

Mohammad, Bakir Mohammad Saleh (2021) *The significance of the life and writings of 'Abdullāh al-Hararī (d. 1429/2008): A response to Wahhābī influence in the Levant*. PhD thesis.

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University of Glasgow

The Significance of the Life and Writings of ‘Abdullāh al-Harārī (d. 1429/2008): A Response to Wahhābī Influence in the Levant

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of PhD in Theology and Religious Studies

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October 2020

Abstract

With the rise of modern-day Islamic reformers, ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Hararī (d. 1429/2008) stands out from his contemporaries. This study does not merely shed light on al-Hararī’s life and works. Rather, it is also concerned with the impact he had on the study of Islam in the 21st century. By analysing the majority of al-Hararī’s works, a unique insight into his emphasis on *‘aqīda* (Islamic creed) and the impact he had on anti-Wahhābī discourse can be deduced. As the title indicates, al-Hararī’s *da‘wa* (lit. call) grew to become one of the most influential and controversial *da‘was* in Lebanon, and consequently the Islamic World. This research is primarily triggered by the scarcity of adequate studies in Western Academia on al-Hararī’s life, coupled with the rise of anti-Hararī rhetoric in the Arab World. While it would be worthwhile to examine the practical methodologies through which al-Hararī’s ideology spread – via the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects and its worldwide branches – this thesis is chiefly concerned with the discourse surrounding the ideology adopted and promoted by al-Hararī, including his views on anthropomorphism, *ta’wīl*, *tabarruk* amongst other concepts. As a reformer, he sought to unify Muslims by stressing the importance of *‘aqīda*, as well as devoting much of his life to warning against what he calls “*al-Firq al-Thalāth*”, or the Three Sects, namely: Wahhābīs, Ikhwānīs and Taḥrīrīs. Even after his death, his impact is becoming increasingly noticeable.

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, praise be to Allāh, the Lord of the universe, for giving me the power and patience to endure this journey. Many people contributed towards this research project. I would like to express my sincere and deep gratitude to my primary supervisor Dr Lloyd Ridgeon who provided guidance and remained engaged with my work throughout the years. I also thank my secondary supervisor Dr Saeko Yazaki for all the useful comments and remarks she offered; particularly in regard to transliteration and consistency throughout the thesis. It is also my pleasure to acknowledge the role of Nabeela Gul in proofreading and revising this dissertation. Her accuracy and strong attention to detail are clearly reflected below.

The generous and continuous encouragement and support of my old friend and colleague Abū al-Makārim Kamāl al-‘Ītānī have been exceptionally valuable on both the academic and personal levels. I have benefited significantly over the years from his guidance and expertise in Arabic and Islamic Studies. Kamāl, in particular, deserves special praise for the excellent advice he gave me throughout the writing process. I owe him a great deal of gratitude for making this thesis more cohesive. He provided insights, incisive commentary and constructive criticism that made the final work more robust.

Furthermore, my sincere thanks go to my beloved, gorgeous and cheerful daughter, Nusaybah Maryam al-Bakir, whose graceful smiles illuminated my days. To her I say: I will always love and cherish you my dear Nusun. Many thanks go to my loved ones: my dear mother, wife, siblings and aunt who have supported me academically and emotionally throughout the entire process, both by keeping me harmonious and helping me in putting pieces together. I am profoundly grateful for your love and help.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Bakir Mohammad

October 2020

Notes on Translation

All Arabic literature has been translated and rendered to English by the author, unless otherwise explicitly stated. Also, all Qur'ānic verses cited as part of this thesis have been analysed in order to distinguish the reliable meaning according to prominent exegetes. Thereafter the meaning implied by the Arabic verses has been translated to English by the author himself.

Notes on Transliteration System

The transliteration for Arabic used in this thesis follows that of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*:

Table 1: Transliteration Table: Consonants and Tā' Marbūṭa

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	ʿ
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	ʾ

ض	d		ي	y
			ة	-a

Table 2: Transliteration Table: Vowels, Diphthongs and Definite Article

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
َ	a		ِ	i
ُ	un		ُو	u
ْ	an		ِ	in
َا - اِي	ā		َو	aw
ُو	ū		َي	ay
ِي	ī		ُو	uww, ū
ِيّ	iyy, ī			

Abbreviation

AH	After <i>Hijra</i>
AICP	The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects
CE	Common Era
d.	Died
b.	Born
n.d.	No date
no.	Number
opp.	Opposite
pl.	Plural
lit.	Literally
sing.	Singular
bt.	Daughter of

Chapter I

Introduction

‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Harārī is commonly recognised as a Shāfi‘ī-Ash‘arī Muslim whose life spanned an incredible period in Islamic scholarship. It is widely believed that he dedicated his career to acquiring and preaching Islamic knowledge. Born in the city of Harar-Ethiopia, al-Harārī’s journey of *ta‘allum* and *ta‘līm* (learning and teaching) started from his hometown in eastern Ethiopia only to stretch over numerous countries in the Arab and Islamic world. For nearly a century, al-Harārī moved from one country to another until he settled in Beirut, capital of the Republic of Lebanon where he stayed until he died. With so much to unpack, this thesis aims to shed light upon al-Harārī’s life and his contribution to Islamic Studies, in addition to highlighting other aspects of his influence, namely: his revival of *‘Ilm al-Kalām* (Islamic Scholastic Theology), the categories of apostasy and *kufr*, and his contribution to the ongoing Sunnī-Wahhābī debate on God’s incorporeality and attributes. Throughout the years, ‘Abdullāh al-Harārī’s *da‘wa* grew to become one of the most influential and controversial ones in Lebanon, and later in the Islamic World. After years of independent effort, al-Harārī’s ideology became deeply manifested in an Islamic-orientated philanthropic association, which inevitably sought to spread his convictions around the globe. It is apparent that al-Harārī succeeded in uniting thousands upon homogenous beliefs, but this also yielded countless opponents. Whilst some of his adversaries have only denounced and criticised his methodology, others went even further by deeming him a heretic. Al-Harārī’s opponents came from different religious backgrounds, but the fiercest of them belong to the neo-Salafist Movement, Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, Jamā‘at al-Ikhwān, amongst other religio-political parties and figures affiliated with Islam.

1.1 Research Problem

It is believed that al-Harārī brought about divisive arguments which, on the one hand, caused many to reject his message, while on the other, strengthened his position and reinforced his agenda. This research project will entail a critical and thorough investigation which will attempt to provide a comprehensive scrutiny of al-Harārī’s life as a preacher, a polemical author and a social reformist. This will be undertaken in the context of the ongoing Sunnī-Wahhābī battle which, significantly, does not cease to impact major religious and political movements within the Islamic World.

Furthermore, this study will attempt to cite several accounts of al-Harārī's mission since its onset in Harar, through to Mecca, Medina, Amman, Jerusalem, Damascus and Beirut. This examination will unearth his influence which left its mark in the field of Islamic scholarship, particularly between 1955 and 2008.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

As a means to comprehending al-Harārī's views and the development of his *da'wa* over the years, this study will deal with his contributions to Islam through an in-depth study of his life and convictions. It entails a critical examination of his works on *'aqīda* (creed), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *ḥadīth* (prophetic traditions), Sūfism and other relevant literature. This study will further present some Lebanese factions that affiliate with the Sunnī school but stand firm in rejection to what al-Harārī and his views represented. Primarily, this study seeks to bridge a gap in Western academic literature regarding al-Harārī's life and career. It essentially aims at providing the first thorough study in Western academia on al-Harārī's life and its significance.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The importance of such a comprehensive investigation into the above becomes increasingly important due to the lack of any in-depth studies or thorough research papers dealing with the life of 'Abdullāh al-Harārī and his many works. This study attempts to fill the gap by examining a wide array of biographical and religious texts in an effort to develop an understanding of al-Harārī and his influence and to add to the scarce research principally focused on the doctrines adopted by al-Harārī. Since 1983, al-Harārī's thought has been promoted by The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP), which was established in Lebanon in 1930 and managed by al-Harārī's followers starting from 1983. It boasts its efforts to spread Islamic teachings not only in Lebanon but across the globe. His impact could be further contextualised by examining the spread of his *da'wa* via his organisation: The AICP (The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects), which describes itself as the "resounding voice of moderation".¹ Lebanon is the home of thousands of al-Harārī's followers, and it is the place where he rallied some of his most loyal followers.

¹ AICP's North America website expands upon their motto, "The AICP, part of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah, adheres to the creed of the Ash'ariyya and the school of Imam ash-Shafi'iyy. The AICP is the 'Resounding Voice of Moderation.' This is the platform upon which we stand firm. The AICP speaks and writes against those extremist groups who sponsor violence, terrorism, and the call for assassinations of government officials because they rule by secular law. These are foreign ideas contrary to the true teachings of Islam. Islam is the Religion of Moderation, and 'Moderation' is the motto of the AICP." For further information visit the "About AICP" tab in www.aicp.org.

For instance, MP ‘Adnān Ṭrābulṣī received 20,000 votes in the 2018 parliamentary election, placing him second behind the former Prime Minister Sa‘d al-Ḥarārī who is regarded by some as the political custodian of Sunnīs in Lebanon.² This demonstrates the impact that al-Harārī and his followers have in the Sunnī arena in Lebanon. In Lebanon, the AICP also contributes towards multiple sectors such as education, healthcare, social work, and media. Educationally, the association built and successfully ran ten schools across the country’s governates, starting from preschool level through to middle school and upper school. The association also boasts the establishment of a state-of-the-art university called: Global University with more than one campus. Aside from education, the association has dedicated efforts to supporting and guiding the youth through Jam‘iyyat Shabāb al-Mashārī‘ (Association of Mashārī‘ Youth), which organises environmental campaigns, academic workshops, athletic competitions and conferences. With regards to print media, most, if not all, of al-Harārī’s works have been published by the AICP’s own publishing house: Dar Al Macharie CO. A radio station was also established in the late 1990s by the name: Nidā’ al-Ma‘rifa (The Call to Knowledge). The radio station often broadcasts religious lectures delivered by al-Harārī or his disciples, as well as Islamic chants performed by the AICP’s *nashīd* group, one of the most organised in the region.

Westward, particularly in the US, the AICP serves California’s Muslim community through the Islamic Center of Anaheim, likewise in Texas, Massachusetts and Michigan.³ As for Canada, the AICP established a daily elementary school in Vancouver, in addition to a number of Islamic centres in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal and Ottawa.⁴ Moreover, one of the most prominent and beautifully built Islamic centres in Europe is Berlin’s Omar Ibn al-Khattab Moschee & Machari Center. The centre is managed by the IVWP (Islamischer Verein für Wohltätige Projekte).⁵ The association is also active in France as: APBIF (Association des Projets de Bienfaisance Islamiques en France)⁶ and in Britain as: AICP UK.⁷ But one of the association’s most recognised and well-integrated branches is that of Australia. The Australian branch: ICPA (Islamic Charity Projects Association), is headed by one of al-Harārī’s most prominent students: Shaykh Salīm

² Al-Fatā, A. (2018). Kayfa Yarā Nuwwāb Sunnat al-Mu‘āraḍa al-Jalaba Ḥawla Tawzīr Aḥadihim? *Akhbār al-Yawm*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2ZWVK7>.

³ See AICP’s ‘Affiliated Websites’ tab on the following page: <https://www.aicp.org/index.php/about-aicp/aicp-affiliated-websites>.

⁴ For further information about AICP Canada’s centres visit the ‘Branches’ page on the following page: AICPCA. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.aicp.ca/2018/12/12/about-us/>.

⁵ IVWP. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.ivwp.de/>.

⁶ APBIF. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.apbif.fr/>.

⁷ AICPUK. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.aicp.org.uk/>.

‘Alwān, who also heads Darulfatwa, The Islamic High Council of Australia.⁸ The ICPA has been commended by the Australian government for its efforts to eradicate fundamentalism and spread moderate Islamic teachings. The ICPA manages elementary schools, mosques, Islamic centres and funeral services across Australia.⁹

In accordance with al-Hararī’s guidance, the AICP identifies itself as an Islamic, charitable, social and educational organisation that promotes the *madhhab* of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a, based upon the authority of credible Muslim scholars such as the four imams: al-Shāfi‘ī, Abū Ḥanīfa, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Mālik. The schools of thought generally promoted by it are the Shāfi‘ī school of jurisprudence and the Ash‘arī school of theology. The AICP stresses that, “... it does not follow a newly-innovated path or notion. It follows the methodology of moderation and uprightness in terms of beliefs and actions. It rejects the concept of *al-takfīr al-shumūlī* (holistic excommunication). It also adheres to Islamic Ṣūfism that is free of the misguided practices of the Ṣūfī-claimers.”¹⁰ Since the assassination of al-Ḥalabī, the AICP has been led by Shaykh Ḥusām Qarāqīra.¹¹ Twelve years after al-Hararī’s death, the association remained faithful to his vision and principles. Year after year, the AICP’s publishing house, Dar Al Macharie CO, continues to partake in the annual book exhibition: The Beirut International Arab Book Fair, and for many years, al-Hararī’s books remained the best-sellers for the Islamic genre.¹² Besides his written works, al-Hararī’s directives remained an integral part of the AICP’s mission

Al-Hararī’s dogmas have had significant impact on some Islamist parties in Lebanon and elsewhere in the Islamic world. I have performed extensive theological and biographical research and have exhausted the bibliographical databases. To my knowledge, studies relevant to this subject in the field of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies have not dealt with al-Hararī in an all-encompassing manner nor have they made any noteworthy research on his life and career. Thus, this novel project will be of immense value to academics and researchers in the fields of Islamic Theology and sectarianism in the Middle East and North Africa.

⁸ Darulfatwa. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.darulfatwa.org.au/en/>.

⁹ ICPA. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.icpa.org.au/>.

¹⁰ See AICP Lebanon’s ‘Methodology & Goals of the Association’ tab on the following webpage: <http://www.projectsassociation.org/files/2-0mnhj.html>.

¹¹ Shaykh Ḥusām Qarāqīra assumed leadership of the AICP in 1995. Since meeting al-Hararī in 1976, he remained one of his most loyal students. He is particularly renowned for the numerous lectures he delivered on anti-extremism. See <http://www.projectsassociation.org/files/hussam/>.

¹² Lebanon Files. (2011). Retrieved from <https://www.lebanonfiles.com/news/311619/?mobile=no>.

1.4 Research Methodology

This research project attempts to lay out the influence al-Hararī had on Islamic theology, and in some instances on Lebanese politics. But in order to arrive at a comprehensive view of al-Hararī's life, his biography ought to be closely examined. Biographical research involves presenting a detailed description of one's entire life, or a portion of it, by highlighting different aspects of his or her life. This genre is described as follows:

Biography, form of literature, commonly considered nonfictional, the subject of which is the life of an individual. One of the oldest forms of literary expression, it seeks to re-create in words the life of a human being—as understood from the historical or personal perspective of the author—by drawing upon all available evidence, including that retained in memory as well as written, oral, and pictorial material.¹³

To unearth al-Hararī's legacy, my research methods will involve interpreting primary and secondary sources by employing biographical and historical research methods. I will attempt to cite and trace the influences which al-Hararī had on much of the Islamic sects in Lebanon, specifically in the fields of Islamic *da'wa* and social engagement. Moreover, I will support my findings with existing, albeit scarce, contemporary works such as media articles that directly relate to this subject. My work is based on most of al-Hararī's books as well as some pertinent literature written in Arabic and English. Furthermore, I will analyse the central concepts in his works, as my research methods require gathering data from relevant documents and compiling databases to analyse his works and arrive at an aggregate understanding of his ideology. This research will essentially provide a historical reconstruction of al-Hararī's accomplishments spanning over 80 years of scholarship. In addition to the above, I will further utilise my personal experience and knowledge gained on this subject throughout my extensive studies of al-Hararī's works. For over a decade, I worked on compiling a bibliography of his works, spent numerous sleepless nights analysing his earliest works and dedicated much of the early stages of my career to gauge his multidimensional ideology in addition to meeting him more than once. A main research methodology which I intend to employ for data collection is the use of library and online research. Furthermore, I will employ qualitative data collection tools that are indispensable for conducting research within a social, cultural, and historical context. Denzin and Lincoln note:

¹³ Kendall, P. (2019). Biography Narrative Genre. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/art/biography-narrative-genre>.

Qualitative researchers think historically, interactionally, and structurally. They attempt to identify the varieties of men and women who prevail in a given historical period (Mills, 1959, p. 7). Such scholars seek to examine the major public and private issues and personal troubles that define a particular historical moment. Qualitative researchers self-consciously draw upon their own experiences as a resource in their inquiries. They always think reflectively, historically, and biographically.¹⁴

While a descriptive timeline of al-Hararī's life is pivotal to this research project, this thesis will go beyond the mere biography to investigate the underlying causes that have led thousands of people to adhere to al-Hararī's teachings. Furthermore, it will employ analytical research methodologies to shed light on the reasons that led to divergent reactions; some in favour of al-Hararī and others against him. As such, this research project will be primarily text-based.

1.5 Overall Research Aim

The overall aim of this research project is to examine and assess the significance of the numerous dogmas which al-Hararī adopted and strived to propagate, along with examining his influence upon mainstream neo-Sunnī political thought in Lebanon as well as the Levant and the Islamic World. This study will further present the textual sources upon which al-Hararī relied to support his religious convictions and rebut his adversaries. The citations will be chiefly extracted from primary sources such as: the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, the entirety of al-Hararī's works, as well as all published literature on anti-Hararism. Al-Hararī's life has neither been examined nor approached in such a manner previously. Therefore, it has become apparent that such a comprehensive investigation into the above religio-political realm will prove valuable.

1.5.1 Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to gain an understanding of how al-Hararī grew to become an influential figure in twentieth-century Islamic thought, and to what extent his teachings have impacted the views of contemporary Islamic sects. The following research question has been solely identified in an effort to achieve the overall aims of this study: **Why did al-Hararī grow to become such an influential and controversial figure?**

¹⁴ Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2013). *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. London: Sage. p. xi.

As such, this study does not propose new hypotheses or theories for the purpose of testing. It has merely collated the data on and critically analysed the different pivotal stages of al-Hararī's life in a single body of research.

1.6 Literature Review

As part of his mission of promoting *‘Ilm al-Kalām*, al-Hararī devoted substantial efforts to the subdiscipline of *al-Rudūd*, otherwise known as the field of rebuttal and refutation. His staunchest adversaries, for decades, had been the Wahhābīs. As such – prior to delving into al-Hararī's life and its particularities per se – this research project will attempt to address the origins and recent development in the centuries-long Sunnī-Wahhābī polemical and physical warfare. Therefore, this literature review will be divided into two sections: a general review that sheds light upon the development of the Sunnī-Wahhābī conflict and its pivotal role in shaping al-Hararī's thought. This section will be followed by a specific literature review which will attempt to lay out all the existent literature that has thus far dealt with al-Hararī's life and ideology, in addition to highlighting the gaps in knowledge, and how this study addresses them. Finally, this research project will attempt to contextualise al-Hararī's influence on Lebanese religious sectarianism, from his views on on Christian-Muslim relations through to his battles with the emergent neo-Salafist movement in Lebanon and the Islamic World.

1.6.1 General Review

The Sunnī-Wahhābī dichotomy placed al-Hararī in the front lines of this modern polemical discourse. As such, al-Hararī and other scholars have staunchly declined to refer to Wahhābīs as Sunnīs. Although Hamid Algar in his *Wahhabis: A Critical Essay* asserts that, “Sunnī has come to acquire an extraordinarily loose meaning”¹⁵, mainstream Wahhābī scholars nonetheless continue to identify themselves as Sunnīs. Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl al-Shaykh – a renowned Wahhābī grand mufti – in his commentary on the Ṭaḥāwī creedal treatise asserts that Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a are strictly the followers of Ibn Taymiyya's thought, whereas Ash‘arīs and Mātrurīdīs are not part thereof.¹⁶ Ibn Bāz goes further to proclaim that Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab's mission was merely to call people to the thought of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a.¹⁷

¹⁵ Algar, H. (2002). *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*. Oneonta: Islamic Publications International. p. I.

¹⁶ Āl Al-Shaykh, Ṣ. (2011). *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Ṭaḥāwīyya*. Maktabat Dār al-Mawadda li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘. pp. 38-39.

¹⁷ *Mādhā Yaf’al man Yuttaḥam bi al-Wahhābiyya*. (2000). [Audio]. Retrieved from <https://www.binbaz.org.sa/noor/1362>.

The above assertions are perhaps dwarfed by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb himself, who declared in his letter to the people of al-Qaṣīm when they asked him about his creed: “God is my witness, the angels who are present herein, and you all: that I believe in what the protected group: Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a, believes in.”¹⁸ The above suffices to prove that Wahhābī literature – since its inception – has regarded Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s mission as a call to a form of Sunnīsm. However, mainstream Sunnī scholars have denounced Wahhābism, as preached in Saudi Arabia and demonstrated fierce defence against the claim that Wahhābism is a form of Sunnīsm. In the 18th century, the Hanafī scholar Ibn ‘Ābidīn declared the Wahhābī movement to be a contemporary manifestation of the Khārījīs.¹⁹ Also, The Malaysian National Fatwa Council, described Wahhābism as being against Sunnī teachings and issued a *fatwā* in support of that, declaring Wahhābism to be a form of heresy.²⁰ Furthermore, recently, the grand Imam of the prestigious al-Azhar University implicitly affirmed that Wahhābīs are outsiders and not part of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a, as per the communiqué of the 2016 Chechnya conference which stated:

Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a are the Ash‘arīs and Mātrūrīdīs in matters of belief.²¹ They are also followers of any of the four schools of thought (Ḥanafī, Shāfi‘ī, Mālikī or Ḥanbalī) and are also the followers of pure Ṣūfism in doctrines, manners and [spiritual] purification.²²

The statement issued by the participants sought to establish scholarly consensus that Wahhābism is not a branch of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā‘a, nor does it conform with the fundamental dogmas of Sunnīsm. More than one religious institution endorsed the communiqué, such as: “al-Azhar in Cairo, al-Zaytunah in Tunisia, and a number of Hadhrami schools in Yemen.”²³ Therefore, the endorsement of al-Azhar’s grand mufti of the conference and its outcomes sends a strong message of exclusion to Wahhābīs and contributes to al-Hararī’s position as one of the most influential contemporary anti-Wahhābī polemicists.

¹⁸ Al-Fawzān, S. (2009). *Sharḥ Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*. Riyadh: Dār al-Minhāj. p. 15.

¹⁹ Ahmad, A. (2009). *Islam, Modernity, Violence, and Everyday Life*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 164.

²⁰ Magnis-Suseno, F. (2016). *Wahhabism Runs into the Sand*. Retrieved from <https://en.qantara.de/content/political-islam-in-indonesia-wahhabism-runs-into-the-sand>.

²¹ They are the adherents of Abū Manṣūr al-Maturīdī’s systematic theology which is identical to that of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī in the fundamentals of belief.

²² Rasool, G. (2016). *Islamic conference in Chechnya: Why Sunnis are disassociating themselves from Salafists*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/world/islamic-conference-in-chechnya-why-sunnis-are-disassociating-themselves-from-salafists-2998018.html>.

²³ Blumi, I. (2018). *Destroying Yemen: What Chaos in Arabia Tells Us about the World*. California: University of California Press. p. 264.

Before examining al-Hararī's life and offering an in-depth analysis of his anti-Wahhābī rhetoric, one ought not to go further than Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's own brother Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb who was the first to warn against his brother's so-called call to reform verbally and in writing. He authored *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyya fī al-Radd 'alā al-Wahhābiyya* (Divine Thunderbolts in Refuting the Wahhābīs). As such, it is believed that this book was the very foundational document in the field of anti-Wahhābism. This treatise which was initially compiled by Sulaymān – eight years after the spread of the Wahhābī call – underwent three major publications. The first of which was published in 1889 by an Indian publishing house known as Nukhbat al-Akhbār,²⁴ ninety years later it was followed by an enhanced publication by the Turkish Ishik Bookshop.²⁵ The 1997 third edition was compiled and revised by al-Sayyid al-Sarāwī, as commissioned for publication in 1997 by the Syrian Ministry of Media.²⁶

Sulaymān's efforts in bringing awareness to what he believed to be the danger of his brother's call extended well beyond his lifetime. The banner of anti-Wahhābism – so to speak – was held, later on, by many Sunnī scholars, such as Aḥmad b. Zaynī Daḥlān,²⁷ a prominent scholar and the grand mufti of the Shāfi'ī school of jurisprudence in Mecca. He wrote *Fitnat al-Wahhābiyya* (The Wahhābīs' Tribulations).²⁸ In it, he documents the birth of the Saudi-Wahhābī alliance as well as what he refers to as the religiously unlawful raids waged in the name of this alliance against the residents of Mecca and Medina.

However, it is worth noting that this historical version is contended by various Wahhābī scholars such as Ibn Ghannām, who authored a well-known biography of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and the first Saudi monarchy,²⁹ and Ibn Bishr³⁰ who offered detailed dates for the accounts in his biography, unlike Ibn Ghannām. Therefore, this general literature review reveals the depth of divergence in creedal, jurisprudential and historical discourse between mainstream Sunnīs and Wahhābīs. Consequently, al-Hararī's mission was, in essence, to draw distinction between the two sects and establish a pure reversion to Sunnī Islam.

²⁴ Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, S. (1889). *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyya fī al-Raddi 'alā al-Wahhābiyya*. India: Nukhbat al-Akhbār.

²⁵ Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, S. (1979). *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyya fī al-Raddi 'alā al-Wahhābiyya*. Turkey: Ishik Bookshop.

²⁶ Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, S. (1997). *Al-Ṣawā'iq al-Ilāhiyya fī al-Raddi 'alā al-Wahhābiyya*. Dār Dhulfaqr.

²⁷ Sharkey, H. J. (1994). Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān's *al-Futuḥāt al-Islāmiyya*: A Contemporary View of The Sudanese Mahdi. *Sudanica Africa*. 5, 67-75.

²⁸ Daḥlān, A. (1978). *Fitnat al-Wahhābiyya*. Istanbul: Isik Kitabevi. pp. 3-20.

²⁹ Ibn Ghannām, I. (2010). *Tārīkh Ibn Ghannām*. Riyadh: Dār al-Thalūthiyya.

³⁰ Ibn Bishr, U. (1982). *Unwān al-Majd fī Tārīkh Najd*. Riyadh: Maṭbū'āt Dārat al-Malik 'Abd al-'Azīz.

1.6.2 Specific Review:

The uniqueness of this research project stems from its endeavour to undertake an in-depth analytical study of al-Hararī's life and influence through a close examination of his books and treatises. It will, thereafter, deal with all academic and non-academic works, whether in support of his mission or not.

This specific review will group al-Hararī's contributions to Islamic literature into five broad categories:

1. Essentials of belief & jurisprudence: *'Ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī* or *'Ilm al-Ḥāl*.³¹
2. Comprehensive *Kālam* (scholastic theology) commentaries.
3. Polemical writings.
4. *Ḥadīth* Studies.
5. Miscellaneous.

Much of al-Hararī's books touch upon *'Ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī* whether directly or indirectly. This branch of Islamic education is commonly referred to as 'The Essential Knowledge'. It is said to represent the portion of knowledge that all accountable Muslims (in religious law) are individually obligated to seek and learn. It comprises matters pertaining to belief and its fundamentals (*'aqīda*), the bare minimum requirements of jurisprudence (*ṣalāt*, *zakāt*, *ḥajj*), and sins. It is sometimes referred to as *'Ilm al-Ḥāl* or the immediate knowledge. In other words, it is the portion of religious education that Muslims have to acquire immediately.³² To facilitate the spread of this knowledge, al-Hararī consolidated all his views on *'Ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī* in his renowned, albeit concise, summary entitled *Mukhtaṣar 'Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi'ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī* ('Abdullāh al-Hararī's Summary Ensuring the Personal Obligatory Knowledge').³³ It is a somewhat short *matn* (religious text) which has been adopted as part of the Religious Education curricula by AICP schools and taught therein to several key stages in Beirut and elsewhere in the Arab and Islamic world. In it, al-Hararī establishes his views on key *'aqīda* tenets along with offering subtle references to Wahhābī and Mu'tazilī philosophical thought.

³¹ The term immediate, or *'Ilm al-Ḥāl*, refers to the knowledge that all accountable Muslims ought to seek immediately.

³² Al-Khādimī's states that *'Ilm al-Ḥāl* is, "... what one cannot do without, such as: knowing the Creator, His messengers, how to perform the prayer and the like. Because knowing it is a personal obligation." See Al-Khādimī, M. (1930). *Barīqa Maḥmūdiyya fī Sharḥ Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya wa Sharī'a Nabawiyya fī Sīra Aḥmadiyya*. Egypt: Maṭba'at al-Ḥalabī. p. 323.

³³ Al-Hararī, A. (1999). *Mukhtaṣar 'Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi'ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

In an effort to reinforce his thought, al-Hararī replicated the Shāfi‘ī version of his *Mukhtaṣar* into Ḥanafī³⁴ and Mālikī³⁵ *Mukhtaṣars*. In terms of the structure and key dogmas incorporated in his *Mukhtaṣars*, al-Hararī followed the methodology of a *fiqh* book compiled by a Yemeni scholar known as ‘Abdullāh b. Ḥussein b. Ṭāhir (d. 1272/1855). Al-Hararī’s *Mukhtaṣar* is essentially an abridgment of Ibn Ṭāhir’s book *Sullam Al-Tawfīq ‘ilā Maḥabbatillāh ‘alā al-Taḥqīq* (The Ladder of Guidance Towards [Attaining] the Proper Love for God).³⁶ He, therefore adopts much of what Ibn Ṭāhir mentions, with the exception the Ṣūfism chapter which he omitted, in addition to making other minor amendments. He states in the introduction of his *Mukhtaṣar*:

The original book was written by the Ḥadramite scholar ‘Abdullāh b. Ḥussein b. Ṭāhir. Many precious issues were added to the book, whilst the section on Ṣūfism was omitted. Some sentences were changed in such a way that it would not change the subject. In a few cases, we – the author – mention what some Shāfi‘ī scholars, like al-Bulqīnī, preponderated in an effort to expose what was weak in the original book (i.e., *Sullam Al-Tawfīq*). One must pay due attention to this Obligatory Knowledge in order to have one’s deeds accepted.³⁷

Al-Hararī’s *Mukhtaṣar*, along with parts of his *Matn al-Ṣirāṭ Al-Mustaqīm* (The Text of the Straight Path),³⁸ lay out his dedication to Ash‘arī and Mātrurīdī thought. Despite the fact that the aforementioned texts are somewhat concise, each is fundamental to understand al-Hararī’s views on numerous creedal topics such as anthropomorphism and God’s incorporeality, the status of the intellect in Islam, the thirteen attributes of Allāh, the Ash‘arī concept of *kasb* (acquisition), the significance of the two testifications of faith, and apostasy. Al-Hararī also enumerated tens of sins in his *Mukhtaṣar* and offered basic teachings on *fiqh* with regards to prayer, pilgrimage, purification and charity. Any student of Islamic knowledge, regardless of age, who sought him to learn about Islam was directed at the first instance to learn his *Mukhtaṣar*.

³⁴ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2001). *Mukhtaṣar ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi‘ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī ‘alā Madhhab al-Imām Abī Ḥanīfa*. Beirut: Dar al-Macharie CO.

³⁵ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2003). *Mukhtaṣar ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi‘ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī ‘alā Madhhab al-Imām Mālik*. Beirut: Dar al-Macharie CO.

³⁶ Ibn Ṭāhir, A. (2013). *Sullam al-Tawfīq ‘ilā Maḥabbatillāh ‘alā al-Taḥqīq*. Beirut: Mu’assasat Al-Kutub Al-Thaqāfiyya.

³⁷ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (1999). *Mukhtaṣar ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi‘ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī*. Beirut: Dar al-Macharie CO. p. 10.

³⁸ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2004b). *Al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*. Beirut: Dar al-Macharie CO.

To further exemplify al-Harārī's commitment to making *ʿIlm al-Ḥāl* available to people from all walks of life, it is worth to note that hundreds of pupils are seen across numerous Lebanese provinces introduced to what may be considered by a lay Muslim to be advanced creedal dogmas. An example of this is the annual competition dubbed 'al-Shaykh Nizār al-Ḥalabī's Contest for Memorising Religious Texts', in which pupils memorise many tests amongst which were al-Harārī's *Mukhtaṣar* and *Matn al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*.³⁹ The Lebanese National News Agency reported that two-hundred and twenty-five pupils partook in this contest in 2016.⁴⁰ As a result of such contests, young Muslim learners are introduced to some classical Ash'arī concepts such as the *kasb* doctrine and intellectual reasoning (*al-dalīl al-aqlī*). This further demonstrates the centre stage the creedal side took in al-Harārī's mission and literature.

Moving on to the second category of al-Harārī's works, it is worth noting that although his *Mukhtaṣar* was explained in writing by the author himself in *Bughyat al-Ṭālib Lima'rifat al-ʿIlm al-Dīnī al-Wājib* (The Student's Desire to Learning the Personal Obligatory Knowledge),⁴¹ nevertheless; his two-volume elucidation of his *Mukhtaṣar* does not encompass all key *kālam* discourses. Rather, much of al-Harārī's doctrinal views were expressed in his compendious commentaries on the renowned creedal texts in Islamic theology: *The Creed of Imām al-Ṭahāwī*⁴² and *The Nasaḥī Creed*. Al-Harārī entitled his commentary on the former *Izhār al-ʿAqīda al-Sunniyya Bisharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭahāwiyya*, (A Declaration of the Sunnī Creed in Explaining the Text of al-Ṭahāwiyya)⁴³ and his commentary on the latter *al-Maṭālib al-Waḥfiyya Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Nasaḥiyya*.⁴⁴ (The Sufficient Causes in Explaining the Text of al-Nasaḥiyya). Upon examining the two commentaries, one could observe al-Harārī walking in the footsteps of his Ash'arī predecessors and consolidating their views on a *kasb*, the *khalq al-af'āl* discourse and the Sunnī-Mu'tazilī dispute on seeing God. He alluded to the debate on Mu'āwiya's rebellion and the shift from the caliphate to a monarchy. Although the *Izhār* and *al-Maṭālib* are not purely a rebuttal of Wahhābism, al-Harārī, however; often attacks Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb in it and redirects his argument to serve the *kalām* discourse.

³⁹ Al-Harārī 2004b.

⁴⁰ Al-Shaykh Nizār Al-Ḥalabī's Contest Honours Participants (2016, March 10). *Lebanese National News Agency*. Retrieved from <http://nna-leb.gov.lb>.

⁴¹ Al-Harārī, 'A. (2004). *Bughyat al-Ṭālib Lima'rifat al-ʿIlm al-Dīnī al-Wājib*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁴² Al-Ṭahāwī, A. (1995). *Matn al-ʿAqīda Al-Ṭahāwiyya*. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm.

⁴³ Al-Harārī, 'A. (2007a). *Izhār al-ʿAqīda al-Sunniyya Bisharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭahāwiyya*. Beirut: Dār Al-Macharie CO.

⁴⁴ Al-Harārī, 'A. (1998). *Al-Maṭālib al-Waḥfiyya Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Nasaḥiyya*. Beirut: Dār Al Macharie CO.

This now takes this review to the field that, arguably, had put al-Hararī on the map of contemporary Islamic scholarship namely, the subdiscipline of *al-Rudūd*, or his polemical writings and treatises. Whilst al-Hararī sought to refute many beliefs that did not comply with his Ash‘arī convictions, he particularly targeted three factions and strived throughout more than half-a-century of preaching to disprove their religio-political agendas.

His staunchest adversaries were the Wahhābis. He dedicated much of his works and efforts to warn against them. He attributed the origin of the Wahhābi ideology to Ibn Taymiyya, examined his thought and provided lengthy refutations of some of his creedal and jurisprudential stances. In his *al-Maqalāt al-Sunniyya fī Kashf Ḍalālāt Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya* (The Sunnī Articles in Exposing the Misguidances of Aḥmad b. Taymiyya),⁴⁵ for instance, al-Hararī divides Ibn Taymiyya’s major divergences from Sunnī thought into seventeen independent articles, dissects them individually and offers his rebuttals. For each article, he relies on explicit Qur’ānic verses, authentic prophetic traditions and the scholarly consensus.

Al-Hararī undertook the same methodology in warning against the two other factions: the renowned Egyptian movement, commonly known as the Muslim Brotherhood or al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, and the transnational party Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr. Both groups, in addition to the Wahhābīs, received a fair share of focus especially in one of al-Hararī’s books which he purely dedicated to raising awareness against their religio-political agendas. He entitled it *al-Bayān al-Muwathaḡ: Dirāsa Muwathaḡa Limaḡālāt al-Firaq al-Thalāth* (The Well-Documented Illustration: A Consolidated Study of the Sayings of the Three Factions).⁴⁶ With regards to the Ikhwān, he particularly focuses on their charge with apostasy any person who abides by any form of non-Islamic law. As for the Taḥrīris, al-Hararī focuses in his *al-Ghāra al-’Imāniyya fī Radd Maḡāsīd al-Taḥrīriyya* (The Raid of the Faithful in Exposing the Misguidances of The Taḥrīrīs)⁴⁷ on their assertion that any Muslim who dies without having pledged allegiance to a caliph is a disbeliever. After presenting the arguments of all three sects and providing his rebuttal, he supplemented his counterargument with two-hundred and six pages of scanned sections from manuscripts and published works of medieval and modern Muslim scholars, to highlight the departure of the Wahhābīs, Egyptian Ikhwānīs and Taḥrīrīs from classical Sunnī thought.

⁴⁵ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2007b). *Al-Maqalāt Al-Sunniyya fī Kashf Ḍalālāt Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁴⁶ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2005). *Al-Bayān al-Muwathaḡ: Dirāsa Muwathaḡa Limaḡālāt al-Firaq al-Thalāth*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁴⁷ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (1993). *Al-Ghāra al-’Imāniyya fī Radd Maḡāsīd al-Taḥrīriyya*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

Although al-Hararī remained focused on responding to the three aforementioned groups, his encyclopaedic two-volume *Ṣarīḥ al-Bayān fī al-Rad ‘alā man Khālafa al-Qur’ān* (The Explicit Declaration in Refuting those who Contradicted the Qur’ān)⁴⁸ goes beyond these sects to explore a wide array of dogmas. In this book, he sometimes debates dogmas or claims whilst ascribing them to their respective sects or figures. This methodology characterised his discussion anthropomorphism and Wahhābīs, Mu‘tazilīs and the creation of one’s actions, Jahmīs and the agent’s powerlessness, intellectual reasoning and atheism, Sayyid Sābiq and apostasy as well as the enormous sins and Khārijīs. In other parts, he merely selects a controversial topic and clarifies certain misconceptions without necessarily referring to a particular group or figure. Examples of such topics include prophet Muḥammad and his relics, the two types of *bid‘a* (innovations), prophet Yūsuf and the accusation of fornication.

In addition to *Ṣarīḥ al-Bayān*, regarded by many as a main authority in contemporary Sunnī polemics, al-Hararī penned two treatises (*risālas*) which tackle two religious misconceptions, notably widespread in the Indian Subcontinent. The first is *Risāla fī Buṭlān Awwaliyyat al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī* (A Treatise Regarding the Invalidity of the Claim that Prophet Muḥammad’s Light is the First of Creation)⁴⁹ in which al-Hararī sought to disprove the claim that the first entity brought to creation was prophet Muḥammad’s light. As for the second treatise *Risāla fī al-Radd ‘alā Qawl al-Ba‘ḍ Inna al-Rasūl Ya‘lamu Kulla Shay’* (A Treatise on the Refutation of those who Say that the Prophet Knows Everything Allāh Knows),⁵⁰ it is concerned with rebutting the assertion that prophet Muḥammad is all-knowing. It is worth to note that, in addition to many of his polemical works, al-Hararī stressed the importance of cooperation and collaboration to establish unity among Sunnīs in the face of the danger of he saw emanating from the three sects and similar groups. For that purpose, he published *al-Ta‘āwun ‘alā al-Nahī ‘an al-Munkar* (Cooperating in Forbidding the Unlawful),⁵¹ a treatise dedicated to emphasising the importance of unity in combating inaccurate interpretations of religious sources. Despite al-Hararī’s continuous efforts to spread classical *‘aqīda* principles and to warn against apostasy, made his reputation, he was renowned for his *ḥadīth* credentials, so much so that he is dubbed at the front covers of his works as the Servant of the Science of *Ḥadīth*. This review goes on now to explore al-Hararī’s contributions to this field of expertise.

⁴⁸ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2002). *Ṣarīḥ al-Bayān fī al-Rad ‘alā man Khālafa al-Qur’ān*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁴⁹ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2001). *Risāla fī Buṭlān Awwaliyyat al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁵⁰ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2001). *Al-Radd ‘alā Qawl al-Ba‘ḍ Inna al-Rasūl Ya‘lamu Kulla Shay’*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁵¹ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2009a). *Al-Ta‘āwun ‘alā al-Nahī ‘an al-Munkar*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

Al-Hararī contributed more than ten works to the science of *ḥadīth*, some of which are in print while others are still in manuscript format. He wrote commentaries on two famous poems in *ḥadīth* studies *al-Bayqūniyya*⁵² and *Alfiyyat al-Suyūṭī*,⁵³ both of which are still manuscripts and yet to be published.⁵⁴ However, it may be argued that there are two interrelated works that stand amongst his *ḥadīth* writings. The first is a pamphlet al-Hararī penned as a response to a magazine article written by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī. In it, al-Hararī disputed by al-Albānī's claim and demonstrated that the prophetic tradition regarding the use of the *subḥa* (prayer beads) is not fabricated. He titles it: *al-Ta'aqqub al-Ḥathīth 'alā Man Ṭa'ana Fīmā Ṣaḥḥa min al-Ḥadīth* (The Swift Pursuit in Refuting the one who Impugned the Authentic *Ḥadīth*).⁵⁵ Al-Albānī rejected al-Hararī's pamphlet and published his response in Damascus in a booklet entitled *al-Radd 'alā al-Ta'aqqub al-Ḥathīth li al-Shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Hararī* (The Refutation of The *Ta'aqqub*).⁵⁶ In turn, al-Hararī disproved al-Albānī's reply and published another response in support of his first treatise under the title *Nuṣrat al-Ta'aqqub al-Ḥathīth* (The Support of the *Ta'aqqub*)⁵⁷

Beside his works on Islamic Theology and *ḥadīth* science, al-Hararī authored many books and treatises in various disciplines in more than one school of thought. For instance, in the Shāfi'ī and Mālikī schools he wrote a commentary on Abū Shujā's *Matn al-Ghāya wa al-Taqrīb* (The Ultimate Conspectus),⁵⁸ al-Shīrāzī's *Tanbīh*,⁵⁹ Ibn Rislān's one-thousand verses of poetry on *fiqh*⁶⁰ as well as the Mālikī *Ashmāwiyya* text.⁶¹ Additionally, he published a treatise on *Tajwīd* rules entitled *al-Dur al-Naḍīd fī Aḥkām al-Tajwīd* (The Arranged Pearls in the Rules of Tajwīd).⁶² As for Arabic grammar, he compiled an explanation of *Mutammimat al-'Ājurrūmiyya*,⁶³ and authored a commentary on *Maẓūmat al-Ṣabbān*⁶⁴ in Arabic prosody. While most of his works have been published, a number of manuscripts are yet to be revisited by his students.

⁵² Al-Bayqūnī, T. (2007). *Al-Manẓūma al-Bayqūniyya*. Riyadh: Dār al-Mughnī.

⁵³ Al-Suyūṭī, A. (2009). *Alfiyyat al-Suyūṭī fī 'Ilm al-Ḥadīth*. Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-'Ilmiyya.

⁵⁴ See al-Hararī's list of books in his biography section.

⁵⁵ Al-Hararī, 'A. (2001). *Al-Ta'aqqub al-Ḥathīth 'alā Man Ṭa'ana Fīmā Ṣaḥḥa min al-Ḥadīth*. Beirut: Dar al Macharie CO.

⁵⁶ Al-Albānī, N. (1958). *Al-Radd 'alā al-Ta'aqqub al-Ḥathīth li al-Shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Hararī*. Damascus: Maṭba'at Al-Taraqqī.

⁵⁷ Al-Hararī, 'A. (2001). *Nuṣrat al-Ta'aqqub al-Ḥathīth 'alā Man Ṭa'ana Fīmā Ṣaḥḥa min al-Ḥadīth*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁵⁸ Al-Aṣḥfahānī, A. (1993). *Al-Ghāya wa al-Taqrīb*. India: Markaz Taw'iyat al-Fiqh al-Islāmī.

⁵⁹ Al-Shīrāzī, I. (1983). *Kitāb al-Tanbīh*. Riyadh: Markaz al-Khadāmat wa al-Abḥāth al-Fiqhiyya.

⁶⁰ Ibn Rislān, A. (1984). *Matn al-Zubad*. Mecca: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa.

⁶¹ Al-'Ashmāwī, A. (n.d.). *Matn al-'Ashmāwiyya*. Cairo: Sharikat al-Shimrī.

⁶² Al-Hararī, 'A. (2004). *Al-Dur al-Naḍīd fī Aḥkām al-Tajwīd*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁶³ Al-Ḥaṭṭāb, M. (n.d.). *Mutammimat al-'Ājurrūmiyya*. Sanaa: Dār al-'Āthār.

⁶⁴ Al-Ṣabbān, M. (2000). *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya al-Shāfiya fī 'Ilm al-'Arūd*. Dār al-Wafā li al-Duniyā.

After offering an overview of the majority of the published works authored by al-Hararī, this review moves to bring forth the literature that has dealt directly and indirectly with al-Hararī's mission or followers. It will cover academic books, published journal articles, and doctoral dissertations in both Arabic and English, in addition to existent works whose authors sought to defame or discredit al-Hararī, whilst assessing their impact on the Arab and Islamic Worlds. The review will particularly highlight the resources and the gap in knowledge in Western academia, thereby reiterating the significance of this research project.

As stated at the onset of this research project, Western academia has not presented any in-depth analytical work on al-Hararī, neither as a spiritual leader nor as a religious reformer. Many works have merely referred to him – or his followers al-Aḥbāsh⁶⁵ – in passing, without much regard to his teachings, save whatever served the purpose of the context. For instance, Zoltan Pall, a researcher on radicalisation, provides a succinct passage on the emergence al-Hararī's followers and how they gained prominence by taking over The Association of Islamic Philanthropic Projects. In his book entitled *Lebanese Salafis: Between the Gulf and Europe*,⁶⁶ he utilizes al-Hararī's mission to rightfully argue that al-Aḥbāsh emerged as a countermovement to the rise of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's followers in Lebanon. However, with the exception of an outstandingly brief ideological outline explaining al-Hararī's historical clash with Wahhābī thought and modern-day Wahhābism, the author reverts swiftly to the topic at hand, to what he refers to as the spread of extremist thought in Tripoli, the capital of northern Lebanon.

Similarly, rather superficial overviews of al-Aḥbāsh appear in the *Guide to Islamist Movements*⁶⁷ and *The Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism*.⁶⁸ Again, both of these references contain little information on the historical or religious significance of al-Hararī's. Both succinctly relay the Ethiopian origins of al-Hararī and his school of thought, with much emphasis on the political role of al-Hararī's association. While an investigation into a al-Hararī's impact on Lebanese politics would be worthwhile, this study will focus on the religious influence rather than the political.

⁶⁵ Al-Aḥbāsh refers to al-Hararī's followers. he is sometime referred to as 'Abdullah al-Ḥabashī (the Abyssinian).

⁶⁶ Pall, Z. (2013). *Lebanese Salafis between the Gulf and Europe: Development, Fractionalization and Transnational Networks of Salafism in Lebanon*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

⁶⁷ Rubin, B. (2010). *Guide to Islamist Movements*. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

⁶⁸ Roy, O. & Sfeir, A. (2007). *The Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Contrary to Zoltan's brief religio-political overview of al-Hararī and his movement, Bernard Rougier's narrative is relatively boarder. His: *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam Among Palestinians in Lebanon*⁶⁹ devotes an entire chapter to investigate the political, ideological and strategic struggle between promoters of militant Islam and al-Hararī's followers, with particular focus on Palestinians. Again, the vast majority of his twenty-odd pages long chapter offers an insight into the political clashes between al-Aḥbāsh and their adversaries with little reference to the ideological grounds. In fact, when exploring the ideological argument – particularly with regards to the figure of Mu'āwiya – Rougier attempts to ideologically group al-Hararī with Shī'īs or 'Alawīs by offering a false representation on multiple issues, which demonstrates his lack of ability to discern the mainstream Sunnī ideology.

Based on reviewing the existent literature, it can be contended that there have been only two worthwhile attempts at unearthing al-Hararī's life and influence. Both articles were published in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, ten years apart. The most recent of the two was co-authored by two University of Tel Aviv scholars Mustafa Kabha and Haggai Elrich. In their paper *Al-Ahbash And Wahhabiyya: Interpretations of Islam*,⁷⁰ they discuss al-Hararī's Ethiopian origins and the development of Islam in Ethiopia before examining al-Hararī's life in Lebanon whilst neglecting the intervening thirty-odd years of his life and scholarship.

This can be explained by the fact that the authors' objective was not to offer a comprehensive study of al-Hararī's legacy, his theological contribution and influence on contemporary Islamic scholarship. Rather, their paper is concerned with two dimensions of al-Hararī's life and ideology: the social and organisational development of al-Aḥbāsh, and the fundamentals of the Hararī-Wahhābī rivalry. After providing a brief overview of the creedal conflict, the authors merely list four theological and conceptual points of dispute between al-Hararī and his Wahhābī rivals. The paper offers a relatively accurate representation of al-Hararī's conflict with Wahhābīs, but due to its scope and length, it sought to condense centuries of the Ash'arīs' clash with the literalists in a few lines, along with much disregard for al-Hararī's scholarly credentials and influence.

⁶⁹ Rougier, B. (2007). *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam Among Palestinians in Lebanon*. Harvard University Press.

⁷⁰ Kabha, M., & Elrich, H. (2006). Al-Ahbash And Wahhabiyya: Interpretations of Islam. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 38(4), 519-538.

The second research paper, *A Sufi Response to Political Islamism: Al-Ahbash of Lebanon*,⁷¹ attempts to, “focus on the controversial historical and theological origins of this movement, its social roots, leadership, and political activities in Lebanon”.⁷² Parallel to the previous paper, Hrair Dekmejian and Nizar Hamzeh provide no considerable account of al-Harārī’s numerous years of scholarship prior to his move to Beirut. Instead, they seem particularly concerned with his followers and their spheres of influence. In addition, and as the title suggests, the authors shed light on al-Harārī exclusively as a Ṣūfī figure rather than a broader Sunnī scholar. This could be seen as a diversion from the conventional depiction of al-Harārī. He is indeed a Ṣūfī, but this does not diminish his *fiqh* or *ḥadīth* credentials. Furthermore, similar to the previously mentioned attempt made by Rougier to portray al-Harārī as a Shī‘ī loyalist, Dekmejian and Hamzeh take on a strikingly similar approach. The authors offer alarmingly ill-founded arguments by averring his loyalty to Shī‘ī thought due to his upholding of Zayn al-‘Ābidīn’s teachings – a figure highly revered and glorified in Sunnī thought. This, again, demonstrates their inadequacy in this arena and warrants a comprehensive investigation into the above assertions.

This review reveals, as per the above analysis and findings, that there have been only a few serious attempts in Western academia to shed light on some facets of al-Harārī’s thought. Whilst some academics touched upon his life and ideology, most authors did not reveal an interest in al-Harārī’s influence on the study of Islam and his contributions to contemporary Islamic scholarship. Rather, they have been concerned more with al-Harārī and his followers’ rivalry with the three sects and its ramifications in the political realm, which serves the authors’ anti-militant Wahhābī thesis. Moreover, as illustrated, some works have put forth unsound arguments suggesting al-Harārī upheld pro-Shī‘ī ideology. As such, in the forthcoming chapter, this project will fill the numerous gaps in knowledge and subsequently offer an alternative narrative supported by primary and secondary sources. However, prior to that, this review will conclude with some of the writings on anti-Harārī thought, especially the works Abdurrahmān Dimashqiyya,⁷³ the most prominent contemporary figure in the field of anti-Hararism, and his followers.

⁷¹ Hamzeh, N. & Dekmejian, R. (1996). *A Sufi Response to Political Islamism: Al-Ahbash of Lebanon*. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 28(2), 217–229. doi:10.1017/S0020743800063145.

⁷² Hamzeh & Dekmejian 1996: 218.

⁷³ Dimashqiyya is a prominent Lebanese Wahhābī figure. He is mostly known for his rebuttals against Ṣūfīs, Shī‘as and the Aḥbāsh. His PhD thesis, which he completed in Saudi Arabia, was a polemical dissertation against Shī‘as and their approach to prophetic traditions. For more than thirty years, he worked in Saudi Arabia but then migrated to Britain, where he currently works for Masjid al-Taqwā and lives in Plymouth, UK.

The analysis of polemical texts, of diverse natures and from different centuries with authors tackling legal-jurisprudential dogmatics, reveals that they usually aim to harden the boundaries between groups,⁷⁴ and tend to offer a one-sided view. The following works cannot be considered pure academic studies, nor their authors should be regarded as strict observers of Western academic ethics and standards.

Abdurrahmān Dimashqiyya is amongst the first to compile a comprehensive polemical encyclopaedia in refutation of al-Harārī. Prior to his encyclopaedia, Dimashqiyya wrote two somewhat short treatises entitled *al-Ḥabashī: Shuthūthuh wa Akhṭā'uh*, *Bayn Ahl al-Sunna wa Ahl al-Fitnah* (The Ḥabashī: His Deviancies and Mistakes, Between Sunnīs and the People of Corruption) and *Shubuhāt Ahl al-Fitna wa Ajwibat Ahl al-Sunna* (The Misguidances of the People of Corruption and the Responses of the Sunnīs), both of which were published in 1990s. In 1997, Dimashqiyya published his in-depth polemical study which, according to him, surpasses all his previous works on al-Harārī. He entitled it *Mawsū'at Ahl al-Sunna fī Naqd Uṣūl Firqat al-Aḥbāsh wa man Wāfaqahum fī Uṣūlihim* (The Encyclopaedia of Ahl al-Sunna in Negating the Fundamentals of al-Aḥbāsh Group and Whosoever Agreed with Them).⁷⁵ It is worth to note that all above works were printed and published in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Another work, representing a pretty similar polemical discourse on al-Harārī, was submitted as a doctoral thesis at Umm al-Qurā University with the title *Firqat al-Aḥbāsh: Nash'atuhā, 'Aqā'iduhā, 'Āthāruhā* (The Aḥbāsh Group: Its Emergence, Beliefs and Influences).⁷⁶ Dr Sa'ad b. 'Alī al-Shahrānī, the author, explicitly states in his thesis that it is predominantly based on Dimashqiyya's writings.

In all the above studies, the analytical framework either entirely focuses on the political aspect of al-Harārī's life and the impact of his association. or merely offers a one-sided defensive attempt at refuting his ideology and doctrinal stances. In this research project, the aforementioned approaches will play a marginal role. Instead, this dissertation will focus on al-Harārī himself and his life as an Islamic reformist scholar and a rejuvenator of Ash'arī thought.

⁷⁴ Wiegers, G. (2013). Fuzzy Categories and Religious Polemics: The Daily Life of Christians and Muslims in the Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean World. *Common Knowledge*, 19(3), 474-489.

⁷⁵ For all three books, see the introduction of Dimashqiyya's Encyclopaedia: Dimashqiyya, A. (1997). *Mawsū'at Ahl al-Sunna fī Naqd Uṣūl Firqat al-Aḥbāsh wa man Wāfaqahum fī Uṣūlihim*. Riyadh: Dār Al-Muslim.

⁷⁶ Al-Shahrānī. S. (2002). *Firqat al-Aḥbāsh: Nash'atuhā, 'Aqā'iduhā, 'Āthāruhā*. Mecca: Dar 'Ālam al-Fawā'id.

Chapter II

Al-Hararī and the Path to Scholarship

After laying out, in Chapter I, the significance of such a study, this chapter will set out to provide a detailed account of al-Hararī's scholarly formation during the earlier part of his life, particularly in Ethiopia and its neighbouring countries. As such, it will establish that, throughout his career, al-Hararī sought to emulate the exemplary model of the four Imāms, rather than forging an unprecedented ideology. 'Abdullāh al-Hararī (b. 1910 – d. 2008) was born in modern-day Ethiopia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Whilst some reports suggest that he was born in A.H. 1328 (1910/1911 C.E.), other sources indicate that his date of birth year is A.H. 1339 (1920/1921 C.E.). However, the exact date of birth, whether according to the Hijri or Gregorian calendar, remains subject to speculation. Al-Hararī was born in the predominantly Muslim city of Harar, which is today the capital of the Harari People National Regional State – the smallest state in Ethiopia. On account of 82 mosques and having been founded by a missionary from the Arabian Peninsula, it is considered by some “the fourth holiest city in Islam”.⁷⁷

Al-Hararī full name is 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. 'Abdullāh b. Jāmi' al-Shaybī al-'Abdarī al-Qurashī al-Hararī, otherwise known as al-Ḥabashī. According to the scant information available on al-Hararī's family. He was born to Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Hararī and Fāṭima bt. 'Abdullāh Baḥr-Shaykh. His father Muḥammad, who was a prominent Shāfi'ī jurist and also one of his son 'Abdullāh's first teachers, taught him two foundational texts in Shāfi'ī *fiqh* (jurisprudence). As al-Hararī's teknonym (*kunya*) - Abū 'Abdurrahmān - suggests, he fathered a son by the name of 'Abdurrahmān with his first wife - an Ethiopian lady whom he married in Harar. His son 'Abdurrahmān moved to Australia where he now lives with his Arab wife and partakes in promoting his father's thought. Al-Hararī remarried later in Lebanon more than once during the early 2000s. One of his marriages was to a Lebanese-Kurdish woman by the name of 'Āmāl al-Kurdī, with whom he had a daughter he named Fāṭima bt. 'Abdullāh. Al-Hararī, did not attend modern educational institutions, nor did he receive formal academic qualifications. Rather, he received a classical Islamic education, spending the first three decades of his life travelling across Ethiopia to acquire knowledge from scores of Islamic scholars from whom al-Hararī earned tens of *ijāzas* (licences) to teach and provide *fatwās*.

⁷⁷ UNESCO. (n.d.). *Harar Jugol, the Fortified Historic Town*. Retrieved from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1189/>.

Despite the fact that al-Hararī's training did not resemble Western-style educational programme at mainstream European or American universities nowadays, it could be argued that the long foundational years he spent studying several disciplines under different shaykhs, in Harar, and its outskirts, had seemingly provided him well-rounded and much more comprehensive education relative to modern-day bachelor's degree programmes which take three or four years to complete, so much so that, according to his official biography, he was qualified as a mufti at the age of eighteen.⁷⁸ The status of "mufti" is highly regarded by classical and modern Islamic scholars alike, and the licence to issue *fatwās* (religious legal opinions) is only granted after having acquired a strong grasp of knowledge through painstaking effort and over a significant period of time. In addition, there are some qualities which are pivotal for issuing *fatwās*, the lack of which would bring about a commentariat defect in the mufti. Al-Nawawī enumerated some of the qualities no man should set himself up to issue *fatwās* until he has attained. According to him, "Among the conditions for one to become a mufti is to be an accountable Muslim [in religious law] who is considered upright, trustworthy, clear of enormous sins, self-reflective, sound-minded, intelligent, and one who acts well and is alert."⁷⁹ Therefore, having attained the title of "mufti" at the age of eighteen is indicative of al-Hararī's status and knowledge, and attest to his uniqueness amongst his peers from a very young age

Whilst many of the *ijāzas* al-Hararī earned were in the field of Ḥadīth, other *ijāzas* were given as licences to practise and pass on some Ṣūfī *ṭarīqas* (orders). With regard to Ḥadīth Studies, al-Hararī studied under the Grand Mufti of Harar, Shaykh Muḥammad Sirāj al-Jabartī the following texts: Sunan Abū Dāwūd, Sunan Ibn Mājah, and Ibn Ḥajar's own explanation of his book in *ḥadīth* terminology *Nukhbat al-Fikar*. His studies under shaykh al-Jabartī culminated in receiving a *ḥadīth ijāza* from him. Al-Hararī also learned *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* and parts of *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* with Shaykh 'Abdurrahmān b. 'Abdullāh al-Ḥabashī. In addition to him being a scholar of *Ḥadīth*, *Fiqh* and *Kalām*, al-Hararī was an acclaimed Ṣūfī. He received multiple *ijāzas* in the Rifā'ī, Qādirī, Naqshabandī, Shadhilī, Suhrawardī as well as the Chishtī Ṣūfī orders. He also received an *ijāza* in the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa* from Shaykh Aḥmad al-Baṣīr, and another *ijāza* in the Naqshabandī *ṭarīqa* from 'Abd al-Ghafūr al-Afghānī. He was granted his *ijāza* in the Rifā'ī order by the Syrian scholar Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Kayyālī (d. 1363/1944).⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Al-Hararī, 'A. (2009b). *Umdat al-Rāghib fī Mukhtaṣar Bughyat al-Ṭālib*. Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 13.

