**Review of book proposal, *Preaching Pious and Learned Rulership in Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Jawzī’s Ameliorative Political Thought***

I found the proposal to be of outstanding quality and far from wanting in any respect. In my estimation, it makes for a very strong pitch which stands the chance of being accepted by any prestigious publisher and/or series in the field. It sets out the book’s topic and agenda, as well as their importance and place within the wider field, very well.

I have no particular comments to make concerning the section outlining the book’s aim and contents. With respect to the part detailing intended readership, the emphasis on a broad audience and accessibility is very well done and should be kept as it is, and perhaps even somewhat amplified. The only part I found somewhat weak in the proposal is comparable titles available on the market. The proposal at this part seems to be going to great lengths to make a case for the relevance of the proposed title to the series ‘Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation’. This, I believe, is the wrong approach to the issue. The ambit of the series is pretty wide and the proposed title is certainly more than a fit for it (so there is no point in labouring that point), while publishers are more interested in knowing what market a proposed title may have. Therefore, emphasis in this section should be shifted from one of relevance to the series to the uniqueness of the project and lack of competitive titles on the wider market, as against within the series. Also, books published within the framework of the same series (‘Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation’) are very over-represented in the list of comparable titles, whereas, as stated, the aim is to know whether there is a market for the proposed title. I would thus advise the inclusion of further titles by other publishers and/or series, and a clear emphasis on what sets the proposed title apart from already existing contributions to this and similar subjects: e.g., first book-length treatment of Ibn al-Jawzī’s political thinking, first monographic study dedicated to Ibn al-Jawzī and his oeuvre, first feature-length study of political thought in mediaeval Islam that pays attention to the role of the preacher class, first major study to make use of this or that untapped source, the first study of Ibn al-Jawzī contribution to Islamic civilisation since the publication of this or that work of his, the first time a study of a mediaeval Muslim scholar’s political thought pays attention to his entire oeuvre and/or political context (you can also compare the project positively to existing titles which focus on a single composition, as against a scholar’s entire oeuvre), etc, and, last but not least, how major a corrective it offers to our understanding of mediaeval Islamic political thought (this point is actually well emphasised throughout the proposal, but I’d like to see it further emphasised in this section with particular reference to the market).

You may have already reached out to the publisher to sound them out about the possibility of being put on a contract without having a completed manuscript in hand, but last that I checked (I believe it was sometime in 2017), they wouldn’t put anyone on a contract without having submitted a full manuscript. Edinburgh University Press, however, would consider giving contracts to book proposals without a complete manuscript in hand, and, at any rate, EUP is a respectable publisher which I would consider publishing with (the requirement for first-time authors, however, is the submission of a sample chapter together with the proposal). Oxford University Press is another publisher to approach, where it can be published as a standalone monograph without being part of any series. I wouldn’t advise spending time sounding out American university presses, as the more respectable ones among them do not have much experience, and are not well-known for, publishing titles of this nature. E. J. Brill can serve as the second best, though, if CUP, EUP, and OUP turn out to be not interested in the title (which I would say is very unlikely).

Finally, while it might sound trivial or not much important, I think the submitted material can certainly benefit from more ‘eye-friendly’ and symmetrical formatting. The CV, for instance, can make use of blue-coloured hyperlinks to publications, more spacious formatting, and a less common font, which would make your accomplishments more ‘noticeable’, so to speak.

Overall, I found the proposal to be a very strong one (and the project is very well-researched and well-thought-out indeed), and I wish you the best with finding a publisher for it!