



AL-QĀḌĪ AL-QUḌĀ'Ī

A TREASURY OF VIRTUES

SAYINGS, SERMONS AND TEACHINGS OF 'ALĪ

with the

ONE HUNDRED PROVERBS attributed to AL-JĀḤIẒ

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Edited and translated by

TAHERA QUTBUDDIN

دستور معالم الحكم وما أثر مكارم الشيم

من كلام أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب

صلى الله تعالى عليه وآله وسلم

من تأليف

القاضي محمد بن سلامة القضاعي

ويليه

مائة كلمة

من كلام أمير المؤمنين علي بن أبي طالب عليه السلام

المنسوب إلى

الجاحظ

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Sayings, Sermons and Teachings of 'Alī

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with deepest gratitude

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I thank you all sincerely. جزاكم الله خيرا

Introduction

تنطق الحكمة على لسانه
“Wisdom speaks upon his tongue”

Ḍirār ibn Ḍamrah, a companion of ‘Alī, describing him¹

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) was an acknowledged master of Arabic eloquence and a renowned sage of Islamic wisdom. When ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d. 132/750)—who has been called the “father of Arabic prose,” and who was a chancery official for the intensely anti-‘Alid Umayyads—was asked, “What enabled you to master the science of eloquence; what formed your training in it?”, he replied, “Memorizing the words of ‘Alī.”² Over the centuries, ‘Alī’s sermons, sayings, and teachings were avidly and assiduously collected, quoted, and studied, and extensively anthologized, excerpted, and interpreted. There are in fact tens of collections, in thousands of pages, of ‘Alī’s compiled words. Among the earliest and best known extant compilations are *A Treasury of Virtues* (*Dustūr ma‘ālim al-ḥikam wa-ma‘thūr makārim al-shiyam*) collected by the Fatimid Shafīī judge, al-Qudā‘ī (d. 454/1062), and the *One Hundred Proverbs* (*Mi‘at kalimah*), attributed to the eminent Abbasid litterateur, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869). They include some of ‘Alī’s most moving sermons and a number of his pithiest maxims. In this volume, I present both these important compilations in new critical editions of the Arabic text using several original manuscripts, and in the first English translation.

‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661): Life and Personality

‘Alī is a well-known figure in Islamic history. Cousin, son-in-law, and ward of the prophet Muḥammad, he was the first male to accept Islam. The Shia believe him to be the Prophet’s legitimate successor in both his spiritual and temporal roles, and thus the first “Imām.” Sunnis regard him as the last of the four “Rightly

Guided Caliphs.” Both Shia and Sunni Muslims laud him for his deep personal loyalty to Muḥammad, his valorous role in the early battles of Badr, Uḥud, Khandaq, Khaybar, and Ḥunayn, and his profound piety, learning, and justice. They recount numerous hadiths from the Prophet praising him, among the most famous of which are: “I am the city of knowledge and ‘Alī is its gateway”; “‘Alī is to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there is no prophet after me”; “You, ‘Alī, are my brother in this world and the next.”

To better understand ‘Alī’s words, it is important to examine the historical, religious, and political context from which his teachings arise. Most, perhaps all, of ‘Alī’s recorded sermons are said to be from the four turbulent years of his caliphate (36–40/656–61). His harsh censure of this world, his many death-themed sermons, and his urgent exhortations to prepare for the hereafter, clearly resonate the difficult reality of those years.

Born in Mecca around AD 600, ‘Alī was raised by his older cousin Muḥammad. He was about ten years old when Muḥammad began the call to Islam, twenty-three at the time of the Muslims’ migration to Medina, and thirty-three when Muḥammad died. He participated actively in the setting up of the Medinan polity, playing a key role in establishing Islam in its nascent stage. Early in his time in Medina, he married the Prophet’s youngest daughter Fāṭimah, and had four children with her: al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab, and Umm Kulthūm. Muḥammad’s line continued solely through ‘Alī’s two sons, a line which would become an important locus for the Shia doctrine of the imamate.

After Muḥammad’s death in 10/632, ‘Alī took a back seat in government during the reigns of the caliphs Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān. The Shia say he spent those twenty-five years collecting the Qur’an and imparting wisdom to al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. After ‘Uthmān’s assassination in 36/656, however, he was thrust into the limelight when the community pledged allegiance to him as the new caliph. During the four short years of his reign, he fought three major battles against groups of Muslims who had revolted against him: (1) The Battle of the Camel against the people of Basra, led by the Prophet’s widow ‘Ā’ishah and the companions Ṭalḥah and Zubayr (the battle is named after the camel ‘Ā’ishah rode onto the battlefield); (2) the Battle of Ṣiffīn against the people of Syria, led by the governor of Damascus, the Umayyad Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān; and (3) the Battle of Nahrawān against a group of renegades from ‘Alī’s own army who came to be known as the Khārijites. In these battles, ‘Alī was supported by many of the Prophet’s companions from Medina, as well as the people of

Kufa and Basra. Many of his close associates played key roles in his administration,³ and some are named as interlocutors in the *Treasury of Virtues*. 'Alī had moved to Kufa from Medina immediately after assuming the caliphate in order to intercept the first group of rebels, and thereafter remained in Iraq, occupied with the Syrian conflict. He spent his last few months unsuccessfully urging the Kufans to regroup and fight Mu'āwiyah. In 40/661, 'Alī was killed by a Khārijite assassin while he was praying in the mosque in Kufa. His shrine in present-day Najaf, near Kufa, has become an important site of Shia pilgrimage, scholarship, and activism.

An account of 'Alī by his close companion Ḍirār ibn Ḍamrah al-Ṣudā'ī al-Nahshali nicely sums up his personality and image. Not only does it encapsulate his companions' affectionate yet reverent regard, it also highlights the austere lifestyle and the concern with the hereafter that underpin 'Alī's pietistic teachings. Moreover, it comments appositely for our purposes on 'Alī's wisdom and exposition. The report is as follows:⁴

Ḍirār came to Damascus to pay a visit to Mu'āwiyah (now caliph after 'Alī's death).⁵ Mu'āwiyah said: Ḍirār, describe 'Alī to me. Ḍirār replied: Let it go, please. Mu'āwiyah insisted and Ḍirār complied, saying:

'Alī was farsighted and strong. When pronouncing judgment, he was discerning. When commanding, he was just. Knowledge gushed from his person. Wisdom spoke upon his tongue.⁶ He shied away from the ornaments of this world, taking solace in the lonely night. He wept copiously in prayer, thought deeply, and turned his hands one over the other, admonishing himself before admonishing others. He favored simple food and plain clothes. He lived amongst us as one of us, responding when asked, and answering when questioned. But despite our intimacy, we would approach him with reverent awe, hesitating to call him out for a casual conversation.⁷ He respected the pious and was kind to the poor. The powerful did not dare presume upon a favorable ruling and the weak never despaired of his justice.

I saw him once when the night had let down its curtain and the stars had set. He stood in his place of prayer with a hand on his beard, writhing as one who had been stung by a snake. Weeping grievously, he exclaimed: "O world! Tempt someone other than me! Is it me you have come to seduce? Is it me you long for? Far be it! Far be it! I have divorced you thrice, a divorce that does not permit reconciliation. Your life is short, your value little. Alas! My provisions are scarce, the distance long, and the journey must be made alone!"

