

## **A Tale of Two Murders: Power Relations between Caliph and Sultan in the Saljuq Era**

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The Caliph al-Mustarshid was murdered in the year 529/1135, reportedly by a group of Isma'ili assassins, who, according to many of our sources, were hired by one or both of the Saljuq Sultans Sanjar and Mas'ud, his vassal. This murder was, most unusually, followed by the suspiciously similar murder of al-Mustarshid's son al-Rashid shortly thereafter. It should be noted that these successive assassinations mark the only occasion in the four hundred years between the 'Abbasid nadir in the ninth century and the end of the caliphate in the thirteenth century that two successive caliphs met with an unnatural demise. This double murder, which has never been closely analyzed by historians,<sup>1</sup> is significant not just as a historical curiosity, but for the light it sheds on the political situation of the eastern Islamic empire generally at this time, and Saljuq-caliphal relations in particular.

The traditional historical appraisal of Saljuq-Caliphal relations has closely followed the official Saljuq version, described by Julie Meisami in the following words: "From the outset, the Saljuqs...cultivated the image of themselves as rescuers of the Sunni caliphate from Shi'i control, promoters of mainstream

Sunnism...implacable foes of heterodoxy...and patrons of religious learning and the *'ulama'*." <sup>2</sup> While parts of this marketing image undoubtedly had a sound basis in empirical fact- the Saljuqs, and even more so their viziers, did patronize religious learning and the *'ulama'* <sup>3</sup>- other parts of this public-relations package are inherently more problematic; for instance, the image of the Saljuqs as the supposedly "implacable foes of heterodoxy" does not accord very well with Ibn al-Jawzi's statement that Sultan Sanjar, when he set out to fight his own nephew Mahmud in the year 513/1119, utilized the military services of "thousands" of Isma'ili, and even infidel Turkish, soldiers. <sup>4</sup> Further holes have since been poked in the Saljuq mantle of Sunni piety by Carole Hillenbrand, who has drawn attention to the lackluster record of the Saljuqs in fighting the Isma'ilis during the period extending from the death of Mahmud b. Malikshah in 1094 through the reign of Malikshah's grandson Mahmud b. Muhammad. <sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the most unfounded component of the traditional wisdom, though, is its rosy view of Saljuq-caliphal relations. Scholars have to a large degree automatically assumed that since the Buyids were Shi'ites and the Saljuqs were Sunnis, the 'Abbasids must have been far happier under the rule of the latter than of the former. This view of happy, grateful collaboration between the Saljuqs and the 'Abbasid caliphs was first seriously challenged several decades

ago by George Makdisi, both in his article on "The Sunni Revival,"<sup>6</sup> and, more devastatingly, in his articles on the marriage of Toghril Beg and on Saljuq-Caliphal relations through the reign of Malik-Shah.<sup>7</sup> Yet, perhaps due to the fact that Makdisi's research treated only the early part of Saljuq rule over the caliphs- less than forty years out of nearly one hundred and forty- the "Saljuq myth" has proven to be surprisingly impervious to empirical findings; the result has been, in the best of cases, a modification rather than a discrediting of the traditional wisdom regarding relations between the Saljuq sultans and their caliphs. According to this modified view, the caliphs viewed the Saljuqs as somewhat distasteful but reliable supporters and protectors of the caliphate.<sup>8</sup>

A closer look at Saljuq-caliphal relations in the twelfth century, however, suggests that, from the point of view of the 'Abbasid caliphs, the Saljuqs were, in practice, no better than the Buyids- indeed, they were probably worse, since the official Sunnism of the Saljuqs, together with their greater political and military strength, allowed them to treat the 'Abbasids in a manner in which the Buyids were never able to indulge. There are many events contending for the title of nadir of caliphal-Saljuqid relations- from the notorious marriages of Toghril Beg and Malik Shah, to Nizam al-Mulk's alleged plan to abolish the 'Abbasid Caliphate;<sup>9</sup> insults to caliphal envoys;<sup>10</sup> and the constant coercion, extortion, and interference in the caliph's court and affairs in which the Saljuq

sultans engaged over the years.<sup>11</sup> But surely the most dramatic point in the history of those relations was reached in the turbulent events that took place between 529/1135 and 532/1137, which involved the actual murder of two caliphs and the deposition of one of them.

The background to these dramatic events was the internal disorder afflicting the Great Saljuq empire- turmoil which began, to some degree, as far back as the death of Malikshah in 1092, but worsened considerably after the death of Malikshah's son Muhammad in 511/1118, when Western Iran and Iraq were riven by the continual wars fought among the sons and grandsons of Malikshah, their atabegs, and local dynasts.<sup>12</sup> 1118 was also the year in which the caliph al-Mustarshid bi'llah ascended the throne. The sources inform us that this caliph was not only a learned and pious transmitter of hadith,<sup>13</sup> and an exquisite calligrapher,<sup>14</sup> but also "brave, and of far-reaching ambition."<sup>15</sup> This ambition found expression in al-Mustarshid's unremitting efforts to exploit Saljuq weakness and disarray, as the various descendants of Malikshah battled with and intrigued against one another, in order to revive the political power of the 'Abbasid caliphs.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, al-Mustarshid became the first caliph in over a century to leave his palace and city and lead armies.<sup>17</sup> In 514/1120, while Sultan Mahmud was preoccupied with the rebellion of his brother Mas'ud, the caliph first asserted

himself by having alcoholic beverages seized and destroyed in the sultan's market in Baghdad.<sup>18</sup> Then, in 517/1123, allied with the Atabeg Aq-Sonqur Bursuqi, the caliph personally led a victorious military campaign against the Mazyadid ruler, one of the regional Arab dynasts.<sup>19</sup> Again, the unusual nature of this campaign must be emphasized: it was the first one to be led personally by a caliph after a hundred years in which the caliphs rarely if ever left their palaces, never took part in military activities- and, indeed, never even set foot outside of Baghdad.

All of this caliphal activity began to worry the Saljuq sultans. In 520/1126, Sultan Mahmud's *shihna*, or military commander, in Baghdad, the amir Yurunqush, went to the sultan: "...He complained much about the caliph, and he confirmed personally that the caliph sought rule [*al-mulk*], and that he had left his house twice, but was defeated of his aim." The *shihna* further noted that the caliph had been in political correspondence with all the Arab and Kurdish amirs and tribal leaders in the area, and warned that if the matter were not taken care of, the caliph's ambitions would soon result in the destabilization of Saljuq rule.<sup>20</sup>

Up until this point, Sultan Mahmud had apparently been glad to enjoy al-Mustarshid's military help in ridding himself of his family rivals. In the preceding year, 519/1125, Mahmud's brother Toghril b. Muhammad (who at

this point enjoyed only the status of a "*malik*") had betaken himself to Baghdad in attempt to win the sultanate. The Caliph had unsuccessfully fought him and Toghril had plundered Baghdad.<sup>21</sup> Mahmud had been delighted with the Caliph's usefulness in battling Toghril, and had written to thank him for this service.

