The Bāʿ Alawī *Sāda* of the Hadhramaut Valley: An Intellectual and Social History from Tenth-Century Origins till the Late-Sixteenth Century

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

﴿إن الله وملائكته يصلون على النبي
يا أيها الذين آمنوا صلوا عليه وسلموا تسليما﴾

"Truly God and His Angels invoke blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe! Invoke blessings upon him and greetings of peace!"

The Study Quran [33:56]

أَوَمَا عَلِمْتَ بِأَنَّنَا أَهْلُ الوَفَا
ومُحِبُّنَا مَا زَالَ تَحْتَ لِوَانَا

نَحْنُ الكِرَامُ فَمَنْ أَتَانَا قَاصِدَا
نَالَ السَّعَادَةَ عِنْدَمَا يَلْقَانَا

Do you not know that we are people of honour,
and that the one who loves us will always be under our banner?

We are generous people so whoever comes to us
seeking will attain felicity when he meets us.

Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim
Imams of the Valley, p. 40

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Abstract

This dissertation is an intellectual and social history of the Banū ʿAlawī *sāda* of Yemen's Hadhramaut valley, charting the evolution of their Sufi scholarly tradition from their early tenth-century origins, with the migration of their famed ancestor Imām Aḥmad b. ʿIsā (d. 345/956) from Basra, Iraq, to Hadhramaut up to the emergence of their major spiritual authority of the late-sixteenth century, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). While there exists a rich number of historical and anthropological studies focusing on the Banū ʿAlawīs' large diasporic communities across the vast Indian Ocean region and on the social and political history of Hadhramaut of the last two centuries, the *sāda*'s premodern history and the early evolution of their Sufi tradition remains relatively understudied and poorly understood, with lingering concerns surrounding the dearth of reliable historical materials on their formative history in Hadhramaut.

This study attempts to fill this general lacuna in the literature by closely re-examining the academic concerns surrounding the reliability of existing historiographical materials, mostly in the genre of hagiographic biographical works (*manāqib*), among other primary sources, so as to provide a more comprehensive and multifaceted account of the *sāda*'s intellectual and social history in the valley. It begins by surveying the early settlement of the *sāda* in Hadhramaut, offering a more comprehensive account of the emergence of their Sufi *ṭarīqa* under al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 653/1255) in the twelfth century. The study moves on to consider the wider socio-political developments in Yemen and Hadhramaut that led to the emergence of the *sāda* as an influential scholarly stratum of peacemakers and political mediators in Hadhrami society. In addition to these developments, the study also surveys the distinctive textual, ritualistic, and geographic features that informed the consolidation of the *sāda*'s spiritual

praxis and Sufi *habitus* by the early-fifteenth century, leading to the development of a uniquely Hadhrami Sufi tradition.

Finally, this study offers a more thorough appraisal of Hadhramaut's cultural and intellectual efflorescence under the first Kathīrī sultanate between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, which witnessed a considerable output of scholarly writings in the fields of historiography, Islamic law, and Sufism, paying special attention to the *sāda*'s emerging intellectual and spiritual canon. In surveying the works and backgrounds of the major ʿAlawī spiritual authorities of this period, this dissertation argues for the need to re-evaluate the current academic understanding of Bāʿ Alawī Sufism. Far from being the product of an intellectual and cultural backwater where the 'high' works of philosophical Sufism were rarely studied, the *sāda*'s spiritual tradition, and Hadhrami Sufism more generally, was in fact well-integrated within the wider intellectual and spiritual currents of western Yemen and the Hejaz, exhibiting a significant engagement with philosophical Sufism (Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq*) and a considerable assimilation of the mystical thought and doctrine of its foremost classical authority, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī. These findings suggest the need for further studies to better revise and nuance our current academic understanding of the Bāʿ Alawī tradition and its significant contributions to the premodern intellectual history of Yemeni and Hejazi Sufism.

Résumé

Cette thèse est une histoire intellectuelle et sociale de la Banū ʿAlawī *sāda* vallée de l'Hadhramaut au Yémen, retraçant l'évolution de leur tradition savante soufie depuis leurs origines au début du dixième siècle, avec la migration de leur célèbre ancêtre Imām Aḥmad b. ʿIsā (d. 345/956) de Bassora, en Irak, à Hadhramaut jusqu'à l'émergence de leur principale autorité spirituelle de la fin du XVIe siècle, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). Bien qu'il existe un grand nombre d'études historiques et anthropologiques portant sur les grandes communautés diasporiques Banū ʿAlawīs de la région de l'Océan indien et sur l'histoire sociale et politique de l'Hadhramaut au cours des deux derniers siècles, l'histoire prémoderne de *sāda* et l'évolution précoce de sa tradition soufie restent relativement peu étudiées et mal comprises, avec des préoccupations persistantes concernant le manque de documents historiques fiables sur leur période de formation à l'Hadhramaut.

Cette étude tente de combler cette lacune générale dans la littérature en réexaminant de près les préoccupations académiques concernant la fiabilité des documents historiographiques existants, principalement dans le genre des ouvrages biographiques hagiographiques (*manāqib*), entre autres sources de première main, afin de fournir un compte-rendu plus complet et multidimensionnel de l'histoire intellectuelle et sociale du *sāda* dans la vallée. Il commence par une étude des premiers établissements des *sāda* à Hadhramaut, offrant un compte rendu plus complet de l'émergence de leur soufi *ṭarīqa* sous al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 653/1255) au XIIe siècle. L'étude examine ensuite les développements sociopolitiques plus larges au Yémen et à l'Hadhramaut qui ont conduit à l'émergence du *sāda* en tant que couche académique influente des artisans de la paix et des médiateurs politiques dans la société de l'Hadhrami. En plus de ces développements, l'étude examine également les caractéristiques

textuelles, rituelles et géographiques qui ont contribué à la consolidation de la pratique spirituelle et de l'*habitus* soufi du *sāda* au début du XVe siècle, ce qui a conduit au développement d'une tradition soufie unique pour les Hadhrami.

Enfin, cette étude offre une évaluation plus approfondie de l'efflorescence culturelle et intellectuelle de l'Hadhramaut sous le premier sultanat de Kathīrī entre le XVe et le XVIIe siècle, qui a connu une production considérable de publications savantes dans les domaines de l'historiographie, du droit islamique et du soufisme, en accordant une attention particulière au canon intellectuel et spirituel émergent de *sāda*. En étudiant les travaux et les biographies des principales autorités spirituelles de cette période, cette thèse défend la nécessité de réévaluer la compréhension académique actuelle du soufisme Bā ʿAlawī. Loin d'être le produit d'un retard intellectuel et culturel où les œuvres élites du soufisme philosophique ont rarement été étudiées, la tradition spirituelle du *sāda*, et plus généralement le soufisme Hadhrami, était en fait bien intégré dans les courants intellectuels et spirituels plus larges du Yémen occidental et du Hejaz, affichant un engagement significatif avec le Soufisme philosophique (soufi *ḥaqāʾiq*) et une assimilation considérable de la pensée et de la doctrine mystique de sa principale autorité classique, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī. Ces résultats suggèrent la nécessité d'études supplémentaires pour mieux réviser et nuancer notre compréhension académique actuelle de la tradition Bā ʿAlawī et de ses contributions significatives à l'histoire intellectuelle prémoderne du soufisme yéménite et hejazi.

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Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed a steady academic interest in the Bāʿ Alawī *sāda*[1] (sing. *sayyid*) of the Hadhramaut valley and their large diasporic communities across much of the Indian Ocean region, with a wealth of historical and anthropological studies focusing on the social and political history of Hadhramaut since the nineteenth century,[2] the Hadhrami system of social stratification,[3] and on various communities or figures within the well-established ʿAlawī diaspora.[4] While this is the case, the Banū ʿAlawīs' origins and their Sufi tradition in Hadhramaut, which constitutes the largest and most influential spiritual tradition in the valley today, remains poorly understood, and a more comprehensive social and intellectual history

[1] The Banū ʿAlawī *sāda* are commonly identified by the patronymic Bāʿ Alawī, where the prefix 'Bā' is used to identify the children of a common descendant in the Hadhrami colloquial.

[2] For a representative body of scholarship on Hadhramaut's social and political transformation over the past two centuries, see Ulrike Freitag, *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the Homeland* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Friedhelm Hartwig, "Expansion, State Foundation and Reform: The Contest for Power in Hadhramaut in the Nineteenth Century," in *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s,* eds. Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 35-50; Linda Boxberger, *On the Edge of Empire: Hadhramawt, Emigration, and the Indian Ocean, 1880s – 1930s* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002); Noel Brehony, ed., *Hadhramaut and Its Disaspora: Yemeni Politics, Identity and Migration* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017); Christian Lekon, *Time, Space and Globalization: Hadhramaut and the Indian Ocean Rim 1863-1967* (Gleichen; Zurich: Muster-Schmidt Verlag, 2014); Brinston Brown Collins, "Ḥaḍramawt: Crisis and Intervention, 1866-1881" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1969).

[3] Aside from the insightful introductory essay by R. B Serjeant, *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1957), a work on the Hadhrami system of social stratification can be found in Abdalla S Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification: A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). Bujra's findings on the rigidity of the social system in the valley are more recently questioned by Camelin Sylvaine, "Reflections on the System of Social Stratification in Hadhramaut," in *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s,* ed. Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 147–156. See Chapter 3.

[4] For two seminal studies relating to the ʿAlawī diaspora, see Anne K Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860-1925* (London: Routledge, 2003); Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006). See also the essays in Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith, eds., *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk and Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, eds., *The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

focusing on their major contributions to Hadhrami Sufism remains to be written, a lacuna that this dissertation hopes to fill.

As such, this dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive account of the relatively neglected premodern social and intellectual history of the Banū ʿAlawīs in Hadhramaut from the migration of their famed ancestor Imām Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā (d. 345/956) to the valley in the early tenth century up to the life and legacy of their major saintly authority of the sixteenth century, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). As perhaps the *sāda*'s greatest exponent of philosophical Sufism (Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq*), Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim in many ways represents a high point in the evolution of *sāda*'s intellectual Sufism, which begins to undergo significant changes throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in response to renewed social, political, and intellectual challenges, under the leadership of the celebrated scholarly authority Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1132/1720).[5]

As a prolific author whose towering intellectual and spiritual legacy marks him as perhaps the most significant reviver (*mujaddid*) and reformer of the Bā ʿAlawī tradition of the last three centuries, Imām ʿAbd Allah al-Haddād marks a new phase in the evolution of Hadhrami Sufism, anticipating the seismic transformations of colonial modernity and the internal challenge of Wahhabism, with the emergence of Muḥammad b. Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792) in the Arabian Peninsula during his lifetime. While his spiritual and intellectual contributions remain generally understudied within the academe, his exclusion from this broad historical

[5] For more on this major Hadhrami Sufi authority, whose intellectual and spiritual impact on the legacy of Yemeni and Hadhrami Sufism remains markedly understudied, see the significant English and Arabic works of Dr. Mostafa Badawi, one of the *sāda*'s contemporary disciples: *Sufi Sage of Arabia: Imam ʿAbdallah Ibn ʿAlawi al-Haddad* (Louisville, MD: Fons Vitae, 2005); *al-Imām al-Ḥaddād: Mujaddid al-Qarn al-Thānī ʿAshar al-Hijrī* (n.p.: Dār al-Ḥāwī, 1994). See also the doctoral dissertation of Shadee Mohamed Elmasry, "Daʿwa in Islamic Thought: The Work of ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād" (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2017).

survey seems justified by the more basic and preliminary objective of this project, which is to revisit our academic understanding on the early *sāda* and offer a more comprehensive account of the *sāda*'s origins and their early social and intellectual history within the valley.

Given the dearth of scholarly engagements on their premodern history, and on Hadhramaut's scholarly tradition more generally, this contribution aims to offer a more comprehensive account of the *sāda*'s intellectual Sufi tradition, situating it within the wider intellectual and scholarly currents of Yemen and the Hejaz. Thus, in attempting to construct a more complete account of the formative history of their spiritual and intellectual tradition, this study aims to contextualize the origins of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa* within the broader historical emergence of organized Sufism in the twelfth century, while also accounting for the social, economic, and political forces that helped to inform its evolution as a distinctly Hadhrami Sufi tradition.

Indeed, the scholarly tendency to study Islamic intellectual history in isolation from the wider social and political forces that help to constrain and inform the genealogies and evolution of diverse Muslim scholarly traditions remains a recurring and general concern within the field of Islamic historiography. As R. S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke, thus, observe, for many "scholars of classical and medieval Islam, Sufism is studied as mystical philosophy," while "in modern Islamic historiography, Sufism is used *de facto* either as a synonym for popular Islam or for its organizational manifestations in the brotherhoods." As they therefore suggest, to move beyond this narrow dichotomy requires "a greater degree of scholarly convergence between text and context,"[6] or in other words, striking a delicate balance between the historiographical desiderata of intellectual and social history.

[6] R. S O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered," *Der Islam* 70, no. 1 (1993), 54.

This recurring concern is more recently echoed by Erik S. Ohlander in his rich contextualized study of the major Sufi authority ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) and his contributions to the emergence of organized Sufism in the twelfth/thirteenth century. As he argues in his observations on Hodgson and Trimingham's historical accounts on the rise and evolution of the early *ṭarīqa* lineages, both influential accounts overlook a number of important socio-political forces at play, "among others the systematic patronage of the ruling class which both encouraged and allowed for the construction, maintenance, and perpetuation of such a system and, in particular, the close ties which obtained between the culture of the *ʿulamāʾ*, the transmission of religious learning, and the praxis of the Sufi *ribāṭs* and *khānaqāhs* in major urban centers."[7] This lacuna highlights for Ohlander the greater need for contextualized historical studies of the main actors who participated in the rise of organized Sufism and for their comparison as case studies in ways that take into consideration "the broader sweep of their historical moments" and "the social, political, institutional, religious and textual genealogies informing them."

To date there are no significant comprehensive historical studies on the ʿAlawī *sāda* and the premodern history of Hadhrami Sufism. Muhammad Ali Aziz's *Religion and History in Early Islam* is a welcome and important study on the early Sufism of premodern Yemen, focusing especially on the spiritual and intellectual legacy of one of its greatest premodern scholars and Sufi authorities, Shaykh Aḥmad b. 'Alwān (d. 665/1266). While insightful in many respects, his historical focus remains mostly on developments in the highlands of western Yemen and the Tihāma, which have traditionally been home to Yemen's ruling dynasties and its intellectual and cultural capitals, such as Taʿizz, and Zabīd. As such, his survey of Sufi

[7] Erik S. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 6.

developments in the eastern Hadhrami interior, historically regarded as a rural cultural and intellectual backwater, remains relatively marginal to his study.[8]

Anne K. Bang's *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea* and Engseng Ho's *The Graves of Tarim* are two noteworthy and penetrating studies on members of the widely diffused ʿAlawī diaspora and their migratory patterns and scholarly networks across the Indian Ocean, with significant forays into the *sāda*'s early history in Hadhramaut. However, as to be expected given their scope and diasporic focus, their overviews of the the *sāda*'s early intellectual and social history in the valley, while more helpful for our purposes, are far from comprehensive.[9] This dissertation, by contrast, focuses on the *sāda's* social and intellectual history in Hadhramaut, while the diaspora and their migrations are only addressed to the extent of their bearing on developments in the Hadhrami homeland.

Other notable academic forays into the state of Hadhrami historiography include the pioneering efforts of R. B. Serjeant and the more recent contributions of Alexander Knysh and Esther Peskes. Serjeant's scholarship in the mid-twentieth century helped pave the way for much of the contemporary scholarship on Hadhramaut. His short yet informative monograph *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt*, based on a 1956 lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and his historiographic and ethnographic fieldwork in the valley, in which he attempted to appraise the condition and scope of Hadhramaut's primary materials by providing an annotated

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[8] While he acknowledges the historical significance of the Hadhrami Sufi figure of Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam (d. 653/1255), the founder the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*, and the major impact of his spiritual legacy on the religious history of premodern Yemen, his very brief survey of the ʿAlawī tradition remains far from satisfactory for our purposes. See Muhammad Ali Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam: Theology and Sufism in Yemen* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2011), 36, 196-199.

[9] The ʿAlawī diaspora and their migratory patterns across the Indian Ocean have been the subject of considerable scholarly interest in more recent decades. See note 4 above. For a briefer insightful historical survey of their migrations across this vast geographical region, see also Muḥammad Yāsir al-Qaḍmānī, *al-Sāda Āl Abī ʿAlawī wa-Ghayḍun min Fayḍ Aqwālihim al-Sharīfa wa-Aḥwālihim al-Munīfa* (Syria: Dār Nūr al-Ṣabāḥ, 2014), 286-327.

catalogue of the major surviving MSS of its historic libraries, are no doubt valuable scholarly resources for the contemporary historian.[10] On the other hand, Knysh's "The Sāda in History"[11] offers a critical and bleak reflection on the current state of Hadhrami historiography in which he questions the nature of the *sāda*'s intellectual Sufi tradition and our ability to reconstruct an accurate account of their early history, while Peskes's German study *al-ʻAidarūs und seine Erben*[12] remains perhaps the most informative and detailed academic study on the early ʿAlawīs to date, focusing on the intellectual and social history of their famous ʿAydarūs clan more specifically.

In addition to building on the insights, questions, and concerns of such secondary scholarship as its point of departure, this dissertation also consults some significant and overlooked scholarly works by modern Arab historians of Hadhramaut, including, among other works, the Hadhrami histories of the ʿAlawī scholars Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥāmid and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad

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[10] For his two studies surveying the current state of Hadhrami MSS, see Serjeant's "Materials for South Arabian History: Notes on New MSS from Ḥadramawt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 1950): 281-307 and "Materials for South Arabian History: Part II," *BSOAS* 13, no. 3 (Oct. 1959): 581-601, henceforth, noted as "Materials I" and "Materials II." For his more detailed assessment of the general state of Hadhrami historiography, see his "Historians and Historiography of Ḥaḍramawt," *BSOAS* 25, no. 1/3 (1962): 239-261.

[11] Alexander Knysh, "The Sāda in History: A Critical Essay on Ḥaḍramī Historiography," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 9, no. 2 (July 1999): 215-222. Based on his fieldwork in Hadhramaut, Knysh also authored a more recent study on the valley's modern Bā ʿAlawī tradition since the 1990 unification of Yemen, which offers a similarly bleak and pessimistic take on the current state of the *sāda*'s intellectual Sufi tradition. See Knysh, "The 'Tariqa' on a Landcruiser: The Resurgence of Sufism in Yemen," *The Middle East Journal* 55, no. 3 (Summer, 2001): 399-414.

[12] Esther Peskes, *al-ʻAidarūs und seine Erben: eine Untersuchung zu Geschichte und Sufismus einer ḥaḍramitischen Sāda-Gruppe vom fünfzehnten bis zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2005). Peskes also offers another insightful essay on the major ʿAlawī Sufi and patron saint of Aden, Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs al-ʿAdanī in "Der Heilige Und Die Dimension Seiner Macht. Abū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs (Gest. 1509) Und Die Saiyid-Sūfīs von Ḥaḍramaut," *Quaderni Di Studi Arabi* 13 (1995): 41-72. Imām al-ʿAdanī and his illustrious father, Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), are the subjects of Chapter 5. The conclusions of these two German studies are also more succinctly summarized in an English essay in Peskes, "Sainthood as Patrimony: ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿAydarūs (d. 1461) and his Descendants," in *Family Portraits with Saints*, eds. Alexandre Papas and Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020).

al-Shāṭirī and the insightful contributions of ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād, who is widely regarded among Hadhrami historians as the modern father of Hadhrami historiography.[13] More importantly, for my primary sources, I rely heavily on historical chronicles, travel memoirs, and the traditional hagiographic (*manāqib*) and biographical (*tarājim*) works on the *sāda*, the two most authoritative and comprehensive of which are perhaps Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Khirid's (d. 960/1553)[14] *Ghurar al-Bahāʾ al-Ḍawī* and Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr al-Shillī's (d. 1132/1720) *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*.[15]

Upon examining these primary sources, a major recurring concern is their relatively late authorship. Indeed, the dearth of earlier near-contemporaneous sources on the life of the ʿAlawī *sāda* and their settlement in the valley poses a challenge for historians seeking a more complete and accurate understanding of their early religious life in Hadhramaut. Nearly all of the surviving biographical sources consulted for this study were composed between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, and most of these were authored by the ʿAlawīs themselves. Indeed, as Knysh and Serjeant have noted, the fifteenth century appears to be generally a 'terminus a quo,'

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[13] Al-Ḥāmid's *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt* is perhaps the most ambitious social and political history of Hadhramaut written to date, offering the researcher much valuable information drawn from the valley's surviving historical MSS, while al-Shāṭirī's less ambitious *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī* offers important complementary insights for a helpful comparison. Among his other works, Ṭāhir b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād's *Janīyy al-Shamārīkh*, in which he responds to probing questions in the field of Hadhrami historiography, displays his unrivaled encyclopedic knowledge on the valley, its tribes, and early history. Furthermore, Muḥammad Ibn Hishām's *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya* likely constitutes the most complete political history of the Kathīrī sultanate to date, with important details on its rulers and their extensive relations with the ʿAlawī *sāda*. See Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2 vols. (Sanaa: Maktabat al-Irshād, 2003); Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2 vols. (Tarim, Yemen: Dār al-Muhājir, 1994); ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh: Jawāb Asʾila fī al-Tārīkh*, ed. Muḥammad Yaslam ʿAbd al-Nūr (Tarim, Yemen: Tarīm lil-Dirāsat wa-l-Nashr, 2012); *ʿUqūd al-Almās bi-Manāqib Shaykh al-Ṭarīqa al-Ḥabīb Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAṭṭās* (Tarim, Yemen: Tarīm lil-Dirāsat wa-l-Nashr, n.d.); Muḥammad Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Jifrī (Tarīm: Tarīm lil-Dirāsat wa-l-Nashr, 2002).

[14] Both Serjeant and Peskes vocalize the family name as 'Kharid,' which is correctly pronounced as 'Khirid.' See Ibrāhim Aḥmad al-Maḥqafī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān wa-l-Qabāʾil al-Yamaniyya* (Sanaa: Dār al-Kalima, 2002), 1:565.

[15] For an exhaustive discussion on these primary sources, see Chapter 4.

with respect to pertinent biographical accounts (mostly hagiographic *manāqib*) and chronicles, among other relevant historical materials.[16] The general neglect of manuscripts, exacerbated by low rates of literacy among the valley's mostly rural and Bedouin population[17], as well as the infestation of manuscripts by the voracious white ant, and the Wahhābī invasion of 1224/1809 appear to have collectively contributed to the destruction of several important libraries and the loss of thousands of volumes in Tarīm, ʿĪnāt, and elsewhere.[18]

Another major concern with the surviving biographical works is their predominantly ʿAlawī authorship and their allegedly pro-*sāda* bias, in addition to their overwhelmingly hagiographic character, an idealized genre (*manāqib*) that is viewed to be inherently more susceptible to exaggeration and embellishment.[19] For Knysh, these works' pro-ʿAlawī accounts are so "riddled with underlying agendas and biases, which often hinge on considerations of

[16] "My considered opinion, based on a cursory examination of MSS., is that Ḥaḍramī MSS . . . 500 years old, do not exist." Serjeant, "Materials I," 283. The most relevant surviving biographical and historical sources noted by Knysh are al-Khaṭīb's (d. 855/1451) *al-Jawhar al-Shaffaf*, al-Shaykh ʿAlī b. Abū Bakr al-Saqqāf's (d. 895/1490) *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa*, Shanbal's (d. 920/1514) *Tārīkh*, Khirid's (d. 960/1553) *al-Ghurar*, and al-Shillī's (d. 1093/1692) *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*. "The Sāda in History," 216. To this list, we may also add the following relevant biographical and hagiographic works noted by Serjeant under slightly variant titles: ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bā Wazīr's (d. ninth/fifteenth century) *al-Tuḥfa al-Nūrāniyya,* ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣāḥib al-Ḥamrāʾ's (d. 889/1484) *Fatḥ Allah al-Raḥīm al-Raḥmān,* Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs's (d. 990/1582) *al-ʿIqd al-Nabawī wa-l-Sirr al-Musṭafawī*, and ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Bā Shaybān's (d. 944/1537) *Tiryāq Asqām al-Qulūb al-Wāf*. "Materials I," 305; "Materials II," 583, 586, 588.

[17] The valley's Bedouin and largely illiterate character (*ghalabat al-badāwa wa-l-jahl*) seems to be a dominant motif in much of the primary literature. See, for instance, the historian Bāhāʾ al-Dīn al-Jundī's remark in ʿAli b. Abī Bakr al-Saqqāf, *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa fī Dhikr Libās al-Khirqa al-Anīqa* (Egypt, 1347), 106. The eminent ʿAlawī historian ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād also observes that, to the exception of its principal towns such as Tarīm, Sayʾūn, and Shibām, Hadhramaut's largely uneducated and mostly rural population may serve to explain why Hadhrami histories and chronicles prior to the sixteenth century have not survived. al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 53–56.

[18] Serjeant, "Materials I," 281-282.

[19] With the exception of al-Khatīb's fifteenth century work *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, the remaining works mentioned by Knysh are authored by ʿAlawī scholars. Another surviving non-*sāda* biographical work from the sixteenth century is the MS of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah b. Sulaymān al-Khaṭīb (d. 1025/1616) *Burd al-Naʿīm fī Manāqib Khuṭabāʾ Tarīm*, which as a biographical work on the prominent *mashāyikh* family of Āl Khaṭīb is less relevant for this study.

genealogy and clannish honour," as to be patently unreliable.[20] His foray into the early historiography of Hadhramaut and his interpretation of the *sāda*'s historical materials is thus largely informed by a hermeneutic of suspicion, which at times appears to tilt towards the more critical and anti-ʿAlawī sentiments of the *sāda*'s modern Hadhrami detractors in the wake of the heated historiographical debates that were fueled by the ʿAlawī-Irshādī rivalries of the early twentieth century.[21]

Knysh's generally pessimistic outlook on the historiography of Hadhramaut, which appears to be colored by his own negative encounters during his fieldwork in the valley,[22] may be contrasted with Serjeant's more nuanced and positive assessment of the *sāda* and the quality of their modern scholarship.[23] Though not entirely uncritical, in his opinion, the ʿAlawīs have generally fared better than their modern detractors, largely "owing to their superior scholarship."[24] Perhaps, nowhere is this contrast more readily felt than in the lingering doubts

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[20] Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 215.

[21] "One may even find oneself in the camp of such critics of the *sada* as Ṣalāḥ al-Bakrī and the leadership of the Indonesian Irshad League, who denounced traditional *sāda* biography and history as a deliberate, calculated distortion of historical data that was driven by their insatiable desire to dominate and exploit the credulous and uneducated members of the other lineages." Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 218. For more on the ʿAlawī-Irshādī controversies of the early-twentieth century, see Yamaguchi Motoki, "Debate on the Status of Sayyid/Sharīfs in the Modern Era: The ʿAlawī Irshādī Dispute and Islamic Reformists in the Middle East," in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet*, ed. Morimoto Kazuo (London: Routledge, 2012), 49-71.

[22] Thus, he describes his "shock" at the existence of illiterate *sāda* amongst the Bedouin rural tribes and at being "accosted by a persistent beggar in traditional *sayyid* garb." "The *Sāda* in History," 217-218. The Banū ʿAlawīs are one of the largest and most diverse tribes in Hadhramaut today, consisting of at least 125 clans. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Bā ʿAlawī and ʿAlī Bā Ṣabrīn, *Bughyat al-Mustarshidīn fī Talkhīṣ Fatāwā Baʿḍ al-Aʾimma min al-ʿUlamāʾ al-Mutaʾkhkhirīn* (Tarīm, Yemen: Dār al-Faqīh, 2009), 4:480. Certainly, not all these families took to the rigors of Sufi piety and scholarship, and indeed, a few of the *sāda's* clans in the rural areas took to the ways of their immediate Bedouin context.

[23] Having visited Hadhramaut in the mid-twentieth century, Serjeant had the advantage of several personal encounters and fruitful exchanges with some of the *sāda's* most influential scholars and historians of the twentieth century. For a brief description of these encounters and his more positive take on the ʿAlawīs' scholarship, see "Historians," 252-257.

[24] Serjeant, *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt*, 28. As for his take on Ṣalāḥ al-Bakrī's controversial modern anti-*sāda* work, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt al-Siyāsī*, "the historical section of the book, it must be confessed, is

concerning the authenticity of the ʿAlawīs' claimed descent from the Prophet Muḥammad. Not only does Knysh question the authenticity of the *sāda*'s Prophetic ancestry, which Peskes also considers to be a dubious claim, but he goes further to question the very historicity of their famed ancestor Imām Aḥmad al-Muhājir.[25] As for Serjeant, on the other hand, he displays no such concerns, for "despite the lack of early sources . . . there is no great reason to be suspicious of the descent of the Hadrami Saiyids, for it is difficult in Arabia to support a spurious pedigree, the more so, of course, when financial considerations enter."[26] Thus, according to Peskes, Serjeant reflects a clearly pro-*sāda* leaning, while Knysh's reading of their history and motives is unduly critical and unwarranted. Though she acknowledges the limitations of the biographical sources and at times shares in Knysh's general concerns, she nevertheless recognizes their value in allowing for at least a partial reconstruction of the *sāda*'s social and intellectual history.[27]

Given the foregoing perspectives and the limitations of our primary sources, a major aim of this dissertation is to revisit the questions they raise and to re-examine the reliability of the available hagiographic biographies, among other primary materials, in allowing us to reconstruct a more accurate and complete picture of the *sāda*'s social and intellectual history. Here, it must be noted that other scholars have already successfully demonstrated that hagiographical materials can in fact be carefully mined in the service of historiography since most such materials are not exclusively concerned with the domain of the preternatural, offering us a wealth of other

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inaccurate in many matters of detail, and a number of refutations are in circulation . . ." "Historians," 250.

[25] Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 218. Peskes also notes the absence of non-ʿAlawī sources confirming the historicity of al-Muhajir, a claim which, as we shall see in Chapter 1, is not in fact accurate. See Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs*, 23, 201.

[26] Serjeant, *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt*, 11.

[27] Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs*, 11–16. For a favorable English review of her German study, see Albrecht Fuess, "Book Review: Al-ʿAidarūs und seine Erben. Eine Untersuchung zu Geschichte und Sufismus einer ḥaḍramitischen Sāda-Gruppe vom fünfzehnten bis zum achtzehnten Jahrhundert," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69, no. 2 (2010): 283–284.

valuable historical and biographical information.[28] Thus, John Renard draws our attention to the helpful distinction between 'hagiography' and 'biohagiography' – while 'hagiographies' are focused on the spiritual and moral qualities of the subject, with a special focus on elements of the preternatural and the marvelous, 'biohagiographies' add significant information concerning the subject's personal, public, and political life.[29]

The primary hagiographic biographical sources consulted for this study would nearly all qualify to varying degrees as examples of 'biohagioaphies.' Upon their closer examination, the competing objectives and considerations of authority construction and the individual biases of their authors certainly played a role in the selection and presentation of their biographical subjects. Thus, Khirid's genealogical work *al-Ghurar* selects its subjects primarily on the basis of their scholarly credentials, displaying a uniquely clear conceptual distinction in the organization of its biographical (*tarājim*) and hagiographic (*manāqb*) content. Such an organizational makess it easier to navigate as a valuable source of historiographical information. On the other hand, other works, such as ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Bā Shaybān's (d. 944/1537) *Tiryāq Asqām al-Qulūb al-Wāf* appear to privilege the hagiographic qualities of their subjects,

[28] Despite some of its drawbacks and limitations, in addition to its more restrictive focus, Peskes's study on the ʿAydarūs family remains a helpful illustration of the overall value of the hagiographic genre for the field of Islamic historiography. For another powerful vindication of the use of hagiographic materials as an informative source of Sufi cultural history, see Bruno De Nicola, "The Ladies of Rūm: A Hagiographic View of Women in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Anatolia," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 3, no. 2 (Nov. 2014).

[29] John Renard, *Friends of God: Islamic Images of Piety, Commitment, and Servanthood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 241-242. For a useful study of the former genre of 'hagiography', where elements of the spiritual, doctrinal, and preternatural are foregrounded above the factual and the biographical, see Meis Al-Kaisi's *Nine Celebrated Ascetics: A Critical Edition of an Extract of Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī's Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ* (UK: Equinox Publishing, forthcoming 2022). For one of the most authoritative academic investigations of early Sufi biographical and hagiographic materials, see Richard Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums,* Veröffentlichungen Der Orientalischen Kommission, Bd. 42, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995-96).

where it also includes four saintly women among its subjects, a rarer consideration in the biographical literature.[30]

Be that as it may, what can be gleaned from nearly all our sources, including those composed by non-ʿAlawī members of the *mashāyikh*, is that the *sāda* are regularly portrayed as belonging to a social stratum of Hadhramaut's saintly and spiritual elite who also possessed a unique spiritual rank and blessing (*baraka*) on account of their noble Prophetic lineage, which has historically served to strengthen their image as uniquely positioned inheritors of the Prophet's spiritual legacy (*al-irth al-nabawī*). This can be detected even from non-genealogical works, such as *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, the earliest known surviving hagiographic work on the Sufis of Tarīm, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, authored by the *sāda*'s fifteenth disciple ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb (d. 855/1451).[31] Thus, while recognizing the potential limitations of the hagiographical genre, such sources continue to retain some value to the historian when considering their frequently devotional or even pedagogical intent. While the historicity of their diverse accounts may not always be fully accessible, they, nonetheless, remain insightful in a secondary sense – as a window into the shared memory, doctrines, values, spiritual imagination, and even collective aspirations of a lived religious community. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter 3, the *sāda*'s historically active participation in the construction of their genealogical and hagiographic canon has served as a major constitutive element of their Sufi *habitus* and their subjectivity formation as a Prophetic scholarly family.

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[30] ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Bā Shaybān, *Tiryāq Asqām al-Qulūb al-Waf fī Dhikr Ḥikāyāt al-Sāda al-Ashrāf* (MS: London, The British Library, Oriental Manuscripts Collection, Or 112). This work is closely examined as a primary source in Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs*, 14ff.

[31] This MS serves as a primary source on the early ʿAlawīs for nearly all the later bio-hagiographical literature. For more on its significance, see Chapter 3.

Another major objective of this project is to offer a contextualized and comprehensive study of the ʿAlawī *sāda*'s major scholarly contributions to the development of Hadhrami and Yemeni Sufism. This involves not only paying special attention to their scholarly networks and the diverse works that they studied, but more importantly, also examining the works that they authored, so as to offer a more thorough account of their intellectual and spiritual canon. In doing so, this study hopes to revisit the received academic wisdom on the breadth and sophistication of the *sāda*'s premodern intellectual culture and re-interrogate the image of a scholarly family that was largely dominated by the interests of temporal and economic power and the more practical and legalistic concerns of religious orthopraxy and public preaching, where engagements with the more sophisticated scholarship of philosophical Sufism and the intellectual concerns of Sufi metaphysics (*ḥaqāʾiq*) remained mostly marginal.[32]

This critical take on the *sāda*'s scholarly credentials and Sufi 'sanctity' is perhaps most forcefully voiced by Knysh, who concludes from his examination of their hagiographic biographies,

> Burdened with vast estates and extended households . . . in addition to numerous religious and judicial responsibilities and occasional arbitration among tribes, many *sāda* leaders were typical public figures who simply could not afford to dedicate themselves fully to the stringent demands of ascetic self-discipline and Sufi meditation. And yet, in keeping with the hagiographic canon, *sāda* authors persistently cast them as paragons of ascetic piety, otherworldly recluses, and miracle-working saints . . . Once the camouflage is removed, the saint's religious clientele presents itself as an economic and political clientele of those in power. Seen from this perspective, . . . the sacred enclave in Ḥaḍramawt (*ḥawṭa*), loses its mythical aura and becomes a seat of quite tangible political and social power . . . [33]

[32] Thus, much of the existing academic scholarship on Hadhramaut is of the general view that the works of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, widely regarded as medieval Islam's preeminent authority on Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq*, only managed to gain a 'subterranean' following among the ʿAlawīs and Hadhramaut's Sufi elite. For examples of this popular academic perception, see Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 15; Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 127n8; Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 49, 190, 274-275; "Der Heilige," 57. See also Knysh's generally critical assessment of the *sāda*'s Sufi tradition and his views on its relative lack of intellectual depth and sophistication in "The Sāda in History" and "The 'Tariqa' on a Landcruiser," 410.

[33] Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 222.

This view is to some extent also shared by Peskes, whose analysis of the *sāda*'s early history focuses heavily on the economic basis of their activities, where their considerable wealth proved instrumental in the consolidation of their influential status and spiritual leadership within Hadhrami society. Such an emphasis on their economic power as wealthy landowners and merchants is seen as a primary motivation behind their many travels, connections, and social activities, where their spiritual authority was utilized to consolidate their possessions, wealth, and status within Hadhrami society.[34] As she argues, for instance, the recurring theme in the *sāda*'s hagiographic depictions of relentless Divine punishments being meted out against those who sought to steal from the their private properties were intended to preserve their possessions and fend off potential transgressors, while enveloping them in an aura of sacred power and authority.[35]

As this study hopes to illustrate, such a focus on the economic motivations behind the *sāda*'s many activities and temporal functions in Hadhrami society is perhaps overstated. For instance, the hagiographic depictions of Divine justice being meted out in the defense of the *sāda*'s properties and possessions need not be motivated by purely materialistic and economic considerations. Rather, they represent a relatively common motif in Sufi hagiographical works, which dramatically highlight God's care and protection of His friends (*al-awliyāʾ*), imbuing the Sufi saint with an aura of Divine protection, sanctity, and spiritual power.[36]

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[34] See Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 27-41ff; "Der Heilige," 50-53.
[35] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 37.
[36] This theme finds ample precedent in the biography (*Sīra*) and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Hence, the popular *Qudsī ḥadīth*, noted in al-Nawawī's popular collection of forty *ḥadīths*, where God promises His friends, "Whosoever shows enmity to a friend (*walī*) of Mine, know that I declare war against him!" (*Man ʿādhā lī waliyyan fa-qad ādhantahu bi-l-ḥarb*). Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī and Ibn Rajab, *al-Arbaʿūn al-Nawawiyya wa-Tatimmatuhā* (Mecca: Maktabat al-Iqtiṣād, n.d.), 26.

More importantly, underlying Knysh's reading above are latent assumptions concerning the domains of the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal,' where spirituality and 'sainthood' are defined in purely ascetic, intellectual, and otherworldly terms, while a commitment to more temporal social roles is taken as a priori evidence of economic and political aspiration and 'worldliness.' In this sense, his theorization of 'sainthood' appears to be influenced by a Protestant bias, where 'saints' are typically portrayed as individual seekers and 'mystics,' quite removed from the pursuits of worldly power and political authority.[37] Such a restrictive conceptualization of sainthood by definition reduces Sufi saints to abstract figures, as the passive representatives of a spiritual or religious culture, and precludes our ability to conceive of them in more dynamic terms, not only as the creators and sustainers of religious culture but also as active agents of social and political change.[38]

In contrast to this understanding, we may turn to other scholars who have attempted to shed greater light on the notion of 'authority' in sainthood, proffering alternative and competing paradigms of saintly authority. For instance, Vincent Cornell's penetrating study of the Jazūliyya in Morroccan Sufism offers us a model of premodern Sufi sainthood in which the *awliyāʾ* were at the center of Moroccan political life, playing a direct role in the establishment of the Saʿdiyyan dynasty.[39] Furthermore, while for Knysh, the *sāda's* numerous 'judicial responsibilities' are seen

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[37] For a critique of the Protestant bias in the construction of 'mysticism,' see Scott Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law: Ahmad Zarruq, Sainthood, and Authority in Islam* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 31; Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial theory, India, and the 'Mystic East'* (London: Routledge, 1999), 8-34, 96-97. For classic examples of this tendency to theorize Sufi sainthood in primarily individualistic and 'mystical' terms, see Julian Bladwick, *Mystical Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1989); Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

[38] Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 36.

[39] A key observation made by Cornell and Kugle concerning the translation of the term '*walī*' into 'saint' is that, aside from its Christian connotation, no single translation can adequately capture the 'polysemic resonance' of the Arabic term, which connotes the two dimensions of 'intimacy' and 'authority.' As

to fall outside of the regimented Sufi *habitus* consisting of a contemplative life of 'meditation,' mystical writing, and 'ascetic self-discipline,' Kugle's notion of 'juridical Sufism' in his study of the fifteenth-century Moroccan Sufi authority Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493), by contrast, offers us a competing paradigm of sainthood that is predicated on a strong sense of social responsibility, legal authority, and juristic practice.[40] These more expansive and nuanced conceptualizations of Sufi sainthood offer a more promising alternative that will be used to inform this study's understanding of the *sāda*'s 'sainthood' and their spiritual tradition within the broader context of Hadhrami and Yemeni Sufism.

Finally, in attempting to account for the ʿAlawīs' religious, economic, and socio-political context in Hadhramaut, this study hopes to offer a more contextualized understanding of the uniquely Hadhrami challenges that helped to shape and inform the evolution of their scholarly tradition. Such a focus necessitates a better grasp of not only the wider regional intellectual trends of Yemen and the Hejaz, but also the Hadhrami scholarly elite's relations with local political leaders. As this dissertation hopes to illustrate, as a political and economic backwater, Hadhramaut's social and political history had a markedly different trajectory from the seats of economic and political power in western Yemen. A broad survey of the valley's premodern

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Cornell perceptively notes, the Arabic '*walī*' is a case of "double subjectivity" since it goes back to the two interrelated terms of '*walāya*' and '*wilāya,*' which were exhaustively discussed among premodern Muslim authorities. While '*walāya*' connotes the inner (*bāṭin*) sense of spiritual proximity, '*wilāya*' is indicative of the outer (*zāhir*) sense of spiritual 'vicegerency;' thus, the saint is best conceived as being simultaneously a 'protégé' of God and a 'patron' who intercedes on behalf of the people. Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), xvii–xxv, 272–73; Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 32.

[40] As Kugle notes, premodern Islamic scholarship generally viewed Islamic law, theology, and Sufism as three interrelated specializations reflecting the totality of Islam, which were naturally seen to correspond with the three dimensions of Islam, Imān, and Iḥsān, respectively. This Islamic *weltanschauung,* which he terms as 'integral Islam,' is commonly referred to in more modern discourses as 'traditional Islam' and may be contrasted with the rivaling puritan 'Salafi' or 'Wahhabi' currents. Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirt and Law*, 5-26.

political history, reveals an impoverished and neglected region that remained largely plagued by entrenched tribal and political rivalries and economic uncertainty, where the valley's scholarly elite were rarely the recipients of the lavish state patronage and institutional support that was enjoyed by their counterparts in the intellectual capitals of Zabīd and Taʿizz. A greater analysis and accounting of these broader societal conditions and disadvantages is thus necessary to help us better appreciate the unique challenges and constraints that the *sāda* faced in their immediate socio-religious and political context and the motives behind their broad social commitments and their growing temporal role as important mediators in the valley's recurring political conflicts, all of which ultimately informed the evolution of a distinctly Hadhrami spiritual tradition.

With these objectives and considerations in mind, Chapter 1 begins with the ancestor of the ʿAlawīs Imām Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-Muhājir (d. 345/956) and his migration (*hijra*) to Hadhramaut from his native Basra in Iraq *circa* 317/929. The chapter surveys the possible motives behind his choice of settlement in this remote valley, offering an account of the turbulent political and economic conditions of his native Basra under the ʿAbbāsids and of the valley's political and sectarian context upon his arrival in the early tenth century. The chapter also addresses his family's early settlement in Hadhramaut, leading up to their momentous move to the city of Tarīm in the early twelfth century. Finally, I also attempt to carefully re-examine the lingering historiographical debates surrounding Imām al-Muhājir's Prophetic lineage and his family's sectarian identity as Sunni Shāfiʿīs of the Ashʿarī creed, arguing that there are in fact enough near-contemporaneous non-Hadhrami historical and genealogical sources to allow for a more conclusive determination of the *sāda*'s family ancestry and their early sectarian orientation in the valley.

Chapter 2 focuses on the major figure of 'al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam' Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 653/1255), the founder of the Bāʿ Alawī *ṭarīqa*, offering a biographical account of his momentous turn to Sufism and his investiture with the Sufi *khirqa* of the great North African Sufi Abū Madyan Shuʿayb. The chapter aims to situate his introduction of organized Sufism to the valley within the broader regional developments of his time, more specifically the institutionalizing drive of the emerging *ṭarīqa* lineages in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The chapter also provides a synopsis of the major socio-political developments of medieval Yemen, beginning with the Ayyūbids' conquest in 569/1173 and leading up to the reigns of their Rasūlid and Ṭāhird successors, whose rule was brought to an abrupt end by the Ottoman invasion of 945/1538.

While these developments ushered in a new era in Yemeni history that was characterized by a greater measure of political stability and economic affluence and a concomitant flourishing of intellectual and scholarly life under the generous patronage of successive sultans and their institutional support for the scholarly elites of cities like Zabīd and Taʿizz, they were sharply contrasted with political developments in Hadhramaut, which remained locked in a prolonged cycle of political fragmentation, recurring invasions, tribal conflict, and economic insecurity under the turbulent rule of the Āl Yamānīs in Tarīm, whose reign was to last for over three centuries until the Kathīrī invasion of 926 or 927/1521. These drastically different socio-political conditions in the valley, which generally translated into a relative absence of political and economic stability and a lack of state patronage for its scholarly elite, among other factors, helps to account for the wave of ʿAlawī migrations across the Indian Ocean beginning as early the thirteenth century. More importantly, this chapter argues that the entrenched political violence and the early *sāda*'s precarious status in Tarīm, are likely instrumental considerations informing

al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's decisive turn to Sufism and his vision of social and spiritual reform along entirely pacifist means, a momentous decision that was to have lasting consequences for the formation of a new *sāda* identity and the ʿAlawīs' gradual emergence in succeeding centuries as a major scholarly family of peacemakers and political mediators within the valley.

Chapter 3 investigates the gradual emergence of the ʿAlawīs in Tarim as a distinct social stratum within a stratified Hadhrami society and the consolidation of their spiritual identity and praxis as a Sufi tradition. In order to better understand this historical dynamic where, in addition to a life of disciplined scholarship, the *sāda* began to occupy a more prominent temporal role within their society, this chapter also examines the impact of the Rasūlid state's patronage of the Sufi elite in western Yemen, which rarely extended to Hadhramaut, and how this in turn informed the ʿAlawīs' many choices, their expanding social roles, and the unique evolution of their spiritual tradition. This chapter also offers an account of the lives of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's descendants, with a special focus on the spiritual legacies of their two leading spiritual authorities of the early fifteenth century, Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Saqqāf (d. 819/1416) and his son, the famous *naqīb* of the *sāda*, Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (d. 833/1429). Here, I adopt a more phenomenological lens in accounting for their unique contributions to the evolution of their *ṭarīqa,* where I identify the major ritualistic, textual, and geographic features of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism in the fifteenth century and how these in turn contributed to the *sāda*'s subjectivity formation and the emergence of a distinctly Ghazalian Sufi *habitus*.

Having examined the consolidation of the *sāda*'s spiritual identity and practice by the first half of the fifteenth century, Chapter 4 investigates the unprecedented spiritual and cultural revival that the valley begins to witness in the fifteenth century and that appears to reach an intellectual high point by the end of the sixteenth century. This explosion of scholarly activity is

paralleled in the political sphere with the gradual eclipsing of the Āl Yamānī dynasty by the rising power of the Kathīrī sultans and their eventual conquest of Tarīm in 926/1520. I thus provide an account of the first Kathīrī sultanate's rule (r. *circa* 814-1130/1411-1718), during which Hadhramaut begins to witness a somewhat greater measure of political, social, and economic stability. Here, I pay special attention to the new sultans' strong rapport with the valley's scholarly elite, noting instances of patronage and support for their activities. More specifically, the Kathīrīs' rule is also characterized by warm and cordial relations with the ʿAlawīs, who are frequently taken as personal counselors and political mediators.

In attempting to document Hadhramaut's major scholarly productions between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, I pay special attention to the most active scholarly fields of historiography, Islamic law, and Sufism. More specifically, I attempt an appraisal of the Hadhrami scholarly elite's 'high' intellectual Sufism throughout this period and the extent of their scholarly engagements with philosophical Sufism (*ḥaqāʾiq*), as exemplified in the works of al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). Here I document the diverse scholarly receptions and attitudes towards the Shaykh's controversial doctrines from among the *mashāyikh* and *sāda*, with a special focus on his ontological doctrine of '*waḥdat al-wujūd*.' In closely documenting what can be gleaned of the works that they studied and providing a more comprehensive appraisal of the ʿAlawīs' emerging spiritual and intellectual canon, I argue for the need to revisit our common academic understanding on Hadhramaut's high spiritual culture throughout this period and the wider reception of Ibn ʿArabī within Hadhrami Sufism and the Bā ʿAlawī tradition more specifically.

Chapter 5 continues with the same line of investigation as Chapter 4, focusing more specifically on the intellectual and spiritual legacies of the *sāda*'s two major saintly authorities of

the mid-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, the towering progenitor of the ʿAydarūs family, Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), and his famous son and patron saint of Aden, Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508). As the first *sayyid* to author a major Sufi treatise, the emergence of Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, marks a new phase in the evolution of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism. This chapter further examines the extent of these two ʿAlawī authorities' engagements with Sufi metaphysics and the thought of al-Shaykh al-Akbar, where I also closely examine Imām al-ʿAydarūs's Sufi treatise *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar* and Imām al-ʿAdanī's important work on the Sufi *khirqa, al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf.*

Finally, Chapter 6 consists of a more focused examination of the intellectual and spiritual legacy of the towering ʿAlawī authority of the sixteenth century, the famous *manṣab* of ʿĪnāt, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). As one of the ʿAlawīs' most celebrated exponents of philosophical Sufism, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim represents a high point in the *sāda*'s intellectual tradition, and his two major works of Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq*, *Miʿrāj al-Arwāh* and *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, remain practically *terra incognita* within the academic study of Yemeni Sufism. Both works on theoretical gnosis are remarkable in their intellectual breadth and sophistication and their technical Sufi vocabulary, displaying an unmistakable familiarity and intimate mastery of Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥat* and *Fūṣūṣ*. As such, this chapter begins by closely examining the Imām's early Sufi training in the valley, once again, suggesting the high plausibility of a wider network of scholarly interest with the works of Ibn ʿArabī among his colleagues and Sufi masters. The bulk of this chapter is devoted to a synopsis of both works' major overarching themes, with a special focus on the Imām's ontology and theology, his Akbarian vocabulary, and his explication of the major Sufi doctrines of '*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*' and '*al-Insān al-Kāmil*.' Once again, building upon the findings of Chapters 4 and 5, this chapter makes a case for

the need to revisit our current academic understanding on the intellectual reception of Ibn ʿArabī within Hadhrami Sufism, and the Bā ʿAlawī tradition in particular.

In examining the intellectual and social history of the Banū ʿAlawī *sāda*'s Sufi tradition in Hadhramaut up to the late sixteenth century, it is hoped that this contextualized study will serve to advance our academic understanding of Hadhrami Sufism and its significant contributions to the wider intellectual cultures of Yemen and the Hejaz, while laying the necessary groundwork for further historical and anthropological research on the Bā ʿAlawiyya's highly influential yet relatively understudied and poorly understood scholarly tradition.

- 1 -

Imām Aḥmad al-Muhājir and the Migration to Hadhramaut

The Banū ʿAlawī *sāda,* trace their lineage back to their famed ancestor Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā (d. 345/956),[1] a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his grandson al-Ḥusayn and a man of considerable wealth and fortune who was better known for his migration with several members of his family from his native Basra in Iraq to the Hadhramaut valley of southern Arabia *circa* 317/929, a momentous decision that earned him the sobriquet (*laqab*) 'Aḥmad al-Muhājir.'[2] As with his grandfathers before him, Imām al-Muhājir's father ʿĪsā al-Naqīb (d. 270/884) was the designated leader of the Prophet's household (*naqīb al-ashrāf*) in Basra.[3] The

[1] The Imām's date of birth remains a source of disagreement among Hadhrami historians, as it is not clearly recorded in the ʿAlawī hagiographic biographical works, such as *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy* and *al-Ghurar*. A commonly assumed date is *circa* 260 AH, while others argue for a later birth date *circa* 273 or 279 AH. See al-Qaḍmānī, *al-Sāda Āl Abī ʿAlawī*, 36; Muḥammad Ḍiyāʾ Shihāb and ʿAbd Allah Bin Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir Aḥmad b. ʿIsā* (Dār al-Shurūq, 1980), 117–118; Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī b. ʿAlī al-Mashhūr, "al-Imām al-Muhājir Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila* (Aden: Arbiṭat al-Tarbiya al-Islamiyya - Farʿ al-Dirāsāt wa-Khidmat al-Turāth, 2002), 260.

[2] Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī Khirid, *Ghurar al-Bahāʾ al-Ḍawī wa-Durar al-Jamāl al-Badīʿ al-Bahī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī Ibn Sālim b. ʿAlawī Khirid (Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2002), 96. The sobriquet 'al-Muhājir' (the Migrant) is short for '*al-Muhājir ilā Allah*', a religious motif that signifies the spiritual migration towards God and His Messenger epitomized in the *Hijra* of the Prophet's Companions to Medina. As for the honorary titles of '*sayyid*' or '*sharīf*' (pl. *ashrāf*; *sāda*), these are commonly used to distinguish the 'Ahl al-Bayt,' the progeny of the two grandsons of the Prophet Muḥammad (al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn) through his daughter Fāṭima from the remaining descendants of their father Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who are collectively referred to as the ʿAlawīs or Ṭālibīs. While a further distinction between the two titles came to be employed in later centuries in the Hejaz, with the '*ashrāf*' designating more specifically the descendants of Imām Ḥasan and the '*sāda*' referring to the descendants of Imām Ḥusayn, both titles continue to remain coterminous in other contexts. See C. van Arendonk and W. A. Graham, "Sharīf", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2006 -) http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1041. In the case of the Banū ʿAlawīs of Hadhramaut, they are commonly referred to as the ʿAlawī *sāda*, where the patronymic 'ʿAlawī' in this case refers to the progenitor of the Bā ʿAlawī tribe and grandson of Imām Aḥmad al-Muhājir, Imām ʿAlawī b. ʿAbd Allah (d. 412 AH?).

[3] Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy fī Manāqib al-Sāda al-Kirām Āl Abī ʿAlawī* (Egypt: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿĀmira al-Sharafiyya, 1901), 1:33. The institution of '*naqīb al-ashrāf*' or '*naqīb al-ʿAlawiyyīn*' was established under the Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids to advocate on behalf of Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalib's descendants and to protect their common interests, and it continued to exist in an uneasy

Imām was thus raised in a prestigious and well-to-do scholarly house and likely had ample opportunity to interact and study with the scholarly elite of his day, as can be gleaned from his brief exchange with the famous historian and Qurʾānic exegete Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923).[4] This chapter briefly examines the Imām's background in Basra and the socio-political conditions and religious climate leading to up to his decision to migrate to Hadhramaut. It also surveys valley's wider sectarian and religious context upon his arrival to Hadhramaut in the early tenth century, and the lives of his early descendants, paying special attention to the historiographical debates surrounding their early sectarian identity and legal affiliation in Hadhramaut.

Beyond the relatively brief biographical entries found in the traditional ʿAlawī genealogical and biographical works, very little is known about Imām al-Muhājir and the lives of his early descendants in Hadhramaut. The general absence of near-contemporaneous primary sources and the dearth of non-ʿAlawī accounts on the early *sāda* indeed poses a major challenge for historians seeking a more complete and accurate account of their settlement and early religious life in the valley, as nearly all of the surviving biographical sources were composed between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, and most of these were authored by the *sāda* themselves. As we have seen, for scholars like Knysh, such sources are too riddled with underlying pro-*sāda* biases and clannish agendas, as to render them unreliable for the serious historian.[5] Thus, not only does he question the ʿAlawīs' claimed Prophetic ancestry, which

relationship with the political elite. See Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir,* 123–124.

[4] See the Imām's brief exchange with al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) noted in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's (d. 463/1071) famous history of Baghdad: Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Khaṭīb, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Salām,* ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 2:553.

[5] Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 215, 217-218.

Esther Peskes also considers a dubious claim, but he goes further to question the historicity of Imām Aḥmad al-Muhājir.[6]

At such it may therefore be pertinent to begin by re-examining some of these concerns. Here it must be noted that, despite claims to the contrary, one need not solely rely on the *sāda's* account of Imām al-Muhājir in the biographical literature to determine his historicity, as other corroborating non-Hadhrami sources do in fact exist; we have noted, for instance, a trace of al-Muhājir's correspondence with the Qurʾānic exegete al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdadī's (d. 463/1071) famous history. More importantly, thanks to the renewed debates contesting the soundness of their Prophetic lineage in the modern period, several ʿAlawī historians have sought to provide more robust evidence by compiling exhaustive lists of non-Hadhrami genealogical (*ansāb*) works by major early genealogists (*nassābīn*) on the Ahl al-Bayt, some of which remain as unpublished manuscripts and the earliest of which date back to the tenth century. Nearly all these genealogical works list the progeny of the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn up to Aḥmad al-Muhājir's generation or that of his children, and a few make direct mention of al-Muhājir's descendants in Hadhramaut.[7] Thus, contrary to Peskes's claim concerning the absence of contemporary sources that can allow us to determine with certainty the

[6] Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 218; Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs*, 23, 201.

[7] For an extensive discussion on these sources, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 294–302; Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir*, 98–101; al-Ḥaddād, *ʿUqūd al-Almās*, 124–180. For our purposes here, it suffices us to note the earliest three *ansāb* works mentioned, which date from the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries and serve as major sources for much of the later genealogical literature, the first two of which are published: ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿUmarī, *al-Majdī fī Ansāb al-Ṭālibiyyīn*, ed. Aḥmad al-Mahdawī al-Dāmghānī (Qom: Maktabat Ayatullah al-ʿUẓmā al-Marʿashī al-Najafī al-ʿĀmmah, 1422 AH); Sahl b. ʿAbd Allah al-Bukhārī, *Sirr al-Silsila al-ʿAlawiyya*, ed. al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq (Najaf: al-Maktaba al-Ḥaydariyya, 1962). As for *Risālat al-Intiṣār li-Banī Fāṭima al-Abrār* of Muḥammad b. Jaʿfar al-ʿUbaydalī (d. 435 AH), its MS seems to contain the most detailed early mention on Aḥmad al-Muhajir and his migration to Hadhramaut. al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:296n3.

sāda's historical origins in Hadhramaut,[8] near-contemporaneous non-Hadhrami sources do in fact exist.

As for the classical ʿAlawī biographical sources, their authors were well aware of the *sāda's* early detractors, especially among the valley's Ibāḍī population, who were known to voice doubts concerning the authenticity of their Prophetic lineage since the very beginning of Imām al-Muhājir's migration to Hadhramaut. It seems that these early doubts, however, were more or less definitively put to rest by the beginnings of the thirteenth century by the accomplished *sayyid* ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (d. 620/1223), the most famous descendant of the Banū Jadīd branch of Imām al-Muhajir's progeny, who would become celebrated for his authentication of the family's *nasab* in Iraq.[9] As the widely recounted story indicates, after repeated requests to have their lineage authenticated from the scholarly community of Tarīm, the celebrated *sayyid* travelled to Basra to produce the evidence of his family's *nasab*, which he was able to obtain from the testimony of a group of Basra's notable scholars and judges and in the presence of some one hundred Basran pilgrims prior to their journey for the Hajj pilgrimage, who in turn were then able to testify to the soundness of his *nasab* before a large contingent of Hadhrami pilgrims upon their arrival in Mecca.[10]

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[8] See Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs*, 23.

[9] For more on his life, extensive travels, and scholarly career, see al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:233-237; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 154-156, 466-468; al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 1:206-211; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:701-709.

