

The Sufism and Anti-Sufism of the Salafis

Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905), Sufi and Anti-Sufi

Muḥammad ʿAbduh, by far the most renowned of al-Afghānī's Egyptian disciples, was an almost exact contemporary of Abū'l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī and there are certain similarities in their background and early experience, which might normally pass unnoticed due to the very great differences in their later development. Both were allegedly born in the Islamic year 1266 (1849–50), although there are some mentions of slightly earlier dates. Both were of Arab peasant origins, their fathers illiterate and undergoing some problems in their villages, leading rather unsettled lives themselves, but anxious to secure some improvement for their sons through a religious education. Both arranged for their sons to study the Qur'ān under local shaykhs and advance further through contacts with regional centres of learning and spirituality, Abū'l-Hudā al-Ṣayyādī in Aleppo, Muḥammad ʿAbduh in Ṭanṭā in the Egyptian delta. But the two boys responded very differently to the traditional systems of religious studies, Abū'l-Hudā adapting readily, the young Muḥammad running away from studies that he found unbearably tedious, as they demanded the rote learning of commentaries on classic texts without any attempt at effective explanation. However, it was through this rebellious escape from formal studies that he was able to discover Sufism.

ʿAbduh as Sufi

When he ran from his studies in the Aḥmadī Mosque at Ṭanṭā, ʿAbduh eventually returned home and was married at the age of sixteen. According to a brief sample of autobiography, it was forty days later (surely a spiritually significant timing) that his father made the fateful decision that his son should return to Ṭanṭā. On the way

Muḥammad once again escaped at a village where his father's maternal relatives were living and there he encountered a man who was to have a critical influence on his growth in religious understanding and aspiration, his father's maternal uncle, Shaykh Darwīsh Khaḍir.¹ At this time Abū'l-Hudā had already been initiated into the Rifāʿiyya by his paternal cousin and was to travel in the following year to Baghdad to his own encounter with destiny in the form of Shaykh al-Rawwās. In both cases critical influences on their spiritual development were relatives and people of humble rural background, but who had travelled in search of knowledge and spiritual guidance. Beyond that there are significant differences in the natures and outlook of these mentors.

As has been noted, Abū'l-Hudā's shaykhs and teachers were tied into the traditional structure of an antique popular ṭarīqa and their careers were closely linked to their progress in the Rifāʿiyya. They retained an outlook little different, on the whole, from that of their medieval predecessors. There was little opportunity to break free of the old patterns and little incentive to seek advancement by other means for men of their social background in the Eastern Arab provinces of the mid-nineteenth century Ottoman Empire.

While ʿAbduh's teachers in Ṭanṭā and many of his later masters at al-Azhar were bound in the same traditional world, his two most influential guides were noticeably outside this formal network of ancient scholarship and organized spirituality. With regard to Sufism, they did not accept its actually existing state as all that it should be, although they had been deeply touched by visions of what the mystical life could offer. They were also more open to reflecting on alternative answers to the important questions of existence, even when these answers were proposed by Western non-Muslims. In Egypt in the 1860s and 70s ʿAbduh was to be exposed through Shaykh Darwīsh and Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī to currents of thought denied to his Syrian contemporary.

According to his own account, ʿAbduh was not immediately receptive to guidance on his first arrival in his great uncle's village. When Shaykh Darwīsh asked him to read aloud from a book of Sufi letters because of his own poor sight, the young Muḥammad cursed reading and anyone connected with it and ran off. However, the shaykh was gently persistent and soon weaned him off his natural preference for amusing himself with the boys of the village, horse-riding and swimming in a nearby river. Within three days, (unless this is a symbolic number), he became totally absorbed in his new-found

studies and Sufism began to take over his life, as the shaykh expounded to him textual meanings in a way that he had never previously encountered. Of the book that so enthralled him and won him over, with his great-uncle's persuasion, to the mystical life, he records:

These letters contained sufistic knowledge (*ma'ārif*), and spoke much of the discipline of the self (*al-nafs*) and training it in noble conduct, purifying it of the filth of vices and arousing in it a dislike of the falseness of the outward appearances of this worldly life.²

The letters, in their fine Maghribī script, were the work of Shaykh Darwīsh's own master, Sayyid Muḥammad al-Madanī (d. 1846).³ °Abduh, looking back on this experience in later life, is anxious to show his uncle as something more perhaps than a peasant who has had contacts only with the more pedestrian aspects of folk Sufism, replete with superstition. He thus narrates his seeking of knowledge beyond the confines of the Egyptian countryside:

One of my father's uncles, Shaykh Darwīsh, had previously travelled to the Libyan desert and journeyed as far as Tripoli, where he sat at the feet of Sayyid Muḥammad al-Madanī, father of the famous Shaykh Zāfir, who used to live in Istanbul and died there. He studied under him and was initiated by him into the Shādhilī *ṭarīqa*. He learned by heart *al-Muwatta'* (of Mālik b. Anas) and some books of Ḥadīth. He excelled in learning the Qur'ān by heart and understanding it. Then he returned from his travels to his home village and worked in the ordinary way in farming and earning a livelihood by agriculture.⁴

The implication is that Shaykh Darwīsh, despite his peasant status, was no ignorant ecstatic, but his mysticism was underpinned with knowledge of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and of classical Mālikī jurisprudence. Furthermore, he had gained this knowledge through one of the most highly esteemed shaykhs of the Arab lands, head of the highly successful Shādhiliyya-Madaniyya. Shaykh Zāfir has already been noted in the circle of Sultan Abdülhamid II in Istanbul, playing a role within this North African order very similar to that of Abū'l-Hudā al-Şayyādī in Syria and Iraq. He was closely associated with Muḥammad Nedim Pasha, when he was governor of Tripoli from 1860–67, and was invited to Istanbul in the 1870s after Nedim rose to the Grand Vizierate. Shaykh Zāfir enjoyed the confidence and favour of the

Sultan, who provided him with a *zāwiya* close to the Yildiz Palace. He stayed in Istanbul until his death.⁵

However, Shaykh Darwīsh is not presented by ‘Abduh as stressing allegiance to the Shādhiliyya-Madaniyya or that this is the path of true Sufism. According to ‘Abduh:

On the seventh day I asked the shaykh, ‘What is your ṭarīqa?’ He said, ‘Our ṭarīqa is Islam.’ So I said, ‘Aren’t all these people Muslims?’ He said, ‘If they were Muslims, I wouldn’t have seen them disputing over trivialities and I wouldn’t have heard them allying liars with God with or without any reason. These words were like a fire that burned all my old baggage – the baggage of those vain pretensions and false conjectures, the baggage of the delusion that we were all Muslims assured of salvation, even if we were really negligent. I asked him, ‘What is your *wird* (litany) that is chanted in retreats or after prayers?’ He said, ‘We have no *wird* but the Qur’ān, that we recite after every prayer with understanding and meditation.’⁶

The nature of the Sufism into which Muḥammad ‘Abduh claimed to have been inducted by his great-uncle seems at least as important as the fact that it was Sufism that won his enthusiasm at this critical stage in his development. It is characterized by a moral earnestness and a concern with interiorization of the faith that would have satisfied al-Ghazālī. There is a stress on spirituality firmly grounded in the Qur’ān and a belief in the essential bonding between all Muslims who live out their lives in accordance with sound Islamic principles. There is also criticism of those who do not associate Islam with activism and commitment and, it seems, of Sufis who rely on their membership of a particular ṭarīqa, however corrupted, for salvation.

Following the stay with Shaykh Darwīsh, ‘Abduh returned to Ṭanṭā and was able to complete his studies and proceed to higher training in Cairo at al-Azhar from 1869–77. We hear of his being drawn ever more deeply into mysticism, including the practice of an extreme asceticism, from whose dangers he was rescued by the counsels of Shaykh Darwīsh and subsequently of Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī. He tells us that each year his great-uncle would ask after his studies at al-Azhar:

‘Haven’t you studied logic? Haven’t you studied arithmetic? Haven’t you studied any principles of engineering?’ Then I would say to him, ‘Some of these branches of knowledge are unknown at al-Azhar.’⁷

Shaykh Darwīsh appears a remarkable man from ʿAbduh's memories of him. He is shown to be a pivotal figure in leading the young ʿAbduh to a truer understanding of Islam as a progressive and reasonable religion compatible with modern science and technological advances. He is the guide to Sufism as it ideally should be, offering a system of training by which the human may reach a higher level of being without false and divisive doctrines and superstitious innovations (*bidaʿ*). How reliable is the portrait of the shaykh? This remains hard to establish. Shaykh Darwīsh probably was instrumental in nourishing the ideals of the young ʿAbduh and directing him on the path that led to his later work of reform. This being so, he should perhaps be given some of the credit that has usually been assigned to al-Afghānī. However, there are certain problems with regard to ʿAbduh's account. The fragmentary autobiography was written near the end of his life at a time when he had achieved an international reputation as a reformer. Therefore, the possibility is increased that the details of the narrative may not be exact, but may reflect the views of the older ʿAbduh that he has projected back onto his young life to demonstrate for public consumption how it was, from the very beginning, the 'right' kind of Sufism that he espoused and to which his great-uncle adhered. The account also fits neatly, perhaps too neatly, into the framework of a stylized spiritual autobiography that has established antecedents in the Islamic tradition, with which ʿAbduh would have been well-acquainted. His resolution of a spiritual crisis by the discovery of Sufism has been compared to that of al-Ghazālī's famous *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (The Deliverer from Error).⁸ But it also seems quite possible that ʿAbduh would have been aware of al-Afghānī's own experience recorded by him as a young man in Afghanistan and also compared with that of the great medieval master. He may have consciously wished to relate how he too had emerged from profitless studies with ineffective teachers to achieve the true enlightenment of authentic mystical experience.

ʿAbduh was first drawn to al-Afghānī through their common interest in mysticism. On their first encounter over supper at the house of Sayyid Jamāl al-dīn, ʿAbduh is said to have been overwhelmed with wonder and love at the way in which the sayyid expounded the comments of Sufis on Qurʾānic verses.⁹ In 1874 he published his one work wholly within the tradition of medieval Sufi theosophy, *Risālat al-wāridāt* (Mystical Inspirations). In the introduction he stresses that it was al-Afghānī who led him to true understanding after his initial interest in Sufism had already been

kindled and he had broken free from the bondage of strict subservience to any particular school of thought.

I came across the traces of true knowledge and developed a passionate love for it, but I did not discover its innermost nature, so I became disturbed and my thoughts began wandering. Whenever I asked a question, they would answer me that it was forbidden (*ḥarām*) for me to concern myself with it and that the scholastic theologians had banned discussion of it. I was truly amazed and the indifference of those who transmitted others' opinions amazed me even more. I meditated on the reason for this and I perceived that one who is ignorant of something hates it and one who keeps far from the sublime rejects it. I found them to be like one who has tasted vine leaves, so that he does not know the bitterness of colocynth or the sweetness of honey. While I was in this state, there arose the sun of truths, who clarified for us their subtle intricacies. (So it came to pass) with the arrival of the perfect sage, truth personified, our master Sayyid Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī.¹⁰

The extreme absorption in mysticism and philosophy weakened under the pressures of political and social realities in Egypt of the 1870s, as well as under Sayyid Jamāl al-dīn's influence towards active participation in the country's affairs. As Egypt slid deeper into debt under the autocratic mismanagement of Khedive Ismā'īl, British and French bankers demanded greater financial control, which swiftly gave way to direct political intervention. Europeans were included among Egypt's government ministers from 1878. In the atmosphere of heightening tension, 'Abduh became involved in the national opposition through his contributions to Cairo's periodical press. When al-Afghānī was deported from Egypt in 1879, 'Abduh was forced to return to his village. However, from 1880–82 he was recalled to Cairo by the Prime Minister to serve as an editor, before becoming chief editor of the Egyptian official gazette, *al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣriyya* (Egyptian Events). From this time he would play a more significant role in alerting the public to what he perceived as the problems of political and social decay in Egypt, problems that needed to be addressed in order to restore national strength and resist the gathering threat from Britain and France. It was a critical period for the country and for 'Abduh, culminating in the occupation of Egypt in 1882 and 'Abduh's arrest, imprisonment and subsequent exile in Paris and Beirut.

ʿAbduh as Anti-Sufi

To the end of his life ʿAbduh retained his deep love for the true Sufism, but he became strongly opposed to what he saw as corrupt manifestations of it in late nineteenth-century Egypt. He believed much of the actually existing Sufism of his own day to have departed from the original authentic faith of Islam. In the pages of *al-Waqāʿi al-Miṣriyya* he launched an open attack on certain Sufi orders as guilty of introducing unacceptable innovations (*bidaʿ*) into the mosques and contributing to the social malaise.

A typical expression of ʿAbduh's concern is contained in an article dated 30 November 1880, supporting efforts to outlaw some of the more extravagant Sufi practices at the Imām al-Ḥusayn and Sayyida Zaynab mosques in Cairo.¹¹ The Ministry of Public Endowments had received complaints from the management of the Ḥusayn mosque about the *dhikr* of the Saʿdiyya, a sub-order of the Rifāʿiyya and one regarded by reformers as dangerously antinomian.¹² ʿAbduh relates the nature of the complaints against the Saʿdis:

In the *dhikr* gathering of the Saʿdiyya which is held in that mosque every Tuesday the name of God is mentioned only to the accompaniment of the beating of the kettledrum (*al-bāz*). . . . Visitors to the grave of Imām Ḥusayn and students have censured and opposed this custom, saying it is forbidden by Shariʿa and the ruler ought to prevent it by issuing an order for its suppression.¹³

The ministry sought a *fatwā* from the Shaykh al-Azhar, Muftī of Egypt, Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-ʿAbbāsī, who ruled that not only was the beating of drums in mosques unlawful, but so were all other noisy disturbances to worshippers, including raising the voice in *dhikr*. He also condemned gatherings which allowed the free mingling of young men and women in the mosque.

ʿAbduh expressed his approval of measures to end all such violations of the Shariʿa, whether by Saʿdis or other Sufis, notably Maghribīs celebrating the *mawlid* of Sayyid Ḥusayn by stripping off their clothes and walking on fire in an ecstatic state before a crowd of onlookers. He concludes in the hope that this prevention of reprehensible *bidʿa* will spread from Cairo to the countryside. The climate of public opinion seems to have been receptive to the reformers and, in this instance, their aims appear to have coincided with those of the European consular authorities, who added to the pressure on the government to take action.

Early in 1881 the khedive acted to ban the Sa^ʿdī custom of the *dawsa* (trampling), in which the shaykh rode a horse over the prostrate bodies of the *murīds*. The occasion was colourfully described by E.W. Lane earlier in the century:

The Sheykh entered the Birket El-Ezbekeeyeh preceded by a very numerous procession of the darweeshes of whom he is the chief. In the way through this place, the procession stopped at a short distance before the house of the Sheykh El-Bekree. Here a considerable number of the darweeshes and others (I am sure that there were more than sixty, but I could not count their number), laid themselves down upon the ground, side by side, as close as possible to each other, having their backs upwards, their legs extended, and their arms placed together beneath their foreheads. They incessantly muttered the word 'Allah!' About twelve or more darweeshes, most without their shoes, then ran over the backs of their prostrate companions; some, beating 'bāzes', or little drums, of a hemispherical form, held in the left hand, and exclaiming 'Allah!' and then the Sheykh approached; his horse hesitated, for several minutes, to tread upon the back of the first of the prostrate men; but being pulled, and urged on behind, he at length stepped upon him, and then, without apparent fear, ambled, with a high pace, over them all, led by two persons, who ran over the prostrate men; one sometimes treading on the feet, and the other on the heads. The spectators immediately raised a long cry of 'Allah lá lá lá láh!' Not one of the men thus trampled upon by the horse seemed to be hurt; but each, the moment that the animal had passed over him jumped up, and followed the Sheykh. Each of them received two treads from the horse; one from one of his forelegs, and a second from a hind-leg. It is said that these persons, as well as the Sheykh, make use of certain words (that is, repeat prayers and invocations,) on the day preceding this performance, to enable them to endure, without injury, the tread of the horse; and that some, not thus prepared, having ventured to lie down to be ridden over, have, on more than one occasion, been either killed or severely injured. The performance is considered as a miracle effected through supernatural power which has been granted to every successive Sheykh of the Saadeeyeh.¹⁴

Such was the unacceptable face of Sufism as far as ʿAbduh was concerned in this period before his exile. But his opposition to it at

this stage was essentially traditional and, in effect, followed in the broad pattern of earlier eighteenth and nineteenth century reformers. Greater exposure to European thought during the years working with al-Afghānī in Paris would bring alterations to the rationale of his critical approaches to the problems of Sufi decadence and excesses.

