Objection

The book “al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah” was not authored by Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari and scholars have doubts in regard to its attribution to him. Orientalist scholars have also criticized its attribution to him and as such, none of them see it as a reliable work. The main objection these scholars [raise against accrediting the work to him] is that the title al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah has not appeared in any of the indices of his works.

The [Dutch] Orientalist [Reinhart] Dozy [d. 1883 C.E] believed that the [present] book was neither pre-modern (qadimi) nor authentic as it contained many historical errors as well as imaginary and irrational stories. In this sense, attributing the work to Ibn Qutaybah is a weak [attempt by some] and [essentially] impossible [that he authored the work].
Reviewing the Objection

When Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) found a group of people [that had gathered] near ʿAli (may Allah bless his face) who had fallen back on pledging allegiance to him [i.e. Abu Bakr], he sent ʿUmar to them. He came and called them out while they were in the house of ʿAli but they refused to come out. ʿUmar then called for wood [to be brought] and said: “by the One who [holds] ʿUmar’s soul in His Hands, if you do not come out I will burn this house along with whoever is in it”. And it was said to him: “Oh Abu Hafs (ʿUmar), even if Fatimah is in the house?!”. And he (ʿUmar) said: “Even if!”

So they came out and pledged allegiance except for ʿAli. ʿAli then declared by saying: “I vowed that I would not leave or put on my cloak over my shoulder [in order to leave the house] until I [finished] compiling the Qur’an”

Then Fatimah (may Allah be pleased with her) [went and] stood by the door of the house and said: “there is no one among people whose presence to me is worse than your [ʿUmar] presence. You left the funeral of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) while you [took] the matter [of the khilafah] and cut it [into pieces] among yourselves while you did not seek to consult us nor did you return us our right.”


One of the doubts which Wahhabis set forth, which in reality is cast in order to escape certain [historical] realities, is that the work al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah was not written by Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari. Given that Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889) was counted as one of the [most] prestigious, renowned and excellent of scholars among Sunnis [in various fields such as] literature, history, law (fiqh), hadith, the sciences of
the Qur’an etc., Wahhabis have not been able to question his credibility or personality. [As such], they prefer to focus their efforts [in casting doubt] on *al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah*’s attribution to Ibn Qutaybah and thus [bidding] to debase its reliability. Therefore, we make it incumbent upon ourselves to investigate and answer these unscientific claims.

**First**, this book has been countlessly printed in Egypt and other countries under the name of Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari whose manuscripts are available in libraries across Egypt, Paris, London, Turkey and India.

**Second**, as long as there are Islamic scholars, what need is there to rely on Orientalists like Dozy (who is far from being an actual Islamic scholar!) in order to establish the reliability or unreliability of [an Islamic] work? Why is there a need to refer to Orientalists who in many instances have even denied the existence of the Prophet Muhammad (s)? It is clear that our Sunni friends have come short in regard to their proofs and as such, [they have had no choice] but to take refuge in Orientalists.

**Third**, many scholars among Ahl al–Sunnah, even contemporary ones, have explicitly authenticated and attributed the book to Ibn Qutaybah and have cited its historical traditions. Here we will briefly point out a few [examples]:


و قال أبو محمد عبد الله بن مسلم ابن قتيبة في كتاب الإمامة و السياسة...


> الإمامه والسياسة ابتدأ فيه بذكر فضل أبي بكر وعمر. مط النيل 1322 جزء 2
> بتصحيح محمد محمود الرافعي مصر 1327 ص 395 مط الفتوح الأدبية جزء 2
> 1331 ص 181 و 184.


> اورد العلامه الدينيوري في كتابه الإمامة و السياسة....

Allamah al-Dinawari, in his book *al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah*, cited [the following]...


In another instance, he also writes:

> ... كتاب الإمامة و السياسة لابي محمد عبدالله بن مسلم الدينيوري المتوفي سنة 270 هـ.


8) Dr. Ahmad Zaki Safut, the famous contemporary Egyptian writer and professor of Arabic, has cited
[various] material from *al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah* in a number of places in his book *Jamharat Khutab al-ʿArab* which he attributes to ibn Qutaybah:

وزاد ابن قتيبة في الإمامة والسياسة: والله يا أهل العراق ما أظن هؤلاء القوم من أهل الشأم إلا ظاهرين عليكم.

...and Ibn Qutaybah added in his book *al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah*: Oh People of Iraq! By Allah, I reckon that the people of the Levant (al-Sham) only show their facades to you [and not what is inside their hearts].


وزاد ابن قتيبة في الإمامة والسياسة: فرق الله بيني وبينكم وأعقبني بكم من خير لي منكم وأعقبكم.

[... and Ibn Qutaybah added [the following tradition from ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭalib] in his book *al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah*: “May God separate me from you, and replace you as my followers with someone who is better for me [as followers]. And make you to be replaced [after me with a new leader...].”


نص آخر لخطبة طارق. وروى ابن قتيبة هذه الخطبة في الإمامة والسياسة بصورة أخري.

[...] another text for the sermon. Ibn Qutaybah narrated this sermon in his *al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah in another way.

See: *Jamharat Khutab al-ʿArab*, II: 316.

Is the emphasis of all of these great scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah in attributing this book to Ibn Qutaybah not sufficient?

