Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements

EDITED BY

Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack

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Islamic Sects and
Movements

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Muhammad Afzal Upal
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BRILL

For Donald Barrett and Antoon Geels,
who were with us at the beginning of this project but
sadly died before the completion of this book

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Introduction: Islamic Sects and Movements

Carole M. Cusack and M. Afzal Upal

Given the presentation of Islam in popular media, it is not surprising that most Westerners (including some scholars) view the faith as a static, monolithic religion that clings fiercely to its seventh century roots, resisting any attempt at change. This is, of course, far from the truth. In common with other faith traditions, Islam has been a dynamic force from the start, with adaptations stemming from individual leaders, diverse ethnic populations, and the cultural contexts in which the religion took root. Christians and Jews, among other representatives of religious traditions, commented on Muḥammad, the prophet and founder of Islam, and identified resemblances between the new monotheistic religion and their own traditions (Hoyland 2000). Islamic tradition implicitly recognizes its own diversity; even as some groups label others heretical and denounce the inventions of so-called 'liar prophets' or *fitna* ('strife') spread by leaders who have succumbed to ungodly forces, they also acknowledge the relationship between these diverse interpretations and their own creed (van Ess 2001). In this way, Islamic literature tells the story of Musaylimah Kazzab (whose very name contains the word 'liar'), who, along with his followers, was killed by troops sent by Abū Bakr shortly after Muḥammad's death (Makin 2010). The Khārijites and Muʿtazilites are also mentioned in standard Sunnī and Shīʿa narratives, being portrayed as falling so far outside of mainstream Islam that their ideologies deserve to be wiped out of Islamic thought. Yet, their existence is clearly acknowledged (Timani 2017).

Such innovation in Islamic thought is not restricted to the past. Modern reformers have continued to push the envelope, sometimes being met with comparable disdain from certain Muslim groups as the 'false prophets' of the Prophet Muḥammad's time. These reformers include the founders of the Aḥmadiyya Muslims Jamāʿat (Chapter 27) and the Bahāʾī Faith (Chapter 33). According to traditional Sunnī and Shīʿa accounts, such 'heretical' movements have little or no value for scholars interested in understanding 'authentic Islam.' Should scholars of Islam researching the current state of Islam confine themselves, then, to studying only those movements which modern-day mainstream Shīʿa and Sunnī Muslims consider to be central to their faith? Do movements that are deemed less than 'fully' Islamic by some Muslims tell us nothing about Islam past, present, or future? The answer for contemporary scholars is clear; Islam is not monolithic, and ideal typical images of the tradition that focus on texts and theology are partial at best, and misleading at worst (Neitz

2011). The study of lived religion, vernacular religion, and of the diverse Islams that are occasioned by gender, social status, ethnicity, geographical location, and other variables must of necessity enrich scholarly understanding of the Islamic tradition.

Thus, while traditional anthologies, encyclopedias, and handbooks of Islam to date have excluded the 'heretical' movements, related religions (except for Judaism and Christianity), and splinter groups, as well as ignoring political manifestations of the faith, this volume casts a broader net. The goal is to present an overview of the wide variety of religious movements that have their origins in the Islamic world so that scholars and those interested in Islamic history can grasp the full extent of the diverse thought that exists under the name of Islam. We include Sunnī, Shī'a and Ṣūfi groups, and examinations of movements that were born of the Islamic world but no longer consider themselves part of the Islamic community (for example, Bahā'ī), and movements that consider themselves Islamic but are rejected as such by many Sunnī and Shī'a Muslims (such as the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at).

Perhaps it is inevitable for those who are faithful to slightly differing iterations of a religious tradition to argue about whose beliefs are most valid. Arguably, no other religious quarrels match the longevity and intensity of the Muslim debate over what constitutes the 'true' faith. Who belongs to the 'circle of Islam' (*daira-e-Islam*) and who is excluded from it? Almost every group has, at one time or another, been accused of being outside the circle of Islam. The heresiographical tradition in Islam appears to date back to its early days. In Chapter 19, Emin Poljarevic gives historical examples of *takfīr* including "ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) Mardin *fatwā* against Syria's Mongol rulers; the Ṣafavid (Shī'ī) Akhbāriyya's *takfīr* of Muslim philosophers in the 1600s; and most notably, during the 1700s, the religious movement of Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's *en masse* excommunication of the Sunnī Ottoman and Shī'ī religious leaders" (Poljarevic 2020). As Najam Haider notes, Muslim heresiographers have often used a *ḥadīth* which in its most commonly employed variant suggests that 72 out of the 73 sects in Islam are hell-bound: "This framework exercised a decisive influence on heresiographers, who sought to document the proliferation of a predetermined number of sects and positioned their own group as the sole representative of the Prophet's original message. Such a view did not allow for the doctrinal evolution of any single group. A sect was a cohesive and unchanging unit that held a discrete set of doctrines and beliefs" (Haider 2014: 104).

Viewing sects as static and unchanging is clearly unscientific. Sects are groups of individuals who share a set of beliefs. What is commonly referred to as a sect's beliefs are a subset of these beliefs. Many sects start out with

an individual founder whose ideas evolve and change over time (typically from orthodox to unorthodox). As other individuals join and leave the group, their individually held ideas also change through interactions with each other (Swatos 2007). Thus, a group's shared beliefs dynamically evolve over time. It is this belief change dynamic that makes these groups so fascinating to study. This also means that religious boundaries are more fluid than heresiographers (and even some scholars) have suggested. This includes boundaries between Islamic and non-Islamic movements as well as boundaries between various Islamic sects. Therefore, most of the movements that are considered non-Islamic now started out as strictly Islamic. For instance, founders of Bahāʾī and Aḥmadiyya Jamāʿat started out holding orthodox Shīʿa and Sunnī Muslim views. Haider suggests that Zaydism may be an even more interesting case, where a sect's beliefs have oscillated between Shīʿism and Sunnism (Haider 2014: 105). In order to understand these groups in relation to Islam, we need to understand the evolution of their shared beliefs over time. For those movements that originated in an Islamic milieu, this can be done by analyzing their shared beliefs in comparison with shared beliefs of Muslims in that historical era.

Given the breadth of this volume and the extent of content not conventionally included in collections such as this, questions arise as to the most effective organization of chapters. The first part of the book has seven chapters focusing on non-violent Sunnī movements. The second part contains six chapters on Shīʿa and Shīʿa-related movements. The third part has eight chapters on fundamentalist and extremist movements that are primarily Sunnī in orientation, ranging from the mostly non-violent (for example, Hizb ut-Tahrir) to the violent (culminating in Islamic State). The fourth part covers Ṣūfi movements and Ṣūfi-related movements. The fifth part has six chapters describing two different types of movements: first, those that mainstream Muslims do not consider part of Islam, but followers of those movements consider themselves to be Muslims; and second, movements that have historical links to Islam but are separate (for example, Yezidis and Druze).

1   Survey of Contents

This volume is organized in five sections: Part 1, "Sunnī Traditions"; Part 2, "Shīʿa Traditions"; Part 3, "Fundamentalists and Extremists"; Part 4, "Ṣūfism and its Influences"; and Part 5, "In Between and On the Fringes of Islam." Three of these sections are uncontroversial; the division of Islam into Sunnī and Shīʿa, with Ṣūfis forming a third grouping that crosses this sectarian divide, is traditional

(Husain 2018). The other two sections, however, may be less popular, although for different reasons. Fundamentalist instantiations of Islam undeniably exist; yet they are slippery and difficult to define, and it may be objected that there are significant differences between the movements in this section that vitiate any desire to strategically group them together. The final section is likely to be more controversial; of the seven movements covered, only two have a strong 'Islamic' identity (Aḥmadiyya and the Nation of Islam), and both are regarded as 'deviant'. The other five are not 'Islamic' sects, in the sense of unorthodox or theological offshoots, but are separate religious entities, both traditional and modern. A distinguishing feature of these groups is that they all have interacted historically, culturally and socially with Islam and have (to some extent) shaped their identities accordingly.

Part 1 introduces the Sunnī tradition, beginning with a general overview and progressing through five specific institutions that are associated with different modern nation-states. The section concludes with an overview chapter on women in (Sunnī) Islam. One of the issues facing scholars of Islam relates to the terminology available for characterizing the diversity within Islamic beliefs and behaviors (Sedgwick 2000). Should terms developed originally for the study of Christian movements, 'sect', for instance, be applied to Islamic subdivisions or movements? (Swatos 2007). Ron Geaves examines this question in the first chapter, "Sectarianism in Sunnī Islam." He traces the history of various schisms in Islam, starting from the first century of Islam and the beliefs of early movements (such as the Khārijites), before moving forward to consider modern Sunnī movements (for example, Tablīghī Jamāʿat, Jamaat-e-Islami, and the Muslim Brotherhood). Geaves' conclusion identifies political and theological causes for the divisions that remain present in Sunnī Islam.

In Chapter 2, Zacharias Pieri reviews the history of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat from its origins in the nineteenth century India to the present. He describes a movement dedicated to reviving and strengthening the faith of the existing faithful by making Islam a part of every single aspects of life. Yet, the movement has splintered in recent years with at least two leaders vying for the top spot: Saad ul-Hasan and Zuhairul Hasan. Pieri also reports that the Pakistani and Bangladeshi branches also appear to be moving away from the Indian center and "becoming increasingly powerful due to the large annual congregations held there and the ambitions of the leaders in those regions to have more say in TJ'S global operations. Violent clashes ensued between those loyal to the Indian branch of the movement and those who wanted an expanded leadership" (Pieri 2020). The appeal of Tablīghī Jamāʿat in varied cultural contexts, including the West, is also examined.

Sunnī conservatism perhaps best represents the monolithic interpretation of Islam made by many in the contemporary world. As such, Rickard Lagervall's chapter on "The Muslim Brotherhood" and its history, from its origins in early twentieth century Egypt, to the proliferation of offshoots throughout the broader Middle East and North Africa, is enlightening (Chapter 3). Lagervall examines the Brotherhood's founder, Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–1949) and the contribution of his contemporary, Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966). The Brotherhood's intervention in Egyptian politics is covered, and the tensions between Saudi Wahhābism and the Muslim Brotherhood are analysed. It even becomes evident that offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood were, in fact, active on both sides of the Algerian Civil War that followed the suspension of the parliamentary election by the military in 1992 (Willis 2012).

The Gülen Movement and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) of Turkey are another case in point. The two movements appear to be similar; for example, both advocated a Sunnī political Islamic revival to remake the Kemalist secular Turkey into a modern Islamic welfare state. In Chapter 4 Caroline Tee surveys the relationship between these two movements, noting they were close allies during the 1990s, but had a falling out as the AKP won elections and consolidated its power. Thus, while in the 2002 election, Fethullah Gülen asked his supporters to vote for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's AKP (leading the AKP to its first majority government), tensions arose between the two allies in the AKP's second term in office over issues such as Turkey's relationship with Israel and how to respond to anti-government protests. The coup of 15 July 2016 seemed to obviate any hope of reconciliation between the two movements. Erdoğan blamed Gülen for orchestrating the coup and ordered arrests of thousands of Gülenists, the dissolution of Gülenist schools, and confiscation of the movement's property.

Chapter 5, Hisanori Kato's "The Islam Nusantara Movement in Indonesia," illustrates the difficulties associated with the traditional approach to studying Islamic movements which insists on drawing clear boundaries. Kato argues that while there are minor differences between the two "modernist" Sunnī movements based in Indonesia, namely, Islam Nusantara and Islam Berkumajuan (such as Nusantara has a more advanced online presence), it is difficult to find genuine theological differences between them. However, these similarities far from making them uniform have only bred "mutual hatred since their establishment." Furthermore, he argues that boundaries between Islam Nusantara and liberal (that is, Jaringan Islam Liberal) as well as more conservative "hardline" Islamists are also not as clearly drawn as some assume them to be. Thus, while some Nusantara leaders of argue against including LGBTQ and

Aḥmadiyya members in the fold of Islam, others argue that they should also be considered Muslims.

In Chapter 6, Faried Saenong reviews the origin and history of the Indonesia-based Sunnī movement Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) which, with its esti- mated 30–90 million members, claims to be one of the largest Muslim organi- zations in the world. Like many movements across the Muslim world, NU was launched during the Dutch colonial period in 1926 by a group of *'ulamā'* who wanted to voice their concerns to the new Saudi king following the Wahhābist revolution in Saudi Arabia and the launch of Wahhābist Muhammadiyah movement in Indonesia in 1912. Unlike similar movements that arose in other parts of the Muslim world (such as Aḥmad Riḍā Khān's Barelwī Movement in South Asia) to defend traditional Ṣūfi practices, NU is unique in revering all four Sunnī *madhhab* founders equally. Saenong discusses how NU balances its insistence on a strict adherence to traditional Sunnī worldview with its pro- gressivism on the issue of allowing local cultural practices. This focus on indi- genization of Islam led to the launch of the Islam Nusantara movement, the subject of the previous chapter, in 2015.

In Chapter 7, Eva F. Nisa brings Section 1 to a conclusion with a review of the role of women in Islam. She commences with the origin of Islam focus- ing on the role of Prophet Muḥammad's wives who (known as 'mothers of the believers') are considered the epitome of Muslim women's piety (Nisa 2020). She progresses through history to a discussion of the role of women in a range of modern movements including the Muslim Brotherhood, Tablīghī Jamā'at, Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Hizb ut-Tahrir. She cautions against making assumptions about Muslim women's roles and emphasizes the dizzying diversity in Muslim women's voices. This is not new; Nisa presents the contrasting the roles played by the Prophet's wives ʿĀʾisha, Khadīja and Umm Salama. While ʿĀʾisha led one of the first inter-Islamic battles and narrated over 1,500 *aḥadīth*, the Prophet's other wives seemed to have played little to no public role in the formation of the new faith. Modern Muslims women's voices range from Islamic feminists such as Fatima Mernissi, to ultra conservative Muslim Brotherhood leader Zaynab al-Ghazali, and everything in between. She concludes that "anyone who wants to understand Muslim women and their activism within diverse Islamic and Islamist move- ments must avoid the inclination to make broad and unqualified generalisa- tions. The wide geographical scope covered in this chapter also reminds us of the diversity within Muslim-majority countries."

Part 2 of the book covers Shīʿa movements beginning with an overview chap- ter (Chapter 8) by Mohammad Fazlhashemi. He argues that the Shīʿa-Sunnī conflict began as a contest over secular state power soon after the death of the

Prophet but, over time, has "widened to include theological, legal, philosophical, cultural, social, and not least political controversies." He stresses, however, that the Shīʿite are far from forming a homogeneous group; the Twelvers are the majority, but there are Zaydīs, Ismāʿīlites, and a number of other branches. Fazlhashemi notes that "during a short period in the early history of Shīʿa, between 660–870, a dozen conflicting factions were formed, all of which laid claim to the correct interpretation within Shīʿa" (Fazlhashemi 2020). Even in modern-day Iran, which is under Shīʿa theocratic rule, not everyone agrees with Ayatollah Khomeni's notion of *vilayat-e-fiqah* (the 'guardianship of legal scholars'); in fact, as Fazlhashemi explains, even "[o]ne of the foremost defenders of the doctrine, the Grand Ayatollah Montazeri (1922–2009), turned his back on it in the mid 1980s." The chapter indicates that such opposition to Shīʿa power has led to demands for a democratic electoral system and the separation of religion and government.

Chapter 9 by Najam Haider tells the fascinating story of Zaydism or Fiver Shīʿism from being a proto-Sunnī group to a Shīʿa denomination in its first two centuries. He starts with the traditional narrative of the formation of Zaydīs as a merger of two sects: namely the proto-Sunnī Batrīs and proto-Shīʿa Jarudis. However, he quickly disposes it as a representation of two "theological orientations as opposed to specific discernible groups" (Haider 2020). He argues that Zaydīs in the middle of the eighth century were predominantly Batrī and anti-Muʿtazilite while Zaydīs in the ninth century were increasingly Jarudi and pro Muʿtazilite. He devotes the first part of his two-part chapter to studying the sociocultural and political factors that caused this change prominent among them the leadership of Yaḥyā bin ʿAbd Allāh and the move of the Zaydī center of gravity from Iraq to Yemen. It was in Yemen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the reverse trend towards Sunnī traditionalism among Zaydīs started under the leadership of Muhammad al-Shawkānī, chief judge appointed by a Zaydī Imam. This Sunnīfication process was only accelerated by the overthrow of the *imāmate* and its replacement by secular government which has oppressed traditional Zaydism for the fear that it would cause Zaydīs to seek revival of a Zaydī *imāmate*. This environment has sparked both a backlash and a reinterpretation of Zaydī traditions resulting in a broad diversity of voices ranging from Houthi rebels to interpretive efforts that seek legitimacy of modern Yemeni state through traditional Zaydism.

Farhad Daftary reviews the history of the Ismāʿīlī (Sevener Shīʿa) movement starting from the split of the Islam into Sunnī and Shīʿa camps after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, with a particular focus on the history of the Nizari Ismāʿīlīs in Chapter 10. It was not, however, till the sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, argues Daftary that Shīʿas became a "major religious community with a distinct

identity" (Daftary 2020). The unity among the Shī'ite community did not last
long. The issue of Ṣādiq's succession led to one of many splits in the com-
munity. The pure Ismāʿīliyya believed that Ṣādiq's older son Ismāʿīl had gone
into hiding but was still the *imām*, while the Mubarakiyya took Ṣādiq's grand-
son to be their *imām*. After the death of the grandson, Mubarakiyya further
split into two more groups. The history of Ismāʿīlī movement is replete with
dynamism in which *dāʿī*s from various factions compete with each other, with
Imami Shīʿas, and with Sunnīs of various factions to convince people of their
truths. As Ismāʿīlīs are getting pushed out of one region (e.g., North Africa),
they establish themselves in another part of the world (Yemen and Central and
Southern Asia).

Chapter 11 of this section reviews the history of Dāʾūdī the Bohra com-
munity of Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa Muslims. Being a minority, even among Indian Shīʿa
Muslims, Jonah Blank describes the considerable efforts that the Bohras have
engaged in to maintain their distinctiveness, and to ensure that they are not
absorbed into the much large Hindu or Sunnī populations. These include the
efforts by the clerical establishment to maintain their control over the laity,
adoption of Western technologies especially telecommunication technologies,
and Western education. While having a strong leader in the almost infallible
dāʿī muṭlaq ensures remarkable amount of uniformity in beliefs and practices,
it has not kept the community from splintering into subgroups of including
Sulaymānī and ʿAlawī Bohras. The most recent split over the succession of
Syedna Burhanuddin has not resulted in the formation of a new Bohra sub-
group, it has raised "the prospect of another community schism" (Blank 2020).

Yvette Talhamy in Chapter 12 describes the origins of two offshoots of Shīʿa
Islam: the Alevīs and the ʿAlawīs (Dressler 2013; Faksh 1984). She explains that,
while both groups revere ʿAlī and are concentrated in neighboring regions
of Syria and Anatolia, there are a number of important differences between
them: "While the ʿAlawī/Nuṣayrī creed developed in Iraq in the ninth century
and is of Arab origin, the Alevī creed was born several centuries later, stem-
ming mainly of Turkoman tribes that settled in Anatolia during the thirteenth
century" (Talhamy 2020). She elaborates on the ways in which the two groups'
views of ʿAlī and Muḥammad diverge, as well as pinpointing differences in
their festivals, prayers, and practices. The matter of how ʿAlawīs and Alevīs are
able to shift their identities from Nuṣayrī to Shīʿa Islam (and, in the case of
the Dede Commission of the Federation of Alevī Communities in Germany, to
non-Islamic identities, too) is deftly handled in this informative chapter.

Chapter 13 is David Thurfjell's study of the *hey'ati* movement in Iran. This
chapter is focused on charismatic eulogists or *maddāhān* and the youth move-
ment that has gathered around them in the past two decades. Thurfjell's

fieldwork in Qom resulted in a multi-faceted characterisation of a movement that has broad popular appeal, draws on Iranian folk religiosity, and has developed into a distinctive subculture expressed through lifestyle, ritual and aesthetics. The *hey'ati* movement is not explicitly political, but Thurfjell argues that "eulogists played a pivotal role in the mobilisation of popular support for former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad" (Thurfjell 2020). In pre-Revolutionary Iran a major activity of eulogists was the offering of prayers for the king, a practice that was discontinued after the downfall of the Shah, Reza Pahlavi. In contemporary Iran, eulogists are interesting as non-clerical sources of religious authority, and as supporters of conservative Islamic jurisprudence and opponents of reformist clergy.

Part 3, "Fundamentalisms and Extremists," opens with Chapter 14, in which Joas Wagemakers defines Salafis as Muslims "who claim to have made being 'salaf-like' the be-all and end-all of their ideology." *Salaf* here refers to the first three generations of Muslims (the so-called "pious predecessors"). Wagemakers divides Salafis into three groups: quietists, political Salafis, and jihādist Salafis. While these groups are similar and share a belief in the ideological purity of the citadel of Islam, Wagemakers cautions against the tendency to generalize about them, pointing out that each group does not consider the others "true Salafis" or, indeed, even Muslims. Moreover, as he elucidates, the various Salafi factions are prone to attacking one another verbally. The quietists, who shun modern political discourse (not unlike the Tablīghīs), brand political Salafis *Ikhwānīs*, borrowing the name of the highly political Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn); they also label jihādist Salafis takfīris or *khawārij* because of their views on *takfīr*. On the other hand, jihādist Salafis (and, to a lesser extent, political Salafis) accuse the quietists of being like the Murji'a because of their alleged tendency to exclude acts from their definition of faith, thereby overlooking the 'sinful' acts of supposedly apostate rulers (Lav 2012; Wagemakers 2012a). In this way, Salafis often deny each other the very label of 'Salafi', indicating that, despite a common desire to emulate their predecessors, those within the citadel of Salafism are "deeply divided" (Wagemakers 2020).

In Chapter 15, Jon Armajani starts with an overview of Pakistan's role in Afghanistan that intensified with Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 as millions of Afghan refugees poured across the border. Many of the refugee children received education at Saudi funded *madrasas*. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989, the Afghanistan erupted further into chaos with a seemingly endless infighting among the Mujahideen. Warlords fought with each other over all sort of issues including the fight over a boy. It was such a fight among two war lords that so irritated Mullā Omar, an *imām* of a village mosque in South Eastern Afghanistan, that he took thirty of his *madrasa* students to

rescue the boy. Local people saw him as a hero and joined his cause swelling his rag tag army. Aided by the governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Omar first took over Kandahar region in the South and eventually Kabul in 1996. His Taliban followers elected his *amīr-al-muʾminīn*, commander of the faithful. He declared Afghanistan an Islamic Emirate and imposed a strict Islamic rule. The Taliban rule came to an end in 2001 when US supported their opponents in the aftermaths of 9/11 attacks. However, the Taliban, far from giving up the flight have gone back to their guerilla warfare roots and continue their attempt to restore their rule.

Chapter 16 by Shaul Bartal, expands on the links between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Palestinian movement Ḥamās. Bartal connects Ḥamās with the Palestinian national-resistance movement that began during the period of the British mandate. Even though Ḥamās was officially founded in 1987, Bartal considers its foundation to have been the start of the organization's second phase. This view is similar to the phase-development notions related to Hizb ut-Tahrir, but involves a shorter period for the preparation of society for *jihād* because, in contrast with Hizb, Ḥamās does not believe in the necessity of waiting for a *khalīfa* to declare *jihād*. The remainder of the chapter summarizes the political and military developments within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1987, concentrating especially on the role of Ḥamās.

Chapter 17 shows how Hizb ut-Tahrir, founded in 1953 by a Palestinian scholar named Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī, holds a similar outlook to Tablīghī Jamāʿat, focusing on preaching and outreach (Chapter 2). As Meerim Aitkulova indicates, however, the movement also differs from the Tablīghīs, in that it has an intensely political nature. Indeed, its political goal is the reestablishment of the Islamic Caliphate system and the achievement of a wholly Muslim world. Notably, though, the movement is depicted as a peaceful one that denounces the use of violence as a means for achieving its goals. Despite this, Hizb ut-Tahrir is banned in many countries around the world, perhaps because of its political involvement. Aitkulova also examines the view expounded by a number of counter-terrorism experts that the movement can act as a first step on the ladder toward violent extremism.

In Chapter 18, "Ungoverned or Alternatively Governed Spaces in North-Eastern Nigeria: A Critical Exploration of Boko Haram's Ideological Motif," Benson Igboin discusses sub-state organizations, such as Nigeria's Boko Haram, which move in to assume leadership of so-called "ungoverned spaces" that lack strong government. Igboin takes to task Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, critiquing his inaugural speech delivered on 29 May, 2015, in which he promised to wipe out Boko Haram and commission a sociological study to

examine its origins and causes. Igboin argues that President Buhari's approach runs contrary to logic, stressing that a study of the causes of violence is needed before the movement can be eradicated. The thrust of the chapter is that some of the reasons behind Boko Haram's violent tendencies are religious in nature and that, instead of killing all the movement's members, the Nigerian Government should focus on using a narrative-based deradicalization strategy to win the war of ideas.

Chapter 19 by Steven Childs is an exposition of the Lebanese Shīʿa political movement, Hezbollah. The assertion of Shīʿa identity has perennial importance within Islam, where Sunnīs are in the majority. This identity was mobilized in Lebanon during the 1970s by the Lebanese-Iranian philosopher Musa al-Sadr (b. 1928, disappeared 1978), who acquired a following among the working class. Hezbollah came into existence in 1985, with three aims: to destroy Israel; to end Israel's presence in South Lebanon; and to establish an Islamic regime in Lebanon (Childs 2011). Hezbollah's eclipsing of the secular Amal party indicated support for the Islamist position that religion and government should be united. Childs also discusses the combat style and militarization of Hezbollah and its implications for the region.

In Chapter 20, Kaarina Aitamurto examines the construction of the concept of the "sect" by the Russian media, looking specifically at the depiction of the Muslim "sect" (Baran 2006). She argues that, "in contemporary Russia, the word 'sect' has even more negative connotations than it does in Western Europe or North America." In this context, sects are often contrasted with traditional Russian Islam, which, in Soviet times, was under the control of the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly. Movements such as Wahhābism, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Nurdzhular, the National Organization of Russian Muslims (NORM), and Faizrakhmanisty, which are seen either as non-traditional or as having originated outside Russia, are labeled sects by the Russia-centric press (Aitamurto 2018). This label, Aitamurto suggests, has real consequences for these movements, in terms of societal opinion turning against them and legislative measures being adopted to hinder their activity, as the rubric of 'security' comes to dominate what were previously regarded as religious phenomena and issues.

The first part of Emin Poljarevic's contribution (Chapter 21) traverses the same ground as Chapter 14, discussing the roots of takfirism in Islam, starting with the Khawārij. He explains the similarities between the positions held by the Khawārij and ISIS that (as Wagemakers described) allow non-Jihādis to accuse ISIS of being like Khawārij. Poljarevic also provides far greater detail concerning the development of the Jihādi Salafi doctrine of *takfīr* and subtle variations of the belief held by various Jihādist Salafis such as ʿAzzām,

al-Maqdisī, bin Lādin, Al- Ẓawāhirī, and Al-Zarqawi. He describes the socio-cultural and political developments that led to the development of ISIS including the formation of al-Qāʿida in Iraq and its metamorphosis into ISIS under Al-Zarqawi's leadership.

The fourth part of the *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements* concerns Ṣūfism and its offshoots. Chapter 22, Marta Dominguez Diaz's "Ṣūfism," is a historical sketch tracing Ṣūfism's emergence and routinization into established orders, and which culminates in a discuss of contemporary transnational Ṣūfism. Diaz discusses whether Ṣūfism belongs in the Islamic mainstream or at its periphery—or even completely outside of traditional Islam. She argues that for much of Islamic history, Ṣūfism was, indeed, part of the mainstream (Knysh 2010). This is despite the fact that modern reformist movements such as Wahhābism insist that many (if not most) Ṣūfi elements are *bidʿa* ('innovations') imported from other religions (Weismann 2011; Ridgeon 2015). Dominguez Diaz contends that much of the original criticism of extravagant Ṣūfi practices came from other Ṣūfis themselves, who were not against Ṣūfism *per se* but, rather, sought to reform Ṣūfism and curb what they saw as its excesses.

Chapter 23 by Milad Milani is a study of the charismatic leader Javād Nūrbakhsh (1926–2008) and the Niʿmatullāhī 'Khaniqahi' Order which held from 1956 to his death. Milani notes that the Niʿmatullāhī Order was established in the fourteenth century (Algar 2012) and "is by far the most widespread and significant Ṣūfi Order in Iran, since the time of its inception in the fourteenth century." The Order took on more sectarian lineaments when Nūrbakhsh established Khaniqahi "Houses of Ṣūfism" in the West in the years prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the year in which he himself relocated to the United States. The type of Ṣūfism developed in the West by Nūrbakhsh, Milani avers, was significantly distanced from Islam, though in a less radical and overt way to that of Hazrat Inayat Khan (founder of Universal Ṣūfism) and Meher Baba (Milani 2012: 670). Thus, Niʿmatullāhī Ṣūfism is not Islamic mysticism but rather a mystical system with historical links to Persian culture.

The next contribution to the volume is Antoon Geels' study of the Indonesian new religion, Subud (Chapter 24). Geels looks at the life and beliefs of Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (1901–1987), the founder of Subud, a mystical movement that, like so many of the other faith traditions examined in this book, inhabits the border region between Islam and other religions (Geels 1997). In the case of Subud, these include Ṣūfism, Javanese religions, and Hinduism. After identifying the key tenets of the Subud faith through a thorough examination of the original sources, Geels concludes that Sumohadiwidjojo's ideas are similar to the "general consensus" about Islam

put forth by Ṣūfi Muslim scholars, even if they appear to be framed in terms of Javanese spirituality.

Chapter 25 by W. Rory Dickson considers a type of Ṣūfism that has moved even further from 'official' Islamic Ṣūfism, the Traditionalist Ṣūfism of René Guénon (1886–1951) and his followers. Dickson sketches Guénon's interactions with various esoteric movements, and how his spiritual quest was transformed by his 1930 move to Cairo and 1934 marriage to Fatima Muhammad Ibrahim, with whom he had four children. Guénon lived an observant Muslim life but did not personally regard himself as a convert, as he believed that all Traditional religions were equally valid; "the essential unity of all traditions" rendered the possibility of conversion "meaningless and truly inconceivable" (Guénon 2004 [1952]: 63). Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998) established braches of the 'Alawiyya Order in the West, which many Traditionalists joined. Schuon's Ṣūfism was reformed in its ritual practices, and was informed by Vedanta, indigenous traditions and Catholicism. By the 1980s, the 'Alawiyya Order had become the Maryamiyya, after the Virgin Mary (Fitzgerald 2010: 119).

Chapter 26 is an examination of the claim that the teaching lineage of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (c. 1866–1949) called the 'Work' or the 'Fourth Way' has its origins in Central Asian Ṣūfism. Carole M. Cusack considers the contribution of Gurdjieff's pupil John Godolphin Bennett (1897–1974) who zealously pursued this interpretation of his teacher's ideas and practices, travelling extensively in the Islamic world to seek "out the sources of Gurdjieff's teachings from the Muslims that he met" (Pittman 2012: 123). Cusack concludes that the identification of Gurdjieff and his teachings as 'Ṣūfi' is erroneous, and the Work should not be regarded as an Islam-derived esoteric system. Rather, Gurdjieff's personal creativity, eclectic borrowing from a range of traditions, and Orthodox Christian upbringing are viewed as (probably) more important in the development of the Fourth Way.

The fifth part of this volume groups together two different types of movements. These are groups that have members who believe themselves to be Muslims, despite the fact that 'mainstream' Muslims would deny them that status, and entirely separate religions that have co-existed with Islam over the centuries and have to some extent moulded their self-image and their public presence in response to this. Chapter 27 sees Muhammad Afzal Upal trace the origins of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamāʿat, which was founded in 1889 in Northwest India by Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1839–1908). Aḥmad's enigmatic beliefs have puzzled scholars of religion, who have explored the various influences upon Aḥmad's thoughts, from Ṣūfi Islam to the reformist Ahl-e-Ḥadīth. In this chapter, Upal discusses the influences of rationalist South-Asian Muslim thinkers, such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (Robinson 1988), upon the movement

under scrutiny. Aḥmadiyya members are persecuted in various Islamic countries, in particular Pakistan, where the movement was based until the administration moved to London in 1984.

The next chapter is the first of three concerning African-American movements of which members regard themselves as Muslims. Edward E. Curtis IV covers the founding of the Nation of Islam (NOI) by W.D. Fard Muhammad in 1930 in Detroit (Chapter 28). Curtis credits Fard's successor, Elijah Muhammad, with introducing NOI's distinctive doctrine, including the notions that "Fard was God in the flesh," Elijah was the "messenger of God," and a "Mother Ship" (UFO) would play a role in Armageddon. These claims are unacceptable in the context of the Sunnī and Shī'a traditions (Curtis 2006: 10–14). He also describes an attempt by Elijah's son and successor, Wallace Muhammad, to move the NOI flock closer to mainstream Islam by de-emphasizing these features. However, as noted in M. Afzal Upal's (2017) cognitive science of new religious movements, these rollbacks have provided an opening for Louis Farrakhan (Wallace Muhammad's competitor for NOI leadership) to capitalize on the very distinctive features that Wallace sought to downplay, causing a split within the NOI. Thus, as Curtis shows, Wallace Muhammad's faction has moved closer to mainstream Sunnī Islam, while Farrakhan's version of the NOI has maintained its more fringe qualities.

In Chapter 29, Fathie Ali Abdat examines the origins and history of the Moorish Science Temple of America (AMSTA), starting from its foundation in Chicago by the prophet Noble Drew Ali (1886–1929) on November 29, 1926 and moving forward to present times (Bowen 2017). He finds similar trends to those observed in relation to the Nation of Islam, with distinctive features typically not found in Sunnī Islam being prominent (such as the concept of divine status for leaders like Allah El). These, Abdat explains, have been emphasized more or less at different times in the group's history, leading to the splintering of the group into multiple branches. As the chapter demonstrates, the group has had to negotiate the fine balance between being critical of the United States government (in order to connect with the Black community) and not being seen as seditious (McGee-Bey 1968: 4) in an effort to avoid legal issues). Unlike NOI, AMSTA has shied away, in the main, from the US Civil Rights struggle (and, in recent decades, has become associated with the idea of "Moorish sovereignty," which, as Abdat notes, has led to the issuing of licenses and other documents to members which make spurious claims to exempt holders from taxation and to confer other benefits.

Chapter 30 is Susan J. Palmer's "The Ansaaru Allah Community," an analysis of the group also known as the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors among other names, founded by Dwight D. York (b. 1945), known as Dr Malachi Z. York,

in 1967. Palmer focuses on the many transformations York's sect has undergone, and the influences that York drew upon in articulating its eclectic doctrines. In addition to Islam, York was inspired by the ancient civilizations of Sumeria and Egypt, and espoused the "ancient astronaut" theory of Zecharia Sitchin (Sitchin 1976). With regard to Islam, York has also alleged that he was initiated into the Order of Al Khidr, and also into a Ṣūfī Order of Khalwatiyya (Gardell 1996: 226), and between 1973 and 1992 claimed to be the Mahdi. In 2004, York was convicted of racketeering and criminal sexual activity, and received a sentence with a release date of 2120.

In Chapter 31, Hussam Timani on the Druze begins with the efforts made by Ismāʿīlī missionaries in the eleventh century preaching of a fresh call to monotheism or Unitarianism (al-daʿwa al-tawḥīdiyya) (Halabi 2015: 16). Timani concludes with the recent death of the Druze sage Shaykh Abu Hasan Arif in 2004. After reviewing various theories about the ethnic origins of the Druze (relating them, for example, to French, Persian, and Jewish histories), Timani suggests that they are, in fact, an Arabic group. He also dissects the specific beliefs of the Druze, including the prominence of reincarnation, the use of wisdom books, and the importance of taʿarruf ("erudition"), which are all elements that set the Druze apart from mainstream Shīʿa and Sunnī Islam (Firro 1992). Finally, he argues that, while the Druze are different from the aforementioned groups, many members do consider themselves Muslims.

Victoria Arakelova's study of the history and beliefs of the Yezidi community of the Middle East concentrates in particular on persecution of the group (Chapter 32). Named after Yazid bin Ummaya, a 'villain' in Shīʿa history who is often held responsible for the killing of Imām Hussain, the group is known for its deification of the traditional Islamic angel of death (Arakelova 2011: 35–36). It is perhaps little wonder, then, that Yezidis are labeled 'devil worshippers' by their Sunnī and Shīʿa neighbors. As Arakelova delineates, members are also known to pray to a pantheon of lesser beings, such as Sheikh Shams (the 'Lord of the Sun'), and are accused by mainstream Muslims, therefore, of engaging in shirk ('polytheism'). Arakelova also covers the persecution of Yezidis by various governments and groups, the most recent example being by ISIS (Asatrian and Arakelova 2014).

In Chapter 33 Lil Osborn considers the origins and belief system of the Bahāʾī community, beginning with its roots in the millennialism of nineteenth-century Shīʿa Islam. Similar to the Aḥmadiyyas, the Bahāʾīs believe in a prophet who came after Muḥammad and are thus regarded as non-Muslims by most Sunnīs and Shīʿas (Warburg 2003). Interestingly, though, unlike the Aḥmadiyyas, the Bahāʾīs do not claim to be Muslims. This positionality does not enable them, however, to escape persecution in Muslim-majority countries,

where, as Osborn discusses, they are discriminated against in private work-places, at educational institutions, and in governmental offices (Cooper 1985).

2   A Note on Translation

For convenience and consistency, we have aimed to systematise the spelling and formulation of non-English words, particularly Arabic, throughout the chapters. Where and when appropriate, we have deferred to Brill's highly regarded third edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (EI3), edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson and released progressively online from 2007, for the translation of Arabic to romanised English. However, as this volume brings together discussions of examples and case studies that range time periods, geographic regions, and cultural as well as linguistic groups, and utilises a range of primary as well as scholarly sources, there are some natural deviations in the spelling of some names and terms notably in the chapters that reprint earlier works.

3   Conclusion

The recent history of violence on the part of Islamic organisations and violence experienced by Muslims across the globe is another powerful driver for this volume. On 3 August 2014 Islamic State militants attacked the Kurdish area of Northern Iraq around Mount Sinjar and killed a number of its inhabitants as it had done elsewhere in Iraq (Chulov 2014). In a new low for Islamic State, women were kidnapped and openly sold as slaves. Responding to the horrified reaction of the rest of the world, the August edition of the Islamic State mouthpiece *Dabiq* included a long article justifying the practice of slavery. After summarizing a discussion among medieval scholars about whether the inhabitants of the area, who referred to themselves as Yezidis, are better classified as *mushrikeen* (idolators), *murtaddīn* (apostates) or *ahl al-Kitāb* (people of the Book), it concluded with a *fatwā* by IS's pre-eminent scholars that Yezidis were idolators. Thus, the enslavement and concubinage of Yezidi women was not only allowed, but required, according to Islamic tradition:

> One should remember that enslaving the families of the (non-believers) and taking their women as concubines is a firmly established aspect of the Shariah, that if one were to deny or mock, he would be denying or mocking the verses of the Quran and the narrations of the Prophet.
>
> *Dabiq* 2014

This set up a flurry of activity among the Western decision makers and Middle East analysts to find any scholars or published material that could explain to them who Yezidis were and what their connections to Islam was. This search was not made easier by the fact that most modern scholarship on Islam limits itself to studying orthodox Sunnī and Shīʿa traditions at the expense of heterodox Islamic movements and religious traditions that originated in the Islamic world and the connections that these movements have with Islam. In the same year Garnik S. Asatrian and Victoria Arakelova published *The Religion of the Peacock Angel: The Yezidis and Their Spirit World*, one of the first academic monographs on Yezidism and an important milestone in documenting this small, vulnerable community (Asatrian and Arakelova 2014). To understand Islamic State's actions in August 2014, we needed to understand Yezidis and their connections their faith has with Islam. To understand the blockade of Pakistani capital Islamabad by Sunnī Tehrik-e-Labaik ya Rasoolullah in first three weeks of November 2017 and the subsequent capitulation of the Pakistani state to the protesters one needs to understand the relationship between Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamāʿat and its origin in Sunnī Islam (*Daily Dawn* 2017). To understand the attacks on Yemeni Bahāʾīs that took place following the capture of Sanaa by Houthi rebels in 2014, one needs to understand the relationship between Shīʿite Islam and Bahāʾīsm (*The National* 2018). If scholars want to better understand Islam as well as religious movements originating in Islam (whether considered part of Islam by Muslims or not), they cannot afford to continue the current practice of artificially separating the two. Scholars of Islam need to pay more attention to religious movements that originated in Islam and scholars of these movements need to know more about Islam. Scholarships of both will improve from a continuous dialogue between them. Thus, we hope that the dialogue that this this book has initiated between scholars of Islam and scholars of religious movements originating in Islam not only continues but flourishes, enriching us all.

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PART 1

Sunnī Traditions

∵

Introduction to Part 1

An overwhelming majority of today's world's 1.8 billion Muslims are Sunnī (Kettani 2019). A key doctrinal difference and cause for the divergence of the Shīʿa Muslims from the Sunnī is based on the contested leadership of the Islamic community following the death of the Prophet Muḥammad. Sunnīs believe that the four caliphs (Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib) who led the *umma* after the death of Muḥammad were legitimate leaders of the Islamic community and were 'rightly guided' by Allāh. This contrasts with the Shīʿite view that only ʿAlī and his progeny were the rightful successors of Prophet Muḥammad and that the first three caliphs were thus illegitimate (Louer and Rundell 2020). Since their initial split, Sunnī and Shīʿa communities around the world have formed distinctive cultures and religious responses to their own changing circumstances.

While Sunnīs today are a diverse group, they generally hold fast to a shared set of tenets. According to the Sunnīs, the Qurʾān is the unchanged word of God. As such it is considered to be the highest authority for providing guidance to Muslims. The 'sound six' (*al-Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sitta*) compilations of Prophet Muḥammad's utterances (*aḥadīth*) and traditions (*sunna*) are the second highest authority in Sunnī Islam. Among these Bukhārī is considered to be the most authentic. The need for specialists to interpret Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* to guide various life decision for individual believers as well as for communities of believers arose early in Islamic history. Sunnīs accept rulings by one of the four schools of jurisprudence: Ḥanafī, Ḥanbalī, Mālikī, and Shāfiʿī (Hallaq 1997). While Sunnī mosques around the world usually do have a prayer leader, any Sunnī Muslim male can lead a ritual prayer, perform marriages, lead funeral rites.

This section consists of seven chapters describing various Sunnī sects, movements, and themes, some of which are locational and specific to particular countries and communities, while others are widespread, and international in scope. We open with a general overview of sectarianism within Sunnī Islam, before looking at Tablīghī Jamāʿat, the Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey's Gülen Movement, Nahdlatul Ulama and Islam Nusantara, both focused in Indonesia, and finally a discussion of women in Islamic movements.

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Sectarianism in Sunnī Islam

Ronald Geaves

1   Introduction

Any attempt to understand sectarianism within the Sunnī tradition of Islam will require acknowledging the perceptions of those among the majority of Muslims that have formed Islamic political and religious reality over the centuries into the present time, recognising the tensions between the real and the ideal, and the overriding conflict between the actual (schismatic division) and the perception (an undivided *umma*). Some may feel that the term 'sectarian' does not accurately reflect the reality of Sunnī Islamic divisions.[1] Yet an alternative term, such as the Arabic *madhhab*, poses similar problems as it is generally used to describe the four orthodox schools of law or jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in Sunnī Islam. The four Sunnī schools are Ḥanafī, Ḥanbalī, Shāfi'ī, and Mālikī. They are joined by two Shī'a schools, Ja'farī and Zaydī. These schools are predominantly regional and rule over questions of religious law and as such they cannot be described as 'sects'. The same reasoning applies to the early historical theological schools (*kalām*). They were more a scholarly exercise in theological questions, undertaken to correct or reassure those that doubted. Majid Fakhry defines *kalām* as an attempt to grapple with complex issues arising out of the Qur'ān's understanding of God and creation; for example, free will, predestination, the eternal as opposed to the temporal reality of the Qur'ān as Word of God (Fakhry 1983: xvii–xviii). It is true that although *Ilm al-Kalām* is not so much a sectarian activity, various divisions within both Sunnī and Shī'a Islam may favour one interpretation over another.[2] Most difficult perhaps is the notion that 'sectarianness' problematises the ideal of an undivided *umma* which remains a key element in the Islamic imagined community (Anderson 1991). A vision of non-sectarianism has often been used as a

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1   I was advised as such in 1990, when I began my doctoral thesis *Sectarian Influences within Islam in Britain* (Geaves 1996).

2   Since Sunnīs often define(d) themselves in opposition to the Shī'a and emerged as a competing theological and political grouping against the Shī'a, arguably one cannot discuss sectarianism within Sunnī Islam without consideration of the role of the Shī'a. However, this volume locates Sunnī movements and Shī'a movements in different parts of the text, and I have therefore omitted discussion of Shī'a sectarianism in this chapter.

critique of Christianity, especially in Muslim apologetics and found frequently amongst converts (Geaves 2010: 48–53; Gilham 2014: 130,154).

The issue is one of definition. Classical sociological theory defines a 'sect' as having various characteristics, mainly derived from early sociologists' attempts to grapple with divisions in Christianity. It is precisely this awareness of the multitude of various sects or denominations within Christianity that may make Sunnī Muslims wary of the term; yet an analysis of sociological definitions does not, in my view, render such understandings of sectarianism unfruitful in the context of the variety of Islamic movements that exist, sometimes uncomfortably, alongside each other in the Sunnī Muslim milieu. Nonetheless, critical engagement with the traditional academic usage of 'sect' is a needed endeavour should we continue to use the term to discuss Islamic movements in the twenty-first century.

2 Defining Sects

Early sociological attempts to analyse and define 'sects' began with Max Weber (1864–1920) who posited that people are born into a church but elect to join a sect (Weber 1973: 140–149). These ideas were developed by Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) in 1912 (Troeltsch 1931). In essence both sociologists work with a sect/church dichotomy in which sects branch away from a parent religion as a protest movement against perceived watering down or liberalisation of the initial charismatic moment that began a new 'world religion'. In turn, founders of sects will usually demand a return to the 'true' or 'authentic' religion as they perceive it, whereas the parent religion will usually accuse the sect of aberration, apostasy or heresy. Thus Fred Kniss and Paul Numrich can state that sects are best described with regard to what they oppose or are in tension with (Kniss and Numrich 2007). Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge agree with the Weberian approach and add that "sects claim to be authentic, purged, refurbished version of the faith from which they split" and often this expresses itself with a high level of opposition or resistance to the surrounding society (Stark and Bainbridge 1979: 117). Roy Wallis attributes to sects "epistemological authoritarianism," meaning that sects justify their particular 'heresy' by claiming to "possess unique and privileged access to the truth" or salvation, and adds that committed sectarians typically believe "that only error exists outside confines of the collectivity" (Wallis 1975: 93). The awareness of elite access to truth, and the corruption inherent in the wider society or weakening of the parent faith, usually means that a sect is marked by a degree of boundary maintenance tactics (McGuire 2002: 338).

There are difficulties in applying the above Weberian-influenced analyses in Islam, but there are Muslim correspondences that can help identify Sunnī sectarianism. As already stated, the ideal of the *umma* as a singular, divinely revealed, and united Islamic community, tends to dominate in Sunnī Islam, with variations among different groups as to who should be included. Talal Asad draws upon a notion of a "discursive tradition" in which knowledge is historically and culturally constituted in the interactive space between people, texts and practice to describe such divisions (Asad 1986). The Sunnī ideal is encapsulated in the phrase *Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamāʿat* (the party of the *sunna*), yet there have been, and continue to be, diverse interpretations of Sunnī Islam and each group is likely to lay claim to being the most 'authentic'. The Muslim community was already torn by dissent and split into factions within the lifetime of the first generation of believers, and even the Qurʾān acknowledges the existence of sects (*ṭāʾifa*), signifying a smaller group that has broken away from a larger whole but which has also developed a discrete and coherent religious worldview of its own. As stated by Fuad Khuri, *ṭāʾifa* indicates a "split-off group possessing a religiously autonomous character" (Khuri 1990: 28). Khuri also cites terms like *firqa* (team) and *nihla* (religious order) as specific instances of such groups in Islamic discourse (Khuri 1990: 27–28). *Firqa* can be understood to mean a number of sub-divisions or groups within one *ṭāʾifa*; for example, the various movements within Shīʿa. However, *nihla* or *firqa* provide a different understanding of sectarianism that is more pertinent to divisions within the Sunnī mainstream. For example, Khuri notes that the twelfth century Persian scholar Muhammad al-Shahrastānī uses *nihla* in opposition to *milla* (a nation ruled over by a body of religious law). Thus, the nation of Israel, for example, is ruled over by one law revealed by God but may contain many religions or even different interpretations of the law within it (Khuri 1990: 28). These terminologies have the benefit of utilising existing Arabic or Muslim understandings of schism and will help to provide an analytical framework for the causes of schism within Sunnī Islam.

3   Sect and Community

Underlying this analysis of Sunnī sectarian is an awareness of what Sunnī scholars and activists have considered to be authenticity and remaining true to the primal message, or, on the other hand, what they considered to be deviation (*bidʿa*) from an imagined 'pristine' message. If Shahrastānī's use of *milla* corresponds in a Muslim framework to *umma*, an imagined unity of all believers, guided by the word of God and the actions of the Prophet Muḥammad,

and believed to possess a moral mission to create a new social order based on faith and obedience to the revelation, *firqa* or *nihla* can be utilised to correspond to various movements and divisions within the *umma*, without recourse to the classic Western sociological understanding of sect. The *umma* is held together not by any formal organisation but by a collective act of will, inspired by personal conviction and embodied in the ritual duty of daily prayer, the month long fast of Ramadan and the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (Moten 1996: 63–81). Five times a day, millions of Muslims face Mecca all at the same time to observe the same ritual prayers. This core of shared ritual practices combined with observances of *sharīʿa* is integral to Muslim life and creates the bonds that tie the *umma* together (Geaves 1996: 11).

These rifts are acknowledged in Islam's sacred literature, for example, in the *ḥadīth* narrative credited to Muḥammad by Abū Hurayra: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'The Jews were split up into seventy-one or seventy-two sects; and the Christians were split up into seventy-one or seventy-two sects; and my community will be split up into seventy-three sects'."[3] Another version of the same theme is where the Prophet says of the sects: "'Only one will be saved. The others will perish.' When asked which was the one that would attain salvation, he replied: 'Those who follow *al-Sunnah wa-l-jamaʿah.*' He was further asked: 'What is *al-Sunnah wa-l-jamaʿah*?' He replied: 'That which I and my companions practice'."[4] It is important to note that *ḥadīth* are not historical documents and like the Qurʾān are employed in ahistorical and ideal-typical fashion when discussed in relation to political and social issues.

The Qurʾān can also be drawn on as a source in support of the saved elect. Islam as a fully formed *umma* is a moral community which not only hears the Law but upholds and enforces it (Qurʾān 3:110). A Godly *umma* is obedient and faithful, and according to the Qurʾān it is bound to be successful (Qurʾān 3:179). The righteous *umma* is the saved *umma*. As far back as the early Meccan period, however, the Qurʾān warns that even within the *umma* of believers there will be varying reactions to the message. There will be those who will fall away, and there will be those who are half-hearted (Qurʾān 35:32). One verse of the Qurʾān highlights this problem, and appears to offer the solution to it, when it uses *umma* in a specialised sense. Although usually the term *umma* applies to the totality of Muslims, it is also used to mean a righteous group of believers

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3   S. Dawud (ND) *Model Behaviour of the Prophet* (*Kitab al-Sunnah*). At https://sunnah.com/abudawud/42 accessed 27 October 2018.

4   Ssekamanya Siraje AbdAllāh, "Ibn Taymiyyah on the Ḥadīth of the 73 Sects." *Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 7:1 (2006), 35–62.

who have been selected from the wider community and who are charged with the duty of inviting other Muslims to obedience. The Qurʾān states "And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful" (3:104). This righteous and faithful *umma* within the wider *umma* functions as a guide and arbiter. This particular passage could be used as a justification for sectarianism in Islam. A self-defined righteous group within the wider community could draw upon this verse to make the claim that they were the true *umma* and in recent times they have increasingly done so.

Clearly in any division within the Sunnī ranks is going to consider itself to be the 'saved sect' and all other groupings to be the seventy-two who perish. This *ḥadīth* has grown in prominence in the twentieth century, and the borders between the groups have become more distinct and aggressive as both claims of political leadership and religious legitimacy, have moved into one province of representation, the right to claim authentic or 'pure' Islam, a claim based on the belief that the Islam practised is *sunna*, the way followed by Muḥammad and his companions. *Ahl al-Sunna*, 'people of tradition', referring to Sunnī Muslims, is thus highly contested. A number of movements and strands of Islam use the title to define themselves, not in the neutral sense of Sunnī identity, but in a highly charged atmosphere of claiming legitimacy, authenticity and a sense of specialness. The appropriation of the title as a religious identity label also serves to fix rival movements as 'other': at best deviant or guilty of innovation, at worst, to be branded by the tool of *fatwā* as non-Muslim or even as idolators (Geaves 2009).

4   Routinisation

Major stress was placed on the *umma* by the spread of the Arab empire and its attendant rapid incorporation of older, more sophisticated cultures brought into the fold of Islam and the imperative to establish good and efficient governance based upon God's ordinances (Esposito 1988: 46). Any attempt to formulate an overriding theory of Sunnī schisms in Islam would need to take account of these factors and also acknowledge both religious and political tensions. Sunnīs have tended to disagree on matters of interpretation of law or to changes in a group's doctrines and/or degree of strictness arising out of such processes of legal/religious interpretation but most deeply felt differences tend to occur historically within the context of debates on governance, especially the 'true nature' of the caliphate (Geaves 2009: 39). It is with these

divisions that this article is primarily concerned yet caution needs to be taken in these analyses as splits can also be driven by ethnic, tribal, racial, or national fault lines.

The rise of the Arab empire after the death of Muḥammad can be seen as a classic example of 'mixed motivation'. Although Weber's classic church-sect thesis is not very helpful in understanding divisions within Islam, his ideas on routinisation as developed by Thomas O'Dea are more fruitful. O'Dea posited five dilemmas that face new religions after the death of a founder: namely the dilemma of mixed motivation; the symbolic dilemma; the dilemma of administrative order; the dilemma of delimitation; and the dilemma of power (O'Dea 1964: 71ff). The first dilemma identified is particularly useful for the arguments presented here. In the dilemma of mixed motivation, O'Dea argued that the only motivation of the founder-innovator is communicating his or her message, but that successors will have additional motivations, such as personal power, prestige, status, and influence (Foy 1978: 300–301).

O'Dea's notions of schism permit an historical analysis beginning with the origins of Islam, through to the foundation of the Umayyad Empire, and even have repercussions in the present day. The dominant group among the inhabitants of Mecca, were the Banū Umayya, a wealthy clan of the Quraysh tribe. Amongst the Meccan merchants, it had been the Quraysh who had most to lose from Muḥammad's preaching on social justice. In addition, they feared the loss of income associated with the tribal pilgrimages into Mecca to worship the gods and goddesses installed in the ancient Kaʿba (Lapidus 1988: 25). Many of the most aggressive opponents of the new religion and its leader were members of the Quraysh and had fought against the Muslims in the battles that took place before Muḥammad's victorious entry into Mecca. Muḥammad's final victory brought many of his enemies into the fold of Islam where they quickly established their position amongst the elite of Arab society (Lapidus 1988: 55).

By the time of the third caliph, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (576–656 CE) elected in 644 CE, the Arabs had expanded their territory to include much of Persia, Byzantine Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and Jerusalem. ʿUthmān belonged to the Banū Umayya and favoured his relatives and supporters, appointing them to positions of authority throughout the expanding empire (Lapidus 1988: 56). In Damascus, Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 680) became the most powerful of the Umayyad rulers, governing over Syria. Ironically much of the Muslim world was now ruled over by representatives of the old ruling Meccan clans that had for years opposed Muḥammad and his message (Geaves 2009: 40). After ʿUthmān's assassination in 656 CE, Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (600–661 CE) of the Banū Hāshim (the only one of the first four caliphs recognised as legitimate by Shīʿa Muslims), succeeded to

the caliphate.[5] However, this was disputed by the supporters of the Umayya clan who departed from Medina and took up residence in their power base of Damascus (Geaves 2009: 41). After ʿAlī's death at the hands of an assassin in 661 CE, Muʿāwiya took control of the caliphate, turning it into the first dynastic Muslim empire, the Umayyad era (Lapidus 1988: 56).

The succession of Muʿāwiya was to have two repercussions. First, no longer could the caliphate be considered a religious institution, a fact recognised by many later Sunnī Muslims who would come to declare only the first four caliphs to be divinely guided. The apparent loss of the Prophet's and his companions' asceticism and religiosity amongst the new rulers led to many of the devout separating themselves from the activities of the court and living in semi-retreat in Medina where they attempted to recreate the lifestyles of the first Muslims. To this development can be traced the first roots of Ṣūfism or Islamic mysticism. But in addition, these issues of authority would dictate that politics and religious leadership were to play a role from the very beginning. Although the first armed struggles between Muslims to take place shortly after the death of Muḥammad were the so-called *ridda* wars (Wars of Apostasy) during the first caliphate of Abū Bakr (574–634 CE), it is difficult to ascertain whether these conflicts with Arab tribes were caused by a rejection of Islam or a rejection of the office of the caliphate, although they were later seen as religious (Afsaruddin 2015: 62–63). However, another factor may have been the issue of nominal allegiance to Islam that arose through accepting the temporal power of Muḥammad as a protector, a common practice among the tribes of Arabia.

A number of elements can contrive to form separatist or rebellious movements against the unity of state and religion within Sunnī Islam. The degree to which Islam is actually practised by Muslims can be controversial and even a cause of political rebellion. The question of whether nominal Muslims were within the fold of Islam arose early in Islam's development and is a continuation of the hypocrite (*al-munāfiqūn*) concerns that arose in Medina. The first movements to declare war against the Umayyad state were the Khārijites, who were unequivocal that the defining feature of Muslim identity was piety, and who controversially claimed the right to declare *jihād* against nominal Muslims, stating they were *kufr* or unbelievers. The state was quick to recognise that such a position led to unrest, civil wars and anarchy, and adopted the Ashʿarite position that only God could judge the condition of *īmān* (faith).

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5 Fred M. Donner has argued recently that the early leaders of the nascent Muslim community did not refer to themselves as *caliph* at all, but as *amīr al-muʾminīn* (Commander or Leader of the Believers). See Donner (2010: 98–99).

Nevertheless, the Khārijite position has never disappeared and has re-emerged dramatically in the twentieth century amongst various *jihād* or *takfīri* (declaring other Muslims to be unbelievers) movements (Timani 2008).

The Khārijite rebellion against the Umayyad state reveals the tensions that arose over leadership, resulting from concerns over the parameters between religious and temporal leadership. As rulers the Umayyads were able to utilise the state as the main means of organising religious life. Indeed, Khuri goes as far to state that Sunnīs feel "lost" when deprived of centralised power (Khuri 1990: 99). The caliph or sultan has ideally embodied both governance and piety but ruling through the implementation and execution of *sharīʿa*, the divine law. Ideally, he is not there to create laws, as these have already been given in entirety by Allāh. Any difficulties of interpretation are resolved by bodies of *ʿulamāʾ* or religious scholars, experts in jurisprudence. Although the dominant Sunnīs are more likely to speak of consensus and unity, even arguing that rebellion is not permitted against unjust rule, Khuri argues that sectarian divisions can be a means to reject the centralised authority of the Muslim state (Khuri 1990: 40–41). Such action is justifiable if the state rejects the correct application of Islamic principles with regard to the role of religion in politics.

Similar to the Khārijite position on individual allegiance to Islam, rather than nominal state or tribal loyalty, is the issue of state loyalty to the religion. In practice the union of revelation and governance has not always been watertight. Many rulers have been at odds with the *ʿulamāʾ* with regard to authority and not all have implemented the *shar'ia*. Most of today's Muslim states have either discarded *sharīʿa* law or mixed it in varying degrees with legal systems adapted from various European codes. It is only family law that has remained sacrosanct (Geaves 2009: 50). The compromise with the political union of *dīn* (religion) and *dunyā* (world) has led to some movements and organisations that condemn the state and seek to implement an Islamic revolution, sometimes through violent overthrow (Geaves 2009: 50), amongst such movements al-Qāʿida, and Daesh (Islamic State or ISIS) can be categorised. As noted already, the justification for such movements in Sunnī Islam is to reform (*ʾiṣlāḥ*) or revitalise Islam and they interpret the legitimacy to do so, as did the Khārijites, on the Qurʾānic passage *al-Imran* 104. Originally revealed in Medina, probably as a reaction to the recruiting of various tribes whose religious motives were suspect, the political and religious significance of this verse can be highly subversive for Muslim states who are seen by the devout to have compromised God's revelation (Geaves 2009: 50). In the twentieth century, a number of revivalist movements have set themselves up as a righteous vanguard to renew Islam and purge the community of anything that is perceived to be a threat to the religion. Not all use violence, but such groups compete

heavily with each other, as to which movement constitutes the righteous remnant apparently spoken of in the Qurʾān (Geaves 2009: 50).

As stated, arguably sectarianism began with the Umayyad dynasty. The succession of Muʿāwiya led to questions over the nature of his rule and the relationship between religion and politics, both clearly part of the legitimacy or, at least, the methodology of Islamic power. The Ummayads were a *fait accompli*, and under their leadership the Arabs became a new force in the world, extending an empire throughout Persian and Byzantine territory (Lapidus 1988: 58). Theologically, such expansion could be justified as evidence of the doctrine of "Manifest Success" (Qurʾān 48), which asserts that divine favour is evidenced by political success, expansion or prosperity, but by some the Ummayad rulers were seen to be usurpers, in violation of the Sunnī precedent, that began with Abū Bakr, that is, the community chooses its rulers according to the principles of Islam. Muʿāwiya was perceived by many of the devout to be a tyrant, a ruler who transformed the Islamic caliphate into a "kingdom" (Qurʾān 67). The event would lead to considerable argument concerning the role of the caliph and even the nature of prophethood, at least, as exemplified by Muḥammad.

To some, the caliphate had to be governed by religious principles, in accordance with Qurʾān and *sunna*. To other scholars, a tyrant could be pragmatically accepted in order to maintain civil order and avoid bloodshed, but only as long as the people were permitted to practice Islam without hindrance. If the caliphate was a political office, such pragmatism was justified, and indeed became the normative mode of operation among Sunnī Muslims, but if the caliphate was perceived to be the Prophet's deputyship, it then acquired religious authority, and disobedience to the caliph could be constituted to be disobedience to God (Lapidus 1988: 228–289). Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1888–1966), an Egyptian scholar considered by some to be Islam's first secularist, would embody the former position, arguing that the caliphate is strictly political, concerned only with administration of empire. In *Islam and the Foundations of Political Power (Al-Islam Wa Usul Al-Hukm)* first published in 1925, he stated that new ways of governance were permitted, and that Islam has no role to play in political life (al-Raziq 1966 [1925]). Bakhīt al-Muṭīʿī (d. 1935), the Grand Mufti of Egypt, took the opposite position.

In 1926, al-Muṭīʿī published his treatise in response, in which he argued that religious and political authority is embodied in Islam, a position that makes it unique from all other religions. The Prophet, he argued, combined in his person delivery of the divine message (*al-risāla*) and political office (*al-ḥukm*). He argued that al-Rāziq was wrong to argue that Muḥammad was only sent to establish religion and not a state. As the caliph acts as the deputy of the Prophet, his authority to govern is from God. In such thinking, one of

the fundamental objectives of Islam is the foundation of a state so that the legal system of Islam can be implemented and to avoid the loss of Muslim dignity implicit in being ruled by non-Muslims or, even tyrannical Muslims (Afsaruddin 2015: 63–66). These differences over the political and religious functions of the caliphate were able to radically divide the Sunnī community, especially when Muslim power was threatened, the caliphate dissolved, or the territory lost, all of which would take place after the advent of European power in the contemporary period.

5   The Ṣūfī Reaction

According to some assessments, for example, Reynold A. Nicholson (1989 [1914]), Ṣūfī origins lie in a non-political or quietist reaction to the worldliness of the Umayyad caliphate, an attempt to preserve the piety of the original community, through a retreat to Medina, and avoidance of Damascus and the new urban centres of the caliphate and its expanding empire. Any analysis of Ṣūfism as a sectarian movement within Sunnī Islam is complicated: first, by the academic study of mysticism, which distorts Ṣūfism through a lens focused on mystical individuals, often antinomian in their relationship with orthodoxy (Dressler et al 2009: 4); and second, as its critics within Sunnī traditions perceive its origins to be outside Islam and who accuse it of *bidʿa* (innovation) and *shirk* (placing others before God). Both the orientalist approach and the vociferous criticism from within certain modes of Sunnī understanding would tend to reinforce views of Ṣūfism as a sect within the greater whole (Dressler et al 2009: 1). However, this focus loses sight of the reality that Ṣūfism has historically been part and parcel of the normative interpretation of Sunnī understandings of Islam and remains so even today, especially outside of the Arab hinterlands. As such it deserves to be treated as a unique formation of *ṭāʾifa* consisting of many *firqa*. It is also the main avenue through which charismatic leadership continues to be part of Sunnī tradition.

As mentioned above, Ṣūfism, sometimes defined as Islamic mysticism, but more likely to be known as *dhikr* (remembrance of God) by its Sunnī practitioners probably began as a ascetic reaction to Umayyad worldliness (Lapidus 1988: 99). From these early examples of asceticism and withdrawal appeared a variety of movements composed of disciples to various spiritual guides who taught paths to self-purification based on the remembrance of Allāh's names (*taṣawwuf*). As Ṣūfism formalised itself under the guidance of a number of skilled exponents of its disciplines, a variety of 'maps' appeared that are identified as 'stages' (*maqāmāt*) and 'states' (*aḥwāl*) on the progress within the

path to self-annihilation in God. Each of these variations on a theme became distinct orders (*ṭarīqa*) of Ṣūfism, each with a founding master (*shaykh*) and a lineage of masters that succeeded him (Haeri 1990: 19–20). *Ṭarīqa* are considered by most Ṣūfis to complement the outer practices of Islam (*sharīʿa*). Discipleship is central to Ṣūfism, to provide guidance to the *murīd* (student) along the way of transformation from a self-centred existence to one which is God-centred (Geaves 2005: 124).

These mystical doctrines and practices developed into a cult of sainthood, in which a hierarchy of deceased saints who are believed to maintain the spiritual well-being of the world from outside time combined with popular belief and dependence upon living *shaykhs*, to create the doctrine of *karāmāt* or special favour that was bestowed upon the saint to perform miracles and even intercede on behalf of those requiring Allāh's mercy and assistance (Geaves 2000: 17–18). This belief in miracles caught the imagination of the populace and led to extravagant and fantastic stories of the deeds of Ṣūfis. When the *shaykhs* died the religious piety of their followers was directed to their graves which would then develop as important shrine centres and the focus of the continuing development of the *ṭarīqa*. It was believed that the power to intercede and perform miracles was contained within the remains of the saint who was in some way still alive awaiting Judgement Day (van der Veer 1992). Similar to the Shīʿa belief concerning their Imams, it was also believed that the Ṣūfi's power was retained in his bloodline and it was usually his immediate remaining family who would take over the religious functions and administration of the shrine. The proliferation of shrines of deceased saints brought a new dynamic into Muslim belief and practices as millions of rural adherents concentrated their devotional practices and petitions around the tombs (Ernst 1997: 73–74). The rapid expansion of Ṣūfi teachings infiltrated the Islamic consciousness as the *ṭarīqa* networks spread throughout the Muslim world in a spider-web pattern. Although the *silsila* (lineage) chains functioned to ensure the legitimacy of the individual *shaykh* and the teachings that he promoted, time and distance enabled many teachers to attract followers with less credible claims of authority linking them back to the eminent *awliyāʾ* (lit. friends of God) and eventually the Prophet.

The loosely organised localised structures of the *ṭarīqas* around an individual *shaykh* and his followers allowed for no central control of either doctrine or practices. Even reputable *shaykhs* had little control over belief and practice outside the inner circle of followers. The classic pattern of Ṣūfi allegiance which still exists to the present day, consisted of an inner circle of initiates who resided with the *shaykh* and an outer circle who still maintained the *shaykh*'s teachings but also had other more worldly priorities. The *shaykh* could exercise

a considerable degree of control over these two groups of followers. However, outside of these groups of loyal and committed disciples there was a wider circle that took *bai'at* (initiation) with the *shaykh* as a means of acquiring status and prestige in their social milieu. Over this group the *shaykh* would have little control, either over their behaviour or the way in which they promoted his teachings and spiritual prowess (Geaves 2000: 76–77). The more they communicated stories of miraculous powers to the credulous, the more their own reputations soared through vicarious holiness or sanctity. Outside these three groups of followers would have been an even larger group of the general populace who would have used the *shaykh* to resolve a whole range of medical, social and psychological problems through access to his spiritual counsel or belief in his miraculous powers based on his proximity to Allāh. Finally, an even more nebulous connection to the *shaykh* existed in the wider population, based on pride or status in having such an elevated figure in their locality (Geaves 2000: 17–18).

The development of a fully-fledged theosophy of sainthood, both living and in the tomb, troubled many orthodox Muslims, especially amongst the ranks of the *'ulamā'*. There was considerable criticism of the need to submit to the authority of charismatic men who claimed a special relationship to Allāh through ecstasy (van der Veer 1992). Some believed that Islam was being subverted through vicarious holiness arising out of dependence on saints, pilgrimage to their shrines, adoration of their relics and total commitment of physical and mental resources to their service (Nicholson 1989 [1914]: 146). Others argued that the emphasis on saints was foreign to Islam and offensive to teachings of Muḥammad (Knysh 2017: 21).

The other major criticism of Ṣūfism appeared from both outside and within its own ranks. As observed above, some Ṣūfis began to assert that the intimate relationship with Allāh which is enjoyed by the *walī* (friend of God) negates the requirement of obedience to the outer laws of Islam, that is *sharī'a*. Some suggested that obedience to the exoteric laws and requirements of Islam was a duty required only during the early stages of spiritual development. It was inevitable that a dichotomy should arise between the experience of those who claimed direct inner access to the divine and therefore felt themselves to be completely surrendered to the divine will and those who dutifully followed the external requirements of the *sharī'a*. Although Ibn Arabi would argue that there is no contradiction with conventional Islamic doctrine, as it would not be possible for the man of self-knowledge to contradict the revelation brought to the messenger of God, such a doctrine is open to abuse by charlatans and religious impostors claiming to be such elevated beings. Although, for most,

the inner path complemented the outer, for others the experience of God's presence within supplied an authority that overrode the historical revelation.

If such sentiments are followed through to their ultimate logical conclusion, Ṣūfism can be completely disconnected from its Islamic roots and perceived as a form of universal mysticism. Haeri, along with many other Muslims including those from within the *ṭarīqas*, finds this view extremely problematic and labels it as "pseudo-Ṣūfism" (Haeri 1995: 41ff). It is important to acknowledge that the emphasis on such extreme viewpoints by Ṣūfis usually originates from members of the nineteenth and twentieth century Sunnī Muslim reform and revivalist movements who often blame Ṣūfism for the decline of the *umma*. However, most Ṣūfis have been equally critical of those who have departed from obedience to the *sharī'a*. The vast majority of the *ṭarīqas* teach that inner development is not possible without the exoteric demands of Islam contained in the final Revelation to humankind from Allāh delivered to and fully manifested in the behaviour of Muḥammad, the final prophet of God.

Today Ṣūfism remains strong in Egypt, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Morocco, sub-Saharan Africa, and is most threatened where secularism and modernity result in a reformed Islam where Ṣūfism is perceived as a superstitious innovation or relic from a pre-modern past. However, there are signs of a revival throughout the Muslim world, perhaps as a reaction to religious violence as manifested in contemporary jihadism (Geaves 2006; Geaves 2013). Although Ṣūfism organises itself through countless *ṭarīqa*s owing loyalty to a living or deceased *shaykh*, the *ṭarīqas* tend to live in relative harmony with each other, recognising that they are part of a greater whole. Although each group of *murīds* will proclaim the pre-eminence of their founding teacher and his successors, there is a recognition of the affective bonds that lead to these loyalties. Increasingly groups of Ṣūfis are meeting together, either geographically or in the virtual to promote their version of Islam as normative and to find strength in the battle against secularism and adversaries in the Sunnī Muslim world. It is only Wahhābī and Salafi inspired movements with a *takfīrī* mentality who are likely to brand Ṣūfism as sectarian. However, *sharī'a*-based Ṣūfi movements are likely to be highly critical of Ṣūfi movements that are more antinomian.

6   Wahhābī and Salafi Reactions

As already indicated, within thirty years of the prophet's death dynastic rule had become reality and increasingly accepted as the status quo among Sunnī

Muslims. In spite of internal conflicts created by dynastic change or aggression on the part of Muslim rulers and warlords towards other territories within the Muslim world, the Sunnī world would not face a serious crisis that would threaten the dominance of the theological position contained within "Manifest Success" until the disaster of the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century (Geaves 2005: 100). Although this event would herald the final destruction of the ʿAbbāsid Empire, the Sunnī Muslim world would rise again in the powerful empires of the Ottomans and the Mughals. Religious unity was maintained within the *madrasa* education system, the chains of transmission (*isnād*) that provided both legitimacy and authenticity to religious scholarship and to the legal decisions (*fatwā*) made by the *ʿulamāʾ* in localities across the Sunnī Muslim world (Saeed 2006: 123).

The relationship between political administration or governance and Islam was pragmatically reached through a truce, a balance of powers between rulers and religious authorities, with the latter usually compliant to the former, developing Islamic law in a way that facilitated power. Such relations between religion and politics was able to work in majority Muslim populations where governance was maintained by Muslim rulers, with varying degrees of compliance with *sharīʿa* (Esposito 1988: 58–59). The judges (*qāḍī*) in the courts were predominantly trained in the religious domains of the *madrasa* (Makdisi 1981: 22) However, all of this would be severely strained by the loss of Muslim power to the rising nations of Europe and their respective imperial ambitions in the East and Africa from the eighteenth century onwards (Donohue and Esposito 1982: 5) .

The complete or partial loss of state power especially to non-Muslim invaders would be the impulse that resulted in the eventual appearance of Sunnī radical or revolutionary reform movements (Tibi 2009: 164–165). In previous eras of crisis, the concept of a renewer of Islam, (*mujaddid*) follows on from Sunnī ideas of rejuvenation of the *umma*. As we have seen the doctrine of "Manifest Success" leads to a pattern of religious revival as a response to external crises. In addition, the Muslim worldview of Islam as the final revelation gives an urgent need to protect the 'purity' of God's revealed practices and beliefs. For all Muslims there can be no replacement of their revelation, as they believe happened to Judaism and Christianity (the revelations that were given before the advent of Muḥammad and the Qurʾān) for it is believed that Muḥammad was the "seal of the Prophets" and the Qurʾān is the co-eternal Word of God in its entirety. Thus it has come to be a part of traditional Sunnī Muslim belief that Allāh sends a reformer every hundred years to maintain the revelation and destroy any innovatory departure from it. Any movement with a new charismatic leader endowed with personal piety and the energy to impact

on the world around him can claim that their leader is the *mujaddid*. A special *mujaddid* is also believed to appear every thousand years (Geaves 2009b: 52). The followers of such a personality are likely to become sub-divisions of the Sunnī community but did not, however, divide their world into distinct religious factions or sects (Geaves 2009b: 52).

However, in previous eras of crises, this revival and reform of Sunnī Islam appeared in localised contexts, responding to local crises, but the eighteenth century witnessed Muslim revivals along similar lines across the gamut of the Muslim world. From South-East Asia, through Arabia to Africa, significant Muslim figures created movements to reform Islam. Out of these simultaneous revolutionary responses, perhaps influencing each other through significant meetings at the *ḥajj*, the most important has to be the radical attempt to reform the original heartlands of Islam—Arabia—by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1703–1792). The successful cleansing of Arabia of its countless shrines, tombs, and sacred objects associated with popular Ṣūfism was linked to the Prophet's cleansing of the pagan gods from the Kaʿba and was achieved by joining the religious zeal of al-Wahhāb with the temporal power of Muḥammad ibn Saʿūd, a local tribal chieftain. The combination was to create the first modern Islamic state, Saudi Arabia, but more significantly a global religious movement that to this day remains influential as it promotes the ideals of its founder throughout the Muslim world as the 'authentic' and 'pure' version of Islam (Geaves 2009b: 50–51).

Ṣūfism came to be regarded as the traditional enemy of these neo-orthodox movements long before they perceived the West as a threat and they were prepared to use *takfīrī* tactics on their opponents in the Muslim world. Before the domination of Muslim territory by European powers, any sign of decline in the Muslim community was blamed on inner lapses within the *umma* and often laid at the door of Ṣūfism by its critics. With the belief that they were the custodians of the final revelation for humankind from God, the representatives of Islam zealously guarded the community from deviation or innovation. Either of these could lead the community from the straight path and result in a failure to protect the revelation in the original purity of its genesis. Internal political failure or conquest by non-Muslims were both likely to be interpreted as punishment for failing to maintain pristine Islam. Events such as the invasion of the Mongols, which destroyed the ʿAbbāsid Empire, or the rise of European domination from the eighteenth century onwards, drove Muslims in upon themselves to examine their own religious belief and practice (Lewis 1968: 52). As a consequence a number of neo-orthodox movements were born that puritanically tried to purge the Muslim community of religious and cultural accretions said to be the influence of foreign cultures or other religions. Such movements

were highly critical of Ṣūfism and attempted to present it as a corrupted form of Islam influenced by Buddhists, Neo-Platonists, Hindus, or Christian mystics, depending on the prevalent traditions within a given geographical region. For the neo-orthodox reformers, Ṣūfism was the cause of Islam's decline and to be eliminated (Geaves 2009b: 56).

Following on from the armed struggle to purge first Arabia and then the Ottoman Empire by al-Wahhāb, such movements were likely to endorse violence against fellow Muslims. The justification for such jihadist activities was the Khārijite doctrine that Muslims who opposed Islamic reform (*ʾiṣlāḥ*) and supported regimes in the Muslim world that compromised with either the *sharīʿa*, the Muḥammadan model of rule in Medina, or adopted cultural practices from outside of the Qurʾān and *sunna*, could be deemed to be *kāfir* or non-Muslim, apostates or hypocrites who had rejected or corrupted the truth of the final revelation. The tactic of *takfīr*, using *fatwā* to declare rival movements or Muslims who did not declare allegiance to them as outside the world of Islam would radically divide the Muslim world (Esposito 2002: 59–60). Although sects had existed prior to the advent of these movements in the early modern period, they had not divided the Sunnī world. It can be argued that it was the various forms of *takfīrī* movements that gave the impetus to Sunnī sectarianism, dividing and killing other Muslims.

7   South Asian Sectarianism

In the nineteenth century, India would experience a proliferation of Islamic movements, some of which would develop into global phenomena. In part these movements would develop as various reactions to the loss of Muslim power in the subcontinent. The thousands of *fatwās* issued by various *ʿulamāʾ* would help maintain the boundaries of the various movements that appeared throughout this period. *Fatwās* were issued to condemn the beliefs and practices of other groups and to give authority to one's own. The *fatwās* functioned to form group identity and they also allowed for some control over keeping Muslim life within the bounds of the *sharīʿa* when there was no Muslim state to enforce the law (Geaves 1996: 133–134). The delivery of *fatwā* would become the main vehicle to call upon the Muslim masses for loyalty to a particular movement and to define the boundaries between movements. For example, in India, the founders of Deoband chose to protect Islam in India through a dual strategy of first providing educational institutions that could supply graduates capable of protecting and maintaining a conservative scripturalist interpretation of Islam in the absence of a Muslim-governed state, and second

by promoting a deliberate policy of isolation that protected India's Muslims against both Hindu and British cultural influence (Geaves 2015: 193–194). From 1911 the Deobandī movement would maintain a register of its *fatwā* and in the first century of the college's existence 269,215 *fatwās* were issued, most of which focused on belief and ritual (Geaves 1996: 157). In particular, the Deobandī *ʿulamāʾ* closely examined customs and beliefs associated with Ṣūfism to see if they contained *bidʿa* or innovation. In response, the Ṣūfis were organised into a rival movement by Mawlānā Aḥmad Rizā Khān (1856–1921) which came to be known as the Barelwīs. Aḥmad Rizā Khān and the Barelwī *ʿulamāʾ* used their status and legal scholarship consciously to justify a mediatory, custom-laden Islam that was closely linked to the intercession of shrine-based *pīrs*. The aim was to revive and maintain the Islamic status quo as it existed currently. The reformers of Deoband were accused of practising an idealised Islam that was based on texts and historical past and was not properly aligned to the present (Geaves 1996: 95). The two movements still compete with each other globally wherever South Asian Muslims have settled.

In addition to *fatwās* the Deobandīs took part in preaching and religious debates, and although much of this activity was often directed against Christian missionaries and militant Hindu organisations like the Arya Samaj, another dimension of this debating was between groups within Islam on points of custom and law. These debates helped to establish the boundaries between different Muslim points of view, and assisted the growth of diverse reform movements such as Ahl-i Ḥadīth and Ahl-i Qurʾān, two smaller movements that appeared in the Indian subcontinent and demonstrate how apparently trivial matters regarding textual authority or minor differences in ritual activity could seriously divide Sunnī opinion and form sectarian movements. The Ahl-i Ḥadīth were more influenced by Arab reformers, particularly those inspired by Wahhābism. They were insistent that learned Muslims should study the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* directly rather than through the commentaries of the four schools of law (*fiqh*) (Metcalf 2006: 58–59).

Closely associated with Deoband, was the preaching movement, Tablīghī Jamāʿat, established by Muḥammad Ilyās in the late 1920s. Ilyās had studied *ḥadīth* in Deoband in 1908, and continued as a teacher in Saharanpur until 1910. In 1926 Ilyās visited Mecca and returned with the burning conviction that he should take on the task of teaching Islam to the Muslim masses. To achieve this he went on extensive preaching tours. Unlike the members of Deoband, Ilyās did not feel that it was necessary to be a member of the professional *ʿulamāʾ* in order to reform Islam. He believed that every Muslim had a responsibility to generate an awareness of Islam to others. He was not interested in reaching out to non-Muslims, but wanted to create a grassroots movement amongst

Muslims to inspire religious renewal (Anwarul Haq 1972: 86ff). Tablīghī Jamā'at has transcended its South Asian origins and has become a major global movement committed to the revival of Islam.

The Deobandī movement is likely to be labelled as 'Wahhābī' within the milieu of sectarian conflicts between rival Sunnī groups. For example, Muhammad Raza goes on to say that "some Islamic groups under Wahhābī influence stopped their followers from paying respects to the saints in Indo-Pakistani history" (Raza 1993: 10). Perhaps more damning is the Deobandī link to the Taliban in Pakistan. William Maley notes that the Taliban's leaders were influenced by Deobandī "fundamentalism" (Maley 2001: 14). The link to the Taliban arises from the role that the Deobandī *dar al-'ulums* played in the religious education of young Afghan refugees of Pashtun ethnicity on the North-West Frontier during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. Leading Deobandīs in Pakistan have been connected to the Sipah-i Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), which has been alleged to be involved in terrorist violence, primarily targeted against the minority Shī'a community in Pakistan. The movement was also part of the alliance of Jama'at-i Islami (JeI), Jama'at-i 'Ulamā'-i Pakistan (JUP), Jama'at-i 'Ulamā'-i Islam, and Fazlur Rahman's faction of JUI and Jama'at-i Ahl-i Ḥadīth in forming the Afghan Jehad Council, which claimed that the US action was not a war against Taliban but against Islam, and therefore, it was essential for the Muslims to declare *jihād* against the US and its allies. Jama'at-i 'Ulamā'-i Pakistan (JUP) and Jama'at-i 'Ulamā'-i Islam are both official bodies of Deobandī *'ulamā'* in Pakistan. From the early 1980s until the early 2000s the Deobandī movement in Pakistan was a major recipient of funding from Saudi Arabia until it ceased in favour of the rival Ahl-i Ḥadīth movement, who are today far more likely and accurately to be associated with the Salafi movement.

8   Mawdūdīan and Quṭbian Reactions

The Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn) founded in Egypt in 1928 and Jamaat-e-Islami created in India in 1947 are vehicles for the vision of Ḥasan al-Bannā, later to be succeeded by Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966) and Mawlānā Mawdūdī (1903–1979). In each case, the primary thrust is political. Both organisations work for an Islamic society based upon the teachings of the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth*. They are essentially regional, with the Brotherhood dominant in the Middle East and Jamaat-Islami in South Asia. As both organisations were founded by non-clerics, their essential approach to interpreting Islam's sources is *ijtihād*. They are suspicious of *taqlīd*, and consider that the *'ulamā'* have been

partly responsible for Islam's decline (Adams 1983: 100). However, it is their founders' respective analyses of the Islamic state that has made each organisation so influential in the world of Sunnī contestation. I will focus on Mawlānā Mawdūdī as Quṭb's ideas are essentially the same, although they would differ on the means to achieve the desired revolution in the Muslim world. Quṭb was more likely to permit violence (*jihād*) whereas Mawdūdī predominantly favoured "gradualism," that is, education and working within the existing political framework (Khurshid and Ansari 1979: 362).

Mawdūdī consistently argued that the first step in bringing about a genuine Islamic renaissance was to convert the state to Islam. *Sharīʿa* had to be fully restored, and all laws from other sources repealed. Secular-minded officials had to be replaced, and all the media of education and mass communication had to be utilised towards the creation of an Islamic consciousness in the populaces (Mawdūdī 1986: 14). This is because Islam is more than just a personal faith; it is a complete way of life (*dīn*). He stressed that *sharīʿa* does not recognise any division between religion and other aspects of life, especially between religion and the state. He saw the division between religion and state as a Western invention. Mawdūdī argued that the need for an Islamic state arose from the nature of universal order. God's law governs all creation, but man suffers from the delusion of independence. Nature is under the sway of Islam because it obeys God's natural law, but human beings have the capacity to choose to obey or disobey (Geaves 1996: 183). In order that they may make the correct choice there is revelation. Human behaviour is governed, therefore, by revealed law just as the universe is ruled by natural law. The law which governs human behaviour is fully revealed in the Qurʾān and *sunna* of the Prophet (Mawdūdī 1985: 18). The key to understanding Mawdūdī's ideas on the necessity of the Islamic state is his interpretation of the *kalima* or 'word'. He saw the major problem of history not as humankind's denial of the existence of one God but as humankind's unwillingness or refusal to recognise the sovereignty of God (Mawdūdī 1985: 15). Mawdūdī interpreted the *kalima* as a statement which not only proclaims the uniqueness of God as the Creator or sole object of worship, but also expresses the uniqueness of God as the Master, Sovereign, Lord and law-giver. God alone has the right to command (Mawdūdī 1985b: 72).

It is this revolutionary interpretation of the *kalima* which provided Mawdūdī with his main critique of the intrusion of Western ideas and philosophy into Muslim society. Secularism, nationalism and Western models for democracy are all based on the idea of the sovereignty of the people. Mawdūdī argued that the acceptance of any other authority as sovereign is a form of *shirk*, and as such raises that authority to the status of being a partner with Allāh (Adams 1966: 382). The moral evil of the age, which all true Muslims should actively

oppose, consists of accepting other sovereigns such as "the will of the people" or the laws of worldly rulers and setting them over and above God. True Islamic faith must strive for the creation of an Islamic society as well as individual righteousness. Islam leads individuals to develop a community of faith which promotes social change by creating a society fully obedient to God's law. Mawdūdī called this state "the caliphate based on the prophetic pattern" (Ahmad and Ansari 1979: 20). It is a human caliphate under the sovereignty of God with no power to make new laws, but it will work within the limits prescribed by Allāh by fully implementing *sharīʿa*. Ideally, the state would be ruled by an *amīr* in consultation with a council (*shūrā*) (Adams 1983: 127). Mawdūdī called this a "theo-democracy" as it was based on the equality of all Muslims under the sovereignty of Allāh (Geaves 1996: 183ff). I have developed Mawdūdī's ideology of an Islamic state as it is so influential among many of the movements that this chapter has explored. Along with Rashīd Riḍā who expressed his vision for the necessity of a reformed Sunnī caliphate in his work *Al-Khilafa aw al-Imama al-ʿUzma* (The Caliphate or the Paramount Imamate) written in 1923 (Rida 1923), Mawdūdī and Quṭb have been a major influence on jihadist movements, for example Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Taliban, and IS who struggle to reconstitute a Sunnī caliphate based upon the prophetic model.

9   Conclusion

Few Muslim commentators are prepared to acknowledge that there are schisms amongst the dominant Sunnīs, despite the fact that for centuries various movements have appeared and ulilised the vehicle of the *fatwā* to declare their religious opponents as non-Muslim (*kufr*) (Metcalf 1982:146). Any analysis of these divisions would need to take account of mixed motivation between those who paid nominal allegiance to Islam and those who espoused piety and commitment to the faith. Such an analysis would lead to the post-Weberian sociologists Thomas O'Dea (1964) and Peter Berger (1974: 132), in which there is a constant or recurring tension between the forces which work for stability, even at the risk of distortion and the forces which work for a truer realisation of the initial charismatic moment, whether this is perceived to be the Qurʾān, the life of the prophets or the *salaf*. In Ṣūfism the charismatic moment occurs repeatedly throughout time and geographical locality through the renewal provided by the *awliyāʾ* (sainthood) (Geaves 2000: 17–18). However, in both Ṣūfi and non-Ṣūfi movements, the impetus to renewal is located in the concept of the mujahid, the reformer of the century, who is sent to preserve the Sunnī tradition from decay or innovation (Geaves 2009b: 52).

Fundamental to this contestation of Sunnī authenticity, is the *ḥadīth* that proclaims that the Prophet's community would divide into seventy-two sects with only one maintaining the true Islam. Obviously each movement feels itself to be that one and its competitors to be the heretical remainder. Yet, the saying itself provides the stimulus for sectarian movements to appear as each new reformer and his followers see themselves as the one that maintains true Islam. I have argued that these analyses of division tend to fall into two categories: those that seek political causes and those that explore theological or religious differences. Yet it becomes clear that in most cases, Sunnī contestations concern governance. Thus historically, any attempt to discover the causes of schism in the early community of Muslims would need to take account of the expansion of the Arab empire and the absorption of a variety of social groups into the religio-political entity (*umma*). The issue here is not only political and economic, but the fear of a dilution or a distortion of the original Arab revelation. It has to be remembered that the religion of Islam was to turn into a body politic in a very short number of years. Tensions between the religious worldview of the pious and their rulers, between those that offered their loyalty to the revelation and those who gave it primarily to the state were endemic. The link between religion and state was so powerful that those who broke away from the religion or deviated from orthodoxy were likely to be seen as traitors, punishable by legal codes.

The success of the Sunnī majority was to come at the price of religious life, and caused dreadful soul searching when territory was lost to non-Muslim forces. Khuri looks at Sunnī sectarian formation and assesses it in the context of state structures, centralised authority, the resort to coercive measures and the tendency to standardise. He argues that it is a "fabric fitted together by the logic of power and conquest" (Khuri 1990: 19). The logic of Khuri's analysis leads to a conclusion that sectarianism within the Muslim world can be explained as instruments of moral control operating outside the heartlands of the Arab empire, either outside the arena of state authority or consciously resisting it for either political or religious reasons. In Khuri's argument sects and state stand in opposition to one another (Khuri 1990: 17–18). Such an analysis would help to explain the 'invented charisma' of Imams, Ṣūfis, and one hundred year renewers of the faith (*mujaddid*). Their miraculous powers, heroic personalities and hagiographies functioned to provide a different authority to that of the bureaucratic state; a resistance to the state monopoly of religion, all legitimised by an immediate access to the divine providing the means to negate all-powerful human authorities by the display of supernatural powers that even overturned the laws of nature (Geaves 2009a: 59). To such figures, invented or otherwise, flocked the dispossessed, the powerless, the seekers of

justice, ethnic and tribal minorities, the searchers for God or merely those that were too far from the centres of power to feel its influence (Geaves 2009a: 59).

The contemporary era has added the complication of the loss of Muslim power and the result has brought out far more sectarianism within the Sunnī world than in earlier centuries when Muslim civilisation remained dominant. As the fundamentals of the faith remain solidly the same, even in warring groups, Metcalf's contestation for religious authenticity in which she argues that 'contestation' indicates the degree to which Muslims have engaged in recent centuries in renewing and rethinking the historic traditions of their religion (Metcalf 2006: 3) or Asad's (1986) imagined community may provide more scope for analysis of the current situation than sectarianism.

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Tablīghī Jamāʿat

Zacharias Pieri

1 Introduction

Tablīghī Jamāʿat (henceforth TJ) is a transnational Islamist movement dedicated to renewing the faith of Muslims around the world and re-orienting the religious practices of Muslims to what it believes is a more authentic form of Islam. The movement was founded in 1926 by Muḥammad Ilyās Kāndhlawī (1885–1944) in the Mewat province of India from where it expanded—first through India and the subcontinent, then through western countries with large Indian diaspora such as the UK, and eventually across the world. TJ operates in all countries where there are Muslims, and it is described as the world's largest Muslim transnational movement of faith renewal (Ali 2006). While TJ does not keep official records of participants in its activities, its structures are flexible, and theoretically any Sunnī Muslim may partake—dipping in and out as they please—though promotion through the ranks of the movement demands disciplined dedication. Its followers are encouraged to imitate the Prophet Muḥammad and the first generations of Muslims in all of their actions, and through donating their time to travel in small preaching groups to bring other Muslims to a similar way of life.

There are up to 80 million Muslims taking part in such activities at any given time across the globe (Pieri 2014: 101). Its annual gathering in Tongi, Bangladesh, is one of the Muslim world's largest gatherings of people, at times exceeding even those who attend the annual *ḥajj* in Mecca, and since 2011 has been divided into two phases to accommodate the large numbers who attend. In 2018, more than two million people from over 130 countries attended (Opu 2018).

Despite its large size, TJ is not well known among non-Muslims, and this is in part due to its eschewing of overt political activity, and in restricting the majority of its work among Muslims. Where TJ is known, it is often because of controversial projects such as an attempt to construct Europe's largest mosque in London's East End (DeHanas and Pieri 2012), or during the COVID-19 pandemic where the movement was accused of spreading the virus in India (BBC 2020). TJ leaders explain that while they do not oppose preaching among non-Muslims, the priority must first be to revive Islam in its authentic form among

Muslims, raising the consciousness of Islamic identity and practice. There is an order to 'Islamising' the world, and for TJ it starts among Muslims themselves.

TJ is an all-encompassing movement that aims to regulate every aspect of the lives of their followers. Participants in the movement are encouraged to model themselves after the Prophet Muḥammad in all actions, they are to build up communities of practicing believers as the path to salvation, and they should reject all non-Islamic pursuits (Pieri 2020). Because of this, the movement can be analyzed through Charles Liebman's (1983) framework of religious extremism, in which he argues that there are three characteristics that define such groups, including the desire to expand religious law, a desire for social isolation, and cultural rejection. It is important to note that in this case, extremism does not connote violence. Even among Muslim communities, there is some misunderstanding as to what TJ really does, and so it is worth saying a few words about the etymology of its name.

The word *tablīgh* is from the Arabic root *b-l-gh*, meaning "to reach one's destination, to arrive, to achieve one's objective, to come to hear and to come of age" (Masud 2000: xx). In addition, the Arabic root also signifies "the transmission, conveyance or delivery of information" (Wehr 1960: 74). *Tablīgh* has come to have the stronger meaning of 'propagation' or 'proselytisation' (Nadwi 2002: 43), while the word *jamā'at*, simply means 'party' or 'organised collectivity'. In its simplest form, Tablīghī Jamā'at, can be translated as 'propagation party' or 'preaching party' (Sikand 2002: 8). The name has stuck, but founder Ilyās did not refer to his movement as Tablīghī Jamā'at, arguing that his aim was not to proselytise non-Muslims but to work among (lapsed) Muslims bringing them back into the fold of Islam.

The research drawn upon for this chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork among Tablīghī communities in the UK for almost a decade between 2009 and 2018. The period between 2009 to 2012 included almost weekly attendance at Thursday evening preaching sessions, interviews with leaders and grassroots members, and collecting and analyzing Tablīghī literature (for example, Elahi 1992; Hasani 1982; Ilyās 1967; Kandhlawi 2007; Miah 2001; Nadwi 2002). Between 2013 and 2018, occasional visits were made to Tablīghī mosques in the UK for Thursday evening sessions during the summer months. Elements of risk and security were important considerations in the research design and implementation. Anonymity was granted to all participants so as to mitigate "risks of harm," except in instances where their role was a matter of public record and consent was forthcoming (Lambert 2010: 75). Any names used in this chapter are pseudonyms to protect the identity of individual participants.

This chapter will chart the emergence of TJ from its colonial context in India, arguing that to understand the movement today, knowledge is needed

of its early workings, its leadership structure, and its core texts and beliefs. The chapter will then examine how TJ's focus on faith renewal and orthopraxy has allowed participants to provide meaningful structure to their lives, providing a counter-culture to modern secular societies, while also inviting charges of social isolationism and cultural rejection. Insight will be provided on how preaching groups are formed, how they invite Muslims to reorient their lives to a Tablīghī understanding of Islam, and the centrality that they have on helping to shape the subjectivities of those who immerse themselves in the process. TJ will be recognised as a movement that has found success in operating among Muslim communities across the world, demonstrating the transnational nature of the movement. Examples will be drawn from TJ's activities in Africa, Asia, and Europe. The chapter concludes through arguing that if the movement is to maintain its growth, it may need to balance its message of faith renewal with greater flexibility to local and national structures, especially in areas of the world where governments are increasingly worried about the capacity of religious movements to exert influence over their followers.

2   The Colonial Context

TJ can only be understood when situated within the context from which it emerged in early twentieth century India. This was a period marked by the British colonisation of the continent, of rising Hindu nationalism, and a drive to assert the political and cultural presence of Islam. TJ stems from, and continues to be closely associated with the Deobandī tradition of Islam. Deobandism was established in 1867 in the aftermath of the First War of Indian Independence, and centered around Darul Uloom, an Islamic seminary in the Indian town of Deoband. Its founders were inspired by the theology of Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762), an Islamic scholar and reformer who sought to reposition Islamic theology in light of changes taking place at the time. He believed that it was the moral collapse of society—a deviation from the straight path of Islam—and the decaying of the social order that caused the decline of the Mughal Empire (Upadhyay 2003). Walī Allāh called for moral renewal among Muslims and advocated for a form of Islam free from what he saw as innovative practices. Muslims, he argued, should assert an independent identity liberated from the influence of Hinduism (Mortimer 1988: 67–69; Jones 1989: 51).

With emphasis on external markers of identity, the Deobandīs wanted to unite the Muslims of India, and to fashion a distinct Muslim identity that would separate them from their Hindu neighbors. It was argued, for instance, that dressing in the fashion of the prophet and abandoning local customary

practices such as celebrating Hindu festivals, a distinct communal and Muslim identity would solidify. Raising the consciousness of an Islamic identity would prevent Muslims from being assimilated into the Hindu fold (which was also reasserting itself), or becoming tainted by the western influences of British colonialism. Deobandī religious leaders were obdurate that through following what they categorised as orthopraxy, they would be defined as a group not only separate from, but also morally superior to the British (Metcalf 1982: 153).

A return to a strict implementation of *sharīʿa* was called for, and arguments were made that the decline of Muslim societies *vis-à-vis* the west was because Muslims "abandoned their dependence on Allāh and fallen into immorality" (Pieri 2012b: 15). The only way to revive Muslim societies and return Islam to a religion of socio-political significance, was through total rededication of each Muslim through direct imitation of the prophetic lifestyle. It was from this tradition that TJ would emerge in the mid 1920s, accentuating the concepts around individual renewal and moral purity. TJ was driven by a desire to cleanse popular Islam of Hindu traces and bring it into greater conformity with orthodox interpretations of the scriptures.

In 1871 the British colonial government in India called for a decennial census. One purpose was to allow the British to accord certain levels of power to communities in India on the basis of religion (Hardy 1972; Jones 1989: 184). The unintended consequence was that colonial policy politicised religious communities in India, locking them into competition. The fluid boundaries over religious practices that existed between Hindus and Muslims prior to 1871 became taboo, as people were pushed to identify themselves as either exclusively 'Muslim' or 'Hindu', creating a more concrete understanding of individual religious identity (Oberoi 1994: 17). Muslim revivalist groups, of which TJ was just one among others at the time, were born of an effort to increase the number of those who identified as Muslim, and as part of the effort to increase the Muslim community's share of power.

The first several years of TJ's faith renewal activities were carried out in Mewat, India. This proved to be an invaluable learning experience and developed TJ's ability to establish strong roots in a context of socio-cultural and political upheaval, and would also be pivotal to the movement's future operations. This is because the shifting contexts of Mewat in the late 1920s were in some ways similar to the changing dynamics in many societies today. The objectives established in Mewat still resonate for Tablīghīs in cities such as London, Auckland, and Cape Town. Ilyās saw Mewat as 'backward' and the inhabitants as nominally Muslim having lost touch with orthodox practices, with hybrid Muslim-Hindu identities. He wanted them to drop the remnants of Hindu culture and embrace Islam in its totality, arguing that the way to revive

the faith was through Muslims coming together each week to preach and listen to sermons in their own communities. For three days every month they should go to nearby villages to preach and hold meetings to persuade the local people to undertake similar tours, and for at least four months they should leave their homes and go to centers of religious studies (Haq 1972: 116). This has become the main method by which TJ operates. Small groups of Muslim men leave their locales to preach the 'correct' version of Islam to other Muslims and encourage them to do likewise.

3   Leadership

It was while on *ḥajj* in Mecca in 1925 that Ilyās is said to have received a divine vision instructing him to begin a movement for faith renewal among Muslims (Nadwi 2002: 42). He returned to India where he saw a state of moral degeneration around him, and in particular Muslims who did not know how to pray, or keep to the dictates of Islam. For Ilyās, faith renewal had to start at home, in Mewat, and then expand to other areas. He remained at the helm of TJ until his death in 1944, seeing it take root and spread across India. After Ilyās, TJ had a succession of leaders all of whom were related to him, and which has led the movement to being characterised as "a total institution" (Gaborieau 2006). Ilyās wanted to ensure a smooth process, and so on his deathbed was active in promoting his son, Muḥammad Yusuf (1917–1965), as his designated successor.

Yusuf's leadership allowed TJ to enter into a period of expansion beyond India with emphasis placed on the Arabian Peninsula. Mecca and Medina, due to the flow of pilgrims that visit each year, were seen as ripe areas for promoting the movement. Tablīghī preaching groups were sent to the holy cities with instruction to teach pilgrims the message and methods of Tablīgh, and to encourage them to establish their own branches of the movement upon return to their own countries. After Yusuf's death, leadership passed to Muḥammad In'āmul-Ḥasan (1980–1995), one of Ilyās' nephews, and the architect of TJ's internationalisation. In thirty years of his leadership, TJ developed into the mass movement that it is today. By the end of his tenure, it had grown so large that it was decided that a different type of leadership structure would be needed. This emerged in the form of an elected executive council tasked with overseeing the management and growth of the movement's activities.

Members of this council included Izhar ul-Ḥasan, Zubayr ul-Ḥasan (son of In'āmul-Ḥasan) and Saad ul-Ḥasan (son of Muḥammad Yusuf). Since the passing of Izhar ul-Ḥasan, and then Zubayar ul-Ḥasan in 2014, Saad remained the sole leader of the movement. This had had major implications, causing a rift

in TJ, and sowing internal politics of division that had global consequences. This is because Zuhairul Ḥasan (the son of Zubayr), also laid claimed to the leadership, with a formal request to Saad to reconstitute the executive council, a move which was rejected by Saad (Ghazali 2018). The decision by Saad not to continue with an executive council was also seen as a move to relocate the center of the balance of power in the movement back to India, and which the branches of TJ in Pakistan and Bangladesh viewed as problematic. Both TJ's regional centers in Pakistan and Bangladesh were becoming increasingly powerful due to the large annual congregations held there, and the ambitions of the leaders in those regions to have more say in TJ's global operations. Violent clashes ensued between those loyal to the Indian branch of the movement and those who wanted an expanded leadership.

Afroz Alam (2016) writing for *TwoCircles.net*, a publication with a history of accurate reporting on TJ, explained that in 2016 the groups belonging to Saad and Zuhairul were discussing the question of leadership at TJ's headquarter mosque in Nizamuddin, and soon it turned "into brawl leading to violent clashes inside the mosque." The argument was over those who believed that it was unjust for Saad to inherit sole leadership of the movement, and were actively calling for an enlarged leadership council as had been practice in the past. So aggrieved are some in TJ that mass protests in Bangladesh during the time of the annual gathering in Tongi, lead to Saad being stopped from attending the event (Hossain 2018). Splits in the movement persist at the time of writing.

4   Core Texts and Principles

While open to all four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, for the most part, Tablīghīs emphasise the Hanafi tradition. Along with the Qurʾān, the *Faza'il-e-A'maal* (also known as the *Tablīgh Nisāb*) is the movement's core text, and one that each participant is required to study daily. This book is a compilation of texts arranged by Mohammad Zakariyya (d. 1982), Ilyās' cousin and son-in-law, and TJ's most influential ideologue. Chapters focus on stories of the *aṣ-ṣaḥābah*—that is, the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad—commentaries on the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, and advice on moral regeneration.

Zakariyya, in his introduction, explains that his book serves to inspire Islamic revival, helping to remedy the bad practices of millions of Muslims who have "indulged in manifest false worship" and who live in an "ignorance of Islam," and to provide concrete examples of legitimate Islamic lives upon

which readers may base their own life (Kandhlawi 2007: 12). It is from this book that TJ participants read sections during study circles, expound upon during preaching, and which contains what they regard to be authentic examples of how Muḥammad and his companions lived their own lives, patterns that should be followed by each Tablīghī themselves. One issue, however, is that accusations have arisen that many *ḥadīth* in the book are "weak or fabricated, and that their selection reflects a bias towards Ilyās' teaching" (Pieri 2012b: 18).

Ilya's understood that the majority of those whom TJ was working amongst in the mid 1940s were mostly illiterate and without a deep intellectual under-standing of Islam, its texts and traditions. Because of this, he called for the movement to center itself around six core principles which each individual could incorporate into their own daily lives, and which would bring them into accordance with prescriptions of the faith. His 'Six Principles of Tablīgh' are seen as fundamental to a correct practice of Islam, and easily understood by all Muslims irrespective of their level of education. Indeed, Ilyās wanted Muslims with little to no schooling to be able to propagate the faith to others. His six points are: 1. recitation of the *kalima* (Article of Faith); 2. *ṣalāt* (ordained prayers); 3. knowledge (of the principles of Islam) and remembrance (of God); 4. respect for Muslims; 5. sincerity of intention; and 6. donation of, and good use of spare time in the path of God (Ilyās 1967).

For those who participate in TJ, the Six Points reflect the entirety of Islam, providing them with a complete framework for living in the world. With the exception of the sixth point, all others are based on the fundamental tenets of Islam, and some, for example, remembrance of God are also stressed among Sufi brotherhoods. It is the sixth point—that of the donation of time for the propagation of faith renewal through preaching groups—that is a distinctive feature of the movement. The belief is that if every Tablīghī spends time dis-seminating TJ's message, then every Muslim will be given the opportunity to rectify their religious practices, increase the depth of their faith, and ulti-mately create a critical mass of faithful Muslims that could over time usher in an Islamic society.

At its core, TJ is salvation oriented. Its leaders and participants see life on earth as temporary and one in which each believer has to work at securing their own salvation. Failure to do so leads to an eternity in hell. Because of this Tablīghīs' daily actions are structured to ensure that a highly ordered and moral path is followed in every activity, and thus maximising their chance of salvation. Notions of heaven and hell, or salvations and judgment are at the core many Tablīghī sermons. The imagery in many such sermons is graphic in detail, leaving those gathered in no doubt as to the consequences of failing to

reorient to a correct practice of the faith. The following excerpt from a Tablīghī sermon given at the movement's annual gathering in Chicago in 2009 captures the typical image presented:

> If a person is entered into paradise he will have luxuries and comfort for ever and ever, and if a person is entered into the fire of hell, the fire of *juhanam* [hell] then he'll suffer for ever and ever; the suffering will never end … Like a person who is traveling in the sea and when he sees the shore, he will want to go to the shore—in exactly the same manner this person will want to go to the edge of the fire of *juhanam*. And he will request of Allāh, 'Grant me permission so that I can go to the edge of the fire of *juhanam*'. And this person will go to the edge of the fire and this person will go there to the border, there'll be snakes. The snakes will be so huge like a palm tree. In the same manner over there, there'll be scorpions, scorpions the size of a mule and a donkey. In the same manner other insects which will be huge and massive size—all of them will get on to this person and they will start biting him and this person will out of suffering say, 'Oh Allāh I cannot take this I do not want to stay at the border of the fire of *juhanam*, I would rather go back to the center of the fire of *juhanam*'.

Such imagery is intended to inspire believers to rectify their lives by invoking a form of existentialist angst. Because no one knows their time of death, each Tablīghī must live each day as though it was their last. They are to constantly ponder on the hereafter and ensure that each action taken is another step towards salvation.

5 Creating a New Society

With such a strict focus on salvation, Tablīghī leaders have been active in calling on their followers to abstain from engaging in the societies around them, and to retreat into Tablīghī communities where lives can be organised around Ilyās' Six Principles. Tablīghīs are told to avoid interaction with the secular world, other than for the purposes of the propagation of Islam. Modern societies, especially those in the west, are seen as being in a state of *jāhiliyya*; that is, akin to the period of heathenry and moral disorder in Arabia prior to the revelation of the Qurʾān. Jan Ali (2018: 18) argues that this chimes with Islamic revivalism more generally, especially the stress that "modern values and ways

promote the idea that happiness and success lie in the possession of material wealth, which ultimately leads to a questioning of the value of religious fundamentals." This argument is further advanced in the suggestion that "this way of life has lead to spiritual emptiness, and thus a desperate need to enforce a religious blueprint through which tradition can be reestablished, and meaning restored to lives" (Ali 2018: 18).

Tablīghī leaders, though, walk a tightrope, balancing blame for the current state of society between the values of the west and Muslims themselves. Muslims as the vice-regents of Allāh, according to TJ leaders, became lackadaisical in their religious practice, abandoning their religious and social duties, and instead invested in the riches of this world (Ali 2006: 182). Ilyās believed that there was little point in engaging in the political and social systems of society, instead stressing individual Muslims with revived faith as "the agent of change, and that what was of first importance was to overcome the state of ignorance prevalent in society" (Pieri 2012a: 178). Consequently, TJ has found itself being accused of social isolationism, or at the very least viewing those who do not conform to a Tablīghī worldview as having the capacity to pollute those who do.

One of the things that TJ has become increasingly adept at doing is to take aspects of modern life that are seen as revolutionary and to highlight them as failing when compared to what is really important. In my work I have termed this as the "worldly unworldliness of the Tablīghī Jamā‘at" (Pieri 2012a, 2015). To use an example, TJ leaders argue that for all the conveniences of modern technology, it has failed to improve the moral character of individuals. They look to contemporary societies and highlight a rise in crime, in drug and alcohol abuse, and in television shows profiting from the exploitation of peoples' misfortunes. TJ's message of abandoning worldly attachments, turning inwards to re-examine one's own life, and striving for salvation has been resonant amongst its adherents (Pieri 2012a: 184). The theme is part of a common thread to TJ's narrative globally, and is evidenced in a sermon given by a Tablīghī elder at a gathering in France (Kepel 2000: 195–196):

> Now there are people who go to the moon! And after that? There are more suicides in America than anywhere in the whole world. Every year more than 80,000 persons commit suicide there! That is the country that you find great and want to imitate! ... Why are there more than 80,000 people who hang themselves? This is because they have not found comfort in this world. Because they are farther from God. That is why they commit suicide.

TJ speakers, such as the one above, invert values that are important to modern western societies to show that modernity is not the antidote to world problems, but rather part of the problem. Material wealth, physical possessions and modern conveniences are today seen as signifying success in life, but for Tablīghīs the opposite is true. Instead, materialism is regarded as promoting an attachment to 'worldliness', thus blocking spiritual engagement. For Tablīghīs the way to achieve success is through abandoning the pursuit of the material, instead focusing on bringing others to a Tablīghī understanding of Islam. This is captured in a sermon given at the movement's Markaz Ilyās in London in January 2010: "The current system we live in is a perversion of the true order of society that is the society, which Allāh and his Prophet had envisioned for us. Everything which we are told is good for us is actually not. Working for success, for power, for money, for position is nothing. Only Allāh can grant those things."

Because of such concerns, there is a strong emphasis among Tablīghīs of maintaining and protecting the purity of the community which has lead to isolationist positions as well as a rejection of non-Islamic culture. This is something discussed by Liebman (1983: 79) who explains that such a position is difficult to maintain but for the strictest sects, and that pursuing such goals would ultimately lead to "the creation of alternate channels of cultural transmission." Groups like TJ advance a strict version of religious norms by which all believers must be bound.

Commentators often point to Savile Town near Dewsbury in the United Kingdom. This is the location of the Markazi Masjid, TJ's UK and European headquarters. Savile Town is centered around the Markazi Masjid, one Europe's largest mosques and a processing and dispatch center for Tablīghī preaching groups from all over the world. The exterior of the mosque when visited during field research in 2007, 2009, and 2012, had large banners warning against photography and the prohibition of unauthorised visitors. Attached to the mosque is an Islamic boarding school, and all businesses within the vicinity of the mosque are *ḥalāl* enterprises. Savile Town has been the focus of investigative reports and attacks in the popular press, with the town being characterised as a ghetto and a "white-free area" due to there being almost no non-Tablīghī residents (Norfolk 2015).

TJ has not only sought seclusion in certain contexts from the wider society, but has also fiercely rejected cultural norms in different locations that it operates in. This was evident in assertions by some TJ leaders that children are especially susceptible to moral corruption and as such should be protected from western influence. This is reflected in literature sold at TJ affiliated bookshops, where the advice is that "You should be convinced as to how

disastrous it is to send young children to these non-Muslim institutions and how harmful it is to their *deen* and character. Our children tend to become isolated from *deen* [*dīn*, faith], emblazoned by the emblem of disbelievers and become flagrant violators with regard to beliefs, actions and characters" (al-Mashaat 1993: 9).

Western education is presented as a tool used by the west to push Muslim children into unbelief and to take them away from Islam. Tablīghī parents are warned in the text that they have a responsibility to protect their children from the traps laid out in western schools to draw children away from Islam, and that even friendships with non-Muslims is enough to entrap one in the fires of hell for eternity (al-Mashaat 1993). At TJ's boarding school in Savile Town, where only Muslim boys are accepted to study, parents are told that their children are not allowed to socialise with 'outsiders', and that television, cell phones, and social media are banned (Perring 2015).

Despite the characterisation of TJ as an isolationist movement, it is also clear that this is not always the way the movement operates, and it is important to strike a balance in the discussion. Barbara Metcalf (1982) for example, takes a positive view of Tablīghīs withdrawing from the wider society, arguing that this should be seen as a lifestyle choice, one that allows the expression of cultural identity. For Metcalf it is important for individuals to be afforded the opportunity to exercise a disciplined life of sacrifice, and in pursuing the ability to live as part of a moral community of mutual acceptance. Moreover, where encouraged to become more socially engaged, for example in London while wanting to advance an ambitious mosque construction project, TJ leaders wanted to show that they were not isolationist. Senior TJ leaders indicated that they were "regularly in touch with parents who ask us to help their children and save them from falling into problems with crime, drugs or being manipulated by others and straying from the right path" (Mohammed 2011: 16). They were able to demonstrate that this role of being active in helping people to combat drug use was more than just talk, providing a letter from the Ministry of Justice, stating that TJ's east London mosque was a place where people provide community service (Pieri 2012a: 283).

6   The Ritualisation of Everyday Life

TJ is not an organisation that seeks to implement their vision for society through active participation in politics. Instead, its leaders place emphasis on the strict and complete adherence to the prophetic lifestyle, which each individual participant is expected to follow. This means that those who choose

to become committed Tablīghīs must implement certain ways of acting in their lives that are taken from examples of Muḥammad and his companions. Individuals must implement the 'law' in their own lives irrespective of whether or not they live in a jurisdiction that enforces the law. TJ is also concerned with expanding the details of the law, making it clear to their followers exactly what is expected of them, so that no aspect of daily living is left to chance. This is in accordance with Liebman's (1983: 77) discussion of the expansion of religious law as a component of religious extremism, and refers to expanding the scope of the law to "include the public as well as the private realm, and to matters of collective as well as private behavior within that realm." There is a push for an elaboration of the details of the law and in demanding a "strictness" of the law referring to "greater restrictions and hardships."

Acts that would be considered as mundane by many in society, for example drinking water, going to the bathroom, brushing one's teeth, how long to grow one's beard, and how to sleep in bed are regulated, and ritualised. This removes committed Tablīghīs from the prevailing secular (or un-Islamic) societies in which they would ordinarily function, and reinforces their identity as reoriented Muslims (Pieri 2020; 64). Self-enforcement of these practices, through encouragement from TJ, allows each believer to create their own moral universe in which they are linked to other Tablīghīs around the globe through knowledge that they are all striving for the same end goal.

Many of the rules that Tablīghīs follow are detailed in the movement's literature, and it is claimed, directly based on examples of Muḥammad and his companions. Some of the rules outlined in TJ's literature (Miah 2001: 69–74; Ilyās 1967: 47–50; Kandhlawi 2007), include always eating with the right hand and always from the corner of the dish—never from the center—and to lick one's fingers to remove all food from them. When it comes to drinking water, one should do so while sitting down and holding the glass in the right hand; the water should be taken down in three gulps. Bedtime is another instance regulated by rules. Tablīghīs are instructed to dust the bed three times before laying down to sleep, and for sleeping, should lie on their right side, with the right hand under the right cheek and recite: "Oh Allāh in your name I live and die."

In order to encourage orthopraxy TJ leaders have devised a system of points and rewards, which Tablīghīs note as important to them, with some even carrying small notebooks with them to keep a tally of their points. Alexander Stewart (2018: 1201) notes that Ilyās stressed particular *ḥadīth* that "claim that reciting certain verses of praise specific numbers of times can earn specific, calculable blessings from Allāh" and that some Chinese Tablīghīs "even carry electronic counters to help tabulate their blessings." One participant

in my research reported that depending on which action one follows, one is rewarded a certain amount of points. If one cleans their plate and licks their fingers they are awarded 'x' amount of points. If they sleep on their right side and dust their bed they are awarded a different amount of points. At the end of a Muslim's life, "Allāh will tally up the points and decide on who can enter the hereafter." In this way emulating the pious ancestors is not just a way of life while on earth, but also a way of ensuring entry into heaven.

During the month of Ramadan there are extra incentives for Tablīghīs to engage in the work of the movement, and this is encouraged through the accruing of extra points. One Tablīghī elder I interviewed stated that "when a person performs something which is *farḍ* [religiously obligatory] during Ramadan it is multiplied by 70, but when he goes out in the path of Allāh in Ramadan all this is multiplied by thousands." Because of this, many Tablīghīs take the month of Ramadan off from work to focus solely on the activities of the movement, including going out on preaching tours, and attending daily prayers and study circles. The same elder stated that, "going out in the path of Allāh is much more than virtue. We want to make an effort and a struggle in the path of Allāh so that we achieve paradise. And because of this struggle our *ahirat* [afterlife] will be made better." These standardised everyday interactions serve to create a bond between practicing Tablīghīs because irrespective of one's background all are united in a common system of praxis.

7   Khurūj

TJ stands out due to its resolute emphasis on the importance of donating time in the path of Allāh. For TJ this is specifically defined as time spent on preaching tours, which every participant in the movement must take part in at least once a year, though preferably more often than that. The preaching tours, also known as *khurūj*, function as a form of proselytisation for lapsed Muslims, and are centered around small groups of men (and sometimes women), who go out into Muslim communities to spread TJ's teachings. *Khurūj* is the 'engine' that drives the movement, and according to Ali (2018: 16) has three key elements—"*taʿlim* (teaching), *jola* (preaching mission) and *bayān* (speech)." At its base are ordinary Muslims that have decided to commit themselves to donating a period of time to take part. Simply put, small groups of Muslims visit "other Muslims and then invite them to meetings at the mosque to discuss and practice the basics of Islam," and it is this that is TJ's "secret to success—its ability to form grass-roots cells of 'evangelists' anywhere in the globe to bring fellow Muslim back within the fold of an active faith" (Dickson 2009: 101).

TJ is famous for its three-day preaching tours which ordinary Tablīghīs are encouraged to participate in regularly throughout the year, and often involve traveling to towns or cities not too far from one's own location. In Britain for example, this may involve journeying from London to Bath, or in the US, from Atlanta to Chattanooga. These tours are designed to allow any Sunnī Muslim the opportunity to participate in TJ's activities, without having to make a substantial commitment. The hope is that after an individual takes part in a three-day tour, they will return for a longer one. There are tours that last for forty days (known as a *chilla*), and are designed to allow the individual to withdraw from worldly affairs and to rededicate themselves to Allāh, while also bringing other Muslims back to what is regarded as correct religious practice. These tours often involve international travel, or travel at some distance from one's own locale. Participants in TJ are recommended to take one forty-day tour on an annual basis. There are also options for tours that last 120 days (known as grand *chilla*), and for the most dedicated, year long tours that usually consist of travelling internationally to a set location, and from there journeying by foot from mosque to mosque calling other Muslims to TJ's version of Islam (Hasani 1982: 772).

In the west, Tablīghī gatherings are usually held on Thursday evenings. The gathering typically opens with prayer, and then an invited speaker gives a motivational talk (*bayān*), which is centered around Ilyās' Six Principles, or on moral regeneration. A bleak picture of the world is presented—societies in moral decline, Muslims have forgotten what it is to be Muslim, and that popular culture, gossip, and frivolity have triumphed. This message is then directly linked to judgment. The speaker often physically cries, bewailing that many people will be cast into the fires of hell, and that there will be no mercy. A way out is then offered to those gathered—it is not too late—if each believer reorients themselves to a correct practice of Islam, and donates time to help their fellow Muslims reform—then salvation may be at hand. At the end of the talk, the speaker asks those present if they are ready to donate time. Individuals stand up, and names are entered into a book, along with the length of time each person wants to donate. Based on observation from many TJ meetings over the past decade, the rate of those volunteering ranges anywhere from three to twenty per cent, and this in part depends on the time of the year, with more people volunteering during Ramadan. It is important to note that though an individual has made an intention to take part in *khurūj* at this point, they are not locked in, and indeed, some do not follow through.

One of aspects of *khurūj* that stands out is not so much the experience of Islamising other Muslims, but rather the reorientation of the proselytiser to a more orthodox understanding of their own faith. *Khurūj* according to most Tablīghīs interviewed for my research, is a period in which they attest to have

pondered the purpose of earthly life, to raise their eyes to the divine, and to get their affairs in order as means of preparing for the hereafter (Pieri 2019: 374). The drive for salvation is a strong thread throughout TJ, and participants not only want to to 'save' themselves, but also their fellow Muslims. As Ali (2003: 177) notes by doing away with the luxuries of life while on missionary tours and "sleeping on hardened floor instead of mattresses, doing own cooking, washing own clothes, and overcoming the reliance of material resources, Tablīghīs are able to gain self-abnegation, modesty and a new outlook on life which sets them apart from ordinary Muslims."

The groups going out on *khurūj* have a hierarchical structure, with each position filled through consensus among those participating. An individual with experience in *khurūj* is often elected as the group's leader, and if anyone in the group is knowledgeable of the local language or terrain, they are often elected to a scouting position to identify local Muslim homes. Other members are elected to remain at the mosque to receive those who decide to attend to hear more about TJ's message, while others are elected to prepare food and take care of miscellaneous duties. While on *khurūj* members are not allowed to contact their families without permission, and should avoid contact with the profane, for example avoiding social media or anything that is not directly related to the work of the mission.

The preaching groups consist of around three to fifteen participants, with each expected to finance their own travel, and all commit to staying together, cooking, eating, and sleeping in Tablīghī affiliated mosques along the way. The more one participates in *khurūj*, the more opportunities open up to that individual for leadership roles within the organisation (Pieri 2019). Those who complete a four-month tour are given the title of *purani sathi*, meaning old comrades, and are rewarded with invitations to special Tablīghī gatherings, opportunities to meet with senior leaders of the movement, and eligibility to join some of TJ's governance committees (Reetz 2008: 114).

Traditionally, *khurūj* was only an option for men, though in recent years this has changed. The primary concern among Tablīghī men relating to female participation in *khurūj* had to do with logistics—for example, issues around how strict gender segregation might be maintained, and who would be responsible for female participants. Initial hesitation with allowing their wives to take part in missionary tours gave way as some men recognised the important work that women could do among other women. Because of this female Tablīghīs are now encouraged to organise teaching groups in order to spread the message of the movement among other women (Metcalf 1982: 56).

Such activities are strictly regulated. Only married women may participate in *khurūj*, explicit permission is needed from their husband, and husbands or male guardians are to accompany their wife. As Anindita Chakrabarti (2010:

602) notes, the emphasis of TJ for both men and women, is on performing one's religious duty, and the ability to fulfil this outside of the home, is paramount for both. It is this stressing of mission that has acted as a catalyst to afford women the opportunity to leave the home, break from domestic chores and child rearing, to participate in religious duty. Though *khurūj* may seem a liberating experience for women, Sikand (1999: 48) argues that all decisions during the missionary tour are taken by the men accompanying the women. Having said this, the mere experience of taking part in missionary activity, and leading religious teaching circles, can have profound effect for Tablīghī women. Many feel empowered, and the experience helps to set them apart and to achieve a level of personal elevation unknown to Muslim women in religiously orthodox divisions of Islam (Siddiqi 2012: 148).

8   Geographic Scope

TJ is a global movement with a presence in almost every country in world. It is strongest in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, where its largest mosques and congregations are located. The movement is still managed from its international headquarters in Nizamuddin, just outside of New Delhi, and this is where the leaders of the movement and advisory council reside. This (non-executive) council has fifteen members and meets daily to discuss matters such as the planning of international meetings, and where preaching groups will be sent to globally. Despite TJ's strong Deobandī influences and its perception as a South Asian movement, it has managed to to become a major force in some unlikely areas.

One such location is the small west African country of Gambia, which has become a strategic center in sending out Tablīghī preaching groups throughout Africa. According to Marloes Janson (2006: 45) Tablīghīs arrived in Gambia during the1960s but were not able to make a significant impact until the 1990s. This was a time of economic stagnation in Gambia, which when coupled with TJ's message that investment in the spiritual and not the material realm would eventually bring the greatest rewards, appealed to young middle class Gambians. TJ gained in popularity because they provided a counter-culture and an alternative vision of society. "Tablīghī religiosity served as a protest against the religious festivities of the 'old' and their conspicuous consumption" (Janson 2006: 45). TJ encouraged the breakdown of traditional structures of authority in Gambia, and created space for scripturalist Islam to emerge. Gambia became a base for TJ to spread throughout west Africa, including Niger, Chad, Mauritania and Mali. Janson (2014) presents a

picture of how young Gambians started to reform their lives in accordance within TJ's framework of how to be an authentic Muslim, interpreted as a believer who is able to reconcile their religious practice with a 'modern' lifestyle. The desire for Gambian Tablīghīs is the same as Tablīghīs in other parts of the world; "success in this life and in the hereafter, which distances them from established Muslim elders whom they call backward traditionalists" (Janson 2014).

TJ has also seen a mass expansion in Southeast Asia to the point where it is now not uncommon to see Indonesian or Malaysian participants attend its international gatherings, or even as part of preaching groups spending forty day tours in Europe. Much has been written about TJ in Indonesia (Nisa 2014; Noor 2012), Malaysia (Noor 2007) and Thailand (Horstman 2007). More interesting are the ways in which TJ have managed to navigate in China, especially given the hostile stance towards religious organisations that falls outside of those accredited by the state. TJ first arrived in China in 1986 with the hope of asserting a fixed presence there. Unlike in other countries in which TJ operates, it has not managed to establish mosques and institutions dedicated to the movement, though it has been successful in using existing mosques to set up study sessions. According to Stewart (2018: 1204), the first Tablīghīs in the country were horrified at "the unorthodox practices and lack of gender separation among Muslims, and they also felt that local Muslims were reluctant to assist their movement for fear of the Chinese Communist Party." It was not until after the early 2000s that TJ managed to gain traction among Chinese Muslims, and did so through reshaping "Chinese Islamic identity to emphasize being a part of the transnational *ummah* instead of a local ethnic group" (Stewart 2018: 1209). Stewart (2018: 1210) found that Chinese followers of the movement regard the call to "individual action as a modern improvement on more passive forms of traditional religiosity that is also a return to the ways of the *Sahaba* [*aṣ-ṣaḥābah*]."

What is clear is that TJ has had a remarkable ability to enact a process of religious revival and purification irrespective of local contexts. Its narrative has remained consistent, and has focused on providing an alternative to modern ways of life which are seen as inauthentic and as leading to corruption of the soul. This alternative is a 'turning inwards', focusing on one's own spiritual growth, but also as part of a wider group of people who have made an active choice to rededicate their lives to living in imitation of Muḥammad and his companions. The effects of this, across the world, have been evident. In Fiji, where Jan Ali (2018) studied TJ, he found "visible changes in the dressing styles of men and women who, under its influence abandoned traditional attire, and adopted more Arab-looking clothing." In addition to this, TJ emphasises

purdah—the seclusion of women—complete gender segregation, and an avoidance of going to places that are not seen as furthering the faith, for example cinemas and cafes (Ali 2018: 15).

This is something that was also evidenced in Mali where since 1999 TJ managed to gain popularity among the Ifoghas clan of the Tuareg. The Ifoghas assert their legitimacy on the basis of religion, and especially the claim to be descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, and with the traditional leader presenting himself as *ʾAmīr al-Muʾminīn* commander of the faithful. The Tuareg traditionally also accorded women much freedom to be actively involved in public life, including the holding of public office. TJ's ascent among the Tuareg coincided with mayoral elections in June 1999, in which a female candidate was expected to win the race. At first, the tribal chief was favorable to the female candidate, but "under the influence of the Tablīghī doctrine, in May, the local *ʿulamāʾ* decreed that it was impossible in Islam to have a female mayor. Should the tribal chief fail to revoke his support for Doe, they would no longer acknowledge him as *ʾAmīr al-Muʾminīn*. The chief complied, withdrawing his support" (Lecocq and Schrijver 2007: 149–150).

While the actions of the tribal chief in Mali could be seen as drastic, and as a sharp break with cultural norms, for participants of TJ it will have come as the triumph of correct practice. For those committed to a Tablīghī way of life, their belief is that taking part in the movement's activities pushes Muslims to new "heights of religious consciousness: their piety has risen, their vigilance in gender roles and segregation has increased, and syncretistic elements from former religious practices have been removed" (Ali 2018: 17). The actions in Mali will have appeared as a manifestation of this and as a cause to be celebrated, especially as the chief's senior advisors had completed a 40-day course with TJ in Gambia, and his two sons had returned from a ten-day course in Bamako (Lecocq and Scrijver 2007: 149). In Fiji too, the consequences of Tablīghī activities have manifested in the appearance of Islam becoming more visible. "Muslim men sporting beards and wearing traditional Muslim attire … and women donning *ḥijāb*, *burqa*, and *niqāb*. Islam's public appearance has been made further visible through the emergence of a plethora of prayer halls and religious centers" (Ali 2018: 17).

It is the case with TJ in the UK, specifically its attempts to construct Europe's largest mosque in east London, that attracted the greatest amount of publicity. The case is an important one because it shows how TJ had to engage with the British political establishment (something usually discouraged) as a means to advancing their project. TJ originally purchased an 18-acre piece of land in West Ham in 1996; a site that was once home to a chemical factory, and deemed to be of little value to the broader community. This was to change

after London was successful in its bid to host the Olympic Games in 2012, with the Olympic Village and many of the facilities to be located in the East End. TJ leaders saw this as an opportunity to capitalise on the development around the Games, and to advance the construction of their own mosque, which they hoped would act as a Muslim quarter.

Architects Ali Mangera and Ada Yvars were commissioned, and their initial design for the mosque sparked national outrage, after indicating plans for a mosque with the capacity for 40,000 worshippers, and with additional tent-like extensions that could increase useable space to accommodate 70,000 individuals (DeHanas and Pieri 2011: 806). Newspapers across Britain decried that TJ's mosque would be far larger than any of the Christian cathedrals in the UK, and vaguely linked the project to concerns around terrorism, especially in the aftermath of the 7 July 2005 Islamic terrorist attacks in London (Steyn 2005). TJ leaders in London were taken aback by the intense level of public debate around their project, as well as the increased public scrutiny of the nature of the movement that was to advance such a large project.

In March 2007, with public anxiety about the mosque heightening, TJ leaders acted in an unprecedented way, making an attempt to take control of the situation. A public relations firm, Indigo Public Affairs, was hired by the movement to manage the discourse around the project and to improve the image of TJ itself. Indigo advised a fresh start for the project, and this involved dropping the architectural plans by Ali Mangera in favor of architectural firm Allies and Morrison. Indigo created a stylish website for the mosque project, as well as a YouTube page in which nervous TJ leaders were filmed talking about TJ as an open and inclusive group (Pieri 2015). TJ leaders announced that the scale of the mosque would be downsized from the 70,000 capacity to one called "medium sized," at a 12,000 capacity (BBC News, 2007). The mosque would still be the largest religious building in the UK, but it would not be "Wembley Stadium" (Amanullah, 2007).

TJ's abrupt change of strategy backfired, with opposition to its plans emerging from Muslim communities in London and within the local authority. Despite their efforts at reframing, TJ proved incapable of quelling the controversy. Indeed, some of its new rhetoric on the mosque and about TJ's own religious diversity and inclusiveness was overstated, and challenged. Numerous court cases were heard on TJ's project, each time with TJ being told that the use of their site was not in compliance of the law, and that they needed to vacate the preemies. This is because TJ had built a temporary mosque on the site that was in violation of local planning law, and which was deemed as unsafe for users. Eventually the case came before the High Court in 2018. Judge Walden-Smith stated that:

Despite the five-and-a-half months that had passed since the adjournment [of the last court case], there had been no progress in entering an agreement with a developer, no steps regarding a site investigation or decontamination of the land, no application for outline planning permission, no consultation with the local authority, and no solicitors instructed to deal with due diligence or license agreements with a developer … The trustees were very far from agreeing any sort of development for the site. They were continuing to procrastinate.

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Because of this, the Judge allowed the for the demolition of TJ's existing structures on the site. TJ surprised the court by announcing that they will move the fight to Strasbourg and filed an application to the European Court of Human Rights for a restraining order. Planning lawyers advise that this is unlikely to succeed (Craig 2018).

9   Conclusion

TJ has seen exponential growth since its origins in India's Mewat province in 1926. Its annual revivals in Bangladesh are the Muslim word's largest faith gatherings outside of the *ḥajj*, and while its membership structures are fluid, it is estimated that up to 80 million Muslims worldwide take part in its actives. Its success has centered on a consistent narrative on the urgency of Muslims needing to reorient to a correct practicing of Islam as a pathway to salvation. The movement has also provided clear articulation of how each Muslim can achieve this, through direct imitation of the Prophet Muḥammad. The movement is a 'total' institution, regulating every aspect of those who commit to a Tablīghī way of life. TJ seeks to ensure that Muslims understand *sharīʿa* and to implement religious rules into their everyday actions including the exact length to which a man should grow his beard, how one should go to sleep, and how to eat from a plate. The intention is to carve out and to create a sacred space among profane contexts; to allow individual believers space in which to pursue salvation. It is the construction of a Tablīghī universe in which a community of believers are linked together through common cause.

Tablīghī attempts to live out such lifestyles have at times presented themselves as isolationist, and as a rejection of prevailing cultural norms. In seeking to minimise interaction with what is considered to be impure, Tablīghīs in some western contexts have withdrawn their children from the state education

system, opting instead for a strictly Islamic upbringing. Yet, as TJ becomes more established in different parts of the world, and becoming more recognised there, it will have to become more adept at navigating those contexts. The best example of this was TJ's attempt to construct a large mosque in the East End of London. Having had no experience in community engagement or public relations, TJ were not able to advance the kind of narrative needed to succeed in pursuing such a large development. Increasingly, countries in western Europe are demanding that any form of large development be couched in the language and spirit of inclusivity and diversity, something that TJ will have to learn to navigate.

TJ stands out in that it calls on Muslims to donate time in pursuit of its goals, and specifically in going out on missionary tours as a means of reorienting Muslims back to what TJ regards as a correct understanding of Islam. More than this though, it is clear that participation in TJ's missions has profound impacts on shaping those who become committed to the everyday rituals of the movement. It is this notion of TJ as an anchor in ambiguous and diverse contexts that explains the success of the movement in the west.

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The Muslim Brotherhood

Rickard Lagervall

1   Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928 by the schoolteacher Ḥasan al-Bannā, is one of the most controversial Islamic movements. Evaluations of it range from descriptions of it as an extremist movement and a fundamental threat to an important vehicle for democratic transition in Middle Eastern states. These various judgements depend to a large degree on underlying assumptions of what religion, and specifically Islam, is, what constitutes democracy, and what role ideology plays in historical processes.

Some authors, who emphasise the role of ideas for historical change, assume that Islam in itself conflates religion and politics (Johnson 2010: 6). From that assumption there is a small step to the notion that an ideology based on Islam is essentially stable through time and place and that the Muslim Brotherhood's goals can best be found in the writings of its founder Ḥasan al-Bannā, most notably in the movement's slogan "Islam is the solution" (Besson 2005: 13). An understanding of the term 'Islamism' as a relatively stable and unified category tends to lead to a dismissal of the Brotherhood's rejection of violence and its political participation, as well as its differences with *jihādi* groups, as pure tactics (Vidino 2010: 17). If this is combined with an understanding of democracy as not only a set of rules for regulating political dissent, but as a set of values and virtues within individual citizens, the conclusion is close at hand that the eventual electoral victory of Brotherhood parties would inevitably mean the end of any democratic transition.

Authors who emphasise practice over ideology, and processes over ideological consistency, tend to be more open to the possibility of reform within the Brotherhood (Lia 2006: 297). This appears even more credible when the Brotherhood leaders' behavior in the Middle East and North Africa is compared with other political actors in the same region rather than with those in mature democracies in Western Europe and North America. Samir Amghar (2008: 75f.), for example, emphasises the need to consider the dynamic character of Islamism and to avoid essentialist definitions in order not to ascribe to actors opinions that they do not necessarily have. With the Brotherhood's history now almost spanning a hundred years with local branches, or independent groups

inspired by it, in most states in the Middle East and North Africa, contradict-
ing evaluations of the movement can find empirical support in different coun-
tries and time periods. Carrie Wickham (2013: 2) argues that generalisations
of the Brotherhood as for or against democracy miss the movement's internal
debates and inconsistencies.

Since its foundation in Egypt in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood has spread
across the Middle East and North Africa through local branches and ideologi-
cal influence. However, it is hard to define a coherent Brotherhood ideology
because of the movement's tendency to adapt its message and policy to socio-
political circumstances. This article will present an overview of the various
directions the Brotherhood has taken at different periods of time and in differ-
ent countries in the Middle east and North Africa.

2   The Egyptian Mother Branch

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in the city of Ismailia, Egypt, in 1928
by Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–1949), schoolteacher and son of a Ḥanbalī *īmān* and
author of Ṣūfi texts, Shaykh Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. Al-Bannā's education
included both government and Qurʾānic education as well as tutelage under
Ṣūfi masters (Krämer 2015: 202). In his youth, he was influenced by nation-
alist and anti-colonial ideas and the Islamic reformist movement, *ʾiṣlāḥ*, that
emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century with leaders such
as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ʿAbdu, and Rashīd Riḍā. Al-Bannā and
many of the members of the Brotherhood belonged to an emerging and newly
urbanised educated lower middle class. His criticism was not only directed at
the British colonial regime but also at the Egyptian upper classes' monopoly on
economic and political influence. Brynjar Lia has described the Brotherhood
as part of the emergence of modern mass politics in Egypt in the 1930s (Lia
2006: 13; Mitchell 1993: 321).

Al-Bannā's initial focus was to educate a new generation of Muslims in what
he considered to be a correct understanding of Islam. Since then, the concept
of *tarbiyya*, (education), has been central to the movement (Lia 2006: 37).
According to Brynjar Lia, the politisation of the movement's message began
in earnest with a speech of al-Bannā in 1938 in which he emphasised Islam
as an all-encompassing system that covers all areas in life. He contrasted this
understanding with what he called "traditional Islam," which he described as
submissive and serving colonial interests (Lia 2006: 202).

Even though al-Bannā called for an Islamic state, he never specified what
this meant. He talked about social justice, redistribution of resources, an

elected assembly and a constitution that limits the prerogatives of powerholders and make them accountable to the people. An Islamic constitution would also, according to al-Bannā, limit lawmakers' authority to make laws that violate Islamic rules and norms. He had an ambiguous view on party politics. On the one hand, he criticised party politics with the pejorative term *hizbiyya*, 'partyism', on the other he and other members contested for parliament on different occasions during the 1940s. The first time when he contested elections, he gave in to pressure from the government and withdrew his own and other members' candidacies and supported the Wafd party, thereby accepting the result of rigged elections (Mitchell 1993: 219, 309).

Al-Bannā's willingness to bargain caused frustration among many members who began to view revolutionary action as the only way for change. Already in the 1920s the two biggest political parties, the Wafd and the Young Egypt, had their own militias that clashed with each other. Another factor was the Palestinian uprising 1936–1939. The Brotherhood was only one among several Egyptian groups that sent voluntary fighters to Palestine. In 1940, the Brotherhood's military wing, *al-tanẓīm al-khāṣṣ*, 'The Special Organisation', was formed. Lia explains this as an attempt to diffuse the pressure from radicalised members and at the same time ensure that the violence did not escalate out of control (Lia 2006: 180, Mitchell 1993: 30ff). However, during the 1940s al-Bannā was increasingly challenged by the leaders of the armed wing to the extent that it appeared uncertain who really led the movement.

In December 1948, the Egyptian government dissolved the Brotherhood with a decree and two months later, in February 1949, al-Bannā was assassinated by unknown perpetrators. Because of internal division, it took two years before Ḥasan al-Huḍaybī (1891–1973) was elected as a new leader as a compromise candidate. This prominent jurist had until then not even been a member of the movement. His task was to consolidate the movement internally and to negotiate with the government and the royal court and later with the Free officers who took power in 1952. Al-Huḍaybī also had to face challenges from radicalised members whose most prominent ideologue was to be Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966).

Sayyid Quṭb is, with al-Bannā, the Brotherhood's most well-known thinker. It should however be stressed that he was never the leader of the movement, but the ideologue of a secret internal group within it, called Organisation 1965, which gathered members who had been radicalised in the prisons. Barbara Zollner divides Quṭb's career into three phases. During the 1930s and 1940s he was a secular literary author and critic. After a stay in the United States 1948–1950, where he was sent by the Egyptian ministry of education to study the American education system, his ideas had a more Islamic color and after his

return to Egypt he joined the Brotherhood and became the editor of its weekly *al-Ikhwan al-muslimin*. Quṭb now argued that a secular division of state and religion is a result of a specific Western historical development which is foreign for Muslim societies. During this phase, his texts focused on social justice from an Islamic perspective and it was during this period he published his book *Social Justice in Islam* (Zollner 2009: 51ff).

The third and last phase began with his first arrest in 1954. Under the influence of the Pakistani thinkers Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nadwī and Abū l-Aʿlā Mawdūdī, he formulated his theory that political sovereignty, *ḥākimiyya*, is located solely with God and that the society and political system in Egypt had relapsed into *jāhiliyya*, 'ignorance of Islam'. Hence, *jāhiliyya*, traditionally referring to the Arabs' ignorance of Islam before the revelation of the Prophet Muḥammad, for Quṭb became a timeless concept for criticising conditions in contemporary society. He argued that the Islamic profession of faith, *shahāda*, is a call for political action and that Muslims who do not combine faith with action are guilty of unbelief, *kufr*. Hence, Quṭb embraced the idea of *takfīr*, to designate as unbelievers other Muslims, who disagree with one's own interpretation, a practice that has always been controversial among Muslim scholars. These ideas were laid out in the book *Milestones* which, according to Zollner, probably was written as an ideological program for members in the Organisation 1965. Quṭb's ideas became a source of inspiration for the Brotherhood's armed wing and later also for well-known jihadist ideologues such as al-Qāʿida's current leader ʾAyman al-Ẓawāhirī; and the former spokesperson for the Islamic State ʾAbū Muḥammad al-ʿAdnānī. Both al-Qāʿida and the Islamic State usually makes an explicit exception for Quṭb when they accuse the Brotherhood of apostasy because of its recognition of parliamentary democracy (Zollner 2009: 52ff).

In 1977, a book entitled *Duʿāt lā quḍāt* (Preachers not Judges) was published under the name of the Supreme Guide Ḥasan al-Huḍaybī. According to Zollner, it had been completed and distributed to members already in 1969 and was the result of a collective work that included Muslim scholars at the al-Azhar University as well as members in the Brotherhood's leadership. Several of the latter would eventually succeed each other as the movement's supreme guide. The purpose of the book was to consolidate al-Huḍaybī's authority over the Brotherhood and to refute Quṭb's jihadist theory, although without naming him. Quṭb's reinterpretation of the concept *jāhiliyya* is rejected with the argument that Muslims never lost the truth after Muḥammad's revelation. The establishment of an Islamic state, in which Islamic law is applied, is described as a secondary matter. What is central is instead that individual Muslims apply Islam in the own lives. Political ruler should be obeyed, even

if they violate Islamic rules, and active opposition should only be a last resort (Zollner 2009: 64ff).

Al-Ḥuḍaybī did not have the charisma of al-Bannā and Quṭb and is described by Mitchell as a weak leader with a great deal of responsibility for the near destruction of the Brotherhood in 1954 (Mitchell 1993: 300). Zollner, on the other hand, claims that it is his ideas, to a significantly greater extent than the ideas of both al-Bannā and Quṭb, that have laid the foundation for the movement's development since the 1970s (Zollner 2009: 146). When Anwar Sadat succeeded Nasser as president in 1970, a great number of the movement's members were released from prison and the Brotherhood was permitted to resume its activity. Al-Ḥuḍaybī passed away in 1973 and was succeeded by ʿUmar al-Tilmisānī, who continued the former's policy of nonviolent and gradual Islamisation of society. In the 1970s, a number of Islamist groups emerged at Egyptian universities. These students were often influenced by Sayyid Quṭb and several of these groups eventually developed into armed jihadist groups. However, others joined the Muslim Brotherhood, where they were exposed to the reformist line of al-Ḥuḍaybī and al-Tilmisānī. It was from this generation the leaders of the Brotherhood's reformist wing in the 1990s sprang, who demonstrated a more unreserved support than al-Ḥuḍaybī and al-Tilmisānī for a democratic multiparty system and the rights of religious minorities (Zollner 2009: 146).

In the 1980s, The Muslim Brotherhood appeared as the strongest opposition movement in Egypt and an internal discussion on whether to establish a political party began, a discussion that would continue until the fall of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. The reformist wing advocated a political party while the conservative wing advocated a focus on *daʿwa*, missionary activities. Already in 1996 Hizb al-Wasat, 'the Center Party', had been formed with the participation of some members of the reformist wing as well as non-members of the Brotherhood. The new party met resistance from both the regime and the Brotherhood leadership, which excluded the members who persisted to stay within the party. In 2007, the Brotherhood leadership and the reformist wing presented two party programs, still without having founded a party. Both programs demanded democratic reforms but the leadership's version suggested a religious expert council with veto power over legislation and a provision that the chief of state must be male and Muslim. In the autumn 2009, the General Guide Muhammad Akif resigned. This was the first time anyone had resigned from this position: the previous general guides having stayed until death. Muhammad Badiʿ, a representative for the conservative wing, was elected as his successor and in the election to the Bureau of Guidance the reformist representatives lost their seats.

The new conservative leadership declared that it had no intention to form a political party and it was now expected the Brotherhood would distance itself from political activity. When street demonstrations against the regime broke out in the beginning of 2011 the Brotherhood leaders initially were cautious. However, younger members pressured them to back the protests which eventually led to the toppling of President Mubarak. The Brotherhood now finally formed a political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, and forbade members to join rival parties. The party gained 43.4 per cent of the votes in the election to the constituent assembly. In 2012 the Brotherhood's candidate Muhammad Mursī won the presidential election with a narrow margin over the military's candidate but was toppled by the military only a year later.

3   The Structure of the Brotherhood

The precise form of the Brotherhood's structure has varied over time but has to a great extent remained the same since the 1940s. On the grassroot level the movement is divided into *usar*, 'families', of about five members who are in intensive contact with each other to strengthen each other's belief. This is the central level for ideological training and cohesion through common prayer. A handful of families form a *shuʿba*, 'division'. Three to four divisions form a *mantiq*, 'district'. Each Egyptian province has an administrative bureau that gathers all the districts in the province (al-Anani 2016: 103ff).

On the national level there is a *majlis al-shūrā*, shūrā council, which is the decision-making organ of the movement. It has ninety members elected from the provinces. There is also a guidance bureau with sixteen members elected from the *shūrā* council. The guidance bureau serves as the executive body. The Brotherhood's leader has the title *al-murshid al-ʾamm*, the 'General Guide'. He is elected by the *shūrā* council, after having received a *bayʿa*, oath of allegiance, from all members:

> I contract with God … to adhere firmly to the message of the Muslim brothers, to strive on its behalf, to live up to the conditions of its membership, to have complete confidence in its leadership and to obey absolutely, under all circumstance (*fi-l-manshat wa-l-makra*). I swear by God in that and make my oath of loyalty to Him. Of what I say, God is Witness.
> quoted in MITCHELL 1993: 165

However, there is disagreement among members what this oath really means and to whom or what the allegiance is pledged. Some argues that the loyalty

is towards the Brotherhood's principles rather than the individual leader. The oath has been criticised by some members for being used to silence internal opposition (al-Anani 2016: 124f; Mitchell 1993: 304).

4   The Muslim Brotherhood in Other Middle Eastern Countries

In the 1950s, exiled members of the Brotherhood, mainly from Egypt but also from Syria and Iraq, found refuge in Saudi Arabia and positions at the newly opened universities there (Lacroix 2011: 37ff). During the 1950s and 1960s at least four rival Muslim Brotherhood groups were established in the kingdom and they never managed to unite under one national organisation. In spite of contacts with the Egyptian mother organisation, the Saudi members never swore an oath of allegiance to its leader. One problem for the Saudi Brotherhood has been the deep suspicion within the Wahhābī tradition against parties and groups as creating division among believers (Lacroix 2011: 62ff).

More important than these groups have been various ideologies that emerged as a result of the meeting between the internal Wahhābī tradition and foreign Muslim Brothers and which with time would challenge the Saudi political system. Jihadists, whose ideology is based on a selective reading of Sayyid Quṭb, turned against the Saudi regime when American troops were allowed on Saudi soil during the Gulf War in 1991. This war also led to the emergence of a movement called *al-Ṣaḥwa al-Islāmiyya*, 'the Islamic awakening', or The Sahwa, which demanded the evacuation of American troops but also political reforms, demands formulated in public petitions. In a country where any public criticism of the king is considered as treason, this led to a swathe of mass arrests in 1994 that lasted for five years. When the country was shaken by a waves of jihadist attack in 2003 and 2004, some of these representatives of The Sahwa were used to spread a nonviolent interpretation of Islam and in rehabilitation programs for jihadists (al-Rasheed: 2007: 82f, 170).

The Arab Spring 2011 was met with enthusiasm among many representatives of The Sahwa and led to a new flood of public petitions demanding political reforms and when the Egyptian President Mursī was toppled by the military in 2013 they condemned it as a violation of the popular will, which implicitly challenged the Saudi monarchical system (Al-Rasheed 2015: 35ff, 88ff). In the Spring of 2014, the Brotherhood was banned and categorised as extremist and a terrorist organisation.

The Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1945. The first decades the movement was allied with the royal house against the leftist opposition (Wickham 2013: 197). When King Hussein lifted the state

of emergency, which had been introduced after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, and allowed political parties, the Brotherhood formed the party Islamic Action Front in 1992 and began during the 1990s to stress Islam's compatibility with democracy (Wickham 2013: 209). According to Roald, there was a swift change after the political opening in 1992. Before that year, representatives of the Brotherhood had talked about a specific form of Islamic democracy, distinctive from Western democracy, with reference to the Islamic concept *shūrā*, counsel, which they claimed meant that the ruler should listen to religious scholars. After 1992, the standard answer was instead to identify *shūrā* with Western democracy. In this period the Brotherhood also had begun to cooperate with secular leftist parties in opposition to a conservative government. In 2007, the same leaders had substituted the loanword *dimuqrati-yya* for *shūrā* (Roald 2012a: 75; Roald 2012b: 99f). However, the party took a more conservative position on issues relating to reforms of women's position. Wickham explains this with the party's internal democratic structure which made the leaders more attentive to tribal norms among a conservative public opinion, which prompted dissatisfied members to leave in 2000 to form the more reformist Wasat party (Wickham 2013: 219ff).

After the Second World War, a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was established in Jerusalem. When the state of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, the Brotherhood on the West Bank was incorporated into the Jordanian branch. While the Jordanian Brotherhood operated as a loyal opposition to the monarchy, the branch in Gaza, now under Egyptian rule, became involved in the conflict between the regime and the Egyptian Brotherhood. With the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 the two branches approached each other again. Until the first Intifada in 1987, the Palestinian Brotherhood focused on *da'wa*, charity, and local politics, leaving militant resistance to secular groups. This prompted dissatisfied members to leave, some of whom participated in the formation of Fatah in 1965 while others formed armed Islamist groups, such as Islamic Jihad at the end of the 1970s (Gunning 2007: 27f; Seurat 2015: 14f).

In Israel, the occupation of the West Bank in 1967 led to a revival of Islam with a renewed access to religious scholars educated on the West Bank. In 1984, the Islamic Movement was founded under the leadership of Shaykh Abdallah Nimr Darwish. He was newly released from a prison term for having being member in an armed group, but he now rejected violence and advocated support for Palestinian, Muslim, and Arab identity within the legal framework in Israel. The movement participated in local elections in 1984 and 1989 but split in 1996 into a northern and a southern branch. Under the leadership of Darwish, the southern branch joined other Palestinian parties in the Arab

Unity List, while the northern branch advocated a boycott of the Knesset, arguing that campaigning for it would imply a recognition of the Israeli state's legitimacy. Both branches reject violence, but the latter has used a harsher rhetoric towards Israel and occasionally defended Ḥamās (Göndör 2012: 53ff; Rosmer 2012: 325ff; Daoud 2016: 22ff).

The expansion of Israeli settlements on the West Bank and Gaza led to the first Intifada in 1987 and to impatience among younger members of the Brotherhood with the movement's inactivity in the resistance. In 1987, *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya* (The Islamic Resistance Movement), with the acronym Ḥamās, was founded by older and younger leaders in Gaza. The younger leaders were allowed to form an armed branch of resistance separate from the Brotherhood (Gunning 2007: 39; Seurat 2015: 15f).

The Charter of Ḥamās, written by a young leader in 1988, defines Palestine as an Islamic charity, *waqf*, thereby describing resistance against the Israeli occupation as a religious duty. From this follows that the land is to be governed by Islamic law and Christians and Jews are allowed to live there as *dhimmīs*, 'protected people', under Muslim sovereignty. The Charter also blames crusaders and Zionists for obstructing the establishment of an Islamic state and even mentions a Jewish world conspiracy with a reference to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. These formulations have not only met external criticism but also from some leaders within Ḥamās, while other leaders have tried to ignore the text and describe it as of secondary importance or no longer relevant (Charter of Ḥamās 1996 [1988]; Seurat 2015: 22).

Since its foundation in 1987, Ḥamās has alternated between violence and diplomacy to achieve its interests. Between 1994 and 2005, the movement performed a number of suicide attacks in Israel. Since then, the use of violence has been limited to rocket attacks on villages near Gaza and attacks on Israeli soldiers. Ḥamās has offered Israel limited truces and introduced unilateral ones when it has considered it politically motivated (Gunning 2007: 195; Hroub 2010: 57; Brenner 2017: 30f).

In 2005, Ḥamās decided to participate in the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Assembly, which it surprisingly won. In the election campaign its political party toned down the religious rhetoric for the benefit of a more nationalist language. The election platform did not mention the idea of an Islamic state but did contain a passus that *sharīʿa* should be the main source of legislation (Hroub 2010: 20, 40, 136ff; Seurat 2015: 48f; Brenner 2017: 3).

While Ḥamās was founded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, the movements do not have formal ties and Ḥamās has described the link differently according to the context. When Ḥamās' external leadership was based in Amman, Jordan, in the 1990s, there was a rapprochement towards

the Jordanian Brotherhood but when it moved to Syria, where membership in the Brotherhood entails capital punishment, the ties were dissolved. When Muhammad Mursī was elected president of Egypt in 2012, the ties were strengthened once again and Ḥamās added the phrase 'section of the Muslim Brotherhood' to its official name. After the military coup that toppled Mursī, Ḥamās distanced itself from the Brotherhood (Seurat 2015: 19, 95).

In May 2017, Ḥamās published a new document with general principles and policies in which Ḥamās is described as a national Palestinian liberation and resistance movement with Islam as a frame of reference. The Muslim Brotherhood is not mentioned and the founding Charter's references to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* has been replaced with assertions that the enemy is 'the Zionist project', not Jews because of their religion. In an ambiguous formulation the document rejects any concession of the historical Palestine, 'from the river to the sea', while at the same time hinting to a sovereign Palestine state within the 1967 borders.

The Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1945. During the two first decades, it advocated parliamentary democracy and the recognition of the rights of religious minorities in more unambiguous terms than the Egyptian mother movement. The first leaders, Muṣṭafā al-Sibāʿī and Issam al-Attar, claimed that Islam only provides general principles for governance, leaving details to human reason (Lefèvre 2013: 23ff, 86).

After the Baathist coup in 1963, a jihadist wing within in the Brotherhood emerged in Hama, led by Marwan Hadid. Several members began to condemn the regime in sectarian terms because of the ʿAlawī origins of several military leaders in the new regime (Lefèvre 2013: 72ff, 97ff). Unrest and mass arrests during the 1970s culminated in a massacre on 83 ʿAlawite cadets at the Aleppo artillery school in 1979. The following days, thousands of members of the Brotherhood were arrested and tortured. In 1980, a law was passed banning membership in the movement under the penalty of death. In 1984, the regime cracked down on a rebellion in Hama by bombing the city, which resulted in between 10,000 and 40,000 deaths (Lefèvre 2013: 125ff). Surviving members of the armed wing fled the country and several of them were to join al-Qāʿida later (Lefèvre 2013: 138). At the end of the 1980s, the moderate wing regained dominance within the Brotherhood. It initially attempted to bargain with the regime but after 2000 initiated a dialogue with the secular opposition. In 2004, the Brotherhood published a political program demanding free and transparent elections and assured that it would accept a Christian or a woman as president if this would be the result of elections. When the rebellion against the regime broke out in 2011, which was soon to develop into a civil war, the Brotherhood joined the Syrian National Council, while groups

within the former armed wing joined al-Qāʿida's Syrian wing, the Nusra Front (Lefèvre 2013: 87f).

In Algeria in 1992, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was on the brink of becoming the first Islamist party in the Middle East and North Africa to come to power in free elections. It had gained 55 per cent of the votes in the local elections in 1990 and 44 per cent in the first round of elections for the presidency in 1991. However, the military intervened, deposed the president, cancelled the second round of elections, and banned the party. This was the beginning of a bloody civil war that cost an estimated 200,000 lives between 1992 and 1999. FIS established an armed wing, AIS, which mainly attacked the police and military. However, a new armed group, which eventually would develop into al-Qāʿida in the Maghreb, also attacked civilians. It is still discussed to what extent groups within the regime were involved in the violence against civilians (Utvik 2016: 114ff).

FIS was founded in 1989 by members in various Islamist groups. However, some of the leader refused to join the new party. Ahmad Sahnoun founded the Islamic Nahḍa and Mahfuz Nahna the Movement for an Islamic Society (with the acronym HAMAS, without any relation to the Palestinian movement). Both were inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood. According to Bjørn Utvik, Nahna was a member in the international organisation of the Brotherhood and Sahnoun's Nahḍa had a structure similar to that of the Brotherhood with a base of families where the members were socialised in the party's ideology (Utvik 2016: 115ff; Boubekeur 2009: 168ff; Willis 1998: 170ff).

While the banned FIS went underground, both Nahḍa and HAMAS operated as a legal opposition during the civil war in the 1990s. Nahḍa had made more clear demands for the Islamisation of legislation and enforcing Islamic norms in society, thus attracting members from FIS. HAMAS entered a closer cooperation with the regime and even participated in some governments between 2002 and 2007. The Algerian case illustrates how groups ideologically influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood in some circumstances may end up on different side, even in a civil war (Utvik 2016: 116; Boubekeur 2009: 169f; Willis 1998: 57ff).

In Tunisia, the Islamic Tendency Movement (*harakat al-ittijah al-islami*) was founded in the 1981 with the aim to Islamise society and counter Western influences on Tunisian society. After president Bourguiba had been toppled by Zine el Abidine Ben Ali in 1987, a short period of political opening followed, and the movement changed its name to al-Nahḍa ('Renaissance'). In 1989, the most prominent of its leaders, Rachid Ghannouchi, was forced into exile in London, where he gradually began to emphasise Islam's compatibility with democracy and human rights. He appears to the earliest Islamist leader who advocated

that women could be chiefs of state. While Ghannouchi in his youth had been an admirer of Sayyid Quṭb, he now talks about popular sovereignty instead of God's sovereignty. He describes Islam as a normative system which provides a spiritual and moral dimension to what he considers the purely materialistic basis of Western democracy. This combination of Islam and democracy has made Ghannouchi a central point of reference for many Brotherhood sympathisers in Europe (Roald 2001: 192f). After the fall of Ben Ali in 2011, al-Nahḍa has been part of succeeding governments. In 2016, the party declared that it considered itself as a purely political party and did not identify as Islamist.

5   Conclusion

The hierarchical structure of the Muslim Brotherhood has proved to be both a strength and a liability. It has helped to movement to survive under authoritarian regimes, but the emphasis on members' obligation to obey the leadership has not prevented factionalism and splits within the movement, with some banished members still enjoying a status as its most prominent thinkers. Strategically, Brotherhood branches have been involved in both armed and peaceful resistance, as well as being coopted by authoritarian regimes. Hence, the Brotherhood's ideology is best seen as fluid and adaptable to different sociopolitical circumstances, having produced militant jihadist ideas as well as defenses for democratic values.

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The Gülen Movement: Between Turkey and International Exile

Caroline Tee

1   Introduction

Since a failed attempt at a military coup on the night of 15 July 2016, the Gülen Movement (henceforth GM), which developed around the figure of Islamic preacher and social critic Fethullah Gülen (b. 1941), has been forcibly exiled from its homeland of Turkey.[1] The events of that night marked the final, explosive stage in Fethullah Gülen's transition from powerful establishment ally to Turkey's most wanted criminal (Esen and Gumuscu 2017; Yavuz and Balcı 2018; Zarakol 2016). The Turkish government holds Gülen directly responsible for masterminding the coup and the GM is referred to in Turkey today as FETÖ (Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation), and the unprecedented wave of arrests and state sector purges that have been witnessed since 2016 have ostensibly been aimed at its members. In reality, tens of thousands of people—many of whom have no connection to Gülen whatsoever—have lost their jobs, fled the country or are now languishing in prison. Those Gülenists who were able to escape have sought refuge overseas, many of them apparently in Western Europe and the United States of America (US), where the GM has an established presence. With its considerable financial assets in Turkey confiscated by the state, febrile anti-Gülenism pervading the public mood and President Erdoğan's grip on power consolidated through an executive presidency, there is little prospect of the GM ever recovering its once powerful position in its homeland.

Since 2016, the organisational contours of the GM have changed. Gülen continues to reside on his reclusive compound in Pennsylvania, US, where he has lived since 1999, and the efforts of the Turkish government to secure his extradition to face charges for masterminding the coup have so far failed. However, while Gülen and his inner circle of followers remain intact, the rest of the global GM has experienced serious rupture. Searching for a future outside Turkey, the

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1 Some parts of this chapter have previously been published in the author's monograph, *The Gülen Movement in Turkey: The Politics of Islam and Modernity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

GM has begun to regroup in nations including Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the US, where for various reasons it is finding a relatively sympathetic reception (Lesage 2019; Watmough and Öztürk 2018).

The victimisation of the GM by a now-authoritarian regime in Turkey is ironic, for it is widely recognised that between the late 1990s and early 2010s the movement was itself one of the foremost architects of that regime. There are numerous examples during that time of Gülenist involvement in political manoeuvring; what Simon Watmough and Ahmet Öztürk (2018) have referred to in the GM context as "parapolitics." In the first two terms of the Justice and Development Party better known as the AK Parti (or AKP), founded by the current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the GM acted as an unofficial ally to the government, sharing its conservative religious outlook and its desire to downgrade the power of the Kemalist establishment responsible for the construction of the modern Turkish state from its Ottoman past (Taş 2017; Yavuz 2018). Although not openly engaged in party politics, Gülen nonetheless steered a political course for the AKP by mobilising his followers in the police service and the judiciary to conspire against senior secularist figures. The so-called Ergenekon, Balyoz and Poyrazköy trials saw 275 high ranking military officers, journalists, and opposition politicians imprisoned on trumped up charges, and replaced with government sympathisers. They were subsequently exonerated and released, but the damage to Turkey's secular institutional structure had already been done. Later on, the GM would turn its political manoeuvring against its former ally, most notably—although ultimately unsuccessfully—with corruption allegations against the Prime Minister launched in December 2013. Therefore, although the coup attempt in July 2016 was the first time the GM had been accused of violence (on the public record, Gülen is a pacifist), its track record of political meddling had already been common knowledge in Turkey for many years.

While the GM has always attracted sceptics and detractors in Turkey, it has strategically recruited support for its activities overseas. It has focused particularly on centres of global power such as Washington DC. Gülen's residence in Pennsylvania has always been more than mere contingency: his followers have long been instructed to invest and settle in the US, a move that reflects the GM's global ambition and strategic vision (Hendrick 2013; Tee 2016). That vision developed pragmatically in a post-9/11 era, when the appetite for representations of 'moderate' Islam amongst western audiences and policy makers has been considerable. With its focus on secular education and inter-faith dialogue, its engagement in free market entrepreneurship, and its public support for political democracy, the GM has provided an attractive foil to the violent jihadi extremism emerging from other parts of the Muslim Middle East.

International endorsements of the GM were especially common during its heyday, between 2002–2012, when optimism about the Turkey's future under the AKP government was high. Turkey was ascribed then with the potential to serve as a 'model' of Islam successfully co-existing with modern, liberal democracy. The GM played an important part in the construction of that image. Academics were amongst those openly expressing their admiration and support for Gülen (Ebaugh 2009; Pandya and Gallagher 2012; Weller and Yılmaz 2012), and a body of largely uncritical pro-GM literature emerged, some of which was written and published by the GM itself from its publishing houses in New Jersey, US. More recently, and particularly since 2016, scholarship on the GM has taken a notably more critical turn. Currently, there are perhaps two major topics that occupy scholarly attention on the GM: the first of these concerns the contradictions between the GM's public image and international presence, and its 'parapolitical' activities in Turkey (Watmough and Öztürk, 2018), which—having been ignored by supporters for decades—are now beyond question; the second concerns the movement's future as a diaspora movement in the wake of 2016.

The aim of this chapter is to offer an introductory overview of the ideas, organisational structure and activities of the GM, an explanation for its emergence and rapid rise to power and influence in late twentieth and early twenty-first century Turkey, and an analysis of the souring of its relationship with the AKP and its dramatic fall from grace. It will conclude with a brief analysis of the current state of the field in GM studies in light of the failed coup, and the new directions that the GM now faces as a movement seeking to regroup in exile.

2   Fethullah Gülen and the Origins of the GM

Fethullah Gülen was born in the village of Korucuk, Erzurum in 1938 (Mercan 2008: 34–35). His origins in Erzurum help to explain his distinctive interpretation of Islam and the Turkish nationalist tenor of the GM (Yavuz 2013: 25–46). Erzurum is a socially conservative province known for its pious population, located high on the central Anatolian plateau, within a few hours' drive of Turkey's eastern frontiers with Iran, Armenia, and Georgia. Erzurum is therefore a strategic city and has a long military history, dictated in large part by its frontier position in both Ottoman and Republican eras. Military skirmishes with neighbouring powers have been a feature of life in Erzurum for centuries and have contributed to the development of a regional identity built on strong national as well as Muslim religious sentiment.

Typical of the time and place in which he was born, Gülen's childhood in the 1940s and 1950s was characterised by rural, Turkish Sunnī Muslim practices and ways of learning. He attended the first four years of primary school, but thereafter had a traditional religious education in local Ṣūfi *tekke*s. In the *tekke*s, Gülen received religious instruction from *shaykhs* of the Naqshbandī Order (Weismann 2007), of which his father was a member, as well as from the Qādirī Order. On leaving the *tekke*, Gülen continued to pursue his study of Ṣūfism under the guidance of various local *shaykhs* in Erzurum, where he also embarked on the formal study of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

While he was still a young man, Gülen became familiar with the teachings of Said Nursi, the Kurdish-Turkish Islamic thinker whose intellectual tradition he went on to follow (Abu Rabi 2003; Mardin 1989; Vahide 2005). Nursi (1877–1960) was a paradigmatic Turkish modernist thinker who authored the *Risale-i Nur* (Epistle of Light). The principle tenet of Nursi's teachings is his vision of a revitalisation of Turkish religious culture, which he saw to be under threat from the rise of scientific scepticism and secularisation in the modern age (Abu Rabi 2008; Turner 2008). He envisaged this religious revival taking place, not through the medium of political activism or violent revolution, but rather through a principle that he defined as 'positive action' (*müspet hareket*). This principle allowed for pious believers to engage and contribute peaceably to society at large in all of its constituent parts, and through it Nursi foresaw an effective way of reintroducing Islamic mores back into the public sphere with the ultimate aim of reinstating Islam as the guiding principle of Turkish society. Nursian principles and the core intellectual themes from the *Risale* are clearly visible in Gülen's own published works: indeed, members of the GM have appealed to the movement's pacifist Nursi-inspired ideology, albeit to a sometimes sceptical audience, when speaking in defence of Gülen in the post-coup era.[2]

2.1　*Gülen in Izmir*

At the age of eighteen, Gülen passed the exam to become a state-appointed imam and was soon sent to the western coastal city of Izmir, where he assumed the directorship of a Qurʾānic school attached to the Kestanepazarı mosque in the city centre. It was in Izmir in the late 1960s that Gülen began to attract a following, and the GM had its genesis.