By the following year, however, Sultan Mahmud's attitude had undergone a fundamental change, as a result of both the *shihna's* warning and of an additional warning directed to him from the Saljuq elder statesman and Mahmud's liege lord, Sultan Sanjar in Khurasan.<sup>22</sup> In the year 520/1126, therefore, Mahmud besieged Baghdad- one of the very few historical instances of such an event taking place.<sup>23</sup> He managed to take part of the city, and the caliph's house was plundered.<sup>24</sup> The Caliph, however, emerged from this clash with the upper hand; for he and his army kept up a stiff resistance from the Western bank of the city, while the populace expressed its hostility toward the Saljuqs not only by shooting a constant barrage of arrows at Mahmud's forces, but also by hurling such taunts as: "O Batinis, O heretics, you have rebelled against the Commander of the believers; your legal acts are invalid, and your giving in marriage is legally unsound;"<sup>25</sup> and "O Batini, why did you not decide to raid Byzantium; you came [instead] to raid the caliph and the Muslims."<sup>26</sup>

Mahmud found himself in a position he could not sustain: he obviously

could not win the battle without killing the caliph, but he was manifestly unable to do that, either for political or for military reasons, or both (the sources are unclear on this point). Eventually, he apologized to al-Mustarshid and the two were reconciled.<sup>27</sup> Al-Mustarshid emerged the clear winner from his first military confrontation with a ruling Saljuq sultan. His next major confrontation, though, was to prove fatal.

After the death of Mahmud in 525/1131, Iraq and Western Iran were convulsed by several years of strife and contention among several different candidates for the sultanate, while the caliph skillfully played off one rival against the other and steadily built up his own power and army.<sup>28</sup> In 529/1134 Sultan Mas'ud b. Muhammad, who had been scheming for years, finally managed to establish himself in Baghdad, thus forestalling his rival and nephew Da'ud, son of the late Sultan Mahmud. Shortly thereafter, war broke out between al-Mustarshid and Sultan Mas'ud.

Our sources diverge quite strikingly regarding the cause of the conflict. According to Zahir al-Din Nishapuri's *Saljuqnama* as well as to the other historians who follow Zahir al-Din's account, the cause of al-Mustarshid's going to battle Sultan Mas'ud was his overweening ambition; he wanted to take for himself "the rulership of Iraq and Khurasan."<sup>29</sup> Yet when we turn to other early works we find some very different views of the circumstances

surrounding al-Mustarshid's murder.

Some sources claim that political intrigue brought about the rift between the caliph and the Saljuqs; in most accounts these political intrigues are attributed to Mas'ud's dissatisfied Turkish amirs, who had defected to the Caliph's service and then fomented war in an apparent attempt to use the caliph in their own quarrel with their erstwhile Saljuq master. According to this version, the intrigues of Sultan Mas'ud's wife and her ally the Atabeg Qara-Sunqur alienated Mas'ud's other amirs, particular Yurun-qush. As a result, a group of powerful amirs rebelled under the latter's leadership, were defeated militarily by Mas'ud, and fled to the caliph. Yurun-qush then informed the caliph that Sultan Mas'ud was intent upon deposing him, al-Mustarshid, "and this led to the killing of al-Mustarshid...." <sup>30</sup> The implication here is that the wicked amirs fomented baseless trouble between Mas'ud and Sanjar on the one hand, and the caliph on the other, in order to serve their own political purposes. Indeed, some accounts make that charge explicit.<sup>31</sup>

The situation as described in much greater detail by other sources, however, seems to indicate that there was a rather strong empirical foundation underlying the amirs' reports to al-Mustarshid regarding Mas'ud's and/or Sanjar's evil intentions toward the caliph. That is, the amirs may actually have been revealing accurate information to the caliph in order to achieve their ends, not

just lying in order to manipulate him; Saljuq betrayal and scheming against the caliph, on the part of both Sultans Sanjar and Mas'ud, was the underlying cause in this case, not al-Mustarshid's delusions of grandeur.

Such Saljuq betrayal is variously said to have included treasonous correspondence between Sanjar and one of al-Mustarshid's step-mothers; Mas'ud's deletion of the caliph's name from the *khutba* in Hamadan;<sup>32</sup> Mas'ud's killing of the caliph's powerful ally, Aq-Sunqur al-Ahmadili; and Mas'ud's offer of sanctuary to amirs in the caliph's service who had plotted to betray their master. According to Ibn al-Jawzi, for instance, Sanjar had been scheming against al-Mustarshid for years. In 526/1131f, the caliph caught one of his stepmothers in correspondence with Sanjar, in which the latter expressed his intention of attacking the 'Abbasid dynasty [*dawla*] itself; "This reached al-Mustarshid. He took the letter from her and this [letter] spurred him to go out to the battle."<sup>33</sup>

Not only Sanjar, but Sultan Mas'ud, too, had been alarming the caliph. One of our sources reports, without elaborating, that al-Mustarshid went to war because he was afraid that Mas'ud was going to take over 'Iraq.<sup>34</sup> Elsewhere we read that about a year before al-Mustarshid set out to battle the sultan, Mas'ud had killed the caliph's powerful ally, Aqsunqur al-Ahmadili, **"and gave out that the Batiniyya had killed him."**<sup>35</sup> The caliph, who had been on a military

campaign in Mosul, immediately abandoned this activity " because he heard that Mas'ud had betrayed [him], for he had killed Aqsunqur al-Ahmadili and bestowed a robe of honor on [the Caliph's long-standing enemy] Dubays [the Mazyadid]."<sup>36</sup> There are several essential points to note in this last report: first, we see that Mas'ud is known to have engaged in political murder and then foisted the blame upon the Isma'ili Assassins. Second, it reveals that Mas'ud had already betrayed the caliph and was machinating against him well before war broke out between them.