⁷⁹ Al-Nawawī, Y. (n.d.). *Kitāb al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhab*. Jeddah: Maktabat al-Irshād. p. 47.

⁸⁰ Al-Hararī 2009b: 14.

The following section will endeavour to present al-Hararī's biography from his birth in Harar through to his demise in Beirut, by providing insight into a decades-long journey of seeking knowledge and establishing a scholarly career. Any researcher seeking to learn about 'Abdullāh al-Hararī and his life will inevitably come across two contradictory short versions of his biography. The first of which is believed to be compiled and proclaimed by his disciples and supporters under the organisational name: The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects, also known as AICP. This three-page biography is typically inserted at the beginning of most of the 'Author's Biography' sections of al-Hararī's books.⁸¹

The other version is included as part of a *fatwā* issued by the Saudi-led: *al-Lajna al-Dā'ima li al-Buḥūth al-'Ilmiyya wa al-Iftā'*, also known as the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and *Iftā'*. This committee restricts the issuing of *fatwās* exclusively to the members of the council or those authorised.⁸² The council also boasts several *fatwās* issued by Saudi clerics warning against al-Hararī and his ideology, thereby deeming him and his followers to be misguided and in some cases apostates. Both accounts will be scrutinised and presented in the forthcoming sections.

Al-Hararī, as the name indicates, hails from the city of Harar. But he is also more famously known as 'Abdullāh al-Ḥabashī after whom the Lebanese Aḥbāsh⁸³ group is named. In order to contextualise al-Hararī's life and provide a holistic account of his life, this chapter will firstly examine the Aḥbāsh – the people of Abyssinia – and their impact upon the spread of Islam. Interestingly, much to the relevance of al-Hararī's biography is the first *hijra* (migration) from Mecca to the land of al-Najāshī, as well as the status of *ḥabashīs* amongst Arabs. Evidently, al-Hararī was born and raised in Ethiopia, but his biography will later on reveal that he is, in fact, a descendant of Arabs, both from his mother's side and that of his father.

⁸¹ Al-Hararī, 'A. (2007). *Bughiat al-Tālib Lima'rifat al-'Ilm al-Dīnī al-Wājib*. Vol. 2. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. Al-Hararī 2009b, Al-Hararī 1998 & Al-Hararī 2007b.

⁸² Boucek, C. (2010). *Saudi Fatwa Restrictions and the State-Clerical Relationship*. Retrieved from <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/41824>.

⁸³ Pierret, T. (2003). *Radicalisation et expansion d'un mouvement néo-traditionaliste libanais*. Memoire de DEA: Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris. Pierret observes: "... the AICP became, in the early 1990s, the largest Sunnī religious movement in Lebanon, with between five thousand and eight thousand active members, recruited primarily from the middle class... The ideology of al-Aḥbāsh is not Islamist, since the group sees politics as a means of achieving religious goals rather than the other way around (the AICP participated in several Lebanese elections). Neither is it fundamentalist ... Instead it can be termed "neo-traditionalist" in that it aims to preserve the Islamic heritage of the Ottoman era — that is, the Ash'arī doctrine ('*aqīda*) of '*ilm al-kalām* (dialectic theology), *taqlīd* (imitation) of one of the four schools of jurisprudence (in this case the Shāfī'ī school), and Ṣūfism (the core of the movement being a Rifā'ī brotherhood headed by al-Ḥabāshī)."

Arabic linguists have defined the *Ḥabash* as an ethnic race from al-Sudān, also known as *al-aḥbāsh*, *al-ḥubshān* and *al-ḥabīsh*.⁸⁴ Al-Sudān here refers to modern-day states located in the Horn of Africa region, encompassing parts of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. In fact, the etymology of the term Ethiopia originates from modern Latin: Abyssinia, which in turn is a derivative from the Arabic: *al-ḥabasha*.⁸⁵ Prior to the spread of Islam and until the late 2nd century, the Abyssinians were influenced by Arabian polytheism until the adoption of Christianity as a state religion in 330 AD.⁸⁶ The *Aḥbāsh*, or the Abyssinians, were known to Arabs through long-standing trade relations between Mecca and Abyssinia, years before the advent of prophet Muḥammad's call.⁸⁷

Certainly, *al-ḥabasha* played a momentous role in the history of Islam and its subsequent spread in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. It did not only constitute the first, "foreign-relations case"⁸⁸ for prophet Muḥammad and his followers, but it is also one of the earliest encounters between Christianity and Islam. As prophet Muḥammad directed his followers to leave Mecca he said: "... if you were to go to Abyssinia, you will find therein a king who does not wrong anyone. It is a friendly land and you could stay there until God grants us relief."⁸⁹ Early converts to Islam fled the wrath of Quraysh and sought refuge with the Negus⁹⁰ Aṣḥama, often referred to as King Armah. As such, *al-ḥabasha*, and more generally, dark-skinned Muslims, played a pivotal role in the spread of Islam. Mustafa Kabha and Haggai Erlich note:

Many darker-complexioned Muslims were nicknamed al-ḥabashī, and throughout history, dozens of prominent personalities of various backgrounds adopted this name. Numerous traditions call on Muslims to respect Muslim Ethiopians and even accept them as leaders. Over the centuries, substantial literature has been produced praising Muslim Ethiopians We mention only a couple here: Jalal al-Din al-Suyutī's 15th century *Raising the Status of the Ethiopians*, and Ahmad al-Hifni al-Qina'ī al-Azhari's *The Beautiful Diamonds in the History of the Ethiopians* of the early 20th century.

⁸⁴ Ibn Manẓūr, (2003). *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Dār Ṣādir. Vol. 4, p. 16.

⁸⁵ Morris, W. (Ed.). (1971). Abyssinia. In: *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. New York: American Heritage Publishing Co. p. 6.

⁸⁶ Hass, C. (2008). Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia. *Journal of Late Antiquity*. The Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 102.

⁸⁷ Watt, W. M. (1961). *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 68.

⁸⁸ Kabha & Erlich 2006: 520.

⁸⁹ Ibn Ishāq. (2004). *Sīratu Rasūlillāh* (tr. Alfred Guillaume). Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 146.

⁹⁰ Members of the Ethiopian royalty are often referred to as Negus which roughly means king, ruler or emperor.

2.1 Name, Lineage & Qualifications

Al-Hararī's title consists of four key components: the first of which refers to his most prominent field of expertise, followed by his *kunya* (teknonym), name and then his *laqab* or epithet. As noted earlier, al-Hararī is dubbed by his disciples: '*khādim 'ilm al-ḥadīth*' (lit. the Servant of the *Ḥadīth* Science). The teknonym by which al-Hararī is known is: Abū 'Abdurraḥmān, after his son 'Abdurraḥmān. His full name is a clear indication of his Afor-Arab origins: 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. 'Abdullāh b. Jāmi' al-Shaybī, al-'Abdarī, al-Qruashī, al-Hararī al-Ḥabashī.

Each of the five aforementioned epithets holds great significance in defining al-Hararī's ethnic as well as his cultural origins, and by extension the nature of the attacks he would consequently face. Whether for the purpose of degradation or otherwise, it has been frequently contended by proponents of the proponents of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's movement that al-Hararī could not distantly be an Arab, let alone belonging to the clan of Quraysh or even the sub-clans: Banū 'Abd al-Dār or Banū Shayba.

One of the most prominent works that sought to defame al-Hararī was conducted by Sa'd al-Shahrānī under the title: *Firqat al-Aḥbāsh: Nash'atuhā, 'Aqā'iduhā, 'Āthāruhā*. (The *Aḥbāsh* Group: Its Birth, Creed & Legacy). The book was published in Riyadh by Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id and was largely based on al-Shahrānī's doctorate thesis which he received from Umm al-Qura University. In his book, al-Shahrānī contends that al-Hararī's claim of being a Qurashī is absolutely and utterly groundless. He observes:

As for al-Ḥabashī's claim of being a descendant of Quraysh, then amongst the Qruashīs: there were individuals who disbelieved the Prophet and belied him, ... Furthermore, I met one of the prominent Hararīs and he told me that this is merely a claim made by one of al-Ḥabashī's siblings of work in butchery. Whereas al-Shaykh 'Abdurraḥmān Mūsā – head of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Ethiopia – confirmed that he is familiar with only one of al-Ḥabashī's family members and they are not known to have any family names (surnames) such as: "Qurashī" or "'Abdarī", contrary to what al-Ḥabashī claimed. Rather, this relation was made up by al-Ḥabashī after he travelled outside of Ḥabasha to the Arab World.⁹¹

⁹¹ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 35.

Al-Shahrānī goes on to discredit al-Hararī's claim of being a descendant of Quraysh through a twofold argument. He firstly draws parallels between al-Hararī and Abū Lahab. He notes that Abū Lahab, despite being a Qurashī - in terms of his clan affiliation - as well as being the prophet's paternal uncle, he nonetheless chose to remain upon polytheism and was thus condemned to eternal damnation along with having an explicit verse revealed in his dispraise.⁹²

Secondly, al-Shahrānī refers to a series of letters published by the AICP's monthly magazine *Manār al-Hudā* (The Beacon of Guidance). During the early 1990s, the magazine published a series of letters it received from Harar, written by Ethiopians who addressed al-Hararī and his followers in Lebanon. The letters included praise of al-Hararī and his efforts. But al-Shahrānī, in a dissatisfactory manner, comments, "None of these letters included, when addressing al-Hararī, the word Qurashī, rather they only ascribe him to Harar. Therefore, the people of Harar belie [your claim]!"⁹³

Upon scrutinising al-Shahrānī's above arguments regarding al-Hararī's lineage, it seems apparent that at first glance, al-Shahrānī's attempts to develop a polemical discourse, or perhaps a rather emotional one blemished with racial prejudice that is far from an impartial academic account. In response to al-Shahrānī's claim, it ought to be noted that, after much research into the disputes surrounding al-Hararī's lineage, this research project has managed to obtain official government-sealed document detailing the tribe and clan to which al-Hararī belongs as well as his line of ancestors from both his paternal and maternal sides. The documents were later on made publicly available.

The said document⁹⁴ has been issued by the Religious First Instance Court of the Harari People's National Regional State. The certificate that is dated 21st January 2003, was signed by Judge Shaykh 'Abdurrahmān Abū Bakr at the behest of 'Abdullāh al-Hararī and his brother 'Alī Muḥammad Yūsuf. In accordance with the court's laws, two upright and trustworthy witnesses were requested to testify before the court under oath on the following: that 'Abdullāh al-Hararī and his brother 'Alī Muḥammad Yūsuf are, in fact, born to their father Muḥammad Yūsuf whose forefathers are descendants of Banū Shayba and to their mother Fāṭima 'Abdullāh Baḥr-Shaykh who is a direct descendant of the first caliph Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.

⁹² The Qur'ān 111: 1-5.

⁹³ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 35.

⁹⁴ Ḥalīm 2017: 728.

As per the document, the two witnesses ‘Abdurrahmān Abū Bakr ‘Abdullāh (eighty-two years old) and Muḥammad Bakrī (sixty-three years old) testified and affirmed that al-Harārī’s paternal ancestors are traced back to Banū Shayba and his maternal forefathers are Qurashīs, particularly descendants of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Thus, based upon all the testimonies presented, the court declared the following:

The Religious First Instance Court of Harar certifies and agrees upon the testimonies borne by the two trustworthy witnesses. [The court] issues its ruling with regards to brother al-Ḥāj ‘Alī Muḥammad Yūsuf and al-Shaykh ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad Yūsuf that: their lineage from their father’s side is directly connected to Banū Shayba. Furthermore, their lineage from their mother’s side is linked with the descendants of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. This proof or certificate was given to them after [due] verification.⁹⁵

Therefore, the above excerpt translated from the original Amharic government-sealed document eliminates any ambiguity whatsoever vis-à-vis al-Harārī’s lineage. It confirms his Qurashī heritage from his mother’s side. It also verifies that his paternal forefathers belonged to the prominent Arab tribe of Banū Shayba that, to this very day, continues to hold the keys to the Ka‘ba.⁹⁶ They do so in keeping with the command revealed to prophet Muḥammad to render trusts to whom they are due. This is in reference to entrusting Banū Shayba with the Ka‘ba’s keys.⁹⁷

Furthermore, it appears that al-Shahrānī’s unsubstantiated claims extend beyond his implicit prejudices towards al-Harārī’s ethnic origin. He attempts to discredit his *ḥadīth* credentials by questioning the nature of the time he spent studying under the grand mufti of Harar, Shaykh Muḥammad Sirāj al-Jabartī. Al-Harārī’s official biography⁹⁸ states that he moved to a town in northern Ḥabasha, called Rāyya which is located approximately one-thousand kilometres away from Harar. There, he studied under al-Jabartī the following *ḥadīth* books: *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, and the explanation of Ibn Ḥajar’s *Nukhbat al-Fikr* as well as receiving a *ḥadīth ijāza*⁹⁹ from him. Al-Harārī’s held his teacher al-Jabartī in high regard.

⁹⁵ Ḥalīm 2017: 728.

⁹⁶ Al-Baghdādī, M. (2011). *Sabā’ik al-Dhahab fī Ma’rifat Qabā’il al-‘Arab*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya.

⁹⁷ The Qur’ān 4:58.

⁹⁸ Al-Harārī 2007a: 9.

⁹⁹ It is an authorization or a licence. Also, one of the eight methods of receiving the transmission of a *ḥadīth*.

However, al-Shahrānī argues that al-Jabartī, one of al-Hararī's most prominent *ḥadīth* teachers, disliked him and disagreed with him on many fronts. According to al-Shahrānī, this led to al-Jabartī's alleged dismissal of al-Hararī, which resulted in his expulsion from al-Jabartī's hometown. It is noteworthy that al-Shahrānī's reference in this particular account is merely a quote of the member of Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs: Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq al-ʿAfrī. He observes:¹⁰⁰

He (i.e., al-ʿAfrī) told me that ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥabashī came to them during the month of Ramaḍān whilst they were studying under al-Shaykh al-Jabartī and remained therein for two only months ... He did not pray in congregation with them, rather he used to pray alone, so al-Shaykh al-Jabartī asked him: why do you not pray with the brothers in congregation, al-Habashī said: I do not pray behind he who does not utter words properly ... On the end of Shaʿbān, when al-Shaykh al-Jabartī saw that he is insistent on praying alone and acting arrogantly, he told his students: escort him to his town! i.e., to the area where cars stop so that he may take a vehicle to his town: Harar.

Any glimpse into al-Shahrānī's aforementioned accounts would suffice to identify the weaknesses in his argument. He firstly denies al-Hararī ties to Quraysh based upon the mere fact that some letters were sent to him from his hometown which did not address him as the 'Qurashī' or the 'ʿAbdarī'. This, certainly, does not constitute reasonable grounds for denying his lineage. Rather, it arguably fuels his inuendo: how could a dark-skinned, Ethiopian national be of Arab descent. Secondly, he attempts to delegitimise al-Hararī's *ḥadīth* credentials by solely relying on the account of a member of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. Assertions, such as the ones made by al-Shahrānī and many more, have been contended by one of al-Hararī's most prominent disciples: Jamīl Ḥalīm.¹⁰¹ Since al-Hararī's death in 2008, Ḥalīm has published more than fifty books in support of his shaykh's methodology. Amongst his books is a recent one-thousand-page research project which, at its core, acts as a response to a doctorate thesis conducted at The Lebanese University.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 39.

¹⁰¹ Jamīl Ḥalīm al-Ḥusaynī spent decades studying under al-Hararī and played a pivotal role in propagating his teacher's thought. He is also the president of *Jamʿiyyat al-Mashāyikh al-Ṣūfīyya* (The Association of Ṣūfī Shaykhs). He has written extensively against Ibn Taymiyya and Wahhābī anthropomorphism. He often appears on TV programmes. He has also carried out extensive research on the prophet's relics and even managed to obtain some. He is particularly influential and active via facebook, with nearly two million followers on his page.

The book which is entitled *al-Suqūṭ al-Kabīr al-Mudawwī*¹⁰² (The Great Thunderous Collapse) discloses a scan of a hand-written document by Muḥammad - al-Jabartī's son - illustrating the nature of the relationship al-Hararī had with his late father, along with alluding to al-Shahrānī's 'expulsion' account. The statement reads:

I, Shaykh Muḥammad son of mufti Muḥammad Sirāj al-Jabartī, do hereby testify that the *ḥadīth* scholar and linguist Shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Hararī has studied [the science of] *ḥadīth* under my father, may Allāh have mercy upon him, and read to him the Sunan of Ibn Mājah and other *ḥadīth*-related books. He was not able to remain in his company due to wars that have taken place in our lands. Hence, the mufti bid him farewell to his hometown out of fear for his life. This took place around 1363 A.H, approximately. Also, all I have ever heard from my father was the constant praise of 'Abdullāh al-Hararī and his students who are still loyal to the mufti and to us, out of honouring our father, may the mercies of God be upon him. The mufti used to express his extreme love to the Shaykh and to his methodology, the methodology of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a. Therefore, every statement that contradicts this, is considered to be a fabricated lie.¹⁰³

Muḥammad al-Jabartī's aforementioned statement in reference to the relationship between his father and al-Hararī rebukes one of the key arguments used to undermine al-Hararī's credentials as a well-grounded *ḥadīth* scholar. Such arguments have been propagated by adherents of the neo-Salafism, the most prominent of which are: Sa'd al-Shahrānī, and even more so Abdurrahmān Dimashqiyya. Certainly, al-Hararī dedicated much of his life to spreading basic 'aqīda principles and warning against numerous non-Sunnī doctrines. But he was also renowned for having attained one of the most prominent titles in *ḥadīth* discipline, namely: '*al-ḥāfiẓ*'.¹⁰⁴ Al-Suyūṭī states that the title of *al-ḥāfiẓ* is exclusively granted to those who fulfil the following: (a) become a reference in authenticating and weakening *ḥadīth*, (b) be well-grounded in the field of *al-Jarḥ wa al-T'adīl* (criticising and praising narrators), (c) memorise all the *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) prophetic traditions and be aware of the weak ones and (d) know the status of each narrator (trustworthy, reliable, fabricator, etc.).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Ḥalīm, J. (2017). *Al-Suqūṭ al-Kabīr al-Mudawwī*. Beirut: Dar Al-Macharie CO.

¹⁰³ Ḥalīm 2017: 730.

¹⁰⁴ Ḥalīm 2017: 773. Here, Ḥalīm provides scans of handwritten and printed letters sent by modern-day Muslim scholars who, on multiple occasions, referred to al-Hararī as *al-ḥāfiẓ* or *al-muḥāddith*.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, A. (n.d.). *Alfiyyat al-Suyūṭī fī 'Ilm al-Hadīth*. Al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya. p. 91.

Al-Suyūṭī goes further to report that al-Mizzī added to the specifications of a *ḥāfiẓ*: that he should be aware of the vast majority of the extant *ḥadīth* accounts and their variant routes. Therefore, it can be deduced that *ḥadīth* scholars did not randomly ascribe the title *al-ḥāfiẓ* in reference to any scholar, rather it is only after one has satisfied the above criteria that one can have this title bestowed upon him. After presenting an overview of the early stages of al-Hararī's life in addition to his ethnic origins and religious qualifications, the following will delve into the religiopolitical challenges he faced in Harar.

2.2 Emperor Selassie & al-Hararī's Exile

As is often the legacy of many reformers, al-Hararī's life was not free of hardships or tribulations. Having spent approximately three decades in his native province Harar, al-Hararī's *da'wa* was en route to its very first ideological clash with Wahhābism, on the one hand, and Emperor Selassie's Ethiopian Christian state on the other hand. But how did the social, political and more importantly, religious factors contribute toward his eventual ousting from Harar? A thorough analysis of the timeline: from the coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen, who took the name: Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1930 until al-Hararī's exile in 1947, will help shed further light on this stage of his life.

The coronation of Selassie as the Emperor of Ethiopia marked a turning point in the history of Harar. The city, that is largely dominated by Muslims, is considered to be the fourth holy city in Islam.¹⁰⁶ It houses approximately one-hundred mosques as well as hundreds of shrines.¹⁰⁷ Selassie's 1930 coronation as emperor was a state-organised event whose purpose was to display authority and usher in a new era of Ethiopian monarchy.

State-sponsored media reported the praise from both Christians and Muslims for the new prince and his endeavours to bring peoples of the two religions together.¹⁰⁸ The preparations for the coronation were extensive,¹⁰⁹ and the event was celebrated for a week.¹¹⁰ In his autobiography, translated by Edward Ullendorff, the emperor describes in detail the extent to which he went in order to ensure this event would reflect the magnitude of his new title. He states:

¹⁰⁶ Santelli, S. (2008). Harar: The Fourth Holy City of Islam. In: Jayyusi, S., Holod, R., Petruccioli, A. & Raymond, A. (Eds.), *The City in the Islamic World* (625–641). Leiden: Brill. p. 625.

¹⁰⁷ Gibb, C. (1998). Religious Identification in Transnational Contexts: Being and Becoming Muslim in Ethiopia and Canada. *Diaspora*, 7(2):247-267. p. 257.

¹⁰⁸ Carmichael, T. (2004). Religion, Language and Nationalism: Muslims in Christian Ethiopia. In: *Islam in World Cultures Comparative Perspectives*. California: ABC Clio. p. 225.

¹⁰⁹ Carmichael 2004: 225.

¹¹⁰ Carmichael 2004: 225.

After these invitations had been despatched to the foreign governments and to the great within Ethiopia, arrangements were made for the principal streets of Addis Ababa and the houses along each street to be repaired as well as for electric light to be installed along the main streets and in all the houses by which the guests would pass.¹¹¹

Through meticulous attention to detail, the emperor managed to impress the notables representing various Western monarchies and states. Asfa-Wossen,¹¹² member of the Ethiopian royal house, recalls the accoutrements used by the emperor: from his golden sceptre and sword, both embellished with diamonds, to his imperial robe, as well as the coronation coach which was specially brought from Berlin to the Ethiopian capital.¹¹³

The now-Emperor sought to place Ethiopia on the world map by providing a religious background for his rule. Tony Carbo argues that with the coronation of Selassie, a new national identity came about, that is: Selassie's belief that he now reigns over God's new chosen people. He goes on to clarify the emperor's claim to the throne, "...the Solomonic emperors are descended from Solomon, and the Ethiopian people are the descendants of the sons of the Israeli nobles. The descent from Solomon was so essential to the nationalistic tradition and monarchical domination that Haile Selassie incorporated it into the country's first constitution in 1931".¹¹⁴

With the establishment of Selassie's reign, his government promised religious liberty to Ethiopian Muslims,¹¹⁵ contrary to his predecessors Yohannes IV and Tewodros II¹¹⁶ who had issued decrees commanding their Muslim subjects to either convert to Christianity or leave the country. Yohannes IV allowed no longer than five years for Muslims to conform.¹¹⁷ Therefore, Selassie's policies could perhaps be regarded as outwardly more accepting of Muslims in comparison with those of his predecessors. But this does not mean that he was as pleasant to his Muslim subjects as he was to his fellow Christians.

¹¹¹ Selassie, H. (1990). *The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Selassie I: My life and Ethiopia's Progress, 1892-1937* (E. Ullendorff Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 174.

¹¹² Asfa-Wossen Assefate is Selassie's great-nephew and a descendant of Empress Menen. As a German-Ethiopian academic, he has written extensively on Ethiopian culture, history and religion.

¹¹³ Assefate, A. (2015). *King of Kings: The Triumph and Tragedy of Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia*. London: Haus Publishing. p. 123.

¹¹⁴ Karbo, T. (2013). Religion and Social Cohesion in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Peace*, 4(3), 43-52.

¹¹⁵ Trimingham, J. S. (1965). *Islam in Ethiopia*. London: Routledge. p. 136.

¹¹⁶ Ahmad, A. (2000). Muslims of Gondar 1864-1941. *Annales D'ethiopie*, 16(1), 161-172.

¹¹⁷ Bekele, G. (2011). *The In-Between People: A Reading of David Bosch through the Lens of Mission History and Contemporary Challenges in Ethiopia*. Pickwick Publications. p. 174.

However, despite the abolition of his predecessors' decrees, Christians were still favoured by the emperor over Muslims, especially in government jobs.¹¹⁸ As such, the position of Muslims under Selassie's rule was seen as inferior to that of the Christians.¹¹⁹ To shed further light on the state of Islam and Muslims in Harar particularly, and Ethiopia more generally, Haggai Erlich¹²⁰ provides an analysis of Muḥammad Taysīr al-Kīlānī's account on his journey in Ethiopia:

The text begins with a series of conversations with various Muslims who testified to the deprivation – economic, social, and cultural – they had suffered in the now defunct empire of Ethiopia. The second part of the book consists of descriptions of situations under the Italians. It culminates in the author's visit to Harar, now no longer a Christian Ethiopian town but lively and flourishing of Islamic life and Arab studies. This new Arab-Islamic freedom in a Muslim Ethiopia was achieved because of the benevolence of fascism and the Fascists.¹²¹

With the Italians taking control over many parts of Ethiopia, Selassie was eventually forced into exile in England for five years (1936-41).¹²² Arslan, who wrote the preface to al-Kīlānī's book, speaks of the enslavement, land confiscations and forced Christianisation under Ethiopian monarchies. He goes on to reprimand Muslims who blame Italy for occupying Ethiopia by reminding them of the tens of thousands of men Selassie had enslaved, the majority of whom were Muslims.¹²³

After many years of religious intolerance and monarchical social prejudice against Muslims, the Italians were seen as allies to Muslims. As such, they supported the Muslim community by granting them autonomy and the freedom to practise their religion. Based on al-Kīlānī's account, Haggai goes on to detail the process through which the Islamic features of Addis Ababa were restored, particularly through the building of Mosques, the implementation of Islamic *sharī'a* as well as the spread of the Arabic language.¹²⁴ So, in Selassie's absence, Muslim communities thrived and were able to re-establish their places of worship and Islamic schools as cornerstones to the traditional Harari Islamic society.

¹¹⁸ Carmichael 2004: 225.

¹¹⁹ Trimingham, J. S. (1965). *Islam in Ethiopia*. London: Routledge. p. 136.

¹²⁰ Erlich, H. (1994). *Ethiopia and the Middle East*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. p. 123.

¹²¹ Erlich 1994:124.

¹²² Grandson of exiled Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie offers thanks to Bath (2016, May 5). BBC News.

Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-somerset-36211381>.

¹²³ Al-Kīlānī, M. (1937). *Al-Ḥabasha al-Muslima*. Damascus: Idārat Jarīdat al-Jazīra.

¹²⁴ Erlich 1994:125.

As seen above, the state of Islam and Muslims in early to mid-nineteenth century Harar, and greater Ḥabasha, underwent several stages, however the return of Selassie to power in 1941 along with sectarian tensions between Ṣūfīs and Wāḥḥābī-influenced parties sparked conflict with Selassie's regime.

2.2.1 'Abdullāh al-Hararī & Ibrāhīm Ḥasan

Al-Hararī's departure from Harar in 1947 was preceded by several confrontations with Selassie's regime and the newly founded association, dubbed: "The Islamic National Association in Harar". The association was established by 'Abdullāh al-Hararī's arch-rival Yūsuf 'Abdurrahmān al-Hararī.¹²⁵ According to 'Abdullāh al-Hararī, this organisation sought to spread Wāḥḥābī beliefs in Harar, thereby instigating disunity and tribulations amongst the Harari people.¹²⁶

Upon the second Italo-Abyssinian war, Ibrāhīm Ḥasan – who would later on have a significant impact on al-Hararī's life in Harar – returned in 1936 from Mecca to Harar. While in Mecca, Wāḥḥābī-influenced Ibrāhīm Ḥasan was said to have published articles in some newspapers attacking the beliefs of much of the Harari people. It is believed that he did so to stir up division among Hararis. Dr Kamāl al-Ḥūt,¹²⁷ a prominent student of al-Hararī, notes that when al-Hararī was on one of his religious missions in a central Abyssinian province and heard about the arrival Ibrāhīm Ḥasan in Harar, he promptly returned.

Coupled with the scholars and shaykhs of Harar, 'Abdullāh al-Hararī followed a systematic methodology in teaching the Sunnī Ash'arī creed across the mosques of Harar, particularly in the Grand Mosque of Harar.¹²⁸ As a result, a formal request was submitted by a number of Harari scholars to hold a debate between al-Hararī and Ḥasan,¹²⁹ but the request was declined by the latter. While al-Ḥūt classifies the nature of the debate as a religious one, al-Shahrānī on the other hand calls it, "the political case against Ibrāhīm Ḥasan".¹³⁰ Nonetheless, al-Ḥūt and al-Shahrānī both report the sequence of events that led to the public debate which eventually took place in the capital Addis Ababa, not in Harar.

¹²⁵ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 51.

¹²⁶ Al-Ḥūt, K. (2015). *Al-Lawāmi' al-Nūrāniyya fī Asānīd al-Ṭuruq al-Ṣūfiyya li Imām al-Bilād al-Ḥabashiyya*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 61.

¹²⁷ Kamāl al-Ḥūt is a historiographer and *ḥadīth* specialist. He is also the head of *Jam'iyat al-Sāda al-Ashrāf* (The Association of the Honourable Descendants of Prophet Muḥammad).

¹²⁸ Al-Ḥūt 2015:61.

¹²⁹ Al-Ḥūt 2015:62.

¹³⁰ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 52.

Both, al-Ḥūt and al-Shahrānī agree that, consequent to his refusal to partake in the debate, Ḥasan was formally seized by Selassie's government and transported to Addis Ababa. It is noteworthy that more than 50 years after debate, al-Shahrānī met Yūsuf 'Abdurrahmān al-Harārī in Medina and sought his detailed account on the arrest and imprisonment of his ally Ḥasan. Al-Shahrānī states, "I visited al-Shaykh Yūsuf in Medina and he stated in detail the events that took place. He also promised to publish another document containing more details."¹³¹ Yūsuf al-Harārī alleges that the trial revolved around a published piece that was submitted by 'Abdullāh al-Harārī and his aides accusing Ḥasan of supporting the Italian attack against Selassie's imperialist regime. Yūsuf 'Abdurrahmān al-Harārī observes:

Ibrāhīm was brought to Addis Ababa, and a special court was convened to look into the case, under the management of the 'Ministry of the Pen' within the palace. The case took its course. Thereafter, this gang asked me to present my testimony against the accused: Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, because I was a resident of the holy land and due to my knowledge of the case. However, I viciously rejected, and reprimanded them ... Eventually, the judgement was announced against Ibrāhīm with imprisonment for twenty-three years along with exile. This [ruling] was executed.¹³²

Throughout his statement, Yūsuf al-Harārī refers to 'Abdullāh al-Harārī as 'Shaykh al-Fitna', that is the leader of tribulations and disorder. He regarded Ḥasan's trial as an attempt on 'Abdullāh al-Harārī's part to further the "interests of the blasphemers"¹³³ and express adulation vis-à-vis the Abyssinian imperialists. On the other hand, and contrary to al-Shahrānī's account, al-Ḥūt argues that the grounds for Ḥasan's trial were solely religious, not political. He notes that, prior to the debate, the Muslim scholars of Harar, including al-Harārī, convened in the capital to discuss the matters raised against Ḥasan.¹³⁴ This led to the first face-to-face public confrontation between al-Harārī and Ḥasan in the capital's religious court. Al-Ḥūt asserts that, upon the conclusion of the debate, scholars unanimously agreed that Ḥasan's *'aqīda* contradicts the fundamental Islamic beliefs and he is, as a result, outside the fold of Islam. Ḥasan's adoption of key Wahhābī beliefs such as *tajsīm* (anthropomorphism) was regarded as a breach to mainstream Sunnī belief. The Ethiopian judges were noticeably followers of traditional Sunnīsm who sought to combat the spread of Wahhābism through this verdict.

¹³¹ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 51.

¹³² Al-Shahrānī 2002: 52.

¹³³ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 52.

¹³⁴ Al-Ḥūt 2015: 61.

After the announcement and implementation of Ḥasan's verdict, the scholars, including al-Hararī, who had convened for the trial, returned to their hometowns. During his return journey on the railway from Addis Ababa, al-Hararī was captured by Selassie's soldiers at one of the railway stations and forced to return to Addis Ababa. In the capital, al-Hararī was imprisoned, but later released upon the involvement of some Harari shaykhs and local notables.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, this was certainly not the first time al-Hararī would face arrest by the Selassie regime. The multiple arrests by the Selassie regime have been documented as part of a statement issued by Aḥmad Dīn b. 'Abdullāh, chair of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council:

Al-Shaykh 'Abdullāh, may God have mercy on him, remained steadfast on the teachings of the [Islamic] law. He did not cajole others with falsehood or deny the truth. Due to this, the previous emperor of Abyssinia – known as Haile Selassie – arrested him in the city of Dessie towards [the city of] Wollo when he was returning from mufti Muḥammad Sirāj. He remained in arrest for a period of time in Dessie then he was released, to be arrested yet again in his hometown Harar. Thereafter, he was placed under house arrest for many years in Addis Ababa.¹³⁶

Al-Hararī's battle against Ḥasan's ideology was regarded by Yūsuf al-Hararī and others as "the betrayal of the nation and service to the foes of Islam". Contrarily, it appears that al-Hararī was merely clinging onto his ideology by remaining at the forefront of the fierce battle against both Wahhābi individuals and institutes promoting their thought. Based on his interview with Yūsuf al-Hararī, al-Shahrānī narrates events leading up to al-Hararī's exile. As stated earlier, al-Hararī stood against Yūsuf al-Hararī's Wahhābī-influenced organisation as well as the schools under its management. As a result, he called for a public meeting in the Grand Mosque of Harar, after maghrib prayer, to warn the people of Harar against this organisation and urge parents to withdraw their children from all schools affiliated with Yūsuf al-Hararī.¹³⁷ However, the organisation resorted to the government to take charge of the situation so as to avoid any potential clashes. Consequently, 'Abdullāh al-Hararī was imprisoned, yet again, but this time his release was – reportedly - contingent upon his departure from Harar. This marked the start of the second chapter of al-Hararī's career.

¹³⁵ Al-Ḥūt 2015: 62.

¹³⁶ In 06-02-2004, the Supreme Federal Council for Muslim Affairs in Ethiopia released a ten-page statement as a response to what it refers to as 'false information' widely circulated about Shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Hararī. Also, see Ḥalīm 2017: 704.

¹³⁷ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 54.

Nonetheless, al-Shahrānī's narrative is contended by the former Ethiopian deputy minister of Labour, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Rashīd al-Harārī, who, on the one hand, agrees that 'Abdullāh al-Harārī was imprisoned several times by Selassie's government. However, on the other hand, he argues that al-Harārī's exile was somewhat self-imposed. He states: "The dangerous way in which al-Shaykh was frequently sieged and captured by the tyrant Selassie resulted in his family fearing for him. This impelled his brother al-Ḥāj Yūnus to obtain a Somali passport for the Shaykh and acquire the Somali nationality. Thereafter, the permission to go to Ḥajj was granted on this passport, thus allowing him to travel outside the country."¹³⁸

Upon examination of 'Abd al-Rashīd's statement, it appears to clash with that of al-Shahrānī, especially in reference to al-Harārī's departure from his hometown Harar. Al-Shahrānī's thesis takes on a rather refutational approach and seeks to depict al-Harārī's in a certain manner. But the events provided by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Rashīd al-Harārī's above statement, suggest that al-Harārī was not forced into exile but wilfully took the decision to depart, rather than his departure being a formal condition set by Selassie's government, as alleged by al-Shahrānī. The former argument is further supported by Aḥmad Dīn b. 'Abdullāh who observes, "...He (i.e. 'Abdullāh al-Harārī) managed to escape from this tyranny and migrate from *al-ḥabasha* to different Arab countries, until he settled in Damascus for nearly twenty years then in Beirut for around forty years."¹³⁹

Parallel to the incidents that prepared the ground for 'Abdullāh al-Harārī's departure from Harar, his arch-rival Yūsuf 'Abduraḥmān al-Harārī was also on a collision course with the Ethiopian imperial government and in the end spent the remainder of his life in banishment outside Harar. Prior to the return of emperor Selassie, the Italians had sent Yūsuf al-Harārī to Mecca, wherein it is argued that he was heavily influenced by Wahhābī thought and had most likely established ties with prominent figures in Mecca. In Harar, this proved problematic for the Emperor's government who, in turn, accused him of revolting and promoting the breakaway of Harar from Ethiopia.¹⁴⁰ Consequently, he was arrested and exiled. Yūsuf al-Harārī nonetheless continued his war against 'Abdullāh al-Harārī, but now from his new abode: Saudi Arabia. There, he rallied support for his cause and worked towards the spread of Wahhābīsm in Africa.

¹³⁸ Al-Ḥūt 2015: 62.

¹³⁹ Ḥalīm 2017: 705.

¹⁴⁰ 'Abdā, N. (2019). *Jamā'at al-Aḥbāsh fī Ethiopia: Min al-Dīnī 'ilā al-Siyāsī*. Aljazeera Centre for Studies.

Ethiopian author and researcher Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abdā argues that the conflict between ‘Abdullāh al-Harārī and Yūsuf ‘Abdurrahmān al-Harārī can be reduced and condensed to two key reasons. The first is the nature of education in Harar, particularly the religious schools of thought adopted by and taught within the school curricula. According to ‘Abdā, a Wahhābī day-school was established in Harar by Yūsuf al-Harārī and his followers.¹⁴¹ The school was later on shut down by the Ethiopian authorities – particularly after the debate between Ibrāhīm Ḥasan and ‘Abdullāh al-Harārī – and staff were either imprisoned or forced into exile.

Secondly, ‘Abdā maintains that one of the key points of dispute lay in the attempts to break Harar away from Ethiopia. This also involves the establishment of ties between Islamic and nationalistic movements in the region that have been calling for independence from Ethiopia and joining greater Somalia.¹⁴² Yūsuf al-Harārī regarded ‘Abdullāh al-Harārī as a traitor to his people and religion, not only due to aligning with the Selassie government, but also for acting as an informant against Yūsuf al-Harārī and his association.

Surely, the reasons stated by ‘Abdā were major contributors to the feud between the two Harārīs. However, in my opinion, it boils down to the doctrinal disparity between the two figures. This certainly stems from the centuries-long dispute between Ash‘arīs and the Karrāmiya.¹⁴³ Suffice it to say that ‘Abdullāh al-Harārī’s dedication to combatting Wahhābism could be fully understood by acknowledging that he regarded their beliefs in regard to some of the attributes of God as more dangerous to Muslims than Jewish or Christian beliefs. This is illustrated in his *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, in which he adopts al-Qushayrī’s stance, who observes, “Those people (i.e., the Karrāmiya and their likes), I swear by the One Who Controls our souls, are more dangerous to Islam than the Jews, Christians, al-Majūs, and idol-worshippers, because the misguidance of the blasphemers is apparent; the Muslim refrains from that. Those people come to the laymen from a path by which the weak people would be deluded.”¹⁴⁴ With the rapid spread of anthropomorphism through Wahhābī petromoney, al-Harārī exerted even more effort in raising awareness against Wahhābism.

¹⁴¹ ‘Abdā 2019.

¹⁴² ‘Abdā 2019.

¹⁴³ “Karrāmiyya: an anthropomorphist sect named after Abū ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Karrām He is also accused of anthropomorphism – that is, interpreting expressions concerning God in the Qur’ān in their literal sense, saying that God is a substance (*jawhar*) and a body (*jism*) of finite dimensions.” See Hoffman, V. (2012). *The Essentials of Ibādī Islam*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. p. 284.

¹⁴⁴ Al-Harārī 2004b.

Therefore, it could be deduced that ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī regarded the protection of lay Muslims against Wahhābī beliefs to be more important – at that time – than calling for the abolition of Selassie’s government. While Yūsuf al-Hararī and his followers, particularly Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, were affiliated with the anti-imperialist camp, ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī did not prioritise an anti-imperialist agenda, albeit he was accused of that ultimately. Despite the two reasons ‘Abdā mentions earlier, he nonetheless insinuates that the disagreement could perhaps be traced back to the long-established clash between neo-Salafīs and classical Ash‘arī-Sūfīs,¹⁴⁵ namely the Sūfīs who chose to coexist with existing governments and attempted to reform from within, rather than revolting and rebelling. This certainly coincides with ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī’s ideology.

2.2.2 The Kulub Movement & al-Hararī’s Alleged Role

The vast majority of Arabic publications that have dealt with al-Hararī’s biography or made references to him, whether directly or indirectly, have accused him of either contributing towards the 1948 Kulub movement or playing a leading role in its advancement in Harar. In 1947, nearly five years after the imprisonment of Ibrāhīm Ḥasan and the closure of Yūsuf al-Hararī’s school, another conflict arose in Harar vis-à-vis its political alignment.¹⁴⁶ The Somali Youth League (SYL) was formed in Somalia due to instability therein and uncertainty concerning Somalia’s fate. Likewise, a similar movement, linked to SYL, was formed in Harar, which became known as the Kulub-Hanolatto movement.¹⁴⁷ It sought the unification of Harar with Somalia and the division of Harar from Ethiopia. Although the movement was initially dubbed: the Kulub-Hanolatto movement but it later on became known as the Kulub. The term Kulub, explained by Østebø refers to, “... a derivation from the English word “club” and was taken from the name of SYL’s predecessor, the Somali Youth Club (1943-1947). Hanolatto is a Somali catch-word or slogan literally meaning “long live”. In Ethiopia, SYL was referred to as *Kulub*.”¹⁴⁸ The movement, found common ground with an organisation called al-Jam‘iyya al-Waṭaniyya, which was formed by some people of Harar, inspired by nationalist identity and patriotic sentiment.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ ‘Abdā 2019.

¹⁴⁶ Loimeier, R. (2016). *Islamic Reform in Twentieth-Century Africa*. Edinburgh University Press. p. 268.

¹⁴⁷ Østebø, T. (2012). *Localising Salafism: Religious Change Among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia*. Leiden: Brill. p. 190.

¹⁴⁸ Østebø 2012: 190.

¹⁴⁹ Carmichael, T. (1998). Political Culture in Ethiopia’s Provincial Administration: Haile Sellassie, Blata Ayele Gebre and the (Hareri) Kulub Movement of 1948. In Beswick, S., Carmichael, T., Page, M. & Spalding, J. (Eds.), *Personality and Political Culture in Modern Africa*, 195-212. Boston: Boston University Press.

In 1947, an alliance was established between the SYL, through their bureau in Harar, and al-Jam'iyya al-Wataniyya.¹⁵⁰ In January 1948, the newly-formed alliance sent a delegation composed of thirteen representatives to address, on their behalf, the UN mission in Mogadishu,¹⁵¹ and inform them of the injustices the Muslims of Harar had been facing at the hands of the Ethiopian authorities who had refused to resolve these issues.¹⁵²

The UN mission dismissed the delegation's proposal of a greater Somalia, and by extension, the ideas upon which the Kulub movement was founded. Their response was that Harar was part of Ethiopia. Naturally, the delegation attempted to marshal support from Muslim and Arab leaders, but eventually the Ethiopian government came to know of the delegation and its movements through radio reports.¹⁵³ As a direct response to the Kulub delegation's movements, the Ethiopian government took severe measures in responding to what it regarded as an attempt to spark rebellion and disunity in Harar. As such, based on face-to-face interviews in Harar, Tim Carmichael describes the response of the Ethiopian government by observing:

On 20 January 1948, government forces seized the offices of SYL and the *jam'íya*, confiscating all documents and membership registers and arresting those then present in the offices In addition to the mass arrests, the government took over public properties, including Hareri *madáris*. Several informants bitterly recalled that the main *madrassa* which had been established and administered with private funds was changed into a non-Islamic government-run school which it remains to this day.¹⁵⁴

Not only did the government seize SYL's offices and take over religious educational institutes, but it also ordered the imprisonment of approximately seven hundred Hararis. Of those detained, eighty were deported to different parts of the country.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ "A politically oriented civil society organisations with a good deal of institutionalization were later formed in Harar in the late 1940s in the shape of al-Gam'iya al-Wataniya al-Harariya ("The Harari Nationalist League/Association") and the Somali Youth Club, both of which had the aim of gaining greater autonomy or political independence to their region from what was then the Christian and Amhara dominated state of Ethiopia." See, Ibrahim, A. (2015). *The Role of Civil Society in Africa's Quest for Democratization*. Springer. p. 134.

¹⁵¹ Loimeier 2016: 269.

¹⁵² Carmichael 1998: 195-212.

¹⁵³ Carmichael 1998: 203.

¹⁵⁴ Carmichael 1998: 205.

¹⁵⁵ Loimeier 2016: 268.

Based upon the aforementioned reports, whether it be fieldwork carried out on the origins of the Kulub movement in Harar and its eventual disbandment, such as Tim Carmichael's paper, or extensive analytical studies, similar to the works of Østebø and Loimeier, none have established any affiliations whatsoever neither between 'Abdullāh al-Hararī and SYL, nor between him and al-Jam'īyya al-Waṭaniyya.

Had it been the case that al-Hararī was in a leadership position in either organisations, this would have been stated or even alluded to. Yet, we find that there is no mention of al-Hararī as one of the founders of al-Jam'īyya al-Waṭaniyya. Rather, only two individuals in whose house all groups met are: Haji Ibrāhīm Sulaymān and Haji 'Abdullāh Sharīf.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, al-Hararī is not alleged to be part of the Ethiopian delegation to Cairo.¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, al-Hararī's role in Kulub is primarily propagated by Abdurrahmān Dimashqiyya in one among his earliest refutational texts on al-Hararī published in 1997. It is entitled *al-Maqālāt al-Sunniyya fī Tabrī'at Ibn Taymiyya wa Radd Muftarayāt al-Firqa al-Ḥabashiyya* (The Encyclopaedia of Ahl al-Sunna: Refuting the Fundamentals of the Aḥbāsh Movement).¹⁵⁸ In it he states that al-Hararī came to Lebanon from a land that was famously known for the tribulations of Kulub and he caused troubles in Lebanon even graver than those he caused as part of Kulub.¹⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that Dimashqiyya is even more forthright in accusing al-Hararī partaking in the Kulub movement at the very introduction of his book *al-Maqālāt al-Sunniyya*. In it he alleges, "Thereafter, an Ethiopian man by the name of 'Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Ḥabashī arrived in Lebanon from a country whose people disliked him. This is due to his treacherous role as part of the *fitna* of Kulub in the Harar region as well as his collaborations with the Muslims' enemies therein."¹⁶⁰ Consequently, al-Hararī's name became synonymous with the Kulub movement. This alleged relationship is included as part of works on religious sectarianism in Lebanon, but more generally literature on sects in the Arab World. Thus, his role in the Kulub became regarded as factual information.

¹⁵⁶ Carmichael 1998: 201.

¹⁵⁷ Carmichael 1998: 203. Here, he states: "The Ethiopian Legation in Cairo later provided the following list of members of the group: Haji Ahmad Adish (the leader), Haji Ibrahim Abdulsalam, Muhammad Ahmad Yusuf, Adish Umar, Haji Umar Gatu (Widato), Yunis Muhammad Yusuf, Yusuf Abdulrahman, Yusuf Shano, Muhammad Ismail, Haji Abukabir Faqi, Yunis Muhammad Adis Abon, Adis Muhammad Adish, Muhammad Ismail".

¹⁵⁸ Dimashqiyya 1997: 3.

¹⁵⁹ Dimashqiyya 1997: 7.

¹⁶⁰ Dimashqiyya, 'A. (2010). *Al-Maqālāt al-Sunniyya fī Tabrī'at Ibn Taymiyya wa Radd Muftarayāt al-Firqa al-Ḥabashiyya*. Riyadh: Dār al-Muslim. p. 3.

For instance, two detailed modern-day works on Islamic sectarianism have dedicated a biographical section to al-Hararī. While al-Juhanī's *al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara*¹⁶¹ focuses on modern-day sects, al-Maghlūth's *Atlas al-Firaq wa al-Madhāhib fī al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*¹⁶² provides a much wider historical scope. But both, al-Juhanī and al-Maghlūth, in an exceptionally similar fashion, assert that the Kulub tribulations took place as a result of al-Hararī's collaboration with, and his assistance of, the Selassie regime. According to them, al-Hararī worked closely with Selassie's son-in-law - the ruler of Endraji - in an effort to shut down all Islamic schools in Harar and promote the handing over of all shaykhs to the government.¹⁶³ In brief, Mustafa Kabha and Haggai Erlich sum up the two key reasons that compelled some of al-Hararī's rivals to accuse him of having a central role in the Kulub movement. They observe:

The struggle revolved around two issues, which will be mentioned here only briefly. One was the nature of Islamic education in Harar. In 1941, a group of Harari-Islamic nationalists reestablished the local modern school in the spirit of Wahhabi fundamentalism. A few months later, the Ethiopian authorities closed the school and sent those involved either to prison or into exile. The second was an attempt during 1946-48 to break away from the Christian state. The same Islamic, nationalist circles in Harar organized to collaborate with the then-active Somali nationalist movement to break Harar away from Ethiopia and annex it to Islamic Somalia. They were again exposed by the Ethiopian authorities, and their leaders were punished. In both cases, the defeated group accused Shaykh 'Abdalla of being instrumental in helping the Ethiopian establishment. Shaykh 'Abdalla and his followers continue to deny any anti-Islamic collaboration.¹⁶⁴

It is noteworthy that in spite of Østebø's¹⁶⁵ staunch disagreement with them, Kabha and Erlich rightly described the Kulub movement as an alliance of two pillars, the first of which is the Wahhābī-oriented religious wing and the second is represented by the Harari nationalist identity. It could also be seen as the Wahhābī movement's hijacking of a nationalist cause to implement their own agenda.

¹⁶¹ Al-Juhanī, M. (1999). *Al-Mawsū'a al-Muyassara fī al-Adiyān wa al-Madhāhib wa al-Aḥzāb al-Mu'āṣira*. Riyadh: Dār al-Nadwa al-'Ālamiyya li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī'

¹⁶² Al-Maghlūth, S. (2017). *Atlas al-Firaq wa al-Madhāhib fī al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*. Riyadh: Obeikan Publishing.

¹⁶³ Al-Maghlūth 2017: 615.

¹⁶⁴ Kabha & Erlich 2006: 530.

¹⁶⁵ Østebø 2012: 190.

While Kabha and Erlich neither explicitly deny nor affirm al-Hararī's role in the Kulub movement, al-Shahrānī – whose thesis revolves around defaming al-Hararī – delivers a strong-worded response to all those who have accused al-Hararī of collaborating with Selassie's regime. He states that the tribulations caused by the Kulub only took place after al-Hararī's departure from Harar.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, he had no role whatsoever in the Kulub movement or its agenda.

However, despite the overwhelmingly negative reports regarding al-Hararī's early career stages in Harar, there exist ample reports, documents, and commendation letters written on al-Hararī by numerous prominent figures. The documents were composed and formally sealed by ambassadors, ministers, politicians, both Muslims and non-Muslims, grand-muftis and other figures. However, the following will merely shed light on some reports from native Harari and Somali notables:

Ḥasan Mūsā Tarey: The Acting Ambassador of the Somali Democratic Republic in Damascus. He refers to al-Hararī in a letter sent by him in 13/12/1992 as “our master” and the “*muḥaddith* of the era”. He goes on to describe al-Hararī as the one who stood firmly against Selassie and challenged imprisonment. He notes that al-Hararī only left Harar and journeyed to the Levant due to the severe hardships he faced, and that it was not out of weakness or the like. Ultimately – according to him – one can support one's cause from different parts of the world.¹⁶⁷

Dr ‘Abdullāh Ḥasan Maḥmūd: The Ambassador of the Somali Democratic Republic in Cairo. In a letter sent in 2005, he boldly labels al-Hararī as the *mujaddid*¹⁶⁸ of the 14th century. Dr ‘Abdullāh describes al-Hararī as one of the most prominent Shāfi‘ī and Ash‘arī scholars of his time. He follows up by stating that, despite the ample reports suggesting that al-Hararī worked against the unity of Muslims, his history is well-known, and he has been commended by the scholars of Arab and Islamic countries.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, such a statement issued by a Somali diplomat in support of an Ethiopian religious figure could be seen as a seal of approval on al-Hararī and his methodology.

¹⁶⁶ Al-Shahrānī 2002: 56.

¹⁶⁷ Ḥalīm 2017: 772.

¹⁶⁸ Landau-Tasseron notes that, “*The Kitāb al-Malaḥim* in the *Sunan* of Abū Dā‘ūd opens with the following *ḥadīth*: “God will send to this community at the turn of every century someone (or: people) who will restore religion.” (*inna allāh yab‘ath li-hadhihi al-umma ‘alā ra’s kull mi’a sana man yujaddid lahā amr dīnihā.*) See Landau-Tasseron, E. (1989). The Cyclical Reform: A Study of the mujaddid Tradition. *Studia Islamica*, 70, 79-117.

¹⁶⁹ Ḥalīm 2017: 778.

‘**Abdullāh Idrīs**: President of the Organisational Council for the Harari community. In his letter sent in 1998, Idrīs frequently conveys the appreciation of the people of Harar for al-Hararī’s efforts. He repeatedly offers thanks to al-Hararī for all that he has offered to the people of Harar. He particularly refers to one of al-Hararī’s students by the name of Aḥmad Bāshā who spent considerable time in Harar teaching and conveying the teachings of al-Hararī. Idrīs goes on to formally request the establishment of a religious centre or institute in Harar, “... we also hope that the city of Harar would receive the honour of having one of your [religious] centres established therein”. He concludes the letter by reiterating his gratitude as well as that of the people of Harar.¹⁷⁰

Al-Sharīf Thābit Sharīf Aḥmad: Head of the religious courts of the Somali Regional State, in Jig-Jiga, Ethiopia. Due to the significance of this letter dated on 2003, a translation of the prominent sections will be provided, particularly in reference to his statement on the rise of Wahhābism and al-Hararī’s role in tackling it. He says:

Before anything, we would like to express our pleasure as we witness the rise of your star over the horizon, and we also extend our blessings for your generous support of the projects of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah around the globe. We also like to thank you for all the efforts you have put in to save the Muslim masses from the dirt of the Wahhābī wing, that has plagued all humanity. As it is known to your eminence, Somalis enjoy an excellent Islamic history, given that they belong to a Sunnī Islamic background whose banner has been held high by the city of Harar - the city that has remained a beacon for spiritual guidance and a significant centre of religious guidance for all the Muslims of eastern Ethiopia. Your eminence, so long as the residents of the Somali region are Shāfi‘īs and Ash‘arīs, then there shall remain between us an exclusive nature of unity in culture and beliefs.¹⁷¹

Al-Sharīf Thābit’s statement clearly emphasises the people of Harar’s dire need for instilling moderate Islamic teachings in Ethiopia by utilising al-Hararī’s teachings so as to block the expansion of Wahhābism. Also, the manner in which he invoked national and cultural unity between Somalis and Hararis, followed by religious unity between Shāfi‘īs and Ash‘arīs speaks volumes.

¹⁷⁰ Ḥalīm 2017: 782.

¹⁷¹ Ḥalīm 2017: 788.

Shaykh ‘Umar Fārikh Moḥammad: Head of the Somali Regional State Islamic Affairs Supreme Council in Jig-Jiga, Ethiopia. Contrary to the above letters of praise, Shaykh ‘Umar’s letter, dated on 2003, constitutes a formal request for collaboration between the Supreme Council and al-Hararī’s organisation. In the letter, he suggests initiating partnership between both parties on six articles: (a) establishing Islamic schools, (b) building mosques, (c) building Qur’ānic seminaries, (d) consolidating Islamic references, (e) holding religious sessions for the mosque shaykhs, preachers, and Imams and (f) to financially support Islamic teachers. The request, according to his statement, stems from the need to combat some ideologies that have infiltrated the African Islamic communities, especially from neighbouring countries, which thereby pose a threat to their unity. He argues that this attack could only be averted through the above partnership proposal.¹⁷²

Muḥammad al-Ṣāfi b. al-Shaykh ‘Abduraḥmān al-‘Arūsī: Member of the *Da‘wa* and *Iftā’* committee in the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and the representative of the council in Arab countries. Al-‘Arūsī’s letter, sent in 1991, highlights his desires to meet al-Hararī again, especially after having met him in Jeddah. However, amongst the most prominent parts of his statement is a quote of a prophetic *ḥadīth* that he employs in reference to al-Hararī. The narration literally translates as, “Whosoever shows enmity to a *walī* of Mine, then I have declared war against him.”¹⁷³ Al-‘Arūsī cites the *ḥadīth* in defence of al-Hararī, who, according to him, has been the target of hateful speech. This is certainly a declaration on al-‘Arūsī’s part attesting that al-Hararī is a high-ranking *walī*.¹⁷⁴

Shaykh Ḥāmid Alī: This letter was addressed to al-Hararī by the scholars of the Gelemso township, located on the outskirts of Harar. On behalf of the scholars of Gelemso, Ḥāmid praises al-Hararī and informs him of the arrival of al-Hararī’s book: *al-Maqālāt al-Sunniyya fī Kashf Ḍalālāt Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya* (The Sunnī Articles in Exposing the Misguidances of Aḥmad b. Taymiyya) which they found to be immensely beneficial in exposing Wahhābism. Prior to concluding, the aforementioned scholars ask al-Hararī to author a brief explanation of Ibn Ḥajar’s *Bulūgh al-Marām* (Attainment of the Objective) as well as a commentary on al-Suyūṭī’s one-thousand verses of *ḥadīth* poetry: *al-Alfiyya*.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Ḥalīm 2017: 787.

¹⁷³ Al-Shafi’i, O., Ali, S., Zin, W. Shuhari, H., Musa, R., Oladosu-Uthman, H., Shuimy, M., Abdullahi, A. (2019). The Concept of Karamat Al-Awliya. According to Ibn Taymiyyah. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 9(11), 754–770.

¹⁷⁴ Ḥalīm 2017: 793.

¹⁷⁵ Ḥalīm 2017: 799.

‘Abduṣṣamad Idrīs: Deputy Head of Council for the Harari Community. A recurrent theme throughout Idrīs’ letter, sent in 1998, is the concept of rejuvenation, revival or *al-tajdīd*. After describing al-Hararī as, “... the honourable scholar, the grand-mufti and the world’s *muḥaddith*”, he goes on to express the desire of the people of Harar to be reunited with al-Hararī and acquire his knowledge. Idrīs refers to his time as, “the era in which Islamic sciences have become *gharība*”, i.e. estranged and foreign to people. So much so that, according to him, whoever clings to the religion nowadays will be similar to the one holding onto a burning ember. He concludes the letter by pointing out how effective al-Hararī’s works have been in combating Mu‘tazilī and Wahhābī beliefs. He also reiterates, on behalf of the people of Harar, their gratitude for al-Hararī’s rejuvenation of the disciplines of *kalām* and *‘aqīda*, “... all the people of Harar, without exception, are unable to describe how thankful they are to you.”¹⁷⁶

Dr Muḥammad ‘Amīn Jamāl, Shaykh ‘Umar Imām ‘Umar and Shaykh Muḥammad Rashīd: all of whom are members of The Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, the president, his deputy and the head of *da‘wa*, respectively. This statement is one of the most recent documents. It was issued in Addis Ababa on 02/11/2015; seven years after al-Hararī’s death. The statement repeatedly emphasises that members of the council have comprehensively analysed the vast majority of al-Hararī’s works, be it on *‘aqīda*, *fiqh* or *ḥadīth*, and concluded, “We have found in the books of ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Hararī al-Ḥabashī, may Allāh have mercy on him, a source of truthful and pure Islamic culture that is far from extremism and negligence, as well as a fortified fortress from extremist thought. It also contributes towards consolidating the path of moderation that helps protect citizens and country.”¹⁷⁷

The aforementioned letters portray al-Hararī as an Ethiopian national and Islamic symbol whose methodology has been praised by a number of prominent African Muslim figures. None of these figures accused him of calling for disunity amongst Muslims, whether by colluding with Selassie’s regime or having a role in the Kulub movement. Instead, one of the letters even describes how al-Hararī stood against Selassie and as a result was repeatedly imprisoned until his exit from Harar in 1950. It was not until 1997 that al-Hararī would return to Ethiopia, but only for a visit.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Halīm 2017: 791.

¹⁷⁷ Halīm 2017: 797.

¹⁷⁸ Harariyy.org (2020). *Harar Taftaḥ Dhirā‘ayhā Limuḥaddith al Duniyā al-‘Allāma al-Hararī*. Retrieved from <http://www.harariyy.org/1hrr.htm>.

2.3 Al-Hararī's Mentors¹⁷⁹

2.3.1 Harar and its Outskirts

As previously stated, one of al-Hararī first teachers was his father, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf, under whom he received and memorised the Qur'ān. Al-Hararī memorised the Qur'ān at the age of ten in one of the *katātīb* (sing. *kuttāb*)¹⁸⁰ of Bāb al-Salām in Harar. One of his first teachers was his father, Shaykh Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Hararī, from whom he received two foundational books in Shāfi'ī *fiqh*: *al-Muqaddima al-Ḥaḍramiyya*¹⁸¹ (The Ḥaḍramī Introduction), as well as *al-Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣaghīr*¹⁸² (The Short Abridgment), both of which were authored by 'Abdullāh Bāfaḍl al-Ḥaḍramī al-Shāfi'ī (d. 918/1512). In addition to being taught by his father, he also learned under Kabīr 'Alī Sharīf, Shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Umar Jāmi' al-Hararī and Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abdussalām al-Hararī *tawḥīd*, Shāfi'ī jurisprudence and Arabic grammar. He received Ibn al-Naqīb's: *Umdat al-Sālik* (Reliance of the Traveller) from Shaykh Ibrāhīm b. Abū al-Ghayth al-Hararī. Under Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ḍarīr he learned grammar, morphology and rhetoric. Al-Hararī was also educated in *Ilm al-Falak wa al-Mīqāt*, i.e. the field of astronomy and the science of timekeeping under Shaykh 'Umar b. 'Alī al-Balbalītī al-Shāfi'ī, along with mastering one of the most advanced texts in Shāfi'ī *fiqh* such as the supercommentary of *Manhaj al-Tullāb* (The Way of the Students) under Shaykh Yūnus 'Afara al-Hararī.