[10] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 110–111; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭib, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf fī Dhikr Faḍāʾil wa-Manāqib wa-Karāmāt al-Sāda al-Ashrāf min Āl Bāʿ Alawī wa-Ghayrihim min al-Awliyāʾ wa-l-Ṣāliḥīn wa-l-Akbār al-ʿUrrāf* (MS: Ḥurayḍah, Yemen, Maktabat Aḥmad b. Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭās 442), 3:164. Interestingly, al-Ḥāmid notes another significantly earlier account of their *nasab*'s authentication by Aḥmad al-Muhajir's own son ʿUbayd Allah (d. 383/993) that is not mentioned in the surviving biographies but is narrated from the major seventeenth/eighteenth-century ʿAlawī saint Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1132/1720) via his disciple Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Saḥāwī al-Shajjār in an MS variant of his *Tathbīt al-Fuʾād*, which appears to be curiously omitted from the work's published edition. *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:310-312.

The ʿAlawī biographies indicate that under the ʿAbbāsids, Imām al-Muhājir witnessed a period of great upheaval and uncertainty that was rife with political sedition, internal corruption, and sectarian discord. The Ahl al-Bayt were no strangers to ʿAbbāsid persecution, as the caliphs were at times suspicious of their political aspirations, popular appeal, and scholarly charisma.[11] Imām al-Muhājir's own brother, Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā, is said to have also instigated his own short-lived rebellion but was quickly admonished by the Imām, whose eloquent counsel convinced him to relinquish his pursuit of worldly power for the spiritual life of piety and scholarship.[12]

Imām al-Muhājir's family also lived through the violent upheaval of the great Zanj Revolt (255-70/869-83), a drawn-out and highly violent rebellion against the ʿAbbāsids in Basra and southern Iraq, which led to a great loss of life and weakened the government's central authority, with devastating and lasting consequences for Basra's economy and overall quality of life.[13] These misfortunes were soon to be compounded by the drawn out and calamitous invasions of the Qarmaṭīs (Arabic pl. Qarāmiṭa), an Ismāʿīlī movement named after the ambitious convert and missionary Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ that would eventually breakoff into its own dissident movement in 286/899, following the first internal Ismāʿīlī dispute over the continuity of the Imāmate.[14]

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[11] Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir*, 13–19.
[12] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:33.
[13] See Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir*, 21–25. While the Zanj rebellion is often depicted as a black slave uprising, recent scholarship points to a more complex picture, noting the wider economic basis of the rebellion and its diverse demographic makeup, consisting of blacks, Arabs, and freemen, leading some scholars to prefer its characterization as a class-based struggle, with others highlighting the rebellion's multifaceted nature, pointing to a wider set of economic and social grievances. See Nigel D. Furlonge, "Revisiting the Zanj and Re-Visioning Revolt: Complexities of the Zanj Conflict (868-883 AD)," *Black History Bulletin* 62, no. 4 (1999): 7-14.
[14] Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2, 107–108.

With the ʿAbbāsids' ineffective control over southern Iraq and their preoccupation with the Zanj Revolt, the Qarmaṭīs successfully seized the opportunity to rapidly spread their missionary activity in Kufa and its environs, attracting many new converts from among the Imāmī Shīʿa. Though the energetic caliph al-Muʿtaḍid (r. 279-289/892-902) managed to repress three Qarmaṭī rebellions between 287-289/900-902, they were nonetheless able to establish a fortified base in Kufa by 297/910, and in 311/923 they attacked Basra, devastating the city once more.[15] These conditions collectively, caused many among Basra's troubled population and its scholarly elite to flee for better fortunes and must have also weighed heavily upon Imām al-Muhājir's decision to emigrate to Hadhramaut. However, prior to exploring the details of this momentous migration and its far-reaching historical implications for Hadhramaut's religious and intellectual landscape, a survey of Yemen's medieval political and religious context prior to the major Ayyūbid invasion of 569/1173 is in order.

1.1. Medieval Yemen and Hadhramaut: Political Struggles and Sectarian Dynamics

Islam's history in Yemen and Hadhramaut dates to the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, as a few of his Companions were of Yemeni and Hadhrami origins, and he is known to have sent some of his senior Companions on missions to southern Arabia. It is noted, for instance, that when the Prophet sent Salīm b. ʿAmr al-Anṣārī with an address to the ancient Hadhrami city of Tarīm, its people were among the first to embrace the new faith.[16] Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Shillī's major genealogical work on the ʿAlawī *sāda*, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, also narrates another interesting incident from the apostate (*ridda*) wars during the reign of the first Muslim caliph

[15] Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs,* 109; Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir*, 27–29.
[16] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUbayd Allah al-Saqqāf, *Īdām al-Qūt fī Dhikr Buldān Ḥaḍramawt* (Beirut: Dār al-Minhāj, 2005), 872–873. The city of Tarīm would in a few centuries become the spiritual and religious capital of Hadhramaut.

Abū Bakr, when several Hadhrami tribes had apostatized, breaking their allegiance with the fragile and newly established Islamic polity. When Abū Bakr sent a personal address to the people of Tarīm with the Companion Ziyād b. Labīd, they were once again among the first to pledge their allegiance to the new caliph, after which the rest of Hadhramaut gradually followed suit. Upon receiving the good news in Medina, Abū Bakr is said to have prayed for the city of Tarīm that it continues to remain well-inhabited, that its water remains abundant and blessed, and that it remains full of righteous saints (*ṣāliḥīn*), an impassioned supplication that has remained a source of pride and distinction for the city's residents, earning it the sobriquet of *Madīnat al-Ṣiddīq*.[17]

Yemen was also a part of the Umayyad (40-132/660-749) and ʿAbbāsid (132-656/749-1258) caliphates, with its own governors appointed by both dynasties. Its remote location and rugged terrain, however, ensured that the centralized caliphates' grip over its territories would remain a persistent challenge, making it an ideal refuge for sectarian rebels and political rivals.[18] These early caliphal governors tended to focus their attention mostly on the highlands of the more fertile north and the western coastal plain of the Tihama, leaving the arid Hadhrami interior to the east in a state of general neglect, where they remained mostly contented with its nominal political allegiance.[19] Robert B. Serjeant, among others, also observes that "the Islamic conquests stripped Haḍramawt of its man-power for the campaigns and settlements in southern Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, and later, Spain."[20]

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[17] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:129.
[18] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 7.
[19] Factors contributing to its being overlooked as a political and economic backwater include its dry desert climate, the scarcity of its resources and fertile lands, and its mostly illiterate and Bedouin rural population. Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:245. See also Introduction, note 17.
[20] Serjeant, "Historians," 241. For more on the significant Hadhrami emigration during the Islamic conquests, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:166-176.

1.1.1. The Ibāḍī Movement

More significant to the medieval sectarian and political milieu of Hadhramaut was the Ibāḍī movement (Arabic pl. Ibāḍiyya), the more moderate offshoot of the early puritanical Khārijīs (Arabic pl. Khawārij), which managed to quickly establish itself as the dominant political and religious force within the valley. The Khārijīs trace their origins to the earliest Muslim political schisms in the wake of the assassinations of the third and fourth rightly guided caliphs (*al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn*), ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. Their name is a reference to those who broke ranks with Imām ʿAlī during the battle of Siffīn, the first Muslim civil war fought in 37/657, after Imām ʿAlī acquiesced to an arbitration agreement with his opponent the governor of Syria Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān to decide upon the succession of the caliphate.[21]

The Ibāḍīs, more specifically, trace their early roots to the moderate Khārijī leader Abū Bilāl Midrās b. ʿUdayya al-Tamīmī (d. 61/680-681) of Basra, Iraq, who took on a quietest orientation and rejected the more belligerent tactics of the Khārijīs and their principle of religious assassination (*istiʿrāḍ*). Under his leadership, Basra soon became a major center of a more moderate stream of Khārijī doctrine. The wider Khārijī movement's relationship with the

[21] As a newly formed militant secessionist movement, the Kharijīs argued that all judgement belongs to God alone and opted to withdraw from the wider Muslim community due to Imām ʿAlī's willingness to engage in arbitration with 'unbelievers', a decision that led to the eventual emergence of a new sectarian identity. These first Kharijīs came to be known as the *Muḥakkima* for their slogan, "All judgement (*ḥukm*) is God's alone." Valerie J. Hoffman, *The Essentials of Ibadi Islam* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 9–10.Valerie J. Hoffman, *The Essentials of Ibadi Islam* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 9–10. See also Giorgio Levi della Vida, "Kharidjites," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 2006 -), http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0497; T. Lewicki, "al-Ibāḍiyya," in *idem.*, http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0307; J. C. Wilkinson, "The Development of the Ibāḍī Movement in Basra," in *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G. H. A. Juynboll (Carbondale, Il.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 125-249.

Umayyad caliphs remained precarious, however, as the Azraqīs (Arabic pl. Azāriqa), the earliest and most violent group among the Khārijīs, continued to pose a threat to their rule, conquering Basra in 65/684 and assassinating its governor.[22]

The Azraqīs' gains in Basra were short-lived, and they were soon expelled during the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65-86/685-705), who quickly regained control of the Umayyad territories. Shortly after assuming his throne, ʿAbd Allah b. Ibāḍ (d. 89/708), an Ibāḍī religious figure from among the Successors' (*tābiʿūn*) generation, broke off from the more violent Azraqīs. While it is after him that the Ibāḍīs derive their name, some have argued that proper credit to the development, spread, and evolution of their school, is more rightly reserved to his successor Jābir b. Zayd al-Azdī. Following the breakdown of friendly relations between the Umayyad governor of Iraq al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf and the more moderate Khārijīs in the aftermath of the assassination of one of his spies, which led to the expulsion of several of their leaders to Oman, Jābir's prominent student Abū ʿUbayda al-Tamīmī began organizing missionary teams to propagate Ibāḍī teachings and spread anti-Umayyad activities in the distant Umayyad provinces, including North Africa, Khorasan, Oman, Yemen, and Hadhramaut. Thus, with their persecution intensifying in Iraq, the Ibāḍīs were forced to relocate to the remote margins of the caliphate.[23]

While Oman has remained historically the major refuge and center for the Ibāḍīs till this day, it was in Hadhramaut where the first Ibāḍī state was established in 129/745 under the leadership of ʿAbd Allah b. Yaḥyā al-Kindī.[24] Known by the title of 'Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq,' ʿAbd Allah

[22] Hoffman, *The Essentials of Ibadi Islam,* 11.
[23] Hoffman, *The Essentials of Ibadi Islam,* 12–13.
[24] According to Ibn Khaldūn, however, it seems that the earliest Khārijī presence in the valley was as early as 66/686, which may help to explain the quick reception of ʿAbd Allah b. Yaḥyā's rebellion among the local population several decades later. al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 1:261. See also al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh,* 20-22, on the Hadhrami Khārijīs of this early period.

b. Yaḥyā was a local Hadhrami leader who was converted to the Ibāḍīs in Mecca by the missionary activist Abū Ḥamza al-Mukhtār b. ʿAwf al-Azadī of Basra. Impressed by Abū Ḥamza's teachings, he persuaded him to join him in Hadhramaut, where ʿAbd Allah was encouraged to initiate his own revolt and given the pledge of allegiance as the ruler of the newly formed Ibāḍī state. The new ruler managed to conquer Sanaa in that same year and assigned Abū Ḥamza al-Azdī and a certain Balj b. ʿUqba to take over Mecca and Medina, where they succeeded in a very brief occupation of the Hejaz. Fearing their approach to Damascus, however, the Umayyad caliph Marwān II b. Muḥammad (r. 127-132/744-750) dispatched an army under ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAtiyyah, who decisively beat back the Ibāḍīs and regained control of the Hejaz before proceeding to Yemen. ʿAbd Allah b. Yaḥyā responded by setting out with his own army, meeting ʿAbd al-Malik's forces in the land of Jurash, near the city of Ṭāʾif, where his army was defeated and where he was finally killed in a fierce battle around 130/748.[25]

While ʿAbd Allah b. Yaḥyā al-Ibāḍī's revolt was short-lived, its consequences for Hadhramaut's sectarian identity were immense. Though they failed to exert full political control over the valley thereafter, Hadhramaut continued to remain a major Ibāḍī stronghold and religious center for centuries, especially among the ancient southern Arabian tribe of Ḥimyar.[26] However, their power and influence began to wane significantly following al-Ṣulayḥī's conquest

[25] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:262-266; Hoffman, *The Essentials of Ibadi Islam*, 13. Hoffman erroneously dates the battle year 748 AD as 139 AH, for which the correct date is 130 AH.
[26] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:247n1. The ninth-century historian Abū al-Ḥasan al-Masʿūdī notes that by the year 132/750, following ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAṭiyya's reclaiming of Sanaa, the Ibāḍīs constituted the clear majority in Hadhramaut. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Maʿādin al-Jawhar*, ed. Kamāl Ḥasan Marʿī (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2005), 3:202–203. For a more detailed discussion on Hadhramaut's sectarian identity and its Ibāḍī population throughout this period, see also al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 19–36.

of Hadhramaut in 455/1063, until they were finally expelled from their last major religious stronghold, the Khawqa mosque in the ancient city of Shibām in 591/1195.[27]

1.1.2. The Sunni Ziyādids

Under the ʿAbbāsids, Yemen became increasingly fragmented along sectarian lines, which led to the rise of several independent and competing polities. In response to the rebellions of the Ashāʿira tribe at the end of the eighth century and of the Shīʿa in 203/818 under the leadership of Ibrāhīm b. Mūsa al-Kāẓim al-Jazzār (d. 210/825), the caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 198-218/813-835) dispatched Muḥammad b. Ziyād (d. 245/859), an ambitious descendant of the Umayyads, with an army to the Tihāma and its surrounding regions. Taking advantage of his remote location and a weakening ʿAbbāsid state in Iraq, he expanded his territories to include Sanaa, Laḥj, al-Jand, Aden, and Hadhramaut, and by 204/820, he established Zabīd as the new capital of the Sunni Ziyādid state, which his sons continued to rule until the last of the Ziyādid emirs was killed by one of their own slaves in 407/1017.[28]

Not much is known about the Ziyādids' rule over Hadhramaut due to the scarcity of surviving historical material prior to the sixteenth century. However, it seems that their presence there left no noticeable traces, such that by the time of Imām Aḥmad al-Muhājir's arrival *circa* 318-19/930-31, during the reign of Abū al-Jaysh b. Ziyād (d. 371/982), their rule seems to have been only nominal.[29] Some, like the historian ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddad, have argued that given

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[27] Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allah Shanbal, *Tārīkh Shanbal*, ed. ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad al-Ḥabshī (Sanaa: Maktabat Ṣanʿāʾ al-Athariyya, 1994), 56; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:270.
[28] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 7–8; al-Ṭayyib b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr fī Wafayāt Aʿyān al-Dahr*, ed. Abū Jumʿa Makrī and Khālid Zawārī (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2008), 3:307-08, 323–24; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:258-260. For more on the history of the Ziyādid rulers, see also Audrey Peli, "A history of the Ziyadids through their coinage (203-442/818-1050)" *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 38 (2008): 251-264.
[29] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:246; al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 1:147, 159.

the absence of historical sources confirming their political rule over Hadhramaut, their control over the valley during this period is far from certain and political authority was more likely distributed between the rulers of the various towns and the leaders of the major Hadhrami tribes. Though the presence of Sunni rule over the valley during this period remains uncertain, it is nonetheless important to note that despite its Ibāḍī majority population, the valley was also populated by a minority of well-established Sunni tribes, most notable of which were the Āl Abī Faḍl (colloquially Bā Faḍl) and the Āl Khaṭīb. [30]

The Ziyādid state was only one among several independent powers locked in a fierce struggle over Yemen's territories in an "age of independent states," where political power was fragmented between several sectarian petty states. They were also not the only Sunni dynasty to emerge on the scene prior to the arrival of the Ayyūbids. Following the murder of their last emir in 407/1017, they were succeeded by the Najāḥid dynasty (412-551/1021-1156), established by their former Abyssinian slaves, who ruled over Zabīd intermittently until 554/1159. Additionally, this period also witnessed the emergence of the short-lived Banū Mahdī dynasty (554-569/1159-1173) and the Sulaymānid *ashrāf* along the north of the Tihamah coastal plain from Najrān and as far as Ḥaraḍ to the south.[31]

1.1.3. The Ismāʿīlī Polity and *Daʿwa* in Yemen and Hadhramaut

To the north, the Sunni Ziyādid rulers had to contend with the first Zaydī Shīʿa state, established in Ṣaʿda in 284/897 under Imām al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. Ḥusayn (d. 298/911),

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[30] al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 20, 26–27. The Āl Khaṭīb are believed to be descendants of the Madinan Companion ʿAbbād b. Bishr al-Anṣārī, while the Bā Faḍl are also said to be descendants of the Companion Abū Sabra Yazīd b. Mālik of the ancient Qaḥṭānī tribe of Saʿd al-ʿAshīra. Both of these prominent Hadhrami Sunni tribes would in due course establish cordial and lasting relations with the Banū ʿAlawīs.

[31] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 8-10; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:259-260; Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 198. The Banu Mahdīs, who followed the school of Abū Hanīfa, were considered to have Khārijī leanings in their *uṣūl*.

while the earlier emergence of the Ismāʿīlī Qarmaṭīs posed another serious threat. In 266/879-80, two famous Qarmaṭī missionaries, ʿAlī b. al-Faḍl (d. 302/914), a Yemeni Shīʿa convert, and al-Ḥasan b. Ḥawshab (d. 303/915), a convert from a prominent Kufan Imāmī Shīʿa family, were dispatched to initiate the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* in Yemen, and their activities were to meet with instant political success. From their mountainous strongholds in ʿAdan Lāʿa and Jand, they managed to penetrate and win over tribal support from the surrounding areas, such that by 293/905-906, ʿAlī b. al-Faḍl had occupied Sanaa and most of Yemen had fallen under the Qarmaṭīs' control. However, these conquests were short-lived and had to be eventually abandoned under increasing pressures from the local Zaydī Imāms.[32]

Not much is known about the Ismāʿīlī Qarmaṭīs' presence and following in Hadhramaut, though some sources suggest that they invaded and briefly ruled over parts of the valley at some point by the end of the third or early tenth century, and according to Ibn Khaldūn, they also established a state in neighbouring Oman from 317/929 to 375/986.[33] With the passing of al-Ḥasan b. Ḥawshab (d. 303/915), the Ismāʿilī *daʿwa* entered a dormant phase throughout the tenth century, receiving limited allegiance from some Yemeni tribes, especially from among the Banū Hamdan.[34] It was not until 429/1038, that we hear of the ambitious missionary ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayhī, who succeeded in establishing a fortified base with some sixty of his followers on the mountain of Masār in Ḥarāz after making contacts and pledging his allegiance

[32] Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 109–10; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:188-192.
[33] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 1:148; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:285n1; al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 72. Here, al-Ḥaddād points to *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm* of Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī al-Bishārī (d. 380/990), which mentions Qarmaṭī rule over parts of the valley. See Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī al-Bashīrī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Maʿrifat al-Aqālīm* (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 104.
[34] Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 198.

to the Fāṭimids in Egypt.[35] From this stronghold, he was able to establish the foundations of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty, conquering Zabīd in 452/1060 and killing its ruler al-Najāḥ, the founder the Najāḥid dynasty. He then moved on to expel the Zaydīs from Sanaa, which he took as his new capital, before proceeding to conquer Hadhramaut and unify Yemen for the first time in its history in 455/1063.[36]

The Ṣulayḥid dynasty ruled over Yemen as a vassal state of the Fāṭimids until 532/1138. Al-Ṣulayḥī's unification of Yemen was short-lived, as he was killed in an ambush by Saʿīd al-Aḥwal al-Najāḥī and his slaves in 459/1067, which unravelled the country's fragile unity and plunged it back into a state of civil war. In the course of these political upheavals, al-Ṣulayḥī's son al-Mukarram successfully defeated the Najāḥids and handed over political control to his capable wife Arwā bt. Aḥmad al-Ṣulayḥī (d. 532/1138), who relocated the state's capital to Dhū Jibla.[37]

During Arwā's reign, a major split occurred in Egypt over the succession of the Fāṭimid Imām following the assassination of the tenth caliph al-Amīr in 524/1130. While some Ismāʿīlīs pledged allegiance to his cousin al-Ḥāfiẓ, others, including the Ṣulayḥids, held al-Amīr's infant son al-Ṭayyib as the rightful Imām, who had mysteriously disappeared into a state of concealment (*satr*). Under the protection and support of their queen, the Ṭayyibīs established their own *daʿwa* in Yemen, which was to survive into the mid-sixteenth century. Queen Arwā's death following a remarkable career in 532/1138 marks the end of the Ṣulayḥid dynasty, after which political rule fell once again into the hands of competing local dynasties, including the

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[35] While Daftary dates al-Ṣulayḥī's rise to power in Masār in the year 439/1047, Bā Makhrama's history dates his emergence a decade earlier in the year 429/1038. Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 199; Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 3:390.
[36] Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 199; Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 8.
[37] R. B Serjeant and A. El-Shami, "Regional Literature: The Yemen," in *ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 454–455.

supporters of the Ḥāfizī Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa,* the Zurayʿids of Aden and the Ḥātimids of Sanaa, both of which were overthrown with the dramatic arrival of the Sunni Ayyūbids in 569/1173, marking the beginnings of a new chapter in Yemen's political history.[38]

Though it spanned just over a century that continued to be marked by sectarian and political tensions, the Ṣulayḥid era was nonetheless a period of considerable cultural and intellectual efflorescence in Yemeni history, as is witnessed by the growth of colleges, learning, and literature, and the building of mosques and the construction of new roads.[39] For Hadhramaut, direct political control of its territory was rather short-lived and the most significant impact was witnessed in the decisive political defeat of the Ibāḍī movement, which created an environment that would allow for the Sunnī ʿAlawīs, the Shīʿa, and any partisans of the Ahl al-Bayt to flourish unhindered by political or religious rivals. Hadhramaut thus soon returned to being divided into three major ruling emirates that were controlled by its traditional ruling families, namely the Banū Qaḥṭān centered in Tarīm, the Banū Daʿār of Shibām, and the Āl Fāris b. Iqbāl centered in the coastal city of al-Asʿā, more popularly known as al-Shiḥr. Their rule over the valley, which was marked by political competition and tribal rivalry, prevailed until it was briefly interrupted by the violent invasion of ʿUthmān al-Zanjīlī in 575/1180, one of Tūrānshāh's (d. 575/1180) Ayyūbid governors who were installed over Yemen's territories following his return to Egypt in 571/1176.[40]

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[38] Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*, 199–200; Serjeant and El-Shami, "Regional Literature: The Yemen," 454–455, 459. The Ḥātimid dynasty, which succeeded the Ṣulayḥids, was established by the Hamdānid sultan Ḥātim al-Yāmī and is thus sometimes referred to as the Hamdānid dynasty. For more on these petty Ismāʿīlī polities, see G. R. Smith, *The Ayyūbids and Early Rasūlids in the Yemen (567-694/1173-1295): Volume 2* (London: The Trustees of the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial, 1978), 58, 63–75.
[39] Serjeant and El-Shami, "Regional Literature: The Yemen," 455.
[40] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:430-432.

1.2. Emigration (*hijra*) from Iraq and Ties to the Hadhrami Community

In 317/929, after consulting with family and relatives and leaving behind his son Muḥammad in Basra to look after his fortunes and properties, Imām Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā decided to emigrate in the direction of the Hejaz with the intention of performing the annual Hajj pilgrimage, setting off with a large caravan, which included his wife Zaynab bt. ʿAbd Allah b. Ḥasan al-ʿUrayḍī, his son ʿAbd Allah and his wife Umm al-Banīn bt. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsa, the Imām's paternal cousins the *sayyids* Muḥammad b. Sulaymān and Aḥmad al-Qudaymī, and a contingent of roughly seventy followers consisting of the Imām's friends, relatives, and their servants (*mawālī*), including his three personal servants Jaʿfar, Shuwayh, and Mukhtār.[41]

While the hagiographic biographies list among the primary motives for his migration Basra's climate of political instability and economic uncertainty and the spread of sectarian 'heresies' across Iraq,[42] less clear are his reasons for choosing Hadhramaut, a remote cultural and economic backwater that was rife with its own sectarian tensions. Some hagiographic ʿAlawī biographies have intimated that the choice of Hadhramaut was divinely inspired or revealed to him in the form of a dream vision, where the Imām was destined to fulfill a Godly *hijra* to carry on his family's Prophetic legacy of calling to God (*daʿwa*) and lay the foundations for a spiritual revival in this remote hinterland of the Arabian Peninsula.[43]

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[41] The Imām's paternal cousins Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, the progenitor of the Banū Ahdal tribe, and Aḥmad al-Qudaymī, the progenitor of the Banū Qudaymīs, both settled in the valleys of northern Yemen, the former in the Sihām valley and the latter in Surdud. Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir,* 109; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 1:33; al-Mashḥūr, *al-Muhājir,* 19–20; Khirid, *al-Ghurar,* 98–99.

[42] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 1:121-123.

[43] "*Wa kullu dhalika bi-amrin min al-Ḥaqqi wa-idhnin Rabbāniyya wa-ishāratin Raḥmaniyya.*" Khirid, *al-Ghurar,* 97. Khirid's (d. 960/1553) wording here is the *ipsissima verba* of the famous ʿAlawī scholar al-Shaykh ʿAlī b. Abū Bakr al-Saqqāf's (d. 895/1490) *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa,* 131. A contemporary disciple of the ʿAlawīs similarly writes, "Many historians and scholars have pointed out that the Imām's movements must have been by Divine command, as were those of his ancestor, the Prophet ﷺ and many other members of the House of Prophecy . . . Had the Imām's goal been security and abundance, he would have fared better in Egypt or India, both of which were fertile lands whose inhabitants loved and

Be that as it may, it seems that the primary motive for the Imām's migration to the valley has remained a source of some debate among modern Hadhrami historians. While many have continued to reiterate the traditional narrative highlighting the political instability and sectarian 'heresies' of Iraq as chief concerns, others have argued that the Imām's choice of Hadhramaut was a deliberate and conscious one that emanated from his desire to find a fertile land to propagate his family's Prophetic heritage; after all, Hadhramaut also had its share of heterodox groups, such as the Ibāḍīs.[44] The influential historian ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād, in the absence of surviving historical sources, posits the likely scenario that the Imām must have come into prior personal contacts with members of the Sunni Hadhrami community in their visits to Iraq, who must have informed him of the religio-political conditions of the valley and solicited his assistance directly in the absence of a strong and charismatic Sunni authority around whom they could rally to defend their community's interests against their sectarian rivals. Such contacts would have likely resulted in the establishment of formal allegiances and agreements beforehand in the lead up to the Imām's eventual relocation to the valley.[45]

Shortly after reaching Medina, the Imām and his retinue received word of the Qarmaṭī invasion and sacking of Mecca, where they put many pilgrims to the sword and infamously stole the black stone, which was only returned some twenty years later. He thus remained in Medina, performing the Hajj pilgrimage in the following year (318/930) before moving on to

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respected Ahl al-Bayt . . ." Mostafa al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley: Wadi Hadramawt & the Alawi Tradition*, 1st ed. (Guidance Media, 2013), 47.

[44] This latter view was primarily advanced by the *sayyid* historian ʿAbd Allah b. Ḥasan Balfaqīh (d. 1980) in his incomplete and unpublished monograph *Ṣubḥ al-Dayājir fī Tārīkh al-Muhājir*. al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 64–66.

[45] al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 67. As evidence of these prior contacts, al-Ḥaddād hints that the Imām's early decision to settle in the fortified village of Hajrayn was likely due to its being populated by the Jaʿāsim, a Sunni branch of the mostly Ibāḍī Banū Ṣadaf. *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 23; al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 1:159.

Hadhramaut.[46] Given the prevalent anti-ʿAlid sentiment among the Ibāḍīs, the Imām's first stop in the valley was at the Shīʿa village of al-Jubayl, after which he moved on to the elevated and fortified town of al-Hajrayn, where he bought a plantation of date palms and lived temporarily. After emancipating his slave Shuwayḥ and gifting him his land in al-Hajrayn, he moved westward and bought another piece of land in al-Ḥusayyisa, located between the two major Hadhrami towns of Sayʾūn and Tarīm, where he settled until his death in 345/956.[47] The town continued to flourish until it was destroyed by war in 839/1435.[48]

1.3. Imām ʿUbayd Allah and His Descendants in the Valley

While Imām al-Muhājir's older son Muḥammad and other members of his family stayed behind to look after his properties in Iraq, his son ʿAbd Allah (d. 383/993), who preferred to go by the diminutive ʿUbayd Allah, migrated with the Imām to the valley. Imām ʿUbayd Allah had three sons; two of them, Baṣrī and ʿAlawī, were the children of his first wife and paternal cousin Umm al-Banīn bt. Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā, while Jadīd was born from a second wife that he married in Hadhramaut after the passing of Umm al-Banīn.[49] Of these three siblings, the family lines of Banū Jadīd and Banū Baṣrī would die out by some time in the twelfth century, and thus all the surviving *sāda* of today are the descendants of ʿAlawī b. ʿUbayd Allah (d. 412/1021?), the eponymous progenitor of the Banū ʿAlawīs.[50]

The surviving biographical accounts on the early ʿAlawīs follow a familiar and nearly formulaic pattern, offering precious little detail on their socio-religious and intellectual context; after learning the Qurʾān at an early age, they would typically proceed to study the *ḥadīth* and

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[46] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:125; Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir*, 129.
[47] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 99.
[48] Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir*, 58, 111.
[49] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 460–463, 469–471.
[50] For more on the Banū Jadīd and Banū Baṣrīs, see Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 101–102, 147–163.

other works with their fathers before moving on to study with their uncles or other scholarly members of their family, with some of them travelling to further their studies across Yemen and the Hejaz. In addition to these journeys, the hagiographic accounts also briefly recount various spiritual states and saintly miracles (*karāmāt*) that many of these early figures came to be known for and the vast date plantations that they would inherit or purchase, which as their principal source of revenue were also used to finance their charitable projects and the construction of new mosques, wells, or *ḥawṭas*, autonomous settlements that functioned as sacred enclaves.[51]

As with many of the earliest ʿAlawīs, not much is known about Imām ʿUbayd Allah's life and learning. Khirid and al-Shillī seem to suggest that he was no stranger to Sufism, noting that he met and benefitted from the great Sufi master Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) in Mecca the same year of his travel for the Hajj pilgrimage in 377/987, studying with him his popular spiritual treatise *Qūt al-Qulūb*.[52] Following his father's death, Imām ʿUbayd Allah gifted his father's land of Ṣūḥ in al-Ḥusayyisa to his servant Jaʿfar and relocated with his family to the village of Sumal, some six miles distance from Tarīm, where he married his second wife who bore him his third son Jadīd. The Imām died in in the nearby village of Būr in 383/993.[53]

As for his son Imām ʿAlawī, the progenitor of the Banū ʿAlawīs, he was educated by his father and went on to study with the scholars of Mecca and Medina of his time. The biographies note his grandfather's pattern of generosity; the year he embarked upon the Hajj pilgrimage with his family, he is said to have taken along with him an additional eighty Hadhrami pilgrims of

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[51] For more on the *sāda's ḥawṭas*, see below.

[52] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 470; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:32. The printed edition of *al-Ghurar* erroneously dates the encounter with Abū Ṭālib al-Makki as occurring in 305AH.

[53] While the sources mention that he died Sumal, the more authoritative view among the *sāda* is that he is buried in Būr and that it is his son ʿAlawī who is in fact buried in Sumal. See Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ḥasāwī al-Shajjār, *Tathbīt al-Fuʾād bi-Dhikr Kalām Majālis al-Quṭb al-Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaddād*, ed. Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥaddād (Tarim, Yemen: Al-Ḥāwī Maqām al-Imām Ḥaddād, n.d.), 2:320; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:336.

meagre means, who were accommodated entirely at his expense for the entire duration of the pilgrimage. His brother Jadīd, who had accompanied him on the journey, was sent to Iraq after the completion of the Hajj to meet with his uncle and relatives and to secure his family's share of the annual yield from their family's plantations. Imām ʿAlawī passed away in Sumal *circa* 412/1021, leaving behind his only son, Imām Muḥammad.[54]

Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlawī was born in Bayt Jubayr and educated by his father and uncles Baṣrī and Jadīd. Very little is known about his life, other than that he was held to be, like his forefathers before him, an Imām of knowledge and repute. He passed away at the age of fifty-six in Bayt Jubayr in a location known as al-Ṣawmaʿa, earning him the title of 'Ṣāḥib al-Ṣawmaʿa,' where his grave continues to be visited today.[55] He left behind one son, Imām ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad, who was also born in Bayt Jubayr and whose mother was from the Banū Jadīd. Following closely in his forefathers' footsteps, he was known for his education and piety, taking on local students of his own. He also married a cousin from the Banū Jadīd, who bore him two sons and a daughter, ʿAlī, Sālim, and Fāṭima, and he died in Bayt Jubayr in 512/1118.[56]

1.4. The *Sāda* Move to Tarīm

The eldest of Imām ʿAlawī's sons, Imām ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī (d. *circa* 527 or 529/1135) was born and educated by his family in Bayt Jubayr, where he memorized the Qurʾān. He moved on to study *ḥadīth* with other scholars in the valley, and among the early *sāda*, he was famously known in the hagiographic biographies for his direct communion with the Prophet during his

[54] al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 135–137; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 472–474. Concerning his date of death, none of the consulted biographical works seem to offer a date, while al-Ḥāmid strangely ascribes 412 AH to Khirid's *al-Ghurar*, which is not found in the printed edition. al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:375.
[55] al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 143; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 167.
[56] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 477–478; al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 143–144.

ritual prayers, which for the ʿAlawī biographers was a mark of his high spiritual rank and accomplishment as a realized saint among his peers.[57]

By his time, Bayt Jubayr had become the established home of the *sāda*, though many of them would visit the larger city of Tarīm, a major scholarly center in the valley. Given the frequency of these visits and scholarly engagements, Imām ʿAlī, his brother Sālim, and their cousins were the first among the *sāda* to move to the city in 521/1127, during the reign of Fahd b. Aḥmad b. Qaḥṭān (d. 528/1134), retaining their former homes in Bayt Jubayr as an annual summer destination. The move to Tarīm marks a new chapter in Hadhrami history that witnesses the ʿAlawīs' gradual emergence from a period of relative isolation, where their Prophetic lineage, economic wealth, and greater exposure would eventually serve to consolidate their influence as a distinguished scholarly class of their own, bringing about a major religious and cultural revival to the city and its environs.[58]

Shortly after his move to Tarīm, Imām ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī bought a piece of land for some twenty-thousand dinars, which he planted with date palms and named 'Qasam' after his family's plantation in Basra, earning him the sobriquet 'Khāliʿ Qasam' (the sower of Qasam). He built a house at the plantation that would become an annual destination for the date gathering season. The land began to attract neighbouring settlers until it gradually grew into the village of Qasam, and it remained relatively autonomous and respected by the local political elite. It is also likely the earliest known mention of a '*ḥawṭa*' (sacred enclave) in relation to the ʿAlawīs in the

[57] See al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:230; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 479–480; al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 145–146. For his *karāma*, the hagiographic biographies indicate that the Prophet Muhammad would respond to the Imām's greeting during his *tashahhud* of the daily ritual prayers with the words, "*Wa ʿalayka as-salām yā Shaykh*!" al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 1:55-56.
[58] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:461-262; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:129.

biographical literature.[59] Imām ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī died *circa* 527 or 529/1135 and is buried in Tarīm's *sāda* cemetery of Zanbal, leaving behind three sons, ʿAlī, Ḥusayn, and Muḥammad.[60]

The most famous of Imām ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī's sons and the only one with surviving descendants was Imam Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ (d. 551 or 556/1161), a major early ʿAlawī figure whose scope of religious learning and influence, as we shall see, remains shrouded in some degree of mystery and debate among later historians. Like his father before him, Imām Muḥammad was known for his wealth that was generated from his properties, mostly from his date plantations in the fertile lands of Bayt Jubayr, which he used to feed many dependant families and fund other charitable projects. The Imām was also known for building the Āl Aḥmad mosque, which was named after the descendants of Imām al-Muhajir and was later renamed as Masjid Bā ʿAlawī in the early fourteenth century.[61] The mosque quickly became the major center of the ʿAlawīs' scholarly activity in Tarīm.

During Imām Muḥammad's time, Bayt Jubayr had served as a resting station on the caravan route to old Dhofar,[62] located at the harbour of Mirbāṭ to the east of the valley, and the

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[59] Al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:230-31; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:460-62. Khirid describes Qasam as a *ḥawṭa* of the Imām. *al-Ghurar*, 479-80. The *ḥawṭa* as a neutral and divinely protected sacred enclave, is a significant feature of the Hadhrami landscape and in later centuries becomes especially associated with the ʿAlawīs and their growing temporal role as neutral mediators and arbitrators of tribal conflicts in the valley. For more on the *ḥawṭa* and its associated function of the *manṣab*, see Serjeant, *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt,* 14–19; idem., "Haram and hawta, the sacred enclave in Arabia," in *Melanges Taha Ḥusein:* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1962), 41-58; Walter Dostal, "The Saints of Hadramawt," in *Shattering Tradition: Custom, Law, and the Individual in the Muslim Mediterranean*, ed. Walter Dostal and Wolfgang Kraus (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 233–253.

[60] Khirid notes his date of death as 522 AH, while Aḥmad b. Zayn al-Ḥabashī who relies heavily on Khirid, notes two conflicting dates (522 and 529 AH), and al-Shillī notes it as 527 AH. Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 169; al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 146; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:131.

[61] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:136. The mosque is located in the center of Tarīm in what came to be known as the ʿAlawī *ḥawṭa*.

[62] The old city of Dhofar was destroyed by its ruler Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥabūẓī (d. 628/1231), who relocated with the local population to his new capital of Dhofar, which he built *circa* 620/1223 some seventy kilometers to the west in modern day Salalah and came to be known as Dhofar al-Ḥabūẓī. al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 1:199. The region remains of historical significance today as the world's premiere exporter of frankincense.

Imām began applying his wealth, prestige and social clout to host many of the passing caravans and guarantee their safe passage to Dhofar. Imām Muḥammad would also visit Mirbāṭ frequently and came to be known as 'Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ' for his eventual settlement there during the final years of his life, where his shrine remains a popular destination.[63] He left behind four sons, ʿAlī, ʿAbd Allah, ʿAlawī and Aḥmad. Two of his sons, ʿAbd Allah and Aḥmad, produced no male heirs, and thus all the surviving progeny of the Banū ʿAlawīs are either the agnates of ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, the father of Imām Muḥammad 'al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam' (d. 653/1255) who founded the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭariqa*, or of his brother ʿAlawī, known as 'ʿAmm al-Faqīh.'[64]

The precise reasons for Imām Muḥammad's move to Mirbāṭ during the latter years of his life remain somewhat shrouded in mystery. It appears that the harbour was a significant economic and trading center, given its surrounding fertile lands and monsoon climate. The town was especially known for its abundant animal feed and its trade in horses,[65] and the Imām likely profited from this activity as a successful merchant. However, a curious mention from the biographical work *al-ʿIqd al-Nabawī wa-l-Sirr al-Muṣṭafawī* of the accomplished sixteenth-century ʿAlawī *sayyid* Shaykh[66] b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 990/1582) suggests that his migration to Mirbāṭ was primarily due to the political instability in Tarīm resulting from the Ibāḍīs' recurring invasions of the city and their attempts to overthrow its rulers of the Banū Qaḥṭān, which also resulted in the killings of members of its scholarly community.[67] On the other hand, the modern historian Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Shāṭirī suggests

[63] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:198-99; Khirid, *al-Gharar*, 172-174.
[64] Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī, known as 'al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam,' is the subject of Chapter 2.
[65] The harbour's name of Mirbāṭ derives from the frequent tying of the reigns (*ribāṭ al-khayl*) of its abundant horses. al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 58.
[66] 'Shaykh' is relatively common as a first name among the ʿAlawīs and is not to be confused here with the more common honorific prefixing many scholarly names. For more on this famous *sayyid* and his works, see Chapter 4.
[67] This explanation from al-ʿAydarūs's MS is noted in al-Ḥaddād, *ʿUqūd al-Almās*, 222.

that his move was primarily in response to local pressure from Tarīm's rulers, who were apprehensive about his influence and charisma among the local population.[68]

The precise role and influence of Imām Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ as a major scholar in Mirbāṭ is also a question of some heated debate, as we shall see below. Aside from this question, however, the Imām is also viewed by Knysh as a highly suspicious figure for the supposedly "severe chronological inconsistencies" surrounding his life and the alleged "desperate attempts to explain them away" by ʿAlawī historians, such as Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥāmid.[69] Knysh is alluding here to a couple of 'inconsistencies' noted by al-Ḥāmid in his analysis[70] of the major biographical work on the *sāda al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*: i) al-Shillī's claim that the Imām was born in Tarīm, which al-Ḥāmid holds to be highly improbable given that he was most likely born several years prior to the *sāda*'s move to Tarīm in 521/1127, and ii) the mention of his investiture with the Sufi *khirqa* by his father Imām ʿAlī Khāliʿ Qasam,[71] which according to al-Ḥāmid is a problematic statement given that the first known Sufis among the ʿAlawīs were Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ's grandsons Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī (d. 560/1252) and his famed cousin Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam (d. 653/1255)[72], the founder of the *sāda*'s Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa.*

With regards to the first claim, the mention of Tarīm as the city of Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ's birth is likely no more than a simple error, a frequent recurrence in our primary sources that is hardly a cause for serious concern.[73] As for Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ's investiture with the Sufi *khirqa* by his father, this is no 'chronological inconsistency' on al-Shillī's part but in fact reflects a more basic

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[68] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:304-305.
[69] Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 220.
[70] See *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:464-465.
[71] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:198.
[72] For more on this major founding figure of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*, see Chapter 2.
[73] Indeed, such errors relating to the proper identification of historical locations and the accurate dating of historical incidents abound in nearly all our primary sources and are routinely identified by later historians. For examples from this chapter alone, see notes 1, 52, 53, 60, and 92.

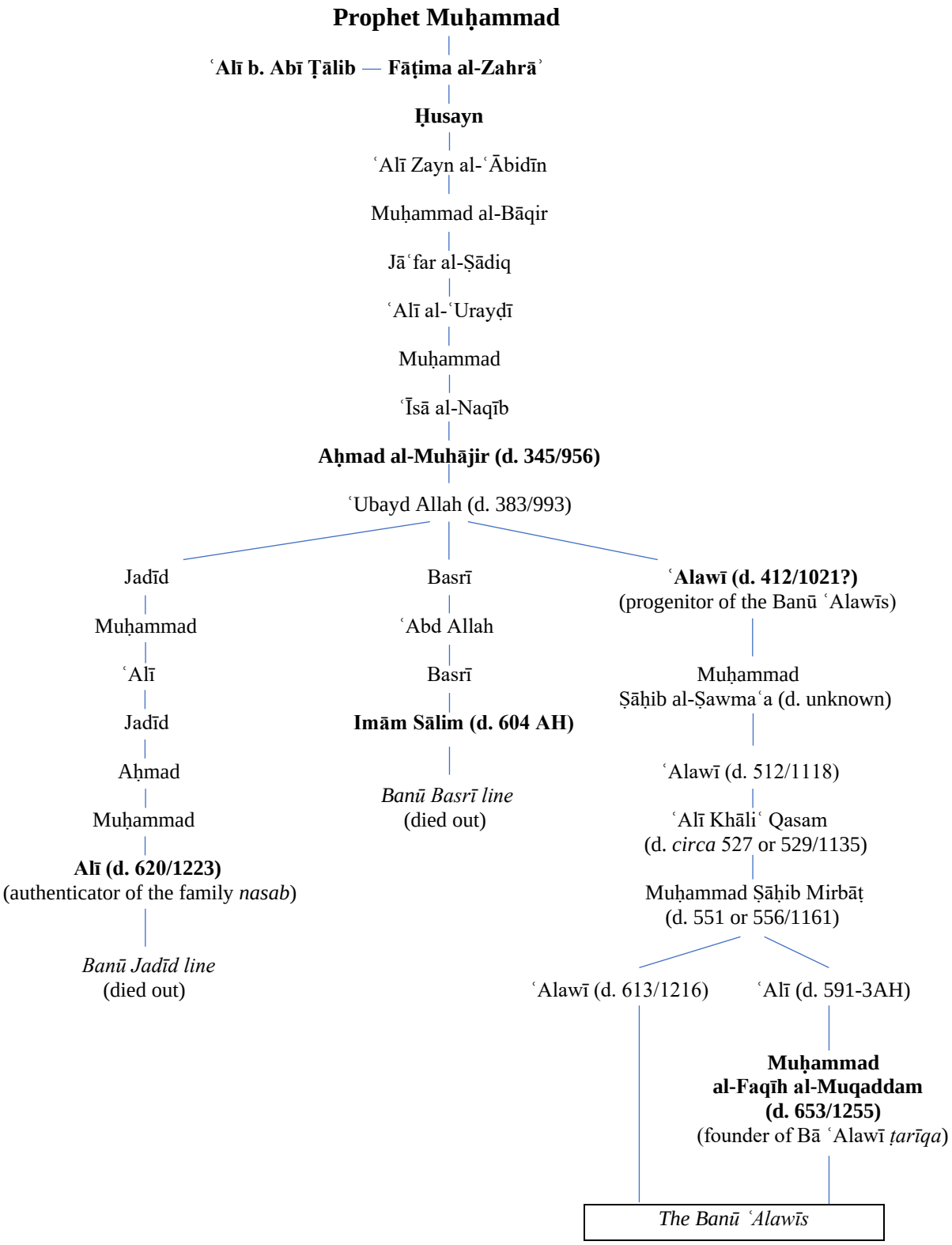

Figure 1: The Prophetic lineage (*nasab*) of the Banū ʿAlawīs.
Sources: *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy; al-Ghurar.*

oversight on the part of al-Ḥāmid. Here, al-Ḥāmid's conception of the *khirqa* is inextricably linked to the spiritual lineages of the Sufi *ṭarīqas*, which only began to emerge by some time in the twelfth century, whereas there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Sufi teachings were certainly an aspect of the *sāda's* early religious milieu, albeit perhaps in a more rudimentary form, well before the rise of the *ṭarīqas*.[74] However, according to the prevalent understanding of the *sāda* and that of many Sufi authorities, the investiture of the *khirqa* is believed to predate the *ṭarīqa* lineages and to have its origins in the practice of the Prophet Muḥammad and his Companions.

While the investiture of the *khirqa* was practiced before the emergence of organized Sufsm, it was to gain a renewed sense of significance and ceremonial importance with the emergence of the *ṭarīqas* in the twelfth century. This much is made clear by the celebrated fifteenth/sixteenth-century ʿAlawī saint Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508) in his famous treatise on the *khirqa*, *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf fī al-Taḥkīm al-Sharīf,* where he attempts to argue against his scholarly detractors for the historical origin of the practice with the Prophet Muhammad and Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, among other Companions, which continued to be transmitted through the spiritual lineages of Imām al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and the Ahl al-Bayt among Imām ʿAlī's descendants.[75]

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[74] This conceptual confusion is reflected in the different opinions surrounding which of the *sāda* was the first to officially embrace 'Sufism.' Al-Ḥāmid's mention of Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī (d. 650/1253) as the first Sufi in Hadhramaut is taken from Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 177. On the other hand, other historians like al-Shāṭirī hold this distinction to belong to al-Muhajir's son ʿUbayd Allah (d. 383/993) for his having studied with the renowned early Sufi authority Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī. *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 1:163.

[75] Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAdanī, *Dīwān al-ʿAdanī* and *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf fī al-Taḥkīm al-Sharīf*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Barakāt (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥāwī, 2011), 459-460ff. The work is published here as an addendum to the Imām's *Dīwān,* and each work is, henceforth, referenced separately. The investiture of the *khirqa* is an important formal component of a disciple's spiritual allegiance to his Sufi master, which is meant to reflect the original pledge of allegiance (*mubāyaʿa* or *bayʿa*) between the Prophet and his Companions. While the historical debate on its historical origins is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore, it suffices us to note that the *khirqa* was widely believed for the Sufis to have its origins prior to

Indeed, one of the distinguishing features of the Bāʿ Alawī Sufi lineage (*silsila*) is its consisting of a dual chain of transmission, the first of which is established on the basis of the *sāda's* genealogical descent (*nasab*) and precedes the second spiritual lineage that is established by the founder of the *ṭarīqa* Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam (d. 653/1255) via the major North African saint Abū Madyan Shuʿayb.[76] Thus, any reference to the *khirqa* predating the founder of the Bāʿ Alawī *ṭarīqa* is no more than an indication of its investiture on the basis of the *sāda's* genealogical *silsila* and, as such, may not be readily dismissed as a historical discrepancy.[77]

1.5. Were the Early *Sāda* Sunni Shāfiʿīs?

A major focus of the Hadhrami historiographical debates since the mid-twentieth century concerns the role of Aḥmad al-Muhājir and his progeny in the spread of the Sunni Ashʿarī creed and Shāfiʿī school in Hadhrmaut. Was al-Muhājir in fact a Sunni Shafiʿī, or was he an Imāmī Shīʿa, whose descendants would only later embrace Sunnism? What was the state of Sunnism and Islamic learning more generally prior to the migration of the *sāda*, and when did the Shāfiʿī school enter Yemen and Hadhramaut more specifically? Is it safe to say that the ʿAlawīs played the leading role in the spread of Shāfiʿī Sunnism in Hadhramaut and the eventual defeat of the Ibāḍīs? To be sure, the urgency of such questions and the debates that they have engendered are of academic interest not only for their historical value, but more importantly for what they betray

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the twelfth century, after which it became increasingly elaborated and integrated as a defining ritual feature of the *ṭarīqas* and the preservation of their *silsilas*. Elsewhere, al-Ḥāmid is well aware of the lengthy classical debates concerning the origins the of *khirqa* as dating back to Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and other Companions. See al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:730-735n1.

[76] See Chapter 2. These two *silsilas* are widely recorded in the *sāda*'s historical sources, where the *khirqa's* transmission from father to son predates its transmission through the *tarīqa*'s spiritual *silsila* from Abū Madyan Shuʿayb to al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam. See al-Saqqāf, *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa*, 208–211.

[77] Thus, for example, al-Faqīḥ al-Muqaddam's uncle, ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ (d. 613/1216), was similarly invested with the *khirqa* by his father. al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:209.

of modern socio-political developments in Hadhrami society and the emerging fault lines in the shaping of a modern Hadhrami identity. For our purposes here, the primary and secondary literature is more briefly discussed to draw some basic conclusions concerning this much debated area of tenth-century Hadhrami historiography.

The difficulty in addressing this question arises, as we have already seen, from the absence of adequate near-contemporary Hadhrami sources. The major biographical works, the earliest of which dates from the fifteenth century, are in general agreement that Aḥmad al-Muhājir was a Sunni Shāfiʿī , and they generally credit him and his immediate progeny almost exclusively with spreading the Sunni Ashʿarī creed and the Shāfiʿī school in Hadhramaut.[78] As the general narrative suggests, from his base in al-Ḥussayisa, and through his unparalleled generosity, charisma, Prophetic lineage, and scholarly preaching, Imām al-Muhājir was able to attract the loyalty of the surrounding Sunni tribes and launch a successful *daʿwa* campaign against the valley's Shīʿa and Ibāḍī populations, with some later historians even pointing to a momentous armed conflict between al-Muhājir's allies and the Ibāḍīs at the alleged desert plain of Baḥrān as an early decisive blow against their continued dominance in the valley.[79]

In addition to Imām al-Muhājir, his descendant Imām Muḥammad Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ is also noted as a particularly noteworthy figure who helped to spread the Shāfiʿī school in Mirbāṭ and the environs of Dhofar.[80] As for his scholarly influence in Tarīm, among the most famous students who are noted to have studied with him is Shaykh Sālim Bā Faḍl (d. 581/1185), a well-

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[78] " . . . *wa kulluhum Shāfiʿiyya Ashʿariyya ʿalā ʿaqāʾid ahl al-Kitāb wa-l-Sunna.*" Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 102. See also al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 32–33, 127–28.

[79] See Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir*, 59.

[80] The modern ʿAlawī historian Muḥammad al-Shāṭirī, in line with the dominant *sāda* narrative, compares Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ's role in his migration to Mirbāṭ to that of al-Muhajir before him. Al-Shāṭirī also credits him with the improvement of the political and economic relations between the Banū Qaḥṭān of Tarīm and the Āl Manjūh rulers of Mirbāt and al-Mihra. *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 1:192.

travelled and towering scholarly figure in the biographical literature who is said to have spent some forty years pursuing the Islamic sciences in Iraq.[81] Shaykh Sālim Bā Faḍl and his most prominent student Imām Sālim b. Baṣrī (d. 604/1208), the most famous descendant of the Banū Baṣrī branch of al-Muhājir's progeny, are especially noted for educating a generation of students in the valley and for their contribution to a Sunni revival in Hadhramaut, especially in the fields of *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and *ḥadīth.*[82]

To be sure these hagiographic and biographical accounts leave much to be desired, and several ʿAlawī and Hadhrami historians have raised serious doubts concerning the historicity of an armed conflict between al-Muhājir's forces and the Ibāḍīs.[83] Peskes contends that the spread of the Shāfiʿī school is unlikely to have been on account of the ʿAlawīs and that in the absence of earlier sources, it remains impossible to draw any definitive conclusions on the early *sāda*'s Sunnism and to accurately reconstruct the presence of Shāfiʿī institutions in Hadhramaut prior to sometime in the twelfth century, though it would be safe to assume that by the thirteenth century, it had become established as the dominant legal school in the valley. Additionally, like Knysh,

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[81] Al-Khaṭīb narrates the story that after decades of his absence, the Shaykh was presumed to be dead until some ʿAlawīs dreamed of his return with camel loads of gold, a foretelling of his impending return with a substantial library of all the Islamic works that he had amassed during his many years of study in Iraq. al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 1:63. Most of Shaykh Sālim's work, including his exegesis of the Qurʾān, has not survived, though his famous poem *al-Manẓūma al-Fikriyya* and several short counsels remain preserved. See the modern hagiographic biographical work on the Bā Faḍl family: Muḥammad b. ʿAwaḍ Bā Faḍl, *Ṣilat al-Ahl bi Tadwīn mā Tafarraqa min Manāqib Banī Faḍl* (Tarim: 1420 AH), 40-66.

[82] Imām Sālim b. Basrī appears to also have been well-travelled, having studied for years in Yemen and the Hejaz. The ʿAlawī biographies highlight him as the most gifted and influential scholar of Tarīm of his generation. "*Wa-ittafaqa ahl al-ʿaṣr ʿalā annahu min khiyārihim wa-aktharihim ʿilman wa ajallihim fahman . . .*" Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 148.

[83] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 1:149-150; Muḥammad Abī Bakr b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut fī Khidmat al-Madhhab al-Shāfiʿī* (Dār al-Fatḥ, 2009), 1:142-143. Such early accounts of major armed confrontations between the Ibāḍīs and Sunnis are highly suspicious and fraught with serious discrepancies. See, for instance, Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥāmid's detailed take on the severe historical discrepancies surrounding the highly suspicious figure of Ibrāhim al-Ḥaḍramī al-Ibāḍī and his alleged confrontations with the Sunnis of Hadhramaut, a mysterious figure who is nowhere to be mentioned in the major Hadhrami historical sources. al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 1:267-272n1.

she also notes the plausibility of the *sāda*'s earlier Shīʿa origins.[84] For Knysh, on the other hand, the prevailing *sāda*-oriented narrative is put to serious doubt by other non-Hadhrami historical accounts whose authors had no "genealogical axes to grind" and which appear to attribute the rise of the Shāfiʿī school in Hadhramaut to the renowned non-ʿAlawī jurist Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Qalʿī (d. 577/1181?).[85] Serjeant, who is generally more sympathetic to the *sāda*, also seems to agree with Knysh's general assessment that the dominant biographical narrative could be "little else than a projection of later circumstances into the past."[86]

Despite the overall skepticism, one can argue that there is enough material evidence to address this tenacious question and illuminate a basic outline of the early *sāda*'s sectarian identity and legal affiliation.[87] For instance, there are in fact sufficient non-Hadhrami historical sources to allow us to construct a reasonable picture of the rise of the Shāfiʿī school in Hadhramaut, the most important of which are Ibn Samra's (d. 587/1191) *Ṭabaqāt Fuqaḥāʾ al-Yaman*, likely the earliest work of its kind on the jurists of Yemen, and al-Jundī's (d. 732/1332) *al-Sulūk fī Ṭabqāt al-ʿUlamāʾ wa-l-Mulūk*. This much is clear from the scholarship of the contemporary Hadhrami historian Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr Bā Ḍhīb in his unparalleled treatment of this topic in his *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut fi Khidmat al-Madhhab al-Shāfiʿī.*

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[84] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs,* 28-29; "Der Heilige," 54-55.

[85] Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 219-220. Here Knysh is referring to the account of this important jurist's introduction of the Shāfiʿī school to Dhofar and Hadhramaut narrated by a certain Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Bā Ṭaḥan, which is addressed below. For Bā Ṭaḥan's account, see al-Ḥaddād, *ʿUqūd al-Almās,* 225-226. See also Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Jundī, *al-Sulūk fī Ṭabaqāt al-ʿUlamāʾ wa-l-Mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥiwālī (Sanaa: Maktabat al-Irshād, 1993-1995), 1:453–455.

[86] Serjeant, *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt,* 8–9.

[87] It suffices us to note here that the modern *sāda's* positions are far less monolithic than we are led to believe, displaying a range of opinions, from the critical and highly nuanced to the partisan and the polemical. Indeed, at least two of the ʿAlawīs' leading historians, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUbayd Allah al-Saqqāf and Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥāmid, were of the opinion that Imām al-Muhajir was an 'Imāmī,' a view which al-Ḥāmid also attributes to the brother (ʿAbd Allah) of the pre-eminent modern historian ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād. al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 1:323-325. For a helpful summary of their varied takes on this question, see Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut,* 1:251-279.

Through his meticulous analysis of the historical sources, which includes a large number of early works and manuscripts, Bā Dhīb concludes that the Shāfiʿī school only made its first humble appearance in Yemen by the beginnings of the tenth century and that the dominant Sunni legal school during this early period was in fact the Ḥanafī school, with a considerable Mālikī minority presence.[88]

Bā Dhīb builds on existing secondary scholarship and his own findings to outline three historical phases for the emergence and spread of the Shāfiʿī school in Yemen: i) a formative stage marked by the school's initial appearance with minimal scholarly activity (307-400 AH), ii) an intermediate stage that witnesses the migration of more prominent Shāfiʿī jurists to Yemen (401-515 AH), and iii) the final stage of its consolidation as the country's dominant Sunni school (515-600 AH).[89] More importantly for our purposes, as Bā Dhīb's exhaustive survey of Hadhramaut's Shāfiʿī scholarship across these three historical phases reveals, it is not until the final stage of the school's consolidation in the twelfth century, that we have any recorded mentions of Shāfiʿī teachings reaching Hadhramaut, which may be largely attributed to the efforts of two notable jurists in particular – Zayd al-Yāfiʿī (d. 515/1121), who was the first to introduce the legal works of Abū Isḥāq al-Shirāzī to Yemen and who had Hadhrami students, and the accomplished Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Qalʿī (d. 577/1181?), whose fame and teachings had a more lasting legacy on the legal scholarship of Hadhramaut, especially in Tarīm.[90]

Concerning the immediate question of Imām al-Muhājir's Shāfiʿī affiliation, Bā Dhīb's analysis of the Shāfiʿī *ṭabaqāt* works of al-Subkī (d. 771/1369) and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba (d.

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[88] See ʿUmar b. ʿAlī Ibn Samra, *Ṭabaqāt Fuqahāʾ al-Yaman*, ed. Fuʾād Sayyid (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, reprint of 1957 Cairo edition), 74, 79; al-Jundī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:149.
[89] Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:194-243. Bā Dhīb is also building on the scholarship of ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād, among others, to draw his conclusions, who similarly displays a clear mastery of the historical sources on Hadhramaut's early legal context. See al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 38–42.
[90] For more on these two figures, see Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:214-416, 230–243.

