notes to properly place al-Ghazâlî in his historical, theological and philosophical context. Sufism, its adherents and beliefs, pervade the work, as is to be expected of al-Ghazâlî, but Winter does not provide even an outline of Sufi thought and history. He mentions that there has been criticism of al-Ghazâlî and the Iḥyâʾ by Ḥadîth scholars because of his willingness to transmit aḥādîth that are weak or fabricated (p. xx), but treats the topic superficially. Winter gives the major Ḥadîth collections in which the narrations of the Prophet can be found, but there is no identification as to the soundness of the aḥādîth which occur in the relevant part of Iḥyâʾ. This becomes particularly problematic when the rejected aḥādîth touch on subtle theological issues. For example, al-Ghazâlî gives a reason for the importance of mid-Shaʾbân (p. 54), reports that Gabriel tells Muhammad that Allah longs for him (p. 61), and mentions that the sage Khîdr and the prophet al-Yasaʾ (Elias) appeared at Muhammad’s death (p. 71). These and many other issues are vigorously challenged by mainstream Sunnî orthodoxy, which Winter identifies as ahl al-sunnah wa’l-jamaʾah (p. xxvi, n. 34). Occasionally, Winter’s notes add to the problem. One notable example is when he questions al-Ghazâlî’s use of the epithet Khalîl Allâh (the Friend of Allah) in reference to Muḥammad (p. 57). In his footnote (A) he explains that Muḥammad is Ḥabîb Allâh (Allah’s Beloved), which is the common Sufi epithet, and that the use of Khalîl Allâh is a textual error or an archaism. Yet, on p. 155, al-Ghazâlî supplies the very authentic Ḥadīth in which Muḥammad calls himself Khalîl Allâh, thus confirming his earlier use of that epithet.

Keeping in mind the uncritical presentation of the material in this translation of Kitâb Dhikr al-Mawt wa Maʿâ Mā Baʿdahu, it is still a worthwhile book for having a general overview of Islamic eschatology and as a ready reference to the many aspects related to death and the afterlife in Islamic belief.

James Pavlin

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It has been over twenty years since Roy Mottahedeh’s book first appeared in hardcover from Princeton University Press. This reissue as a paperback should
come as welcome news to a new generation of graduate students and scholars. Whereas most previous works had concentrated or focused on general political, intellectual, and religious structures of medieval Islam, Mottahedeh’s contribution resided in his analysis of the very matrix that made this society function. *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* focuses on the Buyid dynasty that ruled Iran and Iraq during the tenth-and eleventh-centuries, a period when the Abbasid caliphate was in decline and various transient and limited dynasties attempted to legitimize rule in new ways.

The main question that Mottahedeh asks: What were the various types of bonds and relationships that created the social structure found within Western Iran and Southern Iraq? — is, at first blush, a relatively simple one. However, the skill by which the author uses this question to describe the complex web of obligations, and their concomitant fidelities, in order to create a first rate social history, is still unsurpassed. So, even though the late Abbasid period witnessed a tremendous amount of political upheaval, which led to great changes in terms of economic and social life, it was nonetheless one of great intellectual vigour and cultural flourishing. What allowed this florescence to occur? The lack of an entrenched centralized authority, the inability to standardize orthodoxy (religious or otherwise), and the competition of small courts (like the Buyid), produced an “age in which men were presented with a somewhat wider variety of paths to recognition and patronage” (p. 31).

The book itself is divided into three main chapters, each of which revolves around a distinct set of loyalties: Acquired Loyalties, Loyalties of Category, and Kingship as the arbiter that preserved the equilibrium of these various loyalties. The manner in which the loyalties of acquisition and category differ from, and subsequently overlap with, one another form the core of the book. Deliberately acquired obligations “created the positive and predictable loyalties that shaped society” (p. 40). These included oaths, vows, and clientship – the various ways by which one man committed himself to another. Oaths and vows, in particular, provided the means to establish important new ties in society. For this reason, they were primarily concerned with relations between individuals, as opposed to those between individuals and abstract entities such as a municipality, clan, or school. Clientship and patronage were often established to create bonds of loyalty between the Buyids on the one hand and two important, yet fickle elites on the other: the civil service and the army. In particular, the Buyids used the formal obligations that such patronage provided them in order to stabilize the army, otherwise the most dangerous and unstable element in the state. The significant factor is not that such obligations were made, but that the bonds these obligations created remained so strong. All of the various acquired
loyalties were “frequently invoked when men hoped to make effective demands on others” (p. 95). Moreover, all of these demands were open to public scrutiny and undertaken in a ceremonial or semiformal manner.