Introduction

Moved to tears, Mu'āwiyah responded: May God have mercy on 'Alī, truly he was as you describe! How do you grieve for his loss, Ḍirār? Ḍirār replied: My sorrow is akin to the anguish of a mother whose only child has been butchered in her lap.

Orality, Authenticity, and Collection of 'Alī's Words: Layered Sources

While writing was known in 'Alī's time—in fact, he is reported to have been one of the Prophet's scribes who wrote down Qur'anic passages as they were revealed—his society was primarily oral. Accordingly, the principal mode of verbal production, transmission, and collection was oral, and 'Alī's words were initially related for a century or more chiefly by word of mouth. This long period of oral transmission left room for errors in communication and even outright fabrication.⁸ Nevertheless, the existence of a genuine core of materials from the period is far from inconceivable. The robustness of the indigenous oral tradition gives us good reason to believe in the validity of the oeuvre. Mary Carruthers has shown that members of oral societies had prodigious memories on which they relied to transmit lengthy pieces of their artistic verbal production.⁹ Moreover, Gregor Schoeler has demonstrated that oral transmission in this society was increasingly supplemented by scholarly note-taking.¹⁰ Because 'Alī was an important figure in early Islamic history who preached often and in many different contexts to large public audiences, the early Muslims had good reason and ample opportunity to remember and pass on his teachings. So it is quite feasible that a portion of the words in our two texts were spoken—with some variation or even verbatim—by 'Alī himself.¹¹

'Alī's words were collected and passed down through the centuries by many individuals. We are told of a written collection by a man named Zayd ibn Wahb al-Juhanī (d. 96/715) who fought in his army at Ṣiffīn,¹² but this is perhaps an anomaly. Writing became widespread in the Islamic world after the introduction of paper-making techniques to it from China in the mid eighth century AD, and it was only then that 'Alī's words—along with prophetic traditions, historical reports, and poetry—were systematically transcribed.

In the eighth and ninth centuries AD, historian-compilers such as Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/774), Abū Naṣr al-Mīnqarī (d. 202/818), Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 205/820), al-Wāqidi (d. 207/822), al-Madā'īnī (d. 225/840), and al-Thaqafī (d. 283/896) are reported to have collected 'Alī's sermons, speeches, and epistles in independent works. In the tenth century, the Fatimid jurist and historian al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān

(d. 363/974) is reported to have collected ‘Alī’s sermons and written a commentary on them.¹³ None of these early compilations survive. But ‘Alī’s words were also transcribed into synthetic historical works by the same historians mentioned above, as well as by several others, and many of these histories are extant.¹⁴

‘Alī’s words were culled from these historical works (and perhaps also copied from the earlier independent works) by literary anthologists such as al-Jāhīz (d. 255/869), Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889), Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940), Ibn Shu‘bah al-Ḥarrānī (d. 336/948), and many other scholars. In the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries AD, major independent compilations of ‘Alī’s words were put together from the earlier written sources, still extant today: The celebrated compilation by al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1014), *The Path of Eloquence* (*Nahj al-balāghah*) has attracted over four hundred commentaries. Al-Quḍā‘ī (d. 454/1062), the compiler of *A Treasury of Virtues*, was of the generation after al-Raḍī, and the contents of his collection overlap to a certain extent with *The Path of Eloquence*. Other extant compilations of ‘Alī’s words include *Scattered Pearls* (*Nathr al-la‘ālī*) by al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1153), and *Radiant Maxims and Pearly Sayings* (*Ghurur al-ḥikam wa-durar al-kalim*) by al-Āmidī (d. 550/1155).¹⁵

As a result of the early oral transmission of these materials, assorted renderings of the same piece appear in different works. There are even multiple renderings of the same piece within one collection, including a number of near-identical passages and maxims in the *Treasury of Virtues*. This phenomenon derives from the nature of compiling similar materials from disparate sources, as al-Quḍā‘ī has done. Moreover, some proverbs (and also some sermons), are attributed to more than one person.¹⁶

The Literary Style of ‘Alī’s Words: Oral Patterns, Islamic Ethos, and Arabian Context

Eloquence is a crucial component of preaching, and as Richard Lanham has argued, it “tacitly persuades.”¹⁷ A brilliant exposition is more effective than a clumsy harangue, beautiful language more likely to evoke a positive response than a plodding lecture. In combination with Qur’anic validation and rational argumentation, ‘Alī attempted to stir the hearts and minds of his audience with his verbal artistry, rhythmically expounding his lessons in cadenced parallelisms and vivid metaphors.

Understanding the orality of ‘Alī’s milieu is also crucial to parsing his literary style. In a study that addresses issues of both authenticity and technique,

Walter Ong has shown that verbal expression in an oral culture is mnemonic.¹⁸ He argues that to retain carefully articulated thought, rhythmic patterns must be used. By and large, the materials in the present volume display such oral patterns (as do sermons and sayings attributed to the prophet Muḥammad and other prominent early Islamic orators). Parallelism, which is the hallmark of ‘Alī’s verbal creations, produces a strong acoustic rhythm, and pithy sentences, repetition, assonance, and prose-rhyme augment this rhythm. Several other features of oral-based verbal production are also discernible, including vivid imagery, testimonial citation, additive rather than subordinative phrases, aggregative rather than analytic expositions, an agonistic tone, and closeness to the human lifeworld, shown through the use of mundane objects and daily activities as metaphors physically showcasing abstract ideas.¹⁹ (Arabic prose produced after writing became widespread, such as the sermons of the tenth-century Syrian preacher Ibn Nubātah, would have a very different feel, including longer sentences, consistent rhyming, and much less parallelism.) To Ong’s list of features of orality, we can add an abundance of audience engagement features: direct address, emphatic structures, rhetorical questions, and prescriptive phrases. Together, these elements create a dense web pulling in the audience toward participation in the speech act—and thus the persuasive goal—of the orator. Moreover, the elegance of Ali’s words is apparent in their dignified yet simple language and their apposite positioning.

Growing up under Muḥammad’s care, ‘Alī was continually exposed to the Qur’anic revelation; consequently, his words are permeated by its vocabulary and themes. From time to time, he also cites Qur’anic verses verbatim, endorsing the gravity of his teachings with divine authority. There is a religious flavor, a focus on piety, in all modes of ‘Alī’s speech, undergirding even the material produced in a political or military context. At the same time, his words also have a distinctly local flavor, a cultural texture grounded in the desert topography, tribal society, nomadic lifestyle, and rich poetic tradition of the Arabian Peninsula. In his verbal production, Qur’anic themes merge with nature imagery to produce a distinctive template of Islamic preaching. Directives to contemplate the purpose of life and the majesty of the creator combine with the vocabulary and images of camel caravans, racing horses, and watering holes. Cultural, geographical, and religious strata converge, coming together in a single, seamless, whole.²⁰

Al-Qāḍī al-Qudā'ī (d. 454/1062): Career and Books

The compiler of *A Treasury of Virtues*, al-Qāḍī al-Qudā'ī, was a Sunni-Shāfi'ī jurist, and a scholar of hadith and history who lived and died in Fatimid Cairo. His full name was Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad ibn Salāmah ibn Ja'far ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥakmūn al-Qudā'ī, an affiliate of the Quḍā'ah, a tribe of Ḥimyar.