851/1448) focusing on the ninth and tenth centuries concludes that Basra was an insignificant center of Shāfiʿī learning during this early period, in contrast to the other major centers of Baghdād, Khurasān, and Egypt. This finding renders the likelihood that Aḥmad al-Muhājir became affiliated with the Shāfiʿī school in Basra as highly improbable. As for the claim of Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ's role in bringing the Shāfiʿī school to Dhofar, the answer remains inconclusive. For Knysh, this popular claim is flatly discredited by an opposing account from the Dhofari scholar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Bā Ṭaḥan concerning al-Qalʿī's introduction of Shāfiʿism to Dhofar and Hadhramaut.[91] Here, he dismisses out of hand ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād's detailed and lengthy historiographical analysis of apparent discrepancies between aspects of Bā Ṭaḥan's account and other historical sources; al-Ḥaddād's meticulous analysis of this account consists of no less than eighteen arguments raising major points of contention surrounding al-Qalʿī's obscure origins, the conditions of his entry into Dhofar, the wide discrepancies among historians concerning the dating of his death, and even Bā Taḥan's possible anti-*sāda* leanings.[92] Be that as it may, while it remains unclear whether Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ was in fact a Shāfiʿi precursor to al-Qalʿī in Mirbāṭ, Bā Dhīb's findings nonetheless appear to conclusively establish that through his prolific and skilled scholarship, al-Qalʿī did begin to attract an unparalleled juristic influence over Tarīm's scholarly community since the second half of the twelfth century, a view that accords quite well with Peskes's cautious observation that by some time in the thirteenth century, the Shāfiʿī school had dominated the valley.[93] One can thus safely conclude that al-Qalʿī played the more pivotal role in the consolidation of the Shāfiʿī school in Hadhramaut.

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[91] See note 85 above.
[92] al-Ḥaddād, *ʿUqūd al-Almās*, 226–243. On the wide range of disagreement concerning the date of al-Qalʿī's death, with some dating it as late as 630 AH, see Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:232-233.
[93] Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:238-243; Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs*, 28–29.

As for Imām al-Muhajir's supposedly Ashʿarī Sunni creed, it is known that though Imām al-Ashʿarī was a contemporary of al-Muhājir, he did not disassociate from the Muʿtazila and articulate his own theological doctrine till the beginnings of the tenth century, and his school did not begin to spread to other Muslim lands till the end of that century, with no known recorded mentions of its spread to Yemen prior to the twelfth century.[94] Indeed, as the contemporary historian ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad al-Ḥabshī observes, Yemeni Sunnism had mostly been associated with Ibn Ḥanbal's creed, and the first known scholarly altercation between them and the Ashʿarīs did not occur until the fourteenth century.[95]

Given the absence of supporting evidence to indicate that Aḥmad al-Muhājir was an Ashʿarī Shāfiʿī, some Hadhrami and ʿAlawī historians, have argued that he was more likely an 'Imāmī' in orientation. However, it is important to note here that the majority of ʿAlawī scholars who hold this opinion do not intend by it a direct association with Twelver Shīʿism. Instead, the terms 'Shīʿa' or 'Imāmī' are taken more loosely by them to signify a general fidelity or loyalty to the Ahl al-Bayt and a preference for the legal opinions of their forefathers (*madhhab ʾābāʾihim*), who were most likely viewed as independent jurists on legal questions.[96] In contrast to this alternative view, Bā Dhīb concludes with a slightly different reading that Imām al-Muhājir was neither a Shāfiʿī nor an Imāmī but merely a Sunni *sayyid* with a preference for the opinions of his forefathers on legal matters.[97] Given that the formulation of Twelver Shīʿī doctrine had already been established with the Lesser Occultation (*al-ghayba al-ṣughrā*) of the Twelfth Imam in

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[94] Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:160-162.
[95] ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥabshī, *Ḥayāt al-Adab al-Yamanī fī 'Aṣr Banī Rasūl*, 2nd ed. (Sanaa: Manshūrāt Wizārat al-Iʿlām wa-l-Thaqāfa, 1980), 55.
[96] From among the *sāda* holding this position, ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. ʿUbayd Allah al-Saqqāf is most emphatic in his dissociation of the Banū ʿAlawīs' 'Imāmiyya' from that of the Twelver Shīʿa and some of their more controversial anti-Sunni doctrines and practices. For an analysis of his peculiar definition of their 'Imāmī' orientation, see Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:264-269.
[97] Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:277.

260/874, one cannot conclusively rule out the possibility of a Shīʿa orientation among the early *sāda*, and given that this was a relatively early formative period, the existence of a level of hybridity and fluidity in their sectarian and legal affiliation cannot be equally ruled out.

Conclusion

The origins of the Banū ʿAlawī *sāda* can be traced back to the momentous migration (*hijra*) of the Ḥusaynī *sayyid* Imām Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā al-Muhājir (d. 345/956), along with a large contingent of family, relatives, and servants, from his native Basra in Iraq to Hadhramaut *circa* 317/929. While the motives surrounding his choice of settlement in this remote hinterland of the Arabian Peninsula are not fully clear, the political upheavals and Zanj Rebellion endured under the ʿAbbāsids in Iraq, in addition to growing sectarian tensions, Basra's changing economic fortunes, and the likely persecution of members of the Ahl al-Bayt, appear to have contributed to his decision to migrate. As for the Imām's choice of Hadhramaut, a region that was riddled with its own sectarian tensions, the reasons seem less clear. While the traditional ʿAlawī biographies highlight his desire to start anew and spread his family's spiritual tradition to a new part of the Islamic world, the modern historian ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād points to his possible earlier contacts with members of the valley's Sunni minority seeking a strong and charismatic leader around whom they could rally to defend their community's interests against their sectarian rivals in Hadhramaut.

This chapter has also presented a historical survey of the turbulent socio-political, economic, and religious context of premodern Yemen and Hadhramaut, so as to better contextualize the *sāda*'s settlement and early activities in the valley. The medieval Muslim political history of Yemen was mostly characterized by rivaling polities that were divided along sectarian lines and remained locked in active competition with one another for political power

and survival. Aside from the Zaydī Imāms to the north, Yemen's early premodern history witnessed the emergence of relatively powerful local Sunni dynasties, such as the Ziyādids and Najāḥids, who had succeeded the earlier Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid presence in the region. While their political power remained mostly centralized in the highlands of western Yemen, it appears that these early dynasties' rule over the remote, mostly rural, and arid Hadhrami interior had remained mostly nominal.

By the time of Imām al-Muhājir's arrival in the early fourth/tenth century, Hadhramaut had already become a major religious and political center for the Ibāḍīs, whose stronghold over the valley would only begin to wane following the conquest of Hadhramaut in 455/1063 by the ambitious Ismāʿīlī leader Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ṣulayhī (d. 459/1067), until they were finally expelled from their last major religious stronghold, the Khawqa mosque of Shibām in 591/1195. Having pledged his allegiance to the Fāṭimids in Egypt, al-Ṣulayḥī succeeded in establishing the Ṣulayḥid dynasty, where he proceeded to make Sanaa his capital and to conquer Hadhramaut, thus unifying Yemen for the first time in its history in 455/1063.

Following the Ṣulayḥid queen Arwā's death in 532/1138, political rule would once again fall into the hands of competing petty states, due to emerging internal schisms within the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa,* until the dramatic arrival of the Sunni Ayyūbids in 569/1173, marking the beginnings of a new chapter in Yemen's political and religious history. As for Hadhramaut, the Ṣulayḥids' rule over the valley remained short-lived, and the more significant political development was the decisive political defeat of the Ibāḍī movement, which created an environment that would allow for the Sunnis and ʿAlawīs to flourish unhindered by the presence of stronger sectarian rivals. Hadhramaut thus witnessed the return of its traditional ruling families in Tarīm, Shibām, and al-

Shiḥr, a fragile political order that would prevail until the violent invasion of the Ayyūbid governer ʿUthmān al-Zanjīlī in 575/1180.

Concerning al-Muhājir's settlement in Hadhramaut in the early fourth/tenth century, a recurring concern for historians has been the absence of near-contemporaneous historical materials to draw a definitive account of the *sāda*'s early history and activities in the valley. Aside from the potential biases of the *sādas*' own accounts in their traditional hagiographic biographies, scholars like Knysh and Peskes have sought to question the ʿAlawīs' claimed Prophetic ancestry and even the historicity of Imām al-Muhājir. These concerns are largely overstated since as, as we have seen, one need not solely rely on the *sādas*' own accounts, as other corroborating non-Hadhrami sources do in fact exist; we have seen, for example, a trace of al-Muhājir's correspondence with al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdadī's (d. 463/1071) famous history. More importantly, thanks to renewed debates on the soundness of their Prophetic lineage, modern ʿAlawī historians have sought to provide exhaustive lists of the non-Hadhrami genealogical works (*ansāb*) of major early genealogists on the Ahl al-Bayt, the earliest of which date back to the fourth/tenth century and the majority of which list the progeny of Imām Ḥusayn up to al-Muhājir's generation or that of his children, with a few making direct mention of Imām al-Muhājir's descendants in Hadhramaut.

Knysh has also raised doubts about perceived chronological inconsistencies in the traditional biographies surrounding the major early figure of Muḥammad Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ (d. 551 or 556/1161). These more specifically relate to the improbable claim of his birth in the city of Tarīm, given that he was most likely born several years prior to the *sāda*'s move to the city in 521/1127, and the claim of his investiture with the Sufi *khirqa* by his father, Imām ʿAlī Khāliʿ Qasam, which Knysh considers highly unlikely, given that the first known Sufis among the

ʿAlawīs were the Imām's grandsons Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī (d. 560/1252) and his famed cousin al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam (d. 653/1255), the founder of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa.* Both of these concerns are once again overstated. The dating of Ṣāhib Mirbāṭ's birth is likely no more than a simple dating error, one of many similar errors in our primary sources, which need not be ascribed to ulterior motives or agendas, while the Imām's investiture with the Sufi *khirqa*, as we have seen, is readily explained by the *sāda*'s unique dual *silsila* (see Chapter 2), in which their genealogical lineage naturally predates their *ṭarīqa*'s spiritual lineage introduced by Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ's grandson al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam.

Finally, this chapter has also surveyed the intractable and acrimonious historiographical debates surrounding the early *sāda*'s religious identity as Sunni Ashʿarīs, their possible Shīʿa origins in Iraq, and the extent of their role in the spread and consolidation of the Shāfiʿī school in Hadhramaut. Here I have attempted to argue that, once again, while much of the *sāda*'s early history remains vague in the absence of near-contemporaneous historical sources, there is enough material for us to be able to reconstruct a more accurate account of their early religious identity in the valley. Drawing upon Muḥammad Bā Dhīb's findings in his exhaustive and meticulous survey of the historical evolution of the Shāfiʿī school in Hadhramaut, it can be safely argued that it is not until the twelfth century, that we have any recorded mentions of Shāfiʿī teachings reaching Hadhramaut, which may be largely attributed to the efforts of the two notable jurists Zayd al-Yāfiʿī (d. 515/1121) and Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Qalʿī (d. 577/1181?), the latter of whom had a more lasting legacy on the legal scholarship of Hadhramaut, especially in Tarīm. Bā Dhīb's analysis also reveals that Basra was not a significant center of Shāfiʿī learning in the early fourth/tenth century, rendering Imām al-Muhājir's Shāfiʿī affiliation in the sources as highly unlikely. As for his Ashʿarī creed, it is known that Imām al-Ashʿarī did not begin to articulate his

own theological doctrine till the beginnings of the tenth century, and there are no recorded mentions of its spread to Yemen prior to the twelfth century. This puts the Imām's Ashʿarī affiliation into question, as Yemeni Sunnism had mostly been associated with Ibn Ḥanbal's creed, and the first known scholarly altercation between them and the Ashʿarīs did not occur until the fourteenth century. These general findings lead Bā Dhīb to conclude that Imām al-Muhājir was most likely a Sunni *sayyid* with a preference for the opinions of his forefathers on legal matters.

As a final word of caution against our tendency to over-reify the sectarian and legal identities of such an early formative period, if the biographical accounts concerning the early *sāda's* travels and learning are to be accepted as more or less factual, then the indications of their free mixing and learning with the Sunni scholarly elite of their day (e.g. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Shaykh Sālim Bā Faḍl etc.) would at the very least point to a malleable sectarian and legal identity that openly embraced and was in turn primarily influenced by the Sunni scholarship of its time and its immediate social context.

- 2 -

Al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam and the Emergence of *Ṭarīqa* Sufism

'Al-Ustādh al-Aʿẓam' Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 653/1255), more popularly known as 'al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam,' is the towering Sufi personality of thirteenth-century Hadhramaut, and his lifetime coincides with a flourishing of Sufism across Yemen and the emergence of other major Sufi figures, such as the prolific Ḥasanī *sayyid* and scholar Aḥmad b. ʿAlwān (d. 655/1266) and his famous contemporary Abū al-Ghayth b. Jamīl (d. 651/1253), who were more influential in western Yemen and the Tihāma.[1] Al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's introduction of *ṭarīqa* Sufism in Hadhramaut marks a new era for the spiritual and religious life of the valley. The Imām's life and spiritual legacy is all the more historically eventful given the major political and social developments that were to unfold during his lifetime with the momentous arrival of the Ayyūbids who, along with their Rasūlid and Ṭāhirid successors, helped usher in a new political era and played an instrumental role in the flourishing of organized Sufism and the further integration of Yemen's intellectual and religious life with the regional trends and developments of the wider Islamicate world.

More importantly, the Imām also emerges on the stage of Hadhrami history during a crucial period within the wider history of Islamic mysticism, where over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the decentralized Sufi praxis of the formative period became gradually eclipsed by an 'institutionalizing drive' across diverse Muslim lands. This organizational development was primarily guided by the emergence of several major charismatic Sufi masters

[1] According to Muhammad Ali Aziz, these three Sufis are "the three most celebrated figures of Yemen's religious and cultural history." Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 36.

who became eponymously associated with the establishment of the earliest Sufi *ṭarīqa* lineages.[2] The Imām's role and significance can thus be best understood as a contribution to these wider regional developments.

2.1. An Age of Sufi Brotherhoods

Though a rich body of studies exists on the intellectual history of Sufism generally, the processes behind the institutionalizing drive that led to the rise of the earliest *ṭarīqa* lineages remain poorly understood. This lacuna can be attributed to several factors, such as an over-reliance on the now largely abandoned model of classicism and decline, the tendency to privilege an ahistorical reading of Sufism's mystical and philosophic content that fails to account for the broader societal context and historical patterns informing the evolution of Sufi thought and praxis, and the need for more studies examining the key Sufi personalities that were involved in this institutionalizing process.[3]

J. Spencer Trimingham's three-tiered schema on the evolution and spread of the Sufi orders has been heavily critiqued by more recent scholarship for its reliance on the Orientalist paradigm of classicism and decline. As Nile Green observes, the dominant view that associates the 'cult of saints' with a later period of 'decline' that is marked by the gradual shift from 'mysticism' to 'superstition' is increasingly being put to rest, as new research continues to challenge the mystic/saint dichotomy and the overall theory of decline.[4] Scott Kugle also takes

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[2] Major examples include ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), Aḥmad al-Rifāʿī (d. 578/1182), and ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) in Iraq, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 617/1220) in Transoxiana, Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī (d. 633/1236) in India, and Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) in North Africa. Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 1.

[3] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 1–2. For some examples of older scholarship addressing the rise of the *ṭarīqās*, see Anne Marie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 231, 239; A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1950), 84-92, 119-133; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 150-166.

[4] Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 92.

issue with the "distorting interplay between Protestant and Catholic preconceptions" in Trimingham's conceptualization of Sufi 'sainthood;' while the Protestant conception tends to reduce the saint to an individual seeker or 'mystic,' the Catholic conception, by contrast, prefers to situate such religious authority figures within their communal and social roles, reducing them to the 'cult of saints.' The Christian bias reflected in this either/or dichotomy, means that Trimingham fails to "articulate a theoretical position that makes sense of saints as figures of religious leadership and social importance."[5]

Aside from Trimingham, the other influential standard account on the rise of the *ṭarīqas* is that of Hodgson in his classic *The Venture of Islam*. For Hodgson, the rise of the Sufi orders was the culmination of a natural synthesis between the community-oriented legalism of the scholarly class and the more ascetic modes of religiosity characterizing the High Caliphal Period (692-945 AD). Here, he helpfully identifies some of the mechanisms and 'psycho-social' causes that allowed for the successful popularization of this synthesis and its new institutional forms; these include the mystical orientation's accommodation of other elements of religious life that were mostly neglected by a heavy-handed 'kerygmatic moralism,' its ability to accommodate the ordinary sphere of human activity, and its relevance as a vehicle for a socially conscious activism that it inherited from the populist outlook of the Ḥadīth Folk. These factors, in addition to the Sufi masters' open orientation that was predicated on a greater tolerance and sensitivity to socio-cultural diversity, gave the Sufi tradition an edge over other forms of religiosity, and when

[5] Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 31. For other critiques of Trimingham, see Frederick de Jong, Review of *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, in the Journal of Semitic Studies 12, no. 2 (1972): 279-285; Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 249-250; Carl Ernst and Bruce Laurence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Pargrave, 2002), 11-13.

combined with its new institutional forms, allowed for the tradition to serve as the ideal vehicle for a much wider public outreach.[6]

Though Hodgson's account continues to remain informative, it is nonetheless subject to further refinement. As Erik S. Ohlander observes, both Trimingham and Hodgson's accounts overlook a number of important forces that were instrumental to the rise of the *ṭarīqa* lineages and their historical endurance, perhaps most important among them being the systematic patronage and institutional support of Muslim rulers for Sufi masters and their brotherhoods.[7] Aside from these standard accounts, Nile Green offers a nuanced analysis of the broad historical forces and diverse processes that helped consolidate the successful rise and influence of the *ṭarīqas* between 1100 and 1500, a period in which Sufi leaders became the "social and intellectual linchpins" of the vast and diverse geographical expanse between Morocco and Bengal and their communities played a crucial role in the conversion of the frontier regions' nomadic and cultivator groups to Islam.[8]

Green's account of this period pays careful attention to the crucial element of political patronage and the alliances forged between the scholarly and ruling classes, taking note of the deliberate process of Sunnification that was launched under the Ayyūbids following the fall of the Fāṭimids in 567/1171 and the intellectual and institutional syntheses that saw the development of Sufism as a 'science' alongside the curricula of the *madrasas* and *khanqahs* within the expanding territories of the Saljuqs between Anatolia and Central Asia, a process that was encapsulated by the illustrious career of 'Ḥujjat al-Islām' Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). More importantly, his analysis also identifies four key complementary processes via

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[6] For Hodgson's full account, see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 2:201-254.
[7] Ohlander, *Sufism in an Age of Transition*, 6.
[8] For his full account, see Green, *Sufism*, Chapter 2.

which organized Sufism rose to prominence as a central feature of the newly emerging social and political order, namely the processes of 'diversification,' 'institutionalization,' 'sanctification,' and 'vernacularization.'

The 'diversification' of Sufi doctrines, where the Sufis' literary reach was expanded beyond Arabic, refers to the prodigious growth of Sufi literature through the contributions of such towering figures as al-Suhrawardī, Ibn ʿArabī and Rumi, among others, whose ideas greatly influenced the future of Sufi thought and doctrine.[9] This was further complemented by the process of 'institutionalization,' where the Sufi *ṭarīqas* gradually came to serve as ideal vehicles for the reproduction and standardization of tradition. As multi-generational communal undertakings, the brotherhoods operated on the concrete bonds of connectivity, where Sufi lodges and shrines acted as the 'hardware of Sunnification,' and as 'conceptual communities,' fellowship and belonging were also shaped by the power of memory and imagination, an adaptation that was well-suited for bridging the larger distances of time and space.[10]

As for the process of 'sanctification,' while the notion of *wilāya* (sainthood) had already been developed in Sufi circles, by 1100 we see a more "multi-layered process of sanctification which involved not only a theoretical model of Friendship but a much fuller apparatus of shrine building, hagiographical writing, and pilgrimage making," such that "what was previously an idea among the erudite developed into places, stories, and actions among the masses."[11] While

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[9] While Ibn ʿArabī's complex insights on the nature of 'being' (*wujūd*) established him as Sufism's greatest classical theorizer, Rumi, on the other hand, with his emphasis on the centrality of love, was its greatest poet. Green, *Sufism*, 73–81.

[10] The success of the Sufi lodges and their associated shrines in time helped to render permanent the policies of the Saljuk, Ayyūbid and Mamlūk rulers. Their newly emerging corporate identity was also in part a consolidation and replication of the 'Nishapur model' of the Sufi path, with its distinctive branding through an association with a particular eponym and his teachings. Green, *Sufism*, 81–91.

[11] Green, *Sufism*, 92–103. As Green points out, Trimingham's popular view on Sufism's gradual decline from 'mysticism' to 'superstition' is undermined by new research indicating that the veneration of shrines, relics, and religious figures has a much earlier history in Islam. See L. Halevi, *Muhammad's*

this process was able to attract a mass following based on power and respect, it was through the process of 'vernacularization' that the brotherhoods' Sufi teachings found their greater appeal and accessibility, especially among the less educated masses and in rural populations. Thus, the translation and popularization of Sufi ideas in Arabic into the regional languages east of Iraq, especially in Persian through the major poetic works such as Rumi's *Mathnawī* and Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār's *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* proved to be tremendously influential. Such didactic and lyrical poems successfully drew upon local folklore and idiom as a form of 'edifying entertainment.'[12]

With these wider regional trends and dynamic processes in mind, I now turn to a summary of the major political, institutional, and socio-religious developments in Yemen under the Ayyūbids (r. 569-626/1173-1229) and their Rasūlid (r. 626-858/1229-1454) and Ṭāhirid (r. 858-945/1454-1538) successors in western Yemen, in addition to a survey of the Āl-Yamānīs' turbulent rule in Tarīm (r. 612-926/1215-1520), so as to better appreciate al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's historical moment and the socio-political context informing the rise and early evolution of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*.

2.2. The Ayyūbid Dynasty

The Ayyūbid conquest of 569/1173 brought in sweeping political, institutional, and economic changes to a religiously and politically divided Yemen, which were for the most part successfully continued under the remarkable reign of their Rasūlid lieutenants (r. 626-858/1229-1454), ushering in a new period of relative stability and prosperity and a concomitant flourishing of cultural, religious, and intellectual activity. In his insightful study of Badr al-Dīn al-

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Grave: Death Rites and the Making of Islamic Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); C. Robinson, "Prophecy and Holy Men in Early Islam," in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, eds. J. Howard-Johnson and P. A. Hayward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 241-262.

[12] Green, *Sufism*, 103–112.

Hamdānī's *Kitāb al-Simṭ al-Ghālī al-Thamīn* on the Ayyūbid and Rasūlid dynasties in Yemen, G. R. Smith identifies several important motives for the Ayyūbid conquest, including[13]: Saladin's (d. 589/1193) desire to rid Yemen of the violent rule of ʿAbd al-Nabī of the Banū Mahdīs[14], his desire to "secure the southern end of the Red Sea for economic and strategic reasons," the need to ease the great financial burden imposed by a large standing army in Egypt, the search for an alternative refuge for the Ayyūbid house should their political fortunes change, and Saladin's intention to find a suitable territory for Tūrānshāh (d. 557/1180) to govern, as all the other fiefs under Ayyūbid control had been distributed between his other brothers.

Tūrānshāh led a successful conquest in Yemen until his return to Egypt in 571/1174, after which the country was plunged back into chaos under his Mamlūk governors. Among his appointed governors was ʿUthmān al-Zanjīlī, who presided over Aden and its environs. Al-Zanjīlī invaded Hadhramaut in 575/1178 in a violent takeover that saw the brief overthrow of its three ruling emirates in Tarīm, Shibām, and al-Shiḥr, where he imprisoned some members of their ruling families, while killing others. After violently securing the valley and killing a large number of civilians, including a number of Tarīm's scholarly elite, al-Zanjīlī returned to Aden and sent his brother Suwayd to rule over his newly gained province in the following year. Suwayd's similarly violent and chaotic rule was short-lived, however, as the tribes of Hadhramaut were able to unite and mount a successful uprising under the leadership of ʿAbd al-Bāqī b. Aḥmad b. Rāshid al-Daʿār of Shibām, defeating his forces in the same year, and by 577/1180, Tarīm had returned to the rule of the Banū Qaḥṭān, while al-Shiḥr returned soon after to the rule of Āl Fāris.[15]

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[13] Smith, *The Ayyūbids and Early Rasūlids: Vol. 2,* 31-47.
[14] For more on the Khārijī oriented figure of ʿAbd al-Nabī and the exceptionally violent and short-lived rule of the Banū Mahdīs, see Smith, *The Ayyūbids and Early Rasūlids: Vol. 2*, 56-62.
[15] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:430-432; Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 4:307; *Tārīkh Shanbal*, 48.

In the meantime, given the deteriorating political situation under Tūrānshāh's governors, Saladin had dispatched another army to restore stability under the leadership of Ṣafī al-Dīn Khiṭilbā. Though he managed to briefly regain control of the country, he fell ill and died soon after, and Saladin was thus forced to send in his brother Ṭughtakīn b. Ayyūb (d. 593/1197), known as al-ʿAzīz, who was able to successfully reassert Ayyūbid control over the country. After eliminating his rivals and restoring stability, Ṭughtakīn was also able to establish a new taxation system, profiting greatly from the annual revenues of his conquered lands.

Ṭughtakīn is described in the medieval sources as a just ruler who dug wells and helped boost the country's agricultural production, while restoring a measure of justice, even against the abuses of his own soldiers.[16] While he attempted to capture his rogue governor ʿUthmān al-Zanjīlī for his violent excesses in Hadhramaut, al-Zanjīlī managed to escape back to Damascus unscathed. Ṭughtakīn thus entered Tarīm in 590/1194 for a period of ten days, and after being reassured of the Banū Qaḥṭāns' loyalty to the Ayyūbid house, he returned to his new capital of al-Manṣūra, suggesting that Hadhramaut's three traditional ruling families were allowed to continue their local rule in exchange for their nominal allegiance to the Ayyūbids.[17]

Following Ṭughtakīn's death in 593/1197, he was succeeded by his son al-Muʿizz Ismāʿīl b. Ṭughtakīn, who had a falling out with his lieutenants, leading to conflict within the ruling elite. Al-Muʿizz was assassinated in 598/1202, and the situation continued to deteriorate under his successor al-Nāṣir Ayyūb b. Ṭughtakīn, who was poisoned by his vizier Badr al-Dīn Ghāzī b. Jibrīl in 611/1214, leading to Sulaymān b. Shāhinshāh's appointment as the new sultan. Given this volatile political climate, the ruler of Egypt al-Malik al-Kāmil dispatched his son al-Masʿūd

[16] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 10–11.
[17] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:432.

with an army to Yemen in the same year, who successfully managed to restore a sense of order and remained in power until he died in Makkah during his return journey to Egypt in 626/1228.

Prior to leaving Yemen, al-Masʿūd had appointed the capable Nūr al-Dīn ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Rasūl as his deputy, who was able to further secure the country, successfully quelling an uprising in the Tihāma and a Zaydī offensive from the north. By this point, the Ayyūbids were heavily distracted by several pressing internal and external challenges, and Nūr al-Dīn thus capitalized on the opportunity to replace their military leaders with his own loyalists before throwing off his allegiance to the Ayyūbid house. By 632/1234 he had declared his independence under the title of al-Manṣūr, having secured an investiture from the Abbāsid caliph al-Mustanṣir in Baghdad, thus bringing an end to the Ayyūbid presence in Yemen and establishing himself as the first ruler of the Rasūlid dynasty.[18]

Though they ruled for under a century, the Ayyūbids' policies had a lasting and wide-ranging impact, ushering in a new Yemeni era of greater political stability, economic growth, and a renewed flourishing of religious and intellectual life. During this relatively short period, they were able to suppress the Ismāʿīlis and most of the sultanates, though they failed to fully subdue the Zaydīs in the north.[19] Prior to the Ayyūbids, religious education had been confined to a few mosques, which served as schools (*madāris*, sing. *madrasa*). The Ayyūbids took a keen interest in promoting Sunni Islam through their state patronage of religious education and generous funding for the construction of colleges and libraries. The first major religious college was built in Zabīd by al-Muʿizz Ismāʿīl b. Ṭughtakīn in 594/1197, which he named al-Muʿizziyya and was to a certain extent inspired by similar colleges found throughout Egypt and

[18] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 8–11.
[19] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 32.

Syria.[20] Additionally, they also took a special interest in the promotion of Sufism, in both its popular and its more philosophical and intellectual aspects, by funding the construction of Sufi lodges and exempting the properties of Sufi masters from taxation. Their generous support also meant that Sufi masters were encouraged to play an important function as mediators in recurring conflicts between the rulers and the country's semi-autonomous tribal leaders. These policies laid the foundations for the flourishing of mysticism and Sunni orthodoxy in the Yemen, and as we shall see, they were successfully emulated to great effect under their Rasūlid successors.[21]

2.3. The Rasūlid Dynasty

The first Rasūlid ruler, al-Manṣūr Nūr al-Dīn ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. Rasūl, remained in power until he was assassinated in 647/1250 in a conspiracy orchestrated by his nephew Asad al-Dīn b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Rasūl, the governor of Sanaa. Nūr al-Dīn was succeeded by his son al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf (d. 694/1295), who successfully defeated his father's assassins and other political rivals. Al-Muẓuffar's remarkable reign was to last for nearly half a century, having a great impact on Yemen's economic, cultural, religious, and intellectual landscapes, and achieving "a unity not seen since the pre-Islamic kingdoms and not to be achieved again until the unification . . . of Yemen in 1990."[22]

By the late fourteenth century, the Rasūlids had managed to reduce the influence of their Zaydī rivals to the mountainous stronghold of Ṣaʿda. Though they continued to prosper

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[20] For more, see Ismāʿīl al-Akwaʿ, *al-Madāris al-Islāmiyya fī al-Yaman* (Sanaa: Manshūrāt Jāmiʿat Ṣanʿāʾ: 1980), 7.
[21] Alexander Knysh, "Ibn ʿArabi in the Yemen: His Admirers and Detractors," *Journal of Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 11 (1992): 41; Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 31–32.
[22] Daniel Martin Varisco, "Texts and Pretexts: The Unity of the Rasulid State Under al-Malik al-Muẓaffar" *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 67 (1993), 13. As we shall see, however, this unity under the Rasūlids was to be short-lived, as much of Hadhramaut was to enter into a prolonged period of political fragmentation and competition under the turbulent rule of the Āl Yamānīs of Tarīm and the ambitions of their Kathīrī rivals, among others.

economically with the rapid growth of trade and agriculture, the mounting rebellions from their slaves and other powerful tribes, however, continued to gradually weaken their rule until the reign of al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (d. 827/1424), whose death marked the beginnings of the dynasty's collapse. The Rasūlids were succeeded by their Ṭāhirid rivals, whose reign was brought to an abrupt end by the Ottoman invasion of 945/1538.[23]

The Rasūlids' remarkable reign had a tremendous impact on the intellectual and religious context of Yemen, as they continued to build on the Ayyūbids' policies of funding the construction of colleges, mosques, and libraries. The sultans themselves were highly learned men and some were prolific writers, and as such, they "generously patronized scholars specializing in numerous religious and secular disciplines including history, biography, genealogy, astrology, Sufism, medicine, agriculture, furriery, equine, and veterinary."[24] Through their sustained interest in the development of Islamic culture and institutions, the two Yemeni cities of Zabīd and Taʿizz soon turned into major international centers of Islamic learning, attracting famous Muslim scholars from distant Muslim lands looking for opportunities for further advancement.[25] These scholars included such famous names as the great Egyptian biographer and master of *ḥadīth* Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), the famous lexicographer Majd ad-Dīn al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 815/1415), the Meccan biographer and historian Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī (d. 832/1429), the master of Qurʾānic recitation and *ḥadīth* collector Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429), the celebrated Muslim traveler Ibn Baṭūṭa (d. 779/1377), and the major Sufi thinker and propagator of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, the celebrated 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 832/1428), among others.[26]

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[23] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 12, 230n126.
[24] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 12–14.
[25] Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 231–232.
[26] Knysh, "Ibn ʿArabi in the Yemen," 39; Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 14.

Besides bringing Yemen into greater contact with the intellectual, cultural and religious trends of the wider Muslim world, the Rasūlids had a lasting impact on the development of Sufism in Yemen. Not only were they very tolerant towards charismatic Sufi leaders, cultivating friendly relations with Sufi masters, who were frequently exempted from land taxes, but their rulers and state officials also took a special interest in the study of philosophical Sufism, where the monumental works of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī were held in especially high esteem.[27]

2.4. The Ṭāhirid Dynasty

As the direct successors of the Rasūlids, the Ṭāhirids ruled over much of the southern highlands and the Tīhāma for just under a century (r. 858-945/1454-1538).[28] Their origins are from a scholarly *mashāyikh* family from al-Miqrāna, around Juban in the southern highlands, which became the stronghold of their power. The Ṭāhirids originally rose to prominence as Rasūlid governors and lieutenants during the turbulent internecine squabbles that marked the gradual end of the Rasūlid state, where the ambitious general ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir played an influential role in his assistance of al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Manṣūr against his rivals in the Rasūlid house.[29]

The capture of the port of Aden by al-Mujāhid ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir's forces in 858/1454 marks the end of the Rasūlid state and the beginning of the period of Ṭāhirid rule.[30] ʿAlī b. Ṭāhir's brother who was given the title of 'al-Ẓāfir' ʿĀmir b. Ṭāhir was installed as the first Ṭāhirī ruler

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[27] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 14. For more on the rise and reception of the School of Ibn ʿArabī in Yemen, see Chapter 3. See also Chapters 4, 5, and 6 for an analysis of the reception of Ibn ʿArabī among the scholarly elite and *sāda* of Hadhramaut.

[28] Though their rule is more commonly noted as ending with the reign of al-Ẓāfir ʿĀmir II b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d. 923/1517), he was succeeded by sultan ʿĀmir III b. Dāwūd (d. 945/1538) as the final official ruler of the Ṭāhirid house. See discussion below.

[29] G. R. Smith, "Ṭāhirids," in *EI*$_2$, first published online 2012, http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1152; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:554-554, 568–69.

[30] The following account of the Ṭāhirids' rise to power and short-lived reign is taken from G. R. Smith, "Ṭāhirids" and al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:572-581.

over Aden, and he went on to capture Zabīd in 860/1456. The state would be ruled in his name until he relinquished his power to his brother ʿAlī in 864/1460. After consolidating their power in the Tihāma and the southern highlands of western Yemen, the Ṭāhirids assumed a pattern of governance ruling from their stronghold in al-Miqrāna during the summers and from Zabīd in the winters, which soon returned, with the renewed sense of stability, as Yemen's intellectual and educational capital. Al-Mujāhid ʿAlī would continue to rule until his death in Juban in 883/1460, after which he was succeeded by his nephew al-Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, who continued to rule over Aden and Taʿizz until his death in 894/1489.

In 921/1515, the Egyptian Mamlūks dispatched a fleet to the island of Kamarān, in the Red Sea off the Yemeni coast, to meet the rising Portuguese threat to the eastern trade route. When the fourth Ṭāhirid sultan al-Ẓāfir ʿĀmir II b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (r. 894-923/1489-1517) refused to come to their aid and supply their ships, this was taken by the Mamlūks as an act of war. After a failed attack on the port of Aden in in 922/1516, the sultan was defeated in a battle near Zabīd by a combined force of Mamlūks and Zaydīs, and he was later killed near Sanaa after the Mamlūks had taken over the Ṭāhirid treasure house in al-Miqrāna.

Sultan al-Ẓāfir ʿĀmir II was succeeded by the final Ṭāhirid sultan ʿĀmir III b. Dāwūd, whose territorial rule was reduced to the cities of Aden, Laḥj and Abyan. After dispatching his deputy Yaḥyā al-Sarāḥī and the lieutenant ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Baʿdānī to reclaim the Ṭāhirids' lost territories in the southern highlands, the Zaydī Imām Sharaf al-Dīn dispatched his son al-Muṭahhar from Najrān, who soundly defeated their forces in battle, taking many prisoners. Sultan ʿĀmir III b. Dāwūd continued to rule over his territories until the Ottoman invasion of 945/1538, where he was finally killed by the Ottoman admiral Süleymān Pasha, who was dispatched to Yemen by Sultan Süleymān I the Magnificent to meet the Portuguese presence in

the Arabian Peninsula and the Indian Ocean and their continued threat to the eastern trade route.[31] The Ottoman presence in Yemen would last for nearly a century, where it was gradually unified as an Ottoman province under several successive governors (r. 945–1045/1538–1635).[32]

2.5. The Rise of the Āl Yamānīs in Tarīm and Political Upheaval in Hadhramaut

While much of Yemen came to enjoy greater political stability and economic prosperity under the Ayyūbids and their Rasūlid and Ṭāhirid successors, Hadhramaut, by contrast, was to enter a protracted period of instability characterized by recurring invasions, internal conflict, and tribal rivalry, leading to a precarious political climate and a severely impoverished local economy. Soon after the Ayyūbids dispatched al-Masʿūd (d. 626/1228) in 611/1214 to restore order in Yemen, he appointed ʿUmar b. Mahdī as governor of Hadhramaut. Ibn Mahdī appears to have used excessive force in attempting to control the valley, and he quickly managed to produce several tribal enemies. In 616/1219, he invaded the port of al-Shiḥr, unseating its rulers of Āl Fāris before proceeding to attack Tarīm and killing its ruler ʿAbd Allah b. Rāshid. He then moved on to Shibām, where he fought and defeated the Banū Ḥāritha[33] and Banū Saʿd. From there he moved on to subdue the inhabitants of Wādī ʿAmd, after which he returned to Shibām

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[31] Though he is not included as the final sultan to rule in the name of the Ṭāhirids by G. R. Smith, likely due to his dramatically reduced political power and territorial control, ʿĀmir III b. Dāwūd nonetheless had ambitions to restore the rule of the Ṭāhirids until he met his end with the Ottoman invasion of 945/1538. See al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:578-581; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:68. For a more expansive historical study of this relatively short-lived and significant Yemeni dynasty, see Venetia Porter, "The history and monuments of the Tahirid dynasty of the Yemen 858-953/1454-1517" (PhD diss., Durham University, 1992).

[32] Bernard Haykel, "Western Arabia and Yemen during the Ottoman Period," in *The New Cambridge History of Islam,* ed. Maribel Fierro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2:440-445; Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule: 1516-1800* (London: Routledge, 2019), 39-40. For the most exhaustive academic study of Ottoman Yemen to date, see also Frédérique Soudan, *Le Yémen ottoman d'après la chronique d'al-Mawzaʿī: al-Iḥsān fī dukhūl Mamlakat al-Yaman taḥt ẓill ʿadālat āl ʿUthman* (Cairo: Institut français 1999).

[33] The reign of the Banū Daʿār of Shibām had ended a decade earlier in 605/1209 after the killing of its ruler Rāshid b. Aḥmad b. Nuʿmān, and the city was by this time controlled by the Banū Ḥaritha. See al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:422-423.

and bought the city from the Banū Ḥāritha. By the following year, he had returned to Tarīm to cement his control over the city by laying siege to its fortress (*al-Maṣnaʿa*), thus bringing the whole of Hadhramaut under his control. His command of the valley was very short-lived, however, due to rebellions from its tribes in Dawʿan and elsewhere, especially from among the clans of the powerful Nahd, who were soon able to take over Tarīm, and by 620/1223, they had succeeded in defeating Ibn Mahdī's forces in his stronghold of Shibām in a battle where he was killed.[34]

The removal of Ibn Mahdī inaugurated a new period of political chaos for Hadhramaut that was marked by intensified tribal conflicts and a general sense of lawlessness. With the sudden takeover of the clans of Nahd, the ambitious and charismatic figure of Masʿūd b. Yamānī (d. 648/1250) rose to the challenge of uniting Hadhramaut and its tribes under his rule. With the backing of his kin from the Banū Ḥarām, who were considered a clan of Nahd, he quickly rose to power, taking over Tarīm in the same year. From his stronghold in Tarīm, he was able to establish the Āl Yamānī dynasty, which was to last for over three centuries until the Kathīrī invasion of Tarīm in 926 or 927/1521.[35]

Al-Masʿūd's long and turbulent reign rarely extended beyond the city of Tarīm.[36] In 628/1231, he was able to temporarily buy Shibām from its local ruler, but he continued to face opposition and defeats elsewhere until Ibn Iqbāl attacked Hadhramaut, buying Tarīm and Shibām

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[34] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:494-497; *Tārīkh Shanbal*, 78–79.

[35] For more on the Āl Yamānīs' final days and the conquest of Tarīm by the Kathīrī sultan Badr al-Dīn b. ʿAbd Allah b. Ṭuwayriq, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:533-535; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:61; ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir ʿan Akhbār al-Qarn al-ʿĀshir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥālū, Maḥmūd al-Arnāʾūṭ, and Akram al-Būshī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2001), 185; Sālim b. Muḥammad b. Sālim Ibn Ḥamīd al-Kindī, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt al-Musammā bi-l-ʿUdda al-Mufīda al-Jāmiʿa li-Tawārīkh Qadīma wa-Ḥadītha*, ed. ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad al-Ḥabshī (Sanaa: Maktabat al-Irshād, 2003), 1:163.

[36] The following synopsis of the major events under al-Masʿūd al-Yamānī's reign is taken from al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥadramawt*, 2:498-504; *Tārīkh Shanbal*, 81–94.

in 633/1236. In the following year, Ibn Iqbāl appointed Fahd b. ʿAbd Allah of the formerly ruling Banū Qaḥṭān over Tarīm, who was met by local opposition until he fled for Yemen in order to solicit the Rasūlids' aid, and the city thus fell to a deputy of Ibn Iqbāl in 635/1238. Matters soon took a different turn, however, when the clans of Nahd were rallied once more and took over Hadhramaut under the leadership of ʿĀmir b. Shammākh, the chief of the Banū Khaythama, after which al-Masʿūd al-Yamānī was able to retake Tarīm.

By this time, Fahd b. ʿAbd Allah had returned from Yemen with a Rasūlid army under the leadership of their lieutenant Amīr ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn, who used this opportunity to reassert Rasūlid control over Hadhramaut and to buy its towns from Ibn Shammākh. It seems that by this time, Ibn Shammākh and Fahd b. ʿAbd Allah were won over as local allies to the Rasūlids, and the army would return yet again in the following year to quell any further resistance from al-Yamānī's Banū Ḥarām. At this point, Fahd, Ibn Shammākh, and ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn went on to appoint their local allies as Rasūlid deputies, granting a certain Ibn ʿUbayd control over Tarīm, before proceeding to take over Shibām, which they assigned to a certain Ibn al-Dhiʾb.

It seems that Ibn Shammakh had a change of loyalty soon after, as he turned against ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn and returned to Hadhramaut with his loyalists among the Nahd. This led al-Malik al-Manṣūr to dispatch his lieutenant Ibn Zakī with an army yet again in an ultimately failed mission, where Ibn Zakī was killed in battle. Ibn Shammākh thus took over Shibām, while al-Masʿūd al-Yamānī was able to regain control of Tarīm and remove its Rasūlid appointee Ibn ʿUbayd.[37] In this manner, the Hadhrami political scene remained highly chaotic, and the situation

[37] It seems al-Masʿūd's political ambitions for the unification of Hadhramaut began to wane after a long and difficult career, and he took a spiritual orientation in his final years, repenting from his past and becoming a disciple of the famous Sufi Shaykh ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb, known as 'Ṣāḥib al-Waʿl.' For more on this incident, including a brief bio of the Shaykh, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:503-504, 779-83; al-Khaṭib, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 1:132-133.

did not fare much better under the reign of al-Yamānī's descendants, whose reign over the next three centuries fluctuated between periods of relative strength and weakness and was similarly marked by periodic disruptions, internal competition, and frequent conflicts with the rising ambitions of their Kathīrī rivals.[38]

In 673/1275, during the reign of al-Masʿūd's son ʿUmar b. Masʿūd (d. 675/1277), the ruler of Dhofar Sālim b. Idrīs al-Ḥabūẓī invaded Hadhramaut with the assistance of local allies from among the Nahd and the Kathīrīs, laying siege to Tarīm for a period of three months and taking over Sayʾūn and the surrounding towns. Unable to confront him, ʿUmar b. Masʿūd dispatched his son to seek the aid of the Rasūlid ruler al-Malik al-Muẓaffar (d. 694/1295), who returned soon after empty-handed. At this point, Ibn Shammākh came to the Yamānīs' relief, which forced al-Ḥabūẓī to relocate to Dammūn and then to Shibām, before deciding to return to Dhofar and assigning his Kathīrī loyalists as his deputies over his territorial gains in the valley. The famous Hadhrami chronicler Shanbal notes that al-Ḥabūẓī's invasion brought such a level of disruption to the daily life of Tarīm that the weekly Friday prayer was abandoned for the full nine month duration of his stay in Hadhramaut.[39] The valley continued to remain under al-Ḥabūẓī's grip until he was finally killed during al-Muẓaffār's decisive conquest of Dhofar in 678/1279 under the leadership of his lieutenant al-Amīr Azdumar. By 692/1293, al-Muẓaffār had assigned his son al-Wāthiq to rule over Dhofar, which continued to be ruled by his descendants until the Kathīrī conquest of 807/1405.[40]

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[38] For a more complete account of the Āl Yamānīs' rule, see *al-Ḥāmid, Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:499-535; al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:225–233. For more on the Kathīrīs' rise to power in Hadhramaut, see Chapter 4.

[39] *Tārīkh Shanbal*, 101; Muḥammad Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Jifrī (Tarīm, Yemen: Tarīm lil-Dirāsat wa-l-Nashr, 2002), 1:29–30. The historian Muḥammad Ibn Hishām notes the date of al-Ḥabūẓī's invasion a decade later than Shanbal as 683 AH.

[40] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:505-507, 597-607. After the last Dhofari sultan fled to Yemen in 807/1405, the Āl Yamānī ruler Sulṭān b. Duways (r. 770-813/1369-1410) assigned his deputy Rāṣiʿ Ibn

During this period, the city of Shibām continued to endure a turbulent political history, with recurring invasions and several takeovers by competing local tribes until 824/1421, when the Kathīrī leader ʿAlī b. ʿUmar reached an agreement with the local Āl ʿĀmir to co-rule the city.[41] As for al-Shiḥr, the coastal city had been controlled indirectly by the Rasūlids through the port of Aden. In 677/1279, just prior to the Rasūlid conquest of Dhofar, the city fell to their lieutenant al-Amīr Azdumar, who overthrew its local ruler Rāshid b. Shajʿana and was assigned as its first Rasūlid governor.[42] The Rasūlids would continue to rule the port directly until around 836/1432, when their last governor was overthrown by the local leader Muḥammad b. Saʿd b. Fāris Bā Dujāna of Kinda, ending their control over the Hadhrami coast.[43]

Muḥammad Bā Dujāna continued to rule over al-Shiḥr until 861/1457, when he was persuaded by a group of Yāfiʿīs from the clan of Āl Kald to attack the port of Aden with their assistance after having fled from the Ṭāhirids who seized the port in 858/1454. Bā Dujāna's failed attack on Aden led to his imprisonment by the Ṭāhirids until his mother intervened personally for his release in exchange for his relinquishing of al-Shiḥr to their rule, after which he returned with his mother to the Bā Dujāna stronghold of Ḥayrīj, where he is believed to have died soon after.[44] The new Ṭāhirid rulers were unable to control the port for very long, however,

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Jassār to challenge the Kathīrīs' conquest, and an agreement was temporarily reached between the Kathīrīs and the Āl Yamanīs to jointly rule over Dhofar. This settlement was not to last, however, and the Kathīrīs expelled the Āl Yamanīs from Dhofar in 809/1407, and in 816/1413 the city was decisively conquered by the first Kathīrī sultan ʿAlī b. 'Umar (d. 825/1422), who was able to defeat any resistance to his rule. Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:38–40; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:519.

[41] See al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:608-620.

[42] For a more detailed historical account of this period of direct Rasūlid control over al-Shiḥr, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:547-564.

[43] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:265-266.

[44] Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:450-451. Bā Makhrama seems to hint that Bā Dujāna may have been deliberately poisoned prior to his return to Ḥayrīj.

which soon witnessed the temporary resurgence of the Bā Dujāna family, until they were decisively overthrown by the Kathīrī sultan ʿAbd Allah b. Jaʿfar around 901/1496.[45]

Given this drawn out climate of political instability, Hadhramaut also remained economically impoverished throughout this period, experiencing great economic hardships relative to western Yemen, as it was unable to benefit significantly from the economic growth and prosperity under the successful policies of the Ayyūbid and Rasūlid sultans and the short-lived reign of the Ṭāhirīs after them. The valley's major cities were unable to profit economically from the port of al-Shiḥr, which remained for the most part cut-off from the interior, with its economic wealth and resources accruing mostly to its local rulers or to the Rasūlids during their period of direct governance over the city (677-836/1279-1432). Given the relative scarcity of Hadhramaut's fertile lands and its dry climate, the cultivation of date plantations remained the

[45] Al-Ḥāmid and Ibn Hishām offer divergent accounts on the political history of al-Shiḥr between 861/1457 and 901/1496. al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:581-588; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:50–52. Relying on the histories of al-Ṭayyib Bā Makhrama and Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Ṭayyib Bā Faqīh, al-Ḥāmid indicates that an unknown leader of the Bā Dujāna briefly took over al-Shiḥr in 864/1460, only to flee two years later when al-Ẓāfir ʿĀmir b. Ṭāhir arrived to reclaim the port with a large army (Bā Makhrama implies that this may have been the same Muḥammad Bā Dujāna). Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl b. Safar (or Sanqar?) was then appointed as governor, who was assisted in quelling any local resistance by the Kathīrī ally Badr b. ʿAbd Allah (d. 894/1489). By 867/1463, the Ṭāhirids had agreed to appoint the young Kathīrī Badr b. Muḥammad (d. 915/1509), the nephew of Badr b. ʿAbd Allah, as a governor over al-Shiḥr, but his uncle was able to effortlessly seize the port before he was able to reach it. Nonetheless, his uncle appointed his nephew to rule over the port soon after in the name of the independent Kathīrī sultanate. Badr b. Muḥammad thus ruled over al-Shiḥr until it was attacked by Saʿd b. Mubārak Bā Dujāna in 883/1478 or possibly 894/1489, who successfully seized the port and ruled over it until 901/1496, when the Kathīrī ruler Jaʿfar b. ʿAbd Allah was able to decisively expel and defeat the Bā Dujānas. See Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:450-451; Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Ṭayyib Bā Faqīh, *Tārīkh al-Shiḥr wa-Akhbār al-Qarn al-ʿĀshir*, ed. ʿAbd Allah b. Muḥammad al-Ḥabshī (Maktabat al-Irshād, 1999), 14-15. In Ibn Hishām's account, Saʿd b. Mubārak's takeover of al-Shiḥr in 883/1478 was very short-lived, and the Kathīrī ruler soon returned with his army to regain control of the city. In 887/1482, Saʿd b. Mubārak launched another failed attack on the port, in which he was killed and where Badr ʿAbd Allah came to the aid of his nephew. Badr b. ʿAbd Allah then appointed another nephew ʿAbd Allah b. Jaʿfar as the new ruler of al-Shiḥr before returning to Shibām. It must be noted, as Ibn Hisham points out, that this was more likely ʿAbd Allah b. Jaʿfar (d. 910/1505) and not his father Jaʿfar b. ʿAbd Allah (d. 905/1500), as the latter played a far less significant political role in the Kathīrī sultanate, ruling over the town of Būr until his death.

principal and vital source of livelihood for many of the valley's inhabitants and for the *sāda* of Tarīm in particular, who continued to employ the wealth from their many plantations towards the construction of relatively autonomous *ḥawṭas* and mosques with endowments, in addition the funding of local charitable projects and the feeding of the needy.[46]

It is perhaps these dire economic and political conditions, among other reasons, that propelled many ʿAlawīs and other Hadhramis to emigrate across the Indian Ocean in search of better fortunes. The first known great migrations according to the *sāda's* own sources were to the East African coast and took place as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[47] By the sixteenth century, many ʿAlawīs had migrated to India, where they became prominent as scholars and as court and civic figures, and by the eighteenth century, they had ventured further east to the Malay Archipelago, where many became known not only as prominent religious figures but as "adventurers, sultans, merchants, diplomats, and landlords." [48]

As Engseng Ho explains, these Hadhrami migrations were the result of a process beginning as early as the thirteenth century with the shift in East-West trade routes from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, which brought Hadhramaut and Aden in greater contact with Egypt, the Hejaz, and India and led to the flourishing of new polities, a process that culminated in "the

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[46] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:640-643. See, also, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Khaṭīb's description of Hadhramaut's dire economic hardships in *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 1:95-96.

[47] R. B Serjeant, "The Ḥadramī Network," in *Marchands et hommes d'affaires asiatiques dans l'océan Indien et la mer de Chine, 13e-20e Siècles*, ed. Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, n.d.), 150.

[48] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 27. As Serjeant notes, however, the first known contact with India among the *sāda* was as early as 617/1220. "The Ḥadramī Network," 149. This is likely a reference to the famous incident of the temporary exile of the eminent *sayyid* ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Jadīd (d. 620/1223), the authenticator of the family *nasab*, with his Sufi Shaykh Mudāfiʿ b. Aḥmad al-Maʿīnī by the Ayyūbid ruler al-Malik al-Masʿūd in the same year. See al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:704. On the settlement and history of the prominent Bā ʿAlawī clan of al-ʿAydarūs in Gujarat, India, see also Peskes, *al-ʿAidarūs*, 79-154; al-Qaḍmānī, *al-Sāda Āl Abī ʿAlawī*, 286-301. For a more general survey on the *sāda* in early modern India, their relations with the Muslim political elite, and their changing fortunes, see Omar Khalidi, "Sayyids of Hadhramaut in Early Modern India," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 32, no. 3 (2004): 329–52.

creation of a transoceanic 'new world' for Islam, symbolized by a common allegiance to the Shāfiʿī school of Islamic law." This new "Islamic ecumene," which stretched from "Cape Town on the southern tip of Africa to Timor at the limit of the Malay Archipelago," would become "a transcultural space that numerous Muslims, among them Hadramis from Arabia, traversed and settled in with relative ease and great profit, participating in the creation of new ports, polities, and even peoples."[49] This process was only intensified during the sixteenth century with the Ottoman takeover of Egypt and several ports across the Red Sea, including Aden, and the ʿAlawīs' migrations thus continued to peak well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[50]

With this brief summary of the social, political and economic backdrop of medieval Yemen and Hadhramaut, we now turn to a discussion of the emergence of the of Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa* with al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam in Hadhramaut.

2.6. Al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam and the Birth of a Hadhrami *Ṭarīqa*

Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 653/1255) was born in Tarīm in 574/1178, a mere five years after the Ayyūbid conquest of Yemen. He was raised in a pious scholarly milieu, memorizing the Qurʾān at a relatively young age, where he took to a strict routine of extensive worship that was coupled with an intensive study of the major Islamic disciplines of his day. These efforts and his gifted spiritual and intellectual potential would eventually gain him the sobriquet (*laqab*) of 'al-Ustādh al-ʿAẓam,' an honorary title marking his spiritual and intellectual distinction as the unrivalled spiritual leader of the ʿAlawīs. The Imām also came to be more popularly known as

[49] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 100.
[50] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 100–101. For more on the ʿAlawī diaspora and their migrations across the Indian Ocean region, see Introduction, notes 4 and 9.

'al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam' (the 'Foremost' or 'First' Jurist), signifying his unrivaled status as a jurist and spiritual authority.[51]

Al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam was fortunate to be surrounded by the scholarly elite of Hadhramaut from a young age, receiving his education at the hands of Tarīm's most distinguished and renowned scholars, some of whom were well-travelled across Yemen and the Hejaz. In his earliest years, he was exposed to the teachings of the illustrious Sālim Bā Faḍl (d. 581/1185)[52], who died when the Imām was at a very young age. He received his legal training from the renowned Shāfiʿī jurist ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bā ʿUbayd (d. 613/1216)[53] and the *qāḍī* Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Bā ʿĪsā (d. 626/1229)[54]. For the fields of *uṣūl* and the rational sciences, he studied with ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Bā Marwān (d. 624/1227)[55] and the renowned Hadhrami scholar and poet Muḥammad b. Abī al-Ḥubb (d. 611/1215)[56], while for the *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* sciences, he studied with the accomplished scholar and famed authenticator of the family *nasab* Imām ʿAli b. Muḥammad (d. 620/1223)[57] of the Banū Jadīds. As for his spiritual training in Sufism, he remained under the guidance of his uncle ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad (d. 613/1216)[58], the

[51] This posthumous title is also believed to reflect the precedence accorded to the Imām's grave as the 'first' to be visited during the *sāda*'s customary visitations to the cemetery of Zanbal, a customary practice that has been widely maintained till the present day. al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley*, 54; Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 202.

[52] For more on this major Hadhrami scholarly figure, briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, see Bā Faḍl, *Ṣilat al-Ahl*, 40-66.

[53] Shaykh ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bā ʿUbayd (d. 613) was a major Shāfiʿī authority for Yemen and the Hejaz, who authored a *fiqh* commentary on al-Shīrāzī's *Tanbīh* (*al-Ikmāl ʿalā al-Tanbīh*). See Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī b. ʿAlī al-Mashhūr, "al-Ustādh al-Aʿẓam al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila*, 208n2.

[54] See al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 720n3.

[55] For more on this major Hadhrami scholar and jurist of this period, see Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:326-329; al-Mashhūr, "al-Ustādh al-Aʿẓam," 208n1; al-Jundī, *al-Sulūk*, 2:463.

[56] For a short biography of this major Hadhrami scholar and poet, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:436-442, 479–81.

[57] For more on this famous *sayyid*, mentioned in Chapter 1, see al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:233-237; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 154-156, 466-468; al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 1:206-211; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:701-709.

[58] See al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:209.

highly renowned *sayyid* Imām Sālim b. Baṣrī (d. 604/1208)[59] of the Banū Bāṣrīs, and the major Sufi shaykh of Tarīm Alī b. Muḥammad al-Khāṭīb (d. 641/1243)[60], popularly known as 'Mawlā al-Waʿl.'[61]

The Imām witnessed a period of considerable political upheaval during his lifetime (574-653/1178-1255), having lived through the Ayyūbid conquest of Yemen, the rise of their Rasūlid successors in western Yemen, and the emergence of a chaotic new era in Hadhramaut with the overthrow of its traditional emirates and the emergence of the Āl-Yamānīs and their turbulent reign in Tarīm. Like their forefathers in Iraq, the *sāda* appear to have been viewed with a marked sense of apprehension by local rulers, who occasionally persecuted their Imāms and were generally suspicious of their influence and popularity among Tarīm's local population, who revered and respected them for their charismatic piety, knowledge, and near-legendary hospitality. Thus, in 617/1220, al-Faqīh's famed teacher Imām ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Bā Jadīd was exiled for several months to India along with his Sufi master Shaykh Mudāfiʿ b. Aḥmad al-Maʿīnī by the Ayyūbid ruler al-Malik al-Masʿūd.[62] Similarly, it seems that his grandfather Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī had moved to Mirbāṭ not only to seek economic fortunes and to avoid the instability of external invasions but also due to local pressure from Tarīm's ruling Banū Qaḥṭān.[63] The biographies also mention that al-Faqīh's uncle, Imām ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad (d. 613) had miraculously survived (as a *karāma*) several attempts to poison him by Tarīm's ruler, who feared his growing popularity among the people.[64]

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[59] For more on this major *sayyid* of the Banū Baṣrīs, who was the preeminent scholar in Tarīm of his generation, see Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 148-152.
[60] Alī b. Muḥammad al-Khāṭīb notably became the Sufi master of Tarīm's ruler al-Masʿūd al-Yamānī (d. 648/1250), during the final years of his reign. See note 37 above.
[61] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:3.
[62] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:236; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:704-705.
[63] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:304.
[64] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:209; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 483; al-Ḥaddād, *Jany al-Shamārīkh*, 57–60.

