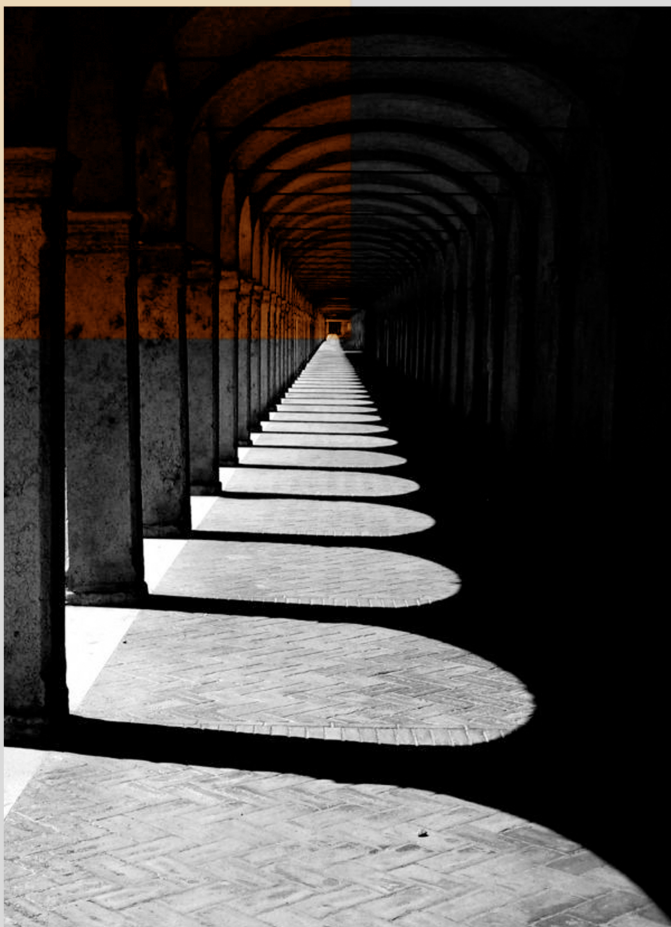


# Mysteries of the SUFİ PATH

FRIEDRICH  
EBERT   
STIFTUNG

The Sufi Community in Jordan  
and Its Zawiyas, Hadras and Orders



MOHAMMAD ABU RUMMAN

# MYSTERIES OF THE SUFI PATH

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Hadras and Orders

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan  
National Library Submission No.  
(2020/12/5184)

Abu Rumman, Mohammed Sulaiman

Mystiries of the Sufi Path: The Sufi Community in Jordan and Its Zawiyas, Hadras and Orders. Translated by William Ward, - Amman: Friedrich Ebert Foundation (374) pages

Deposite Number: 2020/12/5184

Descriptors: Sufi Orders/Sufism/Islamic Groups

The author bears full legal liability for the content of his work. This work does not reflect the opinion of the Department of the National Library or any other government authority.

**Publisher: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Jordan and Iraq Office**

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung – Amman Office

PO Box 941876, Amman 11194, Jordan

Email: fes@fes-jordan.org

Website: www.fes-jordan.org

**Not for sale**

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- Cover design:Huda Khalil Al Sha'ir
- Design of interior: Eman Khattab
- Printer: Alam Alfiker Printing Press
- ISBN: (978-9923-759-21-9)

# MYSTERIES OF THE SUFI PATH

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Hadras and Orders

*Dr. Mohammed Abu Rumman*



## FOREWORD

*By Tim O. Petschulat, Resident Director,  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES),  
Jordan & Iraq*

Once again, we proudly present a well-researched and skilfully written study from Dr. Mohammad Abu Rumman. Our rich cooperation began in 2007 when FES published his book on the Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliamentary Elections 2007 as part of a series on Islamic politics in Jordan. Every year since then, further publications on Political Islam and socio-religious trends followed, were authored, co-authored or edited by Dr. Abu Rumman.

Only the year 2019 saw a break in our research cooperation when Dr. Abu Rumman accepted a call to public service and joined Prime Minister Omar Razzaz's third cabinet as both Minister of Youth and Culture. Understandably, but much to our regret, his new and demanding role did not leave room for anything else. By 2020, when his service with government came to an end, we were all the happier to see him return to research which he took on again prolifically.

"Mysteries of the Sufi Path" is his third FES-publication this year and his twentieth since 2007.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all those with an interest in the history and present-day state of Sufism and its many manifestations in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. There is much to learn from this book about the rivalry between Salafism and Sufism and the footprint both traditions left and continue to leave on Jordanian institutions and society at large.

Dr. Abu Rumman critically reviews and dismisses conspiracy theories about Sufism. He also explains the reasons for the often-distorted public image of Sufism in Jordan. While the author's approach to the object of his research is empathetic, he keeps, as always, an academic distance. In his last chapter, Dr. Abu Rumman gives his most interesting insights into the female side of Sufism and about Sufi Art, Literature and Culture.

Dr. Abu Rumman's ability to combine dedication, diligent productivity, accumulated expertise, love for detail and apparent joy in research does not cease to impress me. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him on behalf of FES for his uncompromising commitment and loyalty - and of course for yet another excellent addition to our library.

FES is a value driven organisation. We believe in social democracy. Our activities around the globe promote social justice, human rights and a thriving but sustainable economy.

Our research activity on the various Islamic traditions and their footprints on society is aimed at a better understanding of the social, religious and cultural fabric of contemporary Jordan as portrayed by academics, development professionals and diplomats.

We hope that this book will contribute to a better understanding of a major spiritual and mystic manifestation of Islam in general and the role it has within the Jordanian society in particular.

May you enjoy reading it as much as I did.

For anyone interested in more of his publications:

You'll find them in the publication section of our website [www.fes-jordan.org](http://www.fes-jordan.org) – both in English and Arabic.

*If they were entrusted with a secret,  
you would see their breasts as graves for secrets  
above any power to convey*

*From the Diwan of Ibn Al-Farid*

*If they reveal the secret, their blood is licit,  
as is the blood of the lovers*

*Al-Suhrawardi Al-Maqtul (the Murdered)*



## *Dedicated to*

- *Samah, Fares, and Sarah, who are my life and represent the mystery of beauty in this world*
- *Those who seek light in the midst of darkness, meaning among the clouds, and beauty beyond the rubble*
- *The many loving souls I have met in this pleasant journey*



## **THANKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This book and the associated painstaking research effort to bring it into the light, for it to find its way into being, would not exist if not for a group of friends who were truly partners in making it happen.

Sufis and gnostics believe that a student must have a shaykh to lead him in his progress along a safe path amid worlds of desolate roads. I had two guides as a help to me at all stages in the development of this book. Wherever I stumbled, encountered a difficulty, or ran into a barrier, wherever a thorny or inscrutable matter arose, they intervened immediately and said: Keep going until you reach the end.

Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, whom I incessantly consulted, avidly seeking out his generosity, did not stint in facilitating the “mission” of reaching shaykhs and members of Sufi orders. He also shared his mastery of Sufism’s minutiae and his deep experience with its major figures and orders.

Shakir Musa Al-Kilani, The Sufism expert not only in Jordan but on an Arab and global level, has been initiated into Sufi orders by more than one shaykh and is familiar with their intricacies, histories, concepts, and stories. Hardly a day went by that we were not in contact to discuss issues, information, and the minutiae of Sufism generally and in Jordan in particular.

In addition to these individuals, an eminent array of distinguished figures showed no impatience, weariness, or annoyance at my constant intrusions upon them with questions or requests for help and assistance in accessing certain knowledge or people on the

journey toward this book: Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman, Shaykh Fawaz Al-Tabba', Dr. Muadh Said Hawwa, and Muadh Na'il Al-Musalaha.

Of course, I cannot forget my friend and companion in most of my books and research, the one who always makes you feel that he is beside you and who draws you into in-depth discussions and dialogues, Hassan Abu Hanieh. He graciously reviewed the manuscript and provided comments, edited it, and checked it for academic, technical, and linguistic accuracy.

I also give my sincere thanks to my brother Abdullah Abu Rumman, a former minister and current ambassador, for his academic and linguistic review of the manuscript, and to my friend Haitham Hossan, a media professional and researcher, who provided valuable copyediting comments on the manuscript.

Finally, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Amman graciously – as usual – paid the cost of this project. Its director Tim Petschulat and my friend Yousef Ibrahim were in constant contact to complete the project and provide any services toward its publication, as is FES practice. Since this fruitful partnership began more than a decade and a half ago, we together have completed many Arabic references and books that have been translated into English, German, and sometimes French, not to mention the unauthorized versions in Turkish and Persian. If not for this pioneering institution and the tremendous assistance it provides, we would not be able to carry out these “research missions” and present the knowledge produced.

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## PREFACE

The date is May 25, 2019.

The place, the Culture Palace in Al Hussein Youth City.

The occasion: Jordan's 73rd Independence Day.

The crowd is watching a shaykh in his late 80s, with a long, white beard, dark clothes, a white cloth covering his head, and a long strand of white prayer beads in his hand. His son walks with him to the steps of the platform, where the king approaches and kisses him, a sign of honor and respect. The shaykh whispers in the king's ear as he receives the King Abdullah II Order for Distinction of the First Degree.

The shaykh becomes the talk of the media as they ask: Who is he? What did he whisper in the king's ear? What is on the piece of paper that the shaykh gave the king – worldly requests or religious advice?

As the media would clarify later, the man was Shaykh Ahmed Mustafa Al-Khudari, the foremost preacher and preachers' shaykh in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, whose *dua'* (supplication) would echo throughout the Kingdom five times a day, every day, after each call to prayer. This sort of *dua'* – accompanied by the prayer on the Holy Prophet – was itself the subject of a fierce debate that swept through the mosques of Jordan after the emergence four decades ago of the Salafists, who argued that it was an impermissible innovation (*bid'a*). This debate sometimes devolved into shouting and fighting.

Along came the austere Sufi Shaykh Ahmed Al-Khudari, who arrived in Jordan in the 1960s from Syria. He held Shadhili *dhikr* (remembrance of God) sessions at the Grand Hussein Mosque, then

in his humble house in Midar, a neighborhood of eastern Amman. He was formally known as the “Shaykh of the Preachers” and the foremost preacher, and he previously turned down the position of shaykh of the Shadhili order due to his humility and asceticism even in leading a religious order. Today his home has become a destination for statesmen, ministers, and the leaders of religious institutions.

Followers of the conservative Salafi current were in shock as they watched the Independence Day ceremony and heard Shaykh Al-Khudari’s name. For some, it probably rewound their memories to 14 years earlier, when their shaykh, Ali Al-Halabi, took to the pulpit of Al-Hashemiyeen Mosque in Amman and delivered a sermon, in the king’s presence, condemning the Amman bombings.

What had happened during the intervening years, that the ascetic Sufi shaykh would become a religious symbol while the Salafists disappeared from view? Was it a strange coincidence or a fleeting moment of tribute? How was it possible that this could happen, and that the shaykh’s *dua*’ echoed everywhere every day, and that three academic chairs were dedicated to senior scholars from the Sufi Ash’ari school – Al-Ghazali, Al-Razi, and Al-Suyuti – at official royal ceremonies?

Much had transpired between these two moments. To realize that and comprehend its significance requires no great effort by religious factions.

Meanwhile, after Friday prayers, Shaykh Nuh Keller was walking from Masjid Al-Bushra, which he had worked to build a few years earlier in the Kharabsheh neighborhood of Amman Sports City, to the Shadhili *zawiya* (lodge) he had established, considered one of the most active *zawiyas* in Amman. A coterie of the shaykh’s *murids* (students) accompanied him. Everyone stood as a token of respect to the shaykh with the henna-dyed beard, who was wearing a white jubba and turban. He sat and began the *dhikr*, reciting the name of God, and those assembled repeated after him *Al-Isim Al-A’zam* (the word “Allah”). Then everyone stood in a circle and a semicircle, absorbed in this remembrance of God. In the back arose the beautiful voice of a

*munshid* (a reciter of chants and poems), reciting the words of Ibn Al-Farid, the Syrian poet of divine love:

*You are my duties and my supererogatory prayer, you are my speech and my preoccupation*

*O my qibla in prayer, when I stand to pray*

*Your beauty fills my eye, I turn entirely toward it*

*Your secret is in my inmost self, and my heart is the mountain where God manifested himself*

*I found a fire in the neighborhood at night, and I told my people the good news*

This *zawiya* has become a destination for hundreds of people coming from Europe and America as *murids* of the American and formerly Catholic Shaykh Keller, who converted to Islam during the 1970s during his study of Arabic at Al-Azhar while working on a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Chicago. He then settled in Jordan in the early 1980s and was initiated into the Shadhili order, later becoming the Shadhili shaykh for North America.

As for the “Naqshbandi shaykha,” she is a graduate in sociology from the Hebrew University and a pupil of the worldwide leader of the Naqshbandi order, Shaykh Muhammad Nazim Haqqani (who died in 2014 in Cyprus), who personally authorized her to teach and lead in the order. Dozens of female *murids* attend the *dhikr* and *salawat* sessions she holds in Amman homes, including members of various social strata: middle and upper class, religious women and those searching for spirituality in the material world.

The orders, *zawiyas*, and Sufism itself are not the exclusive province of men. In dozens of Sufi *zawiyas* around Jordan there are *salikat* (female travelers) on the path of Sufism, and Sufi *dhikr* and learning sessions for women are held in many homes – from the female *murids* of Fadia Al-Tabba’ (known since the 1980s as the Tabba’iyyat), to the women of the Arab Islamic Cultural Society (members of the Rifa’i Order), to all the women who hold their own ses-

sions. It is here that we find Jordanian “Sufi feminism,” which may exist in the shadows but is nevertheless active and present.

How should we understand this new-old Sufi activity? Is just a passing fad that is merely following official religious policies? Or is it a new approach that integrates Sufi culture into the State’s identity and its religious and cultural rhetoric?

Does it stop at the bounds of “religious policies,” or does it affect the social culture, which every once in a long while has tried Salafism on for size? Is our religious culture currently undergoing a change? What happened to pull Sufism out from the shadows into the sunlight?

Sufism was once stigmatized as a collection of myths and fables (as modernists put it) or heresies and novelties that are not true religion (in the Salafist view). Why do we now see hordes of young people racing to quote Ibn ‘Arabi and Jalal Al-Din Rumi on their social media pages? How did the view of dervishes flip from a scornful stereotype to veneration? There are art exhibitions of their products, their drawings are appreciated, and they perform their whirling Mevlevi dances at gift shops where their curios are purchased as decorations for many a home.

Is it weariness with excessive modernity, the pressures of material life, and the repercussions of post-modernism? Or a search for meaning, spirituality, and tranquility in this age of anxiety, unrest, and neuroses? Or –in the face of extremism, *takfir*, and close-mindedness– an escape to the realms of tolerance and openness manifested in, for example, the poetry of Ibn ‘Arabi:

*I profess the religion of love, whatever direction its caravans may take/For love is my religion and my faith*

Does Sufism offer the spiritual, moral, and intellectual prescriptions that young Jordanians are seeking, like Arab, Muslim, and even Christian youth around the world?

To what extent is Jordanian Sufism prepared to engage with these questions and discussions, or is it limited in its scale and impact?

This book is something of a “raid” on the house of Jordanian Sufism, which we thought would be easy to breach, within grasp through brief research. It looked to me, at first glance, to be small, humble, and simple. Well, appearances can be deceptive. No sooner do you take off your shoes and ask the residents for permission to enter than you find yourself in an entirely different world, steeped in spirituality and still engrossed in intense debate about Al-Hallaj, that apostate Sufi who was beheaded and burned in Baghdad. At his execution, he smiled and said:

*Kill me, O my faithful friends, for in being killed is my life  
So kill me, burn me and the bones of my transitory body  
Then pass by my remains in forgotten graves  
You will find the secret of my Beloved in the folds of what survives*

Then you find that everyone speaks with veneration and respect for “Shaykh of the Sect” Abu Al-Qasim Al-Junayd, the wonders (*karamat*) of the saints, and the aphorisms of the *aqtab* and the *abdal*, the saints in the two highest ranks of the saintly hierarchy. In every room you enter you will live the journeys of Abu Al-Hassan Al-Shadhili, Baha’ Al-Din Al-Rawwas, Khalid Al-Baghdadi, and Mustafa Al-Bakri, and you will overhear a debate about the oneness of being (*wahdat Al-wujud*), annihilation (*fana’*) and subsistence (*baqa’*), Muhammadan Reality, and ghazal poetry. You will be forced to resort to experts on Sufism to understand the special Sufi language associated with an unfamiliar gnostic approach based on *dhawq* (“tasting” or first-hand experience) and humankind’s inner light.

Instead of you storming into this humble house, it storms into you and tosses you into complex, intertwined worlds. You drown in a unique spiritual world, and how could you not? For the Sufi path is one of divine secrets that appear only to those who travel it, and “the

one who tastes, knows.” But be careful: someone who uncovers the secret may meet the fate of Al-Hallaj, Suhrawardi, and others. After all, one of the most important *aqtab* in Sufi history, Abu Madyan Al-Gawth, said:

*In the secret are fine, subtle secrets, and our blood is shed openly if we reveal them*

In the worlds of Jordanian Sufism, history is contained within the present and vice versa. The “intelligible,” sensory world is intertwined with ‘*alam Al-ghayb* (the world of the unseen and unknowable) and “mystical subtleties.” Meanwhile, geographic borders are completely erased on your “journey”; Shaykh Muhammad Sa’id Al-Kurdi took up the path from Syrian Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani (originally from Morocco), and his successor was Shaykh Abdulrahman Al-Shaghouri (a Syrian), whose successors include the American Shaykh Nuh Keller and the Jordanian Ismail Al-Kurdi. Before that was Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti from Tunisia, who came to Acre to establish a *zawiya* and become a *murid* of the most prominent “religious leaders” in Syria. The *zawiya* then moved to Jordan. Meanwhile, one of the “seekers of God” brought the order (*ta-riqa*) to the Comoros, where today it is a semi-official State creed.

You cannot understand the schools, spiritual manifestations, and intellectual roots of Sufism without poring over the accounts of its shaykhs dating from the early centuries to today, or without closely reading their books and teachings, from Abdul Qadir Gilani to the teachings of Rifa’i, the life of Al-Shadhili, and the Hikam of Ibn ‘Ata Allah Al-Iskandari, continuing through Abdullah Al-Ahrar in Central Asia, Abdullah Al-Haddad in Yemen, Ibn Ajiba in Morocco, Al-Alawi in Algeria, and the poetry of Al-Rawwas, Abu Maydan Al-Gawth, Ibn Al-Farid, and more.

You will journey with Jordanian Sufism along latitudes and longitudes, between history and geography, all of which is poured forth in the narratives and stories of the Jordanian Sufis, part of their spiritual life and intellectual makeup. Wherever you turn, you find

before you God's servant Al-Khidr (pbuh) and the souls of the saints and the righteous believers. You will stand with some of Sufism's shaykhs and scan the horizon in wait for the Mahdi, a figure expected to emerge before the Day of Judgment, whose arrival Sufism considers a watershed moment in human history.

\*       \*       \*

That is a condensed overview of the book. But there exists a deep chasm between the idea behind this book as an exploration of Jordanian Sufism –a supplement to a series of studies, research projects, and books on Islamic trends in Jordan– and the actual arduous and beautiful “journey” through the world of Sufism and its secrets and mysteries. This journey is one we will take among orders, *zawiyas*, narratives, culture, song, and a spiritual world that neighbors and interfaces with the material world in which we live.

In its essence, Sufism is a path. That is the best way to define it. It has travelers (Sufis, *murids*), a route (spiritual orders and pathways), and guides (the shaykhs of each order). The path is lit by the fire of “divine love,” and you will be unable to ascend higher on the path unless you disengage from the “worldly obstacles” to that ascent. The path is exclusively internal, passing through the human person himself or herself. It is a great, true battle, and the fierce, lurking enemy is the human self or lower soul (*nafs*). Whenever you defeat your *nafs*, your higher soul is elevated and you advance along the path. But how do you defeat the self and win the battle?

That is the golden question and the function of Sufism, and here the secrets of the path lie. Having already chosen a preliminary title for this book, I changed it to “Secrets of the Sufi Path,” a title inspired by two things. First, as mentioned, Sufism is a path. Second, it is steeped in the world of the soul, *ghayb* (the unseen), and what Sufis consider to be “secrets” that can be revealed and disclosed only to those who have reached a certain stage on the path. Third, because a deep understanding of Sufism comes easily only for those who understand its roots, dimensions, and particular language. We are not

studying a social movement with a clear ideology and movement framework but rather a religious school and a social culture with its own special features that have eluded the grasp of many researchers.

\*       \*       \*

This book begins with an introduction –a necessary one– to “Sufi theory,” including history, terminology, concepts, schools, central ideas, major shaykhs, and core debates that impact Sufism in general and have challenged its legitimacy in centuries past.

In Chapter 1, we move on to sketching an overview of the Jordanian environment surrounding the Sufi orders, in order to understand the effects of the rivalry –if not conflict– between Sufism (in its *Ash‘ari-madhhabi* form) and Salafism. We explore two themes in this chapter.

The first is a reading and analysis of official religious policies and whether there are official trends adopting or driving toward Sufism or Salafism, because the State’s stance is important in strengthening or weakening a religious school.

The second is social culture and whether, historically speaking, its character has been closer to Sufism or to Salafism across the decades, or whether shifts have dragged it from one place to another. In this section, we review early Jordanian Sufism, the modern era, and the historical roots of Sufi culture.

In Chapter 2, we work to build a framework for understanding the map of Sufism, and especially of the orders, from the initial founding of the main orders’ well-known *zawiyas* in the 1950s to today (i.e., across seven decades). This chapter is titled “From Orders to a Network” because in recent years there has been a clear trend among Sufi youth toward founding academic and legal institutes and transitioning to institutional work.

Chapter 3, the longest in the book, is an attempt to enter the “Sufi house” and wander through its corners, gatherings, and internal

relationships. We will not address the Sufi orders individually because Chapter 2 will have provided a panoramic overview of them. The goal of Chapter 3 is to draw closer to Sufism and to understand it deeply. Therefore, we take up several Sufi orders and *zawiyas* and paint a picture of *dhikr* sessions, and we try to understand the ideas and the historical background of Jordanian Sufism's governing ideas and narratives.

In this chapter, we address the main Sufi schools in Jordan, such as Shadhili, the branches of Rifa'i, Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani, Naqshbandi-Haqqani, and Ba'Alawi. But these orders can be understood only through tracing them back to their early founders in centuries past in order to dissect the "Sufi mind." How does it think? What are the narratives and stories that have impacted it? Dear reader, perhaps you have noticed our focus on the word "narratives." That is because Sufism is built on the subjective experiences and *dhawq* of the founding shaykhs who instituted the orders' rules and then the renewers who solidified that foundation. Returning to them, reading them, and understanding their spiritual experiences is the "key" to the Sufi house regardless of place, including Jordan of course.

As for the fourth and final chapter, we assay Sufi sociology and psychology through an approach based on interviews, meetings, and conversations with Jordanian Sufis who answer key questions: Why and how did you become Sufi? What does it mean to be Sufi? How does a Sufi understand the makeup of the world around him? Within Sufi society, what is the nature of the relationship between members of an order and members of a *zawiya*?

We approach the world of Jordanian "feminist Sufism" and try to craft a comprehensive picture of it through a study of relevant groups and associations, such as the Tabba'iyyat, the Al-Hawra Institute, the women's sections of Sufi *zawiyas*, and female preachers who are influential in the community.

We then leave the *zawiya* to explore other important aspects of Jordanian Sufism that, for the most part, have gone without study, such as Sufi literature – including poems and novels – and the art of

Sufi chanting and singing, which we observe has recently begun to spread in Jordan and the Arab world.

The book finishes with a conclusion on the future prospects of Sufism in Jordan. We analyze the most significant current trends, predictive indicators, and coming challenges.

We rely on more than one methodological approach in this book. The first, of course, is textual analysis that consults the books and literature of theoretical Sufism; books that discuss the Sufi orders and their histories, shaykhs, and leaders; books by Sufi shaykhs, including the shaykhs of Sufi orders; and books by Jordanian Sufis generally.

The second approach is field research. We met with dozens of people linked to Sufism, including both followers of Sufi orders and experts on Sufism.

With regard to books and literature dealing with Sufism in Jordan, the selection is limited. Biographies of some shaykhs of Sufi orders are also few, and often are a blend of unconfirmed narratives and stories, authenticated stories, and some media and press reports. Nonetheless, there are two essential studies on Sufi orders in Jordan:

1. *Sufism and Sufi Orders: God's Spiritual Paths, Adaption, and Renewal in the Context of Modernization*, by Hassan Abu Hanieh, published by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman Office, in 2011. It is the foremost book and main reference in the past decade for many researchers and people interested in the topic, as the author covers the Sufi orders and their most notable shaykhs in an important research effort.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya: Durub Allah Al-Ruhiya, Al-Takayyuf, wa-l-Tajdid fi Siyaq Al-Tahdith* (Sufism and Sufi Orders: God's Spiritual Paths, Adaption, and Renewal in the Context of Modernization); Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman; First Edition, 2011.

2. The as-yet-unpublished doctoral thesis “Sufi Orders in Jordan: A Comparative Critical Analysis” by Mousa Abdul Jalil Abdul Aziz Amr, presented at the World Islamic Sciences and Education University in 2014. This thesis is no less important than the first book. It is a remarkable work of field research, in addition to its identification of Sufi orders, the shaykhs most important to their histories in Jordan, and their most salient features. The researcher created a survey with several questions on Sufi beliefs and controversial topics, answered by several sheiks from the orders in Jordan.<sup>2</sup>

I benefited greatly from the two above studies. They helped me with several important “shortcuts” in the exploration and examination of the Sufi scene. We hope that this book will add value through its entry into the Sufi house itself. It conducts a study and analysis of ideas, orders, stories, and *zawiyas*, and above all the issue of religious policies, community culture, and the ways they have transformed. This book then tries to understand the psychological and sociological structure of Sufism, feminist Sufism in Jordan, and Sufism’s literary and artistic manifestations.

Before I send you off through the chapters and pages of this book, I would like to apologize in advance, kind reader, for the repetitiveness you will find in certain chapters, especially Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. We worked to minimize it as much as possible, but the repetitiveness is due to the intersecting nature of the two chapters, which required the reiteration of some information about the shaykhs of orders in Jordan. Chapter 3, however, is more extensive and in-depth in that regard.

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<sup>2</sup> Mousa Abdul Jalil Abdul Aziz Amr, “Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fiAl-’Urdun: Darasa Tahliyya Naqdiyya Muqarana” (“Sufi Orders in Jordan: A Comparative Critical Analysis”); World Islamic Sciences and Education University, unpublished doctoral thesis supervised by Dr. Bassam Al-Amoush; 2014.



# INTRODUCTION

## Guidelines on the Sufi Path

Writing about Sufism differs from writing about other Islamic movements or schools. Sufism has unique intellectual and cultural sources and a totally different language. And although everyone drinks from the same well –Islam itself– the particular character of Sufism stems from differences in its fields of interest, objectives, and course.

Sufism has branched into multifarious orders and approaches, and it has an expansive and diverse heritage. This heritage encompasses everything from specialized books on Sufism written by scholars of the discipline and specialized academic books on shari'a and Qur'anic interpretation from a Sufi perspective, to books about Sufi poetry, orders, history, and schools. Despite all that, there are general principles and concepts, and common ground on which all Sufis stand, even if only theoretically.

Therefore, before diving into this book's subject matter on the schools and characteristics of Sufism in Jordan, we must set down an intensive but concise introduction that deals with some key, fundamental issues around the concept, approach, and nature of Sufism. This introduction is fairly "theoretical" from a philosophical, historical, and conceptual point of view. It will help us examine and evaluate Jordanian Sufism and compare it with theoretical approaches and schools, while postponing a discussion of Sufi orders and their scope in Jordan.

## 1. “Sufism”

There is no specific, conclusive meaning for the term “Sufism.” Ignoring the general definition and etymology, which are old controversies, the meaning and scope of Sufism are also many and multifarious, given the discipline’s particular nature. Thus, some scholars of Sufism give dozens of definitions, while some Sufi scholars view Sufism as having more than a thousand meanings.<sup>3</sup>

Why this multiplicity of definitions for Sufism? The answer to this question may itself be a golden key for gaining entry to the concept of Sufism, because it originates in the multiplicity and diversity of sources of knowledge, and the way they intermingle Qur’anic texts and traditions concerning the Prophet (as cited by the Companions, Successors, and righteous believers) with the subjective, experiential knowledge of each individual who has entered on the path of Sufism and lived it. Such a person has passed through spiritual and emotional states that make the experience a specifically personal one, and so he or she would present a personal definition of Sufism linked to that subjective spiritual experience. Thus, in most books on Sufism, we find definitions linked to prominent scholars. They say: the definition according to Abu Al-Qasim Al-Junayd, or Al-Muhasibi, or Al-Tirmidhi, or SariAl-Saqati, or Al-Ghazali, or Dhul-Nun Al-Misri, or Al-Bistami ... and so on. You may find that most of these well-known Sufis, and others, have more than one definition of Sufism because the definitions are linked to an individual’s subjective, interior experience and condition, which lead him or her to a particular, experiential meaning of Sufism.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Éric Geoffroy, *Le soufisme, voie intérieure de l’islam* (Sufism: The Interior Path of Islam), translated by Abdul Haqq Al-Zemmouri; Mominoun Without Borders Foundation for Studies and Research, Rabat, Morocco; First Edition, 2018, pp. 13-15.

<sup>4</sup> In his book *Al-Tasawwuf: Al-Thawra Al-Ruhiya fi Al-Islam* (Sufism: The Spiritual Revolution in Islam), Islamic philosophy professor Dr. Abu Alula Afifi compiled 65 definitions from books by top scholars and ‘arifs (ones who know God). On the meaning of “Sufism” and “Sufi,” see Abu Alula Afifi, *Al-Tasawwuf: Al-Thawra Al-Ruhiya fi Al-Islam*; Afaq Publishing and Distribution, Cairo; First Edition, 2018, pp. 38-51.

In the context of this multiplicity and diversity of delineations and definitions, the key to understanding Sufism is based on “relationship with God.” Most scholars and Sufis rely on the premise that the foundation of Sufism is captured in the term *ihsan* (“perfection,” spiritual beauty), which appears in the well-known hadith in which Gabriel asks the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), “What is *ihsan*?” Muhammad answered, “To worship God as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you.”<sup>5</sup> But how do you worship God as if you see Him? This is where the path of Sufism begins, by working on “reform of the heart.” The heart is the vessel of faith and knowledge of God, and the purer it is, the further from material things, the more it aspires to reach the divine light, the further one will be able to travel along the path of Sufism, ascending toward God.<sup>6</sup>

Sufis’ principal and original concern, then, is for the human heart. The hadith states: “Verily, in the body is a piece of flesh which, if sound, the whole body is sound; and if corrupted the whole body is corrupted. It is the heart.”<sup>7</sup> So, how can the heart be reformed? The answer is through “spiritual struggle,” by curtailing the human heart’s concern with this world, and by thinking about and meditating on God through worship, behaviors, and actions that bring one closer to God. This includes “remembrance of God” (*dhikr*), a spiritual exercise of the heart that occupies significant space on the Sufi path. The more the heart is cleansed and purified of worldly ties, the high-

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<sup>5</sup> Reported by Imam Muslim in *Sahih Muslim*.

<sup>6</sup> Abu Nasr Abdullah ibn Ali Al-Tusi, *Kitab Al-Luma’* (Light Flashes), checked and corrected by Kamel Mustafa Al-Handawi; Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; Second Edition, 2007, pp. 13-15. See also Youssef Ziedan, *Al-Tasawwuf* (Sufism); Nahdet Misr Publishing, Cairo; pp. 11-19.

<sup>7</sup> From hadith: “That which is halal is clear, and that which is haram is clear, and between the two are doubtful matters about which many people do not know. Thus, the one who is wary of doubtful matters is absolved with regard to his religion and his honor, and the one who falls into doubtful matters falls into haram, like a shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary and all but pastures within it. Verily, every king has a sanctuary, and God’s sanctuary is His prohibitions. Verily, in the body is a piece of flesh which, if sound, the whole body is sound; and if corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. It is the heart.” As told by Bukhari and Muslim.

er it ascends, granted understanding and subjective knowledge of God.<sup>8</sup>

We see that Abu Al-Qasim Al-Junayd (or, as Sufis call him, the “imam of the sect,” i.e. Sufism) says: “The one who is with God is without relationships” or “The one who sits with God is without concerns,” and Sufism is “the surrender of the self to God Most High to do as He wants” and is also “that the Truth (God) causes you to die from your self and revives you in It,” and so on.<sup>9</sup>

On the whole, Sufi scholars are unanimous in considering it a “path” along which travelers advance until they reach their destination and their aim, which is God.<sup>10</sup> A “great war” erupts on the path to God for every human being. It is not a war of arms or materiel but of *jihad Al-nafs*, the struggle against the self or lower soul (*nafs*). This fight goes longer than a round or two, and it has no set duration, no beginning or end. This war lives with humanity, and indeed within every Muslim human being who fights and struggles to be on the “path of truth” and not the path of Satan. The Muslim’s heart lives by drawing toward purity, love of God, faith, and conviction, which helps him to correct behaviors and outward actions through inner righteousness.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> One of the luminaries of Sufism depicts for us an aspect of the internal battle between human beings, *nafs*, and Satan through long “internal struggle”—see Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ali Al-Tirmidhi, *Khatm Al-Awliya’* (Seal of the Saints), edited by Othman Ismail Yahia; Institut de Lettres Orientales, Beirut; ebook, pp. 117-130.

<sup>9</sup> See Shihab Al-Din Al-Suhrawardi, *‘Awarif Al-Ma’arif* (The Gifts of Gnosis), checked and corrected by Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Khaldi, Dar Al Kotob Al Il-miyah, Beirut; Third Edition, 2016, pp. 37-40.

<sup>10</sup> The German researcher Annemarie Schimmel says, “The Sufi path is narrow and difficult to pass along, and the traveler will move through various stations until, after a long time, he reaches his goal, which is complete *tawhid*, meaning true knowledge of the oneness of God.” See Annemarie Schimmel, *Al-Ab’ad Al-Sufiyya fiAl-Islam wa-Tarikh Al-Tasawwuf* (The Mystical Dimensions of Islam and the History of Sufism), translated by Mohammed Ismail Al-Sayyid and Rida Hamed Qutub; Manshourat Al-Jamal, Germany; 2006, p. 113.

<sup>11</sup> Harith Al-Muhasibi dedicates his book *Adab Al-Nufus* (Good Conduct of the Self) to detailing the policies of the heart, the self, and the relationship with God, and how the human person walks along the path of faith. See Harith Al-Muhasibi, =

Along with many scholars, Sufis divide the *nafs* into five stages according to its development in the “internal war.” The first is the inciting *nafs*, which instigates disobedience and sin and leads a person onto a path other than God’s path. The second is the reproaching *nafs*, which rages with conflicts between the human propensity toward God and obedience and the propensity toward appetites and Satan’s temptations; the human being is in a state of fight-or-flight and is victorious over the self at times and defeated by it at others. Then comes the third stage, in which the individual achieves a type of victory over the self. That is the tranquil *nafs*, where the matters of the heart take precedence over the self, and the thoughts and spiritual states of the self change. The self then begins to fade, and the predominance of love of this world and the appetites within the self melts away. The human being subsequently starts to ascend toward the pleased *nafs* (meaning that it is pleased and reassured by God, and it cuts off points of entry for the appetites), then the pleasing *nafs* (that which is pleasing to God).<sup>12</sup>

The fruits of the “battle of the self” are harvested in the heart, which is the seat of love of God (*mahabba*). In his book *Maqamat Al-Qulub* (Stations of the Heart), Abu Al-Hussain Al-Nuri describes the heart as a garden; Abu Talib Al-Makki, one of the most important Sufi scholars, wrote a book titled *Qut Al-Qulub* (The Sustenance of Hearts). We find that many books and writings adopt the imagery of the path, stairs, and ladders, all of which point to the essence of Sufism, namely humanity’s spiritual ascent toward God.<sup>13</sup>

If the spiritual ascent to God (*m’iraj*) occurs through reform of the inward self and the heart, it is a path that connects the heart to

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= *Adab Al-Nufus*, followed by *Kitab Al-Tawahhum* (The Book of Delusion), reviewed and edited by Abdul Qadir Atta; Cultural Books Foundation, Beirut; Second Edition, 1991, pp. 31-44.

<sup>12</sup> Some Sufis divide the self into seven levels: inciting, reproaching, inspired, tranquil, pleased, pleasing, and perfect. Meanwhile, other scholars have just three: inciting, blaming, and tranquil. See “The Seven Anfus” on the Aliyya-Qadiriyya Order website: <https://tinyurl.com/ydgrra9q>

<sup>13</sup> See Annemarie Schimmel, *Al-Ab’ad Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Islam wa-Tarikh Al-Tasawwuf*, op. cit., pp. 39, 72.

God. Knowledge of God arises from a person's knowledge of self, hence the Sufi proverb that the one who knows himself knows his Lord. As a person works on the inward self and reform of that self, he ascends from one station to another, so that if he purifies his heart, and his self is cleansed and purified, and he comes to love God, then he advances to further stages and new sections on the path, or what Sufis call "stations of the heart." According to most Sufis, these stations begin with repentance (*tawba*) or penitence (*'inaba*), the return to God, and remorse for disobedience, then move to new levels and fresh, sequential stations, which vary among Sufis. There are those who see it as four or seven stations, while others divide it into dozens or even hundreds. But they are all united by core concepts: repentance, asceticism (*zuhd*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), knowledge of God (*ma'rifa* or gnosis), love of God (*mahabba*), etc.<sup>14</sup>

Sufis agree that, as their imams say, traveling the path requires four main things that help the traveler move forward: hunger, seclusion, silence, and wakefulness. The first stone in the foundation is hunger because it helps the spirit ascend and improve. They deem that the best way to elevate the heart is by the absence of food in a Sufi's stomach.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. The science of Sufism: Problems of law and jurisdiction

That is the essence of Sufism, and the major Sufi scholars defend the legitimacy of the "science of Sufism" on that basis, while schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and thought continue to cast doubt on this science and its credibility. We find that Proof of Islam, Imam Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali, says:

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<sup>14</sup> On the concept of stations and their levels and definitions, see Al-Suhrawardi, *Awarif Al-Ma'arif* (The Gifts of Gnosis), op. cit., pp. 273-283.

<sup>15</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Al-Ab'ad Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Islam wa-Tarikh Al-Tasawwuf*, op. cit., p. 133. And compare: Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Sharani, *Al-Anwar Al-Qudsiyya fi Ma'rifat Qawa'id Al-Sufiyya* (Sacred Illuminations in Knowledge of the Rules of Sufism), presented by and care of Dr. Asim Ibrahim Al-Kilani; Dar Al Kotob al Il-miyah, Beirut; Second Edition, 2018, pp. 37-38.

*The guides on the path are scholars who are the heirs of the prophets, and none exist in these times. There exist only imitators, a majority of whom have been overcome by Satan and ensnared by tyrants. Every one of them has become wrapped up in his own plan and has come to see right as wrong and wrong as right, so that the science of religion is forgotten and the guiding beacon in the countries of the earth is extinguished. They have duped the world into believing that there is no knowledge except the rulings of government, which magistrates use to settle disputes when the populace becomes agitated; or a controversy with which glory-seekers shield themselves in order to confuse and thus triumph; or overwrought language that preachers employ to charm the masses ... On the other hand, the science of the path of the hereafter as traveled by our righteous forebears, which includes what God Almighty named fiqh, wisdom, knowledge, enlightenment, light, guidance, and reason, has been twisted and forgotten among the people. As this is a calamity in religion and a problem that casts a shadow over it, I decided to write this book in order to revive the science of religion..."<sup>16</sup>*

In the context of his defense of the science of Sufism, which is the science of "purifying the self and reforming the heart," Al-Ghazali explains that the sciences of jurisprudence and theology (*kalam*) stray from the purposes of Islam and Muhammad's message. There came to be demand for a formalized justice system, and dissension arose over jurists' disagreements and theological controversies, which prompted him to write *Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) to set forth the religion's principles according to a methodology different from those that prevailed among scholars (*ulama'*) and jurists at the time.

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<sup>16</sup> Muhammad ibn Muhammad Al-Husayni Al-Zabidi, renowned as Murtada, *Ittihaf Al-Sada Al-Mutaqin fi Sharh Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din* (Presentation of the Pious in Commentary on Revival of the Religious Sciences); Dar Al Kotob al Ilmiyah, Beirut; First Edition, pp. 81-82. English translation from Abu Hamed Al-Ghazali and Nabih Amin Faris, *The Book of Knowledge: Book 1 of The Revival of the Religious Sciences*; Islamic Book Service, New Delhi; 1962, pp. x-xi]

We also find that many major Sufi scholars devote long chapters and articles to illustrating the legitimacy of “the science of Sufism” and explaining its position among other schools and trends. In his book *Kitab Al-Luma’* (Lights), Abu Nasr Abdullah ibn Ali Al-Sarraj Al-Tusi, one of the main authorities on the science of Sufism, speaks about three categories of scientists and sciences: traditionists (*ashab Al-hadith*), who are engaged in the study of the hadith in terms of the authenticity, weakness, chains of narrators (*isnad*), etc.; the jurists, who are engaged in deriving rulings on Islamic law; and the Sufis.

After Al-Tusi delineates the scope of each of these sciences, he states a number of things that are within the scope of Sufis, who are concerned with “noble states and lofty stations among the types of worship, and the realities of pious deeds and fine morals.” What characterizes the science of Sufism, then, is that it does not separate the doctrinal Al-gnostic from the practice Al-behavioral. One cannot reach an understanding of Sufi sciences or reach desired destinations except by walking the path, which requires reform of the heart, removal of the obstacles between the heart and God, taming the self, and elevating one’s behavior through moral character, asceticism, and obedience, and through this spiritual behavior, one then receives “mystical knowledge.” Thus, unlike other Islamic doctrines, Sufism is a twofold path combining knowledge and behavior.

According to Al-Tusi, Sufi science is distinguished by asceticism, worship, the heart’s commitment to be close to God, knowledge of the self (*nafs*) and its nature and secrets, and overcoming the self. Sufism is also distinguished by the way Sufis deal with problems that befall jurists and other scholars who are unable to solve them, because those complications and problems are encountered only in the study of exoteric religious law, when what they really require is the more penetrating study that comes from the science of Sufism, i.e. the science of the esoteric.

Al-Tusi subsequently arrives at an illustration of the legality and legitimacy of the science of Sufism, as the science of shari’a is divided into outward actions and inward actions. The former are bodily actions such as religious observances and other rulings of the shari’a,

and the latter are inward actions such the states and stations of the heart, including belief, faith, conviction, sincerity, morals, trust in God, love of God, and so on. He then declares that the inward is indispensable to the outward, and vice versa, because the exterior is a reflection of the interior, and so he redefines the science of Sufism as the science of that which is interior.<sup>17</sup>

So, the essence of the science of Sufism is purification (*tazkiya*) or something like what we call knowledge of the self, which examines inward actions, the heart, and how to elevate and purify the human self and reach the highest levels of knowledge of God, love of God, and obedience to God.

If we return to Sufi heritage, we find that most of the well-known, authoritative books and references address the science of Sufism from numerous overlapping angles – purification of the self, actions of the heart, and the stations and states of a person's inward self; Sufi beliefs about God; and Sufi spiritual exercises and related concepts such as unveiling (*kashf*), states and stations, *dhikr*, travelers' spiritual states, and the nature of the Sufi path. There are chapters and books devoted to talking about Sufis and their conduct, such as the relationship between shaykh and *murid*, the correct conduct for a *murid* and what is required of a shaykh, the pledge of initiation and allegiance (*bay'a*) and spiritual retreat (*khalwa*), and the etiquette of companionship (*suhba*) among the members of the community.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, Sufis have a special interest in poetry, the best vehicle for communicating Sufi knowledge via language, as we will see later. Because such poems are prevalent among many Sufi orders during *dhikr* circles and spiritual gatherings, we find that what scholars of Sufism call the *sama'* or "listening" ceremony, the most important component of which is the *nashid* (a Sufi chant), is a signpost on

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<sup>17</sup> Abu Nasrallah ibn Ali Al-Sarraj Al-Tusi, *Kitab Al-Luma'*, op. cit., pp. 11-18.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Abu Al-Qasim Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala Al-Qushayriyya* (Al-Qushayri's Epistle), footnoted by Khalil Al-Mansur; Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; First Edition, 1998. These topics can be seen in the index, pp. 437-440.

the path and a cornerstone of Sufi heritage, extending today to most *hadragatherings* and *dhikr* sessions.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. The language of Sufism: A special dictionary

Sufism is unique, then, in its connection to a science unlike others, namely the science of the heart, or the soul, which means it is also strongly linked to *'alam Al-ghayb*, the world of the imperceptible, the unintelligible, the unseen. This has given rise to the birth and growth of a language particular to Sufism and unlike the language generally familiar in other Islamic literature. Some researchers call it the "language of experience,"<sup>20</sup>i.e. the language of a reality linked to the experiences of Sufis themselves. The language renews and evolves, which in turn has led to an encyclopedia of terminology specific to Sufism and its orders, conduct, sciences, and concepts. It is not easy for any human being to pick up, say, a book by the great shaykh Ibn 'Arabi and understand its contents, even via one of his foremost commentators, 'Abd Al-Ghani Al-Nabulsi. Moreover, gaining an understanding and knowledge of Sufism is not easy for those who have not "tasted" Sufi spiritual states nor traveled the path because, as we have mentioned, Sufism is a practical school difficult to understand by means of pure reason linked to the traditional sources of knowledge, namely the mind and the senses, or even by adhering to the outward meaning of religious texts the way most other schools of Islam do.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the scholars best able to present, convey, and explain Sufism are those who live the Sufi experience. Perhaps the most significant figures here are those who came into Islam through Sufism, or

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<sup>19</sup> On the language of Sufism, see Adonis, *Al-Sufiyya wa-l-Suriyaliyya* (Sufism and Surrealism); Dar Al Saqi, Beirut; Third Edition, 2006, pp. 22-24.

<sup>20</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Al-Ab'ad Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Islam wa Tarikh Al-Tasawwuf*, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> On the unique character of Sufism, its terminology, and its connection to subjective spiritual experience, see Dr. Suad Al-Hakim, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Sufi: Al-Hikma fi Hudud Al-Kalima* (The Sufi Dictionary: The Wisdom Within the Word); Dendera Printing and Publishing, Beirut; First Edition, 1981, pp. 14-16.51

became Sufi out of an intellectual attraction to Sufism, as in the case of well-known orientalists who have written in the field, like Massignon, René Guénon (Abd Al-Wahid Yahya), Éric (Younous) Geoffroy, Annemarie Schimmel, and many others.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the person most qualified to tell us – in his own way – about the difficulty of understanding Sufism for those who have not tasted and lived it (Sufis have a famous saying: “The one who tastes, knows”) is the great shaykh Ibn ‘Arabi, who says:

*The sciences of the folk [i.e. Sufis] are beyond the grasp of those who have not experienced passion and confusion  
And breathed of that which drives mad while groans, love and tears increase without end  
And abased himself and gone mad in a concealment and taken delight in scenes that are not visible*

To Sufis, gnosis resides in the spiritual heart (*qalb*) and mystical knowledge. Even though Sufi imams adhere to the exoteric meaning of the Qur’an by means of interpretation (*tafsir*) via language and tradition, there is a symbolictafsir of what are called “allusions” in the Qur’an, i.e. derivation of additional meanings for Qur’anic verses, or what some call spiritual interpretation of the Qur’an, such as the Tafsir of Ibn ‘Ajiba, one of the most prominent Sufi shaykhs. We also find here that the Sufis have a special interest in the opening letters of

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<sup>22</sup> Annemarie Schimmel recognizes the difficulty of writing about Sufism and the inadequacy of language to explain and digest the spiritual experience and present it in words. She cites the Sufi saying: “Words remain on the shore.” See Annemarie Schimmel, *Al-Ab‘ad Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Islam wa-Tarikh Al-Tasawwuf*, op. cit., p. 11. Or, as Al-Niffari also says, “The wider the vision, the narrower the statement.” Or, as Ibn ‘Ajiba says, “The knowledge of tastes is not gained from paper,” and then, “Beware if you ask for a guide from outside, for you will lose the way. Seek the Truth from yourself for yourself, and you will find that the Truth is closer to you than yourself.” See Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ajiba, *Al-Futuhāt Al-Ilāhiyya fi Sharh Al-Mabāhith Al-Asliyya* (The Divine Conquests in Commentary on the Basic Research), a book on Sufism that explains the proper conduct of the way and the secrets of truth, edited by Asim Al-Kilani; Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; 2010, p. 13.

surahs (*fawatih*), such as those of Surah Al-Baqarah (*alif-lam-mim*), Surah Maryam (*kaf-ha'-ya'-sad*), Surah Al-Qalam (*nun*, and by the pen and what they inscribe), and other surahs. Sufi allegorical tafsir attributes significance to the letters in line with the Sufi spiritual understanding of Islam.<sup>23</sup>

The language of Sufism is not limited to certain terminology that we will presently mention, nor to the allegorical interpretation of the Qur'an. It goes further than that, especially in poems, which tend toward symbolism and use descriptions, symbols, and expressions that are shocking at first for those unfamiliar Sufi poetry, such as extolling the night or the drinking of wine. That is because of Sufi poetry's connection to the love of God and to the states that Sufis undergo during *dhikr*, when they feel as if they are in a world other than the visible world, and they see images and experience spiritual illumination. The non-traditional descriptions Sufis give for their experiences are difficult to comprehend for those who have not reached those spiritual stages. This has led many scholars and researchers of Sufism, and especially of Sufi poetry, to write commentaries and dictionaries to explain and interpret the expressions and terminology involved.

Here, in particular, there is a special relationship and a strong link between Sufism and poetry, in the view of the notable critic and poet Adonis, because Sufism is based on inspired and intuitive knowledge and on divine love, and these states and conditions are difficult to express in dry, prosaic language, like that in this book. Rather, the closest approximation is expressed through poetry, with its symbolism, metaphor, imagery, and analogies, like that of the most famous Sufi shaykhs and Sufis such as Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn Al-Farid, Jalal Al-Din Rumi, Farid Al-Din 'Attar, 'Abd Al-Ghani Al-Nabulsi, and others.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Éric Younous Geoffroy, *Al-Mustaqbil lil-Islam Al-Ruhani* (The Spiritual Future of Islam), translated by Hisham Saleh; National Center for Translation, Cairo; First Edition, 2016, pp. 142-163. See also Dr. Hassan Ahmed Zaki's presentation of Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Al-Mahdi 'Ibn Ajiba's book *Al-Bahr Al-Madid* (The Immense Ocean: A Quranic Commentary), edited by Ahmed Abdullah Qureshi Ruslan; Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; Vol. 1, pp. 6-14.

<sup>24</sup> Adonis, *Al-Sufiyya wa-l-Suriyaliyya*, op. cit., pp. 22-25.

#### 4. Sufi terminology and concepts

If Sufism is the pursuit of love of God and God's satisfaction, and an ascent toward God through reform of the heart and of both the inner and outer selves, then this comes through *dhikr*, worship, and obedience, and ultimately purification of the self and the adoption of a pattern of behavior including hunger, solitude, silence, and wakefulness to help the traveler (*salik*) on the path reach the destination.

This overview definition of Sufism, and these spiritual exercises and behaviors, give rise to a new world for the person to inhabit. The achievement of "mystical knowledge" or a higher mystical station on the path unfolds in stages, steps, routes, and states through which the person passes. This has generated important terminology, concepts, and ideas that we need to summarize here as a point of entry to this book. You will find that most books on Sufism, especially those by Sufi imams, explain and illustrate these terms.

##### ***a. Unveiling, divine self-manifestation, and witnessing***

As a person engages in *dhikr* or remembrance of God, along with other actions of the heart and the soul by which he seeks to approach God, he passes through stages starting with unveiling (*kashf*), the removal of the veil that separates the human heart from divine manifestations. This veil consists of worldly matters and ties, and a human being cannot reach the divine light except by purifying and cleansing the heart. When that takes place, the veil disappears and the traveler penetrates the divine light. This is called *mukashafa* (lifting the veil and exposing the heart to spiritual illumination) or *kashf*, and the traveler sees things that cannot be seen by the eye or in ordinary reality.

There are several types and degrees of unveiling that are a subject of debate even in Sufi circles. There are those who say that unveiling means removal of the veil between man and God, others who believe that unveiling allows a human being to access some of 'alam-*Al-ghayb* (the world of the unseen and imperceptible), and still others

who confine unveiling to the concept of intuition (*firasa*) whereby a person's attainment of esoteric knowledge enables him to judge events and developments correctly (according to the famous hadith, "Beware the intuition of the believer. Verily, he sees with the light of God"). *Mukashafa*, then, is the first stage at the beginning of the vanishing of the veil separating humanity from the other world, and it is a continuous process. Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilanisays:

*I pierced all the veils of love in ascent, and I still lift up my love in my course*<sup>25</sup>

Then begins divine self-manifestation (*tajalli*), a stage in which the veil is now gone. Divine lights shine on the person's heart, and the heart is bathed in these luminous rays. The person advances to a new stage of knowledge, love, and connection to God, and ultimately to witnessing (*mushahada*), a still-higher stage in which the person leaves behind the physical senses and material existence and becomes subsumed in God once the veil is fully lifted. This culminates in what some Sufis call *wahdat Al-wujud* (oneness of Being) or *wahdat Al-shuhud* (oneness of witness), as we will explain later. From another perspective, it means annihilation (*fana'*) of the self and sensory existence and subsistence (*baqa'*) in God, access to the divine secrets of mystical knowledge, and lights that appear on the "surface of the heart." At this stage, some may reach a point of spiritual transport or divine attraction (*jadhb*), where the person leaves the self behind entirely and subsists with God. This happens not gradually (as if drawn toward God) but suddenly and unexpectedly.<sup>26</sup>

Imam Al-Qushayri, for his part, distinguishes among three terms: presence (*muhadara*), unveiling (*mukashafa*), and witnessing (*mushahada*). The first is "the presence of the heart [with God], meaning that remembrance takes power over it." He describes unveiling as: "the presence of the heart through testimony. In this state,

<sup>25</sup> See Youssef Ziedan, *Al-Tariq Al-Sufi wa Furu' Al-Qadiriyya fi Misr* (Sufi Orders and Al-Qadiriyya in Egypt); Dar Al-Jeel, Beirut; First Edition, 1991, p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> See Adonis, *Al-Sufiya Al-Suriyaliyya*; op. cit., pp. 41-43.

one needs not contemplate evidence or seek an avenue. One does not seek aid against causes for doubt, and is not veiled from the Unseen.” Thus, *kashf* is similar to *tajalli*, as we discussed earlier. The final state, witnessing, is the presence of the Truth, where no doubt remains. Al-Qushayri adds, “When the sky of the innermost heart clears of the clouds that veil it, the sun of witnessing shines from the astrological sign of exaltation.”

*My night is lit by your face, and its darkness encompasses other people*

*Therefore the people wander in darkness, while we are in the light of day*<sup>27</sup>

### ***b. Annihilation and subsistence***

The concepts of unveiling, witnessing, and manifestation are associated with the concepts of annihilation (*fanaʿ*) and subsistence (*baqaʿ*). Annihilation in God, which is achieved through spiritual exercises, especially *dhikr*, is when a human being’s material and worldly ties begin to dissolve. He purges them from his heart and enters into the world of the unseen, where his heart is tied to God, and he eventually reaches a stage in which he completely exits the world of the seen and is absorbed into the other world, linked to God through his heart, feelings, and entire being. A person who exits that material world (which is achieved with the Shahada) sees nothing apart from God, and according to some Sufi orders this is “the lover’s absence from the Beloved, so that the lights of nearness do not touch the darkness of the cosmos.” When a person leaves behind existence entirely to join with God, and undergoes annihilation in God, next comes subsistence. The two stages are not necessarily inherently linked, as one can reach annihilation without subsistence, the latter of which means that a person comes to see God in everything.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala Al-Qushayriyya*; op. cit., pp. 111-112. (Trans. Alexander D. Knysh; Garnet Publishing Limited, Reading, U.K.; 2007, p. 98)

<sup>28</sup> See Éric Geoffroy, *Le soufisme, voie intérieure de l’islam*; op. cit., pp. 28-29.

Imam Abu Al-Qasim Al-Qushayri explains that annihilation means that the traveler is annihilated from his self and his qualities, and he subsists in the qualities of the Truth.<sup>29</sup> From there, as Al-Qushayri says, are derived the terms absence and presence. Absence is “when the heart is absent from knowing the circumstances of creatures due to the complete absorption of the senses by what has appeared to it [from God]. One may also become absent from oneself and others through remembering [God’s] promise of reward and thinking of [God’s] punishment.”<sup>30</sup> As for presence, one may be present in the Truth, i.e. in thinking about God, because remembrance of God takes power over the human heart. Presence with the Truth (i.e. God) corresponds to whether one’s absence from creatures is partial or complete.<sup>31</sup>

On the meaning of annihilation and subsistence, Shaykh’ Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani states:<sup>32</sup>

The *fa’* in *faqir* stands for his annihilation in God’s Essence and ridding himself of his own attributes and qualities

The *qaf* stands for the strength of his heart in his Beloved and his standing up for God for the sake of God’s pleasure

The *ya’* stands for his hope in his Lord, his awe of Him, and his pious mindfulness of Him

The *ra’* stands for the softness and purity of his heart and as it returns from its appetites to God

### ***c. States and stations:***

These are core concepts in Sufism. States (*ahwal*) are incidental spiritual conditions that come over a human being. Al-Tusi says that such a state is something that descends upon the heart, or into

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<sup>29</sup> See Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala Al-Qushayriyya*; op. cit., pp. 102-104.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 104. (Trans. Alexander D. Knysh; Garnet Publishing Limited, Reading, U.K.; 2007, p. 91)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>32</sup> Youssef Ziedan, *Al-Tariq Al-Sufi wa Furu’ Al-Qadiriyya fi Misr*; op. cit., pp. 103-104.

which the heart passes, and it is not lasting – it is more of a “spiritual illumination.” This state occurs due to God, and it is a blessing or a gift like annihilation, subsistence, absence, sobriety, intimacy with God, longing for God, nearness to God, and so on. Stations (*maqamat*), meanwhile, are linked to the struggle against the self and advancement from one stage to another. Achieving a station is the result of a continuous, tireless struggle and work to move to a higher level. As such, Sufis say that states are given (i.e. a gift from God), while stations are earned. The majority opinion is that states are temporary, not fixed, and that stations are levels and stages.<sup>33</sup>

There is also a diversity of opinion on the number and order of stations, but Sufis agree that stations are attained as a result of internal struggle and tireless work. Imam ‘Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani, for example, counts seven stations: struggle (*mujahada* or *jihad*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), good morals (*husn Al-khalq*), gratitude (*shukr*), patience (*sabr*), satisfaction (*rida*), and truthfulness (*sidaq*). To others, the stations are as follows: repentance (*tawba*), renunciation (*zuhd*), satisfaction, fear (*khawf*), longing (*shawq*), divine love (*mahabba*), mystical knowledge (*ma’rifa*); or: belief (*iman*), fear, obedience (*ta’ah*), hope (*raja’*), divine love, pain (*alam*), trust in God, and the final stations – astonishment (*tahayyur*), then poverty (*iftiqar* or *faqr*), then union with God (*ittisal*), etc.<sup>34</sup>

#### **d. *Shari’a, tariqa, haqiqa***

Sufis distinguish among these three key terms. *Shari’a* consists of the provisions of Islamic law. It concerns the sciences of law (*shari’a*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The rules of *shari’a* are external; they govern society and everything outside an individual’s conscience and soul. *Haqiqa* (truth), on the other hand, is esoteric; its rulings concern the internal state of the human soul. These rules are directed at reform of the heart, as we have mentioned, with the objective of wor-

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Shihab Al-Din Al-Suhrawardi, ‘Awarif Al-Ma’arif; op. cit., pp. 274, 295-312.

<sup>34</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *Al-Ab’ad Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Islam wa-Tarikh Al-Tasawwuf*; op. cit., pp. 114-115.

shipping, loving, and knowing God. *Tariqa* (path) is the means of reaching *haqiqa*, and it comprises actions of the heart and the body.

In spite of making this distinction, Sufi scholars always assert that law and truth are not in contradiction and cannot conflict. By default, the exoteric and esoteric rules are consistent and complementary. Thus, many Sufi scholars reject what they consider to be departures by some Sufis, i.e. saying things that run counter to the outward meaning of Islamic law, or the claim by some Sufis that they have reached a stage where worship and obedience are no longer required of them or that they are beyond the stage of engaging in worship, and other such behavior that major Sufi scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Qushayri, and Al-Sha'rani consider to be an abuse of mysticism and Sufism. They have written many books and epistles to that end. Sufis generally maintain that reform of the heart is demonstrated by adherence to exoteric law and observance of the shari'a, not by deviation therefrom.<sup>35</sup>

## 5. Instantiations of Sufism across history: From tension to stability

The question of legitimacy is not limited to the science of Sufism and the doubts cast upon it by other schools of Islam; it also extends to a questioning of mysticism's origins and authenticity within Islamic civilization. There is considerable controversy over the origin of the designation "Sufi" and also an accusation that the origins, approaches, and beliefs of Sufi mysticism were derived from non-Islamic sources –taken from ancient Indian religions or Neoplatonism, or even Christian monasticism– and introduced via early Sufis such as Abu Yazid Al-Bistami, Dhul-Nun Al-Misri, and Al-Husayn ibn Mansour Al-Hallaj.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See, for example, *Al-Risala Al-Qushayriyya*; op. cit., pp. 118-119. And see the introduction to *Al-Risala Al-Qushayriyya* on criticism of the position of many followers of Sufi orders (pp. 8-9).

<sup>36</sup> For details, see Abu Alula Al-Afifi, *Al-Tasawwuf: Al-Thawra Al-Ruhiyya fi Al-Islam*; op. cit., pp. 56-77.

Resolving this debate and controversy is not the mission of this book; many works are available on the subject. The important thing is to realize that even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that Sufism has other sources outside Islamic law, it is now one of the largest schools of Islam and extends into most countries of the world. Indeed, Sufis conquered many countries in Asia and Africa. Sufism also has deep roots in Islam's primary and secondary sources, and numerous and various classes of great, well-known scholars throughout Islamic history have belonged to the Sufi school.

Most scholars of Sufism unanimously agree that Sufism's early beginnings unfolded through a collection of individuals known for their asceticism, devoutness, and remove from worldly ties. Their behavior was a reaction to the state of the Islamic polity at the time, with its scenes of decadence, the spread of civilizational pleasures and money, and the degradation of the spiritual tendencies initially at the core of Islam in the age of the Prophet and the Companions. The Islamic polity's trajectory and governance had begun to trend in divergent directions, and society witnessed a variety of material phenomena. Numerous and diverse sciences and cultures spread, and rulers, elites, and certain groups and segments of society demonstrated overriding interest in the temporal world. Such attitudes had been prevalent among jurists and judges since the time of the Prophet's Successors (*tabi 'un*) in the second century AH, during the Umayyad era, when a group of well-known ascetics emerged that included Al-Fudayl Ibn Iyad, Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Dawud Ta'i, Rabi'a Al-'Adawiyya, and Ibrahim ibn Adham.<sup>37</sup>

The term Sufi was not in use during that early period; researchers point to its first appearance at the end of the second century AH. *Tasawwuf*, or Sufism, became a known term later, and as its usage became defined, it transitioned from its individual form to a group designation. Sufism came to have its scholars, theorists, approaches, and schools, including the Baghdad, Basra, and Nishapur schools, and the Syrian and Egyptian schools. Specialized literature concerned with Sufism, defining it, and affirming its legitimacy began

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 82-83.

to spread. These schools then expanded, and Sufis proliferated, as did the places where they congregated: first in hospices, then in the lodges that were founded (known as *zawiya*, *khanqah*, or *takiyah* depending on location).

Later emerged the Sufi pioneers whose schools are widespread. Their presence in society took root in the third and fourth centuries AH, the “golden age” of Sufism, when major Sufis emerged and gained fame, for example Ma’ruf Al-Karkhi, Abu Sulayman Al-Darani, Dhul-Nun Al-Misri, Abu Al-Hussain Al-Nuri, Abu Al-Yazid Al-Bistami, Bishr Al-Hafi, Abu Al-Qasim Al-Junayd, Sari Al-Saqati, Sahl Al-Tustari, Al-Hallaj, Al-Shibli, and more.

Disputes and crises quickly arose between Sufism and other schools of Islam – theological (*kalam*) schools such as the Mu’tazilites and the Kharijites, and even with schools of jurisprudence, some of which disputed certain Sufi beliefs or ideas and sayings. Tensions rose in the third century AH, when several Sufis, such as Dhul-Nun Al-Misri and Abu Al-Hussain Al-Nuri, were led off to Baghdad and dozens of Sufis were arrested there on charges of heresy in the so-called Ghulam Al-Khalil *fitna* (civil conflict).<sup>38</sup>

But the height of the tragedy was the crucifixion, dismemberment, and burning of Al-Hallaj (309AH) for alleged heresy, apostasy, and magic. Al-Hallaj and his school and followers, who would suffer persecution after him, with some tortured and killed, represent a turning point in the history of Sufism. The conflict between Sufis and the jurists was at its peak, thus leading top Sufis, with Abu Al-Qasim Al-Junayd at the forefront – the “Leader of the Sect,” as he was later termed – disavowed Al-Hallaj and his theses.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See Ahmad Amin, *Zuhr Al-Islam* (The Noon of Islam), with commentary and editing by Mohammed Fathi Abu Bakr; Al Dar Al Masriah Al Lubnaniah, Cairo; pp. 140-143. See also Nile Green, *Al-Sufiyya: Nash’atuha waTarikhuha* (Sufism: A Global History), translated by Safiyya Mukhtar; Hindawi Foundation; 2017, pp.68-70.

<sup>39</sup> See Massignon and Mustafa ‘Abd Al-Raziq, *Al-Tasawwuf* (Sufism); Dar Al-Kitab Al-Lubnani, Beirut; First Edition, 1984, pp. 30-31. Compare to Éric Geoffroy, *Le soufisme, voie intérieure de l’islam*; op. cit., pp. 106-108. See also Hussam Al-Din Rami Naqshband’s study, *Al-Haqa’iq Al-Khafiyya fi Mihan Al-Sufiyya fi ‘Asr* =

The Sufi schools' relationship with various juristic and theological schools remained tense until Proof of Islam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (450-505AH or 1058-1111CE) decisively put an end to that tension when he was able to integrate and wed the Ash'ari creed with juristic and Sufi schools of thought in a single doctrinal, juristic, and cultural creed. In doing so, Al-Ghazali established the tenets for the general trend that predominated in Sunni circles over the following centuries<sup>40</sup> – Sufis generally were no longer under accusation and became part of an Ash'ari-*madhhab* (school of jurisprudence)-Sufi framework in Islamic life.<sup>41</sup>

Against this Ash'ari-*madhhab*-Sufi school there remained only one other strong current: the Salafist school, an extension of the traditionists (*ahl Al-hadith*) and the Hanbali school. Shaykh Al-Islam Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (661-728AH or 1263-1328CE) later worked on elaborating Salafism's overall principles and ideas and would become one of the most prominent figures and representatives of the Salafist school to date. In Sunni circles in the following centuries, rivalry and conflict waxed and waned between the two schools – Ash'ari (and Maturidi)-*madhhab*-Sufi on one hand and Salafi on the other. The disagreements and differences between them are rooted in matters of Islamic belief regarding God's essence and attributes, and numerous epistemic, intellectual, and juristic issues.<sup>42</sup>

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= *Al-Dawla Al-Abbasiyya* (Hidden Truths about Sufi Ordeals in the Abbasid Caliphate); Aslein online forum, 1-1-2017, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yb37tvmp>

<sup>40</sup> See Annemarie Schimmel, *Al-Ab'ad Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Islam wa-Tarikh Al-Tasawwuf*; op. cit., pp. 91-114.

<sup>41</sup> As part of his Ash'ari-*madhhab*-Sufi approach, Al-Ghazali translated the positions, views, and efforts of scholars who preceded him –scholars of Sufism, Ash'arism, and the Sunna alike– who sought to bridge the gap between Sufism and other schools. That approach was a culmination of the moderate Sufi current, never sought to depart from the jurists but rather to integrate with that school. Al-Ghazali's work was a fulfillment of the efforts of the Nizamiyyah schools in Nishapur and Baghdad.

<sup>42</sup> See Massignon and Mustafa 'Abd Al-Raziq, *Al-Tasawwuf*; op. cit., pp. 30-35. Compare to Éric Geoffroy, *Le soufisme, voie intérieure de l'islam*; op. cit., pp. 109-122.

## 6. Sufism's structure: Sufi orders

The Sufi orders started to emerge during the sixth and seventh centuries AH, as Sufism transitioned from a discipline of individuals or unorganized groups to an organized, institutional framework. Among the most prominent early Sufi orders were the Qadiri Order, traceable to 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani (470-561AH); the Rifa'i Order, traceable to Shaykh Ahmad Al-Rifa'i (512-578AH); and the Shadhili Order, traceable to Abul Hasan Al-Shadhili (571-656AH). Then came the Badawi, Desouki, and Naqshbandi orders, then the Khalwati and the Chisti. Thus, many orders began to emerge in both the east and west of the Islamic world. The emergence and spread of these Sufi orders coincided with a major incident that caused pain and suffering in Islamic communities, when the weakness of the Abbasid Caliphate led to the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 656 AH.

A Sufi order is a system of beliefs, forms of worship, behaviors, and spiritual exercises put in place by the order's shaykh; each order has its own system. A Sufi order is a method for spiritual and psychological purification, and a specific route that a person travels on his or her path to God.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the differences among the main Sufi orders, they share a set of tenets, such as regular spiritual exercise, covenants and pledges of initiation and allegiance, donning of the initiatory cloak called the *khirqā*, and a pattern of behavior governing the relationship between a shaykh and his *murids* and followers.

An order stems from the experience of the order's shaykh, who has reached an advanced stage in his own spiritual journey and has a particular approach based on that experience and the spiritual emanations (*fuyūd*) involved. The shaykh thus establishes a set of teachings and exercises to which the *murids* commit, and the order becomes distinct from others.

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<sup>43</sup> See Mohammed Abdul Qadir Nassar, *Ittihaf Al-Khala'iq fi Ta'addud Al-Masharib wa-l-Tara'iq* (Presentation of Beings in the Multiplicity of Schools and Paths); Dar El-Ehsan Publishing and Distribution, Egypt; Second Edition, 2016, pp. 16-19.

Each order has its own features and characteristics. Some focus more on the concept of divine love, others are distinctive for their perspective on behavioral purification, and still others take amplification of love for the Holy Prophet as a starting point. Spiritual exercises have a particular significance and group remembrance (*dhikr*) takes a particular form in each order. Sufis see no problem with the multiplicity of Sufi orders; their well-known dictate goes, “There are as many paths to God as there are souls on earth.” The rule is that while the orders vary in their methods, they agree with regard to basic principles and objectives. If the multiplicity of juristic doctrines is legitimate, that is all the more reason for there to be numerous and diverse Sufi orders or spiritual doctrines, given Sufism’s very link to personal, gnostic experiences.

With the orders, Sufism entered a new age; first, with regard to the transition from a discipline of individuals or unorganized groups to an institutional mode of shaykhs, *murids*, and followers; second, with regard to an order’s etiquette, shaykhs, basis, and chain of transmission; third, with regard to the leadership structure within an order and the prevailing system within *zawiyas*; and fourth, with regard to social, cultural, and political roles, as the shaykhs of these orders would become an object of respect, endearment, and appreciation for many rulers after having previously faced questioning and *takfir*, or even prosecutions and murder.

Sufism would spread among the people and later take root in the cultures of many Arab and Muslim societies. The Sufi orders diverged from one another and split into several other branches. Within a single order you may find dozens of affiliated orders, and new orders arose from the combination of others. We will review all of this in detail when discussing the Sufi landscape in Jordan.

The distribution of the orders varies among countries and societies. In the Levant and Iraq, for example, we find a remarkable distribution of the Shadhili, Rifa’i, Naqshbandi, and Qadiri orders, as is also the case in Central Asia and Europe. The Badawi and Desouki orders, meanwhile, are found in Egypt, and the Tijani in sub-Saharan Africa and Sudan.

Despite the differences and variations among the orders, some common denominators make up a universal general framework:

I. The shaykh of the order. Every order has a shaykh, the person who instituted its principles and rules, who is considered the order's primary authority. Then would come other shaykhs and renewers who brought new ideas to the order and took a branch of the order in that direction, such as the Shadhili-Darqawi Order, for example. Shaykh Al-Darqawi had a major impact at one stage of the Shadhili Order, and this Shadhili side stream gained followers. The same thing happened with the Shadhili-Yashruti line, and so on, and thus we find before us many shaykhs, orders, and chains of succession.

II. The society of the order. Every order has a particular model or form for the relationship between shaykhs and followers or *murids*. The shaykh has special spiritual and intellectual standing among the order's followers, and many view their sheik as a saint (*wali*, a "friend of God") or the chief saint of the age (*qutb*, lit. "axis"). Here you have some of the orders that focus on the spiritual link between shaykhs and *murids*, and on the relationship among members of the order, known as Sufi etiquette or *adab Al-suhba* ("proper manners of companionship").

III. Every order has its supplications (*dua*'), the specific exercises and daily assignments and remembrances that are observed in the daily life of its members. These are considered the "secrets" and "qualities" of the order, and such remembrances are a pillar of all the orders.

IV. Most of the orders hold group remembrance (*dhikr*) sessions, although these sessions differ in manner. Some are held sitting and some standing, some in loud voices and some in soft tones, some with the tambourine known as *daff* and some without. The verses chanted during *dhikr* circles also differ depending on the nature and approach of the order.

V. There are rituals and traditions for entering an order and for climbing through its ranks, and they vary by order (as we will show later), but the great majority agree on certain things, such as

the *murid* taking a pledge of initiation and allegiance (*bay'a*) to the shaykh. Some shaykhs set stricter conditions than others. The *murid* pledges to the shaykh to adhere to a series of actions in their heart and their behavior. This is usually followed by the shaykh instructing the *murid* in the *Ism Al-A'zam*, God's "greatest name." The definition of the *Ism Al-A'zam*, and the method for reciting it, are considered "secrets" of the order, and indoctrination in the *Ism Al-A'zam* is a matter of transmitting the secret to the *murid* in order to help the *murid* ascend on the path of the heart toward God. Every order has its own approach to this.

VI. After the shaykh's instruction of the *murid* in the *Ism Al-A'zam*, the latter enters spiritual retreat (*khalwa*), which can serve as a connecting link for the *murid* to move from one stage to another in the heart's ascent and elevation. The *murid* devotes himself or herself fully to *khalwa* through a specific method based on the shaykh's direction and guidance. The *murid* sits alone in seclusion – in some orders this used to last some 40 days, since reduced to just three days in many orders today – fully engaged in *dhikr*, subsisting on minimal food, refraining from speaking to others, and leaving only at prayer time.

VII. Some of the orders have adopted specific colors for themselves, used in their banners, clothing, or insignia at major events. For example, the Rifa'i color is black, the Qadiri color is green, and the Badawi color is red. The Burhani Order is distinguished not by one color like other orders but by three: white denoting Ibrahim Al-Desouki; yellow denoting Imam Abu Al-Hassan Al-Shadhili, which he gave to his nephew, Ibrahim Al-Desouki; and green, an allusion to the honored lineage of Banu Hashim.

VIII. Lineage of the order: Every order has its own lineage (*sanad*), a chain of individuals who were instructed the order by their shaykhs, stretching back to the Prophet (PBUH). After the Prophet, most of the orders begin with Ali ibn Abi Talib – except for the Naqhsbandi order, which begins with Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq. The lineage of the order's authority then proceeds in succession until reaching its own shaykh, such Al-Rifa'i, Al-Qadiri, Al-Shadhili, or Al-

Badawi, who received the Sufi *khirqā*; and then the shaykhs whom those shaykhs licensed to guide travelers on the path and receive *bayʿa*, as the shaykh of the order typically appoints the successor or successors who take up the order after him. Thus, each shaykh takes up an order as vested by and with the backing of the previous shaykh, on the basis of the previous shaykh's designation of him as his successor. There are multiple kinds of license (*ijāza*), as some shaykhs permit the *murid* to enter the order, some permit *murids* to establish *dhikr* circles and *zawiyas*, and some receive *bayʿa* from *murids* and guide them.

There are some shaykhs of Sufi orders who do not uphold *sanad*. They are called “Uwaisi” after one of the Successors, Uwais Al-Qarni, a Yemeni with an important position in Sufi literature. The Prophet mentioned him to His Companions and considered him among the righteous friends of God. He therefore stood in high regard among the Companions, because the Prophet had commended him despite never having met him.<sup>44</sup> For some Sufi shaykhs, this “Uwaisi Sufism” is a template for the possibility of reaching a high level of sainthood and wonders without a lineage from the known shaykh of an order.

## 7. Sainthood and wonders: The world's esoteric government

There is a special place in Sufi literature for saints or “friends of God” (*awliyaʿ*, singular *walī*), who have reached a high level of nearness to God because of their obedience, sincerity, and struggle through the states and stations of the heart and body. While scholars agree on this term, based on several verses and hadiths, the Sufi shaykhs have run with the term in explaining its meaning and implications. They divide the saints into grades, categories, and ranks, and they give each rank of saints a definition and role, along with functions associated with the preservation of the religion and its precepts across time and place.

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<sup>44</sup> On the figure of Uwais Al-Qarani and his life, see Islamstory.com at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8fccamh>

The French researcher Éric Geoffroy calls the saints the “world’s esoteric government”<sup>45</sup> because, according to the Sufi definition, they perform universal, regional, and local functions depending on their respective ranks.<sup>46</sup> The highest status for a saint is that of *qutb ghawth*, the Helper Axis, who exists in the form of one person per age. According to much of the Sufi literature, God reveals to this person the secrets of the world of the unseen (‘alam *Al-ghayb*) and grants him exceptional powers. The *qutb ghawth* has assistants in the form of the saints and the righteous. The author of the book *Jami’ Al-Usul fi Al-Awliya’* (Compendium of Origins of the Saints) asserts that the *qutb ghawth* is “the single, complete individual who is the focus of Almighty God’s supervision in each age, and God bestows on him attributes derived from the work of the angels or the angelic realm.”<sup>47</sup> Others define the *qutb ghawth* as one who has “perceived the Divine Essence and has knowledge of God’s attributes. His knowledge is unlimited, and he is the most perfect Muslim. There is no limit to his standing, and he can transport himself wherever he wishes. His functions include acting on and influencing the universe, and protecting the *murid*.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Éric Geoffroy, *Le soufisme, voie intérieure de l’islam*; op. cit., pp. 174-176.