2　For example, see Section 3 of the parliamentary report, "UK's Relations with Turkey," available at https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmfaff/615/61502.htm, accessed 10/05/2019.

As well as preaching regularly at the Kestanepazarı mosque, Gülen began to visit local coffee-houses to preach and his message started to reach a wider demographic than the already religiously-observant sectors of the community. By reaching out beyond the traditional catchment of pious individuals, Gülen sought to take his message of moral and spiritual reform to a broader group of listeners in the public sphere. The teachings of Said Nursi constituted the foundations of his message, but, significantly, Gülen's presentation of those teachings focused on their practical enactment in the local context of 1960s Izmir. He set out to show his early audience of students, small business owners and tradespeople how religious piety might complement, rather than compromise, their professional activities and successfully be enacted in their various spheres of worldly influence.

A major factor behind Gülen's success of these early years was his charismatic oratorical style, which he continued to manifest until 2016 through the publication of his sermons online. His use of a rather archaic Turkish is quite distinctive, and he has an extremely emotional style of delivery which often results in him being overcome and crying while preaching. This tendency to display emotion, for which he is well-known, is mocked by detractors but greatly admired by his followers, amongst whom it is interpreted as a sign of sincerity and spiritual depth.

3   Ṣūfi Motifs in Gülenist Thought

Gülen is a social activist and in some senses an entrepreneur, but primarily he is a teacher and preacher of Islam. His interpretation of the Sunnī tradition is distinctive in a number of ways. First, it is strongly influenced by the mystical conceits of Anatolian Ṣūfism (Sarıtoprak in Yavuz and Esposito 2003: 156–169). He has written four books which address Ṣūfi themes directly (Gülen 2011), although the same Ṣūfi idiom pervades all of his writings and sermons on other topics. This is an area of Gülen's work in which he diverges somewhat from the precedent set by Said Nursi. The heavy emphasis on Ṣūfi themes and especially on the Ṣūfic concept of love is particular to Gülen and not something that is developed in the same way in Nursi's *Risale*.

Gülen's followers point out, however, that his reliance on mystical themes and ideas in order to communicate with his readers is entirely consistent with the Turkish cultural and religious context from which he emerged. Ṣūfism has been a central component of the Islam practiced in Anatolia since Ottoman times, when *tarikat* (Arab. *tarīqat*, 'schools') activity characterised every level

of society for hundreds of years. The official abolition of the *tarikats* in the 1920s may have dramatically reduced their presence in public life, but the language and motifs of Ṣūfism have continued to occupy a central place in Turkish Muslim consciousness, be it through familiarity with the folk poetry of Yunus Emre or the learned wisdom of Mevlana Rumi.

It is therefore within this framework of a broadly familiar Ṣūfi cultural tradition that Gülen communicates. Central to Ṣūfi thought is the concept of love; love for God and desire, ultimately, to be united with him. Love is also a central motif in Gülen's theology:

> Love is the most essential element of every being, and it is the most radiant light, and it is the greatest power; able to resist and overcome all else. Love elevates every soul that absorbs it, and prepares those souls for the journey to eternity. Souls that have been able to make contact with eternity through love exert themselves to inspire in all other souls what they have derived from eternity. They dedicate their lives to this sacred duty, a duty for the sake of which they endure every kind of hardship to the very end, and just as they pronounce 'love' with their last breath, they will also breathe 'love' while being raised on the Day of Judgment.
>
> GÜLEN 2006: 1

Through the prism of this Ṣūfic interpretation of love, Gülen articulates his vision for the betterment of humanity. This is a key concern that underpins his social and religious teachings, and which has become gradually more expansive and ambitious over the past fifty years of his life and career. Love of God plays a crucial role in Gülen's thought, and love of others for the sake of God is also ascribed with great importance. Altruism, which is highly praised, is therefore rooted by Gülen in Islamic spirituality and defined as, "devoting oneself to the lives of others in complete forgetfulness of all concerns of one's own[;] it is self-annihilation in the interests of others" (Gülen 2004: 10).

While Gülen draws frequently on Ṣūfi-inspired ideas, and often references poetry from the mystical canon to elaborate his teachings, he is clear to distance himself from the organised nature of Ṣūfism, namely its *tarikat* structure. His followers are also often at pains to point out that the movement is not a Ṣūfi order, appealing to two points of evidence: first, the absence in the Gülen Movement of the ritual religious practice which is a central element of the Ṣūfi orders; and second, the lack of initiation rites or clear demarcation of membership or belonging.

The trope of love for God and humankind in Gülenist thought provides the context for his articulation of Said Nursi's doctrine of positive action (*müspet hareket*). This concept provides the essential framework for Gülen's understanding of how Islamic faith might best be enacted in the modern age and is based on the moral responsibility of believers to make a positive contribution to society in the service of Islam. The ultimate aim of positive action is the restoration of religious values to modern society, which is perceived in the Nursian (and Gülenist) imaginary to be under threat from secularisation and accompanying forces hostile to religion. Unlike other modern Muslim revival ideologies, however, which have espoused political activism and even violent revolution, positive action is a peaceful, apolitical and non-confrontational endeavour. It therefore requires of believers that they contribute to the preservation of public order and stability rather than directly challenge the status quo. The principle of positive action is explained in the following terms by a movement insider in Turkey:

> In every society you might find radical challenge and violent movements—in the USA, Africa, Russia, everywhere ... But, speaking about this movement, it is not anti-systemic. It is not a protest to the existing norms, authorities, state, tradition—and I am talking about every country in which it is present. In every decade of its maybe four-decade lifespan it has been non-contentious, non-violent. This is *müspet hareket*, in Hocaefendi's terminology.[3]

Scholars and commentators in the post-coup era have recognised the obvious dissonance between the GM's long-time public commitment to peaceful social activism, and the allegations of its involvement in the bloody events of 15 July 2016 (Hendrick in Yavuz and Balcı 2017).

4   The Gülen Movement

4.1   *Defining the Gülen Movement*

The Gülen Movement defies easy categorisation, and points of comparison with other religious organisations or ideologies are hard to find. The movement itself is ambivalent about labelling itself and tends to reject the suggestion

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3 Author's interview in English with a senior management figure at Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı (Journalists and Writers Foundation) in Istanbul, March 2013.

that it is an organised movement (*hareket*) at all. Insiders talk instead of the movement as *Hizmet*, which literally means 'service' and refers, in this usage, to the application of the abstract, philosophical concept that they say lies at the heart of Gülen's vision of a better world. The Islamic rationale for this concept is sometimes made explicit and sometimes not. Gülen's own role within the movement is also the subject of considerable ambiguity. He is presented, not as the head of an organised, hierarchical structure, but rather as an 'inspiration' to a loose network of altruistic volunteers who are united only by their commitment to universal principles of civic and humanitarian service. Insiders typically play down their connections with one another, and a common assertion is that there is no 'organic connection' (*organik bağlantı*), by which is meant an official tie, between them.

Joshua Hendrick has called this tendency towards opaqueness about the movement's operational structure "strategic ambiguity," and links it to its emergence in late-twentieth century Turkey when limitations were in place on public religious identities (Hendrick 2013). It has attracted scepticism amongst detractors, who find it hard to countenance the spread of institutions and initiatives all around the world which bear the hallmark of Gülen and yet recognise no central organisational structure and have no official affiliation. These sceptics have tended also to infer an Islamist agenda at the movement's core and found it unconvincing that its interests and aspirations lie purely in the realm of civil society. In this vein, in Turkey it is common for unsympathetic outsiders to use the term *cemaat* (religious community) to refer to the movement, in a somewhat pejorative sense. The term *cemaat* has connotations of subversion in that it refers to religious groups that are still legally banned under the 1925 law which forcibly closed the Ṣūfi *tarikats*. Movement insiders argue that it is an inappropriate label, partly because of its association with religious ritual activity, which is not a feature of the movement, and partly because of its closed, sectarian implications, which Gülenist actors invariably seek to play down.

The ambiguity surrounding the movement and the identities of its affiliates has lessened to some extent since the coup attempt of 2016. Movement insiders have become rather less insistent on stating publicly that the movement is not, in fact, a movement at all and have discarded some of their earlier guarded reserve on this subject. They still, however, refer to *Hizmet* rather than using the term Gülen Movement, which is largely an appellation used in external, English-language sources. Insiders fluent in English might talk comfortably of 'the movement' in interviews in that language, reflecting their familiarity with the growing discourse and body of literature on Gülen in the West, but in Turkish they almost always revert back to simply '*Hizmet*'.

4.2   *Growth of a Movement in Science Education*

Science focused education has been the principal activity of the GM since its inception. In the late 1960s, Gülen and a burgeoning group of followers who were attracted to his teachings started to organise summer revision camps in Izmir for local high school and university students. These early camps, which were the prototype for the global network of private schools that the Gülen Movement went on to operate, were inspired by Gülen's vision for the education of a 'golden generation' (*altın nesil*) equally well versed in modern science as in knowledge of Islam and Islamic ethics (Agai 2002; Tee and Shankland 2014; Tee 2016).

This distinctive educational vision can be traced back to the thought of Said Nursi, who attempted in his own lifetime to establish a university teaching both the secular and the religious sciences in the eastern city of Van. This plan encountered opposition from the state and was never realised, but the philosophical seed for the conception of such a project is contained within the pages of the *Risale*. Gülen articulated this educational vision in the following way:

> As stated by Bediüzzaman, there is an understanding of education that sees the illumination of the mind in science and knowledge, and the light of the heart in faith and virtue. This understanding, which makes the student soar in the skies of humanity with these two wings and seek God's approval through service to others, has many things to offer. It rescues science from materialism, from being a factor that is as harmful as it is beneficial from both material and spiritual perspectives, and from being a lethal weapon. Such an understanding, in Einstein's words, will not allow religion to remain crippled. Nor will it allow religion to be perceived as cut off from intelligence, life, and scientific truth and as a fanatical institution that builds walls between individuals and nations.
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> ÜNAL AND WILLIAMS 1999: 318

The Izmir camps were initially all-male and were characterised by a culture of strict discipline. The inculcation of Islamic ethics is a crucial component within Gülen's educational vision, and typically takes place through the lived example of Gülenist educators and their demonstration of meritorious ethical practices (Vicini 2013). In Gülenist pedagogy, the role of the teacher is twofold: the transmission of scientific knowledge is one aspect of the teaching vocation, but of equal import is the informal mentoring of students in Islamic ethics and morality. The latter endeavour is not limited to the classroom setting but extends to extra-curricular time and space where close personal relationships

are formed between teachers and students, and—crucially—where new recruits to the GM are cultivated.

The importance of teachers in the Gülenist project cannot be overstated. These individuals are devoted followers of Gülen, who are deeply committed to their leader, their religion, and the project of *hizmet* (service), which is the central concept in Gülenist ideology. According to Gülen, working as a teacher in a secular school context, or indeed as an administrator in one of the GM's dialogue or media organisations, is a manifestation of religious service and carries with it the promise of reward (*sevap*) in the afterlife. This reformulated theology of religious duty underpins the entire GM project and explains the extraordinary hard work and commitment of the individuals employed at Gülen schools, and, to some extent, the success of the GM educational project. It is entirely possible—indeed likely—that this cohort of loyal supporters have had no knowledge of, or involvement in, the GM's political ambitions. The organisation is strictly hierarchical in structure, with chains of command stretching from Gülen down through a senior management cohort and beyond; to national, regional and local level leaders known as *abi*s (lit. 'big brother') and *abla*s ('big sister') (Hendrick 2013; Watmough and Öztürk 2018). Gülen and his most senior circle of acolytes take decisions regarding national and international strategy, and those further down the chains of transmission—the rank and file of loyal GM workers—are not necessarily party to them.

4.3   *Expansion of the GM in Turkey*

In the 1970s, Gülen's fledgling group of followers began to establish a presence outside Izmir and opened further summer camps as well as dormitories and after-school revision centres (*dershane*) in other Turkish cities. In the 1980s, changing circumstances in domestic politics and their impact on Turkish society at large had an important effect on the development and growth of the young movement. Its activities expanded dramatically during this decade following the military coup of 1980 and the new constitution of 1982, events which ushered in an era of economic liberalisation under the leadership of Prime Minister Turgut Özal.

The tenor of Turkish society shifted markedly in the 1980s and the previously hegemonic authority of the self-consciously secular state began to concede to counter-hegemonic voices, namely those speaking for Islam (Lord 2018; Mango 2004; Zurcher 2004). This followed a decade of severe unrest and social polarisation in the 1970s, during which violent clashes between right and left-wing factions were common and the loss of life had been considerable. The military coup of 1980, under the leadership of General (subsequently, President) Kenan Evren, sought to bring an end to this chaotic situation and did so by ushering in

an intellectual doctrine called the 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis'. Conscious at the time of internal currents of leftist dissent exacerbated by the keenly-felt threat of Soviet communism on Turkey's near borders, the 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' paved the way for Islam to re-emerge in the public sphere, and to be recognised as the key unifying feature of the Turkish nation. The size and scope of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), was increased during this period accordingly, and religious themes began to re-emerge in various areas of national life.

During this decade, therefore, followers of Gülen benefitted from new social as well as economic conditions that were highly favourable to the flourishing of their schooling project. Private 'Gülen schools' were established in cities all over Turkey during this decade, including Yamanlar Koleji in Izmir, Samanyolu Koleji in Ankara, and Fatih Koleji in Istanbul, schools which were considered the most prestigious and academically-successful until their forced closures—along with hundreds of other Gülen schools in Turkey—in 2016.

Followers of Gülen were also active in the 1980s in other fields. It was during this decade that they began to invest in business as well as media, interests which later represented a significant share of the movement's total financial and cultural assets.[4] In the 1990s, the group started to branch out overseas, primarily in the field of education but also in these other constituent areas. The first countries that the movement expanded into were the newly-independent states of Central Asia, where Gülen's followers capitalised on the emergence of new markets following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Özdalga 2007; Turam 2003). They did so to some extent in collaboration with the Turkish state which, under the prime ministerships of Özal and later Tansu Çiller, was itself seeking to build on the cultural ties between Turkey and the Central Asian peoples and to establish itself with a diplomatic and trading presence in that part of the world. The movement grew rapidly internationally during this time, and by the end of the 1990s, it had schools and business interests in approximately eighty countries around the world.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Gülen attracted support from a new generation of pious Anatolian businessmen who established themselves during this period as successful manufacturers and exporters. Known colloquially as the 'Anatolian Tigers', they emerged from religiously and socially conservative, medium-size towns such as Kayseri, Adana and Afyonkarahisar.

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4   The movement's major media corporation was Feza Gazetecilik (Feza Media Group), which owned the national daily newspaper *Zaman* and its English-language counterpart, *Today's Zaman*. Işık Sigorta was an insurance firm run by movement affiliates, and the Islamic lender Bank Asya was a Gülenist institution. All of these ventures are now closed.

These pious entrepreneurs successfully capitalised on newly liberal conditions instigated after the 1980 coup and joined a Turkish economic elite that had previously been largely off-limits to religiously-minded people in the Anatolian hinterland.

This new phenomenon in Turkish business and industry was, in turn, institutionalised. In 1971, TÜSIAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association), a staunchly secularist business confederation dedicated to the principles of Kemalism, had been established by members of Turkey's old industrial class. In 1990, MÜSIAD (Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) was founded by a new group of pious Turkish businessmen. It served as a religiously-minded alternative to TÜSIAD and has focused particularly on cultivating closer trade links with the Muslim countries of the Persian Gulf and the wider Middle East. Industrialists who were followers of Gülen later established their own Gülenist collective known as TUSKON (Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists in Turkey) in 2005. The Gülenists thus separated from MÜSIAD, and TUSKON became a transnational organisational umbrella under which the businesses affiliated with the Gülen Movement came together for regular trade summits and networking (Hendrick 2013).

4.4   *Commitment and Affiliation*

It is impossible to say precisely how many individuals are, or have been, involved in the Gülen Movement, although an extremely approximate estimation might put the number of close affiliates of Gülen in Turkey somewhere between 500,000 and 2 million people in the pre-2016 era. This ambiguity is partly because there are no official criteria for belonging; there are no initiation rites and no clear membership status. It is also partly because individuals may be involved in different capacities and with greatly differing degrees of commitment. The movement is characterised by a multi-tiered nexus of engagement with three degrees of involvement. At the heart of the movement is a group who are dedicated and loyal followers of Gülen, some of whom may reside with him and receive religious instruction on his ranch in Pennsylvania, but the majority of whom live elsewhere. These individuals are committed disciples and keen consumers of Gülen's teachings either through personal contact or from a distance through print and digital media. They usually work or study in a Gülenist institution of some kind and are fully dedicated in every aspect of their lives to the furtherance of the movement's vision. These individuals display Muslim piety through their lifestyle, personal conduct and dress. Women adopt the modest, *tesettür* style of clothing that is favoured by conservative, mainly urban women across Turkey, and men often favour smart suits

and ties. Inter-personal conduct is regulated by strict codes of Islamic morality and contact with the opposite sex is usually limited to verbal greetings and minimal interaction.

Individuals within this core group of movement affiliates express a strong commitment to the principle of dialogue and are consequently generally very open to engagement and conversation with outsiders. The public persona that is projected is extremely affable and helpful. The values of tolerance, hospitality and hard work which are lauded in the work of Gülen are physically embodied by this core group, who strive to apply those teachings on a practical level in their daily lives. The motivation for living in this way is described by Zehra,[5] a committed follower of Gülen who was a teacher at a (now closed) Gülen school in Turkey in 2013:

> You're not only Muslim when you're praying, you're Muslim when you're living—twenty-four hours a day. That's why I love him (Fethullah Gülen) so much, and that's why I'm working here in this school. Because it's something related to a sociable life, you know? I want to do something for this society. That's why I'm working here.

This core group of committed individuals like Zehra is surrounded in more peripheral roles by a contingent who might be best described as sympathisers (*onaylayanlar*), who are active yet more casual supporters of the Gülenist vision and the movement's activities. This group includes, significantly, businessmen of a pious disposition who lend critical financial support to the movement's projects. It also includes individuals who might attend, either regularly or sporadically, the events known as *sohbet* (lit: 'conversation') at which the books and sermons of Fethullah Gülen are studied and expounded by followers in conjunction with the *Risale* of Said Nursi and the Qurʾān.[6]

The largest and most peripheral stratum of participation in the broad Gülenist project is occupied by those who consume the products and services offered by Gülenist institutions, and who may or may not be cognisant of the connection of those products and services to the movement. These might include readers and viewers of the various print, digital and visual media channels run by the movement, clients in the banking and insurance sector, patients in Gülen-run medical facilities, and parents of children studying at

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5   Not her real name.
6   The *sohbet* tradition is not unique to the Gülen Movement, but is practiced in many Islamic groups in Turkey and elsewhere. The focus of discussion is usually the Qurʾān and Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. See Jassal 2013.

Gülen schools. Within Turkey, when the GM was still operational there, it is most likely that these consumers were aware to some extent of the Gülenist origins of these products, but outside Turkey it is possible that these parents and consumers have not necessarily been aware of the existence of Fethullah Gülen or such a thing as the Gülen Movement at all.

5   Gülen's Move to the US and Globalisation of the Movement

Partly as a culmination of domestic political shifts in the 1980s, the 1990s saw the rise to power in Turkey of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*), the precursor to the AKP, which was in office between 1996 and 1997 under the leadership of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan (White 2002). Erbakan and his government left office after a so-called 'postmodern coup' in 1997, which aimed to restore Turkey's constitutionally secular principles to the national order. Gülen had not openly lent his support to the Welfare Party, choosing to retain his distance from the political Islamism of Erbakan's group in much the same way that Nursi had kept his distance from Adnan Menderes and the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Partisi*) in the 1950s.[7] However, in the tense atmosphere of the anti-Islamist period which followed the 1997 coup, Gülen was also implicated. He was wanted by the authorities for his involvement in what were perceived as anti-secular activities of his own, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. In 1999, Gülen left Turkey for America. Later on, during the heyday of his unofficial alliance with the AKP government, the charges against him were lifted, yet he chose not to return, always enigmatically citing 'poor health' as his reason for preferring to remain in the US.

The decade following Gülen's move to America witnessed the movement's fuller global expansion, as well as the rapid development of its activities in the USA itself. While Turkey remained central, the movement now managed a sizeable portfolio of interests in the USA including a number of major dialogue platforms (namely, the Rumi Forum in Washington D.C. and the Gülen Institute in Houston) and somewhere in the region of 150 charter schools (Hendrick 2013). Between 2000 and 2013, it also expanded its global activities to an estimated 160 countries all around the world, ranging from Europe (Balcı 2018; Ozzano 2018; van Bruinessen 2014) to South America (Dumovich 2018),

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7   The political Islamist ideology of the Welfare Party inspired the development of Milli Görüş, a major Turkish diaspora movement quite distinctive from the global Gülen Movement, espousing a political vision for the future of Islam. The key founding members of the AKP were all previously members of the Welfare Party.

and Sub-Saharan Africa to South East Asia (Dohrn 2014; Saleem and Osman 2019) where it has run a global network of schools, medical facilities, dialogue platforms and business interests.

Since the coup attempt, elaborated on below, the Turkish government has made sustained attempts to force the closure of GM schools and businesses overseas. For the most part, it has been successful in those countries where Turkey wields cultural and/or economic influence (Azerbaijan was amongst the first to close all GM institutions, some of which have subsequently been taken over by the state), but generally less so elsewhere. The GM has mostly retained its freedom to operate in Western nations, which tend to be immune to Erdoğan's appeals for the GM to be punished and expelled.

6   The GM and Political Turmoil

The context for the GM's period of prosperity and wealth accumulation in the early 2000s was an unofficial alliance that it established with the AKP government. Following its landslide electoral victory in 2002, the AKP was able to command a single-party majority in the Turkish Parliament for the first time since 1983. Gülen commanded his followers to vote for the AKP, but their numbers were not enough to significantly impact its electoral successes: the GM is an elitist rather than a grassroots organisation, and its primary source of usefulness to the AKP did not rest in the *numbers* of voters it attracted. Rather, sharing a common commitment to religious conservatism and a desire to weaken the power of the Kemalist establishment, the GM was an essential ally to the government because it commanded a loyal support base scattered throughout the civil service, the police force and the judiciary. The AKP was therefore able to circumvent the separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary by calling on Gülenist allies for help. The clearest example of this was in the Ergenekon, Balyoz and Poyrazköy trials beginning in 2008, when Gülenist prosecutors brought falsified charges against over a hundred key secularists and government detractors.

While the falsification of evidence which underpinned these trials is now acknowledged, it was, remarkably, almost entirely unquestioned at the time (an exception being Jenkins 2009). The trials commanded broad support, not only from a conservative religious constituency but also from the nation's secular intellectuals, most of whom endorsed the narrative that calling the army generals to account, and reining in the political power of the military, paved the way for a new era of fuller democratisation in Turkey. Despite the dubious validity of the evidence presented, a popular narrative argued that by seeking

to downgrade the guardianship of the armed forces over the secular state, Turkey was coming into line with European Union requirements surrounding freedom of expression and the conditions associated with liberal democracy. In turn, there was much support in Europe and the US for these moves to apparently liberalise the Turkish political landscape. A Brookings Institution briefing from April 2012, for example, declared that "the AKP heralds democracy," and described its potential (widely discussed at the time) to serve as a successful model to Arab nations in the wake of the regional uprisings (Taşpınar 2012).

During the AKP's second term in office, tensions began to appear in public between Prime Minister Erdoğan and Fethullah Gülen. These tensions did not manifest themselves in the parliamentary context, for there were only very few Gülenists in cabinet positions. Rather, as tensions rose, they became apparent in broader power-struggles, as the movement exerted its considerable influence within the police force and the judiciary.

One of the earliest sources of conflict between the two men, and the subject of their first public disagreement, was in the realm of international affairs and concerned Turkey's relationship with Israel. Throughout the twentieth century, Turkey had been a rare regional ally of Israel and relations between the two countries had been generally strong. Since Prime Minister Erdoğan's rise to power this relationship has deteriorated severely. Various diplomatic spats between the two countries have escalated rapidly, fuelled in part by an ideologically-driven anti-Israeli rhetoric from the Prime Minister himself. The failure of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel has been accompanied by a surge in anti-Israeli sentiment in the general public. When Erdoğan publically stormed out of a debate on Gaza with Israeli President Shimon Peres at the Davos World Economic Forum in 2009, he was greeted as a returning hero on his arrival in Turkey, with cheering crowds waiting for him at the airport.

Gülen's stance on Israel is markedly different from Erdoğan's, and is shaped by his support for American neo-liberal values. The Prime Minister's public rhetoric against Israel sat uneasily with Gülen, and while he did not speak out after the Davos affair he did intervene in the Mavi Marmara incident of the following year. This incident, in which nine Turkish activists on a humanitarian flotilla were killed at sea by Israeli soldiers in their attempt to break the blockade on Gaza, led to the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Ankara and the suspension of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Gülen spoke out publically, suggesting that the confrontational approach of the activists had been misplaced and that the pursuit of a diplomatic path would have been preferable, both before the crisis and in its aftermath ("Fethullah Gülen Mavi Marmara Baskını Hakkında Görüşleri", 2013). His position brought him into direct conflict with the Prime Minister and

with public opinion more widely, and although there was only muted public response to an interview that he gave, it was a sign of further trouble to come.

The major deterioration in AKP-Gülenist relations came nearly two years later in February 2012, when Gülenist prosecuters sought the arrrest of Hakan Fidan, the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation (Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı, MIT) and a close personal ally of Erdoğan. Fidan was engaged at the time in secret, high level talks with Abdullah Öcalan, the highly-controversial leader of the Kurdish PKK who is serving a life prison sentence. The Kurdish issue is a subject on which the movement had differed ideologically from the AKP: being strongly informed by Turkish nationalist ideology, the movement was not a keen supporter of the government's tentative rapprochement with Kurdish separatists. Erdoğan was able to stop Fidan's arrest by issuing emergency legislation the following day, but the movement's attack on such a high-level AKP ally was perceived as a declaration of open warfare.

It was not long until the government hit back. In October of the same year, the Prime Minister announced his intention to forcibly close down the nation's *dershane* network, an area in which followers of Gülen were heavily invested ("Dersaneler Kapanacak" 2012). According to this new plan, *dershane*s across the country were to be turned into private schools, ostensibly because the government no longer wished to tolerate a parallel system of education provision. The inefficiencies and inequalities of the *dershane* system were not in doubt, but the sudden anouncement of their impending closure came as a shock to many. The Gülen Movement was amongst the foremost providers of *dershane* education in Turkey; large national franchises such as FEM, as well as innumerable smaller operations, provided a valuable source of income to the movement, and also acted as its primary recruitment ground. In threatening to close them down, the AKP government knew that it was targetting one of the major arteries of the movement's social and economic power. Gülen recognised the severity of the threat and offered to voluntarily turn the movement's *dershane*s over to state control, but the offer was rejected.

Against this backdrop of mounting tension, relations between the two groups failed irretrievably in 2013. In May and June of that year, the Gezi Park riots dominated the national news. Violent protests spread from a park in central Istanbul to Ankara, Izmir and many other major cities across Turkey. The riots began as a small-scale, environmental protest but soon became a national movement focused on opposition to Prime Minister Erdoğan. Erdoğan responded by ordering a harsh police crackdown, which resulted in multiple deaths and many serious injuries. It also triggered widespread criticism of his handling of the crisis in the international media (Letsch 2013).

The protesters were drawn from a wide range of social and religious backgrounds, including a group calling itself 'Anti-Capitalist Muslims', but were

dominated by individuals of a secular-leaning, educated and urban background. These are not the people of Gülen's core constituency, and he voiced his criticism of the protesters, declaring that their actions were indicative of 'a generation of moral and spiritual decay' ("323.Nağme" 2013). Gülen was also, however, openly critical of the AKP's response to the situation and publically condemned its excessive use of force to quash the riots. He was not alone in voicing criticism of Erdoğan's heavy-handed approach—indeed, various senior members of the AKP did as well, namely incumbent president Abdullah Gül and deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç. Nonetheless, Gülen's public criticism of the then-Prime Minister did nothing to improve already deteriortating relations between the two men.

Escalation of the mounting power-struggle between Gülen and his followers and Erdoğan's AKP came with the corruption scandal that erupted on 17 December 2013. The Gülenists played their best hand in revealing material that appeared to indicate endemic corruption within the AKP and embezzlement of public funds on a shocking scale. It was a bold move. The recordings that were leaked a few months later on 24 February 2014, purporting to show the Prime Minister and his son conspiring to secrete away huge sums of money, were their strongest blow. The veracity of the recordings was never clearly established, although many, including opposition politicians, believed that they were genuine (Nakhoul and Tattersall 2014). What is certain, however, is that the Gülenists obtained them through illegal means by the sustained wire-tapping of encrypted government telephone lines, and their intention was clearly to fatally destabalise Erdoğan's government. Nevertheless, while Erdoğan suffered some losses, he and his party still secured a majority in both local and presidential elections the following year: the Gülenists' plot had failed.

6.1   *The Coup Attempt of 15 July 2016 and its Aftermath*

Two and a half years later, amidst on-going hostilities between Erdoğan and the GM, the country was shaken to the core by a military coup attempt. A bloody and chaotic night saw aircraft from a rebel faction within the armed forces attack, amongst other targets, the Turkish intelligence headquarters and the parliament in Ankara, and an embattled President Erdoğan addressing the nation via the 'Facetime' app on his mobile phone, inviting his supporters to come out onto the streets to resist the military takeover—something which hundreds of them duly did (Nakhoul and Tattersall 2014). The frenzied scenes of pro-government civilians overrunning military tanks on the Bosphorus Bridge (since renamed *15 Temmuz Şehitler Köprüsü*, '15 July Martyrs' Bridge') became emblematic of the night, and the triumph of Erdoğan over the coup plotters.

Erdoğan made it clear immediately, during this address in the early hours of the morning and at the height of the crisis, that he held Fethullah Gülen and his followers to blame for the coup attempt, and for attempting to violently dismantle Turkey's democratic tradition. Over the course of the night, the government and its supporters repudiated the coup and regained control, but not without the loss of almost 300 lives. Subsequently, close to 150,000 individuals were either arrested or suspended from their duties across an extremely wide section of Turkish civil society, and a state of emergency was instigated, which was to continue for two years, until July 2018. Turkey continues to formally request the extradition of Gülen by the US authorities amid suggestions that the death penalty could be re-introduced as punishment for the plotters. To date, this extradition request has not been granted.

The coup attempt signalled a catastrophic end for the GM in Turkey as well as a catalyst for Erdoğan to consolidate his power, capitalising on a paranoid narrative that posits the president as defender of the nation in the face of threats to its security from within and without. Following a public referendum in 2017, Turkey will change from a parliamentary to presidential system with Erdoğan at the helm. The separation of powers has been almost entirely eroded, and executive power henceforth resides exclusively in the person of the president. Deteriorations in the economy in recent years have impacted somewhat on Erdoğan's popularity, a fact that was reflected in the local elections of April 2019, in which the opposition unexpectedly took control of the Ankara as well as Istanbul municipalities for the first time in over 25 years.[8] While this turn away from the AKP at a local level in Turkey's two major cities is significant, general elections are not scheduled until 2023 and it is unlikely that anything will loosen Erdoğan's grip on power at a national level in the near future. The ramifications for the GM are severe: the government in Turkey continues to seek out Gülenist sympathisers, real or imagined, for punishment.

7   Conclusion

The GM is now tasked with counting its considerable losses, adapting to its position in exile, and forging a new future for itself in the face of extreme hostility from the Turkish government. It has lost a considerable amount of financial wealth through the confiscations of the Turkish state since 2016, and there have been far fewer instances of the lavishly funded public engagement

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8   At the time of writing (April 2019), the outcome of the Istanbul ballot was being contested by the government.

activities that once characterised the global GM.[9] Many followers of Gülen are imprisoned in Turkey, and those who managed to flee the country are dependent on on-going asylum applications elsewhere. In the midst of these seismic changes, the internal integrity of the movement has suffered a blow: for the first time, GM insiders have spoken out critically about Fethullah Gülen and his leadership. Such criticisms had previously only been voiced by those who had left the GM, and they are indication of the potential for damaging internal divisions that could change the future course of the movement.

In sum, the post-coup GM is in many ways a fractured and diminished organisation. Yet at the same time, entirely typically of the movement, it appears to be adapting to these new circumstances and finding a way to capitalise on them. Adaptation to local circumstance and opportunity is one of the hallmarks of the GM. While the core activities of the movement have been the same in every location that it has been present in, the movement has nonetheless always endeavored to engage with the particular strategic opportunities of each place (Tee 2016: 119–139). In the West, and in the US especially, the strategic focus of the GM has always been public relations. It has run schools as well,[10] but an equally important focus of its activities in the US and UK has been the establishment of debating and public engagement organisations such as Rumi Forum in Washington DC and the Dialogue Society in London. In the post-coup era, its investment in building up a credible presence for itself in Western nations as a Muslim voice of dialogue and moderation is paying dividends. The GM retains a lobbying presence in DC and London, as well as in Brussels, and its fight back against President Erdoğan is taking place partly through English-language publications of its PR organisations.[11] Erdoğan has already lost almost all the international political support that he commanded in the first two terms of his office as PM, and is now regarded by western governments as a volatile and dangerous 'strongman' leader. The GM's ability

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9   For example, the GM funded and organised a number of large conferences in the UK and US in the first decade of this century, all of which were heavily subsidised and generously catered for. At a local level as well, spending seems to be diminished (Tee 2018).

10   In the UK, the GM has only ever had one school, North London Grammar school in Hendon (established 2014), previously Wisdom School in Haringey (established 2006). Elsewhere in the West, and especially in the US where the charter school system suits its ends, the GM's schools have been greater in number.

11   See, for example, the publications of the Centre for Hizmet Studies, particularly an article by Özcan Keleş of London's Dialogue Society, published two months after the coup (Keleş 2016). The article is a compelling but blinkered defense of Gülen and the GM. The GM's publishing houses in the US continue to produce hagiographic materials on Gülen, including most recently Jon Pahl's *Fethullah Gülen: A Life of Hizmet* (New Jersey: Blue Dome, 2019).

to communicate in excellent English and to circulate its self-representative accounts of the war with Erdoğan in the centers of western political power is very clearly advantageous.

The academic literature since 2016 has of course focused on the coup and its aftermath. The field has moved on rapidly in that time, and there is now a body of critical literature that is making inroads into analyzing the GM through sociological, anthropological, and political science lenses. This literature is well aware of the GM's complexities and shows none of the 'enchanted' tone of some of the work that came before. Simon Watmough and Ahmet Erdi Öztürk's article of 2018, which prefaced a special journal issue on the GM in post-coup exile, is an incisive and empirically informed analysis of the GM that focuses on its pursuit of power. This analytical approach is shared by Hakan Yavuz and Bayram Balcı, two long-time scholars of the GM, whose edited collection of 2018 analyses the movement's involvement in the coup and its aftermath. A broad scholarly consensus is emerging which sees the GM neither as the pacifist, dialogical voice for modern Islam that it presents itself as in the West, not as the *sharī'a*-minded terrorist or revolutionary movement that many see it as in Turkey, but rather as an organisation inspired by religion but in pursuit of worldly power, wealth and influence. The next chapter of the GM's life has yet to be written, but it is highly likely that its voracious appetite for such power, along with its successful negotiation of an amenable, post-9/11 political landscape in the West, will mean that, in spite of Erdoğan's best efforts, we are far from seeing the end of it yet.

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The Islam Nusantara Movement in Indonesia

Hisanori Kato

1 Introduction

Indonesia is known as a country of socio-cultural diversity with approximately 300 ethnic groups (*Kewarganegaraan* n.d.).[1] The spiritual life of Indonesians is also rather heterogeneous, as various religious traditions are deeply rooted in the fourth most populous nation in the world today (*World Population Review* 2020).[2] Despite the fact that 87.2 per cent of the total population embraces the faith of Islam (*Badan Pusat Statistik* 2010), chronology shows that non-Islamic traditions were dominant in the Indonesian archipelago prior to the advent of Islam. The kings of a maritime empire called Srivijaya which flourished in southern Sumatra between the seventh and thirteenth centuries (Legge 1964: 5–6), for instance, adopted Buddhism and contributed to cultural interchanges among Southeast Asia, South Asia, and East Asia (Laffan 2011: 4). We also know that Borobudur, which is one of the oldest and largest single Buddhist monuments in the world, was built by the Sailendra Kingdom, which was dominant in Central Java in the eighth century (Laffan 2011: 28). Prambanan temples in Central Java were built by an ancient Hindu kingdom called Old Mataram in the tenth century, and the eastern island of Bali, a famous tourist destination today, is also known as the homeland of the Indonesian version of Hinduism.

Apart from the organised religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, the local traditions and cultures have also profoundly exerted their influence over the spiritual life of Indonesians. This tendency is most noticeable in Java, which is the most populated island in the country. The customary traditions of Javanese cultures, including communal religious meals, traditional medicine, and the performance of aristocratic rituals in the residence of Sultan, are co-related with Islam (Woodward 2011: 5). Some argue that Islam in Indonesia is syncretic and is by no means monolithic. Clifford Geertz, for example, stated

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2   The Indonesian government officially recognises six religions, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Confucianism.

that Indonesian Islam is "multi-voiced" and takes "multi-forms" and "not all of them Koranic, and whatever it brought to the sprawling archipelago it was not uniformity" (Geertz 1968: 12).[3]

Islam has been a primary socio-political force in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. When drafting a new constitution in the post-World War II era, there was a serious debate in Indonesia over the enforcement of *sharīʿa* or *syariah*,[4] or Islamic law (Ricklefs 1993: 209–211). The country eventually opted for republicanism with the leadership of Sukarno, the first President of the Republic of Indonesia. However, that political choice has created a division among the *umma* or *umat*,[5] (the Islamic community) between those wishing to realise a more religiously rigid society with the implementation of *syariah* and those upholding secular nationalism wherein faith is an individual matter. The latter group, nonetheless, has never abandoned the commitment to Islam and has emphasised its piousness. This religious stratum tends to be supportive of integrating indigenous Indonesian culture and local tradition into Islam. Nahdlatul Ulama,[6] the largest Islamic organisation in the country (popularly known as NU), best represents this religious orientation and promotes this way of thinking as 'Islam Nusantara'. While NU is branded as 'traditionalist' and is less hesitant to adopt local religious practices of Indonesia, Muhammadiyah—the second largest Islamic organisation, established by Ahmad Dahlan in 1912—is regarded as 'modernist'. Muhammadiyah is more religiously rigid, and intends to bring about a more 'authentic' version of Islam than the syncretic form which has traditionally proliferated in Indonesia.

The establishment of NU was initiated by several Muslim scholars called *kiai*, such as Hasyim Asy'ari. It is a common practice for *kiai* to own Islamic boarding schools or *pesantren*, which has contributed to the organisational expansion of NU since its establishment. NU has exerted much political and cultural influence in Indonesian society. For example, Partai Nahdlatul Ulama, a political wing of NU, secured its second position in the parliamentary election in 1971 after President Suharto's powerful Golkar group. We should also remember that the members of NU played a significant role in the annihilation of the communist party of Indonesia (PKI) after the 1965 aborted *coup d'etat*.

Then chairperson of NU in the 1990s, Abdurrahaman Wahid, popularly known as Gus Dur, was a crucial figure in the process of transforming politically

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3   However, there is also an argument that some Javanese cultures such as *selametan*, which Geertz regarded as animistic, are also linked with authentic Islamic teachings (Woodward 2011: Chapter 3).

4   In Indonesia, *sharīʿa* is usually spelled as *syariah*.

5   In Indonesia, *umma* is usually spelled as *umat*.

6   NU was established by some religious scholars, *ʿulamāʾ*, in 1926.

oppressed Indonesia into a more democratic society after the fall of Suharto in 1998. Gus Dur was elected as the fourth president of the Republic in 1999 and implemented policies that promoted cultural diversity in the nation. He lifted the prohibition against public displays of Chinese culture such as the dragon dance and Chinese characters after he took office. Religious as well as cultural diversity was promoted by Gus Dur, and he was termed *guru bangsa* or the 'teacher of the country'. NU also has been regarded as a safeguard of *kebin-nekaan* (diversity) in Indonesia.

The NU drew widespread attention in August 2015 when it hosted its national congress in the Eastern Javanese town of Jombang with the theme of Islam Nusantara for Indonesia and the World (*International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders* n.d.). NU intended to clarify Islam Nusantara's uniqueness by linking it with the locality found in the archipelago, which differentiates it from Arab-Islamic culture, and to promote tolerant and moderate attitudes for Muslims along with a nationalist message (*International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders* n.d.).

This chapter will explore the nature and characteristics of the Islam Nusantara movement. This work contributes to deepening understanding of how the ideas of authenticity in Islam and local culture mutually interact. An attempt to answer these questions can bring about a better comprehension of the role of religion in Indonesian society.

2   Religion as Organism

As to whether the authenticity of religion remains unchanged regardless of the alteration of the social environment where a religion exists remains a pertinent question; does a religion itself adjust to the newfangled social, economic, political, and historical situation? In relation to this query, we could ask whether the Buddhism taught by Siddhartha Gautama about 2,500 years ago in India can be the same Buddhism in Japan of the present day or whether the Christianity practiced clandestinely by Japanese peasants in the early 1600s can be the same religion as Jesus Christ conveyed to the people of Galilee (Endo 2016)?

By the same token, we are inquisitive about the authenticity of Islam in Indonesia, namely, as to whether it shares the same bearings with Islam in the Middle East. As Clifford Geertz has pointed out, Islam in Indonesia seems to exhibit its noticeable character as a result of socio-cultural encounters with local traditions (Geertz 1971: 12). At minimum, this suggests that Islam has been influenced by its surroundings and has manifested a unique outlook, which is

non-identical with the original form of the religion. However, this is not merely relevant to Islam in Indonesia but is also pertinent to any other religion that spans a significant time period.

For example, Japanese Buddhism, which has flourished with various schools since it was introduced in the sixth century, created its unique syncretic notion with Shinto (Eisenstadt 1996: 224). Shusaku Endo also points out that the long-standing tradition of Japanese ancestor worship contributed to the preservation of the faith of Japanese Christians in the time of the Edo Period when Christianity was forbidden (Endo 2016: 135). These facts suggest that the followers of the same religion recurrently exhibit contending attitudes and practices depending on where and when they exist.

In fact, the homogenisation of indigenous traditional cultures and original religion is ubiquitous, and the locality becomes a part of the religion. Islam in Indonesia is no stranger to this phenomenon. Although egalitarianism is cherished in Islam, the approbation of Muslims towards venerated religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ* or *kiai*) is habitually observed in Indonesia. This specific attitude of Muslims can be found in Islamic boarding schools called *pesantren*, which are operated by *kiai* and *ʿulamāʾ* who belong to NU. Orthodox Muslim (*santri*) students at *pesantren* pay much respect to their teachers and treat them as touched by the divine. This attitude undoubtedly is derived from the appreciation of seniority in Indonesian society that has existed for a long period of time.

Indonesian Muslims commonly pay a visit to the family grave (*ziarah*, Arab. *ziyārāt*), to recite the Qurʾān jointly (*tahlilan*, Arab. *tahlīl*), and to practice homecoming (*mudik*) in the time of Idul Fitri (Arab. ʿĪd al-Fiṭr) following Ramadan. The veneration of saints is another popular religious routine among Indonesian Muslims. The grave of Mbk Priok, which is one of the most famous and popular sites for saint worship in Indonesia, is located in the northern part of Jakarta. Habib Ali, the caretaker of the site and the self-claimed descendant of Mbk Priok, is popular with visitors and attracts respect from pilgrims. The followers of Habib Ali even believe that he possesses supernatural power to bring about miracles. When Habib Ali recites the Qurʾān, the pilgrims put bottled water in front of him, believing that the water will become holy and be able to cure diseases (Kato 2012: 37–49).

None of these religious practices, in the eyes of Salafist-oriented fundamentalist Muslims, are in accordance with the authentic teachings of Islam. This discrepancy creates a wide division between those who are less hesitant to accept the locally influenced version of Islam and those who are firmly determined to maintain the theological authenticity of Islam, disregarding any non-Islamic element in their behaviours.

There appears to be two dominant approaches within the Islamic community or *umat* in Indonesia, that is, theologically rigid Muslims and theologically moderate Muslims. The primary purpose of the former would be to implement *syariah* and to follow the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, the collection of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad. In other words, their absolute objective is to bring about a precise similitude between their modern lives and that which was the case in the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, struggling to create a so-called 'Islamic society' which has not yet been realised. The latter, on the other hand, are more heedful to the changes of the socio-cultural situation; thus, they are more able to adjust to local peculiarities. It is possible to say that they reside in a so-called 'Muslim society', where the adjustability of local traditions with human reasoning is more appreciated (Katakura 1991; Kato 2017a).

The essence of Islamic society is theological genuineness or what we can simply call 'religion', while the substance of Muslim society is anything characterised as religious or 'religiosity'. This classification is useful to understand the substance of *Pancasila*, or the five ideological principles of the Republic of Indonesia as stated in the constitution, which all citizens should follow. *Pancasila* is stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as follows: Belief in One and Only God; just and civilised humanity; the unity of Indonesia; democratic life led by wisdom of thoughts in deliberation amongst representatives of the people; and achieving social justice for all the people of Indonesia.

In the time of the establishment of the Republic, the national leaders set *Yang Maha Esa*, or the One and Only God, as the first principle without alluding to Allāh explicitly on the grounds that Indonesia is a multi-religious nation. At the time of the drafting of the Constitution in 1945, the national leaders decided to take a secular nationalist political formation on religiosity through the principle of *Yang Maha Esa*. Obviously, this rather politically compromised state ideology clashes with the basic principle of Islamic teachings that enforces *syariah* and upholds *tauhid* (Arab. *tawḥīd*), the singularity of Allāh. It was therefore understandable that those who struggle for realising an 'Islamic society' reject *Pancasila*.

Presumably, Islam *qua* religion itself consists of Islamic society or religion and Muslim society or religiosity. As the latter presents new-fashioned religious practices, influenced by social, historical, geographical, economic, political, and cultural locality, religion itself would alter its shape as an organism (Kato 2012). However, this does not necessarily mean that the residents of Islamic society and Muslim society unequivocally cling to their own domains; rather, they occasionally cross the boundary of each sphere and show complex religious attitudes. The residents of Muslim society, for example, believe that

they are religiously authentic enough to be called devout Muslims and never dream that they are being unorthodox Muslims. Jeremy Menchik (2016: 72) points out this complexity in Muslims:

> Godly nationalists feel that belief in God is a civic virtue that accrues both individual and social benefits. For individuals, belief in God brings an enlightened understanding of the world that is preferable to premodern beliefs such as animism, heterodox beliefs, or secular worldviews.

This suggests that the components of religion or Islam are rather complex, and Muslims, especially the people of Muslim society, are by no means single-minded. The object of our study in this chapter, the Islam Nusantara movement, can be categorised as one of the examples of the religiosity of Islam in that the residents of Muslim society adopt local traditions in order to affirm their 'piousness' and commitment to their own faith. At the same time, the Islam Nusantara movement will be rejected by those who value the realisation of a religiously conservative and 'purely' Islamic society.

The substance of religion will be also explored. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown suggested that an efficient means to understand religion is to examine the "social function of religions" (Radcliffe-Brown 1965: 154). With this idea in mind, the substance of the Islam Nusantara movement and the complex mind of the followers of Islam Nusantara will be explored in the following part of the chapter.

3   Overview of Islam Nusantara

'Nusantara' is the combination of two ancient Javanese words, *nusa* and *antara*, which mean 'islands' and 'opposite' or 'across from' respectively (Baso 2017: 2). Nusantara in fact includes Sumatra, Java, the Sunda Islands, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Maluku, and West Papua (Irian Jaya) of current Indonesian territory, as well as other parts of Southeast Asian regions, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and the southern Philippines (Baso 2017: 2–3). The defining characteristic of Islam Nusantara is its appreciation of the diversity of local cultures with regional languages and varying customs in these areas.

However, the initiator of Islam Nusantara, NU, obviously emphasises the linkage between Islam and Indonesian native cultures. Azis Anwar Fachrudin explains that NU's traditions are deeply connected with religious rituals, such as joint prayer (*tahlilan*) and communal meals (*selametan*) (Fachrudin 2015). In addition to the preservation of the local religious rituals, the unity of Indonesia is another key ideological pillar in the movement. The leader of NU, Aqil Siradj,

explicitly stated that "we start from Islam Nusantara and maintain the unity of Republic of Indonesia, the local culture, and the richness of nature" (*Islam Nusantara* n.d.).

This also does not mean that Islam Nusantara is a newly-born Indonesian version of Islamic teachings (Hasyim 2018: 8). The authenticity of Islam is never abandoned by the advocates of the Islam Nusantara movement. Some believe that Indonesian tradition never excluded the orthodoxy of Islam. Azyumardi Azra, for example, lists three major influences in Islam Nusantara: the orthodox Sunnī theology of al-Ashʿarī or *Asy'ariyah;* the judicature of al-Shāfiʿī, and other judicial schools of the Sunnī tradition; and the Ṣūfism of the Persian mystic al-Ghazālī (Azra 2015: 170).

Some also argue that the Islam that spread over the archipelago of Indonesia has a profound relation with the Prophet Muḥammad. Ahmad Baso states that the descendants of the Prophet, called *sayyids* or *asyrafs*, directly contributed to the spread of Islam over the Southeast Asian region, including the Indonesian islands (Baso 2017: 10). It is a common understanding that the nine saints known as *wali songo* (*sanga*) played an important role for the Islamisation of Java (Laffan 2011: 8). According to Baso, these *wali songo*, who were the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad, constructed the foundation of Islam Nusantara (Baso 2017: 27–30). He cited the words of one of the *wali songo* to explain the dialectical development of Islam as "borrowing elements from the old culture to empower and enrich the new; let the old customs become the container and the elements of faith the contents" (Baso 2017: 30). Such statements clearly work to validate Islam Nusantara. This resonates with the view presented by Abudurrahman Wahid, a former leader of NU, who has said that Islam in Indonesia is experiencing an "encounter" with history and "manifests" Islam uniquely, but never forsaking its core teachings (Wahid 2015: 35).

NU hosted an international conference called the International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders (ISOMIL) to promote Islam Nusantara in May 2016. As the outcome of ISOMIL, NU issued a declaration on Islam Nusantara. In addition to the advocacy of patriotism that was expressed by its leader Aquil Siradj in February 2016, there are several points that should be heeded from the declaration: the affinity with the core teachings of Islam; peaceful coexistence with other religions without overpowering them; the rejection of extremism; and the affirmation of being Sunnī Muslim (*Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah*) (*International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders* n.d.: 51–52).

With regard to the first, the declaration clearly states that the inherited nature of Islam Nusantara never conflicts with Islamic teachings, such as "*tawassuth* [Arab. *tawassul*, following the middle path, i.e., the path of

moderation], *tawaazun* [*tawāzun*, balance; harmony], *tasaamuh* [*tasāmuḥ*, gentle and loving rather than harsh and violent behaviour, i.e., tolerance rather than compulsion], and *itidaal* [*i'tidāl*, justice]" (*International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders* n.d.: 51), which also corresponds with Indonesian, especially Javanese, cultural tradition. The declaration also vehemently warns against the emergence of extremism, which would potentially bring about terrorist acts. Some even believe that Islam Nusantara is a reaction to the rise of radicalism in Indonesia.[7]

4 Political Support

Not only does the Islam Nusantara movement have religious meaning, but it also has political significance. President Joko Widodo, who was seeking re-election for another term in 2019, ardently joined the campaign of the Islam Nusantara movement in the hope that he would obtain support from the moderate Muslim constituency, especially from a vast number of NU followers.[8] He has received criticism from more hard-line Muslims, alleging that he and his family are affiliated with communism.[9] It seems that Joko Widodo was eager to maintain his image as a devout and moderate Muslim by supporting NU's Islam Nusantara.

President Joko Widodo attended the religious gathering held in the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, which is the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia, at the time of Islamic fasting month of Ramadan in June 2015. He reiterated the validity of Islam Nusantara in his speech in front of approximately 10,000 attendants, saying that "Thank God, we are Islam Nusantara that is filled with *santun* (well-mannered people), *tata karma* (ordered people), and full *toleransi* (tolerance)" (*NU Online* 2015). On another occasion, President Joko Widodo praised NU's effort to promote a peaceful and tolerant Islam in culturally and ethnically diverse Indonesia at the 92nd commemoration ceremony of NU's establishment in February 2018.

President Joko Widodo also showed his commitment to safeguarding religious tolerance characterised by Islam Nusantara by building a monument in the Sumatran town of Barus, where bearers of Islam from the Middle East arrived at the dawn of Islamic history in Indonesia. In addition, he issued a

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7 Interview with the author, Jakarta, 22 March 2018.
8 NU itself declares that their membership is 91,200,000, that is, 36.5% of the total population in Indonesia, citing the survey conducted by LSI in 2013.
9 Interview with the author, Jakarta, 9 March 2018.

presidential decree that instituted the day of *Hari Santri Nasional* or the National Day of Devout Muslims.[10] The Islam Nusantara Movement has gained momentum by the political stratagems of President Joko Widodo, who intends to emphasise his devout but moderate leadership to eliminate the Islamic religious fanaticism that potentially threatens the stability of the country.

5   Rejection of Islam Nusantara

While Islam Nusantara has been endorsed by the government of the Republic of Indonesia, some criticism has been directed towards this NU-led Islamic movement. H.A. Fallah, who is active in campaigning for the implementation of *syariah* and was once imprisoned in relation to his involvement in a terrorist scheme, has questioned the legitimacy of Islam Nusantara, saying that Islam Nusantara promotes radicalism as it creates a sectarian sentiment.[11] He points out that the substance of the Islam Nusantara movement is merely anti-Wahhābist, and this binary religious setting would widen the division that has already existed in the *umat* in Indonesia.[12]

He in fact has no hesitation to adopt cultural elements in Islamic life, such as wearing Indonesian traditional clothes called *batik*; however, he never accepts any metamorphosis relating to *akidah* [ʿaqīdah], or Islamic faith. For example, he believes the rituals in the time of *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) should remain as they have been, referring to some Indonesians who (illegitimately, he thinks) chanted *Pancasila* (the five principles of the Republic of Indonesia) at the time of *ḥajj*.[13] By the same token, Fallah believes that *selametan*, which has the aura of the existence of a deity other than Allāh, should never be allowed.

Another high-profile Muslim leader, Abdul Rohim, who serves as one of the executives of the hard-line Islamic organisation Jammah Ansharusy Shariah (JAS), also accuses 'moderate Muslims' who advocate Islam Nusantara as forcing fellow Muslims to deviate from the correct path of Islam.[14] Rohim emphasises that the one of the essentials of the Islamic faith is to respect all

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10   22 October is set as *Hari Santri*, as NU once declared *jihād* on 22 October 1945 against the Dutch who intended to recolonise Indonesia after World War II. Presidential Decree no. 22/2015 enacted *Hari Santri*, at https://ketemulagi.com/sejarah-hari-santri-nasional -22-oktober/, accessed 27/05/2018.

11   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 6 March 2018.

12   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 6 March 2018.

13   See their deeds on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpWH_AfKWhc. Accessed 27/03/ 2018.

14   Interview with the author, Solo, 18 March 2018.

creatures including non-Muslims, citing the verse 21 of *al-Anbya* in the Qur'ān, which reads "We have sent you forth but as a blessing to mankind." However, the concept of being tolerant to other faiths, for Rohim, is different from that of moderate Muslims who advocate Islam Nusantara. He believes Muslims should never lose the essentials of Islamic faith, such as *tauhid* (the oneness of Allāh), while he firmly maintains they should respect the followers of other faiths. Therefore, he never forces the Islamic faith on non-believers but refuses to utter, for example, 'Merry Christmas' to Christians.[15]

Rohim explains that the position of Islam is invariably higher than culture, although cultural expressions in the attitude of Muslims are permissible.[16] Muslim women in Indonesia are still allowed to wear Indonesian *jilbab* rather than Middle Eastern *niqāb*.[17] Nonetheless, any practice relating to rituals and belief, for Rohim, should be based on the orthodoxy of Islam. Thus, *tahlīl*, for example, cannot be accepted by Rohim, as it was 'created' by NU followers in Indonesia.[18]

Ismail Yusanto, who is a leader of the banned Islamic organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, also shares similar views with both Fallah and Rohim on Islam Nusantara. According to Yusanto, there should be no "Islam Nusantara" but "Islam in Nusantara," as Islam should be only one.[19] Yusanto also believes that no reconciliation between so-called moderate Muslims and fundamentalist Muslims under the leadership of Joko Widodo is possible, as the social division in the country has been widened by him after the controversial Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017 (Kato 2017b).

The official approval of Islam Nusantara by President Joko Widodo might have created the notion that there exists different Islams: the 'right' Islam, that is, Islam Nusantara, and the 'wrong' Islam, whatever Islam exists outside of Islam Nusantara. Needless to say, no terrorist acts encouraged by fanatical ideology should be justified; however, this does not necessarily mean that all Muslims who reject Islam Nusantara are the perpetrators or advocates of terrorism. While the Islam Nusantara movement has the potential to be an efficient political tool for Joko Widodo, there is the possibility that it will contribute to the creation of more serious ideological conflicts in *umat* in Indonesia in the times to come.

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15   Interview with the author, Solo, 18 March 2018.
16   Interview with the author, Solo, 18 March 2018.
17   Both *jilbab* and *niqāb* are headscarfs for Muslim women. *Jilbab* merely covers the head, and *niqāb* covers the head and face.
18   Interview with the author, Solo, 18 March 2018.
19   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 9 March 2018.

6   NU and Modernity

As has been mentioned, NU is an Islamic organisation that is concilia-
tory to indigenous culture, and it was established "to defend the interests of
Traditionalism" (Ricklefs 1993: 19). On the other hand, there was an Islamic
reform movement in the early twentieth century in Indonesia, which resulted
in the establishment of the modernist organisation Muhammadiyah in 1912
(Ricklefs 1993: 19). The aim of this modernist Muhammadiyah is to bring back
the authenticity of Islam, which corresponds with the Qurʾān and ḥadīth along
with the encouragement of utilising ijtihād, or human reasoning (Ricklefs 1993:
19). Both NU and Muhammadiyah have played an important role not only in
Islamic life but also in political and social life in Indonesia throughout its mod-
ern history. In the time of the fall of President Suharto in 1998, the leaders
of both organisations, that is, Abdurrahman Wahid of NU and Amien Rais of
Muhammadiyah, exercised a tremendous amount of influence over the one
of the greatest social changes in Indonesia that took place after the end of
Suharto's era, called reformasi or reformation (Aspinall 2005).

These two organisations in some respect have had a rivalry, if not mutual
hatred, since their establishment. When NU started to campaign for Islam
Nusantara publicly in 2015, Muhammadiyah also launched a similar Islamic
movement called 'Islam Berkumajuan', which means 'Progressive Islam'. The
substance of Islam Berkemajuan is explained by its leader as "Islam that is
adaptive and accommodative to reconcile with [the] dynamic era" (Sahal and
Aziz 2015: 26). Some note that the difference between Islam Nusantara and
Islam Berkemajuan is that the former emphasises locality with Islam, as if
the outfit is Indonesia but the body is Islam, while the latter focuses more on
globalisation.[20]

However, A. Abdullah, a respected Muslim scholar, finds few differences in
the motivation of these movements, as he believes that they merely 're-brand'
each organisation.[21] In Abudullah's reckoning, as social change proceeds, NU is
required to be more responsive to modernity, and Muhammadiyah becomes
more attentive to local culture. In this regard, the origin of NU's Islam Nusantara
movement could be traced in its vying with Muhammadiyah.

We in fact find NU's effort to bring more modern approaches into their
activities, including the campaign of Islam Nusantara. NU introduced an
online information technology (IT) called NU-Online for the first time in 2004.

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20   This comment was made by Muhammadiyah's young intellectual Najib Burhani (cited in
       Sahal and Aziz 2015: 26).
21   Interview with the author, Yogyakarta, 16 March 2018.

IT-related jargon was so unknown to NU members in rural areas in the early 2000s; even the word 'Internet' was mistaken as *internit*, which means 'plasterboard' in Indonesian.[22] However, NU has rapidly developed its cyber system for the last twenty years with the creation of NU-Online, an official website for the propagation division of NU, and Islam Nusantara.com in order to accomplish their religious mission.

Syaifullah Amin, the head of NU's propagation division, explains that NU needs to reach out to members of every social stratum nationwide. Although the major component of NU's constituency reside in rural areas, NU also intends to extend its religious message to urban young people, who, unlike the lower-educated people in rural areas, do not hesitate or face obstacles when employing modern IT for communication.[23] This strategy has become more urgent since 2010 when ultra-religious conservatism has become more apparent in Indonesian society.[24] In fact, ideas of extremism that can potentially bring about acts of terrorism have been circulated through the internet globally. In response to this, NU, for example, has created an application for smart phones called *NUTIZEN*, which the users can access not only for watching commercial television or shopping but also for the lectures on Islam Nusantara and moderate Islam delivered by members of the NU *'ulamā'*.

7   Conventional Approach

While NU has adopted modern digital technology for their propagation strategy, a more conventional approach has never been dismissed. NU is consistently active in their missionary work with the conventional verbal method. For example, a local branch of NU in Yogyakarta offers community based religious classes to rural workers every fortnight. On 15 March 2018, Fatya, a women's organisation of NU in Yogyakarta, organised a class for female agricultural workers in the evening. The venue was one of the participants' primitive house, and twenty middle-aged women attended the class.

Khotimatul Husna, a leader of Fatya in Yogyakarta, presided over the class which was about the Islamic faith, emphasising the need of reverence to Allāh and obedience to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. After the class, they conducted *tahlīl* and had a meal together. According to the participants, the major objective in attending the class was to obtain 'knowledge'. They also explained that there

22   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 8 March 2018.
23   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 8 March 2018.
24   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 8 March 2018.

was one non-Muslim family in the village, and that their communication and socialisation with non-Muslim families remain firmly amicable. They state that the non-Muslim family commonly joins the funerals of fellow villagers, and mutual help takes place without exception in times of natural disaster.[25] Khotimatul believes that this type of conventional and direct method is vital in order for the villagers to learn the essentials of Islam, as they hesitate to access modern cyber technology.

NU's conventional approach to their followers is employed not only in rural areas but also in urban areas. The propagation division of NU offers a special course to potential community leaders who convey the religious ideas upheld by NU, including Islam Nusantara to the members of their community. The course is called Pelatian Kadar Dakwa'h (PKD) or Practice for the Followers of the Faith, and it runs twice a week for six months at the headquarters in Jakarta. On 20 March 2018, a PKD session was held and was attended by twenty-two male and eight female members of NU. Their occupation and their stage of life varied: there were university and high school students, teachers, food sellers, community leaders, and mosque staff. The class was led by a religious expert, and he provided the participants with rather practical advice for efficient public speaking and choice of topics. The participants were required to prepare for their speech and conduct their session in front of all the participants and the teacher.

Four participants had a chance to present their own speech during the one-and-a-half-hour session. The theme of their speeches included the issue of self-achievement through religion, the importance of tolerance, polygamy, and general ideas on Islam in life. The atmosphere of the class was amicable, and the participants seemed to be enthusiastic about their activities. The youngest participant was a seventeen-year-old high school male student, and he expressed his impressions on the course as follows.

> I was encouraged by my parents who had joined the class before to attend the course. I have no non-Muslim friends and am not sure if I am willing to say 'Merry Christmas' to non-Muslims.[26]

Another participant, a forty-seven-year old community leader also explained his motivation to join the course.

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25   Discussion with the participants in Bantul, 15 March 2018.
26   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 10 March 2018.

> I wanted to get the knowledge. Now I know that mutual respect (between Muslim and non-Muslim) is important. We (Muslims) should let non-Muslims be alone. I myself am not really close to non-Muslims. We should not disturb one another. I do not utter 'Merry Christmas' to non-Muslims. I like to say, '*Selamat*' (Happy).[27]

These comments from the participants of PKD suggest that the essential idea of a harmonious relationship with non-Muslims, for them at least, does not necessarily mean to mingle with non-Muslims; rather, it is to maintain their own community, independent and undisturbed. This attitude echoes with the ideas of Rohim who is regarded as a hard-line, Muslim who vehemently rejects the Islam Nusantara movement. For Rohim, Islam offers no ideology to reject *kuffār* (unbelievers), as long as they do not disturb Muslims, while maintaining the absolute superiority of Islam to other faiths.[28]

8   Ambivalence in Islam Nusantara

Generally speaking, the word 'tolerance' pertains to manifold concepts. However, as far as Islam Nusantara is concerned, there seems to be two major domains of the concept of tolerance: tolerance towards local culture in terms of religious rituals; and tolerance towards minority groups. In relation to the former tolerance, we find clear statements from the advocates of Islam Nusantara. Muhammadun, one of the executives of the NU branch in Yogyakarta, decidedly asserts that the religious rituals in Java should be accepted as Islam in order to complete Islam in Indonesia, which they call Islam Nusantara.[29] He mentioned several rituals as examples, including *kenduren* or *tahlil* (joint prayer), *sekaten* (the procession of the day of Muḥammad's birthday), *sedekah bumi* (offering food to the deity in land and sea), and the tradition in Kudus in Java, where they use buffalo as a sacrifice to Allāh rather than a goat.[30]

Ahmad Ishomuddin, a high-profile NU leader, also explains that there should be tolerance in relation to *adat*, or custom. For example, he finds no obstacle for shaking hands with women where that specific custom is accepted, and it is also permissible for a Muslim to conduct *ziarah*, or visit a grave, and make

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27   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 10 March 2018.
28   Interviews with the author, Solo, 30 December 2017 and 18 March 2018.
29   Interview with the author, Bantul, 15 March 2018.
30   Interview with the author, Bantul, 15 March 2018.

prayers to Allāh through a mediator. He presents more concrete examples of the relationship between Islam and local *adat* in the following:

> Islam should accommodate with local culture and custom [*adat*] as we have the concept that Islam should be in accordance with the place and the time [*shalihun li kulli zamanin wa makanin*]. For example, the share of women's inheritance can be greater in a matrilineal society, though Islamic *syariah* acknowledges the greater share for men. It is also fine that Muslims and non-Muslims are buried in the same complex.[31]

Ishomuddin insists that the essential concepts of Islam Nusantara and the authentic teachings of Islam mutually correspond, and he mentions typical characteristics of the common values of both as follows: *tasaamuh* (tolerance); *itidaal* (justice), *tawaazun* (balance), *tawassuth* (moderateness); and *tasyawur* (valuing discussion).[32] Ishomuddin emphasises the core idea of Islam, that is, *Islam rahmatan lil alamin* or 'Islam as a blessing for all'. Yet, one of the NU executives in fact objected to a view of Ishomuddin's at a meeting with the author, saying that the burial site of Muslims should be separated from that of non-Muslims, which suggests that Islam Nusantara has not yet offered a unanimous view on 'tolerance'.

Nonetheless, it is true that the concept of tolerance is recurrently emphasised in the movement of Islam Nusantara, while hard-line Muslims, including Rohim, clearly elaborate the Islamic tenet on the concept of tolerance. However, the advocates of the Islam Nusantara movement themselves seem to have exhibited a rather abstract attitude towards tolerance compared to fundamentalists, especially on the issues relating to minorities, including the historically persecuted Aḥmadiyya (or Ahmadiyah)[33] movement, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. With regard to the religious minority of Shīʻa, NU is invariably clear that Sunnī Islam is their tenet, and Islam Nusantara is for the Sunnī community (*Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaʻah*) worldwide; however, Islam Nusantara proponents almost unanimously agreed that Sunnī and Shīʻa Muslims should coexist in a harmonious manner. Nonetheless, the

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31   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 7 March 2018.
32   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 7 March 2018. This is also mentioned in *International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders* (*ISOMIL*) *& Deklarasi Nahdlatul Ulama*, 51.
33   Ahmadiyah was established by Punjabi Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad in northern India at the end of nineteenth century. There are two major schools: *Lahore*, which regards Aḥmad as a "renewer" of Islam; and *Qadian*, which takes Aḥmad as the last Prophet (Ricklefs 2012: 48).

degree and extent of tolerance in Islam Nusantara varies depending on individual understandings rather than an institutional definition.

For example, some young NU activists who actively campaign on behalf of Islam Nusantara do believe that the existence of Aḥmadiyya can be accepted, and the followers of Aḥmadiyya can be regarded as Muslims, although their concept of Muḥammad is deemed wrong.[34] On the other hand, some NU executives state that Aḥmadiyya is theologically wrong, and their false beliefs about Aḥmad should be corrected, adding that Aḥmadiyya or its members should not be the target of attack.[35] We find that the difference of attitudes between the two towards Aḥmadiyya is that the former has no intention to alter Aḥmadiyya, while the latter intends to bring them back to the 'right path' of Islam. Nonetheless, one of the advisory board members of NU, Ma'ruf Amin, clearly stated that Aḥmadiyya was unacceptable on the official website of NU in 2005 (*NU Online* 2005).

The Islam Nusantara movement has also failed to set a clear position on another minority group, LGBT Indonesians. While there is no mention in the official declaration of Islam Nusantara, different opinions on sexual minorities exist among advocates of Islam Nusantara. Khotimatul, a leader of the women's association of NU in Yogyakarta, shows her humane attitude towards the LGBT community by supporting the identities of transgender people, without judging whether they are right or wrong.[36] On the other hand, S. Amin, one of the executives of NU, believes that LGBT people are wrong, and they should be taken back to the right path of Islam, though there is no need to abuse or persecute them.[37]

This discrepancy also suggests that Islam Nusantara has failed to present a solution for the discrimination against the minorities. Islam Nusantara in fact remains ambivalent on certain social issues, such as Aḥmadiyya and LGBT people, while it has taken a clear position on the adaptation of local culture in Islamic practice. Azis Fachrudin, a young Muslim intellectual, is right to point out that the urgent need for Islam Nusantara to present its stance on minority groups, lest it be "a new name for old content" (Fachrudin 2015).

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34   Anonymous interview with the author.
35   Anonymous interview with the author.
36   Interview with the author, Bantul, 15 March 2018.
37   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 8 March 2018.

9   Conclusion

The ambivalence found in the Islam Nusantara movement seems to have contributed to the avoidance of intricate religious discussions. Almost all advocates of Islam Nusantara vaguely admit the supremacy of Islam over other religions; however, they never explicitly emphasise the ascendancy of Islam. Zastrouw, a lecturer at NU University in Jakarta, states using a clever metaphor that "I would say that my wife is best, when I am asked about the supremacy of Islam over other faiths."[38]

This 'pacifist' attitude shows clear contrast with that of more 'liberal'-minded Muslims who state that all religions are equal. The liberal Islam movement, such as Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL), was branded as too extreme with overwhelming secularism and was criticised severely in the early 2000s. The Islam Nusantara movement tactfully avoids theological controversies, and this leads us to understand that the movement contains ambivalence on sensitive issues.

The Islam Nusantara movement obviously accepts several metamorphoses in religious practices and rituals. However, the need to retain the authenticity of Islam at the same time seems to have never been abandoned in the movement. For instance, they emphasise the linkage between Nusantara and the Prophet Muḥammad. The residents of 'Muslim society' seem to be unwilling to be branded as impious; thus, they emphasise the rightfulness of Islam Nusantara. In this sense, the attitudes of the advocates of Islam Nusantara and fundamentalists occasionally overlap. This is a time when we have difficulties in drawing a clear line between 'Islamic society' and 'Muslim society'.

In other words, the Islam Nusantara movement, which has emerged from Muslim society, necessitates 'authentic' Islam as a basic tenet of an Islamic society. These two major components of Islam mutually complement each other: so-called fundamentalists accept cultural elements in their social behaviour including wearing traditional clothes, while Islam Nusantara advocates emphasise their linkage with the Prophet. This suggests that there exist some similarities between these two distinctive elements in Islam. Yet, it is the Islam Nusantara movement's ambivalence that differentiates it from Salafist-type Islam and the residents of Islamic society.

Importantly, the Islam Nusantara movement is evidently reactive to the emergence of extremism as the official declaration acknowledges. It could be effective in promoting the peaceable aspects of Islam. However, it should be noted that Islam Nusantara contains potential for promoting the idea that

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38   Interview with the author, Jakarta, 10 March 2018.

any version of Islam other than Islam Nusantara is belligerent and thus wrong, which could create psychological antagonism among *umat* in Indonesia.

The Islam Nusantara Movement seemingly contributes to a more moderate type of Islam and a less tense relationship with other religions in Indonesia; however, it is yet to truly confront the stricter form of Islam. This relationship will bring about either an organic development of Islam with serious yet productive discussions or a deeper mutual distrust and conflicts. We should also remember that Islam Nusantara has been a useful political tool for President Joko Widodo. In this respect, Islam Nusantara has the potential to bring about changes in a society, including stability, peaceful coexistence with the members of society, or threats to these. As its political potential is ongoing, scholars must consistently engage with the movement to witness how Islam Nusantara, Indonesian society, and the religion of Islam more broadly, influence one another.

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Nahdlatul Ulama (NU): A Grassroots Movement Advocating Moderate Islam

Faried F. Saenong

1   Introduction

Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU, the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama) claims to have 60 million members in Indonesia (Arifianto 2017: 257), and approximately 30 million more throughout the world. This makes NU the largest independent Islamic organisation across the globe. Its large number of members require extra attention from PBNU to adequately cater to their needs. In order to support services for the community, a broad range of institutions and infrastructures are necessary. To this end, NU boards have extended their exposure through Pengurus Besar (the central board) in Jakarta, Pengurus Wilayah (regional boards in provinces), Pengurus Cabang (branch boards in towns or districts), Majelis Wakil Cabang (councils of branch representatives in *kecamatan* or sub-districts), and Pengurus Ranting (twig boards in *kelurahan* or villages) across Indonesia. For overseas members, NU has launched Pengurus Cabang Istimewa (special branch boards) in many countries. In addition, NU has semi-autonomous organisations for women, university students, school or *madrasa* students, scholars, business people, and others, that extend from the central board to the twig boards.

The services to the members and communities also require significant attention as they include formation, supervision, leadership on all levels, direction, visits, and other organisational necessities. The services also include organisational workshops and training in order to provide information regarding NU's history, theology, activities, products, networks, political policies and strategies, and future projections. Equally important, NU also provides amenities such as hospital and health services, educational institutions from schools to universities, agricultural groups, and many more. NU provides services for non-members too, since leaders Ahmad Siddiq and Abdurrahman Wahid formally accepted "the official state ideology of *Pancasila* as its 'sole basis'" (Fealy and Bush 2014: 546) at the movement's National Congress in 1984. For a traditional socio-religious organisation like NU, it is a substantial commitment to provide such services across Indonesia and overseas. Moreover, all caretakers from the

central board to the smallest branch are volunteers, providing their dedication and services, free of charge.

The sizeable membership and political influence of NU have triggered studies on this largest socio-religious organisation in the world. International scholars from reputable universities have published on a variety of topics such as the discourse of traditionalism (van Bruinessen 1996), politics (Feillard 2013; Feillard 2002; Fealy 2007; Bush 2009; McGregor 2009; Fealy and McGregor 2010; Turmudi 2003), Islamic law (Hosen 2004); civil society (Bush 2002; van Bruinessen and Wajidi 2006), leadership and organisation (Nakamura 1981; van Bruinessen 1991; 2002; Barton 2002; Mietzner 2001), women (Arnez 2010; Feillard 2008), and many other subjects. In addition, Indonesian scholars have also conducted research on this traditional Islamic organisation. Yet much contemporary progress and development has not been covered in prior research. This chapter presents Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in terms of historical accounts, theology, members and supporters, the *'ulamā'*, organisational structure, politics, the *bahtsul masail* forum, and its recent product 'Islam Indonesia'. In order to discover its socio-cultural strategies, this chapter also observes NU's policies related to religious and political issues. It is concluded that 'moderate Islam' is a contested term in contemporary Indonesia, and that while NU's organization has permitted it to represent the interests of a broad swathe of Indonesian Muslims, its lack of authoritative and disciplinary structures has resulted in illiberal attitudes and practices among individual members and participant organisations.

2   Historical Accounts

Formally established in 31 January 1926, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, lit. 'The Revival of *'Ulamā'*) did not suddenly appear in the history of the Indonesian archipelago or Southeast Asia. Historians pinpoint the initial form of this grassroots movement as appearing in early 1926; however, it can be traced back prior to the twentieth century (Ismail 2011). Its epistemological and ideological traces can even be found as early as the history of Islam in the archipelago. The roles played by KH Hasyim Asy'ari (hereafter, Mbah Hasyim) and KH Wahab Chasbullah (hereafter, Mbah Wahab) in the foundation of NU are worthy of discussion. These men are related as guru and student. Mbah Hasyim (1871–1947) suggested to Mbah Wahab (1888–1971) that he continue studying in Mecca after finishing his studies in Tebuireng, Jombang in 1908. In Mecca, Mbah Wahab and his contemporaries including Abdul Halim, Ahmad Sanusi, and Mas Mansur co-founded a Meccan branch of Syarikat Islam (Effendi 2010:

98). Mbah Wahab was an organiser. In this regard, Mbah Wahab was one of the originators of this traditional organisation, in addition to Mbah Hasyim.

When he returned to Surabaya in 1914, Mbah Wahab established Nahdhatul Wathan (lit. 'The Revival of Homeland') that has been proclaimed as the first religious institution with a nationalistic and moderate character in the archipelago (van Bruinessen 1994: 35). Nahdhatul Wathan grew rapidly and within two years, it already had a *madrasa* (religious school) with a large two-floor building in Surabaya. Branches spread across East and Central Java including Malang, Gresik, Jombang, Semarang, and other places. Nahdlatul Wathan promoted educational and intellectual development and in 1917, it established *Tashwirul Afkar* as a medium for Qurʾānic learning and religious education. Mbah Wahab also founded Syubbanul Wathan (lit. 'Youth of Homeland') and Nahdlatul Tujjar (lit. 'The Revival of Tradesmen') of which members were mostly *kyais* (Javanese clerics). Mbah Wahab is also said to have established Nahdlatul Fikr (lit. 'The Revival of Thought').

The archipelago had previously witnessed the birth of Muhammadiyah, the movement founded by KH Ahmad Dahlan (1868–1923), in Yogyakarta on 18 November 1912. Muhammadiyah was founded as a puritan, reformist, and modernist socio-religious movement. It aims to purify Islam from local syncretic practices commonly known as "TBC" which stands for *takhayul* (myth, Arab. *takayyul*), *bidʿa* (religious innovation), and *churafat* (superstition). It is reformist because KH. Ahmad Dahlan was strongly influenced by the Egyptian reformist Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1323/1905), and considered the reformation of Islam as a foundational principle. Hence, he advocated *ijtihād* (individual interpretation of Islam by going back to the Qurʾān and *ḥadīths* [*hadis* in Bahasa]) in contrast to *taqlīd* (following the opinion of the *ʿulamāʾ*) as being more important (Ricklefs 1991). Muhammadiyah is the second-largest Islamic movement in Indonesia after NU, and the two organisations have been rivals much of their collective history.

The global politics of Islam also underpinned the birth of NU. There was a heated debate among Muslim organisations in the Archipelago in early 1926 after Ibn Saud took power in Hijaz, establishing the state of Saudi Arabia. Some organisations suggested sending envoys to Mecca to meet King Ibn Saud to advocate for the traditional practices of Muslims. Reformist and modern organisations, however, rejected the idea. As a result, traditionalist Muslims decided to send their own envoy to meet the King and voice their concerns. The envoy (called the 'Hijaz Committee') presented three demands to the King: requesting that he grant freedom of adherence to *madhhab* (schools of Islamic law) to Muslims in Hijaz; asking that he open access to historical sites connected to the Prophet including the tombs of his daughters; and suggesting that he

publicise the cost of *ḥajj* (pilgrimage). The idea of dispatching the envoy was discussed prior to the birth of NU, but it eventually reached Mecca on 7 May 1928 after NU was founded (Ismail 2011: 257–258).

Observing socio-cultural developments in the homeland of the Indonesian archipelago, where the modernist Muhammadiyah was gaining ground, and a political shift in Mecca where Ibn Saud with his puritanical Wahhābist form of Islam had gained power, Mbah Wahab strongly suggested that Mbah Hasyim initiate the foundation of an *'ulamā'* organisation that would accommodate the interests of religious educational institutions in Java. In addition, several religious practices were challenged by modernist organisations in the archipelago such as al-Irsyad and Muhammadiyah. After heated debates among *kyais* in Java, Mbah Hasyim initiated the foundation of NU in Surabaya on 31 January 1926 in accordance to 16 Rajab 1438 of the Islamic calendar.

3   Theology

NU is a Sunnī Muslim organisation. In the Indonesian context, 'Sunnī' is equivalent to *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* ('the party of the Sunna', a traditional Arabic expression rendered into Bahasa Indonesia), commonly abbreviated as 'Aswaja'. NU is theologically a middle path (*wasatiya*, 'moderation') between extreme rationalism and hard-line scripturalism. Following this, the source of Islamic law for NU was not only the Qur'ān and *hadis*, but also the power of human reason to understand empirical realities. The idea of the middle path was then conceptualised by NU, following Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (874–936) and Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (853–944) in *kalām* and the theological context; following one of the four major *madhhabs* (Shāfi'ī, Mālikī, Ḥanafī, or Ḥanbalī) with the majority being Shāfi'ī in *fiqh* (Islamic law); and following the method of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) and Junayd al-Baghdādī (830–910) in *taṣawwuf* (Islamic mysticism). This is clearly evidenced in the Muqaddima (Introduction) of the *Qanun Asasi Nahdhatul Ulama*, a principal constitution of NU. NU's choices in *kalām*, *fiqh*, and *taṣawwuf* is the theological and local interpretation of *īmān* (faith), *islām* (submission, rituals), and *iḥsān* (being good) as the common trilogy of being Muslim, in the Indonesian context. The *kalām* versions of al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī teach that NU Muslims must strongly hold their *īmān*. Following one of the four major *madhhab*s (especially Shāfi'iyya) is the principal component of *islām* for NU. Similarly, orienting their spirituality on the teachings of al-Ghazālī and al-Baghdādī is the embodiment of *iḥsān* for NU Muslims. This acknowledgement of Ṣūfi elements marks NU as traditionalist, as opposed to the modernist Muhammadiyah which sought

to rid Indonesia Islam of Ṣūfi beliefs and practices, among other local and regional variations (Ismail 2011: 253).

After the 1998 reformation and the resulting democratic atmosphere, Indonesia witnessed a stronger presence of transnational Islamic movements such as Wahhābism, Salafism, Hizb ut-Tahrir, and other smaller splinter groups. These movement are all Sunnī or Aswaja, with modernist and puritanical religious orientations. They publicly promote being Sunnī and Aswaja whenever the opportunity arises. This inclination has led to the contestation of the designation 'Aswaja' in Indonesia, as NU is significantly different to these transnational Islamic organisations. Therefore, NU introduces itself as *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyyah* in order to create a distinction from these non-local Islamic organisations. Based on this theological orientation, NU has been expected to develop Islam on the credentials of those four *madhhabs* in order to achieve certain short-term and long-term objectives. These include a strong commitment to strengthening associations and unity of practitioners of the four major *madhhabs* within the community. To support this idea, NU is expected to disseminate Islamic teachings based on the four *madhhab*s and to select which accredited canons will be used to teach within Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyyah. The above objectives can also be implemented by supporting the construction of new mosques, *madrasas* (Islamic schools), *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), as well as enhancing its members' well-being and improving the quality of life for orphans (Ismail 2011).

The emblem of NU contains symbolism which represents its theology, characters and ideals. Various elements of the emblem reference verses of the Qur'ān. The globe indicates the place where human beings live and come from on the basis of Q. 20: 55.[1] This means that NU aims to maintain the conservation of the Earth for the prosperity of current and future generations. This universal ideal of NU indicates that NU works not only for its members and communities, but also for humankind in general. The Indonesian map on the globe emphasises that NU was born and established in this country. The ropes surrounding the globe means that NU has ideals which tie the population of the Earth in terms of humanity on the basis of Q. 3: 103.[2] The number of lines on the rope represents the 99 beautiful names of Allāh. In regards to the globe, the Indonesian

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1 Q.S. Taha [20]: 55 says "From the earth We created you, and into it We will return you, and from it We will extract you another time."

2 Q.S. Al 'Imran [3]: 103 says: "And hold firmly to the rope of Allāh all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allāh upon you—when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allāh make clear to you His verses that you may be guided."

map, and the rope, NU has innovated three kinds of ties that can unite human-kind: *ukhuwwa bashariya* (human brotherhood), *ukhuwwa wataniya* (national brotherhood), and *ukhuwwa Islamiyya* (Islamic brotherhood).

There are nine stars on the emblem signifying great personalities from the history of Islam. The largest star at the top represents the Prophet Muḥammad. The four stars on the top right and the left epitomise the four *Khulafāʾ Rāshidūn*, the first four ('rightfully guided') caliphs Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAlī. The four stars at the lower right and left denote the four great Imāms of *madhhabs* (schools of Islamic law) Shāfiʿī, Mālikī, Ḥanafī, and Ḥanbalī. The nine stars, hence, strongly claim that NU follows these great personalities, or in other words, that NU is faithful to Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaʿah. In the local context, the nine stars also exemplify the nine saints of the archipelago from the fourteenth century, who share the same traditionalist Islamic ideology as NU.

The emblem has two colours: green and white. The green symbolises the fertile and luxuriant land of the archipelago where NU was born and established. The white is a symbol of chastity and the saintliness of NU's characters. The Arabic writing reads 'Nahdhatul Ulama', while the roman text 'NU' is the acronym. The emblem was designed by Kyai Ridwan Abdullah, a contemporary of Mbah Hasyim and Wahab Chasbullah. Ridwan was only given fifteen days to complete the design, but he finished the design in less than the given time. As described above, the emblem embodies the stories, Islamic ideology, theology, ideals, and objectives of NU.

4 The Traditionalist Background and Supporters

Founded by *kyais* in Java, NU traditionally has members consisting of rural populations and *santri* of *pesantren* across Indonesia. With ties strongly rooted with *kyais* in villages across the Archipelago, the rural population are traditionally and culturally followers of NU. They conserve and continue to perform Islamic practices as suggested by local *kyais*. Practices would include *ziyāra* (visiting saints' tombs), *wasīla* (intercession), celebrating the *mawlid* (Prophet's birthday), chanting *ṣalawāt* (praises to the Prophet), performing twenty *tarāwīḥ* (night prayers during Ramadan), reciting *tahlīl* (a compilation of specific Qur'ānic verses, remembrances, and supplications) and reciting narratives of the life of the Prophet by Ja'far al-Barzanjī, *sulūk* or *ṭarīqa* practices, and many more. These practices are very common and have become life rituals of the people in rural Indonesia. The key role played by *kyais* also means that a vast number of members come from traditional, conservative Islamic orientations. They are conservative in terms of conserving Islamic traditions and practices based on strong attachment to *al-turāth* or tradition as recorded in hundreds of Arabic manuals commonly learned in *pesantren*. They are conservative as they keep practicing what the Javanese saints had designed centuries ago as the best form of the amalgamation of Islam and local culture (Barton 1997: 324).

The current number of *pesantren* and similar schools across Indonesia is approximately 30,000, with *santri* (*pesantren* students) and alumni constituting the cultural followers of this traditionalist Muslim organisation (Azzahra 2020). Not only do they perform the practices, they also know and understand and are able to elaborate the theological reasoning behind the practices. As *santri* of *pesantren*, they are equipped with strongly rooted "tool knowledge" such as the knowledge of Arabic including *naḥw* (grammar), *ṣarf* (morphology), *balāgha* (rhetoric), and *adab* (literature). For these tasks, it is an important within traditional learning that they memorise manuals of Arabic grammar, from brief texts such as *Matn al-Ajrummiyah* or *al-Imriti*, to the extensive texts like *Alfiya Ibn Malik*, which consists of more than a thousand Arabic pieces of poetry. This is in addition to their obligation to memorise the Qur'ān and *hadis*.

Furthermore, *santri* are traditionally defined as those who reside in the *pesantren*, and who follow and obey the *kyai* (Fealy and Bush 2014: 541). Both *kyai* and *santri* enjoy a special relationship of guru and pupil, of supervisor and supervisee, or that of parent and children. The high reverence of *santri* toward their *kyai* is indicated with hand kissing during the greeting handshake, listening and following advice, physical loyalty, and the taking of *sanad* (chain of

knowledge transmission). The reverence is not limited to the students' time in the *pesantren*, but throughout the person's lifetime. *Pesantren* have been hermitages and retreats for pupils where they train as Indonesian Muslims for six to nine years. Afterward, they often return to their villages and establish new *pesantren* which follow the educational system and practices of the *pesantren* from which they graduated (Hefner 2009; Azra, Afrianty, and Hefner 2007). This practice disseminates the traditionalist Muslim education and values in Indonesia.

NU followers have also been identified as the '*sarungan*' people characterised by the cloth or sarongs they always commonly wear. Sarongs are worn in *pesantren*, as well as for other socio-religious occasions outside *pesantren*. Sarongs, batik shirts or *koko* with black *peci* (hats) on the head are a common fashion style for Indonesian men on important occasions. When Abdurrahman Wahid ('Gus Dur') was the President of Indonesia, he was very often visited by *kyais* from *pesantren*, who arrived at the presidential palace in Jakarta wearing this attire, a sight that was rarely seen in the capital, Jakarta.

5   NU's *'Ulamā'*

As described above, *sanad* as a chain of knowledge transmission, is one of the foremost qualities of NU. Possessing a *sanad* is considered an object of pride for NU Muslims as they participate in a direct line of authoritative knowledge and *'ulamā'*. Some of them simply memorise the full chain. Some write down the *sanad* in their personal customised diaries or books. Some even draw the *sanad* beautifully in a chart and display it on the wall of their house. As there are a vast number of *sanad* among *'ulamā'* within NU, the current chairperson of NU, KH. Said Agil Siradj will be used as an example to demonstrate the continuous *sanad* or chain of transmission of religious knowledge back to the Prophet Muḥammad, in the chart below. The chart shows at least twenty-eight chain links of transmission of religious knowledge. They are all important names, but the most significant names and related to the discussion of NU are given in yellow. The chart shows that the current chairperson of NU, Said Agil Siradj (28) has *sanad* to Mbah Hasyim/Hasyim Asy'ari (25), the founder of NU, to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (14), an NU reference in *taṣawwuf*, then to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (10, an NU reference in *kalām*, to the Prophet Muḥammad (1). Some scholars even expand on this by suggesting that the Prophet Muḥammad received the knowledge from Jibrīl, the Angel of Revelation, who received knowledge from Allāh.

| 1. Prophet Muḥammad saw | → | 2. ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib | → | 3. Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah ibn Ali | → | 4. Wāṣil ibn ʿAṭāʾ | → | 5. ʿAmr ibn ʿUbayd | → | 6. Ibrahim Al-Naẓẓām |

| 12. Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī | ← | 11. Abū ʿAbdillah al-Bahili | ← | 10. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī | ← | 9. Abū ʿAli al-Dhubaʿi | ← | 8. Abū Hasi al-Dhubaʿi | ← | 7. Abū Huzayl al-ʾAllaq |

| 13. ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwayni | → | 14. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī | → | 15. ʿAbd al-Ḥāmid al-Shaykh Irsani | → | 16. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī | → | 17. ʿAbidin al-Izzi | → | 18. Muhammad al-Sanusi |

| 24. Mahfudz Termas | ← | 23. Nawawi Banten | ← | 22. Ahmad Khatib Sambas | ← | 21. Sayyid Ahmad Zayni Dahlan | ← | 20. Imām al-Dasūqī | ← | 19. Imām al-Bajuri |

| 25. Hasyim Asy'ari | → | 26. Wahid Hasyim | → | 27. Abdurrahman Wahid | → | 28. Said Agil Siadj |

FIGURE 6.2 *Sanad* of NU's *ʿUlamāʾ*

The above example is simply written as a linear form of *sanad*, where there is only one *ʿalim* or Muslim scholar in each chain. Realistically, however, there are a number of other names in each chain which continue the same chain eye in different levels or generations. For instance, Mbah Hasyim/Hasyim Asy'ari (25) learned and received *sanad* of knowledge from Mahfudz Termas (24), and at this same level, also from Arsyad al-Banjari, Kholil Bangkalan, ʿAbdul Shomad Palembang, and many more. These four *ʿulamāʾ* learned and took *sanad* from Nawawi Banten (23). Similarly, a number of *ʿulamāʾ* might be present in each level of the example of *sanad* above.

There is indeed a list of *sanad* of NU's *ʿulamāʾ* that involve al-Māturīdī, an NU reference in *kalām*, or Imām al-Shāfiʿī, an NU reference in *fiqh*, or al-Baghdādī, an NU reference in *taṣawwuf*. Moreover, there are other special *sanad*s based on particular *kitab kuning* (lit. 'yellow books', referring to Arabic books), canons, or manuals that are learned from generation to generation of *ʿulamāʾ* and *santri* in *pesantren* all over Indonesia. For example, it is easy to find *sanad* of NU's *ʿulamāʾ* for, for example, the *ṣaḥīḥ* of Imām al-Bukhārī, the number one canon of *hadis*. This means that the *sanad* from Imām al-Bukhārī, to his students which continued to other students, and was passed along to the current

NU's *'ulamā'* and *santri*, is definitely present. Similarly, this is also the case for millions of *sanads* for other *kitab kuning* and Arabic manuals traditionally read and learned in the *pesantren* of NU across Indonesia.

6   Organisational Structure

Pengurus Besar Nahdhatul Ulama (PBNU) is the leadership system and organisational structure covering the Mustasyar (Advisory Board), Syuriyah (Supreme Council), A'wan (Expert Board), and the Tanfidziyah (Executive Board). The highest body within this organisation is the Syuriyah or Supreme Council of which the leader is named Ra'is 'Am, the vice is Naib Rais, and the secretary is Katib Syuriyah. The Tanfidziyah or Executive Board is led by Ketua Umum (general chairperson) and the Secretary General. The Rais 'Am of the Syuriyah Council and the Ketua Umum of Tanfidziyah Council are elected every five years through Muktamar. Another body, which provides advice to both councils, is the Mustasyar consisting of senior *'ulamā'* and members.

Several *lembaga* or institutions within PBNU are formed in order to optimise the running of the organisation. The *lembaga* work as departmental institutions and serve as policy implementers in dealing with certain community groups or any groups that require special treatment. PBNU also supervises several *lajnah* or institutions dealing with key programmes within NU. In addition, PBNU also have several semi-autonomous organisations serving particular community religious interests. The *lembaga* include Lembaga Dakwah Nahdhatul Ulama (LDNU, for Islamic propagation), Lembaga Pendidikan Ma'arif Nahdhatul Ulama (LP Ma'arif NU, for education), Lembaga Pelayanan Kesehatan Nahdlatul Ulama (LPK-NU, for health services), Lembaga Perekonomian Nahdlatul Ulama (LP-NU, for economics), Lembaga Pengembangan Pertanian Nahdlatul Ulama (LPP-NU, for agriculture), Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyah Nahdlatul Ulama (RMI-NU, for *pesantren* or Islamic boarding schools). Lembaga Kemaslahatan Keluarga Nahdlatul Ulama (LKK-NU for family), Lembaga Takmir Masjid Nahdlatul Ulama (LTM-NU, for mosque welfare), Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumberdaya Manusia Nahdlatul Ulama (LAKPESDAM-NU, for human resources), Lembaga Penyuluhan dan Bantuan Hukum Nahdlatul Ulama (LPBH-NU, for legal issues), Lembaga Kesehatan Nahdlatul Ulama (LK-NU, for health), Lembaga Badan Halal Nahdlatul Ulama (LBHNU, for halal), and Sarikat Buruh Muslimin Indonesia (SARBUMUSI, for workers).

PBNU also consists of several *lajnah* or boards, including Lajnah Bahtsul Masail Nahdlatul Ulama (LBM-NU, for religious Islamic matters), Lajnah Falakiyah Nahdlatul Ulama (LF-NU, for celestial spheres), Lajnah Ta'lif wan Nasyr Nahdlatul Ulama (LTN-NU, for publications), Lajnah Auqaf Nahdlatul Ulama (LA-NU, for endowments), Lajnah Zakat, Infaq, dan Shadaqah Nahdlatul Ulama (LAZIS-NU, for charity). Additionally, PBNU maintains autonomous boards including Jam'iyyah Ahli Thariqah Al-Mu'tabarah An-Nahdliyah (JATMAN, for Ṣūfi groups), Muslimat Nahdlatul Ulama (Muslimat NU, for women), Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Nahdlatul Ulama (GP Ansor NU, for youth), Fatayat Nahdlatul Ulama (Fatayat NU, for female youth), Keluarga Mahasiswa Nahdlatul Ulama (KMNU, for university students), Ikatan Pelajar Nahdlatul Ulama (IPNU, for male disciples), Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama (IPPNU, for female disciples), Ikatan Sarjana Nahdlatul Ulama (ISNU, for graduates), Ikatan Pencak Silat Nahdlatul Ulama Pagar Nusa (IPSNU Pagar Nusa, for martial arts), Jami'iyyatul Qurro wal Huffadz Nahdlatul Ulama (JQH NU, for Qur'ānic reciters and memorisers), and Persatuan Guru Nahdlatul Ulama (PERGUNU, for teachers).

NU boards extend from PBNU as the central board to the smallest regional boards. The board levels in sequences include PBNU, Pengurus Wilayah Nahdhatul Ulama (PWNU, for the provincial level), Pengurus Cabang Nahdhatul Ulama (PCNU, for *kabupaten/kota* or the district level), Majelis Wakil Cabang Nahdhatul Ulama (MWCNU, for *kecamatan* or the sub-district level), Pengurus Ranting Nahdhatul Ulama (PRNU, for *kelurahan/desa* or sub-sub-district level), and Pengurus Anak Ranting Nahdhatul Ulama (PARNU, as the smallest regional board). NU also has special branches overseas called Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Nahdhatul Ulama (PCI-NU). NU is a loosely-organised movement, in that the *kyais* and *pesantren* are the core personnel and institutions, and the "central and regional boards had limited authority over, or desire to dictate to, locally influenced *kyai*" (Fealy and Bush 2014: 542).

7   Political Atmosphere

Since it was founded in 1926, NU has been primarily a socio-religious organisation. The Qanun Asasi of NU has no single point which explicitly intersects with politics. However, the strong *fiqh* orientation of NU in its Islamic creeds and rituals has forced NU to discuss politics. This is normal as canons of *fiqh* always contained politics-related discourses such as *imāma* (Islamic leadership), *qaḍā'* (judge-related topics), *bughāt* (rebellion), *ḥudūd wa ta'zīrat* (punishment and retribution), *qisas* (requitals), and *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* (loyalty

and disavowal). All of these *fiqh* discourses initially envisage the presence of Islamic power in politics. With very large numbers of traditional followers, especially in Java, this enables NU to be present as a political power in the archipelago (Ismail 2011).

NU initially intersected with politics when it issued a decree on land defence in 1935. It stated that the Archipelago is a land of Muslims. On another occasion, NU also stated that supporting Japan in the Pacific War was not *wājib* nor an obligation for Muslims, or for people generally living in the archipelago. In the 1938 Muktamar in Menes, there was a proposal that NU should place its representatives in the *Volksraad* (the People's Council) that was initially formed in 1916 by the Dutch Administration in the East Indies (Indonesia). The majority of the Muktamar participants rejected the idea and wanted to keep NU as a socio-religious organisation.

Despite classical competing rivalry between NU and Muhammadiyah, both Islamic organisations established the Majelis Islam A'laa Indonesia (MIAI, the Supreme Islamic Council of Indonesia) in 1937 in order to inaugurate an umbrella or federal organisation for all Islamic groups in the archipelago (Ismail 2011: 271). It united and coordinated the voice of Muslims in the Archipelago to argue against Dutch policies, such as the marriage ordinance and military service for Muslims. The Japanese occupation changed the political atmosphere and sponsored the foundation of Masyumi or Majelis Syura Muslimin Indonesia (Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims) in 1945 when Mbah Hasyim became the national chairperson.

The core role of NU in Masyumi caused NU to start becoming a political movement. After experiencing severe disadvantage while within Masyumi, NU left the council, as decided in the PBNU decree dated 5/6 April 1952 (Fealy and Bush 2014: 542). The decision was then brought to the nineteenth century Muktamar from 28 April–1 May 1952 in Palembang. The Muktamar supported the move and recommended that NU become a political party. NU then founded Liga Muslimin Indonesia (LMI, the Indonesian Muslims League) on 30 August 1952, with Persatuan Tarbiyah Indonesia (Perti, Indonesian Tarbiyah United), Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia (PSII, Islamic Association Party of Indonesia), South Sulawesi-based Darud Da'wa wal Irsyad (DDI) and Persyarikatan Tionghoa Islam Indonesia (the Indonesian Tionghoa Muslim Association). In parliament, seven NU members left the Masyumi faction and formed an independent bloc (Feith 2007: 233–235).

During the process of withdrawing from Masyumi and becoming a political party, the NU Party only had a short time to prepare for the 1955 election. The NU Party eventually took part in the 1955 election and won 45 seats (18.4% votes) in the DPR, ranking third behind the PNI (Indonesian National

Party) and Masyumi, each of which held 57 seats. In the following election for Konstituante (Constitutional Assembly), the NU Party won 91 seats (Friend 2003: 51). Under the New Order policy in 1973, the NU Party was then forcibly fused with Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP, United Development Party), which won the second-largest number of seats in the 1977 and 1982 elections. Due to dissatisfaction and lack of influence, Abdurrahman Wahid, the Chairman of NU, withdrew from PPP, causing a decline of votes for PPP, from 28% in 1982 to 16% in the 1987 election (Ricklefs 1991: 276). Since then, NU has been a socio-religious organisation.

8   Bahtsul Masail

As described above, NU has a *lembaga* or board, which is in charge of answering religious Islamic matters arising within Muslim societies in Indonesia. In the past, the discussion of contemporary issues was conducted in a forum called Lailatul Ijtima ʿNahdatul Oelama or LINO (lit. 'evening of gathering of NU'). This was an intellectual arena for *kyais* in order to grant legal standings of religious matters. Currently, after the institutionalisation of Bahtsul Masail, the LINO uses another format. In many regional meetings, the LINO has been set up as a regular meeting for learning, where a *kyai* presents and discusses an Arabic work in front of the board and members of PWNU (regional board).

Lembaga Bahtsul Masail—Nahdhatul Ulama (LBM-NU, henceforth LBM) is a creative and important scheme of *ijtihād* or *fatwā* production (Laffan 2005). It is significant and inventive for at least two reasons. First, Muslims outside Arab countries used to seek advice and *fatwā* from *ʿulamāʾ* in the Middle East on religious issues in their home countries. A famous work entitled *Muhimmat al-Nafāʾis fī Bayan Asʾilat al-Ḥadīth*, a nineteenth century compilation of questions and *fatwā*, records questions from Muslims in the archipelago, and *fatwā* from Middle Eastern countries and regions, especially Mecca and Cairo (Kaptein 1997; Hosen 2004). LBM has successfully ended this practice by offering answers to religious Islamic matters. Second, before the presence of LBM, Islamic authorities including individual *ʿalim* delivered their independent and individual legal opinions, or *ijtihād*, or *fatwā* pertaining to various religious issues facing Muslim communities. LBM has taken a step forward by introducing collective *ijtihād* or *ijtihād jamāʿī* (Hosen 2004).

LBM consists of senior and junior *ʿulamāʾ* or senior *santri* who are considered knowledgeable and authoritative in Islamic matters. Their authority includes a mastering of Arabic grammar, *tafsīr* and *hadis* knowledge, Islamic law, Islamic history and other supporting knowledge. More particularly, they

must ideally be *faqih al-nafs* (talented in Islamic legal matters), experienced in *fiqh* and its application, and able to present the *fiqh* and its details. If this is impossible to be observed individually, a collective feature of these authorities would be an option. These are the main features of an LBM.

LBMs are present in NU boards either in central (PBNU) or regional (PWNU) areas. The issues or questions must be individually identified as local, regional, or national jurisdictions. LBM in the regional boards, for example, discuss all questions and issues from that particular region. When it is considered national, it must be referred to the LBM central board. Similarly, when it is a local issue, the regional board will discuss and issue the decision. All discussions must be conducted in a forum called Bahtsul Masail. The main task of LBM is to analyse actual cases that have not been found in *kitab kuning* and *fiqh* manuals. Hence, their task is *ilhaq al-masail bi nazhairi-ha*: using what is relevant or analogous in *kitab kuning* and *fiqh* manuals to assess contemporary matters. If the case has been discussed and found in *fiqh* manuals, LBM simply demonstrates what options are available. However, if there is a new case, their task extends to *ilhaq al-masail bi nazhairi-ha*. For these reasons, LBM is generally divided into three issue categories: *wāqi'iyya* (actual cases), *mawdu'iyya* (thematic cases), and *qānūniyya* (legal category).

From here, it is clear that the task of LBM is not to extract the law or *istinbat al-ahkam* directly from the Qur'ān and *hadis* as two primary sources of Islamic law, due to their particular limits (Mahfudz 2003: 24). LBM instead applies *ilhaq al-masail bi nazhairi-ha*, namely linking new issues dynamically to the similar ones available in any *kitab kuning* or *fiqh* manuals. This demands high levels of skill for the participants of Bahtsul Masail in the field of *fiqh*. Due to its important status, Syuriyah is the NU board, which is responsible for organising the Bahtsul Masail (Hosen 2004). The Syuriyah Board organises the Bahtsul Masail at least twice every five years; once in the five yearly NU Muktamar, and once in the Musyawarah Nasional alim Ulama NU (Zahro 2004: 26). The issues discussed in Bahtsul Masail are actual matters arising within Muslim communities in Indonesia. Issues can also be raised by the PBNU which might consider particular matters important. PBNU then distributes the materials, including questions and issues to participants of the Bahtsul Masail, including *'ulamā'*, intellectuals, and any LBM members who are trusted. Before coming into the Bahtsul Masail, they would read them and prepare their answers. The PBNU then discusses issues in detail and makes decisions.

When providing decisions to issues being discussed, the Bahtsul Masail usually applies a number of methods including *qawli* (literal), *ilhaqi* (comparative method), and *manhaji* (by methodology). The *qawli* method enables participants to have direct quotations from acknowledged *fiqh* manuals and books,

especially from the four *madhhabs*. The *ilhaqi* method envisages the making of law by developing analogies between unlisted issues and similar ones available in the *fiqh* books and manuals. Meanwhile, the *manhaji* method requires deep research and follows the method of *istinbat al-ahkam* of the four *madhhabs*, for problems that are unresolved by the *qawli* and *ilhaqi* methods. This explanation could be broken down into at least three steps or processes. First, when new matters are found in the authoritative *fiqh* manuals or books this could be considered a decision. Second, following the first step: if there are differing opinions from *ʿulamāʾ*, they apply *taqrīr jamāʿī* (to make a decision of one strong opinion). Third, when these matters are not listed in the *fiqh* manuals, they apply *ilhaq al-masail bi nazhariha*.

9   Indonesian Islam

One of the most important products of NU is so-called 'Indonesian Islam'. The intention is not to create a negative distinction of Indonesian Islam from the rest of the Muslim world. Rather it is to demonstrate *khasaʾis* or the special qualities of Indonesian Islam, and to accentuate the cultural tastes and experiences of Indonesian Islam. The theology remains the same as that in other Muslim territories, especially the Sunnī world. There is no space within Indonesian Islam to change the principles of Islam such as *arkān al-islam* (the Five Pillars of Islam) and *arkān al-īmān* (the Six Pillars of Faith). This is to highlight that the fact that Indonesian Islam shares its theology with the rest of the Muslim world (Ismail 2011: 249). Behind the concept of Indonesian Islam is an appreciation of localities, including the ways of life, cultures, traditions, and practices that are not in contrast to Islamic principles. This is based on one concept of *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh, al-ʿada* or *al-ʿurf muhakkama*, that localities can be considered a source of law under the Qurʾān and *hadis*. In this regard, NU accommodates local cultures and practices as long as they do not harm the fundamental principles of Islam. One of the most visible demonstrations of this idea are the local customs of wearing sarongs, *peci* (Indonesian black hats), *batik* (traditionally decorated Indonesian shirts) or *koko* (Shanghai-style shirts) during prayers.

Islam in Indonesia has often almost escaped attention even though it constitutes the largest majority Muslim population; the geographical position of Indonesia is at the eastern end of the Muslim world, and it was historically considered to have a low profile in the Muslim world's intellectual, economic, social, and global political arenas. These factors triggered the neglect of Indonesian Islam by various international analysts. In addition, the absence of

Indonesia as a participant in any of the Muslim world contestations is another reason why Indonesia has been neglected. The uniqueness of Indonesia that has been most visible, compared to other parts of the Muslim world, and which Samuel Huntington insisted that the clash of civilisations neglected, is the inclination to accept modernity and democracy, to voice pluralism and religious tolerance, and to accentuate the gracious and the merciful sides of God (Inoguchi 2012). The cultural movements which have been dominating the discourses of Indonesian Islam since the course of the twentieth century, have become the main indicators. In addition, significant actions and movements of neo-modernist Islam in Indonesia, have become another trigger for the promotion of Indonesian Islam. These cultural and religious movements are the consequences of a unique approach to understanding Islamic texts and local cultures, traditions, and practices. The approach has a dual role; to heighten social ethics and individual piety, while at the same time, to refrain from highlighting unnecessary differences in the Muslim world.

In this regard, Abdurrahman Wahid (1940–2009), three-term chairperson of NU (1984–1999) and the fourth President of Indonesia, has been regarded as the foremost pioneer of neo-modernism of Islam in Indonesia (Barton 1997). In the wake of the Iranian revolution and its influence on Indonesian youth, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) rejected Western analysts who believe that Middle Eastern fundamentalism had a strong and deep influence on Indonesian students studying in the Middle Eastern universities. Abdurrahman argued that Islam and Arab culture are two different things. In addition, Abdurrahman successfully highlighted the traditions of Islamic pluralism in Indonesia through his writings which emphasise theological, philological and historical approaches in explaining Indonesian Islam. According to him, the development of Islamic cultures is the product of acculturation between Islamic core values and cultural qualities of archipelagic Indonesia. This is the context when he argues that the harmonious life of religions in Indonesia provides strong traditional roots for modern pluralism (Barton 1997: 342).

Following this idea, there is a strong argument that Islam should be considered on two levels, namely on the theological and cultural levels. In terms of theology, Islam is a universal religion which works harmoniously in any given time and place. Despite different opinions and understanding of ʿulamāʾ, Islam is one and is dedicated and oriented toward one identical aim, which is to worship and affirm the oneness of Allāh. At this level, NU is the same as other Sunnī groups and movements (Ismail 2011: 249). NU, however, would be more conservative in religious rituals and worship than some other groups and streams, as NU holds strongly to *kitab kuning* as textual interpretations of the Qurʾān and *hadis*. On another similar level, Islam is a manifestation and

expression of religiosity that can be married to local cultures and practices. NU generally believes that anything that is not regulated by Islam is *halal* or permissible until one or more texts in the Qur'ān and *hadis* have been identified which restrict it. This completely differs from the Salafi groups, for example, who consider that everything is forbidden until there are one or more texts of the Qur'ān and *hadis* allowing it. On the basis of that principle, and with the support of another principle that habit or culture is a potential source of law, NU has been in the *avant garde* by advocating for local practices that are not in contradiction to the principles of Islam.

NU could be even more "radical" in promoting localities. Gus Dur is famous for his slogan *Pribumisasi Islam* or "indigenisation of Islam." Abdurrahman Wahid's generation and those following within NU have been strong supporters of this idea. There has been a common understanding that Islam must be friendly to local practices. For NU, the indigenisation of Islam is necessary, to avoid the polarisation of religion (Islam) and culture. In this regard, indigenisation is not syncretism as it simply considers localities within the process of the application of Islamic teachings. Neither does it neglect Islamic norms for cultural ones. The idea is that Islam accommodates localities by making use of the interstices and opportunities provided by Islam. In this regard, NU plays hard with the significant roles of the principles of *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* in accommodating localities. In addition, NU believes that indigenisation in any part of the Muslim world is an integral part of the history of Islam.

The important roles of NU-based Ministers of Religious Affairs, as well as other non-NU Ministers, are also effective in the harmonious life of religions in Indonesia. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) has become a main actor of these cultural movements by attaching them to state policies. In this regard, the position of the Ministers of Religious Affairs is becoming more significant in playing their inter-related roles. They are expected to become the primary speaker for the government, and, at the same time, the defender of Muslim interests in promoting harmonious life in Indonesia. They are in charge of and responsible for the harmonious life and cooperation between various religious communities in Indonesia. Similarly, other non-NU-based Ministers of Religious Affairs have played the same significant role. Nevertheless, the close attachment of religions to the state might result in a more dominant position of the state *vis-à-vis* the people (Muslims).

The MoRA has also been supporting Indonesian Muslim intellectuals to develop their Islamic thoughts by providing scholarships and funding to closely interact with the contemporary academic communities globally. It has sent many lecturers and students to both Middle Eastern and Western universities. In this regard, Muslim intellectuals have enriched their knowledge

and horizons in social sciences and humanities, and in turn supported their traditional Islamic studies to develop progressive thoughts. They are skilful in interplaying the truth claims within social sciences and humanities and within Islam. As a result, traditionally NU-based intellectuals have produced progressive thoughts and movements. They are authoritative in speaking and writing on Islam on the basis of *kitab kuning*, yet at they are fluent in quoting and making use any use of sociological, historical, anthropological approaches and theories. The interdisciplinary expertise developed by NU scholarships, as well as non-NU ones, have been contributively catalyst to the development of friendly and tolerant Islam in Indonesia. Woodward (1996) considers this development as a "new paradigm" in the contemporary history of Islam. He believes that Indonesian Islam is unique and different from historical Islam in other Muslim regions.

Through the idea of indigenisation of Islam, NU rejects Arabisation in many aspects of cultural Muslims' life. The text of the Qurʾān, as well as those recited in prayers, will always remain in Arabic, but the contextualisation of Islamic teachings from the Qurʾān and *hadis* can be actualised according to the locality. NU Muslims could possibly be more fluent in Arabic that any other groups in Indonesia, as Arabic is one of the core subjects in NU *pesantrens* across Indonesia. The ultimate point of this accommodation is to emphasise that Muslims living anywhere. and at any time, could potentially become authentic Muslims while still belonging simultaneously to their own culture. When it is extended to the nation-state context, it can be said that Muslims living in Indonesia could potentially become authentic Muslims while also being genuine Indonesians. This should not affect their loyalty as Muslims and as Indonesian citizens at the same time. Likewise, by applying this approach, Muslims living in Europe, America. Australia, and other Muslim minority countries, could realistically belong to their countries of citizenship, while simultaneously living as authentic Muslims. They share the same opportunities to be authentic Muslims as Muslims living in Saudi Arabia.

10   Conclusion

As described above, NU began from robust Arabic and Islamic materials learned and scrutinised in *pesantrens* in Indonesia over time. NU possesses a vigorous tradition which interplays with Islamic texts. This means that NU is fundamentally traditional in its approach to both texts and practices (Aspinall 2010: 121). Based on this fact, some people misunderstand NU to be backward in thought, opportunistic in politics, and syncretic in religiosity (Aspinall 2010:

133). In contrast, religious traditionalism has enabled NU to be a progressive religious organisation. The self-consciousness traditionalism has even allowed NU to become the most prepared Islamic group to face modernity and changes. Criticising an established Western view that religious traditionalism precludes progressivity, Nakamura (1981) argues that NU's traditionalism is not in contrast *vis-à-vis* progressivism in politics.

Nevertheless, the history of Islam in Indonesia has not been linear. There have been a number of violent actions conducted in the name of Islam. The development of the Right and hardliners seems to have found support on the ground. This could influence the common claim and perception of a friendly and tolerant Islam in Indonesia. For example, the loose organisational structure of NU has in practice meant that it is unable to discipline grassroots clerics who express illiberal sentiments, for example, declaring the Shī'a and Aḥmadī minorities to be heretics, and violently persecuting them (Arifianto 2017: 241). Therefore, there is a continuous need to promote what NU has actually constituted so far.

New generations of NU are currently building on Gus Dur's idea of indigenisation of Islam (Effendi 2008). Since 2000, this has created a stream within NU called Post-traditional Islam. The new stream envisages a critical evaluation of tradition (*al-aṣāla*) with the traditional values and norms (*al-turāth*) themselves. Post-traditional Islam has made tradition its fundamental epistemology to transform into a new tradition strongly rooted in the old tradition with a progressive ethos. Through objectification and rationalisation, it deconstructs the tradition so the new one will be more compatible with present-ness (Baso 2000; Rumadi 2015). This differs from modernism, which neglects or even rejects tradition in order to arrive in modernity.

This traditionalism-based socio-religious movement with progressive character has also inspired and stimulated women's movement within this framework. Interestingly, with modern gender awareness that they had absorbed, NU women has experienced progressive development based on traditionalism. They have revitalised the horizons of Islamic traditionalism by promoting open discussion of interpretive tradition from *tafsīr* (the interpretation of the Qur'ān) and *hadis*. In addition, the heavy-duty combinations of authoritative *'ulamā', pesantren* education, and *kitab kuning* that have been learned by *santriwati* (female *santri*) have planted, grown, and harvested the construction of female Islamic authority (Saenong 2016; 2019). Rahima, Fahmina, and 'Alimat are at least some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) with national and global level movement and reputation that have been inspired and born from the womb of NU. They have been working hand-in-hand to establish the Islamic authority of *'alimat* (female *'ulamā'*).

The three CSO have even conducted the first international congress of women's *'ulamā'* in 2017 that has been a cutting-edge progress of women movement, as well as women's Islamic authority in classical and modern Islamic studies (Saenong 2019). It is concluded that while 'moderate Islam' is a contested term in twenty-first century Indonesia, NU has been able to represent the interests of a large number of different social groupings of Indonesian Muslims, though over time it has lost specifically political power and influence since the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid ended in 2001 (Fealy and Bush 2014).

Acknowledgment

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Women and Islamic Movements

Eva F. Nisa

1 Introduction

Muslim women have long been the backbone of the development of Islam, including Islamic thoughts, practices, and movements. This chapter focuses on the complex trajectory of women's movement and women's activism in various Islamic movements, including their struggle for women's rights. Despite their extensive contributions, Muslim women's roles in the development of Islamic thoughts, practices, and movements are often overlooked. Establishing female religious authority, for example, has been an issue in many Muslim countries since the advent of Islam and throughout its development. Meanwhile those who have spoken on behalf of Islam, from its earliest days, were not only men but also women (see Krämer and Schmidtke 2006; Künkler and Nisa 2018). Both men and women have shared their thoughts and expertise to their Muslim fellows, becoming the sources of guidance for Muslims throughout Islamic history. In addition, Muslim women have been active in forming their own Muslim organisations and have become important agents in diverse Islamic movements ranging from ultra conservative to moderate and progressive movements. However, studies on religious authorities often mention Muslim women and their movements only as an appendix of men's religious authorities, though theoretically women and men hold the same responsibility to understand and transmit religious knowledge.[1]

This chapter analyses Muslim women and their religious activism, both as individuals or part of diverse Islamic and Islamist movements. It cannot not be all-inclusive because of the complexity and immensely diverse affiliations and movements that Muslim women have been a part of to date. It also touches on but does not intend to problematise historical debates of women's presence and their roles in the early community. Rather, this chapter will briefly

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[1] Many Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīth* (reports or the words and deeds ascribed to the Prophet Muḥammad) emphasise this duty of seeking and transmitting knowledge an act of worship, for example, Qurʾān 58:11 "God will exalt, by [many] degrees those of you who have attained to faith and, [above all], such as have been vouchsafed [true] knowledge: for God is fully aware of all that you do."

sketch some common traditional narratives of early Muslim women to serve as a bridge to the main discussion of women and Islamic movements. In this section both moderate and conservative movements will be looked at to examine the roles of women within, and the impact of Islamic feminist consciousness. Part of this discussion is the assessment of scholarship by women academics on this topic which forms a central aspect of the methodology and analysis of Muslim women in the modern practice of Islam.

2   Women of the Prophet Muḥammad's Circle

Muslim women, from the most conservative to the most liberal, place the women of the Prophet Muḥammad's household, especially *ummahāt al-Muʾminīn* (mothers of the believers), as role models and main references for the faith (see Stowasser 1997: 115). In analysing Muslim women and Islamic movements, therefore, this chapter necessarily commences with a brief overview of the women within the Prophet Muḥammad's circle and other pious female companions. Among the wives of the Prophet Muḥammad—some say eleven and others thirteen—three wives in particular are often mentioned as leading role models for Muslim women: Khadīja bint Khuwaylid (556–620), ʿĀʾisha bint Abī Bakr (604–678), and Umm Salama (594–680). In addition to the *ummahāt al-Muʾminīn*, one daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ is an important figure for many Muslims. The Qurʾān also mentions other women, such as the Virgin Mary (or Maryam), the mother of Jesus (or ʿĪsā) and Āsiyā bint Muzāḥim, the wife of the Pharaoh and adoptive mother of Moses (Abboud 2014).

It is especially important to look to the life of ʿĀʾisha, the Prophet Muḥammad's favourite wife, who was the daughter of his close companion and first caliph (*al-Khulafāʾ al-Rāshidūn*), Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (573–634) (see also Abbott 1942). There is some contestation about ʿĀʾisha's age at the time of her marriage to the Prophet Muḥammad. Some narrations say that she was six years old when the marriage contract was concluded, but the consummation took place when she reached puberty. Others mention the marriage was consummated when she was nine. For example, one of the collections of *ḥadīth*, (pl. *aḥādīth*) *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, in the Book of Marriage, recorded "that the Prophet married her when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage when she was nine years old" (al-Bukhārī n.d.). Some scholars contend that the age signifies that she had reached physical maturity according to that time in history (Brown 2014: 142–3; Barlas 2002: 125–126).

Those who are interested in understanding ʿĀʾisha often problematise her age at marriage, the conflict with ʿAlī, and the infamous *ḥadīth al-ifk* (the incident of the lie) or accusation of adultery. *Ḥadīth al-ifk* refers to rumours that ʿĀʾisha was unfaithful and had committed adultery with Ṣafwān ibn Muʿaṭṭal. One of the most infamous examples is a controversial fictional novel by Sherry Jones, *The Jewel of Medina* (2008). This fictional book was inspired by Islamic history but has twists to suit the author's interests (see Larsson 2015: 104), depicting ʿĀʾisha negatively including emphasising her special relationship with Ṣafwān (Jones 2008: 178–179). Sunnī Muslims, however, believe that ʿĀʾisha was innocent and falsely accused.

The Prophet's marriage to ʿĀʾisha is important for Sunnī Muslims as it has often been mentioned as one of the signs that Muḥammad desired Abū Bakr as his successor, rather than his cousin ʿAlī ibn ʾAbī Ṭālib, as Shīʿī Muslims believe (see Thurlkill 2010: 91). Her status as the wife of Muḥammad in addition to her intelligence have positioned ʿĀʾisha as one of the main references for the Muslim community, especially Sunnī Muslims. ʿĀʾisha's authority originated from the fact that she was present during the lifetime of the Prophet and witnessed the life of the Prophet, the living role model of ideal persona for all Muslims. During her lifetime, ʿĀʾisha was one of the principal transmitters of *ḥadīth* (see Stowasser 1997).

ʿĀʾisha took an active role in political affairs. She was involved in the first civil war among Muslims after Muḥammad's death. The opponents of ʿĀʾisha's political activities have criticised her involvement in the Battle of the Camel in 656, a battle named after the camel that ʿĀʾisha rode during the battle between her and ʿAlī. Progressive Muslim scholars, activist women, and Islamic feminists, on the other hand, emphasise ʿĀʾisha's venture into the political arena as evidence of women's full participation in early Muslim society. As Leila Ahmed contends, "her venture is itself a sign of the community's acceptance of women as capable of leadership and is important in that it even occurred" (1992: 74).

Shīʿī Muslims have perceived the battle between ʿĀʾisha and ʿAlī differently to Sunnī Muslims. Many Shīʿīs consider her as an opponent of Shīʿī's first *imām* (a leader of Muslim community) and the fourth caliph, Imām ʿAlī. They often contrast ʿĀʾisha's position to other important figures from the Prophet's household, especially his daughter Fāṭima. Mary Thurlkill notes that Shīʿites have argued that Fāṭima's importance transcends that of her mother, Khadīja, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and ʿĀʾisha (2010: 19). Within Shīʿī hagiographical tradition, Fāṭima is depicted as a woman with theological authority, prophetic insight and the mother of Shīʿī *imāmate* (*umm al-āʾimma*) (Thurlkill 2010; Ruffle 2020). She has continuously become the source of emulation for

contemporary Shīʿī women, including Shīʿī Islamic feminists (Fazaeli 2017: 61). Besides Fāṭima, Shīʿīs also often juxtapose ʿĀʾisha with another wife of the Prophet Muḥammad, Umm Salama (Spellberg 1991: 51). However, the records suggest Umm Salama did not enjoy as much influence on Islam as did ʿĀʾisha: "compilers have enumerated between 1,500 and 2,400 *hadith* for which ʿAisha is the first authority. Umm Salama, though a distant second, contributed between 175 and 375 reports" (Sayeed 2015: 25).

The position of ʿĀʾisha against other women within the Prophet Muḥammad's circle signifies that the early contestation between Sunnī and Shīʿa did not only involve male successors of the Prophet Muḥammad, but also debates regarding the leading female religious authority for the Muslim community. Among Shīʿī, including contemporary Shīʿī activist women, Fāṭima's daughter Zaynab bint ʿAlī has also become a role model of ideal womanhood. Lara Deeb records in the context of ʿĀshūrāʿ, the annual commemoration marking the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn, that "lay women focus on Zaynab as the dominant female figure of Ashura, emphasizing her presence at the battle and her role as the community's leader following Husayn's martyrdom" (2006: 32).

2.1   *Aftermath of the Death of the Prophet*

In the aftermath of the death of the Prophet Muḥammad and women within his circles, the central orthodoxy of Islam became increasingly patriarchal. This pattern can be seen in various Islamic traditions. Within Ṣūfī tradition, for example, Ṣūfī biographies and hagiographical literature often mention Ṣūfī women as spiritual guides, saints, and *muḥibbāt* (lovers), especially in the ninth to eleventh centuries, before the institutionalisation and development of *ṭuruq* (Ṣūfi orders) in the twelfth century (Krokus and Catharina 2020). The most notable of them was Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. 801). Later, patriarchal traditions linked to social propriety became the main opposition to the leadership of Ṣūfī women and their ability to become *pīrs* (spiritual leaders).

One major concern within the Muslim community has been the way classical literature within Islamic literary genres, including within the development of the Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), emphasises gender differences between women and men. The premodern era gave birth to Muslim theologians and jurists who interpreted the Qurʾān through patriarchal perspectives. Indeed, during that period Qurʾānic exegesis can be regarded as having a significantly male prerogative. The socio-political contexts of the later era within the Islamic world, embedded in patriarchal societies, have influenced the products of Qurʾānic exegesis and the emergence of misogynistic *ḥadīth*. Fatima Mernissi (1998), a Moroccan feminist sociologist, in her criticism of some companions

of the Prophet and male Muslim scholars, like Abū Hurayra (d. 678), al-Bukhārī (810–870), and their misogynistic *ḥadīth* narrations and collections, emphasises how these early Muslim scholars misinterpreted, and sometimes incompletely presented, Islamic sources on the position of women. A *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī's collection mentions "Three things bring bad luck: house, women, and horse," as Imām al-Zarkashī (745–794) records:

> They told ʿĀʾisha that Abu Hurayra was asserting that the Messenger of God said: 'Three things bring bad luck: house, woman, and horse.' ʿĀʾisha responded: 'Abu Hurayra learned his lessons very badly. He came into our house when the Prophet was in the middle of a sentence. He only heard the end of it. What the Prophet said was: "May God refute the Jews; they say three things bring bad luck: house, woman, and horse"'.
>
> quoted in MERNISSI 1998: 123

Aisha Geissinger (2015) in her work mentions how after the era of the Prophet's wives, Muslims witnessed a decrease of women in the domain of exegetical roles. Karen Bauer (2015) also argues that premodern exegetical works pertaining to certain issues on gender and hierarchy have influenced modern interpretations of the Qurʾān and the later exegetes. Therefore, modern conservative readings of the Qurʾān maintain the views of medieval exegetes by emphasising that women are equal but different, due to their 'natural' qualities. The most common pattern within early exegetical work was that male exegetes influenced by patriarchal forces dominated the discussion of women.

The Qurʾānic exegeses by women can be found in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the most important figures in this context is ʿĀʾisha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (1913–1998), the wife of renowned Egyptian scholar Amīn al-Khūlī (1895–1966), known by her pseudonym Bint al-Shāṭiʾ (Daughter of the Shore). Bint al-Shāṭiʾ was an exceptional scholar in the Arab world who published more than sixty books, including those on Qurʾānic exegesis (see Boulatta 1974). As one of the first Muslim women to focus her work on Qurʾānic exegesis, she has become an inspiration for many Muslims, including Islamic feminists (Roded 2006: 51). During her lifetime she never declared herself a feminist; indeed, her depictions of the wives within the prophet's household are considered as problematic (see al-Shati 1961). Ruth Roded argues that when Bint al-Shāṭiʾ portrayed the Prophet's wives, "there are stereotypical depictions of women's petty jealousy that would hardly be considered feminist, the author raises a common feminist claim—that the perception of women's lives by male authors will always be lacking because they are 'ignorant of

female instinct'" (2006: 52). However, Roded contends that her lecture titled *al-Mafhūm al-Islāmy li Taḥrīr al-Marʾah* published in 1967 was often considered proof that Bint al-Shāṭiʾ was, in fact, a forerunner of Islamic feminism (2006).

3   Muslim Women during Premodern and Colonial Eras

The discussion of women and Islamic movements need not to neglect the non-Arab premodern era. The main inspirations for later Muslim women activists and their Muslim women's organisations, were not only women of the Prophet Muḥammad's household but also non-Arab premodern era female figures, including female rulers in the premodern era (see Reid 1988: 640; Andaya 2006). In South Asia, Sultana Raziya of the Delhi Sultanate (c. 1236–1240), as the only female ruler of the premodern age in the Indian subcontinent, has often been mentioned as a role model (Brijbhushan 1990). Following this, the role of women in the early Mughal Empire was an important inspiration for later women activists (Lal 2005). Southeast Asia witnessed the presence of the first Muslim queen or *sultana*, Sultana Taj al-Alam Safiyat al-Din Syah, who reigned between 1641 and 1675. Taj al-Alam has been described as "a devout patron of Islam who only spoke to European men from behind a curtain" (Andaya 2006: 167). Later in the nineteenth century, Tjoet Nja Dien (c. 1848–1908) and Tjoet Nja Meuthia (1870–1910) were also known as Muslim female warriors and national heroines in the archipelago who fought against the Dutch and became role models for later generations (see Clavé 2020: 109).

Mernissi (1993) has listed fifteen queens across the Islamic empires and how their roles broke the chains of patriarchal norms which suggest that women's access to power can lead to chaos. Mernissi recorded that women were often excluded from being appointed for religious authority, however in the domain of political authority history demonstrates that they were present, such as *sultana* within the Mamluks in Egypt, and *malika* (queen) within Yemeni dynasties. The presence of these female rulers, however, has not had a significant effect in reforming the prevalent discourses pertaining to the patriarchal reading of religious texts.

Further across Muslim-majority countries, the position of women in Islam was one of the main aspects attacked by colonial powers. Thus, issues pertaining to Muslim women's rights and their status were also part of an imperialist agenda. In many Muslim majority countries, the anti-colonial period was not an easy time for Muslim women who fought for women's rights because they were under pressure to conform to anti-colonialist and nationalist agendas. As Ziba Mir-Hosseini notes, "for anti-colonialists and most nationalists,

feminism—that is, advocacy of women's rights—was a colonialist project that had to be resisted" (2006: 639). The complicated situation faced by Muslim women during that period was depicted in Ahmed's expression as a dilemmatic choice "between betrayal and betrayal" (1984) referring to the way early feminists were in limbo between being loyal to their Muslim identity so that they were not accused of cultural betrayal and betrayal to their new gender awareness. As Ahmed puts it, "it is precisely the matter of cultural loyalty that, currently skilfully manipulated in militantly Islamic societies, is behind such bizarre phenomena as women marching and protesting, in the name of cultural authenticity, in support of the revoking of their own rights" (1984: 121–2).

4 Women's Rights Consciousness and Islamic Feminism

The patriarchal reading of religious texts during the premodern era has had a significant influence on Muslim communities in the modern period, particularly relating to the status of women in Islam. This includes domestic seclusion, gender segregation, and educational access. Muslim women have recognised the problems pertaining to embedded patriarchal readings of religious texts, but it is also noteworthy that men have been important figures in struggle for female emancipation. Mernissi praises Imām al-Zarkashī, for example, who acknowledged ʿĀ'isha's contribution to the development of ḥadīth (1998: 124).

The discussion of Muslim women and their movement for rights cannot be separated from the role of modernist movements in different parts of the Islamic world, from the Ottoman Tanzimat's (1839–1876) efforts to address gender inequalities, which can be se seen in the first establishment of secondary school for girls in 1858, to the presence of modernists in the Arab world in the late nineteenth century, such as Rifāʿah Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873) and his disciple, Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905). ʿAbduh focused on defending women's rights and their status, especially in the domain of providing them access to education and preventing arbitrary polygamy. ʿAbduh was very strict about the practice of polygamy and called for polygamy abolition (see ʿAbduh n.d.: 117–118). ʿAbduh's disciple, Qāsim Amīn (1863–1908) was also one of the most important writers calling for women's issues in Egypt. The later generation of male progressive thinkers have also contributed to the discussion of gender equality, such as Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988), Mohammad Arkoun (1928–2010), Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943–2010), Muhammad Shahrour (1938–2019), Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari (b. 1936), Abdulkarim Soroush (b. 1945), Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim (b. 1946), and Khaled Abou el-Fadl (b. 1963) (see Mir-Hosseini 2016: 70).

Along with this, the rise of women's rights consciousness or "feminist consciousness," to borrow Margot Badran's phrase, can be seen in many Muslim societies from the late nineteenth century. Egypt is especially important in the discussion of women's activists, feminists and their movements. Many scholars, including Badran, have argued, that "the feminist movement in Egypt, in many ways, was prototypical of secular feminist activism elsewhere in the Muslim world in the first half of the twentieth century" (2019). To begin with, Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif (1886–1918), the first woman in Egypt to become a teacher, is known as one of the early feminist writers in the country (Yousef 2011: 70). Nāṣif experienced gender discrimination firsthand. Receiving a diploma in 1900, she was banned from teaching after her marriage. This condition, however, did not stop her activities. She was active in contributing articles in *al-Jarīdah*—a liberal/nationalist paper initiated by Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid, the founder of the Ḥizb al-Umma (Umma Party) (Yousef 2011: 73), writing under her pen name Bāḥithah al-Bādiyah (The Searcher of the Desert). In 1911, Nāṣif listed feminist demands to the Muslim nationalist congress in Heliopolis which was conveyed without her presence, because at the time women in Egypt were not permitted to appear in public in front of men. Some of the points mentioned in the demands related to women's freedom to participate in congregational prayer in mosques, females' access to education and work, reforms of the Muslim Personal status code, as well as broader socio-religious reforms (Yousef 2011: 71). In 1914, Nāṣif and other women, including another feminist leader Hudā Shaʿrāwī, founded the Women's Refinement Union (al-Ittiḥād al-Nisāʾī al-Tahdhībī) and the Ladies Literary Improvement (Jamʿīyat al-Raqy al-Adabīyah li-al-Sayyidāt al-Miṣrīyat). Nāṣif died of Spanish influenza when she was thirty-two years old. Her work was then continued by Hudā Shaʿrāwī.

Hudā Shaʿrāwī (1879–1947) was known as one of Egypt's feminist leaders. Continuing Nāṣif's struggle, Hudā formed the first explicitly feminist organisation in Egypt, the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923 (Badran 1995: 37). Active in the Egyptian public sphere during the time leading to the nationalist Revolution, Shaʿrāwī was also involved in the movement for Egypt's nationalist Revolution from 1919 to 1922 (see Kahf 1998: 53). Before her death in 1947, Shaʿrāwī was appointed as the president of the Arab Feminist Union founded in 1945. Following Shaʿrāwī, many Muslim women in Egypt and elsewhere also established women's movements. In 1948, for example, Durīyya Shafīq or Doria Shafik (1908–1975) founded *Bint al-Nīl* (Daughter of the Nile), focusing on women's political participation in Egypt and abolishing illiteracy (Blaydes and El Tarouty 2009: 366). Her staunch struggle for political equality and womens' right to vote resulted in the issuance of a new Constitution in 1956 that granted women this right (Blaydes and El Tarouty 2009: 366).

Continuing the struggles of early Muslim feminists, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, feminists began focusing their agenda on women's bodies and sexuality. One of the most famous feminists and women activists working on women's bodies and sexuality is Nawāl al-Saʿdāwī or El Saadawi who in 1982 founded the Arab Womens' Solidarity Association (Saadawi 1997: 24). al-Saʿdāwī contends:

> We Arab and Muslim Women know that our authentic identity is based on unveiling our minds and not on veiling our faces. We are human beings and not just bodies to be covered (under religious slogans) or to be naked (for consumerism and Western commercial goods). We know that veiling of women is the other side of the coin of nakedness or displaying the body. Both consider women as sex objects (1997: 97).

Mernissi, in her book *Beyond the Veil*, also discusses women's bodies and sexuality, and their relationship with the concept of *fitna* (disorder or chaos). She explores the influence of this concept on women who have been seen as dangerous creatures who produce *fitna* through sexual disorders, thus, need to be controlled through practices such as veiling and seclusion (1987: 31).

4.1   *Islamic Feminism*

Islamic feminism emerged as a discourse rather than a social movement in the last quarter of the twentieth century, particularly from the 1980s and 1990s when it became especially noticeable (Badran 2002). Triggers that have given impetus to the presence of Islamic feminism include the spread of conservative movements, especially Islamist movements, and disappointment with secular authoritarianism (Badran 2005: 9; Schröter 2017: 116). Badran argues:

> The basic argument of Islamic feminism is that the Qurʾān affirms the principle of quality of all human beings but that the practice of equality of women and men (and other categories of people) has been impeded or subverted by patriarchal ideas (ideology) and practices. Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh*, consolidated in its classical form in the 9th century, was itself heavily saturated with the patriarchal thinking and behaviours of the day (2002).

Thus, Islamic feminism can be regarded as a new approach to the gender-egalitarian interpretation of Islamic religious texts, usually known as a discourse focusing on women-sensitive rereading of religious sources, especially the Qurʾān.

The product of patriarchal readings of religious texts, as Badran mentioned, has strengthened those who argue that Islam is the signature cause of women's troubles. Bronwyn Winter, for example, who rejects progressive readings of Islam, contends "all monotheistic religious texts as oppressive to women" (Winter 2001: 12). She calls those who embrace progressive rereading of the texts—which can be seen as a latter product of progressive Muslim thinkers as—"apologists." She argues, "Scholars following the apologist framework claim that Islam made things better for women, but the fundamentalists misinterpret it—which corresponds roughly to the 'multiculturalist' discourse— or that the Quran is open to interpretation, and feminist interpretations can be made—which corresponds roughly to the 'pluralist discourse'" (2001: 13).

The spirit of Islamic feminism in the 1980s can be seen in the development of Muslim feminist solidarity networks and organisations. One of the earliest is Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) which was founded in 1984 by women from Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. In the context of Islamic feminism, women's activists, including a few men, in Iran had been considered as important agents of this new wave. These activists and thinkers published their thoughts on gender justice in Islam in *Zanan*, a journal founded in 1992 by Shahla Sherkat. Indeed, *Zanan* was an important publication which had initiated the use of Islamic feminism. It is noteworthy that the main writers of *Zanan* offering gender justice perspective between 1992 and 2008 were men (Fazaeli 2017: 59). Sherkat and her colleagues used *Zanan* as their platform for Islamic readings of gender equality and justice. This phenomenon can be seen in other countries, such as Sisters in Islam, a Malaysian based nongovernmental organisation mainly of Malay Muslim professional women, founded in Malaysia in the late 1980s and formally registered in 1993 (Basarudin 2016: 4, 12), and Musawah (Equality), a "Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family" founded in 2007 and was officially launched in Kuala Lumpur in 2009.

Some most often mentioned figures in this context who have focused their attention on rereading the Qurʾān are Amina Wadud, Rifaat Hasan, Fatima Naseer, Aziza al-Hibri and Shaheen Sardar Ali. Wadud, an African-American theologian, has been known as a main figure in the rereading of the Qurʾān (see Badran 2001: 50; see Wadud 2006). Two seminal treatises considered to be foundational texts of Islamic feminism are Wadud's *Qurʿān and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* and Pakistani-American scholar Barlas' *'Believing Women': Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qurʿān.*

Although this movement has inspired many other Muslim women's movements across the globe, it is noteworthy that the term "Islamic feminism" has

been highly contested and even explicitly rejected by some Muslim women activists and scholars. Asma Barlas, for example, has been critical about being labelled as feminist due to its ethnocentric undertones. Barlas responded to Badran's "Islamic feminism" in her "Four Stages of Denial or my On-again, Off-again, Affair with Feminism" (2008: 16). Barlas contends, "So, when we call something Islamic feminism we close off the possibility of seeing it as anything else and it is this closure that I find problematic. When we ignore how people choose to name themselves, their work, and their struggles, we necessarily do some epistemic violence to them" (2008: 21–22).

Haideh Moghissi is another one of the scholars who has been critical of the Islamic feminist project (see also Schröter 2017: 128). In her work she asks a question, "'Islamic feminism' is connected with the question of the compatibility of feminism with Islamic teaching and scripture, and the social and legal frameworks which have evolved in Islamic societies. How could a religion which is based on gender hierarchy be adopted as the framework for struggle for gender democracy and women's equality with men?" (1999: 126). Further, she argues:

> Feminism's core idea is that women and men are biologically different, but this difference should not be translated into an unequal valuation of women's and men's experience; biology should not lead to differences in legal status, the privileging of one over the other. This idea is diametrically opposed to the basic principles of Islam ... the Qur'ān makes men 'the managers (*Qawwamoun*) of the affairs of women', because 'God has made the one to excel over the other', assigning men the task of admonishing women when they fear they may be rebellious (1999: 140).

Therefore, she believes that, gender equality is alien to Islam 'essence' and the basic principles of Islam as mentioned in the texts. The exponents of Islamic feminism undoubtedly criticise Moghissi's position. Ahmad, for example, argues, "Islam has no essence; hence a non-patriarchal reading of Islam is plausible. It is my contention that it is not the Qur'ān *per se*, which legitimates gender hierarchy, but the person making interpretation thereof and the context in which it is done" (2008: 551).

It is important to note despite the presence of scholars criticising Islamic feminism, the discourse, movement, and its spirit of gender-just rereading of Islamic texts have spread across the world. Many Muslim women who lack understanding and knowledge of gender just interpretations of the Qur'ān and other religious texts, however, are still unfamiliar with their agenda (Nisa 2019: 441). In addition, within the Muslim-majority countries, the widely spread

assumption is that women's activism, in particular feminists including Islamic feminists, are promoting foreign Western ideas which are at odds with Islamic values. Therefore, although it is regarded as a transnational movement, this progressive movement has not gained significant appeal for Muslim women. The following section will focus on Islamic movements and their women's wings to cater to their female constituents.

5   Muslim Women and Moderate Movements

Women belonging to diverse Islamic movements have contributed greatly in the development of democracy and better gender relations (see Robinson 2008 regarding Indonesia). Robinson provides a crucial study on the important position of women activists as agents of reform and leading players in the fall of the authoritarian New Order regime in May 1998, a regime of hegemonic masculinity. Unfortunately, the end of the New Order was not the end of women's domination and inferiority. Robinson argues, "Politicized Islam has emerged as an important force in the democratic atmosphere of the Reform period. Islamic voices that had been subdued under the New Order have found a public stage" (2008: 165).

Issues dealt by women's activists of Islamic movements mirror those belonging to Islamic feminism or secular feminism, such as access to and development of women's education, polygamy, forced marriages and child brides. Different contexts, however, have different foci due to the specific and localised nature of their problems. Therefore, some of the issues confronted by women of the Middle East and North Africa, like the removal of the face-veil, are not issues faced by Muslim women in Asia where face-covering is not the norm. Another example can be seen from the system of *purdah* or female seclusion which is observed especially within the Indian subcontinent (Minaut and Papanek 1982). In addition, the characteristics of diverse expressions of Islam in different contexts have also coloured women's activism. For example, the development of Ṣūfism in South Asia has led to the high presence of women's participation in devotional activities at Ṣūfi shrines, which are central within Ṣūfi tradition (Abbas 2002). Indeed, the presence of women holding authority as *pīrs* has increased in the subcontinent (Pemberton 2006).

Women within moderate circles in Muslim majority countries have successfully established their women's wings and, in certain contexts, demonstrated their independence in responding to issues pertaining to women. They do not always echo the views of men within the organisations. The presence of

women's wings within moderate mainstream Muslim organisations, can be seen in the world's largest Muslim majority country, Indonesia. Indonesia has two of the largest Muslim mass organisations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) founded in 1926, and Muhammadiyah established in 1912. Both organisations have female wings ranging from female student associations to adult women associations.

Within the organisational structure of NU, women's organisations are part of its autonomous bodies. Muslimat NU is known as a NU women's organisation, Fatayat as a NU young women's organisation, and IPPNU (Ikatan Pelajar Putri Nahdlatul Ulama or NU School Girls Organisation) as a NU female students' association (Bush 2009: 15). Each of these female organisations has its own specialities and agenda which might overlap or differ from one another. Despite being widely known as a moderate Islamic organisation, NU is still rooted in patriarchal norms, which is evident in the position of women within the highest organisational structure of NU, PBNU (Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama, Executive Board of NU). Muslim women within NU have continuously voiced their concerns pertaining to the position of women in the highest level of NU's leadership structure, PBNU. They have demanded revision to NU's constitution to allow women representatives at the PBNU level (Bush 2009: 159). Women activists within NU organisations, especially Fatayat NU, have long been regarded as progressive women (Arnez 2010: 81). Belonging to an Islamic movement, Fatayat has been inspired by and actively collaborated with other progressive scholars, including Islamic feminists, such as Amina Wadud, Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Asma Barlas, Margot Badran, Amina Rasul, and Vivien Wie, (Nadjib 2019). Fatayat, according to Schröter, "have taken on leading roles in the further development and localization of ideas taken from Islamic feminism" (2017: 126).

Muhammadiyah, usually known as a reformist and modernist Islamic organisation in Indonesia, also has affiliated women's organisations. The women's section of Muhammadiyah is called Aisyiyah and was initially led by the wife of founder, Nyai Ahmad Dahlan. Aisyiyah can be regarded as Muhammadiyah's version of Muslimat NU. The equivalent to Fatayat is Nasyiatul Aisyiyah. The term 'Aisyiyah' was intentionally adopted from ʿĀʾisha, the Prophet Muḥammad's wife. As mentioned above, the roles of the wives and women within the family of the Prophet Muḥammad have continuously been the main inspiration for later women's activism and their movements. Similar to Fatayat, the agenda of Nasyiatul Aisyiyah is also more progressive than Aisyiyah. Nasyiatul Aisyiyah has experienced moments when it has opposed Aisyiyah, which has been more conservative when engaging

with gender issues. Syamsiyatun records, "Some Aisyiyah women even tried to block the spread of the gender 'virus' among Aisyiyah by not allowing Nasyiah women to talk about gender issues within Aisyiyah's *pengajian* [Islamic study group]" (2007: 87).

The dynamics within these women's wings of Islamic movements come from the brand of moderate (*wasatiyya*) Islam in their given country, demonstrating that different positions pertaining to various women's issues can be seen even within one organisation (see also Van Doorn-Harder 2006). The following section will focus on women and their organisations within the circle of more conservative movements, especially Islamist movements.

6   Muslim Women and Conservative Movements

Earlier in the section on Islamic feminism, this chapter mentions that the discourse of Islamic feminism initially emerged as part of the response of activists and thinkers to the rise of conservative movements, including Salafism and diverse Islamist movements. Notably, some began attaching themselves to diverse Islamist movements at the same time as when other Muslim women were attracted to feminist activism. Mounira Charrad, in her study on gender in the Middle East, argues that due to better access to education and the end of colonialism in many Muslim countries in the 1980s, Muslim women's movements could be seen flourishing (2011: 425) including those of Islamist movements. Echoing other scholarly positions, such as the position of Ahmed mentioned above, Charrad argues, "Although some may come close to it, most groups differentiate themselves from Western feminism, which has been perceived in the region as a legacy of colonialism and Western hegemony, having little relevance to the Middle East" (2011: 425). This section focuses on the most current scholarly concerns on the growing presence of women becoming part of diverse conservative and Islamist movements and their parties.

6.1   *Salafism*
Salafism is the oldest root of many conservative and revivalist movements, including diverse Islamist movements that have also been inspired by some Salafi ideologies in their understandings of Islam. It is noteworthy that throughout its development, there have been many groups identifying as belonging to Salafism, especially traditionalist Salafism. Scholars (Wiktorowicz 2006; Meijer 2009) often mention the three major factions: purist, political, and jihadi. The position of women within diverse Salafi movements and groups can be seen not only within Muslim majority countries (Nisa 2012, 2013, 2014; Inge 2016;

Tønnessen 2016; Kolman 2017). My work focuses on Salafi women within purist and political Salafism—to borrow Wiktorowicz's classification—in Indonesia. I analyse the agency of young Salafi women in Indonesia living under specific strict Salafi understandings of Islam, including the injunction that women should ideally wear face-veils (Ind. *cadar*) to guard their morality (2012: 367).

The struggle of these Salafi women to defend their conservative understandings of Islam can be seen in Muslim majority and Western countries. Liv Tønnessen (2016), for example, concentrates on the political agency of Salafi women in Sudan in their fight against the state's understanding of gender mixing (in Tunisia see Kolman 2017). Anabel Inge (2016) analyses the life of young, British Salafi women and their process of conversion, as well as the constraints they face when negotiating between their Salafi identity and Western lifestyle (on Moroccan-Dutch Salafi women, see de Koning 2009). These scholarly works emphasise the important role played by Salafi women within diverse Salafi groups not only by supporting the strict conservative Salafi understandings of women's positions in Islam, but also in strengthening their movements by inviting others to uphold the same strict understandings of Islam.

6.2   *Muslim Brotherhood*

The most famous Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn), founded by Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–1949) in 1928, also has a female wing that supports the agenda of the movement, including veiling and the main role of women being in the home. The Muslim Brotherhood is known as "the parent body and main inspiration for many Islamist organizations in Egypt and several other Arab countries" (Ayubi et al 2019). Women's mobility in the public arena was part of al-Bannā's concern, which can be found in his article published in 1940 entitled "*Risālah al Marʾa al Muslima*" (Tadros 2011: 90). He warns of the danger of women's mobility: "This fascistic mingling of sexes among us in schools, institutes ... all of this is foreign goods which have absolutely no relation to Islam and has had the worst effects in our social life" (quoted in Tadros 2011: 91). Al-Bannā argues, "the difference between man and woman in rights is attributable to their different natures and in accordance with the different roles assigned to each" (quoted in Tadros 2011: 91). Indeed, al-Bannā's view on different gender roles have been echoed by many Islamists. Mir-Hosseini, for example, uses the term 'neotraditionalist' or 'neo*fiqh*' to refer to a new gender discourse written mostly by men to oppose Western concepts of gender equality (2016: 68). They use the concepts of 'equity' and 'complementarity' to emphasise the human nature of men and women (2016: 69).

One of the most prominent women within the Muslim Brotherhood's circle was Zaynab al-Ghazālī (1917–2005). Al-Ghazālī initially joined Hudā Shaʿrāwī's

Egyptian Feminist Union until she became "disaffected" and decided to construct her own association for pious Muslim women (Cooke 1994: 2). Later, al-Ghazālī was known as a fierce opponent of feminist movements and a promoter of conservative understandings of Islam. At the age of eighteen, al-Ghazālī founded the Jamāʿat al-Sayyidāt al-Muslimāt (Muslim Women's Association) (Hoffman 2019). Supporting the agenda of the Islamist movement, she "maintained that women should have important public roles as long as it was in the defense of Islam and traditional Islamic values" (Ayubi et al 2019). As the most powerful female figure within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, al-Ghazālī also experienced imprisonment. She shared her experiences in her memoir written in 1977 (Al-Ghazali 1994).

The Muslim Brotherhood spread through the Arab world, opposing the female vote and coeducation in the 1940s and 1950s (Tadros 2011: 92). Later, however, they proposed a reform of the status of women, maintaining their emphasis that women's domestic responsibilities should be centre stage. Their position that women's domestic responsibilities are their 'noble tasks' and 'noble missions' has been maintained. The Muslim Brotherhood's election platform of 2006, states that, "We must not forget that the woman has a noble and significant task entrusted to her by Allah Almighty, child bearing and motherhood ... these duties must be given precedence over other responsibilities ... However, the husband has a right to permit his wife to work" (quoted in Tadros 2011: 92). Permission from one's husband has become the main gate for a woman to become active in public, outside of the home.

6.3   *Beyond the Muslim Brotherhood*

Following women within the Muslim Brotherhood's circle, this kind of Islamist movement has attracted a large number of young women, especially since the 1970s. One of their main role models has been al-Ghazālī. Valerie Hoffman contends, "Zaynab al-Ghazali stands out thus far as the only woman to distinguish herself as one of its major leaders" (Hoffman 2019). During the last quarter of the twentieth century, many Muslim-majority countries started to witness the rise of Islamist movements along with a broader resurgence of piety. This phenomenon also attracted many women to Islamist movements, such as those in Indonesia, Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Palestine, Pakistan, Jordan, and Yemen.

Many Islamist movements have been inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, including Jamāʾat-I Islāmī (The Islamic Party) which shares the Brotherhood's ideology (Ayubi et al 2019). Jamāʾat-I Islāmī, one of the oldest transnational Islamist movements, was founded in Lahore in 1941 by Islamist thinker and activist, Mawlānā Sayyid Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī. Its wide appeal can be seen among Muslim men and women not only in South Asia, but also in East Asia

and the Middle East, North America, the UK, and other parts of Europe (Jamal 2009: 10). Sharing the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology in many aspects pertaining to women, Mawdūdī, like al-Bannā, also ruled that women have to veil themselves because women's body is a source of *fitna*, entry to the public domain can cause immorality, and he was against women's political roles (Ahmad 2008: 549). He was also against women becoming rulers, and quoted a *ḥadīth*, "A nation which handed over its affairs [of state] to a woman would never prosper" (Ahmad 2008: 557). Similarly to the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamā'at-I Islāmī has also experienced some reforms pertaining to the status of women, especially from the 1970s onwards (Ahmad 2008: 549). Differing to the founder, the later generation believed that women should be allowed to leave their homes. In the early twentieth century, Muslim women began to be seen in modern politics and Jamā'at-I Islāmī started allowing female membership (Ahmad 2008: 558). The women's wing of Jamā'at-I Islāmī was developed in the 1950s. Similar to other Islamist women, they emphasise a return to Islam as the answer to moral decadence due to the infiltration of Western culture (Jamal 2009: 11). It is noteworthy that they are not anti-modernity (Jamal 2009: 12).

Another transnational Islamist movement, Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), was founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (1909–1977). With a main agenda to establish a global caliphate with non-violent methods. Women within Hizb ut-Tahrir are active in voicing their concerns pertaining to women and family issues. They are also active in using diverse media, including social media, to voice their concerns. Orofino, in her work on Muslimah Hizb ut-Tahrir in Australia, argues that the women are very active in this movement which has successfully appealed to young girls and has continuously contributed to the movement's agenda (2018: 277). Muslimah Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, the women's division of the Indonesian chapter of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which was banned in 2017, also emphasises the vital role of women in preparing a pious young Muslim generation so that the *khairu umma* (the best Muslim community) can be realised (Nisa 2014a: 145).

Lately, many scholars have focused their attention on elucidating why women's participation in Islamist movements and their parties have increased through time. Indeed, the transformation of diverse Islamist movements in adopting a more pragmatic approach, which might be seen as sacrificing their core ideological commitments for political gain, has created supportive environments for encouraging the presence of women. The literature on the inclusion-moderation hypothesis in analysing the strategies of some Islamist parties and their political actors signifies a tendency to be more inclusive and suggests their democratic commitment as a response to political opportunities

(see Bayat 2013; Tezcur 2010; Hasan 2013), including issues pertaining to the position of women in politics.

Today, women within Islamist parties have more influence. They are present within the ranks of political parties which adopt Islamist ideology (see Clark and Schwedler 2003; Arat 2005 on women within an Islamist Refah party in Turkey; Rinaldo 2013 on women within an Indonesian Islamist party, the Prosperous Justice Party). Clark and Schwedler, for example, focusing their work on women's activists in Islamist groups in Jordan, Jabhat al-ʿAmal al-Islāmī (Islamic Action Front, or IAF) and Yemen, Tajammuʿ al-Yamanī li al-Iṣlāḥ (Yemeni Reform Group), argue that in 1989 and 1990 these two largest Islamist groups expressed a strong opposition to the full and equal political participation of women, however, a decade later they demonstrated that the parties have women in their highest decision making bodies (Clark and Schwedler 2003: 308–9).

6.4   *Tablīghī Jamāʿat*

Besides the involvement of women and political Islam, women have also been the backbone of other Islamic resurgence movements, which are often considered apolitical or movements which strive to stay away from political controversies (see also Sikand 2006). Tablīghī Jamāʿat is an example of this current. Tablīghī Jamāʿat was founded in 1926 in Mewat by Mawlānā Muḥammad Ilyās (1885–1944).

Tablīghī Jamāʿat's views of women is similar to those of other conservative movements, especially Salafism. Although women are active in diverse Tablīghī activities, they have to observe a specific standard of morality, such covering their bodies properly during Tablīghī activities by donning a face-veil. This includes the main core activity of Tablīghī Jamāʿat, *khurūj* (going out of one's own neighbourhood to proselytise) (Nisa 2014b: 470; see also Metcalf 1998, 2009). Mirroring views of *ʿulamāʾ* (Muslim clerics) within Islamist movements, Tablīghī *ʿulamāʾ* initially did not approve women's *khurūj* "arguing that this was 'an age of great disorder' with women going out of their homes without covering themselves 'properly', and that *tabligh* tours might actually be used by women as an 'excuse' for 'turning towards freedom'" (Sikand 1999: 43). However, Ilyās' continuous effort to seek approval from Tablīghī Jamāʿat's elites to allow women to participate in Tablīghī work finally received a positive response, and nowadays, Tablīghī women are as active as their male counterparts. They participate in *khurūj* as long as they are accompanied by their *maḥram*, especially their husband or other close male kin from their immediate family (Nisa 2014b: 482).

My work on Tablīghī Jamāʿat in Indonesia, which can be regarded as one of the biggest branches of this movement, demonstrates the appeal of this

movement not only to Muslims from underserved communities, but also urban middle and high-class wealthy women (Nisa 2011: 135) and school aged girls who are willing to learn the basic teachings of Tablīghī Jamāʿat through the growing presence of Tablīghī Islamic boarding schools (Nisa 2014b: 468). The involvement of women of privileged backgrounds questions the common stereotype of Tablīghī Jamāʿat women, who are commonly seen as women strictly wearing face-veils, hence they are often portrayed as oppressed women. Indeed, the involvement of these women from privileged social backgrounds signifies that "their passion to return to the true path of Islam and the commitments it embodies have made them aware of their capacity to exercise agency within the movement's structuring conditions" (Amrullah 2011: 135). They have been active in recruiting and sustaining the movement, especially women's Tablīghī networks.

7   Conclusion

This chapter does not aim to be exhaustive and cover all issues pertaining to women and Islamic movements. The chapter begins with a historical overview of the position of important female figures in Islam, especially those of the Prophet Muḥammad's circle, who later became the main inspiration for women in diverse movements ranging from Islamic to Islamist movements. One important point in the discussion of women and their activism, including their attachment to diverse Islamic and Islamist movements, is how they frame their attachment in the name of religious language. Both Islamic feminists and conservative women, for example, return to the Qurʾān and position women within the Prophet Muḥammad's circle as their sources of inspiration to justify their activism. In this context, Abu Zayd's remark resonates with the phenomenon in which he said, "the Quran is at the mercy of the ideology of its interpreter. For a communist, the Quran would thus reveal communism, for a fundamentalist it would be a highly fundamentalist text, for a feminist it would be a feminist text, and so on" (2006: 91). The wide spectrum of the position of women and their activism reminds us not only of their diverse opinions, but also that different contexts can lead to different expressions of Muslim activism. Therefore, in studying Muslim women, there is no such thing as a global context. This chapter demonstrates how some Islamist women support gender hierarchy, while at the same time, Islamic feminists and progressive Muslim thinkers strive to fight against gender hierarchy.

Any discussions pertaining to women cannot neglect the position of men. Deeply rooted patriarchal understandings of religious texts have been prevalent in diverse religious traditions, including Islam. On the other hand,

throughout the history of Muslim women's activism, we can see that women have worked in collaboration with modernist male Muslims toward emancipation and gender justice. Similar to women within the circles of Islamic feminism and those who belong to diverse Islamic movements that support gender just interpretations of the Qurʾān and other religious texts, women who have become active in women's wings within Salafist and diverse Islamist movements, also produce or echo their male counterparts' readings and rereadings of the Qurʾān and other religious texts. While women within diverse Islamic movements, including those of Islamic feminist movements, emphasise gender equality and egalitarian gender roles, Islamist and other conservative women strengthen the concepts of equity and complementarity. The growing presence of women within diverse Islamist movements and their Islamist parties, from Southeast Asia to the Middle East, demonstrate the vital position of women. The moderation of Islamist parties due to their intention to achieve political gain has led to the presence of a positive political atmosphere for Islamist women. Women in diverse Islamist parties have become important strategic and potential agents to gain political gain and enjoy diverse political incentives.

This chapter suggests that anyone who wants to understand Muslim women and their activism within diverse Islamic and Islamist movements must avoid the inclination to make broad and unqualified generalisations. The wide geographical scope covered in this chapter also reminds us of the diversity within Muslim-majority countries. A continuous ideological tension can be seen from one movement or organisation. In addition, women's backgrounds need to be considered when reading their activities, because women from underserved communities might be different from those of more privileged backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to underline the specific socio-cultural economic, and political contexts and orientations of women's activism. Any activism should be understood within contextualised and localised settings with their own dynamics and specifics.

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PART 2

Shīʿa Traditions

∵

Introduction to Part 2

Shīʿa Islam is the second largest group of Muslims after the Sunnīs. An estimated 10–15% of the world's Muslims are Shīʿas. While Sunnīs are a majority in most Muslim-majority countries, a majority of population in Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iran, and Iraq adheres to the Shīʿa faith. Shīʿa Muslims believe that Prophet Muḥammad's family (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and his descendants are the source of religious guidance and leadership (Hazleton 2010). According to Shīʿa traditions, after Muḥammad's death, his cousin ʿAlī became the first *imām*. ʿAlī was married to Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima. Their sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn succeeded ʿAlī as the second and the third *imām*s. Ḥusayn's death at the hands of the army sent by the ruler of the time, Yazid, at Karbalāʾ marks one of the most significant events on the Shīʿa calendar.

The concept of *imāma*, a divinely guided leader of Muslims, is fundamental to the Shīʿa faith (Blankinship et al. 2001). Shīʿa *imām*s are infallible. While all Shīʿas agree on the first three *imām*s, different branches of Shīʿism are divided on their successors (Angeles 2011). An overwhelming majority of Shīʿas in the world today belong to the Twelver sect who believe in twelve divinely guided *imām*s. Each of the *imām*s who followed Ḥusayn was the son of the previous *imām*. The twelfth *imām*, Muḥammad al-Mahdi, went into occultation in 874 CE and will return to establish peace and justice. Ismāʿīlīs believe that it was the seventh *imām*, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, who went into occultation. Bohras believe that the last Fāṭimid Caliph, Abū al-Qāsim, is in hiding awaiting his return. Not all Shīʿa believe in occultation. Some, such as Zaydī and Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs, do not believe in occultation. Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs believe that the *Imāmate* has continued in the form of their leaders, Aga Khan (Gova 2005).

Each of the six chapters in this section explores an aspect of the Shīʿa tradition and demonstrates the diversity and geographic spread. We open with the Twelvers or Imāmiyya Shīʿa, who comprise a considerable portion of the Shīʿa Muslim population today. The history, doctrine, and contemporary challenges of the Zaydīs, Ismāʿīlīs, Dāʾūdī Bohras (Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa), and the Alevīs of Turkey with the ʿAlawīs of Syria. This section closes with an ethnography of the *heyʾatī* movement in modern Iran.

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Imāmiyya Shīʿa (The Twelvers)

Mohammad Fazlhashemi

1   Introduction

Shīʿa is one of the earliest branches within Islam. Shīʿa Muslims today make up
a sizable minority among the Muslims around the world (about 15–20% of all
Muslims). They are spread throughout the Muslim world, but in most coun-
tries, they have a minority position. The exception is countries such as Iran,
Iraq and Lebanon, where Shīʿa Muslims make up a majority of the population.
Shīʿa theological traditions and institutions have developed in parallel with the
Sunnī-dominated theological tradition.

   The shaping of Shīʿa within Islam goes back to a conflict over the succession
after the death of the prophet Muḥammad. Just after he died in 633, a struggle
began between his closest followers that would prove to be of great signifi-
cance for Islam, for the future development of the Muslim realm, and for cre-
ation the tradition of Shīʿa political ideas. The power struggle concerned who
was to succeed Muḥammad as leader of the Muslim community. No one could
succeed him in his capacity as divine messenger since Muḥammad, according
to Islamic doctrine, was the last messenger: "Muḥammad is not the father of
any man among you, but a messenger of God, and the seal of the prophets; and
God is knower of all things" (Qurʾān 33:40).

   One of the parties in the conflict over Muḥammad's successor thought
that the role should be filled by one of his oldest followers, in this case, Abū
Bakr, who belonged the small band of Muḥammad's closest men. Opposition
came from a group who claimed that the leadership should remain within
Muḥammad's family. Muḥammad had no sons, so leadership would pass to his
cousin ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭalib (600–661), who was married to Muḥammad's daugh-
ter Fāṭima (Lambton 1981: 219). According to Shīʿa historical sources, when
Muḥammad returned after his last pilgrimage to Mecca, he proclaimed to a
large group of assembled Muslims that he had appointed ʿAlī as his successor.
This claim is challenged by the Sunnī.

   Those who supported ʿAlī's candidacy were called ʿAlī's Party, *Shīʿat ʿAlī*, from
which we get the name Shīʿa. The Shīʿa movement was thus motivated by rever-
ence for the prophet Muḥammad's household, *ahl al-bayt*, in particular for his

cousin ʿAlī, his wife, and their children. Shīʿa Muslims viewed Qurʾānic verses as a support for their reverence for the Prophet's household, for example:

> do not display yourselves after the manner of the days of ignorance; and establish prayer, give the poor-rate, obey God and His messenger. Verily, verily God intends to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness O, you the people of the House, and purify you (with) a through purification.
>
> Qurʾān 33:33

Hence, the household of the Prophet were those who were closest to him and the most pure, providing an example for Muslims to follow and obey. The Shīʿa *imām*s, leaders of the community, were considered to possess special characteristics such as purity and moral and ethical infallibility, or *ʿiṣma*.

Shīʿa have not been a homogeneous group. During a short period in the early history of Shīʿa, between 660 and 870, a dozen conflicting factions formed, all of which laid claim to the correct interpretation within Shīʿa. The differences concerned, for example, the order of succession among Muḥammad's descendants and the question of which of the descendants should be regarded as the rightful Shīʿa *imām*s (Aqajari 2002: 20).

One example is the Zaydīs, who believed that any descendant of the first *imām* ʿAlī could become *imām*. They claimed that Zayd ibn ʿAlī (695–740), who was son of the fourth Shīʿa *imām* ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿAbedin (658–712) should be regarded as the fifth Shīʿa *imām*. This was in contrast to the majority of Shīʿa Muslims who believed that Muḥammad al-Bāqir (676–736), an elder son of ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿAbedin, was the fifth *imām*. The Zaydīs were against the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid caliphates and founded the first Shīʿa dynasty in northern Persia. The Būyid dynasty who controlled a major part of ʿAbbāsid territory were also Zaydīs. The contemporary Ḥuthi Shīʿa minority in northern Yemen are also Zaydīs, and their ancestors founded a dynasty in Yemen in the ninth century that lasted until the 1960s (Esposito 2011: 48–49).

Another example is the Ismāʿīlīs, who in the eighth century decided to contest who was to succeed the Shīʿa *imām* Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. According to the Ismāʿīlīs, his son Ismāʿīl was to succeed him. He is also the one who, according to Ismāʿīlite belief, will return to save the world. The Twelvers, on the other hand, believed that the *imām* Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq should be succeeded by another one of his sons, the one the Twelvers regard as their seventh *imām*, Mūsā al-Kāẓim (745–799) (Fazlhashemi 2011: 29), The Ismāʿīlīs started their activities as a revolutionary and missionary movement who wanted to spread their esoteric knowledge of Qurʾān to other Muslims. They were prepared to use violence in this regard. Security forces from both the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate

and Seljuq Sultanate hunted them, forcing them to operate in secret. Ismāʿīlīs took power in several parts in the Muslim world, but the two most famous of them were the Faṭimid Caliphate in Egypt (969–1171) and a group who broke away from the Faṭimids in 1094 and had its headquarters at Mount Alamūt in northern Persia. The most famous name from this group was Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (1050–1124) who ordered assassinations against ʿAbbāsid and Seljuq officials (Esposito 2011: 49–51).

This chapter focuses on the largest group within Shīʿa: The Imāmiyya, or the Twelvers. According to Imāmiyya Shīʿa the leadership of the Muslim community after Muḥammad should start with his relative ʿAlī and the last Shīʿa *imām* was Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan (b. 868), known as al-Mahdī, the 'Hidden Imām' (Esposito 2011: 48). They recognise twelve *imām*s in total who are believed to have distinguished themselves from other people by possessing a divine light that gave them knowledge about sacred mysteries. This light gave the Twelve Imāms immunity from sin, and for that reason, they should be the obvious leaders of the Muslim community. Their leadership, it is believed, would give them the opportunity to transfer divine knowledge to the people (Lambton 1981: 220).