Given his uneasy context of political and social turmoil, where the instigation of tribal bloodshed and the persecution of his family remained looming realities, the Imām made a firm resolve to shun the world of politics, devoting himself fully to a pacifist life of ascetic spiritual devotion, peacemaking, and scholarship. Since his early years of intensive spiritual training, he is noted to have acquired lofty spiritual states and gnostic inspirations. He soon became widely recognized for his exceptional spiritual and intellectual accomplishment, which brought him into regular contacts and correspondences with other major spiritual masters and visiting scholars in the region. Aside from his Sufi training at the hands of his teachers in Tarīm, he also came into contacts with the accomplished Sufi master of Dhofar 'Tāj al-ʿĀrifīn' Saʿd b. ʿAlī al-Ẓufārī (d. *circa* 607/1211 or 609/1214)[65], who later moved to al-Shiḥr and who the Imām took as a spiritual confidant, corresponding with him on questions of Sufism and matters of spiritual realization.

What remains preserved from their correspondences in the hagiographic biographies suggests that the Imām had written to Shaykh Saʿd concerning his powerful and unusual spiritual experiences, wherein he declared his ascension to the 'Lote Tree of the Farthest Boundary' (*sidrat al-muntaha*)[66] on at least seven occasions, to which the Shaykh responded with the following classic advice of a concerned Sufi master:

> I say to you, with the counsel and concern of a lover: guard your heart from becoming attached to the attainment of saintly miracles (*karāmāt*) . . . and whatever you come to experience, measure it in the scale of the *Sharīʿa*; whatever accords with what is true (*al-ḥaqq*), then follow it, and whatever disagrees with it, abandon it, and you, dear jurist, are, God willing, better guided than to be in need of such counsel and are more knowledgeable concerning the *Sharīʿa* and its inner reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*) and concerning that which is manifest and hidden.[67]

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[65] For a brief biography, see ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad Balfaqīh, *Min Aʿqāb al-Biḍʿa al-Muḥammadiyya al-Ṭāhira min Dhuriyyat al-Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ* (Madina: Dār al-Muhājir lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1994), 1:97.

[66] The enigmatic tree that marks the farthest reaches of the created world at the edge of the seventh heaven, beyond which no creation is able to pass. See Qurʾān 53:14.

[67] al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 158; Khirid, *al-Ghurar,* 207.

Aside from his correspondence with Shaykh Saʿd, the biographies also recount the brief sojourn of the Yemeni *sayyid* and Sufi Shaykh Sufyān b. ʿAbd Allah al-Abyanī (d. 602/1206)[68] in Hadhramaut, who met with the major scholars of Tarīm and had an intimate and fruitful exchange with al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, where they are noted to have enjoyed expansive sessions of mutual spiritual benefit.[69] Following Shaykh Sufyān's departure, the two continued to correspond with each other, and as the biographers note in one of his responses to the Imām, who had written to him concerning the spiritual openings he had experienced, he declares, "This is certainly an affair that is beyond our understanding and which our states have not yet reached!"[70] These early encounters in his spiritual path must have intensified the Imām's aspirations and earned him a considerable reputation in the wider networks of Sufi scholarship in Yemen, the Hejaz, and beyond.

2.6.1. The Investiture with the Sufi *Khirqa* of Abū Madyan

Given his growing regional popularity, news of the Imām eventually made its way to the towering North African Sufi Abū Madyan b. Shuʿayb (d. 594/1191) of Tlemcen, the most influential Sufi mystic of the Maghreb of his time and the spiritual forerunner to the influential Shāḍhilī *ṭarīqa*. The standard account in the ʿAlawī biographies indicates that Abū Madyan, who had commanded a very large and diverse mass following, appointed his Hadhrami student Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Muqʿad as his personal envoy to invest certain 'friends' of his in Hadhramaut with his *khirqa* and initiate (*taḥkīm)* them into his spiritual

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[68] For a very brief biography, see al-Mashhūr, "al-Ustādh al-Aʿẓam," 211n1. A lengthier biography can be found in Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Sharjī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ Ahl al-Ṣidq wa-l-Ikhlāṣ* (Beirut: al-Dār al-Yamaniyya lil-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1986), 146–149.

[69] "*Wa-ḥaṣula baynahumā mudhākarāt wa-inbisāṭāt wa-istamadda kullun minhumā min al-ākhar madadan ʿaẓīman."* al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya,* 159.

[70] "*Hādha shayʿun lam taṣil ilayhi afhāmuna wa-lam tablughhu aḥwāluna*" al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 2:4; al-Mashhūr, "al-Ustādh al-Aʿẓam, 211-12.

lineage.[71] The biographers indicate that this is a reference to al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam in Tarīm and the famous Shaykh Saʿīd b. ʿĪsā al-ʿAmūdī (d. 671/1273)[72] of Qaydūn in the valley of Dawʿan in western Hadhramaut. Abū Madyan is said to have also predicted to Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥman that death would overtake him before reaching his destination, before which he was to entrust another disciple with the completion of his mission. Upon approaching his death while still in Makkah, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥman thus appointed his disciple ʿAbd Allah al-Ṣāliḥ al-Maghribī to complete the mission of investing the two scholars in Hadhramaut on his behalf.

Al-Maghribī successfully completed his assignment and decided to settle in the village of Aṣbaʿūn in the valley of Dawʿān, where he married, fathering two daughters, and where he also initiated another two shaykhs as his own disciples: Shaykh Bā Ḥamrān of Mayfaʿa, and Shaykh Bā ʿAmr of al-ʿŪra. As the classical account continues, once he was nearing his death, he sent for all four disciples, who upon visiting him requested that he elect a new leader (*khalīfa*) over them. At this point, al-Maghribī entrusted Shaykh Saʿīd al-ʿAmūdī as the guardian (*walī al-amr*) of his two daughters and explained that all four men were to inherit his few personal belongings, which were to be divided among them, and that the one to receive the prayer beads (*subḥa*) would be the most distinguished among them and their new leader (*khalīfa*). Upon his death, the

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[71] The full account is in al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:4-6; al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 164–168. Here it should be noted that the *khirqa*, frequently translated as a Sufi 'mantle' or 'cloak,' may in fact consist of any article of clothing. al-ʿAdanī, *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf*, 495. In the Bā ʿAlawī tradition more specifically, the investiture of the *khirqa* is a reference to the donning of the turban (*ilbās al-ʿumāma*), which is ceremonially invested to the *sāda*'s worthy disciples as a license (*ijāza*) to teach what they have acquired.

[72] For more on this celebrated Sufi figure and claimed descendant of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and on the history of the ʿAmūdī family, the spiritual leaders of the Dawʿan valley who ruled over this western end of Hadhramaut intermittently, see also al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:771-778; al-Mashhūr, "Al-ʿAṭir al-ʿAwdī fī Tarjamat al-Shaykh Saʿīd b. Īsā al-ʿAmūdī," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila*, 104-131. The Āl ʿAmūdīs would later become major rivals of the ʿAlawīs, allying themselves with the northern Qāsimī Imāms in the eighteenth century and with the anti-ʿAlawī Irshādīs in the twentieth century. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 202n7.

four of them drew lots and his belongings were divided as follows: his rosary and staff went to al-Faqīh, his lamp and cooking pot fell to Shaykh Saʿīd, his *ḥubwa*[73] went to Shaykh Bā Ḥamrān, and his frock to Shaykh Bā ʿAmr. Thus, al-Faqīh came to be recognized as their unrivalled spiritual leader, and it is said that Saʿīd al-ʿAmūdī's loyalty to him became legendary thereafter.[74]

Setting aside the symbolic, 'mythical' and hagiographic dimensions of this momentous historical narrative, both Peskes and Knysh question the historicity of these encounters and al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's preeminent role in the introduction of *ṭarīqa* Sufism to Hadhramaut. For Peskes, the *sāda*'s hagiographic narrative remains steeped in legend, and the lack of early contemporaneous sources means that the historical origins of *ṭarīqa* Sufism in Hadhramaut cannot be accurately determined. As she notes in her analysis of the hagiographic biographical entries in *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ*, the famous fifteenth century work of the Zabīdī scholar Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Sharjī (d. 893/1488), the work surprisingly offers no biographical entry on al-Faqīh a-Muqaddam, while it provides an entry on his famous companion Shaykh Saʿīd b. ʿĪsā al-ʿAmūdī, where his connection to the *silsila* of Abū Madyan is clearly mentioned.[75] Furthermore, the biographical entry on the Yemeni Sufi Ahmad b. al-Jaʿd al-Abyanī (d. 690s AH) makes no

[73] The *ḥubwa* is a firm piece of cloth traditionally used to support the legs in a folded position during teaching sessions or worship.
[74] al-Mashhūr, "al-Ustādh al-Aʿẓam," 216-219. As Abū Bakr al-Mashhūr observes, while most of the biographical sources agree on this account and there seems to be a consensus on al-Maghribī's initiation of al-Faqīh and al-ʿAmūdī, there is some disagreement over the others who received the *khirqa*. Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1509), for instance, includes the famous Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Bā Maʿbad as the third disciple to be invested with Abū Madyan's *khirqa*. See al-ʿAdanī, *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf,* 482-483.
[75] al-Sharjī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ,* 145-146. For Peskes's full analysis, see *al-ʿAydarūs*, 178-184.

Figure 2: The dual Sufi *silsila* of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*
Source: *ʿIqd al-Yawāqīt al-Jawhariyya* of Ḥabīb ʿAydarūs b. ʿUmar al-Ḥabshī

mention of al-Faqīh but notes instead al-Abyanī's encounter with the famous Shaykh Saʿīd during his visit to the grave of the Prophet Hūd with a group of unidentified Yemeni Sufis.[76]

Aside from these details, Peskes believes there are other reasons to question the *sāda*'s narrative on the origins of organized Sufism with al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam in Hadhramaut. As she argues, the facts that there are no Sufi activities, teachings, or even litanies attributed to the *ṭarīqa*'s founder and that a rudimentary association with Sufism only begins to concretely emerge, according to the biographical sources, with his grandson Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī (d. 731/1330) and his great-grandson Muḥammad b. ʿAlawī b. Aḥmad b. al-Faqīh (d. 769/1368),[77] suggests a basic discrepancy between the *sāda*'s standard account and the earliest tangible evidence of Sufi activity from the sources.[78] Later ʿAlawī authorities, as Peskes suggests, even attempted to draw an earlier association for the *sāda* with Sufism by pointing to an encounter between Imām al-Muhajir's son Imām ʿUbayd Allah (d. 383/993) and the renowned early Sufi Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, with whom he allegedly studied *Qūt al-Qulūb*.[79] These observations collectively suggest for Peskes that, contrary to the traditional accounts of our ʿAlawī biographers, it was al-ʿAmūdī who likely played the more instrumental role in the introduction of organized Sufism to Hadhramaut and that Sufi doctrine and practice did not fully emerge among the *sāda* until at least a couple of generations after al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam.

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[76] al-Sharjī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ*, 72-74. Khirid notes that a certain Aḥmad b. Abī al-Jaʿd had met with al-Faqīh along with the famous Sufyān al-Abyanī, though this was most likely not the same individual noted here. *al-Ghurar*, 208. Aside from the slight difference in name (Abī al-Jaʿd), al-Sharjī further notes that Aḥmad b. al-Jaʿd died in the 690s AH, nearly a century after Sufyān al-Abyanī (d. 602/1206).
[77] For more on these two figures, see Chapter 3.
[78] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 184.
[79] *al-ʿAydarūs*, 184n60. Here, Peskes implies that this earlier ʿAlawī association with Sufism is only drawn by later ʿAlawī authorities, such as the eighteenth century Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥaddād (d. 1204/1790) in his *al-Fawāʾid al-Saniyya*. Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥasan is the grandson of the preeminent ʿAlawī saint of the seventeenth/eighteenth century, Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1132/1720).

Upon a closer consideration of these concerns raised by Peskes, a careful examination of the available sources reveals that they are largely unwarranted. First, the absence of written Sufi teachings that can be attributed to al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam can be explained by the fact that such early sources did not survive;[80] the biographies do note his replies to some three hundred questions on Sufism and legal matters, which appear to be no longer extant. Furthermore, as we have already seen and contrary to Peskes's assertion, a few brief correspondences have in fact been preserved, such as al-Faqīh's famous exchange with the Sufi master Saʿd al-Ẓufārī, in addition to at least one of his own Sufi prayers, which is fully reproduced in the *sāda*'s popular and expansive collection of Sufi litanies *Mukh al-ʿIbāda li-Ahl al-Sulūk wa-l-Irāda.*[81] As for the alleged encounter between Imām ʿUbayd Allah and Abū Ṭalib al-Makkī, this association was not drawn by later ʿAlawī authorities, as Peskes suggests, but is in fact plainly stated in the earlier standard biographical sources, such as Khird's *al-Ghurar* and al-Shillī's *al-Mashaʿ*.[82]

As for Peskes's examination of *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ*, indeed, one can say that al-Sharjī's treatment of the ʿAlawī *sāda* in his hagiographic biographical work on Yemeni Sufism leaves much to be desired. To start, it appears that his list of Hadhrami Sufi figures is far from exhaustive. For instance, aside from failing to provide an independent entry on al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, the work also fails to mention the famous Saʿd b. ʿAlī al-Ẓufārī who was a resident of al-Shiḥr before moving to Dhofar. It also makes no mention of al-Faqīh's local Sufi masters ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad, Sālim al-Baṣrī, and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Mawlā al-Waʿl.[83]

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[80] For an overview of the conditions leading to the loss of thousands of early historical materials and MSS across Hadhramaut, see discussion in Introduction, notes 17 and 18.
[81] See Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 208; ʿAbd Allah b. Muṣṭafā al-ʿAydarūs, ed., *Mukh al-ʿIbāda li-Ahl al-Sulūk wa-l-Irāda* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥāwī, 2012), 100–102.
[82] See Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 470; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:32.
[83] See discussion above.

As for the biographical entry on Aḥmad b. al-Jaʿd al-Abyanī, which notes his meeting with al-ʿAmūdī but fails to mention al-Faqīh, this is not unusual given that al-Abyanī is known to have died in the 690s AH, while al-Faqih died nearly half a century earlier in d. 653/1255, making it less likely that the two would have met. On the other hand, Saʿīd al-ʿAmūdī died in 671/1273, making it likely that they met some time after al-Faqīh's passing. In any case, we must recall that it is rather the aforementioned Sufyān b. ʿAbd Allah al-Abyanī who is noted for his ecstatic exchange with al-Faqīh.[84] It is also noteworthy that Shaykh Sufyān is noted to have become a disciple of Abū Madyan Shuʿayb, making it highly conceivable that he would have informed the great Maghrebi Sufi about conditions in Yemen and Hadhramaut and about his meetings with al-Faqīh and al-ʿAmūdī, a plausible Yemeni connection to the great Abū Madyan that has hitherto gone unnoticed.[85]

More curiously, however, al-Sharjī's only biographical entry on a member of the *sāda* is that of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's grandson Imām ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī[86] (d. 709/1309), a peculiar choice given his relatively obscure status in the traditional ʿAlawī sources, which afford him very short biographical entries in contrast to other more prominent and well-travelled ʿAlawī Sufis among his generation and descendants, such as his celebrated brother Imām ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī (d. 731/1331).[87] Be that as it may, while al-Sharjī provides no other biographical entry on the *sāda*, he nevertheless takes the occasion of this entry to briefly mention other major saintly authorities among Imām ʿAlī's descendants, namely Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf (d. 819/1416), Imām

[84] See discussion above.
[85] In his brief biography *al-Farāʾid al-Ḥisān fi Manāqib al-Shaykh Sufyān*, the s*ayyid* Ḥāmid al-Ḥaddād notes that, according to a now lost hagiographical biography of Shaykh Sufyān al-Abyanī, he had travelled to the Maghreb, where he became a disciple of Abū Madyan Shuʿayb. al-Mashhūr, "al-Ustādh al-Aʿẓam," 211n1.
[86] al-Sharjī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ*, 223.
[87] See the discussion in Chapter 3 on al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's descendants.

ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (d. 833/1429), and Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), who was al-Sharjī's contemporary.[88]

Furthermore, it must also be noted that while al-Sharjī does not offer a separate biographical entry on al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, the Imām is nonetheless indirectly alluded to at least once, as can be found in the biography of the Hadhrami Sufi scholar Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Bā ʿAbbād, who is noted to have met with the leading Sufi masters (*akābir*) of his time, including Aḥmad b. Abī al-Jaʿd (d. 690s AH), the famous Abū al-Ghayth b. Jamīl (d. 651/1253), and "the *sharīf* Abā ʿAlawī."[89] The ʿAlawī *sharīf* mentioned here could be none other than al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, given that the former two were his highly celebrated contemporaries and that he was the preeminent ʿAlawī spiritual authority of his generation.[90]

More importantly, al-Sharjī's *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ* is not the only significant and relatively early non-ʿAlawī historical work that can help us shed further light on this early period in Hadhrami history and the historicity of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's role in introducing organized Sufism to the valley. In his discussion on Hadhramaut and the state of its scholarship in *al-Sulūk fī Ṭabqāt al-ʿUlamāʾ wa-l-Mulūk*, the fourteenth century Yemeni historian Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Jundī (d. 732/1332) makes mention of some early ʿAlawī authorities, including the aforementioned

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[88] Here, al-Sharjī also takes the opportunity to remark, "the Āl Bā ʿAlawī are a house of knowledge and righteousness, and it is said that they are among the leading *manṣabs* of Hadhramaut, and they are among the *ashrāf*." al-Sharjī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ*, 223. These major ʿAlawī authorities are among the key figures discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

[89] al-Sharjī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ*, 311. Elsewhere, under the biographical entry of ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Ahdal (d. *circa* 601 AH), al-Sharjī also makes an indirect reference to the ʿAlāwīs' ancestor Imām Aḥmad al-Muhājir, where he observes that ʿAlī b. ʿUmar al-Ahdal was a descendant of the *sharīf* Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, who had emigrated to Yemen with his two paternal cousins, one of whom had settled in the Hadhramaut valley. *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ*, 195. See also Shihāb and Nūḥ, *al-Imām al-Muhājir,* 109; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:33; al-Mashḥūr, *al-Muhājir*, 19–20; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 98–99.

[90] It may be helpful to recall here that according to Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 36, al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, Abū al-Ghayth b. Jamīl (d. 651/1253), and Aḥmad b. ʿAlwān (d. 655/1266) are "the three most celebrated figures of Yemen's religious and cultural history."

Imām ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī Khāliʿ Qasam (d. *circa* 527 or 529/1135), where he notes his famous *karāma* of conversing with the Prophet during his ritual prayers.[91] More significantly, upon mentioning the eminent Hadhrami jurist and scholar ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Bā Marwān (d. 624/1227), who is noted above as one of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's teachers, he alludes to the famous incident of his falling out with the Imām upon the latter's decisive turn to Sufism.[92] As al-Jundī states concerning Bā Marwān,

> Through him, knowledge spread far and wide across Hadhramaut, largely on account of his upright and blessed teaching . . . and when the first among the house of Āl Abā ʿAlawī, who were known for their knowledge of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), decided to embrace Sufism and the news had reached the jurist [Bā Marwān] that he had become a Sufi, he deserted him.[93]

This passage from al-Jundī's (d. 732/1332) *al-Sulūk* in which he acknowledges al-Faqīh as the first among the ʿAlawīs to turn to Sufism is highly relevant in that the work was authored less than a century after the Imām's passing (d. 653/1255), thus preceding al-Sharjī's (d. 893/1488) *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ* by well over a century and rendering it a more informative primary source for our purposes.

Aside from these observations by Peskes, Knysh also takes issue with the historicity of al-Faqīḥ a-Muqaddam's encounters surrounding his investiture with the *khirqa* of Abū Madyan, where he considers ʿAbd Allah al-Ṣāliḥ al-Maghribī to be a "suspiciously obscure figure." As Knysh argues, this alleged encounter and appointment of al-Faqīh as the *khalīfa* after al-Maghribī appears to be undermined, once again, by the figure of Bā Ṭaḥan,[94] who supposedly indicates that it was Shaykh Saʿd al-Ẓufārī who was the spiritual master of the Imām (and not al-Maghribī). More scandalously, according to Bā Ṭaḥan, Shaykh Saʿd's letters to al-Faqīh had

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[91] al-Jundī, *al-Sulūk*, 2:463. See also al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:230; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 479–480; al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 145–146; al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 1:55-56.
[92] For more on this famous incident and its historic significance, see discussion below.
[93] al-Jundī, *al-Sulūk*, 2:463.
[94] See discussion in Chapter 1 on Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ and the introduction of Shāfiʿism in Dhofar.

"expressed serious misgivings about al-Faqih al-Muqaddam's chances to become an accomplished Sufi gnostic (ʿ*arif*)." This insinuation is flatly rejected by our supposedly biased *sāda* historians, who, according to Knysh, are also guilty of ignoring "all other evidence pointing to the existence of Sufism and Sufis in Hadramawt prior to al-Faqih al-Muqaddam."[95]

Upon a careful investigation of Knysh's claims, it can be asserted that his conclusions are perfunctory and similarly unwarranted. To start, it is likely that the great Abū Madyan came to know of al-Faqīh and of his religious and spiritual milieu in Hadhramaut through his own Hadhrami disciple Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Muqʿad, of whom Knysh makes no mention.[96] Additionally, as we have seen, it is also conceivable that he was informed about the Imām through the aforementioned Yemeni Shaykh Sufyān b. ʿAbd Allah, who had met with al-Faqīh in Hadhramaut and is also noted to have been a disciple of the great Maghrebi Sufi.[97] Such details illuminate for us a more complex portrait of medieval Sufism and the rise of the *ṭarīqas* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, where Sufi masters were connected through a large regional network of itinerant scholars and seekers (*murīds*), many of whom traversed long distances in search of the leading spiritual masters of their time and played a crucial role in the dissemination of new ideas, schools, and organizational forms to the far reaches of the Islamic world.

As for Bā Ṭaḥan's supposedly problematic account, to assert that it was Saʿd al-Ẓufārī who was al-Faqīh's true master instead of al-Maghribī is to ignore that their correspondences and relationship had taken place during the earlier years of the Imām's spiritual career, as the biographies make clear, since Shaykh Saʿd died in 607/1211 or 609/1214. It must also be noted that until his initiation with the *khirqa* of Abū Madyan, al-Faqīh had taken his spiritual training

[95] Knysh, "The Sāda in History," 220.
[96] See his role in the investiture of al-Faqīh discussed above.
[97] See note 85 above.

from several Sufi authorities, including those previously mentioned in Tarīm.[98] As for Bā Ṭaḥan's mention of Shaykh Saʿd's "serious misgivings" concerning al-Faqīh's spiritual credentials, Knysh is alluding here to Bā Ṭaḥan's *Tuḥfat al-Murīd*, a hagiographic biography of his master Shaykh Saʿd, wherein Bā Ṭaḥan makes certain disparaging remarks towards the Imām. These remarks seem to have been brought to Knysh's attention via al-Ḥāmid, who, after closely analyzing Bā Ṭaḥan's MS, concludes that his views were likely born of a sense of jealousy and personal rivalry with the Imām, of whom Shaykh Saʿd appears to have been quite fond as their personal correspondences make clear.[99] What can be ascertained from al-Ḥāmid's brief observations is that the precise misgivings had emanated from Bā Ṭaḥan and may not so easily be attributable to Shaykh Saʿd, who, on the contrary, appears to think well of the Imām and his knowledge in their preserved correspondences.[100]

A final remark concerns Knysh's generalization on the merits of the *sāda's* historical scholarship, whom he impugns for systematically ignoring "all other evidence pointing to the existence of Sufism and Sufis in Hadhramaut prior to al-Faqih al-Muqaddam." This claim is in fact inaccurate, as some ʿAlawī historians have been well aware of the existence of Sufism prior to al-Faqīh, which the biographical ʿAlawī sources also seem to make clear. As discussed in Chapter 1, the diverging opinions and general confusion surrounding this topic is due to the fact that the majority who identify al-Faqīh as the first Hadhrami 'Sufi' are more specifically referring to his being the first individual to be associated with *ṭarīqa* Sufism in Hadhramaut,

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[98] See discussion on his local teachers above.
[99] See al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:724–725. Surprisingly, as al-Ḥāmid notes here, and as Khirid also observes, elsewhere Bā Ṭaḥan seems to speak well of the Imām. See Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 207-208.
[100] See al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 158; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 207. Knysh does not cite Bā Ṭaḥan's MS, whose precise statements remain a mystery. He also fails to mention that Shaykh Saʿd had been a disciple of al-Faqīh's grandfather Muḥammad Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ while in Dhofar, pointing to his well-established relations with the *sāda*. See Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 173; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:198.

while others correctly point to earlier traces of Sufism in the valley.[101] As the ʿAlawī historian al-Shāṭirī thus explains, prior to the Imām's initiation in the lineage (*silsila*) of Abū Madyan, Hadhramaut had only known of a 'general Sufism' (*al-taṣawwuf al-ʿāmm*), after which the Sufi tradition began to take on a more organized group identity among the *sāda*.[102]

2.6.2. The Breaking of the Sword and the Forging of a New *Sāda* Identity

As we have seen, for an influential spiritual figure of his stature, al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam did not bequeath a prolific legacy of intellectual and spiritual writings, like his other major Sufi contemporary Aḥmad b. ʿAlwān (d. 655/1266) in western Yemen. On the other hand, his wide spiritual appeal and influence is nonetheless noticeable from the hagiographic sources, which abound with his ecstatic spiritual states and utterances and dramatic preternatural acts, including his prolonged states of spiritual annihilation in God (*al-fanāʾ fi-Illah*) and communions with the enigmatic figure of al-Khiḍr and other members of the intermediary realm (*al-barzakh*). Be that as it may, if we are to better appreciate the full impact of his lasting social and spiritual legacy for Hadhrami Sufism and the history of the *sāda* in particular, one must additionally look elsewhere for an explanation.

Certainly, the Imām's Sufi initiation in the *silsila* of Abū Madyan was to become a decisive and momentous turning point in the history of the Banū ʿAlawīs in Hadhramaut and the shaping of their religious and social identity as a prominent Sufi scholarly family. As the major seventeenth/eighteenth-century ʿAlawī saint Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1132/1720) elucidates, for the *sāda*, the tremendous power and influence of al-Faqīh's spiritual

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[101] See discussion in Chapter 1, note 74.

[102] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:253. As previously noted, though the donning of the *khirqa* was most likely already in practice prior to the emergence of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭariqa*, one can say that it took on a renewed significance with the introduction of al-Faqīh's dual *silsila*. See Chapter 1, notes 74 and 75.

rank is understood through the succession of Sufi poleship (*quṭbiyya*), which was widely believed to have been transferred from the great ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlanī (d. 561/1166) of Baghdad to Abū Madyan in North Africa and then to al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam in Hadhramaut.[103]

As a notable and charismatic public figure with considerable spiritual influence, the Imām must have retained a socio-religious agenda to bring about greater peace and stability to his precarious political environment, especially in the wake of the valley's growing tribal rivalries and al-Yamānī's conquest of Tarīm, where the political persecution of the *sāda* remained a potential danger. The Imām's new-found sense of spiritual authority and legitimacy deriving from his connection to the Sufi lineage (*silsila*) of the near-legendary Abū Madyan was, therefore, a major opportunity to forge a new identity for the Imām and his family modeled on a vision of social and spiritual reform that would secure the ʿAlawīs' position as a respectable scholarly family in Tarīm and their wider Hadhrami context.

The Imām's new spiritual identity was to be of immediate consequence for his social standing and scholarly relations. His total identification with the path of spiritual poverty came to a dramatic crescendo with the famous and symbolic episode of the breaking of the sword, where he publicly broke his sword as a powerful marker of his complete shunning of political ambition and of his full devotion to the rectification of Hadhrami society through entirely pacifist and spiritual means.[104] As the contemporary ʿAlawī scholar and historian al-Shāṭirī explains, al-Faqīh's breaking of the sword was a response to the troubled political and social climate of his

[103] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 198. In the Sufi cosmological hierarchy, the '*quṭb'* or pole is the highest-ranking spiritual authority of any given time, and this cosmic function may only be acquired and inherited by spiritual merit and never through succession.

[104] The sword's pieces were inherited by his loyal friend Saʿīd b. ʿĪsā al-ʿAmūdī, and they remain exposed till this day as a religious relic at the location of al-Amūdī's shrine. ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir b. ʿAbd Allah al-Ḥaddād, *al-Shāmil fī Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt wa-Makhālīfiha* (Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ, 2017), 819–822.

immediate Hadhrami context and was intended to achieve clear political and social objectives, namely to secure the peaceful future of the *sāda* as a neutral scholarly family before Hadhramaut's ruling and tribal factions and to initiate a wider program of social and spiritual reform against the pervasive tribal violence of Hadhrami society.[105] Such a decision to relinquish his former identity seems to have been so decisive and formative that it angered his famous teacher ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Bā Marwān, who ended his relations with the Imām and rebuked him with the famous words, "You put out your light, while we had high hopes that you would become like Ibn Fawrak, and you chose the path of Sufism and spiritual poverty, while you were of high stature and honour!"[106]

Al-Faqīh left behind five sons, all of whom became accomplished scholars. The Imām's wife Zaynab bt. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ is also noted in the biographies for her spiritual and material role in assisting his cause and caring after his disciples and the needy, which came to earn her the title of 'Umm al-Fuqarāʾ.'[107]

Conclusion

Al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's introduction of organized Sufism to Hadhramaut ushered in a new age for the valley's spiritual, intellectual, and cultural life. This chapter has aimed to situate

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[105] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī,* 2:304–306. See also the extensive analysis of this major incident in al-Mashhūr, "al-Ustādh al-Aʿzam," 220-222.

[106] "*Adhhabta nūraka wa-qad rajawnā an takūna ka Ibn Fawrak wa-ikhtarta ṭarīq al-tasawwuf wa-l-faqr wa qad kunta ʿaliyy al-miqdār wa-l-qadr*." The reference is to Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Fawrak (d. 406/1015), a major tenth-century theologian and Shāfiʿī jurist. al-Mashhūr, "al-Ustādh al-Aʿẓam," 216. The hagiographic biographies also note an interesting tale in which al-Faqīh was miraculously witnessed conversing with the soul of his teacher Bā Marwān soon after he had passed away and mending their once fraught relationship. al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 167; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 502–503.

[107] When the Imām was asked who would lead them after his death, he is reported to have pointed to Umm al-Fuqarāʾ as his spiritual inheritor, a rare mention from the biographical sources on the spiritual role of the *sāda*'s saintly women. Amin Buxton, *Imams of the Valley* (Western Cape, South Africa: Dar al-Turath al-Islami, 2012), 20.

this development within the broader context of the institutionalizing drive of the emerging *ṭarīqa* lineages in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The Imām's emergence and his introduction of *ṭarīqa* Sufism in Hadhramaut came at a time that was also characterized by dramatic social and political change, with the momentous arrival of the Ayyūbids in 569/1173, who, along with their Rasūlid and Ṭāhirid successors, ushered in a new political era and played an instrumental role in the flourishing of organized Sufism and the further integration of Yemen's intellectual and religious life with the regional trends and developments of the wider Muslim world.

The Ayyūbids' policies during their relatively short-lived reign brought about greater political stability, economic growth, and a flourishing of religious and intellectual life. Their rulers took a keen interest in promoting Sunni Islam through their patronage of religious education and the construction of colleges and libraries, such as the al-Muʿizziyya college in Zabīd. They also took a special interest in the promotion of Sufism by funding the construction of Sufi lodges and exempting the properties of Sufi masters from taxation. These policies were successfully emulated to great effect under their Rasūlid and Ṭāhirid successors, laying the foundations for the flourishing of mysticism and Sunni orthodoxy in Yemen.

The Rasūlids in particular had a tremendous impact on the intellectual and religious history of Yemen. Their sultans generously patronized the scholarly elite, displaying a sustained interest in the development of Islamic culture and institutions. Under their rule, the Yemeni cities of Zabīd and Taʿizz soon turned into major international centers of Islamic learning, attracting famous Muslim scholars from distant Muslim lands looking for opportunities for further advancement. The Rasūlids also had a lasting impact on the development of Sufism in Yemen, as their rulers and state officials took a special interest in the study of philosophical Sufism, where the works of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī and his admirers were actively promoted. The Rasūlids

were succeeded by their Ṭāhirid rivals, whose short reign was brought to an abrupt end by the Ottoman invasion of 945/1538.

These positive developments rarely extended to Hadhramaut, however, which remained locked in a state of political fragmentation, dire economic conditions, and recurring invasions and tribal conflict. The violent invasion by Tūranshāh's governor ʿUthmān al-Zanjīlī in 575/1178 saw the brief overthrow of its three ruling emirates in Tarīm, Shibām, and al-Shiḥr. In response, the valleys' tribes were able to mount a successful uprising, temporarily restoring their traditional seats of power. Their rule was not to last for much longer, however, under the deteriorating conditions for the Ayyūbids in Yemen, as the new governor of Hadhramaut ʿUmar b. Mahdī appears to have used excessive force, leading to the overthrow of their local rulers once more. Ibn Mahdī's violent rule alienated the valley's tribes, especially the powerful Nahd, who thus led a successful rebellion, in which Ibn Mahdī's forces were defeated and he was finally killed in 620/1223.

The removal of Ibn Mahdī inaugurated a new period of political chaos for Hadhramaut. With the sudden takeover of the clans of Nahd, the ambitious leader Masʿūd b. Yamānī sought to unite Hadhramaut and its tribes under his rule, with the backing of his kin. From his stronghold in Tarīm, he established the Āl Yamānī dynasty, which was to last for over three centuries until the Kathīrī invasion of Tarīm in 926 or 927/1521. Under al-Yamānī, the Hadhrami political scene remained highly chaotic, and the situation did not fare much better under his descendants, whose reign fluctuated between periods of relative strength and weakness and was similarly marked by periodic disruptions, internal competition, and frequent conflicts with their Kathīrī rivals. Thus, in 673/1275, the ruler of Dhofar Sālim b. Idrīs al-Ḥabūẓī invaded Hadhramaut, laying siege to Tarīm for a period of three months and taking over Sayʾūn and the surrounding

towns. Al-Ḥabūẓī's invasion brought a new level of chaos and disruption to daily life in the valley, which continued to remain under his grip until he was finally killed during al-Muẓaffār's decisive conquest of Dhofar in 678/1279, which continued to be ruled by his descendants until the Kathīrī conquest of 807/1405.

Given this drawn out climate of political instability, Hadhramaut also remained economically impoverished throughout this period, experiencing great economic hardships relative to western Yemen. Given the relative scarcity of Hadhramaut's fertile lands and its dry climate, the cultivation of date plantations remained the principal and vital source of livelihood for many of the valley's inhabitants and for the *sāda* of Tarīm in particular, who continued to employ the wealth from their many plantations towards the construction of relatively autonomous *ḥawṭas* and mosques with endowments, in addition the funding of local charitable projects and the feeding of the needy.

Al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam thus emerged in a chaotic period characterized by entrenched tribal violence and economic and political uncertainty. These social and political conditions likely contributed to his decisive identification with Sufism and his desire to embark on a vision of social and spiritual reform through entirely pacifist means. Given the absence of contemporaneous historical sources, the standard account surrounding the circumstances of his momentous investiture with the *khirqa* of the great North African Sufi Abū Madyan are brought to question by Peskes and Knysh, who question whether the historical origins of *ṭarīqa* Sufism in Hadhramaut can be accurately determined. Peskes relies heavily on the available accounts in al-Sharjī's fifteenth century work *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ*, in addition to the absence of preserved Sufi writings from al-Faqīh, to conclude that it was in fact the Imām's famous companion Saʿīd al-ʿAmūdī who likely played the bigger role in the introduction of organized Sufism to

Hadhramaut. Similarly, Knysh takes issue with the historicity of the Imām's encounters with the obscure figure of ʿAbd Allah al-Ṣāliḥ al-Maghribī, who invested him with the *khirqa* of Abū Madyan, among other concerns that appear to place in doubt al-Faqīh's status as a Sufi leader.

As this chapter has hopefully shown, a careful review of Knysh and Peskes's concerns indicates that they are largely overstated and unwarranted. The absence of written teachings from al-Faqīh can be attributed to the fact that early sources have not survived, as the biographies do ascribe to him written answers to some three hundred questions on Sufism and legal matters. Aside from this, as previously noted, there is the preserved correspondence with his Sufi master Saʿīd al-Ẓufārī in addition to at least one surviving written sample of prayers attributed to the Imām. More importantly, while al-Sharjī's treatment of the *sāda* in *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣṣ* leaves much to be desired, one need not solely rely on this work to draw any definitive conclusions. As we have seen, the significantly earlier work of al-Jundī's *al-Sulūk*, authored less than a century after the Imām (d. 653/1255), makes mention of some of the early *sāda*, where it also notes the famous incident of the Imām's decisive turn to Sufism that led to his fallout with his teacher Bā Marwān. As for Knysh's concerns surrounding the historicity of al-Faqīh's connection with the great Abū Madyan, it must be recalled that the great Sufi master would have likely come to know of al-Faqīh through his own Hadhrami disciple Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Muqʿad, whom Knysh does not mention and who was initially entrusted with investing al-Faqīh with the *khirqa* before assigning al-Maghribī to complete the task upon his approaching death in Mecca. Furthermore, it is also conceivable that Abū Madyan had come to know of the Imām through the aforementioned Yemeni scholar Sufyān b. ʿAbd Allah al-Abyanī, who had formed a strong spiritual bond with al-Faqīh and is known to have become a disciple of the great Maghrebi Sufi.

While al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam failed to leave behind a significant spiritual legacy of written works or notable Sufi doctrines and practices, his preeminent role in the crafting of a new spiritual identity for the *sāda* in his complete identification with the way of Sufism and the spiritual lineage of Abū Madyan cannot be underestimated. Indeed, the powerful symbolism surrounding the famous incident of his breaking of the sword had a profound historical impact on the evolution of Bāʿ Alawī Sufism as a distinctly pacifist spiritual tradition. The consequences of this momentous decision are persuasively captured by Ho, who eloquently observes,

> This action inaugurated the *sayyid* tradition of pacifist Sufism and is a major plank in *sayyids*' self-identification as independent arbiters of the peace between armed tribes. With this act, the *sayyids* were no longer partisans in local disputes. Unable to defend themselves by force of arms, they tied themselves irrevocably to the general good and began to work for its achievement . . . Together with the Hadrami *sayyids*' repudiation of arms, a global discourse enhanced their capacity for mobility across a landscape troubled by tribal rivalries, since they threatened no one . . . This form of mobility carried with it specific notions of primacy in legal, spiritual, and genealogical matters, which the First Jurist brought together.[108]

[108] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 42.

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The Consolidation of *Ṭarīqa* Identity and Praxis: Imāms ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf and ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār

This chapter investigates the constitutive features of the process through the course of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries by which the ʿAlawīs developed a unique spiritual identity and became increasingly distinguished as a distinct social stratum of Hadhrami society. In order to better comprehend their emerging temporal roles as leading spiritual authorities and mediators of political conflict, an analysis of Hadhramaut's system of social stratification is also necessary. Additionally, an overview of the wider spiritual and intellectual trends of medieval Yemen and how these were impacted by state power and patronage is needed to appreciate the challenges and constraints that the *sāda* faced in their socio-religious and political context, all of which ultimately informed the evolution of a distinctly Hadhrami spiritual culture.

3.1. Revisiting the System of Social Stratification in Hadhramaut

As Serjeant, among others, has noted, it took a few centuries for the *sāda* to become consolidated as a distinct and privileged social stratum in Hadhrami society, as throughout their early history, they were largely indistinguishable from other scholarly *mashāyikh* groups.[1] As Anne K. Bang observes, it is not until sometime in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that we

[1] Serjeant, *The Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt*, 12–13.

begin to witness a considerable rise in the number of *ḥawṭas* associated with various *sayyid* names and the gradual transformation of the *sāda's* "spiritual power into worldly influence."[2]

The *ḥawṭas* were considered inviolable neutral settlements or enclaves, typically including a plantation or some agricultural land. As sacred sanctuaries, they were believed to be protected by an aura of spiritual power, where a certain saintly authority practiced some form of sovereignty. Since at least the sixteenth century in Hadhramaut, these settlements became almost exclusively associated with the wealthy leaders of renowned *sāda* families and served as safe havens for the settling of tribal disputes.[3] This was typically achieved through the appointment of a *sayyid* to the important temporal function of the '*manṣab*,' a hereditary position of considerable social standing, where a capable *sayyid* was typically elected by local tribal elders and entered into contractual agreements with them as the spiritual guardian of a particular *ḥawṭa*, where in return for certain guarantees, he was expected to serve as a spiritual leader, peacemaker, and neutral arbitrator of their inter-tribal conflicts.[4]

This gradual expansion of the ʿAlawīs' temporal role in Hadhrami society reflects the continuation of a process of identity formation that was initiated by al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam in the thirteenth century. In addition to their noble Prophetic lineage, other factors that added to the *sāda's* internal sense of unity and cohesiveness as a distinct scholarly stratum were the organized Sufism with which they came to be closely identified and their strict interpretation of the Islamic

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[2] Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 16–17. As we saw in Chapter 1, the earliest known *ḥawṭa* to be associated with a *sayyid* name in the biographical literature is likely the *ḥawṭa* of Qasam of Imām ʿAlī b. ʿAlawī (d. *circa* 527 or 529/1135) in the early-twelfth century.

[3] As Ho notes, many of these *ḥawṭa* settlements in the sixteenth century were established by members of the ʿAydarūs family from the remittances of wealth acquired abroad. The *sāda* also typically played multiple functions in these settlements, as *manṣabs*, spiritual leaders, dispensers of justice, investors, and the recipients of tithes (*khums*). Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 52-53.

[4] The *sāda* came to gradually displace the *mashāyikh* families from this traditional role in the valley. Dostal, "The Saints of Hadramawt," 238.

legal principle of *kafāʾa* (commensurability in marriage), where a man's Prophetic descent was taken as a decisive criterion in determining his marriageability to their women; while a *sayyid* could marry from any social stratum, a *sayyida* or *sharīfa* was expected to always marry within the family.[5]

Aside from the principle of *kafāʾa*, a major historical development contributing to this process of identity formation, as we saw in Chapter 2, was al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's momentous breaking of the sword and his foregoing of arms, which led to the gradual consolidation of the ʿAlawīs' social identity as a neutral class of unarmed scholars and established them as ideal candidates for the peaceful arbitration of tribal disputes. This pacifist streak, which has been maintained with few exceptions throughout the *sāda's* long history has served to distinguish the ʿAlawīs as a class of spiritual reformers, even from their scholarly peers among the *mashāyikh* families, who held no similar restriction on the carrying of arms.[6]

The classic and standard account informing much of our academic understanding of the system of social stratification in Hadhramaut is provided by Bujra's 1962-63 anthropological study of the town of Ḥurayḍa in the valley of ʿAmd. For Bujra, the social hierarchy of Ḥurayḍa is taken as a "microcosm of the over-all Ḥaḍrami system of stratification."[7] His widely cited study, which has been taken by some as representative of the wider state of social stratification across

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[5] See also, Dostal, "The Saints of Hadramawt, " 236–237. More typically, this legal principle was taken to consist of four important criteria, to which the *sāda* added the decisive criterion of family descent. These were namely: religion, personal status (freeborn or slave), personal character, and wealth. Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 17.

[6] One major notable exception to this long tradition of ʿAlawī pacifism was the brief episode in the early nineteenth century, where the ʿAlawī leader Ṭāhir b. Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir (d. 1241/1825) controversially led a call to arms, establishing a ʿAlawī Imamate in Tarīm. For rich biographical accounts of this Imām's life and on his short-lived Imāmate, including his political correspondences, see Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:158-181; al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:388-393. The ʿAlawī clans of the Shaykh Abū Bakr family and the Bin Yaḥyas, of whom the Bin Ṭāhirs are descendants, are among the few ʿAlawī *sāda* who continue to bear arms in Hadhramut. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 212.

[7] Bujra, *The Politics of Stratification*, xiii.

Hadhramaut, identifies three main social strata in Ḥurayḍa, which may be further divided into subgroups. The most privileged social group at the top of the hierarchy are the *sāda*, represented by the al-ʿAttās clan in Ḥurayḍa, who yield the greatest spiritual and political power largely on account of their noble Prophetic lineage and scholarship. After the *sāda* come the scholarly (*mashāyikh*) families and the major Hadhrami tribes (*qabāʾil*) who trace their ancestry back to Qaḥtan, the famed ancestor of all South Arabians. Finally, the lowest stratum are the poor (*masākīn*) and weak (*duʿafāʾ*) commoners, among whom are included the peasants (*ḥirthān*) and the servants (*akhdām* or *ṣubyān*), who typically are of unknown or uncommon tribal origin and have no religious standing.

This classification, which has been viewed as generally representative of Hadhramaut until at least the 1940s, is questioned in Sylvaine Camelin's more recent study on the social stratification of the coastal town of al-Shiḥr. As she convincingly observes, Bujra's generalization on the stratification of Hadhrami society needs to be revisited, as it stems from a limited source base and fails to consider differences between the Hadhrami interior and the coastal areas, the latter of which are generally understudied. As she further notes, Hartley's 1959-60 doctoral thesis on the Nahd tribe offers a slightly different classification as viewed from their tribal perspective. In his classification, the tribesmen occupy the highest social stratum and are followed by the holy men (where the *mashāyikh* and the *sāda* are included together), government officials and wealthy merchants, the poor (*masākīn*), and the ex-slaves (*ʿabīd*) and their descendants. [8] As Sylvaine thus concludes concerning these earlier studies, "the works of

[8] Sylvaine, "Reflections," 148. See John G. Hartley, "The Political Organization of an Arab Tribe of the Hadhramaut" (PhD diss., London School of Economics, University of London, 1961).

these two anthropologists reflect the views of their informants who mainly came from different groups, and the different criteria on which their view of stratification was based."[9]

Sylvaine's study points to a more complex picture of Hadhrami society, suggesting that far from reflecting a monolithic reality, the scope of the *sāda's* power and their privileged status in the valley are frequently a function of demographics and local dynamics. Thus, unlike the case of Ḥurayḍa, where the al-ʿAttās clan occupy the highest social standing, in the coastal town of al-Shiḥr, the *sāda's* temporal power and spiritual authority is divided among competing clans, where the al-Miḥḍar branch of the Shaykh Abū Bakr family have gained a reputation for their religious learning, while the *manṣabs* of the ʿAydarūs family have historically occupied the role of mediating tribal disputes. As she also observes, only three of the town's twenty-five mosques are named after the *sāda*, while the rest are named after the *mashāyikh*, a clear indication of the *sāda's* relatively weaker demographic presence and social standing in al-Shiḥr.[10]

Sylvaine's cautious interjection against the general tendency of placing the ʿAlawī *sāda* at the top of the system of social stratification across Hadhramaut is further corroborated when we consider the case of the Āl ʿAmūdī family of the Dawʿān valley. As the progeny of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's spiritual companion Shaykh Saʿīd b. ʿĪsā al-ʿAmūdī, a claimed descendant of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, this famed family has historically dominated the Dawʿan valley in western Hadhramaut as its spiritual leaders, ruling over it intermittently and becoming major rivals of the ʿAlawīs since at least the eighteenth century.[11] Thus, Sylvaine's conclusion that "there is no

[9] Sylvaine, "Reflections," 147–149.
[10] Sylvaine, "Reflections," 152–153.
[11] See Chapter 2, note 72.

single correct view of Hadhrami stratification" is important to bear in mind, so as to avoid exaggerating the *sāda's* historical power and social standing across Hadhrami society.[12]

Though the *sāda* did not occupy the same social standing and level of influence across all of Hadhramaut, especially among the Bedouin tribes of the rural areas, who were generally unaccustomed to the ways of their piety and religious scholarship, they nevertheless did begin to emerge as a distinct stratum of considerable social and religious power by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the major urban scholarly centers, such as Tarīm, and in the *ḥawṭas* that they had established.[13] In order to better understand this historical dynamic where, in addition to a life of disciplined scholarship, the *sāda* began to occupy a more prominent temporal role within their society, we now examine the impact of the Rasūlid state's patronage of religious learning and scholarship in western Yemen, which rarely extended to the Hadhramaut, and how this in turn informed the ʿAlawīs' many choices, their growing social roles, and the unique evolution of their intellectual and spiritual tradition.

3.2. State Patronage of Sufism and the School of Ibn ʿArabī Under the Rasūlids

As Alexander Knysh indicates in his insightful study on the reception of Ibn ʿArabī's (d. 638/1240) thought in premodern Yemen, the Rasūlid sultans were generally well-educated, with strong pro-Sufi leanings, which translated into the generous patronage of Sufi scholarship in their

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[12] As she accurately observes, competing views on the stratification of Hadhrami society are frequently a reflection of the differing criteria among the populations in question; while the *sāda* emphasized religious descent and knowledge as a major criterion, the autochthonous tribes (*qabāʾil*), by contrast, preferred to classify people according to their ability to defend their honour, consequently ranking warriors of a higher social standing. Sylvaine, "Reflections," 149. Cf. Dostal's remark, "Owing to their descent from the 'Household of the Prophet', the *sada* were accorded a pre-eminent position within the stratified society of Hadhramaut." "The Saints of Hadramawt," 236-237.

[13] One can say, however, that in more modern times, through their religious scholarship, spiritual charisma, energetic preaching, and the generous funding of religious institutions and charitable projects, the ʿAlawīs seem to have gradually emerged as the most influential social stratum in Hadhramaut, especially since the post-1990 unification of Yemen.

territories, especially in their capital of Zabīd and its environs. In particular, they played a crucial role in the promotion of the Ibn ʿArabī school, which rose to great prominence under their protection and patronage. The frequent support and protection of Ibn ʿArabī's Sufi admirers by successive sultans and princes against their many detractors thus ensured that al-Shaykh al-Akbar's more controversial doctrines would soon gain a wide dissemination and following under their rule.[14]

The Rasūlids' generally pro-Sufi bias, however, also provoked the ire and envy of other segments of the religious elite, especially among the ranks of the jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) and preachers (*khuṭabāʾ*), who accused Ibn ʿArabī's admirers of heretical excesses and innovations. The wide promotion of the Shaykh's teachings by his many admirers was roundly condemned by these *ʿulāmāʾ* for the heterodox beliefs and practices they were deemed to promote, which included ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*), Sufi sessions in which disciples reportedly died from emotional shock, and a general indulgence in "strange beliefs" consisting of "a bizarre mixture of the Sufi doctrine of the 'Perfect Man', incarnationalism, and messianic tenets of radical Shiʿism."[15] These developments led to a protracted and highly polemical struggle between the jurists and the Sufis of Yemen's Sunni intellectual elite that was to have "a lasting impact on the intellectual and religious life of both Yemens."[16]

In many ways, the growing confidence of the Sufi faction in western Yemen was a reflection of a much wider and more general pattern since the emergence of the *ṭarīqas* in the twelfth century of growing allegiances and relationships of patronage between Sufi leaders and

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[14] For examples of the Rasūlids' frequent interventions to protect the Sufi faction against the concerted attacks of the jurists, see Knysh, "Ibn ʿArabi in the Yemen," 42–43, 49–50, 52–53.
[15] Knysh, "Ibn ʿArabi in the Yemen," 45.
[16] Knysh, "Ibn ʿArabi in the Yemen," 39. For a more comprehensive account of this struggle between the Sufis and the jurists, see also Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 225–269; Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 201–212.

the ruling elites of diverse Muslim lands.[17] Thus, by the end of the fourteenth century, under the reign of Sultan al-Ashraf Ismāʿīl (d. 803/1401), who was inclined towards mysticism, the Sufi faction had finally gained the upper hand. By this time, the city of Zabīd had become an international center of Sufi learning and scholarship, where large mystical gatherings of Sufi audition (*samāʿ*) had become commonplace, such that the Sufis' influence had become on par with that of the *fuqahāʾ*, thanks largely to the energetic efforts of their highly influential and charismatic leader Ismāʿīl al-Jabartī (d. 806/1403). With the assistance of his disciples, al-Jabartī "managed to create a more or less monolithic movement which declared its full allegiance to the teaching of Ibn ʿArabī and his school," where *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and al-*Futūḥat al-Makkiyya*, in addition to their commentaries, became "standard textbooks" for Sufi disciples (*murīdūn*).[18]

Al-Jabartī's royal patronage and influence led to an intellectual flourishing of the Ibn ʿArabī school in Rasūlid Yemen, attracting some major intellectual figures, among whom the most eminent and original was perhaps ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. 832/1428).[19] With its ability to attract such influential figures, the Sufi faction's influence continued to grow under the leadership of al-Jabartī's most devoted and loyal companion, Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr al-Raddād (d. 821/1418), who succeeded him after his death in 806/1403 as the head of the Sufis in Zabīd. Al-Raddād's influence and strong relations with the Rasūlid sultans ensured his eventual promotion

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[17] "From one group among many Muslim claimants to religious leadership before the eleventh century, the Sufis became, between 1100 and 1400, not only God's spokesmen on earth but also the confidantes of kings." Green, *Sufism*, 95.

[18] Knysh, "Ibn ʿArabi in the Yemen," 46–47.

[19] For James W. Morris, al-Jīlī is "undoubtedly both the most original thinker and the most remarkable and independent mystical writer . . . in the 'school' of Ibn ʿArabī." "Ibn ʿArabi and His Interpreters Part II (Conclusions): Influences and Interpretations" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107, no. 1 (1987): 108. As Knysh observes, al-Jīlī is also particularly relevant in elucidating for us al-Jabartī's pedagogy and method of spiritual training, where the intensive study of Ibn ʿArabī's works was held as a "kind of shortcut, leading the novice to a greater conceptual clarity, and in the long run, to spiritual and intellectual perfection." Knysh, "Ibn ʿArabi in the Yemen," 47.

to the rank of the chief judge (*qāḍī*) of Yemen under the reign of al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (d. 827/1424), which gave the Sufis official recognition from the ruling family and was widely interpreted as a triumph over the jurists.

Al-Raddād's official promotion, however, soon emboldened the jurists to relaunch their anti-Sufi campaign under the leadership of the famous and tenacious Yemeni poet and theologian Ibn al-Muqrī (d. 837/1444). Ibn al-Muqrī's efforts to rally the *ʿulamāʾ* against the Sufis played a decisive role in the gradual weakening of the Sufi faction. The Sufis' influence continued to wane following the death of al-Nāṣir, until several of their leaders were eventually persecuted under the reign of al-Manṣūr ʿAbd Allah at the instigation of Ibn al-Muqrī, including their last eminent intellectual figure Aḥmad b. al-Kirmānī (d. 845/1441), who was forced to publicly repent and abandon Ibn ʿArabī's works. By this time, the Rasūlids had reached the peak of their power, and the eventual retreat of the Ibn ʿArabī school was thus, in the final analysis, equally a consequence of the overall decline of the Rasūlids' power and patronage.[20]

3.3. The View from Hadhramaut

The ʿAlawī *sāda* frequently travelled to western Yemen and the Hejaz, especially during the Hajj season, where they would sojourn for extended periods in its scholarly cities such as Aden, Zabīd, Taʿizz, Mecca, and Medina, regularly benefiting from these cities' scholarly elites. While these travels and scholarly connections suggest a level of integration with the wider scholarly networks and intellectual trends of Yemen and the Hejaz, Hadhramaut's relatively remote and isolated position as a political, economic, and cultural backwater meant that it was

[20] Knysh, "Ibn ʿArabi in the Yemen," 53-56. See also Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam,* 209–212.

less likely to attract scholars from these regions and that the ʿAlawīs had adjusted to a more or less autonomous spiritual culture with its own distinctive local features.

While Ibn ʿArabī's works were certainly known and studied by members of the valley's scholarly elite, his teachings never managed to gain the same level of institutional and political support in Hadhramaut, which was not as well integrated politically, culturally, and economically with the seat of Rasūlid power in Zabīd, suggesting that the sultans' lavish support and patronage of Yemen's scholarly elite rarely extended to the valley. Furthermore, as we shall see, the fractious episode in Yemen's intellectual and spiritual life surrounding the Ibn ʿArabī school in Zabīd and the protracted conflicts that emerged within the ranks of the city's religious elite likely played a significant role in the evolution of Hadhrami Sufism, likely informing the ʿAlawīs' generally more cautious approach towards al-Shaykh al-Akbar's controversial teachings.[21] Be that as it may, and as we shall see in the following chapters, the Shaykh's works continued to be privately studied among the Hadhrami Sufi elite in greater numbers than we are initially led to believe and clear traces of his intellectual and spiritual legacy continued to be felt within the Sufi works of the *sāda* and other Hadhrami Sufi intellectuals.

It thus remains unclear the extent to which the ʿAlawīs were the recipients of Rasūlid state patronage, and if so, it is likely that such patronage would have been the exception rather than the rule. As we've already seen, the turbulent and highly precarious political scene in Hadhramaut meant that the Rasūlids' control over its territories remained for the most part indirect and nominal. As for the local Hadhrami rulers, Ho notes that "the ʿAlawī Way was free of state patronage because states were weak there."[22] Indeed, the local ruling tribes were far too

[21] For more on this discussion, see Chapters 4 and 5.
[22] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 43. Elsewhere, however, Ho (p. 50) cites Knysh's assertion that the scholars of Tarīm were among those generously supported by the Rasūlids. Knysh's claim seems to be unsupported by a clear reference. See Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition,* 227.

preoccupied with directing their resources and focus against their rivals and enemies, and they frequently found themselves in an uneasy relationship with the *sāda*, who were viewed by some with a sense of suspicion for their spiritual charisma, growing temporal power, and popular following.

This understanding seems to be corroborated by the *sāda*'s own accounts in their biographical sources, which note that the construction of the ʿAlawīs' many mosques and *ḥawṭas* was privately funded by the substantial wealth accruing from their many plantations. This was further supplemented since at least the sixteenth century by the remittances of wealthy ʿAlawīs living abroad, especially from among the ʿAydarūs family in India.[23] Thus, one can argue that it is this combination of weak local rulers, who were unable to secure the safety of Hadhramaut's towns and villages from frequent external invasions, and the general absence of state patronage that propelled, nay compelled, the *sāda* to fill this institutional vacuum and utilize their resources towards the construction of their own autonomous *ḥawṭas* and mosques, in addition to their charitable efforts in alleviating the hardships of Hadhramaut's impoverished population.

As we have seen, Knysh offers a somewhat less charitable and worldly interpretation of the *sāda*'s growing temporal role in Hadhrami society, casting doubt on their credentials and 'sanctity' as bona fide Sufi leaders.[24] Aside from a potentially Protestant bias in his conceptualization of Sufi 'sainthood,' in which saints are conceived in primarily more reclusive terms as individual seekers and 'mystics,'[25] one can also argue that such an analysis fails to grasp the different set of societal challenges that the *sāda* had to endure when compared to their Sufi counterparts in western Yemen, who were lavishly patronized by the Ayyūbids and their Rasūlid

[23] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 53.
[24] For my analysis of his views, see discussion in Introduction.
[25] See Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 31; King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 8-34, 96-97.

and Ṭāhirid successors. These dynasties also paid great attention to the construction of mosques and libraries, which meant that the Sufis could devote their time and energy almost exclusively towards their devotional practices and scholarly pursuits. The general absence of state support in Hadhramaut and the valley's greater rates of poverty and political and economic uncertainty, by contrast, meant that the *sāda* had to shoulder heavier financial burdens and social responsibilities than their Yemeni counterparts. Aside from their scholarly activities and stringent spiritual devotions, their time would have been divided between the buying and sowing of date plantations, the erection of new mosques, *ḥawṭas*, and endowments (*awqāf*), their communal commitments and charitable contributions towards the poor, and in the case of the leading *sāda* who served as *manṣabs*, their various contractual obligations towards the local tribes. These competing demands may also help us to at least partially account for the general absence of ʿAlawī scholarly works and Sufi treatises prior to the mid-fifteenth century, after which we begin to witness a steadier flourishing of scholarly writing, especially in Tarīm.[26]

Given the realities of their socio-political context, the establishment of ʿAlawī *ḥawṭas* was likely an intentional process that aimed to fulfill at least two major objectives. As an independent ʿAlawī sanctuary that assumed a politically neutral status within a hostile climate of sustained political instability, the *ḥawṭa* would have given the *sāda* a greater sense of spiritual autonomy and control over their lands from the frequent interventions and political machinations of local rulers. More importantly, the ʿAlawīs' growing association with the function of the *manṣab* was likely consciously cultivated as part of a wider agenda of restoring a sense of peace and stability to a region riddled with violent political upheavals and tribal conflicts.