A senior government official, al-Qudā'ī performed several singular functions for the Fatimids: He was judge over their Sunni subjects;²¹ he traveled in 447/1055 to Constantinople as Fatimid emissary to the Byzantine court; and he served in their chancery, being scribe for a time for the vizier 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Jarjārā'ī (d. 436/1045). Al-Qudā'ī would presumably also have had close contact with the eminent Fatimid scholar al-Mu'ayyad al-Shirāzī (d. 470/1078), who was head of the chancery from 443/1051 to 448/1056; although the sources do not mention specific interactions, al-Mu'ayyad's dates at the chancery overlap with al-Qudā'ī's time there.

Al-Qudā'ī's scholarship was highly respected, especially in the collection and transmission of hadith. His student Ibn Mākūlā (d. 475/1082) praised his teacher saying: "He was a master of many different sciences . . . I don't know anyone in Egypt who approaches his stature."²² Writing a century later, the jurist al-Silafī (d. 576/1180) said of him: "His fame absolves me from lengthy expositions . . . he is counted among the trustworthy and reliable transmitters."²³ Following Ibn Mākūlā and al-Silafī, several medieval biographers chronicled al-Qudā'ī's career and writings, and recorded the names of his teachers and students. Numerous hadith works cite him in their chains of transmission.²⁴ We are told that al-Qudā'ī heard and transmitted hadith in his homeland, Egypt, as well as during his travels to Constantinople, in Syria en route to Constantinople, and in Mecca and Medina, when he performed the Hajj in 445/1053.²⁵

A prolific author, al-Qudā'ī produced at least seven major books on a range of subjects, namely:

1. *The Blazing Star* (*Kitāb al-Shihāb fī l-ḥikam wa-l-ādāb*, also called *Shihāb al-akhbār* or *al-Shihāb al-nabawī*), a book of "testaments, maxims, counsels, and directions for refined behavior" ascribed to the prophet Muḥammad. This is al-Qudā'ī's most famous work, and some of the numerous commentaries on it have been published. A companion volume, the *Musnad al-Shihāb*, also by al-Qudā'ī, provides the chains of transmission (*isnād*) for these hadith. The *Musnad* has been published in several editions.

2. *A Treasury of Virtues* (*Dustūr ma‘ālim al-ḥikam wa-ma‘thūr makārim al-shiyam min kalām amīr al-mu‘minīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*), published in several editions, and newly edited and translated in the present volume.
3. *Al-Quḍā‘ī’s History* (*Kitāb al-Inbā’ ‘an al-anbiyā’ wa-tawārīkh al-khulafā’ wa-wilāyat al-umarā’*), also called *Tārīkh al-Quḍā‘ī: min khalq Ādam ḥattā sanat 427 AH*, and *‘Uyūn al-ma‘ārif wa-funūn akhbār al-khalā‘if*), a book on the history of the prophets and the caliphs up to the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Zāhir. It has been published in several editions.
4. *The Merits of al-Shāfi‘ī* (*Kitāb Manāqib al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī* or *Kitāb Akhbār al-Shāfi‘ī*), a lost hagiographical work on the merits of the founder of al-Quḍā‘ī’s legal school.
5. *Compendium of Teachers* (*Mu‘jam al-shuyūkh*), a lost biographical listing of the scholars from whom al-Quḍā‘ī transmitted hadith.

The above five books are listed in Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, the earliest listing I have found of al-Quḍā‘ī’s books.²⁶

6. *Institutions of Egypt* (*Kitāb Khiṭaṭ Miṣr*, also known as *al-Mukhtār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār*), a lost book on the history of Egypt ascribed to al-Quḍā‘ī by Ibn Khallikān and al-Maqrīzī, both of whom cite numerous reports from it.²⁷
7. *Qur’an Commentary* (*Tafsīr*), now lost, first mentioned by al-Silafī then by al-Maqrīzī,²⁸ this is possibly the same work as the *Book of Numbers* (*Kitāb al-‘Adad*) ascribed to him by Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah.²⁹

Two other works are ascribed to al-Quḍā‘ī in rather late sources, perhaps erroneously: A work on preaching, *The Preacher’s Pearl and the Worshiper’s Treasure* (*Durrat al-wā‘iẓīn wa-dhukhr al-‘ābidīn*),³⁰ and a work on wisdom sayings, *Details of Reports and Gardens of Lessons* (*Daqā‘iq al-akhbār wa-ḥadā‘iq al-‘tibār*), the latter now published.³¹ Al-Silafī also reports that Ibn Mākūlā preserved his notes from al-Quḍā‘ī’s lectures, a “work” which does not appear to have survived.³² Yet other titles which editors of al-Quḍā‘ī’s various works have ascribed to him are variant titles of al-Quḍā‘ī’s *History* or *The Blazing Star*, which they list incorrectly as independent works.³³

A Treasury of Virtues: Form and Content

A Treasury of Virtues is lengthily titled in rhyming Arabic, *Dustūr ma‘ālim al-ḥikam wa-ma‘thūr makārim al-shiyam min kalām amīr al-mu‘minīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib* (*ṣalla Allāhu ta‘ālā ‘alayhi wa-ālihī wa-sallam*), literally “A Compendium

of Signposts of Wisdom and a Documentation of Qualities of Virtue from the Words of the Commander of the Faithful ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.” The Indian manuscript used for this edition also titles it *al-Shihāb al-‘alawī* (*The Blazing Star of ‘Alī*), to mirror *al-Shihāb al-nabawī* (*The Blazing Star of the Prophet*). It is listed among al-Quḍā‘ī’s works by Ibn ‘Asākir, al-Silafī, al-Dhahabī, and al-Maqrīzī.³⁴ In the introduction, al-Quḍā‘ī tells us about the impetus for compiling the work. He explains that the success of his collection of the Prophet Muḥammad’s sayings prompted a friend to solicit a similar work featuring ‘Alī’s wise words. Al-Quḍā‘ī himself describes the compilation as a collection of “‘Alī’s words and eloquent sayings, his wise maxims and counsels, his directions for refined behavior, his answers to questions, his prayers and communions with God, and his preserved verse and allegories, nine chapters in varying genres.”

The contents of the *Treasury of Virtues* are ethical and humanitarian, encouraging their audience to such virtues as honesty, sincerity, and moderation, and warning against such vices as greed, oppression, and stinginess. But they also contain supplications to God, directives to worship him, censures of this world, warnings of the transitory nature of human life, and exhortations to prepare for the hereafter by performing good deeds. A few pieces support a predestinarian position,³⁵ and a few other sections profess eschatological beliefs in the appearance of Dajjāl, the antichrist, at the end of time.