Indeed, even some of the sources that blame the caliph for "rebellious" against the Saljuqs note the historical background of enmity and distrust between the Saljuqs and the caliph:

Hostilities had flared up between the sultan and the caliph in the time of Sultan Mahmud, who went out and defeated the caliph twice. When Mas'ud succeeded him, his deputies became high-handed in Iraq and they opposed the caliph in his own lands. Relations (between the sultan and the caliph) became strained and al-Mustarshid collected troops, having seriously resolved to rebel.<sup>37</sup>

Some of our sources also note that the caliph's distrust of Mas'ud was further strengthened when he caught some of his amirs red-handed in treasonous correspondence with Mas'ud's brother and ally, the Saljuq prince Toghril. The treasonous amirs fled to Mas'ud, who ignored the caliph's demands that he

return them to him for punishment.<sup>38</sup>

The last straw came in 529/1135, when the afore-mentioned group of Mas'ud's senior amirs had a disagreement with their master and came to Baghdad, "and they told of the wickedness of [Mas'ud's] heart."<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, according to some sources, the war was not started by the caliph, but by Mas'ud; the *casus belli* was either his gathering his armies and starting out for Iraq,<sup>40</sup> or, alternatively, his deletion of the caliph's name from the *khutba* in Hamadan.<sup>41</sup> According to Ibn al-Athir, the caliph was still hesitant about the undertaking, and it was that same group of Mas'ud's former amirs who "depicted the journey to him in a favorable light, facilitated the matter for him, and made the rule of Sultan Mas'ud seem weak to him."<sup>42</sup>

Whatever the origins of the conflict, the caliph at this point discontinued the *khutba* in Mas'ud's name- according to at least one source, he deleted it from the coinage as well<sup>43</sup>- but not his recognition of the Saljuqs; he substituted instead the names of Sultans Sanjar and Mas'ud's rival Da'ud (the sultan of Azerbaijan), and solicited a legal ruling from the *fuqaha'* authorizing war against Mas'ud.<sup>44</sup> The caliph then journeyed toward Hamadan, where Mas'ud was camped with a large force.

All the lords of the area were in correspondence with the Commander of the Believers, offering him their obedience, but he tarried on his way; so Mas'ud was reconciled with most of them...A group of the companions of al-Mustarshid slunk away,

and there remained around 5,000; Zangi sent him aid but it did not overtake him, and Da'ud b. Mahmud in Azerbaijan sent messengers indicating that he should go to Dinawar so that Da'ud b. Muhammad could offer service, but al-Mustarshid did not do this.<sup>45</sup>

When battle was finally joined between the two sides, there was further betrayal of the caliph. The left wing of the army went over to Mas'ud, and the rest of the army took to its heels when it saw what had happened.<sup>46</sup>

Mas'ud took the caliph prisoner, and clearly did not know what to do with him. Mas'ud's dilemma stemmed from the widespread popular support that the caliph apparently enjoyed, at least in 'Iraq, which resulted in significant public disturbances there after news of the caliph's captivity spread.<sup>47</sup> The Saljuqs were in a bind: on the one hand, the caliph was too dangerous to their power to be tolerated; on the other hand, they apparently considered it too risky to openly depose or execute him.<sup>48</sup>

While awaiting orders from his uncle and overlord Sanjar, Mas'ud carted al-Mustarshid along on an expedition against the caliph's erstwhile ally, Mas'ud's nephew Da'ud b. Mahmud, in Azerbaijan. Some three months after the caliph had been taken captive, in conjunction with the arrival of messengers from Sanjar, a large group of men described as Batinis entered al-Mustarshid's tent<sup>49</sup>- which, in a suspiciously convenient fashion, had been struck apart from the rest of the camp- and murdered the caliph, cutting off his nose and ears for

good measure.<sup>50</sup> For many of the medieval historians, there is nothing more- or, at least, nothing more that it would be politic to mention- to that part of the story; the Isma'ili assassins simply struck down an 'Abbasid caliph for the first time in history.<sup>51</sup>

However, there is another historical school, which explicitly states that the Saljuqs initiated the murder, using either actual or pretend Isma'ilis to accomplish their goal. One of the more detailed accounts of the events surrounding the caliph's murder is found in Ibn al-Jawzi's chronicle. According to Ibn al-Jawzi, Sultan Sanjar had sent an embassy whose loudly-trumpeted aim was to order Mas'ud to go to his prisoner the caliph, beg his forgiveness, and restore him to Baghdad. Apparently, however, Sanjar's messenger brought with him not only a great army, but also seventeen Isma'ili assassins:

Some of the people say he did not know that they were with him, but the rest disagree with that, and [note] that they had organized to murder him, by separating [his] tent from their tents; the Sultan went out, and with him the army, to meet the envoy; and the Batinis assailed the Commander of the Faithful, and stabbed him until they killed him, [together] with a group of his companions...The army rode and surrounded the tent. The group came out, for they had already finished; and they were killed.<sup>52</sup>

Other sources states outright that "a group of the Batiniya **sent by Sultan Sanjar**...attacked [the caliph] and killed him;"<sup>53</sup> "And it was known from the

concatenation of circumstances that Sanjar sent the Batiniyya to kill him, and of his deeds he never undertook anything more hideous or more atrocious."<sup>54</sup> Yet another source, however, squarely lays the murder entirely at Mas'ud's door rather than Sanjar's, claiming that it was planned secretly by Mas'ud in order to avoid complying with Sanjar's directive to restore the caliph, which had been given in earnest.<sup>55</sup> Suyuti reports both versions, but has no doubt that one or both of the Saljuq rulers were behind the murder, referring to "the killing of al-Mustarshid by trickery."<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, there is a good deal of circumstantial evidence to support these accusations in the sources. First of all, the Caliph was in Mas'ud's actual custody, and was surrounded by guards until Mas'ud, for unknown reasons, drew them away from the caliph after the arrival of the messengers.<sup>57</sup> In other words, circumstances had been made suspiciously easy for would-be assassins: the caliph's tent was a little too conveniently isolated and unguarded. This point was already noted by Sibt Ibn al-Jawzi:

Mas'ud maintained afterwards that he did not know about them, but he lied; rather, he and Sanjar agreed upon the assassination of the caliph and the proof of this is that Mas'ud set apart for them a tent near to the caliph, and honored them and his deed was not unknown to the people; however, he strove to refute the charge- but it was not refuted.<sup>58</sup>

Second, the Caliph's continued existence clearly posed a threat and an

embarrassment to Mas'ud; according to the sources, he had made the caliph promise that he would never set foot outside his palace again should he be returned to Baghdad.<sup>59</sup> This promise, even if it had been enforceable, would have severely damaged the Saljuqs' reputation by perpetuating their role as caliphal jailors, and possibly destabilized their rule. Politically, even the captivity of the Caliph was highly problematic; on hearing of the news,