2.3.2 Outside Harar

Al-Hararī left his hometown and journeyed to western Abyssinia seeking the science of poetic metrics and rhyming in Jimma from Shaykh Bushrā Karukī. Therein, he also began his *ḥadīth* studies journey where he received *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, parts of *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* and *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* from Shaykh 'Abdurrahīm b. 'Abdullāh al-Ḥabashī, who also gave him an *ijāza* in all of his narrations. Also, in Jimma, he met Shaykh Yūnus Kawrakī who taught him two books in Shāfi'ī *fiqh*: *Fath al-Jawād fī Sharḥ al-Irshād* and *Ghāyat al-Uṣūl Sharḥ al-Uṣūl*. In Shiru – within the Jimma greater region – he took from Shaykh Muḥammad Sharīf al-Hadyī al-Ḥabashī the explanation of *Mulḥat al-I'rāb*, Ibn 'Aqīl's explanation of *Alfiyyat ibn Mālik*, Ibn al-Ḥājib's explanation of *al-Shāfiyya* in morphology as well as some lessons in Qur'ān exegesis.

¹⁷⁹ The below travels have been documented by al-Hararī's disciples in the biography section of his books.

¹⁸⁰ The two major categories of Islamic educational institutions are elementary Qur'ānic schools, known as *kuttāb*, and higher religious schools: *madrasas*. Elementary Qur'ānic schools emphasized the memorisation of the Qur'ān as well as reading and writing it. The Oxford Dictionary of Islam.

¹⁸¹ Bāfaḍl, A. (2011). *Al-Muqaddima al-Ḥaḍramiyya*. Dār al-Minhāj.

¹⁸² Bāfaḍl, A. (2014). *The Shorter Abridgment: An English Translation of al-Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣaghīr*. Dār Al-Mihrāb.

Prior to the death of Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Qatbārī, al-Hararī studied under him and completed one of the works of Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī in Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence. Thereafter, he moved to northern Ḥabasha to Rāyya, to study under the grand mufti of Harar, Shaykh Muḥammad Sirāj al-Jabartī the following *ḥadīth* books: *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, and the explanation of Ibn Ḥajar’s *Nukhbat al-Fikr*. He also received a *ḥadīth ijāza* from him. He visited the town of Kadu twice to receive the entire Qur’ān from Abū Hādiya al-Ḍawī al-Kaddī, the grand Shaykh of Qur’ānic reciters of the Meccan Mosque. Before leaving Ḥabasha, he remained for a while in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa to further his knowledge on Qur’ānic recitations under Shaykh Dāwūd al-Jabartī.

2.3.3 Outside al-Ḥabasha

Notably, al-Hararī did not restrict himself to the scholars of his city and its neighbouring towns. Rather, he journeyed across al-Ḥabasha and reached the outskirts of Somalia, where he entered the capital of modern-day Somaliland: Hargeisa.¹⁸³ His biography suggests that he took on several journeys afoot, travelling from one city to another so as to master Islamic jurisprudence as per to the four *fiqh* schools: Shāfi‘ī, Ḥanafī, Ḥanbalī and Mālikī.

As stated earlier, his title indicates that he dedicated much of his career to the science of *ḥadīth* whereby memorising *al-Kutub al-Sitta*¹⁸⁴ along with all of their chains of narrators. Consequently, he was granted the authorisation to issue *fatwās* and narrate *ḥadīth* whilst still under eighteen-years of age. At that point, his reputation extended beyond al-Ḥabasha and Somalia and students sought him for his encyclopaedic knowledge on various Islamic and Arabic sciences. This reportedly qualified him for the status of the mufti of Harar and its neighbouring provinces. After having exhausted most of the religious disciplines in his region, al-Hararī left Harar for al-Ḥijāz in the 1940s where he established scholarly bonds with many shaykhs such as: ‘Alawī al-Mālikī (d. 1391/1972), Amīn al-Kutbī (d. 1404/1984), Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fādānī (d. 1410/1990) and Ḥasan Mashāt (d. 1399/1978). He also met Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghafūr al-‘Abbāsī al-Naqshabandī from whom he received the Naqshabandī Ṣūfī order.

¹⁸³ During that era (1900-1930), Hargeisa was not as developed as it is nowadays. British explorer Carlos-Swayne describes the city, “Hargeisa is situated on two important caravan routes, one from Ogaden and the other from Harar. There is abundance of good water in the bed of the river, and a masonry well has been built, and is kept in order by an Arab from Aden. The town is full of blind and lame people, who are under the protection of Sheikh Mattar and his mullahs.” See Carlos-Swayne, H. (1900). *Seventeen Trips Through Somaliland and a Visit to Abyssinia*. London: R. Ward. p. 96.

¹⁸⁴ The six canonical books of *ḥadīth* are known by the names of their authors: al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870), Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/888), Ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī (d. 273/887), Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892), and Abū ‘Abdurrahmān al-Nasā‘ī (d. 303/915).

Subsequently, al-Hararī travelled northwards to Medina where he also initiated contact with its prominent scholars, such as the renowned Indian *muḥaddith* Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī A‘ẓam al-Ṣiddīqī al-Bakrī from whom he received a *ḥadīth ijāza* (authorisation to transmit prophetic accounts). In Medina, al-Hararī was virtually inseparable from two libraries: the first of which is believed to be one of the oldest Medinan libraries, known as the ‘Ārif Ḥikmat Library. It was established by Shaykh Ahmad ‘Ārif Ḥikmat al-Ḥusaynī, the grand judge of the Ottoman empire. The second library was known as: al-Maktaba al-Maḥmūdiyya, occasionally referred to as the second-most prominent library in Medina. Both libraries were consequently merged with modern-day Saudi academic institutes. Throughout his travels, al-Hararī ensured to establish relations with some of the prominent scholars of each region so as to diversify his list of teachers and advance his knowledge. In addition to studying in Medina under the prominent Medinan-Indian *muḥaddith*: Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī A‘ẓam al-Ṣiddīqī al-Bakrī (d. 1374/1954), he also read *ḥadīth* and Qur’ānic *tafsīr* under Shaykh Muḥammad al-‘Arabī al-Tabbān (d. 1390/1970) in the Ḥaram mosque.

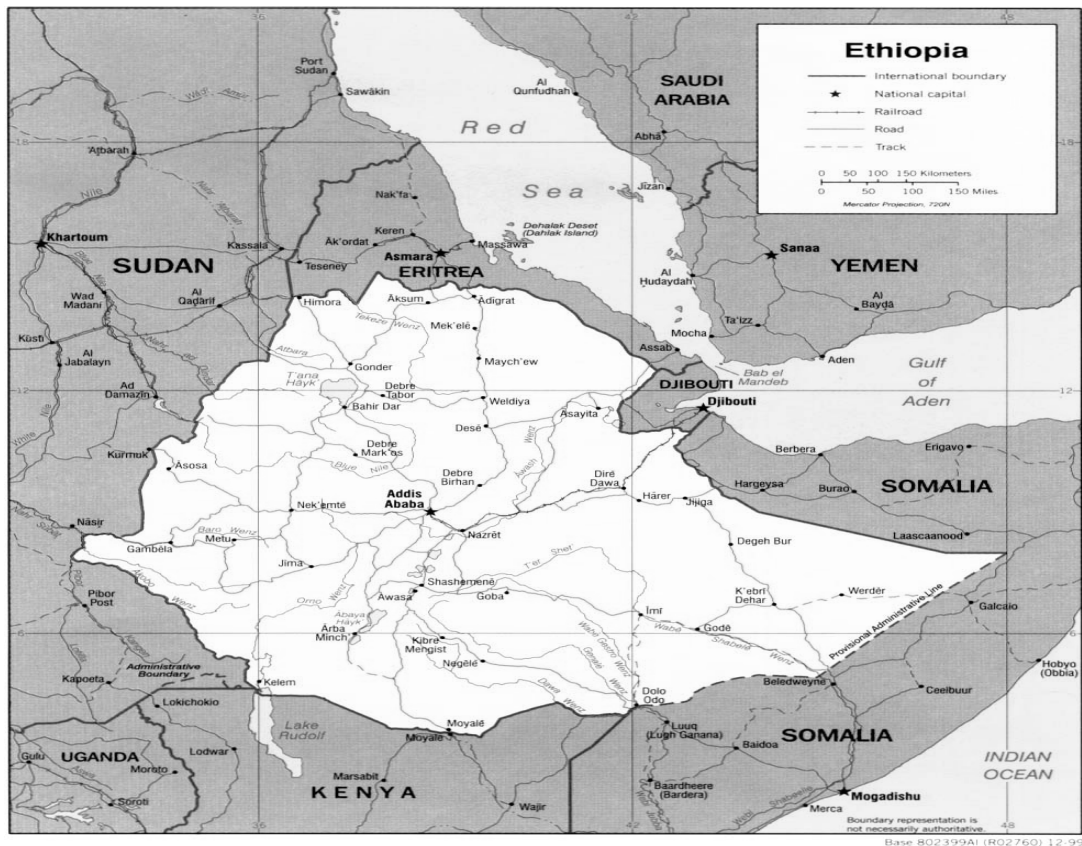
Al-Hararī spent much of his time there studying and examining centuries-old manuscripts on various Islamic disciplines. After years of scholarship in Hijaz where he spent considerable time in Mecca and Medina, al-Hararī took on, yet, another journey to the Levant. He arrived in Jerusalem in 1952, and from there he travelled to Damascus where he was welcomed by its inhabitants, particularly upon the death of the renowned Damascene *muḥaddith* Shaykh Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥasanī (d. 1353/1935) who was regarded as one of the foremost men of religion in the country.¹⁸⁵

Al-Hararī greatly benefitted from the Levantine scholars in Damascus – at the Kāmiliyya school – where he studied Qur’ānic recitation under Shaykh Maḥmūd Fāyiz al-Dayr‘atānī (d. 1385/1965). Moreover, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Bāqir b. ‘Abd al-Kabīr al-Kattānī (d. 1384/1964) gave him a general *ijāza* in all the prophetic traditions he has acquired. Shaykh Muḥammad al-‘Arabī al-‘Azūzī (d. 1383/1963) taught him Imām Mālik’s *al-Muwatta’a* as well as parts of Imām Aḥmad’s *al-Musnad*. He received the *Forty ‘Ajlūnī Ḥadīth Compilation* from Shaykh Muḥammad al-‘Azūzī and Shaykh Muḥammad Tawfīq al-Hibrī al-Beirūtī (d. 1869/1954).

¹⁸⁵ In addition to his role as a prominent religious figure, Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥasanī was a great contributor to the civil movement against French rule. See Weismann, I. (2005). The Invention of a Populist Islamic Leader: Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥasanī, the Religious Educational Movement and the Great Syrian Revolt. *Arabica*, 52(1), 109-139.

For many years, al-Hararī resided in al-Qaṭāṭ mosque in al-Qaymariyya district. Gradually, his standing in the religious circles became prominent, with many Levantine scholars attending his sessions and visiting him for his knowledge on *ḥadīth* studies in particular. So much so, that al-Hararī was dubbed: ‘The Successor of Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥasanī’ and ‘Muḥaddith al-Diyār al-Shāmiyya’, i.e. the Grand *Ḥadīth* Scholar of the Levantine provinces. Al-Hararī moved back and forth between Syria and Lebanon, until he eventually settled in Beirut.

2.4 Map Illustrating al-Hararī’s Travels¹⁸⁶



1. Harar represents the foundational stage of al-Hararī’s knowledge-seeking journey.
2. He, then, journeyed south-west from Harar to greater Ḥabasha, particularly in Jimma & Shiru.
3. Al-Hararī journeyed to the northern town of Rāyya to study under the grand mufti of Harar, Shaykh Muḥammad Sirāj al-Jabartī.
4. After thirty-odd years in Ḥabasha, al-Hararī took on the Arab world.

¹⁸⁶ Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection. (1999). University of Texas Libraries. Retrieved from <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/ethiopia.html>.

2.5 Life in Syria, Lebanon and Death

The time al-Harārī spent in Syria was significantly impactful on his career, but in order to accurately portray this impact, the state of Muslims and Islam in Syria's 1950s will be contextualised below. At that time, the grand mufti of the Republic of Syria was Muḥammad Abū al-Yusr 'Ābidīn (d. 1401/1981). The mufti of the republic represented the highest Sunnī religious authority in the land, he retained some control of the shaykhs of the provinces and regulated the issuing of *fatwās*.¹⁸⁷ With Sunnīs being the vast majority of the population, the office of the mufti represented them. Mufti Abū al-Yusr was a Ḥanafī Ṣūfī scholar who was regarded as an authority in the Ḥanafī *madhhab* and a devout Naqshabandī Ṣūfī. After formally assuming office on the July 4th, 1952, Abū al-Yusr was confronted by two key players in Syrian religio-politics: the Syrian Ikhwān and the Syrian Baath Party. At that time, the Wahhābīs were not as established or influential as the Ikhwān were, "but they had both the will and the means to challenge the traditionalist ulama's domination of the religious field."¹⁸⁸

Abū al-Yusr remained in his position until sometime after the formation of the United Arab Republic which brought Egypt and Syria together. After the unification, the UAR proposed the privatisation of national wealth. Gamāl 'Abdunnāṣir requested that Abū al-Yusr provide a religious *fatwā* legitimating his project. The mufti refused to give the *fatwā* because he regarded Gamāl 'Abdunnāṣir's plans to be religiously unlawful. As a result, he was ousted from his position under pressure from the Egyptian president.¹⁸⁹ Although Abū al-Yusr returned to the same position after the fall of the UAR, "Three months after the Baathi seizure of power in 1963, the acting Grand Mufti, Abu al-Yusr Abidin, was dismissed from his post. He was a popular sheikh in Syria and his dismissal was a clear move by the new regime to reduce the influence of Sunni sheikhs."¹⁹⁰ While Abū al-Yusr seemed to maintain a balance between *fiqh* and Ṣūfism, his successor Aḥmad Kaftārū was said to have weakened the role and influence that the Grand Mufti possessed. After a year of the Baathist coup d'état, Kaftārū was installed by the Baath Party as the Grand Mufti of the Syrian Republic. On this, Böttcher notes:

¹⁸⁷ Skovgaard-Petersen, J. (2004). A Typology of State Mufti. In Haddad, Y. & Stowasser, B. (Eds.), *A Typology of State Muftis in Islamic Law and the Challenges of Modernity*. New York: AltaMira Press. p. 85.

¹⁸⁸ Pierret, T. (2013). *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 105.

¹⁸⁹ Al-Qawsi, N. (2013). *Al-Shaykh al-Ṭayyib Abū al-Yusr 'Ābidīn*. Retrieved from <https://naseemalsham.com/persons/writer35529/subjects/view/38210>

¹⁹⁰ Böttcher, A. (2004). Official Islam, Transnational Islamic Networks, and Regional Politics: The Case of Syria. In Jung, D. (Ed.), *The Middle East and Palestine Global Politics and Regional Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan. p. 131.

The Naqshabandi Sufi order of Sheikh Kaftaru is the classic example of a Sufi network whose leader decided to cooperate with the political authority... Sheikh Ahmad Kaftaru's joint venture with the Baath Party dates back to the 1950s and took many years to develop. It was facilitated by the experience he acquired within the state apparatus. Beginning in 1948, he joined the *fatwa* administration as a teacher of Islam in the Quntaytra on the Golan in Damascus. In 1985 he was nominated Shafii *mufti* of Damascus. From 1959 to 1964 he had his own program on Syrian radio, where he explained Islamic topics to a broad public. Following his motto, "cooperating with any national government" he showed great flexibility in adapting to the demands of the changing Baathi-regimes.¹⁹¹

Kaftārū's influence as the Grand Mufti of Syria continued to diminish, but his Ṣūfī network expanded, especially during President Hafez al-Assad's reign. As such, in the absence of adequate supervision by the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*Wizārat al-Awqāf*), Wahhābīs became more active in Syrian mosques and households under the name of Ahl al-Ḥadīth. The two most influential Syrian Wahhābī figures during that time were Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1419/1999) and 'Abdulqādir al-Arna'ūt (d. 1424/2004), both of whom worked as watchmakers after having withdrawn from formal primary education.¹⁹² "They had received their initial religious training with Hanafī scholars (al-Farfur, al-Burhani), before breaking with them to continue their quest for knowledge through self-teaching."¹⁹³ Although al-Arna'ūt established good relations with Ṣūfīs, al-Albānī, was very controversial, not only for his rejection of Ṣūfism but also his views on the Islamic *madhāhib*. His criticism of the centuries-old Islamic establishment of *fiqh* schools, "represents a challenge to the hermeneutic hierarchy of the *madhhabs* and their system of authorized interpretation of the texts."¹⁹⁴ Moreover, al-Albānī claimed that due to his advocacy for more reliance on the Qur'ān he considered himself to be more Salafī than the Salafīs and more Wahhābī than the Wahhābīs. In contrast, a number of Wahhābīs accused him of relying too much on the Ḥanbalī *madhhab*.¹⁹⁵ As a result of his unpopular views on anti-*madhhabism*, al-Albānī inevitably clashed with a number of Syrian scholars, thus leading to his confrontation with the official religious establishment.

¹⁹¹ Böttcher 2004: 131.

¹⁹² Pierret 2013: 106.

¹⁹³ Pierret 2013: 106.

¹⁹⁴ Brown, J. (2007). *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon*. Leiden: Brill. p. 331.

¹⁹⁵ Chalcraft, J. (2016). *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 484.

In 1955, al-Albānī was put on trial before a court of Syrian scholars headed by the Grand Mufti “who urged him not to use his sect to cause unrest among the people ... Al-Albani’s tours in the province were routinely hampered by the police at the request of local authorities, and in 1967 the ‘defamation of the sheikhs of the Sufi brotherhoods’ earned him eight months in prison.”¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, another anecdote which illustrates al-Albānī’s clash with Syrian muftis is an incident that took place in al-Daqqāq mosque in Damascus. After the *mu’adhin* announced the call to prayer (*adhān*) he recited the *ṣalāt* upon the prophet out loud. To that, al-Albānī said, “This is *ḥarām*. It is similar [in prohibition] to the one who fornicates with his own mother.”¹⁹⁷ As a result, al-Albānī was attacked by those present in the mosque. After the issue was raised to the mufti of Damascus, Abū al-Yusr ‘Ābidīn, al-Albānī was taken to the mufti who banned him from teaching ever again and threatened him with exile should he revoke the terms.¹⁹⁸

Whilst in Syria, al-Hararī had a well-established relationship with Abū al-Yusr ‘Ābidīn, who regarded al-Hararī as a great scholar of *ḥadīth*. In reference to one of his earliest clashes with Wahhābīs in Syria, al-Hararī narrates what transpired between him and Abū al-Yusr. He said: “Thirty-five years ago I went to Damascus to visit Abū al-Yusr, who was the mufti of Syria before Shaykh Aḥmad Kaftārū. During that time, the Wahhābīs had started to spread their beliefs amongst the people. So, I went to him requesting that he contain this movement. He said to me: ‘The Shaykhs of this country have not been aiding me. I shall confront them on the Day of Judgement.’ Abū al-Yusr ‘Ābidīn protected the religion.”¹⁹⁹ As illustrated, al-Hararī played a role in restraining the spread of Wahhābism in Syria and his efforts have been commended by a number of Syrian shaykhs. Such as the mufti of Raqqa Muḥammad al-Sayyid Aḥmad,²⁰⁰ the mufti of Idlib Muḥammad Thābit al-Kayyālī (d. 1429/2008),²⁰¹ Syrian prominent *ḥadīth* scholar Muḥammad Riyāḍ al-Mālīḥ al-Dimashqī (d. 1419/1998)²⁰² and the former head of Aleppo’s Islamic Libraries Aḥmad Muḥammad Sardār (d. 1419/1997).²⁰³ The aforementioned scholars addressed al-Hararī in handwritten letters describing him as a great scholar. They particularly applauded his efforts in eradicating the spread of Wahhābism and Ibn Taymiyya’s thought in Syria.

¹⁹⁶ Pierret 2013: 106.

¹⁹⁷ Al-Sab‘ānī, S. (2012). *Wahhabism: New Saudi Religion*. Cairo: Shams li al-Nasher wa al-I‘lām. p. 166.

¹⁹⁸ Al-Sab‘ānī 2012: 166.

¹⁹⁹ Fathī Yakan. (2020). Retrieved from http://www.sunna.info/Lessons/islam_645.html.

²⁰⁰ Sunna Online. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.sunnaonline.org/news.php?action=view&id=207>.

²⁰¹ Sunna Online. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.sunnaonline.org/news.php?action=view&id=206>.

²⁰² Sunna Online. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.sunnaonline.org/news.php?action=view&id=208>.

²⁰³ Sunna Online. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.sunnaonline.org/news.php?action=view&id=199>.

After spending many years in Damascus, al-Hararī travelled to Beirut in 1952, where he was welcomed by notable Lebanese scholars such as Muḥī al-Dīn al-‘Ajūz (d. 1415/1995). In 1983, al-‘Ajūz established an Islamic organisation called: Jam‘iyyat al-Mashārī‘ al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya (The Association of Islamic Charitable Project or AICP), which he handed over to al-Hararī’s students. To this day, it remains one of the exclusive advocates of al-Hararī’s thought. Al-Hararī also met with the mufti of Akkar: Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Kīlānī who studied *ḥadīth* under al-Hararī. But more significantly, al-Hararī was supported by one of the prominent judges in Lebanon’s Dār al-Fatwā: Mukhtār al-‘Alāylī who provided al-Hararī with a written permit to teach across the mosques of Beirut. Al-‘Alāylī also ensured that al-Hararī’s accommodation is provided and paid for by Dār al-Fatwā. Over the years, al-Hararī solidified his relationship with the notables of Beirut and managed to establish ties with many religious figures. In 1969, the head of the Lebanon’s al-Azhar branch, invited him to the institute, where al-Hararī delivered a seminar on *tanzīh*.²⁰⁴

As part of his mission, al-Hararī travelled to many countries across the globe either to deliver lectures and teach the religion, or for the purpose of medication. Some of the countries he visited were India, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, France, Germany, Britain, Turkey, Jordan and many others. However, he kept returning to is Lebanon. Despite the turmoil afflicted by the Lebanese civil war, al-Hararī remained in Beirut. His most prominent residence is located in the Abu Shaker area near the Municipal Stadium of Beirut, the building is known as the Ḥasan Khālid Organisations Building. Al-Hararī lived on the fourth floor of that building and delivered his lectures on the second floor – the apartment is generally referred to as Bayt al-Shaykh (The Shaykh’s House). However, in his last days, he chose to remain in an apartment in Burj Abou Haidar near the AICP headquarters. In his late 90s, al-Hararī fell ill, his official biography reads, “He became severely ill and was bedridden for several months, until he passed away on the dawn of Tuesday, the second of Ramadan 1429, which corresponds to the second of September 2008.”²⁰⁵ The funeral prayer (*ṣalāt al-janāza*) was performed in the Burj Abou Haidar mosque and led by the AICP’s president Shaykh Ḥusām Qarāqīra. Afterwards, his body was taken to the burial site. After the burial rituals were concluded, the AICP headquarters received thousands of people offering their condolences.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Jafra, S. (2005). Radd ‘alā Maqāl Aḥbāsh Lubnān fī Jarīdat Duniyā al-Waṭan. *Duniyā al-Waṭan*.

²⁰⁵ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2014). *Al-Maṭālib al-Wafīyya Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Nasafīyya*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 23.

²⁰⁶ AlHarariyy. (2020). *Wafātuh wa Tashyī‘uh*. Retrieved from <http://www.harariyy.org/wft.htm>.

In addition to the primary ceremony held at the AICP's Beirut headquarters, other events took place simultaneously across the Lebanese governates. For instance, Ṭāhā Nājī received condolers in Tripoli's AICP branch, Usāma al-Sayyid in the Baalbek branch, Khālīd Ḥunaynī in the Sidon branch as well as a gathering at the AICP's 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb Islamic Centre in Shheem in the Mount Lebanon Governorate.²⁰⁷ Following is a list of prominent attendees who offered their condolences at the Beirut HQ centre:

1. Representative of the President of the Lebanese Republic.
2. Representative of the Speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon.
3. Representatives of the parliamentary blocs.
4. Representative of the League of Arab States.
5. Delegation from Dār al-Fatwā, Lebanon.
6. Former prime ministers.
7. Former ministers and members of parliament.
8. Representative of the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces.
9. Ambassadors of a number of Islamic and Arab countries.
10. Military, social, media and philanthropic figures.

Outside Lebanon, an event was organised and held by al-Harārī's students in Damascus' Ṣālat al-Akram hall. During the event, a number of obituaries were delivered by some of al-Harārī's Syrian connections such as the Minister of *Awqāf* (religious endowments), Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb, MP Muḥammad Ḥabash and Dr 'Abd al-Laṭīf Farfūr. In the city of Homs, the absentee Janāza prayer was also held in the Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd Grand Mosque. Furthermore, the absentee Janāza prayer was also held in a number of countries in the Middle East, Europe, Australia and North America. Upon al-Harārī's death, Shaykh Ḥusām Qarāqīra issued a statement. An excerpt of it reads, "Indeed, the departure of the righteous *walī* and great scholar 'Abdullāh al-Harārī is a great loss of the entire Islamic nation, a loss for scholarship and scholars and a loss for Islamic organisations and associations that truly recognize the merit of knowledge and scholars. May Allāh have mercy on you my master and beloved. You spent your life learning and teaching. You have spread the true *tawḥīd* and the '*aqīda* discipline without any boredom or weariness. You are the one who advised us to remain steadfast onto the indissoluble link [of religious guidance] and to call to the religion of Allāh with wisdom and good instruction."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Harariyy.org 2020.

²⁰⁸ Harariyy.org 2020.

2.6 Al-Hararī's Works

With a scholarly career spanning over eighty years across a wide array of disciplines related to Islam and the Arabic language, al-Hararī devoted much of his life to preaching the personal obligatory religious knowledge (*al-ʿilm al ḍarūrī*) and warning against blasphemous beliefs. Due to this, he did not author as many books as he would have desired during his lifetime. Nonetheless, al-Hararī wrote over forty works in seven key fields: *kalām* (Islamic doctrine), Qurʾānic recitation and exegesis, Arabic grammar and prosody, *ḥadīth* studies, Islamic jurisprudence, polemics and prophetic *sīra*. But he was mostly known for his works on *kalām* and polemics.

In terms of accessibility to al-Hararī's works, this project has gathered that his works are to be categorized into two broad categories: printed books and manuscripts. With regards to the latter, some of these were completed during his lifetime and the remainder remain incomplete. The first category constitutes the vast majority of his works that have been printed and distributed by the AICP's Beirut-based publishing house: Dār al-Mashārīʿ li al-Ṭibāʿa wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīʿ. Initially, and for several years, Dār al-Mashārīʿ was confined to the usage of the Arabic language in all its printed works. However, it was not until 1999 that the first English translation of al-Hararī's *Mukhtaṣar* emerged and was thereafter followed by printed translations of his works in English, French, Turkish, Russian and recently Urdu.

In comparison to his printed works, there remain a few of that are still in manuscript form. This research will henceforth adopt the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of manuscript as, "A written composition which has not been printed; unprinted or unpublished written material. In later use frequently: an author's written, typed, or word-processed copy of a work, as distinguished from the print of the same."²⁰⁹ While some of al-Hararī's handwritten works have been completed – albeit they remain unprinted – other works were left incomplete due to the aforementioned reason. In terms of the genres, his manuscripts varied; some were in the field of *Ḥadīth*, *Kalām* and polemics while others in the field of *Fiqh*, Arabic grammar and *Sīra* (prophetic biography). Most of al-Hararī's manuscripts, both those that have been completed and those that remained incomplete, are believed to be stored at the Library of Global University's Faculty of Literature and Humanities in Beirut.

²⁰⁹ Manuscript. (2000). In OED Online. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/113802?redirectedFrom=manuscript>.

2.6.1 List of al-Hararī's Works

Kalām and Polemics:

1. ***Naṣīḥat al-Ṭullāb*** (An Advice to Students): a poem in Islamic creed composed of approximately sixty verses. Manuscript.
2. ***Al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaḳīm*** (The Straight Path): an introductory text to the *Kalām* discipline. Published.
3. ***Al-Sharḥ al-Qawīm fī Ḥall Alfāz al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaḳīm*** (The Upright Explanation in Clarifying the Terms of the Straight Path): an explanation of the above text. Published.
4. ***Al-Dalīl al-Qawīm 'alā al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaḳīm*** (The Correct Guide to the Straight Path): An elucidation of the Sunnī creed supported by various intellectual proofs. Published.
5. ***Al-Maṭālib al-Wafiyya Sharḥ al-'Aqīda al-Nasafiyya*** (The Abundant Topics in Explaining the Text of al-Nasafiyya): an explanation of the renowned creed text authored by the 10th century theologian Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī. Published.
6. ***Al-Durra al-Bahiyya fī Ḥall Alfāz al-'Aqīda al-Ṭahāwiyya*** (The Radiant Pearl in Clarifying the Terms of the Text of al-Ṭahāwiyya): a much shorter commentary in comparison with his *Izhār al-'Aqīda al-Sunniyya*, perhaps to be viewed as an abridgment of the *Izhār*. Published.
7. ***Izhār al-'Aqīda al-Sunniyya Bisharḥ al-'Aqīda al-Ṭahāwiyya*** (A Declaration of the Sunnī Creed in Explaining the Text of al-Ṭahāwiyya): an explanation of the Abū Ja'far al-Ṭahāwī's text on Sunnī belief. Published.
8. ***Ṣarīḥ al-Bayān fī al-Rad 'alā man Khālafa al-Qur'ān*** (The Explicit Declaration in Refuting those who Contradicted the Qur'ān): one of al-Hararī's most prominent polemical works in refuting some of the ideologies of his contemporaries. Published.
9. ***Al-Maqālāt al-Sunniyya fī Kashf Ḍalālāt Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*** (The Sunnī Articles in Exposing the Misguidances of Aḥmad b. Taymiyya): al-Hararī's first book dedicated to present and refute the ideologies of Ibn Taymiyya. Published.
10. ***Sharḥ al-Ṣifāt al-Thalātha 'ashra al-Wājiba Lillāh*** (An Explanation of the Thirteen Attributes of God): a short treatise in which al-Hararī provides Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions to emphasise the importance of God's attributes. Published.
11. ***Al-'Aqīda al-Munjia*** (The Creed of Salvation): a short treatise on the importance of Islamic belief extracted from one of al-Hararī's lectures. Published.
12. ***Al-Taḥdhīr al-Shar'ī al-Wājib*** (The Religiously Compulsory Forewarning): in this book, al-Hararī openly targets his three key rivals: Wahhābīs, Ikhwānīs and Ṭaḥrīrīs. Published.

13. *Risāla fī Buṭlān Da 'wā Awlawiyyat al-Nūr al-Muḥammadī* (A Treatise Regarding the Invalidity of the Claim that Prophet Muḥammad's Light is the First of Creation): al-Hararī presents a comprehensive textual analysis to disprove the fabricated *ḥadīth* regarding prophet Muḥammad's light. Published.
14. *Risāla fī al-Radd 'alā Qawl al-Ba 'd Inna al-Rasūla Ya 'lamu Kulla Shay'* (A Treatise on the Refutation of those who Say that the Prophet Knows Everything that Allāh Knows): this book as well as the former delve into some religious beliefs prominent in the Indian Subcontinent, particularly adopted by some Barelvīs. Published.
15. *Al-Ghāra al-'Imāniyya fī Radd Mafāsīd al-Taḥrīriyya* (The Raid of the Faithful in Exposing the Misguidances of The Taḥrīrīs): a book dedicated to rebuking the key doctrines of Hizb al-Taḥrīr (The Liberation Party). Published.
16. *Ṣafwat al-Kalām fī Ṣifat al-Kalām* (The Finest Discourse Regarding the Attribute of Kalām): as the *kalām* attribute is the namesake of *'Ilm al-Kalām*, al-Hararī delves into the classical arguments regarding the *kalām* attribute, particularly that of the Mu'tazilīs and those who stand in opposition to *ta'wīl*. Published.
17. *Risāla fī Tanazzuh Kalāmillāh 'an al-Ḥarf wa al-Ṣawt wa al-Lugha* (A Treatise in Clearing the Kalām of Allāh from Letters, Voices and Languages): another *kalām* treatise that is quite similar to his *Ṣafwat al-Kalām fī Ṣifat al-Kalām*. Manuscript.
18. *Al-Ta 'āwun 'alā al-Nahī 'an al-Munkar* (Cooperating in Forbidding the Unlawful): in this book, al-Hararī focuses on rebuking some widespread contemporary religious prohibitions and provides the means and frameworks to rid the community of such forbidden matters. Published.
19. *Qawā'id Muhimma* (Important Rules): one of al-Hararī's prominent works on blasphemy, its categories and how to discern blasphemous sayings, beliefs and actions from non-blasphemous ones. Published.
20. *Risāla fī al-Taḥdhīr min al-Firaq al-Thalāth* (A Treatise in Warning Against the Three Sects): yet another treatise refuting Wahhābīs, Ikhwānīs and Taḥrīrīs. Published.
21. *Risāla fī al-Radd 'alā al-Qādiyāniyya* (A Treatise in Warning Against Qādiyānīs): a staunch attack on the Indian figure Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyānī and his claim of prophethood. Published.
22. *Al-Bayān al-Muwathāq: Dirāsa Muwathāqa Limaqālāt al-Firaq al-Thalāth* (The Well-Documented Illustration: A Codified Study Regarding the Sayings of the Three Sects). After exposing Wahhābīs, Ikhwānīs and Taḥrīrīs, al-Hararī's goes on to document their beliefs through scanned copies from their books. The first part of this book is strikingly similar to the *Risāla fī al-Taḥdhīr min al-Firaq al-Thalāth*.

Ḥadīth Studies:

1. ***Sharḥ Alfīyyat al-Suyūṭī*** (An Explanation of Al-Suyūṭī's Thousand-Line Poem): al-Hararī is typically dubbed: *Khādim 'Ilm al-Ḥadīth* (the servant of the *ḥadīth* discipline). His commentary on al-Suyūṭī's *Alfīyya* further supports this claim. Manuscript.
2. ***Al-Ta'aqqub al-Ḥathīth 'alā man Ṭa'ana Fīmā Ṣaḥḥa min al-Ḥadīth***. (The Swift Pursuit in Refuting the one who Impugned the Authentic *Ḥadīth*): a pamphlet al-Hararī devised as a response to a magazine article written by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī revolving around the permissibility of using the *subḥa* (prayer beads). Published.
3. ***Nuṣrat al-Ta'aqqub al-Ḥathīth 'alā man Ṭa'ana Fīmā Ṣaḥḥa min al-Ḥadīth*** (Supporting the Swift Pursuit...): after al-Albānī devised a refutation of *al-Ta'aqqub*, al-Hararī responded to al-Albānī's work with this book. Published.
4. ***Sharḥ al-Bayqūniyya fī al-Muṣṭalah*** (The Explanation of al-Bayqūniyya in Science of *Ḥadīth*): an explanation of one of the foundational poems in *ḥadīth* studies. Manuscript.
5. ***Risāla fī Ḥadd al-Ḥafīz*** (A Pamphlet Regarding the Description of the Ḥafīz): it is based upon a single lesson he delivered describing the qualifications of the *ḥafīz*. Manuscript.
6. ***Juz' fī Ahādīth Naṣṣa al-Huffāz 'alā Ṣiḥḥatihā wa Ḥusnihā*** (A Segment Containing *Ḥadīths* Judged Explicitly by the Huffāz to be *Ṣaḥīḥ* or *Ḥasan*): a compilation of prophetic traditions that qualify among the highest levels of authenticity. Manuscript.
7. ***Asānīd al-Kutub al-Sab'a fī 'Ilm al-Ḥadīth*** (The Chain of Narrations of the Seven Books on *Ḥadīth* Science): it is merely a detailed listing of al-Hararī's chain of narrators from his direct teachers going back centuries to prominent authors. Published.
8. ***Al-Arba'ūn al-Harariyya*** (The Forty [*Ḥadīths* of] al-Hararī): forty traditions al-Hararī selected from forty books of *ḥadīth* along with an explanation for each. Manuscript.

Qur'ānic Studies:

1. ***Kitāb al-Durr al-Naḍīd fī Ahkām al-Tajwīd*** (The Organised Pearls in the Rules of Tajwīd): a book simplifying the rules of Qur'ān recitation. Published.

Arabic Language:

1. ***Sharḥ Mutammimat al-'Ājurrūmiyya fī al-Naḥw*** (The Explanation of Mutammimat al-'Ājurrūmiyya in Arabic Grammar): this is amongst the books which al-Hararī started but did not live long enough to complete. Manuscript.

2. *Sharḥ Manẓūmat al-Ṣabbān fī al-‘Arūḍ* (The Explanation of al-Ṣabbān’s Poem in Arabic Prosody): it is also among the works al-Hararī did not complete. Manuscript.

Islamic Jurisprudence:

1. *Mukhtaṣar ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi ‘ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī ‘alā Madhhab al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī* (‘Abdullāh al-Hararī’s Summary Ensuring the Personal Obligatory Knowledge According to the School of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī): arguably the most prominent of all of al-Hararī’s books, it conveys the foundational portion of knowledge every Muslim must seek. Published.
2. *Mukhtaṣar ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi ‘ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī ‘alā Madhhab al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfa* (‘Abdullāh al-Hararī’s Summary Ensuring the Personal Obligatory Knowledge According to the School of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa): similar to the above, but according to the Ḥanafī school. Published.
3. *Mukhtaṣar ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi ‘ilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī ‘alā Madhhab al-Imām Mālik* (‘Abdullāh al-Hararī’s Summary Ensuring the Personal Obligatory Knowledge According to the School of Imām Mālik): like the above, but according to the Mālikī school. Published.
4. *Bughyat al-Ṭālib Lima ‘rifat al-‘Ilm al-Dīnī al-Wājib* (The Student’s Goal in Learning the Personal Obligatory Knowledge): a two-volume commentary on al-Hararī’s *Mukhtaṣar*. Published.
5. *Sharḥ Alfiyyat al-Zubad fī al-Fiqh al-Shāfi‘ī* (An Explanation of The One Thousand-Line Zubad Poem in Shāfi‘ī Jurisprudence): This is one of al-Hararī’s first commentaries on Shāfi‘ī *fiqh*. Manuscript.
6. *Sharḥ Matn Abū Shujā‘ fī al-Fiqh al-Shāfi‘ī* (A Commentary on the Text of Abū Shujā‘ in Shāfi‘ī Jurisprudence): a somewhat similar book to the above, however the foundational text of Abū Shujā‘ is much shorter in comparison with *Alfiyyat al-Zubad*, making it more accessible to beginners in the Shāfi‘ī school. Manuscript.
7. *Sharḥ Matn al-‘Ashmāwiyya fī al-Fiqh al-Mālikī* (A Commentary on the Text of al-‘Ashmāwiyya in Mālikī Jurisprudence): despite being based in a Shāfi‘ī-dominated region, al-Hararī did not restrict his works to one school of thought. Manuscript
8. *Sharḥ al-Tanbīh li al-Imām al-Shīrāzī fī al-Fiqh al-Shāfi‘ī* (An Explanation of al-Shīrāzī’s Tanbīh in Shāfi‘ī Jurisprudence): al-Shīrāzī’s *Tanbīh* is considered one of the in-depth texts in the Shāfi‘ī school. The majority of prominent Shāfi‘ī scholars have had a commentary on it. Manuscript.

9. *Sharḥ Manhaj al-Ṭullāb li al-Shaykh Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī fī al-Fiqh al-Shāfi'ī* (An Explanation of Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī's Manhaj al-Ṭullāb in Shāfi'ī Jurisprudence): a very similar book to the above, both in terms of its nature and significance. Incomplete.
10. *Sharḥ Kitāb Sullam al-Tawfīq 'ilā Maḥabbatillāh 'alā al-Taḥqīq* (An Explanation of Sullam Al-Tawfīq 'ilā Maḥabbatillāh 'alā Al-Taḥqīq): al-Hararī's *Mukhtaṣar* is wholly based on *Sullam al-Tawfīq* - with the exception of the Ṣūfism chapter. As such, he wrote a commentary on it. Manuscript.

***Sīra* – Prophetic Biography:**

1. *Al-Rāwa'ih al-Zakiyya fī Mawlid Khayr al-Bariyya* (The Fragrant Scents in the Birth of the Best of Creation): an enumeration of traditions in support of the validity of celebrating the birth of prophet Muḥammad. Published.
2. *Mukhtaṣar Shifā' al-Asqām wa Maḥw al-'Āthām fī al-Ṣalā 'alā Khayr al-Anām Li 'abd al-Jalīl al-Qīrawānī* (A Summary of al-Qīrawānī's Shifā' al-Asqām): summary of a renowned text in prophetic *Sīra*. Published.

2.7 Conclusion

Upon analysing the majority of extant information on al-Hararī's life and travels, this chapter has shed light on key milestones in al-Hararī's career, particularly the early stages in Harar. It investigated into substantial allegations concerning his lineage, qualifications, and his relationship with the Selassie regime, all of which were supported by documents that have been only recently published for the very first time. It also provided names and qualifications of his teachers as well as a thorough timeline of his travels leading up to his arrival in Beirut, where he spent the remainder of his life. Finally, all available works authored by al-Hararī have been meticulously documented according to disciplines and genres.

Chapter III

Al-Hararī in the Midst of Doctrinal Controversies

This chapter will investigate a number of doctrines that have sparked much controversy around al-Hararī and his methodology. Some among the most contentious rhetoric between al-Hararī and his rivals revolve around fundamental *‘aqīda* principles and a number of divisive concepts in *ḥadīth*, *Ṣūfism* and other disciplines. However, it seems that, by far, the arguments that stand out the most are those found in his *kalām* discourses. Subsequently, this chapter will heavily focus on some key doctrines in the *kalām* discipline such as: God’s incorporeality, or *tanzīh*, Allāh’s attribute of *kalām*, *tawassul*, *tabarruk*,²¹⁰ as well as other dogmas. As a result, this analysis will situate al-Hararī on a spectrum in order to illustrate how moderate his interpretation of key articles of faith in contrast with that of his adversaries.

3.1 *‘Ilm al-Kalām* (the Science of Islamic Doctrine)

The nature of this branch of Islamic sciences has been a topic of considerable debate in classical and modern times, particularly between al-Hararī and his Wahhābī rivals. As a well-established scholar of *kalām* (*mutakallim*) himself, al-Hararī promoted the study of *kalām* and produced a staunch rebuttal against those who dispraised and attacked it. However, in order to appreciate al-Hararī’s devotion to and defence of *kalām*, the following section will shed light on some origins of this discipline, its categories, as well as investigating into the denunciation of a specific *kalām* argument by prominent scholars such as al-Shāfi‘ī and his likes. *‘Ilm al-Kalām* or *kalām* is one of the foundational disciplines in Islamic Studies. It is an Arabic expression in reference to an Islamic discipline developed over centuries by Muslim scholars. It is also known as: *‘Ilm al-’Īman* (the Science of Faith), *‘Ilm Uṣūl al-Dīn* (the Science of the Foundations of Faith), *‘Ilm al-Tawḥīd* (the Science of Monotheism), *‘Ilm al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (the Science of the Greater Understanding) and *‘Ilm al-‘Aqīda* (the Science of the Creed).²¹¹ Nonetheless, the phrase *‘Ilm al-Kalām* literally translates to: the science of discourse.²¹²

²¹⁰ *Tawassul* is said to refer to supplicating to God by means of the prophet. As for *tabarruk*, it is generally understood to mean seeking blessings through the prophet. See Fitzpatrick, C. & Walker, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO. Both doctrines will be thoroughly examined in the forthcoming sections.

²¹¹ Šakr, J. (2005). *Al-Tibiyān fī al-Radd ‘alā Man Dhamma ‘Ilm al-Kalām*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 17.

²¹² Winter, T. (2008). *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 4-5.

As for the religious (non-linguistic) definition of *‘Ilm al-Kalām*, numerous *mutakallimūn* have made attempts at comprehensively defining this discipline. Despite some variations, the following definitions share some key components. As illustrated below, *‘Ilm al-Kalām* has been defined as:

1. A discipline through which one would be able to prove religious tenets, by providing reliable evidences and refuting suspicions.²¹³
2. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) who was a prominent Ash‘arī scholar defines *‘Ilm al-Kalām* as a science that discusses religious tenets supported by intellectual proofs.²¹⁴
3. A branch of knowledge that discusses the self and attributes of Allāh as well as the state of the creations since the beginning of creation up until resurrection, all according to the rules of Islam.²¹⁵
4. It has been defined by the prominent Ottoman scholar Taşköprüzade (d. 968/1561) as, “A science by which one is able to prove religious facts by providing evidences in support of them, as well as repelling suspicions from them.”²¹⁶
5. The prominent Māturīdī *kalām* scholar al-Taftāzānī (d. 971/1390) states: “*Al-Kalām* is the knowledge pertaining to religious doctrines based upon factual proofs.”²¹⁷
6. Al-Bājūrī (d. 1276/1860) describes it as a science by which one is able to prove religious doctrines that are derived from textual resources.²¹⁸

As such, the above definitions share a common theme that: *kalām* is a science that utilises both textual and intellectual methodologies. The intellect is employed in an effort to further verify the legitimacy of key Islamic doctrines that have been reported through textual recourses. However, it is noteworthy that the *mutakallimūn* insist that Islam is not founded upon intellectual reasoning, rather it is merely supported by it.²¹⁹

²¹³ This is the definition of a prominent Ash‘arī scholar, ‘Aḍud al-Dīn al-‘Ijī (d. 756/1356) in his *al-Mawāqif* which delves into dogmas examined in late Ash‘arism, it is based upon Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *al-Muḥaṣṣal* and al-‘Āmedī’s *Abkār al-Afkār*. Al-‘Ijī, A. (2005). *Al-Mawāqif fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*. Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub. p. 7.

²¹⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, ‘A. (2004). *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*. Damascus: Dār al-Balkhī. p. 205.

²¹⁵ Al-Jurjānī, ‘A. (1983). *Kitāb al-Ta’rīfāt*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 184

²¹⁶ Taşköprüzade, A. (1985). *Muṭīh al-Sa‘āda wa Mişbāḥ al-Siyāda fī Mawḍū‘āt al-‘Ulūm*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Vol. 2, p. 132.

²¹⁷ Al-Taftāzānī, S. (1912). *Matn Tahdhīb al-Manṭiq wa al-Kalām*. Maṭba‘at al-Sa‘āda Bijiwār Muḥāfaẓat Mişr. p.15.

²¹⁸ Al-Bājūrī, I. (2002). *Hāshiyat al-Imām al-Bājūrī ‘alā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*. Dār al-Salām li al-Ṭibā‘a wa al-Nashr. p. 38.

²¹⁹ Salīm, Ş. (2010). *Maghzā al-‘Aqlāniyya al-Islāmiyya*. Al-Maktaba al-Akādīmiyya. p. 57.

In regard to the variety of interpretations as to why it was dubbed *‘Ilm al-Kalām*; the reason stated by most scholars refers to the classical dispute regarding the attribute of *kalām* that occurred between Ash‘arīs and Mu‘tazilīs on the one hand, as well as Ash‘arīs and the Karrāmiyya on the other. Nonetheless, there have been many reasons stated by the *mutakallimūn* as to why it has been dubbed *‘Ilm al-Kalām*.²²⁰ For instance, al-Taftāzānī, in his *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*,²²¹ mentions the following:

1. It was named *‘Ilm al-Kalām* after the argument around *kalām*, i.e., God’s eternal attribute of speech, which was one of the key discourses of this discipline and resulted in much contention and dispute. This led to battles and bloodshed.
2. It is due to the fact that this discipline enables one to indulge in *kalām*, i.e., to become well-established in substantiating religious doctrines and refuting adversaries.
3. *Al-Kalām* is the first science that one ought to learn. It is learnt via conversing, hence the term *kalām* was assigned to this science and made exclusive to it.
4. Another reason is because this science can only be established by dialogue and exchange of *kalām* between two parties. Contrary to other disciplines that could be studied by reflecting and reading books.
5. It is one of the most controversial and contentious of disciplines, hence there is a dire need to undergo *kalām* with the opponents and refute them.
6. Compared to all the other sciences it is the most significant of all discourses. For instance, the preponderant of two arguments is said to be: the *kalām*.

With the above providing an overview of the origins of *kalām*, its many titles, as well as the reasons as to why classical scholars have referred to it in this manner, the following will predominantly analyse al-Hararī’s unique methodology in prioritising the study of *kalām*. This is illustrated in his commentaries on two foundational works on *‘aqīda*: *al-Maṭālib al-Wafīyya Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Nasafīyya*²²² (The Faithful Topics in Explaining the Text of Al-Nasafīyya) and *Izhār al-‘Aqīda al-Sunniyya Bisharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Ṭaḥāwīyya*²²³ (A Declaration of the Sunnī Creed in Explaining the Text of al-Ṭaḥāwīyya). Perhaps al-Hararī chose the two works of al-Nasafī and al-Ṭaḥāwī because both foundational texts have been unanimously accepted and taught in the Islamic world.

²²⁰ Al-Shimmārī, Th. (2006). *Al-Kabīra wa al-‘Āthār al-Mutarattiba ‘Alayhā ‘Ind al-Mutakallimīn*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 31.

²²¹ Al-Taftāzānī, S. (1998). *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*. Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub. pp. 164-165.

²²² Al-Hararī 2014.

²²³ Al-Hararī 2007a.

Al-Hararī, like his Ash‘arī predecessors,²²⁴ praised *‘Ilm al-Kalām* and defended it. In fact, as part of the introduction section of most of his *‘aqīda* commentaries, al-Hararī begins with the definition of *Kalām*, the significance of this discipline, followed by rebutting reports alleging al-Shāfi‘ī’s criticism of this discipline. In his commentary on Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafi’s (d. 537/1142) *al-‘Aqīda al-Nasafiyya* entitled *al-Maṭālib al-Wafiyya Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Nasafiyya*, al-Hararī provides a somewhat detailed and unique definition of *kalām*, followed by a comprehensive rebuttal of classical and contemporary rhetoric criticising *Kalām*. He observes:

Thereafter, *‘Ilm al-Tawḥīd* is the foundation of Islamic beliefs. Some religious rules pertain to the matters of belief, so the science associated with that is called: *‘Ilm al-Tawḥīd wa al-Ṣifāt*. Others (i.e., other religious rules) pertain to the manner in which the deed is performed, the discipline pertaining to this is called: *‘Ilm al-Sharā‘i wa al-Aḥkām*. Therefore, the science pertaining to Allāh and His messengers is the most honourable of all sciences because it is the foundation of all religious rules. Its aim is to attain religious and worldly rewards. It is substantiated by factual evidences; whether intellectual or textual.²²⁵

As such, it appears that al-Hararī’s interpretation of *‘Ilm al-Kalām* could be a further elucidation of previous definitions. He focuses on the two key components, the first being the textual component of this discipline, and the second is the role of the intellect. But he goes further to explore the debate on whether acquiring this science is a personal obligation on every Muslim or a communal obligation. According to him, there are two degrees for acquiring it:²²⁶ (a) *al-wujūb al-‘aynī* (lit. personal obligation): is to know the basics of *‘aqīda*, and this is obligatory on every Muslim, (b) *al-wujūb al-kifā‘ī* (lit. communal obligation): the stage at which one is able to present Islamic beliefs supported by evidences, along with being able to clarify suspicions presented by the innovators.

²²⁴ Renowned Ash‘arī scholar Abū al-Qāsim b. ‘Asākir states: “*Al-Kalām* that is compatible with the Qur’ān and [prophetic] narrations and further clarifies the fundamentals [of faith] in the face of misguidance – it is praised by the scholars.” See Ibn ‘Asākir, ‘A. (1927). *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī Fīmā Nusiba li al-Imām al-Ash‘arī*. Damascus: Maṭba‘at al-Tawfīq. p. 339. Another prominent Ash‘arī is al-Bayhaqī who observes, “How would this knowledge be dispraised, despite the fact that through it, one learns about Allāh, His attributes and messengers?” Al-Bayhaqī, A. (2017). *Shu‘ab al-‘Imān*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 96. Furthermore, among the staunchest of responses is that of Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushairī, “No one would renounce *‘Ilm al-Kalām* except that he would fall under one of two categories: the first of which is an ignorant person who has resorted to mere imitation ... or someone who adheres to an invalid school of thought.” Al-Kawtharī, M. (n.d.). *Bayān Zaghal al-‘Ilm wa al-Talab*. Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li al-Turāth. p. 23.

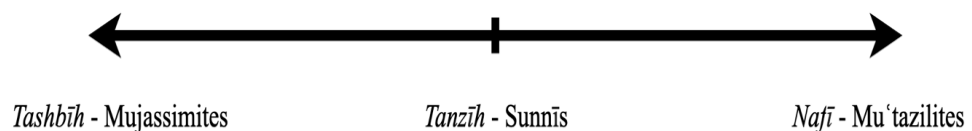
²²⁵ Al-Hararī 2014: 24.

²²⁶ Al-Hararī 2014: 27.

Al-Hararī's interpretation of *ʿIlm al-Kalām* tackles some of the major criticisms against it, whilst concurrently providing a detailed interpretation of the term *kalām*. From another perspective, al-Hararī also addressed two other issues raised by a number of Wahhābīs in reference to *kalām*. The first of which is the status of *ʿIlm al-Kalām* as a science dedicated – for the most part – to establish the Sunnī view on the attribute of Allāh al-Kalām. The second, which is essentially an extension of the first, addresses all reports attributed to al-Shafīʿī, and his likes, regarding their alleged dispraise and rejection of *ʿIlm al-Kalām*.

Stemming from the Qurʾānic verse in al-Baqara chapter which refers to the concept of *al-wasaṭiyya* (lit. moderation), “And thus we have made you a *wasat* nation”,²²⁷ al-Hararī argues that the Ashʿarī stance on God's attribute of *kalām* is seen as a moderate position²²⁸ between two extremes, namely: *tashbīh* and *naḫī*.²²⁹ According to al-Hararī, one of the two extreme views is upheld and advocated by classical Muʿtazilī scholars, who have long denied the attribute of *kalām*. According to them, confirming eternal attributes to God, such as *kalām*, would entail believing in more than one eternal being.²³⁰ While the Muʿtazilīs have entirely rejected the attribute *kalām*, some literalists on the other hand have affirmed *kalām*, but nonetheless a human-like *kalām* that is composed of letters and sounds.²³¹

Contrary to the two aforementioned opposing views, , al-Hararī concludes that the view upheld by Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa on God's attribute of *kalām* is indeed the centrist stance. Sunnīs, according to him, have maintained that God is attributed with the eternal and everlasting attribute of *kalām*, without it being composed of any letters or sounds whatsoever.²³² As such, the below diagram depicts the representation of all three stances on the attribute of *kalām*, as per al-Hararī's account:



²²⁷ The Qurʾān 2:143.

²²⁸ Al-Hararī 2014: 24.

²²⁹ Here, *tashbīh* refers to likening God's *kalām* to that of humans by claiming that it is composed of letters and sounds etc. As for *naḫī*, it is in reference to negating the attribute of *kalām*.

²³⁰ Al-Shahrastānī, M. (1968). *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*. Dār al-Ittihād al-ʿArabī li al-Ṭibāʿa. pp. 50-51.

²³¹ Al-Hararī 2014: 25.

²³² Al-Hararī 2014: 25.

3.1.1 Al-Shāfi'ī and *ʿIlm al-Kalām*

Despite the numerous reports suggesting that *ʿIlm al-Kalām* has been renounced by a number of classical Muslim scholars including, but not limited to, the founders of the four *madhāhib*: Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767), Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855),²³³ only al-Shāfi'ī's account²³⁴ will be scrutinised over three phases. Firstly, the renunciation accounts provided by supporters of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's call will be collated. Secondly, these will be followed by the response of prominent Shāfi'ī-Ashʿarī scholars to the alleged narration. Finally, al-Hararī's stance will be cross-examined with both views.

Drawing on Ibn Taymiyya and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's views on *ʿIlm al-Kalām*, the vast majority of their contemporary followers have attacked this discipline whereby arguing that involving oneself in *kalām* would be religiously forbidden. Others have argued that while it is not deemed to be *ḥarām*, it is nonetheless *makrūh* (disliked).²³⁵ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, one amongst the most prominent adherers to Ibn Taymiyya's thought, attacked the *mutakallimūn* in one of his letters, "... in addition to their beliefs being invalid and contradictory to the intellect, they oppose the religion of Islam, the Qur'ān, the Messenger and all the Salaf."²³⁶ In fact, Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān, a modern-day prominent figure and member of Saudi Arabia's highest religious council, outrightly attacked Ashʿarīs, and has even gone further to brand them with blasphemy. He states, "... the innovators, such as the Jahmīs, Mu'tazilīs and Ashʿarīs; are the ones who followed in the footsteps of the blasphemers of Quraysh who have committed blasphemy."²³⁷

Notwithstanding the above reports, other prominent Saudi figures have been less aggressive towards Ashʿarīs. While they have not explicitly judged them as blasphemers (*kuffār*), they have maintained that Ashʿarīs are not entirely part of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a. Ibn Bāz, who was the grand mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 1993 until 1999, has stated on many occasions that Ashʿarīs are not *kuffār*, but they have, according to him, committed some grave mistakes in the matters of *ʿaqīda*, especially on *ta'wīl*. He alleges:

²³³ Al-Shāfi'ī, Ḥ. (2001). *Al-Madkhal ʿIlā Dirāsāt ʿIlm al Kalām*. Karachi: Idārat al-Qur'ān wa al-ʿUlūm al-Islāmiyya. p. 31.

²³⁴ Due to its significance, only al-Shāfi'ī's account will be scrutinised, not those of other prominent scholars.

²³⁵ Al-Shāfi'ī 2001: 40.

²³⁶ Al-Fawzān, Ṣ. & Al-ʿUlayqī, M. (n.d.). *Al-Rasā'il al-Shakhshiyya*. Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd. Vol. 7, p. 264.

²³⁷ Al-Fawzān, Ṣ. (2011). *Al-Irshād Ilā Ṣaḥīḥ al-I'tiqād wa al-Radd ʿalā Ahl al-Shirk wa al-Ilḥād*. Dār Ibn al-Jawzī. p. 138.

Ash‘arīs are considered to be among Ahl al-Sunna in the majority of [religious] matters. However, they are not classified as Sunnīs with regards to the *ta‘wīl* of the attributes [of God]. Yet, they are not blasphemers, rather among them are great [religious] leaders, scholars and righteous people. However, they erred in the *ta‘wīl* of some attributes. As such, they have opposed Ahl al-Sunna in some issues.²³⁸

When examining Wahhābī narratives towards Ash‘arīs, it appears that some figures might be regarded as less hostile in comparison with others. Any glimpse at *‘aqīda* commentaries authored by self-proclaimed Salafis would suffice to deduce that they unanimously denounce *kalām*. As such, among the foundational cornerstones of their argument are the following narrations attributed to al-Shāfi‘ī:

1. “My opinion of the people of *kalām* is that they ought to be beaten up with palm leaves, placed upon camels, taken to the tribes and clans, then proclaim that this is the penalty of whoever leaves out the Qur‘ān and Sunna and follows *kalām*!”²³⁹
 2. “Beware of looking into *kalām*, if one were asked about a query on jurisprudence and erred, he would be ridiculed, at the most ... However, if he were asked about a matter of *kalām* and committed a mistake, he would be accused of heresy.”²⁴⁰
 3. “It is better for one to be judged by Allāh for committing every sin – besides associating partners with Allāh – rather than be judged for indulging in *kalām*.”
- Other narrations state: “*al-ahwā*” (lit. heresies) instead of *kalām*.²⁴¹

The above reports have been utilised by prominent Wahhābī figures such as the likes of Ibn Jibrīn,²⁴² (d. 1430/2009) Ibn ‘Uthaymīn,²⁴³ (d. 1421/2001) Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Munajjid²⁴⁴ as well as others to delegitimise *‘Ilm al-Kalām*. However, those accounts have been thoroughly scrutinised by numerous scholars of the Shāfi‘ī school of thought. Prior to delving into that, it would be noteworthy to shed light on the unique relationship between Shāfi‘ī school of jurisprudence and the Ash‘arī theological school of thought.

²³⁸ Ibn Bāz, ‘A. (1999). *Majmū‘ Fatāwā Ibn Bāz*. Dār al-Qāsim. Vol. 28, p. 256.