Perhaps the most controversial theological feature of Imāmiyya Shīʿa is the belief in the 'Hidden Imām' al-Mahdī who is considered to have been in occultation since the 900s. According to Imāmiyya Shīʿa, he will emerge from hiding to defeat evil and save the world. In this mission, he is accompanied by other prophets such as Jesus. An even more controversial view within Imāmiyya Shīʿa's eschatological beliefs is the notion of *rajʿa*, the resurrection of a number of central historical figures. The resurrection, includes both good and evil people who will take part in a final battle, in which forces of evil will be vanquished once for all before the final apocalypse, predicted in the Qurʾān. From the Sunnī side, and for some Imāmiyya Shīʿa clergies, these beliefs have been heavily criticised for lack of support from the Qurʾān and the prophetic tradition. Critics regard these beliefs as heretical and superstitious and blame the infiltration of Jewish sources from converts for the appearance of such "un-Islamic" beliefs (see for example the Imāmiyya Shīʿa clergy Shariʿat Sangelaji's [1891–1944] book *Eslam va rijʿat*, published by his disciple Farid Tonkaboni).

The Shīʿas in general, and Imāmiyya Shīʿas in particular, have historically found themselves in the minority and on the losing end of broader power struggles in the early centuries of Islam. These struggles were the foundation for the schism that arose between the two main branches of Islam, the Sunnī and Shīʿas. The most important controversy concerned the foundation for the legitimacy of secular power and leadership in the community (Kadivar 2000: 12). During the fourteen hundred years that have elapsed since then, the chasm

between them has widened to include theological, legal, philosophical, cultural, social, and not least political controversies (Fazlhashemi 2011: 22).

This chapter has a chronological structure and takes a largely historical approach to present the development of Imāmiyya Shīʿa. Relevant primary sources and scholarly works help to trace the process of the development and formation of Shīʿa political ideas in the course of history, with a particular focus on Persia/Iran under the Ṣafavid Dynasty (1501–1736) and in the modern era, where Shīʿa has seen its most fervent periods of support and evolution.

2   Succession and Leadership: The Emergence of Imāmiyya Shīʿa

Shīʿa Islam emerges from the first major schism within the religion founded by the prophet Muḥammad. As Muḥammad appointed no heir before his death, the question of succession caused quickly became one of great political import, causing the division of the Sunnī and Shīʿa factions. It remains the topic of debate today. Iraqi Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholar Moḥammad Baqer al-Ṣadr (1935–1980) writes that the prophet Muḥammad had to choose among three possibilities regarding succession before his death. One was not to bother appointing a successor, another was to persuade his closest followers to elect a successor after deliberation, and the third option was that he himself should nominate his successor. Al-Ṣadr rejects the first two alternatives: that the prophet would not appoint his own successor could be interpreted to mean that he did not care about what would happen to the young Muslim community after his death. This is not consistent with the great concern he displayed for the welfare of the community. Nor was the second alternative particularly appealing to the prophet, in al-Ṣadr's view, since the tradition of deliberative councils was far too risky in view of the heterogeneous character of the Muslim community. It was the prophet himself who functioned as a unifying factor for the early Muslim community, within which there were significant differences. This circumstance would increase the risk of division and would not benefit his community.

Al-Ṣadr believes that the prophet, from a logical point of view, ought to have chosen the last alternative to ensure that the leadership of his community would be in safe hands after him. Al-Ṣadr thinks that the choice of ʿAlī was not primarily due to the close family relationship of the two men. He does not disregard the fact that this would let the leadership stay within Muḥammad's own family, but he asserts that ʿAlī was by far the best choice. ʿAlī had very good and close relations with Muḥammad. He had followed Muḥammad since his childhood and was among the first to convert to Islam. Muḥammad had followed

'Alī's development closely from his early years and had been a part of it. 'Alī had thus been brought up in Muḥammad's "school" since he was a child, but he was also, according to the Shī'a view, the one who was most familiar, after the Prophet himself, with religious knowledge. Here his close relationship to the Prophet played a crucial part. 'Alī's young age also meant that, unlike many of the older followers, he was not involved in conflicts arising from older loyalties to tribes and clans or from the social, economic, and political positions, they had before they converted to Islam. According to al-Ṣadr, then, the choice of 'Alī was something that guaranteed the continuity of secular and religious leadership in the Muslim community (al-Sadr 2002: 28–88).

In the Shī'a view, there was no doubt that following the death of the Prophet Muhammad leadership should go to his descendants, a concept that they argue found support in the Qur'ān and the principle of *wilāya* or leadership. Their stance was that if *wilāya* ended up outside Muḥammad's lineage, the leadership of Muslims would be in the hands of people who lacked divine protection, *'iṣma*. This protection, in the Shī'a view, was reserved solely for Muḥammad's lineage. Without this protection, there was a risk of innovations and deviations that conflicted with the fundamental principles of Islam.

It took over two decades before 'Alī became the fourth caliph after Muḥammad, although not in his capacity as a Shī'a *imām* but as the person chosen by the Muslim people to lead the community. His time in power was very short, however, just over four years. He was murdered in a political attack by a group of religious extremists who accused him of having broken the laws of Islam, and in certain respects not having lived up to its ideals. Shortly after this event, the first caliphate dynasty was founded, the Umayyads (661–750), who were then succeeded by the new caliphate dynasty of the 'Abbāsids (750–1258). Both dynasties belonged to the Sunnī branch of Islam (Fazlhashemi 2011: 21).

'Alī's descendants never succeeded in regaining power. They were outmaneuvered and suffered severe losses. During the time of the Twelve Shī'a Imāms (633–874) the repression of the Shī'a became harsher. A couple of these *imām*s took part in armed actions against Sunnī rulers and were killed on the battlefield or poisoned on the orders of Umayyad leaders. The Battle of Karbalā' in 680, when the third Shī'a *imām*, Ḥusayn, Muḥammad's grandson, and his nearest circle were massacred by a superior Sunnī army, was the last armed resistance put up by the Shī'a *imām*s. After the Battle of Karbalā', which has left deep traces in Shī'a folk memory, the Shī'a Imāms continued their resistance against the Umayyad and later the 'Abbāsid caliphs without armed actions (Fazlhashemi 2011: 21–22). The reason for the Shī'a *imām*s' refusal to recognise the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid rulers was that they wanted to maintain

the principle of *wilāya*, or leadership, under their system of *imāms* who could be traced back to the Prophet.

The repression of the Shīʿa Imāms was so severe during the period from the 680s to the 880s that they concentrated on developing Shīʿa theology in order to preserve Shīʿa Islam as a religious tradition. The best known of these *imām*s who helped to shape Shīʿa theology was the sixth *imām*, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (705–765). The theology of the Twelve Imāms consequently bears his name and is also called Jaʿfarite theology. Despite this, the Shīʿa Imāms did not escape persecution by the Sunnī rulers. Several of them died in prison or were poisoned in their homes. The last of these *imām*s, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan (born 868), known under the name al-Mahdī, went underground as a young man to evade the patrols of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, and communicated with his followers by proxy (Fazlhashemi 2011: 22).

After 940 and the Imāmiyya Shīʿas' idea of the twelfth *imām* living in hiding, the question arose of who would carry on this heritage. It was obvious that no one could replace either the Prophet or the Twelve Imāms, but now the idea was formed that legal scholars should fill the vacuum that had arisen during the long absence. There was no disagreement about the need for these jurists, but soon differences of opinion were heard about their authority. This concerned, above all, the issue of whether they should solely function as stewards of the tradition or could act independently in the interpretation of the religion's founding documents, but also how far they could go and whether it was permissible to use reason when interpreting religious texts and statements by the Prophet and the Twelve Imāms (Lambton 1981: 243–63).

The division among the Shīʿa, however, was not limited to disputes about the order of succession among Muḥammad's descendants. Within the Imāmiyya Shīʿa, there was soon a schism that would be of great significance for the outlook on secular power. Once again, this division concerned the relationship between faith/revelation and reason. The group that wanted to give priority to faith thought that the most important task was to seek guidance in revelation and in the statements of Shīʿa *imām*s. According to this view, the revelation communicated through the Prophet and his statements and through the Shīʿa *imām*s' statements are the only sources that Shīʿa Muslims need when they seek answers to their questions. All they have to do is to navigate correctly among the countless existing statements and guidelines. This group came to be called the Akhbarids. Against this stance were those who thought that although the revelation and the *imām*s' statements should be used, they should simultaneously be interpreted by legal scholars on the basis of the tradition of *ijtihād*. This group was called Uṣulids. The conflict between these two

tendencies would develop into a struggle between faith and reason (Fazlhashemi 2011: 30).

The Twelve Imāms, their lives, theological beliefs, and political stances, have shaped Imāmiyya Shīʿa orthodoxy and orthopraxy, its theology, and its outlook on secular power. Along with themes of persecution and oppression, and the important of history and remembrance, the *imāmate* is one of the key features of 'Twelver' Shīʿa Islam.

3 Key Themes in Imāmiyya Shīʿa

3.1 *The Twelve Imāms*

The concept of heritage is clearly central to the development of Shīʿa, its own schisms, and to the beliefs of Imāmiyya Shīʿa. The centrality of the role of the twelve Shīʿa *imām*s in Imāmiyya Shīʿa was due to their links with the Prophet, and their ability to authentically carry on his tradition. From the time of the Twelve Shīʿa Imāms (633–874 CE) those who are thought to have been of the greatest significance for empowering the movement are the first *imām* ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (600–661 CE), his sons Ḥasan (624–669 CE) and Ḥusayn (626–680 CE), and the last *imām*, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan, al-Mahdī (Fazlhashemi 2011: 22).

A consideration of the actions of the Twelve Imāms during the period 657–940 shows an important dividing line between the first three *imām*s and the others. The first three *imām*s—ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn—acted as both secular and religious leaders. They did not hesitate to take part in armed conflicts even if it meant certain death for themselves and the people closest to them. The murder of the third *imām*, Ḥusayn, in 680 is an example of this. Other *imām*s, however, seem to have had different priorities. They made no great effort to assume secular power. They preferred to act as the foremost religious authorities of their time. It was also during their time that Shīʿa theology took shape. Starting with the fifth and sixth *imām*s—Muḥammad al-Bāqir (676–736 CE) and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (705–765 CE)—this shift became even more obvious. The Shīʿa *imām*s acted more in their capacity as prominent religious than secular leaders. What distinguished them from other religious authorities was their close family ties to the Prophet, since they were his direct descendants (Modarresi Ṭabaṭabaʾi 2007: 38–39). Secular and political responsibility was transferred to a messianic figure who would restore order and give power back to the Shīʿa *imām*s. This saviour, the *Qāʾim*, would come forth from the group of Shīʿa *imām*s, but simultaneously several of these *imām*s declared that they

were not the expected saviours. Among other things, the fifth and sixth *imām*s emphasised this.

The situation changed somewhat under the seventh *imām*, Mūsā al-Kāzim (745–799), who breathed new life into the belief in the coming saviour. What was new for the seventh *imām* was that he introduced an extensive system of representatives all over the Islamic realm. These were in close contact with the *imām* and collected religious taxes. The newly organised network of representatives and the economic opportunities that were opened with the centrally collected religious taxes aroused new hope of the expected saviour among Imāmiyya Shī'as. Another relevant factor is that the seventh *imām* had adopted a position that differed partly from that of his immediate predecessor. He levelled open criticism at the caliphate in Baghdad, and his opposition inspired some Shī'a groups to revolt against the caliphate. The development also provoked fears in the 'Abbāsid caliphate and the then-caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (763–809), who feared new uprising among Imāmiyya Shī'a followers. He imprisoned Mūsā and then had him murdered in captivity (Modarresi Ṭabaṭaba'i 2007: 40–41).

The murder of the seventh *imām* once again crushed new hopes of the saviour who would liberate the Shī'a from 'Abbāsid repression. These hopes were revived when the new 'Abbāsid caliph Ma'mun appointed the eighth Shī'a *imām*, 'Alī al-Riḍā (763–818), as his crown prince. The move by the 'Abbāsid caliph proved to be a political manoeuvre to gain control over the troubled situation. When things calmed down he had al-Riḍā poisoned. The belief in the saviour lay dormant until the 870s when the twelfth and last *imām* began his life in hiding. The ninth and tenth *imām*s were both minors when they succeeded to the office, and the eleventh *imām* spent most of his life under virtual house arrest where his freedom of action was limited by the 'Abbāsid caliph. A debate that flared among the Imāmiyya Shī'a in connection with the ninth and tenth *imām*s concerned whether minors—both became *imām*s at the age of seven or eight because their fathers had been murdered—had sufficient religious knowledge to take office as *imām* or the secular leadership qualities required to save the Shī'a community. These circumstances meant that the secular role of the *imām*s had to take a back seat to other issues (Modarresi Ṭabaṭaba'i 2007: 42–43).

Already in the time of the Shī'a *imām*s, we can see that their actions with regard to secular power and the relationship between religious and secular leadership was linked to prevailing social and political circumstances. While some people could even take up arms to defend their right to secular power, others chose solely to assert this right, without otherwise making any great

efforts to achieve it. They gave priority to other questions, which included religious concerns and areas to do with social care.

A shared view among Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars has been that during the absence of the twelfth *imām*, the secular power belongs, *de jure*, to the Hidden Imām, according to Shīʿa law, but *de facto*, in reality, it is in the hands of others. The Hidden Imām was in occultation, and even if power did fall to him, he was not available to assume this rule. From this point of view, the secular rulers were illegitimate, but there was no real substitute for them. Shīʿa legal scholars were obliged to relate to the secular rulers who had the real power. They chose completely different approaches, however. Some stayed at a safe distance from secular power, maintaining a quietist stance. They refrained from any involvement in secular power and indulged in utopian visions of the ideal society that the Hidden Imām would create on his return. The most important issue for this group was to preserve Shīʿa Islam. The Hidden Imām himself would look after the question of secular power when he found the time ripe.

Against this passive attitude, there was an activist stance that saw it as the task of legal scholars to try to hasten the return of the Hidden Imām. This would be done by combating the illegitimate rulers and trying to overthrow their regime. One example was the distinguished Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholar Naṣir al-Din Tusi (1201–1274), who cooperated with Mongol rulers when they attacked the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate. He saw the Mongols as a means of overthrowing the hated Sunnī supremacy (Lambton 1981: 224).

Another example was the Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholar Shaykh Muḥammad al-Mufid (d. 1022) who believed that those who assigned to the office of illegitimate worldly rulers had in fact received these positions by the Hidden Imām. They should use their offices to counteract offences and sinful acts (Bagdadi and Noʾman 1995: 120–121). A further example was the distinguished scholar Sayyid Murtada (978–1058), who was the great-grandson of the seventh Shīʿa *imām* Mūsā al-Kāẓim. He made a distinction between evil and fair rulers. He meant that the scholars should accept positions and offices offered by fair rulers. Under these circumstances, participation in the political life was a prerequisite for being able to enforce Shīʿa order in the worldly rule (Sayyid Murtada 1987: 96–98).

In between these opposing attitudes were those who wanted to make the best of the situation and adopted a pragmatic and realistic stance by creating forms for dealings between the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars and the secular rulers. The differing attitudes of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars on this issue are based in part on the fact that they lived in different historical, economic, social, and political conditions. It also happened that legal scholars living in

the same period and in similar social and political structures adopted diametrically opposite positions. One explanation for this was that they proceeded from different theological interpretive traditions.

3.2   *Persecution and Oppression*

Imāmiyya Shīʿa Muslims do not regard themselves as a minority or a sect that is in opposition to the majority within Islam in the matter of its religious foundations, the Qurʾān, or the prophet's tradition, *sunna*. Nor do they perceive themselves as an ethnic or political group seeking to establish a new religious tendency to split the Muslim community and thus break up the Muslim unity. They also dismiss all allegations that come from some Sunnī, mostly Salafis and Wahhābīs, claiming that it was Jews—a Jewish man named Ibn Saba who had converted to Islam and lived during the third caliph Othman's era—or Persians, more specifically the Shīʿa dynasties Būyids (934–1065) and Ṣafavids (1501–1736), who were political rivals to Sunnī Caliphates and who invented Shīʿa to harm Islam from within (Ṭabaṭabaʾi 2003: 18–19).

The Imāmiyya Shīʿa Muslims prefer to view themselves as a group within the Muslim community whose history started the same day as the Prophet's death. They reacted to the danger that would shut out the descendants of Prophet from the leadership of the young Muslim community. The descendants of the Prophet had the specific task of protecting Islam's principles and Islamic laws that had their origin in the revelation that God had sent to the Prophet. They reacted also, against what they perceived as deviations from the Qurʾān and the prophet's tradition of which representatives of Sunnī Islam were guilty. According to this view, then, Imāmiyya Shīʿa arose as a defence of Islam's fundamental principles (Ṭabaṭabaʾi 2003: 21–22).

Imāmiyya Shīʿa Muslims tend to highlight the development after Muḥammad's death, when the Muslim rulers, according to the Imāmiyya Shīʿa view, made major deviations from Islamic laws. They also accused the Sunnī rulers of dictatorial ways, corruption, immorality, and love of luxury. They accused the Sunnī rulers of abandoning basic principles of Islam and conventions that were founded by the Prophet during his time. One example was the fair distribution of public funds among all Muslims. They began to favour certain groups of Muslims over others, an act that was in conflict with egalitarian principles of Islam and led to major class divisions between Muslims. They also accused the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid caliphs of having acquired Byzantine and Persian court traditions that were not Islamic and deviated from the path of the Prophet (Ṭabaṭabaʾi 2003: 23–24, 26–27).

During the first century after the Prophet Muḥammad's death, Imāmiyya Shīʿa was an oppositional movement opposed to the secular order. Otherwise

they did not differ much from other Muslims. It was only from the mid-eighth century that Shīʿa theology and *sharīʿa* law began to take shape, in that this was when Shīʿa theologians entered the debate and marked their positions in relation to Sunnī law schools. It was under the fifth and sixth Shīʿa *imām*s that Shīʿa theology developed (Modarresi Ṭabaṭabaʾi 2007: 30–31).

Sunnīs regarded the Shīʿa Muslims as *rāfiḍī* (rejectors/rejectionists, or apostates). During certain periods in the history of Islam, this led to cruel persecution of Shīʿa. They were viewed as outlaws whose lives should not be spared and whose property could be confiscated (Ṭabaṭabaʾi 2003: 28). The harshest persecutions took place during the first three centuries of Islam's history. Sunnīs accused Shīʿa as a kind of opposition who rejected their attempts to hold together the religious institution and the state by reconciling religious theory and historical precedent (Lambton 1981: 223). With the formation of the Shīʿa (but not Imāmiyaa) Fāṭimid Caliphate (909–1171) in Egypt and the Būyid State (934–1055) in Persia, different Shīʿa groups found protection. The great breakthrough for Imāmiyya Shīʿa came when the Ṣafavids (1501–1736) seized power in Persia and Shīʿa became a state religion, thus enjoying its greatest upswing in support.

Another cause of the marginalisation of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa was the dismissal of the rationalist exegetic tradition of Islamic theology favoured by Shīʿa Islam. In Sunnī Islam, the Muʿtazilites had promoted this tradition but this was efficiently subdued by the Ashʿarites who restricted the influence of rationalism (Ṭabaṭabaʾi 2003: 31–33). The Imāmiyya Shīʿa theologian and philosopher Moḥammad Ḥussein Ṭabaṭabaʾi (1892–1981) blames the growing intellectual stagnation in Islamic civilisation on the exclusion of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa. According to Ṭabaṭabaʾi this eliminated critical thinking and left room for orthodoxy, blind faith, dogmatism, and fanaticism (Ṭabaṭabaʾi 2003: 35–37).

The persecutions of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa Muslims by the ʿAbbāsid caliphate intensified to such a degree that the twelfth Shīʿa *imām* chose to go underground to be able to continue to lead the Imāmiyya Shīʿa Muslims. This period, which began in 874 and lasted until 940, is called the 'lesser occultation', *Ghayba al-ṣughra*. During this period the *imām* maintained contact with the Imāmiyya Shīʿa Muslims through four agents he had personally appointed. This period ended in 940, however, when the last agent died, and this marked the start of the 'long occultation', *Ghayba al-kubra*, a time when the twelfth Shīʿa *imām* continued to exercise his leadership of the Shīʿa through a life in hiding and without any agents. He is still believed to be hiding today and will eventually return like a messianic figure to deliver the world from all evil and create a just world (Sachedina 1988: 170).

3.3   *History and Rememberance*

A recurrent feature of Imāmiyya Shīʿa is the feedback loop within the history of Shīʿa, bolstered by the ritual of remembering one's history. Popular Imāmiyya Shīʿa religiosity is based on a large and powerful community of tears. It builds on the grief for the murdered *imām*s, especially the third *imām* Ḥusayn, on the fear of historical persecutions, and on the hope of the redeemer al-Mahdī. This community demands a type of engagement that cannot be questioned and that rests on a natural, original, and unconditional membership (Fazlhashemi 2011: 33). Shīʿa history serves to preserve the hardships of the past as well as informing the present and the future, and a cyclical effect is created through the parallels that arise between historical events and the collective or social memory.

It is always interesting to study why historical events have been constructed and revived in the way they have. The use of history has had an important function in the construction of national identities, and religious identities as well. The most important function has been existential in character. The existential use of history in Shīʿa has been to provide a foundation for remembering, since people need to remember, but also to be able to set the history of the Shīʿa in a larger context of oppression and righteousness and to feel an affinity to other people who profess the same beliefs. Alongside this sense of solidarity, there are also moral and ideological aspects which mean that history is used to achieve completely new aims (Fazlhashemi 2011: 34).

A central concern in the history of Imāmiyya Shīʿa has been to create historical "places of memory" of both physical and spiritual character. It is a question of events, dates, battles, graves, and other things that arouse strong emotional associations in Shīʿa Muslims. Some of the most important places for the Imāmiyya Shīʿa are the places where the Shīʿa *imām*s are buried. They are located in cities like Najaf, Karbalāʾ, Sāmarrāʾ and Al-Kāẓimayn in Iraq, Medina in Saudi Arabia, and Mashhad in Iran. One of the most visited places is the shrine of the third Shīʿa *imām* Ḥusayn who was massacred together with seventy of his children, relatives, and followers by a huge Umayyad army in an unequal battle in 680 in Karbalāʾ. Shīʿa Muslims who visit these places, graves, or shrines participate in mourning ceremonies, specific prayers and rituals. These places of memory belong to a context that is recognised by individuals or a collective that has been welded together by shared Imāmiyya Shīʿa beliefs. These places of memory awaken a sense of "restorative" nostalgia that is used to recreate a specific state that either existed in the past or never had a chance to be realised (Fazlhashemi 2011: 35). Four Shīʿa *imām*s who are buried in Medina at the graveyard of Baqīʿ al-Gharqad are still not allowed to have shrines due to the dominant Wahhābī tradition of that region, a continuing reminder of the compromised status of Shīʿa in the wider Islamic world.

4   Imāmiyya Shīʿa in the Ṣafavid Dynasty

The thoughts of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars about secular government underwent a drastic change in the sixteenth century. They started to collaborate with the Ṣafavids who had seized power in Persia (1501–1736). The Ṣafavids proclaimed Imāmiyya Shīʿa as the state religion and gave the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars a free hand to spread Imāmiyya Shīʿa in their kingdom. In return they demanded that the scholars bless their political status and thereby grant them religious legitimacy, which was an important ground for political legitimacy in pre-modern times. The collaboration of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars with the Ṣafavid kings can be compared to a forced marriage in which the two parties are not very fond of each other, but have to be married since they are mutually dependent. The Ṣafavid kings relied on the blessing of the legal scholars because this could give religious legitimacy to their kingly power. The legal scholars were dependent on the royal house, which could help them to consolidate their position by strengthening their institutions and extending their jurisdiction.

But there were theological obstacles to the collaboration of the legal scholars with the royal house. All power and glory, according to Imāmiyya Shīʿa theology, was supposed to be in the hands of the scholars while the Shīʿa Muslims awaited the return of the occulted *imām* al-Mahdī. The collaboration of the scholars with the royal Ṣafavid house meant that they blessed kings who were regarded by definition as being illegitimate in strict religious and theological terms (Fazlhashemi 2011: 35–48).

For the legal scholars there were weighty reasons for overlooking their own theological misgivings. This was the first time a royal power of the dignity of the Ṣafavids extended a hand of cooperation to the Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholars and also declared themselves willing to proclaim Imāmiyya Shīʿa as the state religion. It was thus a very tempting offer. The first Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholars who accepted the invitation viewed it as a golden opportunity for them to escape from their hitherto vulnerable position as a persecuted minority. They also saw great possibilities to use the support of the Ṣafavid kings to promote the mission of Shīʿa Islam in a larger, cohesive kingdom. The willingness of the Shīʿa leaders to enter this alliance, however, required new theological thinking to open the way for a new political doctrine.

4.1   *Rationalist Theology*

One of those who helped to develop an exchange of favours with the Ṣafavid kings was the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholar Karakī (1464–1534). His most important action, apart from granting the Ṣafavids their longed-for religious legitimacy, was the compilation of *Jamiʾ al-maqṣaid*, a book of legal exegesis. The

work served several purposes. It functioned as a source for interpreting the law during the Ṣafavid era, thereby creating clear judicial structures. It set a Shīʿa stamp on the judicial tradition and counteracted the arbitrary behaviour of the autocratic kings (Fazlhashemi 2016: 134). The Ṣafavid king Ṭahmasp I (1514–1576) declared in a letter that he regarded Karakī as the representative of the twelfth Shīʿa *imām* and himself as Karakī's representative (Khonsari 1981, vol. 4: 362–363).

It is interesting to note that Karakī, despite his close collaboration with the Ṣafavid kings, considered them illegitimate, even though he blessed their power and their right to collect tax from their subjects. One may ask how he could reconcile these two oppositional stances (Khonsari 1981, vol. 4: 76). Karakī maintained that it was forbidden to assist evil and repressive rulers: if it turns out that the collaboration results in an evil ruler consolidating his position, then one is guilty of an impermissible act, in his opinion. But if one can ensure that the cooperation makes it possible to achieve good things in society, there is nothing to prevent cooperation with the king. According to Karakī, through such collaboration one could fulfil the Qurʾānic principle of imposing the admissible and prohibiting the unlawful—*amr bi al-maʿroof wa nahj ʿan al-munkar*. The only thing to be wary of was complicity in sin, oppression, and murder (Karaki 1998: 44).

From this perspective, collaboration with illegitimate secular rulers was not intrinsically evil. The crucial point was the purpose of the collaboration, and a secondary consideration was the circumstances that enabled collaboration. A legal scholar who enters an alliance with an unrightful king with the aim of reforming and rectifying things—of doing *ʾiṣlāḥ* (reforming)—does so with good intent. A legal scholar should be regarded as the representative of the occulted Shīʿa *imām*, al-Mahdī, and not as the king's man or someone obeying the king's orders. It is the occulted *imām* who is the lawful ruler, and it is he who appoints the legal scholar as his agent (Karaki 1998: 489–490). The elevation of the legal scholars to the position as representatives of the occulted *imām* meant that their powers were not confined to the religious sphere. Like the occulted *imām*'s own jurisdiction, theirs would also comprise all spheres of society (Karaki n.d.: 142).

4.2 *Religious Legitimacy*

The powerful position of the Ṣafavids was due to their own military strength, yet religious blessing was still deemed necessary for secular rulers during this historical period. Religious legitimacy would raise the Ṣafavids to the same level as their Ottoman rivals, a fact of which Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars were well aware. Refusing to give the Ṣafavids the coveted religious blessing was an

option, but it would mean gambling away their historical opportunity to exert influence in the corridors of power. This was the factor that made a group of senior Shīʿa scholars choose to collaborate with the Ṣafavid kings.

To begin with, the Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholars viewed their task from an ethical perspective. Their duty was to urge the king to reform the realm in accordance with Islamic ethics. They cited support for their action in concepts such as ʾiṣlāḥ, putting things right, in the Qurʾān (11:88, 7:85). Acting in accordance with the concept of ʾiṣlāḥ proved to be something that could vary depending on prevailing circumstances. In times when the king was strong and the manoeuvring space of the legal scholars was limited, the latter interpreted ʾiṣlāḥ to mean that they should provide the king with an ethical frame of reference. There was no consensus among legal scholars about how to legitimise collaboration with the Ṣafavid kings. The jurist Mollā Moḥammad Bāqer Majlesi (d. 1699) chose to attribute the legitimacy of the Ṣafavid kings to their alleged kinship with the Shīʿa imāms and ultimately with the Prophet himself. This basis for legitimacy meant, according to Majlesi, that there were important obligations for the Ṣafavid kings. They were supposed to follow in the footsteps of the Shīʿa imāms and the Prophet, to live an orthodox life, and act righteously. Majlesi asserted that God had chosen to give royal power to the Ṣafavid kings so that the Shīʿa Muslim subjects could live in security in the kingdom of the Ṣafavids (manuscript collection of the Iranian Parliamentary Library, no. 1, collection no. 2721).

Majlesi's legitimisation of Ṣafavid power can be regarded as a pragmatic solution attempting to adapt the fundamental Shīʿa tradition of political ideas to prevailing conditions. It can simultaneously be seen as a very smart solution to the question of establishing a secular power that could win the blessing of legal scholars during the absence of the twelfth imām. Majlesi enjoined the king to satisfy a series of criteria based on the Shīʿa religious tradition. He did not go so far, however, as to raise the Ṣafavid kings to the level of the Hidden Imām or to see them as his deputies. The most important reason for this was that the Ṣafavid kings, despite all their services to Shīʿa Islam and their alleged kinship with the Prophet's descendants, could not be classed as free of sin, or maʿṣum. This was reserved solely for the Twelve Imāms. Majlesi's support for the Ṣafavids was however founded on his genuine religious conviction that the era of the Ṣafavids was a preliminary stage in the return of the Hidden Imām al-Mahdī (Majlesi 1993: 243). The Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholar Shaykh Bahaʾi (1547–1621) legitimised the power of King ʿAbbās I (1571–1629) for a different and more practical reason: the legitimacy was valid as long as the king, in his public actions, followed the principle of justice and continued to defend Twelver Shīʿa Islam (Lakzai 2007: 290).

Since Shaykh Bahai did not elevate the Ṣafavid kings to the level of the Shīʿa *imām*s, obedience to them was not equated with obedience to God and crimes against them could not be regarded as crimes against God. The legal scholar Sabzevari (1599–1672) listed the properties a king must have if he is to earn religious legitimacy in a Shīʿa kingdom. These properties include probity, following the tradition of the Hidden Imām, protecting Shīʿa Muslims from dangers and infidels, protecting Shīʿa, and so on (Sabzevari 2004: 64). By enumerating the properties of a Shīʿa king and the demands made of him, the legal scholars were released from the duty of dealing with this task themselves (Lakzai 1988: 146).

4.3   *Institutionalisation and Changing Roles*

The Ṣafavid kings knew nothing about Imāmiyya Shīʿa theology. The Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars had unrestricted jurisdiction over religious and judicial matters. To ensure his power over the religious institutions, it was the king who appointed the leaders of the religious institutions. These were selected with great care from among those who were most loyal to the crown. This could in turn create disruptive disputes between parts of the ordinary religious community and the royal house (Lambton 1981: 266–267). The Ṣafavids exercised rigorous supervision over the Imāmiyya Shīʿa religious institutions. The king appointed, for example, the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholar who acted as head of all Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars. This man, who was called Molla Bashi in the Ṣafavid era, was the highest religious authority and the link between the king and the legal scholars. The royal house also appointed another administrative leader designated as *ṣadr*. The duties of the *ṣadr* included appointing religious judges, those who were to take charge religious endowments, appointing prayer leaders, leaders of religious schools and mosques, and various other religious offices (Lambton 1981: 268).

By leaving such religious matters to an official religious leader appointed by the Ṣafavid court, the king could affect development and supervise the various religious activities (Jafarian 2000: vol. 1, 196–198). The office of *ṣadr* filled yet another important function that concerned the dissemination of Imāmiyya Shīʿa. The Ṣafavids proclaimed Imāmiyya Shīʿa as the state religion in a kingdom where the majority were Sunnī Muslims and they thus had the duty of ensuring that people in the realm of the Ṣafavids would convert to Imāmiyya Shīʿa (Lambton 1981: 268). Yet another office of great significance in the Ṣafavid era was Shaykh al-Islām, chief among jurists, the representative of the Hidden Imām, whom all Shīʿa Muslims were duty-bound to obey and whose tasks included crowning the king. At the same time, it was the king who chose the man who would bear the title Shaykh al-Islām (Samia 1999: 3).

When the Ṣafavids fell from power in 1736, the situation of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars changed dramatically. It did not just mean that a Shīʿa dynasty was overthrown and that the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars lost the support of the crown, the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars were also subjected to severe reprisals for having given their blessing to the Ṣafavid kingdom and for their participation in the Ṣafavids' policy of consolidating Imāmiyya Shīʿa in their kingdom. The new rulers regarded the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars as a religious and political obstacle that had to be removed. The fall of the Ṣafavids was accompanied by political unrest, war, famine, and disease, and a share of the Shīʿa people were taken away to be sold into slavery. The population in the former kingdom of the Ṣafavids was reduced by about one tenth (Ravandi 1978: 436).

The Ṣafavids set their stamp on the continued development in what remained of their kingdom. The Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars and their institutions managed to survive the fall of the Ṣafavids and would play an important part in social and political development in following years. The most obvious impact was their influence on political developments in Persia/Iran. This intensified from the second half of the nineteenth century in connection with the constitutional revolution in Iran in 1906, and peaking with the revolution of 1979 when the legal scholars ended the previously mentioned parallel form of government and took over secular power.

5 Modern Iran: Political Activism on the Advance

The attitude of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholars to political matters changed during the nineteenth century, when more and more scriptural scholars were drawn into the discussions about the intellectual tradition of constitutionalism and the nascent constitutional movement that was sweeping over several Muslim countries, especially in the Imāmiyya Shīʿa-dominated Persia. It was thus a consequence of the close contacts of Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholars with European ideas about constitutional government that scholars were increasingly involved in the political debate and new political theories and doctrines were elaborated. Among the issues discussed was the adoption of a constitution, the abolition of despotism, the introduction of parliamentarism, holding general elections, electing or becoming a representative for a constituency/guild/estate, separating executive, legislative, and judicial powers, passing laws to guarantee basic civil rights and freedoms without regard for religious affiliation, birth, or social status, and determining the right of citizens to control political power (Kadivar 1999: 9–12, 19–21).

The reactions of legal scholars to these issues can be roughly divided into two categories. One proceeded from a quietist attitude, advising legal scholars not to intervene in secular matters; this was a sphere that also had to be regarded as reserved for the Hidden Imām. The other attitude broke with the traditional view and recommended a model according to which legal scholars should take an active part in a transition to a constitutional form of government under the supervision of the highest legal Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholars. Iranian scholar and jurist Ayatollah Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Nāʾīnī (1860–1936) advocated this model, believing that legal scholars could sit in parliament and ensure that the laws passed there were not in conflict with Imāmiyya Shīʿa (Naini 1955: 52–55).

The new role of the legal scholars has to do with the changes undergone by Shīʿa-dominated societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A good example of this is the development in Iran. Contacts with European ideas had the result that more and more people were influenced by constitutional ideas demanding political and social reform. It was in the same period that the art of printing reached the country, which meant that more and more people could be reached by the new ideas through printed books and newspapers. The changed situation meant that there were increasing demands on legal scholars to pronounce verdicts on various social and political matters. An illustrative example is the tobacco uprising in Iran in 1892. When the highest religious leader Mirza Shirazi (1814–1896) uttered his famous words about the use of tobacco being an act of war against the Hidden Imām, the statement had such a huge impact among the people that the reigning king was forced to annul the concession to the British company. The response also made the legal scholars aware of their own power.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a growing number of Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars were speaking about the rule by foreigners in Shīʿa-dominated areas. This coincided with the weakening of central government, wars enforced by European colonial powers, and the increasing influence of Europeans over Muslim countries' politics, economy, and social and cultural life. This was viewed as a serious threat that had to be combated. When the secular rulers were unable to resist the external threat, the legal scholars saw it as their duty to use their influence to mobilise the public against this external threat (al-Ṣadr 1980: 2–3).

Although the Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars had moved their positions forward, it would take a long time before they began to speak about taking over secular power themselves. Up to the start of the 1960s, they accepted the division of power that had been founded in the era of the Ṣafavids. For a long time,

the politically active Imāmiyya Shīʿa leaders worked to preserve the status quo. Many of them acted behind the scenes in order not to upset the division of power. After several unsuccessful attempts to introduce a constitutional form of government, however, and after new secular rulers disturbed the parallel power system, voices were heard calling for the introduction of a completely new form of government in which power would lie in the hands of the highest religious jurists.

The reaction of the legal scholars came after a series of political decisions which were interpreted as outright breaches of the parallel power system. Legal scholars were purged from the judicial and educational systems in the inter-war years. Parallel to this, the rulers in Persia/Iran started campaigns of modernisation and secularisation aimed against Islam and the legal scholars. A number of prominent Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars declared that the state was in breach of the agreement about the parallel power system. The one who went furthest was Āyatallāh Rūḥallāh Khumaynī (Ayatollah Khomeini) (1902–1989), who thought that legal scholars were no longer bound by the agreement. At the start of the 1960s he launched a vehement attack on the king, whom he accused of not complying with any part of the agreement. He accused the king of being hostile to Imāmiyya Shīʿa. He also questioned the king's sovereignty and blamed him for having paved the way for foreign rule by conceding to alien powers. Ayatollah Khomeini said he wanted to introduce a new form of government based on Imāmiyya Shīʿa theology and jurisprudence, which in his view included a complete plan for society, comprising everything from political and economic to social and cultural matters (Mousavi Khomeini 1979: 23).

There was no consensus on this matter, however. Ayatollah Khomeini represented a minority view among Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars. His political doctrine, *Velayat-e faqih*, the rule of the jurist (legal scholar), lacked support among the leading grand ayatollahs in the chief seat of Imāmiyya Shīʿa institutions in Najaf (Iraq) and Qom (Iran). A number of contemporary grand Ayatollahs in Imāmiyya Shīʿas most famous religious institutions in the Hawza of Najaf were against this doctrine. Among his leading opponents were Grand Ayatollahs al-Ḥakim (1889–1970), al-Khoei (1899–1992), and al-Sistani (1930). They considered his doctrine as something that lacked basis in the Qurʾān and Imāmiyya Shīʿa sources.

In connection with the revolution in Iran in 1979, the doctrine of rule by legal scholars became the state-bearing ideology. The shortcomings of the doctrine were exposed even more after this transition. Besides the quietist critics of the doctrine, more and more senior Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars who had previously supported the doctrine joined in the critique. One of the foremost

defenders of the doctrine, the Grand Ayatollah Montazeri (1922–2009), turned his back on it in the mid-1980s. He drew attention to the totalitarian elements in the new form of government and demanded its replacement by a democratic form of government in which political power and religious institutions are separated (see for example his books *Eslam din-e feṭrat, Ḥokumat-e dini va ḥoquq-e ensan* and his memoirs, *Khâṭerat*, which was published on the internet).

6   Conclusion

The origins of Imāmiyya Shīʿa goes back to the theological and political struggle within the young Muslim community that started after the death of Islam's prophet Muḥammad. According to the Imāmiyya Shīʿa, the descendants of Muḥammad had the right qualifications to lead Muslims and to defend the fundamental principles of Islam. The Imāmiyya Shīʿa were defeated quickly. Their theological and legal perceptions were marginalised, and they were held outside the corridors of worldly power until the Ṣafavids took over the power in Persia in 1501, and proclaimed Imāmiyya Shīʿa as their state religion in their empire.

The Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars perceived all worldly rulers by definition as illegitimate during the absence of the Hidden Imām. However, in reality they had to relate to the new conditions when the Ṣafavid kings committed themselves to defend Shīʿa Islam. This became the start of a parallel power system, according to which the legal scholars had the power over the judiciary system, education, social welfare and the mission. All other worldly powers were in the hands of the kings. The unique collaboration between the worldly rulers and the religious leaders was the most important background for the leaning of the Imāmiyya Shīʿa scholars towards political pragmatism. This system of distribution of the power lasted until the twentieth century.

A new political doctrine that rejected the parallel power system was presented in the mid-twentieth century, following the socio-political changes that occurred. This doctrine put all the power in the hands of the highest Imāmiyya Shīʿa legal scholars, but the new doctrine eventually encountered tough criticism. The critics took their frame of reference from the religious context and firmly anchored the criticism in the soil of the Islamic/Shīʿa theological and judicial tradition. Their reason-oriented, rationalist approached critique emphasised that the doctrine lacked theological and judicial basis. They also pointed out that the political regime founded on it was dysfunctional. Their

criticism opened the door for the will to create harmony between the interpreting of Imāmiyya Shīʿa theology and jurisprudence and the frames of references provided by modern society. It can also be seen as an attempt to answer the challenges of modernity and globalisation.

This brief survey shows that the outlook on secular power in Imāmiyya Shīʿa and the religious legitimacy of worldly power is grounded to some extent on theological ideas and Imāmiyya Shīʿa jurisprudence, but that it has undergone major changes due to social, political, and historical circumstances. Imāmiyya Shīʿa's history of ideas is not limited to various theological, philosophical, political ideas and *fiqh*, jurisprudence. Another tradition of ideas within Imāmiyya Shīʿa is *ʿirfān*, which, like Ṣūfism, seeks other paths to truth beyond the sources of knowledge of theology, philosophy and jurisprudence.

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Zaydism

Najam Haider

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The Ismāʿīlīs and Their Traditions

Farhad Daftary

1 Introduction

A major Shīʿī Muslim community, the Ismāʿīlīs have had a complex history
dating back to the formative period of Islam. In the course of their history,
the Ismāʿīlīs became subdivided into a number of major branches and minor
groups. However, since the end of the fifth/eleventh century, they have existed
in terms of two main branches, the Nizārīs and the Mustaʿlians, respectively
designated as Khojas and Bohras in South Asia. Currently, the Ismāʿīlīs are scat-
tered as religious minorities in more than thirty countries in Asia, the Middle
East, Africa, Europe, and North America. Numbering several millions, they also
represent a diversity of ethnic groups and literary traditions and speak a vari-
ety of languages.

Both Ismāʿīlī historiography and the perceptions of outsiders of the Ismāʿīlīs
in pre-modern times, in both Muslim and Christian milieus, have had a fasci-
nating trajectory. In the course of their long history, the Ismāʿīlīs were persis-
tently misrepresented with a variety of myths and legends circulating about
their teachings and practices. This state of affairs reflected mainly the fact
that until the twentieth century the Ismāʿīlīs were almost exclusively studied
and evaluated on the basis of evidence collected, or often fabricated, by their
detractors. As the most politically active wing of Shīʿī Islam, with a religio-
political agenda that aimed to uproot the ʿAbbāsids and restore the caliphate
to a line of ʿAlid *imām*s, from early on the Ismāʿīlīs aroused the hostility of the
Sunnī establishment that led the Muslim majority.

With the foundation of the Fāṭimid caliphate in 297/909, ruled by the
Ismāʿīlī *imām*-caliph, the potential challenge of the Ismāʿīlīs to the established
Sunnī order was actualised, and thereupon the ʿAbbāsids and the Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ*
or religious scholars launched what amounted to an official anti-Ismāʿīlī pro-
paganda campaign. The overall aim of this prolonged literary campaign was
to discredit the Ismāʿīlī movement from its origins, so that the Ismāʿīlīs could
be readily condemned as *mulḥid*s, heretics or deviators from the true reli-
gious path. In particular, Sunnī polemicists fabricated the necessary evidence
that would lend support to the refutation of the Ismāʿīlīs on specific doctri-
nal grounds. Muslim heresiographers, theologians, jurists, and historians also

participated variously in the campaign. Through their forged accounts and misrepresentations of the Ismāʿīlīs, the anti-Ismāʿīlī authors in fact produced a 'black legend' in the course of the fourth/tenth century. Accordingly, Ismāʿīlism was portrayed as the arch-heresy of Islam, carefully designed by mischievous impostors to destroy Islam from within (Ivanow 1946). By the fifth/eleventh century, this 'black legend', with its elaborate details and stages of initiation, had been accepted as an accurate description of Ismāʿīlī motives, beliefs, and practices, leading to further accusations against the community.

The revolt of the Persian Ismāʿīlīs, led initially by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/ 1124), against the Seljuq (or Seljuk) Turks, the new Sunnī overlords of the ʿAbbāsids, called forth another round of Sunnī reaction against the Ismāʿīlīs in general and the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs in particular. The new literary campaign was initiated by the all-powerful Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), who devoted a long chapter in his *Siyāsat-nāma* (1978: 208–231) to the condemnation of the Ismāʿīlīs. At the same time, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), the most renowned contemporary Sunnī theologian, was commissioned by the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mustaẓhir to write a major treatise against the Ismāʿīlīs, or Bāṭinīs (esotericists), another designation coined in reference to the Ismāʿīlīs by their enemies.

Around the same time, the Crusader circles and their occidental chroniclers began to fabricate and disseminate, in both the Latin Orient and Europe, a number of tales, rooted in their 'imaginative ignorance', about the secret practice of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs of Syria, who were thus made famous in medieval Europe as 'the Assassins'. These so-called assassin legends finally culminated in a synthesis popularised by Marco Polo (Daftary 1994: 88–127). Henceforth, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs were depicted in medieval European sources as a sinister order of drugged killers bent on senseless murder. The orientalists of the nineteenth century correctly identified the Ismāʿīlīs as a Shīʿī Muslim community, but they were still obliged to study them exclusively on the basis of hostile Sunnī sources and the fanciful tales of the Crusaders. Consequently, the orientalists, too, unwittingly lent their seal of approval to the medieval myths and misrepresentations of the Ismāʿīlīs.

The breakthrough in Ismāʿīlī studies occurred with the recovery and study of genuine Ismāʿīlī texts on a relatively large scale; manuscript sources which had been preserved secretly in private collections in Yemen, Syria, Persia, Central Asia, and South Asia. Modern scholarship in Ismāʿīlī studies was actually initiated in India, where significant collections of Ismāʿīlī manuscripts have been preserved by the Ismāʿīlī Bohra community. The breakthrough resulted mainly from the pioneering efforts of Wladimir Ivanow (1886–1970), a Russian orientalist, and a few Bohra scholars, who were educated in Europe

and based their original studies on their family collections of manuscripts. In fact, Ivanow compiled the first detailed catalogue of Ismāʿīlī works, attesting to the, hitherto unknown, richness and diversity of Ismāʿīlī literature and intellectual traditions (Ivanow 1933). Subsequently, numerous Ismāʿīlī texts were critically edited and studied, laying a solid foundation for further progress in the field (see Ivanow 1963; Poonawala 1977; Daftary 2004: 106–173).

2   Origins and Early History

The origins of Islam's two main divisions, Sunnī and Shīʿī, may be traced to the crisis of succession to the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632). A successor was needed to assume his functions not as a prophet, but as leader of the nascent Islamic community (*umma*). In practice, this choice was resolved by a group of Muslim notables, leading to the historical caliphate. However, it is the fundamental belief of the Shīʿī Muslims that the Prophet himself had designated his cousin and son-in-law, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661), married to his daughter Fāṭima, as his successor, a designation believed to have been instituted under divine command. A minority group originally holding to this view gradually expanded and became generally designated as the *Shīʿat ʿAlī*, party of ʿAlī, or simply as the Shīʿa.

In time, the Shīʿa themselves split into a number of major communities, notably the Ismāʿīlīs, the Ithnā ʿAsharī or Twelvers, and the Zaydīs. However, initially Shīʿism represented a unified community. The Shīʿa then recognised successively ʿAlī and his sons al-Ḥasan (d. 49/669) and al-Ḥusayn (d. 61/680) as their *imām*s or spiritual leaders. The martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson al-Ḥusayn at Karbalāʾ, Iraq, infused a religious fervour in the Shīʿa, also leading to radical trends in Shīʿism. The situation of the early unified Shīʿa changed soon after the Umayyads established their rule. Henceforth, different Shīʿī communities and lesser groups came to coexist, each with its own line of ʿAlid *imām*s, descendants of ʿAlī, and elaborating its own ideas. Under the circumstances, the Shīʿism of the later Umayyad period developed mainly in terms of two branches, the radical Kaysānīs and the quiescent Imāmis. The Kaysānī Shīʿīs were mainly absorbed into the ʿAbbāsid movement and they disintegrated after the ʿAbbāsid victory of 132/750 over the Umayyads.

Meanwhile, Imāmi Shīʿism had continued to develop under the leadership of a particular line of ʿAlid *imām*s, descendants of al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī. By contrast to the Kaysānīs, the Imāmis remained completely removed from any political activity. It was with Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. ca. 114/732), their fifth *imām*, that the Imāmis branch of Shīʿism began to acquire prominence among the early

Shī'a. It was, however, during the long and eventful *imāmate* of al-Bāqir's son and successors, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, that Imāmis Shī'ism expanded significantly and became a major religious community with a distinct identity. Above all, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and his circle of prominent scholars now elaborated the basic conception of the doctrine of the *imāmate* (*imāma*), which was essentially retained by the later Ismā'īlīs and Twelver Shī'īs. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the last *imām* to be recognised by both the Ismā'īlīs and the Twelvers, died in 148/765. The dispute over his succession led to historic divisions in Imāmis Shī'ism, marking the emergence of the earliest Ismā'īlīs (al-Nawbakhtī: 34, 53–55; al-Qummī: 76–78).

Imām al-Ṣādiq had originally designated his second son Ismā'īl, the eponym of the Ismā'īliyya, as his successor to the *imāmate*. As related in the majority of the sources, however, Ismā'īl apparently predeceased his father. At any rate, Ismā'īl was not present in Medina or Kufa, the centre of Imāmī Shī'ism, on al-Ṣādiq's death, when three of Ismā'īl's brothers laid claim openly to the *imāmate*. Be that as it may, al-Ṣādiq's Imāmī Shī'ī followers now split into six groups, two of which may be identified as the earliest Ismā'īlīs. One of these two splinter groups, based in Kufa, denied the death of Ismā'īl and awaited his return as the *mahdī*. The members of this group are designated as the "Pure Ismā'īliyya" by the earliest Imāmī heresiographers, al-Nawbakhtī (57–61) and al-Qummī (80–81, 83), who are our main sources for the opening phase of Ismā'īlism. A second group, designated as the Mubarakiyya, affirmed Ismā'īl's death in the lifetime of his father and now acknowledged his eldest son Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl as their *imām*. It is certain that both these groups, as well as the extremist Khattabi Shī'īs, were politically active against the 'Abbāsids and they represented the radical fringes of Imāmī Shī'ism in Kufa.

On the death of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, not long after 179/795, the Mubarakiyya themselves split into two groups. A majority, identified by Imāmis heresiographers as the immediate predecessors of the dissident Qarmaṭīs, refused to accept his death; they recognised Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl as their seventh and last *imām*, and awaited his return as the *mahdī* or *qā'im* (riser), terms which were synonymous in their early usage by the Ismā'īlīs and other Shī'īs. A second, small and obscure group, acknowledged Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl's death and now began to trace the *imāmate* in his progeny. Almost nothing is known with certainty regarding the subsequent history of these earliest Ismā'īlī groups until shortly after the middle of the third/ninth century, when a unified Ismā'īlī movement appeared on the historical stage (al-Nawbakhtī: 61; al-Qummī: 83; Daftary 2007: 95–96).

It is certain that for almost a century after Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, a group of his descendants worked secretly for the creation of a unified, revolutionary Shī'ī movement against the 'Abbāsids. These leaders did not openly claim

the Ismāʿīlī *imāmate* for three generations. They had, in fact, hidden their true identity in order to escape ʿAbbāsid persecution. ʿAbd Allāh al-Akbar, the first of these hidden leaders, had organised his campaign around the central doctrine of the majority of the earliest Ismāʿīlīs, namely, the Mahdism of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl. At any rate, ʿAbd Allāh al-Akbar eventually settled in Salamiyya, in central Syria, which served as the secret headquarters of the Ismāʿīlī movement for several decades. The early Ismāʿīlīs now referred to their movement as the *daʿwa*, the mission, or the *daʿwa al-hādiya*, the rightly guiding mission. The religio-political message of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* was disseminated by a network of *dāʿī*s, summoners or missionaries (Daftary 2007: 98–116).

The efforts of ʿAbd Allāh al-Akbar, and his next two successors, began to bear fruit in the 260s/870s, when numerous *dāʿī*s appeared in southern Iraq and other regions. In 261/874, Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ was converted to Ismāʿīlism. He organised the *daʿwa* in Kūfa and other districts of southern Iraq. The Ismāʿīlīs of southern Iraq became generally known as Qarmaṭī, after their first local leader. Ḥamdān's chief assistant was his brother-in-law ʿAbdān, a learned theologian. ʿAbdān was responsible for training and appointing numerous *dāʿī*s, including Abū Saʿīd Ḥasan ibn Bahrām al-Jannābī, who later founded the Qarmaṭī state of Bahrayn. In the meantime, the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* had appeared in many other regions. Centred on the expectation of the imminent return of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl as the *Mahdī* who would establish justice in the world, the revolutionary and messianic Ismāʿīlī movement appealed to underprivileged groups of different social strata. It achieved particular success among those Imāmi Shīʿīs (later designated as Twelvers) who were disillusioned with the quietist policies of their *imām*s and were left without a manifest *imām* after the death of their eleventh *imām* in 260/874.

The *daʿwa* in Yemen was initiated by Ibn Ḥawshab, later known as Manṣūr al-Yaman, where he arrived in 268/881, accompanied by his collaborator ʿAlī ibn al-Faḍl. By 293/905, the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī*s were in control of almost all of Yemen. South Arabia also served as a base for the extension of the *daʿwa* to other regions, such as Egypt and Sind. By 280/893, on Ibn Ḥawshab's instructions, the *dāʿī* Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī was already active among the Kutāma Berbers of the Lesser Kabylia mountains in North Africa. It was in the same decade of 260s/870s that the *daʿwa* was taken to the region of the Jibāl in Persia. Later, the *daʿwa* spread to Qumm, Kāshān, Iṣfahān, and other towns of that region. Somewhat later, the *daʿwa* was formally established in Khurāsān and Transoxania (Stern 1960: 56–90; Daftary 2007: 98–116).

By the early 280s/890s, a unified Ismāʿīlī movement had replaced the earlier Ismāʿīlī splinter groups. However, in 286/899, soon after ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī, the future Fāṭimid caliph, had succeeded to the central leadership of the *daʿwa*

in Salamiyya, Ismāʿīlism was rent by a major schism (Daftary 1993: 123–139; Daftary 2007: 116–126). ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī now claimed the Ismāʿīlī *imāmate* openly for himself and his ancestors, the same leaders who had organised and led the early Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*. Later, he explained that as a form of *taqiyya*, or precautionary dissimulation, the central leaders of the *daʿwa* had adopted different pseudonyms, also assuming the rank of *ḥujja*, proof or full representative, of the absent *mahdī*, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl. He further explained that the earlier propagation of the Mahdism of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl was itself another dissimulating tactic, and that this was in reality another collective code-name for every true *imām* in the progeny of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (Hamdani and de Blois 1983: 173–207).

ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī's doctrinal reform, which allowed for continuity in the Ismāʿīlī *imāmate* after Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, split the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* and community into two rival factions. One faction remained loyal to the central leadership and now acknowledged ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī and his ʿAlid ancestors as their *imām*s, which in due course became the official Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī doctrine of the *imāmate*. This loyalist faction included the bulk of the Ismāʿīlīs of Yemen and those communities in Egypt, North Africa and Sind founded by the *dāʿī*s dispatched by Ibn Ḥawshab. On the other hand, a dissident faction, originally led by Ḥamdān and ʿAbdān, rejected ʿAbd Allāh's reform and maintained their belief in the Mahdism of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl. Henceforth, the term Qarmaṭī came to be applied more specifically to the dissidents who did not acknowledge ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī, as well as his predecessors and successors in the Fāṭimid dynasty, as their *imām*s. The dissident Qarmaṭīs soon acquired their most important stronghold in Bahrayn, in eastern Arabia, where a Qarmaṭī state was founded in the same eventful year, 286/899, by al-Jannābī. The Qarmaṭī state of Bahrayn survived until 470/1077. There were also Qarmaṭī communities in Iraq, Yemen, Persia, and Central Asia (Daftary 1993: 129–139).

The early Ismāʿīlīs elaborated the basic framework of a system of religious thought, which was further developed or modified in the Fāṭimid period of Ismāʿīlī history. Central to this system was a fundamental distinction between the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and the esoteric (*bāṭin*) aspects of the sacred scriptures and the religious commandments and prohibitions. Accordingly, the Ismāʿīlīs held that the Qurʾan and other revealed scriptures, and their laws (*sharīʿa*), had their apparent or literal meaning, which had to be distinguished from their inner meaning hidden in the *bāṭin*. They further held that the *ẓāhir*, or the religious laws enunciated by the prophets, underwent periodical changes while the *bāṭin*, containing the spiritual truths (*ḥaqāʾiq*), remained immutable and eternal. The hidden truths, representing the message common to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, were explained through the methodology of *taʾwīl* or

esoteric exegesis, which often relied on the mystical significance of letters and numbers.

The esoteric truths or *ḥaqāʾiq* formed a gnostic system of thought for the early Ismāʿīlīs, representing a distinct worldview. The two main components of this system were a cyclical history of revelations or prophetic eras (*dawr*s), each one inaugurated by a speaker or enunciator (*nāṭiq*) of a divinely revealed message which in its exoteric (*ẓāhir*) aspect contained a religious law (*sharīʿa*). The *nāṭiq*s of the first six eras were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad. Each *nāṭiq* was, in turn, succeeded by a spiritual legatee (*waṣī*), who explained to the elite the esoteric truths (*ḥaqāʾiq*) contained in the *bāṭin* dimension of that era's message. Each *waṣī* was succeeded by seven *imām*s, who guarded the true meaning of the sacred scriptures and laws in their *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* aspects. The seventh *imām* of every era would rise in rank to become the *nāṭiq* of the following era. This pattern would change only in the seventh and final era of history; the eschatological era of the *qāʾim* when the esoteric truths of all the preceding revelations would be made apparent before the consummation of the physical world (Corbin 1983: 30–58; Daftary 2007: 128–136).

3   The Fāṭimid Period

The Fāṭimid period in Ismāʿīlī history represents the 'golden age' of Ismāʿīlism, when the Ismāʿīlīs possessed an important state of their own and Ismāʿīlī thought and literature attained their summit. It was during this period that the learned Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī*s, who were at the same time the scholars and authors of their community, produced what were to become the classical texts of Ismāʿīlī literature dealing with a variety of exoteric and esoteric subjects, as well as *taʾwīl* which became the hallmark of Ismāʿīlī thought.

The early success of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* culminated in the foundation of an Ismāʿīlī state or *dawla*, the Fāṭimid caliphate, in 297/909. The new dynasty was named Fāṭimid after the Prophet Muḥammad's daughter Fāṭima, to whom the Fāṭimid *imām*-caliphs traced their ʿAlid ancestry. The ground for the establishment of the Fāṭimid caliphate in Ifrīqiya, in North Africa, was meticulously prepared by the *dāʿī* Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī (d. 298/911), who had been active among the Kutāma Berbers of the region for almost twenty years. Meanwhile, ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī had been obliged to flee from Salamiyya in 289/902. After spending some time in Egypt and southern Morocco, he was brought to Qayrawān, the former Aghlabid capital in Ifrīqiya, by Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Shīʿī who had successfully uprooted the Aghlabids shortly before. On 20 Rabīʿ II 297/4 January 910, ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī (d. 322/934) was acclaimed as caliph,

also marking the end of the *dawr al-satr*, or period of concealment, in early Ismāʿīlī history.

The Fāṭimids did not abandon their Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* on assuming power, as they aimed to extend their rule over the entire Muslim community and beyond. However, the early Fāṭimid *imām*-caliphs, ruling from Ifrīqiya in North Africa, encountered numerous difficulties while consolidating their power with the help of the Kutama Berbers, who were converts to Ismāʿīlism and now provided the backbone of the Fāṭimid armies. In particular, they confronted the hostility of the Khariji Berbers and the Sunnī inhabitants of the cities of Ifrīqiya, in addition to conflicts with the Umayyads of Spain, the ʿAbbāsids and the Byzantines. Fāṭimid rule was firmly established in North Africa only under the fourth Fāṭimid *imām*-caliph, Abū Tamīm Maʿadd al-Muʿizz li-Dīn Allāh (341–365/953–975), who succeeded in transforming the Fāṭimid caliphate from a regional state into a great empire. He was also the first member of the Fāṭimid dynasty to concern himself significantly with the propagation of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* outside the Fāṭimid dominions, especially after the transference of the seat of the Fāṭimid caliphate in 362/973 to Egypt, where he founded Cairo as his new capital city.

The *imām*-caliph al-Muʿizz also permitted the assimilation of the Neoplatonic cosmology elaborated by the *dāʿīs* of the Iranian lands into the teachings of the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa*. In the course of the fourth/tenth century, Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943), Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (322/934), and al-Sijistānī (d. after 361/971) had set about harmonising their Ismāʿīlī Shīʿī theology, revolving around the central Shīʿī doctrine of the *imāmate*, with Neoplatonic philosophy. This led to the development of a unique intellectual tradition of philosophical theology in Ismāʿīlism. The last major proponent of philosophical Ismāʿīlism was the eminent Persian poet and traveller Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. after 462/1070), who successfully propagated Ismāʿīlism throughout the region of Badakhshān, now divided between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. These Iranian *dāʿīs* elaborated complex metaphysical systems of thought with a distinct Neoplatonised emanational cosmology (Walker 1993: 67–142). It was also in al-Muʿizz's time that Ismāʿīlī law was finally codified and its precepts began to be observed by the judiciary throughout the Fāṭimid state. The promulgation of an Ismāʿīlī *madhhab*, or school of jurisprudence, resulted mainly from the efforts of al-Qāḍī Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān ibn Muḥammad (d. 363/974), the foremost jurist of the Fāṭimid period (Poonawala 1996: 117–143).

The Ismāʿīlīs had high esteem for learning and under the Fāṭimids they elaborated distinctive traditions of learning. The Fāṭimid *daʿwa* was particularly concerned with educating the Ismāʿīlī converts in the esoteric doctrine known as the *ḥikma* or 'wisdom'. As a result, a variety of lectures or 'teaching

sessions', generally designated as *majālis*, were organised. The private lectures on Ismā'īlī esoteric doctrine, known as *majālis al-ḥikma*, or 'sessions of wisdom', were reserved exclusively for the Ismā'īlī initiates who had already taken the oath of allegiance and secrecy (Halm 1996: 91–115). The lectures delivered by the *dā'ī al-du'āt* or chief *dā'ī*, were approved beforehand by the *imām*. Many of these *majālis* were in due course collected and committed to writing. This Fāṭimid tradition of learning culminated in the 800 lectures of the *dā'ī* al-Mu'ayyad fī l-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078), who served as the chief *dā'ī* for twenty years. Another main institution of learning founded by the Fāṭimids was the *Dār al-'Ilm*, the House of Knowledge, sometimes also called the *Dār al-Ḥikma*. Established in 395/1005 by the *imām*-caliph al-Ḥākim (386–411/996–1021), a variety of religious and non-religious subjects were taught at this academy which was also equipped with a major library. Many Ismā'īlī *dā'ī*s received at least part of their training at the *Dār al-'Ilm* (Halm 1997: 71–77).

The Ismā'īlī *da'wa* organisation developed over time. The *dā'ī*s were active both within the Fāṭimid dominions as well as in other regions referred to as the *jazā'ir* or islands. Organised in a strictly hierarchical fashion, the Fāṭimid *da'wa* was under the overall supervision of the *imām* and the *dā'ī al-du'āt*, also known as the *bāb*, who acted as its administrative head. All in all, it was in non-Fāṭimid regions, the *jazā'ir*, especially Yemen, Persia, and Central Asia, that the Fāṭimid *da'wa* achieved lasting success. The *da'wa* was particularly intensified in Iraq and Persia under al-Ḥākim. Foremost among the *dā'ī*s of this period was Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī (d. after 411/1020), who elaborated his own unique tradition within the Iranian school of philosophical Ismā'īlism (Walker 1999: 80–124). Al-Ḥākim's reign also coincided with the opening phase of what was to become known as the Druze religion, founded by a number of *dā'ī*s who proclaimed the end of the era of Islam and advocated the divinity of al-Ḥākim.

The Ismā'īlī *da'wa* activities outside the Fāṭimid state reached their peak in the long reign of al-Mustanṣir (427–487/1036–1094), continuing even after the Sunnī Seljuqs replaced the Shī'ī Būyids as overlords of the 'Abbāsids in 447/1055. Meanwhile, the leadership of the *da'wa* in Yemen had come into the hands of 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣulayḥī, an important chieftain of the Banu Hamdān. The *dā'ī* 'Alī al-Ṣulayḥī rose in the mountainous region of Ḥarāz in 439/1047, marking the effective foundation of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty ruling over different parts of Yemen as vassals of the Fāṭimids until 532/1138. The Ṣulayḥids also played an active part in the renewed efforts of the Fāṭimids to spread the *da'wa* on the Indian subcontinent. The Ismā'īlī community founded in Gujarāt by *dā'ī*s sent from Yemen evolved into the modern Ṭayyibī Bohra community.

Meanwhile, the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* had continued to spread in many parts of the Iranian world, now incorporated into the Seljuq sultanate. By the early 460s/1070s, the Persian Ismāʿīlīs were under the leadership of ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAṭṭāsh, who had his secret *daʿwa* headquarters in Iṣfahān, the main Seljuq capital. He was also responsible for launching the career of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, who in due course led the Ismāʿīlī cause in Persia. In Badakhshān and other eastern parts of the Iranian world, too, the *daʿwa* had continued to spread after the downfall of the Sāmānids in 395/1005. As noted, Nāṣir-i Khusraw played a key role in propagating Ismāʿīlism in Central Asia, while maintaining his contacts with the chief *dāʿī* al-Muʾayyad and the central *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo (Hunsberger 2000: 220–254). By the time the Qarmaṭī state of Bahrayn was finally uprooted in 470/1077 by some local tribes, other Qarmaṭī groups in Persia, Iraq, and elsewhere too, had either disintegrated or switched their allegiance to the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* of the Fāṭimids. There was now, once again, only one unified Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* under the supreme leadership of the Fāṭimid *imām*-caliph.

In the course of al-Mustanṣir's long reign the Fāṭimid caliphate had already embarked on a decline resulting from factional fighting in the Fāṭimid armies and various political and economic problems (Thompson 2016: 40–72). Under the circumstances, al-Mustanṣir appealed to Badr al-Jamālī, an Armenian commander in the service of the Fāṭimids, who succeeded to restore peace and stability to the state. Badr soon assumed leadership of civil, judicial, and religious administrations in addition to being the 'commander of the armies' (*amir al-jūyūsh*), his main source of power. Badr died in 487/1094 after having arranged for his son al-Afḍal to succeed him in the vizierate. Henceforth, real power in the Fāṭimid state remained in the hands of the viziers who also commanded the armies, and were often in charge of the *daʿwa* organisation and activities as well.

Al-Mustanṣir, the eighth Fāṭimid caliph and the eighteenth Ismāʿīlī *imām*, died in Dhuʾl-Ḥijja 487/December 1094, a few months after Badr al-Jamālī. Thereupon, the unified Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* and community split into two rival factions, as al-Mustanṣir's son and original heir-designate Nizār was deprived of his succession rights by al-Afḍal, who installed Nizār's younger half-brother on the Fāṭimid throne with the title of al-Mustaʿlī bi-llāh (487–495/1094–1101). The two factions were later designated as Mustaʿlian and Nizārī, after al-Mustanṣir's sons who had claimed his heritage. Nizār refused to pay homage to al-Mustaʿlī and rose in revolt, but was defeated and killed in 488/1095. The *imāmate* of al-Mustaʿlī was recognised by the Ismāʿīlī communities of Egypt, Yemen, and western India. These Ismāʿīlīs, who were dependent on the Fāṭimid regime, later traced the *imāmate* in the progeny of al-Mustaʿlī. On the other hand, the

Ismāʿīlīs of Persia, who were already led by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, supported the succession rights of Nizār. The Central Asian Ismāʿīlīs remained uninvolved for quite some time in the Nizārī-Mustaʿlī schism.

4   Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlīs

The Fāṭimid state survived for another seventy-seven years after the Nizārī-Mustaʿlī schism of 487/1094. These decades witnessed the rapid decline of the Fāṭimid caliphate. Al-Mustaʿlī and his successors on the Fāṭimid throne continued to be recognised as *imām*s by the Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlīs who themselves soon split into Ḥāfiẓī and Ṭayyibī branches. After al-Mustaʿlī, the all-powerful vizier al-Afḍal placed his minor son on the Fāṭimid throne with the caliphal title of al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh. On al-Āmir's assassination in 524/1130, the Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlīs were confronted with a major crisis of succession. A son, named al-Ṭayyib, had been born to al-Āmir a few months before his death; and, he had been designated as al-Āmir's heir-apparent. But after al-Āmir, power was assumed initially as regent, by his cousin, who later proclaimed himself as caliph and *imām* with the title of al-Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīn Allāh (526–544/1132–1149).

The irregular succession of al-Ḥāfiẓ to the Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlī *imāmate* led to a major split in the Mustaʿlian community. Similar to the earlier case of the Nizārī-Mustaʿlī schism, the Mustaʿlian *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo endorsed the *imāmate* of al-Ḥāfiẓ, which was also acknowledged by the Mustaʿlians of Egypt and Syria as well as a portion of the Mustaʿlians of Yemen. These Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlīs, who recognised al-Ḥāfiẓ and the later Fāṭimid caliphs as their *imām*s, became known as Ḥāfiẓī. Ḥāfiẓī Ismāʿīlism disappeared completely soon after the collapse of the Fāṭimid dynasty in 567/1171. On the other hand, Sayyida Arwā (d. 532/1138), then the effective ruler of Ṣulayḥid Yemen, upheld al-Ṭayyib's cause and recognised him as al-Āmir's successor to the *imāmate*. As a result, the Mustaʿlians of Ṣulayḥid Yemen as well as those of Gujarāt also acknowledged al-Ṭayyib's *imāmate*; they became known as the Ṭayyibīs (Stern 1951: 193–255). Mustaʿlian Ismāʿīlism has survived only in its Ṭayyibī form.

Ṭayyibī Ismāʿīlism found its permanent stronghold in Yemen, with the initial support of the Ṣulayḥid queen. It was soon after 526/1132 that she broke off relations with Cairo and declared Dhuʾayb ibn Mūsā al-Wādiʿī (d. 546/1151) as the *dāʿī al-muṭlaq*, or *dāʿī* with supreme authority, to lead the affairs of the Ṭayyibī Mustaʿlian *daʿwa* on behalf of al-Ṭayyib, who was thought to be in hiding. This marked the foundation of the Ṭayyibī *daʿwa* independently of the Fāṭimid regime as well as the Ṣulayḥid state. The Ṭayyibīs are of the opinion

that since the time of al-Ṭayyib, their *imāmate* has continued in his progeny to the present time. However, all these Ṭayyibī *imām*s have remained in concealment, and in their absence the *dāʿī muṭlaqs* have led the affairs of the Ṭayyibī *daʿwa* and community. As in the case of *imām*s, every *dāʿī muṭlaq* has appointed his successor. In the doctrinal field, the Ṭayyibīs maintained the Fāṭimid traditions, also preserving a good portion of the Ismāʿīlī texts of the Fāṭimid period (Daftary 2007: 269–276).

Meanwhile, the Ṭayyibī *dāʿī*s in Yemen maintained close relations with the rapidly growing Ṭayyibī community in western India, where these Ismāʿīlīs became designated as Bohras. Towards the end of the tenth/sixteenth century, the succession to Dāʾūd ibn ʿAjab Shāh (d. 997/1589), the twenty-sixth *dāʿī*, was disputed, leading to the Dāʾūdī-Sulaymānī schism in the Ṭayyibī *daʿwa* and community. Henceforth, the Dāʾūdī and Sulaymānī Ṭayyibīs followed separate lines of *dāʿī*s. The Dāʾūdī *dāʿī*s continued to reside in India, where the bulk of the Ṭayyibī Dāʾūdī Bohras were located. On the other hand, the Sulaymānīs, accounting for a minority of the Ṭayyibīs, remained concentrated in Yemen, where their *dāʿī*s resided until recent times. In time, the Dāʾūdī Bohras were further subdivided in India due to periodical challenges to the authority of their *dāʿī muṭlaq*. The total Dāʾūdī population of the world is currently estimated at around one million. Since the 1920s, Bombay (Mumbai), with the largest single concentration of Dāʾūdī Bohras, has served as the permanent administrative seat of the Dāʾūdīs (Daftary 2007: 282–295; Qutbuddin 2011: 331–354).

In Yemen, the leadership of the Sulaymānī Ṭayyibīs has remained hereditary in the same Makramī family. The Sulaymānī *dāʿī*s established their headquarters in Najrān, in northeastern Yemen, and ruled over that region with the military support of the local Banū Yām. In the twentieth century, the political prominence of the Sulaymānī *dāʿī*s, checked earlier by the Zaydīs and the Ottomans, was further curtailed by the Saudi family, adherents of austere Wahhābī Sunnism. Najrān was, in fact, annexed to Saudi Arabia in 1934. Thereafter, the Sulaymānī *dāʿī*s and many of their followers have been persecuted intermittently by the Saudis, who persecute Shīʿī Muslims generally as 'heretics'. The total Sulaymānī Ṭayyibī population is currently estimated officially at around 200,000 persons (Daftary 2007: 295–300). Similar to the Dāʾūdīs, the Sulaymānīs withhold their religious literature from outsiders.

5　　Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs

By the time of the Nizārī-Mustaʿlī succession dispute of 487/1094, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, who preached the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* on behalf of the Fāṭimids within the

Seljuq dominions in Persia, had emerged as the leader of the Persian Ismāʿīlīs. He had already been following an independent policy, and his seizure of the mountain fortress of Alamūt in 483/1090 signalled the commencement of the Persian Ismāʿīlīs' open revolt against the Seljuq Turks as well as the foundation of what would become the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī state. The Nizārī state, centred at Alamūt, with its territories and network of fortresses scattered in different parts of Persia and Syria, lasted some 166 years until its destruction by the Mongols in 654/1256.

As an Ismāʿīlī, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ could not tolerate the anti-Shīʿī policies of the Seljuqs, who being the new champions of Sunnī Islam aimed to uproot the Fāṭimids. Ḥasan's revolt was also an expression of Persian 'national' sentiments, as the alien rule of the Seljuq Turks was intensely detested by the Persians of different social classes. This may explain why he substituted Persian for Arabic as the religious language of the Persian Ismāʿīlīs, also accounting for the early popular success of his movement (Daftary 1996: 181–204). It was under such circumstances that in al-Mustanṣir's succession dispute Ḥasan supported Nizār's cause and severed his relations with the Fāṭimid regime and the *daʿwa* headquarters in Cairo which had supported al-Mustaʿlī. By this decision, Ḥasan had founded the independent Nizārī Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* on behalf of the Nizārī *imām*s, who remained in concealment for several generations after Nizār. In fact, numismatic evidence shows that Nizār's own name appeared on coins minted at Alamūt for about seventy years after his death in 488/1095, while his progeny was blessed anonymously (Miles 1972: 155–162).

The early Nizārīs were thus left without an accessible *imām* in another *dawr al-satr*, or period of concealment; and, as in the pre-Fāṭimid period of concealment, the absent *imām* was represented in the community by a *ḥujja*, his chief representative. Ḥasan and his next two successors as heads of the Nizārī *daʿwa* and state were, indeed, recognised as such *ḥujja*s. It seems that already in Ḥasan's time many Nizārīs believed that a son or grandson of Nizār had been secretly brought from Egypt to Persia, and he became the progenitor of the line of the Nizārī *imām*s who later emerged at Alamūt.

The early Nizārīs were also active in the doctrinal field. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ himself is credited with having reformulated the old Shīʿī doctrine of *taʿlīm*, or authoritative teaching by the *imām* of the time. This doctrine, emphasising the autonomous teaching authority of each *imām* in his own time, became the central doctrine of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs. The intellectual challenge posed to Sunnī Islam by the doctrine of *taʿlīm*, which also refuted the legitimacy of the ʿAbbāsid caliph as the spiritual spokesman of all Muslims, called forth the reaction of the Sunnī establishment. Many Sunnī scholars, led by al-Ghazālī, attacked the Ismāʿīlī doctrine of *taʿlīm*. Soon the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs possessed

networks of fortresses in several regions of Persia, including Daylamān and
Quhistān (Willey 2005: 103–203); and, in the opening decade of the sixth/
tenth century, Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ also extended his activities to Syria by sending
*dāʿī*s there from Alamūt. Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ died in 518/1124 and was succeeded
by the *dāʿī* Kiyā Buzurg-Umīd (518–532/1124–1138). However, by the final years
of Ḥasan's life, the anti-Seljuq revolt of the Persian Nizārīs had already lost its
momentum, much in the same way that the Seljuqs had failed in their pro-
longed military campaigns to dislodge the Persian Nizārīs from their fortress
communities. Ismāʿīlī-Seljuq relations had now entered a new phase of 'stale-
mate' (Hillenbrand 1996: 205–220; Daftary 2015: 41–57).

Meanwhile, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs had been eagerly expecting the appearance
of their *imām*. The fourth lord of Alamūt, Ḥasan II, succeeded to the leader-
ship in 557/1162, and soon after, in 559/1164, declared the *qiyāma* or resurrec-
tion, initiating a new phase in the religious history of the Nizārī community.
Ḥasan II relied heavily on Ismāʿīlī *taʾwīl* and earlier traditions, interpret-
ing *qiyāma* symbolically and spiritually for the Nizārīs. Accordingly, *qiyāma*
meant nothing more than the manifestation of unveiled truth (*ḥaqīqa*) in the
person of the Nizārī *imām*. It was a spiritual resurrection only for the Nizārīs
who acknowledged the rightful *imām* of the time, and were now capable of
understanding the truth, the esoteric essence of Islam. It was in this sense that
Paradise was actualised for the Nizārīs in this world. The Nizārīs, like the Sufis,
were now to rise to a spiritual level of existence, transcending from *ẓāhir* to
bāṭin, from *sharīʿa* to *ḥaqīqa*, or from the literal interpretation of the law to an
understanding of its spiritual essence and the eternal truths of religion. On the
other hand, the 'outsiders', the non-Nizārīs who were incapable of recognising
the truth, were rendered spiritually non-existent (Daftary 2007: 358–367). The
imām proclaiming the *qiyāma* would be the *qāʾim al-qiyāma*, or 'lord of resur-
rection', a rank which in Ismāʿīlī religious hierarchy was always higher than
that of an ordinary *imām*.

Ḥasan II's son and successor Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad devoted his long reign
(561–607/1166–1210) to a systematic doctrinal elaboration of the *qiyāma*. The
exaltation of the autonomous teaching authority of the present Nizārī *imām*
now became the central feature of Nizārī thought. Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad also
made every Nizārī *imām* potentially a *qāʾim*, capable of inaugurating an era of
qiyāma. Furthermore, he explicitly affirmed the Fāṭimid descent of his father
and, therefore, of himself. He explained that Ḥasan II was, in fact, an *imām* and
the son of a descendant of Nizār ibn al-Mustanṣir, who had earlier found ref-
uge in Alamūt. Henceforth, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs recognised the lords of Alamūt,
beginning with Ḥasan II, as their *imām*s (Hodgson 1955: 160–184, 210–217).

Meanwhile, the Syrian Nizārīs had entered into an important phase of their own history under the leadership of Rāshid al-Dīn Sinān, their most famous chief *dāʿī* and the original 'Old Man of the Mountain' of the Crusader sources. He reorganised and strengthened the Syrian Nizārī *daʿwa*, also consolidating the Nizārī network of castles (Willey 2005: 216–245). Aiming to safeguard his community, Sinān entered into intricate and shifting alliances with the major neighbouring powers, notably the Crusaders, the Zangids and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin of the Crusader sources). Sinān led the Syrian Nizārīs for almost three decades, when they attained the peak of their power and fame, until his death in 589/1193 (Hodgson 1955: 185–209; Daftary 2007: 367–374).

Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad's son and successor Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan (607–618/1210–1221), who had become concerned with the isolation of the Nizārīs from the larger world of Sunnī Islam, successfully attempted a daring rapprochement with the ʿAbbāsid caliph. He ordered his followers to observe the *sharīʿa* in its Sunnī form; this was interpreted by the Nizārīs as a dissimulating tactic. Be that as it may, the rights of Jalāl al-Dīn Ḥasan to Nizārī territories were now officially recognised by the Sunnī establishment. The Nizārī *imām* had achieved much-needed peace and security for his community and state.

Nizārī fortunes in Persia were rapidly reversed after the collapse of the Khwārazmian empire which brought them into direct conflict with the invading Mongols. Indeed, the Mongols had assigned a high priority to the destruction of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī state, a task completed with much difficulty by Hūlāgū who led the main Mongol expedition into Persia. Rukn al-Dīn Khurshāh, the last lord of Alamūt who reigned for only one year, entered into a complex and ultimately futile series of negotiations with Hūlāgū. The fall of Alamūt in the autumn of 654/1256 marked the end of the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī state. Along with many other fortresses it was demolished by the Mongols, who also massacred countless Nizārīs. In the spring of 655/1257, Khurshāh himself was killed by his Mongol guards in Mongolia, where he had gone to see the Great Khan. Shortly afterwards, the Nizārī castles in Syria submitted to the Mamlūks. Having lost their political prominence, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs henceforth lived secretly as religious minorities in numerous scattered communities in Syria, Persia, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent.

In the aftermath of the Mongol debacle the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs survived the downfall of their state centered at Alamūt; and the Nizārī *imāmate* continued in the progeny of Rukn al-Dīn Khurshāh. However, the Nizārī *imām*s remained in hiding for several generations, and their centralised *daʿwa* organisation had also disappeared. Under the circumstances, various Nizārī communities developed independently under the local leadership of dynasties of *dāʿī*s, *pīr*s, and

mīrs. They also resorted to the strict observance of *taqiyya* and adopted differ-ent external guises. In Persia, many Nizārī groups disguised themselves under the cover of Sufism. Thus, the *imām*s appeared to outsiders as Sufi masters or *pīr*s, while their followers adopted the typically Sufi guise of disciples or *murīd*s (Daftary 1999: 275–289). This practice gained wide currency among the Nizārīs of Central Asia and Sind as well. By the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century, in fact, a type of coalescence had emerged between Persian Sufism and Nizārī Ismāʿīlism, as these two independent esoteric traditions in Islam shared common doctrinal grounds. All in all, the first two post-Alamūt centu-ries in Nizārī history are shrouded in obscurity, mainly due to *taqiyya* practices and lack of sources of information.

By the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century, the Nizārī *imām*s had emerged in the village of Anjudān, in central Persia, still dissimulating as Sufi *pīr*s, initi-ating the so-called Anjudān revival in Nizārī Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* and literary activi-ties that lasted some two centuries (Daftary 2007: 422–442). With the advent of the Ṣafavids, who proclaimed Twelver Shīʿism as their state religion in 907/1501, the Nizārī *imām*s and their followers in Persia and adjacent lands also adopted Twelver Shīʿism in addition to Sufism as a *taqiyya* measure. By the end of the eleventh/seventeenth century, the revived Nizārī *daʿwa* had been particularly successful in Central Asia and several regions of the Indian subcontinent. In South Asia, the Hindu converts, who became known as Khojas, developed an indigenous religious tradition known as Satpanth or the 'true path' (to salva-tion), as well as a devotional literature, the *ginān*s, containing a diversity of mystical, mythological, eschatological, and ethical themes (Nanji 1978: 50–83; Asani 2011: 95–128; Daftary 2007: 442–451).

With the fortieth Nizārī *imām*, Shāh Nizār (d. 1134/1722), the seat of the Nizārī *daʿwa* was transferred from Anjudān to the nearby village of Kahak, near Maḥallāt. By the middle of the twelfth-eighteenth century, the Nizārī *imām*s had moved to the Persian province of Kirmān, where they acquired political prominence. The modern period in Nizārī Ismāʿīlī history commenced with the long *imāmate* of Ḥasan ʿAlī Shāh (1232–1298/1817–1881), the forty-sixth *imām*, who received the honorific title of Aga Khan (*Āghā Khān*), meaning lord and master, from the Qājār monarch of Persia; this title has remained heredi-tary among his successors to the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī *imāmate*. After some prolonged confrontations between this Nizārī *imām* and the Qājār establishment, Aga Khan I permanently left Persia in 1257/1841. He finally settled in Bombay in 1265/1848, and received the protection of the British in India (Daftary 2007: 463–476).

Aga Khan I's grandson, Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh, Aga Khan III (1302–1376/ 1885–1957), who led the Nizārīs for seventy-two years as their forty-eighth

imām, established his residence in Europe. He made systematic efforts to set the religious identity of the Nizārīs apart from other religious communities, especially that of the Twelver Shīʿīs, which for centuries had provided dissimulating covers for the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs. Large numbers of Nizārīs had, in fact, been assimilated into the dominant Twelver Shīʿī community. Known as a Muslim reformer, Aga Khan III worked vigorously to reorganise the Nizārīs into a modern community with high standards of education, health, and social well-being, also developing a new network of councils for administrating the affairs of his community. The education of women and their full participation in communal affairs received high priority in Aga Khan III's reforms.

In 1957, Aga Khan III was succeeded by his grandson Shah Karim al-Husayni, Aga Khan IV, the present Harvard-educated forty-ninth Nizārī Ismāʿīlī *imām*. He has substantially expanded the modernisation policies of his predecessor, also initiating numerous programmes and institutions of his own. Aga Khan IV has created a complex institutional network generally referred to as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which implements projects in a variety of social, economic, and cultural areas. In the field of higher education, his major initiatives include The Institute of Ismaili Studies, the Aga Khan University, and the University of Central Asia (Ruthven 2011: 189–220). Numbering several millions, the global Nizārī Ismāʿīlī community, with significant groups in Europe and North America, has emerged as a progressive Shīʿī Muslim minority with high standards of living.

6   Conclusion

As this chapter has touched on, the Ismāʿīlīs have had a very eventful history stretching back to the formative period of Islam when a diversity of communities of interpretation and schools of thought were articulating their doctrinal positions. Due to their revolutionary anti-establishment stances, the Ismāʿīlīs were from early on targeted for persecution and defamation. As a result, a host of myths and legends were fabricated and disseminated by their numerous adversaries, including the Crusaders who made the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs famous in medieval Europe as Assassins. The misrepresentations of the Ismāʿīlīs have been largely corrected by modern scholarship in Ismāʿīlī studies based on the study of a large number of primary Ismāʿīlī manuscript resources.

After the downfall of their Fāṭimid caliphate and the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī state of Persia, the Ismāʿīlīs lost forever their political prominence, surviving precariously in many lands merely as religious minorities. However, their earlier contributions to Islamic thought and culture had proved enduring. In this context,

particular mention should be made of two examples. In the Fāṭimid period of their history, the Ismāʿīlī *dāʿī*s of the Iranian lands elaborated an original intellectual tradition of philosophical theology, the earliest such tradition in a Shīʿī community, anticipating the contributions of Twelver Shīʿī scholars, notably Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1630) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640), belonging to the so-called 'school of Iṣfahān'. Meanwhile, a distinctive Ismāʿīlī school of jurisprudence (*madhhab*) was founded through the efforts of al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, the foremost jurist of the Fāṭimid period.

All in all, despite numerous odds and rampant persecution, the Ismāʿīlīs have indeed stood the test of time. They have closely guarded their distinctive religious identity. The majoritarian Nizārī branch of Ismāʿīlism is the only current Shīʿī community with a continuous line of present *imām*s. As enlightened Muslim leaders, the last two Ismāʿīlī *imām*s, Aga Khans III and his grandson Aga Khan IV, have devoted much time and resources to promoting a better understanding of Islam, not merely as a major religion but as a world civilisation with its plurality of social, intellectual and cultural traditions. Under the circumstances, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs have emerged as a progressive global community of Shīʿī Muslims. In every country where the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs live as indigenous religious minorities, they enjoy good standards of living with full emancipation of their women, and those who have migrated to Western countries have successfully adapted to their new environments.

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The Dāʾūdī Bohras (Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa)

Using Modernity to Institutionalise a Fāṭimid Tradition

Jonah Blank

1 Introduction

The Dāʾūdī (or Dawoodi) Bohras, a community numbering substantially over one million worldwide, represent one of the two branches of Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism to survive into the modern era. Mustaʿlī Ṭayyibī Ismāʿīlīs (as they are described in denominational terms) are the spiritual descendants of Egypt's renowned Fāṭimid Caliphate. Unlike the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs (who believe that the line of *imām*s continued through the succession of clerics bearing the title Aga Khan), the Mustaʿlīs believe that the last Fāṭimid caliph was the twenty-second and final present *imām* (Abū l-Qāsim Ṭayyib). Since the sixth century AH/twelfth century CE, both spiritual and temporal leadership of the community has rested in a line of clerics bearing the title of *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq*, seated first in Yemen and since the tenth/sixteenth century in the Indian states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. Over the past four decades, the Dāʾūdī Bohra clergy has attempted, with great success, to establish a communal identity that is at once universally Islamic and unique to the denomination. It has done so not by rejecting modern or Western ideas and technologies, but by enthusiastically embracing many of them: in this sense, the Bohras have used 'modernity' as a tool to reinvigorate and reinstitutionalise their core traditions.[1] Thus, the Dāʾūdī Bohras demonstrate the resilience and ideological adaptability of Shīʿa Islam.

The name 'Bohra' is generally presumed to be derived from the Gujarati verb *vohrvun* ('to trade'), reflecting the occupation of the overwhelming majority of Bohras throughout their history. The bulk of the group's ancestors converted to Islam from mercantile Hindu *jatis* within the Vaishya *varna*, beginning in the fifth/eleventh century. The Bohra community experienced a number of schisms

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1 This chapter is adapted from sections of my monograph, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity Among the Dāʾūdī Bohras* (2001), supplemented by my analysis of the recent leadership schism within the Dāʾūdī Bohra community (2017). A brief history of the denomination with more complete sourcing is found in Blank 2001: 14–52.

in the millennium since, most notably a split in the eleventh/sixteenth century between the followers of two rival clerical leaders named Dāʾūd ibn Quṭub Shāh and Sulaymān ibn Ḥasan (*Mausam-e Bahar* 1884: 343–345; Schimmel 1980: 70–71). While the small sect of Sulaymānī Bohras has maintained a separate chain of clerical succession ever since (as has the still-smaller group of ʿAlawī Bohras, product of a subsequent schism), the term 'Bohra' is commonly used as shorthand for 'Dāʾūdī Bohra', the predominant group.[2] While there is some tension between the group's ethnic and spiritual definition—that is, whether the community should be bounded by Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlī doctrine (as the clergy maintains) or by shared ancestry (as some dissidents argue)—the overlap of ethnicity and religion is close enough to make these definitions largely interchangeable. As a practical matter, the term 'Bohra' is generally taken by members of the community to mean "a practitioner of Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlī Islam, who happens to be of Gujarati descent" (Abdulhussein 1995: 225; Davoodbhoy 1992a: 4). It is in that sense that the term will be used in this chapter.

Until the turn of the fifteenth/twenty-first century, the Bohras were one of an exceptionally small set of societies about which no ethnographic study (at least, none conforming to the standards of academic anthropology) had been published.[3] As a result of their sequestration the Bohras are one of the few major communities left to which Marcus Banks' dictum of tainted evidence—

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2   The first important Bohra schism occurred even earlier, in the ninth/fifteenth century, when a theology student named Jafar of Patan led a significant number of followers to abandon Shīʿism for Sunnī practice; this group subsequently had no shared history or culture with its former coreligionists, and is outside the bounds of any modern definition of 'Bohras'. The succession dispute betweeen Daud Burhanuddin ibn Qutbshah and Shaikh Sulaymān ibn Syedi Hasan al-Hindi was brought before the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 1005/1597, who ruled in favor of Daud; the modern Sulaymānī community is far smaller than the Dāʾūdī mainstream (by some estimates, perhaps one-tenth its size), and concentrated in the Middle East rather than South Asia, but it preceded the Dāʾūdīs in adopting Western education and practices; a Sulaymānī Bohra (Justice Badruddin Tyebji) became India's first Muslim barrister, the first Muslim judge to sit on the Bombay High Court, and the first Muslim president of the Indian National Congress. The ʿAlawī Bohras broke away from the Dāʾūdīs over a succession dispute in 1034/1624, and are today headquartered in the Gujarati city of Vadodara.

3   All prior works presenting primary-source ethnographic data on the Bohras fall into one of two categories:

    First, texts published by clerical authorities, generally through the Daʿwat-e-Hadiyah, Department of Statistics and Information (including Anjuman-e Burhani 1965; Bekhud 1994a, 1994b, 1994c; Davoodbhoy 1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1994; Daʿwat-e-Hadiyah 1975, 1983, 1985; Najmuddin 1992; Niazi 1992; Zaidi 1988). These often contain very useful information: For example, Abdulhussein (1995) is the work of a clerical scholar rather than a propagandist; Raik (1975) presents irreplaceable primary-source photographic documentation of the community shortly before the late-1970s program of orthopraxy Islamisation. Clerically-written histories such as Ismailji (1938); *'Mausam-e bahar'* (1884); and Mubarakpuri (1978) provide narratives (albeit *daʿwat*-approved versions) often not available anywhere else.

"the manifestations of ethnicity we study today contain within them the ghosts of previous academic formulations" (Banks 1996: 189)—does not apply. This was not due to geographical remove: far from being an obscure community living in a remote corner of a rainforest, the Bohras are closely integrated to social life in Mumbai, Karachi, Surat, Ahmedabad and other cities in South Asia. Their absence from the anthropological record is due to self-selection: The structure of their society, with a degree of clerical control highly unusual among Muslim groups, enabled them to prevent outside researchers from making inroads into the orthodox community. The fieldwork on which this chapter is based, and the monograph from which most of the information was drawn, was enabled only by the permission of the late *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* Syedna Muhammad Burhanuddin, who gave his *duʿāʾ* (blessing) for the undertaking on 8 *Shabaan* 1415/10 January 1995, at the *Jamea-tus-Saifiyah* in Surat, India.

2   History and Doctrine

The roots of the Bohra faith date to the Fāṭimid Caliphate, the most celebrated Ismāʿīlī dynasty in history. Like the later divisions within the Bohra lineage, the great schism of Shīʿa Islam into rival Ismāʿīlī and Ithnā ʿAsharī ('Twelver')

Second, texts written by or directly derived from a small group of dissidents placed under *baraat* (*de facto* excommunication) by the clergy (Contractor 1980; Engineer 1989, 1980/1993, 1995; through them, Chopra 1982, Nathwani 1979, Roy 1984). The reasons for this are discussed in Blank (2001: 301–307). Due to their exclusion from all contact with members of the orthodox communities, these authors are reliant on information that was already outdated at the time of their excommunications in the mid-twentieth century. Of particular note is the surprising fact that all of these texts—and virtually every notionally-independent text published by a source outside the community over the past century—can be traced directly to material originally published (in 1317/1899, and more completely in 1338/1920) by a Bohra dissident named Mian Bhai Mullah Abdul Husain of Rangoon. For documentation of this lineage, see Blank (2001: 306–307).

Several scholars have written usefully about the Bohras without conducting fieldwork in the orthodox community, and drawing their information largely from the excommunicated authors above. The most useful is the great scholar of Ismāʿīlī history and theology Farhad Daftary (1990; others include Hollister 1953; Misra 1964; and Wright 1975). In addition to these, occasionally facts about Bohra life come up in news reports, or in scholarly texts only tangentially related to social science (for example, genetics: Basu and Gupta 1982, Basu and Jindal 1983).

Independent sources on Ismāʿīlī (including Mustaʿlī) history and doctrine are more plentiful. An illustrative, but by no means exhaustive, list includes—in addition to Daftary (1990)—Ali (1954); Corbin (1956, 1967, 1982, 1984); Feki (1978); Filippani-Ronconi (1973); Fyzee (1934a, 1934b, 1965, 1969, 1974); Hamdani (1971, 1976, 1985); al-Hamdani (1932, 1933, 1934, 1937); Hasan (1964); Ivanow (1936, 1942); Jafar (1942); Jafari (1965); Khan (1914); Lokhandwalla (1968); Poonawala (1970, 1973, 1974, 1977); Stern (1949, 1951, 1955, 1983); and Walker (1993).

branches grew out of a succession dispute: Ismāʿīlīs believe that the *imāmate* was passed to the descendants of Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq's son Ismāʿīl (b. circa 100/720), while the Ithnā ʿAsharīyya believe it was inherited by the descendants of Ismāʿīl's brother Musa. Modern scholars have noted that the idea of an *imāmate* passed down in secret from second/eighth to the fourth/tenth centuries (as Bohras today believe)[4] seems to have been first articulated during Fāṭimid times: if such a doctrine was propagated contemporaneously, the veil of *taqiyya*—a doctrine accepted by most Shīʿa denominations permitting public dissimulation during times of extreme danger to the community (Nasr 2016: 54)—prevented it from appearing in the documentary record.[5] The *dawr al-satr* (period of concealment) ended with ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī, who was proclaimed *imām* in 286/899, and caliph eleven years later (Stern 1983: 96ff; Tabatabaʾi 1975: 81–82).

From the tenure of Imām ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdī until nearly the end of the visible *imāmate* (as recognised by Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlīs), the line of *imāms* would be coterminous with that of Fāṭimid caliphs. At its height, the Fāṭimid empire encompassed North Africa, Sicily, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Syria, and the Hijaz (including Mecca and Medina). The Fāṭimids never succeeded in converting Egypt to Shīʿism, nor did they make a great effort to do so, but their rule marks the high point of Ismāʿīlī history. As the caliphate entered its terminal decline, it insured its legacy through missionary activity far afield. Imām al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh (427–487/1036–1094) saw his power ebb in the Fāṭimid heartland, but in 450/1067 his missionaries established lasting footholds in Gujarat and Persia. The communities they established there would ensure the survival of the Ismāʿīlī faith, through its Mustaʿlī and Nizārī branches respectively, long after the Fāṭimid collapse nearly extinguished the denomination in the Middle East. (Hamdani 1976: 185–187; Qureshi 1985: 41–45).

Following Imām Mustanṣir's death, the Ismāʿīlīs experienced another succession schism: Those who believe that the *imām* bestowed *nass* on his younger

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4 In 'Twelver' Shīʿa histories, Ismāʿīl died fifteen years before his father, so his *nass* (designation as successor) was invalid; in Ismāʿīlī interpretation, Ismāʿīl's death had been faked by his father Jafar to protect the true line of the Imamate from ʿAbbāsid plots. In the words of the ninth/fifteenth century Bohra *Dāʿīs* Idris ibn Hasan, "[T]he time came for Ismaʿil to dissemble death, using this ruse against his enemies who were full of hatred, enmity and the ardent desire to extinguish the Light of God" (Ivanow 1942: 232–233).

5 Reliable historical dates are unavailable for the three hidden *imāms*: Abdullah al-Mastur, Ahmad al-Mastur ibn Abdullah, and Husain ibn Ahmad. When such dates are provided by much later sources, they are so arbitrary as to be virtually meaningless. Farhad Daftary (1990: 126) states, "the early Ismailis, or at least by their overwhelming majority, originally recognised only seven Imams." When al-Mahdi declared himself the *imām*, Daftary argues, he retroactively declared his three predecessors *imām* as well.

son Mustaʿlī would become known as Western Ismāʿīlīs (because of their initial strength in Egypt and Yemen), and are today represented by the Bohras. Those who believe that *nass* was bestowed on the elder son Nizār would become known as Eastern Ismāʿīlīs (because of their initial strength in Syria and Iran) and are today represented by the Khojahs and other followers of the Aga Khan. The Western Ismāʿīlīs won out in the short term: Mustaʿlī was put on the throne by a powerful *wazīr*, and Nizār died in prison. But the First Crusade shook the weakened caliphate, and the line of the twenty-one *imām*s recognised by the Bohras ends with Mustaʿlī's infant grandson Abū l-Qāsim Ṭayyib.[6]

The Mustaʿlī line of *imām*s, however, continued (and is believed still to continue) in secret. The period of *satr* continues to the present day, with the *imāmate* passed down through the descendants of *Imām* Ṭayyib. The current *imām*, like all those since Ṭayyib's time, lives anonymously in the world, utterly unknown to those around him, periodically in contact with the faithful through his *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* (Daftary 1990: 283). Specific theological discussion of the 'hidden *imām*' generally falls under the category of *bāṭin* (secret) knowledge, not permitted to be disseminated outside of specially-authorised clerical circles. As explained by *daʿwat*-authorised sources (personal communication, 1994 and subsequently), Bohras know neither the hidden *imām*'s name, nor his age, nor anything about him whatsoever, but they consider his presence in the world absolutely essential for the perpetuation of mankind.

Ṭayyib inherited the *imāmate* on his father's death (Bohras believe), but he lost the caliphate: his cousin al-Ḥāfiẓ seized the throne in 526/1132.[7] The infant *imām* was protected by the most important woman in Mustaʿlī history since the death of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima. Al-Malika al-Sayyida, the wife of the Fāṭimid *Dāʿī* of Yemen, had taken over the work of her husband in his later years, and after his death had been promoted—in her own right—to the still-loftier position of *ḥujja*. After Ḥāfiẓ's coup, she ran a rival court based in Yemen, in the name of the infant Ṭayyib. To avoid assassination, the baby *imām* was hidden from public eye. Al-Sayyida elevated the existing office of *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq*

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6 Because they take Imām Ṭayyib as the last unconcealed *imām*, the Bohras are technically *Ṭayyibī* Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlīs, to distinguish them from the extinct branch of *Ḥāfiẓi* Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlīs.

7 Al-Ḥāfiẓ passed the caliphate to his son and two grandsons, but their status as *imāms* (while contemporaneously acknowledged by the Fāṭimids for half a century) is unrecognised by either of the two surviving Ismāʿīlī denominations. Ḥāfiẓi Mustaʿlī Ismāʿīlīsm did not survive long after the fall of the dynasty: the last Fāṭimid *wazīr* finally dispensed with the fiction of an independent caliphate, and established his own dynasty under the auspices of the ʿAbbāsid empire: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb, better known to the West as Saladin, officially ended Fāṭimid rule by having the *khuṭba* read in the name of the ʿAbbāsid caliph in 567/1171. On the death of his master Nūr al-Dīn, he established the Ayyūbid dynasty in his own name.

to the highest visible title (apart from her own) of the Fāṭimid court-in-exile. When she died six years later, the office of *ḥujjat* died with her, leaving the *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* the peak of the clerical order. Since that time, each succeeding *Dāʿī* has served as the titular head of a Fāṭimid dynasty that has never theoretically ended (Hamdani 1976 : 92–99; Ivanow 1942: 37–38).

For four hundred years, the seat of the denomination remained in Yemen. During these centuries, the community of Gujarati converts grew more numerous and more prosperous generation by generation. While the *daʿwat* generally enjoyed good relations with local Ayyūbid *amīrs* and other Sunnī political figures on the Arabian peninsula, it was forced to engage in near-chronic warfare with various Zaydī Shīʿa *shaykhs*. And while the Yemeni Mustaʿlī community was often fractious and loathe to submit wholly to the authority of the *Dāʿī*, the Indian converts were far more accepting of central clerical control. (Corbin 1954: 162–172; Ismailji 1937: 93–94).

The first Gujarati *Dāʿī* was Yusuf Najmuddin ibn Sulaymān, who assumed office in 946/1539: his Yemeni predecessor had been so impressed by the Indian cleric's scholarly abilities that he passed over all of the Arabs in the court. Syedna Yusuf's successor, Jalal ibn Hasan, served only a few months, but he transferred the seat of the *daʿwat* to India permanently. Syedna Jalal was also an Indian by birth, as would be all future *Dāʿī*s (with the exception of one Yemeni who served for a single year in the eleventh /seventeenth century). The decision to move the *daʿwat* was influenced not only by the importance of the Indian community, but also by the fall of Yemen to the Ottoman Turks and the persecution of Ismāʿīlīs that followed (Ali 1954, 74–77; Poonawala 1977: 137–143).

In India, the Mughal rulers Jehangir and Shah Jahan introduced some repressive measures against Shīʿa (as had various pre-Mughal Gujarati sultans), but the worst oppression suffered by the Bohras would come at the hands of Aurangzeb—first as governor of Gujarat, later as emperor. Bohras reverted to *taqiyya*, attending Sunnī services in public while carrying on their own rites in secret. Aurangzeb's attempts to impose Sunnī practice throughout his domains stemmed from deeply-held personal conviction, but was further compounded by his experience of warfare against the Shīʿa sultanates of the Deccan. Grinding years of battle against these states had established the paradigm of Shīʿa as political as well as theological adversaries (*Mausam-e Bahar* 1884: 280–296; Pinault 1992: 60).

The fact that Ismāʿīlīs had no ties to the Deccan sultans (or to these kingdoms' Ithnā ʿAsharī patron in Safavid Iran) earned them no mitigation of Aurangzeb's harsh treatment. Bohras were forbidden to observe Eid-ul Fitr and other rites according to their own calendar, to make pilgrimages to their

shrines, or to practice Ashura rituals. Sunnī *pesh-imāms* were reintroduced to all mosques, and any congregants failing to attend were punished with flogging. All marriage and death ceremonies were required to be performed by Sunnī *qāḍīs* rather than Bohra *ʿāmils*, and large sums of money (both official taxes and unofficial bribes) were extorted from community members at every possible occasion (Misra 1964: 32–38, following Abdul Husain 1920: 20–21, 38–39).

The advent of British hegemony in India proved highly beneficial to the Bohras. Where many other Indian communities saw imperialistic encroachment, the Bohras saw relief from Sunnī persecution. During the reign of the forty-second *Dāʿī* Yusuf Najmuddin ibn Abdul-Ṭayyib Zakiuddin (1200–1213/1785–1798) the *daʿwat* moved its headquarters to Surat, to take advantage of the protection offered by this East India Company trading post.

The Bohras helped create modern Mumbai, and Mumbai helped create the modern Bohras; neither the city nor the community would have precisely its present-day form if not for the presence of the other. Moving to the rapidly-developing metropolis in the thirteenth/nineteenth century, the Bohras (like fellow *banias* such as the Khojahs, Memons and Parsis—see Asani 1987; Damodaran 2008: 2–4; Sharma 2014: 15–18; Purohit 2012: 10–11) quickly took up work in professions traditionally shunned by caste Hindus: most often, selling hardware, glassware, plumbing supplies, paint, stationary, or soap. They avoided the more traditionally polluting occupations (butchers, sweepers, leather-workers, or vendors of spirits), but within the confines of mercantile trade they concentrated on niches not customarily filled by Hindus. Since Mumbai (until 1995, Bombay) was centred on trade with Europe, there were an ever-increasing number of these niches to be filled.

Modern-day Mumbai is the capital of the state of Maharashtra, but until the creation of this state in 1960 the city had always been at least as closely linked to Gujarati as to Marathi culture. In this cosmopolitan milieu, the Bohras were able to leave behind their stigmatised minority status and become full-fledged members of society. While the bulk of the community opened shops and small businesses, from the late colonial period onward a substantial number entered banking and larger industry as well. The Dāʾūdī Bohras were so successful in their new environment, both in Bombay itself and in the various Gujarati cities administered by the Bombay Presidency, that by the end of the century a colonial gazetteer would write, "the trading Bohoras, originally all Shiahs [Shīʿa] of the Mustaʿlī branch of the great Ismaili sect, are the richest and most prosperous class of Musalmans in Gujarat" (Campbell 1899: 24).

As the Bohra community rose in power and prosperity alongside the metropolis they helped build, their clerical leadership lost stature in comparison with

the new class of Western-oriented businessmen. The *daʿwat* was racked by internal dissention. A succession dispute in 1255/1840 weakened the clergy's credibility for the remainder of the century. In 1315/1897, yet another schism further discredited the establishment; the *Dāʿī* was subjected to the humiliation of a civil suit brought by one of his own *ʿāmils* (priests), and even when accused of financial impropriety by one of his underlings he lacked the ability to enforce a writ of excommunication. Increasingly unable to collect community taxes to fund their clerical bureaucracy, *Dāʿī*s were forced to cede large amounts of power to wealthy businessmen such as Sir Adamji Pirbhai (an industrialist who served as the first Indian sheriff of Bombay).

When Syedna Taher Saifuddin ascended the office of *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* in 1333/1915, the Bohra clergy was at perhaps its lowest ebb in centuries. Syedna Taher Saifuddin recognised the core problem: While much of the community had begun to assimilate into modern society, the *daʿwat* had run from it. As a result, the most dynamic, educated, and prosperous Bohras were distancing themselves not only from clerical control, but from the Ismāʿīlī doctrines and Islamic orthopraxy by which the community had been defined. The most forward-leaning individuals and families were melting into broader Indian society. The Dāʾūdī Bohra *Dāʿī* was on the path to becoming little more than a figurehead: a path that the Sulaymānī and ʿAlawī *Dāʿī*s had found ran in only one direction. The smaller Bohra communities had been essentially swallowed up already, and the Dāʾūdīs were likewise in danger of losing their unique cultural, spiritual, and denominational identity.

To combat this threat, Syedna Taher Saifuddin set out to revitalise both the clergy and the community through a program of modernisation. He spent the first half of his reign rebuilding the legitimacy and authority of the *daʿwat*, fending off powerful challenges from dissidents, and by the time of Indian Independence his position was stronger than that of any *Dāʿī* in memory. Reversing of the policy of his immediate predecessors, Syedna Taher Saifuddin actively encouraged both modern education and the adoption of a wide variety of Western customs, technologies and practices. He reigned for half a century (longer than his three predecessors combined), giving him enough time to institutionalise these policies.

Syedna Taher Saifuddin conveyed *nass* on his son early enough to avoid a succession dispute, and Syedna Muhammad Burhanuddin continued his father's program through his own forty-nine-year reign. Inside the community, it is sometimes said that Syedna Taher Saifuddin focused more on the modernisation side of the equation, Syedna Burhanuddin more on the Islamisation side. But both leaders saw the two sides as halves to a complementary whole: Both aimed to use the tools of modernity to re-invigorate Bohra society and

faith. Not all members of the community support this ambitious program—the strand of overt and covert dissidence has remained present to this day—but few would deny that it has been very successful in achieving its goals. The death of Syedna Burhanuddin in 1435/2014 led to another disputed succession, raising the prospect of another community schism. It is noteworthy, however, that both camps remain firmly committed to the modernisation and Islamisation programme carried out over the past century (see Blank 2017).

3   Centrality of the *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* as Distinguishing Feature of Bohra Practice

The centrality and all-encompassing authority of the top cleric set the Bohras (and other Ismāʿīlīs) apart from nearly all other Muslim groups. The *Dāʿī* is considered *kal maʿṣūm*, a state just short of absolute infallibility. In the Sunnī world, no single member of the *ʿulamāʾ* holds anything like the unchallenged sway over believers that Bohra *Dāʿī* exercises. A Sufi *pīr* might wield such power over members of his order, but such jurisdiction extends only to initiates and does not generally reach entire communities. This extraordinary spiritual control has given the Bohra *Dāʿī* virtual hegemony in the political realm as well. Such centralisation of spirtual authority, perhaps more than any other factor, has enabled the Bohra clergy—particularly the two *Dāʿī*s reigning between 1333/1915–1435/2014, to promote modernisation and reinstitutionalisation of tradition at the same time.

Even in comparison with other Shīʿa groups the level of spiritual authority enjoyed by the Bohra *daʿwat* is highly unusual. A Twelver *mujtahid* is expected both to guide his followers towards righteous actions and steer them away from prohibited ones, but this spiritual leadership has always been far more diffuse than that of Ismāʿīlīs. The modern Ithnā ʿAsharī clergy has never spoken with a single voice, even during the primacy of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini; since Khomeini's death, the diversity of top-level spiritual guidance has increased markedly (Nasr 2016: 35–39).

Shīʿa theology in general, and Ismāʿīlī theology in particular, is based on *taʾwīl* (esoteric interpretation of scripture). This doctrine holds that beneath the *ẓāhir* (apparent) aspect of revealed text and religious doctrine, a deeper and more important *bāṭin* truth lies hidden. While any Muslim can try to learn the *ẓāhir* by reading the Qurʾān and other religious texts, only a *muʾmin* (true believer) can hope to uncover the *bāṭin* learning with the guidance of the *imām* or his representative. Ismāʿīlīs regard the entirety of the Qurʾān as a text with hidden allegorical interpretations underlying even the most

seemingly straightforward of passages (Corbin 1984; Fyzee 1965; al-Hamdani 1933; Stern 1983).

It is largely for this reason that Ismāʿīlīs regard the teachings of a living, present human (whether the Bohras' *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* or the Nizārīs' Aga Khan) as *more* authoritative than unexplicated scripture or *aḥadīth*, a significant point of divergence from Ithnā ʿAsharī Shīʿa. In the Bohra faith, even devout believers are not permitted to explore esoteric texts without the guidance of a master specially sanctioned by the *daʿwat*, and permission to delve into the deepest secrets is limited to a small group of highly trained clerics. It is their unique access to *bāṭin* knowledge—the true, inner meaning of the Qurʾān, *aḥadīth*, and all scripture—that gives both the Bohra *Dāʿī* and the Aga Khan their fundamental spiritual hegemony over their respective communities.

The Aga Khan's status as present *imām* would seem to give him even greater great doctrinal hegemony for the Nizārīs than the *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* exercises among the Bohras. This hegemony, however, does not manifest in the same way. Recent Aga Khans have lived in Europe, married outside the community, and maintained a regal distance from the bulk of their followers, and, in some cases, from Islamic orthopraxy itself: Sir Sultan Muhammed Shah, Aga Khan III, is said to have justified his consumption of alcohol by holding up a glass of champagne and remarking, "I am so holy that when I drink wine, it turns to water" (Lokhandwalla 1968: 162, n. 16). The *Dāʿī*, however, is intimately linked to every aspect of Bohra life: the very essence of his office is to be physically present. While the *imām* lives in the world but not of it, perhaps guiding by inspiration rather than specific instruction, the *Dāʿī*'s role is to serve as a bridge between the hidden *imām* and the faithful. He *must* be part of his followers' daily lives: It is his central mission.

From the earliest times to the present, there has been relatively little Ismāʿīlī literature devoted to *tafsīr* (external explication) of the Qurʾān or other texts: the *imām* is regarded as a 'speaking Qurʾān' whose presence in the world makes tomes of ordinary exegesis unnecessary. During the *imām*'s concealment, such authoritative interpretation is carried out by his legitimately delegated *Dāʿī*s. One major result of this has been the liberation of Ismāʿīlī thought from the confines of strictly proscribed text: while much Sunnī intellectual debates (at least outside of certain Sufi circles) has been bounded by a literalist interpretation of the Qurʾān and *aḥadīth*, Ismāʿīlī speculation has been much less constrained. For the brief period of the Muʿtazila ascendancy during the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, Sunnī intelligentsia experienced a similar burst of speculative energy. With the triumph of the Hanbalites and the "closing of the door of *ijtihād*," however, such experimentation fell to disfavor. In general Sunnī intellectual exploration has been circumscribed by text and tradition, while Ismāʿīlī

philosophy has been free to draw on a far wider range of sources (both internal and external) for inspiration (Corbin 1984; Daftary 1990: 239–241).

Ismāʿīlī use of Western neoplatonic thought is particularly noteworthy in the context of the present study, for it shows the ancient provenance of modern-day Ismāʿīlī openness to intellectual borrowings from other cultures. Whereas various Sunnī and Ithnā ʿAsharī schools have flirted with neoplatonism and other Western ideologies occasionally, few (if any) have embraced them so unreservedly or welcomed them so intimately to their hearts. This open-minded, intellectually omnivorous attitude is exemplified by an encyclopedic compendium of knowledge entitled *Rasaʾil Ikhwan al-Safa*, penned by Ismāʿīlī authors before the Fāṭimid zenith (Netton 1991).

When today's Dāʾūdī Bohras seek out not only the technology but the education and ideology of the modern West, therefore, they are merely following the example set by their spiritual forerunners. "Seek knowledge," runs a *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet, often cited by Syedna Muhammad Burhanuddin, "even if it be in China." Ismāʿīlīs have been harmoniously integrating the ideas of traditional Islam with those of outside societies for at least the past millennium.

As part of the ethnographic fieldwork underlying this chapter, 169 Bohra households containing 1,068 individuals were surveyed on various aspects of their demography, beliefs, and daily practices (for details of the methodology of this survey, and its admitted limitations, see Blank 2001: 7–10). When asked to select the most important aspects of their faith, an overwhelming ninety-four per cent cited direct, personal contact with the *Dāʾī* as among the most crucial. The category was ranked higher than any other element of orthopraxy, including *ḥajj*, pilgrimage to Kerbala, rituals of birth, *mīthāq* (the oath of allegiance taken by Bohras), marriage and death, eating *ḥalāl* food, personal ethics, ties with other Bohras (including endogamy), dress codes, or *ziyaret* (pilgrimage to Bohra shrines). Contact with the *Dāʾī* was not only deemed the most important aspect of orthopraxy in each of the four cities where the survey was conducted, it was rated number one by almost every respondent giving comparative rankings.

The *Dāʾī* embodies personal charisma to a degree very rarely found in Islam outside of certain Sufi traditions (Blank 2000: 474–475). This charisma is transferable to a wide array of objects: any item touched by the *Dāʾī* is believed to have ingrained merit. Not only did eighty-four per cent of survey respondents report having asked the *Dāʾī* to name their children, but a great many reported seeking scraps from his discarded clothing for their newborn babies' *chatti* garments. Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported regularly seeking the blessing of Syedna or his *ʿāmils* for their home or business, through the ritual of

alamat. The *Dāʿī* confers this blessing by inscribing the word *bismillāh* (Arabic for the words 'In the name of God') or its numerical stand-in ('786') on a plaque mounted on the wall of a new house or office, or on the first page of an account book for a new fiscal year.

This close contact between the *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* and his flock is an essential element of Bohra identity, perhaps the strongest barrier against assimilation to the mainstream of Indian Islam. Until the thirteenth/nineteenth century the Bohra community was small and compact enough for such direct contact to be relatively easy: the population was heavily concentrated in Bombay and Gujarat, and most *muʾminīn* could have personal access to the *Dāʿī* on a fairly regular basis. As the denomination grew larger and farther-flung, however, this direct access became increasingly difficult. By the late thirteenth/nineteenth century, daily contact had come to be monopolised by the coterie of Surti families with kinship ties to the royal lineage of the *Dāʿī*s. This elite capture of the clergy served to weaken the institution: At precisely the period when Bohra businessmen were becoming wealthy and were monopolising access to the *Dāʿī*, the clergy dropped to its lowest level of influence and popular legitimacy in modern history. Without close, personal access to the *Dāʿī*, the faith could not have withstood the twin pressures of ossification and assimilation. It was in large measure to combat this trend that Syedna Taher Saifuddin began the process of modernisation, which served to reinvigorate the faith and bring the *Dāʿī* back into closer contact with the mass of believers.

4 Program of Modernisation and Islamisation

4.1 *Modernisation*

The modernisation piece of the century-long program has two overlapping goals. The first goal has been to provide community members access to the material, social and intellectual aspects of modern life enjoyed by their neighbors, thereby lessening the centrifugal force of assimilation which was pulling many Bohras away from the community in the early fourteenth/twentieth century. The second goal has been to draw community members closer to the clergy, and thereby to restore both clerical hegemony and spiritual unity. A key mechanism for the second goal has been adoption of all manner of modern communication technology and often the modernist ideology that accompanies it (cf. Asani 1994; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

In recent decades, Bohras have used modern technology to recapture the close access to their *Dāʿī* that had been the hallmark of their sect in previous centuries. This effort has not been an accident: it was carefully fostered first

by Syedna Taher Saifuddin and subsequently by Syedna Burhanuddin. Since at least the middle of the fourteenth/twentieth century the *daʿwat* has eagerly latched onto every advance in communications: from telegram to telex, from fax to Federal Express, from transatlantic telephone to transpacific email. A Bohra living in Kolkata, seeking advice on whether to expand his hardware business into electrical fittings, need only email the *daʿwat*'s headquarters at Badri Mahal to have his question relayed to the *Dāʿī* for consideration. A Bohra living in Auckland, seeking a scrap of Syedna's used clothing for her new baby's *chatti*-garment, can WhatsApp a Mumbai relative to have the cloth sent by the next morning's DHL.

Air travel has shrunk the world, and well into his elder years Syedna Burhanuddin (who lived to be 103 years old, by the Islamic calendar) regularly jetted across South Asia, Europe and Afria. His successors are certain to continue the practice. This hypermobility gives almost all Bohras the opportunity to see their spiritual leader face-to-face at least once in their lives. The *Dāʿī* visits his flock, and his flock visits the *Dāʿī*: eighty-two per cent of respondents in the aforementioned survey had seen Syedna in person more than five times.

The Bohras are hardly the only Muslim community to embrace modern communications technology, but they did so much earlier and with fewer reservations than most other groups. What truly distinguishes the Bohras from most other groups in the adoption of communications technology, however, is the holistic nature of their modernisation: Where some Islamists view Western technology with moral ambivalence (in the mid-1990s, for example, the Afghan Taliban used Russian tanks to crush VCRs, televisions and other examples of 'decadent' technology), the Bohras regard it as something beneficial even on its own merits. New technologies are not adopted solely for the sake of novelty, but anything brings the community closer, or simply makes life easier, is heartily encouraged.

Computer ownership, use, and literacy are far more prevalent in the Bohra community than in most other segments of Indian society. At time the survey associated with this study's fieldwork was conducted, the rate of computer ownership among the Bohra respondents was more than twenty times the national rate of Indonesia, more than ten times that of Thailand, nearly quadruple that of Malaysia, about fifty per cent higher than those of Taiwan or South Korea, and almost on par with that Japan. The rate for Karachi's Bohras was marginally higher than that of ultra-high-tech Singapore. Respondents were a whopping seventy-two times as likely to own a computer as was the contemporary norm in India (see Blank 2001: 176–178). Rates for Bohras and non-Bohras alike have risen since.

Bohras were on the Internet practically as soon as it became globally operational. By January 1995, three linked email networks had been initiated, and in their first year of operation grew to include several hundred subscribers in Canada, Hong Kong, Thailand, India, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Britain, and Egypt. One network was "a forum for *mu'mineen* [*mu'minīn*] professionals" to facilitate business ties, a second was for social or general messages, and the third was devoted to spiritual discussions. While not officially set up by the *da'wat*, its stated purpose is the dissemination of spiritual material. By the late 1990s, email had replaced the postal service as the primary pathway for Bohras to seek guidance or favors from the *Dā'ī al-muṭlaq*. Videos of important religious rituals were distributed as soon as broadband service made such access possible, and soon every appearance by the *Dā'ī al-muṭlaq* was viewable on YouTube within minutes of the rite's conclusion. Additional streaming services like Periscope now permit such rituals to be viewed in real time. A member of the community in Mombasa can keep track of her co-religionists' activities in the United States or Canada (to name just two) simply by checking the groups' Twitter feeds (@Bohras_USA and @Bohras_Canada).

Dissident websites and chat groups soon followed the orthodox community online, giving the movement a new avenue for its battle against *da'wat* authority. When Syedna Burhanuddin passed away in 1435/2014, the succession dispute between his son Mufaddal Saifuddin and his brother Khuzaima Qutbuddin immediately took to cyberspace. Both camps set up rival websites and Facebook pages almost instantly, and each used a full range of multimedia to support its claims with scanned documents, photographs, and videos of the late *Dā'ī*'s pivotal (and disputed) public designation of *nass* on his son.[8]

The most recent manifestation of the role played by modern technology in the shaping doctrinal issues is a still-raging controversy over a practice variously termed *khatna*, *khafs*, female circumcision, and Female Genital Cutting.[9]

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8   Supporters of the *Dā'ī*'s son Mufaddal Saifuddin say that *nass* was given privately while Syedna Burhanuddin was in a London hospital, and reiterated at a public ceremony several months later. Supporters of the *Dā'ī*'s brother Khuzaima Qutbuddin say that Syedna Burhanuddin had secretly conveyed *nass* decades earlier, and that his public designation of his son Mufaddal is invalid since he had recently suffered a stroke. Each camp cites a video of the public designation to support its own interpretation of the event. The video of the ceremony, which took place on 19 *Rajab* 1432/21 June 2011, is available at https://www.youtube .com/watch?v=Ge9wG2Irv-Q, accessed 31/10/2018. There is a more detailed discussion of this schism in Blank (2017). Khuzaima Qutbuddin passed away on 30 March 2016, after conferring *nass* (his supporters believe) on his son Taher Fakhruddin.

9   Even the nomenclature of the practice is controversial: Opponents often regard the first three terms as offensive, because they see these names as conferring an Islamic patina to a non-Islamic action; proponents object to the third, as well as to its ideologically-laden

While circumcision of boys is practiced almost universally throughout the Muslim world, the custom has no widely-accepted female counterpart (Boyle 2005). Before the Internet era, it was nearly impossible to offer an informed response to the question of whether such a practice occurred occasionally, frequently or almost never among the Dāʾūdī Bohras: During my initial fieldwork, all reports of which I became aware (whether through personal informants or mentions in the local press) were non-specific, and second- or third-hand. That is no longer the case:

Several recent studies published online (Taher 2017; Anantnarayan 2018) have used academic methodology to document the existence of the practice within the Bohra community, and to suggest that it may be far more common than had previously been assumed, even by community members themselves.[10] The collection of data in these reports would not have been possible prior to the explosion in Internet access of the fifteenth/twenty-first century, and the online dissemination of this data has sparked a growing demand within the community (particularly from previously-under-represented women) for a top-down clerical banning of the practice. This demonstrates two points relevant to the current chapter:

First, these reformists are not necessarily challenging the theological status of the *daʿwat*, indeed, some of them are hoping to use this status to implement a religiously-authorative ban on a practice which they regard not merely as harmful, but as un-Islamic. Second, modernity (both technology, and the intellectual freedom that often accompanies it) works both ways: Just as the *daʿwat* has used the tools of modernity to reestablish its own position as sole arbiter on issues of theology (a position that had fallen into serious question before the fourteenth/twentieth century reinvigoration), so too have community members used the tools of modernity to press their own interpretations

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cousin 'Female Genital Mutilation', or FGM. The practise is well-documented in certain other communities, both Muslim and non-Muslim, in East and West Africa (Shell-Duncan and Hernlund 2001; Gruenbaum 2006) but is rarely documented in South Asian communities.

10   These studies surveyed a combined total of over 500 respondents: The study authored by Mariya Taher had 408 (Taher 2017: 45), and the one authored by Lakshmi Anantnarayan with research assistance from Shabana Diler and Natasha Menon had 94 (Anantnarayan 2018: 10). While both studies are associated with advocacy organisations—*Sahiyo* and *We Speak Out*, respectively—both conform to generally-accepted global standards for academic research. This topic is worthy of far more discussion than the current chapter can provide, but one point is of particular relevance here: These studies, and other reports rapidly emerging, have moved a topic that might previously have been left to family custom and clerical *firman* from the realm of *ad hoc* rule-making into the arena of wide-open social and theological debate.

of theological questions that most concern them. If the *daʿwat* fails to address such interpretations, it may find the movement shifting quickly from reformist to rejectionist.

4.2   *Islamisation*

Throughout the fourteenth/twentieth centuries, but particularly during the reign of Syedna Burhanuddin, the *daʿwat* has paired its embrace of modernity with an effort to re-institutionalise Islamic norms in a community which had run the risk of cultural absorption to the Indian mainstream. Modern technology enabled the clergy to gain increased control over community members' orthopraxy, for example, by instituting a program whereby all Bohras seeking *daʿwat* services are issued green, yellow and red cards indicating their level of compliance with doctrine and practice. The process is bureaucratised and (in many sites) computerised, and would have been extremely difficult to implement without the tools of modernity. Perhaps the most visible symbol of the Islamisation project (a term used in this chapter to denote a top-down communal emphasis on Islamic orthopraxy), is the mandated code of dress and personal appearance for all Bohras worldwide.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Syedna Burhanuddin issued several pronouncements setting out guidelines for dress and personal comportment by all observant Bohras. The two most important of these were a 1399/1979 directive that male Bohras should wear a beard and female Bohras should dress in a *burqa*, and a 1401/1981 instruction setting the normative male dress code as white *topi*, *kurta* and *sherwani*. The modern dress code is both a reaffirmation of preexisting practice and the introduction of novel elements to create a uniform, coherent 'tradition' in place of a less standardised array of customs. Prior to the 1401/1981 *firman*, for example, Bohra men had often dressed in white clothing and headgear, but often had worn other colors as well. The newly-mandated use of white makes Bohras immediately distinguishable from Ithnā ʿAsharī Shīʿa, who often favor black clothing for both men and women. Prior to 1401/1981, Bohra headgear had not been uniform. In colonial times there were at least four types of turban commonly worn; by the middle of the fourteenth/twentieth century, turbans were being worn primarily by clerics, with laymen favoring smaller, less elaborate skullcaps. For ritual settings, however, laymen would often wear a *feta*, a pre-shaped, permanently-coiled turban of gold silk, now seen primarily among the older generation. The specific type of topi now deemed mandatory is only rarely seen in pre-1401/1981 photographs, and is subtly different from the headgear of other Muslim communities.

Bohra women are required to keep their bodies covered from ankles to shoulders with a *burqa* and to wear a special style of *rida* (veil). A Bohra

rida—which is essentially unique to the denomination—is less like a veil *per se* than like a bonnet: it covers the hair, neck, shoulders and upper chest, but leaves the entire face exposed. The *rida* has flaps on either side of the face, so that a woman can (if she is particularly scrupulous to detail) obscure her mouth and nose when conversing with a man outside her family; this seems, however, to be most commonly observed in the breach.

Boutiques in many Bohra neighborhoods advertise a wide array of 'fancy *ridas*' (any *rida* with a colorful pattern), and this technicolor exuberance of dress immediately sets Bohra women apart from those of most other Indian Muslim communities. At important social or religious functions, it is not uncommon for a Bohra woman go through three or four changes of 'fancy *rida*' during the course of a day's varied activities. In a conscious attempt to distinguish themselves from Sunnīs and Ithnā ʿAsharīyya, Bohra women seldom wear plain black clothing. Prior to the mandated dress code, Bohra women had often adopted the clothing styles of their Hindu neighbors.

Close examination of a 1395/1975 Gujarati text entitled *Gulshan-e Malumat* (Raik 1975) yields an extremely valuable baseline for analysis of the *daʿwat*'s dress code reforms. Privately published in a limited edition distributed to various *daʿwat* offices, the *Gulshan* is a 'Who's Who' of important Bohra community leaders throughout the world. The directory contains photographs of 3,177 men: 2,078 residing in India, 1,099 residing abroad.[11] Of these dignitaries—who can be assumed to represent a higher-than-average level of orthopraxy—a mere thirty-seven per cent were in compliance with dress and appearance guidelines that are normative today. While the association of wearing a beard with the *sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad is well-established, a solid majority of men pictured in the *Gulshan* had stopped wearing beards by the 1970s.[12]

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11 As in most official or semi-official Bohra texts, for reasons of modesty no photographs of women are printed.

12 Nearly one-quarter (twenty-three per cent) of those living in India are shown in wholly untraditional ways (generally in Western clothing with no beard, but occasionally in Indian garb unassociated with Bohras). Well over another quarter (twenty-nine per cent) wear Bohra headgear but no beard, indicating easy mobility between the traditional and nontraditional worlds: all of these men could put on a *topi* for a photograph or for official occasions, but would blend perfectly well into the Indian or Western mainstream as soon as they removed their headgear. For Bohras living outside of India, only sixteen per cent had an appearance that would be acceptable today. When figures for India and other countries are combined, the population of over three thousand individuals breaks down roughly into thirds: thirty-seven per cent have a traditional appearance, thirty per cent have semi-traditional appearance (community headgear, but no beards), and thirty-three per cent offer wholly non-traditional self-presentations.

If such a work were published today, it is highly unlikely that *any* of the more than three thousand men pictured would present themselves without a beard or dressed in anything other than uniform *topi/kurta*. In every *da'wat* publication examined for this study, and every Bohra function attended during the course of the fieldwork on which it is based, adherence to mandated community dress codes has been close to universal. Dress is but one element of orthopraxy—but it is among the most visible, and stands as a statistically-measurable proxy for a much wider range of behaviors (including fasting during Ramadan, avoidance of alcohol, and communal prayer) that the Bohra *da'wat* monitors with similar attention.

5 Conclusion

As Margaret Mead noted, "Technical change is as old as civilisation. Since time immemorial the ways of people have been transformed by the introduction of new tools and new technical procedures" (Mead 1953: 9). There would be little noteworthy about the Bohras' modernisation if it were limited to the adoption of technological conveniences. What makes the program remarkable is its use of both 'hardware' (technology) and 'software' (modernist ideas, particularly in the educational field)—to reinvigorate core beliefs. The Muslim world has seen instances of reformers using Western practices to downgrade the position of Islam in society—for example, in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Turkey (Okyar 1984; Rahman 1984), or Mohammad Shah Reza Pahlavi's Iran (Yalman 1991; Ansari 2001). The use of modern pedagogy and a Western intellectual framework paired with a re-institutionalisation of Islamic orthopraxy, however, is far less common.

Syedna Taher Saifuddin began promoting modern education about a century ago, and he is generally credited for the attitudinal sea change on Western pedagogy that has swept the community since that time. There are currently more than 350 Bohra schools throughout the world, all of them operating under the late *Dā'ī*'s educational philosophy of combining Western and Islamic learning into a single curriculum. The highest centers of Bohra education are three universities, the *Jamea-tus-Saifiyah* campuses in Surat (India) Karachi (Pakistan), and Nairobi (Kenya), whose students must all follow a full curriculum of both Western and Islamic subjects.[13] When asked to state the highest

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13 The Jamea-tus-Saifiyah was first established, in a less ambitious form, in the 1224/1814 in Surat, and became the cause of considerable contention between the clergy and dissident reformists before the *da'wat* established full control in the fourteenth/twentieth century. The Karachi campus was inaugurated in 1404/1983. Construction of the Nairobi campus

level of education attained by any member of their household, ninety-one per cent of respondents to the survey cited secondary school or higher; only fifty-eight per cent of the same families reported such educational levels for their previous generation. Such a survey, if carried out today, would almost certainly yield even higher numbers.

This adoption of Western pedagogical philosophy is directly related to unusually high levels of female education in the community: eighty-nine per cent of survey respondents reported full educational parity between the male and female members of their extended families. This is not an accident: over forty years ago, Syedna Burhanuddin explicitly directed Bohra families to provide equal educations to their daughters and sons alike. Education has led to economic and social empowerment: in the space of just two generations, Bohra women have moved into the professional world at a pace that would have astonished their grandmothers. Today, the presence of Bohra women (often wearing community dress and observing other elements of Islamic orthopraxy) in professions such as medicine, finance, law or scientific research is so common as to be almost quotidian.

Many traditionalist Muslim communities have adopted modern technology while rejecting the educational philosophy and other ideas accompanying it. A smaller number of Muslim groups—for example, the Nizārī Ismāʿīlī followers of the Aga Khan—have taken on Western education and ideology even more unreservedly than the Bohras, but have placed less emphasis on using these ideas to re-institutionalise Islamic orthopraxy. Dāʾūdī Bohras have eagerly done both: they have enthusiastically embraced key elements of modern ideology as well as technology, but paired this embrace with a conscious attempt to re-invigorate doctrines and traditions that were losing ground to assimilationist pressures of the wider society. This is perhaps the most noteworthy and unusual part of the Dāʾūdī Bohra identity program, and bears study by scholars of other traditionalist communities facing similar challenges.

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was initiated by Syedna Burhanuddin, and the new institution was inaugurated by Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin on 23 *Rajab* 1438/20 April 2017.

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The Alevīs and ʿAlawīs

Yvette Talhamy

1   Introduction

Many confuse the Alevīs of Turkey with the ʿAlawīs of Syria, regarding them as one and the same because their names are similar. In both cases, the name indicates a loyalty to, or descent from, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad and a figure who is venerated by both groups and especially so in Shīʿa Islam. However, close examination of the two groups indicates that, despite some small similarities in their religious doctrines and practices, the differences between the two are far greater.

Although the ʿAlawīs constitute just a small percentage of the Syrian population (about twelve percent), they are the only minority that rules over a Sunnī-majority population; they are the 'rulers' of Syria, since the president of the state (from 1971 CE until today 2020 CE)[1] is of an ʿAlawī origin. The term 'ʿAlawī' became prevalent only in the early-twentieth century; up until then, they were known to most as the Nuṣayrīs. Since the thirteenth century, most of the group has inhabited the mountain region Jabal al-Nuṣayriyya ('the Nuṣayriyya Mountain' which is named after the group) in Northwest Syria, as well as the Hatay region in South Turkey. Today, however, followers can be found across many parts of Syria (Zisser 1999: 130).

Some sources consider the ʿAlawīs to be a sect, a stance taken in accordance with Shīʿite doctrine. Although there are some likenesses between the ʿAlawīs and Twelver Shīʿite Islam, such as their mutual reverence for ʿAlī and the twelve *imām*s, as well as their shared belief in religious dissimulation, the ʿAlawīs hold many beliefs that are not accepted by the Twelver Shīʿites. These include the belief in the transmigration of souls and the placing of ʿAlī above the Prophet Muḥammad, among others (Friedman 2002: 89).

Today, the Alevīs are one of Turkey's largest religious minorities. No accurate data regarding the proportion of Alevīs within the Turkish population are currently available, and it could be anywhere between 10 to 40 per cent and "recent figures suggest Alevīs number in the region of 20 to 25 million" (Minority Rights Group International n.d.). Celia Jenkins, Suavi Aydin, and

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1   Dates are given in common era (CE) throughout unless specified.

Umit Cetin point out that these numbers are confounded because the Alevīs are not recognised as a distinct religious group but are "subsumed under Islam" (2018: 5 n. 1).

The Alevīs are a set of religious groups with roots in Anatolia (Massicard 2013: 4). During the nineteenth century, the term 'Alevī' was used occasionally in reference to the Kızılbaş ('red heads', named after a red bonnet with twelve folds that symbolises the twelve *imām*s[2]) to indicate loyalty to, or descent from, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Since the 1920s, however, the term 'Alevī' has been used widely, with the community itself coming to utilise the term (Martens 2009: 12). Alevī literature, such as Alevī periodicals and newspapers, and many books, booklets, and articles on the Alevīs, have been published since the 1990s (Vorhoff 2005: 23–50). In addition, various research papers written by non-Alevīs have appeared. Nonetheless, the Alevī identity remains hard to define. Part of the reason is that it is hard to give a clear-cut explanation of their beliefs and practices because they are so diverse.

Although the Alevīs are frequently described as a branch of Twelver Shī'ite Islam because they share the Shī'ites' reverence of 'Alī, the two creeds have hardly anything else in common, as we shall see. Alevīsm is a syncretic, pluralistic tradition, which includes elements of Islam, Shamanism, Christianity, and the pre-Christian religions of rural Anatolia (Jenkins 2007), while Twelver Shī'ites tend to reject any tradition that is not wholly Islamic.

This chapter will examine the two Islamic creeds of the 'Alawīs and Alevīs and their religious doctrines, rituals, and historical backgrounds. It will consider how they became organised sects with their own theologies and identities, as well as exploring the changes that they have both undergone over the years. In addition, the complex relationship both movements have with both Shī'a and Sunnī Islam will become apparent.

2   Theological Background to 'Alawīs and Alevīs

After the death of the Prophet Muḥammad in 632, the first signs of a division in the Muslim *umma* (community) appeared in relation to the right to inherit his position as the leader of the *umma*. The majority of Muslims believed that they should not give preference to one Muslim over another and that every pious Muslim was suitable for this position; these Muslims were

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2   It seems that the term Kızılbaş originated at the turn of the sixteenth century, in the time of Shāh Ismā'īl (1510–1524).

called the Ahl-e-Sunna (Juynboll and Brown 1997: 878). However, another group of Muslims, the *shīʿat ʿAlī* (the party/partisans of ʿAlī), claimed that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib was the most suitable to inherit this position, given that he was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and, although he was very young, he was among the first to believe in Muḥammad's *daʿwa* ('call'/'mission'). Moreover, they argued that the Prophet, while he was alive, had declared ʿAlī his heir, a nomination which was in accordance with the heavenly order (Al-Tawil 1924: 60–89). Thus, they rejected the principle of choosing a leader; for them, ʿAlī had already been chosen by God (Madelung 1997: 420).

ʿAlī was named the fourth *khalīfa* (caliph) after the third *khalīfa*, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, was murdered in 656. The appointment strengthened the differences within the Muslim *umma*. During ʿAlī's reign, a schismatic group named the Khārijites (literally 'those who went out') appeared and, in 661, ʿAlī was murdered by one of them. After ʿAlī's death, his partisans, the Shīʿites, argued that the person most suitable to inherit his position was his son, al-Ḥasan: the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad (Madelung 1997: 420–424). However, it was Muʿāwiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, who became the fifth *khalīfa*. The Caliphate was then held by the Umayyads until the year 750.

Most Shīʿites are Twelvers (*Ithnā ʿAsharī*); also referred to as the *imāmiyya* or Jaʿfariyya).[3] They believe in the existence of twelve *imām*s, beginning with ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn (respectively), and continuing along the line of al Ḥusayn's descendants until the twelfth *imām*, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, who went into occultation in 873.[4] Over the years, several splits occurred among the Shīʿites regarding who had the right to be the *imām*, thus causing the appearance of different creeds such as the Zaydīs (supporters of Zayd bin ʿAlī's revolt) and the Ismāʿīlīs (named after Ismāʿīl, son of the sixth *imām*, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq). As well as these groups, other creeds that deified ʿAlī also began to appear. Amongst these is the Nuṣayrī (later ʿAlawī) creed, which first appeared in the ninth century in Iraq (Friedman 2002: 28).

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3   *Jaʿfariyya* is derived from the name of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, the sixth *imām* (d. 765), who developed Shīʿite jurisprudence during his lifetime.

4   Occultation—*Ghaybah*—concealment or absence. According to the Shīʿites the *imām* Muḥammad al-Mahdī has disappeared and he will return to establish justice and peace. There were two periods of occupations- the minor Occultation and the major Occultation. During the minor Occultation, which lasted until 941, the *imām* communicated with the community through four successive appointed agents. During the major Occultation, which continues to the present, there is no special agent.

3   The Nuṣayrīs (ʿAlawīs)

The founder of the Nuṣayrīs is believed to have been Abū Shuʿayb Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Namīrī (d. 883), known by his agnomen, Abū Shuʿayb (Dussaud 1900: 9–10). According to some sources, ibn Nuṣayr was closely associated with the eleventh *imām*, Hasan al-ʿAskarī, who died in 873 (*Kitāb al-munazara*, Ms Paris, Fonds arabe 1450: 119). Indeed, ibn Nuṣayr claimed that he was the 'gate' (*bāb*)[5] of the eleventh *imām*. In one Nuṣayrī text, it is stated that al-ʿAskarī said: "Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr is my light, my door, and my proof against mankind. Whatever he related to me is true" (Moosa 1988: 259). Moreover, ibn Nuṣayr asserted that he represented the occulted *imām*, a claim which led him to be excommunicated from the Shiʿi community (Friedman 2002: 8).

The circle of ibn Nuṣayr's supporters expanded and became known collectively as the Nuṣayrīs. Ibn Nuṣayr was succeeded by Muḥammad ibn Jundab, who, in turn, was succeeded by ʿAbdallāh al-Jannān al-Junbulānī (d. 900). Another figure that had a central role in the formation of the Nuṣayrī creed was al-Ḥusayn b. Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī (d. 957), who, for several reasons, decided to move to al-Sham (Greater Syria). By the tenth century, there were already Nuṣayrīs on both sides of the Euphrates, in Iraq (mainly Baghdad and Kūfa), and in Syria (mostly Harran and Aleppo) (Halm 1995: 148–150; Friedman 2002: 32–33). According to some sources, by the eleventh century, Nuṣayrī communities could already be found in Jabal al-Ansariyya (Friedman 2002: 42). Another important Nuṣayrī figure is Maymūn b. Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī (d. 1034/5), who is said to have assumed leadership by the beginning of the eleventh century. Al-Ṭabarānī is reported to have been an outstanding leader and theologian, and to have written more books than any other Nuṣayrī theologian (Friedman 2002: 41).

During the thirteenth century, the Nuṣayrī population in Syria increased considerably, due mainly to migration from Jabal Sinjar (north-western Iraq, near the Syrian border). According to the ʿAlawī historian Muhammad Amin Ghalib al-Tawil, in 1220, the Nuṣayrīs were attacked by the Kurds and Ismāʿīlīs, and asked for help from Amīr al-Makzūn al-Sinğārī (Al-Tawil 1924: 295–300). Al-Makzūn al-Sinğārī came to the aid of the Nuṣayrīs but was defeated (Al-Tawil 1924: 296–297). Three years later, in 1222, al-Makzūn al-Sinğārī, leading a large number of warriors and their families, came to the Nuṣayrīs' rescue once more, this time defeating the Kurds and the Ismāʿīlīs. Al-Sinğārī's warriors

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5   The *bāb* ('gate') is a religious role, and the person holding this role is responsible for directing or leading the people to the *imām* by teaching them the religious doctrine. This term was also applied in early Shiʿism, being given to a senior disciple of the *imām*.

and their families are considered the ancestors of most of the Nuṣayrī clans in Syria (ʿAli 1972: 349; Al-Tawil 1924: 298). After the Mongols raided Iraq (1258), they destroyed all the religious centers in the country, including that of the Nuṣayrīs. Their station in Syria became the sole Nuṣayrī missionary station, and it was thus that Syria became the center of Nuṣayrī settlement (Al-Tawil 1924: 307).

3.1   Nuṣayrī Doctrine

The Nuṣayrī doctrine is secretive and, similar to other minority sects who were persecuted due to their religious believes, the Nuṣayrīs resort to religious dissimilation (*taqiyya*) in times of danger, meaning that they are allowed to and even should hide their true religion in order to avoid persecution (Friedman 2002: 143). Nevertheless, various Nuṣayrī religious books and treatises have been written by their theologians, including *Kitāb al-majmūʿ* ('Book of the Totality/Synthesis'), *Kitāb al-maʿārif* ('Book of Knowledge'), *Kitāb majmūʿ al-aʿyad* ('Book of Festivals'), *Kitāb al-mashyakha* ('The Manual for Shaykhs'), *Kitāb al-usūs* ('The Book of Foundations'), *Kitāb taʿlim al-diyanat al-Nuṣayriyya*, (the Nuṣayrī Catechism), *Risālat al- tawḥīd* ('The Epistle of the Unity of God'). From these texts, we can learn about Nuṣayrī doctrine.

At the heart of the Nuṣayrī creed is the deification of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. According to the group, the essence of the divinity was personified in him. As a consequence, he is considered superior to the Prophet Muḥammad. The Nuṣayrīs also believe in the divine triad of 'A.M.S.':

1. 'A' stands for ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who is considered to be the *maʿnā* ('essence' or 'meaning'). According to the Nuṣayrī catechism, "ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib; he is God—there is no God but him, the merciful, the compassionate" (*Kitāb taʿlim al-diyanat al-Nuṣayriyya*, Ms Paris, Fonds arabe 6182: 2). For the Nuṣayrīs, ʿAlī was not a human being but a docetic appearance of a human form, through which God contacted humanity (Friedman 2002: 132). They believe that ʿAlī is the one who created Muḥammad, who is the second element of the divine triad of ʿAlī, Muḥammad, and Salman.

2. 'M' stands for Muḥammad the Prophet, who is considered by to be the *ism* ('name') or *ḥijāb* ('veil') that hides the essence: "know that the *maʿnā* entered the *bāb*, veiled himself in the *ism*" (*Kitāb taʿlim al-diyanat al-Nuṣayriyya*, Ms Paris, Fonds arabe 6182: 4). The *ism* was created from the divine light of the *maʿnā*, which, in turn, created the *bāb* ('gate').

3. 'S' stands for Salmān al-Fārisī, one of the Prophet Muḥammad's companions, who is considered to be the *bāb* that leads to the 'name,' which, in turn, leads to the essence: "he is the only *bāb* which leads to the *maʿnā*, the causal determinant [ʿAlī], through the name [Muḥammad]. No one

comes to the God, ʿAlī, except through him" (*Risalat al-bayan li Ahl al-uʿqal wa al-afham wa man talab al-huda ila maʿrifat al Rahman*, Ms Paris, Fonds arabe 1450: 55).

According to the Nuṣayrī catechism, A.M.S. is "a trinity without separation, whose unity indicates the divinity of our master [ʿAlī]" (*Kitāb taʿlim al-diyanat al-Nuṣayriyya*, Ms Paris, Fonds arabe 6182: 4).

The Nuṣayrīs believe in metempsychosis (*tanasukh*) or transmigration, which is a sort of a punishment (Friedman 2002: 104). For them, at the beginning of time, there was a pure world of light, and God was praised by his enlightened creations. God wanted to test them, so He changed his form, creating confusion among them. Two major sins were committed by His creations: doubt and pride. These sins were followed by other sins, thus causing their gradual fall from the 'world of light' to the 'material world,' where they were given human bodies. According to the Nuṣayrīs, when a person dies, his/her soul leaves the body and moves to another body. It could be a human body, plant, insect, or inanimate object, depending on the person's actions and belief in ʿAlī. The sinner's transmigration can occur on one of five possible levels (Friedman 2002: 105; *Kitāb al-majmuʿ* mentions seven levels; see Dussaud 1900: 183). The more severe a person's sins, the more inferior the creature into which the soul transmigrates will be. Gnosis is the path through which one can return to the pre-fall state in the world of light, and only a small minority of pious mystics (with no body defects) can return there. Even then, it is only after studying religious texts deeply and gaining extensive knowledge that one can reach the highest degree of piety required to return to that world (Friedman 2002: 115–118).

The journey back to the world of light begins with the 'initiation,' a process with several stages, in which an instructor (*naqīb*) and an initiate are both involved. Initiates range in age from fifteen to sixty and are all male, since women are not allowed to follow this path. In addition, initiates must have Nuṣayrī parents and must take an oath of secrecy. They are obliged to maintain a pure way of life and to keep away from any material temptation that might prevent their salvation. If the initiate disobeys his instructor or betrays him, he is expelled from the process. The relationship between the instructor and the initiate is that of a father and son—a kind of "spiritual fatherhood" (Friedman 2002: 214). Rev. Samuel Lyde (d. 1860), who lived among the Nuṣayrīs in the 1850s, offers extracts from the Nuṣayrī text *Kitāb al-mashyakha* in his book *The Asian Mystery*, in which the 'contract' between the instructor and the initiate is elucidated.[6] In general, then, Nuṣayrīs can be divided into two groups: the

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6   "Now the rights due to the Seyyid from his son are that he reveal not his secrets, nor disobey his commands, nor bear malice against him in his breast [...] And the rights due to a son from

khassa ('initiated elite'), or the *shaykhs* ('spiritual leaders,' who are in a minority), and the *ʿamma* (the 'ignorant mass,' consisting of the majority of the population) (Friedman 2002: 144).

The Nuṣayrīs have no specific place of worship but pray in private houses (*bayt/manzil*), and the *shaykhs* take turns to invite the *khassa* to hold meetings at their homes for various purposes (Friedman 2002: 146). The main religious ceremony, which includes the sanctification of wine, is called the *quddās*, or 'mass' (Moosa 1988: 398–408). The Nuṣayrīs also have their own festivals, which are elaborated in the *Kitāb Majmūʿ al-aʿyād* ('Book of Festivals') by al-Ṭabarānī. These festivals contain elements from different religious and ethnic sources: Sunnī, Shīʿite, Persian, and Christian. They celebrate, for example, Eid al-Adha, (the 'festival of sacrifice'), Eid al-Ghadir (the celebration of the appointment of ʿAlī by the Prophet Muḥammad as his successor), Nawruz (Persian new year), and Laylat al-Milad (Christmas), but they are given their own Nuṣayrī interpretations (Lyde 2003: 382–398).

The five pillars of Islam are also interpreted differently by the Nuṣayrīs. For example, the fast (*sawm*) of Ramadan is marked by fasting during the daytime, but also includes abstention from speech. Every day of the month of Ramadan represents a different Nuṣayrī figure (*shaykhs*), and the celebration of *al-Fitr* ('breaking of the fast') represents the abolition of the *taqiyya* at the end of time (Friedman 2002: 155). Moreover, the obligation to pay *zakāt* is interpreted as the giving of a spiritual gift, rather than a material one (although it should be noted that Nuṣayrīs do not exempt themselves from charitable giving) (Friedman 2002: 139).

Nuṣayrī society is segmented along the lines of tribes, religious schools, and classes (religious leaders, landowners, and peasants); there is no distinctive religious or secular leadership. Over the years, this has had a significant influence on the internal solidarity of the group (Al-Sharif 1994: 116–125; Al-Tawil 1924: 469). The Nuṣayrīs can be split into four large tribes or tribal confederations (*ʿashāʾir*): the Khayyatin, the Hadadin, the Kalbiyya, and the Matawira. Each tribe is comprised of several smaller clans, each with its own chief. This setup has led to the Nuṣayrīs suffering severely as a result of internecine quarrels from time to time. Disturbances and bloody clashes have erupted between various Nuṣayrī clans, some of them lasting for decades and causing heavy losses, in terms of life and property (Al-Tawil 1924: 349–375). There have also

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his Seyyid are, good bringing up and proper instruction; and that he do not put hardships on him, nor teach him in a faulty way; […] and warn him against all transgression and lusts […] My wish is that he would […] direct me to the right knowledge of God […] know that if you [initiate] shall have known it [the secret], and shall reject it […] you will be transported into horrid shapes […] take care of your brethren […] you must observe prayer […] and give alms" (Lyde 2003 [1860]: 257–264).

been some religious differences between the main Nuṣayrī religious school (Al-Hariri 1987: 194). The main religious schools, each of which has its own religious leaders, are the Shamsiya (from the word *Shams-sun*) or Shamaliya, and the Qamariya (from the word *Qamar-moon*) or Kalaziya (Moosa 1988: 337–341; Al-Tawil 1924: 468–469; Lyde 2003 [1860]: 188).

Besides the internecine quarrels, the Nuṣayrīs have been persecuted by successive Sunnī Muslim rulers, who have considered the group to be a danger to Islam. Over the years, several Sunnī scholars have issued *fatwās* against the Nuṣayrīs, declaring them heretics. During the fourteenth century, for example, the Sunnī scholar Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) issued three *fatwās* against the Nuṣayrīs. Though they contain false theological and historical accusations against the Nuṣayrīs, the *fatwās* were (and still are) exploited by some extremists to justify their attacks against the group (Talhamy 2010: 175–194).

Two other Sunnī *fatwās* were issued during the period of Ottoman rule (1516–1918). One of these *fatwās* was issued in the sixteenth century. According to various sources, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I, who was at war with the Shīʿite Ṣafavids that ruled over Persia (Iran) from 1502 onward, feared a possible collaboration between the various Shīʿite creeds living adjacent to the border with Persia and the Ṣafavid state. He requested a *fatwā* to justify the conduct of an expedition to tackle these groups, among which were the Nuṣayrīs. The second *fatwā*, issued during the 1820s, stated that the property and lives of the Nuṣayrīs were at the Muslims' disposal (Talhamy 2010: 183). It is worth mentioning that, even though the Ottomans referred to the Nuṣayrīs as heretics, they did not require them to pay the *jizya* (the poll tax that the non-Muslims had to pay). For the purposes of the census, they were counted as part of the Muslim community and, later on, were recruited into the Ottoman army (Talhamy 2011b: 33).

These *fatwā*s and the persecution by the Ottomans caused the Nuṣayrīs to retreat to the Nuṣayriyya Mountain and live in small, mainly homogenous villages or in areas surrounding the coastal cities such as Tripoli, Latakia, and Jablah. They lived in seclusion, avoiding the cities and any encounters with the Ottoman authorities or the Muslim community. Isolated in their mountain fortresses and living in ramshackle villages, they had to endure famine and poverty, as well as exploitation by their landlords, most of whom were Sunnīs and held contempt for their tenants, considering them to be infidels (Talhamy 2010: 182).

Due to their miserable situation, during the nineteenth century, the Nuṣayrīs revolted against the Ottomans, refusing to pay taxes. They attacked and plundered their neighboring villages before their attempts were brutally subdued

by the Ottomans (Talhamy 2008: 905). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Nuṣayrīs, as a religious minority, became a prime target for the Protestant missionaries. This motivated the Ottomans to take action to integrate them into official state religion—or, in other words, 'Sunnify' them—by building schools and mosques in their villages, as well as sending Sunnī *imām*s to them. However, neither the Ottomans, nor the Protestant missionaries had much success in converting the Nuṣayrīs (Talhamy 2011a: 218–236). Indeed, they maintained a lowly existence in poverty until the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

3.2 *Becoming ʿAlawīs*

After World War I, and in accordance with the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), Syria, Lebanon, and Alexandretta were to be put under French control in what came to be known as the French Mandate. Under the French Mandate, the Nuṣayrīs faced major changes. One of these changes pertained to their name: during the 1920s, they became known as ʿAlawīs or ʿAlawites ('followers of ʿAlī'). Indeed, as the 1920s and 1930s progressed, the group started fostering this change itself. As Nuṣayrīs, they were outcasts; as ʿAlawīs, however, they could position themselves as part of Shīʿite Islam and, thus, part of the Muslim community. Hence, during those years, a gradual denial of the Nuṣayrī identity began to occur, along with the emergence of a substantial body of apologetic literature on the issue. At the same time, serious measures were taken by the newly named ʿAlawīs to stress their links to the Shīʿite doctrine (Firro 2005: 1–31).

Some ʿAlawīs, such as the historian Muhammad Ghalib al-Tawil, say that this was an inevitable step; it allowed the ʿAlawīs finally to restore their original name and discard the name given to them by their opponents in order to denigrate them: "after the World War the ancient name of the community [ʿAlawī] was returned to them [...] They were deprived of it for 412 years" (Al-Tawil 1924: 388). In 1926 a group of ʿAlawī *ʿulamāʾ* issued a proclamation, which stated that: "Every ʿAlawī is a Muslim [...] The ʿAlawīs are Shīʿite Muslims [...] they are the adherents of the *imām* ʿAlī" (Al-Ibrahim 1992: 87–88). Then, in April 1933, some ʿAlawī *ʿulamāʾ* asked to be recognised in the population registers under the name 'ʿAlawī Muslims' (Yafee 1992: 251–257). In 1936, another important step toward becoming part of the Muslim faith was taken when the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, the Sunnī Hajj Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, (d. 1974), issued a *fatwā* that described ʿAlawīs as part of the Muslim community: "the ʿAlawīs are Muslims and the whole Muslim community should cooperate with them for good deeds and move away from the bad deeds [...] they are brothers in faith" (Boneschi 1940: 42–45, 134–152). This was the first time in history that a high

religious authority had recognised the ʿAlawīs as belonging within the Muslim community, rather than as an extremist heretic creed that endangered Islam. Following this, a series of declarations were made by ʿAlawī *'ulamā'*, stating that they were Shīʿite Muslims (Al-Ibrahim 1999: 79–81, 93–96). Although some may argue that the main purpose of the *fatwā* was to ensure the integrity of Syria, rather than to reconcile with the ʿAlawīs, it certainly paved the way for the group's integration into the Muslim community, being crucial in the ending of their long period of isolation (Talhamy 2009: 564).

Politically, however, some ʿAlawī leaders saw the French Mandate as an opportunity to gain power by capitalising on the notion of religious difference. The French, who pursued a policy of 'divide and rule,' split Syria into small territories along religious and ethnic lines, and so the ʿAlawīs asked for their own independent state to be granted. It was thus that the 'State of the ʿAlawīs' (1920–1936) was established in the Nuṣayriyya Mountain area. While some ʿAlawīs were pleased to have their own 'independent state,' others opposed it—mainly the young and the educated. They felt that the only way to preserve their existence was through integration with a united Syria, rather than by having their own state (Firro 2005: 17–26).

It was after the French departed Syria in April 1946 that the ʿAlawīs' ascendance to power began. This happened through two main channels: the army and the secular-nationalist Baʿth Party (Zisser 1999: 133). There were several reasons why the ʿAlawīs became so prominent in the army. During the 1920s, the French formed the Special Troops of the Levant (*Les Troupes Spéciales du Levant*), which were composed of troops recruited locally in the Levant. The majority of these Syrian troops came from rural backgrounds and minority groups: the ʿAlawīs, Druze, Kurds, and Circassians. This army, which, by the end of 1945, numbered about 5,000 (in addition to about 3,500 gendarmeries) became the regular armed forces of the newly independent state of Syria (Collelo 1987: 236–237). Though many Sunnīs joined the post-independence Syrian army, various Sunnī urban-, middle-, and upper-class families considered the army unfit for their children (Faksh 1984: 143). In contrast, ʿAlawī boys, who tended not to go to secondary school and suffered from grave economic situations, often chose the military academy, seeing it as a promising start for social advancement. Some of them reached top ranks in the army. Indeed, the political instability in post-independence Syria facilitated ʿAlawī dominance of the armed forces (Moosa 1988: 281, 293). During the 1960s, prominent ʿAlawī officers such as Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad and Ṣalāḥ Jadīd were placed in important positions in the armed forces high command (Moosa 1988: 299) and, by the mid-1960s, the ʿAlawīs have been prominent in both the army and the security services (Devlin 1991: 1404). At the same time, the socio-economic circumstances of the

ʿAlawī peasants improved considerably as the ʿAlawīs started moving eagerly into education and gained strong representation in key professions and within senior state positions (Van Dam 2011: 9).

The secular Baʿth Party was founded in 1947 and drew its strength from the lower socio-economic classes, minorities, and populations inhabiting rural and peripheral regions of the country (Zisser 2001: 7). During the 1960s, the party was under ʿAlawī leadership. It seized power in Syria and managed to retain it, coming to rule the nation (Faksh 1984: 141). Then, in November 1970, the Corrective Revolution (*al-Thawra al-Tashihiya*) brought Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad (d. 2000) to power and, in 1971, he became the first ʿAlawī president of Syria (Zisser 2001: 1). Asad (also Assad) managed to unite the ʿAlawīs under his leadership and change their social and economic situation. The ʿAlawīs, under Asad, became the most dominant political force in Syria. As Matti Moosa puts it, "[t]he Nuṣayrīs, who once would have been content to have autonomy in their own area, now were in control of Syria" (1988: 309).

During the 1970s, Asad made conciliatory moves to gain the trust of the Sunnī majority: he prayed at mosques on Fridays (Dekmejian 1995: 107) and during major Muslim holidays and undertook *ʿumra* ('small *ḥajj*') to Mecca. He abolished restrictions on religious institutions and allowed the construction of new mosques (Maʿoz 2004: 182). In addition, he tried to win religious legitimacy for the ʿAlawīs. In September 1972, Hasan Mahdi al-Shirazi (d. 1980), an Iraqi Shīʿite cleric, stated that "the beliefs of the ʿAlawīs conformed in every respect to those of their Twelver Shīʿite brethren" (Kramer 1987: 249; Al-Mazlum 1999: 127–128; Al-Sharif 1994: 7–8). Then, in July 1973, al-Sayyid Musa al-Sadr, the leader of Lebanon's Shīʿite community, recognised the Muslim ʿAlawīs as brothers of the Shīʿites (Al-Nahar 1973).

Some groups in Syrian society, however, refused to accept this new ʿAlawī status. They included the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (henceforth SMB), who were outlawed by the Baʿth Party in 1964. In 1976, the SMB revolted against the regime's socio-economic policy, sectarian character, and secular worldview (Zisser 2001: 10). The group believed that Islam should be declared as the state religion and that *sharīʿa* should be the basis of legislation (Hinnebusch 1990: 278). They accused the regime of being tyrannical, corrupt, oppressive, and unjust (Abd-Allah 1983: 43). The SMB was joined by other secular opposition forces, who protested against Asad's intervention in Lebanon (1976), official corruption, and the domination of the ʿAlawīs in every sphere of life in Syria. They expressed their intentions to overthrow "tyrant Asad's regime" (Syria Unmasked 1991: 8).

ʿAlawī military officers, government personnel, and Baʿthists were assassinated, and the tensions continued into the 1980s. In June 1980, the SMB were

accused of a failed attempt to assassinate President Asad. As an act of revenge, many SMB held in Tadmur Prison, Palmyra, were executed (Syria Unmasked 1991: 16). A month later, membership in or association with the SMB was made a crime punishable by death (Dekmejian 1995: 109). In retort, in November 1980, the SMB issued a manifesto emphasising that "a minority cannot and should not rule over a majority" (Abd-Allah 1983: 201–267). The peak of the conflict between the two sides was in February 1982, during the 'Hama massacre.' For quite some time Hama has been one of the centers of conflict and the site of several armed clashes between the opposition, mainly the SMB, and the regime forces. On 2 February in 1982 the Defense Brigades and units of the Special forces entered the city to quell the opposition movement once and for all. The consequences were devastating: thousands were killed, many more were injured and left homeless as the city was severely damaged (Syria Unmasked 1991: 17–21).

In the years that followed, the SMB, along with various other secular opposition parties and organisations both inside and outside Syria, continued to protest against the repressive political atmosphere, official corruption and domination by the ʿAlawīs in Syria under both Ḥafiz al-Assad and his son, Bashar al-Assad (who came to power in July 2000) (Talhamy 2012: 34–39). In March 2011, the protest accelerated, with the streets of Syria being dominated by groups of citizens calling for freedom and democracy. The then-supervisor general of the SMB, Mohammad Riad al-Shaqfa, announced optimistically: "I believe that the Asad regime will collapse within the next few months […] the regime's days are over" (Asharq al-Awsat London 2011). Soon, the protests evolved into a violent war. In 2020, after more than nine years, the Asad regime has not collapsed as al-Shaqfa and others have predicated but Syria has suffered great damage, as have the ʿAlawīs. Accused of being loyal to the Asad regime, the ʿAlawīs have thus been attacked by various radical Islamic opposition groups. Serving in the Syrian army has also led to significant loss of life from the ʿAlawī population. Additionally, relations between them and the Sunnī majority have deteriorated, and their sense of insecurity has increased. This war has, once again, highlighted their position as a religious minority.

4   The Alevīs

The term 'Alevīs' refers not only to the Kızılbaş to indicate loyalty to, or descent from, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib but also refers to a variety of religious groups. Indeed, it has been suggested that the Alevī identity was "a new trans-regional identity linking previously only partially connected groups which shared similar

narratives, beliefs, as well as social and ritual practices" (Dressler 2006: 271; Dressler 2013: 1–19, 275–287). The vast majority of Alevīs are from the Kızılbaş and Bektaşi groups, with the Tahtaci ('woodcutters'), Abdal, and Cepni groups also being involved (Dressler 2013: 245).

Linguistically, the Alevīs can be divided into four different categories: Azerbaijani Turkish speakers, Arabic speakers, Turkish speakers, and Kurdish speakers (both Kurmanci and Zaza dialects). The majority of Alevīs speak Turkish or Kurdish. Up until the middle of the twentieth century, the Turkish Alevīs lived mainly in central Anatolia—around Hacibektaş, Ankara, and the regions of Çankiri, Çorum, and Tokat. The Kurdish Alevīs, meanwhile, tended to live in the regions of Tunceli, Elazığ, Erzincan, Bingöl, and Kars (Masssicard 2013: 5). Arabic-speaking Alevīs are found mainly in southern Turkey, especially around Adana and in the region of Iskenderun.[7] They have close links with the Syrian ʿAlawīs and have only few, if any, historical ties to the Anatolian Alevīs (Masssicard 2013: 5). The term 'Alevīsm' homogenised the aforementioned groups, connecting them to Turkish culture and integrating them into Islam. At the same time, however, they still asserted their 'heterodoxy' (Dressler 2013).

4.1 *Historical Background*

The native soil of the Alevīs is Anatolia (Massicard 2013: 12). From the end of the eleventh century up until the thirteenth century, Turkman tribes travelled to Anatolia (Mélikoff 2005: 1). It is believed that in 1230, after escaping the Mongol invasion, a dervish known by the name of Haci Bektaş also arrived in Anatolia. Haci Bektaş was a mystical healer and a thaumaturge, who, despite being a Muslim, had not given up the ancient practices and customs of Central Asia. While some sources from the late-twelfth century indicate that Haci Bektaş founded an order, others suggest that the order in question was not founded until after his death, when a woman named Kandincik Ana, together with her disciple, Abdal Musa, founded a new group (Mélikoff 2005: 2).

Out of the tribes that settled in the area, two groups appeared: the Bektaş and the Kızılbaş. The Bektaş derive their name from Haci Bektaş and are a predominantly urban group. They claim that membership is open to any Muslim. The Kızılbaş are mainly rural, and claim that one can acquire identity only through parentage, that is, you cannot become an Alevī; rather, you are born one (Massicard 2013: 5).

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7 Iskenderun, or Alexandretta, is the largest district in the province of Hatay. It was annexed to the Turkish Republic in 1939, causing some of the ʿAlawīs living there to move south toward the Nuṣayriyya Mountain (although others chose to stay).

The Kızılbaş were partisans of the Shīʿite Ṣafavids,[8] and had joined several revolts against the Ottomans. This troubled the Sunnī Ottoman Sultan Selim I (1512–1520), who was at war with the Ṣafavids. Some sources mention that, in 1514, prior to his march to meet Shāh Ismaʿil at Chaldiran (where the latter was badly defeated), Sultan Selim ordered a census of the Shīʿites living adjacent to the border with Persia. He feared the possibility of a collaboration between the local Shīʿite creeds and the Ṣafavid state, and so he massacred those Shīʿites identified through the census (Farid Bik 1896: 74). As discussed earlier, as Sultan Selim's expedition was an attack against the various Shīʿite-inclined creeds, it may have targeted the Kızılbaş, too, as some sources imply (Issa 2017: 72).

Following the victory at Chaldiran, the Ottomans persecuted the Kızılbaş, who were repressed for centuries (Arslantaş 2013: 92). In the conception of the Ottomans and the surrounding Sunnī society, the Kızılbaş had strayed from the true path of Islam. They were referred to as *zındık*s ('heretics') and *mulhid*s ('atheists'), who were endangering Islam (Vorhoff 1998: 229). To avoid the Ottomans' persecution many Kızılbaş retreated to inaccessible regions of Anatolia, living in relatively isolated villages, far away from the Sunnīs. It is believed that it was during this period of relative isolation that the Kızılbaş developed their own political, social and religious institutions, practices, traditions, and doctrines (Massicard 2013: 15). These elements enabled them to survive in small, self-sufficient and isolated local communities (Zeidan 1999: 76). Due to their beliefs and secretive rituals, however, myths proliferated regarding their "moral deviance" (Zeidan 1999: 76).

From the seventeenth century onward, Haci Bektaş came to be considered an important saint by most of the Kızılbaş (Massicard 2013: 15). Today, his picture is displayed at their associations and worship centers. The group also names associations after him, and members are often heard quoting sayings attributed to him. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Alevīs visit Bektaş' tomb in Kırşehir every August (Shindeldecker 1998: 15).

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8   The Ṣafavids derive their name from Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn Isḥāq, who died in 1334. Ṣafī, who chose to live the Ṣūfī life, became the head of the Safawi Ṣūfī order (the title deriving from his name). Ala al-Din Ali, Ṣafī's grandson, became the leader of the Safawi order, which was joined by many Shīʿites. To make the new Shīʿite members of his order more prominent, Ali ordered his men to wear a new cap divided into twelve plates, representing the twelve *imām*s. Later, the Safawi order became a political force, whose rallying point was Twelver Shīʿism (*Ithnā ʿAsharī*). It seems, however, that the term Kızılbaş did not emerge until the turn of the sixteenth century, in the time of Shāh Ismāʿīl.