<sup>46</sup> Shaykh Abd Al-Aziz Al-Dabbagh provides a vision of what he calls the “Court of the Righteous,” where the *qutb ghawth* gathers with the saints of the age. The Court assembles in the Cave of Hira outside Mecca, and prophets attend on Lailat Al-Qadr, and sometimes the Prophet Muhammad himself (PBUH) attends. See Ahmed ibn Al-Mubarak Al-Sijilmansi Al-Maliki, *Al-Ibriz Min Kalam Sayyidi ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz Al-Dabbagh* (Pure Gold from the Words of Sayyidi ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz Al-Dabbagh); Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiya, Beirut; Third Edition, 2002, pp. 278-300.

Thus, we find expansive and extensive discussion among some Sufis on the topic of *awliya’*, *awtad*, *abdal*, and *nujaba’*. Some ultimately set up a “Sufi kingdom” or an “internal government,” and others a “Court of the Righteous.” Still others restrict the concept to the narrowest possible scope and limit themselves to establishing the terminology. We will see echoes of this disagreement in the Jordanian Sufi scene.

<sup>47</sup> See Diya’Al-Din Ahmed bin Mustafa Al-Kameshkanwi Al-Naqshbandi Al-Mujaddidi Al-Khalidi, *Jami’Al-Usul fi Al-Awliya’* (Compendium of Origins of the Saints); Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiya, Beirut; Second Edition, 2-7, pp. 15-22.

<sup>48</sup> Sunni Ranks, op. cit., <https://tinyurl.com/y76xu7a4>

Shaykh Yusuf Al-Nabhani, meanwhile, defines the *qutb ghawth* as “among those who are close to God. He is the head of the community in his age. Some of them hold tangible power and the position of caliph, as well as the station of caliph for the esoteric world, like Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali, Hasan, Muawiya ibn Yazid, Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-Aziz, and Al-Mutawakkil. On the other hand, some of them are just the caliph for the esoteric world and not a ruler in a tangible sense, like Ahmed ibn Harun Al-Rashid Al-Sabti and Abu Yazid Al-Bistami. Most *qutbs* on Earth are not rulers in a tangible sense.”<sup>49</sup>

Many Sufi schools consider the pioneers of the famous Sufi orders the *qutbs* of their ages, such as Ahmed Al-Rifa’i, ‘Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani, Ahmad Al-Badawi, and Ibrahim Al-Desouki. Each age has one *qutb*.

Below the *qutb* are ranks of saints. The Sufi schools differ in their classification of saints – there are the *awtad* (pillars), *abdāl* (substitutes), *nujabā’* (nobles), *nuqabā’* (chiefs), and imams. There are four *awtad* in each place and age, and according to some Sufis seven *abdāl*, while others count 40 *abdāl* (based on certain contentious accounts of the Prophet). Just as there are disagreements about enumeration, definition, and classification, there is also a disagreement concerning the geography of the saints. Based on those accounts, some consider that the *abdāl* are in the Levant and other saints in Iraq, Egypt, and other countries.

Dawud ibn Mahmoud Al-Qaysari provided a cosmic visualization of the saints’ ranks and missions:

“They have ranks. The first is the rank of *qutb*, and there is only ever one *qutb*, one after the other. He is called *ghawth* because he is a helper to humanity in their various spiritual states. Next is the rank of the two imams, who are the sultan’s viziers. One is the sultan’s right hand, and he manages the affairs of the angelic realm and ‘*alam Al-ghayb*’ with the *qutb*’s authorization. The other is the sultan’s

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<sup>49</sup> Yusuf ibn Ismail Al-Nabhani, *Jami’ Karamat Al-Awliya’* (Compendium of Wonders of the Saints), edited and reviewed by Ibrahim Utwa Awad; Barakat Reza Sunni Center, India; no date, p. 69.

left hand, and he manages the affairs of the earthly world, the world of the seen (*'alam Al-shahada*). When the *qutb* departs for the hereafter, only the left hand may fill his place, being further along in the journey than the right hand, because he has not yet descended from the angelic realm to the earthly world whereas the left hand has done so and completed his tour of the journey and existence. Then is the rank of four, like the four Companions, may God be pleased with all of them! Then is the rank of the seven *abdal*, the custodians of the seven regions. Each of them is like a *qutb* of his own region. Then are the ranks of the 10 saints, like the Ten Promised Paradise. Then are the ranks of the Twelve, who are the rulers of the twelve astrological signs and the related and concomitant incidents in the cosmos. Then are the Twenty, the Forty, and the Ninety-Nine, the manifestations of the Beautiful Names of God, up to the Three Hundred Sixty.

“These exist in the world as substitutes in every age, and their number will not increase or decrease until the Day of Resurrection. Other saints increase and decrease in number depending on the appearance or disappearance of the Divine Manifestation. After them is the rank of the faithful ascetics, servants of God, and scholars, who are found in every age until the Day of Judgment. All of those mentioned are under the rule of the *qutb*.”<sup>50</sup>

The above text offers a model – which does not necessarily enjoy agreement among Sufis – for the status, functions, and powers of the saints. We will learn more about Jordanian Sufis’ vision for this concept in the pages of this book, but what can be said is that there is Sufi consensus on the importance and status of the saints, and on the terms *qutb*, *abdal*, *nujaba’*, and *nuqaba’*, despite differing definitions and conceptualizations.

Among the terms having particular importance in Sufi thought is *karama* (pl. *karamat*) a wonder or miracle, which at its simplest means a breach of natural law and the cosmic order of things at the

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<sup>50</sup> See Dawud ibn Mahmoud Al-Qaysari, *Rasa'il Al-Qaysari* (Al-Qaysari's Epistles), checked and corrected and commentary by Asim Al-Kiyali; Dar Al Kotob Al Il-miya, Beirut; 2015, pp. 52-54.

hands of a saint. As with the matter of saints, Sufis agree that *karamat* exist and are numerous and diverse, but they disagree on the limits, conditions, and evidence for these wonders. Yusuf Al-Nabhani's book enumerates some 25 *karamat* (citing Al-Subki, whom he also says counts more than 100 types of *karama*), such as reviving the dead, healing the sick, multiplying food, treating certain diseases, types of personal revelation, accessing some unseen matters, and peering into the hearts of some by using God-granted sight. It has been said to beware saints, as they are spies of the heart. *Karamat* include reverence, mystical knowledge, and light that God creates for saints, as well as the ability to see some events beyond the saint's geographic orbit (in that God helps the saint traverse the earth and so he sees things happening elsewhere), and so on.<sup>51</sup>

The figure of Al-Khidr, who is defined variously in Islamic tradition as a prophet, messenger, or saint, also has a clear presence in Sufism. He appears in the Qur'an alongside Moses in Surah Al-Kahf, and the Qur'an describes him as "a servant from among Our servants." Moses accompanies Al-Khidr to benefit from his knowledge, as he was versed in the unseen and God's divine rule, which Sufis call the "mystical science." This reveals why Al-Khidr is so important to Sufis, because his story is confirmation and proof of the mystical science that originates not in books or from sources of rational or sensory knowledge, but through a direct relationship with God. He is the source Al-Ghazali was speaking of when he described the "inner light" that guides a human being to the path of Truth, distinct from other sources of knowledge. This illuminating knowledge occupies significant space in Sufi thought. We find that it may arrive through inspiration or unveiling, or by encountering Al-Khidr and learning from him as Moses did. This happens on rare occasions with shaykhs who have attained great importance in Sufism, who say they met Al-Khidr and he draped them in the Sufi *khirqah* or granted them wisdom from the luminous body of knowledge.

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<sup>51</sup> Yusuf Al-Nabhani, *Jami' Karamat Al-Awliya'*; op. cit., pp. 48-60.

According to the majority of Sufi schools, Al-Khidr is still alive and roams the earth, and he has functions in *'alam Al-ghayb*. Several Sufis have met him, as we find in some Sufi traditions. Other Sufis, meanwhile, believe that Al-Khidr is alive in the spiritual, moral world, not the material one.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> On the topic of Al-Khidr in Sufism, see Mahmoud Hussain Al-Shaykh, "Who is Al-Khidr, and What is the Secret of His Immortality?," *Raseef*, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9nd9d7m>

See also Various Authors, *Lubs Al-Khirqa fi Al-Suluk Al-Sufi* (Wearing of the Khirqa in Sufi Behavior), copyedited and commentary by Asim Al-Kiyali; Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah; 2008, pp. 15-16. See also 'Abd Al-Wahhab ibn Ahmed Al-Sha'rani, *Al-Anwar Al-Qudsiya fi Ma'rifat Qawa'id Al-Sufiyya*; op. cit., pp. 30-31. For a Salafi opinion contrary to the Sufi position on the topic of Al-Khidr, see Abdur Rahman Abdul Khaliq, *Al-Fikr Al-Sufi fi Daw' Al-Kitab wa-l-Sunna* (Sufi Thought in Light of the Quran and the Sunna); Ibn Taymiyyah Library, Kuwait; Second Edition, 1984, pp. 125-140.



## Chapter One

# STATE AND SOCIETY : SUFISM VS. SALAFISM

*“Will He be pleased with you from among the best of His lineage – He who is Merciful to believers – that those who worship in heretical sects enjoy salary increases and promotions, while people of merit and distinction from among His children, such as Mr. Ahmed Al-Dabbagh, are barred from anything through which they may seek help in proselytizing for God? Meanwhile, you oversee all and you are able to spread virtue by strengthening people of virtue, and lifting their aspirations. For by God, O Abu Talal and kin: Your wisdom is known, and excellent qualities proceed and are dispensed from the Appointed One of the Prophet’s Family. People of science and religion, and the Family of God’s Messenger in this country, have only Generous God, and you, my master.”*

*Shaykh Abdullah Al-Azab,*

*27/9/1360AH - 18/9/1941CE*



Shaykh Ali Al-Halabi, one of Jordan's most prominent Salafi *da'wa* (proselytism) figures, published a book in 2009 titled *Mujmal Tarikh l-Da'wa Al-Salafiyya fi Al-Diyar Al-Urduniyya* (A Summarized History of the Salafi Dawa in Jordan), in which he discussed the history of Salafism in Jordanian society as a response to a newspaper article calling on readers to search out the Sufi roots of Jordan's cultural and societal heritage, Sufism being Jordan's authentic culture and Salafism an import. Al-Halabi responded in a book titled *Al-Da'wa Al-Salafiyyabayna Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyyawa-l-Da'awa Al-Suhufiyya* (The Salafi Dawa between Sufi Orders and Newspaper Claims) (2008) and then re-edited and re-titled the book A Summarized History of the Salafi Dawa in Jordan.<sup>53</sup>

Although not novel in the context of historical, modern, and contemporary Salafi-Sufi conflict, which has arrived on the Jordanian scene since the 1980s, the book delves into two other important matters. The first is the conflict between the two schools of thought (Sufism and Salafism) in directing the official religious policies of the Jordanian State, and the second is power within the socio-religious culture and whose sermons are published more widely.

When we talk about Sufism, we mean the system that integrates Ash'ari, *madhhab* (i.e. affiliation with one of the doctrines of Islamic jurisprudence, also called *fiqh*), and Sufi currents. Since early

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<sup>53</sup> See Ali Al-Halabi, *Al-Da'wa Al-Salafiyyabayna Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyyawa-l-Da'awa Al-Suhufiyya* (The Salafi Dawa between Sufi Orders and Newspaper Claims); First Edition, 2007, pp. 8-16; also Ali Al-Halabi, *Mujmal Tarikh Al-Da'wa Al-Salafiyya fi Al-Diyar Al-Urduniyya* (A Summarized History of the Salafi Dawa in Jordan); First Edition, 2009, pp. 8-15.

Islamic history, specifically the 6th century AH, this integrated system has become one of the most influential and powerful schools within Sunni Islamic religious circles, not only in the contemporary environment but also historically.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The differences between the two schools have both ideological and intellectual foundations, especially in the area of religious creed. They differ on key questions, including their attitudes toward interpretation of God's attributes. Ash'ari-Sufis affirm God's attributes but refrain from "corporealizing" them; when the Qur'an uses expressions like "hand," "hearing," "sight," and "the Most Merciful mounting the throne" they attribute meanings such as power, understanding, knowledge, etc. Salafis, on the other hand, argue for affirming God's attributes without allegory – for example, God's hand is not like our own hands, His eyes are not like our eyes, He establishes Himself on the throne in a manner befitting His majesty, and so on.

Ash'ari-Sufis also disagree with Salafis on the issue of "place." Does God exist in a particular place, or is He omnipresent? This dispute, which is fundamental in the field of divinity, seeps into the interpretation of many religious and legal texts, as well as the schools' position on how acts relate to faith. Thus, the Ash'ari view is that faith exists when the heart and the tongue affirm and declare it, while Salafis add a practical dimension to the meaning of faith, which has implications for the conditions that nullify a person's Islam and faith, as well as other matters.

These divisive issues may seem theoretical and conceptual in nature, and perhaps they are often philosophical and can be resolved amicably and calmly in academic halls and university corridors. But the patterns of recent and distant history continue to this day, and these disputes are foundational for these two doctrines, each one of which has extended into politics, society, culture, and religion. These disagreements have often become conflicts, although such conflicts are not an inevitability. There are models for cooperation and positive relations between them, and models for the opposite, but for the most part, there has been intense competition over defining which of the two schools is the legitimate representative of the Sunnis, their beliefs, and their ideas.

Although Sufism and Salafism are schools of belief, they also have different mindsets when it comes to jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Ash'arites (together with Maturidites) approach *fiqh* from the standpoint of Hanafi, Shafii, and Maliki teachings, while the Salafi mindset is closer to Hanbali teachings (although this is not an absolute rule) or they do not adhere to any particular *fiqh* doctrine at all.

See, for example, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Iqtisad fi Al-I'tiqad* (Moderation in Belief), edited by Insaf Ramadan; Dar Qutayba, Damascus; First Edition, 2003, pp. 31-117. Similarly, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Ash'ari, *Al-Ibana 'an Usul Al-Diyana* (Elucidation of the Principles of Religion), edited by Mohammad Hamid Mohammad; Al Maktab Al-Islami li-Ihya' Al-Turath; 1950, pp. 113-144. See also Safar ibn Abdul Rahman Al-Hawali, *Manhaj Al-Asha'ira fi Al-'Aqida* (The Ash'ari Approach to Belief); Dar Mnaber Alfekr; pp. 83-150.

Thus, in this chapter we will undertake a reading and analysis of the impact of official religious policies in putting a thumb on the scale for either trend (Salafism or Sufism) to prevail over the other, and therefore their effect on the shifts that have taken place in the socio-religious culture in the past century, i.e. since the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan.



## TOPIC 1

### OFFICIAL RELIGIOUS POLICIES

Since its founding, the Jordanian State has to date adopted no specific religious or sectarian creed in terms of religious policies; it is closer to the “conservative secular model.” Islam is recognized in the Constitution as an official religion of the State, and some Constitutional provisions balance religious considerations in personal matters of religion with freedom of expression. While the State has, as a matter of principle, avoided adopting the propositions of political Islam –such as the ideology of an Islamic state and the establishment of Islamic rule (as commonly defined by Islamist movements)– it shows great sensitivity concerning religious matters and emphasizes respect for people’s religious beliefs, feelings, and rituals, and it does not allow clashes in those areas.<sup>55</sup>

As a matter of principle, Jordan has no specific religious policy or clear, official position in favor of one doctrine over another or weaving an alliance with a particular religious or *fiqh* doctrine, as is the case in Iran (with its link to Twelver Shiism) or Saudi Arabia (where the State has historically been aligned with Salafi proselytism), nor is it hostile to political Islam, as was the case with the revolutionary regimes of the 1950s and 1960s.

#### 1. Religious neutrality and “floating” religious identity

If there is a tidy definition of Jordanian policy in the religious arena, it is “mediation and moderation” among various religious doctrines and trends, in particular Sufism and Salafism. Moreover, it is clear that religious neutrality has historically been a crucial political stance, meaning that there is no political involvement in the details of

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<sup>55</sup> See Mohammed Abu Rumman, *Al-Ilmaniyya Al-Muhafiza: Al-Namudhaj Al-Urduniya fi Idarat Al-'Alaqabayna Al-Din wa-l-Dawla* (Conservative Secularism: The Jordanian Approach to Managing the Relationship Between the State and Religion); Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Amman; June 2011, pp. 17-19.

religious and intellectual disagreements. The State has a predominantly civil (as opposed to religious) character, and there is a distinction between the spheres of religion and politics. At the same time, there is an emphasis on the political order's religious and historical legitimacy, whether through the royal family's Hashemite lineage or through the political legacy of the Great Arab Revolt, which was also founded on the religious and historical standing of the Hashemites.<sup>56</sup>

That is the crux of the religious equation in Jordan's official policies. This foundation is inseparable from another primary, important determinant, namely that a security-political focus takes precedence over various religious considerations in the State's attitude toward religious orientations or even political Islam and Islamist movements. We may find that a Salafi current enjoys the support of State institutions and that the same is true of Sufi *zawiyas* (lodges) and orders. We may find well-known Sufi and Salafi figures close to decision-making circles. A particular Islamic current may be seen as allied with the regime until the situation between them is upended for political reasons, as with the Muslim Brotherhood during the 1960s and 1970s, when the government found in them a suitable ally for confronting nationalist and left-wing opponents both domestically and abroad, before the relationship between the State and the Brotherhood flipped completely to one of dispute and conflict since the early 1990s.<sup>57</sup>

While State religious neutrality is the general rule, it does not preclude the existence of a particular "mindset" that dominates the State's religious discourse and policies in a given period. This mindset can be studied through different routes: first, via the orientations of official religious institutions, and second, via the State's religious discourse, as we will illustrate later.

Returning to the period just after the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921, we find in the setup of the regime's relationship with the society a clear and notable interest in religious legi-

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-25.

timacy and the State's identity. Emir Abdullah I himself was known to be religious and interested in establishing religious observances, yet simultaneously concerned with highlighting the civil character of the State. That interest, however, does not appear to have been an attempt to impose religion by force or make it compulsory, so much as to balance religious and civil considerations in State policy.

There is nothing to underscore or confirm that Emir Abdullah I took a specific position toward various religious schools, nor any clear, specific tendency to adopt the thinking of one of the early religious leaders handled fatwa, judicial, and *awqaf* (religious endowment) functions. Yet it can be argued that the political conflict between the Hashemites and the Saudis during that period, i.e. between World War I until the early 1930s, indicates that the Hashemite kings (Sharif Hussein Bin Ali and Emir, later King, Abdullah I) moved away from Wahhabi-Salafi doctrine. Wahhabis, in fact, viewed the Hashemites as being outside of Sunni Islam, and they employed belief as weapon against the Hashemites. It is well-known that the Wahhabi-Salafi raids reached Jordan in the mid-1930s, and there were clashes between the two sides.<sup>58</sup>

The same applies to the high-ranking religious figures at that time, especially those who were close to Emir Abdullah or occupied religious posts. If there is a particular incident that can be mentioned in this regard, it is the so-called 1934 Fitna (insurrection). Some pupils of the famous Syrian shaykh Ali Al-Dakar came to Jordan wanting

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<sup>58</sup> Dr. Saeed Foudeh, one of Jordan's foremost Ash'ari researchers, extracts passages from Emir Abdullah's memoirs showing that he was Ash'ari, at least on the level of personal belief. Dr. Saeed Foudeh, *Al-Asha'irawa-l-Marturidiyyawalta' Ba'd Al-Ma'lumat Al-Khasa 'anhum fi-l-Urdun* (Ash'arites, Maturidites, and Some Particulars About Them in Jordan); 2012 (I have a copy of the study obtained from the researcher himself). Dr. Noor Al-Din Al-Rafati, meanwhile, shed light on previous research in his lecture "Al-Asha'ira fi-l-Urdun" ("Ash'aris in Jordan") at the 10th Khawaisa Forum held by Al-Maarej Institute for Sharia Studies in 2019. Based on the practice of certain religious figures such as Jordanian Prime Minister Abd Allah ibn Abd Al-Rahman Siraj, Mohammed Al-Shanqiti, and Hamza Al-Arabi, he insists that the official identity of Jordan's official religious establishment is Ash'ari. See the lecture at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycy38ucu>

to spread the Tijani Order. Shaykh Mohammed Al-Khidr Al-Shanqiti, one of the foremost religious and political figures in Jordan, stood strongly against that order, which some of the “Syrians” in Jordan sided with. The dispute nearly came to a head before the Tijani Order members retreated and withdrew from the scene.<sup>59</sup>

Shaykh Ali Al-Halabi attempts to derive from this incident (which he took from the memoirs of Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Qattan, the supreme judge and *awqaf* minister who was once a pupil of Shaykh Al-Shanqiti) the conclusion that these religious figures were opposed to Sufism. It is a very arbitrary inference on Al-Halabi’s part, as Al-Qattan himself mentions that Shaykh Al-Shanqiti was “a major Sufi” and was severely at odds with the Wahhabis. Furthermore, Al-Qattan himself, while criticizing the excess and extremism of some Sufi orders, simultaneously spoke favorably of Sufism and its shaykhs and goals, and he commended Sufism’s role in Islam’s entry into sub-Saharan Africa. This was therefore a stance against “Sufi deviations” rather than Sufism per se.<sup>60</sup>

In general, during that period starting with the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan, official religious institutions steered clear of religious and doctrinal polarization, and they generally put aside such affiliations in their policies. It is nevertheless observable that the dominant culture among the official religious leadership (which held the position of mufti and supreme judge until the Awqaf Ministry was established) was affiliated with the Ash’ari-*madhhabi* school. The most prominent official religious figures at the time were Shaykh Mohammed Al-Khidr Al-Shanqiti, Mohammed Amin Al-Shanqiti, Hamza Al-Arabi, Ibrahim Al-Qattan, and Abd Allah Siraj (Jordan’s first turbaned prime minister, and the only one to date, who formed the 10th government in the Kingdom’s history, 1931-1933).

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<sup>59</sup> See Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Qattan, *Al-Mudhakarata-wa-l-Rahlat* (Memoirs and Journeys), edited by Salah Jerar, Kayed Hashim, and Reem Al-Qattan; Ministry of Culture Publications, Jordan; 2007, pp. 69-71.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 69-71, and also as defined by Shaykh Mohammed Al-Khidr Al-Shanqiti, pp. 121-129. Compare to Ali Al-Halabi, *Mujmal Tarikh Al-Da’wa Al-Salafiyya fi-l-Diyar Al-Urduniyya*; op. cit., pp. 17-21.

## 2. The Army *iftaa'* establishment

The Iftaa' Department was established within the Army in 1944, and Shaykh Abdullah Al-Azab was appointed as mufti of the Armed Forces, thus putting him in charge of the institution responsible for the issuance of fat was or opinions on points of Islamic law, an act called *iftaa'*. That was a turning point for the State's religious institutions as they have existed in the decades since, starting with the tenure of Al-Azab (a pupil of Shaykh Ahmed Al-Dabbagh) as the department's founding leader, and up through Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah, a well-known Jordanian religious figure with considerable influence both inside and outside the military. In the interim there would also be Dr. Ali Al-Faqir, from his work in military *iftaa'* to his time as a member of parliament and finally to serving as *awqaf* minister. The *iftaa'* school within the Army has safeguarded the legacy of Al-Qudah, who was Ash'ari by creed and one of those Sufis known as "above orders," i.e. not affiliated with any order in particular.<sup>61</sup>

The Armed Forces Iftaa' Department evolved to a remarkable extent and underwent a qualitative shift when Al-Qudah took charge of running it. Al-Qudah is considered one of Jordan's most important religious figures of the past decades, perhaps the most important one to serve in an official capacity. He began to have influence through the Army establishment in which he worked following his return from Syria in 1955, becoming mufti of the Army in 1972. The institution then underwent a major evolution in its structure and its role both within and outside the Armed Forces, and Al-Qudah's influence became even more apparent after that when he assumed the post of grand mufti of the Kingdom in 2007.<sup>62</sup>

From the Al-Azab era through Al-Qudah and then his successors, the clear character of the military *iftaa'* establishment was that

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<sup>61</sup> For a biography of Shaykh Abdullah Al-Azab, see the website of the Royal Hashemite Documentation Center at <https://tinyurl.com/y98nl3q6>. See also Noah Mustafa Al-Faqir, Shaykh Abdullah Al-Azab, *Al Ra'i*, 10/8/2017, accessible at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9qzvc3t>

<sup>62</sup> See ShehadaAl-Amri, Shaykh Dr. Noah Ali Salman Al-Qudah, *Al Ra'i*, 6/7/2017, accessible at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9qzvc3t>

its religious-doctrinal identity was Ash'ari, Shafi'i, and Sufi, and that identity played a big role in preaching and instruction within the Armed Forces, expanding to include all military units. The Prince Hassan Faculty of Islamic Sciences, which grants a diploma in Islamic shari'a, was established in this period. We then find that after the end of their service in Armed Forces, the leaders of this religious military department took up official religious posts, for example at the Iftaa' Department or the Supreme Judge Department.

Another influential figure in the *iftaa'* establishment was Dr. Ali Al-Faqir, who had a direct link and a strong relationship, both socially and within Sufism, with Al-Qudah, a friend of his from their time together in the Armed Forces Iftaa' Department. Al-Faqir was affiliated with the same school as Al-Qudah, i.e. the supra-order Ash'ari-*madhhabi*-Sufi school, but he was more aggressive and confrontational than Al-Qudah. Al-Faqir was a prominent preacher whose star rose in the late 1980s and early 1990s via his political sermons at Hamza ibn Abdul-Muttalib Mosque in the Marka district of northern Amman, near the Amman-Marka Air Force Base. He was known for clashing with the Wahhabi current. Once he finished his service with the Armed Forces, he stood for election to Parliament as an independent Islamist and easily carried the electoral district. He then became awqaf minister in 1989 and was known for his conservative religious program. Al-Faqir spoke frankly about his political positions, which distinguished him from Al-Qudah, who tended to be calm and diplomatic in his handling of public affairs.<sup>63</sup>

Despite their divergent approaches to politics, Al-Qudah and Al-Faqir constituted a trend that grew and evolved within the Iftaa' Department, which produced other figures closely aligned with this creedal-jurisprudential orientation, such as Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Showayyat, who was mufti of the Armed Forces from 1992 to 2004, and later a member of the Jordanian Senate; and Shaykh Dr. Abdul Karim Al-Khasawneh, who was a major general in the Armed Forces *iftaa'* establishment, then grand mufti of the Kingdom after Al-Qudah,

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<sup>63</sup> See Shaykh Dr. Ali Al-Faqir, Minister of Awqaf in Jordan, *OdabAl-Sham* website, 3/1/2019, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ya4mta6f>

then supreme judge, then grand mufti again.<sup>64</sup> We see many such individuals who moved from the military *iftaa'* establishment to take up important positions in official religious policy, all of whom belong to the very same school, the Ash'ari-Shafi'i-Sufi school.

Later on, two religious policy camps began to form in the corridors of the State. One camp, led by Prince Hassan bin Talal, was linked to the royal court and its religious orientations and message. The other camp's leadership came from the security world and was associated with managing official religious institutions and policies in service of local politics and security interests. We must divide the current discussion into subsections on each of these two camps that influenced religious policy.

### 3. Religious policies from a security perspective

The security camp's treatment of Islamic currents was based on prioritization of political and security considerations. Thus, the door was opened to Salafism's growth and ascension in the 1980s (after its shaykh, Muhammad Nasiruddin Al-Albani, settled in Jordan). The current established a presence in the mosques without any real hindrance, and in fact, Dr. Mohammad Ibrahim Abu Shaqra—formerly one of the most prominent Salafis in Jordan—became a religious adviser to then-Crown Prince Hassan bin Talal. The reason was that the conservative Salafi current clearly stated its opposition to political action and involvement in politics, preaching instead the necessity of engaging with Islamic legal science and *da'wa*, and it backed the State in countering other Islamic currents.<sup>65</sup>

Paradoxically, official policies themselves also gave legal sanction for the activities and spread of Sufi trends in Jordan, such as the

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<sup>64</sup> On Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Showayyat, see: <https://tinyurl.com/y7wp7ctg>  
On Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Khasawneh, see: <https://tinyurl.com/ybthkmp4>

<sup>65</sup> Mohammed Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Hall Al-Islami fi-l-Urdun: Al-Islamiyyun wa-l-Dawlawa Rihanat Al-Dimoqratiyyawa-l-Amn* (The "Islamic Solution" in Jordan: Islamists, the State, and the Ventures of Democracy and Security); Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, Amman; First Edition, 2012, pp. 234-239.

Al-Ahbash-affiliated Arab Islamic Cultural Society (which we will discuss later). While adopting extreme enmity toward the Salafis themselves, the Al-Ahbash aligned with the Salafis' amicable, peaceable attitude toward the authorities and avoidance of direct interference in politics, while at the same time taking greater care to maintain relationships with elites and influential official and non-official political leaders.<sup>66</sup>

It is arguable that the security camp was very close to official religious institutions, especially the Awqaf Ministry. The Ministry oversees mosques and Friday sermons and manages the status of imams and preachers in mosques, and therefore there was a persistent security interest in ensuring that the Ministry and its general approach would not deviate from the security camp's perspective.

Meanwhile, the Awqaf Ministry had not taken sides with any particular religious trend in the previous decades, and security considerations remained fundamental. Preachers and imams from the traditionalist Salafi current were at times allowed to play a major role in mosques, and at other times this role was given to those in the Ash'ari-Sufi orbit. At no point and under no circumstances was the goal ever to back this or that trend, but rather to provide the greatest political and security benefit. That remained the case until recently.

Later on, specifically from the turn of the 21st century to 2014, there emerged a great deal of official interest in the traditionalist Salafi current, which strengthened its relationship with various State institutions for multiple reasons, most notably the attacks of September 11, 2001, the escalation of War on Terror policies during the term of President George W. Bush, and Jordan's early integration into the associated international alliances. The traditional Salafi current presented itself as spearheading the intellectual and religious confrontation with the jihadi current both domestically and internationally, especially because the leading Jordanians Salafis had regional and international standing as the students of Shaykh Muhammad Na-

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 28-37.

siruddin Al-Albani, one of the most prominent traditionalist Salafi figures in the world.

Official policies came to rely heavily on traditionalist Salafism to confront the “jihadis” in religious terms, because the Salafi current had an active presence in the streets and a strong internal structure compared to the Ash‘ari-Sufi current, which was limited and weak at the time. The traditionalist Salafis therefore enjoyed wide latitude to carry out this role.

Another reason the Salafis were favored was the Jordanian-Saudi rapprochement during that period. It was commonly known that Saudi Arabia had recently adopted traditionalist (Wahhabi) Salafism, and Shaykh Ali Al-Halabi was chosen to give the Friday sermon with the King in attendance after the 2005 hotel bombings in Amman, a sign of the degree of convergence between Salafi figures and the official establishment.<sup>67</sup>

Opponents of Shaykh Dr. Ahmad Halil saw him as an important player in consolidating the Salafi presence in official religious institutions or the rapprochement with the current, which opened up the possibility for it to spread and strengthen its relationship with the State. This also coincided with an improvement in relations between official religious institutions and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Shaykh Ahmad Halil is also a prominent religious figure and played a major role in the development of religious institutions, especially while he worked in the Supreme Judge Department. He was the imam to the Royal Hashemite Court for decades and is close to the royal family, but disputes between him and the Ash‘ari-*madhhabi* current have become clearly apparent since 2010 based on an allegation that Halil is close to the Salafis, even though his father, Shaykh Mohammed Halil, used to be one of the most prominent Sufi shaykhs in Jordan.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See the text of the Friday sermon at: <https://tinyurl.com/yc2fy25r>

<sup>68</sup> “Who is Ahmad Halil?”, *Assawsana* online newspaper, 22/1/2017, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8c6ulh2>

Shaykh Ahmad Halil resigned as Supreme Judge in early 2017 after delivering a Friday sermon calling on the Arab Gulf countries to support Jordan economically and not abandon it. It was considered an implicitly political message and may have prompted decision makers to request his resignation to avoid the appearance of incivility.<sup>69</sup>

#### 4. Shaping the Jordanian religious message

On the other hand, since the 1980s the royal court has taken a role in shaping one facet of religious policy, as embodied in the institutions established, supervised, and monitored by former Crown Prince Hassan bin Talal. Later, during the reign of King Abdullah II, the King's nephew Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad took over supervision of religious policies and institutions.

The Royal Al Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought was founded by royal directive as the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research in 1980, and it began its work the following year. The Institute, which initially operated under the supervision of Prince Hassan, has worked on multiple objectives, which include highlighting Islamic civilization's philosophy, bridging sects and religions, and offering an introduction to Islam. The Institute also focuses on the heritage and history of Jordan and the Levant. The Institute's work has never overlapped directly with that of other official religious institutions such as the Awqaf Ministry and the Supreme Judge Department: they all operate independently, each within its sphere, like islands isolated from the other institutions. We therefore see that the religious policies associated with Prince Hassan differ from those with a security

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<sup>69</sup> "Why was the Royal Hashemite Court Imam dismissed?", *Al Jazeera*, 25/1/2017, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8dvd7ni>

See also "Shaykh Halil, Supreme Judge of Jordan and former Royal Hashemite Court Imam, tells *Rai Al-Youm*: My appeal to the Gulf kings and princes to save Jordan was an expression of my convictions, not meant to dictate to or order anyone ... I said what I said out of concern for Jordan," *Rai Al-Youm* online newspaper, 1/2/2017, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y7mp6>

imprint, and the two sets of policies may appear contradictory at times.<sup>70</sup>

A royal decree was issued in 1992 to form a royal committee, chaired by Prince Hassan, on the establishment of Al Al-Bayt University. The University was inaugurated in 1993 and began receiving students the following year. Prince Hassan was chairman of the Board of Trustees, and the University was intensely interested in the subject of religion and civilization. It clearly sought to be a springboard for new, modern religious discourse based on interfaith dialogue, building of bridges between various religious creeds, emphasis on a culture of academic research, and a philosophical perspective on Islamic heritage. The Faculty of Law incorporated shari'a and secular law, seven *madhhabs* were taught (the four Sunni *madhhabs* plus Zaidi, Twelver, and Ibadi), and a research program with Muslim scholars was created for postgraduate students.

The University drew a large number of students from various countries around the world, especially from East Asia, to study the religious sciences and the Arabic language. There was a notable presence of Omani students. The Board of Trustees membership also included several different Islamic orientations, reflecting the University's philosophy of serving an Islamic mission characterized by religious pluralism.<sup>71</sup>

The Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies was inaugurated in 1994 under the supervision and patronage of Prince Hassan. The Institute was dedicated to "consolidating the values of pluralism and diversity and promoting social peace and regional and world peace by promoting common human and ethical values that contribute to strengthening cooperation and interfaith relations, eliminating mutual misconceptions about the 'other,' and ultimately expanding these shared commonalities in the hope of promoting peaceful coexis-

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<sup>70</sup> See "Past and Present," Al Al-Bayt Institute, on the Institute's website: <https://tinyurl.com/ybu9xr7c>

<sup>71</sup> Phone interview with Dr. Muhannad Mubayyidin, professor of history at the University of Jordan, 11/5/2020.

tence.”<sup>72</sup> The Institute publishes books and studies, and it holds and participates in conferences and symposia, especially in connection to interfaith studies and dialogue, a preoccupation of Prince Hassan bin Talal’s dating to the early 1970s<sup>73</sup>

This religious orientation, which seemed contrary to Salafi tendencies, especially with regard to other religions and Islamic sects, rankled Saudi Arabia, which decided not to accept Al Al-Bayt University degrees in the country.<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, seeking to bridge the gap between Sunnis and Shiites, Prince Hassan opened informal lines of communication with the London-based Imam Al-Khoei Foundation, which is run by Iraqi Shiite authorities close to Tehran.<sup>75</sup>

After the death of King Hussein bin Talal, new Crown Prince Hamzah bin Hussein became chairman of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research. The same year, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad was chosen as working member of the Academy, then as its president, so that Prince Hamzah was the Academy’s chairman and Prince Ghazi its president. The Academy’s Charter was amended, and a temporary law for the institution was then passed in 2001. It later cleared constitutional hurdles to become, in 2007, a permanent law called the Law of the Royal Al Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought. Prince Ghazi became the Institute’s chairman, and its Board of Trustee members include senior official religious figures such as the awqaf minister, the education minister, the supreme judge, the grand mufti, the president of Al Al-Bayt University, and others.<sup>76</sup>

Prince Ghazi’s role in shaping religious policies has become evident since 2005, two years after he became a special adviser and personal envoy to the King.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> More about the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies at the Institute’s website: <https://tinyurl.com/y6u8piz8>

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Mohammed Abu Rumman, *Al- ‘ImaniyaAl-Muhafiza*, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

<sup>76</sup> See the Royal Al Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought website: <https://tinyurl.com/y7wurg5b>

<sup>77</sup> The King’s letter to Prince Ghazi on the occasion of his appointment as special adviser in 2003 is accessible online: See “His Majesty: Our Jordanian family =

During that period, especially after 2001 and then the 2005 Amman bombings, anti-terrorism policies were introduced to the cultural approach and religious policies. The Amman Message on interfaith harmony was released, as well as Prince Ghazi's book *True Islam and the Islamic Consensus on the Message of Amman* and his wife Princess Areej Ghazi's study titled "How to Integrate the Remembrance of God into Teaching" (which was originally her doctoral thesis in Islamic Studies). Prince Ghazi also published the book *Love in the Holy Quran* (his doctoral thesis in Islamic Studies from Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, supervised by the shaykh of Al-Azhar, Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb).<sup>78</sup>

Those efforts were clearly a continuation and advancement of previous efforts to create a Jordanian message around religion and civilization. This message focused on religious pluralism, interfaith and intrafaith dialogue, and combating extremism and terrorism on an intellectual and cultural basis.

In the same vein, the A Common Word initiative was launched in September 2007 during the Al Al-Bayt Institute's annual conference.<sup>79</sup> The initiative was a message directed at Christians

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= will remember your generous gift with the utmost appreciation - King appoints Prince Ghazi as personal envoy and adviser, and Sharif Fawaz as advisor for tribal affairs," *Ad-Dustur*, 7-10-2003.

<sup>78</sup> See the Prince Ghazi Trust for Quranic Thought, <https://tinyurl.com/y8k7ga5u>. On Princess Areej Ghazi's book *Al-Dhikr fil-Ta'lim* (How to Integrate the Remembrance of God into Teaching), see the following link:

<https://tinyurl.com/y93bpzp5>

The Holy Quran and the Environment, <https://tinyurl.com/ycv5ksdj>

For more on Prince Ghazi's biography, see the Royal Jordanian Heritage website at <https://tinyurl.com/yb3nfabn>

On the Amman Message, see the official website: <https://tinyurl.com/boyjfmU>

<sup>79</sup> "The A Common Word document provides a common constitution for numerous eminent and competent organizations and individuals that are active in the field of interfaith dialogue all over the world. One month after the declaration of the initiative, 138 scholars addressed an open letter titled "A Common Word between Us and You," drafted by HRH Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad, King's Adviser on Religious and Cultural Affairs and His Majesty's Personal Envoy. It was revised by key scholars and was dispatched from Abu Dhabi to all church leaders and Christians in the world, calling them to meet Muslims on a common

from Muslim scholars, thinkers that encompassed Islamic and religious values and common ground that could unite people from different religions.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, Prince Ghazi, who advised the King on religious and cultural matters, came to take a major role in shaping religious policies, bridging the gap between various religious institutions, creating alignment within the structure of religious policies, consolidating the State's religious message, and later working to "define a Jordanian religious identity."

## 5. The structure and design of the religious arena

As one of the policies that structure the religious arena, the *Iftaa'* Law was adopted in 2006, making the *iftaa'* establishment independent from the Awqaf Ministry. The grand mufti was now equal in rank to the ministers and would be appointed by royal decree. There were now *iftaa'* departments in all governorates of the Kingdom. After adhering to the Hanafi school early in the history of the State, the General Iftaa' Department began following the Shafi'i school of law.<sup>81</sup>

Leading the Iftaa' Department from 2007 to 2010, Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah shaped the Department in the image of the military's Iftaa' Department during his tenure there. As time went by, the Depart-

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= ground of Love of God and Love of Neighbor. As an outcome of A Common Word, the World Interfaith Harmony Week was launched in 2010." Quoted from King Abdullah II's official website: <https://tinyurl.com/y76urnpa>

See also: "Germany honors A Common Word Initiative," at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycyhgoa>. The award was given to three key figures who made active contributions to the initiative: Prince Ghazi, Grand Mufti of Bosnia Mustafa Cerić, and Tabah Foundation Director Habib Ali Al-Jifri.

<sup>80</sup> For further details, see the initiative's official website: <https://tinyurl.com/y9dxojkb>

<sup>81</sup> See the Iftaa' Department, the Iftaa' Law, at: <https://tinyurl.com/ybqa796r>  
This function was initially filled by SaeidHijawi (who was the Mufti before the Iftaa' Department became independent), then by Shaykh Dr. Noah Al-Qudah from 2007 to 2010, Shaykh Dr. Abdul Karim Al-Khasawneh from 2010 to 2017, Shaykh Mohammad Khalaileh from 2017 to 2019, and Abdul Karim Al-Khasawneh once again from 2019 to present.

ment has gradually over the past decade taken on a clear Ash'ari-*madhhab*-Sufi religious identity, whether through the authorities it references or the choice of those who issue fat was. The selection of Al-Qudah, with the reputation and great credibility he possessed, clearly aimed to give the new institution legitimacy and symbolic weight.

The Anti-Terrorism Law was passed in 2006, and subsequently amended in 2016 after hundreds of Jordanians joined hardline organizations in Syria and Iraq, and anti-extremism and anti-terrorism policies became a key part of religious and cultural policy. A deradicalization program was launched in prisons, like several experiments around the world, and meanwhile the Counter-Extremism Unit was established to coordinate the work of ministries and institutions concerned with extremism and terrorism. A national counter-extremism plan was designed and a national counter-extremism strategy also drawn up, revealing the enormous attention to this topic, especially after the Arab Spring and then the rise of ISIS and extremist groups in the regional neighborhood and domestically. The fight against extremism became a key part of religious policies, and it was also injected into Jordan's religious message that portrayed the country as a moderate Hashemite state that rejected extremism and terrorism.<sup>82</sup>

During an earlier period from 2001 to approximately 2011, there was harmony with the traditionalist Salafi current as a spearhead against extremism and jihadis. This harmony was also helped by official fears within Jordan of political and religious "Shiization," especially after the 2006 Lebanon War, and the emergence of a politics of "camps" in the region –moderation (comprising Jordan, the Gulf countries, and Egypt) vs. resistance and deterrence (comprising Iran, Hezbollah, Syria, and Islamists)– which provided further reason to rely on the Salafi school.

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<sup>82</sup> See Saud Al-Sharaft, "Taayim Al-Istratijiyyat Al-Wataniya li-Mukafahat Al-Tatarrufwa-l-Irhab fi Al-Urdun" ("Assessment of National Strategies for Combating Extremism and Terrorism in Jordan"), European Centre for Counterterrorism and Intelligence Studies, 5/7/2019, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yc5jw7to>

But matters later began to change, and a new trend has been ascendant since 2011, pushing for less reliance on Salafism and consideration of other alternatives. Although the “official” Salafi streak remained, it started to ebb. When ISIS burned the Jordanian pilot Muath Al-Kasasbeh to death in early 2015, it was an important turning point for religious policy because ISIS’s adoption of fatwas by Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, the spiritual father of all Salafi currents, led to a violent reaction against Salafi culture itself, to the point that Ibn Taymiyyah’s books were tracked down and prevented from entering Jordan. This reinforced the official trend that called for shifting to another school, Ash’ari-Sufi, and enhancing its presence within official religious institutions and in the structure of religious policies because it offered a clearer approach to moderation and centrism.<sup>83</sup>

The gradual shift that began in Saudi Arabia in 2015 and the emerging manifestations of a convergence between Salafi *da’wa* and the Saudi authorities also had consequences for official religious policy. This encouraged and reinforced the trend toward the reduction of Salafism’s presence and role in the Jordanian scene and a clearer and stronger turn toward boosting and entrenching the Ash’ari-Sufi school. This was patently reinforced by Shaykh Ahmad Halil’s resignation in early 2017.

If the “about-face” in religious policies has taken on more obvious practical dimensions since 2011, it has become a reality since 2017, and there is no longer any official tendency opposed to such policies. The “religious camp” was subsequently consolidated in a process of formulating religious policies; dealing with existing sects, religions, Islamic schools of jurisprudence and other religious trends; and shaping the State’s message and religious identity. This process was overseen by Prince Ghazi and involved the leadership of religious institutions including the awqaf minister, the grand mufti, the supreme judge, and certain official religious leaders whose scope of work encompasses the religious sphere.

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<sup>83</sup> For example, see “*Al-Urdun Yatahaffaz ‘ala Mu’allafat Ibn Taymiyya*” (“Jordan seizes Ibn Taymiyyah books”), Al Jazeera, 8/6/2015: <https://tinyurl.com/ybgjrlv3>

There are many signs of this about-face and the gradual, near-total shift in religious policies away from everything that had existed previously –both the “religious neutrality” era and the era of multiple religious policy camps. The main signs and indicators of these transformations are:

1. The creation of two endowed professorial chairs in the name of King Abdullah II to study the work of Al-Ghazali and Al-Razi in early 2012. This is notable for multiple reasons: First, the endowments are named for two major Ash‘ari and Sufi scholars. Second, the chairs must be held by a follower of the Ash‘ari or Maturidi creed. Third, the board for each chair (and Prince Ghazi is the chairman of both boards) included top Arab figures in the Ash‘ari-Sufi school: Mohammed Said Ramadan Al-Bouti (a prominent Syrian scholar who was killed in a 2013 bombing at the Al-Iman Mosque in the Mazraa district of Damascus while giving a lesson), Dr. Ali Gomaa (formerly the grand mufti of Egypt), and Habib Omar Bin Hafiz and Habib Ali Al-Jifri (both among the most prominent Arab figures of the Ash‘ari-Sufi school today).<sup>84</sup>

2. The establishment of World Islamic Sciences and Education University in 2008. The University is quasi-Ash‘ari-Sufi, and in 2018 it launched faculties and postgraduate programs in the Shafi‘i, Hanafi, and Maliki schools of jurisprudence. It also teaches Sufism or *tazkiya* (purification of the self), and employs teachers and scholars affiliated with the Ash‘ari-*madhhabi* school, including well-known scholars from Iraq and Syria.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> “Two endowed chairs named for the King established to study the work of Al-Ghazali and Al-Razi, at a value of 4 million dinars”, *Al Ra‘i*, 25/1/2012, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y7vq3san>

<sup>85</sup> The University’s vision states: “The World Islamic Sciences and Education University seeks to combine knowledge and virtue based on faith and wisdom so as to become a modern and comprehensive Islamic university and a leader in its methodology and academic plans in order to achieve distinction at the Arab, regional, Islamic, and international levels. The University will do so by serving as a beacon for research into Islamic civilization and Islamic thought in order to graduate diligent cadre and scholars in various specializations within the legal, human, and natural sciences. Our graduates will be armed with science, faith, and the highest professional ethics in accordance with the teachings of Islamic law.”

The university was also entrusted with the development of imams and preachers through its academic courses and the degrees it grants.

3. The increasingly clear creedal and jurisprudential identity of the Iftaa' Department, and of the individuals who issue fatwas and run the Department.

4. The growing closeness to and celebration of several Sufi shaykhs, such as Shaykh Ahmed Al-Khudri, a senior Sufi figure in Jordan; and the mosques' use of a common call to prayer that includes a prayer for the Prophet, which is something the Salafi current had resisted.<sup>86</sup>

5. The establishment of the Imam Al-Suyuti endowed chair at the Grand Husseini Mosque with royal sponsorship. Al-Suyuti was one of the key Ash'ari and Sufi scholars in Islamic history, and the ceremony was attended by Al Al-Bayt Institute advisor Shaykh Dr. Usama Al-Azhari.<sup>87</sup>

With regard to foreign affairs, the same about-face can be observed in the shaping of Jordan's religious message:

1. The launch of the Amman Message advocating respect for religious pluralism and rejection of *takfir*, extremism, and killing in the name of religion, and propagating a message of moderation and tolerance.

2. The launch of the A Common Word initiative through the Al Al-Bayt Institute and with the direct participation of Prince Ghazi and Arab religious leaders. The initiative is addressed to the West in pursuit of commonalities.

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<sup>86</sup> Shaykh Al-Khudri was awarded the Order of Independence in 2019, see: <https://tinyurl.com/y7t38eu5>

<sup>87</sup> On the endowed chair and its creation: "King endorses creation of endowed chair to study work of Imam Al-Suyuti," *Al Ghad*, 6/5/2019, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ybbxyy2p>

3. Interfaith Harmony Week, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly based on King Abdullah II's proposal and initiative in 2010. It is a week dedicated to promoting a culture of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, observed the first week of February of each year.<sup>88</sup> The idea for Interfaith Harmony Week was based on the A Common Word initiative, and King Abdullah II won the 2018 Templeton Prize for his efforts in the field of religious harmony and interfaith and in trafaith dialogue.<sup>89</sup>

4. The Al Al-Bayt Institute is considered a supporter of Kalam Research & Media (KRM), the chairman of which is Dr. Aref Ali Nayed, a well-known Libyan diplomat and academic figure. He is a follower of the Ash'ari-Sufi school and has been one of the Aal Al-Bayt Institute's most prominent scholars and collaborators. KRM is dedicated to reviving and renewing Islamic theology (*kalam*); promoting the values of mercy, wisdom, and working for the common good, encouraging interfaith initiatives around the world; and developing curricula and resources. KRM's publications include a notable presence of work by Dr. Saeed Foudeh, who, as we will see, is one of the foremost shaykhs of the Jordanian Ash'ari school.

5. Networking with a wide elite of Muslim scholars, jurists, thinkers, and clerics within the programs and activities of the Al Al-Bayt Institute or the endowments that have been established. This has created a wide network of relationships and highlighted Jordan's role in the religious sphere. The cooperation with prominent scholars is notable here – scholars such as “the Habibs” in Yemen (Shaykh Habib Omar Bin Hafiz and Shaykh Habib Ali Al-Jifri), Shaykh Ali Gomaa, Shaykh Usama Al-Azhari, and the late Shaykh Mohammed Said Ramadan Al-Bouti. The relationships with this Ash'ari-*madhhab*-Sufi religious school have thus become solid.

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<sup>88</sup> On Interfaith Harmony Week and King Abdullah II's proposal, see: <https://tinyurl.com/y9ka74qk>

<sup>89</sup> On the Templeton Prize and the King's remarks on that occasion, see: <https://tinyurl.com/ycqlgmuy>



## TOPIC 2

### SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The Sufi-Salafi rivalry has become a matter of tracing the early stages of Jordan's history, i.e. the initial founding of the Emirate of Transjordan and even earlier. One of the assumptions that Shaykh Ali Al-Halabi perhaps sought to reject and refute is that Sufism has deeper roots in Jordan than does Salafism. We see both sides conducting research and an excavation of historical documents and oral traditions to confirm claimed origins and roots.

Shaykh Ali-Halabi wrote a book on *A Summarized History of the Salafi Da'wa in Jordan*. In return, efforts began within the Ash'ari school to confirm that Jordanian social identity is closer to Ash'arism and Sufism – the very identity whose authenticity in Jordanian society official religious institutions are now working to emphasize. Both Dr. Saeed Foda and his disciple Dr. Noor Mustafa Al-Rafati have written papers on "Ash'arism in Jordan."

In this section, we will address some of the contours of the evolution in Jordan's religious culture and observe whether there are indications of trends in this culture of creed and jurisprudential *madhhab*. We will also discuss the major transformations this culture has undergone over the decades, especially since Salafi activity emerged in the 1970s, accelerated in the 1980, and peaked in the 1990s. Perhaps that brings us to the main question: Before the period in which Salafism became widespread, what was the nature of the prevailing religious culture in Jordanian society?

#### **1. An examination of roots: "The Kingdom of Sufism"**

In his book *Sufi Thought in Jordan: A Study in Socio-Religious History*, Dr. Ayman Al-Shareeda argues that Sufism's roots penetrate most deeply in Jordanian social culture and that Jordan has had a major Sufi presence in centuries past, especially since the Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman eras. This is because Jordan's strategic loca-

tion on the route between the Two Holy Mosques and Jerusalem, or on the Silk Road, or in the middle of political and religious conflicts (in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Palestine), helped make it an important stopping point for clerics, especially Sufi clerics.<sup>90</sup>

Al-Shareeda links Mount Ajloun, which is the center of Sufism in Jordan, with Safed in Palestine, Jerusalem, and Aleppo in what he calls the “Kingdom of Sufism” in the region, given the volume of religious activities there, especially in Safed and Jerusalem. The proliferation of Sufi *zawiyas* (lodges) and orders, and shrines and tombs of prophets, saints, and the righteous makes this region a global center for the practice of religious rituals not only in Islam, but even Christianity and Judaism, creating a Sufi quasi-confederacy.<sup>91</sup>

One of the important pieces of information the book presents is what it calls “the migration of Sufi families” to Jordan and their settlement there – families such as Al-Omari, Al-Kilani, Al-Rifa’i, Al-Momani, Al-Malkawi, Al-Mestarihi, Al-Samadi, Al-Qadiri, Al-Rababah, Al-Zoubi, Al-Jaafirah, and others. The researcher attributes this Sufi expansion to well-known Sufi masters throughout Islamic history and the fact that many Jordanians also joined Sufi orders under scholars in Syria and moved to Palestine, where they established *zawiyas* and now have shrines.<sup>92</sup>

In this book, he points to the spiritual influence of Sufi masters in northern regions, where villages and towns were identified with particular masters. The villages of Judayta, Kufr Rakeb, Rason, and Orjan followed Shaykh Rabbaeh (forefather of the Rababaa clan), while Tibnah, Sammou, Izma, and JinninAssafa followed Shaykh Mohammed MuslihAl-Mestarihi. The authority of ShaykhAl-Zoghbi and his descendants encompassed Al-Qasabeh, Maru, Juffein, KafrAl-Ma’, and all the way to Palestine and Lebanon. The authority of Shaykh Rashid Al-Omari Al-Faruqi, from the Messadin clan, encompassed the

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<sup>90</sup> See Dr. Ayman Ibrahim Hassan Al-Shareeda, *Al-FikrAl-Sufi fil-Urdun: Dirasa fi Al-Tarikh Al-Ijtima’iAl-Dini* (Sufi Thought in Jordan: A Study in Socio-Religious History); First Edition, 2010, pp. 15-20.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-21.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-40.

villages of Inbah, Kufr Kifiya, Beit Yafa, Al-Nabie, Kufr Asad. The villages of Ajloun, Jerash, Dibbeen, Anjara, and Asmad took after Shaykh Mohammed ibn Ahmed ibn Shaykh Muslim Al-Samadi.<sup>93</sup> Many of the families sought to trace their lineage back to the Family of the Prophet. Note that some traced their lineage to Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Gilani, the founder of the Qadiri Order, as we find in the lineage of the Al-Mestahiri clan in Jennin Assafa. This indicates that the Qadiri Order was widespread in the preceding centuries in Mount Ajloun and northern Jordan.<sup>94</sup>

Many testimonies from the oral traditions handed down in several regions of Jordan bolster the author's argument that the folk religion was closer to Sufism than Salafism, such as the establishment of dozens of shrines and tombs for saints and *'arifin* (ones who know God), and before them Companions and Prophets. The people pay visits to these places for the purpose of supplication and asking blessings of God, and they are also linked to social customs and circumstances, such as prayers for rain, requests for help, and holiday processions. Similar practices have also been associated with certain trees, grottos, rocks, and springs linked to saints.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, the Jinnin Assafa website: [incorrect link]

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-52. One of the most famous shrines is that of Shaykh Abu Dhabla in Kufr Rakeb. The shrine is said to belong to Shaykh Mohammed bin Abdullah Abu Dhabla Al-Rababaa, who is considered one of the righteous saints and was a descendant of Shaykh Rabbaa, the patriarch of the Rababaa clan. The latter has a domed shrine in the village of Judayta. The nephew of Shaykh Abu Dhabla, Shaykh Abdo Al-Rababaa, who was known to be Sufi, also has a shrine in Judayta. There is also the Al-Hawi shrine in the Barqash Forest and the Mohammad Al-Qaysouni shrine in Samu, Irbid Governate. For further details about these shrines in Al-Kourah District: Nasser Al-Shareeda, "Maqamatdiniya 'ala Ard Al-Kura mundhumi'at Al-sinin" ("There have been shrines in Al-Kourah for hundreds of years"), *Al Ra'i*, 2/11/2019; also Dr. Hassan Al-Rababaa, "Shaykh Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al-Rababaa, 'Abu Dhabla,'" *Rabitat Olama' Al-Sham* (Levant Association of Scholars), 17/5/2008, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ybj6rp5c> And Abdul Hamid Bani Younis, "Majhulunyanbushun maqam Abu Dhalba fi Al-Kura" ("Unidentified persons dig up Abu Dhalba shrine in Al-Kourah"), *Ad-Dustur*, 9/4/2007.

Folk Sufi rituals are not limited to northern Jordan. They are observable in the folk culture of the Balqa Mountains and the proliferation of shrines and tombs there, such as the shrines of the prophets Shuaib and Joshua and the shrines of the Companions Abu 'Ubaida 'Amir ibn Al-Jarrah and Shurahbil ibn Hasana, as well as others. The connection to these shrines forms part of the folk religious culture, as people have customarily visited them to worship, make requests, and pray for rain, believing that doing so at those sites is more likely to bring a response from God.

If we examine Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman history, those were all sultanates of a Sufi-Ash'ari religious nature. We link that to the shrines named for saints, the *zawiyas*, and the Sufi families in northern areas, as well as the folk religion rituals, all of which give an indication of the deep Sufi roots in Jordan's folk heritage. The Sufi orders have mixed with humble folk culture, and become imbued in it, without there necessarily being any link to institutional or order-based Sufism.<sup>96</sup>

On the whole, it can be said that people's understandings of the practice of a simple, Sufi-inflected religiosity most often are not based on learning, study, and the spread of mosques and schools but depend instead on the presence of shaykhs, saints, and generational Sufi heritage. Although the Sufi world is replete with names of families that settled in Mount Ajloun and surrounding areas, and despite the prevalence of a quasi-Sufi culture, there was no adoption of fixed, settled traditions that led to the creation of Sufi orders in Jordan, as was the case, for example, in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, and even Sudan and other places. Instead, the situation was limited to an assortment of Sufi shaykhs or *'arifin*, and temporary *zawiyas*, as many Sufi gatherings and activities were held in people's homes. This may have something to do with the lack of a settled, clear civil culture in most areas of eastern Jordan, which meant that the culture and concepts of Sufism took on a simplicity consistent with rural and agricultural life and the humble folk culture of that world during those centuries.

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<sup>96</sup> See Ayman Al-Shareeda, *Al-Fikr Al-Sufi fi Al-Urdun*; op. cit., pp. 60-63.

## 2. The first contemporary Sufis

That folk religiosity remained largely unchanged until the early 20th century, when Sufi clerics and models of Sufism began to change, becoming more scholarly because of religious figures who came to Jordan or Jordanians who studied at Al-Azhar in Egypt or in Syria and then were active in teaching and *da'wa* (proselytism) after returning to Jordan. Prior to the establishment and spread of Sufi orders in many geographic areas, there were several notable Sufi masters, foremost among them the Al-Kilani family in Al-Salt, beginning with the patriarch Mustafa Yousef Zaid Al-Kilani (1850-1892), who studied at Al-Azhar and earned the *'Alimiyya* (habilitation) degree there, and then came to Al-Salt from Nablus to be a mufti, scholar, and preacher. He was initiated into the Qadiri Order by his father, who had moved between the two cities, and he had a major role in promoting science, engaging in *da'wa*, and preaching in Al-Salt until his death in 1892. The same can be said of his son, Shaykh Fahim Mustafa Zaid Al-Kilani (1860-1941), who became imam of the old mosque in Al-Salt during his father's lifetime in 1881 and obtained the imamate of the Al-Salt Grand Mosque from the Ottoman Empire.

One of the luminaries of the Al-Kilani family and an important early Sufi shaykh is Shaykh Mustafa's son Shaykh Abdul Halim Al-Kilani (1884-1968), who was initiated into the Qadiri Order by his father. He studied shari'a legal science and established a house of Qur'anic study, where he continued to teach shari'a for 50 years. He taught Islamic education at Al-Salt Secondary School and was a Muslim Brotherhood representative in Al-Salt.<sup>97</sup>

Shaykh Abdul Halim later visited Damascus and there met Shaykh Ismail Al-Hussari, who initiated him into the Naqshbandi Order, and he remained committed to that order and its spiritual exercises until his death in Al-Salt in 1968. He instructed his sons in both the Naqshbandi and Qadiri orders: Dr. Ibrahim Abdul Halim Zaid Al-Kilani (leader in the Muslim Brotherhood, university professor, and

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with Shakir Musa Al-Kilani, 19/5/2020. See also Abdul Rahman Ibrahim Zaid Al-Kilani, "Shaykh Abdul Halim Mustafa Al-Kilani," *Al Ra'i*, 29/5/2017; similarly, Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiya fi Al-Urdun"; op. cit., pp. 83-85.

former awqaf minister) Dr. Musa Al-Kilani (researcher and media professional), Mohammad Rasul Al-Kilani (former interior minister and intelligence director), and Dr. Hosni Al-Kilani. His successor was Shaykh “Muhammad Amin” Fahim Mustafa Zaid Al-Kilani (1926-2016), who was mufti of Al-Salt and a teacher at Al-Salt Secondary School, and delivered sermons at both the Great Mosque and the Small Mosque in Al-Salt.<sup>98</sup>

The Sufism of the Al-Kilanis is generally characterized by moderation and a departure from the concepts of *zawiyas* and orders in an institution Al-organizational sense – their preferred tools being *da’wa*, education, sermons, and teaching – and they granted permission (*idhn*) and authorization (*ijaza*) to few people.<sup>99</sup>

An early Sufi figure in the city of Tafilah was Shaykh Al-Sharif Ahmed Masoud Al-Dabbagh (1883-1974), who studied at the normal school in Medina and then was appointed as a judge in Medina and Mecca. He moved to Aqaba –which was then under the Emirate of Hejaz but later split off and became part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan– to be appointed judge there. He preferred working in education to the judiciary, and so he entered the Ministry of Education and taught in Maan and then Al-Karak (1934). After retiring from the Ministry of Education in 1945, he was appointed as a justice official in Tafilah. He was a Sufi with *murids* (initiated disciples) in many countries of the world.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> See Darwish Al-Kashef, “Al-Kunuz Al-Turathiyya fi Madinat Al-Salt: Masjid Al-Salt Al-Kabir” (“Patrimonial treasures in Al-Salt: Al-Salt Great Mosque”), *Al Ra’i*, 7/12/2018.

<sup>99</sup> See “Wazir Al-Thaqafa yaraanadwat ‘Aal Zaid Al-Kilani fi Madinat Al-Salt wAl-Urdun” (“Minister of Culture sponsors symposium on ‘Aal Zaid Al-Kilani in Al-Salt and Jordan”), *Ad-Dustur*, 2/9/2002. See also Mousa Abdul Jalil Abdul Aziz Amr, “Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun: Darasa Tahliliyya Naqdiyya Muqarana”; *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>100</sup> See Mahmoud Saleh Al-Harbi, “Al-‘Allama Al-Sharif Al-Shaykh Ahmed Masoud Al-Dabbagh” (“The honorable and most erudite Shaykh Ahmed Masoud Al-Dabbagh”) *Al Ra’i*, 10/9/2017.

See also Hazza Al-Barari, “Al-Shaykh Ahmed Al-Dabbagh: Al-Shaykh Al-Jalil wa-l-Tarbawi Al-Faqih” (“Shaykh Ahmed Al-Dabbagh: Distinguished shaykh and *fiqh* educator”) *Al Ra’i*, 19/12/2011.

After his death, a school in Tafilah was named in honor of Al-Dabbagh. He had many pupils and *murids*, most prominently Shaykh Abdullah Al Azab, and the novelist Sulaiman Al-Qawabiah mentioned him in his novel Basin of Death (*Hawd Al-Mawt*).

Then examples of educated sheiks began to emerge and be initiated by scholars in Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Hejaz, or other areas, and began to be an influence in their cities. This was the case with Shaykh Yousef Al-Atoum (b. 1889) in Jerash. He was initiated into the Tijani Order by the famous Syrian Shaykh Ali Dakar, then into the Shadhili Order by Shaykh Muhammad Said Al-Kurdi.<sup>101</sup>

Similar was Shaykh Ahmed Al-Zoubi (nicknamed “Al-Ashram” because he ate the leaves of trees), who left Jordan for Umm Obaida in Iraq, joined the Rifa’i Order there, then returned to Jordan. His son Abdullah succeeded him in the order in the 1940s. Likewise, Shaykh Khudr Abu Al-Ainain went to Daraa in the 1930s and met Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Rifa’i, who initiated him into the Rifa’i Order and gave him permission to lead others on the path in Jordan, so he returned and propagated the order there.<sup>102</sup>

The Mauritanian Shaykh Mohammed Al-Ghudhuf (Muhammad Al-Amin bin Zain Al-‘Abidin Al-Qalqami), a follower of the Mauritanian Ghudhufi Order (which resembles a blend of the Qadiri and Shadhili orders), came to Jordan after 1910 before moving to Turkey and residing there until his death. He initiated several people into the Ghudhufi Order while in Jordan. When he left Jordan, many Jordanians went with him to Turkey, and some of them later returned to Jordan. Fallah Nasrallah Al-Huneiti, who was initiated into the order in the 1930s by followers of Shaykh Al-Qalqami, is believed to be one of those who accompanied him to Turkey. Al-Huneiti then initiated

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<sup>101</sup> See Mousa Abdul Jalil Abdul Aziz Amr, “Al-Turuq Al-Sufiya fi Al-Urdun: Darasa-Tahliliyya Naqdiyya Muqarana”; op. cit., p. 91. A biography of Shaykh Yousef Al-Atoum can be found on his Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/y7bfdrup>

<sup>102</sup> See Mousa Amr, “Al-Turuq Al-Sufiya fi Al-Urdun”; op. cit., p. 53.

members of various clans into the order, including Shaykh AyeshAl-Hawyan.<sup>103</sup>

### 3. Sufi orders: Newly Jordanian by virtue of migration

Later on, with the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921, then independence in 1946 and the subsequent unification of the east and west banks in 1950, Sufi orders began entering Jordan by more than one route. Migrations from surrounding countries, especially after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War (the Nakba), contributed to the emergence of orders and *zawiyas* in Jordan. Immigrants coming to Jordan from Syria and Iraq have also played a role in fostering Sufi culture since the second half of the 20th century. Meanwhile, many Jordanians who went to study at Al-Azhar and in Syria were initiated into Sufism by shaykhs there and then returned to teach and preach in Amman. Rifa'i Rifa'i

Some orders were present in the first half of the 20th century, and their followers established circles for *dhikr* ("remembrance" of God) and activities related to dissemination of the order and taking of the pledge. This was the case for the Ghudhufi Order (via Fallah Al-Huneiti), the Naqshbandi Order (via the Al-Kilani family), and to a lesser extent the Tijani Order (via Shaykh Ali Al-Dakar in Syria). The Shadhili-Yashruti forerunners started with a presence in Jordan in the 1930s, and the story is similar for Shaykh Abdul Halim Oudat Al-Qadiri, from the Qadiri Order, who came to Jordan before the Nakba and then moved to Amman and settled in Al-Hashimi Al-Shamali.

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<sup>103</sup> For further details on the Ghazifi Order and its beginnings in Jordan, see "Lamha'an Al-Tariqa Al-Ghazifiyya" ("An overview of the Ghazifi Order"), Agence Kiffa pour l'Information, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8x6pppd> Also "Jamaat Al-Ghazif Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun" ("The Ghazifi Sufi Brotherhood in Jordan"), *Sahel News*, 25/8/2019, link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8xj6ppd>; and Ali Obaidat, "Al-Sufiyya, Limadhawa Kaifa' Adat: Al-Urdun Namudhajan" (Why and how Sufism returned: Jordan as a model"), *Thaqafat*, 23/11/2015, at <https://tinurl.com/ybasq3x>  
See also Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun"; op. cit., pp. 47-49.

It was not until after the 1948 Nakba, however, and the arrival of Palestinian refugees, that *zawiyas* and orders really began to establish a presence and spread in several governorates and to transition to an organized, collective, order-based form. The first stage of real establishment was the 1950s, and the orders and *zawiyas* began to take root and spread in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

It could be said that migrations from Syria to Jordan as a result of confrontations between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood, which started in the 1960s and reached their peak during the 1980s, also led hundreds of Sufis to migrate to Jordan during those decades. Most of them did not establish *zawiyas*, but they had a remarkable influence on the societal culture and on propagating the observance of saints' birthdays, religious chanting (*nashid*), *dhikr* circles, and even religious books through publishing houses. Mention can be made here of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Jammal, Shaykh Mamdouh Abu Al-Shamat, Shaykh Mohammed Taysir Al-Makhzoumi, Shaykh Abdullah Al-Sabahi, and Shaykh Dr. Said Hawwa, one of the most prominent Sufi Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Jordan. *Nashid* groups began to proliferate, including Shaykh Mohammed Amin Al-Tirmidhi's group specializing in *madihnabawi*, a genre of songs praising Prophet Muhammad.

The irony is that those coming to Jordan from Syria, especially after the 1982 Hama massacre, included Salafis as well as Sufis, even among the Brotherhood-affiliated migrants. This means that even as Syrian Sufi culture was spreading, the vanguard of Salafi thought also arrived in Jordan. Shaykh Nasiruddin Al-Albani, who also lived in Damascus before the events of the 1980s, left for Saudi Arabia and then Jordan, and his pupils began spreading in the 1980s, thus sparking off the Salafi-Sufi rivalry in Jordan.

#### 4. Sufi-Salafi rivalries

The vanguard of Salafi *da'wa* began to appear in the 1970s. Mohammad Ibrahim Shuqrah, one of the movement's foremost pioneers in Jordan, returned from Al-Azhar and worked in *da'wa* and teaching on the Salafi model. He left for Saudi Arabia to work at the

Islamic University of Madinah, where he met Salafi *da'wa* masters, then returned to Jordan and resumed his activities. He invited Shaykh Nasiruddin Al-Albani to Jordan to live there several days out of the month and give religious lessons, and thus *da'wa* began to spread and its pupils to emerge before Shaykh Al-Albani settled in Jordan in the early 1980s. That was followed by Salafism's great leap in becoming widespread.<sup>104</sup>

Al-Albani's pupils came to prominence starting in the 1980s, and the Salafi *da'wa* often clashed with prevailing religious beliefs and practices. Harbingers of the Salafi-Ash'ari clash appeared in the mosques, where disagreements sometimes escalated to shouting and physical fights and at other times resulted in debates organized between followers of the two schools.

Why did this confrontation occur? Because the essence of the Salafi *da'wa* is founded on reforming beliefs and expurgating rules and behaviors that Salafis consider heretical innovations (*bid'a*) with no basis in the religion, such as the muezzin invoking a blessing for the Prophet after the call to prayer. The Salafis say that this is *bid'a*, along with some customs and behaviors during prayers that Salafis criticize (such as shaking hands after the prayer), and the manner of prayer, for which Salafis have rules that contradict some in the prevailing culture. The same applies to the observance of prophets' birthdays and religious celebrations. The Salafis thus entered a battle with the generally prevailing folk religious culture, some of which was linked to the legacy of Sufism and some of which was custom honed through decades of religious practices.

The great battleground was the field of religious doctrines concerning the knowledge of God, such as the Divine Essence and God's names and attributes. The biggest question here for the Salafis was: Where is God? This is the test of a human being's ideology. If a person says that God is in the heavens, Salafis consider him to hold the correct beliefs. If he says that God is everywhere or cannot be contained

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<sup>104</sup> See Mohammed Abu Rumman and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Hall Al-Islami fi Al-Urdun*, op. cit. 230-234.

by “place,” his beliefs are unsound. This question has been a cause of intense disputes between the two schools.

The fundamental disputes between the two sides include Salafism’s fierce, harsh criticism of Sufism and everything considered to be “interior sciences”; Salafis’ description of Sufis as *ahl Al-bid’awa-l-dalalat* (“the people of innovations and error”); Salafi antagonizing of Sufis in mosques, books, and scholarly lessons; Salafis’ emphasis on rejecting supplication to anyone but God; criticism of the practice of visiting the tombs of saints and the righteous, a well-known Sufi practice; and the fact that Salafism deems every aspect of the Sufi orders to be error and innovation for which there is no evidence in the sources of Islamic law, i.e. the Quran and the sunna.

Shaykh Al-Albani’s Salafi pupils came with an arsenal of religious weapons and missiles to destroy the underpinnings of the other school and beat back Sufi culture. The Salafi school owed its power in this showdown to the fact that Shaykh Al-Albani was a scholar specializing in hadith, while the Sufi school was very weak in that field of knowledge. It was easy for Salafism’s followers to demolish the other side’s arguments by invoking the required hadiths and weakening the legal and theoretical foundation on which the opponent had based his own arguments. It helped that the Sufi orders had no such academic, juristic, or intellectual arsenal at the time. Their masters had delved into Sufism but had not prepared themselves for this sort of battle, while the Salafi side founded its ideas, beliefs, and stances on criticism of other schools.

This dynamic tipped the scales strongly toward the Salafi current in the initial confrontations. More important was the fact that, as observed by Shaykh Hasan Al-Saqqaf, one of Salafism’s most prominent detractors in Jordan at the time, there was no actor really capable of responding to the Salafi attack. The Sufi orders and *zawiyas* were isolated and had limited influence outside their walls, and they lacked the scholarly weaponry required for the fight. The military *iftaa’* establishment, meanwhile, had no desire to get involved in these confrontations, although one of its shaykhs, Dr. Ali Al-Faqir, decided later (in the 1990s) to take up a spot on the front lines of the

conflict. In fact, this greatly facilitated the Salafi mission, the state of which in that era calls to mind the poet's line:

*Her love came to me before I knew love, and so it found an empty heart, and took control*

The prevailing religious culture suffered a quick blow. Salafism began to spread, and there was no real resistance except from certain individuals and orientations, as we will address later. The social culture witnessed a profound shift towards Salafism, especially in the 1990s. If Palestinian immigration in 1948 and 1967 helped spread the Sufi orders and Sufi culture, the return of Jordanians working in the Gulf at the beginning of the 1990s led to a major advance for Salafism in Jordanian society, as the dominant religious culture in the Gulf is generally Salafi-Wahhabi.<sup>105</sup>

No longer limited to Al-Albani's pupils, other Salafi schools began to appear. The Al-Kitab wAl-Sunnah Association, which is affiliated with Haraki Salafism, was founded. Mujahideen returned to Jordan from Afghanistan, and the vanguard of jihadi Salafism began to emerge with the arrival of Shaykh Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi and the return of his protégé Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi from Afghanistan. The 1990s thus became the decade that Salafi religious culture achieved a stunning prevalence in Jordan.<sup>106</sup>

In any case, we cannot talk about the causes of Salafism's spread and the profound transformations in Jordanian religious culture without making reference to a fundamental, central reason behind it, namely Saudi Arabia's role during that period. It was a role with many dimensions and underpinnings, most notably:

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Hasan Al-Saqqaf at his home in Jabal Al-Zuhour, 1/4/2020.

<sup>106</sup> Mohammed Abu Rumman, *Al-Sira 'ala Al-Salafiya: Qira'a fi Al-Idiulijiyatwa-l-Khilafat wa-Kharitat Al-Intishar* (The Fight Over Salafism: A Reading of Ideologies, Disputes, and the Map of its Spread); Arab Network for Research and Publishing and Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, Amman; First Edition, 2016, pp. 129-140.

1. Amid the conflict with Nasserism, which was extremely popular in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s, Saudi Arabia started to strengthen its role in the Arab and Islamic world, founding organizations linked to “Islamic” *da’wa* against Nasserism and working to promote *da’wa* and Salafi beliefs worldwide, especially after 1973. Tremendous financial resources were marshaled in the service of this cause and in the standoff with Nasserism. Jordan was of course important as one of Saudi Arabia’s neighbors, and Saudi *du’ah* (practitioners of *da’wa*) wanted to promote and support *da’wa* in Jordan. Opponents of Salafism still recall the role that a cultural adviser in the Saudi Embassy in Amman played in distributing Salafi books and supporting Salafi shaykhs in the 1990s.<sup>107</sup>

2. The oil boom led to thousands of Jordanians migrating to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf to work there, while Saudi universities opened their doors with scholarships for Jordanian students wishing to study shari’a and other religious sciences. Thousands of Jordanian students went to Saudi Arabia and encountered Salafi sciences and beliefs. And so unfolded a major, intensive process to create a new religious culture among millions of Jordanians.

3. Books and guides on Saudi Wahhabi Salafism proliferated in those years. Salafi *du’ah* and scholars of great religious renown emerged from various Salafi schools, and they found followers and supporters in Jordan. Meanwhile, annual Umrah trips served as another occasion to absorb the Salafi culture and pick up related books and literature.

In addition to the above, attention must be called to the transformation within the Muslim Brotherhood, a current that avoided involvement in controversies around creed or jurisprudence, preferring to focus on social, political, and religious objectives. But it was evident that Salafi thought was growing within the organization, and that leaders from a Salafi doctrinal and ideological background were emerging. Sufi culture, which had predominated in Muslim Brother-

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-75.

hood circles in previous decades, was in retreat. Why was this happening?

The situation within the Muslim Brotherhood was no different from the above contexts of Salafi spread and Saudi Arabia's obvious role. But another important factor was at play, namely that Saudi Arabia embraced Muslim Brotherhood leaders who fled the tyranny of Arab nationalist and socialist regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq and opened up its universities and schools to them to teach there. Salafism merged with Brotherhood ideas, and Haraki Salafism was born. It provided public figures who became very popular in the Islamic world generally in the 1990s, such as Shaykh Safar Al-Hawali, Shaykh Salman Al-Ouda, Nasser Al-Omar, and A'idAl-Qarni. The Brotherhood thus found an ally in Saudi Arabia, and a safe haven in its religious and educational institutions, and so its interests during that period converged with the Saudi position. Consequently, the group shook off the "Sufi residue" in its ideas, especially given what we know about influential *da'wa* and Brotherhood figures moving to Saudi Arabia and working there.<sup>108</sup>

Some pillars of the Ash'ari-Sufi school add another reason to the above, namely that university professors were wary of declaring beliefs contrary to Salafism, and were close to Saudi Arabia as they sought employment contracts to teach there, given the large salary differential. This took them out of the battle that had begun and was at usually fought unilaterally by the Salafi current against the existing popular religious culture.