The other set of loyalties, those of category, was primarily based on one’s identity as formed by membership in a particular social group or profession. Since an individual’s worth was often seen as an inherited phenomenon — great individuals having great ancestors and so forth — one often acted in a certain way because of the obligation to live up to the deeds and actions of one’s predecessors. These obligations, since they were often inherited, were much more imprecise than those of acquisition. Within this context, society was arranged in a vertical set of layers or ranks (tabaqāt); for example the tabaqah, or sîf, of the soldiers, of clerks, of butchers, etc. All of the members of each one of these categories shared a similar set of interests that was based on shared loyalties.

As an example of loyalties of category and the manner in which they tended to overlap, and, thus, their potential for vagueness, let me focus on Mottahedeh’s discussion of the ‘ulamā’. Scholarly consensus often regards the ‘ulamā’ as a clearly defined body with a distinct structure which commanded considerable popular loyalty, thereby creating an important group to challenge the government. Mottahedeh challenges such a view by arguing that this group was much more vaguely defined because the men that comprised it had other loyalties that overrode their commitments to the ‘ulamā’ (p. 137). As a result of this, they lacked a distinct internal structure and, consequently, lacked the ability to present themselves as the voice of popular opinion (p. 137). Yet, despite this vagueness, the ‘ulamā’ did possess a self-conscious identity that was conferred by their knowledge of hadith.

These various categories of loyalty never expanded into full governments. Indeed, Mottahedeh stresses that “what men most feared was that any one loyalty might overwhelm other loyalties in the consciousness of its adherents” (p. 174). For if such an overwhelming loyalty should arise there was a real danger that members of groups might disregard their other loyalties, thereby threatening social balance. In order to ensure against this, the Near Eastern society needed a distinct presence that, existing outside of all the other categories, would preserve the equilibrium that the overlapping of loyalties provided.

Just such a presence existed in the form of the king. The king, remaining aloof from the various interests associated with loyalties of category, functioned as an arbiter, someone who “saw that each interest got its due” (p. 175). The king, thus, prevented various partisan interests from solidifying at the expense of others. The manner in which he did this, according to
Mottahedeh, was by forming around himself his own loyalties of acquisition. The result was paradoxical: In a world of political instability, society consciously separated itself from the government court, using the king, when it could, to balance its own social instabilities. Although Mottahedeh claims this was a conscious effort (see, e.g., p. 190), I am not entirely convinced with this point. Surely government bureaucracy, at the forefront of which was taxation, permeated the society to such an extent that the tidy separation Mottahedeh posits between the society and the king were, in fact, inextricably linked.

On a related note, Mottahedeh too easily extracts religious factors out of the equation. For example, what role did religion play in both category and loyalty formation? How did this influence the way in which an individual saw himself as part of a larger society of believers (ummah)? Although the author acknowledges the religious background of the oath and the vow, he fails to connect this to the concept of social maintenance. God, then, is the ultimate arbiter of society, and the individual’s ultimate loyalty is to Him. Moreover, it was Islam that connected the members of different categories, and that ultimately transcended all otherworldly obligations. All men, irrespective of class or category, prayed together. How did this influence the social relations, etc.?

Another criticism is, in many ways, also a great complement. This book was excellent when it was first published in 1980, and it is still excellent. However, it is exactly the same book. Very little has changed, so far as I am aware, from the 1980 edition. Granted, there is a new preface of three pages, but beyond this there is very little addition. This is a book that has changed the way in which we look at the medieval Islamic social history and it has had a tremendous impact on subsequent scholarship. In many ways, I wish Mottahedeh had reflected more on this impact and had used the occasion of the re-issuing of this book as an occasion to show how the various studies originally influenced by this book could, in turn, shed light on it. The author could have attempted to answer the question: What exactly is the status of Islamic social history as we enter the twenty-first century?

Aaron Hughes