[26] For more on the flourishing of scholarly activity in Tarīm during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Muḥammad Yaslam ʿAbd al-Nūr, *al-Ḥayāt al-ʿIlmiyya fī Tarīm fī al-Qarn al-ʿĀshir al-Hijri al-Sādis ʿAshar al-Mīlādī* (Tarim, Yemen: Tarīm lil-Dirāsat wa-l-Nashr, 2010). See also, Chapter 4.

Aside from these material considerations, the Indonesian born *sayyid* ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī b. Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭās (d. 1916) offers an idealized and characteristically Sufi explanation concerning the absence of earlier Sufi works among the *sāda* in *al-ʿAlam al-Nibrās*, a short informative treatise on the Bā ʿAlawī *tarīqa*, where he suggests that

> given this was a *ṭarīqa* of spiritual realization (*taḥqīq*), experiential tasting (*adhwāq*), and secrets (*asrār*), they [the early generations] leaned towards obscurity, anonymity and secrecy. Thus, they chose not to author any treatises or works on these realities, and this remained the case till the generation of al-ʿAydarūs and his brother ʿAlī, when their circle [of disciples] expanded as did the distances, such that the near and the far were attached to them. At this point, books needed to be authored to provide greater clarifications and definitions . . .[27]

More convincingly, the relative absence of earlier Sufi works may also be explained by the *sādas'* more practical religious commitments and their greater focus on the *Sharīʿa* sciences, especially the science of transactions (*al-muʿāmala*) and the dimension of orthopraxy (*ʿamal*) more generally, which includes, in addition to private worship, such social commitments as public preaching, religious instruction, and calling to God (*daʿwa*), among other pious initiatives aimed at the common weal. This is made clear by the same author who approvingly quotes the nineteenth-century Hadhrami scholar ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAḥmad Bā Sawdān as stating, "Our ʿAlawī masters . . . the majority of them for the most part choose not to concern or exert themselves, nor take any initiative, except with the realization of the science of transactions (*ʿulūm al-muʿāmala*) – their knowledge, practice, and realization."[28] Indeed, as Bang correctly notes, the ʿAlawī tradition has always coupled mysticism with a strong emphasis on the Sharīʿa, "both as the science of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and a way of life," such that "*fiqh* came to be considered the basis of all knowledge, including mystical insight."[29]

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[27] ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī b. Ḥasan al-ʿAṭṭās, al-ʿAlam al-Nibrās fī al-Tanbīh ʿalā Manhaj al-Akyās (Tarīm, Yemen: Zāwiyat al-ʿAydarūs al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 22.
[28] al-ʿAṭṭās, *al-ʿAlam al-Nibrās*, 4.
[29] Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 15.

Though some notable *sāda* would eventually author more philosophical Sufi works of Sufi metaphysics (*ḥaqāʾiq*) by the sixteenth century[30], the ʿAlawīs would continue to maintain a stronger focus on the more practical and exoteric dimensions of orthopraxy and of putting knowledge into action (*ʿamal*) as a general spiritual principle, which in time would come to be succinctly expressed by the popular aphorism, "Strive and you shall witness!" (*Jāhid tushāhid*).[31] This strong emphasis on action, legal knowledge, and training, once again, calls to mind Kugle's notion of 'juridical Sufism,' which we find epitomized in the paradigmatic life and career of al-Ghazālī, whose works, unsurprisingly, have held pride of place among the *sāda*.[32] As we shall see, this seems to be a consistent feature of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism, characterizing the *sāda*'s spiritual culture and preoccupation as a scholarly class since its earliest generations, where the daily study of Shāfiʿī *fiqh* works alongside popular works on spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*), such as the highly popular *Iḥyāʾ*, has been the standard practice.[33]

[30] For more on their Sufi works of *ḥaqāʾiq* and the extent of their scholarly engagements with philosophical Sufism, see Chapters 4, 5, and 6.
[31] Mostafa al-Badawi, *Sufi Sage of Arabia*, 125–126.
[32] A common concern in the historiography of Sufism is the tendency to demarcate its 'mystical' or 'esoteric' dimension from the 'exoteric' dimension of jurisprudence and ritual praxis (*fiqh*). While this scholarly demarcation is to an extent warranted, the continued treatment of these two traditions as strictly independent fields of inquiry obscures their high degree of inter-dependence in the premodern Islamic *weltanschauung*. It is also indicative of a general 'myth' within the field, highlighted by Kugle, Bernd Radtke, and William Chittick, among others, that the Sufi tradition evolved more or less independently from the sciences of the Sharīʿa. Such a view fails to consider the phenomenological dimension of Sufi religious experience, where the the Sharīʿa and its religious prescriptions are taken as the foundation for all true spiritual realization. See Bernd Radtke, "Ijtihād and Neo-Sufism," *Asiatische Studien* 48 (1994): 909; Kugle, *Rebel*, 5-26. See also my study: "Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī's Personalist Theory of the Sharīʿa: An Examination of His Legal Doctrine," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 6 (2017), 1-46.
[33] For more on al-Ghazālī's reception within their *ṭarīqa*, see discussion below. Thus, as early as the mid-seventh/thirteenth century, al-Faqīh's cousin Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī (d. 650/1253) is noted to have studied al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) works of *al-Basīṭ*, *al-Wasīṭ*, *al-Wajīz*, al-Shīrāzī's (d. 476/1083) *Muhadhdhab* and *Tanbīh*, and al-Rāfiʿī's (d. 623/1226) *Muḥarrar* in Shāfiʿī law, in addition to al-Qushayrī's famous *Risāla* in Sufism. Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 483–484. As we saw earlier, Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī is claimed by some historians as the first Sufi in Hadhramaut. See Chapter 1, note 74.

3.4. Al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's Descendants

As we saw in Chapter 2, al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam had five sons. The Imām was known to say concerning them, "ʿAlawī, ʿAbd Allah, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān are from the Essence; ʿAlī and Aḥmad are from the Attributes." This was understood by some to mean that the first three would come to know God through His Essence, while the last two would come to know him through His Attributes.[34] From among his sons, Imām ʿAlawī b. al-Faqīh (d. 669/1270) was better known for inheriting his father's spiritual 'secret' and for the illustrious saintly progeny that would one day emerge from his descendants.

Imām ʿAlawī was known as '*al-Ghayūr*' for his possessiveness of his name, such that none of the *sāda* were able to name their sons ʿAlawī during his lifetime.[35] He was a major spiritual authority in his day, who, like his forefathers before him, was noted in the hagiographic biographies for his many saintly preternatural acts (*karāmāt*). [36] The Imām took on the responsibility of educating his brothers along with his father, who predicted that he would attain to the station of 'highest sanctity' (*al-ṣiddīqiyya al-kubrā*).[37]

The hagiographic biographies also highlight an interesting interaction narrated by the Sufi Shaykh Aḥmad Bā Mukhtār between Imām ʿAlawī and the governor of al-Shiḥr upon their arrival to the coastal town during their return journey from Medina. After being informed of their arrival, the governor sent one of his servants to invite the Imām as his guest. Imām ʿAlawī turned

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[34] al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley*, 59.
[35] In one famous hagiographic story, when the wife of his brother ʿAbd al-Raḥmān entered into labour, and they decided to name their newborn ʿAlawī, her delivery was interrupted for days, until Imām ʿAlawī convinced them to change the name, after which she was finally able to deliver. Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 517.
[36] In one such famous story, his father had sent the Imām to bring some green fodder for their sheep, but he was unable to complete the task for fear of cutting down the plants, as he could hear their glorification of God. al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:211-215.
[37] Imām ʿAlawī was also said to have declared concerning his spiritual state, "I am in the station of al-Junayd." al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley, 60*; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 516.

down the invitation, and the servant became worried for his safety from the governor's wrath. Shaykh Bā Mukhtār then pressed the servant to insist upon the invitation and to ask the Imām to accept it for the sake of his grandfather (the Prophet), and the Imām accepted, knowing full well of Bā Mukhtār's intervention. On their way to greet the governor, they encountered him heading towards them, at which point the Imām recited the following couplets, echoing a familiar trope in the Sufi literature,

> When the *amīr* stands at the door of the Sufi *faqīr*,
> Then splendid is the *faqīr* and splendid is the *amīr*.
>
> But when the *faqīr* stands at the door of the *amīr*,
> Then wretched is the *amīr* and wretched is the *faqīr*.[38]

Imām ʿAlawī married his second cousin Fāṭima bt. Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī, who bore him two sons, ʿAlī and ʿAbd Allah.[39] Al-Shillī notes the popularly circulated belief among the *sāda* concerning the inherited spiritual qualities of their descendants that the spiritual opening (*fatḥ*) of ʿAlī's progeny would be in their invocation of God (*dhikr*), while the opening of ʿAbd Allah's progeny would be in their recitation of the Qurʾān.[40] Imām ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī (d. 731/1331), as he is known in the colloquial Hadhrami, would become a major scholar and leader of his time, taking on the leadership of the ʿAlawīs after the death of his brother ʿAlī in 709/1309.[41]

As we enter the early fourteenth century, we start to observe a gradual shift towards greater detail in the hagiographic biographies, which begin to provide more valuable information

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[38] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 513-514.
[39] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:214.
[40] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:215; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 249.
[41] Imām ʿAbd Allah's descendants became known as the Āl ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī branch of the *sādā*, which today consists of numerous sub-clans that are widely dispersed across Yemen, the Hejaz, Dhofar, India, and Southeast Asia. The families of the two famous authors of our hagiographic biographical works Āl al-Shillī and and Āl Khirid belong to this branch of the *sāda*. See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Mashhūr, *Shams al-Ẓahīra fī Nasab Ahl al-Bayt min Banī ʿAlawī*, ed. Muḥammad Ḍiyāʾ Shihāb (Jeddah: ʿĀlam al-Maʿrifa, 1984), 1:335-370; Abū Bakr b. ʿAlī al-Mashhūr, "al-Shaykh ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila*, 321–322.

concerning the ʿAlawīs' daily devotional routines and scholarly training, including the works they studied, their scholarly exchanges, and samples of their Sufi poetry and popular sayings or teachings.[42] The biographies include considerable detail concerning Imām ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī's feats of spiritual worship, his daily routines, his various scholarly engagements, and charitable projects. The Imām is also noted for his near legendary generosity; with the wealth of his plantations he would spend generously on the *sāda* families of Tarīm and their servants, even gifting lands to the grave diggers of Tarīm, while retaining little for himself. For the ʿAlawīs' main mosque of Āl Aḥmad, he donated several plantations and wells to the value of some 90,000 dinars as endowments for its maintenance and upkeep and for the hosting and feeding of its daily congregants and visitors, which led to it being renamed as the Bā ʿAlawī mosque in his honour.[43]

Imām ʿAbd Allah reached a certain level of recognition and accomplishment throughout his scholarly career, with al-Shillī going as far as to overstate his influence as the 'renewer' (*mujaddid*) of the seventh *Hijrī* century, noting that he may only be rightfully compared to al-Ghazālī.[44] In his formative years he studied Shāfiʿī law with Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad Ṣāḥib Mirbāṭ (d. 720/1320) and Shaykh ʿAbd Allah b. Ibrāhīm Bā Qushayr, and he also studied the sciences of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, and Sufism with his grandfather al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, being invested with the *khirqa* from them, as was the common practice.[45]

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[42] As we reach the early sixteenth century, which begins to witness a flourishing of scholarship in Hadhramaut, the biographical entries offer us a much more complete picture of the *sāda's* scholarly training. See, for example, Khirid's entry on Imām Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Khawn (d. 929/1523), a descendant of Imām ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī, where he provides a list of the legal, grammatical, and *ḥadīth* works he studied. Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 247. On the state of scholarship in the sixteenth century, see Chapter 4.

[43] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 229. The Bā ʿAlawī mosque's name is mistakenly ascribed by Peskes to ʿAlawī b. ʿUbayd Allah (d. 412/1021?), the progenitor of the Banū ʿAlawīs. Peskes, "Der Heilige," 54.

[44] "*Lā yuqās illa bi-l-Ghazālī . . .*" al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:185.

[45] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:185.

After his early religious training in Tarīm, where he also mastered the Arabic language, he travelled to further his studies in Yemen before embarking on the Hajj pilgrimage in 670/1271. He settled temporarily in the city of Aḥwar on his way, where he studied with the famous Shaykh ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. Maymūn al-Tihāmī (d. 678/1279).[46] The Imām went on to settle for at least one year in Medina and eight years in Mecca, reaching a certain level of scholarly fame and recognition, where he studied extensively with the scholarly elite of the Hejaz and received many *ijāzas*. His stay in Mecca was interrupted, however, when he received letters from Tarīm's scholarly community informing him of the passing of his brother ʿAlī and urging him to return at once to his homeland. On his return journey, he passed through the cities of Taʿizz, Zabīd, and Mayfaʿa, where he was well received, engaging in scholarly activities and taking on several students, initiating some with the Sufi *khirqa*. He also passed through the city of al-Aḥwar, where he led the funeral prayer on the aforementioned Shaykh ʿUmar, appointing the Shaykh's son to lead the spiritual community (*muqaddam*) after him.[47]

Upon his return to Tarīm, the Imām married his brother ʿAlī's wife, Fāṭima bt. Saʿd Bā Layth, with whom he had two sons, Muḥammad and ʿAlī. Imām ʿAbd Allah resumed a life of devotion in Hadhramaut, where he taught Shāfiʿī *fiqh* and Sufism, taking on a generation of students until he died in 731/1331.[48] He also fathered one other son named Aḥmad from his other wife and paternal cousin Fāṭima bt. ʿAbd Allah, who would become the father of the famous

[46] When asked why he preferred settling in the relatively remote city of Ahwar, where he built his famous *ḥawṭa*, Shaykh ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. Maymūn explained that he had found the city to be in a state of moral ruin, and he hoped to be a means of salvation for its people. al-Mashhūr, "al-Shaykh ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī," 314n1. This theme, as we shall see, is a recurring one for the *sāda*, who for centuries have made a habit of extended excursions into the more remote rural areas and villages of Yemen to spread greater religious literacy and education to the country's relatively uneducated Bedouin population.
[47] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 538.
[48] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:184–191; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 227–238.

Imām Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 787/1386), who was popularly known as 'Jamal al-Layl' for his peerless feats of night worship.[49]

While the biographies have much to say on Imām ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī, less is known about the life of his brother ʿAlī. The biographies indicate that he would spend the three months of Rajab, Shaʿbān, and Ramaḍān in long retreats at the tomb of the Prophet Hūd.[50] He also became popularly known among the *sāda* as one of three ʿAlawīs who were particularly recognized for their spiritual power of answering to those who call upon their names in prayer (*istighātha*) and rising to their succour.[51] Imām ʿAlī left behind one son, Imām Muḥammad (d. 765/1354), and six daughters, Maryam, Khadīja, Zaynab, ʿĀʾisha, Bahiyya, and Māniya.[52]

Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī was also a solitary figure, who preferred the simple rural life of contemplative worship over the rigours of scholarly study in Tarīm. After the death of his father at a young age, he was raised by his uncle ʿAbd Allah, under whom he received his early religious training, memorizing half of the Qurʾān. He later travelled to Mecca and Medina to perform the Hajj pilgrimage, benefitting from the scholars of the Hejaz, having also the

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[49] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 231. This Imām's family line would eventually die out, and the now famous and widely diffused ʿAlawī clan of Jamal al-Layl in fact derive their name from a later progenitor of the same sobriquet, Imām Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Muʿallim b. Muḥammad Asad Allah b. Ḥasan al-Turābī b. ʿAlī b. al-Faqīh (d. 845/1442). For more on these two notable figures, see al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:73-74, 177-179; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 231-232, 361-367.

[50] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:231-232; al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 175.

[51] The other two being his father, Imām ʿAlawī, and his celebrated great-grandson Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār, discussed below. al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 175.

[52] al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 176. Imām ʿAlī is the only Bā ʿAlawī *sayyid* to have a distinct biographical entry in *Ṭabaqāt al-Khawāṣ,* an important fourteenth-century hagiographic biographical work on Yemen's major saintly figures by the Zabīdī scholar Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Sharjī (d. 893/1488). The Imām's entry also includes a brief discussion of the Banū ʿAlawīs in Hadhramaut and makes mention of his major descendants Imāms Muḥammad Mawlā al-Dawīla, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf, ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār, and ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, the central figures of Chapters 3 and 4. *Ṭabaqāṭ al-Khawāṣ,* 223.

opportunity to befriend the renowned Sufi scholar and jurist ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allah al-Ṭawāshī[53] (d. 748/1347) during his return journey.

Following his return to Hadhramaut, Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlī chose to settle in the rural desert area of Yubḥur, located near the tomb of the Prophet Ḥūd, where he built himself a private residence near a spring for solitary worship and contemplation. This was a common practice for many of the *sāda,* who frequently took for themselves an alternative residence in the countryside for extended periods. Such retreats offered them temporary relief from the social demands and the rigours of scholarly life in Tarīm, freeing their time for private meditation and worship. They were also an opportunity for the *sāda* to preach and interact with the valley's rural and uneducated Bedouin population, which was a recurring concern for them.[54] Imām Muḥammad's residence in the area found a positive reception among the locals, and soon a small village had formed around him. Another village was later established in the area, and the Imām's settlement was thus named 'Yubḥur al-Dawīla,' meaning the 'old Yubḥur' in colloquial Ḥaḍramī, after which he became known as Muḥammad Mawlā al-Dawīla.[55]

The hagiographic biographies note that Imām Muḥammad Mawlā al-Dawīla stood out among the *sāda* for his relative lack of scholarly training, where he was not known to master any scholarly works in particular. Be that as it may, they nonetheless highlight his unusual spiritual

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[53] ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allah al-Ṭawāshī was the Sufi master of the highly celebrated Yemeni Sufi and prolific Shāfiʿī scholar ʿAbd Allah b. Asʿad al-Yāfiʿī (d. 768/1367), whose *Nashr al-Maḥāsin al-Ghāliya,* among other works, was widely studied among the ʿAlawīs. For more on al-Yāfiʿī, see Ibn al-ʿImād ʿAbd al-Ḥayy b. Aḥmad al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir and Maḥmūd al-Arnāʾūṭ (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1986), 8:362-363.

[54] al-Mashhūr, "al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Mawlā al-Dawīla," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila,* 447.

[55] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 1:201. The settlement's pronunciation is sometimes mistakenly noted as 'Duwayla,' the diminutive form of '*dawla*.' The correct vocalization is 'Dawīla,' however, from the same root '*d.w.l,*', the meaning of which is to become 'used' or to be 'exchanged,' a reference to the settlement's older status.

states, his various *karāmāt,* and his attainment of lofty esoteric secrets and divinely bequeathed inner knowledge (*al-ʿūlūm al-ladunniyya*), which remained inaccessible to many of his peers. In one famous story, the Imām had wanted to lead the prayer at the Bā ʿAlawī mosque when he was stopped, as he was seen to be uneducated and not worthy of the honour. Upon completing their prayers, the Imām proceeded to give a remarkable exegesis of a *sūra* in the Qurʾān and was instantly recognized by those in attendance for his divinely gifted knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-wahbī*).[56]

By the mid-fourteenth century, the biographical literature also begins to take note of various interactions between the *sāda* and the local rulers of Hadhramaut, which frequently included a preternatural dimension. Al-Shillī, thus notes an interesting tale of one of the Imām's *karāmas* involving the local ruler Aḥmad b. Yamānī b. ʿUmar (r. 747-757/1346-1356) in the coastal city of al-Shiḥr. The Rasūlid sultan had dispatched an army under the leadership of his lieutenant al-Barjamī to retake the city and remove Aḥmad b. Yamānī. Imām Muḥammad happened to be in al-Shiḥr at the time of this encounter, and the local Hadhrami ruler requested him to intervene on his behalf to the Rasūlid lieutenant to request that he give them a respite until they completed their Friday prayers. The lieutenant refused, requesting that Ibn al-Yamānī vacate the city at once with his small army, after which the Imām returned to Ibn al-Yamānī and said to him reassuringly, "Go out and fight them, for you will be granted victory by God's leave." The Imām is said to have gone to their meeting point on the battlefield, where he blew on some pebbles and cast them at their enemies, successfully repelling their advance and granting victory to Ibn al-Yamānī's beleaguered forces.[57]

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[56] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 1:201.
[57] al-Shillī, 1:201; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:512-513.

Imām Muḥammad had four sons, ʿAlawī, ʿAlī, ʿAbd Allah and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, and one daughter ʿAlawiyya.[58] Among his children, Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf (d. 819/1416) along with his son Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (d. 833/1429), would become the two most distinguished and celebrated ʿAlawī saints and spiritual leaders of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. It is to their combined spiritual legacies and their major contributions to the consolidation of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism that we now turn.

3.5. Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf, the 'Second Muqaddam'

Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad (d. 819/1416) was born in Tarīm in 739/1338. From a young age, he took to a life of extraordinary spiritual devotion, discipline, and scholarship, eventually mastering the Islamic sciences of his day. In addition to Islamic law, he would go on to study legal methodology (*ūṣūl*), Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*), and the *ḥadīth* sciences, covering most of the extant Islamic scholarly literature in Hadhramaut. Among his local teachers were Shaykh Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb, with whom he memorized the Qurʾān, and the *sayyid* Muḥammad b. ʿAlawī b. ʿAḥmad b. al-Faqīh (d. 769/1368), known as ʿṢāḥib al-ʿAmāʾim,'[59] with whom he studied Shāfiʿī law. The Imām would excel in this field, becoming the leading juristic authority (*mujtahid*) of his day, mastering such *fiqh* works as al-Ghazālī's *al-Basīṭ*, *al-Wasīṭ*, *al-Wajīz*, and his *Khulāsa* of al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*, al-Shīrāzī's *al-Muhadhdhab* and *al-Tanbīh*, and al-Rāfiʿī's *al-ʿAzīz Sharḥ al-Wajīz* and *al-Muḥarrar*.[60]

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[58] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 199–201; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 540–42; al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley*, 68–69.

[59] For more on him see, Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 319–325. A renowned scholar of Tarīm, Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAlawī was named 'Sāḥib al-ʿAmāʾim' for having accidentally burnt some thirteen of his turbans (ʿ*ūmāmas*) with his night lamp after being overtaken by slumber during his long nights of intensive study!

[60] al-Ḥabshī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya*, 183. Khirid also mentions that the Imām studied some fifty works in the field of *fiqh* alone, while al-Shillī notes his attachment to the *fiqh* works of al-Ghazālī and al-Shīrāzī in particular, that he committed nearly the entirety of *al-Wajīz* and *al-Muhadhdhab* to memory. Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 543; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:141.

The Imām also travelled within Hadhramaut to further his studies with some of the valley's celebrated scholars. In Ghayl Bā Wazīr, he studied al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ*, al-Qushayrī's *al-Risāla*, and al-Suhrawardī's *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* with Shaykh Muḥammad b. Saʿd Bā Shakīl. He then went on to study with the distinguished Shaykh Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Bā ʿAbbād, from whom he benefited greatly, before traveling to Aden, where he studied grammar, morphology, and the Arabic sciences with the judge (*qāḍī*) Muḥammad b. Saʿīd Kayyin.[61] His travels also allowed him to benefit from several other scholars from the local valleys of ʿAmd and Dawʿan, also visiting the coastal cities of al-Mukalla and al-Shiḥr among his destinations.[62]

Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥmān quickly rose to prominence as the leader of the ʿAlawīs of Tarīm and as the most accomplished spiritual and scholarly authority in the valley of his day, teaching a generation of students from across Hadhramaut and beyond. In recognition of his rank as the ʿAlawīs' unrivalled spiritual authority, he was given the title of 'al-Saqqāf,' which was variously interpreted as a reflection of his ability to conceal his true spiritual state from his peers under a 'ceiling' (*saqf*) of humility or as a recognition of his towering status as a 'ceiling' over the saints (*awliyāʾ*) of his time.[63] The Imām became the progenitor of the 'al-Saqqāf' family, which, as one of the *sāda's* largest and most influential families, remains a leading clan of the Bānī ʿAlawīs today.[64]

Given his remarkable spiritual attainment and equally unrivaled mastery of Sufism and the traditional Islamic sciences, Imām al-Saqqaf quickly distinguished himself as the most

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[61] The name is alternatively spelled elsewhere as Kibban.
[62] al-Mashhūr, "al-Imām al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila*, 14.
[63] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:143. Peskes holds these interpretations of the *laqab* to be less plausible and suggests that it was likely intended in the more literal sense of a 'roofer,' a reference to the great number of mosques that he built during his lifetime. *ʿAidarūs*, 36.
[64] "*Wa li-awlādih wa-naslih al-ʾān al-mīza wa-l-riʾāsa ʿalā sāʾir ʾĀl Abī ʿAlawī.*" Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:376.

significant ʿAlawī authority since the emergence of his great, great grandfather al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, which would earn him the title of the 'Second Muqaddam' (*al-Muqaddam al-Thānī*).[65] The biographical sources record for us a number of his famous sayings and teachings, including the following, which have been taken as pithy maxims of the ʿAlawī tradition[66]:

> "The one with no consistent devotions or litany (of prayers) is a monkey" (*man lā lahu wird fa-huwa qird*).
>
> "The one who has no manners is a bear" (*man la lahu adab fa-huwa dubb*).
>
> "The one who does not study the *Iḥyāʾ*, has no shame" (*man lam yuṭāliʿ al-Iḥyāʾ ma fīh ḥayāʾ*).
>
> "The one who has not read *al-Muhaddab* knows not the foundations of the *madhhab*" (*man lam yaqraʾ al-Muhaddab mā ʿaraf qawāʿid al-madhhab*).
>
> "People are in need of knowledge, and knowledge (*ʿilm*) is in need of action (*ʿamal*), while action is in need of intellect (*al-ʿaql*), and the intellect is in need of Divine facilitation (*tawfīq*). Knowledge without action is meaningless; knowledge and action without intention are worthless; knowledge, action, and intention that are not upon the Sunnah are rejected; and knowledge, action, and intention that are upon the Sunnah without scrupulousness (*waraʿ*) risk being lost."

Aside from a life of scholarly devotion, Imām al-Saqqāf, like his forefathers, also took to date farming with his own hands, owning several plantations in Tarīm and elsewhere, from which he would donate and spend generously on his relatives and the needy.[67] He is also known to have built some ten mosques in various parts of Hadhramaut, for which he also established separate endowments. The most famous of these mosques is the great Masjid al-Saqqāf in Tarīm, which was the first to be built in 768/1366 and would become famously known for '*Ḥaḍrat al-Saqqāf*,' its weekly performance of spiritual poetry (*samāʿ*) to the tune of flute and drum, which

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[65] Buxton, *Imams of the Valley*, 21.
[66] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 258; al-Mashhūr, "al-Imām al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf," 15.
[67] As was his custom, the Imām was known to recite *Sūrat Yā Sīn* over each tree that he would sow. In the case of his famous plantation of 'Bā Ḥabshī,' he is said to have recited the entire Qurʾān over each palm before donating the plantation to his children on the condition that his boys recite the '*tahlīl*' (*La Ilāha illa Allah*) seventy-thousand times and his girls thirty-five thousand times per month with the intention of gifting its reward to their father. al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:142.

was established by the Imām and continues to be held by his descendants every Wednesday and Sunday evening till this very day.[68]

As the celebrated spiritual pole (*quṭb*) of his time, the Imām was sought by seekers from far and wide. Among his many notable students was Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭib (d. 855/1451), the famous author of one of the earliest and most important hagiographic *manāqib* works on the saints of Tarīm, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*. This work differs from later ʿAlawī biographical works, as it is not organized genealogically, containing the biographies of ʿAlawīs and non-ʿAlawīs alike, which include some five hundred stories of preternatural acts (*karāmas*) in their lives. The work groups its saintly biographies into four generations, with Imām al-Saqqāf and his son Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār figuring very prominently in the last generation of the author's day. As the earliest surviving hagiographic work on the *sāda*, al-Khaṭīb's *al-Jawhar* is a major primary source on the early *sāda* for much of the subsequent hagiographic biographical works in Hadhramaut.

The author of *al-Jawhar* highlights many of the Imām's spiritual feats, including stories of his *karāmat* and a long panegyric poem dedicated to his Shaykh.[69] His intimate stories offer us a rich phenomenological window into the spiritual imagination and psychology animating the *sādas'* daily lives and their disciple-teacher relationships. In one example, he notes an anecdote from the *sayyid* Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. Aḥmad b. Abī ʿAlawī who narrates that on the

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[68] al-Mashhūr, "al-Imām al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf," 16-19. These are noted as Thursday and Monday evenings since in the Islamic calendar the day begins at sunset. Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Mashhūr compiled a dedicated work on the *Ḥaḍra* with a comprehensive description of the ceremony, including a collection of the major poems (*qaṣīdas*) that are sung during its performance. See ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad al-Mashhūr, *al-Manhal al-ʿAjīb al-Ṣāf fī Faḍīlat wa-Kayfiyyat wa-Qaṣāʾid Ḥaḍrat al-Imām al-Saqqāf* (n.p., n.d.).

[69] The poem is entitled "Bāhir al-Mafākhir wa Ṭalʿat al-Anwār al-Shawāhir fī Madḥ Quṭb al-Awliyāʾ al-Mawhūb al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Maḥbūb." al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 2:109-111.

occasion of his investiture with the *khirqa* by the Imām, he felt a strong spiritual transmission that wiped away his covetousness of this worldly life (*ḥubb al-dunyā*) and all his negative traits, replacing them with beautified qualities, which he was able to nurture and maintain ever since.[70] On yet another occasion, he quotes the Imām's own words, where he asserts, in the inspired manner of the Sufis, that he never undertook the construction of a single house, mosque, or even the sowing of a single date palm prior to receiving an explicit decree from his Lord to do so. The Imām goes on to explain, "And I did not build my great mosque without the great Imāms al-Shāfiʿī, Mālik, Ibn Ḥanbal, and Abū Ḥanifa . . . assisting me in establishing it. They were each standing by one of its pillars, while the Prophet, God's blessings and peace be upon him, was standing in its *qibla*."[71]

Among Imām al-Saqqāf's other notable students was the famous Shaykha Sulṭāna bt. ʿAlī al-Zubaydiyya (d. 843/1439), one of the most famous Sufi women in premodern Hadhrami history, who was popularly known as the 'Rābiʿa of Hadhramaut.' Born in the tiny rural village of Qārrat al-ʿUrr, east of Sayʾūn, around 781/1379 in the Bedouin Āl Zubaydī clan of Kinda, she quickly excelled in her religious knowledge under her teacher Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAbbād, surpassing her own brothers in her spiritual maturity. She eventually founded her own Sufi lodge (*ribāṭ*), where she was said to teach alongside her teacher, and news of her fame soon spread across the valley, attracting seekers and disciples from far and wide to her door.[72]

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[70] For this reason, the author notes that many of the pious came to call the Imām '*al-Sabbāgh*,' for his ability to 'dye' the hearts of his disciples with beautiful spiritual traits and qualities. al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 2:57.

[71] al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 2:74.

[72] Boxberger, *On the Edge of Empire*, 163. The primary sources seem to disagree over the function of the *ribāṭ*, with some describing it as a Sufi lodge of religious learning and others describing it as a guest house for visitors and the needy. al-Mashhūr, "al-Shaykha Sulṭāna al-Zubaydiyya," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila*, 396.

Shaykha Sulṭāna soon attracted the attention of Imām al-Saqqāf and his children, forming a strong and intimate spiritual bond with the Imām and his sons Abū Bakr al-Sakrān and ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār in particular, who were in the habit of visiting her village on occasion, taking the time to benefit from her spiritual company.[73] More unusually, in recognition of her spiritual stature, she was also known to have frequented the scholarly gatherings of Imām al-Saqqāf and his famous *Ḥaḍra* in Tarīm, where she was occasionally given the opportunity to speak and share her poetry.[74] On one such occasion, while attending *Ḥaḍrat al-Saqqāf*, she was challenged by the Imām's son Ḥasan with the following couplet in the colloquial Hadhrami (*dārij*):

> How sorry is your state when you find the she-camel competing with the males!
> (*Yā mā asfahish mā badā bakrah tumārī jimāl*)

Upon hearing this, the Shaykha sought permission from Imām al-Saqqāf to respond before instantly rising to the challenge with appropriate rhyme and meter:

> She carries a similar load (to the males), and, further still, produces milk and offspring!
> (*Al-ḥaml bi-l-ḥaml, wa-l-zāyid laban wa-l-ʿiyāl*).[75]

The Shaykha's colloquial Sufi love poetry would become celebrated across Hadhramaut, and the *Ḥaḍra* of al-Saqqāf continues to open its weekly auditions with three of her renowned poems, a sample translation of which are the following couplets[76]:

> Warm greetings to the ones who draw upon us,
> and to the Shaykh amongst them who brings all to light!
>
> The lantern in the darkness of the night,

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[73] Among her preternatural visions, she would witness her village becoming lush with greenery prior to the Imām's arrival and hear a voice calling, "The Sultan, son of a Sultan, has come to you!" al-Khaṭīb, *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 2:75. She is also said to have witnessed al-Saqqāf's son ʿUmar under a large dome in the sky with all the saints below him. al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:748.
[74] Linda Boxberger notes that the Shaykha failed to attend the Imām's gatherings in Tarīm, possibly on the assumption of a strict segregation between the sexes, which was normally the case. The contemporary ʿAlawī scholar Ḥabīb Abū Bakr al-Mashhūr, on the other hand, asserts that she not only attended but also participated in scholarly discussions and was given the honour of sharing her poetry in the Imām's *Ḥaḍra*. Boxberger, *On the Edge of Empire*, 163; al-Mashhūr, "al-Shaykh Sulṭāna al-Zubaydiyya," 395.
[75] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:309-310.
[76] ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Muḥammad al-Mashhūr, *al-Manhal al-ʿAjīb*, 20.

He who consoles every aching heart!

For he dived deeply into the Sea of Love,
preserving the ways of his ancestors with a mighty oath!

My Lord do benefit us through his noble rank!
Indeed, my Lord, we are but sinners!

And we conclude with peace and blessings upon Muḥammad,
a perpetual prayer to last for all times!

Following her death, Shaykha Sulṭāna's village was transformed into a *ḥawṭa*, and her tomb became a regular destination for visitors and the site of a popular annual pilgrimage (*ziyāra*).[77]

In addition to his scholarship and farming activity, the hagiographic biographies also make mention of Imām al-Saqqāf's brief interventions with the local rulers of the valley. On one occasion, when Ibn Būz,[78] the troublesome Rasūlid governor of al-Shihr, seized the keys of his paternal cousin ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allah, the Imām travelled to al-Shiḥr and was able to successfully convince him to return them.[79] Another story intended to highlight the Imām's clairvoyance (*fīrāsa*) recounts an incident when Ibn Būz decided to invade the town of al-Ghayl, forcing its local ruler Ibn Yamīn to flee to Tarīm and seek the aid of its ruler Rāṣiʿ b. Duways (r. 770-813).[80] Upon hearing of this, Imām al-Saqqāf reassured Ibn Yamīn that though the governor's forces had entered al-Ghayl, they would soon leave the village unharmed. As it happened, the

[77] For more exhaustive biographical entries on Shaykha Sulṭāna, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:793-795; al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley,* 95–99.
[78] His name is alternatively noted in *al-Jawhar* as Ibn Thawr. For more on this Rasūlid governor, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:561-63.
[79] As the story is told by al-Khaṭīb, the governor went to visit Imām al-Saqqaf and his travel mate the day after their arrival, and they requested that he return the keys at once. After initially refusing to do so without the permission of the sultan, the Imām and his companion responded by saying, "Our Custodian (God) is mightier than your sultan," at which point the governor acquiesced to their request. *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf,* 2:45-46.
[80] For more on this Āl Yamānī ruler of Tarīm, see al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:516-519.

governor's men retreated soon after in response to false rumors that Ibn al-Duways had dispatched his men to the aid of Ibn Yamīn.[81]

Imām al-Saqqāf married several women throughout his long life, leaving behind thirteen sons and seven daughters.[82] The most celebrated among his children were the sons of his wife Bahiyya bt. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allah Bā ʿAlawī, the renowned ʿAlawī leader Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (d. 833/1429) and Imām Abū Bakr al-Sakrān (d. 821/1418), father of the illustrious Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), a towering ʿAlawī saint of the fifteenth century and the progenitor of the prominent ʿAydarūs clan.[83]

3.6. Imām ʿUmar 'al-Miḥḍār'

Imām ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf (d. 833/1429) was Imām al-Saqqāf's most celebrated and accomplished son, following closely in his father's footsteps and taking on the mantle of the *sāda*'s spiritual authority following the death of his older brother Imām Abū Bakr al-Sakrān in 821/1418. He was educated by his father from a young age, who not only saw his scholarly potential but also took a keen interest in his spiritual training.[84] Among his other notable teachers was the famous jurist Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Ḥājj Bā Faḍl[85] (d. 804/1401) of al-Shiḥr. After memorizing the Qurʾān, he went on to study several works such as al-Shirāzī's *Tanbīh*, al-Nawawī's *Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn*, which he fully committed to memory, the *al-Iḥyāʾ*, and the Sufi *tafsīr* of Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad al-Sulamī (d. 412/1021) *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tafsīr*,

[81] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:746-747.
[82] See Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 259.
[83] For more on Imām al-ʿAydarūs, see Chapter 5.
[84] Thus, al-Khaṭīb mentions a couple of interesting stories in which the Imām was redirected by his father to exert himself spiritually, reminding him that "while the jurists have but a small firebrand (*qabaṣ*), the Sufis have a large torch (*jadhwa*)" and that "an ounce of inner exertion (*ʿamal al-bāṭin*) is equivalent to a dazzling magnitude of outer attainment (*ʿamal al-ẓāhir*)." *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 2:18-19.
[85] A short entry on him can be found in Bā Faḍl, *Ṣilat al-Ahl*, 121-122.

with which the Imām developed a lifelong attachment. Like the other *sāda* of his day, he would also go on to travel and benefit from a great number of scholars in his generation, especially in al-Shiḥr and the Hejaz.[86]

Among the ʿAlawīs' renowned saints, Imām ʿUmar would perhaps be most celebrated for his asceticism and his legendary feats of spiritual exertion (*mujāhadāt wa-riyāḍāt*), marking his entry in the *sāda*'s hagiographic canon, alongside his father and a small elite, as an archetypal exemplar of ascetic self-discipline and devotional piety. The Imām is said to have spent a whole month in isolated spiritual retreat (*khalwa*) at the famous tomb site of the Prophet Hūd in eastern Hadhramaut during which he survived on only one pound of dried fish. In yet another famous story highlighting his extreme self-denial, upon noticing his strong appetite and temptation for dates, the Imām vowed not to consume them for a period of thirty years![87] The hagiographic sources thus abound with stories of his spiritual openings and access to divinely bequeathed inner knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*), especially concerning his dazzling exegesis of the Qurʾān, which he is believed to have gained on account of his long isolated spiritual retreats, his prolonged fasts, and regular abstinence from the most basic worldly pleasures.[88]

While the Imām, like the major ʿAlawī authorities before him, is not known to have left behind any scholarly works, he was the author of several popular lyrical poems, many of which continue to be sung alongside the poems of Sulṭāna al-Zubaydiyya as the opening lines of *Ḥaḍrat al-Saqqāf*. Like Shaykha Sulṭāna, much of the Imām's lyrical poetry is expressed in the

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[86] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:241.
[87] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:749.
[88] When asked by his peers concerning the remarkable knowledge that he had shared, which was not to be found in the usual works, the Imām would respond by indicating that it is "from Above." "You have keys with which you may enter the houses from their front doors, whereas I scale their walls!" al-Khaṭīb, *a-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, 2:188.

colloquial Hadhrami dialect (*dārij*), where the overwhelming love of God and his Prophet and his intimate attachment to his Prophetic family and the city of Tarīm are some recurring themes. The following translation is an example of one such popular *qaṣīda*[89]:

Send your Peace and Blessings upon the Light of Aḥmad,
the Light of the spiritual stations, O Muḥammad!

O One created from the Light of His Lord!
O One who was named since before his birth![90]

A very dear welcome to my Beloved,
he who resides at the center of my heart!

And in my ardent love, he suffices me;
these are the (spiritual) provisions decreed by my Lord!

Certainly, none has been tried (with such Divine grace) as I have;[91]
I am the ungrateful one (ʿ*uqayyiq*)[92] of my family!
And I have indeed stumbled much on accord of my ignorance.
O breeze of my beloved ones do blow upon us!

Surely, the one who gazes upon the Mount of Qaṭba[93]
will have certainly smelled the fragrant winds of Love!

And he who is unable to smell the fragrance of Love
will most assuredly have no cure for his ailments!

My heart is fully attached to them,

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[89] al-Mashhūr, *al-Manhal al-ʿAjīb*, 26–27. The *Manhal* contains some 18 poems by the Imām. I am grateful to Shaykh Hamdi Ben Aissa for his assistance and subtle insights with this translation.

[90] These opening couplets are not included in the poem but are added as the chorus whenever it is sung in ʿAlawī gatherings.

[91] The reference is a motif calling to mind the trials of the Prophet Sulaymān in the Qurʾān, who was granted a great kingdom with immense powers and provisions that he may express his gratitude to His Lord (Qurʾān 27:40).

[92] From its context, 'ʿ*uqayyiq*' is likely from the Arabic root ʿ*aqqa*, and it is a diminutive of the adjective ʿ*aqq*, meaning 'disobedient,' 'ungrateful,' or 'recalcitrant,' hence, the insignificant "ungrateful one," which would read as a statement of humility, expressing his sense of imperfection and unworthiness before the great Imāms of his Prophetic family. Alternatively, it may possibly read as the diminutive form of ʿ*aqīq*, the semi-precious carnelian gemstone, in which case it is a reflection of the Imām's spiritual stature and distinction. Yet given the following verse, where the Imām speaks of his stumbling on accord of his 'ignorance,' the first meaning appears to be more accurate.

[93] The mountain of Qaṭba overlooking the city of Tarīm is known to have been a place of spiritual retreat for some of the *sāda*, including Imām al-Miḥḍār. The reference here may be to the mountain's spiritual aura, or it may be a more general emblematic reference to Tarīm, the city of saints and lovers (*awliyāʾ*).

whether in their earth, as in their heaven![94]

Certainly, I possess nothing that can compare to them!
So steer them towards me (Dear Lord), the day of my end!

How long I have delighted in the immense gifts (inherited from them),
throughout my days and the nights!

The land and the sea are brimming (with Divine favours)![95]
Indeed, it is but from their crop that my seed derives!

If only I had an eye to gaze upon them,
or I were present there amongst them!

That we may exchange the beautiful and be grateful,
and be among those who take heed and respond!

Aside from his spiritual and poetic achievements, the Imām is equally celebrated in the hagiographic biographies for reaching an unrivalled status in terms of his temporal power and wealth as a strong and charismatic leader of the ʿAlawīs. He was thus given the title '*al-Miḥḍār*' (he who is promptly present) for always making haste to the material and spiritual aid of others, having a horse saddled and bridled in front of his house for this very purpose.[96] As one of the richest men of his time, owning several lucrative date plantations and employing several fishing boats off the Hadhrami coast, he generously spent the revenues of his wealth on his large extended family, students, seekers, travelers, and the valley's impoverished population, in addition to the establishment of mosques with their own endowed plantations and the construction of several *ḥawṭas* in Tarīm and elsewhere, three of which were located around the

[94] For the Sufis, their 'earth' is likely a reference to their earthly human nature (*bashariyya*), while their 'heaven' evokes their exalted spiritual reality (*khuṣūṣiyya*).
[95] In the lexicon of the Sufis, the 'land' and the 'sea' are common motifs as metaphorical references to the '*Sharīʿa*' and the '*ḥaqīqa*', the outer (exoteric) and inner (esoteric) dimensions of the spiritual journey respectively.
[96] According to one story, echoing a familiar Sufi motif, when one of the Imām's disciples succumbed to temptation and was on the verge of committing the sin of fornication, he received a sudden knock on the door from a messenger summoning him to his Shaykh at once. As he entered upon his master, the Imām threw a handful of dust in his disciple's face, warning him that he was about to perish, after which the disciple instantly repented and vowed to never repeat his mistake. al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley*, 93.

port of al-Shiḥr.[97] The Imām also built three mosques. One of these was in the city of ʿAraf, near the port of al-Shiḥr, at the site of one of his famous *ḥawṭas*, where he was known to settle for extended periods and became renowned for his hospitality, regularly hosting groups of travelers and wayfarers at his expense.[98] His most famous mosque was Masjid al-Miḥḍār, which remains a major public attraction today as one of the Tarīm's most defining architectural landmarks.[99]

Given his remarkable social standing and influence, Imām al-Miḥḍār was occasionally sought out by local rulers, who would consult with him and whom he freely counseled. In one such meeting with the Kathīrī ruler Jaʿfar b. ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar (d. 905/1500) at the *ḥawṭa* of Shaykha Sulṭāna, the Imām suggested that he take over the recalcitrant town of Būr, reassuring him that its current ruler had become weary of its inhabitants and that he would personally intervene on his behalf to convince him to step down.[100] More importantly, however, the Imām's more lasting and momentous political achievement was his establishment of a ʿAlawī council (*naqāba*) under his leadership in 821/1418, which greatly served to consolidate the *sāda*'s voice under one banner and to enhance their social standing and influence in the valley. The consultative council was comprised of ten leading ʿAlawī figures, each of whom was further

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[97] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 554. The hagiographic biographies note that when his family and relatives expressed their disapproval of his liberal spending, his rejoinder was, "*That which is with you will surely perish, while that which is with God is everlasting*" (Qurʾān 16:96). al-Mashhūr, "al-Imām al-Shaykh ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila*, 187.

[98] In one celebrated story, a large traveling army with some eighty horses was passing through ʿAraf, and its men expressed an initial reluctance at bothering the Imām, given their number. After feeding them all along with their horses with great hospitality, Imām al-Miḥḍār said to them, "By God, had you not visited us, none of you would have reached his destination, and it concerns me not if your numbers were as many as the leaves on these trees!" al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:242.

[99] As a major attraction, with its elegant adobe architecture, the mosque is especially popular for its *Tarāwīḥ* prayers during the month of Ramadan, where the final recitation of the Qurʾān is completed in Tarīm. The original construction underwent a significant expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the mosque currently houses the major manuscript library of al-Aḥqāf. Its minaret, visible from over a mile away, is said to be the tallest mud brick minaret in the world.

[100] al-Mashhūr, "al-Shaykh al-Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār," 190; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:48.

assigned five *sayyids* as his answerable guarantors (*ḍumanāʾ*) and subordinates, and it was primarily convened to safeguard and coordinate all major public decisions relevant the *sāda*'s communal affairs, including any initiatives directed towards maintaining the public order (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*), the distribution of charity, and the preservation of the common weal.[101]

Imām al-Miḥḍār left behind four daughters, ʿĀʾisha, Fāṭima, Maryam, and ʿAlawiyya and no male heirs.[102] Having discussed these major ʿAlawī figures of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, we now turn to an analysis of their spiritual legacies and the new ritual, geographical, and textual dimensions they helped introduce in the consolidation of an emerging and distinctly ʿAlawī spiritual tradition.

3.7. The Defining Features of Bāʿ Alawī Sufism in the Fifteenth Century

According to some scholars, the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa* initially consisted of a rudimentary and vague set of clan rituals instead of a coherent order, and it was not until the emergence of their Sufi literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that their order came to be consolidated in a more organized form.[103] This characterization, however, may be partially explained by the relatively understudied and unique features of Yemeni Sufism. As Muhammad Ali Aziz observes, while Yemen's Sufi orders were initially imitations of some of the great regional

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[101] The *naqāba*'s founding document consists of a detailed and signed covenant outlining various duties and obligations that was witnessed by some forty one leading ʿAlawīs and other major dignitaries, including Sulṭān b. Duways (r. 844-872/1440-1467), son of the reigning Āl Yamānī ruler of Tarīm at the time. For more on this major document, which is reproduced in full by al-Ḥāmid, and on the reign of the Āl Yāmānī rulers of this period, see his *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:523-531, 751-755. See also, al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:285-287.

[102] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 267. As Imām al-Miḥḍār had no male descendants, the famous ʿAlawī clan of Āl Miḥḍār goes back to his namesake, a son of the major sixteenth-century ʿAlawī saint Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583), who was named thus by his father for the immense blessing (*baraka*) of the name. See discussion on Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's progeny in Chapter 6.

[103] Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 16.

orders, "the idea of centralized hierarchal authority was not appealing to the Yemeni communities, and so they did not organize as did their counterparts in the central lands of Islam."[104] This important insight needs to be borne in mind as we examine the defining features of Bāʿ Alawī Sufism.

Be that as it may, one can nonetheless witness the beginnings of a more articulated process of consolidation in the *sāda*'s spiritual culture that can be more accurately attributed to the generations of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf and his son ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār at the end of the fourteenth and early fifteenth century and which reaches a high point of intellectual and spiritual flourishing by the end of the sixteenth century. As Ho observes, Imām al-Saqqāf, as the 'Second Muqaddam,' stands at the beginning of a new phase in the history of the Bāʿ Alawī *ṭarīqa* that may be characterized by "the development of an institutional complex of Sufi practices" consisting of "identifiable clusters of ritual, geographic and textual forms, each of which ties to an individual originator."[105] This conclusion is refined in greater detail below.

3.7.1. A 'Ghazalian' *Ṭarīqa* and Sufi *Habitus*

As we have seen, by the time of Imām al-Saqqāf's emergence, an informal 'curriculum' of identifiable scholarly works is clearly visible among the *sāda* in the biographical literature, which includes some of the popular works of Shāfiʿī law alongside some Sufi classics, the most important of which is the indubitable *Iḥyāʾ* of al-Ghazālī. One cannot overstate the outsized influence that al-Ghazālī's *magnum opus* has had on the *sāda*'s religious culture, orthopraxy, and spiritual psychology.[106] This emphasis on the *Iḥyāʾ* begins to take off more formally as a central

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[104] Aziz, *Religion and Mysticism in Early Islam*, 184.
[105] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 43.
[106] See ʿAbd al-Nūr, *al-Ḥayāt al-ʿIlmiyya*, 81; al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:258-259; al-Ḥaddād, *ʿUqūd al-Almās*, 74–76. Al-Shillī notes, for instance, that some of the *sāda*, such as Imām Muḥammad b. ʿAlawī al-Shāṭirī (d. 897/1491), had committed the entire *Iḥyāʾ* to memory. *al-Mashraʿ al-*

feature of the *sāda*'s pedagogy with the emergence of Imām al-Saqqāf's illustrious grandson Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), whose strict emphasis on the work was to have a lasting impact on the Bā ʿAlawī tradition and its reception of al-Ghazālī in its spiritual method; it is largely on account of his spiritual legacy that the *ṭarīqa* would later come to be axiomatically described as "Ghazalian in its external form (*ẓāhir*) and Shādhilī in its inner reality (*bāṭin*)."[107]

The ʿAlawīs' strong focus on the paradigmatic authority of 'Ḥujjat al-Islām' is hardly surprising, given his towering status in the intellectual *weltanschauung* of premodern Sunni Islam. As Wael Hallaq eloquently observes, al-Ghazālī's "life . . . and scholarly-spiritual pursuits reflected the synthetic practices of mainstream Islam in its Sharʿī, Sufist, and philosophical manifestations," and his magisterial work

> offered an ethic that mirrored the Sharʿī-Sufist orthopraxis, one that defined much of what Islam, as a lived spiritual and worldly experience, was. His *Iḥyāʾ* is a virtuoso expose of the art of religious practice and, indeed, of living the good life. It is paradigmatic. If one can say that the modern age is one overshadowed by Kantianism, then the several centuries of middle Islam were overshadowed by Ghazālianism.[108]

With the foregoing in mind, it may be helpful to adopt a phenomenological lens for our remaining analysis in order to better grasp how the ideas, beliefs, and embodied practices that were explicated in the *Iḥyāʾ* served as constitutive elements of the *sāda*'s subjectivity formation. Adopting such a lens, will hopefully allow us to better interpret their social roles and agency in the spiritual, cultural, and political transformations of premodern Hadhrami society, illuminating

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Rawy, 1:191-192. The work continues to be read in uninterrupted fashion as a devotional practice within ʿAlawī scholarly circles, where it is completed several times a year, as one would with the recitation of the Qurʾān (*khatm*).

[107] al-Mashhūr, "al-ʿAydarūs al-Akbar," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila*, 165. This description is provided by the famous *sayyid* and major seventeenth/eighteenth scholar Ḥabīb ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allah Balfaqīh (d. 1162/1749). See his description of the *ṭarīqa* in al-ʿAṭṭās, *al-ʿAlam al-Nibrās*, 20-25.

[108] Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 129.

for us how their actions and aspirations were shaped and constrained by the inherited ideals of their spiritual and intellectual tradition.

In his famous essay "Techniques of the Body," Marcel Mauss formulates the concept of '*habitus*,' shifting our attention to the 'social nature' of those 'habits' that are essential to the formation of the self. As he explains,

> These 'habits' do not just vary with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, proprieties, fashions, and prestiges. In them we should see the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason rather than, in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties.[109]

Mauss highlights how the enculturated training of the human body through various practices or 'techniques' serves to instill a '*habitus*.' As Ian Burkett helpfully defines it, "Habitus . . . denotes an acquired ability or faculty rather than an acquired habit to act in a routine way. The term ability suggests the possibility of doing something, of acting in ways that are creative and not wholly predetermined."[110] For Mauss, the human body, as the "object and the means" of our technical activities, must first be 'reformed' through the cultural development of 'techniques of the body' "in order to take on the instrumental attitudes needed for the processes of production." Here it must be noted that Mauss defines 'technique' as "an action which is both *effective* and *traditional*," highlighting its ability to produce a desired result, while at the same time being culturally inherited.[111] In this sense, '*habitus*' comes to form "the basis of our character, what we regard as our self."[112]

As Talal Asad further observes, Mauss's insights offer some far-reaching conclusions for our anthropological understanding of ritual, and even mysticism, as he believes that all mystical

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[109] Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," *Economy and Society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 73.
[110] Ian Burkitt, "Technologies of the Self: Habitus and Capacities," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 32, no. 2 (June 2002): 225.
[111] Mauss, "Techniques" 75; Burkitt, "Technologies," 223.
[112] Burkitt, "Technologies," 226.

states are ultimately rooted in the conscious cultivation of certain body techniques.[113] For Asad, this understanding opens up the possibility "of inquiring into the ways in which embodied practices (including language in use) form a precondition for varieties of religious experience. The inability to enter into communion with God becomes a function of untaught bodies. 'Consciousness' becomes a dependent concept."[114] This approach also allows us to conceive of bodily experience "not as an autogenetic impulse but as a mutually constituting relationship between body sense and body learning," where "an experience of the body becomes a moment in an experienced (taught) body."[115]

More interestingly for our purposes, Burkitt draws some clear parallels between Mauss's concept of 'techniques of the body' and Michel Foucault's more expansive notion of 'technologies of the self.'[116] As Foucault defines them, 'technologies of the self' are those techniques

> which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.[117]

This Foucauldian concept is helpfully appropriated by Hallaq in his informative analysis of the Sharʿīa's fundamental role in the subjectivity formation of premodern Islamic societies.[118] In this context, Muslim 'moral technologies of the self' are those "techniques of subjecting the

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[113] "I believe precisely that at the bottom of all our mystical states there are body techniques which we have not studied, but which were studied fully in China and India, even in very remote periods. This socio-psycho-biological study should be made. I think that there are necessarily biological means of entering into 'communion with God.'" Mauss, "Techniques," 86-87.
[114] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 76-77.
[115] Asad, *Genealogies*, 77.
[116] See his helpful definition and reflection on this concept in Burkitt, "Technologies," 224.
[117] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. H. Hutton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 18.
[118] See Hallaq's insightful discussion in *The Impossible State*, 110–135.

self to the consistent and systematic practice of the ʿ*ibādāt* with the view to producing and nurturing a moral subject."[119] For my purposes here, however, it may be helpful to move beyond a narrow focus on the fundamental ritual practices of the ʿ*ibādāt*, viewing them as the paradigmatic exemplifications of a wider set of embodied practices and teachings that have historically served to instill a Sufi '*habitus*.'[120] In this sense, al-Ghazālī's wide ranging exposition in the *Iḥyāʾ* would have constituted a compendium or roadmap for the ʿAlawīs, indeed for many premodern Sufis more generally, on how to cultivate a host of diverse Sufi 'technologies of the self.'

The various embodied practices or 'technologies' outlined in the *Iḥyāʾ* are inevitably enmeshed within a host of associated psycho-spiritual concepts that are the inner states, predispositions, or qualities that collectively constitute the art (*adāb*) of Sufi wayfaring (*sulūk*). As such, they may be identified as the virtuous ideals (*faḍīla*, pl. *faḍāʾil*), which the Sufi seeker must aspire to attain. These include such qualities as God-consciousness (*taqwā*), scrupulousness (*waraʿ*), steadfastness (*ṣabr*), trust (*tawakkul*), and spiritual exertion (*mujāhada*), to name but a few. In some sense, these embodied practices and their associated spiritual qualities or virtues are mutually reaffirming and complimentary; the routine training and discipline of the body, mind, and soul through their regular subjection to the Sharīʿa's prescribed and embodied practices serves to facilitate the cultivation of such virtuous qualities within the self, while the acquisition or realization of such qualities, in turn, enhances and deepens the Sufi's overall spiritual experience and state of consciousness during these practices.[121]

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[119] Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 218.

[120] Indeed, focusing narrowly on the ritual acts of worship (ʿ*ibādāt*) runs the risk of robbing us from appreciating that the premodern Sharīʿa reflected a system that was "at once moral, cultural, legal, and deeply psychological." Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 12.

[121] This link between spiritual practice and the attainment of virtuous qualities is clearly outlined in the Qurʾān. See, for instance, the link between ʿworship' (ʿ*ībāda*), especially fasting (*ṣiyām*), and the

Although various Sufi groups have historically approached and interpreted the *Iḥyāʾ* in diverse ways, one can highlight several of its prescribed teachings and practices that were discoursed upon and routinized as prominent features of Bāʿ Alawī Sufi praxis. As an illustrative example, we may consider one ascetic predisposition identified and expounded upon by al-Ghazalī and earlier authorities, namely that of the Sufi virtue of 'hunger' (*jūʿ*).[122] As an ascetic quality, 'hunger' was widely regarded as a Sufi virtue, and traditions abound from the life of the Prophet and the examples of the earliest generations of Muslims (*salaf*) on their renunciation of food, among other worldly pleasures (*shahawāt*), where eating to one's satiation (*shabʿ*) was considered a blameworthy (*madhmūm*) hindrance to one's spiritual progress.[123]

The *sāda*'s hagiographic biographies are unsurprisingly replete with examples of their preternatural abilities in renouncing food for weeks and even months on end. Thus, Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥdhār would avoid eating anything for days at a time, spending "five years not eating anything of what the people are accustomed to." As we have seen, he is also said to have spent a period of thirty years without eating dates, stating, "They are the most beloved of pleasures to me, and it is for this reason I have denied them myself." The hagiographic biographies also note that he once travelled for forty days during the Hajj pilgrimage without food or drink and that, on another occasion, he survived on only one pound of dried fish during a month-long retreat at the tomb of Prophet Hūd. His nephew Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, likewise, is said to have spent a lengthy period surviving only on the grain of the *ʿashraq* plant, a full seven years breaking his

attainment of 'God-consciousness' (*ṭaqwā*) in Qurʾān 2:21 and 2:183. Elsewhere (Q. 29:45), the observance of the five daily prayers (*ṣalāt*) is prescribed as a direct means for warding off one's evil and immoral tendencies.