After al-Afghānī's journal ceased publication, ʿAbduh travelled East to Beirut where he taught at a school established by a Muslim benevolent society. Here he delivered a series of lectures that were to be developed into his best-known book, *Risālat al-tawḥīd* (The Treatise of Unity).¹⁵ In this exposition of Islamic theology with a modernist bent, ʿAbduh gives systematic support to a vision of Islam as a religion of reason and progress well-suited to the modern world, compatible with science and technology. There is no room in such a faith for the irrational and the world of saints and their miracles is consequently rejected. The traces of al-Afghānī's thought are evident, although the tone is calmer and more reasonable, the firebrand giving way to the systematic theologian. At the same time ʿAbduh stops well short of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and his attempts to rationalize the miraculous. Miracles that contravene the laws of Nature are not totally denied by ʿAbduh, but he is cautious with regard to those charismatic gifts (*karāmāt*) attributed to saintly Sufis, believing that the ignorant masses have come to hold wrong beliefs concerning them. They have reached the point where they treat *karāmāt* as tools of a saint's profession, in which he competes with others. ʿAbduh does not commit himself clearly regarding the possibility of such miracles, but admits that most Ashʿarite theologians acknowledge that they may occur, while most Muʿtazilites and one major Ashʿarite reject them. However, he does conclude:

Sunnis and others are agreed that it is not necessary to believe in the occurrence of any particular miracle (*karāma*) at the hand of any particular saint after the emergence of Islam. So, according to the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the community, any Muslim may deny the occurrence of any miracle at all and, by denying it, he will not be acting contrary to any principles of the faith or deviating from a sound sunna or departing from the straight path.¹⁶

ʿAbduh as Salafī Muftī of Egypt

By 1888 ʿAbduh was permitted by the British occupation authorities to return to Egypt and reconciled to the pursuit of reform by peaceful

co-operation. In 1899 he reached the pinnacle of his official career, being appointed as Muftī of Egypt, a position he was to hold until his death in 1905. His considerable energies were then devoted to an overhaul of the legal system and the improvement of Egyptian education, including the reform of al-Azhar.

After attaining high public office in his later life, ʿAbduh appears to present rather different faces depending on the target of his attentions. The modernist stance is perhaps most familiar from his famous confrontations with the French historian Gabriel Hanotaux in 1900 and the Christian Syrian secularist Farah Anṭūn in 1902.¹⁷ In ʿAbduh's refutation of Anṭūn's claims that Islam had destroyed the spirit of philosophy, he wrote in defence of the faith as rational and tolerant, contrasting Islam with a picture of Christianity as an irrational religion of miracles, itself far more hostile than Islam to scientific inquiry. Yet the Islam of reason and tolerance was the true and original religion of *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the righteous ancestors) and not of the later generations of modern Muslims who no longer were familiar with all the great authorities in their heritage. In this context the *salaf* are broadly understood to include the major figures of the 3rd and 4th centuries of Islam/the 9th and 10th centuries C.E., such as the theologians al-Ashʿari (d. 324/935) and al-Māturidī (d. 333/945). He also speaks with respect of the Qur'ān commentaries (*tafāsīr*) up to the twelfth century C.E. and these are noted as indispensable for the student of religion due to the wisdom that they contain from an earlier age.¹⁸ Elsewhere *salaf*, sometimes described as *al-salaf al-auwālūn* (the first ancestors), designate more strictly the earliest generation of Muslims, especially the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Generally, the message to European and Arab secularist critics of Islam is that they should not judge Islam by the state of knowledge and practice among their Muslim contemporaries, but by the standards of the true, original Islam. This true faith will be found to contain everything that modern Europe has only recently come to esteem as essential for enlightened progress.

Another face of ʿAbduh in later life is that presented to an Egyptian Muslim audience, still speaking of the ideal faith of the *salaf*, but in a wholly traditional framework of Islamic discourse. There is an evident desire to return to the true ways of this early faith without any sense of a need to compare its concepts with those of nineteenth-century European thought. As Muftī of Egypt he would naturally be consulted as to the truth or falsity of much popular belief, in which Sufism occupied a central position. He can thus be seen to be

engaged in the search for an authentic *salafī* Sufism. Reference here will be made to two texts from the summer of 1904. The first is a report of a conversation that took place at the house of a village *‘umda* in July 1904, during the course of which *‘Abduh* responded to the questions of a Shādhilī shaykh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, his close associate.¹⁹ The second is a *fatwā* delivered by *‘Abduh* in September 1904 in reply to a question about seeking the intercession of prophets and saints.²⁰

Both the conversation and the *fatwā* reveal a concern with the dangers of exposing ignorant people to matters beyond their comprehension and are aimed at correcting popular misunderstandings, especially those that can lead to *bid‘a*. According to *‘Abduh*, many people have developed an essentially wrong attitude towards Prophet Muḥammad and the dead Sufi saints, *awliyā’ Allāh*. This is manifested in the widespread practice of asking the holy dead to intercede with God. In his *fatwā* *‘Abduh* states that there is no evidence from the Sunna of intercession (*tawassul*) in the first three centuries of Islam, although he does note a rare and controversial case in a ḥadīth reported by al-Tirmidhī. He concludes that it is indeed *bid‘a* and of the very worst kind that can lead to the sin of *shirk*, associating others with God. The supplicant is guilty of wrong thought about God, presumably in over-exalting the powers of human beings, a view already familiar from the Wahhābīs. Those who call upon the Prophet and saints for such favours are misled in supposing that they delight in praises and panegyrics, in emphatic pronunciation in the *dhikr*,

and the invention of things which have no basis in the Book of God or Sunna of His messenger and no approval from the righteous ancestors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). . . . This view of the prophets and saints is the worst because they have likened them in that to the tyrants of the people of this world, whose sight is covered by the darkness of ignorance before they meet death.²¹

He argues that the greatest respect they could accord the prophets would be by adhering to the revelations that they brought from God. Similarly with the saints, they would respect them best by choosing in their lives what the *awliyā’* chose for themselves. The necessity is for sound personal morality.

The same problem is addressed in *‘Abduh*’s conversation with the Sufi Shaykh Muḥammad al-Dalāṣī. *‘Abduh* remarks to him not only that the practice of intercession is at variance with the guidance of the *salaf*, but that people ask the saints for this-worldly favours, such as

money, a good harvest, healing of illness and revenge on their enemies. It would be more reasonable if they were to ask them about matters relating to the Afterlife, but in truth the mysteries that God has made known to them are only accessible to those who are able to 'taste' them, to experience them directly for themselves.²²

ʿAbduh sees considerable dangers arising from misconceptions about the teachings of Sufism. Even those who are well-trained in the exoteric aspects of the faith may not appreciate the real significance of Sufi speech because it is clothed in symbolism and technicalities. Therefore, he maintains that Muslims who read only the exoteric meaning of a text may go astray. Books of Ibn al-ʿArabī appear on the surface to contradict the principles of the faith, as does *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (The Perfect Man) of ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. c. 1410). The latter seems outwardly closer to Christianity than to Islam

but this exterior meaning is not what is intended and the speech alludes to meanings known only to one who knows their key. . . .

When I was in charge of the printing presses, I ordered a ban on printing *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Meccan Revelations) and their like because books of this kind should only be looked at by their own people (i.e. Sufis).²³

ʿAbduh's explanation of his reasons for halting the publication of the *Futūḥāt* reveals not a serious disapproval of Ibn al-ʿArabī's major work but a fear of its corrupting effects on those unable to discover its hidden meanings. His personal respect for Ibn al-ʿArabī is visible from the fatwā where ʿAbduh cites comments from the *Futūḥāt* on Sūrat al-Baqara v. 186, counselling against the need for any intercession since God is always near.²⁴

Illustrative of the difficulties associated with the allegorical speech of Sufis is a sample of the July 1904 conversation, when Rashīd Riḍā questioned ʿAbduh about the supposed existence of a council of living and dead saints regulating world affairs. Riḍā expressed his doubts, seeing that the strength of the Muslims was in the past, so how could they be weak now with the agreement of all these saints? ʿAbduh first mentions the suggestion that 'God's friends' have observed that the Muslims have departed far from the original faith and are hoping to drive them back to Islam through these misfortunes. But he discounts this explanation. The council of saints, he claims, is to be understood as a symbolic reference 'to the situation in the time of the salaf, when this community was alive and well.'²⁵ However, it was not the Sufis who were to blame for its decline, but the jurists and judges who

opposed them and so forced the Sufis to resort to secrecy and the use of technical and symbolic language. ʿAbduh's explanation is expressed in Sufi terms and makes it plain, as on other occasions, that his sympathies were with the Sufis against their legalist critics. However, he genuinely regretted the move to esotericism for the damage that it had done and was continuing to do to the community, since the majority of Muslims could be misled by it. There is also a point at which ʿAbduh seems to cross over from unveiling hidden meanings in Sufi style to seeking a rational explanation for an embarrassing superstition.

In addition to the problems arising from misunderstanding of Sufi mysteries, ʿAbduh locates a further difficulty in the existence, as he maintains, of forged works attributed to famous Sufi masters of the past, such as the sixteenth-century Egyptian Sufi ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shāḥrānī (1492–1565). According to ʿAbduh, these forgeries contain material contrary to the Qurʾān and Sunna. In this context he asserts his own continuing allegiance to the Shādhiliyya, but warns that even some of the prayers of al-Shādhilī are suspect:

I respect Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī and I belong to his ṭarīqa and have not followed any other. But not everything attributed to him is correctly ascribed.²⁶

There is, therefore, a serious risk of people being led astray, if they accept such works at face value and follow them even when they are not in conformity with the Qurʾān and Sunna and the views of the salaf.

At the end of his life ʿAbduh retained a personal commitment to what may be described as salafī Sufism, benefiting from the spiritual training he had received since his early encounters with Shaykh Darwīsh and al-Afghānī, but rejecting any Sufi teachings that might contradict those of al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ. It was an openly elitist view of Islam that he espoused. Sufism was for the spiritual elect, not for the ignorant mass who failed to interpret its messages correctly and fell prey all too easily to charges of bidʿa. However, his desire to rid popular Sufism of unacceptable accretions was remembered chiefly in terms of anti-Sufism and seen as contributing to the decay of the Sufi orders.

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Anti-Sufi (1865–1935)

Where Muḥammad ʿAbduh developed the intellectual foundations for a modern salafī rethinking of Sufism, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā

built on those foundations and made them known to a wide audience across the Islamic world from Morocco to Indonesia. In the process he also moved and moved others in the direction of a more rigorous anti-Sufism.

Rashīd Riḍā was born in 1865 in a village near the town of Tripoli on the Syrian coast (present day northern Lebanon). It was a town with a strong tradition of Sunni piety, in which Sufi orders played an active role. Riḍā's family background was not dissimilar to that of ʿAbduh, but he was able to benefit from a more modern education provided by the National Islamic School in Tripoli, which taught Arabic, Turkish and religious studies alongside French, mathematics and natural sciences. Like ʿAbduh, he was attracted to Sufism at an early age and, also like him and al-Afghānī, recorded his experiences in the form of spiritual autobiography.²⁷ Riḍā was deeply impressed by al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' ʿulūm al-dīn* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) and it helped to mould his conviction that the Muslim should consciously interiorize the faith and go beyond the mere externals of observance, being constantly aware of the ethical implications of actions. He describes how, for a while, he gave himself up to a régime of severe ascetic practices in order to cultivate the proper spirit of devotion:

I was striving to follow the Sufi Way by leaving the best food and being satisfied with a little wild thyme with salt and sumac and by sleeping on the ground etc., until it was no longer any trouble deliberately to leave the best food available. But I tried to accustom myself to put up with dirt on my body and clothes, which is not lawful, and I was unable to do so.²⁸

He subsequently sought to place himself as a *murīd* under the spiritual guidance of a Naqshabandī shaykh. He records remarkable mystical experiences that he underwent at that time: the sensation of moving outside his body, while reading the *Ihyā'*; visions of future events; even the claims that his prayers were swiftly answered and that he was enabled to heal the sick in an apparently miraculous way. Another man might have considered such 'gifts' as *karāmāt* and in time accepted the status of a *walī Allāh*. Riḍā seems to have exercised his reason and searched his conscience in a way that eventually led him to reject the validity of much that was accepted in the Sufism of even the most reform-minded and stern of Naqshabandīs, condemning even the silent *dhikr*:

My daily office in this *ṭarīqa* was the mention of God's Majesty in my heart, without voicing it, five thousand times, closing my eyes and holding my breath as long as possible, fixing my attention on the bonding of my heart with the heart of the shaykh, and this kind of *dhikr* is unlawful.²⁹

The moment at which he turned off the Way may or may not be encapsulated in his own account of revulsion at bid'a, when he attended the *dhikr* of the Mawlawīs at their well-known *zāwiya* in Tripoli in its idyllic pastoral setting by the River Abū 'Alī. He observed the famous dance of the 'Whirling Dervishes' with 'handsome beardless youths among them, dressed in snow-white gowns like brides' dresses, dancing to the moving sound of the reed-pipe, turning swiftly and skilfully so that their robes flew out and formed circles, at harmonious distances and not encroaching on one another.'³⁰ Riḍā relates that he was overcome with anger at the sight of such 'forbidden acts' and shouted at the assembled company before retiring from the scene. His revulsion at the Mawlawī *dhikr* seems part of a more vehement and intense reaction against the excesses of 'false' Sufism than anything experienced by 'Abduh. Although it might at the time have been in keeping with the outlook of a reformist Naqshabandī, Riḍā would be driven to a more critical questioning of the scope of Sufism than that of Naqshabandīs. While he might come theoretically to acknowledge, with 'Abduh, the continuing existence of a 'true' Sufism, for him it would gradually cease to command his personal commitment.

While al-Ghazālī's *Iḥya'* had drawn the youthful Rashīd Riḍā into a concentration on spiritual preparation for the hereafter, his discovery, in 1892, of old copies of *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* among his father's papers led him towards a fresh appreciation of Islam as a religion concerned also with this life and the regulation of temporal affairs. He described the effect of the journal on him at that time as like an electric current giving his soul a shock. It was not his earliest encounter with *al-ʿUrwa*, but it reoriented him at a critical point in his life, helping to harness his energies in new channels of activist reform. He wrote to al-Afghānī in Istanbul, beseeching him to accept him as his *murīd*, showering him with extravagant praises couched in Sufistic terminology, speaking of him as 'the perfect man' (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and the 'beauty of this world and of the faith' (*Jamāl al-dunyā wa'l-dīn*).³¹ But the attempt to join al-Afghānī failed and it was not until 1897 (the year of Jamāl al-dīn's death) that Riḍā made his secret

journey to join Muḥammad ʿAbduh in Egypt, secrecy being necessary to avoid attracting the unwelcome attention of the Ottoman authorities.