Al-Quḍā‘ī’s love for the family of the Prophet is evident not only in his collection of ‘Alī’s words, but also in his selection of materials. Some of the pieces in the *Treasury of Virtues* laud them, mention ‘Alī’s special status as Muḥammad’s legate, and confirm the special knowledge conferred on him by the Prophet. Al-Quḍā‘ī’s reverence for the Prophet’s family may have its origin in the fact that the founder of al-Quḍā‘ī’s school, al-Shāfi‘ī, composed numerous poems in praise of them.³⁶

The wide-ranging themes of the *Treasury of Virtues* are presented in several distinct genres and forms, including sermons, testimonials, and homilies focused on the hereafter, prayers for forgiveness and salvation, theological discourses on the oneness of God, dialogues about a variety of ethical and religious topics, epistles with pietistic counsel, and ad hoc teachings in the form of legal dicta, prescriptions, proscriptions, and nutritional advice. The work includes a chapter comprising verses composed as a spontaneous response to the battles fought by the early Muslims, as well as gnomic verses, and verses proclaiming ‘Alī’s closeness to the Prophet. There is also a chapter on sayings that use rare

words or phrases. Proverbs are the single most prominent genre in the book, presented in three separate chapters, occurring in distinct grammatical and rhetorical patterns, and containing mostly moral advice.

Al-Jāhīz (d. 255/869) and the *One Hundred Proverbs*

Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāhīz (“Pop-eyed”) is one of the best known figures of Arabic literary history. Born and raised in Basra in a humble family of possibly African origin, he was a self-educated litterateur who wrote some 240 books and essays on diverse topics, of which 75 survive in whole or in part. His writings include: (1) books of literary criticism which also anthologize much prose and poetry such as the 4-volume *Book of Eloquence and Exposition* (*Kitāb al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*), and the 7-volume *Book of Living Beings* (*Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*); (2) vivid portrayals and incisive critiques of society in shorter books and essays such as *The Book of Misers* (*Kitāb al-Bukhalā*), *The Virtues of the Turks* (*Manāqib al-Turk*), and *The Epistle on Singing Girls* (*Risālah fī l-Qiyān*); (3) rationalist theological and sectarian Sunni treatises, such as the *Epistle on the Createdness of the Qur’an* (*Risālah fī Khalq al-Qur’ān*), and *The Epistle on the Position of the Supporters of ‘Uthmān* (*Risālah fī Maqālat al-‘Uthmāniyyah*); and (4) expositions legitimizing the ruling Abbasids, such as the *Epistle on the Abbasids* (*Risālah fī l-Abbāsiyyah*).

Several manuscripts of the *One Hundred Proverbs* (*Mi’at kalimah*)—sometimes called *One Hundred Select Proverbs* (*Mi’at kalimah mukhtārah*) or *Maxims of ‘Alī* (*Amthāl ‘Alī*)—credit al-Jāhīz with their compilation. These manuscripts cite the Abbasid scholar Ibn Durayd (d. 312/933), who says he obtained it from Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (d. 280/893), a friend of al-Jāhīz according to the report, who had himself solicited it from al-Jāhīz. In this report, Ibn Abī Ṭāhir tells Ibn Durayd the following:

For years al-Jāhīz had been saying to us that the commander of the faithful ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib had produced a hundred proverbs, each one worth a thousand of the best proverbs produced by the Arabs. I asked him many times to collect and dictate them to me. He would promise to do so, but deliberately, stingily, forget. One day toward the end of his life, he brought out several earlier drafts of his own works, culled from them ‘Alī’s proverbs, wrote them down with his own hand, and gave them to me.

The *One Hundred Proverbs* is also transcribed in full and attributed to al-Jāhīz by three medieval scholars: al-Tha‘ālibī (d. 429/1038) in *Inimitability and Pithiness*

(*al-I'jāz wa-l-ijāz*),³⁷ Abū l-Mu'ayyad al-Muwaffaq al-Khwārizmī (d. 568/1172) in *The Book of Virtues (Kitāb al-Manāqib)*,³⁸ and Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh (d. 855/1451) in *Important Chapters on Recognizing the Imams (al-Fuṣūl al-muhimmah fī ma'rifat al-a'imma)*.³⁹ The compilation and its ascription to al-Jāhīz are also mentioned by al-Āmidī in his introduction to the *Radiant Maxims (Ghurur al-ḥikam)*.⁴⁰

And yet, the attribution of the collection to al-Jāhīz is uncertain, perhaps even unlikely. Charles Pellat, who compiled a critical listing of al-Jāhīz's works, expresses skepticism at the ascription (although he does not explain why),⁴¹ and when I looked through the indices of al-Jāhīz's published works, I found just five maxims of the *One Hundred Proverbs* cited in them.⁴² If al-Jāhīz culled the proverbs from his own works, this low number appears to belie the attribution. One possibility might be that al-Jāhīz culled the hundred proverbs from earlier drafts of his own works (*musawwadāt taṣānīfihī*, according to al-Khwārizmī), and perhaps these drafts had materials not included in the final versions. Another important consideration is that only a fraction of al-Jāhīz's works has survived, and the missing maxims might be from his lost books.

Whether or not al-Jāhīz compiled it, the probability of the attribution of its contents to 'Alī is about the same as it is for other collections, because these same proverbs are also found scattered in many different sources. Authenticity of words attributed to 'Alī (and to others from his time) has to be considered at the level of the individual proverb or sermon rather than at the level of the compilation as a whole.

Whatever the authorship, the *One Hundred Proverbs* is a text that has attracted much attention. There are numerous commentaries in Arabic, as well as Persian and Ottoman Turkish translations, supercommentaries, and verse renditions, typically one or two couplets per saying, with handsome calligraphy and beautiful illumination.⁴³ The work continues to be studied assiduously by Muslims across the globe. Two well-known commentaries are: (1) al-Rashīd al-Waṭwāṭ (d. 578/1182), *What Every Student Needs, to Understand the Words of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (Maṭlūb kull ṭālib min kalām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib)*; and (2) Maytham al-Bahrānī (d. 679/1280), *Commentary on the One Hundred Proverbs (Sharḥ Mi'at kalimah)*.⁴⁴ The *One Hundred Proverbs* has also been translated into modern Turkish as *Hazrat-i Ali'nin Yüz Sözü*.

Introduction

‘Ali’s Wisdom in the West

‘Ali’s words, particularly his proverbial sayings, were among the earliest pieces of Arabic literature with which the Western world engaged, presumably because of their universal ethical appeal. Following the first edition in the seventeenth century, there are at least two translations and four editions with translations from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of ‘Ali’s gnomic maxims and verse into Western languages, including Old English, Latin, and German (these are listed in the Bibliography). Al-Ṭabarsī’s *Scattered Pearls* seems to have been a particular favorite. In the twentieth century, no further translations of those specific compilations appeared. Al-Raḍī’s *Path of Eloquence*, however, was translated several times in Iran and India, unfortunately in rather lackluster translations; the one accurate and idiomatic partial rendition is Thomas Cleary’s English translation of its wisdom section.