[122] For his treatment on the virtue of *jūʿ*, see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, ed. Muḥmmad Saʿīd Muḥammad (Cairo: Dār al-Bayān al-ʿArabī, 2005), 3:100-122.

[123] Al-Ghazālī thus notes no less than ten spiritual benefits accruing from the renunciation of food. *Iḥyāʾ*, 3:104-109.

fasts with only seven dates, and another year not consuming beyond five *mudds* worth of food.[124] Similarly, the famous sixteenth century Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583) was known to regularly fast the three hottest months of the year and to subsist for days on a mere diet of milk and coffee.[125]

As seemingly legendary and dramatically far-fetched as these ascetic feats may appear to our modern sensibilities, the famous travel memoir of an anonymous fifteenth-century Moroccan pilgrim, *Riḥlat al-Maghribī*, nonetheless, offers enough descriptive detail on the *sāda*'s daily eating habits and spiritual routines in Tarīm that highlights for us the degree to which the shunning of food was a prevalent feature of their spiritual culture.[126] Furthermore, the biographical sources occasionally narrate for us some of the *sāda*'s attitudes and spiritual teachings on the virtue of *jūʿ*. Thus al-Shillī notes that Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's Sufi master Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī Bā Jaḥdab (d. 973/1566), who was famously known for his asceticism, had so conquered his appetite for food that he confirmed to his disciple "My desire [for food] has become as the desire of this wall. Does the wall desire anything?" Here, al-Shillī also narrates the Imām's extended discourse on *jūʿ*, where he expands upon al-Ghazālī's four recommended categories for the consumption of food to include a gradation of seven categories, ranked from the most austere and meritorious to the outright blameworthy (*ḥarām*). These categories are namely: i) to eat the minimum that is needed for the sustenance of life; ii) to add to that what is necessary to for the maintenance of one's daily prayers and fasting; iii) to add to that what is needed to sustain one's supererogatory fasting and vigils of night worship (*qiyām*); iv) to eat the

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[124] al-Ḥaddād, *ʿUqūd al-Almās*, 80. The '*mudd*' is a measure equivalent to a pint (*riṭl*) and one third.
[125] Buxton, *Imams of the Valley*, 38. For more on this major ʿAlawī saint of the sixteenth century, see Chapter 6.
[126] *Riḥlat al-Maghribī*, ed. ʿAydarūs al-ʿAydarūs (Tarim, Yemen: Zāwiyat al-ʿAydarūs al-ʿIlmiyya, 2013), 5-6, 13-14, 20-22. For more on the significance of this famous *Riḥla* as a historical source, see Chapter 4.

amount required to secure one's daily labour and the earning of one's living, which is the definition of a satiating amount according to the Sharīʿa (*al-shabʿ al-sharʿī*); v) to eat up to the decreed amount of one third of the stomach's capacity, leaving one third for one's drink and one third for one's breath; vi) to go beyond this amount, which is considered detestable (*makrūh*) and causes one to feel heavy and sleepy; and vii) to eat in excess, as to harm one's body by continuing to eat before having fully digested what one has previously eaten (known as *al-barda*).[127]

From this brief example, one can thus see how the astounding examples of legendary generosity and extreme devotional piety in the hagiographic biographies may be similarly viewed as ʿAlawī attempts to embody the strict spiritual ethos of paradigmatic works, such as the *Iḥyāʾ*. The veracity and seemingly overstated nature of such accounts is of no real consequence for the historian, for as towering examples of Divine favour (*faḍl; tawfīq*), their consequences remain very real for the *sāda*'s Sufi *habitus* and psychological and spiritual imagination. As such, they have undoubtedly played an instrumental role in the ʿAlawīs' subjectivity formation, while establishing an insuperable and exemplary standard of piety and virtue for their future descendants to follow.[128]

3.7.2. The Formation of a Hagiographic Canon

As we have already seen, one of Imām al-Saqqāf's notable students was the author of *al-Jawhar*, likely the earliest known hagiographic biographical work on the *sāda* and the Sufis of

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[127] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:71. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 3:110-111.

[128] This high level of devotional practice and spiritual exertion would later be defined as the path of the elect or elite (*ṭarīqa khāṣṣa*) or 'those drawn near' (*al-muqarrabīn*), which may be contrasted with the more common path (*ṭarīqa ʿāmma*) of the 'people of the right hand' (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*), as outlined by the major seventeenth/eighteenth-century ʿAlawī authority and reformer Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1720/1132). On these two 'paths' in the ʿAlawī tradition, see al-Ḥaddād, *ʿUqūd al-Almās*, 74-89.

Tarīm to have survived. Though he was not a *sayyid*, one cannot underestimate the crucial role that al-Khaṭīb's work has played in the preservation of the spiritual memory and identity of the early *sāda*, as it constitutes the primary reference for all their later genealogical hagiographic works, effectively launching the genre of ʿAlawī '*manāqib.*'[129]

A recurring question here concerns the general historiographical value and reliability of the hagiographic genre of '*manāqib*' in our attempt to construct an accurate account of the *sāda*'s social and intellectual history. As we have seen for Knysh, the normative constraints of the hagiographic canon in the ʿAlawī biographical sources serve only to 'camouflage' a host of temporal and clannish agendas that must be properly transcended by the sober historian, rendering such materials as generally unreliable. Evidence of early clannish rivalry and of the *sāda*'s claims of moral and spiritual superiority over the *mashāyikh* are further alluded to by Peskes, who points to a famous dream vision of al-Khaṭīb of the Day of Resurrection narrated in *al-Jawhar*, in which the *sāda* are distinguished in their dress above the *mashāyikh* and which is explained to be on account of their superior status owing largely to their noble Prophetic lineage.[130] As further suggested evidence of this tendency among the *sāda*, Peskes also asserts, likely drawing on an earlier claim made by Trimingham, that the ʿAlawīs had formed an exclusivist family-based *ṭarīqa*, where access to their Sufi tradition remained closed to non-*sayyids*.[131]

Such lingering concerns of deep-seated rivalries that have served to colour and put into question the reliability of the *sāda*'s biographical sources, as we shall see, are largely overstated.

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[129] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 47.
[130] Peskes, "Der Heilege," 60.
[131] Peskes, "Der Heilege," 63. "In Hadramawt leadership of the ʿAlawiyya and of its family offshoots was hereditary in the Ba ʿAlawī family from its foundation by Muhammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad (d. A.D. 1255); such a group can only be regarded as an expanded family *ṭariqa*." Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders*, 73.

Al-Khaṭīb's *al-Jawhar* was not the only early fifteenth-century hagiographic biographical work to cover the *sāda*. Two other significant works are ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bā Wazīr's *al-Tuḥfa al-Nūrāniyya* and ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣāḥib al-Ḥamrāʾ's (d. 889/1484) *Fatḥ Allah al-Raḥīm al-Raḥmān*, both of which are an in the main hagiographic biographies (*manāqib*) of Imām al-Saqqāf's grandson, the celebrated ʿAbd Allah b. Abū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461).[132] *Al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf* and *al-Tuḥfa al-Nūrāniyya* are significant in this regard in that both of their authors were disciples of the *sāda* from leading *mashāyikh* families, and they are thus less likely to have been motivated by the 'genealogical' and 'clannish agendas' outlined by Knysh.[133]

A careful examination of the primary sources also suggests that the ʿAlawīs did indeed establish a clearly *sāda*-oriented tradition, where the notion of Prophetic descent played an important function, not only on account of the special *baraka* that is believed to run through their Prophetic lineage, but also because, as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (*Ahl al-Bayt*), the Banū ʿAlawīs have historically conceived of themselves as uniquely positioned inheritors of his noble character and spiritual legacy (*al-irth al-Nabawī*). Be that as it may, while the spiritual leadership of the *ṭarīqa* has historically been guarded by the leading spiritual authorities among the ʿAlawīs, such a restriction did not extend to their many disciples, who openly expressed their affiliation with the ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa* and its spiritual method. Similarly, examples also abound of members of the *sāda* studying with scholars of the *mashāyikh* and being initiated into the spiritual lineages of other Sufi *ṭarīqas*, especially into the Qādirī *ṭarīqa*, which has historically

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[132] Serjeant, "Materials I," 305; "Materials II," 586. Serjeant incorrectly notes *al-Tuḥfa* as a biography of the Imām's son Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd Allah (d. 914/1508). The work is in fact a hagiographic biography of Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, and its author is known to have been his student. See Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 48, 278. For more on the author of *Fatḥ Allah al-Raḥīm al-Raḥmān,* the *sayyid* ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān of al-Ḥamrāʾ, see Chapter 5.

[133] See Knysh's article, "The Sāda in History," discussed in the Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2.

had the largest presence in Yemen and Hadhramaut.[134] Indeed, as the sources make amply clear, many of the *sāda*'s major disciples have historically been members of the *mashāyikh,* who are frequently regarded as accomplished Sufis in their own right and held in high esteem as knowledgeable scholars and even peers among the ʿAlawīs.[135] Far from reflecting a deeply seated sense of rivalry between the ʿAlawīs and the local *mashāyikh* tribes of Hadhramaut, such cases point to a more amicable and fluid spiritual culture of scholarly cooperation and affection between them, and indeed, the examples in this regard are too many to enumerate.[136]

Furthermore, while recognizing the potential limitations of the hagiographical genre, such works can remain nonetheless valuable to the field of historiography in a secondary sense, when considering its frequently overlooked devotional and pedagogical intent. Thus, while the historicity of diverse hagiographic accounts may not always be fully accessible to the historian, they, nonetheless, can remain insightful in a secondary sense – as a window into the shared memory, doctrines, values, spiritual imagination, and even collective aspirations of a lived religious community; in short, such a genre can be more creatively mined as an illustrative expression of a religious community's *habitus*.

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[134] For a characteristic example of this, see the discussion on *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf* of Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī in Chapter 5.

[135] See, for example, the twentieth-century author of *Ṣilat al-Ahl*, the famous hagiographic work on the *mashāyikh* of the Bā Faḍl family, who proclaims his affiliation to the ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*, indicating a clear devotion to the *sāda* as one of their disciples. Bā Faḍl, *Ṣilat al-Ahl*, 343. This is especially the case today, where on account of their international reach and preaching, the *sāda* have amassed a large global following of disciples, many of whom are frequently accomplished scholars in their own right, who typically continue to teach the ʿAlawīs' spiritual method in their home countries after extensive years of study with the *sāda* in Tarīm or elsewhere.

[136] See, for instance, the following illustrative example of a panegyric poem by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bā Qushayr (d. 885/1480), a member of the *mashāyikh*, that is dedicated to Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs and is intended to seek his spiritual blessing and succor (*tawassul*), reproduced in Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 198-200.

In the case of our ʿAlawī subjects, the very process of participating in the reading, sharing, and writing of such works is a devotional act that is part and parcel of their religious experience and their Sufi *habitus*. For the *sāda*, reproducing the biographies of their saintly ancestors and connecting to their exemplary stories is yet another Sufi 'technology of the self' that has been consciously employed towards the fulfillment of particular spiritual and communal objectives. Given their genealogical organization, such works have served to reinforce the *sāda*'s connection to their pious ancestors and preserve their collective memory for future generations. Through sharing stories on their remarkable feats of worship, *karāma*t, virtues, and near legendary acts of generosity, the authoring and retelling of such genealogical works also ensured that the *sāda* remained active participants in the spiritual canonization of their ancestors.

More explicitly, however, as devotional works, such stories are intended to cultivate a deep sense of love, belonging, and devotion to the Prophet's family (*Ahl al-Bayt*) as the uniquely positioned inheritors of his noble character and spiritual legacy (*al-irth al-Nabawī*).[137] Indeed, the cultivation of an inner sense of belonging and attachment towards the Prophet's inheritors and for the people of God (*awliyāʾ*) as exemplary models of piety has been an indispensable devotional concern for Sufis across the generations. As the famous Prophetic *ḥadīth* states, "A person is with the one he loves" (*al-marʾu maʿa man aḥabb*).[138] Pondering and emulating the lives of the saints is thus another important Sufi 'technology of the self' by which such an inner orientation is achieved, where the spiritual seeker is habituated to think, feel, and act in harmony with the people of God. Through their active canonization, such figures become elevated as the icons and archetypes of a spiritual culture, constraining and inspiring the devotional and

[137] Hence, for instance, Khirid concludes his biographies in *al-Ghurar* with sections on the importance and duty of loving the Prophet's family, attempting to offer doctrinal support to this effect from the Qurʾān and Sunna. Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 766–767, 789–802.
[138] See Khirid's discussion on this famous *ḥadīth* in *al-Ghurar*, 725-726.

behavioral patterns of their followers for generations to come. Being nurtured by such stories since their infancy thus plays a tangible role in informing and constraining not only the s*āda*'s moral behavior and devotional practice but their temporal, political, and social deliberations as well.

3.7.3. Spiritual Poetry and Public Auditions

Aside from the emergence of hagiographical works in the early fifteenth century, the generations of Imām al-Saqqāf and ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār are also notable for their rich and frequently overlooked poetic output. It is at this historical juncture where we begin to see a steadier preservation of the *sāda*'s spiritual lyrical poetry and its gradual incorporation in ritual performances of audition (*samāʿ*) as a regular feature of ʿAlawī devotional practice. The earliest and most important example of such a gathering can be found in the highly popular *Ḥaḍra* of Imām al-Saqqāf. The *Ḥaḍra* was initially performed by the Imām's children and grandchildren until sometime in the sixteenth century when his descendant Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-ʿAydarūs (d. 968/1561) brought with him professional singers from Egypt and ʿAraf and employed them to lead the *samāʿ* performance; the descendants of these singers, known by the family names of Āl Bā Maṣrī and Āl ʿArfān, continue to specialize in leading the weekly *Ḥaḍra* till this very day.[139]

The *Ḥaḍra* of al-Saqqāf is a living repository of the *sāda*'s sacred poetry (*qaṣīdas*). Beginning its ritual sequences with the opening *qaṣīdas* of Sulṭāna al-Zubaydiyya and Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār to the sound of flute and drum, it has gradually evolved to incorporate the *qaṣīdas* of many of the Imām's notable descendants, starting with those of his children, and proceeding to include the poetry of other towering ʿAlawī figures. Through the careful selection

[139] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār Al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:264-265.

of which *qaṣīdas* to include and their intentional sequential arrangement in accordance with the precedence, rank, and stature of their various saintly authors, the guardians of the *Ḥaḍra* among al-Saqqāf's descendants have contributed in their own way to the historical process of canonization, whereby a clear hierarchy of saintly ranking begins to emerge.[140]

Given its mass appeal and popularity as an accessible ritual form, with much of its poetry being sung in the local Ḥaḍramī dialect (*dārij*), it may be very easy for the unassuming observer to characterize the *Ḥaḍra* as a mere instantiation of local folkloric tradition. For the ʿAlawīs, however, the sacred auditions of ritual poetry, which later come to take on the popular cultural form of the weekly and annual Mawlid celebration, constitute yet another major Sufi 'technology of the self,' by which one's faith is reaffirmed and celebrated and the Sufi tradition is kept alive and propagated. Such performances also serve a clear pedagogical function, attracting large and diverse crowds drawing in the scholar and the commoner alike in shared moments of spiritual intimacy. Far from being valued purely for their recreational purpose, such devotional performances serve to deepen the faithful's states of emotional and spiritual development and to connect them to their pious predecessors, thereby reaffirming their commitment to a living spiritual tradition.[141]

3.7.4. Sacred Geography

By the early fifteenth century, we begin to witness the rudimentary elements of a sacred geography taking form in the ʿAlawī 'institutional complex,' consisting of consecrated

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[140] This hierarchy of saintly authority is clearly evident in the intentional arrangement of the *Ḥaḍra*'s *qaṣīdas,* as can be seen in al-Mashhūr, *al-Manhal al-ʿAjīb.*

[141] To safeguard against the tendency to view sacred auditions as no more than folkloric distractions, the contemporary ʿAlawī historian Ḥabīb Abū Bakr al-Mashhūr, as did earlier authorities, goes to great lengths to dispel such views by characterizing them as a forms of Sufi '*dhikr*' directed at the spiritual and emotional development of the Sufi seeker, where he outlines the strict etiquettes that disciples must observe to reap their spiritual benefit. al-Mashhūr, "al-Imām al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf," 19.

spaces "where spiritual meaning is grounded in ritual locale."[142] Whether it is the gravesites of their forefathers in the cemetery of Zanbal and elsewhere, that have served as destinations of pilgrimage and prayer for the *sāda,* the Bāʿ Alawī Mosque, the first ʿAlawī mosque to be built in Tarīm, al-Saqqāf's Mosque, site of the famous *Ḥaḍrat al-Saqqāf*, or al-Miḥḍār's Mosque, where congregants converge from across the valley to complete the Qurʾān in Tarawīḥ prayers every Ramadan, all such locales are the major landmarks of a sacred Hadhrami geography, standing as timeless relics where the spiritual memory of the *sāda*'s ancestors is accessed and revisited. In addition to these major sites, there is the tomb site of the Prophet Hūd, which according to popular Hadhrami lore was held to be this Prophet's resting place since pre-Islamic times. For the *sāda,* the accuracy of the Prophet Hūd's burial location was never in doubt, however, as it was believed to be confirmed spiritually through the process of spiritual unveiling (*mukāshafa*); the hagiographic biographies retell several preternatural incidents of various *sāda*'s spiritual communions with this pre-Islamic Prophet.[143]

These ritualistic, textual, and geographical features, which begin to coalesce into a Sufi 'institutional complex' at the beginning of the fifteenth century, continue to evolve and take

[142] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 45.

[143] It is believed that the first ʿAlawī to formalize the visit to the Prophet Hūd as a devotional practice was al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, after whom the major ʿAlawī saints typically followed suit making a habit of prolonged and isolated spiritual retreats at his tomb site. It was not until the sixteenth century, however, that the tomb became formally the site of a major annual ʿAlawī pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) in the month of Shaʿbān, which was initially led for the first time by the illustrious Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley*, 148–149. The three-day festival of the Prophet Hūd remains the largest and most popular religious festival in Hadhramaut today. The trek up the hill to the ancient Prophet's tomb begins, as has been the custom for centuries, with opening supererogatory prayers over a large rock known as ʿUmar's Rock, where Imām al-Miḥḍār was known to have prayed. For more on this annual pilgrimage (*ziyāra*), see Boxberger, *On the Edge of Empire*, 156–159; R. B. Serjeant, *Hūd and other pre-Islamic prophets of Ḥaḍramawt*, in *Le Muséon*, lxvii (1954), 121-179; Buxton, *Imams of the Valley*, 37-38.

shape into the sixteenth century, where we reach a critical point of intellectual and spiritual flourishing for Hadhrami Sufism and the ʿAlawī tradition, the topic of Chapter 4.

Conclusion

As various historians and anthropologists have noted, the early ʿAlawī *sāda* of Hadhramaut were generally indistinguishable from the scholarly class of *mashāyikh*, and while the earliest example of a ʿAlawī *ḥawṭa* in the literature dates back to the early-twelfth century, it is not until the fifteenth century that we begin to see a significant rise in their number, signifying the gradual expansion of the *sāda*'s temporal power and influence as a distinct social stratum in Hadhrami society. By some time in the sixteenth century in Hadhramaut, these settlements became almost exclusively associated with renowned *sāda* families, where a capable *sayyid* was typically elected as a '*manṣab*' by local tribal elders and served as a spiritual leader, peacemaker, and neutral arbitrator of their inter-tribal conflicts. This newly emerging social role was largely a consequence of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's decisive turn to Sufism and his forgoing of arms in the thirteenth century, which impacted the *sāda*'s emerging social identity as an unarmed scholarly family. This pacifist streak, which has been historically maintained with few exceptions, served to distinguish the ʿAlawīs as spiritual reformers, even from their scholarly peers among the *mashāyikh*, who held no similar restriction on the carrying of arms. Aside from this consideration, the *sāda*'s noble Prophetic lineage and their strict interpretation of the legal principle of *kafāʾa* (commensurability in marriage), where a *sayyida* or *sharīfa* was expected to always marry within the family, were other important factors that helped to differentiate the *sāda* as a distinct scholarly class in Hadhrami society.

Bujra's anthropological account of the Hadhrami system of social stratification in his study of the *sāda*'s ʿAṭṭās family in the town of Ḥuryaḍa, in which the *sāda* are identified as the

most privileged social stratum of Hadhrami society, has been taken by later scholars and academics as a standard account of the overall system of social stratification in Hadhramaut. While his contribution remains highly informative as a localized anthropological study of the town of Ḥuryaḍa, as Camelin correctly observes in her more recent study on the social stratification of the town of al-Shiḥr, competing perspectives and regional differences do in fact exist, such that it would be inaccurate to rank the *sāda* uniformly as the highest and most privileged social stratum across all of Hadhramaut, as such a social standing is occasionally occupied, in other contexts, by the autochthonous Hadhrami *qabāʾīl*. Her nuanced study thus suggests that far from reflecting a monolithic reality, the scope of the *sāda's* power and social influence in the valley is more frequently a function of demographics and local dynamics. However, while the *sāda* did not always enjoy the same social standing and level of influence across the valley, especially among the Bedouin tribes of the rural areas, they nevertheless did begin to emerge as a distinct social stratum of considerable religious and economic power by the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the major urban scholarly centers, such as Tarīm, and in the *ḥawṭas* that they had established.

This chapter has also sought to account for the *sāda*'s growing temporal functions and social influence in Hadhramaut by situating their diverse social roles and activities within their immediate socio-political and economic context, which is sharply contrasted with the more favorable conditions faced by their scholarly peers under the powerful Sunni dynasties in western Yemen. As can be gleaned from Knysh's informative study of the Sufi faction in Rasūlid Yemen, the Sufi elite were generously patronized by the sultans, who as learned men, took a keen interest in the promotion of Islamic mysticism and the generous funding of Islamic libraries and institutions. Their friendly relations with the Sufi elite and their favorable inclination

towards philosophical Sufism, in particular, ensured that Zabīd would soon become a major intellectual and spiritual capital for the Ibn ʿArabī school, where al-Shaykh al-Akbar's controversial teachings were widely received and his intellectual admirers were regularly supported against their scholarly rivals by successive sultans.

These favorable conditions in western Yemen rarely extended to the Hadhrami interior. While Ibn ʿArabī's works were known and studied by members of the valley's scholarly elite, his teachings never managed to gain the same level of institutional and political support, as Hadhramaut was not as well integrated politically, culturally, and economically with the seat of Rasūlid power in Zabīd, meaning that the sultans' lavish support and patronage of Yemen's scholarly elite rarely extended to their Hadhrami counterparts. Indeed, the turbulent and precarious political scene in Hadhramaut meant that the Rasūlids' control over its territories remained for the most part indirect, while the local ruling tribes were far too preoccupied with directing their resources and focus against their political rivals and enemies.

This view is corroborated by the *sāda*'s own accounts in their biographical sources, which note that the construction of their many mosques and *ḥawṭas* was privately funded by the wealth accruing from their many plantations. This was further supplemented since the sixteenth century by the remittances of ʿAlawīs living abroad, especially from among the ʿAydarūs family in India. It is thus, this combination of weak local rulers, the general state of political and economic instability, and the absence of state patronage that largely motivated the *sāda* to utilize their own resources towards the construction of mosques and *ḥawṭas* and to shoulder the extra burden of alleviating the economic hardships of Hadhramaut's impoverished population.

This chapter has also surveyed the biographies of early ʿAlawī figures from among al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's descendants, with a special focus on the spiritual and social contributions

of Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥman al-Saqqāf (d. 819/1416) and his son and spiritual inheritor Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (d. 833/1429), both of whom played an instrumental role in the consolidation of the Bā ʿAlawī tradition's spiritual praxis and Sufi *habitus* in the early-fifteenth century. As Ho has observed, this process of consolidation can be seen in the gradual emergence of a Sufi 'institutional complex' that was characterized by a set of distinct ritualistic, textual, and geographic features. These general features were more precisely identified and expanded upon in this chapter as follows: the formation of a distinct curriculum of scholarly study, in which al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* took pride of place, the emergence of a ʿAlawī hagiographical canon beginning with al-Khaṭīb's *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf,* the growing importance of spiritual poetry and Sufi auditions, as can be seen with Imām al-Saqqāf's famous *Ḥaḍra,* and the emergence of a new sacred geography, in which the *sāda*'s early mosques and graves came to be elevated as major landmarks and timeless relics, where the spiritual memory of their ancestors was more readily accessed and revisited.

Finally, in adopting a phenomenological lens in my examination of each of these major features of the ʿAlawī tradition, I have also sought to highlight how the *sāda*'s aspirations and growing temporal roles were in many ways shaped and constrained not only by the dictates of their more immediate socio-political context but also by the inherited ideals and Sufi *habitus* of their spiritual and intellectual tradition.

- 4 –

An Intellectual and Cultural Efflorescence in the Valley

With the consolidation of the *sāda*'s spiritual identity and practice in the first half of the fifteenth century, the valley began to also witness a steady spiritual and cultural revival, with an unprecedented flourishing of intellectual activity that peaked by the end of the sixteenth century. These developments were paralleled in the political sphere with the eclipsing of the Āl Yamānī dynasty by the rising power of the Kathīrī sultans and their eventual conquest of Tarīm in 926/1520. Under the first Kathīrī sultanate, which continued into the early eighteenth century (r. *circa* 814-1130/1411-1718), Hadhramaut began to witness a somewhat greater measure of political, social, and economic stability, where the new sultans established a strong rapport with the scholarly elite, frequently taking them as counselors and political mediators, and demonstrating some instances of patronage and support for their activities.

While the new order under the Kathīrīs was never fully free from recurring episodes of political strife, tribal rebellion, and internecine rivalries, these new developments, nevertheless, helped set the stage for a spiritual, cultural, and intellectual efflorescence across the valley, and in Tarīm in particular, with the ʿAlawī *sāda* playing a crucial role as the favoured *manṣabs* and mediators of an ever-fragile political order. This chapter explores these social, political, and intellectual developments, addressing the Kathīrīs' rise to power, the scope of their political relations with ʿAlawī *sāda*, and the broader intellectual and scholarly Hadhrami context from the mid-fifteenth through the end of the seventeenth century.

4.1. The First Kathīrī Sultanate

The Āl Kathīr are a southern Arabian tribe who trace their origins to Kathīr b. Ẓanna of the Qaḥṭānī tribe of Sabaʾ.[1] They seem to have first come to prominence as tribal allies of the Dhofari ruler Sālim b. Idrīs al-Ḥabūẓī, who organized them into his own military force during his short-lived invasion and conquest of Hadhramaut in 637/1275. The Kathīrīs, however, only managed to make their first dramatic appearance on the stage of Hadhrami history as an organized polity following their initial conquest of Dhofar in 807/1405, which continued to be challenged by the Āl Yamānīs until their first sultan ʿAlī b. ʿUmar (d. 825/1422) decisively took over the city in 816/1413, defeating all opposition to his rule.[2]

Prior to the rise of the ambitious sultan ʿAlī b. ʿUmar, the Kathīrīs had governed in a dispersed manner over parts of Hadhramaut in competition with the Āl Yamānīs of Tarīm. In 814/1411, ʿAlī b. ʿUmar left the town of Būr and travelled through the valley, establishing close relations with several of its leading scholarly figures, especially Shaykh ʿAlī b. ʿUmar Bā ʿAbbād, who rallied behind his cause and encouraged him to consolidate his power over Hadhramaut and Dhofar. After conquering Dhofar in 816/1413, he successfully repelled an attack from the Āl Yamānīs and their local allies in 821/1418, who feared his growing political ambitions over Hadhramaut. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar then went on to fortify several strongholds, including the town of al-Ḥusayyisa in the same year. In 824/1421, he was attacked by the ruler of Shibām, and he seized the opportunity to besiege and subdue the city, having thus consolidated several parts of the valley under his rule. Sultan ʿAlī b. ʿUmar was succeeded by his son ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlī after his death *circa* 825/1422, who continued to capitalize on his father's territorial gains,

[1] According to al-Shāṭirī, the Ẓanna are Qaḥṭānīs of Sabaʾ and not Hamdan, as some commonly believe, and their origins are from Muscat and Dhofar. al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:234, 352.
[2] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:38–40; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:519.

and thus was born the first Kathīrī sultanate in Hadhramaut, which was to last into the beginnings of the eighteenth century.[3]

The Kathīrī sultans did not rule for most of their reign as a typical Muslim dynasty, where political rule was centralized under one ruler and power was usually inherited from father to son. Rather, for most of the duration of their reign, Hadhramaut and Dhofar remained divided amongst several sultans of the same family, who mostly interacted with one another as peers, with relations that frequently oscillated between periods of cooperation and rivalry, where the weaker or less powerful rulers, usually a younger brother or nephew, typically cooperated with those who were stronger and better established, as long as such alliances were deemed to be advantageous and helped to fend off their common enemies.[4] Although this arrangement would ensure a continued element of political rivalry and instability to their rule, through their political acumen, their stable and effective military power, and their friendly relations and general deference towards Hadhramaut's scholarly elite, who were frequently called upon to mediate their recurring conflicts, the Kathīrīs gradually succeeded in restoring a relative measure of peace, security, and economic growth to Hadhramaut.

The most famous and celebrated Kathīrī sultan was undoubtedly the highly ambitious Badr Abū Ṭuwayriq (*r*. 922-77/1516-70). As one of the longest serving Kathīrī rulers, Abū Ṭuwayriq's expansionist policies would eventually allow him to consolidate his power over the

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[3] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:38-44. Ibn Hishām's history is likely the most comprehensive study on the Kathīrī sultans to date, though as G. R. Smith warns, the work must be used with 'extreme care,' owing to some clear historical errors. As al-Shāṭirī also observes, Ibn Hishām's exhaustive list of Kathīrī rulers, who are numbered chronologically according to their rule, is not always the most accurate, with some of the listed 'sultans' not being confirmed to have actually ruled or played any significant or mentionable political role. G. R. Smith, "Kathīrī," in *EI*$_2$, first published 2012, http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8761; al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:236.

[4] al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:234.

coast and the interior, unifying the whole of Hadhramaut under his control, with the exception of the autonomous land of al-Mihra, whose leaders eventually came to respect his power and authority.[5] Recognized as a just and wise ruler, Abū Ṭuwayriq fostered friendly relations with the ʿAlawīs. An interesting tale narrates that a group of *sāda* had taken a keen interest in the young ruler and wished to confirm his family *nasab*. After verifying his descent from Sabaʾ back to the Prophet Hūd, a group of seven ʿAlawī leaders travelled to the tomb of the Prophet Hūd to pray for his political success in uniting Hadhramaut under his control and bringing peace and security to its population.[6]

A shrewd politician and strategist, Abū Ṭuwayriq was able to use the Ottoman-Portuguese rivalry in the Indian Ocean to his own advantage. In 926/1520, he corresponded with the Turks and reached an agreement to employ some of them to serve in his army. With his Turkish army he then went on to swiftly conquer the city of Shibām in the same year. This was also the first introduction of firearms into Hadhramaut, which gave him a distinct advantage over his enemies and would become a major contributing factor to his future military success.[7] He then went on to conquer Tarīm in the same or following year, dealing the final death blow to the Āl Yamānī dynasty in Hadhramaut and expelling their last sultan, Muḥammad b. Aḥmad.[8]

In 942/1536, Abū Ṭuwayriq successfully defeated an attack by the Portuguese on al-Shiḥr, who had posed a regular threat to the coast, seizing their ships and taking some seventy of their men as prisoners. He corresponded with the Ottoman sultan Süleymān I the Magnificent

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[5] For his biography, see Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:56-79; al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 435–437. For a more detailed historical account of the major incidents during his reign, see al-Kindī, *al-ʿUdda al-Mufīda*, 1:162–217.
[6] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:58-59.
[7] Smith, "Kathīrī"; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:59-60.
[8] The sources disagree as to whether Abū Ṭuwayriq's conquest of Tarīm was in 926/1520 or the following year. See al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 2:533-535; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:61; al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 185; al-Kindī, *al-ʿUdda al-Mufīda*, 1:163.

seeking his aid against the Portuguese, who responded by dispatching an impressive galley under the leadership of the general Süleymān Pasha to al-Shiḥr in 944/1538, which was generously received by Abū Ṭuwayriq. The Friday *khuṭba* was pronounced in the name of the Ottoman sultan and Süleymān Pasha would go on to conquer Aden in the following year, bringing an end to the Ṭāhirid dynasty in Yemen.[9]

Abū Ṭuwayriq's long reign in the sixteenth century (*r*. 922-77/1516-70) marks the peak of Kathīriī power and, as we shall see, corresponds to an unprecedented period of intellectual and cultural efflorescence across Hadhramaut. Despite the occasional instability from political rivals, his just rule brought about a measure of political and economic stability, and in 932/1526 and 937/1531 he struck coins in his name, introducing a new currency to Hadhramaut.[10] Aside from his political and economic achievements, he also took an interest in Islamic scholarship and is noted for having patronized a number of scholars; in 959/1552, he established the al-Sulṭāniyya al-Badriyya college (*madrasa*) along with a generous endowment in al-Shiḥr, appointing Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAlī Bā Yazīd as its chief instructor and *mufti*.[11]

This trend would be continued by later sultans, including his son ʿAbd Allah b. Badr (d. 985/1577), who enjoyed strong relations with the scholarly elite, appointing the jurist Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bā Jammāl as chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāṭ*) over the jurisdiction stretching from Wādī Yubḥur to Wādī ʿAmd and Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Bā Jābir as the chief instructor of his father's Sulṭāniyya college. His brother sultan al-ʿĀdil ʿUmar b. Badr (d. 1021/1612) was especially known to have generously patronized several scholars, while

[9] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh Al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:64-68. For more on the century of Ottoman presence in Yemen, see Chapter 2, note 32.
[10] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh Al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:61. Ibn Ḥamīd al-Kindī also notes him as striking coins in al-Shiḥr in 934/1528. al-Kindī, *al-ʿUdda al-Mufīda*, 1:165.
[11] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:78; al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 337.

hiring others as scribes and secretaries. ʿUmar's son, the famous Badr b. ʿUmar (d. 1073/1663) also established several Sharīʿa courts across Hadhramaut and built several grand mosques with generous endowments, including Masjid al-Ḥuṣn in Sayʾūn and Masjid al-Ṣulṭān in Tarīm.[12]

Following the reign of Abū Ṭuwayriq (d. 977/1570), the Kathīrīs' power began to gradually wane due to intensified internecine squabbles and rising external challenges to their authority. A power struggle in the mid-seventeenth century between the aforementioned Badr b. ʿUmar (d. 1073/1663) and his nephew Badr b. ʿAbd Allah (d. 1075/1665) led to the direct intervention of the Zaydī Imāms into the political affairs of Hadhramaut. In response to the rising threat to his rule from his ambitious nephew, Badr b. ʿUmar began corresponding heavily with Imām al-Mutawakkil Ismāʿīl of Yemen (r. 1054-87/1644-76) seeking his assistance, and the Friday *khuṭba* was soon pronounced in the name of the Zaydī Imām. This move served to alienate the sultan from many of his Hadhrami subjects, especially after it had been rumored that he had converted to the Zaydī rite, a development which Badr b. ʿAbd Allah used to his advantage.[13]

In 1058/1648, Badr b. ʿAbd Allah finally invaded the capital of Sayʾūn, imprisoning his uncle and his son in the fortress of Maryama. Al-Mutawakkil swiftly reacted by corresponding with Badr b. ʿAbd Allah and demanding for his immediate release and appointment as governor of Dhofar. After initially feigning his obedience, the Imām sensed a reluctance from the sultan and dispatched the amīr Ṣāliḥ b. Ḥusayn to Hadhramaut to ensure Badr b. ʿUmar's release and secure his governorship over Dhofar. This agreement would not last for long, however, and after sensing that Badr b. ʿAbd Allah and his brother Jaʿfar were plotting to overthrow him, Badr b. ʿUmar sent his sons to Sanaa to seek the aid of the Imām once more. Dhofar was attacked soon

[12] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:86, 90, 95.
[13] Smith, "Kathīrī"; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:96.

after by Jaʿfar's forces, who took over its fortress, and Badr b. ʿUmar was forced to flee to Yemen via the port of Aden, arriving at the Imām's court in Sanaa in 1069/1659. These developments would serve as a pretext for a full scale Zaydī invasion on Hadhramaut in the following year led by Ṣafī al-Islām Aḥmad b. Ḥasan, who was now accompanied by Badr b. ʿUmar.[14]

The Zaydī invasion of Hadhramaut and the Imām's direct involvement in Hadhrami political affairs was a substantial blow the Kathīrīs' sovereignty in the valley, marking the beginnings of their decline as a powerful sultanate. Though the Zaydīs' influence in Hadhramaut did not last beyond the reign of al-Mutawakkil's nephew al-Mahdī Aḥmad (d. 1093/1681), at which point the Kathīrīs had regained much of their control over Hadhramaut, their power remained greatly weakened by the rising threats and instability caused by recurring conflicts with the Yāfiʿīs, a powerful tribal confederation whose men were frequently hired to serve in the Kathīrīs' forces. The Yāfiʿīs eventually gained the upper hand in Hadhramaut, with Tarīm falling to Āl Baʿūs, Sayʾūn to Āl al-Ḍibby, and al-Shīḥr to Āl Barīk.[15]

The last ruler of the first Kathīrī sultanate was Jaʿfar b. ʿAbd Allah, whose reign lasted till *circa* 1130/1718, after which Hadhramaut fell into a period of political chaos and tribal rivalry, with the re-emergence of several short-lived petty states.[16] The political instability would continue for over a century until the rise of al-Ghālib b. Muḥsin (d. 1287/1870) of the Āl ʿAbd

[14] Smith, "Kathīrī"; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:97-99.
[15] Smith, "Kathīrī"; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:100; Aḥmad Faḍl b. ʿAlī Muḥsin al-ʿAbdalī, *Hadiyyat al-Zamān fī Akhbār Mulūk Laḥj wa-ʿAdan* (Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1932), 115.
[16] Though the exact end date of his reign remains unclear in the sources, al-Shāṭirī notes that the first Kathīrī sultanate was to last until *circa* 1130/1718. al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:225.

Allah branch of the Kathīrīs, who would establish the second Kathīrī sultanate, which was to last until the establishment of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in 1967.[17]

4.1.1. The Kathīrī Sultans and the ʿAlawī *Sāda*: A History of Cordial Relations

Under the first Kathīrī sultanate, the ʿAlawīs continued to develop their temporal role as advisors to the sultans and as the mediators of political and tribal conflicts, especially in their capacities as the *manṣabs* of independent *ḥawṭas*. From the beginning of their rule, the Kathīrīs displayed a willingness and keenness to develop friendly relations with the valley's scholarly elite, with whom they frequently consulted in deciding their political affairs, and who in turn played a crucial role in legitimizing their rule within Hadhrami society. Some of these sultans, as we shall see, gravitated naturally towards the scholars, taking them as spiritual guides, given their personal proclivities for a life of piety and learning.

The period of Kathīrī rule thus witnessed a great number of interventions from the *sāda* in the mediation of their political conflicts. As we saw previously, when the Kathīrī ruler Jaʿfar b. ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlī b. ʿUmar (d. 905/1500), who was religiously devout and enjoyed close relations with the ʿAlawīs, met with Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (d. 833/1429) in the *ḥawṭa* of Sulṭāna al-Zubaydiyya, the Imām encouraged him to rule over the town of Būr, reassuring him

[17] Though others, like G. R. Smith, prefer to classify the Kathīrīs' rule as a single continuously ruling state, with its reign ending in 1967, I prefer to follow Ibn Hishām's and al-Shāṭirī's classification of their rule as consisting of two sultanates, with a political interregnum between them lasting for over a century from around 1130/1718 till *circa* 1270/1854. Among other political contenders, this tumultuous period in Hadhrami politics would witness two failed attempts to revive the Kathīrī sultanate by the Āl ʿUmar b. Jaʿfar (r. 1220-1239/1805-1824) and the Āl ʿĪsā b. Badr (r. 1239-1274/1824-1858) and the controversial rise of a short-lived and armed ʿAlawī Imāmate in Tarīm under the *sayyid* Ṭāhir b. Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir (d. 1241/1825). See al-Shāṭirī, *Adwār al-Tārīkh al-Ḥaḍramī*, 2:337-400; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:141-222. For an extensive history of the second Kathīrī sultanate and the rise of its rivaling Quʿyṭī state in Hadhramaut (from 1880s-1936), see Boxberger, *On the Edge of Empire*, 183–240.

that he would personally intervene to convince its incumbent ruler to step down.[18] On another occasion, when the sultan ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlī (d. after 844/1441) sent his brother Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 835/1432) to overthrow the Āl Yamānīs in Tarīm, Imām al-Miḥḍār went out to meet him as he laid siege to the city and succeeded in persuading him to retreat and leave the city unharmed.[19]

As widely respected spiritual leaders, the *sāda* were thus called upon regularly to mediate the Kathīrīs' political conflicts and to facilitate their peace treaties. When sultan Badr b. ʿAbd Allah (d. 894/1489) was being challenged by the Āl Yamānī's tribal alliance of al-Masfala shortly after assuming his rule following the death of his brother in 855/1451, he met their forces in a fierce battle in the region of Bā Jalḥabān, which resulted in many casualties. At this point, Imām Abū Bakr al-Sakrān b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf (d. 821/1418) successfully intervened in convening a peace treaty between the parties, which came to be known as the treaty of al-Ghadīr. A few months later, upon witnessing the deteriorating relations between sultan Badr b. ʿAbd Allah and Ibn Duways al-Yamānī (d. 872) of Tarīm, Abū Bakr al-Sakrān's son, the renowned Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461) would travel to al-Qārra on the outskirts of al-Shiḥr to meet personally with the Kathīrī sultan, urging him to initiate another peace treaty with Ibn Duways, which was finally convened between the two parties in Ṣūh after some initial reluctance from the Kathīrī sultan.[20]

Some of the Kathīrī sultans also became celebrated for their piety and for developing intimate relations with the *sāda* and other Sufi figures, in some cases becoming their personal disciples. One such ruler was sultan ʿAlī b. ʿUmar (d. 981/1573), a man of knowledge and a

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[18] al-Mashhūr, "al-Shaykh al-Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār," 190; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya,* 1:48.
[19] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya,* 1:44.
[20] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt,* 2:528-529; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya,* 1:46-47.

gifted poet, who came to be celebrated for his piety, having memorized the Qurʾān and studied with the scholars of his time. He remained initially aloof of politics and was immersed in a private life of scholarly study and worship, until he was evicted from Shibām with other members of the Kathīrī family after the city was conquered by his nephew, the famous Badr Abū Ṭuwayriq in 929/1523. Several members of the evicted Kathīrī family would in turn rally behind ʿAlī b. ʿUmar to enter the political arena and retake Shibām from Badr, which he succeeded in doing in 943/1537.[21] Upon his return to Shibām, ʿAlī b. ʿUmar returned to his former life of piety, becoming a Sufi disciple of the famous Sufi master Maʿrūf b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Jammāl (d. 969/1562), who was also the teacher of the illustrious Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Salīm (d. 992/1583), one of most celebrated ʿAlawī saints of the sixteenth century.[22]

Among the *sāda*, it was Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim, the famous *manṣab* of the *ḥawṭa* of ʿĪnāt, and his descendants who inherited his title after him who would have the most extensive relations with the Kathīrī sultans, regularly hosting them in their *hawṭa* and serving as personal advisors and mediators to their conflicts. When the sultan ʿal-ʿĀdil' ʿUmar b. Badr (d. 1021/1612) was imprisoned by his brother ʿAbd Allah (d. 985/1577), Shaykh Abū Bakr delivered a private letter to the sultan, offering him words of encouragement and a glad tiding of his impending release and the return of his rule. The sultan and his descendants would henceforth establish long-lasting ties of affection with the Abū Bakr b. Salim family in ʿĪnāt.[23]

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[21] Concerning ʿAlī b. ʿUmar's decision to enter politics, the biographies narrate the story that several of the ʿAlawī *sāda* had witnessed the Prophet in their dream rubbing his hand over his head and consoling him, "*You are surely among the victors!*" Muḥammad al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir bi-Takmīl al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, ed. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Muqḥafī (Sanaa: Maktabat al-Irshād, 2004), 539–40; Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:79-82.

[22] For more on Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim and his Sufi master Maʿrūf Bā Jammāl, see Chapter 6.

[23] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:89-90; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:28.

The most dramatic of these encounters with the *sāda* is perhaps that of ʿUmar's son, sultan ʿAbd Allah b. ʿUmar (d. 1045/1636), who abdicated his rule a mere three years after succeeding his father in 1021/1612. As a man of exceptional piety who preferred the seclusive contemplative life, he resolved to forgo his political career in 1024/1615 and to seek out Ḥabīb Ḥusayn b. Abū Bakr b. Salīm and his son Ḥabīb Aḥmad in their *ḥawṭa* of ʿĪnāt.[24] As is recounted in this dramatic story, after firmly resolving to become a disciple of the *sāda*, the sultan stealthily took off for ʿĪnāt disguised as a wandering dervish. After reaching the *ḥawṭa* and praying at the tomb of Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim, he approached ʿAbdūn, a servant of the family, and informed him that he was a visiting dervish from Damascus who desired to meet with Ḥabīb Aḥmad. ʿAbdūn responded with some initial reluctance by saying, "By God, even if you were the sultan ʿAbd Allah b. Badr himself, he would have no time for you!" He was later eventually taken through the courtyard of the family residence by its caretaker, Salmān Bā Ṣaybaʿ, and upon passing by the Shaykh's children in his disguise, the *sayyid* ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn is noted to have instinctively proclaimed that this must be none other than the sultan himself! The sultan was then taken into a private room, where he was greeted by Ḥabīb Ḥusayn and his son Ḥabīb Aḥmad, before whom he revealed his disguise and is said to have wept profusely, informing them of his desire to become their disciple and to abdicate his rule to the Abū Bakr family, for them to dispense with it as they please. After consoling the sultan, Ḥabīb Ḥusayn responded, "To rule over the people (*al-wilāya ʿalā al-nās*), we do not desire any of this, not even for our servant who carries our water, and we shall never permit it for our sons! However, we will grant it to your brother Badr, for he is honorable and just." At this point, the sultan requested of the Shaykh

[24] At some point in the *sāda*'s history, the exact period of which remains unclear, it becomes more commonplace to address them by the honorific title of 'Ḥabīb,' instead of the usual 'Imām' or 'Shaykh,' though the latter honorifics continued to be reserved for some of their preeminent authorities. It is clear from this example that this must have taken place since at least the sixteenth century, if not earlier.

to pray for three things: that he be forgiven his sins, that he be granted his death in Mecca, Medina, or ʿĪnāt, and that he be guaranteed the Shaykh's company in Heaven. The sultan thus chose to settle in ʿĪnāt for several years before moving to Mecca in 1045/1636, where he is believed to have died.[25]

Prior to exploring the lives and legacies of the three major ʿAlawī figures of this period in Chapters 5 and 6, we now turn to a brief survey of the major intellectual developments and the general state of scholarship and learning in sixteenth/seventeenth century Hadhramaut.

4.2. An Intellectual and Cultural Revival in Hadhramaut

The emergence of the major ʿAlawī authority Imām ʿAbd Allah b. Abū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), known as al-ʿAydarūs al-Akbar, in the fifteenth century marks the beginning of a new intellectual and cultural age in Tarīm and Hadhramaut that witnesses a prodigious rise in scholarly writings across a number of fields and disciplines. This revival of scholarly activity would continue to gain momentum well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with a great number of Hadhrami scholarly works being produced in the fields of historiography (mostly chronicles and hagiographic biographies), the Sharīʿa sciences, Sufism, the Arabic sciences, and poetry (*dīwāns*), in addition to other works in the natural and practical sciences, such as astronomy, geography, medicine, and agriculture.[26] For our purposes here, we will suffice ourselves with a brief overview of developments in the three major fields of historiography, Islamic law, and Sufism.

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[25] The story is reproduced by Ibn Hishām as narrated by the historian ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Aḥmad Bā Wazīr. Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:93-95.

[26] Serjeant provides a helpful examination of Hadhrami sources and MSS categorized by discipline, many of which date from the sixteenth/seventeenth century, in "Materials I" and "Materials II."

4.2.1. Historiography

Of all these scholarly fields, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem especially critical for the development of Hadhrami historiography, giving rise to a number of important Hadhrami chronicles, where few had previously existed or survived.[27] Among the most important of these works in offering us valuable historical and biographical information on the *sāda* of this period is *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, a centenary biographical chronicle by the prolific creole *sayyid* ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Shaykh al-ʿAydarūs (d. 1037/1627).[28] Completed in 1011/1603 in Islamabad, the capital of the Indian state of Gujarat, the work chronicles the events and personalities of the tenth/sixteenth Islamic century over a wide geographical region from Gujarat to Egypt, the horn of Africa, and the Hejaz.[29]

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[27] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 118. The major historical chronicles of this period include al-Ṭayyib b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Makhrama's (d. 947/1540) *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allah Shanbal's (d. 920/1514) *Tārīkh*, Sālim b. ʿAwaḍ Bā Sabaʾ's (d. 950/1543?) *Bahjat al-Samar fī Akhbar Bandar Saʿād al-Mukhtaṣar*, ʿAbd Allah b. Aḥmad Bā Sanjala's (d. 987/1579) *al-ʿIqd al-Thamīn al-Fākhir fī Tārīkh al-Qarn al-ʿĀshir* (also known as *Tārīkh Bā Sanjala* or *Tārīkh al-Shiḥr*), and Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Bā Faqīh's (d. after 1038/1629) *Tārīkh al-Shiḥr wa-Akhbār al-Qarn al-ʿĀshir*. Nearly all of these are noted in Serjeant, "Materials I," 289-295, 300, with the exception of *Bahjat al-Samar*, the only MS to remain unpublished in a critical edition. Bā Makhrama's years of birth and death are mistaken by Serjeant for those of his father, ʿAbd Allah Bā Makhrama, a prominent jurist in Aden who died in 903/1497. Al-Tayyib Bā Makhrama's correct year of death is 947/1540.

[28] For more on this major ʿAlawī scholar in Gujarat, see my discussion below and his autobiographical entry in *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 444-453. Al-Shillī also has two biographical entries in *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:147-153 and *ʿIqd al-Jawāhir wa-l-Durar fī Akhbār al-Qarn al-Ḥādī ʿAshar*, ed. Ibrāhim Aḥmad al-Maḥqafī (Sanaa: Maktabat al-Irshād, 2003), 202–207. *Al-Mashraʿ* mistakenly notes his year of death as 1048 AH, while the editor of al-*Nūr al-Sāfir*, 444n1, notes the date of his death on a margin of an MS copy as the 10th of Muḥarram, 1037 AH. The subject's name is also mistakenly noted as Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd al-Qādir in *ʿIqd al-Jawāhir*, as he was also named with the honorary *kunya* of Abū Bakr by his father. As is explained in the story of his naming, upon the nearing of his son's delivery, his father witnessed the Imāms ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī and Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī in a dream, where he was also informed that his wife had just delivered a boy, and he thus chose to name his son after these two illustrious saints (*fa-sammāhu li-hadhihī al-ishāra ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, wa-laqqabahu Muḥyī al-Dīn, wa-kannāhu Abā Bakr*). *ʿIqd al-Jawāhir*, 203.

[29] This genre was first pioneered by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) in his *al-Durar al-Kāmina*, a chronicle on the eighth Islamic century. Though *al-Nūr al-Sāfir* covers the lives of kings, princes, and ministers, with their death notices serving as an occasion for their biographical entries, it also provides a thorough accounting of the lives of the major scholars and *sāda* of this period. Ho closely examines the chronicle, which he also compares with al-Shillī's more legalistic and genealogically focused *al-Mashraʿ*

In addition to chronicles, two popular travel memoirs, *Riḥlat al-Maghribī* and *Riḥlat Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī,* are also worthy of mention as historical sources, both of which were authored by Moroccan travelers to Hadhramaut. The first *Riḥla*, written by an anonymous Moroccan pilgrim who visits Tarīm in 965/1460, consists of a highly idealized account of his sojourn in Tarīm, offering intimate details on the *sādas*' day-to-day life, their hospitality, ascetic scrupulousness, the education of their children, and their rigorous routines of worship and learning in Tarīm's mosques.[30] The latter work is the travel memoir of the Moroccan Ḥasanī *sayyid* and scholar Yūsuf b. ʿĀbid b. Muḥammad al-Fāsī (d. 1048/1638), recounting his journey from Fez to Egypt, and finally Hadhramaut, where he travelled to meet with the renowned Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583) and chose to settle and marry on multiple occasions between 992/1583 to 1036/1627. The work is notable as an outsider's account of his extensive travels across Hadhramaut and his many exchanges with its scholarly elite, where he was popularly received as a scholar and theologian.[31]

More importantly, this period also witnesses the emergence of several notable biographical and hagiographical works on the *sāda*, such as Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Khirid's (d. 960/1553) *al-Ghurar*, Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr al-Shillī's (d. 1132/1720) *al-Mashraʿa al-Rawy,*

al-Rawy. Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 117-151, esp. 117-137. Peskes also examines the work in *al-ʿAydarūs*, 247-256.

[30] The highly popular account offers similar details to what can be gleaned from the *sāda*'s own biographical literature, and though the ʿAlawīs are generally aware of minor errors and discrepancies in the text, they consider it to be historically sound and verified through spiritual unveiling (*mukāshafa*). See editor's introduction in *Riḥlat al-Maghribī,* 4. Serjeant, on the other hand, considers the work to be a forgery. "Historians," 258–259. A full translation of the *Riḥla* can also be found in al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley*, 113–140.

[31] See Yūsuf b. ʿAbid b. Muḥammad al-Fāsī, *Riḥlat Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī min al-Maghrib ilā Ḥaḍramawt,* ed. Ibrāhim al-Sāmrāʾī and ʿAbd Allah b. Muḥammad al-Ḥabshī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1993), 99–140.

Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs's (d. 990/ 1582)[32] *al-ʿIqd al-Nabawī wa-l-Sirr al-Musṭafawī,* and ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Bā Shaybān's (d. 944/1537) *Tiryāq Asqām al-Qulūb al-Wāf.*[33] Of these works, none have proven as foundational and influential for the *sāda* as Khirid's *al-Ghurar* and al-Shillī's *al-Mashraʿ*. Authored in 944/1538, *al-Ghurar* is the first major genealogically based work of its kind, making it a primary historical source for later works, including *al-Mashraʿ* and *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*.[34] Khirid builds upon extant biographical and hagiographic sources to offer a more ambitiously comprehensive and genealogically organized biographical work on the *sāda*.[35] Not only does his work include valuable historical information on the early ʿAlawīs, but it is also unprecedented in its organization. Consisting of ten sections on a number of diverse but related topics, the work's biographical subjects are treated under two distinct sections, a designated 'biographical' section (Section III) and a distinct 'hagiographic' section recounting stories of their preternatural feats and virtues (Section IV). This novel arrangement demonstrates its author's desire to conceptually distinguish between 'biography'

[32] For more on him, see discussion below. As previously noted, 'Shaykh' is a common first name for the *sāda* and is not to be confused here with the more frequently intended scholarly honorific.
[33] The MS of the last of these works is closely examined by Peskes as a primary source in *ʿAidarūs*, 14ff. In addition to these, there are a number of lesser-known works from this period, including hagiographical (*manāqib*) works on individual figures and works on the *mashāyikh* families, such as Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Sirāj al-Dīn Bā Jammāl's (d. 1019/1598) *al-Durr al-Fākhir fī Aʿyān al-Qarn al-ʿĀshir*, focusing mostly on the Bā Jammāl family, and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah al-Khaṭīb's (d. 1025/1616) *al-Burd al-Naʿīm* on the Āl Khaṭīb family of Tarīm. See, Serjeant "Materials I" and "Materials II."
[34] Khirid was an accomplished ʿAlawī *sayyid* and a well-travelled scholar and master of *ḥadīth*, having studied with the eminent *sāda* of his time such as al-Shaykh ʿAlī al-Saqqāf (d. 895/1490) and Imām Abu Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508) in Aden, in addition to other prominent scholars in Zabīd and the Hejaz. al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 1:196-198.
[35] While earlier sources were restricted in scope by either focusing exclusively on the *manāqib* of a single figure or group or including only details pertaining to an author's teachers, their scholarly training and chains of initiation (*taḥkīm*), *al-Ghurar* is significantly more ambitious in its scope and content, including the biographies of any ʿAlawī figures who were known to be men of knowledge and scholarship (*man ṣadaqa ʿalayhi ism al-faqīh wa-l mushāraka fī al-ʿilm*). See Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 48-53.

(*tarājim*) and 'hagiography' (*manāqib*) as distinct genres, while combining both in a single comprehensive work.[36]

Al-Mashraʿa al-Rawy, authored in late seventeenth-century Mecca by the famous *sayyid* Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr al-Shillī (d. 1132/1720), is the second major genealogically based work from this period. As Ho observes, al-Shillī's work appropriates the diasporic accounts of *al-Nūr al-Sāfir* and the hagiographic content of the much earlier *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf* , "synthetically recasting the whole."[37] Indeed, al-Shillī was very familiar with *al-Nūr al-Sāfir,* having authored an independent appendix (*dhayl*) to the work, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*. He also relied on Khirid's *al-Ghurar,* among other unidentified biographical sources.[38] Being authored over a century later, *al-Mashraʿ* is the more complete of the two works. Its biographies are organized alphabetically as opposed to Khirid's genealogical organization, and the work is also significant for including large sections on Tarīm's mosques, graveyards, and surrounding valleys and villages, outlining a sacred geography imbued with a strong aura of nostalgia and sanctity.[39] As comprehensive genealogical works on the *sāda*, *al-Mashraʿ* and *al-Ghurar* have come to serve as the canonical references on the Banū ʿAlawīs.[40]

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[36] Khirid, *al-Ghurar,* 23-24. It may be helpful here to recall John Renard's distinction between the simple genre of 'hagiography' and 'biohagiography,' which combines hagiographic depictions with important biographical details. Renard, *Friends of God,* 241-242. This latter term more accurately represents the bulk of medieval Sufi 'biographical' literature, including genealogically focused works, such as *al-Mashraʿ*.

[37] Ho, *The Graves of Tarim,* 118. *Al-Mashraʿ* is closely examined by Ho in pp. 138-151.

[38] Al-Shillī includes a charitable biographical entry on Khirid, where he also occasions praise for *al-Ghurar*. "*Wa-huwa kitābun lam yusbaq ilayh wa lā nasaja aḥad ʿalā minwālih fīh*." *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 1:197. The fact that he relied on other historical sources is clear from his inclusion of biographical details not to be found in *al-Ghurar* or *al-Nur al-Sāfir*. For instance, in his biographical entry on Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī, he notes his mastery of the works of Ibn ʿArabī, an important detail that is omitted from these two earlier works. See my discussion of Imām al-ʿAdanī in Chapter 5.

[39] Al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 1:136-169.

[40] Ḥabīb Aḥmad b. Zayn's (d. 1144/1732) eighteenth-century biographical work *Sharḥ al-ʿAyniyya,* a biographical commentary on his teacher Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād's panegyric poem on the *sāda*, largely draws from these two sources.