4.2 *Alevī Doctrine*

The Alevīs accept ʿAlī as the only legitimate successor to Muḥammad. They venerate the 'House of the Prophet' (*ahl al-bayt*) and reject all their enemies (Zeidan 1999: 79). Some Alevīs consider both the Prophet Muḥammad and ʿAlī to be emanations of the 'Divine Light.' Here, Muḥammad is seen as the announcer and ʿAlī is the preserver of 'Divine Truth,' and both seem to merge, at times, into one divine figure: the Alevīs use the following saying: "ʿAlī is Muḥammad, Muḥammad is ʿAlī" (Shindeldecker 1998: 13). Some Alevīs believe in a trinity consisting of Allāh, Muḥammad, and ʿAlī. They assert, however, that this trinity is not the same as that of the Christians (Shindeldecker 1998: 14).

For a proportion of Alevīs, ʿAlī is the ultimate example of the perfect human. They consider him the 'gate' (*bāb*) to esoteric knowledge (Zeidan 1999: 79). Thus, certain divine attributes are ascribed to him, such as the ability to have created the world and the dispensation of the livelihood of his creatures (Moosa 1988: 51). The following poem (Olsson 2005: 174–175) demonstrates how ʿAlī is viewed by the Alevīs:

> You are the first and the last of this world
> Shah, who is the sultan of the universe
> I wander around in every corner of the world
> I never saw any other man than Ali
> Who bestowed destiny and created the worlds
> I never saw any other man than Ali
> One of his names is Ali, one of his names is Allah
> By God, I swear by God, I do not deny
> Facing the way of Ali and Muhammad
> I never saw any other man than Ali

In addition, ʿAlī's picture is displayed in every Alevī place of worship and association, and it often appears on the cover of Alevī publications (Shindeldecker 1998: 12). Here is another example (Olsson 2005: 173) illustrating the identification of ʿAlī with the divine reality composed by Melıniet Ali Hilmi Dedebaba (d. 1907):

> I took the mirror to my face
> Ali appeared to my eye ...
> He is Jesus and Christ
> He is the refuge to the believers
> He is the Shah of the two worlds

Ali appeared to my eye
Ali is the pure, Ali is the clean
Ali is the hidden, Ali is the manifest
Ali is the first, Ali is the last
Ali appeared to my eye
Ali is the life, Ali is the Beloved
Ali is the religion, Ali is the belief
Ali is the Merciful, Ali is the Compassionate
Ali appeared to my eye

The Alevīs believe that the four major holy books, the Torah, Psalms, the Gospel, and the Qurʾān, are God's written revelations, and that the Qurʾān is the last written revelation from God (Shindeldecker 1998: 5). Most Alevīs believe that the 'original' Qurʾān stated clearly that ʿAlī was to be the Prophet's successor, and that parts of the text related to ʿAlī were taken out of it by his rivals. The Alevīs interpret the Qurʾān in an esoteric, allegoric, and symbolic (rather than literal) manner (Shindeldecker 1998: 5). They also look to the following religious books as sources for their beliefs and practices: 1. the *ḥadīth* (the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad); 2. *Nahj al-balāgha* (the traditions and sayings of ʿAlī); 3. the Buyruks (collections containing the doctrine and practices of several of the twelve *imām*s, claimed to have been written by important leaders (Zeidan 1999: 79); and 4. the *Vilayetnameler* and/or *Menakibnameler* (books that describe events in the lives of important Alevī figures, such as Haci Bektaş). Another important source of Alevī belief and thought comes in the form of the mystical poems and musical ballads/liturgical hymns (*deyisler*; *nefesler*) that are passed down orally from one generation to the next (Shindeldecker 1998: 5).

According to the Alevīs, in order to approach God, the faithful must pass through the following four consecutive 'gates' (each of which includes ten 'levels' or duties) Zeidan 1999: 79): 1. *sharīʿa* (Islamic law); 2. *tarīqat* ('the path'), which is at the core of the community (and is an Alevī mode of worship, where strangers are not welcome); 3. *marifet* ('knowledge'): the esoteric intuitive knowledge of God; 4. *ḥaqīqat* ('ultimate truth'): union with God—the highest stage (it is believed that the *dede* lineages are at this level) (Zeidan 1999: 79). For the Alevīs, salvation exists in imitating perfect models such as ʿAlī, Haci Bektaş, and other Alevī saints. According to them, every Alevī must "be master of his hands, tongue and loins," meaning that theft, lies, and adultery are forbidden because every man must seek "purity of heart" (Shankland 2005: 19). Additionally, love and forgiveness are seen as important elements in interpersonal relationships (Zeidan 1999: 79).

The Alevīs reject external forms of Islam, including its five pillars. They do not have mosques and do not pray five times a day. They believe that relationships with people are more important than observing formal religious ritual: "If you hurt another person, the ritual prayers you have done are counted worthless" (Shindeldecker 1998: 10). Although, one can find mosques in the Alevī villages today, few residents attend the five daily prayers (Shankland 2005: 21). Alevīs do not undertake pilgrimage to Mecca and do not fast during the month of Ramadan (Moosa 1988: 121). Their main fast is held during the first twelve days of the month of Muharram, during which they mourn the murder of ʿAlī's son, al-Ḥusayn, during the battle of Karbalāʾ. During this fast, they avoid any sort of comfort or enjoyment (Shindeldecker 1998: 11).

Their rituals differ markedly from Sunnī rituals (Zeidan 1999: 79). Their form of community worship, which is attended by both men and women, is referred to as the 'assembly meeting' (*cem* or *ayini cem*)[9] and is held either in a private home or in a building or a room known as 'assembly house' (*cem evi*). In contrast with mosques, *cem evi*s do not have minarets and *cem* meetings are not announced by a call to prayer (Shindeldecker 1998: 10).

The assembly meeting is led by a 'grandfather' (*dede*): a man recognised to have spiritual and moral authority in the community and who claims to have a direct bloodline connection to the family of the Prophet Muḥammad through one of the twelve *imām*s. Only *dede*s are allowed to lead the rituals and prayers. Before the *dede* holds the religious service, he must make sure that all the members of the congregation are at peace with one another. If he finds that there are any quarrels, he will act as a judge to foster a reconciliation between those involved; anyone who refuses to be reconciled in this way is prevented from participating in the assembly (Shindeldecker 1998: 10). Additionally, those who do not confess their personal sins or are not reconciled with others are disciplined by the *dede* and are sometimes excommunicated until they repent (Moosa 1988: 90; Shindeldecker 1998: 9).

During the *cem ayini*, the *dede* sits on a sheepskin on the floor on one side of the room. The participants, who enter the room barefoot, sit in a circle on the floor, facing each other. They are instructed to cleanse themselves all over before attending an assembly meeting. Most Alevīs also believe that being clean on the inside when coming to worship is at least as important as being clean on the outside; indeed, many regard inner cleanliness as even more important than outer cleanliness. The *dede* says prayers, gives short religious messages, sings solo ballads, and leads the congregation in singing, while playing the *saz* (a seven-stringed lute). A select group of men and women also

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9 *Cem* can be translated as community/congregation and *ayin* means rite/ceremony.

perform the *semah*: a ritual circle dance characterised by turning and swirling (Massicard 2013: 15), which symbolises unity with God (Grove 2008). At the end of the service, which is held entirely in Turkish, the congregation shares a meal (Shindeldecker 1998: 10).

One of the Alevīs' customs is to visit holy shrines (*ziyārāt*) dedicated to figures such as Haci Bektaş and Abdal Musa. They pray at these people's tombs, asking for spiritual cleansing and blessings for themselves and others (Shindeldecker 1998: 8). The Alevīs also hold festivals and celebration days. For instance, they celebrate Nawruz (21 March), which is believed by many to be ʿAlī's birthday. Others believe that the date is ʿAlī and Fāṭima's wedding anniversary, the day that Joseph was pulled out of the well, or the day God created Earth; in any case, it is considered a significant celebration (Shindeldecker 1998: 11). In addition, they observe numerous folk religious practices, such as lighting candles at saints' tombs, not stepping on the thresholds of holy buildings, and writing wishes on cloth strips before hanging them on trees that are considered spiritually powerful (Shindeldecker 1998: 17).

The Spiritual Brotherhood ceremony (*musahiplik*) is very important in the Alevī faith and society. In this ceremony, two unrelated men, along with their wives, enter into an irreversible, lifetime kinship of total solidarity, in which they share all possessions and the responsibility for all debts, as well as agreeing to support each other and any children in the two families (Shindeldecker 1998: 10). Importantly, this relationship is considered deeper than a blood relationship (Zeidan 1999: 80). The practices and rules followed in Alevī society, such as monogamy, the prohibition of divorce, Spiritual Brotherhood, and the acquisition of the Alevī identity by parentage only, help to guarantee the group's survival (Massicard 2013: 16).

Most Alevīs believe that one can change his or her position in life through education and work. They say that "the greatest act of worship is to work" (Shindeldecker 1998: 7). Observers have noted that Alevī society is divided into two separate endogamous groups: the *Ocak* ('hearth'), which consists of the spiritual and social elite, who claim descent from ʿAlī, al-Ḥusayn, the *imām*s, legendary Saints, or religious warriors and who constitute a priestly caste; and the *Talip*s (disciples), the lay majority. Religious knowledge is passed down orally by the *Ocak* families, who are responsible for the religious and social leadership of the community. The *Ocak*s are the central authority for the survival of Alevī religious knowledge and identity, and comprise some ten percent of the Alevī community (Zeidan 1999: 79).

4.3   *From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic*

Up until the late Ottoman period, the Kızılbaş were considered heretics. They had no official status, being neither members of the dominant Sunnī group,

nor protected by the status afforded by the *millet* system (Massicard 2013: 16). During the middle of the nineteenth century, however, shortly after the establishment of the Protestant *millet* (1850), Protestant missionaries started working among the Alevīs (as was the case with the Nuṣayrīs of Syria). This alarmed the Ottoman authorities and, as with the Nuṣayrīs, the Ottomans reacted by seeking to integrate the Alevīs into official state religion by building mosques and sending *imām*s to their villages (Massicard 2013: 17).

After the founding of the Turkish republic in 1923 and the ascendance of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (d. 1938), who instituted state secularism, there was a change in the attitude of the Alevīs. The Alevīs were supportive of the secular ideals of Atatürk (Van Bruinessen 1996: 8). Atatürk's policy on secularism was to remove religion from the public realm and reduce it to a matter of the faith and practice of the individual. In 1924, he established the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), an arm of the state responsible for overseeing religious matters and ensuring their separation by law from other affairs of state. The Diyanet provides religious services and, at the same time, regulates the majority of religious activities in Turkey (Hurd 2014: 417). According to the Diyanet, the Alevīs are Muslims who were pushed away somehow from the 'true path.' The Alevīs' religious status was not recognised and *cem evi*s were not recognised as places of worship, unlike mosques, churches, and synagogues, which were exempted from water and electricity charges due to their status (Massicard 2003: 169). Alevī places of worship were not given these privileges.

Despite all this, the Alevīs still chose to stay in their isolated villages. A change in the Alevī attitude began, however, in the 1950s, when group members started leaving the villages to settle in the towns in Western Turkey. Some even migrated further west to other parts of Europe, mainly Germany (Van Bruinessen 1996: 7). On one hand, when the Alevīs migrated to the towns, became educated, and began working in the public service sector, this helped them to integrate into wider society and put an end to their marginalisation. It brought them into closer contact with the Sunnīs, from whom they had remained socially separate for centuries (Van Bruinessen 1996: 7). On the other hand, however, migration largely weakened their religious practice, since they could not perform their religious practices publicly in places where a mixture of citizens with different beliefs resided (Massicard 2005: 4). In addition, in some regions, relations between the Sunnīs and the Alevīs were marked by tension. During the 1970s, there were bloody clashes between some conservative Sunnī groups and the Alevīs, resulting in the death of hundreds of Alevīs (Martens 2009: 19).

During the 1980s there was a change in the state's policy towards Islam. The Diyanet was strengthened, new mosques were built, *imām*s were appointed in different parts of Turkey (and included some Alevīs), and religious education

was made obligatory. These measures were viewed by some as governmental efforts to bring the Alevīs into the Sunnī fold (Van Bruinessen 1996: 8). During those years, an Alevī cultural revival was witnessed. In an attempt to reconstruct the Alevī culture, community, and identity, the newly educated Alevī elite leadership organised foundations and trusts, rebuilt Saints' tombs, and restored rituals. Alevī voluntary associations sprang up all over Turkey, Alevī rituals were performed publicly, and new *cem evi*s were opened. Alevī intellectuals published several works in which they reinterpreted Alevī history, doctrine, and rituals, and defined its relationship to Sunnī Islam, thus resulting in a 'reinvention' of Alevī traditions. The Alevīs stopped 'hiding' their identity and started calling for its recognition (Massicard 2013: 4). These efforts continued into the 1990s, when the Alevīs increased their political activity. They demanded the legalisation of their religious rituals and practices, the integration of their doctrine into the state education system, and a fair share of broadcasting time in the official media (Zeidan 1999: 78). The state, for its part, began assisting in the organisation of the annual Alevī festival commemorating Haci Bektaş, which became a place for "political bargaining, [and] expressing demands and promises" (Massicard 2000: 29).

The Alevīs in Europe were active, too, but in a different way. In 2004, due to Alevī demands, the EU officially categorised the Alevīs as a "non-Sunnī Muslim minority" (Massicard 2013: 9), while the Venice Commission defined them as a disadvantaged minority in need of legal recognition and protection (Hurd 2014: 430). At the same time, the chairman of the Dede Commission of the Federation of Alevī Communities in Germany, Hasan Kılavuz, openly rejected attempts to associate Alevīsm with Islamic tradition:

> Alevīlik is a belief in its own right. Alevīs possess a belief that sees God everywhere in the universe. Alevīs performed their worship and beliefs for a thousand years in a modest and extremely pure form; today, some *dedes* try to decorate this form of belief with fake pearls. These *dede*s, which are insecure about themselves, which are carried away by a minority complex towards the Sunnī Muslim faith, distance the essence of Alevīsm from our traditions and customs [...] We cannot connect the faith of the Anatolian Alevīs with the basic principles of the Islamic religion.
>
> DRESSLER 2006: 285

In contemporary Turkey, however, the Diyanet promotes a version of Sunnī Ḥanafī Islam that incorporates Alevīsm into Islam, considering it an interpretation of the faith. Here, reference is made to the "common share of Islam," a phrase that overlooks the complexity of Islamic traditions, which, like all

religious traditions, are fundamentally indeterminate and contested (Hurd 2014: 432). Moreover, despite these attempts at bringing the Alevīs into the wider community, Alevī community leaders are still not trained via or funded by state resources. To this day, *cem evi*s are treated more like cultural centers than houses of worship, and Alevīsm is not taught at state schools or included in textbooks (Özyürek 2009: 124–125).

5 Similarities and Differences between the ʿAlawīs and the Alevīs

The historical and ethnic backgrounds of the two creeds discussed here are very different. The ʿAlawī creed developed from Arab Islamic origins in Iraq in the ninth century and, up until the 1920s, they were known as Nuṣayrīs. The Alevī creed developed in Anatolia during the thirteenth century, however, from Turkoman tribes in the main, and followers came to be known as Alevīs in the 1920s. There are similarities in terms of their names: both were named to indicate their loyalty to, or descent from, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who is venerated by both creeds. Moreover, both groups have lived in isolated villages and have been persecuted by Muslim Sunnī rulers as they were considered heretics (*zındık*s) that endangered Islam. Since the 1920s, the political influence of both the ʿAlawīs and the Alevīs has increased considerably—especially that of the ʿAlawīs, who, ultimately, have become the rulers of Syria.

There are also some similarities and differences with regard to Alevī and ʿAlawī religious doctrine and practices. They both believe in a trinity, but while the ʿAlawī trinity consists of ʿAlī, Muḥammad, and Salmān, the Alevī trinity includes Allāh, Muḥammad, and ʿAlī. The way in which they tend to view ʿAlī differs, too. The ʿAlawīs see ʿAlī as a human form through which God contacted humanity in a docetic appearance. Here, ʿAlī is considered superior to the Prophet Muḥammad. Some Alevīs, however, consider both Prophet Muḥammad and ʿAlī to be emanations of the divine, while others believe ʿAlī is the ultimate example of the perfect human and a gate to esoteric knowledge. The ʿAlawīs believe in the transmigration of souls, while the Alevīs do not. Neither group prays at a mosque; the ʿAlawīs pray at private houses and the Alevīs pray at *cem evi*s. Moreover, neither group prays five times a day nor performs pilgrimage to Mecca. During Ramadan, the ʿAlawīs, like the rest of the Muslims, do fast, but also obstain from speech and give it (Ramadan) a mystical meaning, while the Alevīs do not which are typical aspects of other Islamic traditions.

In terms of the social makeup of the two creeds' followers, the ʿAlawīs are divided into two groups: the *khassa* (the initiated elite, who are in a minority)

and the *ʿamma*, who are the majority. Similarly, the Alevīs also form two groups: the *Ocak* (the spiritual and social elite, who are a minority) and the *Talip*s (lay members). This, however, is not a unique feature of these two movements, but a common feature to many Islamic and non-Islamic religious groups.

6   Conclusion

Looking closely at the doctrine, practices, and history of the Alevīs and the ʿAlawīs, it is evident that the differences between these two creeds exceed their similarities. Their historical and ethnic backgrounds are different, and so are their geopolitical conditions. While the ʿAlawī/Nuṣayrī creed developed in Iraq in the ninth century and is of Arab origin, the Alevī creed was born several centuries later, stemming mainly of Turkoman tribes that settled in Anatolia during the thirteenth century. As we have seen, the ways that they view ʿAlī and Muḥammad, their interpretations of the divine triad, their festivals and prayers, and their religious assemblies and practices differ, too.

Where they are similar is in that they have both suffered from aggressiveness leveled at them by Sunnī rulers, who, historically speaking, have viewed them as heretics endangering Islam. Moreover, the two groups' reactions to Sunnī oppression were similar. To avoid persecution and for self-preservation, followers of both creeds chose to live in homogenous villages in inaccessible, mountainous regions. Since their rituals and beliefs were different from those of the Sunnī majority, they resorted, in both cases, to secrecy, thus causing Sunnīs to accuse them of moral deviance.

Even though such comparisons can be made, the creeds have certainly evolved very differently. Within forty years, the ʿAlawīs of Syria, despite comprising only twelve percent of the total population, managed to become the rulers of their country; the Alevīs of Turkey, however, are still striving for state recognition and equality. What can be said is that, although both groups changed their names in the 1920s for different reasons, such changes did, in some ways (and perhaps in one case more than the other), help them to become integrated into Islam.

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The Hey'ati Movement

Charismatic Preachers, Politics and Youth Culture

David Thurfjell

1   Introduction

This chapter explores the role of charismatic prayer leaders or eulogists, *maddāhān*, in the religious landscape of the Islamic Republic of Iran. A youth movement centred around these lay religious authorities has expanded during the last three decades. For instance, eulogists played a pivotal role in the mobilisation of popular support for former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. These charismatic leaders and the movement around them represent a form of Iranian folk religiosity that in connection to certain religious celebrations draws broad popular support. Lately it has also developed into a particular subculture with its own lifestyle, ritual repertoire and aesthetic expression.

In the following I will sketch the modern history of this movement based on the oral history of some of those who were a part of it. Having done this, I will analyse its place within the changing landscape of Islamic authority in Iran. Describing the movement as an expression of what I will call the amalgamation and aesthetics of authority I suggest that it may exemplify some ways in which religious authority is changing in our time. The movement around the *maddāhān*, it is argued, represents a renegotiation and a relocation of authority: not through the articulation of new jurisprudential or political positions, but through the reinterpretation of the ways in which people are letting religion become a part of their lives. The text is based on fieldwork and interviews conducted in Qom and Tehran from 2013 to 2016.[1]

It is the first of the month of Shaʿbān, ten o'clock in the evening, and the night is pleasantly hot in Qom. Tonight is the evening before the birthdays of Imām Ḥusayn (in the Persian colloquial: Hoseyn) ibn ʿAlī and his brother ʿAbbas, both of whom were martyred in Karbalāʾ. To commemorate the occasion, one of the many local congregation halls (*hoseynieh*s) is organising an evening with religious talks and singing. Shaʿbān is a joyous month in the Shīʿite calendar

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1   For the sake of anonymisation, the dates and specific locations of the interviews will not be revealed.

and the walls of the *hoseynieh* where we have gathered are carefully dressed in pink and green cloth. Plastic flowers are placed on the podium and most of the visitors are dressed in pale colours. The speaker of the evening is a scholar and a eulogist who has profiled himself as a demagogue on the conservative side of Iranian politics for some years, and lately he has built himself quite a reputation in hardliner circles. He is dressed all in white this evening with a white turban, a long, greying beard, and the traditional dress of a clergyman. His glasses are square-shaped and metal-framed, of the type the Supreme Leader himself wears and that was given out to the soldiers in the Iraqi war. Along with the folded Palestinian *kefiyeh* that he wears around his neck, the glasses evoke memories of that war. In today's Iran, these are recognisable signs of a hardliner position and declare an affinity to the *sepāh* or *basīj* organisations.

This preacher is hostile to reformist clergy such as Ayatollah Montazeri (1922–2009) and Ayatollah Yousef Sanʿei (b. 1937). He is not happy with the way these two clerics were critical of the way the authorities dealt with the Green movement and the reformist demonstrations following the disputed presidential election of 2009. Following the funeral of Montazeri in the same year, he was involved in attacks on their offices and in calling for their defrocking. Although it is now more than five years since these events took place, the talk this night circles around the same theme. He is critical of the former president Mahmoud Khatami and his understanding of the notion of *velāyat-e faqīh*. "Khatami and Montazeri wanted to limit the scope of the *velāyat* of the Supreme Leader [*rahbar*]," he explains, "but that was wrong. The authority of the Supreme Leader is wide and no one can change that." He then continues with what seems to be a threat of what may come if people mess with these principles. "Montazeri criticised the leader [*valī*] himself and not the whole notion of *velāyat-e faqīh* and for this he was attacked." The preacher here raises his index finger in affirmation, and then, reproachfully shaking his head, he continues solemnly, "had he criticised the notion as a whole, his punishment would have been much harsher." The topic of the speech then moves on to the fighting in Syria and a legal discussion about whether mercenaries who fight for Ḥizballāh in that conflict for the pay—rather than out of conviction—should still be considered martyrs if they are killed. The preacher declares that they should.

When the speech is over, he moves on to the singing of tonight's eulogy. He has the lyrics written on a piece of paper and sings the eulogy with a strong voice, leaning forward and gesturing as if to emphasise his eagerness to get the message across. The poem is on the theme of the night, Hoseyn's birth, and—this being Shīʿism—also about his tragic martyrdom. There is an undertone of violence to the content of both speech and eulogy, but the atmosphere in the

room is anything but violent. The men gathered there listen with varying levels of attention. Some fiddle with their mobile phones. A few of them are drowsing, and there are a number of children running around and playing, despite their fathers' half-hearted cautioning. At the end of the session, the preacher rewards their endurance by smilingly picking up a bucket filled with sweets from under his chair and sprinkling its contents over the audience.

This preacher is a *maddāh* (literally 'eulogist'), and the group assembled in his *hoseynieh* is a *hey'at* (literally 'gathering', plural *hey'athā*). These are institutions with a long history in the Shī'ite world. Over the last two decades, however, their role in Iranian society and politics has changed. The popular influence of the *maddāhān* has increased, and the widespread folk tradition of the *hey'at* has grown into what could be described as a subculture youth movement, a movement sometimes referred to as the new *hey'atī* and one with ambiguous connections to the ever-ongoing intrigues and negotiations of religio-political authority in Iran. Although the borders of this subculture remain indistinct, and although there are vast differences within it, *hey'at* communities have today developed into a subculture with institutions, information channels, ritual practices, leaders and aesthetic features that are distinct from other Islamic movements in the Islamic Republic.

2   The Modern History of *Hey'athā* and *Maddāhān*

The word *hey'at* is an Arabic loanword that literally means 'group' or 'delegation'. In a Persian religious context, the word signifies a group that gathers to mourn for Hoseyn and the other members of the household of the Prophet (*ahl-e bayt*). *Hey'atī* (plural *hey'atīhā*) is the adjective that signifies someone who belongs to such a group. *Hey'at* groups constitute a common feature in the popular Iranian religious landscape, and they have a long history. Traditionally, informal groups have formed on a neighbourhood basis to commemorate events in the Shī'ite calendar. Often the organisational responsibility has rotated between households. In connection to religious celebrations, they have organised sermons, Qur'ān classes or, most prominently, mournful lamentation sessions known as *rouzeh* or *nuhe* in people's private homes or in *hoseynieh*s. Individuals may also organise gatherings as a sign of gratitude for a prayer answered or recovery from illness. There is a traditional connection between the *hey'athā* and the *bāzāri* class, but groups have also been formed based on ethnicity, friendship or gender (Momen 1985: 238–240). *Hey'at* groups, furthermore, have also played a role in the organisation of *ziyārat*, that is, pilgrimage visits to the shrines of Mashhad and Qom as well as other

religiously significant sites. Here the local *hey'athā* have organised the practical arrangements as well as the ritual content of these journeys (Fischer 1980: 134–135). In connection to the commemorative rituals of the first ten days of Muharram, the *hey'athā* have also played a pivotal role. And in the processions that fill the streets of most Iranian cities on the day of Ashura the most fervent chest-beaters who constitute the core groups often consist of *hey'atīhā*. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say, with Michael Fischer, that the *hey'athā* have traditionally provided the skeleton of popular religion in Iran (Fischer 1980: 135).

Every *hey'at* pivots around its *maddāh*. A *maddāh* (plural *maddāhān*, from Arabic *madh*, eulogy) is a eulogist or a performer of mourning prayers. A person given this task may in Persian also be referred to as a *zāker* (from Arabic *dhākir*, meaning commemorator) or a *rouzeh khān* (reader of *rouzeh*). Traditionally, *maddāhān* are not clergy. They do not wear a turban and they usually have no theological or jurisprudential education. They are typically lay people of other professions who are engaged because of their good singing voice, their knowledge of pious poetry, and their skills in evoking religious emotion. Usually they are called *hājji* or *seyyed* by their followers.

Non-clerical religious authorities have existed in Iran for a long time, and *maddāhān* have had a role in Iranian religious culture since Ṣafavid times (Mitchell 2011: 144). But before the Revolution their societal authority was confined to the festivals at which they said their prayers, and they constituted no threat or challenge to the monarchy or the jurisprudential authority of the *'ulamā'*. During the Pahlavi era it was the tradition to end *hey'atī* gatherings with prayers for the king. This practice was criticised by revolutionary pioneers such as Murtaza Mutahhari and 'Ali Shariati, who allegedly even quoted Karl Marx in describing the pro-monarchist *hey'athā* as an opium of the people, offering quick-fix heavenly rewards without any demand for righteous engagement (Mazaheri 2008: 9).

After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and in the chaos that endured during its first years, mourning rituals of various types flourished. The activities around local shrines increased dramatically as people gathered to listen to *maddāhān*, pray, and, not least, praise the Hidden Imam. Some entirely new traditions were even invented, like ten days of mourning in honour of Fatemeh Zahra (Amanat 2009: 226). According to the Iranian-British historian Abbas Amanat, it was in this apocalyptic and revolutionary environment that a new spirit of camaraderie emerged in connection to the *hey'atī* culture. According to him, it was especially among the young *basīj* and Revolutionary Guards that this new spirit evolved, and it was especially flavoured by the messianic awareness of the early days of the Revolution (Amanat 2009: 226). The *maddāhān* now proved to be resourceful also in mustering political engagement, and for

this reason they have since become a force to count with in Iranian politics. Iranian anthropologist Mohsen Mazaheri, who has written the most extensive study on the modern history of the movement, categorises the *hey'athā* into five types: traditional, wartime revolutionary, post-war revolutionary, popular, and quasi (Mazaheri 2008). These categories differ in style but also in their age range, social base, and gender distribution.

The important position that the *hey'athā* have attained in today's Iran evolved in several steps. The early years of the Revolution and the impact of Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989) himself mark a first such step: the immediate post-revolutionary upsurge of *hey'atī* culture. Khomeini showed an appreciation for Shī'ite folk traditions by partaking in mourning rituals himself. He also had a *maddāh*, Hajj Seyyed Kowsari, who would follow him around and sing in traditional *rouzeh khāni* style for a few minutes at the end of the ayatollah's speeches. Khomeini, too, would weep at these sessions.

When Saddam Hussein invaded Iran on 22 September 1980 and the eight-year-long war with Iraq started, a formative period for the modern *hey'atī* movement began. In pro-revolutionary circles, the war became an opportunity to realise the self-sacrificial lifestyle that is celebrated in the Karbalā' commemorations. Perhaps it can be said that it was the ritual logic of revolutionary *hey'atī* culture that created the emotional regime that made thousands of young Iranian men volunteer to fight in the war. "All those volunteers," one of my *hey'atī* interviewees tell me, "came from this Hoseyn culture that tells you to give your blood for your honour, and you were so happy, and your family was so happy and proud" (interview with author, 2013). The clerical establishment that had risen to power in Iran used the *maddāhān* to stir the emotions needed to mobilise young men to enlist. Two particularly prominent *maddāhān* who rose to fame during this time were Sadeq Ahangaran and Gholam Koveyti Pour.

Since the ceasefire with Iraq in 1988, the war has continued to be an important reference for many *hey'atī* groups. Many *hey'atīhā* were angry with President Rafsanjani and Mohsen Rezaie Mirqaed, chief commander of the *sepāh* (the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps), for not continuing the war. Some of them, one interviewee told me, even wrote a letter to Khomeini himself, offering their readiness to fight even if they had no weapons left to fight with. "Imam Hoseyn never gave up," they are supposed to have told him (interview with author, 2013). Today, romanticisation of the war is still an important element of the *hey'atī* lifestyle. The soldiers who fought and died in the war constitute a powerful image of the type of self-sacrificial lifestyle that the *maddāhān* promote. "It is the image of those martyred people," one former *hey'atī* tells me,

their lifestyle, how they left everything, their studies, their money, women, everything to go to war. That became a utopian lifestyle for us that we wanted to imitate today in the cities also: the free, amazing, happy, spiritual way of life that they experienced in the war.

> interview with author, 2014

Veterans from the war also played an important part in forming the *hey'atī* culture that developed in the period after the ceasefire. "In our group there were lots of people who survived the war and they were so influential," another interviewee tells me,

they missed the spiritual lifestyle that they had during the war. Now when they had come back life was so complicated. They needed to organise things and earn money and they could not be as spiritual as they had been in the war. They cried over this in the meetings and gave the young people [who had not been in the war] this sense that they missed that time.

> interview with author, 2014

In the dramaturgical logic of the Karbalā' narrative, many *hey'athā* built up their post-war identity as a reflection of the *tawwabūn* (the Penitents). The *tawwabūn* were those who came too late to assist Hoseyn at Karbalā'. Just as they were too late to help Hoseyn at Karbalā', some *hey'atīhā* today think of themselves as coming too late to fight for Islam in the Iraq war. One *maddāh* I interview tells me that he tries to convey this "feeling of being late" in his meetings because this feeling is particularly efficient in stirring the emotions of the crowd (interview with author, 2014).

Now the post-war era in Iran coincides with the succession from Khomeini to 'Ali Khamene'i. This change of leadership also entailed a professionalisation of the *maddāhān*. Khamene'i was not as unequivocally endorsed by the *'ulamā'* and their theological seminars as Khomeini had been. In order to secure his legitimacy, he sought support among groups in Iranian society that had been important in defending and supporting the revolutionary ideals during the time of the war. The *maddāhān* were one such group. The new leader endorsed this group, and some of them became important mouthpieces for him. A particularly important figure here is Hajj Mansour Arzi. He is probably the most influential political *maddāh* in modern Iranian history. Endorsed by Khamene'i in the first years of his leadership, Hajj Mansour Arzi profiled himself as a charismatic spokesperson of the hardliner camp in Iranian politics and a fervent supporter of the Supreme Leader. Hajj Mansour Arzi is based

in Masjed-e Ark in Tehran and from there he has tightened up Iranian *rouzeh* culture and endeavoured to bring the stories told in the *hey'athā* more into line with officially sanctioned Shī'ism.

Hajj Mansour Arzi also brought about a change in ritual style. Under Khomeini, the endorsed eulogies of *maddāhān* like Kowsari had been short and traditional; under Khamene'i and *maddāhān* like Arzi, the ritual tradition found new expressions and expanded in influence. My interviewees tell me that much of this lay in the organisation. Arzi and his contemporaries were much more organised and professional in their approach to the whole thing. Kowsari was respected and knowledgeable, but he was not a professional singer or performer. "He sang some simple songs for five minutes and there would be some weeping," one interviewee tells me,

> but Arzi, he would go on for more than an hour with perfect planning. First he would read a poem, then tell a story of Imam Zaman [i.e. the *mahdī*] which would lead into an eulogy which would initiate some pre-chest-beating which in its turn led to loud chest-beating, hard weeping and a few minutes of *shur* [passionate style]. He was a masterful singer.
> interview with author, 2014

Cassette recordings of Hajj Mansour Arzi's gatherings spread across the country, and his performances were sometimes broadcast on television. In this way his new style became a government-endorsed norm of *hey'atī* culture that came to be imitated in *hoseynieh*s across the country in the mid-1990s (interview with author, 2013).

The rise of Hajj Mansour Arzi entailed an important change because it made *hey'atī* culture a part of the power play between rivalling camps in Iranian politics. This marked the next phase of the development of *hey'atī* culture in Iran, unfolding in the late 1990s. From this time the *hey'atī* movement (with few exceptions) became firmly rooted in the conservative camp that was later to be referred to as *usulgarān* (principalist). Thus it came to play an increasingly important role in the power struggle of Iranian politics (interview with author, 2013). Hajj Mansour Arzi was instrumental in this change. He was involved in several controversies due to his explicit criticism of reformist leaders and currents in the politics of the time. He was also associated with the hardliner vigilante group known as Ansar-e Hezbollah (Ḥizballāh), and he wielded massive influence over the young students of the theological seminars (*houzehā*) as well as the Revolutionary Home Guard movement known as *basīj*.

The politicisation of the *hey'athā* had started already in the early years of Khamene'i's leadership, but it gained its present ascendancy during the

presidency of the reformist Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005), and mainly after the repression of the student riots in Tehran and Tabriz of 1999. In that period the *usulgarāyān* groups in Iran felt the need to counteract the liberalisation process that the new president and his many voters wanted to pursue. My interviewees describe the victory of Khatami in the 1997 elections as a shock:

> We gave everything we had for Nouri [Nateq Nouri was the opponent of Khatami in the 1997 elections] and some *hey'atīhā* really demonised Khatami. They said he was like Yazid who killed Hoseyn. And then suddenly 20 million people vote for him. It was like "What happened here?" And people would laugh at us because they knew we were defeated.
>
>   interview with author, 2013

Khatami's landslide victory made many *hey'atīhā* feel politically and socially isolated in Iranian society since such an overwhelming majority of the people had voted for liberalisation and reform. "Many of us became a bit more cautious after that," another interviewee tells me. "At the same time there was a strong feeling that the revolutionary values were threatened and that this called for a major mobilisation against the reformist tendencies" (interview with author, 2013).

During Khatami's second presidency, the *hey'atī* movement became instrumental in Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidential campaign. Ahmadinejad became mayor of Tehran in 2003 and in this position he allocated resources to the *hey'athā* and *maddāhān* in the capital. These groups, as well as *maddāhān* across the country, would later publicly endorse his candidacy, and some of the most influential ones would even take part in his promotion. Hajj Mansour Arzi himself was one of these. He travelled around the country with Ahmadinejad to promote his candidacy, and he was also criticised for doing this, mainly because of his closeness to the Supreme Leader, who is supposed to take a neutral stance in presidential elections. Another prominent *maddāh* who supported Ahmadinejad was Hajj Mansour Arzi's former student, Hajj Said Haddadian (interview with author, 2013).

In the years prior to the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005, the *hey'atī* movement grew on a massive scale. In many small cities, my interviewees from the movement tell me, they had not even had *hoseynieh*s until this period. Before, *hey'atī* meetings had taken place in mosques or shrines (*imāmzādeha*), but now purpose-built *hoseynieh*s were erected for the first time as a part of the general mobilisation of conservative forces against the reformists (interview with author, 2013). Some of these relatively new small city *hoseynieh*s would

later become the gathering places for some of the most radical *hey'atī* communities. My interviewees remember *hey'atī* life during this period as a popular movement characterised by increasing enthusiasm and the return of revolutionary spirit. When Ahmadinejad won the elections in 2005, they saw it as the expected outcome of their efforts (interview with author, 2014).

The re-election of Ahmadinejad in June 2009 was the beginning of a turbulent time in Iran. Ahmadinejad's foremost rival, Mir Hoseyn Mousavi, was a close associate of Khatami, with massive support among certain strata of Iranian society. For months before the election, his supporters had gathered in the streets of Tehran and other cities to manifest their support for his candidacy and their disappointment with the hardliner politics of Ahmadinejad. When it was announced that Ahmadinejad had won the election with 63 per cent of the votes, Mousavi and other reformist leaders accused the authorities of having stolen the election, and the reformist rallies in Tehran continued in what was soon to become the most massive public protest since the Revolution, thirty years before.

Many of the *hey'atīhā* I have interviewed think that the allegations of cheating are absurd. As they describe it, they had experienced the massive popular support for Ahmadinejad and felt the tailwind of their own movement (interview with author, 2014). For them, the Green movement (*jonbesh-e sabz*)—as the pro-reformist protestors came to be called—was an expression of decadence and a result of manipulation by the enemies of the Islamic Republic. "It has been proven," one of them told me, "that the whole thing was instigated by American infiltrators" (interview with author, 2014). Of course there most certainly were also people with a *hey'atī* background among those who demonstrated in the sea of green, but as a movement the *hey'atīhā*, or a vast majority of them, were on the side of Ahmadinejad and the Supreme Leader.

During and since Ahmedinejad's presidential terms, the *maddāhān* and their *hey'athā* have become increasingly present in Iranian society and public debate. On the one hand the visibility of the *maddāhān has* increased in the Iranian broadcast media through the growth of social media like YouTube, or the Iranian counterpart, Aparat.com; at the same time, the elaborate individual websites maintained by many *maddāhān*, with clips of *maddāhān* performing their eulogies, have become more accessible than ever before. This development has not passed without criticism. On the contrary, many influential thinkers on the reformist side—among them the famous philosopher Abdolkarim Soroush—have openly criticised the role that *usulgarān maddāhān* have begun to play in Iranian public debate (Soroush 2016). There have also been a number of controversies connected to various *maddāhān* and their connections with dubious fractions in the political establishment.

As a religious institution of growing importance, the *hey'athā's* activities have also been further formalised and professionalised. Measures have been taken to control the *hey'athā* gatherings and to make sure that the *maddāhān* style of singing, as well as the ideological and theological content of their poetry, is in line with the doctrines of the clerical establishment. For instance, state-sanctioned education and a special *maddāh* diploma have been established in order to certify this (Deutsche Welle-Persian 2016).

3   *Madāhān* in a Changing Landscape of Islamic Authority

In Twelver Shī'ism, the question of the limits and status of religious authority has constituted perhaps the most prominent focus point of the last century's theological and jurisprudential debates. This focus is also reflected in the scholarly research on this branch of Islam, where much energy has been put into the analysis of the changing role of religious authority following the Islamic Revolution.

In the broader field of religious authority studies, a recent shift is the turn away from a one-sided focus on the discursive aspects of authority and a developing interest in material and bodily aspects. Much research emphasises that religious authority cannot be explained if the social and aesthetic framing of authoritative words are ignored. Max Weber's categorisation of authority into charismatic, traditional and legal-rational types—which has dominated the study of religion and authority for so long—has also been challenged by a theoretical movement that emphasises the fluid, relational and narrative aspects of culture, religion and power at large (Krämer and Schmidtke 2010: 2). Furthermore, an increased emphasis on the agency of those subordinated to religious authority can also be distinguished in much research (see, for instance, Mahmood 2005, Hirschkind 2001).

In the following I will connect to these trends by foregrounding the vernacular aspects of Shī'ite authority that the *maddāhān* represent in today's Iran and by highlighting the complex and fluid relationships between the aesthetic and charismatic authority that these leaders possess and the bureaucratic authority of the political establishment. I will focus my discussion on three particularly prominent characteristics of the Iranian authority situation: the amalgamation of clerical and charismatic authority, the aesthetics of authority, and the relocation of authority.

The Islamic Revolution led to a situation in which the clergy tightened their grip and control over the *maddāhān*. At the same time, it entailed a great upsurge for *hey'atī* culture at large. Indeed, the Islamic Republic was

from its very beginning upheld by a combination of clerical and charismatic authority. Ruhollah Khomeini himself strikingly combined these two types of authority in his person. As an emotional preacher, he stirred the feelings and frustrations of his followers; as a high-ranking scholar and a *marja'* of Shī'ite jurisprudence, he bestowed his legislative authority on these feelings (Mishal and Goldberg 2012: 89). Khomeini maintained the two types of authority by bringing along the above-mentioned *maddāh*, Kowsari, to his speeches. In this respect Khomeini's practice set the example for an alliance and a division of labour among the two types of religious authority in the *velāyat-e faqīh* system: at the centre stands the *'ālem* with his jurisprudential expertise, and at his side, the *maddāh* who—with his ability to stir the pious emotions of the people— would anchor the message in their hearts. Khomeini's example secured a place for the traditional *maddāh* in the religious and political landscape that was taking shape, and it gave legitimacy to the ritual expressions of the *hey'athā*.

This alliance has to a large extent remained intact. Today, most *maddāhān* are fervent supporters of the Supreme Leader, and among them we also find the most outspoken critics of those who challenge his power. A common view in Iran is that the Supreme Leader uses the *maddāhān* as emissaries who, through their semi-independent position, can express criticism or verbally attack opponents much more bluntly than he himself can.

At the same time, the alliance and the division of labour between establishment clergy and *maddāhān* has been challenged. Many have criticised the way *maddāhān* have advanced their position in the Iranian political debate and the crude and impolite language that some of them have used in their critique of reformists. The former chair of the Assembly of Experts (a deliberative body of clerics assigned to supervise the activities of the Supreme Leader), Mohammad Yazdi, recently criticised *maddāhān* for delivering "banal and false content."

Yazdi, however, has also criticised them for preaching and performing eulogies in a style that is inspired by Western music (Deutsche Welle-Persian 2016). Now these statements are symptomatic of the ambiguous relationship between different types of religious authority in today's Iran. At the same time as the *maddāhān* function as mouthpieces for the less sanitised messages of the Supreme Leader, they are not an entirely controllable asset. As I have mentioned above, some of the leading clerics of the Islamic Revolution were critical of the *maddāhān* and their role in society in pre-revolutionary Iran. The major agenda of the Islamic Revolution was to overthrow the monarchic system. Another side of it, however, was to reform Iranian Islamic culture, and one aspect of this was to bring order and control over the many and varying expressions of vernacular religion. From the early days of the Revolution, efforts were made to tighten up the eulogies of the *hey'atī* meetings and to remove stories

that were not in line with the official teachings of the new political establishment. The ʿālem and philosopher Murtaza Mutahhari wrote a book called *The Story of Hoseyn* (*Hamāse-ye Hoseyni*) already before the Revolution for this purpose. In this book, originally a compilation of lectures, he criticised and sought to correct the falsehoods and exaggerations that were conveyed by some *maddāhān*, and in the immediate post-revolutionary period it was widely used as a basis for criticism of some preachers and for the call for more orthodox content in their poetry and eulogies. Hence already from the beginning of the Islamic Republic the relationship between the *maddāhān* and the clerical establishment was ambiguous, and this ambiguity prevails today.

Now, Iranian politics is a complicated field in which a number of parallel and often contradictory processes are unfolding at the same time. Two processes that can be discerned over the last decades are the intertwinement of decision-making structures and the centralisation of power. The Islamic Republic's unique constitution is designed with several parallel chains of command: there is the democratic decision-making structure, with the elected parliament and the president; the clerical establishment, with the *houzeh* seminars and the assembly of experts and the Supreme Leader; the military, with its various regiments; and the Revolutionary Guard, with its many subsections. In the constitution, the Supreme Leader is at the top of all these decision-making structures, but in all other respects they are largely independent of one another and separated by Chinese walls. Or at least, that was the original idea.

What has happened over the last decades is that this separation has begun to falter. The Revolutionary Guard's increased involvement in politics (Golkar 2015) is perhaps the foremost example of this. The original idea—declared in the constitution from 1982 and emphasised by Khomeini in his final publication *Imam's Final Discourse* (1990)—was the *sepāh* should remain outside politics. Their duty was to execute the decisions decided on by the jurisprudential experts, not to make the decision themselves. This role has now changed. When Mohammad ʿAli Jaʿfari was appointed commander of the Revolutionary Guard Corps in 2007, he declared that he considered "dealing with internal threats" to be one of the Guard's most important assignments. He also stated that the Guard should not settle with being solely a military organisation, but that it has to be political and ideological as well (Thurfjell 2014). The consequence of this new ambition by the Revolutionary Guards is apparent in large numbers of individuals with a *sepāh* background who now hold seats in the parliament, the cabinet, as governors, and so forth. The connection between the *sepāh*, *the basīj* and the *maddāhān* has also been strengthened lately. There are today specific branches for *maddāhān* within the *basīj*, and several prominent

maddāhān, such as Mahmoud Karimi or Mehdi Salahshor, are themselves members of the Revolutionary Guard.

Another separation that is dissolving in Iran is the one between clerical and political decision-making structures. Of course, there never was a strict separation between these two. But the idea has at least been that the position of the Supreme Leader—with his jurisprudential expertise and his status as deputy for the Hidden Imam—corresponds to the democratically based authority of the elected president and parliament. A brief glance at the modern history of Iranian politics, however, shows that these structures have not been mutually exclusive. There are many individuals who have built their career in the system on both sides of the fence. ʿAli Khameneʾi and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani are perhaps the two best-known examples, but the constitutional idea is at least that the two sides should fall back on different forms of authority.

What I seek to pinpoint here concerns the position of the *maddāhān* and their *hey'atīhā* in relation to these two sides. Traditionally the *maddāhān* have been on the side of the Islamic jurisprudential authority. After the Revolution, most *hey'atīhā* endorsed the Supreme Leader and the system of *velāyat-e faqīh*, but they were often critical of elected authorities in the system. "We were so critical of politicians," one former *hey'atī* told me, "we felt that they didn't promote the feeling of Moharram as much as they should" (interview with author, 2014). The presidential campaign and subsequent election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president of the Islamic Republic in 2005 changed this. As discussed above, many *maddāhān* were heavily involved in mustering the support for this candidate, and his election marked a change in the relation between the *hey'atī* subculture and the political establishment. Ahmadinejad, my interviewees tell me, was not perceived as a politician type of person. Instead they felt he was more deeply rooted in the pious Shīʿite grassroots culture to which they too belonged. Ahmadinejad's two terms as president also entailed that the *maddāhān's* involvement in politics—and with politicians—increased: for instance, governmental resources were earmarked to fund *maddāhān* during this period. In this sense, clerical and political authority were brought closer.

This also meant that the connection between the *maddāhān* and the clergy was strengthened. As mentioned above, the position of the *maddāhān* has been sanctioned by the clerical establishment since the Revolution. The *hey'atī* movement has never been an outspokenly anti-clerical movement, and some *maddāhān* have been clerics, but at the same time the movement is an expression of lay folk religion and there has often been some kind of tension between it and the educated, bookish and clerical Islam of the *houzeh* seminars. Under Ahmadinejad's presidency, this would change somewhat. All in all, therefore,

what has befallen during the ten years that has passed since Ahmadinejad was first elected to the presidency is that the different types of authority in the Islamic Republic have become more intertwined. The Islamic jurisprudential authority of the *houzeh*, the legal authority of the elected bodies, the political and military authority of the *sepāh* and the charismatic folk-religious authority of the *maddāhān* have become increasingly amalgamated.

The *maddāh* cleric in Qom with whom I began this chapter exemplifies the amalgamation of the different decision-making structures in the country. He is not a folk-religious *maddāh*, but a trained clergyman from Qom who in his preaching style has picked up elements from *hey'atī* culture. In other words, a *houzeh* scholar with political ambitions and ties to both the *sepāh* and *basīj* organisations who is also a *maddāh* and a demagogue on the conservative side of Iranian politics. After we left his gathering, a *hey'atī* interviewee whom I had accompanied there spoke of him in appreciation:

> He is a little bit gentler and smarter than other clergymen. The language that he uses is more understandable for young people. He doesn't speak the way they usually do but uses simpler words. I love his style of talking because he can bring new aspects to what they always repeat. He reads *rouzeh* gently and finds some artistic aspect that you never saw before, so that you love it little bit deeper.
>
> interview with author, 2014

What he embodies, then, is a consolidation of the various types of authority around the Supreme Leader. This process is unfolding at a time when the *usulgarāyān* camp of Iranian politics is coming under challenge by the progress of the reformists—including the nuclear deal, the recent electoral successes and the defrosting of international relations—but also at a time when Iran's presence in the many armed conflicts of the region is increasing, the struggle against Daesh in Iraq and Syria being the most prominent example. Both these challenges—domestic and external—are being construed among the *hey'atīhā* as calls for the reawakening and reinvigoration of the "spirit of Moharram" around which their subculture pivots.

On a structural level, the situation can be described as a struggle over the interpretative prerogative to the legacy of the Islamic Republic and the nation of Iran. This struggle is today framed within the polemic between the *usulgarān* and the *eslāh talab* camps. In the late 1990s these camps grew out of a more unified political establishment. The emergence of clear political alternatives—in connection with the election of Khatami in 1997—brought with it a diversification of Iranian politics that was much clearer than anything that had

existed before. Of course, Iranian Islamism has been divided in fractions since before the Revolution. Today's *eslāh talabān* movement are the inheritors of the Iranian Islamic left and the organisation Mojahedin-e enghelāb-e eslāmi, including its founder Behzad Nabavi. Already during the Khomeini period the dividing line between this Islamic left and more hardliner fractions was deep, but Khomeini, most of the time, managed to curb the conflict and uphold an image of unity. Just months before Khomeini's death in 1989, however, the conflict came out in the open in relation to the defrocking of leftist Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, who up until then had been the expected successor of Khomeini. Under the rule of Khamene'i and in the presidency of Rafsanjani, the conflict gradually intensified in order to bloom fully in the Khatami period.

The surfacing of the conflict between *eslāh talab* and *usulgarān* in Iranian politics can be said to have become the starting-point for the above-mentioned attempt to consolidate the different decision-making structures. The diversification of open political stances hence coincided with the amalgamation of various power structures in and around the *usulgarān* camp. The *maddāhān* had an important role to play in this process. In order to understand their role, however, we need to look into the way *hey'atī* culture is lived and performed in everyday life.

A shift of focus that has occurred in scholarly work on religion lately, and which also can be observed in the study of religious authority, can be found in the increased emphasis on aesthetic, sensorial, bodily and material dimensions (Meyer 2009, 2010; Schulz 2006; Stolow 2005, 2007). Such a focus also turns out to be fruitful when it comes to analysing the changing role of the *maddāhān* in Iran. I have argued that the new position of the *maddāhān* in Iran can be construed as a part of the mobilisation and consolidation of the *usulgarāyān* camp across sections in Iranian society. The *maddāhān* and their *hey'athā* are here used as vehicles for political mobilisation, filling the function of anchoring the political and religious messages of the *usulgarāyān* in the hearts and lives of young people.

As a majority of *hey'atīhā* are young, it is reasonable to approach the *hey'atīhā* as a youth movement and to analyse it analogously with other youth movements. Many *hey'atīhā* that I have interviewed are people who have little or no religious engagement beyond their *hey'atī* engagement and who may even be critical of the Islamist system in Iran. Although no statistics are available on this point, this observation gives a hint that the link between a *hey'atī* lifestyle and the political establishment can at times be rather weak. And when that is the case, *hey'atī* engagement is more like that of football supporters than other Islamic organisations in the country. *Hey'atīhā* have their own community, their own pop-star-like *maddāhān*, their own fashionable style of

clothing, their own shops where they can buy cassettes, posters, pictures of their *maddāh* and other gear specific to their group, and they have their own places where they socialise. Let me therefore move on to say something about this style-connected side of the movement.

The clothing style of *hey'atī* groups varies, and not all *hey'atīhā* wear any distinguishable outfit. In certain communities and among the most active members, however, it is common to display a *hey'atī* identity through certain attributes. In some places these attributes have some kind of military connotation. Among some groups it has been common to wear army trousers; the *kefiye* scarf—generally associated with the Palestinian struggle and militaristic Islamist activism—is another common feature, and so is a certain crocheted green cap associated with the Ḥizballāh leader Emad Moqanieh. Most *hey'atī* communities, however, have a less militaristic approach. In the community surrounding Seyyed Zaker, in Qom, to take but one example, it is common to wear fashionable and tightly cut black shirts, often with a special type of collar associated with Seyyed Zaker himself. It is also common to wear metal bracelets, rings and other group-specific attributes.

In the post-war period, the *hey'atī* culture also began to change in terms of ritual style. Up until then it had existed as a ritual extension of the revolutionary movement, which was modern in its connection to Khomeinist ideology, but traditional in its ritual style and musical expression. In the 1990s this would change, as the various *hey'atī* groups became more profiled and the ritual expressions started to change. Many *hey'atīhā* that I have interviewed tend to speak of this stylistic development as a very central aspect of *maddāh* practice and *hey'atī* life. They speak of different styles and rhythms, of how *maddāhān* differ from and are inspired by each other much as a young person belonging to a musical subculture in Europe—be it techno, electronica, R & B or progressive rock—might be. Here the style of performance is in focus. This does not mean that the wider societal context or the political content is entirely disregarded, but these are not what appear to be in the forefront of the interviewees' minds when asked about the movement.

An important contributor to the stylistic development of the *hey'atī* expression was a *maddāh* by the name of Narimane Panahi. He was active in Tehran for a short period during the Ahmadinejad period and his style became influential among *hey'atīhā* across the country. He sang with a hoarse voice and introduced a certain type of backbeat tempo (*dam*) to the chest-beating sessions. He was also famous for downplaying the poetry aspect of his eulogies. Sometimes, one of my interviewees tell me, he could start a session completely without *rouzeh* and limit himself to a few lines of poetry, then build the whole session around subtle changes in melody and rhythm, somewhat similar to the

stylistic manner of much Western techno music (interview with author, 2014). One *maddāh* I interviewed called Panahi's style a revolution of the whole musical paradigm of *hey'atī* culture (interview with author, 2013).

Another very important *maddāh* in furthering the development of this process was, and is still, the above mentioned Mahmoud Karimi. Besides performing traditional eulogies and reading his own poetry, he developed and brought the style of Arzi and Panahi one step further. Like Panahi, he expanded the duration of the repetitive chest-beating, but he also developed a particularly passionate style (*sabk-e shur*) of doing this. The term *shur* refers to the passionate form of presentation. The specific *hey'atī* expression that Karimi developed is characterised by a clear rhythm that is built up and amplified through looping and reverberating effects. He sings his eulogies on top of a beat created by the rhythmic repetition of, for instance, the name of Hoseyn and the thumping of the *hey'atī* crowd beating their chests. His performances are known for their highly moving and atmospheric feeling, his charismatic persona, and the wholehearted engagement of the crowd. One of his early followers I interviewed tells me that the fascinating thing about him was that he could go on for more than an hour just repeating the name of Hoseyn. *Maddāhān* like Panahi had reformed the style before him, but no one has yet become as influential as he is. Perhaps this is because of his very professional approach to the task. Karimi, I am told, has a group of assistants around him who help with writing his poetry, and his recordings are professionally produced (interview with author, 2013).

The development of what is sometimes referred to as 'new' *hey'atī* culture can be said to begin with the stylistic changes made by Karimi in the mid-1990s. These new expressions created a new role for the *maddāh*. More than before, the prayer leaders became performers, the central focus of *hey'atī* gatherings. People started to choose what meetings to go to based on which *maddāh* was performing. The most renowned *maddāhān* today achieve a status similar to that of a pop star: they attract large followings of fans, recordings of their singing are sold and spread on the internet, and their pictures and other objects connected to them are sold as merchandise. For some young *hey'atīhā* the *maddāhān are* more important as religious authorities than the *'ulamā'*, and many are very loyal to them (interview with author, 2014).

Following the reforms of Karimi, *hey'atī* culture can be said to have divided into two styles. The *sunnati* style is characterised by traditional eulogy readings and is less spectacular in its expression, whereas the *shur* (sometimes referred to as *jadīd* or new; interview with author, 2014) *hey'athā* that follow Karimi's line are more ecstatic and modern in their expression. These latter also tend to attract younger people (interview with author, 2013). One *maddāh*

I interviewed told me that Karimi had paved the way for musical reformation also in other *hey'athā*. "I had lots of problems because I wanted to sing in a new style," he tells me,

> I wanted to create this excitement and have some jumping. But it was a catastrophe and there was lots of fighting and they would not accept it. But then we got this [Hajj Mahmoud] Karimi, you know, a very famous *maddāh*, and he brought a whole new frame of music and a new way of chest-beating (*sīne zanī*) that was more flexible and that became the prototype for a new generation of singers.
>   interview with author, 2014

Some of the more influential of these *maddāhān* are Hajj Seyyed Mahdi Mirdamad, Mehdi Salahshor, Hajj Seyyed Haddadian, Hoseyn Sibsorkhi, Abdolreza Helali and Seyyed Javad Zaker. How are we to understand the popularity of these religious leaders? One way is to look at the situation of the young people who are their followers and the historical timing of their popularity. During the Khatami presidential period (1997–2005), two major developments fundamentally changed the everyday situation of young Iranians. One was the liberalisation of society that Khatami's election brought about, at least for some time. One aspect of this was that the ban on Western and popular music became less strict. A second development was the introduction of the internet. This meant that Iranians could now access information—including films, television shows, music and other expressions of global youth culture—more easily than ever before. The election of Ahmadinejad was a setback for those who wished for a continued liberalisation of Iran, but the conservative elements of Iranian society are not blind to the demands of young people and the rise of the *hey'atīhā* coincided with increased efforts to hinder the spread of Western youth culture. This may, therefore, be construed as a more or less conscious attempt to satisfy young people's demands for aesthetic, physical, passionate and youth-oriented activities in a way that also has Islamic sanction. Under Ahmadinejad more resources were allotted to *hey'athā*, and some other changes that professionalised and brought them closer to the government were also introduced, for instance formal educational programmes for *maddāhān*. Individual *maddāhān* have also come to be involved in the political economy of the country in other, sometimes controversial ways. Certain endorsed *maddāhān*—and through them *hey'atī* culture at large—have also increasingly been given space in broadcast media.

Dutch anthropologist Ellen van de Bovenkamp has argued that the popularity of Muslim preacher Tariq Ramadan in Morocco can be explained by the fact

that his charismatic and attractive appearance in a performative way provides young people with a way out of the paralysing dichotomy between the modern and secular on the one hand and the Islamic and traditional on the other that is dominant in their country (Bovenkamp 2015: 226). This analysis is helpful also in understanding the Iranian new *hey'atīhā*. They have managed to carve out a religious space that is both youthful and traditional, and also one that succeeds in the delicate task of combining the feel of youthful rebellion with governmental sanction. Despite their passionate commitment to the Shī'ite religion, however, the *hey'atīhā* have also become something of a challenge to the Islamist establishment. Let me now move on to say something about this.

4 The Renegotiation and Relocation of Authority

In the following I will connect the *hey'atī* movement to processes that are developing today within the field of religious authority at large. The *maddāhān*, and the societal processes that they represent, constitute a challenge to the clerical establishment, not primarily as alternative spokespersons for Islam but in so far as they present a new idea of what role this religion should play in the lives of the faithful. The area that is contested here, then, is not primarily about jurisprudential authority or religio-political ideology but—on a more near-life and everyday note—about what it means to be a Shī'ite Muslim in Iran today. The *maddāhān* do not challenge the jurisprudential authority of the *'ulamā'* in any way; on the contrary, many of them are quite eager to stress that they lack formal education in jurisprudential matters. The challenge to jurisprudential authority that they constitute, rather, is not about legal interpretation, but about defining what aspects of a person's life it is that Islam should primarily address. The question of authority is thus in this movement moved from its traditional location among scholars and kings to the arena of aesthetics, physical experience and youth culture. This is also something that is discussed in the Iranian public debate.[2]

This connects to what Gudrun Krämer has described as a proliferation of religious knowledge. The authority structures in the Islamic world have changed, not only as a result of the fragmentation of traditional religious authority associated with the new media situation, but also because of the multiplication of actors who provide religious knowledge. The *'ulamā'* are still around, but new and, more importantly, additional and alternative types of authority have reached prominence alongside them (Krämer and Schmidtke

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2 See for instance, *Alef.ir*, http://alef.ir/vdcfyydjcw6dxja.igiw.html?401418. Accessed 28/10/2016.

2010: 12). The *hey'atī* movement, then, represents a relocation of authority not on the level of scholarly or political position, but by reinterpreting where and in what ways people are letting religion become a part of their lives.

Let me illustrate this point by referring to one of my interviewees. Kalb-e Hoseyn is a man in his late forties. Kalb-e Hoseyn is a pseudonym that he himself chose. It means, literally, Hoseyn's dog, and it reflects the type of piety that is encouraged in this *hey'at*. Kalb-e Hoseyn belongs to a *hey'at* in Qom that is dominated by the new *hey'atī* style, and he thinks of himself as a *hey'atī*. When I ask him what this identity means to him, he immediately starts talking about his own emotional development and about the performative style of his favourite *maddāh*. For Kalb-e Hoseyn, *hey'atī* engagement is all about the feeling. He lived a wild life before he got involved in the movement. There were drugs and a constant seeking of highs. He used to be a bodybuilder and weightlifter and, besides his daytime job as a painter, he used to spend his days working out in the gym and drinking vodka with his friends. "I have been an outsider in many ways," he tells me, "I used to live a crazy life, I tried everything to get a little bit of excitement. But it was a joy that was for myself only, only myself, myself, myself all the time."

One day, Kalb-e Hoseyn tells me, he collapsed. His lifestyle had worn him down and this is when he found relief in the *hey'at* of a young *maddāh* in his city. Kalb-e Hoseyn had participated in Shīʿite devotional rituals in connection to Ashura since his childhood, but what he met now, he tells me, was something new. "The first time I went there I was caught," he says, "I liked the *shur* style, it made me interested, I felt happiness, you could say that I fell in love." For him the *hey'at* was something new and a way out of his destructive lifestyle. "My *maddāh* lit a fire in my heart and I found true happiness," he explains, "This is the path of Imam Hussein" (interview with author, 2014).

Kalb-e Hoseyn was twenty-four years old when he became engaged in the movement. Ten years have passed since that day, and his life has changed for the better. He goes to the *hoseynieh* as often as he can, and he works as a volunteer with the events they arrange there. He has also married and has a one-year-old son with whom, he tells me, he likes to listen and cry to recordings of eulogies at home. The *hey'atī* life has come to dominate his everyday. He prays in the car as he drives between different jobs and he constantly listens to recorded *hey'atī* meetings. The *maddāh* who lit the fire in his heart has died, but Kalb visits his grave at least once a week. "This is what makes us different from other Muslims," he tells me, "that we think more about Hoseyn. We don't think about money and material stuff. We are not rich. We are satisfied with this life, and this is the sweetness of Imam Hoseyn, this feeling of satisfaction."

For Kalb-e Hoseyn his religion is all about the feeling: the feeling that fills him at the *hey'atī* meetings, the feeling about his *maddāh*, the feeling of satisfaction in his life. This does not mean that he disrespects the jurisprudential or theological aspects of Islam. There are *'ulamā'* who come to the *hoseynieh* sometimes, he tells me, and he likes them. They give some speech before the *rouzeh* begins and that is good and okay, "but," he tells me, since he "cannot explain things theologically it is better to go with the feeling. And the feeling is the love for Hoseyn." When I ask about having a *marja'*, he tells me that "if we need a *marja'* we will pick one who loves Hoseyn." "Some people," he continues with a smile, "have called us *kāfers* because of what we say"—in his *hoseynieh*, it is said, they once paraphrased the Islamic creed and shouted *lā-ilāha-ill-Hoseyn* (there is no god but Hoseyn)—but Kalb does not seem so bothered about this. He knows what he has found in the *hey'atī* lifestyle. It has changed his life and filled him with a feeling of satisfaction and joy that he takes as proof of its authenticity.

5   Conclusion

The rise of the *hey'athā* as a popular youth culture based on aesthetics and emotion constitutes a fundamental challenge to the authority of the *'ulamā'* in virtue of the fact that it neglects their very idea of what authority should be built on. Many *hey'atīhā*, like Kalb-e Hoseyn, do not care much for *fiqh* or jurisprudential evidence. They, like most young people, care about emotions. Now as long as they respect and support the authority of the *'ulamā'*, this is in line with Khomeini's idea of a division of labour within the *velāyat-e faqīh* system, with the jurisprudential expert at the centre and the *maddāh* at his side, anchoring the message in the hearts of his followers.

But what seems to have happened with the professionalisation of the *maddāhān* and the development of *hey'atī* culture in the direction of youth culture over the last decade is that this division of labour has been challenged. Some *hey'atīhā*—although probably not most of them—see their *maddāhān*, not as a complement, but as a substitute for the clergy. This, naturally, makes them potentially unreliable for the jurisprudential elite to build their authority on. The above-mentioned *maddāh* diploma can be understood in this context as an attempt to bring the *maddāhān* back into line.

These processes are unfolding at a time when Iranian civil society is going through a process of change. Civil society can be defined as "the space between the state and the family, where citizens on a voluntary basis engage with issues

of societal relevance" (Aarts and Cavatorta 2013: 6). In recent research on Iran, the dynamics of this space have become the subject of increasingly sharp focus. Studying "the dynamics that occur outside formal groups," ʿAli Fathollah-Nejad, for one, has shown that the international sanctions were counterproductive for civil society because they led indirectly to reduced space for democratic activism. In this period, then, the *heyʾatī* movement managed to seize a part of the youth cultural space where the interest in—and the authority of—the Shīʿite Islamist governmental establishment is waning.

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PART 3

Fundamentalisms and Extremists

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Introduction to Part 3

The term 'fundamentalist' was first used by American Baptists to describe themselves as a wave of revivalism of 'fundamental' Christian beliefs swept through various protestant communities in the US in the 1920s (Shepard, 2004). In the following years, the term begun to be applied to other religious traditions including Islam (especially in the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian revolution). After the events of September 11, 2001, Islamic fundamentalism has become *the* fundamentalism. In the Islamic context, fundamentalism is characterized by opposition to the West and any who rule Muslim-majority countries with Western support, and the belief that the pure practice of Islam is in decline. In this way of thinking the only way to make Islam glorious again is by going back to the beliefs and practices of the first Islamic communities that lived under the Prophet and the first leaders (the four righteously guided Caliphs in the case of Sunnīs and the first *imāms* in the case of the Shī'ites). Islamic fundamentalist groups often reject what they perceive as Western values, particularly, individual freedoms, women's rights, and secular governance.

A term closely related to fundamentalism is extremism. Extremism is generally understood to be a set of religious beliefs and practices that fall outside of the norm for their group (Sotlar 2004). In order to identify extremist beliefs and practices among Muslims, we would need to identify norms of beliefs and practices among world's 1.8 billion Muslims. The problem is that norms vary not only between different ideological group and regional groups but also between subgroups that form parts of these larger groupings. Because of these challenges, Islamic extremism is often defined by a particular set of beliefs, particularly, beliefs about religious sanctions for violence. Those groups that support *jihād* with the sword against those that are perceived to be non-believers are considered to be extremists. Those that support the notion of *takfīr* (the belief that some of those who claim to be Muslims are really non-believers) are considered to be extremists.

Fundamentalist and extremist beliefs are often related-many groups that hold fundamentalist beliefs also hold extremist beliefs. Many anti-western groups committed to a revival of the lost glory of Islam also believe that *jihād* as a violent, even self-destructive, war against the West is the best way to achieve these goals. They also believe that those Muslims who are co-operating with the West and advocate Western values are not true believers and also deserve to be confronted violently. Teasing apart these related beliefs and distinguishing between fundamentalist and extremist Muslims is challenging, nonetheless this section of the book engages with this challenge by discussing themes,

motivations, and tactics of varied movements and ideologies. Here, the significant and impactful topics of Salafism, the Taliban, Ḥamās, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Boko Haram, Ḥizballāh, the Faizrakhmanisty, and ISIS are each the focus of a chapter.

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The Citadel of Salafism

Joas Wagemakers

1   Introduction

"Salafism [...] is a danger to Muslims themselves and thus a danger to France as well." This is how former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls referred to Salafism in late July 2016. A certain level of hyperbole in talking about Islam was perhaps to be expected a few weeks after the French city of Nice had been the target of a terrorist attack by what appeared to be a radical Islamist, killing over eighty people. Yet it was significant that Valls apparently felt the need to single out Salafism, which he blamed for having "destroyed and perverted part of the Muslim world," despite the fact that the perpetrator of the Nice attacks did not appear to be a Salafi at all (AFP 2016). A French Member of Parliament, Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, even went so far as to call for a ban on Salafism altogether (Lefeivre 2016).

Such criticism of Salafism as being dangerous and even calls for banning this trend altogether are not limited to France. A similar call was heard in the Netherlands, for instance, from Ahmed Marcouch, a former Member of Parliament for the Dutch Labour Party, who considers Salafism a "breeding ground of jihadism and the ideological cradle of [the Islamic State (IS)]" (Marcouch and El Bouch 2015). In Kazakhstan, to mention one more example, a Muslim-majority country with an officially secular regime, President Nursultan Nazarbaev indicated in October 2016 that his country intended to ban Salafism, which he said, "poses a destructive threat to Kazakhstan" (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2016).

Salafism, in other words, is controversial. Ironically, this is also the case among Salafis themselves. Issues such as who may be labelled a Salafi and what types of Salafism exist are highly contested among adherents to this branch of Sunnī Islam themselves, which—as we will see later on in this chapter— indicates that Salafis are far less unified than the politicians quoted above appear to believe. This chapter will shed light on such contestations by dealing with the definition, history and ideological development of Salafism, the means adherents to this trend use to defend their doctrinal turf, its spreading throughout the Muslim world, Salafis' everyday practices, and the faultlines that exist within the trend.

I argue that Salafism is like a citadel or a fortress, experienced by Salafis as, on the one hand, a refuge providing them protection from their daily frustrations and unwanted outside influences and, on the other, as a place where they can safely pursue an alternative project of living and breathing a religiously purposeful life. Although this 'fortress-factor' is not the only reason for the rise of Salafism, it does account for at least part of its popularity among people who—frustrated as they are by repression, corruption and/or Islamophobia— seek solace in the eternal truths they believe Salafism embodies and live their lives keeping them 'pure'.

2   Constructing the Citadel: Definition, History, and Ideological Development

Based on the meaning of the word, a 'Salafi' is someone who is '*salaf*-like'. According to several *ḥadīth*s, the Prophet Muḥammad once stated that his "generation" are "the best people" or "the best of my community" and then the two generations following his.[1] These words have led many to equate the term *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the pious predecessors) with these first three generations of Muslims. This chapter concentrates on the trend in Islam whose adherents claim to have made being *salaf*-like the be-all and end-all of their ideology. It is therefore justified to base our label for them on this characteristic, to name them Salafis and to define them as those Sunnī Muslims who claim to emulate the first three generations of Muslims as closely and in as many spheres of life as possible.

Salafis are, of course, not the only ones who read the *ḥadīth*s mentioned above and, as such, are not the only Sunnī Muslims who hold the *salaf* in very high esteem. A crucial difference between these non-Salafi Sunnīs on the one hand and Salafis on the other is that the latter gear their entire teachings and lifestyles to emulating the predecessors, rather than 'merely' seeing the *salaf* as an inspirational example, as many non-Salafi Sunnīs do. This difference can be difficult to spot for the uninitiated, however, and it is therefore not surprising that Salafis are sometimes viewed as merely very pious or doctrinally 'pure' Sunnīs, both by Muslims and non-Muslims (Hamid 2009: 387–390; Hegghammer 2009: 249). Indeed, while Salafis can be distinguished from other

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1 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, book 57 ("Kitāb Faḍāʾil Aṣḥāb al-Nabī"), chapter 1 ("Faḍāʾil Aṣḥāb al-Nabī"), nos. 2–3; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, book 44 ("Kitāb Faḍāʾil al-Ṣaḥāba"), chapter 52 ("Faḍl al-Ṣaḥāba, thumma lladhīna Yalūnahum, thumma lladhīna Yalūnahum"), nos. 2533–2536.

Sunnīs, the site on which their citadel was constructed and the bricks with which it was built were produced in debates with scholars and trends within Sunnī Islam as a whole.

2.1   *Law: The Ahl al-Ḥadīth as a Construction Site for Salafism*

With regard to law, modern-day Salafism's genealogy goes back to the question of how to live one's life after the Prophet had died, when Muslims could no longer rely on his legal verdicts. One group of early scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) advocated the view that, when searching for answers, Muslims should rely on the Qurʾān, the memorised practices (*sunan*, sing. *sunna*) and considered opinion (*raʾy*) of early believers (including, especially, the Prophet) and the consensus view (*ijmāʿ*) of the scholars themselves. Because of their reliance on their own considered opinion in establishing rulings, these scholars were referred to as the *ahl al-raʾy* (the people of considered opinion) (Coulson 1999 [1964]: 38–41; Schacht 1982 [1964]: 29–33).

Not everyone agreed to the *ahl al-raʾy*'s approach of emulating the Prophet, however. Some scholars, including the eponymous 'founder' of the Ḥanbalī school of Islamic law (*madhhab*, pl. *madhāhib*), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (780–855), argued that the example of Muḥammad should be searched for in the traditions (*ḥadīth*s) ascribed to him. The emulation of the Prophet, in other words, was to be done on the basis of *ḥadīth*s, which led to the name *ahl al-ḥadīth* (the people of tradition) for those who subscribed to this view. The debates between these two different trends resulted in a compromise—forged partly by the eponymous 'founder' of the Shāfiʿī school of Islamic law, Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (767–820)—that came to embody what may be termed the mainstream legal approach to Sunnī Islam: the Qurʾān and *sunna* of the Prophet as central sources, complemented by the insights and judgements of scholars (Coulson 1999 [1964]: 41–61; Hallaq 2009: 55–59; Schacht 1982 [1964]: 33–48).

The legal compromise between the approaches of the *ahl al-raʾy* and the *ahl al-ḥadīth* became embodied in the four schools of Islamic law (Ḥanafī, Shāfiʿī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī) and has had a great impact on Sunnī Islam. This does not mean, however, that the ideas of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* have died. Their view that only direct recourse to the primary sources of Islamic law (the Qurʾān and the *sunna*) suffices and that everything else distracts from the alleged purity of early Islam—when believers did not have *madhāhib* either—is one that can be found among many Salafis today. This does not mean that the original *ahl al-ḥadīth* were Salafis; Salafism, after all, encompasses more than just the legal sphere. Yet it does entail that today's Salafis' derive one aspect of their

ideological citadel—reverting to the *salaf* in legal matters and circumventing the *madhāhib* in doing so—from an early-Islamic trend and that they have built their edifice on a construction site put in place by the *ahl al-ḥadīth*.

Salafism's debt to the *ahl al-ḥadīth* also shows us how Salafis differ from mainstream Sunnī Muslims in the legal sphere: whereas the former often seek to avoid the schools of Islamic law in favour of referring directly to the Qur'ān and the *sunna* according to the understanding of the *salaf*, the latter believe the Prophet should be emulated through the prism of the *madhāhib*, thereby allowing more room for scholarly input in the legal sphere (Brown 2015: 117–144).

A natural consequence of Salafis' approach to legal issues is the use of independent reasoning on the basis of the Qur'ān and the *sunna* (*ijtihād*), rather than the blind following (*taqlīd*) of the *madhāhib* that many non-Salafi Sunnīs make use of. The concept of *ijtihād* was used in varying ways by scholars that are held in very high esteem by Salafis today, including Ḥanbalī *'ulamā'* such as ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) and his student ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350). Through scholars such as these, as well as others on the Indian Subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula, the practice of *ijtihād* was kept alive and turned out to be an important tenet in the beliefs of many Salafis today (Brown 2007: 314–321; Haykel 2003: 89–108; Haykel 2009: 43–44).

2.2   *Theology: The Bricks of the Salafi Citadel*

As important as the issue of *ijtihād* may be for modern-day Salafis, it was not always agreed upon by all of them. Although the practice seems to have been accepted by many Salafis now, a famous scholar like the Saudi mufti Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Āl al-Shaykh (1893–1969) advocated a less far-reaching approach to *ijtihād*. His rulings were therefore mostly limited to those found within the Ḥanbalī school of Islamic law (Lacroix 2009: 66). The *ahl al-ḥadīth* can thus be said to have laid some of the groundwork for Salafism and the question of *ijtihād* is certainly an important one to Salafis, but it is not central to them in the way theology is, in which Salafis really distinguish themselves from other believers and which provides the bricks to the walls of the Salafi citadel that protect their 'pure' lifestyle.

The theological concept most central to modern-day Salafism is *tawḥīd* (the unity of God), which Salafis—unlike other Muslims, for whom this concept is also of great importance—divide into three different aspects: the unity of God's lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*), the unity of his divinity (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*) and God's unity of names and attributes (*tawḥīd al-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt*). The first of these signifies the belief in one Lord and Creator, while the second one more clearly distinguishes Salafis from pre-Islamic polytheists by denoting the need

to worship the one true god (Allāh) alone. *Tawḥīd al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*, finally, refers to the idea that God is utterly unique and incomparable.

The latter aspect of *tawḥīd* has been linked to the word '*salafī*' since at least ibn Taymiyya (Haykel 2009: 38) and is of crucial importance to today's Salafis in their attempts to distinguish themselves from other trends in Islam. For example, when other Muslims read references to God's physical attributes such as his hand (Qurʾān 38:75, 67:1), they may apply metaphorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) or anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*). To Salafis, however, neither approach is acceptable. While *taʾwīl* clashes with their desire to read the Qurʾānic text literally, *tashbīh* does not square with their belief in the uniqueness of God as expressed in Qurʾān 42:11 ("like Him there is naught" [Arberry's translation]) to underline their belief that nothing can be compared with God. Adherents to the mainstream Ashʿarī and Māturīdī schools of Islamic theology have solved this problem by reading the texts literally but allowing for some speculation about the character of God's attributes, while Ḥanbalī scholars accepted the texts simply as they are "without [asking] how" they could be explained (*bi-lā kayfa*) (El-Bizri 2008: 122–131). The Salafi position on this matter strongly resembles the Ḥanbalī one, with Salafis believing that God does have a certain form, but without ascribing any descriptive designation to him (*bi-lā takyīf*) (Gharaibeh 2014: 112–124).

The issue of *tawḥīd al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt* separates Salafis from other Sunnī Muslims today, just as it separated ibn Taymiyya and his followers from mediaeval trends such as the rationalist Muʿtazila, who used *taʾwīl* as an interpretative tool. In a similar way, today's Salafis use the theological concepts of faith (*īmān*) and unbelief (*kufr*) not only as tools to express what they see as the true creed (*ʿaqīda*), but also as the very bricks with which to build walls meant to separate them from other trends in Islam. Firstly, according to Salafis, faith consists of belief in the heart (*al-iʿtiqād bi-l-qalb*), speech with the tongue (*al-qawl bi-l-lisān*) and acts with the limbs (*al-aʿmāl bi-l-jawāriḥ*) and is incomplete without any of these three elements. Today's Salafis (as well as some other Sunnī Muslims) not only believe this to be the correct doctrinal position, but also hold on to this to distinguish themselves from, for example, the early-Islamic (and long extinct) Murjiʾa, who generally believed faith consisted only of belief and speech. Secondly, there is the question of whether *īmān* can increase (*yazīdu*) and decrease (*yanquṣu*) or is indivisible. The adherents to some trends in Islam, such as many scholars belonging to the Ḥanafī school of Islamic law, believe that faith is either present or absent and cannot change in size. Salafis, however, believe *īmān* does increase with every good belief, act of speech or deed and decreases whenever a person thinks, says or does something sinful (Wagemakers 2016a: 46–48).

Apart from the different elements of faith, today's Salafis also divide *īmān* into three different levels on which sins can take place: *ṣiḥḥat al-dīn* (the soundness of the religion), *wājib al-dīn* (the compulsory of the religion) and *kamāl al-dīn* (the perfection of the religion). The first of these encompasses beliefs such as the existence of God, which are so basic to Islam that any opposition to this is seen as unbelief. *Wājib al-dīn* refers to the level of faith on which transgressions are seen as major sins (*kabāʾir*, sing. *kabīra*), but which do not in and of themselves make one guilty of *kufr*. Beliefs, sayings or acts on the level of *kamāl al-dīn*, finally, are not seen as sins at all and can therefore not decrease one's faith, only increase it. Salafis believe that mistakes on the level of *ṣiḥḥat al-dīn* as well as consciously perpetrated sins on the level of *wājib al-dīn* are so grave that they are labelled 'major unbelief' (*kufr akbar*) and expel the culprit from Islam as an unbeliever (*kāfir*, pl. *kuffār*). Sins on the level of *wājib al-dīn* made without a sinful intention—but, for example, because of compulsion (*ikrāh*), out of ignorance (*jahl*) or by mistake (*khaṭaʾ*)—mean the person in question is only guilty of minor unbelief (*kufr aṣghar*), which does not expel one from Islam (Wagemakers 2009: 97–99).

Modern-day Salafi views on this issue mean that they only apply excommunication (the expulsion of a Muslim from Islam [*takfīr*]) in cases of *kufr akbar*. In fact, even Salafis who are accused of being too restrictive or, conversely, too casual in using *takfīr* emphasise that they are adhering to the doctrinal positions outlined above. Salafis stress this not only for doctrinal reasons, but also to distinguish themselves from the early-Islamic Murjiʾa and Khawārij trends (although neither still exists anymore in its earlier form), who are, respectively, said to have refrained from applying *takfīr* even in cases of *kufr akbar* and to have applied excommunication for 'mere' cases of *kufr aṣghar* (Wagemakers 2012b: 154–156).

3   Defending the Citadel: Salafi Means of Maintaining 'Purity'

Through their views on law and theology, Salafis thus distinguish themselves from 'blind' followers of a *madhhab*, mainstream Ashʿarī-Māturīdī theologians, the Murjiʾa, many Ḥanafī scholars and the Khawārij. The result is a legal and especially theological fortress that Salafis believe represents a resurrected form of what the Prophet and the *salaf* themselves stood for. Salafis believe the 'purity' of their creed to be under constant attack, however, from outside influences coming from the Islamic trends mentioned above, as well as Shīʿites, who are often viewed with great scepticism, and members of other religions (Wagemakers 2016a: 71–72). In order to defend their citadel from

such influences and keep their own house in order, Salafis have developed or adopted several concepts from Islamic tradition that aid them in warding off unwanted views and the people who hold them.

The first of these concepts is *al-firqa al-nājiya* (the sect saved [from hellfire]) or *al-ṭāʾifa al-manṣūra* (the victorious group). These terms are derived from a number of *ḥadīth*s that differ slightly in content and in which the Prophet says that his community (*umma*) will split up into seventy-three sects (*firqa*), "all of which are in hell, except for one." This one sect is believed to be linked to another *ḥadīth*, which states that "a group (*ṭāʾifa*) from my *umma* will remain committed to the truth."[2] Salafis believe that they are the people referred to in these *ḥadīth*s and they thus equate themselves with *al-firqa al-nājiya* and *al-ṭāʾifa al-manṣūra* and their beliefs with "the truth" (Haykel 2009: 34).

While Salafis believe the concepts of *al-firqa al-nājiya* and *al-ṭāʾifa al-manṣūra* set them apart as different, the term *ghurabāʾ* (sing. *gharīb*; strangers) underlines this. Again based on a *ḥadīth*, the Prophet is said to have stated that "Islam began as a stranger (*gharīban*) and it will return as it began, a stranger" and added "so good tidings (*ṭūbá*) to the strangers (*al-ghurabāʾ*)."[3] Another *ḥadīth* states: "Be in the world (*kun fī l-dunyā*) as if you are a stranger (*gharīb*) or a traveller (*ʿābir al-sabīl*)."[4] Although this tradition and those following it in collections of *ḥadīth*s seem aimed at keeping believers from attaching too much value to earthly pleasures and possessions, the concept of *ghurabāʾ* easily lends itself to more specific interpretations of ideological and doctrinal purity and exclusiveness. As such, Salafis see the label of *ghurabāʾ* as a badge of honour[5] and may even view their being marginalised as a sign that they do not belong anywhere but in Islam (De Koning, Wagemakers, and Becker 2012: 128–129; Köpfer 2014: 449, 451–460).

Given the exclusive claims to truth that Salafis make, it is obvious that they want to keep their supposedly pure beliefs from becoming sullied. This attitude is not only translated in a doctrinal position that differs from other, 'deviant' trends in Islam, as we saw above, but also from any addition to the religion

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2   See, for instance, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, book 56 ("Kitāb al-Manāqib"), chapter 27 ("Bāb"), nos. 834 and 835; book 92 ("Kitāb al-Iʿtiṣām bi-l-Kitāb wa-l-Sunna"), chapter 10 ("Qawl al-Nabī Ṣallá llāh ʿalayhi wa-Sallam: Lā Tazālu Ṭāʾifatun min Ummatī Ẓāhirīna ʿalá l-Ḥaqq wa-Hum Ahl al-ʿIlm"), no. 414.

3   *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, book 1 ("Kitāb al-Īmān"), chapter 65 ("Bāb Bayān anna l-Islām Badaʾa Gharīban wa-innahu Yaʾziru bayna l-Masjidayn"), no. 145.

4   *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, book 76 ("Kitāb al-Riqāʾiq"), chapter 3 ("Bāb Qawl al-Nabī Ṣallá llāh ʿalayhi wa-Sallam: Kun fī l-Dunyā ka-annaka Gharībun"), no. 425.

5   See, for example, the famous *nashīd* (song) "Ghurabāʾ" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLR j2u475RU, accessed 18/11/2016, which is particularly popular among militant Salafis.

as Salafis believe it was understood by the *salaf*. They refer to such additions as *bidaʿ* (sing. *bidʿa*; religious innovations) and condemn them in matters of law, theology, lifestyle, customs, rituals and language (Wiktorowicz 2001: 116–117). Precisely because such *bidaʿ* were allegedly absent among the *salaf*, Salafis see them as steps toward the slow corruption of Islam. It is for this reason that Salafis often cite a *ḥadīth* that states that "every novelty (*muḥdatha*) is an innovation (*bidʿa*) and every innovation is an error (*ḍalāla*) and every error is in hell (*fī l-nār*)" (Wagemakers 2016a: 43).

The main tool that Salafis use to keep alleged threats to their legal and theological views and their general 'purity' at bay is *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ* (loyalty and disavowal). This concept is used to stimulate a strong sense of allegiance toward God, Islam and other Muslims (particularly Salafis), on the one hand, and a clear repudiation of everything else, on the other. This is applied in the personal sphere, with regard to clothing, names, (religious) holidays and dealing with non-Salafis, but also in the political sphere, where Salafis believe in solidarity with Muslims in times of conflict and principally oppose asking 'unbelievers' for help (*al-istiʿāna bi-l-kuffār*) against other Muslims (Wagemakers 2008).

Al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ is thus used by Salafis to stick together inside the citadel and keep others away from its walls. In practice, however, it is important to note that Salafis have built an ideological fortress, not an actual one. In other words, Salafis do not live in physical seclusion but among people who have very different beliefs, which may hamper their efforts to disavow others, particularly in non-Muslim countries. Friendly relations with Christian neighbours, for example, can easily be portrayed as causing one to stray from 'true' Islam if they are not framed in the context of missionary activities (*daʿwa*) (Shavit 2014: 71–78). *Al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ*, precisely because it is meant to keep Salafis away from any 'un-Islamic' influences, can therefore be an effective instrument against the 'corruption' of Islam but can simultaneously cause friction with non-Salafis when zealously applied.

4   Expanding the Citadel: The Spread of Salafism

The spread of the Salafi message based on the ideas espoused by men such as the aforementioned ibn Taymiyya, ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and their ideological heirs has perhaps had less drastic consequences than Salafi ideology may suggest. While it is true that Salafism represents a break with the Islamic tradition of following a *madhhab* and adhering to Ashʿarī-Māturīdī theology, it is

also true that its adherents claim to merely follow the Qurʾān and the *sunna*, a principle that few Sunnī Muslims will reject, even if they disagree with Salafis' precise way of doing so. This means that while Sunnī Muslims cannot simply be labelled potential Salafis, they can be said to be somewhat susceptible to the core Salafi message of returning to the Islam's primary sources.

In this context, and in addition to factors specific to certain countries or communities, several reasons can be mentioned that strongly aided the spread of Salafism, all of them related to Saudi Arabia. The reason Saudi Arabia is involved in all of them stems from that country's unique historical ties with Salafism. Influenced by the writings of ibn Taymiyya and others, the Arabian reformer Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1703–1792) started spreading his Salafi message across the Arabian Peninsula, particularly from 1744 on, when he made a pact with the tribal leader Muḥammad ibn Saʿūd (d. 1765), the ancestor of the Saudi royal family. Together, they conquered most of the Arabian Peninsula and made Salafism, often referred to as "Wahhabism," the Saudi state's guiding ideology, which it has remained ever since (Commins 2005; Crawford 2014).

Despite Salafism's importance to Saudi Arabia and, to a lesser extent, other parts of the Arabian Peninsula, it did not spread much outside its borders initially. This changed with the exploitation of the kingdom's oil reserves after the Second World War. Because of Saudi Arabia's booming oil industry and its lack of qualified personnel to run it, the kingdom had to employ many foreign workers (often Muslim Arabs), who not only lived and worked in the Saudi state, but frequently also adopted its religious customs, which they subsequently took home with them after several years. This trend was abetted by a second factor that influenced the spread of Salafism, namely the Saudi efforts use the kingdom's oil wealth to spread Salafi beliefs, for example through the Muslim World League (MWL) (Schulze 1990) and the Islamic University of Medina (Farquhar 2017). In response to the socialist rhetoric of Egypt's President Gamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir or Nasser (r. 1954–1970) and, later, the revolutionary propaganda emanating from Iran after 1979, the kingdom poured great amounts of money into spreading a conservative Salafi message. This, in turn, was connected with a third factor allowing Salafism to spread: the decline of Nasser's Arab socialism after the Arab defeat against Israel in 1967 and the search for an alternative that very often turned out to be religion. In the 1960s and 1970s, Saudi Arabia was therefore spreading a Salafi message, both through individuals and through organisations to a Middle East that was increasingly susceptible to it. As a result, Salafism grew extensively (Kepel 2002: 62–75).

5   Inside the Citadel: Living the Life of a Salafi

So far, this chapter has focussed on the first half of the 'fortress-factor' of Salafism: seeking refuge from outside influences considered detrimental to the 'purity' of Islam. Yet once inside the citadel—constructed by legal and theological means and defended by various instruments of maintaining 'purity'—Salafis can safely pursue their alternative lifestyle of strictly emulating the *salaf* in every detail of their lives, provided they stay within the fortress' walls. This latter condition is quite important since it speaks for itself that for Salafis, life in any country—even in Saudi Arabia—is often stubborn and unruly because of the simple fact that it is difficult to keep up a lifestyle that differs so much from the one preferred by many other people. That is a clear drawback from living in an ideological citadel, rather than one made of actual bricks and mortar. Salafis therefore strive to withdraw into the safety of their religious fortress, which guarantees doctrinal soundness and provides them with the best opportunity to live their daily lives in accordance with the example of the predecessors.

5.1   *Citadel Life: Salafi Everyday Practice*

Given the importance of doctrine, it is obvious that for many Salafis the study of the sources (the Qur'ān and the *sunna*) and the books based on those by scholars considered Salafi is of great importance. Precisely because Salafis attach such great value to emulating the *salaf*, they believe it is highly important to know what those predecessors said and did and, conversely, what they did not say or do. This process of 'cleansing' Islamic tradition to look for 'true' Islam is referred to as *taṣfiya* (cleansing) and it is a process in which many Salafi scholars engage, most famously Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1914–1999), who compiled several volumes of 'sound' and 'weak' *ḥadīth*s in order to establish exactly what the Prophet did and which of his sayings should be dismissed as inauthentic (Amin 2004).

   For 'ordinary' Salafis, who may not always have the time to engage in such scholarly endeavours, life according to the predecessors' example is often found in the exact performance of many rituals concerning things like prayer, good manners and personal hygiene. Quite often, instructions on how to perform these are given in small booklets that are handed out or can be picked up free of charge at mosques and other Salafi places of gathering. As such, ritual purity is a theme that plays a major role in Salafis' everyday lives (Gauvain 2013; Wagemakers 2016a: 170–171).

   One booklet that is perhaps more popular than any other is *Ḥiṣn al-Muslim*, which gives a highly detailed description of what one must say when

awakening, putting on clothes, leaving one's home, entering a mosque, etcetera, all based on texts from the Qurʾān and the life of the Prophet (Al-Qaḥṭānī 2010). Although the use of this booklet—whose title, aptly, can be translated as "The Citadel of the Muslim"—is not limited to Salafis, it is ubiquitous among the latter, who really try to live in accordance with these verses and sayings (Wagemakers 2016a: 172–173). This same attitude can also be discerned with regard to speech and clothes, in which Salafis also try to emulate the predecessors. Islamic phrases such as *jazāka llāh khayr* ('may God bless you for it') when thanking someone, instead of the more common *shukran* ('thanks'), are frequently used by Salafis. Similarly, Salafi women very often wear a facial veil (*niqāb*) and a wide dress (*ʿabāya*) covering their entire body, while men often dress in a white tunic (*thawb* or *dishdasha*), generally wear a skullcap (*qulunsuwa*) and usually have long beards. All of this is done not only to emulate the predecessors, but also—again in an effort to keep outside influences away from their Salafi citadel—to clearly distinguish themselves from non-Muslims (Amghar 2011: 148–149; Bonnefoy 2011: 49; Wagemakers 2016a: 173–174).

5.2   *A Citadel Divided: Faultlines within Salafism*

While few Salafis would be against the lifestyle described above, a truly purposeful life lived within the Salafi citadel does not just focus on one's own situation, but also on that of others. The term Salafis use for the way they deal with society is *manhaj* ("method"), but the way this concept takes shape differs greatly. The first and probably biggest group of Salafis in the world are the ones I label 'quietists'[6] because of their unwillingness to engage in political activism such as setting up political parties, attending demonstrations or debating topical issues in political terms. Instead, they focus mostly on studying the sources and teaching others about them through *daʿwa*. Their relationship with political authorities is one of quiet obedience and sometimes extends into working in the service of regimes, either through loyalty to or explicit propaganda for the rulers (Wagemakers 2016c). Examples of such groups exist in many countries, including, for example, France (Adraoui 2013), Jordan (Wagemakers 2016a), and Yemen (Bonnefoy 2011).

The second major group within Salafism I refer to as 'political Salafis' because of their commitment to extending their ideas on religion to the political sphere in the form of demonstrations, political parties, participating in elections and engaging in political debates. This is not to suggest that quietists do not care about, for example, the civil war in Syria after 2011, but that they discuss this

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6   It should be borne in mind that 'quietists' and other labels are ideal types and that, in practice, Salafis sometimes cannot be placed in one single category.

issue strictly in religious terms (sectarian, doctrinal, theological), not political ones like international relations, the involvement of Russia and the regional balance of power, as political Salafis do. Some political Salafis do not engage in actual party politics, such as the so-called *ṣaḥwa* (renaissance) movement in Saudi Arabia, which started in the kingdom in the 1960s through a cross-over between Muslim Brotherhood ideas and Salafism (Fandy 1999; Lacroix 2010; al-Rasheed 2007; Teitelbaum 2000). Others do engage in elections and run for public office, but do so with different reasons: some want to engage in the actual political process and discuss issues like taxes, such as some Salafis in Kuwait before the Gulf War in 1990, while others see parliament as another platform for *daʿwa*, such as Kuwaiti Salafis after the Gulf War and the Nur Party in post-coup Egypt, and are therefore perhaps best seen as quietist Salafis in a political guise (Lacroix 2016; Lahoud-Tatar 2011: 190–197).

The third and final group within Salafism is the one I call 'Jihadi-Salafism'. The adherents to this trend believe that the regimes in the Muslim world do not rule (entirely) according to the *sharīʿa* and, as such, should be overthrown. This does not always mean that Jihadi-Salafis actively strive to topple regimes in Muslim countries, although they do believe such action would be legitimate (Wagemakers 2012a: 9). Organisations adhering to this trend include al-Qāʿida and, most recently, the Islamic State (IS), although there are strong disagreements between these two, with supporters of the former accusing the latter of extremism in ideology and actions (Wagemakers 2016b).

The accusations levelled at IS by members of al-Qāʿida are not exceptional among Salafis. In fact, Salafis verbally attack each other quite often, with quietists labelling political Salafis 'Ikhwānīs', after the highly political Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn), and framing Jihadi-Salafis as *takfīrī*s or 'Khawārij', because of their views on *takfīr*. Conversely, Jihadi-Salafis (and, to a lesser extent, political Salafis) accuse quietists of being like the Murjiʾa, because of their alleged tendency to exclude acts from their definition of faith and thereby letting supposedly apostate rulers and their 'sinful' acts off the hook (Lav 2012; Wagemakers 2012a). As such, Salafis often deny each other the very label of 'Salafi', epitomising the fact that—despite sharing a strong desire to emulate the predecessors—the citadel of Salafism is deeply divided.

6   Conclusion

Considering the long history of Salafism's various concepts, Salafis' detailed arguments and the strictness and wide range with which they apply their beliefs, it is easy to understand that Salafism baffles a lot of people, including

policy makers. Moreover, given the fact that Salafis more or less look the same and are all engaged in keeping up, defending and living inside a citadel that often appears, and sometimes is, unwelcoming to others, it seems natural to generalise about them. Furthermore, the critical views that Salafis take toward others (including other Muslims) in their doctrine—not to mention the fact that some Salafi groups, such as al-Qāʿida and IS, actually engage in terrorism—makes it seem all the more obvious to echo former French Prime Minister Manuel Valls' words mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Yet Salafism is an ideology adhered to by people who mostly never engage in violence of any kind, let alone terrorism. Their views may be too strict for many from a societal point of view, but this cannot simply be equated with destruction. While IS may be responsible for the latter, it is an over-generalisation to suggest that all Salafis are guilty of this. For that claim to be justified, the Salafi citadel is simply too divided.

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The Taliban

Jon Armajani

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Ḥamās: The Islamic Resistance Movement

Shaul Bartal

> Allāh is our goal. The prophet is our leader.
> The Qurʾān is our law. *Jihād* is our way.
> Death in the way of Allāh is our exalted hope.
>
> Article Eight, Hamas Covenant (1988)[1]

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1   Introduction

Ḥamās (or Hamas) is one of the better-known and the largest of several Palestinian Islamist groups.[2] Ḥamās, the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Ḥarakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya*), is one faction of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. It was founded on 14 December 1987 at the beginning of the first *intifāḍa* by Shaykh Aḥmad Ismāʿīl Ḥasan Yāsīn (also Yassin, 1937–2004). Other opinions believe that it already existed in 1986 (Yousef 2010: 19–20). Ḥamās is usually described as a case study of political entities and, as such, employs and interprets doctrines and beliefs in a flexible and incentive manner. Ḥamās' call to *jihād* has been cast in nationalist hues and 'customised' to the specific Palestinian milieu (Dalacoura 2011: 66; Dunning 2016).

After a brief overview of the history of the movement and the role of women, this chapter will turn its focus to the ideology of Ḥamās. Palestinian (Arab-Islamic) nationalism, the elimination of not just Israeli but specifically Jewish control over Palestinian territory, and both specific and geo-political, and broader theological and cultural, holy war are all essential features of the group's outlook. Ḥamās sees itself as a movement of the people that is

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1   "Hamas Covenant 1988: The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement," *Avalon Project*. At https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/Hamas.asp. Accessed 06/07/2020. This phrase has also been used as a slogan and appears on other Muslim Brotherhood sites. See also ʿAzzām (1989: 25).

2   This study is based on my book, *Jihad in Palestine, Political Islam and the Israeli-Arab Conflict*. See Bartal (2016: 44–83).

responsible to all of the Palestinian public. The establishment of Ḥamās by Shaykh Aḥmad Yāsīn during the first *intifāḍa* heralds a new decisive stage, one where the Muslim Brotherhood activists began to carry out their world-view in relation to an Arab-Islamic Palestinian state established in the land of Palestine. This chapter will touch on events such as Ḥamās' 2006 electoral victory and its connection to the Islamic Movement in Israel to provide further contextualisation for the rise of influence of this religio-political group.

2   The Ideology of Ḥamās

Ḥamās is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood which was established in Egypt in 1928. Ismail Haniyeh, chairman of the Ḥamās Political Bureau since May 2017, (and the Ḥamās ex-prime minister of the Palestine Authority 2006–2014), has described it as the "Jihad movement of the Brotherhood with a Palestinian face" (Coughlin 2015: 163). Ḥamās was deeply influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood's *jihād* ideology of Ḥasan al-Bannā, Sayyid Quṭb, ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām, Saʿad Hava, and other less familiar philosophers (Lajna al-Thaqafiya al-Aama et al. 2013a: 26, 58–59, 82–85, 91–93).

The main source of Ḥamās' philosophy can be seen in the Ḥamās Covenant which was published by Aḥmad Yāsīn on 18 August 1988 (Hamas Covenant 1988). The principles of the charter emphasise that ideologically this is an Islamic revivalist movement with a militant dimension. The two main pillars of Ḥamās ideology are: Palestinian nationalism and Arab Islamism (Gleis and Berti 2012: 134–143). In May 2017, Ḥamās published "A Document of General Principles and Policies" emphasising the nationalistic character of the movement (Hamas 2017). According to Ḥamās, the Jews do not have a right to any portion of Palestinian land. The derogation of the Jewish people in Ḥamās rhetoric and strategy has lead scholars like Meir Litvak to propose antisemitism as a third pillar of the Ḥamās ideology (Litvak 2005: 41), and *jihād*, with an end goal of "the destruction of Israel and the elimination of the Jews," as the fourth (Litvak 2010: 716).

2.1   *Arab-Islamic Nationalism*
On each Palestinian memorial day, such as the day that the Balfour Declaration was issued, the day the State of Israel was established, or the anniversary of the decision to partition Palestine, Ḥamās takes pains to explain its allegiance to only one political solution in all of Palestine and that is that Palestine cannot be divided in any way, shape or form. Take as an example the anniversary

of the sixty-third year of the UN resolution of the partition of Palestine (Resolution 181 from 29 November 1947):

> Palestine from the sea to the river belongs only to the Palestinian nation. This decision [Resolution 181] is cancelled legally and politically. Palestine from the sea to the river is the private property of the Palestinian nation and an inseparable part of the Arab homeland and the Islamic nation. One must adhere to the rights of the Palestinians which include full return of all of the Palestinians to all of the Palestinian land.[3]

The recognition of Israel by the PLO and its cooperation on security issues with Israel during the period of the agreements, even for a short time, have caused ongoing tension with Ḥamās. According to Ḥamās, in order for the PLO to return and become a leading factor in the Palestinian society, it must retract its recognition of Israel, stop its security coordination with Israel, and re-adopt the armed struggle approach while redefining the supreme aim—the liberation of all of Palestine (Levy and Madzini 2011). Using Ḥamās' Covenant and its summary of Ḥamās history, Ḥamās' refusal to recognise Israel can be seen as a natural progression of its ideology based upon its radical view against the Jews.[4]

2.2   *Antisemitism*

The slogan that Shaykh Yāsīn coined during the first *intifāḍa—Khaybar, Khaybar Ya Yehud, jaysh Muḥammad Sawf Ya'ud* ("Khaybar, Khaybar, Oh Jews, the army of Muḥammad will return," quoted in 'Azzām 1989: 41)—gives an indication of how anti-Jewish attitudes neatly segue with Ḥamās' religio-nationalistic agenda. A theological right to land is embedded in Ḥamās ideology, for example, Ḥamās prisoner, Fahmi 'Aid Ramadhan al-Mashaira, who called himself Abu 'Ubayda al-Muqaddasi,[5] wrote the following explanation of the first verses of Sura 17, according to Ḥamās commentators:

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3 A public statement by Ḥamās from a Palestinian information site affiliated with the movement, 28 November 2010. At www.palestine-info.info.

4 It is no surprise that Muslim Brotherhood leader Sayyid Quṭb's book, *Marakatuna maa al-Yahud* or *Our Struggle Against the Jews*, became a best seller among members of Ḥamās.

5 Fahmi 'Aid Ramadhan al-Mashaira, from Jabel Mukaber, Jerusalem, was arrested together with his brother Ramadan in July 2002. The two planned and carried out a terrorist attack at the Pat Junction in Jerusalem where 19 people were murdered. In addition, according to the indictment where they were found guilty, the two also planned on blowing up a cruise ship in the Gulf of Eilat. The brothers are currently serving out life sentences in an Israeli jail. During

> The Jews corrupted the land, the first time in Medina and al-Hijaz before
> and after the messenger and his fellows arrived. They succeeded with the
> grace of God to remove this corruption. The second time of their [the
> Jews] corruption is here in our land, in Palestine. As this is clarified by
> modern commentators … 'You will surely cause corruption on the Earth
> twice' [Qur'ān 17:4].
>
> ABU ʿUBAYDA AL-MUQADDASI 2012: 3

The second corruption mentioned is Israel's existence. In Ḥamās' Covenant,
the Jews are the presented as a hidden source of evil on earth, continuing a long
history of antisemitic themes (Bartal and Rubinstein-Shemer 2018; Patterson
2015: 101–103).

In Article 7 of the Hamas Covenant (1988) the war with the Jews, like Muslim
Brotherhood leader Sayyid Quṭb said, is eternal (Coughlin 2015: 123–125; Quṭb
1954: 37–38). In Ḥamās' first proclamation in the *intifāḍa*, the following words
were said:

> Hey! the *al-Murabitun* (the defenders) on Palestine, the pure and the
> loved land. Hey! All ye residents, men and women. Hey! Children of ours.
> Here are the Jews, the brothers of monkeys, the murderers of the proph-
> ets, the bloodsuckers, the war agitators—murdering you, depriving you
> of your life after they have stolen the Motherland and your home. Only
> Islam can break the Jews and destroy their dream:
>
> Therefore, they proclaimed in their faces, '*Allāhu akbar, Allāhu akbar*'
> ['Allāh is great'] from their army, '*Allāhu akbar*' from their planes and
> from their weapons. Take into account that when you are fighting with
> them to ask one of two favors: The martyr's death or victory over them
> and their rout.
>
> MISHAL AND AHARONI 1989: 199

According to a short film which appears in the Ḥamās educational curriculum
from 2007, for Ḥamās the first *intifāḍa* lasted up until the year 2000, while the
second *intifāḍa* began in September 2000 and continues up until today. The
period of the agreements, from September 1993 until July 2000, is considered,
in the eyes of the movement, a cynical but successful attempt by Israel to divide
Palestinian society and to cause a *fitna*—a war between brothers. Article 13 of

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the years that Fahmi sat in jail, he wrote his memoirs and was even able to smuggle the book
that he wrote out of prison. The book was published and distributed among Ḥamās activists
and on Ḥamās sites in 2012.

the Hamas Covenant (1988)—"There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad"—continued to be the position of the group in their ongoing narrative of resistance.

2.3   *Jihād*

Jihād or holy war[6] is the epitome of the aspirations of Ḥamās and the organisation sees *jihād* as its mission (Litvak 2010: 716–734; Bartal 2016a). Resistance to opposing forces and infidels has been a long-standing aspect of Islam from its earliest form into the colonial era up until today, and the implicit and explicit call to overcome oppression, often with military might (for example, Qurʾān 4:97, 29:69), continues to inspire participation in armed combat. In their official announcements, Ḥamās emphasises that *jihād* on the land of Palestine has lasted from 1 May 636, from the time of the second Caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 644) who, following the death of Muḥammad, captured the city of Jerusalem. Afterwards the need for *jihād* arose again as a result of the Crusader occupation in 1099. Palestine was freed by Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb (d. 1193) but experienced attacks, such as the one by Napoleon in 1799, and foreign occupation. Under the control of the Ottoman empire and then the British in the early twentieth century, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 established Palestine as a home for the Jewish people, seen by some as the fulfillment of the Zionist mission. Following decades saw tensions increase exponentially between Arabs and Jews living in the region and intervening foreign powers, sparking violent reactions from all sides in an ongoing conflict that continues today. For Ḥamās, *jihād* is an essential response to the conflict and will continue until Palestine has achieved total freedom (Lajna al-Thaqafiya al-Aama 2013b: 4–12). As Tristan Dunning has argued "by invoking *jihad*, Ḥamās imbues its political actions with existential weight and religious legitimacy. In short, Ḥamās has proven adept at appropriating social and religious traditions to justify and legitimise resistance—violent or otherwise" (Dunning 2016: 9).

Ḥamās is a frequent user of many different internet websites and social media sites in order to advance its jihadist mission. On the website of its military arm, the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades, one can see a list of the martyrs killed in confrontations with Israel as well as military manifestos of the organisation (Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades n.d.). In many cases, songs of praise to the martyrs killed in the struggle against the occupational forces can also be found here. Next to the name of each martyr is the date of the attack and its results. Additional Ḥamās advertisements glorifying these acts of valor also appear in *al-Qassāmiyun*, the magazine of the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades,

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6   The word *jihād* is multivalent: see, for example, Esposito (1992: 26–37).

as well as in various booklets commemorating the deeds of various organisation leaders who were killed during their confrontations with Israel. For example, there is a pamphlet praising the heroism of Nizar Rian, killed in January 2009 in Operation Cast Lead (27 December 2008–18 January 2009). This pamphlet was written by Fathi Hamad who, at that time, served as the Minister of the Interior in the Ḥamās government (Hamad 2010). This is proof of the great importance that the organisation's leaders gave to these pamphlets. An additional example is the highlighting of Ibrahim al-Makadmeh's book, *Milestone for the Liberation of Palestine*, on various Ḥamās sites. Makademeh's was one of the first ideologists of Ḥamās who was killed by Israel on 8 March 2004. His book advocates the destruction of Israel through *jihād* in a well-organised manner through harnessing the entire Muslim world to the destruction of Israel, emphasising the use of the military, politics, and economics in order to free Palestine (al-Makadmeh 2002).

Through the use of these pamphlets and others, Ḥamās fulfills two main purposes:

1. Publicity of its *jihād* activities against Israel using all of the means available to it including the various types of electronic media;
2. An emotive call to join and support the organisation and commit to *jihād* against Israel. On the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades website one can find calls to donate to Ḥamās through various tracks (Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades n.d.).

Thus organisations such as the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) can comfortably state "the military wing is an integral part of Hamas and not a separate entity," that "Ḥamās' military power is also the main reason for its decade-long control of the Gaza Strip." The IDF classifies Ḥamās, unquestionably, as a terrorist organisation responsible for the deaths of "over 650 innocent civilians" via "mortar and rocket fire, terrorist raids, tunnels and suicide attacks" from the 1990s to the present day (Israel Defense Forces n.d.).

3 History of Ḥamās

Ḥamās has very deep roots. In the eyes of the movement these roots were already intertwined with those of the Muslim Brotherhood, when, in the 1930s, the Muslim Brotherhood began to act in Palestine. ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām (d. 1989) was a Palestinian from the Jenin area who belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood of the West Bank during the 1970s. Later on he become one of the most influential pro-*jihād* thinkers.[7] His book on the origins of the Ḥamās

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7 For more about ʿAzzām see Bartal (2016: 9–29).

movement begins with a description of the establishment of the Islamic movement in Egypt by Ḥasan al-Bannā in the year 1928 and with the movement's ties to Palestinian nationalists like the Grand Mufti Ḥājj Muḥammad Amīn al-Husseini and resistance fighter Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam in the 1930s and 1940s. It is Ḥamās and not the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) which is the real movement that follows in the footsteps of Ḥājj Amīn al-Husseini and Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam ('Azzām 1989: 13–16, 29, 33).[8]

The Ḥamās organisation sees itself, according to its basic documents, (mainly the Covenant of 1988 and "A Document of General Principles and Policies" from 2017), as a widespread Palestinian nationalistic movement, one which is worthy of leading the Palestinian people to independence and to the total liberation of its land. As a movement aspiring to rule the entire Palestinian public, Ḥamās has developed and established local Islamic institutions which provide services for the whole population. These religious, social, and educational activities also won limited cooperation on the part of the Israeli regime which saw the organisation as a counterweight to the activities of the PLO (Mishal and Aharoni 1989: 34; Litvak 1993: 58; Higgins 2009).[9]

The activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine officially began with the establishment of a Jerusalem branch in May 1946. This branch was nominally led by Mufti Ḥājj Muḥammad Amīn al-Husseini who had been banished from Palestine after World War II due to his support for Nazi Germany during the war. In reality, there were already branches of the Muslim Brotherhood which were subordinate to the parent organisation in Egypt which had been founded in Ismailia by Ḥasan al-Bannā in 1928. According to statements by Ḥamās activist Hatem Abu Ziyada, approximately 10,000 activists of the Muslim Brotherhood enlisted in droves in the war against the establishment of the Jewish state (Hatem Abu Ziyada 2009: 5–6). Ḥasan al-Bannā, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood told his students:

> The problem of Palestine is a top central problem for the Muslims because Palestine is a part of the Islamic Nation and defending Palestine and its

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8 'Azzām also especially emphasised his close ties with Ḥasan al-Bannā, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood together with the *mujahideen* in Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s. See also the pamphlet without a date called '*Al-Mathuwrat lil-Mu'alam al-Shahid Ḥasan al-Bannā, Kanuz la Tiendab*' (Tradition of the *Shahid* Teacher, Ḥasan al-Bannā, Inexhaustible Treasure). This pamphlet, carrying the Muslim Brotherhood movement's slogan and the movement's message, was found in the hands of Ḥamās activists in Jerusalem.

9 Al-Mujama al-Islamiya was established in 1973 under the leadership of Shaykh Aḥmad Yāsīn. In the year 1978, the organisation received recognition from the civilian administration. According to Litvak, Jordan also worked to strengthen the stand of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank as a counterweight to the strength of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO).

holy places protects Islam. The exploiting entity [the State of Israel], is the head of the weapon of the Western colonial cultural war against the Muslim nation and its treasures. This entity [meaning Israel] is supposed to be the base and its mission is to cause a rift in the unity of the [Muslim] nation and to tear it into weak, contemptible entities which capitulate to the colonial western countries.

<div style="text-align:center">HATEM ABU ZIYADA 2009: 5</div>

After the 1948 war the branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine became divided. The branches in the West Bank came under the control of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. The Gaza branches of the Muslim Brotherhood became under the control of the parent organisation in Egypt where they were exposed to the ideology and influence of the Egyptian leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, especially the most prominent Ḥasan al-Huḍaybī and Sayyid Quṭb.

At the beginning of the 1950s, the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip took part in anti-Israel activities; but after the 1956 War, and in light of the clashes between the then president of Egypt Gamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir and the Muslim Brotherhood, cruel and serious persecutions began which also affected Brotherhood activists in the Gaza Strip. Shaykh Aḥmad Yāsīn, who later founded the Ḥamās organisation, experienced this himself. Yāsīn became a refugee in 1948, wandering with his family, exiled to Gaza from his home in al-Jura (a village near Ashkelon). In Gaza, Yāsīn taught in various religious institutions while continuing his activities in the Muslim Brotherhood. Up until 1946 Yāsīn was employed as an Arabic language and religious teacher by the Egyptian regime. In 1966, the Egyptian regime conducted a wave of widespread arrests among Muslim Brotherhood supporters. Yāsīn was arrested together with many other activists including Sayyid Quṭb, the head of the section for the propagation of the message in the Muslim Brotherhood. Quṭb was executed in 1966, but Yāsīn was released. After the 1967 war, he began to rehabilitate the Muslim Brotherhood organisation in the Gaza Strip and renew the ties between the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip and the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank (Hatem Abu Ziyada 2009: 113–128; ʿAtef ʿAdwan 1991: 14–69).

Unlike the other *jihād* organisations which view themselves as pioneers (like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood in 1979 in Egypt) and which do not invest a lot of energy and resources on 'civilian' topics that do not directly affect the struggle with Israel, Ḥamās theology rejects this way of thinking. The Muslim Brotherhood traditionally supports *daʿwa* (invitation to Islam and, in this case, to the Ḥamās social welfare

network), the building of mosques, widespread diverse activities, and the strengthening of the faith until the long-term goal of *jihād* is reached. This is the way that Mufti Ḥājj Amīn al-Husseini viewed these activities up until the Great Arab Revolt of 1936–1939. That was also the Ḥamās' point of view up until the first *intifāḍa*, called the *intifāḍat al-jihād*, which began in December 1987. Up until that time, the organisation kept busy with the preparation of hearts and minds for *jihād*. For Ḥamās, it was the first *intifāḍa* which ripened the moment for the eruption of the *jihād* of the Muslim Brotherhood (Litvak 1993: 58; ʿAzzām 1989: 24–25; Farsoun and Zacharia 1997: 100–101, 105).

The money for Ḥamās' *daʿwa* is received as donations from different charity associations from all over the world. Some of them, like the Holy Land Foundation, were run by Ḥamās members such as Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzooq who lead this charity organisation in the United States. Others were part of *I'htalf al-Khayr* (the Charity Coalition) by Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī. The Shaykh sent millions of dollars from Qatar which he had received from donors throughout Europe, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf countries, and the United States. This is in accordance with his *fatwā* (religious ruling) of 2003, that stated that Muslims must give *zakāt* (charity) and the best use of that charity was to earmark it for *jihād* (Levitt 2006: 160–161; Coughlin 2015: 164–172). In doing so, he called for Muslim dedication to this 'holy matter' to match the devotion of the Jewish people to Israel: "The Jews throughout the world helped Israel before it was established and they don't cease helping it even now. Aren't the Arabs able to act like them for the sake of this holy matter, the Palestinian cause?" (al-Qaraḍāwī 2003: 487–488; see also Bartal and Rubinstein-Shemer: 2018: 90–91).

There are many events which led the movement to the understanding that the time was ripe for a visible armed struggle. The main cause was the inspirational success of the Islamic revolution in Iran. The end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s was a period where Islamic movements all over the Palestine and Greater Israel area blossomed (Marwan 2006). The Islamic movement in Israel was founded in the year 1979 by Abdullah Nimer Darwish who established the Usrat al-Jihād (The Jihād Family) and by Shaykh Asa'ad Byud al-Tamimi who established the Islamic Jihād-Bayt al-Maqdis organisation. In 1979, the Islamic Jihād in Palestine was also founded by Fathi Shaqaqi which began to carry out its activities in the beginning of the 1980s. It was influenced mainly by the Egyptian *jihād* organisation. In this period, the Sarya al-Jihād (the military companies of the *jihād*), which was tied to the Fataḥ movement, also began its activities (Cook 2015: 114–115).

In 1984, a group of activists under the leadership of Shaykh Aḥmad Yāsīn, which included Salah Shahada (assassinated in 2002), was imprisoned. The activities of the Islamic Jihād movement challenged the Muslim Brotherhood. Yāsīn thought that the hour was right to move on to the next stage. The movement began to hoard weapons and prepare for a military confrontation. Instead, they were exposed by Israel's General Security Services and its activists were arrested. They were later freed in the framework of a prisoner exchange with the Ahmed Jibril organisation in the year 1985 (Litvak 1993: 59; ʿAdwan 1991: 134–144).

After his release from prison, Shaykh Yāsīn was very careful about his activities until the first *intifāḍa* broke out on 9 December 1987 (ʿAdwan 1991: 145–149; Kuntzel 2002: 103–107). On 18 August 1988, the Ḥamās Covenant was publicised. This charter was filled with anti-Jewish motifs such as the notion that Jews run the media and referring to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and made unequivocal statements that only Islam was the path toward victory over Israel. The Covenant also drew on the philosophy of the founder of al-Qāʿida, Palestinian Shaykh ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām (d. 1989) who, from his base in Pakistan, had supported Ḥamās politically, financially and logistically (Maliach 2010: 85–6). The Afghanistan *mujahideens*' success in expelling the Soviets in 1989 created an amazing incentive and raised hopes that perhaps Ḥamās in Palestine would also succeed through constant military pressure, to bring about the destruction of the State Israel and the return of Palestine to its legal owners, read Palestinians (Hegghammer 2013: 376–378).

In 1988, after the publication of Faisal Abdel Qader Al-Husseini's "principle for peace letter with Israel" and the Palestinian Declaration of Independence (Anthony and Nusseibeh 2008: 212–214), the PLO began to sound more moderate. As the Hamas Covenant was publicised, the belief that there was "nothing to talk about with the Jews and the rest of the infidels" became popular. Ḥamās' answer to the PLO was "Israel will rise up and continue to exist until Islam will destroy that which preceded it" (ʿAzzām 1989: 55–73).[10]

The establishment of a military arm enabled Ḥamās to carry out military activities in an established and organised manner. The first groups in the West Bank were established by Salah Aruri and were named after the martyr ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām. In 1991, Zakaria Walid Akhel established the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades in the Gaza Strip, named after the resistance figure Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam. At the beginning, the military activities focused on the kidnapping of soldiers and those that collaborated with Israel. The murder of Doron Shorshan in December 1991, a resident of Kfar Darom, was the first murder

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10   In the opening of the Ḥamās Covenant this sentence is attributed to the Imam al-Shahid Ḥasan al-Bannā.

incident of an Israeli resident by the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam military group (IDF Official Publication 1995: 6). On 13 December 1992, the al-Qassam activists, among them Mussa al-Akari, (a resident of the Shu'afat refugee camp in East Jerusalem,) kidnapped and murdered Nissim Tolidano, an act that led to the expulsion of 415 Islamic Jihad and Ḥamās activists to Marj al-Zohour in southern Lebanon for about a year. This act created an operational tie and a sharing of military tactics between the Ḥamās and the Ḥizballāh (or Hezbollah) (Gleis and Berti 2012: 121–122).

In 1993, after the Oslo accords, Ḥamās' military groups expanded their activities and began to use improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in their attacks. They also began to use shooting attacks and later on suicide attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians. The first suicide attack carried out by an activist from Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam took place on 16 April 1993 when Shaer Hamadallah Tammam blew himself up inside a car near a group of soldiers. An additional seven incidents of suicidal terrorist attacks (*ishtishad*) were carried out against the security forces after this attack (IDF Official Publication 1996: 6–9).

In February 1994, American-Israeli terrorist Baruch Goldstein slaughtered twenty-nine Palestinians in the mosque and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. This incident caused an increase in the amount of sacrificial attacks carried out by Ḥamās, including civilian targets. On 6 April 1994, a car bomb was activated by a suicide terrorist at a bus station in the center of Afula. As a result of this attack, eight civilians were killed and forty-four were injured. This rise in Ḥamās sacrificial attacks led Israel to take action against the organization by approving 'targeted' killing of the Ḥamās military leadership and its engineers who shared responsibility for a whole series of attacks by suicide terrorists during the 1990s. The most famous of these attacks were the targeted killings of Imad 'Akel (d. November 1993) and Yahya Ayyash (d. January 1995). Since the 1990s, the kidnapping and murder of soldiers were replaced with suicidal attacks on busses and other places teeming with people, shooting attacks, and IEDs. These became the calling card of the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades despite the serious attempts made by Israel's military to control them as well as attempts made by the Palestinian Authority, the interim government established after the Oslo agreements and through an agreement between the PLO and Israel (Hamas Official Publication 2013: 26–55). Ḥamās succeeded in spreading an ideological content that inspired activists and supporters to holy martyrdom for al-'Aqṣā and Palestine which even justified the activities of individuals against the Israeli enemy and in creating in Israel an atmosphere of fear of Ḥamās (Hatina 2014: 108–122).

When the al-'Aqṣā *intifāḍa* broke out on 28 September 2000, it led to a period of unification between all of the Palestinian organisations. Ḥamās, the Islamic Jihād, and the PLO all worked together against the Zionist enemy

in both military and propaganda activities. The activists of the military arm of the Islamic Jihād and the Jerusalem companies (Saraya al-Quds) acted hand-in-hand with the military arm of the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades. The Islamic factions, which were previously outwardly persecuted by the Palestinian Authority, now worked together in cooperation with the *Katā'ib Shuhadā' al-'Aqṣā* (al-'Aqṣā Martyrs' Brigades), the new military arm affiliated with the Fataḥ-PLO. During this stage of the second *intifāḍa*, all of the Palestinian organisations were involved in suicide operations including Fataḥ. On 22 March 2004, Shaykh Aḥmad Yāsīn was assassinated as he exited the al-Mujama al-Islamiya Mosque after the early morning prayers. Like 'Abdallāh 'Azzām in his time and Usāma bin Lādin (d. 2011) afterwards, Shaykh Yāsīn also died with a few relatives—his nephew and his daughter's husband—who were with him at the time: the paralysed *shaykh* turned into "a symbol and example together with all of the Arab and Islamic symbols of the holy warriors" (*Al-Resalah* 2004).[11]

Ḥamās also used other names of small organisations to hide its activities. One such example is The Defenders of al-'Aqṣā, a military group. According to the Shab'ak (Israel's General Security Services) site, it was found that Iyub Azam Abu Karim admitted under investigation that he acted under a subsidiary of Ḥamās called the Defenders of al-'Aqṣā. In his own words, he tells how, already in 2007, he was drafted into Ḥamās and how, in this framework, he carried out a number of attacks against Israeli targets as part of his understanding of *jihād* against Israel. The organisational purpose of the Defenders of al-'Aqṣā was, in his words, "to create an additional framework to carry out *jihād* against Israel without being directly tied to Ḥamās." That gave Ḥamās much more flexibility. The directives for such organisational activities came straight from Fathi Ahmad Muhmmad Hamed, the Minister of the Interior in the Ḥamās government at that time (General Security Services 2011).

Ḥamās has continued its war against Israel from the Gaza Strip. The last one was in 2014, when Ḥamās launched rockets at all of Israel's cities without discrimination. This was supported by Shaykh Yousf al-Qaraḍāwī (Bartal 2015: 99–115). Ḥamās operatives also kidnapped young children in the West Bank (2014) and a soldier (Gilad Shalit) during battles in the Gaza Strip. Ḥamās'

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11   This Ḥamās newspaper, published in the Gaza Strip, emphasised that the Shaykh's liquidation was carried out by an American Apache helicopter. Eight other Ḥamās fighters were killed that day and an additional fifteen were injured. Among the dead were also Khamis Sami Mustahi, the *shaykh*'s nephew, and his son-in-law. The newspaper also emphasises that the liquidation was carried out as a response to an activity carried out earlier in Ashdod by the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades of the Ḥamās and by the *Shuhadā' al-Aqṣā* of the PLO. In this activity eleven Israelis were killed and dozens wounded.

aim was to release Palestinian prisoners by exchanging those kidnapped for the prisoners as in the 2011 Shalit deal.[12] There was also a renewal of 'lone-wolf' methods during the years 2015–2016, including suicide bombers, as in Jerusalem on 18 April 2016 (Bartal 2017). Ḥamās described the attacks since the end of the Gaza War in 2014 as *Intifāḍat al-Quds*, an *intifāḍa* that will continue until the victory (Bartal 2017; Ḥamās 2016).

3.1   *Women in Ḥamās*

According to Ḥamās thinking, women are only seen as national agents insofar as they literally reproduced national citizens. According to Article Seventeen of the Hamas Covenant: "The Moslem woman has a role no less important than that of the Moslem man in the battle of liberation. She is the maker of men. Her role in guiding and educating the new generations is great." However, when faced with its political rivals' mobilisation of women in politics, Ḥamās also reluctantly allowed for affiliated women warriors and female electoral candidates (Khalili 2007: 30).

Over the years Ḥamās has succeeded in receiving support from women's organisations. This has enabled women believers to express their faith through commitment to the values of the organisation like the Muarabitat (defenders of the faith) women in the Temple Mount/Haram as-Sharif. The most prominent among them are Hanadi Halawani and Khadija Khwes who are known as teachers of religious studies in al-ʾAqṣā. Their activities include demonstrations and calls against allowing Jewish visitors on the Temple Mount. They also have active ties with Ḥamās and the Islamic movement headed by Shaykh Raʾed Salah. They were removed from the Temple Mount and even arrested a number of times by the Israeli authorities (Cohen 2017).

Ḥamās also succeeded in drafting women's political support by presenting these women as models for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The most prominent woman is Umm Nidal Farhat (Maryam Mohammad Yousif Farhat), the mother who lost three of her children, her sons, at three different times in their struggle against Israel. She became a symbol of the Palestinian women and a model of a woman who raised her children to sacrifice for the motherland and the return of Palestine to its rightful owners. In 2006, Umm Nidal Farhat was chosen as one of six women to run in the 2006 election and represent Ḥamās in the Palestinian Legislative Council (Khalili 2007: 203). In an interview given after she was chosen for the Palestinian Legislative Council, Umm Nidal Farhat explained what the duty of a Palestinian woman was in her eyes, and in the

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12   In the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange Ḥamās released one Israeli soldier for 1,027 prisoners.

eyes of the Ḥamās organisation that she represented till her death in 2013: "A Muslim mother should raise her children on prayer, good deeds, and, of course, on *jihād*, which is one of the duties on which we should raise our children" ("Palestine: Special Dispatch No. 1063" 2006).

The integration of women in actual fighting is, however, uncommon. Fighting is still thought of as a man's task. Aḥmad Yāsīn tended to prohibit women's suicide. According to Yāsīn, there was no reason for women to die a holy death since there were enough men who were willing to risk their lives. Also, the integration of women in the fighting could endanger the survivability of Islamic society (Hatina 2014: 121).

During the second *intifāḍa*, the military arm of Ḥamās chose to adopt the model of the suicide female bomber in line with an additional *fatwā* of Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī published on his internet site. According to his *fatwā* from 2003, women are permitted to sacrifice themselves for Allāh. Al-Qaraḍāwī justified this as due to the need to overcome the inferiority of the arms and the other existing Palestinian means. Reem Saleh al-Reyashi, a mother of two small children from the Gaza Strip, was the first Ḥamās female martyr who carried out a suicide attack on 14 January 2004. Al-Qaraḍāwī praised her courage before God. (Bartal 2018: 107–108). After Yāsīn's death on 22 March 2004, al-Qaraḍāwī become the spiritual leader of Ḥamās' members.

4   Ḥamās and the Palestine Authority

On 25 January 2006, the Ḥamās party, called Change and Reform, won 74 out of the 132 seats in the Palestinian legislative council and formed a government of the Palestinian Authority (PA) with a Ḥamās-heavy cabinet under the leadership of Ismail Haniyeh. Abdallah Frangi, the holder of the foreign affairs portfolio in the opposing Fataḥ party and the most senior man in the Fataḥ in the Gaza Strip until the 2007 revolution, was optimistic after the Ḥamās election victory. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, in an answer to the question if the participation of Ḥamās in the elections could be explained as recognition of the State of Israel, he had this to say: "This [participation in the elections] is *de facto* recognition, despite the fact that Hamas does not say this explicitly … Hamas [must] assume political responsibility for itself" (Frangi 2006). It was his opinion that the Ḥamās and the PLO would reach a compromise:

> A disagreement between Hamas and the Fataḥ is not in the interest of the *jihad* in Islam. The sides declared clearly that they were interested in an agreement which would include all of the parties. But they [Ḥamās]

have achievements as it relates to the agreement in Israel. The rejection of the agreement with Israel will not have a great effect on the Palestinian society.

FRANGI 2006

Frangi's optimism did not last. The unity government between the PLO and Ḥamās that was established after the elections fell apart as a result of the Ḥamās revolution in Gaza. It took only six days (in June 2007) for the Ḥamās fighters to control all of the Gaza Strip. The PLO men who were caught alive were led through the streets of Gaza, naked. Afterwards, they were taken out to the desert to be killed. Some of them met a quick death when they fell out of or were thrown out of a fifteen-story building. 100 PLO men were killed and about 200 were injured. A different version reports that there were 161 Palestinian dead and 700 injured (Schult 2007). This activity deepened the rift and the division in the Palestinian nationalistic movement between the two streams which are represented internally by the Ḥamās and Fataḥ organisations.

Immediately after the January 2006 elections, the Quartet, which included Russia, the United States, Europe, and the United Nations, placed conditions on Ḥamās if it wanted to receive international recognition. These conditions included the official recognition of the State of Israel, a clear rejection of violence, and a willingness to carry out negotiations in the framework of a peace process: the Ḥamās government refused (Schanzer 2008: 95–98; Wilson 2006). Israel also began to withhold its monthly transfer of approximately 50–60 million US dollars. The Ḥamās government started dealing with fiscal and economic crises to make it more flexible due to the loss of financial support. This led Ḥamās to attempt cooperation with Fataḥ: On 8 February 2007 the two parties signed the Mecca agreement to create a Ḥamās-Fataḥ government, but this agreement failed like all of the others that followed it after April 2011 (Levi and Madzini 2011. The last agreement was signed in April 2014 but also failed after a short period). Ḥamās and Fataḥ's disagreements about Israel spurred the Ḥamās takeover of the Gaza strip in 2007. It led to a division of the captured 1967 areas between two separate political entities hostile to one another—a Fataḥ-state in the West Bank and a Ḥamās-state in the Gaza Strip (Gleis and Berti 2012: 123–133).

Historically, Ḥamās supporters actually took part in the 20 January 1996 elections under different party names as a party of Change and Reform which did not explicitly associate itself with Ḥamās (Mishal and Sela 1999: 191–202).[13]

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13   This is integration without identification. Thus, for example, Imad Falluji the editor of *al-Watan*, a Ḥamās journal that closed down, was appointed Communications Minister and

This was in order to avoid direct participation which would have required it to support the Oslo agreements which the party found not only unfortunate from their point of view, but to which they strongly objected. Yasser Arafat was shaping the PA and his popularity was still very high. But in 2006, Ḥamās chose to officially participate in the elections as they believed there was now a distinct possibility of their victory, thereby enabling them to impose other conditions on the discussions with Israel.

The Ḥamās approach is to carry out a struggle with Israel with ceasefires from time to time but without arriving at a final permanent solution. Ḥamās leaders do not agree with the PA that the Oslo Accords with Israel are like the Treaty of Hudabiyyah, signed by the Prophet Muḥammad and the Qurayshi tribe of Mecca in 628/AH 6 to ensure peace in the region (Coughlin 2015: 82). The battle with Israel is a battle for awareness, a sort of competition on strength, decisiveness, and the deepness of will. According to the Ḥamās, it is clear that in the end, slowly and patiently, *as-saber*—patience until the victory—and Islam will win: Palestine will be liberated again, and there will be an Islamic Palestinian State (Mishal and Sela: 124–125; Steinberg 2008: 272–386). Ḥamās' position since the start of the 1991 peace process—that "sell[ing] the Holy Land and Palestine according to a humiliating US-Zionist formula and conditions in exchange for illusory promises and getting a submissive autonomy is an illegitimate delegation and presence … does not represent the Palestinian people" (Khatib 2010: 66)—remains intact today.

5   Ḥamās Connections to the Islamic Movement in Israel

Since 1989, Ḥamās has succeeded in organising ties to the Palestinian Arabs living in Israel and East Jerusalem, especially with the Islamic Movement in Israel, headed by Shaykh Ra'ed Salah. Throughout the years, a group of youths from East Jerusalem, known by the nickname *Shabab al-ʾAqṣā* (the al-ʾAqṣā youth), have associated themselves with the Ḥamās organisation and have worked hard in order to show support, especially for activities within region of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. *Shabab al-ʾAqṣā* actively opposed Jewish

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Shaykh Talal al-Sider of Hebron was appointed by Arafat as an advisor on religious affairs and after 1997 he became the Minister of Youth and Sports for twenty months. He then served as a state minister for three years. Both of these men were well-known Ḥamās men who ran as independents in the 1996 elections and were appointed by Arafat as members of the Palestinian cabinet.

settlement in this area, the archeological digs close to the Temple Mount, the King's Garden project in Silwan, and other projects.[14]

In 2011, the group was outlawed in Israel and declared a terrorist organisation by the Israeli authorities. Its members were occasionally arrested and among the members convicted of Ḥamās activities were Haytam and Majed J'ubah and Nihad Zghyer. The most prominent among the members of the organisation was Mesbah Abu Sabih who, on 9 October 2016, carried out a terrorist attack in the Shaykh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem where he shot at passers-by and killed one civilian and a policeman. Although Abu Sabih was killed during this incident, due to his actions additional arrests were carried out against the members of the group that included his sons Izz and Emad (Anon. 2016; Winer 2017; Gross 2018).

The Islamic Movement in Israel has had two branches, the Northern and the Southern. Since the mid-1990s, substantive differences between the two regarding Ḥamās are hard to find.[15] The Northern faction is considered to be closely aligned with Ḥamās but support appears to come from the South as well. For example, in 2008 Shaykh Ibrahim Sarsur, leader of the Southern faction, sent his condolences to the leader of Ḥamās Mahmoud al-Zahar, on the death of his son, Hussam al-Zahar, an activist in the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades, by Israeli forces. In an announcement published in *al-Mithaq* (The Faith), a newspaper of the Southern faction, it was written:

> With solidarity with our brothers and our Palestinian nation ... the Islamic movement feels great sorrow and sends its condolences to the sons of the Palestinian people, to the residents of Gaza and to Dr. Mahmoud al-Zahar on the circumstances of the falling of his son Hussam on his way to Allah.

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14 See for example Al-'Aqṣā Foundation for Waqf and Heritage, *Sarakha Tahdhir min Mukhatat 'Kedem Yerushalaim 'Urshalim Awalan*. There is no publishing date, but, according to content, this was written sometime between the years 2009–2010 for the al-Quds Foundation for Development and the al-Bustan Neighborhood Committee of Silwan, *Silwan Siraa Bekaa Wawagud* (Jerusalem, April 2010). Abd al-Karim abu Sanina appears in the pamphlet alongside Ali Ahmad Jabareen, one of the leaders of the Northern Islamic Movement who lives in Umm al Fahm.

15 During the 1990s, the Islamic Movement in Israel separated into two streams. The first stream was led by Shaykh Abdullah Nimer Darwish and Ibrahim Sarsur from Kfar Kassem which is found in the southern part of the area nicknamed 'The Triangle'. This stream was in favour of participating in the elections for the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. The second stream, under the leadership of Shaykh Ra'ed Salah and Kamaal al-Khatib objected to becoming integrated politically in the elections for the Knesset. They were located in the Wadi 'Ara, in other words in the north of the Triangle. This is the root for the differentiation between the southern and northern branches.

Our prayers are that Allah should have mercy on all of the slain of our
Palestinian people and that they will be settled in higher heaven. [Signed]
Sheikh Ibrahim Abdullah [Sarsur], head of the Islamic Movement.

Further on in the condolence letter Sarsur condemns the actions of the Israel
Defense Forces against Ḥamās, and calls Hussam al-Zahar's death "a barbaric,
wild massacre" (*Al-Mithaq* 2008).

From an ideological point of view, however, Ḥamās is closer to the Northern
faction headed by Shaykh Ra'ed Salah. In 2003, Shaykh Ra'ed Salah and friends
from the Northern faction were convicted of giving aid to a terrorist organ-
isation through fundraising campaigns for the families of Ḥamās martyrs. In
the various Ḥamās publications, the Shaykh is described with admiration as
'Shaykh al-ʾAqṣā' due to his non-compromising stand against the Israelis on
the Temple Mount. The support of Shaykh Ra'ed Salah in the organisation is
also expressed in his speeches and writings. Due to close ties between Ḥamās
and the Northern faction of the Islamic Movement the Northern faction of the
organisation was declared illegal in Israel in 2015 (Cohen 2017; Hamas 2020).

The Ḥamās faction of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank and the
Gaza Strip also has a tendency to create artificial distinctions between the
Muslim Brotherhood branch in Jerusalem, who are Israeli residents, and who
work mostly in *daʿwa*, similar to the Islamic movement in Israel, and Ḥamās,
which works more in the military field in the areas of the West Bank and the
Gaza Strip. This artificial divide was revealed when four movement activists—
Muhammad Mahmoud Abu Tir, Minister Khaled Ibrahim Abu ʿArafeh,
Muhammad Imran Tutah, and Ahmad Muhammad Attoun—were arrested
and exiled from Jerusalem. All of the above were residents of Jerusalem and
activists in the Muslim Brotherhood, Jerusalem, which was recognised as a
Ḥamās branch in the city (Bartal 2016a: 229–265). All of them were chosen
to serve as members of the Palestinian parliament from the Ḥamās party of
Change and Reform. As a reaction to the 2006 kidnapping of Gilad Shalit,
Israel arrested these Ḥamās representatives and, with their release, the interior
minister instructed the removal of their status as permanent residents in Israel
and expelled them to outside of Jerusalem's borders. Their activities deviated
from the mere expressing of support and *daʿwa* activities for the Islamic move-
ment. This is not just 'preparing the hearts', but also preparing for attacks to be
carried out by Ḥamās members.[16]

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16   This is an official magazine published by the Palestinian parliament. In this issue the strug-
      gle of the four Islamic representatives, led by the former Minister on Jerusalem Affairs in

The Muslim Brotherhood organisation in the Gaza Strip is split into many different small rebellious groups which act separately from the Ḥamās movement. The Muslim Brotherhood movement in Israel and Palestine has influenced the different factions. Some of them carry out *jihād* activities against Israel, (a recent example being the Temple Mount operation on 14 July 2017).[17] Several of them use their Israeli citizenship or their legal status as residents or citizens of Israel in order to help each other in different and varied ways. There is mutual reciprocity between all of the Muslim Brotherhood factions as all of them are a part of the Islamic Movement. Thus, for example, both factions of the Islamic movement in Israel donate funds to the families of Ḥamās *shuhadā'* (martyrs) under the category of charity to orphans and widows.

6   Conclusion

As of 2020, Ḥamās is a varied organisation which is divided into a political arm headed by Ismail Haniyeh and his second in command Saleh al-Arouri (who have been in their current positions since 2017) and the military arm which is called the Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades, led by Muhammad Deif (born as Mohammed Diab Ibrahim al-Masri). It is the political arm that decides on the way the organisation will move forward. Saleh al-Arouri himself was founding commander of Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades.

In May 2017, Ḥamās published a document of principles that included Ḥamās' explicit support for the idea of the establishment a Palestinian state whose capital was Jerusalem alongside Israel as a temporary stage until the time that all of Palestine would be free (Hamas 2017). The heads of the political arm, Khaled Mashal (1996–6 May 2017), and his replacement Ismail Haniyeh presented their views as representing the Palestinian consensus of a State on the lands of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (1967 borders) whose capital would be Jerusalem, a state without any concessions on the right of return and without a permanent solution that would bind future generations.

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the Ḥamās government, Khaled Ibrahim Abu 'Arafeh, who were exiled from their homes, is described. The issue opens with the blessings of the head of the Palestinian municipality legislature, Dr Aziz Duwaik. See also The Electronic Intifada 2011.

17   On 14 July 2017, three IM members killed two police officers on the Temple Mount. It was indicated that one of the murderers said to one of the policemen that he was "from Umm al Fahm and from Ra'ed Salah's group" (PM"H 5580/18–3205/17; from the indictment served on Shaykh Ra'ed Salah Mahajna by the Shalom Court in Haifa on 24 August 2017).

The military arm, Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassam Brigades, which was established at the beginning of the 1990s, acted very closely with Iran on matters relating to funding activities and military supplies. The military arm, together with the Palestinian Islamic Jihād organisation, are an Islamic front fighting against Israel. In negotiations between the political arm and military arm, which acts mainly from the Gaza Strip, the internal Ḥamās leadership in the Gaza Strip headed by Yihye Sanwar tries to balance between the need to rule a population of two million people while somehow coordinating in some way with Israel—even if through a third party—and despite his ideological commitment to act for the destruction of Israel and to use the Gaza Strip as a base for continuing the *jihād* against Israel.

Additional factors influencing the decision-making process are the security prisoners in Israeli prisons whose stand is seen as the organisation's battlefield. Ḥamās makes a serious effort to free these prisoners as it did with the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange on 18 October 2011, serving as the most prominent example. Yihye Sanwar was the leader of the Ḥamās prisoners before he was released in the Shalit prisoner exchange. Today, Muhammad Naji Sabha and Abbas as-Sayed are the leaders of the Ḥamās prisoners in Israel. Both are sentenced with life imprisonment because they ordered suicide attacks on Israeli targets during the second *intifāḍa*.

Jihād can take many different shapes—personal, economic, social, legal, via propaganda, and militarily. To Ḥamās, even suicide acts can be seen as part of survival, retaliations, and computations (with Fataḥ) (Singh 2011: 15–22). *Jihād* also needs patience and *ṣumūd* (steadfastness) alongside political activity. All of these means are legitimate in the eyes of Ḥamās in order to carry out their goal of establishing an Islamic-National Palestine State at the expense of the State of Israel. Ḥamās believes that the all the territory of Palestine/Israel is holy land (*waqf*) for the Muslim people until Judgment Day. This belief, enshrined in the Ḥamās Covenant, stipulates that war with Israel will cannot end without the total destruction of the Jewish State.

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Hizb ut-Tahrir: Dreaming of Caliphate

Meerim Aitkulova

1 Introduction

Against the background of turmoil in Muslim majority countries that began with escalation of the Palestine and Israel conflict, and the processes of the decolonization and internal collisions between Arabic states, the appearance of Islamic movement like Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) struggling for own version of justice was not unexpected.[1] However, in a world where the conjunction of religion and politics was long ago dismissed as regressive, the ideas of a new movement claiming to be a political party, but obstinately fighting for an Islamic Caliphate on the Prophet's model, was definitely unusual. The Party persistently spreads this message among Muslims on the global level, while rejecting cooperation with other Islamic movements, and perhaps has never been so popular as it is now. It is the particular focus of close attention by security services and social and political institutions in Central Asia, where Hizb ut-Tahrir attained wide popularity since the collapse of the Soviet system. Yet, Hizb ut-Tahrir gained less international attention than other fundamentalist Islamic movements and often research on this Party is rather controversial, oscillating between labelling it as a 'terrorist' or a 'peaceful' group. In this regard, this chapter attempts to provide more insights into the history and ideology of Hizb ut-Tahrir and the position it takes on violence.

2 Hizb ut-Tahir: Historical Background

Hizb ut-Tahir (Party of Liberation) was founded in 1953 as an Islamic political organization in Jerusalem by an Islamic scholar of Palestinian origin, Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (1909–1977). He received his education at several prestigious Islamic institutions including the prominent Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Upon completion of his university studies, he began his career as a

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teacher and later as an appeals court judge in Palestine. The historical background of Hizb ut-Tahrir's appearance is in many ways related to the situation in the "Muslim countries" (al-Nabhani, 1998: 240) in the middle of the twentieth century. Deeply disturbed by the occupation of Palestine, the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1914, al-Nabhānī enters the political arena with a new program, generated primarily as a reaction to these factors (Wali 2017: 102). Reflection on the broader question of what happened to the Islamic world that until recently shone in all its might and ruled half of the world, led him to the idea that only the revival of the single pan-Islamic state (Caliphate) could eliminate disunity among Muslims and restore the former glory (Azad 2017: 7). It is worth noting that throughout Islamic history the political component was an inseparable part of Islamic religion, and this complementarity largely influenced on the ideology of many intellectuals since the twentieth century, who also searched for appropriate answers and reactions towards challenges of the post-colonial world. Other influential movements like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (established in 1928), and Jamaat-e-Islami in India (established in 1941), also claimed the right to be present in the political arena in the name of Islam, and campaigned for the reestablishment of an Islamic state (Nuruddin 2017: 276).

The activity of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was a source of inspiration during the early years of al-Nabhānī's career, when he began to explore the opinion that West threatened not only the physical borders of the Muslim majority countries, but also the spiritual and intellectual development of Muslims (Nuruddin 2017: 276). However, al-Nabhānī's disagreement over the proper way to reestablish the Caliphate and his vision of the future of this system resulted in an ideological split with the leaders of Muslim Brotherhood like Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949) and Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966). Al-Nabhānī criticised them for being too moderate and deviating from the model of the state that was already present in its complete form during the lifetime of the Prophet and Caliphs (Nuruddin 2017: 277).

Unlike some other Islamic religious groups, Hizb ut-Tahrir is well structured and its ideology is clearly defined. This ideology promotes the revival of Islamic *umma* (community of believers) through the creation of a Caliphate, similar to the one that existed during the era of the Prophet Muḥammad and his first four successors (the four 'rightly guided caliphs'). The Party sees the flaws of other Islamic movements in their lack of a strong political program and cooperation with secularists and proclaims itself not as a purely religious organization but rather as a political movement which gets its inspiration from Islam (Taji-Farouki 2000: 22). Therefore, it opposes any other ideologies—whether they be communism, capitalism, or anything else—as alien to Islam.

For Hizb ut-Tahrir Islam is a self-sufficient totality revealed by God and cannot comply with any humanly created ideologies (Taji-Farouki 2000: 22–23). The main principles of Hizb ut-Tahrir have not changed since the day of its foundation and, despite frequent changes of leadership and changing conditions in the contemporary world, al-Nabhānī's initial ideas constitute the immutable ground of Hizb ut-Tahrir and continue to inspire many Muslims today. The name of the Party reflects its primary aim of liberating Muslim countries from the influence of the systems of the *kufr* (non-believers) (Hizb ut-Tahrir n.d. b).

Muhammad Iqbal and Zulkifli Zulkifli (2016: 39) consider Hizb ut-Tahrir as a group that has all the characteristics of the fundamentalist movement, though it is often inaccurately confused with a 'terrorist' group. They define Islamic fundamentalist movements as groups that view themselves as both religious and political movements, believing in the coherence of Islam as an alternative to Western domination, and considering *jihād* as a necessary element in defending and expanding the Muslim *umma*, though varied groups may interpret *jihād* differently.

Today, Hizb ut-Tahrir is one of the largest Islamic movements in the world (Stuart and Ahmed 2010: 143). From its humble beginning in Palestine, the ideas of Hizb ut-Tahrir swiftly spread throughout many countries, largely thanks to the strategy of al-Nabhānī who encouraged his followers to travel extensively, his own charismatic personality and his welcoming approach to all Muslims regardless of race, gender or the *madhhab* (school of thought) to which they belonged (Osman 2012: 90). Also, Hizb ut-Tahrir actively disseminates its ideas through leaflets, booklets, lectures, and regular meetings. Today, its media branch is perhaps the most organised and modern, when compared with the media outlets of other Islamic organizations (Iqbal and Zulkifli 2016: 49–50). During the first decade of its activity, Hizb ut-Tahrir experienced relative success in many Arab countries, and had official premises in those countries until it was outlawed after being involved in two coup attempts in Amman, and for fomenting coup plans in number of other Arab countries (Taji-Farouki 2000: 22). It is known that military elements in Jordan, Syria and Egypt closely cooperated with Hizb ut-Tahrir during the coup planning, and it was not until 1977—with the launch of more repressive measures against the Party—that Hizb ut-Tahrir members started to emigrate to the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and following the Cold War, to Central Asia, the Caucasus and Southeast Asia (Wibisono 2018).

After the death of al-Nabhānī in 1977, Sheikh Abdul Qaleem Zalloum (1924–2003) took over the leadership of the Party. It was during his tenure that Hizb ut-Tahrir expanded beyond the limits of its early geographical presence and

could claim with confidence that it was a truly international organization. However, this expansion was less the result of a conscious strategy and more the result of coercion, as mass persecution and growing resentment in the countries with the greatest numbers of Hizb ut-Tahrir's members forced them to migrate, predominantly to the US and to European countries (International Crisis Group 2003: ii). Later, the processes of globalization in combination with Hizb ut-Tahrir's media strategies, facilitated the internationalization of this organization (Iqbal and Zulkifli 2016: 49–50). Currently it is present either officially or clandestinely in more than forty countries (Hasan 2017). Effective use of media potential is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the movement; it adapts the latest modes of communication, through professionally composed printed and media brochures, official and unofficial pages in social media, web sites in the countries where it is present. For example, for a long time, Hizb ut-Tahrir's Central Asian office had pages on the online social media, until they were blocked by security agencies. However, the flexibility of social media allows them to continue own activity under different names and they are easily recognizable due to the specific vocabulary used (terms like 'revival of Caliphate', 'the hypocrisy of the system of the *kufr*' and so on).

Since it is not easy to estimate the number of followers due to its partially underground nature, the Party's regular conferences and meetings may give some indication of the level of support. For example, the largest Hizb ut-Tahrir conference took place in 2007 in Jakarta (Indonesia), and brought together something like eighty thousand people (Reuters 2007). According to other estimates there were from ten thousand (Filiu 2008) to one million people involved (Dyett 2014); yet this diverse assessment of attendance reflects the fact that it is extremely difficult to provide even rough estimates of their membership and supporters.

It is important to mention Hizb ut-Tahrir's activity in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), where the Party is widely present today, albeit clandestinely (Baran 2004: 2). Following the downfall of the Soviet regime in 1991, Islam, a dominant religion in Central Asian countries, returned in all its diversity of traditions, virtues and new challenges, after being excluded from public sphere by the communist ideology of the Soviet Union. The opening up of society allowed the entrance of many religious movements, including Hizb ut-Tahrir, that swiftly found new members in fertile soil. In the political arena, the Party's enthusiastic activity is usually considered as being more a response to repressive and corrupt regimes in this region, while, from a spiritual point of view, the Party was attractive to the masses, as it could effectively fill the ideological vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet system (Khamidov 2003: 11). Emmanuel Karagiannis writes

that today "Hizb ut-Tahrir is among the most feared Islamic groups in Central Asia, but it is also, apparently, the least understood" (2005: 137). Central Asian regimes have a pronounced authoritarian character and tend to be more intolerant toward any movements that could undermine the existing status quo (Heathershaw and Montgomery 2014: 7). Thus Hizb ut-Tahrir's calls for change in the political order—said to be inspired by God himself—have triggered an uncompromising struggle against them. The position of the Central Asian population does not differ much; it is secular in the main, with citizens finding religion a relic of the past that hinders progress. People are skeptical towards any and all religious groups. There are no official statements or statistics about the Party's engagement in acts of violence (Frances 2015), and accusations are mainly based on the presumption that Hizb ut-Tahrir members can be "a conveyor belt" to terrorism (Baran 2004: 11) and their ideology "sanctions military coups and the mass killings of innocent peoples" (Stuart and Ahmed 2010: 143). Yet, their activity attracts attention regarding the question of proportionality of measures against them taken by the authorities. Evidence of brutal persecution, like torture unto death and long term imprisonments for disseminating Hizb ut-Tahrir's literature, on the one hand confer to Hizb ut-Tahrir's members status of innocent victims of the regime (Karagiannis and McCauley 2006: 321), while from the human rights perspective the uncompromised struggle against non-violent Party members has come to demonstrate the repressive nature of Russia and the Central Asian states (Human Rights Watch 2017). Today, the Party is banned in all Central Asian countries, in some Middle Eastern countries, in Russia and Germany, and since 2017 in Indonesia (Al Jazeera 2017). Many Hizb ut-Tahrir members have found asylum in European countries, where they regularly conduct demonstrations and conferences against the authorities of their home countries and actively deploy their self-image as victims.

3   Aim and Ideology

> Let there be among you a group that invites to the good, orders what is right and forbids what is evil, and they are those who are successful.
>> Qur'ān 3:104

According to al-Nabhānī's interpretation, Islam is a complete and coherent system of thought that can regulate all aspects of life (al-Nabhani cited in Azad 2017: 70). According to Hizb ut-Tahrir's official website:

> Its aim is to resume the Islamic way of life and to convey the Islamic
> *da'wah* [preaching] to the world. This objective means bringing Muslims
> back to living an Islamic way of life in *Dar al-Islam* [Land of Islam] and
> in an Islamic society such that all of life's affairs in society are admin-
> istered according to the *Shari'ah* [law] rules, and the viewpoint in it is
> the *halal* and the *haram* under the shade of the Islamic State, which is
> the *Khilafah* State [Caliphate]. That state is the one in which Muslims
> appoint a *Khaleefah* [Caliph] and give him the *bay'ah* [an oath of alle-
> giance to a leader] to listen and obey on condition that he rules accord-
> ing to the Book of Allāh (swt) and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh
> (saw) and on condition that he conveys Islam as a message to the world
> through *da'wah* and *jihād*.
>
>   HIZB UT-TAHRIR n.d. a

This aim embodies, in brief, the core idea of Hizb ut-Tahrir; all other docu-
ments and programs processed by the Party are issued in accordance with the
main points of this central aim.

Being revealed by God, Islam is the only true way of life and all sovereignty
in this system belongs to God, not humankind. Its political ideology encom-
passes two principles: *sharī'a* or Islamic law, needed for the foundation and
operation of a just society; and second, the Islamic state or Caliphate that can
ensure and protect *sharī'a*. Therefore, all-regulative character of Islam is only
possible within the Caliphate system, where faith (*dīn*) and state (*dawla*) are
inseparable (Hizb ut-Tahrir n.d. a). In upholding its ideology, the Party refers to
the historical Caliphates, when this system of governance granted stability for
the Muslim people and independence from other countries. Al-Nabhānī writes
of the Islamic state that "it is not a dream, nor is it a figment of the imagination,
for it had dominated and influenced history for more than thirteen hundred
years" (cited in Azad 2017: 70). Al-Nabhānī expected that at first the Caliphate
or Islamic state would be established in one of the Arabic-speaking countries
and would eventually encompass all Islamic countries. However, his ideas later
proved to be more popular in other places.

Al-Nabhānī synthesised classical Islam with modern politics, which resulted
in a draft constitution (1953) of the future Caliphate that contains a code of
laws for the political, economic and social system of the state and its foreign
policy (Stuart and Ahmed 2009: 17). According to the constitution, the head
of the state, the Caliph, is an elected figure and should be just and account-
able leader, as he is a symbol of the God's absolute power and his representa-
tive on earth (Draft Constitution of the Khilafah State 2011: Article 34). The

constitution stipulates that the state will be governed by *sharī'a* law and that people of the book (Christians and Jews) will be allowed to practice their religion freely by paying *jizya* (a special tax, historically levelled on Christians and Jews), while other faiths will not be tolerated until they convert to an acceptable religion within the Caliphate (al-Nabhani 1997: 228).

Unlike other Islamic parties, Hizb ut-Tahrir has a comprehensive constitution encompassing ready-to-implement policies for every sphere of life. While there is some slight accommodation to modern realities, all of al-Nabhānī's views on the Islamic state are available in the official documents of the Party and are actively distributed by its members. The Party, although espousing the uncompromised pursuit of the Prophet's model of life and governance, is unable to replicate this in its 'purest form' and faces some paradoxes in its activities. The constitution, although tailored for the Caliphate system, takes a lot from the Western systems of law and governance; also many Party members found asylum in Western *kufr* countries,[2] and in Indonesia the democratic climate allowed the Party to flourish and conduct large demonstrations, despite the stark criticism of Indonesia's democratic model by Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Despite his zeal for the idea of the Caliphate, al-Nabhānī was no less realistic and expected many obstacles on the way, like the influence of the colonial legacy on economy, culture and politics in majority Islamic countries that might participate in the future Caliphate. In the modern stage of the Party's development, the idea of Caliphate appears more like a dream, one that might never come true, but will be an eternal source of inspiration. According to Iqbal and Zulkifli, today Party members "are not interested in discussing the details of the proposed Islamic Caliphate … more important for them here is a psychological need to believe that great Islamic Caliphate will emerge as inescapable entity to bring back the Muslim glory" (2016: 56). Sabara Nuruddin (2017: 277) also has an impression that "HT is a model of romantic political consciousness that idealises the past for the future." In addition, many authors find the re-establishing of the Prophet's model of the Caliphate as utopian, unless the blueprint model is adapted for modernity, which would be a major deviation from the Party's position (Nuruddin 2017: 283).

The Party makes many statements on the governmental system of democracy. While acknowledging many commonalities between Islam and democracy, the Party nevertheless finds them incompatible on the matter

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2　Although Party justifies this based on the story of migration of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina, where he and his followers found refuge and welcoming approach from Jewish and pagan Arab tribes, most of whom later converted to Islam.

of sovereignty (Baran 2004: 18), and on the basis that democracy was largely developed in the *kufr* lands. The supreme role of the *demos* (people) in a democratic state is not acceptable for the Islamic state as envisaged by Hizb ut-Tahrir, where God is the only source of governance and the people are those who submit to his power (Azad 2017: 9). All other states where governance is not based on this principle—that is, the primacy of God—live in the state of *jāhiliyya* (ignorance) (Azad 2017: 9). Therefore, the Party rejects democracy and other political ideologies as being man-made, and thus un-Islamic and inherently flawed. Due to this basic contradiction, Hizb ut-Tahrir believes that "we are already in an ideological clash between the secular democratic ideology and the God-given system" (Robin interview by Baran 2004: 18). Moreover, the Party has a divine duty to bring people to the correct path, that of Islam, since with the downfall of the last Caliphate, all Muslims are in a state of *jāhiliyya* and, by living under Western-composed concepts, their situation is only worsening. Even Islamic states like Saudi Arabia and Iran are dismissed as non-Islamic for their policy of double standards and for sharing the ideologies of the *kufr* (Iqbal and Zulkifli 2016: 51). On this point, the Party refers to pre-Islamic history when Arabic tribes lived in similar state of ignorance and polytheism until the Prophet Muḥammad introduced the only true religion of Islam. According to the Party, in the new world order—by God's mercy—land, resources, and power to regulate them within the limits set by God, will be given to the people and all merits will be equally shared (Stuart and Ahmed 2009: 17).

Born in the era of upheaval in the Muslim world, Hizb ut-Tahrir from the very beginning has yearned for justice and is actively propagating this notion today to resist the era of neo-colonialism and capitalism. Anti-Zionism and anti-Western rhetoric are particularly strong in the Party's propaganda. Hasan Azad finds Hizb ut-Tahrir's ideology in comparison with other radical Islamic movements "as a clear (some say radical) alternative to Western modes of being and thinking, upholding (and preaching) a clear message of political, epistemological, and religious-ethical unity in the face of an overweening West" (2017: 16). Suha Taji-Farouki notes that this animosity is largely based on the conspiracy theories shared by Party members since they strongly believe that "Jewish and Christian unbelievers allegedly form a united front against Muslims, and are engaged in a permanent effort to destroy Islam: haunted by echoes of the historical cry of 'Allāhu Akbar' at the Gates of Vienna, they are terrified at the mere prospect of an Islamic reassertion" (2000: 24).

In recent decades, with the geopolitical problems in the world and the deteriorating situation in Muslim majority countries, the Party's ideals of struggling

for a just world look increasingly reasonable to many Muslims around the globe. This fosters the Party's zeal to disseminate the divine order. Hizb ut-Tahrir members believe that working for the Party is the same as serving God (Sinclair 2014: 4).

4   Hizb ut-Tahrir Methodology

The Party strongly opposes gradual and 'soft' approaches to implementing Islam, as real changes are only possible through uncompromising radical actions; otherwise, it would mean that "Allāh has sent something impractical that has to be made practical by Muslims" (Mayer 2004:14). Hizb ut-Tahrir often refers to historical events depicting the success of radical changes, like the rise of communism and, more importantly, the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, which was full of drastic measures. However, the notion of radicalism in the Party's ideology means achieving radical change within the existing order of the Muslim world without resorting to violence. As of 2017, "the Method" of Hizb ut-Tahrir outlined online included the statement that Party members "consider that Islamic law forbids violence or armed struggle against the regime as a method to reestablish the Islamic State" however the most recent update of this website in 2020 gives some indication of when taking up arms is in the Party's purview, that is, in the case of *jihād*, discussed below (Hizb ut-Tahrir n.d. a).

Instead of advocating the forceful seizure of the State, it rather opts for peaceful methods to attract more members. The Party pays keen attention to the education, both religious and secular, as the *da'wa* (preaching) and intellectual debates require a sophisticated knowledge to recruit new members on both grassroots and higher levels and get wider outreach (Zahid 2014: 4). Also, Hizb ut-Tahrir finds it important to win over the minds of members of the military, as they are capable of carrying out peaceful coups when the right moment arrives (Zahid 2014: 4). The amalgam of passion for the Caliphate and competence in religious questions makes their ideas highly attractive and distinguishes it from other religious movements criticised for superficial knowledge.

For the Party, Islam as a universal religion is based on proper ideas (*fikra*) and methods (*ṭarīqa*), and no other inventions are needed to justify this divine combination (al-Nabhani cited in Osman 2012:95). In this regard, the Party is unwilling to cooperate with other Islamic organizations, viewing their errors as misunderstandings of the basic tenets of Islam. Al-Nabhānī emphasised that other parties had unclear ideas that were often influenced by modern

concepts and undefined methods (Baran 2004: 19). Additionally, members of other parties responsible for change were often disorganised and incoherent in their actions. To resolve these problems, the Party argued that the best approach was demonstrated by the Prophet himself, and during the golden age of Islam under the rule of the four righteous Caliphs. Thus, Hizb ut-Tahrir does not claim originality in its plan of action for Caliphate building. Rather, by adopting the three-staged program of the Prophet Muḥammad, the Party anticipates the same divinely-inspired success that was attained more than a thousand years ago (Baran 2004: 20).

4.1   First Stage: Culturing

The first stage involves recruiting and developing intellectually candidates "to produce people who believe in the idea and the method of the Party, so that they form the Party group" (Hizb ut-Tahrir n.d. a). Hizb ut-Tahrir reminds its recruits about the patience and individual approach demonstrated by the Prophet during his preaching activities, as well as his tireless efforts to educate his community of believers. After the potential member initially accepts the Party's basic ideas, the process of more nuanced teaching on an individual basis about their ideas and methods begins. According to Baran "by the end of the first stage, the HT member is ideologically, theologically and spiritually prepared to deal with any hardship that may befall him or her by being certain that this is God's path" (2004: 21). This part is considered important for the growth of the group, capable of spreading its ideas to others.

During the first stage potential Party followers get an education in study circles called ḥalaqa that replicates the historical Islamic study method (Azad 2017: 10). The method is still widely used in the Islamic world when students sit in a circle on the floor in the mosque or teacher's home. Ḥalaqas cover different topics related to Islam, moreover, since Islam is considered by members as a complete way of life all other 'non-religious' subjects are also relevant for study. In ḥalaqas followers listen to al-Nabhānī's basic ideas, by reading his main books or listening to the teacher's lections about his ideas. All lectures have a heavy focus on the idea of the revival of the Caliphate infused with the criticism of the modern systems. New recruits in the initial stage of the study are not allowed to question the Party goals and are expected to comprehend the ideas through hard study and practical work (finding new members and practice of Islam) (Azad 2017: 11).

4.2   Second Stage: Interacting with the Muslim Umma

At this stage, the Party continues to introduce its ideas to the larger Muslim population so that they implement its ideology in life. It is described as:

> The collective culturing of the masses of the Ummah with the thoughts and the rules of Islam which the Hizb had adopted, through lessons, lectures, and talks in the mosques, centres and common gathering places, and through the press, books and leaflets. This was done in order to create a common awareness within the Ummah and to interact with her.
>
> HIZB UT-TAHRIR n.d. a

Here the Party operates more decisively, and openly propagates ideas that create conflict between the *umma* and ruling regimes (Khamidov 2005: 7). Again, this is inspired by a key event in Islamic history, when the Prophet Muḥammad raised his *umma*, composed of people from different nations and social classes, to resist the corrupt regime of the Quraysh tribe in Mecca. On the way to uniting all Muslims into single *umma*, the Party is rather flexible in its approach to other interpretations of Islam practiced by different Muslims.

4.3   *Third Stage: Establishment of the Islamic State*

According to Hizb ut-Tahrir, the final stage will eventually come after the whole *umma* embraces the Party's ideology (Khamidov 2005: 7). However, the work of the Party does not stop on this stage, because only after the entire world comes under the rule of Islam can the Party claim that its mission is completed. At present, the Party can be considered to be at the second stage (Baran 2004: 21). Initially, al-Nabhānī set an ambitious thirteen-year timeframe for accomplishing these stages, which was later extended to thirty years (International Crisis Group 2003: 3). When this period proved to be unrealistic as well, the Party claimed that it will patiently continue its tireless efforts for the order of God to be established on earth as long as needed (Hizb ut-Tahrir n.d. a).

5   Attitude to Violence and *Jihād*

It is widely reported that Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects violence as a method to achieve its aim, and extensively uses primarily propaganda tools (Khamidov 2005: 4; Karagiannis and McCauley 2006: 315; Stuart and Ahmed 2009: 18). In taking such a position, Hizb ut-Tahrir also regards itself as pursuing the path of the Prophet Muḥammad, who "limited his struggle for the establishment of the Islamic State to intellectual and political work. He established this Islamic state without resorting to violence" (Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain 2007), and instead looked for support from other tribes and relied on his followers. Hizb ut-Tahrir adopted such an approach in the concept of *nusra*, which means looking for assistance from outside (Karagiannis and McCauley 2006: 326). It seems that,

in order to avoid violence, the ideal scenario for the Party would be a peaceful *coup d'état* undertaken by military forces, that in turn would hand over power to the Party (Karagiannis and McCauley 2006: 326). This is why it is so important for Hizb ut-Tahrir to gain the *nusra* from the military block.

Despite their harsh criticism of US policy in the Middle East, Party members have never been involved in acts of violence (Safi 2015). Acts of terrorism committed by other Islamic groups evoke the Party's official condemnation and serve to accentuate their ideological and methodological distance from such organizations. The Party has argued that jihadist terrorism is counter-productive to their goal. Furthermore, even if conditions were to make *jihād* a valid option, the killing of innocent civilians is unacceptable (Hizb ut-Tahrir 2014). For example, in relation to the Caliphate pronounced by ISIS, the Party claimed it to be "islamically illegitimate" (Hizb ut-Tahrir 2014) due to the purely militaristic character of ISIS and a number of other Islamic factors which ISIS violated when established a Caliphate. Regarding Al-Baghdadi's proclamations against the Iraqi government Hizb ut-Tahrir has described his words as "empty speech without substance" (Al Jazeera 2014). Indonesia is an interesting case of the counter terrorist achievements of Hizb ut-Tahrir when some former members of violent Islamic organizations denounced violence and joined the Party (Osman 2012: 98). As a demonstration of its allegiance to non-violent means, the Party often brings up the example of the peaceful resistance of its own members from Central Asia who are under close surveillance from security services and often end up imprisoned or even tortured to death.

