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Political thought of Al-Ghazali on Imamah: Debate between theocracy and democracy

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Al-Ghazali is a Muslim scientist who masters almost all relevant Islamic scholarly disciplines. His analysis is so trenchant for every phenomenon that appears in society. The results of his thought are mostly applicable in several situations to Muslims. This study aims to uncover Al-Ghazali's views about the concept of Islamic leadership. This study supports by looking at comments from figures about various forms of Al-Ghazali's political thought. This study finds that Al-Ghazali's political thought is theodemocracy, where the people must support the leadership under religion's demands (Islam). Thus, Al-Ghazali did not replace one of the sects: Shi'a or Sunni, related to Islamic leadership, but he took to combine the two of them.

Contribution: Al-Ghazali is a scholar who is a reference for Muslims until today, especially Sunnis. Muslims can consider Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the concept of theo-democratic leadership. It is usable for Muslims who live in countries that adhere to democracy or Islamic countries who want to build a democratic system.

Keywords: Al-Ghazali; politics; Imamat; Islamic leadership; leadership; theo-democracy; Sunni Muslims.

Introduction

Imamate or leadership, for Al-Ghazali, is not only to the issue of mandatory and non-mandatory or *d.arūrī* or non-*d.arūrī*, but further it is a religious obligation. According to him, religion and the state are inseparable, as both, although different, may have functions that mutually reinforce each other.

The relationship between religion and state is the obligation to establish a country as a religious entity. Al-Ghazali reiterates several times in his book, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn,* that the real world is an afterlife field. Religion does not fulfill its purpose if it does not participate in providing solutions to world problems. Power and religion are twin sisters (*taw'amān*). The faith is a pole, whilst the ruler (*imām*) as a power is its guard. The building would collapse and be lost without the bar. It is maintained not only with the ruler but also with the regularity of civil order (Al-Ghazali 1975:71). Thus, religion and the state cannot be separated because of the interdependence of both. Religion is a guideline for governing, and the government ensures that it works properly.

The interdependence between religion and state can be seen as an instrument to both achieve worldly goals and gain Allah's pleasure. The government should be seen as an intermediary (*wasilah*) to benefit the hereafter. Therefore, it is logical that in the discourse of the state and position of Imamate, Muslim scholars, not least Al-Ghazali, make interdependency aspects of religion and state as something that had not been passed. The Prophet said that acts in the world are a means to gain Allah's pleasure (Hereafter). The hadith is الدنيا بلاغ للآخرة.

According to Al-Ghazali, the state organised many people; it shall be styled with religion. The government must work to lead the people to the good of the Hereafter and create a country conducive to this purpose. Thus, it is understandable why religion and the state must be interrelated. The Government serves people in worldly benefit and deliver people to Allah so that people may be happy in both this world and the Hereafter. So, to reach the afterlife, the role of *syari'a* is necessary.

View of Al-Ghazali, who did not want to separate religion and state, is certainly not limited to the relationship of both, but closely related to the pattern of leadership (*Imamate*) to synergise with

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religious values. The demand was very logical because a state government implementing religion's mandate would have to run according to spiritual matters.

A *Sultan* as the holder of political power is the guardian of religion in public life, whereas the state religion is the basis for it all. Therefore, if the *Sultan* who must keep faith in the atmosphere is not stable, it will adversely impact a country's belief. Based on that, the presence of the state in which Muslims live is a necessity. However, the view that religion and the government should function interdependently does create polemic among Islamic thinkers. One would expect Al-Ghazali to take a theocratic stance, arguing for authoritarian leadership that requires absolute obedience to the text. But he also engages with democratic notions of governance.

Research method and design

This research is a qualitative type of biographical and bibliographical research. Biographical research is part of historical research (Bakker & Zubair 1990:41; Nazir 1998:56–57). The subjects in this study were individuals who were the main actors in the dynamics of Islamic politics in his day. This research's object is Al-Ghazali's as a *Hujjatu al-Islam* and its interaction with political realities in his lifetime.

Al-Ghazali was a prominent Muslim intellectual in his day and even today. According to Azyumardi Azra, Muslim scholars are layers of educated Muslims who have a unique role in developing cultural values. Therefore, they can hold leadership in society (Azra 1999:34).

Thus, the product of Al-Ghazali's political thought as an intellectual response is inseparable from the socio-political and cultural situations and conditions that grew and developed in the Muslim community at that time.

This study's primary data source is several works produced by the characters that become the research object. These works can be in the form of books, articles and other activities (Kartodirdjo 1993; Kuntowijoyo 2000:189–202).