Once settled in Cairo, Riḍā became almost inseparably associated with ʿAbduh, acknowledging himself in the role that he had sought with al-Afghānī, that of murīd, but with the proviso that he would not surrender himself totally to his master in the Sufi manner, but would accept only as much as he understood and would retain his independence of judgement. In 1898 he began the publication of the famous periodical *al-Manār*, intended to serve as an organ for the promotion of salafī reform and with the backing of ʿAbduh. Riḍā was to continue as editor until his death in 1935, proclaiming himself as ʿAbduh's trusted spiritual heir, although his status as such was questioned in some quarters.³²

Through the pages of *al-Manār* salafī critiques of contemporary Sufism reached a wide public and generated an extensive correspondence around the *umma*. During ʿAbduh's lifetime, in early issues from 1898 to 1903, Riḍā's warnings about the dangers of focusing attention on saintly karāmāt clearly reflect his master's concerns. However, in later life Riḍā embraced harsher anti-Sufi views, inspired especially by the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya and Wahhābīs. In the 1920s Wahhābī reassertion was attracting attention on the international scene with Ibn Suʿūd's expansionist campaigns in Arabia, culminating in his invasion of the Ḥijāz in 1924 and assumption of the title of king of the Ḥijāz in 1926. Riḍā wrote a book at this time in support of Ibn Suʿūd as a defender of true Sunnism and declared the Wahhābī doctrines to represent the original faith.³³ This was also the stand that he adopted in *al-Manār* and it coincides with forceful attacks on Sufi deviations.

The Tijāniyya was an order that was criticized with a notable degree of zeal.³⁴ In the issue of 14 March 1926, Riḍā replied to a question from an Algerian correspondent as to the possibility of seeing the Prophet while awake, as Aḥmad al-Tijānī claimed to have done. Riḍā discounted it and somewhat indirectly denounced al-Tijānī as an unbeliever, leading astray millions of people in Africa, and particularly in Algeria. He also published a student's rebuttal of the Tijānī belief that their founder had been taught a special prayer by the Prophet, *al-Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ*, which was not made known to the Companions in his lifetime. According to the article, this was tantamount to devaluing the Prophet's mission on earth, and even more alarming were the claims of Tijānīs that the prayer was a part of

God's eternal speech, which would only be beneficial to those who acknowledged the truth of such a belief. Riḍā added his own comments to the effect that al-Tijānī was a liar and he condemned all those Sufi shaykhs who exploited their supposed miraculous gifts for their own worldly advancement. The tone of his criticisms would probably have found favour with Ibn Su'ūd and enemies were ready to accuse him of being a Wāḥḥābī.

Riḍā certainly appears to have gone beyond 'Abduh in doubting the acceptability of core aspects of Sufism. He argued against the desirability of pursuing the Path to the point of *fanā'*, maintaining that a Muslim did not need to, and perhaps could not, pass beyond the station of absolute trust in God (*tawakkul*). Nor was there a sound purpose in the spiritual guide-disciple relationship, since it discouraged the development of a personality capable of independent thought and there were risks of being led blindly into erroneous innovations or deceived by unscrupulous shaykhs. Serious psychological damage might even result from certain practices, such as seeking to make contact with dead saints. Generally, there is the sense that Sufism, along with Shī'ism, has been responsible for bringing into Islam from Zoroastrianism a mass of extraneous matter that has no place in the original Arabian religion. For Riḍā, those who support esoteric interpretations have conspired in the past to undermine Islam from within and to end Arab authority in the state. The latter viewpoint seems tinged with the rising nationalism of the age, as does Riḍā's support for the growing Wāḥḥābī-backed power of Ibn Su'ūd in the Peninsula.

With the growth of a wider movement of salafī reformism, the appeal was not always for such a severe condemnation of the Sufi approach to Islam, but activists sometimes opted for the moderate face of salafī Sufism favoured by 'Abduh and Sufi scholars of a reforming disposition. On other occasions, and with increasing frequency, Riḍā's harsher critique was to feed into the stream of voices of those adopting a more radical anti-Sufi position.

The Salafiyya in the Arab Lands

Syria

In 1901, a friend of Riḍā in Damascus, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī (1871–1916), published a long essay in which he launched a fierce attack on the existing state of Islamic legal scholarship and

condemned Sufism without reservation.³⁵ Not only was he extremely critical of current Sufi malpractices, of fraudulent and lazy impostors duping the superstitious to part them from their money rather than seeking any genuine spiritual development, he openly questioned Sufism's Islamic basis, denouncing it as 'a jumble of theosophy, Greek metaphysics, and bits from the Qur'an and the Sunnah'.³⁶ The reaction of Sufi 'ulamā' was so violent that the governor of Damascus had al-Zahrāwī arrested and sent to Istanbul for investigation. Rashīd Riḍā, writing in *al-Manār* shortly after these events, expressed his admiration for al-Zahrāwī's brave stand and the independence that he displayed, but also felt he was somewhat excessive in his assault on Sufism. At a later date he might have been even more openly supportive, but he and other Syrian salafis were concerned that the essay had unleashed a conservative backlash against them with demands that al-Zahrāwī be put to death as a heretic and unbeliever and that the Sufi 'ulamā' should determine what did and did not constitute acceptable Islamic doctrine and practice.

A few years later Riḍā witnessed for himself the dangers of offending the traditional Sufi party in Damascus. On a tour through Syria in the autumn of 1908, he paid a visit to the city and on 24 October delivered a public address in the Umayyad Mosque.³⁷ He attracted a large audience and spoke to them on the now familiar theme of the need for progress through the proper combination of Islam and science. In the course of the lecture Riḍā denounced the practice of seeking the intercession of saints, already prominent in 'Abduh's campaign against bida', but most familiarly associated in the public mind with Wahhābism. Riḍā was not allowed to complete his speech, as he was interrupted by a Sufi shaykh, who angrily defended the practice, as well as the visitation of tombs and belief in saintly miracles. He cautioned the audience against listening to critics such as the Wahhābīs and Riḍā. Yet another shaykh stirred up the crowd against Wahhābīs, labelling Riḍā as one of them and forcing him to make a hurried retreat from the mosque. In later street disturbances a mob demanded that Riḍā be killed and attacked other Damascus salafis for holding the same Wahhābī views.

These accusations of Wahhābism occurred long before Riḍā's public appreciation of Ibn Su'ūd at a time when the third Wahhābī-Su'ūdī state was still in its infancy in central Arabia. Nevertheless, there was a lingering suspicion in Syria of all manifestations of anti-Sufism as Wahhābī and, therefore, distinctive of elements whose loyalty to the Sultan was doubtful. The conservative Sufis of Damascus backed

Sultan Abdülhamid against the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), who had taken control of Damascus and replaced the Sultan's men in charge of the city in August 1908, following their successful backing of an army mutiny in Macedonia in July. The Committee had been calling for the restoration of the 1876 Ottoman Constitution. Their backers included the Damascus salafis, who were consequently regarded with considerable anxiety by the conservatives, who had gained strength in the heyday of Shaykh Abū'l-Hudā al-Şayyādī and now found their position weakened. Riḍā thus became embroiled in a dispute which centred on popular Sufism, but was actually as much concerned with politics as with religion. A few months after Riḍā's visit, the conservatives were even more discomforted, when a CUP army division entered Istanbul in April 1909, deposing Sultan Abdülhamid, much to the satisfaction of the salafī faction in Damascus.

Despite all the charges of Wahnābism and the occasional extreme anti-Sufi posturing such as that of al-Zahrāwī, the Damascene salafis were more typically 'Abduh-style moderates, salafī Sufis who condemned excesses and abuses rather than the whole rationale of Sufism. Typical of such figures are those in the circles of the leading reformers Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī (1852–1920) and Jamāl al-dīn al-Qāsimī (1866–1914).³⁸ Al-Jazā'irī became prominent in educational reform in the 1880s, when he was also involved in the establishment of the Zāhiriyya Library in Damascus, for which he sought out many rare books and manuscripts, showing an especial interest in the works of Ibn Taymiyya and his fellow Ḥanbalī Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.³⁹ Despite some earlier acquaintance, from 1906 al-Qāsimī became more closely associated with al-Jazā'irī, joining in discussions with him on reform programmes and exchanging manuscripts.

Among Jamāl al-dīn al-Qāsimī's numerous works is one aimed at the removal of innovations in ritual and un-Islamic customs practised in the mosques of Damascus.⁴⁰ The attack on popular practices in the visitation of saints' tombs echoes the medieval Ḥanbalī campaigns and those of the Wahnābīs and the Egyptian reformers. The tone is sarcastic towards the conservative Sufis who defend such practices, but there is also a new note of embarrassment at the way in which Sufi processions, with their fire-eaters and rowdy followers, are perceived as attracting the ridicule of Westerners. However, in another short essay al-Qāsimī makes known his generally positive view of the 'true Sufism', very much in the line of 'Abduh, taking a position of qualified support for an authentic Islamic philosophy.⁴¹ Real Sufis, in his view, should be humble, sincere ascetics, engaged in constant

prayer, unlike the false shaykhs so commonly heading the orders of his own day. Yet the true Sufism has not totally died out, but is still to be found among sober intellectuals, such as some distinguished adherents of the Qādiriyya and Naqshabandiyya. The élitism and paternalism notable in ʿAbduh's attitude are present also in al-Qāsimī's view of the common people. He considers it better for the ʿulamā' to limit their contacts with the ignorant, spending time with them only to the extent necessary to teach them to perform their religious duties correctly and improve their morals.

In Syria salafism, whether moderately favourable to Sufism or occasionally more radically anti-Sufi, reached its peak early in the twentieth century before the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire. For a while it would lose ground to the rising force of secular Arab nationalism, for whose advocates questions of religious reform were, for the time being, less urgent.

North West Africa

In the French-occupied lands of North West Africa, salafism reached its peak later than in Syria, being rather more successfully linked to the rising forces of nationalism between the World Wars. The influence of the ideas of Muḥammad ʿAbduh was strongly felt and notably so in the conflict with the powerful ṭarīqas of the region. Nationalist salafis were not slow to perceive a connection between the readiness of certain Sufi leaders to collaborate with the French colonialists and corruption in their doctrines, deviating from the true original Sufism.

A small number of Tunisia's ʿulamā' responded favourably to ʿAbduh's visits to the country in 1884 and 1903, even though the majority remained staunchly conservative. In 1920 the Destour/Dustūr (Constitution) Party was formed under the leadership of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Thaʿālibī, a noted advocate of salafī reforms in the spirit of ʿAbduh, trained in the traditional style of the Zaytūna Mosque in Tunis, but much criticized by conservatives for his rationalizing approach to the Qurʾān. He saw the French protectorate, established under the al-Marsā Convention ratified by the French Chamber of Deputies in April 1884, as disrupting the natural Islamic development of the country and demanded a radical reversal, rejecting the right of the French to rule in the name of the *bey* and calling for a restoration of the 1860 constitution.⁴² The hope of Muslim reformists in the

Destour was initially for independence and the opportunity to press forward with modernization in a manner that would be consistent with salafī rationalist rethinking of Shari‘a and the promotion of an Arabic and Islamic ethos purged of the unacceptable innovations of the Sufi orders. However, al-Tha‘alibī was soon to find himself condemned to fifteen years of exile and, on his return to Tunis in 1937, he and his party were already outmanoeuvred on the nationalist front by the activities of the French-educated Habib Bourguiba and the Neo-Destour.

During his 1903 journey to North Africa, Muḥammad ‘Abduh had also visited Algeria, calling at Algiers and Constantine. This visit was to sow the seeds of salafī thought in particularly fertile ground, for, among the young Muslims to be impressed by ‘Abduh, was ‘Abd al-Ḥamid b. Badīs (1889–1940), who would become the best-known salafī scholar in North Africa. Ibn Badīs maintained his contacts with the Egyptian reformers, reinforced during the *ḥajj* of 1912. His activities centred on countering the impact of French culture, on the one hand, and, on the other, opposing those Sufi *ṭarīqas* that failed to defend Islam owing to their co-operation with the colonial authorities and dissemination of false doctrines. In 1931, in conjunction with other scholars of similar views, he founded the Association of Algerian ‘Ulamā’ (*Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’ al-Muslimīn al-Jazā’irīyyīn*), which worked indefatigably for the preservation and reform of Islam in Algeria up to the war for independence from 1954. Schools and the media were the major organs through which Ibn Badīs and the Association sought to convince a wider sector of the population of their vision for Islamic Algeria. By 1954 they had some 200 schools in operation, running very much the programme originally put forward by ‘Abduh, with Arabic and reformist Islamic studies taught alongside a modern Western curriculum. They also endeavoured to counter Sufi *ṭarīqas*, especially the Tijāniyya, through denunciation of them in their periodicals, most prominently in *al-Shihāb* (The Meteor) in the 1930s. The grounds for the assault on the Tijānīs were very similar to those of Rashīd Riḍā a decade earlier: personal criticism of the founder, Aḥmad al-Tijānī, and of his prayer *al-Ṣalāt al-Fātiḥ*, repudiating its being a part of God’s eternal speech; condemnation of the Tijānīs as undermining the rites of Islam; charging members of the Tijāniyya with loose morals and explaining this as resulting from their belief that they will not be punished in the hereafter on account of their adherence to the *ṭarīqa*.⁴³

How successful was the Association in convincing the population as a whole to accept their critique of the Sufi orders in Algeria? Although the salafī scholars have been frequently acclaimed for their religio-political role in the modern Algerian Islamic resistance, the extent of their influence is also questioned.⁴⁴ They appear as an upwardly mobile urban minority, affecting a rising bourgeoisie in the towns, but making little headway among the poorer classes, particularly in the countryside. Despite their ability to attack, discredit and disrupt the organized bases of Sufism, it is less clear that they managed to oust the faith of the mystics from the hearts of the peasants. However, in the longer term they were to contribute to a deepening of divisions between Sufis and anti-Sufis in the post-colonial Algerian state.

In Morocco, as in Algeria and Tunisia, the rise of salafī thought is closely associated with the growth of nationalist resistance and opposition to Sufis in alliance with colonialist forces.⁴⁵ In 1912, when the French assumed a protectorate over most of Morocco and the Spanish over a small northern zone, Sufism predominated in the Islamic outlook of the country, although there had been some salafī attempts to reform teaching in the mosque-university of al-Qarawiyyīn in Fez as a result of contacts with the ʿAbduh school. The reformers had called for stricter philological, exoteric interpretation of the Qurʾān in the Qarawiyyīn and condemned efforts to interpret through mystical insight and allegorical understandings of the sacred text. It was during the First World War and in the 1920s that Fez would become an increasingly active centre of salafī anti-Sufism.

Meanwhile salafism found militant expression in the Spanish-administered Rif, when Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm, a Berber who had been exposed to this reforming tendency in the Qarawiyyīn from 1904–6, led a *jihād* against the Spanish from 1920 to 1926. His programme included the establishment of a rigorous moral discipline: enforcing prayer, banning *hashish*-smoking, outlawing un-Islamic customs and appointing *qādīs* to judge by the Shariʿa. He was sternly opposed to the order of the Darqāwiyya, represented by a number of *zāwīyas* in northern Morocco, seeing them as a dangerous source of corruption and seeking to eliminate their presence in the Rif. His example was, however, not typical of salafī leaders in Morocco, who generally resembled their counterparts in Algeria and Tunisia, working through their associations of like-minded scholars to support nationalist political organizations and found schools. While 1926 saw

the suppression of Ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm's tribal forces by a concerted effort of both Spain and France, it also witnessed the involvement of the salafī scholars of Fez in a wider reform party, Hizb al-Iṣlāḥ. They conducted a very similar campaign to that in Algeria against the Tijāniyya and also struggled against the Ṭayyibiyya, allies of the French since the last century, and the Kittāniyya, who joined the ranks of the collaborators from the 1920s. Yet the salafīs themselves are remarked as feigning Sufi devotion, describing their group as the Zāwiya, to provide a cover for their secret meetings in which they organized nationalist activity. Thus they hoped to avert French suspicions of their real purpose.

In December 1943 the Istiqlāl (Independence) Party was formed, led from 1946 by a prominent salafī, ʿAllāl al-Fāsī. In a book entitled *al-Naqd al-dhātī* (Self-Criticism) he delivered his blueprint for the achievement of an Islamic state and society formed according to the thought of the school of ʿAbduh; the understanding of Islam to be propagated in the state was that of the religion of reason and progress, in which there would be no place for intermediaries with God in the form of Sufi shaykhs. ʿAllāl al-Fāsī and the Istiqlāl Party lent their support to the Moroccan Sultan Muḥammad V's efforts to achieve independence and consequently continued their opposition to those Sufi ṭarīqas working in support of an alternative, French-backed candidate for the sultanate. The sultan was deposed in 1953, but restored to office in 1955, eventually witnessing an independent Morocco in March 1956.