However, many experts consider the Party's relation to political violence as more nuanced than it appears at first glance. Emmanuel Karagiannis and Clark McCauley (2006: 328) provide two ways of describing the Party's ideology on violence: "the first is to say that they have been committed to non-violence for fifty years. The second is to say that they have been waiting fifty years for the right moment to begin violent struggle." For Mohamed Osman (2012: 98), "Hizb ut-Tahrir's general non-violent position does not mean that the party is avowedly non-violent at all times."

The Party's envisioning of the concept of *jihād* may provide more clarity on the question of violence. *Jihād* in Islam is a complex concept, basically meaning that it is the religious duty of Muslims to struggle in the way of God (Shah 2013: 344). This struggle has two aspects: first, inner struggle against one's own ego, one's harmful desires, and resistance to the temptations that corrupt the soul. In the Islamic tradition, this version of non-violent *jihād* turned inward is often referred to as the greater *jihād*, since mastering the self is considered more difficult than engaging in a physical struggle. The second aspect of *jihād*, also referred to as 'lesser *jihād*', is warfare against the enemies of Islam, which

can take the form of offensive or defensive struggle. Defensive *jihād* is usually set in motion when Muslim territories are occupied by foreign invaders, while offensive *jihād* is warfare launched by Muslims to expand Islamic rule to other territories.

For the Party, it is obligatory for every Muslim to fight if their lands are invaded and occupied, regardless of whether or not the Caliphate has been established (Abedin 2005). As such, for the Party, fighting against foreign occupiers in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan is considered to be defensive *jihād*. Focusing on this distinction, it can be said that there might exist a fragile border between defensive and offensive *jihād*, as the first may easily turn into the second under specific social and political circumstances (Ahmed and Stuart 2009: 22).

If the Party resorts primarily to peaceful means for the revival of the Caliphate, then the potentially 'violent' part of *jihād* may be launched later after the establishment of the Caliphate, since this model of expanding the Caliphate is acceptable in Islam. This model of expanding or offensive *jihād* is detailed in the Party's publication, *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilizations* (2002), in which, along with calls for the intellectual struggle against Western culture, the Islamic legitimacy of offensive warfare is emphasised as well. The Party argues that the Muslims with their *dīn* (faith) and civilization on one side, and Christians with their capitalistic worldview on the other side, were always clashing with each other:

> The clash of civilizations as an inevitable matter. It existed in the past, exists now and will remain until the clash ends shortly before the Hour, since it does not come except upon the worst of creation. Do not be deceived, O Muslims, by the callers to the dialogue who place their heads in the sand and condone humiliation and defeat. Make the preparations required for the conflict, since the Capitalist Western civilization has knocked you down militarily, politically and economically.
>
> HIZB UT-TAHRIR 2002: 62

Yet, the Party stresses that they cannot legitimately launch an offensive *jihād*, as it is the prerogative of the Caliph only (Karagiannis and McCauley 2006: 325). Thus, until his Caliphate is established, the Party continues its intellectual struggle to persuade Muslims and non-Muslims about the righteousness of their aims.

As for criticism of the notion of offensive *jihād*, the Party responds that it is legitimate for every nation state to declare war under certain conditions (Hizb ut-Tahrir 2002: 25). For example, they state online:

> The fact that the Party does not use material power to defend itself or as a weapon against the rulers is of no relevance to the subject of *jihād*, because *jihād* has to continue till the Day of Judgement. So whenever the disbelieving enemies attack an Islamic country it becomes compulsory on its Muslim citizens to repel the enemy. The members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in that country are a part of the Muslims and it is obligatory upon them as it is upon other Muslims, in their capacity as Muslims, to fight the enemy and repel them. Whenever there is a Muslim *amīr* who declares *jihād* to enhance the Word of Allāh (*swt*) and mobilises the people to do that, the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir will respond in their capacity as Muslims in the country where the general call to arms was proclaimed.
>
> HIZB UT-TAHRIR n.d. a

The Party also refers to the unlawful acts of the US and the state of Israel against Muslims under the guise of democracy building. Thus the Caliphate as a legitimate Muslim state has even more justification, given that it is concerned with bringing global justice under Islam. In recent times, against the background of the growing religious terrorism in the world and severe persecution of Hizb ut-Tahir members in some countries, the Party's 'classical' perception of violence is being strained. Thus, the official web sites in general try to stand by al-Nabhānī's vision of violence, and official leaders preach divine punishment. However, on the individual level, some voices welcoming violent acts can be traced in the online social media. Some experts also claim that the Party acts as a gateway for *jihādi* terrorism (Baran 2004: 11; Stuart and Ahmed 2010: 143), and that non-involvement in acts of violence does not mean that the Party does not contribute to it through its own ideology that may inspire some 'violent jihadists'.

6   Structure and Funding

The structure of the Party is strictly hierarchical and resembles a pyramid with an *amīr* (supreme leader) positioned on the top (Osman 2012: 92). The specific aim of the Party is incompatible with their secular surroundings, and this demands a highly centralised and disciplined structure. The primary leadership centre, located in Arab territory, is primarily concerned with the general coordination of the Party's ideological activities, as well as being responsible for the promotion of the Party's ideas on the higher levels (among politicians and armies for the realising of the so-called *nusra* concept) (Osman 2012: 92–93). At the next level are committees responsible for the coordination of

a particular region or country (Baran 2004: 24). For example, the Party has an administrative committee regulating the Central Asian region. However, due to bans on the activity of the Party in that region, the committee's office is located in London. At the lower levels are local committees that oversee cities and the Party's smaller cells (Baran 2004: 24). As noted, the centralised character results in a top down approach when it comes to passing along the Party's documents and directives. According to Taji-Farouki (2014: 46), unlike other revolutionary organizations, Hizb ut-Tahir has managed to maintain this structure since the day of its establishment, and has demonstrated long term ideological cohesion, as well as a lack of serious disagreements and splits in internal structures.

The membership in the Party requires a period of indoctrination that is needed to detect possible security agents and to keep ideological unity. By the end of this intensive period of the study of al-Nabhānī's primary documents, a new member pledges allegiance to the Party's ideals with an oath of loyalty and an agreement to obey orders (Baran 2004: 25). Karagiannis and McCauley (2006: 317) compare the effectiveness of the Party's structure to that of the Bolshevik revolutionaries in Russia, when each level had a clear vision and a task toward attaining an ultimate goal. Depending on the legal status of Hizb ut-Tahrir in different countries—whether it is either recognised or banned— the Party accordingly acts openly or in a chain of secretive cells. Ironically, the Party, which is so antagonistic towards the Western world and its concepts, has more freedom for its activities in Western countries, but is not tolerated in many Muslim majority countries.

The Party stresses the importance of the role of women. Women in Hizb ut-Tahrir act as main recruiters of other women, as cross gender recruiting is forbidden, and carry out religious education in line with the Party's ideology in female-only cells (Baran 2004: 32). Though it is not easy to give the statistical data on female membership, we can assume significant numbers as male members will try to engage their wives, mothers, or sisters to the new ideology. It can also happen the other way around. Women also actively support the women of an imprisoned member's family (Cragin and Daly 2009: 52).

Funding mainly comes from the donations of the members, who, depending on their own income, contribute a percentage to the Party, and propaganda activity, being an effective and non-violent tool for raising awareness, is the primary expense (Osman 2012: 99). Donations from wealthy Muslim patrons also constitute an important part of the Party's income. Mutual assistance and support for the families of members who are imprisoned or in need is also a characteristic activity of the Party, and this perhaps is another factor in the popularity of Hizb ut-Tahrir.

7   Conclusion

The ideas of Hizb ut-Tahir have stood the test of time and its current transnational character reflects the ideological success of this group. Spreading from the Arab world to America and Asia, it is insensitive to gender, race or *madhhab* biases, welcoming all who believe in one God and who are ready to share the Party's ideology. The ideas of Caliphate building and the awakening of the whole *umma* as a single entity seem to have a strong utopian flavour, even after years of the Party's activity. Yet, with al-Qāʿida and ISIS in the background and growing resentment among contemporary Muslims, the idea of the Caliphate does not seem so fantastic. The Party was able to launch a wide-scale ideological propaganda campaign to win over the hearts and minds of many Muslims. However, despite many accusations of being an inspiration for *jihādi* terrorism, in its official rhetoric of the Caliphate revival in the current century, the Party continues to adhere to the initial method advocated by its founder al-Nabhānī, who stressed that an Islamic state represents the only safe haven, but the way to that goal should not be paved with blood (at least there is no official information of Party members being involved in violence). Based on the characteristics and the methods of the Party considered in this chapter, it is likely that the movement will continue to expand.

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Ungoverned or Alternatively Governed Spaces in North-Eastern Nigeria

A Critical Exploration of Boko Haram's Ideological Motif

Benson O. Igboin

1 Introduction

The whole question of what was happening to us, which is now called Boko Haram, has never been subjected to any critical intellectual analysis. We've just been interested in the burning of houses, suicide bombers and so on, but we have never attempted to ask what is the moral economy or what really predisposes people to this kind of attitude, where did this come from? Beyond thinking of intelligence as gathering gossip and information from people, there are intellectual views. It is possible to trace the historical processes that have produced what we have now in the name of Boko Haram. Is there any connection between Boko Haram and other forms of violent protests that precede it, whether it's Maitatsine or whatever? Can we explain why this Boko Haram is dominant in Maiduguri, Yobe and not Sokoto or Kebbi? These are questions that only intellectual analyses, dispassionate, taken away from politics, can help us to come to the conclusion because there must be a reason and it may be sociological, cultural, religious or historical, as to why certain things happen where they do. If this was about religion, and Muslims are trying to expand the frontiers of Islam, which kind of a stupid man will be fighting inside his own house and hope to conquer other people?

KUKAH 2013: 39–40

Matthew H. Kukah, the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, has been one of the few dispassionate and committed crusaders of good governance in Nigeria. His averments above provide a template for undertaking an in-depth historical and ideological analysis of Boko Haram, a group which by 2015 was declared by the Global Terrorism Index as the most deadly terrorist group in the world, followed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), on the basis of their capacities for actual violence (Botha, Ewi, Salifu, and Abdile 2017). Many media outfits, governments at both national and transnational levels, and commentators and

scholars have been more interested in the outward manifestations or operations of Boko Haram and military counter operations, while leaving the historical trajectory that underlined the ideological anchorage of the group. While efforts geared towards counter-terrorism are salutary for their immediate effects, they do not, as the Nigerian experience has shown, address the fundamental inspiration that results in collective violence again and again. Kukah is therefore challenging us to go beyond the politics, politicisation, and economical factors that are often adduced for the rise of the group and engage in a more nuanced historical and ideological investigation to unravel the remote factors that have made northern Nigeria a hotbed of inveterate violence.

Kukah's reference to Sokoto and Kebbi in the North-western geo-political zone is instructive because at the time of the rise of Boko Haram, Sokoto and Kebbi states were the poorest of all the 36 states of Nigeria (The National Bureau of Statistics 2005). In other words, if poverty is actually the cause of the rise of Boko Haram, as the West widely believed and theorised (Ini 2013; Ayegba 2015), the states of Sokoto and Kebbi should have been the proper provenance. In addition, studies have shown that even though Sokoto and Kebbi are extremely poor, they are the most peaceful in the North coming behind only Jigawa state (Obinna-Esiowu 2018). Zamfara state, where *sharīʿa* was instituted in 1999 as Nigeria returned to civil rule, is now one of the states being devastated by bandits. Studies have shown that poverty cannot always be connected to violence or insurgency, especially when religious nationalistic ideology, collective hatred, or moral conviction are involved (Mandel 2002; Yanay 2002; Skitka and Mullen 2002; Ogunfolu, Assim and Adejumo 2018: 190). Furthering this argument, Christopher Smith, reporting to the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, pointedly notes:

> I think it is all too convenient to suggest that somehow just because there are deprivations, somehow people then automatically know Osama bin Laden was rich. Ideology that is highly, highly radicalised may exploit poverty at times, but poor people don't necessarily become terrorists and killers. That is an insult, frankly, to poor people. I think we made the same mistake, with all due respect, with South Sudan.
>
> "US Policy Toward Nigeria" 2012: 32

Thus, Kukah's last question above is germane in an attempt to underscore the ultra-*jihādi*-Salafism that defines the ideological bent of the group, which has a long history stretching back to pre-colonial era. Of course, by fighting inside its house, Boko Haram is contesting space with the government of Nigeria with the aim to institute its own kind of rule and form of Islam—a *sharīʿa*-governed

space—as a forestate to what it probably 'plans' to extend to other parts of the country. Its capture and brief administration of Gwoza apodictically demonstrates this, where it hoisted its flag and announced the headquarters of its caliphate (Azama 2017: 83; MacEachern 2018: 155). Boko Haram's reference to a caliphate expressly underscores that it wants an exclusive rule based on *sharīʿa* and an Islamic identity. Accordingly, Michael Ibanga and James Archibong (2018: 147) state that "Boko Haram has established a strong administration based on Islamic Law. During the duration of its occupation of Mubi town in Adamawa State, ten people were tried and convicted of looting and other offences and had their hands amputated."

In the light of the foregoing, to deny as Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari (2015) has done that the ideology of Boko Haram is influenced by Islam, seems patently incorrect and is, in fact, provocative. The present study is provoked by the inauguration speech of President Buhari delivered on 29 May 2015. Although the speech touches on many issues of national life, a significant space is given to security challenges especially those posed by Boko Haram. Since July 2009, Boko Haram has not only continued to contest space with the Nigerian government but has also taken over some spaces where it has raised its flag and declared independence. Past administrations of the Federal Republic of Nigeria—Presidents Musa Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan—might have tried their best in either curtailing or exacerbating the occupation of swathes of spaces in the North-eastern part of Nigeria, especially in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, by the group. The line that President Buhari treads in the speech under review is that Boko Haram is not only "mindless" and "ungodly" but also "un-Islamic." These comments are critical in understanding and contending with the group, for, the first is emotive—being an ethical judgement that might not have added much to the meaning and essence of the group—and the second and third are theological and ideological—which provides the cannon fodder for its persistence and motivation. It is the second that President Buhari has denied, which is the thrust of this chapter.

The argument here is that Boko Haram draws strong ideological inspiration from its reading of Islam, and to deny it is to misunderstand the group altogether, the consequence of which is that wrong diagnosis can result in wrong prescription and administration. On the other hand, to accept that its ideology is, at least in its own estimation, 'Islamic' would enable counter-narrative processes, which have the potency of blocking recruitment, de-radicalisation, and possible resurgence in the near future. Although the securitisation process is important as the Nigerian and other regional governments are trying to intensify anti-terror efforts, it is mainly to reclaim the contested spaces from those who have established an illegal sovereign government. To achieve the

aims of this chapter, we shall conceptualise ungoverned spaces or alternatively governed spaces from global and Nigerian contexts, analyse Buhari's speech as it relates to our leitmotif, and finally emphasise the ideological implications involved, arguing that counter-narrative processes cannot be ignored as they are effective responses to ideologically-induced terrorism.

2   Conceptualising Ungoverned Spaces

The concept of 'ungoverned spaces' is sly and controversial. It is so because many definitions proffered to encapsulate its contents have either failed woefully or succeeded only partially. One question is whether there can be actual ungoverned spaces. We are poised to think that there is no such space that remains ungoverned in the physical or in the orbital. Put differently, every available space, even at interplanetary level, is governed by some persons or forces who dictate their affairs rightly or wrongly. These persons or forces hold the belief that they are legitimately, even if not legally empowered, to exert authority over the spaces under their control. An attempt to oust them makes the space a contested one. In the interim, the contested space is governed by an alternative force. This line of thinking is what leads us to the concept of 'alternatively governed spaces', since there is no actual absence of control over the space.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2014: 1) argues that it is not just that there are no such spaces called ungoverned spaces but even "the very existence of truly 'ungoverned space' is questionable." Six reasons are adduced for this position. One, the term does not take into cognisance the variations that practically exist between and within states. Two, it is state-centric, that is, it does not recognise the fact that it is not only the state that exists as a governable space. Three, it does not envisage the fact that other forms of government other than the state such as monarchy or sectarian government exists: these are in fact forms of government that exercise enormous power and authority, which Western theories may not recognise within a state-oriented structure, but are essentially are alternative governments in their own right. Four, it is also generally assumed that the so-called ungoverned spaces are high risk areas that produce violence or terrorism. This may not always be the case because: consider cyberspace, for example, as a form of ungoverned though not strictly physical space, acquired by terrorists to operate effectively. Five, much attention is drawn towards weak or failing states without a corresponding consideration that the 'strong' states may not be insulated from the incidence of ungoverned space. In fact, terrorists are more interested in spaces

that have modern facilities that can ease their operations rather than vast expanse of 'barren' spaces that can make them ineffective. Finally, six, it does not empirically demonstrate, as it is commonly theorised, why many of the terrorist operations are in advanced states rather than developing or fragile ones which are majorly conceived as less-governed, ungoverned, or mis-governed (Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2014: 1–2).

Michael Clark and Renad Mansour argue that what is at stake in ungoverned space discourse is "spaces of contested governance and mis-governance" (2013: 2). Working with data generated from Syria, Clark and Mansour maintain that the logic of ungoverned space is unsound for the simple fact that spaces termed ungoverned are actually either disintegrated or lack the presence of governance at all, and are now being alternatively governed. It is the alternatively governed spaces that are indeed spaces of contested governance and mis-governance. They note that since there are no absolutely ungoverned spaces, it is better to talk about space voluntarily ceded, which falls within the ambit of mis-governance, and space which is not ceded voluntarily, which can be referred to as contested governance. In the latter case, the state only performs its normal governance functions where other actors are not in control, but contest with non-state actors in the performance of governance functions. Spaces of contested governance, just like the state, strive to perform its normal responsibilities and non-state actors struggle to do the same. In reality however, since the state does not voluntarily cede its space, the idea of mis-governance readily explains the reason for contested governance.

Since governance is pivotal to space ownership, Clark and Mansour insist that the fundamental questions to ask should be: "*who* is governing, *how* are they governing, and *what* are the consequences of this mode of governance?" (Clark and Mansour 2013: 3) This does not obviate the contest, for, as they hold:

> In the case of spaces of contested governance, this core problem—*how* the space is governed and *by whom*—takes on added significance. By definition, in such areas it is frequently unclear who is governing; often, even when the identity of the dominant actor is established, the manner in which governance is being implemented and its consequences remain opaque.
>
> CLARK AND MANSOUR 2013: 3

According to Clark and Mansour, contested spaces are 'safe havens' for non-state actors that have come to occupy them. Ilija Djugumanov and Marko Pankovski (2013: 9) succinctly define 'safe haven' as a "space for operational activity," spaces where non-state actors can galvanise and mobilise forces for

expansionist purposes. From there, they "are able to establish themselves, consolidate, plan, organise, fundraise, recruit, train, and operate" (Clark and Mansour 2013: 3). Safe havens are spaces governed by non-state actors, which may also be contested.

Jennifer Keister (2014) like other scholars who have contributed to ungoverned spaces discourses focuses on either their legal or political economy dimension. This is understandable because their thrust is towards policy formation on how best to either manage or eradicate ungoverned spaces. The more prominent factor, which is political economy, does not answer the thorny question that borders on why there are ungoverned spaces in states that are well governed, which have modern military soft and hard wares. It does not also proffer solution to the radicalisation of those (especially terrorists) who believe that such spaces are their portion where their form of independent government should exist. For radicalised groups and individuals, ideological bent of mind is more important than political economy of those they conceive as enemies of their ideology. The question is: why, in spite of favourable political economy will people choose to operate a separate space from the state? The examples of Boko Haram in Nigeria and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) point to ideological suasion for deliberately creating alternatively governed spaces. Why would a British Muslim fly to fight on the side of ISIS rather than Britain? Or, why would Boko Haram raise its flag and set up an alternative government in areas it has conquered within and around the Nigerian borders? The obvious reason is theologically ideological, and not political economy as many have argued. It is this vacuum in literature of ungoverned spaces this paper fills with particular reference to Boko Haram and its ideology being denied by President Buhari. But before analysing President Buhari's speech, it is pertinent to give a brief historical development of Boko Haram.

3 The Evolution of Boko Haram

Many opinions have been canvassed as regards the evolution of Boko Haram, a group which calls itself Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad meaning 'Association of Sunnīs for the Propagation of Islam and for Holy War' or 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teaching and *Jihād*'. Literally, *boko* in the Hausa language means 'book', while *ḥarām* in Arabic means 'forbidden'. It is the combination of these two words that form Boko Haram, a nickname given to the group by the people of Bauchi State and popularised by the media, because of its preaching against Western education. For the group, Western education is forbidden for a true Muslim because of its corruptible

contents and inferiority to an Islamic education (Igboin 2014a). The group believes that Islamic education should hinge on the teachings of the Qurʾān and the *sunna* (practices of Prophet Muḥammad). But along this line, however, Boko Haram has clarified this perception: it argues that it is not against Western education exclusively, but Western culture more broadly. According to Boko Haram,

> Boko Haram does not in any way mean 'Western education is a sin' as the infidel media continue to portray us. Boko Haram actually mean 'Western civilisation' is forbidden. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West, that is Europe, which is not true, the second affirms our believe [sic] in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not Education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by Western Education. In this case we are talking of Western Ways of life which include: constitutional provision as if [sic] relates to, for instance the rights and privileges of Women, the idea of homosexualism, lesbianism, sanctions in cases of terrible crimes like drug trafficking, rape of infants, multiparty democracy in an overwhelmingly Islamic country like Nigeria, blue films … alcohol and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilisation.
>
>   quoted in THURSTON 2018: 11

This modification became necessary because the group wanted to firmly root its origin and cause in an Islamic theology and ideology posited as oppositional to that of the West.

A further indication of this modification can be gleaned from the name it calls itself, namely Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jihād. As Alexander Thurston (2018:11) analyses it, this name means that the group claims that it is a model of the Prophet's teaching and the authentic Muslim community. In addition, the group also claims that it is in the right position to dictate the 'true state of the religion', and further emphasises their Sunnī ideology, which is grounded in Salafism. No matter the name by which the group has called itself, the fact of its antagonism towards the West is established, and in fact, legendary among radical Muslims in the northern part of Nigeria. Paradoxically, while there is much hatred towards Western civilisation, these Muslims have continued to utilise the products of this civilisation to prosecute their religious agenda. Indeed, after analysing many of the speeches and sermons of Boko Haram's founder Mohammed Yusuf, as they touch on the stance of Boko Haram with Western values and modernity, Edlyne Anugwom (2019: 212–213) argues that Yusuf was mostly ambivalent in his handling of this issues. Yusuf tended to

oscillate between total rejection and implicit acceptance. More critically, Yusuf had sometimes borrowed from Western political ideologies and movements in his organisation and execution of his group's agenda. The weapons he used and which the group continues to use today are products of Western technology and culture.

The most popular version of the evolution of the group is that it was a political outfit or instrument of the former governor of Borno State, Ali Modu Sheriff, who in 2002 used it as support for his political ambitions. This school argues that it was the disagreement between the group and the governor that led to its radicalisation. This school views the emergence of the group as politically motivated. Marc-Antoine de Montclos (2014: 5) for instance, argues that even though Boko Haram as an Islamic group has a religious background, it is "political in nature because it contests Western values, challenges the secularity of the state and reveals the corruption of a system that relies on a predatory ruling elite." The immediate past governor of Borno State, Kashim Shettima, while supporting the 2002 thesis, argues that the Boko Haram started as a group known as the Taliban, with the codename Kandahar, a name borrowed from Afghanistan. The group aimed "to freely worship as an Islamic body that sought to commit members to spiritual devotion to Allāh" (Shettima 2015). Of course, this was the grooming stage of what would later become a violent group.

In 2004, the group attacked police formations in Bama and Gwoza, and had to be repelled by soldiers. There was another sudden attack in 2007 in Kano, which also resulted in inviting the soldiers to quell the group. By 2009, the clash between the Boko Haram and the police once again resulted in the full militarisation of the group, following the order of Mohammed Yusuf who called for *jihād*. While the opinion of this school is legitimate, it does not unravel the historical facts behind the ideological development that encouraged this metamorphosis into a radicalised organisation as Boko Haram has come to be known today. After all, Shettima (2015) agrees that his "chronicles of the Boko Haram [were] based on some respected accounts" but in fact, the political narrative has been largely associated with Western media, which in the course of time became an overarching narrative of the motif of the group.

Monica Emmanuel (2016) gives the impression that the emergence of Boko Haram can be viewed in the light of the politicisation of religion, a phenomenon that is widespread in Nigeria. This argument of politicisation goes even further to say that the group was carefully orchestrated to frustrate the administration of former president Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the southern part of Nigeria. In other words, Boko Haram was a militant resistance group against the change of political power in the Nigerian federal structure,

often more than not dominated by the Muslim North. She posits that even though religion has a role to play in the activities of the group, it is mostly a tool of mobilisation. For her, Islam helps the leadership of the Boko Haram to easily convince poor members of society to enter its fold, and thereafter radicalise them. As true as this may sound, it does not address the historical and ideological trajectory of the movement. Her analysis basically countenances the conflict and insurgency that resulted long after the group had been in existence.

In another vein, Scott MacEachern (2018: 3) argues that an eclectic approach to understanding the origin of Boko Haram is in order because radical groups usually have different motivations. This is not to ignore the religious background to the emergence of the group as "religion is certainly a central element in any comprehensive understanding of Boko Haram" (2018: 3). MacEachern observes that there are religious, political, social, military, gendered, economic, and cultural ways of making sense of the group. As an archaeologist, he started his investigation by looking at the history of the cultural and human landscapes involved in the emergence of Boko Haram. Emphasising instead the military and theological outlook of Boko Haram, Sadau Azama (2017: iv) argues that the group was established in 2002 with the sole aim to "establish an Islamic state and institutionalise Sharia law in Nigeria, particularly the northeast region." As Azama notes, a key motivation was the establishment of a caliphate with distinctive Islamic law and enforcement over the 'corrupted' Sokoto caliphate that has embraced Western civilisation.

Rather than 2002 as the year of origin of Boko Haram, S.O. Anyanwu (2012), Abdulkareem Mohammed (2010), and Shehu Sani (2011) have traced the nascence of the group to 1995. According to them, Boko Haram started in 1995 under the leadership of Abubakar Lawan from Kano as the Sahaba group. When Lawan left for further studies at the University of Medina, he handed over to Yusuf. Yusuf made allegations of corrupt practices against the founder and senior clerics "in order to subdue them. They gave in to his blackmail and he took over control" (Mohammed 2010: 40). Soon after, Yusuf changed the doctrines bequeathed to him and began to form a separatist movement against the establishment. Sani (2011) notes that Yusuf did not hide his puritanical, fundamentalist, and theocratic vectors, which he carved after the thirteenth century controversial scholar, Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya, a prominent personality in Salafi thought and who was an uncompromising defender of Sunnī Islam. Ibn Taymiyya believed that the Qur'ān and the *sunna* were sufficient for the guide and salvation of Muslims. He also thought that the four prominent schools of jurisprudence had become sectarian and unhelpful, particularly because of the influence of Greek thought, logic, and Ṣūfī mysticism. Consequently, he strongly advocated a return to the Qur'ān and *sunna* as

exemplified by the Prophet Muḥammad in Medina. It is this religious persona that Yusuf named his mosque after in Maiduguri: the Ibn Taymiyya Markaz (centre). Yusuf made ample references to Taymiyya's teachings and ideological bent as the basis for a quintessential *umma* (Islamic community), and frequently drew moral boosts and authority from his teachings and style (Salkida 2012; Thurston 2018). Yusuf further drew inspiration from ibn Taymiyya's austere lifestyle, which was notably uncommon for most religious and political leaders in northeast Nigeria (Smith 2015). As Ahmad Salkida (2012) concludes "the root cause of the [Boko Haram] conflict is ideological in nature" contrary to Ahmad Murtada's (2013: 5) position that before 2002 "the group had no ideological agenda," while Shettima (2015) maintains that it had "misguided ideologies." Salkida elaborates his argument thus:

> Clearly, there's huge and frightening degree of unemployment in Northern Nigeria. But the real fuse that drives this level of terror is with the sect's doctrinaire and ideologue. What we are dealing with is a growing Islamic ideologue that greatly appeals to young people. The doctrines that the leaders of the Boko Haram founded their sect cannot be separated from the global *jihad* movement that exploits the widespread suffering, resentment, and anger in the Muslim world.
>
> SALKIDA 2012

Before 2002, Yusuf had become prominent in Borno state as he was a member of the state's committee on the implementation of *sharī'a*. In his own capacity as a religious preacher with an ideology and agenda for an alternative state, Yusuf had also established "*laginas* (departments), had a cabinet, the *Shura*, the *Hisbah*, the brigades of guilds, a military wings [sic], a large farm, an effective microfinance scheme, and late Yusuf played the role of a judge in settling disputes. Each state had an *amir* (leader) including *amirs* in Chad and Niger that gave account of their stewardship to Yusuf directly" (Sani 2011: 27–28). Yusuf was already administering a state-like structure based on *sharī'a* within the fringes of the Nigerian state or what Thurston (2018: 80) calls "an imaginary state within a state." This bordered on a social justice and welfare scheme which enticed the poor masses into his Ibn Taymiyya Markaz centre in Maiduguri. In fact, before the start of the Boko Haram crisis in 2009, Yusuf could conveniently boast of five hundred regular members plus other admirers all over the place.

This was what attracted politicians to woo the group's support in order to win elections, hence its widespread political prominence. Yusuf's fundamentalist ideology led to a theocratic formation governed by puritanical rules,

which he tried to extend to general society, especially in the North. Yusuf's rule became a prototype for his subsequent followers who established a government over conquered spaces or alternatively governed spaces. Shettima (2015) reveals that of the 27 local government areas in Borno State, 20 were at a time (between 2014 and 2015) under the control of Boko Haram where it "hoisted its flag and instituted quasi-administrative structures" and "declared a caliphate over captured areas" (Asiwe 2015). Although former Governor Ibrahim Gaidam (2015) of Yobe State countered his Borno counterpart that it was not true that "five local government areas in the two states are still under Boko Haram control," there is no disagreement about the intentions of the group to establish political control.

The teachings of Boko Haram under Mohammed Yusuf did not differ substantially from other examples of global Islamism, especially Salafism. Salafism is a fundamentalist-theological interpretation of the Qurʾān, and seeks to return Islam and Muslims to a vision of the puritan, pure religion that existed in Medina under the direct governance of Prophet Muḥammad. Salafism derives from the Arabic etymology, *salaf*, meaning 'predecessors' (pl. *aslāf*). The notion of *al-salaf al-sahif*, that is, 'pious predecessors', rose to prominence in global Salafism when it became obvious that there was a need to carefully select personalities and aspects of the early Islamic community to emulate in the course of reforming or advancing Islam in the contemporary world. Salafism emphasises literal interpretation of the Qurʾān and the *sunna* and according to Thurston (2018: 18), "Salafis narrowly interpret the Islamic injunction to worship one God, and they try to 'purify' other Muslims of alleged deviations in belief and practice." Thurston (2018: 109) tends to generally view Salafism as non-violent yet in the case of Boko Haram, he argues that Yusuf "tried to smuggle jihadist thought into a Salafi community that had originally been oriented toward non-*jihādi* Salafism." However, Abdulbasit Kassim (2018) notes that Thurston's averment cannot completely be true considering Yusuf's mentor, Salafi *shaykh* Ja'far Adam, who gave support to al-Qāʿida's global *jihād* against the 'far enemy' rather than the 'near enemy' of 'westernised' Nigeria.

Meanwhile, according to Stephen Schwartz (2012), neo-Salafis consider themselves as authentic followers of the *aslāf*. Distinguishing between Salafi and neo-Salafi, he states: "The difference between the authentic *aslāf* and the 'neo-Salafis' is defined additionally by things Muḥammad and the *aslāf* did not do. Muḥammad is never known to have pronounced any Muslim an apostate, to cite the most obvious example, while the 'neo-Salafis' are avid to expel those of whom they disapprove from the worldwide community of Muslims." Indeed, Abubakar Shekau, leader of Boko Haram, emphasises neo-Salafi thought when he insists that Muslims outside Boko Haram are infidels. He denounces Saudi

Arabia as "not Islamic" because it fails to strictly adhere to the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad, and consequently it will "enter the Hellfire." Shekau has threatened that Boko Haram would soon perform the *ḥajj* and visit the Kaʿba in Mecca, ostensibly for 'cleansing' (Bodansky 2015: 38).

Adam had preached sermons supporting the use of violence to achieve Islamic goals when necessary. As a mainstream Salafi, Adam had predicted that "the *jihād* in Nigeria is coming, either they, the infidels, chase us out of Nigeria or we chase them out" (in Kassim 2018: 14). In fact, Yusuf himself confirmed the use of violence as a Salafist in some of his sermons before his death. According to him:

> Our religion is Islam, our creed is the creed of the *al-salaf al-sahil Ahlul Sunna Wal Jama'ah*, and our *manhaj* [path] is *jihād*. We believe that the *Shariah* is the only truth. The constitution is a lie it is *Kufr* [disbelief]. Democracy is a lie; it is *Kufr*. Working with the government that does not rule by *Shariah* is a lie; it is *Kufr*. Working with the security agencies is a lie; it is *Kufr*. For those who are ignorant, let them be aware that it is important for the Muslim to make *hijrah* from the institutions established by the *tawaghit* [idolatrous governments].
>
> KASSIM 2015: 189

Kassim (2018: 14) further reveals that as far back as 2001 when the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia Abd al-Aziz bin Abdullah Al Ash-Shaykh condemned the use of suicide bombs by Muslims, the Kano-based Salafi cleric Aminu Daurawa, who is at present the Commander General of Kano's Hisbah board countered the condemnation of suicide bombing and described "God as a suicide bomber." These precedents of preaching and ideological confirmations laid the foundation for the eventual ascendancy of Yusuf's *jihādi*-Salafi disposition. Kassim observes that when it mattered most, the mainstream Salafists became "*jihādi* revisionists" and subsequently "backtracked from the *jihādi* project" for which some of them were to later pay the supreme price.

Kassim (2015) espouses that *jihādi*-Salafism holds a theological belief that leans towards legitimising violence and violent rebellion, not only against infidels but also those Muslims who have even implicitly adopted a progressive form of Islam. Relying on Petter Nesser's definition of *jihādi*-Salafism as encapsulating "a revolutionary program of overthrowing unjust and un-Islamic regimes in the Muslim world, as well as irredentism aiming at expelling non-Muslim military presence and influences from Muslim lands" (Kassim 2015: 176), Kassim argues that a historical excursus into some Salafists operations reveals the fact that they are rarely quietist. *Jihādi*-Salafists have interpreted

Islamic texts in ways that have justified the use of violence to carry out their operations: "*Jihādi*-Salafi doctrinal underpinnings on the legitimacy of *jihād* as a tool to overthrowing the political rulers in the Muslim world developed from the interpretation that ruling by other than God's law is major unbelief" (Kassim 2015: 179).

In relation to Boko Haram, Kassim (2015) and Igboin (2020) point out the historical trajectories that developed and established *jihādi*-Salafism in the Nigerian Muslim society, from where Yusuf and Boko Haram, would eventually draw inspiration. In line with *jihādi*-Salafi ideology, Yusuf thought and also taught that secularism, democracy, and Western education, values, and civilisation should be replaced with Islamic education and *sharīʿa* law. He preached that democracy is intricately linked to secularism and thus to *shirk* or impiety, as according to him, secularism ousts God from society and human affairs. This can be seen in the mace which is the symbol of authority of a legislative assembly. In this sense, Muslims who bow to the mace are worshipping an idol, the penalty for which is death:

> Parliamentarians and members of assemblies have combined between [sic] them making themselves gods and ascribing partners to Allāh. This is because their mace is their object of worship in various ways such as bowing to it, subjecting themselves to it, loving it and using it as a symbol of *shirk* [apostasy], as they do not pass any bill or make decisions without it. [Without the mace] such decisions are unacceptable and has [sic] no legal backing.
>
> in MOHAMMED 2014: 16

In addition, Yusuf argued that though Western education is not bad in itself its contents must be censored. He insisted that Western education can be accepted to the extent that it does not clash with the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth* and the *sunna*. Yusuf preached that Western geography, aspects of biology, geology and sociology are forthrightly forbidden for Muslims because they contradict the Qurʾān. "These branches of knowledge," according to him, "are not knowledge but full of unbelief. Even those studying it are aware if they are fair to Allāh, except they haven't studied Islam. If you have read geography, you'll know that in geography there is danger" (in Mohammed 2014: 18). He also condemned the 'big bang' theory, Darwinism, and "the law of conservation of matter and energy" because they oppose creationism (in Mohammed 2010: 52). Consequently, he urged true Muslims to "take up arms to purge our curriculum of heresy" (in Mohammed 2010: 52). Thus 'heretical' and 'false' teachings are argued to be at the core of secularism, and democracy is the agent which

secularism uses to impose the corrupt Western values on other nations of the world including Nigeria (Mohammed 2010: 56–57). In this sense, Boko Haram has it as one of its objectives to overthrow the vestiges of Western values and civilisation and replace them with *sharīʿa* law and education. Hence the group entrenched radicalised Islamic values in its agenda in conquered spaces in North-eastern Nigeria.

4   Islam as Ideological Gristmill of Boko Haram

Like many religions Islam offers not just a religious belief system but a total way of life for the follower. This can clash with the idea of the compartmentalisation of life, which secular political structures, particularly the Western type, have promoted. Islamism, in vehemently rejecting this, enunciates and reiterates a structure that is essentially God-centric and clearly instantiated in divinely inspired *sharīʿa* law and praxis. While *sharīʿa* manifests in differing ways in Islamic communities around the world, it is also from this law that actions that have been viewed as violent or terroristic are drawn. In the contemporary West *sharīʿa* and Islam generally are popularly associated with acts of terror and oppression.

   Those who have studied terrorist groups have mostly ascribed their acts of terror to an ideology. For instance, Christopher M. Blanchard (2007) observes that al-Qāʿida's messages are ideologically situated and steeped in religion. Importantly, the idea that religion and politics are separable is uniquely Western: in religions like Islam the two worlds are intertwined. David C. Rapoport (1972), a renowned scholar of religion and terrorism, also argues that any attempt to deny religion as a key motivation for terrorism would mean that a proper process of arresting the trend might be forfeited. Accordingly, Rapoport (1984: 659) argues that until the rise of nationalism, anarchism and Marxism, "religion provided the only acceptable justifications for terror." Security analyst David Brannan (2007) corroborates the position that religion provides the cannon fodder for terrorist acts and as such religion is equally important for counter-terrorism, noting that religion provides the framework and organisational structure while theology legitimises action through interpretive science. Scholars such as Joshua Wright have pointed to Islam as a lived religion where certain "psychosocial religious factors" have made it especially prone to violent extremist expression (2016).

   Hugh Segal and Serge Joyal (2011) suggest there are four stages believers pass through to become radicalised—though not all those who begin eventually complete the processes, this potentially transforms one from a 'seeker' to a

'terrorist'. The first stage is Pre-Radicalisation, which has to do with life before the journey into radicalisation, that is, lifestyle, religion, social status, and education. The second is Self-Identification, which "involves the beginning of a religious seeking often following an economic, social, political, or personal crisis" (Segal and Joyal 2011: 10). The third is Indoctrination: "the individual wholly adopts *jihādi*-Salafi ideology and concludes that militant *jihād* is required to support and further the Salafist cause, and joins a cluster of like-minded individuals" (Segal and Joyal 2011: 12). The fourth stage they call Jihadization and designate as the critical stage that leads to planned violence: "members of the cluster accept their individual duty to participate in *jihād*, and begin planning for a terrorist attack" (Segal and Joyal 2011: 13). Segal and Joyal further reveal that the social, economic, and political reasons often cited as precursors of terrorism are secondary and insufficient. According to them, many terrorists and terrorist groups more often than not originate from the middle or upper-middle classes rather from the poverty-stricken population. They argue that it is these upper classes that possess the wherewithal to mobilise and radicalise the poor people and not vice versa.

Rogelio Alonso et al (2008: 14) add that "a *Jihādi* Salafist ideology that promotes violence as a way to achieve the creation of a new caliphate as well as to recover territories that were once under Muslim rule is utilised to form a common bond." David Mandel (2002) also explains how religio-nationalist ideology and theology can motivate a wide-scale program of collective violence and counter-violence, citing the case of Usāma bin Lādin and President George Bush. bin Lādin's recourse to religious nationalism with al-Qāʿida worked and still works to rally support for other terrorist groups like Boko Haram who seek to establish religio-political control over states. Bouzerzour Zoubir (2014) notes that the action of *jihād* to carve or create an Islamic state is usually promoted by radicalised Muslims as religiously sanctioned because it is the will of God to implement *sharīʾa* globally.

We have gone this far to demonstrate the critical role religion—Islam in this context—plays in the radicalisation process that culminates in the kind of violence deployed by Boko Haram. In the case of Mohammed Yusuf, the former leader of the Boko Haram, he vehemently disagreed with his tutors and held stringent, extremist views about the Qurʾān and the implementation of a caliphate. Yusuf's "blistering speeches" were widely circulated which won him a large following across the cadres of his society. His group was made up of both educated and wealthy and poor and uneducated members of society, who appear to have been drawn to his teachings. Mohammed Kyari (2014: 14) sums it up as follows: "The message of Boko Haram, as outlined by Mohammed Yusuf, derived from and fed into the extant discourse and ideology of Islamism

worldwide. Boko Haram narratives were framed within the radical Islamic discourse with which Mohammed Yusuf had become conversant ... The rejection of secularism, democracy, Western education, and Westernisation were the major planks of the narratives." The group itself has stated as follows:

> We want to reiterate that we are warriors who are carrying out *jihād* in Nigeria and our struggle is based on the traditions of the Holy Prophet. We will never accept any system of government apart from the one stipulated by Islam because that is the only way that the Muslims can be liberated. We do not believe in any system of government, be it traditional or orthodox, except the Islamic system and that is why we will keep on fighting against democracy, socialism and whatever.
>
> AGBO 2011: 47

Olufemi Vaughan (2016) observes that the rise of Boko Haram was predicated upon the failure of the northern state governments to fully implement and abide by the ethos of *sharīʿa* law since 1999. The resurgence of *sharīʿa* in 1999 as the country returned to civil rule was hinged on the notion that it would produce a better society. The politicisation of *sharīʿa* and the crises that followed demanded a reform of Islam, which Boko Haram largely now represents, though in its extremity. This neo-Salafist outfit insistently preached hard messages of messianic revivalism that roundly condemned the northern Muslims, particularly the political leaders who Yusuf saw as compromisers with the idolatrous and corrupt systems entrenched by democracy. The haphazard implementation of *sharīʿa* and its complete failure and abandonment was frequently cited by Yusuf as an indication that a new order was needed to salvage Islam from further profanity. As a puritan, Yusuf expected Muslim politicians to live strictly moral lives, and the unconscionable corruption of politicians stimulated his Salafist spirit, which ultimately resulted in levels of "lethal violence unprecedented in Nigerian history" (Vaughan 2016: 219). Thus, contrary to popular expression, "Boko Haram's militancy did not cause Nigeria's political crisis ... rather, it reflects the endemic crisis of governance, especially in Northern states" (Vaughan 2016: 219). In other words, it was the situation in northern Nigeria that provided the impetus for Yusuf to practically and violently express his 'reform agenda'. Olufemi Vaughan (2016: 229) further elucidates this:

> In the specific case of Boko Haram, its militancy does not simply reveal the extent of the crisis of national governance; it shows the eroding

legitimacy of traditional Muslim rulers in Northern communities because of their essential role as a critical component of Nigeria's neopatrimonial state system. Furthermore, since militant Islamic groups such as Boko Haram have consistently exploited the pressure for *sharia* to stake their claims in Northern Muslim communities, the custodians of Nigerian state have had to confront a major constitutional dilemma between Nigerian secularism and a clamor for an Islamic theocracy.

The neo-Salafi orientation of Yusuf can also be seen in the religious philosophy of the Maitatsine sect in the 1980s, which many scholars have argued has many similarities with Boko Haram (Danjibo 2009; Walker 2016; Anugwom 2019; Igboin 2019). Maitatsine's threat to national security started before Nigerian Independence in 1960. Led by Mohammed Marwa, the sect erratically and violently propagated its doctrine of total rejection and eradication of Western civilisation. Marwa publicly denounced religious leaders before him as infidels because he considered them idolatrous, flirting with democracy and Western ideologies and cultures. His erratic nature came to a crescendo when he and his followers "denigrated Prophet Muḥammad and had the popular … phrase, 'may Allāh curse those who disagree with this (our) version'" (Anugwom 2019: 42). Marwa also rejected Isa (Jesus) as a prophet and regarded the *ḥadīth* and *sunna* as illegitimate but emphasised the Qurʾānic verses he thought right for his ideology, especially his doctrine of millenarianism. He preached an imminent end of the world and the emergence of a redeemer who would lead God's army against the infidel and compromised Muslims. This ultra-fundamentalist revivalism could not accommodate Muslim leaders whom the group had already declared infidels, hence many of them were killed in the riots which preceded the war he prophesied. It was a strategy that Boko Haram would later adopt, which led to the "civil war" (Kassim 2018: 3) in the group, as we shall show below.

5   Schisms and 'Civil War' in the Alternatively Governed Space

The disagreement between Ja'far Adam and his protégé Yusuf has been interpreted in many ways, and the most prominent for us here is ideological inconsistency underlying the interpretation of Islamic texts in the context of the prevailing political situation in the country. The reality is that the disagreement resulted in the contestation of space and governance in a kind of schism. Yusuf moved on to create an alternative space where he felt his doctrines could better

be served. Using the Ibn Taymiyya Markaz as his platform, Yusuf developed his theological and ideological teachings and mobilised a militant unit (Guitta and Simcox 2014). The confrontation with the security agencies and eventual extra-judicial killing of Yusuf by police in July 2009 introduced another phase in the development of Boko Haram. Abubakar Shekau, who succeeded the late Yusuf, resurged the group with violent attacks on the country. Shekau's unflinching Salafi orientation earned him several descriptions such as "crazy," "rabble-rouser," "deranged," "mad-man," "a brutal psychopath," "bloodthirsty lunatic" and the leader of "ignorants who are the antithesis of contemporary values" (Barkindo 2018: 53–54). Edlyne Anugwom (2019: 113) also describes Shekau as an "unstable character." Atta Barkindo (2018) argues that such perceptions about Shekau are merely emotive as they do not countenance the strategic and ideological prowess of Yusuf's successor. Shekau's successful campaigns, affiliation with international terrorist organisations, and funding of the group's operations are critical to properly situating the presence of mind of Shekau. While Barkindo's focus on Shekau's versality as a corporatist-strategist is important for policy-making and counter-terrorism, here we will focus on his religious philosophy and its underlying Salafist ideology.

Shekau's aversion for Western civilisation resonates in his attacks on perceived Western-style institutions and demonstrates continuity with the ideology of Boko Haram. This can be substantiated in the attacks carried out on schools, United Nations' buildings in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, and on police, the army, Christians and churches, and on moderate Muslims who criticised his religious credentials. Anugwom (2019: 114) posits that the schools are attacked because they represent Western civilisation, and the primary focus of attack on schools populated by Christian students testifies to this claim. The cases of abductions, such as the kidnapping of 276 Chibok school girls in 2014 and 110 school girls from Dapchi 2018, in Borno and Yobe states respectively, are quintessential. While the attacks on police and military formations and personnel are understandable, the attacks on Muslims raises questions as to the ultra-*jihādi*-Salafi ideology of the group.

However, Shekau defends the group's attacks on Muslims on the grounds that he has credible information that such Muslims were working against the goals of Boko Haram. According to him, "even if he is a learned Muslim teacher, if we confirm that he exposes us to the government, his children will become orphans and his wife will become widow, in God's name" (in Anugwom 2019: 139). Boko Haram's killing of Muslims is defended on the basis of *takfīr*, the accusation of apostasy levelled by the group against Muslims for allegedly practising impure, fake, or adulterated Islam. Adam was indeed likely one of the victims of Boko Haram: he was killed during prayer in a mosque in 2007 for

allegedly opposing the group. Kassim (2018: 17) captures the rising extremism of Shekau thusly:

> Shekau began to manifest signs of deviation on the issues of *al-'udhr bi-l-jahl* and *takfir al-Muthlaq* by declaring the entire Muslim population of Nigeria as infidels on the basis that they did not disbelieve *taghut* [the idolatrous government], their children still attended government schools, and they participated in democratic elections. Shekau's farthest level of extremism on the issue of *takfir* spurred his launching of an indiscriminate campaign of violence and confiscation of the wealth and properties of Muslims population that did not pledge allegiance to him.

Subsequently, Shekau would declare himself a Caliph over the territories taken, and demanded unalloyed loyalty, declaring as apostates those who had deserted the group or opposed him. Unquestioned obedience to his commands was expected from all members of the group including the highest echelons. Within the group, the Consultative or Shura Council is vested with the powers to deliberate and take decisions on issues to be implemented by the group (Sheehan and Porter 2014: 8; Omenma, Abada and Omenma 2020). According to Yossef Bodansky (2015: 14), "The Shura is Boko Haram's highest decision-making body, and the Amir ul-Aam cannot launch major operations, formulate strategy or issue communiques without the approval of the Shura."[1] Shekau totally disregarded the decisions of the Consultative Council and superimposed his views or opinions onto it. In June 2012, Ansaru (or Jama' atu Ansaru Muslimina Fi Bilad al Sudan, which is translated as 'Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa'), emerged as a faction of Boko Haram, founded on their ideological diversion from Boko Haram's killing of fellow Muslims. Although Ansaru's activities centred on abduction of foreigners in Nigeria, it maintained its ideological disagreement with Boko Haram (Igboin 2014b; Faluyi, Khan, and Akinola 2019).

A further schism occurred in 2015 when a group headed by Abu Musab al-Barnawi broke away under the name Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP). As Kassim explains it the "transmutation from Boko Haram to ISWAP was fraught with newfound agreements at the Consultative Council on the issues of ideology and strategy as well as the persuasive efforts intended to discipline the megalomaniac idiosyncrasies and highest level of extremism of Shekau" (Kassim 2018: 19). Shekau and his lieutenants would later regard

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1 Members of the Boko Haram's Consultative Council are not fully known except two that were listed by the Joint Task Force (JTF) to include Mamman Nur and Khalid al-Barnawi.

al-Barnawi as an infidel, who "does not follow a sound doctrine from authentic Salafism" (in Kassim 2018: 21), and who "condones living in an un-Islamic society without waging *jihād*" (Anugwom, 2019: 196). It is reported that this ideological conflict led Shekau to assassinate some of his close associates (*Vanguard* 2017).

Although it has been argued that these sub-groups have reconciled and re-united, a claim Kassim (2018) seriously doubts, it has, however, shown the mosaic of ideological stranglehold that has run through the development and sustenance of Boko Haram. Even when there is division, it does not in any way suggest a reduction in the sub-groups' capacities to inflict violence, in fact, as the period of the 'internal' civil war shows (see Anugwom 2019), they were attacking in different forms and areas which make it difficult to strategically confront them. But the ideological leaning towards ultra-*jihād*-Salafism, no matter how it is interpreted and applied, is the cannon fodder of Boko Haram.

6   Conclusion

We have argued that Boko Haram, whether or not it is a sobriquet for the group that calls itself Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad, is based on ultra-*jihādi*-Salafist ideology that has a long history in Nigeria. Even though the group has attempted to clarify that it does not condemn all aspects of Western civilisation as sinful, it has actually maintained an ambivalent posture. Western culture such as multi-party democracy, constitutionalism and any other aspects the group considers anti-Islam are declared *ḥarām*, that is, forbidden. *Sharīʿa* is presented as the absolute divine law that ought to guide human society, a body of law that is believed would purify all immoral behaviour in society. The absence of *sharīʿa*, or its haphazard implementation and lacking support by the Nigerian Muslim leaders, is considered antithetical to the spirit and letter of the law, and this is blamed on the influence of Western democracy. However, *sharīʿa* appears to have had the capacity to foster a democratic approach in post-colonial Nigeria. Even when the expanded *sharīʿa* issue arose in 1999, it was vehemently argued that since the majority of northerners expressed their faith in *sharīʿa*, as a democratic process would entail, opposition against it should be rested (Vaughan 2016: 173–174). This same ambivalence has trailed after the *jihādi*-Salafi ideology upon which Boko Haram is founded. In global Islam, Salafism has been interpreted in different ways, and different groups either hold to the quietist persuasion or *jihādi*-Salafi option, which Boko Haram has consistently aligned itself. The schisms and civil war within the group are borne out of ideological disagreement despite the fact

that all the sub-groups have the belief in the establishment of *sharīʿa* in the territory they are holding sway.

Rather than the popular argument that Boko Haram arose as a consequence of political economy factors prevalent in the North, however, we have argued that the group grew from an Islamist basis for the creation of an anti-Western caliphate. The desire to maintain alternatively governed space within Nigeria is part of the political history of the country. Nevertheless, while it is germane to intensify efforts towards addressing the socio-economic factors that might have been the immediate causes for the militancy of the group, and also deploy securitisation processes by the government and allied forces, more nuanced efforts need to be emplaced to deepen the understanding of the ideological diversity and influence that characterise the belief and operations of this group.

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From Identity to Militancy: The Shī'a of Hezbollah

Steven Childs

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The Faizrakhmanisty: The Islamic Sect as a Social Problem in Russia

Kaarina Aitamurto

1 Introduction

In 2012, news about a police raid on the premises of an Islamic group named the Faizrakhmanisty (after its leader and initiator, Faizrakhman Sattarov) was reported across the Russian media.[1] During the raid, it was said, the police found tens of children living underground in unsanitary conditions. Different versions of the story of this sect,[2] which was said to be waiting for the end of the world in an isolated compound, spread rapidly throughout not only the Russian media, but also the Western media. The story of the Faizrakhmanisty brings together several topics that have been prominent in the recent political attitude toward Islam in Russia and representations of Islam in the Russian media. This chapter argues, first, that the term 'sect' is used frequently as an evaluative concept in the construction of certain Islamic organizations or phenomena in the Russian media. Second, it is suggested that the idea of the 'totalitarian sect', used in particular by 'experts' committed to the anti-cult stance to combat non-institutionalised or 'non-traditional' forms of Islam, is often introduced in the media to guide interpretations of Islam-related content.

The chapter begins with a discussion about Islam, religious freedom, and media representations of religion in Russia. The first part of the analysis focuses on the ways that the term 'sect' is used in the Russian media by focusing on four very different phenomena that have been labeled as Islamic sects: Wahhābism, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Nurdzhular, and the National Organization of Russian Muslims (NORM). The second part of the analysis examines the case of the Faizrakhmanisty and its coverage in the media.

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2   In this article, I use the term "sect" as it appears in the media and scholarly analyses of the Faizrakhmanisty and other Islamic groups, without going into debates on the theoretical basis or relevance of the term in relation to these groups.

2   Non-Traditional Religiosity and Sects in Russian Discussions

In contemporary Russia, the word 'sect' has even more negative connotations than in Western Europe or North America. The reason for this can be found in the social history of the 1990s, when the idea that new religious movements, often referred to simply as 'sects', were socially dangerous phenomena gained ground. This shift toward more authoritarian and conservative religious politics began soon after the post-Soviet religious revival that followed the introduction of an extremely liberal religious freedom law in 1990. One aspect of this religious renaissance was an upsurge in new religions, religious influences, and foreign missionaries arriving in Russia. These elements upset the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in particular. It claimed that missionaries were acting impudently in relation to Russia's own religious traditions. The ROC appealed to its disadvantaged position in comparison with Western-originated Christian organizations here; while the ROC was still recuperating from the material and educational damage caused during the Soviet era, many of its competitors had much more solid financial bases. The ROC capitalised on the claim that the Soviet period had alienated Russians from their own religious heritage, making them religiously illiterate and therefore vulnerable to all kind of religious propaganda (Fagan 2013: 53–62).

Some challenges to new and foreign religion also came from below, although they tended to have been designed carefully by the ROC itself or by social circles close to it. Western anti-sect activists and scholars of religion who held negative attitudes toward such groups (but hardly represented the mainstream with regard to academic views on new religions) were invited to Russia. Some Orthodox Christian activists, such as Alexander Dvorkin, aimed to introduce the new discipline of 'sectology' (*sektovedenie*) and the title 'scholar of sects' (*sektoved*) to academic circles (Baran 2006). Although sectology was mostly rejected by the academy, expressions like 'totalitarian sect' and 'destructive sect' became established in the media, where the so-called 'scholars of sects' were presented as authoritative experts on the development of sectarianism in Russia. The common definition put forth by the press indicated that a 'sect' was an organization controlled by a power-hungry leader who brainwashed people and dissolved families for his/her own financial benefit. As a consequence of the religious developments in the country at this time, the new, stricter Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations was introduced in 1997. Since then, some amendments have been made to impose still further limits on the activities of minority religions (Shterin and Richardson 2000; Fagan 2013: 62–74).

Although the 1997 law did not mention any religions in particular, it has been referred to surprisingly widely in discussions and policies as legitimizing the four 'traditional religions' of Russia: Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism. Unsurprisingly, then, many official Islamic organizations and leaders joined the Orthodox Christians in demanding stricter control of new and Western-originated religions. At the same time, however, Islam has not been overlooked as a possible source of societal problems. In post-Soviet Russia, Islamic organizations faced similar challenges to the ROC: an insufficient amount of religious buildings, many of which were in a bad condition; a shortage of religious literature; a lack of trained religious professionals. In such a dire situation, aid from Islamic countries was crucial for Russian Muslims, in terms of both providing education for future imams and supporting the building of new mosques and madrasas. As a result, the perceived influence of foreign Islam on Russia caused concern over the radicalization of Muslims. This tendency was reinforced by the rise of negative attitudes toward Islam than began after 9/11 and certain terrorist actions in Russia (Verkhovsky 2010: 30; Kemper 2012: 120).

The idea of the need to control Islamic religiosity and Muslims in Russia can be traced back, however, to Catherine the Great. Ivan the Terrible's conquest of Kazan in 1552 had given Russia's crown a substantial number of Muslim subjects. Catherine the Great was the first ruler to grant some (albeit limited) religious rights to them, including the right to build new mosques and to perform ḥajj. Although the liberal philosophy of the Enlightenment undoubtedly influenced Catherine's political line, another significant motivation in her politics concerning the Muslim minority was to guarantee the loyalty of her subjects. In addition to providing them with a new level of freedom, Catherine decided to create a single, centralised, hierarchical organization, which could act as a mediator between the state and the Muslim community, as well as having control over the latter. Thus, the Orenburg Mohammedian Spiritual Assembly was founded and was based on the Christian tradition of hierarchical organizations—a concept quite alien in Islam. Over the centuries, the name of this organization changed several times, but the centralised structure was preserved until the end of Soviet times (Crews 2009: 33, 49–53).

At the end of the Soviet period, four Muftiates governed the Central Asia/Kazakhstan, South Caucasus, North Caucasus, and European Russia/Siberia areas, respectively. In the 1990s, religious liberation, coupled with dissatisfaction with the old, Soviet-time religious authorities, led to the burgeoning of new religious communities, as well as divides within existing organizations (Bukharaev 1996; Yemianova 2003: 140, 143–7). Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of the Islamic religious establishment continued to express a

preference for having a single organization that could represent all Russian Muslims. It was felt that a unified voice would allow Muslims to be heard better in society and to be more efficient in controlling the radicalization of the youth. Admittedly, internal power struggles between Muslim organizations challenged this aim, discrediting the community in the eyes of both Muslims and non-Muslims, thus leading to further social divisions. Despite such consequences, in the aspiration to centralise Islamic activity, one can discern a wish to monopolise Islam in Russia once again. Furthermore, the idea of centralization reproduces the evaluative dichotomies of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' or 'official' and 'non-official' religiosity (Aitamurto 2015).

It should be noted here that the policies put in place to protect 'traditional religions' refer mainly to certain institutions that represent those religions. Orthodox Christian Churches other than the ROC, for example, have also faced difficulties or even oppression, but have had little protection. In a similar vein, newer Islamic organizations have often been refused the right to become registered as religious groups. Instead, their premises have faced raids and even closure. Indeed, the situation is more complex in the Islamic case than in the Orthodox Christian one. The preferred Islamic organization varies by region, and there are constant struggles to adopt the position of most powerful organization. For example, almost all of the mosques in Moscow are controlled by the Religious Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation (*Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, or DUMRF), a group which has sought to extend its control further but has had difficulty in establishing its activities in places like St Petersburg (Aitamurto and Gaidukov 2018).

The discussion about certain forms of Islam posing a social problem has mainly revolved around the concepts of 'official' and 'unofficial Islam' (and, later, 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' Islam—see Makarov and Mukhametshin 2003; Aitamurto 2015). Ironically, some of the Islamic traditions that were seen as the main reference points for 'unofficial Islam' in Soviet times are now accepted as authentic, local, traditional Islam; this is the case, for instance, with Ṣūfism in Central Asia and the North Caucasus. The category into which a religious organization is placed can have significant consequences for its social position because authorities will lend official support to traditional Islam, while working to prevent the growth of non-traditional Islam because it is seen as problematic. The term 'traditional Islam' has been criticised by some Russian scholars and Muslims (Malashenko 2013; Mukhametov 2015) for its vagueness and normativity, but it is still used frequently by politicians, authorities, and the most prominent Islamic leaders to distinguish 'good' Islam from its 'bad' counterpart. There are, indeed, countless ways to interpret this concept; most often, however, 'traditional Islam' is conceived as including

features like loyalty to the Russian state and a long history of operating in a given area. This means that types of Islam considered traditional in certain parts of Russia are seen as non-traditional in others; the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*, for example, is viewed as non-traditional in Tatarstan, Moscow, and St. Petersburg, despite being accepted as traditional in North Caucasus. Likewise, in 2011, the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Tatarstan (*Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man Respubliki Tatarstan*, or DUMRT) announced that all imams of the republic should base their teaching on the Hanafi *madhhab*, In addition, in 2012, the President of the Republic of Tatarstan, Rustam Minnihanov, signed a law stating that imams who had studied abroad must have their diplomas confirmed in Russia before being allowed to work in local mosques, thus posing a risk to the survival of non-traditional Islamic groups. As eminent Islam scholar Alexey Malashenko points out, such restrictions can drive unofficial religious organizations underground where they are more difficult to be controlled and in a greater risk to get radicalised (Andrukhaeva 2012).

Surprisingly, given the prevalence of conversations about 'sects' in the Russian media, the phrase 'Islamic sect' is seldom used. A quick survey of the use of this combination of words in the Russian media database Integrum between 2000 and 2015 reveals that it usually (but not always) refers to foreign groups, such as Boko Haram. Sometimes, Russian groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, Nurcular (*Nurdzhular* in Russian), and the Wahhābists are also labeled as such, as is militant Islam in general. Journalists, politicians, and Muslim leaders seem, at times, to issue warnings about Islamic sects in general terms—to support calls for tighter control of the religious behavior of Muslims, for example.

In the book on Islamic sects published by Mir Islama and recommended for use in religious education, author Murat Mamirgov (2007: 6) writes that sects have brought no additional value to Islam; rather, they have only caused division and discordance within the *umma*. His views represent a widely shared attitude toward sects among Russian Muslims. According to the Deputy Director of the Foundation for the Support of Islamic Culture, Science, and Education, Ali Vyacheslav Polosin, the undesirable features of sects include the existence of religious innovations (*bidʿa*) and 'exclusive truth' claims. Among his examples of sects, Polosin mentions Salafism. According to him, a sect can never become a religion and is typically "bloody and criminal" (Khizrieva 2011). Less condemnatory attitudes toward sectarianism can also be found in Russia. An eminent scholar of Islam, Aleksandr Ignatenko (2003), defends the concept of the Islamic sect, seeing it as a natural part of the religion. He stresses that for Muslims and scholars of Islam, such developments do not have the negative connotations that are associated with the emergence of sects in other religions—especially in Christianity. The concept of the 'totalitarian sect' has

been used, however, by Muslim clerics; the head of the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia (*Tsentral'noe Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man Rossii*, or TsDUM), Talgat Tadjuddin, has referred to the danger posed by 'totalitarian sects' within the Russian *umma* (Crews 2014).

3   The Study of Islam and Anti-Extremist Legislation

In Soviet times, the study of Islam was focused mostly on two topics: 1) the role of Islam in the politics of foreign countries and 2) classic Islamic literature and culture. There was hardly any research conducted on Muslims or Islamic religiosity within the USSR. In contemporary Russia, a new generation of scholars has engaged in the ethnographic and sociological study of the Muslim communities of the country, but the number of specialists in this field is still relatively modest. There are also individuals working at various think tanks or institutions and are considered by the public to be specialists in Islam (Kovalskaya 2017). Some of them have clearly indicated preferences for certain organizations within the Russian *umma*—or have even displayed political ambitions. Of course, these matters influence their interpretations of Islam. One of the best-known examples of such an expert is Roman Silantyev, who has also been a member of the prestigious Inter-religious Council of Russia and works in the Department of External Affairs at the Moscow Patriarchate. In his writings, Silantyev expresses his sympathies for the TsDUM, which can be considered more compliant, where the demands of the ROC are concerned. Moreover, Silantyev does not hesitate to make accusations of extremism and radicalism against the TsDUM's main rival, the DUMRF (on Silantyev, see Kovalskaya 2017: 143–146). According to Roland Dannreuther (2010: 18), Silantyev represents the not-so-rare tendency of Islam scholars in Russia to "entrench, rather than to problematise the dualistic bifurcation between foreign radicalism and moderate traditional Russian Islam" and to "view political Islam as primarily an ideological threat and something that needs to be eliminated rather than contained." As a consequence, the titles of 'expert' or 'scholar' of Islam can be considered somewhat dubious in the Russian context. Indeed, some of the work of experts like Silantyev can be thought of as bordering on Islamophobia.

Scholarly discussions about religious radicalism have gained special importance in Russia, where the authorities have tightened up procedures regarding religious 'extremism' significantly in recent years. Now, suspicions about extremist activity can be fatal to religious organizations. The first anti-extremist law was implemented in 2002 and, since then, several new statutes have been introduced. From the outset, however, these anti-extremist laws have been

criticised for their vague wording, which allows a wide range of activities to be labeled 'extremist' and prohibited. Where religiosity is concerned, one of the most problematic aspects is the ban on preaching 'religious superiority'. Not surprisingly, this means that religious publications account for a very large proportion of the list of banned literature in Russia (Ledovskikh 2013; Fagan 2013: 158–70).

The labeling of a religious organization as a 'sect' in the media often has tangible consequences for the organization in question. Geraldine Fagan draws a parallel between the Soviet-time media campaigns against some enemies that led to administrative measures against them and the current branding of religious communities as sects. She suggests that some of these media campaigns are 'ordered' by local authorities or representatives of the ROC (Fagan 2013: 99–100). Vladimir Lukin, who served as the Human Rights Commissioner of Russia from 2004 to 2014, has commented that the policy for passing verdicts of extremism often involves the "misguided personal opinions of experts, who have no training in the study of religion, who are not basing their arguments on the scholarly literature of the study of religion, but on the accusatory 'sectological' directories. In these experts' statements about the activity of religious communities, the accusations of activity that is allegedly harmful to the moral, mental and physical health of their members and other citizens, are often unfounded and do not prove that these communities would have committed such offenses" (Smirnov 2008; see also Shterin & Dubrovsky 2019).

This article does not seek to provide evidence regarding a link between media accusations of sectarianism and court verdicts of extremism, although such links certainly do appear in the published literature. However, an examination of the wide and indiscriminate usage of the term 'sect' in public discussions reveals that it is often utilised as a derogatory label through which certain forms of religiosity are discredited, rather than as a concept based on any scholarly understanding of the term. Next, I will discuss four very different organizations that are often referred to in the Russian media as sects.

4   The Wahhābists, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Nurdzhular, and NORM

4.1   *The Wahhābists*

Geraldine Fagan argues that in the internal quarrels within the Russian *umma*, Wahhābism plays the same role as the 'totalitarian sect' does in public debates (Fagan 2013: 162). In Russia, the usage of the term 'Wahhābism' is broad, to say the least; it tends to be used, according to Alfrid K. Bustanov and Michael Kemper, to refer to "all Salafi trends in Islam, which are critical

of the theological, legal and Ṣūfi 'traditional' schools and brotherhoods in the country, and which are believed to have been 'imported' from the Arab world, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey" (Bustanov and Kemper 2013: 809).

In 1999, under an initiative driven by the local Muftiate, Wahhābism was banned in the Dagestan Republic of the Russian Federation. Similar laws were soon introduced in other southern republics, including Chechnya. There were also attempts to widen the ban to cover the whole Russian Federation. Scholar Aleksei Malashenko (2007, 34–5) recollects that some "experts from Moscow," including Malashenko himself, managed to convince the ruling elite that the ban would be senseless. It should be noted that, while President Putin (who probably did not wish to complicate foreign relations with Saudi Arabia) recommended that the word 'Wahhābism' should not be used as a synonym for radical or terrorist Islam back in 2006, its usage as such still continues in the media and at lower levels of the Russian Government (Fagan 2013: 161).

When I searched the media database Integrum for word combinations like 'sect Hizb [ut-Tahrir]', 'sect Nurdzhular', and 'sect NORM', the largest number of hits came from the combination 'sect Wahhābism'. For example, an article in the newspaper *Izvestiya*, discussing politics in Saudi Arabia, provides its readers with a small amount of background information, which begins: "Wahhābism itself (which the other Muslims consider as a sect and its followers as heretics) was founded in the eighteenth century" (Yusin 2003). However, the number of hits for the word combination decreases over the ten-year period for which I performed the search. Correspondingly, in that time, a new topic 'sect ISIS', has begun to appear more frequently.

4.2   *Hizb ut-Tahrir*

A decision by the Highest Court of the Russian Federation in 2003 banned Hizb ut-Tahrir on the grounds of it being a terrorist organization aiming to eliminate non-Islamic governments, including those in Russia and the CIS countries.[3] The director of the human rights and analytical center SOVA, Alexander Verkhovskii (2006), argues that although there were good grounds to ban Hizb ut-Tahrir for being extremist—including its incitement of religious and ethnic hatred, and its propagation of anti-Semitism in particular—the terrorism verdict was unsubstantiated. He reminds us that the organization does not call

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3   Federal'nyi zakon "O Bor'be s terrorizmom," No. 130-FZ, 25 July 1998. The verdict. Reshenie Verkhovnogo Suda RF ot 14 Fevralya 2003 g. No. GKLI 03–116, Natsionanal'nyi antiterroristicheskii Komitet, https://web.archive.org/web/20160108040711/http://nac.gov.ru/content/3934.html.

for terrorist action and that none of its members have been found guilty of inciting terrorism in Russia.

After the verdict, the human rights organization Memorial requested an analysis of Hizb ut-Tahrir's publications[4] by the Head of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Asiatic Russia, Nafigulla Ashirov. He concluded that the publications contained no calls for violence or the violent overthrow of the legal regime. After the statement was published on Memorial's website, the organization received a request from Moscow city prosecution to remove the material as it was potentially extremist. After a short legal battle, Memorial was forced to comply in 2005 (Fagan 2013: 157).

Human rights organizations have reported that questionable arrests and convictions have been made on the basis of membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir (Fagan 2013: 157). Given that the Hizb ut-Tahrir has been denounced as a terrorist organization, its pleas for fair treatment are easy to disregard. In 2011, demonstrations were held against the mass arrest of Muslim activists in Tatarstan. The fact that members and symbols of Hizb ut-Tahrir were seen at these demonstrations led some authorities and Russian Islam specialists to brand the events radicals' attempts to achieve their own extremist goals, backed by "naïve human rights activists" (Suleimanov 2012).

Labeling Hizb ut-Tahrir as a sect is an integral part of the public campaigns mounted against it. The newspaper *Moskovskii Komsomolets* quotes the head of the DUMRT, Ravil Gainutdin: "For some, it may come as news but, nevertheless, Hizb ut-Tahrir is a typical sect. Namely a sect in which all the concepts of traditional Islam and the Qur'ān are presented in a distorted form" ("Rab Lampy" 2005). The same rhetoric can be found on some Islamic websites, especially those that are accused of being cover-up projects for anti-Islamic actors. For example, on 10 February 2014, *Islam Today* published the article "Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islamic Party or a Misguided Sect?" which presented features like "religious marketing" and "aggressive missionary work and psychological pressure" as typical characteristics of a sect—and of Hizb ut-Tahrir in particular.

After the annexation of Crimea, the rights of the Crimean Tatars became an issue of concern. In comparison with Russia, religious politics in Ukraine are less prescribed. Although Russia promised to grant the Tatars the same privileges as other inhabitants of the area, soon after the annexation, raids began on mosques, madrasas, and Muslim homes. Several high-profile Islamic leaders have been forcibly deported or have left Russia of their own accord. The current leader of the Crimean Muftiate, Emirali Ablaev has remained silent

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4   These five publications were selected because they have often been referred to in Russian court cases as evidence of the extremism of Hizb ut-Tahrir.

about the oppression of Tatar people and religious activists in the peninsula. Instead, he has appealed to Russian authorities in his rivalry with other Islamic actors and organizations, accusing these of extremism and sectarianism. These accusations are used both as weapons in internal struggles within Crimean Muslim community and to show loyalty to Kremlin by vilifying Ukraine. As early as 2012, Ablaev, who was already then known of his pro-Russian stance, accused the Ukrainian authorities of oppressing the Crimean Tatars: "At the same time ... we can see within the Crimean procurator and the Ukrainian Secret Service a complete indifference toward the activity of radical, extremist-terrorist sects: 'Hizb ut-Tahrir', Wahhābites, [members of] Al-Ahbash, takfirists and others. Not one of the appeals of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Crimea on banning these sectarian organizations have been heard" (Ivzhenko 2012). It is questionable, how widely Ablaev's concerns were shared among Crimean Tatars in 2012. However, it is clear that the Russian regime has undeniably been more efficient in blocking extremism and the activity of 'sects', but also religious freedom than Ukraine.

4.3   *Nurdzhular*

In May 2007, the Moscow Koptevo District Court banned as extremist fourteen parts of the Russian translation of the *Rislae-I Nur* by Said Nursi (1876–1960). The verdict was based on an expert's statement, in which it was explained that the publication attempted "to influence the psyche of the reader subconsciously, using mechanisms of religious belief, i.e. the formation of conscious values and convictions with an irrational basis" (quoted in Fagan 2013: 161). The ban was criticised both in Russia and abroad. Indeed, the court has refused to take into account several statements by Russian scholars of religion and Muslim organizations. In the years that followed, many more of Nursi's publications were banned. In April 2008, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation banned the Nurdzhular organization for being extremist. Again, the basis for this accusation was widely condemned.

Human rights organizations and Muslim activists have criticised the ban, claiming that there is no evidence of the existence of the Nurdzhular organization in Russia. Those arrested for being members of Nurdzhular, it is claimed, have been detained simply for reading Nursi's works (Ponomarev 2012; Smirnov 2008). Many of these people have denied the accusation, pointing out the absurdity of concluding that reading certain publications is the same as belonging to an organization run by their author (Fagan 2013: 159–61). However, the measures taken against Nurdzhular have met with the approval of experts known to support action against Islamic activism in Russia. Silantyev (2007: 439), for example, suggests that the ban is valid by making the erroneous claim

that both Nurdzhular and Nursi's publications are also banned in Turkey for their extremist tendencies. Reporting on such matters by seemingly neutral news outlets thus creates an image of the prevalence of radical Islamic activity in Russia.

In its denunciation by Muslim leaders and human rights organizations in the media, Nurdzhular is often referred to as an extremist sect. In the *Izvestiya* article "Sectarians Spied Russia," Nurdzhular is accused of spreading pan-Turkish ideas in Russia and raising "a generation in Turkic areas in Russia, loyal to Turkey." The same article claims that Nurdzhular is a cover organization for the CIA's operations in Russia (Bulavin 2011). Moreover, a connection to terrorism has been made in the official newspaper of the Russian Government, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* (25 April 2007), which stated that "according to the international intelligence, the members of Nurdzhular are connected to the terrorist organization the Grey Wolfs Bozkurtlar," as well as claiming that Nurdzhular books promote the idea of "overthrowing the secular order and replacing it with shariat [*sharīʿa*]."

4.4   *NORM*

The National Organization of Russian Muslims (*Natsional'naya Organizatsiya Russkikh Musul'man*, or NORM) was founded in 2004 as an organization aiming to represent and defend the rights of ethnic Russian Muslims. NORM argues that ethnic Russian Muslims should not reject their national traditions and roots upon conversion to Islam. According to Renat Bekkin, the godfather of NORM was Geydar Dzhemal, who, in Soviet times, gathered a group of left-wing and conservative revolutionary intellectuals around him. Dzhemal, whose mother was Russian and father was Azerbaijanian, was a Shīʿite; remarkably, NORM members include both Sunnīs and Shīʿites.

From the outset, one of the group's leading ideologists (who would also become its leader) was Vadim Sidorov (Kharun ar-Rusi), who, in addition to being a student of Dzhemal, had a background in Russian ultra-rightist nationalist circles, as did many of the founding members of the organization. Sidorov, along with many other prominent figures within the organization, has flirted with Fascism and has openly admitted his interest in the ideas of traditionalists like Julius Evola and René Guénon. A year after the foundation of NORM, Shīʿite members were expelled from the group and Sidorov fell out with Dzhemal, criticizing his internationalist tendencies.

Initially, both Sidorov and NORM seemed to subscribe to Salafism. Inspired by its contact with the Murabitun World Movement, however, in 2007, NORM announced that it bases its activities on the Maliki *madhhab* and Ṣūfism, although it does accept members from other *madhhabs* (Bekkin 2012: 380–7).

Only a small percentage of ethnically Russian Muslims belong to NORM. This is either because they do not subscribe to the organization's ideas or because they have never heard about it. After expelling the Shīʿites, the organization gained some new prominent members, such as Ali Polosin; when NORM begun to take a more critical stand against the state, however, they left. NORM was among the few Muslim groups that openly supported the anti-Putin demonstrations in 2011 and 2012, as well as the Ukrainian Maidan. Sidorov claims that before these events, NORM tried to distance itself from active involvement in opposing the Government, but the oppression of Muslims (and ethnic Russian Muslims in particular) compelled it to abandon its loyalism ("Znachimoe Ottsustvie" 2015).

Oppressive measures against NORM began in St Petersburg in 2013, when several of its members were arrested. The informal leader of the group, Maksim Baidak (Salman Sever), was accused of "justifying terrorism." The charges were based on a blog written by Baidak two years earlier, in which he expressed some understanding of the motives of the Primorskie Partizany,[5] a criminal group which had attacked and killed several police officers in 2010. Arrests made for the purpose of questioning spread to other cities as well so that, by the end of 2013, the majority of NORM leaders had fled Russia.

NORM has condemned the annexation of Crimea and, in 2014, it founded a new organization, Slavyano-Islamskaya Liga (the Slavic-Islamic League), together with some groups representing ethnic Ukrainian Muslims. Sidorov claims that Russian special services continue to monitor and intimidate people whom they suspect of being connected to NORM. It is because of these threats, Sidorov argues, that the organization has become more closed since the late 2000s. After leaving Russia, leading NORM figures advised all the group's members and friends in Russia to disassociate themselves publicly from the organization (Sila 2015).

NORM has been presented as a sect both in media reports and by rival Muslim organizations. The latter tend to base their claims on the doctrinal nature of NORM. The organization Darul'-Fikr, which also includes some ethnic Russian Muslims, has labeled both the Murabitun World Movement and NORM "misguided sects." They have also accused them of being overly nationalistic and blindly following Western culture, including Western philosophy and discourse, which they see as unnecessary or even harmful for Muslims ("Russkie

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5   The Primorskie Partizany had been mistreated by police officers and the case aroused much discussion about police brutality in Russia. Originally, the Primorskie Partizany had no connection with Islam; some of the members have been reported to have converted to Islam, however, during their time in prison.

musul'mane" 2010; Bekkin 2012: 385–387). In 2007, NORM published a report in response to its accusations of being a sect. Surprisingly, NORM chose to defend the word 'sect' by drawing on the *ḥadīth*, in which, NORM stated, Muḥammad predicted that Islam would be divided into 73 sects. NORM argued, therefore, that all Muslims belong to some sort of 'sect'. Notably, NORM *does* draw a distinction here between the 'sect' and the 'misguided sect', rejecting the second label (Ar-Rusi 2007).

In the media, accusations of sectarianism made against NORM are usually linked to suspicions about Russian Muslims in general. As in the case of Wahhābism, the threat posed by radical ethnic Russian Muslims seems to be exaggerated in the press. For example, in an interview with *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* on 6 June 2015, Silantyev argued that if a Slav converted to Islam, there was a 90 percent chance that he or she would end up in a 'radical sect'; he also referenced both Wahhābism and NORM. In another interview, he commented on the role of ethnic Russian Muslims in terrorist activity: "If, earlier, the most criminal sect in our [country] was considered to be the Satanists, which immediately fell into the special category, nowadays, it can be said that radical [ethnic] Russian Muslims have surpassed them in their inclination towards criminality (*kriminogennost*)" (Svetlova 2011). Some reports describing NORM as a sect refer to a change in the organization's behavior at the end of the 2000s. In a 2009 article about ethnic Russian Muslims in the popular newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, it was argued that the adoption of the Maliki *madhhab* and the election of Sidorov as leader led NORM to "become alien for Russians and for Russian Muslims and turned [it] into a minute pro-Nazi sect" (Mal'tsev 2009).

5   The Faizrakhmanisty

5.1   *Scholars on the Faizrakhmanisty*

Until recently, there was little scholarly literature on the Faizrakhmanisty. Of the few publications on this topic, some fall more into the category of theological contentions, rather than scholarly analyses. The two publications on the group that are cited most often are 'Unofficial Islam in Tatarstan' (2003)[6] and 'Anti-Islamic Tendencies' (2006) by the scholar and Islamic leader Valiulla Yakupov. Yakupov knew the organization's leader, Faizrakhman Sattarov, very well. Despite his thorough acquaintance with the Islamic tendencies within

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6   Interestingly, in this booklet, Yakupov seems to use the terms "unofficial Islam," "non-traditional Islam," and "sect" interchangeably.

Tatarstan and his scholarly competence, Yakupov's writings on Islam (in particular, his non-official Islamic tendencies) are indicative of his position as a theologian and official in the DUMRT. For example, in his booklet *Anti-Islam: About the Sectarian Nature of Wahhābī Reformers* (2006), he maintains that there cannot be any real Islam outside the four (Sunnī) *madhāhib*. According to Yakupov, Wahhābism was created by the British special services in order to cause discordance among Muslims (2006: 5–9). Yakupov also criticises Nurdzhular and reminds his readers that "during the cold war [Said Nursi] did much to discredit our country, factually supporting NATO's plans against the USSR" (2006: 38).

After the Faizrakhmanisty's rise into public consciousness in 2012, another source became widely cited: an online article entitled "Faizrakhmanisty: A Sect of Islamic Origin in Tatarstan in the 21st century" and written by a highly controversial scholar of Islam, Rais Suleimanov (2011) whose claims about the prevalence of radical Islam have been contested by scholars and Muslims alike.[7] According to Suleimanov, the Faizrakhmanisty represent a "salient example of a totalitarian sect with Islamic origins" (2011). The rector of the Islamic University in Kazan, Rafik Mukhametshin, has also written about the Faizrakhmanisty. Unlike Yakupov (2003) and Suleimanov (2011), who both describe the Faizrakhmanisty in terms of the concept of the 'totalitarian sect', Mukhametshin does not use even the word 'sect'; rather, he refers to the Faizrakhmanisty as a 'group' or 'movement'. In an interview after the raid on the Faizrakhmanisty compound, Mukhametshin explained that, in his view, the Faizrakhmanisty could not be considered an Islamic sect because the group mixes together various Islamic traditions and elements, and also lacks a coherent religious doctrine (Ivanov 2012). The most recent studies of Sattarov and Faizrakhmanisty has been conducted by Renat Bekkin (2018, 2020), who bases his writings in both diligent study of archives and fieldwork material.

5.2   *Faizrakhman Sattarov and His Teachings*

Faizrakhman Sattarov was born in Ufa, the capital of Bashkortostan, in 1929. After compulsory service in the Soviet Army, he had various odd jobs, including one as a janitor. In 1955, he entered the Mir-I'Arab Islamic Madrasa at Bukhara and the Baraq-Khan Madrasa in Tashkent (in the Soviet Union, these were the

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7   For example, an eminent Russian scholar of nationalism, Valerii Tishkov, called a report about the threat of ethno-religious conflicts and radical Islam in Povolz'e, published by the Russian Institute for Strategic Research, a provocation. At: http://golosislama.ru/news .php?id=17631. Suleimanov is often argued to have close contact with the Russian security services (see Dzutsati 2014).

only two institutions which provided higher Islamic learning (Kemper, Motika and Reichmuth 2010: 11). At Tashkent, where Sattarov studied between 1955 and 1964, he was the first Tatar student. After working in a mosque in Kazan, Sattarov was invited by Shamir Khiyaledinov, the leader of the Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man Evropeiskoi Chasti SSSR i Sibiri (DUMECSS), to work at his organization. Sattarov's star in the organization began to rise and he was sent to work in mosques in Leningrad, Rostov-on-Donu, and Ufa (Yakupov 2003; Bekkin 2018).

At the beginning of the 1980s, Sattarov began to gather a group of followers and to develop his teachings. According to Yakupov (2003), his alienation from the official DUMECSS was his response to being passed over in the DUMECSS leadership election in 1980, despite being one of the most suitable applicants for the post, in terms of his mastery of the Islamic tradition. Sattarov himself claimed that, at that time, he had begun to regret cooperating with the Soviet authorities: "The authorities of the state security organizations took me to Islamic countries, where I had to say that 'I do not believe the American slander that believers are harassed in the USSR. We have a total freedom of religion!' That is how I came to be a servant of Satan, a traitor. And when I understood this, I regretted it and began to travel to cities and to preach" (Varsegov 2008). Due to his activities, Sattarov was expelled from the DUMECSS and his followers thus decreased in number (Yakupov 2003).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, Sattarov's scholarship began to be appreciated and the number of people wishing to learn from him grew once more. Paradoxically, many of the future Islamic leaders of Tatarstan, such as Valiulla Yakupov and Ildus Faizov, who later condemned Sattarov, were students of his. Rafik Mukhametshin confirms that "many people came to Faizrakhman-khazrat to learn, because he was educated. In the 1980s, it was impossible to find anyone more educated" (Zavalishina 2013). Sattarov published his religious views in a small publication entitled *Iman tamynlary* (which translates from the Tatar language as 'The Roots of the Faith').[8]

In 1992, Sattarov opened a small madrasa in Naberezhnye Chelny, the second largest city in Tatarstan, and also created communities in Ufa and Kazan. In 1996, he settled in Kazan on 700 square meters of land, which he called *dār al-Islām* or 'the house of Allāh' (*gosudarstvo Allakha*). This compound, housed in a three-story building, became home to Sattarov and his followers. He was

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8   Interestingly, none of the scholars who are discussed in this article refer to this publication, which was Sattarov's only publication. Likewise, it is not available in either the Russian National Library or the State Library, which, between them, should be in possession of everything published in Russia.

able to register the land officially as a residence for his community and he also obtained land for the construction of a mosque, although the latter was never realised. In the 1990s, then, the community was thriving, and functioned in a very democratic manner. According to Yakupov (2003), however a schism appeared in the community when one of its students begun to gain too much influence. When he was expelled from the community, a substantial number of people deserted Sattarov.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the community began to become more isolated and to take a more critical stance in relation to the rest of society. The Faizrakhmanisty refused to pay taxes or utility charges, so their water, gas, electricity, and telephone were disconnected by the authorities. The organization's children were kept out of public schools and the members refused to receive any medical treatment. In fact, the community went as far as denying the validity of the Russian state and its laws; the Faizrakhmanisty created their own passports and flag. As the 2000s went on, however, the authorities began to challenge the organization's activities more and more. Members were banned from a local marketplace where they sold food products, a move which was attributed to their inability to compromise with officials. Equally problematic was the fact that, given that official Islamic organizations refused to acknowledge the Faizrakhmanisty as Muslims, the organization's deceased could not be buried at Islamic burial grounds. Nonetheless, Sattarov was not afraid of presenting his community as being distinct from official Islam in Tatarstan, which left it vulnerable to accusations of sectarianism (Bekkin 2020).

The Faizrakhmanisty consider all other Muslims heretics and therefore do not allow any outsiders into their mosques. Nevertheless, the community has grown slowly; according to the local newspaper *Vechernyaya Kazan*, in 2002, twenty-two people lived in the compound but by 2012, the number of the followers had increased to nearly seventy (Yudkevich 2012). Whereas in the 1980s, the community attracted many middle-class people, several reporters argue that by the 2000s, most of Sattarov's followers were the uneducated and underprivileged. Many of Sattarov's critics claim that money was one of his main motives for creating the community, suggesting that some of his supporters were pursued for their wealth. However, Sattarov can hardly be accused of seeking a lavish lifestyle, given that he shares the ascetic life of his followers. Moreover, some interviews with community members have indicated that at least some of these people came to the community in order to be saved from poverty and hunger (Varsegov 2008). By the end of 2000s, Sattarov's Parkinson's Disease compelled him to stay in bed and made him unable to continue teaching and preaching. The leadership of the community was entrusted to one of his followers, Gumer Ganiev, who gained the title of *emir* (Arab. *amūr*).

It should be noted that the term 'Faizrakhmanisty' has been created by outsiders as a label for the organization. Members of the community called themselves Mu'mins or simply 'true Muslims'. Sattarov refers to the concept of seventy-three branches of Islam, of which only one is the true one. He claims that the end of the world is soon to come and the only ones who will be saved are his followers. He has stated that he receives direct messages from Allāh in his sleep and calls himself a messenger of God. He does not claim to be unique in this respect, however; he suggests that there have been, and will be, other messengers (including women), all of whom will suffer for their faith. In 1976, Sattarov claimed to have received the title *narsulla* ('Allāh's helper') from God. In 1993, he also claimed the title of *rasulalla* ('messenger of God'). Critics such as Valiulla Yakupov argue that this change amounts to appropriation of the title of the Prophet, as *rasulalla* can be interpreted as having such a meaning.[9] Sattarov has always denied considering himself to be a prophet, however. Indeed, in an interview with the newspaper *NG-Religii*, Sattarov is careful not to break one of the five commands of Islam by disputing that Muḥammad was the last prophet. He explains that while a prophet receives instruction directly from Allāh, a messenger's task is to bring more people to faith (Aisin 2007). Apparently, the members of the community also understood this crucial difference; after being raided by the security forces, one member stated: "do not call us sectarians. The messenger is not a prophet, just a messenger. We are not breaking [any laws of] Islam" (Allenovaya 2012). Nevertheless, the Faizrakhmanisty had several ritual practices and hold many beliefs that appear very unorthodox. For instance, according to Sattarov, the true Kaʿba is located on the premises of his community and all of its members, therefore, performing *ḥajj* daily (Demidova 2009).

For the Faizrakhmanisty, the only authority is the Qurʾān. They deny the validity of various *madhhabs* and any forms of national Islam, including Tatarism. However, there are distinct nationalist tendencies in Sattarov's teachings, including an emphasis on the 'golden age' of the earliest Tatar state, Volga Bulgaria (c. 700–1238 CE). Sattarov criticises the political and religious elite of Tatarstan for cooperating with Russia—for "shaking their hands." Nevertheless, in another interview, he states that he has nothing against Russians, as long as they stay in their own areas (Varsegov 2008). During the 2000s, Sattarov's attitude toward the Russian state turned more hostile. In an interview in 1998, Sattarov stated that he prefers the state to remain secular, not religious and

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9 According to Il'shad Nurmiev's (2012: 136) *Dictionary of Islamic Terms* (in Russian), (*ar*) *rasulla*(ʿ) means "the Prophet" and *rasulullakh* means "messenger of God." The dictionary is approved by the Commission of the DUMRF.

that "citizens should remain loyal and […] participation in politics is permissible" (Makarov and Mukhametshin 2003: 132). A few years later, the community began to disassociate itself from the state and the surrounding society, which is when Sattarov denied the legitimacy of the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, the Faizrakhmanisty have never expressed any inclination toward revolutionary activity. In the 2000s, the sect ended proselytism in outside society and even Suleimanov (2011) admits that "though not acknowledging the state, they have a loyal attitude towards it. Sattarov does not call his followers to engage in any kind of war."

5.3 *The Raid of August 2011*

Religious control of unofficial Islam tightened up in Tatarstan throughout the 2000s (see International Federation for Human Rights 2009). However, even stricter measures followed the terrorist actions that took place on 19 July 2012: the murder of Valiulla Yakupov, the deputy to the Mufti of Tatarstan, and the assault on the chief Mufti, Ildus Faizov. Immediately after the attacks, the police and special forces began a campaign against Islamic terrorism, within which they made raids on various Islamic organizations, confiscated literature and computers, and arrested up to 600 people (Mukhetdinov and Khabutdinov 2012: 215–245).

It was as part of this anti-terrorist campaign and the search for the murderers of Yakupov that the raid on the premises of the Faizrakhmanisty took place on 1 August 2012. According to the police, they "received information" that guns might be stored at the compound. As expected, no weapons were found in the raid; instead, the authorities concluded that the premises were unsuitable for habitation and twenty-seven children were taken to a hospital, where they were found to be healthy and returned to their parents. The police confiscated approximately 1,000 books, including some manuscripts by Sattarov, in order to check them for signs of extremist activity. At first, Sattarov was prosecuted for arbitrariness (*samoupravstvo*),[10] but this was later changed to a charge of extremism. Once more, the children were taken from their parents, who were told that they would lose their parental rights unless they left the compound and allowed the children to go public schools and have medical

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10   Under the Russian criminal code, this is defined as "the unauthorized commission of actions contrary to the order presented by a law or any other normative legal act, actions whose lawfulness is contested by an organization or individual, if such actions have inflicted substantial harm." See http://www.russian-criminal-code.com/PartII/SectionX/Chapter32.html.

treatment. Most of the parents submitted to these demands and only around fifteen members stayed at the compound.

On 25 February 2013, the court of the Sovetskii district of Kazan declared the Faizrakhmanisty an extremist group. The verdict was based mainly on the rights of the citizens and children, which were argued to have been violated due to, for example, being forced to live in isolation, not being allowed to receive medical treatment, and being coerced into religious group. The verdict also referred to the "breaking up of families" on the basis of religious conviction. One of the few defenders of the community was the human rights organization sova Center, which stated: "Despite the fact that the members of the community led an isolated way of life and the theology of the community differed from the traditional Islam, we do not see any grounds for declaring the community extremist and we consider the banning of its activity lawless" ("Obshchina faizrakhmanistov" 2014).

In August 2013, all Sattarov's manuscripts, which were confiscated during the raid, were declared extremist and added to the federal list of banned materials. The manuscript collection contained a variety of materials: mostly handwritten books in the Tatar language but also leaflets, single papers, and a personal letter. The official list gives very cursory information about the material: "No. 61. Grey notebook with writing in Russian and Arabic. No. 77. Papers in format A4, joined with a metal clip" (Zaochnoe 2013a). As is customary in such cases, the verdict was based on the testimony of the experts, who had assessed the material from the viewpoints of linguistics, psychology, and religious studies. These unnamed experts (their names were not included in the proceedings) pronounced that the material was "targeted at transforming the personality of the reader, to change his worldview, values, conviction, and the manners of behavior. Its effects can be isolation from the surrounding world, the destruction of an individual's spiritual, and physiological harmony, [causing] an individual to oppose social structures and norms which have established themselves in the society" (Zaochnoe 2013a). The material was also found to create negative opinions of other religions and promote aggressive behavior toward followers of different faiths. Moreover, the contents of the literature were declared "not to correspond the classic concepts of Islam" (Zaochnoe 2013a).

After the raid, some Faizrakhmanisty members remained at the compound. In November 2013, however, the Sovetskii district court ruled that the Faizrakhmanisty, including the property owners, had lost their right to live in the compound. The verdict stated that: "The religious group represents an isolated community, which lives according to its own internal rules and ordinances, which brings clear threat to societal peace. Moreover, [allowing] these

citizens to continue living and planning together can create a threat to the security of the Russian Federation. Only enforced dissolution of the group 'Faizrakhmanisty' enables us to secure and effectively protect the rights, prescribed by law, and interests of a non-specified group of people" (Zaochnoe 2013b). In April 2014, the police evicted the last fifteen people from the compound.

5.4   *Media Coverage of the Case*

The story of the raid on the premises of an 'underground sect' spread rapidly not only through the Russian media, but also internationally, both in print and online. The majority of the reports drew a picture of the Faizrakhmanisty as a dangerous sect. Often, this was achieved in subtle ways—for example, by comparing the Faizrakhmanisty with the Christian sect Penzenskie zatvorniki, whose members barricaded themselves underground in 2007 and threatened to burn themselves as they were waiting for the end of the world. Despite the fact that the Faizrakhmanisty had no suicidal inclinations and lived in a house, parallels between the two were drawn (Sokolov 2012). It seems improbable that the police ever seriously suspected that the Faizrakhmanisty had anything to do with terrorism; the statement that the sect's whereabouts was discovered during the investigation into the murder of Yakupov, however, insinuates just that. Moreover, in some newspapers, it was reported that Yakupov had criticised both the Faizrakhmanisty and Sattarov.

The most negative and exaggerated versions of the events and the community seem to have been propagated most efficiently. Outright misinformation was repeated in the Russian and international media. The raid was portrayed as a dramatic finding; many articles used words to the effect that the police had 'discovered' a sect. However, the community was well known to local people—it had been discussed in Russian newspapers before and members of the community had given numerous interviews to the press. Indeed, the Faizrakhmanisty have been under surveillance for years. A newspaper article from 2007 explains that police waiting outside the compound had stated: "They live there quietly and peacefully" (Basilaya 2007). As Rafik Mukhametshin admits, "There have always been Faizrakhmanists [here], which was known to both the law enforcement and social authorities. But, I think, they were afraid to ban them [the Faizrakhmanisty], because it would have caused much controversy. After the [terrorist] events in July, it seems, it was decided to solve this problem, as well" (Zavalishina 2013).

Many newspapers stated that Sattarov had deprived members of all contact with outside world. However, even though such interactions do seem to have

been limited, other reports indicate that a complete ban on contact was never in force. For example, in 2007, the newspaper *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* wrote: "as it turned out, the underground-dwellers (*zatvorniki*) still go outside the gates and have been chatting with the police and the neighbors with pleasure" (Basilya 2007). In 2008, when journalists from *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* visited the compound, some members of the community told them that they read and respected the newspaper (Varsegov 2008).

The state-run media in Russia had an important role in spreading the news abroad and in forming the dominant image of the community. Perhaps the most dramatic misrepresentation was the claim that many of the children had never seen the light of day, which had no basis in fact. As CNN stated on 10 August, "The state-run newspaper *Russia Today* said some [children] were born underground and have never seen daylight." An article published in the *Daily Mail* on 8 August 2012 claimed: "A cruel religious sect kept twenty-seven children locked away in dark and unheated underground cells—some for a decade. The youngsters, aged from one to seventeen, have never seen daylight and have now been rescued from their living hell in Russia." Even less scandal-seeking, more prestigious media offered a similar story. On 9 August, *The Guardian* wrote: "The digging began about a decade ago, and seventy followers soon moved into an eight-level subterranean labyrinth of cramped cells with no light, heat or ventilation. Children were born. They too lived in the underground cells for many years—until authorities raided the compound last week and freed the twenty-seven sons and daughters of the sect." There were some more balanced articles. On 14 August, Mansur Mirovalev reported in *The Huffington Post*: "A brief visit inside the compound, which provided shocking headlines around the world when police raided it and seized the children, revealed none of the elaborate underground design described by prosecutors. Nor does a police video showing rooms inside. The father of a cult member, who originally disapproved of his daughter joining the group, said he was able to visit freely and has no complaints about how members live or treat their children."

Having analysed twenty-seven Russian and ten Western media reports on the raid, I have found that members of the community were interviewed in very few cases. Moreover, some of these 'interviews' consisted of just one quoted sentence.[11] The most frequently quoted persons were police representatives, court officials, and medical professionals. The subject expert quoted

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11   The community did not let reporters on to the compound premises, but members did talk with reporters at the gate.

most often was Rais Suleimanov, who, some Russian sources claimed, had conducted an 'extensive study' on the Faizrakhmanisty. In the material examined for the present chapter, Suleimanov's comments appeared in four Russian and five Western media reports.

A more skeptical attitude toward the authorities can be found in readers' comments on the internet, especially on Islamic websites and Tatarstan media sites. Here, people who knew the community rejected media representations of the Faizrakhmanisty as a dangerous or 'totalitarian' sect. The skeptics targeted both the authorities and the mainstream media. Some commentators noted that the living conditions of the Faizrakhmanisty were not that different from the ways in which a substantial proportion of the Russian population lived in the countryside. In this way, the conservative religious lifestyle of the Faizrakhmanisty was depicted by some as mirroring the reality of Russian society. On Radio Azattyck's website, one reader commented: "What did the parents do differently? Didn't they live like everyone else? Not watching the Olympic [Games] on TV, not drinking beer, not smoking, not wearing miniskirts and so on?" (Andrukhaeva 2012).

On some Islamic sites in particular, the measures taken by the authorities and the representations perpetuated by the media were denounced as being examples of Islamophobia existing in Russian society. This can be seen in quotations like: "I still do not understand why they are called sectarians? Because they look like Muslims, talk like Muslims and behave like Muslims?" (Alishaev 2012). On a Tatarstani news portal, a reader's comment revealed the skepticism toward the authorities' fight against Islamic terrorism: "Something very strange here … As soon as there is a terrorist action, our brave 'internal [surveillance] authorities' begin to intimidate this half-crazy Faizrakhmanisty. It gives an impression that, as the joke goes, they [special services] are not looking for the key where they lost it, but in there, where there is more light" (Kazanskie sektanty 2013).

6   Conclusion

An examination of labeling phenomena in the Russian media indicates that the term 'sect' is used in the construction of images of social problems. Moreover, it is chosen specifically to refer to social groups of Islamic dissent that are figured as posing difficulties within society. As we have seen, it is easy to find links between the media label 'sect' and legislative measures taken against religious organizations such as the Wahhābists, Nurdzhular, and the Faizrakhmanisty.

When coupled with the broadening of the category of 'extremism' in Russian court decisions, accusations of sectarianism by the media and depictions of various groups' activities as suspicious can be devastating to religious communities.

In the media, the Faizrakhmanisty have been criticised on various grounds: for distorting Islam, practicing religious fundamentalism, violating the rights of children, brainwashing people, and exploiting people to satisfy the leader's so-called greed and power hunger. These accusations mirror the characteristics of the 'totalitarian sect' elaborated typically in Russian discussions from the 1990s onward. The accusations are not completely unfounded but it is evident from an analysis of media reports that the Faizrakhmanisty have been constructed as a typical 'totalitarian sect' through selective reporting. This is symptomatic, in part, of the fact that the person referred to most often as a scholar of the topic, Rais Suleimanov, has clear biases, preferences, and political ambitions, which can be detected in his statements about the Faizrakhmanisty. It can be concluded that a lack of knowledge about Islam led to many Russian and Western media outlets simply repeating the most dramatic claims that were made about the case by Suleimanov and others, even though they were inaccurate.

The case of the Faizrakhmanisty reflects currents in the flow of ideas not just in Russia, but in many Western countries, as well. The increasing tendency toward discussing Islamic minorities within the framework of security invites authorities to have dismissive attitudes regarding non-traditional religions and newer communities. Ironically, this securitization creates pressure for uniformity within Muslim organizations, leading to the rejection of religious pluralism and constraints on the freedom of religion. It is thus that, in Russia, depictions of the Faizrakhmanisty, arguments about 'totalitarian sects', and Islamic extremism have been elided, blurring the definitions of and links between all three.

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Theology of Violence-oriented Takfirism as a Political Theory: The Case of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

Emin Poljarevic

1   Introduction

The notion of *takfīr* (lit. excommunication) was part of pre-modern heresiology that revolved around a range of conceptualisations of *kufr* (rejection of belief) and the conditions of belonging to a Muslim community (Al-Shahrastani 1923).[1] This issue of religious and sectarian belonging was directly connected to belonging to a Muslim polity. *Takfīr*, therefore, entailed pronouncing judgment on Muslims for having exited a community of Muslims either through what was understood to be their 'erroneous' beliefs and/or actions. Such judgments have often had direct political consequences (Khalidi 2005). Those who voluntarily had left Islam and, consequently, left a specific Muslim community, have traditionally been re-classified as *murtaddīn* (apostates) and/or *kuffār* (non-believers, sing. *kāfir*) (Chaliand and Blin 2007). For example, in his *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, the seminal philosopher and jurist Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) opined that "heretics," namely, those who violate the agreed upon principles of the divine law are apostates, ought to be killed (Khalidi 2005: 167). In the classical period of Islam, the issue of excommunication has often been a complex legal discussion among Islamic scholars and philosophers.

The earliest systematic form of such theologically based excommunication appeared in the 660s, when a zealous militant opposition group of proto-Khawārij (lit. 'those who go out') or Khārijites, called upon Muslims to reject and rebel against ʿAlī's political authority. The series of events within which later Khārijite theology started to crystalize is oftentimes described

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as the first *fitna* (lit. ordeal). The large-scale civil war between ʿAlī (by Sunnīs regarded as the fourth caliph, d. 661) and Muʿāwiya (the governor of Damascus, r. 639–680)[2] enabled the emergence of a range of more of less theologically zealous groups, of whom the most politically significant were the Khawārij. During an arbitration attempt, a group within the ʿAlī's encampment rejected any thought of negotiation based on several Qurʾānic passages claiming that only God, the true Sovereign, could arbitrate between a legitimate political authority (ʿAlī) and the rebels (Muʿāwiya's Damascene army). This caused a serious split between ʿAlī's supporters and those who rejected his attempt to negotiate (Hodgson 1974). Later, a Khārijite assassinated ʿAlī with a poisoned sword in 661. A range of violent events and political rifts followed this early intra-Muslim schism.

The early Khārijites accused both parties, including each other's active and passive supporters, of heresy and apostasy. Their central axiom was expressed by Qurʾān: 12:40, which summarizes the notion of God's legislative sovereignty: *lā ḥukm illā lillāh* [legislation belongs to God alone]. In addition, their de-contextual and literal reading of the text frequently pointed to the verses 4:60, 4:100, 12:14, and similar passages, all of which in various ways express God's supremacy in making (political) judgments.

In effect, Khārijites developed theological arguments that labelled those who indirectly deny God's sovereignty to be apostates. For example, the logic of Khārijites' arguments led them to claim that if and when Muslim political leadership try to resolve political disputes by, for instance, negotiating with their opponents (that is, ʿAlī's negotiation with Muʿāwiya), they are considered breaking their bond with the Qurʾānic principles of God's sovereignty, which makes them deviants and apostates who deserve severe punishment. The result has therefore been that Khārijites considered it a religious duty to fight all Muslim political leaders and, indeed laymen, who neither joined nor swore allegiance to the Khārijites. For instance, the early Khārijites labelled the Muʿtazila 'deviants' because they chose abstention (*iʿtizāl*) when confronted with the choice between ʿAlī and Muʿāwiya (Adang and Ansari 2015).

The early late-seventh century Khārijite movement represents an early violence oriented and literalist interpretative tradition that justified rebellion as the religious tradition's central tenet. Comprised of relatively small groups of ardent rebels scattered across Iraq, Iran, the eastern Arabian Peninsula, and the Maghreb region, they sought political power to 'purify' Muslim communities primarily through literalist and selected reading of the Qurʾānic text

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2   Sunnī Muslims consider both as the Prophet's Companions who led the opposing sides in the first Muslim civil war over a legal issue related to the murder of Caliph ʿUthman ibn al-ʿAffan in 656. ʿAlī was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law.

and prophetic narrations. For instance, to qualify as a political ruler, a Muslim must demonstrate extraordinary moral virtue, justice, religious devotion, and knowledge, as well as strictly apply the appropriate legal sanctions to those who break Islam's moral code. The entire debate on distinctions between major and minor sins, ethics, and moral virtues within the early mainstream Sunnī scholarship seems to have evolved in an attempt to counter what was considered to be Khārijites' unreasonableness. The debate evolved in the light of the formation of interpretative methodologies and scholastics used by the main part of the religious scholars primarily within the Muslim urban centres.

Some of the main concerns articulated by Khārijites is that any violation of moral codes unequivocally identifies the political leader and his supporters as non-Muslims—which would theologically require all Muslims to rebel against such a person's authority (Kenney 2006). However, it is rather unclear who is responsible for making this decision: the majority of male adults, the whole community of believers, the religious authorities, or any individual who has a 'legitimate' cause? This particular question has also been a source of intense controversy regarding ISIS' proclamation of its caliphate on 29 June 2014 (Gerges 2016).

Nonetheless, insisting upon the 'correctness' of a person's actions also indicated that the Khārijites emphasised free will far more than did the early Sunnīs, especially the Ḥanbalīs, who were leaning more towards predestination. This theological distinction became clearer during the tenth century, after the great ninth-century rivalry and conflict between Ashʿarī/Ḥanbalī and Muʿtazilite scholarship (Makdisi 1981). The later Khārijites' strict adherence to inflexible legal requirements and high moral expectations, particularly for political leaders, meant that group cohesion of and within their various groups slowly eroded. Simply put, the severity of their socio-political structures and codes of conduct was, in the long term, untenable and thus caused an increasing variety of reinterpretations of alternative theological principles to emerge.

The initial severity of differentiation between 'believers' (Khārijites themselves) and all others (*kuffār*) was therefore revised. For instance, the outright hostile and violent othering and mass killing (*istiʿrāḍ*) of non-compliant Muslim 'infidels' (*kuffār* and *murtaddīn*) turned into nonviolent labelling, wherein general Muslim public were categorised as hypocrites, 'the ungrateful ones', heretics, and so on. These and similar reinterpretations caused many additional (but smaller) groups to appear, often named after their originators such as the Azāriqa, ʿAtāwiyya, Baihāsiyya, Ibāḍiyya, Muḥakkima, Najadāt, and Ẓafariyya (Al-Shahrastani 1923). Only a few of these have survived. The Ibadis, one theologically and politically reformed Khārijite group, eventually became the official religious establishment of the Sultanate of Oman (Kenney 2006).

Both Sunnī and Shīʿī groups have used *takfīr* (excommunication) through-out Islam's multivariate history. For example, its theological and jurispruden-tial application played a significant political role during the Muʿtazilī *miḥna* (ordeal or inquisition) of the 830s and 840s in what is today known as Iraq against Ḥanbalī and other rival Islamic scholars. The irrecoverable end of Muʿtazilism as a religious and intellectual force came only after the political shift of power (Makdisi 1981). Others examples are ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) Mardin *fatwā* against Syria's Mongol rulers; the Ṣafavid (Shīʿī) Akhbāriyya's *takfīr* of Muslim philosophers in the 1600s; and most notably, during the 1700s, the religious movement of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's *en masse* excom-munication of the Sunnī Ottoman and Shīʿī religious leaders. All of these and similar historical cases are either concerned with othering their doctrinal and/or political opponents, who are perceived as violating 'Islamic doctrine's fun-damental principles' and thus as not belonging to the broader community. Again, such theological exclusions often had socio-political consequences that largely depended upon the context or the dynamics of pre-existing religious polarisations as well as the political authorities' interest, willingness and/or ability to support the 'orthodox' position vis-à-vis the perceived heterodoxies (El-Rouayheb 2015).

2   Political Theory of Loyalty and Disavowal

The idea of political and religious allegiance was hotly debated among Sunnī scholars throughout the classical period (ca. 850s–1400s) (Al-Mawardi 1995). Sunnī polemics largely revolved around consistency in a person's theologi-cal, jurisprudential 'belonging', which in turn determined that person's social and political rights vis-à-vis leadership and other religious communities. Such polemics became more contentious in Muslim polities with higher levels of theological heterodoxies. For example, the survival of four schools of Sunnī jurisprudence (Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, Ḥanbalī, and Ḥanafī) and the dominant Shīʿī school of jurisprudence (Jaʿfarī) is a consequence of complex relationships between political and scholarly classes in pre-modernity. One suggestion is that the crystallization of these schools and the *de facto* disappearance of the Zahiris and a significant number of other jurisprudential traditions is a direct result of political decisions from the early thirteenth century onwards (Makdisi 1981). Similar developments occurred later on in the North Africa, Levant, Arabian peninsula and in the eastern lands of Islam (Hodgson 1974). Nevertheless, the broader Sunnī establishment drifted towards a more prag-matic compliance and coexistence between the religious scholar-experts class and the political leadership (El-Rouayheb 2015).

For example, the long-term scholarly discourse drifted towards religious understandings that the populations were expected to obey a political leader who publicly proclaims (*shahāda*) God's unity and, at least in theory, admits the sovereignty and supremacy of God's will over his own dominion (Hodgson 1974). This requirement entailed public announcements of loyalty, during the congregational Friday prayers and on other occasions, to a political leader or religious establishment (*ʿulamāʾ*) either as a matter of conviction or coercion. It is therefore not surprising that the classical Sunnī scholarly deliberations from the tenth century onwards focused primarily on a political ruler's legitimacy and discouraging popular rebellions (*aḥkām al-bughāh*) against political leadership (Abou el-Fadl 2001).

The basis and framework of political commitment and legitimacy (*siyāsa sharʿiyya*) remained at the heart of classical scholarly discussions on political theory related to caliphal authority and legitimacy (Hodgson 1974). That is different from the idea of *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ* (loyalty and disavowal) within the modern discussion concerning political legitimacy brought forth by contemporary Salafi interlocutors. Muhammad Saeed Al-Qahtani (b. 1956) presents one of the most comprehensive contemporary Salafi-discussions of that topic. He, along with other Salafi interlocutors, conceptualizes this idea as a primary duty of contemporary Muslims, one that entails a personal commitment to a relationship with God, a social framework that enables the fulfilment of collective duties, and a political dimension that involves prospects of violence (Al-Qahtani 2003). Most of the pre-modern conceptualisations of political commitment were not necessarily framed in the terminology of *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ*, but the insinuations of allegiance and political compliance were nevertheless deeply imbedded in the discourse.

Historically, the scholarly elites (*ʿulamāʾ*) were forced to respond various political circumstances and conflicts with moral, ethical, and political opinions on how socio-political problems ought to be addressed. For instance, the early proto-Sunnī scholars proclaimed the Khārijites unbelievers (*de facto* excommunication) because they posed an imminent threat to the existing social order. Today, there is a similar situation where mainstream Muslim scholars disqualify ISIS' leadership as *de facto* apostates (see below). Arguably, the general Sunnī opinion held that rebels destabilise ruling structures, which, in turn, results in social and material destruction and, subsequently, causes violations of both the rights of God (*ḥuquq Allāh*) and the rights of Muslims (*ḥuquq al-ʿibād*). Shīʿī scholars developed a theological principle *tawallā* (pledging allegiance to the *ahl al-Bayt*) and *tabarrā* (displaying enmity towards the enemies of God, the Prophet, and his family).

In the classical period, however, the early Ḥanbalīs and similar contemporary proto-Sunnīs expressed predominantly negative opinions regarding the

meaning of *al-walā' wa-l-barā'*. Their main understanding was that the formulation of loyalty and disavowal is a religious innovation caused by sectarian infighting, which many Ḥanbalīs interpreted as religious deviancy. Nonetheless, a violation of the principle of ('correct') political and/or religious allegiance in the subsequent centuries would occasionally result in occasional excommunication of a Muslim individual or group (Adang and Ansari 2015). Such pre-modern doctrines of othering or identity affirmation and differentiation played an important and historically contingent role in othering of thought heretics.

Distinctions between the in- and out-group members were often manifested through context-dependent processes of social classification, political belonging, and legal status. Similar distinctions acquired new meanings during European colonialism and/or nation-state formation (Lewis 1988). During the first half of the twentieth century and within the context of unravelling colonial control, modern national state formations, growing nationalism, pan-Arabism, secularism, the declining relevance of religious institutions, and the evolution of authoritarian regimes gave takfirism its new form and means of expressing it.

The traditional distinction between believers and non-believers was for the most part a non-political issue in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region during the Ottoman political hegemony. There were few political repercussions for apostasy on the local level (Deringil 2000). Nevertheless, a secularized form of takfirism (for example, disqualifying and expelling a person as a member of a community) arose and dominated all public and political discussions in determining a person's legal status *vis-à-vis* a state or citizenship. Such belonging was oftentimes expressed through narratives of more or less intense expressions of patriotism, including ancestral and ethnic belonging. Hence, we find Sunnī citizens in Iran or Shī'ī citizens in the Gulf monarchies. In the case of reformed Khārijites, such as Oman's Ibāḍī Muslims (or Muḥakkima as some prefer to be called today), *takfīr* has also appropriated a new largely abstract meaning of excommunication, that is based on symbolic confined to differentiations between the larger body of Muslims (considered by and large as hypocrites) and the 'true' believers.

3   Belonging between State Sanctioned Nationalism, Ethnocenticity and Religious Communitarianism

Some would argue that takfirism during the latter half of the twentieth century has evolved into a contentious religious and political issue due to the failure of

pan-Arab nationalist projects across the MENA region (Ibrahim 2007). Within this process of conceptual evolution, terminology such as *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* came to play an increasingly central role in religio-political othering. For example, the early modern interpretation of political loyalty and disavowal within the national state framework was largely interpreted as a subordinate issue of religion (*furū'*), namely, political allegiance to a nation constructed within specific territorial borders. As a range of initially vibrant nationalist projects turned into authoritarian military and monarchic systems, a significant part of political opposition and intellectual elites turned towards cultural and religious symbols for inspiration (Hourani 1970). A part of more militant and religiously inspired opposition groups *and* several regimes in Muslim-majority states began interpreting and promoting political loyalty as an essential part (*uṣūl*) of the Islamic creed, thereby merging and equating belief in God with loyalty to a particular political order. Such conflation of political and religious terminology has been expressed through political narratives by which some authoritarian regimes and militant opposition groups seek to delegitimise their respective political opponents.

During the last half of the twentieth century seemingly marginal political oppositional groups in the MENA region picked up the idea of *takfīr*. The first generation of modern-day violence-oriented *takfīrī* groups operationalised *al-walā' wa-l-barā'* as an ideological framing by which to establish a range of violent action plans against the region's authoritarian regimes. These groups confronted these regimes' repressive policies and the perceived ungodliness that their political systems represented (Kenney 2006) with violent and nonviolent mobilisation strategies. These early conceptualizations of *takfīr* integrated the modern political idea of a nation state with the pre-modern religious doctrinal claim of God's sovereignty. For instance, divine sovereignty trumps any worldly authority claimed by modern nation states, for God's supreme will, as understood to have been recorded in the Qur'ān and the canonical *ḥadīth* literature, is attempted to be realized in the social, political, and broader civilisational spheres. At the same time, this political reasoning had dismissed the authority and legitimacy of the traditional Islamic religious establishment's scholarship (Huwaidi 1988).

Sayyid Quṭb, Egyptian intellectual and activist, executed by the Egyptian government in 1966 allegedly for conspiring to assassinate Gamal Abdel Nasser, is presented as an political voice that provided important arguments to the later development of *takfīrī* political doctrine (Wright 2006). One of the most important arguments in his last book, *Milestones* (1990), is that the "Muslim World"—a civilisational category—suffered from the overpowering social disorder that he termed "the state of *jāhiliyya*," much like the situation in pre-Islamic Arabia. One of his suggested prescriptions to resolve this was to

establish *just* governance in Muslim-majority societies based on God's sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*) (Quṭb 1990).

Takfīr-oriented political opposition groups adopted this basic set of arguments and regarded *ḥākimiyya* as a form of operationalised *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ* within political context of a nation state. This view gave the idea of loyalty and disavowal doctrinal content and a more concrete relational link between the political and theological. As a central tenet of Islamic doctrine on par with God's unity, names, attributes, and lordship, it provided a theological argument to advocate rebellion and insurrection against perceived ungodliness and apostasy of political leadership in Muslim majority polities (Al-Maqdisi 1984). Muslim political authority, according to this view, must be based on doctrines presented in the Islamic scriptures and historical examples that had validated, during brief moments of the first Islamic century, how to govern a Muslim community and polity.

This line of theological reasoning lays ground for broadening the concept of Islamic worship (*ʿubūdiyya*), wherein the political is an integral part of human compliance with divine purpose. In addition to broadening the role of free will by implicitly suggesting that humans are able to act/choose within the range of multiple God-given futures, these broadened understandings provided a tacit intellectual platform to reactionary theological attitudes that have potential to legitimate political violence. This is a major point of difference between violence-oriented takfirist groups, traditional Sunnī scholarly discourses and democratically inclined Islamist reformist movements.

For example, political and social movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood have denounced and rejected similar *takfīrī* interpretations of Quṭb's original analysis and proposed reformist solutions by not employing *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ* or *ḥākimiyya* in their mobilization discourses and activism (Al-Hudaybi 1977; Poljarevic 2012). It is therefore significant to note that disagreements between nonviolent and violent, democratic and nondemocratic, including what is sometimes considered theologically heterodox and orthodox Muslim political and religious groups, are rooted largely in theological interpretations, ideological preference, operational disagreements and collective proclivities towards political violence or nonviolence (Hamid and Farrala 2015). One important theological feature of these disagreements is the role and meaning assigned to Islamic eschatology.

4   The Millenarian Component of Modern-day Takfirism

A part of the second generation of violence-oriented *takfīrī* groups emerged during the early 1970s as a direct response to the Egyptian state's initial

permissiveness and latter repression of selected parts of the religiously moti-vated political opposition. By the mid-1970s, Takfīr wa al-Hijra, initiated by Ahmad Shukri Mustafa (executed 1978) and others, had begun a violent cam-paign against state officials and institutions (Ashour 2011). By the late 1970s and early 1980s Islamic Jihād, then led by Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj (executed 1982), became the most influential promoter of *takfīrī* militancy. His important *The Forgotten Duty* (*farīḍah al-ghā'ibah*) had a significant effect on legitimating violence against such leaders as Anwar Sadat, who was assassi-nated by Faraj's group in 1981 (Faraj 2000). Another relevant argument was anchored in the *fatwās* of 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman, the theological and juris-prudential council to Faraj and Islamic Jihād (Faraj 1986) which differed con-siderably from those of al-Azhar's scholarly elite. 'Abd al-Rahman died in a US maximum security prison in 2017, convicted in 1995 for his leading role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombings.

One of *The Forgotten Duty*'s most important doctrinal points is the impor-tance of waging a physical (as opposed to a spiritual) war against the perceived enemies of Islam and Muslims. Some authorities considered this a collective duty (*farḍ kifāya*), Faraj and others argued that it is an individual duty (*farḍ 'ayn*) ('Azzām 1985). The latter argument added a new sense of urgency, espe-cially to young predominantly male audiences, for it meant that no permis-sion was needed from political, religious, or parental authorities to join Islamic Jihād and similar groups (Cook 2011).

In the late 1970s, and as a part of the third generation of violence-oriented *takfīrī* activism, on the first day of the Islamic year 1400 (20 November 1979), a millenarian group composed largely of university students led by Juhayman al-'Utaybī (executed in 1980) launched an armed raid and captured the Sacred Mosque in Mecca. The rebels proclaimed a new political and spiritual order in Saudi Arabia by announcing the arrival of the *Mahdī*, an eschatological figure who, according to most Sunnī theological interpretations, will appear some time before the Day of Judgment and lead Muslims in the global struggle for justice and salvation. Although not a new phenomenon, this type of 'mahdism' had a more innovative dimension: the particular Salafist interpretation and the nature of its threat to an important segment of the Arab political context (Voll 1982). Al-'Utaybī announced that the kingdom's clergy or for that mat-ter any Muslim who defended the ruling system, as well as its policies and political authorities, had abandoned their religious obligations and personal piety to the extent of actual *kufr*, or disbelief. These and similar contemporary examples of modern-day political rebellion demonstrate both the potency and longevity of this form of political othering and its ongoing important doctrinal role in mobilising against primarily authoritarian regimes in and beyond the MENA region.

Doctrinally, Islamist, Salafi, and other Muslim activist groups are divided along different strategic considerations some of which are outlined above, but, more importantly, along interpretations of the role of God's sovereignty, as well as how, where, and to what extent Muslims should be involved in governance (Meijer 2009). These doctrinally and subsequent jurisprudential differences in interpretation are contingent on the particularities of the surrounding political, social, and cultural contexts. Eschatological urgency is, for example, a more pronounced feature of violent groups such as ISIS, wherein the political governance of *khilāfah* is directly related to fulfilling an important theologically defined precondition of the Judgement Day (*Dabiq* 1:21–28).

Although takfirism and Salafism share important theological and legal principles, among them a literalist approach to the scripture, strict personal pietism, and demands on a public obligation-based approach to lived Islam, they do differ in significant ways. For example, ISIS' brand of takfirism stands for perpetuating violence based on the unremitting excommunication of its opponents and its ambition to establish a state as the primary mean to usher in the apocalypse. Arguably, these and other primary objectives can be considered as significant discrepancies from what has traditionally been viewed as Salafism: a diverse set of religious and ideological principles driven by ambitions to purify and authenticate Muslims' beliefs and practices (Meijer 2009).

Contemporary Salafism, broadly understood, is a wide-ranging, ultraconservative, and complicated revivalist/reformist religious methodology that has been developing more systematically since the turn of the twentieth century. Looking beyond these 'family resemblances', ISIS represents anti-systemic mobilization and violent forms of othering against all perceived enemies, which is more in line with the early Khārijites' fervent anti-establishment militancy and theological hairsplitting. Consider, for instance, its selective doctrinal positions, the level and form of repression in the state or region it controls, a place's demographic composition, the dynamic of historical grievances, along with political and religious freedoms, including the availability of a charismatic leadership and other socio-political conditions such as foreign military occupations.

5   Trajectories of Violence in a Volatile Geopolitical Context

Few violent events, besides wars, so clarify the separation between enemies. The 1979–1989 Afghan war of liberation from Soviet occupation, one such event, provided an exceptional opportunity for violence-oriented MENA region Salafi activists, some of whom already held *takfīrī* predispositions, to defend fellow

Muslims. Doing so enabled them to demonstrate both the theological obligation to use violence to show solidarity with their perceived religious brothers and sisters and their commitment to violent struggle beyond their own sociopolitical contexts. Subsequently, the Mujahideen gathered Arab volunteer fighters, together with parts of the organised Afghan resistance, partly under the leadership of ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām (d. 1989).[3] Their guerrilla tactics and tenacious insurgency led the Soviet forces to withdraw in 1989 (Kepel 2006). Other important components that helped maintain the Mujahideen's efficiency were the financial and logistical support, including the weapons and communication equipment, provided by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, the United States, and others (Roy 1995).

ʿAzzām, one of the rare religious scholars who actually fought there, had published a range of writings during the 1980s that advanced Quṭb's thesis on the urgency of action (*jihād*) against the perceived enemies of God and the Muslims. His theory's central tenet was that all Muslims (collectively) were theologically obliged to undertake an armed struggle against immediate injustices to confirm their Islamic commitment (Lawrence 2005). Informed by mainstream pre-modern Sunnī religious scholarship, ʿAzzām presented relatively few and largely undeveloped *takfīrī* positions in relation to the broader Muslim populations.

By the end of the 1980s, when the Soviets gradually withdrew, Usāma bin Lādin (assassinated in 2011), along with several of his companions including ʾAyman al-Ẓawāhirī (b. 1957), sought to maintain the foreign volunteer's momentum of military success by establishing al-Qāʿida (the Base) network (Farrall 2011). They had organised a transnational network to connect all of the committed, proven, and trustworthy Arabic-speaking militants (Roy 1995). At its core, the network would be hierarchically structured and headed by bin Lādin. Affiliated subsections were given operational independence but had to commit to following the general direction and principles of the central leadership and its consultative council of veteran, trusted, and personally interconnected violence-oriented activists (Gunaratna 2002). At the same time, Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (b. 1959), ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Rahman, and other allied religious scholars who have been either directly or indirectly affiliated with al-Qāʿida and have influenced the network's doctrinal orientation demonstrated stronger tendencies to excommunicate and justify violence against political opponents, Muslim and non-Muslim alike (Farrall 2011).

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3   The official name of the managing organization for the volunteers was the Service Office for (Foreign) Fighters, *Maktab al-Khidmah li al-Mujahidīn.*

At the end of the Cold War and witnessing the MENA region's unravelling geopolitical structure, al-Qāʿida's leadership adopted new ambitions, one of which was to become an independent military force capable of operating internationally. Embolden by the network's military successes in Afghanistan, bin Lādin, had offered the group's military aid to the Saudi monarchy in 1991, which felt threatened by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. One of his supporting arguments was that al-Qāʿida had overpowered a far stronger enemy, namely, the USSR, just a couple of years earlier. The Saudi leadership, however, briskly rejected his offer and turned to the United States for military support, all of which was supported by the Wahhābi religious establishment.

President George H. W. Bush responded by establishing military bases, to which he sent over half a million US soldiers, in and around the "Land of the Two Holy Places" (Mecca and Medina). Bin Lādin, along with al-Qāʿida's leadership and religious advisors, saw this as doctrinal and political treason of what is understood as Islam's principles (Hamid and Farrall 2016). Their political conclusion was similar to that of al-ʿUtaybī: Attack the House of Saud and its allies by all available means.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s a series of civil and occupation wars in Afghanistan, Algeria, Bosnia (Croatia/Serbia), Chechnya (Russia), Iraq (the United States), Mindanao (the Philippines), Somalia, Tajikistan, and elsewhere prompted the leadership to dispatch several of its affiliates to some of these hotspots to assist the indigenous Muslim groups' war efforts (Ashour 2011). During this same period, the increased systematisation of takfirism both as a network-based violence-oriented transnational rebel-force *and* as a self-referential and theologically autonomous tradition also started to assume a more distinctive ideological shape.

Al-Maqdisī, a Jordanian who as a young man knew al-ʿUtaybī, has been among the most important intellectuals who formulated the new meanings for *takfīr* (excommunication), *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ* (loyalty and disavowal), the nature of the relationship between belief and political action, and other notions that became pivotal concepts for *takfīrī* militants (al-Maqdisi 1984). His contribution has been crucial to extending the meaning of historically contingent terms by weaponising them against apparent socio-political injustice, corruption, repression, and perceived godlessness in various Muslim-majority contexts. He made a particular effort to explain the meaning of *ḥukm Allāh* (God's rule), which he related to the political leadership's responsibility to rule in accord with a strict reading of scripture (Wagemakers 2009).

For al-Maqdisī, excommunication was directly reserved for 'ungodly' political leaders. According to him, any political leader who consciously fails to

execute his "godly" responsibility of establishing *ḥukm Allāh* as the primary symbol of recognising God's sovereignty over all things becomes a *ṭāghūt*, defined as a tyrant similar to the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt. Other prominent ideologues, such as Sayyid Imam al-Sharif (b. 1950) and Abu Musʿab al-Suri (b. 1958), earlier presented similar arguments, but stopped short of excommunicating entire Muslim populations. This line of reasoning differs from the general theological principles of the historical Khārijites as well as those of ISIS. In the case of ISIS, the processes of excommunication become the defining feature of the group's identity and cornerstone of its organizational theological principles and eschatology that is wedded with its violence-oriented mobilization and political ambitions.

Al-Maqdisī's religious training, which consisted of the Salafi religious methodology of reasoning and a long record of social activism, for which he had been repeatedly jailed by Jordanian authorities and something that had contributed to his scholarly reputation and authority. His writings became particularly salient among personalities such as al-Zarqawi, who was already involved in ongoing violent conflicts in primarily Iraq. Although he is not a member of the al-Qāʿida network, Al-Maqdisī had provided important religiously informed arguments and personal integrity—both of which the network has utilised enthusiastically (Hegghammer 2009).

Even though al-Qāʿida and its affiliates are theologically wary of proclaiming general Muslim audiences to be non-believers, they have been more inconsiderate when it comes to using indiscriminate violence against their perceived enemies. For example, they have often justified such campaigns on the grounds of revenge, where the collateral damage is acceptable because they are attacking hostile governments or their military forces (Chaliand and Blin 2007). Such legitimation is frequently expressed in jurisprudential language, although they regularly sidestep mainstream Sunnī legal methodology and jurisprudence in favour of the operational circumstances in making strategic choices (Maher 2016).

One can reasonably argue that this violence is far closer to the violent strategies of the pre-modern Khārijite insurgency than the pre-modern Sunnī definitions of *jihād* as 'just war' (Poljarevic 2018). For instance, the al-Qāʿida leadership's decision to violently confront the Saudi monarchy was based primarily on the king's outward and direct hostility towards the network and its agenda, and secondarily on theological principles (Gunaratna 2002). The leadership legitimised the subsequent violence, including its attacks of non-military targets, primarily as a matter of 'personal grudge' and only later as a matter of theology.

In the mid-1990s, bin Lādin sent a letter to Saudi Arabia's Council of Senior Scholars, then under ʿAbd al-ʿAziz bin Baz's (d. 1999) leadership, in which he outlined his criticism of the kingdom.

> This aggression has reached such a catastrophic and disastrous point as to have brought about a calamity unprecedented in the history of our *umma*, namely the invasion by the American and western Crusader forces of the Arabian peninsula and Saudi Arabia, the home of the Noble Kaʿba, the Sacred House of God, the Muslim's direction of prayer, the Noble Sanctuary of the Prophet, and the city of God's Messenger, where the Prophetic revelation was received.
>
> This momentous event is unprecedented both in pagan and Islamic history. For the first time, the Crusaders have managed to achieve their historic ambitions and dreams against our Islamic *umma*, gaining control over the Islamic holy places and the Holy Sanctuaries, and hegemony over the wealth and riches of our *umma*, turning the Arabian peninsula into the biggest air, land, and sea base in the region.
>
> LAWRENCE 2005: 15–16

This diagnostic analysis of the perceived moral hubris of both the Saudi state and the MENA region more generally also reveals the urgency with which the revolutionary militants more broadly understand socio-political realities. For instance, using "unprecedented," "aggression," "invasion," and "Crusader forces" in relation to Islam's holy places all point to the need for immediate action. This and similar passages in his letter and later statements emphasise the foreign "control over the Islamic holy places," which call for launching a total war primarily against the monarchy and its supporters (Khatab 2011). The concept of *umma*, therefore, becomes a useful symbol by which to address non-Arab audiences. However, if the masses were to support such a call to arms, which is apparently important in creating permanent socio-political change, bin Lādin also had to emphasise that he had the backing of the region's senior and influential Salafi scholars (Ibrahim 2007).

Such a line of argumentation is largely compatible with the thought of ʿAzzām, who promoted a form of religious legitimacy anchored in the theological discourse of contemporary Salafi and Wahhābi religious scholars. This approach is also emblematic of foreign volunteers in the Afghan war of 1979–1989, a process of which bin Lādin himself is partly a result of (Bergen 2006). However, both he and al-Ẓawāhirī (b. 1951), now the first in command of the al-Qāʿida network, widened ʿAzzām's approach. Bin Lādin's understanding of violent opposition

and warfare was anchored in the militant Salafi activist empowerment discourse that engaged in what can be described as a "civilisational struggle for survival," a trend that can be traced to the Muslims' struggles against colonialism during the twentieth century. On the other hand, he sought theological recognition and legitimation from recognised Salafi, Wahhābi and other Sunnī scholarship to communicate with the masses in Muslim majority sociopolitical contexts (Lawrence 2005).

al-Ẓawāhirī, a founding member of the small Egyptian militant group Islamic Jihād and a part of the second generation of violence-oriented takfirism, had a clear ideological and strategic vision that entailed a violent overthrow of what he and his co-founders considered heretical Arab regimes. His vision and leadership has consistently been more *takfīrī*-oriented than bin Lādin's, who emphasised a more theologically reconciliatory approach to the general public, including religious tolerance of Shīʿīs living in Afghanistan and the MENA region. This public communication strategy of addressing particular religious and political authorities has, at times, been both strategically functional and morally resonant with vast segments of frustrated and politically perceptive young men primarily in that region. Al-Qāʿida gained little physical support for its efforts, however, and its network eventually became a distinctive transnational symbol of radical resistance against the U.S. interests there, and its repressive regional allies (Gerges 2009).

One of the major features of al-Qāʿida's political theology, as it relates to other political opposition groups in Muslim-majority societies, is its insistence on creating a radically different transnational political space. Such an approach entails more distinctive features than what is sometimes described as '*jihādi*-Salafism', which is closer to the contingent reading of the neoclassical doctrine of *jihād* (Maher 2016). One classical understanding dictates a broad religious scholarly support for violent action in a particular territory, which is, in turn, based on the request of that territory's political leadership for military aid. Thus, it can be argued that al-Qāʿida gradually developed a distinct form of ideological and strategic mobilisation that did not fully resemble that of ʿAzzām, which was more in line with the neoclassical doctrine of *jihād*. This gradual transformation occurred primarily due to the recruitment of an increasing number of younger *takfīrī*-oriented activists from Egypt's Islamic Jihād (led by al-Ẓawāhirī), as well as Algerian and Libyan militants who had little interest in discussing theological methodology beyond its violent interpretations. Al-Qāʿida's political theology therefore represents an organisational and doctrinal kernel out of which ISIS developed.

6   Political Opportunities and Theological Activism

The third generation of violence-oriented *takfīrī* mobilization was born after 9/11. This critical event has had irreversible effects on the MENA region and indeed on large segments of Muslim-majority societies. The invasion of Afghanistan by the US and other forces in late 2001 and dispersal of al-Qāʿida's infrastructure there was one immediate result. A far more substantial one was the US invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in early 2003. The occupation's initial result—the total collapse of Saddam Hussein's Baathist state institutions—created opportunities for al-Qāʿida to enter a new battlefield with a renewed sense of self-importance (Gerges 2016).

Abu Bakr Naji (d. 2008), a little-known al-Qāʿida operative who authored *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through Which the Umma Will Pass* (*Idārah al-tawāḥush: akhṭar marḥalah satamurru bihā al-ʾummah*), argues that the ultimate goal of the violence-oriented *takfīrī*(s') struggle is to create and promote total war against all perceived enemies both locally and globally. Naji represents the fourth generation of violence-oriented *takfīrī* militancy. In such a situation, the ensuing savagery and destruction would offer Muslim populations little choice other than to view joining them as the only way to establish security and stability. This influential text recommends ways to institutionalize takfirism within the scope of a modern (also global) state. Its apocalyptic message focuses on conquering and gaining support from 'disillusioned' Muslim populations. In short, by drawing the US and the EU into wars against Muslim-majority states, a large swath of populations would 'realise' who the cosmic enemy is and thereafter join the struggle to establish the caliphate (Naji 2004). Naji's text outlines a grand political strategy without extensive theological discussion, an approach that appeals to a new strand of violence-oriented *takfīrī* activists who are arguably less competent in following or even interested in complex theological explanations and methodologies.[4]

Al-Qāʿida gradually adopted the Jordanian *takfīrī* militant Ahmad Al-Khalayla, better known as Abu Musʿab al-Zarqawi (d. 2006), as its network's leading member in Iraq. Much like Naji, he can be considered representative of the fourth generation of violence-oriented *takfīrī* militancy. In the early 2003, his Group for Monotheism and Jihad (Jamāʿat al-Tawḥīd wa al-Jihād) was on al-Qāʿida's probation. However, the group quickly proved to be an effective insurgent group that could not be ignored, and thus became a primary, although disorderly, al-Qāʿida affiliate. In 2004 it adopted the name

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the al-Qāʿida Organisation for Jihād in the Land of Two Rivers (Tanzīm Qāʿida al-Jihād fī Bilād al-Rafidayn), or simply al-Qāʿida in Iraq (AQI). Its primary goal was to simultaneously target the occupying forces and the Shīʿa-dominated government, along with Shīʿa civilians and especially their religious symbols and gatherings (Celso 2015). Al-Zarqawi, an earlier student and colleague of al-Maqdisī, implemented some of the *takfīrī* theological teachings after significant recalibration of exactly who was 'the enemy'. According to its subsequent widening and weaponising of al-Maqdisī's scriptural interpretations, any Sunnī who opposed AQI and essentially all Shīʿa Muslims were legitimate targets. Subsequently, al-Maqdisī sought to distance himself from such indiscriminate violence by openly disagreeing with his former student on both theological and jurisprudential grounds.

Another theological feature of al-Zarqawi's militancy was his ardent focus on eschatology, particularly on the smaller and larger signs of the Day of Judgment (*ʿalamāt al-saʿā al-sughrā wa al-kubrā*). One of his emblematic statements, uttered sometime between 2003 and 2006, was: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify—by Allah's permission— until it burns the Crusader armies in Dabiq." This eschatological message, a permanent feature of the ISIS' flagship publication *Dabiq*, appears on either first or second page of each issue of the magazine,[5] thereby signalling the importance and centrality of al-Zarqawi's mission, mobilisation narrative, and a subsequent feature of ISIS' *takfīrī* doctrine (McCants 2015). It is based on a reading of what is sometimes described 'as a minor sign of the Apocalypse' in Sunnī eschatological thought. This is a part of a well-known Prophetic statement recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*'s "Book of Tribulations and Portents of the Last Hour," it reports that the Prophet had said that: "The Last Hour will not come until the Romans land at al-Aʾmaq [in present-day Turkey] or in Dabiq [in present-day Syria]." This is an important example of invoking prophetic insights and the direct implications of representing the divine order. This type of messianic and apocalyptic appeal to wider audiences is an important ISIS mobilization strategy.

Al-Zarqawi did not live to see the formation of the Islamic State in Iraq in 2010, its 2014 declaration of reinstatement of caliphal authority, its violent campaigns, institutional development, and temporary revivification of slavery, ultimately its military decline and 2019 collapse. Nevertheless, the significance

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5   Fifteen issues of this magazine were published during 2014 and 2016, often distributed via the deep web. The featured contents ranged topically from news reports from a range of battlefields, interviews with ISIS soldiers and leaders, as well as doctrinal memoranda, including a recurring and distinct eschatological message. They have, at present, no stable URL or online location.

of his interpretation of *takfīrī* doctrines, strategy of indiscriminate violence, and emphasis on eschatology can be seen as central to ISIS' establishment. On the other hand, these important components were among the key causes of the ISIS—al-Qāʿida split in 2014 (Celso 2015).

For instance, much in line with al-Maqdisī's (part of the second-generation of violence-oriented *takfīrī* thinkers) critique, al-Qāʿida's leadership repeated attempts to reign in al-Zarqawi by ordering him to stop attacking general populations and focus instead on the occupying troops. But he continued and even intensified his group's violent campaign; a clear violation of his earlier pledge of obedience and allegiance (*bayʿa*) to bin Lādin. This violation has oftentimes been interpreted as a breach of a fundamental theological commitment and therefore equated with apostasy, which in this case did not result in enmity and violence. In the case of the ISIS' interpretation the principles of *bayʿa* this is understood to mean total obedience to the caliph.

Although troubled by al-Zarqawi's decision, al-Qāʿida's leadership never severed contact with him or denied him support, indicating that their theological pragmatism was tied to their political and strategic realism. Despite the ensuing criticism, his group's brutality and rebellious effectiveness attracted large numbers of recruits and media notoriety. Some estimates have shown that he commanded only a few dozen militants at the beginning of the US invasion in 2003—a number that had grown to several thousand rebels and tens of thousands of supporters just a few years later (Gerges 2016). It can therefore be argued that the nature and brutality of al-Zarqawi's violent strategy and strict *takfīrī* doctrine became a defining feature of ISIS, as well as an important point of (ideological and strategic) contention between it and al-Qāʿida.

The issue of religious and political significance of *bayʿa* has fiercely been debated between al-Qāʿida and ISIS affiliates, especially prior to and during the factional infighting since the end of 2013. Sami al-Uraydi, an earlier al-Qāʿida affiliate and the former deputy leader of Organisation for the Liberation of Syria (Ḥayāt Taḥrīr al-Shām), defines allegiance as both general (*bayʿat al-ʿāmma*) and specific (*bayʿat al-khāṣṣa*). The former concerns the public, which is obliged to recognise the political authorities in exchange for the political leadership's obligation to protect it. If the political authorities fail to do so, the political leadership becomes illegitimate.

The latter expression concerns the obligation to fight the *umma*'s apparent enemy with all that that entails. ʿAzzāms writings make a similar distinction between the collective (*farḍ kifāya*) and individual (*farḍ ʿayn*) duty to fight. This type of legal reasoning reduces the general scope of al-Qāʿida's initial understanding of general allegiance to the mere recognition of an individual's

belonging to the *ummah*, an expression of one's Muslim identity, as it were ('Azzām 1985).

The fourth generation of violence-oriented *takfīrī* activists, in the shape of ISIS have a different understanding of belonging to a Muslim community. For ISIS, a Muslim's identity is conditioned upon his or her active theological and political allegiance to and recognition of the caliphal authority. This makes its notion of *takfīr* broader than that of al-Qāʿida and its affiliates. More significantly, ISIS leadership's reasoning is premised on a theological methodology that likens one's religious creed (*ʿaqīda*) with political recognition (*bayʿa*) and unquestionable obedience (*saʿah wa ṭāʿah*) to the ruler (*khalīfa*) and what is understood as godly political order (*khilāfa* or *imāma*). Therefore, 'correct' political allegiance, *bayʿa*, much like *ʿaqīda*, is an essential condition for salvation.[6] Subsequently, ISIS' theological methodology directly implies that each believer is expected to actively demonstrate and confirm his or her enmity to all other political orders and/or persons, be they branded as *ṭaghūt*, *kāfir*, or *murtad*, to be accepted as a *muʾmin* (believer).

Next, consider the context—the so-called Sunnī Awakening in Iraq (2006–2010)—within which such a theological methodology gained traction. During this period, large swaths of the Sunnī minority rebelled against the sectarian Iraqi state institutions occupied almost exclusively by Shīʿīs. Systematic disenfranchisement of Sunnīs after Saddam Hussein's fall in 2003 contributed directly to the domestic growth of *takfīrī*-oriented militancy. Likewise, the occupying forces' policies had intensified sectarian identity politics to the point of a low-intensity civil war. For example, the dismantlement of the former regime's army caused many Saddam-era officers to join the fight against both the occupying forces and the Shīʿa-dominated government. During this same period, al-Qāʿida in Iraq garnered increased material support from part of the disenfranchised Sunnīs living in the country's western provinces (McCants 2015).

The Sunnī tribal leaders' support for AQI after 2010, and later ISIS in 2014, was primarily based on pragmatic calculations concerning their collective survival in an increasingly violent sectarian context, and not necessarily the population's theological convictions (Gerges 2016). The effects of this alliance of convenience were immediate. The pre-existing road, electricity, water, oil-producing infrastructures were quickly utilized by experienced ISIS managers who had built a self-sustaining bureaucracy that, in turn, enabled the enforcement of strict public morality codes. Moreover, its attempt to establish a new order included the theatrical destruction of cultural heritage that did not

6   See *Dabiq* 2014, 1: 6–7, also the article on Imāma, July 2014: 20–28.

conform to its religious interpretations,[7] redolent of al-Zarqawi's targeting of Shīʿa places of worship (McCants 2015: 99ff.). Due to the deepening sectarian conflict and prolonged war without any prospects of peaceful settlement, the evolving violence-oriented *takfīrī* mobilization allowed no space for any deviance from the strict doctrines of radical differentiation between friends (believers) and enemies (heretics). In a war situation, one can assume various drastic notions of cosmic war, such as the ISIS apocalyptic framework's disallowance of any doctrinal, tactical, or otherwise nuances. A totalizing, black-and-white, and unrestrained worldview becomes a realistic dogmatic alternative. In other words, the immediacy of survival, wherein the logic of total war mixed with questions of survival and even salvation, became the defining feature of political discourse (Kalyvas 2006).

7   The Case of ISIS and its Theology of 'Apocalypse Now'

In a narrow historical sense, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or Dawla al-Islāmiyya fī al-ʿIraq wa Shām (Daesh), can be considered an outgrowth of the theological and organisational evolution of al-Qāʿida's network in Iraq after the US invasion of 2003. ISIS, which briefly controlled large swaths of territory in eastern Syria and western Iraq, represents a transnational takfirist network that seeks to establish a new theocratic state. Self-identified as a caliphate (*khilāfa*), it is based on the idea of global and perpetual war, a *takfīrī* credo, and an apocalyptic worldview. This also means that ISIS is a tactically, ideologically, and religiously violent movement that had operated in several Muslim-majority authoritarian and failed states within which it exerted varying degrees of control over part of their territory.

ISIS represents an early twenty-first century wave of violence-oriented takfirism that differs from similar historical groups. Its theological underpinning is rooted in an eschatological conviction that initiating a global conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims and "re-establishing" the *khilāfa* marks the beginning of the Day of Judgement. Members urge their audiences

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7   Some of the most reported cases in this regard is the group's total destruction of ancient Palmyra's Temple of Bel and its Roman amphitheatre, among other things, reminiscent of the Taliban's 2001 destruction of the Buddha statues in Afghanistan's Bamiyan valley. ISIS also destroyed a large number of historical mosques in the Syrian and Iraqi land that it controlled, purportedly because they symbolised *shirk* (polytheism) (*Dabiq* 2:14–17). ISIS' defiance against the international and national plies to stop destroying the historical monuments attracted the mainstream media's attention which was arguably the very purpose of the material destruction.

to participate in a cosmic struggle between good and evil. This messianic project is oftentimes expressed in a symbolic and tangibly violent rhetoric of religious and political othering and excommunication, but also in mass-killings and destruction of property. This analysis highlights the interchangeably of some of the important political and theological elements found among its core building blocks. ISIS can therefore be considered to represent an outgrowth and ideological creation of combining contextual circumstances dominated by authoritarian rule and violent foreign interventions, intra-state conflicts, long-running zealous doctrines of sectarian othering, and radical and politically motivated groups (Hafez 2003). Over the last fifty years, violence-oriented takfirism, as previously explained, has undergone evolutionary stages represented by a particular generation of militants who responded to unique circumstances.

As elaborated above, the first stage (not to be confused with generation), characterised by the rise of violence-oriented ideological and religious belligerency, was triggered by the persistence and perceived robustness of repressive and totalitarian states in the post-colonial MENA region. Authoritarianism there, especially in Egypt during the 1950s and 1960s, helped form the first *takfīr*-centred organisation—Jamāʿat al-Muslimīn—in 1969, which the Egyptian media labelled *Takfīr wa al-Hijra* (Excommunication and Emigration) several years later. This initially nonparticipating and isolationist religious group considered the Egyptian state, its society, and the wider Muslim community as heretical and fallen in terms of their religious duties. Its leaders therefore excommunicated (*takfīr*) all non-members and those who rejected their views and religious understandings. The second stage represents the particular expressions of marginal, yet still important, violent mobilization in that region during the 1970s and 1980s, which was (in)directly prompted by the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Its leaders produced key *takfīrī*(-oriented) texts. The third generation, which arose during the 1990s, represents the internationalization and broadening of violence-oriented *takfīrī* mobilization, which culminated with the 9/11 attacks on the US symbols of political and economic power.

The fourth stage was initiated by the US-led invasion and subsequent occupation of Afghanistan (2001–2014) and Iraq (2003–2014), which provided pivotal political opportunities for the evolution of an increasingly religiously and politically independent strand of takfirist militancy. This stage started in the beginning of the 2010s, when the so-called Arab Spring destabilised several authoritarian regimes, thereby creating unprecedented opportunities to establish themselves in previously impervious territories, most notably Libya and Syria. ISIS launched a massive recruitment drive that has attracted many young, frustrated, and almost exclusively male volunteers from

the MENA region, Europe, Asia, and Africa. They, together with parts of the deprived and disenfranchised Iraqi and Syrian rebels, made up its core fighting force. The leaders framed these important consolidating factors within their state-building project, which pivots around apocalyptic interpretations of existing *takfīrī* doctrines, thereby adding a powerful theological spin to its millenarian worldview.

In the war-torn Iraq and later Syria during the 2010s, the pre-existing and marginal religious imaginaries and symbols had become weaponised rhetorical tools that often demean, dehumanize, and dishonour the perceived enemy. These have been tangible in both al-Qāʿida and ISIS narratives, which are replete with 'otherising' terms: *kuffār*, deviants, hypocrites, innovators, heretics, crusaders, Zionists, and so on.[8] The assumed logic of war and enmity, especially in civil conflicts, had produced a sense of immediacy wherein the individual is obliged to show enmity to anyone who does not subscribe to or share his or her (political, ideological, religious and so forth) convictions (Kalyvas 1999). Extraordinary displays of enmity and violent forms of theological hair-splitting are more common during periods of prolonged and collective existential crises (Taylor 2013). Severe forms of existential stress, especially in war situations, enable the growth of particularly violence-oriented and anti-systemic groups.

Propaganda materials effectively communicate an alternative reality that can perpetuate enmity and encourage violence. For example, *Dabiq* was a major ISIS news outlet for personal interviews of its fighters and commanders, as well as expositions of its doctrinal principles. The magazine hurled many proclamations of *takfīr* against 'non-conformist' Muslims, "renegades whom it's permissible to fight, and for no reason other than the fact that they refuse to give *bayʿa*" (*Dabiq* 2014, 1:24). The political and theological notions of *ḥākimiyya* and political allegiance are equated with the correctness of one's religious creed and 'purity of faith', which subsequently assumed the central theological place in differentiating friend from enemy.

In the eighth issue of its English-language version, an article entitled "*Irjāʾ*, the most dangerous *bidʿa*:[9] and its effects on the *jihād* in Sham [Syria]" presents ISIS' eighteen-page opposition to considering all Muslims to be believers as a default position or based on their own words and statements. The

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8   This type of hostile othering and categorizing is similar to that used in the occasionally racist labelling of perceived enemies as terrorists, jihadists, extremists, Mohammedans, Islamists, hajjis, camel jockeys, and so on.

9   *Irjāʾ* (postponing, for example, a judgement) describes a specific theological principle: a person can either have faith or not. The definition of faith is thereby limited to a religious state (of presence or non-presence of faith). In other words, only God can assess the quality of an individual's faith and devotion. It is believed that this assessment will take place on the Day of Judgement.

article presents several prophetic statements that highlight the importance of one's faith and deeds, followed by contemporary examples of how 'misguided' al-Qāʿida and its allies in Syria are in terms of their military cooperation against ISIS and the Assad regime. In other words, any group or faction that does not back up its ideological beliefs and religious interpretations with proper action, namely, recognising ISIS as the only religiously valid group defending MENA and the world's Muslims, are deviants, heretics, and *kuffār*—legitimate targets.

ISIS' doctrinal and mobilisation logic, much of which aligns with the early Khārijite theological framework and later *takfīrī* conceptualizations of the political, dictates that it represents the only legitimate solution to the entire spectrum of socio-political, moral, and economic problems experienced by the global Sunnī population. This logic, therefore, extends to claiming that the organization has an exclusive God-given right to establish the eschatologically ordained and sole legitimate power structure recognised by God, namely, the caliphate (*Dabiq* 2014: 1). Within the scope of ISIS' political theology and God's sovereignty, its general framework of religious creed, acts of political loyalty and disavowal, including strict adherence to moral piety, are combined with one's obligatory allegiance to the self-proclaimed Caliph Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri al-Samariai, or simply Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (assassinated 2019).

A large number of Sunnī scholars and religious movements have heavily criticised the ISIS' policies and religious standpoints on a range of issues, including the legitimation of slavery and its millenarian interpretations.[10] At the same time, the ISIS leadership challenges the validity of any religious and political authority outside its own power structure of ideological control. In the fourth issue of *Dabiq* carried "The Revival of Slavery before the Hour," which argued for the systematic enslavement of Yezidi individuals and prisoners of war, particularly women, so that the group's fighters could avoid committing sexual "sins":

> [T]he Yezidi women and children were then divided according to the *sharīʿa* amongst the fighters of the Islamic State who participated in the Sinjar operations, after one fifth of the slaves were transferred to the Islamic State's authority to be divided as *khums*.
>
> *Dabiq* 2014, 4:15

Some Salafis, including ISIS, regard *bidʿa* as a negative form of innovation in matters of religion. This term therefore describes an attempt to deform Islam's teachings and thus threatens ISIS' strict understandings of the religious sources.

10   Some criticism is presented at http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/. For more theologically based Sunnī criticisms, see al-Yaqoubi (2015).

This interpretation provides religious justification for the legitimacy of slavery as a part of war booty.[11] What is more, enslavement seems to be based on the Yezidis' supposed belonging to an ancient "pagan minority" having the sole legal status of a subservient class of people. Another consequence of this attitude is its genocidal policies justified as a revenge for "genocide [that] is committed by the Maliki, Asadi, and Israeli forces against the Muslims via systematic massacres, chemical warfare, rape, and starvation by siege, Obama watches with euphoria" (*Dabiq* 2014, 3:35).

Another eschatological passage relates its revival as a precondition of the Day of Judgement:

> After this discussion and as we approach al-Malhamah al-Kubrā (the greatest battle before the Hour [Armageddon])—whenever its time comes by Allāh's decree—it is interesting to note that slavery has been mentioned as one of the signs of the Hour as well as one of the causes behind al-Malhamah al-Kubrā.
>
> *Dabiq* 2014, 4:15

Yet another argument regarding slavery is connected to *takfīr*. Expecting the critique from the "weak-minded and weak hearted," presumably the Muslim public and religious establishment, the article justifies the "revival of slavery" as a preordained and God-given obligation:

> Before Shaytān [Satan] reveals his doubts to the weak-minded and weak hearted, one should remember that enslaving the families of the *kuffār* and taking their women as concubines is a firmly established aspect of the *sharīʿa* that if one were to deny or mock, he would be denying or mocking the verses of the Qur'ān and the narrations of the Prophet (*sallallāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*), and thereby apostatizing from Islam.
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> *Dabiq* 2014, 4:14

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11   Many Sunnī scholars have issued *fatwās* refuting ISIS' claims of legitimacy for slavery and its other religious interpretations (Al-Yaqoubi 2015, www.lettertobaghdadi.org, Dar al-Ifta). "Egypt's Dar al-Iftaa vehemently condemns the heinous murder of the Jordanian pilot by the bloodthirsty QSIS." *Al Azhar Fatwā Committee Official Website*, at http://eng.dar-alifta.org/foreign/ViewArticle.aspx?ID=660&CategoryID=1. Accessed 01/06/2019. See also Adam McCoy and Adam Taylor, 2015, "Islamic State says immolation was justified: experts on Islam say no," *The Washington Post* at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/02/04/the-chilling-reason-the-islamic-state-burned-a-jordanian-pilot-alive/. Accessed 01/06/2019.

This indicates that the ISIS' strategy of othering and its theological reasoning is extreme in relation to existing Muslim scholarship, from which it radically diverges in terms of current legal understanding of slavery's prohibition[12] and its understanding of who is a Muslim.[13] This line of theological reasoning is similar to that of the pre-modern Khārijites. For instance, the above passage suggests that anyone who denies the (Islamic) legality of slavery is per definition a *kāfir*. The same article directly suggests that in a literal interpretation of the scriptures, slavery is "much more plausible" than any other interpretations (see above). This apparent melding together of *uṣūlī* (the basic theological principles) and *furūʿ* (legal rulings) is another methodological similarity with the early Khārijites and dissimilarity with contemporary mainstream Sunnīsm.[14]

8   Conclusion

ISIS is the latest evolutionary stage of violence-oriented *takfīrī*-based mobilization that denotes a religiously inspired socio-political ideology that has spawned a militant organisation with a sustained, distinct, and largely unique set of millenarian beliefs and violent practices. This set of religious and political beliefs has gained traction in the context of existing national and international violent conflicts and, as such, has been conveyed through a range of violent and extraordinary forms of othering. Its particular violence-centred religious orientation is takfirist political project that is based on the fusion of narrow, Khārijite-like political strategy and selective, Salafi-inspired, principles of violent othering. In the end, what emerges from this inimitable set of religious, ideological, strategic, and contextual fusions is a worldview driven by the cosmic struggle between perceived believers (ISIS members) and *all* others.

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12   See for example, "Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights," 21 Dhul Qaidah 1401/19 September 1981, Preamble, paragraph g), point iii) at http://www.alhewar.com/ ISLAMDECL.html. Accessed 01/06/2019.

13   See for example, "The Amman Message" at http://ammanmessage.com/. Accessed 01/06/2019.

14   Mainstream Sunnīsm is a contested term; nevertheless, it is useful because it illustrates numerous points of theological, legal, philosophical, spiritual, and political conflict between ISIS and its many Sunnī opponents, arguably the mainstream. Moreover, the earlier mentioned religious declarations of opposition to ISIS, its religious and political goals and methods, represent just a few English-language examples that outline generally held Sunnī position towards contemporary violence-oriented takfirism in general, and towards ISIS in particular.

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PART 4

Ṣūfism and Its Influences

∵

Introduction to Part 4

Ṣūfism is the mystic and ascetic aspect of Islam. As such it is unrelated to the Shīʿa-Sunnī split. One can be a Shīʿa or Sunnī and still be a Ṣūfi. Ṣūfism is about a way of believing and experiencing Islam rather than about a sectarian belief system. John Spencer Tirmingham (1971: 2) called it the way which is aimed "at spiritual freedom whereby man's intrinsic intuitive spiritual senses could be allowed full scope." Despite the accusations of heresy by some Sunnī and Shīʿa fundamentalists, Ṣūfi Muslims argue that their beliefs and practices are firmly rooted in the same sources of Islamic tradition that all Sunnīs and Shīʿas hold as sacred, namely, the Qurʾān and *sunna* of the Prophet Muḥammad. Muḥammad, who Ṣūfis claim was the first Ṣūfi master (*murshid*). While most Ṣūfis believe that Muḥammad's cousin and the first Shīʿa *imām*, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, was the second in line after Muḥammad and source of divine wisdom, some believe Abū Bakr, the first Sunnī *khalīfa* to have played that role.

Over time Ṣūfism was institutionalized into *ṭarīqa*, commonly known as orders. While many of these orders were regional and short lived, others became well established over vast regions and long periods of time. These include: Suhrawardiyya, Qādiriyya, Rifāʿiyya, Kubrāwiyya, Chishtiyya, Shādhiliyya, Badawiyya (or Aḥmadiyya), Mawlawīyah, and Naqshabandiyya (Tirmingham, 1971: 14). Distinctive features of institutionalized Ṣūfism outlined by Alexander Knysh (2017 60–1) include revelatory knowledge of God, techniques and teachings are transmitted from masters to students, and that a follower (*murīd*) goes through stations (*maqām*) to gain ecstatic states (*ḥāl*). Devotional practices amongst Ṣūfis range from *dhikr*, repetition of the names of God and the scriptures, to quiet meditation, to lively dance and music.

This section starts with an overview of Ṣūfism, before moving on to look at the Khaniqahi Ṣūfi Order. The remaining three chapters describe regional variations in Ṣūfism and the ways in which this mystical tradition has influenced new religious movements and spiritual ideologies. This includes Subud, founded by an Indonesian student of Ṣūfism, Muhammad Subuh, the life and ideas of René Guénon, a French Shadhili Ṣūfi, and the teachings of the Greek-Armenian esotericist G.I. Gurdjieff.

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Ṣūfism

Marta Domínguez Díaz

1 Introduction

The chapter offers an overview of Ṣūfism (*taṣawwuf*), covering Ṣūfi beliefs and practices, as well as their historical and social dimensions. First, it provides an introduction to the origins of the term 'Ṣūfism' and its etymology, with the aim of identifying the core of the Ṣūfi ethos, and the ways it is manifested through ritual. The historical development of Ṣūfism is explained from its initial otherworldly impetus to its routinisation, first into lodges scattered across the world, and later into well-established Ṣūfi Orders (*ṭuruq*, sing. *ṭarīqa*). The face of Ṣūfism today is then considered, by introducing the reader to today's most relevant *ṭuruq*, and its location and influences. Finally, the chapter assesses the manifold influences Ṣūfism has exerted in religious as well as social and political movements across the world.

2 Ṣūfism: Genealogy of a Term

The term Ṣūfism has long been widely used in Western academia. Today, it is also of common usage in popular parlance, employed when people want to refer to a broad array of phenomena, from some types of music or particular kinds of devotional dances, to ritual practices such as trance or religious healing. But what do we mean when speaking about 'Ṣūfism'? The association of the term with such a diverse range of phenomena has admittedly obscured its meaning. This ambiguity, often embedded in a mysterious and exotic tone, is a feature that has characterised the term since its inception, and it is related to the patchy knowledge Europeans had about Islam.

Up to the end of the eighteenth century, Europeans' knowledge of *taṣawwuf* was admittedly scant (Chodkiewicz 1994: 12; Schimmel 2011: 7–8). Prior to colonialism, some of the beliefs and practices that were to be later associated with the Ṣūfis attracted the attention of some European travellers, and they provided almost the only knowledge of *taṣawwuf* that Europe had had up to that time. For example, the Italian merchant Giosafat Barbaro (d. 1494), as well as the Spanish Ambassador of the Castilian King Ruy González de Clavijo

(d. 1412), travelled through Anatolia (De Nicola 2016: 59) and left accounts of encounters with Qalandar dervishes, devotees of a mendicant religiosity of an antinomian nature in pre-modern Islam (Karamustafa 1994). In the sixteenth century, there are also accounts of Europeans who travelled to Istanbul and visited a "dervish convent in the city" (Jezernik 2007: 166), and in the seventeenth century of travellers who returned to Europe with descriptions of dervish rituals (Schimmel 2013: 179). Yet, none of these explanations provides evidence of the authors being good *connoisseurs* of what they were describing. On the contrary, since exploring religious aspects was not the main objective of their trips, the superficial acquaintance that characterises their reports is only to be expected.

The word 'Ṣūfism' came to be coined during the Enlightenment. From the eighteenth century onwards, the addition of the suffix '-ism', characteristic of European language and often used to denote 'ideology' or 'worldview', was added to the root '*ṣuf*'. It is unclear what the root '*ṣuf*' actually means. Some have connected it to the term *ṣafā'* (purity), or to *ṣafwā* ('the elected, the chosen ones'), or even to *ṣuffā* (bench, in reference to a supposed group of contemporaries of Muhammad who would have gathered on a bench, symbolising a primordial community of paupers) (Ernst 1997). Nonetheless, it is clear that the combination of '*ṣuf*' with 'ism' made the term Ṣūfism an etic attribution, with no single emic translation in the languages spoken in Muslim-majority societies.

In addition, the sparse, sometimes inconsistent knowledge Europeans had about the religious realities of Muslim-majority societies contributed to a representation of Ṣūfism within an atmosphere of ambiguity. One of the results of the ambiguity connected to this orientalising gaze is that those aspects of Islam that became commonly associated with Ṣūfism were extremely diverse in nature. So varied was the miscellany of ideas, personas, and practices that were from then on considered Ṣūfi that, one may argue, it would be difficult to find, other than Islam, a common denominator to connect them. In the eyes of the observer however, they were part of a unique, well-defined world, and they were typified accordingly. Most of the religious doings were perceived as practices that stood 'at the fringes' of what was perceived to be 'normative' within Islam, the dichotomy being in itself a further attribution of its dubious correlation with living religion. The orientalising gaze through which Europeans often looked at Muslim-majority societies often meant that Islam was viewed quite negatively. It follows that since Ṣūfism was perceived as not exactly part of Islam, the 'foreignness' attributed to Ṣūfism within its own tradition gave it a more positive connotation. That meant that, for Europeans, over time the term became useful to designate different Muslim beliefs and practices that

for whatever reason were met with more interest and congeniality than the other Islamic beliefs and practices considered to be less congenial (Ernst 1997).

The religious manifestations that were viewed more favourably included certain types of poetry and musical genres, particular traditions of foretelling the future and interpretation of dreams, rituals connected to the practice of God's remembrance (*dhikr*),[1] pilgrim worship at tombs and mausoleums (*ziyāra*),[2] and religious healing (*shifāʾ*) (the latter three being practices that on occasion involved practitioners entering states of trance). It was in this context that *taṣawwuf* begun to be located either outside or at the fringes of the Islamic tradition. This positioning gave Ṣūfism its current traditional association with 'mysticism' (that is, a human effort to get closer to the divine often beyond or at the expense of particular religious traditions). Most notably, the positive connotation acquired by Ṣūfism grew in direct contrast to the negative one acquired by Islam, to such an extent that, at least for some, the Ṣūfis came to be viewed as non-Islamic devotees in Muslim-majority societies. Orientalists such as Sir William Jones (d. 1794) or Sir John Malcolm (d. 1833) represent the classical view of this approach. Ṣūfism from this perspective was 'non-Muslim within Islam,' and was defined as an offshoot of Hindu yoga, Greek philosophy, and Buddhism (Ernst 1997). By the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, the term sometimes also became linked to pantheistic beliefs; that is, the creed in which the human is perceived to be identical to the divine.

3 Ṣūfism's 'Foreignness' and 'Impurity'

The tendency to associate Ṣūfism with something other than Islam has continued until the present day, and Ṣūfism's foreignness to Islam is an idea that is still quite popular in the Western world and among (an ever-increasing number of) Muslim opponents of *taṣawwuf*. In the West, the twentieth century saw the popularisation of the idea of Ṣūfism as 'the non-Islamic mysticism' put into practice. As a result, we have witnessed the emergence of groups in Europe and North America who describe themselves as Ṣūfis, but do not consider

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1 *Dhikr* (Arab.) is generally translated into English as 'remembrance'. It denotes a ritual commonly performed by Ṣūfis that consists of mentioning a previously memorized formula. *Dhikr djāli* refers to the performed ritual when the formula is uttered aloud, whereas *dhikr khāfi* refers to the one practiced either in silence or in low tones. Both can be performed either individually or collectively.

2 *Ziyāra*, pl. *ziyārāt* (Arab.) is a Ṣūfi pious visitation, pilgrimage to a holy place, generally a *zāwiya*, tomb, or shrine.

themselves to be Muslims. Organisations such as the Ṣūfi Order International, for example, consider Ṣūfism to be a 'universal' (that is, not bounded to Islam) religious tradition, with the current leader, Zia Inayat Khan (b. 1971), expressing his views on the non-Islamic nature of Ṣūfism in a famous essay called "The Paradox of Universal Ṣūfism" (Inayat Khan 2016). Equally, the International Ṣūfi Movement and the Ṣūfi Ruhaniat International, based in San Francisco (Ṣūfi Ruhaniat International 2020) are groups that see themselves not as part of the Islamic tradition, but of a 'Universal' one. Finally, special mention is given to Idries Shah (d. 1996), arguably the greatest populariser of the 'non-Islamic' tendency within Ṣūfism. The Indian spiritual teacher and prolific author became famous for suggesting that Ṣūfism, a 'universal' religiosity, *predates* Islam. Although his scholarly credentials have been widely questioned, he is well known for 'guiding' and being a source of inspiration for famous personalities, such as the Nobel Laureate Doris Lessing (d. 2013) and the American psychologist Robert Evan Ornstein (d. 2018). He was also in close contact with members of more recently formed religious groups, including Gerald Gardner, (d. 1964) the founder of Wicca, and John Godolphin Bennett, (d. 1974) the British scientist and disciple of G.I. Gurdjeff (d. 1949) (Wellbeloved 2003). Although these ideas have contributed to make Ṣūfism known in some non-Muslim milieus unfamiliar with Islam, they are certainly not representative of the majority of Ṣūfis. In fact, a more 'mainstream' identity within contemporary Ṣūfism positions *taṣawwuf* right at the core of the Islamic tradition, or as epitomising its essence, in Alexander Knysh's words: "[Ṣūfism is] Islam in miniature [because] all the features of the encompassing larger tradition (Islam) are reflected in its ascetic-mystical stream (Ṣūfism)" (Knysh 2017: 7).