**Fourth**: a number of Sunni scholars, despite having attributed the book to “Ibn Qutaybah” as well as having accepted some of the bitter and unpleasant historical realities that have been narrated in the book in regard to the first part of Islam’s history, have nevertheless criticized Ibn Qutaybah as to why he
did not gloss over, censor or distort (tahrif) history [when it comes to the Companions]! They have stated that he, like other scholars, must show self-restraint in narrating certain [problematic historical] realities.


One of the worst thing[s] [to befall] on people is a learned simpleton or deceitful innovator (mubtadiʿ).

However, the simpleton (jahil) [here] is Ibn Qutaybah who has not observed the custom (rasm) [of censorship] with regard to [the faults of] the Companions (sahabah) in the book al-Imamah wa al-Siyasah, [that is] if everything in the book can be authentically [attributed] to him.3


If there were no other proofs in attributing this book to Ibn Qutaybah except for the above statement of al-Qadhi Ibn al-ʿArabi, it would have been enough for truth-seekers (ahl al-haqq). This is because in addition to establishing the attribution of the book, Ibn al-ʿArabi’s statement also sheds light on the motives behind the Sunni attempts to deny the book’s attribution to [its proper author].

The Sunnis believe that when confronted with traditions related to the problematic behavior of the Companions, it is incumbent on historians and traditionists [alike] to remain silent, hide and cover-up those traditions.

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When it became necessary to show restraint in merely narrating the minor disputes of the Companions, the avoidance of narrating the oppression, abuses and injuries that Imam ṬAbīʿa (a), Fatimah the Purest (a) and the rest of Ahl al-Bayt (a) faced became ubiquitous and the necessity for censorship became more extreme. It is interesting that even Shaykh ṬAbīʿa b. ṬAbīʿa b. Ṣāliḥ Zehi, the [Sunni] imam for Friday prayers in Zahedan (Iran) admitted this in one of his interviews:

ما موظِف به حفظ حرمَت صحابه هستیم. ما نمی گوییم که صحابه معصوم‌ند و گناه نمی‌کنند؛ اما نباید به چای یادآوری خویشبها و اعمال صواب آن‌ها متشکر خطاهاشان باشیم....
It is incumbent upon us to preserve the sanctity of the Companions. We do not say that the Companions were infallible and that they did not sin. However, instead of remembering their merits and good deeds, one should not mention their mistakes...


Conclusion

With the acknowledgement of some of Sunnism’s great scholars, [we can ascertain that] al–Imamah wa al–Siyaṣah was indeed authored by Ibn Qutaybah and as such, the motive behind rejecting [the authenticity of the book] is to hide the [bitter historical] realities that Ibn Qutaybah candidly exposed.

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1. Translator’s note: there are a number of criticisms directed against the book that are unwarranted. For example, Dozy claims that the book indicates that the author had travelled to Damascus whereas in reality Ibn Qutaybah had never left Baghdad except to Dinawar. This objection is not warranted given that first, there is no strong evidence that Ibn Qutaybah never travelled outside of Baghdad and Dinawar. Second, there are reports that Ibn Qutaybah did in fact travel out of Baghdad, including to cities like Kufa. See Abd al–Rahman b. Ali b. Muhammad al–Jawzi (Abu Faraj), al–Muntazam fi Tarih al–Mulk wa al–Umam 19 vols. (Beirut: Dar al–Nashr & Dar al–Sadir 1358 A.H/1939 C.E), XII, 276 (in other prints, 277).

Other objections include the fact that Ibn Qutaybah narrated from people who were not alive during his time, or that he narrated from Egyptians whereas he had never travelled to Egypt. These criticisms are also problematic and perhaps even naïve. With regard to the first objection, Dozy does not consider the practice of irsal and rafʿ in hadith transmission where narrators often skip or omit intermediate narrators in their chains of transmission for various political, religious and/or personal reasons.

This is a practice that was not alien to Ibn Qutaybah (al–Bukhari, for example, has a number of mursal and munqatiʿ (disconnected) traditions in his Sahih) and can be regularly found in his works in general (including the narrations that Dozy cites to prove his point). On the second objection, Dozy ignores the all–too–evident historical fact that many Egyptians travelled to Baghdad and shared their traditions with Iraqi scholars and transmitters.

As such, it is quite ironic that Dozy’s problematic and even naïve understanding of hadith is used by some modernist Sunnis as a standard for discrediting al–Imamah wa al–Siyaṣah when Dozy himself thought that the vast majority of hadiths in Islam (his study having looked at Sunni hadiths in particular) were blatant fabrications. See R.P.A. Dozy, De voornaamste Godsdiesten, Het Islamisme (Leiden, 1863), 81; this view was also echoed by his contemporary Alfred Von Kremer in Geschichte der herrschenden Ideen des Islams (Leipzig, 1868), 142–43; idem, Culturgeschichte des Islams unter den Chalifen (Wien, 1875), I, 477–81.

2. Translator’s note: not to be confused with the mystic Muḥi al–Dīn ibn ʿArabi (d. 638 A.H/1240 C.E).

3. Translator’s note: Ibn al–ʿArabi does not question the book’s attribution to Ibn Qutaybah. His reservations are only directed to parts that seem abhorrent to him. He does not, however, expand on this point and leaves it as it is. Therefore, it does not seem that these reservations of his are too serious.