4.2.2. Sharīʿa Sciences

Among all the scholarly fields throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, no field enjoyed as much scholarly activity and attention in Hadhramaut as the *Sharīʿa* sciences, with a prodigious number of works produced in terms of Shāfiʿī manuals of substantive law (*fiqh*) and their commentaries (*shurūḥ*), legal opinions (*fatāwā*), and works on legal methodology (*uṣūl*) and other related disciplines, such as the *ḥadīth* sciences and, to a lesser extent, theology (*ʿaqāʾid*). As we saw in Chapter 1, Shāfiʿism had become fully consolidated as the predominant legal school in Hadhramaut by the beginnings of the thirteenth century. While some of the *sāda* contributed to this literature and were widely recognized as jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) and scholars of *ḥadīth*, most of the major works produced in these disciplines were authored by scholarly members of the prominent *mashāyikh* families, such as the Āl Khaṭīb, Bā Qushayr, and Bā Faḍl. Two major juristic authorities worthy of mention here are Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAḥmad Bā Faḍl (d. 903/1497) [41], author of *al-ʿUdda wa-l-Silāḥ*, a popular legal treatise on the rulings of marriage (*nikāḥ*), and his highly renowned student Shaykh ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Balḥāj Bā Faḍl (d. 918/1512), author of *al-Muqaddima al-Ḥaḍramiyya*[42], the most widely studied Shāfiʿī treatise on ritual worship (*ʿibādāt*) in Hadhramaut, and whose influence in the Shāfiʿī school extended far beyond Yemen. Both jurists are also noted among the instructors of

[41] A prominent Shāfiʿī jurist, who authored several legal works, including a no longer extant work on *uṣūl*, Shaykh Muḥammad Bā Faḍl also instructed several prominent *sāda* and scholars in his generation. Among his most prominent teachers were Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461) and his brother al-Shaykh ʿAlī (d. 895/1490). The historian and *qāḍī* al-Ṭayyib Bā Makhrama (d. 947/1540), author of *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, and Imām al-ʿAydarūs's son, Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508), are also noted among his students. See Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut,* 1:419-428; al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 49-53.

[42] His *Muqaddima* is also known by the variant titles of *al-Mukhtaṣar al-Kabīr* and *Masāʾil al-Taʿlīm*, and a large number of commentaries (*shurūḥ*) have been authored on the work, the most popular of which is *al-Minhāj al-Qawīm* of the famous Egyptian Shāfiʿī jurist, theologian, and scholar of *ḥadīth* Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1566). Shaykh ʿAbd Allah Bā Faḍl is also noted as a student of the jurist ʿAbd Allah Bā Makhrama, father of our famed historian al-Ṭayyib Bā Makhrama. See Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut,* 1:446-459; al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 145-147.

Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508), with the latter also having instructed Khirid, author of *al-Ghurar*.[43]

While there was some exposure to the Ashʿarī creed, especially through the works of al-Ghazālī, which was considered to be part and parcel of the Sharīʿa sciences, the field of Islamic speculative theology (*Kalām*) did not receive as much scholarly attention among the ʿAlawīs.[44] Interestingly, the relative underdevelopment of Ashʿarī Kalām in Hadhramaut also seems to be confirmed by a first-hand account in the travel memoir of our Maghrebi scholar Yūsuf Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī (d. 1048/1638), who himself was a respected Ashʿarī theologian (*Mutakallim*). Having allegedly foretold to his disciples of al-Fāsī's arrival to Hadhramaut, the renowned ʿAlawī saint Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583) is said to have instructed his students, "Study the science of *Tawḥīd* (i.e. *Kalām*) with Yūsuf, as Hadhramaut is devoid of this science, and that is largely due to this land's being freed from deception and hypocrisy (*nifāq*), and it has no school (*madhhab*) other than the school of Imām al-Shāfiʿī." As Ibn ʿĀbid thus explains, this is how he came to be a popular and sought-after figure as a specialist of *Kalām* in Hadhramaut, with local scholars inviting him to teach *al-ʿAqīda al-Sanūsiyya al-Ṣughra* in Sayʾūn and elsewhere.[45]

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[43] For a brief overview of some of the major juristic authorities from this period and their works, see ʿAbd al-Nūr, *al-Ḥayāt al-ʿIlmiyya*, 73–77. For a more exhaustive account of the notable Hadhrami jurists of this period, see Bā Dhīb, who meticulously surveys no less than 199 jurists between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries alone and offers a comprehensive catalogue of all their known legal writings. Bā Dhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:380-687.

[44] An influential contemporary student of the *sāda* observes that the relative lack of concern with Kalām is more broadly reflective of the ʿAlawīs' general distaste for intellectually verbose expositions of theology and their greater privileging of the practical dimensions of action (*ʿamal*), preaching (*daʿwa*) and orthopraxy in their intellectual and spiritual method. al-Badawi, *Sufi Sage of Arabia*, 125–126. As we shall see, however, while such a view may be generally true, this general orientation did not prevent the *sāda* from occasionally authoring works of Sufi metaphysics (*ḥaqāʾiq*), which frequently overlap with the theological concerns of Kalām.

[45] al-Fāsī, *Riḥlat Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī*, 106–108. *Al-ʿAqīda al-Sanūsiyya al-Ṣughra* is the popular work on Ashʿarī Kalām, also known as *Umm al-Barāhīn*, by Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490).

While this may generally be the case, it is not to suggest that the *sāda* did not compose any works on theology. Khirid, for instance, notes among the works of al-Shaykh ʿAlī b. Abū Bakr al-Sakrān (d. 895/1490), the younger brother of the illustrious Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), an unnamed work in theology.[46] Additionally, he was also the author of a theological poem (*manẓūma*), *al-ʿAqīda al-Zahrāʾ*, on which the famous sixteenth century *sayyid* Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 990/1582) authored an expansive commentary, *al-Fawz wa-l-Bushrā*.[47]

4.2.3. Sufism

It is no exaggeration to say that nearly all the Hadhrami scholarship of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was heavily imbued and influenced by its surrounding Sufi milieu, where the works of al-Ghazālī, and his *Iḥyāʾ* in particular, and those of other major Sufi authorities like ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, al-Qushayrī, and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī were widely studied.[48] The ʿAlawīs in particular authored several Sufi works, where they became specialized among the Hadhrami scholarly elite as Sufi saints and masters. Beginning in the fifteenth century, Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461) was the first to author a Sufi treatise among the *sāda*, *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar wa-l-Iksīr al-Akbar fī Maʿrifat Asrār al-Sulūk ilā Malik al-Mulūk,* which in many ways builds on the technical vocabulary of al-Suhrawardī and al-Qushayrī, offering a summary of the

[46] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 300.
[47] The commentary was recently published. See Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Fawz wa-l-Bushrā fī al-Dunyā wa-l-Ukhrā bi-Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Zahrāʾ ʿalā al-Sunna al-Gharrāʾ*, ed. Ḥusayn b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-ʿAydarūs (Amman: Dār al-Nūr al-Mubīn, 2015). The Ashʿarī creed would continue to receive some limited attention in later centuries, with the eighteenth-century *sayyid* ʿAbd Allah b. Aḥmad Balfaqīh (d. 1110/1699) authoring *al-Manẓūma al-Nūrāniyya*, a notable lyrical theological treatise, on which he also authored an expanded commentary. See ʿAbd Allah b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allah Balfqīh, *al-Nafathāt al-Raḥmāniyya fī Sharḥ al-Manẓūma al-Nūrāniyya fī al-ʿAqīda al-Qurʾāniyya*, ed. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Zayn Balfaqīh (Tarīm, Yemen: Tarīm lil-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 2017).
[48] See discussion in Chapter 3.

various spiritual stations and their spiritual fruits for the Sufi wayfarer (*sālik*). His younger brother al-Shaykh ʿAlī (d. 895/1490) was also the author of several Sufi works, including a *dīwān* of Sufi poetry, his own sizable treatise on spiritual wayfaring, *Maʿārij al-Hidāya*, and a shorter treatise on the Sufi *khirqa, al-Barqa al-Mushīqa*.[49] These early treatises would serve to inaugurate the Bāʿalawiyya's written intellectual and spiritual canon.

Imām al-ʿAydarūs's son, the famous Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508) who succeeded his father as the spiritual authority of the ʿAlawīs, also authored three Sufi litanies (*awrād*), *al-Basīṭ, al-Wasīṭ,* and *al-Wajīāz*, a popular *dīwān* of spiritual poetry, and a more detailed work on the Sufi *khirqa, al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf fī al-Taḥkīm al-Sharīf,* which lists the spiritual lineages of the various Sufi initiations that he acquired and includes, among other things, a polemic defense of the practice of Sufi initiation (*taḥkīm*) on legal and historical grounds.[50] Al-ʿAdanī's nephew Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 968/1565) further authored a Sufi work in the art of spiritual refinement (*raqāʾiq*), *al-Irshād,* while our *ḥadīth* scholar and famous biographer Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Khirid (d. 960/1552) is known to have authored a Sufi treatise, *al-Nafaḥāt,* that is no longer extant.[51]

In addition to these earlier figures, the illustrious Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583), among the most widely celebrated ʿAlawī saints of the sixteenth century, also authored important works in Sufism. These include two famous and widely read litanies entitled *al-Kabīr* and *al-Wird al-Ṣaghīr*, a large *dīwān* of spiritual poetry, a short introductory treatise on

[49] For his notable Sufi treatise, which we will not have time to explore here, see ʿAlī b. Abū Bakr al-Sakrān al-Saqqāf, *Maʿārij al-Hidāya ilā Dhawq Jany Thamarāt al-Muʿamalāt fī al-Nihāya*, ed. Abū Bakr b. Ḥusayn al-Kāf (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Maṣriyya bi-l-Azhar, n.d.).
[50] For an examination and synopsis of this work, see Chapter 5.
[51] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:57 and 2:197. The genre of '*raqāʾiq*' is named thus for its effects on 'softening' the heart and typically consists of an exposition on verses and *ḥadīth* related to Sufi manners and morality. Imām al-Nawawī's *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn* is a popular example.

spiritual wayfaring that he authored in his formative years entitled *Miftāḥ al-Sarāʾir wa-Kanz al-Dhakhāʾir*,[52] a lesser known treatise entitled *Miʿrāj al-Tawḥīd*, and finally, two significantly more advanced philosophical works of theoretical gnosis (*ḥaqāʾiq*), *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ wa-l-Manhaj al-Waḍḍāḥ* and *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib wa Bughyat Maṭlab al-Maṭālib*,[53] which we will have ample room to examine in Chapter 6.

From among the ʿAydarūs family who migrated to Gujarat, India, the well-travelled and famous author of the biographical work *al-ʿIqd al-Nabawī*, Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 990/1582), who settled in Ahmedabad, composed several works on Sufism. Aside from his litany of prayers entitled *al-Ḥizb al-Nafīs* and two *Mawlids*,[54] *al-Mukhtaṣar* and *al-Muṭawwal*, he also authored *Nafaḥāt al-Ḥikam*, an incomplete Sufi-styled commentary on the renowned classic poem *Lāmiyyat al-ʿAjam*,[55] and two commentaries on his poem *Tuḥfat al-Murīd*, a smaller one entitled *Sirāj al-Tawḥīd* and the more extensive commentary *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīḍ*. Of these works, his *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawhīd*, which we will address below, seems to be his longest and most sophisticated work and may be described as an advanced Sufi work of theoretical gnosis (*ḥaqāʾiq*).[56]

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[52] Abū Bakr b. Sālim al-Saqqāf, *Miftāḥ al-Sarāʾir wa-Kanz al-Dhakhāʾir* (Cairo: al-Bayyina lil-Nashr wa-l-Abḥāth, 1994).

[53] These two sophisticated and relatively understudied works were only published very recently in two excellent critical editions. See Abū Bakr b. Sālim, *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ wa-l-Manhaj al-Waḍḍāḥ*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Beirut: Kitāb Nāshirūn, 2013); *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib wa-Bughyat Maṭlab al-Maṭālib*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Beirut: Kitāb Nashirūn, 2019).

[54] In its Sufi context, the term '*Mawlid*' may refer to the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad or, as in this case, to lengthy panegyric poems in honour of the Prophet, which are normally recited as highly festive ceremonial events on the annual celebration of his birth in the month of Rabīʿ al-Awwal and on other sacred occasions. The authoring of a *Mawlid* and its popular reception are often regarded as markers of a saint's spiritual prestige and rank as a 'lover' of the Prophet, and among the Bā ʿAlawiyya, this poetic genre and its regular audition becomes a regular feature of their spiritual tradition.

[55] The celebrated poem of the famous eleventh-century poet, alchemist, and administrative secretary of the Seljuks, Muʾayyad al-Dīn al-Tughrāʾī (d. 513/1061), which became the subject of several extensive scholarly commentaries.

[56] Al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:119-122.

Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah's son, the famous author of *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Shaykh (d. 1037/1627), was also an important spiritual authority who authored several Sufi works. These include the large and no longer extant *al-Futūḥāt al-Qudsiyya fī al-Khirqa al-ʿAydarūsiyya*, a highly popular work on the merits of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* entitled *Taʿrīf al-Aḥyāʾ bi-Faḍāʾil al-Iḥyāʾ*,[57] a *dīwān* of spiritual poetry entitled *al-Rawḍ al-Arīḍ wa-l-Fayḍ al-Mustafīḍ*,[58] and a commentary on Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī's *al-Qaṣīda al-Nūniyya*.[59] Finally, ʿAbd al-Qādir's renowned nephew Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh[60] (d. 1031/1622) of Surat is also notable for his *Iḍāḥ Asrār ʿUlūm al-Muqarrabīn*, an important work that focuses on the wayfarer's (*sālik*) cultivation of spiritual virtues through the guarding of one's inner states and attending to the spiritual art (*adab*) of transacting with God and His creation (*ʿulūm al-muʿāmala*), which in many ways is indicative of the *sādas*' Ghazalian preoccupation with the Sharīʿa and praxis as the foundation of Sufi devotional life.[61]

4.3. The Reception of Ibn ʿArabī in Hadhrami Sufism Revisited

Aside from these general works on Sufism and the ʿAlawīs' Ghazalian preoccupation with the dimension of Sufi orthopraxy, the *sāda* did not shy away from also authoring more

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[57] The popular work can be found published as a margin or appendix to several editions of the *Iḥyāʾ* and its commentaries. See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 5:219-33.
[58] The *dīwān* has partially survived, an MS of which can be found in Milan's Ambrosiana Library. Editor's introduction in *al-Nūr al-Sāfir,* 11-12.
[59] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 2:149-150.
[60] Born in Tarīm, he moved in his later years to Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in 989/1581 to study with his famous grandfather, Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah (d. 990/1582), and he later settled in the port of Surat, becoming the foremost ʿAlawī authority in Gujarat of his time, where, as with his relatives in India, he was generously patronized by the Mughals. See al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 1:185-186.
[61] Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh al-ʿAydarūs, *Īḍāḥ Asrār ʿUlūm al-Muqarrabīn* (Dār al-Ḥāwī, 1995). The work is closely examined in Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 133-143. The *sāda*'s Ghazalian preoccupation with the Sharīʿa and praxis (*ʿamal*) has led to the lasting but false impression among Arab and Western academic historians that they generally failed to engage with the more sophisticated works of philosophical Sufism. As we shall see below and in the following chapters, however, this characterization is not entirely accurate, as this general orientation did not preclude them from studying and authoring works of Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq*.

sophisticated Sufi works on gnostic realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) that dealt with the philosophical concerns of Sufi ontology (*wujūd*), cosmology, epistemology, and hermeneutics, themes that are best exemplified in the highly influential thought of the towering visionary and Sufi mystic Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240).[62] While Ibn ʿArabī is regarded by many as the preeminent medieval intellectual authority on Sufi metaphysics, the common view suggests that his works remained controversial within Hadhramaut's intellectual and religious climate, gaining him only a limited 'subterranean' following.[63] As I will attempt to argue, however, a closer reading of the primary sources reveals a more complex reality that challenges this prevailing narrative, suggesting that al-Shaykh al-Akbar's works were more widely received within Hadhramaut than we are initially led to believe, as was also the case within the intellectual and spiritual cultures of western Yemen and the Hejaz of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Certainly, to gain a clearer grasp of the extent of Ibn ʿArabī's reception within the intellectual context of Hadhrami Sufism would require its own monograph to give this topic its due justice, and the limited exploration here is only intended to pave the way for further research. But before this foray into Hadhrami scholarly engagements with the Shaykh and his ideas, a brief interjection on the nature of al-Shaykh al-Akbar's reception within the broader intellectual history of Sufism and the manner in which his controversial teachings have been historically interpreted and diffused is warranted.

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[62] For academic specialists like William Chittick, 'al-Shaykh al-Akbar' is widely regarded as the "final summation of Islamic intellectuality." Quoted in Tim Winter, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3. For more on 'philosophical Sufism' and the impact of al-Shaykh Akbar's thought and doctrine on its evolution in particular, see Mukhtar H. Ali, *Philosophical Sufism: An Introduction to the School of Ibn ʿArabi* (Routledge, forthcoming 2022); Mohammed Rustom, "Philosophical Sufism," in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard C. Taylor and Luis Xavier Lopez-Farjeat (London: Routledge, 2016), 399–411.

[63] For examples of this popular academic perception, see Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 15; Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 127n8; Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 49, 190, 274-275; idem., "Der Heilige," 57.

Given the sheer complexity of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, which typically spans and synthesizes all the intellectual fields of Islamic inquiry, and given the frequently enigmatic, paradoxical, and seemingly anti-systematic nature of his writings, it is only to be expected that his works would become prone to confused, reductionist, and inaccurate readings, especially among Sufi novices and non-specialists.[64] This observation alone can at least partially explain for the historically controversial reception of his teachings in diverse Muslim contexts and for the fierce polemical battles that they have tended to evoke, especially among the exoterically-minded scholars (*ahl al-rusūm*) and those who are less familiar with the Sufi tradition and its specialized lexicon. This dynamic has also historically meant that Sufi proponents of the Shaykh's teachings were frequently reticent to express their open affiliation with Ibn ʿArabī and his more controversial doctrines, preferring to adopt a more reserved and sometimes evasive approach, while cautioning against the dangers of exposing his teachings to the masses and the uninitiated. This tendency is exemplified in the words of the sixteenth century Egyptian jurist Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1566), an admirer of the Shaykh, who stressed that his teachings are a "fatal poison" for most men "due to the subtlety of their meanings, the delicacy of their allusions, and the abstruseness of their structure."[65]

Indeed, such a recurring observation has caused Michel Chodkiewicz to remark that "the absence of explicit reference to Ibn ʿArabī, or even the presence of negative reference, is not a priori significant" in accurately determining the presence of the Shaykh's teachings and

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[64] Indeed, such confusion and difficulty with the Shaykh's writings is by no means the preserve of Muslim scholarship and can be readily seen among some of the early orientalists, such as Clement Huart, Arberry, Rom Landau, and even Abū al-ʿAlāʾ ʿAfīfī, where his works are typically described as generally opaque, confused, and contradictory. See Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn ʿArabī, the Book, and the Law*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 1-2.

[65] Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, *al-Fatāwā al-Ḥadīthiyya* (Cairo, 1970), 296. Quoted in Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore*, 1.

influence, offering several telling examples to illustrate the point.[66] As he therefore suggests, in order to better gauge the extent to which the Shaykh's ideas were positively mined and engaged by premodern authors or within certain scholarly traditions, there is a need to branch out beyond a narrow study of the 'noble' Sufi literature of Ibn ʿArabī's intellectual inheritors to include a closer examination of 'second-level' literature that is frequently deemed to be of little or no significance to the intellectual historian.[67]

Furthermore, while the Shaykh continues to be widely perceived within the academe as a 'monist' or 'pantheist,' several scholars of Sufism have questioned the utility and accuracy of these terms in defining his ontological doctrine, as such terms fail to convey the important emphasis placed in Ibn ʿArabī's thought on such aspects as 'multiplicity,' 'otherness,' and 'relationality.'[68] More importantly, they also fail to adequately capture the complexity of his

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[66] Thus, in a popular anecdote narrated by al-Fayrūzabādī (d. 818/1415), the famous Shāfiʿī jurist ʿIzz al-Dīn Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1262) once remained silent when Ibn ʿArabī was attacked as a heretical '*zindīq*' in his presence, while that same evening, when a disciple enquired about his silence concerning the incident, he confirmed that Ibn ʿArabī was the *quṭb* of his time. For a more modern example, in his partially completed *tafsīr* work, Shaykh Aḥmad al-ʿAlāwī (d. 1935), founder of the *ṭarīqa ʿAlāwiyya* branch of the Shādhiliyya, borrows almost literally and directly from the *Futuḥāt* a controversial interpretation of the Qurʾānic verses 2:5-7, while making no mention of the Shaykh, though he is sure to cite his authorities elsewhere in his *tafsīr*. Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore*, 3-4. As, we shall see below, a similar attitude seems to be detectable among members of the *sāda* in their works.

[67] Such an investigation must also be coupled with a strong familiarity with the Shaykh's vocabulary, the peculiarities of his style, and the technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*), rhetorical procedures, and motifs that he regularly employs, "if one is to differentiate, in the writings of any author, between that which stems from the common patrimony of the Sufis and that which constitutes the individual contribution of Ibn ʿArabī." Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore*, 3-6. While Chodkiewicz's insight is sound and compelling, a general caveat must also be added that the Akbarian tradition has historically become so naturalized within the wider intellectual world of Sufism, especially in discourses on Sufi metaphysics, such that the mere appropriation of the Shaykh's terminology, doctrines, or ideas need not always suggest a direct engagement with his works or even an active affiliation with his school.

[68] This popular understanding undoubtedly has its roots in the highly partisan medieval polemic against the Shaykh, influencing subsequent generations of scholars up to the modern period. For scholars questioning the accuracy of such terms in capturing the full complexity of the Shaykh's ontological doctrine, see James Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and his Interpreters. Part 1: Recent French Translations," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106, no. 3 (1986), 542–545; Mohammed Rustom, "Is Ibn ʿArabī's Ontology Pantheistic?" *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 2 (2006): 53-67; William C. Chittick, "Rūmī and *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*" in *The Heritage of Rūmī*, ed. A. Banani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 88; Chittick, "A History of the Term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*," in *In Search of the Lost Heart*, eds.

thought on the relationship between God and His creation, where the Shaykh's conception of the cosmos as 'He not He' (*Huwa lā Huwa*) is only made possible by a God that is both 'Immanent' and 'Transcendent.'[69] Indeed, as some scholars have further observed, even the expression 'oneness of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), frequently associated with Ibn ʿArabī's ontological doctrine, remains somewhat problematic.[70] For William C. Chittick, this is primarily because Ibn ʿArabī had "no intention of systematizing Islamic thought," as he was first and foremost a 'visionary' and not a 'philosopher.'[71]

Be that as it may, a brief explanation of the multi-faceted concept of '*wujūd*' as explicated by the Shaykh remains necessary for our purposes. Aside from its meaning when understood as a subjective experience, the Shaykh employs '*wujūd*' in two major senses: i) as a reference to God, the 'Real Being' (*al-Wujūd al-Ḥaqq*) or the 'Necessary Being' (*Wājib al-Wujūd*), and ii) as a reference to the created universe, i.e. 'that which is other than God' (*mā siwa Allah*). The latter of these two meanings is understood purely in the metaphorical (*majāzī*) sense since, as with other Sufis before him, including Imām al-Ghazālī, the Shaykh holds that '*wujūd*' belongs to God alone, meaning that nothing exists in reality other than the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*). Thus, the created world is in its fundamental essence 'non-existent' (*ʿadam*), and it 'exists' only in the

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Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 73-76; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 105.

[69] Rustom, "Is Ibn ʿArabī's Ontology Pantheistic?", 66-67; Chittick, "A History of the Term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*," 75-77.

[70] Ibn ʿArabī never used the expression himself, and the term was never employed by his own students in any technical sense; it first became a technical term associated with his school some three decades after his death. Rustom, "Philosophical Sufism," 400.

[71] As Chittick eloquently explains, "Ibn al-ʿArabī's point lies more in the very act of constantly reformulating *waḥdat al-wujūd* in order to reshape the reader's imagination . . . [and demonstrate] the intimate inward inter-relationships among phenomena, basing himself on a great variety of texts drawn from the Koran, Hadith, Kalam, philosophy, cosmology, Arabic grammar, and other sources." "A History of the Term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*," 73.

relative contingent sense and to the extent that it serves to manifest the Real. This perspective can be further explained via the analogy of the rainbow, where

> the multiplicity of colors does not negate the oneness of light. Red and blue have no existence of their own because only light is manifest. We can speak of the reality, entity, or thingness (*shayʾiyya*) of red and blue, but not of their own, independent existence; their existence is only a mode of light's existence.[72]

Returning to our focus on Hadhrami scholarly receptions of the Shaykh in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Khaled El-Rouayheb's recent and ground-breaking work *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century* has revised our understanding of the intellectual life of the Arabic-speaking Ottoman provinces during this period. Far from being a period of stagnation characterized by a lack of creativity and originality, the seventeenth century in particular witnessed a significant intellectual revival in Arab lands, including the Hejaz, which witnessed an influx of Maghrebi scholars as well as Azeri and Kurdish scholars who were fleeing the Shīʿī Safavid conquest of their lands. These scholars introduced new intellectual works and scholarly methods into the Arab East and played a significant role in the revival of intellectual life in the Hejaz, Egypt, and Syria.[73] A significant finding of Rouayheb's work concerns the bold revival of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings by such major seventeenth century scholars as Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1091/1690) in the Hejaz and ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731) in Syria, among other prominent figures in the Arab East.[74]

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[72] Chittick, "A History of the Term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd,*" 75.

[73] Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 23–59, 131–172. Thus, the historian al-Muḥibbī observes that the arrival of Kurdish scholars and their new philosophical and theological works in Damascus led to the "opening of the gates of verification (*taḥqīq*)" in the city. *Khulāṣat al-Athar*, 4:329-330.

[74] El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 236. For his full analysis of this trend, see pp. 235-271, 312-346. Among El-Rouayheb's most interesting and underappreciated findings in this ground-breaking study is the surprising intellectual connections and affinities between aspects of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, as exhibited in the writings of Kūrānī, and the positions of the neo-Ḥanbalī tradition, as exemplified by the views of Ibn Taymiyya and his inheritors. See *Islamic Intellectual History*, 272-311.

Rouayheb argues that such scholars not only reinvigorated the study of Ibn ʿArabī's works during this period, but they represented a clear shift away from the earlier 'non-monistic' Arab scholarly engagements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by such prominent figures as the Egyptian Sufi ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565) towards a more confident espousal of the 'mystical monism' of the Persian tradition of Ibn ʿArabī's commentators exemplified by Qunawī.[75] This novel development was largely a consequence of "the spread in the Arab East of Sufi orders such as the Khalwatiyya from Anatolia and the Shaṭṭāriyya and Naqshbandiyya from India."[76]

While the extent to which Arab scholarly engagements with the Shaykh in the seventeenth century represent a clear departure from earlier receptions of his thought is a question that is beyond the immediate scope of this project to explore, a few brief observations are in order. As previously noted, the characterization of the Shaykh's teachings as 'monistic' is challenged by other contemporary scholars of Sufism.[77] Furthermore, an accurate examination of this question is rendered all the more challenging when we consider, as we have seen, that many Sufi scholars were frequently equivocal and reticent to express their open affiliation with Ibn ʿArabī's thought, given their frequently polarized, and sometimes hostile, intellectual and cultural contexts.[78] Additionally, Rouayheb's examination of al-Kūrānī and his scholarly

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[75] For his examination of 'non-monistic' Sufi receptions of Ibn ʿArabī in the Arab East prior to the seventeenth century, see El-Rouayheb, *Intellectual Islamic History*, 237-249.
[76] El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 236.
[77] Certainly, al-Kūrānī for his part, like most Sufi admirers of the Shaykh, rejected any notions of 'incarnation' (*ḥulūl*) and 'union' (*ittiḥād*) and their association with Ibn ʿArabī, suggesting that the Shaykh's detractors are merely confusing God's 'Self-disclosure' (*tajallī*) for His 'incarnation' (*ḥulūl*). El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 279. For a more complete survey of his views, see idem., pp. 277-85, 320-32. See also al-Kūrānī's tellingly titled treatise in defense of Ibn ʿArabī's ontological doctrine: Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, *Tanbīh al-ʿUqūl ʿalā Tanzīh al-Ṣūfiyya ʿan Iʿtiqād al-Tajsīm wa-l-ʿAyniyya wa-l-Ittiḥād wa-l-Ḥulūl*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Ḥusayn (Damascus: Dār al-Bayrūtī, 2009).
[78] For examples, see note 66 above.

formation is more recently challenged by Harith Ramli in his insightful article "Ashʿarism through an Akbarī Lens." Through a careful re-examination of al-Kūrānī's 'curriculum vitae' from what can be gleaned of his *isnād* work *al-Amām*, Ramli challenges the 'linear interpretation' of al-Kūrānī's intellectual formation as reflective of a general trend in the East to West transfer of intellectual works, indicating that the intellectual lineages of the works that he studied also went through Syrian, Yemeni, and Egyptian teachers.[79]

Ramli's study highlights the importance of the *isnād* genre in the works of individual scholars, such as *al-Amām*, as a valuable historical source in helping us gain a more complete understanding of the transmission of knowledge in premodern scholarly networks and the intellectual lineages of the works that were studied by different scholars. With this in mind, Naser Dumairieh's more recent pathbreaking PhD dissertation, "Intellectual Life in the Ḥijāz in the 17th Century: the Works and Thought of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī," is a notable project that aims to fulfill this very task. By examining the *isnād* works detailing the 'curriculum vitaes' of individual scholars, as can be found in the genre of the '*thabat*', '*mashyakha*', '*fahrasa*', or '*muʿjam*,'[80] Dumairieh is able to give us a richer and more comprehensive account of the

[79] This can be seen, for example, in al-Kūrānī's study of the important works of al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī and al-Dāwānī, both of whom were admirers of Ibn ʿArabī, under the tutorship of his teacher Sayyid Muḥammad Sharīf b. Yūsuf al-Ṣiddīqī (d. 1078/1667). As Ramli observes, "the intellectual lineages through which al-Ṣiddīqī transmitted to al-Kūrānī most of [these] works almost all go through Syrian, Yemeni and Egyptian teachers, rather than Kurdish-Iranian ones." Furthermore, al-Kūrānī's intensive study in the Hejaz with the influential Palestinian Sufi master Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d. 1071/1660), another important exponent of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings, included works with lineages that passed through his Egyptian Sufi master Abū l-Mawāhib Aḥmad al-Shinnāwī (d. 1028/1619). Ramli, thus, offers us a more complex picture of the transmission of intellectual works during this period, noting further that some of the works studied by al-Kūrānī, such as those of al-Dawānī and al-Isfarāʾīnī, appear to have been circulating in the Ḥejaz much earlier than the turn of the seventeenth century. Harith Ramli, "Ashʿarism through an Akbarian Lens: The Two 'Taḥqīqs' in the Curriculum Vitae of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī," in *Philosophical Theology in Islam: Later Ashʿarism East and West*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 377–383.

[80] For the definitions of these technical but interrelated terms representing the genre of *isnād* literature, see Naser Dumairieh, "Intellectual Life in the Ḥijāz in the 17th Century: The Works and Thought of Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī" (PhD diss., Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 2019), 119–120. Among

intellectual life of the Hejaz in the seventeenth century. Interestingly, for our purposes, among the six *isnād* works that were consulted for his project, four included chains of transmission to various works of Ibn ʿArabī, revealing that the Shaykh's works were widely studied and circulated within the intellectual culture of the Hejaz in the seventeenth century.[81]

Shifting our attention to Hadhramaut, it must be noted from the onset that the valley's generally well-travelled Sufi community maintained regular links with the scholarly elites of western Yemen and the Hejaz. As their biographies make amply clear, Hadhrami scholars among the *mashāyikh* and the *sāda* sought out the intellectual capital of Zabīd as a regular destination, among other major Yemeni cities such as Taʿizz and Aden, especially during the Hajj season, where many of them would sojourn for extended periods throughout their journeys to and from the annual pilgrimage. More importantly, many of these scholars also chose to settle in Mecca and Medina for significantly lengthier periods of time, not only due to the two cities' obvious spiritual and devotional appeal, but also for their cosmopolitan allure that allowed them to benefit from their more diverse scholarly populations.

As such, Hadhramaut's Sufi community would have been well-acquainted with the major controversies surrounding the Ibn ʿArabī school of Zabīd and its antinomian excesses in the early

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the most representative and comprehensive examples of this genre for the ʿAlawīs is perhaps the major work *ʿIqd al-Yawāqīt al-Jawhariyya* of the famous eighteenth/nineteenth *sayyid* ʿAydarūs b. ʿUmar al-Ḥabshī (d. 1314/1897). Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī's *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf* and his uncle al-Shaykh ʿAlī's *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa* serve as perhaps two earlier and more rudimentary examples from the fifteenth/sixteenth century.

[81] Dumairieh, "Intellectual Life in the Ḥijāz," 124-125. For these *isnād* works, see Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī, *al-Amām li-Īqāẓ al-Himam* (Hayderabad: Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyyah, 1328 AH); Abū al-Mawāhib Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Ḥanbalī al-Baʿlī, *Mashyakhat Abī al-Mawāhib al-Ḥanbalī (1044-1126)*, ed. Muḥammad Muṭīʿ al-Ḥāfiẓ (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1990); ʿIsā b. Muḥammad al-Thaʿālibī, *Thabat Shams al-Dīn al-Bābilī al-Musammā: Muntakhab al-Asānīd fī Waṣl al-Muṣannafāt wa-l-Ajzāʾ wa-l-Masānīd* and Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *al-Murābbā al-Kābulī fī man Rawā ʿan al-Shams al-Bābilī*, ed. Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-ʿAjamī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir, 2004); Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh b. Sālim al-Baṣrī, *al-Imdād bi-Maʿrifat ʿUluw al-Isnād*, ed. al-ʿArabī al-Dāʾiz al-Faryāṭī (Riyadh: Dār al-Tawḥīd, 2006).

fifteenth century, as well as the bitter disputes that ensued among the scholarly community of Rasūlid Yemen.[82] The contours of these acrimonious debates and the recurring characterization of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine on 'the oneness of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) as a form of heretical 'monism' would have been well-known, where the polemical charges of '*ittiḥād*' and '*ḥulūl*' were a recurring motif. This immediate historical context, as we shall see, seems to have played an important role in shaping the Hadhrami Sufi community's generally cautious approach to al-Shaykh al-Akbar, which was by no means monolithic.

Even despite these considerations, the valley's Sufi community continued to have its share of engagements with philosophical Sufism, and the *sāda* were certainly not the only Hadhrami scholars to author works of theoretical gnosis. The famous scholar Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Balḥajj Bā Faḍl (d. 979/1571) [83], who enjoyed intimate relations with the *sāda* and was among their Sufi disciples, was widely known for his philosophical leanings, authoring his own work on gnostic realities, *al-Fuṣūl al-Fatḥiyya wa-l-Nafathāṭ al-Rūḥiyya*.[84] He was especially devoted to Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥāt* and was believed to be in possession of the only extant copy of the Shaykh's *magnum opus* in Hadhramaut during his lifetime, which he closely guarded and would only share with the realized Sufis (*ahl al-nihāyāt*) among his peers.[85] Nearly

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[82] See Chapter 3.

[83] For more on him, see al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 531–532; al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 454–458; Muḥammad b. ʿAwaḍ Bā Faḍl, *Ṣilat al-Ahl*, 174–199. Among his ʿAlawī teachers in Sufism were the celebrated saint and gnostic Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī Bā Jaḥdab (d. 973/1566), one of the foremost Sufi masters of his generation, and Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn al-ʿAydarūs (d. 968/1565), author of *al-Irshād*. See al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:57-59, 69-73.

[84] The work remains an unpublished MS. See Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Faḍl, *al-Fuṣūl al-Fatḥiyya wa-l-Nafathāṭ al-Rūḥiyya* (MS: Tarim, Yemen, Maktabat al-Aḥqāf 4685).

[85] "*Lā yuẓhiruhā illa ʿinda ahl al-nihāyāt*." al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 531. He is also said to have destroyed the work prior to his death, with the exception of its final chapter of general counsels (*waṣāya*), out of caution, lest it be a source of confusion for the uninitiated. "*Innamā faʿaltuhu taʿẓīman li-shaʾnihi li-anna al-nās lā yafqahūna maʿānīh fa-yaqaʿūna fī al-ghalaṭ bi-sabab dhalik*." al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 455. As we shall see, however, Ibn ʿArabī's works continued to be studied privately among several members of the *sāda* and the Sufi elite, indicating the possibility of there being more than one copy of the *Futuḥāṭ* in circulation.

a century later, his nephew's grandson, the well-travelled scholar Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Bā Fāḍl (1087/1676), who settled in Mecca and also enjoyed close scholarly relations with the *sāda*, similarly became known for his intense preoccupation with Ibn ʿArabī's works.[86] In yet another case, the famous Damascene historian al-Muḥibbī (d. 1111/1699) notes that the major seventeenth century Dawʿanī scholar Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Qādir b. ʿUmar Bā ʿAshan (d. 1052/1642), who was reputed for his knowledge of gnostic realities, authored a commentary on Ibn ʿArabī's gnostic poetry and was a widely sought after authority by the major ʿAlawī figures of his time.[87]

While Ibn ʿArabī likely had his share of detractors in Hadhramaut, a clear trend can be detected from our biographical sources among influential members of the *sāda* and *mashāyikh* by at least as early as the first half of the fifteenth century who espoused a more cautious approach towards the dissemination and teaching the Shaykh's works, while maintaining a good opinion of his knowledge and Sufi piety. This trend is typified in the views of the famous jurist and Sufi scholar ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Makhrama[88] (d. 952/1545), who revered the Shaykh as one of the most realized Sufi gnostics,[89] while strongly warning against the reading of works such as the *Fuṣūṣ* for the tremendous abuse and confusion that they engendered among the Shaykh's many admirers and followers, the majority of whom he held to be in great loss and

[86] For his biographical entry, see al-Shillī, *ʿIqd al-Jawāhir*, 356–358; Bā Faḍl, *Ṣilat al-Ahl*, 235–241.
[87] "*Fa-kāna yatakallamu bi-l-futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyya wa-kānat al-sāda Āl Bā ʿAlawī maʿ jalālatihim takhḍaʿ lahu wa-taʾkhudh ʿanhu wa-tatabarrak bihi wa-lāzamahu minhum aʾimma ʿārifūn . . .*" Muḥammad Amīn b. Faḍl al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-Athar fī Aʿyān al-Qarn al-Ḥādī ʿAshar* (al-Maṭbaʿa al-Wahbiyya, 1284 AH), 1:237-238.
[88] The brother of the famous historian al-Ṭayyib Bā Makhrama (d. 947/1540).
[89] "*Aʿtaqiduhu . . . Shaykh al-ṭarīqa ḥālan wa-ʿilman wa-Imām al-taḥqīq ḥaqiqatan wa-rasman, wa-muḥyī ʿulūm al-maʿārif fiʿlan wa-isman.*" Here he is espousing the opinion of Majd al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī on Ibn al-ʿArabī. al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 379.

error, displaying little regard for the Sharīʿa.[90] As he argues, the study of such works of *ḥaqāʾiq* is of little tangible benefit for most seekers, as

> they are among the sciences of spiritual tasting (*al-ʿulūm al-dhawqiyya*), which cannot be acquired via the means of formal instruction and explication at all, and when they are realized through spiritual tasting, there is no real need to examine them. Yes, the one who examines them may be able to verify what is in them based on the soundness of his spiritual tasting, but as for those who are not of the people of spiritual tasting, it is better and more favorable for them to set aside such works by the will of God. Nay, it is the obligatory and sound thing to do.[91]

The earliest notable example of this position among the *sāda* can be found in the views of Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461), where al-Shillī notes that he followed the intermediate approach famously outlined by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) of continuing to respect Ibn ʿArabī as a noble saintly figure (*walī*), while forbidding his works from being studied.[92] This position is first noted in a highly popular account of Imām al-ʿAydarūs's son, Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508), who recalls that the only time that he was beaten by his father in his youth was when he was discovered with a copy of the *Futūḥāt*. As he then goes on to explain,

> My father, God have mercy on his soul, used to forbid us from reading the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* of Ibn ʿArabī, while enjoining us to maintain a good opinion of him, believing that he is among the greatest of saintly scholars and knowers (*ʿārifīn*) of God, the Exalted; and he used to say: 'his works speak of realities which can only be grasped by those who have reached the end of the Path (*arbāb al-nihāyāt*) and would be harmful to beginners on the path (*ahl al-bidāyāt*).'[93]

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[90] "*Fa-minhum hudāt mahdiyyin, wa-qalīlan mā hum, wa-minhum ḍāl muḍil, wa-hum kathīr jiddan . . . wa-amma al-muntasibūn ilā Ibn ʿArabī fī hadhā al-zamān fa-muṣība fī al-dīn wa-fasād fī ṭarīq al-Muslimīn, rafaḍū al-Sharīʿa, wa-dānū bi-l-ibāḥa, wa-qālū bi-l-tanāsukh . . .*" al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 380.

[91] al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 379.

[92] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:154-155.

[93] "*Inna kutubuhu ishtamalat ʿalā ḥaqāʾiq lā yudrikuhā illa arbāb al-nihāyāt fa-taḍurru bi-ahl al-bidāyāt*." This popular story is first narrated in Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Baḥraq's (d. 930/1524) hagiographic biography of Imām al-ʿAdanī, *Mawāhib al-Quddūs fī Manāqib al-Shaykh Abī Bakr b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs*, an MS of which exists in the Āl Kāf library in Tarīm. Serjeant, "Materials II," 586. It becomes more frequently referenced by later ʿAlāwī authorities as a definitive account of the *sāda*'s position on Ibn ʿArabī. See ʿAydarūs b. ʿUmar al-Ḥabshī, *ʿIqd al-Yawāqīt al-Jawhariyya wa-Samṭ al-ʿAyn al-Dhahabiyya bi-Dhikri Ṭarīq al-Sādāt al-ʿAlawiyya*, ed. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Bā Dhīb (Tarim, Yemen: Dār al-ʿIlm wa-l-Daʿwa, 2009), 1:156.

Based on this account in addition to Imām al-ʿAydarūs's explicit rejection of '*ittiḥād*' and '*ḥulūl*',[94] Peskes concludes that he must have rejected the 'monistic' doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī.[95] Similarly, although Imām al-ʿAdanī was known to have closely read Ibn ʿArabī's works during his later years, an open rejection of '*ḥulūl*' is also taken by Peskes as his rejection of the Shaykh's 'monism.'[96] This leads her to conclude that the explicit condemnation of monistic teachings, on the one hand, and the continued deference shown towards Ibn ʿArabī's works, on the other hand, are likely indicative of a somewhat differentiated perspective among the *sāda*, where a rejection of the Shaykh's teachings in one central respect did not necessitate his complete rejection as a Sufi authority in other respects.[97]

Based on a passage from *al-Ghurar*, Peskes also mistakenly notes that Imām al-ʿAydarūs's younger brother al-Shaykh ʿAlī (d. 895/1490) had studied the *Futuḥāt* with him, when in fact they are only confirmed to have read the *Iḥyāʾ* together.[98] Rather, as Khirid indicates, al-Shaykh ʿAlī studied the *Futūḥāt* with Imām 'Jamal al-Layl' Muḥāmmad b. Ḥasan al-Muʿallim (d. 845/1442), the famous progenitor of the Jamal al-Layl clan of ʿAlawī *sāda*.[99] Interestingly, he is also noted to have studied with him al-Raddād's[100] work *Mūjibāt al-Raḥma*, a clear indication that the works of Ibn ʿArabī and his Yemeni admirers were more widely read

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[94] See ʿAbd Allah b. Abī Bakr al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar wa-l-Iksīr al-Akbar fī Maʿrifat Asrār al-Sulūk ilā Malik al-Mulūk* (Cairo: Dār Jawāmiʿ al-Kalim, 1423 AH), 63.

[95] This conclusion is furthermore indirectly supported, in her view, by the approving biographical portrait of the Imām given by the Egyptian historian Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) in his centenary biographical chronicle *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ*, as its author was an ardent opponent of Ibn ʿArabī. Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 190, 274. See Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ fī Akhbār Ahl al-Qarn al-ʿĀshir* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 5:16.

[96] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 49. See, for example, *Dīwān al-ʿAdanī*, 406. See also my discussion on Imām al-ʿAdanī in Chapter 5.

[97] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 274-275.

[98] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 274.

[99] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 301.

[100] For more on this influential figure and his role as a major representative of the Ibn ʿArabī school in Rasūlid Yemen, see Chapter 3.

among other *sāda*. Thus, it is unsurprising to find al-Shillī's observation that al-Shaykh ʿAlī's son ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī (d. 923/1517) similarly had a strong preoccupation with the works of gnostic realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*), especially the works of al-Shaykh al-Akbar.[101]

Given these observations and our lengthy foregoing discussion, a more plausible reading of Ibn ʿArabī's intellectual and spiritual legacy is to suggest that the charges of '*hulūl*' and '*ittiḥād*' arose primarily within the context of a fierce medieval polemic against the Shaykh and that the majority of learned Sufis among his admirers did not readily ascribe such terms and 'monistic' beliefs to his thought.[102] Given the divisive and charged history of these terms, the Shaykh's Hadhrami admirers would have also dissociated themselves from such doctrines not only because they fail to adequately reflect the complexity the Shaykh's teachings but also to pre-empt the recurring charges and attacks of his detractors. In the case of Imām al-ʿAydarūs, though he had a greater preference for the *Iḥyāʾ* of al-Ghazālī and it is not in fact known whether he personally studied the works of Ibn ʿArabī, he, nonetheless, clearly maintained a reverence for the Shaykh as a realized spiritual authority, as can be explicitly gleaned from his son's account quoted above. Similarly, as we shall see in Chapter 5, Imām al-ʿAdanī's close reading of Ibn ʿArabī's works in his later years is more likely a reflection of his receptivity and affinity for the Shaykh's teachings rather than of a partial deference towards the Shaykh and his works.

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[101] "*Wa-kāna lahū iʿtināʾ tāmm bi-kutub al-ḥaqāʾiq lā siyyama kutub al-Shaykh al-Akbar*." al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:136.

[102] Rouayheb also makes a brief mention of some of the Hadhrami figures noted here in his discussion of sixteenth-century 'non-monistic' Arab receptions of Ibn ʿArabī. As he notes, based on al-Taftazānī's reading of '*waḥdat al-wujūd*,' the statement that 'only God exists' has been understood to reflect one of two opposing Sufi positions: i) as a mere expression of the overwhelming experience of 'annihilation' (*al-fanāʾ*), where the Sufi's consciousness of the creation fades away before the Divine Presence, or ii) as the belief that "God is identical to absolute, unconditioned existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*)," where the phenomenal world is in reality no more than an "insubstantial shadow or mirage." Rouayheb associates the latter position with the 'ontological monism' of the Persian tradition and later seventeenth-century figures in the Arab East, such as al-Kūrānī and al-Nabulusī, suggesting that earlier Arab receptions of the Shaykh typically ascribed to the former of these two interpretations. *Islamic Intellectual History*, 241-242.

Aside from these prominent fifteenth century ʿAlawī figures, as previously mentioned, the famous sixteenth century *sayyid* Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 990/1582) of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, also authored a notable work of philosophical Sufism, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīḍ*, the MS of which is closely examined by Peskes.[103] As a Sufi treatise addressed to his disciples, the work contains an expansive discussion of gnostic realities, including the familiar themes of Sufi cosmology and ontology. As Peskes notes in her analysis, its author cites from a significant number of important Sufi figures throughout his treatise, including Imām al-Ghazālī, especially from *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and the *Iḥyāʾ*, and Abū Madyan Shuʿayb, al-Junayd, Dhul Nūn al-Miṣrī, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī, and Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī, among others.[104] Peskes further notes an unmistakable Shādhilī influence throughout the work, where Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah cites from the *Ḥikam* and *Laṭāʾif al-Minan* of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allah and quotes the sayings of other Shādhilī authorities, such as Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Murṣī and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī.[105]

Interestingly for our purposes, Peskes mentions no trace of any Akbarian influences in her survey of *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīd*, though a closer examination of the work's themes and some of its key passages, which she has helpfully reproduced, betrays the clear presence of the Shaykh's

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[103] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 222-233. See Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīd bi-Sharḥ Tuḥfat al-Murīd* (MS: Istanbul, Sülaymanie Kütüphanesi, Murad Buhari Tekkesi 314), fols. 1b-45b. As discussed above, the work is the more extensive commentary on the author's poem *Tuḥfat al-Murīd*. Al-Shillī describes the poem as a work of theology (*ʿaqāʾid*). *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:120. Given the commentary's title, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīd*, it may easily be mistaken for a theological work (*ʿaqāʾid*), though as we shall see, it is better described as an advanced Sufi work of philosophical Sufism (*ḥaqāʾiq*). Be that as it may, the philosophical and intellectual concerns of Sufi metaphysics tend overlap significantly with the concerns of theology proper.
[104] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 231n128.
[105] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 228-230.

teachings.[106] Let us consider the following passages as a few examples, which are highly indicative of Ibn ʿArabī's ontological doctrine:

> "All of existence (*al-wujūd kulluh*) is in relation to God's Existence (*Wujūd Allah*) as the illusory imagination (*al-khayāl al-mawhūm*) is in relation to True Existence (*al-Wujūd al-Ḥaqq*)."[107]

> "For this reason, the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) does not reveal in the creation other than Himself, for He is the Manifest (*al-Ẓāhir*) within it . . .and each thing in existence is but one aspect of His (Disclosure) through which He has chosen to manifest Himself, Glorified and Exalted is He, by His Perfection."[108]

In yet another familiar Akbarian analogy, which calls to mind our earlier rainbow analogy mentioned above,[109] Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah explains God's relationship to the creation as follows:

> "The relation of all other manifestations to Him is like the relation of the waves of the sea to the sea, for the sea never changes, and it is the waves that surge up and become still, emerging and disappearing."[110]

In another striking passage, Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah is also sure to emphasize that the universe was brought into 'existence' through the 'Self-disclosure' (*tajallī*) of God's Light, while simultaneously rejecting, in familiar fashion, any implication of His 'indwelling' (*ḥulūl*) in creation:

> "Thus, He granted the universe its 'existence' through His Existence within it, Glorified and Exalted is He, without this implying any 'indwelling' (*ḥulūl*) because the 'things of the phenomenal world (*al-ashyāʾ al-kawniyya*) in themselves do not have a real independent existence."[111]

While these examples shall suffice to illustrate the work's clear affinity with Ibn ʿArabī's ontological doctrine, other Akbarian themes that are also addressed by the author include a

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[106] Here it must be recalled that the mere absence of direct references to the Shaykh may be reflective of the prevalent Sufi tendency that is aimed at warding off any potential attacks or controversy. See notes 66 and 67 above.
[107] "Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīḍ," fol. 1b. Quoted in *al-ʿAydarūs*, 222.
[108] "Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīḍ," fol. 2a. Quoted in *al-ʿAydarūs*, 222.
[109] See note 72 above. For yet another popular analogy employed by al-Kūrānī, see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 279.
[110] "Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīḍ," fol. 2a. Quoted in *al-ʿAydarūs*, 222.
[111] "Haqāʾiq al-Tawḥīd," fol. 4a-b (for further examples of his rejection of '*ittiḥād*' and '*ḥulūl*', see fols. 5a, 12a, 23a). Quoted in *al-ʿAydarūs*, 223.

discussion on the cosmological doctrine of the 'Muḥammadan Reality' (*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*), where the Spirit of Muhammad represents the first and most complete creation pervading the phenomenal world, and the associated familiar doctrine of the 'Complete Human' (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*).[112]

Though it is fairly common for ʿAlawī scholars to display a familiarity and affinity with the Shādhilī tradition, given both *ṭarīqas'* shared spiritual lineage (*silsila*), as Peskes observes, Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah likely formed his close association with the Shādhiliyya during his formative years in the Hejaz,[113] where he settled for three years and met with the prominent Egyptian Sufis Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad al-Bakrī (d. 952/1545) and his son Mūḥammad b. Abī al-Ḥasan (d. 993/1585),[114] among other notable scholars, such as Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī. As al-Shillī notes, Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah also studied with other scholars in Zabīd and Aden, spending another thirteen years in Tarīm before finally migrating to Gujarat in 958/1551, where he was generously received as an accomplished scholar and celebrated Sufi.[115] It is thus to these earlier decades of his scholarly formation in the Hejaz and Yemen to which we must look for his likely exposure to Ibn ʿArabī's teachings.[116] One must also consider the likely scenario that he was exposed to the works of al-Shaykh al-Akbar directly through his family, as his grandfather and namesake Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah (d. 919/1513) is known to have studied under the close care of

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[112] See Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 223-224, 228. For more on the cosmological doctrine of the 'Muhammadan Reality' and the associated doctrine of the 'Complete Human,' see my extensive discussion in Chapter 6.
[113] Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 230-231.
[114] For the latter's biography, see al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 534-554. Rouayheb considers Mūḥammad b. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī as a typical example of sixteenth-century Arab engagements with Ibn ʿArabī that rejected the 'mystical monism' exemplified in the Persian Akbarian tradition. *Islamic Intellectual History*, 242-245.
[115] See al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:119-122.
[116] Given that he was born in 919/1513, Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah would have been thirty-nine years of age by the time of his migration to India, suggesting that his exposure to Ibn ʿArabī was more likely formed in his earlier years.

his older brother Imām al-ʿAdanī and his uncle al-Shaykh ʿAlī,[117] both of whom, as we have seen, were well acquainted with the works of Ibn ʿArabī.

Aside from this notable work, we need not solely focus on works of philosophical Sufism for observable traces of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, as one can reasonably expect to find the presence of Akbarian themes in the *sāda*'s other works. Thus, in his opening introduction to his biographical chronicle *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah's son ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Shaykh begins with a devotional discussion on the virtues of the Prophet with the elaboration of an Islamic cosmogony where the cosmological principle of '*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*' takes center stage. Here the 'Light of Muhammad' figures as the primordial light and first creation from which the various worlds emanated in accordance with God's pre-eternal wisdom, knowledge, and will. Though he does not explicitly reference the Shaykh in his expanded discussion of the various scholarly opinions on this topic, this is hardly surprising, given our foregoing considerations on al-Shaykh al-Akbar.[118] It is, thus, unsurprising to find that in his effusive praise of ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Shaykh's knowledge of gnostic realities, al-Shillī describes him as the "Ibn ʿArabī of his times!"[119]

Aside from these examples, perhaps the two most significant sixteenth-century works on philosophical Sufism (*ḥaqāʾiq*) to be authored by a ʿAlawī *sayyid* are the aforementioned *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ* and *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib* of the celebrated saint and *manṣab* of ʿĪnāt, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). As advanced Sufi works of Sufi metaphysics, both are very similar in their breadth and content, covering a diverse number of topics in theology, ontology,

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[117] See al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:116.
[118] See al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 18-23. This opening section is addressed by both Peskes and Ho. *al-ʿAydarūs*, 247-250; *The Graves of Tarīm*, 125-127. While Peskes makes no mention of Ibn ʿArabī in connection to this discussion, Ho notes the unmistakable influence of al-Shaykh al-Akbar on the author, indicating that his omission of any direct reference to the Shaykh is likely deliberate.
[119] "*Kāna Abā Yazīd zamānih, wa-Junayd dahrih, wa-Ibn ʿArabī awānih.*" al-Shillī, *ʿIqd al-Jawāhir*, 204.

cosmology, epistemology, and hermeneutics. As we shall see in our examination of these works in Chapter 6, what makes them all the more notable is their unmistakable Akbarian themes and technical vocabulary, where they cover many of the recurring topics and theoretical concerns of the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ*.

Conclusion

As this broad survey of Hadhramaut's political and intellectual life from the mid-fifteenth to the late-seventeenth century reveals, the improved sense of political and economic stability under the Kathīrī sultans and their favorable relations and patronage of members of the Hadhrami scholarly elite helped facilitate a revival in the valley's intellectual, cultural, and spiritual life, as can be seen in the dramatic rise in scholarly writings in the fields of historiography, Islamic law, and Sufism, among other fields. A closer examination of Hadhramaut's scholarly production during this period also reveals the extent to which Sufism was an entrenched feature of the valley's intellectual and spiritual life. In particular, contrary to academic and popular perceptions, the Bānī ʿAlawīs played an integral role in the valley's scholarly and intellectual landscape, not simply as public preachers, but also as authors of more advanced philosophical works on theoretical gnosis and Sufi metaphysics (*ḥaqāʾiq*).

As we have seen here, and as will be further illustrated in Chapters 5 and 6, not only did the *sāda* study and author works of philosophical Sufism, but in addition to the valley's *mashāyikh*, their scholarship was in many ways reflective of the broader intellectual climate of Yemen and the Hejaz, exhibiting a deeper assimilation and reception of Ibn ʿArabī's works and teachings than has been generally assumed to be the case. This is clearly illustrated in the case of Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 990/1582) and his work *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīd*. Having spent the formative half of his scholarly career in Yemen and the Hejaz, his

example, among others, potentially complicates Rouayheb's finding concerning the absence of 'monistic' Arab scholarly receptions of Ibn ʿArabī prior to the seventeenth century since his Akbarian ontological doctrine would be classified by Rouayheb as a typical example of 'mystical monism.'

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Sufi Authors and Saintly Exemplars: Imāms ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs and Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī

The rise of the first Kathīrī sultanate in the fifteenth century ushered in a new age in Hadhramaut's political and cultural life that was characterized by a greater measure of political and economic stability, where the valley's scholarly elite enjoyed close relations with the new sultans and were occasionally the recipients of their patronage. As we have seen, these improved conditions set the stage for a new cultural and intellectual efflorescence that witnessed the establishment of new religious educational institutions, such as al-Sulṭāniyya al-Badriyya college in al-Shīḥr, and an explosion of scholarly writings in a variety of disciplines, especially in the fields of history, Islamic law, and Sufism.

Aside from their active social and temporal roles as public preachers and *manṣabs*, the ʿAlawī *sāda* also contributed to this intellectual and scholarly activity, authoring works that were in many ways reflective of the wider the intellectual and spiritual trends and developments of their Yemeni and Hejazi milieu. Thus, not only did they author the usual works on Sufi manners and spiritual refinement (*raqāʾiq*), as can be gleaned from their Ghazalian focus, but they also occasionally engaged with Sufi metaphysics (*ḥaqāʾiq*), displaying an unmistakable familiarity with the thought and doctrine of al-Shaykh al-Akbar. This chapter aims to complement and reinforce the conclusions of Chapter 4 by exploring the spiritual and intellectual legacy of the two preeminent ʿAlawī spiritual authorities of the latter half of the fifteenth century, Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461) and his son Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī (d. 914/1508), shedding light on their intellectual contributions to Hadhrami Sufism, as the paragons of saintly piety and scholarship of their time.