Also common, however, is the tendency to view Ṣūfism as something that has departed from a 'normative' understanding of Islam, at least from the point of view of orthopraxis. This conceptualisation of Ṣūfism is becoming more popular not only in the West, but also in some Muslim-majority societies. It is clear that the practices that today are perceived as 'Ṣūfi' (for example, *samā'*,[3] *shifā'*, *ziyāra*, and *dhikr*) have accepted a wide variety of performative styles according to cultural variations to give Ṣūfism a reputation of being syncretic. Clearly, as a living tradition, Islam has largely embodied a multiplicity of rhythms, looks, and cadences, generating today's characteristic stunning

3 *Samā'* (Arab.): type of music used in Ṣūfi rituals of *dhikr*. Today it has become a musical style in its own right and is performed in non-religious settings. *Samā'* literally refers to the act of hearing, but more precisely denotes 'that which is heard'. In Ṣūfism, *samā'* is often used to refer to the hearing of music, the spiritual concert, in a more or less ritualised form. In medieval Ṣūfi writings *samā'* is perceived as a means of enriching the soul that often induces pronounced emotional states (*aḥwāl* sing. *ḥāl*), including episodes of trance.

diversity, for which Ṣūfism is evidently not solely responsible. It is also true that Ṣūfism has historically played (and continues to do so) a significant role in Islam reaching new cultural milieus. In fact, it is often claimed that *taṣawwuf* has been a decisive element in the historical spread of Islam, and in the development of local Islamic cultures across the globe.[4] Therefore, the location of Ṣūfism at 'the fringes', both in religious terms, and especially in geographical terms, makes sense to a certain degree.

Nonetheless, the single most significant reason why Ṣūfism today may be considered to be insufficiently Islamic, and as a result viewed in a negative light by Muslims, is the often unsympathetic attitude that certain reform movements have had towards *taṣawwuf* since their inception in the late eighteenth century. It should be noted that (although probably the best-known) reformists' attacks against Ṣūfism were not the first or only criticisms faced by *taṣawwuf*. As early as the tenth century, one of the most renowned Ṣūfi personalities, the medieval mystic Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 922), was executed for proclaiming his mystical union with God in a manner considered extreme by his detractors. Literalist and legalist interpreters of Islam have long opposed the ideas of the Ṣūfis. They have argued over centuries that Ṣūfi Orders provide means for non-Islamic practices and are based in beliefs of idolatry (*shirk*), considered by Islam an unforgivable sin. Yet it was the reform movements that made these criticisms widespread from the eighteenth century onwards.

Most famous for its outright opposition to Ṣūfi practices and beliefs was the Arabian Wahhābī movement, as well as India's Ahl-i Ḥadīth (Robinson 1988). With their emphasis on correctness in religious performance, these groups saw practices such as the veneration at the graves of the *awliyāʾ Allāh*[5] as a breach of the belief of *tawḥīd* (the principle of Oneness of God) fundamental articulation of the monotheistic ethos in Islam. These criticisms were present in diverse cultural settings within Muslim-majority societies. We find them, for example, in the activities and teachings of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Idrīs al-Sanūsī (d. 1931) (Vikør 1995) and the 1930s Society of Algerian ʿUlamāʾ in North Africa, in the Jadid movement in Central Asia (Khalid 1999; Baldauf 2001), and in the

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4   There are a number of studies devoted to the spread of Islam that support this view: for example, Buehler (1998), Le Gall (2010), Cornell (1998), and Vikør (2000). However, an increasing number of scholars are questioning this view by arguing that this is a claim made *a posteriori* by Ṣūfis of later periods (DeWeese 1994), or in particular by members of Ṣūfi Orders willing to legitimate their institutions.

5   *Walī Allāh*, pl. *awliyāʾ Allāh* (Arab.): *walī* can be translated as manager, guardian, protector, and also intimate or, most commonly, friend. *Walī Allāh*, generally translated as 'friend of God', is the term used to designate a Muslim saint, one who intercedes for others as Allah's deputy or vice-regent on earth.

Muḥammadiyya in Indonesia (Anwar 2005). In the Arabian Peninsula, as early as 1803, the Wahhābī seizure of Mecca and Medina brought about the destruction of all the tombs that existed in and around the city (Bruinessen 2009). Attacks on Ṣūfi shrines in the name of Islam's 'purification' have persisted to this day; in Libya, for example, as recently as 2012, there was desecration of at least six Ṣūfi shrines and complexes,[6] and in Pakistan two bomb attacks—at the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Baksh Ali Hujweri in Lahore in 2010, and at a Ṣūfi Festival in southern Punjab in 2011—killed around a hundred people and injured many more. These are just a few of numerous examples. Confrontation between 'Ṣūfis' and 'anti-Ṣūfis' has recently become the norm rather than the exception in many Muslim-majority societies (Sirriyeh 1999).

The opposition between Ṣūfism and anti-Ṣūfis is not straightforward, and various aspects deserve to be highlighted. First, it has been claimed that 'fundamentalist' voices within Islamism have been able to elaborate on their religio-political identity thanks to and against a backdrop of 'two others' (an external other, the West, and an internal other, Ṣūfism) (Weismann 2011). As our knowledge of both Ṣūfism and Salafism expands, a view in which Ṣūfism is both the antithesis and a foundational background to Salafism is gaining ground, at least within academic circles (for example, Ridgeon et al 2015). Considering Ṣūfism as merely antithetical to militant Islam is therefore misleading, in that it purportedly forgets the relevant role Ṣūfism has had in Islamic history, in among other things, the creation of groups and ideologies from which Islamists (Salafis among them) stem. Thus, the structure typical of the *ṭuruq*, if not their core doctrines, has provided inspiration for Islamist political organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, founded 1928), a spin-off of the *ṭarīqa* Ḥaṣāfiyya Shādhilīyya (Johansen 1996). Thus, Salafism can be seen more accurately, or at least partly, as a modern result of a religious trend that was at the same time Ṣūfi and reformist, rather than the negation of Ṣūfism in itself (Weismann 2011).

Second, the relationship between Ṣūfis and their detractors is also complex because some of the verbal attacks pronounced against Ṣūfism have been and are vocalised from within the Ṣūfi movement; therefore, these critics should be viewed not as opponents of Ṣūfism, but as proponents of change from within *taṣawwuf*. One example of this interesting relationship is Deobandism, a

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6 Attacks on: the al-Maṣrī shrine in Tripoli (October 2011), Sīdī 'Ubaīd's tombs' complex in Benghazi (January 2012), the tomb of a fifteenth-century scholar 'Abd al-Salām al-Asmar (d. 1575) in Zlitan (March 2012), Abdul Salam Al Asmari's shrine, mosque, and library, Hazrat Sheikh Aḥmad Zarrūq's (d.1493) tomb, and the al-Sha'ab al-Dahmān mosque, which lodged a number of Ṣūfi graves, including the tomb of the Ṣūfi scholar 'Abdullah al-Sha'ab (d. sixteenth century) (August 2012). At http://themuslim500.com/2013-2/issues-of-the-day/destruction-of-Ṣūfi-shrines. Accessed 01/07/2020.

reformist trend that is often referred to as 'South Asian Wahhābism' and which shows, at the same time, accommodation and acceptance of Ṣūfism. Yet clearly the two seem to differ, as noted by Oliver Roy when speaking about the situation in Afghanistan, in that:

> The Deoband school rejected innovation (*bi'dā*), kept to a strict orthodoxy and would not permit the cult of the saints; nevertheless, it accepted Ṣūfism and many of the teachers were Naqshbandi or Qadiri [these are the names, as we shall see later, of two of the most relevant Ṣūfi Orders], which, in itself, clearly shows how the fundamentalism of the school is distinct from that of the Saudi Wahhabi. Once again, the link between fundamentalism and Ṣūfism was to be the hallmark of the orthodoxy of the 'ulama of the subcontinent, Afghanistan included.
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> ROY 1990: 57

Similar to the situation with Deobandism, many reformers in other parts of the world, did not, at least initially, oppose Ṣūfism *per se*, but some of the practices that were more often associated with this type of religiosity (the veneration of saints, the visitation of tombs, faith healing, miracle claims, and so forth).

In most cases, they were very critical of Ṣūfism in its organised form, the Ṣūfi Orders, being lines of thought inspired, for example, by the Egyptian thinker Muḥammad 'Abduh or Indonesia's Muḥammadiyya movement. Such objections attest to the anti-*ṭarīqa* stance of many nineteenth and early twentieth century Islamic trends, rather than a mere anti-Ṣūfi position. These perspectives could also be applied to (both Islamic and secularist) nationalist circles in many Muslim-majority societies. The most famous example is the policies of the Turkish Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who suppressed Ṣūfi Orders because they were seen as a tie to the past and an impediment to the modernisation and advancement of the nation. Other countries, such as Egypt, aware of the effective powers that Ṣūfi leaders and their organisations exerted over vast groups of the population, attempted to limit their influence and bring them under state control.

A further aspect of the complex confrontation between Salafis and Ṣūfis is the inner diversity existing within the two. For example, several attacks on centres of Ṣūfi piety have been authorised by supporters of the Salafiyya, yet not all Salafis support acts of violence against Ṣūfis, even though, in many cases, they consider the veneration of Ṣūfi figures as an innovation (*bid'a*) with no place in Islam. Soon after the desecration of shrines in Egypt on March 2011 by Salafi vigilantes, the Salafi leader 'Abd al-Muna 'im al-Shahha publicly condemned the attacks as criminal acts, declaring they were completely impermissible

because, in his view, Salafis oppose the veneration of graves but do not advocate their destruction. This statement proliferated on Salafi websites, and attacks on Ṣūfi shrines ceased immediately (Brown 2011: 10).[7]

4   The Making of a Religious Tradition

But what really is Ṣūfism, and how did it come to be what it is today? Albeit historically not proven, Muslim tradition speaks of the existence of people with mystical inclinations that were companions of the Prophet. Somewhat vaguely defined, it is difficult to know exactly what bound these people together and differentiated them from other Muslims (Knysh 2017: 247).[8] Additionally, there are references to ascetics as part of the *taṣawwuf* trend (for example, *faqīr*, *ʿārif*) in source material. Despite these few cases, the formative period of what we refer to today as Ṣūfism can be more generally identified between the ninth and twelfth centuries, a long-lasting period of time in which a wide range of diverse religious ideas and practices became a 'recognised religious tradition', which included a body of religious literature, a set of principles, and a compendium of ritual exercises. Historians have identified a significant number of religious trends within 'Islamdom' that tried to use the human soul as a mechanism and tool to experience reality during the ninth and tenth centuries (Karamustafa 2007). At first, these sometimes quite distinct religious movements were not part of a single unified trend, but rather diverse groups based across the world.

In this early phase, Baghdad was important in terms of the innovation of mystical trends, but it was by no means the only place where they existed. Lower Iraq, North-Eastern Iran, and Central Asia, for example, were places with a vibrant mystical life, as exemplified by groups such as the Malāmatīs and authors such as Sahl ibn ʿAbdulla al-Tustarī (d. 896) or Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā ibn Sawrah ibn Shaddād al-Tirmidhī (d. 892).[9] Some of these renunciant trends, such as the Malāmatiyyā or the Karrāmiyyā, have been identified as being too distinct as to be considered 'Ṣūfi'. They are oftentimes referred to as made of 'the people of the *khānaqā*' (a lodge for spiritual retreat), the

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7 This was published on Salafi websites. See: www.salafonline.net/frontend/newsdetails .aspx?ftid=11&nid=65. Accessed 19/05/2016.

8 Examples of the early mystics are 'Abū Ḏarr al-Ghifārī al-Kinānī (d.652), 'Abū'l-Dardā' (d.639), Hudhayfā ibn al-Yamān (d.656), or, 'Imrān ibn al-Hussayn al-Khuzā'ī (d.672), 'Abdallah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As (d.685), see Knysh (2017: 247).

9 For a more detailed analysis of earlier groups and personalities, see Karamustafa (2007).

khānaqāʿiyyūn (Maqdisi in Melchert 2001: 237).[10] In any case, they contributed to the consolidation of Ṣūfism.

In time, Baghdad would emerge as a major capital of Ṣūfi ideas, and Baghdadi trends were exported to more distant parts of the Islamic world, such as the Iberian and Arabian Peninsulas, where they became fused with local practices and ideas. As a result, a growing gap emerged between what Ahmet Karamustafa (2007: ix) called the "metropolitan" version of Ṣūfism (distinctive of Baghdad) and a series of "provincial" counterparts. These flourishing mystical trends should be viewed within the context of a rapidly evolving intellectual milieu within Islamic thought during this period of consolidation of Islam as an established World religion.

However, it is the creation of a distinctively Ṣūfi literary genre during the tenth and eleventh centuries that has been seen as the historical landmark in the birth of 'Ṣūfism', that is, a self-conscious religious tradition. The literary output produced in this phase—first in Arabic from the eleventh century onwards, and later on in Persian—has been viewed as a sum of attempts to unify the eclectic 'metropolitan-versus-provincial' compendium of mystical trends into a single normative corpus. At the same time, Ṣūfism incorporated doctrinal corpuses from other traditions (for example, Neoplatonic, Hellenic, Gnostic) elaborating on a theosophical system. The contributions of other traditions are evident in the writings of one of the theosophical Ṣūfis *par excellence*, the Persian al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191), who is said to have incorporated Zoroastrian and Hermetic concepts into his thought.[11]

The process of developing an 'orthodoxy/orthopraxis' was meant to define the boundaries and somehow assimilate the diversity of mystical approaches that existed, with mystical writers of the period disagreeing over matters of religious norm, and also in that they positioned themselves and their views of Islam in rather different ways. The literary genre introduced the tradition to new audiences, contributed to building new solidarity between groups, and preserved and evaluated the legacy of earlier paragons (Le Gall 2010: 676). The process of tradition-building was further consolidated by the emergence of a new type of religious institution, the Ṣūfi lodge (sing. *zāwiya, ribāṭ*, or *khānaqāʾ*).

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10   A good approximation of these distinct early renouncing movements that appeared mostly in Nishapur, see Melchert (2001).

11   A later but very relevant theosophical author was the Murcia-born Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), one of the major exponents of theosophical Ṣūfism and the perhaps most important author in the development of the idea of sainthood in Islam. For further reference, see Renard (2008).

Ṣūfi lodges housed a new type of congregation comprising a religious leader, the *shaykh al-tarbiyya*, and his followers. A religious 'method' emerged as the key that brought together the master and his disciples.[12] These communities soon became regulated by manuals of conduct and etiquette (*adab*) by which communal living was organised. The ultimate goal of the Ṣūfi method was, the rationale goes, fusing the devotee with God, an objective ultimately attained after undertaking a journey through a 'path' (*ṭarīqa*) consisting of 'stations' (sing. *maqām*) and a series of feelings or 'states' (sing. *ḥāl*) derived from the experience of being in those stations. Ṣūfism understands that the journey is a way of progressively overcoming the machinations of one's carnal soul or ego-self (*nafs*) and detaching oneself from those mundane aspects that habitually estrange the spirit from its godly source (Ohlander 2015: 61). By eliminating these impurities, the devotee is understood to finally return to the 'original source', God. By undertaking the journey, the devotee seeks ultimately to attain experiential knowledge (*maʿrifa*) of God's unity, distinguishing the reality of the Islamic profession of faith 'There is no god but God' from the physical world.

It was assumed, however, that the sojourner required guidance to navigate the path. The *shaykh*'s 'educational' (*tarbiyya*) role consisted of training and closely supervising the spiritual transformation of the devotee. The link between *shaykh* and disciple was conceptualised as *maḥabba* (divine love) and routinely manifested by personal submission and obedience. Loyalty to those masters became more formally established over time by developing the notion of 'initiation', signalled by the *bayʿa*[13] (oath of allegiance), and thus the exclusive connection that a disciple had with the shaykh became a feature of that master-disciple relationship. Each *ṭarīqa* then became a group of disciples living in a lodge with their shaykh and following his particular method to attain the Divine.

In most cases, the small communities that were created around particular masters did not survive more than a few generations. Nevertheless, it was not long until a new concept, that of the *silsila*, became central to Ṣūfism, and groups would often consolidate to become more sizeable and stable. The notion of the *silsila* connected particular individuals that had studied with a master to him and his unique method/path. The idea of the *silsila* helped to

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12 A more detailed explanation of this method of spiritual attainment is given by Schimmel (2013: 99–148), Knysh (2010: 301–311), Ernst (1997: 98–108), and Hodgson (1974: 232–227).

13 *bayʿa* (Arab.) is generally used to refer to an 'oath of allegiance' pledged to a religious or political institution or leader. In Ṣūfism, it signifies a vow of allegiance to a Ṣūfi saint (*walī Allāh*). Sometimes members of Ṣūfi Orders refer to it as 'the pact'.

develop webs of individuals and far-flung spiritual families, relating people from distant times and places.[14] Through the notion of the *silsila*, particular sayings were linked to specific personalities, in a development that resonates with the concept of *isnād*, the authentication mechanism that is characteristic of hadith literature. However, these incipient 'chains of authority' found in early Ṣūfism soon gave way to veritable Ṣūfi genealogies, by which all the *awliyāʾ* within a given path had to be connected by a shared pedigree. The Ṣūfi communities grew not only larger, but also more important.

The role played by the lodges is the key to understanding the evolution of Ṣūfism from a dispersed and liminal mystical movement to a consolidated and vastly spread religious tradition. Ṣūfism underwent a process of institutionalisation, by which the small religious communities articulated around specific lodges came into contact with relevant political and social players. The *ṭuruq*, thence, emerged from a dynamic of routinisation that made the Ṣūfis both more famous and more powerful. In a variety of political scenarios, we see that by the end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh century, rulers in highly volatile political contexts began to support with patronage (*waqf*) *ʿulamāʾ*, Ṣūfis, and scholars of law, as a way to try to cement their legitimacy among local communities.[15] In time the groups became more complex: the lodges that housed them often turned to sponsorship from wealthy donors in the form of charitable endowments, a partnership between religious and economic or political personalities that often benefitted both parties.

In addition, these communities soon acquired pivotal roles in their local societies, with their leaders frequently becoming significant and well-known personalities, not only with a saying about religious matters.[16] Nevertheless, the *ṭuruq* of this period showed little resemblance to those we know today, with 'modern' *ṭuruq*, or as they are often called "full-grown brotherhoods" (Abun-Nasr 2007), emerging from the eighteenth century onwards.

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14   The earliest known exponents of such genealogies are Jaʿfar al-Khuldī (d. 959), who declared that Junayd had inherited his teachings ultimately from the followers via a chain that included Ḥasan Yasār al-Baṣrī (d. 728) and, soon after Khuldi, Abu Ali al-Daqqaq (d. 405/1015) who also traced Junayd's teaching to the followers, but via Dawud ibn Nusair al-Ṭāʾī (d. 781-2) (Karamustafa 2007: 116).

15   This has, for example, been analysed by Erik Ohlander (2008) in his study of tenth-century Palestine.

16   Multiple instances can be cited for the political influence exerted by Ṣūfis at different times and in different regions. A notable example is that of the movement led by the Qaramanoghlus, which resulted in the foundation of the Safavid dynasty in Persia, a dynasty that traced their origin back to a Ṣūfi personality, the dervish Nura Ṣūfi (Trimingham 1973: 239).

Prior to the twelfth century, the Ṣūfi concept of 'friendship with God' (*walāya*), which gives a special 'saintly status' to particular Ṣūfi personalities, developed independently from the existing groups that gathered around lodges (Karamustafa 2007). However, the mushrooming success of these mystical communities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has been seen as both the cause and the consequence of the integration the *walāya* cosmogony into the routinised structure of the lodges. It is during this period that local *awliyāʾ* began to be adored by wider crowds, becoming the axis of posthumous veneration. Thus, the *walī*'s tomb became a symbol of the vector connecting the ordinary with the otherworld. These graves were converted into shrines and worshippers developed series of rituals around the *walī*'s tomb, for it was perceived as a point of connection between humans and God.

The *awliyāʾ*'s descendants used their ancestors' charisma to convert the lodges into centres of increasing economic and social power. More sizeable communities of devotees were created around these nuclei, many of which were organised along tribal or ethnic lines. The *ṭuruq* began to ramify, with groups in different regions claiming adherence to particular *awliyāʾ* with common ancestry. Ṣūfism grew in popularity beyond recognition, attracting audiences of an increasingly diverse social and economic background. Such growth promoted its fame and attracted renewed criticisms from both non-Ṣūfis and insiders, who sometimes considered that a tendency towards routinisation would bring about the loosening of the moral and radical freshness that Ṣūfism stood for.

By the fourteenth century, the transformation of Ṣūfism from a minority religious trend manifested by a fringe community of wayfarers into one of the most widespread traditions within Islam, with a significant impact at social, economic, and political levels, was concluded. By then, Ṣūfism was "a religious and social presence embedded in a distinct tradition of piety, anchored in coherent local associations, and integral to the world of Muslim scholarship and the fabric of Muslim societies" (Le Gall 2010: 677).

5   The Ṣūfi Brotherhoods

Scholars still lack a more distinct understanding of the transformation that Ṣūfism underwent from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century (Le Gall 2010). The fourteenth century saw the success and consolidation of the *walāya* concept, connected with the establishment of a 'culture' of Ṣūfism. In this context a *ṭarīqa* consisted of a *walī*, a doctrinal body and a series of distinct ritual practices that were often not distinct from those of other *ṭuruq*. In

addition, there was a network of shrines geographically dispersed and connected through a number of Ṣūfi pilgrimage routes. I define this landscape as a 'culture of Ṣūfism', denoting that the travel to various shrines and participation of pilgrims in rituals performed in them was a common practice and implied devotion to *awliyā'* from different *ṭuruq*. In other words, a notion of 'exclusive membership' did not exist within the *ṭuruq* system. Although Ṣūfism as a 'culture' is still widespread today, over time this loosely organised form of saintly veneration has had to learn to coexist with an increasingly structured type of Ṣūfism, that of the modern established Orders.

By the eighteenth century, and not entirely historically coincidental with the emergence of non-Ṣūfi revivalist trends, a further step in the process of institutionalisation of the *ṭuruq* system had been observed (for example, Abun-Nasr 2007). The Ṣūfi Orders of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are considered to be a major foundation for understanding the recent dynamics of Ṣūfism, as they developed organisations and leadership that are pivotal in setting the discourse and defining the issues of Ṣūfism in the modern period (Ohtsuka and Voll 2016). Crucially, the *ṭuruq* of that time, which was more similar to today's Orders, began to exhibit a more restrictive idea of membership, the concept of *bay'a*, which acquired a renewed relevance because it signifies exclusivity in the bond between devotee and *walī*. As a result, religious authority tended to concentrate more exclusively on the *walī*, and *baraka* (Colin 2016), the force by which God is believed to emanate his/her/its source into the ordinary, became increasingly associated with *awliyā'* at the expense of other sources of veneration, such as objects and places. Although in many cases the 'new' *ṭuruq* were just branches of the old ones, they were a totally new breed and with *awliyā'*'s renewed claims of genealogical connection to Muḥammad, they have to be seen as fully fledged and highly influential distinct sources of Islamic revival.

In a development that predates the beginning of the eighteenth century, rituals adopted distinctive features and were associated with a formal chain of spiritual descent (*silsila*) which indicated that the person leading the ritual (or instructing others in geographically distant places on how to do so) took its formula from a *walī* who took it from another *walī* and so on, in a line extending back to the founder, and then often beyond the founder to the Prophet Muḥammad (Ohtsuka and Voll 2016). As Orders consolidated, leadership would pass from one shaykh to the next, sometimes along blood lines and less often on the basis of spiritual seniority/mastery within the *ṭarīqa*. Sometimes branches would disappear over succession disputes, while in others a devotee would attain sufficient charisma to establish a recognised 'sub-branch' within a pre-existing Order or initiate a whole new *ṭarīqa* (Ohtsuka and Voll 2016).

Overall, the structures of Ṣūfi religious authority that we know today were well established by the eighteenth century.

6   Ṣūfism and Ṣūfi Religious Organisations

From the eighteenth century onwards, the *ṭuruq* became "full-grown brotherhoods" (Abun-Nasr 2007), 'religious organisations' that were to a certain extent comparable with those developed by other religions. In particular, there are parallels in that the concept of membership attained by most Ṣūfi Orders since then would easily comply with the definition proposed by sociologists of religion when referring to religious groups in general. Stolz, for example, defines it as the situation in which:

> The individual may consider him or herself to be a member of a group, giving him or her certain rights to the resources (such as knowledge, rituals, friendship) of the group. Among these resources we normally find 'chains' of salvation means leading to salvation ends. In return, the individual normally gives up control over certain actions or resources (for example, agrees to follow certain rules, subscribe to certain beliefs, support the group financially, etc.). Memberships are normally indivisible, and not alienable. They are often exclusive; the group thus forbids membership of other religious groups.
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>   STOLZ 2006: 24

This notion of membership is certainly applicable to many Ṣūfi Orders today. Nonetheless, some specific points are worth considering in the case of *taṣawwuf*. First, the laxity of the bond between *walī* and devotee is often still significant. For example, in many Ṣūfi organisations, both in Muslim-majority societies and in the West, there are a significant number of people at the gatherings who are not formal members of the Order, but people just 'tasting' Ṣūfism (to use the jargon of Ṣūfi Muslims). Although in some cases these individuals will in time become fully committed members of the *ṭarīqa*, others will have a noncommittal in-and-out relationship for as long as their association with the organisation lasts; this is sometimes a period of time that is much longer than the Order would like it to be. In some cases, as is the case with some branches of the Qādiriyya, such as the Būdshīshiyya, those 'tasting' Ṣūfism are asked for a certain degree of commitment and exclusivity, and at least for the time period in which they are 'tasting' they are prevented from visiting other brotherhoods (Dominguez Diaz 2014: 129).

Second, although a number of known organisations conform with this pattern, Ṣūfism displays an entirely parallel dimension that escapes the formality, exclusivity, and commitment imposed by the idea of membership. On the one hand, the aforementioned 'culture' of Ṣūfism, with its "routes, circuits and networks which pilgrimage and visitation establishes" (Werbner 2015: 299) is still vigorous and compelling to millions of Muslims. On many occasions, these networks contain shrines whose *awliyāʾ* do not belong to the same *silsila*, and thus not to the same *ṭarīqa* either (in fact, these shrines are often not associated with particular Orders at all). In Central Asia and North Africa, especially, there are plenty of local groups that have evolved around particular shrines or families. *Awliyāʾ* with a renowned reputation for their religious excellence and *walāya* might attract crowds during their lifetime, but these followers might fall away once they die; thus, Ṣūfi Orders with a stable body of formal disciples are not created. Tombs of such pious teachers exist throughout the world and are vibrant centres of popular piety and the rituals performed there sometimes combine the styles of various Orders. These practices might be indirectly identified with Ṣūfism in a more general way, and less so with a particular path, although the real impact and identity of these manifestations is not general or vague, but specific and local. This type of Ṣūfi centre is called "shrine-Ṣūfism" by Kazuo Ohtsuka and John Voll (2016), and it is an important aspect of modern Ṣūfism that does not conform with, and in some cases defies, the rule of exclusive membership followed by the largest brotherhoods.

Third, there are other types of Ṣūfi groups that similarly defy the notion of exclusive membership. Some groups, often those that stand closer to New Age religiosities, evolve around a loosely organised structure, with a lax attitude towards affiliation for which they are often very proud. In these groups, participants are not asked for any form of exclusive affiliation and, in fact, it is often the case that attendees discuss and compare the practices of the group with those of others at ritual sessions; for example, this is found among members of the *ṭarīqa* Naqshbandiyya in various European countries.

Despite all the aforementioned issues, the majority of Orders have a clearly defined notion of membership, or at least one that is more evident than that of the pre-modern groups. The orders that developed from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards are, by and large, more stable structures than their pre-modern precursors. They represented a new organisational direction and were "relatively more centralized and less prone to fission than their predecessors" (O'Fahey 1990: 4). They were also different from the old *ṭuruq* in a number of other ways. The new orders tended to place less attention to the joyful aspects of Ṣūfism and became more 'sober', and also, typically, became more concerned with matters of Islamic law.

7   Ṣūfism's Vitality in Modern Times

By the mid-twentieth century some observers thought of the *ṭuruq* as remnants of the past, with little chance of surviving the rapid changes being experienced by Muslim societies. They believed that as societies became more industrialised and technology was made more widely accessible, the social functions once played by the Ṣūfi *awliyāʾ* and their Orders would be replaced by other forms of social participation, such as the labour unions (Gilsenan 1967). In some parts of the world Ṣūfi activity appears to have decreased, partly due to the increasing success of the aforementioned attacks by reformists and secularists. In countries such as Tunisia, for example, Ṣūfism has become relegated to almost minimal expression. In other countries, such as Turkey, there has been a diminished role of several Orders, and in most other places some of the typical characteristics of the *ṭuruq* have undergone significant changes.

Today, for example, the role played by the internet and mobile phones in the reaffirming of Ṣūfi charisma through the sharing of saintly imagery, although yet to be formally assessed by the academe, is a key aspect in the religious lifestyles of some Muslim youth. Equally, the transnational impetus acquired by many Orders via an increasing flow of international migration and cosmopolitan ties was difficult to predict forty years ago. Nevertheless, the dramatic changes that Ṣūfism has undergone, and contrary to the predictions of decline, demonstrate quite the opposite, that *ṭuruq* continue to be a fundamental element of Muslim religious life everywhere.

Ṣūfi Orders have also been capable of integrating into the local religious cultures of disparate corners of the globe, becoming effective vehicles of religious proselytization. In some cases, Ṣūfi Orders have adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude with regard to legal matters, becoming *de facto* friendlier to the pre-existing religious fabric of the lands in which they arrived. This has contributed to minimising the confrontational aspect of inter-religious encounters and facilitated the success of Islam in many regions of Africa and South-East Asia. Ṣūfism has demonstrated the ability to adapt to local religious laws and cultures, and has also brought about, for the new devotee, the opportunity to be incorporated into a wider religious community, the *umma*, which has provided a new and dynamic identity to the communities it has reached. For example, in West Africa, the flexible structure adopted by the Qādiriyya allowed this *ṭarīqa* to engage with local tribal leaders who have played a key role in the function of the organisation (Brenner 1988). Similarly, the Neo-Ṣūfism of the Shaṭṭāriyya and the adaptable character of the master—disciple relationship, in particular in West Sumatra, has facilitated expansion of the Order within South-East

Asia, especially during the late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century (Fathurahman 2003).

It is worth noting, however, that patterns of change coexist with continuity of other aspects, and that of the features that have defined Ṣūfism for many centuries are still part of what it is today; in fact, these are essential to understanding its modern success. Thus, Ṣūfi Orders continue to facilitate spaces of religious devotion that often pervade social class, race, and ethnicity—nowadays, in some cases, even gender. The culture of saint veneration that occurs around shrine and tomb complexes is as vibrant and flourishing as it was before the advent of nation states. Moreover, the consolidation of social and political structures such as political parties and labour unions have not threatened, as predicted earlier, the survival of the Orders; instead *ṭuruq* have become new ways of articulating civil society in many Muslim majority societies. In some cases, the *ṭuruq* advocate political quietism, as it is often the case among Ṣūfi Orders in countries such as Germany or Holland, yet in others they are involved in political matters, as in Afghanistan and Iraq. The political involvement of Ṣūfism has sometimes been open, such us in war-torn scenarios, yet in other instances it has been more discreet. For example, in several countries in the West, Ṣūfi groups of different leanings have been supported economically by governments as part of their efforts to combat home-grown jihadism (see Muedini 2015).

7.1 *Transnational Ṣūfism*

Several Orders have thrived to such an extent that they have developed interregional networks of religious followers and personalities. The example of the Naqshbandiyya in the Levant, analysed in detail by Itzchak Weismann (2007) in his famous monograph, is a good example of the geographical expansion that Ṣūfism can achieve. This Order, originally from Central Asia, has extended into South Asia and to Ottoman lands via Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1625) and his successors on one hand, and by the earlier line of ʿUbaydullāh Aḥrār on the other. By the eighteenth century, dignitaries of this Order were well known among Istanbul's most illustrious circles as well as in other major Ottoman capitals, such as Damascus. In Syria's capital, for example, the great Ḥanafī *muftī* Muḥammad Khalīl al-Murādī (d. 1791) was part of a family associated with the Naqshbandiyya. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Shaykh Khālid al-Baghdādī (d. 1827), part of the Mujaddidī line within the Order, led a significant revivalist movement in the lands of the Fertile Crescent, and the religious life of Naqshbandī's Khālidī line has been famously defined as being "the paramount order in Turkey" (Algar and Nizami 2016).

The *ṭarīqa* has also become well known for developing a stable network of commercial and intellectual ties across distant lands, with students, pilgrims, and travellers who visit city after city being housed with physical shelter and religious instruction in the *ṭarīqa*'s lodges. Sobieroj (2016) has studied one of these devotees, the scholar Ma Mingxin (d. 1781), who left his homeland China in order to study in Naqshbandī lodges in Central Asia and the Arabian Peninsula, including the important Naqshbandī centres of Mecca and Medina. Combined networks of commercial activities and pious instruction can be seen in the activities of family-based *ṭuruq*, as in the South Arabian ʿAydarusiyya, a Ṣūfī order of a notable family of the Hadramawt region that has expanded into Egypt and the islands of South-East Asia, as well as into India (Ohtsuka and Voll 2016).

Furthermore, Ṣūfism's characteristic adaptability, a feature that stems from the fact that it often generates relatively small gatherings and less formal congregations than those in mosques, has facilitated the renovation of Muslim piety in situations where Muslims are in the religious minority, and thus have less capability to develop the religious infrastructure (such as mosques and madrasas) that Ṣūfis can manage without. Likewise, in the highly volatile religious countries of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Ṣūfism has successfully engaged devotees in endeavours of religious proselytization (*daʿwa*), giving Ṣūfi groups a distinct power in social milieus with a large degree of religious pluralism.

The good press that *taṣawwuf* often gets in the West has allowed Ṣūfi groups to continue to thrive and gain converts to Islam in times of somewhat extended anti-Muslim sentiment. Thus, the transnational character of some of the pre-modern Orders still prevails among various groups today. The Qādiriyya Būdshīshiyya is a case in point: it is an order that originated in North-Eastern Morocco but in the last thirty years has expanded, through both migrant and cosmopolitan connections, to sub-Saharan Africa, Western Europe, and South and North America. Although most of its followers are Moroccans or of Moroccan origin, the *ṭarīqa* has been successful in attracting former non-Muslims as well as Muslims from other non-Ṣūfi and/or non-Moroccan religious backgrounds.[17] One of the mechanisms through which the Order has been effective in attracting new devotees is through its online presence, with sites in various languages.[18] Similarly, the *ṭarīqa* Burhāniyya that originated

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17   For an ethnographic study comparing the diverse branches of this order, looking in particular at the religious identities of its female members, see Dominguez Diaz (2014).

18   See for example, the following internet sites: https://www.tariqa.fr/espanol/index.php, https://www.tariqa.fr/it/index.php, https://www.tariqa.fr/ar/index.php. All accessed 01/07/2020.

in the Sudan with Burhāni (d. 1983) has spread to various countries in North Africa, the Levant and the Gulf, Western Europe, South Asia, and North America.[19] A visit to their YouTube channel will acquaint the reader with the impressive following of the Order's gatherings.[20]

Another often cited example of a transnational Ṣūfi Order is the *ṭarīqa* led by Nazim al-Qubrusī al-Haqqanī (d. 2014). The organisation is connected to the worldwide spread of the Naqshbandī trend, although it is an offshoot of the mainstream *ṭarīqa*. Whereas, the original Naqshbandiyya traces its origins to Central Asia, the Haqqaniyya branch, in contrast, relates its ancestry to the Caucasus region through a linkage to the Indian Mujaddidiyya tradition. Nazim al-Qubrusī al-Haqqanī moved to London in the 1970s to establish a European branch of the Order, then led by Abdullah Fa'izi al-Daghestani (d. 1973); this was a successful endeavour that today has resulted in the *ṭarīqa* having a significant and active following in places such as North America and most of Western Europe, the Middle East, and South and South-East Asia.[21] Although it also exists in various parts of the world, this *ṭarīqa* in particular has had success in attracting non-Muslims to Islam. It also is quite visible on the internet.[22]

Particular mention should also be given to the Chishti Order, an organization that originated in Herat. Although most of its followers are in Afghanistan and South Asia, it has recently, through migration, been established in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and East and South Africa. The Ajmer (Rajasthan) shrine of the Order is the tomb of Moinuddin Chishti (d. 1236) and it receives many visitors during Ṣūfi celebrations, particularly Urs.[23] Finally, it is good to remind the reader that the number of Orders with an international outreach is too large for them all to be mentioned individually. Moreover, not only that they are too many to mention, but one of the consequences of *taṣawwuf*'s flexible nature is that new groups of devotees are created, whereas others disappear, on a regular basis, complicating the scholarly task of accurately mapping the Orders and their transnational outreach.

19　For an interesting study of the German branch of this Order see Lassen (2009).

20　Their channel, at https://www.youtube.com/user/TariqaBurhaniya/videos, at the time of writing has 5,930 subscribers, and some videos have garnered over 24,000 views. Accessed 01/07/2020.

21　The Order was studied in an ESRC project let by Nielsen, Yemelianova and Stringer. See http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/wwwroot/nielsen.htm. Accessed 28/09/2018.

22　See http://www.naqshbandi.org/, http://Ṣūfilive.com/. Accessed 28/09/2018.

23　To obtain a more accurate idea of the Order's following see http://dargahajmer.com/photo-tour/. Accessed 28/09/2018.

7.2   *The Legacy of Ṣūfism in Non-Religious Organisations*

Ṣūfism has been and continues to be a fundamental element in the religious fabric of Muslim contexts, and it has an impact on all sorts of aspects of Muslim culture, from music, to poetry, and even dress. One of the consequences of this pervading influence is to be found in civil society and politics where Ṣūfism has played a key role in the ways in which a variety of organisations are structured. For example, in South Asia, Ṣūfi culture has given rise to political parties and platforms. In Pakistan, for instance, the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) was formed in 2010 as a coalition of Barelvi Muslims; Barelvism is the largest Islamic orientation within Pakistan, and one that has been based mainly on Ṣūfism throughout its history (Eppin 2013). The SIC is an alliance of Islamic political parties with followers numbering about 160 million people.[24]

Similarly, various African countries have seen Ṣūfi orders intertwined with or transformed into political parties, since the way in which some of the *ṭuruq* have been organised has provided the basis for the creation of political parties. The leaders of the Tijaniyya in Senegal have entered politics by becoming part of the ranks of the existing Parti de l'Unité et du Rassemblement (PUR). The Tijani leadership had initially expressed a desire to found their own party but the Senegalese constitution forbids the formation of political parties of religious nature. Nevertheless, the PUR has been significantly influenced by the Ṣūfi background of its leaders (Samson 2000).

Ṣūfism has also exerted its influence on non-political organisations. In Senegal, the Murīdīya evolved into an organisation that was key in transforming and modernising agriculture. During Soviet times, various *ṭuruq* in areas of Central Asia created modern organisations tolerated by the state, and so Islamic communal life could endure the challenges they faced when the state applied severe efforts to suppress religion. In Afghanistan after 1979, the *ṭuruq* system and, notably, the Qādiriyya and Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidīyya Orders have been central in recruiting *mujahideen*, in which traditional Orders turned *de facto* into modern military units. Another example is the Sudanese *ṭarīqa* Khatmiyya, which served as a basis for the emergence of the National Unionist Party, later the People's Democratic Party; by the end of the twentieth century, the head of the Order was also the president of the Democratic Unionist Party (Ohtsuka and Voll 2016).

7.3   *Non-*ṭarīqa *Religious Organisations*

The ethos and the intellectual legacy of Ṣūfism have been equally pivotal in the constitution of some of the most widespread religious organisations within

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24   For a more detailed study of the coalition see Khan (2011).

Islam, groups that are often not Ṣūfi Orders. These groups are not organised according to the principle of *walāya*, and therefore they do not develop a master—disciple relationship, or at least not one that is representative of the traditional patterns of Ṣūfi religious authority. One example of this type of organisation can be seen in the informal networks of women in Istanbul who gather to perform Ṣūfi practices but whose groups only present a weak connection and little resemblance to traditional established Orders (Raudvere 2002).

Another example of a group that does not conform to the patterns of the *turuq* is the Gülen movement, which is a transnational religious movement led by the Turkish Islamic preacher Fethullah Gülen. There are several elements that are typical of Orders that do not apply to the Gülen movement. A *tarīqa* has a leader, a *shaykh*, who in turn has a group of devotees. Devotees shall, in most cases, formally initiate into the *tarīqa* in order to become disciples of the master. Additionally, every *tarīqa* has a chain or lineage (*silsila*), as we have seen, through which it endorses religious legitimacy by establishing a genealogical line that connects the current head of the Order to previous ones, and from them to one of the founder fathers of Ṣūfism (for example, in the case of the Qādiriyya, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, d. 561 AH/1166 CE). The role of the shaykh is still educational, even though, in a number of modern *turuq*, religious instruction has been diluted or somehow transformed. This education, as we have seen before, is generally based on a ritual discipline. The discipline is supposed to progress as the disciple ascends in his religious education to more complex stages of religious learning. Conversely, the Gülen movement does not show any of these features. Fethullah Gülen considers himself an intellectual who is not the *shaykh* of a *tarīqa*. More relevant perhaps is the fact that there is no initiation and there is no specific set of ritual practices unique to the movement. The Gülen movement is Ṣūfi only to the extent that Ṣūfism, as an intellectual and religious legacy, has heavily informed the thinking of the founder. It is often noted that Fethullah Gülen was influenced by Said Nursi and the Nur movement, another group with relevant Ṣūfi underpinnings but no *tarīqa* structure in the traditional sense.

A further example that illustrates the religious influence of Ṣūfism beyond the world of Ṣūfi Orders is to be found in the three, perhaps, most famous proselytising Islamic religious groups that exist in South Asia, namely the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, the Daʿwat-i Islāmī, and the Sunnī Daʿwat-i Islāmī. These movements, with an effective missionary outreach, are believed to be comparable in size and scope to Christian Pentecostalism (Gugler 2009). To various extents, the three represent examples of the legacy that Ṣūfism has contributed to Muslim religious life beyond the *turuq*, as they all are based on what has been called 'Sunnization', a doctrine heavily influenced both by Ṣūfism and the Salafiyya

(Gugler 2009). These movements are not obvious heirs of Ṣūfism, as the incorporation of the Ṣūfism legacy into their practices is complicated. For example, in the case of the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, the founder had been initiated in a number of *ṭuruq* (Chishtiyya, Suhrawardiyya, Qādiriyya, and Naqshbandiyya) and whereas the structure and aesthetics of this organisation relies heavily on Ṣūfism, Tablīghīs support a reformed version of Islam that outwardly rejects certain Ṣūfi practices, which they deem to be synchronous with Hinduism. In this sense, the group has attracted the criticisms that Ṣūfism had to face from Salafi orientations, as discussed previously.

8   Conclusion

The once questioned capacity of Ṣūfism to adapt and overcome the challenges of the modern world has been easily overcome. Ṣūfism has demonstrated an impressive capacity to maintain its significance in the religious life of millions of Muslims across the world. The contemporary face of Ṣūfism has achieved an impressive transnational spread, thanks mainly to globalisation, and to the interaction and assimilation of peoples and cultural aspects, including religious ones, although, as we have seen, this is not an entirely new phenomenon. On the contrary, historical studies indicate that there is something inherently cross-cultural in the conceptualisation of the *ṭuruq* world. In addition, the relationship between Ṣūfism and the organisations that have been developed by the Ṣūfis is not straightforward. In fact, a recurrent feature within *taṣawwuf* has been the existence of Ṣūfis, masters, and devotees, and of Ṣūfi gatherings and networks of pilgrims, that evade the constrictions of the patterns characteristic of *ṭuruq*, with lodges made up of a substantial following of 'non-formal' devotees of any *ṭarīqa*. Additionally, the Ṣūfi Orders do not seem to be in decline. On the contrary, they are important elements of the Islamic religious landscape, and our understanding of the *ṭuruq* world, I would contend, is key for obtaining an accurate picture of (at least a significant part) of the existing spectrum of Islamic sects, trends, and organisations. The Orders, with their often quite traditional ways of approaching religious authority and discipleship, have been able to gain a substantial following among both Muslims and non-Muslims who have converted to Islam to join them, generating networks that thrive in very diverse societies. Also, modernity has shown us the vibrancy of Ṣūfism outside the *ṭuruq* system and *taṣawwuf*, and as an ethos, it has become part of organisations of various sorts, from labour unions and political coalitions and parties, to non-*ṭarīqa* religious groups. The importance of the study of Ṣūfism and its legacy in social, political, and economic terms is

central to acquiring a well-informed picture of the sects, trends, and organisations that exist in Islam today.

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Javād Nūrbakhsh and the Niʿmatullāhī 'Khaniqahi' Order

Milad Milani

1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the designation of Ṣūfi Master Javād Nūrbakhsh (1926–2008) and the Niʿmatullāhī 'Khaniqahi' Order or Khāniqāh-i-Niʿmat Allāhī as sectarian. Within the field of Islamic Studies, or even the broader scope of the study of Islam, there is no sufficient term that equates with 'sect' or 'sectarian'. Generally, Islamic history—from early on—is replete with examples of divisions between political alliances/parties (for example, *shīʿat ʿAlī* or *shīʿat Muʿāwiya*) pertaining to leadership (*imāma*) and schools of thought (*madhhab*) and to methods of reading and practicing the religion. Yet it has to be cautioned that none of these are tantamount to the 'church-sect typology' as set out in the sociology of religion for the Western Christian context. Max Weber (1922) and Ernst Troeltsch (1912) used the typology as a heuristic tool. In their theorising, the church was equated with the larger bureaucratic state-sponsored organisation that ministered to the general population, whilst the sect was the smaller evangelical group that adopted a radical stance towards the state. Bryan R. Wilson (1959, 1992) later modified the typology to define sects by the way in which they positioned themselves in opposition to social values or demonstrated their indifference to societal norms. In this sense, it has been more about a study that assists in the categorisation of dissent and along with it claims about the return to true religion. As such, and despite my own reservations about the application of 'sectarian' to groupings within Islam, one point of entry into the debate might very well be the combined issue of the interpretation of religion and legitimation of rule that both dominated early debates and forced Muslims to pick sides. Obviously, Muslims gradually became aware of partisanship, dissent, apostasy (*ridda*), and secession (*khawārij*), although more sharply once a sense of orthodoxy had begun to take shape.

Historically, the Ṣūfis are no strangers to intrigue and controversy regarding their allegiance to orthodoxy. Although Ṣūfism was never collectively viewed as heterodox or heretical, certain aspects of its belief system and praxis were

held in suspicion by those stalwart defenders of conventional Islam. Early Ṣūfism made the attempt to demonstrate itself as part of orthodoxy, and Ṣūfis claimed that they were representative of 'real' Islam, wanting to avoid being branded as different or apart. The entry point, then, into the debate about sects in Islam—in particular with a view to Ṣūfism—can be based on the Latin 'to follow', as in a prescribed view deemed to be authentic and not necessarily as a break-away group or movement. It is specifically in this sense of the term that I conceptualise Javād Nūrbakhsh and the Niʿmatullāhī 'Khaniqahi' Order. The way I proceed to define this further is by creating a framework wherein Nūrbakhsh is discussed as a sectarian in the generic sense of a nonconformist (even revisionist), and the Order as a sect is read as 'a following' whose partisanship is defined by its adherence to the figure of Nūrbakhsh.

Javād Nūrbakhsh became the leading *pīr* (master) of the Niʿmatullāhī 'Khaniqahi' Order from 1956, and remained its figurehead until his death.[1] He was known by the sobriquet, Nur ʿAlī Shāh, upon succeeding his Master, Mūnis ʿAlī Shāh Dhū l-Riyāsatayn, in the line of the Munawwar ʿAlī Shāhi branch of the Niʿmatullāhī Order. The Niʿmatullāhī Order with which he was associated is by far the most widespread and significant Ṣūfi Order in Iran, since the time of its inception in the fourteenth century (Algar 2012). The Order survived harsh persecutions and enjoyed periods of patronage, but all in all, it is well-established with roots deeply embedded in Iranian society. The secret of its success is likely related to its dynamic style and transformative nature, but also in its peculiar ability to have managed the tension between Sunnī and Shīʿa sensibilities in its earlier manifestations.

In its early history, the Order had undergone several transformations: from Sunnī to Shīʿa, moving from Iran to the Deccan, and inaugurating a revival of passionate Ṣūfism at a time of Shīʿa scholastic ascendancy. The most recent transformation, however, was initiated by Javād Nūrbakhsh with the Order's expansion beyond Iran. It has to be said that the role of Javād Nūrbakhsh in the history of the Order is of special note, since it was he, in particular, who adapted the branch of the Order that came under his directorship to the present day conditions of Western society and culture (Lewisohn 2006: 52). Most importantly, the Niʿmatullāhī Masters were generally men of erudition and all of them were prolific figures (Algar 2012). Nūrbakhsh was no exception.

The legacy of Javād Nūrbakhsh—as a pronounced figure in the recent history of the Niʿmatullāhī—is no less controversial. Here, we discuss Javād Nūrbakhsh as a tacit sectarian in that the unnoticed effort of his career as a

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1 However, his son, Alireza Nūrbakhsh was being groomed to succeed Javād Nūrbakhsh from early on.

leading Ṣūfī figure had been to demonstrate Ṣūfism as something other than Islam. This relates to what I have called "Nūrbakhshian Ṣūfism" (Milani 2018: 124) propagated through the Niʿmatullāhī brand. In effect, Nūrbakhsh never outwardly proclaimed the Order a sect, nor did he reject Islam outright. His was a 'silent' revolution of an unspoken majority. Whilst the Niʿmatullāhī Khaniqahi cannot be labelled sectarian, the philosophy and praxis of Javād Nūrbakhsh warrants a rethinking of his outlook on Ṣūfism as a sectarian movement. What we find in the writings of Nūrbakhsh is that the Ṣūfis began as a covert group of Iranian converts to Islam who developed Ṣūfism in order to protect themselves from persecution and preserve their pre-Islamic identity. In this sense, then, Ṣūfism, represented the merger of old Iranian customs and the new religion of the Arabs. Specifically, it consisted of a synthesis of the chivalric ideal and the religious notions of love and unity. In Nūrbakhsh's view, as time passes, the Ṣūfi identity is developed more indiscriminately with Islamic identity, and as such differences became, over time, increasingly more difficult to discern.

In this chapter, I will refer to the overall historical context of Nūrbakhsh's rise to a position of influence, taking into consideration his works within the nexus of social, political and cultural aspects of his time. I will primarily draw on his Ṣūfi writings, which include books, poems, and discourses, as well as a final interview with a documentary film maker (Smith 2008a, 2008b).[2] I treat Nūrbakhsh as a genuinely perceived charismatic figure who wielded significant influence over a large nationwide (and eventually global) community of initiates.

In the task of studying Nūrbakhsh and his works, I have primarily worked within the framework of a multidisciplinary approach, particularly that of religious studies, through which I have drawn on history of ideas and Islamic history perspectives in working through problems pertaining to historical interpretation and the utilisation of key ideas over time. In my own theorisation of Nūrbakhsh and his works I have taken an approached inspired by both Martin Heidegger and Pierre Bourdieu. Heidegger's hermeneutics is especially relevant because we are examining how meaning arises in a given historical circumstance based on the retrieval of what is (or might be) still available from the past.[3] There is a relationality that is central to a study which examines an

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2   My own observations and interviews with group members are not extensively dealt with in this chapter, but they do on occasion inform the basis of my assertions, and I will indicate this where relevant (whilst preserving the anonymity of interviewees). Some aspects of these interviews have, however, been analysed from a sociological perspective and published elsewhere (cf. Milani and Possamai 2016).

3   For background see Thomas Sheehan (2015).

agent of history and historical data for the purpose of examining how meaning arises and is understood in that context. As such, Bourdieu's theory of field and habitus are especially important for appreciating the value of an agent's habitus in relation to the conditions that define a particular field.[4]

2   Overview and Considerations

The Niʿmatullāhīyya or Niʿmatullāhī Order is representative of a number of branches and sub-branches of which the 'Khaniqahi' is a recent twentieth century development under the leadership of Javād Nūrbakhsh. The Niʿmatullāhī take their name from the fourteenth century Sunnī Ṣūfi saint of Syrian descent, Shāh Niʿmatullāh Walī. (1330–1431), whom they claim as their founder. Shāh Niʿmatullāh gained a large following in Timurid Samarqand, where he seems to have become the subject of intrigue and forced to resettle in Kerman (Algar 2012). The Order was later moved to Muslim India in the fifteenth century and then returned to Iran in the eighteenth century, during the twilight of the Ṣafavid period, to lead a renaissance of its Ṣūfi style. The Order had by now showed itself as truly Shīʿa, and its Ṣūfi figureheads preferred the sobriquet 'Kings' (Shāh) after their 'King', Niʿmatullāh Walī no doubt, but with particular reference to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib , known in Persian popular culture as the 'King of [True] Men' (Pers. *shah-e mardan*). The 'Kings' of this branch of Ṣūfism, however, suffered heavy persecution at the hands of extremist Twelver Shīʿa *ʿulamā* who had won favour with the Ṣafavid Kings.[5] Yet the Order endured, outlasting the Ṣafavids to find its own patronage under the Qājār and Pahlavi dynasties. The Order once again came under suspicion with the rise of the fundamentalist state of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 and experience a new period of suppression and harassment, but not before finding refuge in the West.

The process of exporting Niʿmatullāhī Ṣūfism to the West was initiated by Nūrbakhsh in the years immediately preceding the 1979 Iranian Revolution. There, the 'Khaniqahi' label became the name of the Order abroad, known in English as the 'House of Ṣūfism', and that aspect of Niʿmatullāhī Ṣūfism that becomes directly associated with the teachings of Javād Nūrbakhsh. In 1974, he visited the United States at the request of American devotees and in 1975 two Houses of Ṣūfism were established in San Francisco and New York by his senior disciple, Mr Niktab (1918–2003), and also in London by Nūrbakhsh (Lewisohn

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4   For background see Robert Grenfell (2012).

5   For an extended discussion on the heritage and history of the Niʿmatullāhī Kings see Pourjavadi and Wilson (1978).

2006: 51). From 1976–1978, further Houses of Ṣūfism were established in the United States (Washington DC and Boston); in 1979 Nūrbakhsh emigrated to the United States, and in 1983 he settled in England (Lewisohn 2006: 51). It was in the years following the Revolution that the Order was particularly defined by Javād Nūrbakhsh in the Western context. This differed, at least outwardly, quite significantly from the way it was practiced and defined in Iran, where it particularly emphasised the Order's Persianate roots and the inward aspect of religious observance over the external.

In light of this, a cautionary proviso is needed regarding Nūrbakhsh and the Niʿmatullāhī Order (broadly speaking, and even the Khaniqahi, more specifically). That is, the two—Nūrbakhsh and the Niʿmatullāhī—are not synonymous, despite typically being treated as such. I would go so far as to differentiate between the 'mission' of Javād Nūrbakhsh and the Niʿmatullāhī Order and, further still, in relation to the Khaniqahi as well. The reason is that the written works of Nūrbakhsh—as well as his live discourses, some of which were published under the same titles—do not always, or consistently, represent the views of the participants of the House of Ṣūfism. As such, a careful distinction has to be made in any study of the Niʿmatullāhī Khaniqahi between what I will call, for the sake of simplicity, 'attendees' and 'adherents': a difference between those who are initiated, but are not aware of the Nūrbakhshian agenda, and those initiates who subscribe to it. Of course, all those initiated into the Order were seen as disciples of their Master (Nūrbakhsh), yet they were not all treated as equally holding the 'right' understanding of the Path. Nūrbakhsh would on occasion relay the sentiment, although in more nondescript terms, in what he categorised as the difference between 'Ṣūfi' and 'Darvish' (Nūrbakhsh 2005–6: 30). The Ṣūfi simply takes the oath of initiation and becomes a seeker (*salek*), while the Darvish arrives at the station of becoming 'nothing' (Pers. *heech*) (see Nūrbakhsh 1996: 55). There were indeed concentric circles within the domain of the Order that indicated who was in the know, and who was not, so to speak.

The Niʿmatullāhī teachings of Javād Nūrbakhsh gain greater traction through its spread in the West (as they are translated into numerous languages) and where the Order begins to flourish on democratic soil, primarily in the United Kingdom and North America. Niʿmatullāhī teachings in Iran continued to maintain a conservative countenance, but in the West, headed by Nūrbakhsh during the 1980s and 1990s, it showed itself as a global spiritual phenomenon for all humanity, irrespective of religious belonging. Though not quite Inayat Khan's Universal Ṣūfism, Nūrbakhsh was more invested in the Iranian legacy of mysticism (*farhang-e irani*) and its wisdom tradition (*hikmat-e khosravani*) (Milani 2014: 219–220). This meant that the Order, as mentioned earlier, was made up of layers of hidden initiation (in addition to the formal initiatory rite),

which seemed more or less reserved for Iranians or those able to penetrate its linguistic and cultural barriers. Nūrbakhsh's chauvinism was pronounced, even in his writings, because he based himself squarely and solely on his Iranian Ṣūfī protagonists such as Bāyazīd, Ḥallāj, ʿIrāqī, Kharaqānī, Abū Saʿīd, as well as the poets Saʿdī and Ḥāfiẓ, whom he considered to have been real Ṣūfis. They all portray a sense of antinomianism to which Nūrbakhsh related, and was fond of, but also, they were seen as being part of the Malāmatiyya (the seekers of blame), a tradition of Ṣūfism that Nūrbakhsh himself followed.[6]

From 1979 until 9/11 marks the period of the Western transformation of Ṣūfism under Nūrbakhsh where he propagated a distinct shift in his attitude toward the formal Islamic identity attached to traditional Ṣūfism. What can be gleaned from his writings and his final interview is that Nūrbakhsh distances himself further still from an identifiable Islamic identity. Moreover, from this time onward, the obligatory prayers ceased to be performed at the Khaniqah abroad (though not prohibited), and the terms 'Ṣūfi' and 'Darvish' (the latter being the preferred among Persian speaking members) came to represent mystical morality rather than religiosity.

2.1　　*Ṣūfism in the Shīʿa Context*

One detail that needs to be underlined in the study of the Niʿmatullāhī Order, even in the case of Javād Nūrbakhsh, is that it is a Ṣūfi tradition steeped in the Shīʿa context. Of the traditional Ṣūfi orders, the Niʿmatullāhī Order is a cardinal Ṣūfi order in Shīʿa history. It is a Shīʿa form of Ṣūfism and one that thrives in its historical heartlands. This is important to note because Ṣūfism is historically a Sunnī phenomenon. It was in many ways a reaction to the exteriority of dynastic religion in an effort to derive the true meaning of Islam as preserved in the Revelation of Muḥammad and passed down to his closest Companions. Today, its mysticism is rooted in the exercise of austerities by which the movement earned its name *Ṣūfi* (that is, from the Arabic noun *suf*, referring to those who practiced the wearing of wool). The Ṣūfi were also defined by their devotion to the contemplative life (for example, as per the

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6　The outlook of Javād Nūrbakhsh on Ṣūfi history has been analysed by Leonard Lewisohn (2006: 56–61) who explained (away) their value in connection to Orientalist influenced Iranian scholars. For instance, the Niʿmatullāhī publications of Parviz Nawruziyan who utilised the well-known works of Abdul-Hussain Zarrinkoub were the product of nationalist chauvinism and a revival of later shunned theories of Orientalists such as F.R.D. Tholuck, E.H. Palmer, Reinhart Dozy, and Richard Hartmann. Such reductionism, however, fails to take into account the phenomenological value of Javād Nūrbakhsh's challenge to the status quo. For discussion on this see Milani (2014: 219–221).

systematic methodology of al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī who died in 857), developing extensive techniques and terminology to explain their manner of aspiring to intimacy with the divine.[7] In this, they read the Qurʾān for its inner meaning and made effort to imitate Muḥammad—though not for the sake of exteriority of his habits—but because he was the recipient *par excellence* of Revelation. It is impossible to determine the precise relationship between the Shīʿa *imām*s and the Ṣūfi movement, but we do know that the *imām*s, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in particular (as well as all the *imām*s of the Twelver tradition up until the eighth *imām*, ʿAlī al-Riḍā), were commonly mentioned as figures of significance for the Ṣūfis (see, for example, Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-awliya* where Jaʿfar is listed as a principal figure in a list of mystic saints). What becomes clear is that the developing Shīʿa tradition possessed its own school of *maʿrifa* (sacred knowledge) and thus had no need of the Sunnī developed *taṣawwuf* tradition, although the Shīʿa did more than their fair share of appropriating mystical teachings of grand masters such ibn Sīnā, ibn al-ʿArabī, and Rūmī (all of whom were in fact Sunnī) when it was suitable.[8]

In the Shīʿa context, Ṣūfi identity is demarcated by its own specific terminology and technical methodology. The Shīʿa generally played down the Sunnī tradition of *taṣawwuf* as meaning 'Ṣūfism' and instead replaced it with *ʿirfān*. The distinction for the Shīʿa was based on their take on Ṣūfism: a mysticism as opposed to Sunnī asceticism. Ṣūfism as *ʿirfān*, understood in the Shīʿa context, was determined by an elevated form of knowledge, since *ʿirfān* was indicative of someone who was an *ʿarif* (possessor of sacred knowledge), but also someone instinctively attuned to the sacred, able to perceive the inner most secrets (*bāṭin*) of divine communication. For the Shīʿa, Ṣūfism was not only a kind of spiritual athleticism but also, and especially, an exercise of the active intellect (*ʿaql*). Ṣūfism in the Shīʿa context, therefore, represents a keen balance between Sunnī mysticism and Shīʿa gnoseology, and it becomes a form of esotericism that is different to the Ṣūfism found in the Sunnī context as *taṣawwuf* (mysticism).

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7   Several manuals were produced to this effect, which include the Ṣūfi manuals of instruction of Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (*Kitab al-luma* or 'Book of Light Flashes'), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (*Qutb al-qulub* or 'Nourishment of Hearts'), and ʿAlī al-Hujwīrī (*Kashf al-mahjoub* or 'Revelation of Secrets').

8   See for instance the work of Nasir al-Din Tusi (1201–1274); for background, refer Black (2001: 145–53).

3   New Directions in Ṣūfism: Khaniqahi Ṣūfism Under Nūrbakhsh

Javād Nūrbakhsh took Ṣūfism in a new direction. His radical approach to the religio-political hegemony in Iran produced the kind of Ṣūfism that can be arguably perceived as being free of Islam. This is not original to Nūrbakhsh; Inayat Khan and Meher Baba had accomplished the same end in their exploits with Ṣūfism in the West.[9] What is unique about Nūrbakhsh is how, despite the apparent rift, he nevertheless maintained the synaptic link to tradition, albeit, reinterpreted in the light of Iranian historicising. It is Irano-Islamic tradition (and not the Islamic per se) that is represented as tradition in the Khaniqahi Niʿmatullāhī context. In the narrative, Iranians are the champions of chivalry and morality that are the basis of spirituality, mysticism and, of course, the core of religion. This is a view akin to the influence of the position of *philosophia perennis* (or Traditionalist School) that was advocated in Iran by the towering figure of Hussein Nasr.[10]

The perennialists believed all religious traditions shared a single metaphysical truth, which produced the esoteric and exoteric knowledge and doctrine. Nūrbakhsh, however, had a greater appetite for modernisation and change. A liberal, Nūrbakhsh took this reading further in interpreting religion as the meaningless outer garb of what it all means internally, whereby, religion must in end be dispensed with. It sounds radical, yet it is a view—albeit loosely construed—not far removed from the traditional Ṣūfi schema of certain medieval authors. For instance, authors of early manuals such as Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 988) and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 996) wanted to portray that Ṣūfism was the 'real' Islam as practiced by the *tābiʾūn* (successors) in perfect accordance with *sharīʿa* and *kalām*, and not conceived as its mystical dimension. To be truly Muslim and abide by the *sunna* of Muḥammad was to be a Ṣūfi. They imagined the path of Islam as one of literally travelling (*seyr*), in which the wayfarer (*salek*) would go from the outer toward the inner heart of faith: from *sharīʿa* (the religious prescriptions) to *ṭarīqa* (the path) to *ḥaqīqa* (ultimate truth). Al-Makkī himself had two manuals of Ṣūfism: one for the lay ('Nourishment of the Hearts') and one for the initiated ('Knowledge of the Hearts') (Knysh 2000: 122–123).

It might seem reasonable to think of Nūrbakhsh in the light of New Age philosophy, as has been suggested elsewhere (Lewisohn 2006: 59, n. 73), but

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9   The creed of the Universal Ṣūfism (Inayat Khan) and Ṣūfism Reoriented (Meher Baba) are highly pluralistic systems without a central Islamic identity (Milani 2012: 670).

10   Nasr and Nūrbakhsh were acquaintances in the known circles of Tehran society. They also appear together on publications relating to Ṣūfism. See, for example, Lewisohn (1999).

I would argue that urge is best resisted. Nūrbakhsh did not invent tradition, but rather redirected it from alternate readings of the past. This is an important distinction in that a new direction must draw and build on the past in order to move forward. Also, there is an important tension for Nūrbakhsh between the past and the present whereas this tension does not exist for Inayat Khan and Meher Baba, who liberated Ṣūfism from historical traditional baggage to the point where it is actually difficult to tell whether *it is* still Ṣūfism being referred to. The ʿinvention of traditionʾ is not the same as the activity of retrieving possibilities for interpreting tradition by reading the past for new understandings, of which Nūrbakhsh was instructive. Such a tension does not exist in Nasr or the Traditionalists either, since they too had taken the failings of modernity as a foregone conclusion.[11] Nūrbakhshʾs conceptual categorisation is defined by his adaptation of classic Ṣūfism *as* a modern, and what he provides is a distinct identity that both breaks with traditional understandings and hauls Ṣūfism into the present, giving it a modern form. In this we can make a case to speak about his approach as, *mutatis mutandis*, sectarian.

Other problems abound regarding the categorisation of Nūrbakhsh with the neo-Ṣūfism label, which has been typically defined as ʿreformʾ and/or ʿrenewalʾ, meaning that there is something ʿnewʾ that has occurred (as though this is to be indicative of something separate to the past). This is problematic because the modern context of Nūrbakhshʾs thinking is predicated on elements from the Ṣūfi past; and the visible change in his thinking is a necessary part of growth through tradition (and not separation from it). Can we imagine at all a time in which Ṣūfism did not ʿchangeʾ? How has Ṣūfism continued to the present age? If we observe the early (proto-)Ṣūfi as frontier warriors (for example, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī [d. 728] Ibrāhīm ibn Adham [d. 782]), they actively engaged enemy forces in the holy wars (*jihād*) on the fringes of the Muslim world. This had the dual effect of both affecting and being affected. To be sure, the Ṣūfi tradition is one that shaped the Islamic, in unprecedented ways, through interreligious exchange with ʿthe otherʾ outside Islam. Yet, and at the same time, medieval Ṣūfism had developed systems of practice and belief that pushed the boundaries of normative religious understanding, whilst some even flirted with heresy in their reformulation of creed and the poetic rendering of mystical experience. Indeed, Ṣūfism served as both the safety net for those losing their faith in Islam as well as a net cast wide to attract new converts. Ṣūfis freely associated with Christians, Hindus, Zoroastrians, and Buddhists. In other words, that which differentiates the classic Ṣūfi identity from the modern are simply notions of historicity.

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11   See for example, Hahn et al (2001: chapter 6).

Nūrbakhsh is no exception to this rule, because what he had fulfilled throughout his tenure was to both establish a connection to the West and manage the lifeline of traditionalism in relation to it. His open resistance to a traditional religious framework and its conventional theological underpinnings was the key to transforming Ṣūfism, making it palpable for the present time. Notwithstanding, classic and modern Ṣūfism have in common the project of mysticism that started in the medieval Islamic.

Nūrbakhsh indeed problematised the interpretation of Ṣūfism (and as most do), citing a medieval Ṣūfi by the name of Būshanjī who is made famous for his saying: "*taṣawwuf* [Ṣūfism] was a reality without a name and now a name without a reality."[12] By this example, Nūrbakhsh clearly demonstrates a break with the past whilst maintaining its importance. Aptly, the definition of Ṣūfism is kept by the paradox. There are three distinctive qualities which articulate the activity of mysticism: subversion, creativity, and connection with the times. From the time he became the head of a traditional Ṣūfi order, Nūrbakhsh worked to break the monopoly of traditionalists over Ṣūfi identity. He focused on praxis as the fulcrum for change. In this, Nūrbakhsh found inspiration from masters of the past and ideas latent in classic Ṣūfi sources such as Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's *Manṭiq al-ṭayr* and Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's *Mathnawī*. In these works, conventional Islamic practice is overshadowed by subtle, nuanced, and intuitive forms of exercise.

In his endeavour, Nūrbakhsh is by all accounts to be seen as a a sincere Ṣūfi who maintained his roots in one of the oldest and traditional Ṣūfi orders dating back to the fourteenth century. The Niʿmatullāhī style generally favoured a non-partisan (that is, Shīʿa/Sunnī) approach to religion and followed the habit of its founder, Shāh Niʿmatullāh Walī, in advocating the Akbari principle of Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) over historical partisanship. Nūrbakhsh gave this a modern twist in his Khaniqahi Ṣūfism. It is ironically this very classical root of the idea that underpins the 'modernity' of Nūrbakhsh in positioning Ṣūfism in the face of contemporary political discord and sponsorship politics. Not bowing to the pressures of choosing sides (that is, Islamic or apostate), he extemporaneously became the sectarian, that is, he chose to stand apart by not partaking in partisanship as other traditionalists had done. In contrast, the Gonabadi branch of the Niʿmatullāhī, for instance, had reverted to the original position of Shīʿa quietism during the rise of the Islamic Republic, and as such

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12   This saying of Būshanjī (my translation) is oft quoted in many books and articles on
       Ṣūfism, and is paradoxically as much a cliché as it is key to unlocking medieval Ṣūfi
       thought as Ḥallāj's theophanic locution: *ana al-ḥaqq* ("I am the truth!").

they had fallen back into a traditionalist position as historically practiced by the *marjaʿ* (model scholars).

Nūrbakhsh primarily drew upon the full repertoire of the Iranian cultural heritage and the legacy of notable Ṣūfi ecstatics and seekers of blame (*malamat*) to make the point that Ṣūfism was always the Islamic façade of Persian mystical antiquity, and that it is squarely based on the principles of chivalry (*javanmardi*) and etiquette (*adab*), embodied by antinomian attitudes (Milani 2013). Now, this was not like the Chishti—another ancient traditional Ṣūfi order—which renovated Islam from within by way of Ṣūfism (Milani and Adrahtas 2018); what Nūrbakhsh achieved through Khaniqahi Ṣūfism was to go further still. He undermined Ṣūfism *by* Ṣūfism, leaving very little to be said that could be described as Ṣūfism: "whatever comes into words is not Ṣūfism" (*aanche dar gofteh aayad dar taṣawwuf neest*) (Smith 2008), he had said. For 'Ṣūfism' was synonymous with 'Truth', and drawing on ʿAṭṭār's metaphysic, he concluded that there is nothing that can be said that would capture the Truth (*ḥaqq*). As such, the way to be 'Ṣūfi' is to become nothing because "Ṣūfism is to become and not something to hear about" (*darvishi shodanist na shaneedani*) (Smith 2008).

The case study of Khaniqahi Ṣūfism is demonstrative of Nūrbakhsh's intentions to build on what he saw as the ecstatics' representation of Ṣūfism as the other within Islam, and to go further still in revealing a mysticism radically uncontained by Ṣūfism and without Islam. Yet it was the general tenor of the Khaniqahi Ṣūfi style—as an authentic traditional Ṣūfis—that was best known to its followers and it is what attracted hundreds, especially those abroad, to its doors. People were drawn by the idea of a real traditional mystical teaching that was rooted in the distant past that liberated individuals from formalistic religion.

3.1   *Nūrbakhsh and the Traditional Islamic Identity of Ṣūfism*

The Khaniqahi branch of the Niʿmatullāhī order is a globally established Ṣūfi network due to the efforts of Javād Nūrbakhsh. It is the only branch of the Niʿmatullāhī Order that has had the greatest success in expansion and development outside Iran, and Nūrbakhsh is the principal force behind the Niʿmatullāhī initiative to adapt, expand, and grow in light of challenges faced in the twentieth as well as those in twenty-first century. The twentieth century, from the time of his ascension to the role of Master (*pīr*) and on to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, was largely about sidestepping political tensions. The twenty-first century involved strategic decisions in circumventing the stigma of being Islamic in an age of Islamophobia. These were significant factors in what ultimately defines Nūrbakhsh's positioning as one distinct from the

other traditional Niʿmatullāhī branches (not to mention, other traditional Ṣūfi orders) that retained a clear connection with Islamic identity. For Nūrbakhsh, Islamic identity was defined through the tradition of interpretation that had been dominated by the *ʿulamāʾ* class over the centuries. The battle between the Ṣūfi and *ʿulamāʾ* was an old one and it became epitomised in Ṣafavid Iran with the return of the Niʿmatullāhī to their native country as the battle between "Mullahs and Kings" (Pourjavadi and Wilson 1978: 136).

As such, Nūrbakhsh's active promotion of Ṣūfism for a Western audience requires careful attention. Niʿmatullāhī Ṣūfism is historical, culturally rich, and guided by a genealogy of spiritual leaders that have been at the heart of Persianate society since the fourteenth century. On the one hand, Nūrbakhsh's positionality was demonstrative of a clear break with both Islamic identity and traditional Niʿmatullāhī Ṣūfism. Yet, on the other hand, it was not in defiance of Niʿmatullāhī identity. Nūrbakhsh was ever in tune with the Niʿmatullāhī identity as a historical phenomenon that was defined by the challenges that it had faced. Upon their return to Ṣafavid Persia, the Niʿmatullāhī faced their oppressors with what was, in the words of Antonio Gramsci, a passive revolution. The new Niʿmatullāhī of the Ṣafavid era were Shīʿa, where they embodied a fusion of Ṣūfism and *Imāmi* expectations that had a protreptic function: a Shīʿa-messianic-Ṣūfi formula about the return of justice against despotism, social tyranny, and religious fanaticism. This same spirit was once again conjured by Nūrbakhsh for the moderns and with a modern sensibility in his writings.

The sectarianism of Javād Nūrbakhsh is, therefore, a product of the overt manoeuvrability of what it means to be Ṣūfi across a minefield of historically laden religio-political challenges. Nūrbakhsh navigated the dangerous waters of religious institutions and government politics, while retaining both the order's strong cultural ties to the Iranian homeland and demonstrating an acute awareness of the importance of being present in the contemporary setting. Thus Nūrbakhsh helped to properly situate the Niʿmatullāhī Order in modern society and to keep in touch with the modern lifestyle of its initiates. Abroad, Khaniqahi Niʿmatullāhī Ṣūfism was especially accommodating of the needs of its non-Muslim, non-Iranian converts. For instance, the weekly 'sermons' of Nūrbakhsh, delivered in Persian, were always translated immediately into English by his son, Alireza Nūrbakhsh. This would be the case whether delivered live or if recorded for production.[13]

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13   Javād Nūrbakhsh always and primarily communicated his message in Persian, which was his way of keeping the mainstay of the Order's ancestral roots, but he permitted and encouraged translations into languages other than Persian. Indeed, the bulk of his books

Nūrbakhsh's ambitions for the Niʿmatullāhī Order to be a modern Ṣūfi order, combined with keeping a distance from both Iranian politics and the West's politics of Islam, gave it a distinct sectarian feel. But this was couched in an esoteric demeanour. Whatever Niʿmatullāhī Ṣūfism entailed, it did not self-identify with the 'theology' (or ideology) of Islamic regimes, yet it never overtly disavowed its Islamicness. The notion that the order was Islamic was never withdrawn, nor denied, but what it meant *to be Ṣūfi* was certainly based on a (Niʿmatullāhī) version of Islam, at the very least, which was prominent among the few Ṣūfis that were seen to have been apostles to the 'true' message of historical Ṣūfism as the *real* Islam. For Nūrbakhsh, these were the heroes of the past such as Bāyazīd and Ḥallāj. By the time of the Republic, Iranians generally perceived Islam as being synonymous with the newly risen Islamist state; and by the time of 9/11, Nūrbakhsh wished to avoid having Ṣūfism confused with the negative image of Islam embedded in the West's War on Terror.[14] The events that played out in Iran as field, and the West as field, resulted in Nūrbakhsh showing that the habitus of Ṣūfism was something not at all tied to Islam, irrespective of how that was defined. One thing for certain was that he had to bypass the geopolitics of both the Middle East and the West in their formulations of Islam (as either a force championing justice against foreign corruption or undermining the peace of liberal society).

Comparatively speaking, Nūrbakhsh is presented as reflecting the Order's fourteenth century founder, Shāh Niʿmatullāh Walī, as an 'enlightened' figure during what has been portrayed as a dark and despotic time when most Ṣūfis, apart from the protagonist and his following, had reverted to narrow-minded religious dogmatism (Graham 1999a; cf. Calder et al 2003: 262–268). Accordingly, Shāh Niʿmatullāh's character was not the kind that would flee from danger, nor was he someone able to be coerced; rather he made the choice to leave Transoxiana on account of a point that he wanted to make: that he, unlike his rivals, did not cling to possessions or status; he left town to give way to the worldly pretenders (implicating the rival Naqshbandī Ṣūfi order) who were jealous of Shāh Niʿmatullāh's reputation and following (Calder et al 2003: 262). Shāh Niʿmatullāh travelled for some time before finally settling in Mahan, just outside Kerman. Admired by the Bahmanid sultan, Ahmad Shāh, Shāh Niʿmatullāh was invited to the Deccan. Yet it was his son and successor who took up the offer of invitation to relocate and remain there for two and a half centuries. The return to their native Persia by the end of the eighteenth

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have been translated into English (as well as other European languages where the Houses of Ṣūfism are located) to ensure wider access.

14   This was confirmed by an anonymous source well connected to the Order.

century is what Terry Graham has noted as a renaissance of Ni'matullāhī Ṣūfism (Graham 1999b: 167–168). The intensity of the Ni'matullāhī revival was defined both by state persecution as well as internal fractures. The order gradually divided into three distinct sub-branches: the Ṣafī 'Alī Shāhī, Sulṭān 'Alī Shāhī (or Gonabadi), and the Munawwar 'Alī Shāhī, the third branch being the one inherited by Javād Nūrbakhsh.

Shāh Ni'matullāh was a prolific author of prose and poetic works. As mentioned, he followed the doctrine of unity of being as espoused by the ibn al-'Arabī school of thought in Iran, but did so in combination with the theme of intense divine love as found in Rūmī's poetry. More importantly, Shāh Ni'matullāh considered *sharī'a* as secondary to *ṭarīqa*. These are comparable facets that underline Nūrbakhsh's approach. We can see that Nūrbakhsh instigated his own Ni'matullāhī revival in the Iran of the Shāh through a process of modernisation and liberalisation of Ni'matullāhī Ṣūfism for an educated populace previously disillusioned with the stagnating traditions of bygone Ṣūfism. A psychiatrist by profession, he was well known among influential circles in Tehran, which enabled him to leave his mark through the Ṣūfism he espoused. He envisaged Ṣūfism as a 'progressive spirituality', which both attracted and detracted followers. In truth, his innovations had greater success abroad. Despite the regime change in Iran, Nūrbakhsh demonstrated his commitment to modernisation and what would be indelibly the Ni'matullāhī renaissance of the age (Milani 2018: 120f).

Like its founder, and other Ni'matullāhī masters, Nūrbakhsh too was prolific. He produced a vast amount of publications (assisted by having his own press: Khaniqahi Ni'matullāhī Publishing) launching his Ṣūfi modernising project. Simultaneously weaved into these works was the message about distancing Ṣūfism from traditional Islamic identity. As noted, he championed the view that Ṣūfism was innately Iranian and evolved out of native Persian mysticism. He advocated for the humanitarian principles of Ṣūfism that he believed were a "quintessentially Iranian cultural phenomenon" (Lewisohn 2006: 56). Nūrbakhsh's initial strategy was to nationalise Ṣūfism (in Iran) in order to counter the influence of the *mullās* by producing a picture of the past that showed Ṣūfism having pre-Islamic and Iranian roots. This invoked the spirit of nationalism as represented by the eleventh century literary masterpiece of Firdausi, the *Shāh nameh* or Book of Kings.[15] In his writings, Nūrbakhsh described the history of Ṣūfism as a process of making Islamic the native Iranian mysticism of Persia. He made the point that the designation 'Ṣūfi' only mattered when Iranian mystics accepted Islam in the years following the conquest of their

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15   For further discussion on the Ni'matullāhī creed, see Milani (2014: 219).

lands (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 13). The particular focus was the province of Khurasan, home of 'true' Ṣūfism, which only wore the garb of 'Islam':

> Nūrbakhsh understood the non-Iranian elements of Ṣūfism, such as the doctrine of 'trust in God' (*tavakkol*) and asceticism (*zuhd*), as linked to Egyptian and Syrian Christianity, and explained the 'doctrine of activity' and 'social exertion' (*kasb*, *amal*) as sourced in the pre-Islamic Khurasanian experience.
>
> MILANI 2018: 122[16]

It is important to note that Nūrbakhsh's national chauvinism in favouring Iranian heritage as the key to Ṣūfism was never collectively a Niʿmatullāhī concern (Lewisohn 2006: 59). His non-Iranian disciples were largely unaware of the Persian agenda, and most of them even now do not bother with what was Nūrbakhsh's propaganda. Whilst the Niʿmatullāhī abroad are generally aware of, and share in the concerns about, the tensions between Ṣūfi and *mullā*, for them Ṣūfism is essentially a universal spirituality open to all humanity (Milani 2014).

4   Nūrbakhsh's Reading of Khurasanian Ṣūfi Identity

Nūrbakhsh made apparent his preference for Khurasan as the historic 'home' of original Ṣūfism. Khurasan was furthest from the capital in Baghdad. Historically, Khurasan had been a political red-zone from whence the ʿAbbāsid revolt emerged to topple the Umayyads. Khurasan also represented a place with a history of hybrid asceticism that was based on local communities who had converted to Islam. They were a people steeped in old customs and fiercely proud. These groups, of which the most notable are the Karrāmiyya (ninth century) and the Malāmatiyya (tenth century), were ascetics that were eventually swallowed up by the expansion of Sunnī endorsed orthodox Ṣūfism that came out of Baghdad in the late tenth century (Green 2012: 36f). From about the tenth century, Muslim piety was taking shape in different ways, and it was a time that the hard-defined boundaries that exist today had not yet formed (Melchert 2015). Ṣūfism itself was still in the process of being defined through competing ascetical and mystical strands, all of which were coming together under the newly evolving umbrella term 'Ṣūfi'. Baghdad and Khurasan, at that

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16   On the explanation of Nūrbakhsh's narrative on Ṣūfism see Nawruziyan (1997a, 1997b, 2000).

time, represented two distinctly different schools of thought with two unique outlooks: the 'sober' and the 'intoxicated' method. As Ṣūfism became more prominent, the Karrāmiyya and Malāmatiyya gradually fell into obscurity.

The Karrāmiyya were known for their rigorous asceticism and literalism and were nicknamed 'mortifiers' based on their strict austerities. Their monastic communities were both influential and important for conversion of the local community of *dhimmis* or those who paid the religious tax to be allowed their prayers (Green 2012: 46, 48). The Malāmatiyya developed in reaction to the Karamiyya. They were known as 'the seekers of blame' as per their distinctive practice. It was the latter group that was particularly opposed to the Ṣūfis from Baghdad. Their main rivalry was, however, with the local Karrāmiyya. The Malāmatiyya criticised the Karamiyya for putting their piety on public display, which for the former group was an obstacle to true piety (Green 2012: 46). Nūrbakhsh was not only fond of the Malāmatiyya, but he saw himself as a modern day *malamati*, a seeker of blame. For the Malāmatiyya, the greatest obstacle on the path to God was the public display of piety, because it characterised a hypocritical religiosity. Someone who practiced the *malamati* philosophy would, for instance, deliberately expose themselves to self-humiliating instances that attracted the blame of others. The Ṣūfis of Baghdad—as instigated by Junayd (d. 910)—also held a disdain for public displays of piety, as the aim of Ṣūfism was to control the *nafs* and not make a spectacle of oneself for sake of diverting others from their pious obligations. Yet unlike them, the Malāmatiyya believed that the *nafs* could not be destroyed and they argued that saying so was evidence of the victory of *nafs* (Green 2012: 46).

Nūrbakhsh, of course, underlined the charade of 'the religious' in their proclamations and displays of piety and induced the Niʿmatullāhī Ṣūfism with the force of *malamati* attitude. Similar to the Malāmatiyya who were opposed to Karrāmiyya pietism and Ṣūfi moralising in public, Nūrbakhsh held a disdain for those who would impose their pious status over others. In line with this philosophy, Nūrbakhsh was obstinate in exposing the hypocrisy of religion.

Nūrbakhsh in fact had never openly declared his *malamati* approach— known only to those closest to him—until when it was made public in a final recorded interview (Smith 2008a, 2008b). As mentioned, many of the Niʿmatullāhī followers remained unaware of (and thus unaffected by) Nūrbakhsh's more intimate praxis, especially if they did not read or understand Persian (see Lewisohn 2006). Nevertheless, another distinctive aspect of his sectarianism is defined through his espousal of *malamati* philosophy. One could say that Nūrbakhsh had decisively undermined both Islam and Ṣūfism by employing *malamati* piety. This gave him the spiritual mechanism with which to divorce his mysticism from mainstream religion, but also from the formal and traditional Ṣūfism that was historically associated with orthodoxy.

5   ʿNūrbakhshian Ṣūfism': The Inner Circle of Iranian Mysticism

In their book, *Kings of Love* (1978), Nasrollah Pourjavadi and Peter Lamborn Wilson celebrate the "Ṣūfism of Shāh Niʿmatullāh Walī" as the distinguished methodology of a significant historical figure. He is described as having inaugurated a new era of Ṣūfism, confirmed by the lending of his name to the Order that it formed and which continues to the present day. In this segment, I make the point that the ʿṢūfism of Javād Nūrbakhsh' is in a similar vein, something equally distinct. Indeed, it might be said of Nūrbakhsh that he was the ʿShāh Niʿmatullāh ' of the age; that he was the *Quṭb* and *Imām* of his time—as was implied of the Shāh Niʿmatullāh (Pourjavadi and Wilson 1978: 40)—though Nūrbakhsh would have undoubtedly denied it about himself (Pourjavadi and Wilson 1978: 242).

Javād Nūrbakhsh was a charismatic figure and interviews with his followers indicate that his views had great appeal.[17] Up to this point, we have attempted to locate Javād Nūrbakhsh in his historical context. Now, we turn our attention to the content of his Ṣūfi thought and his picturing of Ṣūfism as a sectarian movement. This takes us beyond the Khaniqahi Ṣūfism identity, which is really an outer layer to what is ʿNūrbakhshian Ṣūfism', that is, that aspect of Nūrbakhsh's thought that reveals something authentic about Nūrbakhsh's Ṣūfi identity. This is a deeper level of the Khaniqahi Ṣūfism that rightly belonged to only the closest circle of Javād Nūrbakhsh, and it was certainly not something that was ordinarily or openly shared with the wider audience of the Niʿmatullāhī Khaniqahi initiates. Interestingly, the section of this chapter on historical contextualisation was about the clues to seeing Nūrbakhsh as a sectarian, yet the content of his work (as will be seen) reveals the inverse, that Ṣūfism was seen by him as a sectarian movement.

The best place to start is with how Nūrbakhsh defined Ṣūfism. A careful reading of his works will show that he squarely placed the emphasis on moral conduct and service to others. Throughout all his writings (including both his discourses and poetry) this is the central aspect of his message and it is consistently repeated countless times: Spiritual morality always takes precedence over religious duty and the obligation to religious law. This he would occasionally make explicit, but typically enveloped in historical quotes taken and interpreted from Abu Saʾid, Saʿdi, or Hafiz. These he would interpret (albeit, without much difficulty) in making his point. For Nūrbakhsh, these regular reference points were not only demonstrative of the antinomian attitude of certain historical Ṣūfis whom he admired greatly, but also, and more importantly, of the kind of Ṣūfism that he espoused. Two distinct quotes to this effect were a

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17   For more details see Milani and Possamai (2016).

saying of Abu Sa'id: "If you walk on water, you're no more than a water-bug; if you fly through the air, you're no more than a fly; gain a heart and become a human being" (Nūrbakhsh 2000: 44); and another of Sa'di: "Devotional practice is nothing more than serving others; it has nothing to do with rosary, prayer rug or robe" (Nūrbakhsh 2004: 36).

Nūrbakhsh's attitude toward religion, God, and the Ṣūfi path is about gradual layers of understanding, and so an important aspect of his methodology was underpinned by what he termed as "Sufism and Psychoanalysis" (Nūrbakhsh 1990). These Jungian style layers of consciousness are representative of Nūrbakhsh's overall depiction of the Ṣūfi path (Nūrbakhsh 1992). Driven by the apprehension of the 'real', the Ṣūfi was to traverse beyond the outward description of terms and arrive at inner meaning. Similarly, what it meant to be Ṣūfi was not about the outward definitions or even the practices, because ultimately it was about the experience. Nūrbakhsh thus made the distinction between mystical understandings of God from theological readings, stating on several occasions that Ṣūfism has nothing to do with religion (Smith 2008a), and by extension the 'God' of the Ṣūfi similarly has nothing to do with the God of biblical tradition (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 32–34). Notwithstanding, he consistently refers to God or a sense of God's presence behind the symbolic language he utilises. At the crux of his writings is a delineation between Ṣūfism and Islam. His narrative tells the story that Ṣūfism was never really part of the Islamic religion (Smith 2008a; Forum 2007) and in fact existed before the arrival of Islam, and it is since then that Iranian mystics developed Ṣūfism as their way of accepting Islam while being able to secretly continue their practice of the ancient spiritual traditions. Secret, not because these ancient traditions were innately profane, but because they were sacredly humane customs of the old world needing to be preserved.

The published *Discourses* of Nūrbakhsh (1996) are heavily laden with the ideal of chivalry or what he refers to in Persian as *javanmardi*. Chivalry is a Persian institution and is the hallmark of the heroes of Persia's past. While the actual heroes of the past, such that they appear in the *Shāh nameh* of Firdausi, are Muslims implicitly and they are those who are primarily observant of ancient Iranian customs, Nūrbakhsh promotes the virtues of altruism (through them) at the expense of religion. Such a degree of altruism is predicated upon an unrelenting decree of having faith in the 'master', and so goes the infamous quote from Hafez: *be mey sajjadeh rangin kon garat pir-e moghan gooyad* ("stain the prayer rug with wine should the master command you"). Moreover, and taking extracts from numerous poems of Nūrbakhsh such as: "Feigning Negligence," "Love's Bazaar," "Love's Treasure," and many others, we see the view reinforced that religion is nothing but a barrier to God, and that

God is not what is conventionally disclosed by the religious (Nūrbakhsh 1980). Most telling is that in his *The Psychology of Ṣūfism* (1992), a dense and technical book, Nūrbakhsh expounds on his psychological theory of the process of spiritual transformation from a state of ego-centeredness to spirit-consciousness, all the while without recourse to religion. So it would seem, though difficult to ascertain for certain, that Nūrbakhsh's 'theology' does not advocate a transcendent God, but rather the divine presence through humane virtues. For certain, the point conveyed in his exegesis is that Ṣūfism is about the power of self-realisation through the utter devastation of the ego. The method, as visible throughout all his works, is by way of observing personal etiquette (*adab*) and the practice of service to others (*khedmat*) (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 51).

However, a full appreciation of Nūrbakhsh's view of Ṣūfism as a sectarian movement requires careful deliberation, because Nūrbakhsh never explicitly denounced Islam but stated that Islam was taken up by Iranians and then made synonymous with their sense of spirituality: "Ṣūfism is the culture of ancient Iran [...] With the coming of Islam to Iran, Ṣūfism gradually took its place in the Iranian culture and gave rise to the mysticism of Islam" (Nūrbakhsh 2006: 4). His historical understanding of Ṣūfism is connected to his definitional understanding of Ṣūfism. What Ṣūfism is in practice is what it is historically: "Before Islam appeared, the tradition of chivalry (*javanmardi*) in the Middle East was maintained through the training of men to be chevaliers (*javanmardan*)" (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 13). He described *javanmardi* as involving several key practices that define the substance of a particular kind of person whose very substance as a human being is quintessentially good:

> Consideration for others (*morowwat*), self-sacrifice (*ithar*), devotion (*fada-kari*), the helping of the unfortunate and unprotected, kindness towards all created beings, keeping one's word and self-effacement—all qualities that were later to emerge as the noble attributes of the perfect human being from the point of view of Ṣūfism.
>
> NŪRBAKHSH 1996: 13

The chevalier was in effect an exemplar person, what Nūrbakhsh calls "a true human being" who abided by a "code of etiquette and conventions" that defined *javanmardi*. Ṣūfism was therefore an accidental occurrence due to the adaptation of chivalry to Islam upon its arrival to Iran. He says:

> With the appearance of Islam, these chevaliers embraced the religion of Islam while retaining the conventions of chivalry, thereby founding the creed of Ṣūfism on the basis of both Islam and chivalry. Thus, the

etiquette of the chevaliers became the part of the practice of the *kha-niqah* and of the Ṣūfis.

NŪRBAKHSH 1996: 13

In the course of time, Nūrbakhsh explains, the Ṣūfi masters of this tradition placed emphasis on developing ideas such as Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and divine love (*ʿishq*), which they defined as the central tenets of Islam, and they combined these with their code of chivalry to define Ṣūfism. Therefore, the definitional practice of Ṣūfism "consisted of focusing one's gaze in one direction (towards God) through the power of love, and its method was to cultivate a humane code of ethics, which was equated with that of the chevaliers" (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 13).

Nūrbakhsh's opening chapter in *Discourses* is a direct appeal to his initiates to realise that they are "the standard-bearers of the school of humanity and of the tradition of chivalry" (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 13). Furthermore, these "noble human qualities" that defined Ṣūfism are what differentiated those that would call themselves Ṣūfis from others in the world today, but which were expected of all fellow humans. In effect, Ṣūfism, as a practice of the 'true' human being was the key to establishing a 'spiritual paradise' discovered here and now within and through the Ṣūfi path as opposed to the "material paradise" of those who worshiped externalities (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 13).

6   Ṣūfism as a Sectarian Movement and the Inner Revolution

If Nūrbakhsh portrayed Ṣūfism as he saw it, the mainstay of his thought, in my analysis of his works, was the need for a modern re-interpretation of Ṣūfi history. One does wonder whether and to what extent Nūrbakhsh's reading of Ṣūfism for the modern age was due to the contemporary circumstance of his time. In any case, it is his reframing of Ṣūfism for the present time that in my opinion reified the sectarian attitude of Nūrbakhsh about Ṣūfism.

Nūrbakhsh received explicit patronage during the modernising reign of the Shāh , because Ṣūfism was shown to be something attuned to the modern liberal values of a westernising society. However, after the Revolution that brought to power the Islamic Republic, such a notion could not at all be tolerated, not even by moderates. As such, Nūrbakhsh felt it necessary to leave Iran altogether in order to maintain the sense of freedom of religion that was enjoyed prior to the Islamist regime's takeover. Nūrbakhsh's circumstances were, of course, reminiscent the ordeals faced by Shāh Niʿmatullāh , and in a

way Nūrbakhsh must have seen himself in the light of the grandmaster, who also practiced self-exile (Graham 1999b). In the *Discourses* Nūrbakhsh makes the point about frustrations with religious authorities, doing so on many occasions, but one in particular is worth noting: "The Ṣūfis celebrate two festivals each breath; spiders celebrate by making feasts of flies" (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 14). The use of 'spider' and 'fly' was a common trope for the '*mullā*' and the 'believer'. What was fast disappearing in the aftermath of the Revolution was what was always most precious to Nūrbakhsh: the means to offer individuals a degree of flexibility and accountability of conscience. It was not that people needed to have religion forced upon them but that they needed to understand the moral imperative to be found in religion. Once discovered, whether religion was needed or not remained a personal choice. Nūrbakhsh never condemned the following of religious laws or the practice of Islamic rituals; this was left up to the individual to decide, but he made sure to remind people of what the real expectation of a 'religious' person was. For example, Nūrbakhsh says (mind you, echoing the saying attributed to Rabea the female saint of Basra): "The Ṣūfi's love of God involves no expectation of reward or fear of punishment, for the Ṣūfi does not have any wishes and demands" (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 21). Again, he says, "Righteous action refers to acting with no thought of merit of reward" (Nūrbakhsh 1996: 16).

Nūrbakhsh's progressive attitude was the stamp of Ṣūfism for the modern individual. Moreover, that Ṣūfism's originality was sourced in Persian antiquity fit perfectly with the paradox of Iranian identity in balancing the old and the new. Nūrbakhsh understood that Iran was a land of many contradictions and the place of many tensions brought about by centuries of religious revolution. As such, he provided the framework for an inner revolution that was powered by the historicity of Ṣūfism as effectively an arcane sectarian movement. Rather than outwardly divorce religion, the Ṣūfi travelled within to shed the layers of outward piety. Even quoting Junayd, the founder of Baghdad School of Ṣūfism, Nūrbakhsh shows just how this mystic of Persian descent was forced to preserve the vibrancy of mysticism in the face of outward jurists and their religious tradition: "For twenty years I have been discoursing only on marginal aspects of Ṣūfism, but of what concerns its profoundest depths I have not breathed a word, for tongues have been forbidden to utter that and hearts not permitted to apprehend it" (Nūrbakhsh 1997: 10).

In a sense, it is clear that Nūrbakhsh had distinctly made the case for Ṣūfism as a sectarian movement which had consistently defied the outward extremities of the religious class. In the course of its inner revolution, sometimes Ṣūfis had to remain silent, and sometimes vocal. On the whole, anonymity was

preferred to outward conflict for the majority of Ṣūfis, and Nūrbakhsh was no exception. What makes Nūrbakhsh different to other traditional Ṣūfi figure-heads is that his approach reminds one of the spirit of the antinomianism of classical Ṣūfism, in that Ṣūfism (for them and, I surmise, for Nūrbakhsh) was not about acquiescing to tradition, nor was it about foregoing goodness for the sake of observing outward religion.

7   Conclusion

It is never easy to define a person or their ideas in a way that does justice to their intention and purpose. This chapter has attempted to engage with sig-nificant aspects of Nūrbakhsh's thinking on the topic of Ṣūfism within Iran and the West generally as made available through his writings (in Persian and English) and later made public in a final interview (Smith 2008a, 2008b). In such an undertaking there is no claim to having pinpointed either the histori-cal or any ontological sense of the person. Rather, this chapter captures, with due caution, a reading of Nūrbakhsh's outlook—as he reveals it—on Ṣūfism as a sectarian movement, from as much as can be discerned about his perspec-tive, and a consideration of Nūrbakhsh as an undisclosed sectarian based on the geopolitical conditions of his circumstance. It is of course my own inter-pretation, in fleshing out from his writings, something about his own view on Ṣūfism as a sectarian movement historically, and in discerning the Niʿmatullāhī Khaniqahi teachings of Nūrbakhsh as sectarian in nature, implicitly.

    In this endeavour it would seem that the Niʿmatullāhī Khaniqahi Ṣūfism of Javād Nūrbakhsh presents those who engage with its belief system with some-thing different to what is ordinarily encountered in traditional Ṣūfi circles. Ṣūfism of the Niʿmatullāhī brand is not Islamic mysticism, but rather in the words of Annemarie Schimmel (1975) the "mystical dimension" of it *tout court*. Javād Nūrbakhsh is certainly seen as a facilitator of such a space/dimension of habitation for those practitioners of mysticism with principal concern for divine mystery *and* for its own sake. In this way he presented a new direction for Ṣūfism based on a forgotten past.

> O Nūrbakhsh, the debate over Truth
>   And illusion,
> Which began long ago,
>   Now no longer remains.

<p align="center">• • •</p>

Our intent was to explain the story
　　Of the heart
And its condition in the grief
　　Of burning and boiling.

From a kingdom beyond
　　All thoughts of the world
The sovereign of the soul was captured
　　By the beauty of the Beloved.

I said that for me it went pleasantly,
　　But the heart heard and replied,
ʿDo not conceal it—
　　Our story burned the soulʾ
　　　NŪRBAKHSH 1980: 110–111

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Subud: An Indonesian Interpretation of Ṣūfism

Antoon Geels

1   Introduction

Subud is one of hundreds of mystical movements (*aliran kebatinan*) that have grown significantly in post-war Indonesia. Along with other movements like Sumarah and Pangestu, Subud has attracted people from the West and has now spread to 83 countries, divided into nine zones. The total number of members is estimated at close to twelve thousand. Despite the fact that Subud leaders deny any relation to the Javanese mystical tradition, it can easily be shown that the greater part of Subud's conceptual apparatus is firmly rooted in the cultural history of Java. Under the banner of change and renewal, Subud presents a message that, fundamentally, is one of continuity in a society in transition. Subud's ideas and practices underline not only the variety within Islamic sects and movements, but also the adaptability to local traditions, as the present chapter will try to show.

Subud is an acronym for Susila Budhi Dharma, words of Sanskrit origin. According to Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, the founder of Subud, the meaning of these three words is "to follow the will of God with the help of the Divine Power that works both within and without, by way of surrendering oneself to the will of Almighty God." As such Subud "may be attached to the whole of mankind in every religion." This means that Subud also can be presented as an example of 'glocal' spirituality. Subud attaches to local spiritual traditions, including Hinduism, while simultaneously having the ambition to reach out globally. The focus in this chapter will be on a short biographical presentation of the founder, the basic concepts of Subud, its specific spiritual exercise (*latihan kejiwaan*), and, finally, the Javanese background of Subud, especially focused on the nineteenth century renaissance period and the rise of mystical movements in post-war Java.

2   The Life of Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (1901–1987)

Raden Mas Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, the founder of Subud, usually called Bapak (a conventional honorific term, meaning 'father'; here referred

to as Subuh), was born on 22 June 1901, in a small village near Semarang, the capital of the province Central Java. The name Muhammad does not necessarily mean that Subuh was an orthodox Muslim (*santri*), but like millions of other Indonesians Muhammad Subuh would regard himself as a Muslim though he did not observe all five pillars of Islam. He did not perform regular Friday prayers at the mosque, and despite extensive travelling around the world, the founder of Subud did not make the pilgrimage to Mecca (Sitompul 1974: 61–62).

Although Muhammad Subuh always claimed to be an 'ordinary' person, his life, as told by himself, provides proof that he was a remarkable man. At his birth volcanoes erupted, as is common in Javanese folklore when an important person is born. At the age of six or seven Subuh went to a private Dutch school. The young Subuh turned out to be a very sensitive boy. He did not like to see boys fighting and was unable to read degrading or false information about Indonesia in Dutch schoolbooks. He also displayed a clairvoyant faculty and was teased for it by other children, who did not like the fact that Subuh could clearly see things that they could not see in the ordinary world. It is also important to note that the family of Subuh held in high esteem traditional Javanese values, like the practice of self-denial, values that Subuh retained all his life (Longcroft 1993: Chapter 4).

When Subuh was fifteen or sixteen years old he had a decisive experience. One night an old man, dressed in black and carrying a staff, awakened him. Later Subuh understood that this man must have been Sunan Kalijaga, an ancestor saint who returned to this world in order to look after Subuh when he could not take care of himself (Sumohadiwidjojo 1991: 23–24). The man approached the astonished boy and uttered this prophecy: "Remember. When you are thirty-two years old, you will be called by Almighty God." For Subuh this could only have one single meaning: he was going to die at thirty-two (Longcroft 1993: 30). Muhammad Subuh mentions that this experience came to him shortly after he received the message that his grandfather had died. "I was very shocked by the news," he writes many years later in his autobiography, and adds that he no longer had the will to study and rather wanted to start work.

In the years to come Subuh became the breadwinner for his family. He worked as a bookkeeper at the Semarang City Hall. During these years he also felt an intense spiritual quest related to the prophecy he had received some years earlier. If he was going to die at thirty-two, he surmised, it was better to search for higher values. His spiritual journey took him to a number of teachers. The most important spiritual teacher of Subuh during these years was Shaykh Abdurachman. He was also the last one to whom Subuh went to receive

spiritual guidance. Abdurachman was a well-known *shaykh* of the Naqshbandī order of dervishes. Like most other spiritual teachers he immediately noticed 'the spiritual potential' of the young Muhammad Subuh (Longcroft 1993: 46).

Muhammad Subuh received the *latihan kejiwaan*, the spiritual exercise of Subud, in 1925 when he was twenty-four years of age. This unexpected experience concluded his search for spiritual teachers. As he tells the story, one night, around midnight, after hours of studies, Subuh put his books aside and went for a walk. Suddenly, and surprisingly, he noticed "a light shining from above a ball of radiant white light," falling onto his head. Then it happened:

> My body started shaking; my chest was heaving. I feared I would collapse in the street. I quickened my pace to get home as quickly as possible. But on reaching the house, the shaking stopped and my chest was calm. I knocked on the door, which was immediately opened by my mother, who asked, 'Why do you look so pale?' to which I responded, briefly, 'It's nothing!'
>
> I went directly to my room and stretched out on my bed. I folded my arms over my chest and surrendered to Almighty God. Amazing: I saw my whole being filled with light. This lasted for just half a minute. Then I arose, but not from my own will, and went to the room that I used for prayer and study. There I stood and performed two *raka'ats* of prayer. After finishing the prayer, I returned and lay down again on my bed and fell asleep.
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> SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1990a: 24

This was Muhammad Subuh's first experience of the Subud *latihan*, characterised by a total surrender to Almighty God. In Subuh's biography it is added that he was reminded of the words uttered by the old man in black, who prophesied that God would call him, interpreted by Subuh that he would die young. If this was the time, then he should surrender completely, which is why Subuh lay down on his bed with his arms crossed on his chest (Longcroft 1993: 49).

Subuh felt troubled by this kind of experience. At that time, he did not really understand its deeper meaning. Apparently, Sheikh Abdurachman could not explain them either. A number of similar experiences came to him shortly afterwards. Only a few months later, when performing the *dhikr* ritual, reciting the prayer *lā ilāha illa 'llāh*, ("There is no god but God"), spontaneously during *latihan*, he saw and felt a large book falling into his lap. On the first page he saw the picture of an Arab in a long robe and wearing a turban. Subuh tried to read the Arabic script, which suddenly changed into Roman characters and in

Dutch translation. He read: "The Prophet Muhammad Rasulu'llah." Strangely enough the picture smiled and nodded, confirming the interpretation. Then Subuh turned the page and saw Javanese people; on other pages there were people representing many different races. All of them were moving, praying, crying, shouting, and asking God for forgiveness. Then the book vanished into his chest (Longcroft 1993: 52ff; see also Sumohadiwidjojo 1990a: 29–30).

During this period Subuh met his future wife, Rara Ruminda. They married in October 1926. Ruminda gave birth to four children. Siti Rahayu was born in 1928, followed by Haryono two years later, and eighteen months later by Haryadi. Their youngest child, Siti Hardiyati, was born in 1935.

The first group around Subuh was formed among the followers of Shaykh Abdurachman. Subuh still considered himself to belong to that group. Soon a small group of Abdurachman's pupils started to visit Subuh's house regularly. In 1932–33 some of these friends received the *latihan*. Slowly, the *latihan* spread to a group in Semarang and elsewhere in Java.

During these years Subuh had his most important spiritual experience, referred to as his ascension. According to his biographer it is most likely that this experience came to Subuh in the middle of 1933, around the time that he decided to give up his worldly work. This must have been a worrying time for his wife Ruminda, who at the time was only twenty-one years of age. After all, Subuh was the main financial provider for her and her small children, as well as for other members of his family.

No doubt, this must have been a confusing time for Subuh as well. One evening, when at home, he felt his body growing weak, his mind emptied. Suddenly he was aware of the prophecy of the old man in black, who told the schoolboy Subuh that at thirty-two years of age he would be called by Almighty God. Subuh stretched out on his bed and "surrendering to the Power of Almighty God" he suddenly felt his body "lengthen, widen and expand" and he moved at great speed across "a huge expanse." In his own words:

> Before me I could see mountain-like cones of light, seven of them, stacked one above the other, and each connected by a cord of brilliant white light. I approached the first cone and entered it. Within could be seen a vast panorama, much greater than that I had seen before.
>
> There I saw Almighty God's creatures clad in white and praising the majesty and greatness of Almighty God … It seems I was not permitted to stay too long as I was transported again and found myself entering the second mountain from below, then I went up until I reached the sixth mountain where I felt completely powerless.

> In this state of utter weakness I felt myself saying, '*Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar.*' Only then did I enter the seventh cone. There I had no direction and no purpose other than to say, '*Allah, Allah, Allah.*' But from there I could see anything and everything that was very distant, including the world that I had left.
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> SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1990a: 34–35

It was only after his ascension that Subuh started to 'open' other people, that is, initiate them into the Subud *latihan*. Slowly the *latihan* began to spread, first in Java and then, more than two decades later, all over the world (Longcroft 1993: 67ff).

While Subuh and his family were still living in Semarang, a small group in Yogyakarta, 'opened' and guided by Subuh, started an organisation called *Ilmu Kasunyatan* (*ilmu* means 'esoteric spiritual knowledge'; *kasunyatan* means 'emptiness') (Longcroft 1993: 73–74). During the next twelve years after the ascension Subuh and his family lived a life of hardship. He had no work and was financially dependent on others for support. When their sixteen-month-old boy Suharyo died in August 1934, young Ruminda became severely depressed. In 1936 she fell ill and passed away.

In November 1941 Subuh remarried to Ibu Siti Sumari who was thirty-four years old and the mother of two children. This second marriage was of tremendous importance for Subud. Ibu Sumari made the Subud *latihan* available for women. In his autobiography Subuh writes: "My family life was complete again. We lived simply but always felt at peace and calm, so I was able to be diligent in the *latihan kejiwaan* that I had received through the grace of Almighty God" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990a: 32; see also Longcroft 1993: 95ff).

Like many other families they lived through a time of hardship during World War II and the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies. The Dutch surrendered the country to the Japanese in March 1942. Subuh tried to survive by starting a small contracting business together with eight other persons. After the war, in February 1946, Subuh and his family moved to Yogyakarta.

Towards the end of 1946 membership increased from about twenty to two or three hundred. A few months later, on 1 February 1947, journalists, government officials, and others were invited to an inaugural meeting in a reception room at the City Hall of Yogyakarta. On that occasion Subuh proclaimed the name chosen for the new organisation: Subud, an acronym for Susila Budhi Dharma.

The words 'Susila Budhi Dharma' are of Sanskrit origin. According to the interpretation of Subuh, *susila* means 'to be able to live according to the will of God as really true human beings'. *Budhi*, usually translated as 'endeavour', 'power of the intellect', or 'consciousness' in the Indonesian vocabulary, refers

to a divine power within man and all creation, according to Subuh. *Dharma*, usually translated as 'religion', 'righteousness', or 'duty', is translated by Subuh as "the possibility for every creature, including man, to surrender completely to the will of God" (quoted in Sitompul 1974: 80). The combination of the three words thus means "to follow the will of God with the help of the Divine Power that works both within and without, by way of surrendering oneself to the will of Almighty God" (Sitompul 1974: 80). As such Subud "may be attached to the whole of mankind in every religion" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1984b [1961]: 245; Longcroft 1993: 121).

In his speech to the invited people Subuh emphasised that Subud "had no holy book, no teaching, no sacred formulas, no methods of meditation … In Subud the members only surrender with patience, trust, and sincerity to Almighty God." In addition to all this Subuh also explained that Subud is not a political party and that its members will obey the laws of the state (Longcroft 1993: 122–123).

After independence on 17 August 1945 membership was rapidly increasing. In May 1957 Subuh and his wife Ibu left Jakarta for England. There they met important people, including Dr John G. Bennett a leading follower of the mystic G.I. Gurdjieff, who had died some years earlier. The followers of Gurdjieff, about 1200 in number, were looking for a new master. When Muhammad Subuh came to England, invited by Bennett and his Gurdjieff group, he was welcomed by a great number of people.

Since 1959 Subud has arranged World Conferences, held every fourth year. Muhammad Subuh became known to the world of Subud as Bapak or 'father'. In 1970 the American scholar Jacob Needleman, in his book *The New Religions*, could write that Subud is the most widespread of all the new teachings, being spread in more than sixty countries throughout the world (Needleman 1970: 104). Today this number has increased to 83 countries. After 1955 the Headquarters of Subud moved to Jakarta. In the early 1960s Subuh managed to buy some land on the outskirts of the capital. In time it became known as Wisma Subud, situated in a village called Cilandak, and Subud members from overseas donated considerable sums of money for construction projects.

3 Basic Concepts in Subud

24.3.1 *God and Creation*
Although the idea of God is implicitly included in Subuh's talks, there are relatively few lengthy statements about God. The simple reason for this is that God cannot be known by the human mind. Like other mystics Subuh sometimes

uses negative descriptions of God. Allāh, he says, "has no form, no colour, no time, no place, no nationality, no country" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1967: 80). "Do not try to understand the impossible," Subuh exhorts his followers. But in order to be able to communicate about God, Subuh usually refers to "the Great[est] Life" (*hidup yang maha besar*) (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990c [1957]: 119). This Great Life permeates the whole universe; it is "within all that is within, and outside all that is outside, and God goes before all that is before and comes after all that is after" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 113; 1988a: 18).

This concept is similar to the most basic idea of God in mystical theology: a combination of immanence and transcendence. In relation to man, God is near and simultaneously far away, Subuh says, reminding us of a few words from the Qurʾān, often quoted by the Ṣūfis: "God is nearer to you than your jugular vein" (Sura 50:16). "The power of God is within man," says Subuh: "God is closer to a human being than if he sees with his own eyes, God is closer to a human being than when he thinks his own thoughts. God is closer to a human being than when he feels his own feelings" (Sumohadiwidjojo: 1993: 84). "But if a man wishes to go toward God," he also says, "then, o dear, He is far, far away; that is to say, the distance cannot be measured" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1969: 112). Despite the utter unknowability of God for the human mind, it is possible for man to be guided by His power, which is within every human being. "God is within you, God is there all the time, God accompanies you in everything that you do" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1988a: 5; 1981: 11). "Your inner self ... keeps you constantly in touch with the Great Life" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 17).

Although most references to God are of an abstract kind, like in epithets such as "the Great Life" or "the Life Force," being "the light and the guide within the individuality of each of you" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1984b: 153), Subuh occasionally uses personal terms like "the One who watches over you" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990c: 183). Expressions such as the aforementioned are certainly of a second order in relation to abstract references to God. Sometimes Subuh says that it does not matter how we designate God. God is Almighty, All-Powerful, and All-Knowing. It is impossible for man to picture God, because God has no form. But man can reach a certain understanding of God since he has been given the capacity of understanding. Being immanent in His creation God encompasses the whole universe. Nothing is lifeless, as modern physics has proven (Sumohadiwidjojo 1989: 12–13).

Subuh does not talk often about creation. In the beginning there was emptiness, silence, and the first vibration (*qadr ilham*, sometimes spelled as *hadir ilham*) that issues from the will of God (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990b: 13). "Such utter isolation," Subuh says in a talk from 1982, "is referred to in Javanese as *samun suwung*, a total void." Then, he continues,

there arose for the first time the so-called *nur ghaib*, the light of Life, the source of everything, and its vibration and radiance, as it spread everywhere, created the light and heat of the sun, fire, air, water and earth. It is said that with the creation of these four elements there also arose the forms of life, starting from the material, to the vegetable, the animal, the human and others beyond. All these arose spontaneously, growing together. Such is the story of life as received by the prophets and the messengers of God.

SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1983b: 18–19

So, in the beginning there was emptiness and vibration, the same basic vibration that can be felt in the Subud spiritual exercise, the life within a life. Then there was light, which explains why important messengers like Jesus are always depicted as surrounded with light or with a halo, "as if his body is bathed in light that comes down from above" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990b: 13). After the manifestation of light, the four elements were created, and the four basic forms of life.

Subuh, through his compiler, describes creation as an emanation process: God "decided to test His Own Power" by making "something out of nothing" (quoted in McKingley 1992: 1). The world as we know it is materialised spirituality, passing through the four elements, successively condensed into gross matter. The first human beings were Adam and Eve, existing first in a state of original unity when there was just light. This was a state of perfection, a state of bliss. Everything needed was provided for, just like the unborn baby in the mother's womb. God created a physical body for Adam, a body with senses, a heart and mind, and he gave it all kinds of forces, intended to be useful in this world: vegetable, animal, human, and 'other forces'. Equipped with all this, Adam was able to live in the world and although he was sad to leave his state of original unity, he soon adopted to this new world, forgetting about eternal bliss. But by giving Adam the Holy spirit (*Roh Ilofi*) and the power of the angels (*Roh Kudus*) God made it possible for Adam and his children to remember the state of original unity. To take us back to this state is the most profound task of the *latihan kejiwaan* (McKingley 1992: 3ff). This means that we have to study another two aspects of the Subud doctrine: the view of man and the essence of the spiritual exercise.

3.2   *The Concept of Humanity*

It is obvious from Subuh's explanation of the biblical story of Adam and Eve that they and their descendants are equipped with all kinds of forces, powers, and capacities that enable man both to live in the world and to transcend it.

We will now go deeper into the human and divine capacities of humankind. This brings us to the following doctrines: the seven universal life forces; the four types of *nafsu* (will, desire); the four bodies of man; and the concept of *jiwa* (soul).

Life as it really should be, Subuh says, "is a chain of being that is harmonious" (McKingley 1992: 44). The concept of 'harmony', often used by Subuh, is important and used in different contexts. Here it primarily means altruism, to live and show respect to fellow human beings, independent of race or nationality (Sumohadiwidjojo 1988a: 2, 1979: 26). Mankind is truly one, "and if this can become general then it is the way whereby the world can achieve a state of peace, a state of harmony, and can become different from what it is today." This state of being, Subuh adds, is an ideal and realised only by the few (Sumohadiwidjojo 1989: 3–4).

The most ordinary state of being is not harmonious. Humans are constantly being influenced by lower forces, originating not only from oneself, but also from one's parents and generations of ancestors (Sumohadiwidjojo 1969: 104). These lower forces are four in number. The lowest is the material or satanic force (*daya rewani*) (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990c: 135). The next level is the vegetable force (*daya nabati*), more powerful in influence. Like the material force, and the other lower forces, the essence of the vegetable force is already present in the human body. There is a mutual influence between plants and other lower forces and human beings.

As well as rice and vegetables people also eat meat. We now reach the third lower force, the animal force (*daya hewani*), even stronger in influencing the feelings of humans and thereby impeding progress (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990b: 247ff). The fourth of the lower forces are related to the ordinary human being (*daya jasmani*) and acts in sexual union. It is an even "mightier" influence (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990b: 263ff). These four forces should be our inner servants, not our masters.

In addition to the lower forces there are three higher forces. The *roh rohani* is the finer human soul (McKingley 1992: 10). Subuh also refers to this level with the expression "the force of the true human being" (*daya insani*) (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 33–34). Being above the ordinary human level, the higher forces are difficult to describe. Subuh says that there is a dividing line between the lower forces, the realm of the *nafsu*, and the three higher levels (Sumohadiwidjojo 1985: 51). The true human being is free from self-interest (Sumohadiwidjojo 1969: 67); "the perfect human soul ... goes straight to God and worships Him" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1984b: 66). Beyond this level Subuh mentions the *rahmani* and *rabbani* levels (Sumohadiwidjojo 1969: 90).

The presentation and discussion of the seven forces, especially the lower four of them, is a favourite theme in Subuh's talks. Another frequent topic is the struggle with the different desires or passions of man. We touch upon the important concept of *nafsu*, usually translated as passion, of which there are four. The first one is called *nafsu amarah*, red in colour. It is connected with will, desire, and anger. This *nafsu* is also closely related to the material life force, which we cannot get rid of. The reason for this is that man "while in this world, is composed of the elements earth, water, air and fire," the four material elements (Sumohadiwidjojo 1973: 161).

The second type is called the *nafsu aluamah*, black in nature and colour. Its characteristic is greed, and it is related to the vegetable life force. "Trees and plants provide food. By nature they are competitive, greedy" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1973: 163). This *nafsu* is an obstacle to the worship of God. Then comes the *nafsu Ṣūfiyah* or *supiyah*, yellow in colour, the colour of spirituality. It has to do with attraction between men and women, and it is related to the animal life-force. It is needed in order to develop "the passion of love and unite with the opposite sex." When this has been achieved, the *nafsu* appropriate to man, connected to the human life force, can be developed. This is the *nafsu mutmainah*, white in colour. This *nafsu* "is an especially good one, a holy one. It is the *nafsu* of the human level" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1965: 165). Thus, the relation between the different *nafsu* and the lower forces is that they are usually intermingled, causing a negative or positive spiritual development.

A third important doctrine, necessary for a proper understanding of the Subud view on spiritual development, is the teaching about the four bodies of man. In one of his early talks, Subuh uses a diagram consisting of four circles. The outer one is man's physical body; the second circle represents the body of feeling and emotions; the third circle is the body of understanding, while the last one represents "inner peace or the consciousness of the inner feeling" (*rasa diri*) (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 12ff).

We cannot leave the Subud view of man without touching upon the concept of *jiwa*, one of the Hindu influences on Subuh's thoughts. In the earliest published book of Subuh, a book which is not composed of talks, but consists of a systematic survey of his ideas, it is stated that man should not neglect "training in the realm of the *jiwa*." In its context, this statement obviously means spiritual development. Through the influence of the lower forces and the *nafsu*, people can lose their human *jiwa*. That is why they need to develop "the inner nature of mankind—the *kejiwaan*" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990b: 221). This means that the concept of *jiwa* is related to different levels of spiritual development. In his Cilandak talks Subuh explains about this developmental aspect when

commenting upon the concept of *kejiwaan* (Sumohadiwidjojo 1973: 36–37, see also 1983a: 4):

> The *kejiwaan*, however, does not depend on the power of thought, but rather on the glory, the greatness of God, Whose Power envelops all, from the *jiwa* of matter to the *jiwa Rabani* (Spirit of the Almighty), to the *jiwa Ilofi* (the Great Life Force) and up to the *jiwa Roh Kudus* (the Holy Spirit).

Thus, the *jiwa* is spiritual, it is the sum total of human capacities and possibilities, entangling the whole hierarchy of the physico-spiritual universe. In the same talk Subuh describes the *jiwa* as an atmosphere: "The *jiwa* is an atmosphere surrounding you, enveloping you, just as you are enveloped by bright light when you stand in the sunshine at midday, or by darkness in the middle of the night when there is no sun" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1973: 35). In this atmosphere there is a dimension that is eternal. "The *jiwa* God gives can never be destroyed" (McKingley 1992: 7).

3.3 *The Return to Original Unity*

In Subud, the world is materialised spirit, reaching an ever-increasing level of density. The whole of creation aspires to return to the original state of unity, symbolised by the story of Adam and Eve. The universal pulse consists of a double movement: emanation and ascension. Although we live in a world of multiplicity, there is unity in plurality; the Great Life Force is eternally immanent in its creation. It is the privilege of man to 'taste' this unity, to be in touch with the Omnipresent, supporting Life Force.

In the following quotation from the texts of Subuh we encounter this fundamental idea, so common in the mystical theology of world religion, in Arabic Ṣūfi terminology:

> [E]verything originates from God. This cannot be denied; no. *Inna illahi wa inna ilaihi rojiun* (from God we come and to God we return). It is not only words when we say that we come from God and return to God. No. Everything is from God, and everything will return again into the power of God. No more and no less.
>
> SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1981: 18

Subud emphasises personal, non-mediated experience of God's presence. But due to the influence of the lower forces, the *nafsu*, and the four bodies of man, the more common situation of man is at best to be aware of God's absence. The longing for divine presence and guidance is the first step on a long and arduous

road, described by Subuh in different ways. It is absolutely necessary, however, to undertake this journey with a pack containing some indispensable tools: to be able to surrender, to have patience (*sabar*), to trust in God (*tawakal*), to display an attitude of submission, and to be sincere (*ikhlas*). In addition to these fundamental capacities, Subuh also mentions the importance of losing self-interest and of being quiet: "You can yet come to understand all that is necessary just by being patient and quiet" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990c: 183).

One of the most important concepts is surrender. In connection with the spiritual exercise (*latihan kejiwaan*) Subuh has already indicated what this means. We have to surrender everything in our feeling and thinking:

> If you let go of all your thoughts, and let go of all that you feel in your inner feeling, and you really believe in God … If, in the training [*latihan*], you think of something, even a little, it stops. Clearly, the training you receive—that is, your receiving in the training—cannot be mixed with your desires and thoughts.
>
> SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1993: 101

Before going deeper into the spiritual exercise and elaborating on its require-ments, it is necessary to present the different stages in spiritual development, according to Subuh. Occasionally, Subuh refers to the four traditional stages within mystical Islam or Ṣūfism. In a talk from 1959 he criticises other interpre-tations of the spiritual life for consisting of words only, a theoretical approach existing in the mind. All these approaches can be grouped under the headline *tarikat*, spiritual ways. But there are stages beyond *tarikat* (sometimes *tarekat*). Subuh divides all four of them in two groups:

> The first two forms are called *Shariat* [Arab. *sharīʿa*, 'law'] and *Tarikat* [Arab. *ṭarīqa*, 'path']. *Shariat* does not imply any search for the way to God, for all that is required is simply faith; that is to say, if a man already has faith in the counsel of those who have received in the past, it is held that such a faith will bring him straight to God, and that God will look after the faithful. The second form is *Tarikat*, which means the way to find the inner meaning of faith.
>
> SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1984b: 122–123

The first two stages are usually related to the religiosity of ordinary man. But deeper spiritual development can only be obtained when man reaches the sec-ond group of two stages: *Hakekat* [Arab. *ḥaqīqa* 'truth'] and *Makrifat* (Arab. *maʿrifa*, 'knowledge'). The third stage can only be reached when all efforts

have ceased: "This *Hakekat* only exists when a man comes to see that all his efforts are useless and that in truth this can only come to man by the Will of God." (Sumohadiwidjojo 1984b: 123). The meaning of *Makrifat*, Subuh explains, is "that a man has received the contact with and is filled by the Will of God, and is following that divine Will which exists within His being." The difference between the first and the final two stages is described in the following way:

> *Hakekat* and *Makrifat* are qualities of a man who has received the contact with the Power of God to such an extent that he lives according to this power and becomes, in very truth, its instrument, whereas in the first two ways he is still the instrument of his own self-will; that is, of his thoughts, desires and feelings. This is the difference between *Shariat* and *Tarekat* on the one hand and *Hakekat* and *Makrifat* on the other.
>
> SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1984b: 123

Subuh adds that the two higher ways are received in the Subud *latihan*. In rare cases, spiritual development leads to the state of 'perfect man' (*insan kamil*), a person who has integrated all forces. Perfect man, Subuh says, "is equipped with the entire framework, the hierarchy of life-instruments or forces; and these exist within him to make his life in this world complete." Perfect man, Subuh continues, is not somebody who turns away from the world, somebody who isolates himself in a cave or in the jungle in order to meditate. Perfect man does not turn his back to society, he is socially-minded (Sumohadiwidjojo 1975: 67). A perfect human being or a perfect human soul (the soul called *insani*) "is one with the nature of a creature that knows the true life and knows, too, the life of other natures, and which always feels love, and loves and assists anyone in need, or those who are ill or in need of care" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 44).

4   *Latihan Kejiwaan*: The Subud Spiritual Exercise

From what has been said above it is obvious that a purification process is needed in order to reach the state of perfect man. From an overall point of view the *latihan kejiwaan* is a purification process. This process proceeds at several levels of the psycho-physiological human being, starting with the body and our feelings. The purification process includes past sins committed by ancestors. Sometimes Subuh refers to the Hindu-Buddhist concept of *karma*. The influence from ancestors is firmly rooted in the *Wayang* stories (Rieu 1985: 26). In the words of Subuh: "inside the mistakes which you committed in your own life are the mistakes committed by your parents. And inside *those* mistakes are

the mistakes of your grandparents" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1981a: 29; see also 1983b: 3, 1986: 2, 1993: 28).

It is obvious that the higher levels of *latihan* are just as rare as similar mystical states of consciousness in other traditions. In a booklet entitled *This Is What I Have Been Hoping For* Subuh mentions that during the twenty-five years that he first set foot in Europe only about fifty Subud members have received something "beyond their ordinary knowledge" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1983a: 12). The most important psychological prerequisites for reaching these higher levels can be summarised as letting go, that is, complete surrender to the will of God. A mystical way of expressing this important part of the exercise is to reach "death in life" (*Mati sakjeroning urip*) (Sumohadiwidjojo 1985: 36). The same idea is expressed in one of Subuh's New York talks:

> Those men who received Grace in the days of old ... have repeatedly declared that in order to know and to realise the true, the real, life, which it is both necessary and possible for man to know, he is required to die before he really does die; that is to say, he should experience death before he really dies. This is symbolised in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which represents the return of Life from death.
>
> SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1975: 12

The psychological description of this requirement is to "stop thinking and imagining" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990c: 111). Subuh's advice to Subud members is to put aside all speculations, all thought. In a way it is like "re-entering the state ... as a small child free from the influence of the external world" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1984b: 28).

Subuh not only demands the inhibition of thought, but also "the cessation of your personal self" during *latihan* (Sumohadiwidjojo 1984a: 45). In addition to all this one should be free from desire: "If your thinking and desires interfere, your *latihan* stops by itself." In the next sentence Subuh says that it is necessary to surrender "body and soul to the One God" with trust, patience, and sincerity (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 67). The practice of *latihan* is not limited to the *latihan* hall, twice a week. Subuh advises experienced practitioners to do the *latihan* at home (Sumohadiwidjojo 1984a: 176). The experience of *latihan* is an on-going process leading, finally, to a permanent state in which Subuh claimed to be (Rieu 1985: 76).

From what has been mentioned above it is obvious that Subud is embedded in mysticism, in the sense of experiencing the immediate presence of God, leading to far-reaching consequences in the individual's life. One of the most common verbal expressions of this experience is to feel "a vibration of energy

felt within the self," or "to make contact with the Great Life, or with the Power of God" (*mendapatkan kontak dengan hidup-besar atau dengan kekuasaan Tuhan*) (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990: 110–111).

> What we receive in the *latihan* can be described as a vibration of life, called in Islam the *hadir ilham*. This vibration arises within our being the moment the *nafsu* ceases to act. Gradually it spreads to our whole body, eventually manifesting in the form of movements.
>
>   SUMOHADIWIDJOJO 1981a: 53

In one of his early talks in Coombe Springs, England, Subuh again mentioned that a person who has an immediate relation to the "Great Life" is called, in the language of Islam, a perfected human being (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 12; see also 1983b: 58).

In summary, then, Subuh asks Subud members to stop thinking and desiring, to inhibit impressions from the external world, as well as to inhibit consciousness of the self. In short, to empty yourself: "When you are free from your thoughts, mind and desires in your exercises, and really become empty, only then will you be able to receive and be aware of blissful and light movements and other such actions within yourselves" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1975: 23).

With this last quotation we touch upon certain experiences that can be felt during *latihan*. Subuh mentions involuntary bodily movements, expressions of joy and sorrow, all coming from the soul (*jiwa*), not from the heart. Even if people only utter sounds like "Er, er, er, eh, eh, eh, ah, ah, ah" it is regarded as receiving, as coming "from the human soul … and not from the other forces which suppress it" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 77; see also 1988b: 9, 1979: 18ff). The *latihan*, Subuh explains, begins with "the coarse physical body, and later goes deeper to the inner feeling," cleansing as it goes. The result of this purification is that it brings to life "the real power of the soul or *jiwa*" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 79).

The purpose of the *latihan*, then, is to purify the four bodies, that is, the physical body, the body of feelings and emotions, the body of understanding, and the inner feeling, as well as to calm the passions (*nafsu*). The necessary requirements are an attitude of "patience, faith, submission and sincerity towards the greatness of God" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 56). Only then can we receive "guidance from the Great Life" during *latihan* (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993: 58).

From a societal point of view the *latihan* is beneficial for *all* mankind in our present, troublesome situation. One of the fruits of the *latihan* is "to bring our lives to a state of happiness and usefulness in this world" (Sumohadiwidjojo

1986: 2; 1988a: 14). The *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud is a method or a way to re-establish original unity, a way of unifying all humankind, a method given to us through Muhammad Subuh, and adapted to the situation of humanity in the present age (Sumohadiwidjojo 1986: 21–22; 1989: 9).

5 Subud as Javanese Mysticism

As stated in the introduction, Subud leaders usually deny any relation to the Javanese mystical tradition. In this chapter, however, I have tried do show that the greater part of the conceptual apparatus of Subud is firmly rooted in Javanese mysticism. The *latihan kejiwaan* is the *axis mundi* of Subud. Due to this experiential basis of Subud, the concept of God and the view of creation receive a limited space in the talks of Subuh. God is described in terms very common in *kebatinan* circles: as unity, the Great Life, immanent in the universe. God is utterly unknowable, but simultaneously man's inner guidance, in other words both far and near. This description can be characterised as a combination of transcendence and immanence, one of the main features of panentheism.

The mystical movements (*aliran kebatinan*) are firmly rooted in Javanese culture. It certainly is no easy task to present an overall picture of Javanese culture. Clifford Geertz, a well-known authority on the subject, expresses the diversified cultural situation on Java in the following way:

> Java—which has been civilised longer than England; which over a period of more than fifteen hundred years has seen Indians, Arabs, Chinese, Portuguese, and Dutch come and go; and which has today one of the world's densest populations, highest development of the arts, and most intensive agricultures—is not easily characterised under a single label or easily pictured in terms of a dominant theme.
>
> GEERTZ 1960: 7

In a chapter like this we will have to limit ourselves to some of the main elements of Javanese religion, especially the themes as presented above: God and creation, the concept of man, and the return to original unity.

The Indonesian anthropologist K.P. H. Koentjaraningrat distinguishes between *Agami Jawi* ('Javanese Religion') and *Agami Islam Santri* ('Islam of the Religious People'). "The Agami Jawi manifestation of Islam," according to Koentjaraningrat, "represents an extensive complex of mystically inclined Hindu-Buddhistic beliefs and concepts, syncretistically integrated in an

Islamic frame of reference" (Koentjaraningrat 1985: 317). We will now turn to a few aspects of this worldview called 'Javanese Religion'.

From a cosmological point of view, life on earth is regarded as part of an all-encompassing unity. This unity (*yang Suksma*) is also called 'life' (*urip*), since all existence emanates from and will eventually return to this principle. Existence is hierarchical, extending from condensed matter to more subtle levels that are closer to the origin. Man is somewhere in the middle of this great chain of being. With his outer manifestation (*lahir*) man belongs to the world and its material aspects; the inner nature of man (*batin*), on the other hand, has connections upwards in the hierarchy. With the aid of his 'intuitive inner feeling' (*rasa*), man has access to knowledge and experiences inaccessible to those who are bound to the outer, material manifestation of the unity of existence (Mulder 1992b: 5ff). Considering this premise, it is easier to understand the attitude of the Javanese towards the Koran, the Bible, or a formalised, institutionalised view of God. There is no need for a 'mediator' as God is immanent in the human heart, God is Life of which every human being is a part (Mulder 1992b: 8).

The Javanese concept of God is non-personal, immanent in all creation. There are, however, also more personal features in the Javanese view of God, features that can be summarised in the following way:

> God is the totality of nature, manifested as a small divine being, so tiny that it can enter any human being's heart at any moment, yet he is in reality as wide as the oceans, as endless as space, and he is manifested in the colours which make up and symbolize everything that exists on earth.
>
>   KOENTJARANINGRAT 1985: 327. See also ZOETMULDER 1935 and MULDER 1992b: 18

There is hardly any doubt that Subuh is in agreement with the general pattern in Javanese mystical literature: the necessary descent of the One into the many, of unity into plurality, and the equally necessary return to original unity. In this basic pattern is also included the view of man in his unique position in this cosmic chain of being, that is, somewhere in the middle, which gives him a possibility to become aware of his original state. The human is a microcosm, and as such they are the sum total of the universe. This doctrine is not limited to Ṣūfism and Javanese literature from the renaissance period; it is also fundamental in the Javanese Shaiva interpretation of Hinduism.

Subuh's syncretistic presentation of the emanation process is based, I think, on two sources: the Javanese mystical tradition, and Subuh's own experience. Concerning the latter, this explains why the founder of Subud chooses to connect the original state of Unity to "the first vibration" and to describe the "first

manifestation" as "Light." Both aspects are intimately related to his own experience, which is now linked to the Subud conceptual apparatus. These concepts, in turn, enable a Subud member to interpret his or her experience of vibration as a direct contact with God.

In addition, it is reasonable to assume that the story of Adam and Eve is influenced by court literature like the *Paramajoga* and similar texts from the nineteenth century renaissance period. I am referring especially to the *Serat Wirid*, where it is stated that Adam is created out of the four elements and that God inserted spiritual elements in him (Hadiwijono 1967: 106ff). In order to survive in the world Adam was equipped with senses and a heart and mind, all useful in a world consisting of vegetable, animal, human, and other forces.

As far as the concept of humanity is concerned, the doctrines discussed above comprise the seven forces inside and outside the human, the four types of *nafsu*, the four bodies of humankind, and the concept of *jiwa*. The first two doctrines are related to each other in such a way that the four so-called lower forces have their counterparts in the four types of passions. This fourfold division of passions occurs first and foremost in Ṣūfism, which in turn influenced renaissance mystical literature.

Finally, the thoughts pertaining to humanity's return to original unity are also firmly rooted in Ṣūfi sources. Subuh repeats again and again that the true servant of God should cultivate the following qualities: complete surrender, patience (*sabra*, Arab. *ṣabr*), trust in God (*tawakal*, Arab. *tawakkul*), and sincerity (*ikhlas*, Arab. *ikhlāṣ*). These concepts belong, of course, to classical Ṣūfism. In her general description of the Ṣūfi spiritual path Annemarie Schimmel depicts *ikhlas* as "absolute sincerity," as a giving up of "selfish thoughts in the service of God." Sincerity is a prerequisite before entering the mystical path proper, one of the stages of which is *tawakal*, 'trust in God'. A total trust in God implies self-surrender to Him, amounting finally in nothing less than union with God (Schimmel 1975: 108, 117ff).

Another important station on this path is patience, *sabar*. "Perfect patience," Schimmel writes, "is to accept whatever comes from God, even the hardest blow of fate." Ṣūfi mystics in all times and places never tired of inventing new parables for this station. In the words of Schimmel:

> Only through patience does the fruit become sweet; only through patience can the seed survive the long winter and develop into grain, which, in turn, brings strength to the people, who patiently wait for it to be turned into flour and bread.
>
> SCHIMMEL 1975: 124

There is a general consensus among Ṣūfī authors on these issues and that they are in line with the thinking of Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo. In conclusion, then, the basic concepts of Subud can be regarded as doctrinal fragments originating predominantly from Hindu inspired and Ṣūfī mystical sources, as elaborated during the Javanese renaissance period.

6   Conclusion

Subud is amongst other Indonesian "thriving sects" such as Pangestu and Sumarah that draw on Javanese mysticism (Mulder 2005: 28) but Subud considers itself not so much a religion as an organisation centred on the spiritual techniques of *latihan* as revealed by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (Subud 2013). This chapter started by briefly detailing the life of Sumohadiwidjojo, fondly known as Bapak, and his founding of Subud after experiencing mystical revelations. Drawing on the primary data generated by his many talks and autobiographical writings over the years, the basic concepts of Subud were outlined, including the concepts of God, creation, humanity, and returning to the state of original unity. The essential spiritual exercise of Subud, *latihan kejiwaan*, was elaborated upon as a means of experiencing the divine and knowing the self. Finally, although the analysis presented in this chapter is not exhaustive, it can nevertheless be stated that the doctrinal profile of Subud is primarily derived from the Javanese interpretation of Islamic mysticism and to a lesser degree from Hindu-Javanese systems of thought. Thus, Subud represents an Indonesian interpretation of Ṣūfism in a comparatively new revelatory tradition that exists today on a global scale.

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René Guénon and Traditionalism

William Rory Dickson

1   Introduction

René Guénon's (1886–1951) Traditionalist school of thought has played a significant role in the transmission of Islam within Europe and North America. Like Guénon, most of his followers became Muslim and pursued the practice of Ṣūfism within several Traditionalist Ṣūfi orders, making Traditionalism a largely Islamic movement. Several of Guénon's followers were accomplished academics whose writings on Islam have shaped its reception in the West more broadly, particularly among intellectuals and Ṣūfis. This chapter will first of all outline Guénon's life and thought, before considering the broader Traditionalist movement and its role in the development of Islam in the West in the twentieth century.

Initiated into a Ṣūfi order in 1910, Guénon sought to recover humanity's 'Primordial Tradition' (*la Tradition Primordiale*), whose metaphysical truths he believed were still preserved within Eastern religions. Although Guénon held that Hinduism's non-dual Advaita Vedanta school was the most authoritative expression of the Primordial Tradition, he did not think Hinduism suitable for Westerners, and saw in Islam a more recent and accessible expression of the Primordial Tradition. Guénon's emphasis on orthodox religion as the necessary container of esoteric truth, alongside his trenchant critique of modernity, led to his school of thought being referred to as Traditionalism.

His initiation into Ṣūfism, and later devout practice of Islam, would prove to have historical significance for Islam in the West, as several of his followers and associates would become Muslims, establish their own branches of Ṣūfi orders in Europe and North America, and further write influential interpretations of Islam for Westerners. Most notably Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998) would publish numerous books expanding upon Guénon's thought and initiate several European and North American intellectuals into his Ṣūfi order, the Maryamiyya. Together, Schuon and Guénon's writings would form the core works of the Traditionalist school of thought. Traditionalism has been particularly influential among Western scholars of Islam, including Titus Burckhardt (1908–1984), Michel Chodkiewicz (b. 1929), Martin Lings (1909–2005), and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933), many of whose students have become established scholars in

their own right. The many works by Traditionalist scholars published in the last century have helped shape Western discourse on Islam more broadly, but especially in regards to Ṣūfism.

2   The Life and Thought of René Guénon

René-Jean-Marie-Joseph Guénon was born in Blois, France in 1886, to a bourgeois Catholic family. Despite a delicate constitution and recurrent health issues he excelled as a student, obtaining baccalaureates in philosophy and mathematics (Borella 1992: 330). In 1904 he began a mathematics program at the Collège Rollin in Paris, hoping to eventually enter the prestigious École Polytechnique. Guénon struggled with his studies, however, and withdrew from college in 1906, leaving the Latin Quarter for the more placid Ile Saint-Louis. His interests were increasingly drawn towards the thriving occult scene offered by *fin de siècle* Paris, a scene he would immerse himself in over the next six years.

Guénon's occult pursuits were mediated through Gérard Encausse (1865–1916) or Papus as he was also known. A physician interested in alternative medicine, Encausse became a pillar of Paris's occult milieu. He established several esoteric organisations that Guénon would become affiliated with, including the École Hermétique and Ordre Martiniste. Encausse's interests overlapped with Theosophy, and he had been a member of the Paris branch of the Theosophical Society since 1887. Emerging out of nineteenth century Spiritualism, Theosophy offered a synthesis of Western and Eastern esoteric traditions. Established in 1875 in New York, by 1890 the Theosophical Society had over 200 branches, with publishing houses in America, Britain, France, India, and Sweden (Dickson 2015: 68).

For Theosophy's founders, Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) and Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), a unitary truth lay at the core of the various religions and philosophies of human history, perennially present though expressed in different forms. Their perennialism was based on the *prisca theologica* of the Renaissance, an idea that can be traced to the Council of Ferrera (1438–1439) in Florence, Italy. Here, Georgios Gemistos Plethon (1355–1452), a Neoplatonist scholar of the Byzantine delegation, suggested to Catholic Florentines that a deep understanding of Plato could lead to the harmonisation of divergent philosophical and religious views, with outward differences resolved in a transcendent unity. Plethon drew Cosimo de' Medici's (1389–1464) attention. A wealthy Florentine noble, de' Medici would become a patron of Neoplatonic and Hermetic thought during the Renaissance, funding Marsilio

Ficino's (1433–1499) revived Platonic Academy. Ficino was an influential proponent of the *prisca theologica*, arguing that all true religion and philosophy were diverse manifestations of a single truth, just as all visible forms shared a deeper ontological unity. The phrase *philosophia perennis* itself was later coined by the Italian humanist Agostino Steuco (1497–1548), who built upon Ficino's perennialism in his *De perenni philosophia* (1540) (Schmitt 1966: 505–506).

Perennialism found renewed *cachet* during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Europeans began to encounter non-Western languages, philosophies, and religions in much greater depth, with the access afforded by Western imperial and colonial expansion. Exemplary here is the founding father of British Orientalism, Sir William Jones (1746–1794), an accomplished philologist, translator, and jurist, who was appointed as a judge in the British supreme court in India in 1783.[1] In his study of Hindu and Ṣūfi philosophy, Jones saw shared patterns with Plato in the West, all of which he believed to be derived from an ancient, primordial "metaphysical theology" (Dickson 2015: 37). Jones's version of the *prisca theologica* included the Vedanta (Hinduism's most influential philosophical school)[2] as particularly profound representative of the Primordial Tradition. According to Jones, "It is impossible to read the Vedanta, or the many fine compositions in illustration of it, without believing that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain with the sages of India" (Benoit 2010: 92).

Jones is further credited with discovering the Indo-European language family. In his famous address to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1786, he outlined the connections between Sanskrit, Persian, Latin, and Greek. This Indo-European or 'Aryan' language family would be increasingly conceived of in racial terms in the century that followed, with an imagined superiority over its Semitic counterpart (Masuzawa 2005: 150–151). As Gregory A. Lipton observes, "The idea of the metaphysical superiority of the so-called Aryan spirit in relation to Hinduism—or more esoterically conceived as 'the Vedanta'—formed a large part of the Romantic fascination with India" (Lipton 2018: 128). This

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1   Jones played a paramount role in introducing Westerners to "Oriental" philosophies and religions, creating the first society and journal devoted to the study of the Orient in 1784. For more on his life and work, see Franklin (2011).

2   Vedanta is considered to be one of six *Darshanas* or philosophical schools within Hinduism, that had largely crystalised by the twelfth century. It has developed through commentaries on the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and on the *Vedanta-Sutras* (Doniger 2009: 505). Orientalist understandings of Vedanta were largely based upon Shankara's (c. 788–820) *Advaita* (nondual) school, which asserted that the self (*atman*) or subjectivity is ontologically identical with the absolute (*brahman*), and that spiritual liberation (*moksha*) is attained through knowledge of this identity.

Vedanta-oriented perennialism, in part based upon a notion of Aryan philosophical superiority, would be further elaborated upon by Theosophists in the nineteenth century and Traditionalists in the twentieth.

In her major works *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), Blavatsky suggested that the "Secret Doctrine" was an ancient system of esoteric knowledge, synthesising both the truths of religion and science, with the potential of uniting people across boundaries of religion, race, and culture. This perennial wisdom was best preserved in the East with Vedanta and in the West with the Hermetic texts. Despite sharing this version of perennialism with Theosophists, Encausse was drawn to Masonic rites, something most Theosophists were not. In 1890 he founded the Ordre Martiniste as a sort of neo-Masonic movement, with a focus on esoteric symbolism and initiation. Perceiving a threat to her authority, Blavatsky published critiques of Encausse in her new journal *La Revue Théosophique*. In response Encausse established his own journal, *Le Voile d'Isis*, publishing articles critical of Blavatsky and Theosophy (Sedgwick 2004: 46–47).

Alongside a Vedanta-oriented perennialism,[3] Guénon would inherit Encausse's concern with symbolism and initiation, as well as his disdain for Theosophy. However, Guénon's quest for an authentic initiatory tradition would also draw him away from Encausse. During a séance in 1908, Guénon believed that Jacques de Molay (1243–1314), the Knights Templar's last Grand Master, contacted him with instructions to re-establish the Order of the Temple, providing him with a direct source of initiation (Sedgwick 2004: 49). Several Martinists joined Guénon's Ordre du Temple Renové. Encausse saw this as a threat and consequently expelled Guénon from his order. Guénon's search for spiritual authenticity would continue.

In 1909 he joined the Église Gnostique, established by Jules Benoit Doinel (1842–1903) in 1888. After joining, Guénon established *La Gnose*, a journal affiliated with the church. The Gnostic Church is where Guénon would meet Count Albert de Pouvourville (1861–1939), a French solider, writer, and journalist who claimed to receive a 'Taoist initiation' from Vietnamese Triads after his desertion from the French military in Vietnam. Guénon would credit de Pouvourville as his source for the idea that the Primordial Tradition is one, and, with a dig at the Catholic Church, that "parasitic vegetation must not be

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3 Harry Oldmeadow summarises the centrality of perennialism to Guénon's thought as follows: "The existence of a Primordial Tradition embodying a set of immutable metaphysical and cosmological principles from which derive a succession of traditions each expressing these principles in forms determined by a given Revelation and by the exigencies of the particular situation, is axiomatic in Guénon's work" (Oldmeadow 1995: 5).

confused with the very Tree of Tradition" (Sedgwick 2004: 57–58). Although Guénon later hoped to recover access to the Primordial Tradition within Catholicism, he would eventually conclude that the Church had been too tainted by the modern spirit, and that authentic initiations into the Primordial Tradition could only be found in the East.

His Gnostic affiliation would further lead him to Ivan Aguéli (1869–1917), who would ultimately have a pivotal influence on Guénon's life and path. Aguéli was a Swedish-born convert to Islam, Ṣūfi, and artist, who also joined the Gnostic Church and began writing articles on Ṣūfism for *La Gnose*. Also known as Shaykh ʿAbd al-Hādī al-ʿAqīlī, Aguéli was a representative (*muqaddam*) of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿIllaysh (1845–1921), leader of the Shadhiliyya ʿArabiyya Ṣūfi order in Cairo. Through Aguéli, Guénon was initiated into the Shadhiliyya ʿArabiyya in 1910, and began to correspond with ʿIllaysh, becoming a Muslim and taking the name ʿAbd al-Wahid Yahya. Guénon soon dissolved his Ordre du Temple, though there is little evidence to suggest that he adopted the practice of Islam until decades later, despite his perhaps perfunctory conversion.

It is important to note here that, while living in Damascus, ʿIllaysh had been an associate of the famous Algerian philosopher, Ṣūfi, and military leader, *amīr* ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazāʾirī (1808–1883). Like al-Jazāʾirī, ʿIllaysh was a proponent of the thought of the medieval Ṣūfi philosopher Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (1165–1240) (Chodkiewicz 1995). Traced from al-Jazāʾirī, through ʿIllaysh, and then from Aguéli to Guénon, the thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī would come to have a prominent role in Traditionalist circles, being seen as something like a Muslim equivalent to Hindu Vedanta. This embrace of Ibn al-ʿArabī's school of thought was not merely coincidental however. Considered by many Ṣūfis to be the *shaykh al-akbar* or 'greatest master' of the Ṣūfi tradition, as well as the most influential expounder of the 'oneness of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*),[4] Ibn al-ʿArabī's non-dual philosophy was another example for Traditionalists of what they took to be the core doctrine of the Primordial Tradition: the inherent oneness or non-duality of existence.

During this period Guénon began to believe that the ancient wisdom of the Primordial Tradition could only be authentically found within orthodox religious forms, something that would distinguish his perennialism from that of Martinists and Theosophists. This turn towards tradition would coincide with

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4 Although Ibn al-ʿArabī and his students certainly held that *wujūd* or 'being' is one, the use of the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* in a polemical context frequently led to misunderstandings of the term. Hence, its appropriateness as an accurate representative of Ibn al-ʿArabī's school of thought remains a subject of debate. For more see Chittick (2004).

his marriage to a devout Catholic woman, Berthe Loury (d. 1927) in 1912. In 1915 Guénon began attending lectures at the Institut Catholique, where his emerging orientation towards tradition fit well with the Institute's conservative Catholicism. Guénon's experience of Paris's occult underground convinced him that authentic initiation was not to be found there, and his increasingly critical view of Spiritualist and Theosophical groups was lauded by many in Catholic circles (Dickson 2015: 71).

Despite his initiation into Ṣūfism, and mutual sympathy with tradition-oriented Catholics, Guénon considered Hinduism's Vedanta to be the most explicit articulation of the Primordial Tradition. This did not mean that he understood Vedanta to have a categorical superiority over other traditions, but merely that he thought it offered the most incisive expression of the truths shared by them all. Regarding this essential unity of traditions, Guénon writes:

> The real traditional outlook is always and everywhere essentially the same, whatever outward form it may take; the various forms that are specially suited to different mental conditions and different circumstances of time and place are merely expressions of one and the same truth; but this fundamental unity beneath apparent multiplicity can be grasped only by those who are able to take up a point of view that is truly intellectual.
>
> GUÉNON 2004 [1927]: 30

By "intellectual," Guénon here means a point of view based on objective intellection, or pure gnosis, which he considers to be of a "supra-individual order," in contrast with the inherently individual, subjective nature of rational human thought (2004 [1945]: 90). Schuon would consider this to be one of the great contributions of Guénonian thought, "to have recalled what modern thought … has forgotten or sought to forget, namely the essential distinction between intellectual intuition and mental operation, or, in other words, between the Intellect, which is universal, and the reason, which is individual" (Schuon 2004 [1984]: 1).

Guénon wrote a dissertation on Vedanta in 1920 that was rejected by French Indologist Sylvain Levi (1863–1935). Levi discounted Guénon's assertion of a perennial tradition traced back to earliest humanity, and further disagreed with situating Vedanta as representative of Hinduism more broadly (Sedgwick 2004: 22–23). The French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) liked the book however, and recommended it for publication. It would become Guénon's first book, *L'introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues*, published in 1921. That same year he also published a series of polemical articles in the Institut Catholique's journal *Revue de philosophie*, denouncing Theosophy

as a "pseudo-religion."[5] In a similar vein, he published *L'erreur spirite* in 1923 as a refutation of the errors of modern Spiritualism. Guénon's critique of Theosophy and Spiritualism was informed by his growing concern to distinguish authentic forms of initiation from inauthentic ones, which he termed "counter-initiation."

His concern to exclude heretical traditions could be taken too far even for some of his Traditionalist associates. For example, Guénon initially believed that Buddhism was not an inherently orthodox expression of the Primordial Tradition, but rather a heretical deviation from Hinduism. It was only after extensive correspondence with fellow Traditionalists Marco Pallis (1895–1989), who himself was a practitioner of and writer on Tibetan Buddhism, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947), a Tamil philosopher with a far deeper understanding of Buddhism, and Schuon, who had also read more extensively on Buddhism, that Guénon would eventually revise his opinion and consider it an authentic tradition (Waterfield 2002: 47; Fitzgerald 2010: 54).

Guénon's persistent interest in 'Oriental metaphysics' eventually dried up his support in Catholic circles, including that of Maritain. In his fourth work, *Orient et Occident* (1924), Guénon proposed that the forthcoming collapse of Western civilisation could only be averted with the help of Eastern traditions. For Guénon, the modern world was starkly contrasted with its Eastern predecessors: Western modernity was a materialistic deviation from the traditional norm, as represented by the classical civilisations, of India, China, and the Middle East. In his *La crise du monde moderne* (1927), he suggested that, "Easterners are justified in reproaching modern Western civilisation for being exclusively material," as Western materialism is "a complete state of mind … one that consists in more or less consciously putting material things, and the preoccupations arising out of them, in the first place" (Guénon 2004 [1927]: 81–82). Less geographical entities, for Guénon the 'West' and the 'East' were first and foremost mentalities, one grounded in tradition, the other deviating from it.

In contrast to the modern West, Eastern civilisations were exemplary as their art, law, religion (and most importantly esoteric teachings), preserved the sacred, metaphysical knowledge of the Primordial Tradition. As a result, the East maintained contact with divine truth, and hence experienced a civilisational balance and health as a result. Although the modern West appeared

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5   On the Theosophical appropriation of Hindu terminology, Guénon suggests "the self-styled Theosophists … are almost completely ignorant of Hindu doctrines, and have derived nothing from them but a terminology which they use entirely at random" (Guénon 2001 [1925]: 18).

to offer moral, scientific, and technological progress, this appearance was an inversion of the stark reality: modernity represented a movement away from traditional principles, and even a diabolical inversion of traditional truths, leading to the atrophying of genuine knowledge, social fragmentation, conflict, and the eventual dissolution of human civilisation (Dickson 2015: 71).

Guénon critiqued "the profane sciences of which the modern world is so proud" as "really and truly only the degenerate 'residues' of the ancient traditional sciences," just as "quantity itself, to which they strive to reduce everything" is "no more than the 'residue' of an existence emptied of everything that constituted its essence" (Guénon 2004 [1945]: 5). In general, he described the conditions of the contemporary period as those of the *Kali Yuga* or Dark Age of the Hindu cosmic cycle. Elaborating upon this notion, Guénon suggested that over time, cosmic manifestation moved further from its metaphysical source and unified principle (*Brahman*) thereby experiencing greater materialism, quantification, fragmentation, and spiritual-moral decline. As Mark Sedgwick notes, Guénon's perennialism is distinguished from its Theosophical counterpart with this pessimistic understanding of the modern world (Sedgwick 2004: 50–51).

In the 1920s, Guénon seemed to find a certain equilibrium. He was working as a schoolteacher, married and raising his niece, with his Traditionalism gaining ground as a respectable philosophy. His life would take a quite different turn beginning in 1927, however, when his wife died during an operation, his niece was taken from his care, and he lost his job as a teacher. By this time, he had also soured on the possibility of finding a convivial home for his Traditionalism within the Catholic Church. In 1930 Guénon traveled to Egypt in the hopes of finding Ṣūfi texts for translation and publication (Borella 1992: 334). Although initially struggling to get by, alone and penniless in Cairo, he increasingly integrated into Cairo life, and eventually decided against returning to France. In 1934 he married Fatima Muhammad Ibrahim, a devout Muslim Egyptian woman, with whom he would have four children.

In marked contrast to many urban Egyptians, who were adopting Western clothing, Guénon wore the traditional *jalabiyya*, and maintained the life of a committed Muslim: praying, fasting, and following the dictates of the *sharīʿa* in his personal life. He also joined the Hamdiyya branch of the Shadhili order, as ʿIllaysh's ʿArabiyya had largely dissolved (Sedgwick 2004: 75–76). Guénon maintained some link to traditional Egyptian elites through Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (1910–1978), an accomplished scholar of law and Ṣūfism, who would later become the head of al-Azhar Mosque. Maḥmūd wrote a book about Guénon in 1954, *al-Faylasuf al-Muslim: René Guénon ʿAbd al-Wahid*

Yahya, in which honorifically referred to him as an *'arif bi-llah* or 'knower of God' (Laude 2010: 9). Guénon's wholesale embrace of life in Egypt is in part indicated by his formally becoming an Egyptian citizen in 1949 (Borella 1992: 334).

During his years in Egypt Guénon's sense of the importance of having an orthodox religious form within which to practice the esoteric path crystalised. He would eventually conclude that authentic initiation is always an integral part of a complete religious tradition, with its doctrines, rituals and rules all collectively forming a living, organic whole. To isolate one aspect of a religious tradition from others, or to mix elements of different traditions, was to destroy this organic coherence and the providential power it transmitted. This was precisely what he accused Theosophy of, and why he considered it to be a counter-initiatory tradition. In his *Initiation et réalisation spirituelle* (1952), Guénon concisely articulates the Traditionalist position on the necessity of following a particular religious form: "Whoever makes himself out to be a spiritual teacher without attaching himself to a specific traditional form, or without conforming to the rules established by the latter, cannot truly possess the qualifications he appropriates to himself" (Guénon 2004 [1952]: 110). Very much in line with classical Muslim understandings of Ṣūfism, that suggested the spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*) could only legitimately occur within the confines of Islamic law and ritual life (*sharī'a*), Guénon held that authentic Ṣūfism always coincided with a devout Muslim life.

Despite living a life that, to all outward appearances, indicated a deep conversion to Islam, Guénon did not consider himself to have converted. He was careful to specify that his practice of Islam did not imply "the attribution of the superiority of one traditional form over another," but was rather a question of "spiritual expediency," as an understanding of "the essential unity of all traditions" rendered the possibility of conversion "meaningless and truly inconceivable" (Guénon 2004 [1952]: 63). Schuon notes that at the time of his embrace of Islam, Guénon did not believe that Buddhism was an authentic tradition, nor did he think that Christianity retained any genuine esotericism. Further, believing that an orthodox Hindu need be born into the caste system, Islam appeared to be his only option to access the Primordial Tradition through an initiatory esotericism within an orthodox religion (Schuon 2004 [1984]: 6). Although a committed Muslim in practice, Guénon continued to use Hindu terminology in his metaphysical expositions, with the belief that "Hinduism serves as the standard and central tradition for present humanity" (Borella 1992: 332). However, for the reasons mentioned above, Guénon did not see the practice of Hinduism as a viable way for Westerners, and instead saw

in Islam the most recent and final manifestation of the Primordial Tradition in this cosmic cycle, one particularly suitable for moderns looking to recover universal truths in a traditional context.

This synthesis of primarily Vedanta-based expositions of metaphysics with Islamic path and practice would leave a lasting imprint on Traditionalism. Indeed, Guénon published seventeen works during his life, with eight volumes produced following his death, collectively constituting the doctrinal base for Traditionalism. Harry Oldmeadow concisely summarises Guenon's writings, noting that they cover "a vast terrain—Vedanta, the Chinese tradition, Christianity, Ṣūfism, folklore and mythology form all over the world, the secret traditions of gnosticism, alchemy, the Kabbalah," regardless of subject however, "always intent on excavating their underlying principles and showing them to be formal manifestations of one Primordial Tradition" (Oldmeadow 1995: 275). The main themes of Guénon's body of work include: 1) a concern with articulating a universal metaphysics underlying diverse religious expressions, or perennialism; 2) defining the relationship between the esoteric and exoteric aspects of tradition; 3) analyzing various religious symbols, drawing out their universal implications, and; 4) a trenchant critique of inauthentic forms of initiation, and of the modern world more broadly (Laude 2010: 14). These themes would continue to shape Traditionalism following Guénon's death, largely under the leadership of Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998).

3 Guénon's Influence and Successors

As a result of his extensive writings and correspondence, Guénon would have significant influence, and yet until recently there was little academic attention paid to him. In the 1980s Joyce O. Lowrie observed that, "despite Guénon's having written twenty-six books and hundreds of articles in his lifetime, and despite the fact that at least seven books have been written about him, he is still virtually unknown" (1985: 392). Sedgwick suggests Guénon's absence from academic discussion is rooted in the general scholarly skepticism and even hostility towards writings based on esoteric principles, and further resulting from Guénon's unique style of French writing, which includes his own terminology developed independently of contemporary academic approaches (Sedgwick 2008: xvii–xviii).

Recently however, Wael Hallaq, scholar of Islamic law and intellectual history, has argued in *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (2018) that Guénon's deep critique of modernity "is gaining enough appeal that it has become recently relevant for many intellectual concerns," including

postcolonial studies and environmental ethics (2018: 144). Hallaq suggests that Guénon offers a more thorough and effective critique of Western modernity than Edward Said (1935–2003) does in *Orientalism* (1978), arguing that "Guénon begins where Said ends" (2018: 145). Besides noting that Guénon was not discussed by Said, and in fact complicates Said's concept of Orientalism, Hallaq valorises Guénon as being 'ahead of his time' with a prescient diagnosis of Western modernity's destructive deviation from traditional metaphysics, social norms, and structures. He suggests that Guénon's work "captures much of the best in recent social theory, Critical Theory, and cultural criticism, but without admitting the legitimacy of the system on which these critical theories insist" (2018: 145). As Sedgwick notes, Hallaq's "use of Guénon represents a Traditionalist breakthrough into the Western intellectual mainstream" (Sedgwick 2019).

Despite his (until quite recently) marginal presence in mainstream academic discourse, Guénon was critically important for the development of Ṣūfism in the West. Though Guénon never recommended in print that his readers convert to Islam or practice Ṣūfism, "most of those who were influenced by him did become Sufis" (Rawlinson 1997: 280). Hence the majority of Guénon's intellectual heirs followed Guénon's own example of becoming Muslim and were likely influenced by his understanding of Islam as the final manifestation of the primordial tradition in this cosmic cycle.

The spread of Traditionalism and Traditionalist Ṣūfism in the later twentieth century however was largely the result of the writings and teachings of Guénon's successor of sorts, Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998) or Shaykh 'Isa Nur al-Din, as his followers referred to him. Schuon's father was a concert violinist, and perhaps growing up with a musician had some influence on Schuon's later emphases on aesthetics and beauty, as well as his own poetry and painting. Schuon grew up a Lutheran, but at his father's request converted to Catholicism at the age of fourteen. During his school years he became friends with Titus Burckhardt, who would become a prominent Traditionalist author in his own right (see, for example, Burckhardt 1992, 2008, 2010).

After his father's death, while he was still a teenager, Schuon became a textile-designer to support himself. He was also an avid reader of books on religion and philosophy, and became particularly entranced with Hinduism (Fitzgerald 2010: 13). When he was sixteen, Schuon read Guénon's *Orient et Occident*, and was profoundly affected. As a result he corresponded with Guénon, who, in 1931, advised him to look to Islam and Ṣūfism. Although he was an avid student of Advaita Vedanta, Schuon agreed with Guénon that it was not a valid path to spiritual realisation for Europeans, as one could not technically convert to Hinduism. So, despite some reservations, in 1932 Schuon spent four months at

the ʿAlawi Ṣūfī center in Mostaganem, Algeria, under the tutelage of the famous Shadhili master Ahmad al-ʿAlawi (1869–1934), where he would embrace Islam and enter the Ṣūfī path. He returned to Europe and established a branch of the ʿAlawiyya, with mostly fellow Guénonians joining. Burckhardt was impressed with Schuon's change and wanted to go to Mostaganem himself. However, with al-ʿAlawi's health in decline, Burckhardt decided to pursue Ṣūfīsm in Fez, Morocco, where he would study Arabic, convert to Islam and become a member of the Darqawi Ṣūfī order. Despite his own extensive initiatory experience with Ṣūfīsm, Burckhardt continued to acknowledge Schuon as the leader of their burgeoning Ṣūfī circle (Sedgwick 2004: 87).

In 1934 Schuon described mystically receiving the highest ʿAlawi spiritual practice, the use of the Supreme Name in recitation (*Allah*), while reading the *Bhagavad Gita* in Paris (Sedgwick 2004: 88). In 1935 Schuon returned to Mostaganem where he was authorised as a representative (*muqaddam*) of the ʿAlawi order. This authorisation has led to some debate as the Arabic certificate he was given appears to authorise Schuon as one who can call people to the Islamic faith, without specifying any initiatory authority beyond that. But for his followers, this authorisation was taken to include a broader spiritual authority. Regardless, in 1937 Schuon experienced a vision that he believed authorised him as a Ṣūfī master (*shaykh*) in his own right, and dreams reported by his followers were taken as confirmation. Guénon would continue to send interested seekers to Schuon, and his order would grow during the 1930s until, at the end of the decade, he had established centers in Paris, Amiens, and Basel (Sedgwick 2017).

Notable for his later influence as a scholar of Islam, Martin Lings would join the ʿAlawiyya in 1938 after reading Guénon. He became an associate of Guenon's while teaching in Cairo during the Second World War (Sedgwick 2004: 119). Lings is perhaps most broadly known for his highly-regarded English version of the Prophet Muhammad's biography (Lings 2006). Lings would later go on to establish himself as a respected scholar and member of Britain's Muslim community. His *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century: Shaykh Ahmad al-ʿAlawi* (1993) remains a popular study of al-ʿAlawi and Ṣūfīsm more broadly. Lings also quietly led Maryamiyya circles in Jordan and the United Kingdom, both connected to the royal families of those countries, with Prince El Hassan Bin Talal and Prince Charles both having notable interest in Traditionalism, and personal connections with Lings (Sedgwick 2011: 177).

Schuon maintained the style of *dhikr* (remembrance of God, usually chanting) practiced by the ʿAlawiyya. He taught his students *salat* (the five daily prayers), and suggested they follow the basic moral and ritual guidelines provided by the *sharīʿa*. However, in contrast to broader ʿAlawi practice, Schuon

emphasised the primacy of the *dhikr* practice, downplaying other devotional forms usually associated with Ṣūfi practice. This was part and parcel of Schuon's concern to avoid the limitations of "average Sufism," which for Schuon was based on a simplistic pietism and sentimentality that failed to produce genuine spiritual realisation or gnosis.

Distinguishing his own path from what he saw as the limitations of conventional Ṣūfism, Schuon noted that, "our point of departure is the Advaita Vedanta and not a moralist, individualist and voluntarist anthropology with which ordinary Sufism is undeniably identified" (Sedgwick 2004: 170). Like Guénon, Schuon held that Vedanta "stands out as one of the most direct formulations possible of what constitutes the very essence of our spiritual reality" (Schuon 2003 [1959]: 19). Although for Schuon the "Vedantic perspective finds its equivalents in the great religions which regulate humanity," non-Vedantic formulations "may be dependent on dogmatic perspectives which restrict their immediate intelligibility," making them less accessible (Schuon 2003 [1959]: 19). Hence for Schuon, Vedanta was something like a key unlocking the very same truths found at the heart of Ṣūfism, truths only obscured by the limitations of Islamic theology. On this point he elaborated, "we take our stand on Shankaracharya [the founder of Advaita Vedanta], not on an Ibn ʿArabī; the latter we accept only insofar as we find in him something of the Vedanta" (Lipton 2018: 138). To the extent that Traditionalists have embraced Ibn al-ʿArabī, some of their interpretations have been critiqued for downplaying "exclusivist notions of religious supersessionism and [Islamic] socio-politcal authority" in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, in effect reframing his work along the lines of Tradtionalist perennialism (Lipton 2018: 9).

In line with nineteenth cenutry Orientalist and German Romanticist understandings of language family and race, Schuon believed that Ṣūfism suffered from a Semitic "subjectivism," and hence it lacked the objectivity to "consistently discern the transcendent formlessness of essential truth from religious particularism," while holding that the "Aryan metaphysics of Vedanta and Platonism" retained this objectivity (Lipton 2018: 122). In his work *Le Soufisme: voile et quintessence* (1980) Schuon summarises his perspective on this issue describing Aryans (Indians, Persians, and Europeans) as "above all metaphysicians and therfore logicians," while characterising Semites (Jews and Arabs) as "*a priori* mystics and moralists," and "subjectivists" (Schuon 2006 [1980]: 21).[6]

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6   Although the concepts of "Aryan" and "Semitic" are integral to Schuon's analysis of various traditions, he limits their importance in affirming that, "it is only too obvious that the great question that arises for man is not to know whether he is Semitic or Aryan, Oriental or Western, but to know whether he loves God" (Schuon 2006 [1980]: 26).