Notes

- 1 For this autobiographical fragment see Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Sīratī*, in *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila li'l-Imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAmāra, 2d ed. (Beirut: al-Muʿassasa al-ʿArabiyya li'l-dirāsāt wa'l-nashr, 1980), 2: 315–37, and on ʿAbduh and Shaykh Darwish, 329–32.
- 2 Ibid., 330.
- 3 Muḥammad Ḥasan b. Ḥamza Zāfir al-Madanī (d. 1846) was a disciple of Mawlay al-ʿArabī al-Darqāwī (d. 1823), founder of the Darqāwiyya in Morocco. On the propagation of the Shādhiliyya-Madaniyya in Egypt see F. de Jong, *Ṭuruq and Ṭuruq-Linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 109–10.
- 4 ʿAbduh, *Sīratī*, in *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila*, 2: 330.
- 5 See Abu-Manneh, 'Sultan Abdülhamid II and Shaikh Abu'l-Huda al-Sayyadī,' 139.
- 6 ʿAbduh, 2: 331.

- 7 Ibid., 332.
- 8 See Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 25–6, n. 2.
- 9 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Ta'riḫ al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh*, 1st ed. (Cairo, 1931), 1: 23; quoted in Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 131–2.
- 10 Muḥammad 'Abduh, *Risālat al-wāridāt*, introduction in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 2:413. The full text, originally published in Cairo in 1874, was reprinted in Riḍā, *Ta'riḫ*, 1st ed. (Cairo, 1908), 2: 1–25, but excluded by Riḍā from the 2d ed. in 1925–6, apparently because of Riḍā's own opposition to this type of mystical theology and his reluctance to have 'Abduh's name linked with it.
- 11 See Muḥammad 'Abduh, 'Ibtāl al-bida' min nizārat al-awqāf al-'umūmiyya,' in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 2: 23–6, originally published in *al-Waqā'i' al-Miṣriyya*, No. 958, 27 Dhū'l-Hijja 1297/30 November 1880.
- 12 The Sa'diyya was founded by a Syrian shaykh, Sa'd al-dīn al-Jibāwī (d. 1335) from Jibā near Damascus. This branch of the Rifā'iyya spread from Syria into Turkey and Egypt.
- 13 'Abduh, 'Ibtāl,' in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 2: 23.
- 14 E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1836; reprint, London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1936), 458–9 (page citations are to the reprint edition). 'Abduh, writing in *al-Ahrām*, welcomed the ban. On the measures of 1881 to control the Egyptian ṭarīqas and suppress certain of their practices, including the *dawsa*, see de Jong, *Ṭuruq*, 96–101. De Jong (96, n. 4) notes that, following the khedive's decree, Sa'dīs asked for permission to continue performing the *dawsa* at the *mawlid* of Sīdī Yūnis, their main saint in Egypt, and that their tradition recorded its original performance over bottles and only later over human bodies. After its banning in Egypt, the *dawsa* continued in Syria and was reported in Ḥimṣ as late as the 1940s. See art. D. B. Macdonald, 'Dawsa (Dosa),' in *EI* 2, ii, 181.
- 15 'Abduh, *Risālat al-tawḥīd*, in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 3: 353–475.
- 16 Ibid., 473–4.
- 17 Gabriel Hanotaux (1853–1944), French Minister of Foreign Affairs and historian. 'Abduh's response to Hanotaux's critical comments on Islam was first published in a series of newspaper articles in *al-Mu'ayyad* and *al-Ahrām* in 1900. See 'Abduh, *al-Radd 'alā Hanotaux (al-Islām wa'l-Muslimūn wa'l-Isti'mār)*, in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 3: 201–40. Farah Anṭūn (1874–1923) published his provocative article on the twelfth century Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in his magazine *al-Jāmi'ah* in the spring of 1902. Rashīd Riḍā first brought 'Abduh's attention to it as a dangerous attack on Islam asserting (following Renan) that the religion was hostile to philosophy. 'Abduh's public refutation also appeared first in periodical form in *al-Manār* and was later published in book form. For the Arabic text see 'Abduh, *al-Radd 'alā Farah Anṭūn (al-Idṭihād fi'l-Naṣrāniyya wa'l-Islām)* in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 3: 243–350. On the debate see Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 148–9 and Donald M. Reid, *The Odyssey of Farah Anṭūn* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica Inc., 1975), ix–x, 80–90.

- 18 'Abduh, *al-Radd 'alā Faraḥ Anṭūn*, in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 3: 341–2.
- 19 'Abduh, 'Hiwār fi'l-taṣawwuf wa'l-walāya,' in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 3: 517–24. Rashīd Riḍā and the 'umda's father also contributed to the discussion.
- 20 *Fatwā* published in *al-Manār*, Pt. 13, 7 September 1904; reprinted in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 3: 511–16.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 514.
- 22 'Abduh, 'Hiwār,' in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 3: 520–1.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 3: 523.
- 24 'Abduh, *Fatwā*, in *al-A'māl al-kāmila*, 3: 513.
- 25 'Hiwār,' in *al-A'māl*, 3: 517.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 521.
- 27 In Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Manār wa'l-Azhar* (Cairo, 1934–5), 146–72. See Albert Hourani, 'Sufism and Modern Islam: Rashīd Riḍā,' in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 90–102 for further discussion of Riḍā's views on Sufism and personal experiences.
- 28 Riḍā, *al-Manār wa'l-Azhar*, 147.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 148. Further on Riḍā's adherence to the Naqshabandiyya critically recollected, 148–9.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 171; translated in Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 225 and *Emergence*, 90.
- 31 See Assad Nimer Busool, 'Shaykh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's relations with Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh,' *MW* 66 (1976): 272–7 on the impact of *al-ʿUrwa* on Riḍā and his attempt to join al-Afghānī.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 278–86.
- 33 M. Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Wahhābiyyūn wa'l-Hijāz* (Cairo, 1926).
- 34 Abun-Nasr, *Tijāniyya*, 163–85, devotes a chapter to critics of the order, including Riḍā (177–8).
- 35 'Abd al-Ḥamid al-Zahrāwī, *al-Fiqh wa'l-taṣawwuf* (Cairo, 1901).
- 36 Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 58 and for further discussion of the case, 55–9. Commins investigates the origins of Salafism in Damascus from the late nineteenth century to 1914.
- 37 On Riḍā's visit to Damascus see David Commins, 'Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus, 1885–1914,' *IJMES* 18 (1986): 405–25.
- 38 On Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī see Joseph H. Escovitz, "'He was the Muḥammad 'Abduh of Syria": a study of Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī and his influence,' *IJMES* 18 (1986): 293–310 and Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 41–2, 89–96; 42–6, 59–63, 65–88 on al-Qāsimī.
- 39 On Ḥanbalis, including Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), and the question of their reformist approach to Sufism, see George Makdisi, 'The Ḥanbali School and Sufism,' *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas XV. Madrid* (1979): 115–26; reprinted in *idem*, *Religion, Law and Learning*.
- 40 Jamāl al-dīn al-Qāsimī, *Iṣlāḥ al-masājīd min al-bida' wa'l-ʿawā'id* (Cairo, 1923).
- 41 See Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 80–1.
- 42 The Tunisian constitution of 1860 had aimed to reduce the powers of the *bey* through assigning legislative and executive powers to a supreme council, to which ministers were responsible. However, as the council members were appointed by the *bey*, it was no experiment in democracy

and ended in failure, the constitution being suspended after only four years. See Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, 272–97 on the events leading to the establishment of the French protectorate and Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 84–94 on the role of Khayr al-dīn Pasha in the faltering reform efforts of the 1860s and 70s.

43 See Abun-Nasr, *Tijaniyya*, 178–80.

44 Ludmila Hanisch, 'The denunciation of mysticism as a bulwark against reason – a contribution to the expansion of Algerian reformism 1925–1939,' *The Maghreb Review* vol. 11, 5–6 (1986): 102–6, regards the Association's role as overvalued by historians in post-colonial Algeria.

45 On the salafis in Morocco see Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, 'The Salafiyya movement in Morocco: the religious bases of the Moroccan nationalist movement,' in *St. Antony's Papers* 16, ed. Albert Hourani *Middle Eastern Affairs* 3 (1963): 90–105; also Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, 369–93.

Contemporary Sufism and Anti-Sufism

Sufi Ṭarīqas, 1950s–1960s: Decline and Continuity

By the 1950s it was not uncommon for Western observers to view the *ṭarīqas* as movements that were destined to fade, as Muslim countries followed Western models of development and the educated élites abandoned the traditional forms of religious organization. A. J. Arberry's comments of 1950 are representative of such a viewpoint: 'Though the Sufi Orders continued – and in many countries continue – to hold the interest and allegiance of the ignorant masses, no man of education would care to speak in their favour.'¹ The observation was made with special reference to Egypt and apparently also with the Arab Middle East primarily in mind, but ten years later Clifford Geertz was expressing quite similar opinions with regard to the *ṭarīqas* in Java, perceiving them as the preserve of old men on the social periphery, ready to be forced out of existence with the growing strength of the modernists.²

More recent scholarship would be inclined to see such observers as somewhat too eager to sound the death knell of the Sufi orders, when 'on the contrary Sufism is not only surviving but in many areas flourishes.'³ However, it is arguable that it is easier to remark the vitality of Sufism in various parts of the world in the 1980s and 1990s than it was in the 1950s and 1960s. In some cases there has been considerable revival where there was notable decline at mid-century and the expectation of still further decline, rather than revival, was not confined to Western scholars. Some prominent Muslim intellectuals shared this perception, having been nourished on the ideas of the reform-minded critics of the orders and become convinced that they, and not the traditional Sufi shaykhs, would mould the thinking of the younger generations. These men of education who declined to speak in favour of the orders not infrequently enjoyed a high profile in the secularized circles of certain nationalist leaders emerging with the

reassertion of independence in a number of Muslim states following World War II.

Apart from the unpredicted revival in some countries and ṭarīqas, there has also been increased study of organized Sufi activity, embracing a greater range of areas and orders and including those where these bodies have achieved persistent expansion or at least maintained a reasonable level of continuity. A high proportion of the research has been undertaken by sociologists and anthropologists and sometimes also political scientists, but certainly far less by those for whom the classical Sufi tradition is of major concern.

It is proposed here to make a brief examination of cases where either decline or continuity has been studied with reference to organized Sufism in the fifties and sixties. Egypt has been chosen as an area of well-documented decline in that period and Sudan and Senegal as areas of evident vitality in particular ṭarīqas.

The Decline of the Ṭarīqas in Egypt

If the Egyptian ṭarīqas could appear moribund by 1950, the 1952 revolution of the Free Officers did nothing to reinstate their position. The years that witnessed the rise to power of Jamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir and his presidency from 1956–70 oversaw a phase of decline that was widely presumed to be terminal. Viewed from the vantage point of his nationalist and socialist government, the orders represented all that it hoped to leave behind: ignorance, superstition and quietist toleration of foreign intervention in Egyptian affairs. While they might not represent the direct threat of a religious opposition, they were nevertheless looked upon with some misgivings on account of their traditional associations with the old landed classes in the countryside and their potential use as the tools of reactionary political forces.

By the mid-1960s, Michael Gilsenan, conducting anthropological research on a reformed branch of the Shādhiliyya, observed of the Egyptian orders:

To the encroachments of Western imperialism and scientific knowledge, to the changing political conditions of Egypt after independence, to the revolution of 1952 and all that it has meant in terms of social change, the Orders offered nothing save an image of intellectual irrelevance, superstitious beliefs and practices which degraded Islam.⁴

He saw their survival as owing to their appeal to the conservatively religious and illiterate peasants and urban lower class. They also seemed to present some outlet for those to whom other avenues of religious expression were closed with the government clampdown on the politically activist Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in 1928 by Ḥasan al-Bannā', a salafī Sufi and close associate of Rashīd Riḍā, the Brotherhood had expanded to attract a membership of around half a million by the time of his death in 1949 at the hands of the secret police. It had continued to grow, but had developed increasingly anti-Sufi attitudes, generally highly critical of the decaying ṭarīqas. However, for those who sought the tranquillity, reassurance and comparative security of traditional spiritual guidance and brotherhood, the Sufi orders of the 1960s might at least provide a temporary refuge from the pressures of dramatic changes in the world around them.

On the other hand, for those who actively sought progressive change in their society, the ṭarīqas had little to offer. They lacked intellectual, articulate and dynamic leadership that might have attracted the more educated and appeared too loosely structured to foster a strong sense of corporate identity. Multiple membership of orders was common, so that *murīds* did not owe exclusive allegiance to the group. There was also a pronounced tendency for ṭarīqas to splinter into a number of sub-sections with leadership disputes and rivalries. In 1960 there were twenty-one orders represented in the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders apart from some minor unregistered orders.⁵ While such numbers might give the impression of strength, the reality was one of underlying weakness with a proliferation of amorphous bodies. Had the religious climate enabled the emergence of fewer, but more highly organized, orders, Sufism in Egypt might have experienced a much improved potential for empowerment.

At this period the weak and fissionable Egyptian ṭarīqas presented a stark contrast to the apparent strength of the Sanūsīyya in neighbouring Libya, the Sanūsīs providing the political power base for the then independent kingdom ruled over by the head of their order and grandson of its founder. In 1951 Sayyid Idrīs had taken a truly extraordinary step for a prominent Sufi shaykh, assuming the non-Muslim title of king with British backing for his rule and going on to preside over a régime of spiralling corruption, only to be toppled by the coup of Colonel Mu'ammad al-Qadhdhāfī in September 1969. In the fifties and sixties it would have been inconceivable for an Egyptian ṭarīqa head to play a role equivalent to that of the Sanūsī leader, but at the same time the very weakness of the orders could

offer a certain protection, since they were unable to constitute a threat serious enough to demand real efforts at containment or suppression. They could simply be left to wither with the possibility that times and their fortunes might change.

Continuity in the Sudan and Senegal

Elsewhere in Africa certain powerful *ṭarīqas* supply models of greater success in self-preservation and adaptation to new conditions. Writing at the beginning of the 1970s, John Voll observed the situation in the Sudan to be somewhat unusual on account of the continuing vitality of Sufi religious leadership, notably represented by the *Mirghani* family of the *Khatmiyya* from the reformist *Idrisī* tradition, still facing their *Mahdist* rivals.⁶ Unlike their counterparts further North, they seemed to have managed far more effectively to cross the divide between the traditional religious outlook and that of those who had received a Westernized style of education, whom Voll classes as 'new men'. During the years between the World Wars, the *Khatmiyya* leader, Sayyid ʿAlī al-*Mirghani*, and Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mahdī of the *Mahdiyya* had assiduously developed links with the new men. Following World War II, both parties had skilfully retained credibility and local backing. The *Khatmiyya*, despite an earlier history of connections with the British, emerged in support of a pro-Egyptian radical nationalism. The *Mahdists* favoured a more gradualist path to independence, cooperating with British plans for Sudanese self-government, but winning over Sudanese who remained suspicious of Egyptian intentions towards the Sudan. Thus after gaining independence in 1956, these traditional religious organizations still enjoyed large-scale membership and influence among the new nationalist politicians.

The same was to hold true of the Sufi orders in Senegal, after its achievement of independence from France in 1960. A United States Army handbook estimated that, in 1960–61, three major *ṭarīqas* accounted for over 97% of all Muslims in the country, the remainder numbering only 60,000 out of the total of 2,500,000 Muslims.⁷ Muslims constituted 78.5% of the population with adherents of traditional religions making up a further 18% and Roman Catholics (including Europeans and Lebanese) 3.5%.