²³⁹ Al-Bayhaqī, A. (1970). *Manāqib al-Shāfi‘ī*. Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth. p. 462.

²⁴⁰ Al-Rāzī, M. (2008). *Al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī Manāqibuhu wa ‘Ilmuhu*. Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfiyya li al-Nashr. p. 570.

²⁴¹ Al-Zabīdī, M. (2016). *Ithāf al-Sāda al-Muttaqīn Bisharḥ Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Mu‘assasat al-Tārīkh. p. 73.

²⁴² Ibn Jibrīn, ‘A. (n.d.). *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Ṭahāwiyya*.

²⁴³ Al-Sulaimān, F. (1992). *Majmū‘ Rasā’il wa Fatāwā al-Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn*. Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan li al-Nashr. p. 75.

²⁴⁴ Al-Munajjid, M. (2018). *Ibar wa ‘Izāt min Ḥayāt al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī*. Dār al-Amal.

Given the centuries-long relationship between Shāfi'īs and Ash'arīs, it would seem rather paradoxical that such reports are attributed to al-Shāfi'ī, himself, and employed by Wahhābīs to vilify the *mutakallimūn* and by extension Ash'arism. While Ash'arī scholars were predominantly followers of al-Shāfi'ī's school, they did not exclusively committed themselves to it. Rather, al-Bayhaqī defines Ash'arīs as, “those of the Ḥanafīs, Malikīs and Shafi'īs that do not go the way of divesting Allāh of his attributes (*taḥlīl*) as the Mu'tazila did, nor the way of likening Allāh to the creation (*tashbīh*) as the Mujassima did.”²⁴⁵ As Shāfi'īs tended to favour and defend Ash'arism,²⁴⁶ there have been a plethora of high-ranking Shāfi'ī scholars who also identified as Ash'arīs and later on became authorities in the *madhhab*, such as:

1. 'Abd al-Malik b. Yūsuf al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085).
2. Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. al-Ḥusain Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 605/1210).
3. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).
4. Sayf al-Dīn Muḥammad al-'Āmidī (d. 631/1233).
5. Abū Ishāq Jamāl al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. Yūsuf al-Shirāzī (d. 476/1083).
6. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027).
7. 'Uthmān b. 'Abdurrahmān Ṣalāh al-Dīn, known as: Ibn al-Ṣalāh (d. 643/1245).
8. Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277).
9. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Anṣārī, known as: Ibn al-Rif'a (d. 710/1310).
10. Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān al-Athrā'ī (d. 783/1381).
11. Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. al-Ḥusain al-Isnawī (d. 772/1370).
12. Abū Naṣr Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370).
13. Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū b. 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1292).
14. Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520).
15. Sulaimān b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Bujairimī (d. 1221/1806).
16. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bājūrī. (d. 1859).

The above Ash'arī scholars have attained lofty ranks in the Shāfi'ī school, ranging from: *muṭlaq muntasib*, *aṣḥāb al-wujūh*, *ḥamalāt fiqh*, to *mujtahid al-fatwā*, among other ranks.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Al-Bayhaqī, A. (1998). *Allah's Names and Attributes: Excerpts*, Translated by Gibril Fouad Haddad. As-Sunn Foundation of America. p. 18.

²⁴⁶ Malamud, M. (1994). The Politics of Heresy in Medieval Khurasan: The Karramiyya in Nishapur. *Iranian Studies*, 27(1-4), 37-51.

²⁴⁷ For further information on the various ranks in the Shafi'ī *madhhab*, see Al-Nawawī, Y. (2011). *Kitāb al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muḥadḥab*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. p. 72.

Thus far, it has been established that Ash‘arīs and Shāfi‘īs enjoyed, for centuries, a unique partnership through which many have come to concurrently master *‘aqīda* and *fiqh*. Nonetheless, the question remains: how could such anti-*kalām* statements be attributed to al-Shāfi‘ī? In his treatise, dedicated to documenting the life of al-Shāfi‘ī,²⁴⁸ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 605/1210) who was, as stated above, an Ash‘arī-Shāfi‘ī scholar, conveys nine reports attributed to al-Shāfi‘ī dispraising the discipline of *kalām* and its practitioners. Thereupon, al-Rāzī provides three interpretations for all nine reports. He observes:

First interpretation: The great tribulations took place in that era, due to people indulging in matters pertaining to the Qur’ān. Heretics sought the Sultan’s help and overpowered the people of truth ... When al-Shāfi‘ī learned that undergoing this discourse was not for the sake of Allāh but rather was being acquired for the sake of worldly matters, he undoubtedly abandoned and disregarded it, and he dispraised whoever studied it.

Second interpretation: This criticism ought to be directed towards the *kalām* which was particularly supported and approved by the heretics... Then, when the dispraise of *qiyās* as reported by the companions and their followers became widespread, jurists said that this dispraise is to be directed towards the invalid types of *qiyās* that contradict the explicit [Qur’ān or *ḥadīth*] text – and likewise here. Therefore, we declare that this severe dispraise of *kalām* that was reported from al-Shāfi‘ī should be directed towards the kind of *kalām* that was supported by the heretics. This is because, in that period, *al-Kalām* was used in reference to those who indulged in al-I‘tizāl and al-Qadar.

Third interpretation: Perhaps he believed it was obligatory to exclusively rely upon the evidences laid out in the Qur’ān, and that adding to them and going further into issues that cannot be perceived by the intellect is impermissible. Due to this, he exaggerated in criticizing whosoever indulged in such intricate matters.²⁴⁹

Al-Rāzī, as seen above, establishes that the *kalām* referred to by al-Shāfi‘ī is not, in any way whatsoever, the Sunnī version of *kalām*. Rather it is that of the heretics. Al-Rāzī goes on to justify his three aforementioned explanations to further validate his stance.

²⁴⁸ Al-Rāzī 2008: 65-68.

²⁴⁹ Al-Rāzī 2008: 67. Note: this passage is quoted in full because of its importance to the subject matter.

Al-Hararī arrives at the same conclusion as that of al-Rāzī, but he takes on an interestingly different methodology. Al-Hararī relies upon al-Shāfi‘ī’s other narration as reported by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī in his *Ithāf al-Sāda al-Muttaqīn Bisharḥ Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Gift of the God-Fearing Sayyids in Explaining the Revival of the Religious Sciences). His version reads, “It is better for one to be judged by Allāh for committing every sin – besides associating partners with Allāh – rather than be judged for indulging in *al-Ahwā’*.”²⁵⁰ The singular: *hawā* literally translates as the inclination of the soul or predilection. But in a religious context, the term: *Ahl al-Ahwā’* has been used by theologians in reference to those who have deviated from the traditional Sunnī belief system, such as the Qadariyya, Rawāfiḍ, Jabariyya, Mu‘aṭṭila, Mujassima as well as the Khawārij.²⁵¹

Al-Hararī simply states that *ahwā’* is the plural of *hawā* and this term exclusively refers to the beliefs adopted by the deviant sects. Therefore, according to him, al-Shāfi‘ī only criticised the *kalām* that entailed establishing the beliefs of the heretics. In an effort to further strengthen his position, al-Hararī relies upon a report by Ibn ‘Asākir who narrated that one day al-Shāfi‘ī held a conversation with a scholar of *fiqh*. As the dialogue progressed, al-Shāfi‘ī repeatedly assessed the scholar and requested further proofs. So, the jurist reprimanded him by saying, “This is the way of the people of *kalām* not the people of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām*” (i.e., the jurists). Al-Shāfi‘ī responded, “We mastered that (i.e. *kalām*) before this (i.e., *fiqh*).”²⁵² This is an explicit statement not only confirming al-Shāfi‘ī’s involvement in *‘Ilm al-Kalām*, but rather his mastery of it.

Overall, al-Hararī²⁵³ seems to follow in the footsteps of previous Shāfi‘īs and Ash‘arīs, but he certainly takes some unique means so as to further solidify arguments made by his predecessors. In regard to *kalām*, he was - without question - one among the pioneers of the twenty-first century. This is particularly due to his systematic efforts in reviving this science, simplifying its terms and making it available for the masses. He particularly sought to establish the difference between *‘Ilm al-Kalām* and its modern-day association to Aristotelian philosophy; and argument that is propagated by numerous Wahhābīs and utilised to attack *‘Ilm al-Kalām*.

²⁵⁰ Al-Zabīdī 2016: 73.

²⁵¹ Goldziher, I. (2020). *Ahl al-Ahwā’*. In Bearman, P. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0377.

²⁵² Ibn ‘Asākir, ‘A. (1983). *Tabyīn Kadhīb al-Muftarī Fīmā Nusiba li al-Imām al-Ash‘arī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī. p. 342.

²⁵³ Al-Hararī concludes his argument on the significance of *kalām* with two verses of poetry in Al-Hararī 2014: 25. He states: “*Kalām* has been dispraised by some - But it shall not be affected by their dispraise - Likewise, the rising sun is not affected - If those afflicted with blindness cannot see it.”

3.2 *Tanzīh* and Šūfism in al-Hararī's Thought

The concept of *tanzīh* is one of the most prominent and central topics in *ʿIlm al-Kalām*. According to the morphological rule, *tanzīh* is derived from the triliteral root: *nūn*, *zāy* and *hāʾ*. This root originally refers to *al-buʿd*, that is to be far,²⁵⁴ whether physically or metaphorically.²⁵⁵ A person is said to be *nazīh*, as long as he is far away from mischief, clear of wickedness and considered to be well-mannered. Also, the phrase, “*hātha makān nazīh*” which means: this place is *nazīh*, is used to refer to a remote place that is not occupied by anyone.²⁵⁶ Thus, the linguistic definition of *tanzīh* refers to remoteness or the state of being - literally or figuratively - far from something. It is mostly employed to clear one from obscenities and indecencies.²⁵⁷

In a religious context, the term *tanzīh* holds a much narrower meaning in comparison with its linguistic meaning. The Egyptian *mutakallim* al-Munāwī (d. 1031/1621) – who lived during the Ottoman Sultanate – states that *tanzīh* is a principle that denotes clearing God from imperfections; such as the possibility of *hudūth*, i.e. the existence of a thing, after its nonexistence.²⁵⁸ Similarly, al-Jurjānī (d. 474/1078) states that *tanzīh* refers to clearing Allāh from imperfections,²⁵⁹ and in another part of the same book, when defining *taqdīs* (lit. glorification), he says that it is to clear God from that which does not befit Godhood.²⁶⁰ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī also provides a similar definition as he notes, “*Tanzīh* is clearing Allāh from attributes of the bodies.”²⁶¹

Therefore, *tanzīh* may be classified as the opposite of *tashbīh* which is the basis of anthropomorphism. In the context of Islamic theological discourses, *tanzīh* has always had a positive connotation as it promotes God's transcendence.²⁶² On the other hand, *tashbīh* which is heavily employed in polemical discourses between Ashʿarīs and their literalist opponents, is deemed a derogatory term.²⁶³

²⁵⁴ Al-Jawharī, I. (2005). *Al-Ṣaḥāḥ*. Dār al-Maʿrifah. p. 1034.

²⁵⁵ Ibn Fāris. A. (1979). *Muʿjam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr. p. 417.

²⁵⁶ Al-Jawharī 2005: 1035.

²⁵⁷ Abū Ṣuʿaīlik A., ʿUkāsha, R. & Malkāwī, F. (2014). *Ismāʿīl al-Fārūqī wa Ishāmātuh fī al-Iṣlāḥ al-Fikrī al-Islāmī al-Muʿāṣir*. Amman: Dār al-Faṭḥ. p. 581.

²⁵⁸ Al-Munāwī, M. (1989). *Al-Tawqīf ʿalā Muhimmāt al-Taʾrīf*. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir. p. 147.

²⁵⁹ Al-Jurjānī, A (2012). *Muʿjam al-Taʾrīfāt*. Dār al-Faḍīla. p. 60.

²⁶⁰ Al-Jurjānī 2012: 58.

²⁶¹ Al-Rāzī, F. (1999). *Al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya fī al-ʿIlm al-Ilāhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. p. 17.

²⁶² Ess, J. van, (2012). *Tashbīh wa-Tanzīh*. In Bearman, P. (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1190.

²⁶³ Dickson & Sharify-Funk note, “The opposite of *tanzīh* in Islamic theology is *tashbīh*, a term derived from *shabbaha*, which means to consider something similar to something else.” See Dickson, W. & Sharify-Funk, M. (2014). *Traces of Panentheism in Islam*. In Biernacki, L. & Clayton, P. (Eds.), *Panentheism Across the World's Traditions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Al-Hararī linked *tanzīh* to Ṣūfism and sought to spread both. While some Middle Eastern countries are considered to be havens for Ṣūfīs wherein Ṣūfī orders have grown and flourished. Other countries in contrast have either frowned upon Ṣūfīs, like Saudi Arabia, or simply did not attract as many of them, like Lebanon. Countries neighbouring Lebanon such as Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Turkey have housed decades-old Ṣūfī communities who follow a vast array of Ṣūfī orders such as: Rifāʿī, Qādirī, Shādhilī, Badawī, Naqshabandī, Mawlawī, Dusūqī and others. Perhaps, Ṣūfism was not popular in Lebanon because of the overwhelming number of religious sects that have been coexisting, or attempting to coexist, since its independence. The Lebanese Constitution officially acknowledges the existence of seventeen different religious groups²⁶⁴ constituting Lebanon's extremely complex sectarian fabric. With a population of nearly five million, the Lebanese public have mostly remained affiliated with the groups their forefathers have been associated with. This is possibly amongst the reasons as to why Lebanon was not as welcoming towards Ṣūfīs as its bordering nations were. Nonetheless, a number of Ṣūfī communities across the country certainly exist. But it is worth pointing out that a straightforward google engine search in English on: 'Ṣūfism in Lebanon' reveals al-Hararī and his followers to be the most established, organised and active Ṣūfī group in Lebanon. In 2014, Washington-based Middle East researcher Haitham Muzāḥim wrote a piece on the decline of Ṣūfism in Lebanon and contrasted it with the rise of Wahhābism. He notes:

Few are the resources that discuss Ṣūfism and Sunnī Ṣūfī orders in Lebanon. One would assume that Ṣūfī orders are completely non-existent in Lebanon had it not been for the spread of videos over YouTube, as well as some news reports on celebrations during which *dhikr* and Ṣūfī dances are observed. This is especially the case in light of the media's focus on the fundamentalists' control over the religious atmosphere in Lebanon. In an exclusive interview with *Al-Monitor*, judge Shaykh Aḥmad Darwīsh al-Kurdī – who is a religious judge and follower of one of the Ṣūfī orders – said that the Sunnī Muslim community in Lebanon mostly cares for Ṣūfism and supports it. This is exemplified in the fact that the majority of the Lebanese muftis are supporters of Ṣūfism. Al-Kurdī further clarifies that Ṣūfī orders are spread across the capital Beirut, and northern Lebanon.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Prados, A. (2006). CRS Issue Brief for Congress: Lebanon (CRS Report No. IB89118) Retrieved from Congressional Research Service website <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=464480>, p. 1.

²⁶⁵ Muzāḥim, H. (2014). *Al-Turuq al-Ṣūfiyya fī Lubnān.. Ghiyāb al-Dawr fī Zill al-Ṣu'ūd al-Salafī. Al-Monitor*. Retrieved from <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ar/originals/2014/04/lebanon-sufi-orders-threat-rise-salafism.html>.

Muzāḥim goes on to note that, according to renowned Lebanese scholar Riḍwān al-Sayyid, Ṣūfīs in Lebanon amount to approximately twelve thousand *murīds* (students). Those *murīds* follow one of the five key Ṣūfī orders: Rifāʿī, Qādirī, Shādhilī, Naqshabandī or Mawlawī.²⁶⁶ Al-Sayyid argues that the decline of Ṣūfism in Lebanon could be credited to two factors: (a) the rise of modernity (*al-ḥadātha*) in Lebanon, and (b) the continuous state of instability. In order for Ṣūfī orders to thrive, according to him, there must be a level of stability in security, society and politics. But since Lebanon has faced significant disorder in the past four decades, some of the youth have joined sectarian combat while the conservatives adopted Wahhābism over Ṣūfism.²⁶⁷ As a result, Ṣūfism did not play a significant role in Lebanese politics, contrary to some Ṣūfī orders in Turkey who managed to protect their Islamic identity while facing secularism and communism.

While it may seem that the spread of Ṣūfism continued to decline in Lebanon, Muzāḥim points out that al-Hararī and his followers rejuvenated a number of Ṣūfī practices across Lebanon. He notes, “Al-Sayyid states that “al-Aḥbāsh” are the followers of the late Ethiopian Shaykh ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī al-Ḥabashī who founded Jamʿiyyat al-Mashārīʿ al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya (The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects) in Lebanon. They follow a Ṣūfī order. They used to congregate in *dhikr* circles in the past. However, they stopped that during the recent years due to lack of security.”²⁶⁸ Maḥmūd Ḥaidar, a Lebanese researcher at the Delta Research Centre in Beirut, stresses that Ṣūfism is particularly dominant in northern Lebanon, especially in Tripoli, as well as other cities like Beirut and Sidon. Like al-Sayyid, Ḥaidar also alludes to al-Hararī’s role in the growth of Ṣūfism in Lebanon, “... most Ṣūfī orders in Lebanon remained distant from political involvements with the exception of Jamʿiyyat al-Mashārīʿ al-Khayriyya (al-Aḥbāsh). They took part in the political process due to the circumstances and the changes to the Sunnī religious authority in Lebanon during the recent years.”²⁶⁹ Muzāḥim concludes that al-Hararī’s followers in Lebanon, who amount to thousands, follow the Naqshabandī Ṣūfī order and hold Ṣūfī *dhikr* sessions in all Lebanese governates. While Muzāḥim’s statement might be partially accurate, it is noteworthy that al-Hararī promoted the Rifāʿī and Qādirī orders much more compared to the Naqshabandī. In fact, Jamāl Ḥalīm al-Ḥusaynī, one al-Hararī’s most prominent students is the president of Jamʿiyyat al-Mashāyikh al-Ṣūfiyya (The Association of Ṣūfī Shaykhs) and promotes the Rifāʿī order.

²⁶⁶ Muzāḥim (2014).

²⁶⁷ Muzāḥim (2014).

²⁶⁸ Muzāḥim (2014).

²⁶⁹ Muzāḥim (2014).

Al-Hararī has dedicated the majority of his works to the science of ‘*aqīda*, be it through concise yet informative treatises or long, exhaustive commentaries. It seems that the approach he took in his ‘*aqīda* works could be divided into two genres: (a) works that constituted traditional commentaries or explanations of classical texts such as his commentary on the *al-Nasafiyya Creed* entitled *al-Maṭālib al-Waḥfiyya Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Nasafiyya*²⁷⁰ and his explanation on the *al-Ṭahāwiyya* creed: *Izhār al-‘Aqīda al-Sunniyya Bisharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Ṭahāwiyya*,²⁷¹ or (b) books that he particularly devoted to his refutational and polemical arguments, such as his seven-hundred-page long text on exposing Ibn Taymiyya and his dogmas entitled *al-Maqālāt al-Sunniyya fī Kashf Ḍalālāt Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*.²⁷² While the former and the latter diverge in terms of the methods undertaken, both predominantly converge in the nature of the topics discussed.

Upon surveying al-Hararī’s books, whether those written on ‘*aqīda*, *fiqh*, *sīra* or Ṣūfism, one can easily detect that the principle of *tanzīhul-lāh* ‘*an mushābahat al-makhlūqīn*, that is clearing Allāh from resembling his creations – otherwise simply known as *tanzīh* – is perhaps the most commonly and frequently discussed topic. His official biography reads, “He was preoccupied with reforming people’s ‘*aqā’id* (sing. ‘*aqīda*) and refuting the atheists, as well as the heretics such as the Wahhābīs and others.”²⁷³ This is further emphasised in his public lectures and lessons, of which there are multiple tape recordings. In fact, when al-Hararī was invited in 1969 by the head of the Lebanese branch of al-Azhar Seminary, to address students of the institute, he specifically chose to deliver the lecture on *tanzīh*.²⁷⁴ Therefore, having established that *tanzīh* fundamentally opposes *tashbīh*, it would be valid to assume that championing *tanzīh* remained at the forefront of al-Hararī’s war with Wahhābīs. This war constituted a number of fronts, including but not limited to the two key arguments: (a) disagreement regarding the esoteric interpretation of the Qur’ān, generally referred to as *ta’wīl* and (b) as an extension of the *ta’wīl* discourse, both parties have clashed over the concept of God’s *istiwā’*, the mentioning of *yad* and ‘*ayn*²⁷⁵ in reference to Allāh. as well as many other *mutashābih* (lit. ambiguous) Qur’ānic verses and *ḥadīths* traditions.

3.2.1 *Ta’wīl*: Esoteric Interpretation of the Qur’ān

²⁷⁰ Al-Hararī 2014.

²⁷¹ Al-Hararī 2007a.

²⁷² Al-Hararī 2007b.

²⁷³ Al-Hararī 2009b.

²⁷⁴ Jafrā, S. (2005). Radd ‘alā Maqāl Aḥbāsh Lubnān fī Jarīdat Duniyā al-Waṭan. *Duniyā al-Waṭan*.

²⁷⁵ While in several contexts, the attributes of *yad* and ‘*ayn* refer to God’s power and sight, they have been utilised by many literalists to attribute a physical hand and eye to Allāh.

Qur'ānic exegetes and commentators have extensively discussed *ta'wīl* by examining the two types of Qur'ānic verses: the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt*. The former refers to verses whose meaning is clear, unambiguous, “and thus liable to only one literal sense or interpretation”²⁷⁶ in the language. The second are the *mutashābihāt* verses which linguistically, might carry more than one meaning and are thus either categorised as ambiguous or less clear.²⁷⁷ In fact, when translated to English, the term *mutashābihāt* is rendered in numerous variations such as: allegorical, parabolical, metaphorical, similar or, in some cases, confusing.²⁷⁸ The following verses refer to the two categories of *āyāt*:

It is He who has sent down upon you the book. In it are verses that are *muḥkamāt*, they are the foundations of the Book and others are *mutashābihāt*. So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking tribulations and seeking its *ta'wīl*, but none knows its *ta'wīl* except for Allāh. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: we believe in it; all of it is from our Lord. And only the men of understanding observe the advice.²⁷⁹

However, there are also two additional verses that have received considerable attention when shedding light upon the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt* verses.²⁸⁰ This first is Q. 38:23, “Allāh revealed the best of discourses containing subjects resembling each other in truthfulness and eloquence – *kitāban mutashābihan*”,²⁸¹ and Q. 11:1, “.... A Scripture whose verses are perfected – *uḥkimat āyātuh*”.²⁸² Nonetheless, *mutashābihan* and *uḥkimat* in the aforementioned context, denote a meaning that is different from *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt* as illustrated in Q. 3:7. As such, Q. 38:23 refers to the book whose verses are *mutashābihan*, but here *mutashābihan* does not refer to ambiguity, rather to likeness. That is, it derives from the Arabic root *sh/b/h* indicating similitude and sameness.²⁸³ Likewise, *uḥkimat*, in the aforementioned verse means the book (i.e. the Qur'ān) has been perfected, as its words are clear-cut and precise.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁶ Ayoub, M. (1984). *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*. Albany: State University of New York Press. p. 19.

²⁷⁷ Leaman, O., (Ed.). (2006). *The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia*. London: Routledge. p. 87.

²⁷⁸ Leaman 2006: 97.

²⁷⁹ The Qur'ān 3:7.

²⁸⁰ Albayrah, K. (2003). The Notions of Muḥkam and Mutashābih in the Commentary of Elmalī'lī Muḥammad Ḥamdi Yazır. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 5(1), 19-34.

²⁸¹ Albayrah 2003: 23.

²⁸² Albayrah 2003: 1.

²⁸³ Leaman 2006: 97.

²⁸⁴ Leaman 2006: 97.

The concept of *ta'wīl* has received much attention from al-Harārī. In fact, he dedicated an entire chapter in his *al-Sharḥ al-Qawīm fī Ḥall Alfāz al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*²⁸⁵ to the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt* verses. With approximately ten percent of his book dedicated to this topic, al-Harārī undergoes a methodical approach in arguing his stance whilst – throughout the entire argument – maintaining a key underpinning conviction; that there are no contradictions whatsoever in the Qur'ān. He starts off the chapter by analysing Q. 3:7, followed by a detailed definition of the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt*. He then goes on to illustrate how the classical scholars (*salaf*) and their successors (*khalaf*) sought to establish reconciliation between the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt* through *ta'wīl*. Al-Harārī concludes this chapter by focusing on the interpretation of five prominent and widely argued *mutashābihāt* verses, with much of the focus directed towards Q. 20:5.

Prior to embarking on his refutation of the Wahhābīs' anti-*ta'wīl* discourse, al-Harārī begins by defining the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt*. In regards to the former, he notes that, "... the *muḥkamāt* verses are those which do not accept more than one meaning as an explanation as far as the rules of the language are concerned, or – according to another definition – are the verses whose intended meaning is known with clarity."²⁸⁶ Thus, according to him, if the verse carried only one meaning in the Arabic language or its intended meaning was unambiguous, only then would it be classified to be amongst the *muḥkamāt*. It is noteworthy that al-Harārī's definition of *muḥkamāt* finds its origins in the statements of many exegetes such as: al-Shāfi'ī, Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. al-Zubayr,²⁸⁷ Ibn al-Jawzī,²⁸⁸ al-Nasafī,²⁸⁹ Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr,²⁹⁰ as well as many others. The three most frequently cited *muḥkamāt* verses by al-Harārī are: (1) Q. 42:11, "... There is nothing like him – *laysa kamithlihī shay'*",²⁹¹ (2) Q. 112:4, "And there is no comparable to Him – *wa lam yakun lahū kufuwan aḥad*",²⁹² (3) Q. 19:65, "... Do you know of any who is similar to Him (of course, none) – *hal ta'lamu lahū samiyyā*".²⁹³ The three verses are regarded by al-Harārī to be foundational in the *tanzīh* discourse.

²⁸⁵ Al-Harārī, 'A. (2007c). *Al-Sharḥ al-Qawīm fī Ḥall Alfāz al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 181.

²⁸⁶ Al-Harārī 2007c: 182.

²⁸⁷ Al-Māwardī, 'A. (2012). *Tafsīr al-Māwardī (Al-Nukat wa al-'Uyūn)*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. p. 369.

²⁸⁸ Ibn al-Jawzī, 'A. (2013). *Majālis Ibn al-Jawzī fī al-Mutashābih min al-'Āyāt al-Qur'āniyya*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. p. 103.

²⁸⁹ Al-Nasafī, 'A. (1998). *Tafsīr al-Nasafī*. Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib. p. 238.

²⁹⁰ Ibn 'Āshūr, A. (1997). *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*. Dār Saḥnūn. p. 154.

²⁹¹ The Qur'ān 42:11.

²⁹² The Qur'ān 112:4.

²⁹³ The Qur'ān 19:65.

After discussing the *muḥkamāt* and providing examples, al-Hararī thoroughly engages in the *mutashābihāt*. However, prior to delving into that, it is worth noting that Arabic lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1312) states that *ta'wīl* derives from *'āla* which means to return and revert, or to collate and mend.²⁹⁴ Another definition he offers is, "... *ta'wīl* is to gather the meanings of ambiguous terms and reduce them into one unequivocal and clear statement."²⁹⁵ As such, according to linguistic rules, *ta'wīl* could denote the process of collecting and mending, or refer to the notion of returning to its source or origin, amongst other meanings.

Conversely, when translated to English, *ta'wīl* is loosely rendered as: explanation, elucidation, interpretation, commentary or even esoteric interpretation of the Qur'ān.²⁹⁶ Nonetheless, al-Hararī, like other Qur'ānic exegetes, maintain that *ta'wīl* means to assign a meaning to a religious text – Qur'ān or *ḥadīth* - and disregarding its *ẓāhir* (lit. apparent) meaning that either opposes authentic religious texts or definitive intellectual evidences.²⁹⁷

The *mutashābihāt* section exhausts much of the chapter, as this is where al-Hararī, justifiably, lays ground to one of his earliest written polemical arguments against Wahhābīs. By promoting the *ta'wīl* of *mutashābihāt* verses, al-Hararī sought to eliminate the unbecoming *ẓāhir* meanings by replacing them with ones consistent with the *muḥkamāt*. It seems that the above is an effort on his part to safeguard the principle that there are no contradictions whatsoever between Qur'ānic verses. After examining the *muḥkamāt* and arguing for the significance of *ta'wīl*, al-Hararī goes on to elaborate on the *mutashābihāt*. He notes:²⁹⁸

The *mutashābih* verse is that which what it refers to is not clear, or it could possibly have several facets in meaning according to the Arabic language. As such, there is a need, in order to ascertain the meaning, for the contemplation and interpretation of the people of understanding who possess sufficient knowledge about [religious] texts and what they mean and are also knowledgeable about the Arabic language.

²⁹⁴ Ibn Manẓūr 2003: 33, Vol. 11.

²⁹⁵ Ibn Manẓūr 2003: 33, Vol. 11.

²⁹⁶ Poonawala, I. (2020). *Ta'wīl*. In Bearman, P., (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7457.

²⁹⁷ After stating examples of the *muḥkamāt* verses, al-Hararī maintains that *ta'wīl* can only done for the *mutashābihāt* verses, not the *muḥkamāt*, "It is not permissible to have the *muḥkamāt* undergo *ta'wīl* ... because disregarding the *ẓāhir* meaning without a textual or intellectual proof is absurd." See Al-Hararī 2007c: 182.

²⁹⁸ Al-Hararī 2007c: 184.

In reference to Q. 3:7, al-Hararī acknowledges the legitimacy of the two well-known recitation methods for this verse: *waqf* and *waṣl*.²⁹⁹ Exegetes, such as al-Nasaḥī,³⁰⁰ agree that, depending on the method of recitation, the meaning of the verse would differ. Expectedly, al-Hararī contends that whether the verse is recited according to *waqf* or *waṣl*, this will not result in any inconsistencies in his argument. The two methods are:³⁰¹

1. *Waqf*: this method refers to recitation pauses in the Qur'ān. According to this recitation, the verse would mean: "... but none knows its *ta'wīl* except for Allāh". The pause or a full stop takes place here, upon the uttering the word Allāh. After the short pause, the recitation resumes but now meaning: "And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: we believe in it".
2. *Waṣl*: a manner in which some parts of the verse are recited without any pauses between the words. That is, to join the words or to recite them together. If *waṣl* is employed, the verse would mean: "... but none knows its *ta'wīl* except for Allāh as well as those who are firmly grounded in knowledge".³⁰²

Therefore, according to the *waqf* recitation, the verse indicates that it is only God who knows the *ta'wīl* of the *mutashābihāt*.³⁰³ While the *waṣl* method implies that the meaning of some *mutashābihāt* verses is known to the scholars who are firmly rooted in knowledge, and certainly known to Allāh as well as. It is in this context that al-Hararī cautions that there are two types of *mutashābihāt*, ones whose meaning is only known to Allāh and none else, and others are known to some of God's pious slaves. He notes:³⁰⁴

Consequently, it is necessary to refer the interpretation of the *mutashābihāt* verses back to the *muḥkamāt* verses. This is in reference to the ambiguous matters that a scholar could possibly know. That is, whoever wants to interpret the *mutashābihāt*, then it has to be in compliance with the *muḥkamāt* verses. An example of that is interpreting the *istiwā'* with subjugation, as this is certainly in agreement with the *muḥkamāt*.

²⁹⁹ Al-Hararī 2007c: 185.

³⁰⁰ Al-Nasaḥī 1998: 238.

³⁰¹ Al-Nasaḥī 1998: 238.

³⁰² For further details on the *waṣl* and *waqf*, one ought to refer to Qur'ānic *tajwīd* rules as well as the numerous symbols in the modern-day Qur'ānic scripture (known as the Ottoman script) signalling when and where to completely stop or pause.

³⁰³ *Mutashābihāt*, here, refers to one of the two categories of the *Mutashābih*. It will be expanded upon below.

³⁰⁴ Al-Hararī 2007c: 185.

With the conclusion of his meticulous elucidation of the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt*, al-Harārī reveals that one of the key reasons for employing the two types of verses in his polemical discourse is to confront the Wahhābī position on *ta'wīl*. While the classical Ash'arī stance on the one hand remains that *ta'wīl* ought to be utilised in reference to *mutashābihāt* verses³⁰⁵ in order to avoid any apparent contradictions, Wahhābī scholars, on the other hand, have either entirely dismissed the concept of *ta'wīl* or simply introduced and employed a pick-and-choose *ta'wīl* mechanism in reference to some verses and, surprisingly, deemed it entirely unlawful with regards to other verses. With reference to the Wahhābī position, al-Harārī staunchly responds, “The general rule applied by Wahhābīs entail that: ‘*ta'wīl* is considered to be *ta'fīl* (divesting God of all attributes) and misguidance’, this is absolutely groundless. How would this be true when *ta'wīl* is confirmed to have been utilised by the righteous Salaf such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal? – who is dearly admired by Wahhābīs. Even though they oppose him in the matters of belief.”³⁰⁶

As stated, prominent Wahhābī figures have either dismissed *ta'wīl* or introduced unprecedented conditions for its employment. Prominent figures such as Ibn 'Uthaymīn, Ibn Bāz and al-Albānī have adopted this creed. For instance, any glimpse at Ibn Bāz's easily accessible *fatwā* denouncing and condemning *ta'wīl*³⁰⁷ would suffice to point out how self-contradictory it is. The *fatwā* begins by asserting that the *ta'wīl* that pertains to the attributes of God is abominable and impermissible.³⁰⁸ Later on, in the very *fatwā* itself, Ibn Bāz essentially employs *ta'wīl* in his explanation of three *mutashābihāt* verses: Q. 54:14, Q. 20:39 and Q. 52:48. The three verses refer to *al-'ayn* (lit. eye) in reference to Allāh. Nonetheless, Ibn Bāz shockingly disregards the *ẓāhir* meaning and utilises the very method he denounced earlier, that is *ta'wīl*. He states repeatedly, that *al-'ayn* in those verses refers to God's protection – not a physical eye.³⁰⁹ Therefore, it does not seem that Ibn Bāz understood the concept of *ta'wīl*, what it really refers to or how it could be employed. He merely denounces it, then goes on to utilise it, thus validating it!

³⁰⁵ In support of the legitimacy of *ta'wīl*, many Ash'arī scholars have relied upon the multiple narrations and occurrences on which prophet Muḥammad's cousin, 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās explicitly presented *ta'wīl* for multiple Qur'ānic verses. In fact, al-Qurṭubī reports that Ibn 'Abbās said that he was amongst those who have been granted the knowledge of Qur'ānic *ta'wīl*. See Ṣarṣūr, H. (2004). *Āyāt al-Ṣifāt wa Manhaj Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī fī Tafṣīr Ma'ānīhā Muqāranan Bighayrihī min al-'Ulamā'*. Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya. p. 234. For Ibn 'Abbās' statement, see Al-Nawawī, Y. (1972). *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Bisharḥ al-Nawawī*. Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī. p. 218. & Al-Suyūṭī, 'A. (1999). *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī. p. 595. & Ibn Hajar, A. (1986). *Fath al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Dār al-Rayyān li al-Turāth. p. 532.

³⁰⁶ Al-Harārī 2007c: 185.

³⁰⁷ Note that Ibn Bāz only rejects the *ta'wīl* that pertains to Allāh's attributes.

³⁰⁸ Ibn Bāz 1999: 131.

³⁰⁹ Ibn Bāz 1999: 132.

In comparison with Ibn Bāz, it appears that Ibn ‘Uthaymīn tackles this issue quite differently. For instance, Ibn Bāz attempts to make an argument for the division of *ta’wīl* into two categories: one that is praiseworthy (*mamdūh*) and another that is blameworthy (*madhmūm*).³¹⁰ He alleges that, “.... If some evidence supports it (i.e. *ta’wīl*) then it is considered to be praiseworthy, and it would fall under the first category, which is exegesis. However, if no evidence attests to it, then it is blameworthy. It would be classified as *tahrīf* (i.e., distortion or alteration) rather than *ta’wīl*.”³¹¹ While Ibn Bāz allows for *ta’wīl* as long as the verse does not pertain to any of Allāh’s attributes, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn’s method seems to cover a wider range of verses without restricting it to any particular theme or topic. In all cases, whether it is the method of Ibn Bāz, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn or other Wahhābī figures, they tend to disparage *ta’wīl* in favour of promoting the fundamental notion of anthropomorphism by attributing to God a physical sitting on the throne, or confining him with space and time, as well as other humanistic features – all based upon the *ẓāhir* meanings of numerous *mutashābihāt* verses.

Contrary to Ibn Bāz and Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, al-Hararī maintains that it is not permitted to dismiss *ta’wīl* altogether and consider all Qur’ānic verses according to their apparent meanings. This would result in claims that the Qur’ān is self-contradictory, which is not true.³¹² He further elaborates on that by presenting three *mutashābihāt* verses:

1. Q. 20:05: “*ar-Raḥmān ‘alā al-‘arsh istawā*”³¹³ is one of the most controversial verses that will later be scrutinised. The *ẓāhir* and literal meaning is that Allāh is physically established upon the throne in a location high above.
2. Q. 02:115: “*fa aynamā tuwallū fa thamma wajhu Allāh*”.³¹⁴ If this verse is taken according to its literal meaning, it would seemingly indicate that to whichever direction one turns, that one would be turning to the face of Allāh.
3. Q. 37:99: “*innī dhāhibun ilā rabbī*”.³¹⁵ This verse refers to a statement uttered by prophet Ibrāhīm in reference to taking a journey to Palestine. Also, if literally translated, it would mean that Ibrāhīm is going to his Lord, or to the place which his Lord occupies.

³¹⁰ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, M. (2000). *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*. Dār Ibn al-Jawzī. p. 89.

³¹¹ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn 2000: 90.

³¹² Al-Hararī 2007c: 182.

³¹³ The Qur’ān 20:05.

³¹⁴ The Qur’ān 02:115.

³¹⁵ The Qur’ān 37:99.

After presenting the three verses, al-Hararī notes that if the aforementioned verses were exclusively considered according to their literal, apparent or *ẓāhir* meanings, then it would be problematic. This is because the *ẓāhir* meaning of the first verse indicates that God resides in a direction high above. As for the second and third verses, the *ẓāhir* meanings refer to God being at the horizon and in Palestine, respectively. As such, al-Hararī deduces that “if we were to leave those verses according to their *ẓāhir* meanings, this would lead to contradiction and it is not possible for there to be any contradiction in the Qur’ān. Therefore, it is necessary to disregard the *ẓāhir* of those verses.”³¹⁶ Moreover, al-Hararī goes further to argue that if *ta’wīl* was disregarded, this would lead to undermining clear Qur’ānic instructions to refer back to the *muḥkamāt* in order to understand the *mutashābihāt*. It is believed that by discrediting *ta’wīl*, one would not be heeding to Q. 3:7 which states that the *muḥkamāt* verse, “... are the foundations of the Book”.³¹⁷ The literal translation of the Qur’ānic expression “*umm al-kitāb*” is: the mother of the book, i.e., the Qur’ān. According to al-Hararī, the *muḥkamāt* are regarded as *umm al-kitāb* because the *mutashābihāt* are to be interpreted in accordance and compliance with the *muḥkamāt*, not the contrary. In sum, al-Hararī presents his case for promoting *ta’wīl* by arguing that: (a) without *ta’wīl*, the Qur’ān would be regarded as self-contradictory, (b) dismissing *ta’wīl* altogether would lead to the promotion of blasphemous anthropomorphic beliefs and finally (c) Q. 3:7 does not only permit *ta’wīl*, but it also provides instructions as to how *ta’wīl* ought to be undertaken, as long as it is in line with the *muḥkamāt*.

All of the above is according to the *waṣl* method of recitation. However, according to *waqf*, the meaning of Q. 3:7 would differ slightly. In the case of *waqf*, the verse indicates that the *mutashābihāt* are only known to Allāh. Here, al-Hararī – like many other exegetes³¹⁸ – notes that the *mutashābihāt* are of two types: a type that is only known to God, such as the specific time on which the day of judgement will take place, or another type which is known to the scholars who are firmly grounded in knowledge. An example of the latter is *al-istiwā’* in Q. 20:05 which has been interpreted as subjugation (*al-qahr*).³¹⁹ Thus, the *mutashābihāt* verses, according to the *waqf* recitation, pertain to the first category, not the second.

³¹⁶ Al-Hararī 2007c: 183.

³¹⁷ The Qur’ān, 3:7.

³¹⁸ Prominent exegetes state that *mutashābihāt* in Q. 3:7 refer to the time of Judgement Day, or the emergence of the imposter (*al-Dajjāl*). So, according to the meaning of *mutashābihāt* in this verse, the exact time on which Judgement Day will commence is only known to Allāh. See Al-Naḥḥās, A. (2013). *Al-Qaṭ’ wa al-I’tināf*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 118.

³¹⁹ Al-Hararī 2007c: 206.

Therefore, it has become evident that in order to fully comprehend the significance of *tanzīh* according to al-Harārī, it would be imperative to investigate the textual-based discourse that is largely grounded in the *muḥkamāt* and the *mutashābihāt* verses. Due to that, al-Harārī attempts to provide an appropriate *ta'wīl* for the vast majority of the *mutashābihāt* verses that have been used by the likes of Ibn Ḥāmid (d. 403/1012) and al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1132),³²⁰ as well as a number of modern-day Wāḥḥābīs.

Tanzīh remained at the forefront of al-Harārī's agenda and refuting the claims of God's resemblance to His creations (*tashbīh*) was amongst the issues of utmost importance to him. In blatant terms, he laid out heretical doctrines and sought to dissect and rebuke such arguments. For instance, al-Harārī quotes Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) who, in simple terms, provides the end result for dismissing *ta'wīl* and – as a result – falling into *tashbīh*. He wrote describing the beliefs of Ibn Ḥāmid and al-Zāghūnī:

They attributed [to Allāh] an image as well as a face, two eyes, a mouth, an epiglottis, molars and a direction; which is the clouds. Also, [they ascribed to him:] two hands, fingers, a pinkie, a thumb, a chest, a thigh, two shins and two feet. They also said that they have not heard about the mentioning of a head [in reference to God]. They said that he touches and is touched, and that he brings man close in proximity to him. Also, some of them said that he breathes.³²¹

The above suffices to reveal the extent to which some classical literalists have gone to explicitly ascribe physical characteristics or human attributes to God. Again, they have done so by, firstly: dismissing the *ta'wīl* of *mutashābihāt* verses, thereby ascribing anthropomorphic features to God based on the *ẓāhir* meanings of those verses. This is followed by their disregard of the *muḥkamāt*. However, there remains one verse that has been at the epicentre of the *tanzīh* vs. *tashbīh* dispute. The *istiwā'* verse Q. 20:05 – alluded to earlier – has been repeatedly quoted in an effort to assign a physical place for God, particularly over the throne, as will be discussed below.

³²⁰ Zulfiqar Ali Shah delves into the anthropomorphic reputation attributed to the Ḥanbalī school of thought and – like many others – attributes that to three prominent figures, “such as: ‘Alī ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Zaghūnī, al-Qadī Abu Ya‘la, Abu ‘Amir al-Qurāshī, who followed a literal route to interpreting Qur’anic expressions ... In contrast, other Hanbalites such as Ibn al-Jawzī al-Hanbalī and Ibn ‘Aqīl vehemently opposed literalist interpretation and seemed to have inclined towards a sort of rationalism closer to that of Ash‘arites.” See Shah, A. (2012). *Anthropomorphic Representations of God: The Representation of God in Judaic, Christian and Islamic Traditions*. Guttenberg Press Ltd. p. 583.

³²¹ Ibn al-Jawzī, ‘A, (2002). *Kitāb Akhbār al-Ṣifāt*. Leiden: Brill. p. 18.

3.2.2 The *Istiḥwā* Discourse

The ongoing discourse on *istiḥwā* is one of the frequently debated topics between Ash‘arīs and Wahhābīs. So, before engaging in the various positions on *istiḥwā*, it would be useful to point out al-Harārī’s unwavering position in which he declares at the beginning of the *istiḥwā* subchapter, “Whosoever believes that the verse: ‘*ar-Raḥmān ‘alā al-‘arsh istawā*’ means: He sat on the throne, settled upon it or bordered it, then he blasphemes.”³²² As such, this section will endeavour to offer a detailed analysis of al-Harārī’s methodology in tackling this issue. It will start by shedding light on the term *istiḥwā* and its many variations, as they appear in the Qur’ān and other Arabic texts. It will then go on to demonstrate the Wahhābīs’ interpretation of Q. 3:7, followed by al-Harārī’s response and counterargument. Lexically, the verb *istawā* derives from root: *sīn*, *wāw*, and *alif*; of which a plethora of verbs and nouns are composed. Likewise, *istawā* (verb) or *istiḥwā* (noun) carry numerous meanings. Renowned Mālikī judge, Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī (d. 538/1148) cautions that, “*al-istawā* according to the language of Arabs has fifteen meanings with some being literal and others metaphorical. Some of these meanings befit Allāh and thus the verse would be interpreted according to that, whilst others are not befitting.”³²³ Following is a list compiled by lexicographer al-Fairūzābādī on six variants of *istiḥwā*:³²⁴

1. Q. 1:39 mentions the *istiḥwā* of Allāh in reference to the sky. It means the existence of the sky occurred and took place. God created the sky.
2. To rest on or be fixed upon. *Istawat* is used in Q. 11:44 in reference to Noah’s ark coming to rest upon Mount al-Jūdī.
3. *Istawāytum* in Q. 43:13 means they have mounted or settled upon.
4. Strength and power. Such as: *istawā* in Q. 28:14 referring to prophet Mūsā attaining full strength.
5. *Istawā* refers to contrasting. Q. 35:19 alludes to the difference between the blind and the seeing and that they do not *yastawiyān*, i.e. they are different, not equals.
6. Subjugation and power as referred to in Q. 20:05: *ar-Raḥmān ‘alā al-‘arsh istawā*. This means God subdued the throne, the largest of His creations, in size and volume. Since he subdued it, how about what is lesser than the ‘*arsh* in size?

³²² Al-Kawtharī, M. (2017). *Al-‘Aqīda wa ‘Ilm al-Kalām min A‘māl al-Imām Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 288.

³²² Al-Fairūzābādī, M. (1996). *Baṣā‘ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz fī Laṭā‘if al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz*. Wizārat al-Awqāf. p. 106.

³²³ Ibn al-‘Arabī, M. (1997). *‘Aridat al-Aḥwadhī Bisharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Vol. 2, p. 235.

³²⁴ Al-Fairūzābādī 1996: 106

As seen above, prominent Arabic lexicographer al-Fairūzābādī provides a number of variants for *istiwā*’ as they appear in the Qur’ān exclusively. Yet, outside the Qur’ān, more meanings appear in addition to the six versions of *istiwā*’:

1. *Istawā*, in some contexts denotes sitting; “*istawā jālisan*”, means he sat down.³²⁵
2. The sun, *istawat* i.e., it reached its zenith.³²⁶
3. Ibn Manẓūr states that *istawā* refers to literal elevation, ascension or loftiness. *Istawaytu* on top of the house means: “‘*alawtuh*” that is, I ascended to the rooftop.³²⁷
4. “*Istawā al-qawm fī al-māl*” i.e., people are equal in wealth. Thus, implying equality.³²⁸
5. The food *istawā*, refers to food being properly cooked or ready for consumption.³²⁹
6. It is also used in Q. 48:29 in reference to plants as, “they grow firm and stand upon their stalks”. *Istawā* means *istaqāma*, it became upright or straightened up.³³⁰
7. “*Istawā ‘alā sarīr al-malik*” is a metonymy indicating that he assumed ownership over the king’s throne, even if he did not physically sit upon it.³³¹

Therefore, the verb *istawā* or noun *istiwā*’ may indicate different meanings, some of which are literal and physical: such as sitting, ascending or settling, whereas others are metaphorical – or metonymical – like: owning, subduing, or preserving. However, when mentioned in relation to Allāh and in reference to the throne (*al-‘arsh*), the verb *istawā* appears more than once in the Qur’ān. In fact, it is seen in seven verses: Q. 20:05, Q. 7:45, Q. 10:3, Q. 25:59, Q. 32:04, Q. 13:02 and Q. 57:04. Yet, when discussing those seven verses, al-Harārī and his rivals, particularly Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, acknowledge that the Qur’ān was revealed in a clear and eloquent Arabic language. Both cite the same verse in an attempt to support their argument: Q. 26:105, “[It is revealed] in a clear Arabic language.”³³² Unlike al-Harārī, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn argues for the *prima facie* meaning for *istawā* alleging that it conforms with the rules of the language.³³³

³²⁵ Al-Fayyūmī, A. (1977). *Al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr fī Gharīb al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr li al-Rāfi’*. Al-Ma‘ārif. p. 298.

³²⁶ Al-Qūjāwī, M. (2012). *Ḥaṣhiyat Muḥyiddīn Shaykhzāda ‘alā Tafṣīr al-Bayḍāwī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Vol. 4, p. 233.

³²⁷ Ibn Manẓūr 2003: 410, Vol. 14.

³²⁸ Al-Fayyūmī 1977: 298.

³²⁹ Al-Fayyūmī 1977: 298.

³³⁰ Ibn Manẓūr 2003: 414, Vol. 14.

³³¹ Al-Fayyūmī 1977: 298.

³³² The Qur’ān 26:105.

³³³ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, M. (2020). *Al-Mawqī‘ al-Rasmī li Muḥammad ibn Ṣālih ibn ‘Uthaymīn*. Retrieved from <http://binothaimeen.net/content/11508>.

Ibn ‘Uthaymīn alludes to the concept of *istiwā*’ in the majority of his books, in addition to the many voice recordings in which he explicitly voices his devotion to the literalist methodology. Nonetheless, one amongst his works stands out the most as he dedicates approximately thirty-five pages to this topic, in an effort to further his argument. He does so in his commentary on Ibn Taymiyya’s infamous treatise on *‘aqīda* which he entitled *al-‘Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*.³³⁴ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn begins the section by providing definitions of the term *al-‘Arsh* (The Throne), followed by comparing and contrasting reports attributed to the Salaf with the views of those whom he refers to as: Ahl al-Ta‘īl.³³⁵

Ibn ‘Uthaymīn then goes on to present his counterargument by relying heavily on the categorisation of *‘uluww* (lit. ascension) into two categories: physical ascension and metaphorical ascension. As a literalist, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn’s anthropomorphic beliefs entail specifying God with a direction. He argues that God’s *‘uluww* refers to him being physically on top of the throne. In support of this, he relies upon a systematic methodology by which he chronologically refers to implicit quotes from the Qur’ān, *sunna* and *ijmā‘* as well as the intellect and the *fiṭra* (natural disposition).

It seems that Ibn ‘Uthaymīn’s classification of *ta’wīl* into *mamdūh* (praiseworthy) and *madhmūm* (blameworthy) is merely a tool which he calculatedly employs at particular times while disregarding it at other times. For instance, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn rejects interpreting God’s *istiwā*’ with *istīlā*’ (lit. subjugation). Rather, he insists that it refers to the physical and literal ascension of Allāh over the throne, above the seven heavens. As a result, he brands with heresy or *ta’īl* whosoever explains the *istiwā*’, that is mentioned in the seven aforementioned verses, with *istīlā*’. He goes further to argue that by interpreting God’s *istiwā*’, “one might not necessarily fall into *kufr* ... sometimes one might be considered a heretic but not a blasphemmer or a heretic who is also a blasphemmer.”³³⁶ Despite that, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn alleges that he does not believe that the ascension of God on top of his throne is similar to the ascension of the creation upon another creation.³³⁷

³³⁴ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn 2000: 89.

³³⁵ According to Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, *Ahl al-Ta’īl* refers to Ash‘arī and Māturīdī scholars who have rejected the belief in God’s corporeality and employed *ta’wīl*. Therefore, “The term “*ta’īl*” is used by the *mutakallimūn*, as is well-known, to describe the act of divesting God of His attributes ... Al-Nasafi discredits the anthropomorphists’ belief in God corporeality by arguing that it leads to the erroneous practice of divesting God of His attributes.” So, Wahhābīs charge Ash‘arīs with *ta’īl* and vice versa. See Erlwein, H. (2019). *Arguments for God’s Existence in Classical Islamic Thought: A Reappraisal of the Discourse*. Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. pp. 164-165.

³³⁶ Al-Sulaimān 1992.

³³⁷ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, M. (2013). *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*. Mu’assasat al-Durar al-Sunniyya li al-Nasher. p. 166.

Paradoxically, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn – following an Ash‘arī-like method – utilises *ta’wīl* by interpreting 57:4, “*wa huwa ma‘akum aynamā kuntum*”.³³⁸ This verse, if literally rendered, would imply that Allāh is with you wheresoever you may be. But, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn completely disregards the *ẓāhir* meaning and argues that God is attributed with a, “... general *ma‘iyya*, that encompasses all the creations. He, the Exalted, is with everything in his knowledge, power and subdual.”³³⁹ As illustrated, stemming from Ibn ‘Uthaymīn’s belief that Allāh is not omnipresent, or physically everywhere, he dismisses this *ẓāhir* meaning and assigns another meaning to the verse, by allowing 57:4 to undergo *ta’wīl*. As such, one might assume, according to Ibn ‘Uthaymīn that this would also apply to the *istiwā’* verses, but this is certainly not the case. He maintains:

They (i.e., Ash‘arīs and Māturīdīs) attempt to disregard the *ẓāhir* meanings of these explicit verses by employing invalid *ta’wīl*, thereby signifying their confusion and perplexity. Such as their interpretation of *istiwā’* with subjugation ... as well as all of what Zāhid al-Kawtharī reported, as he is the promoter of *jahmism* and *ta’fīl*. All of which is invalid and is considered an alteration of the truth. Furthermore, what do these Mu‘aṭṭila want to say? Do they want to say the there is no Lord within the sky that can be sought [in the times of need]? Or that there is no God above the throne that is worshipped? Where would he be then?³⁴⁰

Ibn ‘Uthaymīn’s approach to *ta’wīl* is entirely selective. According to him, it cannot be applied to any of the seven verses of *istiwā’*. Notwithstanding the many instances on which he says that Allāh is clear from resemblance to the creation, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn follows up that statement by confirming a *kayfiyya*³⁴¹ (lit. modality) to God’s *istiwā’*, that is only known to Allāh. For instance, he contends that Sunnīs believe that Allāh attributed himself with being *mustawīn* upon the throne, not similar to His creation but, “with a *kayfiyya* that he only knows”.³⁴² His methodology reveals a great deal of inconsistency, he also appears to be selective whenever it may suit him.

³³⁸ The Qur’ān 57:4.

³³⁹ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn 2013: 171.

³⁴⁰ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn 2013: 166.

³⁴¹ While the denial of *kayfiyya* could refer to a certain meaning in Ibn ‘Uthaymīn’s works, it holds an entirely different meaning when mentioned a part of an Ash‘arī argument. The *kayf* or *kayfiyya* refers to corporeality, “... in Arabic, the question *kayfa* applies to corporeal features, therefore any reference to [a seemingly] anthropomorphic expression with the addition of the denial of *kayfa* means to accept this expression as it is without attributing corporeal qualities to God. See Abrahamov, B. (1995). The ‘Bi-Lā Kayfa’ Doctrine and Its Foundations in Islamic Theology. *Arabica*, 42(3), 365–379.

³⁴² Ibn ‘Uthaymīn 2013:166.

In sum, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn refuses to interpret God’s *istiwā*, but he nonetheless applies *ta’wīl* to so many other *mutashābihāt* verses. After extracting the literal meaning from Q. 20:05 and ascribing corporeality to God, he follows by confirming a *kayfiyya* or a modality to Allāh’s *istiwā*, but one that is only known to Him. So, he denounces *ta’wīl* then applies it, followed by seemingly condemning *tashbīh* and then likening God to the creation. It is noteworthy that in his *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn does not only exhibit complete devotion to Ibn Taymiyya and his argument for God’s corporeal *istiwā*, but he goes further to employ a polemical argument by repeatedly attacking those who oppose his beliefs. He calls them: the Mu‘aṭṭila. As stated earlier, according to Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, Ahl al-Ta‘īl refers to Ash‘arī and Māturīdī scholars who have rejected the belief in God’s corporeality and employed *ta’wīl*. However, he does not explicitly refer to Ash‘arīs or Māturīdīs by name. Yet, his argument reveals the identity of those being attacked, as he particularly accuses Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī³⁴³ (d. 1371/1952) of being the promoter of *jahmism* and *ta’īl*.

Classically, Ash‘arī and Māturīdī scholars regarded the *istiwā* debate with much significance and attempted on many occasions to support their imams’ views, either by presenting textual-based arguments – a method strictly reliant on religious texts – or intellectual proofs. Sometimes, they even presented a mixture of both methods. Such scholars have been classed as pioneer lexicographers, morphologists, theologians and jurists of the four *madhāhib*: the Ḥanafī, Shāfi‘ī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī schools of thought. Amongst those who have explicitly interpreted *istiwā* as Allāh’s subjugation or power are:

1. ‘Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak al-Yazīdī (d. 237/851)³⁴⁴ – exegete and lexicographer.
2. Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923)³⁴⁵ – prominent exegete.
3. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Zajjāj (d. 310/923)³⁴⁶ – lexicographer and morphologist.
4. Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944)³⁴⁷ – exegete and theologian.
5. Abū al-Qāsim Sulaimān al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/918)³⁴⁸ – *ḥadīth* scholar.
6. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Jaṣṣās (d. 370/980)³⁴⁹ – jurist and exegete.

³⁴³ Al-Kawtharī was the last scholar to assume the office of Shaykh al-Islām of the Ottoman Empire. He was a Ḥanafī Māturīdī scholar. He was very critical of Ibn Taymiyya. Al-Kawtharī was also one of the teachers of Moroccan scholar ‘Abdullāh al-Ghumārī, one of al-Hararī’s most prominent allies.

³⁴⁴ Al-Yazīdī, ‘A. (1985). *Gharīb al-Qur’ān wa Tafsīrih*. Beirut: Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub. p. 113.

³⁴⁵ Al-Ṭabarī, M. (2013). *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ‘Āyi al-Qur’ān*. Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub. p. 457.

³⁴⁶ Al-Zajjāj, I. (1988). *Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān wa I‘rābihih*. Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub. p. 373.

³⁴⁷ Al-Māturīdī, M. (2005). *Ta’wīlat Ahl al-Sunna: Tafsīr al-Māturīdī*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 411.

³⁴⁸ Al-Ṭabarānī, S. (2008). *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Kabīr*. Irbid: Dār al-Kitāb al-Thaqāfi. p. 372.

³⁴⁹ Al-Jaṣṣās, A. (1992). *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*. Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī. Vol. 5, p. 49.

7. Abū al-Laith al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983)³⁵⁰ – exegete and Ḥanafī jurist.
8. Abū Bakr b. Fūrak al-Aṣbahānī (d. 406/1015)³⁵¹ – Ash‘arī theologian.
9. Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh al-Juwaynī (d. 438/1047)³⁵² – Shāfi‘ī jurist.
10. Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Māwardī (d. 450-1059)³⁵³ – exegete and Shāfi‘ī jurist.
11. Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066)³⁵⁴ – *ḥadīth* scholar.
12. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083)³⁵⁵ – Shāfi‘ī jurisconsult.
13. ‘Abd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085)³⁵⁶ – Shāfi‘ī jurist and Ash‘arī theologian.
14. Abū al-Qāsim al-Rāghib al-Aṣbahānī (d. 502/1108)³⁵⁷ – exegete and lexicographer.
15. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)³⁵⁸ – theologian and Shāfi‘ī jurist.
16. Abū al-Mu‘īn Maymūn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1115)³⁵⁹ – theologian and Ḥanafī jurist.
17. Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī, Ibn Rushd (d. 520/1126)³⁶⁰ – Mālikī judge.
18. Ibn ‘Aṭīyya al-Andalusī (d. 541/1146)³⁶¹ – exegete and Mālikī scholar.
19. Abū al-Faḍl ‘Iyāḍ al-Yaḥsubī, al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ (d. 544/1149)³⁶² – Mālikī judge.
20. ‘Abdurrahmān b. ‘Alī b. al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201)³⁶³ – *ḥadīth* scholar and jurist.

The above scholars hail from different schools of thought and are considered well-established and qualified in a number of disciplines and schools of thought. All of them have unanimously stated that God’s *istiwā’*, as it appears in the seven Qur’ānic verses, ought not to be taken literally, according to its *ẓāhir* meaning. Rather, an appropriate meaning, befitting to God, is to be assigned to those verses. Some valid and befitting interpretations assigned to the *istiwā’* verse are subjugated, protected, conquered, and preserved. Surprisingly, some of the above scholars are much admired and frequently cited by Ibn Taymiyya and some Wahhābī scholars, such as: Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī,³⁶⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Rāghib al-Aṣbahānī among others.

³⁵⁰ Al-Samarqandī, N. (1993). *Baḥr al-‘Ulūm. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya*. Vo. 2, p. 336.

³⁵¹ Ibn Fūrak, M. (1985). *Mushkil al-Ḥadīth wa Bayānuh*. ‘Ālam al-Kutub. p. 389.