On top of all that is another reason no less important than those above, namely Western modernity. Although Salafism may appear essentially incompatible with modernity—in terms of religious belief, practices, behavior, and even clothing—and most Salafis prohibit art, music, and other imports from Western modernity, modernity's influence on Arab and Muslim societies has nevertheless general-

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<sup>108</sup> See Stéphane Lacroix, *Zaman Al-Sahwa: Al-Harakat Al-Islamiyya Al-Mu'asira fi Al-Sa'udiyya* (Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia); Arab Network for Research and Publishing, Beirut; translation by Abdul Haqq Al-Zemmouri, First Edition, 2012, pp. 19-22.

ly caused greater suffering for Sufism and pushed Sufis toward seclusion, reclusiveness, and staying out of view. That is due to modernity's stark rejection of Sufi spirituality, arguments, and ideas that are altogether contrary to the "modern mind," as are Sufi practices such as dancing at gatherings and group *dhikr*, and theses associated with the unseen world. Such rituals have become unpalatable to the mainstream. The media and the arts also play a role by presenting a stereotypical image of Sufism based on prayer beads and dervishes and associated Sufism with scenes of "backwardness."

Although Salafism was engaged in a battle with modernism via its institutions and shaykhs, it was more closely aligned with modernism than was Sufism, because Salafis participated in the modernists' attacks on and ridicule of the manifestations of Sufism deemed contrary to reason and law. At the same time, the Salafis barricaded themselves behind a wall of religious text and the science of shari'a, which was perceived as more in line with the aspirations of communities that did not want to abandon their religion and yet were integrated into modernity. In the face of modernism, the emergence of influential Salafi shaykhs, in addition to the role of Saudi universities and those influenced by Salafi thinking in various countries, contributed to establishing some degree of balance in the claims exchanged between modernists and Salafis.

Perhaps this leads us to a reason just as important as those mentioned, one inherent to the nature of both Salafism and Sufism. Wahhabi Salafism originated as something of a socio-religious reform movement pursued under the banner of correcting people's beliefs and renouncing *bid'a*, *shirk* (idolatry), and other concepts. It is aggressive, combative social proselytism based on attacking opponents for their intellectual and religious beliefs. Sufism, by contrast, is based on spiritual advancement, purification, knowledge granted only to initiates, and the idea that "not everything that is known is said." It is based on a certain hierarchy and on a model incorporating individuality and subjective emotional experience. Unlike Salafism, Sufism has a hierarchy and is not an "open invitation." Salafism, meanwhile, has offered a shortcut for many people, as it is possible for a person, after a short period of learning, to become a "religious au-

thority” over those around him and say: “That is *bid’a*, this is error, that is not permitted.” With more learning, he can become a shaykh, charged with challenging others who disagree – again, in contrast to Sufism.

Later we will find the previous dynamics reversed. We will find that post-modernism, the media shift toward Sufism, and changes in international, regional, and even domestic policies rehabilitated Sufism. We will discuss all of this after spending time with some of the first combatants in the clash with Salafism.

## 5. On the front lines against Salafism

We noted how the Salafi attack ran into no defensive lines among official and non-official religious institutions, and how it managed, within the space of two decades, to make major changes in the domestic religious culture. But there were several individuals and certain groups that struggled on the front lines from the outset and dedicated themselves to this battle, including Shaykh Hasan Al-Saqqaf and Shaykh Saeed Foda.

Al-Saqqaf, who is descended from the Banu Hashim sharifs, started life with a love of the Islamic legal sciences. He was instructed in some of those sciences by Shaykh Ahmed Al-Khudri and Shaykh Mamdouh Abu Al-Shamat, both famous Sufi masters. He was surprised to learn at an early age that his great-great grandfather, Ahmed Alawi Al-Saqqaf, was a famous scholar and a Shafi’i mufti in Hejaz during the time of Sharif Hussein Bin Ali. Al-Saqqaf says, “He was a shaykh of the Husayni and Ba ‘Alawi *sada*, and I was influenced by him and his knowledge and language. He became a catalyst for me to follow in his footsteps.”<sup>109</sup>

Al-Saqqaf left for Damascus to study agriculture, but he remained infatuated with the religious sciences. Although he returned due to the intensifying confrontations between the Muslim Brother-

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<sup>109</sup> Interview with Shaykh Hasan Al-Saqqaf, op. cit. We will talk about Ba Alawiyya later.

hood and the regime in Syria, during his year there he continued attending lessons with masters such as Mohammed Said Ramadan Al-Bouti, Shaykh Mohammad Hashem Majzoub, and Shaykh Abdulrahman Al-Shaghouri.<sup>110</sup>

At the time, Al-Saqqaf received instruction in the Sufi path from AsadAl-Sagharji, a Hanafi shaykh from Damascus. Despite Al-Saqqaf's Sufism, he clearly was even more interested in books on creed, theology, hadith, and Islamic legal sciences. He therefore sought to meet Shaykh Nasiruddin Al-Albani in Damascus when the latter was there. He brought Al-Albani an assortment of religious questions and did not like the answers, which served to confirm his preexisting inclination against Al-Albani's Salafism.<sup>111</sup>

Al-Saqqaf returned to Amman in the early 1980s, ironically at the same time that Al-Albani settled in Jordan. Al-Saqqaf received scientific lessons in creed, *fiqh*, and Sufism from several shaykhs, including Mohammed Taysir Al-Makhzoumi, a pupil of Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani who lived in Jabal Al-Jofah in Amman and held *dhikr* sessions and the gatherings called *hadras*. Al-Saqqaf says, "He had me memorize the text of the Sanusi Creed and Abu Shuja's text on Shafaii*fiqh*, and I recited to him Shaykh Al-Hashimi's book *Mafatih Al-Janna* (The Keys to Paradise). Al-Makhzoumi gave me permission to hold hadra, and he said, 'If I am absent, Shaykh Hasan Al-Saqqaf will be my representative.'"<sup>112</sup>

Al-Saqqaf also studied with Shaykh Mohammed Halil, a well-known Sufi; Hussan Razouk, a Syrian Sufi who was the imam of a mosque in Jabal Al-Hussein; and Motea Al-Hamami, a shari'a judge. Al-Saqqaf therefore spent the 1980s absorbed in seeking knowledge from shaykhs and scholars in Jordan.

His early wrangling with the Salafis started with one of their most prominent masters, Shaykh Mohammad Ibrahim Shuqrah, who was an inspector in the Ministry of Awqaf. Al-Saqqaf clashed with

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

him at the Islamic Educational College and took a stand to refute the Salafi ideas he espoused. Al-Saqqaf later gained his own pupils and began writing and printing books in the mid-1980s in response to the Salafis, and he entered debates with their shaykhs and engaged in responses through books. This propelled him into the heart of the battle with Salafism, where he has been ever since the late 1980s.

In the mid-1980s, Al-Saqqaf met Shaykh Abdullah Al-Ghumari, a well-known Moroccan religious scholar, and went to Morocco to visit him. The relationship between them was cemented, and Al-Saqqaf took up another approach to the Sufi path at Al-Ghumari's hands. Al-Ghumari was a distinguished scholar of Islamic legal science, especially hadith, which was a forte of the Salafi current. Al-Saqqaf therefore considered it extremely important in order to prevail in the battle he was waging, especially given that he tried to rouse a front of Ash'ari and Sufi scholars to join him in the confrontation against the Salafis but was unable to do so because of the limited scholarly capabilities within the school during that period.<sup>113</sup>

Al-Saqqaf was greatly influenced by Al-Ghumari, and the latter became a scholarly authority for him. Al-Saqqaf was quick to say about Al-Ghumari, "He made me. ... I drew energy and light from him." It seems that Al-Saqqaf, having realized the weakness of the Jordanian schools, had finally found someone to support and bolster him. Telling a story that greatly impacted him, he says: "We were in Mecca once at the house of Shaykh Al-Fadani. Every year he would invite Shaykh Al-Ghumari to his home for three months. My letters rebutting Salafism had spread, and Syrians from Aleppo came to Mecca and said, 'Brother Hasan is a learned man, but if only he would cease this vehemence!' Al-Ghumari told them, 'If they –the Salafis– stand down, then we will stand down.'" <sup>114</sup>

Al-Saqqaf's battles with the Salafis intensified in the late 1980s. He entered a famous debate with Shaykh Ali Al-Halabi –one of Al-Albani's pupils– after Al-Saqqaf declared Ibn Taymiyyah a *kafir*, i.e.

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<sup>113</sup> Interview with Hasan Al-Saqqaf, *ibid*.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*.

an unbeliever. The debate lasted for hours and was moderated by Shaykh Dr. Ali Al-Faqir.<sup>115</sup>

As a means of defending the Ash'ari creed, Sufism, and the schools of *fiqh*, Al-Saqqaf subsequently authored books, responses, and other writings: "I persisted in writing and teaching, and I planned strategies. The most important was to create alternatives to the Salafi books, especially on creed and *fiqh*, and especially because anyone seeking a book on creed to learn about Ash'arism in simple language would find nothing. So, I decided to write simplified books on creed, and I composed a book refuting Al-Albani in three volumes, and I called it *The Contradictions of Al-Albani*. That is what brought me significant global fame."

The second shaykh is Dr. Saaed Foda, born in 1967 in Jabal Shamali near Russeifa, Zarqa Governorate. His love of Islamic legal science began early, when he was 12 years old. He studied with two local shaykhs: Hussein Al-Zuhairi (an imam at the Great Mosque in Russeifa and a successor of Shaykh Mohammed Halil's in Russeifa) and Shaykh Said Al-Anabtawi (a specialist in *qira'at* (different readings or recitations) of the Qu'ran).<sup>116</sup>

Foda clashed with the Salafis starting in the 1990s. His interest inclined toward the study of Islamic legal sciences. Although he was studying engineering at the University of Science and Technology, shari'a was the object of his interest and passion. He formed around himself a group of students and *murids* in the legal sciences, and he taught Ash'ari creed, theology (*kalam*), and other sciences. His school began to bear fruit in the form of pupils who would later become prominent in Islamic legal sciences and in the fields of *da'wa*, preaching, and thought, such as Awn Al-Qaddoumi, Dr. Amjad Rashid, Dr. Ahmed Al-Hasanat, and other pupils of Foda's.

Our interest in both Al-Saqqaf and Foda stems from their major and early impact on the balance of the conflict with the Salafi current.

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<sup>115</sup> A recording of the debate is available on the website Kul Al-Salafiyeen, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yd33oz4v>

<sup>116</sup> Private interview with Shaykh Saeed Foda at his home on 13/4/2020.

Each of them had his own presence and influence. Al-Saqqaf was close for a time to decision-making circles, and he played a primary role in some institutions, such as the Faculty of Da'wa and Fundamentals of Religion, Aal Al-Bayt University, and later World Islamic Sciences and Education University. While he was not directly in the picture, he was influential in several official decisions and orientations, especially the previously mentioned turnaround in religious policy in favor of the Ash'ari-*madhhabi*-Sufi school. Saeed Foda's presence is evident through his influential pupils, including university professors, *du'ah*, *fiqh* jurists, and imams involved in issuing fatwas. Today, Foda is a professor who holds the Imam Al-Razi Chair, and he gives lessons at the King Hussein Mosque. Along with Al-Saqqaf, he is considered one of Jordan's most prominent Ash'ari-*madhhabi* authorities in the past decades.

Meanwhile, also in the 1990s, pupils of the well-known Ash'ari-Shafi'i-Rifa'i Sufi Shaykh Abdullah Al-Harari settled in Jordan and founded the Arab Islamic Cultural Society. We will talk about them later, but it is important to note here that had their own part in the conflict and dispute with the Salafis and even with other Islamic political currents. Harari's followers, also known as Al-Ahbash, vigorously attacked the Salafi current, Ibn Taymiyyah, and several well-known figures in Islamic history.

Before that, in the mid-1980s, Fadia Al-Tabbaa founded the Development and Social Services Association. A parallel Sufi feminist movement emerged as an outgrowth of the Al-Qubaysiat movement in Syria and was active in *da'wa* and education, especially in the home. This indicates that the currents opposed to the Salafis began to form and grow during the 1990s and the first decade of the current century.

## 6. Is a "Sufi wave" coming?

This is an important question, and it is not easy to answer. There are many indications of fundamental transformations in Jordanian religious policies, which adopted the Ash'ari -Sufi school and pushed Salafism aside – policies consistent with and complementary

to similar international and regional shifts. The same can be said with regard to the society's religious culture, where Sufi or spiritual tendencies have begun to emerge.

What are the factors influencing these shifts?

1. At the international policy level, there has been a clear global trend since the events of September 11, 2001, in the United States, to hold Salafism itself responsible, as an ideological school, for incubating violence and extremism. This trend calls for searching out alternative visions in place of Salafism, and American think tanks and research centers have put out reports pushing to support alternatives such as Sufism. Of course, this does not mean that Sufism is in any way part of a global conspiracy. Several think tanks in decades past have adopted visions that diverge from the alliance with political Islam, and US foreign policy itself once supported jihadi Salafi movements and was allied with Saudi Arabia in the Afghan war. The point is that today there is a Western and American trend that sees Sufism as a religion option that is peaceful, not violent, as compared to Salafism.<sup>117</sup> Perhaps one of the clearest expressions of the trend towards Sufism worldwide and regionally was the conference held in Chechnya in August 2016 at the invitation of the Chechen president,

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<sup>117</sup> See the translation of the report "Understanding Sufism and its Potential Role in U.S. Policy" ("Fahm Al-Sufiyyawa-Istishraf Mustaqbaliha fi Al-Siyasa Al-Amrikiyya") by Tobias Helmstorf, Yasemin Sener, and Emmet Tuohy, ed. Zeyno Baran; Nixon Center Conference Report, March 2004, Washington D.C.; translated and presented by Dr. Mazin Motabagani; pp. 2-10. The report quotes the well-known orientalist Bernard Lewis as saying: "But Sufism is remarkable. It offers something better than tolerance. The attitude to people of other religions exhibited in Sufi writings is without parallel. It is not just tolerance, it is acceptance. There are poems by Rumi, by Ibn Arabi in Persian and Turkish which indicate that all the religions are basically the same" (p. 37). This is reinforced by what Shaykh Hashim Kabbani says, as also quoted in the report: "Accordingly, we are faced with the following question: are we as Americans going to support the Sufis, or work with the Wahhabis? If we do the latter, we run the risk that we work with terrorists, whereas there is no such risk with Sufis. It is very simple: the United States must reach out to non-Wahhabi Muslims if it wants to succeed in this battle. It's a no-lose proposition!" (p. 37). See the English text of the report issued as issued by the Center for the National Interest, 2004, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ybhd6s4h>

which was attended by religious leaders from the Arab and Islamic world. The object of the conference was to define Ahl Al-Sunna wa-l-Jama'a, i.e. who qualifies as a Sunni Muslim. The conference participants concluded that "Ahl Al-Sunna wa-l-Jama'a are those who follow the Ash'ari or Maturidi schools in creed, including the Ahl Al-Hadith who adopted the principal of *tafwid* (consignment); the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i or Hanbali schools in Islamic law and jurisprudence; and the path of spirituality in its manifestation as science and practice, namely the adornment of noble character and purification of the heart, as exemplified in the order of Al-Junayd and the imams who followed his way."<sup>118</sup> It is notable that the conference implicitly excluded the Wahhabi-Salafi current from Ahl Al-Sunna when it confined that designation to those from the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools, and the Ahl Al-Hadith who do not attempt a rational explanation of God's attributes, instead consigning them to God alone; then focused on sanctioning the traditional schools of *fiqh*; and finally recognized "moderate Sufism" as represented, according to the conference participants, by the school of Al-Junayd.

2. A number of regional transformations and developments are functioning hand-in-hand with international and global variables to enact policies through several Arab governments and countries to support Sufism as the alternative to political Islam, violence and extremism. In this regard, we see the support for institutions involved in promoting and defending Sufism, such as the Tabah Foundation in the United Arab Emirates, Kalam Research & Media, and other institutions in several Arab countries. On the political front, recent changes in Saudi Arabia since the ascension of Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman may be an important indicator of a decline in Saudi and Gulf policies in support of Salafism, and that Salafism is suffering the loss of its political incubator as the UAE and other Arab states adopt Sufism and provide it new arenas for growth and proliferation.

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<sup>118</sup> See the concluding statement on the official website of the Chechnya Conference: <https://tinyurl.com/ybtxv5um>

3. There is a Sufi-Arab trend which can be said, at a minimum, to have coordinated efforts for the first time to support the Ash'ari-Sufi school and adopt its religious and intellectual discourse. These efforts can be observed in the cooperation between "the Habibs" in Yemen, Shaykh Habib Al-Jifri and Shaykh Habib Omar Bin Hafiz, with others who have transcended the national boundaries of Yemen. We note their presence in Egypt, Jordan, and several other Arab countries, in coordination with religious leaders such as former mufti of Egypt Shaykh Ali Gomaa, the late former mufti of Jordan Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah, the late Mohammed Said Ramadan Al-Bouti, and others. This sort of supranational trend has begun to redefine Sufism, shore up its foundations, and present it in the form of new rhetoric. The Habibs have a broad audience, a new and refreshed presence, and a marked influence in the Arab world. This sort of coordinating role helps reintroduce Sufism in the contemporary age, when the previous hallmark of Sufism was that it was closed up among *zawiyas*, orders, and *murids*.

4. At the intellectual, cultural, and societal level, modernist philosophy rejected Sufism and relegated it to the corner or into Sufi *zawiyas*. Furthermore, societies influenced by modernism and its scientific, technological, and philosophical power often spurn Sufi-inflected spiritual orientations and narratives, preferring the tangible, material world and strictly rational knowledge based on scientific and laboratory experiments and on critical thinking. Hence, if one of the manifestations of modernism is that it is not compatible with religious philosophies, this is all the more true for spiritual Sufism, which privileges the unseen and the intangible. In the second half of the 20th century, however, post-modernism began its ascension. While post-modernism did not incline toward Sufism so much as it destroyed the underpinnings of modernism and pushed for reconsideration of its assumptions, this indirectly rehabilitated spirituality and Sufism worldwide. The spiritual world, once deemed a myth, came to be acknowledged even within the social sciences. One example is psychology, which witnessed the birth of several schools that recognize religion and the soul, such as transpersonal psychology,

positive psychology, and humanistic psychology.<sup>119</sup> We will see how this “wave” cast up onto the shores of Sufism new Sufis who were influenced by the views Ibn Arabi, Jalaluddin Rumi, and Tabrizi and were searching for something spiritual. In Sufism, they found a safe haven.

5. There are numerous studies and surveys that observe the transformations occurring in patterns of religiosity among young Muslims, especially after the Arab Spring. They are moving away from “political Islam,” and are searching for a mode of spiritual, individual religiosity, which many are finding in Sufism. That is what has happened in some Jordanian examples.<sup>120</sup>

6. The shift in Jordanian religious policies towards strengthening Ash'ari-*madhhab*-Sufi identity. This sort of orientation is likely to produce results soon, via the hundreds of graduates of World Islamic Sciences and Education University's faculties of *fiqh* and through new religious civil society institutions.

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<sup>119</sup> See Ali Kusa and Ali Ayten, *Ilm Al-Nafs Al-Dini* (Religious Psychology); translation by Abdul Samad Taibi, Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press, First Edition, 2019, pp. 10-60. See also Mohammed Abu Rumman, “‘An Ilm Al-Nafs Al-Dini wa-Mujtama’atina” (“On Religious Psychology and Our Societies”), Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, 10/3/2020.

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, the researcher Hamza Yassin's master's thesis in sociology, “Al-Taghayyur fi Tadayyun Al-Shabab min Mustakhdimi Mawaqi' Al-Tawasul Al-Ijtima'i fi Madinat Amman: Facebook Namudhajan” (“Changing Religiosity Among Young Social Media Users in Amman: Facebook as a Model”); University of Jordan School of Graduate Studies, October 2017, pp. 94-102. Compare to Jörg Gertel and Ralf Hexel, editors, *Ma'ziq Al-Shabab fi-l-Sharq Al-Awsat wa-Shamal Afriqiya* (Coping with Uncertainty: Youth in the Middle East and North Africa); Dar Al-Saqi, Beirut; First Edition, 2019. The book consists of surveys involving 9,000 Arab youths in eight Arab countries, as well as Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In the sphere of religiosity, the survey responses lead to the remarkable finding that “Religion for MENA youth today no longer serves political or ideological purposes, but instead centers on individual well-being and self-discipline, making it more of a channel for spirituality. Where one finds high degrees of piety, it is primarily felt at the individual level, no longer in terms of a collective social utopia” (p. 33).

If we look at the above variables taken together, they at minimum show that we are facing a new stage, one with international, regional, local, and philosophical underpinnings that signal transformations in the Sufi landscape and increasing opportunities for a potential return to Sufism. But that requires a conceptual framework with some key components, such as these important determinants:

First: The current trend to support Sufism situates it as part of the composite that is the Ash'ari -*madhhab*i-Sufi triangle. In this instance, Sufi seems to be part of a whole, and in the new trend it is most likely that doctrinal and jurisprudential considerations will take priority in religious policies over Sufism generally, although this does not preclude recognition of Sufism under the new heading "legitimized" or "lawful" Sufism, which is what some call "moderate Sufism" or the "school of Junayd." Among some shaykhs and orientations, such as the Sufi orders, we find that Sufism takes precedence over doctrinal and *madhhab*i-*fiqh* considerations. Among others, such as academics, muftis, and a number of shaykhs and scholars, Sufism is secondary, the primary battle being the one that pits Ash'ari beliefs or *fiqh* schools against other currents. We will find this composite school in the legacy of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, in particular among Sufi luminaries, because he was someone with the solid scholarly and intellectual ability to synthesize creed, jurisprudence, and behavior.

It is important for us to realize that the existence of this general framework for the Ash'ari -Sufi school does not conceal or eliminate the significant internal disputes and differences. Matters may escalate to clashes and conflict, as we find between certain shaykhs within this framework, or among religious and intellectual orientations. We will see later how the "shari'a-based Sufism" adopted by many in this school will clash with "gnostic Sufism" over issues such as the Oneness of Being (*wahdat Al-wujud*), their stances on Ibn Arabi, and other matters.

Second: The existence of "politics" or attempts to "politicize" and exploit Sufism on the global and Arab levels does not necessarily mean it is being mainstreamed or that the Sufi case should be treated

as the product of a “conspiracy.” As we found earlier, no religious trend is free from politicization, and this applies equally to traditionalist Salafism or even jihadism in its most radical form, i.e. ISIS. It is not hyperbole for us to assert that all religious doctrines and schools of jurisprudence throughout history have been politicized, and the sources of their strength and weakness have often been their proximity to or distance from political power. Caliph Al-Ma’mun adopted Mu’tazilism; the Buyids and the Fatimids adopted Shi’ism; and the Seljuks, Turks, and Ayyubids adopted the Ash’ari -Sufi school. But it is also important to draw attention here to the fact that Sufism began as an “internalized protest” against political authority, and that Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, a Sufi shaykh, wrote in *Ihya’ ‘Ulum Al-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) an important chapter preceding the book’s other chapters, in which he warned against scholars of the earthly world and authorities, and stressed that it was important for scholars to be independent and incorruptible. This may lead us to the necessity of distinguishing between an authority adopting a certain doctrine and exploiting that doctrine in the service of political power. An example is Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah, as we will see. While he was one of the most prominent official religious leaders, he maintained a great deal of independence and the society’s respect and credibility.

Third: Across history, it was natural that a particular religious trend would rise and then recede, or would predominate for a period of time. There are probably indicators of shifts toward Sufism, but what is the extent and magnitude of these shifts? More importantly, how long do they last, and how stable have they been? These questions are difficult to answer at present, and are perhaps linked in part to the State’s religious policies and the stability of those policies, and also conditional on society’s openness to answering them. This in turn depends on this school’s ability to offer the public an acceptable model and convincing, credible religious discourse, because there is broad segment of society with a general aversion to rhetoric that is beholden to political authority. Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah attained his legitimacy and standing through his independence and credibility. It is notable that the Ash’ari-Sufi school has had a growing media presence in more than one sphere in recent times. With respect to

preaching and *da'wa*, we find broad acceptance of Mohammed Rateb Al-Nabulsi, the Sufi-Ash'ari Syrian shaykh who resides in Amman, and also Shaykh Mohammad Noah Al-Qudah, the member of parliament and former minister who is the son of Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah. While neither of them talks directly about matters of creed or about Sufism so much as they focus on *da'wa*, this may be more successful with the public than the approach, often taken by others, based on theological arguments against Salafis and other schools.



## CHAPTER TWO

# FROM ORDERS TO A NETWORK

*If You are the cause of my confusion, then to whom  
can I escape my confusion?*

*O my confusion, O my wonder, through You my grief  
continued*

*You are the One who set me in confusion, through You  
I became scattered*

*Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi*



The Sufi orders entered Jordanian society via the establishment of *zawiyas* (Sufi lodges) starting in the early 1950s. Before that, there was Sufi heritage and there were Sufi shaykhs, but in most areas of the Kingdom there were no *zawiyas* with shaykhs, *murids* (students), followers, and traditions. There are several reasons behind the initial Sufi wave, which was linked to migration from Palestine to Jordan after the 1948 Nakba (“catastrophe,” the common Arab term for the Arab-Israeli War), then the unification of the two banks in 1950. Many Sufi masters moved to Jordan after those events. Then came the Naksa in 1967, which reinforced the Sufi presence in Jordan and contributed to increasing the number and spread of *zawiyas*.

From those early beginnings for the Sufi orders to today, 70 years later, we see approximately three generations of Sufis. The first is the founding generation, which started launching *zawiyas* and founding Sufi orders in society, then the succeeding generation that propagated the orders and strengthened their presence and spread, and finally today’s youth generation, which represents a transitional phase on more than one level. It coincides with a shift in the State’s religious policies and a new Sufi wave associated with political, intellectual, and cultural factors. Today we find Sufi orders that are adapting to transformations and orders that are becoming institutions, while other orders and *zawiyas* are on their way to extinction.

In this chapter, we will address the transformations in Jordan’s Sufi landscape by examining the founding and spread of Sufi orders, studying institutional and networked Sufism through the youth generation, and learning about the school of Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah.



## TOPIC 1

### SUFI ORDERS: FOUNDING AND SPREAD

It can be said that in modern history, specifically from the end of the 19th century to today, the Sufi landscape in Jordan has passed through three main stages and witnessed successive generations. If we skip the pre-founding phase before the spread of *zawiyas* and orders (*tariqas*), the initial founding generation is the one that worked in the 1950s to establish *zawiyas* and bring *tariqa*-based Sufism to Jordan. That generation continued into the 1960s and has completely passed away. The second is the generation that carried out a process of strengthening and building, and most of them have now passed away. The third generation came after that, then the youth generation, which clearly represents a new phase on the Sufi scene in Jordan.

#### 1. The founding generation:

The Nakba and then the unification of the two banks heralded a new era for Sufism in Jordan, as the context changed dramatically. Some figures had a major impact on this transformation from the outset. Among the most prominent symbols of the founding generation were Shaykh Mohammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi and Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali, who was of Moroccan origin. Both of them began their educational activities and founded Sufi *zawiyas* in the mid-1950s, and they were affiliated with the same school, namely the Shadhili-Darqawi-Alawi Order (or Allawi – both are used).

Shaykh Al-Kurdi founded his *zawiya* in the city of Irbid and moved to an area near the Irbid refugee camp before later moving to the Al-Sarih area and establishing his *zawiya* there. His followers subsequently contributed to the establishment of a mosque and a tomb for him during the 1970s. Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali, meanwhile, came to Jordan in 1953 and founded his first *zawiya* near the Al-Husseini Mosque, then moved to the Hayy Al-Arab neighborhood of

Zarqa, where he founded a mosque and a *zawiya* in his name in 1967.<sup>121</sup>

While the Shadhili Order was getting its feet on the ground, Shaykh Abdul Hafez Al-Tahrawi, who had made the pledge to Shaykh Yousef Al-Nuwayhi in Palestine, came to Jordan after the Nakba, settling initially in the town of Al-Karama in Al-Aghwar. He founded a *zawiya* there after the 1948 Nakba, then moved to the Jabal el-Hussein camp and settled there and founded his *zawiya*. Rifa'izawiyas thus began to spread in many regions via his disciples and *murids*.<sup>122</sup>

As for the Qadiri Order, it entered Jordan by way of the disciples of Shaykh Muhammad Hashim Al-Baghdadi, a Qadirishaykh in Palestine and Jordan and the successor to Shaykh Muhammad Habibullah Al-Shanqiti. Some of them had met Al-Baghdadi through their military service in Palestine in the 1950s and others through Shaykh Al-Baghdadi's visits to Jordan. He administered the Qadiri pledge to them, and many of them were allowed to set up *zawiyas* and circles for *dhikr* ("remembrance" of God) that were subsequently endorsed by Shaykh Al-Baghdadi's current successor in Jerusalem, Shaykh Ahmad Al-Natsheh, who is the shaykh of the Qadiri Order in Jordan and Palestine and makes frequent visits members of the Order at these outposts.

One of the most prominent founders of Qadirizawiyas in Jordan, Shaykh Abdul Halim Ouda Al-Qadiri (born 1930), left Lod for Jordan early in his youth and worked as a muadhin and imam. He established a *zawiya* in the Shuna area and remained active there until 1966, after which he moved to Al-Hashmi Al-Shamali and founded a Qadirizawiya there.<sup>123</sup>

The Khalwati-Qasimi-Jami'a order was spreading in Jordan at the same time, after Shaykh Abdul Hayy Al-Qasimi settled in the city of Irbid following the Nakba. He founded *zawiyas* in the Barha district of Irbid and in the city of Zarqa prior to the founding of the Darawish

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<sup>121</sup> Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya*, op. cit., pp. 99-110.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pp. 118-122.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., pp. 123-128.

Mosque and a *zawiya* for the order in the Bayader Wadi Al-Seer area. Also during the 1950s, Shaykh Hassan Al-Sharif, a shaykh of the Khalwati-Rahmani-Jami'a Order, settled in Amman, founded the Najah National School, and worked in teaching, giving sermons, and helping others travel the path in the Khalwati-Rahmani-Jami'a Order, doing so at the Bayader Wadi Al-Seer Central Mosque. In Palestine, the Khalwati Order has been divided between the Sharifs and the Qasimis since 1928.<sup>124</sup>

The Tijani Order, meanwhile, entered Jordan by way of the disciples of Shaykh Ali Al-Dakar at first and then those of Shaykh Muhammad Mahmoud Mustafa Al-Musaleh, also known as Abu Salah Al-Tijani, who studied the Tijani Order under the Moroccan shaykh Ahmad Al-Dadisi, who granted him the authorization known as *idhn* to teach and lead in the order in the early 1960s. He set up a gathering for *dhikr* at his home in the Al-Mahatta neighborhood of Amman.<sup>125</sup>

Although Shaykh Nazim Haqqani, the worldwide shaykh of the Naqshbandi Order, visited Jordan in the 1950s and went into *khalwa* (spiritual seclusion) there, the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order arrived late in comparison to other orders, in the subsequent decades.

These are the most prominent men of the generation that established the Sufi orders in Jordan, with whom *zawiyas* began to spread in the Kingdom's cities of Irbid, Zarqa, and Amman. From the womb of those first *zawiyas* emerged others, and the orders proliferated further throughout various governorates.

It is notable that the members of the founding generation are all deceased: Shaykh Sa'id Al-Kurdi (1890-1972), Shaykh Al-Filali (1888-1986), Shaykh Abdul Halim Al-Kilani (1886-1968), Shaykh Abdul Hayy Al-Qasimi (1899-1962), Shaykh Hassan Al-Sharif (1926-1984), and Shaykh Abdul Hafez Al-Tahrawi (1910-2002), and Abdul Halim Al-Qadiri (1930-1998). The founding generation would leave

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<sup>124</sup> Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif, private interview at his home in Bayader Wadi Al-Seer, 19/5/2020.

<sup>125</sup> See Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun"; op. cit., pp. 90-91.

behind successors, and new Sufi orders would migrate to Jordan in the 1980s, 1990s, and beyond and found dozens of *zawiyas*.

## 2. The strengthening and building phase:

Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh returned from Syria after being educated there and finishing his university studies. Shaykh Abdul Qadir Issa granted him *idhn* in the Shadhili Order, and he established a *zawiya* near downtown Amman in the 1960s before founding a new *zawiya* and a mosque named Dar Al-Qur'an. He was transferred to the Hayy Nazzal area and then began founding several *zawiyas* in various regions.<sup>126</sup>

Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib also came to Jordan after the Six-Day War, and Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfagranted him *idhn* in the Rifa'i Order in Syria in 1976. He also established the Imam Rawas Mosque in the Jabal Al-Zuhour area of eastern Amman. Shaykh Omar Al-Sarafandi settled in Jabal Al-Nasr at about the same time, after being instructed in the Rifa'i Order by Shaykh Abu Yaqub Al-Sarafandi, then by Shaykh Hatem Al-Rawi in Iraq in 1978. He founded his *zawiya* in the 1980s in Jabal Al-Nasr in eastern Amman. Meanwhile, Shaykh Muhammad Adel Al-Sharif of the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order founded a hadith school in the Al-Wehdatrefugee camp to teach recitation of the Qur'an and also celebrate religious events such as Mawlid, the Prophet Muhammad's birthday.<sup>127</sup>

Shaykh Ali Abu Zaid, nicknamed Al-Ashqar or the Blond Shaykh, came to Jordan from Jenin in Palestine after the 1948 Nakba and initially settled in the city of Sahab, before moving to the el-Hussein Camp. He met Shaykh Al-Tahrawi and received *idhn* from him in five Sufi orders, then in 1979 met Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa, who granted him *idhn* in the Rifa'i Order. In the 1980s, he founded his *zawiya* in Russeifa, Zarqa Governorate.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> We will talk in detail in the next chapter about Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh.

<sup>127</sup> Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya," op. cit. 53-55.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

Meanwhile, in Amman in the early 1980s, Shaykh Ahmad Al-Yashruti took over as successor to the Shadhili-Yashruti Order following his father's death. He founded a *zawiya* in his home in the 4th Circle, but it was later moved to the new *zawiya* building in the Al-Jandawil neighborhood.

At the end of the 1990s, Shaykh Nazem Haqqani, the world-wide shaykh of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, instructed Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi, who served Shaykh Abdullah Al-Daghastani, to move to Amman to establish a presence for the Naqshbandi Order, and so he founded a Naqshbandi *zawiya* near the Abu Sham Mosque in Jabal Amman.

The Sufi orders thus became entrenched in Jordan, *zawiyas* multiplied, and the shaykhs had their successors. The most prominent features of the Jordanian Sufi map were:

### *I. The Shadhili Order:*

With its various branches, the Shadhili Order today is the most widespread in Jordan, and some Sufis consider Jordanians to be "Shadhilisby inclination." The key developments that have taken place are as follows:

After the death of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi, who entrusted succession of the order to Shaykh Abdulrahman Al-Shaghouri, there was dissension and a split among his followers. Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Momani created an independent branch of the order and founded a new *zawiya* and the Al-Junayd Mosque in Hayy Al-Janubi in Irbid. He was succeeded by Shaykh Abdul Karim Urabi, who was later succeeded in 2014 by Shaykh Ahmed Al-Akour.

On the other side of the split, Shaykh Al-Shaghouri appointed successors such as Shaykh Younes Hamdan Al-Dajeh and Dr. Ahmad Al-Jammal, neither of which stayed on, and he granted *idhn* to the American-born Shaykh Nuh Keller, who moved from Irbid to Amman in the late 1990s to found a new mosque and the Shadhilizawiya in the Kharabsheh neighborhood of Amman Sports City. In Damascus,

meanwhile, Shaykh Al-Shaghour granted *idhn* to Shaykh Al-Kurdi's son, Shaykh Ismail, to lead others in the way of the order at his father's *zawiya* and mosque in Al-Sarih and Irbid Refugee Camp. Al-Shaghour also granted *idhn* to Shaykh Abdul Rahman Amoura, who lives in the United Arab Emirates and was one of Shaykh Sa'id Al-Kurdi.

After the death of Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali, he was succeeded at his mosque and *zawiya*, in Hayy Al-Arab neighborhood of Zarqa, by his son Dr. Muhammad Al-Filali, as well as Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh, who established a *zawiya* in Kafr Yuba; Shaykh Shehadeh Al-Radaydeh, who established a *zawiya* in Maan; and Shaykh Ali Al-Husseini, who established a *zawiya* in Shafa Badran.

Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh, a disciple of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Issa who was initiated into the Order by Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani, expanded the creation of Shadhili-Qadirizawiyas in many areas. So did Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh, who became active in *da'wa* (proselytism) and preaching after retiring in the late 1980s from the Public Security Directorate division responsible for issuing fatwas on questions of Islamic law, giving sermons and teaching at Al-Kalouti Mosque in the Rabiah district of Amman. He was initiated into the Order by Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali and became a well-known Sufi *da'i* (practitioner of *da'wa*) in Jordan. His religious activity and presence were notable in the 1990s, when he taught public lessons at mosques such as Sido Al-Kurdi and Al-Kalouti, and also held private lessons at his home in Marka Al-Shamalia until he created an endowment for those religious lessons at a house in the Al-Kursi neighborhood in Amman.<sup>129</sup>

One Shadhili-Qadirizawiya is Shaykh Abdul Hadi Samoura's *zawiya* off Rainbow Street in Jabal Amman. Samoura received the *idhn* of Shaykh Ahmad Fathallah Al-Jami, successor to Shaykh Abdul Qadir Issa.

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<sup>129</sup> See Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh's official website at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yalm93r4> [WRONG LINK]

Interview with one of his *murids* at my office at the University of Jordan on 20/5/2020.

The Shadhili-Yashruti Order, meanwhile, created a new *zawiya* in the Al-Jandawil that also incorporated a scholarly library. There is also Shaykh Dr. Abdul Jalil Al-Abadleh, who was initiated into the Shadhili-Yashruti Order in the 1970s by Shaykh Abdul Rahman Abu Rishah after having previously been initiated into the Naqshbandi Order by Najm Al-Din Al-Kurdi in the 1960s. Shaykh Abdul Jalil holds lessons at the shrine of Prophet Shuaib in Balqa Governorate.<sup>130</sup>

The streams of the Shadhili school in Jordan include the *murids* and successors of Shaykh Khalil Al-Baraghaithi, also known as Abu Ibrahim, from Ramla in Palestine. He was first initiated into the order in the prime of his life by Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali in Ramla. Shaykh Al-Allawi Al-Shaykh Al-Hilali came to the order a while later, and Shaykh Khalil Al-Baraghaithi made him his lieutenant and granted him *idhn* in Al-Ism Al-A'zam (the word "Allah") as Shaykh Al-Allawi authorized him to do. After staying a while in Ramla, Shaykh Al-Baraghaithi left for Jerusalem to reside there, in service at Al-Aqsa Mosque, where he had a *zawiya* for the poor called Al-Zawiya Al-Hamra'. When the Israelis entered East Jerusalem in 1967, he left his home of Ramla even further behind and went to Amman, leaving them the Order's current lieutenant, Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Afghani, who continues to carry out guidance and education functions.<sup>131</sup>

Shaykh Al-Baraghaithi resided in Jordan until his death. His *zawiya* was initially at the Grand Husseini Mosque, and then the Al-lawis created another *zawiya* for themselves under his supervision in Hisban, Jordan, and also established other branches of the Allawi *zawiya*.

He has many successors, among the most famous of whom are Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Afghani, Shaykh Haider Yaqub Hamu Al-Idrisi, and Shaykh Islam Muhammad Al-Hindi. This *zawiya* is distinctive in having maintained its ties to the parent *zawiya* in Mostaganem, Algeria, and their friendly relationship with Shaykh Khalid, the

<sup>130</sup> See Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun"; op. cit., p. 44. See also Dr. Abdul Jalil's Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/ycp7klhq>

<sup>131</sup> For a biography of Shaykh Al-Baraghaithi, see the Al-Allawi blog, 27/12/2017, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycz3u73n>

grandson of Shaykh Eddah and successor to Shaykh Al-Allawi. His grandson Islam Al-Hindi – one of his successors in Jordan – resides in his home in the Tabarbour neighborhood of Amman.<sup>132</sup>

## *II. The Rifa'i Order:*

One of Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa's disciples was Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib, one of Jordan's most prominent Sufis, who founded the Rawas Mosque and the Rawasi *zawiya* in the Jabal Al-Zuhour area of Amman. He expanded his activities and ultimately founded the Soufia TV channel and other Sufi and *da'wa* institutions. After his passing, his son Al-Mutasim succeeded him.

In the Al-Nasr Camp in Amman is the *zawiya* of Shaykh Omar Al-Sarafandi, who practiced *darb Al-shish*, ritual piercing of the body with skewers, and other acts that he and his followers consider *karamat* (saintly wonders). Al-Sarafandi died some years ago, and one of his sons is his current successor.

After the death of Shaykh Ali Abu Zaid, Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh succeeded him in his *zawiya* in Russeifa starting in 1997, and he later moved the *zawiya* to a more spacious location in the Al-Rashid neighborhood of Russeifa. Shaykh Muraweh has been sanctioned in five Sufi orders, but he pursues the Rifa'i Order like Ali Abu Zaid, his shaykh.

Shaykh Dr. Sa'id Hawwa, who moved to Jordan after the 1982 massacre in Hama, Syria, was one of the most prominent Muslim Brotherhood leaders and also known for being Sufi. His son, Dr. Muadh Said Hawwa, followed him onto the path of Sufism and currently teaches at World Islamic Sciences and Education University. He also conducts lessons at his mosque in the Sweileh district of Amman, and on Thursdays he attends the *hadra* (gathering) led by Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh in Russeifa. Hawwa has a number of disciples and *murids*.

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with Shakir Al-Kilani, 18/6/2020.

As for the stream of the Rifa'i Order that stems from the disciples of Shaykh Yousef Al-Nuwayhi, after the death of Shaykh Abdul Hafez Al-Tahrawi in 2002, his son Mohammed succeeded him. There are *zawiyas* led by the sons and grandsons of Shaykh Yousef Al-Nuwayhi in the Al-Quwaysimah area and the Madaba Camp.

Shaykh Al-Tahrawi's disciples included Shaykh Faris Al-Thalji Al-Rifa'i in Jerash, who was initiated into Sufi orders by more than one shaykh. He was sanctioned in the Rifa'i Order by Shaykh Al-Tahrawi in 1991. His *zawiya* is in Jerash, and he has *zawiyas* in Morocco, Baqaa, and Al-Muqabalayn, as well as many successors without *zawiyas*.<sup>133</sup>

### *III. The Qadiri Order:*

The order followed Shaykh Muhammad Hashim Al-Baghdadi in Jerusalem, then his successor, Shaykh Ahmad Al-Natsheh. Shaykh Abdul Halim Al-Qadiri was succeeded in his *zawiya* in Al-Hashmi Al-Shamali by his son Shaykh Muhammad Abdul Halim Al-Qadiri. There are also still several *zawiyas* in Russeifa, Zarqa, Shuna, Al-Karak, Irbid, and Amman.<sup>134</sup>

### *IV. The Khalwati Order:*

One division, the Khalwati-Rahmani-Jami'a Order, originated with Shaykh Husni Hassan Al-Sharif, succeeding his father as shaykh of the order in Jordan and Palestine in a formal ceremony in 1988. Shaykh Husni undertook the construction of a mosque, *zawiya*, schools, charitable societies, and orphanages associated with the order, and he extended the order outside Jordan to Ghana and other countries. Meanwhile, *zawiyas* in Irbid and Zarqa, and Al-Darawish Mosque and his *zawiya* in Bayader Wadi Al-Seer, remained affiliated with the Khalwati-Qasimizawiya, which expanded through institutions and educational and religious work in Palestine, especially those areas that became part of Israel in 1948. The Al-Qasimi Acade-

<sup>133</sup> Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya*, op. cit., pp. 118-122.

<sup>134</sup> Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya," op. cit. 63-64.

my was established there, along with *zawiyas*, schools, and a college. Some view the Khalwati-Qasimi order as having a strong role in Palestine, while it has receded in Jordan in recent years.<sup>135</sup>

#### *V. The Naqshbandi Order:*

The entrenchment of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order began with Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi. After he moved to Turkey years some years ago, Shaykh Abu Al-Yusr and Sitt Umm Mariam succeeded him.

#### *VI. The Tijani Order:*

Shaykh Abu Salah Al-Tijani continued to conduct *dhikr* sessions and preach at his home in Al-Mahatta until his death, but the Tijani Order did not become widespread. Then Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Safarini sanctioned Shaykh Mansour Ahmed Nasser Al-Yemani in the Tijani Order in the early 1990s, and Shaykh Ahmed Mohammad Al-Tijani Al-Masri appointed Al-Yemani a lieutenant of the order in Jordan in 2009. He obtained written license from Shaykh Ali Belourabi, the top leader of the Tijani Order, describing him as the order's lieutenant in Jordan. Al-Yemani holds *dhikr* in his home in Tabarbour every Friday after the afternoon prayer.

#### *VII. The Ahmadi-Badawi Order:*

Shaykh Dhiyab Khattab founded a Badawi *zawiya* in the Al-Yadudah area. He was initiated into the Badawi Order by Shaykh Abdul Hafez Al-Nuwayhi, who provided instruction in more than one order but is considered the top Badawi in Jordan and Palestine.

The Ahmadi-Badawi shaykhs also include Dr. Mohammad Jaber Al-Husni Al-Ahmadi, a professor at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in Maan, who was sanctioned in the Order by his father, Shaykh Jaber Al-Ahmadi. He lives in Dhiban and holds *dhikr* at his father's Ahmadi

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<sup>135</sup> Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya*, op. cit., pp. 140-141.

Zawiya in the Jerash camp for Gaza refugees. His father, Shaykh Jaber Al-Ahmadi, was initiated into the Ahmadi Order by taking the covenant from his shaykh, Mahmoud Abu Hassanain, who was nicknamed Al-Mushallah (the naked one) because he wore only pants and a vest, summer and winter alike. His shrine is in Al-Batani.<sup>136</sup>

Speaking of the Badawi Order's Jordanian center in Jerash, in the Ahmadi Zawiya, Al-Sharif Hani Al-Ahmadi, son of Shaykh Dr. Jaber Al-Ahmadi, says: "The main headquarters of the Ahmadi-Badawi Order in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is considered to be in the city of Jerash, where the Qur'an is recited, and *dhikr* is held, and blessings are invoked for our Master, the Chosen Prophet, and for his virtuous family and benevolent friends, and the order's *awrad* [litanies, sing. *wird*] are recited, and these trace to my master, Ahmad Al-Badawi. They include the Ahmadi *wird*, which involves the opening supplication with the Opening of the Book, Yasin, Al-Waqia, the Prayer of Ibrahim, and variants on *salawat* [the invocation of blessings on Muhammad and his associates]. It concludes with a supplication for Muslims and for the head of our community, the head of the virtuous Aal Al-Bayt, His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al-Hussein, and for the Crown Prince. We turn to God Almighty and pray that He sustains the blessings of security and safety for our country and all Muslim countries, and that God Almighty will preserve the country and His servants and shield us from the evil of strife and dissension both outward and inward."<sup>137</sup>

### VIII. The Desouki-Burhani Order:

It was established in Jordan through Shaykh Abu Al-Awn Al-Burhani. The *zawiya* is located in the Shmeisani area. *Dhikr* sessions

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<sup>136</sup> Written response from Al-Sharif Hani Mohammad Jaber Al-Ahmadi, the son of Shaykh Al-Ahmadi, who resides in Saudi Arabia, on 5/6/2020. See the Al-Tariqa Al-Ahmadiya Al-Badawiya fi Filistin (Ahmadi-Badawi Order in Palestine) Facebook page at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9fnndsh>

<sup>137</sup> Written response from Al-Sharif Hani Al-Ahmadi, op. cit.

are held there, but the followers number in the dozens, and the *zawiya* welcomes Desoukis coming from Egypt.<sup>138</sup>

### *IX. The Kasnazani Order:*

The Kasnazani Order spread and arrived in Jordan after the occupation of Iraq in 2003, and then the Order's shaykh, Muhammad Al-Kasnazani, came to Amman in 2007. He used to convene *hadras* at his home in Abdoun, before the *zawiya* moved to Marka Al-Shamalia in 2007.<sup>139</sup>

### *X. The Ba'Alawi Order:*

It began to enter Jordan starting at the turn of the new millennium, thanks to the influence of "the Habibs" in Yemen, especially among academics and the educated classes. The Order's most prominent adherents in Jordan include Shaykh Dr. Ahmad Al-Sowi, Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Harthi, and the mufti of Aqaba, Shaykh Mohammad Al-Juhani.

## **3. The Sufi scene in Aqaba:**

The Sufi scene in Aqaba is socially and culturally unique due to Aqaba's strategic location and the its community meshes with Egypt's and Palestine's (Gaza and Beersheba), in addition to the fact that Aqaba was considered part of Hejaz until 1925. Aqaba Mufti Dr. Mohammad Al-Juhani has made great efforts to document Aqaba's Sufi heritage, from the first Sufi shaykhs to folk and cultural heritage to *zawiyas* and documents.<sup>140</sup>

Al-Juhani rattles off the names of some of the first Sufi shaykhs, known in Aqaba for being Sufi, from the end of the 19th to the mid-

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<sup>138</sup> The researcher contacted the order's successor in Jordan, Shaykh Abu Al-Awn Al-Burhani and tried to set a meeting more than once but was unable to do so despite repeated attempts.

<sup>139</sup> Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya*, op. cit., pp. 126-128.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Shaykh Al-Juhani, 15/6/2020.

20th century. At the top of the list is Mohammad Hassan Effendi, who followed the Azhari (not yet studied) and Shadhili orders and was from the Khoja clan. A special decree issued by Sultan Abdul Hamid II made him a preacher and imam at an Aqaba mosque, and Dr. Al-Juhani has kept a copy of the document, dated 1332 AH (1913/1914). Al-Juhani states that the Khawaja family had a Sufi *zawiya*. Shaykh Mohammad had two sons, Hassan and Hamza, who were also known to be Sufi, and Hassan served as his father's successor.<sup>141</sup>

The second important figure was Mohammed Abdul Jawad, who was of Upper Egyptian origin. He was an imam and servant at Aqabawi Mosque (which housed the tomb of Shaykh Mohammed Al-Aqabawi until its removal from the mosque) and had a written statement from the Shadhili-Rifa'i shaykh for Suez that he was his successor in Aqaba. He was known for commemorating Mawlid and religious celebrations, and he regularly convened *hadras* for *dhikr*. Some Aqaba residents attributed *karamat* to him, like appearing to fire-walk as the *dhikr* crescendoed, or throwing dust onto the fire burning at a *hadra* that gave off the aroma of incense, or using magical incantations (curing through the Qur'an).<sup>142</sup>

Then there is the Yasin family, one of the well-known Sufi families in Aqaba. The Yasin family had a *zawiya* where *dhikr* sessions, *hadras*, and Mawlid observances were convened, and it offered shelter for strangers to the community. One of their most prominent old masters was Shaykh Ali Khalil Yasin, "famous for sainthood (*walaya*) and *dhikr*." His son Kulaib "treated some diseases by writing Qur'anic verses on the hand, and some Aqaba tales say that Shaykh Ali prayed for rain in the Negev Desert and saved a trading caravan from dying of thirst."<sup>143</sup>

One of Aqaba's important figures was Shaykh Khalid Al-Manzalawi (born 1890), a disciple of Ahmed Al-Dabbagh, whom we previously mentioned was one of the first Sufi shaykhs in Jordan. Dr. Al-Juhani states that he found books in Al-Manzalawi's home in

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

which he had written, “We completed to here in our reading with Mr. Al-Dabbagh,” meaning that lessons in Islamic legal science took place in Aqaba. When Al-Dabbagh came from Tafilah to Aqaba to teach, he would go see Al-Manzalawi.

Shaykh Mohammad Diab Bassiouni was one of the shaykhs known to hold Mawlid observances, and there are old recordings of his voice dating back to 1938.

The year 1948 was a turning point for Aqaba’s Sufi landscape, which was impacted by the Nakba just like the rest of the Kingdom, as Palestinian families from Beersheba and Gaza fled to Aqaba. One of the shaykhs who arrived in this context was Fahmi Al-Bulbul, who was blind and would recite at special *dhikr* sessions for women and recite Al-Burda (a 13th-century ode to the Prophet Muhammad) and *madihnabawi*, songs in praise of the Prophet.

The Gaza shaykhs in Aqaba included Amin Mustafa Al-Zubda, who had founded the Rashidiya School. He was one of those who arrived in Aqaba immediately after the Nakba, and he founded the old Zawiya Mosque, where meetings, *dhikr* sessions, and Mawlid observances were held. Al-Zubda was unique in that he combined Sufism with *da’wa* and movement work. The Muslim Brotherhood nominated him for municipal elections, and he obtained the highest vote count.<sup>144</sup>

Al-Juhani asserts that Aqaba’s Sufi culture is equally rooted in shaykhs, *zawiyas*, and orders as in social customs with a Sufi flavor, like Mawlids, religious celebrations and blessed nights such as at the tail end of Ramadan, and traditions associated with recitation of Al-Burda and readings on the Prophet’s birthday, *dhikr* sessions, and saints’ shrines. Mawlid was “a wondrous, momentous day in Aqaba. Shaykh Mohammed Abdul Jawad would wear the turban, and ranks of people would show up carrying banners and go to the shrines. The Prophet’s birth was celebrated, and Al-Burda and the *madih* were recited that day.”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Shaykh Dr. Mohammad Al-Juhani, mufti of Aqaba, on 15/6/2020.

#### 4. Preliminary observations on the landscape of Sufi orders:

In the above overview encapsulating the landscape of Sufi orders over the past decades, we see that dozens of *zawiyas* spread through many areas in Jordan, although they have been concentrated largely in Amman, Zarqa and the northern governorates, especially Irbid. Some of these *zawiyas* were built specifically for the order, some were inside the homes of the order's *murids*, some were attached to mosques, and others were linked to the shrine of the order's shaykh.

Examples of Sufi *zawiyas* linked to mosques in Amman and built by adherents of Sufi orders include Dar Al-Iman and its *zawiya*, Zawiya Al-Ashraf, in Al-Jandawil (Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani); Darawish Mosque in Bayader Wadi Al-Seer (Khalwati-Qasimi); Imam Rawas Mosque and the Rawasi-'Alia-Rifa'izawiya in Jabal Al-Zuhour (Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib, Alia-Rifa'i Order); the Dar Al-Qur'an mosque and *zawiya* in Nazzal (Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh, Qadiri-Shadhili Order); and the Shadhilizawiya in the Kharabsheh neighborhood of Amman Sports City, near the Boshra Mosque (Hashimi-Darqawi-Shadhili Order, Shaykh Nuh Keller).

In other governorates, Irbid has the mosque and *zawiya* of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi in the Irbid camp and in Al-Sarih (Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order, Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi), the Al-Junayd mosque and *zawiya* in Irbid (Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order), and the Al-Noor mosque and *zawiya* (Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Urabi).

In addition to the Sufi orders' main *zawiyas*, there are several satellite *zawiyas* that have sprung from the orders. There is Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali's *zawiya* in Hayy Al-Arab in Zarqa (Filali-Darqawi-Hashimi Order), the Ahmadi *zawiya* in the Gaza camp in Jerash, the Desouki Order's *zawiya* in Shmeisani in Amman, the Yashrutizawiya in Al-Jandawil, the Rifa'izawiya in Jwaideh, the Rifa'izawiya in Aqaba, Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh's *zawiya* in Kafr Yuba, the Naqshbandi *zawiya* attached to Abu Al-Shamat Mosque in Jabal Amman, Mah-

moud Muraweh's *zawiya* in Russeifa, Shaykh Al-Tabari's *zawiya* in Maan, and small *zawiyas* that mostly are within the home of an adherent of the order in that area.

We mentioned that the founding generation of Sufi orders and *zawiyas* (in the 1950s and 1960s) has come to an end. The second generation, meanwhile, is still around, stretching from the mid-1960s to the start of the new millennium. Some are living, while others have died (or departed, as Sufis would put it), but most are now elderly. Those who have died include: Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib (2012),<sup>146</sup> Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh (1947-2014),<sup>147</sup> Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Momani (1924-1991),<sup>148</sup> Shaykh Abdul Karim Urabi (1942-2014),<sup>149</sup> Shaykh Ali Abu Zaid (1934-1997), Shaykh Ali Saleh Al-Husseini (2019), Shaykh Shehadeh Al-Tabari (1936-2015), Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Falluji (1934-2015), and Shaykh Omar Al-Sarafandi (1950-2018).

Those who are still living include: Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh (1933), Shaykh Ahmed Al-Yashruti (1928), Ahmad Al-Radaydeh (1941), Shaykh Mohammad Abdul Hafez Al-Tahrawi (1944), and Shaykh Abdul Hadi Samoura (1945).

Ismail Al-Kurdi, Nuh Keller, Faris Al-Rifa'i, Husni Al-Sharif, Mahmoud Muraweh, Muhammad Mustafa Al-Filali, and Sa'id Hawwa are all from the third generation.

If we leave aside all considerations of form and look at the Sufi orders and *zawiyas* from a practical standpoint, whether in terms of structure, traditions, financial support, influence, and adaptivity, we can observe the following:

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<sup>146</sup> On the life of Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib, see his Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/y76xu7a4>.

<sup>147</sup> For a biography of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh, see his website at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yalm93r4>

<sup>148</sup> On the life of Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Momani, see the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ydfb3nt2>

<sup>149</sup> For a biography of Shaykh Abdul Karim Urabi, see the Shadhli-Darqawi Order website at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8lr8lhq>

In terms of effectiveness and remaining continuously active: We find that the Shadhili-Darqawi-Alawi Order is one of the most present and influential, for example through the Shadhili-Momani *zawiya* in Irbid and Shaykh Nuh Keller in Amman, while the Filali-Shadhili *zawiyas* are considerable less effective with the exception of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh's *zawiya*, whose shaykh is very active online. We also find Ba'Alawi, Khalwati, and Rifa'i-'Alia effectiveness in Russeifa with Mahmoud Muraweh.

In terms of institutional work and reach, such as *da'wa* and educational work, the Ba'Alawi Order is very active, but it has no *zawiya* in Jordan, just educational and *da'wa* organizations. The Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order has also established an assortment of *da'wa*, scholarly, and charitable institutions that are active, but less so since the death of Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib, including the Rawasi-Rifa'i *zawiya* (Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib in Jabal Al-Zuhour).

With regard to continuity, communication, and cohesion, the Shadhili-Momanis, Yashrutis, Khalwatis, and Shadhili-Darqawis (Shaykh Nuh Keller) show the most capability.

With regard to adaptivity and renewal in form, sermon content, social media communications, or elevating youth leadership, the Ba'Alawi Order is strong, as are the Khalwati-Rahmani-Jami'a, Rifa'i-'Alia, Shadhili-Darqawi-'Alia, Shadhili-Momani, Yashruti, and Rifa'i-'Alia orders (the last as represented in Russeifa by Mahmoud Maraweh).

With regard to external relationships, we find that some orders and *zawiyas* are subordinate to authorities outside Jordan, such as Qadiri *zawiyas*, which all follow Jerusalem, with Shaykh Muhammad Hashim Al-Baghdadi and his current successor; the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, including the stream that succeeded Shaykh Nazim Haqqani; the Khalwati-Qasimi Order; the Tijani Order; the Badawi-Ahmadi Order; and the Burhani Order. In contrast, other orders have their center in Amman but reach and influence outside Jordan that may be much larger than inside Jordan, including the Khalwati-Rahmani-Jami'a Order with its institutions in several countries of the

world, the Yashruti Order, and the Shadhili-Darqawi Order, represented by Shaykh Nuh Keller.

Given the above, it can be said that there the Qadiri, Ahmadi, Burhani, and Tijani orders are severely lacking in effectiveness and strength. Meanwhile, we find that some schools of the Shadhili Order, especially Nuh Keller's *zawiya* and the Momani *zawiya*, as well as the Ba'Alawis, Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmanis, Yashrutis, Rifa'i-Alia-Rawasis, and the Rifa'is in Russeifa are the most powerful, present, active, and continuous.

## **TOPIC 2**

### **INSTITUTIONAL AND NETWORKED SUFISM: THE YOUTH GENERATION**

With the passing of the first generation and much of the second generation, and with the passage of time since the emergence of the third generation, the vanguard of the fourth generation began to appear within Sufi movements. This generation comprises the children and grandchildren of the generation that founded the Sufi orders, or that generation's disciples who are still young today. The most prominent names include Al-Mutasim Nasser Al-Khatib of the Rifa'i-Rawasi Order, Yousef Hazem Abu Ghazaleh of the Shadhili-Qadiri Order, the sons of Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif from the Khalwaiti-Rahmani-Jami'a Order, Ali Ahmad Al-Yashruti of the Yashruti Order, and those whom we term the neo-Sufis.

But the orders that attract a considerable proportion of young people today are: the Ba'Alwawis, who operate in an institutional framework, as we will see; the Rifa'is in the Russeifa *zawiya* of Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh, who attract university and postgraduate students, among whom Dr. Muadh Hawwa has made clear inroads; the Shadhili-Darqawis with Shaykh Nuh Keller's *zawiya*, especially among young people of diverse nationalities; the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmanis, who are distinguished by the high proportion of imams, preachers, and students of Islamic Sharia; and the Naqshbandi-Haqqanis.

#### **1. Characteristics of youth Sufism**

Looking at today's youth generation, whether we are talking about the fourth generation or, to a lesser extent, some members of the third generation, their ascension, role, and visibility have coincided with the new millennium and with the State's current shifts in religious policy toward the consolidation of an Ash'ari/Maturidi, *madhhabi*, and Sufi climate. The most prominent characteristics of the current "youth Sufism" are:

I. The transition from working within a framework of orders to an institutional and networked approach. There have been two main Sufi movements to appear on the Jordanian scene since the 1980s and 1990s, namely the Tabba'iyyat and Shaykh Abdullah Al-Harari's disciples, and they are both institutional in nature. While these two have operated independently and at a remove from the local Sufi orders for decades, a shift has now emerged within some orders and Sufi youth as they transition to institutional work in the new millennium.

Even prior to that, though, and within the context of the traditional orders, Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif found after becoming leader of the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order that what was required was the creation of educational, *da'wa*, and social institutions, and a transition from working within the *zawiya* to working outside it. He thus established several institutions in Jordan and abroad, including an orphanage, a large school, and charitable societies. He registered the Order officially with the Supreme Judge Department and is still working to expand its educational, social, *da'wa*, and charitable operations in Jordan and abroad.

One of the most significant turning points was the opening of the Al-Ma'arij Institute for Sharia Studies in 2007, then its expansion through the opening of several branches and the establishment of various institutions. Successive institutes were created to focus on teaching Sharia and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), in particular by professors at the Sharia faculties of World Islamic Sciences and Education University, for example Dr. Amjad Rashid, dean of the Faculty of Shafi'i Fiqh, who founded the Madarik Institute of Science for Training and Consultation; Dr. Salah Abu Al-Hajj, dean of the Faculty of Hanafi Fiqh, who founded the Anwar Al-Ulama' Center; and the Dar Al-Awwa been Society, founded by Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Harthi.

II. Online Sufism, as many Sufi orders in Jordan are now on the Internet, especially social media, and have begun to share their activities and publications online.

Some orders have merely replicated their activities onto websites and Facebook pages –especially *dhikr* circles, preaching, lessons and events with their Shaykhs, and information about their Shaykhs–without updating or evolving the content or trying to renew the Sufi discourse in terms of tools, form, or content. One of the most notable is the Shadhili-Momani-Urabi Order in Irbid, as we find that many of the *dhikr* circles its followers hold at the Al-Noor Mosque in Irbid are posted online, and the Order also established a Sound Cloud channel in 2020.<sup>150</sup> Another example is the Shadhili-Darqawi Order of Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, son of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi and Shaykh Al-Shaghouri's successor in Irbid, at Shaykh Al-Kurdi's mosque and *zawiya* near the Irbid refugee camp.<sup>151</sup> There is also the Sayyadi-Rifa'i *zawiya* in Al-Diyar Al-Hashimia, founded by Muhammad Sabih in Aqaba, where Sabih is active in broadcasting his *dhikr* sessions on social media and his YouTube channel.<sup>152</sup>

Among orders that have evolved their tools and diversified the materials they present on the Internet, most notable is the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order, which posts a variety of content on its Facebook page, including lessons, lectures, *nashid* (religious chants or songs) by several masters, and *dua'* (supplications) by adherents of the order.<sup>153</sup> The order also has an official website that introduces the order and its masters, activities, and publications, and offers recorded lectures, sermons, and lessons given by Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif or his *murids*.<sup>154</sup>

Shaykh Fawwaz Al-Tabbaa is part of the youth generation and is active on social media, and he presents himself as Shaykh of the Rifa'i-Qadiri-Alia Order.<sup>155</sup> There is also the Rawasi-Rifa'i Order, the followers of Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib, who founded the Soufia TV channel. Although the channel ceased operating after Shaykh Nass-

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<sup>150</sup> See its Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yayhedgp> and its SoundCloud channel: <https://tinyurl.com/y99uoruv>

<sup>151</sup> See his Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/ychboz4a>

<sup>152</sup> For example, see: <https://tinyurl.com/y8lo4kc7>

<sup>153</sup> See its Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yc4m9wa7>

<sup>154</sup> See the website at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yblnpcem>

<sup>155</sup> See its Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/ybaw6umh>

er's passing some years ago, his Order and disciples have been notably active on the web.<sup>156</sup>

As for institutes, the Al-Ma'arij Institute for Sharia Studies has been a paradigm shift in online activity, as it provides online access to many activities, lectures, *da'wa* sessions, and conferences it holds. Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, the founder and director of Al-Ma'arij, gives *da'wa* lessons in modern, accessible language via audio broadcast, as do some others at the Institute. They have also established an art direction company.<sup>157</sup>

**III. "Shari'a-based Sufism" and academic education:** It can be observed that many young people in today's Sufi landscape are keen to complete their academic education and pursue Islamic legal sciences, and to link Sufism to those sciences. This has been clearly evident in recent years as many members of the new generation emphasize the concept of "Shari'a-based" or "Shari'afied" Sufism. The interest in academic attainment, however, varies by institute, orientation, and specialization. We find that the Al-Ma'arij Institute has a comprehensive religious education pathway that begins with so-called obligatory knowledge, then progresses through the sciences in an education qualification program that teaches 80 books in 18 sciences in parallel with attention to Sufi considerations or what is known as *tazkiya* (purification of the self). By contrast, Shaykh Saeed Foda, who holds the Imam Al-Razi Chair, is interested in *kalam* (the science of theology); Shaykh Hasan Al-Saqqaf in the sciences of *hadith*; and both the Madarik Institute and the Anwar Al-Umama' Center in the sciences of *fiqh*, although they all consider themselves to belong to the Ash'ari-*madhhab*-Sufi school. We also find today that many of this school's adherents hold advanced degrees or are study-

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<sup>156</sup> See the Soufia Channel's Twitter: <https://tinyurl.com/ybztjnws> and Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib's Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yjc6ey2> and the Al-Khatib Dar Al-Dhikr and Kindergarten, supervised by Shaykh Nasser's son Al-Mutasim Al-Khatib, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9ld2f3y>

<sup>157</sup> See the Institute's Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/y7ukugb> and the Institute's YouTube channel: <https://tinyurl.com/y88t9au2> and Shaykh Awn Al-Qadoumi's Twitter: <https://tinyurl.com/yd4czbjb>

ing toward them, and many are middle-class or even wealthy, indicating a major shift in Sufi trends in Jordan.

**IV. Diversity of arenas:** Sufism in Jordan is no longer restricted to traditional modes, *zawiyas*, or even the Sufi orders. There is a new current today that some of the literature terms the “neo-Sufis,” who enter Sufism through routes other than the traditional orders – some influenced by the current global wave of spirituality and Sufism, some who enter through energy healing, and others who are Islamists who steer clear of political Islam as an ideology, especially after the Arab Spring. Some move in the direction of the traditional orders, while others are seeking only individual, subjective meaning in Sufism. We will see later that there are books, novels, and singers that have begun venturing into Sufism and offer a specialized product in some fields, as is the case with many Jordanian artists who perform Sufi songs.

## **2. Institutional work: The Abdullah Al-Harari’s disciples as an example**

One of the oldest Sufi movements in Jordan is that of Shaykh Abdullah Al-Harari’s disciples (while the *Tabbaiyyat* preceded them in being founded earlier as an association, we will postpone talking about them until our discussion of feminist Sufism). The Hararis founded the Arab Islamic Cultural Society (AICS) in the mid-1990s, and it later gave rise to several educational and *da’wa* institutions, leading to the establishment of schools and *nashid* ensembles and the organization of lectures and courses in Islamic legal sciences at the AICS branches dispersed through multiple governorates of Jordan.

Shaykh Abdullah Al-Harari’s disciples, termed *Ahbashis* by their opponents because Shaykh Al-Harari was from Habash (present-day Ethiopia), began to proliferate in Jordan in the 1980s, as Shaykh Al-Harari’s *da’wa* started to spread globally, especially in the Levant after he settled in Lebanon in the wake of his departure from his home country of Ethiopia in 1949. He first moved to Mecca and

Medina, then Jerusalem, Syria in 1950, and finally in Lebanon, though he continued to visit many Arab countries and societies.<sup>158</sup>

Shaykh Al-Harari's *da'wa* is based on adherence to the way of the Ahl Al-Sunna wAl-Jama'a ("the people of Sunna and the communi-

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<sup>158</sup> A biography of Shaykh Abdullah Al-Harari as presented by his disciples: "He is the great *'alim* [Islamic scholar], a memorizer [of Quran], a *mujtahid* [a producer of jurisprudence], a *muhaddith* [a scholar of hadith], the Imam Abu Abdul Rahman Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Yusuf Al-Shaybi Al-Abdari Al-Qurashim, called Al-Harari, from his homeland known as Al-Habasha, God's mercies be upon it. He was born in the city of Harar around 1328 AH, or 1910 and grew up in a humble house loving *'ilm* [Islamic scholarship] and its people. He memorized the Quran by heart with *tarteel* [proper recitation in measured, rhythmic tones] when almost 10 years old. His father had him read the book *The Hadhramaut Introduction to Shafi'i Fiqh* and other books on *fiqh*. He memorized a number of works on various Islamic legal sciences when still young, then left to seek knowledge in his country and surrounding countries. He met many *'ulama'* from his country and others. His intelligence and strong memory helped him dive deep into Shafi'*fiqh* and its principles, as well as Maliki, Hanafi, and Hanbali *fiqh*. He then devoted his attention to the science, recitation, and narration of hadith, memorizing the six books of hadith and other books with their *isnad* [the chain of transmission], and he was authorized to issue fatwas and relate hadiths. He then went to Mecca when killing of *'ulama'* intensified in his country around 1369 AH, or 1949. He met several *'ulama'* of Mecca and forged strong friendships with them. Then he went to Medina and met the *ulama'* there. He stayed in Medina for about a year, drawing knowledge from its libraries and delving into their scriptures.

Shaykh Abdullah Al-Harari went to Jerusalem around 1370 AH, or 1950, and from there he went to Damascus. His renown began to spread, and the masters and students of the Levant came to him. He got to know the *ulama'* of the Levant, and they benefited from him, attested to his erudition, and recognized his knowledge. He became known in the Levant as "the successor to Shaykh Badr Al-Din Al-Husni" and "the *mutahaddith* of the Levant." Within the Levant, he then moved among Damascus, Beirut, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and other Syrian and Lebanese cities until he finally settled in Beirut, where he was the guest of senior masters. A residence was provided for him at the expense of Dar Al-Fatwa so that he could move among Beirut's mosques to teach, with written authorization from Director of Fatwa Shaykh Mukhtar Al-Alayli.

The Shaykh continued to defend Ahl Al-Sunna wAl-Jama'a, teaching *tawhid* [the oneness of God], *fiqh*, hadith, and other Islamic sciences until he met his fate in Beirut in 1429 AH, or 2008. He lived for about 100 years. May God have mercy on him." The reference is a document provided to the researcher by the Arab Islamic Cultural Society in response to several questions he asked AICS in writing, 15/5/2020.

ty,” i.e. Sunni Muslims), namely the Ash‘arites/Maturidites, as well as to the *fiqh* schools and moderate Sufism. That approach governs the work of AICS in Jordan and the other branches of the Harari school around the world, such as the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects in Beirut and other organizations.

Although Shaykh Al-Harari belongs to the Rifa‘i Order, and his followers are also committed to that Order, they insist that adherence to Sufi orders is “sunna” and not a duty (*fard*) or obligation (*wajib*), and that Sufism should be linked to and based on firm creed (the Ash‘aricreed) and a sound juristic and scientific foundation (one of the *fiqh* schools). Dr. Mazen Abdul Rahman Ghanem, a Shaykh and AICS vice president, says that Hararis refuse to instruct anyone in Sufism prior to instruction in shari‘a, in order to ensure that the person is committed to the principles of proper Sufism. This is in accordance with the well-known rule: “He who practices Sufism without studying *fiqh* corrupts his faith.”<sup>159</sup>

As to whether they define themselves as a movement, party, organization, or Sufi order? Ghanem answers that the Hararis are a “legitimate school” belonging to Ahl Al-Sunna wa-l-Jama‘a and are not a new idea within religious work but represent the general Sunni public. It is the “saved sect” (*Al-firqa Al-najiyya*) comprising senior scholars, jurists, and imams of moderate Sufi orders, as well as leaders of the Umma (the community of all Muslims) who played an important and historic role in saving the Islamic world, such as Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi (Salah Al-Din), who was keen to establish schools that would teach correct legal science and reinforce Ash‘ari dogma. He was interested in establishing Sufi *takiyas* and *zawiyas*, and he commanded a senior scholar, Muhammad ibn Hibatallah Al-Barmaki, to write a book on the Ash‘ari creed. Al-Barmaki wrote a poem summarizing the beliefs of Ahl Al-Sunna, and it later came to be called “Al-‘Aqida Al-Salahiyya” (the Creed of Salah Al-Din). Shaykh Abdullah Al-Harari typically kept his own book of “Al-‘Aqida Al-Salahiyya,” and he

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<sup>159</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mazen Ghanem, vice president of the Arab Islamic Cultural Society, at the Society’s headquarters near the 4th Circle, 15/5/2020.

would stress adherence to the creed and the importance of teaching it to the people.<sup>160</sup>

In talking about Salah Al-Din, Shaykh Al-Harari's supporters refer to Al-Harari's reformist vision in the establishment of schools, along the lines of Salah Al-Din's founding of reformist schools concerned with promoting correct beliefs, introducing people to the jurisprudence of their religion, and educating them in these concepts. Thus, originated Shaykh Al-Harari's and his disciples' attention to promoting Islamic legal science and building schools.<sup>161</sup>

The strategy behind the Harari school's work consists of keeping within the confines of the law, avoiding clashes with governments, and taking into account the interests of the states and societies within which they are operating. This strategy guided the founding of the Arab Islamic Cultural Society, three schools affiliated to AICS, and three kindergartens in Irbid and Amman. As to whether these schools linked to the Hararis have special curricula, Ghanem answers that the schools are fully compliant with Ministry of Education law, regulations, and instructions, and thus necessarily adhere to the curricula and books provided by the Ministry, but they take a special interest in the pedagogical and moral aspects of activities and events. The schools therefore add classes for teaching Qur'an and the rules of prayer, and add supplementary worksheets and various summer camps and activities in which the legal sciences are also taught through student clubs.<sup>162</sup>

In addition to the schools, AICS holds many community activities and makes impactful contributions to the events such as religious

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<sup>160</sup> See the document sent by the Arab Islamic Cultural Society, op. cit. Dr. Mazen Ghanem, vice president of the Arab Islamic Cultural Society, has written a book of commentary on the Creed of Salahuddin. See Mazen Abdul Rahman Ghanem, *Uns Al-Qulub fi 'Izhar 'Aqidat Fatih Al-Quds Salah Al-Din Bin 'Ayyub aw Izhar Al-'Aqida Al-Ash'ariya bi-Sharh Al-'Aqida Al-Salahiya* (Intimacy of Hearts in Revealing the Creed of Conqueror of Jerusalem Salah Al-Din ibn Ayyub, or Revealing the Ash'ari Creed as Explained by the Creed of Saladin); Arab Islamic Cultural Publishing and Distribution House; First Edition, 2019, pp. 1-72.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mazen Ghanem, op. cit.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

festivals, especially the Mawlid (Prophet Muhammad's birthday). For years, AICS has consistently held a major Mawlid festival attended by politicians, members of parliament, ministers, other prominent figures, and large crowds of ordinary citizens. Its Al-Hashimi *nashid* ensemble presents *madihnabawi*, songs in praise of the Prophet, at the festival.

According to AICS, its work is not limited to men, as there is a lot of activity involving women that takes place within various AICS branches, including a women's *nashid* ensemble that has performed hundreds of concerts at community events. Ghanem says that the women's wing includes academics, doctors, and teachers, and there is also a children's team. AICS has also founded the Arab Islamic Cultural Publishing and Distribution House and Al-Bakie Establishment for Islamic Burial and Events Services, and it puts out a special periodical called Minbar Al-Thaqafa ("Cultural Pulpit").<sup>163</sup>

AICS incorporates the Qur'anic verse "There is nothing like Him" in its emblem, alluding to the Ash'ari understanding of the verse as opposed to the Salafi understanding. This makes it clear that a large part of the AICS battle is with the Salafi school; since the 1990s, the Hararis have engaged in intense intellectual and religious debates and clashes with the Salafis, and the hostility between the two sides in Lebanon has even reached the level of assassinations. This pugnaciousness has not been limited to Salafism; indeed, AICS confronted other Islamic currents when it spoke about Sayyid Qutb, Hassan Al-Banna, and other such figures.<sup>164</sup>

While their opponents accuse them of working with governments to undermine political Islam, the Hararis insist that they are committed to working within the law and shunning direct political action, focusing instead on defending the creed of Ahl Al-Sunna wa-l-Jama'a and the Umma, and that they are not advancing new religious thinking or discourse. Some friends of AICS, however, admonish it for

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> See "Hal ustudifamas'ul Al-Ahbash fi Ain Al-Hilwehraddan ala ahdath Al-Mieh Mie?" ("Was Al-Ahbash official in Ain Al-Hilweh targeted in response to Mie-Mieh incident?"), An-Nahar, 9/4/2014.

intolerance against those with whom it disagrees, especially Salafis and some Islamists.<sup>165</sup>

AICS, by contrast, presents itself as a representative of centrist, moderate Islam, a platform for disseminating a culture of tolerance, and the tip of the spear against extremist, hardline thinking and against radicalism and takfir among some Islamists.<sup>166</sup>

As for Sufism, Shaykh Al-Harari's disciples affirm their commitment to moderate Sufism based on legal science. Adherents of the Rifa'i-Harari Order in Jordan do not hold weekly *hadras* for *dhikr* along the lines of traditional orders, do not establish *zawiyas*, and view the spiritual relationship between Shaykh and *murid* as a practical exercise through which instruction in the Rifa'i Order is provided within the framework of AICS.<sup>167</sup>

Hararis consider their observance of Mawlid and commemoration of Islamic occasions as tantamount to *dhikr*. They emphasize adherence to daily *awrad* (litanies) and reject ecstatic utterances (*shathat*) and excess in Sufism, as well as the assertion that esoteric sciences of that which is inward and hidden (*Al-batin*) are incompatible with the exoteric sciences of that which is outward and apparent (*Al-zahir*). They may join others in emphasizing their adherence to the school of Imam Al-Junayd, which is described as moderate in comparison to other Sufi schools.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> For example, see Dr. Firas Al-Majali, "Radd ala Bassam Al-Amoush" ("Response to Bassam Al-Amoush"), Ammon News, 18/3/2015, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yd9o7oor>

See also Ahl Al-Sunna wAl-Jama'a, Al-Ahbash, at <https://tinyurl.com/ybod4c7p>  
 Firas Al-Shufi, "'Al-na'ibil-nafs': Markamusajallalil-Ahbash" ("'Distancing': The Ahbash brand"), An-Nahar, 28/1/2013, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9yrtgqk>

<sup>166</sup> See answers document, op. cit.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mazen Ghanem, op. cit.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mazen Ghanem. Ibid.