A group of the *'amma* of Baghdad rebelled, and they broke the *minbar*... and stopped the *khutba*. They went out to the markets loading dust on their heads, crying, and shouting, and the women went out unveiled in the markets striking themselves [in lamentation]; the supporters of the *shihna* and the populace of Baghdad fought [one another], and more than one hundred 150 of the populace were killed. The governor and the major domo fled.<sup>60</sup>

Note that the caliph posed, on the contrary, no threat at all to the Isma'ilis. It does seem significant that the only two caliphs ever murdered during Saljuq times were precisely the only two who had taken up arms against a Saljuq sultan, and who posed a grave political problem to them - particularly in light of the fact that Mas'ud, as we mentioned earlier in connection with the murder of the Caliph's ally Aq-Sunqur, is already known to have committed murder and then attributed it to the Batinis. Also, this and the subsequent murder of al-Rashid are the only instances in which Isma'ilis supposedly murdered a caliph- and by the time al-Rashid was murdered, he was a deposed ex-caliph,

so his symbolic value to the Isma'ilis was dubious.

Third, not only was the Batini group unusually large (comprising between seventeen<sup>61</sup> and twenty-four individuals<sup>62</sup>); according to all of the sources, even the unsuspecting ones, the assassins were either among Sanjar's company or even "among the guard Mas'ud had set over [al-Mustarshid]."<sup>63</sup> Perhaps one or two Isma'ilis having infiltrated the army unbeknownst to the Saljuqs would have been credible; but dozens of them?

Finally, while there are additional arguments to be made, perhaps the most convincing one is the subsequent course of events itself, particularly the immediate estrangement between Mas'ud and the new caliph, al-Mustarshid's son al-Rashid; al-Rashid's vehement insistence that the Saljuqs were responsible for his father's murder; and the fact that al-Rashid died exactly the same death as did his father. The murders of al-Mustarshid and al-Rashid are therefore inseparable, and must be examined together, since according to all the sources the second murder was a result of the previous one.

In the immediate aftermath of the murder of al-Mustarshid, Mas'ud, either from a guilty conscience or in an attempt to deflect apparently widespread blame from himself for the suspicious death of the caliph in his custody, killed the Mazyadid amir Dubays b. Sadaqa on the pretext that it was Dubays who stood behind the murder:<sup>64</sup>

As for Sultan Mas'ud... his name and reputation were ignominious...he began considering what thing would remove from him the suspicion [of al-Mustarshid's murder] and withdraw from him from the hearts [of others] the hidden hatred, until he talked himself into killing the amir Dubays b. Sadaqa...he thought that if he killed him people would attribute to [Dubays] the killing of the caliph, and that the Sultan because of this [guilt] did not allow him to live...

Between the martyrdom of the caliph and of Dubays there was one month. And this instance also was shameful, and a disgraceful dishonoring; and this atrocious crime was added to the [previous] atrocious crime, and outrage followed outrage.... The sultan did not take notice... and did not show grief for what he had caused; the flood of his greed overflowed , and the sparks of his iniquity burned....<sup>65</sup>

In the meanwhile, the people of Baghdad and the 'Abbasid court, upon hearing of al-Mustarshid's demise, immediately swore the oath of allegiance to al-Mustarshid's son and heir apparent, Abu Ja'far Mansur al-Rashid Bi'llah.<sup>66</sup> The Saljuqs, of course, had to follow suit; but al-Rashid is described by all the sources- including those sources that neglected to mention the suspicions that the Saljuq sultans were connected to the murder- as keen to avenge his father's death upon Mas'ud; he, at least, had no doubts as to who stood immediately behind the murder.<sup>67</sup>

According to some of the sources, Mas'ud very soon thereafter demanded that Rashid pay the money that al-Mustarshid had apparently agreed to pay to Mas'ud if he were restored to Baghdad. Al-Rashid sent back saying that "the money promised by the Caliph [al-Mustarshid] was dependent on his being

returned safely to his palace, but this did not happen, and I am held answerable for blood vengeance. ..there is nothing between us but the sword."<sup>68</sup> According to other accounts, al-Rashid, without any additional provocation on Mas'ud's part, was determined to avenge his father's blood; he accordingly began gathering armies and allies- most notably the amir 'Imad al-Din Zengi and the Saljuq ruler of Afghanistan, Da'ud b. Mahmud, whom Mas'ud had maneuvered out of the sultanate of 'Iraq- to wreak vengeance upon Mas'ud;<sup>69</sup> according to several of the sources, he also deleted the name of the Saljuqs completely from the coinage and the *khutba*.<sup>70</sup>

Upon Mas'ud's arrival in Baghdad with an army, al-Rashid fled the city.<sup>71</sup> Mas'ud thereupon gathered all the religious scholars and professional witnesses of Baghdad, forced them to declare al-Rashid deposed, and appointed the brother of the late al-Mustarshid as the new caliph under the throne title al-Muqtafi.<sup>72</sup> Al-Rashid appealed to Sultan Sanjar for recourse, but Sanjar turned him down with a polite but transparent excuse.<sup>73</sup> Afterwards al-Rashid joined forces with his late father's erstwhile ally, the Saljuq Sultan Da'ud of Azerbaijan, and some powerful amirs, thus beginning to pose for the first time a serious political threat to Mas'ud. Mas'ud, in fact, was defeated in one battle by one of the caliph's allies; some of his most prominent amirs were killed, and al-Rashid, emboldened, laid siege to Isfahan.<sup>74</sup> According to one source,

Mas'ud's caliph in Baghdad, al-Muqtafi, was so daunted at this point that he wished to flee to the swamps.<sup>75</sup>

Precisely at the juncture, when al-Rashid finally began to pose a serious threat, he, too, was conveniently murdered, according to most sources by a group of alleged Batinis.<sup>76</sup> According to at least one source, these supposed Batinis were acting on commission: "Sanjar and Mas'ud sent them to [al-Rashid], and they came and killed him just as they had killed his father."<sup>77</sup>

The murders of al-Mustarshid and al-Rashid, together with the events that precipitated and followed these murders, reveal a great deal about the state of Saljuq-caliphal relations in the frequently-overlooked mid-Saljuq period. First and foremost, this series of events raises grave doubts regarding the traditional belief of historians in the Saljuq claim to be the 'Abbasids' supposed saviors from the Buyids, and their great defenders and champions. If we compare the frequency of caliphal deposition and murder, the Buyids deposed two caliphs;<sup>78</sup> but these were the only depositions they performed. The Buyids, with all their poor treatment of the 'Abbasids, never murdered a caliph.