³⁵² Al-Zabīdī 2016: 73.

³⁵³ Al-Māwardī, ‘A. (2012). *Al-Nukat wa al-‘Uyūn*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya Vol. 2, pp. 229- 230.

³⁵⁴ Al-Bayhaqī, A. (2014). *Kitāb al-Asmā’ wa al-Ṣifāt*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 519.

³⁵⁵ Al-Shīrāzī, I. (1999). *Al-Ishāra ‘Ilā Madhhab Ahl al-Ḥaqq*. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī. p. 150.

³⁵⁶ Al-Juwaynī, ‘A. (1995). *Al-Irshād ‘Ilā Qawāṭi’ al-Adilla fī Uṣūl al-‘Iṭiqād*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 22.

³⁵⁷ Al-Aṣbahānī, H. (2009). *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur’ān*. Dār al-Qalam. p. 440.

³⁵⁸ Al-Ghazālī, M. (2016). *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Dār al-Fikr. p. 140.

³⁵⁹ Al-Nasafī, M. (1993). *Tabṣīrat al-Adilla fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*. Nashriyyāt Ri’āsat al-Shu’ūn al-Dīniyya. p. 242.

³⁶⁰ Ibn al-Hāj, M. (n.d.). *Al-Madkhal*. Cairo: Dār al-Turāth. p. 148.

³⁶¹ Al-Andalusī, A. (2001). *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz fī Taḥṣīr al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 70.

³⁶² Al-Yaḥsubī, ‘I. (1914). *Mashāriq al-Anwār ‘alā Ṣiḥāḥ al-Āthār*. Dār al-Turāth. Vol. 2, p. 231.

³⁶³ Ibn al-Jawzī, ‘A. (1991). *Daf’ Shubah al-Tashbīh Bi’akuff al-Tanzīh*. Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya. p. 20.

³⁶⁴ Ibn Taymiyya states, “the most reliable of them (i.e. *taḥṣīr* books) is that of Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.” See Ibn Taymiyya, A. (1995). *Majmū’ Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya*. Mujaḥma’ al-Malik Fahd. p. 387.

Thus far, this section has provided a detailed account of the concept of *istiwā'* and its definition according to lexicographers and exegetes, in addition to presenting the selective literalist process that has been applied by Ibn 'Uthaymīn and a number of his Wahhābī fellows. Now, it will delve into al-Harārī's methodology in dealing with the *istiwā'* argument as illustrated in his 'aqīda commentary *al-Sharḥ al-Qawīm fī Ḥall Alfāz al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*.³⁶⁵ In it, he introduces his response by categorising *ta'wīl* into: *ijmālī* (general) and *tafṣīlī* (detailed), followed by laying out the numerous definitions of *istiwā'*, as well as the reasons as to why those verses must undergo *ta'wīl*. Al-Harārī then rebukes some reports on *istiwā'* that have been attributed by the aforementioned figures to Mālik b. Anas and others. He concludes the chapter by quoting Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī's *al-Tadhkira al-Sharqiyya*, wherein al-Qushayrī puts forward a robust and strongly worded counterargument against those whom he explicitly dubs as al-Mujassima.

In an effort to further the credibility of his position, al-Harārī resorts to *ta'wīl* as undertaken by some of the most prominent scholars of the Salaf era. Upon analysis, it appears that al-Harārī's reliance on the statements of Salaf scholars could be seen as a response to Ibn Taymiyya and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's self-ascription to the Salaf generation by assuming the title of Salafīs.³⁶⁶ However, before discussing the Salaf's methodology vis-à-vis *ta'wīl*, al-Harārī revisits the term 'Salaf' and discusses what it truly represents. He maintains that, "the Salaf are the people of the first three centuries: (a) the century of the followers of the *tābi'īn* (i.e., those who have met one of the Prophet's companions), (b) the century of the *tābi'īn*, and (c) the century of the companions, which is the century of the Messenger".³⁶⁷ He notes that those who lived in the first three generations are exclusively referred to as the Salaf. As for those who succeeded them, they are called the Khalaf or successors. According to this, the Salaf era would span three-hundred years. But al-Harārī also recognises another scholarly opinion stating that the Salaf era spans, "one-hundred and twenty years since the *bi'tha* of the Messenger."³⁶⁸ (i.e., commencement of prophet Muḥammad's prophethood).³⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the common opinion is that it refers to the first three-hundred years.

³⁶⁵ Al-Harārī 2007c: 206-217.

³⁶⁶ Leaman 2006: 632.

³⁶⁷ Al-Harārī 2007c: 197.

³⁶⁸ Al-Harārī 2007c: 197.

³⁶⁹ It is worth noting that at the very beginning of his commentary on al-Ṭahāwī's creed titled: *Izhār al-'Aqīda al-Sunniyya Bisharḥ al-'Aqīda al-Ṭahāwīyya*, al-Harārī states that the best of Muslims are those of the first three generations, "... about whom the Messenger said: 'The best of my community are my generation (*qarnī*), the ones who follow them and the ones who follow them.' The *qarn* means 100 years."

As an indirect response to numerous Wahhābī figures who have dismissed *ta'wīl*, al-Harārī outlines how the process of *ta'wīl* was, in fact, upheld by high-ranking scholars of the Salaf and the Khalaf. However, he argues that the general *ta'wīl* (*al-ta'wīl al-ijmālī*) was dominant during the Salaf era. As for the detailed *ta'wīl* (*al-ta'wīl al-tafṣīlī*), it was mostly utilised by the scholars of the Khalaf. Al-Harārī maintains:

Here there are two methods; both are correct. The first is the method of most of the Salaf, and those are the people of the first three centuries; they interpreted the *mutashābihāt* verses by other than the *ẓāhir* or apparent meanings, in a general way. That is, by believing in them and having conviction that those are not the attributes of a body, rather, that they have a meaning that befits the Majesty of Allāh and His Greatness, without specification; instead, they referred those verses to: “Nothing is similar to him in any way whatsoever” ... The second is the method of the Khalaf. They interpreted the verses and assigned to them detailed meanings that are dictated by the Arabic language. Like the Salaf, they do not carry those verses by their apparent meanings. There is no problem taking this method.³⁷⁰

Al-Harārī notes that neither the Salaf nor the Khalaf rejected *ta'wīl*. Rather, scholars of both eras employed it. The Salaf's approach, according to him, is known as *al-ta'wīl al-ijmālī*. This is exemplified by another wide-spread statement attributed to al-Shāfi'ī. It reads: “I believe in what came from Allāh according to the meaning that Allāh willed, and what came from the Messenger of Allāh according to the meaning that the Messenger of Allāh meant.”³⁷¹ Al-Harārī cautions that while al-Shāfi'ī's statement does not indicate any approval of anthropomorphism, it implies that the *mutashābihāt* verses ought not be taken according to their literal meanings, thus resulting in *tajṣīm*. This approach is what al-Harārī dubs: *al-ta'wīl al-ijmālī*. Similarly, another phrase that is also attributed to prominent Salaf figures such as: al-Awzā'ī (d. 157/774), al-Laith b. Sa'd (d. 175/791), Sufiyyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778) and Makḥūl al-Dimashqī (d. 112/730) regarding the *mutashābihāt* is, “*amirrūhā kamā jā'at bilā kayf*.”³⁷² The statement means let it pass without attributing a modality (*kayf*) to God. It indicates the Salaf's method in predominantly employing *al-ta'wīl al-ijmālī* when faced with ambiguous verses. Nonetheless, prominent Salaf scholars applied *al-ta'wīl al-tafṣīlī*.

³⁷⁰ Al-Harārī 2007c: 197.

³⁷¹ Al-Māwardī 2012: 66.

³⁷² See Al-Bayhaqī, A. (1999). *Al-I'tiqād wa al-Hidāya 'ilā Sabīl al-Rashād*. Beirut: Dār al-Faḍīla. p. 123.

Through *al-ta'wīl al-tafṣīlī*, exegetes and theologians examined the numerous metaphorical interpretations and sought to specify the most plausible and befitting amongst them. This practice, for the most part, appears in the writings of the Khalaf but a number of renowned scholars of the Salaf generation did, in fact, employ this type of *ta'wīl*. In support of this argument, al-Hararī cites the *ta'wīl* accounts of two prominent *ḥadīth* scholars: al-Bukhārī and Ibn Ḥanbal. He mentions three of al-Bukhārī's and one of Ibn Ḥanbal's.

Firstly, in Q. 28:88, the expression *wajh* (lit. face) appears in reference to Allāh. The verse reads, “*kullu shay'in hālikun illā wajhah*”.³⁷³ In al-Bukhārī's *ḥadīth* book, he interprets *wajh* in the verse as: God's *mulk*, or his attribute of dominion. He states, “*illā mulkah*”.³⁷⁴ So, according to him, the verse would that mean everything will perish except for His [attribute of] dominion. Here, al-Hararī states that Allāh's *mulk* is one of His attributes that is derived from His name: al-Malik. Hence, God's *mulk* is an eternal and everlasting attribute. Al-Hararī further explains al-Bukhārī's *ta'wīl* of *mulkah*, as: *sulṭānah*,³⁷⁵ i.e., God's supremacy shall not perish.

A second verse that has also been interpreted by al-Bukhārī following *al-ta'wīl al-tafṣīlī* is Q. 11:56, “*mā min dābbatin illā huwa 'ākhidhun bināṣiyatihā*”.³⁷⁶ Similarly, this verse has also been literally rendered in an anthropomorphic manner. The literal translation reads, “... there is no living creature, but He holds it by its forelock”. So, this verbatim translation attributes to God a physical grasping and thereby does not adequately convey the meaning of the verse. So, in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī notes that “*'ākhidhun bināṣiyatihā*” refers to Allāh's dominion and supremacy over all creations.³⁷⁷

The third example is a *mutashābih ḥadīth* in which the verb *yaḍḥak* (lit. to laugh) is attributed to Allāh. Al-Bukhārī is reported to have said, “The meaning of *al-ḍaḥik* is mercy.”³⁷⁸ Again, al-Bukhārī specifies meanings to ambiguous and implicit Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth* accounts. However, contrary to the first two *ta'wīl* narrations, this report has been widely contested by Wahhābī scholars and deemed unreliable. They have particularly targeted the chain of the narration attributed to al-Bukhārī.³⁷⁹

³⁷³ The Qur'ān 28:88.

³⁷⁴ Al-Bukhārī, M. (1993). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Dār Ibn Kathīr. Vol. 4, p. 1788.

³⁷⁵ Al-Hararī 2007c: 198.

³⁷⁶ The Qur'ān 11:56.

³⁷⁷ Al-Bukhārī 1993: 1201.

³⁷⁸ Al-Khaṭṭābī, M. (1988). *A'lām al-Ḥadīth fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā. Vol. 3, p. 1921.

³⁷⁹ Al-Jāsim, F. (2007). *Al-Ashā'ira fī Mizān Ahl al-Sunna*. Kuwait: al-Mabarra al-Khayriyya Li'ulūm al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunna. p. 590.

Fourthly, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who is regarded as an authority by Ash‘arīs and Wahhābīs equally, is reported to have applied *al-ta’wīl al-taḥṣīlī*, particularly vis-à-vis Q. 89:22. The verse reads, “*wa jā’a rabbuka walmalaku ṣaffan ṣaffā*”.³⁸⁰ The verse is literally rendered as: your Lord has come with the angels. In this verse, Ibn Ḥanbal interpreted the verb *jā’a* to mean, “His *qudra* (i.e., power) has come”.³⁸¹ Al-Hararī elucidates further and expands upon Ibn Ḥanbal’s *ta’wīl* by stating, “... *qudra* in: “His *qudra* has come”, according to Ibn Ḥanbal’s interpretation of the verse, it refers to the magnificent creations, which Allāh has created for the Day of Judgement. These matters are the traces (‘*āthār*) of the *qudra* (i.e., God’s power).”³⁸²

Thus, by relying upon al-Bukhārī’s *ta’wīl*, as well as that of Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Hararī reinforces his pro-*ta’wīl* position. He also stresses that Ḥanbalī scholars reported that Ibn Ḥanbal did not only approve upon *ta’wīl* but he also applied it. Amongst those Ḥanbalīs is prominent Judge Abū Ya‘lā (d. 458/1066),³⁸³ Muḥammad b. al-Sa‘dī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 900/1494),³⁸⁴ Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān al-Ḥanbalī (d. 695/1295)³⁸⁵ and Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795/1393),³⁸⁶ all of whom narrated in their books that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal applied *al-ta’wīl al-taḥṣīlī* to Q. 89:22. Conversely, Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, who was a self-proclaimed Ḥanbalī, denied that *ta’wīl* was the practice of the Salaf.³⁸⁷ He wrote:

The unacceptable figurative interpretation (*ta’wīl*) is to divert discourse from its apparent sense to what goes against the apparent sense (*ṣarfū l-kalāmi ‘an ṣāhirihi ilā mā yukhālifu ṣāhirahu*). If it is said ... that only God knows its *ta’wīl* then we concede to the Jahmiyya that the Qur’anic verse has a true *ta’wīl* that is other than its [plain] specification (*yukhālifu dalātaha*), but that this is only known to God. This is not the position of the Salaf and the Imams. Rather, their position is to deny and reject *ta’wīl*, not to suspend judgement.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁰ The Qur’ān: 89:22.

³⁸¹ Al-Ṣāwī, I. (2015). *Hāshiyat al-Ṣāwī ‘alā Jawharat al-Tawḥīd fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 105.

³⁸² Al-Hararī 2007c: 200.

³⁸³ Ibn al-Jawzī 1991: 141.

³⁸⁴ Al-Sa‘dī, M. (n.d.). *Al-Jawhar al-Muḥaṣṣal fī Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad*. Maktabat Gharīb. p. 48.

³⁸⁵ Ibn Ḥamdān, A. (2004). *Nihāyat al-Mubtadi ‘in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*. Maktabat al-Rushd. p. 35.

³⁸⁶ Ibn Rajab, ‘A. (1996). *Fath al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Maktabat al-Ghurabā’ al-Athariyya. Vol. 9, p. 280.

³⁸⁷ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya brands with heresy whosoever undergoes *tafwīd* (or entrusting the meaning to Allāh, synonymous with *al-ta’wīl al-ijmālī*) He states, “*tafwīd* is worse than *tahrīf*”. See Ibn al-Qayyim, M. (1987). *Al-Ṣawā‘iq al-Mursala ‘alā al-Jahmiyya wa al-Mu‘aṭṭila*. Riyadh: Dār al-‘Āṣima. p. 296.

³⁸⁸ El-Rouayheb, K. (2015). *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 227.

As illustrated earlier, any glimpse at the *ta'wīl* argument brought forth by the opponents of Ash'arism camp would suffice to reveal their numerous inconsistencies and contradictions. It seems that all of those efforts are undertaken for the sole purpose of defending their literalist approach to the Qur'ān; particularly regarding Q. 20:05: “*ar-Raḥmān ‘alā al-‘arsh istawā*”.³⁸⁹ While Ibn Bāz permits *ta'wīl* only if the verse does not pertain to any of Allāh's attributes, Ibn 'Uthaymīn applies a rather selective method. He entirely rejects any *ta'wīl* in regard to the *istiwā* verse, but when confronted with other *mutashābihāt* verses, such as Q. 57:4, he does not hesitate to dismiss the *ẓāhir* meaning and interpret it, even if it pertains to God's attributes. Contrary to Ibn Bāz and Ibn 'Uthaymīn, Ibn Taymiyya not only rejected the concept of *ta'wīl* or *tafwīd*, but he went on to allege that none of the Salaf acknowledged this methodology. He claims, “... I have not found until this moment any of the companions who applied *ta'wīl* to any of the verses or *ḥadīths* regarding God's attributes in a way that goes against the apparent meaning.”³⁹⁰ Therefore, the above evidently indicates that Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn 'Uthaymīn and Ibn Bāz have adopted vastly contradictory methods in an attempt to support one key belief: anthropomorphic.

Conversely, al-Harārī set forth a robust and consistent argument that appears to be in compliance with the guidelines provided by Q. 3:7. He acknowledges the two categories of Qur'ānic verses when faced with a number of verses whose apparent meanings (*ẓāhir*) might seem irreconcilable, al-Harārī would refer the interpretation of the *mutashābihāt* verses back to the *muḥkamāt*. Certainly, al-Harārī employs this methodology so as to safeguard the concept of *tanzīh*. Perhaps, the correlation between *tanzīh* and the *muḥkamāt* verses in al-Harārī's thought could be best exemplified by his statement regarding Q. 43:11, “... the verse: *laysa kamithlihī shay'* (i.e., there is nothing like Him) is absolutely the greatest verse in *tanzīh*, and clearing Allāh from unbefitting attributes.”³⁹¹ On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya comments on the very same verse expressing, yet again, another self-contradictory statement, whereby noting, “... it (i.e., Q. 43:11) is the greatest verse revealed in regard to *tanzīh*, yet it was not void of any corporeality (*tashbīh*).”³⁹² In any case, al-Harārī's anti-Wahhābī discourse in support of *tanzīh* was not the only contentious topic as he also disagreed with Wahhābīs on some key principles in Ṣūfism.

³⁸⁹ The Qur'ān 20:05.

³⁹⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, A. (2005). *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*. Dār al-Wafā'. Vol. 17, p. 219.

³⁹¹ Al-Harārī 2009b: 37.

³⁹² Ibn Taymiyya, A. (2001). *Bughyat al-Murtād fī al-Rad 'alā al-Mutafalsifa wa al-Qarāmiṭa wa al-Bāṭiniyya Ahl al-Ilhād min al-Qā'ilīn bi al-Ḥulūl wa al-Ittiḥād*. Maktabat al-'Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam. p. 464.

3.2.3 Şūfis & The Mutaşawwifa

With the emergence of new Şūfī orders and the spread of many self-ascribed Şūfis, al-Hararī focused on the distinction between authentic Şūfism and the misconceptions surrounding this discipline. In principle, al-Hararī argues strongly that the Sunnī fundamentals of *tanzīh* do not in any way nullify the pillars of authentic Şūfism. While Şūfism is considered to be a spiritual dimension in classical Sunnī practice,³⁹³ yet it has been recently regarded as an independent sect or even a separate school of thought in addition to Sunnism, Shī‘ism and Ibādism.³⁹⁴ This erroneous belief, according to al-Hararī, could be traced back to two underpinning reasons. The first is (a) the staunch battle launched by Wahhābīs against all branches of Şūfī orders, while the second is (b) the emergence of some Levantine Şūfī-claimers; referred to by al-Hararī as Mutaşawwifa.³⁹⁵ In an attempt to tackle the aforementioned misconception, al-Hararī meticulously establishes the bond between the concept of *tanzīh* and the pillars of Şūfism by relying upon one of the great Şūfī masters, al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910).³⁹⁶ Al-Hararī cites one of al-Junayd’s statements on ‘*aqīda*: “Al-Tawhīd is to differentiate between the *Qadīm* (the Eternal) and the *muḥdath* (i.e., the creation).”³⁹⁷ Al-Hararī does not deny the spiritual dimension that Şūfism promotes but he nonetheless reiterates that all major classical Şūfī figures upheld and promoted *tanzīh* and considered it a prerequisite to Şūfism. He notes:

The true Şūfis are those who followed him (i.e., al-Junayd al-Baghdādī). They are the ones who have accorded with the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* ... Al-Tawhīd means to avoid likening the Eternal – i.e., Allāh – to the creations. This is because Allāh is neither an impalpable nor a palpable body. The body (*jism*) requires a place and a direction [to dwell in]. As for Allāh, the Exalted, who is neither a palpable nor an impalpable body, he exists without a place. He does not reside in a direction or a place ... These are the true Şūfis, and these are the Muslim believers. As for those who are not upon this, they do not know their creator.³⁹⁸

³⁹³ Marshall Cavendish Reference (Firm). (2010). *Islamic Beliefs, Practices, and Cultures*. New York: Marshall Cavendish Reference. p. 148.

³⁹⁴ Rubin, B. (2012). *The Middle East: A Guide to Politics, Economy, Society and Culture*. Routledge. p. 333.

³⁹⁵ The term Mutaşawwif refers to an intermediate *şūfī murīd* (i.e. student). See Ohlander, E. (2008) *Umar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods*. Leiden: Brill. p. 287. However, al-Hararī utilises this term in reference pseudo-Şūfis who have distorted the image of authentic Şūfism by deviating from classical Sunnī tenets and introducing doctrinal innovations.

³⁹⁶ Al-Hararī – alongside classical and modern-day scholars – regarded al-Junayd al-Baghdādī as ‘Sayyid al-Şūfiyya’ or ‘Shaykh al-Şūfiyya’. During his lifetime, he was considered to be the master of Şūfis.

³⁹⁷ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2017a). *Jāmi‘ al-Khayrāt min Majālis ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Hararī*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 123.

³⁹⁸ Al-Hararī 2017a: 125.

As illustrated, al-Hararī argues that the practice of Ṣūfism would only be accepted and deemed valid so long as one's foundations of belief are sound, that is, as long as one is upon *tanzīh*. Al-Hararī strictly prioritises acquiring the Islamic sciences related to *ʿIlm al-Ḥāl*³⁹⁹ over the study of Ṣūfism. For instance, his book *Mukhtaṣar ʿAbdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi ʿilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī*⁴⁰⁰ is one of his earliest works on *ʿIlm al-Ḥāl* which is essentially a summary of Yemeni scholar ʿAbdullāh b. Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir's book entitled *Sullam al-Tawfīq ʿIlā Maḥabbatillāh ʿalā al-Taḥqīq*.⁴⁰¹ In the *Mukhtaṣar*, he states that it is based upon Ibn Ṭāhir's *Sullam al-Tawfīq*. Then, al-Hararī goes on to admit that, during the abridgment process, he omitted the section of Ṣūfism from his *Mukhtaṣar*. This is because he took it upon himself to exclude all non-essential chapters. Again, al-Hararī's prioritisation of *ʿIlm al-Ḥāl* ought not to be misunderstood as disapproval on his part of Ṣūfism. In fact, al-Hararī identified himself as a Ṣūfī follower of the Rifāʿī order. In addition to qualifying as a Rifāʿī, he acquired other *ijāzas* in the Naqshabandī, Shadhilī, Suhrawardī, as well as the Chishtī Ṣūfī orders.

On the topic of Ṣūfism, al-Hararī sought to tackle the opposing views propagated not only by Wahhābīs but also the Mutaṣawwifa. With regards to the former, he devoted an entire section in his encyclopaedic refutation of Aḥmad b. Taymiyya⁴⁰² in which he responds to Wahhābī views that are primarily derived from Ibn Taymiyya's works. Ibn Taymiyya opposed Ṣūfism and branded Ṣūfī practices as devilish, as he states in his *Kashf Ḥal al-Aḥmadiyya wa Aḥwālhim al-Shaṭāniyya*.⁴⁰³ The title literally reads: revealing the state of the Aḥmadiyya and their devilish ways. The Aḥmadiyya refers to the followers of Ṣūfī Imām Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī (d. 578/1182). In simple terms, al-Hararī responds by revealing Ibn Taymiyya's admiration of the master of Ṣūfis, al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, whom Ibn Taymiyya referred to as: a leader of guidance (*imām hudā*).⁴⁰⁴ Al-Hararī argues that by completely denouncing Ṣūfism, Wahhābīs would essentially oppose their grand-shaykh Ibn Taymiyya who, despite his disagreements with Ṣūfism, held a number of Ṣūfī figures, such as al-Junayd, in high regard.

³⁹⁹ It is generally regarded as the knowledge that covers the fundamentals of faith as well as the obligatory acts of worship - amongst other matters - which every Muslim is obliged to acquire. See the definition of *ʿIlm al-Ḥāl* in Al-Khādimī 1930: 323.

⁴⁰⁰ Al-Hararī, ʿA. (1999). *Mukhtaṣar ʿAbdullāh al-Hararī al-Kāfil Bi ʿilm al-Dīn al-Ḍarūrī*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁴⁰¹ Ibn Ṭāhir 2013.

⁴⁰² Al-Hararī 2007b.

⁴⁰³ Although it is not in print, but his book has been attributed to Ibn Taymiyya by many. See Al-Ṣafadī, S. (2010). *Al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt*. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. Vol. 5, p. 266.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, A. (2011). *Majmūʿ Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya*. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. Vol. 3, p. 242.

The authentic Ṣūfī, according to al-Hararī, is the one who, "... abides by the Qur'ān and the Sunna by observing the obligations and refraining from prohibitions, along with leaving out indulging in luxuries pertaining to food, clothing and the like (*tana'um*)."⁴⁰⁵ Therefore, the above traits are the only two integrals al-Hararī considers for becoming an authentic Ṣūfī. Al-Hararī continues by addressing the denunciation of the term Ṣūfī by some Wahhābīs. He notes that Ibn Ḥibbān relied on many famous Ṣūfī scholars in his collection of *ḥadīths*.⁴⁰⁶ Not only Ibn Ḥibbān, but also Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal who in his *Musnad* states: "We were informed by Mūsā b. Khalaf, who was considered to be among the high-ranking Ṣūfīs (*abdāl/budalā*)."⁴⁰⁷ Al-Hararī wonders: how could identifying one as a Ṣūfī be condemned as a heretic innovation despite it being used by a number of classical scholars who did not express any objections to using the term Ṣūfī? He goes further to argue:

If their (i.e., the Wahhābīs') objection pertained to employing the term Ṣūfī, then let them also denounce the term 'Shaykh' so-and-so. Because it was not common during the early ages to refer to a scholar by 'Shaykh'. Likewise, after the first generation, some scholars were referred to as 'Shaykh al-Islām' and this is in reference to those who lived past the first three centuries. So, what is the difference between this and that? Thus, there should be no objections to the introduction of new terminologies that do not oppose the religion.⁴⁰⁸

In the same context, al-Hararī criticises the Wahhābīs' objection to the non-luxurious lifestyles adopted by many Ṣūfīs and maintains that it would be as though some of those Wahhābīs are attacking prophets and messengers because they themselves did not indulge in *tana'um*. For instance, it was numerous reported (via *tawātur*) that Jesus ate vegetables and wore wool garments. Also, no fire was set for cooking in prophet Muḥammad's house for two months as he would simply sustain himself with dates and water.⁴⁰⁹ After presenting those anecdotes, al-Hararī concludes this section by reiterating that Ṣūfīs do not prohibit *tana'um* but rather they have taken it upon themselves to leave out indulging in luxuries following the example of prophets.

⁴⁰⁵ Al-Hararī, A. (2004a). *Al-Maqalāt Al-Sunniyya fī Kashf Ḍalālāt Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 437.

⁴⁰⁶ Al-Hararī 2004a: 438.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1995). *Al-Musnad li al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal*. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth. Vol. 12, p. 270.

⁴⁰⁸ Al-Hararī 2004a: 438.

⁴⁰⁹ Al-Hararī 2004a: 438.

As stated earlier, al-Hararī deals with the topic of Ṣūfism on two fronts, the Wahhābī front and that of the Mutaṣawwifa. In principle, he acknowledges the soundness of many Ṣūfī orders, but he nonetheless personally ascribed to the Rifāʿī. He states that the very first two orders to be established were the Rifāʿī and the Qādirī, followed by the foundation of approximately forty *ṭarīqas* such as the Shādhilī, Naqshabandī, Badawī among others. However, he argues, “All those orders, apart from the Rifāʿī, were subject to deviation; their followers deviated, especially the Shādhilīs. The Shādhilī [order] was affected by a lot of deviation.”⁴¹⁰ To emphasise this point, al-Hararī declares that no one can become a Ṣūfī unless they uphold the belief of *tanzīh*. However, many Mutaṣawwifa have advocated the belief in God’s incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and the unity of being with God (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), amongst other radical beliefs. Consequent to the spread of such beliefs, al-Hararī declared war against two Mutaṣawwifa groups: the Shādhilī Yashruʿī order and the Tijjānī *ṭarīqa*.

The Shādhilī Yashruʿī order is a branch of the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa*⁴¹¹ which is considered to be one of the oldest orders in the Muslim world. It was established by Moroccan-born scholar Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258).⁴¹² However, the Yashruʿī branch was founded by ʿAlī Nūr al-Dīn al-Yashruʿī (d. 1316/1899). It was established in Acre and became rather influential in Syria, Palestine and Jordan.⁴¹³ Al-Hararī considered both ʿAlī al-Shādhilī and ʿAlī al-Yashruʿī as authentic Ṣūfī masters and regarded them highly. He notes that the original Shādhilī order, in terms of its foundations, is sound.

However, more than six-hundred years after the demise of ʿAlī al-Shādhilī, many radical beliefs penetrated the *ṭarīqa*, particularly through the foundation of the two sub-Shādhilī *ṭarīqas*: the Darqāwī and the Yashruʿī orders.⁴¹⁴ The Darqāwī order was established in Morocco by Muḥammad al-ʿArabī al-Darqāwī (d. 1239/1823). As for ʿAlī al-Yashruʿī, al-Hararī believed that he was a true follower of the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa* but his followers deviated from his path, “Most of them deviated, they became misguided. They left Islam during his life. During his lifetime, they strayed. Just a few of his followers benefitted.”⁴¹⁵ Al-Hararī credits the deviation of many Yashruʿīs to their adoption of the *ḥulūl* doctrine. That is, their belief in God’s incarnation.

⁴¹⁰ Al-Hararī 2017a: 292. This deviation relates to some practices, but mostly beliefs.

⁴¹¹ Yashruʿī Tariqa. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, Esposito, J. (Ed.), Oxford Islamic Studies Online. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2530>.

⁴¹² Esposito, J. (2003). *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 284.

⁴¹³ Bang, A. (2014). *Islamic Sufi Networks in the Western Indian Ocean (c.1880-1940): Ripples of Reform*. London: Brill. p. 43.

⁴¹⁴ Al-Hararī 2017a: 123.

⁴¹⁵ Al-Hararī 2017a: 293.

Al-Hararī goes on to warrant, “Among the most abhorrent statements that have been expressed by those who diverted from Shādhilīs is the following: Allāh is inside every human, male or female. They have left the fold of *Tawhīd*, they have left Islam. They committed greater blasphemy than that of the Jews and Christians.”⁴¹⁶ Therefore, it would be valid to assume that al-Hararī admired and respected the Shādhilī order, – and by extension the Yashruṭī – but when faced with heretic doctrines, such as *ḥulūl* or *waḥdat al-wujūd*, al-Hararī did not hesitate to respond, whether through public lectures or in writing.⁴¹⁷ In fact, on many occasions, al-Hararī expressed that followers of the Ṣūfī masters: Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī (d. 578/1182) and ʿAbd al-Qādir Gīlānī (d. 561/1166) explicitly warned against the spread of *ḥulūl* and *waḥdat al-wujūd* doctrines amongst many Mutaṣawwifa. Al-Rifāʿī, according to al-Hararī, focused on *tanzīh* and as such many of his followers spread *ʿaqīda*, “until they became known as the Guardians of the Creed.”⁴¹⁸

Al-Hararī finds in al-Rifāʿī’s works considerable focus on two elements: the *ʿaqīda* dimension and the spiritual Ṣūfī nature. In his defence of the Rifāʿī order, al-Hararī emphasises that the Rifāʿīs worked towards eradicating the two doctrines that have become widespread among those who ascribe to Ṣūfism: the *ḥulūl* and *waḥdat al-wujūd* creeds. Those Rifāʿīs, in fact, did so by following the example of their master Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī who combatted anthropomorphic doctrines by focusing on *tanzīh*. For instance, he said, “The ultimate knowledge about Allāh is to be certain that Allāh exists without a how or a place.”⁴¹⁹ In fact, when al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), a famous mystic who lived in modern-day Iraq during the Abbasid era,⁴²⁰ proclaimed one of his most famous pro-*ḥulūl* statements: “I am al-Ḥaqq”,⁴²¹ al-Rifāʿī is reported to have said in response to it: “Had he been upon the truth (*al-ḥaqq*), he would not have said: I am God (*al-Ḥaqq*)”.⁴²² Therefore, followers of the Rifāʿī and Qādirī orders continued to rebut the *ḥulūl* and *waḥdat al-wujūd* doctrines.

⁴¹⁶ Al-Hararī 2017a: 293.

⁴¹⁷ It is worth noting that all statements quoted from *Jāmiʿ al-Khayrāt min Majālis ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Hararī* were originally part of tape-recorded public lectures and seminars delivered by al-Hararī over decades. The lectures and speeches were later on compiled - after al-Hararī’s death - and published thereafter as part of *Jāmiʿ al-Khayrāt* book.

⁴¹⁸ Al-Hararī 2017a: 294.

⁴¹⁹ Al-Duhaibī, ʿA. (2009) *Ithāf al-Akābir fī Sīrat wa Manāqib al-Imām Muḥī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī al-Ḥasanī al-Ḥusainī wa Baʿḍ Mashāhīr Dhurriyyatih Uḷī al-Faql wa al-Maʿāthir*. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. p. 59.

⁴²⁰ Massignon, L. & Gardet, L. (1986). Al-Halladj In Bearman, P. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Retrieved from https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-halladj-COM_0256.

⁴²¹ The verbatim translation of al-Ḥaqq is: ‘the Truth’, but here, al-Ḥallāj is referring to one of the 99 names of Allāh: al-Ḥaqq. It means: the one whose existence is confirmed, about which there is no doubt. See Q. 24:35. Essentially, he is saying that God has dwelled in him.

⁴²² Al-Dimashqī, ʿA. (2018). *Samāʿ wa Sharāb ʿInda Ashraf al-Aqtāb*. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. pp. 46-47.

In addition to the Yashruṭīs, al-Hararī also targeted followers of two modern-day orders: the Tijjānī and the Naqshabanī *ṭarīqas*. Similar to the case of ‘Alī al-Yashruṭī, al-Hararī did not brand the founders of the Tijjānī and the Naqshabanī orders with heresy or deviancy. Instead, he praised Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Tijjānī (d. 1230/1815) and Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband Bukhārī (d. 791/1389) and repeatedly argued that those Ṣūfī figures are far from having uttered such blasphemous statements, let alone promoting or teaching *al-ḥulūl* or *al-waḥda*. With regards to some Tijjānīs, many present-day followers of this group consider ‘Alī Ḥarāzīm’s *Jawāhir al-Ma‘ānī wa Bulūgh al-Amānī* (The Pearls of Meanings and Attainment of Desires)⁴²³ as a reference for their daily *wird*.⁴²⁴ Amongst the most revered *wirds* by Tijjānīs, is *ṣalāt al-fātiḥ* (lit. the salutation of the opener). It reads:

O Allāh! Bless our Master Muḥammad, the opener of what has been closed, the one who sealed what had gone before. He makes the truth victorious by the truth, and he is the guide to Your Straight Path and bless his Household as it befits his immense stature and splendour.”⁴²⁵

Ḥarāzīm alleges that reciting this *wird* once is equivalent to, “... every praise (*tasbīḥ*) of Allāh that has ever been uttered in the world, as well as every *dhikr* and supplication, be it short or long, and [it is also equivalent to] reciting the [entire] Qur’ān, six thousand times.” So, Ḥarāzīm’s statement clearly portrays the belief adopted by some Tijjānīs’ that reciting their daily *wird* is more rewardable than reciting the Qur’ān or any other *wird*.⁴²⁶ This, certainly, is a claim that has not been made by anyone prior to Ḥarāzīm! But this is not the only issue al-Hararī warned against. He also touched upon yet another Tijjānī *wird* that is commonly known as *al-ṣalāt al-ghaybiyya* (lit. the unseen prayer). The *dhikr* reads: “*allāhumma ṣalli ‘alā Muḥammad ‘ayni dhātik al-ghaybiyya*”⁴²⁷ which means: O God, praise Muḥammad, who is, himself, part of your unseen self. Al-Hararī vehemently rejects this *dhikr* as a blasphemous statement and cautions that it belies a Qur’ānic verse which means: “Say [O Muḥammad]: “I am only a human being, like you [people]”.”⁴²⁸

⁴²³ Ḥarāzīm, ‘A. (2017). *Jawāhir al-Ma‘ānī wa Bulūgh al-Amānī*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 440.

⁴²⁴ “In essence, the *wird* is a series of invocations determined by the founder or his disciples which are integral to the initiation.” See Willis, J. (2018). *Studies in West African Islamic History: The Cultivators of Islam*. London: Routledge. p. 54.

⁴²⁵ Al-Suwailim, ‘A. (2011). *Al-Tijjāniyya: Dirāsa Li’ahamm ‘Aqā’id al-Tijjāniyya ‘alā Ḍaw’ al-Kitāb wa al-Sunna*. Dār al-‘Āṣima. p. 113.

⁴²⁶ Al-Suwailim 2011: 113.

⁴²⁷ AICP. (n.d.). *Al-Taḥdhīr al-Shar’ī al-Wājib Mimman Khālafa Ahl al-Sunna*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 99.

⁴²⁸ The Qur’ān 18:110.

Furthermore, some followers of the prominent Naqshabandī Ṣūfī order were also criticised by al-Hararī. But it is worth noting that al-Hararī had a well-established relationship with Naqshabandī master Muḥammad ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn al-Naqshabandī, whose father ‘Uthmān Sirāj al-Dīn II was said to be the last master in this lineage.⁴²⁹ In a series of handwritten letters exchanged between al-Hararī and ‘Uthmān al-Naqshabandī, al-Naqshabandī refers to al-Hararī as a *‘allāma* (great scholar). He wrote:

My beloved, dear and eminent brother: the *‘allāma* ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Ḥabashī, may Allāh preserve you. Peace be upon you; I have kindly received your delightful letter – that was sent with Abū Waḍḍāḥ – and it reflects the honourable traits and noble manners that we equally carry for you. We have, and still do, express to you our longing, respect and love. We are, as the poet says [in Persian]: the souls of dogs and wolves are inharmonious, and our souls are united.⁴³⁰

However, despite al-Hararī’s good relationship with the Naqshabandī masters, he expectedly, pointed out a number of erroneous practises and beliefs practised by some of their shaykhs. For instance, in one of his public lessons, al-Hararī refers to an incident that occurred with a self-proclaimed Naqshabandī shaykh who self-identified as a *qutb*.⁴³¹ “This Shaykh went to Medina with some of our brothers and said when he saw the chandelier in the mosque: “this is not created by Allāh, this is created by man.” What benefit did he retain from adhering to the Naqshabandī *wird*.”⁴³² In this anecdote al-Hararī illustrates how some Mutaṣawwifas have come to adopt the belief that not all creations are brought into existence by God. So, this Shaykh disregarded a doctrine that is unanimously agreed-upon in *‘aqīda*, which is the belief that Allāh is the sole creator of all things.⁴³³ Undoubtedly, this opinion is not adopted by all Naqshabandīs but as it has become apparent that, al-Hararī would very often contrast the Mutaṣawwifas’ beliefs with the pillars of *tanzīh*. He simply concludes that whosoever merely ascribes to the Ṣūfīs without truly following their path, then his actions are to be exclusively attributed to him and he is not to be identified with the attributes of the pioneer Ṣūfī masters.⁴³⁴

⁴²⁹ Weismann, I. (2007). *The Naqshbandiyya: Orthodoxy and Activism in a Worldwide Sufi Tradition*. London: Routledge. p. 103.

⁴³⁰ Ḥalīm 2017: 859.

⁴³¹ “The shaykh of the Sufi order symbolizes *qutb* ... Popularly has come to refer to any holy man.” See “Qutb.” In *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Ed. John L. Esposito. *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*. 28-Apr-2020. Retrieved from <<http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1953>>.

⁴³² Al-Hararī 2017a: 126.

⁴³³ The Qur’ān 25:2.

⁴³⁴ Al-Hararī 2004a: 443.

3.2.4 *Tawassul*: Mediation

The practise of *tawassul* has been a major point of contention between al-Hararī and his adversaries. This concept of *tawassul* has generally been affiliated with the genre of Ṣūfism, particularly in the past two centuries. As such, this section will firstly present an overview of this concept, followed by a detailed account of the linguistic and the religious definitions of *tawassul*. Then, it will shed light upon Ibn Taymiyya's position as well as the of al-Hararī. Generally, *tawassul* has been associated with mediation but sometimes it is likened to intercession (*shafā'a*). However, there is significant distinction between the two, as it is noted:

Besides the eschatological intercession that Muhammad has been granted by God, there is a second concept, close to that of *shafa'a*, discussed in Islamic literature: the idea of Muhammad's mediation (*tawassul*) to God during his lifetime and after his death. Various episodes of Muhammad's life depict him interceding on behalf of his Companions, mostly asking God to forgive their sins (*istighfar*).⁴³⁵

In terms of the linguistic origin of the term *tawassul*, it is derived from three root letters: *wāw*, *sīn* and *lām*. It also appears in the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* but in the form of *wasīla*, which is similarly derived from the three aforementioned root letters. Linguistically, *tawassul* may hold different meanings depending on the context in which the term is used. However, the common meaning associated with *tawassul* is to request or desire. Comprehensive definitions are provided by classical lexicographers as follows:

1. Ibn Fāris states in his *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughā* that, "*al-wasīla* is the desire and seeking. The term *wasila* is used when one desires something. *Al-Wāsil*, is the one who seeks [the reward] of Allāh, the Exalted."⁴³⁶
2. Al-Fairūzābādī delves into the derivatives of *wāw*, *sīn* and *lām* and concludes that the verb *wasila* in, "... *wasila 'ilā Allāh tawsīlan*, [means]: he did an action by which he sought God['s reward], and it is similar [in meaning] to *tawassala*."⁴³⁷
3. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣbahānī defined *al-wasīla* as seeking something with desire, "Also, it has a more specific meaning compared to *al-waṣīla* (with a *ṣad*, not a *sīn*)."⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ Fitzpatrick, C. & Walker, A. (2014). *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*. London: ABC-CLIO, LLC. p. 300.

⁴³⁶ Ibn Fāris, A. (2011). *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughā*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. Vo. 2, p. 631.

⁴³⁷ Al-Fairūzābādī, M. (n.d.). *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*. Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Jamī'. Vol. 4, p. 64.

⁴³⁸ Al-Aṣbahānī 2009: 821.

Although the term *tawassul* does not appear in this form in the Qur’ān, *al-wasīla* is mentioned in two verses: Q. 5:35 and Q. 17:57. Both verses seem to be similar in terms of their wording and structure, essentially conveying a related message. Q. 5:35 and Q. 17:57 make reference to the believers who seek their Lord’s *qurba* and His reward or request a high status. In regard to Q. 5:35, renowned exegete Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabari interprets “*wa ibtaghū ‘ilayhi al-wasīla*”⁴³⁹ as, “seek His *qurba* by performing the deeds that He accepts.”⁴⁴⁰ Also, Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) reports from Qatāda b. al-Nu‘mān (d. 23/644), one of prophet Muḥammad’s companions, saying that *al-wasīla* refers to seeking Allāh’s reward and His *qurba*, “... by obeying Him and performing the deeds that He accepts.”⁴⁴¹

As for Q. 17:57, most *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* books indicate that this verse refers to a group of *jinn* who were worshipped by some Arab men. When the *jinn* embraced Islam, those men continued to worship them.⁴⁴² Ibn Ḥajar states that upon the *jinn*’s conversion to Islam, they started seeking *al-wasīla*.⁴⁴³ Similar to Q. 5:35, *al-wasīla* here refers to the concept of *qurba* (lit. nearness or closeness), as illustrated by al-Qurṭubī’s statement, “... *yabtaghūn*, means they seek *al-qurba* and *al-zulfā* from their Lord.”⁴⁴⁴ The two synonyms *qurba* and *zulfā* appear frequently in the interpretations of both verses. As alluded to earlier, both terms literally translate to nearness, proximity, neighborship or closeness, however the literal meaning is not intended here.

Interestingly, Ibn Ḥajar contributes to the interpretation of *qurba* when associated with Allāh, particularly when discussing the famous *ḥadīth*, “Whosoever shows enmity to a *walī* (righteous slave) of Mine, then he has been informed that I have declared war against him.”⁴⁴⁵ The *ḥadīth* ends by addressing the attainment of Allāh’s *qurba* by performing the obligatory deeds. Ibn Ḥajar relies on al-Qushayrī’s interpretation of *qurba*, whereby arguing that it is metaphorical and does not refer to physical closeness or proximity in distance. Rather, “The slave’s *qurb* from his Lord is attained by believing [in Him] and doing good. As for the Lord’s *qurb* from His slave, it is in reference to the bounties He endows upon him.”⁴⁴⁶

⁴³⁹ The Qur’ān 5:35.

⁴⁴⁰ Al-Ṭabarī, M. (2013). *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wil ‘Āyi al-Qur’ān*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Vol. 4, p. 566.

⁴⁴¹ Ibn Kathīr, I. (2011). *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*. Dār al-Fikr. Vol. 2, p. 62.

⁴⁴² Al-Nawawī, Y. (2019). *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim Bisharḥ al-Nawawī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 128.

⁴⁴³ Ibn Ḥajar, A. (2011). *Fath al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Vol. 8, p. 340.

⁴⁴⁴ Al-Qurṭubī, M. (2019). *Al-Jāmi‘ li Ahkām al-Qur’ān*. Dār al-Fikr. p. 252.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, A. (2011). *Fath al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Dār al-Fikr. p. 116.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥajar 2011: 116.

Q. 56:11 which reads, “*‘ulā’ik al-muqarrabūn*”⁴⁴⁷ refers to the people of paradise who have been granted *qurba* or *qurb* by Allāh. Exegetes have also sought to clarify the meaning of *qurb* in this verse. Amongst them is renowned exegete Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. ‘Āshūr who argues that, originally, *qurb* refers to being chosen and selected. As such, it is metaphorical – so when one attains a lofty rank, Allāh would endow upon him His kindness and bounties. Therefore, it could be deduced that *qurb*, *qurba* or *zulfā* mentioned as part of the definition of *al-wasīla* is strictly in reference to the metaphorical closeness. Which means would elevate his rank, grant him rewards and the like.

Having established that the linguistic definition of *tawassul* or *wasīla* refers to desirably seeking a matter or requesting it, the two Qur’ānic verses indicate that *wasīla* may be understood as seeking means in hopes of gaining God’s bounties. However, a common religious definition of *tawassul* has certainly not been agreed upon. Nonetheless, it fundamentally portrays *tawassul* as, “the use of a *wasīla* to arrive at or obtain the favour of Allah.”⁴⁴⁸ It is agreed that, when invoking Allāh or supplicating to Him, Muslims are permitted to seek means or mediation (*tawassul*) via the good deeds they have performed, such as their fasting or prayers. They do so in hopes of being granted their requests. However, it has been argued whether or not it is permissible to employ *tawassul* through the prophet himself, or the *awliyā’*.⁴⁴⁹ Zamhari⁴⁵⁰ notes:

More specifically, the debate revolves around the question of whether or not it is permissible to make the Prophet, after his death, the means of supplication with such phrases as *allāhumma innī asaluka bi-nabyyika* (O Allah! I beseech You through your Prophet), or *bi-jāhi nabīyyika* (By the dignity of Your Prophet), or even *bi-Haqqi nabīyyika* (For the sake of Your Prophet), and whether or not it is permissible to call on deceased pious Muslims or Muslim saints, other than the Prophet, as the means of supplication.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁷ The Qur’ān 56:11.

⁴⁴⁸ Millie, J. (2008). Supplicating, Naming, offering: Tawassul in West Java. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 39(1), 107–122.

⁴⁴⁹ “In Arabic, *walī* (pl. *awliyā’*) means someone who is near, a supporter, a guardian, or a friend. But most often it refers to a SAINT in the Islamic world. In this sense, the word is often used in the expression *walī ALLAH* ... Islamic saints are those who are recognised as such by people, usually because they are considered holy. They inspire feelings of reverence in people, and their help is sought in times of need. This is true for both living and dead saints.” See Campo, J. (2008). *Encyclopedia of Islam*. New York: Facts On File. p. 707.

⁴⁵⁰ Zamhari, A. (2010). *Rituals of Islamic Spirituality: A Study of Majlis Dhikr Groups in East Java*. The Australian National University Press. p. 70.

⁴⁵¹ Zamhari 2010: 70.

Prior to delving into Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of *tawassul*, the restrictions he imposed upon it, as well as al-Harārī's responses, it would be worthwhile to examine the agreed-upon mentions and instances of *tawassul* as they appear in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. For example, Q. 2:45 has been repeatedly quoted to prove the permissibility of performing *tawassul* by one's good actions. The verse reads: “*wa ista'īnu bi al-ṣabr wa al-ṣalāt*”,⁴⁵² which instructs believers to seek help through patience and prayer.

Although most, if not all, exegetes acknowledge the clear guidance provided by the verse to seek help through those good deeds, not all of them have employed the term *tawassul* explicitly in their interpretation of this particular verse. But amongst those who have is the Shāfi'ī and Ash'arī exegete Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū b. 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1292) who argues that Q. 2:45 urges believers to perform, “... *tawassul* by the prayer and resort to it, “because it (i.e. the prayer) encompasses many physical and spiritual acts of worship.”⁴⁵³ Similarly, this was echoed by two, more recent, Ottoman exegetes: Judge Ebussuud Efendi⁴⁵⁴ (d. 982/1574)⁴⁵⁵ and Ismā'īl Ḥaqqī al-Bürsawī (d. 1127/1715),⁴⁵⁶ who have also employed the term *tawassul* in their interpretation of the verse. A famous anecdote from a *ḥadīth* on *tawassul* is the story of the three men who sought protection from heavy rain by entering a cave, only to be blocked by a boulder that shut off the mouth of the cave. The *ḥadīth* is reported, with slight variations, by al-Bukhārī and Muslim:⁴⁵⁷

...The story of the three men who took shelter in a cave to protect themselves from the rain. The entrance of the cave was later blocked by a huge rock. They enjoined one another to seek God (*tawassul*) through the righteous work they had done in the hope that God would save them. Each one of them mentioned an incident that happened to him, and as each of them did so, the rock moved slightly to one side and they were able to get out of the cave. The story of these three men is well known in the religiously authenticated collections of prophetic sayings.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵² The Qur'ān 2:45.

⁴⁵³ Al-Bayḍāwī, 'A. (1997). *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*. Dār Iḥiyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī. p. 78.

⁴⁵⁴ He is said to have held the highest religious office in the Ottoman empire during Suleiman the Magnificent's reign. See Schneider, I. (2001). Ebussuud. In Michael Stolleis (Ed.), *Juristen: ein biographisches Lexikon; von der Antike bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (in German). München: Beck. p. 192.

⁴⁵⁵ Ebussuud, M. (2010). *Tafsīr Ebussuud*. Dār Iḥiyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī. p. 98.

⁴⁵⁶ Al-Bürsawī, I. (2018). *Rūḥ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. p. 127.

⁴⁵⁷ Al-Nawawī states that that his tradition is, “*muttafaquun 'alayh*” i.e. reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. See Al-Nawawī, Y. (2004). *Riyāḍ al-Ṣalīḥīn min Kalām Sayyid al-Mursalīn*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 23.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibn Daqīq, M. (2014). *A Treasury of Hadith: A Commentary on Nawawi's Forty Prophetic Traditions*. Kube Publishing. p. 50.

Therefore, the above indicates the permissibility of *tawassul* by invoking Allāh via means of an intermediary, such as one's good deeds. In the detailed account of this story, the first is said to have made *tawassul* by virtue of his abstinence from committing fornication, the second by virtue of being dutiful to his parents and the third by virtue of his rendering back the trust.⁴⁵⁹ However, with regards to seeking the means through the person of the prophet himself, in his absence but during his life, or after his death, this has been regarded by Ibn Taymiyya and his disciple Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, "as shirk, because no dead can be asked to invoke God."⁴⁶⁰ Ibn Taymiyya states:

If one were to ask by means of one's deeds, through which one obeyed Allāh and His messenger, such as asking by means of one's belief in the Prophet, his love or support for him, or the like, this would be permissible. However, if one asked by [means of] the very person of the prophet or the righteous ones, this would be unlawful, as it has been rejected by more than one scholar.⁴⁶¹

Here, Ibn Taymiyya simply dismisses *tawassul* and considers it to be unlawful. However, in his *Qā'ida Jalīla fī al-Tawassul wa al-Wasīla*, which he authored in opposition to the concept of *tawassul*, he classifies *tawassul* into three categories:⁴⁶²

1. Calling upon someone – other than Allāh – who is either deceased or absent, whether they may be a prophet or a righteous Muslim, such as saying: *yā sayyidī fulān aghithnī* (my master, so-and-so- aid me). Such statements are considered to be *shirk* or polytheistic and blasphemous by Ibn Taymiyya.
2. The second category is to address a prophet or a righteous Muslim, who is also either deceased or absent with: *ud'ullāh lī* (supplicate to Allāh on my behalf). This, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is akin to the Christians' invocation of Mariam. Therefore, he alleges that no scholar doubts about this being unlawful.⁴⁶³
3. Ibn Taymiyya argues that the third type of *tawassul* is saying: *Allāhumma innī as'aluka bi fulān* (O Allāh, I beseech you through so-and-so). Although he does not openly accuse the one who says such a statement with blasphemy, but he alleges that this was not the way of the prophet's companions and was not, at all, practiced by them.

⁴⁵⁹ Al-Nawawī 2004: 23.

⁴⁶⁰ Zamhari 2010: 70-71.

⁴⁶¹ Ibn Taymiyya, A. (2005). *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*. Dār al-Wafā' li al-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashr. p. 234.

⁴⁶² Ibn Taymiyya, A. (2001). *Qā'ida Jalīla fī al-Tawassul wa al-Wasīla*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. p. 129.

⁴⁶³ Here, Ibn Taymiyya does not explicitly brand who says *ud'ullāh lī* with *kufṛ* but considers him a sinner.

As illustrated, Ibn Taymiyya rejects the practice of *tawassul* unless it is performed by someone, a prophet or otherwise, who is alive and as long as it is done in his presence. One would assume that Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, who was notably one of the most committed theologians to Ibn Taymiyya’s thought, followed suit. However, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb took it further and rejected *tawassul* altogether. He alleged, “Whoever sought the prophet (*tawassul/istighātha*) or other prophets, *awliyā’*, or righteous [Muslims], or called upon them or even asked them for intercession, would be like those polytheists.”⁴⁶⁴ Meccan historian and specialist on Wahhābī ideology, Aḥmad b. Zaynī Daḥlān (d. 1304/1886), depicts the extent to which Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb further evolved Ibn Taymiyya’s thought and how he enforced such doctrines in the Wahhābī stronghold of al-Dir‘iyya, “Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, who introduced this innovation, used to deliver the Friday speech in al-Dir‘iyya mosque and declare in each sermon: Whosoever performs *tawassul* by the prophet, then he has blasphemed.”⁴⁶⁵ As such, early Wahhābīs strongly believed *tawassul* to be a form of fanatical exaggeration that leads to polytheism, as expressed by Wahhābī polemicist Sulaymān b. Saḥmān (d. 1931/1349):

Whosoever invokes other than God, be [that invoked person] dead or absent, and implores his aid, is a polytheist and an infidel.... It is like this that many of the believers of this community have slid towards polytheism and were led to solicit other than God. They [who are in error] call this practice ... *tawassul* and *tashaffu’*. The change in the names [of the practice] makes no difference in the matter and does not change its legal status or its reality.⁴⁶⁶

Further analysis into the literalists’ narrative reveals a major shift in methodology. Whilst Ibn Taymiyya seems to have taken a detailed approach to *tawassul* whereby unprecedentedly dividing it into three categories, Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his contemporaries did not only reject *tawassul* altogether, but they went further to charge with blasphemy whoever practices it.⁴⁶⁷ Nonetheless, modern-day prominent Wahhābī figures such as Ibn Bāz⁴⁶⁸ and Ibn ‘Uthaymīn⁴⁶⁹ seem to have favoured Ibn Taymiyya’s approach.

⁴⁶⁴ Daḥlān 1978: 19-20.

⁴⁶⁵ Daḥlān, A. (2003). *Al-Durar al-Sunniyya fī al-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyya*. Dār Ghār Hirā’. p. 44.

⁴⁶⁶ Haykel, B. (2003). *Revival and Reform in Islam: The Legacy of Muhammad Al-Shawkani*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 137.

⁴⁶⁷ In a letter allegedly sent by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb to the people of al-Qaṣīm, he denies charging the performers of *tawassul* with blasphemy. However, most of his works reveal the contrary.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibn Bāz, ‘A. (2015). *Risāla fī al-Tabarruk wa al-Tawassul wa al-Qubūr*. Madār al-Waṭan. p. 16.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, Ṣ. (2004). *Fiqh al-‘Ibādāt*. Madār al-Waṭan. p. 92.

In response to the anti-*tawassul* rhetoric, al-Hararī stands out as a *muḥaddith* and a *ṣūfī*, concurrently. He certainly supports *tawassul* but also cautions against some illicit practices under the name of *taṣawwuf*; particularly by the Mutaṣawwifa. He also produced a number of arguments based upon, and supported by, some well-grounded *ḥadīth* principles in defence of *tawassul* and as a rebuttal of Ibn Taymiyya’s notions. It is worth noting that al-Hararī touched upon *tawassul* in the vast majority of his books, but his most comprehensive examination appears to be in his *al-Maqālāt al-Sunniyya fī Kashf Ḍalālāt Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya* which includes seventeen overarching topics presented by al-Hararī vis-à-vis Ibn Taymiyya’s breach of the Muslim scholarly consensus (*ijmāʿ*). Amongst those topics is *tawassul*, to which al-Hararī dedicates nearly forty pages. Contrary to classical scholars who have written extensively on *tawassul*, al-Hararī did not introduce his counterargument by laying out the meanings of *tawassul* or even delving into the linguistic and religious definitions of this term. Rather, he began by outrightly attacking Ibn Taymiyya and branding him as a heresiarch and an innovator. Al-Hararī maintains that Ibn Taymiyya’s categorisation of *tawassul* is merely an unprecedented *bidʿa* (innovation). Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), a contemporary of Ibn Taymiyya, says:

Know, that it is permissible and commendable to perform *tawassul* and *tashaffuʿ* through the prophet, *ṣallā-llāhu ʿalayhī wa-sallam*, unto his Lord, the Exalted. The permissibility and the desirability of this is from amongst the matters that are known to all those who have a religion. This is also known from the actions of the prophet and the messengers, and the biographies of the righteous Salaf, as well as the layman among the Muslims. No one has denied this from among the people of any religion, nor has anyone heard about it [being denied] in any era until Ibn Taymiyya appeared.⁴⁷⁰

Al-Subkī who was a Shāfiʿī jurist, *ḥadīth* scholar, exegete, and the chief judge of Damascus⁴⁷¹ argues that Ibn Taymiyya was the first to introduce the prohibition of *tawassul*. This is further reinforced by another prominent Shāfiʿī *mutakallim* al-Munāwī, who notes, “... he (i.e., Ibn Taymiyya) denied the permissibility [of *tawassul*] and deviated from the right path. He said something that was never said by any scholar before. As such, he became an example [for deviancy] to all Muslims.”⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ Al-Subkī, ʿA. (2008). *Shifāʾ al-Saqām fī Ziyārat Khayr al-Anām*. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. p. 357.

⁴⁷¹ Al-Subkī 2008: 4.

⁴⁷² Al-Munāwī, M. (1972). *Fayḍ al-Qadīr Sharḥ al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr*. Dār al-Maʿrifā. Vol. 2, p. 135.

In his commentary on *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, al-Harārī introduces the concept of *tawassul* by addressing Ibn Taymiyya's assertion that *tawassul* is considered to be a form of worship ('*ibadā*'). Al-Harārī categorically dismisses this claim and seeks to disprove it by delving into the meaning of '*ibadā*' as reported by the linguists. Through this methodology, al-Harārī sought to establish the difference between *tawassul* and '*ibadā*'. He notes:

Know that there is no true evidence proving the impermissibility of *tawassul* by the Prophets and *awliyā*' in their absence or after their deaths, claiming that this is worship of other than Allāh, because merely calling on one who is alive, or dead is not worship of other than Allāh. Nor is mere glorification of someone, nor merely seeking the help of other than Allāh, nor merely seeking the grave of a righteous Muslim with the purpose of seeking blessings, nor merely seeking what is not usually sought from people, nor the mere expression of seeking help from other than Allāh, the exalted. This means that none of that is *shirk*, because that is not applicable to the definition of '*ibādā*' (worship) according to the linguists.⁴⁷³

Tawassul is defined by al-Harārī as, "Asking Allāh to bestow a benefit or avert a harmful matter by stating the name of a prophet or a *walī*, in honour of the one by whom *tawassul* is performed."⁴⁷⁴ Thus, al-Harārī's definition reflects his belief that the one Who is truly asked, requested and invoked is God, not the prophet or the like. To clarify, he maintains that this temporal world is predominantly based on causes and effects (*al-asbāb wa al-musabbabāt*), but nonetheless Allāh could grant believers reward (*thawāb*) even without them performing any good deeds.

For that, he employs Q. 5:35 "*wa ibtaghū 'ilayhi al-wasīla*",⁴⁷⁵ which he interprets as: seek any causes that would result in your attainment of a high rank. In other words, the verse instructs believers to seek the causes, so that Allāh may grant them their requests. Amongst those causes, al-Harārī stresses, is for one to perform *tawassul* by asking Allāh through the prophets, for instance, to fulfil one's needs, "So, we say: O Allāh, I ask you by the virtue (*bijāhi*) of your prophet or by the sanctity (*ḥurmat*) of the Messenger of Allāh to grant my request or alleviate my hardship."⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ Al-Harārī, 'A. (2004d). *Al-Sharḥ al-Qawīm fī Ḥall Alfāz al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 426.