The Order does not require *khalwa* (spiritual seclusion), as they see *dhikr* sessions and retreats as tantamount to *khalwa*. Shaykh Talal Al-Homsi says that members of AICS do engage in *khalwa*, but they do not do it much, instead prioritizing Islamic legal science to meet the needs of today's societies. At the same time, they do not dismiss *khalwa*, since it can be performed when a person continually engages in private prayer with God, on the basis "Take from your *khalwa* for the time of your return to the world [lit. *jilwa*, removal of the bridal veil]." <sup>169</sup>

As for the covenant and *bay'a* (pledge of initiation and allegiance) in the Rifa'i Order, similar to other Sufi orders, Shaykh Abdullah Al-Harari provided admittance to the order, and when he visited Jordan he would admit many of his disciples. Shaykh Al-Homsi asserts, however, that taking *bay'a* with Shaykh Al-Harari is not required. A person can take up the Rifa'i Order from another *sanad* (authority in a chain of transmission) or Shaykh, and the Hararis would not object. A person can also follow another Sufi order, and they do not object so long as it is one of the moderate orders committed to Islamic Sharia. <sup>170</sup> Like most Sufi orders, they believe that Al-Khidr (peace be upon him) is still alive, while at the same time they reject the doctrine of *wahdat Al-wujud* (Unity of Being), which they consider to have been foisted on Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar Ibn 'Arabi. <sup>171</sup>

AICS has three branches – in Amman, Irbid, and Al-Salt – and it is active in several governorates through individuals and the events in which they participate. The most prominent and influential AICS figures include AICS President Dr. Muhannad Al-Hamoud Uraibat, Dr. Mazen Ghanem, Shaykh Talal Al-Homsi, and Dr. Waleed Al-Samamaa, who preach and engage in *da'wa* in the media and on social media. <sup>172</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Telephone interview with AICS Secretary Shaykh Talal Al-Homsi, 22/5/2020.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Document of written answers to questions, op. cit.; and interview with Shaykh-Mazen Ghanem, also op. cit.

<sup>172</sup> See Dr. Waleed Al-Samamaa's Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/y7dqne58>

### 3. From orders to a network: Al-Ma'arij Institute as a major transformation

The Al-Ma'arij Institute for Sharia Studies, founded in 2007, was truly transformative in the Jordanian Sufi scene on more than one level. Al-Ma'arij is the product of more than one trend:

**First:** The notable and increasing presence of the Ba' Alawi Order in Jordan, especially the Habibs–Shaykh Omar Bin Hafiz and Shaykh Al-Jifri, and Shaykh Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur. Many young Sufis in Jordan have begun to be influenced by them. Some have gone to the Mostafa Institution, affiliated with the Habibs in Yemen, to study Islamic legal sciences with them, and they return influenced by this experience and the figures involved.

**Second:** The school of Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah, which has had a deeper impact on the youth generation since he was appointed as the Kingdom's grand mufti after the Iftaa' Department became independent from the Awqaf Ministry. Al-Qudah is from the Damascus school, which speaks of a "Sufism of masters" rather than of orders, meaning that Sufism would transition to a supra-order model, and Sufis would be open to one another.

**Third:** The youth generation, which in the past studied with *ulama'* (scholars) and masters, had their own experiences, and then became convinced of the need for Sufism to leave the era of traditional orders, rhetoric, and tools to an era of new rhetoric and tools, and especially of institutions and networks.

The Al-Ma'arij Institute was founded with the blessing of the Habibs in Yemen, Al-Qudah, who provided substantial moral support to the founders, and other masters. Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, the current director and intellectual leader of Al-Ma'arij, was one of the most prominent founders, along with a number of masters influential among Ba' Alawis, such as Shaykh Dr. Ahmad Al-Sowi, Mufti of Aqaba Shaykh Dr. Mohammad Al-Juhani, and the *munshid* (*nashid* performer) and doctoral candidate Shaykh Jihad Al-Kalouti. After years of activity and work following its founding, Al-Ma'arij was able to attract a large, diverse cohort of Sufi youth and Sufi masters to study

there, as well as *ulama'* and professors specializing in Sharia, *fiqh*, and Sufism.

The bulk of Sufi youth action shifted to Al-Ma'arij, which contains various branches of the Ash'ari-*madhhabi*-Sufi school. For example, Saeed Foda, Shaykh Nur Mustafa Al-Rifati, Dr. Muhammad Al-Juhani, and Dr. Ahmed Al-Hassanat teach there, most of whom are from the Iftaa' Department. Other teachers include Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi and Shaykh Yusuf Abu Ghazaleh, the son of Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh, and a number of Sharia professors and specialists belonging to the Ash'ari-*madhhabi*-Sufi school.

In 13 years, Al-Ma'arij's work has expanded significantly, in a way never before seen in Sufism in Jordan, with eight branches having been established in four governorates: Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, and Aqaba. In addition to the Al-Ma'arij Institute there exists a network of other institutions, such as a publishing house (Dar Al-Mueein); a shop selling books, rosaries, curios, and Islamic clothing; the Qibla Center for Psychological and Family Counseling; a media production company; Elixir Solutions and Business; and Ibrahim Al-Khalil Kitchen.

The Al-Ma'arij motto is "Together to revive the entire religion throughout the entire world." It provides numerous, diverse courses in Islamic legal sciences. Its weekly public religious lessons in religious and legal sciences include preparatory programs for *du'ah* (practitioners of *da'wa*) and preachers. This includes two-year programs in which the student commits to taking a sequence of courses over a full two years, the so-called obligatory sciences, i.e. the Islamic knowledge that the student must have. After completing the obligatory sciences, students then begin to expand and deepen their study of the legal sciences under the faculty Shaykhs. The Al-Ma'arij methodology is based on the so-called '*ilm Al-musnid*, the science of tracing a narrative or piece of knowledge, from studying under and receiving the license of well-known Shaykhs to teach and lead, to certain books that they in turn studied under other Shaykhs, and so on back to the famous Shaykhs in the religious and legal sciences.

In addition to the legal and *fiqh* sciences, and periodic lectures, Al-Ma'arij participates in Islamic occasions and holds regular *dhikr* sessions. Their *dhikr* tends toward *madihnabawi* and recitation of Al-Burda (a 13th-century ode to the Prophet Muhammad) while sitting, not standing or jumping or dancing as in many Sufi orders.

Shaykh Awn Al-Qadoumi confirms that real institutional action and constant planning and consultation take place within the Al-Ma'arij Board of Directors and its elite group of founders. One of the Al-Ma'arij Institute's important activities is the Khuwaisa Forum, a semi-annual forum attended by well-known Shaykhs, *ulama'*, jurists, and intellectuals, along with many people affiliated with Al-Ma'arij and other interested parties. Each edition of the forum features discussion of religious, *fiqh*, and intellectual topics.<sup>173</sup>

In some of its iterations, the Khuwaisa Forum has transformed into a kind of conference for discussing, thinking about, and planning the future of Sufi action in Jordan, and even abroad, as Shaykhs from outside Jordan are a constant presence there. For example, the Khuwaisa Forum decided in 2018, a decade after the founding of the Al-Ma'arij Institute, to transition from local to global work and activity, which led to an intensified and solidified network of relationships and links with Sufi organizations, institutions, and currents outside Jordan.

One of the Institute's annual community-based initiatives is Rabi' Al-Muhibbin ("Spring of the Devoted"), a 10-year-old initiative involving commemoration of the months Rabi' Al-Awwal and Rabi'

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<sup>173</sup> See the Khuwaisa Forum introductory video: <https://tinyurl.com/yb4xvx7b>

The name Khuwaisa comes from a hadith of the Prophet (PBUH): "When you see stinginess being obeyed, passion being followed, this world being preferred, everyone being charmed with his own opinion, and you realize you have no power over it, then you must mind your own business." Here, *khuwaisa* (translated in the hadith as "your own business") does not mean sitting at home and not caring about the general public, but identifying responsibilities and fulfilling duties within those responsibilities. The head of a family, for example, looks after the affairs of his family, a professor those of his disciples, a ruler those of his subjects, and so on. We will eventually link the Khuwaisa Forum and the thinking of Al-Ma'arij founder Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi to *fiqh Al-tahawwulat*.

Al-Thani each year through gatherings for *salawat* (the invocation of blessings on the Prophet Muhammad) in various governorates of the Kingdom of Jordan and in various institutions, mosques, and homes. These enjoy diverse attendance and media coverage by television and radio programs, on social media platforms, and via youth and community publications and activities.<sup>174</sup>

The Al-Hawra' Institute, the women's division of Al-Ma'arij, actively participates in the same programs, including legal science lectures and courses, as well as women's activities. As we will mention later, Al-Ma'arij has moved outside its walls by expanding its interactions with the local community.<sup>175</sup>

Al-Ma'arij has advanced in the field of Sufi action in Jordan, not only in terms of transitioning from order-based to institutional work, but also in the areas of language, discourse, interests, the framing of activities, and ensuring orderly instruction in the legal sciences while also showing concern for Sufism. This may be what distinguishes it from other Sharia institutes, such as the Madarik Institute and Anwar Al-Ulama' Center, that have opened in recent years and focus on legal science –especially Hanafi, Shafi'i, and Maliki *fiqh*– without a corresponding interest in Sufism. Although most of those in charge are Sufis, their greater interest is *fiqh*.

The other distinguishing feature of the Al-Ma'arij Institute is that it has moved Sufi discourse out of *zawiyas* and into the public space through its numerous events, such as Rabi' Al-Muhibbin and the Khuwaisa Forum, or even the Sufi *ulama'* who visit and give lectures at the Al-Ma'arij, as well as by giving equal attention to women in Sufism. Al-Ma'arij has also shifted from Jordanian Sufism to global Sufism by networking with Sufi institutions and figures around the world, especially the Habibs in Yemen. The Institute has sent dozens of Jordanians as delegates on foreign visits, and it hosts many students from outside Jordan, especially from East Asia.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> On Rabi' Al-Muhibbeen, see <https://tinyurl.com/y756ewkc>

<sup>175</sup> See the Al-Hawra' Institute Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yahp6tnz>

<sup>176</sup> See the festivities for the Al-Ma'arij Institute visit to India at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9axxvjr>

In addition, Al-Ma'arij gives special attention to its theory of work and its vision for change and reform in accordance with so called *fiqh Al-tahawwulat*, the “jurisprudence of transformations.” This brings us to speak more broadly about the Al-Ma'arij superintendent, Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi. While he insists that Al-Ma'arij operates according to an institutional approach, he had a major impact and role in founding and developing the Institute and defining the intellectual vision that guides its work.

Al-Qaddoumi is a member of the youth generation, born in 1982. He describes his upbringing and family by saying: “I grew up in an educated household. My father has a doctorate in economics and has written extensively on education and economics. He completed his studies in Czechoslovakia. Starting in my childhood I would go with him to the Writers Union, and I attended different debates and discussions. He gave me my love of knowledge and learning. It was the same with my mother, who was a highly educated teacher. The atmosphere at home was fairly conservative, religiously and socially.”<sup>177</sup>

Al-Qaddoumi became active in the religious sphere early. He was interested in going to Shaykh Saleh Abu Goura Mosque, and starting in seventh grade, at age 11, he took lessons in the Qur'an, Ash'ari doctrine, Shafi'i *fiqh*, and Sunni Sufism. While in university he continued his pursuit of Islamic legal knowledge, attending religious lessons with Shaykh Saeed Foda and Shaykh Hasan Al-Saqqaf. During his university studies, Al-Qaddoumi got acquainted with the spectrum of Islamic action and engaged with some players in the arena. He encountered the Muslim Brotherhood and got involved in some of their activities, which cultivated his action and organizational abilities and would later be reflected in his career at the Society and within Sufism in general.

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<sup>177</sup> Interview with Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi at the Al-Ma'arij Institute in downtown, 5/4/2020.

Al-Qaddoumi remained interested in education and legal science, and he began participating in several student activities in this field. He then deepened his knowledge of the Sufi orders and the media, and he helped found a local Islamic radio station, Hayat FM, in Jordan in 2005.

In 2004, he went to Yemen and stayed there for two months, at Dar Al-Mustafa. He had met some of the Yemeni Al-Kaff family in Jordan in 1997 and 2000, and in Saudi Arabia in 2001 during his Umrah pilgrimage. He returned to Amman and ran into strong opposition from the Muslim Brotherhood because of his Sufi activities and interests that had begun influencing Brotherhood youth. To commemorate the centennial of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan Al-Banna, Al-Qaddoumi wrote a book titled *Hassan Al-Banna and the Lost Ring*, in which he presented an in-depth reading of Hassan Al-Banna's writings and biography. He asserted that Al-Banna was originally affiliated with Sufi orders and that when founding the Brotherhood he was greatly influenced by Sufi education and intent on Sufism in forming the group. According to Al-Qaddoumi, however, the Muslim Brotherhood has strayed toward Salafi ideas in recent decades, and Brotherhood thought has abandoned its founding principles three times over, in shifting from knowledge to ideology, from Sufism to Salafism, and from *da'wa* to movement work.<sup>178</sup>

Al-Qaddoumi's relationship with Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah deepened after the latter returned from the UAE in 2007 and from Yemen. Al-Qaddoumi considers Al-Qudah his "spiritual father," as he has supported him and spurred him toward institutional work. Al-Qaddoumi has learned from Al-Qudah in developing his ideas and conceptions, and he stayed a long time at Al-Qudah's side while becoming more thoroughly familiar with the Sufi landscape in Jordan and shoring up his knowledge of the map of Sufi orders and masters.

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<sup>178</sup> See Awn Al-Qaddoumi, *Hassan Al-Bannawa-l-Halqa Al-Mafquda* (Hassan Al-Banna and the Lost Ring); Dar Al-Razi, Amman; First Edition, 2007, pp. 101-1008.

It is true that Al-Qaddoumi was influenced by the Habibs in general, and Omar Bin Al-Hafiz and Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur in particular, but it is important to note his role in reaching out to the Habibs and helping them reach Jordan. He was among the first to adopt the Ba'Alawi Order and bring it to Jordan, and he worked to strengthen his relationship with them in coordination with Al-Qudah, Shaykh Saeed Foda, and some friends and associates on the path.

These early and fertile experiences for the young Al-Qaddoumi influenced his vision of Sufism, and he nourished them with further experience in learning and early scholarly study of Sharia, connecting him to research and knowledge in various areas, and in movement work with the Brotherhood, institutional work with the Habibs, the spiritual component with Sufism, and missionary work with Tablighi Jamaat. That all boiled down into a new experiment, the creation of the Al-Ma'arij Institute for Sharia Studies in 2008.

Al-Qaddoumi's star began to rise not only on the Sufi or scholarly scene, but even in *da'wa*. With his radio programs and his eloquent, modern language, he attained popularity and a good local reputation. Then, with his activities outside Jordan, he created a network of foreign relationships with Sufi currents, orders, and groups. He has participated in several global conferences on Sufism in Turkey, India, Indonesia, Morocco, and elsewhere.

It is easy to see the impact that Al-Qaddoumi and the pioneers and friends of the Al-Ma'arij Institute have had, in particular on the topic of *fiqh Al-tahawwulat*, as influenced by the Yemeni Shaykh Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur. Al-Qaddoumi has written a book specifically concerning *fiqh Al-tahawwulat*, with an introduction by Shaykh Al-Mashhur, and from this field of jurisprudence we can observe the hallmarks of Al-Qaddoumi's vision of politics.

In his book *Articles on the Jurisprudence of Transformations*, he notes that he took an early interest in this field of knowledge from an early stage, given his study of *Kitab Al-Fitanw Al-Malahim* (Book of Trials and Fierce Battles), which talks about the end times, and he

mentions being influenced by masters such as Omar Sub Laban and Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur, who granted him entry into this science.<sup>179</sup>

As to what *fiqh Al-tahawwulat* means, it is the jurisprudence of the Hour (the Day of Judgment), the jurisprudence of signs, the science of judgment, the science of the end times, etc. Al-Qaddoumi links it to futurology, but by means of study, analysis, and reading of books of hadith, and by extrapolating from prophetic portents that speak of the changes, transformations, trials, and bloody battles that will take place prior to Judgment Day, and then deducing what is required at each of these stages to face each account or each of these “transformations.”<sup>180</sup>

Al-Qaddoumi extracts principles and rules for the science of the Hour, then talks about the functions of this science. In an important article in the book, “From Somalization to Al-Sailama,” he analyzes the Prophet’s account of the great tribulations that will occur in Syria. He concludes that every human being must take an interest in his “own business” not in a negative sense, i.e. by scorning reform, but rather by being accountable for that which has been entrusted to him and not taking sides in conflict.<sup>181</sup>

In his book, we find a focus on key concepts linked to *fiqh Al-tahawwulat*, notably the necessity of self-sufficiency through reliance on local industry and agriculture, and a latent criticism of democracy borne of the fear that it could lead to the explosion of conflicts and disputes in Arab societies and create instability and insecurity.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> See Awn Mueein Al-Qaddoumi, *Maqalat ‘Ala Fiqh Al-Tahawwulat* (Articles on the Jurisprudence of Transformations); Dar Al-Mueein Publishing and Distribution; First Edition, 2019.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-32.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-77. *Sailama* is derived from the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH): “Every trial will be in Syria. If it is in Syria, then it is *Al-sailam*, which is darkness.” According to Al-Qaddoumi, *sailama* means darkness, pandemonium, and affliction.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-137.

Although Al-Qaddoumi and his associates steer clear of political action, their project does not completely disregard public affairs, as they speak about change, reform, and public concerns.<sup>183</sup> Al-Qaddoumi summarizes his project within Sufism, at both the domestic and global levels, in two main objectives: renewal of Sufi discourse, and setting the Sufi house in order.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Al-Qaddoumi's interest in the reform of various spheres can be seen through the themes of his media and *da'wa* activities and his writings on women, including his book *Al-Dor Al-Mujtima'ilil-Mar'a: Umahat Al-Mu'manin Namudhajan* (The Societal Role of Women: The Mothers of the Believers As a Model); his book on the family, *Al-Bayt Al-Nabawi* (The Prophet's Household); his book on religious education for children, *'Ibbadan li-Na* (Our Servants); his book on behavior, Sufism, and education, *Khalafat Al-Insan fil-Akwan* (Humanity's Succession in the Universes); and so on.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Awn Al-Qaddoumi, op. cit.

## CONCLUSION

### THE SCHOOL OF SHAYKH NOAH AL-QUDAH

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that the Sufi orders in Jordan differ in their survival, presence, spread, structure, and role. Many of the Sufi orders and *zawiyas* have not lasted through recent decades, while some have become a sort of “family business” that remains relevant in Sufism only in a formal sense, by virtue of a name inherited from a father or family, without even discernable followers and *murids* or any of the elements associated with a *zawiya*.

By contrast, some orders have proven their ability to endure and carry on thanks to various factors, including the availability of financial and human resources, and more importantly, the ability of some Sufi orders to adapt and evolve in structure, role, and presence. The Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmanis are among the very few orders that have managed to combine the concept of order and *zawiya* with institutional, community, and *da'wa* work, and it has a domestic presence and foreign reach.

In fact, the Yashruti-Shadhilis have also persisted while keeping the succession within the Al-Yashruti family, and their Order has a major international presence while maintaining its origins and structure within Jordan. Not dissimilar is Shaykh Nuh Keller of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Alia Order, who has a domestic presence and students both from abroad and from within Jordan, and at the same time is considered the Shadhili-Darqawi Shaykh for North America. The Rifa'i-Rawasi Order has also endured and maintained its existence, the Shadhili-Momani Order has remained present and strong, and the Rifa'i-Alia Order at Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh's *zawiya* in Russeifa has attracted young, educated people.

With the youth generation's presence today in the Naqshbandi Order at the Abu Sham *zawiya* in Jabal Amman, especially neo-Sufis and those influenced by energy healing, the Order's discourse has evolved toward interacting with “spirituality.” We find that the most effective, powerful, and influential presence in recent times belongs

to the Ba'Alawis, who have attracted a large proportion of today's youth through the Al-Ma'arij Institute, institutional and networked action, and interaction with the Habibs (Omar Bin Hafiz and Al-Jifri) domestically and abroad.

There are two issues of great importance in wrapping up this chapter on the map of Sufi orders:

The first issue is the changing nature of Jordanian Sufism, most notably the rise of an educated, academic generation, which is linked to so-called "shari'a-based Sufism," paired with the shift in State religious policies towards reinforcing the Ash'ari-*madhhabi*-Sufi religious identity. Numerous legal institutes have been established to teach the associated doctrine, jurisprudence, and Sufism, and an active generation of academics belonging to that school has been ascendant.

This development can be credited to the reinforced culture of Sufism in Jordan and the demolition of the cultural and psychological walls that were built up over previous decades based on a negative stereotype of Sufism, whether through the spread of Salafism or through media propaganda that linked the entirety of Sufism to legends or even the behavior of some specific Sufis. At the same time, however, differences have begun to emerge within this school between those who put the greatest focus on legal science and jurisprudence, those who view the Ash'ari doctrinal dimension as important, and those who believe that Sufism and *tazkiya* are the most important.

Within this school today, there is an acceptance of Sufism and a removal of the barriers in its way, but at the same time, attempts are being made to "codify" it within strict frameworks of scholarship and belief, thus giving rise to debates and backlash by Sufis. For example, we find this sort of explosive difference between Shaykh Saeed Foda, who is concerned with belief and theology, and a number of Sufi *murids* of Shaykh Nuh Keller's. They disagree about the doctrine of *wahdat Al-wujud*— while Foda is against the doctrine, the other side has

launched a vigorous attack on social media to stress *wahdat Al-wujud* and the teachings of Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar Ibn 'Arabi.<sup>185</sup>

Such internal crises are at heart a difference in priorities, goals, and visions, and may reflect fundamental disputes between, on one hand, a gnostic trend within Sufism that relies on orders, *zawiyas*, and mystical knowledge, and gives great importance to *dhikr* sessions and the traveler's "spiritual attainment"; and on the other hand, the Sufi trend that insists on education, belief, and jurisprudence and works to codify Sufism within that framework. To what extent can these disputes be checked and transcended in the coming era within the Ash'ari-*madhhab*-Sufi school? How likely is it that this school will implode, creating a split between its various components along lines of doctrine, *fiqh*, and orders? The answer to this question is one of the most important challenges to the future of Jordanian Sufism.

The second issue is the growth of institutional and networked action, which has the potential to advance and spread in the coming era. There are Sufi orders that have been able to build institutions and networks, but at the same time, this mode of action might diminish the importance and impact of *zawiyas* and orders as a framework for Sufism in favor of what we could call "supra-order Sufism" in the coming era. One model is the Al-Ma'arij Institute. Despite the fact that most of its leaders follow the Ba'Alawi Order, it makes room for adherents of various orders, including Shadhilis and Qadiris, as well as jurists and Ash'ari'ulama', to teach there. This lessens the notable introversion and isolation of Sufi orders and *zawiyas* in Jordan, where the Sufi landscape appears as separate islands secluded unto themselves, each *zawiya* functioning within its own sphere in the absence of an overarching framework.

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<sup>185</sup> Some of these "online wars" can be traced on the pages of Marwan Elkateb (<https://tinyurl.com/ybh5qc8h>), Abdul Rahman Al-Shaar (<https://tinyurl.com/ybh5qc8h>), and others who criticize Dr. Saeed Foda and describe his stances as a new Wahhabism dressed up as Ash'arism. To that end, a page was launched on Facebook called "Defending Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar": <https://tinyurl.com/y8e4c9tk>

This supra-order Sufism, as interpreted through the model of the Al-Ma'arij Institute, is closest to that of Shaykh Noah Salman Al-Qudah. We have referenced the important role that Shaykh Al-Qudah played in the decades prior to his death in 2010. He founded the military *iftaa'* establishment – the division that issues fatwas, or opinions on points of Islamic law, an act called *iftaa'*– and gave it an Ash'ari-Sufi religious identity. That establishment has graduated religious leaders who later took leadership positions in government and civil religious institutions. Al-Qudah also sponsored and supported groups of young Sufis and pushed them to found Sharia and religious education institutions, and he became a symbol of the Jordanian religious condition. He enjoyed credibility, popularity, and a good reputation even though he spent his life working in the State's military institutions and civil religious institutions.

Although Al-Qudah became a Sufi early in life, and studied in Damascus and Egypt, he laid the foundation for a new concept of Sufi religious action inspired by the Damascus model, the so-called “Sufism of masters,” meaning a focus more on Sufism than on alignment with a specific Sufi order. Al-Qudah was Tijani, having been instructed in the order by his father, who received instruction from Shaykh Ali Al-Dokar in the 1930s, and he was also Shadhili-Darqawi and entered *khalwa* under the direction of Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani while studying in Damascus. He refused, however, Shaykh Abdulrahman Al-Shaghouri's request for him to become the Order's successor in Jordan because he believed that his position in official religious institutions barred him from partiality to a given Sufi order.<sup>186</sup>

The “Sufism of masters” arose in a context in which masters of Sufi orders in Syria were concerned with buttressing Sufism and the associated culture and religious sciences to stem the Wahhabi-Salafi tide. It is noticeable that today's *iftaa'* establishment has an Ash'ari-Sufi bent thanks to the great influence of Al-Qudah, its founding fa-

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<sup>186</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, referenced above.

ther. The youth generation that has shifted to institutional Sufi work also sees Shaykh Al-Qudah as its spiritual father.<sup>187</sup>

Other features of this school include its attention to the doctrinal, juristic, and Sufi dimensions of Islamic legal science, and its dedication to moderate Sufism. It has been concerned with cultivating and developing this identity from the outset.

This, then, is the school that Al-Qudah founded, whether through the generation whose Shaykhs and young people he influenced, or by means of the main concepts and ideas that today seem to have the greatest presence in the Jordanian religious landscape. Paradoxically, the school flourished and reached its present state in Jordan only after Al-Qudah's passing almost a decade ago, after he left his posts as supreme judge and grand mufti following political disputes that he kept to himself rather than disclose them publicly, thereby seeking to avoid falling into the trap of political conflicts. His rule, which represents another aspect of his school, was to work calmly and quietly, and that preserving capital takes precedence over profit, and to stay away from direct political action. In the event of a clash between his stances and the political powers, he preferred to remain in the shadows and withdraw quietly.

One feature of Al-Qudah's school was his firm insistence that the ranks of Islam be unified, and that Sufism should not be dragged into political conflict with other currents or used to that end. This orientation may go a long way in explaining why the Jordanian case is an exception compared to other Arab experiences in which Sufism was positioned to be at odds with the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic groups.<sup>188</sup>

While Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif keeps with the Al-Qudah school on more than one level, whether in terms of the importance of Islam-

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<sup>187</sup> For a biography of Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah, see Shehadeh Al-Amri, Shaykh Dr. Noah Salman Al-Qudah, *Al Ra'i*, 6/7/2017; and also "Noah Al-Qudah: Al-Mufti Al-Askari" ("Noah Al-Qudah: Military Mufti"), *Al Jazeera*, 17/5/2016, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yc2wqfqf>

<sup>188</sup> Private interview with Awn Al-Qaddoumi, referenced above.

ic legal science, or in the shift in Sufis' work to an institutional context or out of *zawiyas* and into the community to affect the public sphere, or in the need for an overarching framework for Sufi action in Jordan, he has reservations about the term "supra-order Sufism" because he believes that the order itself must be the starting point and that Sufi orders and *zawiyas* are indispensable, as they are the incubators for *tazkiya*, education, and spiritual advancement. Shaykh Al-Sharif fears that academics will drown themselves in doctrinal-theological and juristic-scholarly considerations at the expense of spiritual and educational elements and the necessary work of reform, and will therefore miss the essence of Sufism, which is based on *tazkiya* and spiritual advancement.<sup>189</sup>

From the above indicators, the future direction of Sufi action is likely to be a combination of two approaches. The first is the Sufi orders that have demonstrated durability, adaptivity, and influence in the recent past, and that have the potential to endure and perhaps evolve. The second is the institutional and networked approach pursued by today's youth. At the same time, recent developments have generated a new argument between Sufism's Gnostic and legalistic trends as to whether the current dynamics of the discussion will lead to mutual understanding or to fractures, fissures, and fragmentation within this very school.

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<sup>189</sup> Conversation with Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif in his office in Al-Jandawil, 19/5/2020.

## CHAPTER THREE

# IN THE SUFI HOUSE: ORDERS, SHAYKHS, AND ZAWIYAS

*Sufism is not patched woolen clothes, nor your weeping when the singer sings*

*It is not shouting, nor dancing, nor rapture, nor fainting as if you have gone mad*

*Sufism is rather that you are purified without blemish, and that you follow Truth, the Qur'an, and the True Faith*

*It is that you humble yourself before God, contrite for your sins and forever grief-stricken*

*Ibn Al-Hajj Al-Maliki*



Jordanian Sufis orders are an outgrowth of well-known Sufi orders, and most of the streams of contemporary Sufism in Jordan came through either the west via Palestine or the north via the Levant. There are also those that came via Iraq and Egypt.

The dominant orientation of Jordanian Sufism is the Shadhili Order, which is the most widespread and has the largest presence, followed by the Rifa'i Order, then the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order. As for the Qadiris, they have a faint presence and limited reach. Meanwhile, we note that both the Naqshbandi-Haqqanis and Ba' Alawis are strong within the new youth wave.

The Jordanian orders have maintained their commitment to the schools and theoretical principles from which they were derived. According to researchers and even Sufi shaykhs, Jordanian Sufism has not yet deepened to the point of developing solid traditions and establishing schools similar to those in Arab countries such as Morocco, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, and Sudan. This is in spite of the fact that the centers and leadership of a number of orders have moved to Jordan, as in the case of the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order and the Shadhili-Yashruti Order.

It is worth recalling here that a Sufi order generally resembles a school dedicated to a spiritual, moral, and behavioral system inspired by the shaykh of the order and his spiritual experience. A Sufi order is a pathway for a person's spiritual life that consists of subjective psychological exercises; a behavioral system of values, worship, and duties including daily supplications (*ad'iya*, sing. *du'a*) and litanies (*awrad*, sing. *wird*); and a spiritual connection between shaykh and *murid* (initiate).

As for differences and divergences among Sufi orders, some view the difference between one order and another as represented in the *awrad*, as “*wird* is the secret of the order.” This is true, on the whole, because *ad’iya*, *ahzab* (sing. *hizb*, devotional prayers), and *awrad* by and large reflect the philosophy of the order and its branches and reveal their underlying beliefs, ideas, and values. There are those who see each order as having a deep-seated mark or stamp that characterizes it. Some orders are distinguished by “inscribing truth and plunging into the sea of unity, annihilation, and absorption,” as is the case with the Naqshbandis; others are distinguished by assistance and executive power (*tasarruf*), like ‘Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani’s order; and some are distinguished by strength of knowledge and the inspirations received by Ali Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili; or *kharq Al-‘aadat* (a break in the customary order of things, i.e. a type of miracle performed by saints) and chivalry of Ahmad Al-Rifa’i.<sup>190</sup> These characteristics may exist in all the orders, but a characteristic may be stronger and more evident in a particular order, thus distinguishing it.<sup>191</sup>

There is agreement among the imams of Sufi orders that Islamic legal science and Sufism are siblings, and that *shari’a* (law) must be combined with *haqiqa* (truth), and the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) of exoteric and apparent meanings must be combined with the *fiqh* of esoteric and underlying meanings. The difference among the orders lies in a dialectic of legal science and *dhikr* (remembrance of God), i.e. a debate over which takes precedence or is more important. There are those who believe that legal science must come first, and others who

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<sup>190</sup> Mohammed ‘Abd Al-Qadir Nassar, *Ittihaf Al-Khala’iq fi Taaddud Al-Masharib wa-l-Tara’iq*, op. cit., pp. 30-32.

<sup>191</sup> Shah Waliullah Dehlawi believes that the difference between Sufi orders consists in recitations and meditations. He sees the order as a product of inspiration, and says: “As a matter of fact, the order does not consist of those recitations and meditations. It is a reality embodied in the Exalted Assembly [of angels] ruled by God from above the heavens. God’s will is revealed to the Exalted Assembly, and the matter is decided there then revealed to humankind. God Almighty is a herald in the Exalted Assembly and will remain a statute among humankind and in its den and habitat as long as it exists.” See Mohammed ‘Abd Al-Qadir Nassar, *Ittihaf Al-Khala’iq fi Taaddud Al-Masharib wa-l-Tara’iq*, op. cit., pp. 21-24.

take the contrary view. There are those who believe that legal science is more important because it keeps orders in check and prevents Sufis from straying from the right path, as has happened with many individuals. Others believe that legal science without Sufism is sterile and does not achieve the objective that is the purpose of religion, which is true servitude to God.<sup>192</sup> This translates into the aphorism often echoed by Sufis that “He who practices Sufism and without studying *fiqh* corrupts his faith, while he who studies *fiqh* without practicing Sufism corrupts himself.” They quote poetic verses by Imam Al-Shafi‘i:

*Be both a jurist and a Sufi, not just one – indeed I recommend  
God’s truth to you  
Since the one is harsh and its heart never tasted piety, while the  
other is ignorant and how  
can the ignorant be set right?*<sup>193</sup>

In this chapter, we will enter the “Sufi house” and learn more about the origins, masters, histories, and *zawiyas* of the orders. We will try to paint a picture of the main features of the *hadras* (ritual gatherings) or *dhikr* sessions that they conduct by getting to know the Shadhili school, the Rifa‘i branches, and the Khalwati-Jami‘a-Rahmani, Naqshbandi-Haqqani, and Ba‘Alawi orders.

We have chosen these orders based on a set of criteria, most prominently presence, reach, structural strength, adaptivity, continuity, and ability to attract the youth generation.

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<sup>192</sup> See Awn Al-Qaddoumi, *Khalafata Al-Insan fi Al-Akwan* (Humanity’s Succession in the Universes); Dar Al-Mueein Publication and Distribution, Amman; First Edition, 2014, pp. 78-86.

<sup>193</sup> From Diwan Imam Al-Shafi‘i, see the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycdy6r5x>. There are Salafis who question the attribution of these verses to Imam Al-Shafi‘i– see “Is it proven that Imam Al-Shafi‘i praised Sufism in his poetry?” on the website Islam Question & Answer, 27/6/2012, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yabpxe6u>

Some of the terms used in this chapter should be pointed out here. Speaking about a shaykh granting a person license (*ijaza*) for the general *wird* means that the shaykh permits the person to hold *hadrās* and *dhikr* sessions but not the right to induct others into the order. General and special *idhn* (authorization) means that the shaykh authorizes the person to induct others into the order, and in this context, Sufism uses the term *taslik* to denote leading travelers on the Sufi path through the ways of the order. That involves both general and special *idhn*.

## TOPIC 1

### THE SHADHILI “SCHOOL” IN JORDAN

The origins of the Shadhili school trace back to its initial founder, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili. It later branched and split into several sub-orders in many countries around the world. In Jordan, the Shadhilis are generally represented by the Alawi-Darqawi school and the Shadhili-Yashruti school.

#### 1. The Shadhili school: Shaykhs, origins, and features

The founder of the Shadhili school is Shaykh‘ Ali ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn‘Abd Al-Jabbar Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili, who, according to his biographers, traces back to the Prophet Muhammad through Al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn ‘Ali Talib. He was born in the Moroccan village of Ghomara near Ceuta in 593 AH (1197AD), and studied Islamic legal sciences in Fez before beginning his Sufi journey under Shaykh‘ Abd Allah ibn Abi Abu Al-Hasan Ali ibn Harzihim, from whom he received the Sufi *khirqā*, a woolen robe. He then migrated to Iraq, searching for the *qutb ghawth* (lit. “helper axis,” the supreme saint in any given age). There he met Shaykh Abu Al-Fath Al-Wasta, who influenced him and took him on as a disciple. He told him that he was searching for the *qutb ghawth* in Iraq, when he was in his own country of Morocco. So Al-Shadhili returned to Morocco and met his spiritual teacher, Shaykh‘ Abd Al-Salam ibn Mashish, who marked out the path that Al-Shadhili would later follow after being his companion, learning from him, and receiving instruction in Sufism under him. Ibn Mashish asked Al-Shadhili to leave and go to Tunisia, and to reside in the Shadhila region, and told him that he would become associated with the area. So Al-Shadhili went into seclusion in Tunisia. His teacher foretold that after enduring trials in Tunisia, he would migrate to Egypt and become the *qutb*, the supreme saint of the age. This prophecy indeed came to pass.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> For a biography of Shaykh Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili, see Dr. Abdel Halim Mahmoud, *Qadiyat Al-Tasawwuf: Al-Madrasa Al-Shadhiliyya* (The Issue of Sufism: The Shadhili School); Dar Al-Maarif, Cairo; Third Edition, pp. 18-42. See also Amer =

The famous tale about Al-Shadhili's journey takes us into detail on his travels to Shadhila and his meeting with one of *murids*, and then his prolonged retreat in one a cave near the town on Mount Zaghwan overlooking Shadhila. He then descended into Tunis and attained masses of *murids* and followers, provoking the enmity of the Qadi of Tunis Ibn Al-Bara', who tried to sow dissension between him and the governor of Tunis by accusing Al-Shadhili of being a Fatimid and of trying to turn the people against the governor. Although these allegations did not succeed, Abu Al-Hasan later left (after going on Hajj and returning to Tunisia) for Egypt, having received authorization to go there, and so he went to Alexandria.

Ibn Al-Bara' chased after him there and attempted to sow dissension between him and the governor of Egypt, but it did not work. Al-Shadhili made his home in the Alexandria citadel after the governor instituted an endowment for him, and he gave lessons at Attarine Mosque. His *da'wa* began to spread among the people and in many countries, and he stayed in Egypt for nearly 14 years until dying in 656 AH (1258) in Humaithara, a town in the Aydhhab desert of southern Egypt, while on his way to the Hajj with some of his disciples and followers. They prayed over him and buried him there, and his shrine is located there to this day, drawing a constant stream of pilgrims.<sup>195</sup>

The Shadhili Order became widespread, powerful, and prominent in Egypt, and two of Sufism's luminaries inherited the Order from Al-Shadhili. The first was Abu Al-'Abbas Al-Mursi (616-685 AH/1219-1287), who was born in Al-Andalus. He traveled with Al-Shadhili from Tunisia to Egypt and married his daughter. After the two of them came Ibn 'Ata Al-Iskandari, a prominent Egyptian jurist and a disciple of the two shaykhs. Unlike Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili and Abu Al-'Abbas, Ibn 'Ata left a collection of writings valuable in Sufism and the Shadhili Order. He is the author of *Hikam Al-'Ata'iya*, which today is one of the most significant references in Sufism.

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= el-Naggar, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Misr: Nasha'tha wa-Nuzumha wa-Rawadha* (Sufi Orders in Egypt: Their Origin, Systems, and Pioneers); Dar Al-Maarif, Cairo; Fifth Edition, pp. 124-127.

<sup>195</sup> Amer el-Naggar, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Misr*; op. cit., pp. 124-129.

Meanwhile, if Abu Al-Hasan were asked why he did not write books, he would say, "My companions are my books."<sup>196</sup>

Despite not writing books, Al-Shadhili in practice established the parameters of the Shadhili school through his statements. This includes his emphasis that a Sufi who travels the Sufi path must build that path atop a foundation of legal science, and that the order must adhere to the sciences of Islamic Shari'a.<sup>197</sup>

One of the features of the Shadhili school is moderation. Al-Shadhili wore the best clothes, rode horses, ate the best food, and cared about his appearance. He was not quick to wear the clothing for which Sufism was known, which was often rough and torn, and he viewed that clothing as a way for Sufis to distinguish themselves from others, as if they were better than them. According to Ibn 'Ata, however, he did not stand in the way of anyone who wanted to wear such clothes, and he said to Abu Al-'Abbas: "Know God, and be as you please." He also said: "My son, drink your water cold. If you drink it hot and then praise God, you would say it begrudgingly. But if you drink cold water and praise God, every organ of your body would respond with praise to God."<sup>198</sup>

He would urge his *murids* to work and earn a living, and refuse to be dependent on the community. Ibn 'Ata said, "Shaykh Abu Al-Hasan hated the idle *murid*." Abu Al-Hasan himself worked in agriculture, and indeed, Shaykh 'Abd Al-Halim Mahmoud, the former imam of Al-Azhar, is of the opinion that the Shadhili theory on Sufism prefers the grateful rich to the patient poor. His *du'a* included, "O God, be generous with my livelihood in my mortal life, and do not bar me from the afterlife with it."<sup>199</sup>

Shaykh Ibn 'Ata Al-Iskandari gave an account of Shaykh Abu Al-'Abbas Al-Mursi telling him: "When we accompany a trader, we do

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<sup>196</sup> Abdel Halim Mahmoud, *Qadiyat Al-Tasawwuf: Al-Madrasa Al-Shadhiliyya*; op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-76.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-44.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

not say to him, 'Leave your business and come'; or a craftsman, 'Leave your craft and come'; or a seeker of knowledge, 'Leave your pursuit and come.' With each one, we recognize what God has established for him."<sup>200</sup>

One of the characteristics of the Shadhili school, as Dr. Abdel Halim Mahmoud describes, is "struggle" in various regards. This struggle ranges from the human self and the effort to resist and be liberated from appetites, all the way to the battlefield, as it is known that Al-Shadhili was present at the famous Battle of Mansurah in 1250 between the Egyptian army led by Baibars and the French campaign led by Louis IX, which ended with the Egyptians victorious. There were prominent Islamic scholars within the Egyptian army, including Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili and 'Izz Al-Din ibn 'Abd Al-Salam. They urged the soldiers and the army to fight and wage a holy war against the Crusader enemies and to raise their moral standing, although Al-Shadhili had become blind by then, after his eyesight weakened as he aged.<sup>201</sup>

Like the other Sufi orders, the Shadhili school stresses the importance of asceticism (*zuhd*) in this world, and the necessity of ongoing spiritual and psychological exercises in order to advance towards spiritual "illumination" and ascend through the stations that lead to God. It is always affirmed in Abu Al-Hasan's theology that "A servant will never reach God while he still has any of his appetites or any of his desires."<sup>202</sup>

The Shadhili Order is based on five primary pillars of behavior: Be devout toward God in secret and in public. Follow the sunna in word and deed. Turn away from the corporeal world both in approaching and withdrawing. Be content with God amid want and plenty. Turn to God in times of weal and woe.

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<sup>200</sup> See Ibn Ata Al-Iskandari, *Lata'if Al-Minan* (The Key to Salvation), edited by Grand Imam Abdel Halim Mahmoud; Dar Al-Maarif, Cairo; Third Edition, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-58.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

As to how to get there: Piety is achieved through righteousness and fear of God. The sunna is achieved through good moral character. Turning away from the corporeal world is achieved through patience and trust in God. Contentment in God is achieved through conviction and delegation. Returning to God is achieved through giving praise and thanks in times of weal and returning to Him in times of woe.<sup>203</sup>

Concerning the basis of his order, Imam Al-Shadhili said: "The pathway in pursuit of God is remembrance, with its soil being good works and its fruit being light; thought, with its soil being patience and its fruit being knowledge; poverty, with its soil being thankfulness and its fruit being more of it; and love, with its soil being some of this world and its people, and its fruit being nearness to the Beloved."<sup>204</sup> He also said: "Make piety your homeland, and you shall not be harmed by the carousing of the *nafs* (the "self" or lower soul) unless you consent to vice, insist on sin, or lose the fear of *Al-ghayb* (the unseen world)."<sup>205</sup>

While Shaykh Al-Shadhili did not write books, he left his *murids* and followers a set of *adhkar* ("recitations") and *awrad* that became a sign of a *murid's* commitment to the Shadhili Order. The most notable *adhkar* that he left are Hizb Al-Barr (Litany of the Land), Hizb Al-Bahr (Litany of the Sea), Hizb Al-Fath (Litany of Victory), and Hizb Al-Hamd (Litany of Praise).<sup>206</sup> His words and legacies, and those of his disciple Abu Al-'Abbas, have also become a guidebook for disciples and shaykhs traveling the path within the Shadhili Order.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> See Shaykh Ahmad Zarruq, *Risala fi Usul Al-Tariq* (Epistle on Principles of the Path), at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yd65auxx>

<sup>204</sup> Amer El-Naggar, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Misr*; op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>205</sup> See Mohammed Saleh Al-Mestaoui, "A Reading of Ahmad Zarruq's *Principles of the Shadhili Order*," on Mestaoui's website, 21/3/2009, at <https://tinyurl.com/ybegff6j>

<sup>206</sup> See Shaykh Al-Himyari, known as Ibn Al-Sabbagh, *Durrat Al-Asrar wa-Tuhfat Al-Abrar* (The Mystical Teachings of Al-Shadhili); Al-Maktaba Al-Azhariya lil-Turath, Cairo; 2001, pp. 53-78.

<sup>207</sup> See selected statements and observations of Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili and Abu Al-'Abbas Al-Mursi, op. cit., pp. 64-180.

These are the origins of the Shadhili school and some of the views of its top scholars and founders such as Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili, Abu Al-'Abbas Al-Mursi, Ibn 'Ata Al-Iskandari, and Ahmad Zarruq.

## 2. The origins of the Jordanian Shadhili Order: The Darqawi-Allawis

All the branches of the Shadhili Order in Jordan are affiliated with the Shadhili-Allawi-Darqawi school. It is therefore necessary here to mention two other shaykhs of great importance in the Shadhili school, in particular Shaykh Muhammad Al-'Arabi Al-Darqawi (1150-1239 AH/1737-1823) of the Zeroual tribe in northern Morocco, who is considered the founder of the Darqawi Order, one of the Shadhili branches. His order spread in the 19th century and found tens of thousands of followers. It is based on the same principles as the Shadhili Order, in addition to the legacy of Al-Darqawi's letters on Sufism and travelers on the Sufi path, especially Shadhili travelers. His order focuses on following the sunna in words, deeds, worship, and customs; avoidance of any sort of *bid'a* (innovation in religion) under all circumstances; breaking the *nafs* and forgoing control and choice; dissociating from legal claims and power; engaging in remembrance all day and night; and devoting oneself to study and what it involves, and giving up all else.<sup>208</sup>

Al-Darqawi said: "The *dhikr* circle, whether standing or sitting, is the emblem of the path of Sufism, including remembrance, veneration, and exaltation by the group in one voice directed toward a single purpose, having nothing but God's name on the tongue and in the heart in accordance with rank, and interlacing hands in rising up, chanting poetic verses with subtle meanings, singing the praises of the Truth accepted by Sufis (may God be pleased with them). Thus the novice, the one in the middle of his journey, the one at the end, the seeker of God's favor, and the one who loves God – they all are

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<sup>208</sup> See Al-Sharif Al-Husni Moulay Al-Arabi Al-Darqawi, *Majmu'at Rasa'il* (Collected Letters), edited by Bassam Mohammed Baroud; Abu Dhabi Cultural Center, 1999, p. 32.

the same in the *dhikr* circle, as in prayer. Each one of them reaps the fruits of his *dhikr* according to his standing with his Lord and his destiny.”<sup>209</sup> Al-Darqawi’s opinion here may bring us to an important debate in the Shadhili Order about the *sama’* or “listening” ceremony that Sufi orders hold. Al-Shadhili, the founder, did not like *sama’*, while the renewer Al-Darqawi permitted it, and we see that the latter’s opinion is followed in Jordanian Shadhili *dhikr* sessions.

The second figure to whom the Jordanian Shadhili school can be traced is Ahmad ibn Mustafa ibn ‘Aliwa Al-‘Allawi from the Algerian coastal city of Mostaganem. He was born in 1874, and because of his father’s early death, he went into business while still young but persisted in seeking knowledge during that period under local Sufi masters in the city. In the period between 1886-1894, he was influenced by the Aissawi Order and advanced far in that order, which focused on *karamat* (saintly wonders or minor miracles) and *kharq Al-‘aadat*. But he began to withdraw from the order and avoid its gatherings, until he met Shaykh Mohammed ibn Al-Habib Albouzaidi, the leader of the Shadhili-Darqawi Order at the time, in 1894. The story of this meeting is quaint and shows us some of the features of the Allawi school. At the time, Al-‘Allawi followed the Aissawi practice of snake charming (as a type of *karama* and *kharq Al-‘aadat*), and the shaykh asked him to show him the practice. So Al-‘Allawi fetched a snake and began to perform with it, and the shaykh said to him, “Can you control a snake bigger than this one?” Al-‘Allawi replied, “This is all I have.” So Shaykh Albouzaidi said to him: “Then I will show you one that’s much bigger and more dangerous. If you successfully master it, then you really are wise!” Al-‘Allawi asked him, “But where is it?” The Shaykh responded: “It is you, the self that is within your own body. Its venom is much stronger than the snake’s, and you will be truly wise if you can master it the way you do with this sort of snake. Don’t repeat these tests!”<sup>210</sup> This story indicates

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<sup>209</sup> See “Luminaries of Sufism: Moulay Al-Arabi Al-Darqawi,” on the Qadiri-Boutchichi Order website: <https://tinyurl.com/yawzjev4>

<sup>210</sup> See “Ahmad ibn Mustafa ibn Aliwa Al-Allawi,” Al-Mudawwana Al-Allawiyya (The Allawi Blog), 22/12/2017, available at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ybvzvzqb>

that the Shadhili school is generally indifferent to *kharq Al-'aadat* as a type of *karama*, at least to the extent that *karamat* are linked to religious virtue and adherence to Islamic shari'a.

Al-'Allawi began his commitment with Shaykh Albouzaïdi after that. He remained the shaykh's companion and was one of his closest *murids* and disciples in the Darqawi Order for 15 years until the 1909 death of Albouzaïdi, who did not appoint a successor. There was a dispute among the Darqawis until they decided to choose Ahmed Al-'Allawi as Albouzaïdi's successor. He thus became the Darqawi shaykh, and he then moved to Libya and began publishing some of his books there. The dispute intensified between Al-'Allawi and many followers of the Darqawi Order and Albouzaïdi's disciples, who spent their time at Albouzaïdi's tomb. At their weekly Thursday meetings, they engaged in some practices and then burned incense, read *adhkar* aloud, and sang poems by the Saliheen. Al-'Allawi, meanwhile, believed it was necessary to attend to reform and public affairs, confront French colonialism, stand against attempts to change Islamic identity, and preserve the Arab language and Islamic legal sciences. This prompted him to found the new Allawi Order independent of the Darqawi *zawiya* in existence at the time. He subsequently launched his Shadhili-Darqawi-Allawi Order in 1914.<sup>211</sup>

We cannot expand much on Shaykh Al-'Allawi's policies and attitudes here, but we find before us a model that really deserves study because it led to a major paradigm shift in Shadhili Sufism in Algeria. In exiting the *zawiya*, moving into the community, and engaging with the street, Al-'Allawi gained tens of thousands of followers in a short period of time. He had an important view that *zawiyas* must not be limited to *dhikr* but should be a place for education and thought. He founded political and intellectual journals such as *Al-Balagh Al-Jaza'iri* (the *Algerian Messenger*), and he actively opposed France's colonial policies in Algeria and played a significant role in founding the Association of Algerian Muslim Ulama' before it became a Salafi

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= See also the biography of Shaykh Al-'Allawi on the Facebook page of the Shadhili-Momani-Urabi Order in Jordan: <https://tinyurl.com/ydy3gwal>

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

organization. The shaykh also founded the Society for Preaching and Guidance in 1932. He died in 1934.<sup>212</sup>

How, then, did the Shadhili-Darqawi (-Allawi-Yashruti) Order reach Jordan?

The Shadhili-Darqawis came to the Levant (Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon) in the early 1930s, when Shaykh Ahmad Al-'Allawi went on Hajj and visited Gaza, Hebron, Jerusalem, Damascus, and Beirut before returning to Algeria via Marseille. Shaykh Al-'Allawi granted Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani *idhn* in the order during that trip and authorized him to lead travelers on the path, and he subsequently did the same for Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali. Meanwhile, the Darqawi Order's representative in Libya, Shaykh Muhammad Al-Madani, granted *idhn* to Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti, as we will mention later.<sup>213</sup>

We therefore have before us three streams of the Shadhili-Darqawi Order in Jordan: Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani, Mustafa Al-Filali, and Ali Al-Yashruti.

**I. Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani:** Born in Algeria in 1880, he studied science and took up the Darqawi-Shadhili Order in Tlemcen under Shaykh Ahmed ibn Yalas, who had been granted *idhn* there in the general *wird*. Although he became involved in commercial business at an early age, he remained deeply interested in *da'wa* and seeking knowledge until he was arrested for his stance against French colonization and his options for scholarly study were constrained. He decided to go to Damascus, and did actually leave in 1911 for Turkey, where he stayed for a year biding his time for an opportunity to enter Syria. He eventually managed to travel to Damascus, where he settled near the Umayyad Mosque and started to meet well-known Syrian shaykhs and become a disciple to some of them, such as Badr Al-Din Al-Husni, Ali Al-Dakar, and others. Al-Tilimsani then met Shaykh Al-'Allawi during his visit to Damascus in the early 1930s. The latter granted him *idhn* to guide travelers on

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid. Al-Mudawwana Al-Allawiyya, different link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8luuhbb>

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

the path of the Shadhili-Allawi Order, and he became the shaykh's successor in the Levant.<sup>214</sup>

The Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order initially entered Jordan via Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi, who was a student and *murid* of Shaykh Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani in Damascus. In the early 1950s, Al-Tilimsani ordered him to move from Syria to Jordan to spread the *da'wa*. Shaykh Al-Hashimi came to visit Al-Kurdi and also visited his *zawiya* in the Irbid Refugee Camp, and they traveled together to Jerusalem by mule to visit Al-Aqsa Mosque, where they met the shaykh of the Qadiri Order, Shaykh Muhammad Hashim Al-Baghdadi.<sup>215</sup>

The current of the order associated with Shaykh Al-Hashimi also arrived in Jordan via Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh. He was granted *idhn* by Shaykh Abdul Qadir Issa, who in turn had Shaykh Al-Hashimi's authorization to leader travelers on the path in the Shadhili Order after having previously been granted *idhn* in the Qadiri Order. He therefore called his order the Shadhili-Qadiri Order, which counts among its adherents in Jordan both Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh and Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh, who received instruction in the Shadhili Order and was granted *idhn* in it by Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali.<sup>216</sup>

**II. Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali:** Originally from Morocco and a descendant of *Ahl Al-Bayt* (the Prophet's family), the family of the Prophet Muhammad, he was born in 1889 in Morocco. His father decided to go on Hajj with the family, so they all went on Hajj in 1897. After completing all the rites and ceremonies of the Hajj, they were fascinated by the shrine in Medina, and so Mustafa studied there under the city's '*ulama*' and shaykhs until later moving to Egypt and the

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<sup>214</sup> See, for example, the Facebook page of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order in the Levant: <https://tinyurl.com/ya4qgjb>; also "Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi," on the website Naseem Al-Sham, 23/7/2011, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y92t9pnv>

<sup>215</sup> See the Facebook page of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order in the Levant: <https://tinyurl.com/y9bpkl28>

<sup>216</sup> See "Biography of our master, Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh" on the Dala'il Al-Khayrat Forums website: <https://tinyurl.com/y8vrzj5k>; and also on Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh's official YouTube channel: <https://tinyurl.com/y8hen2jd>

Levant. He then resided a long time in Jerusalem, and there he met Shaykh Ahmad Al-ʿAllawi at the beginning of the 1930s and followed him to Tlemcen. Al-Filali learned about the path and was granted general and special *idhn* and authorized to lead travelers on the path within the Allawi Order. He then returned to Jerusalem and worked to spread the *daʿwa*. Several Allawi-Filali *zawiyas* were opened in Palestinian cities, including Jerusalem, Ramla, Gaza, Jaffa, and Jabal Mukaber (Arab Al-Sawahira).<sup>217</sup>

In 1953, Shaykh Al-Filali moved to reside in Amman, occupying two houses near the Grand Hussein Mosque. He started holding *ha-dras* and *dhikr* in one of them and in the homes of *murids*, who became numerous and began to spread, until the opening of a Filali *zawiya* and the establishment of a mosque in the Hayy Al-Arab neighborhood of Zarqa. The shaykh himself moved in 1967 to live in Zarqa near the *zawiya* until his death in 1986.<sup>218</sup>

**III. Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti:** Born in Bizerte in Tunisia in 1794, he was from the Yashrut clan. His father was a dignitary in the Ottoman Empire, and his family was wealthy. His brothers died of illness, leaving only him an only child, and then his father died. He had shown an inclination toward Sufism and Islamic legal sciences from a young age, and after moving to Tunis he studied legal science there. He became acquainted with the Sufi orders and their masters during his youth, including the Aissawi Order, and eventually met a Shadhili-Madani follower in Tunis. He then moved to Misrata in Libya, where the shaykh and founder of that order lived, Shaykh Muhammad Hassan ibn Hamza ibn ʿAbd Al-Rahman Zafir Al-Madani, who was a fol-

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<sup>217</sup> On the life of Shaykh Al-Filali, see “Mustafa Abdul Salam Al-Filali,” Al-Mudawwana Al-Allawiyya, 27/12/2017, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycmp572n>. On his *zawiya* and his successors in the Order in Palestine and Jordan, see the Facebook page of Shaykh Ahmed Al-Radaydeh, 11/10/2015: <https://tinyurl.com/yahqcr5v>.

<sup>218</sup> See a celebration of Mawlid (Prophet Muhammad’s birthday) at the Filali *zawiya* in Zarqa, attended by Shaykh Al-Filali himself, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y98jq6l7>; and a recording of a different gathering for *dhikr*, available on YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/yc9lbgfc>.

lower of the Shadhili-Darqawi order and a *murid* of Shaykh Muhammad Al-Arabi Al-Darqawi.

Shaykh Al-Yashruti went to Libya and established himself at his shaykh's *zawiya* for about 13 years, until the latter died in the 1940s. Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti then decided to travel to the Mashreq on religious tourism and to perform the obligation of the Hajj. He left with a fellowship of brothers, and after the Hajj, he returned to Egypt and intended to go then to Jerusalem, but the sea tossed him ashore in Acre in 1850.<sup>219</sup> He felt that he had "authorization" to set up there, so he took the Al-Fath Mosque as his home and began teaching and preaching. He became renowned and attracted more and more followers, until some began to denounce him to the Ottoman authorities, who exiled him to Rhodes. He returned after a year and achieved great standing once again. The Yashruti *da'wa* spread throughout the Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan), Egypt, and the Comoros.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Muhammad Zafir Al-Madani's biographers differ over the date of his death, but he probably died in the 1940s. After that, Shaykh Al-Yashruti decided to travel to the Mashreq. Telephone conversation with Dr. Wafa Sawaftah, 28/5/2020.

<sup>220</sup> For more information on the life, biography, and order of Shaykh Ali Nur Al-Din Al-Yashruti, founder of the Yashruti Order, reference can be made to the book by his daughter Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya Al-Hassaniyya, *Rihla ila Al-Haqq* (A Journey Toward the Truth), Third Edition, pp. 169-366. See also Wafa Ahmed Al-Sawaftah (a Shadhili-Yashruti academic), *The Shadhili-Yashruti School and its Shaykh, Ali Nur Al-Din Al-Yashruti*; Dar Al-Basha'ir, Damascus; Second Edition, 2017; pp. 179-265. The book was originally a doctoral dissertation in philosophy presented by Dr. Al-Sawaftah, an adherent of the Shadhili-Yashruti Order at the Lebanese University in Beirut, and was supervised by Dr. Suad Al-Hakim, a well-known Arab scholar of Sufism, especially Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar Muhyi Al-Din Ibn 'Arabi. Iskandari Al-Fawzi Musa Nasser Nasser, *Asalib Al-Tarbiya Al-Akhlaqiyya fi Al-Tariqa Al-Shadhiliyya Al-Yashrutiyya wa-Mada Mura'at Mu'alimmi Al-Marhala Al-Thanawiyya liha fi Juzur Al-Qomr Al-Muttahida* (Moral Education Methods in the Shadhili-Yashruti Order and Their Application by Secondary School Teachers in the Comoros); Dar Al-Basha'ir, Damascus; 2014, pp. 86-98. It was originally a master's thesis in education at Aal Al-Bayt University. It should be noted that the thesis focused on educational curricula in the Comoros due to the prevalence of the order there, as it was initially brought to those islands by one of Shaykh Al-Yashruti's disciples, Abdullah Darwish Al-Afriqi, as he was known in Acre. He received instruction in the order from the shaykh and spent time with him, then returned to his country and spread the order, which was well received and spread widely (pp. 32-33).

Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti died in the late 19th century, and his son Ibrahim Al-Yashruti took over the order. Shaykh Ibrahim died in 1928, and his son Muhammad Al-Hadi succeeded him and led the order for nearly half a century. Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hadi Al-Yashruti moved to Beirut to live there around 1947-1948. The Palestinian Nakba occurred during that period, and a large number of the order's adherents moved to neighboring countries, especially Jordan and Lebanon. The center of the order moved to Lebanon.<sup>221</sup>

The order established several *zawiyas* and found many followers and *murids* prior to Shaykh Muhammad's death in 1980. The Yashruti Order then transferred to his son, lawyer Ahmad Al-Yashruti, who was born in 1928. He shifted the center of the order to Amman, and *dhikr* sessions were initially held at his home near the 4th Circle before moving to a new *zawiya* built in the Al-Jandawil neighborhood of Amman.

Dr. Abdul Jalil Al-Awawdeh also took up the Shadhili-Yashruti Order. He was born in Palestine in 1944 and enrolled in Al-Azhar, where he became acquainted with the Naqshbandi Order through Shaykh Najm Al-Din Al-Kurdi and went regularly to his gatherings for one year. He then returned to Palestine after 1967 and was appointed as a lecturer at the University of Jordan Faculty of Shari'a. In the early 1970s, he met the famous poet Abdul Rahman Abu Risha, the son-in-law of Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Yashruti, Shaykh Ali Yashruti's son and successor, and received instruction from him in the Yashruti Order.<sup>222</sup>

He recalls that a large number of Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti's disciples were well-known political, literary, and religious figures in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria, and Sultan Abdul Hamid II asked Shaykh Al-Yashruti to move to Istanbul to be near him. He excused himself from doing so and sent one of his disciples in his place, Shaykh Mamduh Abu Al-Shamat, the order's representative in Damascus. He met Sultan Abdul Hamid and took *ba'ya*, a pledge of initiation and alle-

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<sup>221</sup> Telephone call with Dr. Wafa Al-Sawaftah, an adherent of the Shadhili-Yashruti Order and one of the foremost researchers specializing in the order, 28/5/2020.

<sup>222</sup> Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya*, op. cit., pp. 113-114.

giance, with some of the sultan's ministers, admitting them into the Yashruti Order. There was later a constant stream of messages and contacts between the sultan and the order's representative, Shaykh Abu Al-Shamat, including a communication in which Sultan Abdul Hamid told him about Jewish attempts to obtain permission to establish a homeland in Palestine.<sup>223</sup>

### 3. The Darqawi and Allawi-Hashimi model

Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi (1890-1972), one of the most prominent founders of contemporary tariqa-centered Sufism in Jordan, was the disciple of and successor to Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani in the Darqawi-Allawi Order.

His full name was Muhammad Sa'id ibn Ajaj ibn 'Ali ibn Ahmed Agha Al-Ayzouli, and he was a descendant of the famous saint Musa ibn Mahin Al-Ayzouli Al-Kurdi. His father was part of the Ottoman-era Kurdish migration to Jordan, and he settled down in the town of Sakhra, Ajloun Governorate and married the daughter of Muhammad Al-Amin Al-Momani. Muhammad Sa'id was born in the village of Al-Nuaima in northern Jordan at the end of the Ottoman era in 1890. His father died when he was 7 years old, and he grew up an orphan among his uncles in the Momani tribe in Sakhra. He lived the typical rural life and worked in agriculture.<sup>224</sup>

Due to the ignorance and poverty widespread in the country among Muslims at the time, the shaykh was unable to seek knowledge until reverence for the Lord overtook him, and he found in himself a will that pushed him to seek knowledge. When he was 27,

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<sup>223</sup> Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya, *Rihla ila Al-Haqq*; op. cit., pp. 317-329. See also Mohammed Awad Al-Hazaimah, *Al-Quds fi Al-Sira'Al-Arabi - Al-Isra'ili* (Jerusalem in the Arab-Israeli Conflict); Dar Al-Hamed for Publishing & Distribution, Amman; 2011, pp. 45-51; and Youssef Hussein Omar, *Asbab Khali' Al-Sultan Abdul Hamid* (Why Sultan Abdul Hamid was Deposed); Dar Al-Ketab Al-Thaqafi for Publishing & Distribution; 2005, pp. 355-356.

<sup>224</sup> See further explanation of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi on his Facebook page, in a biography written by his son, Dr. Radwan Al-Kurdi, 10/5/2011, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y93wkr23>

he migrated to Damascus, the refuge of scholarship and scholars, in search of Shaykh Ali Al-Dakar. He married a Damascene woman and lived in Damascus, and he became an imam at several mosques in Damascus and the villages surrounding it, Dael and Duma and others. He met Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi and spent long years at his side, receiving instruction from him in the Shadhili Order, and became one of his closest and most prominent *murids*.

Shaykh Al-Hashimi then asked him to go back to Jordan to teach people the correct religion, so he returned to Irbid and started teaching in Hayy Al-Janubi, but he did not find an audience. He then moved to a location adjacent to the Irbid refugee camp, buying a plot of land there and building a *zawiya* on it, a mosque, and a shari'a school for teaching Islamic legal science. He held *dhikr* circles in his *zawiya* in Irbid and at the homes of *murids* in Amman.<sup>225</sup>

Shaykh Al-Kurdi remained a teacher until his 1972 death in the village of Al-Sarih, where had moved and established his *zawiya* in 1970. After his death, his disciples built a mosque next to the *zawiya*. Shaykh Al-Kurdi left behind him a set of published books and a well-known poetry collection.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Interview with his son, Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, at his home in Al-Sarih near Shaykh Al-Kurdi's *zawiya*, 12/3/2020.

<sup>226</sup> One of Shaykh Muhammad Said Al-Kurdi's lessons can be heard on YouTube at: <https://tinyurl.com/ydymp2xy>  
His books include: *Nashr Al-'Atar Al-Muhammadiyya fi Al-Diyar Al-Islamiyya wa-Wujub Mahabbat Al-Itra Al-Nabawiyya* (Spreading the Muhammadan Fragrances Through the Islamic World and the Mandate to Love the Prophet's Descendants); *Kitab Al-Adhkar fi Al-Lail wa-l-Nahar Al-Ma'thura 'an Al-Nabi Al-Mukhtar* (Book of Adhkar for Day and Night as Transmitted by the Chosen Prophet); *Fawa'id Al-Adhkar wa-Mahabbat Al-Aziz Al-Ghaffar* (The Benefits of Adhkar and Love of the Dear Redeemer); *Duhat Al-Imdad fi Karamat ba'd Al-Awlia' Al-Akrad* (Tree of Assistance in the Karamat of Some Kurdish Saints); *'Ismat Al-Anbiya' alati Khufiyat 'ala Al-Aghbiya'* (The Virtue of Prophets Which is Hidden from Fools); *Al-Darr Al-Farid fi Ihiya' Tariqat Al-Junayd* (The Unique Pearl in the Revival of Al-Junayd's Order); *Sharh Hizb Al-Bahr Sharahahu Ahmad ibn Zarruq Al-Fasi* (A Commentary on Hizb Al-Bahr as Explained by Ahmad ibn Zarruq of Fes); *Al-Risala Al-Ruhiyya fi Al-Tariqa Al-Hashimiyya wa-l-Munaja Al-'Alawiyya* (A Spiritual Epistle on the Hashimi Order and the Alawi Address); *Risalat Al-Tawhid li-Man Arada Al-Dukhul fi Maqam Al-Tafrid* (Epistle on Unity for the One Who Wishes to Reach the Station =

His disciples include Shaykh Dr. Majid Ersan Al-Kilani, a prominent Jordanian academic with well-known writings including *Thus Emerged the Generation of Saladin*, and *Thus Jerusalem Was Saved* (*Hakadha Zahara Jil Salah Al-Din wa-Hakadha 'Adat Al-Quds*); Shaykh Ahmed Al-Khudari; Shaykh Mustafa Al-Batiha, a leading shaykh who sought knowledge under Al-Kurdi until he became a scholar of *iftaa'* (the issuance of fatwas), as he studied the Islamic legal sciences and scholarly texts, and is considered an authority in the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence; Shaykh Ahmed Ghazlan, the mufti of Irbid; Al-Hajj Abdulrazzaq Arabiyat; Abdulkarim Shammout; Abdulhalim Mulaabeh; former Awqaf Minister Abdulrahim Akour; Ibrahim Al-Khatib; Muhammad Al-Khatib; *iftaa'* imams Shaykh Younes Hamdan and Col. Saleh Taifour; Ali Yousef Akour; Shaykh Mohammed Hejazi Al-Rawabdeh, who rose through the military *iftaa'* ranks and was a jurist, preacher, and teacher; Shaykh Ahmed Al-Momani; Shaykh Abdulkarim Al-Momani; Shaykh Abdulkarim Urabi; Mohammed Najah Al-Nobani; Tamim Oqailan; and Ibrahim Al-Shayyab, who graduated from the Faculty of Shari'a at Damascus University.<sup>227</sup>

His son, Dr. Radwan Al-Kurdi, states that Shaykh Al-Kurdi gave Shaykh Abd Al-Rahman Al-Shaghouri written license in the general

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= of Individuation); *Mawlid Al-Ruh Al-Nabawiyya Khair Al-Khala'iq Al-Kuliyya* (The Birth of the Prophet's Soul: The Best of All Creations); *Al-Bahr Al-Madid fi Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Majid li-Ahmad ibn Ajiba Al-Hasani* (The Immense Ocean: Ahmad ibn Ajiba Al-Hasani's Commentary on the Holy Quran); *Munajat Al-Shaykh Muhyi Al-Din Ibn 'Arabi Al-Musama bil-Dur Al-'Aala waYalihu Hizb Al-Nass* (Shaykh Muhyi Al-Din Ibn 'Arabi's Address Called 'The Higher Realms' Followed by Hizb Al-Nass); *Al-Risala Al-Ruhiya fi Al-Tariqa Al-Hashimiyyawa-l-Munaja Al-'Alawiyya* (A Spiritual Epistle on the Hashimi Order and the Alawi Address) [sic]; *Risalat Al-Tawhid li-Man Arada Al-Dukhul fi Maqam Al-Tawhid* (Epistle on Unity for the One Who Wishes to Reach the Station of Unification); *Kitab Al-Ta'arruf bi-Haq'iq Al-Tasawwuf* (Book of Truths in Sufism); *Kitab Maw'izat Al-Sayidat wa-Arbab Al-Usrat* (Book of Sermons by Masters and Mistresses of Families); *Al-Shajara Al-Numaniyya Al-Mahiqqa lil-Ta'ifa Al-Yahudiyya lil-Shaykh Muhyi Al-Din Ibn 'Arabi* (Shaykh Muhyi Al-Din Ibn 'Arabi's Numaniya Tree for Eradicating the Jewish Sect); *Radd Ma'ani Al-Ayat Al-Mutashabihat ila Ma'ani Al-Ayat Al-Muhkammat Ta'lif Al-Shaykh Muhyi Al-Din Ibn 'Arabi* (The Response of Allegorical Verses to Decisive Verses as Authored by Shaykh Muhyi Al-Din Ibn 'Arabi). See his biography and an explanation as presented by his son Radwan; op. cit.

<sup>227</sup> See his biography as presented by his son Radwan, Ibid.

and special *awrad* and named him successor to the order. He also gave general license to other disciples, such as Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Momani, Radwan Al-Momani, Adel Rehan, and Ahmed Ghazlan.<sup>228</sup>

In addition, Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh asserts that Shaykh Al-Hashimi granted him *idhn* and *ba'ya* three days before his death, and he was also granted *idhn* by Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi and later by Shaykh Abdul Qadir Issa, a disciple of Shaykh Al-Hashimi. Therefore, Abu Ghazaleh's *zawiya* is also affiliated with the Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order, although it simultaneously uses the name of the Shadhili-Qadiri Order because Shaykh Abdul Qadir Issa guided travelers on the path in both the Shadhili and Qadiri orders.

### I. The Shadhili-Momani-Urabi *zawiya*:

After Shaykh Sa'id Al-Kurdi's death, succession transferred to Shaykh Abdul Karim Salim Al-Momani, who was born in the village of Ibbin, Ajloun Governorate, in 1924. His biography states that he initially worked in agriculture, then joined the Mujahideen Brigades in Palestine led by Fawzi Al-Qawuqji, later returning and meeting Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi. He became Al-Kurdi's companion and lived in his home for years while Al-Kurdi instructed him in the order and led him on his own path as a traveler. Al-Momani became one of Al-Kurdi's most prominent disciples.

Shaykh Al-Kurdi then ordered him to go to Damascus and spend time with Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi to learn from him, which he did after he sold him some land he inherited from his father. Al-Momani spent time with Shaykh Al-Hashimi and attended his scholarly gatherings and *dhikr* circles, then returned to Jordan. Shaykh Al-Kurdi asked him to work on *da'wa* and disseminating knowledge, which he did for 14 years. Al-Kurdi commended his *murids* to Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Momani after him at all his *zawiyas*.

When Shaykh Al-Kurdi passed away, Shaykh Al-Momani took over teaching and counseling the *murids*, and he held lessons and gatherings at the Shaykh Al-Kurdi *zawiya* in Al-Sarih. He then moved to

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<sup>228</sup> Radwan Said Al-Kurdi, biography of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi, Ibid.

the city of Irbid and opened his own home to *murids* and travelers on the path. During his tenure, the order spread in various parts of the Kingdom, most importantly in Amman, Zarqa, Mafraq, and Ajloun, and his *zawiyas* proliferated in several villages such as Hatim in northern Irbid, where he himself taught.<sup>229</sup>

Shaykh Al-Momani's time as successor to the Shadhili-Darqawi Order lasted almost two decades, from 1972 until his death in 1991. It was a period of great activity for adherents of the order. *Dhikr* gatherings in Amman were usually held in Hayy Al-Misdar at the home of Shaykh Ahmed Al-Khudari, one of the most prominent Sufi shaykhs in Jordan and a disciple of Al-Hashimi's who was committed to the Momani *zawiya* but refused to become the order's shaykh. The order's *zawiyas* proliferated in Sahab, Zarqa, Madaba, and Ajloun.<sup>230</sup> Religious lessons, *dhikr* sessions, and *hadras* were held consistently during that period, and Mawlid, Prophet Muhammad's birthday, was always observed. The *hadras* were similar to those of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order.<sup>231</sup>

Shaykh Al-Momani began building a mosque and *zawiya* in the Al-Qasilah neighborhood of Irbid in the early 1990s. The *hadras* moved to that *zawiya* after his death in 1991, and Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Urabi assumed succession of the order. Shaykh Al-Momani was buried next to the Al-Junayd Mosque, which he built.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> See his biography according to the Shadhili-Momani Order Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/y75yxdpd>

Also see his biography on Al-Mudawwana Al-Allawiyya:  
<https://tinyurl.com/ybf49s9k>

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman, op. cit.; interview with Dr. Mustafa Al-Khudari, son of Shaykh Ahmed Al-Khudari, at his home in Jabal Al-Lweibdeh, Amman, 2/5/2020.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman, op. cit. See a recording of the 1987 Mawlid observance in Sahab, on YouTube at the following link:  
<https://tinyurl.com/y9ms6aun>

<sup>232</sup> Interview with Dr. Bassam Al-Nimr at his home in Aydoun, 2/6/2020. He is one of the most prominent men of the Shadhili-Momani first generation, one of those who joined the order in the early 1970s, near the start of Shaykh Al-Momani's tenure. Al-Nimr was in the Armed Forces *iftaa'* establishment at the time and =

Shaykh Al-Urabi, born in Beersheba, Palestine, in 1942, migrated to Jordan after the Nakba and met Shaykh Al-Kurdi. He received instruction from Al-Kurdi in the order and Sufism and studied Islamic legal science with him, and then Al-Kurdi appointed him as imam of a mosque in the village of Abu Al-Lawqas in northern Irbid. Al-Urabi remained a companion of Shaykh Al-Kurdi, and after his death became close to Shaykh Al-Momani and was appointed Al-Momani's successor after his death in 1991. He served in that role for nearly 23 years, until his death in 2014. Shaykh Al-Urabi moved the *dhikr* sessions out of the Al-Junayd Mosque after several years, after he retired from the Awqaf Ministry, and into a *zawiya* near his house in the village of Hakama in Irbid. He then built a large mosque that he named Al-Nur Mosque, where *hadrās* and *dhikr* sessions are currently held.<sup>233</sup>

After Shaykh Al-Urabi's death, Shaykh Ahmad Al-Ali Al-Akour took the reins of the Shadhili-Momani-Urabi order and *zawiya*. Al-Akour was in his 70s and had studied Arabic literature at a Lebanese university. He was a *munshid* (*nashid* performer) in the *zawiya* and the son-in-law of Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Momani. He had been in the Armed Forces when he became acquainted with the order, with which his brothers are also affiliated. Al-Akour followed in his predecessors' footsteps in the holding of *hadrās* and *dhikr* sessions, and he made several visits to Malaysia and Turkey.<sup>234</sup>

It can be said that the Shaykh Al-Akour's contribution was an opening of the order to the world. Today we find that the order extends to Malaysia, and there is interest in its remarkable presence on the internet. The order's webpages and YouTube channel post many

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= until recent years. He was a long-time *munshid* (*nashid* performer) at Shadhili-Momani *hadrās*, and he is currently the imam of a mosque and holds *dhikr* in Irbid. He recently left the order with the ascension of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Ali Al-Akour.