The first Western translator of ‘Ali’s words was Simon Ockley, Professor of Arabic at the University of Cambridge in the early eighteenth century. He extolled the humanitarian grounding of ‘Ali’s sayings, adducing them as proof against accusations of “gross ignorance” leveled at the Arabians by eighteenth century Englishmen. His words are an appropriate characterization with which to conclude:

The Sentences are full, and to the Purpose: They breathe a Spirit of pure Devotion, Strictness of Life, and express the greatest Gravity, and a most profound Experience in all the Affairs of Human Life . . . All that I say, is, That there is enough, even in this little Handful, to vindicate, in the Judgment of any Man of Sense, the poor injured Arabians, from the Imputation of that gross Ignorance fastned upon them by Modern Novices.⁴⁵

Notes to the Introduction

- 1 Ibn 'Asâkir, *Târikh Madînat Dimashq*, 24: 402.
- 2 Al-Jahshiyârî, *Kitâb al-Wuzarâ'*, p. 82. Other accolades include those by al-Sharîf al-Rađî (*Nahj al-balâghah*, pp. 28–29), Ibn Abî l-Hadîd (*Sharh Nahj al-balâghah*, 1:24), Muḥammad 'Abduh (*Nahj al-balâghah*, p. 23), and Ṭâhir Sayf al-Dîn (*Tadhkirat al-labîb*, pp. 80–81). Eulogies for 'Alî's wisdom and eloquence abound, many of which have been collected by 'Abd al-Zahrâ' in *Maşâdir*, 1:43–47, 87–99, and by editors of compilations of 'Alî's words.
- 3 'Alî's close companions include Salmân al-Fârisî, 'Ammâr ibn al-Yâsir, Abû Dharr al-Ghifârî, Miqdâd ibn al-Aswad al-Kindî, Ḥudhayfah al-Yamân, Mâlik al-Ashtar, 'Abdallâh ibn 'Abbâs, Muḥammad ibn Abî Bakr, and Kumayl ibn Ziyâd.
- 4 This report is found in several sources; this version is from the earliest: al-Qâlî, *al-Amâlî*, 2:147. Other sources include: al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj al-dhahab* 2:415; Abû Nu'aym al-Işbahânî, *Ḥilyat al-awliyâ'*, 1:84–85; al-Rađî, *Nahj al-balâghah*, pp. 641–42; Ibn 'Asâkir, *Târikh Madînat Dimashq*, 24:401; Ibn Ḥamdûn, *al-Tadhkirah*, 4:28; Ibn Abî l-Ḥadîd, *Sharh Nahj al-balâghah* 18:225–26; it is also cited in the modern anthology by Şafwat, *Jamharat khuṭab al-'Arab* 2:374.
- 5 This line is added from the al-Mas'ûdî version, *Murûj al-dhahab* 2:415.
- 6 Lit., “Wisdom spoke from his sides” (*tanṭiqu l-ḥikmatu min nawâḥihî*), its meaning is not conveyed clearly if translated literally. I have modified the word “sides” to “tongue” here, basing my translation on the variant version of Ibn 'Asâkir (*Târikh Madînat Dimashq*, 24:402): “Wisdom spoke upon his tongue” (*tanṭiqu l-ḥikmatu 'alâ lisânihî*).
- 7 Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj al-dhahab* 2:415, adds here: “His smile revealed two rows of strung pearls. He respected the pious and was kind to the poor. He fed the hungry, <orphaned relatives, and the starving destitute.> [Q Balad 90:15–16]. He clothed the naked and consoled the grieving.”
- 8 What is more, just as some of the materials that entered the corpus of teachings attributed to 'Alî were likely produced afterward, some may even have preceded him. Dimitri Gutas in “Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope,” and Riad Kassis, in *The Book of Proverbs and Arabic Proverbial Works*, argue that some maxims from the Islamic corpus may actually be older than Islam, arising from a mixture of Biblical and other Near Eastern cultural material.

- 9 See Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*.
- 10 See Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*, and *idem*, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*.
- 11 I have argued this position in more detail elsewhere: see my article, “*Khuṭba*: Evolution of Early Arabic Oration,” pp. 187–89, and my forthcoming book, *Classical Arabic Oratory*. See also ‘Abd al-Zahrā’, *Maṣādir*, vol. 1. A list of people who transmitted from ‘Alī is provided by Habbūd in the introduction to his edition of the *Dustūr*, p. 20.
- 12 See ‘Abd al-Zahrā’, *Maṣādir*, 1:51.
- 13 For details of these attributions, see ‘Abd al-Zahrā’, *Maṣādir*, 1:51–66.
- 14 Scholars who recorded ‘Alī’s words in synthetic works of history include Ibn Sa’d (d. 230/845), al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), Ibn al-A’tam al-Kūfī (fl. early third/ninth c.), al-Yā’qūbī (d. 284/897), and al-Ṭabarī (d. 314/923).
- 15 For a full list, see ‘Abd al-Zahrā’, *Maṣādir*, 1:66–86.
- 16 For example, a few maxims are attributed to ‘Alī in the *Treasury of Virtues*, but credited to the prophet Muḥammad in certain hadith compilations, and a pious sermon from the *Treasury of Virtues* is ascribed in another source to the Khārijite commander Qaṭarī ibn al-Fujā’ah.
- 17 Cf. the detailed exposition in Richard Lanham, *Analyzing Prose*, pp. 122–39 (ch. 6, “Tacit Persuasion Patterns”).
- 18 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 34 and *passim*.
- 19 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 34–57.
- 20 I have explored this confluence in some detail through a close reading of certain key texts of ‘Alī’s sermons in a recent article, “The Sermons of ‘Alī.”
- 21 “Egyptian” subjects, *per* Ibn Khallikān.
- 22 Ibn Mākūlā, *Kitāb al-Ikmāl*, 7:115.
- 23 Al-Silafī, *Mashyakhat al-Rāzī*, 1:241–42.
- 24 Al-Quḍā’ī’s biographers include: al-Ḥabbāl, *Wafayāt qawm min al-Miṣriyyīn*, 1:87; Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah, *Fihris Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah*, 1:128; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 53:167–70; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a’yān*, 4:212, 4:523–24; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* 30:368–70; al-Yāfi’ī, *Mir’āt al-jinān*, 3:75; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi’iyyah al-Kubrā*, 3:62–63; and Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, 3:293.
- 25 Al-Quḍā’ī studied hadith with several well-known scholars including Abū Muslim Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Baghdādī, Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar al-Jizī, and Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Yamanī. He transmitted hadith to men who would become well-known jurists in their own right, including Ibn Mākūlā, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Khaṭīb, Abū Sa’d ‘Abd