Other documents also support it – academic work or scholarly work – written by academics about the figures studied as a source of supporting data and the results of research studies related to the journey and dynamics of the characters' lives that are the objects of this study.

This study used an intellectual history analysis and the textual analysis, namely data analysis techniques on the meaning of one text and intertextual. The analysis technique links one book with another so that relations and interrelationships are known to indicate the possibility of mutual influences.

Data analysis is the activity of collecting, organising, sorting, grouping, coding or signing, and categorising data to find and formulate working hypotheses based on the data. Data analysis is useful for reducing the data set into an embodiment that can be understood through a logical and systematic description process so that the focus of the study can be explored, tested and answered carefully and thoroughly.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for a research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Result of the research
Socio-political setting of Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali's full name is Zain DīnAbūHamîd Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Ghazali al-Thūsīal-Shāfi'ī. He was born in the *Ghazalan* village in Thûs Khorasan, now near Masyhad, 450 AH (1058 CE), and died in 505 AH (1111CE). It is widely known as a *faqih*, the *kalam* (theologian), philosopher and *Sufi*. His father, Muhammad, was a wool spinner and cloth merchant; the surname Al-Ghazali is often ascribed to the word *gazal,* meaning spinning wool. He had a brother named AbûFutûh Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tûsî Al-Ghazali or better known as Majduddin.

Al-Ghazali lived in a time when many religious and political movements were opposing the Islamic World. Three years before he was born, the domination of Bûyiyah Dynasty (*Buwaihiyyah*) Shi'a on the Sunni Caliphate in Baghdad ended. At that time, the Seljuk Turks, under the leadership Thugrul Beg, entered the city and got rid of the regime Bûyiyah. Thugrul Beg, known as the man who proclaimed himself as *Sulthan Nishapur*, ruled much of the Abbasid Empire. There was a shift in politics and a change in the Shiite dominance to Sunni power.

At the time of Al-Ghazali, the central government was only an ideal. Small nations in the area governed themselves, among these was the city-state in the Medina of the Prophet (the then state capital in Greece). The payment of tribute encouraged the caliph's friendly engagement with small countries. Abbasid Caliph was quite satisfied with this nominal recognition from individual provinces with the tribute payments. However, the caliphate could not succeed in convincing the *Sulthans* in control of the areas to be subject to the central government (Nasution 1985:70).

Al-Ghazali witnessed a peak of power during his lifetime until the sharp setback to the Seljuk dynasty, following the murder of Malik Shah (Sjadzali 1991:73–74). In the reign of Seljuk, Al-Ghazali grows and thrives with religious thoughts. He got a fresh breeze and high respect from the Seljuk ruler because of the similarity of two schools, namely Syafi'iyah in jurisprudence and Asy'ariyah in theology.

The above picture shows that Al-Ghazali was an idealist in almost all aspects of life. He mastered many disciplines and is also known as a political scientist who held views and theories of significant state influence. He authored several other works, such as *al-Musta al-Zhahiriyya* (Rebuttal to the flow of illegal political Bathiniyyah) or better known as the

book of *Fadha'ih al-Bathiniyya* (Vices of Bathiniyya doctrine), *Sulûk al-Sulthânah* (How to Govern) and *al-Tibr al-Masbuk* (Gem Already Carved) that in Europe known as the 'Ethical Political Handbook', and other books that are generally talking about the moral state emphasise that the state is the goal of Islam.

As mentioned above, Al-Ghazali lived in a period marked by the intellectual tension between philosophy and *kalam*, political and religious tensions between Sunni and Shiite and practical political tensions during the Abbasid dynasty, a lot of events that were very influential in his personal life. The Islamic political arena was unstable because the caliph was but a symbol, one can go as far as to say a mere puppet, instead of ruling a centralised Muslim government. More precisely, the caliph is only a religious character, because the real political power and government are in the Bani Seljuk (Sjadzali 1991:72). Moreover, beyond the Islamic World's control in *Bani Seljuk*, the Abbasid Caliphate split into several small governments, led by its rulers, although they still formally acknowledged the caliph as head of state (Abdul Karim 2007:164; Sjadzali 1991:71).

The more people feel strongly about autonomous governance instead of centralised control, the weaker the Caliph's position becomes (Karim 2007:164). Besides, the political legitimacy of the Caliph is turning into the hands of the *Sulthan*. In Al-Ghazali's era, Caliph of Bani Abbas was under the *Bani Seljuk Sulthan's influence*, namely *Sulthan* Barkiyaruq. The *Sulthan* came to power after he overthrew his uncle, *Sulthan* Tutusy bin 'Alb' Arsalān (Badawi n.d.: 9; Hitti 1970:479; Sjadzali 1991:72).