<sup>233</sup> See his translation on the Facebook page of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order in the Levant: <https://tinyurl.com/y8lr8lhq>; also the Al-Mudawwana Al-Allawiyya blog: <https://tinyurl.com/y7w9kro9>

<sup>234</sup> See the Shadhili-Momani-Urabi Order Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yacqxfr6>

activities, such as *dhikr* sessions, special sessions of *dhikr Al-Latif*, observances of saints' birthdays, and lessons. They even rebroadcast events that were held during the tenure of Shaykh Al-Momani, as well as some of Shaykh Mohammed Sa'id Al-Kurdi's recorded lessons.<sup>235</sup>

Shadhili-Momani-Urabi *zawiyas* witnessed a remarkable proliferation during Shaykh Al-Momani's tenure. Al-Kurdi's *zawiya* was initially in Irbid, then in Shaykh Al-Momani's house in the Irbid camp. After a disagreement between Al-Momani and both Al-Kurdi successor Shaykh Al-Shaghouri and Al-Kurdi's son Shaykh Ismail, there were *zawiyas* in Al-Ghwairiyah in Zarqa, Tloo Al-Misdar in Amman at Shaykh Ahmad Al-Khudari's house, in Madaba, in Sahab, in Tafilah, and in Sakhra in Ajloun. Shaykh Al-Momani opened a *zawiya* in Mafrag, but it did not last long. Then, after becoming shaykh of the order, Shaykh Al-Urabi moved *dhikr* sessions to the Grand Husseini Mosque in downtown Amman with the written consent of then-Awqaf Minister Dr. Abdul Salam Al-Abadi. The sessions moved to Al-Junayd Mosque and later to Al-Nur Mosque. Then, finally, Shaykh Al-Urabi named two successors: Ahmad Al-Ali Al-Akour and Shaykh Hamad Barakat in Madaba. But there was a dispute between them, and so today the main *zawiyas* with Shaykh Al-Akour are those at Al-Nur Mosque in Irbid, Sakhra in Ajloun, Mafrag, and Sahab, and a disciple and *murid* in the order recently opened a *zawiya* in Malaysia.<sup>236</sup>

Adherents of the order stress that there has been remarkable growth and youth receptivity to Sufism and the Shadhili-Momani Order, and that *murids* are clearly active and committed to the order

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<sup>235</sup> For more, see pictures of Mawlid held by Shaykh Ahmad Al-Ali, his visits abroad, and *dhikr* sessions at the following links:

- *Dhikr* with recitation of "Allah": <https://tinyurl.com/y8r6d8jf>
- Mawlid celebration at the order's *zawiya* in the village of Sakhra, Ajloun, in 2018: <https://tinyurl.com/y7z47het>
- Mawlid reading at Al-Dhakireen Mosque in Tafilah, 2018: <https://tinyurl.com/y8ak2wyn>
- Another example of a *dhikr* session: <https://tinyurl.com/ydhdyr9g>

<sup>236</sup> Interview with Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman, op. cit. Interview with Shaykh Bassam Al-Nimr, op. cit.

and *zawiyas*. The most prominent activities of the order's adherents include weekly meetings, *dhikr* sessions on Fridays after the dawn and noon prayers, sessions of *dhikr Al-Latif* and prayers for the Prophet on Wednesday and Friday nights, and daily *awrad* in the morning and evening. The order also commemorates religious occasions, especially Mawlid.<sup>237</sup>

Some of the order's followers mention the major disagreements that occurred after the passing of its founding shaykh, Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi. The first was that Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah and Shaykh Ali Al-Faqir met with Shaykh Al-Momani and told him that they had agreed with Shaykh Al-Kurdi before his death to change some of the wording in his collected poems because it contained suggestions of *wahdat Al-wujud*, the doctrine of Unity of Being. Shaykh Al-Momani said no and that he was not authorized to do so, as it was Shaykh Al-Kurdi's work. This led to a dispute between the two sides, which impacted the order's adherents in the Army Iftaa' Department because Shaykh Al-Qudah's treatment of them changed. That included the son of Shaykh Al-Momani himself, Shaykh Aref Al-Momani, who was one of the candidates to succeed his father but died before his father did.

A fundamental disagreement that raises questions about the very lineage (*sanad*) of the order is that Shaykh Al-Momani ended his association with Shaykh Al-Shaghouri and told him that he was not subject to him. The order split into two, and the Momani-Urabi *zawiya* broke away. There was great controversy as to whether Shaykh Al-Kurdi had actually granted Shaykh Al-Momani *idhn* in the general and special *wird*, sent him into *khalwa* (spiritual seclusion), and authorized him to lead others on the path. There were many *murids* who said they wanted to enter *khalwa*, and Shaykh Al-Momani told them that he did not have *idhn* in that practice. *Sanad* is known to be very important because it is the basis of legitimacy for Sufi orders and their masters. By rule, *idhn* should be firm and in writing. Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, the son of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi, states

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<sup>237</sup> An example of the order's Mawlids from the Sahab *zawiya* can be seen on YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/y8wfw45x>

that his father declared that Shaykh Al-Shaghouri would be his successor.<sup>238</sup>

After the dispute with Al-Momani, Al-Shaghouri granted several people *idhn* to lead others on the path, including Shaykh Younes Al-Dajeh, who later renounced the role, and then Shaykh Ahmad Al-Jammal Al-Hamawi. He held *hadrās* at a house in Jabal Amman, but Shaykh Al-Shaghouri's followers objected to Shaykh Al-Jammal's restrictiveness in some areas and his affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Shaghouri then authorized Shaykh Nuh Keller as his successor, but there were also objections that Shaykh Keller was American and that the people of the Irbid camp where Shaykh Al-Kurdi's *zawiya* is located could not understand him when he spoke. Al-Shaghouri acquiesced by granting succession to Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, the son of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi and the current successor in Jordan, while Shaykh Keller is his successor for North America and in Amman for foreigners. Shaykh Al-Shaghouri also granted *idhn* to Shaykh Abdul Rahman Amoura, one of Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi's most prominent disciples residing in the UAE.<sup>239</sup>

One of the most significant books that shaykhs Al-Momani and Al-Urabi teach in the order is *Iqaz Al-Himam fi Sharh Al-Hikam* (*Awakening Aspirations: Commentary on Al-Hikam*), by one of the most prominent Shadhili *qutbs* of the Arab Maghreb.<sup>240</sup>

*Dhikr* sessions are normally held on Friday and follow the usual Shadhili pattern. They start with intoning Al-Ism Al-'Azam while sitting. The participants stretch out the name, taking a long breath and using all of it while saying "Allah." Then the shaykh and the crowd stand, and God's name begins to reverberate through the assembly. There is recitation of Sufi poems by Ibn Al-Farid, Al-Kurdi, Al-'Allawi, 'Abd Al-Ghani Al-Nabulsi, and other Shadhili and Sufi luminaries. This unfolds in stages, beginning with nodding the head up

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<sup>238</sup> Interview with Shaykh Bassam Al-Nimr, op. cit.

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, op. cit. Interview with adherents of the order, 2/6/2020.

<sup>240</sup> Interview with Shaykh Bassam Al-Nimr, op. cit.

and down, lifting the body, and bending the knees. In a later stage, the *dhikr* begins with the letter *ha'*, the final letter in "Allah."<sup>241</sup>

One of the poems that the Shadhili-Momani adherents recite in these *hadras* is "Qam da'i Al-haqq fina" (The inviter to Truth arose among us) by Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shushtari, a Sufi *qutb*. The poem says:

*The inviter to Truth arose among us and revealed the clear secret  
It manifested itself gradually and the heart was filled with certainty  
O my companion! My companion! It is the true secret  
Do not stray from my path; take the right hand road  
It manifested itself gradually and the heart was filled with certainty  
The garden of Eden drew near, prepared for the God-fearing  
God said, "Enter the garden in peace and safety"  
It manifested itself gradually and the heart was filled with certainty*

## II. Shaykh Nuh Keller's *zawiya* in the Kharabsheh neighborhood of Amman

Nuh Keller is an American born in 1954 in rural northwestern Washington State. Keller is today not only one of the most prominent Sufi shaykhs in Jordan, he is the Shadhili-Darqawi Order's shaykh for North America, and he has followers and *murids* in many countries around the world.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> An old clip of a Shadhili-Momani *dhikrhadra* in Ajloun, attended by then-Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Urabi in 1994, can be heard on YouTube at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8s46nde>

<sup>242</sup> For example, see Abdul Aziz el Kobaiti Idrissi, *Al-Tasawwuf Al-Islami fi Al-Wilayat Al-Muttahida Al-Amrikiyya: Mazahir Hudur Al-Tasawwuf Al-Maghrabi wa-Ta'thirathu* (Islamic Sufism in the West); Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; 2013, pp. 160-166.

### So, who is Nuh Keller?

Nuh Keller's spiritual experience and journey to Islam and Sufism are laid out in his book *Becoming Muslim*, which resembles Imam Al-Ghazali's book *Deliverance from Error* (interestingly, Keller was influenced by Al-Ghazali's book during his spiritual and intellectual journey). Keller grew up in a religious Catholic family but began to wonder to himself about the validity of the Christian faith, especially after reading Martin Luther and the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965. These doubts were reinforced by his study of philosophy at Gonzaga University in the fall of 1972. He says: "I studied philosophy in college and learned to ask basic questions of anyone who claimed to have the truth. The first is: What exactly do you mean by truth? And the other: How did you get there? When I asked myself these two questions about my religious beliefs, I had no answer, and right away I realized that Christianity had slipped from my grasp."<sup>243</sup>

These questions led Keller on a philosophical and spiritual quest for substance and meaning. He immersed himself in the books of major philosophers and scholars, as he takes us through his readings, observations, and his own inferences from the books of philosophers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Eric Hobsbawm. The one with the greatest influence on Keller was the German philosopher Hegel, especially with regard to his framing of the "wise person," the concept that is the ultimate objective of philosophy.

Keller then stumbled upon Al-Ghazali's book *Deliverance from Error* (*Al-Munqidh min Al-Dalal*) and found himself and his journey through the book. He says: "I read other books on Islam, and came across some passages translated by W. Montgomery Watt from "That Which Delivers from Error" by the theologian and mystic Ghazali, who, after a mid-life crises of questioning and doubt, realized that beyond the light of prophetic revelation there is no other light on the face of the earth from which illumination may be received, the very

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<sup>243</sup> See Nuh Keller, *Limadha Aslamtu: Rahlat Al-Bahth 'an Ma'na* (Becoming Muslim); Dar Al-Fath, Amman; 2005, p. 13.

point to which my philosophical inquiries had led. Here was, in Hegel's terms, the Wise Man, in the person of a divinely inspired messenger who alone had the authority to answer questions of good and evil. It was clear that such a human being could not exist except in the person of a messenger receiving revelations."<sup>244</sup>

Keller began studying philosophy at the University of Chicago, going deeper with his readings, studies, and questions, and moving from one thinker or philosopher to the next until he came to the famous Muslim philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr and then Al-Ghazali's book, and read a translation of the Qur'an. He started learning Arabic and then decided to go to Egypt to improve his Arabic. Within himself, he had another goal, which was to learn and understand more about Islam.

He got to know Islam in Egypt through his daily observations, and in 1977 he decided to become Muslim. He was deeply influenced by his study of Western philosophy, which made him critical of a Western modernism void of spiritual and humanist dimensions. His experience with Catholicism and his religious upbringing had not helped him to answer the questions on his mind. His doubts and questions were reinforced by his experience working as a sailor to support himself during his university studies, an experience that was a catalyst for him to seek out the faith he had lost, which he later found in Islam generally and then in Sufism in particular.<sup>245</sup>

After completing his language studies at Al-Azhar, he returned to the University of California at Los Angeles to complete his education. In 1979, he went to Jordan to resume his studies in Islamic law and scholarship. He received instruction in the Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order in the 1980s from Shaykh Abd Al-Rahman Al-Shaghouri through repeated visits to him in Damascus, and Al-Shaghouri granted him *idhn* to lead others on the path and general and special *idhn* in 1988.

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-60.

Shaykh Keller took up residence in Amman and studied under several masters and *'ulama'*, creating a deep bond with some of them, including Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah. He became a researcher at the Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought and translated several books on jurisprudence and religion into English, and he continues to work in translation to this day. He initially held *dhikr* sessions and *hadras* at Shaykh Al-Kurdi's mosque in Al-Sarih, then after moving to Amman held them in *murids'* homes until establishing the Shadhili-Darqawi *zawiya* in 2004, which Shaykh Al-Shaghouri opened in the Kharabsheh neighborhood of Amman Sports City. Keller also established a mosque named the Bushra Mosque near the *zawiya* a few years ago.

Several Jordanian masters and academics have studied under Shaykh Keller and learned and taken up the order from him in the past three decades. Hundreds of people have come to Jordan from Europe and the United States to live near Keller and his *zawiya* and receive instruction from him in legal sciences and Shadhili Order. Most of them live in the vicinity of the *zawiya* and come with their families and children. The *zawiya* has a special wing for women, and Keller's wife oversees their education.<sup>246</sup>

Shaykh Keller makes annual visits to his *murids* around the world, who are called his *sahba* (fellowship). He is known for avoiding the media, unlike the Shadhili-Momani-Urabi Order or even Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi. You will find no *dhikr* sessions, *hadras*, or even observances of saints' birthday's by Keller's order on the internet. Phones are always set on silent, and recording sound or video during *hadras* is prohibited.

Each week, Shaykh Keller holds a *hadra* for *dhikr* at the *zawiya* on Friday after Friday prayers, a gathering for study and prayers on the Prophet on Tuesday and Wednesday, and an English-language lesson on Thursday. The *zawiya* has several floors, and the shaykh lives in a house next door.

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<sup>246</sup> See his Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/ybaeebdn>

The *hadra* usually begins with recitation of God's greatest name (Allah), drawn out and repeated several times while sitting. The attendees then repeat with Shaykh Keller or whoever is filling in for him. After that, everyone stands and intones "Allah" while *munshids* recite Sufi poems. There is a circular ring of men and boys, and a semicircle with a group actively engaged in *dhikr*. A number of the shaykh's close disciples take turns entering the *dhikr* ring to motivate and direct those engaged in *dhikr*. The session concludes with participants standing while Shaykh Keller finally enters into their midst while they maintain a common rhythm and similar movements through small hops and movements of the head and sometimes the knees. No one is allowed to diverge from this shared movement, for fear that someone who gets over stimulated could influence the others. The session usually ends with a lesson given by Shaykh Keller or his designee from a book on Sufism such as *'Awarif Al-Ma'arif* (The Gifts of Gnosis) by Al-Suhrawardi.<sup>247</sup>

Shaykh Keller follows Shaykh Al-Shaghouri's approach to *khalwa*, sending *murids* into seclusion after becoming convinced of their seriousness, desire, and spiritual fitness. This is not current practice for the followers of the Shadhili-Momani-Urabi Order, for which *khalwa* is no longer one of the pillars of the order. For his part, Shaykh Keller requires that before *khalwa*, which usually last three days, the *murid* spends the preceding 40 days assiduously praying at the appointed times, doing so at the mosque as often as possible, and is mindful of conducting himself properly by adhering to Islamic morals and teachings in his words and deeds. In the event of any deficiency in that regard, the *murid* repeats the 40-day period from the beginning.

The most prominent poems recited in Shadhili-Hashimi *hadras* in general, such as Shaykh Keller's *hadras* and Shadhili-Momani *hadras*, include the poems known as *khamriyyat* ("wine songs"); those that speak of divine love, such as Ibn Farid's "You are my duties and

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<sup>247</sup> From the researcher's observation of *dhikr* sessions at Shaykh Nuh Keller's *zawiya*.

my supererogatory prayers”;<sup>248</sup> or poetry from the collections of Shaykh Al-Shaghouri and Shaykh Ahmad Al-‘Allawi, such as “Litany of the Pious” (Ahl Hizb Al-Diyyan).

### III. Shaykh Al-Kurdi’s *zawiya* in Irbid

Shaykh Muhammad Sa‘id Al-Kurdi’s son Ismail, born in 1958, is in charge of the *zawiya* today. He was a young boy when his father died, and because they were poor, his father left them nothing, and he was forced into the backbreaking work of road paving and other day labor at a young age. He later entered the Army without having any education whatsoever. His financial situation improved, and then Shaykh Al-Shaghouri, his father’s successor in the Shadhili-Hashimi Order, asked him to leave the Army and study Islamic legal science, telling him, “God is going to do something for you.”<sup>249</sup> He then worked at Yarmouk University, but Al-Shaghouri also insisted that he seek knowledge in Islamic sciences, so he went to Damascus and studied at Badrudeen Institute of Islamic Studies. He met regularly with Shaykh Al-Shaghouri until Al-Shaghouri granted him *idhn* in the order in 1999. Al-Kurdi became Al-Shaghouri’s successor in Jordan and

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<sup>248</sup> One of Ibn Farid’s most famous poems, it includes the following lines:

You are my duties and my supererogatory prayer, you are my speech and my preoccupation

O my qibla in prayer, when I stand to pray

Your beauty fills my eye, I turn entirely toward it

Your secret is in my inmost self, and my heart is the mountain where God manifested himself

I found a fire in the neighborhood at night, and I told my people the good news

I said, Stay and perhaps I will find my guidance there

I drew near it, and the fire of the addressee was before me

I was called by it openly, and nights of union responded

Even if the subsistent things drew near one another in the union of my whole

My mountains crumbled from awe of God’s self-manifestation

A hidden secret shone that is known by whoever is like me

Death therein is my life, and in my life I am killed

I am the poor man made submissive, ascend to my condition and my lowliness

<sup>249</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi on 12/3/2020 at his *zawiya* near the Al-Kurdi *zawiya* in the town of Al-Sarih.

took his father's place at the Al-Kurdi *zawiya* and mosque in the Irbid camp and in Al-Sarih.<sup>250</sup>

Every Tuesday after the sunset prayer, Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi holds *dhikr Al-Latif*, which involves intoning Al-Latif (one of the names of God, meaning the Kind One) 1,000 times and reading from Imam Al-Sharani's book *Al-'Uhud Al-Muhammadiyya* (The Muhammadan Pledges) and also the rules of Sufism. There is a session for prayers on the Prophet Muhammad on Thursdays and a communal *dhikr* circle after Friday prayers.<sup>251</sup>

There are several *zawiyas* affiliated with Shaykh Al-Kurdi: the Shaykh Al-Kurdi *zawiya* near the camp in Irbid, one in Al-Sarih, one in Souf, and one in Amman. We also see that Shaykh Al-Kurdi is notably active on social media and actively communicates with other Sufi shaykhs, and he also gives lessons in Sufism at the Irbid branch of the Al-Ma'arij Institute for Shari'a Studies.<sup>252</sup>

#### 4. The Shadhili-Darqawi-Filali model

The Shadhili-Darqawi-Filali Order originated with Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali, whose son Dr. Muhammad Al-Filali inherited the order as his successor in 1986. He holds regular *dhikr* sessions and lessons at the Al-Filali *zawiya* and his mosque in the Hayy Al-Arab neighborhood of Zarqa.

Al-Filali has other successors in Jordan and Palestine, such as Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh; Shaykh Shehadeh Al-Tabari, who established a Filali *zawiya* in Maan and died in 2015; and Shaykh Ali Al-Husseini, who established a *zawiya* in Shafa Badran and died in 2019.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> See some of Shaykh Ismail's activities on his Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/y8hs8eg5>

<sup>253</sup> See "Shaykh Ali Al-Husseini, leader of Sufi order, dies in Shafa Badran," Ammon News, 10/3/2019, at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y7rgtvzx>. See a Mawlid ceremony in which Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh, Shaykh Shehadeh =

Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh is one of the most active Sufi shaykhs among Shaykh Al-Filali's successors. He established a *zawiya* in his hometown of Kafr Yuba, Irbid Governorate, and registered it with the Awqaf Ministry as an endowment for adherents of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Filali Order. Al-Radaydeh was born in 1941 and completed his secondary education in Kafr Yuba. He then entered the Armed Forces as a private in 1957 and climbed the ranks to captain before leaving the service in 1980. During his service in the Armed Forces, he met Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali and started receiving instruction from him at his *zawiya* near Grand Hussein Mosque in downtown Amman. Shaykh Al-Filali granted him *idhn* initially in general *wird*, then special *wird* and authorization to lead others on the path in the Shadhili-Darqawi Order in 1974. He began holding *dhikr* sessions in his town in northern Jordan, using various locations until he built a *zawiya* that he gave the order as an endowment in 1984. The *zawiya* has two floors and regularly hosts *dhikr* sessions, Mawlid observances, and lessons that Shaykh Al-Radaydeh gives. He also established another *zawiya* in 1992 in the Al-Turrah–Al-Ramtha area, where his representative (*muqaddam*) is Shaykh Ibrahim Subaihat, and there is also a *zawiya* in the village of Kafr Yuba that hosts lessons for women.<sup>254</sup>

Shaykh Al-Radaydeh has authored many books and other writings on the path, Sufism, and commentary, and he has social media pages and a website. Despite being about 80 years old, he is in constant communication with the Filali Order's shaykhs in Palestine and with Sufi currents in Jordan and abroad.<sup>255</sup>

Al-Radaydeh mentions that Filali *hadras* involve intoning the name of God and listening to poems, just like other *hadras*, but while sitting rather than standing. We find many of Al-Radaydeh's activi-

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= Al-Tabari, and the Allawi Order's representative in Tunisia all participated at the Kafr Yuba *zawiya* on 5/9/2011: <https://tinyurl.com/yahcovhh>

<sup>254</sup> See "Ahmad Hassan Shehadeh Al-Radaydeh" on the blog Al-Mudawwana Al-Allawiyya, 1/1/2018: <https://tinyurl.com/y9u2wg52>

<sup>255</sup> For example, see the shaykh's Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yagueqma>, and his website: <https://tinyurl.com/yb82wh5l>

ties, such as religious lessons, Mawlids, and *dhikr* sessions, on his social media pages.<sup>256</sup>

Another shaykh who took the pledge with Shaykh Al-Filali is Ibrahim Mohammad Hassan Al-Falouji, who is also a Muslim Brotherhood member and was born in 1934 in the town of Al-Faluja, Palestine. After the Nakba, he migrated to Ramallah, then to Jordan, and he met Shaykh Al-Filali in the village of Al-Karameh in 1952. Al-Falouji took the covenant with Al-Filali in 1958 in Jericho, where the latter lived in the winter, and stayed by his side until his death in 1986. Al-Falouji was a merchant who lived in the Nuzha area of the Amman suburb Prince Hassan, and he had a *zawiya* there. He died in 2015.<sup>257</sup>

## 5. The Hazem Abu Ghazaleh model: Shadhili-Qadiri

Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh is one of Sufism's most prominent shaykhs in Jordan. His *zawiya* has been one of the most famous and popular since the 1970s and 1980s, and his presence and activities extend beyond the Jordanian scene to the world stage. He has successors and *murids* in many regions of the world.

Abu Ghazaleh was born in 1933 in Jaffa and moved to Jerusalem and then Nablus, where he completed his secondary education in 1955. He memorized the Quran when young, then moved to Damascus to study Islamic law. He met several masters, including Shaykh Abdul Qadir Issa, who granted him *idhn* in the Shadhili-Qadiri Order, as Shaykh Issa had received instruction in the Qadiri Order at an early age from Shaykh Hassan Hassani in his hometown of Aleppo. Abu Ghazaleh then joined Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani in

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<sup>256</sup> For example, see: <https://tinyurl.com/y7kf2w9b>

See a *dhikr* session attended by Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali when he was alive: <https://tinyurl.com/y98jq6l7>

<sup>257</sup> See Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun"; op. cit., p. 39. Also see what Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi said about him after his death, posted on the Al-Ma'arij Institute Facebook page on 8/2/2015: <https://tinyurl.com/y97jst5v>

Damascus to receive instruction from him in the Shadhili-Darqawi Order in the 1950s.<sup>258</sup>

Shakir Al-Kilani, who researches Sufism, notes that the term Shadhili-Qadiri, adopted by Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh, is linked to his view of the Shadhili Order as a continuation of the Qadiri Order via Abu Madyan Al-Tilimsani, the pupil of Shaykh ‘Abdal Qadir Al-Jilani. He also sees it as a continuation of Shaykh ‘Abd Al-Salam Mashish’s teachings via Shaykh Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili, as the Shadhili Order sprang from the Qadiri Order. Indeed, Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh linked the Shadhilis, Qadiris, and Rifa’is when he first became active in Jordan because of the strong links among these orders and their award.<sup>259</sup>

Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh returned to Jordan after completing his studies of shari’a at Damascus University, and he worked as an imam and preacher at Grand Hussein Mosque. At his *zawiya* in central Amman, he began holding *dhikr* and scholarship sessions in 1964. He founded the Dar Al-Quran Society and established the current Dar Al-Quran *zawiya* and mosque in Hayy Nazzal in 1974. His *murids* began to increase in number, and several *zawiyas* affiliated to him were established. His network of relationships expanded, and he was granted license by the shaykhs of Sufi orders once his reputation spread and he became famed.<sup>260</sup>

During a career of more than six decades in the fields of Sufism, *da’wa*, and giving sermons, Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh gained *murids* in several countries of the world. He made frequent visits to many countries and participated in many regional and global conferences and symposia, and he wrote numerous books on Sufism and Islamic

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<sup>258</sup> About Shaykh ‘Abd Al-Qadir Issa, see the website Syrian Modern History: <https://tinyurl.com/yapc67gk>. Shaykh ‘Abd Al-Qadir Issa died in Turkey, and his successor today is Shaykh Ahmed Fathallah Jami. See also the synopses on the Shadhili-Qadiri Order website about Shaykh ‘Abd Al-Qadir Issa (<https://tinyurl.com/ybbx4lb6>) and his successor, Shaykh Ahmed Fathallah Jami (<https://tinyurl.com/yd2adpyx>).

<sup>259</sup> Telephone interview with Shakir Al-Kilani on 31/5/2020.

<sup>260</sup> See the Al-Arabiya interview with him on 2/8/2011: <https://tinyurl.com/y88evntf>

jurisprudence, all while keeping up his *zawiyas*, lessons, and gatherings in Jordan. He has about 30 sons and daughters, the most prominent of whom is his son Yousef, who today is the second-in-command of the order and the *zawiya*. He also has successors, including Shaykh Said Dawleh in Jordan, Shaykh Ismail Al-Sirhan, and more in Nigeria and other countries.

Because the shaykh has been broadly present and visible on the Jordanian scene for decades, his is the Sufi order that has come under attack from opponents most often, especially from the Salafi current, for his *hadras* and communal *dhikr* sessions. It must be noted here, when comparing his *hadras* to other Shadhili *hadras* for *dhikr*, such as those of the Shadhili-Filalis or Shaykh Nuh Keller, that Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh's *dhikrhadras* are less disciplined and reserved.<sup>261</sup>

What makes Abu Ghazaleh's order distinct from the other Sufi orders in Jordan, though, is its greater closeness to the political arena. Although not directly or publicly, Laith Shubeilat and Shaykh Yaqub Qarrash, representatives in the 11th Jordanian Parliament after the resumption of parliamentary elections in 1989, were Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh's *murids*, although he did not officially acknowledge or endorse them in the parliamentary elections or in Shubeilat's trade union election before that. Nevertheless, the shaykh's close *murids* confirm that he supported their candidacies and urged the order's adherents to support them and pray for them. Both Shubeilat and Qarrash had split from Abu Ghazaleh's *zawiya* before standing for the elections, but it seems that they did so with the shaykh's blessing. Observers of the shaykh also confirm that he had a special relationship with some of the leaders of the former Iraqi regime, especially then-Vice President Izzat Al-Douri, a Sufi of Kurdish origin and an adherent of the Naqshbandi Order. As is well known, Al-Douri is the founder of the Naqshbandi Army, a militant group in Iraq.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> See "Hazem Abu Ghazaleh: Uncovering the Dancing Islam of Sufism," aired by Al-Arabiya on 6/8/2011: <https://tinyurl.com/ywaysdw>

<sup>262</sup> For example, see Ibrahim Abu Ghusheh, *Al-Ma'dhana Al-Hamra'* (The Red Minaret); Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultation, Beirut; Second Edition, =

In 2015, Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh played a prominent and visible role in founding the Islamic Shura Party, which has its headquarters in Hayy Nazzal, also home to the shaykh's main *zawiya*. He was elected chairman of the Shura Council and issued many statements and political positions linked to issues such as blasphemy fines, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the status of Jerusalem.<sup>263</sup>

There are no indications, however, that these positions or attitudes extend beyond Shaykh Abu Ghazaleh to his *zawiya* or *murids*, nor any basis in terms of thought, discourse, or institutional action to support the hypothesis of a shift toward political action. So far, they seem to be more of a personal orientation or private behavior on the part of some individuals within the *zawiya*, nothing more.

## 6. The Shadhili-Yashruti model:

The Shadhili-Yashruti Order is affiliated with the Shadhili-Darqawi school, just through a different stream, namely Shaykh Muhammad Zafi Al-Madani of Tunisia. The Yashruti school in Jordan, however, appears to exist in a different environment from the other orders, and we observe from the statements of other Sufi orders' shaykhs that there are "walls" separating them.

The Yashruti Order entered Jordan early, in the 1930s, via followers and *murids* of Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti. But its true establishment in Jordan began in the 1980s, when the lawyer Ahmad Al-Yashruti took over the order from his father, Ahmad Al-Hadi. Ahmad Al-Yashruti, the current shaykh, lives in Amman, and *dhikr* sessions and *hadras* were held in his home in the 4th Circle until a large, architecturally distinctive *zawiya* was established in the Al-Jandawil area

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= 2015, pp. 128-132. Private interview with Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman on 2/6/2020. Interview with Eng. Mohammad Al-Bitar, 1/6/2020, at the Al-Ma'arij Institution in downtown Amman.

<sup>263</sup> See "Reversal in Sufi thinking ... Abu Ghazaleh: We will enter political battles!", Gerasa News, 29/9/2015: <https://tinyurl.com/y8vnlm6h>. Likewise, "Abu Ghazaleh calls on parties to meet immediately in response to insult of the Holy Prophet," Jfra News, 18/1/2015: <https://tinyurl.com/y8h2tcs>

in 2006. The *zawiya* has a large library and modern technology including computers and surveillance cameras.

The Yashruti Order is popular and accepted in Jordan by a broad swath of society that is generally middle class, and it has spread widely outside Jordan, especially in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and the Comoros. It is united and cohesive, and the succession has remained within the Al-Yashruti family, passing to the sons and grandsons of the order's founder, Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti.

Shaykh Ahmad Al-Yashruti, the lawyer, decided that the order would lean toward moderation, centrism, and modernity and avoid being strict with people. Notably, the order emphasizes that its followers should be well integrated into society through their dress, work, and mixing with others. Unlike other Shadhili *hadras*, such as those at Shaykh Keller's *zawiya* and the Shadhili-Momani *zawiya*, wearing certain clothing and covering one's head are not preconditions for attending Yashruti *dhikr* circles.<sup>264</sup>

It is also notable that the shaykh of the order himself usually wears elegant clothes such as a suit and is clean-shaven, unlike in other Sufi orders. The order's followers have the same characteristic appearance. This explains the barriers that currently exist between the Shadhili-Yashrutis and other *zawiyas* in Jordan, especially other Shadhili *zawiyas* in spite of their shared lineage to the authority of Al-Shadhili and Al-Darqawi.<sup>265</sup>

Moreover, the Yashrutis take a remarkable view on the topic of women. Shaykh Al-Yashruti says that women's clothes are already modest, so why mandate that they wear a niqab or certain clothing? He is not against other clothing, but the order does not oblige women to dress any particular way. It also views women as having an important role in life, and therefore questions why they should have to sit at home.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> See Akram Khuzam's interview with Shaykh Ahmad Al-Yashruti on Alhurra, 7/10/2014: <https://tinyurl.com/yda8o3br>

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

With regard to political action and relations with the government, Shaykh Al-Yashruti acknowledges that they keep their distances from politics, and his explanation is that the purpose of Islam is guidance, righteousness, and truth, whereas politics is based on lies, disputes, and wars.<sup>267</sup>

What differentiates the Yashrutis from Sufi orders generally and other Shadhilis in particular? What makes them unique?

Dr. Wafa Al-Sawaftah, one of the most prominent researchers specializing in the Yashruti Order and also an adherent of the order in Jordan, answers indirectly: "Shaykh Al-Yashruti's object was a distinct plan of modernization that stipulates that no one should withdraw into Sufism's heritage, great figures, and classifications, so that the Sufi desire for God does not ossify into stereotypes. Consequently, creative Sufi thought was unleashed to fashion a reality within the parameters of his era, on the basis of Ibn Ajiba's statement that 'The *faqir* is the son of his time.'"<sup>268</sup>

The Yashruti Order descends from the overarching Shadhili school through Al-Madani, and although the order's founder, Shaykh Al-Yashruti, remained devoted and held tight to his spiritual affiliation to Al-Madani, who was his shaykh in Tunisia. Several years after the establishment of the *zawiya* in Acre, however, the order transitioned from the so-called Shadhili-Madani Order to the so-called Yashruti Order, and this did not happen in a vacuum. Rather, it owed to the clear imprint that Al-Yashruti had on Sufism and judgments that made his order and *zawiyas* substantially different in character from other *zawiyas* and orders. Foremost among those was, as cited by Al-Sawaftah, the insistence on adaptivity and a willingness to adjust Sufi spiritual principles and values and general tenets to the time and place.

Based on the above, an explanation of the Yashruti theory of Sufism is indispensable. Al-Yashruti drew from Sufism, in particular the Shadhili Order, a set of fundamental principles and values, then

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> See Wafa Al-Sawaftah, *The Shadhili-Yashruti School*; op. cit., p. 279.

developed them. Moderation is a key feature of the Shadhili Order, and one of its foundations is the balancing of Islamic legal sciences, the *tariqa* or Sufism, jurisprudence, and material and spiritual considerations, or the earthly world and the Realm of Dominion (*'alam Al-malkut*). We see this clearly in the teachings of Shaykh Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili, who wore the best clothes and expected his *murids* to be balanced and moderate, continue working, and keep up with the demands of worldly life. These are conceptual templates that the Yashrutis have adopted and applied to their reading of the transformations and developments taking place in the world, without seeing that as an abandonment of their Sufi, spiritual, and moral core.<sup>269</sup>

Perhaps one of the most prominent features of the Yashruti Order is the insistence that Sufism should not be reduced to just the *zawiya* and *dhikr*, and that the concepts of *fana'* and *baqa'* (annihilation of the self and subsistence in God, respectively) and righteousness should be linked to social impact. Dr. Al-Sawaftah clarifies this and provides a thorough explanation of these key concepts: "Because our Shadhili order is one of sobriety, it takes an approach in which all the stations are summed up in the station 'poverty of the *faqir*, and dropping the pronoun "me" and "mine," meaning give up selfishness and the love of appetites. But there have lived adherents of our order who attained *fana'*, and some who attained *jadhb* (a state of spiritual transport or divine attraction wherein a person leaves the self behind entirely and subsists with God). But the one who attains *jadhb* in this order does not remain in those states for long; he returns to sobriety with the shaykh's powerful assistance. Shaykh Al-Yashruti chooses a course for his *murid* that approaches reality without isolation or withdrawal, and that transforms philosophical concepts and divine secrets into a living reality. This does not eliminate that which makes the Muhammadan *'arif* (one who knows God) distinct or his diligent pursuit of perfect witness."<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Compare: Wafa Al-Sawaftah, *The Shadhili-Yashruti School*; op. cit., pp. 266-287.

<sup>270</sup> Written document submitted by Dr. Al-Sawaftah to the researcher on 6/4/2020.

One of the most notable features of the Yashruti Order is the status of the shaykh. While similar to that in other Sufi orders, Shaykh Al-Yashruti's opinions and updates to the order have made it unique and reconstructed several concepts in line with a vision that gives new meanings to the Yashrutis' understanding of Sufism. Perhaps the key to understanding the shaykh's status in the Yashruti Order is linked to the Muhammadan Reality and can be summarized in the words of Shaykh Al-Yashruti himself: "Let yourselves be annihilated in your shaykh, and let your shaykh be annihilated in Muhammad, and let Muhammad be annihilated in God. Observe shari'a outwardly and *haqiqa* (truth) inwardly."<sup>271</sup>

The shaykh is the inheritor of the Muhammadan knowledge and light, and "he wants his *murids* to focus on the figure of Muhammad instead of wasting their efforts on *fana'* in the Divine Essence as the Sufi philosophers did, bringing blame upon themselves from Creation and losing their way toward truth."<sup>272</sup>

This leads us to the concept of the Muhammadan Reality, which is fundamental to understanding the Yashruti Order, though it is a concept that also exists among most Sufis. It means that God's Messenger (PBUH) has two facets. One was human and lived through all variety of existential challenges, then vanished. The other is an illuminating inward self, derived from the Divine Light. Sufis call this essence the Muhammadan Reality or the "perfect human being" (*Al-insan Al-kamil*).<sup>273</sup>

Al-Sawaftah adds, "The Muhammadan Reality, according to Sufi instruction as taught by our masters, the shaykhs of the Shadhili-Yashruti Order, is that this is light from the Light of God. This Muhammadan Reality is the bridge that links existence with its Creator, as that existence emerged from the munificence of the Muhammadan Presence. My master Shaykh Ali Al-Din Al-Yashruti said, in explanation, 'Muhammad is the all-encompassing individual who opens and seals, from the beginning to the end, and is not absent from the be-

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<sup>271</sup> Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafahat Al-Haqq* (Breaths of the Truth); op. cit., p. 299.

<sup>272</sup> Dr. Al-Sawaftah's document, op. cit.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

liever for even a breath. If the veil were lifted, he would see it firsthand.' But the Muhammadan Reality is not a passive figure inhabiting the atoms of existence or suspended in the bodies of created beings. It is power, or a creative, generative energy that flows through existence like water through the stem of a plant. I therefore believe that this Muhammadan Light flows through the spiritual states and affairs of worshippers. The role of the *'arif* is not just to recognize the ties that connect the Divine Presence and the Muhammadan Presence to the *'arif* himself, but to name the degrees of contact that are manifested in identification with that knowledge and the object of that knowledge."<sup>274</sup>

Therefore, according to the Yashruti theory, the Muhammadan Reality has an important and primary role in the process of *fana'* and *baqa'*. The shaykh is the one who serves as a bridge between the *murid* and the Prophet (the Muhammadan Presence), and the Prophet is the one who serves as a bridge to God. This is also reflected in Shaykh Al-Yashruti's conception of *wahdat Al-wujud* or *wahdat Al-shuhud* (Unity of Witness). Al-Sawaftah says: "He made it so that the aim of the Sufi stations is not knowledge (*ma'rifa*), verification (*tahqiq*), or

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid. Dr. Al-Sawaftah equates the Muhammadan Reality with the contemporary energy theory, saying: "If we look at the theory of Muhammadan Reality, in our current age, the theory of light is not so distant from the concepts of our age. Just as electrical energy is converted to thermal energy, kinetic energy, and so on, and we can accept that based on the findings of modern science, the origin of existence is the Divine Light, and this luminous energy is converted into various creations, including humans, inanimate objects, animals, time, place, etc. Modern science believes that energy, or the atom, is the origin of existence, and this atom, under various natural conditions, transforms into creations and manifestations, ascending in biological processes and rationality. Simple and complex cells sprang from this atom, and from both of those branched human beings and animals at varying levels of biological complexity. Similarly, it will help our understanding if we know that, just as radiation or light transforms into a printed image on light-sensitive paper, and food is converted into energy in the human body, and intellectual energy becomes work, or kinetic energy, and brain activity becomes intellectual energy - all of these transformations are different in kind but have a single source. Shaykh Al-Yashruti therefore made an allegorical interpretation of the Almighty's statement in Surah Al-Anbiya', verse 30, "We made from water every living thing," as Al-Yashruti said, "'Water,' here, means the Muhammadan presence from which sprang everything that was and everything that is."

witness of the Divine Essence, but rather verification, witness, and unification with the Muhammadan Reality. He said, illustrating the way the shaykh's will merges with Muhammad's will, 'I have nothing but Muhammad...' He also urged his *murids* to be at one with Muhammadan perfection, represented in the deputy or heir of Muhammad, i.e. the shaykh. He asked them to undergo annihilation in their shaykh. The shaykh undergoes annihilation in Muhammad (peace be upon Him), and Muhammad undergoes annihilation in God. Shaykh Al-Yashruti also condensed the witnessing relationship that a *murid* can achieve after crossing through many wildernesses and barriers, which he summarized in his theory of the 'unity of Muhammaddan Witness.' In his theory, Muhammad serves as a *barzakh* (the "isthmus" between the corporeal and spiritual worlds) that combines the stations of union (witnessing the Divine Essence) and separation (viewing Creation). This combination does not involve commingling, incarnation, or unification. It achieves what is known among Sufis as the "second separation," meaning that one absorbs truth internally and manifests Creation externally."<sup>275</sup>

As for Shaykh Al-Yashruti's theory on the *qutb* and saints, he believes that each age has a *qutb* and seven *abdal* ("substitutes"; sing. *badal*). His daughter Fatima cites some of his statements to the effect that: "There are seven *abdal*, and there is one *qutb ghawth*. If the *qutb* goes to be with God Almighty, the seven *abdal* meet to elect one of them to be a *ghawth*. They often seek to escape this burden and elect one of the saints to be a substitute for the one *badal* who will become *ghawth*. If they disagree in their decision, they turn to the Messenger (PBUH) and are brought before him and stand in his presence. He appoints one of the *abdal*, and this *qutb ghawth* becomes the locus where Al-Ism Al-'Azam (God's "greatest name," i.e. Allah), which is ascendant over the other names, finds its expression. Visible reality shall be subject to the one in whom Al-Ism Al-'Azam finds its expression, and he shall command the material world and the angelic realm by virtue of the Name manifested through him. He shall be a helper supported by the spirit of Muhammad (PBUH)."<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya, *Nafahat Al-Haqq*; op. cit., p. 205.

We thus find that the Yashruti theory is not dissimilar from the general Sufi theory of the ranks of divine things, prophets, and saints in the universe, or the theory of the *qutb ghawth* and the *abd al*. As with most Sufi orders and their leaders, the Yashrutis believe that Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti and his successors are the latest links in the chain of saints and *qutbs* through the ages. Fatima quotes her father as saying: “Every age has its *qutb*. When affliction descends from the heavens, that *qutb* absorbs it. If anything remains, it is dispersed among all of creation. This *qutb* holds in his hand the domain of existence, from which nothing leaves unless pulled out by that *qutb*.’ Then he was silent, and our brothers realized that this *qutb* is our revered master (i.e. her father). Al-Sharif raised his head and said: “There is another, who is not aware of what descends from heaven and what comes from the earth, and who is always and invariably engrossed in the Muhammadan Presence and in the master of the praised station, the cistern to which many will come, and the appointed day.”<sup>277</sup>

Foundational to the Yashruti Order is the idea that *fana’* involves annihilation in the shaykh of the order first. Dr. Wafa Al-Sawaftah explains this by saying that “the relationship between the *murid* and the shaykh is a relationship of direction, guidance, and the acquisition of Muhammad’s qualities, not a relationship of sanctification and worship, as some believe.”<sup>278</sup>

We see Al-Yashruti’s fingerprints in many areas. In writing several books, his daughter Fatima Al-Yashrutia (1890-1980) provided a plethora of details about her father’s life and her life in her father’s shadow, her father’s conceptions and vision of Sufism, his *karamat*, and the spread of the order and its *murids*. She quoted many of her father’s statements in her book *Nafahat Al-Haqq (Breaths of the Truth)*, and her books are a major, authentic reference in the presentation and definition of the Yashruti Order.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., pp. 205-206.

<sup>278</sup> Written reply from Dr. Wafa Al-Sawaftah, 3/6/2020.

<sup>279</sup> See Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya, *Rihla ila Al-Haqq (A Journey Toward the Truth)*; Third Edition, 1990. Also *Mawahib Al-Haqq fi Al-Karamat Al-Shadhiliyya Al-Yashrutiyya* =

Fatima Al-Yashrutia herself could be considered an important example of what makes the Yashruti Order unique. The daughter of Shaykh Al-Yashruti, she lived under his wing in her childhood. She mentions that he took a special interest in her upbringing and education, and he always stressed women's rights and the importance of treating women courteously. She offers examples of him shunning prudishness and evincing great concern for moderation in theorizing about women. She then describes her later life in Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo, and her exposure to cultural, literary, and artistic circles in those countries. Her house became something of a literary and intellectual salon, and in approaching anyone she was slow to take offense and always preserved the Sufi values that she received from her father and the Yashruti Order. Her personality thus provides a model of what makes the Yashruti Order distinct from other orders.<sup>280</sup>

Fatima was always eager to attend concerts by Mohammed Abdel Wahab and Umm Kulthum or plays by Naguib el-Rihani, and to meet '*ulama*', jurists, literary figures, and people from different segments of society. She did not feel that to be at odds with her religiosity or her Sufism, and she said: "I did it, and I was confident that it did not conflict with commitment to religion. If a person fulfills his obligations toward his Lord, there is no issue with him taking care of himself and enjoying himself within the bounds of the law and good manners, because then the self will be pleasing to God (*Al-nafs Al-mardiya*) and at peace (*Al-nafs Al-mutma'inna*), and the True Faith brings delight, not prudery or distress."<sup>281</sup>

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= (Gifts of the Truth in Shadhili-Yashruti *Karamat*); Third Edition, 1997; and *Masirati fi Tariq Al-Haqq* (My Journey on the Path of the Truth) and *Nafahat Al-Haqq*.

<sup>280</sup> Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya, *Masirati fi Tariq Al-Haqq: Athr Al-Tasawwuf fi Hayati* (My Journey on the Path of the Truth: The Impact of Sufism on My Life), 1981. This book speaks about her own journey, her relationship with her father, her understanding of Sufism, and her relationship with cultural, artistic, and intellectual milieus.

<sup>281</sup> Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya Al-Hassaniyya, Al-Hakawati: <https://tinyurl.com/y7tgxlk3> See also a similar article on another Shadhili-Yashruti feminist: Bilal Ramiz Bakri, "Halima Al-Basma," Al Jazeera blogs, 20/3/2018: <https://tinyurl.com/yan4wc2d>

If Sufi orders generally have been subjected to vicious attacks and criticism by their opponents, especially the Salafi current, the Shadhili-Yashrutis have had it the worst. There have been many accusations against them, including mixing between men and women, and moral allegations encompassing the founder himself and other leaders. The order has not been safe even from other Sufi orders, which have also been reserved and skeptical concerning the Yashrutis.<sup>282</sup> Some members of the order have responded to this by explaining the difference between the Yashrutis and other orders that makes them appear strange and draws attacks. In their account, it is merely the fact that they are a liberal, evolved order that is not restricted to a specific form, clothing or beard, and it advocates granting women a progressive role in society.

The lawyer Ahmad Al-Yashruti, the current shaykh of the Yashruti Order, was born in Acre in 1928 (making him about 90 years old). He went to school in Acre through secondary school, then completed his baccalaureate studies in economics and political science at the American University of Beirut in 1950. He then obtained an advanced degree in legal studies and jurisprudence from an Arab League-affiliated institute and completed a law degree at Cairo University before returning to Amman and starting to practice law there. He also attended to the affairs of the order on behalf of his father, Shaykh Ahmad Al-Hadi, while the latter was living. He traveled to several countries to visit the order's *murids* and followers and give lectures, which will soon be printed under the title *Mudhakarat* (Consultations).

Soon after he took over the order following his father's death, Shaykh Ahmad has shown an openness to various groups within society. Every year he holds an iftar for *murids*, friends, and community leaders, and during his term he has opened several *zawiyas* around

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<sup>282</sup> See "Al-Shadhiliyya Al-Yashrutiyya," Sunnah Online, at: <https://tinyurl.com/ya9u6bge>; also "Warning from members of the Shadhili-Yashruti Order," Lebanese Association of Media website, 24/4/2016: <https://tinyurl.com/y8oklyxm>; and Rasha Salama, "Sufi *zawiyas* in Jordan surrounded by high walls and cameras," Hafryat.com, 8/11/2017: <https://tinyurl.com/y7hcjd5>

the world, in Damascus, Amman, Beirut, the Beqaa Governorate of Lebanon, Canada, and Brazil.<sup>283</sup>

Adherents of the order say that the shaykh is preparing his son Ali to become shaykh after him. Ali was born in 1956, has a doctorate in immunology from the United States, and works as a university professor while also helping his father run the order.<sup>284</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Yashruti Order shares its main principles and concepts with the other orders, and their *hadra* is similar. It begins with a group reading of the Yashruti *wazifa* (a spiritual exercise, literally “work”) – a set of *ad’iya* drawn from the Salutation of Mashish, a prayer for the Prophet attributed to ‘Abd Al-Salam Mashish – then intonation of God’s name while standing and bobbing the head initially, then moving into to another phase of shared movements such as lifting the knees or the body. The shaykh leading the *hadra* stands in the middle and directs the *murids* with his hand to form rings around him, and he ends the *hadra* with a single clap of his hands. Then someone next to him, followed by the person next to him, starts the *dhikr*, intoning Al-Ism Al-‘Azam, and the participants listen to Sufi poems and *nashids*. In the case of the Yashrutis, there is a poem specifically associated with the order that is taught to the shaykh of the order. The Al-Jandawil *zawiya* has a special floor for women to engage in *dhikr* at the same time, as is the case with other *dhikr* sessions. At Shaykh Nuh Keller’s *zawiya*, for example, the women are in the balcony for the *dhikr* circle.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> See Ahmed Mohammed Yusuf Abu Al-Hawa, *Falsafat Al-Shadhiliyya Al-Yashrutiyya* (Shadhili-Yashruti Philosophy); Dar Amjad for Publishing and Distribution, Amman; 2018, pp. 101-105, 127-128.

<sup>284</sup> Private interview with Dr. Wafa Al-Sawaftah in my office at the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, 27/2/2020.

<sup>285</sup> The researcher Mousa Amr says that he himself attended a Yashruti *dhikr* session at which there were no taboo matters and no mixing between men and women. See Mousa Amr, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun*, op. cit., p. 43. A clip of a Yashruti *hadra* led by Shaykh Ahmad Al-Yashruti in Amman can be viewed at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yd5l4b6>. A wide range of poems and *nashids* by Yashruti poets, some by the shaykh of the order himself, can be found in Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya’s book *Rahla ila Al-Haqq*, op. cit., p. 393-445.

The Yashrutis do not have *khalwa*, as with some Shadhili orders, and Shaykh Al-Yashruti said: “Every single Sufi imam has his own opinion. There are those who choose *khalwa*, those who choose spiritual exercises, and those who choose travel. Our master, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili (may God be pleased with him) preferred Divine Love, and so our order is an order that loves God and His Messenger.”<sup>286</sup>

The Yashruti Order is based on four main pillars: *mahabba* (love of God), *dhikr*, thought, and surrender. It is also based on combining the sciences of shari’a (law), *haqiqa* (truth), and *tariqa* (the path), and the necessity of adhering to and acting consistently with the mandates of Islamic shari’a. These are things the Yashrutis share in common with the Shadhili Order as a whole and other orders.<sup>287</sup>

The Yashrutis recite specific *awrad*, including the Yashruti *wa-zifa*, once or twice daily. There are also general daily *awrad* shared by all Sufi orders (morning and evening: “No God but God” 100 times, asking for forgiveness 100 times, saying a prayer on the Prophet 100 times), and *dhikr* circles are held.

One Yashruti shaykh in Jordan is Dr. Abdul Jalil Al-Abadleh, who was a professor of Shari’a at the University. He was born in Palestine, in the village of Deir Balout, Nablus. He first studied at a religious institute in Nablus, then at the Shari’a Faculty of Al-Azhar. He first received instruction in the Naqshbandi Order under Shaykh Najm Al-Din Al-Kurdi. He moved to Amman in the wake of the War of 1967 (the Arab name for the Six-Day War) but returned to Al-Azhar to finish his master’s degree. He then returned once again to the University of Jordan Faculty of Shari’a in 1970, and that same year he met Shaykh Abdul Rahman Abu Risha, whose maternal grandfather was Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Yashruti. Abu Risha was impressed with Al-Abadleh’s knowledge, and he visited him multiple times when he came to Jordan and instructed him in the Yashruti Order.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Dr. Wafa Al-Sawaftah’s response to our question about *khalwa*, telephone call, 1/6/2020.

<sup>287</sup> See Wafa Al-Sawaftah, *The Shadhili-Yashruti School*; op. cit., pp. 306-371.

<sup>288</sup> See Mousa Amr, “Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun”; op. cit., p. 44.

Dr. Al-Abadleh lives in the Al-Kamalyah area of Amman, but he gives lessons and sermons at the shrine of Prophet Shuaib in Balqa Governorate. He was subjected to fierce criticisms while working at the University of Jordan because his promotion of some of his Sufi ideas caused a clash with other professors and students. Those who like the shaykh, meanwhile, see him as having stood up to the Muslim Brotherhood, which controlled the Faculty of Shari'a at the time.<sup>289</sup> His son Hassan is a professor of shari'a sciences at Al-Balqa' Applied University, and his son Abdul Rahman is imam of the mosque at the Prophet Shuaib shrine in Al-Salt, where Shaykh Al-Abadleh gives a sermon every Friday.

## 7. The Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh model

Born in Amman in 1947, he was brought up in a household known for its religiosity. He became fascinated with mosques and sermons in childhood and was influenced at an early age by Shaykh Mohammad Mahmoud Al-Ramini, who gave the sermons at Grand Husseini Mosque and bequeathed Al-Shaykh a celebrated introduction to the matter of prophetic biography (*Al-sira Al-nabawiyya*), i.e. biographical accounts of the Prophet Muhammad. Then, at the age of 20, he was influenced by Shaykh Al-Filali and received instruction from him in the Shadhili-Filali Order. He began giving sermons at Al-Fath Mosque in the Mahatta area.

He entered the Armed Forces in 1969 and obtained a scholarship to study shari'a at Al-Azhar, after which he returned to the Army Iftaa' Department. He was close to Shaykh Abdullah Al-Azab and Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah and was greatly influenced by the latter. After serving nearly 16 years in the Armed Forces, he was pensioned off, but Al-Qudah worked to get him a position in Civil Defense on a civil contract to found an *iftaa'* department there. He thus was one of the most prominent participants in the building of the Armed Forces religious institutions until he left for civilian life at the Faculty in 1989.

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45, as well as his Facebook page, on which his sermons, lessons, activities, and trips are posted: <https://tinyurl.com/ycp7klhq>

Sufism had an early influence on him, and he notably gave sermons at many mosques. He was distinguished by his sermons and lessons on prophetic biography, and he spoke at several schools to explain Muhammad's biography, initially at Siddiqa Fatima Zahra Mosque in Marka Al-Shamalia, the Civil Defense mosque in Shmeisani, Sido Al-Kurdi Mosque in Umm Uthainah, and Masjid Aisha in 'Abdoun, then at Al-Kalouti in Al-Rayibah. He died in June 2014 and was buried in the family cemetery in Sahab.<sup>290</sup>

Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh traveled the path within the Qadiri Order, despite having received instruction in the Shadhili Order from Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali, because Al-Shaykh believed that the Shadhili Order was an outgrowth of the Qadiri Order via Abu Madyan Al-Tilimsani and 'Abd Al-Salam Mashish.<sup>291</sup> Shakir Al-Kilani emphasizes that Al-Shaykh taught the Shadhili general *wird* and led *murids* on the Qadiri path toward instruction in Al-Ism Al-'Azam, God's "greatest name," and he sometimes granted admittance in a Tijani *wird*, as he had his own approach linked to his experiences.<sup>292</sup> His son Muadh, meanwhile, notes that Shaykh Abdul Qadir was Qadiri by origin because he descended from a Qadiri family going back generations, and he received early instruction in the Qadiri Order from one of his uncles. He remained Qadiri in spite of later taking up the Shadhili Order under Shaykh Al-Filali.<sup>293</sup>

Al-Shaykh's lessons were usually held in mosques. He specialized in prophetic biography and was highly popular. At the same

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<sup>290</sup> See the official website of Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Shaykh, sermonizer on prophetic biography: <https://tinyurl.com/yalm93r4>

<sup>291</sup> Shakir Al-Kilani, a Sufism researcher, remembers that he and his father, the late media figure and researcher Musa Al-Kilani, went with Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir to the Civil Defense mosque, and someone asked him about this, i.e. leading others on the Qadiri path despite the fact that they were Shadhili. He responded as we mentioned above. Shakir Al-Kilani says that Al-Shaykh provided instruction in the general *wird*, and then "no God but God," before teaching Al-Ism Al-'Azam.

<sup>292</sup> Shakir Al-Kilani points out that one of Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir's shaykhs, the Tijani Shaykh Saif Al-Din Al-Zawawi, was a well-known Tijani shaykh. His most prominent disciples included Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir and Areef Al-Khatib.

<sup>293</sup> Telephone conversation with his son Muadh, 30/5/2020.

time, he held *dhikr* sessions and lessons in his *zawiya* and his home, first in Marka Al-Shamalia and later in Hayy Al-Kursi.

Sufyan, a *murid* who took *ba'ya* with Al-Shaykh, tells of part of his spiritual experience with him, especially his approach to *hadas*: "We would begin the *zawiya* lesson with verses from the Quran, then the *nashid* Mawlaya Sali from Al-Burda (a 13th century ode to the Prophet Muhammad), and then the shaykh would begin his lesson and conclude it with a *du'a*. But after a conversation with my friend, the devil played with my mind, and I decided to speak frankly with the shaykh. It was the custom after the *zawiya* lesson ended that any *murid* who needed to speak with the shaykh would wait to meet with him in private. So I asked him, He said, 'I am Sufi, and I am from Al Al-Bayt. My ancestor was the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. 'I asked him, 'Do Sufis jump and so forth?' He laughed and asked me, 'You have been with us for almost a year, have you seen us jump or pierce our flesh with skewers?' I said no, and he told me, 'There is true Sufism that maintains remembrance of God in the right way, and there are Sufis who go to extremes and do the wrong things.' He advised me to seek knowledge from various sources, on the condition that I be a 'superior student and seeker, not a follower.'"<sup>294</sup>

Al-Shaykh has not designated a successor in his *zawiya* or order, as his son Muadh confirms, so there is currently no one to take his place in the order.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Interview with Sufyan, a disciple of Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Shaykh, 23/5/2020.

<sup>295</sup> Telephone interview with his son Muadh, 30/5/2020.

## **TOPIC 2**

### **BRANCHES OF THE RIFA'I ORDER IN JORDAN**

The Rifa'i Order, named for Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i, is one of the most prevalent orders in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. In the 19th century, Shaykh Baha'uddin Al-Rawwas was one of the most significant renewers of the order, as was his disciple Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi, the top shaykh in the Ottoman Empire.

In Jordan, the Rifa'i Order arrived through more than one route. It came from Palestine via the successors of Shaykh Yousef Al-Nuwayhi; from Syria via the disciples of the martyred Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa; and from Iraq via the successors of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Rawi, via the descendants of Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi, and via Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Durra, shaykh of the Rifa'i Order in Damascus.

#### **1. Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i and the foundations and pioneers of the Rifa'i Order**

The founder of the Rifa'i Order is Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i (512-578 AH / 1118-1182). A descendant of Al Al-Bayt, the Prophet Muhammad's family, he was born in the Wasit area near Basra. The word rifa' came from his ancestor Rifa'Al-Hassan Al-Makki. His forefathers had moved from Hejaz to Morocco before his grandfather Yahya returned to Iraq and settled there.

When Al-Rifa'i was 7 years old, his father died and left him in the care of his uncle Mansour Al-Bata'ih, a well-known jurist and religious scholar with many followers. Al-Rifa'i learned Islamic legal science from his uncle, and he studied jurisprudence, creed, and various categories of sciences under many other religious scholars (*'ulama'*). When his uncle died, an argument arose among his followers between those who wanted his son to succeed him, and his uncle himself and some others who believed that Ahmad Al-Rifa'i should be the successor because his obvious scholarship, intellect, and *karamat* (minor miracles) made him more deserving. And so he came to take

his uncle's place at the mosque to teach while still young. His influence grew, as did his following, and he built the foundations of his order during that period. One of his contemporaries was Shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani, who believed that for their age, Imam Al-Rifa'i was the *qutb ghawth* (the greatest saint and helper; there exists only one in any era).

Among some followers of the of the Rifa'i order, it is said that Al-Rifa'i was called Dhu Al-'Ilmayn (Master of the Two Sciences) because he was offered the title of *qutb ghawth* twice. He rejected it the first time because Imam Al-Jilani was worthier of the title, then accepted it the second time. But historians believe that the reason for the name is his lineage, which goes back to Imam Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib on his father's side and also on his mother's side, through his great-grandfather Yahya Al-Rifa'i.<sup>296</sup>

The order spread considerably during Al-Rifa'i's lifetime. The village of Umm 'Ubayda, where he lived and offered lessons, became a global center for the order's followers and *murids* (students) and became a focus of attention for '*ulama*' and *murids* from around the world. The famous explorer Ibn Battuta detailed his journey to Umm 'Ubayda, where he visited Imam Al-Rifa'i's shrine in the village near the city of Wasit in the year 727/1326 and met his successor, his grandson Ahmad Kocheh. Ibn Battuta depicts the *ribat* (a meeting house for a Sufi order), *dhikr* circles, *karamat*, and *kharq Al-'adat* for which adherents of the order were known, as we will discuss later.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> For example, see Jamaluddin Faleh Al-Jailani and Ziyad Hamad Al-Sumaidaie, *Al-Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i Al-Muslih Al-Mujaddid* (Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i: The Renewing Reformer); Moroccan Education and Culture Organization, Fes; 2014, pp. 10-16, 99-103.

<sup>297</sup> It is useful to refer to Ibn Battuta's observations about Shaykh Al-Rifa'i's *ribat* that year. He says: "On the afternoon of the second day we arrived at the vestibule, a great gathering place for thousands of the poor. Our arrival coincided with that of Shaykh Ahmad Kocheh, the grandson of friend of God Abu Al-'Abbas Al-Rifa'i, who was the object of our visit. He had come from his home in the Byzantine Empire to visit his grandfather's grave, and he had come to hold the position of shaykh at the *ribat*. When the afternoon prayer was over, drums were beaten and the poor took to dancing. Then they prayed the sunset prayer and laid out the meal, which consisted of bread made from rice, fish, milk, and dates. =

The foundations of the Rifa'i Order are based on a set of rules established by Imam Al-Rifa'i himself: commitment to the Qur'an and the sunna, avoiding whims and *bid'a* ("innovation" in religion), and patience under orders and interdictions. He described his order by saying: "My order is religion without *bid'a*, vigor without indolence, work without obsequiousness, a heart without distractions, and a self without appetites."

Although a slim volume, Al-Rifa'i's famous book *Al-Burhan Al-Mu'ayyad* (The Supported Proof) summarizes his teachings, vision, and order. If we were to define their most salient features, they are the concepts of contrition, asceticism (*zuhd*) in this world, and humility toward people and other creatures. He says: "I exerted myself and left no path that I had not traveled and learned the extent of its validity with the truest of intentions. I found nothing closer, clearer, or dearer than adhering to the sunna of Muhammad and adopting the manners of the people of humility, contrition, helplessness, and destitution."<sup>298</sup>

Among the avenues for the humility, asceticism, and contrition that Al-Rifa'i emphasized to his followers, he told them that they must attend to their hearts more than fancy clothes. He did state, however, that he would not bar them from dressing well and caring about other people, provided that such concerns were on account of one's relationship with God. A similar principle applied to the subject

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= The people ate and then prayed the night prayer. They began their *dhikr* as Shaykh Ahmad sat on his grandfather's rug. Then they started the *sama'* [a "listening" ceremony]. They had prepared loads of firewood, and they kindled a fire and went into the middle of the fire and danced. Some of them rolled in the fire, and some ate it in their mouths until they put it out entirely. This is their custom, and it sets this Ahmadi sect apart. Some of them will take a large snake and bite its head with their teeth, even biting it off." See Ibn Battuta, *Tuhfat Al-Anzar fi Ghara'ib Al-Amsar wa-'Aja'ib Al-Asfar* (A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Traveling), edited and prefaced by Abdul Monem Al-Arian; Dar Ihya El Ouloum, Beirut; First Edition, 1987, p. 195.

<sup>298</sup> See Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i the Elder, *Al-Burhan Al-Mu'ayyad* (The Advocated Proof), p. 33.

of work: They should work as long as it did not distract them from their worship of God.<sup>299</sup>

Al-Rifa'i always took care to alert his *murids* to the importance of adhering to and acting consistently with Islamic shari'a, saying: "The path is clear: prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, alms, and profession of faith in the one God and His Messenger (peace and blessings upon him), which is the first of the pillars. Avoidance of prohibited matters is the believer's state with God. This is the path. The believer's state with God also includes frequent remembrance of God Almighty, and the proper conduct of remembrance includes sincere intention, perfect submission, contrition, abandoning affections, and standing on the threshold of servitude, fully capable and shielded by grandeur."<sup>300</sup>

He prescribed that his followers adopt asceticism in this world, comply with God's commands and prohibitions, abide by the sunna, renounce *bid'a*, value Islamic legal science and jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and avoid the spiritual deviations of some early Sufis, such as Al-Husayn ibn Mansour Al-Hallaj, against whom Al-Rifa'i directed vehement criticism.<sup>301</sup> Al-Rifa'i says: "You say: 'Al-Harith said, Abu Yazid said, Al-Hallaj said.' What is this situation? Instead of these words, say, 'Al-Shafi'i said, Malik said, Ahmad said, Noman said.' Correct the dealings (between you and God), and then amuse yourselves with the additional sayings. What Al-Harith and Abu Yazid said neither detracts nor adds, while what Al-Shafi'i and Malik said provides the most propitious path and will bring you closest to your destination. Build the foundations of shari'a with knowledge and action, and then turn your zeal toward the mysteries to the rules behind that knowledge and action. Gathering in pursuit of knowledge is better than worshipping for 70 years."<sup>302</sup> He would say: My path is a clear

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p. 14. He specifically criticizes the statement attributed to Al-Hallaj: I am the Truth.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

creed, abundant intent, and receptivity to God and God's purpose of leaving behind designs for this world and the hereafter.<sup>303</sup>

In more than one place, Al-Rifa'i emphasized the importance of adhering to shari'a, *dhikr*, reflection, and worship, and not being dazzled by *karamat*, and that the order was not an inheritance or lineage lacking in substance. But what his order and followers became most known for is their great interest in *kharq Al-'adat* and *karamat*, such as *darb Al-shish* (piercing the abdomen and mouth with swords), fire-walking, fire-eating, and eating live snakes. These practices continue to this day in most branches of the Rifa'i Order around the world.<sup>304</sup>

An important book that reveals to us the personality and religious and social vision of Al-Rifa'i is his book *Al-Wasaya* (Counsels), which contains five main counsels: the first for the Abbasid caliph (based on the caliph asking his advice), the second for his son, the third for his nephew, and the fourth and fifth for the adherents of the order generally. At the start of the chapter addressed to the caliph, he notes the extent to which many 'ulama' and jurists are self-confident, independent, and disinclined to offer the familiar words of deference and veneration such as we see in books on the "etiquette of government," for example. Indeed, he says: "Know, my lord, that the army of just kings, their watchmen, their deeds, and the ledgers of their affairs, workers, and comrades – these ledgers are in the hands of the commoners, so put your affairs in order and keep your army in check, and make use of the people of rationality and religion. Beware men of cruelty, treachery, and perversity, and understand your enemies. Safeguard your business from the meddling of women, juveniles, and

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<sup>303</sup> Abu Al-Hassan Al-Wasiti Al-Shafi'i, *Khulasat Al-Iksir fi Nasab Sayyidna Al-Ghawth Al-Rifa'i Al-Kabir* (Distillation of the Elixir of the Lineage of Our Master, Ghawth Al-Rifa'i the Elder), Gamei Rifai, a Rifa'i Order website: <https://tinyurl.com/y93vepc2>

<sup>304</sup> Compare that to what Imam Al-Rifa'i said in his book *Al-Burhan Al-Mu'ayyad*: "I fear for you that you take delight in *karamat* and their demonstration. The saints hide *karamat* just as a woman hides her menstrual blood" (p. 13). Also Amer el-Naggar, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Misr*; op. cit., p. 74.

those lacking in chivalry; they are the causes of destruction and degeneration.”<sup>305</sup>

The well-known stories that circulate among followers of the Rifa’i Order include Al-Rifa’i’s *karamat*, especially a story from when he performed the Hajj in 555 AH. He entered the Prophet’s Mosque, “and addressed the Prophet by saying, ‘Peace be upon you, grandfather.’ The Prophet answered, ‘Peace be upon you, my son.’ Hearing this, Imam Al-Rifa’i trembled and grew pale. He wept and fell to his knees, then stood and said:

If I were ever far from you, I would send my soul to kiss the ground as my representative.

I have come to this country of phantasms, so extend your right hand that my lips may meet it.

The prophetic coffin cracked open, and the Prophet (PBUH) extended his venerated hand through the lattice. Al-Rifa’i kissed it as the people looked on, and the people nearly went mad in their awe of Muhammad.”<sup>306</sup>

The Rifa’i Order is known for black turbans. Al-Rifa’i did not designate a particular color or dress, but he wore black and old clothes. While, as we mentioned earlier, Al-Shadhili wore fine clothes and cared about worldly affairs, Al-Rifa’i was greatly inclined toward asceticism and austerity.<sup>307</sup>

Most books on the Rifa’i Order and its history indicate that successors to Imam Al-Rifa’i spread through various countries, with their number reaching into the thousands. Within the Al-Rifa’i family

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<sup>305</sup> See Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa’i, *Al-Wasaya* (Counsels), edited by Ahmed Zeinhom Ahmed el-Azab; Madbouly Books, Cairo; First Edition, 1993, pp. 9-11.

<sup>306</sup> See Abu Al-Hassan Al-Wasiti Al-Shafi’i, *Khulasat Al-Iksir fi Nasab Sayyidna Al-Ghawth Al-Rifa’i Al-Kabir*; op. cit., p 38.

<sup>307</sup> Amer el-Naggar, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Misr*; op. cit., p. 73.

itself, his sons and grandsons served as successors and then left successors after them.<sup>308</sup>

In the modern era, one important figure in the history of the Rifa'i Order is Shaykh Baha'uddin Mohammed Mahdi ibn Ali ibn Nur Al-Din Al-Rifa'i, also called Imam Al-Rawwas (the name Al-Rawwas came from the fact that he was a sheep dealer and cooked and sold their heads so that he would not be dependent on anyone in life, and he was a constant nomad). He is considered a "renewer" of the Rifa'i Order and had an important, major influence on the Rifa'i branches in Jordan, like Shaykh Al-Darqawi with respect to the Shadhili Order.

Al-Rawwas was a Rifa'i descendant whose lineage traced to Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i, and through him, of course, to the Husayn ibn Abi Talib branch of Al Al-Bayt. He was born in the early 19th century (1805/1220 AH) near Basra, Iraq, in an area called Souq Al-Shaykh. His father died young, and his mother followed when he was no older than 5, and he was left in the care of his uncle. He learned the Qur'an there under some shaykhs and then, at age 15, he began traveling through the spiritual states of Sufism (*ahwal*). He went with his uncle to Hejaz to perform the Hajj and remained in the Medina area for two years, receiving instruction under masters there. His uncle died and was buried in Medina. Al-Rawwas says that he then received "an order to migrate to Egypt," and he went and studied there at Al-Azhar for nearly 13 years, receiving license from his shaykhs in the esoteric sciences of that which is inward and hidden (*Al-batin*) and the exoteric sciences of that which is outward and apparent (*Al-zahir*). He eventually came to believe that he must leave and return to Iraq, the resting place of his ancestor Ahmad Al-Rifa'i.<sup>309</sup>

In his book *Bawariq Al-Haqa'iq* (Flashes of Truths), Al-Rawwas details for us his journey from Egypt to Iraq and the areas he passed

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<sup>308</sup> Jamaluddin Faleh Al-Jailani and Ziyad Hamad Al-Sumaidaie, *Al-Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i Al-Muslih Al-Mujaddid*; op. cit., pp. 127-137.

<sup>309</sup> Abu Al-Huda Al-Rifa'i Al-Sayyadi, *Qiladat Al-Jawahir fi Dhikr Al-Ghawth Al-Rifa'i wa-Atba'ih min Al-Akabar* (Necklace of Gems in the Mention of Ghawth Al-Rifa'i and His Oldest Followers), verses and sayings extracted by Abdul Warith Mohammad Ali; Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; p. 394.

through in the Levant, Turkey, and Iraq before arriving in Umm 'Ubayda, the location of Imam Al-Rifa'i's shrine and the center of the Rifa'i Order. *Bawariq Al-Haqa'iq* is more than a travelogue: it provides spiritual scenes and dramatic dialogues with prophets, saints, and Companions whose shrines Al-Rawwas visited on his journey, making it a literary masterpiece that contains talk of the stations, states, scenes, and visions that take place in the angelic realm, the world of the soul and the unseen, according to most Sufis. He reveals how this world is intensely present through spiritual communication, visions, or even *karamat* within the Sufi orders, but to a greater extent with the Rifa'is, given that Al-Rawwas is one of the order's most prominent renewers.

On that journey by Al-Rawwas, as he presents it in his book, he saw Prophet Muhammad in his sleep and asked him to "renew the Rifa'i Order." He says: "That night, I saw God's Messenger (PBUH), and he said to me: 'My son, for ninety-four years the crescent has been visible. In six years the moon will shine, and in ten years the full moon will appear when you are the father of the Ahmadis. Renew, renew, renew.' So I awoke and went to the river to take the raft to Baghdad. I saw Al-Khidr (peace be upon him) on the shore of the river, and I said, 'I beg of you, explain to me what our Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, meant by saying: Renew, renew, renew.' Al-Khidr said: 'First, renew the community of Muslims with respect to its religion through the wisdom of Muhammad, your legal sciences, and your jurisprudence on the meanings of holy truths. Second, renew the order of Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa'i, as it is the order of the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) and the order of the righteous ancestors among the Prophet's household, companions, and followers. Third, renew the Sufi orders, which have been engulfed by *bid'a* in expression, counterfeit beliefs, and abominations in worldly matters.' I became ecstatic with joy."<sup>310</sup>

On the trip, his "visions" confirmed for him that the Rifa'i Order was the order of the Prophet and the Companions. He then arrived in

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<sup>310</sup> Baha'uddin Al-Rawwas, *Bawariq Al-Haqa'iq* (Flashes of Truths); op. cit., pp.139-141.

Iraq and met Shaykh Abdullah Al-Rawi Al-Rifa'i, who instructed him in the order and guided his travels on the path of the order (as Al-Rawi told him, the order's rules require such guidance, even though Al-Rawwas was an Al-Rifa'i descendant with great influence). When he arrived in Umm 'Ubayda, Al-Rawwas's spiritual condition reached its apex. He arrived at the shrine of Shaykh Al-Rifa'i, and he attests that he took *bay'a* (a pledge of initiation and allegiance) in the Rifa'i Order from Al-Rifa'i at his shrine, and Al-Rifa'i designated him the *qutb ghawth*. He then presents his conception of the Rifa'i Order approach under the heading "I was acknowledged in his presence," mentioning the beliefs, concepts, and rules governing the Rifa'i Order. Under the heading "What shall be disregarded," he presents the things that the order's followers must forswear and affirms that the imam acknowledged him as the *qutb ghawth*.<sup>311</sup>

Al-Rawwas became one of the most prominent shaykhs of the Rifa'i Order. The Sayyadis trace back to him, and *zawiyas* branched off of this larger branch. One of the poems chanted at their *hadra* gatherings is a poem about Al-Rawwas titled "We entered the *hadra* of Al-Rawwas."<sup>312</sup>

One of the luminaries of the Rifa'i Order in the modern era was Shaykh Abu Al-Huda Al-Rifa'i Al-Sayyadi, a well-known religious and political figure who was the supreme shaykh of the Ottoman Empire. He was known to be extremely close to Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who reached out to the shaykhs of the Sufi orders. Al-Sayyadi was also affiliated with the religiously conservative current within the Ottoman Empire and known for his stance against Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani and his ideas, as well as his intense hostility to Salafism. After Sultan Abdul Hamid was deposed, Al-Sayyadi was exiled to the Adalar archipelago off Turkey and died there. His body was taken to Istanbul, then to his hometown of Aleppo. It is worth mentioning here

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid., pp. 145-217. With regard to his emphasis on being the *qutb*, p. 212. Reference can also be made to what his disciple Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi wrote about his life in Abu Al-Huda Al-Rifa'i Al-Sayyadi, *Qiladat Al-Jawahir fi Dhikr Al-Ghawth Al-Rifa'i wa-Atba'ih min Al-Akabar*; op. cit. pp. 293-400.

<sup>312</sup> See the chant on the Soufia channel: <https://tinyurl.com/y766ffuh>

that Shaykh Abu Al-Huda was the father of Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi, the prime minister of Jordan in the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>313</sup>

The third influential figure is Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa Al-Hamawi, who brought the order to Jordan. Shaykh Al-Shafqa was from Hama and born in 1898. He received instruction in the Rifa'i Order from Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sabsabi Al-Rifa'i Al-Husseini, who granted him license in the order in 1967.<sup>314</sup>

Al-Shaqfa was a disciple of prominent '*ulama*' including Badr Al-Din Al-Husni, received instruction in other Sufi orders, and was notably close to the famous Hama shaykh Ahmed Al-Naasan. Al-Shaqfa participated in the construction and administration of various Shari'a and religious schools and also successfully stood for parliamentary election in 1947 to represent Hama Governorate, but then Husni Al-Za'im overthrew Parliament in 1949.<sup>315</sup>

Al-Shaqfa was active in education and *da'wa* (proselytism), and he visited Jordan on several occasions. He was killed at the entrance of the mosque where he was delivering a sermon in 1979, stabbed by an assailant who evaded capture. The murder occurred during a fla-

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<sup>313</sup> Abu Al-Huda is a controversial figure in contemporary history. There are those who see him as a defender of Islam and others who consider him a deceitful partisan of any Islamic reform cause. Some even believe that he claimed a false lineage and invented the character of Al-Rawwas, who in their view has not been proven authentic.

For example, see "Reading Hassan Al-Sammahi Suwaidan's book *Abul Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi According to His Contemporaries*," Al-Rased, 14/9/2007:

<https://tinyurl.com/yaqwzeo4>

Also Hamza Rastanawie, "Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi," Al-Hewar Al-Mu'tamaddin, 30/11/2007: <https://tinyurl.com/yauhusxd>; and about the life of his son Hassan, see the documentary aired by Al-Mamlaka on 9/1/2019:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybbs2wpj>

<sup>314</sup> See "Shaykh Al-Sabsabi, Shaykh of the Rifa'i Order in Hama":

<https://tinyurl.com/y92utr3s>

<sup>315</sup> Khaldoun Makhoul, "Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa Al-Hamawi: The blessed, martyred, faithful scholar," League of the Syrian Ulama', 29/10/2018:

<https://tinyurl.com/y7nkohhk>

reup in clashes between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Baathist regime, and Al-Shaqfa was therefore declared a martyr.<sup>316</sup>

At present, Shaykh Al-Shaqfa's many successors include Shaykh Abdullah Al-Said, a resident of Turkey, and Shaykh Abdul Hakim Abdul Basit, who previously received instruction in the order from Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sabsabi and played a major role in publishing and reprinting Rifa'i Order books. Al-Shaqfa granted *idhn* (authority to lead and teach in the order) to Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Durra, a resident of Saudi Arabia with disciples and *murids* in Jordan who hold *dhikr* sessions in the Abu Nseir area.<sup>317</sup>

In light of the above, in the counsels, literature, articles, and books by the shaykhs, leaders, and renewers of the Rifa'i Order, we find some of the main characteristics of the Rifa'is compared to other orders:

- The order is dominated by *kharq Al-'adat* and *karamat*. Despite the assertions that phenomena such as *darb Al-shish* and snake-eating became widespread only with later Rifai'is, we find that that they are deep-rooted in the order, practiced by its adherents since the earliest days, and to this day in the order's home base, Umm 'Ubayda. In contrast to the Shadhilis, for example, that who prioritize love and gnosis, the Rifa'is are absorbed in asking for help, i.e. resorting to God in order to seek assistance, disrupt reality, and triumph over enemies. This leads Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi to argue that the Rifa'i Order is dominated by grandeur (i.e. wonder and power) and the Shadhili Order by grace (i.e. passionate love of God).<sup>318</sup>
- The above is also reflected in Rifa'i *iad'iya* and *awrad* (supplications and litanies). The primary *awrad* are Al-Hizb Al-Kabir (the

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid. Some rare videos of Shaykh Al-Shaqfa and of him addressing his meetings can be seen on YouTube, 21/1/2013: <https://tinyurl.com/yc96ssfu>

<sup>317</sup> Telephone interview with Shakir Al-Kilani, 5/6/2020. See also the Hama Madinati page on Facebook: <https://tinyurl.com/y8drx7ub>  
On Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Durra, see the Muhabbi Al-Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Durra page on Facebook: <https://tinyurl.com/y8ctv6xa>

<sup>318</sup> Private interview with Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, referenced above.