The strongest of the *ṭarīqas* in numerical terms was the *Tijāniyya*, whose 1,400,000 affiliates comprised well over half of the total

Senegalese population, divided into three branches: the ʿUmarian Tijānis following the holy lineage of al-Ḥājj ʿUmar Tal who first propagated the ṭarīqa in nineteenth century Senegal, the Niass Tijānis who emerged as a new section in the 1920s under the leadership of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niass and, finally, those attached to the Sy lineage of Tivouane. These divisions would tend, to some extent, to reduce the otherwise considerable strength of the organization. The Qādiriyya was the smallest, most loosely structured and least influential of the orders with members owing their prime allegiance to their local shaykhs, but still counting over 400,000 members, 17% of the population. The third order, exclusively Senegalese, and the most tightly organized with the clearest sense of group identity, was that of the Murīds (Mourides), second to the Tijāniyya in numbers with 575,000 members, over 23% of the population. Founded by Amadu Bamba Mbacké (c. 1850–1927) as an offshoot of the Qādiriyya, the order, after initial French persecution, managed to negotiate an important role for itself in the political economy of Senegal, opening up previously uncultivated land for peanut production by its devoted murīds in a process of steady expansion from the 1920s to the 1960s.⁸ The extraordinary economic success story of this period has been variously interpreted as exploitation of poor peasant farmers to the benefit of a wealthy spiritual leadership or a fair deal by which these 'wretched of the earth' were given economic and religious security in exchange for their services.⁹

Despite the dominance of these ṭarīqas in Senegalese society, the 1950s presented them with some challenges in the run-up to independence. Opposition arose from two principal quarters: from urban leftist nationalists and salafī anti-Sufis. The leftists charged the shaykhs of the orders with being the tools of the French colonialists, feudalist exploiters and religious frauds. The salafīs organized themselves around the Union Culturelle Musulmane, founded in 1953 by a graduate of the Ben Badīs Institute of Algiers, Shaykh Touré. The accusations levelled by the Union against the Sufis were of a broadly similar nature, the criticisms focusing on the record of the ṭarīqas as unpatriotic collaborators and in more detail on their corruptions of the faith, essentially in the style of the North African salafīs.

However, with the advent of the newly independent state under President Léopold Senghor from 1960–80, the ṭarīqas found their position generally unimpaired and their leaders courted for support by all political parties. When Senghor faced disturbances among city

workers and students in 1968–9, he turned to the rural Sufi shaykhs and saw his salvation in their backing for his régime.¹⁰

The continuing strength of Sufi organizations in both Sudan and Senegal in the 1950s and 60s bears witness to the advantages of a few powerful orders, able to deliver services to their members and influence political developments, without being so closely tied to a particular régime that its demise inevitably leads to their own eclipse, the situation experienced by the Sanūsīs in Libya.

The Ṭarīqas and the Contemporary Islamic Revival

In the climate of Islamic revivalism that has expanded worldwide since the 1970s, especially following the Iranian revolution of 1979, previous predictions about the future of the ṭarīqas have proved all too often seriously flawed. Much attention has been paid to the politically active Islamist elements in the revival, who are frequently anti-Sufi with their demands for an Islamic order with its basis in exoteric legalism. It might be assumed that the prominence of such trends would have a largely negative effect on Sufism in posing even stronger challenges to the ṭarīqas. While such an assumption has often been valid, there have also been positive aspects to the revival as far as organized Sufism is concerned.

Politically Resurgent Sufism

Sufis could find encouragement in seeing that not all proponents of the political resurgence of Islam have been anti-Sufi in outlook. Perhaps the most outstanding example to be noted is that of Āyat Allāh Khumaynī himself, for whom Sufi spirituality was central to his vision of an Islamic system to regenerate Iran and the wider *umma*.¹¹ Despite much populist talk about oppressed and oppressors, his concern in post-revolutionary Iran was not solely to improve the material lot of the poor, but to restore a sense of spiritual equilibrium to a people whom he perceived to be sick with the Western diseases of materialism and self-love. Therefore, a solution which addressed only material needs would be inadequate, since his own country initially required purification from un-Islamic and anti-Islamic thinking. Such a view is reflected in a series of lectures delivered before an audience of religious students in Najaf towards the end of

1972, several years before the revolution. Entitled *Mubārāza bā Nafs yā jihād-i akbar* (The Struggle against the Self or the Greater Jihād), it is concerned with admonishing the students to beware of this world and its attractions and warns of the dangers of diseases of the spirit, which are painless and may even be pleasurable, but which lead to hellfire. They are urged to reject love of this world and its goods:

If you have any tie or link binding you to this world in love, try to sever it. This world, despite all its apparent splendour and charm, is too worthless to be loved, particularly if one is deprived of what it has to offer... What value does this transient and seemingly sweet life (supposing that it is indeed spent pleasantly) have when compared to infinite torment? For the torment suffered by those attached to this world is indeed sometimes infinite.

Those attached to this world are mistaken when they imagine that they are in possession of it and its various benefits and advantages. Everyone looks upon the world through the aperture of his own environment and place of residence, imagines that the world consists of what he possesses. But this corporeal world is vaster than man can even imagine, let alone traverse or possess. Despite all the adornments with which He equipped it, God has never looked upon this world with mercy, according to a certain tradition. We must see, then, what the other world is upon which God, Almighty and Exalted, did look in mercy and what the 'fountainhead of magnificence' is to which He is summoning man.¹²

Khumaynī's tone appears little different from that set by the early ascetics and seems quite reminiscent of that of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728), addressing the Umayyad Caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and likening this world to a serpent, smooth to the touch, but whose venom may prove fatal.

Khumaynī had even hoped to include non-Muslims in this call to purification, writing in a letter to President Gorbachev of the U.S.S.R. of his conviction that the Soviets could benefit from studying the Islam of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Sīnā.¹³ However, if this appeal was of little avail in such quarters, it met with a warmer reception among some Muslim supporters of the Āyat Allāh's revolution. For example, in West Africa certain Sufi leaders showed eagerness to foster links with Iran. In Nigeria Iranian Shīʿī literature began to circulate in the 1980s, being published in English, Arabic and Hausa and adding a

further sectarian dimension to local controversies over the Islamic credentials of the Sufi orders, when Nigerian Sufis expressed their approval of Khumaynī's ideas. In 1987 a senior Tijānī, Shaykh Dahira Usman Bauchi, was invited to Iran to attend the eighth anniversary celebrations of the revolution.¹⁴ Pro-Khumaynī activity also led to splits in the Muslim Students Society in this period and the emergence of a new group, known locally as the Yan Shia, although this did not literally mean that they were Shī'īs.¹⁵ In Ghana, Tijānīs have also looked to Iran for support and it has been remarked that some of the Tijāniyya in Tamale and Accra have become Shī'īs with an 'Iranian-sponsored school of Shī'ite piety' being founded in Accra, apparently with the intention of serving as a training centre for the region.¹⁶ However, once again, it is by no means clear what becoming Shī'ī really involves beyond a radicalization of ṭarīqa activity in the area.

Looked at more generally, the wider climate of revivalism may be seen as having stimulated a variety of forms of Islamic religious expression, including Sufism. As it has given confidence to Muslims of different perspectives to assert their faith, many have turned to ṭarīqas for spiritual satisfaction, leading to the sudden expansion of some old orders, such as the Burhāniyya in the Sudan and Egypt under the influence of the Sudanese Shaykh Muḥammad ʿUthmān ʿAbduh al-Burhānī (d. 1983), who claimed followers in the millions, including three million in Egypt.¹⁷ The revival has also led to the creation of pan-Sufi umbrella organizations, such as the Aḥbāsh in Lebanon, which owes its support especially to the Qādiriyya, Rifāʿiyya and Naqshabandiyya.¹⁸

In some cases, Sufi movements have become more consciously politicized in reaction against the assault on them by anti-Sufi organizations, as has happened in the Nigerian and Ghanaian situations just noted and with the Lebanese Aḥbāsh, who, like their West African counterparts, have been influenced to some extent by Shī'ī spirituality. The Aḥbāsh take their name from the organization's founder, Shaykh ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥabashī, of Ethiopian origin, but settled in Beirut since 1950.¹⁹ The movement developed from 1983 as a successor to the Society of Philanthropic Projects, first founded in 1930.

Viewing themselves as salafī Sufis, the Aḥbāsh defended themselves against criticisms by arguing that they accepted only 'good' *bidaʿ*, innovations that were consistent with Qur'ān and Sunna, such as 'giving *bayʿa* (allegiance) to the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-*

ṣāliḥ); upholding the name of Allah by prayer and singing (*tahlīl*) celebrating the Prophet's birthday; visiting the shrines of saintly ancestors for their blessing; praying loudly after mosque services; and keeping meditation boxes (*miḥrāb*) in the mosques.²⁰ However, they were anxious to distance themselves from those ṭarīqas that they considered guilty of practising 'bad' innovations, condemning the Shādhiliyya, Mawlawiyya and Khalwatiyya, although the last two have been in marked decline in Lebanon, as they have been elsewhere in the Middle East.

The Aḥbāsh managed to appeal to a cross-section of the Lebanese Muslim population during the years of the civil war and its aftermath, presenting a moderate blend of Sunni and Shī'ī theology and a message of tolerance and determination to preserve Lebanon's religiously pluralistic society against any attempts to impose an Islamic order. While they infiltrated and recruited from the militias, they maintained a strict opposition to violence which ensured good relations for their followers with Arab governments, helping their peaceful spread to Syria and Jordan and as far afield as Tajikistan and Australia.

However, their denunciation of Sunni anti-Sufi views from Ibn Taymiyya to Sayyid Quṭb and of organizations from the Muslim Brotherhood to more radical groups, such as al-Takfīr wa'l-Hijra, al-Jihād and the local al-Jamā'a al-Islāmiyya, led to increasing tensions. By 1992 they came into open conflict with the Lebanese al-Jamā'a, whom they condemned as unbelievers (*kuffār*), clashing with them in the coastal cities of Sidon and Tripoli. At this time the Aḥbāsh were becoming less distinctively apolitical, as they put forward candidates in the 1992 parliamentary elections, rather surprisingly allying themselves with the Shī'ī movement of Ḥizb Allāh, despite their criticisms of Ḥizb Allāh's demands for an Iranian-inspired Islamic order.

Apolitical Resurgent Sufism

In other cases the representatives of organized Sufism have remained consistently apolitical, while profiting from the heightening of Islamic consciousness with the wider revival. Returning to Egypt, where weakness and decline had been characteristic of the orders in the 1950s and 60s, a remarkable resurgence of a generally apolitical nature could be witnessed. A clear indication of increasing ṭarīqa activity has

been provided by the rising numbers of Sufis attending the annual ceremonies in honour of the Prophet's birthday, an occasion on which they would traditionally gather for several days in the vicinity of the Imām al-Ḥusayn mosque in Cairo's Old City prior to the grand parade. In order to take part in the parade, *ṭarīqas* have been required to register with the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders. A tripling of the number of participants was observed in the period from 1970 to 1985. According to an Egyptian sociologist, Saad Eddin Ibrāhīm:

In the mid-1960s the parade march took no more than two hours following the afternoon prayer (*al-asr*) and ending well before the sunset prayer (*al-maghreb*). In the mid-1980s, the parade begins after the noon prayer (*al-zuhr*) and may continue long after sunset.²¹

Yet despite the huge upsurge in Egyptian Sufi activity since the 1970s, deep and damaging divisions have continued to plague its organized expression. Such a state of affairs may be seen as a visible long-term effect of the salafis' reform efforts, part of the heritage of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and associates. It is also a significant reflection of state policies designed to support the supposedly respectable face of Sufism approved by the Supreme Council, who stress its conformity with Shariʿa and place in mainstream Sunnism. However, such officially-backed reformism has led to a widening gulf between the registered and sanitized orders and those persisting in the traditional forms of popular Sufism.

Awareness of the dangers of officially-approved Sufism degenerating into an empty shell without the substance of true Sufism is already evident in the 1961 novel, *al-Liṣṣ wa'l-Kilāb* (The Thief and the Dogs) of Najīb Maḥfūz.²² A Sufi shaykh, ʿAlī al-Junaydī plays a pivotal role as the model of the sober Sufi master sanctioned by the authorities (hence the association of the name with al-Junayd). In a dream of the novel's severely alienated hero, the thief and murderer Saʿīd Mahrān, the shaykh actually appears to demand an identity card from Saʿīd:

Said was surprised and objected that a Sufi disciple didn't need an identity card, that in the eyes of the mystical order the righteous and the sinner were alike. When the Sheikh replied that he did not like the righteous and wanted to make sure that Said was really a sinner, Said handed him the revolver, explaining that every missing bullet meant a murder, but the

sheikh insisted on seeing his card; the government instructions, he said, were stringent on this point.²³

The shaykh had all the outward appearance of a true guide, the austere ascetic who sees the other world more clearly than this world, his language cloaked in symbolism and inaccessible to the uninitiated ears of the ordinary man. However, Shaykh ʿAlī al-Junaydī is not to be taken at face value, for his behaviour and, it is implied, his inner state is not that of the true Sufi. Real spirituality, through which the human might actually journey towards God, is to be found beyond the confines of state-registered piety.

With the end of the Nasserist period in 1970 and the advent to power of President Anwar Sādāt, the state became concerned with more than the mere control and limitation of religious groups, including the *ṭarīqas*. 'Safe' versions of Sufism were actively encouraged as a bulwark against leftist political activity, initially, and somewhat ironically, alongside the largely anti-Sufi Muslim Brothers, who were being offered respectable reinstatement in Egyptian public life. But state encouragement was also backed by even more controls with the powers of the Supreme Council to regulate Sufi affairs being further strengthened in 1976 and 1978.

A prominent example of the type of order to receive such state backing is the Ḥāmidiyya Shādhiliyya, a sub-order founded by a civil servant, Shaykh Salāma Ḥasan al-Rāḍī (1867–1939). This was the Shādhilī branch studied by Michael Gilsenan in 1964–6 and visited by him once again in the late 1970s, when he discovered striking changes.²⁴ The organization whose original appeal had been to the poor of Cairo and the Nile Delta had gathered a growing number of middle-class members, who had gained influence within the *ṭarīqa* and moved it in an ever more reformist direction. They stressed the intellectual abilities of the founding shaykh rather than his miraculous gifts, his skill in outwitting the *ʿulamāʾ* in knowledge of Shariʿa, not his power to intervene in his followers' lives by communication with them from beyond the grave, by saving them from death by drowning or bringing them some unexpected good fortune. Finally, the increasing social divisions led to a split in the leadership, with the bourgeois élite breaking away completely and developing their own well-equipped and costly mosque and associated teaching centre, library and other facilities in the fashionable Cairo district of Zamalek. Such was the desired, government-approved model of a Sufi order, far removed from the

working-class followers massing at the tomb of Shaykh Salāma in the port quarter of Bulaq.

The dilemmas of the middle-class seeker had also already been highlighted in the 1960s in the novels of Maḥfūz, notably in *al-Summān wa'l-Kharīf* (The Quail and Autumn, 1962) and *al-Shaḥḥādh* (The Beggar, 1965).²⁵ Shut out from the spiritual reassurance of traditional ṭarīqa membership, characters turn to book knowledge of Sufism or embark on their own lone struggle towards mystical enlightenment. The former course seems relatively harmless and at least provides some comfort and sense of purpose for Samīr ʿAbd al-Bāqī in *al-Summān*, a civil servant who has lost his government post and taken a job with an uncle as accounts director and junior partner in his furniture business. Armed with a copy of the eleventh century popular summary of Sufi teaching and practice, al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, he endeavours to persuade a disenchanted ex-colleague of the benefits of Sufism.

Far more problematic is the search of the successful, but spiritually sick, lawyer, ʿUmar al-Ḥamzāwī, chief protagonist and spiritual beggar of *al-Shaḥḥādh*. Bound to a base everyday life dominated by materialistic concerns, his loneliness is 'the loneliness of the wave absorbed by the sand, which never returns to the sea,' his soul lost in the sand of worldliness and never able to return to the ocean of God.²⁶ The turning point comes for him one night when he drives out to the Pyramids and experiences an ecstatic state, as the sunrise eliminates the utter darkness of his human sin, replacing it with a marvellous light. Nothing worldly matters any longer and he gives up his work and family to retreat in the countryside. There he immerses himself in book knowledge of Sufism in a far more dangerous way than that of Samīr ʿAbd al-Bāqī, hoping once again to taste ecstasy. The result, without the proper guidance or support of ṭarīqa brotherhood, is a severe psychotic illness with al-Ḥamzāwī overwhelmed by hallucinations and delusions.