Munawir Sjadzali supported political factors behind the departure of Al-Ghazali. According to him, Al-Ghazali's emigration to Damascus motivated two things: the murder of Prime Minister Nizam al-Muluk and the murder Tutusy *Sulthan* bin 'Alb' Arsalan by his nephew, Barkiyaruq. The assumption is strengthened by the return of Al-Ghazali to Baghdad. He was persuaded by the Minister of Fakhr al-Muluk, son of Nizam al-Muluk, because Barkiyuruq *Sulthan* had died.

Al-Ghazali leaves Baghdad because of political issues that include security threats from Bāthiniyyah. This terror is caused by the Fathimiyyah Caliphate's support in Egypt to undermine the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Besides, the inner turmoil related to his academic endeavours is also an essential factor. During his retreat from Baghdad, his focus shifts from philosophy to jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and Sufism. It was also marked by the birth of the '*Ihyā*' `*Ulūm al-Dīn*, a book about Sufism and *fiqh* during his seclusion (Al-Ghazali n.d.:13; Sjadzali 1991:73) and also *al-Munqidzmin al-D}alāl* after he returned from exile to Baghdad.

Apart from issues of power conflicts that raged around Al-Ghazali, ideology problems are also significant. At the time, the clash of ideas amongst Ash'arite, Mu'tazilites and Shi'ites

were so fierce (Ma'arif 1993 :23). The conflict between Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite is more a matter of theology relating to God's issue and the nature of human action (Al-Ghazali 1988:65–66). Nonetheless, given the fact that Mu'tazilite before Al-Ghazali had become an official theological doctrine of the state, the political nuances indirectly carried away because many people linked the destruction of the *Khilafah* Bani 'Abbas related to the shift of the philosophy of Mu'tazilite to Ash'arite ('*Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a*). However, in essence, it is not because Al-Ghazali represents Ash'arite ('*Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jama'a*), but rather on political overtones, since that time, the Caliphate of Bani Abbas was in a weakened state. Whilst on the other hand, the Shiite group represents Bathiniyya's vigorous violence against the Caliph in Baghdad. To dispel the validity of claims that are not Sunni, according to Ahmad Syafii, the Sunni scholars express political theorising, especially about leadership, including the Al-Ghazali.

Discussion
The views of Al-Ghazali on leadership in Islam

Qamaruddin Khan, in his book, *The Political Thought of IbnTaymiyyah*, stated that Al-Ghazali was the first to launch the idea of *ahl al-Shawka* (Khan 1992:136–137). The statements expressed in the context of explaining the similar concept explained in detail by Ibn Taymiyyah, whereby several parties, including by Qamaruddin Khan, considered a new perspective in determining the source of the authority of the power of a ruler (*imam* or *Sulthan*) originated. *Ahl al-Shawka's* ideas of Ibn Taymiyyahare were seen as a new milestone in viewing the source of authority. As a result, the concept became synonymous with Ibn Taymiyyah to ignore similar idea first proposed by Al-Ghazali.

Ahl al-Shawka's notion of Al-Ghazali disclosed in detail in his book, *Fadlâih al-Bâthiniyya*, a book written to criticise various forms of deviation from one of the Shiite sect, namely *al-Bâthiniyya* and also to defend and strengthen the Caliphate of Bani Abbas and the position of Caliph Mustazhhir bi Allah (المستظهر بالله) (Al-Ghazali 1956:169).

Such reality is emphasised by the following words (Sjadzali 1991):

فالشوكة فى عصر نا هذا من اصناق الخلائق للتر ك {للتر كى والتر كمانى} وقد اسعدهم الله تعالى بمالاته ومحبته حتى أهم يتقربون الى الله بنصر ته وقمع أعداءدولته.... (pp. 66–67)

translation: The power (*Shawka*) at the time, we were in a group of Turkish people and God was happy to give them his passion and love (to them) to draw closer to God and thanks to the help of his enemies to destroy him.

Thus, Al-Ghazali's statement suggests that the Abbasid Caliphs had lived his formal name only (Badawi n.d.:13). Whilst the real power has shifted into Bani Seljuq completely, they moved the government's seat to Baghdad's regions. For those who are still left behind him, the Caliph is the authority approving as did Caliph al-Qaim bi Amr Allah (القائم بامر الله),

which gives recognition to the king TughrilBek of Bani Seljuq and power around the palace alone.