⁴⁷⁴ Al-Harārī 2004d: 427.

⁴⁷⁵ The Qur'ān 5:35.

⁴⁷⁶ Al-Harārī 2004d: 427.

According to al-Hararī, the debate on *tawassul* primarily relates to the definition of ‘*ibāda*’ (lit. worship). This is because Ibn Taymiyya asserts that *tawassul* involves calling upon someone (*nidāʾ*) and this, according to him, would be classed as an act of worship that could only be offered to Allāh.⁴⁷⁷ Al-Hararī argues that Ibn Taymiyya has confused *tawassul* with ‘*ibāda*’ and misunderstood it to be synonymous with the ‘*ibāda*’ that appears in Q. 1:5, “*ʾiyyāka naʿbudu*”, i.e., it is You whom we worship. In an effort to further clarify the meaning of ‘*ibāda*’, al-Hararī refers to several Arabic linguists and lexicographers:

1. Abū Ishāq al-Zajjāj notes, “*Al-ʿIbāda*, according to the language, means obedience with subjugation.”⁴⁷⁸
2. Abū al-Qāsim al-Rāghib al-Aṣbahānī says in his *Mufradāt al-Qurʾān*, “*Al-ʿIbāda* is the utmost level of subjugation.”⁴⁷⁹
3. Al-Subkī states in his interpretation of Q. 1:5, “It means, we exclusively offer ‘*ibāda*’ to You, that is: the ultimate submission and self-subjugation.”⁴⁸⁰
4. Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, also when interpreting Q. 1:5, notes that, “*Al-ʿIbadā*, according to the vast majority of linguists, is self-subjugation.”⁴⁸¹
5. Al-Fayyūmī maintains in *al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr*, “‘*abadtull-āha aʿbuduhu*’ (lit. I worshipped Allāh) carries the meaning of submission and subjugation.”⁴⁸²

After establishing that ‘*ibāda*’ does not merely denote calling upon someone but rather, it is to offer one’s ultimate submission and subjugation, al-Hararī goes on to debunk Ibn Taymiyya’s interpretation of Q. 45:5, “*wa man ʾaḍallu min man yadʿū min dūnillāh man lā yastajību lah*”.⁴⁸³ In this verse, those who offer *duʿāʾ* to other than Allāh are deemed misguided. However, al-Hararī argues that the term *duʿāʾ* (lit. supplication) here does not refer to the mere calling upon prophets, such as saying: Yā Muḥammad. Yā Mūsā or Yā Ibrāhīm. But the verse refers to the worship (‘*ibāda*’) that should only be offered to Allāh. Therefore, al-Hararī goes on to argue that exegetes have unanimously agreed that the *duʿāʾ* in this verse refers to ultimate submission.⁴⁸⁴ While the term *duʿāʾ* might denote ‘*ibāda*’, however it is mostly employed for its alternative meanings.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, A. (1987). *Al-Fatāwā al-Kubrā*. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. p. 423.

⁴⁷⁸ Al-Zajjāj 1988: 48.

⁴⁷⁹ Al-Aṣbahānī 2009: 440.

⁴⁸⁰ Al-Hararī 2009b: 28.

⁴⁸¹ Abu Ḥayyān, M. (2010). *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī al-Tafsīr*. Dār al-Fikr. p. 42.

⁴⁸² Al-Fayyūmī, A. (1994). *Al-Miṣbāḥ al-Munīr fī Gharīb al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr li al-Rāfiʿi*. Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. p. 389.

⁴⁸³ The Qurʾān 45:5.

⁴⁸⁴ Al-Hararī 2007b: 219.

Furthermore, al-Hararī states that adherents to Ibn Taymiyya’s thought have relied upon his unfounded interpretation of Q. 45:5⁴⁸⁵ and, “thus, they (i.e., Wahhābīs) have consequently charged with blasphemy whoever says: O Messenger of Allāh, O Abū Bakr, O ‘Alī, O Jīlānī or the like. Whether in their presence, during their lives, or after their deaths. [They did so because] they assumed that *nidā’* means to worship other than Allāh.”⁴⁸⁶ As stated, al-Hararī’s position is that performing *tawassul* via *nidā’* does not necessitate offering one’s ultimate submission, contrary to the Wahhābī position.

This is reinforced by the fact that the term *du‘ā’* does in fact appear in the Qur’ān in reference to ultimate submission and to the mere calling (*nidā’*). Q. 24:63 instructs the following, “Do not make [your] *du‘ā’* (i.e., calling or *nidā’*) of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another.”⁴⁸⁷ Throughout the life of prophet Muḥammad, he is reported to have interceded on behalf of his companions, particularly asking Allāh to forgive their sins, otherwise known as *istighfār*. This appears in the Q. 4:64, “Had they, after having wronged themselves, come to you and sought forgiveness from Allāh, and had the Messenger asked forgiveness for them, they would certainly have found Allāh accepting of repentance and Merciful.”⁴⁸⁸ The verse does not explicitly specify whether this should be done during the prophets’ life only or beyond his death. The following well-reported *ḥadīth* concerning the Bedouin’s visit to prophet Muḥammad’s grave has been utilised by scholars to reinforce the legitimacy of *tawassul*. The report reads:

According to ‘Utbī, once he was sitting beside the prophet’s grave when a Bedouin came and he said, “*Assalāmu ‘alayka* (peace be on you), O Messenger of Allāh. I have heard that Allāh says: ‘Had they, after having wronged themselves, come to you and sought forgiveness from Allāh’ I have come to you, asking forgiveness for my sins and I make you as my intermediary before my Lord and I have come to you for this purpose.” Then he recited these verses [of poetry]. Afterwards, the Bedouin went away, and I fell asleep. In my dream I saw the prophet. He said to me: O ‘Utbī, the Bedouin is right, go and give him the good news that Allāh has forgiven his sins.”⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁵ For examples pertaining to *yad‘ū* (lit. to call upon) in Q. 45:5 interpreted as *ya‘bud*, see Al-Jawzī, ‘A. (1984). *Zād al-Masīr fī ‘Ilm al-Tafsīr*. Al-Maktab al-Islāmī. Vol. 7, p. 371. & Al-Suyūṭī, ‘A. & al-Maḥallī, M. (1986). *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. Dār Ibn Kthīr. p. 503. & Al-Bayḍāwī 1997:112. & Al-Rāzī, M. (2004). *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 6.

⁴⁸⁶ Al-Hararī 2007: 219.

⁴⁸⁷ The Qur’ān 24:63.

⁴⁸⁸ The Qur’ān 4:64.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibn Kathīr, I. (1983). *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa. p. 521.

The above episode is regarded as proof for the permissibility and effectiveness of *tawassul* even after the death of the prophet.⁴⁹⁰ Interestingly, the ‘Utbī tradition was reported and validated by one of Ibn Taymiyya’s closest disciples, Ibn Kathīr, who blatantly disagrees with his shaykh on the permissibility of *tawassul*. Nonetheless, al-Harārī does not hesitate to utilise this tradition to support his stance on *tawassul* in addition to another report related to Q. 4:64. This account stands out in particular as it has been narrated by the grand-shaykh of Ḥanbalīs of his time, Abū al-Wafā’ b. ‘Aqīl (d. 513/1119). Ibn ‘Aqīl cites Q. 4:64 in his *al-Tadhkira fī al-Fiqh* when discussing the etiquettes that ought to be observed when visiting the prophet’s grave. He states that amongst the recommended matters is for the visitor to recite Q. 4:64 before prophet Muḥammad’s grave and then say the following, “... and I have come to Your prophet, seeking [Your] forgiveness. So, I ask You to grant me Your forgiveness, as You have granted it to those who came to him during his life. O Allāh, I ask You by Your prophet, the prophet of mercy, O Messenger of Allāh, I turn to you to ask Allāh to forgive my sins.”⁴⁹¹

As seen above, al-Harārī’s polemical methodology reveals that he prefers to rely on Ḥanbalī scholars in his arguments, if possible; especially those predating Ibn Taymiyya. But Ibn ‘Aqīl’s statement constitutes only an optional *dhikr* and even so, it not a prophetic tradition in its own right. For that, al-Harārī brings forward a *ḥadīth* which he regards as an ultimate proof supporting the permissibility of performing *tawassul* by the prophet in his life, after his death, in his presence or absence. The *ḥadīth* is commonly referred to as: Ḥadīth al-A‘mā (the tradition concerning the blind man). The narrations of this episode have been included by al-Ṭabarānī in both of his works on *ḥadīth*, *al-Mu‘jam al-Ṣaghīr* (The Small Encyclopaedia of *Ḥadīth*)⁴⁹² and *al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr* (The Great Encyclopaedia of *Ḥadīth*).⁴⁹³ Due to the significance of this *ḥadīth*, al-Harārī quotes it in full in a number of his books. After al-Ṭabarānī fully quoted the *ḥadīth* in both of his books, he declared, “...the *ḥadīth* is authentically reported (*ṣaḥīḥ*).”⁴⁹⁴ Al-Ṭabarānī’s classification of this *ḥadīth* will play a major role in al-Harārī’s argument.

⁴⁹⁰ Fitzpatrick & Walker 2014: 301.

⁴⁹¹ Ibn ‘Aqīl, ‘A. (2001). *Al-Tadhkira fī al-Fiqh*. Riyadh: Dār Ishbīlīā. p. 117. The Wahābī-influenced editor on the Dār Ishbīlīā publication, Dr Nāṣir b. Su‘ūd – who is also a judge in Afif Court, K.S.A. - dismisses Ibn ‘Aqīl’s statement, recommends the reader to refer to Ibn Taymiyya’s book and claims that, “Requesting supplications (*du‘ā*) from prophets, or other righteous Muslims, or turning to them after their death falls under the major type of *shirk* (blasphemy) that Allāh has prohibited.”

⁴⁹² Al-Ṭabarānī, S. (1985). *Al-Rawḍ al-Dānī Ilā al-Mu‘jam al-Ṣaghīr li al-Ṭabarānī*. Al-Maktab al-Islāmī. Vol. 1, p. 306.

⁴⁹³ Al-Ṭabarānī, S. (1983). *Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*. Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya. Vol. 9, p. 18.

⁴⁹⁴ Al-Ṭabarānī 1983: 19.

In addition to al-Ṭabarānī's narration, Ḥadīth al-A'mā was also reported, albeit with slight variations, by al-Tirmidhī,⁴⁹⁵ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,⁴⁹⁶ as well as Ibn Mājah.⁴⁹⁷ Due to the significance of this report, it will be thoroughly examined, followed by presenting the argument brought forth by al-Albānī vis-à-vis its chain, as well as al-Hararī's response. The *ḥadīth* tells the story of a man who repeatedly visited caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān regarding a personal matter, but 'Uthmān paid no attention to him or his need. The man, later on, met 'Uthmān b. Ḥunayf and complained to him. So, Ibn Ḥunayf instructed him to perform ablution (*wuḍū'*) and say a specific supplication, then return. Upon his return, the doorman came, took him by the hand, brought him to the caliph, and seated him next to him on a cushion. After his request was fulfilled, the man departed, met Ibn Ḥunayf, and told him that he believed the caliph would not have seen to his need or paid any attention to him until Ibn Ḥunayf spoke with him. To that, Ibn Ḥunayf replied:

By Allāh, I didn't speak to him, but I have seen a blind man come to the Messenger of Allāh and complain to him of the loss of his eyesight. The Prophet said, "Can you not bear it?" and the man replied, "O Messenger of Allāh, I do not have anyone to lead me around, and it is a great hardship for me." The Prophet told him, "Go to the place of ablution and perform ablution (*wuḍū'*), then perform two *rak'as* of prayer and say this supplications: O Allāh, I ask You and turn to You through our prophet Muḥammad, the Prophet of mercy; O Muḥammad (Yā Muḥammad), I turn through you to my Lord, that He may fulfil my need. Then, mention your need." Ibn Ḥunayf went on to say, "By Allāh, we didn't part company or speak long before the man returned to us as if nothing had ever been wrong with him."⁴⁹⁸

Al-Hararī deems al-Ṭabarānī's narration sufficient to disprove Ibn Taymiyya's claim that performing *tawssul* by the prophet in his absence is an illicit practice. Al-Hararī argues that, according to the *ḥadīth*, the blind man was not in the presence of prophet Muḥammad when he said, "O Allāh, I ask You and turn to You through our prophet Muḥammad, the prophet of mercy; O Muḥammad...", because the narrator expressed that, soon thereafter, the man entered and was no longer blind. Thus, proving that he performed *tawassul* through the prophet and in his absence.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁵ Al-Mubārakfūrī, M. (2018). *Tuḥfat al-Aḥwadhī Bisharḥ Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya. Vol. 11, p. 22.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1993). *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad*. Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī. p.138.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibn Mājah, M. (2011). *Sunan Ibn Mājah*. Dar Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya. p. 441.

⁴⁹⁸ Al-Ṭabarānī 1983: 18.

⁴⁹⁹ Al-Hararī 2007b: 219.

Another point al-Hararī raises is that the blind man did not say Yā Muḥammad in the presence of the prophet, let alone having said it to his face. This is because Q. 24:63 prohibits believers from addressing the prophet in a manner similar to how they address one another: “Do not make [your] *du‘ā*’ (i.e. calling) of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another.”⁵⁰⁰ Al-Hararī contends that the *ḥadīth* does not only indicate the legitimacy of *tawassul* during the lifetime of the prophet, but also after his death. This is indicated by the conversation that occurred between Ibn Ḥunayf and the man who sought ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān (who was at that time the caliph). Despite al-Hararī’s various arguments to deduce the legitimacy of *tawassul* from Ḥadīth al-A‘mā, al-Albānī criticised this *ḥadīth* on two fronts; the chain (*sanad*) of the *ḥadīth* and its text (*matn*).

Al-Albānī lays out his views on *tawassul* in his treatise entitled *al-Tawassul: Anwā‘uh wa Aḥkāmuh* (Tawassul: It’s Categories and Judgements)⁵⁰¹ which is mostly based upon Ibn Taymiyya’s *Qā’ida Jalīla fī al-Tawassul wa al-Wasīla*. In regard to the *sanad* of the *ḥadīth*, al-Albānī claims that the two episodes of the same narration are to be assigned different levels of authenticity. As such, the first part pertaining to what transpired between the blind man and the prophet is deemed authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*), but it is completely independent of the second part which, according to him is *munkar* (i.e., weak or denounced). Since the second part is an account that is solely attributed to a companion and not the prophet, al-Albānī judges it as *munkar* because it falls under the *mawqūf* category of *ḥadīth*. Here, al-Albānī argues that when al-Ṭabarānī classed the *ḥadīth* as *ṣaḥīḥ*, this was only in reference to the first part that was attributed to the prophet (*marfū‘*) and not the *mawqūf* part. By doing so, he reiterates that performing *tawassul* after the prophet’s death, based on the second part, would be invalid because the *mawqūf* narration is unreliable.⁵⁰²

Al-Hararī simply dismisses al-Albānī’s argument as unsound, accusing him of blindly following Ibn Taymiyya and attempting to justify his *fatwā*. But Nabīl al-Sharīf, one of al-Hararī’s prominent students, delves further into al-Albānī’s claim that the second part is *mawqūf* and argues that if it was claimed that al-Ṭabarānī only classed as *ṣaḥīḥ* the first part by saying: “*al-ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ*”, one’s response should be that *ḥadīth* scholars refer to the *mawqūf* and *marfū‘* as a *ḥadīth*.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰⁰ The Qur’ān 24:63.

⁵⁰¹ Al-Albānī, M. (2001). *Al-Tawassul: Anwā‘uh wa Aḥkāmuh*. Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif.

⁵⁰² Al-Hararī 2007b: 219.

⁵⁰³ Al-Sharīf, N. (2004). *I’lām al-Muslimīn Bibuṭlān Fatwā al-Qaradāwī Bitahrīm al-Tawassul bi al-Anbiyā’ wa al-Ṣāliḥīn*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 22.

Al-Sharīf supports his position by stating that Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245)⁵⁰⁴ and Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) opined that whether a *ḥadīth* is *mawqūf* or *marfūʿ*, it would still be classed as a *ḥadīth*. Al-Sharīf goes on to quote al-Ramlī (d. 957/1550), who said when asked about the definition of *al-ʿathar* (lit. a report), “The definition of *al-ʿathar*, according to traditionists, is a *ḥadīth*; whether it may be *marfūʿ* or *mawqūf*.”⁵⁰⁵

Thus, the above report further supports al-Hararī’s response to al-Albānī’s claim that the second episode of the *ḥadīth* is weak. After addressing al-Albānī’s claim that the *ḥadīth* is weak, al-Hararī points out that only the *muḥaddithūn* are qualified to classify a *ḥadīth* as authentic or weak, “... he (i.e. al-Albānī) has transgressed, as he did not adhere to the rules set by scholars of *ḥadīth*, that is; he who has not qualified as a *ḥāfiẓ*, is not allowed to categorise [traditions] as authentic or weak.”⁵⁰⁶ Therefore, whether al-Albānī considered the *ḥadīth* to be weak or not, his classifications holds no weight whatsoever, in al-Hararī’s opinion, because he does not consider al-Albānī to be a qualified *muḥaddith*.⁵⁰⁷

The second stage of al-Albānī’s analysis of Ḥadīth al-Aʿmā relates to the *matn* of the narration. Like Ibn Taymiyya, al-Albānī does not believe that the prophet could be beneficial after his death. This is why he alleges that *tawassul* statements, “... must not be translated as seeking a means through the person or the status of the Prophet’s uncle. Instead, a word should be added to make the last part of the phrase read: *bi (duʿāi) ammi nabiyyika*, which means through the prayers of the Prophet’s uncle.”⁵⁰⁸ Therefore, al-Albānī notes that Ḥadīth al-Aʿmā must not be understood as the blind man’s *tawassul* by the person of the prophet, rather his *tawassul*, as he understands it, is by the prayers of the prophet. As a result, al-Albānī claims that the blind man could not have gained his sight by virtue of his supplication alone, without that of the prophet.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁴ He is one of the most influential authors in *ḥadīth* studies. Amongst his works is the foundational *ḥadīth* book *al-Muqaddima*, known as: *The Introduction to the Science of Ḥadīth*.

⁵⁰⁵ Sharīf 2004: 21.

⁵⁰⁶ Al-Hararī 2007b: 224.

⁵⁰⁷ The Hararī-Albānī feud went on for years. With many polemical treatises authored by each in refutation of the other. It is noteworthy that in 2007, some of al-Hararī’s students compiled an exposition against al-Albānī, titled: *Tabyīn Ḍalālāt al-Albānī Shaykh al-Wahhābiyya al-Mutamaddith* (Exposing al-Albānī’s Misguidances: The Shaykh of Wahhābīs and Self-Proclaimed *Muḥaddith*). Most Wahhābīs regard al-Albānī as a *muḥaddith*, in fact he did too! In this book, it is reported that during one of al-Albānī’s conversations with a lawyer, al-Albānī introduced himself as a *muḥaddith*. The lawyer asked him, “Would you be able to narrate to us ten traditions along with their chains?” Al-Albānī responded, “I am not a *muḥaddith* of memorisation, rather a *muḥaddith* who reads from books.” See Al-Hararī’s Students. (2007). *Tabyīn Ḍalālāt al-Albānī Shaykh al-Wahhābiyya al-Mutamaddith*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 6.

⁵⁰⁸ Zamhari 2010: 72.

⁵⁰⁹ Zamhari 2010: 72.

Al-Albānī's above claim is entirely derived from Ibn Taymiyya's unprecedented *ta'wīl* of Ḥadīth al-A'mā which he expressed in his *Majmū' Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya*.⁵¹⁰ By doing so, Ibn Taymiyya employs *ta'wīl* by dismissing the apparent meaning of the *ḥadīth* and alleging that the meaning of: *atawassula bika*, in reference to the prophet, is *atawassula bi du'ā'ika* (i.e., I perform *tawassul* by your supplication) assuming that *du'ā'ika* was omitted. This is what some Uṣūl scholars refer to as *taqdīr maḥdhūf*. That is, assuming the omission of the intended term. However, al-Hararī's student, Nabīl al-Sharīf, disagrees with Ibn Taymiyya's methodology and calls it a baseless claim. He argues that Ibn Taymiyya's employment of *ta'wīl* here goes against the fundamental rules of Uṣūl, "The scholars of Uṣūl prohibit the employment of *ta'wīl* unless supported by a conclusive intellectual proof or an authentic textual evidence."⁵¹¹ Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya's *ta'wīl*, and by extension that of al-Albānī, are rendered invalid. In fact, al-Albānī's interpretation does not only fundamentally oppose Uṣūl rules but it is merely undertaken in a false attempt to give credibility to a *fatwā* never issued by anyone prior to Ibn Taymiyya.

Al-Hararī does not exclusively rely on Ḥadīth al-A'mā or the few prophetic traditions and Qur'ānic verses stated earlier. Rather, he explores a plethora of anecdotes such as the *du'ā'* the prophet instructed to say when walking towards the mosque, "*Allāhumma innī as'aluka biḥaqqi al-sā'ilīn 'alayk wa biḥaqqi mamshāya hādihā*".⁵¹² The *ḥadīth* means: O Allāh, I ask You by the virtue of those who ask of You, and I ask by virtue of this walking of mine. Here, al-Hararī notes that *al-sā'ilīn* is a plural term that includes those who are both alive and deceased, present or absent.⁵¹³ He, then, goes on to explain that even before prophet Muḥammad was created, it would have been equally permissible to perform *tawassul* by him. To exemplify that he cites al-Ḥākim's account regarding prophet Adam who said after having committed the sin, "O Allāh, I ask you by the virtue of prophet Muḥammad to forgive me."⁵¹⁴ As such, al-Hararī believes that *tawassul* is not but an optional *sabab* (cause) that one could seek in hopes of attaining one's desire. Just as food is a cause, albeit a necessary one, that is sought after to fulfil one's hunger. One the permissibility of *tawassul*, al-Hararī concludes that believers who perform *tawassul* by the prophets and other righteous Muslims, regard them as a mere cause or a means that could only be of benefit if Allāh so willed.

⁵¹⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, A. (2011). *Majmū' Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. p. 236.

⁵¹¹ Al-Sharīf 2004: 22.

⁵¹² Ibn Mājah 2011: 256.

⁵¹³ Al-Hararī 2007b: 225.

⁵¹⁴ Al-Ḥākim, M. (2002). *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. Vol. 2, p. 672.

3.2.5 *Tabarruk*: Seeking Blessings

Tabarruk, which is roughly defined as seeking blessings, is a concept generally associated with the practice of *tawassul* and frequently discussed as part of the *tawassul* discourse. Many scholars who have written on *tawassul* did so at great length. However, since *tabarruk* is sometimes regarded as an extension of *tawassul*, it did not receive similar attention nor was it examined in independent sections. This appears to be the methodology undertaken by al-Hararī in his *al-Maqālāt al-Sunniyya*, but in his commentary on *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, he dedicates an entire chapter to the *tabarruk* debate, albeit shorter than the *tawassul* chapter. As such, following the same methodology undertaken in the *tawassul* section, this subchapter will present a detailed account of the linguistic and religious definitions of *tawassul*. Then, it will present the narrative of prominent Saudi religious figures followed by al-Hararī's refutation.

Linguistically, the root of *tabarruk* is: *bā'*, *rā'* and *kāf*. It appears in the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* in abundance and in many forms; singular, plural, verb, noun and adjective, such as: *mubārak*, *barakāt*, *bāraknā*, *būrik*. Like many Arabic terms, the meaning of *tabarruk* might vary depending on the context. In its original form, the term refers to stability, consistency and steadfastness. For instance, it is said: "*baraka al-ba'ir*", which means the camel has sat and remained in that position.⁵¹⁵ However, the common meaning associated with *tabarruk* is seeking blessings or the abundance of goodness. Following is a list of definitions of *tabarruk* according to linguists and Qur'ānic exegetes:

1. According to Ibn Fāris' *Maqāyīs al-Lughā*, "Al-Khalīl said: *al-baraka* is derived from *al-ziyāda* (abundance) and *al-namā'* (growth)."⁵¹⁶
2. Renowned lexicographer Ibn Duraid (d. 321/933) says, "It is said: *lā bāraka Allāh fih*, i.e. may Allāh not increase him in goodness."⁵¹⁷
3. In his commentary of al-Fairūzābādī's *al-Qāmūs*, al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790) expands on the *bā'*, *rā'* and *kāf* root by stating, "*Al-baraka* refers to increase and growth ... Also, *al-tabrīk* is to request *al-baraka* through supplication."⁵¹⁸ He notes that *al-birka* (pool of water) has been assigned this name because water remains still therein.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁵ Ibn Fāris 1979: 227.

⁵¹⁶ Ibn Fāris 1979: 230.

⁵¹⁷ Ibn Duraid, M. (2019). *Jamharat al-Lughā*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. Vol. 1, p. 338.

⁵¹⁸ Al-Zabīdī, M. (2011). *Tāj al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. Vol. 1, p. 33.

⁵¹⁹ Al-Zabīdī 2011: 35.

Therefore, the meaning predominantly associated with *tabarruk* is growth and increase in blessings and goodness. This theme is also reflected in a number of Qur'ānic verses, such as Q. 19:31 in reference to Jesus' miracle when he proclaimed, as a baby in the cradle, "And He has made me *mubāarak* wherever I may be".⁵²⁰ Al-Rāzī states that *mubāarak*, here, refers to Jesus being a source of blessings to his people, particularly vis-à-vis his miracles that resulted in the revival of the deceased, as well as the healing of the blind and deaf.⁵²¹ Al-Nasafī similarly interprets *mubāarak* in the same verse as, "A cause for benefit (*naḥḥā'an*) wherever I may be".⁵²²

Another verse in which the term *mubāarak* also appears is Q. 3:96 which describes al-Ka'ba, in Mecca, as the first House of worship that has been established for mankind, and that this house is, "*mubārakan*".⁵²³ Al-Ka'ba is described as a blessed place because pilgrims who visit it benefit by acquiring rewards (*thawāb*) and forgiveness of sins.⁵²⁴ Ibn 'Āshūr, on the other hand, argues that among the reasons as to why al-Ka'ba is a source for ample *khayr* (goodness), is because, "... its blocks were laid down, when it was built, by the hand of Ibrāhīm, then the hand of Ismā'īl, then that of Muḥammad."⁵²⁵

Based on the above, *baraka* could be in individuals, such as the Qur'ānic reference to Jesus, or even in places such as the Ka'ba. Therefore, *tabarruk* is regarded as a practice through which one would seek blessings, or the increase thereof, from something or someone that has been made blessed by Allāh. While Ibn Taymiyya seems to approve upon this aforementioned notion, in concept, his position on *tabarruk*, albeit broad, is regarded as a source of many modern-day Wahhābī *fatwās*. Ibn Taymiyya's views on *tabarruk* are largely found in his *fatwā* on visiting the prophet's tomb as well as other graves. As part of his argument, he briefly discusses the practice of seeking blessings through *al-tamassuḥ bi al-qabr* (wiping oneself against the grave), "As for wiping oneself against the grave – whichever grave it may be – and kissing it as well as grazing one's cheeks upon it, this is deemed unlawful by the consensus of all Muslims. Even if that was amongst the graves of prophets. None of the scholars of the Salaf did such as thing. In fact, this is considered to be a type of *shirk* (blasphemy)."⁵²⁶

⁵²⁰ The Qur'ān 19:31.

⁵²¹ Al-Rāzī 2004: 183.

⁵²² Al-Nasafī 1998: 334.

⁵²³ The Qur'ān 3:96.

⁵²⁴ Al-Nasafī 1998: 275.

⁵²⁵ Ibn 'Āshūr 1997: 17.

⁵²⁶ Ibn Taymiyya 2011: 44.

Here, Ibn Taymiyya paved the way to his followers, and their followers, to delve into his understanding of the concept of *tabarruk* and seek to justify his *fatwā*. It is worth noting that Ibn Taymiyya does not explicitly discuss *tabarruk* by the prophet himself or his relics. This seems to be discussed at differing lengths by many of his modern-day followers. For instance, Ibn Bāz argues that the prophet is blessed and so is his hair, sweat or any clothing that was in contact with him.⁵²⁷ This is also the view of Ibn ‘Uthaymīn who notes, “The companions sought the blessings through the sweat of the prophet, saliva, clothes and his hair.”⁵²⁸ But it is noteworthy that none of Ibn Taymiyya’s followers believe that any of the prophetic relics, such as his hair, clothes etc., have been preserved till this very day. Instead, they allege that whoever claims to possess a prophetic relic cannot present any evidence of its credibility. Al-Albānī therefore states that *tabarruk* is illicit because:

It would be a condition for whoever desires to practice *tabarruk*, to possess one of the relics of the prophets and use it. We know that all his relics: his clothes, hair and excrements have been lost. No one can prove, without a shroud of doubt, the existence of any of them. If that were the case, then seeking blessings by those relics would be invalid and purely speculative.⁵²⁹

Thus far, it is deduced that there is no outright disagreement between contemporary Wahhābī and Sunnī figures in relation to *tabarruk* by the very self of the prophet and his relics. In fact, scholars of either schools of thought quote the same *ḥadīth* in support of *tabarruk*. The *ḥadīth* tells the story of the prophet distributing his own hair when he performed pilgrimage. According to Muslim’s narration, after the prophet had slaughtered his sacrifices, he instructed the barber to shave his right side first. After doing so, the prophet called Abū Ṭalḥa al-Anṣārī and gave him that hair. He then instructed the barber to shave the left side, which he did, and the prophet then gave it to Abū Ṭalḥa instructing him to distribute it among the people.⁵³⁰ The authenticity of this account has not been challenged and has been deemed reliable by both parties. Therefore, the prophet’s command to have his hair distributed among his companions is regarded as an indisputable proof supporting the practice of *tabarruk* by the relics of the prophet.

⁵²⁷ AlSa‘ūd, N. (2007). *Manhaj Ibn Bāz fī al-Rad ‘alā al-Mukhalifīn*. Riyadh: Obeikan Publishers & Booksellers. p. 89.

⁵²⁸ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn, A. (2004). *Sharḥ Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*. Madār al-Waṭan. Vol. 4, p. 243.

⁵²⁹ Al-Albānī 2001.

⁵³⁰ Muslim. (1991). *Saḥīḥ Muslim*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 948.

Besides his hair, another episode narrates the distribution of the prophet's nails, as reported by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.⁵³¹ As such, parts of his body, such as his hair and nails were sought for their blessings. Also, other belongings, like his clothes, were circulated for *tabarruk*. For instance, a commonly accepted narration portrays prophet Muḥammad's companions seeking blessings through his cloak. After the death of the prophet's wife 'Ā'isha her sister, Asmā' received prophet Muḥammad's cloak. She said, "This is the cloak of the messenger of Allāh. 'Ā'isha had it, and when she died, I took it. The prophet wore it, and we now wash it for the sick people to seek cure by it."⁵³² Nevertheless, as stated earlier, Wahhābī scholars, insist that the above cannot be practiced today because all the prophet's relics disappeared with the end of the generation of the companions.⁵³³ After presenting what Ibn Bāz dubs: 'the permissible *tabarruk*', he mentions the two categories of *tabarruk* deemed unlawful by Wahhābīs:

1. Seeking blessings through prophet Muḥammad's grave, or whichever place the prophet dwelt in or any object he touched. According to him, such practices are forbidden because the *baraka* that has been granted to the person of the prophet does not extend beyond him to the places and locations he passed through, sat in or stepped upon.⁵³⁴ Based on that, they have inferred that there are no blessings in any place on earth, such as mosques, except if one performs good deeds in them. Otherwise, they would be void of *baraka*. This is certainly unprecedented!
2. The second category of illicit *tabarruk*, as opined by prominent contemporary Wahhābī scholars: Ibn Bāz and Ibn 'Uthaymīn, is seeking blessings by righteous men (*al-ṣāliḥīn*) and their relics. After stating that none of prophet Muḥammad's companions performed *tabarruk* by one another, Ibn Bāz alleges that considering some *awliyā'* to be blessed and seeking their blessings would lead to drawing analogy (*qiyās*) between this and *tabarruk* by the prophet. According to him, this would be unlawful because for this *qiyās* to be valid, the original case (*aṣl*) should equate with the new or parallel case (*far'*), thus entailing that the prophet is equal to those *awliyā'*, which is incorrect.⁵³⁵ This *fatwā* extends beyond the persons of the *ṣāliḥīn* whereby prohibiting *tabarruk* by their relics and graves as well.

⁵³¹ Ibn Ḥanbal 1995: 28.

⁵³² Muslim 1991a: 257.

⁵³³ Al-Ghuṣn, 'A (2003). *Da 'āwā al-Munāwi'īn*. Dār Ibn al-Jawzī. p. 368.

⁵³⁴ Al-Ghuṣn 2003: 368.

⁵³⁵ Al-Shway'ir, M. (2007). *Fatāwā Nūr 'alā al-Darb*. Riyadh: Al-Ri'āsa al-'Āmma li al-Buḥūth al-'Ilmiyya wa al-Iftā'. Vol. 2, p. 164.

In response to the above, al-Hararī delves into the continuousness of prophet Muḥammad’s blessings after his death and even beyond his person and relics. Simultaneously, he proves the legitimacy of *tabarruk* by other than the prophet, like the *ṣāliḥīn*, through reports from prominent figures of the early generations; in particular Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself, as well as adherents to his school of thought.⁵³⁶ Al-Hararī starts by defining *tabarruk* as, “*ṭalab ziyādat al-khayr*”, that is: requesting the increase in goodness. After establishing the definition of *tabarruk*, al-Hararī derives its legitimacy from the aforementioned *ḥadīth* that illustrates the prophet’s distribution of his own hair. He argues, “The prophet distributed his hair among his companions to seek the blessings by it and not to eat it. Because hair is inedible, rather it is used for other purposes, not for consumption.”⁵³⁷ Contrary to the Wahhābī position, al-Hararī rejects the notion that none of the prophet’s relics exist today. He maintains that numerous relics were passed on by the Salaf generation to the Khalaf, all the way down to present-day Muslim masses.

In accordance with his polemical methodology, al-Hararī often refers to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal to nullify Wahhābī arguments. For instance, he presents a narration by al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) that ‘Abdullāh, the son of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, said, “I saw my father take a hair that belonged to the prophet, put it on his mouth and kiss it. I assume I saw him put it on his eyes. He also dipped it in water and drank the water to seek cure. I saw him take the prophet’s bowl, wash it in water, and drink from it.”⁵³⁸ Al-Hararī believes this report to be sufficient not only to prove that the relics of prophet Muḥammad remained in circulation beyond the generation of the companions,⁵³⁹ but also to prove that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, himself, practiced *tabarruk*. Another report utilised by al-Hararī is yet again narrated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s son ‘Abdullāh who said that he asked his father about the judgement of the one who seeks the blessings by touching the prophet’s *minbar* (pulpit) or the prophet’s grave. To that Aḥmad responded, “*lā ba’sa bidhālik*”,⁵⁴⁰ i.e. there is no harm or sin in doing so. Such reports, despite explicitly portraying Aḥmad’s approval of *tabarruk*, have been invalidly challenged by Wahhābīs as weak or unreliable

⁵³⁶ Al-Hararī 2007b: 219.

⁵³⁷ Al-Hararī 2004d: 450.

⁵³⁸ Al-Dhahabī, M. (1983). *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*. Mu’assasat al-Risāla. Vol. 11, p. 212.

⁵³⁹ It is believed that the last companion of prophet Muḥammad to pass away was a man by the name of Abū al-Ṭufail ‘Āmir b. Wāthila al-Laithī, he died in Mecca on 110 A.H. On the other hand, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was born on 164 A.H., thus not only making him among the generation of the *tabi’īn* who came after the companions, but also confirming that he had not met any of the prophet’s companions. See Al-Ṣabbān, M. (1999). *Manzūmat Ṣabbān fī ‘Ilm Muṣṭalaḥ al-Ḥadīth*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 255.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (2006). *Al-Jāmi’ fī al-‘Ilal wa Ma’rifat al-Rijāl*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya p. 352.

Al-Hararī does not only cite Aḥmad’s approval of *tabarruk*, but he also relies upon another prominent Ḥanbalī, namely the grand-shaykh of Ḥanbalīs in Egypt: Maṣṣūr al-Buhūtī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 1051/1641). In the prayer chapter of his *Kashāf al-Qinā’*,⁵⁴¹ al-Buhūtī discredits Ibn Taymiyya’s claim that all scholars of the early generation (Salaf) unanimously agreed that whoever visits the prophet’s grave, should only send salutations upon him and avoid touching or kissing the grave. After presenting Ibn Taymiyya’s *fatwā*, al-Buhūtī says, “Rather, I say in response that, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī said: it is recommended to kiss the prophet’s chamber.”⁵⁴² So, he relies on Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī (d. 285/898) who is a well-known student of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,⁵⁴³ also amongst the Salaf generation.

With regards to visiting the tombs of the righteous (*al-ṣāliḥīn*) and seeking their blessings, al-Hararī believes that it is not only Muḥammad’s grave that is blessed, but also the graves of the *ṣāliḥīn*. Like *tawassul*, al-Hararī believes that *tabarruk* is equally a non-compulsory *sabab* (cause) that one could seek in hopes of attaining one’s desire. He argues that, for centuries, Muslims have continued to seek the blessings from the *awliyā’*, until Ibn Taymiyya’s *fatwā* came to light. Here, al-Hararī makes reference to the devastating consequences of the *fatwā*, “Therefore, since Wahhābīs charged with blasphemy whoever performs *tabarruk* nowadays by the graves of the *ṣāliḥīn*. It applies to those who preceded this era, up to the [era of the] companions. As such, they would regard the Salaf and the Khalaf as blasphemers.”⁵⁴⁴ Al-Hararī goes further to argue that Ibn Taymiyya contradicted himself whereby stating in is *Iqtidā’ al-Ṣirāt al-Mistaqīm* that Aḥmad supported the permissibility of touching the prophet’s *minbar* and seeking its blessings.⁵⁴⁵ In sum, although Ibn Taymiyya’s contemporaries charged him with heresy for introducing the prohibition of *tabarruk*, this did not stop his followers and their followers from attempting to justify a belief that has always been overwhelmingly rejected. Al-Hararī labels them as the deniers (*nufāt*) of *tawassul* and *tabarruk*. Many relics of prophet Muḥammad have been passed on, well-documented and preserved, particularly by the Ottomans, who, most recently, dedicated the Topkapı Palace as an Islamic museum housing many of the prophetic relics, such as his swords, a cloak, a grail a tooth and number of his hairs.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴¹ Al-Buhūtī, M. (1983). *Kashāf al-Qinā’ ‘an Matn al-Iqnā’*. Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub.

⁵⁴² Al-Buhūtī 1983: 151, & Al-Hararī 2004d: 455. The editor of the 1983 ‘Ālam al-Kutub version comments on the report from Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī and claims that it has been deemed baseless and fabricated by no other than, Ibn Taymiyya.

⁵⁴³ Al-Dhahabī 1983: 357.

⁵⁴⁴ Al-Hararī 2004d: 453.

⁵⁴⁵ Al-Hararī 2004d: 453.

⁵⁴⁶ Simons, M. (1993). Center of Ottoman Power. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/22/travel/center-of-ottoman-power.html>.

3.2.6 Ziyāra: Shrine Visitations

Ibn Taymiyya's views on *tawassul* and *tabarruk* were certainly controversial but perhaps not as widespread as the three infamous cases for which he faced imprisonment multiple times between Cairo and Damascus. He was firstly put on trial and convicted of anthropomorphism in 705/1305. Then, in 718/1318, he was imprisoned for his views on issue of divorce oaths. Finally, in 726/1326 he was arrested and confined as a prisoner in the Damascus Citadel for two years, until his death.⁵⁴⁷ This inquisition was a result of his *fatwā* on *ziyāra* which is defined as the initiation of a journey with the intention to visit tombs or shrines. Ibn Taymiyya's considered this to be an unlawful matter in Islam.⁵⁴⁸

For centuries, it has been customary for pilgrims who completed the rituals in Mecca to visit the mosque of the prophet in Medina (*al-Masjid al-Nabawī*) as well as his tomb. However, "Ibn Taymiyya's argument challenging the licitness of travel undertaken with the purpose of visiting tombs, including the prophet's tomb, was, therefore, a deeply shocking proposition for the majority of Muslims, and al-Subkī clearly intended to make the most of that fact."⁵⁴⁹ Like al-Subkī, al-Hararī systematically examined Ibn Taymiyya's views on *ziyāra* as they appear in his books. He started off by quoting Ibn Taymiyya's rationale for forbidding *ziyāra*:

He said in his *al-Fatāwā*: "The travel that has been initiated to visit a grave is considered to be prohibited by the majority of scholars. To the extent that they do not permit the shortening of prayers as part of it, because it is a sinful travel. This is taken from his (i.e., the prophet's) saying in the two *Ṣaḥiḥ* [books]: "No journey ought to be undertaken except to three mosques; the Holy Mosque, the Aqṣā Mosque, and my mosque", and he is the most knowledgeable of people about this." ... They said: because travelling for the purpose of visiting the tombs of prophets and the righteous is an innovation that was not practiced by any of the companions or their followers and neither was it instructed by the messenger of Allāh. Therefore, whoever believes it to be an act of worship and practiced it, then he would be in opposition to the *sunna* and the nation's [scholarly] consensus.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁷ Rapoport, Y. (2004). Ibn Taymiyya on Divorce Oaths. In Levanoni, A. & Winter, M. (Eds.), *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*. Leiden: Brill. p. 191.

⁵⁴⁸ Al-Matroudi, A. (2006). *The Hanbali School of Law and Ibn Taymiyya Conflict or Conciliation*. London: Routledge. p. 20.

⁵⁴⁹ Taylor, C. (1999). *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*. Leiden: Brill. p. 195.

⁵⁵⁰ Al-Hararī 2007b: 289.

Al-Hararī's refutation of Ibn Taymiyya's *ziyāra* *fatwā* constitutes the twelfth article in his *al-Maḡalāt al-Sunniyya fī Kashf Ḍalālāt Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*. In this chapter, his method of response appears to be predominantly focused on citing a significant number of scholars who addressed Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā*, such as: Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥiṣnī (d. 829/1426), Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 738/1338), Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī (d. 973/1565), Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), al-Nābulī (d. 1143/1731), Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1362), Abū Zur'ā al-'Irāqī (d. 826/1422), Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī (d. 806/1403) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).

Al-Hararī stresses that visiting prophet Muḥammad's tombs is not only permitted but it is also a recommended matter (*sunna*), whether for the resident of Medina or elsewhere. He rejects Ibn Taymiyya's view and argues that had it been illicit to initiate a journey for the sole purpose of visiting the prophet's grave, then how could this be reconciled with the *ḥadīth* regarding Jesus' descent, who, according to the prophet, "will descend to earth as a ruler and a fair judge. He will perform *Hajj* or *'Umra* and will travel to visit my grave in order to salute me and I will return his salutation."⁵⁵¹ This account, reported by al-Ḥākim,⁵⁵² narrates the prophet's foretelling of a journey that Jesus will take from Mecca to Medina for the purpose of visiting prophet Muḥammad's tomb.

Nonetheless, al-Hararī does not dwell much on the account regarding Jesus' descent and visit. Rather, much of his focus is directed at the *ḥadīth* upon which Ibn Taymiyya relies, "No journey ought to be undertaken except to three mosques; the Holy Mosque, the Aqṣā Mosque, and my mosque."⁵⁵³ While Ibn Taymiyya understood it to indicate the prohibition of *ziyāra*, al-Hararī maintains that Ibn Taymiyya misinterpreted the *ḥadīth* and falsely derived from it his *fatwā*. This *ḥadīth*, al-Hararī notes, exclusively applies to travels which are initiated for the purpose of performing the prayer in specified mosques. That is, a person ought not to travel to a mosque with the purpose of praying in it, except if his destination was one of these three mosques, "... this is so, because the multiplication of rewards by one-million and five-hundred is exclusive to these [three mosques]."⁵⁵⁴ As such, if one travels to pray in a mosque, other than the three aforementioned mosques, the multiplication of rewards would not apply, so the visitor would not acquire the merit mentioned in the *ḥadīth*.

⁵⁵¹ Al-Hararī 2009b: 296.

⁵⁵² Al-Ḥākim 2002: 651.

⁵⁵³ Al-Bukhārī 1993: 659.

⁵⁵⁴ Al-Hararī 2009b: 297.

In support of that, al-Hararī quotes Ibn Ḥajar al-Haitamī who declared that none of the Salaf derived from that *ḥadīth* the judgement deduced by Ibn Taymiyya. In fact, al-Haitamī reinforces his interpretation of the *ḥadīth* but with a parallel narration from a different route of the same account. The narration is related by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal from the route of Shahr b. Ḥawshab from Abū Saʿīd that the prophet said, “The saddles of the camels shall not be fastened for setting out to a mosque for the purpose of prayer (*ṣalāt*) except for three mosques: the Holy Mosque, the Aqṣā Mosque, and my mosque.”⁵⁵⁵ Building upon al-Haitamī’s statement, al-Hararī reiterates that Ibn Taymiyya’s flawed argument could not be a valid interpretation of the *ḥadīth* because the best method to interpret a *ḥadīth* is with another narration of the same account, as al-ʿIrāqī states in his *Alfiyya*, “*wa khayru mā fassartahū bil wāridī*”⁵⁵⁶ which means the best way for one to explain a *ḥadīth* is with another *ḥadīth* or verse. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya’s interpretation of the *ḥadīth* holds no weight when contrasted with Ibn Ḥanbal’s narration.

But this is not the only *ḥadīth* Ibn Taymiyya relies upon to prohibit *ziyāra*, another account he employs is, “*lā tajʿalū qabrī ʿīdan*”.⁵⁵⁷ This *ḥadīth* literally translates as: do not make my grave an Eid. Ibn Taymiyya alleges that this *ḥadīth* acts as an explicit proof indicating the prohibition of setting out to visit the prophet’s grave or any other graves because that would render them places for festivities and illicit practices, according to him.⁵⁵⁸ Ibn Taymiyya’s contemporary, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī refuted his employment of this account and considered it to be invalid and baseless. In fact, in his treatise dedicated to supporting the validity of *ziyāra*, al-Subkī presented three possible interpretations to this *ḥadīth*:⁵⁵⁹

1. It is possible that the *ḥadīth* encourages setting out to visit the prophet’s grave, rather than discouraging. It implies that his grave ought not to be neglected and only visited a few times, similar to the Eid, that only comes twice a year.
2. Do not commit to a specific date, only on which you offer *ziyāra* to his grave.
3. Perhaps it is meant, do not gather at his grave and decorate it in a way that is only done during celebrations. Instead, one should visit to salute, supplicate, then leave.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁵ Ibn Ḥanbal 1995: 201.

⁵⁵⁶ Al-ʿIrāqī, A. (2002). *Sharḥ al-Tabṣira wa al-Tadhkira*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. Vol. 2, p. 84.

⁵⁵⁷ ʿAzīmābādī, M. (2019). *ʿAwn al-Maʿbūd Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. Vol. 5, p. 88.

⁵⁵⁸ Abū Dāwūd, S. (2009). *Sunan Abī Dawūd*. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla. Vol. 3, p. 385.

⁵⁵⁹ Al-Subkī 2008: 65.

⁵⁶⁰ Al-Subkī 2008: 66.

Noticeably, al-Subkī does not believe that the validity of visiting the prophet's grave is a matter that is open for debate. Rather, he contends that the scholarly consensus (*ijmā'*) has been established upon the permissibility of *ziyāra*. He notes, "Al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, may Allāh have mercy on him, said: visiting his grave, peace be upon him, is classed as a *sunna* (a recommended matter) by Muslims and it is also *mujma'* *'alayhā* (unanimously agreed upon by scholars), as well as it being a virtuous deed."⁵⁶¹ Thus, according to the rulings issued by the judges of the four *madhāhib*, Ibn Taymiyya is believed to have breached the Islamic scholarly consensus on the case of *ziyāra*.

Although Ibn Taymiyya's view on *ziyāra* was mostly based on the two aforementioned accounts, his analysis was not confined to those reports. He went further to collate numerous reports pertaining to the permissibility of visiting the prophet's grave and dismissed them by alleging, "As for the *ḥadīths* reported in regard to visiting the grave of the prophet, all scholars unanimously agreed that they are not only weak, but also fabricated. None of the authors of the reliable *Sunan* reported any of them."⁵⁶² For instance, the following *ḥadīth* is contested by Ibn Taymiyya.

The *ḥadīth* reads, "*Man zāra qabrī wajabat lahu shafā'atī*".⁵⁶³ It means whoever visits my grave, my intercession will be confirmed for him. This account has been deemed *ḥasan* (fair) by al-Dhahabī.⁵⁶⁴ It was also related by al-Bazzār⁵⁶⁵ as well as al-Dāraquṭnī.⁵⁶⁶ Regarding Ibn Taymiyya's statement on the weakness of all *ziyāra* accounts, al-Harārī wonders how could Ibn Taymiyya have the audacity to make such a claim? This *ḥadīth* has been reported by an author of one of the reliable *Sunan*: al-Ḥāfidh Sa'īd b. al-Sakan (d. 353/964) who also reported a similar *ḥadīth* on *ziyāra* his *al-Sunan al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (The Authentic Prophetic Traditions).⁵⁶⁷ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī mentions that all the routes, through which this *ḥadīth* is reported, are considered weak in their own right, however it gained authenticity because Ibn al-Sakan reported this *ḥadīth*, as well as ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī (d. 581/1185) in his book *al-Aḥkām al-Sharʿiyya al-Ṣuḡhrā al-Saḥiḥa* (The Minor Authentic Religious Rules).⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶¹ Al-Subkī 2008: 65.

⁵⁶² Ibn Taymiyya 2001: 195.

⁵⁶³ Al-Harārī 2007b: 297.

⁵⁶⁴ Al-Suyūṭī, ʿA. (1988). *Manāḥil al-Ṣafā Bitakhrīj Aḥādīth al-Shifā*. Dār al-Jinān. p. 208.

⁵⁶⁵ Al-Haitamī, A. (1979). *Kashf al-Astār ʿan Zawāʿid al-Bazzār*. Muʾassasat al-Risāla. Vol. 2, p. 57.

⁵⁶⁶ Al-Dāraquṭnī, ʿA. (2011). *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. Vol. 1, p. 244.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, A. (2014). *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr fī Takhrīj Aḥādīth al-Rāfiʿ al-Kabīr*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. Vol. 2, p. 572.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibn Ḥajar 2014: 572.

It is worth noting that, perhaps, Ibn Taymiyya's prohibition of *ziyāra* would not have been propagated as much, had it not been for the efforts of two of his disciples: Shihāb al-Dīn b. Murrī (d. 728/1328) and Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350). As for Ibn Murrī, he promoted Ibn Taymiyya's views on *tawassul* and grave visitation in Cairo, thereby resulting in clashes with the Ṣūfīs who, in turn, reported him to the Mālikī judge Taqī al-Dīn al-Iknā'ī (d. 750/1349). The judge initially had him imprisoned and beaten up, but after some intervention, he was released and sent into exile.⁵⁶⁹

Similarly, Ibn al-Qayyim spoke outwardly in Jerusalem against initiating a travel with the intention of visiting the prophet's grave, so much so that he openly stated that he would not visit Abraham's grave in Hebron.⁵⁷⁰ As a result, he was put on trial in al-Ṣālihiyya before the Ḥanbalī judge Shams al-Dīn b. Muslim, who ordered that he be punished before imprisonment. However, before his journey back to the citadel prison, he was paraded around al-Ṣālihiyya on a donkey while being mocked by onlookers.⁵⁷¹

To conclude this section, it ought to be noted that prior to Ibn Taymiyya's final admission into the citadel prison, he was put on trial by judges of the four *madhāhib* who decreed that such beliefs upheld by him are blasphemous and in opposition to the fundamentals of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. However, this does not mean that Ibn Taymiyya was not well-grounded in a number of Islamic disciplines. He was certainly knowledgeable, but after acknowledging the depth of his knowledge, Walī al-Dīn al-'Irāqī describes Ibn Taymiyya by saying, "His knowledge was bigger than his intellect."⁵⁷² Ibn Taymiyya's numerous disagreements with his contemporaries led him, as Walī al-Dīn notes, to breach the *ijmā'* on nearly sixty issues, ranging from fundamental matters of the creed (*uṣūl al-'aqīda*) to topics in jurisprudence (*furū' al-fiqh*).⁵⁷³ As stated earlier, many scholars accused Ibn Taymiyya of committing apostasy, to the extent that Ḥanafī jurist 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 841/1437), known as al-Bukhārī al-Ḥanafī, upheld that it would not be permissible to refer to Ibn Taymiyya as *shaykh al-islām*. In fact, he who does so would be considered an apostate.⁵⁷⁴ He also dedicated his book *al-Muljima li al-Mujassima* (Restraining the Anthropomorphists) to refuting Ibn Taymiyya's ideology.

⁵⁶⁹ Hoover, J. (2019). *Ibn Taymiyya*. One World Academic.

⁵⁷⁰ Al-Ḥiṣnī, A. (2010). *Daf' Shubah man Shabbah wa Tamarrad wa Nasaba Dhālika 'ilā al-Sayyid al-Jalīl al-Imām Aḥmad*. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li al-Turāth. p. 123.

⁵⁷¹ Al-Ḥiṣnī 2010: 124.

⁵⁷² Al-'Irāqī, A. (1989). *Al-Ajwiba al-Marḍiyya 'an al-As'ila al-Makkiyya*. Maktabat al-Taw'īya al-Islāmiyya. pp. 91-96.

⁵⁷³ Al-'Irāqī 1989: 95.

⁵⁷⁴ Al-Matroudi 2006.

3.2.7 *Mawlid*: Celebration of the Prophet's Birth

Prophet Muḥammad's day of birth is annually commemorated during the third month of the Islamic calendar, Rabī' al-'Awwal. The prophet's *mawlid* continues to be celebrated in most Muslim-majority countries with the exception of Saudi Arabia and Qatar.⁵⁷⁵ The specific date for the *mawlid* is not a matter of consensus amongst scholars. Whilst some have asserted that he was born on the 10th or 17th, the majority have observed *mawlid* on the 12th of Rabī' al-'Awwal. On the other hand, some scholars argued that although the specific date is not conclusively recorded, the *mawlid* certainly took place on a Monday during the month of Rabī' al-'Awwal.⁵⁷⁶ On *mawlid*, Muslims honour the life of the prophet through a variety of events, such as: visiting his grave in Medina,⁵⁷⁷ reciting Qur'ānic verses, praising the prophet, sharing stories from his biography and holding massive outdoor celebrations.⁵⁷⁸ Following are some traditional features of the *mawlid*:

The *mawlid* genre includes several relatively standard elements: an opening invocation and praise of God. Other information like Muhammad's ancestry; the announcement of his conception to his mother Amina; and the account of his birth and associated miracles ... Perhaps the most well-known poem written to commemorate the birth of Muhammad is al-Busiri's 'Qasida al-Burda' or Mantle Ode, written in the late 1200s in Egypt.⁵⁷⁹

It is well-established that the prophet neither celebrated his *mawlid* nor did he explicitly instruct his companions to do so. As such, this practice is unanimously believed to be a *bid'a*, otherwise known as an innovation. But the argument on whether it is a praiseworthy *bid'a* or a reprehensible one is a matter that will be discussed extensively below. Before delving into the religious debate, it would be useful to shed light upon the historical narrative vis-à-vis the origins of celebrating *mawlid*. Two dynasties stand out when discussing the origins of *mawlid* celebration, the Fāṭimid and the Ayyūbid eras.

⁵⁷⁵ Hughes, A. (2013). *Muslim Identities: An Introduction to Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 218.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibn Kathīr, I. (2003). *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*. Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub. Vol. 3, p. 373.

⁵⁷⁷ Nowadays, the month of Rabī' al-'Awwal has become a booking high-season for those planning to perform 'umra to Mecca, then visit the prophet's grave in Medina. Tourist agencies advertise ahead of the *mawlid* season, offering Muslims deals to go on: 'umrat al-mawlid from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and other Arab countries.

⁵⁷⁸ Schussman, A. (1998). The Legitimacy and Nature of Mawlid al-Nabī: (Analysis of a Fatwā). *Islamic Law and Society*, 5(2), 214-234. p. 214.

⁵⁷⁹ Stanton, A. (2015). Supra-national Events, Communities and Identity Discourses. In Merkel, U. (Ed.), *Identity Discourses and Communities in International Events, Festivals and Spectacles*. London: Palgrave MacMillan. p. 199.

The importance of examining the era during which the *mawlid* initially emerged stems from the Wahhābī claim that this practice is not only an illicit one because it is a *bid‘a*, but also since it was established by the Shī‘as. Ibn Bāz alleges, “The first ones to introduce it are the Shī‘as of Banī ‘Ubayd; the Fāṭimid Shī‘as, about whom Ibn Taymiyya said: they outwardly exhibit the attributes of the Rāfiḍa⁵⁸⁰ and inwardly, they conceal pure blasphemy.”⁵⁸¹ So, in order to pinpoint the era during which the *mawlid* originated, the concept of celebration ought to be revisited and examined. The *mawlid* event is regarded as a festival during which all social classes of the Muslim society congregate and perform good deeds. Nāṣir al-Dīn b. Mubārak describes some key elements of the *mawlid* festival:

If someone spends money (*anfaqa al-munfiq*) on that night, gathers a group of people to whom he feeds licit things and makes them listen to licit things (*aṭ‘amahum mā yajūzū iṭ‘āmuḥu wa-asma‘ahum mā yajūzu sam‘uhu*), and gives the performer who arouses people’s longing for the next world something to wear, all out of delight in [the Prophet’s] birth, all of this is permissible and the one who does it will be rewarded if his intention is good. This is not limited to the poor to the exclusion of the rich [i.e., as recipients of food], unless he intends to comfort those who are most needy, in which case the poor yields greater rewards.⁵⁸²

For centuries, the *mawlid* celebration has been described as a gathering of the rich, poor, old and young in remembrance of the prophet and his virtues. However, assuming that the Fāṭimids practiced a form of *mawlid*, it was not considered a public *mawlid* festival, per se. Rather, as Marion Katz notes, it was a private observance conducted by the royalty. They observed four *mawlids*: those of prophet Muḥammad, his cousin ‘Alī, his daughter Fāṭima, and the reigning caliph. But the rituals were restricted to the Fāṭimid court and the public were excluded. It is, however, recorded that some court officials took to the streets of Cairo in simple processions during the day.⁵⁸³ Some rejected the notion that the Fāṭimids celebrated *mawlid*, those who did not, argued that the Fāṭimid ceremonies were not at all public festivals. Instead, it is believed that the very first Sunnī initiator of the *mawlid* as a public mass festival was the Ayyūbid emir Muẓaffar al-Dīn Gökburī (d. 630/1233).

⁵⁸⁰ The singular of *rāfiḍa* is *rāfiḍī* which translates as: he who rejects. It is used in reference to the Shī‘as who rejected the legitimacy of Abū Bakr’s caliphate as well as that of ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān.

⁵⁸¹ Al-Aḥmad, M. (2012). *Al-‘Ādāb wa al-Akhlāq*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 103.

⁵⁸² Katz, M. (2007). *The Birth of The Prophet Muhammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam*. London: Routledge. p. 68.

⁵⁸³ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. (2018). *Mawlid*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mawlid>.

Records of Gökbūrī being the first to introduce the mass celebration of *mawlid* are documented by a number of historiographers. For instance, Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* states, “He (i.e., emir Gökbūrī) regularly commemorated the honourable *mawlid*, during Rabī‘ al-‘Awwal, and organised massive celebrations. He was a chivalrous and a brave hero, as well as a just and a bright scholar, may Allāh have mercy upon him.”⁵⁸⁴ Also, prominent biographer Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) alluded to Gökbūrī’s efforts when discussing the biography of *ḥadīth* scholar Ibn Dihya al-Kalbī (d. 633/1235), “He (i.e., Ibn Dihya) was amongst the prominent scholars and the well-known nobility. He came from Morocco to the Levant and Iraq, he passed through Erbil in 604 and found its glorified king Muẓaffar al-Dīn Gökbūrī b. Zain al-Dīn paying due care to the practice of *mawlid*. So, he (i.e., Ibn Dihya) compiled a book for him [entitled] *al-Tanwīr fī Mawlid al-Bashīr al-Nadhīr* and recited it himself to him. As a result, he was gifted one-thousand dinars.”⁵⁸⁵ But perhaps one of the leading authorities on *mawlid* is Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī who authored his famous treatise: *Husn al-Maqṣid fī ‘Amal al-Mawlid*⁵⁸⁶ (The Good Endeavor in Celebrating the *Mawlid*), which he dedicated to proving the permissibility of *mawlid*. In it, he also mentions that Abū Sa‘īd Gökbūrī was the very first to celebrate the prophet’s *mawlid* in a festive manner. The magnitude of the *mawlid* celebration, especially during the reign of Gökbūrī, is comprehensively illustrated by Marion Katz. She observes:

Early public celebrations of the *mawlid* seem to have involved an almost potlatch-like level of conspicuous consumption. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654 AH/1257 CE) reports of the celebration sponsored by Muẓaffar al-Dīn Kōkübrī – the first Sunni *mawlid* celebration of which we have a detailed description – that “somebody who had been present at the banquet of al-Muẓaffar during one of the *mawlid* celebrations said that for that banquet he served 5000 roast [sheep], 10,000 chickens, 100,000 dishes (*zabdīya*) and 30,000 platters of sweetmeats.” According to Ibn Khallikān (d. 681 AH/1282 CE), the number of camels, cows and sheep that were paraded to the slaughter to the accompaniment of drumming and singing was simply “beyond description.” The overall cost of the annual celebration is said to have reached 300,000 *dirhams*.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴ Ibn Kathīr, I. (2015). *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Vol. 13, p. 139.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibn Khallikān, A. (1978). *Wafayāt al-A‘yān wa Anbā’ Abnā’ Ahl al-Zamān*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir. Vol. 3, p. 449.