With the Sufi revival in Egypt such seekers from a more secularized educational background have sometimes found their niche within the new ranks of the Ḥamidiyya Shādhiliyya or comparable reformed ṭarīqa sections. Sometimes they have carved out a place for themselves in smaller intellectual Sufi circles open to the exploration of medieval theosophy and far removed from what they perceive as the debased street religion of the traditional popular orders.

While the ṭarīqas were criticized by such circles, they were also open to criticism from the Rector of al-Azhar from 1973 to 1978, ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, himself a scholarly Shādhilī pressing the

case for reform.²⁷ For Maḥmūd the current state of the Egyptian ṭarīqas was one of decay and he supported a return to the classical sources to rediscover an authentic and austere style of Sufism that would stress social responsibility and a life in obedience to the Sharīʿa, attempting to achieve its inner meanings. This, he believed, could be accomplished through a renewal of the Shādhilī path, setting out his blueprint for this project in his major contribution to Sufi theory, *al-Madrasa al-Shādhiliyya al-Ḥadītha* (The New Shādhilī School). His vision was essentially of an intellectual and spiritual elect

to reflect on the true Islamic tradition in a secular environment which is progressively hostile to religion and where Sufism is perceived as a complicated system of superstition and innovation in religion. In explaining the concept of the elect, Maḥmūd says that, "it is in the nature of things that there should be an aristocracy; it is the concept of the elect – those people who are divinely gifted by an acute sense, a sharp intelligence, and by a spiritual instinct."²⁸

By contrast with the reformist Sufism of varying degrees able to win government approval, the revival has also borne witness to a vibrant undercurrent of traditional, popular Sufi activity in those orders that could not expect establishment approbation.²⁹ Valerie Hoffman-Ladd, researching these popular understandings of Sufism in Egypt in the late 1980s, noted of her interviews with Sufis:

I would often begin my interviews by asking members and affiliates of Sufi orders what Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) was. Sometimes, particularly among illiterate Sufis, the term *taṣawwuf* was not understood, or was understood to mean "fanaticism". But most respondents defined Sufism as purification of the heart, sincerity of worship, and renunciation of fleshly passions. These ends were largely met through practices of devotion to the Prophet, his family, and one's own sheikh.³⁰

One Rifāʿī *wakīl* whom she met defined Sufism as 'love for the family of the Prophet,' and the Rifāʿiyya, formerly a prime target of attacks by Muḥammad ʿAbduh and the salafīs, is notable among the major orders participating in devotional activities of *dhikr* and the celebration of *mawlid*s at the many shrines throughout the country. Apart from the occasion of the Prophet's birthday celebrated in locations all over Egypt, other *mawlid*s are remembered at the tombs and shrines of members of his family (*ahl al-bayt*), such as Imām al-Ḥusayn and

Sayyida Zaynab with mosques in Cairo, already noted as the scenes of reprehensible innovations in the eyes of nineteenth century reformers.

In the mid-1970s the Burhāniyya attracted unwelcome attention from the Ministry of Awqāf, when one of its publications was denounced as containing unorthodox doctrines concerning the Prophet and *ahl al-bayt* and a media campaign was initiated against the order's alleged extremist and Shīʿī-inspired views.³¹ Effectively this was an attack on major figures of the medieval Sufi tradition, since the book was largely a compilation of extracts from their writings long absorbed in the teachings of Egyptian ṭarīqas and by no means exclusive to the Burhāniyya. These would include Ibn al-ʿArabī and ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī.

Thus remaining apolitical has not necessarily enabled ṭarīqas to escape condemnation by the state, although it may enable considerable numbers of Sufis to continue in traditional expressions of their faith without systematic efforts to suppress their organizations.

State Anti-Sufism

States continued to function as major actors among the forces of anti-Sufism in the post-World War II period. Both Muslim states and non-Muslim states with substantial Muslim populations were among those concerned about the dangers of politically activist Sufis, although the threat of Sufi-led armed *jihād* had passed in most parts of the Islamic world. The confrontation between Sufism's proponents and governments hostile to its purposes was rooted not only in practical power politics, but also contained varying forms of ideological conflict. In Communist lands state opposition to Sufism normally constituted part of a wider anti-religious programme, in which Sufis were targeted as representative of reactionary Muslim elements and as potential or actual subversives.

Soviet Anti-Sufism: Return to the North Caucasus

In the Soviet Union the Sufi orders were viewed as primary enemies of the Communist state and people, whether in Central Asia or the Caucasian region. It is proposed here to look once again at the North Caucasus, examining it as an example of an area where anti-Sufi

policies were resolutely pursued, hardly surprisingly, since the *ṭarīqas* had refused to abandon their old commitment to *jihād*, directing their energies against the atheistic régime, as they had against its Christian Tsarist predecessor in a series of uprisings from 1917 to 1943.³² In February 1944 Stalin ordered the mass deportation of the entire population of Chechnya-Ingushetia, some 800,000 people, to be sent to prison camps in Siberia and Kazakhstan. The alleged reason for this drastic action was that the people of the Chechen-Ingush Republic had collaborated with the Germans against the Red Army, despite a complete absence of any German presence in or anywhere near the territory. In fact, the local Sufi leadership had been quite sufficiently able to instigate anti-Soviet resistance without any external incitement to unrest. Some Sufis even managed to avoid deportation and, under a shaykh of the Batal Haji branch of the Qādiriyya, continued to fight a guerrilla war from the high mountains. The Batal Haji were noted for their puritanical strictness and exclusivism, refusing to eat with the uninitiated and marrying only among themselves. A Soviet observer remarked of the Sufis of the Caucasus in 1947:

They are distinguished by their blind, unlimited and unreasoning faith in God: they actively propagate their religious beliefs and cannot endure those who do not share them. They endeavour to force their religion upon their relatives, their friends and their children and isolate themselves from the social and cultural collective life.³³

The experience of exile only served to build a closer association between Sufism and nationalism, as they clung to both, while also promoting Sufism among the Kazakhs, Uzbeks and Karakalpaks of Central Asia. Following mass repatriation to their homeland in the late 1950s during Khrushchev's programme of de-Stalinization, the Soviet physical and verbal assault on the *ṭarīqas* persisted. They were branded as reactionaries, fanatics and criminals, as the Soviet press reported a number of trials of Sufi shaykhs and their murids, particularly Naqshabandīs and Batal Hajīs. Major trials took place in 1958 and 1963–4.

The Soviet authorities identified the Sufi orders with ensuring the survival of the traditional religious order and the refusal to integrate into the Soviet way of life. They were seen to reject the learning of Russian, to avoid association with the Communist Party and military service. From the Soviet perspective, one of the most dangerous aspects of their influence lay in their efforts to attract the young by

illegal religious education, allowing them to observe dhikr, distributing Sufi literature and taking children and young people to visit shrines. These included a number of tombs of Naqshabandīs and Qādirīs killed in anti-Russian and later anti-Soviet guerrilla fighting.³⁴ As part of their campaign to discourage such pilgrimage visits (*ziyārāt*), official establishment ‘ulamā’ were co-opted to denounce the practice through the publication of *fatwās*. A *fatwā* issued by Haji Kurbanov, muftī of the North Caucasus and Daghestan in the 1960s, condemns the seeking of intercession at a grave:

Question: Does Shari‘yat law permit meeting at a *mazār* to pray?

Answer: No, it does not. Our Prophet said that those people (who meet at a *mazār*) are sinners. He also said that during the pre-Islamic era of ignorance, when a man died, great honours were bestowed on him, a temple was built and people would pray at his image. This is paganism and those who practice it will have to answer on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet also said: “When I die, do not meet at my grave.”

Question: Is it allowed to ask a dead one for healing?

Answer: No, this would be a sin, and moreover a useless one. The dead don’t listen. . . .³⁵

The *fatwā* seems oddly reminiscent of ‘Abduh’s *fatwā* of 1904 against intercession, but much less subtle and scholarly and not really concerned with the reform of Sufism, but with political control of Sufis.

However, notwithstanding official condemnation, holy places provided important opportunities for uniting Sufi religious activity with nationalist sentiments. Instead of dwindling under the force of Soviet anti-Sufism, the numbers of shrines and pilgrimages actually increased into the 1980s.³⁶

By the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the failure of Soviet anti-Sufism was increasingly conspicuous. As Russian specialists had recognized, the vitality of Islam in the region was largely owing to the *ṭarīqas*. In Daghestan alone the number of working mosques had grown from 27 in 1974 to 600 in 1991. In Chechnya, where there had been no mosques between 1943 and 1978, there had been a huge upsurge in their restoration and construction.³⁷ But where Soviet anti-Sufism had failed, the Sufis of the North Caucasus would be faced with a new round of participation in resistance to the Russians.

Turkey: Sufis Between Secularists and Islamists

In Muslim lands Sufi concepts of the nature and role of the state were, in various cases, perceived to differ from those of controlling governments. Turkey provides a notable example of this type of conflict where efforts by the Kemalist government of the 1920s and 30s to create the new Turkish nation-state ran counter to the concept of the Islamic state supported by traditional Sufis, but also competed with incipient Kurdish nationalism in eastern Anatolia. In 1945, with the end of the one-party system controlled by the Republican People's Party, political parties were inclined to attempt the accommodation of Islam within the secular state. Hence there were moves away from extreme anti-Sufism, marked in 1949 by the reopening of tombs for pilgrimage visits (*ziyārāt*). Despite being officially banned, the *ṭarīqas* remained popular and, during the 1950s, began to make their influence felt politically behind the scenes.³⁸ This was especially so in the East where Sufi shaykhs effectively delivered the votes of their constituencies to allied politicians, the Democratic Party being notably assiduous in cultivating their support. The strength of the Naqshabandiyya in this regard was remarkable.³⁹ But the new movement of the Nurbus, a modernist spiritual organization originating from the Naqshabandiyya, was also courted.⁴⁰ Its founder, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1876–1960) hoped to see Turkey restored to the light of faith by a new sufistic interpretation of the Qur'ān for modern conditions, propagated through his treatises known as *Risale-i Nur* (Epistles of Light).

However, while the co-operation of Sufis and their fellow-travellers might be sought by anxious politicians, anti-Sufi measures were not completely suspended in the 1950s. On 3 February 1954, seventeen leading Naqshabandīs were arrested for attending an illegal *dhikr*. The mainly African order of the Tijāniyya, introduced into Turkey after World War I and forced underground in the general suppression of 1925, re-emerged under the leadership of an Ankara businessman and lawyer, Kemal Pilavoğlu. Its openly violent rejection of the Turkish secular state was expressed in the smashing of statues and busts of Atatürk, regarded by the Tijānīs as idols encouraging the Turks in a new form of *shirk*. The Tijānīs were quickly suppressed, Pilavoğlu sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment. The government saw no benefit in seeking an accommodation with the Tijānīs. Even if it had been practicable, they had no large body of votes to be delivered.

In the 1960s and 70s, the more powerful Naqshabandīs and Nurbus continued to offer valued support for the Justice Party, successor to the

Democratic Party. However, the Naqshabandīs felt the position of their order further fortified by a widening membership, with other *ṭarīqas*, in the shanty towns growing up with mass rural-urban migration.⁴¹ They were also to profit from the creation of a succession of religious parties: the National Order Party (1970–72), National Salvation Party (1973–80), and Welfare Party (1983–98), all headed by Dr. Necmettin Erbakan, himself maintaining close links with the Naqshabandīs.⁴² Naqshabandīs were seen to be dominant in the grassroots of these parties' organization and of critical importance in ensuring funding through religiously-approved business enterprises. They were also active in journalism, promoting a Sufi spiritual orientation and opposing it to state-supported secularism and the establishment Islam approved by the Directorate of Religious Affairs.⁴³

Welfare (Refah) experienced growing success in the 1990s, leading to a substantial share of the poll in the general elections of December 1995. Despite combined secularist party attempts to block Welfare's way to power, Erbakan succeeded in the spring of 1996 in becoming prime minister at the head of a shaky coalition government. However, the secularist position gathered reinforcement from the army and, under such pressure, Erbakan stepped down in June 1997. In January 1998 Welfare was shut down and Erbakan banned from politics for five years.

Secularist anti-Sufi politicians and military in Turkey have found themselves faced not simply by influential traditional *ṭarīqas* with demands for an Islamic state on the old Ottoman lines. Instead, they have been encountering modern-educated technocrats with sympathies for an activist Sufi agenda to be implemented through a new style of political organization influenced by the thinking of Sufi and non-Sufi Islamists outside Turkey. Links had been forged in the 1980s with Iran, perhaps not so surprising in view of Khomeyni's personal spiritual commitment and sympathy for the Naqshabandiyya. More ironically, funding links were also developed with Saudi Arabia, most ideologically dedicated of anti-Sufi states, through the Saudi-sponsored *Rābiṭat al-ʿĀlam al-Islāmī* (Islamic World League) interested in replacing the secular state with one based on *Sharīʿa*.

Saudi Arabia and New Wahhābī Influences

Much change had occurred in the Suʿūdī state since the time in the 1920s when Rashīd Riḍā had been so enthusiastic about the revival of

Wahhābism in the Arabian peninsula under the leadership of Ibn Suʿūd. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Suʿūd (1876–1953) had continued to struggle for the extension of his authority in Arabia until the establishment of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932.⁴⁴ In spite of his evident piety and dedication to Wahhābī doctrines, not all Suʿūdīs would be convinced of the adequacy of his religious zeal. Among those matters which aroused their anxiety was his perceived readiness to compromise strict Wahhābī principles by showing a willingness to deal with those who did not accept their interpretation of the faith. This was seen, for example, in his reaching agreement with the British over the new kingdom's boundaries, allowing American engineers into the country to prospect for oil, surrounding himself with non-Wahhābī Syrian and Egyptian advisers and administrators and failing to enforce Wahhābism among the Shīʿa, particularly in the eastern part of the country.⁴⁵ Following the death of Ibn Suʿūd in 1953, the lapse from original Wahhābism was felt by critics to have become more marked, especially as oil revenues brought ever increasing luxury into an austere society.

Yet however far Saudi Arabia might deviate from the norms prescribed by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, official support for his anti-Sufi position remained.⁴⁶ Among Suʿūdīs themselves, it might appear a matter of marginal contemporary concern but, with increasing wealth available to promote the Wahhābī message abroad, it became one aspect of Wahhābism that could be readily exported to areas where Sufism was still strong. It served to bolster a public image abroad of being true to reformist ideals which included a policy of anti-Sufism, even though the state might in practice be prepared to ease its relations with Sufis where it suited them, as in the Turkish case in which Sufism seemed to be less abhorrent than secularism in the eyes of Suʿūdī policymakers.

The founding of the above-noted Islamic World League in Mecca in 1962 was a key measure in the worldwide struggle to promote Wahhābī-approved understanding of Islam, cleansed of Sufi innovation. The League has devoted considerable funds for the training of those engaged in mission (*daʿwa*) and established regional councils such as the European Council of Mosques and the Islamic Co-ordinating Council of North America.

