

Law and Politics under the Abbasids

Abu Ma'ali al-Juwayni (d. 478/1085) lived in a politically tumultuous period. The rise of powerful dynastic families forced the Abbasid Caliph into a position of titular power and created instability. He also witnessed intellectual upheavals living amid great theological and legal diversity. Collectively, these experiences led him to consider questions of religious certainty and social and political continuity. He questioned that if political elites are constantly changing, paralleled with shifting intellectual allegiances, what ensures the continuity of religion? He concluded that continuity of society is contingent on knowledge and practice of the Shari'a. Here, Sohaira Z. M. Siddiqui explores how scholars grappled with questions of human reason and knowledge, and how their answers to these questions often led them to challenge dominant ideas of what the Shari'a is. By doing this, she highlights the interconnections between al-Juwayni's discussions on theology, law, and politics and the sociopolitical intellectual landscapes that forged them.

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An Intellectual Portrait of al-Juwayni

SOHAIRA Z. M. SIDDIQUI

Georgetown University Qatar



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To
All those who are certain of their doubt,
And doubtful of their certainty.

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The requisites of knowledge: a quick mind, zeal, poverty, foreign land, a teacher's inspiration, and of life a long span.

– al-Juwaynī (quoted in George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, 1981)

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