Grand Litany), Al-Hizb Al-Saghir (the Lesser Litany), Hizb Al-Fatuh (Litany of Openings), Hizb Al-Hisn (Litany of Fortification), Hizb Al-Sitr (Litany of Protection), and the daily *awrad*, which are at least similar to other Sufi orders generally (“No God but God” 100 times, asking for forgiveness 100 times, saying a prayer on the Prophet 100 times). The *awrad* take a particular form and are read twice per day, in the morning and evening.

- The *nashids* in Rifa’i *dhikr* gatherings are somewhat similar to those found in the Shadhili Order, with some overlap between the two orders. A feature of many Rifa’i *hadrās*, however, is that the poems generally sing the praises of the order and its shaykhs and approach. Most poems in other orders such as the Shadhili, meanwhile, belong to the genre known as *khamriyyat* (“wine songs”) related to love of the Divine Essence.<sup>319</sup> There is an Iraqi flavor to the poetry and *nashids* in Rifa’i *hadrās*, given that the descendants of Shaykh Al-Rifa’i and related individuals continue to make up a major portion of the order’s lineage (*sanad*).<sup>320</sup>

- Rifa’i *hadrās* are generally varied, but they are often unruly and involve deviations from any set order, unlike in the Shadhili Order, which, as we have seen, generally seeks to control individuals during the *hadra* by prescribing a clear order for the gathering. In the Rifa’i Order, meanwhile, many *hadrās* feature the use of the frame drum known as *daff*, and often other drums, and participants engage in practices that are considered *karamat* and *kharq Al-‘adat*, such as *darb Al-shish*, dancing in fires, and snake-eating. Dancing is also sometimes mixed with orderly movements during *dhikr*. Thus, there

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<sup>319</sup> See Shaykh Ali Hassan Jami Al-Rifa’i, *Al-Majmu’ Al-Jami’ fi Ahzab wa-Awrad wa-Adhkar Al-Tariqa Al-Rifa’iyya lil-Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa’i* (The Complete Omnibus of Ahzab, Awrad, and Adhkar of Imam Ahmad Al-Rifa’i’s Rifa’i Order). The book is available at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9qyzbwv>

<sup>320</sup> For example, see the poem “O, Prophet Al-Sayyad” at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycg8tmds>; an Iraqi-style Rifa’i-Qadiri *hadra*: <https://tinyurl.com/yb8fnu27>; “Hayim li-Nasb Al-Raya” (“Eager to Raise the Banner”), the *nashid* of the Rifa’i Order in Homs: <https://tinyurl.com/y77vhmyb>; listen to a collection of Rifa’i *nashids* at *hadrās*: <https://tinyurl.com/y96xkmdq>

is generally a clear difference between the Shadhili and Rifa'i *hadras*.<sup>321</sup>

Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman notes that the Rifa'is in Jordan have been influenced by Shadhili *hadras*, and some have worked to control behaviors during the *hadra*, create rules such as orderly movements, and end *darb Al-shish* and other forms of *kharq Al-'adat*.<sup>322</sup>

- There is also notably a strong attachment to love of Al Al-Bayt. We find this feature in Sufi orders generally, but in the Rifa'i Order it is deeper and more intense, to the point that some of the order's most prominent shaykhs use Shi'i terminology, such as talk about the Twelve Imams and hyperbolic glorification of Al Al-Bayt. This is easy to observe in the book *Bawariq Al-Haqa'iq* by Imam Al-Rawwas.<sup>323</sup>

## 2. The roots and reach of the Rifa'i Order in Jordan

The Rifa'i Order in Jordan, compared to other orders, is distinctive for the multiplicity of its divisions and *zawiyas*, which does not necessarily reflect broad appeal so much as it represents the outgrowth of a *sanad* or branch of the Rifai school. The Rifa'i Order entered Jordan via three main gateways: Syria, Palestine, and Iraq.

**I. The Syrian Gateway: The Rawwas-Sayyadi School:** Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib was one of the most prominent Rifa'i shaykhs in Jordan. He was instructed in the order by Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa. After Al-Khatib's death in 2012, his son Al-Mutasim took over his *zawiya* in the Rawwas Mosque in Jabal Al-Zuhour.

Another Rifa'ishaykh is Shaykh Ali Abu Zaid, nicknamed Al-Ashqar or the Blond Shaykh, who initially received instruction in the

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<sup>321</sup> Examples of Rifa'i *hadras*: *Hadra* at Imam Al-Rifa'i Mosque in Cairo: <https://tinyurl.com/ybr3fy6y>; Iraqi-style Rifa'i-Qadiri *hadra*: <https://tinyurl.com/yb8fnu27>; wartime Qadiri-Rifa'i *hadra*: <https://tinyurl.com/y8stvzmo>

<sup>322</sup> Private interview with Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman, 2/6/2020.

<sup>323</sup> See Muhammed Mahdi Al-Din Al-Rawwas, *Bawariq Al-Haqa'iq*; op. cit., p. 140-144.

order from by Shaykh Abdul Hafez Al-Tahrawi, and then was granted *idhn* in the order by Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa during the latter's visit to Amman. Shaykh Ali Abu Zaid has granted license to Mahmoud Muraweh, who has a *zawiya* in Russeifa, and Shaykh Dr. Muadh Said Hawwa at the same *zawiya*.

The Rifa'i Order has also spread recently among immigrants and new arrivals from Syria. This includes the Rifa'i-Sayyadi *zawiya* of Shaykh Abdul Karim Al-Rifa'i Al-Sayyadi, who studied the order under Shaykh Abdullah Al-Sa'id, a successor to Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa. The *zawiya* is located near Jwaideh and is called the Muhammadan Rifa'i-Sayyadi *Zawiya*.<sup>324</sup>

There is a gathering for prayers on the Prophet in Mafrag that brings together adherents of the Rifa'i and Shadhili-Darqawi-'Allawi orders. It is led by a disciple of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Rahbawi, who was instructed in the Rifa'i Order by Shaykh Ahmad Mahdi Al-Sayyadi, the grandson of Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi, and whose lineage in the order traces to Shaykh Al-Shaqfa.<sup>325</sup>

Shaykh Fawaz Al-Tabba' also states that he received instruction in the order from Shaykh Muhammad Yassin Al-Husni, who received instruction from Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi's grandson Taj Al-Din. Muhammad Sabih Al-Rifa'i, who established a *zawiya* in Aqaba and holds *hadras* and *dhikr* sessions, studied the order under Shaykh Abdullah Sa'id in Turkey and was previously a *murid* and disciple of Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh in Russeifa.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> For further details, see the Facebook page of the *zawiya*'s shaykh, Abu Muhammad Al-Sayyadi Al-Rifa'i: <https://tinyurl.com/ybrzc8j>, as well as the page of the Muhammadan Rifa'i-Sayyadi *Zawiya*: <https://tinyurl.com/ybx99y7r>

<sup>325</sup> Phone interview with a murid and disciple of Syrian shaykh 'Abd Al-Qadir Al-Rahbawi, 4/6/2020. And on the life of Ahmad Mahdi Al-Sayyadi, who died and was buried in Amman, see the website Manazil Al-Sa'irin: <https://tinyurl.com/y8wgtyxa>

<sup>326</sup> Fawaz Al-Tabba', *Al-Fuyudat Al-Muhammadiyah 'ala Al-Tariqa Al-Rifa'iyya* (Muhammadan Emanations on the Rifa'i Path); op. cit., pp. 324-326. Also see a *hadra* on Muhammad Sabih Al-Rifa'i's YouTube channel: <https://tinyurl.com/y7tc3m9e>

Another figure in Jordan whom Shaykh Abdullah Al-Sa'id instructed in the Rifa'i Order is Shakir Al-Kilani, who also studied the Naqshbandi and Qadiri orders with Shaykh Muhammad Amin Al-Kilani and the Shadhili Order with a number of shaykhs.<sup>327</sup>

**II. The Palestinian Gateway:** The order arrived in Jordan via Shaykh Yousef Al-Nuwayhi's disciples, sons, and grandsons, and also via Abdul Hafez Al-Tahrawi, one of the most prominent figures in spreading the Rifa'i Order in Jordan. We mentioned that his successors include his son Shaykh Muhammad Al-Tahrawi, Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Muraweh, and Shaykh Faris Al-Thalji Al-Rifa'i in Jerash. *Zawiyas* affiliated with this branch have spread into several areas of eastern Amman and in Jerash, Mafraq, and elsewhere.

**III. The Iraqi Gateway:** Shaykh Omar, born in Ramla in 1955, was instructed in the Rifa'i Order by Shaykh Hatem Al-Rawi in Iraq, then returned to Amman in 1978. Al-Sarafandi was known for practicing *darb Al-shish*. He died about two years ago, after having brought several successors into the order, but a few years before his death, the successors met and decided to appoint his son Ahmad as his successor. Activities such as Mawlids (celebrations of the Prophet's birthday) and religious events are held in that *zawiya*.

Here we must note that Shaykh Hatem Al-Rawi initially received instruction in the Rifa'i Order and was successor to Shaykh Fahd Al-Fahhad, who was originally from Deir Al-Zor and resided in Saudi Arabia. He in turn had studied under Shaykh Ahmad Barakat and was the successor to the Shaykh Ahmad Al-Rawi *takiya* (a Sufi house of assembly not unlike a *zawiya*) in Deir Al-Zor. Shakir Al-Kilani points out that for Hatem Al-Rawi, the name Al-Rawi is attributable to the order; his real name was Hatem Al-Dulaimi, and he was Iraqi. Hatem Al-Rawi later returned to study the order under Shaykh Saif Al-Rawi, the successor at the Shaykh Ahmad Al-Rawi *takiya* in Deir Al-Zor. Likewise, Shaykh Omar Al-Sarafandi initially received instruction in the order from Shaykh Hatem, then took the pledge and *bay'a* with Shaykh Saif Al-Rawi. Shaykh Fawaz Al-Tabba'

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<sup>327</sup> Interview with Shakir Al-Kilani, 5/6/2020.

also indicates that Shaykh Fahd Al-Fahhad instructed and licensed him in the order.<sup>328</sup>

The Shaykh Ahmad Al-Raqi *takiya* in Deir Al-Zor, then, is one of the main tributaries of the Jordanian Rifa'i Order. The Deir Al-Zour *takiya* was founded in 1883 through the efforts of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Rawi. After his death, his son Abdul Wahab Al-Rawi took over, then his brother Shaykh Ahmad Barakat. After 1983, Shaykh Saif Al-Rawi became the shaykh there and played an important role in advancing the *takiya's* work and spreading the order until his death in 2000, whereupon Shaykh Wa'il Al-Rawi became shaykh of the order. Due to the Syrian Civil War he left for Turkey, where he currently resides, and ISIS blew up the *zawiya* when the city of Deir Al-Zor was under its control.<sup>329</sup>

Based on the above, it can be seen that there are multiple generations within the Rifa'i Order in Jordan, with the most widespread being the Rawwasi branch. The outbreak of the war in Syria has made refugees of many adherents of the Rifa'i Order, especially those migrating from Homs and Hama, and they have become influential in the landscape of Jordanian Sufism through their connections and relationship with the Syrian Rifa'i Order.

The Al-Rawi stream of the Rifa'i Order also overlaps with tributaries from Iraq (through Shaykh Hatem Al-Rawi) and Syria (through the Al-Rawi *takiya* in Deir Al-Zor). Although the Al-Rawi family itself has Iraqi roots, the Deir Al-Zor *takiya* shifted the center of influence to Deir Al-Zor and the successors to the *takiya* there.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Telephone interview with Shakir Al-Kilani, 5/6/2020. See also Fawaz Al-Tabba', *Al-Fuyudat Al-Muhammadiyya 'ala Al-Tariqa Al-Rifa'iyya*; op. cit., pp. 322-324.

<sup>329</sup> Interview with Shakir Al-Kilani, op. cit. For further details, see Deir Al-Zor website article on the *takia*: <https://tinyurl.com/ycfhfksl>, and the Facebook page of the Al-Rawi *takia*: <https://tinyurl.com/y7e47jev>. On ISIS blowing up the *takia*, see "Al-Rawi *takia* in Deir Al-Zor: Destroyed by the regime and then detonated by ISIS," Orient Net: <https://tinyurl.com/ybtkme7p>

<sup>330</sup> Telephone interview with Shaykh Fawaz Al-Tabba', 5/6/2020. Telephone interview with Shakir Al-Kilani, 5/6/2020.

### 3. Al-Khatib and the Al-Rawwas Zawiya in Jabal Al-Zuhour

The founder of the Rifa'i-Rawwasi *zawiya* in Jabal Al-Zuhour, eastern Aman, was Shaykh Nasser Al-Din Al-Khatib. Born in Jerusalem in 1955, he moved to Jordan after the Six-Day War in 1967. In 1975 in Syria, he met Shaykh Al-Shaqfa, who granted him *idhn* in the Rifa'i Order. He established a *zawiya* in Jabal Al-Zuhour in 1973.<sup>331</sup>

One of Shaykh Al-Khatib's most prominent disciples, Mohamad Abu Awad, provided a biography in his book *Al-Taqrīb fi Sirat Nassir Al-Din Al-Khatib* (Understanding the Biography of Nasser Al-Din Al-Khatib). He states that Al-Khatib showed signs of maturity, spirituality, and excellence starting in childhood, when he was no older than 7 or 8, and became a "phenomenon" bewildering to 'ulama' and teachers. The Sufi orders even competed over him in his youth. Abu Awad says: "After that, a community of Sufis flocked to him, and they called him "the Sufi mind," "the inspired imam," or "the illuminating opener." But instead of supporting Al-Khatib, everyone wanted to lay claim to him or undermine him. This light would be important, and so everyone wanted to call him 'my disciple.' The masters fought over him, and he was mindful of this, taking from each what would benefit him. The reason the masters ran after him was that they knew from the outset that here was an instance of opening, favor, and a gift from the Lord, and so each one of them wanted to attach his name to Al-Khatib, whether that meant Al-Khatib was his disciple or vice versa."<sup>332</sup>

According to Abu Awad, then, Shaykh Al-Khatib showed early genius and became a phenomenon in the Palestinian Sufi scene. He also tells that Al-Khatib's father named him after his own father, Nasser Al-Din Al-Khatib, who worked for the Ottoman state. He met Muhammad Hassan Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi in Istanbul and renewed

<sup>331</sup> See Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun," op. cit., pp. 53-55; and Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya: Durub Allah Al-Rouhiyya*, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>332</sup> Mohammad Abu Awad, *Al-Taqrīb fi Sirat Nassir Al-Din Al-Khatib* (Understanding the Biography of Nasser Al-Din Al-Khatib), Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; 2009, p. 71.

the covenants of the saints in all the orders, because Shaykh Al-Sayyadi was a recognized heir of Al-Rawwas in all the orders and for all the orders.<sup>333</sup>

Hassan Abu Hanieh, who recorded an interview with Shaykh Al-Khatib before the latter's death, says that after Al-Khatib came to Jordan, he committed himself to Tablighi Jamaat in 1970, then to Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh (who was, as we noted earlier, in the Shadhili school). He then decided to leave for Syria, where he met Shaykh Al-Shaqfa and received instruction from him in the Rifa'i Order.<sup>334</sup>

Abu Awad states that when Shaykh Al-Khatib arrived in Syria and met with Shaykh Al-Shaqfa, he had been a "full shaykh, affirmed and supported (by God), with *murids* and *zawiyas*, since the age of 17, as God had affirmed him with *karamat* and clear proof. At that time, in addition to the Qadiri school, he was influenced by and learned from Mawlana Jalal Al-din Rumi, Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar Muhyi Al-Din Ibn 'Arabi, Sidi Ahmad 'Aliwa Al-Mustaghani, and many of the major saints such as Al-Shadhili, Al-Naqshbandi, and Al-Tijani. These spiritual relationships matured into strong, exalted bonds. He depended on his work, thus complying with the exhortation of the imams and '*ulama*' of the path that every shaykh and traveler on God's path must have a trade or craft on which he can subsist. Our shaykh worked starting in childhood. He began his life by acquiring work and knowledge, worked in industry, and then worked in trade."<sup>335</sup>

Although Al-Khatib studied the order under Shaykh Al-Shaqfa, it was similar to the case of Al-Rawwas with his shaykh, Abdullah Al-Rawi, in that Al-Rawwas was not in need of knowledge, work, or anything from his shaykh because he was at a rank verging on that of *ghawth*. Nevertheless, he was "ordered to receive license from Shaykh Abdullah Al-Rawi because of the wisdom with which the path was arranged and to demonstrate the knowledge within the Rifa'i Order, which is the mother of all the orders. ... When he arrived in

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>334</sup> Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya*, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

Hama and saw some of them, our shaykh wanted to ask for Shaykh Mahmoud's license, and Shaykh Mahmoud looked at him with a smile and read him *Barqamat Al-Bulbul*, then brought him into the order's lineage and gave him license, in the same manner that Al-Rawwas had done with his shaykh. There was a relationship that was perhaps stronger than those with several *qutbs* and companions when they granted our shaykh *sanad* in the Akbari way (of Ibn 'Arabi). They recognized him in the Akbari way due to Shaykh Abdul Latif."<sup>336</sup>

Abu Awad states that Al-Khatib took up the Sufi path in five orders and *sanads*: from his father, Abdul Latif Al-Khatib; from his grandfather, who studied it under Al-Sayyadi in Turkey; from Al-Khidr, peace be upon him; from Taj Al-Din ibn Hassan Khalid ibn Al-Shaykh Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyad, the grandson of Shaykh Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi in Amman;<sup>337</sup> from Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa; and from Shaykh Salim Haidar Muhammad Al-Rashidi through his *sanad* tracing to Imam Al-Rifa'i.<sup>338</sup>

We find a strong influence and presence for Al-Rawwas in Al-Khatib's *zawiya* in Jabal Al-Zuhour. Al-Khatib himself joined Rifa'ia *d'iya* and *awrad* to poems by Al-Rawwas and other poets of the order, and put them in books such as *Al-Ifada Al-Kubra* (*The Greater Elaboration*) and *Minbar Al-Ghayb* (*The Pulpit of the Unseen*).

Al-Khatib, like other Rifa'i shaykhs, focuses on *karamat* being orthodox and compliant with Islamic law, and he permits his disciples and *murids* to demonstrate *karamat* and *kharq Al-'adat*. "The *murids* are authorized to perform the order's *karamat* in the mosque, the street, the *zawiya*, on Mawlid and in homes, but we have observed that they distract travelers from continuous progress. He would say: 'We want to see something evident in the attendee that is new. Any sincere person can produce light, arcana, and *karamat*, and

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>337</sup> Taj Al-Din, the grandson of Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi, lived in Abdoun. He died, and his daughter built the Amin Al-Rawi Mosque, named after her husband, near the Professional Associations Complex.

<sup>338</sup> Nasser Al-Din Al-Khatib, *Al-Taqrif fi Sirat Nasser Al-Din Al-Khatib*, op. cit., pp.75-76.

true intention endows us with something new as needed by his time and the people of his age. ... The motive behind displaying *karama* is to reveal the hypocrites and skeptics. I perform *karamat* to plant the tree of certainty in admirers, on the condition that enjoying it brings them closer to God and does not stop the journey toward knowledge.”<sup>339</sup>

As evidence of the legitimacy of demonstrating *karamat*, Abu Awad adds: “Imam Al-Rifa’i said that a saint is embarrassed by the demonstration of *karamat* just as a woman is embarrassed by her menses. But if the hour approaches and strife emerges, people must display what they know, and the saint must display his miracles. If *karamat* have a role in the reform of souls and hearts, there can be no objection to mentioning and demonstrating them. ... The Generous One bestowed our shaykh with *karamat* and sustenance. He was bestowed with blessings that a mind cannot comprehend unless it believes in God’s power.”

Abu Awad presents dozens of stories in his book of Shaykh Al-Khatib’s *karamat*, including some related to extinguishing fires in homes, some connected to exorcising demons from people, some related to foresight, telepathy, and visions, recovering from poisoning, surviving accidents and conspiracies by adversaries, and ones related to light, attracting people’s hearts to him, divine guidance, healing the sick, etc.<sup>340</sup>

Like Shaykh Omar Al-Sarafandi’s *Rifa’izawiya* in Jabal Al-Nasr, Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib’s *zawiya* once witnessed *darb Al-shish* and other practices that adherences consider to be *kharq Al’adat* and *karamat*, but Shaykh Al-Khatib later halted those practices.

Al-Khatib built the Imam Al-Rawwas *Zawiya* next to the small mosque in the late 1980s, then expanded it significantly in the early 1990s. He added a house of Quranic instruction and a library, and he renovated the building in 2007-08.

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<sup>339</sup> Mohammad Abu Awad, *Al-Taqrīb fi Sirat Nasser Al-Din Al-Khatib*, op. cit., pp.96-97.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., pp. 111-175.

Those close to Shaykh Al-Khatib, and observers, point to important shifts for Al-Khatib starting in the 1990s, which accelerated following the so-called “Arar *karama*,” in which he extinguished a fire in that area in Saudi Arabia. Shaykh Al-Khatib earned visibility and a remarkable following there, and he took to living in Medina every year from Ramadan until the Hajj. He gained *murids* in those areas, especially in Jeddah and Medina. Shaykh Al-Khatib also established good relations with certain Omani figures, especially in the Salalah area, and he came to have a larger regional presence.<sup>341</sup>

Shaykh Al-Khatib began substantive reviews of “his order” starting in the 1990s, and they became standard around the beginning of the new millennium. The shaykh halted *darb Al-shish* at his *zawiya* in the 1990s, then adopted seated *dhikr* in 2007. The shaykh said that standing and moving impacted acceptance of the order, while seated *dhikr* encouraged greater dissemination of the order.<sup>342</sup>

At the beginning of the new millennium, Awn Al-Qaddoumi and Fawaz Al-Tabba', two shaykhs from the younger generation who knew Al-Khatib extremely well, noticed that Al-Khatib was tacking toward the scholarly approach to Sufism, focusing on proselytism (*da'wa*) and teaching. He broadened his relationships with Sufis and jurists in the Arab world, especially from Iraq, and in the final years before his death, he developed relationships with the Yemeni shaykhs known as “the Habibs.” He even sent his son Al-Mutasim to Yemen to learn about their experience and study Islamic legal science.<sup>343</sup>

In 2009, Shaykh Al-Khatib founded the Soufia television channel, which specialized in revival of the Sufi path in Jordan and the Arab world. Because Shaykh Al-Khatib believed deeply in the *nashid*'s importance and superior ability to deliver a message relative to sermons and scholarly lessons, he dedicated the channel to Islamic *nashid*, as well as to Islamic legal science. He recruited top *munshids* from Syria, such as Abu Sha'ar, a famous *nashid* ensemble, and the channel

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<sup>341</sup> Telephone interview with Shaykh Fawaz Al-Tabba', 7/6/2020.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., and telephone interview with Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, 7/6/2020.

produced *nashid* videos of their performances. Another *munshid* that Al-Khatib recruited was Mansour Zaiter. The channel also filmed interviews with a number of Sufi shaykhs in Jordan, and it became an Arab media platform for promoting Sufism and Sufi *nashid*.<sup>344</sup>

Al-Khatib also founded the Sama'il Foundation in the Sultanate of Oman and expanded his relationships with Sufi groups and orders in Jordan and elsewhere in the Arabi world. He began planning to develop coordination among Jordanian and Arab Sufis before his death in 2012.

After Shaykh Al-Khatib's death, his son Al-Mutasim was chosen as his successor after the eldest son, Al-Qasim, declined the assignment. But the Soufia channel has ceased operating, and some believe that Al-Mutasim's relationship with the Ba' Alawi Habibs is taking the *zawiya* and the order in a new direction, which has led some of his father's closest disciples and *murids* to leave the *zawiya* recently. Others, meanwhile, believe that Al-Mutasim is applying his father's reconsiderations to the real world and carrying forward on the path he started by turning toward shari'a-based and scholarly Sufism and institutional action.<sup>345</sup>

#### 4. The Mahmoud Muraweh and Muadh Hawwa model: The Abu Zaid *zawiya*

Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh is the successor to Shaykh Ali Abu Zaid, the "Blond Shaykh," who was born in 1934 in Qabatiya, a village outside the city of Jenin in Palestine. After the 1948 Nakba, Abu Zaid went to Bizzariya, a village near Nablus, then moved to Sahab, Jordan, and finally to the el-Hussein refugee camp in the 1950s. There he met Shaykh Abdul Hafez Al-Tahrawi, who granted him *idhn* in five Sufi orders. Abu Zaid later received *idhn* in the Rifa'i Order from Shaykh

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<sup>344</sup> Interview with Fawaz Al-Tabba', 7/6/2020.

<sup>345</sup> See the Facebook page of the Al-Khatib Dar Al-Dhikr and Kindergarten, which is linked to the Rawwasi *zawiya* in Jabal Al-Zuhour: <https://tinyurl.com/y9ld2f3y>. See a Mawlid observed by Shaykh Al-Mutasim Al-Khatib in the Al-Rawwas *Zawiya* in November 2019: <https://tinyurl.com/y9yb4t4b>, as well as on the Soufia Channel Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/y9syjk2h>

Mahmoud Al-Shaqfa during the latter's visit to Jordan as part of a Hajj trip shortly before he was killed. Shaykh Abu Zaid's *murids* say that Shaykh Al-Shaqfa came as the guest of Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib and asked what Abu Zaid was like, so Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib described him, and Abu Zaid was invited to meet Al-Shaqfa. He asked Al-Shaqfa for *idhn* in the order, and Al-Shaqfa told him that he had asked about him in order to grant him admittance after having a vision in his sleep despite having never met Abu Zaid. Shaykh Ali Abu Zaid also was instructed in the Shadhili Order by Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali.<sup>346</sup>

Shaykh Abu Zaid moved to Russeifa in the early 1980s and established his *zawiya* there. He met Mahmoud Muraweh, who was an education professor and had come to Jordan to study history at the University of Jordan. After receiving his bachelor's degree in 1975, he decided to stay there. He became Abu Zaid's *murid* and stayed close to him until Abu Zaid died in 1997, having made Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh his successor.<sup>347</sup>

Muraweh continued to hold *hadrās* in his shaykh's *zawiya* but then moved to a new, more spacious *zawiya* near his home in the Al-Rashid neighborhood of Russeifa in 2013.

A prominent figure in Abu Zaid's *zawiya* in Russeifa is Shaykh Dr. Muadh Said Hawwa, a professor of Shari'a at World Islamic Sciences and Education University and the imam of Al-Awwabeen Mosque in Sweileh. He is the son of one of the most prominent Sufi Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Syria, Shaykh Sa'id Hawwa, who arrived in Jordan in the early 1980s after the Hama massacre amid the clash between the Syrian regime and the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>348</sup>

Shaykh Muadh Hawwa is from the epitome of a Sufi home. He was born in 1969 to a family with roots in Hama, Syria. His father got

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<sup>346</sup> See Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun," op. cit. Also, interview with Muadh Said Hawwa at his home near Al-Awwabeen Mosque in the Sweileh area, 6/4/2020.

<sup>347</sup> See Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun"; op. cit., pp. 57-58.

<sup>348</sup> For more on the life of Shaykh Sa'id Hawwa, see Muhammad Said Hawa, "Shaykh Sa'id Hawwa: Scholar, Preacher, Thinker," League of the Syrian Ulama', 14/1/2019: <https://tinyurl.com/ybs53fyy>

out of prison in 1978, and the family went to Jordan. His interest in Sufi books and literature began early, and he took up the Shadhili path through his father, who received instruction in the Shadhili Order from Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi in Damascus. His father gave him simple *awrad*, and his learning and knowledge of Sufism were reinforced and boosted by printing his father's books on jurisprudence, religious education, and Sufism, including *Notes on the Stations of the Truthful and the Worshippers of God* (*Mudhakarrat fi Manazil Al-Siddiqin wa-l-Rabbaniyyin*) and *Foundations of the Sunna and Its Jurisprudence* (*Al-Asas fi Al-Sunna wa Fiqhiha*). These books, which he began printing in seventh grade, were landmarks of Sufism.<sup>349</sup>

The general atmosphere in the home was also a powerful catalyst for Muadh Hawwa. His father was a leading Sufi scholar and jurist, and his mother was a teacher specializing in Arabic and was also from a Sufi family. When they moved to Jordan, she chose to devote herself full time to raising and educating her children properly, and she had a major influence on them.<sup>350</sup>

Also during that period in the early 1980s, Sa'id Hawwa gave itinerant lessons at the homes of friends, Brotherhood members, and acquaintances, and Muadh was brought up in this atmosphere. His father also received many visitors, and so he overheard discussions, scholarly gathering, and lessons from which he picked up many ideas and arguments regarding Sufism.<sup>351</sup>

Dr. Muadh Hawwa mentions that the debates with the Salafis also started during that period: "My father debated Salafis, which gave me a good background in the legal and Sufi sciences and debates in the general Islamic environment."<sup>352</sup>

He met Shaykh Hatem Al-Rawi after his father's death in 1989 and studied the Rifa'i Order under him. He then met and was influ-

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<sup>349</sup> Interview with Shaykh Muadh Hawwa, op. cit.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

enced by Shaykh Ali Abu Zaid in the early 1990s. Dr. Hawwa says: “I stayed with Shaykh Ali for seven years while studying for my bachelor’s and master’s at the University of Jordan. I committed to him and took *bay’a* with him, and I then had *idhn* in more than one order. He admitted me to the Rifa’i Order. When he died, his successor was Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh, and we continued with him in the order and *dhikr* sessions.”<sup>353</sup>

Hawwa has worked as an imam and delivered sermons since 1993. He has been a professor in the Faculty of Hanafi Fiqh at World Islamic Sciences and Education University since 2018. He teaches jurisprudence according to the Hanafi school and the jurisprudence of Sufism, and he has recorded several lectures and lessons on Sufism and *tazkiya* (purification of the self), as well as an extended explanation of the book *The Principles of Sufism and Evidence for Recognition (Qawa'id Al-Tasawwuf wa-Shawahid Al-Ta'arruf)* by Shaykh Abu Abbas Ahmad Zarruq, one of the most prominent shaykhs in Sufism.<sup>354</sup>

Hawwa focuses on the importance of based Sufism on a firm scholarly and legal foundation. This is known as shari'a-bound or sunna-bound Sufism, or scientific Sufism because of its link to Islamic legal science. He sees *tazkiya*, which involves moral and spiritual advancement as well as purification of the self, as extremely important in Sufism and believes that it must be introduced into the curricula of shari'a faculties at Jordanian universities. At the same time, however, he is affiliated with the scientific current, which holds that the sciences of shari'a (law) and *haqiqa* (truth) are fully compatible and rejects any gnosis or behaviors in certain Sufi orders that are inconsistent with Islamic law.

Hawwa is surrounded by disciples and *murids* who consistently attend lessons, sermons, and lectures. He also belongs to an elite set of World Islamic Sciences and Education University professors who today represent the Ash'ari-*madhhabi*-Sufi school and are interested in a Sufism grounded in science and academic attainment. We there-

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> See a series of lessons on *Qawa'id fi Al-Tasawwuf* on his official website: <https://tinyurl.com/ydcr63r8>

fore find Shaykh Abu Zaid's *zawiya* in Russeifa is distinctive for the notable presence of educated young people, some of whom are university professors or have important positions in official religious institutions.

We find many examples of the moderate approach Hawwa takes. When we ask about the figure of Al-Khidr, who shows up often in Sufi literature, Hawwa answers: Ibn Taymiyyah had two opinions in fatwas in two different places. He said in one that Al-Khidr is alive and in one that Al-Khidr is dead. Sufis generally tend to say that he is alive, but there is no conclusive evidence for that. I lean toward the opinion that Al-Khidr has a sublime spirit when he appears to the saints as if he has a corporeal form. Those who meet him sense that he is an insubstantial body. Thus, if the Sufi's spirit is sublime, it joins with Al-Khidr's spirit, and this is why Al-Khidr is called the 'examiner of saints.' He is deceased, but it is an issue of spirit."<sup>355</sup>

With regard to *fana'* in the shaykh, as is the belief in some Sufi orders, Hawwa answers: "I came across a hadith corrected by Shaykh Shuaib Al Arna'ut, which is 'Be modest before God like your modesty before righteous men from your tribe.' Al-Albani had it as 'Be modest before God like your modesty before a man of your people.' This can be cited in connection to *fana'* in the shaykh, from the standpoint of manners and modesty before God."<sup>356</sup>

Based on his own experience, he points to the importance of legal science and jurisprudence in basing Sufism on sound foundations: "I have never felt any doubt or hesitation on the path that I am traveling. The reason is that I had a solid structure for my beliefs from the start, especially with regard to the Ash'ari-Maturidi creed, which has the advantage of being based on clear logic, and so I was never confused. This structure also helped in my study of jurisprudence, because whenever I encountered a contradiction I could not accept, I would subject it to jurisprudence. While building this structure, I reinforced my scientific foundations in the science of the

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<sup>355</sup> Interview with Shaykh Muadh Hawwa, op. cit.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

Prophet's Sunna, examining 90% of *sahih* and *hasan* hadiths (sayings in the highest two categories of reliability) before finishing my baccalaureate studies. All of that enabled me to litigate matters in a properly rational and scientific manner. I was looking for evidence for Sufism from the foundational religious sources."<sup>357</sup>

Omar, one of Shaykh Muadh Hawwa's *murids* and adherents in the Rifa'i Order who took *bay'a* with him, describes the *dhikrhadra* this way: "The representatives in the *zawiya* arrange things there. The *hadra* is on Thursdays and lasts a long time. It begins after the nighttime prayer with reading the Qur'an and Surah Al-Kahf. Then Shaykh Muadh gives the *fawatih* (mystical letters at the start of some Quranic verses), and chanting of poetry starts after that. Then the *dhikr* begins, seated and with the lights out. Video recordings are prohibited, but audio recording is allowed. Usually about 25 people attend, but it can be as many as 100. This goes on for more than an hour, and then begins the Khatm and *dhikr*, with intonation of the names of God: Allah, the Living One, He, etc."<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Interview at his home in western Amman, 13/3/2020.



### Topic 3

## THE KHALWATI-JAMI'A-RAHMANI ORDER

The Khalwati Order began spreading in Jordan in the 1950s through its two main branches: Khalwati-Qasimi and Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani. Shaykh Hussein Al-Sharif was shaykh of the order at the time and until his death. His son Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif took over the order in 1988 and is still its shaykh today.

### 1. Roots and founding leaders

The Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order acquired its name from its founder, Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sharif (d. 1855), in Hebron. The shaykh of the Ashraf Zawiya in Hebron was his father, Hussein Al-Sharif, who was instructed in the order by Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Rifa'i Al-Tarabulsi, also known as Abu Al-Anwar. This clearly indicates the lineage (*sanad*) of the order. Shaykh Hussein Al-Sharif told his son Abdul Rahman that he had studied the order under Shaykh Abu Al-Anwar Al-Tarabulsi and asked him to go to Al-Tarabulsi's home and take a pledge and receive instruction from him. Abdul Rahman was only 14 years old at the time. He did indeed go to Abu Al-Anwar, served him for several years, and received license from him in the Khalwati Order after learning the Seven Names liturgy and going into *khalwa* (spiritual seclusion). Al-Tarabulsi granted him general *idhn* (authorization to teach and lead) in the Rifa'i Order and ordered him to return to Hebron to spread the order and teach people. After Abu Al-Anwar's death, Al-Sharif received *idhn* in the Shadhili-Yashruti, Idrisi, Badawi, Qadiri, and Ahmadi orders, thus bringing to six the number of main Sufi orders in which Shaykh Al-Sharif was authorized to lead travelers on the path. He then received *idhn* in the Naqshbandi and Idrisi orders, bringing the number to eight.

Shaykh Al-Sharif was granted license (*ijaza*) in the following orders: "Khalwati, Rifa'i, Qadiri, Ahmadi, Desouki, Shadhili, Naqshbandi, and Idrisi. This caused his successors – i.e. the generation of shaykhs immediately after him – to use Jami'a-Rahmani as an um-

brella term for these orders. Rahmani is derived from his name, Abdul Rahman, and *Jami'a* means “comprehensive,” in that it unites the *sanads*, literature, and *awrad* (litanies) of all these orders that God opened to Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sharif to reflect the spirit of all the orders’ *awrad*.”

Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sharif had been instructed in the Khalwati Order by Shaykh Abu Al-Anwar Al-Rifa'i Al-Tarabulsi, but the addition of Jami'a-Rahmani came with Shaykh Al-Sharif through his successors, thus making him essentially the main founder of this order that combines Khalwati with seven other Sufi orders.

The Khalwati Order itself was an extension of the Dinawari Order of Shaykh Mumshad and Mohammad Al-Dinawari, then of the Suhrawardi Order of Shaykh Abu Al-Najib Al-Suhrawardi. It took the name Khalwati from its shaykhs Akhi Muhammad, Omar, and Muhammad Mubram Al-Khalwati, and the name Al-Khalwati, according to well-known sources, comes from the frequent practice of *khalwa*. It is said that the order's first shaykh, Akhi Muhammad Al-Khalwati, declared that he derived authoritative *sanad* in the order from the Prophet (peace and prayers upon him) after seeing him in his sleep.

The website of the Khalwati Order in Egypt, meanwhile, presents a story about the importance of the order's second shaykh, Omar Al-Khalwati (d. 1397 AD): “Yes, his shaykh (Akhi Muhammad Al-Khalwati) was first to be known by this surname, but our Shaykh Omar was the one who polished its start. It is told of him that he completed the stages of the journey under his shaykh, Muhammad Al-Khalwati, and left for the mountains. He lived in the hollow of a tree and made it his hermitage, devoting himself to worship and remembrance of God for five years. He named the tree ‘Al-Doleb.’ He completed 40 *khalwas* of 40 days each, and when he was finished, the Prophet (God's peace and prayers upon him) appeared and placed on him the crown that indicates *khalwa*, known among Khalwatis as the Khalwati Crown or the Khalwati Turban. The Crown is wrapped seven times for the Seven Names of the Khalwatis: No God but Allah, Allah, He, Truth, the Living One, the Everlasting, the Almighty. ... When the Prophet (God's peace and prayers upon him) placed the Crown

on him, he ordered him to go out and guide the people. This means that Shaykh Omar Al-Khawati was the one who saw the Prophet in a dream.”<sup>359</sup>

Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad Karim Al-Din, who died in Egypt in 1578, contributed to the dissemination of the Order in the Mashreq, especially in Egypt.<sup>360</sup>

One of the most important and influential figures in the spread of the Al-Khalwati Order in the Arab Mashreq, to whom the Khalwati-Jami' *asanad* passed, was Shaykh Mustafa Al-Bakri (Al-Bakri indicating that his lineage traced to Abu Bakr) of Damascus. Born in 1009 AH/1688 AD in Damascus, he was from a wealthy, well-known family and studied Islamic legal sciences under a number of shaykhs. He then opted to become a hermit and a Sufi, and he received instruction in the Khalwati Order from Shaykh Abdul Latif Al-Halabi when he was 16 years old. When he was about 20 years old, his shaykh granted him *idhn* to take *bay'a* (the Sufi pledge of initiation and allegiance) and appointed him as his successor.<sup>361</sup>

That was followed by a series of journeys and migrations in search of legal knowledge, part of the well-known Sufi tradition of traveling the earth. He visited dozens of cities and regions, helping disseminate the order in Jerusalem, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, and

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<sup>359</sup> For more about Shaykh Omar Al-Khalwati, see the website Al-mashaykh: <https://tinyurl.com/y7zwbzvz>

<sup>360</sup> Hassan Abu Hanieh, *Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya*; op. cit. p. 128. Also Abdullah Ibn Mohammed Al-Ayyashi, *Al-Rahla Al-Ayyashiyya ila Al-Diyar Al-Hejaziyya Al-Musamma bi-Ma'Al-Mawa'id* (Table Water: Ayyashi's Journey to Hejaz), edited by Ahmad Farid Al-Mazidi; Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; First Edition, 2010, Vol. 2, p. 290: The author states that he met the elderly Shaykh Muhammad Al-Khalwati, stranded at Al-Maridini Mosque in Cairo. He asked him about his *sanad*, and the shaykh told him that he visualized the Prophet and that he was cut off from shaykhs and *sanads*. By contrast, see the account of Shaykh Akhi Muhammad Al-Khalwati on the website of the Khalwati Order in Egypt: <https://tinyurl.com/y7mmcru8>

<sup>361</sup> See Hassan Abdul Rahman Salwadi, "Al-Shaykh Mustafa Al-Bakri Al-Siddiqi Al-Dimashqi Al-Muqadisi ("Shaykh Mustafa Al-Bakri: The Life and Works of Siddiqi Shaykh Mustafa Al-Bakri of Damascus and Jerusalem"); Al-Quds Open University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences; Vol. 2, Issue 18, 2010, pp. 200-201.

Turkey, until he died in Egypt, where he lived next to Al-Azhar Mosque and was buried in Cairo in 1162 AH/1749 AD.<sup>362</sup>

The *sanad* of the Khalwati Order traces back from Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sharif to Shaykh Abu Al-Anwar Al-Tarabulsi, then to Shaykh Ahmad Al-Sawi in Egypt, to Ahmad Al-Dardir in Egypt, to Muhammad ibn Salim Al-Hafnawi in Egypt, to Shaykh Mustafa Al-Bakri. We therefore see that the Khalwati was clearly concentrated in Egypt, despite having originated in Iran. One of its foremost *qutbs* was Shaykh Mustafa Al-Bakri, but the fact that its *qutbs* lived in Egypt, and some died there, made Egypt the order's center of gravity.

Going back to Shaykh Ahmad Al-Sawi, and Abu Al-Anwar Al-Tarabulsi after him, we find that the chain of *sanad* takes a different route with Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sharif, with whom the Khalwati-Jami'a Order began in the 19th century. There remained a single *sanad* until 1928, when the order divided into two branches, Sharifi and Qasimi. The Sharifi branch kept the name Jami'a-Rahmani, while the Qasimi branch took the name Khalwati-Jami'a-Qasimi in 1989 following a discussion between the two branches.<sup>363</sup>

At present, there are institutions and *zawiyas* affiliated with both Khalwati-Jami'a branches, Jami'a-Rahmani and Jami'a-Qasimi, the latter of which has its home base in Palestine and has expanded its activities into the State of Israel. It has established an institute, schools, and dozens of *zawiyas*, and there are *zawiyas* in Jordan affiliated to the order, most notably the Al-Darawish mosque and *zawiya* in Bayader Wadi Al-Seer. The shaykh of the order, Shaykh Abdul Raouf Muhammad Husni Al-Qasimi (b. 1942), comes to Jordan regularly to visit his *murids*, but it can be said that the bulk of the order and its activities have moved to Israel and the Palestinian Territories.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> See the chain on the Khalwati-Qasimi Order official website: <https://tinyurl.com/yamgg7wp>; also the *sanad* of the order at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y79nltsb>

<sup>363</sup> Conversation with Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif at the Ashraf Zawiya in Al-Jandawil, op. cit.

<sup>364</sup> See the account of the order's shaykhs on the official website: <https://tinyurl.com/yamgg7wp>

## 2. The Dar Al-Iman *zawiya* and the order's institutions in Jordan

The *sanad* of the order traces from Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sharif, through Shaykh Kheir Al-Din Al-Sharif, to the current shaykh, Husni Hassan Al-Sharif. We therefore find unity and cohesion in this branch, the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order. The Ashraf *zawiya* has existed in Hebron and Palestine since the time of Shaykh Hussein Al-Sharif, the father of Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Sharif. The order then expanded there, and *zawiyas* multiplied. In the West Bank, there are still members of the Al-Sharif family among the order's followers linked to the order and the Amman *zawiya*.

If Shaykh Hassan Al-Sharif established the Khalwati Order in Jordan in the 1950s, Shaykh Husni was the one who built the institutional structure and developed and expanded the order, starting when he became the lead shaykh in 1988. He initiated construction of the current *zawiya* in 1990, and it was completed in 1993, then opened with a ceremony attended by religious officials. The *zawiya* and its associated functions were registered with the Supreme Judge Department as an endowment for the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order. Shaykh Abdul Rahman's remains were later moved there, and a shrine for him was placed next to the *zawiya*.<sup>365</sup>

Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif's primary interest was the creation of educational, *da'wa*, and charitable institutions, i.e. the institutionalization of the order in Jordan. He admits that he was preoccupied with this and considered it his primary mission. In two decades, he was able to establish the mosque and *zawiya* and a charitable society, all of which he gave the name Dar Al-Iman (House of Faith). The complex is located in Al-Jandawil. He also founded the Al-Durra Al-Sharif schools, a Qur'an teaching center, an orphanage, a languages center, a religious youth center, and a scientific research committee.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> About the *zawiya* and its associated facilities, see: <https://tinyurl.com/ycs588pa>

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., as the website offers important details on the nature, mission, and philosophy of each institution.

An assortment of diverse institutions thus emerged from the womb of the Ashraf *zawiya* in Al-Jandawil, and Shaykh Al-Sharif has in fact expanded outside Jordan to Africa. There is an effort to build a university in Ghana, following the torpedoing of permission to build it in Jordan.

It is quite clear that the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order focuses on community work or so-called "social reform" in an institutional and networked context that begins with schools at various levels up to colleges and universities. There is also a focus on the Arabic language, attracting foreign students residing in Jordan, and charitable and *da'wa* work.

The *zawiya* has real, central value in this reform. Al-Sharif emphasizes that it is important for the adherents of the order and the *zawiya* to interact with and be involved in society, and for the *zawiya* not to be isolated and absent as an influence. He believes that an educated shaykh and a *zawiya* are essential to the process of reform in spite of the stereotype that seeks to distort the image of orders, *zawiyas*, and shaykhs.<sup>367</sup>

In addition to the order's interest in education up to the university level, charity work, the *zawiya's* role in *da'wa*, and *tazkiya* (purification of the self) for adherents of the order, Shaykh Al-Sharif links Sufism to the Islamic legal sciences and focuses on the importance of a scientific foundation. This is reflected in the dozens of adherents of the order who are preachers, imams, or jurists, or who work in mosques, fatwa-issuing institutions, and so on. Shaykh Al-Sharif insists on the necessity of coupling legal science and Sufism so that *ulama'* (scholars) and shaykhs are not teaching religious doctrine and jurisprudence without Sufi and moral content, because balance between the two is essential.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Interview with Shaykh Al-Sharif, op. cit.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Pillars of the order and Shaykh Al-Sharif's approach

The order is based on seven main pillars,<sup>369</sup> starting with love, the first pillar, as "Our shaykhs selected love as the first pillar of the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order because no station is attained except as a product of love. This includes the stations of longing (*shawq*), satisfaction (*rida*), and submission (*taslim*). And any station prior to love is nothing but a precursor to love, such as the stations of faith (*iman*), repentance (*tawba*), enduring troubles (*tahammul*), and asceticism (*zuhd*). We mean divine love, from the fruit of which emerges love of Muhammad and of the prophets, saints, and beloveds of God. He who attains the station of love attains true iman, as the Almighty says: {Among the people are those who take others as equals to God and love them as God should be loved. But those who have faith are stronger in their love for God}(Qur'an 2:165). The most profound definition of love is the one given by Imam Al-Junayd. When asked about the signs of love, his answer was "a deluge of tears from the eyes, and a heart throbbing with passion and longing."

In the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order, there are ascending levels of divine love. They start with connection, then will, desire, attachment, goodwill, adoration, passion, enthrallment, devoutness, and intimacy "(the last of which is enjoyed only by Ibrahim and Muhammad (peace be upon them), the two intimate friends of God)." <sup>370</sup>

After love comes compliance "of the human temperament out of obedience on the part of the one who loves. How so, if the one who is loved is God, and how so, if the one who is loved is God's beloved, our master Muhammad (God's peace and prayers upon him)?! What we mean by compliance in the legal sense is following the commands of God, His Messenger, and those in authority."<sup>371</sup> The third pillar is *dhikr*: "The word '*dhikr*' is most often used to mean remembrance of God, when in fact the purpose is to increase the remembrance of God through *tasbih* (saying *subhanallah*, "Glorified is God"), *tahlil* (saying

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<sup>369</sup> This can be found detailed on the website of the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order: <https://tinyurl.com/y9q2hvnk>

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

*la ilaha illa Allah*, “There is no god but God”), *takbir* (saying *Allahu akbar*, “God is greater”), and other formulations.”<sup>372</sup> Next is the pillar of thought. “Many have failed to consider how to do it, how it can possibly be worship, and what links our Khalwati Order to this form of worship and makes it one of the pillars of the path, until they eventually come to understand it, as it is the pillar after *dhikr*.”<sup>373</sup>

The fifth of the order’s pillars is silence. It is known that hunger, wakefulness, silence, and seclusion are four pillars present in Sufi orders generally. “Silence is a type of struggle against the self, a fight to pacify it and transform its detestable ills into praiseworthy qualities. Silence means abstinence from speech, and the opposite of silence is one of the evils of the tongue, which, if given free rein, will go on and on with prattle and blabber without end. The evils of the tongue are many, and this is not the place to list them, but safety from the tongue’s tendency and peril is available only through this pillar (silence), which requires determination and taxes patience.”<sup>374</sup>

The sixth pillar is *khalwa*, “a type of seclusion intended to scrub away anything that has attached itself to the heart during normal life, including temptations and disobedience. The traveler is advised to seclude himself from time to time in order to devote the heart to remembrance of God and meditation on all He created. This is indispensable for a shaykh treating the ills of the *nafs* (the self or lower soul) in the manner of a doctor treating the maladies of the body. The duration of *khalwa* is determined by the treating shaykh, just as a doctor determines the quantity and duration of a prescription. This should not be understood as monasticism as practiced in Christianity or as withdrawal from the world and leaving family and children without a provider. That is mutual reliance, which is incompatible with trust in and reliance on God (*tawakkul*), and the True Law wages war against it. It is therefore a distancing from the world and all its trappings for a period of time, during which the body and intellect

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

are relieved of worldly concerns and the heart receives a dose of faith that pushes it into *'Illyun* (the highest heavens)."<sup>375</sup>

Finally, the seventh pillar is hunger. "The human *nafs* naturally inclines toward the appetites. It incites toward evil by default, and so *mujahada* (struggle against the *nafs*) and spiritual exercise are the path to *tazkiya* for this *nafs* to make it capable of gratitude. The contemptible qualities in the *nafs*, including gluttony, must be rectified and transformed into praiseworthy qualities. Through *mujahada* and *tazkiya*, stinginess transforms into generosity, hatred into love, arrogance into humility, anger into kindness, discontent into satisfaction, and likewise with the other conditions of the *nafs*. This can be achieved only through *mujahada* and *tazkiya*."<sup>376</sup>

It is not difficult to notice that in the definition and explanation of each pillar, the shaykhs of the order favor juristic, legal language that is moderate and somewhat distant from well-known Sufi language or the other connotations of those pillars. With regard to hunger, for example, there is talk of voluntary fasting and moderation of food intake, whereas we find that many Sufis well-known in Islamic history were strict in their practice of hunger and avoidance of rich foods. Additionally, in many Sufi orders hunger is at the forefront of the four pillars of hunger, silence, wakefulness, and seclusion, but in this order it ranks last. We also do not find wakefulness (*sahar*) listed; perhaps it was replaced by *dhikr*, thought, and compliance.

#### 4. *Zawiya, shaykh, and murids*

It has been two decades since Shaykh Al-Sharif turned away from standing *dhikr*. There are daily *dhikr* sessions at the *zawiya* in the morning and evening in which those adherents of the order who are able participate with Shaykh Al-Sharif, while those who are not able to go carry out the practice on their own. Khalwa exists in the order under certain conditions and circumstances, but the shaykh does not view it as a requirement for all *murids*. Rather, he sees seclusion and nighttime vigils spent in prayer to be tantamount to *khal-*

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

*wa* for most people, and he urges the order's adherents to be active in society and not isolate or seclude themselves otherwise.<sup>377</sup>

Al-Sharif takes his time in exchanging *bay'a* and pledges with *murids*, waiting until he is certain of their spiritual condition, and he does not accept everyone. He also does not license individuals in Jordan to lead others on the path in the order, as other shaykhs do – only individuals outside Jordan, as with his *murids* in Kuwait and Palestine.

He is a believer in the *qutb ghawth* and the *abdal*, the top rank of saints led by the *qutb*. With regard to *wahdat Al-wujud*, he argues for *wahdat Al-shuhud* (Unity of Witness), i.e. seeing everything in the universe through the act of God. In his doctrine, Al-Khidr exists. Even so, Shaykh Al-Sharif admits that he does not encourage adherents of the order to talk about these things, or even their spiritual states and *karamat* (minor miracles) or illuminations that happen to them in the *zawiya*. He considers that to be between a servant and his Lord. In addition, the order's adherents are not concerned with visions to the same extent as in other orders and *zawiyas*. This is linked to Shaykh Al-Sharif's shari'a-bound Sufism.<sup>378</sup>

Al-Sharif indicates that in the decades since he became shaykh of the order, he has been dedicated to the fundamental task to which he swore himself, namely building, organizing, and developing institutions to nurture the order's work and serve spiritual, social, and *da'wa* functions. Now, however, he feels the need to attend to the Sufi scene in Jordan, work on "reforming the Sufi house" from within, and coordinate more with the shaykhs of the Sufi orders and the scientific current that has become prominent in recent years.<sup>379</sup>

Although Al-Sharif shies away from political action or political debate in general, we see that he is clearly interested in public affairs, whether that relates to social reform or even national and Islamic issues, such as the issue of Palestine and the situation of Muslims. At

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<sup>377</sup> Interview with Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif. Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

the same time, he does not conceal his concern for and constant emphasis on the importance of Sufi orders remaining independent of the authorities, political parties, and the opposition. In his view, the shaykh of the Order should be wholly engaged in his work, operating independently with his own resources, without subsidy from the authorities so as not to fall prisoner to political, partisan, or factional interests and whims.<sup>380</sup>

Shaykh Al-Sharif does not hide the fact that he has been influenced by the school of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali with regard to *tazkiya*, conduct, and self-analysis. He aspires in the future to found a university to teach Islamic legal sciences by combining the sciences of *shari'a* ("law," i.e. jurisprudence, creeds, etc.) and *haqiqa* ("truth," i.e. Sufism, *tazkiya*, and conduct).<sup>381</sup>

A large group of *murids* swirl around the Dar Al-Iman *zawiya*. While the shaykh has thousands of admirers, there are hundreds close to him, with whom he maintains consistent ties, and dozens in Jordan who are involved in *da'wa*, education, preaching, and guidance.

Al-Sharif's sons work with him in the order's institutions and help him manage the order's affairs. They absorbed the order from their father, but they are also keenly interested in financial independence. The shaykh's son Muhammad is a doctoral candidate in philosophy with an interest in values, patterns of religiosity, and social and educational Sufism. He plays a major role in helping his father while continuing his own work, on which he relies for his income, and he is also occupied with study and learning.

Muhammad, who has been influenced by his father and his approach to religiosity and Sufism since he was young, says that the driver for him to study philosophy and patterns of religiosity was the 2011 Arab Spring. He adds: "The 1967 Naksa signaled the collapse of the national project, while the 2011 protests were the end of the Islamist political project. That prompted me to study philosophy, espe-

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<sup>380</sup> Interview with Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif, op. cit.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

cially when I saw the image of Egyptian Shi'ites dragged through the streets by masses of demonstrators in Egypt. One of the perpetrators said it was because they were Shi'ites, and the reporter asked him, 'Do you know what Shi'ite means?' He answered, 'That they are infidels.' That gave me the idea to study philosophy to learn about and analyze groupthink and how it is manifested. Then that prompted me to study patterns of religiosity in my sociology master's thesis at the University of Jordan. I then opted to study philosophy at the doctoral level in this field, also at the University of Jordan."<sup>382</sup>

I met with Muhammad at the Al-Durra Al-Sharif schools affiliated with the order, which are located in the Umm Al-Sous area. The schools have separate branches for males and females of various ages. It is clear that many of the school's workers and teachers are influenced by the order and by Shaykh Al-Sharif. Like other private schools, the school is bound by the curricula adopted by the Ministry of Education, and it does not seem so different from other schools. The school director and other supervisors also confirm that it is an educational school with a greater emphasis on morals and an investment in various voluntary activities focused on the students' religious, educational, and behavioral growth. The school is also associated with the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order's institutions.<sup>383</sup>

Based on his study of philosophy and patterns of religiosity, Muhammad explains that Sufism is attention to purification of the self and to the concept of freedom in a broader sense, i.e. the liberation of the human soul. He explains: "Human beings have feelings of inadequacy, and in the course of status-seeking, they continue to strive toward the absolute. The search for perfection is an act of pure free will, and a spiritual guide is someone who helps in disciplining and upgrading the *nafs* and supports the person to reach that stage. The relationship with the guide is therefore voluntary, not compul-

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<sup>382</sup> Interview with Muhammad Al-Sharif at the Al-Durra Al-Sharif school in the Umm Al-Sous area of Bayader Wadi Al-Seer, Amman, 20/2/2020.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

sory or mandatory, like with a coach or a teacher in one of the arts.”<sup>384</sup>

Muhammad acknowledges that Sufi orders usually tend to stay out of politics on the basis of the rule “Do not dispute about rule with those in power,” meaning do not engage in disputes over power or authority with existing governments. But he does not agree with that as an absolute rule: “I personally have my opinion about politics. I don’t buy the story that Sufism is sullied by politics, because politics involves good and bad, and not all political doctrines are based on lying or the art of the possible regardless of ethical standards. A politician can be a good, honest person, and this should be presented as an alternative to the other models.”<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.



## **TOPIC 4**

### **The Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order: Attracting Youth**

The Naqshbandi Order in Jordan has two main branches. The first is the Naqshbandi-Kilani, which traces to Shaykh Abdul Halim Al-Kilani, who was instructed in the Naqshbandi Order by a Syrian shaykh, Shaykh Ismail Al-Husari. He authorized his four sons in the Nashbandi Order, but they have no *zawiya* today. The second is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani, associated with Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi. The worldwide shaykh of the Naqshbandi Order, the late Muhammad Nazim Haqqani, ordered him to go to Jordan and spread the order there, which he did in the late 1990s. He founded the Abu Sham *za-wiya* at Abu Sham Mosque in Jabal Amman, near the 1st Circle.

#### **1. Origins and most prominent shaykhs of the Naqshbandi Order**

Baha' Al-Din Naqshband, who lived in the 8th century AH and was originally from Bukhara, Uzbekistan, is the eponymous shaykh of the Naqshbandi Order. He was born in 717 AH/1317 AD in the village of Qasr-i-Hinduvan, later renamed Qasr-i Arifan, near Bukhara in Uzbekistan.

His grandfather was a *murid* (student) of the well-known Sufi Mohammad Baba Al-Sammasi, shaykh of the so-called Khwajagan Order. His grandfather, who wanted a Sufi upbringing for him, presented him to Shaykh Al-Sammasi when he was still a child, and the shaykh administered the pledge to him and predicted that he would have a future as a great Sufi, according to the general Naqshbandi narrative. Then, when Al-Sammasi died, his education was entrusted to Al-Sammasi's successor, Shaykh Amir Kulal in Samarkand. Naqshband was 38 years old at the time, and he dove deeper into his quest for knowledge of Islamic law and the esoteric sciences of truth. His shaykh eventually admitted that the student's zeal had surpassed the zeal and knowledge of the master, and so he asked him to seek out

another shaykh to take in his full path and conduct. Naqshband went to Shaykh Arif Al-Durk Krani, then a Turkish shaykh, Halil Atta, and went on Hajj twice.

Naqshband later settled in his homeland, returning to his town and founding his Sufi order there. He came to have a large number of *murids* and followers before he passed away in 791 AH/1389 AD at about 74 years old. He was buried in Bukhara, and his tomb remains renowned to this day.

Although Naqshband studied under Shaykh Al-Sammasi and his successor, Amir Kulal, in their unbroken *sanad* (chain of authority), but according to his followers, he was “Uwaisi.” This means that like the well-known Yemeni shaykh Uwais Al-Qarani, he did not trace his authority to a particular teacher. Instead, Naqshband sought inspiration from the soul of a previous shaykh famous as the leader of an order, namely Abdul Khaliq Ghijduvani (d. 575 AH/1179 AD), who laid the first foundations of the Khwajagan current.<sup>386</sup>

Although the Naqshbandi Order has been widespread in Central Asia, its global expansion and arrival in Turkey and a majority of the world’s countries unfolded in stages through followers of the order. They carried it, renewed its dissemination, and created new basis for it. Here we must mention four key figures:

**I.** Khwaja Ubaidullah Ahrar (806-895 AH/1405-1490 AD), who spread the order in Central Asia in the second half of the 15th century. He organized the order’s affairs and turned the “Khwajaganis” – the followers of the Naqshbandi Order– into more of an organization

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<sup>386</sup> See the account of Baha’ Al-Din Naqshband’s life in *Majmu’at Awrad wa-Ahzab Al-Tariqa Al-Naqshbandiyya lil-‘Arif Muhammad ibn Muhammad Baha’ Al-Din Al-Ma’ruf bi-Shah Naqshband* (Collected Liturgies and Litanies of the Naqshbandi Order of Al-‘Arif Muhammad ibn Muhammad Baha’ Al-Din, Known as Shah Naqshband), compiled by Khawaja Ahmad Diya’ Al-Din Kamshkhanawi, checked and supervised by Dr. Assem Ibrahim Al-Kayyali, pp. 8-14. See also Juergen Paul, *Al-Khwajagan Al-Naqshbandiyya Al-Jil Al-Awwal ba’d Baha’ Al-Din Al-Fikr wa-l-Tanzim* (Doctrine and Organization: The Khwajagan Naqshbandiya in the First Generation After Bahauddin), translated by Naser Dumairieh; Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; 2020, pp. 3-8.

with a hierarchical structure that distinguished it from other groups. He acquired considerable political and economic power.<sup>387</sup>

**II.** Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi Dehlawi (971-1034 AH/1564-1624 AD), one of the most prominent renewers of the first millennium in the estimation of many historians and Islamic scholars (*'ulama'*). Because of him, the Naqshbandi Order spread into the Indian subcontinent and many other countries of the world, and it reached the Arab world through his successors and those he influenced.<sup>388</sup>

**III.** Khalid Al-Naqshbandi, also called Al-Uthmani after his supposed ancestor Uthman ibn Affan, was an important figure in the Arab world, especially in the Levant and Iraq, and the Islamic world, specifically Turkey and among the Kurdish people. He was a Kurd born near Sulaymaniyah in 1193 AH/1778AD, and he studied Islamic legal sciences there. He reached an advanced level of knowledge at an early age, and when no older than 20 he enrolled at the school of his shaykh, AbdAl-Karim Al-Barzinji, for seven years. He then moved between Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah, performed the Hajj, and visited India to study the Naqshbandi Order there with followers of Shaykh Dehlawi. He returned to Sulaymaniyah as a Naqshbandi Sufi and began to disseminate the order in Iraq. He became renowned, and his followers and *murids* multiplied, and an elite cohort of *'ulama'* and judges found conviction in him. He sent successors to spread the order in many regions of the world, most notably Turkey, which was fairly overrun by the Naqshbandi-Khalidis, and Syria, where Shaykh Khalid himself later moved. He remained there until his death of plague in 1242 AH/1826 AD, when he was not yet 50 years old.

Despite this young age, he made a enormous, extremely important impact not only on the order's propagation or the religious situation in Turkey, Iraq, and Arab countries, especially Syria, but also po-

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<sup>387</sup> Juergen Paul, *Al-Khwajagan Al-Naqshbandiyya*; op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>388</sup> On Shaykh Ahmad Dehlawi, see Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi, *Tarikh Al-Haraka Al-Mujadadiyya, Dirasa Tariqiyya Tahliliyya li-Hayat Al-Imam Al-Mujaddid Ahmad Al-Sirhindi* (History of the Revivalist Movement: An Analytical Historical Study of the Life of Imam Ahmad Sirhindi); Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; First Edition, 2009, pp. 80-100.

litically. The Naqshbandi-Khalidi Order served as an intellectual and religious vessel from which Turkish “political Islam” later emerged, out of the Iskander Pasha *zawiya* founded by one of Khalid Al-Naqshbandi’s successors in Turkey. That country has since been influenced by major Islamist figures such as Necmettin Erbakan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and others.<sup>389</sup>

In Iraq and the Levant, many elite *‘ulama’* and jurists have been influenced by Shaykh Khalid’s *da’wa*, especially Kurds, and some believe that the order provides Kurdish nationalism its religious identity. We also see that the order’s Syrian arm exists among Kurdish *‘ulama’* and shaykhs who have reached top official religious positions, such as former Grand Mufti Ahmed Kuftaro, the imam of the Abu Al-Nur mosque and its affiliated institute; and Shaykh Mohammed Said Ramadan Al-Bouti, one of the world’s pre-eminent Sufi *ulama’* and intellectuals. The Naqshbandi-Khalidi Order is still strong and active in Syria thanks to Shaykh Kuftaro’s successors and *murids*, who have established new institutions for themselves in Turkey.

Perhaps what distinguishes the Naqshbandi-Khalidi Order, and the Sirhindi branch before it, is that it has exited the *zawiya* to work within the community, and it encourages disseminating teachings and dispatching successors to various regions. The Naqshbandis have played clear and remarkable roles in resistance to foreign occupation and in military struggle, as has been the case with the Chechan leader Imam Shamil, the Naqshbandi Army in Iraq, and several other examples.

The Naqshbandi-Khalidi Order, like other Islamic ideologies, is also known for encouraging interest in Islamic values and rejecting deviations. The difference between it and other orders, however, is that the Naqshbandis have come out of the *zawiyas* in many places and engaged with society, giving rise to movements that have played community roles. That may be attributable to the fact that one of its most important principles is not to isolate or recede into the *zawiya*,

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<sup>389</sup> Hudson Institute, “Al-Tariqa Al-Naqshbandiyya Al-Khalidiyya wa-l-Islam Al-Siyasi fi Turkiya” (“The Naqshbandi-Khalidi Order and Political Islam in Turkey”); IDRAK Centre for Studies & Consultations, 13/8/2016: <https://tinyurl.com/y74n3>

and instead to engage with society in accordance with their primary rule of “*Khalwain jalwa*,” i.e. living out seclusion while remaining present in the world.

IV. Shaykh Muhammad Nazim Haqqani, born in 1926, of Turkish Cypriot origin, and the namesake of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order. He was influenced by the Naqshbandis while studying engineering at university in Turkey, as he simultaneously studied the Islamic sciences of shari‘a and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) under the masters of Sufi orders. He received instruction in the Naqshbandi Order from Shaykh Suleyman Erzurumi, but the shaykh who granted him admittance to the order, administered to him the pledge, and named him a successor was Abdullah Al-Daghestani, whom he met in Damascus in 1945. His shaykh then asked him to return to Cyprus and spread the order there. His followers say that he was imprisoned and detained several times for insisting on making the call to prayer in Arabic in the Turkish Cypriot mosques during the Atatürk era, when this was known to be prohibited.

He returned to Damascus in 1952 and married a daughter of a senior Sufi shaykh there. Al-Daghestani ordered him into *khalwa* in Amman in 1955.<sup>390</sup> Haqqani was reluctant to go on in Cyprus, and he

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<sup>390</sup> About his *khalwa* in the Sweileh area of Amman and his subsequent *khalwas*, Shaykh Nazim Haqqani’s website says: “With regard to Shaykh Nazim Haqqani, Shaykh Abdullah Al-Daghestani ordered him to enter *khalwa* for the first time in 1955 in Sweileh, Jordan, for six months. Thousands of people converged around Shaykh Haqqani as his *murids*, coming from Sweileh, ar-Ramtha, or Amman itself. After that, Shaykh Al-Daghestani asked to meet Shaykh Nazim to tell him: I received an order from the Prophet (God’s peace and prayers upon him) that you must enter *khalwa* at the Shaykh’Abd Al-Qadir Al-Jilani Mosque in Baghdad, so go there and isolate for six months.

About this isolation, Shaykh Nazim Haqqani says: “I did not leave my room except for the five prayers. Otherwise, I spent all my time in the room, and I became able to complete the Quran in nine hours. In addition, I said “There is no god but God” 124,000 times, prayed on the Prophet (God’s peace and prayers upon him) 124,000 times, read the entirety of the book *Dala’il Al-Khayrat*, and repeated “Allah, Allah” with regularity, 313,000 times. All this in addition to the prayers dictated for me. ... Vision after vision began to appear to me each day, and they typically transported me into a state of annihilation in the Divine Presence. Shaykh Haqqani was ordered into *khalwa* and isolation several times, with the =

moved among other countries of the world until his shaykh, Abdullah Al-Daghestani, died in 1973. He became Al-Daghestani's successor and transformed this legacy from a small *zawiya* in a Damascus suburb to one of the world's major orders and *zawiyas* in terms of followers and *murids*.<sup>391</sup>

Haqqani's global travels resulted in the order spreading widely, especially in Europe, which he visited in 1974. Europe witnessed the proliferation of dozens of *zawiyas* affiliated with the Naqshbandi-Haqqanis due to the influence of Shaykh Haqqani. That influence then reached North America, which the shaykh visited also in 1991 and 1993, and a large center for the order was established there. The International Sufism Centre was established in North London with Haqqani's influence and a donation from the Sultan of Brunei.<sup>392</sup>

Shaykh Haqqani's *zawiya*, which he opened in a small town in Turkish Cyprus called Lefke, is today one of the most prominent and important centers of Sufism in the world, frequented by thousands of *murids* and followers from dozens of countries. It has affiliated religious leaders around the world and at institutions linked to the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, and it has become a destination for Arab, Islamic, and international leaders and officials.<sup>393</sup>

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= duration ranging from 40 days to a year. He went into isolation in Medina several times. Shaykh Nazim holds the highest rank in the order because he is the shaykh of the Naqshbandi Order and the heir of Shaykh Abdullah Al-Daghestani." See <https://tinyurl.com/yb2vh6zb>

<sup>391</sup> One adherent of the Naqshbandi Order, Shaykh Abu Al-Yusr, states that Al-Daghestani's *zawiya* was attended by only a limited number of people.

<sup>392</sup> Simon Stjernholm, "What is the Naqshbandi-Haqqani tariqa? Notes on Developments and a Critique of Typologies," Ron Greaves and Theodore Gabriel, editors, *Sufism in Britain*; Bloomsbury, London; pp. 197-213.

On Shaykh Haqqani's life, see also his biography on his website, Shams Al-Shamus: <https://tinyurl.com/yb2vh6zb>

<sup>393</sup> Lecture by Shaykh Muhammad Adel Naqshbandi, Nazim Haqqani's son and successor: "The Naqshbandi-Ali Order: Its Origins, History, Branches, and Roles," Perspectives on 100 Years of the Aal Al-Basir Desert Zawiya in Bni Ayat, Azilal, conference held in Morocco on 25-26 May, 2016. The lecture can be read on the order's Shams Al-Shamus website: <https://tinyurl.com/ycanqokd>

Shaykh Haqqani died in 2014. His son Muhammad Adel Haqqani, born in 1957, is his successor in the order. He studied and learned under Shaykh Abdullah Al-Daghestani, his father's shaykh in Damascus, and received license (*ijaza*) in Islamic legal sciences from a number of shaykhs there.<sup>394</sup>

## 2. Foundations of the Naqshbandi Order and secrets of its spread

The Naqshbandi Order is one of the fastest spreading in the world today and one of the most prevalent, especially in the West, and has supporters and followers in various countries of the world. The phases of dissemination we spoke about earlier occurred at the hands of a number of renewers, such as: Khwaja Ahrar in Central Asia, Ahmad Sirhindi in India and East Asia, Khalid Al-Uthmani Al-Baghdadi in Turkey and the Arab world, and Shaykh Nazim Haqqani in the West. The “renewers” have played an important and notable role in these moves, helped by the fact that they were from the countries and societies in which the order spread. They combined the global and the local at the same time.

Reflecting on the principles and foundations of the Naqshbandi Order, and the pillars on which it rests, may bring us to the most important secrets of its rapid spread. While the order shares essential Sufi principles and concepts with other orders, it is distinct in its emphasis on remembrance of God (*dhikr*) within the heart – i.e. silently – as the primary, direct, and most effective method of connecting the *murid's* heart to God. This principle, with which the Naqshbandi Order begins, is one that the other Sufi orders reach after a long phase of exercises for the soul and heart, as other Sufis consider it a later, very advanced stage on the path. Naqshbandis therefore say, “We begin where others finish.”

It is also known that silent *dhikr* is the rule in the Naqshbandi Order because it is more conducive to generating a profound impact, which is where the Naqshbandi idea of “deep inscription” originated.

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<sup>394</sup> On his biography, see the website Shams Al-Shamus:  
<https://tinyurl.com/y9nlt68w>

The initial founder of the order, Abdul Khaliq Ghijduvani, was the one who introduced silent *dhikr*, and oral or “public” *dhikr* was retained until Baha’ Al-Din Naqshband decided that “secret” *dhikr* was sufficient. There was then intense disagreement among the generation after Naqshband as to whether secret *dhikr* was sufficient or must be combined with public *dhikr*. It became settled opinion that silent *dhikr* was for the specially initiated and public *dhikr* for the masses, but the secret to reaching God was secret, silent *dhikr*.

Silent *dhikr* is inseparable from the other foundations of the order, which are based on constant meditation on God (*muraqaba*), even linking it to breathing so that no breath enters or exits the body unless coupled with the remembrance of God. The goal, of course, is that the heart and intellect are always connected to God, so that this becomes familiar for a person and the chief pillar of his daily life, and remembrance of God suffuses the person’s spiritual being.

There are two types of *dhikr* for Naqshbandis. The first is *nafi wa ithbat*, meaning “negation and affirmation” and involving intonation of the formula “There is no god but God.” The second is repetition of *Ism Al-Jalala*, the Majestic Name of God, i.e. Allah. Both necessarily involve special techniques and a certain number of repetitions in a particular manner. *Dhikr* sessions usually conclude with a *du’a* (supplication) or Khatm Al-Khwajagan, a special form of prayer on the Prophet, and include offering the *dhikr* to the chain of Naqshbandi shaykhs as a “gift.”<sup>395</sup>

The direct focus on relationship with God and silent *dhikr* have made the Naqshbandi Order accessible for many people, making joining and adopting the order simpler in comparison to the other stages through which the various Sufi orders pass. The *murid* finds it easier to join and get involved in the order and *dhikr* sessions without complications, difficulties, or hindrances.

The second reason is that the Naqshbandi Order also rests on the fundamental concept of “*Khalwa injalwa*.” It is inherently an

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<sup>395</sup> See Naser Dumairieh’s translation of Juergen Paul’s book *Al-Khwajagan Al-Naqshbandiyya*; op. cit., pp. 11-13.

open order that engages with social, religious, and even political realities. We find that its shaykhs play a major role in resisting foreign occupation and influencing the culture, whether we are talking about the shaykhs of jihad in Central Asia, such as Imam Shamil, or about Ahmad Sirhindi and Khalid Al-Baghdadi, who played major roles in social and religious action.

The Naqshbandis cite the importance of “fellowship” (*suhba*), “gathering” (*jam’iya*), and “community.” Shah Naqshband’s famous saying, which his followers constantly repeat, making it something of a slogan for the order, is “Our way is fellowship, and the goodness is in the gathering” (i.e., in community). While emphasizing the importance of *khalwa*, *muraqaba*, and *dhikr*, they simultaneously persist in rejecting isolation and scorning of community activity. This gives the order vitality and an ability to adapt and acclimate to the demands of the contemporary world, combining the exoteric dimension of engagement with society and the esoteric dimension of attachment to God, or in other words, material and spiritual aspects. This has enabled many Muslims in the West and the contemporary world to be involved in their societies while maintaining their identity.

The concept of *rabita*, the straightforward meaning of which is the spiritual relationship or “bond” between the *murid* and the shaykh, came later. The Naqshbandis elicit this bond in their *hadras* (ritual gatherings), when the *murid* envisions his shaykh’s face while in a *dhikr* session in order to derive spiritual assistance from him and link his heart to his shaykh’s heart. This concept has generated wide-ranging controversy even within Sufi circles, leading to many charges against the Naqshbandis, to the extent that some accuse them of sanctifying shaykhs in contravention of monotheistic belief in God. On the other side, we find many arguments by Naqshbandis rebutting such charges, but one of the most remarkable responses is the answer from 19th-century Naqshbandi renewer Shaykh Khalid Al-Baghdadi in a slim booklet he devoted to emphasizing that *rabita* is legitimate and consistent with shari’a.<sup>396</sup> After reviewing the prin-

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<sup>396</sup> See Khalid Al-Baghdadi, *Risala fi Tahqiq Al-Rabita* (Epistle on Achieving *Rabita*). The text can be referenced via the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/yaa8eoyt>

ciples, evidence, and statements confirming the legitimacy of *rabita*, Al-Baghdadi offers examples from the Qur'an, including a verse from Surah Yusuf: {had he not seen a sign from his Lord}. Al-Baghdadi says: "Yusuf (peace be upon him) heard a voice say 'Beware of her,' and he did not heed it. He heard it a second time, and he did not comply. He heard it a third time, and he turned away from her. Thus, it had no effect on him until Ya'qub (peace be upon him) appeared before him, biting his fingers, and it is said that he beat his chest."<sup>397</sup> This indicates that images of prophets and saints always help in remembrance of God and attachment to Him. In the remaining pages of the book, the writer continues to emphasize the importance and necessity of *rabita* to the order.

*Rabita* helped greatly in the order's spread by creating deep spiritual bonds between shaykhs and *murids*. Among adherents of the order, the shaykh is known to have a permanent spiritual link to his *murids* wherever they are and to monitor their situations and affairs. The spiritual bond between the shaykh and the *murid* is not the only one. Such bonds form a series of connections between *murids*, creating a true "global network" that links adherents of the order with one another around the world.

Another factor in the order's spread is the broad adoption of the principle of successors. We find that the granting of *idhn* (authorization to teach the order) and *taslik* (authorization to lead others as travelers on the path) is less complicated than in other orders. Shaykh Khalid Al-Baghdadi, for example, sent dozens of successors to Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and other regions, thereby facilitating the order's dissemination and access to new social arenas.

The transition to a global order essentially became a reality under Shaykh Al-Haqqani, helped by globalization and evolving means of communication. There are now dozens of Naqshbandi-affiliated *zawiyas*, branches, and institutions in the West.