- al-Jalil al-Sāwī, Muḥammad ibn Barakāt al-Saʿīdī, Sahl ibn Bishr al-Isfarāʾīnī, and Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Rāzī.
- 26 Ibn ʿAsākīr, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 53:168–69.
- 27 Al-Maqrīzī mentions al-Quḍāʾī's *Khīṭaṭ* in his own *Khīṭaṭ* (1:5) but oddly, does not do so in his biographical entry on al-Quḍāʾī in the *Muqaffā* (5:710–11).
- 28 Al-Silafī, *Mashyakhah al-Rāzī*, 1:241–42; al-Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā*, 5:710. Habbūd, in his edition of the *Dustūr* (p. 33) and al-Salafī in his introduction to the *Musnad al-Shihāb* (1:9) say al-Quḍāʾī's *Tafsīr* is in 20 volumes, but they do not cite the medieval source for their information.
- 29 Ibn ʿAṭīyyah, *Fihris*, 1:128, presumably about the number of verses in the Qurʾan, in the vein of several other books by that name.
- 30 The *Durrat al-wāʿiẓīn* is cited by Ḥājjī Khalīfah, *Kashf al-zunūn*, 1:745. Habbūd in his edition of the *Dustūr* (p. 33) says it is extant in manuscript form, but does not provide its location.
- 31 The *Daqāʾiq al-akhbār* is cited by Ismāʿīl Pāshā, *Hadiyyat al-ʿarīfīn*, 6:70.
- 32 Al-Silafī, *Mashyakhah*, 1:242.
- 33 Suwaydān ed. pp. 13–14, Habbūd, p. 33, al-Salafī, pp. 9–10, citing al-Marāghī, *al-Lubāb fī-sharḥ al-Shihāb*.
- 34 Ibn ʿAsākīr, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 53:169; al-Silafī, *Mashyakhah*, 1:241; al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* 30:370; al-Maqrīzī, *Muqaffā*, 5:711.
- 35 See for example 5.7, 8.1.41.
- 36 Al-Shāfiʿī, *Dīwān*, 5 segments, pp. 58, 73, 89, 113.
- 37 Al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Iʿjāz wa-l-ijāz*, pp. 37–38.
- 38 Al-Khwārizmī, *Kitāb al-Manāqib*, pp. 270–73.
- 39 Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, *al-Fuṣūl al-muḥimmah*, pp. 537–48.
- 40 Al-Āmidī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, p. 2.
- 41 Pellat, “Nouvel essai d’inventaire de l’oeuvre Ḡāḥizienne,” p. 131, no. 35.
- 42 I found three maxims from the *One Hundred Proverbs* in al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān*: “قيمة كل امرئ” (1:398); “السعيد من وعظ بغيره” (1:398); “الحكمة ضالة المؤمن” (1:83, 2:77); “ما يحسنه رأي” (1:192); and a fifth (without specific attribution to ʿAlī) in *Risālah fī l-Awṭān wa-l-buldān* “الناس بأزمانهم أشبه منهم بأبائهم” (ibid., 4:79).
- 43 See the folio from an illuminated manuscript of the *Mīʾat kalimah* in the Bavarian State Library, with Arabic original and an anonymous scholar’s Persian verses, in *The Wonders of Creation*, pp. 148–49; and another with al-Waṭwāṭ’s verses in *ibid.*, pp. 174–75.

- 44 Al-Baḥrānī also wrote two commentaries on the *Path of Eloquence*.
- 45 Ockley, *Sentences of Ali*, section A3: “Preface.”
- 46 I would like to acknowledge my debt to Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s article, “Ahl al-bayt fī l-maktabah al-‘arabiyyah,” for the current location of this manuscript in the Chester Beatty library, which al-‘Aẓm had seen as part of a private collection. The article also provides useful biographical references for scholars and transmitters associated with the manuscript.
- 47 The first work in the manuscript is titled *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur’ān (Exegesis of the Rare Words of the Qur’an)* attributed to Zayd ibn ‘Alī (d. 122/740, from whom the Zaydī school of Shi‘ism takes its name), followed by the *Dustūr*, and the third text, or rather set of texts, is informally titled *Naql mā lafiẓahū (A Record of Things He Said)*, referring to Zayd again, as noted in the margin).
- 48 The post title page folio with ‘Alī’s praise has what appears to be a narrow piece of paper pasted on the right side, covering some of the writing below, which states in verse that the book is “Donated as a religious endowment, *waqf*, to the children of the community, by a servant of ‘Alī (or by a man named ‘Abd-‘Alī),” (*waqfun li-wajhi l-wāḥidi l-fardi l-‘alī – ‘alā banī l-da‘wati min ‘abdi ‘Alī*). Another note on the same piece of paper states “from the first, divinely aided, treasury” (*min al-khazānah al-awwalah al-muwaffāqah*).
- 49 The Iraqī manuscript contains roughly half of *Dustūr* 8.1, viz. 8.1.1–8.1.3, 8.1.16–8.1.18, 8.1.20–8.1.39, 8.1.67, 8.1.74, and part of 8.1.77. Moreover, it includes 9 short prayers that are not present in the *Dustūr*.
- 50 ‘Abd al-Zahrā’ (in the Introduction to his edition of the *Dustūr*, p. 9) mentions a work by Abū l-Sa‘ādāt As‘ad ibn ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Iṣbahānī titled *Majma‘ al-baḥrayn wa-maṭla‘ al-sa‘adatayn* that he says brings together al-Quḍā’ī’s *Kitāb al-Shihāb* containing the wisdom of the prophet Muḥammad and his *Dustūr* containing the wisdom of ‘Alī. This statement appears to be incorrect, since the author says in his introduction (p. 63) that he has based his work on al-Quḍā’ī’s *Kitāb al-Shihāb* and on al-Raḍī’s compilation of ‘Alī’s words, the *Nahj al-balāghah*.

There is some confusion among scholars regarding the title of al-Iṣbahānī’s compilation. The printed edition of this work (ed. Ṣādiq al-Ishkivārī, Tehran, 1385/1965) is titled *Maṭla‘ al-ṣabāḥatayn wa-majma‘ al-faṣāḥatayn (The Rising-Place of the Two Mornings, and the Confluence of the Two Eloquences)*—slightly different from the title cited by ‘Abd al-Zahrā’. It is possible that there is more than one work by this author drawing on different collections of sayings by ‘Alī, and that one draws on the *Nahj al-balāghah* while the other draws on the *Dustūr*. More likely, ‘Abd al-Zahrā’ was mistaken, and al-Iṣbahānī produced one compilation that scholars referred to by two or more names, which drew not on the *Dustūr* but on the *Nahj al-balāghah*.

- 51 http://gadir.free.fr/Ar/imamali/kutub2/Destur_Mealimul_Hikem.htm The website does not mention the source for the text, nor the name of an editor; presumably it is copied from the al-‘Aẓm Cairo 1914 edition (it misspells the name of the author in the same way the al-‘Aẓm edition does, viz., al-Quṣā‘ī). The text is not vocalized, but the meanings of rare words are provided; there are some typographical errors.
- 52 The dissimilar letters *n* and *z* in the words نائل in the Egyptian manuscript and زائل in the Yemeni manuscript (*Dustūr* 2.3) derive from copyist error, but variant pairs such as لم يتَّهَمَهَا in the former and يسكن إليها in the latter (*Dustūr* 2.14.2), or عصرة in the former and ملجأ in the latter (*Dustūr* 8.2), would seem to originate in the distinct oral transmission of each manuscript, their differences rooted in the meaning, rather than the consonantal skeleton, of the words.
- 53 There is a third book, a late work, that includes the text of the *Mi‘at kalimah*, which I have not used for this edition, as it does not add anything we do not already have from the earlier sources, namely, Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh (d. 855/1451), *al-Fuṣūl al-muhimmah*, pp. 537–48. Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh records the text without referring to it by this, or any other, title, but he does cite its attribution to al-Jāhīz. He lists 93 proverbs, but among his list are a few pairs that are presented as a single aphorism in the other works. His introduction includes a line from the Ibn Durayd-Ibn Abī Ṭāhir preface, without naming either individual.

الباب الاوّل

فيما روي عنه عليه السلام من فوائد حكمه

١٠١	خير ما جرت ما وعظك
٢٠١	خير أهلك من كهالك
٣٠١	خير المقال ما صدّقه الفِعال
٤٠١	خير البلاد ما حملك
٥٠١	خير الأُمور أو ساطها
٦٠١	لكل أمر عاقبة
٧٠١	لكل حياة أجل
٨٠١	لكل مُقبل إِدبار
٩٠١	لكل زمن قوت وأنت قوت الموت
١٠٠١	التاجر مُحاطر
١١٠١	التبّت حزم
١٢٠١	الصاحب مناسِب
١٣٠١	القلة ذلة
١٤٠١	الإِنصاف راحة
١٥٠١	المُلاج وقاحة
١٦٠١	التواني إضاعة
١٧٠١	الحرص محقرة

١ هـ: في المتن (الكلام)، ونسخة في الحاشية (المقال).