However, after looking closely at caliphates confined only to religious symbolic aspects, Al-Ghazali does not have antipathy towards the board. It can be seen from a solid defence to the caliphate (Al-Ghazali 1956:169), even in politics and government, have any authority and a symbolic nod to the rulers who dominated the caliphate itself. Of course, he means, in this case, is the Bani Abbas Caliphs.

According to Al-Ghazali, there are some reasons why the Bani Abbas Caliphs was entitled to the caliphate. Amongst other things he said, because he had the support of *ahl al-Shawka* (influential people) through allegiance (*baiat*) (Al-Ghazali 1988:150), as well as he is a man of Quraysh (Al-Ghazali 1956:193, 1988:150–151) where it became the basis for the legitimacy of' Abu Bakr al-Siddiq in conquering the companions of the *Anshar* at the hearing Tsaqifah Bani Saidah (Al-Mawardi 1973:6; Pulungan 1999:106).

Affirmation of Al-Ghazali on the validity of the Abbasid Caliphate (Al-Ghazali 1956:169, 194), despite having no political power at all, according to Abd al-Rahman Badawi (Badawi n.d.:ي) is purely based on religious motivation. According to him, the various arguments put forward in the book of *Fadhā'ih al-Bāthiniyya* are in religion (Badawi n.d.:ط). However, when the Bathinite emerged as a political force who claim that their Imams are entitled to the caliphate based on *nash* (*washiyya*). Al-Ghazali (1956:142–145) developed a more nuanced political opinion about the irregularities of the Shiite sect.

That emphasis, according to Al-Ghazali, was significant so that the caliphate which was in the name is not deleted by the successive *Sulthans* who controlled Baghdad. Moreover, at the time of the *Bani Seljuk* Empire, which holds authority over their internal war-torn, Barkiyaruq itself cut off to the *Sulthan* Tutusy, supported by caliph (Sjadzali 1991:72).

While conflict was raging in the Abbasid Caliphate's internal area, the threat to the caliph's political authority required constant assertion (Al-Qadhi 1993:127; Sjadzali 1991:73). There will be other authorities, including from Seljuk, to seize the Bani Caliphate. If that happens, it not only lost the political power of the caliphate but also considering the religious influence in those days, it was just a live realm of authority besides the formal recognition.

When explaining the source of power (authority), in this case, the Abbasid Caliph, Al-Ghazali, is often linked to the *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, an institution which, according to political thinkers such as al-Mawardi, serves as *ahl al-ikhtiyar* [election]. It is found from the expression, all of *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd* (وكافة اهل الحل والعقد). The disclosure of this institution is indeed impressive that Al-Ghazali admits the truth. However, if it has the same recognition as its predecessor, why should it relate to the Ahl al-Shawkah?

According to the author, irrespective of the *ahl al-ikhtiyar* mention amongst the Sunni, Al-Ghazali wanted to explain things very principles on which the authority was obtained from the authorities. Therefore, to know about what the *ahl al-Shawka* means, one should bear in mind his comments regarding the ordination of Caliph Abu Bakr as a successor to the Prophet. Abu Bakr was cemented into the caliph by Umar ibn Khattab in the Bani Saqifah hall when there was debate over who is entitled to be the Prophet's successor. Umar bin Khattab spontaneously (*mubadarah*) holds hands for allegiance to Abu Bakr.

According to Al-Ghazali, outwardly, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq was elected as the first caliph after Umar bin Khattab alone has allegiant to him. Just a few moments later, the allegiance to the people followed. According to Al-Ghazali it is a historical fact, and it is not necessary to say that a Muslim caliphate could be inducted by one of the people who become *ahl al-halliwa al-'aqd*. However, it does depend on where the person's allegiance lies. Therefore, in the case of Abu Bakr, al-Siddiq could be succeeded only by Umar. Although a candidates allegiance to those qualified to appoint or depose a caliph should be a factor when considering the candidates suitability to be caliph, this is not the main problem. Rather, the issue was Umar bin Khattab's self (Al-Ghazali 1956:177).

In other words, if Umar bin Khattab's allegiance was different, he would not have succeeded Abu Bakr. Therefore, according to Al-Ghazali, assuming some parties claim that a caliph's validity can be based only on the allegiance of a member of the *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd* is not right. Its most crucial cause is how much influence an individual is to the surrounding community. Thus, he argues, the number of people born of allegiance should be seen, but this would be the person's quality. If Umar bin Khattab, is not an influential person surely others will oppose it. However, as he is so respected, it became the inaugural allegiance of other Muslims.

About it, Al-Ghazali (1956:177, 1988:150–151) stated:

الأيدى الى البيعة بسبب مبادرته ولكن لتتابع.

