *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* at times shows understanding for the distress of the poor—"It is most astonishing that the one who is poor and has a family to provide for does not throw himself on the notables (*al-nās*) with a knife [in his hand]"¹³⁹—its essential attitude is expressed in the aphorism: "Continenence is the ornament of the poor and thankfulness is the ornament of the rich."¹⁴⁰

Al-Kanz al-Madfūn also assures the impoverished that a poor but righteous man is often better than a vile rich one: "Chosroes has said: 'Stinginess is worse than poverty, for the poor man, if he becomes rich, he is content, whereas the rich man, if he gets something, is never content.'"¹⁴¹ At any rate, *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* comforts its readers when placing money and wealth in the context of *al-dunyā*, that world which is doomed to perish and therefore of no real importance other

have to presume that al-Mālikī came from a less educated and wealthy milieu than the likes of al-Ibshihī.

¹³³ See above, p. 13.

¹³⁴ Al-Mālikī, *Kanz*, 97, l. 22: "من رضي بالقضاء صبر على البلاء".

¹³⁵ "خير المال ما أغناك وخير منه ما أكفأك", *Ibid.*, 16, l. 1.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9, l. 1, "ما أقبح الخضوع عند الحاجة، والتكبر عند الاستغناء. يقال: ثمرة القناعة الراحة." A similar idea is expressed by the following: "He who is content with little subsistence [that God has bestowed on him] has no need of most people." *Ibid.*, 97, l. 14: "من قنع باليسير من الرزق استغنى من كثير من الخلق»

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 45, l. 7: "أحسن من السؤال ركوب الأحوال".

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 56, l. 16: "خير الرزق ما سلم من الآثام في الأكتساب، والذل والخضوع عند السؤال".

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 95, l. 7: "قال بعض الحكماء: إني لأعجب ممن له عيال كثيرة وهو فقير كيف لا يخرج على النس بالسيف".

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 9, l. 12: "العفاف زينة الفقير، الشكر زينة الغني".

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 69, l. 20: "قال كسرى: الشح أضر من الفقر. لأن الفقير إذا وجد شبع، والشحيح لا يشبع أبداً".



than being the antechamber of *al-ākhirah*, which is the real world after this one: “The ignorant man wants to acquire wealth, whereas the intelligent man wants to acquire perfection. Be abstinent from that which does not subsist and cling yourself to that which persists.”¹⁴² Worldly power, like wealth, is not to be desired—it mostly brings trouble and strife: “Being a prince means first to be blamed, then to regret, and finally torture on the Day of Resurrection.”¹⁴³ Pious people should therefore stay far away from the centers of power, as does the ascetic in the following citation: “An ascetic once looked at the door of the king and said: an iron door, death already prepared, hard agony, and travel far away.”¹⁴⁴ So *Al-Kanz al-Madfūn* provides its reader with a quietist moral, and the author’s petit-bourgeois ideology is perhaps best characterized by the following two statements:

“Be occupied with what you’re responsible for/مشتغولاً بما أنت عنه مسئول”¹⁴⁵ and: “He who wishes to remain at peace, does not expose himself and leaves courage alone/من أراد البقاء والسلامة فليدع الاقدام والشجاعة”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Ibid., 18, l. 17: “الجاهل يطلب المال، والعاقل يطلب الكمال. ازهد فيما يزول، واعتقل لنفسك ما يدوم.”

¹⁴³ Ibid., 110, l. 15: “الامارة أولها ملامة. وثانيها ندامة. وثالثها عذاب يوم القيامة.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 54, l. 12: “نظر زاهد إلى باب الملك، فقال: باب حديد، وموت عتيد، ونزع شديد، وسفر بعيد.”

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 185.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 94.