Chapter 1

Wise Sayings

The best experience gives good counsel.	1.1
The best kinsman suffices in times of need.	1.2
The best words are backed by deeds.	1.3
The best country is one that sustains you.	1.4
The best affairs are those in the middle.	1.5
Every affair has a consequence.	1.6
Every life has an appointed end.	1.7
Everything that moves forward turns back.	1.8
Everything has its fodder; you are Death's.	1.9
A trader takes risks.	1.10
Constancy is a sign of character.	1.11
Friends are like kin.	1.12
Poverty humiliates.	1.13
Justice comforts.	1.14
The quarrelsome have no shame.	1.15
Delay causes waste.	1.16
Greed debases.	1.17

١٨٠،١	الزنا مفقرة
١٩٠،١	السخط قربة
٢٠٠،١	اللؤم غربة
٢١٠،١	التذلل مسكنة
٢٢٠،١	العجز مهانة
٢٣٠،١	العجز آفة
٢٤٠،١	العجلة زلل
٢٥٠،١	الإبطاء ملل
٢٦٠،١	الصبر شجاعة
٢٧٠،١	الجبن منقصة
٢٨٠،١	البخل عار
٢٩٠،١	الكذب ذل
٣٠٠،١	الحزم يكاسة
٣١٠،١	الأدب رياسة
٣٢٠،١	الفاحشة كأسمها
٣٣٠،١	الصدود آية المقت
٣٤٠،١	كثرة العلل آية البخل
٣٥٠،١	التجرم وجه القطيعة
٣٦٠،١	العبادة أنتظار الفرج
٣٧٠،١	الفكرة مرآة صافية
٣٨٠،١	البشاشة مخ المودة
٣٩٠،١	الصبر حجة من الفاقة
٤٠٠،١	الحرص علامة الفقر

١ ي: (كثرة العلل لآمة). ٢ ه: (التحرم). ٣ م: (مح).

Wise Sayings

Fornication begets poverty.	1.18
Generosity attracts affection.	1.19
Depravity isolates.	1.20
Dishonor bankrupts.	1.21
Incapacity is a form of wretchedness.	1.22
Incapacity is a calamity.	1.23
To hasten is to fall.	1.24
Tardiness wearies.	1.25
Forbearance is a form of courage.	1.26
Cowardice is a defect.	1.27
Stinginess is a vice.	1.28
Falsehood is a disgrace.	1.29
Prudence is smart.	1.30
Refinement elevates.	1.31
Wantonness is like its name. ⁴	1.32
Obstruction is a sign of hatred.	1.33
Too many excuses are a sign of stinginess.	1.34
False accusations cause discord.	1.35
Waiting on God's succor is a form of worship.	1.36
Thought is a polished mirror.	1.37
Cheerfulness is the marrow of friendship.	1.38
Patience is a shield against destitution.	1.39
Greed is a sign of impoverishment.	1.40

الباب الثاني

ماروي عنه عليه السلام في ذم الدنيا وترهيدته فيها

١٠٢

فمن ذلك قوله عليه السلام:

الدنيا أولها عناء وآخرها فناء حلالها حساب وحرامها عذاب من صحَّ فيها أمين ومن مرض فيها ندم ومن آستغنى فيها قُتِنَ ومن أفقر فيها حَزَنَ ومن ساعاها فانتته ومن قعد عنها أتمته ومن نظر إليها أعمته ومن نظر بها بصرتة. لله أمرٌ عمل صالحا وقدم خالصا وأكسب مذخورا وأجنب محذورا وبني غرضا وأحرز عَوْضًا كابر هواه وكذب مُناه وجعل الصبر مطية نجاته والتقوى عُدَّة وفاته.

٢٠٢

وقال عليه السلام:

الدنيا دار فناء وعناء وغير وعبر:
فمن الفناء أن الدهر مُوتِر قوسه مُفوق نبله لا تطيش سهامه ولا تؤسى جراحه يرمي الشباب بالهرم والصحيح بالسقم والحياة بالموت. شاربٌ لا يروى وأكل لا يشبع.
ومن العناء أن المرء يجمع ما لا يأكل ويبنى ما لا يسكن ثم يخرج إلى الله تعالى بلا بناء نقل ولا مال حمل.
ومن غيرها أنها تُلفيك المرحوم مغبوطا والمغبوط مرحوما ليس بين ذلك إلا نعيم زال وبؤس نزل.

١ هـ: تضيف (ومشبهها عتاب).

Chapter 2

Censure of this World and Exhortations to Reject Worldliness

‘Alī said: This world begins in weariness and ends in death. You are accountable for what is lawful in it and punishable for what is unlawful. The healthy are safe and the ailing remorseful. The wealthy are seduced and the poor grieve. It escapes those who try to catch it and comes willingly to those who ignore it. It blinds those who look at it with longing and instructs those who view it with perception. 2.1

How excellent is the man who performs good deeds and undertakes acts of purity, who earns something he can set aside and avoids what he is warned against, who sets a goal for himself and guards his store, who overcomes his desires and gives the lie to his wishes, who makes forbearance the steed of his salvation and piety the provision for his passing!

‘Alī said: This world is a place of perishing and weariness, of vicissitudes and instruction: 2.2

Perishing is this—Fate stands stretching his bow, loading his arrows. His arrows do not miss and their wounds do not heal. He strikes the young with old age, the healthy with illness, and the living with death. He is a drinker whose thirst is never quenched; an eater who is never satiated.

Weariness is this—A man gathers food he will not eat, and builds edifices he will not inhabit. He leaves this world to go to God, with no edifice to take with him, no property to carry.

Its vicissitudes are these—The world gladdens the deprived and deprives the glad. Between the two is only a pleasure that has ceased or a misfortune that has arrived.

ومن عبرها أن المرء يُشرف على أمله فيقطعه دونه أجله فلا أملٌ مدرَك ولا مؤمِلٌ مدرَك.^١

فسيجان الله ما أغرّسورها وأظمأريها وأضحي فيأها كأن الذي كان من الدنيا لم يكن وكأن الذي هو كائن منها قد كان. لا جاء يُرد ولا ما ض يُرتجع. وإن الآخرة هي دار القرار ودار المقام وجنة ونار. صار أولياء الله إلى الآخرة بالصبر وإلى الأمل بالعمل. جاور والله في داره ملوكا خالدين.

وقال عليه السلام:

الدنيا دار غرور حائل وزخرف زائل وظل آفل وسند مائل. تُردى مستريدها وتضمر مستفيدها. فكم من واثق بها ران إليها قد أرهقته إيثاقها وأعلقتة أرباقها^٢ وأشربته حناقها وأزمتته وثاقها.

وقال عليه السلام:

إن الدنيا قد أدبرت وأذنت بوداع وإن الآخرة قد أقبلت وأشرفت باطلاع. والمضمار اليوم وغدا السباق.