The statement quoted Al-Ghazali bit long to give a real perspective on what he wanted to *ahl al-Shawkah*. From these expressions, Al-Ghazali has provided a different perspective from previous Sunni Muslim political thinkers, such as al-Mawardi, where, according to Khan's, it is more like a jurist board (*dewan fuqaha*) (Khan 1992:133).

Thus, although Al-Ghazali mentioned several times *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, apparently it is not absolute, such as the ability of its members to conduct allegiance. From the statement, the number one, two and so on is not essential, but what is behind the individual who did the critical devotion.

Al-Ghazali's stance concerning the need for support of influential people in the community will be more clear if linked with other doctrines, such as the doctrine of the struggle

for recognition of power (coup) against the legitimate authority (Al-Ghazali 1967:54–55) if it then can handle people and situations. However, if the failed coup perpetrators dominate and fall, it will also fail to win legitimate authority status.

I suppose the explanation of Al-Ghazali is only considered as an independent study. In that case, it means that it not associated with other doctrines such as: (1) the authority *Muqaddas*, (2) power is the grace of God given to a person and (3) the Caliph al-Mustazhhir bi Allah is legitimate authority based on holy text, it will provide a clear picture if that person's power is not derived in blessing or grace, as admitted Shiites, but merely support the availability of people, particularly people of influence in the community.

However, it seems to be increasingly difficult to understand if all three are integrated into the political doctrine of Al-Ghazali. So, it is not surprising that political thinkers consider Al-Ghazali hold the view that the source of authority is the power of God's revelation.

Arguments raised by critics of Al-Ghazali are a statement that God has chosen two groups of Bani Adam, namely (1) the Prophet in charge explained to God's servants on the right path. It will bring happiness in the World and the Hereafter and (2) it is the king's duty to ensure his servants are not hostile to each other. Because of their duties to maintain order and peace, Sulthan occupies a privileged position and must be respected. It follows the Prophet's words, which states that the *Sulthan* is the shadow of God on earth. In essence, Munawir Sjadzali assumes that Al-Ghazali considers that the rulers are extraordinary, so they cannot be sued. If explored further, it seems Munawir wants to say that power, according to Al-Ghazali, comes from God (Sjadzali 1991:77–78).

Opinions expressed by Munawir Sjadzali, according to the authors, are less valid because he did not explain further Al-Ghazali's statement about the issue. According to the authors, Al-Ghazali was not so far to say that power comes from God. At least, it is not the same as assuming that Shiite power comes from God's grace or blessing. According to the authors, Al-Ghazali has stated that God's role could not be ignored in the determination of a leader. However, the position does not necessarily come just to someone based on blessing, so he became the ruler. More precisely, we read the statement of Al-Ghazali (Sjadzali 1991):

فكأنا فى الظاهر رددنا تعيين الإمامة الى اختيار شخص واحد وفى الحقيقة رددنا الى اختيار الله عقيب متابعة شحص واحد أو أشخاص. (pp. 77–78)

This is reinforced by the phrase Al-Ghazali that (Sjadzali 1991):

فإن الإمامة عند نا تنعقد بالشو كة، والشو كة تقو م بالمبايعة و المبايعة لا تحصل إلا بصر ف الله تعالى .... (p. 179)

The existence of the word, according to the author, cannot be claimed that Al-Ghazali hangs leadership to the gift of God. According to the author, if it is understood, not necessarily the inclusion of language that asserts regarding the need *syawka* and allegiance, in which both words are affirming the human role in realising it.

According to the authors, the phrase Al-Ghazali will be readily understood if associated with an *Asy'ariite* theological term that emphasises aspects *kasb* [the human effort], where although people try. Still, determination ultimately remains in the hands of Allah.

In this connection, according to the authors, it is not appropriate if Al-Ghazali equated with figures such as al-Hilli, who said that power is a gift of God to His servant. If attributed to the Shiite group and said that the legitimate caliph by *nash* is Ali, he opposed it because they do not have any evidence to support it (Sjadzali 1991:178).

His statement, which stressed that al-Mustazhhir bi Allah is legitimate authority, based on religious guidance and people obey them, is imperative. It is a consequence of the recognition element of the Quraysh as a necessary condition. According to the authors, what is meant by the religious argument (*dalilsyara'*) is no other than the Quraysh factor itself and not the other, according to the statement of Abu Bakr al-Shiddiq الأئمة من قريش (leaders [must] from the Quraysh).