The Saljuqs, on the other hand, deposed only al-Rashid, but they also threatened to, and nearly did, depose some additional caliphs: Malik-shah, for instance, wanted to depose al-Muqtadi, but conveniently died a sudden death before he could do so;<sup>79</sup> while al-Muqtafi, the unfortunate al-Rashid's Saljuq-

appointed replacement, was at one point placed under siege by Mas'ud's successor until he capitulated to Saljuq wishes.<sup>80</sup>

In the matter of murder, the Saljuq era was likewise not a good one for the caliphs. Although many historians are under the mistaken impression that from the time of their decline in the ninth century, 'Abbasid caliphs were as easily and frequently liquidated as are former Russian spies today, this was simply not the historical reality. In the nearly four hundred years between the end of the 'Abbasid nadir in 870 and the killing of the last 'Abbasid caliph in 1258, with only one exception,<sup>81</sup> **no caliph was ever murdered by a non-family member except al-Mustarshid and al-Rashid.** The fact that two caliphs in succession were done away with is therefore a startlingly unusual sequence of events, something unparalleled since the dark days of Samarra' some two hundred and seventy years before. It is also highly significant that the only two caliphs to meet such an extraordinary fate were the only caliphs who actually took up arms against a Saljuq sultan. Whereas the Buyids only deposed, the Saljuqs both deposed and, apparently, disposed.

Then there is the matter of Saljuq versus Buyid treatment of the 'Abbasid capital, Baghdad, and to what degree they respected its sanctity as the caliphal seat. We have already mentioned Sultan Mahmud's partial siege of Baghdad during al-Mustarshid's reign. Not counting that incident and other "minor"

ones, LeStrange notes that Baghdad was besieged only four times from its founding until the fifth and final siege of the Mongols that ended in the destruction of the caliphate. Two of the five sieges LeStrange considers major enough to count- that is, half the pre-Mongol total- were carried out by Saljuq sultans.<sup>82</sup> This, obviously, was something that had not occurred under the Buyids. Equally obviously, this relatively restrained behavior on the part of the Buyids was not due to any love or piety on the part of the Buyids toward the 'Abbasids. Yet it is immaterial for our present analysis whether the reason for this relative restraint was caliphal weakness under the Buyids, the actual Buyid physical presence in Baghdad, Buyid lack of daring, or their lack of the political security that would permit them to treat the caliphal seat in the same high-handed fashion as did the Saljuqs; the empirical fact remains that the Saljuq sultans engaged in at least two (depending upon what one includes in the count) destructive and humiliating sieges of the 'Abbasid caliph and his capital.

Looking at the various measures taken against the caliphs by the Buyids and the Saljuqs respectively, one is led to the paradoxical conclusion that the Sunnism of the Saljuqs enabled them to treat the Sunni caliph far more peremptorily than did the Shi'ite Buyids; if one compares the empirical behavior of the two dynasties toward the 'Abbasids, the yoke of the Sunni Saljuqs was probably the harder one for the caliphs to bear. The objective

measurements listed above, together with the attempts of the caliphs from al-Mustarshid onward to undermine the Saljuqs in every way possible, lead to the ineluctable conclusion that the 'Abbasid caliphs, *pace* current scholarly consensus on the subject, did not regard the Saljuqs in a friendly light.

Finally, this episode of the successive caliphal murders, when viewed in the context of the constant friction between the Saljuqs and the Caliphs throughout the entire Saljuq period, and the unremitting efforts of all the caliphs from al-Mustarshid onwards to free themselves of the Saljuq yoke, indicates that the neat theories being formulated during the Saljuq period, according to which there should be a harmonious division of political and religious authority between the sultan and the caliph respectively, were never accepted by the 'Abbasids- nor, indeed, by the Sunni populace of Baghdad. Again, this fact was noted long ago by George Makdisi regarding the early period of Saljuq rule,<sup>83</sup> and even more strongly by Henri Laoust,<sup>84</sup> but for some inexplicable reason it has failed to make a serious dent in historians' acceptance of the official Saljuq line.

This long-neglected series of sensational events, and the career of al-Mustarshid generally, also allow us to trace the revival of 'Abbasid power further back than is generally accepted.<sup>85</sup> Although the 'Abbasids did not finally succeed in restoring the political fortunes of the caliphate until several

decades later, in the reign of the Caliph al-Nasir, the roots of that success lie in the efforts of al-Mustarshid.<sup>86</sup> Above all, though, the story of the murders of al-Mustarshid and al-Rashid helps to supply the missing context and counterpoint of the Saljuq reaction to 'Abbasid efforts to rehabilitate their worldly affairs. It illustrates how the 'Abbasid attempt to retrieve their old glory aroused the determined opposition of their supposed Saljuq protectors—an opposition that in at least two cases turned quite deadly.

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<sup>1</sup> Although Carole Hillenbrand wrote two excellent but necessarily brief entries on each of the murdered caliphs in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "al-Mustarshid Bi'llah" and "al-Rashid Bi'llah."

<sup>2</sup> J. Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*

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(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 142-143. This official Saljuq image has recently been termed, quite appositely, "The Great Saljuq Myth," Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., for one example among many, Sadr al-Din b. 'Ali al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-saljuqiyya*, ed. Muhammad Iqbal (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1404/1984), 122.

<sup>4</sup> Abu'l-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam fi ta'rikh al-muluk wa'l-umam*, ed. M. A. 'Ata et alii (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1412/1992), 17:172.

<sup>5</sup> Carole Hillenbrand, "The Power Struggle between the Saljuqs and the Isma'ilis of Alamut, 487-518/1094-1124: The Saljuq Perspective," in F. Daftary, *Mediaeval Isma'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 205-220. On 208 Hillenbrand attributes this lackadaisical attitude regarding religious heterodoxy to *realpolitik*: "The evidence suggests that neither Barkiyaruq nor Sanjar nor Muhammad was strong enough singly to resist the necessity of using whatever troops were available to them, even if they were 'Isma'ili.' All three were accused at some time of using the Isma'ilis to dispose of their enemies."

<sup>6</sup> G. Makdisi, "The Sunni Revival," *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150*, ed. D. S.

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Richards (Papers on Islamic History, 3, Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1973), 155-168.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, "The Marriage of Tughril Beg," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 1, 1969, 259-275; *idem.*, "Les rapports entre calife et sultan à l'époque Saljuqide," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, 1975, 228-236.