The European headquarters of the League in Brussels has been responsible for various prestigious projects, including the opening of the Centre Islamique et Culturel de Belgique in 1969, when the Belgian Minister of Justice handed the keys to King Fayṣal of Saudi

Arabia in a high profile public ceremony.⁴⁷ In its work among Muslim minorities in Europe, the League has lent its backing to those whom their enemies have often inaccurately labelled 'Wahhābī', notably the originally South Asian Deobandīs, Ahl-i Ḥadīth and the more recent reformist organization of Jamā'at-i Islāmī (founded 1941). The Barēlwīs, with their commitment to traditional Sufism, have been heavily criticized, being viewed as a dangerous innovating sect. In their turn, they established the World Islamic Mission in 1973 as a means of countering the Su'ūdī attacks on their faith.⁴⁸ Their resentment of the Wahhābī assault on their position is evident in some resolutions passed at their conference held at the Wembley Conference Centre in May 1985:

condemning Saudi officials for confiscating and allegedly destroying translations of the Qur'ān by Aḥmad Raza Khān and devotional books; complaining about the draconian measures to which Muslims in Medina and Mecca were exposed when they sought to celebrate the Prophet's birthday; seeking assurances that remaining sites associated with the Prophet, his family and companions would be respected and maintained.⁴⁹

About one third of all the League's missionary *dā'īs* are working in Africa where they have been involved in propagating Wahhābī ideas in areas traditionally associated with the dominance of Sufi *ṭarīqas*. In Nigeria the Sardauna of Sokoto and premier of the Northern Region, Alhaji Sir Aḥmadu Bello (d. 1966), became linked with the League from early on in its establishment, being nominated Vice-President at its third meeting in 1963.⁵⁰ He was then heavily financed from Saudi Arabia for the work of *da'wa* in Nigeria and for the building of the Central Mosque in Lagos, interestingly despite the fact that he had personal connections with both the Qādiriyya and Tijāniyya and had performed pilgrimage visits to the tombs of their founders. However, the main conduit of Wahhābī ideology into Nigeria at this period was the chief judge (*qāḍī*) of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakr Gumi (d. 1992), a man more strictly dedicated to the struggle against Sufism than the Sardauna. Perhaps he was more suited to such campaigns through his training in Arabic legalism. In 1978 he founded the Society for the Eradication of Innovation and the Establishment of the Sunna, generally known as Izāla (Eradication).⁵¹

The 1960s also witnessed an influx of Saudi-backed Wahhābī influence in Ghana, albeit with less high level support than in

Nigeria.⁵² The clash in this case was primarily with the Tijāniyya, especially as represented by the new branch associated with the Senegalese Ibrāhīm Niass (d. 1975). Niassi Tijānīs were readily charged by Wāhhābīs with corrupting the purity of the faith due to such factors as their excessive reverence for Shaykh Ibrāhīm as the Seal of the Seal of the Saints (*khātim khātim al-awliyā'*), their belief that he would guarantee them salvation in the next world and that any member could achieve the degree of *qutbāniyya* the highest point of mystical enlightenment.

Among Ghana's neighbours to the West, so-called 'Wāhhābism' in Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea has undergone vigorous development since the 1940s, but is only partially due to the direct influence of Saudi Arabia.⁵³ Anti-Sufism is a powerful element within it, but is owing to a variety of sources: actual Wāhhābism imbibed directly by pilgrims during the *hajj* since the early period of Ibn Su'ūd's gaining control of Mecca; the salafī reformism of 'Abduh and Riḍā as mediated by students returning from al-Azhar and contacts with the religious associations of Egypt, Jamā'at al-Shubbān al-Muslimīn (Society of Muslim Youth) founded in 1927 (hence the local name of the movement – Subbanu), also with the Muslim Brothers; a more recent overlay of Su'ūdī contacts and funding. Saudi Arabia has undertaken the training of 'Wāhhābī' teachers and *dā'īs*, who are seen to have the advantage of fluency in Arabic and access to a higher level of Islamic scholarship than most local non-Wāhhābīs. Robert Launay, an anthropologist working among a Dyula community in the northern Ivory Coast, noted the impression made on local Muslims by a sermon given by one such returnee in 1985:

Local Dyula, particularly those educated in French, were impressed. It was pointed out to me that he could pronounce Arabic in the way that Arabs do ... and not with the heavy accent of locally trained scholars. He read texts fluently out loud (rather than reciting them from memory) and could comment readily on the meaning of different words, glossing them in Dyula with greater ease, in the opinion of his audience, than local scholars could.⁵⁴

However, there may also be the risk for trained Wāhhābīs of being viewed with scepticism at times as agents of the Su'ūdīs, which may not necessarily help the cause of anti-Sufism in the region.

Radical Rethinking of the Way

In the rising swell of voices critical of Sufism, many seem content with arguments that go little beyond those of the salafis, which they reiterate usually in a simplified form. For most anti-Sufis there is little perceived need for the kind of adventurous rethinking attempted by Gökâlp and Iqbâl between the Wars, so as to consider a new role for mysticism in contemporary Islamic society. It is sufficient to criticize the corruptions of traditional *ṭarīqas* and to conclude, with Sayyid Quṭb (1906–66) of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers, that lazy and superstitious Sufi shaykhs and their *murīds* should be excluded from the government of an Islamic state.⁵⁵ Two radical voices that would concur with such a view, but have also attempted a bolder rethinking are those of the Sunni Pakistani Abū'l-Aʿlā Mawdūdī and the Shīʿī Iranian ʿAlī Sharīʿatī. Both have been markedly influential in the contemporary Islamic revival, across sectarian lines and among both Sufis and anti-Sufis.

Abū'l-Aʿlā Mawdūdī (1903–79)

The most prominent of contemporary Muslim revivalists in South Asia, Abū'l-Aʿlā Mawdūdī would appear to have had all the right connections for the task of reassessing and even finding solutions to the problems facing Sufism in the subcontinent.⁵⁶ His own Sufi ancestry was impeccable, since he could claim descent, through a line of Mawdūdī *sayyids*, from distinguished masters of the great order of the Chishtiyya, including his eponymous ancestor Abū'l-Aʿlā Mawdūdī (d. 1527), said to have introduced the order into India from Afghanistan. His own father, a lawyer by profession, was deeply involved in the ascetic pursuit of Sufism at the time of Abū'l-Aʿlā's birth in 1903, to the extent that his family suffered privation as a result of his absorption in the mystical life. Regarding his reform credentials, Mawdūdī was a great admirer of Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi, related through his paternal grandmother to Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and having personal working contacts with Muḥammad Iqbāl in 1937–8, when he was selected to administer Iqbāl's proposed model *dār al-ʿulūm* at Pathankot in the Punjab, intended to train a new generation of Muslim leaders. Mawdūdī does not seem to have been Iqbāl's first choice for the post, but he and Jamāʿat-i Islāmī, the revivalist organization which he founded in Lahore in 1941, were to

stress the connection with the revered poet as a source of legitimacy for their movement.⁵⁷

Mawdūdī was well-acquainted with aspects of Sufi theosophy and practice, not only through his father, but also through formal studies under Deobandī 'ulamā' at the seminary of the Fatihpuri mosque in Delhi, where in 1926 he received a certificate (*ijāza*) to the effect that he had completed the study of texts on 'gradations of mystical ecstasy'.⁵⁸ He was also exposed to Deobandī reformist ideas critical of expressions of popular Sufism. Although he was working largely in journalism in the 1920s and 30s, Mawdūdī was involved in some more scholarly pursuits, including, in 1931, a translation into Urdu of *al-Asfār al-Arba'a* (The Four Journeys) of Mullā Ṣadrā (1571–1641), a major theosophical text studied in India. Ṣadrā's views on the necessity of Shari'ah for the human's spiritual ascension seem to have made a deep impression on him at that time, which is probably reflected in his best-known short book, *Risāla-i dīniyya* (Treatise on Religion), written in fifteen days in 1932 and translated into English under the title *Towards Understanding Islam*.⁵⁹ In discussing *taṣawwuf* he remarked of later Sufis:

They polluted the pure spring of Islamic *Taṣawwuf* with absurdities that could not be justified by any stretch of imagination on the basis of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. Gradually a section of Muslims appeared who thought and proclaimed themselves immune to and above the requirements of the *Shari'ah*. These people are totally ignorant of Islam, for Islam cannot admit of *Taṣawwuf* that loosens itself out of the *Shari'ah* and takes liberties with it. No Sufi has the right to transgress the limits of the *Shari'ah* or treat lightly the primary obligations such as daily prayers, fasting, *zakāt* and the *hajj*.⁶⁰

While apparently under Ṣadrāian influence, it is not difficult to see why his comments should have won enthusiastic approval in Saudi Arabia and in other anti-Sufi circles in the Arab world, being extensively promoted by the Muslim Brothers in the 1950s and 60s. This is even more understandable, when he goes on to attempt a redefinition of Sufism as no more than 'an intense love of Allāh and Muḥammad (peace be upon him),' requiring 'a strict obedience to their commands as embodied in the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet.' Such a complete rejection of the entire esoteric tradition of Sufism would lead many members of the Jamā'at and admirers of

Mawdūdī to assume the major influences on him to have come from Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. Thus Maryam Jameelah, influential American convert from Judaism, claimed that 'the Maulana fully shared their unrelenting antagonism against Sufism in its developed form in favour of a rational exposition of the Faith in contemporary idiom to attract modern youth.'⁶¹ However, she also felt dissatisfied with this redefinition of Sufism, labelling it 'limited' and 'superficial'.⁶²

Poetry composed by Mawdūdī in the same period suggests that his private thoughts were far less simplistic and clear-cut than the popular message would suggest. They show a much stronger influence from the Sufi poetic heritage and probably also from Iqbāl's positive, life-asserting rethinking of the self. Thus, twisting the old imagery of *fanā*, the moth burnt in the candle's flame, he wrote of the need for a new religious activism in the world:

You have a hidden fire within you,
So you don't need the candle.
O, the burning desire of the moth become a radiant flame
yourself.⁶³

But the poetic Mawdūdī was not the one for widespread dissemination to a new generation of revivalist youth. The anti-ascetic message that would be remembered and issued in numerous reprints in the years of his old age, and after his death in 1979, was usually simpler and prosaic. Spiritual development was to be seen not as the exclusive preserve of traditional Sufis, but available to all humans as God's vicegerents, and not only as individuals, but as whole communities and nations.⁶⁴ The body was not to be denied and mortified as a prison for the soul, but regarded positively as its workshop, in which the soul could grow and develop through undertaking essential religious duties and responsibilities. There was no room for seclusion and retreat from the world and the new, life-affirming spiritual path led the believers closer to God through faith, obedience and piety until they reached the state in which their human will became identified with the will of God. The highest point would indeed be reached when the path was followed collectively and realized in the virtuous Islamic state. Such an alternative, uncomplicated Way would inspire younger generations far beyond Pakistan's borders, whether in Britain or Central Asia or Malaysia, often to rather crude and reductionist assaults on Sufis as representatives of an anachronistic and irrelevant esotericism.

Yet neither the older Mawdūdī nor all members of the Jamā'at totally abandoned traditional Sufism. In the 1970s towards the end of his life, Mawdūdī was ready to return to some of the Sufi devotional practices that he had previously rejected and even acted as a shaykh initiating followers into the Chishtiyya.⁶⁵ In the 1980s and 90s the Jamā'at was prepared to make concessions to popular Sufism in Pakistan, including shrine visitation. However, further afield the anti-Sufi orientation would usually be more dominant.

‘Alī Shari‘atī (1933–77)

Thirty years younger than Mawdūdī and brought up near Mashhad in eastern Iran by a father committed to modernist interpretation of the faith, ‘Alī Shari‘atī had fewer ties to the Sufi tradition than the Pakistani Sunni revivalist. He shared his father’s concern to bring modern-educated youth back to Islam, to free them from Western ideologies irrelevant to Third World needs and at the same time offer them Islamic solutions more suited to life in the modern world than the obscurantist religion of the clerics. Sufism was for him a central element in that obscurantism which represented a retreat from the necessary active struggle to establish an Islamic order. The list of those whom Shari‘atī admired as precursors in true Islamic revolutionary reform over the last two centuries contains the names of some of the most notable reformers of Sufism and rethinkers of its social role: ‘Abd al-Qādir of Algeria, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh and the Salafiyya, Ḥasan al-Bannā’ and Iqbāl.⁶⁶ However, as a Shī‘i, Shari‘atī did not include Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb among the illustrious champions of reform, but noted the Wahhābīs along with Bābīs and Bahā’īs as guilty of introducing corrupt innovation into Islam. Their anti-Sufi stance did not serve to create a common ground between them.

Among the reformists, al-Afghānī and Iqbāl are singled out for the highest praise by Shari‘atī and seem to have the strongest impact on his own thinking. He speaks with respect of al-Afghānī’s refusal to become absorbed in ‘unraveling mystical intuitions, by conducting mortification of the flesh or by conducting hair-splitting research in jurisprudence, literature, philosophy etc.’⁶⁷ Iqbāl is similarly approved for not isolating himself from his society, on completion of his Ph.D., not burying himself in philosophical and mystical studies, spending his time with Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Ibn Sīnā, Mullā Ṣadrā and Jalāl al-dīn Mawlawī (i.e. Rūmī).

He realized that he had been sent on a mission to his people. His selfhood (*khudī*) philosophy was not a specialized theory. It was a revolutionary spirit that he wanted to blow into the skeleton of his society.⁶⁸

Sharī'atī readily acknowledged the great poet-philosopher as a role model and seems to have felt much in common with him. He also had the experience of studying for a Ph.D. in Europe, in his case from 1960–1964 at the University of Paris. There he presented his doctoral thesis, an edition and translation of *Faḍā'il al-Balkh* (The Merits of Balkh), a medieval Persian text, although his personal studies of sociology were arguably far more influential on him and better known to a wider public. In France he was also politically active in the campaign of opposition to the Shah, founding the Liberation Movement of Iran Abroad soon after his arrival in 1960 and helping in the publication of *Free Iran*, a journal directed at Iranians in Europe. Not surprisingly, he was arrested as soon as he returned to Iran and spent six months in gaol. After his release, he could find employment only in high school, but later worked for a short while on the evening teaching programme at Mashhad University. But he became particularly well-known from the late 1960s, when he was invited to give lectures at the Ḥusayniyya Ershād Institute in Tehran and his dynamic oratory began to attract large audiences.⁶⁹ The Institute was far from being a traditional *ḥusayniyya*, a Shī'ī teaching centre to encourage the emotional remembrance of Imām Ḥusayn's martyrdom at Karbalā in 680 C.E. It was intended instead to function as a teaching and research institute to propagate a modernist Shī'ism. Sharī'atī, emerging as its brightest star, won the increasing enmity both of the Shah whose régime he indirectly attacked for despotism and corruption and of the religious conservatives. Much of his published writing resulted from talks at the Institute, in which Sufism is frequently condemned as part of a more generalized attack on clericalism. Eventually the Shah himself ordered the closing of the Institute in 1972 and Sharī'atī was once again imprisoned. Upon his release, he travelled to England, hoping apparently to seek a university teaching post in Algeria, but died in Southampton of a heart attack on 19 June 1977, although suspicions lingered among his sympathizers that SAVAK, the Shah's secret police, might be implicated in his death.

When Sharī'atī spoke in negative terms about Sufism, and he did so frequently, it was not that he denied the virtue of mysticism

completely, but rather that he associated the way it had developed with reactionary clericalism, 'the degenerate and narcotizing religion' that he saw as opposed to 'the progressive and awakening religion.'⁷⁰ While admitting that advanced industrial societies stood in need of spirituality and mysticism to overcome their materialistic environment, he believed that this was far less the case with Third World and Islamic societies and that excessive devotion to such pursuits could distract the best minds from active involvement in their communities' affairs. He regarded it as a tragedy of history that societies were often either worldly or ascetic, when what was needed was a balance between the two. Human beings should be capable of combining responsible activity in the world with the spiritual dimension in order to achieve their true potential as God's vicegerents.⁷¹ Sufis have gone wrong where they have failed to fulfil the first part of the human's duty to act responsibly in the world and have opted for the life of total seclusion.

With regard to particular Sufis, Shari'ati displays mixed feelings. Those in the modern reformist tradition, such as the Algerian jihādīst 'Abd al-Qādir, are obviously admired, since they do participate in the twin worldly and spiritual dimensions of life. Other earlier figures, such as Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) or Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1641), are sometimes referred to with respect and their opinions valued. Thus he expresses agreement with Rūmī in his interpretation of Qur'ān 33: 72 regarding the nature of the trust offered by God to humans as His representatives on earth, i.e. that this is the capacity for exercising free will and choice so as to be able to act contrary to one's nature.⁷² As for Mullā Ṣadrā, he is regarded as exemplary of authentic Persian Islamic thought and values.⁷³ By contrast, the suffering martyr of divine love al-Ḥallāj (d. 922) is negatively depicted as a man aflame with the passionate love of God, but without any sense of social responsibility:

Ḥallāj was constantly immersed in the burning invocation of God, and this was a source of true exaltation for him. But imagine if Iranian society were to consist of 25 million Ḥallāj's. It would be nothing but a vast lunatic asylum...⁷⁴

The society that emulated al-Ḥallāj, Shari'ati concluded, would be heading for nothing but 'wretchedness and destruction'.