Therefore, there is truth in the opinions expressed by the reviewer of the book, *Fadaih al-Batiniyyah*, who said that the arguments of Al-Ghazali about the position of al-Mustazhhir bi Allah are a feeble argument from the arguments put forward in other chapters. The opinion is probably based on the existence of such a contradiction between the necessities of *ahl al-Shawkah* support against a ruler. Still, on the other hand, it confirms the validity of the Abbasid Caliph based on religious arguments (*dalil syara'*).

According to the authors, these contradictions in appearance cannot be separated from their underlying political situation to write a book. As a result of Batiniyyah movement the political situation was so alarming that followers of the sect had conducted a series of heinous acts, such as the murder of Nizam Malik, Chief Justice of Isfahan, Abdullah ibn 'Ali al-Khutaibi, Abu al-'Ala', Hakim Abu al-Mahasin 'Abd al-Wahid ibn Ismail al-Rutani and others. Practice terrors indeed have made Al-Ghazali concerned if one can master through intimidation of Muslims. Therefore, he also felt the need to strengthen his argument by grounding texts. Thus, it takes deterrence and according to him, it can only be done by writing a book about the crimes of Batiniyyah. Through reason alone, such as *ahl al-Shawkah's* role in a person's leadership, arguments felt inadequate to deal with the doctrine of Batiniyyah which assumes that leadership is based on revelation. Therefore, he also felt the need to strengthen his argument by grounding texts.

Authors assume that if the argument is based solely on reason, things could turn around when Batiniyyah controls Muslims. It required a second argument that could fortify Batiniyyah sovereignty, namely the religious view (*dalilsyara'*).

That is why, according to the authors, there is a contradictory image between rational arguments and *Nash*. However, it seems that Al-Ghazali sought to avoid giving the impression that power is solely God-given with the use of the *kasb* concept, according to the Ash'arite School of Theology. According to the authors, such efforts should be sufficient to say that Al-Ghazali is not the belief of grace, as the faith of Shi'ites such as al-Hilli. Irrespective of the existence of these contradictions, thoughts and ideas of Al-Ghazali about *ahl al-Shawkah* is a little enlightening, although Ibn Taymiyyah, who came later regarded as a thinker who gives a clearer perspective about these terms. However, what he presented regarding the existence of a group of influential people who support the ruler is something new than the doctrine of *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*. However, with the approach of the concept of *ahl al-Shawkah*, Al-Ghazali's views is a bit enlightening, although it should be faced with a bit of ambivalence in him because he still acknowledges the role of God and the doctrine of Quraish factors. Moreover, he argues that people who can appoint and dismiss a ruler is *ahl al-Shawkah*. Perhaps, in his time, the terms addressed to the ruler Seljuq still want to support the caliphate's existence, despite the caliph even just a name.

Nevertheless, regardless of the political problems that followed Al-Ghazali, his ideas about the *ahl al-Shawkah* have given a new perspective to the source of authority of power, which is about the strong support of the people. Henceforth, although a few times, he mentions *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, but he disagrees with the *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, which has been understood as a forum of people who are competent to appoint and dismiss a ruler. Or, according to the author, if he had to admit, it must not be recognised as al-Mawardi, but closer to what was raised by Muhammad Abduh, as quoted by Yusuf Musa by his definition (Al-Ghazali 1956):

اهل الحل و العقد من المسلمين و هم الأ مر اء والحكام والعلما ء ورؤساء الجند والذ عماءالذ
ين ير جع اليهم الناس والحاجات و المصالح العامة. (p. 174)

Thus, if Al-Ghazali still clings to the doctrine of *ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd*, he meant what he meant in the *ahl al-Shawkah* doctrine, in the sense of a person or group of influential people who support the authority of a ruler (caliph, *Sulthan* or a king).

Therefore, according to the authors, the doctrine of *ahl al-Shawkah* should make Al-Ghazali be placed as a political thinker who is relatively realistic because he consciously recognises that in affirming one's position is the support of people of influence and not merely the pious.

Another thing that needs to be explained about the concept of leadership of Al-Ghazali is that he always emphasised aspects *of aghlabiyah* based on a priest (*imam*). In a sense, he rejected the idea of legitimacy than the majority, as expressed by a group of followers of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (Shiite), especially Bathiniyah, which emphasises that a priest's power be based on texts or probate. As Sunni scholars in general, Al-Ghazali refused booking in terms of leadership, as the Prophet did

not leave anything to establish `Ali ibn Abi Talib and his descendants as stakeholders Imamate (*imâmah*) in Islam.