⁵⁸⁶ Al-Suyūṭī’s treatise *Husn al-Maqṣid fī ‘Amal al-Mawlid* is mentioned as part of his comprehensive collection of *fatāwā* that he produced over the years in many disciplines like *tafsīr* (Qur’ān interpretation & exegesis), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *ḥadīth*, grammar as well as other sciences. See Al-Suyūṭī, ‘A. (2004). *Al-Ḥāwī li al-Fatāwā*. Dār al-Fikr. p. 222.

⁵⁸⁷ Katz 2007:67.

After establishing the historical narrative pertaining to the origins of *mawlid* celebrations, the theological debate ought to be closely examined. As stated earlier, a number of modern-day countries with a significant Muslim population celebrate *mawlid* as a public holiday, but only two countries consider observing the *mawlid* to be forbidden: Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Governmental religious institutions in both countries adhere to Wahhābism as their official religious ideology and, as such, they adopt strict Wahhābī principles in regard to the practice of *mawlid*.

Ibn Bāz, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn and a plethora of other Wahhābī figures consider the *mawlid* a forbidden innovation (*bid‘a muharrama*) – a concept that is highly contested. For instance, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn states, “... therefore, celebrating the prophet’s *mawlid* so as to seek [the reward of] God and glorify His messenger would be an act of worship (*‘ibāda*). Since it is a *‘ibāda*, it would be forbidden to introduce to the religion that which is not part of it. Therefore, celebrating the *mawlid* is a *bid‘a* and is considered to be illicit.”⁵⁸⁸ Likewise, Ibn Bāz adopted an identical position, he expressed, “What is known to us from the religion and what we have been taught by the reliable scholars is that celebrating the *mawlid* is, undoubtedly, a *bid‘a*.”⁵⁸⁹ So, the Wahhābī rationale in dismissing *mawlid* relies entirely on classifying every new matter as an innovated *‘ibāda* and consequently dismissing it as an unlawful *bid‘a*.

The *ḥadīth* that is frequently quoted by Wahhābī figures when arguing for the illicitness of *mawlid* reads, “... For, every newly invented matter is an innovation (*bid‘a*). Every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in Hellfire.”⁵⁹⁰ Based on the prophet’s statement, “*kulla muḥdathatin bid‘a*”, it has been claimed that every single matter introduced to the religion ought to be branded as a heresy. Ibn Bāz argues that every innovation is to be rejected, even though jurists opined that some innovations are good (i.e., *bid‘a ḥasana*), such as compiling the book of the Qur’ān (*muṣḥaf*) and establishing the *tarāwīḥ* prayers. The compilation of the *muṣḥaf* was initially instructed by Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and finalised by ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān. However, according to Ibn Bāz, the only valid opinion is that all *bid‘as* are of misguidance and that none of them could be classified as a praiseworthy or a good *bid‘a*.⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁸ Al-Sulaimān 1992: 299.

⁵⁸⁹ Al-Shway‘ir 2007: 254.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal 1995: 279.

⁵⁹¹ Al-Shway‘ir 2007: 256.

Therefore, the official Wahhābī position in relation to celebrating the prophet's *mawlid* is to simply dismiss it as *bid'a* and attempt to reinforce that position by claiming that a *bid'a* could only be an unlawful deed. In response to the Wahhābī *fatwā* on *mawlid*, al-Hararī devised a number of counterarguments scattered across his works. However, he wrote an independent treatise dedicated solely for the validity of *mawlid*. His book, entitled *al-Rāwa'ih al-Zakiyya fī Mawlid Khayr al-Bariyya*⁵⁹² (The Fragrant Scents in the Birth of the Best of Creation), is an enumeration of traditions in support of the validity of celebrating the birth of prophet Muḥammad. The book is divided into three sections, the first of which delves into the historical origins of celebrating the *mawlid*, followed by the definition of *bid'a* and its categories and the final section is dedicated to narrating the story of *mawlid*.

Contrary to the Wahhābī view, al-Hararī, like many scholars before him, opined that *bid'a* is divided into two categories: a good innovation or *bid'a ḥasana* and an innovation of misguidance or *bid'a sayyi'a*. Although the linguistic definition of *bid'a* refers to a practice or a matter that has been invented without a previous example, the religious definition is more specific. Al-Hararī notes, "Religiously, it (i.e., the *bid'a*) is the new thing that was not documented in the Qur'ān or the *ḥadīth*."⁵⁹³ To support this categorisation, al-Hararī relies on the same report that is utilised by Wahhābīs to delegitimise *bid'a*. This account is narrated by al-Bukārī and Muslim from 'Ā'isha with slight variations in wording. Muslim narrates the following, "*man 'amila 'amalan laysa 'alayhi amrunā fahuwa raddun*".⁵⁹⁴ That is: whoever does an act that is not in accord with our matter will have it rejected. On the other hand, al-Bukārī's narration reads, "*man 'ahdatha fī amrinā hādhā mā laysa minhu fahuwa raddun*"⁵⁹⁵ i.e., whoever innovates into this affair of ours that which does not comply with it is rejected.

Al-Hararī stresses that the prophet's statement, "*mā laysa minhu*" which translates as: that which does not comply with it, indicates that if a *muḥdath* or a *bid'a* did not accord with the rules of the religion, then it ought to be dismissed as an innovation of misguidance. However, if the innovated matter was in compliance with the religious rules, then it is to be accepted. By doing so, al-Hararī differentiates between the *manṭūq* (the uttered meaning) of the *ḥadīth* and its *mafḥūm* (understood meaning).

⁵⁹² Al-Hararī, 'A. (2009). *Al-Rāwa'ih al-Zakiyya fī Mawlid Khayr al-Bariyya*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁵⁹³ Al-Hararī 2004d: 415.

⁵⁹⁴ Muslim 1991a: Vol. 3, 343.

⁵⁹⁵ Al-Bukhārī 1993: Vol. 3, 959.

After providing an interpretation of the above widely circulated account, al-Hararī goes on to derive the legitimacy of the good innovation (*bidʿa ḥasana*) from the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth*. The verb *ibtadaʿūhā* (lit. they innovated it) appears in the Qurʾān in reference to the followers of Jesus about whom Q. 57:27 says in meaning, “And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy and *raḥbāniyya* (lit. monasticism), which they innovated (*ibtadaʿūhā*); We did not prescribe it for them except [that they did so] seeking the approval of Allāh”.⁵⁹⁶ In the verse, those believers are praised for having innovated a matter that was not prescribed upon them. According to al-Hararī, their *raḥbāniyya* refers to their abandonment of pleasures, so much so that they have observed celibacy and dedicated themselves to obeying Allāh in remote places.⁵⁹⁷ After explaining Q. 57:27, al-Hararī derives, “This verse indicates that whosoever performed a deed that does not oppose the religion, but instead it conforms with it, it would not be a blameworthy *bidʿa*. Rather, the one who does that would be rewarded. It is called: a *sunna ḥasana* or *sunnata khayr* and it is also referred to as a *bidʿa ḥasana* or *bidʿa mustaḥabba*.”⁵⁹⁸ In addition to Q. 57:27, al-Hararī presents a *ḥadīth* in support of his classification of *bidʿa* into two categories. The *ḥadīth* reads:

Whoever starts a good *sunna* in Islam (*sanna fī al-Islām*) will have its reward and the reward of whoever practiced it after him, without diminishing any of their rewards. And whoever starts an evil *sunna* in Islam, then upon him is its sin and the sin of whoever practiced it after him, without diminishing any of their sins.⁵⁹⁹

Despite the fact that the *ḥadīth* unequivocally classifies *bidʿa* into two categories and promises reward to whoever introduces a good innovation, Wahhābīs have rejected such an understanding and maintained that it does not, in any way whatsoever, refer to the two types of *bidʿa*. Instead, Ibn Bāz claims that, “*sanna fī al-Islām*” does not indicate innovating or introducing a new matter. Rather, he argues that it denotes rejuvenating a practice that has been long abandoned. He insists that every *bidʿa* is an evil one, so he claims that the *ḥadīth* refers to the example of a man who enters town whose residents do not perform the Friday prayers, or do not recite the Qurʾān. So, this person would teach them and revive the *sunna*.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁶ The Qurʾān 57:27.

⁵⁹⁷ Al-Hararī 2004d: 418.

⁵⁹⁸ Al-Hararī 2004d: 418.

⁵⁹⁹ Muslim 1991a: Vol. 2, 705.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibn Bāz, ‘A. (1999). *Majmūʿ Fatāwā wa Maqālāt Mutanawwiʿa*. Riyadh: Dār al-Qāsim li al-Buḥūth wa al-Nashr. Vol. 4, p. 373.

Upon examining the explanation of the above *ḥadīth*, it seems that interpreting “*sanna*” as revived has never been attempted prior to Ibn Bāz, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn and al-Albānī. In fact, classical scholars have consistently contended that the *ḥadīth* refers to innovating practices in Islam, rather than reviving them. This is indicated by the following accounts:

1. Al-Bayhaqī reports one of the foundational statements in the *bid‘a* argument that is attributed to al-Shāfi‘ī who says, “The newly-invented matters are of two types: the first of them is that which has been introduced from that which opposes [something from] the Qur’ān, or [something from] the *ḥadīth*, or a narration, or [a matter of] consensus. This is the misguided innovation. And the second is a good matter that has been introduced and there is no opposition to any of these things (i.e., Qur’ān, *ḥadīth* and *ijmā‘*). This is the newly-invented matter which is not blameworthy.”⁶⁰¹
2. Ibn al-Athīr (d. 660/1233) states: “The *bid‘a* is of two categories: an innovation of guidance and an innovation of misguidance. Therefore, whatever opposes the commandments of the prophet would fall under the blameworthy and unacceptable [*bid‘a*]. However, whatever falls under the deeds that are deemed good by God and encouraged by His messenger, then it is a good [*bid‘a*].”⁶⁰²
3. Al-Nawawī explains the *ḥadīth* by arguing that it encourages one to initiate good deeds and innovate good matters. He insists that this *ḥadīth* provides *takhṣīṣ* (specification) to the other account in which the prophet proclaimed that every innovated matter is a *bid‘a*. That is, every innovated matter that opposes the religion is considered an evil *bid‘a*, and if it does not oppose, then it is deemed a good *bid‘a*.⁶⁰³

Also, there exists another categorisation of *bid‘a* that is somewhat broader. Prominent Ḥanafī scholar Ibn ‘Ābidīn (d. 1252/1836), and others, maintained that a *bid‘a* could also be categorised into five types, (a) obligatory (*wājiba*): such as refuting the misguided sects, (b) forbidden (*muḥarrama*): like some innovations related to the *‘aqīda* (c) optional (*mandūba*): like building a school, (d) disliked (*makrūha*): such as mosque ornamentations and (e) merely permitted (*mubāḥa*): like eating and drinking.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰¹ Al-Bayhaqī 1970: 469.

⁶⁰² Ibn al-Athīr, ‘A. (2010). *Al-Nihāya fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Athar*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Vol. 1, p. 107.

⁶⁰³ Al-Nawawī 1972: 104.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibn ‘Ābidīn, M. (2011). *Radd al-Muḥtār ‘alā al-Durr al-Mukhtār wa Sharḥ Tanwīr al-Abṣār*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. Vol. 2, p. 299.

Therefore, contrary to the mainstream Wahnābī view, al-Hararī upheld that *bid'a* is an innovation whose two categories are evidently derived from the above *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim. After establishing this, al-Hararī concludes the section by providing a number of examples for both categories of *bid'a* so as to reinforce his position. He starts with the good *bid'a* whereby providing seven examples. Amongst those examples is the *bid'a* that was introduced by one of prophet Muḥammad's companions, Khubayb b. 'Adī. Initially, Khubayb was sent with a number of people to Najd to teach the Qur'ān, however, many were killed, and he was captured and sold to 'Uqba b al-Ḥārith in Mecca. 'Uqba wanted to execute him to avenge his father who was killed during the battle of Badr. Before he was executed, Khubayb made a final request saying, "Let me pray two *rak'as*". Shortly after he prayed, he was killed. Al-Bukhārī commented on the incident by saying, "So, he was the first one who innovated [praying] two *rak'as* before death."⁶⁰⁵ Another good *bid'a* mentioned by al-Hararī is writing *ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* (generally translated as: peace be upon him) after writing the prophet's name. The prophet never did so. Instead, he ordered the scribes to write, "From Muḥammad, to so-and-so" without the addition of *ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*.⁶⁰⁶

One good *bid'a* al-Hararī utilises to refute Wahnābīs is that of Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar (d. 129/747), who was believed to be a companion of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Ibn Ya'mar is credited for applying to the Qur'ān the system of *i'jām* or *naqt*, otherwise known as consonant differentiation. Through this method, Ibn Ya'mar placed dots on certain letters in the Qur'ān,⁶⁰⁷ so as to differentiate them from other letters with similar shapes. Al-Hararī notes that none of the early copies of the Qur'ān included dots on any letters, neither during the lifetime of the prophet, nor during any of the three caliphs. When Ibn Ya'mar introduced this *bid'a*, none of the scholars objected to this practice.⁶⁰⁸ In another book, al-Hararī lays out the report regarding Ibn Ya'mar's dotting of the Qur'ān. Then he exclaims, "Would it be said about this that it is an innovation of misguidance because the messenger did not do it? If this is the case, then let them (i.e., the Wahnābīs) abandon these dotted Qur'ān copies or let them erase these dots from them so that they would return to being devoid of dots, as they were at the time of 'Uthmān."⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ Al-Bukhārī, M. (2019). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. Vol. 3, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁰⁶ Al-Hararī 2009: 23.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī states, "The first to add dots to the *maṣāḥif* (i.e., books of the Qur'ān) is Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar." See Al-Sijistānī, 'A. (2002). *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*. Dār al-Bishāra al-Islāmiyya. p. 521.

⁶⁰⁸ Al-Hararī 2009: 22.

⁶⁰⁹ Al-Hararī 2004d: 421.

Despite the existence of numerous good *bid'as*, al-Hararī selected the most significant and widely accepted practices among Muslims nowadays. To the extent that, if such practices were claimed to be illicit, this would result in widespread controversy. For instance, his argument regarding the introduction of the dotting system to the Qur'ān is accepted by Wahhābīs as a permissible practice. But despite their admission that it would be classed as a religious practice that was neither done by the prophet nor introduced by him, they insist on refusing to categorise it as a *bid'a*. For instance, when a question was posed to the Wahhābī-controlled Saudi Fatwā Committee (*al-Lajna al-Dā'ima*) regarding the innovation of dotting the Qur'ān, the committee responded, “As for the introduction of dots to the letters of the Qur'ān, as well as adding the *ḥarakāt* (diacritics), this is not considered a *bid'a*, even though it did not exist during the life of the prophet.”⁶¹⁰ Clearly, the committee's response seems to be self-contradictory and reflects their insistence on dismissing the well-established categorisation of *bid'a*.

Al-Hararī warns that such *fatwās* became grounds for violent attacks against Muslims in some Arab states. For instance, another *bid'a* that has become manifest in nearly every mosque is: the *miḥrāb*. The *miḥrāb* is described as a hollow space or a small chamber which indicates the direction of prayer in a mosque.⁶¹¹ It is believed that the 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 101/720), during his governorship of Medina, was the first to introduce the *miḥrāb* to the Prophetic Mosque.⁶¹² Al-Hararī reports that the Wahhābīs of Algeria, based on their belief that every *bid'a* is inherently an evil one, rejected the building of *miḥrābs* in Algerian mosques, to the extent that, “... some Algerian Wahhābīs closed up the *miḥrābs* with wooden sticks.”⁶¹³ Furthermore, among the practices deemed forbidden by Wahhābīs is saying: “*ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*” aloud after the *adhān* (call to prayer). In fact, reports suggest that Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb himself ordered the killing of a blind man who performed the *adhān* only because he uttered the *ṣalāt* upon the prophet after the *adhān*.⁶¹⁴ Despite the Wahhābīs' rejection of it, the *ṣalāt* upon the prophet continues to be announced after the *adhān* in thousands of mosques.

⁶¹⁰ Al-Darwīsh, A. (2003). *Fatāwā al-Lajna al-Dā'ima li al-Buḥūth al-'Ilmiyya wa al-Iftā'*. Dār al-Mu'ayyad. p. 329.

⁶¹¹ It is also described as a, “... semi-circular niche usually set into the qibla wall. Often a dome over the bay in front of it marked its position.” See Kleiner, F. (2010). *Gardner's Art through the Ages: The Western Perspective*. Boston: Wadsworth. Vol. 1, p. 265.

⁶¹² Al-Samhūdī, 'A. (2006). *Wafā' al-Wafā Bi'akḥbār Dār al-Muṣṭafā*. Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. Vol. 1, p. 94.

⁶¹³ Al-Hararī 2007b: 431.

⁶¹⁴ Daḥlān reports Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's *fatwā* that the adulteress who plays the flute at home is less sinful than the one who utters the *ṣalāt* upon the prophet after the *adhān* in the mosque. See Daḥlān 2003: 108. & Al-Hararī 2004d: 424.

As for the second type of *bid'a*: the innovation of misguidance, al-Hararī subdivides it into two categories: a *bid'a* that relates to the matters of belief (*uṣūl al-dīn*) and a *bid'a* that relates to non-fundamental branches of the religion (*furū' al-dīn*). In regard to the former, he mentions that any innovated doctrine that opposes the belief of the prophet and his companions is considered an evil *bid'a*. Such as:

1. The heresy of denying *qadar* (predestination): al-Hararī notes that Ma'bad al-Juhanī (d. 80/699) was the first to introduce the doctrine that only the good deeds are created and predestined by God, not the evil ones.⁶¹⁵
2. The Jahmīs' *bid'a*: they are the followers of Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/745), also known as the Jabrīs. Amongst their beliefs is that man is not attributed with freewill. Rather, according to them, humans are like a feather in the wind, with no control whatsoever.⁶¹⁶
3. The innovation of the Khawārij: they revolted and rebelled against 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his rival Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān. The Khawārij believe that the committer of an enormous non-*kuf'r* sin is deemed a *kāfir*, not a Muslim sinner.⁶¹⁷

Al-Hararī also provides examples of the forbidden *bid'as* that do not relate to fundamental doctrines. He dubs it, “*al-bid'a al-sayyi'a al-'amaliyya*”, i.e. the practical (i.e. non-doctrinal) forbidden innovations. For this category, he provides three cases. The first is adding the letter *ṣād* in parenthesis after writing prophet Muḥammad's name instead of writing: *ṣallā Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*. Some abbreviate it in the form of the following joint letters: *ṣād*, *lām*, *'ayn* and *mīm*, or ‘pbuh’, as it commonly appears in English. The second *bid'a*, he mentions, is performing *tayammaum*⁶¹⁸ (dry ritual purification) on carpets or pillows only, instead of the use of sand or the like. The final example he provides is a *bid'a* that is frequently observed by a number of Mutaṣawwifa. After congregating in a *dhikr* circle, they start the session by saying repeatedly the word: “Allāh” correctly, i.e. by extending the *lām* and uttering the *hā'* at the end. However, after some time, they would omit the prolongation, thereby eliminating the *alif* between the *lām* and *hā'*, rendering it: “*allh*”. Some might also drop the *hā'* at the end, thus pronouncing it as: “*alla*”. Others, al-Hararī notes, would go further to say: “*'āh*”, instead of Allāh, which is essentially the Arabic version of ‘ouch’.

⁶¹⁵ Al-Hararī 2009: 25.

⁶¹⁶ Al-Hararī 2009: 25.

⁶¹⁷ Al-Hararī 2009: 25.

⁶¹⁸ *Tayammum* is a purification ritual performed instead of water ablution (*wuḍū'*) in preparation for prayer. It is exclusively performed with sand or the like.

The final step al-Hararī takes in his endeavour to support the legitimacy of *mawlid* is proving the inconsistency and self-contradiction of the Wahhābī argument regarding the *mawlid* argument. To achieve this, al-Hararī quotes Ibn Taymiyya who said about the *mawlid*, “So, honouring the *mawlid*, and taking it as a festive season (*mawsam*), which some people have done, there is a great reward in it due to the good intention and the honouring of the messenger.”⁶¹⁹ Ibn Taymiyya’s statement is an explicit endorsement of *mawlid*, but it has been challenged by a number of Wahhābī scholars who insistently argued that it strictly refers to yielding the reward for one’s intention, rather than it indicating the permissibility of the practice.

Whether an attempt is made to interpret Ibn Taymiyya’s statement or not, modern-day rivals of the Wahhābī establishment have shed light on other annual rituals innovated by prominent Wahhābī shaykhs. For instance, high-ranking Wahhābī figures have organised a celebratory week to commemorate the ideology of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. It is commonly known as: *Usbū‘ al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*. Another example is the Saudi grand mufti’s *fatwā* urging citizens to celebrate the national day on an annual basis.⁶²⁰ So, according to these practices, the question posed is: how would celebrating the prophet’s *mawlid* be forbidden but commemorating the national day be commendable?

In sum, al-Hararī’s argument appears to be evidence-based and consistent with the Qur’ān, the *ḥadīth* and notably the practices of Muslims over the centuries. He clearly establishes the meaning of *bid‘a* along with its categories in a logical and coherent manner. He follows a systematic method that casts light on the linguistic, historical and ideological aspects of the argument. Al-Hararī concludes on the *mawlid* argument by stressing the fact that arranging gatherings during the month of Rabī‘ al-‘Awwal to recite the Qur’ān, discuss the prophet’s biography and feed the poor cannot be regarded as a forbidden practice. On the other hand, the Wahhābī stance reflects considerable inconsistencies in their arguments. Their insistence on *bid‘a* only referring to forbidden innovations is problematic and irreconcilable with the numerous practices innovated by Muslims over the centuries. Finally, their attempt to justify celebrating the national day (*al-yawm al-waṭanī*) as a form of religious allegiance to their rulers, whilst concurrently forbidding *mawlid*, is utterly laughable.

⁶¹⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, A. (n.d.). *Iqtidā‘ al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm li Mukhālafat Aṣḥāb al-Jahīm*. Maktabat al-Rashīd. Vol. 1, p. 621.

⁶²⁰ Al-Baḥrakī, Ṭ. (2017). *Irshād al-Muhtadīn fī ‘Īdāḥ Ba‘ḍ al-Masā’il min Furū‘ al-Dīn*. Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya. p. 217.

3.3 Conclusion

Thus far, this chapter has investigated into some of the most prominent and controversial doctrines propagated by al-Hararī. As stated earlier, al-Hararī takes pride in being a moderate reformer who adheres to the principles of *al-wasaṭiyya* (lit. moderation) as illustrated in the Qur’ān, “And thus we have made you a *wasat* nation”.⁶²¹ Throughout the chapter, his views were frequently contrasted with advocates of traditional and modern-day Wahhābism. Apart from al-Albānī, al-Hararī did not independently focus on specific Wahhābī figures, but he attacked their belief system as a whole. As such, the above sections investigated into a number of doctrines along with providing several views and accounts from linguistic, historical, and ideological angles.

The topic of *tanzīh* – and by extension *ta’wīl* and *istiwā’* – was firstly discussed, as it was prioritised and regarded highly by al-Hararī. His focus on *‘aqīda* extended beyond his clash with Wahhābīs to include the Mutaṣawwifa and some of their practices. By stressing that *‘aqīda* is a prerequisite to Ṣūfism, he warned against the spread of the doctrines of *ḥulūl* and *waḥdat al-wujūd* amongst many contemporary Mutaṣawwifa. Al-Hararī approved of classical Ṣūfī beliefs and practices and his promotion of Ṣūfism was not only a way to criticise Wahhābīs but, as a devoted Rifā’ī Ṣūfī, al-Hararī committed himself to reciting the daily Rifā’ī *wird*.⁶²²

Finally, al-Hararī remained loyal to his moderate approach, particularly with regards to the topics of: *tawassul*, *tabarruk*, *ziyāra* and *mawlid*. On those highly contentious issues, this chapter concludes that al-Hararī has demonstrated his reformist approach by adhering to a moderate position between ends of a spectrum. The two opposing ends are occasionally referred to by his disciples as: *ifrāt* (exaggeration) and *tafrīt* (carelessness).

⁶²¹ The Qur’ān 2:143.

⁶²² In their *A Sufi Response to Political Islamism: Al-Ahbash of Lebanon*, Nizar Hamzeh and Hrair Dekmejian examined al-Hararī’s systematic incorporation of Ṣūfism into Lebanese Islamic circles. After highlighting al-Hararī’s role in combating extremism through a traditional Sunnī discourse that is consolidated with authentic Ṣūfism, they conclude: “... there is no doubt that the Ahbash have emerged as important political actors in Lebanon and within the Islamic orbit. They present a clear alternative to the powerful Islamist trend and, as such, are likely to attract a considerable following among those Sunni Muslims... Moreover, within their pluralist framework, the Ahbash can accommodate individuals who desire a retreat into spiritualism, as well as conventional Muslims who have adopted the lifestyles of modern society. Despite the general expectation that the Sufi orders would decline as a result of modernization and industrialization, the Ahbash have demonstrated that Sufi traditions possess special strengths in societies such as Lebanon’s, where a high degree of religious pluralism prevails.” See Hamzeh and Dekmejian 1996: 226.

Chapter IV

Al-Hararī vs. Contemporaries

While the previous chapter was largely dominated by al-Hararī's ideological clash with Wahhābism, this chapter, on the other hand, will shed light on the other religious factions and figures with whom al-Hararī fundamentally disagreed. His anti-Wahhābī rhetoric was certainly central to his mission but it is also his campaign against prominent religious factions and individuals is what propelled him to fame in the Islamic world. Al-Hararī devoted much of his life to warning against what he calls: *al-Firaq al-Thalāth*, or the Three Sects, namely: Wahhābīs, Ikhwānīs and Taḥrīrīs. As such, this section will begin by analysing al-Hararī's views on Ikhwānism and Taḥrīrism. Then, it will delve into his stance on a number of contemporary non-sectarian figures such as: Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī and many others.

As previously mentioned, the Lebanese Constitution officially recognises seventeen religious groups which account for Lebanon's extremely complex sectarian fabric.⁶²³ According to the US Department of State, Sunnī Muslims constitute 27% of Lebanon's population.⁶²⁴ In her paper entitled *Lebanon's Sunni Islamists — A Growing Force*, Omayma Abdel-Latif attempts to map the most influential religio-political movements and organisations affiliated with Lebanon's Sunnī Islam. Omayma divides the groups into two categories: traditional Islamist movements and neo-Salafist movements.⁶²⁵ While the latter emerged recently in the 1990s, traditional movements are considered more established. She states: "This includes mainstream political movements, such as *al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic Group), *Jamiyyat al-Masharii al-Khayriyya al-Islamiyya* (Organization of Islamic Charitable Projects, also known as *al-Ahbash*), *Jabhat al-Amal al-Islami* (the Islamic Action Front), and *Hizb al-Tahrir* (the Party of Liberation)." The aforementioned movements maintained the highest influence in the Sunnī arena and represented four disparate ideologies. The first of which is represented by the Jamā'a's loyalty to Ikhwānī doctrines, the Taḥrīrīs' defection of Ikhwān's path and adoption caliphate-centred agenda. Also, new Salafists emerged as an influential power in northern Lebanon and finally al-Hararī's Sūfī, Shāfī'ī and Ash'arī methodology appears in most Lebanese governorates.

⁶²³ Prados 2006: 1.

⁶²⁴ U.S. Department of State. (2013). *Lebanon*. Retrieved from <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2012/nea/208400.htm>.

⁶²⁵ Abdel-Latif, O. (2008). *Lebanon's Sunni Islamists - A Growing Force*. *Carnegie Endowment*. Retrieved from https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CMEC6_abdellatif_lebanon_final.pdf. p. 1.

To this very day, the above-stated religious movements remain the most active and prominent in Lebanon. No formal alliances or coalitions have been forged between any of them. As such, religious figures from each camp continue to oppose the views presented by the others. For instance, in a statement issued by Faiṣal Mawlawī, head of Lebanon's al-Jamā'a, he attacks the Taḥrīrīs' ideology regarding the participation of Muslims in the Swedish election. He states, "The Ikhwān remained opposed to the other movements, especially those affiliated with Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr who regarded partaking in the political process to be an act of loyalty to the blasphemers (*kuffār*) and they considered it forbidden (*ḥaram*) to take part [in the elections]."⁶²⁶ Further research indicates that, in the context of Lebanon, none of the three movements dedicated any independent books or pamphlets in attack of their rivals' ideologies. Instead, their attacks were mostly comprised of verbal statements. Contrary to al-Hararī who wrote extensively against each one of the three sects.

4.1 Sayyid Quṭb's Ikhwānism

As per al-Hararī's biography, his public confrontation with Wahhābism started as early as the late 1930s. However, it was not until after his migration to the Levant that he became exposed to the thought of an Egyptian organisation called *Jamā'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, also known in English as The Muslim Brotherhood. After years of research, al-Hararī wrote extensively against Ikhwānism, albeit not as much as he did on Wahhābism. Nonetheless, his views on Ikhwānism have been documented in three of his polemical treatises: (1) *al-Bayān al-Muwathāq: Dirāsa Muwathāqa Limaqālāt al-Firq al-Thalāth*⁶²⁷ (The Well-Documented Illustration: A Codified Study Regarding the Sayings of the Three Sects), (2) *al-Ta'āwun 'alā al-Nahī 'an al-Munkar*⁶²⁸ (Cooperating in Forbidding the Unlawful) and (3) *Risāla fī al-Taḥdhīr min al-Firq al-Thalāth*⁶²⁹ (A Treatise in Warning Against the Three Sects). Yet, al-Hararī did not solely rely upon written works to raise awareness against Ikhwānism. He also engaged in public lectures and seminars, as illustrated in one of his public lessons entitled 'Warning Against the Three Sects'.⁶³⁰ The lecture was, later on, published in writing as part of a book entitled *Jāmi' al-Khayrāt* (The Collection of Benefits), which is a text that essentially encompasses decades of what tape-recorded public lectures and seminars delivered by al-Hararī, that were later on compiled and published, years after his death.

⁶²⁶ Egypston, S. (2018). *Al-Kadhib al-Abyaḍ: Qirā'āt fī Nuṣūṣ al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn wa Taṭbīqihā fī al-Gharb: al-Suwayd Unmūdḥajan*.

⁶²⁷ Al-Hararī 2005.

⁶²⁸ Al-Hararī 2009a.

⁶²⁹ Al-Hararī, 'A. (2010). *Risāla fī al-Taḥdhīr min al-Firq al-Thalāth*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁶³⁰ Al-Hararī 2017a: 237-243.

As to the reason why this section is entitled Sayyid Quṭb's Ikhwānism, it is because al-Hararī draws a clear distinction between the vision of the party's founder, Ḥasan al-Bannā (d. 1398/1949) and that of Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1385/1966) who, later on, became a ranking member of the party. Al-Hararī regarded al-Bannā as a pious reformer who upheld and promoted moderate Islamic beliefs. However, al-Hararī believed that soon after al-Bannā established *Jamā'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, many members deviated from the guiding principles and adopted heretic beliefs. When al-Bannā learned about their defection, he disowned them. In support of this narrative, al-Hararī quotes Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1416/1996), one of al-Bannā's comrades. Al-Ghazālī observes:

When Ḥasan al-Bannā, himself, was establishing his group in the early stages, he knew that the notables and dignitaries, as well as those who seek social entertainment, could not be relied upon, especially during serious times. As such, he founded the special system. It is a system that included men who have been trained for combat. Ḥasan al-Bannā said about them before he died: "They are neither Ikhwān, nor are they Muslimīn."⁶³¹

Al-Bannā's statement, "They are neither Ikhwān, nor are they Muslimīn" has been frequently cited by al-Hararī especially in reference to the Quṭb-influenced Ikhwānī offshoot. Sayyid Quṭb joined the Ikhwān in the early 1950s and was shortly thereafter appointed as the editor-in-chief of the Ikhwān's official newspaper. However, he was imprisoned several times for attempting to overthrow Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime, especially through his influential writings.⁶³² As one of the chief ideologues of the Ikhwān, Quṭb wrote on many Islamic disciplines and was rather influential. One of his most famous works is his six-volume commentary of the Qur'ān entitled *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*⁶³³ (lit. In the Shadows of The Qur'ān), most of which he wrote whilst in prison. Quṭb's *Zilāl* lays out much of his beliefs and views, especially in reference to some key events that took places during his lifetime. As a result of the numerous attacks perpetrated by Quṭb's Ikhwānīs, al-Hararī sought to examine Quṭb's beliefs, particularly due to the exponential growth of the Ikhwānī's political and militant branches in a number of Arab countries at that time, namely Egypt, Syria, Algeria and Lebanon.

⁶³¹ Al-Ghazālī, M. (1963). *Min Ma'ālim al-Haqq fī Kifāhīnā al-Islāmī al-Ḥadīth*. Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha. p. 264.

⁶³² Rizq, Ḥ. (2013). *Faṭḥ Miṣr Wathā'iq al-Tamkīn al-Ikhwāniyya*. Dār Nahḍat Miṣr. p. 29.

⁶³³ Quṭb, S. (1980). *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq.

After the fall of the Egyptian monarchy in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers who supported him in overthrowing King Farouk realised the threat posed by the Ikhwān. After an unsuccessful attack on Abdel Nasser's life in 1954, Quṭb and thousands of Ikhwānīs were imprisoned.⁶³⁴ As stated earlier, Quṭb authored the majority of his works in prison. One of his works which is even more influential than his *Zilāl* is his *Ma'ālim fī al-Tarīq*,⁶³⁵ it is otherwise known as *Milestones Along the Way*, or simply *Milestones*. After analysing Quṭb's life and writings, John Zimmerman argues that his life could be divided into three key phases:

His first phase began in the 1930s as a literary critic. The second phase began in the late 1940s and lasted until 1964 when he devoted his writings to the necessity of establishing a society following strict Islamic adherence. Although imprisoned from 1954-64, he continued his writings from a jail cell. The third phase began in 1964 when he added to his Islamic writings the need to overthrow all existing governments by force if necessary.⁶³⁶

Quṭb's *Milestones* has been described as the manifesto for the Quṭbism ideology, "The book's primary significance is its great influence on militant groups from the seventies of the previous century until today."⁶³⁷ As a result of the spread of Quṭbism, a number of groups have turned to violent combat such as The Jihad Organisation which was responsible for the assassination of president Anwar al-Sadat (d. 1401/1981), Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA); an insurgent faction credited for massacring masses during the Algerian civil war and more significantly al-Qaeda.⁶³⁸ In Quṭb's *Milestones*, he developed his doctrine of *jāhiliyya* through which he "pointed the finger at Muslim societies as being in a state of Jahiliyyah."⁶³⁹ The doctrine which Sayyid Quṭb derived from Abū al-A'ālā al-Mawdūdī (d. 1399/1979), has become one of the central principles adopted by modern-day militants who exercise violence against the regimes and societies of Muslim countries. He also applied the *jāhiliyya* doctrine to non-Muslim countries.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁴ Azoulay, R. (2015). The Power of Ideas. The Influence of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb On the Muslim Brotherhood Organization. *Przegląd Strategiczny*, 8, 171-182. p. 174.

⁶³⁵ Quṭb, S. (1979). *Ma'ālim fī al-Tarīq*. Dār al-Shurūq.

⁶³⁶ Zimmerman, J. (2004). Sayyid Qutb's Influence on the 11 September Attacks. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16(2), 222-252. p. 223.

⁶³⁷ Azoulay 2015: 175.

⁶³⁸ Azoulay 2015: 175.

⁶³⁹ Zimmerman 2004: 235.

⁶⁴⁰ Zimmerman 2004: 235.

In his *Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of "Jāhiliyya"*,⁶⁴¹ William Shepherd analyses the concept of *jāhiliyya*. He points out that the term *jāhiliyya* is generally translated as 'the Age of Ignorance', as exemplified by its linguistic derivative: *jahl* or ignorance. However, in a religious context, the term *jāhiliyya* is mostly employed "to refer to the Arabian society of the century or so prior to Muhammad's mission."⁶⁴² This term, he notes, also appears in the Qur'ān four times, as well as in a number of *ḥadīth* accounts. For instance, it is reported that the prophet said, "The best of you in the *jāhiliyya* are the best of you in Islam if they have understanding (*fiqh*)."⁶⁴³ As indicated earlier, the concept of *jāhiliyya* was developed by Qutb but not introduced by him. Rather, it is believed that al-Mawdūdī and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī, from the Indian subcontinent, laid foundations to this doctrine. It was also heavily employed by Sayyid Qutb's brother Muḥammad Qutb in his book: *Jāhiliyyat al-Qarn al- 'Ishrīn* (The Jāhiliyya of The Twentieth Century), "Thus, the idea of *jāhiliyya* as a contemporary condition found among Muslims did not originate with Qutb, as is sometimes suggested. What Qutb did was to take it further than others have done."⁶⁴⁴

Sayyid Qutb did not believe that *jāhiliyya* is only applicable to a certain period of time or a specific country. Like Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Qutb believed that Islam was no longer being practiced and that the Muslim communities who have regressed to *kufṛ* are in dire need of reform. Hughes notes: "He juxtaposed these systems with his own vision of Islam: "Today we are in a similar or darker *jahiliyyah* than that contemporaneous to early Islam. All that surrounds us is in *jahiliyyah*, people visions, beliefs, rules and laws, even what we consider as Islamic education, Islamic resources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought – all of it the product to *jahiliyyah*."⁶⁴⁵ Since Qutb argued that every non-Muslim society is a *jāhilī* one, he opined that societies "are either one or the other, and none on both."⁶⁴⁶ As a result of his influence, Qutb's redefinition of *jāhiliyya* became the key doctrinal basis for some groups in defence of what they regarded as the "encroachment of Western political and moral principles on Islam."⁶⁴⁷ Therefore, al-Hararī sought to raise awareness against Qutb and his ideologies.

⁶⁴¹ Shepard, W. (2003). Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of "Jāhiliyya". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35(4), 521-545.

⁶⁴² Shepard 2003: 522.

⁶⁴³ Al-Bukhārī 1993: Vol. 4, p. 729.

⁶⁴⁴ Shepard 2003: 524.

⁶⁴⁵ Hughes, A. (2013). *Muslim Identities: An Introduction to Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 238.

⁶⁴⁶ Shepard 2003: 525.

⁶⁴⁷ Menaldo, M. (2014). Sayyid Qutb's Political and Religious Thought: the Transformation of *Jahiliyyah* and the Implications for Egyptian Democracy. *Leadership and the Humanities*, 2(1), pp. 64–80.

Al-Hararī attempted to address the Ikhwān's attacks by shedding light on some of Quṭb's key ideologies. The first issue al-Hararī tackles is Quṭb's misinterpretation of three Qur'ānic verses that Quṭb understood to advocate for *al-takfīr al-shumūlī* (lit. holistic excommunication). As a result of Quṭb's misunderstanding of the verse, he charged whoever did not adhere to his thought with apostasy. Consequently, Quṭb proclaimed that the entirety of mankind has regressed to the state of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) and disbelief. He alleges:

The entirety of mankind, including those who repeat from the minarets, in the East and the West, the words: *lā 'ilāha 'ilā Allāh* (No God but Allāh) without heeding to their meaning or reality, they are considered to be the most sinful of people and will be the most severely punished on the Day of Judgement. This is because they have apostatised by turning to the worship of [God's] servants.⁶⁴⁸

After condemning humanity with blasphemy, Quṭb goes on to allege that his *fatwā* is derived from the Qur'ān. He refers to three verses of *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*: Q. 5:44, Q. 5:45 and Q. 5:47. All three verses share a similar meaning that is often translated as, "And whoever does not judge by what Allāh has revealed, then they are...". Each verse ends by attributing those individuals with synonymous terms: the *kāfirūn* (blasphemers), the *fāsiqūn* (sinners) and the *ẓālimūn* (wrongdoers). As such, Quṭb applied the judgement of *kufr*, *fisq* and *ẓulm* – three of which are considered synonyms in this context – to anyone who rules or governs according to non-Islamic laws. He says, "Whoever applies a law, even if it was a partial rule, that does not accord with the religion [of Islam], then he has left the fold of the religion."⁶⁴⁹

After presenting Quṭb's ideology, al-Hararī draws analogy between the Khawārij and the Ikhwānīs. The Khawārij firstly emerged as a sect when they refused to support arbitration between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya, alleging that both armies have dismissed the law revealed to the prophet, "Some of them also defected and opined that if the rule were to apply a non-religious law, then he would have apostatised along with his subjects. Therefore, they've charged the rulers and the subjects with blasphemy."⁶⁵⁰ Thus, Quṭb legitimated killing of whoever governed by secular law or accepted it.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁸ Quṭb 1980: 1057.

⁶⁴⁹ Quṭb 1980: 841.

⁶⁵⁰ Al-Hararī 2017a: 238.

⁶⁵¹ Al-Hararī 2005: 16.

Al-Hararī's concerns regarding Quṭb's interpretation of the three verses have been echoed and further examined by a number of academics such as James Toth in: *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual*⁶⁵² and Adnan Musallam in: *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism*.⁶⁵³ Toth discusses at length Quṭb's distinction between the states of *jāhiliyya* and Islam, "He harangued readers and listeners to realize that there is a chasm – with Islam on one side, and *jahiliyya* on the other. There is no middle ground. Salvation means joining Islam and renouncing *jahiliyya*. This is the only way."⁶⁵⁴

Like al-Hararī, Toth argues that Quṭb's understanding of a *jāhiliyya* society stems from his misinterpretation of Q. 5:44. As stated earlier, Quṭb relied on this verse to contend that one of the principal characteristics of a *jāhili* society is to abandon ruling, governing or judging by everything Allāh has revealed. Quṭb notes, "What is a *jahili* society and how does Islam confront it? It is any society other than the Muslim society...which does not dedicate itself to submission to God alone, in its beliefs and ideas, in its observances of worship, and in its legal regulation."⁶⁵⁵ As Toth illustrates, Quṭb delved deeper into the *jāhiliyya* concept by arguing for an economic *jāhiliyya* in which the *zakāt* is unobserved, resulting in a massive gap between the rich and the poor. Quṭb also discusses political, social and cultural *jāhiliyyas*, "But even so-called Muslim communities are also *jahili* societies, not because they believe in or worship other gods, but because their lifestyles are not based on *shari'a*."⁶⁵⁶ Adnan Musallam analysed Quṭb's *Milestones* and how he perceived the Egyptian society. He notes that although Quṭb categorises the Egyptian society as an un-Islamic one, he does not use the term *jāhili* in reference to it. Quṭb observes:

Islamic society today is not Islamic in any true sense (laysa Islamiyan bi-halin min al-ahwal). We have already quoted a verse from the Qur'an which cannot in any way be honestly applied today: "*Whoever does not judge by what Allah revealed is an unbeliever.*" In our modern society we do not judge by what Allah has revealed; the basis of our economic life is usury; our laws permit rather than punish oppression; the poor tax is not obligatory and is not spent in requisite ways."⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵² Toth, J. (2013). *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁵³ Musallam, A. (2005). *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism*. London: Praeger.

⁶⁵⁴ Toth 2013: 127.

⁶⁵⁵ Toth 2013: 128.

⁶⁵⁶ Toth 2013: 132.

⁶⁵⁷ Musallam 2005: 99.

Furthermore, based on the *jāhiliyya* doctrine, Sayyid Quṭb has been criticised for accusing all members of Muslim societies with apostasy. For instance, Ḥasan al-Huḍaybī (d. 1392/1973), Ḥasan al-Bannā's successor as the Ikhwān's Murshid (General Guide), agrees that absolute rulership is exclusive to Allāh and that permitting what Allāh has forbidden or forbidding what Allāh permitted is undoubtedly an act of *kufṛ*. However, contrary to Quṭb, al-Huḍaybī rejects, "the translation of this concept into *takfīr* of the rulers. Firstly, he does not consider legislation per se to be an act of apostasy. This is given that there is a need for society to be regulated in such a manner so as to further the ends prescribed by the *sharī'a*."⁶⁵⁸ In a very similar methodology, al-Huḍaybī and al-Hararī both maintain that it would be *kufṛ* to judge by other than what Allāh revealed if one does so as an explicit rejection to Allāh's law (*manḥakama bi-ghayr māanzala Allāh jāḥidan*).⁶⁵⁹ Al-Hararī stresses that it would be impermissible to brand a Muslim as a *kāfir* for merely following an un-Islamic rule whilst not truly acknowledging its validity.⁶⁶⁰ But Quṭb, on the other hand, does not only judge members of the society with *kufṛ*, but also judges the rulers as such. According to his *al-takfīr al-shumūlī* ideology, he notes:

Time has come full circle, and the present has taken the same form as that day on which this religion came to humanity through [the testimony that] there is no god but Allāh. Humanity has reverted [or: apostatized; *irtaddat*] to servitude to [or: worship of] humans (*'ibādat al-'ibād*), and to the iniquity of the religions, and has retreated from "there is no god but Allāh." This is the case even if a party of them continues to repeat from atop the minarets "there is no god but Allāh," without comprehending its meaning, and without having this meaning in mind as they say it, and without rejecting the legitimacy of the "*ḥākimiyya*" that humans claim for themselves, and which is tantamount to divinity, whether this be claimed by individuals, legislative bodies, or peoples. For individuals, like the [legislative] bodies and the peoples, are not gods, and thus do not have the right of "*ḥākimiyya*." But humanity has returned to *jāhiliyya*, and reverted [or: apostatized] from "there is no god but Allāh," and has granted to these humans the prerogatives of divinity (*ulūhiyya*). It no longer professes the unity of Allāh, nor does it give Him its exclusive allegiance."⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁸ Lav, D. (2012). *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 63.

⁶⁵⁹ Lav 2012: 63.

⁶⁶⁰ Al-Hararī 2009b: 383.

⁶⁶¹ Lav 2012: 55.

Al-Hararī warns that Quṭb’s inaccurate interpretation of the verses was later on adopted by some radicalised laymen, which, in turn, resulted in the murder of hundreds of Muslims, “Many were deceived by Sayyid Quṭb’s exegesis and sought to follow it. To the extent that, they killed several people in Egypt, Algeria and Syria, as well as other countries. They considered killing whoever opposed them as an act of loyalty to God.”⁶⁶² Al-Hararī stresses that Sayyid Quṭb’s understanding of the verse contradicts that of ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Abbās, the prophet’s cousin, who is known as Tarjumān al-Qur’ān, that is the interpreter of the Qur’ān. Before presenting Ibn ‘Abbās’ interpretation of the verse, al-Hararī emphasises that Ibn ‘Abbās is the one about whom prophet Muḥammad said, “O Allāh, grant him wisdom and instruct him in exegesis (*ta’wīl*) of the book.”⁶⁶³ Since then, Ibn ‘Abbās has been regarded, and still is, as the one of the earliest and most established exegetes of the Qur’ān. Followed by his brief introduction, al-Hararī presents al-Ḥākim’s report concerning Ibn ‘Abbās’ interpretation:

Aḥmad b. Sulaymān al-Muṣallī reported to us from ‘Alī b. Ḥarb, from Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna from Hishām b. Jubair from Ṭāwūs that he said: Ibn ‘Abbās said: “It is not the *kufṛ* (disbelief) that they are thinking of. It is not the *kufṛ* that renders one outside the fold of the nation [of Islam]. It is a *kufṛ* below *kufṛ*. [The verse which means:] “And whoever does not judge by what Allāh has revealed, then they are the *kāfirūn*” It is a *kufṛ* below *kufṛ*. This is a *ḥadīth* whose chain is authentic.”⁶⁶⁴

Therefore, the terms: *kāfirūn*, *fāsiqūn* and *ẓālimūn* in the three verses of *al-Mā’ida* do not refer to a blasphemous act that would render one a non-Muslim. Rather, Ibn ‘Abbās states that it is merely an enormous sin that is less than disbelief (*ma’ṣiya dūn al-kufṛ*). In parallel with Ibn ‘Abbās’ interpretation, al-Hararī also presents examples from the prophetic *ḥadīth* clarifying that some non-*kufṛ* sins are often labelled as *kufṛ* or *shirk* due to their enormity. For instance, it is reported that the prophet said, “Beware of insincerity (*riyā*), as it is *al-shirk al-aṣghar*”,⁶⁶⁵ as well as, “Cursing the Muslim is *fusūq* (sin), while fighting him is *kufṛ*.”⁶⁶⁶ Al-Hararī notes that by labelling the sin of insincerity in the first *ḥadīth* as “minor *shirk*” and fighting against Muslims in the second as “*kufṛ*”, the prophet likened those sins to *kufṛ* to emphasise the severity of the sin, not to say that it truly results in one becoming a non-Muslim.

⁶⁶² Al-Hararī 2010: 17-18.

⁶⁶³ Ibn Ḥajar 1986: 204.

⁶⁶⁴ Al-Ḥākim 2002: 342.

⁶⁶⁵ Al-Zabīdī 2016: 96.

⁶⁶⁶ Muslim. (1991b). *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya. Vol. 1, p. 81.

Furthermore, al-Hararī reiterates that Quṭb’s *takfīrī* ideology resulted in the rebellion of thousands of subjects against their governments to overthrow them and allegedly apply Islamic law. But this, al-Hararī notes, was not the Ikhwān’s real motive. Instead, their true goal was to secure high-ranking government positions so as to attain power. The application of Islamic or secular laws was truly irrelevant to them. To reinforce this, al-Hararī cautions that Quṭb’s ideology extended beyond Egypt to a number of Arab countries, such as Syria. For instance, in Syria, a number of Ikhwānīs managed to secure seats in the People’s Council of Syria, “some of whom partook in devising the constitution, i.e., the secular law. This is an indication that they are liars. They do not want to rule according to God’s law. Rather, they want people to be lured by their statements: ‘We want to rule by Islamic law’, so that they would follow them.”⁶⁶⁷

An in-depth analysis of al-Hararī’s works suggests that one of the major points he raises when warning against Ikhwānīs is their adoption of Quṭb’s *takfīrī* ideology. Nonetheless, al-Hararī does not only attack Quṭb and his relationship with Ikhwānism, but one of his lesser-known works appears to be dedicated to exposing a number of Sayyid Quṭb’s radical beliefs, whether or not they were adopted later on by Ikhwānīs. The treatise is entitled *al-Nahj al-Sawī fī al-Radd ‘alā Sayyid Quṭb wa Tābi‘ih Faiṣal Mawlawī*⁶⁶⁸ (The Straight Path in Refuting Sayyid Quṭb and his Follower Faiṣal Mawlawī).⁶⁶⁹ Besides Quṭb’s *takfīrī* ideology, al-Hararī touches upon several erroneous views upheld by the Egyptian figure:

1. Omnipresence: Quṭb stated in his *Zīlāl* concerning Q. 57:4, “So, Allāh is [physically] with everyone and everything, and He is in every place.” Al-Hararī vehemently rejects this interpretation and proclaims that it is a *kufīr* belief.⁶⁷⁰
2. Ibrāhīm’s Infallibility: al-Hararī warns that in Quṭb’s exegesis, prophet Ibrāhīm is charged with blasphemy for allegedly believing that the stars, the moon and the sun are his Lord. By accusing a prophet of blasphemy, Quṭb would be undermining the Sunnī concept of *iṣma*, i.e. prophets’ impeccability.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁷ Al-Hararī 2017a: 239.

⁶⁶⁸ Faiṣal Mawlawī (d. 1432/2011) was one of al-Hararī’s contemporary rivals. Mawlawī was the Secretary General of the Lebanese radical organisation called: al-Jamā‘a al-Islāmiyya (lit. The Islamic Group), which is essentially the Lebanese branch of Quṭb’s Brotherhood. See Helfont, S. (2009). The Muslim Brotherhood and the Emerging 'Shia Crescent'. *Orbis*, 53(2): 284–299.

⁶⁶⁹ Al-Hararī, ‘A. (2017b). *Al-Nahj al-Sawī fī al-Radd ‘alā Sayyid Quṭb wa Tābi‘ih Faiṣal Mawlawī*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁶⁷⁰ Al-Hararī 2017b: 14.

⁶⁷¹ Al-Hararī 2017b: 16.

3. Names of Allāh: Quṭb is often regarded as an eloquent writer but this claim of eloquence has led him to ascribing non-befitting names and attributes to God. Al-Hararī describes Quṭb's negligence of key Islamic principles by noting that he addresses God as he would a human or an object. Quṭb refers to Allāh as, *al-rīsha al-mu'jiza* (the miraculous brush) and *al-'aql al-mudabbir* (the managing mastermind).⁶⁷² By attributing to Allāh such expressions, al-Hararī maintains that Quṭb outwardly disregarded instructions provided by Q. 7:180 which means, "And to Allāh belong the perfect names, so use them to call on Him. And keep away from those who practice deviation concerning His names."⁶⁷³
4. Quṭb's Belittlement of Scholars: Quṭb states, after presenting his interpretation of Q. 5:44, "Employing *ta'wīl* or *ta'awwul* [by assigning a meaning different from the apparent one] to this rule is not but an attempt to distort words from their proper usages." Here, al-Hararī concludes that Quṭb's ignorance and arrogance have both led him to belittling those who interpreted the verse in a different manner. Especially those among the Salaf, such as: 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās, Ḥudhaifa b. al-Yamān (d. 36/656), Sa'īd b. Jubair (d. 95/714) and al-Biṣrī (d. 110/728).⁶⁷⁴

The above portrays al-Hararī's methodology in tackling such doctrines that have been formulated by Sayyid Quṭb and adopted by the Ikhwān party. Al-Hararī endorsed Ḥasan al-Bannā and his motives for establishing the Muslim Brotherhood but he stressed that the party has deviated from the guiding principles set forth by al-Bannā. It is worth noting, however, that after requests urging al-Hararī to forge an alliance with the Lebanese branch of the Ikhwān, he responded, "In relation to Sayyid Quṭb's party who call themselves al-Jamā'a al-Islāmiyya did they not kill Muslims in Algeria eleven years ago? So, how can we establish unity with them? Rather, we only unite with those who uphold our beliefs, the belief of Sunnīs."⁶⁷⁵ Sayyid Quṭb was already a popular figure whose writings received significant criticism from a number of Wahhābīs, Ṣūfis and Western academics. So, al-Hararī's rhetoric against Sayyid Quṭb mostly resonated amongst his followers and was not as popular in the study of Islamic sects as other polemical works. Nonetheless, his views against Quṭb – whether through his lectures or books – were central to revealing his efforts in tackling ideologies such as Quṭb's *al-takfīr al-shumūlī*. It also highlights his call to building positive relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

⁶⁷² Al-Hararī 2017b: 4.

⁶⁷³ The Qur'ān 7:180.

⁶⁷⁴ Al-Hararī, 2017b: 10.

⁶⁷⁵ Al-Hararī 2009a: 69.

4.2 Taḥrīrism

Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, or the Liberation Party, is a political party established by prominent figures who dissented from the Ikhwān in 1952. The party was established in what was then Jordanian-controlled Jerusalem, “for the dual purpose of establishing an Islamic state and liberating Palestine.”⁶⁷⁶ Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (d. 1376/1977) is credited for founding the party and setting its goals, policies and plans for his vision for reviving the Islamic state. Al-Nabhānī was born in 1905 in the village of Ijzim, near Haifa.⁶⁷⁷ After completing his religious education at al-Azhar University, al-Nabhānī returned to Palestine assuming a leadership position in the Palestinian branch of the Ikhwān, until he left the Brotherhood in December 1950 after the partition of Palestine. Al-Nabhānī’s ideology appealed to many audiences, thus spreading to numerous countries. Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr even managed to expand its operations to Western Europe, particularly in Britain, where it was established in the early 1980s under the leadership of ‘Umar Bakrī.⁶⁷⁸ The party’s expansionist strategy is directly derived from al-Nabhānī⁶⁷⁹ who “provided a constitution of his proposed Islamic state that clearly defines a division of powers among three branches of government: executive, consultative, and judicial.”⁶⁸⁰

As illustrated, al-Nabhānī envisioned the establishment of a state according to his ideology and under his supervision. Through his writings, al-Nabhānī expressed his views on many issues across a number of disciplines ranging from *‘aqīda* and *fiqh*, to politics and governance. Despite the fact that al-Nabhānī’s main focus was on the latter, al-Hararī points out that not only was his approach to the caliphate unsound, but al-Nabhānī also advocated a number of erroneous doctrines as a result of which he breached the *ijmā’* (Islamic scholarly consensus) on religious matters related to the fundamentals (*uṣūl*) and branches of faith (*furū’*). Al-Hararī discusses Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr briefly in a number of his books but, similar to the case of Wahhābīs and Ikhwān, he wrote a somewhat detailed treatise solely dedicated to exposing their beliefs. The thirty-odd page treatise is entitled *al-Ghāra al-’Imāniyya fī Radd Mafāsīd al-Taḥrīriyya*⁶⁸¹ (The Raid of The Faithful in Refuting the Contraventions of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr).

⁶⁷⁶ Commings, D. (1991). Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī and the Islamic Liberation Party. *The Muslim World*, 81(3–4), 194–211. p. 194.

⁶⁷⁷ Al-Ṣūṣ, ‘A. (2007). *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr al-Islāmī wa al-Taḍlīl al-Siyāsī*. Amman.

⁶⁷⁸ Karagiannis, E. (2018). *The New Political Islam: Human Rights, Democracy, and Justice*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁶⁷⁹ Commings 1991: 194.

⁶⁸⁰ Commings 1991: 203.

⁶⁸¹ Al-Hararī 1993.

However, prior to delving into al-Harārī's views on al-Nabhānī and his party, it would be worthwhile to examine the party's overarching goals and plans. One of the leading experts of Western Academia on Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr is Exeter University's Dr Suha Taji-Farouki. Her doctorate thesis examined the history, ideology and organizational structure of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr. In her paper entitled *Islamists and the Threat of Jihad: Hizb al-Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun on Israel and the Jews*,⁶⁸² Taji-Farouki lays out al-Nabhānī's key ideologies based on a comprehensive analysis of his writings. She argues that al-Nabhānī focused on the concept of liberation (*taḥrīr*), namely; liberating the Arab-Muslim nations from colonialism, "His main concern was to unite the Arab-Muslim countries under a single caliphate, erected on the ruins of existing regimes."⁶⁸³ Al-Nabhānī viewed likeminded movements in his era such as Egypt's Ikhwān or India's Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) as failures, as their goals for erecting the caliphate were not clear. As such, "Nabhani's brand was revolutionary compared to other Islamist movements formed in opposition to colonialism."⁶⁸⁴ In terms of the party's plans and policies for political change, Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr (HT) has outwardly promoted its three key phases for establishing its goal:⁶⁸⁵

1. Instilling a number of individuals with the party's aims and method to form a group which is intellectually capable of propagating HT's message.
2. Interacting intellectually with society, encouraging it to embrace HT's version of Islam and work towards the establishment of its Islamist state.
3. Establishing an Islamist government and expanding to unite all Muslim-majority countries as one state.

While liberating Palestine was one of the party's foremost goals, al-Nabhānī believed that the problem of Palestine would only be resolved once the caliphate is restored. He proclaimed, "The issue of Palestine is nothing more than one amongst many issues which have befallen the Islamic *umma* since the *kuffar* destroyed the *khilafa* and removed Islam from the political arena."⁶⁸⁶ Hence, the fall of the Ottoman Empire – the last authentic Islamic caliphate, in al-Nabhānī's view – coupled with the rise of the Zionist State played a pivotal role in formulating the party's objectives.

⁶⁸² Taji-Farouki, S. (2000). *Islamists and the Threat of Jihad: Hizb al-Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun on Israel and the Jews*. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36(4), 21-46.

⁶⁸³ Taji-Farouki 2000: 22.

⁶⁸⁴ Ahmad, H. & Stuart, H. (2009). *Hizb ut-Tahrir Ideology and Strategy*. London: The Centre for Social Cohesion. p. 15.

⁶⁸⁵ Ahmad & Stuart 2009: 18.

⁶⁸⁶ Taji-Farouki 2000: 23.