وقال عليه السلام:

طوبى للزاهدين في الدنيا والراغبين في الآخرة. أولئك قوم آتخذوا أرض الله بساطا وترا بها فراشا وماءها طيبا والكتاب شعارا والدعاء دثارا وقرضوا الدنيا قرضا على منهاج المسيح ابن مريم عليه السلام.

١ هـ: (فلا أمل يدرك ولا مؤمل يترك). ٢ ي: (قد أرهقته أنياقها وأعلقتة أزياقها).

Its lessons are these—A man is about to see his aspirations fulfilled when they are severed by the ending of his life. No aspiration is attained, and no aspirer attains.

God be praised! How deceiving are the pleasures of this world! How parching its drink! How scorching its shade! It is as though what existed in this world never did, and what is about to be already is. None who arrives is turned away and none who leaves can return.

Truly, the hereafter is a place everlasting, a place of permanence, whether paradise or hellfire. God's elect attain paradise in the hereafter through patience, and realize their aspirations through good deeds. They become companions of God in his abode, abiding there as kings forever.

'Alī said: This world is a place of barren deceptions and ephemeral embellishments. It is a fast-disappearing shade and a keeling support. It destroys whomsoever wants more of it, and harms any who try to benefit from it. How many place their trust in it, depend upon it! But it oppresses them with its bonds, binds them with its tethers, overcomes them with its strangling rope, and enmeshes them in its cords. 2.3

'Alī said: The world has turned away and declared its farewell. The hereafter is approaching and has almost arrived. Today is the day of training and tomorrow is the race. 2.4

'Alī said: Blessed are the people who reject worldliness, who place their desires in the hereafter. They take God's earth as bed, its dust as bedding, its water as perfume, the book as garment, and prayer as robe. They sever all bonds with the world just as the Messiah, the son of Mary did. 2.5

Chapter 3

Counsel

‘Alī said:

3.1

You have been created by God’s power and are ruled by his might. You will be placed in the grave and turn to dry bones. Every one of you will be resurrected alone and held accountable for your deeds.

3.1.1

May God have mercy on the man who, having sinned, confesses. Fearful of punishment in the hereafter, he performs good deeds. Dreading it, he hastens to the straight path. Having been given a long life, he takes heed. Warned, he is driven back from error. Answering, he comes back to God. When he wavers, he repents. When he emulates, he takes good people as an example. He hastens to seek knowledge. He flees from error and is saved. He gives away entire treasures. He purifies his heart. He prepares for the return, gathering provisions for his day of departure when he will set forth on his path, for his moment of need and for his time of want. He assembles supplies beforehand to take to his final abode.

Prime your souls while your bodies are sound. Think: Do people fresh and youthful wait for anything but the humbling ravages of age? People of glowing health for anything but the hard blows of sickness? People still on earth for anything but the arrival of sudden annihilation? And the drawing nigh of death? And the approach of the passing? And the looming closeness of the end? And the piercing moans? And the sweating brow? And the dilating nostrils? And the insomnia of anxiety? And the snuffing out of the last spark of life? And the pain of burning grief? And the choke of the death rattle?

Servants of God! You, and all things with you in this world, are on the path of those who have gone before—people who lived longer than you, who were stronger in battle, and had more prosperous homes and longer lasting monuments. After a long run of power, their voices have become extinguished, their bodies decayed, their homes emptied, their monuments effaced. In exchange for fortified palaces and lavish thrones and cushions,

الصخور والأحجار المسندة في القبور اللاتية المكددة التي قد بين الخراب فنائها
وشيد التراب بناءها.

فحلها مقترب وساكنها مغترب بين أهل عمارة موحشين وأهل حلة متشاغلين^١
لا يستأنسون بالعرمان ولا يتواصلون كواصل الجيران والإخوان على ما بينهم
من قرب الجوار ودنو الدار.

وكيف يكون بينهم تواصل وقد طحنهم بكله البلى وأكلهم الجنادل والثرى
فأصبحوا بعد الحياة أمواتا وبعد غضارة العيش رفاتا. فُجِعَ بهم الأحباب
وسكنوا التراب وطمعوا فليس لهم إياب. هيهات هيهات ﴿ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ
قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْحٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴾.

وكان قد صرتم إلى ما صاروا إليه من البلى والوحدة في دار الموتى وأرثنتم
في ذلك المضجع وضمتم ذلك المستودع. فكيف بكم لو قد تناهت الأمور وبُعِثَتِ
القبور ﴿ وَحَصِلَ مَا فِي الصُّدُورِ ﴾ ووقتم للتحصيل بين يدي الملك الجليل
فطارت القلوب لإشفاقها من سالف الذنوب وهتكت عنكم الحجب والأستار
وظهرت منكم العيوب والأسرار. هنالك تجرى كل نفس ما أسلفت. إن الله
يقول ﴿ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَى ﴾.

اغتنموا أيام الصحة قبل السقم والشيبة قبل الهرم وبادرُوا بالتوبة قبل الندم.
ولا تملئكم المهلة على طول الغفلة فإن الأجل يهدم الأمل والأيام موكلة
بتنقيص المدّة وتقريق الأوبة.

فبادر وارحمكم الله بالتوبة قبل حضور التوبة وبرزوا للغيبة التي لا تنتظر
معا الأوبة وأستعينوا على بعد المسافة بطول المخافة.

١ هـ: (بين أهل حلة موحشين وأهل فراغ متشاغلين). ٢ م: (بتنقيص). ٣ م: (ترؤد ووا).

they have been given rocks and stones propped up in the crushing shelter of dug out graves. Ruination has revealed the annihilation of their palaces, and dust has covered their towering edifices.

The grave is at hand. Its resident is like a stranger. He is with those who live together in one domicile and yet are lonely, who stay in one locale yet are too preoccupied to be concerned about each other. They have neither the comfort of a prosperous home, nor do they associate as neighbors and brothers. All this, despite their physical closeness and the proximity of their dwellings. 3.1.2

How could there be association between them, when decay has crushed them, and stones and earth have eaten them up? When after being alive, they have become dead bodies? After having had fresh life, they are now dry bones? Their loved ones are shocked by their death, a death that has sent them to live in the dust, departed, never to return. Woe! Woe! «No indeed, it is but a word that he speaks, while behind them is a barrier till the day they are resurrected.»²²

It is as though you have arrived at their destination: At the place of decay, solitary in the abode of the dead. It is as though you have already been yielded as collateral to that bed, and that depository has already enveloped you. How do you think it will be with you, when all affairs reach their end? When the contents of graves are scattered forth?²³ When «what is in people's breasts is reaped»?²⁴ When you are made to stand in front of the mighty judge for your hearts to be reaped? Hearts will flutter from their dread of punishment for past sins. Veils and curtains will be rent. Faults and secrets will be revealed. In that place, each soul will be recompensed for what it has presented.²⁵ God says: «He will recompense evil with its like, and good with good.»²⁶

Take advantage of your days of health before the arrival of days of illness, of youth before the onset of old age. Hasten to repent before the time of regret. Do not let this respite prompt you to ride the back of lasting heedlessness, for the end of your life will destroy your hopes. The passing days are charged with disrupting your time span and with separating you from loved ones.

Hasten to repent—may God have mercy on you!—before the arrival of the calamity. Outpace your fellow men in preparation for that disappearance from which there is no return. Seek help in traveling the great distance through a sustained fear of God's punishment.