Therefore, Al-Ghazali rejected the Shia (Bathiniyah) idea that Islam's political conception leads to theocracy. Although there are also Islamic political thinkers like Munawir Sjadzali (1991:77), Al-Ghazali argued that the state government in the Islamic theocracy patterned.

Said Ramadan stated that the theocratic Islamic government's attribution is an accident because of Western political thinkers' ignorance when assessing the relationship between religion and state. Errors that he began when Western political thinkers construct arguments based on the values they see in Europe where the church considered representing God's power. Governance in Islam, especially when the Prophet Muhammad has not passed away, in which the aspect that is often used as a foundation attribution theocracy, but it is far from what they equate it. Therefore, although the Prophet is inside, there are two aspects: humanitarian and prophetic, but it does not necessarily make the last attribute the foundation for an undemocratic act.

He gave an example. In the battle of Badr, the Prophet decided to stop the Muslim army from fighting. However, the decision was protested by al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir. An argument ensued. After the Prophet was assured that the place was not strategic, advice of Hubab bin al-Mundhir was followed and used as the basis for setting (Katsir 1993:429; Pulungan 1999:92–93; Ramadhan 1979:150–153). During the battle of Uhud, the Prohet argued that the Muslims needed to wait in Madina. However, the Prohet's companions advised against it and he followed their advice (Ramadhan 1979:150–153).

Sherwani (1935:471–472) also confirms the same thing. According to him, the judgement that Al-Ghazali tends to choose the form of theocracy is not proper. Because Al-Ghazali never asserted that a priest does not get his Imamate mandate from God, but from most people or through the help of military commanders, as affirmed by Lambton (1991:112). It is a significant concern of Al-Ghazali when he joined his opinion in rejecting the legitimacy of the proposed pattern Shiites (*Bâthiniyyah*).

Related the problems, 'Ahmad' Arafât al-Qâdhî asserts that Al-Ghazali's views relating to the support of the majority (*aghlabiyah*) are an advancement in Islamic political thought. According to him, the idea was when he rejected claims that the Imamate according to their Bâthiniyah based on texts (*nash*) and deny the validity of the positions that carried al-Mustazhhir bi Allah as caliph (Al-Qadhi 1993:254).

In connection with the *'aghlabiyah* affirmation, Muhammad Dhiyâ' al-Dîn al-Rays, in *Al-Nazhariyyah al-Siyasiyah al-'Islamiyah*, asserted that the stance of Al-Ghazali contains the recognition of a fundamental principle in a democracy,

wherein the legitimacy of a ruler is based on the support of a majority vote. It was, he said, showed that the scholars who have been in *fiqhsiyasah* have known at once admit the principle in which the principles are then applied in today's modern democracy (Al-Rays 1976:208).

Thus, according to Muhammad Dhiyâ' al-Dîn al-Rays, 'Ahmad' Arafât Al-Qâdhî, Sherwani and Lambton, Al-Ghazali never asserted that the style of Islamic government is a theocracy. In fact, according to Muhammad Dhiyâ' al-Dîn al-Rays, 'Ahmad' Arafât al-Qâdhî and Sherwani, Al-Ghazali tended towards democracy through the support of the majority.

Nonetheless, Sherwani (1945:471–472) assessed the thought of Al-Ghazali on majority support (*'aghlabiyah*) has not led to democratic governance. According to him, there is a practice of democracy in the appointment of a priest (caliph), even it has not had a functioning government, just a symbol of Muslims' unity (Sunni). Still, the democratic principle does not continue to govern the governance or leadership in running his government. According to him, it is because of the absence of checks and balances as a non-negotiable prerequisite in the modern democratic world. Thus, according to Sherwani, the democracy that runs here is limited to the appointment of an imam (caliph) and not until the practice of democratic governance.

In this case, 'Ahmad' Arafât al-Qâdhî disagreed with Sherwani because although there is still no mechanism of checks and balances as a prerequisite of modern government, Al-Ghazali has floated the idea that a ruler chosen by consent (allegiance) the majority (*'aghlabiyah*). From here, it is implied that a ruling in running his government should pay attention to that aspect. Furthermore, 'Ahmad' Arafât al-Qâdhî, by quoting Rosenthal, stated that Al-Ghazali has laid a pattern of thought that government power should be appropriate to a particular situation. In that context, if implementing the governments was not yet to meet the standards, as stated by Sherwani, it is because the condition is not possible (Al-Qadhi 1993:255).