In contrast to Schuon's self-described Aryanism, Guénon dismissed the notion of the 'Aryan race' as an Orientalist fiction devoid of substance (Lipton 2018: 243).

Schuon's streamlining of devotional practice combined with a doctrinal focus on Vedanta clearly set his Ṣūfism apart from the phenomenon as it tended to function in Muslim-majority contexts, though his Ṣūfism still remained largely within the parameters of Guénon's thought. The coming decades however would see Schuon take his thought and his Ṣūfi order in directions disapproved of by Guénon. Notably, Schuon's thought diverged from Guenon's in terms of Christianity and the West. Whereas Guénon eventually concluded that authentic initiation could no longer be found within the Catholic Church, and that the West was largely devoid of genuine traditional knowledge, Schuon believed that not only Catholicism but also the Lutheranism of his youth retained some esoteric efficacy, and that the West still maintained some elements of traditional doctrine. On this, Schuon wrote, "Guénon is magisterial in his defense of the traditional East and his condmenation of the anti-traditional West, but he overestimates Eastern man as such and underestimates Western man as such" (Schuon 2004 [1984]: 20).

Further, whereas Guénon emphasised the incontrivertible necessity of adhering to an exoteric form if the integrity of esoteric truth was to be maintained, Schuon leaned more towards embracing a universal metaphysics that transcended religious forms. Schuon went so far as to suggest that religions are like heresies in comparison to the perennial philosophy on which they are based. Thus Schuon relaxed or simplified the obligations of Islam for his followers, including permission for some not to fast during Ramadan, and the allowance of practicing the prayers at irregular times to avoid difficulties. He further allowed his students to drink alcohol with European family and friends, so as not to create social controversy. On the primacy of the perennial or universal truth over religious form, Schuon wrote, "the goal of the work is not the Islamic form as such, but precisely esoterism as such … This is Islam, not as the daily universe of Arab sentiments and passions, but as the manifestation at the end of time of the primordial religion" (Fitzgerald 2010: 40).

This concern with the primordial religion manifested in Schuon's growing interest in Indigenous religion and spirituality, especially after reading John Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* (1932). He would later visit members of the Sioux tribe, and in 1959 would be adopted into the family of Chief James Red Cloud (1879–1960), leader of the Oglala Lakota on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota (Fitzgerald 2010: 89). In the late 1940s, Guénon was getting reports from associates that Schuon was relaxing *sharīʿa* requirements, allowing Christians to participate in Ṣūfi practices, and including themes for meditation from other traditions. Guénon saw this as a kind of "syncretism" that deviated from

a genuinely Traditional approach, and encouraged his students to separate themselves from Schuon's 'Alawiyya, writing that Schuon was transforming the organisation into a "vague 'universalist' organisation" (Sedgwick 2004: 129).

During this period two associates of Guénon and Schuon's would go on to establish their own branches of Ṣūfi orders, both with a more explicitly Guénonian orientation. Schuon had refused to admit a French associate of Guénon's, Roger Maridort (1903–1977), into the 'Alawiyya, as Maridort was living with a woman who was separated but still married to her husband. Guénon encouraged Maridort to go to Morocco, where he was initiated into the Darqawi branch of the Shadhili order, for which he would later receive an *ijaza* (authorisation) to establish his own group. With the majority of his followers in Italy, in 1961 Maridort relocated from France to Turin, establishing his branch of the Darqawiyya there. He further created the *Rivista di Studi tradizionali*, an italian journal publishing translations of Guénon's works as well as works by Ṣūfi figures like Ibn al-'Arabī. Maridorth's group would hold most closely to Guénon's Traditionalism, breaking markedly with Schuon and other Traditionalist Ṣūfis (Sedgwick 2004: 131–133).

Michel Valsan (1907–1974) was a Romanian Traditionalist and diplomat who joined Schuon's 'Alawiyya, and helped establish a branch of the order in Bucharest in the 1930s. Beginning in 1940 Valsan led the 'Alawiyya in Paris, before separating from Schuon in 1951, after sharing Guénon's perspective that Schuon was taking the order in directions that deviated from Traditionalism-proper. Valsan would then shift the Paris 'Alawiyya towards a more mainstream Islamic orientation. Valsan regularly attended Friday prayers in Paris and raised his family strictly in accord with the *sharīʿa*. His intellectual work was focused on publishing French translations of Ibn al-'Arabī's works. By his death in 1974 he had gathered around one hundred followers. Notable here is Michel Chodkiewicz (b. 1929), a convert to Islam who would also go on to publish respected translations and interpretations of Ibn al-'Arabī (Chodkiewicz 1993a; Chodkiewicz 1993b). Chodkiewicz worked as a publisher and professor at the Sorbonne, earning some renown within French Islamic studies. Sedgwick credits Valsan and his followers with helping to establish Ṣūfism as a recognised and accessible expression of Islam in France (Sedgwick 2004: 133–135). Unlike Guénon and Schuon, Valsan and Chodkiewicz were not beholden to Vedanta as the necessary barometer for authentic metaphysics, and more deeply enmeshed themselves in the study of the Ṣūfi-philosophical tradition, with their intensive focus on Muslim metaphysicians like Ibn al-'Arabī and his intellectual heirs.

Although he experienced periodic defections, Schuon's Maryamiyya would remain the most prominent Traditionalist organisation in the twentieth

century. In 1965 Schuon had a vision of the Virgin Mary. Schuon understood the Virgin as an incarnation of both mercy and the perennial philosophy: his new relationship with her marked a turning point in his branch of the ʿAlawiyya towards an even more universal orientation. For Schuon, the Virgin Mary represented the spiritual domain where different religions "lose much of their importance and where by way of compensation the essential elements they have in common are affirmed" (Lipton 2018: 136). Sedgwick summarises Schuon's spiritual lineage thus: "He was a Muslim with a Sufi initiation from the ʿAlawiyya, appointed *shaykh* of a Sufi order in a vision, but he was also a universalist with a primordial initiation from the Sioux, appointed to a universal mission by the Virgin Mary in another vision" (Sedgwick 2004: 151). Although Schuon did not immediately change the name of his ʿAlawiyya order following this vision, by the 1980s the order was described by Schuon and his followers as the Maryamiyya, after the Virgin Mary.

In 1967 Victor Danner (1926–1990), a professor of religious studies in Bloomington, Indiana, established a Maryamiyya branch there. It would become the most important center of Schuon's order, and the site of the Maryamiyya's development toward a more universal orientation. Schuon moved to Bloomington in the Fall of 1980, establishing a community at Inverness Farms of about sixty or seventy Maryamiyyas. This new community at Bloomington focused more on Schuon's role as a primordial sage, at times somewhat critical of older Maryamiyyas more grounded in the outward practices of Islam (Dickson 2015: 115). Schuon wrote at this time, characterising this new phase of his life and teaching, that "the Holy Virgin is the living and heavenly link between Islam and Christianity, and that she also links us to Judaism and even to all religions" (Fitzgerald 2010: 119).

By the 1980s Schuon had also established himself as an author with a growing following.[7] In many cases he proved able to elaborate upon Guenon's core ideas in ways that may have been more broadly accessible, at least to those with some philosophical inclination. His illustration of the perennialist perspective in his first book, *De L'Unité transcendante des religions* (1948) is exemplary in this regard:

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7 Relevant works of Schuon's in English include *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (1993 [1948], *Understanding Islam* (1998 [1963]), *Sufism: Veil and Quintessence* (2006 [1980])), and for some of Schuon's writings on Hinduism, Buddhism, and Indigenous traditions, see *Language of the Self: Essays on the Perennial Philosophy* (2003 [1959]). For a summary of Schuon's thought, see *The Essential Frithjof Schuon*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2005).

> If an example may be drawn from the sensory sphere to illustrate the difference between metaphysical and theological knowledge, it may be said that the former, which can be called 'esoteric' when it is manifested through a religious symbolism, is conscious of the colorless essence of light and of its character of pure luminosity; a given religious belief, on the other hand, will assert that light is red and not green, whereas another belief will assert the opposite; both will be right insofar as they distinguish light from darkness but not insofar as they identify it with a particular color.
>
> SCHUON 1993 [1948]: xxx

Within the Maryamiyya, Indigenous traditions were incorporated into ritual practice and ritual dances that included sacred nudity were practiced by Schuon and his close students. Schuon himself articulated these practices in terms of the symbolism of nudity, representing the naked, esoteric truth that religious forms veil or cover. In an interview he affirmed that "In an altogether general way, nudity expresses—and virtually actualises—a return to the essence, the origin, the archetype, thus to the celestial state (Lipton 2018: 137). However, this symbolic practice eventually broke out into controversy when, in 1991, a disaffected former student of Schuon's brought charges against him of inappropriate contact with minors, involving ritual nudity. The charges were dropped due to insufficient evidence, though the controversey likely only increased the somewhat secretive nature of the group. Following Schuon's death in 1998, Seyyed Hossein Nasr would take over leadership of the largest branch of the Maryamiyya.

Nasr, a Professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University, is one of the most well-known North American scholars of Islam, having contributed to the development of the academic study of Islam, authoring over fifty books and around five hundred articles since he began publishing in the 1960s, and training several accomplished scholars of Islam (Chittick 2007: xiv). He is also the most influential living Traditionalist, playing an important role in articulating the Islamic legitimacy of Schuon and the Maryamiyya.

Nasr was born in 1933 to an elite Iranian family tied to the late *shah*, Reza Pahlavi (1919–1980), and with connections to Iranian Ṣūfī orders (Dickson 2015: 116). He pursued secondary and post-secondary studies in America and discovered Traditionalism during his time as an undergraduate in science at MIT, when he found himself in an intellectual crisis. Following a transformative encounter with Guénon's works, Nasr describes how he then discovered the writings of Guénon's associates Coomaraswamy and Schuon:

That step led me to the writings of [Ananda] Coomaraswamy and Frithjof
Schuon, and finally my meeting with Schuon in Europe and my going to
North Africa. I became directly involved in the Shadhili order, emanat-
ing from Shaykh al-ʿAlawi, an Algerian shaykh. I was only 24 years old,
in Morocco and Europe. I have been associated with Sufism since then.

Nasr first met Schuon in 1957 in Lausanne (2006 [1980]: viii). He became a mem-
ber of Schuon's order and eventually established a branch of the Maryamiyya
in Tehran. He was better known however for his Imperial Iranian Academy of
Philosophy, which, during its time, was the most prominent educational insti-
tution based on Traditionalist principles. Established in 1974, Nasr's Academy
hosted world-renowned scholars of Islam like Henry Corbin (1903–1978) and
Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–1993), and trained William Chittick, who is now the
foremost English-language scholar and translator of Ibn al-ʿArabī (Chittick
1989, 1998). Nasr's connections with the Pahlavi regime made his place in Iran
untenable after the revolution in 1979, and he left for America where he has
lived since.

Following Schuon's death in 1998, Nasr would become the leader of the larg-
est branch of the Maryamiyya. Due to his own Muslim background and scholar-
ship, and perhaps to counter claims that the Maryamiyya are not authentically
Ṣūfī or Muslim, Nasr has emphazied the order's Islamic nature, and affirmed
Schuon's function as a Muslim Ṣūfī *shaykh*. In an article for the Traditionalist
journal *Sophia*, "Frithjof Schuon and the Islamic Tradition" (1999), Nasr notes
Schuon's role as a messenger of "universal and perennial wisdom," but main-
tains that "his function to speak of pure esoterism should not, however, detract
anyone one moment from thinking that he is anything other than a Muslim in
the deepest sense of the term and that he practiced the tenets of the Islamic
tradition, on both the levels of the law and the way." Nasr further suggests that
Schuon's integration of Christian and Indigenous elements into the spiritual
life of the Maryamiyya "can be explained in the light of Sufism" (Nasr 1999:
30–31). Nasr's article reflects one of the two competing visions of Schuon's life
and thought that have developed among Maryamiyyas. Whereas Nasr empha-
sises the Islamic nature of Schuon and his teachings, other students of Schuon
have focused on his almost divine role as the messenger of pure esoterism
beyond any single tradition.

In contrast to Schuon's notable criticism of Ṣūfism for its "Semitic" sub-
jectivism and dogmatic moralism, Nasr's writings focus almost exclusively
on the positive aspects of the Islamic tradition. This difference results from
Schuon's strong prioritisation of the esoteric over the exoteric, a prioritisation

that Nasr does not share to the same degree. For Schuon, the esoteric nucleus of a religion "is not in any sense a part, even an inner part, of the exoterism, but represents, on the contrary, a quasi-independent 'dimension' in relation to the latter" (Schuon 1993 [1948]: 9–10). This qualified distinction between a religion's esoteric and exoteric elements contrasts with Nasr's perspective on Ṣūfism as the crystallisation of Islam's inner dimension, a perspective in which Islam's exoteric and esoteric elements are organically joined. Patrick Laude concisely notes this difference, suggesting that, "Seyyed Hossein Nasr's intellectual and spiritual path is different from Schuon's, since the latter starts from esoterism to go toward Islam while the former has its starting point is Islam while its ultimate destination is esoterism or gnosis" (Laude 2003).

Unlike Schuon, a European who embraced Islam as an expedient part of his search for esoteric knowledge, Nasr was born into a Muslim family in Iran, one deeply connected to the historic Islamic tradition there. With his scholarly career, Nasr has written on many of the varied facets of the Islamic tradition as a whole, ranging from philosophy, art, and spirituality, to law and theology. This depth of engagement with Islam's intellectuality is not paralleled by any other Traditionalist writer. Nasr's focus on the Islamic nature of Ṣūfism and the Maryamiyya coincides with his lifelong association with and study of the Islamic tradition.

Non-Traditionalist Muslims have had various takes on the legitimacy of Traditionalism and the Maryamiyya. Hamza Yusuf, an American convert who has become one of the most prominent Muslim leaders in the West, and founder of Zaytuna College (the first accredited Muslim undergraduate college in America), was deeply influenced by Martin Lings' works. Yusuf met with him several times and had a great respect for his piety and scholarship. In his lengthy 2005 obituary for Lings, Yusuf suggests he and other Muslim authorities who knew him, including the well-known Yemeni scholar Habib 'Ali al-Jifri, felt that:

> Dr. Lings was most certainly a devout and pious Muslim, fully committed to the teaching of the Prophet and one who rooted his thought and practice in the Quran despite our clear differences with him on the subject of perennialism. I believe that his spiritual presence was a cogent argument for his practice and commitment.
>
> YUSUF 2005: 55

Both Yusuf and al-Jifri fall within a broader movement to revive the classical Sunnī synthesis of Islamic law (*fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), and Ṣūfism (*taṣawwuf*), what Jonathan Brown calls "late Sunni traditionalism" (Brown 2014: 29). Many

of their concerns overlap with those of Traditionalists and so it is not necessarily surprising that there would be a great deal of sympathy between them despite their difference on the issue of perennialism. In contrast to Yusuf and al-Jifri's understanding of Traditionalism as something that deviates from mainstream Islamic theology, but not in a way that fundamentally compromises one's Muslim faith and practice, Nuh Ha Mim Keller, another American convert who is also a Ṣūfī leader and scholar of Islamic law, has condemned the belief in the universal validity of non-Islamic religions as *kufr* or unbelief (Keller 1996).

4   Conclusion

Emerging out of the occult milieu of *fin de siècle* Paris, Guénon inherited from his varied experience of esoteric movements a Vedanta-oriented perennialism alongside a concern for authentic initiation. In addition, Guénon developed a critique of modernity and valorised traditional religion as the carrier of the metaphysical truths of the Primordial Tradition. Guénon would further come to see Islam and its esoteric tradition, Ṣūfism, as offering the most expedient means for Westerners to access this Primordial Tradition, which he believed the West had long ago lost connection to. As a sort of successor, Schuon then elaborated upon Guénonian themes in his prolific writings during the latter half of the twentieth century, and further became a Ṣūfī *shaykh* in his own right, establishing the Maryamiyya as the predominant expression of Traditionalism in practice.

Although both Guénon and Schuon believed that adherence to a religion's exoteric morals and laws was a requirement to practice its esoteric path, and hence believed that genuine Ṣūfīs should be committed Muslims, they tended to interpret Islamic thought through the lens of Hinduism's Advaita Vedanta philosophy, which continued for them to be the hallmark of explicit metaphysical truth. Schuon in particular criticised conventional Islamic theology and devotion as overly moralistic in nature, in some cases inhibiting the realisation of pure metaphysics, and was comfortable integrating Christian and Indigenous religious symbols and practices into his order. However, both Guénon and Schuon held Ṣūfism and its Islamic form to be one of the most accessible means of Traditional initiation, and their writings on Ṣūfism and personal practice of Islam were paradigmatic for most Traditionalists who followed them, leading to the establishment of a Traditionalist Islam in Europe and North America. In his scholarship, Nasr would further ground Traditionalism within Islam, as would Burkhardt, Lings,

Valsan, and Chodkiewicz in Europe. Taken as a whole, the body of literature on Islam and Ṣūfism produced by Traditionalists, academic and otherwise, has had a profound influence on Western understandings of Islam, and led to its adoption as a spiritual path by several Western intellectuals, and countless others influenced by their work. Traditionalism then, forms an important element of Islam's establishment as an intellectual orientation and religious practice in Europe and North America.

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Ṣūfism and the Gurdjieff 'Work': A Contested Relationship

Carole M. Cusack

1   Introduction

The origins of 'the Work', the system taught by the Greek-Armenian esoteric spiritual teacher, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (c. 1866–1949) remain obscure, and its sources have been sought in a range of religious traditions, most commonly Buddhism, Christianity, and Ṣūfism.[1] This chapter interrogates the claim that Gurdjieff's teaching is broadly derived from Islamic sources, in particular central Asian Ṣūfism. Gurdjieff spoke of his system as "esoteric Christianity," and his cosmology owes a debt to neo-Platonism, in particular the works of Iamblichus (Azize 2010). However, his pupil John Godolphin Bennett (1897–1974) believed that Ṣūfism was the ultimate source of Gurdjieff's teaching. In this chapter Ṣūfi influence is identified in four areas of the Work.

First, Gurdjieff's travels in search of wisdom, chronicled in a fictionalised form in *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1963), seemingly led him to Ṣūfi monasteries in Central Asia, where he learned the meditative techniques of "self-remembering" and the "Movements" (Hunt 2003). Gurdjieff's magnum opus, *Beelzebub's Tales To His Grandson* (1950) also features Ṣūfi characters and teaching stories. Second, the sacred dances or Movements that Gurdjieff taught have been presumed to originate in dervish dances (Barber 1986). Third, his pupil John Godolphin Bennett (1897–1974) identified Gurdjieff's distinctive persona and teaching method, involving insults and "shocks," as deriving from the Ṣūfi *malamatiyyah* or "way of blame" (Bennett 1973). Bennett's involvement with *soi-disant* Ṣūfi master Idries Shah (1924–1996) and with Indonesian new religion Subud (founded by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, 1901–1987), itself influenced by (Javanese) Ṣūfism, is discussed (Geels 1997), as is the Bennett lineage's links with contemporary Ṣūfism. Fourth and finally,

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Gurdjieff's famous nine-sided figure, the Enneagram, has been dubiously connected to Ṣūfism and used by post-Gurdjieffians and neo-Ṣūfis, including psychologist and spiritual teacher A. Hameed Ali (b. 1944), better known as A.H. Almaas (Almaas 1998) and Oscar Ichazo (Lilly and Hart 1975: 331).

It is concluded that it is valid to identify Ṣūfi influences within the Gurdjieff 'Work,' with varying degrees of prominence depending on the teaching lineage. However, it is inaccurate to state that Gurdjieff was a Ṣūfi teacher, or to claim that the Work is a modern Western form of Ṣūfism (and thus an 'Islamic' new religious movement). In the twenty-first century the Fourth Way and Ṣūfism are associated through processes of spiritual eclecticism and *bricolage*, and internet and popular cultural media.

2   Ṣūfism in Gurdjieff's Life and Writings

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff was born c. 1866 "in Alexandropol [now Gyumri, Armenia], on the Russian side of the Russo-Turkish frontier, his father a Cappadocian Greek carpenter and bardic poet (*ashokh*), and his mother an illiterate Armenian" (Moore 1994a: 190). When Gurdjieff was a child the family moved to Kars, where he became a chorister at the Kars Military Cathedral school. He emerged as a spiritual teacher in 1912 in Moscow, married Julia Ostrowska in St Petersburg in the same year, and attracted pupils, the most important of whom was mathematician and esotericist Pyotr Demianovich Ouspensky (1878–1947). In 1917 Gurdjieff and his pupils left Russia, escaping the Revolution. From 1917–1922 they were based chronologically at Essentuki, Tblisi, Constantinople, Berlin, and finally Paris, where Gurdjieff founded the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Prieuré des Basses Loges at Fontainebleau-Avon for a second time (Rawlinson 1997). In 1924 he had a near-fatal car crash, disbanded the Institute, and moved to a flat in central Paris. Gurdjieff then focused on writing his three major works, assisted by his secretary Olga de Hartmann and translator Alfred R. Orage. From 1922 until his death in 1949, apart from some travels, Gurdjieff remained in France (Rawlinson 1997: 283).

Until P.D. Ouspensky met Gurdjieff and began to document his teachings there was no external testimony concerning Gurdjieff's life. Ouspensky separated from Gurdjieff in 1924, by which time the journalistic chronicling of Gurdjieff's life had become established. Ouspensky taught the Gurdjieff system until his death in 1947 and published the earliest and most systematic version of the teaching, *In Search of the Miraculous* (1949). Mark Sedgwick has argued he made a greater contribution to the Work than is generally

acknowledged, and that "much of what is known as the Gurdjieff teaching is actually Ouspensky's teaching" (Sedgwick 2019: 132). Gurdjieff's writings, *Beelzebub's Tales to his Grandson* (1950), *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1963), and *Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'* (1974), were published posthumously (Moore 1991). Gurdjieff's quasi-autobiographical *Meetings* presents him as a seeker of wisdom, one desirous to unite religious, esoteric and scientific knowledge. *Meetings* records the quest by Gurdjieff and his friends, a group calling themselves the 'Seekers of Truth'. They included: Abram Yelov, an Assyrian Christian; trainee Orthodox priest turned engineer Sarkis Pogossian; the pasha's son Ekim Bey; archaeologist Professor Skridlov; one 'remarkable woman' Vitvitskaia; and Prince Yuri Lubovedsky, the principal spiritual guide in Gurdjieff's book. The Seekers of Truth allegedly travelled in search of ancient wisdom in the 1880s and 1890s. They went on an expedition to the Gobi Desert, visited Egypt (which Gurdjieff linked to Atlantis), experimented with music and vibrations, met wandering holy men in Central Asia, and Gurdjieff himself finally found the monastery of the fabled Sarmoung Brotherhood, where he reunited with Prince Lubovedsky and learned the sacred dances, or Movements (Moore 1991: 31–32).

There has been much speculation about the sources of Gurdjieff's teachings, and how reliable the account of his early years given in *Meetings* is. The Fourth Way or 'Work', as Gurdjieff's teaching is called, has been described as an amalgam of esoteric Christianity, Ṣūfism, Tibetan Buddhism, Western occult traditions, and Hindu ideas. Gurdjieff himself never acknowledged a master. Certain Gurdjieff pupils, like J.G. Bennett, thought that Gurdjieff's travels were based in reality. He believed that Gurdjieff had lived with Essenes and at the Christian monastery of Mount Athos, and had visited Ethiopia where he acquired knowledge of Coptic Christianity. Bennett also accepted that Gurdjieff spent time in Egypt, Babylon, Afghanistan, and Tibet, and was initiated into a Ṣūfi order in Central Asia. From the early 1950s he travelled extensively in the Islamic world and "clearly sought out the sources of Gurdjieff's teachings from the Muslims that he met" (Pittman 2012: 123). Yet during Gurdjieff's life the orientation to Ṣūfism was not apparent to many of his key pupils, the most prominent of whom was Jeanne de Salzmann (1889–1990), his nominated successor. She established the Gurdjieff Foundation (with branches in London, New York, Paris, London, and Caracas), the official teaching and institutional lineage of the Work. The changes which de Salzmann made late in her life were criticized sharply by James Moore; he charged that she introduced Hindu-style meditation aimed at awakening the *Kundalini*, when Gurdjieff dismissed "Indian religiosity in general ('a bordel for Truth') and *Kundalini* in particular" (Moore 1994b: 13).

The first account of Gurdjieff's teaching to be published was Ouspensky's *Search*, and when the two met in 1915 Ouspensky was known as the author of *Tertium Organum* (1912), in which he spoke of Ṣūfism as "a philosophical school of a very high idealistic character, which struggled against materialism as well as against narrow fanaticism and the literal understanding of the Koran" (Ouspensky 1981 [1912]: 250). In *Search* Ouspensky wrote of his years as Gurdjieff's pupil (he left Gurdjieff in 1924 though he continued to teach Gurdjieff's ideas to his students). He noted Gurdjieff's vagueness regarding the sources of his teachings:

> [a]bout schools and where he had found the knowledge he undoubtedly possessed he spoke very little and always superficially. He mentioned Tibetan monasteries, the Chitral, Mount Athos, Sufi schools in Persia, in Bokhara, and eastern Turkestan; he mentioned dervishes of various orders; but all of them in a very indefinite way.
>
> OUSPENSKY 2001 [1949]: 36

When in Istanbul *en route* to Europe, Ouspensky, Bennett and others visited the Mevlevi *tekke* with Gurdjieff, and drew parallels between Ṣūfi exercises and what he had taught them. Ouspensky recalled Gurdjieff saying that "the whirling of the Mehlevi [sic] dervishes was an exercise for the brain based upon counting, like the exercises he had shown us in Essentuki" (Ouspensky 2001: 383). Bennett was convinced that the Ṣūfi practice of *zikr* or *dhikr*, remembrance of the names of God (Allāh) was the same as Gurdjieff's self-remembering, despite the obvious distinction that one practice was focused on God and the other on the self (Brenner 1972: 646). Bennett also argued that the distinction between (false) personality and (true) essence was of Ṣūfi origin, and the Study House at the Prieuré reminded him "of the Sema Hanes of the Dervish communities outside the walls of Constantinople" (Bennett 1973: 152).

It is certainly true that Gurdjieff crafted an image that was 'Eastern'; the Study House (an aircraft hangar that was used for Movements) was hung with Persian carpets, and the Turkish bath in which Gurdjieff joked with the men of the Prieuré was also exotic in 1920s Paris. Bennett also saw the "Stop Exercise," in which pupils at Gurdjieff's command ceased moving and froze, as a Ṣūfi practice (Bennett 1973: 227). His conviction that Gurdjieff had studied with the Naqshbandī Ṣūfi order in Bukhara was supported by the fact that the Ṣūfi characters in *Meetings* (Bogga Eddin) and *Beelzebub's Tales* (Hadji-Asvatz-Troov), were both associated with Bukhara. He said of Gurdjieff:

He put on a mask that would tend to put people off, rather than draw them towards him. Now this method ... the *Way of Malamat*, or the method of blame—was highly esteemed in old times among the Sufis, who regarded the sheikhs ... who went by the Way of Blame, as particularly eminent in spirituality.

> quoted in PITTMAN 2012: 139

Other evidence for Gurdjieff's identification with Ṣūfism is found in the 'sacred dances' or Movements, and the music he composed with Thomas de Hartmann, both that to accompany the Movements, and piano music that is of three types, "Asian and Eastern Folk Music, Sayyid and Dervish Music, and Hymns" (Petsche 2015: 112). It is to these two teaching tools, dance and music, that we now turn.

3   The Movements and the Piano Music: Ṣūfi Themes

The Movements were unveiled by Gurdjieff in 1919 in Tiflis (Tblisi), the site of the first foundation of the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man, and of the first public Movements demonstration. Yet sacred dances were a teaching method from the start. In "Glimpses of The Truth" (1914), a text that was likely designed to attract students, a seeker asked Gurdjieff about *The Struggle of the Magicians*, a ballet that he had advertised in 1914. He responded:

> in the rhythm of certain dances, in the precise movements and combinations of the dancers, certain laws are vividly recalled. Such dances are called sacred. During my journeys in the East, I often saw dances of this kind executed during the performance of sacred rotes in some of the ancient temples. These ceremonies are inaccessible and unknown to Europeans. Some of these dances are reproduced in *The Struggle of the Magicians*.
>
> GURDJIEFF 1984 [1973]: 31

The ballet was never performed but is evidence for Gurdjieff's use of dance as a teaching method very early on. Ouspensky notes exercises that were done on a large drawing of the Enneagram (discussed below) on the floor, with students on the numbers from 1 to 9 and moving "in the direction of the numbers of the period in a very interesting movement, turning around one another at the points of meeting" (Ouspensky 2001: 294–295). Ouspensky did not link

the symbol to Ṣūfism as later commentators have but considered it particular to Gurdjieff.

The origin of the Movements has been speculated to be the monastery of the obscure 'Sarmoung Brotherhood', although, as Sedgwick has noted, there is no evidence that the Sarmoung Brotherhood existed, and in the Work tradition it functions as a source of authority, like "[Madame Helena Petrovna] Blavatsky's mythical Mahatmas" (Sedgwick 2010: 176). More probably, the Movements reflect a blend of Eastern and Western dance forms, including Ṣūfi dervish dances, Anthroposophical Eurythmy, and Dalcroze Eurhythmics (Wellbeloved 2005 [1003]: 45). Jeanne de Salzmann's Dalcroze class were the first Movements students, and it is probably significant that Gurdjieff did not teach Movements prior to Jeanne and her husband Alexandre becoming his pupils. Yet he taught Movements in an expert, rather than an amateur or spontaneous, fashion, which suggests that body-based disciplines were of long-standing interest to him (Cusack 2017). It was at the Sarmoung monastery that Gurdjieff allegedly saw the doll-like machine consisting "of a vertical column fitted with seven movable arms, each attached by seven universal joints. Like a written alphabet, the machine was capable of transmitting an infinite number of sign combinations" (Gordon 1978: 38). This is supposed to have demonstrated the particular postures of the Movements, which often involve complicated and counter-intuitive actions of different body parts, such as the head, arms, and legs. This exotic source has never been substantiated, and it seems more likely that, as Gurdjieff noted, when he was young he had "practised mostly Yoga and the gymnastics of the 'Swede Mueller'" (van Dullemen 2014: 215).

Gurdjieff taught that humans are "three-brained beings," who must align their intellectual, emotional and sensory selves into a single self via the development of a finer (or *kesdjan*), body. His teachings are called the 'Fourth Way', because of the three ways that he connects to the three centres of being. The way of the *faḳīr* (Ṣūfi ascetic) Gurdjieff connects to the body and the sensory centre; the way of the monk (Christian ascetic) he links to the emotional centre; and the way of the *yogi* (Hindu ascetic) he aligns with the intellectual centre (Cusack 2017: 104). All these paths are fragmentary, as they "are all imbalanced because each centre is only aware of part of what we are … So in effect, there are two kinds of imbalance … individual neurosis (derived from the fact that centres try to do the work that is proper to one of the others) and 'spiritual lopsidedness' (derived from the fact that no centre can reveal the whole nature of man)" (Rawlinson 1997: 288).

For Gurdjieff the purpose of life is the development of a *kesdjan* body through work and "conscious suffering." Humans, for Gurdjieff, are essentially

machines who pass through life asleep. There are four states of consciousness; sleep, waking consciousness (nearly the same as sleep), self-remembering, and objective consciousness, the attainment of which is linked to the development of the *kesdjan* (astral or higher-being) body. This is a type of soul or immortal element that survives physical death; those without souls become food for the Moon when they die. The Movements are the most important bodily activity undertaken in the Work, and cultivate the physical centre, while the piano music "cultivate(s) the emotional centre," and *Beelzebub's Tales* cultivates the intellectual centre (Petsche 2015: 182). The transformative nature of the Movements is recognized by Joseph Azize, who notes "there are inner attitudes, which at a certain stage become even more crucial than the corporeal dimension" (Azize 2012: 297).

The script of *The Struggle of the Magicians* tells of dances taught by the White Magician to his students, including the heroine, the beautiful and modest Zeinab. The description is clearly of a Movements class:

> [i]mmediately the pupils leave their work and place themselves in rows, and at a sign from the Magician they go through various movements resembling dances. The Magician's assistant moves up and down and corrects their postures and movements. These 'sacred dances' are considered to be one of the principal subjects of study in all esoteric school of the East, both in ancient times and at the present day. The movements of which these dances consist have a double purpose; they express and contain a certain knowledge and, at the same time, they serve as a method of attaining a harmonious state of being.
>
> GURDJIEFF n.d.: 19

The Struggle of the Magicians reinforces this sense that the source of the teaching is "Islamic"; the heroine Zeinab, described as "of an Indo-Persian type," is the daughter of a wealthy *khan* and becomes crucial to a struggle between the White Magician and the Black Magician; at the ballet's conclusion, the White Magician is victorious and Zeinab and her suitor Gafar are united (Gurdjieff n.d., 8–9). The costume and set drawings have a strong "Arabian Nights" aesthetic, adding to the impression of an Islamic, or more properly Ṣūfi, origin to Gurdjieff's teachings.

Yet it is surprisingly difficult to connect any of the music that Gurdjieff composed or Movements that he choreographed with particular ethnic or religious groups; Gert-Jan Blom claims to have identified the source of one tune, "Kurd Melody for Two Flutes" (Petsche 2015: 120). Similarly, there is one Movement where the words "Sharsche Varsche" are recited. Wim van Dullemen identified

FIGURE 26.1   Enneagram Movement, Sherborne House, 1974
IMAGE COURTESY OF ANTHONY BLAKE

the source for this as a "ritual procession to honour the Holy Hussein, who fell at the battle of Kerbala, one of the twelve imams" referencing the death of Ḥusayn, grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad (van Dullemen 2014: 184).[2] In *Beelzebub's Tales* Gurdjieff calls 'Saint Muhammad' "a genuine messenger of our Endlessness [God]" (Gurdjieff 1999 [1950]: 1091); Gurdjieff's books abound with comic tales of the Ṣūfi Mullah Nassr Eddin. Some Movements include

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2   "In the distance, the muffled beat of a large drum could be heard, threatening as a warning from the Invisible. The dusty street glowed in the sun that shone directly above Schimran (the city in Persia where the author was located). The drum beat edged slowly closer and incessantly the cries 'Sha-ssé … Wah-ssé' rang out: Shah Hussein … Woe Hussein. The procession became visible and above the mass of people three large flags flapped. One on of the flag's Ali's name was written in large golden letters against a black velvet background. On the second, a large hand could be seen, the hand of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, both blessing and threatening. On the third, so large that it almost obscured the view of the heavens above, just 'Hussein', the grandson of the prophet. The crowd proceeded slowly through the street with the penitents leading, dressed in black mourning attire but with bare backs and holding heavy chains in their hands that were whipped across their bleeding shoulders to the beat of the drum. Behind them walked a large semi-circle of broad-shouldered men, who took two rhythmic steps forward and one back. At each step, their chant 'Sha-ssé … Wah-ssé' rose up and they hit their balled-up fists against their bare hairy chests. They were followed by—in white robes, like those of the dead, with deeply bowed heads—Martyrs, with shaven heads and long daggers in their hands, their faces closed off and dark as though they were looking into another world. 'Sha-ssé … Wah-ssé'. At each cry, the daggers flashed in the sunlight and fell across their shaven skulls, blood running over their (185) white robes. One of them fell to the ground and was quickly transported away by the crowd. I saw a beatific smile on his face" (van Dullemen 2014: 184–185).

whirling, but there is evidence that Gurdjieff introduced this only after living in Istanbul in 1920.

4   John G. Bennett, Subud, and Idries Shah

Bennett met Gurdjieff and Ouspensky in Istanbul during his employment with British military intelligence in 1920–1921, and spent time at the Prieuré in 1923. He then was a pupil of Ouspensky and his wife, Sophia Grigorievna for many years. In 1946 Bennett established an Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences, which acquired Coombe Springs, a large house at Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey (Coates 2013: 182). In 1948 Bennett returned to Paris and Gurdjieff, and was with Gurdjieff when he died in 1949. Sitting by Gurdjieff's body before the funeral, Bennett felt that Gurdjieff's "power remained and … his work would continue" (Bennett 1973: 272). Bennett is unique among the early pupils in that he was interested both in locating the sources of Gurdjieff's teaching, and in the possibilities of other religions and spiritualities. In 1957 he became intrigued by Subud, an Indonesian spiritual group led by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (known as Bapak— "elder or father"—or Pak Subuh), who taught an exercise, the *latihan kejiwaan* (training of the soul), which Bennett introduced to Work students at Coombe Springs (Rawlinson 1997: 185).

Fascinatingly, Bennett's involvement with Subud was the earliest transmission of Pak Subuh's ideas to Europe. The name Subud is formed from three Indonesian words derived from Sanskrit; *Susila* (good-tempered), *Budhi* (enlightenment) and *Dharma* (law). Stephen Urlich describes the *latihan*, during which men and women are segregated, as "uninhibited and unrestrained emotional expression, in which 'contact' with Subud's deity is made" (Urlich 2005: 163). Given that Indonesia is a primarily Islamic country it is unsurprising that Pak Subuh denied that Subud was a new religion:

> [i]t is also necessary to explain that Subud is neither a kind of religion nor a teaching, but is a spiritual experience awakened by the Power of God leading to spiritual reality free from the influence of the passions, desires and thinking. That is why in the spiritual training of Subud one really feels that one's inner self is no longer influenced by the passions, heart and mind, which means that in the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud the inner feeling has truly been separated from their influence.
>
> SUMOHADIWIDJOJO n.d.

Bennett then converted to Catholicism in 1961, the year that he went to India to consult "an Indian sage, Shivapuri Baba" (Rawlinson 1997:185). A break with Pak Subuh ensued in 1962. Thus, Bennett was a quintessential seeker and at various times had been a pupil of Ouspensky, Gurdjieff, Jeanne de Salzmann, Henriette Lannes, all in the Work tradition, and Pak Subuh, Abdullah Daghestani, Emin Chikou, the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and Shivapuri Baba outside the Work.

At Coombe Springs Bennett and his pupils built the *Djameechoonatra*, a structure based on the Enneagram. Its purpose was as a venue for performances of the Movements, and it evoked the Study House at the Prieuré (Coates 2013: 182). This was completed in 1965, but was destroyed the next year, after Bennett gave Coombe Springs to the *soi-disant* Ṣūfi teacher Idries Shah who sold it to property developers (Pittman 2012: 107). James Moore is scathing in his assessment of the relationship between Bennett and Shah. Bennett

> became persuaded that Shah had come direct from Gurdjieff's 'Sarmoung Monastery' with a 'Declaration of the People of The Tradition'; how Shah pressed Bennett ('The caravan is about to set out') to give him Coombe Springs outright; how Bennett agonized, and in January 1966 complied; how Shah promptly repudiated Bennett, and sold the establishment for 100,000 [British pounds]; how Coombe Springs with its sub-Goetheanum Djamichunatra passed under the bulldozers; how Shah with the proceeds founded the Society for Organising Unified Research in Cultural Education (SOURCE) and the Society for the Understanding of the Foundation of Ideas (SUFI) and established himself at Langton House, Langton Green, near Tunbridge Wells—all this defies both *précis* and belief, but is … recorded in Bennett's autobiography *Witness*.
>
> MOORE 1986: 4–6

Bennett had broken with de Salzmann in 1953, and he became one of the most creative and productive teachers of Gurdjieff's ideas. After the loss of Coombe Springs, Bennett began the International Academy for Continuous Education, at Sherborne House in Gloucestershire, in 1971 (Blake 2017: 168–170).

He designed a "year-long course … utilizing Gurdjieffian techniques and ideas alongside material from other sources" (Coates 2013: 183). He was convinced that whirling dervishes practicing *zikr* at the Ṣūfi *samā'* (spiritual concert) was identical to the self-remembering exercise of Gurdjieff, and he had made the acquaintance of Shaykh Abdullah Daghestani, the leader of the Naqshbandī Order in 1955 (Pittman 2012: 125). Later at Sherborne and at Claymont Court, Ṣūfism became core, with regular *zikr* and teaching sessions by

Ṣūfi leaders. Bennett bought Claymont Court in West Virginia in October 1974, just before his death in December. He wanted Claymont to host the Claymont Society for Continuous Education. Claymont Court was meant to house people living together in a self-sustaining agricultural community. Sedgwick notes that under Pierre Elliot (1914–2005), a teacher in the Bennett tradition, Ṣūfis including Reshad Feild (1938–2016), Muzaffer Ozak (1916–1985), and Süleyman Loras (1904–1985), who initiated Elliot as a Mevlevi *shaykh* (Sedgwick 2019: 133), taught at Claymont. The courses at Claymont Court ended in the 1980s, but it continues to be a site of "significant exchanges with a number of teachers and groups representing a wide variety of spiritual traditions and practices" (Pittman 2012: 211).

The involvement that Bennett had with various Ṣūfi groups and especially with Shah and his pupils had some long-term results that have proved problematic with regard to the academic study of Gurdjieff and his teachings. In 1966 a writer using the name 'Rafael Lefort' published a short book entitled *The Teachers of Gurdjieff*, which clearly emanated from the circle of Idries Shah and his elder brother Omar Ali-Shah, also a popular leader of Naqshbandī Ṣūfi groups in the West. This purported to be a series of interviews with 'authentic' Ṣūfi masters in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and a range of other countries, presented as those from whom Gurdjieff's ideas were derived, or (less diplomatically)

stolen.[3] Lefort claimed that Hakim Abdul Qader in Adana taught Jurjizada (Gurdjieff) weaving, at which he was "an attentive pupil" (Lefort 2008 [1966]: 12). Controversially, he alleged that Sheik Daud Yusuf in Kerbala (and sundry other figures he posited taught Gurdjieff) firmly dismissed Gurdjieff's teaching, saying "Gurdjieff is dead … Gurdjieff passed his authority to none. His message died with him" (Lefort 2008: 28).[4] While such criticism was unlikely to trouble Work members, it is clear that an attack on Gurdjieff's authority to teach was being mounted on the grounds of "tradition." Thus, the polemical tone of Ali-Shah is unmistakable:

> Gurdjieff … had been passed from Master to Master and he had most certainly assimilated various techniques, terms of reference, music, movement and other things; but he was not mandated to teach, and this is a very fundamental, important and crucial factor … The amount of … damage which was caused and is still being caused by Gurdjieff and his followers can be measured only in terms of human suffering and pain. All the more reprehensible from our point of view is that, after the death of Gurdjieff, Madame de Salzmann took over, to be subsequently followed by her son and one of the other dancing bears, and they knew what they were teaching was not real.
>
> ALI-SHAH 1994: 223–226

It is interesting that Ṣūfis in the Shah lineage make such concerted attempts to attack Gurdjieff, when the Work itself (apart from Bennett's lineage) has not claimed Ṣūfism as its root tradition or emphasised Ṣūfi influences at all.

The scholarly literature on Gurdjieff, which is relatively limited, contains efforts like Anna T. Challenger's *Philosophy and Art in Gurdjieff's Beelzebub: A Modern Sufi Odyssey*, an interesting book which nevertheless uncritically accepts the Bennett view that "'the Sufi origins of his [Gurdjieff's] teachings were unmistakable for anyone who had studied both', consequently we may move back and forth with ease between Ṣūfism and Gurdjieff without

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3   It is interesting that Lefort (1966) was taken seriously by many authors, including Theosophist Paul Johnson, whose *Madame Blavatsky: 'The Veiled Years'. Light from Gurdjieff or Sufism?* (1987), argued that "Since modern Sufis are claiming that Gurdjieff was trained in Sufic schools for a mission to the West, an examination of the possibility that H.P.B. was also indebted to Sufis is in order" (1987: 8).

4   This attitude was shared by Gary Chicoine (b. 1942) who, as "Rishi Dada Narayana" sent a letter to Bennett's Institute at Sherborne in August 1977 (Rawlinson 1997: 203). He presented himself as a teacher of Gurdjieff's original source and asserted, "The entire Gurdjieff Path as away in itself is truly defunct" (Thompson 1995: 549).

a need for re-orientation" (Challenger 2002: 12). Harry T. Hunt's admirable attempt to situate Gurdjieff in the context of modern secular mysticism also states confidently,

> What is clear is that Gurdjieff's final system contains a set of practices largely derived from Sufism, with a more Western psychology of the multiplicity of ordinary personality, all synthesized within an original version of Gnosticism and an attendant highly technical alchemy of alchemy of inner experience.
>
>   HUNT 2003: 227

Sedgwick, in studies of modern Ṣūfism in the West, has drawn attention to the fact that in the 1930s, in addition to Gurdjieff, there were other teachers of 'Sufism' (variously defined) in the West, including Hazrat Inayat Khan, Frithjof Schuon, Rudolf von Sebottendorff, Meher Baba, and René Guénon (Sedgwick 2016: 413). Michael Pittman, the most insightful and scrupulous chronicler of the discourse of Ṣūfism within and without the Gurdjieff tradition, offers a more cautious and nuanced account of mutual influence in the Bennett legacy, with due restraint about Gurdjieff's relations with and/or debt to Ṣūfis and Ṣūfism (Pittman 2012, 2013).

5   The Enneagram and Ṣūfism

The Enneagram, a term that combines the Greek *ennea* (nine) and *grammos* (drawn or written), is a nine-sided figure, usually shown as a triangle inside a circle (connecting points 9, 3, and 6), that features in the esoteric system of Gurdjieff and was first described by Ouspenky. Gurdjieff said that the Enneagram was "completely self-supporting and independent of other lines and it has been completely unknown up to the present time" (Ouspensky 2001: 286), but many different origins have been traced for the symbol (including Christian, Ṣūfi, and Kabbalistic) (Webb 1980: 505–519). The numbers around the circle show the Law of Seven (this for Gurdjieff was the musical octave of seven fundamental notes and two "semitone" intervals, so nine points). The points representing the seven fundamental notes are therefore labelled do, re, mi and so on. The Law of Seven determines all processes in the universe, according to a pattern of seven unequal steps. Gurdjieff used the "seven-tone scale," consisting of two sets of larger intervals—*do re mi* and *fa sol la ti*—and two smaller intervals, between *mi* and *fa*, and *si* and the *do* of the next octave (Ouspensky 2001: 124–126; Gurdjieff 1984: 187–189). Gurdjieff taught that in
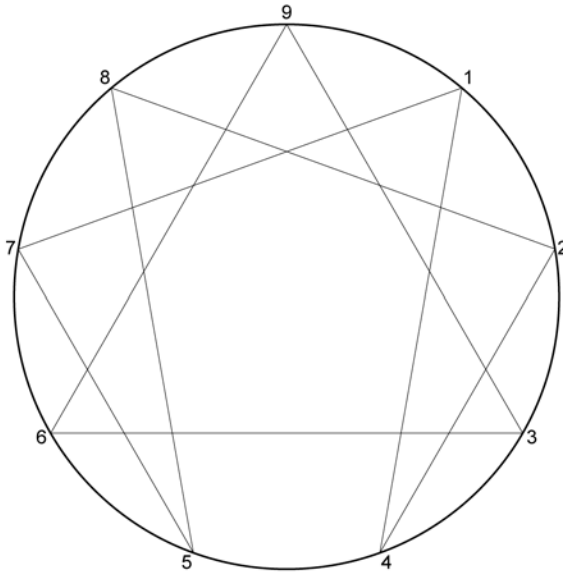
FIGURE 26.3
The Enneagram
IMAGE COURTESY OF
SEBASTIAAN VAN OYEN

all processes resistance is met at the smaller intervals, and a 'shock' is needed for processes to continue. The nine digits on the Enneagram do not show the Law of Seven with seven fundamental steps and two semitone or 'shock' steps exactly, as the distance between points is equal around the circumference of the circle, where intervals between tones and semitones vary.[5] The unusual six-pointed shape inside the Enneagram is made by joining by straight lines the six numbers on the edge that make up the sequence of numbers that occur and repeat when 1 is divided by 7 (0.142857 repeated). The other points—9, 3, and 6—form an equilateral triangle symbolising the Law of Three, and points 3 and 6 correspond to the two shock intervals of the octave (Ouspensky 2001: 290–291).

Gurdjieff claimed the Enneagram was a symbol of universal significance and enormous power:

> the enneagram is a *universal symbol*. All knowledge can be included in the enneagram and with the help of the enneagram it can be interpreted. And in this connection only what a man is able to put into the enneagram does he actually *know*, that is, understand. What he cannot put into the enneagram he does not understand. For the man who is able to make use of it, the enneagram makes books and libraries entirely unnecessary.

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5 Johanna Petsche, personal communication, 7 May 2013.

> *Everything* can be included and read in the enneagram. A man may be
> quite alone in the desert and he can trace the enneagram in the sand and
> in it read the eternal laws of the universe. And every time he can learn
> something new, something he did not know before. If two men who have
> been in different schools meet, they will draw the enneagram and with
> its help they will be able at once to establish which of them knows more
> and which, consequently, stands upon which step, that is to say, which
> is the elder, which is the teacher and which the pupil. The enneagram is
> the fundamental hieroglyph of a universal language which has as many
> different meanings as there are levels of men.
>
> OUSPENSKY 2001: 294

This passage makes comprehensible the stern criticisms that 'orthodox'
Gurdjieff groups make of unorthodox (but Gurdjieff-inspired) applications of
the Enneagram, and those uses by non-initiated teachers who have never been
part of the Work. The power claimed for the Enneagram by Gurdjieff explains
why faithful followers believe that its misuse is dangerous. The Enneagram is
a tool for analysing an individual's psychological condition (from the Greek
psyche, soul) and his/her resultant spiritual status.

Gurdjieff also claimed that the Enneagram embodied "objective knowl-
edge," a significant claim in the Work context:

> [t]he symbols that were used to transmit ideas belonging to objective
> knowledge included diagrams of the fundamental laws of the universe
> and they not only transmitted the knowledge itself but showed also the
> way to it ... The fundamental laws of triads and octaves penetrate every-
> thing and should be studied simultaneously both in the world and in
> man. But in relation to himself man is a nearer and a more accessible
> object of study ... in striving towards a knowledge of the universe, man
> should begin with the study of himself and with the realization of the
> fundamental laws within him ... The transmission of the meaning of sym-
> bols to a man who has not reached an understanding of them in himself
> is impossible.
>
> OUSPENSKY 2001: 280–281

Thus the Enneagram is a truly esoteric symbol; uninitiated humans without
the necessary preparation to understand its meaning cannot apprehend its
significance. This statement also links the diagnostic Enneagram which can
identify a person's spiritual level with the developmental Enneagram that plots
the course of spiritual progress that a person might go on to make. Further, the

Enneagram is also a map of the microcosm-macrocosm relationship between the human and the universe.

James Webb, a non-Gurdjieffian, argued that the genealogy of the Enneagram lay in the Kabbalistic *Sephiroth*, by way of the *Ars Magna* ("The Great Art," c. 1305–1308) of Ramon Lull (c. 1232–1315), and the *Arithmologia* (1665) of Athanasius Kircher (1601–1680) (Webb 1980: 505–519). Biographer and Work member Moore rejects this, claiming the Enneagram "was intrinsic and peculiar to Gurdjieff's system, and unpromulgated before him" (Moore 2004 [1987]: 2). Sophia Wellbeloved has observed that that the turning nature of Gurdjieff's "Enneagram" Movements may suggest Dervish and Ṣūfi origins for the symbol (2003: 66), but offers no evidence to demonstrate this possible affinity. The Bolivian Oscar Ichazo, founder of the Arica School, rejected the alleged Ṣūfi origins of the Enneagram: "I know Ṣūfism extensively—I've practiced traditional *zikr*, prayer, meditation—and I know realized Ṣūfi sheiks. It is not part of their theoretical framework. They couldn't care less about the Enneagon [Enneagram]" (Patterson 1998: 24). Helen Palmer and Don Richard Riso (1946–2012), among other contemporary popularisers of the Enneagram of personality, continue to trumpet its 'Ṣūfi' origins. The neo-Ṣūfi A.H. Almaas has developed a method called the "Diamond Approach," in which "ancient wisdom" is integrated with depth psychology, and which uses the Enneagram, in a version derived from the Chilean Claudio Naranjo, who had been a pupil of Ichazo (Almaas 1998). Sedgwick has noted that in what he calls the "Enneagram movement" now largely ignores Ṣūfism, with the exception of Iranian-American Laleh (b. Mary, 1938) Baktiar, who has affinities with both Frithjof Schuon's Traditionalist Ṣūfi order, the Maryamiyya and the Niʿmatullāhī order of Javād Nūrbaksh (Sedgwick 2019: 141–142), and sundry other groups.

6   Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that, while there are Ṣūfi motifs and ideas that feature in the teachings of Gurdjieff, it is manifestly the case that Gurdjieff was *not* a Ṣūfi and did *not* teach Ṣūfism. The discourse of Gurdjieff and Ṣūfism largely was the result of John Bennett's quest for the origins of Gurdjieff's system, which was complicated (and perhaps compromised) by his identification of Gurdjieff's "self-remembering" with *zikr*, the remembrance of the names of Allāh (Bennett 1973: 219). Bennett's problematic relationship with both Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo and Subud, and Idries Shah and the particular Western form of Naqshbandī Ṣūfism he was associated with, add further layers of complexity to the story. However, other teachers in the

Gurdjieff tradition have interpreted his teaching according to other templates (Christianity in the case of Maurice Nicoll, and with Hindu overtones in the later years of Jeanne de Salzmann, for example).

Scholars including Michael Pittman and Mark Sedgwick have traced the links that Ṣūfism had with Gurdjieff himself and that his followers, loosely defined, have developed. The time in Constantinople in 1920–1921, when Gurdjieff and Ouspensky were both teaching and John Bennett made their acquaintance, is of particular importance, and the memories of time spent in the *tekkes* watching whirling dervishes have influenced the presentation of the Work as Ṣūfi-inspired (Pittman 2016: 41). Pittman has researched figures including Ahmet Kayhan (1898–1988) and Jelaluddin Loras, who founded the Mevlevi Order of America in 1980 and taught at Claymont Court from 1978 (Pittman 2016: 46). These links involve mutual influence between the United States and Turkey, the Work and Ṣūfism, and friendships between Loras and Fourth Way teacher Pierre Elliot, for example, and also Reshad Feild (b. Richard Timothy, 1934–2016) (Sorgenfrei 2013: 114–117). Sedgwick has chronicled interactions between the Work and Ṣūfism in Latin America, covering figures including Rodney Collin (1909–1956), a pupil of Ouspensky who brought the Fourth Way to Mexico, Ichazo and Naranjo (discussed above), and also "[a] similar group in the Dominican Republic, the Gurdjieff Dominican Group directed by by José Reyes (born 1942) … [which] retains on occasional emphasis on Ṣūfism" (Sedgwick 2018: 15). Reyes and Elliot were friends; Reyes went to Claymont and Elliot to the Dominican Republic, which explains the group's Ṣūfi features.

Those elements of Gurdjieff's teaching that have been claimed to be Ṣūfi, such as the Stop Exercise, the Movements, and the Enneagram, when carefully examined are found to be not specifically Ṣūfi at all.[6] Gurdjieff was a teacher who wore masks and played roles, and these masks and roles varied from pupil to pupil. Yet one continuous and never-repudiated thread in the Work was its pretension to unite the wisdom of the East and the West. In 1923, when he was becoming established in Paris, Gurdjieff spoke with Professor Denis Saurat, Director of the French Institute in London. He said:

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6   There is another important project to be undertaken, to chronicle and analyse the difficult, one could say hostile, relationship between Gurdjieff and his pupils, and his younger contemporary, the Traditionalist and Ṣūfi René Guénon (1886–1951) and his pupils. Traditionalists have a very negative view of Gurdjieff; Whitall N. Perry, for example, says of the Stop Exercise that it "is a far remove from the ritual cessation of movement practised in dances like those of the Mevlevi Dervishes and the American Indians, where the flutes, the singing, and the drums unexpectedly stop on an explosion of sound between two instants, and the dance evaporates into the Void. It is the moment of death, the close of the cosmic cycle" (Perry 1978: 55). Perry's attitude to Gurdjieff is unambiguous; he is a "black magician" (Perry 1978: 74–75).

> I want to add the mystical spirit of the East to the scientific spirit of the West. The Oriental spirit is right, but only in its trends and general ideas. The Western spirit is right in its methods and techniques. Western methods alone are effective in history. I want to create a type of sage who will unite the spirit of the East with Western techniques.
>
> SEYMOUR-SMITH 1998: 451

The fictional memoir *Meetings* shows a young Gurdjieff who is fascinated by machinery and modern science, as much as Gurdjieff the seeker of truth was attached to ancient and perennial sources of wisdom. It remains to observe that if the Work is not Christian, not Ṣūfi, not Buddhist, not Hindu, not Kabbalistic, it does not mean that it is *sui generis*, or that it sprang fully-formed from Gurdjieff's intellect as Athena did from the head of Zeus. Recently Steven J. Sutcliffe made a case for Gurdjieff as a *bricoleur*, an indubitably inventive thinker, but one who was limited by the materials to hand, and not above "making it up" as he went along (Sutcliffe 2015: 117–137). *Bricolage* and invention are the next models to apply to Gurdjieff's teaching, to identify progress and change in the "system" and to map the historical development of one of the most innovative and interesting new religious groups (and new esoteric orders) in the modern West.

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PART 5

In Between and on the Fringes of Islam

∵

Introduction to Part 5

It is hard to package any tradition as large and diverse as Islam neatly into a small fixed number of packets. Not all Islamic traditions can be easily categorized as Shīʿa, Sunnī, Ṣūfi and fundamentalist/extremist as we (and indeed most other anthologies, encyclopedias, and handbooks of Islam) have attempted to do. Any attempt to force them into such categories is bound to fail and leave too many fascinating movements out. The choice then is to either leave such movements out of a collection or create a catch-all category. We have chosen to include them here in this section of the handbook because we believe that including such movements provides our readers a better view of the full diversity of the world of Islam.

Deciding what to do with heretical movements that are deemed less than fully Islamic by traditional Sunnī and Shīʿa clerics presents an even more daunting challenge for editors of anthologies, encyclopedias, and handbooks of Islam. While most traditional collections have excluded such movements, our volume casts a broader net. Our goal is to present an overview of the wide variety of religious movements present in the Islamic world so that scholars and those interested in Islamic history can grasp the full extent of the diverse thoughts that exists (or existed) under the name of Islam. This section also includes movements that were born of the Islamic world but no longer consider themselves part of the Islamic community, such as the Bahāʾī, Druze, and Yezidis. It also traces the development and influences of movements that consider themselves Islamic but are rejected as such by many Sunnī and Shīʿa Muslims as heretical for one reason or another such as the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamāʿat, the Nation of Islam, the Moorish Science Temple, and the Ansaaru Allah Community.

In addition to a shared Islamic past, these movement are also marginalized and minoritized within the world of Islam (and the larger world). As such their members also share experiences of discrimination, persecution, and suffering at the hands of the larger societies they are a part of. Black Muslim movements in America suffered slavery and continue to suffer racism (Mauleon, 2018). Aḥmadis, Bahāʾī and Yezidis who live in Muslim majority societies often suffer various forms of oppression by the state (Zabihi-Moghaddam, 2016; Ahmed *et al.*, 2019). Thus a shared experience of suffering and otherness is also common to the movements discussed in this section, especially in the mirror of 'normative' Islam variously framed by moderates, extremists, governments, and those outside of Islam.

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The Cultural Genetics of the Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamāʿat

M. Afzal Upal

1 Introduction

Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamāʿat was founded as a movement to reform Islam by Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1839–1908) in Qādiān, Punjab, India in 1889. Following Aḥmad's death, the movement was led by one of his most senior disciples Hakim Nūr al-Dīn (1841–1914). Nūr al-Dīn called himself the *khalīfa*. After his death, the movement split into two factions. The larger faction stayed in Qādiān and was led by Aḥmad's son Mirzā Bashiruddin Mahmud Aḥmad (1889–1965), who was considered the second Khalifa by his followers. The smaller faction moved to Lahore and disbanded the office of Khalifa altogether. Following the partition of British India, the second Khalifa moved the Jamāʿat headquarter to Rabwah, Pakistan in 1948. After Mahmud Aḥmad's death, his eldest son, Mirzā Nasir Aḥmad (1909–1982) took the reins of the main faction as Jamāʿat's third Khalifa. In 1974, the parliament amended Pakistan's constitution to declare that anyone who believes in Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad as a divinely appointed Messiah is not a Muslim. Nasir Aḥmad's younger brother, Mirzā Tahir Aḥmad (1928–2003), became the fourth Khalifa on his passing in 1982. In April 1984, the military dictator Zia-ul-Haq issued Ordinance XX to make it illegal for Aḥmadis to preach their faith "or in any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims." Days later, Tahir Aḥmad escaped to London in a cloak and dagger style. After Tahir Aḥmad's passing in 2003, Mirzā Masrur Aḥmad, a great grandson of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad became Jamāʿat's fifth Khalifa. He continues to live in UK and guide millions of his followers all around the world.

Since its inception, the movement has attracted attention from scholars (Walter 1918; Friedman 1992; Khan 2015; Lavan 1974) as well as Muslim, Christian and the Hindu faithful because of the messianic claims of its founder. Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad claimed that he was a prophet of God and both the Islamic *mahdī* and the messiah of various religious traditions. Such claims drew immediate rebuke from Muslim *ʿulamāʾ* across India who accused Aḥmad of *kufr*—ungratefulness to God. Scholars of South Asian Islam have been at a loss to explain what led Aḥmad to make such extra-ordinary claims.

In his seminal article delineating boundaries between sects, denominations, and minority, Mark Sedgwick (2000) discusses the case of Aḥmadiyya Jamāʿat extensively pointing out its various "peculiarities" that make it harder to fit it neatly into any of those categories. Recently, Upal (2017) explored various connections between Aḥmad and the Ahl-e-ḥadīth *ʿulamāʾ*, namely, Abū Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Baṭālvī and his teacher Syed Nazir Hussain Dehlavi. In *From Ṣūfism to Aḥmadiyya* (2015) Adil Hussein Khan traces various modern reformist, as well as traditional Ṣūfi, influences on Aḥmad's thought. In particular, he suggests that Ahl-e-Ḥadīth *alim* or scholar the Ṣūfi Abdullah Ghaznavi, as well as writings of the Ṣūfi greats such as Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindi, may have had significant influence on Aḥmad's thinking. Yohanan Friedman (1992) also explored similarities between Aḥmad's spiritual claims and those of Ṣūfi masters such as Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindi. In this chapter, I will add a third source of influence that has not been fully explored yet, namely, that of the rationalist South Asian Muslim reformer Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898).

2   South Asian Islam in the Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth century was a time of great tumult for South Asian Muslims, and therefore a time of great opportunity for Muslim reformers (or "social identity entrepreneurs" as I have referred to them elsewhere (Upal 2017) to emphasize the role they play in creating and marketing social identity beliefs) to remove what they perceived as non-Muslim influences from the thinking of the Muslim masses. The most influential among them were the descendants of the eighteenth century reformer Ṣūfi Shāh Walī Allāh (or Waliullah) of Delhi and his students at the Delhi-based Madrasa Raḥīmiyya which was founded by Walī Allāh's father.

Although a *sanad*-holding Ṣūfi himself, Shāh Walī Allāh came to believe that some Ṣūfi practices had become un-Islamic. He particularly objected to overly exuberant Ṣūfi practices such as *urs* celebrations of the anniversaries of dead Ṣūfis, revering the tombs of Ṣūfi masters, and asking Ṣūfis for amulets to cure various illnesses. Shāh Walī Allāh's also railed against *taqlīd*, that is, the traditional Sunnī Muslim practice of choosing one of the four school of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and exclusively following *fatwās* issued by scholars from that school. For most South Asian Muslims, this was the school founded by Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, the eighth century Sunnī theologian, whose followers are known as Ḥanafīs. The remaining three schools are Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī.

Shāh Walī Allāh argued that following all *fatwās* of one's chosen school was not mandatory on Muslims. Instead, he suggested that Muslims could pick and

choose from *fatwās* of various schools and various scholars. They could even use their own reasoning faculties to carry out *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) in situations where no previous *fatwās* existed to create solutions to novel problems. Thus he argued that a Ḥanafī woman may disregard the edict by Abū Ḥanīfa (who ruled that a woman whose husband goes to war and goes missing may not marry until he's confirmed dead) and remarry after waiting for four years (as Imām Mālik, founder of the Mālikī school, ruled).

Shāh Walī Allāh's sons and grandsons helped spread Shāh Walī Allāh's messages to the Madrasa Raḥīmiyya students and beyond. The movement they helped create came to include a broad class of Muslims. By the nineteenth century, it included much of the Muslims elite of North India who were worried about the loss of royal patronage after the demise of the Mughal power in Delhi. The Indian Muslims were divided about the best way to respond to the British occupation of India. Some declared that India had become a *dar al-Harb* (a 'land of war'), while others insisted that it continued to be the land of peace (*dar al-Islam*). The proponents of the *dar al-Harb* enacted their beliefs and engaged in *hijra* (migration) to Islamic areas (including Afghanistan and Arabia). They called on their followers and other Muslims to wage *jihād* against the British.

Shāh Walī Allāh's grandson Shāh Muḥammad Ishaq (1783–1846), the head of Madrasa Raḥīmiyya, moved to Mecca because he believed that India had become the land of war. Another group led by Syed Ahmad Barelwī (1786–1831) moved to the tribal areas on India's north-western frontier with Afghanistan. Barelwī labeled his movement Ṭarīqa-e-Muḥammadi, while others labelled them as Wahhābīs because of the similarity of their worldview to that of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb of Arabia. The Wahhābīs were considered violent extremists by the British government and they came to be persecuted both in Arabia and India (Allen 2006). Barelwī's group included the younger grandson of Shāh Walī Allāh named Shāh Ismail. Both Barelwī and Ismail died in a fight with the Sikhs in 1831.

Those followers of Shāh Walī Allāh who remained in India either became completely apolitical (such as Muḥammad Qasīm Nānotawī, who moved away from the limelight of Delhi to the village of Deoband, where he founded the Deobandī Movement in 1867) or they became fully supportive of British rule (Metcalfe 1982). Among the latter were Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), Syed Nazir Hussain (1805–1902), and Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan (1832–1890). They called themselves variously as Muwahideen (that is, unitarians, the term preferred by Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan), and Ahl-e-Ḥadīth (that is, the Followers of the Prophet's Words, the term preferred by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Syed Nazir Hussain). Syed Nazir Hussain, a graduate of Madrasa Raḥīmiyya, came to

be known as the premier scholar and teacher of *ḥadīth* in India after the departure of Shāh Muḥammad Ishaq (Robinson 2000). One of Hussain's prominent students, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Baṭālvī (1840–1920), was so worried about being associated with Syed Ahmad Barelwī's Wahhābī followers that he lobbied the British officials to stop referring to them as Wahhābīs. After completing his *ḥadīth* studies, Baṭālvī moved back to his hometown of Batala in Punjab. In 1876, he started an Urdu magazine called *Ishat-us-Sunnah* to propagate the message of the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth movement to the wider world (Robinson 1988).

Another nineteenth century group of Muslims objected to some of the teachings of the followers of the Shāh Walī Allāh movement. The Barelwīs (named after their founder Ahmed Raza Khan of Bareli [1856–1921]) defended traditional Ṣūfi practices. While others referred to them as Barelwīs, they called themselves 'party of the *sunna*' to assert that they are the true Sunnīs and inheritors of the millennia and a half of the Ḥanafi Sunnī tradition. Barelwīs regarded Deobandīs and Ahl-e-Ḥadīth as innovators who disrespect traditional imams by not following all of their edicts.

3   Syed Ahmad Khan's Rationalist Islam

The Ahl-e-Ḥadīth viewpoint was very influential among Delhi Muslims in the nineteenth century, including Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the son of a noble Delhi family who became one of the most prominent Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century. Khan received a traditional training in Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* in Delhi (some under Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz). The Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shāh Zafar, who ruled Delhi with British support, confirmed Khan's status as a noble by awarding him titles of Javad-ud Daulah and Arif Jang in 1842 (Faruqi 2017). He helped his older brother set up Delhi's first printing press and launch the first Urdu journal. Khan claimed that Ahl-e-Ḥadīth had been the original faith of Muslims from the very early days, but it had become corrupted after the reign of the four Sunnī Caliphs:

> Mahomedanism was at first for many long years a pure and simple Theism; but in the second century of the Higra, when the ideas of the learned men as to its principle were reduced to writing, it was divided into four churches-Ḥanafi, Shfai, Malki, and Humbali. For some time it remained optional for Mahomedans to choose and follow any doctrine of any of these four Churches. When, however, Bani Umaiya and Bani Abbas became kings an edict was issued directing all Mahomedans to embrace the whole doctrine of any one church of the above four. Those

who disobeyed were punished ... There were still, however, many who clung the true faith in its primitive simplicity, but who dared not breathe their opinion except to a trusted few. Their name was then Ahal-i-Hadis i.e., believers in the sayings of the Prophet, who were not bound down by the doctrines of the four churches ... In India, during the Mahomedan rule, the Turk and Pathan kings who were of the Ḥanafī sect were strictly averse to religious toleration, and the same state of affairs prevailed during the sovereignty of the Mogul Emperors ... On the establishment of the British rule, however, owing to the English principle of strict religious toleration, the followers of Ahal-i-Hadis again came to the front and preached openly and fearlessly.

KHAN 1872: 10–11

Thus Khan argued the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth view point that Indian Muslims needed to be grateful to the British for allowing them to follow their faith in freedom. Ahl-e-Ḥadīth also came to adopt distinct practices such as *rafa-yadain*— repeatedly lifting hands up to one's shoulders and dropping them to one's navel during the five daily ritual prayers—that allowed them to stand out from their fellow traditional Ḥanafī Muslims who made up the vast majority of Indian Muslims. *Rafa-yadain*, in particular, became a key marker of the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth. In a letter Khan claimed that he had been practicing *rafa-yadain* long before his friend Nazir Hussain:

I am the one who turned Syed Nazir Hussain into a puritan Wahhābī. He didn't use to perform *rafa-yadain* during *namaz* [ritual Islamic prayer] even though he considered it to be the practice of those who were rightly guided. I said, this is sad that you do not practice what you consider to be a virtuous deed because of what others will think of it. He got up to offer the *asar* [afternoon] prayer and started practicing *rafa-yadain*.

KHAN 1959

Since most scholars regard Hussain to be the founder of Ahl-e-Ḥadīth in India, this is a remarkable statement. Khan is not only claiming to be an Ahl-e-Ḥadīth but he is also claiming that he was an Ahl-e-Ḥadīth even before Hussain was one. In essence he is claiming to be the real founder of the movement because he argues that he persuaded Hussain to become an Ahl-e-Ḥadīth and adopt the practice of *rafa-yadain*.

Khan's early writings mostly expressed traditional views. In his book *Qaul-e-Matin dar ibtal-e-harkat-e-zamin* (literally 'firm assertion about the false assertion of the earth's motion'), he defended the traditional Ptolemaic view

that Sun rotated around the earth–the view that was universally accepted by early nineteenth century Indian Muslims (Powell 1993: 209). At some point early in his career, however, Khan experienced a dramatic change in his world-view. This may have been a result of deeper interactions with the increasing number of Westerners in Delhi that resulted from his decision to join the British East India Company and study at the East India Company College. Although his initial appointment was as a clerk, his talents ensured that he was quickly promoted to the rank of a jurist. Whatever caused it, Khan came to wholeheartedly adopt modern scientific views in the second half of his life. This social identity entrepreneur seems to have convinced himself that the biggest problem faced by Indian Muslims was the lack of scientific education caused by the belief that Islam was opposed to Western science. He became a forceful advocate of integration of Western science with Islamic worldview through a complete reinterpretation of over a millennium of Islamic tradition. Francis Robinson (1988) argues that Khan used the religious interpretation techniques he had learned from his Ahl-e-Ḥadīth friends Syed Nazir Hussain and Nawab Sidiq Hasan Khan to reconcile Western science with Islam to create a distinct doctrine that is best described as a rationalist Islam.

> Like the Ahl-i Ḥadīth he circumvented the medieval law schools and went straight to the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* as guidance for Muslims. The basis of his exegetical principles was that the laws of Creation were the Work of God and the Qurʾān was the Word of God and they just could not be contradictory—and if they seemed to be so it was because man failed to understand them correctly. So, for instance, he explained apparently miraculous events in the Qurʾān, as Christian apologists might have done similar events in the Bible, as metaphors.
>
> ROBINSON 1988: 9

Khan has come to be so closely identified with his educational endeavours that he pursued in the second half of his life to open schools to educate Indian Muslims that his considerable intellectual efforts to reform Islam are often overlooked. Khan was in fact an *alim* first and foremost. He wrote a *tafsīr* (exegesis) of the Qurʾān as well as several books on the topic of Islamic reform. He argued that Shāh Walī Allāh's project of ridding Islam of external influences remained unfinished because so many Muslims still held onto their superstitious beliefs. He argued that Islam was revealed as a rational religion to Prophet Muḥammad and that in the intervening years, people had added irrational beliefs into Islam. He argued that Muslims had imported miracle stories from Christian and Jewish sources and also added some of their own to

counter Christian claim that while Jesus showed miracles Muḥammad did not. Extending the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth polemic against *taqlīd*, he labeled the practice of using Christian and Jewish miracle stories to interpret Qurʾān as *taqlīd*.

Khan developed a unique interpretation of the nature of God and His relationship with the universe (Derajat et al 2019). He argued that God created the universe and put the laws of nature (*Qanun-e-Qudrat*) in place. Just as God is unchanging so are his laws argued Khan (Bettani and Shaw 2016: 49). To imply that God changes his laws is to imply that God Himself changes which is impossible. He presented the Qurʾān's verse 48:23—"It is the law of Allāh which hath taken course aforetime. Thou wilt not find for the law of Allāh aught of power to change" (Pickthall 1938)—as proof for his interpretation. For Khan, *sunnatullah* (literally 'the way of Allāh' meaning 'law of nature') is as important a divine attribute as *tawḥīd* (unity of God) is for traditional Muslims. God's desire to maintain his law of nature trumps his desire to support his prophets and destroy their enemies through supernatural miracles. Thus, while an event may appear to be supernatural to some observers, it is in fact just an ordinary event when seen in a different light. Those who suggest that God broke his law to support His prophets do not understand the nature of God, said Khan. What these believers see as miracles that violate law of nature are really something else entirely. He wrote:

> This is true that we do not completely know all the laws of nature and the ones we do know are very few and even for those we do not possess a complete knowledge. Instead our knowledge is faulty. The result is that when some strange event happens and there is plenty of evidence for its having happened and its occurrence is possibly not in accordance with known laws of nature and if we assume that there was no cheating or fraud and that it actually happened, even then we'd have to admit that there is no doubt there is a natural law that explains its occurrence that we do not yet know ... To say that the law of nature is that things happen in accordance with prayer or intention of a prophet or a holy person is not acceptable because a proof for such assertion would require that every single time that holy person prayed for something, it happens accordingly ... Shāh Waliullah has written in Hujjat-ul-Balagha Chapter Haqiqat-ul-Nabuwah wa Khwasa that miracles and acceptance of prayers are outside of prophethood.
>
> KHAN 1885: 28–29

Khan further argued that God did not break his law of nature even to support the greatest of all prophets, namely, the prophet Muḥammad. So, if God did

not show any miracles to support Muḥammad, it was unimaginable that God would have done so to support his lesser prophets. Thus, the Qurʾān could not be speaking of any supernatural miracles even if traditionally Muslims have understood them as such. He wrote:

> Shāh Waliullah Sahib, in his book *Tafhimat-e-Ilahia* clearly states that there is no mention of any miracles in Qurʾān. And About the splitting of the moon, he says that it was not a miracle. Thus he says that splitting-of-the-moon is not a miracle in our view. Instead, it is a sign of the Armageddon as God says that the time for the splitting of the moon comes near and Holy Prophet has informed us about it beforehand.
>
> KHAN 1885: 7–25

The fact that Khan only turns to Shāh Walī Allāh (rather than for instance imām Abū Ḥanīfa-the founder of the Ḥanafī School) as he seeks authoritative voices from the past to support him shows the regard that he had for the eighteenth-century reformer. The above quoted passages also demonstrate the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth tendency to skip over most of the medieval scholars and go to the original sources of Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad) to bolster their arguments. Khan also invoked events from the life of Prophet Muḥammad to support his argument that God does not show supernatural miracles:

> The infidels demanded miracles from the Holy Prophet peace be upon him and said clearly that we will absolutely not going to believe you until you rip up the earth and draw fountains, or if you can produce flowing canals among orchards of dates and grapes, or if you drop pieces of the sky on us, or bring God and angels with you, or if you can produce a decorated house, or if you can ascend to heaven … but despite such insistence God told his messenger, 'say to them that my Lord is pure and I'm nothing but a human being who is sent as a messenger' … The fact that the Holy Prophet, who was the most superior of all prophets and messengers, did not have any miracles, proves that the previous prophets peace be on them also did not have any miracles.
>
> KHAN 1885: 23–24

In a remarkable follow-up passage, Khan seems to anticipate the modern cognitive science of religion (Boyer 1994) approach to explaining the spread of religious ideas:

> If an ordinary person imprecates someone saying that 'lightning may fall on you' and coincidentally that person dies because of lightning. Then no one will think much of that but if that prayer were uttered by a person whose holiness fills people's hearts then it becomes associated with his miraculous powers ... Many strange rumors that have no basis in reality become popular about holy people. People are so impressed by the notion of holiness of such people that they do not research the truth and believe them without any research.
>
> KHAN 1885: 22

It is not God or His prophets who carry out supernatural acts according to Khan, it is ordinary people engaged in ordinary processes of cognition and communication that end up creating the supernatural religious concepts.

It is not just the physical miracles such as splitting of the moon by the Prophet Muḥammad that ordinary Muslims have misunderstood, argued Khan: most Muslims also misunderstand the very nature of prophethood, divine revelation, and humanity's status among the animal kingdom. Countering the traditional Sunnī belief that only prophets of God can receive God's revelation, Khan argued that ordinary human beings are not only capable of revelation but routinely receive it. Revelation is not restricted to humans either: animals can, and do, receive God's wisdom as well, claimed Khan. In his view, divine revelation is nothing but an instinctive call from one's nature:

> All creation whether it be humans or animals or plants, God has put a nature into everything. Things happen according to that nature without any teacher's teachings. This blessing of nature has been labeled by some *ʿulamāʾ* of Islam as *ilhamat* (revelations). But the High Lord has called it *wahi* ... This *wahi* was not delivered to the honeybee by Gabriel or another angel of God but God himself put it into it ...
>
> According to the ranks of their nature there will be people who will be born from among them whom Shāh Waliullah Sahib has labeled as perfects, hakims, khalifas, aided by the Holy Spirit (*ruh-ul-qudus*) guides, imams, *munazir* (warners), *nabī* (prophets). Today's faithless people call them reformers ... A guide who has a perfect nature of guidance is a prophet (*nabī*)
>
> KHAN 1885: 16–17

Thus divine revelation is nothing but an animal's natural instincts and prophets are nothing but reformers in Khan's worldview.

Belief in prophets is one of the six articles of faith in Islam. Traditional Sunnī Muslim doctrine not only specifies the status of prophets to be higher than that of ordinary human beings, but it also carefully delineates boundaries between different levels of prophethood and revelation. Theologians have debated differences between *anbia* (prophets), *paighambars* (messengers), and *rusul* (apostles), and argued in depth about what distinguishes the *wahi* form of revelation from those of the *ilham* and *kashaf* kind (Bisati 2001; MacGregor 2002). Khan may have been forgiven by the traditional *'ulamā'* had he simply argued against these fine distinctions and insisted that all prophets were prophets and all revelation is of the same degree, but because of his wholescale reinterpretation of Islamic doctrine, he was condemned by traditional Ḥanafī *'ulamā'* (for example, Barelwīs) as a heretic. They accused him of denying the physical existence of angels, denying supernatural miracles of prophets, and even limiting God's powers. They labeled him as outside the pale of Islam and pejoratively called him a *naturie* (Urdu for a 'naturalist').

Given Khan's open disregard for traditional understanding of Islamic doctrine, opposition from traditional Ḥanafīs (such as the Barelwīs) was expected. However, even those who fully embraced Shāh Walī Allāh's reforms (including the Deobandīs and the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth) also felt that Khan had gone too far in applying his rationalism to Islamic doctrine. Both Deobandīs and Barelwīs accused Khan of being an Ahl-e-Ḥadīth. Ahl-e-Ḥadīth leaders not only denied the allegations but, as they were keen to establish themselves as genuine defenders of the faith in competition with Deobandīs and Barelwīs, they felt the need to be even harsher in their criticism of Khan. Ahl-e-Ḥadīth leaders wanted to be seen as distant from Khan as possible. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Baṭālvī said that Khan's dangerous innovations (*bid'a*) were so severe that he was a *kāfir* (that is, an infidel). None of this perturbed Khan who replied that the *'ulamā'* of his time had deemed Shāh Walī Allāh as well as other reformers *kāfir* as well. Khan continued to publish and deliver public lectures all over India. He founded the Scientific Society and Muḥammadan Anglo Oriental College in Aligarh to pursue the mission of redefining Muslim social identity as that of harmony between science and Islam.

4   Syed Ahmad Khan's Influence on Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad

As Khan (2015) points out, Aḥmad's Aḥmadi biographers are loath to admit of any external influence on his religious worldview because they regard his ideas to have been divinely inspired. Since Aḥmad was repeatedly accused of plagiarizing Khan's ideas by his contemporaries early in his career (see Batalavi

1891 for such claims made by over a dozen *ʿulamāʾ*), Aḥmadis had reasons to be extra careful to minimize any mention of Khan's influence on Aḥmad. Thus it is not surprising that there are only a few scattered hints of contact between Khan and Aḥmad documented in the Aḥmadiyya literature. During his stay in Sialkot (1864–1868), Ahmed seemed to have written a letter to Khan on hearing about Khan's plans to write an exegesis of the Bible (a first for a Muslim). It is not clear as to whether Khan responded to the young man in his twenties and if he did what he wrote. Since we also do not have access to Aḥmad's letter to Khan, it is hard to see whether Khan used any of Aḥmad's ideas in his exegesis. Given the status differences between the two men and the fact that Aḥmad did not start proclaiming any heretical ideas till 1891 when Khan's writing career was coming to an end, it seems unlikely that any of Aḥmad's writings had any impact on Khan. In the 1880s when Aḥmad published his first book *Braheen-e-Aḥmadiyya* (Volume 1 was published in 1880 and Volume 4 was published in 1884), he expressed orthodox Sunnī Ahl-e-Ḥadīth views on most issues. Given that Khan started publishing in 1840s, and he was better known than Aḥmad, we are better off searching for Khan's influence on Aḥmad. We will do this by comparing Aḥmad's publications published in a given year with Khan's publications published prior to that year. Such a comparison yields a number of possible instances of Khan's potential influence on Aḥmad, although we have no way of knowing for sure whether Khan was the source of any of Aḥmad's ideas.

4.1   *The Nature of Revelation, Angels, and Prophecy*

Syed Ahmad Khan started publishing his rationalist ideas in 1880 through the first volume of his Qurʾānic exegesis (S.S. A. Khan, 1880). In it, argued against the notion of supernatural angels that act as mediums between God and humans (Khan 1880: 29–30, 33–34, 53–57). Instead, he said that God communicates with all human beings (and animals) at the time of their conception when he decides their nature (he probably would have used the word DNA instead of nature, had DNA been discovered by 1880). He endows some of his creation with stronger capabilities to receive his knowledge than others. The capabilities latent at birth become stronger as a person gets older and exercises them and they reach their full potential in God's prophets. He said, "I believe *nabuwwat* (that is, prophethood) to be a natural thing. A *nabī* (prophet) is a *nabī* even when he is in his mother's womb" (Khan 1880: 31). Those endowed with the knowledge to overcome their cultural norms and given the courage to seek reform are called "*paighambar* (messengers) in the Sharia lingo and reformers in the cultural expression" (Khan 1880: 25). The capabilities to receive divine wisdom are metaphorically referred to as the angel Gabriel in

the Qurʾān. He wrote: "This proves that that the prophetic capability that God produced in prophets (*anbia*) is named Gabriel" (Khan 1880: 33), adding,

> The angels that Qurʾān mentions cannot physically exist but the manifestations of God's infinite powers and those capabilities that God created his creation with are called angel (*malak*) and angels (*malaika*). One of them is Satan or Iblis. The rise of the mountains, water's flow, power of the trees to grow, electricity's powers of attraction and repulsion etc., all capabilities that are present in the creation are the very angels mentioned in the Qurʾān.
>
> KHAN 1880: 56

Before publishing *Braheen-e-Ahmdiyya*, Aḥmad shared his drafts with his friend and the Ahl-e-Ḥadīth *alim* Muḥammad Ḥusayn Baṭālvī, who prominently advertised upcoming volumes of *Braheen* in his *Ishat-us-Sunnah* magazine and devoted over 150 pages to reviewing the *Braheen*. In his review, Baṭālvī declared that it was the best defense of Islam published since the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. He defended Aḥmad as a good Muslim who meant well, even if he was rural and a bit over-exuberant. One of the biggest issues of contention was Aḥmad's claims to be in receipt of constant communication from God in the form of dreams and *ilham* and *wahi* (revelations). While Aḥmad's critics decried that Aḥmad was claiming a higher status for himself by claiming to be a *mulhim* (receiver of divine revelations), Baṭālvī defended him by saying that Aḥmad was describing these experiences to impress non-Muslims by showing them that Islam's God was alive who still communicated with Muslims.

In *Braheen*, Aḥmad expressed traditional Sunnī views about prophets, Jesus, and nature of divine revelation. However, something changed between 1884 to 1891 when Aḥmad published three books in rapid succession: *Fath-e-Islam*, *Tauzi-e-Maram*, and *Azala-e-Auham*. In these books, Aḥmad said that he no longer believed in traditional Sunnī doctrine of Jesus' ascension to heaven or the physical nature of angels. He said that the reason for this change was that Christian missionaries were duping simple Punjabi Muslims through their claims that Islamic teachings also awarded Jesus a higher status than Muḥammad by allowing for Jesus' ascent to heaven while admitting a human death for Muḥammad. To blunt these arguments and to restore Muḥammad's superiority over Jesus, he argued that Jesus also had to die a mortal death. In order to sell others on this interpretation, Aḥmad argued that many of these supernatural beliefs were, in fact, irrational and made little sense in the nineteenth century.

Muslim researchers do not believe that angels descend on earth with their feet like humans. This idea is a false innovation because if it was necessary for angels to descend to earth with their true bodies in the service of their duties then it was impossible for any task to be completed by them. For instance, the angel of death who takes the lives of thousands of such people who are in different countries and live thousands of miles apart from each other. If he was dependent on his feet for travel to the country, city, and house of each person and then struggle to take their lives then even months are not enough for carrying out such a task.

AḤMAD 1891C: 30–31

We do not know whether Aḥmad would have included Khan among the Muslim researchers. Perhaps, because of Khan's poor reputation among Aḥmad's Ahl-e-Ḥadīth target audience, Aḥmad never cites Khan in any of his writings (except when he is criticising Khan). Similar to Khan, however, Aḥmad argued that instead of being physical creatures with human-like bodies, angels are natural forces:

In some places in the Holy Qurʾān, every particle of the body has been given the name of angels because all those particles listen to their Dear Lord's voice and do what they are ordered to do. For example, whatever changes happen in the human body with respect to sickness or health, each particle from these materials moves back and forth according to God's will ... Without believing this organization, God's omniscience cannot be proved nor can his creation function. If every particle does not obey him as an angel how can this whole machine work according to his will.

AḤMAD 1891C: 44

Not unlike Khan's forces of nature, Aḥmad's angels are "particles" of a human body. They are no longer supernatural agents of traditional Muslim theology who travel from heaven to earth to convey God's message to human beings. This is established, for example, in his explanation of the various roles of the archangel Gabriel which he explains by appealing to various natural processes:

Regarding revelation (*wahi*) Gabriel has three jobs. First, when semen falls in a womb for such a person whose nature the all-powerful God because of his kindness, that has nothing to do with human actions, has decided to make revelatory (*mulhimana*) then he puts the shadow of

Gabrielic light (*nur*) on that sperm. Then that person's nature develops a
revelatory nature from God and he gets revelatory organs.

<div align="center">AḤMAD 1891C: 84</div>

4.2   *The Nature of the Miracles of Past Prophets*

The Qur'ān's prophets include Biblical figures such as Adam, Abraham, Moses,
Jacob, Joseph, as well as Jesus and Islamic tradition associates all of them
with various supernatural events, such as miracles which Allāh granted them
in order to support their missions (Alumujali 2014). The Qur'ān describes a
number of such miracles in detail while hinting at many others. Early exegeses
of the Qur'ān (for example, by Ibn Kathir, Yaqubi, Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Ishaq)
expanded on these stories. Brannon Wheeler (2002) argues that stories of pro-
phetic miracles played a critical role in the development of a coherent, "more
accessible and less piecemeal interpretation of the Qur'ān" (Wheeler 2002: 7).

Given Khan's insistence on God's unchanging law of nature, as mentioned
above, he explained all miracles mentioned in the Qur'ān in naturalistic terms.
As discussed earlier, he denied that Prophet Muḥammad split the moon into
two and then rejoined the moonlets back together again. Khan argued that
the Qur'ānic verse suggesting the splitting of the moon was a prophecy about
the end of times and not description of an event that had actually taken
place. He also explained away miracles Muslims had traditionally associated
with Jesus such as Jesus making clay birds come alive and switching the body
with another person just before his crucifixion (Reynolds 2009). Although in
Braheen (published 1880–1884), Aḥmad had proclaimed his adherence to the
traditional Ahl-e-Ḥadīth views about Jesus' miracles and ascension to heaven,
in 1891, he also downplayed these miracles.

4.3   *Jesus' Miracles*

In Volume 2 of *Tafsīr* published in 1885, Khan comprehensively went through
the list of various miracles traditional Muslims had attributed to Jesus and
argued that none of them could be proven to have occurred super-naturally
from Qur'ān. When interpreting Qur'ān 5:110, which Muslims had tradition-
ally interpreted to mean that Jesus created birds out of clay and made them
come alive and fly away. Khan argued that this was not the correct interpreta-
tion of the Qur'ānic verse. He claimed that Muslim exegetes had been engaged
in blind following (*taqlīd*) of "incorrect Christian traditions" (Khan 1885: 151).
Khan argued that events Qur'ān only describes Jesus' desire to have the clay-
birds fly but there is no mention in Qur'ān of God accepting Jesus' request
and the birds ever actually having flown much less having become alive (Khan
1885: 151). If we believe Khan's claim of being the first Muslim to deny Jesus'

miracle of making clay-birds alive, then Aḥmad must have been the second Muslim to do so. In his book *Azala-e-Auham* published six years after Khan's publication, Aḥmad also denied Jesus miraculous powers, but his explanation was a lot more fanciful:

> It is not surprising if the High Lord could have told Jesus about a clay toy that flew like the birds or walked by pressing a key or as a result of blowing on it. Since Jesus, son of Mary, worked with as a carpenter with his father for twenty-two years, and it is clear that carpentry is one of those jobs that increase one's smarts for inventing mechanisms and artifacts … Even in today's age it is seen that some designers create such birds that talk and travel and move their tails. I've also heard that some birds fly through mechanics. Many such toys are made in Bombay and Calcutta and Europe and America. And new ones are invented every year. Since the Holy Qurʾān is full of metaphors, these verses can also be interpreted spiritually that clay birds refer those illiterate and ignorant people that Jesus befriended … and blew the soul of guidance into them that made them take flight.
>
> In addition, it is also possible that such miracles could have taken place through *amal-al-tarab* i.e., mesmerism in a frivolous way and not for real. Because *amal-al-tarab* that in the present age is called mesmerism is full of such wonders that those who are fully practiced in it can seemingly bring things to life by pouring the energy of their soul onto those things … It should be remembered that this practice is not as worthy as commoners think that it is. If this humble servant did not think of this practice as despicable and contemptible then I am strongly hopeful that because of God's blessings I would not have been any inferior than Jesus, son of Mary, in showing such wonders.
>
> AḤMAD 1891a: 309–312

Thus, similar to Khan, Aḥmad also claims that Qurʾān does not say that the clay birds ever flew much less became alive. He also presents explanations designed to show that what appears to be a violation of law of nature was not as such. However, unlike Khan who offered a single explanation, Aḥmad offers multiple ones. Furthermore, while unlike Khan's rationalization Aḥmad's rationalizations cast aspersions on Jesus's spiritual status. Aḥmad claimed that Jesus's other miracles of healing the sick and bringing the dead back to life were also done in a 'frivolous way' through the use of mesmerism (Aḥmad 1891a: 311). A downside of practicing mesmerism, argued Aḥmad, is that one loses one's prophetic power to reform society of its spiritual ills. This he said explained why

Jesus had "almost failed" to guide people to "God's oneness (*tawḥīd*)" (Aḥmad 1891b: 311).

Khan and Aḥmad were both motivated by a desire to improve Islam's status with respect to its competitors in South Asia, namely, Evangelical Christianity ushered in by the British colonials and resurgent Hindu movements including the Arya Samaj and the Shuddhi Movement (Jaffrelot 2007). However, they chose two different methods to achieve that end. Khan chose to give Islam a rational makeover to make it appear more at home in the modern scientific world. Aḥmad, on the other hand, focussed his primary efforts at critiquing Hinduism and Christianity. This is reflected in how the two employed their rationalizations of Jesus' miracles. While Khan's rationalization is intended to make Islam and the Qurʾān sound more rational, the primary purpose of Aḥmad's rationalizations is to diminish Jesus' prophetic status (who he relegates to a magician, using cheap tricks rather than true spiritual insight) relative to the prophets of Islam (including Aḥmad himself, alongside Muḥammad).

Unlike Khan, Aḥmad also claimed that Muḥammad had the power to show supernatural miracles because he did not practice mesmerism and therefore had greater spiritual powers. This enabled the Prophet Muḥammad to show 'real' miracles such as "splitting of the moon" into two (Aḥmad 1891a: 302). Contrary to Khan who denied miracles in principle, whether they were attributed to Muḥammad or to Jesus, Aḥmad denied Jesus miraculous powers while confirming them for Muḥammad. The only exception to this rule is Muḥammad's miracle of *miʿrāj*, that is, physical ascension to heaven and flight to visit Jerusalem and to heavens to meet with past prophets such as Jesus. Aḥmad denied Muḥammad this miracle, the reason for this exception being that admitting Muḥammad's physical ascension would have required admitting the possibility of Jesus' miracle of having survived crucifixion by his own physical ascension to heaven, both ascensions being described using the same terms (*rafa*) in the Islamic scriptures.

Through his 1880 publication of the first volume of his *Tafsīr*, Khan may have also become the first Muslim to deny the claim that Jesus survived crucifixion by ascending to heaven. As the excellent review by Gabriel Reynolds (2009) shows, all previous Muslim scholars who had written on the subject had unanimously agreed that God had lifted Jesus to heaven alive to save him from the disgrace of being hanged. Given Khan's stand against all supernatural events, he disagreed with all his predecessors. But instead of simply adopting the position that Jesus had been crucified and had died on the cross, he came up with a novel theory. He argued that because Jesus was hanged on a Friday afternoon, he was only up on the cross for a few hours before being taken down on account of the Sabbath (Khan 1880: 39–40). Even though the

"Jews requested that his leg bones be broken" the Romans did not do so (Khan 1880: 39). Joseph, who received his body, chose not to bury him. Instead, he covered Jesus in a shroud and hid him in a cave. Khan wrote:

> Jesus was taken down from the cross after three or four hours and it is completely possible to believe that he was still alive. At night, he was taken out of the shroud and he secretly stayed under the protection of his disciples. The disciples saw him and met him. And he died later at some unknown location. Undoubtedly, because of the Jewish enmity, he was secretly buried at an unknown location that is unknown to this day. And they popularized the idea that he has been lifted to the heavens.
>
> KHAN 1880: 41

Ten years after the publication of Khan's *Tafsīr*, in January 1891, Aḥmad, who had previously professed standard Muslim beliefs about Jesus in *Braheen*, claimed that God had recently given him divine knowledge about Jesus' survival from the cross. He said, that it had been revealed to him that "they thought that they had killed him on the cross but because they hadn't broken his bones. Thus he was saved because of the support of a faithful and a good man and he passed away after spending the rest of his days" (Aḥmad 1891b: 25). A few months later, Aḥmad added more details to this account in his book *Azala-e-Auham* (Aḥmad 1891a: 378–386). These details (and even the language used to describe them) sound remarkably similar to those published by Khan a decade earlier, though Aḥmad does add a few embellishments of his own. In Aḥmad's account Jewish leaders play a critical role. He calls them *maulvis*, the term used to refer to Muslim clerics in South Asia and argues that they were the ones who asked a reluctant Pontius Pilate for Jesus's crucifixion. He also adds the notion of a dust-storm that resulted in darkness earlier than usual to explain why Jesus was taken down so early and why his leg bones were not broken (Aḥmad 1891a: 385). In another point of departure from Khan's version, and similar to his explanation of clay birds, Aḥmad claimed that God had revealed the knowledge of Jesus' survival on crucifixion to him through *ilham* and *kashaf* (revelations): "I swear to He who holds my life in His hands that that right now and at this instant, in a divine vision (*kashaf*) the truth has been revealed to me. What I have just written is from the teachings of that True Teacher" (Aḥmad 1891a: 376).

Aḥmad's use of the term *maulvis* to refer to Jewish priests seems intentional. It was a part of his argument that he was a Messiah similar to Jesus (*misl-e-maseeh*) and was also being opposed by *maulvis* of his time just as the original Messiah had been. He argued that because of these the similarities between

him and Jesus, his coming had fulfilled Prophet Muḥammad's prophecy about the second coming of Jesus at the end of times. Jesus had come 1400 years after Moses, and Aḥmad had come 1400 years after Muḥammad. Muslim *ʿulamā'* had gone astray similar to Jewish priests and thus Islam needed a reformer. The British government in India was benevolent similar to the Roman government in Israel in the time of Jesus.

5   Prayers

Khan believed that Islam was more a rational and logical religion than Christianity and Hinduism-Islam's primary competitors in nineteenth century South Asia. The irrational elements (such as supernatural miracle stories) had crept into Islam from other religions. Ridding Islam of the supernatural elements to make it more logical and rational is the best way to demonstrate its superiority. Aḥmad's diagnosis of Islam's ills (as he laid it out in *Braheen*) was very different from that of Khan's. Aḥmad believed that Islam's primary distinction from other religions was that it brought humans into a relationship with a living God who listened to their prayers and responded to them. Aḥmad claimed that God regularly talked to him and told him of future events. In *Braheen*, he challenged non-Muslims to visit Qāḍiān and spend a few months in his company to witness these miraculous events, even promising them a payment of 10,000 rupees if they had no supernatural experiences (Aḥmad 1880).

Aḥmad criticized Khan for denying miracles shown by Muslims, in particular the Prophet Muḥammad. He joined his friend and Ahl-e-Ḥadīth leader Baṭālvī in arguing that Khan was engaged in dangerous *bidʿa* by doing so and mocked him as a 'naturie' who uncritically followed the Western Orientalists in maligning Islam. Aḥmad accused Khan of "leading astray a large number of Muslims" and bringing "them to the brink of heresy and atheism by undermining the sanctity of the revelation of prophethood" (Aḥmad 1893: 33). Given Aḥmad's attempt to establish prayer as a point of distinction for Islam, it is understandable that he was not delighted at Khan's assertions that prayers (Christian or Muslim) do not have any impact on the outcome of an event. In 1893, Aḥmad penned *Barakat-ud-dua* (Blessings of Prayer) in "refutation of the concepts of Sayed Aḥmad Khan Sahib." Aḥmad's basic argument in Barakat was to present incidents from his personal life where he believed that his prayers had been answered by God. He also reissued his challenge from *Braheen*, inviting those who were skeptical of the power of prayer to come to Qāḍiān and see it for themselves. He added a personal invitation to Khan:

stay in my company for a few months. Having been appointed by God and being the bearer of glad tidings, I promise that I will concentrate (in prayer) so that Sayyid Sahib may be satisfied. I do hope that God Almighty will manifest such a sign that Sayyid Sahib's proposed law of nature will be brought to naught in no time.

AḤMAD 1893: 22

Khan never acknowledged the existence of Aḥmad's 'refutation' much less responded to it. Such was their relationship. The fact that Aḥmad acknowledged having read Khan's books prior to 1893 through his refutation leaves the possibility open that he may have read them prior to 1891 when he first published his own rationalistic interpretations of Jesus's crucifixion. Given the unequal power between the two men in 1893, Aḥmad was probably able to anticipate Khan's non-response. So he decided to pray for Khan and his followers even without Khan's acceptance of Aḥmad's challenge or a visit to Qāḍiān: "God Almighty may wash away this cursed naturalism from the hearts of Muslims, so that no stain of it may be left" (Aḥmad 1893: 34). Khan passed away in 1898, and ten years later, Aḥmad followed.

The religious movement founded by Aḥmad, known as Jamāʿat-e-Aḥmadiyya has been led by a Khalifa since Aḥmad's demise. The movement claims millions of adherents in India, Pakistan, East Asia, Western Africa, Europe and North America. Khan today is primarily remembered as an educationalist rather than as a religious reformer. While few people read his Qurʾānic exegesis, the college he founded in Aligarh continues to educate thousands of Muslim students in Western sciences as do an uncountable number of other schools, colleges, and universities across South Asia. Far fewer Muslims today see Islam and Western science as polar opposites than in the nineteenth century. Thus, both social identity entrepreneurs can be said to have achieved some success in achieving their goals.

6   Conclusion

The Aḥmadiyya Muslim Jamāʿat with its belief in prophethood for its founder Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, has long been considered an enigma by scholars of South Asian Islam. This chapter complements recent attempts to understand various influences on Aḥmad's thoughts. It explores the influence of rationalistic reform movement led by Khan. I perform a careful comparison of their writings to explore the similarities and differences and analyse why Aḥmad employed rationalistic techniques sometimes but not at other times and why.

Taken in conjunction with recent work, such as that of Friedman (1992) and Khan (2015) that explains that Aḥmad's claims about a high spiritual status were not entirely out of line with those made by Ṣūfis such as Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindi, and that Aḥmad's anti-*taqlīd* beliefs were not entirely out of line with those of Ahl-e-Ḥadīth (Upal 2016), I argue here that Aḥmad's rationalist beliefs were not entirely out of line with those of Khan's naturalism. Aḥmad was certainly unique in his combination of these strands and Aḥmadiyya Jamāʿat is certainly in a unique position among Islam inspired movements as fiercely clinging to their identity as Muslims while believing in a prophet after Muḥammad. Despite these claims or perhaps because of them, Aḥmadiyya Muslims are persecuted in many Muslim majority countries around the world. This is especially true in Pakistan where the movement was based until 1984 (it has been based out of London, UK since 1984). Pakistan's constitution was modified twice (in 1974 and 1984) to make propagation and practice of Aḥmadiyya beliefs a punishable offense. The anti-Aḥmadiyya hostility is not limited to the government but is widespread among Pakistani public. This means that they also face widespread discrimination in the private job market, admissions to educational institutions, as well as in public service.

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The Nation of Islam

Edward E. Curtis IV

1 Introduction

Established in 1930 in Detroit, Michigan, by W.D. Fard Muhammad (1893–?), the Nation of Islam (henceforth NOI) grew after World War II to be the most important and controversial Islamic new religious movement in the United States and the Anglophobe Black world. Tens of thousands, perhaps over one hundred thousand African Americans joined the movement, but it garnered the sympathy and tacit support of many more African Americans for its emphasis on Black pride and self-determination. By the 1970s, the number of NOI religious congregations numbered seventy, and its businesses generated tens of millions of dollars in revenue (Curtis 2006: 2–4).

The NOI taught that Islam was the original religion of Black people stolen from them during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and beckoned them to abandon Christianity, which the movement said had bound them in both physical and mental chains. Introducing an original form of Islamic religion that interpreted historically Islamic traditions through the prophecies of its charismatic leader, Elijah Muhammad, the NOI advocated separate Black businesses, schools, neighborhoods, and a state. Though it used revolutionary theological rhetoric, it eschewed both war and violence. Instead, the NOI focused on achieving its goals through the reformation of Black American minds and bodies. Membership in the NOI required careful study and practice of Elijah Muhammad's teachings, which combined Islamic themes with twentieth-century metaphysical religion, including a belief in UFOs, to produce a version of Islam that included novel theological, cosmological, and eschatological doctrines as well devotion to a strict code of middle-class, socially conservative ethics (Curtis 2016). From an historically Islamic perspective, one of the most controversial of these teachings was the belief that W.D. Fard was God in the flesh, and that Elijah Muhammad was the Messenger of God—a claim that contradicted both Sunnī and Shīʿa Islamic traditions (Curtis 2006: 10–14).

Though representing a tiny sliver of the global Muslim community, the men and women of the NOI played an outsized role in US politics as they voiced some of the fiercest and most effective opposition to US imperialism,

especially the Vietnam War, in the twentieth century. This chapter will detail the NOI's origins and development, paying attention to important charismatic figures such as Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. It will then outline its religious teachings and practices. Finally, it will detail the split of the movement into two main branches after the death of leader Elijah Muhammad in 1975; one led by W.D. Mohammed and the other led by Louis Farrakhan.

2   NOI Origins and Development

Scholars continue to debate the background of the NOI's mysterious founder, W.D. Fard or Farad Muhammad (Evanzz 2001; Turner 2003). An itinerant sales-man who went door-to-door in Black Detroit, Fard peddled Oriental silks and shared secrets with his clients about their origins. He told them that they were originally from the Holy City of Mecca in Arabia, and their original language was Arabic. Echoing the claims of Black intellectuals such as Edward W. Blyden and many African American religious and cultural leaders of the 1920s, Fard linked the history of Black people to Islamic civilisation. He established a tem-ple devoted to this teaching in Detroit, where Elijah Poole Muhammad (1897–1975) of Sandersville, Georgia, became his student and an important aide. But by 1934, Fard had permanently left Detroit, and after some struggle for the lead-ership of the group, Elijah Muhammad emerged as its leader (Clegg 1997).

Even though Elijah Muhammad gave credit for all of his teachings to W.D. Fard, claiming that his prophecies came directly from God Himself, it seems clear from historical records that many of the Messenger's teachings were passed on to organisation members long after Fard had left. One of these doc-trines, for example, may have been the claim that Fard was Allāh, or God, in person. It is more likely that Fard believed he was the Christian Messiah and the Islamic Mahdī, figures who, according to Islamic tradition, will appear near the time when the world will end. This idea has been circulating among vari-ous African American new religious movements of the 1920s, and members of the Aḥmadiyya movement had been making such claims about their own founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, for decades (Curtis 2002: 63–84).

More than any other person, Elijah Muhammad was responsible for the unique teachings of the NOI. Raised during the Jim Crow era of racial segre-gation in the Deep South, Elijah Muhammad traveled north during the Great Migration of over one million and half people between World Wars I and II. He worked alongside African Americans and immigrants alike at the Chevy Axle Company but became unemployed during the Great Depression, when

he met Fard. After Fard left in 1934, Elijah Muhammad not only faced competition for the leadership of the movement but also ran afoul of federal authorities (Curtis 2002: 63–84).

Like many African American leaders of both traditional and new religious movements, Elijah Muhammad was investigated by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for sedition. For FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, almost any agitation for equal rights was seen as potentially seditious. But Hoover was especially concerned about the advocacy of many new religious movement leaders such as Mittie Maud Lena Gordon on behalf of the Empire of Japan. Elijah Muhammad was also implicated as a possible ally of the Japanese, whom he considered to be fellow people of color. But the government managed to convict him only of draft evasion, not sedition (Curtis 2013).

As he served time in a federal penitentiary from 1943 to 1946, his spouse, Clara Muhammad, is credited with keeping the movement's members connected to its leader and to keeping the movement alive. It was after Elijah Muhammad emerged from prison that the movement distinguished itself from the dozens of Islamic groups and new religious movements seeking the patronage of African Americans. As the United States emerged as a predominant global power that advocated freedom of religion and speech and economic opportunity in its Cold War with the Soviet Union, the NOI attempted to expose the white supremacist social system that used both legal and extralegal means to insure the second-class citizenship of Black people in the United States. Elijah Muhammad criticised African American civil rights leaders saying that their advocacy of racial integration would not correct the problem, and he advocated instead religious and political separatism. He instructed his followers to avoid service in the US military and he told them not to vote in elections. As one of the chief US critics the civil rights movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Elijah Muhammad did not share Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of racial brotherhood with the people whom he called "blue-eyed devils." Instead, Elijah Muhammad dreamed of racial justice, which he said would come when God would send fire and brimstone to destroy white America in an imminent racial apocalypse. Since God would eventually see justice done, Elijah Muhammad taught, it was not the job of his followers to stage a violent revolution against white America. He told them to obey US laws unless they conflicted with their freedom to practice their religion. Though the NOI advocated self-defense, the movement did not advocate aggressive violence and it did utilise the US courts to defend its religious liberty, especially the rights of Muslim prisoners to practice Islam (Curtis 2002: 63–84).

This lack of a direct challenge to the US political system and white neocolonialism more generally was a frustration for Malcolm X (1922–1965), Elijah

Muhammad's chief lieutenant. Born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, Malcolm X converted to the NOI while in prison, and became the movement's most effective organiser and spokesperson during the 1950s. Serving as an NOI minister at Temple No. 7 in Harlem, New York, Malcolm X helped to link the movement to the burgeoning Afro-Asian solidarity and non-aligned movements of developing countries that opposed both US and Soviet interference in their internal affairs. Malcolm X articulated the dreams of many Black Americans for pan-Africanism, the movement to create cultural and political unity among all people of African descent. He was also a strong supporter of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, whom he later saw as a model Muslim political leader (Curtis 2015). As a result of his fiery rhetoric and his intellectual creativity, Malcolm X became a media fascination, especially after Mike Wallace of CBS News featured him as part of a 1959 television special on the movement entitled *The Hate that Hate Produced*. Like other liberals, including the Rev. Dr King, Mike Wallace explained the popularity of the NOI as the product of poor race relations or what sociologist of religion C. Eric Lincoln would analyze in *The Black Muslims in America* (1961) as a form of psychological and social compensation and the expression of black resentment (Lincoln 1961).

In 1963, Elijah Muhammad suspended Malcolm X for disobeying an order not to comment on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Malcolm X formerly separated from the NOI in 1964, when he converted to Sunnī Islam and went on the *ḥajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca. He took a new name, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz. Shabazz also toured several sub-Saharan African countries but devoted even more time to studying Islamic religion in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Freed from the constraints of the NOI, he founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity and articulated the need for revolution and the use of violence if necessary to free Black and other oppressed people from oppression, racism, and neocolonialism. At the same time, Malik Shabazz sought to develop his New York-based Muslim Mosque, Inc., into a viable African American Sunnī Muslim organisation. But before either organisation could develop further, Shabazz was assassinated in February 1965 (Curtis 2015).

As significant as Malcolm X's assassination was, it did not impede the growth of the NOI in the second half of the 1960s. The NOI's most famous convert, world heavyweight-boxing champion Muhammad Ali, remained loyal to Elijah Muhammad and when, in 1967, at the height of the Vietnam War, he refused to be inducted into the US Army, the NOI gained stature among people of color around the world as a space of radical protest against US foreign policy and especially military occupation in the developing world. Ali claimed that it went against his religious principles to fight in Vietnam and he decried the

hypocrisy of a US government trying to protect freedom abroad when it had not achieved freedom at home for Black people. Ali's boxing license was taken away, and like his leader Elijah Muhammad, he prepared to face prison time rather than serving in the US military. Even as the NOI continued to avoid any direct challenge to the state, the symbolic protest of Ali's refusal to fight and his reasons for not doing so were viewed by supporters and detractors alike as a form of radical politics (Curtis 2006: 1–14).

3   NOI as a Religious Organisation

Public figures such as Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali helped to produce popular, scholarly, media, and governmental images of the NOI as a radical political group. And NOI made a significant political impact in postwar US history. But such images often cloud or even overshadow the strongly religious character of a movement that rested on clearly articulated religious doctrines, a charismatic prophet, religious ethics, a system of rituals, and a vibrant material religious culture. Examining these religious elements and how they intersected with or were coterminous with the movement's politics are essential to understanding why the NOI worked as a mass movement. The NOI offered its followers meaning and purpose and a clear path toward religious liberation.

The first step toward this liberation, Elijah Muhammad taught, was knowledge of self; the real history of Black man that white people had suppressed. Many members who converted to the NOI said and wrote that they found Islam to be a more rational and scientific religion than Christianity. Even if many of the theological claims of the NOI were no more based on modern science than those of many Christian groups, NOI members presented their religion as grounded in material reality. They criticised the doctrine of the Trinity (the Christian belief that God is three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) as irrational. Their belief that God was a human being, not some "spook in space," exemplified the NOI belief that their religion was grounded in fact rather than fiction. The same was true for their belief that heaven and heaven were not actual places, but states of mind—a belief shared by many other metaphysical religions in the twentieth century (Curtis 2006: 16–24).

NOI catechisms entitled 'Actual Facts', the 'Rules of Islam', and 'Student Enrollment', memorised by both male and female followers, offered both astronomical fact and cosmological theory. For example, 'Actual Facts' detailed the various distances between planets in the solar system and the Sun as well as the total square mileage of land on the Earth. In explaining the separation of the Moon from the Earth, this catechism credited a scientist with creating an

explosion sixty-six trillion years ago. Indeed, the belief that scientists' mastery of technology was behind most cosmological events was central to Elijah Muhammad's thought. Like Christian fundamentalists, he agreed with the idea that the current historical dispensation, or the reign of white civilisation, began 6,000 years ago, but he argued that the actual origins of humanity—that is, Black humanity—could be dated to trillions of years ago (Curtis 2016).

No matter how esoteric Elijah Muhammad's teachings may have seemed to those outside the movement, these lessons attempted to give concrete reasons for the relative lack of social, cultural, and political power among Black people, and offer the means to Black empowerment. The fullest published expression of his theology was in his 1965 opus, *Message to the Blackman in America*. In explaining the origins of slavery and racism, Elijah Muhammad offered a unique myth, sometimes called 'the Myth of Yacub'. Referring to archeological and anthropological discoveries on the African continent, Elijah Muhammad said that the original man—the first human species—was Black. These Black people, who followed the religion of Islam, lived in Mecca, he said, where they existed in an Edenic state. But a mad scientist named Yacub began the process of genetically engineering the white man, who was naturally brutish and rapacious. White people eventually conquered the Black people, and Black/Muslims forgot their language, Arabic, and their true religion. They adopted the religion of their slave masters. These enslaved Black people gave up their dignified, respectable behaviors, the Messenger taught. They ate poorly, became sexually promiscuous, became lazy, and accepted their lot in life. But God would not abandon God's people. The appearance of W.D. Fard to Elijah Muhammad promised to change this history. Commissioned by Fard to "mentally resurrect" Black people, Elijah Muhammad would bring Black people back to Islam. They would separate from their slave masters and live righteously again. They could again live in a state of heavenly contentment if they would follow the Messenger's strict program of self-improvement (Muhammad 1972; Curtis 2006: 68–93).

Much of this ethical program of uplift focused on strengthening, purifying, and disciplining the Black body, which was tied to the fate of the entire Black race. For example, members of the NOI devoted a great deal of energy to their diet. According to Elijah Muhammad, NOI Muslims should avoid all pork and liquor—like other Muslims—but also the foods that came to be associated with the shameful legacy of slavery such as "lima beans, butter beans, black-eyed peas, green cabbage collard greens, pinto beans, kidney beans, brown field beans, cornbread, carp, catfish, crustaceans, mollusks, rabbit, possum, squirrel, [and] coon" (Curtis 2006: 98). Other beans were fine, and indeed the movement became known for selling bean pies, which were often made from

navy beans. Red meat should be limited, and the Messenger exhorted followers to give up refined sugar, which, he said, was increasing diabetes among African Americans. He also asked followers to limit their overall caloric in-take and eat only one meal a day. Ramadan was practiced in the movement, but during Advent rather than during the actual Islamic (lunar) month of Ramadan. Elijah Muhammad explained that a Yuletide practice of Ramadan would help focus his followers' attention on Islam rather than Christianity during the holiday season. Eventually, all of the Messenger's teachings on diet were compiled into a monograph entitled *How to Eat to Live* (1972). Various columns and letters in the movement newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*, outlined the health advantages of following this diet, and many believers testified to how following a strict diet could cure various bodily ailments (Curtis 2006: 98–109).

In addition to providing guidelines on how to eat, the movement became an incubator of food businesses that focused on providing healthy and wholesome food to the Black community overall. Elijah Muhammad himself owned several farms, a dairy, a meat processing plant, and by the 1970s, a multi-million dollar fish import business called Whiting H & G. NOI followers were not only employed in these businesses but also established their own restaurants, bakeries, and groceries. Women in the NOI became known for selling homemade goods, especially the bean pie, around NOI places of worship, during NOI events, and in their homes and neighborhoods (Curtis 2006: 98–109).

Dress, fashion, and adornment were also essential to the NOI's focus on the ethics of the Black body. Unlike the teachings on food, many of these teachings emphasised the movement's central focus on properly gendered nature of male and female Black bodies. In the case of both men and women, Black Muslims were to dress in a respectable, dignified, and modest manner. But much of the discussion of dress in the movement centered on women's bodies. Many female writers in the *Muhammad Speaks* beckoned women to stop imitating what they regarded as white fashions. They proclaimed that wearing cosmetics and short skirts, bleaching skin, and dying hair obscured the natural beauty of Black women. Eschewing conventional fashion was a religious issue, as Sister Beverly 3X wrote in a poem: "Years ago, hemlines were not too short, but the clothes fit tight / I thought I was really all right. / A stone fox? No! An ignorant fool, following the devil's evil rule" (Curtis 2006: 114). Elijah Muhammad went even further when African American women in the 1970s began to wear afros. He banned them from the movement, and one of his female columnists said that African people did not actually wear their hair in this manner. To be naturally Black, it was said, was to be more civilised than wearing 'savage' styles like the afro.

As much as dress and fashion focused on the female Black body, the NOI's program of moral reform concerning sexuality and reproduction did so even more. The official teaching of the movement was that men and women were equally responsible for sexual morality, which was defined as heterosexual married monogamy. Men in the movement were shamed and punished for sex outside wedlock and for adultery, especially with white women. But it was once again women's bodies that were often the focus of the NOI's official teachings about sexuality. *Muhammad Speaks* discussed women's bodies as the field in which the seeds of the Black nation must be planted. Elijah Muhammad talked about birth control as a form of Black genocide. Women were told to have large families in order to repopulate the race. Not all women in the movement followed the teachings about birth control, but it is also clear that patriarchy of the NOI was attractive to many of its female members. In the 1960s and 1970s, African American women remained extremely vulnerable to sexual violence from both white and African American men. The promise of physical protection, which sometimes included escorts from the home to the mosque, made some NOI women feel safe. Moreover, Black women's safety was under threat from the state. One primary example of state violence against African American women was forced sterilisation, especially of poor African American women. This is one of the key contexts in which to understand why, even as second-wave feminism and the movement for the Equal Rights Amendment gained ground, tens of thousands of African American women would choose to support a sexually conservative movement like the NOI (Curtis 2006: 118–130).

Men and women also often operated inside the movement in separate spheres. Men participated in the Fruit of Islam, a fraternal organisation that insured movement discipline, provided security for NOI events, and arranged for the selling of movement newspapers. The Fruit of Islam was organised in military fashion: men inside the group possessed various military ranks and they were taught military salutes and protocols. The Fruit, as they were sometimes called, were much more than a self-defense force. It provided a male space for the teaching of NOI religious texts and catechisms as well as activities such as woodworking. In the 1960s and 1970s, members were told to sell a certain number of copies of *Muhammad Speaks* newspapers each week, and sometimes developed entertaining, even aggressive sales techniques to hawk their newspapers on the streets of Black America. NOI women were enrolled in Muslim Girls Training-General Civilization, which taught cooking, sewing, spelling, penmanship, hygiene, child-rearing, and other subjects thought to be essential to being a wife and mother. Women sometimes learned to march in military fashion and maintained various military ranks. Like the Fruit, Muslim

Girls Training enforced the ethical commandments of Elijah Muhammad, punishing those who wore the wrong clothes or had sex out of wedlock. Indeed, Sister Captains, as they were called, could be known to be harsh toward those under their authority. But there is also ample evidence that women often resisted their authority or simply ignored them (Curtis 2006: 132–153).

In addition to establishing its own businesses and groups such as the Fruit of Islam, the NOI created what was in the 1960s was the largest Muslim parochial system in the United States. Called the 'University of Islam', dozens of private schools offered a regular school curriculum in addition to classes on Arabic language and the religious teachings of Elijah Muhammad. The leaders of this school system were women, many of whom had professional experience in the public-school system. Though the schools enforced the socially conservative gender norms of the movement, they also encouraged both male and female achievement. Various issues of *Muhammad Speaks* featured the achievements of girls not only in subjects such as English and home economics, but also in math and science. The prominence of female educational leaders and award-winning female students in University of Islam system are important indicators of the schools' commitment to the public presence of Muslim women and girls within the community itself (Curtis 2006: 153–160).

Bodily discipline, Black knowledge, punctuality, modesty, patriarchy—and pageantry—were also featured in the public-facing ritual gatherings of the NOI. The ritual highlight of the year was Saviour's Day, the annual celebration of W.D. Fard on 26 February. Thousands of NOI members would come from across the country, joined by visitors, to celebrate the day in Chicago. In 1965, for example, attendees were able to observe an exhibition by boxer Muhammad Ali, testimonies from members of the Fruit of Islam and Muslim Girls Training, jazz music from Osman Karriem, and addresses by the Messenger himself. In addition to attending the Saviour's Day celebration, thousands of Muslims traveled long distances to see their leader in various rallies across the country. These carefully choreographed rallies treated Elijah Muhammad like a head of state as the Fruit of Islam carefully escorted him to the podium and maintained their posts with great discipline throughout the leader's long lectures (Curtis 2006: 160–167).

Unlike African American Christian preachers who use what has been called the 'chanted sermon', Elijah Muhammad possessed a plain-speaking style, sometimes even stuttering as explained his teachings. His charisma did not come from his own personal style, but rather from the sobriety and truth that his words illustrated. Elijah Muhammad embodied his own critique of what he regarded as Black Christianity's emotionalism. To many outsiders, Muhammad was regarded as a boring, often rambling speaker. His charisma came instead

from the respect and devotion of tens of thousands to his prophetic utterances and his person. They regarded him a genuine prophet, and if his teachings did not make sense on an initial hearing, this was the result of their lack of understanding, not his lack of explanatory skill (Curtis 2006: 160–167).

Toward the end of his life, Elijah Muhammad began to make plain or perhaps reinterpret the meanings of some of his prophecies. This was especially true for his prophecy that the world would be destroyed by a Mother Plane, which he compared to Ezekiel's wheel (Ezekiel 1:16). Like his teachings about the origins of the Earth and of humankind, his proclamations about the end of white America were heavily invested in technological explanations of salvation history. In 1972, during a television interview, he revealed that the end of white supremacy would not equate into the end of white people. "I must tell the truth," he explained. "there will be no such thing as the elimination of all white people from the earth." In his other works, including *The Supreme Wisdom* (1957) and *The Fall of America* (1973), the Messenger explained or at the least implied that what would be eliminated was not white people, but the whiteness in people—the genetic or moral poison that created racism and violence. The appearance of the Mother Ship would be like medicine. The Mother Ship would reign down fire upon humanity, but such fire was a spiritual technology of righteousness. If people were willing to take this spiritual medicine, humankind could rediscover its Blackness, that is, its original goodness, and live in peace and harmony. Though the NOI did much to further a dark and angry religious vision of the racial apocalypse, Elijah Muhammad's religious teaching was in the end a utopian vision of human solidarity (Curtis 2016).

4   NOI Sects after the Death of the Messenger

In February 1975, Elijah Muhammad died, and though he never publicly named a successor, it was son, Wallace D. Muhammad (also spelled W.D. Mohammed, 1933–2008) who emerged as the NOI leader at that year's Saviour's Day convention. In just a few short years, Imam Mohammed, as he would eventually be known, radically altered key characteristics of the movement. In short, he transformed the NOI from a new religious movement into an African American Sunnī Muslim religious denomination. Mohammed abandoned the NOI profession of belief in W.D. Fard as God and his father as a prophet. In its place, the leader asked his follower to recite the *shahada*, or the profession of belief that there is no god but God and Muḥammad (of Arabia) is the Messenger of God. He instructed his followers to pray five times a day, to observe the holy month of fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan, and to go on *ḥajj*. Mohammed

also eventually disbanded the Fruit of Islam and Muslim Girls Training, partly because he no longer wanted to use these groups to enforce the strict moral rules of the movement. From this point on, believers would answer to God and their own conscience for their behavior (Curtis 2002: 107–127).

Mohammed's approach to US politics and society was just as radical. Like his father before him, Mohammed had refused to serve in the US military and spent time in prison rather than take even a non-combat role. But as a leader, Imam Mohammed encouraged his followers to volunteer for military service. Over the next few decades, many of his followers would become the most highly ranked Muslim members of the US military and Imam Mohammed himself would be honored at the Pentagon, the Department of Defense head-quarters, for his commitment to the US military after the first Gulf War. The Imam even introduced US flags in NOI mosques (Curtis 2002: 107–127).

Instead of encouraging racial separatism, Imam Mohammed invited white people to join the NOI, and participated in various interfaith cooperation efforts, most prominently in the Roman Catholic Focolare movement. To sym-bolise the new stance of the NOI, Imam Mohammed changed the name of the group to the World Community of al-Islam in the West. The organisation would go through more name changes, being called the American Muslim Mission and the American Society of Muslims until eventually it became known simply as the W.D. Mohammed community. Mohammed also divested himself of his father's business empire, and eventually handed over control of all mosque properties to each congregation. He did not wish to be in charge of a business, he said; he wanted to be a religious leader (Curtis 2002: 107–127).

There were also some continuities with his father's NOI. Imam Mohammed continued to stress the appeal of the movement to African Americans and cel-ebrated historical Black achievements in Islamic and US history. The 1970s wit-nessed a popular Black ethnic revival, and Imam Mohammed participated in the movement to honor African American roots by asking his followers to call themselves 'Bilalians', after the Black companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and first prayer-caller of Islam, the freedman, Bilal ibn Rabah. The name of the newspaper was also changed from *Muhammad Speaks* to *Bilalian News*. Imam Mohammed renamed the parochial schools of the movement, calling them the Clara Muhammad Schools after his mother, whom he discussed as an impor-tant African American historical figure (Curtis 2002: 107–127).

All of these changes were called the 'Second Resurrection' and Imam Mohammed told NOI members that W.D. Fard and his father had intended for them to occur all along. Many, if not most NOI members stayed with him through these changes. As NOI businesses ceased operations and the entre-preneurial activities tied to each congregation declined, followers nonetheless

expressed palpable excitement over the change and committed themselves with fervor to observing Sunnī Islamic religious practices.

But some members rejected Imam Mohammed's changes, and the most important of these dissidents was Minister Louis Farrakhan (b. 1933). Minister Farrakhan rose to prominence in the NOI as Elijah Muhammad's chief spokesperson after Malcolm X left the movement in the 1960s, and he was rumored to have been one of the candidates to lead the movement after Elijah Muhammad died. He publicly declared his allegiance to W.D. Mohammed in 1975, but by 1978, broke with the new leader because of the radical departure from NOI teachings (Curtis 2002: 129–135).

Minister Farrakhan set about rebuilding a version of the original NOI based on the original teachings. In 1979, Minister Farrakhan established a newspaper, *The Final Call*, and bow-tied Fruit of Islam members could once again be seen in urban, African American neighborhoods offering it for sale. He eventually purchased Elijah Muhammad's home in Chicago and the NOI's largest mosque in Chicago, which he renamed Mosque Maryam. He also set about rebuilding movement businesses, and the Fruit of Islam became a private security service for hire, gaining some contracts to protect public housing programs. A significant number of African Americans who lived in neighborhoods affected by the drug epidemic of the 1980s praised their performance; the Fruit of Islam symbolised and helped to further Black safety and dignity. Farrakhan also became a vocal critic of gang-banging and of how AIDS was disproportionately killing Black people. He advocated the practice of a clean living, socially conservative, and patriarchy as solutions for these social problems, but also blamed the US government and racism as the agents behind the problems of African Americans (Gardell 1996).

Farrakhan's NOI was just as uncompromising a critic of the US government as Elijah Muhammad's NOI had been, though Farrakhan still told followers to obey US laws and avoid any revolutionary activities. Like Elijah Muhammad's NOI, the new organisation sought ties with foreign Muslim governments, including those of Qaddafi's Libya and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the 1980s, the group was highly critical of Jewish anti-Black racism. Farrakhan's anti-Semitic comments—and those of other NOI ministers—sparked outrage among Jewish Americans, and the Southern Poverty Law Center, a liberal American think-tank that tracks racist groups, eventually labeled the new NOI a "hate group" (Gardell 1996).

But this public opprobrium did not lessen Farrakhan's appeal to many African Americans. Though his NOI remained a small movement in terms of card-carrying members, perhaps numbering in the tens of thousands at its height, Farrakhan himself and the movement's resistance to white supremacy

appealed to a far larger number of Black Americans, thousands of whom would travel to see Farrakhan speak in various US cities. His greatest success in this regard was the 1995 Million Man March in Washington, D.C., where hundreds of thousands of Black men would crowd the nation's mall not only to protest anti-Black racism but also to renew their commitments to themselves and other Black men for unity and self-improvement. Farrakhan's address delved into numerology and Freemasonry, but the bulk of the address outlined a multi-step program for personal improvement. His leadership of the march also represented a turn toward more inter-racial and ecumenical thinking. The Unification Church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon cosponsored the march, and Minister Farrakhan addressed people of all races in calling for world peace and justice. Quoting from the Qurʾān, he proclaimed that one race is not superior to another: "It doesn't matter what your color is, your race is, with God it is righteousness that He is after" (Curtis 2002: 132).

Minister Farrakhan both perpetuated and further interpreted the metaphysical doctrines of Elijah Muhammad. The Mother Plane, or Mother Ship, played an especially important role in Farrakhan's thought and religious experience. In 1985, while in Mexico, Farrakhan described a religion vision in which he was transported to the Mother Ship, where he heard the voice of Elijah Muhammad. This spiritual vision was interpreted as a sign that God had chosen Farrakhan to lead his people in the final days. In the twenty-first century, Farrakhan made an alliance with the Church of Scientology, and various members of the NOI engaged in a Scientology practice called auditing, which focuses on self-knowledge. The two organisations' interest in science, technology, and especially extra-terrestrial beings became a common ground for cooperation, and demonstrated the seriousness of the NOI's long history as what some students of new religious movements have called "UFO religion" (Curtis 2016).

In viewing Farrakhan and the NOI as beyond the pale of Sunnī Islamic orthodoxy and US liberalism in the twentieth-first century, critics sometimes missed the important changes that Farrakhan introduced to the NOI movement since recreating the group in the late 1970s. While still maintaining the NOI's unique Islamic theology, Farrakhan also introduced traditional Islamic Friday congregational prayers at Mosque Maryam. Like W.D. Mohammed, he asked believers to celebrate the month of fasting not during Christmas time but during the regular Islamic month of Ramadan. He invited W.D. Mohammed to NOI events, and members of both W.D. Mohammed's and Farrakhan's communities have worked together on various projects, including contemporary efforts to insert a strong African American voice into discussions of Muslim American identity. The NOI has cooperated across racial lines, especially with

other new religious movements, and remains an important religious organisation and social institution in African America (Gardell 1996).

5   Conclusion

As a movement, the NOI has remained a vital element of the US religious scene for decades. During that time, the NOI has changed the course of US history through its political activities. Joining many Muslims and the voices of African, Asians, and Latin Americans, the NOI rose to prominence as a part of a broader wave of opposition to white supremacy and neocolonialism. It was also a small, but vibrant new religious movement that developed a unique form of Islamic religion practiced by hundreds of thousands of African Americans since 1930. Its legacy not only encompasses those who have remained committed to the religious prophecies of Elijah Muhammad but also those African Americans Muslims who have transitioned from the NOI to African American Sunnī Muslim communities.

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The Moorish Science Temple of America

Fathie Ali Abdat

1 Introduction

Scholars of African-American Islam usually view the Moorish Science Temple of America as a peculiar religious sect.[1] This is understandable given the treacherous terrain that must be traversed to understand the Moorish[2] Science Temple of America (henceforth MSTA). Early source materials on the movement remain scant, its religious creeds tangled in esoteric eclecticism, and their followers' narrations bewilderingly conflict one other. Yet, it remains vital to critically examine the MSTA given its significance as one of the earliest pan-American Islamic organisations in the twentieth century, one that influenced other communities it came into contact with. Thus, Edward Curtis IV, a doyen of African-American Islamic studies, has advocated the need for a re-examination of the MSTA through a more critical lens of "cultural history" and away from the straightjacket of it being a deviant heretical group (Curtis IV 2009). This chapter takes up this challenge by analysing the MSTA at the interstices of hagiography and heresiography and historicising how the MSTA as a genuine spiritual community reinvented and restyled its orientation over the decades through its ebbs and flows in its quest for respectability, relevance, and salvation.

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1 I am indebted to several individuals for their unwavering support in my study of this religious movement. Patrick D. Bowen was extremely generous in sharing his repository of primary and secondary source materials on this movement. I also extend my sincerest appreciation to Professor Jacob Dorman for rekindling my academic interest in African-American Islamic history. Along this journey, I feel humble to have had countless Moorish Science Temple of America believers share with me their stories, experiences and histories. In particular, Sharif Anael-Bey has been very helpful to me in the writing this chapter.

2 Within the literature of the movement, the term 'Moor' is an elastic, amorphous identity-signifier that concomitantly refers genealogically (to the ancient Biblical community of Moabites), historically (to the golden age of Islamic Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages) and geo-politically (to the modern nation-state of Morocco).

2   Noble Drew Ali

Most literature on the founding prophet of the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), Noble Drew Ali (1886–1929), has either treated his murky origins cursorily or hagiographically exaggerated and romanticised his roots. Recent fortuitous discoveries of Drew's pre-Moorish documents have enabled historians to reconstruct a more empirical account of the Moorish prophet. While tampering with Drew's legacy could open a Pandora's box, with unforeseen circumstances that would bring no discernible benefit to contemporary Moorish-American Sheiks, the MSTA laity deserves knowledge of its genuine historical past unencumbered from crudely constructed myths (Wilson 1993).

Newly unearthed census and city records disclosed that dogmatic MSTA narrations on Drew's genealogical roots were specious. Drew Ali was born Thomas Drew on January 8, 1886 in Norfolk, Virginia. By 1898, he was adopted by James Washington Drew and Lucy Drew, an African-American couple residing in 411 Princess Anne Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia (United States Federal Census 1900). As a teenager, the illiterate Drew worked as a common labourer, rural farmhand, and wharf longshoreman in the southern port city to supplement his adopted parents' wages (Abdat 2014). However, like many black Norfolk laborers, the Drews were paid little, and could not catapult themselves into the black bourgeois class.

As such, Drew explored new prospects in other cities plying his trade first as a porter in Richmond, Virginia in 1916 and then as a shipyard labourer for the Submarine Boat Corporation in Newark, New Jersey, answering America's call in the industrial war effort. On September 12, 1918, Drew reported to a public school in Bruce Street, Newark, New Jersey for the Third Draft registration as part of the volunteer-conscripted American army in the Great War. A routine medical examination revealed "badly burnt" forearm muscles (United States WWI Draft Registration Card 1918) and Drew subsequently failed the criteria for induction. After World War I, the company folded leaving Drew unemployed.

In large part, between 1916 and 1923, Drew resided in 181 Warren Street, Newark, New Jersey together with Louisa Gaines, a married Virginian, in a mixed neighbourhood. Drew alternated between working in a barber shop and as "street preacher" (United States Federal Census 1920). For the latter, Drew attired himself in a loosely fitting multi-colored gown, covered his head with a brilliant purple hood and cosmetically redesigned himself as "Professor Thomas Drew, the Egyptian Adept Student," an East Indian from Virginia who ate nails and cured blind soldiers. His vast clientele sought him for a wide range of services including crystal-gazing, advice on love-affairs, and eastern wisdom such as the forgotten eighteen years of Jesus Christ's life. Swiftly he emerged as black

Newark's leading faith healer amidst the crowded (and competitive) religious market place of seers, mystics, palmists, professors and princes who taught mystical sciences since the turn of the twentieth century (Dorman 2009). At this juncture, Drew was still un-fezzed, unaffiliated to a Moorish lineage, but had already fashioned himself as a true Orientalist Muslim. Nevertheless, during this phase Drew fell afoul of the law several times, and was arrested for illegally peddling medicine.

Despite trumpeting messianic claims of his ability to "bend (prison) bars" (*Newark Evening News* 1916), Newark's federal penitentiary successfully quarantined Professor Drew physically in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Yet, prison walls failed to totally circumscribe Muslim teachings in Newark, as another enigmatic figure took Drew's position to further fan the flame of esoteric folk Islam in the community. With Drew's religious preaching in abeyance, Abdul Hamid Suleiman (b. 1864-?), a Sudanese immigrant, filled the mantle as a charismatic spiritual leader serving Newark's coloured community. Suleiman founded an extremely successful Canaanite Temple, a black Mohammedan-Masonic movement that operated in various cities including one at the corner of Bank and Rutgers Streets, Newark, a mere three miles from his residence (Bowen 2011). In April 1923, the popularity of Suleiman's Canaanite Temple spectacularly nosedived when Suleiman and his assistant Muhammad Ali, were charged and arrested by the Supreme Court of New Jersey for carnal abuse of a follower's child.

Amidst the leadership vacuum, Professor Drew reinvented himself as a religious prophet by deliberately suffixing the powerful surname Ali, that concomitantly connected him to three important sources of authority in the minds of black urban masses: Caliph Alee (599–661), the imagined founding father of Masonry and son-in-law of Islamic Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah; Duse Muhammad Ali (1866–1945), an inspirational pan-Africanist Garveyite intellectual; and the incarcerated Mohammed Ali, local organiser for the Canaanite Temple. As Canaanite Temple No. 1 had legally been incorporated in Newark in May 1924, Drew embarked on an evangelical crusade elsewhere under a new Moorish banner, to re-structure Suleiman's satellite temples and travelled to several Southern cities before establishing his headquarters at Chicago, Illinois in 1925.

As Drew's sense of Islamic-consciousness was stirred through an embodied experience with Oriental street healers and Canaanite-Masonic esotericism, Drew's understanding of Islam was imagined-yet-authentic when contextualised through the lens of its gestation. By corollary, Sunnī sceptics who uncritically vilify Drew for deviating from Muhammad ibn Abdullah's finality of prophethood have somewhat misdirected their accusation, since they have

overlooked that Drew's adoption of the titles 'Noble' and 'Prophet' were borrowed from Masonic circles, and not ever intended to be an affront to Sunnī orthodoxy (Abu Shouk, Hunwick and O'Fahey 1993).

3   Drew's MSTA, 1925–1929

Though MSTA followers believe the historical process underpinning the establishment of the MSTA as a religious organisation was forged along an uncomplicated linear trajectory, this was a façade. Rather, Drew's inchoate MSTA between 1925 and 1929 underwent capricious and erratic shifts as the founder experimented and cobbled together various ideological fragments of his highly eclectic movement. The MSTA's mutable vagaries were clearly reflected as his Moorish movement underwent a series of name changes. Initially, Drew formally incorporated the Moorish Temple of Science on 29 November 1926 as a civic organisation on 3603 Indiana Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, to "uplift fallen humanity" and "teach men and women to become better citizens" (Ali 1926).

Structurally, Drew was inspired by Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), hence modelling the MSTA along Garveyite lines of ancillary units like the Moorish Manufacturing Corporation, the Moorish Guide and the Sisters National Auxiliary (Haddad and Smith 1993). Drew perspicaciously linked his incipient organisation to Garvey's by embedding the popular UNIA leader in the trope of John the Baptist, a forerunner who prophesised Drew's advent. Theologically, Drew looked to Abdul Hamid Suleiman's Canaanite Temple novel blueprint of a black Islamic Masonry (Bowen 2014). Though Drew substituted Suleiman's Mecca with Morocco as the main cosmological centre of spiritual power, Drew appropriated Suleiman's taxonomy that bifurcated Islam for blacks and Christianity for whites. This unique Mohammeddan-Masonic nexus premised on a romanticised pan-African and pan-Islamic genealogical identity anchored the MSTA ideology.

In compiling his main religious scripture, the *Circle Seven Koran* (henceforth CSK), Drew leveraged on his experience as an Oriental Asiatic Scientist in Newark as fodder.[3] In Chapters 1 to 19 of Drew's *Koran*, he drew heavily from Levi Dowling's *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (1908), an esoteric

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3 The term 'Asiatic' is a nuanced racial-religious term often found in African-American Muslim communities in the twentieth century (for example, the Nation of Islam, Five Percenters, and the MSTA). While 'Asiatic' groups occasionally claim ties of affiliation with 'Asian' communities (such as the Japanese, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese) in some cases, the term 'Asiatic' is divorced from 'Asian'. See N. Deutch, 2001, "The Asiatic Black Man: An African American Orientalism," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 4:3, 193–208.

theosophical text emphasising Christ's itinerant travels and encounters with other world religious figures, symbolising humankind's quest for universal spirituality. For Chapters 20 to 44 of CSK, Drew included sections from *Unto Thee I Grant* (1925) published by the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, a Rosicrucian group propagating moralistic, puritanical lives to achieve happiness and liberation in their worldly-state (Curtis IV 2002).

While Drew was aware of mainstream Islamic tenets from Ahmadiyya Muslim literature produced out of South Wabash, Chicago, and evangelical censures from Satti Majid, a Sudanese missionary, the Moorish leader warily-but-pragmatically steered clear of Islamicising his movement, maintaining a hesitant embrace of orthodox Islam at best (Abu Shouk, Hunwick and O'Fahey 1993). Instead, Drew favoured a metaphysical disposition of Islam based on universal principles of "love, truth, peace, freedom, justice and equality" through a conversion to "Islamism" where neophytes swapped Christianity and blackness for a Moorish-American nationality, symbolised by taking on surnames of El and Bey (Ali 1928).

Yet the path towards forging a monolithic, pan-national movement was fraught with uncertainties. In January 1928, Drew and several aides travelled to Havana, Cuba to attend the 6th Pan American Conference to represent the nascent community.[4] Nevertheless, prospects for a successful National Convention were hamstrung by a series of Temple fiascos. Between April to June, 1928, leaders in Pittsburgh Temple No. 5 and Richmond Temple No. 6 were arrested for practising bigamy, unlicensed medicine selling and seditious teachings (Bowen 2013). As authorities raided the temples, Drew retreated to Mexico and on his return, convened a special meeting to legally rename the movement as the "Moorish Science Temple of America" on 21 May 1928 to shield against allegations of conspiratorial subversion. The metamorphosis into a more patriotic-leaning organisation was completed a month later as the MSTA was formally re-incorporated as a religious organisation on 20 July 1928 that not only taught "loyalty to the nation and the deepest respect for law and order" but also dismissed notions of a "pilgrimage to some other country" (Ali 1928).

Following Drew's desperate organisational reshuffling, he travelled to Arkansas, Philadelphia, and West Virginia visiting his congregation to revive flagging Temples and appeal for financial assistance. To amplify his reach,

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4 Though details of Drew's participation in this Cuban conference remain doubtful, a very interesting shipping record recently was discovered by Moorish-American followers that definitely verified that Drew Ali boarded the S.S. Northland vessel on 25 January 1928 to sail from Havana, Cuba back to the United States.

Drew placed monthly articles in the *Chicago Defender* advertising an impend-
ing Moorish conclave featuring a parade led by pilgrims decked in Eastern
regalia and updates of economic accomplishments. The efforts bore fruit
such that by August 1928, Drew churned out the first edition of the *Moorish
Guide* newspaper. Eventually, the momentum climaxed in the MSTA's First
National Convention spanning five days from 15 to 20 October 1928 marking
the apex of Drew's ascent as a respectable national religious figure as thou-
sands of devotees from seventeen temples in fifteen different cities turned out
(McCloud 1994). In turn, Chicago's politicians and businessmen gravitated
closer to Drew, attracted by his mesmeric influence over his members. Drew,
who had endorsed the candidacy of African-American city alderman Oscar De
Priest during the Convention, contributed to the latter's achievement as the
first person of African descent from a Northern state to serve in the House
of Representatives, earning Drew an invite in the victory celebrations in
November 1928. In February 1929, Drew urged his followers to successfully re-
elect Louis B. Anderson as Alderman in the 2nd Ward.

Paradoxically, the MSTA's exponential growth to 7,000 neophytes within a
year proved too exhilarating for its own stability (Bowen 2017: 201–202).[5] As the
MSTA raked in huge revenues from membership fees, newspaper subscriptions
and sales of medicinal products, this lured in shady characters who cultivated
ties only for associations with adventure, fortune and opportunism. Amidst
accusations of financial embezzlement, lascivious philandering and seces-
sionist intrigues, Drew extricated top-brass Sheiks in Detroit, Chicago, and his
Supreme Business Manager. This triggered first a Detroit Temple gunfight on
12 March, 1929 wounding two Moors and two police officers and then two days,
a heinous assassination of the former business manager. Following the slay-
ing, police officials raided Moorish temples, arrested Drew and hauled in other
leaders for questioning on charges of being an accessory to homicide. At this
juncture, the *Chicago Defender* radically revised their portrait of Drew from an
authentic religious figure to a menacing charlatan. Still, faithful Moors rejected
the demonisation of their prophet's moral credibility, instead demanding the
police release Drew.

Though attorneys secured Drew's release temporarily on bail, the prophet
passed away suddenly on 20 July 1929 in his home from tuberculosis bron-
chopneumonia, suspending criminal investigations and leaving bereaved fol-
lowers despondent. Noble Drew Ali's elaborate funeral service orchestrated
over a few days in late July 1929 proved the final occasion when different

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5 Bowen arrived at this figure after meticulous calculations of early *Moorish Guide* temple
   numbers, financial membership fees and accounts by contemporary MSTA historians.

Moorish Sheiks, Governors, and Adepts were united in grief. While Drew's apex proved fleeting, prematurely cut short by his death, the MSTA's exhilarating promises of connecting to a romanticised, Islamic-Moroccan community vis-à-vis uplifting message of socio-economic empowerment have transcended the founder's death by compelling many in the African-American community to question and re-evaluate long-held assumptions about the compatibility of their racial identity with their existing Christian, Jewish, or Sunnī Islamic faith-systems.

4   The Moorish Silver Age, Japan, and World War II, 1929–1945

Following Drew's demise, historians of black American Islam like C. Eric Lincoln downplayed the movement's significance in the black community, citing its inevitable collapse owing to its fissiparous tendencies (Lincoln 1994). A rigorous scrutiny however disclosed that the MSTA edifice did not come crashing down. In fact, the supposed "collapse" myopically ignored the re-flowering of Moorish Islam characterised by an exponential proliferation of more than sixty MSTA Temples and an expanded membership with amplified political consciousness. Ironically, Drew's death in 1929 decentralised power and control beyond Chicago, prompting a mushrooming of Moorish theologians, whose textual revisionism of Drew's pre-1929 apocrypha in the rapidly changing 1930s and 1940s socio-political environment, ushered in a second 'Moorish Silver Age' from 1929 to 1945 (Abdat 2015). This phase produced an inexhaustible reservoir of diverse Moorish-American modalities whose temples operated unique Moorish dispositions, each with different trajectories and only loosely held together by wildly charismatic leaders.

Undoubtedly, turbulent events from 1929 to 1931 between feuding Moorish leaders compromised Moorish unity. The leadership was riven with internecine squabbles in which politics and policies were inextricably fused. After Drew's obsequy, Supreme Grand Sheik Edward Mealy El (1870–1935), the most obvious candidate to inherit Drew's position based on organisational hierarchy, toured various Temples and embarked on a letter-writing campaign to Sheikhs and Adepts to desperately shore up the demoralised movement (Mealy-El 1931). Concurrently, Charles Kirkman-Bey (1896–1959), Drew's translator, colluded with other Sheiks to vote Mealy-El out of power during the contentious 2nd Annual Convention on September 1929. This decision provoked Ira Johnson Bey (1879–1950), Drew's Pittsburgh-based enforcer, to kidnap Kirkman-Bey and seize leadership documents on 21 September 1929. But the scheme went awry, escalating into a deadly shootout between sixty Moors and the CPD.

Throughout a protracted trial, lines of demarcation between diverse Moorish factions were clearly drawn. Kirkman-Bey, who took on the title Supreme Grand Advisor and Moderator (SGAM), filed legal suits against rivals who claimed to be Reincarnated Prophets for heretical innovation. Though the Circuit Court of Cook County legally awarded Drew's organisation to the SGAM in June 1935, such that he spearheaded the largest Moorish group, it was impossible for the SGAM to keep thousands of Moors dispersed across the nation's cities under effective control as they fluidly transcended boundaries across different Moorish factions, or independently carved out their own Moorish variant. The maddening confusion was exacerbated by followers' overlapping fealties, shape-shifting leaders, and non-exclusive relations between temples.

Apart from the SGAM, John Givens-El, Drew's former chauffeur, led a Reincarnated Moorish Temple faction whose followers distinguished themselves by being heavily bearded and perpetually fezzed. This group of Moors subscribed to the centrality of Drew's spirit entering Givens-El who fainted while working on the Prophet's car but mysteriously "had the sign of the star and the crescent in his eyes and they knew right then he was the prophet reincarnated into his chauffeur" (Marsh 2000: 35). After this religious epiphany, Givens-El fashioned himself as Noble Drew Ali II—'Mohammed Reincarnated'—but then found himself confined to a mental asylum for several years for his role in the leadership imbroglio. From behind prison bars, he successfully built up a significant puritanical faction with thousands of disciples in Chicago, Illinois, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Augusta, Georgia, Newark, New Jersey, and Baltimore, Maryland (Vale 1934: 20).

The third aspirant, Mealy-El, failed to make much headway in his challenge to unseat Kirkman-Bey. His letter-writing campaigns to convince Sheiks of his legitimacy and organisational credentials as Drew's rightful heir vis-à-vis Kirkman-Bey's duplicity fell on deaf ears until he passed away in 1935. Despite the struggles, Moorish-American relationships relatively stabilised after 1931 as each leaders grudgingly accepted their rivals' influence without directly confronting each other again.

In the 1930s and 1940s, all Moorish groups felt compelled towards exegetical revisionism owing to the rapidly changing domestic and international climate. The bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941 necessitated Moorish theologians to re-read, reinterpret, and refurbish Drew's 1920s doctrines to make sense of the turbulent events for their respective congregation. Noble Drew Ali's esoteric New Age wisdom had racially positioned the Japanese, alongside Egyptians and Arabians, amongst the divine Asiatic nations in the *Circle Seven Koran*. But Drew could not possibly have foreseen the permeating influence of Japan's Black Dragon Society propaganda, which cajoled

black organisations in the 1930s including the MSTA to embrace pro-Japanese, "black messianic" nationalistic proclivities in the event of a Japanese invasion of America (Allen, Jr. 1994). The Moorish faith-system became easily impregnated with external ideologies and influences demonstrating its porous boundaries.

Conversely, there was a need to determine MSTA's degree of patriotism towards America, since Drew's original attitudes had capriciously oscillated from brief seditious flirtations in 1928 to overt American fealty by 1929. Confronted with Japanese agent provocateurs' propagandistic formulations of a rigid pan-Asiatic international order antagonistic towards Washington, Moorish-American theologians could no longer depend on Drew's anachronistic 1920s matrix of a double consciousness of constitutional adherence to America and a mytho-genealogical Asiatic brotherhood with the Japanese. Moorish-American theologians had to challenge the tired norms and cultural hangovers from the past.

All Moorish groups flirted with pro-Japanese revisionism, differing only in the degree and extent they acted on their beliefs. Kirkman-Bey's Temples quickly gravitated towards the draping of a Japanese pan-Asiatic blueprint over Drew's Asiatic Muslim core. Ever since 1936, his Hartford Moors hosted representatives from the Japanese Chamber of Commerce to propagate Japan's program for the new Asian order. In Bartholomew County, Indiana, Ruben Frazier Bey, a rural farmer adorned his living room with tapestry embroidered with a Black Dragon and Japanese scripture, transforming his home into a safety zone so "when the Japanese start bombing the United States, we will run up our flag and they will know we are their friends and won't bomb us [for those] who knew the symbols" (FBI MSTA File 1940).

In Flint, Michigan, Moors keenly awaited Drew's return and even took Major Satohata Takahashi, a Japanese agent provocateur, to be the prophet reincarnated. This influenced Flint Moors such as Rhodes-Bey to look towards the Japanese for survival in 1942 since they would provide nourishment as well as long-term job security believing the benevolent Japanese would "take over the plants here in Michigan and give them [to] the Moorish Science Temple and that everybody would have to work for us" (FBI MSTA File 1942). This position was hardly surprising considering the *Moorish Voice* constantly expounded on the genealogical-racial compatibility between Moors and the Japanese Army, demanding the former shape their glorious destiny alongside Japan, rather than remaining fatalistically passive awaiting Allāh to reverse the status quo. Ironically, within this Moorish-Japanese alliance Japan was repositioned above other Asiatics (including Moors), relegating the latter to a subordinate position within the Asiatic hierarchical order of races (Folsom-Bey 1942).

The authorities' fears regarding the MSTA's treasonable proclivities heightened considerably from 1942, with increasingly frequent reports. In April, two Moorish leaders were arrested for coaxing African-Americans in Yazoo, Humphrey, Belzoni, and Milestone, Mississippi, not to register for Selective Service. Three months later, Father Prophet Mohammed Bey's Moors were arrested in Kansas City, Missouri, for evading Selective Service prompting the FBI Office to begin a thorough investigation of the different MSTA leaders. Once confronted with FBI interrogations and a wave of arrests, almost instantaneously for survival, the movement made a sudden volte face morphing into a more conservative orientation of Moorish Science emphasising fealty to America. Kirkman-Bey bowdlerised Japanese leanings, as the *Moorish Voice* now printed articles showing the compatibility of being a faithful Moorish-American while concurrently serving the United States armed forces.

Reincarnationist Moors compromised with Selective Service officials. In November 1941, Eddie Stephens-Bey, a Reincarnationist Moor reported to Fort Dix, New Jersey military training camp brazenly refusing to wear a necktie, swap his fez for an army helmet, consume army chow, or trim his beard, earning him a two-week confinement (*Galveston Daily News* 1941). Eventually, a middle ground was reached after Reincarnated Moorish leaders granted Private Bey dispensation to relax orthodox religious prohibitions concerning food and the fez; however, his beard was not to be shaved completely but simply trimmed over lightly with clippers. By 1943, even the Reincarnated Moors Americanised their faith system when George Johnson Bey, dramatically transformed from a seditious anti-American propagandist into a patriotic collaborator by furnishing testimony in a federal district court clearly elucidating links between Ashima Takis, Japanese agent provocateurs, and leaders of other seditious black movements who allied themselves with the Axis Powers to produce a revolution by 1944. By irrevocably distancing themselves from more seditious groups, the MSTA averted a similar fate.

In the short run, though shrewd Moorish re-orientation towards American fealty judiciously prevented a similar fate to other repressed, incarcerated religious groups, in the long run this conservative bent only served to disconnect them from the pulse of black urban America which became increasingly livid with the racial hypocrisy of white America by the 1950s. Ironically, the Moorish 'decline' lay not so much in 1929 with Drew's death but rather due to the softening of the MSTA into passivity marked by a growing penchant for white mainstream American acceptance. Concomitantly, Moorish volatility during this post-Drew period caused several MSTA leaders to depart the fold and embrace Sunnī Islamic orthodoxy such as Professor Ezaldeen (ex-James Lomax Bey) and Sheikh Nasir Ahmad (ex-Walter Smith Bey), both of whom

created and spearheaded their own African-American Sunnī Islamic communities. This elucidated how even so-called heretically deviant groups like the MSTA possessed latently, creative energies to spawn and re-invigorate Sunnī Islamic vitality in tempestuous times.

5   Beyond the Wars: The MSTA, Civil Rights, and Black Power, 1945–1975

After the war in 1946, Kirkman Bey used the occasion of the 19th Annual Convention held in 1032 Orleans St, Chicago, Illinois to take stock of the existing state of his movement only to discover a bleak outlook. Officials inspected illegally printed materials from fissiparous rogue Moorish sects. Nevertheless, its response was feeble, merely to read platitude Moorish regulations concerning fraud. Forward-thinking Sheiks from Cleveland, Ohio suggested plans for business expansionism but Chicago officials brusquely dismissed such plans. Most alarmingly, ultra-reactionary, lackadaisical Temple leaders contributed little to a movement in dire need of theological reinvigoration such that Kirkman-Bey caustically impugned thirty-six elderly Adepts in the Moorish National Home as "useless deadheads" (Kirkman-Bey 1946).

The conservative transmogrification towards American jingoism was deepened during a celebration of Drew's birthday in 1949 when the Moorish contribution to American valour in World Wars I and II was embellished. A heroic portrait of Kirkman-Bey was constructed in the *Chicago Defender* as a fearless war veteran who saw action with the 92nd Division in France in World War I, where he was wounded by bomb fragments in a bloody Argonne forest battle. This set the stage for the MSTA to embrace a conservative placid disposition, steering clear of the civil rights dynamic challenges to Jim Crow's racist-institutions of the 1950s and 1960s since this potentially invited authorities' repression as gleaned from their 1940s' seditious adventurism.

For Reincarnated Moors, continuing their conservative stance was understandable given the desperate need for stable leadership. In 1945, Givens El (Reincarnated Drew Ali II) passed away, creating a leadership vacuum. The faithful first pinned their hopes on the incarcerated Ira Johnson Bey, who reinvented himself as Allah El, but this semi-divine figure remained manacled away in prison despite his retinue's repeated petitions to release their leader citing medical grounds. Hoping to soften the authorities' stance, Allah El proclaimed a pacifist stance prohibiting his followers to participate in wars, instead 'nationalising' as peaceful, civic-minded Moors but to no avail, as he died blind on 5 December 1949. Temporarily, the baton was passed to Sidney

Rosson El, the National Grand Sheik in Chicago, but soon he made way for George Johnson Bey, Allah El's son, who re-emerged in 1949 to briefly reenergise the movement before controversially abrogating the puritanical inclinations of the Reincarnated community, bringing about heated theological debates and a power struggle before he passed away in 1951.

As leadership in the Reincarnated community frequently changed hands in the 1950s, they distanced themselves from the civil rights momentum that took shape in the mid-1950s. A Reincarnated Moorish publication, *Moorish Review*, lambasted the civil rights movement as an unnatural, a "diabolical scheme" to appease African-Americans at best and perpetuate slave-mentality at worst (Jones-El 1956: 3–4). Also, they were wary of the white political machine's latent intrigues and influence on the civil rights movement, that merely paid lip service to African-American salvation and hopes. Rather, the Reincarnated Moors banked their hopes externally—and rhetorically—on the Islamicisation of Africa and America in the 1960s while dismissing white American destiny as unpropitiously heading towards disaster in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis of 1956, foreshadowing the precarious scenario of being "left alone as the last big Western power in the sea of Asia" (Jones-El 1956: 2).

1959 proved a dramatic turning point for the fortunes of the MSTA. As Malcolm X propelled Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam (henceforth NOI) towards unprecedented growth, Kirkman-Bey passed away in January of 1959. Moorish leadership was thrust into the hands of F. Nelson Bey, who persisted in alienating them from the civil rights movement, by instructing Moors to be more civic-minded through active participation in communal activities. Still, the passivity lingered as he insisted no evangelising be done, while permitting members to leave the community. This prompted large number of Moors to exit the Temple doors, swapping their fezzes and turbans in exchange for the NOI's bowties and the angrier pro-black ideology offered. On 6 January 1961, Elijah Muhammad replied in a letter to Ferrell-Bey, a Chicago Moor urging "all that believe and follow prophet Ali [Drew] to follow me and you will be successful" in a symbolic transfer of influence from the MSTA to the NOI (Muhammad 1961).

J. Blakeley-Bey, who succeeded F. Nelson Bey as SGAM in 1963, recognised the need to position the MSTA vis-à-vis the NOI's black separatism and civil right movement's integrationist goals. However, Blakeley-Bey's energies were expended untangling messy knotted rivalries. Lacking a strategy to stem the flow of heretics, the SGAM fatalistically drew on Drew's messianic return to salvage the movement reminding that Drew exhorted "I am going to drive the Moors back home to Islam if I have to cut their heads off" (Blakeley-Bey 1964: 1). Despite garbing Drew in proto-Black Power prophetic garb, this proved

merely rhetorical as it sought only to deal with internal enemies while avoiding larger national, African-American issues.

In 1967, upon witnessing the series of federal civil rights legislations successfully passed, Blakely-Bey vacillated hesitantly towards civil rights. But this attitudinal shift was laboriously slow towards a phenomenon that was already on the wane. On one hand, the SGAM entertained notions of racial integrationism through a future of expanded white Moorish membership, revealing that while the religion may currently be strange to Caucasians, it was not a "closed book" (Hopkins, Jr. 1967: 16). To justify this revisionism to a more racially inclusive one, Blakeley-Bey re-emphasised the Moorish faith's underlying esoteric Theosophical roots, "we co-exist with everyone because we are a religion of love" (Blakeley-Bey 1967: 1). On the other hand, the authenticity of promised bi-racial membership was questionable, given this was only permissible narrowly within the confines of the Temple doors rather than through mass civil protests outside the Temple. Paradoxically, it was Blakeley-Bey's own arcane and millenarian belief in a rigid racial-religious dichotomy between black Asiatic Islam and white Protestantism that hamstrung his own innuendoes about racial integrationism: "give the Europeans the time, and they will force us back out [of Christianity]. They've got 34 years to do it before the big change comes. The big change is the millennium" (Blakeley-Bey 1967: 16). Bey's precarious oscillation between integrationism and separatism only bewildered Moorish adherents who perceived his shifts as a sacrilegious bastardisation of Moorish tenets.

In stark contrast, the Reincarnated Moors retained their distrust of civil rights movements' methods and aims. Instead, they began syncretically experimenting with select Sunnī Islamic beliefs that seamlessly dovetailed within Moorish religious principles without compromise. In January 1967, the community announced that Drew's birthday uncannily coincided with Ramadan. It highlighted Ramadan's significance being the holiest month of the Islamic lunar calendar but concomitantly assured that Ramadan was not be imposed onto his Moorish community and the spiel was only meant for "enlightenment" (Reynold-El 1967). Reincarnated Moors from the 1960s grew acutely aware of the distinct advantages of allying themselves to orthodox Islam given the religio-political significance of weaving themselves to the centre of traditional Islam. Over the next few decades, various Moorish groups have continued to carve open a Sunnī Islamic space within Moorish Temples.

As Black Power militancy emerged in the mid-1960s, a hodgepodge of 'ronin Moors' previously affiliated to diverse sects pushed aside theological differences to band together from 1965 to 1972. Aghast at the staid MSTA of the 1960s, and the failure of civil rights legislation to meaningfully impact

African-Americans, this Moorish ecumenical, activist group was influenced by Black Power's rallying call for black empowerment to organise their own 37th Annual Convention of MSTA in September, 1965 calling for Moorish activism to be at the vanguard of developing model African-American communities.

At the Convention, Joseph Jeffries El excoriated the civil rights movement to preserve the bio-religious and national purity of the Moors, "We Moorish-Americans do not ask for social equality integration because we, as a clean and pure nation descended from the inhabitants of Africa, do not desire to amalgamate or marry into the families of the pale skin nations of Europe" (Jeffries-El 1965: 1) Integration was undesirable from a religious perspective since divine Moors do not serve "the Gods of their religion" (Jeffries-El 1965). By transplanting Drew's words from the *Circle Seven Koran* and layering it onto the 1960s socio-political climate, El effectively transformed Drew into a Black Power prophet, who prophesised the failure of civil rights integrationism and forewarned his posterity against the dangers of racial integration. While rejecting Black Power methods of militancy, Jeffries-El was inspired by the NOI's ten point-program called "What the Muslims Want" and by the Black Panther Party's ten-point-program called "What We Want Now!" and "What We Believe" (Bloom and Martin 2013). El crafted a similar ten-point Moorish manifesto called "Let My People Go" designed to build positive African-American communities. Hence, Jeffries El organised a plethora of businesses and community programmes ranging from heading a government-aided housing construction, moving company and a management company (Tomasson 1973). In September 1967, constructive Moorish empowerment was demonstrated as Brooklyn Moors played peacemaker between Mayor Lindsay, besieged policemen and black rioters on the streets of Brownsville, Brooklyn. MSTA leaders walked into the crowds, talking to angered residents, and cajoling them to discuss matters on MSTA premises with officials where they held a joint news conference with Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) demanding the end of police brutality.

Rufus German Bey, (1909–1984), another charismatic ronin Moorish leader, based himself in Baltimore, Maryland since 1927. Disenchanted at the passive religious orientation, he distanced himself from Chicago's headquarters, instead favouring a more pro-active evangelising Moorish mission for incarcerated African-Americans. Beginning in 1956, German-Bey started the first Moorish Preparation Centre at Lexington, Kentucky Federal Prison and expanded it to over sixty Preparation Centers mainly in Baltimore, Maryland and Washington, D.C. During these crusading visits, German-Bey invited incarcerated African-Americans to Islamism over cake and pastries, initiated their proclamation of Moorish-American nationality and celebrated Moorish holidays.

Still the Moorish turn towards Black Power empowerment was complex, given Moors publicly maintained an aversion to black cultural pride as un-Moorish averring that "there is no dignity in black pride because there is no Negro, black, or colored people attached to the human race. I do not believe in black pride, but in human dignity and in the pride of Allah's creation" (McGee-Bey 1968: 4). In addition, the Moorish distaste for Black Power's militant, confrontational strategies was reasonable for it went against the grain of Drew's advice for civic-minded Moorish members to adhere to all laws.

Yet, the relationship between Black Power and Moorish Science was a dynamic two-way process, as several Black Power nationalist groups borrowed motifs and elements from MSTA. Colonel Hassan Jeru-Ahmad leader of two Washington-based Black Power movements, the Blackman's Volunteer Army of Liberation and Blackman's Development Center, prepared for a future race war between his mercenaries and 'whitey' to create an independent central and southern African utopian state called the United Moorish Republic (Mac, Jr. 1971). Jeru-Ahmad's local UMR ameliorated social and economic ills in underprivileged black communities through community security patrols, anti-riot programs, vermin extermination businesses and job skills training. In fact, he envisioned migrating his adherents to Westmoreland County to build a utopian rural community of 500 citizens of the UMR, where he would also establish a Moorish University of Science and Technology (MSUT) as a "port of embarkation" (Delano 1971: 17) for trained black technicians to transfer their knowledge and skills to aid emerging nations in Africa.

In the post-war years, the MSTA was forced to reconfigure itself in complex, pretzel-like directions in response to civil rights and Black Power developments. Though these contortions further weakened the glue holding the disparate Moorish groups together, this generation of Moorish leaders' creative policies have benefitted under-privileged, black urban micro-communities near the MSTA temples by serving their economic, spiritual and psychological needs.

6   Paper Terrorists, 1975–2000

As Black Power momentum waned by the mid-1970s, so too did the MSTA's fortunes flag. The pro-active Moorish ecclesiastical unity of the late 1960s proved ephemeral, succumbing to internal fissures over theological fault-lines and to the popularity of Elijah Muhamad' s ubiquitous black Muslims. Faced with such strains, the MSTA underwent another metamorphosis in orientation. Following decades of misreading by American authorities as a

cult devoid of authenticity, the Moors over-reacted as Kirkman-Bey's faction reclusively turned inwards, while Reincarnated Moors embraced a hyper-legal anarchism in a desperate attempt to foist their Moorish identity upon various state and federal documents at expense of transgressing the law (Mubashir 2001). Unfortunately as a result of the latter, contemporary Moors have been pejoratively and unfairly stereotyped as criminalised Islamic "paper-terrorists" (Hanson 2015) bent on finagling the American legal system.

The roots of the Moorish legal anarchism traced back to the teachings of C.M. Moseley Bey, an independent, Cleveland-based Moorish renegade in the 1950s and 1960s whose followers evaded taxation based on the Moorish-Masonic text, *The Clock of Destiny*. Its more modern equivalent evolved from the Baltimore Reincarnated Moorish Temple, following a public fallout between the Dingle El siblings (Richardson and Timothy Dingle El) and R. German Bey in 1972. In 1975, Richardson Dingle-El (1910–1992) proclaimed himself as 'Reincarnated Prophet Noble Drew Ali III' while his brother Timothy Dingle-El (1923–1980) declared himself as 'Supreme Grand Resurrector' (Dingle-El 2006: 76–77) after publishing his own religious corpus, *The Resurrection of the Moorish Science of Temple of America*. Together with Clarence R. Reynolds El, they established a Moorish School of Law and History, Incorporated, No. 13 (henceforth MSHL) that attracted a group of college graduates who meticulously researched American laws, modernised the movement's outlook and reinvigorated Baltimore Temple membership (Amenu-El 2008).

In the early 1970s, the MSHL successfully removed erroneous labels issued by the Maryland Department of Motor Vehicles (MDMV) such as 'negro' or 'black' by re-registering the Moors' licenses. From 1974 to 1976, the MSHL attempted to extend their reach out by petitioning the Black Caucus to discuss their interpretation of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, but their request for official meetings were brushed off. The MSHL believed ex-slaves had never been legally raised to the status of persons, nor had they been properly compensated for their involuntary servitude as intended by Lincoln, such that African-Americans were fleeced of constitutional rights, including a restitution from the government as compensation to colonise and develop "model communities" for Moors (Amenu-El 2008: 60). Instead, they proposed 'resurrecting' the executive will of Lincoln's Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States constitution with twenty sections.

Rebuffed, they stirred local tax protests such that arrests of felonious Moors charged for filing tax-withholding statements and violation of property laws began surfacing in newspapers in Baltimore and Philadelphia in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While such cases mystified court officials, this turn towards legalistic anarchy should be contextualised as the by-product of earlier

Selective Service officials' politicisation of Moors to the Kafkaesque maze of world of acts, laws and statutes in the 1940s and 1950s as well as Washington officials' brusque dismissal of the MSHL in the 1970s. This snowballed into a mutual misunderstanding where court officials grew increasingly indifferent to Moors' religious traditions, despite the Moors' legal defiance stemming from the government's own policies in the first place. Curiously, the Reincarnated Moors' hyper-legalistic anarchy represented a rupture from Drew's insistence on adherence to *all* laws in the past and myopic oversight on the larger implications of tarnishing the Moorish faith in the future.