Yet, while Shari'ati perceives acute dangers for the society obsessed with asceticism and overwhelmed by its pursuit of ecstatic experience, he is still making some moves in the direction of a modernist Islamic mysticism, which he would wish to distinguish from Sufism.⁷⁵ Unlike

Mawdūdī, he does indeed see the body as a prison for the soul and speaks of the need to free oneself from this last prison by the force of love, which, he claims, does not mean Sufi or theosophic love:

By love I mean an Almighty force (which is beyond my rational and discretionary faculty) in the very depth of my being that can blow me apart and help me to rebel against my self. Since the prison is in me, my inside should be set aflame. How? Why fire? Why can't I liberate myself from this prison by utilizing my rational faculties?⁷⁶

But the language in which he speaks of the need to free the 'I' from the dungeon of selfhood seems all too familiarly Sufi, and indeed Ḥallājīan. It is reminiscent of al-Ḥallāj in the last days before his martyrdom causing both himself and his prison to disappear from view, as he had surmounted this dungeon of the self. But Shari'atī, rather oddly, cannot bring himself to refer to such a source of inspiration, but looks to a non-Muslim as authority for his views, stating that man, 'in order to free himself from the prison of his self, as Radhakrishnan states, "He needs religion and love."⁷⁷

Shari'atī's new strain of Islamic mysticism, if it can be so-called, is communal as much as it is individual. In this it has something in common with Mawdūdī's vision, and perhaps more with that of Ziya Gökalp fifty to sixty years earlier. This is possibly most clearly reflected in his book on the Pilgrimage, entitled simply *Hajj*.⁷⁸ The experience of the hajj is related in terms of an uplifting social transformation, in which the pilgrims aspire to free themselves from the forces of evil that keep their souls enslaved. In their struggle to break free of worldly entanglements, symbolized by their sacrifice of whatever they hold most dear (the equivalent of the Prophet Abraham's sacrifice of his son Ishmael), they are collectively purified and brought nearer to God as members of an Islamic society with a heightened sense of social responsibility. Mystical awareness leads them forward to active service in the community, not to isolation from it in the pursuit of personal, unshared and incommunicable ecstasy.

Unlike Mawdūdī, ʿAli Shari'atī founded no Islamic organization, but his voice would nevertheless be influential not only in progressive religious circles in Iran, especially among the youth, but would also be heard by Sunni as well as Shī'ī revivalists much further afield, among the radical Sufis of Turkey and Central Asia as well as among Muslim activists disposed to share his critical perspective on Sufism.

Notes

- 1 A. J. Arberry, *Sufism* (1950), 122.
- 2 Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960).
- 3 Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), 153.
- 4 M. D. Gilsenan, 'Some Factors in the Decline of the Sufi Orders in Modern Egypt,' *MW* 57 (1967): 17. Gilsenan was studying the Hāmidiyya Shādhiliyya from 1964 to 1966, a modern branch of the Shādhiliyya which had first gained recognition from the Supreme Council of Sufi Orders in 1926. Gilsenan viewed its growth as an exception to the general decline in Egyptian orders and ascribed its expansion to its 'relative newness' and hence energy and its high degree of centralized organization. For further details see Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt: an Essay in the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- 5 See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 'Egypt's Islamic Activism in the 1980s,' *TWQ* 10 (1988): 638–9 for figures of ṭarīqa membership from the 1960s to 1980s.
- 6 John Voll, 'Mahdis, Walis and New Men in the Sudan,' in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, ed. Nikki Keddie (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1972), 367–84.
- 7 Figures cited in Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, *Saints and Politicians: Essays in the Organization of a Senegalese Peasant Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 157, giving estimates published in United States Army, *Area Handbook for Senegal* (Washington, D.C., 1963), 181.
- 8 For a re-examination of the emergence of the Murīds and their relationship to the French colonialists see David Robinson, 'Beyond Resistance and Collaboration: Amadu Bamba and the Murids of Senegal,' *JRA* 21 (1991): 149–71.
- 9 Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, *The Mourides of Senegal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) for the first view and idem, *Saints and Politicians* for a revised opinion.
- 10 On Sufi involvement in Senegalese politics in this period see Donal Cruise O'Brien, 'Sufi Politics in Senegal,' in *Islam in the Political Process*, ed. James P. Piscatori (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 122–37.
- 11 On Āyat Allāh Khumaynī's mysticism see Mohammad Javad Gohari, 'Ibn al-ʿArabī and Shīʿism' (Ph.D. diss., University of Leeds, 1996), 240–306; Alexander Knysh, 'Irfān Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mysticism,' *MEJ* 46 (1992): 631–53.
- 12 Imām Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations*, trans. Hamid Algar (London: Kegan Paul International, 1985), 357–8.
- 13 Gohari, 'Ibn al-ʿArabī and Shīʿism,' 3 and 286–8. Text of letter reproduced in *International Ettelaʿat* No. 263, June 1995.
- 14 See Muhammad Sani Umar, 'Changing Islamic Identity in Nigeria from the 1960s to the 1980s: From Sufism to Anti-Sufism,' in *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Louis Brenner (London: Hurst and Co., 1993), 172–3.

- 15 See John Hunwick, 'Sub-Saharan Africa and the Wider World of Islam: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives' *JRA* 26 (1996): 240–1.
- 16 Patrick J. Ryan, 'Ariadne auf Naxos: Islam and Politics in a Religiously Pluralistic African Society,' *JRA* 26 (1996): 323.
- 17 The Burhāniyya was founded in the thirteenth century by Ibrāhīm b. Abī'l-Majd al-Dasūqī (c. 1246–1288), the name being taken from his *laqab* Burhān al-dīn. The order was also known previously as the Ibrāhīmiyya and the Dasūqiyya.
- 18 On the Aḥbāsh see A. Nizar Hamzeh and R. Hrair Dekmejian, 'A Sufi Response to Political Islamism: Al-Aḥbāsh of Lebanon' *IJMES* 28 (1996): 217–29.
- 19 Ibid.: 219 where the shaykh's name is given in full as 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ḥirārī al-Shībī al-'Abdarī, 'also known as al-Ḥabashī,' born in al-Ḥirāra, near Somalia in 1920. He is noted as moving to the Hijāz in 1947 after his expulsion from Ethiopia by Emperor Haile Selassie on account of the perceived threat from his teachings. In 1948 he moved to Jerusalem and Damascus, studying with Rifā'ī and Qādirī Sufis, before settling in Beirut.
- 20 Ibid.: 221.
- 21 Saad Eddin Ibrāhīm, 'Egypt's Islamic Activism': 639.
- 22 Najīb Maḥfūz, *al-Liṣṣ wa'l-Kilāb*, 4th ed. (Tunis: Dār al-Tūnisiyya li'l-Nashr, 1990), trans. Trevor Le Gassick and M. M. Badawi, revised by John Rodenbeck, *The Thief and the Dogs* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1961).
- 23 Ibid., trans., 52.
- 24 See Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Suft in Modern Egypt* for his earlier study and idem, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Middle East* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 1990), 229–43.
- 25 Najīb Maḥfūz, *al-Summān wa'l-Kharīf* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1962), trans. Roger Allen, *Autumn Quail* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1985); idem, *al-Shaḥḥādh* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1965), trans. Kristin Walker Henry and Nariman Khaled Naili al-Warraki, *The Beggar* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1988).
- 26 Maḥfūz, *al-Shaḥḥādh*, 56; trans. Henry and Warraki, 39. Maḥfūz has here adapted the classical Sufi imagery of the soul being absorbed in God's ocean.
- 27 On 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd's views on Sufism and the Shādhiliyya see Ibrāhīm M. Abu-Rabi', 'Al-Azhar Sufism in Modern Egypt: the Sufi Thought of 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud' *IQ* 32 (1988): 207–35.
- 28 Ibid.: 221.
- 29 See further on this contemporary traditional Sufism in Egypt, Valerie Hoffman-Ladd, 'Devotion to the Prophet and His Family in Egyptian Sufism' *IJMES* 24 (1992): 615–39.
- 30 Ibid.: 618.
- 31 Ibid.: 618–19 on the controversy surrounding Muḥammad 'Uthmān al-Burhānī's *Tabri'at al-dhimma fī nuṣṣ al-umma*.
- 32 On this Sufi-led resistance to the Soviets see Alexandre Bennigsen, 'Muslim Guerrilla Warfare in the Caucasus (1918–1928),' *CAS* 2 (1983): 45–56; Marie Bennigsen Broxup, 'The Last Ghazawat: The 1920–1921

- Uprising,' in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World* (London: Hurst and Co., 112–45; and Abdurahman Avtorkhanov, 'The Chechens and the Ingush during the Soviet Period and its Antecedents' in *ibid.*, 146–94.
- 33 V. G. Pivovarov, *Na Etapakh Sotsiologicheskogo Issledovaniia* (Groznyi, 1947), 35, quoted in Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in the USSR: A Historical Survey' *CAS* 2 (1983): 17–18.
 - 34 On Sufi tombs in the Soviet Union, including the North Caucasus, see Maria Eva Subtelny, 'The Cult of Holy Places: Religious Practices among Soviet Muslims' *MEJ* 43 (1989): 594–604. On Soviet attempts to deal with Sufism and nationalism in the North Caucasus in the 1970s and 80s, see Fanny E. B. Bryan, 'Internationalism, Nationalism and Islam' in *The North Caucasus Barrier*, 195–218.
 - 35 Text of *fatwā* in I. A. Makatov, 'Kul't sviatykh v Islame,' *Voprosy Nauchnogo Ateizma* 3 (1967): 173–4, quoted in Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 41.
 - 36 Bryan, 'Internationalism,' 209–10.
 - 37 Numbers of Soviet mosques in the 1970s provided in Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (London and Bloomington: C. Hurst and Indiana University Press, 1986), 17–18; numbers in 1991 in Alexei V. Malashenko, 'Islam and Politics in the Southern Zone of the Former USSR,' in *Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict*, ed. Vitaly V. Naumkin (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1994), 111.
 - 38 See Feroz Ahmad, 'Politics and Islam in Modern Turkey' *MES* 27 (1991): 3–21 on relations between Turkish political parties and Sufi orders.
 - 39 On the Naqshabandiyya influence in the state in Turkey see Şerif Mardin, 'The Nakşibendi Order in Turkish History,' in *Islam in Modern Turkey*, ed. Richard Tapper (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1991), 121–42.
 - 40 *Ibid.*, 132–3; Ahmad, 'Politics and Islam': 11–12.
 - 41 See Ozay Mehmet, *Islamic Identity and Development* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 121–5 on the changing social and political situation of Turkey's Sufi orders in the 1960s–80s.
 - 42 On Erbakan and the National Salvation Party see Binnaz Toprak, 'Politicisation of Islam in a Secular State: The National Salvation Party in Turkey,' in *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 119–33.
 - 43 For discussion of some themes in these Sufi journals see Sencer Ayata, 'Traditional Sufi Orders on the Periphery: Kadiri and Nakşibendi Islam in Konya and Trabzon,' in *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 223–53.
 - 44 On the creation of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia see e.g. J. Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia 1916–1936: From Chieftancy to Monarchical State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); L. McLoughlin, *Ibn Saud, Founder of a Kingdom* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993).
 - 45 The Shīʿa constitute approximately 10% of the population of Saudi Arabia, concentrated mainly in the oil-rich area in the oases of al-Ḥasā and Qatīf in Eastern Province, with a small number in the Ḥijāz and near the Yemeni border.

- 46 See e.g. William Ochsenwald, 'Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Revival' *IJMES* 13 (1981): 271–86 on some aspects of contemporary Wahhābī thinking in Saudi Arabia. Ochsenwald (283) discusses a defence of Wahhābism by Dr. Muhammad Khalil Harras, Head of the Department of Theology in the College of Holy Law in Mecca, who remarks that 'the monarchy has acted correctly... in moving against spiritual enemies such as the mystics (*ṣūfīs*).'
- 47 On the Centre Islamique et Culturel de Belgique and its Muslim critics see Felice Dassetto, 'The Tabligh Organization in Belgium,' in *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, ed. Tomas Gerholm and Yngve Georg Lithman (London: Mansell, 1988), 165–7 and 172 n. 16.
- 48 See Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain, Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims: Bradford in the 1990s* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 83–5, 160–1, 164–5 on the Islamic World League and Barēlwī opposition to it in Britain.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 85.
- 50 See John Hunwick, 'Sub-Saharan Africa': 238–41 on the links of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic World League with Nigeria, also (241) with Burkina Faso.
- 51 For further details on Abubakar Gumi and Izāla see Muḥammad Sani Umar, 'Changing Islamic Identity,' 154–78.
- 52 See Patrick J. Ryan, 'Ariadne auf Naxos': 323.
- 53 On the Subbanu 'Wahhābīs' see, for example, Lansine Kaba, *The Wahhabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974); Jean-Loup Amselle, 'A Case of Fundamentalism in West Africa: Wahabism in Bamako,' in *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*, ed. Lionel Caplan (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987); R. W. Niezen, 'The "Community of Helpers of the Sunna": Islamic Reform among the Songhay of Gao (Mali)' *Africa* 60 (1990): 399–425; Louis Brenner, 'Constructing Muslim Identities in Mali,' in *Muslim Identity*, ed. Brenner, 59–78; René Otayek, 'Muslim Charisma in Burkina Faso,' in *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, eds. Donal B. Cruise O'Brien and Christian Coulon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 91–112.
- 54 Robert Launay, *Beyond the Stream: Islam and Society in a West African Town* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 94–5.
- 55 Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Pinter, 1990), 99 on Qutb's attitude to Sufis, but also (121) his greater concern with the secular state as the greater enemy of Islam than corrupt Sufi orders.
- 56 Of the numerous writings on Abū'l-A'ālā Mawdūdī, many are concerned with the political aspects of his career and thought on Islamic government. For a recent biography which takes into consideration his relationship to Sufism, see Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdūdī and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), to which I am indebted for information in this short account.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 34–9 on relations between Mawdūdī and Iqbāl and the Dār al-Islām project.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 18–19 and 147–8, n. 78 on these Deobandī studies.

- 59 Abū'l-A'ālā Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding Islam* (London: U.K. Islamic Mission, 1980), 104–5 on *Taṣawwuf*.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 105.
- 61 Maryam Jameelah, 'An Appraisal of Some Aspects of Maulana Sayyid Ala Maudoodi's Life and Thought' *IQ* 31 (1987): 118.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 129.
- 63 Poem dated 18 July 1932, trans. in Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 141.
- 64 See the development of this theme of an activist Islamic road to spirituality in Abū'l-A'ālā Mawdūdī, 'The Spiritual System of Islam,' in *Islamic Way of Life*, trans. Khurshid Aḥmad (Damascus: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1977), 80–92. This is the text of a talk originally broadcast on Radio Pakistan on 16 March 1948.
- 65 Nasr, *Mawdudi*, 128.
- 66 From a list cited in 'Ali Shari'atī, *What Is to be Done: The Enlightened Thinkers and an Islamic Renaissance*, ed. Farhang Rajaei (Houston, Texas: The Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986), 148–9.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 58.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 59.
- 69 On the Ḥusayniyya Ershād Institute see e.g. H.E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1990), 202–10.
- 70 Shari'atī, *What Is to be Done*, 63.
- 71 'Ali Shari'atī, *Man and Islam*, trans. Fatollah Marjani (Houston, Texas: Free Islamic Literatures Inc., 1981), 6–9.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 118.
- 74 'Ali Shari'atī, *On the Sociology of Islam*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), 68.
- 75 On this mystical tendency in Shari'atī, compare Steven R. Benson, 'Islam and Social Change in the Writings of 'Ali Shari'atī: His *Hajj* as a Mystical Handbook for Revolutionaries' *MW* 81 (1991): 9–26.
- 76 Shari'atī, *Man and Islam*, 60.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 62.
- 78 *Idem*, *Hajj*, trans. 'Ali A. Behzadnia and Najla Denny (Houston: Free Islamic Literatures Inc., 1974).

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