Shakir Al-Kilani makes the important observation that Shaykh Haqqani was able to bring about a Sufi revolution in the West. The

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

Naqshbandi proliferated in an astonishing way during a short period of time, and Haqqani, with his rhetoric, managed to attract large numbers of people to Islam. Al-Kilani's interpretation is that "Shaykh Haqqani was proficient in the jurisprudence of *da'wa*, skilled in speaking, and able to convince the Western mind in the time of spiritual thirst and a search for truth, as many Westerners were choosing to seek out the truth in Yogic meditation and schools of Buddhism. The shaykh's creativity was apparent in his presentation of Islam as the religion of love, mercy, and brotherhood, and in the linking of religious rituals to their true significance. You find his successors talking about ablution as a means of mystical and material enlightenment, and the power of water as an element is linked to the process of enlightenment, which has led to many people entering Islam, and to his disciples spreading rapidly through most of Europe and America."<sup>398</sup>

One observation that must be referenced with the Naqshbandi Order is its strong attachment to the figure of Al-Mahdi, the "Rightly Guided One" who will appear before the Day of Judgment. Shaykh Nazim Haqqani himself, and some of his disciples such as Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi (the shaykh of the order in Jordan and the Levant) have emphasized a particular time when Al-Mahdi will appear, but it has not happened. One adherent of the order tells me that a well-known shaykh from a well-known Naqshbandi Syrian family went to Medina 10 years ago to wait for Al-Mahdi to emerge there.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Discussion with Shakir Al-Kilani, 12/6/2020.

<sup>399</sup> Shaykh Haqqani predicted that Al-Mahdi would emerge in 1999. He believed that Al-Mahdi had accepted *bay'a* (a pledge of allegiance and initiation) from his shaykh, Abdullah Al-Daghestani, and that he and Al-Daghestani would be Al-Mahdi's ministers for the Levant. He said: "When God gives the command, our-master Al-Mahdi (AS) will say the first takbir [Allahu Akbar]. He will be in Damascus and will accept *bay'a* from the people in accordance with shari'a, because he will be Sultan and Khalifa [i.e. a ruler wielding both secular and religious authority]. Al-Mahdi's (AS) *bay'a* is different from ours because he accepted the *bay'a* of Shaykh Abdullah (QAS). When our master Al-Mahdi (AS) says the first takbir, it will be heard at the distance of a 40-day journey. He will be in Damascus with all his successors and ministers, and people will rush there to take *bay'a* with him. With the second takbir, the technology problem will be ended. The third takbir will be a symbol to attack Satan and anyone who represents him. Every Muslim will attack them, and thus the world will be cleansed and then will rest and be =

It is clear that although the idea of Al-Mahdi has a major presence in Sufi discourse generally, it took on deeper dimensions with Shaykh Haqqani. He cited the views of Shaykh Suleyman Erzurumi, his shaykh in Istanbul from before he committed to Shaykh Abdullah Al-Daghestani, that Al-Mahdi will appear after a major global war, which his shaykh predicted in 1940, and cause military weapons, aircraft, and equipment to cease functioning.<sup>400</sup>

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= at peace. The year 1999 is an extraordinary one, full of extraordinary signs." See the website Shams Al-Shamus: <https://tinyurl.com/yd7fetnr>; and Shaykh Haqqani's remarks about Al-Mahdi appearing in 1999: <https://tinyurl.com/ybhjudhl>

<sup>400</sup> Shaykh Haqqani believed that Al-Mahdi would appear at the same time as the Messiah (AS), based on a set of prophetic traditions. He believed that King Mohammed VI would be one of his ministers and the commander of his armies, and that King Abdullah II would be one of his most prominent ministers, with the keys to 10 mini-states and the Arabian Peninsula. He added: "The role of King Abdullah I has passed, and now has come the role of Sultan Abdullah II. We hope that God will establish him, strengthen him, and enhance his command until he governs the countries of Islam, with the holy land of Hejaz, the Holy House [Jerusalem], the house of God ... He shall have in his hand the keys to all stations. When you look at his image, you see him as someone with veneration. That message I wrote and gave to Effendi Al-Shirkassi, mufti to the late King Abdullah I, whom the Messenger of God (God's peace and prayers upon him) advised through our master the shaykh not to go out on Friday or in any group. Our master the shaykh dictated that to me, and I wrote it down. ... But he made a mistake, and one Friday he went to prayers at Al-Aqsa Mosque. ... He departed this world, and fulfillment was deferred. We ask of God that his great-grandson, King Abdullah, will be the holder of the key to the 10 mini-states, and that he will be with Al-Mahdi (AS). God support him! ... God honor him with the glory of the one to whom Surah Al-Fatiha was revealed." This text can be referenced at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ybhm4bo7>

With regard to the king of Morocco, reference can be made to:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybca9nq5>

He says: "Sultan Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, is the first among the ministers of our master Al-Mahdi (AS), and 12,000 knights on horseback will come to our master Al-Mahdi (AS) from the Maghreb. No one shall stand against this king! I am personally responsible for anyone who objects to the king, and I will wipe them out of existence, for anyone who is against the sultans shall be removed from existence and shall never reach Al-Mahdi (AS). I am sending this message to the Ashab Al-Nawba [saints] in the Maghreb, for 12,000 of them live there to guard the King. If the Sultan goes, Satan comes, and it is over!"

Haqqani explained some of the causes of technology failure by saying: “Electricity is related to the power of the jinn, because the jinn is a creature of fire, and radiation comes from the jinn’s essential energy. Jinns have a form and use a small part of their energy, and this energy is the electricity we know. The jinn has no problem with electricity, but we have a problem with electricity, as we cannot touch it for fear of the shock.”<sup>401</sup>

### 3. The Haqqani *hadra* in Jordan

The Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order entered Jordan gradually through several *murids* and others influenced by Shaykh Haqqani. Some of them visited him periodically in Cyprus, and some Jordanians took the pledge and oral *idhn* in the order from him. But the Haqqanis’ organizational arrival as an order and a *zawiya* occurred late in the 20th century and early in the 21<sup>st</sup>, when Shaykh Nazim Haqqani sent Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi, a former servant in Shaykh Abdullah Al-Daghestani’s *zawiya*, to Jordan in 1997. The small Abu Sham *zawiya* was founded along with Abu Sham Mosque in Jabal Amman near the 1st Circle.

Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi “was born in 1934, in Jerusalem in the village of Kfar Kama, to a conservative family of Caucasian (Circassian) origin. His mother and father were both Circassian. He went to school and grew up in that village, and he emigrated from Palestine to Turkey in 1954. He met imams of the Naqshbandi-Ali Order in Turkey, then went to Damascus to meet with Shaykh Abdullah Al-Daghestani, who extended him *bay’a* in the “listening” ceremony called *sama’* and in obedience (*ta’a*). He remained in the service of Shaykh Al-Daghestani until 1973, when Al-Daghestani passed away. His shaykh married him in Damascus to his wife, Nawal Qarkajy Umm Omar, with whom he had nine children. After Al-Daghestani died, Shaykh Shamsi took *bay’a* with his successor, Shaykh Nazim

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<sup>401</sup> Shaykh Nazim Haqqani, Shams Al-Shamus: <https://tinyurl.com/yd7fetnr>

Haqqani, and became a servant at Al-Daghestani's shrine in Damascus and shaykh for the rest of the Levant as ordered by Shaykh Haqqani. At Shaykh Haqqani's order, he left Damascus for Jordan in 1997 and took over the Naqshbandi-Ali *zawiya* in Jordan."

The Abu Sham *zawiya* gained a remarkable following of *murids* at the outset, especially individuals influenced by Shaykh Haqqani who had studied in the West, including princes and the scions of wealthy families. The order began to spread among dozens of young people especially, men and women alike, because the order took a smooth, easy approach to interacting with people, and because attendees were not required to be Naqshbandis. The *zawiya* was open to all. Shaykh Shamsi lived nearby for a long time, initially as the guest of a Jordanian family of *murids* of Shaykh Haqqani.<sup>402</sup>

Shaykh Shamsi left Jordan about four years ago, and the *zawiya* at Abu Sham Mosque closed due to disagreements among some of Shaykh Haqqani's followers. Shaykh Shamsi went to live in Turkey for family reasons, and the order's momentum and progress stalled, but it did not come to an end. Shaykh Nazim Haqqani and his son Shaykh Muhammad Adel Haqqani granted *idhn* to Shaykh Shamsi's servant in Jordan, Shaykh Abu Al-Yusr, a Syrian national who came to Jordan in 2012 with his family and studied the Naqshbandi Order under Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi. He was previously Shadhili and a *murid* of the well-known Shaykh Shukri Al-Luhafi. He had studied business but did not complete his degree. He worked as a welder before returning to Sufism, being from an ancestrally Sufi family – Qadiri by order and Jilani by descent – of Syrian Kurds.<sup>403</sup>

Abu Al-Yusr received *idhn* from Shaykh Haqqani more than once, as well as from his son Shaykh Muhammad Adel. Working alongside him to spread the Haqqani Order is Umm Maryam, who is originally from Jerusalem (b. 1978) with a mother from Acre. Umm

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<sup>402</sup> Interview with Shaykh Abu Al-Yusr, the current Haqqani shaykh in Jordan, at his home in Jabal Amman, 9/6/2020.

<sup>403</sup> Interview with Abu Al-Yusr, *ibid*.

Maryam was attracted to Sufism while studying sociology at Hebrew University, and she says: "I attended *dhikr* sessions with the Circassians. Sometimes I encountered Sidi Yaqub, who was *majdhub*" – a term for someone who has left self behind and gravitated inexorably toward God – "and people thought he was crazy, but in fact he gravitated strongly toward the Divine Presence. He would walk through the markets of Jerusalem's Old City, and you would think he came from another world. He did not look at other people. When he saw me walking in the street, he came up to me and said, 'I see your light.'"<sup>404</sup>

Umm Maryam evolved in her spirituality, and she entered seclusion in Al-Aqsa Mosque. She later became familiar with the Naqshbandi Order and its shaykh, Abdul Halim Shamsi, and she traveled to Cyprus to meet Shaykh Haqqani. She became devoted to visiting him regularly, and he ordered her to marry Shaykh Abdul Halim, which she did. She lived an austere life with her husband before they left on Haqqani's orders to spread the order to a Circassian village in Central Asia. She then returned to give birth to her daughter in Jerusalem, and her husband died shortly thereafter.

After her husband's death, Shaykh Haqqani ordered her to go to Jordan to connect with Shaykh Abdul Halim's brother, Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi. She began to play an active role in *da'wa* and preaching, and she obtained written *idhn* in the order from Shaykh Haqqani. She has literary interests and a publication that features spiritual articles.

*Dhikr* sessions are currently held in numerous different places, generally in homes and other locations belonging to *murids*, and are supervised by both Abu Al-Yusr and Umm Maryam. In spite of the closure of the *zawiya* and some of the problems the order has experienced, it has become popular among young people, especially neo-Sufis seeking spirituality and Sufism. There are also people influenced by energy healing, who link those beliefs to Sufism.

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<sup>404</sup> Interview with Umm Maryam in Jabal Amman, 7/1/2020.

Some years ago, Shaykh Eşref Efendi, a German of Turkish origin who is one of the most prominent Naqshbandi-Haqqanis in Europe, visited Jordan. He met with followers of the order and was received and honored by high-level Jordanian figures. Then Shaykh Muhammad Adel Haqqani, Shaykh Nazim's successor, came to Jordan on a visit last year. He was received by princes, and he visited the shrine of the Prophet Shuaib and met with some followers of the order.<sup>405</sup>

The order is characterized by its flexibility. Attendees at *dhikr* sessions include young men and women who do not seem to have made the sort of commitment familiar in other orders. Neither Shaykh Abu Al-Yusr nor even Umm Maryam is strict with regard to dress, as is the case in other Sufi orders in Jordan. Abu Al-Yusr explains that by saying: "There are priorities and principles we introduce before the (other) branches. We cannot ask anyone to start something before faith is firmly established in his heart and he takes delight in Islam."<sup>406</sup>

Umm Maryam used to hold women-only *dhikr* sessions some years ago, but for reasons related to the absence of designated spaces, sessions began to be held for men and women together. Abu Al-Yusr allows that at certain times, given the small space and the lack of resources.

As a result of this openness to the younger generation and the relatively relaxed *hadras*, the order has attracted many people who have not undertaken any commitment whatsoever. Umm Maryam is well aware that she has modified and developed her rhetoric to win the hearts of young people over to the call. She says that some may fear or shy away from the word "Sufism" because of stereotyping, "So we use the term 'spirituality' instead, especially because there is a broad segment of society searching for light and the world of the

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<sup>405</sup> Interview with an adherent of the Naqshbandi who refused to disclose his name, 25/5/2020.

<sup>406</sup> Interview with Abu Al-Yusr, op. cit.

soul. Sufism can give that to them because of its great spiritual richness, if we can present it properly.”<sup>407</sup>

The *hadras* are simple and short. It begins with Khatm Al-Khwajagan and is a seated *dhikr* that consists of recitations, verses from the Quran, and some group litanies (*awrad*) by the attendees, who usually number between 10 and 20.

Anyone who commits to the order is taught the daily *awrad*, which in the Naqshbandi Order consist of intoning “There is no god but God,” Al-Ism Al-A’zam (God’s “greatest name,” i.e. Allah), and prayers on the Prophet. These are recited anywhere from 500 times to thousands of times a day.<sup>408</sup>

Khaled Walid, a prominent young adherent of the Haqqani Order in Jordan, founded Mi’raj Healing, a spiritual coaching and therapy business. It combines Sufism, spirituality, and energy healing and teaches participants how to rid themselves of negative feelings through a combination of contemplation and *dhikr*. Through this program, people learn how to move between chakras – which it links to the Sufi concept of *lata’if* (“subtleties,” special organs of perception) – in the body, self, or heart by means of repetition of the names of God and certain letters in the Qur’an that are separated from the rest of the text, often called *fawatih*. Khaled Walid adds: “Based on a hadith or a saying that has been passed down, ‘An hour of contemplation is better than a hundred years of worship,’ as contemplation can produce ‘mind shifting.’”<sup>409</sup>

Mi’raj Healing reflects the Haqqani Order’s openness to new sciences, the world of spirituality, and also energy healing, yoga, and spiritual therapy, and to mixing these sciences with Sufism. Khaled Walid’s experiment is different from the “Neo-Sufism” model, which

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<sup>407</sup> Interview with Umm Maryam, op. cit.

<sup>408</sup> Interview with Abu Al-Yusr, op. cit.

<sup>409</sup> From the study by Muath Na’il Musalha, “Al-Mutasawwifun Al-Judud: Rihlat Al-Baḥth ‘an Al-Ruhaniyat wa-l-Sakina” (“The New Sufis: Journey to Discover Spiritualities and Inner Peace”), paper presented at the Sufi Awakening Conference held in Amman by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

adopts a spirituality that is far removed from traditional Sufi orders. Therefore, he affirms that his project's approach is based a new, non-traditional Sufism not in a literal sense, as he is an adherent of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, but that the order itself is open to these things with respect to discourse and practice.<sup>410</sup>

We find that the official website of Mi'raj Healing reflects the above philosophy, as the project concept is defined as "a unique form of energy therapy designed to awaken insight and spiritual evolution and heal body and soul. Mi'raj means 'ascension' in Sufi terminology, referring to the soul rising to higher levels of spirituality through healing. Our practice fuses ancient Sufi healing techniques with energy medicine, drawing on Abrahamic wisdom to support healing with connection to the divine."<sup>411</sup>

Level 1 of Sufi spiritual healing through energy, a two-day program, promises that participants "will understand what energy is and how to feel and differentiate different kinds of energy. Sensitize your hands to be able to feel the energy and the *lata'if* energy centers. Learn how to heal using energy and learn about the different centers and their functions." In Level 2, also for two days, "we will learn about the psychological dimension of energy and *lata'if*. We will also learn about the secrets of sacred movements in prayer. We will learn secret aspects to divine healing." In the two-day Level 3 course, "we learn how to treat ourselves against harmful energies and mental and emotional diseases. We understand the energetic dimension to positive and negative thinking." In Level 4, also two days, "we learn how to harness energy to create powerful shields that can protect us from psychic attacks and negative environments. We also understand the role of crystals, flowers, and herbs in our natural healing." In the one-day Level 5 course, "we culminate the healing process by understanding ascension. We learn about the energetic secrets of ascension and fulfilling the divine purpose for your life."<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> See the official website of Mi'raj Healing: <https://tinyurl.com/yb2luoua>

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., at the following link:

The above is an example of fundamental changes that have been introduced in Sufism and how the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order has absorbed and accepted such changes and dealt flexibly with them. Khaled Waleed is not a special case, as his friend in the Haqqani Order, Muadh, is his partner in the project of linking energy and spiritual therapy with Sufism. Then there is Baqaa, a young man we will discuss later who underwent a unique experience in Sufism. He entered this arena through energy and found in the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order a space that embraced and accepted him, something that is not readily available in most other Sufi orders in Jordan.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Interview with Baqaa in Al-Luweibdeh, 12/2/2020.



## TOPIC 5

### THE BA'ALAWI ORDER: SUFISM ASCENDANT

The Ba'Alawi current of "the Habibs" is today one of the most important and widespread Sufi orders in Jordan. An elite cohort of young Sufi leaders are affiliated with the order, and it also attracts adherents of other Sufi orders for a number of reasons. One reason is the considerable presence and influence of prominent figures on Arab and global stages, such as Habib Omar ibn Hafiz, Habib Al-Jifri, and Habib Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur (Habib being a common honorific for religious scholars in Yemen). These figures and the order's other scholars (*ulama'*) and shaykhs have transformed the Ba' Alawis into a global order in the last two decades. They have engaged with Arab governments, linking some of them to Sufism, and shifted the Arab Sufi landscape from one of separation and isolated islands to one of harmony and an overarching framework. We find that Habib Omar and Habib Al-Jifri roam from one place to another, and from one country to another, meeting with political leaders, reaching out to Sufi shaykhs, and connecting them to one another like links in a chain. They also have become media stars.

Neither action/movement work nor media acuity alone is the buttress of the Ba' Alawi Order or the reason for its rise. More important is neo-Sufi discourse, which brings Sufism closer to the street by preaching in simple, spiritual language that avoids delving too much into talk of disputes and problems or traditional order-based Sufism. The Ba' Alawi Order itself, as we will observe in the course of this study, takes an interest in scholarship, *da'wa* (proselytism), and field work. It is not closed off inside *zawiyas*, individual actions, or the framework of the shaykh-*murid* (student) relationship. It may be described as outwardly Ghazali, in that it takes after Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's concern with revival of Islamic legal sciences and the learning of rules and Sufi social conduct, and inwardly Shadhili because it shares cleansing of the heart and spiritual and inner advancement with Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili.

The Ba'Alawi Order entered Jordan through a set of individuals it influenced. It gained real momentum, however, with the founding of the Al-Ma'arij Institute for Shari'a Studies and then the network of strong relationships among its notable shaykhs of today, Omar ibn Hafiz and Ali Al-Jifri, and official religious institutions. Their relationship with former Supreme Judge Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah and Shaykh Saeed Foudeh developed to the point of coordinating on many issues. Habib ibn Hafiz and Habib Al-Jifri became prominent '*ulama*' installed in the academic chairs established in Jordan in the names of Imam Al-Ghazali and Imam Al-Razi. Some people closely associated with Sufi orders, however, confirm that relations have cooled, especially after the Chechnya Conference of Muslim '*ulama*' in 2016, at which the Habibs had a notable presence, and also for non-obvious political reasons.<sup>414</sup>

### 1. Origins, roots, and modern figureheads of the Ba' Alawi Order

The origin of the name "Ba' Alawi" traces to a family of Hashemite sharifs (descendants of Hasan ibn Ali) whose patriarch, Ahmad Isa Al-Muhajir, left Basra with his family in 317 AH (929 AD). This was during the period in which the Zanj Rebellion occurred, and the Qaramatian state was founded, stretching into Hejaz. Al-Muhajir first moved to Hejaz and then settled in Yemen, in the Hadhramaut Valley region. He later settled in an area called Husaisa, where today

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<sup>414</sup> The Chechnya Conference provoked a tumultuous debate in the Arab and Islamic world, and some considered it part of the international and regional political game. It was notable for having excluded Salafis from the circle of Ahl Al-Sunna (the people of Sunna, i.e. Sunni Muslims). The Tabah Foundation, led by Habib Al-Jifri, was one of the main players in organizing the conference. For some of the controversy surround it, see:

"Abu Dhabi-based foundation announces that it was the organizer of the Chechnya conference," Arabi21, 3/9/2016: <https://tinyurl.com/y8rxqlpl>

Mu'ayyid Bajis, "Major controversy over Chechnya conference ... Sufis present and Salafism ignored," Arabi21: <https://tinyurl.com/ydxawcr2>; and "Ahmad Al-Tayyeb: Al-Azhar is not culpable for the Chechnya conference ... and Salafis are part of Ahl Al-Sunna wa-l-Jama'a," CNN Arabic, 19/11/2016: <https://tinyurl.com/ydxawcr2>

See the official website of the Chechnya Conference: <https://tinyurl.com/y8g6ejx>

there live a people named “the people of Ahmad.” Al-Muhajir had three sons: Basri, Jadid, and Alwi, the latter of whom is the namesake of the Ba’Alawis.<sup>415</sup>

Ahmad Al-Muhajir’s children continued moving among the villages in the valley, and they settled in the village of Sumul for a time, then left to live in Beit Jubeir. In 521 AH, Al-Muhajir’s descendant Ali ibn Alawi, also known as Ali Khali’ Qasam, moved to the city of Tarim and adopted it as a home for himself and his children. Tarim has been a seat of the Alawi family to this day. They are called Aal Ba’ Alawi, a Hadhrami dialect contraction of Bani Alawi, meaning “sons of Alawi.”

As for the emergence and origins of their order, it was founded by Muhammad ibn Ali Ba’ Alawi, who is called Al-Faqih Al-Muqaddam, the “Foremost Jurist” (574-653AH / 1178-1232 AD). He was the standard-bearer of Sufism in Hadhramaut and made it the intellectual life blood of his age and those that followed. He was the first well-known Sufi in Hadhramaut and also established the parameters of the Sufi order of the Ba’ Alawi sada (*sada* referring to descendants of Husayn ibn Ali).<sup>416</sup>

It is told that Muhammad Ba’ Alawi, the founder of the order, was in contact with one of the foremost Sufi *qutbs* in the Islamic world of the sixth century AH, Al-Ghawth Abu Madyan. He attached himself to Abu Maydan and took his pledge, and Yemeni Sufism consequently shifted from an individual matter to collective action at a time when those in Hadhramaut were concerned with Islamic legal sciences and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). After this “declaration,” Sufism became a new path in Yemen.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Habib Zain bin Ibrahim bin Sumait Ba’Alawi Al-Husseini, *Al-Manhaj Al-Sawi fi Sharh Usul Tariqat Al-Sada Al Ba’Alawi* (The Right Approach to Explaining the Origins of the Al Ba’ Alawi Sada Order); Dar Al-’Ilm wa-l-Da’wa, Hadhramaut, and Dar Al-Fath, Amman; First Edition, 2005; see Iyad Al-Ghouj’s profile of the order of the Aal Ba’Alawi Sada, pp. 20-22.

<sup>416</sup> See Muhammad ibn Ja’far ibn Idris Al-Kattani, *Al-Safar Al-Sufi* (The Sufi Journey); Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Beirut; First Edition, 2005, pp. 40-41.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-23.

An important story that reveals something about the origins and philosophy of the Ba' Alawi Order is the story of the broken sword. Shaykh Sa'id Al-Amoudi came to Al-Faqih Al-Muqaddam Muhammad ibn Alawi, and together they made a definitive decision to break the sword and forego carrying weapons. They turned their attention instead to scholarship and work as the basis for a spiritual orientation. In this spiritual alliance between the shaykhs, Shaykh Sa'id Al-Amoudi was the primary partner in Al-Faqih Al-Muqaddam's decision to promote peace among believers and transform into a path of asceticism and renunciation of the quest for control. His call led to disarmament in Hadhramaut and an embrace of Sufism. His people, the Alawis, as followed his example, as did others, foremost among them many of those known as "the shaykhs."<sup>418</sup>

After that, a unique school formed in Hadhramaut that combined interest in legal science, *da'wa*, social reform, and an emphasis on the importance of work and service on the one hand, with issues of Sufism, behavior, ethics, and spiritual education on the other. The school went through several stages of development, and several cohorts of '*ulama*', jurists, and Sufis affiliated with the school. It spread to many regions of the world through the migration of Ba' Alawi adherents and moves they made due to either commerce or problems and crises, especially in communist-ruled South Yemen. These migrations from Hadhramaut led the order and its *da'wa* to spread considerably, especially in Indonesia, India, and Africa.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> See Abu Bakr Al-Adani ibn Ali ibn Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur, *Al-Abniya Al-Fikriyya Al-Jami'a li-Thawabit Al-Tariqa Al-Alawiyya Al-Hussainiyya Al-Mutafarrigha min Hadhramaut ila Majmu' Al-Bilad Al-Islamiyya* (The Intellectual Structures Uniting the Constants of the Alawi-Husseini Order Moving from Hadhramaut to the Entire Islamic World); Second Edition, 2001, pp. 62-65. The book can be read at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y77oe3ct>

<sup>419</sup> See Mohammed Yasser Al-Koudmani, *Al-Sada Al Abi 'Alawi wa-Ghayd min Fayd Aqwalihim Al-Sharifa wa-Ahwalihim Al-Munifa* (The Ba'Alawi Sada: Selected Sayings and Eminent States); Dar Nur Al-Sabah, Damascus; First Edition, 2014, pp. 284-329.

One influential figure and one of the most prominent renewers of the order was Shaykh Abdullah ibn Alawi Al-Haddad (1040-1132 AH / 1634-1720 AD), who was born in Hadhramaut and studied the legal and religious sciences there. Although he lost his eyesight when young, he became one of the most prominent renewers of the Ba' Alawi Order in Yemen and also a notable poet, jurist, and religious scholar.

Al-Haddad had a major impact on the renewal of the order. He directed his attention to the revival of faith among the people of Yemen, and his books, *awrad* (litanies), and poems contributed to the dissemination of the order throughout the world. He focused on the importance of combining scholarship, *da'wa*, and reform.<sup>420</sup>

We can observe Al-Haddad's focus on integrating these aspects and uniting scholarship and *da'wa* in many of his books, including *Al-Da'wa Al-Tama wa-l-Tadhkira Al-'Amma* (The Complete Summons and General Reminder). He says: "One of those myths is that the people should occupy themselves and their time in continuous repetition of *awrad* and certain types of worship: recitation and remembrance and the like. They believe that this is better for them and more worthwhile than proselytizing for God and His cause, and disseminating beneficial knowledge in religion. But in fact, proselytizing for God and the dissemination of beneficial knowledge with dedication to God is better than the required worship of superogatory prayers and remembrance. This is because knowledge is abundantly beneficial and is needed by all people of all ages."<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> See Iyad Al-Ghuj's profile of the order of the Aal Ba'Alawi Sada in: Habib Zain bin Ibrahim bin Sumait Ba' Alawi Al-Husseini, *Al-Manhaj Al-Sawi fi Sharh Usul Ta-riqat Al-Sada Aal Ba' Alawi* (The Right Approach to Explaining the Origins of the Aal Ba' Alawi Sada Order); op. cit., pp. 22-24.

<sup>421</sup> See Abdullah ibn Alawi Al-Haddad Al-Hadhrami Al-Shafi'i, *Al-Da'wa Al-Tama wa-l-Tadhkira Al-'Aama* (The Complete Summons and General Reminder); Dar Alha-wi; First Edition, 2000, p. 34.

## 2. The spiritual and intellectual features of a global order

The Ba' Alawi Order has spread far and wide in the past two decades, which can be attributed to more than one reason. First is the end of communist rule in South Yemen, which has allowed for a climate of religious freedom and *da'wa*. The second is globalization, which has enabled people to learn about the order and has facilitated communication among the order's adherents.

The Ba' Alawi Order was known to take an interest in shari'a scholarship and Islamic sciences, with this interest passing from generation to generation, as reflected in the remarkable interest in the *ribat*, a sort of schoolhouse for teaching Islamic law. Nevertheless, the founding of Dar Al-Mustafa by Habib Omar ibn Hafiz in 1997 was a paradigm shift in the geographic dissemination of the order and the reach of its *da'wa*. Dar Al-Mustafa, which began to specialize in the authenticated (*musnad*) sciences – i.e. teaching jurisprudential, religious, and scholarly texts as well as conduct – became a destination for many seekers of knowledge and *du'ah* (practitioners of *da'wa*). It welcomed them to learn about this experiment in scholarship, education, and *da'wa*, which influenced many top figures, including Jordanians who worked to build create something similar to the experience at Dar Al-Mustafa.<sup>422</sup>

But one of the most important factors that created a real revolution in the dissemination of the Ba' Alawi Order was the emergence of figures such as Habib Ali Al-Jifri, Omar ibn Hafiz, Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur, and other '*ulama*' and *du'ah*, who have been hugely influential.

Habib Ali Zain Al-Abidin Al-Jifri was born in Jeddah in 1971. He initially studied under his mother's aunt, Safiya bint Alawi Al-Jifri, an '*arif billah*, "knower of God." He received instruction in Islamic legal science from a great elite of Ba'Alawi*ulama*' and enrolled in the Faculty of Islamic Studies at Sana'a University. During that period, he

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<sup>422</sup> On the ribats and Dar Al-Mustafa, see Yasser Al-Koudmani, *Al-Sada Al Abi 'Alawi*; op. cit., pp. 81-100.

developed a strong relationship with Shaykh Omar ibn Hafiz, and he settled in Tarim from 1993 to 2003. He has received the license (*ijaza*) of more than 300 shaykhs in various religious sciences in a number of Arab countries.<sup>423</sup>

Habib Al-Jifri became a star and one of the world's leading Sufi clerics. He has supervised several international and regional projects that have contributed to promoting and defining Sufism.

Despite Al-Jifri's remarkable and profound impact, he has caused a tangible shift in the relationship between Arab governments and Sufism, especially the Ba' Alawi Order. The Chechnya Conference, along with Al-Jifri's stances against Islamist political movements and in support of governments opposed to such movements, have provoked widespread controversy even in Sufi circles.

As for Habib Omar ibn Muhammad Salim ibn Hafiz, he is among the most influential shaykhs of the present day. Born in 1963 in Tarim, he was raised in the chambers of his father, Mufti of Tarim Shaykh Muhammad ibn Salim ibn Hafiz, who was kidnapped by the communist authorities in Yemen. He disappeared, and no word has been heard of him since. His son Omar was about 10 years old at the time.<sup>424</sup>

Habib ibn Hafiz moved from Tarim to Al Bayda to seek knowledge of the shari'a sciences. After harassment by the communists in 1981, he took up residence in his father-in-law's *ribat* and continued studying legal science. He made repeated trips to the Two Holy Mosques in Saudi Arabia and studied there under well-known '*ulama*', then moved to Oman, then returned to Yemen in 1992, to the city of Shihr, where he opened a *ribat*. He later returned to Tarim and founded Dar Al-Mustafa for Islamic Studies, which was first founded in 1994.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid., pp. 362-367.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid., pp. 354-362.

The third figure, Abu Bakr Al-Adani ibn Ali ibn Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur, was born in Abyan Governorate in 1366 AH (1947 AD). Instructed by his father, Ali ibn Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur, he memorized the Quran, and he studied under a collection of *'ulama'* in Ahwar, Aden, and Hadhramaut. He earned a degree in language and literature from the University of Aden, then went to Saudi Arabia during the communist era, when he was 33. He studied under a number of *'ulama'* from the Levant, Hejaz, and Egypt, and he worked as an imam in Jeddah before returning to Yemen at age 44. He founded numerous scholarly *ribats* and dozens of schools, including the Dar Al-Zahra women's school and a Qur'an memorization school for boys, as well as social and cultural forums, and a creativity and heritage service center.<sup>426</sup>

Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur is unique for the language he uses, which is steeped in shari'a scholarship, and his ability to craft intellectual frameworks. He is one of the founders and theorists of *fiqh Al-tahawwulat*, the "jurisprudence of transformations," and he has several theses related to the concept, including *Al-muthalath Al-madmuji*, the "integrated triangle" of nurture, teaching, and the call to God. He also has an interest in economic self-sufficiency, and in combining verified ancestral teachings with academic education. He has famous insightful sayings such as "A sound mind in a sound heart," "The end determines the means," and "Person before approach, and nurture before teaching."<sup>427</sup>

His writings in the intellectual field include *Reviving and Renewing the Global Language of Islam By Establishing Alternatives and Modernizing Methods* (*Ihya' Lughat Al-Islam Al-'Alamiyya wa-Tajdidiha min khilal Ta'sil Al-Bada'il wa-Tahdith Al-Wasa'il*), *Circles of Restoration and Ranks of Information* (*Dawa'ir Al-I'ada wa-Maratib Al-Ifada*), *Muslims in Degraded Societies: Politics of Income and Worship of Haste* (*Al-Muslimun fi Mujtama'at Al-Dhilla bayna Siyasat Al-Dakhl wa-'Ibadat Al-'Ajal*), *Dissertation: An Analytical View on Religious Literacy as Applied to the Reality of Contemporary Media* (*Al-*

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid., pp. 348-350.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., p. 349.

*Atruha: Wajhat Nazr Tahliliyya li-Mahu Al-Umiyya Al-Diniyya Al-Mutabbaqa 'ala Al-Waqi' Al-I'lamiyya Al-Mu'asir*), *In the Hands of Dajjal* (Bayna Yaday Al-Dajjal), and so on.<sup>428</sup>

Let us leave behind the most prominent figures in the order to move on to the most important features and characteristics of the order itself. It clearly differs from other Sufi orders in that it is comprehensive, systematic, and school-based, meaning that it does not focus much on the shaykh-*murid* relationship or on the adherents of the order. Its version of Sufism goes beyond spiritual advancement and moral action: it is more of a systematic school in which Islamic legal science is the central pillar. The order is considered an extension of the school of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, which has perhaps had the greatest impact on its approaches, ideas, and creed. It is Ash'ari by creed, Shafi'i by school of jurisprudence, and Sufi, and all of these orientations are integrated with one another. Sufism is a part of this school, and one of its pillars, but the school rests on mastery of the shari'a sciences, or what is called "shari'a-bound" or "sunna-bound" Sufism.<sup>429</sup>

In addition to the intellectual and spiritual influence of Al-Ghazali, the influence of the Shadhili school of Sufism can also be observed in the emphasis on love of God, love for the Prophet (God's blessings and peace upon him), and the litanies (*ahzab*) of Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili.<sup>430</sup>

The Ba' Alawis do not harass or compete with other orders. As its shaykhs affirm, they recognize the main orders as they are. The object of their concern is to open educational institutions and teach the shari'a sciences and Sufism. We therefore find no Ba' Alawizawiya in Jordan, but they are active in *da'wa*.

The order is one of spiritual education and *da'wa*. While it recognizes *khalwa* (spiritual seclusion) for 40-day periods as a means

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>429</sup> See Iyad Al-Ghouj, Profile of the Order of the Aal Ba'Alawi Sada; op. cit., pp. 28-32.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

of strengthening the spirituality and contemplativeness of the traveler on the Sufi path, the order emphasizes social action and reform, spending time on good works, and avoiding Sufi heterodoxies.<sup>431</sup>

### 3. The Jordanian Ba' Alawis: The new Sufi generation

We addressed the entry of the Ba-Alawi Order into Jordan in the previous chapter, specifically when we discussed the “turning point” that took place in the Sufi landscape as a whole with the founding of Al-Ma'arij Institute for Shari'a Studies, and Awn Al-Qaddoumi, its shaykh, founder, and thought leader. He came under the influence of the Habibs in Hadhramaut, visited them repeatedly, and was instructed in the order there. He then returned to Jordan to establish the Al-Ma'arij Institute for Shari'a Studies with the support and backing of Shaykh Noah a-Qudah and the Habibs themselves, in particular Shaykh Omar ibn Hafiz, along with Dar Al-Mustafa in Hadhramaut.

Habib Ali Al-Jifri and Habib Omar ibn Hafiz have made repeated visits to Jordan and built relationships with Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah and certain shaykhs such as Dr. Saeed Foudeh, as well as political actors. It seemed natural that they would be constant participants in official religious events and members of religious institutions and other platforms, such as the Al Al-Bayt Institute and academic chairs that have been established and have taken on an Ash'ari-Sufi character. Such has been the deep and reciprocated response the Habibs received in Jordan in the last decade. The number of Ba'Alawi Order followers has increased, especially among academics and within the institutions that issue fat was. The order has planted its feet in Jordan.

Many religious figures have played an influential role in planting the roots of the Ba'Alawi Order in Jordan, but the key figure is Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, who was one of the first to visit Dar Al-Mustafa and be influenced by the masters there, especially Omar ibn Hafiz and Abu Bakr Al-Mashhur. Al-Qaddoumi transported *fiqh Al-*

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<sup>431</sup> Yasser Al-Koudmani, Al-Sada Al Abi 'Alawi; op. cit., pp. 241-271.

*tahawwulat* to Jordan and grafted Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah's ideas and conceptions onto the Yemeni model.

Among the prominent figures at Al-Ma'arij and in the Ba'Alawi Order is Dr. Jihad Al-Kalouti, who is preparing a doctoral dissertation in Islamic jurisprudence at the University of Jordan on "Self-sufficiency and its applications in Islamic jurisprudence." He was born in 1988 and is a *munshid* well known in Islamic circles. He is an official at the Al-Ma'arij Institute and adopted the Ba'Alawi Order in 2006.

Other important figures in the Jordanian Ba' Alawi Order are Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Harhi and his son Abdul Qadir, the owners of the Awwabeen Establishment. Abdul Qadir was born in 1972 and has a master's degree in management. He works as a director of Dar Al-Awwabeen in Amman and participates in Ba' Alawi Order activities in Jordan and abroad. He usually organizes visits to Jordan by Omar ibn Hafiz and Ali Al-Jifri and is present on those visits.

Another notable figure is Dr. Ahmad Al-Sawi, who was born in Amman in 1974 and has a doctorate in prophetic hadith from World Islamic Sciences and Education University. He studied at Dar Al-Mustafa and was authorized in the Alawi Order by Shaykh Omar ibn Hafiz. He is active in *da'wa* work and is the imam of Al-Rawda Al-Mubarak Mosque in the Tila'Al-Ali neighborhood of Amman, where he holds lessons, sessions of prayers on the Prophet, and readings of Al-Burda, a 13th-century ode to the Prophet Muhammad.

Other figures include Mufti of Aqaba Shaykh Mohammad Al-Juhani, Abdullah Abu Snaineh, Taha Urabi (imam of mosque in Ta-barbour), the media figure Mohey Al-Din Al-Qotb, Shaykh Ghassan Al-Ziyoud, and Omar Bani Mustafa, imam of Suf Al-Qadim Mosque in Jerash.<sup>432</sup>

A *murid* in the Ba' Alawi Order begins with *awrad* repeated for 40 days, adding up to 12,000 repetitions of "No god but God," 12,000 repetitions of "Allah," and likewise for "Huwa" (which translates to

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<sup>432</sup> See Mousa Amr, "Al-Turuq Al-Sufiyya fi Al-Urdun"; op. cit., pp. 97-99.

“he” and is another name for God). The Al-Fatih prayer is read thousands of times. This is a form of prayer for the Prophet that goes: “O God, bless our master Muhammad, who opened what was closed, who sealed what had gone before, who helps the Truth with Truth, and who is the guide to Your straight path. Bless his family, and makes these blessings equal in magnitude to his grandeur.” There are general *awrad* such as reading Surah Al-Ikhlās 30,000 times, Surah Al-Falaq and Surah Al-Nas 30,000 times, and so on, as well as regular gatherings to read Al-Burda and pray for the Prophet.

Al-Kalouti notes that the pledge of initiation and allegiance known as *bay’a* is new to the order. In the past, a person’s mere commitment to attending scholarly seminars and gatherings was considered *bay’a*. *Bay’a* in the Ba’ Alawi Order differs from that in other orders in that taking this pledge with any of the Habibs makes one a *murid* of all the order’s shaykhs. The order’s gatherings for *dhikr* full of the intonation of “Allah” and prayers for the Prophet, and participants sit rather than stand.<sup>433</sup>

The Al-Ma’arij Institute stresses that it is a Sufi scholarly institution, not a Ba’Alawi one, and that adherents of diverse Sufi orders teach there, as well as scholars not affiliated with any Sufi order. Nevertheless, the Institute’s philosophy, nature, and strategy reflect its essence as a Ba’Alawi school focusing on the importance of authenticated shari’a science and its link to Sufism and *tazkiya*, the purification of the self. All in all, the new orientation of official religious policies is to establish and consolidate the Ash’ari-*madhhab*-Sufi school as the country’s religious identity.

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<sup>433</sup> Telephone interview with Jihad Al-Kalouti, 13/6/2020.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **TRADITION VS. ADAPTABILITY AND OPENNESS**

After this tour of the “Sufi house” and through the halls of orders, *zawiyas*, *hadras*, shaykhs, and *murids*, it would be advantageous to offer some findings, digests, and observations:

#### **1. The influence of “shaykhs” and their “unseen impact”**

One of the most significant observations we can extract from dozens of interviews, especially with *murids* of earlier generations is something that so far has not undergone study and analysis, namely the substantial and profound impact of certain shaykhs of Sufi orders. A prime example is Shaykh Muhammad Sa’id Al-Kurdi, who returned to Jordan in the early 1950s and began spreading his order. He played a key role in building up the Shadhili school, which had a major, notable impact within the Armed Forces, not only among *iftaa’* institutions, but also among various other units. Because of this, we see that many of those who joined Sufi orders were in the Armed Forces, such as Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman, Shaykh Bassim Al-Nimr, Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh, Shaykh Faris Al-Rifa’i, and even Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh. This is in addition to the Sufi orientation of the Army *iftaa’* body, which Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah instituted.

Another influential figure within the Armed Forces was Shaykh Mustafa Al-Filali, who also instructed many members of the Armed Forces in the order. Others also received instruction in the Qadiri Order from Shaykh Muhammad Hashim Al-Baghdadi, including Jordanian Army soldiers serving in Jerusalem in the 1950s and 1960s.

Far from the spotlights, the most influential and charismatic figure was Shaykh Noah Al-Qudah. He planted the seeds of Sufism in the military’s *iftaa’* establishment and then the Iftaa’ Department when it became independent from the Awqaf Ministry. But most important is his impact on successive generations of students of the

shari'a sciences, *iftaa'* shaykhs, and the new generation of Sufis. He has been a teacher to Nuh Keller, Ismail Al-Kurdi, and many young people who have drawn on his knowledge and thinking, as they often mention.

## 2. Jordan: Formerly an “importer” of Sufism, now an exporter

In recent decades, Jordan has transformed from a consumer and importer of Sufism to a producer and exporter. Many of the orders that came mainly from Syria and Palestine are now based in Jordan and making an impact abroad. Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib, for example, has *zawiyas* in Jordan and followers in many regions of the world. Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh also has a major influence on Sufi orders abroad, and Shaykh Nuh Keller is the Shadhili shaykh for North America and has tens of thousands of followers worldwide. The Shadhili-Momani *zawiya* has opened a large branch in Malaysia. Meanwhile, Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi has become one of the foremost Sufi leaders on the world stage. Shaykh Ahmad Al-Khudari, who came to Amman from Syria about six decades ago and is still unknown to most Jordanians, is considered by many Sufis to be a *qutb* of Sufism for this age.

The Shadhili-Yashruti Order, for its part, is hugely influential in the Comoros, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon. The Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order, meanwhile, has branches and *murids* in many countries of the world. Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi is the shaykh of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order in the Levant. With its shaykhs and *zawiyas*, Jordan has thus become a regional and global center and exporter of Sufism.

## 3. The sway and spread of the orders

The determinants of a Sufi order's strength or weakness are numerous, but we have observed that the orders vary in their level of openness vs. closure, renewal vs. tradition, rigidity vs. adaptability,

and cohesion vs. splintering. The more capable an order is of opening up to society and interacting with it, rather than receding into the *zawiya* or traditional, classical rhetoric, and the more it capable it is of renewing and reviving its structure, discourse, and content, as well as adapting to developments in society, remaining cohesive, and avoiding rifts and conflicts, the more likely it is to endure, spread, and have influence. The inverse is also true.

The Ba'Alawi Order, for example, seems to be the most open order with regard to orders, *zawiyas*, and *da'wa* and educational action. The Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, meanwhile, offers a unique model of adaptability and interaction with society and changing discourse. The order is weakened, however, by insufficient financial resources, disagreements that have occurred at some point and weakened its cohesion, and the departure of the order's shaykh to live in Turkey.

On the other hand, Shaykh Nuh Keller's *zawiya* and the Shadhili-Darqawi Order have endured and been influential despite the shaykh's strict adherence to principles and traditions, and the absence of openness, renewal, or change. That is due to Keller's authority as a shaykh with a global following, as well as the order's cohesiveness and financial resources.

With regard to the general mindset of orders and *zawiyas*, we find that the Shadhili Order is generally focused on spiritual advancement and internal clarity, which are not strongly intertwined with *da'wa* or social action. It also favors a traditional relationship between shaykh and *murid*. Nevertheless, it is the most widespread and present among the traditional orders in Jordan.

The Jordanian Rifa'i Order focuses on the reality-bending acts, considered to be minor miracles, known as *kharq Al-'adat* and *karamat*. Its *hadras* appear less disciplined than Shadhili *hadras*, which hold participants to strict orderliness. The Rifa'i Order has benefited greatly from immigration, especially from Syria, which has supplied its *zawiyas* with *murids* and shaykhs. For example, the Sayyadi *zawiya* in Jwaideh, the followers of Shaykh Mahmoud Al-Durra, and

some scattered gatherings, all of which are linked to shaykhs who came to Jordan after incidents in Syria.<sup>434</sup>

The Qadiri Order is one that has experienced a marked decline in recent decades. Despite the spread of associated *zawiyas*, its activities and reach seem limited and weak.

As for the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order in Jordan, it is mainly characterized by openness to society, attraction of the younger generation and new arrivals, renewal of its discourse, and strong openness and adaptability to global developments, such as the rise of energy healing and proliferation of people seeking spirituality and meaning.

The Shadhili-Yashruti Order, despite its generally isolation within the Sufi landscape, is also characterized by development and renewal of thinking and content, and even form. But in the view of other Sufis, it seems to have reservations about relationships with other Sufi orders, and it is associated with particular families.

The Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani Order stays far away from Sufi heterodoxies, and it emphasizes more than one focus. The first is scholarship and *shari'a*, and the second is social action that brings the order and its adherents out of the *zawiya* into the social and *da'wa* space. On the other hand, the order has upheld family as a consideration, namely the Al-Sharif family, which has retained leadership of the order through the generations, similar to the Yashruti Order.

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<sup>434</sup> One topic that perhaps has not been studied in depth is the impact of Syrian and Palestinian migration on the religious environment in Jordan generally and on the Sufi landscape particularly. After 1948, a considerable number of adherents of the Sufi orders in Palestine moved to Jordan, and the same happened after the war in 1967. As for Syrian immigration, it has profoundly impacted Sufism in Jordan due to the pervasiveness of Sufism in the daily culture of Syria. This phenomenon encompasses immigrants from the Muslim Brotherhood, those affected by the war in Syria in the early 1980s, and the thousands of recent Syrian migrants now in Jordan. The other side of the coin is the return of Jordanians from Kuwait in the early 1990s, carrying with them various modes of Salafi thought.

In the *zawiya* of Shaykh Muraweh, the Rifa'i Order maintains Rifa'i and Sufi traditions and does not demonstrate openness or adaptability to the general environment. Its strength, however, is in its moderation and focus on legal science, as well as the active influence of both Muraweh and Dr. Muadh Said Hawwa.

As for the succession of generations, a new generation of leadership is ascendant in the Jordanian Sufi orders. Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib's successor is his son Al-Mutasim, Shaykh Abdul Halim Qadiri's successor is his son Muhammad, and Shaykh Abdul Hafiz Al-Nuwayhi's successor is his son as well. Thus, it is expected that Hazem Abu Ghazaleh's successor will be his son Yusuf, and that Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif's successor will be one of his sons. It is already known that Dr. Ali Al-Yashruti, the son of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Yashruti, is the next successor to that order.

There is also an ascendant generation of leadership other than the sons of Sufi orders' sheikhs. At the forefront are Al-Ma'arij Institute Director Shaykh Awn Al-Qadoumi, Jihad Al-Kalouti, Hassan Abu Arqoub, Muhammad Al-Juhani, and Ahmad Al-Sawi. Shaykh Fawaz Al-Tabba' is shaykh of a Rifa'i *zawiya*, and Muhammad Sabih is shaykh of a Rifa'i *zawiya* in Aqaba.

Geographically, the centers of Sufism appear to be mainly in Amman, then Irbid, and then Zarqa and Russeifa. The culture of Sufism has spread in some northern governorates, especially in Ajloun, despite the orders having only a minor presence. In the south, both Sufi culture and the Sufi orders are very weak, and there are few Sufi *zawiyas*.

The Shadhili Order has spread through Amman and Irbid, and it has a presence in certain other areas, such as Sahab and Madaba, thanks to a few *zawiyas*. The Filali Order is concentrated today in the Kafr Yuba *zawiya* of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh. As for Shaykh Al-Filali's *zawiya* in Zarqa, his son Muhammad's health no longer allows for activities there. And while Shaykh Al-Tabiri's *zawiya* in Amman has remained open, its attendance and reach are very limited. The Shadhili-Momani-Urabi *zawiya* in Irbid has a notable presence, and

the order has *zawiyas* in Sakhra in Ajloun Governorate, in Sahab, and in Madaba. Shaykh Said Al-Kurdi's *zawiya* in Al-Husn Camp and Al-Sarih are now led by his son, Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi.

Despite his old age, Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh still maintains contact with his murids and admirers, and his sons are working to continue his approach, although his son Yusuf is more inclined toward "shari'a-bound Sufism." In western Amman, the *zawiyas* active today are the Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmanis in Bayader Wadi Al-Seer, the Yashrutis in Al-Jandawil, and the Haqqanis in Jabal Amman.

The Rifa'is historically had a presence and dissemination in eastern Amman thanks to both the Al-Rawwas mosque and *zawiya* and the *zawiya* of Shaykh Abu Yaqub Al-Sarafandi. It is also present in Zarqa-Russeifa, and in Mafraq to a limited extent.

## Chapter four

# Niches Within Sufism: Community, Women, and Culture

*“From the start of the path, visions begin, so that even  
when awake they see angels*

*and the souls of the prophets, and they hear voices and  
learn from them.”*

*Al-Ghazali, Deliverance from Error*



In this chapter, we will move on from the way Sufism manifests in its lodges, orders, *hadrās*, shaykhs, and students, to the deep-seated ways it takes shape in society. We will explore the changes happening among Sufis, women's Sufism in Jordan, and even areas that may not appear on the surface to be a direct part of Sufism's influence and impact on culture, literature, song, and art.

We will look for the impact and influence of Sufism outside the *zawiya* (lodge) and the *hadra* (ritual gathering), in the areas of thought, culture, and society. How does a person who is Sufi differ from one who is not in terms of creed and daily behavior? What is the pattern of religiosity among Sufis? Are we talking about a single version of societal Sufism, or are there numerous and diverse modes, degrees, ideas, and cultures?

And then, what about Sufi women? How do they get involved in Sufism? What does it mean to be a Sufi woman or traveler (*salik*) on this path? How large and widespread are Sufi orders and culture in Jordanian women's circles?

There is an observable Sufi influence on the arts, especially Islamic *nashid* (chanting), an art form that has morphed into singing. Sufism has also made inroads in recent years into the world of novels, literature, and poetry in Jordan.

In Topic 1, we will go deeper into the Sufis' stories and the path they are traveling: How do they learn of the path of Sufism? What are the most important signposts on this path? What does it mean to be a Sufi? What are the characteristics of the Sufi community?

In Topic 2, we will move to an extremely important subject, women's Sufism, to examine the extent and nature of Jordanian women's participation in the Sufi community. We also get to know some examples of Jordanian Sufi women.

In Topic 3, we learn about the manifestations of Sufism in literature, culture, and the arts, fields that may not have direct bearing on the strength of Sufism as some researchers measure it, but paradoxically may be more influential and effective than the existence of Sufi *zawiyas* or lessons.

## TOPIC 1

### “I AM SUFI”

The common stereotypical image of Sufism is limited to the *hadra*, dervishes wearing the woolen robe known as the *khirqa*, and the *majdhub*, the “divinely attracted” madman in the street. This short-handling of Sufism is unfair on more than one level. The *hadra*, dervishes, and *majdhub* are not just images linked to a “pro” or “anti” social stance that accepts or rejects Sufism; such psychological and societal conceptions are linked to something deeper it appears on the surface. Sufism is more than this stereotype: it has philosophical, psychological, cultural, and societal dimensions.

Many people who hold this stereotypical idea may be surprised that Sufism (molded in the above framework, which Sufi orders and behaviors helped reinforce) is a wide-ranging school rooted in Islamic history. Many figures, luminaries, and leaders in the religious, intellectual, and scholarly arenas are affiliated with Sufism, and we do not have the space to explore them here, but the important thing is to liberate our thinking about Sufism from this shorthand, stereotyped conception.

In this topic, we will present the stories and journeys of travelers on the Sufi path – Sufis we interviewed to learn how they see the path. We will also try to explore some of the landmarks and features of the world as the Sufi sees it, or the Sufi’s psychological, societal, and cosmic identity.

#### 1. The path to Sufism

Tales about Sufism in Jordan are varied and diverse, but one of the most important factors that led many individuals to Sufism is that they grew up in a Sufi family. This may seem natural, a result of family influence and socialization, but the issue is not so simple. Many of them tried other paths, then returned to Sufism. Importantly, this is not inevitable or a general rule; we find that many children of

shaykhs and leaders in Islamic movements have chosen other orders and pathways. With Sufism, however, family socialization seems to be deeper, more impactful influence.

Abdullah (an alias) worked as a corporate accountant before starting down the path of Sufism and building a strong relationship with Shaykh Nuh Keller of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Allawi Order. Although his father was a Sufi close to Shadhili shaykhs such as Shaykh Muhammad Sa'id Al-Kurdi and Nuh Keller, Al-Rawi decided that his father's Sufism should not be his only option.<sup>435</sup>

About his journey, Abdullah says: "I learned about the Salafis, and I found that they are interested in the reform of external, visible things (*Al-zahir*). They are not concerned with the reform of internal, unseen things (*Al-batin*). They observe the sunna in their clothes and lifestyles, but there is no educational interest in *Al-batin*. I spent some time with the Brotherhood, and I found that they do not address purification and refinement of the self. I had more and more questions."<sup>436</sup>

For Abdullah, then, Sufism was embodied in the figure of his father. Although he tried seeking out other options, he found none. He remained reluctant to "wear the same garments" as his father until he became convinced of the path through his father's behavior and spirituality, and not as an inheritance. One story that Abdullah told us: "We had a big store in the Jabal Amman area. In the late 1990s, we went through difficult economic circumstances. My father was sick, and we got into a cycle of debt, and my brother and I didn't want to tell him. When the problems piled up to the point where we were stuck, we decided to tell him. I went in to see him, and he was absorbed in *dhikr*. I sat near him, and opened his eyes and looked at me. He said angrily, 'Someone whose Lord is God is afraid? Go back to work.' I was stunned and confused. How did he get the message without me speaking? He was completely unaware of the financial

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<sup>435</sup> Interview with Abdullah in my office at the University of Jordan, 14/3/2020.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

crisis we were suffering. I said to myself, this man is 'linked directly to God.'"<sup>437</sup>

Dozens of situations similar to the one with Abdullah's father led him onto the path of Sufism. He tells a story that happened in 1994 at the store: "My father usually turned his back to the door as a precaution against looking at women. A man came in and asked my father, 'Sir, do you have a pen?' My father answered 'No,' even though there were pens. It was extremely important to me that my father did not lie, and so I was shocked at his response. I asked him, 'Why didn't you give him the pen?' He said, 'My son, he intended to harm a Muslim with it.' I followed the man to a place far out of our line of sight, and I found him in a fight with someone. He wanted to take down the number of the other person's car and make a complaint against him. I wondered to myself, 'Who told my father about this?' We do not know him, and they were far away from us, and my father never came out into the street at all!"

His father was a major influence on him, his first teacher on the Sufi path and a role model of morals and conduct. But Abdullah's Sufism was an individual pursuit, and he was never inclined toward the Sufi orders until he met Shaykh Nuh Keller in 2008. He says: "What led me to Shaykh Nuh was not just my father's ties to the Shadhili Order, or my brother. I sensed great spirituality and sincere commitment in him, and I felt truly at ease when interacting with him. He is firmly committed to the sunna; you could not find a practice from the sunna that he does not keep, including even the abandoned ones. He began his *zawiya* in Amman in 1996 in his home and in the houses of *murids*(students) and admirers, before building a *zawiya* a few years ago and a big mosque nearby."<sup>438</sup>

Abdullah took *bay'a*, the pledge of initiation and allegiance, from Shaykh Keller in 2012, after nearly four years of commitment to the order and the *zawiya*. *Bay'a* involves making a pledge before God to keep the general *awrad* (litanies) – consisting of asking forgive-

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

ness 100 times, praying for the Prophet 100 times, and saying “There is no god but God” 100 times – to adhere to mandatory and recommended rules, to avoid forbidden and offensive acts, and to read the Qur’an and the Hizb Al-Bahr daily after the afternoon prayer. Those who take *bay’a* are also expected to perform the Shadhili *wazifa* (a type of spiritual exercise) when able, as well as a prayer for the Prophet known as the Salutation of Mashish,<sup>439</sup> and to command the right and forbid the wrong and provide counsel for every Muslim. Another stage is instruction in Al-Ism Al-A’zam –God’s “greatest name,” i.e. Allah– and reciting that 100 times a day.<sup>440</sup>

Wafa is the son of a family belonging to the Shadhili-Yashruti Order; his father and grandfather were “people of the order.” He was born in 1957 in the village of Tubas, in a house beside a *zawiya* that his grandfather bestowed to the Yashruti Order, and so he grew up seeing the *zawiya* and knowing what it meant. He then migrated with his father to Jordan after the Six-Day War in 1967, and there he began a phase of gradually distancing himself from the order and then from religion in general. He had a love for philosophy, and he recalls that he read William Durant’s book *The Story of Philosophy* when he was 15. Deviating from philosophy, he studied Arabic in university and then worked as an editor at the *Sawt Al-Sha’b* newspaper before it closed.<sup>441</sup>

He says: “I returned to the order, but I approached it with rationality and moderation, influenced by my study of philosophy. God opened for me the unseen (*fath*), and I now mix rationality with knowledge of the Divine.” (He amends this by saying that it was not an actual “opening,” merely a devoted dervish.)<sup>442</sup>

We note that he dedicated his doctoral dissertation to Shaykh Ahmad Al-Yashruti, saying: “To the sun of the Absolute Truth and the

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<sup>439</sup> The Salutation of Mashish is named for Abd Al-Salam Mashish, one of the most prominent shaykhs in Sufism and the shaykh of Imam Abul Hasan Al-Shadhili. It is a daily litany for the Shadhilis and the source of the Shadhili-Yashruti *wazifa*.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Interview with him in my office at the University of Jordan, 27/2/2020.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

human being, to the one who prompted me to undertake this study, encouraged me to persevere through it, and stayed by my side at every stage ... until this dissertation resulted from it. To my Shaykh at God's side, and my Professor who instructed me in God's path: Ahmad Muhammad of the attributes, the guide to the sun of the Divine Essence ... Yashruti in method and rule, knowledge and science ... Shadhili in approach, source, pathway, and name." We also see that the dedication in his master's thesis says: "To my Imam and Shaykh, Ahmad "Muhammad Al-Hadi" Al-Yashruti, who taught me by pen what I did not know about the precise meaning of *mahabba*: love of God, and love of the tokens of God in His creation."<sup>443</sup>

Whereas both Wafa and Abdullah were from Sufi families, Ali (an alias) – a man in his 30s who has a bachelor of business administration degree from the University of Minnesota in the United States – is from a family that is religious but not Sufi. He is a friend of Abdullah's at Nuh Keller's *zawiya*, but he previously tried out several Islamic disciplines. He used to pray at a mosque near his home where the Muslim Brotherhood had the greatest presence, and he was very close to that group, participating in their mosque and athletic activities.<sup>444</sup>

He did not find a fit for himself in the Brotherhood or Tablighi Jamaat, where he went after the Brotherhood, and so he sufficed with praying at the mosque and a religiosity lacking in any particular ap-

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<sup>443</sup> See Wafa Al-Sawaftah, "Al-Madrasa Al-Shadhiliyya Al-Yashrutiyya"; op. cit., dedication. Also Wafa Al-Sawaftah, "Nazariyyat Al-Hubb Al-Ilahi 'ala Lisan Al-Din Ibn Al-Khatib wa-l-Shaykh Ali Nur Al-Din Al-Yashruti" ("The Theory of Divine Love According to Lisan Al-Din Ibn Al-Khatib and Shaykh Ali Nur Al-Din Al-Yashruti"), Dar Al-Basha'ir, Damascus; First Edition, 2012; dedication. Wafa chose Suad Al-Hakim, a well-known professor deeply versed in the sciences of Sufism and especially Ibn Arabi, as the supervisor for his doctoral dissertation. Dr. Al-Hakim knew Fatima Al-Yashrutia, daughter of Shaykh Ali Al-Din Al-Yashruti personally. Wafa's dissertation is titled "The Shadhili-Yashruti School and its Sheikh, Ali Nur Al-Din Al-Yashruti." His master's thesis, "The Theory of Divine Love According to Lisan Al-Din Ibn Al-Khatib and Shaykh Ali Nur Al-Din Al-Yashruti," was supervised by the well-known philosophy professor Dr. Fehmi Jadaane.

<sup>444</sup> Interview in my office at the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, 14/3/2020.

proach. He went to the United States to study and felt that God was looking after him, which prevented him from giving up religion. He then returned to Jordan and came to feel a great internal urgency to seek a spiritual guide whom he could have confidence would lead him to the right path.

He says: "I met a Sufi during this period, and he told me that Sufism is good. I was surprised because the traditional idea that I had about Sufism was different. Whenever I brought up an allegation against the Sufi people, he would refute it. He even brought me a book by a Sufi shaykh, Muhammad ibn 'Alawi Al-Maliki, responding to those criticisms, and Shaykh Muhammad Said Ramadan Al-Bouti's book *Al-Salafiyya Marhala Zamaniyya Mubaraka La Madhhab Islami* ("*Salafi*": *A Blessed Epoch, Not a School of Thought*). During that phase, which lasted three years, I let go of Salafi intellectual hegemony and intentionally chose to pray at Saleh Abu-Goura Mosque, where Shaykh Nuh Keller prayed. I observed him and his actions and behavior, and during those years I saw no act or behavior or talk that bespoke anything worrisome. I gradually made my way closer to Shaykh Nuh until my Sufi friend came to me and said, 'Isn't it time?' I told him, 'Yes, the time has come.'" Starting in 1998, he began to frequent the old *zawiya* at Shaykh Keller's house.<sup>445</sup>

Among those we met, Ali was not alone in having been influenced by Salafi thought. Abdullah was one of the young people committed to Salafism in the city of Mafraq. They were introduced to Sufism through the well-known Syrian wing, meaning that they were influenced by Muhammad bin Nayif Surur Zayn Al-'Abidin, a Salafi sheikh who emphasized the need for Salafis to take an interest in politics. This is in contrast to traditional Salafi currents, and it shows the influence of Sayyid Qutb's concept of *hakimiyyah* (God's sovereignty), which promotes an Islamic state in which God is the ultimate source of sovereignty and law. As a result, Ali left the international organiza-

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

tion he worked for in the camps for Syrian refugees in Mafraq because of the Sufi tendencies of the organization's leaders.<sup>446</sup>

But how did he make the move from Salafism to Sufism? Abdullah told us the story: "My becoming Sufi was not a matter of a friend's suggestion that changed my mind, or that one of the prophets –God's blessings and peace upon them– spit in my mouth in a vision. The shift I made was a step-by-step cleansing process."

He gradually began to change his Salafi thinking and abandon his negative attitude toward Sufism "during my postgraduate studies in the Faculty of Shafi'i Fiqh (at World Islamic Sciences and Education University). I went to a lecture on the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) of personal spiritual states, and it was preceded by a lecture by Shaykh Muadh Hawwa. Written on the board were all the allegations, suspicions, and criticisms directed at Sufism. Next to me was a friend who was one of the senior *murids* of Shaykh Mahmoud Muraweh, and he told me that the next day there would be a gathering in Russeifa at Shaykh Muraweh's *zawiya*.<sup>447</sup>

"I went to the gathering, and Dr. Mohammad Al-Najjar was there reading from a book on *tazkiya* (purification of the self). Shaykh Mahmoud delivered a commentary on speech, and one of the things he read was that speech is like a merchant's goods. The merchant sells the goods he has, and likewise, speech reveals the attachments in your heart. Someone who is attached to this life will speak about this life. Someone who is attached to the hereafter will speak about the hereafter. Someone who is attached to God will speak about God ... Here I was listening to the shaykh speak, and I didn't know whether what was flowing through my body was blood or electricity! His words were more than a sermon, they were the definition of truth. With the utmost discipline, I managed to hold myself together despite an indescribable sense of happiness. After we finished the lesson, he handed out the poem Al-Burda, and we began to chant it."

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<sup>446</sup> Letter to the researcher explaining how he made the move to Sufism, dated 12/6/2020.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

After that, Abdullah decided to travel the Sufi path of *tazkiya*, “so that I would not be deprived of religion in the name of religiosity. The first sheikh who taught me his path was a Sudanese scholar named Ahmed Daoud. After that, I began to read and take an interest in Sufi books about religious science, jurisprudence, and creed.”<sup>448</sup>

Omar also was brought up on Salafism, in Saudi Arabia. After he returned to Jordan, he maintained his Salafi ideas, but he began his exit –still ongoing– from Tablighi Jamaat. He then was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood until meeting Shaykh Dr. Muadh Hawwa. Omar says: “I had finished university about 10 years ago, and I met Shaykh Muadh Hawwa. Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi asked him, ‘Would you advise him?’ Hawwa bowed his head, then lifted his gaze and gave me a piece of advice about something no one knows except God. It was very moving, and he ‘caught’ me. After that, I started attending his lessons at Al-Awwabeen Mosque in Sweileh (near the Highway Patrol Department), then I began to go with him to the *zawiya* in Russeifa, where the shaykh was Mahmoud Muraweh. He used to be a professor and a director at the Education Ministry, and he retired and opened a *zawiya* in his home.”<sup>449</sup>

“I was greatly influenced by Shaykh Muadh’s personality. Thanks to him, I went from chemistry to studying shari’a, and I received a scholarship to study jurisprudence at the Islamic Sciences University, where he taught. I completed my master’s degree, and now I hope to get a scholarship to complete my doctorate.”<sup>450</sup>

“I kept going to Shaykh Muadh’s lessons and to the *zawiya* for a while. Then I decided to take *bay’a* with Shaykh Muadh. I couldn’t make up my mind between him and Shaykh Mahmoud, and I chose him. Before that I had thought about Shaykh Mahmoud, but he would not take *bay’a* if either he or the *murid* saw visions. That did not happen, so I took it with Shaykh Muadh. It was *bay’a* in the Rifa’i-Alawi Order.”<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Interview with him at his home in Tila’Al-Ali, op. cit.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

We note that the individuals in the above examples shifted to Sufism from some other form of religiosity, such as Salafism, the Brotherhood, or even Tablighi Jamaat. Or they grew up in Sufi homes, and so it was no great leap in their lives. Meanwhile, there are other cases in which we find that a particular incident, most often visions in a dream, turned a person toward Sufism, as one adherent of the Shadhili-Yashruti Order tells about his brother. The brother kept his distance from the order, despite the fact that their home had long been a Shadhili-Yashruti one. At some point, the shaykh asked his brother to examine the plans to finish building the *zawiya* and look at some engineering errors that had occurred. He says: "When my brother went in to see the shaykh, he came out as another person. He went back to religious observance and the order. Although we had been trying with him for a long time, he had not listened. But as soon as he saw Shaykh Al-Yashruti he began to tremble, and his life was changed." What did he see? His brother refused to say, because this is one of those secrets between a person and God.<sup>452</sup>

Abu Al-Yusr, a Naqshbandi-Haqqani shaykh in Jordan, has a similar story. Although he was from a family that was by both Qadiri descent and spiritual affiliation, he kept his distance from Sufism and did not know about *dhikr* *hadras* until he had a dream where he saw himself at a *hadra*, with a handsome sheikh, at Prophet Muhammad's tomb. These visions moved him, and he asked his brother about nearby *hadras*. His brother told him about one of them, and that was the first time he went to a *dhikr* session. When he entered, they were repeating "Allah," and there was a dignified shaykh giving the seated attendees water. He was shocked to see the very man he had seen in his dream, with the very same smile on his face. He asked the attendees, "Who is that?" They were surprised that he did not know that the shaykh was Shukri Al-Luhafi, one of the most well-known shaykhs and elders in Damascus.<sup>453</sup>

Abu Al-Yusr's tale resembles several narratives and stories from people who have followed the path of Sufism throughout Islam-

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<sup>452</sup> Interview with him in my office at the University of Jordan, 27/2/2020.

<sup>453</sup> Interview at his home in Jabal Amman, op. cit.

ic history. They saw visions in dreams or were influenced by a particular incident that changed their lives. As for Mustafa and Bassam of the Shadhili Order, their turn toward Sufism began when they were in the Armed Forces, when they heard about *dhikr* session in Amman and Zarqa. When they witnessed the *hadras*, their hearts were immediately struck by love for the path. Mustafa describes the scene at the time –in the early 1970s– as though they were in the era of the Companions. His life turned upside down after he began to frequent Shadhili Sufi gatherings. He started learning the Qur'an and *fiqh*, and he left the Armed Forces for an Islamic legal science institute and studied there, then became an imam. During that period he assiduously pursued his commitment to the Shadhili-Momani Order, and he was close to the sheikh of the order at the time, Abdul Karim Al-Momani.<sup>454</sup>

Like others, Khalid was influenced by Salafi culture when he was young. Then, during his university studies in Canada, he went through a phase of searching for spirituality. During that time, he explored Buddhism, Franciscan Catholicism, and energy healing, but they all pushed him to investigate whether similar things existed in Islam.

During his search, he became acquainted with the book *The Forty Rules of Love* (*Qawa'id Al-'Ishq Al-Arba'un*), from which he saw that the things he was looking for were present in Islam. That was the starting point for his interest in learning about Sufism, and he found online that there was a Sufi organization in the city in Canada where he was living (probably Montreal). He went to visit the group, and there he learned of Shaykh Nazim Haqqani's Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order.

He learned about order-based Sufism and started attending *dhikr* gatherings. He was approached about taking *bay'a*, but he hesitated to do so. He went through an internal debate and was inclined to maintain his individual practice of religion. He realized later, however, that this self-talk was due to egotism, and he asked God to point

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<sup>454</sup> Interview with Mustafa Abu Rumman and Bassam Al-Nimr, op. cit.

him in the right direction. Then, he saw Shaykh Nazim Haqqani in a dream. The shaykh was wrapped in a jubbah, and the colors green and purple were wafting toward him. The shaykh asked him in his dream, "Why did you come here?" Then he went on: "If you want to be on the path, learn *tazkiya*. You can learn *tazkiya* from any spiritual school, such as Buddhism or any other." Khalid answered that he wanted to fill his heart with love of God Almighty and Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him), and the shaykh responded that he knew the right answer. After that, Khalid went to the shaykh and took *bay'a*.<sup>455</sup>

## 2. *Khalwa*: The secret to transformation

What does it mean to be Sufi? It is an important question, but there is no one prescription applicable to everyone. There are those who dive into Sufism without abandon and completely transform their lives, as in the case of Mustafa and Bassam, who have spent half a century, i.e. most of their lives, in Sufism. When asked what Sufism means to them, the answer is brief: It is our life. That is understandable, because Sufism is ultimately a religion, a creed, behavior, and a daily way of life. But for associates of the Shadhili Order, it is more than that. In addition to the religious commitment, and the daily *awrad* they keep, it is the shaykh, the order, the *zawiya*, the fellowship of the path, and the community of brothers, which intersect in spiritual and intellectual partnership throughout one's lifetime.

The processes of initiation into the path of Sufism and moving forward along it vary from one order to another. In all of the orders, however, the key is religious commitment, adherence to religious obligations, avoidance of prohibited things, and observance of the order's daily *awrad* and obligations.

The shaykh of orders generally divide followers into several categories. The first category, and the majority, consists of the admirers (*muhibbun*), those who come to *dhikr* sessions and participate in *hadras* but chose not to commit. The second category is the *murids*,

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<sup>455</sup> See Muadh Na'il Al-Musalha, "Al-Mutasawwifun Al-Judud," op. cit.

who maintain a connection to the *zawiya* and consistently attend the order's *dhikr* sessions and *hadras*. They may pledge *bay'a* with the shaykh, but the order is part of their life only to a certain extent. The third category, the smallest one, is the travelers (*salikun*), who pledge *bay'a* and show a serious commitment to the order. Some become shaykhs, and they have a deep, strong relationship with the order's sheikh and other adherents.<sup>456</sup>

A crucial inflection point in the Sufi path is *khalwa*, which varies from one order to another and is no longer practiced by some orders. *Khalwa* used to last 40 days, during which the *murid* or *salik* would be almost entirely cut off from the outside world, diligently engaged in *dhikr*, silence, and worship under a shaykh's supervision. As depicted in Sufi literature, it is an important stage in stripping the self of worldly ties and appetites, and replacing them with remembrance of and absorption in God. In Sufi terminology, this process is likened to the step-by-step processes of a water treatment plant.

The majority of the Sufi orders today recognize *khalwa* for individuals who are well advanced on the path, and it is linked to the shaykh becoming convinced that the *murid* is ready for this "transitional moment." For instance, a person may enter *khalwa* under Shaykh Nuh Keller only after completion of a 40-day trial. Abdullah explains this requirement: "The *salik* must not become angry within these 40 days, because anger is the root of evil and problems. He must engage in constant meditation on God (*muraqaba*) and adhere to the five daily prayers at the correct times. He must commit to avoiding lies, forbidden acts (*muharrramat*), and anything else that is prohibited. In other words, I would fully prepare myself and my spirit for *khalwa*. Some *murids* call this the '40-Day Regimen,' because you watch your tongue and do no harm to others by speaking badly about them in their absence or spreading negative things about them."<sup>457</sup> Ali, on the other hand, failed for five years to enter *khalwa* because he was unable to meet those conditions for a 40-day period.

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<sup>456</sup> Interviews with Shaykh Muadh Hawwa, Ismail Al-Kurdi, and Fawaz Al-Tabba', referenced above.

<sup>457</sup> Interview with Abdullah, op. cit.

Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif really takes his time before deciding to send a *murid* into *khalwa*, for which he often substitutes daily *awrad* and seclusion among adherents of the order, along with commitment to worship practices and forms of obedience. And in Shaykh Al-Yashruti's order, there is no *khalwa*.

### What happens in *khalwa*?

The shaykh instructs the *murid* in the required *awrad* and *dhikr*, with specific formulations the shaykh teaches the *murid*, and the way in which the *murid* will perform the *khalwa*. Then, the *murid* usually goes into an isolated, partially darkened room. There is sometimes a person who serves the *murid* by bringing him food while in *khalwa* and checking whether he needs anything. The *khalwa* usually takes place in a small room within or adjacent to the *zawiya*. The *murid* subsists on an austere diet and does not speak with anyone during this period.<sup>458</sup>

Although most of those who talk about *khalwa* avow that it had a major psychological impact on them, greatly changed the course of their lives, and was a turning point for them, they refuse to talk about what they saw while in *khalwa*. That is considered a "secret" between a servant and his Lord that the former reveals only to the shaykh, who sits with him after his period of *khalwa* ends and explains many of the things that happened to him, such as visions and signs seen by the *murid*.<sup>459</sup> As the well-known Sufi sayings go, "Our secret thoughts are maidens that shall not be deflowered by someone's imaginings," and "The breasts of free men are graves for secrets."<sup>460</sup>

Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi recalls the *khalwa* of one of his friends under the guidance of Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-Shaghouri at the latter's *zawiya* in Damascus. His friend insisted on visiting the shaykh, so they traveled together to Damascus. When that person met the

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<sup>458</sup> The subject of *khalwa* is of great importance in Sufi literature, and most books on Sufism have established rules and principles for it. For example, see Shahab Al-Din Suhrawardi, *'Awarif Al-Ma'arif*; op. cit., p. 123-136.

<sup>459</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, op. cit.

<sup>460</sup> For example: Abu Al-Qasim Al-Qushayri, *Al-Risala Al-Qushayriyya*; op. cit., p. 125.

shaykh, he urgently requested to go into *khalwa*, and the shaykh could find no place for him except the laundry room attached to the shaykh's servant's house. Shaykh Ismail says: "Our friend sat in there for three days, during which I was his servant. During *khalwa*, you do not speak with the one who has isolated himself, and no one speaks with him. You just set down the food, and he remains by himself, practicing remembrance of God as the shaykh has instructed him. I noticed that he wasn't eating the food. On the third day, I went in to him, and he said God's majestic name in a loud voice and fainted. I was in a panic, and I took off in my car to see Shaykh Al-Shaghouri and tell him what had happened. He was calm and told me, 'Sit down and drink some coffee. Then we'll go to him. Don't worry.' The shaykh went to him and sat with him, and they said *dhikr* together. Then he came out of *khalwa*, a man speaking in a new way. Although he had never composed poetry and had absolutely no experience doing so, he composed a poem about his *khalwa* and sent it to me." The poetry he wrote about the mysteries of his *khalwa* goes as follows:

*They lifted the veil that blocks nearness to God (tadani), and  
power of expression fell away from me  
It showed me, from my being, a sun that illuminates meanings.  
The Law came into view and shed light on me in my station.  
My path is long but tangible, now that I have rectified my spirit,  
For in truth, I contained the deepest secret of the way,  
And so I am elevated above the veil that obscures complete devo-  
tion.*<sup>461</sup>

Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi states that when Shaykh Al-Shaghouri instructed him in saying "Allah" and he entered *khalwa* in the shaykh's house, the shaykh came to check on him. He was going through spiritual states that caused him to dissociate completely from what was happening around him, and Al-Shaghouri came to sit

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<sup>461</sup> Interview with Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, op. cit.

next to him and held him. He does not remember whether this happened on the third day of his *khalwa*.<sup>462</sup>

Al-Shaghouri himself composed a famous poem about *khalwa* after he did it under the guidance of Shaykh Muhammad Al-Hashimi Al-Tilimsani. It is titled “The Curtains of Between Have Been Lifted” (“Rufi’at Astar Al-Bayna”), and it speaks of the spiritual illuminations and unveilings, as Sufism puts it, that a person achieves with spiritual and intellectual exercises during *khalwa*, including silence, sleep deprivation, *dhikr*, and hunger. He says in the poem:

*The curtains of between have been lifted, and the lights of Oneness have appeared,  
Revealing themselves without any “where,” so be witness to them,  
O Sufis!  
I am the mirror of my Beloved. My spirit, in His love, embrace goodness;  
My spirit, from other than him be absent, and cast aside vile things.  
Since He appeared in these places of vision, I have been bowing and prostrate,  
Thankful and praising Him, for He enveloped me in His Essence.*

### 3. “A world inhabited by spirits”

All religions involve spirits and a world of the unseen. In Islam, it is called *‘alam Al-ghayb*, the world of the invisible and imperceptible, that which is linked to God, and is also populated by angels, other creatures, and the souls of prophets and the righteous. But in Sufi theory specifically, and in the lives of Sufis, the presence of unseen beings is more intense, more prevalent, more profound. It occupies considerable territory in a Sufi’s outlook and perceptions of himself and his environs.