<sup>8</sup> Thus Meisami writes that the 'Abbasid caliphs "seem to have regarded the Saljuqs as something of a necessary evil: strong (if somewhat crude) warriors for the faith who could be relied upon to support the caliphate and Sunni Islam, protect the regions, guard the roads, and combat heresy and unbelief." Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 142.

<sup>9</sup> C.E. Bosworth, "A political and dynastic history of the Iranian world," *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. J. A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 100.

<sup>10</sup> al-Fath b. 'Ali b. Muhammad al-Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra wa-nukhbat al-'usra*, ed. Th. Houtsma, Leiden, 1889, 160: "The envoys of the Imam al-Mustarshid Bi'llah arrived and the wazir met them with scowling and adversity...and was insolent to their faces...."

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 206, 220.

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, one of our sources notes that "From the time of the Sultan Mahmud... the dynasty was weakened... and their resources became less." al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiyya*, 98.

<sup>13</sup> Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi (Shams al-Din Abu'l-Muzaffar Yusuf b. Qizoghlu), *Mir'at al-*

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*zaman fi ta'rikh al-a'yan* (Hyderabad: Da'irat al-Ma'arif al-'Uthmaniyya, 1951), 156; Jalal al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Bakr al-Khudayri al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-khulafa'* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, no date), 345.

<sup>14</sup> 'Izz al-Din Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali b. Muhammad, *al-Kamil fi'l-ta'rikh*, ed. Tornberg (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1399/1979, 11: 28; Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 345; Abu'l-Fida' ('Imad al-Din Isma'il b. 'Ali b. Mahmud), *al-Mukhtasar fi akhbar al-bashar*, ed. Mahmud Dayyub (Beirut: 1417/1997), 2: 73.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 162, *sub anno* 512; also Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 345.

<sup>16</sup> This point was also noted by Hillenbrand in her entry *s.v.* "al-Mustarshid Bi'llah," *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VII: 732-733.

<sup>17</sup> The fact that he personally led armies is remarked upon in the sources; e.g. Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 345; and, among modern scholars, Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 199: "[Between the caliphs al-Ta'i and al-Mustarshid] the caliphs withdrew [from public life] and secluded themselves, and were content to rule [only] their households." According to , al-Mustarshid had amassed thirty-thousand soldiers by the time of his war against the Saljuqs.

<sup>18</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 186, 187.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Hamdallah b. Abi Bakr b. Ahmad b. Nasr Mustawfi Qazvini, *Ta'rikh-i guzida*, ed. 'Abd al-Husayn Nava'i (Tehran: 1339/ 1960), 358.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 229.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 228-229.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam* 17: 231.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-saljuqiyya*, 97-98. A different version is given by Bar Hebraeus; Gregorius b. Ahrun al-Malti Ibn al-'Ibri, *Ta'rikh mukhtasar al-duwal*, ed. Antun Salihani al-Yasu'i (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1992), 203, which places the siege after the death of Mahmud, with the blame firmly on Sanjar.

<sup>24</sup> Actually, this was apparently the least of the shocking deeds of Mahmud's army. The vizier Anushirvan b. Khalid relates of this episode, quite tantalizingly, that the Saljuq sultan and his allies "did what it is not appropriate to mention; they did intentionally everything that made shameful his name and made his crime tremendous..." Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 152.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam* 17: 236.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam* 17: 242.

<sup>27</sup> Jamal al-Din Abu'l-Qasim Qashani, history of the Saljuqs incorrectly identified and published by Isma'il Afshar as Zahir al-Din Nishapuri's *Saljuqnama* (Tehran, 1332), 53, now established by A.H. Morton in his introduction to the authentic *Saljuqnama* as belonging to Rashid al-Din's contemporary (hereinafter this work will be referred to as Qashani, pseudo-*Saljuqnama*). Some of the sources save the face of the Saljuqs by attributing Mahmud's capitulation to his supposedly falling ill and having an epiphany that

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the cause of his illness was his audacity in "making war upon the Commander of the Faithful al-Mustarshid," al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiyya*, 97-98.

Our earliest source merely notes discreetly that there was a siege, and "after that there was a reconciliation between them," Zahir al-Din Nishapuri, *Saljuqnama*, ed. A.H. Morton (Chippenham: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2004), 70-71.

Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Sulayman Ravandi, *Rahat al-Sudur wa-ayat al-surur dar tarikh-i Al Saljuq*, ed. Muhammad Iqbal (Tehran: Intisharat-I Amir-I Kabir, 1364/1985f), 205, also whitewashes this conflict (as well as doing his best to disguise Mahmud's essential defeat).

<sup>28</sup> Thus, for instance, Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 11:5, writing of al-Mustarshid's siege of Mosul, notes "it was at that time [that] a group of the Saljuq amirs betook themselves to the gate of al-Mustarshid Bi'llah and remained with him, and he dominated them."

<sup>29</sup> Zahir al-Din Nishapuri, *Saljuqnama*, 74; Ravandi, *Rahat al-Sudur*, 227; al-Qashani, pseudo-*Saljuqnama*, 56; Rashid al-Din Fadlallah, *Jami' al-tawarikh*, tr. K.A. Luther, *The History of the Saljuq Turks from the Jami' al-tawarikh*, ed. C.E. Bosworth (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 106; Qazvini, *Ta'rikh-i guzida*, 356; Muhammad b. Sayyid Burhan al-Din Khwandshah Mirkhwand, *Ta'rikh rawdat al-safa* (Tehran: Markaz-i Khayyam Piruz, 1959-1960), 4:322. This is the interpretation adopted by Hillenbrand, in her "al-Mustarshid bi'llah" entry in *EI*<sup>2</sup>. Note, however, that Zahir al-Din dedicated the work to the last reigning

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Saljuq; this known bias, taken together with the fact that he glosses over the surrounding historical circumstances leading to the war between the caliph and the Saljuqs (the long-standing tense relations between Sanjar and Mas'ud on the one hand and al-Mustarshid on the other; the defection of Yurun-qush and the other amirs to the caliphal court; the treasonous correspondence between al-Mustarshid's mother-in-law and Sultan Sanjar, and so forth, all reviewed *infra*), renders suspect his attempt to airily dismiss the entire war as the product solely of al-Mustarshid's lust for power.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiyya*, 106; similar account in Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 175-176.