While in Jordan, al-Nabhānī, sought to have Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr registered by the Jordanian government as a political party. However, his application for registration was denied because the party rejected the monarchy and Arab nationalism.⁶⁸⁷ As a result, “The Jordanian authorities issued a decree banning Hizb ut-Tahrir and arrested its leadership, holding the leaders for two weeks in March 1953.”⁶⁸⁸ In spite of the ban, al-Nabhānī’s followers continued to spread his ideology, not only in Jordan but also in neighbouring countries. Consequently, al-Nabhānī resorted to Beirut where he spent the remainder of his life. He died on 20th December 1977 and was replaced by a fellow Palestinian ‘Abdulqadīm Zaloom.⁶⁸⁹ The party adopted a wide range of political and religious ideologies, thus proposing, “a puzzle to observers because of its odd combination of revolutionary ideals and use of non-violent political means to achieve its objective.”⁶⁹⁰

As previously mentioned, Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr expanded in Middle Eastern, European and Western countries. In fact, the party is already active in more than forty countries.⁶⁹¹ Hudson Institute’s Zeyno Baran expressed that Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr’s members are prone to exhibiting radical behaviour, thereby resulting in violence, thus referring to the party as the ‘conveyor belt’ for extremists.⁶⁹² Despite its rapid spread, it has been banned in a number of countries, “including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. The group is also banned in China and Russia. The United Kingdom has not banned HT. According to Baran, HT’s British chapter in London is the “nerve center” of the international movement.”⁶⁹³ The vast majority of works written on al-Nabhānī and Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr shed light on the party’s political ideology as well as that of its founder. The most prominent topic discussed is their caliphate reestablishment strategy; from which a number of ideologies branch out, such as: *dār al-ḥarb* (the land of war), *dār al-Islām* (the land of Islam), *jihād* as well as their views on democracy and the West. While al-Hararī discusses the caliphate discourse at length he also delves into some problematic creedal issues posed by al-Nabhānī – unlike many of his contemporaries – such as his adoption of the Mu‘tazilīs’ views on God’s *qadā’* (predestination); as illustrated below.

⁶⁸⁷ Karagiannis 2018: 53.

⁶⁸⁸ Karagiannis 2018: 54.

⁶⁸⁹ Karagiannis 2018: 54.

⁶⁹⁰ Ahnaf, M. (2018). Hizb al-Tahrir: Its Ideology and Theory for Collective Radicalization. In Steiner, K. & Önnersfors, A. (Eds.), *Expressions of Radicalization*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 296.

⁶⁹¹ Counter Extremism Project. (n.d.). *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Report) Retrieved from <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/hizb-ut-tahrir>. p. 2.

⁶⁹² Baran, Z. (2005). Fighting the War of Ideas. *Foreign Affairs*, 84(6), 68-78. doi:10.2307/20031777.

⁶⁹³ Counter Extremism Project: 2.

Al-Hararī introduces *al-Ghāra al-ʿImāniyya* with a direct attack on the person of al-Nabhānī. Al-Hararī regarded him as a self-proclaimed scholar who falsely assumed the rank of *ijtihād*. The book then presents seven doctrines adopted by Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, each followed by al-Hararī's refutation that is largely based on the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and *ijmā'*. While some of al-Nabhānī's beliefs will be thoroughly examined below, others will only be listed. Al-Hararī lays them out in the following order: (1) al-Nabhānī's claim that an agent's voluntary acts are not created by Allāh, (2) the infallibility of prophets before prophethood, (3) reasons for deposing the caliph, (4) dying prior to pledging allegiance to a caliph, (5) the Taḥrīrīs' *fatwā* on the permissibility of walking towards a sin without committing it, (6) alleging that a man is permitted to kiss a marriageable woman (*ajnabiyya*), and finally (7) the qualifications by which the rank of *mujtahid* is attained. Al-Hararī highlights the importance of such an undertaking by stating:

Therefore, out of fulfilling the obligation made incumbent upon us by Allāh - which is enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong - and in an effort to give advice to Muslims and warn them against this party (i.e., Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr) and its statements, we have composed these documents. We mentioned their statements and disproved their beliefs and challenged them with the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, *ijmā'* as well as the statements of the scholars. This is because warning against the people of misguidance is an obligation. Just as it is compulsory to warn against whoever cheats Muslims in trade, it is even more dutiful to warn against those who [attempt to] alter the religion, distort it and fabricate lies against Allāh and His messenger ... Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq said, "The one who does not speak out against the wrong is a mute devil."⁶⁹⁴

The above introduction is foundational to understanding why so much time and effort has been dedicated by al-Hararī to exposing most of his rivals and their misrepresentation of Islam. As demonstrated, al-Hararī rightfully considers his efforts to rebut erroneous doctrines to be part of a duty that is tantamount to *jihād*. However, it should be noted that al-Hararī gives preference to one of the two types of *jihād* over the other. According to him, *jihād al-bayān* (*jihād* through words) is more important in this day and age, in comparison with *jihād al-sinān* (*jihād* through weapons).⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹⁴ Al-Hararī 1993: 4.

⁶⁹⁵ Ḥalīm, J. (2019). *Darb al-Salāma fī Irshādāt al-ʿAllāma ʿaw Samiʿt al-Shaykh Yaqūl*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO. p. 128.

In a fashion somewhat similar to that of Sayyid Quṭb, al-Nabhānī regarded all Muslims of his time to be sinners. His reasoning for arriving at that judgement is erroneously derived from the numerous *ḥadīth* accounts regarding the establishment of the caliphate. For instance, al-Nabhānī contends that whoever dies without having a pledge of allegiance (*bay‘a*) on his neck, dies the death of the *jāhilyya*, i.e., in the state of ignorance.⁶⁹⁶ He goes on to declare that Muslims should only be given three days. Should this deadline pass without them having pledged allegiance to a caliph, they would all be sinful.⁶⁹⁷ Furthermore, in a memoir issued by Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr’s leadership council to the Muslims of Lebanon, they warned that, “... the Muslims in Lebanon, likewise Muslim in all countries, are sinful, unless they work towards returning Islam to [everyday] life and appoint a caliph to unite them.”⁶⁹⁸ Therefore, al-Nabhānī’s message was essentially to call for the establishment of the caliphate by classing all those who refused to join his exclusive party as the people of *jāhilyya*.

Following is an analysis of the *ḥadīth* pertaining to the caliphate. However, prior to that, it is worth noting that the *jāhilyya* death al-Nabhānī talks of is in reference to those idol worshippers who died whilst believing that the idols, they built themselves, were their deities. So, al-Hararī argues that al-Nabhānī’s understanding entails that, “... every Muslim who has died in the past hundred years, then dies the death of the *jāhilyya*. Because there has been no caliph since that time.”⁶⁹⁹ Al-Hararī strongly believes in the significance and importance of a legitimate Islamic Caliphate. However, since the caliphate that manages the affairs of all Muslims came to an end a long time ago, he insists that Muslim subjects today are exempted for not having appointed a caliph, since they are unable to do so. In support of this he cites Q. 2:286, “Allāh does not require of any soul except with that which is within its capacity.”⁷⁰⁰ So, Al-Hararī compares between Quṭb and al-Nabhānī and concludes that both figures ultimately sought power and influence, particularly by appealing to the uneducated laymen. For instance, al-Nabhānī claimed the caliph position for himself, ordained his wife as the so-called “Mother of Believers” and was allegedly given the *bay‘a* or allegiance. Each of his three sons was purportedly granted the title ‘Emir’; one of whom was the Emir of Iraq, another the Emir of the Levant and finally the Emir of Egypt.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁶ Al-Nabhānī, T. (2003). *Al-Shakhṣiyya al-Islāmiyya*. Beirut: Dār al-Umma. Vol. 2, p. 13.

⁶⁹⁷ Al-Nabhānī, T. (2002). *Al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya*. Beirut: Dār al-Umma. p. 235.

⁶⁹⁸ Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr. (n.d.). *Mudhakkarat Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr ‘ilā al-Muslimīn fī Lubnān*.

⁶⁹⁹ Al-Hararī 2010: 20.

⁷⁰⁰ The Qur’ān 2:286.

⁷⁰¹ Al-Hararī 2010: 18.

The *ḥadīth* that al-Nabhānī and Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr consider central to their mission reads, “The one who withdraws his hand from obedience [to the caliph] will find no argument [in his defence] when he is judged by Allāh on the Day of Resurrection; and one who dies without having sworn allegiance (*bay‘a*) will die the death like the one belonging to the days of ignorance (*jāhilyya*).”⁷⁰² Al-Hararī reveals that the Taḥrīrīs’ methodology is only to transmit the second part of the *ḥadīth* whilst disregarding the first part. By doing so, they would cast fear in the hearts of their audiences for not having pledged allegiance to a caliph. While al-Nabhānī understood the *ḥadīth* to apply to all situations, al-Hararī responds by stating that the *ḥadīth* exclusively refers to those who rebelled against the caliph, remained on that position and died upon it.⁷⁰³ Al-Hararī insists that the judgement inferred by the *ḥadīth* only applies if a caliph was already appointed and was denied the *bay‘a*. It would not apply to this era, especially after the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate.

In fact, according to al-Hararī, another narration of the *ḥadīth* reinforces his interpretation. The narration reads, “Whoever disapproves of something done by his ruler (*amīr*) then he should be patient, for whoever departs from the obedience of the ruler and dies upon that, he would have died like those who died in the *jāhilyya*.”⁷⁰⁴ Therefore, the prophet’s saying, “dies upon that” indicates that it exclusively refers to those who died after having rebelled against the caliph. This, evidently, does not apply to Muslims today. Al-Hararī provides another report that is particularly significant, because in it the prophet answers the question of what a Muslim should do in the absence of a caliphate. Al-Hararī notes, “This is also indicated by the *ḥadīth* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim from Ḥudhaifa b. al-Yamān in which he says: the messenger of Allāh said, after describing those who invite others to the gates of Hellfire, “Adhere to the group of Muslims (*jamā‘at al-muslimīn*) and their Chief.” I asked, “If there is neither a group [of Muslims] nor a chief, [then, what shall I do]?” He said, “Keep away from all those different sects.”⁷⁰⁵ Therefore, the prophet instructed Ḥudhaifa to abandon all the illegitimate sects, and he did not tell him that those Muslims would die like those who died in the *jāhilyya*. Al-Hararī concludes this section by reiterating that Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr’s approach would result in introducing *ḥaraj* (hardships/difficulties) in the religion, because they have entirely disregarded al-Bukhārī’s account and only utilised the second part of Muslim’s.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰² Muslim 1991: 743.

⁷⁰³ Al-Hararī 1993: 16.

⁷⁰⁴ Al-Bukhārī, M. (2000). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr. p. 1774.

⁷⁰⁵ Al-Hararī 1993: 17.

⁷⁰⁶ Al-Hararī 1993: 17.

The caliphate debate was addressed at the beginning of this subchapter due to its notable association with Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr. However, the first issue al-Harārī tackles in his *al-Ghāra al-ʿImāniyya* is the debate on *qadar* (predestination). Al-Harārī considered al-Nabhānī's stance on *qadar* much more serious compared with his views on the caliphate debate. Al-Nabhānī seems to have been influenced by the early Qadariyya or Mu'tazila, particularly on the doctrine of *khalq af'āl al-ʿibād*, i.e., the debate on whether or not the voluntary acts of humans are created and predestined by Allāh. Also, among the key doctrines upheld by the Qadariyya is their denial of Allāh's predetermination of human voluntary acts.⁷⁰⁷

In more than one part of his book, *al-Shakhṣiyya al-Islāmiyya* (The Islamic Personality), al-Nabhānī professes his adherence to the Qadariyya's views vis-à-vis God's *qaḍāʾ* (predestination). He states, "These acts, i.e., the acts of humans, have no connection whatsoever to the *qaḍāʾ*". Likewise, the *qaḍāʾ* has no influence over them. Because it is the human who performs them in accordance with his will and choice. Therefore, according to this, voluntary acts would not fall under the *qaḍāʾ*."⁷⁰⁸ After presenting his reasoning, al-Nabhānī concludes the *qaḍāʾ* argument by stating, "Since attainment of reward or the affliction of torment is contingent upon guidance and misguidance, this indicates that both guidance and misguidance are a result of the slave's action, and neither are created by Allāh."⁷⁰⁹

It is still unclear as to what led al-Nabhānī to adopt the Mu'tazila's views, especially that the Ash'arī school of thought was, and still is, particularly dominant both in the Levant where al-Nabhānī spent his life, and in al-Azhar University, especially during the time he studied. The fact that the Mu'tazila, as a sect, ceased to exist centuries ago did not stop al-Harārī from examining their belief system and rebuking it at great length. Therefore, al-Harārī believed it was crucial to refute some of the Mu'tazila's most prominent beliefs, as he expansively did in his *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*, as well as its explanation: *al-Sharḥ al-Qawīm fī Ḥall Alfāẓ al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*. Al-Harārī follows his standard polemical method in his refutations of al-Nabhānī. He starts with some Qur'ānic verses, followed by *ḥadīth* account, he then goes on to support them both with the intellectual proof (*al-dalīl al-ʿaqlī*).⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁷ Hoffman 2012: 287.

⁷⁰⁸ Al-Nabhānī 2003: 94.

⁷⁰⁹ Al-Nabhānī 2003: 96.

⁷¹⁰ Al-Harārī 1993: 4-11.

The first verse al-Hararī employs is Q. 25:2, “*wa khalaqa kulla shay*”.⁷¹¹ The verse explicitly indicates that it is only Allāh who is the sole creator of everything. Al-Hararī sheds light on the term *shay*’ (lit. thing) by noting that it encompasses all of what has come into existence. Everything is created by Allāh, whether that may be the bodies or the actions of slaves; both voluntary and involuntary actions. Moreover, al-Hararī goes on to deduce the following argument, “.... Also, voluntary actions are much more in number than involuntary acts. Hence, if every voluntary act was created by the slave, then the deeds that are [supposedly] created by the slave would be more [in number] than the slave’s actions that are created by Allāh.”⁷¹² In *al-Ghāra al-’Imāniyya*, al-Hararī cites the above verse and then presents numerous other reports indicating– contrary to al-Nabhānī’s belief – that the creator of guidance and misguidance is God.

On the other hand, when warning against Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr in his other books, al-Hararī gives little attention to the discourse on accountability and misguidance. Rather, he directs his efforts to the debate on voluntary and involuntary acts (*al-af’āl al-ikhtiyāriyya wa al-idṭirāriyya*). For instance, he cites the following verse, “Say [O Muḥammad]: truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice (*nusuk*), my life and my death, are all created by Allāh.”⁷¹³ While, the prayer and service of sacrifice are both voluntary acts, life and death are involuntary. The verse mentions four examples, two for each one of the categories of actions (voluntary and involuntary) in one context. Then, it explicitly states that Allāh is the creator of all. Al-Hararī goes further to argue:

Among the verses indicating that the slave does not create any of his actions, whether voluntary or otherwise, is the verse: “*falam taqtulūhum wa lākinna Allāha qatalahum*” (which means: the believers did not kill them, but it was Allāh who created death in them). Despite the fact that Muslims fought and killed, Allāh negated that they truly afflicted death [through creation] upon non-Muslims. This is because the killing that they afflicted [on the enemy] took place, however they did not create the action of killing, but Allāh created it. They only performed the deed as an acquisition (*kasb*)⁷¹⁴, and Allāh is the One who brought it into existence.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹¹ The Qur’ān 25:2.

⁷¹² Al-Hararī 1993: 5.

⁷¹³ The Qur’ān 6:162.

⁷¹⁴ In his *Izhār al-’Aqīda al-Sunniyya Bisharḥ al-’Aqīda at-Taḥāwiyya*, al-Hararī provides a number of definitions for the concept of *kasb*: (1) *kasb* is the act which takes place within an agent who has power over it, (2) It is the act which is done via a created power, (3) the act by which the agent *yarūm* (lit. seeks, pursues) to obtain a benefit or avert a harm. See al-Hararī 2007a: 292-314.

⁷¹⁵ Al-Hararī 2010: 12-20.

In response to al-Nabhānī, al-Hararī addressed the *qadar* argument, albeit briefly, and sought to promote the Ash‘arī stance by employing the *kasb* doctrine. Nonetheless, the above response does not adequately portray the comprehensiveness of al-Hararī’s polemical works against the Qadariyya or the Mu‘tazila, as this can be found in his *al-Sharḥ al-Qawīm fī Ḥall Alfāz al-Širāṭ al-Mustaqīm*. Al-Hararī’s feud with Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr is dominated by the two fundamental disagreements laid out previously; the *qadar* and the caliphate debates. So much so that al-Hararī argues that a Taḥrīrī could be easily identified by their ‘trademark’ caliphate argument, “... as for Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, they are known by saying: we are obligated to appoint one caliph, i.e., one ruler, who governs all Muslims. And whoever dies before the appointment of the caliph, then his death is similar to that of the *jāhilyya*.”⁷¹⁶ While the two overarching arguments dominated al-Hararī’s feud with Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, some unexpected, yet peculiar, issues surface. For instance, a *fatwā* emerges in one of the pamphlets given out in Lebanon during the 1970s. It states that a man is permitted to kiss a marriageable woman (*ajnabiyya*) or shake her hand as long as he does not do so for the intention of adultery or fornication.⁷¹⁷ Again, the reason for such a *fatwā* is not entirely clear, especially since Taḥrīrīs are generally associated with a conservative and somewhat strict attitude. Throughout the book, al-Hararī consistently presents their *fatwā* and refutes it.

In sum, al-Hararī regarded Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr as a faction that called for opinion-based *fatwās* and the spread of chaos in the name of Islam. Members of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr have ever since promoted their ideology under their caliphate agenda, with their leaders enjoying the distribution of powers according to systematic nepotism. Stemming from his unwavering belief that forbidding the *munkar* (unlawful) is an essential step to establishing unity among Muslims, al-Hararī took it upon himself to warn against the three infamous sects that have spread in Muslim communities. He notes, “... therefore, if a man came with a marriage proposal to a woman, then he should not to be given to her in marriage before he is put to the test. As such, he should be asked the following questions: what do you say about those who adopt the beliefs of Ḥizb al-Ikhwān? What do you say about those who adopt the beliefs of Wahhābīs? What do you say about those who adopt the beliefs of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr? If he says: they are misguided. Then he could be given in marriage to her. Otherwise, he would impose a great danger.”⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁶ Al-Hararī 2017a: 240.

⁷¹⁷ Al-Hararī 1993: 5.

⁷¹⁸ Al-Hararī 2017a: 242.

4.3 Miscellaneous Modern-Day Figures

Thus far, it has been established that over the decades, al-Harārī managed to unify his adversaries against him. He not only waged fierce battles against Wahhābīs, Ikhwānīs and Taḥrīrīs, but he also directed part of his attention to some of his contemporaries. Most of figures did not necessarily affiliate with any of the major sectarian groups, but instead worked either independently or had a small following in the Arab world, particularly in the Levant. Some of those who managed to attract al-Harārī's attention are: Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, Muḥammad Rajab Dīb, Ḥasan Qāṭirjī, Munīra Qubaisī, and Faṭḥī Yakan. While their names might have appeared in some of al-Harārī's works, each has a section dedicated to them in *al-Ta'āwun 'alā al-Nahī 'an al-Munkar* (Cooperating in Forbidding the Unlawful), wherein some of their beliefs are examined and challenged by al-Harārī.

4.3.1 Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī

Born in 1926, al-Qaraḍāwī spent his childhood in a religious environment in his hometown Tanta, Egypt. Then, he went on to Cairo where he completed his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at al-Azhar University.⁷¹⁹ Al-Qaraḍāwī spent many years in Qatar as part of an educational delegation arranged by al-Azhar University. The Qatar-based thinker is credited for founding a number of councils and research centres such as: the European Council for Fatwa and Research, as well as the International Union for Muslim Scholars. But he is best known for his deep-rooted connections with the Ikhwān. In addition to serving as a leading member for many years, al-Qaraḍāwī received numerous offers to lead the Brotherhood and assume the rank of the *murshid* (leader) of Ikhwān. However, after revoking his membership, he declined all the leadership offers.⁷²⁰ Perhaps al-Qaraḍāwī is most renowned for his regular appearances on the Qatari state-funded TV channel Al Jazeera. For many years, he was hosted as part of a religious programme called *al-Sharī'a wa al-Hayāt* (Religious Law and Life). Since then, al-Qaraḍāwī has been regarded as one of the key fundamentalist figures, "capable of drawing large crowds of more than a quarter million people."⁷²¹ Over the decades, al-Qaraḍāwī issued a vast array of *fatwās* on religion, ethics, politics and other disciplines. Thus, sparking controversy in the Islamic world.

⁷¹⁹ Baroudi, S. (2014). Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi on International Relations: The Discourse of a Leading Islamist Scholar (1926–). *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50(1), 2-26.

⁷²⁰ Soage, A. (2008). Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi: Portrait of a Leading Islamic Cleric. *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 12(1), 51-68.

⁷²¹ Soage A. B. (2010). Yusuf al-Qaradawi: The Muslim Brothers' Favorite Ideological Guide. In Rubin, B. (Ed.), *The Muslim Brotherhood. The Middle East in Focus*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 19.

In 2004 al-Qaraḍāwī and some prominent Ikhwān figures founded an international organisation tasked with establishing unity between Sunnīs, Shī'as and Ibāḍīs. It was named: *al-Ittiḥād al-‘Ālāmī li ‘Ulamā’ al-Muslimīn* (the International Union of Muslim Scholars or IUMS). The organisation is based in Doha, Qatar and was headed by al-Qaraḍāwī himself until he handed over its leadership to the Moroccan Aḥmad al-Raysūnī in 2018. However, “The United Arab Emirates first designated the IUMS as a terrorist organization in 2014. In late 2017, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain designated the IUMS.”⁷²² Furthermore, al-Qaraḍāwī was branded a terrorist and a warrant was issued by the Interpol for his arrest because of his role in the 2011 jailbreak during the Egyptian uprising. Although the Interpol warrant consequently cancelled, he was sentenced to death, in absentia, by the Egyptian government for the same reasons.⁷²³ Al-Qaraḍāwī has been seen as an agitator by the four countries that recently severed ties with Qatar: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt.⁷²⁴

Until recently, al-Qaraḍāwī has been regarded by a number of Western academics as a moderate religious figure who has been a pioneer in issuing *fatwās* especially for Western Muslim communities, as well as contributing toward religious coexistence dialogue. However, after extensive scrutiny, the Western view seems to have shifted, “He propagates a takfiri version of Islam that excommunicates any Muslims who do not adhere to this conservative and politicized understanding of religion. He advances the radical design of the Muslim Brotherhood whose goals and tactics he fully embraces.”⁷²⁵ In the Arab world, al-Qaraḍāwī was also largely criticised by Wahhābī scholars; the most prominent of whom are Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī and Ibn ‘Uthaymīn. While al-Albānī refuted one of al-Qaraḍāwī’s *fatwās* on *ribā* (usury), Ibn ‘Uthaymīn charged al-Qaraḍāwī with apostasy and declared that he ought to be killed as a form of punishment. In his response to al-Qaraḍāwī’s comments on Ehud Barak’s election results, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn said: “He has to repent to Allāh, otherwise the rulers ought to behead him”.⁷²⁶

⁷²² Counter Extremism Project. (n.d.). Yusuf al-Qaradawi (Report) Retrieved from <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/yusuf-al-qaradawi>.

⁷²³ Al-Arian, A. (2015). Death sentence for freedom in Egypt. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from <http://aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/05/egypt-morsi-death-sentence-150517102814924.html>.

⁷²⁴ Raghavan, R. & Warrick, J. (2017). How a 91-Year-Old Imam Came to Symbolize the Feud Between Qatar and its Neighbors. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/how-a-91-year-old-imam-came-to-symbolize-feud-between-qatar-and-its-neighbors/2017/06/26/601d41b4-5157-11e7-91eb-9611861a988f_story.html.

⁷²⁵ Virgil, T. (2018). Yusuf al-Qaradawi: False Moderate and True Radical? *Al Mesbar Studies and Research Center*. Retrieved from <https://mesbar.org/yusuf-al-qaradawi-false-moderate-and-true-radical/>.

⁷²⁶ Ibn ‘Uthaymīn Yarudd ‘alā al-Kalb al-‘Awī Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī. (2010). [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnMzTU>

While al-Qaraḍāwī's works and views have been criticised by a number of Arab and Western scholars, the only responses examined below will be those personally devised by al-Hararī himself. Two compressive books have been authored by al-Hararī's students solely to refute al-Qaraḍāwī; the first of which is written by Shaykh Khalīl Daryān, entitled *al-Naqḍ al-Kāwī Lida'wā Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī* (The Scorching Response to Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's Claim),⁷²⁷ and the other by Shaykh 'Usāma al-Sayyid, entitled *al-Qaraḍāwī fī al-'Arā'* (Al-Qaraḍāwī in the Wilderness), however neither will be examined here.⁷²⁸ With a wide range of *fatwās* subject to scrutiny, al-Hararī seems to have selected some of the most explicit and outrageous *fatwās* he came across. He presents the following:⁷²⁹

1. One of the famous statements proclaimed by al-Qaraḍāwī is his comment on Ehud Barak's election results. He said, "If Allāh were to present Himself for election, He would not have received this percentage of votes."⁷³⁰ This statement also received considerable criticism in Wahhābi circles. In fact, Ibn 'Uthaymīn charged al-Qaraḍāwī with apostasy for making such a statement, as stated earlier.
2. According to al-Qaraḍāwī, when prophet Muḥammad performs religious *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), he would either err or be correct. Interestingly, al-Qaraḍāwī followed that by saying about himself that he also undergoes *ijtihād* and sometimes errs. Al-Hararī dismisses this by suggesting that al-Qaraḍāwī would be equating himself with the prophet. He, then, notes that the beginning of Sūrat al-Najm explicitly states that, with regards to religious matters, Muḥammad does not speak from his own inclination, rather it is all through revelation.⁷³¹
3. Another view adopted by al-Qaraḍāwī is the belief that hellfire would eventually cease to exist. He said in an interview on Al Jazeera, dated 22/02/2004, "On the Day of Judgement, hellfire perishes, and this suits God's mercy."⁷³² Al-Hararī rejects al-Qaraḍāwī's view arguing that it belies many Qur'ānic verses describing hellfire as the everlasting abode of torture, "Indeed, Allāh cursed the disbelievers and prepared for them a blazing fire. In it, they shall reside forever".⁷³³ Al-Hararī notes that al-Qaraḍāwī erroneously adopted and promoted Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā* on hellfire.

⁷²⁷ Daryān, Kh. (2004). *Al-Naqḍ al-Kāwī Lida'wā Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁷²⁸ Al-Sayyid, 'U. (2002). *Al-Qaraḍāwī fī al-'Arā'*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁷²⁹ Al-Hararī's refutation of al-Qaraḍāwī is laid out in his book *al-Ta'āwun*. See Al-Hararī 2009a: 60-61.

⁷³⁰ Al-Hararī 2009a: 61.

⁷³¹ The Qur'ān 53:2.

⁷³² *Al-Qaraḍāwī Yuwāfiq Ibn Taymiyya al-Qawl Bifanā' al-Nār*. (2012). [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXi9IIJxYss>.

⁷³³ The Qur'ān 32:65.

4.3.2 Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī

Al-Būṭī (d. 1434/2013) was a Syrian academic and a religious figure notably known for his role as the Friday preacher of the grand Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.⁷³⁴ Al-Būṭī held this position from 2008 until his death in March 2013 through a bomb explosion during the Syrian civil war. Al-Būṭī wrote over sixty books on a range of topics. However, one of his most recognised works is a book he wrote on *ʿaqīda* entitled *Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyāt al-Kawniyya* (The Major Universal Certainties). It is worth noting that Mullā Ramaḍān, Muḥammad Saʿīd's father, was one of al-Harārī acquaintances, particularly during time he lived in Damascus.⁷³⁵ Al-Harārī regarded al-Būṭī's father highly and acknowledged his scholarship.

Amongst the most comprehensive Western Academic accounts published on al-Būṭī's life is that of Andreas Christmann who conducted an in-depth analysis of al-Būṭī's life and works. Al-Būṭī did not officially associate with any religio-political party, albeit his biography reveals that during the 1950s, he regularly attended meetings held by *Rābiṭat al-ʿUlamāʾ* (The Scholars' League) who had established close relations with the Ikhwān.⁷³⁶ Despite al-Būṭī's connections with the Ikhwān, Christmann denies his membership of the Ikhwān's party, or his endorsement of their militant actions, "It seems that Shaykh al-Būṭī's sympathy for the cause of a viable and politically conscious Islamic movement was considerable. Yet sympathy with some ideals of the Brotherhood is not the same as collaboration or complicity when it comes to militant actions."⁷³⁷ While al-Būṭī condemned the Ikhwān's 1979 revolution and supported president Hafez al-Assad's Baathist regime, the majority of his senior colleagues either backed the Ikhwān or simply remained silent. Similarly, after the death of Hafez al-Assad and "under Bashar al-Asad, al-Buti remained loyal to the regime in exchange for some concessions to the religious sector."⁷³⁸

⁷³⁴ Pierret, T. (2013). Syria's Unusual "Islamic Trend": Political Reformists, The Ulema and Democracy. In Bayat, A. (Ed.), *Post-Islamism: The Many Faces of Political Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 336.

⁷³⁵ Al-Harārī 2014: 17.

⁷³⁶ Christmann's paper reveals his deep admiration of al-Būṭī, as well as his bias in favour of him. Christmann actually met al-Būṭī in person and interviewed him. He states, "Having thus become aware of al-Būṭī's leading position in Syria's spiritual life I was anxious to meet him personally. Last year I encountered al-Būṭī only briefly after one of his sermons whereas this year I succeeded in conducting an interview with him in his university office." See Christmann, A. (1998). Islamic Scholar and Religious Leader: A portrait of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Būṭi. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 9(2), 149-169, DOI: 10.1080/09596419808721146. p. 152.

⁷³⁷ Christmann 1998: 152.

⁷³⁸ Pierret, T. (2013). Syrian Regime Loses Last Credible Ally among the Sunni Ulama. *Syria Comment*. Retrieved from <https://www.joshualandis.com/blog/syrian-regime-loses-last-credible-ally-among-the-sunni-ulama-by-thomas-pierret/>.

With al-Būṭī being a key recipient of regime's full support, he rose to fame in Syria, amongst Muslims and non-Muslims. His weekly fixed televised lectures which were held every Wednesday at 7 p.m.⁷³⁹ propelled him to fame, not only in Syria, but in the Arab world as well. This, naturally, led to his inevitable clash with other movements. During the formative stages of his career and thereafter, al-Būṭī maintained a dismissive position vis-à-vis Wahhābism. Naturally, al-Albānī and Ibn Bāz were amongst his staunchest rivals. In more than one book, al-Albānī attacks al-Būṭī. For instance, al-Albānī says in response to al-Būṭī, "It seems that this doctor (i.e., al-Būṭī) will not attain comfort until he fabricates lies against the Salafīs."⁷⁴⁰

To a certain extent, al-Harārī and al-Būṭī agreed on number of doctrines, but al-Būṭī received staunch refutations from al-Harārī on a number of issues. For instance, upon his analysis of *Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyāt al-Kawniyya*, al-Harārī notes that al-Būṭī refers to Allāh as a: "illa". The term 'illa is generally used in reference of an illness, or it might refer to a cause or a source. While al-Būṭī might have intended the latter meaning, al-Harārī replies, "Al-Būṭī called Allāh a 'illa in more than one part of his book *Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyāt*. In the past, I instructed him to remove it from his book, so he promised me that he will change it, but he did not. Instead, he republished it nine times, according to what I was told. So, how could we remain silent while he spreads misguidance?"⁷⁴¹ In an exclamatory manner, al-Harārī wonders how could al-Būṭī allow calling God a 'illa and not his own son. In response to al-Būṭī, al-Harārī employs the same counterargument he did in his refutation of Sayyid Quṭb when he referred to Allāh as, *al-rīsha al-mu'jiza* (the miraculous brush) and *al-'aql al-mudabbir* (the managing mastermind). Al-Harārī also cites al-Nasafī's interpretation of Q. 7:180 who states, "It is blasphemous to call Allāh a *jism* (body), *jawhar* (entity), *'aql* (intellect) or a 'illa (cause/illness)."⁷⁴² Another scholar who touched upon this issue is the Ḥanafī scholar Rukn al-Islām 'Alī al-Sughdī (d. 461/1068) who opined that whoever calls Allāh a cause or a reason, then he has committed blasphemy.⁷⁴³ This stems from the agreed-upon Sunnī doctrine that all the names of Allāh are *tawqīfiyya*, that is God is only attributed with the names and attributes that are referred to him in a *naṣṣ* (explicit text) or by the scholarly consensus. As seen, al-Harārī only sheds light on a few of al-Būṭī's mistakes.

⁷³⁹ Christmann 1998: 150.

⁷⁴⁰ Al-Albānī 2001: 146.

⁷⁴¹ Al-Harārī 2009a: 66.

⁷⁴² Al-Nasafī 1998: 620.

⁷⁴³ Al-Zabīdī, M. (1994). *Ithāf al-Sāda al-Muttaqīn Bisharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. Mu'assasat al-Tārīkh. p. 100.

4.3.3 Muḥammad Rajab Dīb

Since Syria ceased control of Lebanon in 1976, this resulted in the expansion of Syrian influence over prominent Lebanese territories. In addition to imposing their political agendas, economic proposals and military powers, the Syrian state-sponsored *da'wa* was also exported to Lebanon. Aḥmad Kaftārū (d. 1424/2004), who was the grand mufti of Syria, "... sent one of his most trusted disciples Sheikh Rajab Dīb, on a teaching mission to Beirut during the month of Ramadan. Sheikh Rajab build a Sufī network. This sub-network of the Kaftariyya was later named the Rajabiyya."⁷⁴⁴ The Rajabiyya is believed to be a network in Lebanon which Rajab Dīb's family controls and oversees.⁷⁴⁵ Al-Hararī considered Muḥammad Rajab Dīb (1437/2016) to be an unqualified teacher who initially worked as a mechanic, among other professions, and then suddenly wore the Islamic turban and attire and became a preacher. Al-Hararī's students compiled a book detailing most of Rajab Dīb's fallouts. It is entitled *al- 'Ajab al- 'Ajīb min Ḍalālāt Muḥammad Rajab Dīb* (The Wonders of Muḥammad Rajab Dīb's Statements of Misguidance).

One of the most mind-boggling statements ever attributed to Rajab Dīb is the following: "There are two gods in this universe, the one God who is worshipped, and the other God is the one provides help." Rajab Dīb's polytheistic statement is said to have been recorded during Ḥajj season in 1978.⁷⁴⁶ Another unprecedented *fatwā* which al-Hararī points out, is Rajab Dīb's view that a woman is not allowed to call her husband by his name. Rajab Dīb proclaims, "So if he says to her: where are you Asmā'? Where are you Asmā'? and she says to him: I am here, Khalīl. He is not a Muslim and she is not a Muslim. It is neither permissible for a man to call his wife by her name, nor it is allowed for her to call her husband by his name. He calls her by her title (*laqab*) and she calls him by his title."⁷⁴⁷ Perhaps, this could be cited as an example of innovating a religious rule in order to satisfy cultural habits. The last issue al-Hararī raises is Rajab Dīb's claim that he is a miniature prophet. This was documented by one of Rajab Dīb's former students who wrote down what his teacher said. His student, later on, became one of al-Hararī's followers. Al-Hararī concludes, "I still have this notebook and his handwriting is on it."⁷⁴⁸ Despite his preposterous claim of prophethood, people continued to attend his lectures.

⁷⁴⁴ Böttcher, A. (2004). Official Islam, Transnational Islamic Networks, and Regional Politics: The Case of Syria. In Jung, D. (Ed.), *The Middle East and Palestine Global Politics and Regional Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan. p. 142.

⁷⁴⁵ Roberson, B.A. (2003). *Shaping the Current Islamic Reformation*. London: Frank Cass. p. XVI.

⁷⁴⁶ Al-Hararī 2009a: 89.

⁷⁴⁷ This statement is recorded on tape as part of Rajab Dīb's lecture titled: *al-Niẓām fī al-Islām* (The Order in Islam), when discussing the relationship between a husband and his wife. See Al-Hararī 2009a: 89.

⁷⁴⁸ Al-Hararī 2009a: 90.

4.3.4 Ḥasan Qāṭirjī

Qāṭirjī can succinctly be described as a textbook militant. Born and raised in Lebanon, Qāṭirjī went on to Riyadh in 1984 to enrol in the Ḥadīth Studies programme at the Muhammad ibn Saud University from which he graduated. After his return to Lebanon, Qāṭirjī founded an association through which he was able to promote and further his ideology. He named it: Jam‘iyyat al-Ittiḥād al-Islāmī (The Association of Islamic Unity).⁷⁴⁹ Over the years, Qāṭirjī managed to promote some key Wahhābī beliefs such as: anthropomorphism, rejection of *ta’wīl*, the slandering of Ash‘arīs and Māturīdīs among other ideologies.

For instance, al-Hararī notes that one of the views upheld by Qāṭirjī is his belief that all women are obligated to cover their faces with the *niqāb* and wear a long loose-fit outer garment (*jilbāb*). His *fatwā* on the *jilbāb* is mentioned in: *Minbar al-Da‘iyāt* (The Planform of Female Scholars) in which he says, “Scholars agreed that, if a woman leaves her house, she is obligated to wear the *jilbāb* over her clothes.”⁷⁵⁰ Al-Hararī argues that Qāṭirjī opposed the *ijmā‘* reported by al-Qāḍī ‘Iyād al-Mālikī; that scholars agreed that a woman is permitted to uncover her face and that men ought to lower their gazes.⁷⁵¹

However, Qāṭirjī is perhaps best known for the role he played in the assassination of al-Hararī’s most prominent student Shaykh Nizār al-Ḥalabī who was murdered on August 31st, 1995. Al-Ḥalabī presided over Jam‘iyyat al-Mashārī‘ al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya (The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects - AICP), until his demise. Qāṭirjī is often referred to by al-Hararī’s students as: “Shaykh al-Qatala” i.e., the teacher of assassins. This is primarily due to his role in indoctrinating the murderers. In 1996, the Lebanese newspaper *Addiyar* published the court proceedings, as well as the murderers’ statements. One of the murderers was Khālīd Ḥāmid who confessed to his close relationship with Qāṭirjī, “... during that time, I continued my religious lessons under Shaykh Ḥasan Qāṭirjī.”⁷⁵² While the murderers were eventually executed, Qāṭirjī was imprisoned for some years until his release under the pressure of a neighbouring country.⁷⁵³

⁷⁴⁹ See Ḥasan Qāṭirjī’s biography, published as part of the online archives of The *Multāqa* Online Forum. Retrieved from <https://al-maktaba.org/book/31616/79470>.

⁷⁵⁰ Al-Hararī 2009a: 89.

⁷⁵¹ Al-Hararī 2009a: 121.

⁷⁵² ‘Awwād, M. (1996). Qaḍiyyat al-Ḥalabī ‘ilā 31 al-Jārī Limutāba‘at Tilāwat Ifādāt al-Muttahamīn. *Addiyar Newspaper Archive*. Retrieved from www.addiyar.com/article/687431-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%AD%D8%A9-8910-235-1996.

⁷⁵³ Southlb.com (2004). *Mā ‘Alāqat Ḥasan Qāṭirjī’s Bighitiyāl al-Ḥarārī*. Retrieved from <http://southlb.com/2014/02/05/44837/>.

4.3.5 Munira al-Qubaisi

Head and founder of the women-only Qubaysiyyāt movement, Munira al-Qubaisi was born in Damascus in 1933. After graduating from the University of Damascus' Islamic Studies programme, she went on to teach in Syrian public schools.⁷⁵⁴ However, due to being religiously active in the workplace, she was ultimately suspended. This led her to devoting more time to her followers, particularly upper-class women.⁷⁵⁵ The Qubaysiyyāt are generally regarded as a religious cult composed of, approximately, seventy-five thousand women, many of whom hold university degrees. Munira al-Qubaisi is described as a middle-aged lady who, "... wears a dark-blue coat along with a dark-blue headscarf.... The status of a Qubaysiyya [follower] is known from the colour of her scarf; the closer it gets to black, the closer she gets to al-Qubaisi."⁷⁵⁶ Very few information is available on the Qubaysiyyāt and the development of the movement over the years. So much so, that it has been described as an inclusive group that is shrouded in mystery. Cambridge University's Raphaël Lefèvre discusses the movement's influence in comparison with the rise of the Ikhwān's sisterhood in Syria. He describes it as a:

Mystical religious movement emphasizing women's role in Islamic life, the *Qubaysiyat* were founded by Munira al-Qubaysi – hence the name – and have gained significant traction over the last decade, rapidly assuming such a highly influential role in Syrian society that, by the late 2000s, the movement was estimated to control at least half of the religious schools in Damascus devoted to women's education. Given Munira al-Qubaysi's commitment to keep away from politics, the Syrian regime allowed her movement to operate more openly in many of the country's mosques, thereby implicitly giving it approval. "Yes, the *Qubaysiyat* deserve credit for inviting women to religiosity during the rule of the Syrian regime—urging them to memorize the Quran and to wear the hijab while also paying special attention to the spiritual side of Islam," acknowledged one woman active in the Syrian Brotherhood whose two aunts and their daughters are members of the *Qubaysiyat*. "However," she added, "the group avoided going into politics and was supportive of the regime."⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁴ Hannā, 'A (2018). *Ṣafahāt min Tārīkh al-Aḥzāb al-Siyāsiyya fī Sūriya al-Qarn al- 'Ishrīn wa Ajwā'uhā al-Ijtīmā' iyya*. [Kindle iOS version]. Retrieved from www.amazon.com.

⁷⁵⁵ Hannā 2018.

⁷⁵⁶ Hannā 2018.

⁷⁵⁷ Lefèvre, R. (2013). *The Rise of the Syrian Sisterhood*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved from <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/51633>.

Till this day, the only comprehensive research dedicated to the Qubaysiyyāt and their beliefs is compiled by one of al-Hararī's prominent students 'Usāma al-Sayyid. Al-Sayyid's book is entitled *Dirāsa Shāmila 'an al-Tanzīm al-Nisā'ī al-Sirrī al-Khaṭīr*⁷⁵⁸ (A Comprehensive Study Regarding the Women's Secretive Movement). He delves into the key doctrines adopted by Munira al-Qubaisī and some of her disciples, namely: Amīra Jibrīl, Saḥar Ḥalabī, Fādia al-Ṭabbā' and Su'ād Maybar. Furthermore, in a piece she wrote for the German broadcasting channel DW, 'Afra' Muḥammad cited 'Usāma al-Sayyid's book when analysing the movement's beliefs. 'Afra's research concluded that the *ḥulūl* and *waḥdat al-wujūd* doctrines are in fact adopted by the group, as confirmed by one of their foundational treatises: *Mazāmīr Dāwūd* (lit. David's Psalms).⁷⁵⁹ Like Muḥammad Rajab Dīb, Munīra al-Qubaisī also studied under Mufti Aḥmad Kaftārū. Due to this, the Qubaysiyyāt are generally affiliated with Ṣūfism. As indicated earlier, the *ḥulūl* doctrine (incarnationism) was prominent among a number of Mutaṣawwifa, it also spread among the Qubaysiyyāt. Al-Hararī notes:

As for the Qubaysiyyāt, it is sufficient in proving their misguidance to have a glimpse at what they said in their book entitled *Mazāmīr Dāwūd* (lit. David's Psalms): "Everything you desire is in the self of God" and: "I seek God's forgiveness for abandoning the sin" and: "I seek God's forgiveness for believing that He is One" and: "We are two, but in reality, are one." and: "The universe is not but the Lord who is independent and alive."⁷⁶⁰

The four statements al-Hararī quotes from al-Qubaisī's book are not only indicative of the group's adherence to *ḥulūl* but also their misunderstanding of authentic Ṣūfism. As such, al-Hararī reaffirms that Ṣūfism does not endorse *ḥulūl*, and that followers two amongst the most iconic Ṣūfī orders: al-Rifā'ī and al-Qādirī explicitly warned against the spread of the *ḥulūl* doctrine among the masses. However, it was not only the early Ṣūfīs who tackled *ḥulūl*, but also more recent figures such as: Abū al-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī al-Rifā'ī (d. 1328/1909). Al-Ṣayyādī, whom al-Hararī regarded as the head of Rifā'īs of his era, opined that whoever adopted the *ḥulūl* belief whilst being sane and accountable, there would be no disagreement whatsoever among Muslims that he has committed blasphemy.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁸ Al-Sayyid, 'U. (2003). *Dirāsa Shāmila 'an al-Tanzīm al-Nisā'ī al-Sirrī al-Khaṭīr*. Beirut: Dar Al Macharie CO.

⁷⁵⁹ Muḥammad, 'A. (2010). *Ḥarakat al-Qubaysiyyāt al-Nasawiyya al-Sūriyya: Shukūk 'Aqā'idīyya wa Makhāwif Siyāsiyya*. DW. Retrieved from www.shorturl.at/jqDJ3.

⁷⁶⁰ Al-Hararī 2009a: 123.

⁷⁶¹ Al-Hararī 2009a: 66.

4.3.6 Fathī Yakan

Another Lebanese figure is Fathī Yakan (d. 1430/2009). He headed the Lebanese Ikhwān offshoot, called: al-Jamā‘a al-Islāmiyya from 1962 until 1992. However, after securing a seat in the Lebanese Parliament, Yakan became rather distant with the Ikhwān. In 2006, he established his own independent party which included a number of Ikhwān dissidents. He dubbed it: Jabhat al-‘Amal al-Islāmī (The Islamic Action Front).⁷⁶² For many years, Yakan worked towards building an infrastructure in Lebanon through which he planned to implement Sayyid Quṭb’s ideology. As such, “he leaned more toward the actionable ideology of Quṭb to face the challenges of this fateful battle.”⁷⁶³ As a result of Fathī Yakan’s reverence of Quṭb, as well as his adherence to Ikhwānism, al-Hararī, naturally, disagreed with him. However, the fierce battle with Yakan could be traced back to a meeting held between the two figures in Lebanon. Al-Hararī discloses some key points he covered during the meeting which took place on September 14th, 2004.⁷⁶⁴

1. A presentation of the fundamentals of Islamic creed.
2. Emphasising that Sunnīs are the Ash‘arīs and Māturīdīs, such as Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al Ayyūbī, an Ash‘arī and Sultan Muḥammad al-Fātiḥ, a Māturīdī.
3. Warning against the views of Sayyid Quṭb which he used to sanction violence against all those who disagreed with his methodology.

According to al-Hararī’s narrative, the meeting lasted for nearly one hour, during which Yakan did not oppose a single word al-Hararī said. However, after the meeting, Yakan’s press office issued a statement wherein they categorically denied that Yakan attended such a meeting.⁷⁶⁵ However, al-Hararī notes that, a week later, Yakan’s official journal, named: *al-Amān*, declared al-Hararī and his followers to be deviants, “Al-Shaykh ‘Abdullāh al-Hararī’s thought and that of [his association:] Jam‘iyyat al-Mashārī‘ al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya oppose the consensus of the righteous Salaf and the jurists of this nation.”⁷⁶⁶ In a rather dissatisfied and furious manner, al-Hararī completes the chapter with a comprehensive refutation of Yakan’s claims, concluding with a cautionary statement addressed to Yakan that, on the Day of Judgement, the adversaries shall meet!

⁷⁶² Saab, B. & Ranstorp, M. (2007). Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 30(10), 825–855. p. 831.

⁷⁶³ Rabil, R. (2011). Al-Jama‘a al-Islamiyah and Fathi Yakan: The Pioneer of Sunni Islamic Activism in Lebanon. In: *Religion, National Identity, and Confessional Politics in Lebanon. The Middle East in Focus*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 32.

⁷⁶⁴ Al-Hararī 2009a: 138.

⁷⁶⁵ Al-Hararī 2009a: 138.

⁷⁶⁶ Al-Hararī 2009a: 139.

4.4 Statements of *Kufr*

In addition to warning against a number of contemporary figures, al-Hararī also raised awareness against some widespread *kufṛ* statements, whether promoted by a particular group or not. After stating that *kufṛ* is divided into three categories: creeds, acts and expressions, al-Hararī stresses that the classification of *kufṛ* into these categories has not only been opined by scholars prior to him, but it is also derived from the Qurʾān. He also notes that scholars of the four schools of thought unanimously agreed upon this classification such as: al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), Ibn al-Muqṛī (d. 837/1433) who were Shāfiʿīs, Ibn ʿĀbidīn al-Ḥanafī (d. 1252/1836), al-Buhūtī al-Ḥanbalī, (d. 1051/1641), and Muḥammad ʿIllaysh al-Mālikī (d. 1299/1882).⁷⁶⁷ However, al-Hararī provided much more examples of *kufṛ* statements and expressions compared to the two other categories of *kufṛ*. He focused on expressions that became widespread during his life. He states:

The blasphemous expression is like insulting Allāh, the Exalted - we seek refuge with Allāh from blasphemy - by saying: “O daughter of your Lord,” or: “O son of Allāh.” Blasphemy takes place in this case even if the person did not believe that Allāh has a daughter or a son. Furthermore, if a Muslim calls another Muslim by saying “O blasphemer,” without any *taʾwīl*, he blasphemes, because he has named Islam blasphemy. So, whoever says to the Muslim, “O Jew,” or the like, with the intention that he is not a Muslim, he would have committed blasphemy. Unless he intended that he resembles the Jews; then he does not blaspheme. If a person said to his wife, “You are more beloved to me than Allāh,” he blasphemes. If he said to her, “I worship you,” while understanding from that the worship which is specific to Allāh, the Exalted, then he blasphemes.⁷⁶⁸

Al-Hararī continues to provide even more examples of common statements uttered by the laymen in reference to God. After decades of waging war against *kufṛ*, al-Hararī boasts, “We have, praise be to Allāh, demolished [the spread of] many blasphemous statements across Lebanon and Syria. Before our brothers were able to identify to the people the [danger of] blasphemous statements, one could hear the cussing of Allāh as he passes through the streets of Beirut.”⁷⁶⁹ By providing real-life common examples of *kufṛ*, al-Hararī became more and more relatable to the public.

⁷⁶⁷ Al-Hararī 2007c: 36.

⁷⁶⁸ Al-Hararī 2007c: 42.

⁷⁶⁹ Al-Hararī 2009a: 34.

4.5 Conclusion

Following the example of many early scholars, al-Hararī wrote extensively on *al-milal wa al-niḥal* (sects and creeds), which is a discipline by which the practitioner presents non-Islamic sects – including those affiliated with Islam – and their beliefs, then sets on to refute them and defend the true faith. Al-Hararī strongly believed that forbidding the *munkar* (unlawful) is incumbent on whoever is able to do so. He notes that this practice is one of the features for which prophet Muḥammad’s nation has been praised in the Qur’ān, “You are the best nation sent to mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allāh.”⁷⁷⁰ In addition to this verse, al-Hararī relies on two *ḥadīth* accounts on forbidding the *munkar*, “If you see my nation fearful of telling he who is unjust: you are unjust. Then know that little goodness remains among them.”⁷⁷¹ The second *ḥadīth* is, “If people see the *munkar* but do not change it, then soon the punishment of Allāh will befall them.”⁷⁷²

Essentially, al-Hararī cautions that those who have inexcusably dismissed the forbidding of unlawful matters will be afflicted with hardships and calamities in this world, before the hereafter. He also insists that *kufr* – in all its categories: sayings (*aqwāl*) beliefs (*i’tiqādāt*) and actions (*af‘āl*) – is the greatest of all unlawful matters, “... Numerous forbidden matters, such as *kufr*, have spread among people, to the extent that it became like a salutation with which ignorant people salute one another. For centuries, many *kufr* statements have become common, even more so in this era.”⁷⁷³ Al-Hararī entitled his book *Cooperating in Forbidding the Unlawful* because he simply sought to cooperate with mutual Muslim figures and associations in order to right the wrongs. Thus, this chapter has portrayed al-Hararī as a reformist who, after many clashes with his rivals, did not fear to tell those who committed mistakes that they have erred.

⁷⁷⁰ The Qur’ān, 3:110.

⁷⁷¹ Ibn Ḥibbān, M. (1993). *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*. Mu’assasat al-Risāla. Vol. 5, p. 352.

⁷⁷² Ibn Ḥanbal 1993: 5.

⁷⁷³ Al-Hararī 2009a: 14.

Chapter V

Conclusion

This study has set out to provide an answer for the key research question: Why did al-Hararī grow to become such an influential and controversial figure? The answer to this question could perhaps be deduced from the will al-Hararī left behind. In it, he addressed his followers, in particular those who worked as part of the AICP. It also emphasises unity and presents some key guiding principles for future Muslim generations. It has been printed and affixed in his burial chamber in Burj Abou Haidar. The will reads:

This is what ‘Abdullāh b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Hararī commands himself, his family, his beloved ones, and his students: The testification that no one is God except Allāh and that Muḥammad is the messenger of Allāh. He also advised [by saying]: I advise with the knowledge of the religion, it is the guide for everlasting happiness, a happiness that has no end ... I advise you with embracing and working by the Qur’ān and the way of the prophet, *ṣallā Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*. Cling to the schools of Ahl al-Sunna and work on spreading the religion and teaching it to the people. Order with the good and forbid the evil. I also advise you to love each other for the sake of Allāh and advise each other for His sake. Be supportive of each other and do not be segmented, hateful, and angry. Work by the *ḥadīth* of the Messenger of Allāh, *ṣallā Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* [which means], “One would not be a perfect believer until he likes for himself what he likes for his brother from the good matters.” I warn you against discord and preferring money over the Hereafter, because the enemies of this religion are plotting and working diligently to destroy it. Thus, be like those mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of the messenger of Allāh [which means], “The believer with the Muslim believer is like the building. Each brick supports the other.” I advise you to help your brothers in the Association. Be an aid to them and do not be a hindrance to their efforts. Be unified and do not be fragmented. If you are fragmented, your strength will dissipate. Any person who weakens this Association or discourages people from following it, then shun him and know that he is fighting against the Religion. I ask Allāh for me and you to have the good practice and ending.⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷⁴ In addition to al-Hararī’s will, the page also provides the obituary that Qarāqīra announced upon al-Hararī’s death. AlHarariyy. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.harariyy.org/wsklmq.htm>.

Chapter I shed light on the significance of this research project especially by highlighting the gap in research, namely the fact that there has been no research in Western Academia dedicated to comprehensively examining al-Hararī's life. Only a number of works in Western academic literature make reference to al-Hararī and often in an inaccurate manner. In fact, the only two academic papers that stand out in this context are Dekmejian and Hamzeh's: *A Sufi Response to Political Islamism: Al-Ahbash of Lebanon*, as well as Kabha and Elrich's: *Al-Ahbash And Wahhabiyya: Interpretations of Islam*. Both papers follow a comparative analytical approach; whereby al-Hararī's life is either contrasted with Ṣūfism or Wahhābism. Perhaps due to certain limitations, none of the said authors offer a detailed breakdown of al-Hararī's beliefs or even shed light on his qualifications or contributions to Islam. Likewise, the vast majority of Arabic works that have been dedicated to al-Hararī or have made reference to him are predominantly written by his adversaries, most notably from the Wahhābī camp, such as: Dimashqiyya and al-Shahrānī. Thus, before providing and answer to the research question, Chapter I presented an outline of all relevant literature and indicated the gap in research. The importance of this thesis stems from the need to examine the ideology of this modern-day Islamic reformer and document his life by shedding light on his path to scholarship; a theme that is entirely absent in Western Academia.

Chapter II, on the other hand, presented an in-depth analysis of al-Hararī's scholarly credentials via a close examination of the key milestones in al-Hararī's career. As such, this thesis endeavoured to tackle the misrepresentations concerning the early stages of al-Hararī's life. The aim of this chapter was to portray al-Hararī's personal development from a young student of knowledge to a mufti, through decades of classical Islamic education, under several teachers and across many disciplines. Additionally, Chapter II provided a detailed investigation into the multiple accusations that al-Hararī partook in the Kulub movement. Upon analysing decades-old papers, meeting minutes and archival documents, this chapter concluded that al-Hararī did not play any role whatsoever in the Kulub movement, nor did he collude with the Selassie regime. His rise to fame did not protect him from his rivals who sought to defame him and tarnish his image. So, this chapter also explored all major academic and polemical writings that have attacked al-Hararī's legacy and contrasted them with never-before-published documents composed by al-Hararī's countrymen in defence of his methodology. Finally, it provided the names of his teachers and a detailed timeline of his travels leading up to his arrival in Beirut, where he spent the remainder of his life.

While the first two chapters highlighted the historical and biographical aspects of al-Hararī's life, Chapter III, on the other hand examined some of the most prominent Islamic doctrines promoted by al-Hararī. As such, the chapter presented a comparative analysis between the ideologies of Ibn Taymiyya and modern-day Wahhābīs with that of al-Hararī and classical Ash'arīs. As a *mutakallim*, and through the *tanzīh* doctrine - as one of the foundational Islamic tenets - al-Hararī addressed the Wahhābīs' misrepresentation of God's attributes by relying on the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth* and *ijmā'*, thus revealing numerous contradictions and inconsistencies in their discourse. Al-Hararī's battle with Wahhābism extended beyond *tanzīh*, as he rebuked their positions the following doctrines:

1. **Ṣūfism:** al-Hararī maintained that Ṣūfism is a discipline that has been promoted and practiced by Sunnīs for centuries. He nonetheless warned against a number of unorthodox beliefs he believed to be falsely attributed to Ṣūfism.
2. **Tawassul:** Ibn Taymiyya opined that calling upon anyone other than Allāh would be tantamount to *shirk*. This was also professed by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb, al-Albānī and others. Al-Hararī stressed that Muslims who perform *tawassul* by the prophets do not worship them, but they believe the righteous to be a means.
3. **Tabarruk:** the prohibition of *tabarruk* was introduced by Ibn Taymiyya and expanded by his followers. Al-Hararī derived the permissibility of this practice from prophet Muḥammad himself who taught his companions to perform *tabarruk*.
4. **Ziyāra:** Ibn al-Qayyim's prohibition of *ziyāra* led him to openly state that he would not visit Abraham's grave in Hebron. Due to upholding this unconventional belief, the Sunnī judges imprisoned him and his teacher Ibn Taymiyya. Al-Hararī refuted Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwās*, supported the practice of *ziyāra* and defended it.
5. **Mawlid:** this discourse is heavily dominated by the *bid'a* argument. Al-Hararī, like many Shāfi'ī scholars, opined that *bid'a* could be categorised into good and evil. Since the *mawlid* celebration is, in its own right, an occasion on which the prophet is praised and glorified, it should thus be classed as a good *bid'a*.

There is, certainly, a plethora of other doctrines and concepts that have been widely disputed between al-Hararī and his opponents, but this study deduces that the abovementioned arguments constitute the foundation of al-Hararī's fundamental divergence from Wahhābism. Even prior to his journey to Beirut, al-Hararī openly raised awareness of the dangers of Wahhābism and considered it to be one of the key reasons for the disunity in Muslim-dominated countries.

One underlying theme throughout Chapter IV is the use of polemics as a means to conveying beliefs. The chapter analysed al-Hararī's feuds with a number of his contemporaries. By doing so, it revealed his stance on many issues, such as: the Islamic Caliphate, Muslim-Christian relations, and *takfīr* among other topics. Therefore, a key aspect of this study is its formation of and contribution to a database of al-Hararī's views on a wide array of topics relating to *'aqīda*, *fiqh*, *naḥw*, *tafsīr*, *tajwīd* and other Islamic sciences. Al-Hararī's most significant book on polemics is entitled *Cooperating in Forbidding the Unlawful*. Through this book, he surveyed the most prominent beliefs which he deemed to be in opposition to the Qur'ān and challenged them. Thus, portraying him as one of the greatest Muslim polemicists of his time. He only did so in fulfilment of the duty of forbidding the *munkar*.

There are, however, some significant limitations in this research that ought to be pointed out. Firstly, this thesis does not delve into the highly contentious debate on Mu'āwiya's rebellion and the shift from the Islamic caliphate to a hereditary monarchy. Al-Hararī stood firm in support of 'Alī's position as illustrated by the title of a book he dedicated to this topic: *al-Dalīl al-Sharī 'alā Ithbāt 'Iṣyān man Qātalahu 'Alī* (The Religious Evidences Proving the Sinfulness of those whom 'Alī Fought). Due to his views on the 'Alī-Mu'āwiya war, al-Hararī's followers came to be known as the Shī'a-sympathisers of the Sunnīs (*Shī'at al-Sunna*). Therefore, a dedicated study on al-Hararī's stance on the three battles that took place between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya would be significantly useful to the study of Sunnī-Shī'ī relations. Secondly, the final chapter only offers an overview of the history of al-Hararī's association: The AICP (The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects). So, an in-depth analysis into the association and its history would be worthwhile. For instance, its role in Lebanese politics through the alliances it forged with a number of Lebanese parties to serve the Sunnī community, whether during the leadership of Shaykh Nizār al-Ḥalabī or his successor Shaykh Ḥusām Qarāqira.

Finally, this study has demonstrated that al-Hararī's approach to *kalām* and Islamic Law portrays his commitment to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* in accordance with the methodology of the Salaf and classical Ash'arīs. His followers were not geographically restricted to the Levant, but they journeyed east and west to spread his call. Therefore, through the unwavering efforts of his loyal students, al-Hararī's moderate representation of Islam – with his particular emphasis on *'aqīda* – continues to be transmitted through multiple generations and taught across the Islamic World as the moderate Sunnī creed.

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