If the thought of Al-Ghazali, according to Sherwani, is merely in the selection of priests (Caliph) alone correlated with thinking about the characteristics of leadership? If referring to the opinion of Munawir Sjadzali, Al-Ghazali has relatively ignored the issue because it emphasises the aspect of obedience according to the texts, such as surah al-Nisa verses 59 and Ali `Imran verse 26, and also a hadith: السلطان ظل الله في الأرض. Therefore, if this refers to the practice, it is understood that Al-Ghazali considers the aspects of democratic leadership style is essential.

However, according to the authors, assessments of Al-Ghazali's leadership are not fair, if it only refers to things that are indicated by the Munawir Sjadzali. Besides, the Islamic political thinkers should examine the evolving political situation at that time, when Al-Ghazali's first contact with politics. Issues terror (Hitti 1970:446) Bathiniyah (Qaramithah)

is a motivation for Al-Ghazali to be in touch with politics. According to Watt, Al-Ghazali's active participation in politics is to defend the Sunni leadership, the Khilafah Bani' Abbas. In defence of the Sunni leadership, teamwork is much overlooked. Because if it is not compact, propaganda conducted by Bathiniyah will successfully shed Sunni leadership. Therefore, it is understandable if compliance problems seem to disregard the idea of democracy because the objective is to consolidate the Sunnis' power from Shi'a's attack (Watt 1997:82–83).

Besides, a typical Sunni political thought has always tried to maintain an enduring power, although defended caliphate does not affect other than just as a mere symbol. It is also the ruler Seljuq when competing for energy and even beheadings occurred Sulthan Malik Syah bin Alb Arslan by his nephew, Barkiyuruq (Sjadzali 1991:72; Yusuf & Al-Muzhaffar 1907:25).

Whether Al-Ghazali did not make a doctrine concerned with how a leader should run the government? To answer this question, many aspects must be constructed to know whether it was in line with the thinking of Munawir Sjadzali or as proposed by other intellectuals.

According to Syida Saiqa Zubeda, leadership, according to Al-Ghazali, cannot be separated from religion. That is, a ruler should understand that he is nothing more than a religious duty commanded. Furthermore, he said that a priest representing religion (*din*), religion protects the world (*dunya*), the world administered by *Sulthan*, *Sulthan* represent priests (*imam*) and the priest gave legitimacy to the *Sulthan*. Although the plot illustrates the complexity surrounding the position of Caliph and *Sulthan* (Bani Seljuq), Al-Ghazali asserted that the authorities must observe the rule of religion in government. He also stated that the power could not be separated from religion, and it means that a ruler is always in the eyes of Allah (Zubeda 2000:164).

The opinion of Syida Saiqa Zubeda is consistent with Al-Ghazali's assertion that religion is a principle and the ruler is the guardian (*hāris*). Something that has no basis would have broken and something that has no guard would be lost (Al-Ashbahi 2000:563; Al-Ghazali 1956:149; Zubeda 2000:165). Furthermore, Al-Ghazali asserted that happiness in the Hereafter depends on the setting of this world. That is, a ruler, if it is to attain happiness hereafter, should observe the teachings and religious values. That is the view of Al-Ghazali related to leadership or *Imamah* very genial in his time.

Thus, the political thought of Al-Ghazali, as a consequence of the doctrine of 'Aghlabiyah' (majority) and also need to heed religious, more akin to what is asserted 'Abū al-'A`lā al-Maudūdī (1995:30), that the Islamic government is theodemocracy. Namely, on one side to accommodate the people's rights, but on the other hand, cannot be separated from religion (Islam).

Conclusion

Based on the above, we can state that Al-Ghazali stated that the source of authority is not the power of God (theocracy), but by the support of the wider community are represented by influential people (*ahl al-Shawkah*). Al-Ghazali also emphasised that the rise and fall depend entirely on the presence or absence of public support.

With the rejection of the concept of theocracy, Al-Ghazali firmly stated that he had never supported the authoritarian government and absolute. The contradiction can be seen from the emphasis that the implementation of governance must be based on the teachings of religion, law (*sharia*) and morals. He stated that one of the aspects that he always emphasised was that a ruler must emphasise justice and avoid injustice.

Based on these two things, the author also rejects the notion wherein Munawir Sjadzali confirms that Al-Ghazali argued that the source of authority (*mandate*) a ruling based on texts by many verses which he took, and that Al-Ghazali was more inclined towards theocracy. The authors also agree with the Rays and Ahmad al-'Arafat al-Qadi that a ruler acquired a source of authority through democratic processes represented by the *ahl al-Shawkah*. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that democracy is desirable Al-Ghazali is not an absolute democracy, but theodemocracy, which is a government in which the people actively participate, but they still should heed the sovereignty of religion.

Acknowledgements

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

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