<sup>31</sup> Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 176; Abu'l-Fida' , *al-Mukhtasar* 2: 73; Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-safa*, 3: 530. Ahmad b. 'Umar b. 'Ali Nizami 'Arudi Samarqandi, *Chahar maqala*, ed. Muhammad Qazvini and Muhammad Mu'in (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1375/1955f), 36-37, states that al-Mustarshid was actually marching against Sanjar in Khurasan, "because of a claim that he had against Sanjar, the Sultan of the world, and that [claim] was the work of designing persons, and the falsehood of wicked people who had brought matters to that pass."

<sup>32</sup> 'Ala' al-Din Mughultay b. Qilij b. 'Abdallah al-Bakjari al-Hanafi, *Mukhtasar ta'rikh al-khulafa'* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1324/2003), 156.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 272. Note how Sanjar's reported plans resemble

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Malik-Shah's of some forty years previously, when the latter ordered the reigning caliph al-Muqtadi to leave Baghdad within ten days in order replace him with his own mixed Saljuq-'Abbasid grandson; on the latter episode, *vide* Makdisi, "Les rapports entre calife et sultan," 235.

<sup>34</sup> Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Muhammad Ibn al-'Imrani, *al-Inba' fi ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, ed. Qasim al-Samarra'i (Cairo: Dar al-Afaq al-'Arabiyya, 1999), 174.

<sup>35</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 275, emphasis added. Note how other authors- e.g. Ibn al-'Ibri, *Mukhtasar al-duwal*, 202; 'Imad al-Din Muhammad b.

Muhammad al-Katib al-Isfahani, *Kharidat al-qasr wa-jaridat al'asr. Al-Qism al-'Iraqi*, ed. Muhammad Bahjat al-Athari (Baghdad: al-Majma' al-'Ilmi al-'Iraqi, 1955), 29-30 - write simply that "The Isma'ilis killed him."

<sup>36</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 276. Ibn al-'Ibri, *mukhtasar al-duwal*, 204, attributes the lifting of the siege to mere lack of caliphal success; however, he appears to be singularly unsuspecting in everything to do with Saljuq-caliphal relations (*vide infra*).

<sup>37</sup> Ahmad b. Yusuf b. 'Ali Ibn Azraq al-Fariqi, *Ta'rikh al-Fariqi*, trans. Carole Hillenbrand, *A Muslim Principality in Crusader Times: The early Artuqid State*, Istanbul, 1990, 67.

<sup>38</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 284; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, 11: 19.

<sup>39</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 291; also recounted in Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 11: 24.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 293.

<sup>41</sup> 'Ala' al-Din al-Bakjari, *Mukhtasar ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 156.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 11: 25.

<sup>43</sup> Qazvini, *Ta'rikh-i guzida*, 359.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Qashani, "*Saljuqnama*," 56; Rashid al-Din, tr. Luther, *History of the Saljuq Turks*, 106.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 294-5; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 11: 25.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17:295. Similar accounts can be found in Sibt ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman*, 156, Ibn al-'Ibri, *Mukhtasar al-duwal*, 204, and Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 177, who attributes this defection to racial '*asabiyya*: "kind inclined toward kind; the Turks inclined to the Turks, and they betrayed the chaste sanctity of Islam to ravishing..."

<sup>47</sup> E.g. Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam* 17: 296. This issue will be treated at greater length below.

<sup>48</sup> The Sunni population of Baghdad was largely Hanbalite, and were traditionally the caliphate's staunchest supporters, particularly against the encroachments of sultans; *vide* H. Laoust, "Les Agitations Religieuses à Baghdad aux I<sup>ve</sup> et VI<sup>e</sup> siècles de l'Hégire," *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150, op. cit.*, 169-185, especially 178-183, where he notes popular Hanbalite hostility toward the Saljuqs because of their encroachments upon caliphal prerogatives. Unfortunately, Laoust's other major article on Hanbalism in Baghdad, "Les Hanbalisme sous le califat de

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Bagdad (241/855-656/1258)," *Revue des Études Islamiques* 27 (1959), 67-128, inexplicably skips over the entire period of al-Mustarshid's reign.

<sup>49</sup> Note that the size of this group of assassins was not at all in line with normal Isma'ili assassination practice, a point which will be discussed *infra*.

<sup>50</sup> Facial mutilation, particularly of the nose and ears, is apparently still a rather common cultural method of inflicting degradation and outrage in this part of the world; *vide* Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, "Honour, Shame and Bodily Mutilation. Cutting off the Nose among Tribal Societies in Pakistan," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16: 3 (2006), pp. 243-260, particularly the section on the bodily mutilation of men, beginning on p. 254; Frembgen characterizes nose-cutting (p. 256) as a classic "ritual of degradation." The author is indebted to Michael Cook for apprising her of the existence of this article.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Minhaj Siraj Juzjani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, ed. 'Abd al-Hayy Habibi (Tehran: Dunya-i Kitab, 1363/1984f), 1:126; Yahya b. 'Abd al-Latif al-Qazvini, *Lubb al-Tawarikh*, (Tehran: Bunyad u Guya, 1364/1984), 124; al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiyya*, 107; Abu'l-Fida', *al-Mukhtasar* 2:73; Ravandi, *Rahat al-sudur*, 228-229; and Ibn al-'Ibri, *Mukhtasar al-duwal*, 204. Zahir al-Din Nishapuri, *Saljuqnama*, 75, carries his whitewashing a bit further, claiming that the Batini assassins were members of the caliphal retinue, and eliminating all mention of the arrival of Sanjar's men.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam* 298-9.

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<sup>53</sup> 'Ala' al-Din al-Bakjari, *Mukhtasar ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 157.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 175.

<sup>55</sup> Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-Safa'*, 3:531.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 345: "Then Sanjar sent another messenger, and with him was an army to help Mas'ud to return the Caliph to the seat of his might; but there came in this army seventeen of the Batinis. It is related that Mas'ud did not know about them; but it is [also] said; 'Nay, he did know about them;' and it is [even] said: 'Rather, he was the one who smuggled them in.'"

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Ibn al-'Imrani, *al-Inba' fi ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 185. According to Ravandi, *Rahat al-sudur*, 228, the Batinis were actually **in the caliph's guard**, which of course was set by Mas'ud.

<sup>58</sup> Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman*, 157. Indeed, the isolation of the caliphal tent and Mas'ud's personal selection of the guard is noted even by authors who do not accuse the Saljuq sultans of having had a hand in the murder, e.g. Ibn al-'Ibri, *Mukhtasar al-duwal*, 204.

<sup>59</sup> E.g. Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 11:27; Ibn al-'Ibri, *Mukhtasar al-duwal*, 204.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 11: 26.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi, *loc. cit.*; Suyuti, *Ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 346.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil* 11:26; Ibn al-'Ibri, *Mukhtasar al-duwal*, 204.