For German-Bey, dissociation from the Reincarnated Moors gave birth to a phase of Panglossian growth for most of the 1970s, before strategic miscalculations abraded initial optimism. By 1978, his prison-proselytisation project bore fruit as healthy numbers of incarcerated Moors filed prison-initiated court suits demanding their rights for a spiritual co-ordinator, religious literature and prayer arrangements in Baltimore's State Penitentiary (Hyer 1978). In the same year, German-Bey successfully organised a National Convention in the Hopkins Room of the Civic Centre in Baltimore, Maryland, commemorating the 50th Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the MSTA transferring the focal point of Moorish activism from Chicago to Baltimore (Oishi 1978). Buoyant, German-Bey legally re-styled his Baltimore Temple No. 13 as the *bona fide* and *de facto* Temple No. 1, but this only expended his energy and resources in a protracted legal imbroglio from 1978 to 1982 (Way-El 2011).

To complicate matters further, the boundaries between past-criminality and present-disciplined Moorish lifestyle were amorphously fluidic such that the Moorish faith-system became criminalised. Jeff Fort's (b. 1947) conversion to the MSTA elucidated the cross-fertilisation of organised crime networks and Moorish faith systems, giving birth to Imam Malik Kaaba El's El Rukn Moorish Science Temple in the 1980s. Not only did the literal translation from Arabic, *El Rukn* and *Kaaba*, into English—'foundation' and 'black stone', respectively—provided a powerful double-barrelled symbolic connection, projecting the El Rukns retrospectively back to its street roots as well as spiritually coupling his movement to the site of orthodox Islam's holiest shrine, Moorish tropes and motifs were skilfully scrambled into a complex code used over the telephone to communicate with associates beyond prison walls. For example, MSTA's core principles were encrypted with secret meanings—'love' represented one, one hundred, or one thousand, 'love-truth' meant two, two hundred, or two thousand, and 'justice' meant weapon—and used in various numerical combinations to be deciphered by associates, as Fort operated a major narcotics ring while ensconced in a federal penitentiary in Bastrop, Texas (Blau and O'Brien 1991).

Though the El Rukns evolved to Sunnīfy their doctrines by 1985, their criminal activities continues to taint MSTA's reputation as fezzed pseudo-Muslims involved with drugs, racketeering, witness intimidations and occasional straying into international terror when accepting a multi-million dollar contract from Moammar Gadhafi's Libyan government (Possley 1987). The demonisation of MSTA's reputation was perpetuated by arrest of other controversial Moorish leaders in the early 1990s such as Jerry Lewis-Bey, a St. Louis Sheik imprisoned for a decade long murderous criminal enterprise that handled cocaine traffic. In 1993, Clarence Rodney Hampton-El (1938–2014), a Brooklyn-born Moor's highly publicised arrest for conspiring to bomb several buildings in New York reinforced the MSTA's standing in the public as a grotesquely menacing organisation (Clines 1993). The underlying lesson gleaned was the sheer fluidity through which these protagonists symbiotically intertwined their personae between Moorish Science, Sunnī Islam, international jihadist inclinations and altruistic community-activism as well as between boundaries of legality.

7   Conclusion

In the 1990s and 2000, Moorish synonymity with unbridled "paper terrorism" returned, where Moors claimed immunity from American laws owing to an imagined Moorish sovereign status (Nelson 2011). This phenomenon now rooted from nefarious leaders' surreptitious pseudo-Moorish teachings. In the mid-1990s, Malachi York and his Ansarullah community's alchemic transmogrification into Moorish cultic movements, the Yamassee Native American Moors of the Creek Nation and the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors, introduced the bogus notion of a tax-free Moorish haven (Moser 2002). York's ideas was fetishised further by Verdiacee Turner, a dreadlocked Louisiana-based 'Washitaw Empress' who spuriously sold her followers gobbledygook Washitaw documents ranging from driver registration plates, registrations, birth certificates and passports promising to insulate holders from being sued and taxed.

In the 2000s with the advent of the Internet, cyber Moorish Prophets brought such insidious doctrines to a much wider public audience. In particular, Tej Tarik Bey, a Harlem-based Moor have extensively used the online pulpit of websites and YouTube sermons to propagate his Moorish sovereign doctrines. Mainstream Moors have lampooned Tarik-Bey for confusing Moors and infuriating authorities but sadly, such fallacious teachings continues to gain traction among both Moors and non-Moors, oblivious of Drew's insistence on MSTA members' obeisance for legal statutes. Usually desperate for an escapist

route out of financial ruin, these naïve Moorish paper terrorists usually end accused for tax fraud, illicit trespassing into vacant houses, filing bogus liens and lawsuits against officers and prosecutors.

Though the media has caricaturised the MSTA as criminalised fanatics and membership diminishing, all is not lost. Other black religious nationalist groups like the NOI, Five Percenter Nation and Ansarullah Community continue to pay homage to Noble Drew Ali as their ideological progenitor for being the Original Asiatic Muslim. Black hip hop artists such as Nas, Wu Tang Clan, Mos Def, and Nick Cannon have all referenced Noble Drew Ali's ideas, Moorish-tropes and iconography in their lyrics, thus popularising and preserving the memories of the religious innovator to millions of consumers. The few thousand contemporary Moors need not worry about the future, all they need is to reach back to their own past- and live out the highest, purest form of Moorish principles of "learning to love, instead of hate."

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The Ansaaru Allah Community

Susan J. Palmer

1 Introduction

The Ansaaru Allah Community (also known as the Ansarullah Community) was one of the African American Muslim movements to emerge out of the new, indigenous forms of Islam in America in the 1960s. This movement might best be understood within the context of America's twentieth century Black 'cultic milieu'; the esoteric 'underground' of spiritual/philosophical concepts, debating circles and private practitioners that was percolating in the rebellious salons of the major American cities (Campbell 1972). Within this eclectic milieu, various Black messianic spiritual movements took root and evolved into successful NRMs, such as the Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam, and the Five Percent Nation of Gods and Earths (McCloud 1995). Marcus Garvey's "Blackosophy" of the early 1900s (Moses 1987; Simpson 1978), and the Black Nationalist and Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s also contributed to the formation of these African-American NRMs.

The Ansaaru Allah Community (AAC) was an African-American communal society that flourished in Brooklyn, NY from 1973 to 1992. 'Ansaaru Allah' refers to the 'helpers of Allāh', and the daily life of the members was centered on their mosque on Bushwick Avenue. This intentional community, which might be described as utopian, millenarian and messianic, dominated the neighborhood around Brooklyn's Bushwick Avenue for over nineteen years. The Ansaars published a newsletter, *The Nuwaubian Village Bulletin*, and hundreds of 'scrolls' (small booklets) co-authored by their messianic founder with his plural wives. These scrolls were sold in the bookstore on Bushwick Avenue and distributed in the streets of New York and other major cities by the Ansaar missionaries, known as Propagators.

On the surface the AAC appeared to be an expatriate community of African fundamental Muslims. The men wore Sudanese robes and turbans, and the women wore long white gowns and burkas. But a reading of the AAC literature indicates that the Qur'ānic verses and *aḥadīth* are intertwined with ufology, theosophy and New Age racialist creation myths. A study of the forty-year history of this movement reveals that the founder, Dwight D. York (b. 1945), has founded not just one, but an elaborate series of at least seven spiritual

movements. Dr Malachi Z. York (as he is known by his disciples) has been creating, debriefing, renaming and reorganising his various spiritual groups since 1967. Each time a group goes underground and resurfaces under a new name, York's disciples reappear in new exotic costumes on the streets of New York and other American cities. His movement has operated under the following names: Ansaar Pure Sufi (1967); Nubian Islamic Hebrew Mission (1968); Nubian Islamic Hebrews (1969); Ansaaru Allah Community (1973–1992); Holy Tabernacle Ministries (1992); United Nuwaubian Nations of Moors (1993); and Yamassee Native American Moors of the Creek Nation (1993).

Confronted with this enigma, the obvious questions for an academic studying Dr York's volatile career would be these: "Why the dramatic divagations? What is the purpose or meaning of these radical changes in this African-American movement? What is the larger social significance?" The goal of this chapter is to try to answer these questions. Much of this study is inspired by my years of fieldwork with the Ansaaru Allah Community. My research on Dr Malachi York's movement involved several stages. In the late 1980s I began to collect the Ansaaru Allah literature that was being peddled on the streets of Montreal, Toronto and New York by the Propagators. Most of my information was gathered from intermittent participant observation in Nuwaubian meetings over a period of ten years at the group's esoteric bookstores where they hold their weekly Question & Answer sessions. These took place in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, London (UK), Atlanta, and at Tama-Re, their commune and Egiptian (sic) theme park in Georgia.

In June 2004 I participated in the 'Savior's Day' festival and pilgrimage, traveling by bus with the disciples from Brooklyn to Tama Re in Georgia. There I conducted interviews with various pilgrims and with the 'Triad' (the three top administrators at Tama Re). On another trip to Georgia I interviewed some of the group's cultural opponents, Sheriff Howard Sills, a local journalists Rob Peecher, and Jacob York, the alienated son of Dr Malachi York (a.k.a. Dwight York). I worked closely with a New York documentary filmmaker, Paul Greenhouse, who was in the process of making a film on the movement. I also did fieldwork through occasional attendance at the Sunday Question & Answer sessions held at Tents of Kedar and All Eyes on Egipt (sic) bookstores in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, London, and Atlanta.[1]

It is not unusual to find rapid, startling transformations in new religions, as Robert Ellwood (1973), Roy Wallis (1984), and Eileen Barker (2013) have noted. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of a new religious movement is its instability or mercurial nature. As 'baby religions', NRMs pass through

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1   For more on my fieldwork experiences with this group, see Palmer 2010.

developmental stages of rapid growth. Charismatic prophet-founders are still in the process of defining their roles and *personae*, and their revelations are still in the primitive oral phase, hence fluid. Myths, doctrines and rituals begin to unfurl as the prophet and his/her core group set in place the building blocks of a future religion. Millenarian expectations change course, and dress codes, dietary habits (and even sexual mores) will be tried on, worn out, and then discarded. In Dwight York's movement, however, these divagations are even more rapid and extreme than usual.

York's critics will offer quite different reasons from his disciples. Historians of religion might compare York's pedagogical methods to those found in gnostic currents through the European history of heresy. An additional interpretation can be found the sociology of new religions. But before exploring these interpretations, it is necessary to focus on Dwight York's career and the development of the Ansaaru Allah Community.

2   The Enigma of Dwight York's Identity

There is ample information on the internet about Dr Malachi Z. York the god, but very little data on the man, Dwight York. He was an enigmatic and complex personality, to say the least. The biographical data in this chapter is from four sources: the 1993 FBI report; *The Ansar Cult* by Bilal Philips (1988); interviews with members, ex-members and relatives; and hagiographies of York found in his books or 'scrolls'. Over forty years of directing his rapidly mutating spiritual movement, York has assumed various charismatic titles. In the days of the Ansaaru Allah Community, orthodox Sunni leaders denounced York as a '*Mahdī* pretender' who blasphemed Allāh and perverted Islam. Today, for his prison wardens, he is Inmate #17911, and serving a 135-year sentence in the 'supermax' security federal prison in Florence, Colorado—known as the 'Alcatraz of the Rockies'—on charges of child molestation and financial misconduct. Sheriff Howard Sills of Eatonton, Georgia, who assisted in the FBI's military-style raid on York's "compound" in 2002 described York as "the most heinous criminal in the history of the United States" (Palmer 2010). Journalists (predictably) tend to portray York as "cult leader" and a "con artist" who exploits the gullible members of his "black militant," "quasi-religious" sect (Osinski 2007).

His supporters, however, insist that he is an innocent man who was framed, silenced, and brought down by a conspiracy of disgruntled ex-members who colluded with the 'White Power Structure'. For his disciples, he is still their Master Teacher, the Savior, come to awaken the sleeping African Americans, to help them break the 'Spell of Kingu', to arm them with 'Right Knowledge'.

York's lawyer, Attorney Malik Zulu Shabazz of the New Black Panther Party, describes his client as "a great leader of our people ... a victim of an open conspiracy by our enemy" (Palmer 2010). Thus, one finds conflicting portraits of Dr York, but his enemies and supporters do have one thing in common: passion.

It is difficult to get a sense of Dwight York from the 450-odd booklets, authored or edited under various *noms des plumes*. The curious reader will encounter a bewildering choice of esoteric topics culled from seemingly incompatible sources, including mystical Islam, 'scientific' theories in UFO lore, American Blackosophy, Edgar Cayce's writings, US Patriot conspiracy theories, and Black Freemasonry. A better sense of Dr York may be gained from watching the man in action: by viewing his speeches filmed at his Savior's Day appearances in Georgia during the late 1990s, or in the Brooklyn mosque in the 1980s.[2] On film he appears as a robust middle-aged man—handsome, confident, relaxed—and his discourse is riveting. Yet he does not behave like a conventional religious leader. He does not formulate doctrines, relate parables or explain ideas in a coherent fashion. Rather, he shakes the very foundations of belief. He mocks mainstream religions and attacks orthodox doctrines, Christian, Muslim and Jewish. He plays his audience, who roars with laughter and shout out responses as he relentlessly punctures their preconceptions, challenges social conventions, and assaults their deepest conceptions of 'Reality'. "Don't believe me! Do your own research! Check it out for yourself!" is the *leitmotiv* that runs through all his discourses.

York's rhetorical style resembles other twentieth century religious and mystical teachers: George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, and Marshall Herff Applewhite, to name but a few. By playful use of language, they point to the ineffable, mysterious nature of direct spiritual experience. They inspire their audiences to wake up, seize the moment, to 'become your own master'. Like these better-known spiritual teachers, Dr York's discourse is self-consciously metaphorical and filled with paradox and humor. But unlike these Caucasian spiritual teachers and Indian gurus, Dr York is a Black man who speaks to African Americans. His rhetoric is steeped in Black Nationalist ideas borrowed from Marcus Garvey, Noble Drew Ali, Elijah Muhammad, Stokely Carmichael, and the other inspirational, revolutionary ideologues. However, York's peculiar brand of racialism does not correspond with the 'fundamentalism' of the Nation of Islam or the political activism of the Black Panthers. Rather, it is closer to the ancient, esoteric schools of Gnosticism. Dr York has forged theories and myths of race, not to build a church or to bring about a social revolution, but rather to function as

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2   See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb9SkJypVi4. Accessed 25/09/2018.

pedagogical devices to awaken his disciples from 'sleep'. In *Is There Eternal Life After Death?* (York n.d.) one of his more succinct statements, he declares his mission as follows: "I have devoted my visit to this planet to the resurrection of the mentally dead, which I affectionately refer to as 'mummies'."

For future historians studying the "alternative altars" (Ellwood 1979) of Black History in America, Dwight York will occupy an important place in its gallery of messiahs, prophets, philosophers and social activists. Each leader proposed creative practical solutions to the socio-economic problems of his or her people. Many forged their own original theodicies, in trying to make sense of a people's four hundred years of suffering since the slave trade came to the Americas. The result has been to imbue the African American experience with an uplifting moral and spiritual significance, and Dwight York is acutely conscious of his place in this gallery. He recreates the ongoing narrative of the Black Jeremiad in America (Pitney 2005) in such a way as to reinforce his own charismatic claims. In *The Holy Tablets* this becomes quite apparent:

> But they all knew a savior was coming. Some thought it was Marcus Garvey who wanted to go back to Africa. Others thought Noble Drew Ali, others thought it was Elijah Muhammad or his teacher, W.F.D. Muhammad. Others thought it was Clarence 13X, even others thought it was Martin Luther King, some said it was Rap Brown or Stokely Carmichael from the 60s. Or Eldridge Cleaver or Bobby Seale, some thought it was Ron Karenga or Leroi Jones ... Others think it is Minister Louis Farrakhan or Yahweh ben Yahweh or Ben Ammi Carter. And even others think it is themselves, and the list of saviors goes on ... from the early 1900s all the way up to 1970 A.D. when something new started happening. A teaching unlike any other started spreading.
>
> YORK n.d.: 1640–1641

Dr York firmly plants his message within the social context of 1960s America: the race riots, the rise of the Black Panthers, and the struggle for social justice and the beginnings of Black Pride. As he explains in *The Holy Tablets* (York n.d.) "This made way for the first part of our liberation ... what I have to give would liberate the mind of the Nubian Nation and the physical will follow." York portrays himself as a spiritual seeker during the tumultuous period of Black nationalism in the 1960s in Harlem and New York, and he shows a keen interest in the 'spiritual politics' of the era. One example is the NOI's internecine struggles and disputes over the succession following the death of Elijah Muhammad; a situation York was quick to capitalise on. York's writings reveal

his awareness of new currents in the Black nationalist/spiritual *milieu*, as well as his ability to incorporate these currents into his movement.

Like other prophets (Master Fard, Father Divine) Dwight York's birth and origins remains shrouded in mystery. York claims he was born in the Sudan on 26 June 1945. The FBI report gives the same date, but states his birthplace was in Baltimore, Maryland. Bilal Philips (1988), an orthodox Sunni heresiologist and "countercultist" (Introvigne 1995: 32) insists that York was born in 1935, but revised his birth date in order to bolster his charismatic claim to be the great-grandson of the Sudanese *Mahdī*, whose rebirth was prophesied to occur in the West exactly one hundred years later; his point being that York wanted to fit the *ḥadīth* that proclaims a reformer or *mujaddid* will be sent every hundred years, in order to support his messianic claims (Phillips 1988: 1).

Little is known about Dwight York's father. York announced in 1973 that his true biological father was Al Haadi Abdur Rahman al Mahdi, the grandson of the famous Mahdī Muḥammad Aḥmad (1845–85) who led an uprising against the British in Sudan. York confesses in his *Rebuttal to the Slanderers* (1989) that he was a teenaged gangster and became a "youthful offender." The 1993 FBI report states that in 1964 Dwight York was charged with statutory rape, of possession of a "dangerous weapon" and of resisting a police officer. York received a three-year prison sentence on 6 January 1965 but was paroled on 20 October 1967 (FBI Report 1993).

York encountered Muslim missionaries during his stay in prison and converted to Islam. On his release in 1967, he began to attend the Islamic Mission of America, Inc. mosque on State Street, NY, founded by a West Indian, Sheikh Daoud Faisal, who became his only living spiritual teacher. Sheikh Daoud (1891–1980) had set up two temples attracting African Americans in Philadelphia and in Harlem and was reported in the newspapers as having 100,000 followers. His mission was to establish a peaceful Muslim community, a theocracy under the laws of Allāh. To this end, he purchased the Talbot Estate in East Fishkill, Duchess County, NY. This became a famous spiritual retreat for Black Muslims, called Medina Salaam. Sheikh Daoud condemned the Nation of Islam for their unorthodox recognition of W.D. Fard as divine and embraced a more orthodox Sunni Islam. In 1967 he insisted that members of his mosque carry 'Sunni identification cards' to prove that they were not affiliated with the Nation of Islam. When York left the State Street Mosque to found his own Muslim movement, he maintained a warm relationship with his old mentor, Sheikh Daoud, and after his death in 1980, York continued to carry a State Street Mosque identity card in his wallet along with his Moorish Science Temple of America card. One finds reprints of these cards in many of his books.

After his release from prison, York supported himself by peddling incense, African perfumes, and body oils on the streets of Harlem and Brooklyn, where he engaged passers-by in philosophical discussions. He assimilated a wide range of esoteric teachings, through street conversations, reading, and attending the sermons at local mosques and temples. In the late 1960s York began to preach his original racialist theory. His theory rejects the revelations of Noble Drew Ali and Elijah Muhammad concerning the true identity of African Americans as 'Asiatics' (Gomez 2007). York argues that that his people originated from the Sudan region of Africa. His disciples today define themselves as 'Nuwaubians' (as opposed to 'Nubians'); a term that refers to the masses of African Americans still sleeping under the 'Spell of 'Kingu' (a figure from Mesopotamian mythology, sometimes associated by York with the biblical Leviathan), not yet awakened to 'Right Knowledge'. Starting with the ancient kingdom of Nubia in Sudan, York traces the lineage of his people back to the Sumerian and Egyptian civilisations, and even beyond that, to the stars. He finally expounds the 'ancient astronaut' theory proposed by Zecharia Sitchin of the Anunnaki, angelic extraterrestrial astronauts who arrived from the planet Rizq, colonised our planet, and built the first great civilisations of Sumeria and Egypt (Sitchen 1976).

In 1967 Dwight York enlisted friends to join his first spiritual circle, Ansaar Pure Sufi. He adopted the title Isa Abdullah and set up a center at 2525 Bedford Avenue in New York. They wore black and green tunics and adopted the symbol of the Crescent, the Star of David, and the Ankh, all intertwined (Phillips 1988: 1–6). In 1968 York changed the name to Nubian Islaamic Hebrews and the dress code switched to African robes (*dashiki*) and the black fez. His 'Nubians' were identified by a small bone in their ears and a nose ring. At that point, York assumed the new title of *imām* Isa and began expounding his racialist myth of the 'Canaanites' whose pale skin was the result of the Curse of Ham (Palmer and Luxton 1998: 353).

3   The Ansaaru Allah Community

Between 1973 and 1992, York claimed to be 'the *Mahdī*' and presided over a large Islamic community in Brooklyn known as the Ansaaru Allah Community. This phase began with his journey in the summer of 1973 to the Sudan, where he sought out the descendants of the famous Sudanese *Mahdī*, Muḥammad Aḥmad (1845–1885). Imitating the custom of pilgrims to Africa from the Nation of Islam, York had his photograph taken standing before the *Mahdī*'s tomb at

Khartoum University. He met members of the *Mahdī*'s family and had his photograph taken in their company (York 1978: 3–4). He claimed he was initiated into the Order of Al-Khiḍr and also into a Sufi Order of Khalwatiyya (Gardell 1996: 226) which prepared him for his role as the *mujeddid* (reformer). York reports that this initiation took place at the junction of the White Nile and the Blue Nile in Egypt, where he experienced a mystical visitation. He describes his encountered with Archangel, Al-Khiḍr (the Muslim version of the Archangel Michael) who had guided Moses. He describes Al-Khiḍr as the "Highest of all Angels" (York 1980: 11–12). York also claims he beheld the 24 Elders of St John's Revelations (York 1986a).

Upon his return to New York in 1973, York declared that he was a direct descendant of the Sudanese *Mahdī*, since he was born in June, exactly one hundred years after his great-grandfather, and that he had acquired a degree in Islamic law during his stay in Sudan. He then claimed to be the Return of the *Mahdī* by adding the title '*Mahdī*' to his honorific name (al Imām Isa Adbullah Muhammad al Mahdi) and published a new book, *Muḥammad Aḥmad the Only True Mahdi* (1976). York then renamed his movement the Ansaaru Allah Community and discarded most of the Jewish features of the Nubian Islaamic Hebrews. He rationalises this development in one of his scrolls: "I opened the seal in 1970, as prophesied. I founded this community exactly one hundred years after the foundation of the Ansaru ALLAH Community ... in Sudan by Muḥammad Aḥmad Al Mahdi, my great grandfather. There is no co-incidence!" (York 1986b: 79). York's followers changed their attire to the long white robes and turbans of the Sudan.

3.1   *The Expansion of the Ansaar Movement*

The Ansaar Allah Community expanded rapidly in the Bushwick Avenue neighborhood, acquiring thirty buildings to set up a mosque, a large communal residence with a home school, a bookstore, two recording studios, several restaurants, a grocery store, and a laundromat. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms began its investigation into the AAC on the mid 1980s for suspected arson, for harbouring criminal fugitives, for welfare fraud, and for purchasing and stockpiling illegal weapons. The FBI investigators estimated that around five hundred people were living in the Ansaar community during its peak in Brooklyn. One ex-member who became an FBI informant claimed York had as many as 2000 to 3000 followers across North America during the 1970s (FBI Report 1993). Men wore the long white robes and turbans, women wore white dresses and face veils, and the Ansaar literature projected an image of a rigorous, conservative Islam. York even tried

to legitimate his new title by applying for a new passport on 7 October 1987 under the name Isa Al Haadi Al Mahdi. He was immediately arrested for passport violation but was released on probation.

The AAC sent out missionaries to Baltimore, Cleveland, Atlanta, Newport, Virginia, Washington DC, and Philadelphia. They established teaching centers in their chain of bookstores, known as the Tents of Kedar, and held classes in esoteric philosophy and Blackosophy and Question & Answer meetings. By the 1980s Ansaaru Allah Communities had established centers in Canada (Montreal and Toronto), in the UK in the London suburb of Brixton, in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and in the Jamaican Islands (Palmer 2010). In 1983 York purchased a lodge on eighty acres of woodlands in the Catskills for $145,000. He called it Camp Jazzir Abba and it became a summer retreat for AAC families. In 1988 York retired from his role as *imām* at the Brooklyn mosque, delegating a new *imām*, and in 1989 he began to spend most of his time at Camp Jazzir, where he organised military training drills and survival workshops.

3.2   *Social Organisation*

There were two levels of membership in the AAC. The majority of York's disciples were short-term associate members who wore the appropriate garments and symbols, read the scrolls, and participated in the Sunday afternoon Question & Answer class/discussions. The more committed members would eventually move into the local commune housed above, or next door to, the bookstore, to work as 'peddlers' and 'propagators' on the streets. But the great majority of these 'Muslims', 'Hebrews', or 'Moors' would defect during the group's next convulsion as it morphed into a new spiritual phase. Many Ansaars who left moved on to join more mainstream branches of Sunni Islam, notably Warith Deen Muhammad's, World Community of Al-Islam in the West.

But at the core was a more loyal and intimate group of disciples. These were York's Ministers (teachers), his Propagators (missionaries), his *muhajid* (bodyguards and security force), and his 'wives' or concubines. York's seeming disorganised and rapidly mutating movement was held together by an internal secret Masonic order. Male disciples belonged to the Order of Melchesidek, and females to the Eastern Star. Based on the highly disciplined, hierarchical structures found in Freemasonry, these secret Orders were a stable force of authority amidst the transitory phases of York's more ephemeral groups.

3.3   *Gender Roles and Family Life*

The Ansaar literature advocates polygamy, but only for the top leaders. As York, (a.k.a. Imām Isa) explains in *Hadrat Fatimah, Part Two* (York 1988: 23–24), ideally, a man should have four wives: the Domestic Wife; the Companion Wife;

the Educated Wife; and the Cultured Wife. Each wife specialises in certain tasks and possesses unique desirable qualities: The Domestic Wife does cooking and laundry, the Companion Wife listens to her husband's problems and offers friendship, the Educated Wife's job is "to be an encyclopedia of facts for her husband" and to educate the children, and the Cultured Wife creates money-making schemes for her husband, has knowledge of the arts and culture, and "is naturally talented at pleasing him sexually" (York 1988: 23–24). Of course, this model of Muslim polygamy is outside the norms of orthodox Islam, and elicited criticism; that York was running a "cult" (Philips 1988).

York's family, his male executives and bodyguards lived in apartments with their own biological families near the mosque on Bushwick Avenue. Most of York's female disciples lived with their husbands in the Brooklyn neighborhood, but York's wives and concubines lived in his house or in adjoining women-only apartments. They worked in the publishing office or in Passion, the recording studio. They spent their days researching material, co-authoring, typing, editing, printing and publishing the scrolls (under York's supervision) and handling mail orders and deliveries. Some of York's wives presided over the children's boarding school as teachers or administrators.

Women in the AAC appeared to lead a segregated life, apparently relegated (at least in the Ansaar literature), to the domestic role. But in fact, the women were the executives who ran the movement behind their veils. They were the administrators who controlled the finances, ran the school, and handled the newsletter and the publishing press.

On joining the community, the new brothers and sisters would fill out a form and have their photographs taken. Husband and wives and unmarried couples were separated and lived in same-sex quarters. The sisters slept three to six in one bedroom, each with their own mat and bag of belongings, sharing one bathroom. The brothers were sent out to be Propagators and slept on shelves or on the floor in same-sex "barracks" (Phillips 1988). New members gave their money and furniture to the community. Clothing was shared also. Contact with outsiders, with former friends or blood kin, was forbidden. Outsiders were regarded as *Kaafirs* (unbelievers), and secular society was *Dunyaa* (the lower, material realm) (Phillips 1988).

Mothers and pregnant women applied for public assistance. Welfare checks were turned over to the whole community. One of Phillips' informants described a woman who "was complaining that she had to turn over her whole check to the community, and sometimes she needed personal money to do things. So, she took some out secretly because it was hers. That's how they had to do it." One disciple notes, "Isa justified this dependency on welfare by saying that during the time of slavery all black people got a certain amount of mules

and after slavery it stopped, so this is a way of the white people paying black people back" (Phillips 1988: 151).

In 1989 two lavish weddings were held in the AAC to celebrate the marriage of two second-generation girls to men from the Middle East. One of them was Afifah, York's eighteen-year-old daughter. She married As Sayyid Kamal Ahmad Hassib, the Arabic teacher in the community, in a ceremony in the mosque that blended Islamic and Jewish symbols and featured a procession under held canopies (Osinski 2007: 60–61). After that, there were no more wedding ceremonies. Members were told to choose their own 'mates' in an informal fashion. York sometimes assigned mates for his men. On occasion, he would choose people who were completely inappropriate and match them together as a joke (interview with Jacob York and the author in Atlanta, GA, August 2003).

Children played a central role in the AAC, for the salvation of the community depended upon them. There were over one hundred children living in the AAC (Philips 1988: 152). Ansaar children were separated from their parents, attended the Ansaar home school, and slept in the children's quarters of the commune. One woman interviewed by Philips described how she decided not to join the AAC because she disagreed with the way they restricted the members' contact with their own parents outside the AAC, and with the way they separated children from their parents inside the community. The Ansaar children were raised to speak Hebrew, Arabic and 'Nubic' (a language created by Dr York, a blend of Arabic and Ebonics), but they spoke no English. They could be seen by their parents and visitors chanting the Qurʾān daily in the AAC mosque (Palmer 2010).

York placed a great deal of emphasis on what he called "genetic breeding." Predicting an apocalypse in the year 2000, he urged Ansaar parents to make haste and procreate the 144,000 Nubian children who would "rapture" their parents as the reign of Shaytan (the Devil, associated with the "Paleman") winds down (York 1990). He warned his people that, because they are "subliminally taught that light skin is more attractive, they will tend to choose a light-complexioned mate, and produce children who, in four generations will have straight hair." "The Paleman," York warned them, "will try to pick apart our genes and take what is beneficial to him ... and incorporate it into himself." That is why the Paleman is resorting to "sperm banks, fertilized egg banks and DNA banks" (York 1992a: 12).

Phillips' informants report that men were denied access to their wives or mates unless they brought in sufficient funds. If successful, they would be given an appointment in the 'Green Room'. The AAC's practice was to permit intimate relations between mates once every three months or so in the Green Room, also known as 'Eden' (a room decorated with murals of a tropical

plants and jungle scenes). Many of Phillips' informants complained of how their sex life was controlled by Imām Isa, and of how he would seduce his disciples' wives. It is interesting to note that the United Nuwaubian nation's "factology" website in 2008 offers an apology for the Green Room called "Green Room Blues":

> Resurfacing is the history of one of our schools (Islam). Green rooms were lodgings for couples who achieved a certain criterion, to spend a night therein. We lived communally and genders were separated. A few faultfinding former fellows feel, 'oh, the embarrassment … they wanted to control our sex lives!' Followers joined the Ansaaruallah community to grow spiritually, advance the cause and were always free to leave.[3]

As for the men, York's close friends and relatives tended to become Ministers. Most of them had wives, and their role was to preach, teach, and preside over Question & Answer meetings held on Sunday afternoons at the far-flung bookstores located in the crowded black ghetto areas of the major cities in America and the West Indies. Below the Ministers were the Propagators, who were fundraisers and missionaries. They were sent out every day to work on the street as peddlers and propagators of 'Right Knowledge'. They sold exotic-scented oils and incense on the street. Besides *tableeghing* (*tabligh* in mainstream Islam, means the communication of a message or revelation, interchangeable with *dawah* or propagation of faith) the Propagators sold Dr York's esoteric books and handed out flyers to spiritual seekers and pedestrians of African descent, seeking to engage them in philosophical discussions about Right Knowledge.

3.4 *The Appeal of the Ansaaru Allah Community*

On the basis of interviews with members at the Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Brooklyn bookstores, and informal conversations with participants in the Tama Re festival in June 2004, as well as four of my students' interviews with ex-members in Montreal (Palmer 2010: 59–68), it is possible to gain some insights into the appeal of the Ansaaru Allah Community. Sifting through the data, we found that there were three main motives for conversion to this radical, racialist new religion:

1. The appeal of Black Nationalism. Several informants describe their quest for a new racial identity uncontaminated by white stereotypes of the 'negro' or the 'coloured person' in America;
2. The quest for the 'true Islam';

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3 See www://factology.com/20020921.htm#york. Accessed 28/01/2008.

3. The need for moral reform. Many informants claimed they chose the
    AAC's strict communal life based on cleanliness and prayer, away from the
    temptation of drugs, wine, recreational sex and idle materialistic pursuits.

4   Conflicts and Controversy

For the first few years of its existence, the AAC was noncontroversial. The group
moved into impoverished, drug-ridden Brooklyn, Philadelphia and other cit-
ies, and quickly established order and cleanliness. The AAC's security force or
mujahim (sic) (*mujahideen* is the term for Islamic guerrilla fighters in main-
stream Islam) formed a vigilante team to protect the neighbourhood from
shoplifters and armed robberies. They managed to rid Bushwick Avenue of
drug dealers. In the first news reports that came out about the group, both the
Mayor and the Brooklyn police went on record commending the AAC for the
good work they were doing in the Bushwick community (interview with Paul
Greenberg, documentary filmmaker).

   By the late 1970s the AAC was under investigation by the FBI. A network of
interest groups began to form in the mid-1970s, to share information regard-
ing the AAC. Among them were the orthodox Muslim missions, the NYPD, the
Welfare Office, the IRS, the INS, the FBI, the ATF, and, most importantly, dis-
gruntled ex-members who were beginning to form their own, informal net-
works. The 1993 FBI report records the various complaints received from these
different interest groups. This report cites fifteen confidential informants and
calls for a "full domestic terrorism investigation" of the AAC (FBI Report 1993:
2). The "criminal connections" of the AAC are mentioned, and the report notes
that many of York's disciples are ex-convicts or parole violators. The 1993 FBI
Report portrays the AAC as a criminal enterprise disguised as a religious com-
munity in order to harbor thieves, murderers and escaped convicts. Its appar-
ent success was only due to the vigilantism, intimidation and "protection
racket" of York's private militia (FBI Report 1993).

   A handful of York's former disciples, who had held high positions in the
AAC, became its most vociferous critics. Several women launched pater-
nity suits against York, and two of his former wives were to file child sup-
port actions against him (Osinski 2007: 142–53). Several male defectors from
the AAC became FBI informants. Siddiq Muhammad Redd had joined 1970,
and worked for eight years as York's driver, accompanying him to Baltimore,
Washington DC, and Trinidad to open branches of the AAC. After eleven years
of service, Redd left the AAC in 1981, claiming it was not "true Islam" (Osinski

2007: 69). Siddiq's name appears as Saadik Redd in the 1993 FBI Report, where he is quoted describing the harsh living conditions inside the AAC. He claims he shared barracks with other men in an abandoned house with no heat or hot water or beds. He noted that the conditions in York's house were "totally opposite from how the people lived." He described York as an irresponsible womaniser: "He would meet a person and their wife and sleep with their wife just to show he had control over you" (Phillips 1988: 140–149).

The vigilante peacekeeping activity of the AAC's *muhajim* is interpreted in this report as a "protection racket." FBI's informant 'T-C' claimed that in the summer of 1990 the AAC "muscled their way into a security contract with a number of local businesses and used force against the security company already under contract" (FBI Report 1993). On apprehending a shop-lifter the AAC guards would not call the police, but beat up the culprit themselves. T-3 also claimed that the AAC raked in $5000 to $6000 a week in protection payment from intimidated storeowners (FBI Report 1993). Ironically, just as the FBI Report was being complied, the AAC was simultaneously receiving congratulations from Ed Koch, New York's mayor in the 1980s, for purging the streets of crime and drugs. At the time, it was under investigation by the New York Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms for suspected arson, for harbouring criminal fugitives, for welfare fraud, and for purchasing and stockpiling illegal weapons (FBI Report 1993: 6–12).

The Welfare Office was investigating the possibility of welfare fraud. FBI informant 'T-9' claimed that all the women in the AAC commune were on public assistance. As soon as one woman would become pregnant, T-9 claimed, all the other women would take a specimen of her urine to the women's center in Manhattan to obtain a letter verifying their pregnancy. By this means, every single woman was able to apply for welfare as an unwed mother, each using a different, fake address. These checks would be cashed and handed over to the AAC to support the commune (FBI Report 1993).

A criminal investigation was launched in 1979 into the murder of Horace Green (Wagonner 1979). Green had antagonised the Ansaars by lobbying to halt what he feared as the AAC's "takeover" of his neighbourhood in Brooklyn. On the morning of 19 April 1979 he was shot with two bullets in the head as he went to open the daycare center that he managed on Hart Street, near the AAC mosque (Anon. 2002). Suspicion fell upon Roy Savage, known as Hasim the Warrior who (according to FBI informants T-5 and T-4) was part of the *muja-him*. But Savage's guilt was never proven, and the murder remains unsolved to this day.

An arson investigation was launched after a series of fires broke out near the AAC mosque on Bushwick Avenue, between 1976 and 1991; five fires which just so happened to facilitate the AAC's expansion in the area. According to the FBI Report, "it is common knowledge that many buildings in the areas in Brooklyn ... had mysteriously burned [and] York would subsequently purchase these properties at city auctions" (FBI Report 1993: 6). An ATF investigation into illegal firearms possession was also launched. In 1983 York had bought an 81-acre camp near the town of Liberty in Sullivan County, NY, for Camp Jazzir Abba. The AAC constructed six bungalows and huge house built around a double-wide trailer and proceeded to hold summer camps for AAC families. Armed guards and dogs manned the gate of Camp Jazzir Abba. Inspectors were sent in to check on building codes and land use violations (interview with Jacob York in Atlanta, GA, August 2003).

An AAC newsletter from that period advertises workshops in survival skills, in preparation for impending disasters. It features a photograph of military training exercises with rifles. In October 1983 the NYSP received complaints of gunfire coming from Camp Jazzir Abba in Sullivan County, New York. The FBI informant T-2 claimed he had seen many guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition at the Camp Abba Jazzir (FBI Report 1993: 9–11). In May 1989 the BATF began to investigate the guns purchased at various guns shops on Long Island, by two of York's disciples, who gave the AAC address and were accompanied and driven away by Dr York (FBI Report 1993: 8–10). The BATF reported that nineteen assault rifles, one M1 and over four thousand rounds of ammunition were purchased in May to June 1989. The FBI Report features a list of the guns purchased in the New York area—seven Ruger mini-14's, four twelve gage shotguns, and one .22 caliber rifle—all purchased within a four-month period.

4.1   *The Muslim Counter-Cult Opposition*

In 1979 Dwight York formed a music group called Doctor York and the Passion and began to perform in the nightclubs and dance halls of New York, an activity explained in his writings as a "sacrificial missionary" (Phillips 1988: 13). According to filmmaker Paul Greenwood, "the notion of an *imām* working as an entertainer was offensive to some orthodox Muslim leaders, as was the Ansaar custom of soliciting funds on trains."

By the late 1970s a counter-cult movement had formed among Orthodox Muslim groups in the Brooklyn area, whose opposition to the AAC was based on theological concerns, in particular York's messianic, prophetic claims. These Muslim heresiologists included Abdullah ibn Ridn Al-Bidaah, Director of the General Aministration for Qur'aans in Ridh, Dr Ahmad Muhammad Jalli,

Assistant Professor of Islamic theology at Omdurman University in Sudan, Dr Maneth Al-Johani, Secretary General, World Assembly of Muslim Youth. They denounced the group as "a dangerous anti-Islamic cult operating in America" (Phillips 1988: Appendix III). Bilal Phillips, an Islamic scholar and counter-cultist, wrote a book, *The Ansar Cult in America* dedicated to "exposing the falsehood of heretical movements disguised under the cloak of Islam" (Phillips 1988). Initially, York weathered this criticism with aplomb. He denounced Bilal Phillips and other orthodox Sunni leaders in his scrolls, while freely appropriating passages from their sacred literature.

In 1989 Dr York launched a counterattack against Bilal Phillips and his Muslim critics. Writing as Al Mahdi As Sayyid Isa al Haadi, he published *The Ansar Cult. The Truth about the Ansaruallah Community in America. Rebuttal to the Slanderers* (1989). In this York denounces all previous translations of the Qurʾān, claiming only his nineteenth translation to be the supreme Code of the Qurʾān. He condemns mainstream Muslims for hiding the "fact" that Muḥammad was Black. He dismisses the first three Khalifs as "usurpers" and rejects Abū Bakr as Muḥammad's successor, arguing that since all the prophets of the Bible and the Qurʾān were Black and Muḥammad was Black, since his friend and successor, Abū Bakr was White, this means that the lineage of Islam was compromised from the beginning (Phillips 1088: 181–82). Next, York traces the true line of succession back to his grandfather, the Sudanese *Mahdī* (whose birthday he shared), which proves that he, Dwight York, was the one and only legitimate successor to Muḥammad. He even challenges the leadership of the Nation of Islam by proclaiming that he, Al Mahdi, was 'The One' whom Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam had come to herald.

In 1992, Dr York suddenly rejected Islam, and denounced all Muslims. He produced a book *360 Questions to Ask The Orthodox Sunni Muslims* (1992d) attacking Islam. Reverting to his former Hebrew themes, York announced he was now "The Lamb, Liberator of Women." Women were told to take off their veils and modest robes. They were to be allowed to wear shorts, drive cars and preach in the mosque, now called "the tabernacle." An explanation for this unexpected *volte face* was provided by York's estranged son, Jacob York:

> Then Dad wrote [*360 Questions to Ask The Orthodox Sunni Muslims*]. This got a negative reaction from the Muslim community. He already had a lot of New York mosques opposing him. This was after the assassination of a Jewish journalist by a Muslim. The same man came to see Dad the day before and asked him to come downstairs and talk to him. But Dad never went, because he was changing his clothes and kept getting delayed.

> There were always a lot of people waiting to talk to him. Then, the next day he heard this guy had murdered a Jew. He concluded that someone had taken out a contract on him as a heretic, that if he'd gone downstairs, it would have been him who was killed. He was anti-Muslim after that.
>
>> interview with JACOB YORK in Atlanta, Georgia, August 2003. See also PALMER 2010: 68

Here, Jacob refers to the 5 November 1990 assassination of Meir Kahane, founder of the Jewish Defense League, by a Muslim terrorist, Sayid Nosair. Nosair was acquitted of Kahane's murder but was later tried and convicted for his role in the 1993 WTC bombing (Juergensmeyer 2003: 59). After his close encounter with an assassin, York debriefed the Anssaru Allah Community and changed his movement's name to The Holy Tabernacle Ministries, reverting to his earlier Hebrew motifs. He got rid of the crescent and adopted the Star of David as the main symbol. He discarded his titles of *Imām* and *Mahdī*, and called himself Rabboni or 'The Lamb'.

In 1993 York's movement adopted the title, the United Nuwaubian Nations of Moors (UNNM). They sold all their properties in Brooklyn, and the executive leaders relocated to 475 acres of farmland in Georgia and began constructing an Egyptian village to be the Mecca in the West. They began to call themselves the Yamassee Native American Moors of the Creek Nation and claimed their sacred territory in the state of Georgia (called 'The Land') was a 'Sovereign Nation'. Upon arriving in Georgia, York's followers began to refer to their Master Teacher by his tribal name, as Maku or Chief Black Eagle. They now belonged to the Yamassee tribe, and it became fashionable to dress in cowboy gear, or in Plains Indians dress (Osinski 2007: 122).

4.2 *The Issue of Plagiarism*

Dr York has been accused of plagiarism by many, including journalist William Osinski, and the Muslim heresiologist, Bilal Phillips. Even York's his own son, Jacob, said in our interview. "My Dad was [a] *reader*. In the early days he wrote for days at a time—but he used to plagiarize a lot." Jacob then told a story to prove his point:

> He was given Zecharia Sitchen's *The Twelfth Planet* by a brother who came in and said, 'You've got to read this book!' So, he stayed up all night reading it. The next day, he sent the brother and his whole family off on a mission to the Trinidad mosque to get him out of the way so he could steal the book. He gave it to his secretary and told her to incorporate it into the philosophy. He would give books and ideas to his all-girl research

team, and they would cobble it all together. He would then look it over, edit it—and it would come out in the next publication.

In new religious movements the line between inspirational influences and plagiarism can be very tenuous. It appears reasonable to assume that many mystics and prophets undergo a period of apprenticeship perusing esoteric writings and attending the discourses of spiritual masters, and that these influences may be evident in their theology.

Inspired prophets do not consider themselves subject to the mundane rules of copyright that govern the material plane. Dr York complains that the "Holy Books" have been adulterated and "plagiarized," and that his mission is to *restore* the revelations of the Eloheem to their original form. In *The Bible Mastery Series* he complains:

> Both of these so-called holy books [Bible and Koran] that you hold in your hand today, were plagiarized and taken from ancient tablets such as the Enuma Elish (which can be found in *The Holy Tablets*), as a guide for you by Tammuz, one of the Eloheem (Elo-Heem, Aramic/Hebrew—*these beings*) assigned to you.

York reveals that each "copy" of the "ancient tablets"—the Torah, then the New Testament, and then the Koran—"was getting further away from the original written truth," and that the true versions of these original "tablets" can be found only in *The Holy Tablets*.

Gomez offers a sensitive analysis of plagiarism in his discussion of Noble Drew's process of "innovation, reciprocation and appropriation": "Noble Drew certainly initiated some ideas, but he just as certainly borrowed other concepts and was influenced by the whirl of events around him. The line of demarcation [that separates] original from recycled ideas … are not always evident" (Gomez 2005: 215). In his broader discussion of mutual influences among Black social movements in the early nineteenth century, Gomez observes, "the congruency of perspective among the various movements allowed for the absorption of multiple influences without necessarily compromising the integrity of the core beliefs and practices."

These insights would apply to Dr York's use of source material. Dr York clearly pays homage to his gifted predecessors, but he cannot be dismissed as a mere copyist, for he has developed his own synthesis of earlier doctrines. On occasion he uses these disparate influences in the most inspired ways. While his sources are recognisable, his evocations are not dry or stale. He rewrites the past in order to revitalise it for the present.

5   Interpreting Dr York's Movement

As the account above of Dr Malachi Z. York's forty-year movement demonstrates, this charismatic prophet has founded, renamed, or debriefed an exotic *series* of at least seven Black spirituality movements. Over the years, York's disciples have experienced corresponding shifts in their racial identity. They have defined themselves as black Jews or Muslims, as 'Brown' Moors, as the 'Red' Indians, and even as the 'Green' descendants of extraterrestrials whose skin turned rusty as they entered our atmosphere. Dr York has guided his disciples along a convoluted path full of surprises. They have tried on and discarded the 'masks' of Hebrews, Egyptians, Moors, Muslims, Yamassee Indians, Freemasons, and Shriners.

York's critics and supporters have given four reasons that account for these radical changes: 1. they are a marketing strategy; 2. they are signs of a fake religion; 3. they are a pedagogical device; 4. they are a test of loyalty; and 5. they are part of a survival strategy. A sixth interpretation can be found in the sociology of religion, in Colin Campbell's model of the cultic milieu (Campbell 2002 [1972]). Hostile ex-members tend to interpret Dr York's eclecticism and experimentation as a *marketing strategy* aimed at Black youth. A former Ansaar, Abdul-Muta'aal, explained the group's change of name to Nubian Islamic Hebrews as a "psychological ploy":

> [Its purpose was] to attract people, black people, anyone seeking Islamic knowledge, also to attract black Jews. The title of the organization has changed and will keep changing as a psychological ploy to attract people and replenish those who leave. There was a time when the … African drum was a symbol … and when the steel drum became the … symbol to accommodate people coming from the Caribbean. He took on titles like the Lion of Judah because a lot of these people were Rastafarians formerly. He packaged himself wisely. He just reorganized his presentation.
>
> PHILLIPS 1988: 165–66

A similar explanation was provided by Dr York's estranged son, Jacob York, who claimed the purpose of the changes was to raise funds: "This was just a way to make people spend money. Every time he changed the religion, people would have to buy new clothes, new books, new oils. He was a great marketer."

York's critics claim the changes demonstrate the essential phoniness and illegitimate nature of York's religion. Journalist William Osinski portrays York as

a salesman who, in order to "sell his utopia," needed to "find a new way to dress up." "Packaging is everything," Osinski writes: "like any successful businessman launching a new venture, York test-marketed" (Osinski 2007: 105). An FBI agent expresses the opinion that, "York was a criminal who was simply trying to use race as a smokescreen for his plan to make Tama Re the base for expansion of his criminal empire" (Osinski 2007: 215). Phillip Arnn, a researcher with the Watchman Fellowship (a Christian fundamentalist organisation) called the Nuwaubian nation "almost a caricature of a cult" (Osinski 2007: 177).

York's disciples posit a more sophisticated interpretive framework and explain the radical transitions in their movement as a *pedagogical device*. They claim the Master Teacher has intentionally guided them through the world's great religious traditions in order to educate them, and to cultivate an 'overstanding' of all the world's religions. This notion is expressed in an HTM publication:

> We, the Nubian people, went through a religious metamorphosis. In the 1960s to the 1970s our spiritual guide Rabboni ... took us through the religion of Christianity ... Also in the 1970s he taught us about African, 5%, Hebrews and Islamic doctrines which was the time of knowledge. During the 1980s he educated us about Egyptology and Islam, which gave us wisdom. Now in the 1980s there is no faith in any foolishness, only truth and wisdom you couldn't possibly overstand! He has taught us that he took us through all these phases in order to create an immunity from all the garbage that we have been taught all of our lives by the evil one. We had to live through it to make it.
>
> YORK 1992b

They claim this teaching method encourages skepticism. As one disciple put it, "When I talk to a Jew or a Christian, I can really talk, because I have lived through their experience. So, I can't be fooled."

A fourth explanation is presented by Dr York himself; that the starting transformations in his movement are *tests of loyalty*. He elaborates on this point:

> At first, many people joined the mission because it was the style: to be 'black' and cultural. I drew many hypocrites—phonies who just wanted to 'play Muslim'. They didn't want to work to build a nation. They just wanted to dress in African clothing, play drums and listen to me speak. I called them the 'first fruits'. In nineteen seventy and two AD, after returning from Sudan I drew a literal line in the masjid floor, and said: those who wanted their 'culture', but did not want to sacrifice to build for

the future were excluded. The mission was then carried on by those who were willing to work for perfection.

YORK 1992b

In 1993, after York relocated the group to Georgia, his disciples explained the new "cowboy" theme as a test of loyalty: "in order to get everybody away from doing their own thing; those that truly followed the Lamb wherever he may lead them, trusted in him and wore western clothes and even listen to country western music, simply because he asked them to" (York 1992b).

A fifth explanation of York's *modus operandi* is to analyze it as a *survival strategy*. It is interesting to note that when faced with a serious level of opposition, York's characteristic response has been to flee and hide. Instead of confronting his enemies, or pursuing legal courses of self-defence, York tends to resort to *mythic solutions* to conflict. When the AAC in Brooklyn met with cultural opposition from the network that included the welfare office, the police, the FBI, the BATF, ex-members and Muslim leaders, York withdrew to Camp Jazzir Abba in the Catskills. There he waxed apocalyptic, the group bought guns and established a survivalist training camp. By the 1990s the ATF had become too intrusive, and the AAC was the subject of a police investigation into the murders committed by his former bodyguard, Hasim the Warrior, and York's life had just been threatened by a Muslim assassin. York responded to this pressure in his characteristically chameleonesque fashion. He discarded his 'Muslim' persona, changed his title, his costume, and assumed a 'Hebrew' identity. This established a precedent for how York and his followers would respond to conflict in the future by changing shape, recasting their corporate image, and assuming new titles and new disguises.

A sixth explanation for York's eclecticism and mutability may be found in the micro-sociology of NRMs. If we look closely at York's cultural background, and if we scrutinise the ecological niche that sustained his ephemeral spiritual groups, we come face to face with the 'cultic milieu'.

5.1   The 'Cultic Milieu'

The British sociologist Colin Campbell (1972) coined the term "cultic milieu" to describe the spiritual underground of esoteric teachings, pseudo-scientific theories and "forgotten knowledge" found in most post-industrial societies. He argues that it is in this fertile milieu that "cults" take root, sprout up, and begin to grow:

> The cultic milieu can be regarded as the cultural underground of society ...
> it includes all deviant belief systems and their associated practices ...

> Unorthodox science, alien and heretical religion, deviant medicine ... the world of the occult, and the magical, spiritualism and psychic phenomena, of mysticism and new thought, of alien intelligences and lost civilizations ... these heterogeneous assortment of cultural items can be regarded as one entity—the cultic milieu.
>
> CAMPBELL 2002: 53–54

The cultic milieu tends to thrive during periods of revolution and social ferment, and it is oppositional by nature. It is a zone where proscribed, forbidden knowledge can be accessed; a place where countercultural ideas, theories, speculations can be presented, discussed, mutated and exchanged by spiritual seekers and leaders of *ad hoc* groups who come and go. But the cultic milieu is not a 'cult' *per se*, but rather a "society of seekers" (Campbell 2002: 65). The sole thread that unites these denizens of the cultic milieu is a shared rejection of the paradigms, the orthodoxies, of their societies. Their ideas are considered 'unscientific', hence unacceptable to the social, cultural and political mainstream, although some ideas (like reincarnation) may eventually become fashionable and mainstream (Campbell 2002: 61).

The 'White cultic milieu' is well-known to scholars of Western esotericism. It is accessible to the public through New Age fairs, bookstores, practitioners and their websites. But the 'Black cultic milieu' is barely visible to White New Agers, or to the general population—and it has been virtually ignored by the anti-cult or "cult-awareness" groups (such as the Citizen's Freedom Foundation, Cult Awareness Network, American Family Foundation, and the International Cultic Studies Association). Historians of Black History, however, are quite familiar with this milieu, and have described it in considerable detail (but without referring to Campbell's 1972 model). George Eaton Simpson (1978) and Essien-Udom (1962) each describe the rich matrix of Black occultism in Harlem that contributed to the education of many prophet-founders, such as Noble Drew Ali, founder of the Moorish Science Temple of America. Michael A. Gomez describes how he was nurtured in the cultural environment of Harlem in the early 1900s:

> The black diasporic experience had become an ontological question of the first order, such that religion, ideology, political discourse, and cultural production were all called upon ... to achieve some degree of overarching, perhaps totalizing, resolution ... it was into such a tempestuous swirl of intense self-examination and energetic reconfiguration that Noble Drew Ali entered.
>
> GOMEZ 2005: 214

Characteristics of the 'Black cultic milieu' have also been described by Jeremiah Wilson Moses (1988) who notes the "ideological proximity of Christian, Islamic, Hebraic, and atheistic black nationalism ... and the messianic rhetoric characteristic of these movements" (Moses 1988: 185).

5.2 *Dr York and the 'Black Cultic Milieu'*

The Moorish Science Temple of America was established in 1913 in New York by Timothy Noble Drew (1886–1929) who called himself Prophet Noble Drew Ali and claimed to be the last in a line of prophets stretching from Buddha, Confucius, and Zoroaster (Ahmed 1991: 18). Noble Drew Ali said he was commissioned by the king of Morocco to awaken American Blacks to their true identity, and offered them his own translation of the *Holy Koran*, also known as *Circle Seven*; which, on closer examination, turned out to be the plagiarised text of *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus*, authored by Levi H. Dowling (1844–1911).

Dwight York had been a member of the MSTA in his youth and carried a Moorish Science Temple of America 'passport' in his wallet. Since the earliest stages, Dr York and his followers have defined themselves as 'Moors' and worn the fez. York reprinted (or 'translated') Noble Drew's (already plagiarised text) *The Holy Koran: Circle 7* (n.d.) to be sold in the Tents of Kedar bookstores. His preface notes that "Prophet Noble Drew Ali prepared these lessons through the guidance of Allāh" and recommends they be read as "a great source of inspiration." Photographs of Noble Drew are featured, but Dr York's photograph appears on the front and last page of the book.

Dr York also drew on the Black Hebrew prophets' materials. Black Jews claim to be the Ethiopian Jews, the *Falashi*, whose names were taken away during slavery, and who are the true descendants of some of the original tribes of the ancient Hebrews of the Torah (Simpson 1978: 268–269). Prophet F. S. Cherry was the founder of a Black Hebrew association that lasted between 1919 and 1931, and after him at least eight Black Hebrew NRMs arose in Harlem. According to Bilal Phillips, "these groups were given to splintering, disappearing and reorganizing" (1988: 2–3). Dr York founded his Nubian Islamic Hebrew Mission in 1968, and the photographs of Ben Ammi Carter and Yahweh Ben Yahweh, both leaders of the more successful Black Hebrew movements in the late twentieth century, soon appeared in York's scrolls.

York also borrowed heavily from his mentor, Sheikh Daoud, and from the Nation of Islam. He quotes from the writings of Elijah Muhammad and appropriates his creation myth of the evil scientist, Yacoub, who bred the first White babies through a laboratory experiment on the Island of Patmos. York does not denounce Elijah Muhammad, rather, in *The Holy Tablets*, he acknowledges the Messenger as "the third Elijah sent to prepare the way for myself, Malachi ...

the Elijah for this day and time" (n.d.: 1642). Thus, he is suggesting that he is in the role of Jesus Christ in relation to the Messenger, who stands in the place of John that Baptist. York elaborates on this claim in *Malachi: I Will Send you Elijah*, a scroll that reprints many of Elijah Muhammad's sayings (York c.1993). York begins by apologising to the NOI for a statement he made in a previous scroll that offended them, and explains he was merely talking about "Do for Self." Then he claims to have discovered, through listening to old tapes of Elijah Muhammad's sermons from the Savior's Day Gatherings of the 1950s and 1960s, prophecies of a coming Elijah who could be none other than himself, Dr Malachi Z. York.

Dr York also demonstrates a knowledge of the lessons of Clarence 13X of the Five-Percent Nation, for he actually reprinted the latter's teachings and sold them the Tents of Kedar bookstores, entitled *The Book of the Five Percenters* (1991). This book contrasts the Five Percenters' "distorted lessons" with the original NOI version and then abrogates both see York's "Real Meaning by the Reformer" (Knight 2007: 202). York's goal in this publication appears to be to merge the Gods and the Ansaars under his own leadership: "We are establishing the greatest black nation on the planet earth ... guide by ALLAH Himself ... by way of me ... Let's work together. United we are an undefeatable force" (York as Al Mahdi As Sayyid Isa al Haadi 1993: 625).

York may have based his three pillars of "Right Knowledge, Right Wisdom and Right Overstanding" on Afrika Bambaataa's "fifth element" of the Zulu Nation, or vice versa. It is often difficult to know who borrowed from whom. Certainly, Afrika Bambaataa's anti-doctrine of "Sound Right Reasoning" meaning "factology" as opposed to blind beliefs is quoted in the Zulu Nation and the Nuwaubian Nation alike (Chang 2005: 90). It is also possible that Dr York "grafted" his three "Rights R's" from Clarence 13X's "Supreme Mathematics." The Ansaars, in turn, have influenced the Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE). Michael M. Knight, in his study of the Five Percenters, finds "a massive amount of [Ansaar] literature has smuggled ideas and motifs into the NGE" (Knight 2007: 203). Many of York's linguistic breakdowns resonate with Five Percenters, such as "gospel" as "ghost spell"; understanding as "overstanding" (a Rastafari term), and prayer for "undertakings" as "overtakings."

Sun Ra's legacy has influenced York's movement, according to Ian Simmons (2009), writing for the *Fortean Times*. A jazz musician, composer and mystic who toured with his jazz band, Arkestra, Sun Ra preached a radical gnostic philosophy (Sun Ra's "equation") that combined Kabbala, Rosicrucianism, channeled revelations, Freemasonry, and Black Nationalism. His "equation" inspired many eminent jazz musicians to join his commune in Philadelphia. Elements of Sun Ra's Afrofuturism and Egyptian imagery are found in Dr York's

scrolls, and the notion of the "Mothership" can be traced to Sun Ra (Petsche 2016: 12, 15).

5.3   *The Ansaaru Allah and Islamic Movements in America*

Paradoxically, much of the appeal of the Ansaaru Allah Community was that it appeared to embody the "real Islam" or the "true Islam." Visitors to the thriving Ansaar village in Brooklyn between 1973–1992 would see veiled women in the streets, men in flowing white robes and children chanting Arabic verses from the Qurʾān in the mosque. In many of the interviews cited in Philip's 1988 book, as well as those conducted by this researcher, disciples said they joined because they felt the AAC was the "true" or "real" Islam. Of course, on deeper acquaintance with Dr York's teachings, the heretical elements that Bilal Philips (1988) points to become apparent.

Over the forty-odd years of its existence, the Nuwaubian movement has established its own ecological niche within the Black cultic milieu. It began with the formation of small, experimental 'cult-like' groups, like Ansar Pure Sufi and the Nubian Hebrew, that were eclectic, syncretic, and short-lived. Next, its fluid boundaries commenced to harden into a sect-like formation during the Ansaaru Allah Community phase. For Campbell, a *sect* is distinct from a *cult*, because "their belief in a revealed truth leads to a believer-nonbeliever distinction, rather than the notion of degrees of seekership prevailing in the cultic milieu in general" (2002: 64). Dr York began to reshape his movement into a 'sect' when he attacked the credentials of his rival prophets. One of his scrolls, *The Truth: Who do People Say I Am?* (York 1992c), features photographs of twenty Black spiritual teachers, interspersed with disclaimers like: "We need the whole truth, not half-truths or opinions or spookism or myth or the paleman's religion." Photographs of Clarence 13X, Marcus Garvey, Ben Ammi, Yahweh Ben Yahweh and Minister Farrakhan are displayed with the caption, "These people can't save us. They don't know the way. They speak well, but they get nothing done. They complain, but that's all. No more lies, no more games!" Once Dr York revealed himself as Al Mahdi, he offered one, exclusive path to salvation, as is typical of a 'sect'.

But in 1992 York suddenly debriefed the AAC and rejected Islam. He dissolved the sectarian boundaries of his movement, and it quickly subsided back into the Black cultic milieu. The Holy Tabernacles Ministry (HTM) emerged, drawing on the wide range of materials available in this rich, fermenting compost heap of forgotten knowledge. The HTM was characterised by a rampant eclecticism and syncretism, embracing Hebrew motifs blended with ancient Egyptian, Babylonian symbols, ufology and Masonic lore.

All this borrowing did not necessarily imply that the HTM was opening up to other study groups or movements in the Black cultic milieu. Rather, it was appropriating their ideas and withdrawing inward, away from its competitors. As the HTM's boundaries expanded, they also commenced to crystallise, so that by 1993 when York changed the name of his movement to the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors, it had become a self-contained 'spiritual supermarket' offering access to an eclectic range of doctrines, myths, theories, and rituals that had been appropriated from other groups.

A study of other Black nationalist NRMs indicates that as they mature, many of them seek to purify and solidify their own religious tradition (Lee 1996). As Colin Campbell (2002 [1972]: 55) explains, "the continuing pressure to syncretization" is a unifying force, counteracting the fragmentary tendencies cause by enormous diversity in cultural items. One finds this "pressure to syncretization" in The Commandment Keepers, founded by Wentworth Matthew in the 1920s in Harlem. This NRM started out as an eclectic Jewish-Christian synthesis, but Matthew applied twice to be a member of the New York Board of rabbis, and after his death his scrupulously Jewish orientation toward black Judaism was carried forward by the current rabbi of the Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Congregation in Chicago. A similar "pressure" can be noted after Warith Muhammad assumed the leadership of the NOI upon his father Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975. Warith Muhammad proceeded to purge the movement of Christian apocalyptic rhetoric, of UFO lore, and of anti-white sentiments in order to lead his congregation back into mainstream Sunni Islam (Lee 1996).

But York's movement has behaved quite differently. To use an agricultural metaphor, most of the 'Black' NRMs take root in the matrix of the Black cultic milieu, but then they tend to grow like saplings, and sprout up vertically towards a self-contained maturity. York's ephemeral groups, however, behave more like rhizomes (for example, potatoes or strawberries). Lacking firm stems or 'trunks', they reach out their tentacles or tubers, pulling up their shallow roots to drift horizontally, sprouting up as new plants, nurtured in the rich soil of the Black cultic milieu. For over forty years, York has continued to borrow from many sources and his movement waxes ever more eclectic as it matures. To facilitate this nomadic process, York must periodically fold up his tents, debrief his schools, and contradict his own (exoteric) teachings; behavior that might appear to outsiders as being counterproductive.

Dr York's critics have interpreted his erratic behavior as 'proof' of the insincerity of his vision. But for his disciples, Dr York's cryptic style of teaching points to an underlying message. This message corresponds to the Gnostic

revelation of the mystical Self; a Self that, for African Americans, has been long suppressed by slavery, racial stereotyping, self-hatred and prevailing ignorance. Kurt Rudolph begins his classic book, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, by observing that this ancient religion "was known almost exclusively through the work of its opponents" (Rudolph 1987: 9). By reading the heresiological literature of Christian apologists, he notes, "we receive but a weak and distorted reflection" of this ancient religion of the Gnostics.

Randolph might be describing the current situation regarding the Dr York's disciples. To date, the public has received their information through stigmatising news reports about the 'Nuwaubian nightmare'; the 'quasi-religious sect' founded by a 'black militant'. In the only two book-length studies of Dr York, one by a Muslim heresiologist (Bilal Phillips) and the other by a journalist (William Osinski), the word "cult" and "evil" appear in their titles. York's chameleon-like strategy is perfectly consistent with the inner goals of his secret mystery school: to lead his disciples on a winding journey backwards in time, unpeeling layer after layer of false or incomplete identity, towards their origins as godlike beings, utterly alien and inaccessible to the laws and limitations of the Paleman during the reign of Shaytan (Satan). Thus, the external forms of York's movement are consistent with his underlying spiritual message, which is a Gnostic revelation of the mystical Self: the Self that has been obscured by the miasma of racial stereotyping, self-hatred and self-forgetfulness in which the so-called Black man in America has been enmired.

6   Conclusion

The question of what place Dr York's movement has within the larger phenomenon of Islam in America might be examined through the lens of different disciplinary perspectives. In historical perspective, the Ansaaru Allah Community appears to be the largest, most long lasting and highly-developed Islamic-style utopian commune in American history. From a theological perspective, it stands out among the other Black Muslim groups as the most eclectic and heretical. In sociological perspective, its ephemeral quality and the rapid divagations of its social structure might be analyzed as an unique and effective *survival strategy* for a NRM nourished by the Black cultic milieu. York created for his followers a self-contained spiritual supermarket of Black nationalist products. This meant that the spiritual seekers who join his movement could sample a wide selection of esoteric lore and ritual practices. They could 'try on' different charismatic racial identities. They could study the teachings of Elijah Muhammad or Clarence 13X through Dr York's reprints without ever having to

venture outside the boundaries of their Nuwaubian culture. York's critics have debunked his 'Black Muslim' movement, pointing to his heretical ideas and manipulative marketing strategies. They have a point, but they have missed something deeper and more complex; a gnostic philosophy and a secret mystery school.

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The Druze

Hussam S. Timani

1   Introduction

The Druze—one of the most misunderstood and understudied sects of
Islam—is found today mainly in Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and Jordan. The Druze—
a term that is considered a misnomer for the sect and is rejected by many
members of the faith (Abi Khuzam 1995: 48, 276; Zahr al-Din 1994: 34)—have a
distinct set of beliefs and practices, and their manuscripts (wisdom books) are
a collection of epistles and correspondences among eleventh century Muslim
scholars and theologians whom they call luminaries. The influence of the
Qurʾān, as well as Greek, Persian, and Indian philosophies and theologies are
apparent in Druze manuscripts and beliefs. This chapter provides an overview
of the sect's ethnic origins, history, religious tenets, scriptures, and rituals, as
well as the Druze's theological and philosophical views about the absolute and
life after death.

2   Ethnic Origins

Historians have debated the ethnic origins of the Druze. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad
ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. AH 310/923 CE)—a prominent and influential Muslim
historian—tells us that an Arab tribe by the name of Taym Allāh travelled from
Arabia into the valley of the Euphrates (Hitti 1928: 21) before migrating into
Wadi al-Taym in Lebanon, where 'the call' to the Druze faith emerged. Philip
K. Hitti explains that most of the Druze Arab tribes trace their origin to south-
ern Arabia, and not to the Hijaz tribes, which migrated to the Levant during
the Muslim conquests, suggesting that the ancestors of the Druze migrated
from Arabia prior to Islam (Hitti 1928: 21–22). As such more modern schol-
ars like Anis Obeid writes: "ethnically, the Druze are Arabs … [who] migrated
mostly from southern Arabia at different times in history" (Obeid 2006: 9).
Mahmud Shaltut describes the Druze as "Muslims, *muwaḥidūn* (monotheists),
and *muʾminūn* (believers)," whose roots go back to the twelve Arab tribes that
arrived in Mount Lebanon during the reign of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Manṣūr
(r. 136–158 AH/754–775 CE) to help ward off Byzantine infiltrators at the

northern frontiers of the Islamic empire (Zahr al-Din 1994: 75, 78, 91–109). When the Druze community was first formed in the eleventh century, these Arab tribes accepted the call to the new faith (Abu-Izzeddin 1984: 11). The center of the propagation of the Druze faith occurred in Wādī al-Taym, at the foot of Mount Hermon, a region that is said to be one of the most Arab regions in Syria (Abu-Izzeddin 1984: 12).

3   Historical Background

The emergence of the Druze faith occurred in 408 or 409 AH/1017 or 1018 CE during the reign of the sixth Ismāʿīlī-Fāṭimid ruler al-Ḥakim bi Amr Allāh (r. 386–411 AH/996–1021 CE) who sent missionaries from Cairo to what is today Lebanon to spread the preaching of a fresh call to monotheism (al-daʿwa al-tawḥīdiyya) (Halabi 2015: 16). Al-Ḥakim was fifteen-years old when he inherited the Fāṭimid Caliphate that stretched over a vast geographical area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea including Damascus, Mecca, and Yemen. His reign, which lasted for twenty-five years, witnessed internal political and religious turmoil in addition to external threats from the ʿAbbāsids in East (Baghdad), the Ummayads in the West (the Andalus), and the Byzantines in the north (Abi Khuzam 1995: 34–35). Despite all the upheavals that marred the Fāṭimid Caliphate, al-Ḥakim continued on the path of his Fāṭimid ancestors promoting free thinking in philosophy and the sciences. Among his greatest achievements was the establishment of an institution of higher learning called Dār al-Ḥikma (House of Wisdom) in 395 AH/1005 CE. Students who attended this institution were able to study philosophy, science, Islamic religious thoughts, languages, and literatures (al-daʿwa al-Fāṭimiyya al-tawḥīdiyya) (Abu Salih 1981: 53). At the same time when philosophy and the sciences were flourishing in the Fāṭimid Caliphate, tenth-century Cairo also witnessed the rise of a variety of religious schools and movements, among them was the Ḥākimite Call (al-daʿwa al-Hākimiyya), also called the Monotheist Call (daʿwat al-tawḥīd) leading up to what is known today as the Druze.

The main theological principles of daʿwat al-tawḥīd was 1. the attempt to reconcile the differences between the competing Islamic schools of thought by emphasising on the importance of both the esoteric and exoteric interpretations of the Qurʾān and 2. the belief that al-Ḥakim was the 'Awaited Imām' who comes in the end time to spread justice and prepare people for the Day of Reckoning (Abi Khuzam 1995: 39–43). The new call to monotheism originated in tenth-century Cairo, where the anticipation of the coming of a new era was running high. In this era, according to Druze scholar Sami Nasib Makarim,

truth was to be revealed and the knowledge of the unity of God was to be disclosed to those who had been preparing themselves for this moment since the beginning of man … Since the beginning of humanity man had been striving for the moment when true knowledge was to be divulged, free from all superficial, material, anthropomorphic, and ritualistic implications, and free from all allegorical, symbolic, cabalistic and superfluous interpretations.

MAKARIM 1974: 15

On 30 May 1017, al-Ḥākim announced the beginning of the new era calling upon the people to do "away with corruption of delusion and conformity … to be free to express themselves, and to be liberated so that they might have the courage to distinguish between truth and falsehood" (Makarim 1974: 16–17). Reaching such a state is "compliance with God's will, the real law of nature that governs the universe" (Makarim 1974: 16–17), which is monotheism; the acknowledgement of the singularity of God (*tawḥīd*).

The beginning or foundation of the Druze faith, according to Abbas Halabi, can be attributed to three figures who took on preaching the *daʿwa*, the new call to monotheism: a Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī preacher named al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥaydara al-Farghānī al-Akhram, Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, and Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī al-Darazī (also known as Nashtakīn al-Darazī) (Halabi 2015: 16).[1] Al-Akhram organised the first movement and preached the divinity of al-Ḥakīm in 1017 at the encouragement of al-Darazi (Abi Khuzam 1995: 48). Two months into preaching the *daʿwa*, al-Akhram was assassinated and replaced by Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī who took "over the guidance of the movement and bestowed on the *Tawḥīd* Call (*daʿwat al-tawḥīd*) its final divine theological status" (Halabi 2015: 16). The assassination of al-Akhram was perhaps a response from preachers of the *daʿwa* in Cairo who rejected the divinity of al-Ḥākim and who wanted to put an end to this erroneous teaching before it becomes weaved in the theology of the new *daʿwa*.

In 1017, Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī was proclaimed an *imām*, started teaching God's unity, and called upon the people to accept the divine *daʿwa*. Ḥamza summoned all the missionaries in Cairo, supplied them with his knowledge, and gave them instructions to guide them in their missionary works. These missionaries were assigned destinations to spread the new Call to *tawḥīd*. Among

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1 Samy S. Swayd tells us that the Druze religious establishment revolves around the figures of al-Ḥākim bi Amr Allāh, Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, and Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Samūqī, "all of whom left little information about themselves or the motivation behind their social and religious activism." See Swayd (1998: 19).

these missionaries was al-Darazī who was jealous of Ḥamza ibn 'Alī's appoint-ment by al-Ḥākim bi Amr Allāh (Zahr al-Din 1994: 27) and believed that he, rather than Ḥamza ibn 'Alī, should be appointed *imām*. Al-Darazī, accepting Ḥamza's *imāmate* reluctantly, started propagating the new *da'wa* resorting to "unscrupulous methods, such as intimidation, threats, and other coercive means" to induce people to join his following (Makarim 1974: 19; Zahr al-Din 1994: 29). He pursued this method of preaching in the hope that he wins al-Ḥākim's favor and eventually the *imāmate* (Makarim 1974: 19). Al-Darazī was successful in this endeavor as he was able to win many followers although many people disapproved of the way he converted individuals to the new Call.

Sami Nasib Makarim tells us that the people who disapproved of the way al-Darazī conducted his missionary work refused to join the Call and, believing that al-Darazī represented the whole movement, called those who joined him 'the Druze' (*al-Durūz*). On the other hand, the people who joined the Call under the leadership of Ḥamza ibn 'Alī were known as the *Muwaḥidūn*, or Unists (Makarim 1974: 19–20). Problematically, al-Darazī's own followers declared this man a heretic, thus many Druze today despise being named after him. As both Samy Swayd and Sami Nasib Makarim emphasise, the character of al-Darazī in the Druze teachings and scriptures reveal him to be "the first [Druze] apos-tate ... the deviate ... and the great heretic" (Swayd 2006: xxxii; Makarim 1974: 19). Among the deviations committed by al-Darazī, according to Marshall G.S. Hodgson, are his teachings that "exalted 'Alī over Muḥammad—*imāmate* over prophecy—and identified 'Alī (and therefore all the *imām*s, including al-Ḥākim) with the demiurge" (Hodgson 1962: 8).

According to Swayd, the term 'Druze' does not occur in Druze manuscripts and is rejected by "all learned members of the community" (Swayd 2006: xxxii). Yet, while most Druze agree that the name is a misnomer, there have been little to no efforts by Druze leaders to officially change or remove the label. It is common, however, and highly preferable by Druze leaders and scholars to refer to the sect as *al-Muslimūn al-muwaḥidūn* (Muslim Unists), *al-muwaḥidūn al-Durūz* (Druze Unists), *ahl al-tawḥīd* (People of monotheism), and *maslak al-tawḥīd* (the Tawḥīd Path).[2]

In a 1962 article, Hodgson provides a different account on al-Darazī and his relationship to the Druze origin. He tells us that Syrian Druze tradition "recalls

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2   See, for example, Salih Zahr al-Din, *Tārīkh al-Muslimīn al-Muwaḥidīn 'al-Durūz'*, 2nd ed. (Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Markaz al-'Arabi lil Abhath wa al-Tawthiq, 1994); Anwar Fu'ad Abi Khuzam, *Islām al-Muwaḥidīn* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Yamama, 1995); Yusuf Salim al-Dubaisi, *Ahl al-Tawḥīd 'al-Durūz'*, vol. 2 (n.c: n.p., 1992); and Sami Nasib Makarim, *adwā' 'ala Maslak al-Tawḥīd 'al-Durziyya'* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Sadir, 1966).

other men as their chief converters." He further adds that Ḥamza's letters "reduce the likelihood that al-Darazī preached personally in Syria, or at least he was the leading spirit locally there" (Hodgson 1962: 6). Indeed Druze sages consider Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī as the sole founder of the *Muwaḥidūn* or Druze faith. The new Call to *tawḥīd* came to an end in 436 AH/1043 CE after Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī announced "the closing of the gate" (*iglāq bāb al-daʿwa*) to new converts (Zahr al-Din 1994: 35), which has continued to be in effect until today.

4 Society, Culture, and Politics

For centuries, the Druze have lived among Christians (largely in Lebanon), Sunni and Shiite Muslims (in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan), and Jews (in Israel). It is important to mention that Druze scholars need to take into consideration nowadays that the Druze are no longer confined to the Middle East, nor are mere immigrants in their host countries. In fact, many Druze who are born and raised in Europe and the Americas consider themselves native of these societies with little or no attachment to the Middle East. Today, the Druze number approximately one million worldwide and their largest communities are in the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan) in addition to scattered communities in Latin America, North America, Australia, and West Africa (Swayd 2006: xxxiii; Miles 2019: 22). Due to their contribution to the Druze faith and to the societies they live in, the Druze of the diaspora expect and deserve to be acknowledged, rather than marginalised, in any serious work on the sect.

The structure of the Druze society is dualistic. Within the Druze community there are two types of dualism: 1. communal (religious) and 2. familial (political). The communal consists of the initiated and the uninitiated (Swayd 2006: xxxiii). The initiated, known as the *ʿuqqāl*, or 'the enlightened', are considered sages and keepers of the religious tradition. Druze theosophy figures into the daily lives of this group as the initiated must follow strict dress, dietary, behavioral, and lifestyle codes. For instance, the *ʿuqqāl* must dress modestly and strictly adhere to a traditional dress code, speak in low voices, refrain from the use of profanity, and avoid smoking, drinking alcohol, and other practices deemed undesirable (Khuri 2004: 13–14). They are also required to attend the weekly scriptural readings on Thursday nights. From the earliest days of the faith, the *ʿuqqāl* included women in its ranks (Betts 1988: 16). The uninitiated, who are considered the 'ignorant', or *juhhāl*, meaning secular and ignorant of their own faith, "protected the secrecy and sanctity of their religion through their loyalty to one another" (Betts 1988: 16). The secrecy of Druze theology, Robert Brenton Betts writes, "has served to reinforce communal

separateness" (Betts 1988: 17). Although the *juhhāl* are not permitted access to "knowledge of the mysterious secrecies" of the holy books, they are required to follow a strict code of moral and ethical behavior (Betts 1988: 17). The secrecy of the tradition compelled the Druze to adhere to an exclusivist theology. For example, since the closing of the *da'wa* in 434 AH/1043 CE, "no longer could one be admitted into the faith" (Miles 2019: 22). Also, missionary activity, open public performance of rituals, open worship, and marriage outside of the community are all prohibited (Betts 1988: 17; Khuri 2004: 26). The familial division is rather political in which the Druze are historically aligned with one of the two most politically influential families: the Junblat-Arslan division. According to Swayd, "[m]any Druze believe that familial dualism is a constructive stimulus for the lasting health of the community, providing access to more opportunities and resources than would otherwise be available" (Swayd 2006: xxxvii).

Despite their minority status, the Druze have played a key role in the modern history and politics of their respective countries. For instance, in 1925, the Syrian Druze led a revolt against French presence in the region and the leader of the revolution, Sultan Basha al-Atrash (d. 1982), "came to be lionised not just as a Druze hero but as a champion of Syrian nationalism writ large" (Miles 2019: 29). Betts writes that the Druze "were to be increasingly accepted as participants in the fight for independence from European domination, and as a result they were steadily drawn out of the cocoon of their self-imposed isolation into ever-increasing contact with the highly politicised society around them" (Betts 1988: 89).

Since Syria's independence in 1947, the Druze have been prominent supporters of Syrian governments and regimes regardless of ideological backgrounds (Miles 2019: 33). Although they pursued a neutral position in the ongoing civil war in Syria, many Druze supported the uprisings (Miles 2019: 37) and, at the same time, were attacked on theological grounds by Islamic extremists like ISIS and al-Nusra Front who consider the Druze 'heretics' and 'infidels' for having abandoned orthodox Islam (Miles 2019: 36–37).

In Lebanon, under the leadership of two important families, the Junblat and the Arslan, the Druze "led the fight for independence in Lebanon" (Fallah 2002: 28). During the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), Druze leader Kamal Junblat (d. 1977) formed an alliance among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Lebanese Muslims, and leftist groups in the fight against the Western-supported Christian-Maronite forces (Miles 2019: 330). In Israel, the Druze live as a marginalised minority but military service is mandatory for (male) members of the faith. This has been the Jewish State policy—initiated at the request of the Druze leaders—since 1956 (Miles 2019: 32).

5   Scriptures

The Druze scriptures, referred to as *Kutub al-Ḥikma,* or Books of Wisdom, are six in number and consist of one hundred and eleven separate pieces or epistles and communications. These epistles are assigned to various ministers, among them is Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī. Anis Obeid tells us that Ḥamza wrote around thirty epistles during the first three years of the *daʿwa* (Obeid 2006: 96). Some of these epistles, according to David R. W. Bryer, are not "specifically Druze," but they are included because they are connected to al-Ḥākim bi Amr Allāh (Bryer 2005: 30). Among the writers of Druze epistles, Muhammad Kamil Husayn suggests, is the great Ismāʿīlī scholar Ḥamīd al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Kirmānī (d. 411 AH/1021 CE) (Husayn 1962: 93).[3] The Druze scholar Kais M. Firro considers al-Kirmānī's writings among the "early non-Druze sources [that] were predominantly hostile" to the *daʿwa* (Firro 1992: 13).

It is unclear who collected the one hundred and eleven epistles, edited their texts, compiled them in order, and divided them into volumes. It is also unclear when this compilation occurred. Some scholars suggest that a Druze theologian by the name of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Tanūkhī was the founder of the Druze canon. For example, Obeid tells us that the epistles remained in the custody of trusted leaders and notables and passed from one generation to the next until they were compiled in the six books more than four centuries later through the efforts of al-Tanūkhī (Obeid 2006: 97). Other scholars have suggested Bahāʾ al-Dīn (one of the *daʿwa* propagators), a figure generally accepted by the Druze community, as the founder of the Druze canon (Bryer 2005: 34). While Obeid tells us that the compilation occurred four centuries after the advent of the Druze faith (Obeid 2006: 97), other scholars have suggested an earlier date (Bryer 2005: 35).

The content of the Druze scriptures is difficult to decipher or understand due to its esoteric nature. The privilege of understanding its meaning is reserved only to those who are "acquainted with Arabic esoteric terminology and with the way esoteric beliefs were written" (Makarim 1974: 4). The Italian traveler Giovanni Mariti (d. 1806) writes:

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3   Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī takes the credit for refuting the divinity of al-Ḥākim. He was summoned to Cairo by al-Ḥākim and was asked to refute the heresies and innovations that were propagated along with the new *daʿwa.* Al-Kirmānī refutes al-Akhram's claim of al-Ḥākim's divinity in an epistle titled al *Risālah al-wāʿiẓa,* where he writes that al-Akhram was the leader of the movement that propagated the divinity of al-Ḥākim. See, for example, Abi Khuzam (1995: 53–54).

> Even if their books can come into our hand, we can only understand the rules and general precepts of this religion, all the more so as the religious figures have an exclusive control of the religious matters, communicating amongst themselves only some points and keeping the more special mysteries secret, even to the rest of the Druze people, thus also inducing doubt and ambiguity in the souls of the curious.
>
> MARITI 1787: 17; qtd in BRANCA 2000: 96

The Druze usually read their scriptures on Thursday night of each week and members are invited to attend the readings. It is also a common practice that the sages ask certain members to leave the room in the middle of the readings, indicating that the next reading is of higher level and is intended only for those who are acquainted with the esoteric meaning of the text. The one hundred and eleven epistles can be found today in libraries around the world, including the British Museum, Cambridge, Manchester, Moscow, Munich, St Petersburg, Paris, Turin, Uppsala, Berlin, Vienna, the Bodleian Library, and the Vatican (Branca 2000: 108).

6 Theosophy

The Druze have a distinct set of beliefs and practices, and the influence of the Qurʾān as well as Greek and Indian philosophy is apparent in the Druze scriptures and faith.[4] The Druze is an esoteric faith that "differs in many respects from traditional Islam" (Makarim 1974: 4). It is a "gnostic faith based on a philosophical background" (Makarim 1974: 4). The conceivers of the Druze faith were theologians who had studied in the Fāṭimid-Ismāʿīlī schools of *dār al-ḥikma* and *dār al-ʿilm* (the House of Wisdom and the House of Science), where religion, medicine, logic, mathematics, philosophy, history, and languages were taught. Kais M. Firro tells us that although Druze doctrines can be traced back to Ismāʿīlīsm, the new *daʿwa* was "to place the Druze order outside the orthodox Ismāʿīlī creed" (Firro 1992: 10). For example, the radical change

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4   The Druze today follow the same beliefs and doctrines that were developed in the fifth century AH/eleventh century CE. Sami Nasib Makarim, *Maslak al-Tawḥīd* (Beirut, Lebanon: N.p., 1980), 30.

the Druze teachings introduced was the abolition of the hereditary system of the *imāmate* and the replacement of the Ismāʿīlī messianic idea by "the final triumph of Unitarianism [unity of God; *al-tawḥīd*], in which a last cycle of divine manifestations would occur before a Last Judgment" (Firro 1992: 10). The Druze teachings call for the strict, uncompromising oneness of God and the Druze concept of creation "followed Neoplatonic philosophy in its Ismāʿīlī interpretation and terminology" (Firro 1992: 11). Based on these philosophies, the Druze explain their worldview of the absolute, good and evil, and life after death.

God in the Druze doctrine is not above or beyond existence, God is existence itself. He[5] cannot be separate from or outside it since it represents time and space, and if it is outside God, then it exists parallel to God. This notion of the separation between God and the existence is not accepted in the Druze doctrine because it represents a plurality: God and the universe. Plurality is "only possible within space and time. How then can God be one when there is something outside Him?" (Makarim 1974: 41). Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī tells us: "[God] does not occupy a definite place, for He would be limited to it … There is no place where He is not, or else His power would be deficient. He is neither first, for this would imply a notion related to a last, nor is He the end, for this would make Him have a beginning" (Makarim 1974: 41).

Evil, according to Druze teachings, "does not lie in matter"; rather, it lies in the heart of those who deflect from their real purpose, which is the union with 'the One'. Selfishness and one's own ego separate the human from his real purpose, away from his "true nature" and from the "unity of the universal idea of man." Evil is a "product of metaphysical egotism" where one separates from the unity of being. Good or love, on the other hand, is the feeling of union with the One Who compromises all being (Makarim 1974: 50).

The Druze follow five main articles of faith. The first article of faith is *tawḥīd*, hence their name *muwaḥidūn* (monotheists). Druze scholars translate the term *tawḥīd* to mean "unity," "unicity," "unification," or "unism" (Swayd 1998: 33). The second article of faith is veneration (*taqdīs*). The Druze venerate all the previous prophets and believe that each preached the word of God but in different times. The Druze also believe in five luminaries (*ḥudūd*) who are spiritual in origin. The third article of faith is the belief in reincarnation, the transmigration of the soul. Unlike in some Hindu traditions where the belief in the transmigration of the soul from humans to nonhumans is prevalent, the

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5   The Druze reference to God in masculine term is only a function of language and does not relate to theology.

Druze believe in the transmigration of the soul from humans to humans only. The fourth article of faith is the belief in the process of initiation, in which a person must be of strict moral character in order to be initiated and to earn a place among those who are permitted to participate in reading and interpreting the scripture and perform certain rituals. The fifth article of faith is erudition (*ta'arruf*), which means that the initiate must be able to read and understand the scriptures (Swayd 1998: 33–36).

There is a consensus among Druze scholars that Druze practices and behavior are, to some extent, identical to those found in Ṣūfism, and that the latter presents similarities to the Druze faith. The Druze implementation of Ṣūfī practices and behavior has led Druze and non-Druze scholars to identify the sect as an intrinsic aspect of Islamic orthodoxy. If we take Ṣūfism and the Druze faith in their historical manifestation, we find that Druze and Ṣūfī roots and methodologies are derived from the esoteric (*bāṭin*) dimension of Islam. Throughout their historical developments, Ṣūfī movements and the Druze followed the esoteric path of Islam, a practice that led to a profound relationship between the Druze and the Ṣūfīs as well as other Islamic esoteric sects.

The Druze teachings stress the implementation of the Islamic pillars not in their literal implications or allegorical interpretation but in their real meaning. Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī developed these pillars from their literal implications to their real meanings "to relieve the true believer from their ritualistic constraint and from their literal and inner implications, not from their real significance," and only those who adhered to *tawḥīd* are able (or must strive) to realise their true significance (Makarim 1974: 90–91). Makarim tells us that the Druze scriptures give the pillars a meaning other than their literal and allegorical connotations because the Druze faith "developed in its approach both Islam and *īmān* … into the larger concept of *tawḥīd*, [that is], the knowledge of God's unity" (Makarim 1974: 91).

While each of the Islamic pillars is given either an exoteric or esoteric meaning by various sects and movements in Islam, Swayd writes, Druze sources speak of a third level of interpretation, that of "the esoteric of the esoteric" (Swayd 1998: 37). The true significance of the pillars, according to Druze teachings, goes beyond both the exoteric and esoteric. For example, the Druze fulfill the ritual act of performing the prayer (*ṣalāt*) by being truthful. Truthfulness, or speaking the truth (*ṣidq al-lisān*), is the first Druze act of worship. The pillar of almsgiving (*zakāt*) is fulfilled in the performance of the second Druze act of worship referred to as brotherliness, the protection of brothers (*ḥifẓ al-ikhwān*). The third Druze act of worship is that of abandoning the worship of idols (*tark ʿibādat al-awthān*). Idols or *awthān* does not mean literally deities

or gods, but it refers to sin or evil. Thus, this act commands the believers to be vigilant at all times against committing evil. This act of worship corresponds with the Islamic pillar of fasting (*ṣawm*) (Swayd 1998: 37–38).

The fourth act of worship in the Druze faith is *al-barāʾah min al-abālisah wa al-ṭughyān*, or fleeing from devils and oppression. Here, the believer is commanded to flee from one's evil nature, to defeat oppression wherever it is encountered. Evil in the forms of oppression "must be fought vehemently in order to purify the self" (Swayd 1998: 39). This act of worship corresponds with the Islamic pillar of *ḥajj*, or pilgrimage. The Druze fifth act of worship is declaring the unity of God (*tawḥīd al-Bārī*). This act of worship corresponds with the first pillar in Islam, the *shahāda*. It reflects the literal meaning of *tawḥīd*: "There is no god but Allāh, and Muḥammad is His messenger" (Swayd 1998: 39–40).

The Druze teachings stress the importance of two additional acts of worship to be undertaken by the believers. They are contentment (*al-riḍāʾ*) and submission (*al-taslīm*). *Al-riḍāʾ*, as the sixth act of worship, corresponds with the Islamic duty to fight in God's cause, or *jihād*. For the Druze, the duty to fight or perform the *jihād* is not understood literally but it is the struggle to know God's Oneness. In other words, for the Druze, "the meaning of *jihād* is purely spiritual and reflects a vertical relation between the believer and God" (Swayd 1998: 40). The seventh and last act of worship in the Druze faith is the act of submission (*taslīm*) to the One God. Also, according to Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, submission "entails holding fast to one's contentment" by proclaiming submission to the Code of Faith in the following three phrases: 1. "surrender his soul, his body, his possessions, his children and everything he owns;" 2. "contentment with God's deeds and submission to Him are indeed the end of both learning and teaching;" and 3. "obedience is the true worshiping of God" (Swayd 1998: 40–41).

Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī teaches that man's ultimate happiness can be achieved if he is "in conformity in his reason, soul, words and actions with God's Will." Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī calls this divine will the "all-inclusive *ʿaql* that contains the whole of creation." God's Will, or *al-ʿaql*, is the cause of all cosmic principles and the source of all material beings (Makarim 1974: 51). It is the source of all existing being and also their purpose. Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī teaches that *al-ʿaql* is the matter (*hayūlā*) of all things, "perfect, in substance and potentiality, and complete in actuality and form" (Makarim 1974: 44).

In a Druze manuscript entitled *al-Sharīʿa al-Rūḥāniyya fī ʿulūm al-laṭīf wa al-Basīṭ wa al-Kathīf* (henceforth *al-Sharīʿa*), the author dedicates a whole chapter to *al-ʿaql* (*al-Sharīʿa al-Rūḥāniyya*: 20–137), and discusses the relationship between *al-ʿaql* and the passionate soul (*al-nafs*). The author states that *al-ʿaql* is superior to *al-nafs* and, therefore, guides it. In *al-Sharīʿa*, the term

al-ʿaql appears 111 times in a range of 117 pages. It is also preceded by the word *Mawlānā* (Our Master), or *Mawlānā al-ʿaql* (Our Master the Intellect). The author writes: "Oh passionate soul, be cautious of the contaminated world around you and turn to the assistance of ... your Master *al-ʿaql* ... You should know that everything you observe and experience is eternal in the world of your Master *al-ʿaql*" (*al-Sharīʿa al-Rūḥāniyya*: 25).

The author adds that the abode of *al-ʿaql* is a place of wealth, peace, pride, and happiness. The opposite to the abode of *al-ʿaql* is the natural world (*ʿālam al-ṭabīʿa*), which is a place of poverty, misery, insecurity, and chaos. *Al-nafs*, after observing both abodes, can choose to join either one. *Al-nafs*, however, cannot exist in both abodes simultaneously because man cannot be rich and poor, happy and miserable, secure and fearful at the same time (*al-Sharīʿa al-Rūḥāniyya*: 43). *Al-ʿaql*, therefore, guides and teaches *al-nafs* to feel the oneness of God (*waḥdat Allāh*). By doing so, *al-nafs* enters paradise (*al-janna*), the abode of *al-ʿaql*, and delivers itself from ignorance. The ultimate goal of *al-nafs* is to reach the eternal happiness. This happiness, being *al-ʿaql*, is "the cognisance of divine knowledge itself" (Makarim 1974: 84).

According to *Al-Sharīʿa*, the position of *al-ʿaql* to *al-nafs* can be compared to that of the sun and the moon. As long as the sun sends its rays, the moon keeps glowing. But, when the earth comes in between them, the earth's shadow eclipses the moon and causes darkness. Similarly, *al-ʿaql* sends its light to *al-nafs*. Only the corruption of *al-nafs* may prevent *al-ʿaql*'s light from reaching *al-nafs*. Moreover, *al-ʿaql* is the reflection of its perfection. If *al-nafs* loses this reflection, it will lose its essence, and once *al-nafs* loses its essence, it ceases to exist (*al-Sharīʿa al-Rūḥāniyya*: 45–55). Moreover, the author of *Al-Sharīʿa* writes:

> Oh *nafs*, when it becomes clear to you that light comes from *al-ʿaql* and darkness from the body, then you should not mourn your separation from your body. The latter can do nothing but distracts you from reaching the permanent truth [revelation or *Kalimat Allāh*]. You should rather regret your separation from *al-ʿaql*, because you would lose its abundant benefits and its assistance to you in reaching your needs.
>
> *al-Sharīʿa al-Rūḥāniyya*: 65

Thus, the more *al-nafs* seeks the assistance of *al-ʿaql*, the more it nears the truth, and the more it detaches itself from *al-ʿaql*, the more it loses guidance and power.

It is important to mention that in the classical Ṣūfī doctrine, *al-nafs* occupies a lower state, and it is the cause of blameworthy actions, sins, and base

qualities. The Ṣūfīs have referred to their struggle with *al-nafs* as "the greater Holy War" (Schimmel 1975: 112), following Muḥammad's statement to followers after returning from battle. The Qurʾānic expression "*al-nafs al-ammāra bil sūʾ*," or "the soul that commands evil" (Qurʾān 12:53), has prompted Ṣūfīs and Druze to blame *al-nafs* for evil doings. However, the Druze, like any other groups who highlight the *nafs* verses in the Qurʾān, believe that *al-nafs* can purify itself and become *muṭmaʾinna* (Qurʾān 89:27) "at peace," if it assists itself with the guidance of *al-ʿaql*. Thus, for the Druze, *al-ʿaql* surrounds, guides, and manages all things with the assistance of the divine power. It is also a sparkling light and the eternal world. *Al-ʿaql*, which is the source of every action, exists in every age and epoch. It is man's guide to the pure doctrine of Unitarianism (*tawḥīd*). Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad, the second Druze luminary, says of *al-ʿaql*:

> From His pure Light and by His divine Omnipotence, God originated the *ʿaql* without any means nor any exemplary form. He made it contain all things at once. Within it He bound all creatures and made it the source of all things which He had originated. He confirmed it with His godly power and divine influx, and thus He safeguarded it from any imperfection. He made it present in all ages and times and made it the cause of all things. God originated a sparkling light that guides us. He made it a source from which real knowledge issued, and by which spiritual forms develop. It is the all-inclusive *ʿaql*, and the first being that precedes all beings. It is the beginning and the end: from it all things come forth, and to it all things go back.
>
> MAKARIM 1974: 44–45

Thus, the excerpts mentioned above tell us how perfect and central *al-ʿaql* is in the Druze faith. However, there is another side to *al-ʿaql*: the imperfect one. Unlike the Muʿtazilites who believed that *al-ʿaql* is an all-time perfection, the Druze assert that *al-ʿaql*, at one point in time, had become deflected from what it had been created for, deviating from its original course. By its very nature, *al-ʿaql* is in constant union with God. This perfect oneness of God made *al-ʿaql* realise its own perfection. Taking joy and pride of itself, *al-ʿaql* abandoned the love of the whole to the love of its own self. This deviation rendered *al-ʿaql* weak and remote from God (Makarim 1974: 45). To prevent *al-ʿaql* from looking inward at itself, God created disobedience, darkness, arrogance, and ignorance, all from *al-ʿaql*'s obedience, light, humbleness, and wisdom. At that point, *al-ʿaql* admitted to its shortcomings and weaknesses, and asked God to create an entity to assist it in regaining its perfection (Makarim 1974: 46–47).

Al-ʿaql is so important in the Druze doctrine that the Druze sages have made it the intermediary in their daily religious discourses and prayers. For the Druze, *al-ʿaql* is a perfect entity that occupies a supreme status, namely, the *imām*. The Druze give *al-ʿaql* a hundred names but only a few are known and mentioned regularly among Druze sages and scholars. Some of these names are: the Muḥammadan Truth (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*), the Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*), the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the Will or Volition (*al-irāda*), and the embodiment of the divine will (*al-irāda al-ilāhiyya*). According to the Druze doctrine, *al-ʿaql* can be given all the perfect attributes and descriptions except one: the divine description (Abi Khuzam 1995: 119). From its essence all things come to life, and all things end with it. It is very likely that the Druze adopted this notion of *al-ʿaql* as a primary source for all things from Ismāʿīlī thought (Al-Kirmani 1967: 167).

7 The Doctrine of Reincarnation

The Druze are strong believers in the doctrine of reincarnation (*naskh al-arwāḥ*). For the Druze, this doctrine is rooted in the Qurʾān (al-Atrash 1974: 187–188; al-Basha 1982: 205; Taliʿ 1980: 44) and is not a deviation from Islamic teachings. For instance, the Druze scholar Anwar Abi Khuzam argues that any belief based on Qurʾānic hermeneutics, despite the disagreement about its interpretation among the various Islamic sects, remains within the circle of Islam (Abi Khuzam 1995: 296). Therefore, the Druze believe that their belief in the doctrine of reincarnation does not make them less Islamic but it distinguishes them from other Islamic sects and schools.

Abi Khuzam tells us that the Druze belief in reincarnation has a psychological dimension. This belief stems from the human rejection to the idea of death and separation from this world. Reincarnation provides a theoretical solution that guarantees a permanent return to life with the possibility of better living conditions. However, the main reason for the belief in reincarnation in the Druze faith is tied to religious doctrines that are metaphysical in nature. The study of metaphysics was a prime subject among Muslim philosophers and theologians who dealt with the issue of Divine Justice. For the Druze, the belief in reincarnation allows Divine Justice to take its course as it provides the human soul with the chance to experience life more than once (Abi Khuzam 1995: 297).

The doctrine of reincarnation in the Druze faith may have emerged out of theological debates on the issue of God's justice. For example, some theologians,

like the Muʿtazilites, believed that God is bound to be just, while others—chief among them is Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111)—argued the opposite (Abi Khuzam 1995: 298). The issue that prompted the debate was an allegory put up by al-Ghazālī as to whether it is just for God to assess the faith (īmān) of a Muslim who died in infancy and another who passed away after living a long life. The conclusion based on the allegory is that the degree of īmān in the old person is higher since he worked all his life on increasing it while the child had a lesser degree of īmān since his life was short. The question posed: What is the guilt of the child if God had already decreed that he should die in infancy thus denying him an equal chance to increase his īmān? According to Abi Khuzam, Druze sages believe that the doctrine of reincarnation provides a solution to this problem since the passing through many lives gives human beings equal opportunities to increase their īmān (Abi Khuzam 1995: 298–299). Abdallah E. Najjar writes that the doctrine of reincarnation

> makes ultimate, human accounting before man's Creator fair, rational and just … The one life conception is obviously inequitable, for human beings are not offered equal opportunities in one life so they can grow, consider and perform … One life with its evident handicaps in time and fortune does not offer a suitable criterion of judgment and evaluation. How are the babies and the immature in years to be judged without any score in merits or demerits or sufficient knowledge and understanding?
>
> NAJJAR 1973: 94

It is worth mentioning that Druze sages do not see in reincarnation an escape from God's judgment. Instead, they assert that on the Last Day, every soul will be held accountable. This belief in the Last Day and the accountability of the soul keeps the Druze within the realm of Islam, according to Abi Khuzam, and distinguishes them from other believers in reincarnation, such as in Hindu traditions where the soul faces a different destination. The Druze are against the belief that the human soul upon death may migrate to nonhuman form— animal, plant, or rock. Najjar tells us that the Druze believe "categorically in the passage upon death of the soul from the dead human body to a newborn human baby and to nothing else" (Najjar 1973: 88). The Druze belief that reincarnation "occurs among all humans at all places and times," but only a minority remembers previous lives (Bennett 2006: 87). In a study on the belief of reincarnation in the Druze faith, Anne Bennett finds that the Druze reincarnation is a social phenomenon that enhances sect unity and identity despite the fact that it is "not uniformly accepted" among the Druze. Bennett writes, "there is … no blanket agreement among Druze regarding reincarnation. There

are many who are skeptics about the phenomenon and dismiss it outright"
(Bennett 2006: 87). Druze sages emphasise that the belief in the Last Day and
the accountability of the soul is at the core of the Druze beliefs, and whoever
denies them is not from the people of monotheism (*laysa min ahl al-tawḥīd*)
(Abi Khuzam 1995: 299–300).

8   Sages and Shrines

Of the most important Druze practices is the veneration of sages. The sages
are the 'mystics' of the Druze society, and they are at a higher state than their
Druze brethren. They are known as the *ʿuqqāl* (wise, sages) and are distin-
guished by their dress, appearance, and way of life. According to Druze tradi-
tion, the sage is a person who not only reaches a degree of spiritual knowledge,
but he is the one upon whom God has sent upon enlightenment to relieve him
from ignorance. Their role is social rather than political. For instance, the com-
munity turns to them for guidance, reconciliation, and blessing. Although the
sages live the mystic life, they live among people in villages and rarely lead a
life in isolation (Abu Muslih 2002: 28).

The Druze sages detach themselves from all worldly desires, meditate most
of the time, some practice celibacy, and dedicate their lives to worshipping
God. They are constantly reading the scripture and strictly follow its teachings
and guidance. Their mystic life does not prevent them from working in jobs
such as farming, tailoring, and hand copying the scripture. If they happen to
have more money than they need for themselves, they donate it to charities. In
the sage, the people see and feel the presence of divine power. These are the
signs of a person becoming special or sacred (Abu Muslih 2002: 28).

The Druze sages are considered special people to their community and to
others as well. They are so sacred and special to the extent that Druze and,
in some cases, non-Druze visit them for guidance, blessing, or simply out of
curiosity. After their death, the community buries the sage in his house and
turns the latter into a shrine. In the shrine, a tomb is erected over the sage's
body and writings are carved on the tomb. Traditionally, the writings are verses
from the Qurʾān and statements praising the buried sage. All the tombs are
similar in size and shape. A picture of the sage may be hanged on the wall, and
Persian rugs are scattered all over the shrine. Thus, the sage's house becomes a
sacred place, where people visit regularly to pray at, touch, and kiss the tomb,
light candles, drink or wash from what they consider sacred water and oil,
and donate money to maintain the shrine or to be distributed among Druze
orphans. Before leaving the shrine, the visitors carry with them a piece of

cloth, believing that it would protect them against evil or would bring good luck charms.

The Druze visit the various shrines regularly and all year round. There are more than seventy-seven shrines, which are found in nearly every locale where the Druze live. Shrines are erected for male and female sages as well. For instance, there are a number of shrines for woman sages, and they are as popular and important as those for male sages. It is also common for the Druze to visit shrines of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish religious figures (Abi Khuzam 1995: 285). There is no special month or time for visitation. At any day of the year, the typical visitors at the shrine range from engaged or newly married couple, to those who just had a new baby, to people starting their own businesses. They all come asking for the sage's blessing. The belief is that the soul of the sage is still around and can hear their prayers and wishes. The visits may be as short as a few minutes, or they may last for days, if there are rooms to accommodate for overnight visitors. In recent times, the shrines have been turned into recreational areas for visitors. It has become very popular today that families bring their food and barbecues and, after visiting the tomb and paying their respect to the sage's soul, these families spend the whole day in the surrounding area of the shrine where they slaughter sheep, eat, play cards, backgammon, or volleyball, and dance, sing, and take naps.

The most recent sage to pass away was Shaykh Abū Ḥasan ʿĀrif (d. 2004) from the Shuf Mountain, southeast of the Lebanese capital Beirut. He had a state funeral that was attended by dignitaries from all religious sects and dominations in Lebanon, in addition to politicians and government officials. His funeral was broadcast on satellite television stations all over the Arab world. Thus, the sacredness of this sage was acknowledged and respected by Druze and non-Druze alike all over the region. After his death, his house was turned into the most recent shrine with a tomb in a room that is skillfully and sacredly built. The dead sage lies under ground, but the tradition lives on.[6]

9 Conclusion

Since its inception in the eleventh century, there have been attempts to portray the Druze sect in a negative light. In the formative years of the Druze *daʿwa*, some Ismāʿīlī scholars, like al-Kirmānī, were hostile to the new movement (Firro 1992: 13). In modern times, some scholars, travelers, and Orientalists

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6   For further discussion of Druze shrines and sages, see, for example, Abu Muslih (2002); Firro (2005); Makarim (1990).

have suggested that the Druze are descendants of a French Comte de Dreux, who disappeared in the mountains of Lebanon in the thirteenth century (Betts 1988: 25; Hitti 1928: 15). Others have advanced the claims that the ethnic origin of the Druze is not Arab but Persian (Hitti 1928: 18–23). Some speculated that the Druze represented remnants of a lost Jewish tribe (Obeid 2006: 10).

As this chapter has demonstrated, the ethnic origins of the Druze can be traced to Arab tribes, according to prominent historians like al-Tabari. Their Arab origin is obvious today in the dialect spoken by the Druze, which "is one of the purest of the Arab dialects" (Obeid 2006: 10). The teachings of the Druze faith are rooted in Islam as the Druze are staunch believers in the oneness of God, in the authenticity of the Qurʾān as the word of God, and in Muḥammad as God's messenger. Arguably, the sect's esoteric interpretation of the Islamic doctrines drives the Druze to be more radical in applying the Islamic pillars. Their belief in reincarnation, whether they take this doctrine literally or metaphorically, provides them with the tools to argue for God's justice. For Druze sages, the Druze is a philosophical school within the realm of Islam, not a separate religion.

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Yezidism

Victoria Arakelova

1   Introduction

Yezidism is a syncretic product of the Near Eastern non-dogmatic milieu, having its own unique characteristics and sharing certain aspects with other non-dogmatic trends. The Yezidis[1] or Yazidis (Arab. *yazīdīya*, Kurd. *ēzdī*) form a separate ethno-religious group, which have preserved its complex ethno-religious identity through the centuries, in the historical motherland and elsewhere on the territories of the habitat—both in the hostile environment and in safe and benevolent societies, having remained a closed, esoteric society.

The Yezidis are found scattered over a vast area: the northern part of Iraq (north-west of Mosul and Jebel Sinjar [*Ĉīyā Šangālē*], west of Mosul), Syria (Siruj, Birjak, Klis, Afrin, Amuda, and Qamishli), Eastern Turkey, Armenia (the districts of Aragatsotn, Artashat, and Talin, as well as the city of Yerevan), and Georgia (the city of Tbilisi). There are also relatively new communities in Russia (Krasnodar kraj and other regions) and Europe (Germany in the main, but also other countries such as Sweden), which are the result of economic migration (from Armenia and Georgia, largely to Russia), persecution, and military conflicts (from Iraq, Syria, and Turkey). Indeed, almost the entire Yezidi population of Turkey, based previously in compact settlements in the rural centers of Tur-Abdin, Nisibin, Diarbekir, Mush, Sasun, and Bitlis, as well as on the upper shores of the Tigris river, has moved to Syria, Germany, or other Western-European countries. The main religious center of the Yezidis is situated in the valley of Lalish in the Sheikhan region (North Iraq), where the sanctuaries of most of the Yezidi saints and holy men are located. The seat of the Yezidis' spiritual leader, the Prince (or *mīr*), is in the nearby village of Ba'dre. The Yezidis speak a local variant of Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji), which they

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1   On the early encounters and history of the community, as well as the historiography of the subject, see: Guest (1987); Arakelova (2006a; 2011a); and Açikyildiz (2014). On the Yezidi religion, rites, rituals, and textual tradition, see: Furlani (1936); Drower (1941); Kreyenbroek (1995); Kreyenbroek and Rashow (2005); Asatrian and Arakelova (2014); and Arakelova (2015a).

call *ēzdīkī* ('the Yezidi language'). The community usually leads a sedentary lifestyle, but also includes nomadic clans.

It is virtually impossible to determine any precise population figure for the Yezidis for at least two reasons: 1) the sparsity of information on the territories inhabited by the Yezidis (particularly in Iraq); and 2) identity problems, for example the Yezidis have often been grouped together with other religious or ethnic groups (the Qizilbash and the Kurds) when population counts have taken place (Arakelova 2001a: 320–321). The total number of Yezidis, therefore, can be estimated only approximately: around 200,000 in Iraq, 80–100,000 in Syria, 45–50,000 in Armenia, 20–25,000 in Georgia, 10–15,000 in Russia, and 45–50,000 in Western Europe; all in all, this totals some 450–500,000 people.[2]

2   Formation of Yezidism as a Separate Ethno-Religious Group

The formation of the Yezidis as a separate ethno-religious group took place from the eleventh to the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries (the fifth to the seventh-eighth centuries AH) in the region of Sinjar in Northern Iraq. The new community was shaped on the basis of the Adawīyya Ṣūfi order, whose leader, the Ṣūfi *murshid* and *shaykh* ʿAdī bin Musāfir later became approached in the Yezidi legendary history as founder of the first Yezidi community and deified in the Yezidi tradition as incarnation of God (see below).

The consistent dissociation from the local Muslim milieu and the gradual closing of the newly shaping community, with its further shift to endogamy, was occurring amid the very colorful religious scenery of Mesopotamia. Different versions of Islam and Christianity resided alongside Old Iranian religious elements tightly interlaced with Gnostic ideas and substrate heathen beliefs, while the still strong cult of the Omayyads coexisted with other, rather marginal religious-political movements. This eclectic atmosphere led to different and often contradictory elements being incorporated into the Adawīyya Ṣūfi order. Many of them can be found in Yezidism, having been either borrowed from diverse trends of the syncretic religious landscape of the time or inherited directly from the Adawīyya. Followers of the Ṣūfi *murshid* Sheikh ʿAdī, came from diverse groups and, ultimately, this led to the development of a fundamentally new syncretic religious teaching that lacked a set doctrinal

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2 The data is from Asatrian and Arakelova (2014: vii); recent mass migration from Iraq and Syria caused by ISIS' persecution of the Yezidis in the Middle East is not taken into consideration here.

basis. Thus, the Yezidi religion can be defined as a product of the Near-Eastern non-dogmatic milieu, which is deeply rooted in a form of Ṣūfism, but has had multiple elements superimposed onto it as a result of being exposed to the then-Mesopotamian religious landscape (Guest 1987: 15–28; Kreyenbroek 1995: 45–68; Arakelova 2006a).

Some elements of Yezidism are extremely specific, even unique, which makes them the main markers of the Yezidis' particular self-consciousness (Arakelova 2010: 6–17). The group's identity is based, *ante omnia*, on following a non-proselytising religion, called Sharfadin (Arab. *Šarfadīn* or *Šaraf ad-dīn*, literally 'the honor of religion'). The peculiarities of this religious system are limited not only to its syncretism, in which elements are borrowed from, or shared with, other doctrines; they also include the particular features that are solely characteristic of the Yezidi faith. For instance, its followers are defined as belonging to the Ezdikhana (*Ēzdīxāna*): the esoteric community of the Yezidis. The specific parameters of belonging to this community are determined by *Farzē brātīyē* ("The Canon of Spiritual Guidance"; lit. 'Brotherhood'), which can be said to define the character of the Yezidi tradition. The Yezidi community confines itself to three major proscriptions: the prohibition of marriage with adherents of a different faith, providing purity of religion; the prohibition of marriages between representatives of different castes, providing caste purity; and the following of the basic precepts of the religion, aimed at preserving the faith's traditions. Breaking these rules is seen as a dreadful sin; a Yezidi who has ignored at least one of those prescripts is considered an apostate and must be expelled from the community (Ankosi 1996: 12–15).

The caste of a Yezidi determines the role of the follower in the *Ezdikhana*. The clergy (*tariqat*, Arab. *tarīqa*, meaning '[spiritual] path') includes the casts of the *sheikhs* or *shaykhs* (*šēx*, Arab. *šayx*) and the *pīrs* (Pers. *pīr* 'elder, saint'), and their families. The other community members are the laymen—*mirīd* (Arab. *murīd*, meaning 'disciple'). This structure also determines the system of spiritual guidance within the community, which is very specific (and even includes members entitled 'brother/sister of the hereafter' (Asatrian 1999– 2000: 79–96; see also Nicolaus 2016). Of course, the structure elaborated here is a simplification of the hierarchy of Yezidi society, which includes other titles like *Kochak*, *Faqir*, *Qawwal*, *Farrash*, and *Kebani* that are meaningful within the spiritual aspect of Yezidism and are functionally significant (within the contexts of the temple service and the organisation of religious festivals, for example). It has been argued that in diaspora in particular, coordination between the three basic castes—the *sheikhs*, *pīrs*, and *mirīds*—is absolutely necessary (see Kreyenbroek 1995: 125–137). Spiritual tutorship is a crucial element within

an esoteric group that protects its secret knowledge zealously from strangers, as is the case with the Yezidis. The system is supposed to guarantee cultural and religious preservation and self-awareness.

In the early stages of the development of the faith, affiliation with the community could lead to initiation into the esoteric group. At present, however, due to the ethnic vector of the Yezidi identity, it is presupposed that members will be born to Yezidi parents (although membership is not necessarily guaranteed for descendants; they must still follow the above-mentioned prescriptions.[3]

Deprived of their own sacred scriptures, this closed community has developed through centuries a rich and multi-genre lore, which has fixed its religious traditions and represents the most reliable source for research into the group. The texts were predominantly recorded in the twentieth century in Armenia;[4] their dating seems to be virtually impossible, though some features and contexts allow to distinguish between earlier and later texts (see, for example, Rudenko 1982; Arakelova 2008a). The so-called 'holy books' of the Yezidis— *Kitēbā Jalwa* ('The Book of Revelation') and *Mashafẽ Raš* ('The Black Book')— can be considered late forgeries (compiled, most probably, in the eighteenth century and recorded in the nineteenth century), rather than authentic original texts, although they definitely reflect the group's genuine religious and folk traditions, nonetheless (Marie 1911; Bittner 1913). While containing much less information about Yezidi sacred knowledge than the elements of religious lore, these short texts have gradually become part of tradition, and are now treated as holy writings by the Yezidis themselves.

3   The One God and the Yezidi Triad

Although sometimes classified as polytheistic, the Yezidi religion is based on the idea of one god and his three incarnations, with the so-called 'folk pantheon' being represented by Yezidi deities, saints, holy patrons, and deified personalities. The Yezidis themselves approach their faith in a monotheistic

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3 Historical analyses of various ethno-religious communities have shown that their development involves a clearly expressed drive for ethnicity (Arakelova 2010).

4 The first sample of the Yezidi lore was recorded at the end of the nineteenth century and published with the Russian translation by the Armenian scholar Solomon Egiazarov (Egiazarov 1891: 221–227); the same text was republished with the German translation in 1900, by the Hungarian Orientalist Hugo Makas (Makas 1900: 37–38). Then, only around eighty years after, voluminous collections of the Yezidi lore, recorded also among the Yezidis of Armenia, appeared in in Moscow and Yerevan (Celil and Celil 1978a, 1978b).

way, as expressed in the following creed, which is called *Šahdā dīnī* ('symbol of faith'):

> *Šahdā dīnē min ēk Allāh, ...*
> *Silt'ān Šēxadī pādšē mina, ...*
> *Silt'ān Ēzdī pādšē mina, ...*
> > *Tāwūsī malak šahdā ū īmānēd mina ...*
> *Haqa, xwadē kir, [am] ēzdīna,*
> *Sar nāvē Silt'ān Ēzdīna.*
> *Al-h'amd lillāh, am ži ōl ū tarīqēd xō di-řāzīnā.*

> The testimony of my faith is one god,
> Sultan Sheikh ʿAdī is my king,
> Sultan Yezid is my king,
> Malak-Tāwūs (The Peacock Angel) is the Symbol [of Faith] and my faith.
> Indeed, by god's will [we] are Yezidis,
> We are called by the name of Sultan Yezid.
> God be praised, we are content with our religion and our community.
> KREYENBROEK 1995: 226

The Yezidi triad comprises of the following: Malak-Tāwūs, the Peacock Angel (featuring in the Yezidi imagination as a bird, a peacock, or a cock, or sometimes even a dove); Sheikh ʿAdī (*Šeyx ʿĀdī*; i.e., Sheikh ʿAdī bin Musāfir), a historical figure and founder of the proto-Yezidi community, represented as an old man); and Sultan Yezid (*Silt'ān Ēzīd*, a youthful character). All three characters are considered manifestations of god (*xwadē*, *xwadī*, or *xudā*, the term deriving from New Pers. *xudāy*).[5]

Yezidi ideas on *xwadē* are quite hazy. There are just a few references to him in Yezidi religious knowledge; his will is said to be realised through his manifestations. For the Yezidis, *xwadē* is an utterly transcendent figure, which, together with his function as demiurge, makes him equivalent to the 'one God' of the dogmatic religions, to a certain extent. However, despite being creator of the Universe, *xwadē* is considered completely indifferent to its fate; he is figured as not concerning himself with worldly affairs. Thus, *xwadē* is a typical example of a *deus otiosus*: an impartial and removed god.

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5   There are also other variations used to designate god: *xudāvand*, *rab*(*b*)*ī*, and *Allāh* (the latter mostly in Arabic formulae). Moreover, in some religious songs, the term *ēzdān* (from New Pers. y*azdān*—"god") appears (Asatrian and Arakelova 2014, Part 1: 1–7).

The emergence of the triad in the Yezidi doctrine, with its ubiquitous presence and multiple functions, seems to have led to the figure of *xwadē* being moved aside. *Xwadē* even seems to be a kind of a tabooed element due to his absolutely sacred nature; in the Yezidi liturgy and oral tradition, there is only one religious text dedicated (or, rather, addressed) to *xwadē* directly: *Madh'ē Xwadē* ('Glorification of God' or 'Praise to God'. See the two variants of the text with English translations in Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 4–6). It is Malak-Tawus (*Malak tāwūs*, *Malakē tāwūs*, or *Tāwūsē/ī malak*—that is, the peacock angel) who appears to be not just the most important character of the Yezidi triad, but also the very essence or *raison d'être* of the whole religion. He dominates over all the major and minor divinities in the pantheon. In one variant of the Yezidi Symbol (or Statement) of Faith, he features directly after *xwadē*:

> *Min ša'datīya īmānā xwa*
> *Bi nāvē xwadē ū Tāwūsī malak dāya.*
>
> I attest that my faith is given
> In the names of god and Malak-Tawus.
>   DEWRĒŠ 1993: 11

As such, Malak-Tawus is clearly the main marker or distinguishing feature of Yezidism, lending a unique character to this syncretic religion. No other religious group in the region follows a comparable figure, including some of the dogmatically related, extreme Shīʿa sects, in which a similar image of a peacock angel has but a marginal level of representation, for example the Mandaeans and the Ahl-i Ḥaqq (see Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 30–32; Arakelova 2015b: 120–123; Drower 1941).

Malak-Tawus also provides an eponym for the Yezidis: they are referred to as *milatē Malak tāwūs*—'the nation (or tribe) of Malak-Tawus'. In the Yezidi text known as 'The Black Scripture' or *Mash'afē řaš* (Arab. *Kitāb al-aswad*), Malak-Tawus is identified with Azrail, the messenger of death and one of the four archangels nearest to god (*Malēkī xalq kird nāvēna ʿAzra'īl; awiš Malak tāwūsa kī gawra hamūyāna*—"[God] created an angel and gave him the name Azrail; that was Malak-Tawus, who [is] the leader of all"; *Li sirī Ādam … milatī li sar arz paydā dibī, li pāštir milatī ʿAzrā'īl, ya'nī Malak ṭāwūs kī yazīdīya paydā dibī*—"From the essence of Adam … the people will emerge on earth from which later the people of Azrail, that is, Malak-Tawus, will be born, which is the Yezidi folk" (Bittner 1913: 24–28; see also Eliseev 1988: 59–74). The genesis of this specific image, his depiction as a peacock, and his identification with

evil can be traced to the Islamic apocryphal tradition and the early Ṣūfi idea of the apologia for Satan (Massignon 1922: 869; Soane 1926: 100; Elâhî 1966; Schwartz 1971: 211; Wilson 1989–90: 45; Arakelova 2001a: 321–323; Arakelova 2001b; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 26–29). In fact, Sharfadin, the Yezidi religion, should be regarded here as an allegory; a substitute for the taboo name of Malak-Tawus, positioned as the supreme deity of the Yezidis (Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 29–30). Moreover, it is the ambivalence of the image of Malak-Tawus—and particularly his identification with the Fallen Angel—that led to the Yezidis acquiring the epithet "devil worshippers" (Arakelova 2011b: 35–36).

The two other representatives of the Yezidi triad, Sheikh ʿAdī and Sultan Ezid, represent quite a different phenomenon: that of the deification of historical personalities. Sheikh ʿAdī bin Musāfir (465–555/557 AH) (in the Yezidi tradition, *Šīxādī*, *Šēxādī*, *Šīxāndī*, or *Šēx[ē] Aʾdī [Ādī]*)[6] was the founder of the Adawīyya Ṣūfi order, which became the backbone of the future Yezidi community. The veneration of this historical personality, with his well-documented biography as a Ṣūfi master, within the Ṣūfi tradition led to his deification by the Yezidis, who honor him as the founder of the first Yezidi community and a representative of *xwade*. Sheikh ʿAdī also provides another eponym to the community, as the members are also referred to as *ʿadabī* (Arab. *ʿadawī*: 'followers of Sheikh ʿAdī') and *šarqīs* (from *ʿadawīyē šarqī*, which means 'Eastern Adawīyya').

The third character in the holy triad, Sultan Ezid (25–64 AH) (in the Yezidi tradition, Si/ulṭān Ēzīd),[7] is known as the lord of people and their worldly life, which is the essence of the Yezidi faith (Kreyenbroek 1995: 95–96). Sometimes, he is even associated with Malak-Tawus himself. Historically speaking, Sultan Ezid, the second Umayyad caliph (61–64 AH), was venerated in the early community and also later in the tradition, most probably as a result of the then-common trend of venerating the Umayyad dynasty. In time, Sultan Ezid's name came to provide the main eponym for the Yezidi community, most probably as the result of an overlap between an endo-ethnonym and a pejorative exo-ethnonym in the Shīʿa milieu (Arakelova 2008b: 199–201). According to the Yezidi tradition, Sultan Ezid broke away from Islam and adopted the religion of Šahīd bin-ǰarr, the son of Adam (Spät 2002: 27–56); that is, Yezidism. It should

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6   For more details on this character, see Guest (1987: 15–16); and Asatrian and Arakelova (2014: 37–44).

7   For more details on this character, see Arakelova (2005); and Asatrian and Arakelova (2014: 45–50).

also be noted that in some marginal trends, Sultan Ezid is not identified with the historical Umayyad caliph at all.

All the three representatives of the so-called triad are often interchanged with each other, with their domains and functions overlapping in various religious contexts. All three appear as the creator, as representatives of a credo, as articles of faith, as providers of eponyms, and as Yezidi saints.

4   Folk Pantheon: Deities and Patron Spirits

Apart from the triad, the Yezidis' folk pantheon includes numerous minor deities, guardian spirits, saints, and holy men, who patronise diverse spheres of human activity or personify natural phenomena. Most of the deities who are thought to control natural phenomena are believed to heal the diseases caused by the spheres that are under their command. The effects of healing are typically ascribed to sanctuaries, shrines, and certain sheikh-connected clans (Arakelova 2001a). The names of deities, spirit guardians, and saints commonly feature the caste-related titles *sheikh* (*šēx*), *pīr* (*p'īr*), and dervish (*dawrēš*). All the figures in question are, in fact, predominantly performative entities that are deprived of a constant dogmatic basis and are, in the main, essentially elements of ritual. Many of them have legendary graves in the Lalish Valley, which seems to be the only sign of 'canonisation' by the tradition.

'The Thunderer' as a *denotatum* is represented in several characters or, rather, acts under different names. The actual thunder god is Māma-(Mam) řašān (or Mahmad-řašān, lit. 'pouring, darting Mahmad (Muhammad)'; appearing sometimes with the epithet 'lion' (Šēr Mahmadē řašān or Šēr Mahmad řašān). Šēx A'brūs is the lord of lightning, A'bdī Řašō (or A'bd Řaš) is the god of thunder and lightning, and Bā-raš is the spirit of the hurricane. Mama-řašān is, however, the most generic indication. Mama-řašān controls harvesting and his feast is celebrated in spring. In a drought, when the rain needs to be summoned, the Yezidis use special formulas; traditionally, each village owned a special ritual cup, 'Mama-řašān's cup' (*K'āsā Mama-řašānē*), with the name of Mama-řašān inscribed inside it in Arabic letters, which was employed during the ceremony for calling the rain (Asatrian and Arakelova 2004: 234–242; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 54–61; see also Kreyenbroek 1995: 109, 115).

Šēx Mūsē-sōr, 'the Red Sheikh Mūs (Moses)', is another atmospheric deity, who controls the winds and the air. Glorified as Sōrē Sōrān (the attribute *sōr* ['red'] underscoring sanctity), he is addressed to send wind in fair weather during threshing work for winnowing. In addition, the sheikhy families from Ōǰāxā Sōrē Sōrān, a branch of the Adani sheikhy clan (who, traditionally, claimed

to originate from Šēx Mūsē-sōr), are known for their ability to cure diseases caused, according to the popular mind, 'by the wind or air penetrating into the body', those of the lungs and joints, such as rheumatism.

The deities of the sun and the moon—Sheikhs Shams (otherwise Šēx Šams, Šēx Šims, Šēšims, or Šēšim) and Faxr ad-Din (or Farxadīn,/Faxradīn)—are represented by two brothers. These deified historical personalities were the sons of 'Adī II (Guest 1987: 20–21), the third person to lead the Adawīyya community. Their deification is by no means explained by their historical roles, particular contributions to community life, or any personal merits. In the case of Sheikh Shams, the reference of his name to the sun (Šams = Arab. 'the sun') determined his identification with the deity. Sheikh Shams is considered the third manifestation of Malak-Tawus, corresponding to the Angel Israfil (Raphael). His figure is particularly significant in the folk pantheon. He is endowed with specific characteristics: his epithet *bīnāyā ĉavā* ('the eyes' light') is a metaphor for 'godhead', according to the Yezidis. Among his other epithets are the following: *masabē mina*, 'the essence [lit. "confession, doctrine"] of my religion'; *ĉirā dīnī* ('the light of the faith'); the *qibla* ('pivot'); *qawatā dīn* ('the power of the faith'); *xudanē ma'rīfatē ū ark'ān ū nāsīna* ('the master of spiritual knowledge'); *mōrā Šēx Šims* ('the owner of the seal'); *ĉirā bar sunatē* (the torch of the [Yezidi] community); and *ĉavē xwadē* (God's eye). Moreover, Sheikh Shams is accredited power over hell and the *Sirāt* bridge (Celil and Celil 1978a: 33–34). According to tradition, he has twelve children, corresponding to the twelve months of a year. The polyvalence of the sun allows the character to penetrate into numerous domains, even those formally belonging to other deities. The special attitude of the Yezidis to the sun (and, thus, the special place of Sheikh Shams in the folk pantheon) is also confirmed by the fact that Sheikh Shams' name is mentioned in Yezidi lore more frequently than that of any other deity (Arakelova 2002: 57–67; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 67–69).

To move on to Faxr ad-Din, the only reason why he was deified as the 'moon' seems to be his blood-brother relation to historical Sheikh Shams. In the folk tradition, the sun and the moon are two celestial siblings. The hymn dedicated to Faxr ad-Din, the *Qawlē Malak Farxadīn* (Celil and Celil 1978a: 329–337), does not even allude to his connection with the moon; in the tradition, however, the moon is called *Māngā Malak Farxadīn* ('The disc of the Angel Faxr ad-Din'). His role as that of the moon deity can be observed, although indirectly, in the ritual of healing from 'lunar disease': *kēma hayvī* or *hīvē lēxistī* (lit. 'the [state of being] moonstruck'; Arakelova 2001a). Malak Faxradīn (Faxr ad-Din) or A'zīz Malak Faxradīn—that is, (Saint) Angel Faxr ad-Din—is identified in the Yezidi tradition with Turail (or Nurail), the seventh avatar of Malak-Tawus. He is considered the creator of Yezidi religious lore, or *Qawl-ū-bayt* (Tamoyan 2001: 148),

and the *qawwals* (reciters) are known as *Jēšē Malak Faxradīn*: 'the armies of Malak Faxradīn' (Kreyenbroek 1995: 218–219).

Two deities probably representing the same *denotatum* are Pīrā-Fāt, the foremother of the Yezidis, and Xatūnā-farxā, the patroness of pregnant women and infants. Pīrā-Fāt is the patroness of women in labor and newborn babies: she protects them from the evil demoness Āl (Asatrian 2001; Arakelova 2003). Pīrā-Fāt is thought to have saved the seed from which the Yezidi people originated from annihilation; she is credited with having preserved it for several hundred or thousand years. Xatūnā-farxā has the similar function of being the protectress of infants, but her domain focuses on the so-called *čilla*: the initial forty days of life (Asatrian 2007; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 72–77).

Two other important figures are the dual deities of livestock—Mamē-Šivān (or 'shepherd Mam' and Gāvānē Zarzān ('herdsman Zarzān')—who play crucial roles in the Yezidi religious worldview. When farmers put their animals to pasture, these deities are addressed using the following formula: *Am pištī ta, Mamē-Šivān, dičin bar vī pazī; pišti ta, Gāvānē Zarzān, dičin bar vī dawārī; am pištī ta, Mamē-Šivān, paz xway dikin, am pištī ta Gāvānē Zarzān, dēwēr xway dikin* ("Relying on you, Mamē-Šivān, we follow that flock (of sheep); relying on you, Gāvānē Zarzān, we follow the herd (of cows); relying on you, Mamē-Šivān, we go after the small animals; relying on you, Gāvānē Zarzān, we go after the cattle" [Davrešyan 1977: 74]). Their significance is evident particularly in the number of rituals and feasts related to them (Davrešyan 1977: 73; Aristova 1986: 75, Asatrian 2002: 83), although Mamē-Šivān seems to be somewhat more important than Gāvānē Zarzān, probably because the Yezidis are primarily sheep breeders. Indeed, the shepherd deity's name provides the eponym for the Mamē-Šivān clergy family (Kreyenbroek 1995: 111–112). The deity is also considered the earthly twin of the constellation of the Ram. Its shrine in Lalish, the 'Wishing Pillar' (*stūnā mirāza*), is believed to have the power to fulfill followers' desires, if they place their palms upon it.[8]

A more universal religious figure is Xidir-Nabī (or Xidr-Navī—'Prophet Xidr'; Arab. al-Xiḍr, Pers. Xizr or Xezr), who appears in the beliefs of numerous peoples in the Near East and Central Asia. Often identified with the Prophet Elijah, Xidir-Nabī is a character with a double name in many traditions, including the Yezidi one—he is also referred to as Xidirnabī-Xidiraylās or simply Xirdaylās (Papazyan 1986; Krasnowolska 1998: 141–60; Celil and Celil 1978b: 308). For the Yezidis, he is one of the sons of Sheikh Shams and is usually represented as a celestial warrior: as *mērē gāz-gēdūkā* ('the man of mountains and gorges')

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8   For more details about both the livestock deities, see Arakelova (2003); Asatrian and Arakelova (2004: 256–259); and Asatrian and Arakelova (2014: 80–82).

or *haspē sīyārē bōz* ('rider of a white horse'). He is also patron of the young, travelers, and those in love. In these respects, the Yezidi Xidir-Nabī has clear parallels with the Armenian popular saint Surb Sargis (St Sergius), who is also a celestial warrior and is depicted as controlling storms and as a patron of love (Harut'yunyan 2002). Xidir-Nabī's festival, an important date in the Yezidi religious calendar (Šēx K'eleş 1995: 33–34; Davrešyan 1977: 73), is also reminiscent of the Armenian Surb Sargis feast. It can be argued, therefore, that this character of Muslim origin has been shaped as a Yezidi deity by Armenian cultural influences (Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 95–97). There is also another figure associated with travel in the Yezidi tradition: Šēx A'lī Šams (or Šīxālī-Šamsān), the protector of wayfarers, captives, exiles, and all those in strange lands. He is addressed mainly via a toast made in his honor (*ašqā Šīxālī-Šamsān*) during festive meals or wakes, or before one takes to the road (Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 90–91).

A further character worth mentioning in the Yezidi folk pantheon is Pirā-stēř or Prikī stēř (lit. 'the old woman of bedding'), who, unlike Xidir-Nabī, is unique to Yezidi culture. She is described as an old woman that is invisible to the eye but lives in bedding (*stēř*) and roams about the house at night. Her role is to look out for the welfare of the whole family (Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 92). Šēx-kirās ('the spirit of the garment') is a less important, almost forgotten figure, but is mentioned in Yezidi literature and was probably responsible for the process of death or the transmigration of the soul (*tanāsux*) (Arakelova 2002: 72–74).

Milyāk'atē-qanǰ (lit. 'the holy angel') is the only example of the *Deus Phalli* in all New Iranian folk pantheons. There is just one written reference to this deity (Avdal 1957: 93–94) but some elements of the phallic symbol can be traced to the Yezidi festival *Barān-bardān* ('the releasing of rams'—see Şemîlov 1969; Asatrian 1998). This is another character who has almost been forgotten; he continues to hold significance, however, in relation to notions of fertility (Arakelova 2007; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 82–86).

Šēx-kirās, the Spirit of the Garment, an almost a forgotten figure, was probably responsible for the process of death or even transmigration of a soul (*tanāsux*) (Arakelova 2002: 72–74). Other characters of the Yezidi folk pantheon include Dawrēš-a'rd or Dawrēšē-a'rd (lit. 'saint/master/host of the Earth'), who is the lord of the Earth (the underworld) and has the function of preserving people's hidden or pawned possessions; Xatā-ǰōt ('spirit of the furrow'), who is the patroness of agriculture; Xudāne-mālē ('master of the house'), the spirit of the household, who lives in fireplaces and protects families' welfare and morality; Šēx Mand or P'īr Mandī-gōrā, the lord of graves—a chthonic character who has power over snakes and scorpions and carries the epithet *šēxē řaš* ('the

black sheikh'); Ibrahim-khalil ('the friend of god'), who is the Yezidi version of the Biblical Prophet Abraham and has no specific function but is mentioned in the prayer said before an ordinary meal; Jin-tayār ('the flying jinn'), who is the lord of the genies and cures the mentally ill; and Pīrē-Libinā(n), the 'builder spirit', who is said to have built many of the sanctuaries in Lalesh and is also believed to facilitate marriages.

Important objects of worship for the Yezidis include the avatars of Malak-Tawus: 'Azrail, Dardail, Israfil, Mikail, Jabrail, Shamnail, and Turail (of which 'Azrail, the alleged head of the seven avatars, is usually identified with Malak-Tawus, although they are all considered emanations of him; Edmonds 1967: 4). The category of 'deity' excludes most of the figures within the system of saints—for example, the historical personalities that are associated with the Adawīyya order. Of particular note here are Sheikh Abū Bakr (Šēxōbakr), Sajjad ad-din (Siĵdīn, characterised as *qāsidē řuhē mirīyā* or 'psychopomp', who is responsible for escorting the souls of the dead to the underworld), and Nasr ad-din (identified with the angel of death—a divinised person who used to be the executor under Sheikh 'Adī and killed everyone who opposed him), who are not considered deities (Asatrian and Arakelova 2004; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 51–108).

5   Other Specific Features of the Yezidi Religious Syncretism

The Yezidi tradition has also preserved elements of animal worship (particularly that of the dog, the snake, the chameleon, and the rooster) and plant cults (the onion and the mandrake). Celestial bodies are another essential aspect of folk beliefs—the Milky Way (Kurmanji *Rīyā kādizīyē*—'the road of a straw reaper or thief'), Venus (*Stayrā sibē*—the morning star), Sirius (*Galāvēž*; lit. '([the star] bringing people to perdition'), and the constellations of Libra (*stayrā Mēzīn*), Pleiades (*Pēwir*), and Aries (*Barān*) all have connotations in the Yezidi tradition, as do lunar eclipses, rainbows, earthquakes, thunder, and lightning (Arakelova 2006b; Arakelova 2014; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 109–120).

The Yezidi religion also has other distinguishing features, such as the coexistence of conflicting ideas adopted from different traditions, which have been retained due to the absence of a strict doctrine in Yezidism. For example, there are three legends related to the Yezidis' origins. As explained in the Black Scripture (Bittner 1913: 28), and stated by the Yezidi sheikhy tradition, unlike all other peoples (who originated from Adam and Eve), the Yezidis had

only a primeval father, Adam; Eve played no role in their genesis. Yezidi legend explains that Eve once claimed that children were produced by her alone and that Adam had no part in creating them. In order to test Eve's claim, she and Adam placed their seeds in separate jars. When, nine months later, they opened Eve's jar, they found serpents, scorpions, and poisonous insects, while in Adam's jar, there was a beautiful, moon-faced child. They called the boy Šahīd bin-ǰarr ('Šahīd, the son of the pot'). He later married a *hūrī* and became the forefather of the Yezidis (Spät 2002). This version of Adam and Eve's story, which is clearly apocryphal but has Biblical origins, coexists with the legend of the Yezidi seed preserved by Pīrā-Fāt, the foremother of the Yezidis. The latter version parallels the common mythologeme of the preservation of the primordial seed in the Iranian tradition (Asatrian 2007). The third ethno-genetic myth, though a marginal one, goes back to a plot of the Iranian epic *Shahnameh*; it is, however, not related to any of *Shahnameh* versions in Kurmanji, but rather stands as a separate *sujet* (Arakelova 2017).

A similar example of a contradiction is that the Abrahamic idea of the "hereafter" (Arakelova and Amrian 2012) coexists in Yezidism with a belief in reincarnation (*tanāsux*), which is similar to that held by the shibboleths of the non-dogmatic Near-Eastern milieu, some extreme Shī'a sects (*ɣulāt-i šī'a*), and the Mandaeans (see Arakelova 2015b). Indeed, despite its unique character, Yezidism has a number of striking similarities with other syncretic religious systems, first of all, with such extreme Shī'a groups as, for example, the Ahl-i Ḥaqq and the Zaza Alevīs (Kreyenbroek 1995: 53 et seq.; Arakelova 2004; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 121–123). Dogmatic Shī'a elements are also present, particularly in the religious folklore, all being either nominally presented in the texts or adapted to the Yezidi Weltanschauung (Asatrian and Arakelova 2016).

Some aspects of the Ṣūfi heritage can be noted, although, in many cases, they are reinterpreted in accordance with Yezidi tradition (Arakelova 2008a; Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 128–129). Among the latter, especially interesting are such outstanding Ṣūfi figures as Husseyn al-Ḥallāj (c. 244–309 AH) and Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya (95/99–185 AH) Both are honoured with separate hymns—*Qawlē Husēyīnī Halāj* and *Qawlē Rabi'a al-'Adawīya*—in the Yezidi religious lore, and being approached in the tradition as proper Yezidi saints (Arakelova 2001b; Celil and Celil 1978b: 29; Kreyenbroek and Rashow 2005: 196–200). Moreover, in the text, Rābi'a, a prominent woman saint, is engaged in dialogue with another Ṣūfi master, Bayazid Bisṭāmī' (188–262 AH) (Sheikh Bāzīd). Incidentally, despite the absence of the clearly articulated women's role in the tradition, apart from the case of Rābi'a, there is another sample

dedicated particularly to a woman in the Yezidi lore. Bayt'ā Gilāvīyē is a lament for a noble woman, recited during a funeral rite for a woman of a high social status (Arakelova 1999/2000).

Some Yezidi legends and cosmological myths, including mythological figures and rituals are pervaded with gnostic content (see, for example, Spät 2002; Arakelova 2002: 72–74; Arakelova 2014, Asatrian and Arakelova 2014: 124–127; Rodziewicz 2014, 2016). Various common features and parallels exist at a range of levels—both basic ideas and marginal elements are shared. It is perhaps because of the religious idiosyncrasies and contradictions, having emerged and developed as a result of the complete dissociation of Yezidism from Islam and clear rejection of Islamic roots, that the Yezidis have been viewed as heretics or devil worshippers, being persecuted by the wider Muslim community throughout history. Two of the most severe episodes of Yezidi persecution were perpetrated by the Ottomans (see, for example, Çelebi 1991: 169–171) and the Young Turks, who, apart from the Christians (Armenians and Greeks), also targeted the Yezidis.

6   Conclusions and Current Status

Yezidis remain among the most vulnerable groups in the Muslim milieu. The present-day Near-Eastern conflict and the 'forced conversion campaign' mounted by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant on Yezidi-inhabited territories has resulted in a whole range of crimes being committed against this ethno-religious group: tens of thousands have been killed, are missing, remain in captivity (physical and sexual slavery), or have been forced to convert to Islam. Places of Yezidi religious and cultural significance have been systematically destroyed. The peak of these atrocities was the Sinjar massacre of early August 2014, when several thousand Yezidis were killed in the Sinjar area in Iraq's Nineveh Governorate (see the detailed report in OHCHR and UNAMI 2016). In Turkey, in the recent past, dozens of the Yezidi villages near the Turkey-Syria border have been destroyed or taken over by their Muslims neighbours, predominantly Kurds (see Andrews 1989, 119).[9]

Among the latest trends noticeable in the Yezidi communities of Armenia, Georgia and Russia is the adoption of Orthodox Christianity or Neo-

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9   Among numerous recent reports on the issue, see, for example, "The pro-Kurdish *Peace and Democracy Party* deputy Ayla Akat Ata gives the figure of 400 Yezidis currently living in Turkey," *Ekurd Daily*, 19 April, at https://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2014/4/turkey4996. htm, accessed 15/07/2020.

Protestantism, the former being more typical of Russia and Georgia, while the latter, of all the three states. This obvious process allows some representatives of the Yezidi authorities to speak about the crisis in Yezidism caused by globalisation processes and, as a result, rapid transformations in the traditional world outlook among the younger generations. Recent researches based on field work among the proselytes point to the absence of a role model in the Yezidi religion, as a main factor of the conversion (Arakelova 2016, 2018). The mentioned trends will definitely spread, resulting in transformations of the Yezidi identity and shaping of new, syncretic identities.

Principally new challenges Yezidism is facing in the modern period—mass resettlement, forced conversion to Islam and return to Yezidism/attempts to reintegrate to the Yezidi community, formation of new communities in the countries with less traditional societies (primarily in Western Europe), conversion to Orthodox Christianity and Neo-Protestantism in the traditional Yezidi communities of the South Caucasus and Russia, and so forth—inevitably lead to major transformations in Yezidism as integral phenomenon. It will gradually acquire new specific characteristics, giving birth to new syncretic identities.

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The Bahā'ī Faith

Lil Osborn

1   Introduction

The modern Bahā'ī Faith claims over five million adherents (Langness 2013) and has a global presence with National Spiritual Assemblies in almost every country in the world. It is an independent religious tradition accepting financial support from none but members and eschewing political involvement. The Bahā'ī Faith is, however, rooted in the millennialism of the nineteenth century Shī'a Islam of Iran, although most Bahā'īs today are not of Muslim heritage and may even be unaware of its Islamic roots. The relationship of the Bahā'ī Faith to Shī'a Islam is comparable to that of the historic link between Judaism and Christianity, in so far as the founders of the related Bābī and Bahā'ī Faiths were born into an Islamic society, and most of their early followers were born Muslims, but their religion superseded Islam. Unlike Jesus, however, Bahā'u'llāh, founder of Bahā'ī, was clear that he was founding a new religion, one which replaced that of the Bāb, which in turn had abrogated Islam.

2   Origins of the Bahā'ī Faith

The earliest stirring of what would become the Bahā'ī Faith can be traced back to the Shaykhi School of Shī'a Islam in Iran and Iraq, named after its founder Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Zayn al-Dīn al-Aḥsā'ī (1753–1826). This was a religiously conservative movement with an emphasis on eschatology and an allegorical interpretation of Quranic descriptions of the end of days. The second leader of the Shaykhi School, Sayyid Kāẓim al-Rashtī, did not appoint a successor, arguing the time was too short and that his followers should instead seek out the prophesied *Mahdī*, who was already in the world. Consequently, on his death his followers dispersed to find the promised *Mahdī*. One of these questing Shaykis was Mullā Husayn (1813–1849). He took his search to Shiraz where he encountered 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (20 October 1819–9 July 1850).

'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī had been in contact with Rashtī and shared his belief that the eschatological prophesies of Shī'a Islam were soon to be fulfilled, on the night of 22 May 1844, he declared his mission to Mullā Husayn and revealed

himself to be the Bāb ('the Gate'), the promised Qāʾim of Shīʿa Islam. The Bāb and his short-lived Bābī movement are regarded by Bahāʾīs to be an independent prophet and an independent religion; however, they acknowledge the Bāb's central function was that of a herald of a future prophet, referred to as 'He whom God will Make Manifest'. The Bāb began by declaring the imminent return of the Twelfth Imām and sending out his followers to proclaim the news. In 1848, a conclave of the Bāb's followers met at Badasht to abrogate the laws of Islam. Many of the laws revealed by the Bāb in his central book the *Bayān*, have been argued (Saiedi 2008) to be impossible to implement, because they are dependent upon the appearance of 'He whom God will Make Manifest', who would be able to affirm or abrogate them. Thus, it follows that the purpose of the Bābī laws was simply to break with Islamic tradition and create a context for a further Revelation. The Bābī movement was put down brutally and the Bāb executed by firing squad. After his death, the nominal headship of the movement fell to Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī (1831–1912) whose leadership proved ineffective and ultimately caused the community to disintegrate into factions.

3   Bahāʾuʾllāh

Mīrzā Ḥusayn-ʿAlī Nūrī (12 November 1817–29 May 1892) known as Bahāʾuʾllāh was the older half-brother of Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī, he had accepted the claims of the Bāb in the late summer of 1844 (Momen 2007), and attended the Conference of Badasht. He was a prominent and respected member of the Bābī community. After the death of the Bāb in 1850, Mīrzā Yaḥyā, known as Azal, became the publicly acknowledged leader of the Bābīs. It has been suggested by Juan Cole in his piece on Bahāʾuʾllāh in the *Bahāʾī Encyclopaedia* (Cole 1995) that Bahāʾuʾllāh, who had been corresponding with the Bāb through his younger half-brother, may have been the real leader of the group. Cole goes on to say, "Azal was acknowledged by many prominent Bābīs as a 'Mirror' and a first among equals. There is no evidence that the Bāb appointed him as a legatee or vicar, and there were many Mirrors" (Cole 1995). After a brief sojourn in Karbalāʾ, Iraq, Bahāʾuʾllāh returned to Iran in 1852, in his absence some fanatical Bābīs had plotted an attempt on the life of the Shah and despite Bahāʾuʾllāh's condemnation of the plot and innocence of involvement, he was arrested and imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal, the Black Pit dungeon. It was in this prison he underwent an intense mystical experience. On his release from prison and after a period in Baghdad, Bahāʾuʾllāh spent several years as a Ṣūfi in Kurdistan.

In response to the pleas of Bābīs concerning the shambolic leadership of his increasingly reclusive half-brother, Bahāʾuʾllāh returned to Baghdad in 1856 and

took on much of the administrative leadership of the community. The positive impact of his work led to a resurgence of the Bābī movement, and ultimately a demand from the Persian government for the extradition of Bahāʾuʾllāh to Persia. The Ottoman authorities refused but instead, for reasons which are not clear, removed Bahāʾuʾllāh to Constantinople. Before he left Baghdad on 21 April 1863, Bahāʾuʾllāh and his entourage stayed for twelve days in the Najibiyyih gardens, it was there that Bahāʾuʾllāh declared to a small group of his companions that he was He whom God will Make Manifest, the messenger promised by the Bāb. Bahāʾuʾllāh travelled from Baghdad to Constantinople between 3 May and 17 August 1863, accompanied by a large group including family members and followers. After three and a half months in Constantinople, he was ordered to depart for Adrianople. It was while he was in Adrianople that the schism with his brother Azal became absolute after several attempts by Azal's supporters to kill Bahāʾuʾllāh.

In 1866, Bahāʾuʾllāh made his claim to be Him whom God will Make Manifest public (MacEoin 1989), as well as making a formal written announcement to Azal referring to his followers for the first time as the "people of Bahā" (Smith 2008). Whilst in Adrianople Bahāʾuʾllāh wrote extensively, including letters to political and religious rulers, announcing his station and mission, demonstrating the intended universality of his message outside the Muslim world. The discord between Bahāʾuʾllāh and his followers and the rump of the Bābī movement loyal to Azal caused the Ottoman authorities in July 1868 to exile both factions, Bahāʾuʾllāh to the prison city of ʿAkkā (Acre) and Azal to Famagusta in Cyprus. Bahāʾuʾllāh and his family arrived in ʿAkkā at the end of August 1868, the first years there were very hard and marred by the tragic death in 1870 of Bahāʾuʾllāh's son, Mīrzā Mehdī, at the age of twenty-two when he fell through a skylight. After some time, relations between the prisoners and officials and the local community improved, so that the conditions of the imprisonment were eased and eventually, Bahāʾuʾllāh was allowed to leave the city and visit nearby places. From 1877 until 1879 Bahāʾuʾllāh lived in the house of Mazraʿih (Smith 2008). In 1899 Bahāʾuʾllāh moved to his final home a small mansion at Bahjí. He had fourteen children by his three wives including four daughters, five of his sons predeceased him. Bahāʾuʾllāh died of a fever in ʿAkkā on 29 May 1892, at the age of seventy-four.

4   ʿAbduʾl-Bahā and Shoghí Effendí

Before his death, Bahāʾuʾllāh appointed ʿAbbās Efendī (23 May 1844–28 November 1921), his eldest son, as leader of the community and inspired

interpreter of His Revelation. Known as ʿAbduʾl-Bahā, he communicated with the community he led through letters, referred to as tablets and through lectures. He visited the West to two occasions, the first time from August to December 1911, when he visited the United Kingdom, France, and Switzerland, and the second time between April 1912 and June 1913, when he visited Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria, and Hungary, meeting his growing number of Occidental supporters and answering their questions and concerns. This meant that issues such as the role of women were pushed to the fore and the Bahāʾī message took on aspects of Western social thought (Osborn 2014: 22). Several younger members of (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā's family were sent to England to complete their educations and acquire linguistic skills. Between March 1916 and March 1917, ʿAbduʾl-Bahā wrote fourteen letters to the Bahāʾīʾs of Canada and the United States known collectively as *The Tablets of the Divine Plan* (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1991 [1916–1917]). These instructed his North American followers to spread the Bahāʾī teachings around the world, an indication of how important he understood his Western followers to be. With no surviving son, ʿAbduʾl-Bahā passed the leadership of the community to his grandson and amanuensis Shoghí Effendí Rabbání.

Shoghí Effendí Rabbání (1 March 1897–4 November 1957) was born in ʿAkkā and educated at the Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut) and Balliol College, Oxford (Khadem 1999). He learned of the death of his grandfather in London and returned to Palestine to discover that his grandfather's will instructed the Bahāʾī community to "turn unto Shoghí Effendí … he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God … He is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants" (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1990). Under the Guardianship of Shoghí Effendí the unique Bahāʾī Administration was set up, this included the establishment of local and national bodies, the regulation of published material and large scale coordinated missionary activity. Throughout the period of the Guardianship the Bahāʾī Faith evolved into fast growing international community, stressing modernity and social reconstruction, books with titles such as *Bahāʾuʾllāh and the New Era* (Esslemont 1923) and *Bahaism: the Modern Social Religion* (Holley 1913) being used to teach the new religion across the globe.

The death of Shoghí Effendí in 1957 caused some tensions, as the will of ʿAbduʾl-Bahā had clearly stated the Guardianship was a hereditary office whose incumbent would lead the community alongside an elected legislative body, the Universal House of Justice, an institution described by Bahāʾuʾllāh in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. When Shoghí Effendí died without an heir there was potential for discord. However, in 1951 Shoghí Effendí had appointed a number of men

and women to the International Bahā'ī Council, a body which existed to assist him in specific tasks and to be the forerunner of the Universal House of Justice. In 1961, the appointed International Bahā'ī Council was reconstituted as an elected body and their final task was to set up the election of the Universal House of Justice which took place in 1963.

5   A 'World Religion' from 1957

The Universal House of Justice (henceforth UHJ) is elected every five years by the National Spiritual Assemblies (henceforth NSAs) which are in turn elected annually by unit conventions of grass roots members. Where more than nine Bahā'īs are resident in a locality a Local Spiritual Assembly (henceforth LSA) of nine members is elected; unit conventions, local and national assemblies are open to all members, only the UHJ is restricted to males. As well as the elected institutions, there is an appointed stratum of administration which also functions under the guidance of the UHJ, this comprises of Counsellors and their appointees at local level, there is no clergy and apart from the members of the UHJ all functionaries are expected to be self-financing and in employment.

After the death of its last hereditary leader a period of significant expansion and development took place. The community had been rooted in Iran and spread into Iranian expatriate communities, gradually including Jews, Zoroastrians, Sunni Muslims, and others. From the 1890s small groups of Bahā'īs developed in the West, the most significant of these was that of the USA. In response to the expansion plans of Shoghí Effendí Bahā'īs from both the Middle East and the West undertook 'pioneering'; moving to places hitherto without a Bahā'ī community and striving to set up groups. By the 1950s the two cultural contexts of the Bahā'ī community came together in missionary activity, the post Islamic Iranian Bahā'īs and the occidental Bahā'īs seeped in the alterative religious milieu of Europe and the USA began to establish Bahā'ī communities in several parts of the non-Muslim 'developing world', initially among the Western-oriented urban minority (Smith and Momen 1989: 68). Throughout the 1960s the Bahā'ī Faith gained adherents throughout the developing world and beyond. Bahā'ī teachers learned to adapt their message and missionary techniques to largely uneducated workers, transforming the social base of the community. In the well-established and largely white American community, converts began to be drawn from Native American and African American demographics.

The mission work was exceptionally successful in some areas, bringing about massive cultural change in the worldwide community, however, this change

was not without problems. The infrastructure was not in place to enable reten-
tion of such an influx of new believers, many of whom "were poorly educated,
and many lived in rural and tribal areas with which effective communication
was difficult to sustain" (Smith and Momen 1989: 72). Around the same time
the revolution in Iran also effected the spread of the Bahāʾī Faith. The revolu-
tion brought about significant persecution of Bahāʾīs in the homeland of the
Faith and furthermore curtailed the sending of funds abroad. This was a signif-
icant blow as the Iranian community had funded much missionary work and
supported communities in poorer countries. The Iranian government, rather
strangely for Shīʿa Muslims, seemed oblivious of the positive impact of perse-
cution and martyrdom, and Iranians fleeing the revolution bolstered numbers
across the worldwide community with emotive stories of persecution gaining
much publicity.

To address the ability to attract people to the Faith but the failure to retain
them a new strategy was implemented, the concept of the 'training institute'
was introduced by the Universal House of Justice in the mid-1990s. Its purpose
is to assist individuals to deepen their understanding of the Bahāʾī teachings,
and to gain the spiritual insights and practical skills they need to carry out the
work of the community. The Institute process is based on the use of mate-
rials developed in Columbia by The Ruhi Institute, which is directed by the
Columbian NSA. The Institute produces a sequence of books, referred to as
the 'Ruhi Books' which are studied in small groups led by a facilitator who has
completed the sequence. There are training materials for different age groups
and a range of support resources including songbooks and colouring sheets. As
well as the Ruhi Book, in study circles Bahāʾīs are encouraged to participate in
'core activities', including children's classes and devotional meetings. It must
be stressed that these activities are neither compulsory nor restrictive and
individuals are encouraged to continue and develop other activities, though
there is anecdotal evidence that the study circles have come to dominate the
community at the expense of other activities. At the present time, the Institute
process does not appear to have been subjected to academic scrutiny, making
it impossible to assess the effectiveness of the strategy.

6   Bahāʾī Beliefs and Practices

In common with Muslims, Bahāʾīs have a linear view of history, throughout
which prophets, or Manifestations of God, bring books and laws to found and
govern divinely inspired communities, each revelation building upon the last
in a process described as 'Progressive Revelation'. Bahāʾuʾllāh is held to be the

'promised one of all ages', the universal manifestation of the unknowable deity and the founder of a new cycle of revelation. Some of the basic beliefs of the Bahāʾī Faith can be summarised as a list of principles extrapolated from the writings of the founder that concern the nature of religion. All religions, according to the Faith, are ultimately one: "It is the outward practices of religion that are so different, and it is they that cause disputes and enmity—while the reality is always the same, and one" (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1969: 120). Thus, religion must be a source of unity: "religion must be the cause of unity, harmony and agreement among mankind. If it be the cause of discord and hostility, if it leads to separation and creates conflict, the absence of religion would be preferable in the world" (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1976 [1956]: 247). Furthermore. religion is evolutionary, revealed to suit the place and time but receptacles on a single universal truth: "There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They all have but one purpose; their secret is the same secret" (Bahāʾuʾllāh 1983: 78).

The understanding of this universality must be made through the independent investigation of truth, which Moojan Momen postulates in an article intended for the *Bahāʾī Encyclopaedia* (Momen n.d.) "is to be found in embryonic form in the Shīʿī prohibition of *taqlīd*, blind imitation, in matters of the principles of religion." As ʿAbduʾl-Bahā phrases it, "God has created in man the power of reason, whereby man is enabled to investigate reality. God has not intended man to imitate blindly his fathers and ancestors" (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1982: 291). This emphasis on reason is further enhanced by the insistence of the harmony between religion and science, which are described by ʿAbduʾl-Bahā as "two wings" which will facilitate the development of the intellect and spirit (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1969: 143).

Other principles deal with the nature of humankind, stressing the oneness of religion reflected in the oneness of humanity. This is the basis for the emphasis on equality: "as to religious, racial, national and political bias: all these prejudices strike at the very root of human life; one and all they beget bloodshed, and the ruination of the world. So long as these prejudices survive, there will be continuous and fearsome wars" (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1978: 249). Sex equality and equal opportunities for women and men in education and training are also stressed: "Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible" (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1982: 76). The abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty is also desirable, "O Ye Rich Ones on Earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust and be not intent only on your own ease" (Bahāʾuʾllāh 1990: 41). World unity is promoted, with peaceful consultation as a means for resolving differences: "The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions" (ʿAbduʾl-Bahā 1978: 87). The ideal is for

universal peace and the establishment of a world parliament, where all world leaders will come together to "consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men" (Bahā'u'llāh 1983: 249).

To facilitate unity great emphasis is put on universal education, "Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet" (Bahā'u'llāh 1993: 38). In the interests of universal communication the need for an international auxiliary language is highlighted: "It behoveth the sovereigns of the world ... or the ministers of the earth to take counsel together and to adopt one of the existing languages or a new one to be taught to children in schools throughout the world, and likewise one script" (Bahā'u'llāh 1978: 22).

It is in the daily practices of Bahā'īs that the origins of the Faith in an Islamic context are most clearly preserved. Bahā'īs are required to declare their faith, pray in a specified manner at specific times, give alms based on property held, fast, and make a pilgrimage to sacred sites. It is widespread practice in some Bahā'ī communities to issue cards to new believers, which outline the beliefs being accepted, the following statement is on the card issued by the NSA of Australia:

> I wish to become a member of the Bahā'ī community. I accept Bahā'u'llāh as the Bearer of God's Message for this Day and will endeavour to follow His teachings and the Bahā'ī way of life. I also accept the authority of the institutions which administer the affairs of the Bahā'ī community.

There are three daily obligatory prayers, any one of the three may be used but must be done so in accordance with any specific directions with which they may be accompanied, for example facing the *qibla* and prostrations. Bahā'īs are required to fast by refraining from food and drink between the hours of sunrise and sunset during the Bahā'ī month of Alá, (Loftiness). The Bahā'ī fast, therefore, takes place over nineteen days, from 2 March to 20 March inclusive. Bahā'īs are subject to the law of *Ḥuqúqu'lláh* (the Portion of God): "Should anyone acquire one hundred *mithqáls* of gold, nineteen *mithqáls* thereof are God's and to be rendered unto Him" (Bahā'u'llāh 1993: 55) That is, 19% of that portion of income which is not essential for living expenses is to be paid, similar to a tithe, to support philanthropic causes.

7   Controversies

The teachings of the Bahā'ī Faith might generally be described as progressive, egalitarian, and inclusive, however, in recent years there has been some

discussion, particularly in Europe and North America, around the issues of the role of women and LGBT rights. The equality of men and women is a basic principle of the Bahāʾī Faith and has been expounded as such since its inception, however, the Universal House of Justice is an exclusively male institution and that has raised questions as to how that can be rationalised in a context of gender equality (Lee et al 1999).

Despite non-involvement in politics the Bahāʾī Faith has a history of inclusivity of races and opposition to racism. This is particularly true in the US where prominent African Americans in such diverse fields as philosophy, for example, Alain Locke (1885–1954) (Buck 2005), and jazz music, for example Dizzy Gillespie (Shipton 2001), have embraced the Bahāʾī Faith. The inclusivity in regard to race, sex, and gender has led to some tension over issues such as same-sex marriage (Snow 2016). The Bahāʾī Faith has teachings similar to those of other Abrahamic faiths around chastity before marriage, faithfulness in marriage, and a dislike of divorce and non-heterosexual relations. Whilst strongly opposing any form of discrimination on the grounds of sexuality the admonishment of Bahāʾuʾllāh—"We shrink, for very shame, from treating of the subject of boys ... Commit not that which is forbidden you in Our Holy Tablet, and be not of those who rove distractedly in the wilderness of their desires" (Bahāʾuʾllāh 1993: 59)—was further reinforced by both Shoghí Effendí and ʿAbduʾl-Bahā to clarify the term 'boys' did not refer to pederasty or paedophilia but is inclusive of adult homosexual acts. More latterly the UHJ has stated:

> The Universal House of Justice is authorized to change or repeal its own legislation as conditions change ... but it cannot abrogate or change any of the laws which are explicitly laid down in the sacred Texts. It follows, then, that the House of Justice has no authority to change this clear teaching on homosexual practice.
>
> Universal House of Justice 1995

The increasing numerical dominance of Bahāʾīs in the developing world may render concerns around scholarship and gender politics marginal to the wider Bahāʾī community.

8   Persecution

Bahāʾīs have suffered persecution for their beliefs, particularly in Muslim majority countries where their understanding of the ministries of The Bāb and Bahāʾuʾllāh as fulfilments Shīʿa Islam and consequently 'prophets after

Mohammed' have led to charges of apostasy. The presence of the Bahāʾī World Centre in Israel has led to accusations of complicity with Zionism, despite the obvious objection that the Centre predated the foundation of the state of Israel.

The tragic situation for Bahāʾīs in Iran is well documented, as since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran Bahāʾīs have been systematically persecuted as a matter of government policy. During the first decade of this persecution, more than two hundred Bahāʾīs were killed or executed; hundreds more were tortured or imprisoned, and tens of thousands lost jobs, access to education, and other rights solely because of their religious belief. According to Roger Cooper in *The Bahāʾīs of Iran: The Minority Rights Group Report 51*, Bahāʾīs are classified as "unprotected infidels", "heretics" and "those whose blood may be shed with impunity" making it impossible to seek justice, redress or protection. The reaction of the Bahāʾīs to oppression derives directly from the teachings of Bahāʾuʾllāh:

> Bahāʾīs therefore believe that strategies for achieving lasting social change—including strategies for overcoming violent oppression—must pay attention to both the material and spiritual dimensions of change, including the transformation of hearts among both the oppressors and the oppressed. In this regard, oppositional strategies that pit one group against another, whether violently or non-violently, are not considered conducive to spiritual transformation and lasting change. Bahāʾīs thus refrain from all divisive form of social action, including involvement in partisan political organising and opposition.
>
> KARLBERG 2010: 222

There are currently more than ninety Bahāʾīs imprisoned in Iran, including all seven members of the Yaran, a now disbanded leadership group which tended to the spiritual and social needs of the Bahāʾī community in the absence of an NSA.

Economic pressure on Iran's Bahāʾī community is acute, with both jobs and business licenses being denied to Bahāʾīs. Government jobs, including not only in the civil service but also in such fields as education and law, have been denied to Bahāʾīs since the years immediately following the Revolution. Education has been denied, both to in schools and more significantly in universities, which are effectively closed to Bahāʾīs. Other forms of persecution faced by Iranian Bahāʾīs include the monitoring of their bank accounts, movements, and activities; the denial of pensions or rightful inheritances; the intimidation of Muslims who associate with Bahāʾīs; the denial of access to publishing

or copying facilities for Bahā'ī literature; and the unlawful confiscation or destruction of Bahā'ī properties, including Bahā'ī holy places and graveyards.

In Egypt, there has been spasmodic persecution of the Bahā'īs, since the Faith first arrived in Egypt in 1867 and developed through the work of Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpáygání (Mirza Abu'l-Fada'il 1844–1914) at the Al-Azhar University, where he taught from 1894, and brought as many as thirty (Momen 1995) teachers and students to accept the Bahā'ī Teachings. By 1900 there were small groups of Bahā'īs, mainly of Persian heritage, scattered throughout Egypt and Bahā'ī texts in Arabic were being published in Cairo. In 1924, the first National Spiritual Assembly of Egypt was elected and a year later a provisional court in Upper Egypt attempted to divorce three women from their husbands because they argued the men were not Muslims and could, therefore, not be married to Muslim women (Scharbrodt 200848). This case effectively created a legal precedent which separated the Bahā'ī Faith from Islam, particularly as the women chose to remain with their husbands. The Bahā'ī community grew modestly over the next few decades with some outbreaks of hostility, however, in 1960 the passage of Law No. 263 under Gamal 'Abdel Nasser, which granted official government recognition only to Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, effectively stripped organisational rights from all who would identify otherwise. Bahā'ī rights were further complicated with the inclusion of Article 2 of the constitution in 1971, declaring Islamic law to be the source of Egyptian legislation. As such, any religion not recognised as legitimate by Islamic scholars cannot be recognised by the state.

There were periodic arrests of Bahā'īs in the mid-1960s, 1972, and 1985, and in early 1987 forty-eight Bahā'īs had sentences pronounced against them for religious activities. The restrictions on Bahā'īs came to a head in 2006, over the matter of identity cards, all Egyptians are required to carry an identity card, which states among other things their religious affiliation. Life without an identity card is almost impossible. Bahā'īs are forbidden to misrepresent their faith, and this had led to the custom of leaving the field blank, until the system was computerised which made inserting anything but one of the 'three heavenly religions' (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) impossible. In 2008, the Court of Administrative Justice ruled that the Ministry of Interior must issue identification cards to Bahā'īs with the caveat that 'religion' is left blank, justified by Egyptian constitutional protections for freedom of religion.

While Iran and Egypt have been the particularly harsh in response to the Bahā'īs, there have been instances of persecution in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime, and in several other predominantly Muslim nations. Some of the assertions made to discredit the Bahā'īs by the more imaginative of their opponents go beyond the spiteful to the bizarre: for example, "They forbid

their women to wear *ḥijāb*, and they regard *mut'ah* (temporary marriage) as permissible, and they promote the sharing of women and wealth," claims an unnamed author answering the question "Q: What is the ruling on the Baha'i ideas and beliefs? What is the difference between them and other Muslims?" on Islamway.net (Anon. 2008).

9   Conclusion

In a century and half or so, since its inception in Iran, the Bahāʾī Faith has spread throughout the globe, it has been embraced by a diverse community, comprising of urban workers, royalty, artists, and the lower classes, all of whom have found solace in the teachings of Bahāʾuʾllāh. It is now possibly the eighth largest religion in the world. How the role of this latest of the Abrahamic religions will unfold is not yet clear but its emphasis on unity in diversity makes it likely to be of major significance in an ever more globally defined civilisation.

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