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

As we have noted, in addition to the well-known pillars of faith—in God, angels, books, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and fate—the saints (*awliya'*) have an important role in Sufi culture, on more than one level. First is the blessing, intercession, and miracles (*karamat*) that God grants them based on their stature. The foremost saint is the *qutb* (“axis”), who in Sufi literature is called the shaykh of the age. He is first among the saints and has “mystical knowledge” of God. He is acquainted with matters of *ghayb* in addition to important *karamat*, and his prayers are answered by God.

Most adherents of Sufi orders see their own shaykh as the *qutb* of the age, regardless of whether they are deceased or still living. We see that most clearly in two orders, the Naqshbandi-Haqqani and the Shadhili-Yashruti. This may be attributable to the fact that these two orders speak openly about *fana'* (“annihilation” in God) in the shaykh as heir to the Prophet and bearer of the secret of prophecy. The shaykh is therefore versed in God’s mysteries of the unseen and communicates with the angelic realm and the Divine Presence.

In the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, there is a firm conviction among all members of the order that Shaykh Nazim Haqqani is the *qutb* of our age, and that spiritual contact with him often helps adherents of the order achieve visions and telepathy. What one often hears from them is that they saw Shaykh Nazim doing such and such in a dream, or saw him while awake. They talk about the shaykh’s many *karamat*.

The situation is similar in the Shadhili-Yashruti Order. Fatima Al-Yashrutiyya speaks extensively in her books about the spectacular *karamat* of the order’s founder, Shaykh Ali Al-Yashruti, and *karamat* are a continuing, deeply rooted doctrine in Yashruti theory. One finds them using words like sublimity, magnificence, and splendor when speaking about their past sheikhs.

Other orders, such as the Shadhili-Darqawi-Allawi Order, apply the very same attributes and descriptions to their shaykhs, but more cautiously. This happens after the shaykh has reached an advanced age, or after his death. This is the case with Shaykh Abdul Rahman Al-

Shaghouri, highly esteemed among the adherents of his order, who see in him the traits of the *qutbghawth*. They speak of his *karamat*, which are often associated with the mystical sciences and divine emanations of majesty, dignity, and insight, more so than with the ability to carry out supernatural acts (*kharq Al-'adat*). The Rifa'i Order, on the other hand, is characterized by *kharq Al-'adat*. Its *qutb* and shaykh in particular can withstand being pierced with a sword or walking into fire without suffering harm.

After the *qutbghawth*, there are other, successive ranks of saints, including the *awtad* (pillars), *abdal* (substitutes), *nujaba'* (nobles), and other designations linked to the hierarchy and composition of *'alam Al-ghayb* in Sufi theory. The *abdal* specifically are the objects of interest in Jordanian Sufism, which may owe to the many hadiths indicating that the Levant is the homeland of the *abdal* in every age. This means that identifying them, and the discussion about them, revolves around questions such as who, among the existing saints, is an essential part of Sufi interests.

In the ranks of saints, the *abdal* come after the *qutbghawth* and the *awtad*. They are described as "men of *Al-ghayb*" close to God, and they are called substitutes because if one of them dies, someone else takes his place, so that the number of *abdal* remains constant. For the most part, many Sufis tend to believe that there are 40 *abdal*, based on accounts attributed to the Prophet. In conversations among Sufis in Jordan, it is often said that so-and-so is a saint and a *badal* (the singular of *abdal*), meaning that he has stature with God, his prayers are more likely to be heard, and he knows more than others about *Al-ghayb*. A possible story about the Prophet (scholars disagree about the reliability with which hadiths about the *abdal* can be traced to Muhammad) illustrates the Sufi conception of the *abdal* and their role and status: "The *abdal* are in Syria, and they are 40 men. Whenever one of them dies, God substitutes another man in his place. Through them, God brings the rains, grants victory over enemies, and diverts evil away from the people of the land."<sup>463</sup> The adherents of

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<sup>463</sup> On the debate about the validity of hadiths about the *abdal*, see, for example, Shaykh Mohammed Said Ramadan Al-Bouti's lesson, "The *Abdal* of Syria: =

Sufi orders categorize the orders' shaykhs into descending ranks, with the *qutbghawth* at the top. Most shaykhs of orders are counted among the *abdāl*.

One saint extremely prominent in Jordanian Sufi culture is Al-Khidr (PBUH). A majority of Sufis in Jordan believe that Al-Khidr is still alive, and that he is the one who dressed the old shaykhs of orders in the characteristic Sufi cloak called a *khirqā*. They believe that Baha'uddin Al-Rawas met with him regularly, and he also appears in the visions dreams of many adherents of Sufi orders in Jordan. Al-Khidr is known to be a sign of goodness and mystical science, and a righteous man who serves as a guide to wisdom, the virtuous path, and the interpretation of events, as depicted in Sufi tales.

An important figure in Sufi theory is Al-Mahdi, whose emergence is linked to signs of the endtimes and the approach of the hereafter, as in prophetic accounts. He is the one who will stand with Isa ibn Maryam against the one-eyed Dajjal when the last battle takes place between the people of faith and good on one side and depravity and evil on the other. This narrative is not limited to Sufism or even to Islam: similar stories appear in the other monotheistic religions, where the battle is called Armageddon.

Returning to the place of Al-Mahdi in Jordanian Sufi culture, Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi, the sheikh of the Haqqani Order, had previously prophesized, like his shaykh Nazim Haqqani before him, that Al-Mahdi was due to emerge years ago. This prophecy failed more than once. We mentioned earlier that Shaykh Haqqani himself spoke about King Abdullah II of Jordan and King Mohammed VI of Morocco as ministers to Al-Mahdi and commanders in his anticipated army. Shaykh Haqqani famously called on King Abdullah II to take up the mantle of caliph of the Muslim world as a prelude to and as preparation for the appearance of Al-Mahdi and the final battle.<sup>464</sup>

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= Truth or Fiction?" at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y8ns49ox>; and on the other side of the debate, the wholesale rejection of the hadiths on *abdāl* by Salafis: "Hadiths on the *Abdal*," Islam Way: <https://tinyurl.com/y9xvuyqv>

<sup>464</sup> Nazim Haqqani, "Whose is the Throne of Syria," Shams Al-Shamus: <https://tinyurl.com/yys2sg>

Shaykh Haqqani is not alone in this. Some Jordanian Sufi shaykhs speak amid intimate audiences about the coming of Al-Mahdi. Some have gone to Medina to await his emergence, and others preach that it will happen soon. If there were any indication of Al-Mahdi's prominence in Sufi thought – on top of the fact that he is described as the final salvation and victory for Islam – it is the theory of the corrupted age. This theory, familiar in Ash'ari discourse, speaks of depravity that heralds the approach of Judgment Day and the end of the world. The most notable signs are 'Isa ibn Maryam's descent from heaven and the emergence of Al-Mahdi.<sup>465</sup>

For Sufis, the universe is divided into multiple worlds, which are variously associated with the Divine Essence, the unseen subtleties (angels, jinns, and souls), and visible beings. The latter is the *'Alam Al-Mulk*, and it contains humanity and other visible, perceptible beings. The important thing about these worlds in the Sufi mind is that they overlap, and there are no firm barriers or boundaries between them. Shakir Al-Kilani states that for Sufis, the worlds are stratified: The first and highest is *'Alam Al-Hahut*, linked to one of God's names, *Huwa*, meaning "He"; second is *'Alam Al-Lahut*, the name of which comes from "Allah"; third is *'Alam Al-Jabrut*, in which God's

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= Shaykh Haqqani says: "O scholars, I want an opinion from you on the caliph! I am a lowly servant, and I want us to take a caliph from Ahl Al-Bayt, the household of the Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him). He is now here ... You know what is happening in the holy land of Syria, which is the best of all Muslim homelands. The Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) says: 'When the great war comes, Muslims will assemble in a place called Ghouta, near a city called Damascus, the best of all Muslim homelands in that time' (*sahih hadith*). The people will gather there. The most worthy of all people for the Islamic caliphate and sultanate now is His Majesty King Abdullah. His name is Abdullah. Almighty God, clothe him in exaltation and diminish all obstacles before him. God bless him!"

<sup>465</sup> This theory is based on an account from the Prophet: "No time will come upon you but the time following it will be worse than it, until you meet your Lord." See Baha' Al-Din Muhammad bin Abdul Ghani Al-Bitar Al-Hallaj, *Al-Isharat Al-Ilahiyya fi Al-Tafsir 'ala Al-Tariqa Al-Sufiyya bi-l-Ishara wa-Sarih Al-'Ibara* (Divine Gifts for Interpretation of the Sufi Order Through Allegory and Explicit Terms), Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, Beirut; 2019, Vol. 1, pp. 58-63.

attributes and actions are manifested; fourth is *'Alam Al-Malakut*, the realm of illuminations; and *'Alam Al-Mulk*, the sensory world.

By means of *dhikr*, a human being can move from one world to another, progressing gradually in the elimination of worldly, physical, and material barriers and attachments to go from *'Alam Al-Mulk* to *Al-Malakut*, then to *Al-Jabrut*, then *Al-Lahut*. Moreover, in everyday life, these worlds are reflected in a Sufi's perception and interpretation of events. If a person comes and gives him 100 dinars, for example, and this is linked to *'Alam Al-Mulk*, he thanks the man. If it is linked to *'Alam Al-Jabrut*, he sees it as a manifestation of one of God's names, *Al-Razzaq*, the Provider.<sup>466</sup>

Similarly, a person's everyday life is linked to multiple worlds. When a person dies, it is said, in the language of Sufism, that he has "departed," i.e. that he left this world for another world, but his soul continues to exist. This is especially true when talking about the sheikhs of Sufi orders, whose spirits the adherents of their orders see in their lives, visions, and dreams. Returning to the shaykhs of the Sufi orders, when they leave one place for another, they do so after receiving signs and messages. For the most part, they do not go anywhere without having scrutinized signs and messages coming from *'alam Al-ghayb*.

Visions and dreams –the difference between them being that visions are closer to divine signals from *'alam Al-ghayb*, while dreams reflect the esoteric world and are not necessarily reliable– have particular importance in Jordanian Sufi culture. Many Sufis are interested in the interpretation of dreams. While the famous Sufi rule is that one may heed dreams but should not rely on them in making judg-

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<sup>466</sup> Interview with Shakir Al-Kilani, 15/6/2020. With regard to the worlds of Sufism, see, for example, Shaykh Ali Gomaa's opinion on the five worlds, namely *Al-Mulk*, *Al-Malakut*, *Al-Rahamut*, *Al-Jabrut*, and *Al-Lahut*. According to Gomaa, a human being has five energy centers (*lata'if*) reflected in these worlds: the heart (*qalb*), the spirit (*ruh*), the secret (*sirr*), the mystery (*khafi*), and the most mysterious (*akhfa*). Some Sufis believe that rays of energy are linked to these *lata'if*, with a different color for each. Reference the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9fujgmh>

ments, they have a clear presence and influence in the Jordanian Sufi landscape. Some followers of Sufi orders go so far as to say that they have seen, in their dreams, a shaykh accepted or sanctioned by the Prophet or a major saint, and some have split from their orders on this basis.

Current or past shaykhs of orders often appear in the visions and dreams of adherents of Sufi orders. One Sufi woman saw Shaykh Nazim Haqqani after his death. He was near her, looking at her, and between them were rays of a particular color. Another person was dressed in Sufi garb by Haqqani in a dream. Another had visions of the adherents of the order and himself bringing tidings of the shaykhdom from the Prophet. There are those who see the Prophet in his human form, while others see him as light. Some see visions not only while sleeping but also in a state between sleep and wakefulness.<sup>467</sup>

For some adherents of orders, the worlds also become intertwined through *ruqya*, the practice of reading the Qur'an over a sick person in order to heal the person or protect him or her from evil caused by magic, sorcery, or the evil eye. Sufis accord *ruqya* varying levels of attention. Some rely on it heavily in interpreting events, while others downplay its importance and impact on daily life and the interpretation of his or her surroundings. As a matter of course, these beliefs and practices also tie in to popular culture and other religions: they are not exclusive to Sufism. The Salafis also practice *ruqya*, and other religions have similar practices. But here we are trying to investigate Sufism and Sufis' beliefs, culture, and conceptions of what is happening in the world around them.

One notable Sufi practice is visiting the graves, tombs, and shrines of saints. This is something that Sufis are always concerned with doing, and while in those places they pray to God and ask God's help through the intercession of the saints. The masters of Sufi orders make regular visits to these tombs, whether those of prophets

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<sup>467</sup> Some of these stories are from sources previously referenced, and some are from interviews the researcher conducted with Sufis.

(Shuaib, Joshua, Lot) or saints and companions (Abu 'Ubaidah 'Amir ibn Al-Jarrah, Shurahbil ibn Hasana), or to Mosque Cave of the Seven Sleepers. This is an area of disagreement between Sufis and Salafis. With regard to seeking favor from the Righteous by way of gaining access to God, Salafis generally reject the practice and even consider it polytheistic. Sufis, meanwhile, seek blessings and to get closer to God by invoking the saints and their intercession.<sup>468</sup>

Suffice it to say that the vast majority of Sufis in Jordan believe in the existence of saints and the righteous, the hierarchy of saints, visions, Al-Mahdi, and Al-Khidr (PBUH). But there are clear and obvious differences among them with regard to the prominence and influence of *'alam Al-ghayb* in daily life, the interpretation of events, and interactions with others.

The Ahl Al-Bayt, the family of the Prophet Muhammad, is of particular importance to Sufis in Jordan. We have noticed that the shaykhs of Sufi orders generally strive to link themselves to the Prophet's lineage, often taking the title Sharif to indicate descent from Hassan ibn Ali. This is nothing new. Most major Sufi shaykhs have likewise linked themselves to the clan of Hashim due to the honor and reverence given to Ahl Al-Bayt and the blessings available through them according to Sufi beliefs.

#### 4. "People of the order" and the *zawiya* community

The Sufi orders vary in their level of openness to society and in the shaykh-*murid* relationship or the relationship among *murids*. Past Sufi literature is known to be full of talk about the shaykh-*murid* relationship and "companionship" (*suhba*) among the *murids*. Past names for the *zawiya* included terms like *ribat* (from the root word for "connection"), *khanqah* (from the Persian for a place of companionship around a table), and *takiya*.

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<sup>468</sup> For example, see Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh's visit to the Shrines of the Companions: <https://tinyurl.com/yakofxrw>; and Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif's visit to the grave of Prophet Joshua ben Nun: <https://tinyurl.com/ydx5fhom>

In some orders, the shaykh's relationship to the *murids* takes on profound spiritual dimensions, as is the case with Shaykh Haqqani's relationship to the adherents of his order, despite the fact that his followers number in the millions around the world. Even so, many Jordanians have stories of communicating with him, taking *bay'a* from him, and a warm spiritual relationship between them. This is also the case at the *zawiyas* of Nuh Keller, Husni Al-Sharif, Ahmad Al-Yashruti, and Mahmoud Muraweh, where we find significant spiritual relationships and ongoing interaction among adherents of the order, the *zawiya*, and the shaykh.

The daily *awrad* are typically read at Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif's *zawiya*. As for Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh, his *zawiya*'s location in his village facilitates a mingling of family and clan relationships with the spiritual and religious side.

Nuh Keller's *zawiya* is distinctive for the presence of many foreigners coming from abroad to study the order and legal science with the shaykh, as well as the students of legal science who help him teach. Keller calls the relationship among adherents of the order *suhba*, and he visits with adherents in various countries of the world on a continuous basis. Dozens of the shaykh's *murids*, especially those from abroad, live in the area adjacent to the mosque and *zawiya*. The shaykh himself lives nearby, facilitating communication and strengthening relationships among the community of the order.

*Zawiyas* and orders also vary in the degree of interaction and communication among adherents. Within a single *zawiya* and order there may be divisions like concentric rings – a small circle of those close to the shaykh, then the general *salikun*, then admirers and *murids* in the most expansive circle. Family relationships, whether by blood or by marriage, often arise from this intellectual and spiritual convergence.

Naturally, the shaykh's relationship with his *murids* is a singular one in Sufi culture, but it often takes on profound spiritual dimensions and at times may go too far. Shaykh Keller thus stresses the importance of maintaining the "community of the *zawiya*" and conti-

nuously reviews those close to him. Some orders and *zawiyas*, on the other hand, are marked by disagreements, schisms, and distant relationships. Some shaykhs are known for being strict and severe, while others are flexible and easy-going with *murids* and adherents of the order.<sup>469</sup>

The relationship among the community of an order usually is not limited to the *zawiya*. A member may invite adherents of the order to a religious gathering of celebration and blessing at his home. This may occur on religious occasions such as the Prophet's birthday, the commemoration of the Hijrah from Mecca to Medina, or other religious events, or even personal occasions such as the birth of a son.

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<sup>469</sup> An observation from interviews the researcher conducted with Sufis. The interviews are referenced above.

## TOPIC 2

### WOMEN'S SUFISM: SHAYKHAS IN THE SHADOWS

The subject of women in Sufi literature is a singular one. There are many well-known female Sufis and ascetics, and women appear in Sufi literature and poetry as a symbol of divine love, which we also find in most Sufi poetry, old and new. Similarly, women have a real, impactful presence in Jordanian Sufism, but they so far remain in the shadows.

There are several forms and levels to women's Sufism in Jordan. The first is women's associations or women's divisions of some Sufi associations and institutions. The second is the women who are active in certain *zawiyas*, especially Nuh Keller's *zawiya*, the Yashruti *zawiya*, the Nasqhbandi-Haqqani *zawiya*, and certain *zawiyas* designated for women's activities, as with one of the *zawiyas* affiliated with Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh. Then there are also the Sufi women within Sufi men's families, such as the wives, sisters, and daughters of the shaykhs of Sufi orders, and finally female Sufi preachers who are active in the community.

#### 1. The Tabbā'īyyat: Their order, school, and *da'wa*

Tabbā'īyyat is a term given to a group of female *murids* (students) and disciples of Al-Hajjah Fadia Al-Tabbā' (or Miss Fadia, as she is called). She is from a wealthy family of Syrian origin, and she went to school in Beirut. She was a *murid* of Al-Hajjah Munira Al-Qubaysi in Syria, so the Jordanian Tabbā'īyyat group is considered an extension of the Al-Qubaysiat, which Al-Qubaysi founded in 1933.<sup>470</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Munira Al-Qubaysi had a degree in natural sciences. She began teaching in the Damascus neighborhood of Muhajireen. In the early 1960s, she began to engage in *da'wa* (proselytism) as well as educational action because of her proximity to the Abu Nour Mosque of late Syrian mufti Ahmad Kuftaro, who was close to the Syrian regime and President Hafez Al-Assad. Because Al-Qubaysi was active in *da'wa* as well as teaching, she was barred from teaching in government schools. The general orientation of the Syrian regime in the 1980s and early 1990s =

Al-Qubaysiat is a Sufi women's movement that emerged in Syria. It grew and spread in a remarkable way in the 1980s, and it enjoyed the support of Shaykh Ahmed Kuftaro, the grand mufti of Syria and a follower of the Naqshbandi Order. The movement is restricted to women only. It started with lessons organized in homes until the women were allowed to operate openly in 2006, and at that time they began holding lessons and lectures in mosques.<sup>471</sup>

The components and structure of the Jordanian Tabba'iyyat movement are like those of the Al-Qubaysiat organization. Al-Tabba' started her movement in Jordan during the second half of the 1980s. She initially formed a small nucleus of *murids* and gave lessons in her home, but with the rapid spread of the movement, the lessons moved into *murids'* homes. She then founded the Development and Social Services Association, which gave rise to Al-Dur Al-Manthour Schools in the Khilda neighborhood of Amman. They are Islamic schools that are co-ed in the lower grades, then girls-only in the middle and upper grades, and they operate in Amman and Zarqa. Al-Khamael Islamic Schools, consisting of kindergarten and primary schools, emerged later on.<sup>472</sup>

In pursuing their activities, the Tabba'iyyat take great care to avoid the media and the spotlight. They also assiduously maintain a great deal of secrecy in their dealings with others, under various pretexts, which has created uncertainty in understanding and reading the group. Some information comes from those who have left the

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= was that anyone engaged in *da'wa* should not be involved in teaching in government schools. This was due to the events of the 1980s following the clash between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood, which continued to cast a shadow on the relationship between the regime and the public. This expulsion from teaching made Al-Qubaysi more receptive to learning under Shaykh Kuftaro and caused her to shift toward studying Islamic legal sciences at the Damascus University Faculty of Sharia. Thereafter, Al-Qubaysi began pursuing her own *da'wa* activities and established a structurally, financially, and ideologically independent approach while remaining loyal to the first shaykh who instructed her, Kuftaro. See Laila Refaai, "Al-Qubaysiat: A 'women's' religious organization that does not admit men," Al Jazeera Net, 8/5/2017: <https://tinyurl.com/y7whjt7h>

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

group's auspices, who offer more information. One such individual is Umm Ahmad (an alias used at her request), a Syrian woman who initially became familiar with Al-Qubaysiat in Syria, where her teacher at school was a member. When she entered university in the 1980s, her teacher contacted her and asked her to attend lessons for women because she was a top student, and the teacher wanted to bring her into the Qur'an memorization and religious education sessions. Umm Ahmad made a commitment with her teacher and gradually became part of Syrian Qubaysiat circles. She began to study religious sciences with them and was active in recruiting female students from Syrian universities into the group.<sup>473</sup>

When Umm Ahmad got married, she moved to Amman, and there she learned about the Jordanian Tabba'iyyat. Umm Ahmad saw that the Tabba'iyyat were an extension of Al-Qubaysiat in terms of ideas and organization, but the Jordanian case differs from that in Syria, where the movement was much more popular and accepted as a result of the deeply rooted Sufi culture in society.<sup>474</sup>

Umm Ahmad stayed with the Tabba'iyyat for about two decades, before deciding to leave the group. She had disagreed with the "Ladies" (Tabba'iyyat teachers) about ideas that influenced her via another Sufi woman who held a *dhikr* circle and lessons in her home. The Tabba'iyyat considered this an affront to the movement, even though Umm Ahmad had reached an advanced station in the movement and was one of its most prominent teachers.<sup>475</sup>

Umm Ahmad emphasizes that the Tabba'iyyat insist on privacy, verging on secrecy, in their work, believing it best to work far from the spotlight and thus "closer to God." The internal structure of the Tabba'iyyat resembles concentric rings, starting with the nucleus around Fadia Al-Tabba' and those close to her. Then come the Ladies, who give lessons in homes. The students make up the outer rings.

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<sup>473</sup> Private interview with Umm Ahmad in the suburb of Al Rashid, 3/5/2020.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

On the whole, the Tabba'yyat are concerned with religious education and preaching. The movement is active among university students and has a distinct presence among middle-class women. According to Umm Ahmad, however, this was not intentional so much as a product of the movement being more accepted among religious middle-class women.

Like the Qubaysiat, the Tabba'yyat can be distinguished by their clothing. They wear navy blue jalabiyas and a white head covering. The movement intentionally pursues engagement with women's society through lessons, lectures, and social events such as weddings, wakes, and so on. They also participate in religious occasions at home, such as Mawlid (the Prophet's birthday) and other celebrations. Nevertheless, the group is selective in inviting women to attend private lessons and gatherings. Thus, there is a distinction between the public lessons to which many women may be invited on a Saturday or Thursday, and the private lessons for those specially chosen to be part of private gatherings for study and instruction.<sup>476</sup>

The focus on creed, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and conduct applies to students and members, and the students study books in the religious sciences and books on thought. Umm Ahmad says that she completed all the books included in the levels of study in "Tabba'yyat councils," including books on hadith, prophetic biography, and *fiqh*, such as *Women Around the Messenger (Nisa' Hawla Al-Rasul)* and *Men of Thought and Da'wa in Islam (Rijal Al-Fikr wa-l-Da'wa fi Al-Islam)*.

The Ladies are committed to groups of students, to give them lessons in religious sciences and attend to their daily *awrad* (litanies) of prayers, religious obligations, and supplications. The relationship between the Ladies and their disciples takes on significant spiritual dimensions, and the students become attached to the Ladies, even if the students are older. This prompted Fadia Al-Tabba' to adopt a policy of changing out the Ladies responsible for students every so often to avoid serious attachments.

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

Intense commitment is the hallmark of the Tabba'iyyat, along with attention to worship, conduct, and education in Islamic law. As for the Naqshbandi Order, it is not an explicit component of the organization, in the sense that members do not take *bay'a*, the pledge of initiation into a Sufi order, nor is it spoken of openly in Jordan. But the order's *awrad* and ideas are incorporated into the work of the Tabba'iyyat, albeit indirectly, so the Tabba'iyyat have no *zawiya* or *hadras* (ritual gatherings) similar to those of other Naqshbandis.

If a member has a disagreement with Miss Fadia or someone close to her, she is cut off and usually labelled as a "dissident sister" in allusion to her departure from the "established approach." The Tabba'iyyat have influenced hundreds, perhaps thousands, of women, and the founding of the Al-Dur Al-Manthour Schools has helped to promote the culture of the organization and to impact and attract the younger generations. The Tabba'iyyat are particularly active in Amman, Zarqa, and Irbid.

## 2. The women's wing of Sufism: *Zawiyas*, institutes, and orders

Women's Sufism is not limited to the Tabba'iyyat. Today, new religious institutes play an important role in networking among educated Sufi women. This includes Al-Hawra' Institute, affiliated with Al-Ma'arij Institute for shari'a Studies, which attracts educated women in particular. The shari'a and religious action within Al-Hawra' correspond completely to what the men do. Various lessons in shari'a are offered for women, and they participate in *da'wa* and educational work as well as the general activities of Al-Ma'arij, such as the Khu-waisa Forum we discussed earlier and Rabi'Al-Muhibbeen. In addition to the male shaykhs and teachers recruited to Al-Hawra' Institute, highly educated women participate in teaching and scholarship around shari'a, as well as in the administration.<sup>477</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Interview with a supervisor at the institute, 5/5/2020. Also the Al-Hawra' Institute Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yb7zoaxq>

Al-Hawra' Institute has developed its activities and events, and it has begun holding a morning gathering that includes breakfast at a women's cafe. This is a new method of *da'wa* in which a religious lesson is given by a practitioner of *da'wa*— male or female — and there is a discussion with the women in attendance.

There is also the Zohrat summer camp for young girls. Considerable interaction with the community can be seen on the Al-Hawra' Institute Facebook page, as can the institute's ability to attract many women involved in *da'wa*, especially the daughters of Sufi orders' shaykhs. The institute has become a Sufism-inflected incubator for scholarly and *da'wa* work.

Although there are other institutes teaching legal science to female students, focusing on aspects of *fiqh* and scholarship, Al-Hawra' Institute is different. The overall character of the institute leads many of the women, indirectly, to join the Ba'Alawi Order due to the impact of the institute's leadership and "the Habibs," influential shaykhs from Yemen. Nevertheless, the institute always emphasizes that it does not promote any particular order and is committed to Sufism as a general methodology. It also recruits shaykhs from various schools of Sufism, and non-Sufis as well. But regardless, the impact of shaykhs such as Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, Dr. Ahmad Al-Sawi, and visitors from Yemen, like Omar bin Hafiz, has led to this outcome.<sup>478</sup>

Al-Rawda Al-Sharifa Mosque in Tila'Al-Ali also offers a space for women's Sufism through lessons, prayers for the Prophet, and gatherings to read Al-Burda, a 13th-century ode to the Prophet Muhammad. These are organized for women at the mosque, whose imam, the shaykh Dr. Ahmad Al-Sawi, is a prominent successor of the Ba'Alawi Order in Jordan.

Another group active in women's Sufism is the women's wing of the Arab Islamic Cultural Society (479AICS). The women of the Ri-

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<sup>478</sup> Interview with a teacher at Al-Hawra' Institute, 2/5/2020.

<sup>479</sup> See an interview with the Hashimi women's ensemble on Jordanian television, the program Youm Jadid, 21/8/2011: <https://tinyurl.com/ybgjcddc>

fa'i-affiliated AICS are remarkably active in classes on Islamic sciences. A women's *nashid* (Islamic chanting) ensemble has been established, the Al-Hashimi Ensemble for Reviving Heritage (there is also a men's ensemble by the same name), and it has put on hundreds of religious concerts. There is also an AICS *nashid* ensemble for children. The leaders of AICS emphasize the female leadership, teachers, and *da'wa* practitioners who belong to AICS and are active in the community.<sup>480</sup>

In addition to these frameworks for women's Sufi action, women are broadly active in *zawiyas*. Dozens of women usually attend the Friday *dhikr* session at Shaykh Nuh Keller's *zawiya* in Amman Sports City. There is a special place for women on the upper floor, and Shaykh Keller's wife plays a major guidance role with women. There are also classes at the *zawiya* for women, particularly those coming from abroad with their families and husbands to join the order and study under Shaykh Keller.

There is a women's presence at the Yashruti and Khalwati-Jami'a-Rahmani *zawiyas*, and in the Haqqani Order, especially at the *dhikr* sessions with Umm Maryam. She holds *dhikr* sessions in several homes and is active in bringing believers to God, and she has many *murids* (male and female). Umm Maryam is originally from Acre, born in 1978, and has a bachelor's degree in sociology from the Hebrew University. She committed herself to the Naqshbandi Order and took *bay'a* with Shaykh Nazim Haqqani, and she married Shaykh Abdul Salam Shamsi. She later moved to Amman. Umm Maryam has written *idhn* (authorization) from Shaykh Nazim Haqqani and his son and successor, Muhammad Adel, to lead others on the path in the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order in Jordan.

There are also many shaykhas and women granted *idhn* by the shaykhs of orders to hold *dhikr* sessions, including wives, sisters, and daughters of the shaykhs of Sufi orders in Jordan. These women include one of the daughters of Shaykh Ahmad Al-Radaydeh, Al-Hajjah

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<sup>480</sup> Interview with Shaykh Dr. Mazen Ghanem, vice president of the Arab Islamic Cultural Society, op. cit.

Umm Al-Ragheb, who received instruction in the order from Shaykh Abdullah Al-Sabahi, as well as other women active in Sufi *da'wa*. For the most part, the sessions they lead are held in the women's homes or the homes of women close to them.

### 3. On the Sufi path: The women of Al-Hawra' Institute

Umm Ahmad was committed to the Tabba'yyat for nearly two decades and advanced within the group to become one of the Ladies, giving lessons in preaching and guidance. Before that, she had started with Al-Qubaysiat. In Al-Hajjah Umm Al-Ragheb, who was instructed in the Shadhili Order by Shaykh Abdullah Al-Sabahi, Umm Ahmad found a different model. Umm Ahmad began attending the other woman's lessons once a week, but her relationship with Umm Al-Ragheb led to her departure from the Tabba'yyat when they discovered Umm Al-Ragheb's influence on her. They were especially concerned about Umm Ahmad's study of *Al-Hikam Al-'Ata'iyya*, a book that Fadia Al-Tabba' and her disciples reject. She began attending Shadhili *dhikr* sessions and Mawlid observances led by Umm Al-Ragheb, who explained *Al-Hikam Al-'Ata'iyya*, *Al-Qushayri's Epistle*, and *'Awarif Al-Ma'arif*, among other famous Sufi books.

Some time later, Umm Ahmad learned about Al-Rawda Al-Sharifa Mosque and attended a recitation of Al-Burda with Shaykh Ahmad Al-Sawi. She was deeply moved by the faith she perceived in the climate. She then met Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi at the Al-Ma'arij Institute and was influenced by their approach to shari'a science, instruction, and *da'wa*. She committed to the approach and became a teacher at Al-Hawra' Institute, affiliated with Al-Ma'arij.

Describing the many phases she passed through in the course of two and a half decades, all in women's religious action, Umm Ahmad says that the Tabba'yyat introduced her to *da'wa* and worship, Umm Al-Ragheb to spirituality, and the Al-Ma'arij Institute and Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi to the legal science of *tazkiya* (purification of the self) and conduct, plus new concepts and illuminating openings. Umm Ahmad later committed to the Ba'Alawi Order after attending lessons and lectures by Shaykh Omar bin Hafiz during his

visits to Jordan. She says that in the Shadhili Order, she learned love of God, and in the Ba'Alawi Order, love of His Messenger, Muhammad.<sup>481</sup>

Masarra, who is 32, earned a master's degree in Islamic sciences, in English, from the University of Jordan, having previously earned a bachelor's degree in pharmacology. She worked as a pharmacist after graduating from the University of Jordan. During her studies at the university, she had been content to study and memorize the Qur'an.

Masarra did not feel that her pharmacy work fulfilled her ambitions: there was something spurring her toward another purpose in life. One day, friends invited her to the Qiyam Al-Layl extra nighttime prayer at Al-Rawda Al-Sharif Mosque in Tila'Al-Ali. She was taken with the atmosphere there and noticed that the imam was reciting poetry between prostrations and seemed intensely spiritual. She was surprised when the mosque itself announced a free course on shari'a sciences, and she signed up for it and started going to the mosque every Saturday.

Masarra felt that she had been looking for something, and here she had found it. She said, "This is the knowledge I want," and she continued to take the lessons on shari'a after quitting her job as a pharmacist and deciding to complete her studies of Islamic sciences at the University of Jordan. Al-Hawra' Institute got started during that period, so she went to work there and discovered a strong sense of belonging.

Masarra began to hear comments from people around her that this shaykh –Awn Al-Qaddoumi– was Sufi and that gatherings for prayer on the Prophet are *bid'a*, i.e. an impermissible religious innovation, not part of Islam. But she did not find the criticisms valid or convincing, and during those years she continued her pursuit of the legal sciences traceable to Muhammad and the generations immediately following him. She studied many books under the instruction of masters, and she began to feel a great emptiness when she did not

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<sup>481</sup> Interview with Umm Ahmad, op. cit.

go to Al-Hawra'. Masarra dove deeper into her shari'a reading list and committed to daily *awrad*. In addition to legal books on *fiqh Al-tahawwulat*, the jurisprudence of transformations, she took classes on legal science. She also took lessons on creed and jurisprudence, and she read Muhammad ibn Alawi Al-Maliki's book *Concepts that Must Be Corrected (Mafahim Yajib an Tusahhah)*, a rebuttal to many of the objections against Sufism. She and her family traveled by air on the Umrah pilgrimage with the Al-Ma'arij Institute.

She sees her real journey as having begun with the institute. Her life has changed completely, not because she had the sense of a shaykh-*murid* relationship within the institute but because of the focus on religious sciences and conduct. Today, she is an activist at Al-Hawra' Institute.<sup>482</sup>

Tasnim recalls what her maternal grandfather, an '*arif*' (a knower of God), used to say: Wherever you find your heart, pitch your tent there. Her path toward Sufism started with the influence of her grandfather, who was visited by many scholars and *da'wa* practitioners. She participated with him in the religious events he attended, but she heard no talk of Sufism at home, where Sufism was a practical reality and way of life, not something that was regularly discussed or mentioned.

The turning point came when she entered university, at the Faculty of Da'wa and Fundamentals of Religion. Tasnim began to learn more about the religious and political trends out there, and to examine the push and pull between them. Outside of university, she committed to lessons in the Hanafi school of jurisprudence with Dr. Salah Abu Al-Hajj at Anwar Al-Ulama' Center to study legal texts, and she diligently continued those lessons for several years.

Tasnim then began to learn about the philosophy of the Habibs in Yemen through Habib Muhammad Al-Saqqaf, who used to visit her grandfather. She was impressed by the Habibs' intellectual approach, morals, and ideas. She followed them persistently and worked with Habib Muhammad on the Revival of Sunna project. During that pe-

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<sup>482</sup> Interview with Masarra at Al-Ma'arij Institute, 5/5/2020.

riod, she began working at a major publishing house for books, and she remained there for five years until enrolling in a master's program in Islamic jurisprudence at the World Islamic Sciences and Education University.<sup>483</sup>

Tasnim became more deeply convinced of the Habibs' approach during that period because it combines a legal science, behavioral piety, and spirituality while steering clear of the excesses seen among some Sufis. They sit while reading *Al-Burda*, they study, and they pray to God. Tasnim found her heart with them and pitched her tent there, just as her grandfather advised her.

After that, she moved to Dar Al-Mueein Publishing and Distribution, affiliated with the Al-Ma'arij Institute, and she started participating actively in designing programs for Al-Hawra' Institute, and in planning activities and teaching there. She teaches *fiqh Al-tahawwulat*, having studied under Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi and been influenced by his instruction in the subject. She has also been influenced by the Habibs' and Al-Qaddoumi's ideas and values, which are based on reinforcing common denominators within the worldwide Muslim community and reviving the essence of the individual.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> On Al-Saqqaf's Reivival of Sunna project, read the following report: "'Follow me': A program to revive the Prophet's sunnas during Ramadan," Al Watan Online, Saudi Arabia, 1/8/2011:<https://tinyurl.com/yd7sjdks>

<sup>484</sup> Interview with Tasnim at Al-Ma'arij Institute, 7/5/2020.



### TOPIC 3

## “INVISIBLE” SUFISM: LITERATURE, CULTURE, ART

It would be a grave mistake to measure the strength and magnitude of Sufism in quantitative terms, as is the case with other Islamic parties or movements. The very nature of Sufism means that it refuses to be framed and constrained in this way.

Perhaps the most important areas where we must be conscious of Sufism’s impact are the cultural, literary, and artistic fields. Sufi tendencies are plentiful in novels and poetry, and in the culture generally. Sufism is most palpable, however, in Islamic chanting (*nashids*), which permeates many aspects of social life, such as Mawlid and social occasions like weddings. The art form of chanting is in turn based on the various genres of Sufi poetry.

In the previous chapters, we addressed Sufism in terms of cultural and social heritage, then Sufi orders and *zawiyas*, and later in social life such as schools, universities, and institutes. In this section, we will address the invisible or indirect side of Sufism by taking a brief tour through the fields of novels, poetry, and art.

### 1. Sufi manifestations in Jordanian literature

It would take another study or book to explore and investigate the Sufi influence on Jordanian literature. My conversation with a friend, the novelist Mohammad Hasan Al-Omari, has created a deep debate among literary writers about some aspects of Sufism in Jordanian literature. This includes the story of the “inward” spiritual experience of one of Jordan’s most important literary writers, Mu’nis Al-Razzaz. His confessions were published in the newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, in which he spoke about the Sufi “illuminations” that happened to him. Meanwhile, citing Laith Shubeilat, Al-Omari affirms that both Mu’nis Al-Razzaz and Tayseer Sboul – another major Jorda-

nian novelist – experienced Sufism through their involvement in the *zawiya* then led by Shaykh Hazem Abu Ghazaleh.<sup>485</sup>

Al-Razzaz and Sboul had short-lived experiences in Sufism and did not continue on the path, as those close to them confirm, and perhaps it did not make an obvious impact on their literary production. On the other hand, the Jordanian novelist and literary writer Yahya Al-Qaisi (b. 1963) has devoted a considerable portion of his output to the Sufi experience and spirituality in general, and to deconstructing the world of secrets and strange phenomena. This is clearly evident in his novel *Bab Al-Hayra* (*The Door of Uncertainty*, 2006) and the novels that followed in the course of more than a decade: *Abna' Al-Sama'* (*Children of Heaven*), *Al-Fardus Al-Muharram* (*Forbidden Eden*), *Ba'd Al-Haya bi-Khatwa* (*One Step Beyond Life*), and *Hawiyat Sahiqa* (*Ancient Turns*).

In *Abna' Al-Sama'*, Al-Qaisi writes about an encounter between a Sufi shaykh from Aleppo and the protagonist of the novel, who is weighed down by spiritual and intellectual questions and has been through an experience that changed the course of his life. In the novel, Al-Qaisi goes into experiences with energy healing, spirituality, and neo-Sufism. The protagonist eventually meets the “beloved” Sufi shaykh, who provides Sufi answers to existential questions.<sup>486</sup>

Al-Qaisi weaves his other novels out of inspiration from the Sufi experience and his exhaustive, in-depth readings in the field of Sufism. The ultimate outcome is a book critical of Ibn 'Arabi's thinking in his view of the Prophet.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> With regard to this debate about the experiences of some novelists with an interest in Sufism, refer to Mohammad Hasan Al-Omari's Facebook post titled “A strange, Sufi day ... from Tayseer Sboul to Mu'nis Al-Razzaz,” 7/5/2020: <https://tinyurl.com/y98xhhmn>

With regard to Mu'nis Al-Razzaz's experience in Sufism, see Yahya Al-Qaisi, “Iluminations: Shaykh Mu'nis Al-Razzaz,” *Ad-Dustur*, 9/2/2010.

<sup>486</sup> Yahya Al-Qaisi, *Abna' Al-Sama'* (Children of Heaven); Arab Institute for Research & Publishing, Amman; First Edition, 2010, pp. 143-180.

<sup>487</sup> For more about Sufism in Al-Qaisi's novels, see the following reports: =

One literary figure whose contact with Sufism is both academic and personal<sup>488</sup> is Dr. Amin Yusuf Odeh, a professor of Arabic literature who wrote his doctoral dissertation about Ibn 'Arabi and has published several books and studies on Sufism. These include "Interpreting Poetry and Its Philosophy in Sufism: Ibn 'Arabi,"<sup>489</sup> "Esthetics of Expression and Content in the Sufi Epistle: Epistle on the Qualities of the Authentic and Most Complete Attentiveness to the Majestic and Exalted Truth by Abu Al-Ma'ali Sadr Al-Din Al-Qunawi."<sup>490</sup>

Dr. Odeh's *Book of Stations and Subtleties* makes clear that he was influenced by the famous Islamic Sufi 'Abd Al-Jabbar Al-Niffari's writings *Stations and Addresses*. Odeh writes:

*He said to me, The way of those between me and you  
If you are you  
They shall have no fear nor shall they despair  
Leave yourself and come to me, and do not be concerned  
Beware if you see other than me  
For if you see other than me  
The stone sleeps in your hands while I am in the depths.  
Those who came before climb mountains of light  
And ascend to red domes without sides –  
How?! When I have no "where" to me, and no "how"  
In the domes are cushions of light and rubies...  
In the shadow, I stood up from my seat.  
I heard without ears. I saw without eyes.*

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= "Yahya Al-Qaisi: A novelist who lost the keys to salvation," Al Bayan, 25/4/2007: link. His interview about his novel *Abna'Al-Sama'* on the Roya TV program Dunya Ya Dunya, 8/5/2011: <https://tinyurl.com/y98ay6l9>  
Ibrahim Abdel Meguid, "New Book: *Al-Fardus Al-Muharram* by Yahya Al-Qaisi," Thaqafat, 22/5/2011: <https://tinyurl.com/yc3u3at9>

<sup>488</sup> Modern Book World, Irbid; First Edition, 2007.

<sup>489</sup> Interview with Dr. Amin Yusuf Odeh at his home in Amman Sports City, 2/5/2020.

<sup>490</sup> Modern Book World, Irbid; First Edition, 2015.

*The heart throbbed insistently ...*

*The heart lied not in what it saw, but it was rent asunder  
And I came to 'You will see, and they will see' ...*<sup>491</sup>

Among the poets inspired by experiences with Sufism and spirituality are Maha Al-Autoom and Tahir Diab. The latter transformed some of the poems in his collection *Hallaj Al-Waqt* ("The Miller of Time") into Sufi songs that have been performed by Nasr Al-Zoubi and the Syrian artist Bachar Zarkan.<sup>492</sup>

Others whose poetry bears the stamp of Sufism are the poet Zuhair Abu Shayeb, especially in his collection *Daftar Al-Ahwal wa-l-Maqamat* ("Book of States and Stations"), and the poet Ahmad Al-Khatib.<sup>493</sup>

One important figure in Jordanian Sufi literature, if not the most important, is Amin Shonnar (1933-2005), who has been described as one of the most influential figures in Jordanian and Palestinian literature in the 1960s. He was termed the "professor of a generation" because he was the editor in chief of *Al-Ufuq Al-Jadid*, or New Horizon, a magazine that drew young literary writers during that era. His novel *Al-Kabus (The Nightmare)* also tied with Taysir Sboul's novel *Anta Mundhu Al-Yawm (You Since Today)* to win the 1968 award for Best Arabic Novel given by *Al-Nahar* magazine.<sup>494</sup>

Shonnar's experience in Sufism began before the 1967 Six-Day War and was reinforced by the self-isolation he forced himself to undertake in the 1970s and lasting until his death. He secluded himself and preferred to avoid political and media circles, and he chose his

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<sup>491</sup> See Amin Yusuf Odeh, *Kitab Al-Mawaqif wa-l-Lata'if* (Book of Stations and Subtleties); Modern Book World, Irbid; First Edition, 2016, pp. 5-6.

<sup>492</sup> Arab Institute for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, 1993. To listen to his poem "Hallaj Al-Waqt" as sung by Bachar Zarkan, see the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycn3ve94>

<sup>493</sup> Interview with Dr. Amin Yusuf Odeh, op. cit.

<sup>494</sup> Ziad Ahmed Salamah, *Ustadh Al-Jil Amin Shonnar Darasa fi Adabihu wa-Fikrihu* (The Professor of a Generation: A Study of the Literature and Thought of Amin Shonnar); unpublished manuscript.

friends with extreme care. The influence of Sufism began to show itself more clearly in his literary output, poetry, articles, and plays. He continued to write for the newspaper *Ad-Dustur* until 1998, under his own name at times and under the name Juhayna at other times. He worked in Jordanian television in the 1960s and then was dismissed in 1972, after the Jordanian Civil War. For television, he wrote the series “Bab Al-‘Amud” and the program “Subhan Allah.” He also wrote many poetic skits and plays. Although he chose not to publish any poetry collections following his first, *Al-Mush‘al Al-Khalid* (“The Eternal Torch”) in the 1950s, he continued to write poems until late in life. His poems reflect his internal intellectual and spiritual dialogues.<sup>495</sup>

Jordanian researcher Ziad Salamah, one of Amin Shonnar’s students at Al-Aqsa School, wrote a book about Shonnar titled *Professor of a Generation* that is still in the manuscript stage. He also wrote another book compiling Shonnar’s poetry, which is as yet unpublished and runs about 1,000 pages. Salamah says that Shonnar was clearly Muslim from the beginning, but the impact of Sufism began to show clearly in his writing in 1970. The end of his novel *Al-Kabus* contains obvious indicators of Sufism.

Salamah notes that although Shonnar did not adopt any Sufi order in particular, he stringently shaped his conduct and life philosophy, in personal and literary terms, around the Sufi path, and he spoke to his students at the school about the concepts of love of God, losing oneself in God (*fana*), and clarity.<sup>496</sup>

If anyone can truly be called “the Bard of Sufism” in Jordan, it is indisputably Amin Shonnar. He composed poems that are astonishing in their manifestations of Sufism, and Sufism was his way of life, es-

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<sup>495</sup> See “He found his Uwais, carried the key to his home, and departed quietly – Amin Shonnar: A Sufi Muslim who believed in poetic modernity and the responsibility of the educated person for defeat,” *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 28/9/2005. See what was written about him: <https://tinyurl.com/y7gmyay7>

<sup>496</sup> Telephone interview with Ziad Salamah, 16/6/2020; also an article Salamah wrote on the Aslein online forum titled “Amin Shonnar slipped away without a fuss!”, 10/8/2008: <https://tinyurl.com/yd3uy2ey>

pecially after he chose to isolate himself and dissociate from other people.

True, the poems that reflect his maturation in Sufism came in the 1970s, but we can also perceive Sufi spiritual questioning in his earlier poem commemorating the birth of his son Amar in 1966, titled “Ila Waladi” (“To My Son”). Poems such as “Farah La Yantahi” (“Unending Joy”) and “Dimat Al-Nur” (“Pouring Light”) would come later, then the poem crowned by the fire of his Sufi passion, “Uwais,” along with many other poems.<sup>497</sup>

Anyone who reads any of Shonnar’s poetry cannot fail to detect the profundity of Shonnar’s Sufism, which mixed with a self-imposed exile from politics and the intellectual world. In his youth, he was a leader in the Islamist party Hizb ut-Tahrir and a poet writing about political struggle. Then he lived through the Naksa, Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War, which prompted him to migrate to Jordan. The Jordanian Civil War followed, he was laid off, and he decided to keep to his home. These circumstances created the environment for pure Sufi feelings abounding in significance and subtle connotations.

Some selections from his poem “Farah La Yantahi”:<sup>498</sup>

*The light of my mind? It is no longer with me,  
They stole my sandals while I prayed, and I took heed  
They tore my robe while I slept, and I screamed  
I said: Do I walk on their path  
Barefoot and naked?  
She said:  
The earth before you is your shoes, wear it  
My veil is yours, a robe to conceal you from their sight  
No, by my Lord!*

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<sup>497</sup> See Ziad Ahmed Salamah, *Al-Aa'mal Al-Shi'riyya Al-Kamila li-l-Ustadh Amin Shonnar* (The Complete Poetic Works of Professor Amin Shonnar), compiled, edited, and checked by Ziad Salamah; unpublished manuscript.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171-177.

*I am from the moment of warmth and calm  
 Until the oasis of my blessing!  
 I gave my body as a banquet to the hungry  
 I spilled my blood for the thirsty  
 We crossed the isthmus of light and made our way  
 Between drowning, confusion, fog and graves  
 I said, If the covering is lifted from the eye  
 It would be illuminated by its radiance  
 And its sins would not be committed  
 If...  
 I bowed my head a while...and before me were tears  
 I was alone on evenings of time  
 Her eyes take me up to her white balcony  
 My existence swells with gusts of breath in the blink of an eye  
 It increases with praise and remembrance of God  
 I cast my agonies at your door  
 I extended my sleeplessness  
 Sorrow became my companion  
 Tears became my pillow  
 I was tossed on the sea of silence until my words forgot me  
 I prayed to your remembrance and silence  
 I burned with your conversation  
 And was extinguished  
 I disappeared and only my ashes remember me*

In his poem "Uwais," we see creativity and the clear influence of Sufism when he begins searching for Uwais Al-Qarani. Then Shon-nar states that he found Al-Qarani in his heart after searching for him everywhere:<sup>499</sup>

*I stood at the gates of Mecca asking the pilgrims about you  
 I search the hearts of those performing tawaf  
 I thrust my hands in the breasts of those at prayer and in seclu-  
 sion*

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<sup>499</sup> The poem "Uwais," *ibid.*, pp. 206-208.

*Is Uwais among you?  
Is Uwais among you?  
That's enough!  
I won't implore the caravan of pilgrims  
Or the clouds heavy with rain  
Or the birds and beasts for you*

*For you are before me  
A dove of love before me  
A cloud of light before me  
I gave you my life  
Pieces of my ribs  
And you drink from my tears  
Did it find Uwais?*

Meanwhile, the others, confused, still seek help, make clamor, drowning, why? Because they did not find Uwais, and did not look for him.

The world is still in their hearts, and they have not yet freed themselves from it in order for us to hear him say:

*God's servants are confused  
They make clamor, drowning  
Their voices are drowning  
Dead, they scream  
Their screams fade  
Wanting Uwais  
But do you see any return to Uwais?*

Some other beautiful excerpts from his poems:

*If the sun withheld its rays from the people of earth  
It would fall like a lump of coal  
If the whale refrained from praising God, even for a second  
The depth of the sea would spit him out*

*So what about you, O person with a soul who believes in the un-  
 seen linked to the light of truth  
 You are about to see the people of the earth, drunk, blind, deaf  
 and dumb  
 Why do you not grant them sight from your light, hearing from  
 your soul, praise from your heart!  
 They are part of you  
 What good is it for you to flee from them?  
 They are, if you know  
 For this you were created  
 You were not created to drown in your earthly existence  
 You were not created to flee from your earthly existence  
 So why are you  
 Making every effort to purify yourself from the filth of the earth  
 And you forget yourself  
 And your limbs that show your age  
 They are your ground  
 Who will free it, who is less than the whale  
 And why do you  
 Extinguish your eye and close the door of life?  
 Life calls: Live a life in the name of God that is devoted to God  
 That gives and does not take anything, that gives and does not  
 weary  
 Until it is grasped by the greatest joy  
 There is ladder to it except the Qur'an<sup>500</sup>*

More excerpts:

*You knew that if the eyes are washed by light  
 That if the heart does not remove its sandals on Mount Sinai  
 It will remain distant, more distant than any distance  
 From the expected promise<sup>501</sup>*

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<sup>500</sup> "Qasidat Uwais," Ibid. p. 485

<sup>501</sup> From the poem "Ru'ya 'Am Mada," Ibid., p. 180.

I have taken many lines from Shonnar's poetry in order to offer a glimpse of this reclusive, forgotten Sufi poet whose poetry blends spirituality with criticism of existing realities. He believed Sufism and turning to God to be the best path. On a literary level, though, this productive, creative isolation prevented him from receiving the acclaim this legacy deserves not only in Jordan but in the Arab world as a whole.

The Jordanian director Abbas Arnaout is part of the caravan of "literary Sufism," as he has past experience with Sufism and a religious commitment. His Sufism matured considerably some years ago thanks to his relationship with Shaykh Salah Al-Din Al-Tijani, the shaykh of the Tijani Order in Egypt.<sup>502</sup> Arnaout condensed his spiritual experience into his novella *Al-Tariq (The Path)*, which is still in manuscript form. In the book, he shifts between the narrative in Proof of Islam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's famous book *Deliverance from Error* and his own story, leading up to him meeting Shaykh Al-Tijani.

Arnaout previously published his novel *Al-Hallaj wa-Arta'asha Al-Qalb 'Ishqan (Al-Hallaj: The Heart Shivered with Love)*, in which he narrates the story of Al-Hallaj and his life. Arnaout avows that Al-Tijani has offered him a panacea for enormous questions and confusion and has led him to the path of comfort and reconciliation with oneself.<sup>503</sup>

## 2. From *madih nabawi* to songs of divine love

Chanting (*nashid*) is a prominent Sufi art form reliant on Sufi poetry. We have already referenced the importance of Sufi poetry, which is swathed in symbolism, divine love, and *madih nabawi*, praise of the Prophet Muhammad. Some of this poetry is turned into *anashid* that are sung at sessions for *dhikr* ("remembrance" of God, an essential Sufi practice), the ritual gatherings known as *hadras*, Mawlid, and other religious occasions. Different terms have been

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<sup>502</sup> Interview with Abbas Arnaout at his home in the Al-Rashid suburb of Amman, 6/6/2020.

<sup>503</sup> Interview with Abbas Arnaout, *ibid*.

applied to this practice of singing or chanting, including Sufi *sama'* ("listening") and *madih nabawi*.

The foremost theater for Sufi *nashid* is at *dhikr* sessions and *hadras*. People with good voices are selected as *munshids*, as the performers of *nashids* are known, to chant at the *hadras*. Shaykh Ahmad Al-Ali Al-Akour, the shaykh of the Shadhili-Momani order, and Dr. Bassam Al-Nimr serve as *munshids* at the same *hadras*, and Shaykh Jihad Al-Kalouti of the Al-Ma'arij Institute is also a *munshid*. Well-known *munshids* and *nashid* ensembles commemorate religious occasions and attend *dhikr* sessions.

In decades past, Mohammed Amin Al-Tirmidhi gained fame in Jordan as the "Shaykh of the Munshids." Born in 1945, he arrived in Jordan in the early 1980s after clashes began between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Syrian regime. He founded the Badr *nashid* ensemble, which specialized in *madih nabawi*, and recorded about 30 *nashid* performances for Jordanian television. He was one of the most well-known and prominent figures at religious events, and he contributed to the teaching of religious chanting in Jordan. He recorded his experiences with *nashid* in his book *The Art of Chanting: Origins and Modernity*, and he authored a series of books on religious *nashid*.<sup>504</sup>

When a number of Syrian *munshids* fled to Jordan in the 1980s, Sufi *nashid* mixed with movement *nashid*, and tapes of movement *nashid* spread around. Those tapes, such as those recorded by the famous *munshid* Mohamed Abu Ratib and the *munshid* Abu Dujana, were linked to Islamic movements, issues around proselytism, and conflict with regimes. Several Islamic *nashid* ensembles were established, which now appear at weddings and religious occasions, performing various forms of *nashids*, including Sufi forms, *nashids* from the genre called *muwashshah*, or ones specific to weddings and social events.

Sufi *nashid* is once again thriving and has proliferated recently. Several Sufi and Islamic ensembles have been founded, and the Soufia TV channel founded by Shaykh Nasser Al-Khatib had an important

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<sup>504</sup> See Shaykh Al-Tirmidhi's Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/yc2vtlp8>

role in attracting Sufi *nashid* ensembles from Syria, such as the Abu Shaar Brothers, the *munshid* Mansour Zaiter, and others. They recorded many Sufi *anashid* on the Soufia channel, then on YouTube, and they lived in Amman for a time before the channel shut down.

In recent years, new Sufi *nashid* ensembles have emerged, such as Bani Omayya, the Al-Hashimi ensembles for men and women, the *munshid* Yahya Hawwa, the Descendants of Khalid ibn Al-Walid, and the Rihaba ensemble. With the Syrians in the latest wave of refugees, new Syrian *nashid* ensembles have been established, such as Al-Darawish wa-Al Al-Bayt, and *munshids* such as Samer Nashar and Ghiab Al-Azzam have emerged. Some of this activity, however, has stopped due to the disagreements between the Jordanian and Syrian communities.<sup>505</sup>

Several Sufi *nashid* ensembles abandoned their previous sole reliance on the *daff*, a simple frame drum or tambourine, transitioning first to drums and now to the use of a variety of musical instruments. They have become more professional and sophisticated, like their counterparts elsewhere: the Abu Shaar Brothers, the Ibn 'Arabi ensemble in Morocco, the Mawlawiyya ensemble in Egypt, Ahmad Hawili in Lebanon, Bachar Zarkan in Syria, and other groups in Jordan and Arab countries.

It can be argued that recent years have witnessed a breakthrough in the field of Sufi song, on the Jordanian and Arab levels, in parallel and simultaneous with the turn by many famous Arab singers toward Sufi song. In Jordan there has emerged a genre of Sufi song that avoids the content of traditional Sufi chanting, which has focused on songs of praise. The new Sufi song, on the other hand, focuses on divine love. The famous Jordanian artist Malik Madi became famous for songs of this sort and was followed by his daughter Caroline Madi, who has sung songs derived from several poems by the well-known Sudanese Sufi shaykh El Nayl Abu Groon, who lives in

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<sup>505</sup> See the Bani Omayya Facebook page: <https://tinyurl.com/ydhodb99>

Amman. Madi and his daughter arranged and recorded an album of Abu Groon poems, titled “Al-Hubb La Yakhfa” (“Love is No Secret”).<sup>506</sup>

Other Jordanian singers and musicians who have taken up Sufi song are Dr. Ayman Tayseer, who has sung poems by Ibn Al-Farid, Ibn ‘Arabi, and Al-Hallaj;<sup>507</sup> and musician and artist Nasr Al-Zoubi, who has arranged and sung poems by the famous Sufi ‘A’isha Al-Ba’uniyya after having spent time working on the poetry she left behind.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> A clip of the song “Al-Hubb La Yakhfa”: <https://tinyurl.com/y79dghcm>

<sup>507</sup> See Ayman Tayseer’s evening of Sufi songs on Radio Al-Balad, 10/4/2009.

<sup>508</sup> See “Events at ‘Amman, Capital of Islamic Culture’ to include Al-Zoubi, Taraneem on Sufi night with selections from the poetry of ‘A’isha Al-Ba’uniyya,” MNC Daily, 3/12/2017: <https://tinyurl.com/y842sj3w>



## CONCLUSION

### SUFISM AND THE QUESTION OF REFORM

Beyond the circumstances, reasons, indicators, and dimensions of the current Sufi wave, one of the main questions that we cannot conclude this book without attempting to address is: What can Sufism contribute to the future of Muslim societies? Can Jordanian Sufism rise to the level of a “historic undertaking,” so to speak? Can Sufism be a project of reform and change –or does it, on the contrary, represent regression, isolation, and stagnation?

In light of the above, it is clear that the answer to these questions depends on the direction that the people of the Sufi orders take and how they handle a set of major challenges facing Sufism. That will determine whether Sufism really should be viewed as a future for Islam, as argued by the well-known Sufi researcher, Professor Éric Younous Geoffroy, in his book *L'Islam sera spirituel ou ne sera plus*, or as described by Egyptian professor of Islamic philosophy Abu Alula Afifi in *Sufism: The Spiritual Revolution in Islam*. Will today's Sufis, as demanded by Dr. Suad Al-Hakim, a professor specializing in the philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi, abandon the idea of “individual salvation” and work to present Sufism to the world anew?<sup>509</sup>

What are the factors, requirements, drivers, challenges, and obstacles that must be mentioned here with regard to drawing up this project essential to the future?

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<sup>509</sup> See Khalid Muhammad Abdo, “Suad Al-Hakim is reclaiming Sufism in pursuit of a more open-minded world,” Tawaseen.com: <https://tinyurl.com/ydbnvlvu>  
See also “SuadAl-Hakim: Sufis are no longer entitled to be preoccupied with their own individual salvation,” Tawaseen.com:<https://tinyurl.com/y8cyok9m>

## 1. Who is a Sufi?

This is an important, fundamental question and the key to the future role of Sufism. If Sufism originated for the sake of liberating humanity and is, as the shaykhs define it, liberation from religious and human limitations in pursuit of spiritual and intellectual advancement, then it is important that we try to paint a picture of the Sufi person who can accomplish that task. Is he secluded in the *za-wiya*, absorbed in remembrance of God, silent? Yes, he may be, if he takes those things to be the “spiritual preparation” and the intellectual, mental, and spiritual exercises needed to carry out the day’s required tasks. If, on the other hand, the goal is to leave the real world and spurn any intellectual and cultural engagement with it, then such a goal is not for everyone but is in fact an attempt to escape from the world and pursue individual salvation.

This leads us to the same understanding of Sufism held by the “people of Sufism.” If we return to the appeals of the early, major shaykhs of Sufism, such as Abdul Qadir Gilani, Ahmad Al-Rifa’i, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili, and many others, the message was clear: Sufism is not isolation and retreat, nor taking leave of life, but a project of spiritual struggle primarily, leading to the effective liberation of humanity from the limitations that prevent the kindling of these spiritual energies toward good and useful action.

One might say: What advantage does Sufism offer a person in comparison with other religious ideologies and ideas, and even other Islamic ideologies such as Salafism, for example? What has been said here applies to all those other ideas.

This is true in principle, but in the world of Sufism, the emphasis on this rule first of all is necessary and important, because many people have used Sufism as a means of spurning public life or have separated their Sufism from anything worldly. Some treat Sufism as a process of spiritual beautification with no bearing on morality in a broad sense or on aspects of reform or even politics. Others have turned Sufism into an escape into the life of a dervish and a spiritual status divorced from the surrounding context. To be sure, a Sufi who

takes this approach is merely a being isolated from any project of reform, and Sufism is nothing but an individual story, possibly with negative social, cultural, and political dimensions. That would be totally contrary to the vision of the leading Sufi scholars who saw Sufism as a major process of reform for Islamic societies through the birth of the “free individual” connected to God and the formation of upright, reformist societies. With this concept, Sufism managed to open a route for Islam to far-flung continents through behavior and morality, not swords and spears.

## 2. Characteristics of the Sufi project

If we agree that a Sufi is not someone who is isolated or a fugitive from reality, but rather engages with reality and is influenced by it, we come to the important question: What distinguishes Sufism from other religious movements, and what is the significance of its resurgence today?

There are various characteristics of the Sufi project, as they can be formulated today and if Sufism is to take the lead in the stated historical task. In these pages, we will focus on three main aspects:

I. The values of tolerance, love, openness, and religious pluralism. Sufism is based on ideas of love and adoration, whether that takes the form of a relationship with God, with human beings, or even with other creatures. No one who peruses the Sufi dictionary can fail to notice the vast space given to the value of love. It is a language that can easily cross religious, cultural, geographic, and psychological boundaries to form a bridge and broad avenues for tolerance among religions, the translation of religious freedoms, and approaching others from the standpoint of tolerance, openness and pluralism.

If there is anything that can sum up the importance of the value of love in Sufism, it is the verses of Ibn Arabi:

*My heart has become receptive to every form, a meadow for gazelles, a monastery,*

*A house for idols, a Kaaba for pilgrims, the tablets of Torah, the Holy Quran.*

*I profess the religion of love, whatever direction its caravans may take, for love is my religion and my faith.*

One well-known Sufi saying is that “there are as many paths to God as there are souls on earth.” This opens a broad horizon to judgment, pluralism, and acceptance of the other. We can clearly perceive this in Sufi philosophy generally, which focuses on the value of benevolence, clarity, love, and good works. That in turn removes a community’s religious interpretations from a framework of exclusion, rigidity, intolerance, and religious extremism or even terrorism.

II. The spiritual space in interpretation of the Qur’an and Islam. Sufism allows for allegorical interpretation within confines established by Sufi scholars so as not to negate the meaning of Qur’anic verses as understood at face value, while giving the verses new dimensions arising from subjective spiritual experiences. As a result, Qur’anic verses become capable of addressing human emotional consciousness anew, in a way that is responsive to the time and place and is not limited to historical or linguistic interpretations alone. Literal interpretation of the Qur’an has long been an impenetrable wall closing off the vitality and energy of Qur’anic text and blocking the potential to develop a contemporary understanding of that text or even open it up to other cultures and philosophies.

III. Moral structure: As a religion open to the world, Islam needs to be unique, not to become a system like any other afflicted with internal structural diseases. According to the Sufi narrative, that has happened already, and the rise of Sufism is a protest against this disorder and decline. Thus the return, in Al-Ghazali’s thinking, to the “revival of religious sciences” by presenting an explanation of Islam derived from its spiritual and moral sides. Sufi scholars always emphasized morality as a cornerstone of Sufism: “Sufism is morality, so whoever is greater than you in morality is greater than you in Sufism.” This practical application of the principles of Islam is the object of great interest among Sufis, and it starts with an individual’s con-

science as a precondition for his righteousness, clarity, and Sufism, and then his relationship with others.

### 3. Out of the *zawiya* and into society

Éric Geoffroy states that Bediüzzaman Nursî and then Fethullah Gülen shifted Sufism away from a framework of *zawiyas* and brotherhoods or orders and even rejected the very concept of Sufi orders themselves. That may become unnecessary if the Sufi orders and *zawiyas* in Jordan undergo a review and internal reform or renewal. We have observed how Sufi orders have introduced educational, social, and *da'wa* (proselytism) institutions, with some transitioning into a post-order or supra-order phase.<sup>510</sup>

Based on our study of the state of Sufi orders and *zawiyas*, it is clear that some shaykhs of orders and *zawiyas*, and the new generation of Sufis, are increasingly aware of the importance of this significant shift in Sufi action. But the work of forming social institutions, developing roles, and moving toward networked action will be incomplete without evolution and renewal of Sufi rhetoric itself to remove it from its elitist and individual context and make it accessible to the masses. We have seen successful experiments in this field by many scholars and shaykhs who have demonstrated the potential for expansion and spread.

### 4. Sufism and politics: Authoritarianism or freedom?

This issue may be one of the most problematic and sensitive points within the topic of Sufism today. There are international, regional, and domestic agendas that would like to position Sufism as a counter to political Islam or in service of the existing authorities, on the basis that Sufism is against terrorism and extremism. This is true to some extent, but on the other hand, it does not serve authoritarian regimes or oppose the right of the people to self-determination, freedom, and liberation. The biggest paradox here is that the essence of

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<sup>510</sup> Éric Geoffroy, *Al-Mustaqbil li-l-Islam* *Al-Ruhani*; op. cit., p. 219.

Sufism rests on concepts of freedom and dignity, and it has historically rejected corruption and tyranny by the authorities and the ruling elites. It is independent of the powers that be and their peers.

The unseen crux in the case of Al-Hallaj was his stance against the despotic authorities and his insistence on freedom. Likewise, the first Sufis rebelled against rulers and authorities. Even when Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali came along and put together a “historic reconciliation,” that was not in service of despotism but in order to bridge the jurists and the Sufis and build a historic bloc that became the largest of any Islamic doctrine or sect. Al-Ghazali himself constantly issued warnings against power, sultans, their associates, and scholars of worldly sciences. He considered money from the sultan to be forbidden to practitioners of religious science.<sup>511</sup>

Those pushing Sufism toward alliance with authoritarians want to vacate it of substance entirely. How can a human being be liberated from “otherness” and “other,” as Sufism puts it, and see the world and everything in it shrink before his eyes, and be liberated from the greatest internal enemy, i.e. the self, to reach the station of “dignified, free men,” to use Al-Hakim Al-Tirmidhi’s expression, while relying on the external enemy, i.e. power and prestige, and the attendant authorities of longing, temptation, appetites, and suspect things?<sup>512</sup>

The poetry of Shaykh Al-Ghawth Abu Madyan may do the best job of revealing the depth of Sufi feeling for dignity, freedom, and liberation from subservience to power or submission to rulers. Abu Madyan characterizes Sufi society as consisting of sultans, masters,

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<sup>511</sup> It would be beneficial here to refer to the important study by the Jordanian researcher Osama Ghawji titled “Al-I’radwa-l-Mu’arada: Al-Tasawwuf Al-Mubakkirwa-l-Sulta Al-Siyasiyya” (“Alienation and Opposition: Early Sufism and Political Power”), a paper presented at the Resurgence of Sufism Conference organized by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Amman in 2020.

<sup>512</sup> See Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Al-Hasan Al-Hakim Al-Tirmidhi, *Khatm Al-Awliya’* (Seal of the Saints), edited by Othman Ismail Yahya; Catholic Press, Beirut; pp. 136-137.

princes, and the *fuqara'*, ascetics who are “impoverished” and in need of God:

*What pleasure is there in life except in the company of the fuqara’? They are the sultans, the masters, and the princes.*

If Sufism is made part of authoritarianism, it loses any capacity for future impact because it will be the object of popular blame. If it receives the blessings of power and despotism and loses its independence, it will also be lost. This is the case in many Arab countries, where authoritarian and military governments turn the orders and *zawiyas* to the government’s benefit, thus robbing them of any legitimacy in the advancement of a future project of reform.

This does not necessarily mean revolution or confrontation with regimes. Sufism is the furthest thing from conflict, competition, direct politicization, confrontation, and civil wars, or from transformation into a political party in pursuit of political authority. But it is possible to seek out other roles between those two extremes, especially in the fields of social and cultural action, civil peace, and emphasizing political, moral, and cultural commonalities.

We have seen in Islamic history how Sufi scholars played major roles in national defense and the fight against occupation. ‘Izz Al-Din ibn ‘Abd Al-Salam did this alongside Al-Zahir Baibars, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili stood up to the French, and Abu Madyan Shu‘ayb traveled with his disciples from Morocco to Jerusalem in support of Saladin at the Battle of Hattin. Saladin himself saw Sufi *zawiyas* as beacons guiding and giving spiritual energy to the Umma, the greater community of Muslims. That is the track their successors took, such as Omar Al-Mukhtar, Abdelkader El Djezairi, Imam Shamil, and many Sufi movements that took up arms in defense of their countries.

## **5. Sufism and Salafism: Openness or intolerance**

One of the key challenges in the Jordanian case is the domestic battle raging between Sufis and the Salafi current. Is Sufism’s primary

war actually with Salafism? Is the relationship between the two necessarily zero-sum? Is victory possible for either of the parties? These are questions that must be placed on the table as we seek to understand what is happening between the two sides. To ask the obvious, how can we present Sufism today as an antidote to extremism and intolerance and a prescription for dialogue among religions and sects, when it is engaged in an all-out fight with Salafis and political Islam?

If there is any model that can best Sufism for openness and the capacity for coexistence amid religious and cultural pluralism, it would first be achieved at home. If the differences between the two schools are self-evident and obvious, that is not a new state of affairs. It has stretched across centuries and will not cease to be if one of them defeats the other. The alternative is to offer a discourse of reconciliation, pluralism, and openness. After that, any advocacy for openness will be suspicious, as the recognition of difference and divergent interpretations is fundamental to philosophy of pluralism, especially religious and cultural pluralism.

Furthermore, Arab societies today, including Jordanian society of course, are not concerned with Sufi-Salafi disagreements over creed, for the most part, such as the heated debate over the question: Where is God? No, the society is concerned with having a proper understanding of God, and an understanding of religion that makes it the engine of an economic, social, and cultural renaissance, as well as a source of optimism, hope, spiritual energy, civil and community peace, and the spiritual and moral advancement of the individual. And are these not the aims and objectives of the Islamic message? What success or victory will be achieved by Jordanian Sufi discourse if it relies on clashing with Salafism over matters of creed and drowns in theoretical topics distant from society's daily concerns and essential issues?

In conclusion, there may be many factors and variables driving the rising tide of Sufism, but a number of formidable tasks and serious functions that remain unfinished have now been added to Sufis'

daily liturgies and rites in order for them to meet the current challenges. Otherwise, they will be overtaken by subsequent reformist waves while isolated in their *zawiyas* or engrossed in fruitless, all-consuming theoretical arguments about an imaginary history, oblivious to the reality taking shape.



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## Personal Interviews

An adherent of the Naqshbandi Order who refused to disclose his name, interview on 25/5/2020.

A murid and disciple of Syrian shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Rahbawi, telephone interview on 4/6/2020.

A supervisor at Al-Hawra' Institute, interview at Al-Ma'arij Institute on 5/5/2020.

A teacher at Al-Hawra' Institute, interview at Al-Ma'arij Institute on 2/5/2020.

Abbas Arnaout, Sufi writer and director, interview at his home in the Al-Rashid suburb of Amman, 6/6/2020.

Abdullah, an adherent of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Allawi Order, interview at the University of Jordan, 14/3/2020.

Shaykh Abu Al-Yusr, shaykh of the Haqqani Order in Jordan, interview at his home in Jabal Amman, 9/6/2020.

Dr. Amin Yusuf Odeh, interview at his home in Amman Sports City on 2/5/2020.

Shaykh Awn Al-Qaddoumi, director of the Al-Ma'arij Institute, at the Institute in downtown Amman on 5/4/2020.

Dr. Bassam Al-Nimr, interview at his home in Aydoun on 2/6/2020.

Baqaa, an adherent of the Naqshbandi Order, interview in Al-Luweibdeh on 12/2/2020.

Shaykh Fawaz Al-Tabba', telephone interview on 5/6/2020.

Shaykh Hasan Al-Saqqaf, at his home in Jabal Al-Zuhour, interview on 1/4/2020.

Shaykh Husni Al-Sharif, shaykh of the Khalwati-Jami'a Order, at his office in Al-Jandawil, 19/5/2020.

Shaykh Ismail Al-Kurdi, shaykh of the Shadhili-Darqawi-Hashimi Order, interview at his home near the Al-Kurdi on 12/3/2020.

Jihad Al-Kalouti, from Al-Ma'arij Institute, telephone interview on 13/6/2020.

Masarra, a supervisor at Al-Ma'arij Institute, interview at the Institute on 5/5/2020.

Shaykh Mazen Ghanem, vice president of the Arab Islamic Cultural Society, at the Society's headquarters near the 4th Circle, interview on 15/5/2020.

Eng. Mohammad Al-Bitar, activist and author, interview at Al-Ma'arij Institution in downtown Amman on 1/6/2020.

Shaykh Dr. Mohammad Al-Juhani, mufti of Aqaba, interview on 15/6/2020.

Shaykh Muadh Said Hawwa, interview at his home in Tila' Al-Ali on 3/6/2020.

Muhammad Al-Sharif, interview at the Al-Durra Al-Sharif school in the Umm Al-Sous area of Bayader Wadi Al-Seer, Amman, on 20/2/2020.

- Dr. Muhannad Mubayyidin, professor of history at the University of Jordan, telephone interview on 11/5/2020.
- Shakir Musa Al-Kilani, researcher specializing in Sufism, interviews on 19/5/2020 and 18/6/2020.
- Dr. Mustafa Al-Khudari, son of Shaykh Ahmed Al-Khudari, interview at his home in Jabal Al-Lweibdeh, Amman, on 2/5/2020.
- Shaykh Mustafa Abu Rumman, Sufi and researcher, interview on 2/6/2020.
- Shaykh Saeed Foudeh, at his home in Tabarbour, interview by telephone on 13/4/2020.
- Sufyan, a disciple of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Shaykh, interview on 23/5/2020.
- Shaykh Talal Al-Homsi, secretary of the Arab Islamic Cultural Society, telephone interview on 22/5/2020.
- Tasnim, a supervisor at Al-Ma'arij Institute, interview at the Institute on 7/5/2020.
- Umm Maryam, from the Naqshbandi Order, interview in Jabal Amman on 7/1/2020.
- Dr. Wafa Al-Sawaftah, interview in my office at the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, 27/2/2020; telephone call on 28/5/2020.
- Ziad Salamah, researcher specializing in Islamic thought, telephone interview on 16/6/2020.



This book is something of a “raid” on the house of Jordanian Sufism, which we thought would be easy to breach, within grasp through brief research. It looked to me, at first glance, to be small, humble, and simple. Well, appearances can be deceptive. No sooner do you take off your shoes and ask the residents for permission to enter than you find yourself in an entirely different world, steeped in spirituality and still engrossed in intense debate about Al-Hallaj, that apostate Sufi who was beheaded and burned in Baghdad.

Instead of you storming into this humble house, it storms into you and tosses you into complex, intertwined worlds. You drown in a unique spiritual world, and how could you not? For the Sufi path is one of divine secrets that appear only to those who travel it, and “the one who tastes, knows.” But be careful: someone who uncovers the secret may meet the fate of Al-Hallaj, Suhrawardi, and others. After all, one of the most important aqtab in Sufi history, Abu Madyan Al-Gawth, said:

In the secret are fine, subtle secrets, and our blood is shed openly if we reveal them. In its essence, Sufism is a path. That is the best way to define it. It has travelers (Sufis, murids), a route (spiritual orders and pathways), and guides (the shaykhs of each order). The path is lit by the fire of “divine love,” and you will be unable to ascend higher on the path unless you disengage from the “worldly obstacles” to that ascent. The path is exclusively internal, passing through the human person himself or herself. It is a great, true battle, and the fierce, lurking enemy is the human self or lower soul (nafs). Whenever you defeat your nafs, your higher soul is elevated and you advance along the path. But how do you defeat the self and win the battle?

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ISBN

Nr: 978-9923-759-21-9