<sup>63</sup> Ravandi, *Rahat al-Sudur*, 228, cited *supra*. Virtually every other confirmed case of Isma'ili assassination involved a lone assassin; there is no other recorded

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case of such a large group. *Vide* e.g. the assassination of the vizier of Sultan Berk-Yaruq's mother, Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 10: 270; on the very next page a lone Batini assassinates one of Nizam al-Mulk's mamluks, who was connected to the Saljuq dynasty by marriage; in the year 1104f a lone Batini assassinates the Shafi'i shaykh of al-Rayy (*ibid.*, 393); one of Nizam al-Mulk's sons was assassinated by a lone Batini in the year 1106 (*ibid.*, 418-419); the caliphal vizier was assassinated by a lone Batini in the year 573/1177f (*ibid.* 11: 446-447), and so forth. In fact, there are very few examples at all even of more than one Isma'ili carrying out an assassination- the murder of the vizier in the mosque in 1109f (*ibid.*, 478) stands virtually alone. Obviously, a group- particularly a large one- would be far more likely to be discovered than a lone actor.

<sup>64</sup> Again indicating that the story about independent Isma'ili assassins was not believed.

<sup>65</sup> Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 178-179.

<sup>66</sup> al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiyya*, 106; Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 177.

<sup>67</sup> Ibn al-'Imrani, *al-Inba' fi ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 186; al-Qazvini, *Lubb al-tawarikh*, 124; Nishapuri, *Saljuqnama*, 75; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-ta'rikh*, 11:28; Abu'l-Fida', *al-Mukhtasar*, 2:74 In fact, al-Rashid does not even permit the Saljuq *shihna* to physically enter his *bay'a* ceremony, forcing him instead to make his oath through a window (Sibt b. al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman*, 158; Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-*

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*Muntazam* 17:300)- perhaps due not solely to hostility, but also out of fear that the Saljuqs would exploit the opportunity to get rid of him as well. The sole exceptions are Ibn al-'Ibri and the Katib al-Isfahani. Ibn al-'Ibri not only omits the mention of any tension whatsoever between al-Rashid and the Saljuqs over al-Mustarshid's death, but even justifies the deposition of al-Rashid, first by quoting from a supposed conditional self-deposition in al-Rashid's own hand stating that "If I ever levy an army, or rebel, or meet any of Sultan Mas'ud's supporters with the sword, then I have already [by this action] deposed myself from rule," then by casting aspersions on the quality of al-Rashid's rule (Ibn al-'Ibri, *Mukhtasar al-duwal*, 205). Al-Katib al-Isfahani, likewise, neglects to supply a reason, both for al-Rashid's departure from Baghdad to Mosul and for his subsequent deposition. Mas'ud's and Sanjar's names simply do not appear in his account of al-Rashid's reign (al-Katib al-Isfahani, *Kharidat al-qasr*, 32-33).

<sup>68</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, 17: 305; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil* 11:35; Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-safa'* 3: 531.

<sup>69</sup> Ibn al-'Imrani, *al-Inba' fi ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 186.

<sup>70</sup> Ravandi, *Rahat al-sudur*, 228; Mustawfi Qazvini, *Ta'rikh-i guzida*, 360; Qazvini, *Lubb al-tawarikh* 124; according to Qashani, pseudo-*Saljuqnama*, 56, and Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-safa'* 3: 531, al-Rashid merely substituted Da'ud's name for that of Mas'ud.

<sup>71</sup> Ravandi, *Rahat al-sudur*, 229; Mustawfi Qazvini, *Tarikh-i guzida*, 360-361; Qazvini, *Lubb al-tawarikh*, 124; Mirkhwand, *Rawdat al-safa'* 3: 532; al-Husayni,

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*Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiyya*, 108.

<sup>72</sup> Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 183. According to one source, Mas'ud originally alarmed, ordered the vizier Sharaf al-Din al-Zaynabi to go in pursuit of the fleeing caliph in order to retrieve him, but it was the vizier who suggested a simpler, more expedient solution to Mas'ud's dilemma; he not only gathered the '*ulama*', but "forced them to testify, accusing al-Rashid Bi'llah of drinking intoxicating beverages; but, by God, there was not one of them that had seen him drink even water; they testified [solely] out of fear...." Ibn al-'Imrani, *al-Inba' fi ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 186.

<sup>73</sup> Al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-sajuqiyya*, 109. Sanjar claimed to be too busy to restore al-Rashid, but that of course does not explain why he did not simply command Mas'ud to desist- Mas'ud was his acknowledged vassal.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, 11: 60-62.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn al-'Imrani, *al-Inba' fi ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 188.

<sup>76</sup> Bundari, *Zubdat al-nusra*, 179. Note that Ibn al-'Imrani, *al-Inba' fi ta'rikh al-khulafa'*, 188, does not refer to them as Isma'ilis at all.

<sup>77</sup> Sibte b. al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman*, 164.

<sup>78</sup> al-Mustakfi in 946 and al-Ta'i in 991.

<sup>79</sup> Maqdisi, "Les rapports entre calife et sultan," 235. Maqdisi also points out the similarity of this project to that of the Buyid sultan 'Adud al-Dawla.

<sup>80</sup> Al-Husayni, *Akhbar al-dawla al-Saljuqiyya*, 131-134.

<sup>81</sup> The disastrous al-Muqtadir in 932.

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<sup>82</sup> LeStrange, *Baghdad During the 'Abbasid Caliphate*, London, 1924, 327-328.

<sup>83</sup> George Makdisi, "Les rapports entre calife et sultan à l'époque saljuqide," 229.

<sup>84</sup> Laoust, "Les Agitations Religieuses," 185: "Loin d'accepter de gaieté de cœur la venue des Saljuqides à Bagdad, et loin encore de l'avoir sollicitée, le califat continuait de s'efforcer, comme il l'avait déjà fait sous les Buyides, de lutter contre la tutelle de ses nouveaux maîtres tout en liant sa propre survie à la défense de la Sunna, dont il entendait être, à l'exclusion de toute dynastie provinciale, si puissante fût-elle, le dépositaire privilégié."

<sup>85</sup> Laoust, for instance, "Le Hanbalisme sous le califat," 108, incorrectly terms al-Muqtafi "le premier calife qui, depuis l'avènement des Bouyides, ait disposé à Bagdad de quelque pouvoir indépendant."

<sup>86</sup> A point that has also been appreciated and noted by both Bosworth, "Political and Dynastic History," 121, and Hillenbrand, *s.v.* "al-Mustarshid."