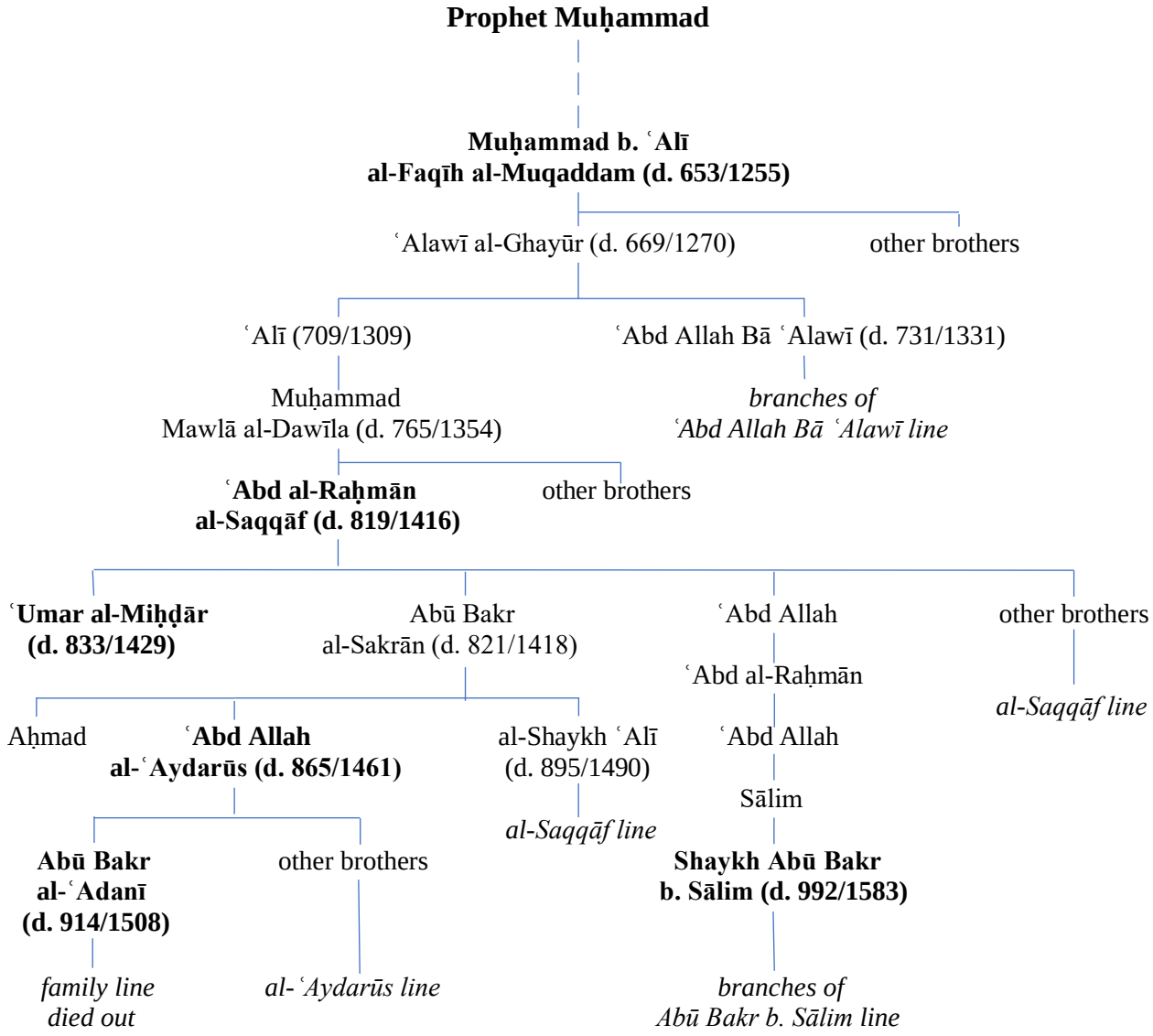

Figure 3: The family tree of Imāms ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī, and Abū Bakr b. Sālim
Sources: *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy; al-Ghurar.*

5.1. Imām ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs

Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs (d. 865/1461) was born in 811/1409, and his emergence in the early fifteenth century marks a new chapter in the evolution of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism. His famous sobriquet 'al-ʿAydarūs' possibly comes from '*ʿutayrūs*,' which, according to al-Shillī, is a known name for the lion, where the verb '*ʿatrasa*' means "to seize violently by force," as with the lion hunting its prey.[1] The historian Bā Makhrama, on the other hand, curiously mentions that the title, which he notes to mean 'chief of the Sufis' (*zaʿīm al-Ṣūfiyya*), is of non-Arab provenance and that it was given by an unnamed foreigner (*siyāḥiyy al-ʿajam*) on the occasion of his visit to the Imām in Tarīm.[2] Imām al-ʿAydarūs would also later come to be known as ʿal-ʿAydarūs al-Akbar,' likely to distinguish him from his equally famous son, Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAydarūs al-ʿAdanī, and to mark his distinction as the famous progenitor of the large and widely diffused ʿAydarūs clan of *sāda*.

Imām al-ʿAydarūs's grandfather, Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf, passed away when he was eight and is said to have predicted that he would become the leading Sufi of his age. His father, Abū Bakr al-Sakrān, passed away a mere two years later, after which he fell under the care of his uncle Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār, the famous *naqīb* of the ʿAlawīs, with whom he developed a strong and lasting spiritual bond. Imām al-Miḥḍār took great care in his spiritual education, exposing him to the valley's scholarly elite and initiating him with the Sufi *khirqa* as one of his foremost disciples, and he later married him to his daughter ʿĀʾisha and was said to have refused her marriage to anyone else.[3]

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[1] "*Wa-lā shakka anna al-asad muqaddam al-sibāʿ, wa-l-ʿAydarūs muqaddam awliyāʾ ʿaṣrih.*" al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:152.
[2] Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:543.
[3] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:152-153.

Imām al-ʿAydarūs had a typical ʿAlawī scholarly education, in which he quickly excelled, beginning with the memorization of the Qurʾān from a young age. For his training in the Sharīʿa sciences, he mastered the usual works of Shāfiʿī law, such as *al-Tanbīh*, *al-Minhāj*, *al-ʿUmdah* and *al-Khulāṣā*, with a number of scholars in the valley, such as the jurist and litterateur Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Faḍl,[4] with whom he also studied the Arabic sciences. He also went on to study works of *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* with a number of scholars across Hadhramaut, western Yemen, and the Hejaz.[5] As for his training in Sufism, his two main teachers were his uncle Imām al-Miḥḍār and the famous *sayyid* Muḥāmmad b. Ḥasan al-Muʿallim Jamal al-Layl (d. 845/1442). Though he is noted by Khirid to have studied the usual works of Sufism, such as Qushayrī's *Risala*, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, and *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*,[6] al-Shillī indicates that he also studied works of '*ʿḥaqāʾiq*' with Imām Jamal al-Layl, suggesting that he was likely exposed to other advanced works of philosophical Sufism, such as the *Futūḥāt.* This is quite likely since, as we may recall, his younger brother al-Shaykh ʿAlī is known to have studied the *Futūḥāt* with Imām Jamal al-Layl.[7]

Be that as it may, though the Imām was likely exposed to al-Shaykh al-Akbar, his central preoccupation was undoubtably with the *Iḥyāʾ*, which he generally preferred over the works of *ḥaqāʾiq* for its wider practical benefits as the paradigmatic manual of Sufi spiritual training. Al-Shillī notes this general attitude as follows:

> He used to, may God be pleased with him, forbid his companions from studying *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* and *al-Fuṣūṣ*, while instructing them to maintain the highest opinion of Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī and to regard him as one of the great saints and gnostics, and this is only because [such works] are high above the comprehension of the masses, and their meanings are too subtle for the generality of the people; this may be contrasted with the works of Ḥujjat al-Islām [al-Ghazālī],

[4] For more on him, see Bā Faḍl, *Ṣilat al-Ahl*, 130.
[5] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:152-153; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 274-275.
[6] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 274.
[7] See Khirid, *al-Ghurar,* 301.

> the meanings of which are able to reach the generality of the people and the knowledge of which is able to benefit both the elect and the masses.[8]

As the preeminent ʿAlawī authority of his time and the progenitor of the ʿAydarūs family, Imām al-ʿAydarūs would also become the eponym of a distinct ʿAydarūsī branch (*silsila*) of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*.[9] He was thus especially celebrated for his spiritual feats and preternatural acts (*karāmāt*) during his lifetime, becoming the subject of several hagiographic works and panegyric poems.[10] More importantly, as we have seen, his strict emphasis on the *Iḥyāʾ* was to have a lasting impact on the wider Bā ʿAlawī tradition and the reception of al-Ghazālī in its spiritual method.[11]

Imām al-ʿAydarūs's uncle, ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār, is noted to have proudly celebrated his initiation into spiritual training at the tender age of seven, when he began to practice voluntary fasting, remarking that he would deliver his fast with a mere seven dates for a period of seven years.[12] Among his spiritual routines, the Imām was also known to partake in the ascetic practice of the forty day seclusion, the '*arbaʿīniyya*,'[13] while his daily *wird* would consist of reciting the

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[8] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:154-155.

[9] For Peskes's overview of some of the most prominent figures of the ʿAydarūsī branch of the Bā ʿAlawī tradition, see *al-ʿAydarūs*, 188-269.

[10] Al-Shillī and Khirid both include long sections recounting the Imām's many *karāmāt*. See *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:162-166; *a-Ghurar*, 560-569. As a clear indication of the Imām's legendary status within Hadhrami Sufism, al-Shillī notes Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bā Faḍl's observation that reports of the Imām's preternatural acts had so many witnesses that, in the lexicon of *ḥadīth* criticism, their veracity was considered to be apodictic (*al-qaṭʿ wa-l-tawātur*). As al-Shillī declares, the only saint to have enjoyed this unanimous status was the great ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, while also noting Imām al-Zurrūq's opinion that this was likely similarly the case for Imām al-Shādhilī. *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:162.

[11] See discussion in Chapter 3.

[12] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:153.

[13] The *arbaʿīniyya*, in addition to other spiritual practices, was intended to discipline the soul for the remembrance of God, while training it to avoid food, sleep, idle talk, and mixing with people (*qillat al-ṭaʿām, wa-qillat al-manām, wa-qillat al-kalām, wa-iʿtizāl al-anām*). al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar*, 7. For more on the *arbaʿiniyya*, see al-Mashhūr, "al-ʿAydarūs al-Akbar," 160-161; al-Qaḍmānī, *al-Sāda Āl Abī ʿAlawī*, 249-250.

invocations *Lā ilāha illa Allah*, *Allah Allah*, and *Hū Hū* twelve thousand times each.[14] As he explained concerning this practice of *dhikr*, each invocation acts as a spiritual magnet (*maghnāṭīs*) with an intended spiritual effect: '*Lā ilāha illa*' unveils the realities of the heart, '*Allah Allah*' unveils the realities of the Spirit, and '*Hū Hū*' unveils the inner secret (*sirr*).[15]

Besides his spiritual and scholarly accomplishments, Imām al-ʿAydarūs, like his celebrated uncle, was also held in high esteem for his temporal role in Hadhrami society, where he became the most influential ʿAlawī leader of his time at the young age of twenty-five. Following the death of his uncle Imām al-Miḥḍār, the *sāda*'s elders convened a meeting to decide on the new *naqīb* to lead them. After requesting Imām Muḥammad Jamal al-Layl to lead them, he adamantly refused, and he was thus asked to elect a leader in his place to take charge of their affairs. At this point, Imām Jamal al-Layl is said to have prayed the '*itstikhāra*' prayer, after which he was inspired to appoint the young al-ʿAydarūs as their new leader. After some initial reluctance due to his young age and the presence of other notable elders from among his family, the Imām finally accepted the new title following the unanimous insistence and blessing of the *sāda*.[16] In addition to being the leader of the *sāda* and his important role in the mediation of local political conflicts,[17] the Imām was also known for his near legendary generosity towards his family and disciples and for his many charitable initiatives, including the building of various mosques, which he mostly funded with the wealth of his private plantation of Sūḥ, near the town of Būr.[18]

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[14] This *wird* continues to be given to the *tarīqa*'s disciples upon their initiation into the Bā ʿAlawī path. Buxton, *Imams of the Valley*, 30.
[15] al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar*, 50.
[16] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:153.
[17] For examples of his mediation efforts, see discussion in Chapter 4 on the *sāda*'s relations with the Kathīrīs.
[18] al-Mashhūr, "al-ʿAydarūs al-Akbar," 164.

As a celebrated Sufi master, Imām al-ʿAydarūs was the teacher of a generation of scholars, attracting disciples form as far as the Hejaz, Syria, and Iraq.[19] Among his notable students were ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Bā Wazīr and the famous *sayyid* ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣāḥib al-Ḥamrāʾ (d. 889/1484), both of whom were the authors of important hagiographic biographies of the Imām.[20] Imām al-ʿAydarūs was also a teacher of the famous Aḥmad ibn ʿUqba al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 895/1489), who later became an influential Sufi master of the renowned Moroccan juridical Sufi Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493) in Egypt.[21] The Imām's most devoted disciple, however, was likely none other than his younger accomplished brother al-Shaykh ʿAlī (d. 895/1490),[22] with whom he studied the *Iḥyāʾ* intensively, among other works.[23] As we have seen, al-Shaykh ʿAlī was one of the first ʿAlawīs to author important scholarly works alongside his older brother.[24] The historian al-Ḥāmid also notes that, as a widely respected ʿAlawī authority and scholar, he was delegated with running the affairs of the *sāda*'s mosques and their respective endowments, such that, according to the ʿAlawīs, he came to represent the

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[19] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 278.

[20] See Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 48, 278. For more on the *sayyid* ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān of al-Ḥamrāʾ, author of *Fatḥ Allah al-Raḥīm al-Raḥmān*, see the discussion on Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī below.

[21] Interestingly, the Moroccan pilgrim Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī mentions al-Ḥaḍramī in his famous *Riḥla*, where he notes that it was Imām al-ʿAydarūs who had instructed him to leave his hometown of Shibām and to travel to the Hejaz, after which he also journeyed to Jerusalem and finally Egypt, where he famously met with his student Imām Aḥmad al-Zarrūq. *Riḥlat Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī*, 105-106. For more on this enigmatic Sufi's relationship with Imām al-Zarrūq, see Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 118-128. See also his biographical entry in Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-Durriyya fī Tarājim al-Sāda al-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Adīb al-Jādir (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1999), 3:138-141.

[22] For more on this accomplished Imām, see al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:215-218; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 296-303; al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥaḍramawt*, 767-770.

[23] See al-Shaykh ʿAlī's mention of his investiture with the *khirqa* from his brother in *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa*, 42.

[24] For more on his works, see Chapter 4. Peskes mistakenly notes that the first known ʿAlawī work to to provide the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*'s family lineage (*silsila*) was that of Imām al-ʿAdanī's *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭif* (alternatively titled *Khirqat al-Taṣawwuf*), when in fact the first known ʿAlawī work to do so was his uncle al-Shaykh ʿAlī's *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa*. Peskes, "Der Heilige," 60; *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa*, 208-211. For more on the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*'s dual *silsla*, see Chapter 2.

‘*Shārīʿa*’ and his older brother came to represent the ‘*ḥaqīqa*’ of Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār’s spiritual legacy.[25]

5.1.1. *Al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar*

Al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar has its notable place in the ʿAlawīs’ spiritual canon as the first major Sufi treatise to be authored by a *sayyid*.[26] Imām al-ʿAydarūs begins his treatise with a brief discussion on the means taken in the spiritual path that aims to highlight the seeker’s fundamental need for a perfected spiritual guide, as embodied in the ideal of the ‘Complete Human’ (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*). He then proceeds to highlight the importance of having a sound belief, where he reproduces the creed of Ahl al-Sunna in a poem of the famous shaykh ʿAbd Allah b. Asʿad al-Yāfiʿī (d. 768/1367).[27] This is followed by a short discussion on the reality of ‘*tawḥīd*’ amongst the Sufi gnostics, which consists of the removal of the veils of the human self, such that all that remains to be witnessed is God (*maḥw al-bashariyya wa tajarrud al-Ilāhiyya*).

Following the foundation of sound belief, Imām al-ʿAydarūs proceeds into a more elaborate discussion on God consciousness (*taqwā*), the foundation of all sound religious practice. Here ‘*taqwā*’ is defined to encompass five inward and outward robes (*libās*), namely those of : i) the ‘limbs’ (*al-aʿḍāʾ*), which must be kept busy with good deeds and liberated from sin; ii) the ‘hearts’ (*al-qulūb*), which relates to the inner states of the seeker (such as repentance, patience, sincerity, trust, and contentment); iii) the ‘spirits’ (*al-arwāḥ*), which relates to the experiential tasting of the spirit (of yearning, Divine love, etc.); iv) the ‘secrets through the Divine Unicity’ (*al-asrār bi-l-Waḥdāniyya*), where the ‘Complete Human’ (*al-Insān al-Kāmil)* is realized in the *Sharīʿa*, *ṭarīqa*, and *ḥaqīqa*; and finally, v) the ‘the secret of the secret’ (*sirr al-*

[25] al-Ḥāmid, *Tārīkh Ḥadramawt*, 2:761.
[26] What follows is a brief synopsis of the work’s contents. See also Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 188-193.
[27] For more on the famous al-Yāfiʿī, see Chapter 3, note 50.

sirr), which consists of the reality of vicegerency (*al-khilāfa*), a station that is only endowed to the one who is fully realized in the knowledge of the Divine Names.[28]

The Imām next proceeds to discuss the true reality of Sufism, which consists of being realized in the three dimensions of the law (*sharīʿa*), the path (*ṭarīqa*) and spiritual reality (*ḥaqīqa*), where he also addresses the differences between the '*malāmatī*' (people of blame) and '*qalandarī*' Sufis. This discussion is interestingly followed by a word of caution, where he directly quotes the following noteworthy passage from *Nashr al-Maḥāsin* of the aforementioned Sufi ʿAbd Allah al-Yāfiʿī:

> Due to the believer's inviolability, if he is known to have expressed explicit disbelief (*kufr ṣarīḥ*) that is intended, or if he apostates from Islam, his execution should not be hastened. Rather, his repentance should be sought as a matter of obligation (*wujūban*) or recommendation (*istiḥbāban*), as there is a difference of opinion on the matter. So how about the one who is not known to have ever intentionally pronounced words of disbelief, or whose words may be interpreted in several plausible ways, according to the intention of specification (*takhṣīṣ*) or some other reason, or where forgetfulness and slips of the tongue are also possible, among other plausible excuses? Hence, establishing certainty is necessary. Al-Ghazālī, thus declared that sparing a thousand souls that are deserving of execution is less grievous than spilling a cupping bowl of the believer's blood.[29]

The passage is noteworthy in that it is likely a consciously concealed effort on the part of Imām al-ʿAydarūs to defend the controversial status of al-Shaykh al-Akbar against the charge of apostasy and disbelief by relying on the authoritative scholarly voices of al-Yāfiʿī and al-Ghazālī. This suggestion is all the more plausible when we consider that, as a celebrated Sufi, al-Yāfiʿī is known to have elsewhere come to a more explicit defense of Ibn ʿArabī.[30]

Next, the Imām proceeds with an interesting discussion on the different spiritual 'stations' (*maqāmāt*) of the Sufi wayfarer, and the various states (*aḥwāl*) that are their fruits. While the 'stations' are acquired through personal effort and striving, spiritual 'states' are gifted

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[28] Here he cites the relatively obscure Prophetic *ḥadīth*, "God created Adam, and then manifested Himself within him" (*Inna Allah khalaqa Ādam fa-Tajalla fīh*). *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar*, 11.
[29] *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar*, 14.
[30] For more on his defense of Ibn ʿArabī, see Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 118-120. Peskes also makes note of this quoted passage, without commenting on its likely intent. *al-ʿAydarūs*, 190.

from God. Here he lists ten spiritual stations and their resulting fruits among the gifted spiritual states: i) 'repentance' (*tawba*), which leads to Divine 'love' (*maḥabba*); (ii) 'scrupulousness' (*waraʿ*), which leads to 'longing' (*shawq*); iii) 'renunciation' (*zuhd*), which leads to humble 'reverence' (*khushūʿ*); iv) 'steadfastness' (*ṣabr*), which leads to 'intimacy' (*uns*) v) spiritual 'poverty' (*faqr*), which leads to Divine 'proximity' (*qurb*) ; vi) 'gratitude' (*shukr*), which leads to 'diffidence' (*ḥayāʾ*); vii) 'fear' (*khawf*), which leads to 'drunkenness' (*sukr*); viii) 'hope' (*rajāʾ*), which leads to 'arrival' (*wuṣūl*); ix) 'trust' (*tawakkul*), which leads to 'annihilation' in the Divine (*fanāʾ*); and x) contentedness (*riḍā*), which leads to 'subsistence' (*baqāʾ*). This exposition is followed by a very brief elaboration of the *Sharīʿa*, *ṭarīqa*, and *ḥaqīqa*, before continuing with a lengthy excursion into many more technical definitions of various other spiritual states that are commonly found in the lexicon of the Sufis,[31] as well as a discussion of the spiritual openings (*fatḥ*) of the gnostics and the spiritual effects of remembrance (*dhikr*). The ultimate goal of the wayfarer is to transcend all these spiritual states through the practice of *dhikr*, such that the lower self is annihilated (*fanāʾ*), and the seeker subsists (*baqāʾ*) fully through the Acts, Attributes, and Reality of God.

This section is then followed by a discussion on the practice of spiritual audition (*samāʿ*). Here, in clear Ghazalian fashion, the Imām offers a Sharīʿa perspective on the practice of *samāʿ*, classifying it as either permissible (*mubāḥ*), praiseworthy (*mustaḥabb*), or blameworthy (*ḥarām*).[32] These varying classifications depend on the soundness of the audience's intentions and the purity of one's heart in listening to such auditions; if the listener is increased in their longing and remembrance of God, such activity is deemed praiseworthy and written as a form of

[31] These include such states as 'union' (*jamʿ*), 'separation' (*farq*), feigning ecstasy (*twājud*), ecstasy (*wajd*), ecstatic finding (*wujūd*), erasure (*maḥw*), and affirmation (*ithbāt*), to name a few examples. For the full discussion, see *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar*, 34-44.
[32] For Imām al-Ghazālī's lengthy discussion on the practice of *samāʿ*, see *Iḥyāʾ*, 2:323-67.

dhikr. On the other hand, if it is no more than a source of empty distraction and excitement that increases one's passions and love of this worldly life (*shahwa*), it is considered blameworthy, while if it is simply a form of relaxation, leading to neither of these two results, then it is merely permissible.[33] This discussion is followed by a concluding description of the true gnostics who have traversed the *ṭarīqa* to finally reach the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of witnessing the lights of the secrets of Lordship (*mushāhadat anwār asrār al-Rubūbiyya*), reminding his readers that this path can only be traversed through a strict adherence to the Sharīʿa.[34]

Imām al-ʿAydarūs married several times, leaving behind four daughters, Ruqayya, Khadīja, Umm Kulthūm, and Bahiyya, and four sons, Abū Bakr, ʿAlawī, Shaykh, and Ḥusayn. He died in Ramadan of 865/1461 during his return journey to Tarīm following one of his regular visits to al-Shiḥr,[35] and his tomb had a large dome erected upon it, where it remains today one of the most widely visited landmarks in the *sāda*'s Zanbal cemetery of Tarīm. Among his sons, Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī, the son of Imām al-Miḥḍār's daughter ʿĀʾisha, would become the next celebrated leader of the ʿAlawīs and the major inheritor of his father's spiritual legacy.

5.2. Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī

Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī was born in in Tarīm in 851/1447. Following the familiar ʿAlawī pattern of education, he was initially educated under his father, learning the Qurʾān at a young age and moving on to master the Sharīʿa sciences and Sufism. For his training in Islamic

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[33] Here it must be noted that the Imām is likely drawing on his strict concern for the sacred law and orthopraxy to distinguish himself from the more ecstatic and antinomian excesses of the *samāʿ* auditions that were associated with Ibn ʿArabī's admirers in Rasūlid Yemen. This reasoning is also reflective of his tempered approach, as the biographers also note the Imām's initial dislike of *samāʿ* during his earlier years, before eventually developing a change of heart towards the popular Sufi practice. See al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:162.

[34] "*Fa-al-ḥaqīqatu nihāyat ʿazāʾim al-Sharīʿa*." *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar*, 63.

[35] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 281-2.

law, he studied with the *sayyid* Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Balfaqīh in addition to the highly renowned jurists Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bā Faḍl (d. 903/1497) and his student ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Balḥājj Bā Faḍl[36] (d. 918/1512), with whom he covered such works as *al-Tanbīh* and *al-Minhāj*, among other popular manuals of Shāfiʿī law. For his studies in Sufism, he is known to have studied with the *sayyid* Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Mawlā ʿAydīd[37] and Shaykh Saʿd b. ʿAlī Bā Madhḥaj,[38] in addition to his father Imām al-ʿAydarūs and his uncles al-Shaykh ʿAlī and Aḥmad.[39] With his uncle al-Shaykh ʿAlī, he read such works as the *Iḥyāʾ*, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārīf*, *Nashar al-Maḥāsin* of al-Yāfiʿī, and al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, and with his father, he is known to have read al-Ghazālī's *Bidāyat al-Hidāya*.[40]

As we have already seen, at a young age, Imām al-ʿAdanī was reprimanded by his father for delving into the *Futuḥāt* before the completion of his requisite spiritual training.[41] His father is also known to have placed him into the forty-day spiritual seclusion (*arbaʿīniyya*), only to have him released some seven days later after successfully demonstrating that he was no longer in need of it. Very soon after, at the age of fourteen and nearly one month before his father's death in 865/1461, his father initiated him with the Sufi *khirqa* in a large Sufi gathering in the presence of his uncles, authorizing him with a full license (*ijāza*) to take over his teaching activities and to initiate others into the path.[42] Thus, from a relatively young age, the Imām took to a strict regimen of teaching and rigorous spiritual training. Like his father, he formed a strong

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[36] For more on these latter two jurists, see Chapter 4, notes 41 and 42.
[37] For more on him, see Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 184-7, 489-92.
[38] For more on this Tarīmī scholar, who was a disciple of Imām al-Saqqāf and also a teacher of al-Shaykh ʿAlī, see *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa*, 42-44; Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:410-12.
[39] For more on his lesser-known uncle, Imām Aḥmad, see Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 272-273.
[40] Khirid, al-Ghurar, 284; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:34.
[41] See Chapter 4, note 93.
[42] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:34. Imām al-ʿAdanī was also invested with the *khirqa* on different occasions from all his teachers in Sufism noted above. See his rich description of these occasions in *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf*, 479-482.

connection with the *Iḥyāʾ*, vowing to read portions of the work on a daily basis, and he was known to spend his nights with his cousin ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Shaykh ʿAlī in the surrounding valleys of Tarīm, where he would complete one third of the Qurʾān (ten *ajzāʾ*) in his night prayers (*qiyām*) before returning for the morning Fajr prayer.[43]

Imām al-ʿAdanī was also well-travelled and met with many of the scholarly elite in Yemen and the Hejaz, where he took special interest in being initiated into their Sufi lineages (*silsilas*). In his earlier years, he was known to regularly visit al-Shiḥr, like his father, and from his *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf,* it is known that he visited and benefited from various scholars across Hadhramaut. Thus, he visited the shrine of the celebrated Saʿīd b. ʿĪsā al-ʿAmūdī[44] in the valley of Dawʿan, where he also sought out his descendent the major Sufi Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān al-ʿAmūdī in Qaydūn, from whom he received the *khirqa* connecting him to Abū Madyan Shuʿayb through the *silsila* of the ʿAmūdīs.[45] *Al-Juzʾ al-Laṭif* also makes note of his especially strong connection with various Qāḍirī Sufi *mashāyikh* in Shibām and elsewhere, who also invested him with the Qādirī *khirqa,* connecting him to the spiritual lineage of Ismāʿīl al-Jabartī (d. 806/1403) and his student Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr al-Raddād (d. 821/1418), the famous Qādirī leaders of the Ibn ʿArabī school in Zabīd.[46] Here, he lists no less than eight Qāḍirī scholars from whom he received the *khirqa* and various teaching *ijāzas* on diverse occasions. The most extensive of these relations seems to have been with the scholar Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad Bā Hurmuz of Shibām, from whom he received the *khirqa* numerous times, the final occasion being during a large Sufi gathering in the shaykh's residence in 897/1492.[47] Via his connection

[43] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 2:34-35.
[44] For more on this celebrated Sufi and companion of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam, see Chapter 2.
[45] al-ʿAdanī, *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf,* 483.
[46] For more on them and the Ibn ʿArabī school of Zabīd, see Chapter 3.
[47] al-ʿAdanī, *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf,* 484-487. Here, the Imām also notes that the majority of Yemen's Sufis were of the Qāḍirī *ṭarīqa*. "*Fa-innahu kāna al-ghālib ʿalā ahl al-Yaman wa-manāṣibihum al-mashhūra*

to the *silsilās* of the famous Ismāʿīl al-Jabartī, the Imām also indicates that he was also invested with the *khirqas* of the major *ṭarīqas* of Imām al-Rifāʿī, al-Suhrawardī, Abū Madyan, and Abū Isḥaq al-Kāzrūnī. In addition to these major Sufi lineages, he was also invested with the Shādhilī *khirqa* on a separate occasion by the Moroccan scholar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dahmānī in 904/1498, from whom he notes two separate *silsilas* connecting him to Imām al-Shādhilī.[48]

In 880/1475, Imām al-ʿAdanī travelled to the Hejaz to perform the Hajj, where he notably met with the famous Egyptian historian and master of *ḥadīth* Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), receiving from him a license (*ijāza*) to teach a number of works. Along his journey to the Hajj, he also sojourned with the scholars of western Yemen, where he met and benefited from the famous Hadhrami jurists ʿAbd Allah b. Ahmad Bā Makhrama[49] and the aforementioned Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Bā Faḍl in Aden and with the celebrated Sufi Imām Yaḥyā b. Abū Bakr al-ʿĀmirī[50] in Zabīd, among other prominent scholars. While in Zabīd, Imām al-ʿĀmirī invested him with the Qādirī *khirqa,* granting him a comprehensive *ijāza* to teach his works and requesting that he in turn invest his son with the ʿAlawī *khirqa*, which took place in a mosque in the northern Yemeni town of Ḥaraḍ.[51]

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intimāʾahum ilā al-Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir." Interestingly, Imām al-ʿAdanī is also credited with the introduction of Qāḍīrī Sufism to East Africa, where he is believed to have played an instrumental role in its introduction to the city of Harar in modern day Ethiopia. See I. M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-Based Society* (Lawrenceville, N.J.: Read Sea Press, 1998), 11. I am grateful to my friend Mahdi Hasan for alerting me to this detail.

[48] al-ʿAdanī, *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf,* 488-492.

[49] Father of the famous jurist and historian al-Ṭayyib Bā Makhrama (d. 947/1540), the author of *Qilādat al-Naḥr*. For more on him, see al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir,* 58-66; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ*, 5:8-9.

[50] Author of the popular *Bahjat al-Maḥāfil*. For more on this famous Imām, see Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr,* 6:480-1; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ*, 10:224.

[51] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 2:35; al-ʿAdanī, *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf,* 485-86. As is to be expected, the hagiographic biographies recount various preternatural events in association with the Imām's journeys to the Hejaz and Aden, including on the occasion of his notable exchange with Imām al-ʿĀmirī, who was also known for his *karāmāt* as a celebrated lover of the Prophet.

Imām al-ʿAdanī returned to Tarīm following his first Hajj, where he settled into the life of teaching and scholarship until he decided to return to the Hejaz for a second pilgrimage in 888/1483, after which he was to eventually settle in Aden, never to return to Hadhramaut. His reason for his decision to leave Tarīm is not entirely clear, though the historian Bā Makhrama points to his mistreatment by its local rulers as a possible cause.[52] In any case, his decision to settle outside of Hadhramaut upon his return to Yemen in 889/1484 seems to have been greatly influenced by his contacts with the *sayyid* ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 889/1484), the famous student and hagiographer of his father who had settled in al-Ḥamrāʾ in the valley of Laḥj to the north of Aden in 868/1464.[53]

Imām ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān seems to have been a personality of great influence among the Ṭāhirids who was patronized by the sultans al-Mujāhid ʿAlī (r. 864/1460-883/1478) and al-Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (r. 883/1478-894/1489), where he generously spent of the sultans' wealth on the various needs of the local population in al-Ḥamrāʾ and its environs.[54] The *sayyid* played an important role as a scholar and mediator of local conflicts in the area, and his charisma soon gained him the respect of the local tribes and the Bedouin population, bringing greater peace and security to the region. As a trusted mediator, he also resolved conflicts within the Ṭāhirid house on at least one occasion; when al-Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb had a falling out with his cousin ʿAbd al-Bāqī b. Muḥammad, the latter sought the protection of the *sayyid* in al-

[52] "*Thumma kharja minha min ḍaymin ḥaṣala ʿalayhi min wullātihā qāṣidan al-Ḥajj*." Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:543.
[53] For more on him, see, al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:240-241; Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 345-349. The *sayyid* died in the city of Taʿizz at the time of Imām al-ʿAdanī's return from his second pilgrimage in 889/1484.
[54] For a clearer sense of his intimate relations with his Ṭāhirid patrons, see Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:476-477; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ*, 5:91; Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 57-58. For more on the reign of the relatively short-lived Ṭāhirid dynasty in Yemen, see Chapter 2.

Ḥamrāʾ, who quickly rose to mediate their dispute, allowing him to safely return to his residence in Juban.[55]

Along his journey to the Hajj, Imām al-ʿAdanī stopped in the valley of Laḥj, where he was well received by ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and through whom he received his first contacts with sultan al-Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, who treated him with great hospitality. Thus, upon his return from the Hejaz in 889/1484, he sought a similar appointment from the sultan to settle in the fertile valley of Mawzaʿ, located between Taʿizz and the port of Mocha, where he was to serve as a resident scholar and as a local mediator and host to traversing travelers and dignitaries. However, before assuming his new role, he received news of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd l-Raḥmān's death and decided to settle in al-Ḥamrāʾ to succeed him in his role with the sultan's blessing. After a brief stay in the city, however, where he cemented a lasting relation with the sultan as one of his personal confidants, the Imām had other ambitions and decided to move on to the port of Aden, where he settled for the rest of his years with the full blessing and generous patronage of the Ṭāhirid sultan.[56]

In Aden, the Imām quickly made a name for himself as one of its most prominent religious figures, gaining many disciples and students from far and wide and securing his position as the city's patron saint and as the Sufi pole (*quṭb*) of his time.[57] Khirid notes that the Imām's popularity in Aden would spread as far as the Hejaz, Syria, Iraq, and India, making him

[55] Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:476-477.
[56] Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Nāhr*, 6:543.
[57] Peskes offers an insightful and comprehensive article on the al-ʿAdanī's role and position as the city's patron saint in "Der Heilige." Concerning his spiritual function as the Sufi '*quṭb*', al-Shillī recounts two miraculous dream visions by his famous student and hagiographer, Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Baḥraq, in which the Imām's role as the Sufi pole of his time is confirmed. On yet another much earlier occasion, al-Shaykh ʿAlī is also said to have foretold through a spiritual unveiling that his nephew would one day settle in Aden and become the *quṭb* of his time. *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:37-9.

a much sought after spiritual authority.[58] Among his various scholarly functions, Imām al-ʿAdanī was especially known for his large and regular public gatherings of *samāʿ*, which were widely attended by the city's commoners and the scholarly elite alike. These public auditions served to showcase not only his role as a spiritual leader, but they were also an opportunity for him to fulfill his temporal role in mingling with the city's local population and attending to their diverse material needs and concerns. The Imām's liberal spending throughout these public functions soon became legendary and was a clear indication of his generous access to the public treasury of his Ṭāhirid patrons. As a means of encouraging his attendees to remain and to regularly attend his spiritual gatherings, which would extend late into the night, he was known to compensate many of them with financial rewards and to host lavish meals. During Ramadan, especially, the Imām would slaughter thirty sheep on a daily basis to feed his many guests, and on the occasion of the Eid, he would buy expensive clothes for his servants and close entourage.[59]

These lavish displays of generosity, where he was regularly petitioned and sought out by the city's locals for his generous financial aid, came to be the subject of some controversy, as might be expected within the context of a Sufi scholarly culture that emphasized the ascetic virtues of *zuhd* and *jūʿ*. On one occasion, where the Imām was rebuked for incurring many debts on account of his unrivalled spending, he responded that he was only doing so seeking the pleasure of His Lord and that he had received a Divine guarantee that all his debts would be relieved. As Bā Makhrama notes, though the Ṭāhird ruler al-Ẓāfir ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (r. 894/1489-923/15l7) failed to respond to the Imām's appeal in settling his outstanding debts, his son-in-law Nāṣir al-Dīn b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Ḥalwān, who was very fond of the Imām, rose to the

[58] Khirid, *al-Ghurar*, 285.
[59] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:36-39.

occasion in generously paying off all of his outstanding debts, in which he was assisted by the Imām's son Aḥmad.[60]

Aside from his scholarly and spiritual influence, a close reading of the Imām's *Dīwān* suggests that he enjoyed intimate relations with his Ṭāhirid patrons, especially with al-Ẓāfir ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, whom he advised and corresponded with regularly as a close confidant.[61] Like the *sayyid* ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān before him, the Imām also seems to have played an important role in the mediation of local political disputes, including feuds within the Ṭāhirid house. Thus, for instance, two of the poems in his *Dīwān* appear to have been penned shortly after al-Ẓāfir ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's maternal nephew ʿAbd Allah b. ʿĀmir reneged on a peace agreement that he had convened with the sultan in the presence of the Imām and other important dignitaries.[62]

Aside from his social functions in Aden, the Imām also made an important contribution to the city's intellectual scholarly culture. It is during his years in Aden where he came to be especially celebrated among his students and disciples for his intimate knowledge of Ibn ʿArabī's works, receiving praise for his insightful expositions on the *Futūḥāt* and the *Fuṣūṣ*. Al-Shillī records two examples of poetry from his disciples praising the Imām for his commanding grasp of al-Shaykh al-Akbar's works.[63] The first excerpt is from his student ʿAbd al-Muʿtī b. Ḥasan Bā Kathīr, whose verses are translated as follows:

> You clarified for us the knowledge of reality (*ʿilm al-ḥaqīqa*), making it manifest
> And brought to life Muḥyī al-Dīn, he who is a specialist

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[60] Bā Makhrama, *Qilādat al-Naḥr*, 6:544; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:39.
[61] A significant portion of the Imām's *Diwān* consists of poems taken from his diverse correspondences with the Ṭāhird ruler. Most of these appear to have been penned on the occasion of important events or incidents in al-Ẓāfir ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's political career, where the Imām offers his encouragement and praise of the sultan, counseling him on various matters and praying for his continued success and victory. See *Dīwān al-ʿAdanī*, 97-103, 136-139, 148-150, 159-160, 234-245, 410, 413-415.
[62] *Dīwān al-ʿAdanī*, 234-237.
[63] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:36.

The speech of Ibn ʿArabī, though it may be concealed,
and its understanding brings much difficulty and exhaustion,

with your promising determination, you have clarified it for us,
and it is now for us well-parsed and well-grasped.

The second example is from the Imām's famous and accomplished student Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Baḥraq (d. 930/1524)[64], whose verses read:

O One who is complete in his description and who brings together
the knowledge of reality (*ḥaqīqa*), the sacred law (*sharīʿa*), and literature (*adab*).

You have brought to light what was obscure of the *Fuṣūṣ*, among other works
of every knowledge, whose distorters display great perseverance (in their efforts)!

So may the Lord of the Throne grant you a lofty recompense,
for you have been blessed with gifts and talents too numerous to count!

In addition to his disciples' poetry, Imām al-ʿAdanī also has the occasion to express his own views on the controversial figures of Ibn ʿArabī and al-Ḥallāj, among others, in his *Dīwān*. Concerning the controversies surrounding these Sufi masters, he expresses his opinion in a poem, whose relevant verses are translated as follows[65]:

The vision of the Divine Reality (*al-Ḥaqīqa*) has no witness,
except but one from every seventy thousand (men).

A true rarity such that no ruling can truly govern him!
How many a well-intentioned one has strayed in his wayfaring?

The Ocean of Divine Reality rages and overflows;
even Ibn ʿArabī was overburdened by its waves!

And the texts [of the Law] dictated the execution of al-Hallaj,
God have Mercy on him, for he was a devout servant!

He was killed by the right (of the law), though he was in reality,
upon the true Reality (*Ḥaqīqa*),[66] a wayfarer on the path (*ṭarīqa*).

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[64] For an expansive biography of this prolific Hadhrami Sufi, poet, and notable hagiographer of the Imām, see al-ʿAydarūs, *al-Nūr al-Sāfir*, 202-211.

[65] *Dīwān al-ʿAdanī*, 404. The poem is also translated and analyzed in Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 220-221, with a couple of minor yet notable errors.

[66] The editor of this published edition of the *Dīwān* notes two other MS variants in which the word '*ḥaqīqa*' is replaced with '*Sharīʿa*', which would read as an even more emphatic defense of al-Ḥallaj's

Each of the two parties has their supporting text (*wathīqa*);
the killer and the killed, each has their goals.

They seized upon the apparent form of his words and judged
that he be killed, while these jurists did not know

that above every knowledge of the one who knows is a [superior] knowledge.
Yet they are the pillars of this faith, and none can resist them.

He may have said "I am the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*)," yet intended "I'm the first to follow (*anā alḥaq*)[67]"
to the men of the Unseen, meaning the 'fastest' (*asbaq*).

This is an excuse that has been reported and authenticated (*muḥaqqaq*)![68]
So do not be unruly and do not oppose it!

As these verses make amply clear, Imām al-ʿAdanī expressed great concern in defending the orthodoxy of these major Sufi figures and their knowledge of gnostic realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) against the charges of their detractors among the jurists, while maintaining a conciliatory tone in his deference and respect for scholars of the law.

In addition to what little can be gleaned of his scholarly orientation from his biographers and his *Dīwan*, Imām al-ʿAdanī's short but relatively important work *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf* provides us with a greater insight into his educational background and his wider scholarly network as a prominent member of Yemen's scholarly elite. The work also serves as a rich exposition on the Sufi *khirqa* and its ritual and ceremonial significance within the broader Sufi culture of the fifteenth/sixteenth century.

religious orthodoxy on the part of Imām al-ʿAdanī. Peskes seems to be unaware of this significant variant reading.

[67] Possibly on account of a variant reading or a typographical error in her MS of the *Dīwān*, Peskes transliterates "*anā alḥaq*" (I am the closest to follow) as "*yalḥaq*" (he intended to follow). This renders her translation of the verse less clear and convincing.

[68] Peskes mistakenly vocalizes the passive participle "*muḥaqqaq*" into its active form "*muḥaqqiq*."

5.2.1. *Al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf fī al-Taḥkīm al-Sharīf*

Al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf is a short treatise on the Sufi *khirqa* that is in many ways similar to *al-Barqa al-Mushīqa* of the Imām's uncle al-Shaykh ʿAlī.[69] The work begins with a legalistic polemical defense of the *khirqa* and the practice of Sufi initiation against its detractors from among the *ʿulamāʾ* and the jurists, in which the Imām also includes a lengthy discussion on the various scholarly opinions and relevant *ḥadīth* traditions relating to the *khirqa*.[70] Here the Imām attempts to prove the historicity of the practice of Sufi investiture of the different *ṭarīqas* as ultimately going back to the following shared spiritual lineage (*silsila*), from which they are believed to have branched out into their respective lineages[71]:

Prophet Muḥammad

Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib

al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

Ḥabīb al-ʿAjamī

Dāwūd al-Ṭāʾī

Maʿrūf al-Karkhī

Al-Sarī al-Saqaṭī

al-Shaykh Junayd

diverse Sufi silsilas

[69] Both works contain valuable information on the *khirqa* and the manner of its ritual investiture, and they both serve as rudimentary precursors for the *isnād* genre of the '*thabat*,' detailing the *sāda*'s dual *silsila* and all the scholars who invested them with the *khirqa* and the various *ijāzas* that they received from them.

[70] See *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf*, 457-475. See also Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 193-196.

[71] *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf*, 459.

In this discussion, Imām alʿAdanī is also sure to stress that even if the relevant traditions concerning the investiture of the *khirqa* are considered weak according to the masters of *ḥadīth*, the ceremonial practice nonetheless remains at the very least, legally speaking, a 'commendable innovation' (*bidʿa ḥasana*) like many other widely approved innovative practices in the Islamic tradition. Here he includes an expanded legal discussion with examples on the various categories of innovation (*bidʿa*) in the law, consisting of the obligatory (*bidʿa wājiba*), the forbidden (*bidʿa muḥarrama*), and the recommended (*bidʿa mandūba*), the permissible (*bidʿa mubāḥa*), and the detestable (*bidʿa makrūha*).[72]

Imām al-ʿAdanī then moves on to discuss the three different intentions for donning and investing the *khirqa*, which are namely to wear it: i) out of mere emulation of the righteous (*khirqat al-tashabbuh*), without a desire to become a Sufi disciple, ii) out of an expression of pious affinity and to seek the spiritual blessing of the master (*khirqat al-tabarruk*), and iii) as a mark of one's complete devotion and discipleship to the master (*khirqat al-irāda*).[73] This is immediately followed by a general description of the ceremonial practice of investing the *khirqa* (*taḥkīm*), where he offers several examples of its preferred ritual form and the diverse formulas that are invoked upon taking the oath of allegiance (*ʿahd*) with the Sufi master.

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[72] *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf*, 468.

[73] *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf*, 471-5. Given that Imām al-ʿAdanī was invested with the *khirqa* by several different masters, which seems to have been a relatively common practice among the Sufis of his time, one may venture to assume that this practice of amassing various *khirqas* was largely motivated by the intention of *tabarruk* in being connected to diverse spiritual lineages, and it did not necessarily reflect the desire to identify formally as a disciple of multiple spiritual masters. This seems to be confirmed in Imām al-ʿAdanī's discussion here, where he also warns disciples against becoming scattered in their affiliation to different masters and their differing spiritual methods. Kugle also interestingly notes from the example of Imām Aḥmad Zarrūq's teacher Aḥmad b. ʿUqba al-Ḥaḍramī that Yemeni Sufism had a common "tradition of fusing the Mayanī lineage and the Qādirī lineage." Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 126.

Imām al-ʿAdanī then concludes his work with a detailed list of all his spiritual affiliations, where he offers a comprehensive list of the Sufi masters who initiated him with the *khirqa* and their respective spiritual lineages, several of whom are noted above. This is then followed by two brief discussions wherein he clarifies the definition of the *khirqa,* noting that it may consist of any article of clothing and that it need not be restricted to the cloak or mantle,[74] and where he contemplates the virtues of donning the *khirqa* not only for the Sufi elect, but as a commendable practice for the common Muslim out of the desire to express one's love and belonging to the people of God and to seek their spiritual blessing (*tabarruk*).

Imām al-ʿAdanī was succeeded by his son Imām Aḥmad (d. 922/1516),[75] who took over his father's duties as the *manṣab* in Aden and continued in his pattern of generous hospitality. Imām Aḥmad died at the young age of thirty-four, however, leaving no progeny to succeed him in his role. This led the governor of Aden ʿAbd Allah b. Tāhir to eventually call upon the *sayyid* ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs from Hadhramaut to fulfill this important spiritual role. The Imām settled in Aden to meet his position for a brief period before leaving the port city in 932/1526, possibly on account the Ṭāhirid's changing political fortunes and the city's decline as a scholarly hub and trading metropolis.[76] Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī's memory as the patron saint of Aden would continue to live on, however, and the important title of the *manṣab* in connection with his legacy would be resumed by the ʿAydarūs family in later decades up to the present day, where his shrine (*maqām*) remains a major annual pilgrimage destination.[77]

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[74] As we have seen, in the Bā ʿAlawī tradition, it is the *sāda*'s characteristic Sufi turban that is commonly used for the ceremonial donning of the *khirqa*.
[75] See al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy,* 2:50-53.
[76] Peskes, "Der Heilige," 67.
[77] See al-Mashhūr, "Jalāʾ al-Hamm wa-l-Ḥazan," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila,* 101-102.

Conclusion

As we have seen in Chapter 4, aside from their active social and temporal roles as public preachers and *manṣabs*, the ʿAlawī *sāda* also contributed in significant ways to the valley's intellectual and cultural revival of the fifteenth/sixteenth century, especially in their scholarly contributions as learned Sufi masters, where they remained active participants in the wider intellectual and spiritual currents of Yemen and the Hejaz. As such, not only did they author the usual works on Sufi manners and spiritual refinement (*raqāʾiq*), as can be gleaned from their Ghazalian focus, but they also occasionally studied and engaged with Sufi metaphysics (*ḥaqāʾiq*), displaying a level of familiarity with the thought and doctrine of al-Shaykh al-Akbar. This chapter sought to further reinforce these findings by examining the intellectual and spiritual legacies of the two leading ʿAlawī authorities of the mid-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, Imāms ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs and his son Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī.

Imām al-ʿAydarūs's emergence as a towering ʿAlawī leader in the early fifteenth century marks a new development in the evolution of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism, as his a*l-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar,* alongside the works of his younger accomplished brother and disciple al-Shaykh ʿAlī, served to effectively launch the *sāda*'s spiritual and intellectual canon. The Imām had received his primary spiritual training in Sufism from the major ʿAlawī Imāms ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār and Muḥammad Jamal al-Layl, where al-Shillī notes his study of the works of *ḥaqāʾīq* with the latter. This suggests the high likelihood that he was exposed to the works of al-Shaykh al-Akbar since as we have already seen, Khird had already noted his younger brother's study of the *Futūḥāt* with Imām Jamal al-Layl.

While he likely studied the works *ḥaqāʾiq*, Imām al-ʿAydarūs's more practical focus on the *Iḥyāʾ* was to have a more significant impact on the Bā ʿAlawī tradition and the reception of

al-Ghazālī in its spiritual method. Be that as it may, what can be clearly gleaned from the standard account of his famous episode with his son in which he rebuked the young Imām al-ʿAdanī for reading the *Futūḥāt* is that this had less to do with his censure of al-Shaykh al-Akbar and his ideas; on the contrary, it was a confirmation of his high opinion of the towering Sufi mystic, whose works were considered by a significant portion of the Sufi elite as being too advanced and potentially harmful for novices (*ahl al-bidāyat*) and as befitting only the realized few who have reached the end the Path (*aṣḥāb al-nihāyat*).

Imām Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī was also a very well-travelled and accomplished Sufi authority who studied and benefited from a great number of the scholarly elite in Yemen and the Hejaz. The Imām's eventual relocation and settlement in Aden, where he enjoyed intimate relations with the Ṭāhirids as a personal confidant and recipient of their generous patronage, helped to quickly propel his scholarly career and fame as the city's patron saint. His notable work *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf* is not only valuable for its rich account of the ceremonial significance and function of the Sufi *khirqa* in the Sufi intellectual culture of the fifteenth/sixteenth century, but more significantly, it offers us an important window into the Imām's extensive travels and wide scholarly network, in which he attempted to amass a spiritual connection to the diverse *silsilas* of the major Sufi *tariqas* of his regional milieu.

Most significant of these scholarly connections is no doubt Imām al-ʿAdanī's intimate spiritual relations with members of Yemen's majority Qāḍirī Sufi community, where the Imām details his investiture with the Qāḍirī *khirqa* on numerous occasions. It must be recalled here that this connection must have placed him in close contact with the spiritual inheritors of the Ibn ʿArabī school of Zabīd, whose influential spiritual leaders Ismāʿīl al-Jabartī (d. 806/1403) and his successor Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr al-Raddād (d. 821/1418) were also among Yemen's most

influential Qādirī figures of the fourteenth/fifteenth century. As such , *al-Juzʾ al-Laṭīf* notes his relations with the Qāḍīrī Sufis of Shibam who invested him with Qādirī *khirqa*, connecting him to the same spiritual lineage of al-Jabartī and al-Raddād.

This finding should be unsurprising to the intellectual historian of Yemeni Sufism since as Scott Kugle observes, Yemeni Sufism had a common "tradition of fusing the Mayanī lineage and the Qādirī lineage."[78] While Imām al-ʿAdanī was reprimanded during his youth for obtaining a copy of the *Futūḥāt*, as al-Shillī significantly notes, he would be praised by his disciples during his later more established years in Aden for his insightful mastery of the *Futūḥāt* and the *Fuṣūṣ*. This observation in addition to what can be gleaned from his defense and praise of al-Ḥallāj and Ibn ʿArabī in his *Dīwān* serve to clearly demonstrate that the Imām and his immediate scholarly milieu engaged extensively with philosophical Sufism and the works of Ibn ʿArabī in particular.

[78] Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 126.

- 6 -

Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim: A Master of Sufi *Ḥaqāʾiq*

The sixteenth century in many ways reflects a high point in the evolution of the ʿAlawīs' intellectual tradition and Hadhrami Sufism more generally, as we have seen with the emergence of important Sufi figures and their more sophisticated works in theoretical gnosis, such as Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 990/1582), author of *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīd*, and the famous scholar and disciple of the *sāda* Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Faḍl (d. 979/1571), author of the important work on gnostic realities *al-Fuṣūl al-Fatḥiyya wa-l-Nafathāṭ al-Rūḥiyya*.[1] This chapter seeks to further reinforce the findings of Chapters 4 and 5 by examining the relatively neglected intellectual and spiritual legacy of the *sāda*'s towering saintly authority of the sixteenth century, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583), who remains widely recognized as one of the Alawīs' most sophisticated exponents of philosophical Sufism.

Born in Tarīm in 919/1503, where he was raised, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583) received a typical Islamic education from the leading *sāda* and *mashāyikh* of his time.[2] He began his intensive education from a young age with the Qurʾān, after which he received an extensive exposure to the Islamic sciences with a number of different scholars. Among his notable teachers were ʿUmar b. Muḥammad Bā Shaybān, the *qāḍī* Aḥmad Sharīf, the

[1] See Chapter 4.

[2] The traditional biographies appear to be silent on the Imām's father and immediate family, and not much is known about them other that he was a sixth-generation descendant of the famous Imām ʿAbd al-Rāhmān al-Saqqāf (see family tree in Chapter 5). The Imām' great-great-grandfather was Imām al-Saqqāf's son, Imām ʿAbd Allah (d. 857/1453), for whom al-Shillī occasions a brief biography, noting that his main teacher in Sufism was his older brother Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār, who taught him the works of *ḥāqāʾīq* and invested him with the Sufi *khirqa*. *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:179.

jurist ʿAbd Allah b. Muḥammad b. Sahl Bā Qushayr (d. 958/1551)[3], with whom he studied the usual *fiqh* works such as *al-Minhāj*, and the famous Sufi, jurist, and poet ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allah Bā Makhrama[4] (d. 952//1545), with whom he studied Qushayrī's *Risāla*. More importantly, among the major Sufi masters who played a more influential role in his spiritual training were the famous Tarīmī *sayyid* Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī Bā Jaḥdab[5] (d. 973/1566) and the renowned Sufi master of Shibām, Maʿrūf Bā Jammāl (d. 969/1562).[6]

In addition to his daily routine of scholarly learning, Shaykh Abū Bakr would complement his education with a strict regimen of spiritual training, developing an affinity for long spiritual retreats at the grave of the Prophet Hūd. The hagiographic biographies also note that he regularly fasted the three hottest months of the year and that he would subsist for days on a mere diet of milk and coffee.[7] He eventually built himself a private residence near the village of ʿĪnāt for his private retreats, where he permanently decided to settle.[8] The old city of ʿĪnāt had been initially built by the Kathīrīs in 929/1522, and soon after his settling in the area, news of his knowledge and generous hospitality attracted large numbers of seekers and visitors, with many

[3] A major jurist and author of the popular *fiqh* work *Qalāʾid al-Khlāʾid*. For more on him, see Bā Ḍhīb, *Juhūd Fuqahāʾ Ḥaḍramaut*, 1:491-499; Bā Faqīh, *Tārīkh al-Shiḥr*, 337.
[4] For more on this famous Hadhrami Sufi scholar, see Bā Faqīh, *Tārīkh al-Shiḥr*, 312-319; al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 378-383. For his views on Ibn ʿArabī, see discussion in Chapter 4.
[5] For more on this major ʿAlawī figure, see al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:69-73. See also discussion in Chapter 3.
[6] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:26-27; *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 589. As we have seen, Shaykh Maʿrūf Bā Jammāl was also the famous Sufi master of the Kathīrī sultan ʿAlī b. ʿUmar (d. 981/1573) in Shibām. For a detailed and insightful biography of this famous Hadhrami Sufi, see al-Mashhūr, "al-Shaykh Maʿrūf Bā Jammāl," in *Silsilat Aʿlām Ḥaḍramawt al-Kāmila*, 272-302, which is mostly drawn from the sixteenth-century biographical work *Mawāhib al-Rabb al-Raʾūf fī Tarjamat al-Shaykh Maʿrūf* authored by the Hadhrami scholar Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Sirāj al-Dīn Bā Jammāl (d. 1019/1598). For a briefer biographical entry, see also *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 456-462.
[7] Buxton, *Imams of the Valley*, 38.
[8] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:27; *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 590; Buxton, *Imams of the Valley*, 38.

deciding to settle around his new residence, which would eventually become the Imām's *ḥawṭa* in the new ʿĪnāt.[9]

As we saw in Chapter 4, as the *manṣab* of the *ḥawṭa* of ʿĪnāt, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim was to also play an important role in the resolution of local conflicts and tribal disputes. Among the *sāda*, it was the Shaykh and his descendants who were destined to have the most extensive relations with the Kathīrīs, where their *hawṭa* served as a regular destination and meeting ground for the resolution of local political disputes and for seeking the *sāda*'s blessing and private counsel. In particular, the Imām and the *manṣabs* of his family after him would establish long-lasting ties with sultan ʿal-ʿĀdil' ʿUmar b. Badr (d. 1021/1612) and his descendants.[10]

Sometime after settling in ʿĪnāt, the Imām decided to visit the famous Sufi master Maʿrūf Bā Jammāl of Shibām and seek his permission to become his disciple. The shaykh is said to have tested his zeal and determination by refusing to grant him permission to enter upon him for a period of forty days. Having passed this test, the shaykh invested him with the *khirqa* and granted him an *ijāza*, and the Imām would go on to become the shaykh's foremost disciple and his spiritual inheritor after him.[11] On other occasions, the Sufi master is known to have hinted at the Imām's status and promising future as the leading Sufi of his time, describing him variously with the exalted titles of '*quṭb al-wujūd*,' '*ṣāḥib al-waqt*', and as the '*khalīfa*' of his time.[12]

Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's fame in ʿĪnāt would soon spread to all the corners of the valley and beyond, where he became the subject of several hagiographic biographies. His teaching circles in the village soon began attracting scholars and seekers from as far as Iraq, Egypt, and Syria. His generosity towards his disciples and the poor was near legendary. His

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[9] al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:29.
[10] Ibn Hishām, *Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Kathīriyya*, 1:89-90; al-Shillī, *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:28.
[11] al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley*, 141-142.
[12] al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 590.

biographies note that he operated a public kitchen, wherein he would personally distribute some five hundred loaves of bread during lunch time and another five hundred during the evenings. As the most celebrated ʿAlawī Sufi authority of his day, the Imām taught a generation of major scholars and students from among the *sāda* and *mashāyikh,* which soon earned him the celebrated sobriquet of 'Fakhr al-Wujūd.' Among his famous students were Imām Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥabshī and our famous Moroccan pilgrim and Ḥasanī *sayyid* Yusuf Ibn ʿĀbid al-Fāsī, who met him near the end of his life and whose visit to Hadhramaut is said to have been foretold by the Imām. The Imām's litanies continue to be widely read till this day, and his famous prayer of blessings upon the Prophet, 'Ṣalāt al-Tāj' continues to be widely recited in the Indian subcontinent.[13]

The story of Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's rise to fame (*ẓuhūr*) as the preeminent ʿAlawī spiritual authority of his day is unsurprisingly the subject of several preternatural tales. Al-Shillī relates a story where after wonderous tales of the Imām's renown and *karāmāt* in ʿĪnāt had reached Tarīm, despite his relatively young age, a *sayyid* began complaining to his Sufi master Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī Bā Jaḥdab that people were setting the young Abū Bakr above his ʿAlawī elders in Tarīm. Imām Bā Jaḥdab also disapproved of this and informed the *sayyid* to go out and remind people to refrain from such tales, for the young Shaykh possesses no more than a grain and is still a beginner on the path. Upon hearing of this news, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim is said to have been humbly pleased to receive confirmation that he possessed as much as a 'grain' of attainment on the path. He then set out to meet with his master Imām Bā Jaḥdab in Tarīm, who gently reprimanded him during their meeting that seeking fame and renown was something he did not need and to stop encouraging the spread of such tales. Shaykh Abū Bakr responded

[13] Buxton, *Imams of the Valley*, 38-40; al-Badawi, *A Blessed Valley*, 145.

that he could not contain the people from speaking about him and that Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī had come to him in a dream vision, along with a number of ʿAlawī masters, commanding him to expose himself and to make his spiritual state known to the people. Imām Bā Jaḥdab is then said to have spoken to him in an equivocal and unintelligible language, which none understood, before reverting to his normal speech and ordering him to return to ʿĪnāt.[14]

In addition to his litanies, spiritual poetry, and gnostic writings on Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq*, the Imām is widely remembered for inaugurating the annual pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) and festival to the tomb site of the Prophet Hūd in the month of Shaʿbān, which had been previously arranged in smaller numbers according to the date harvest. As the largest spiritual festival in Hadhramaut, the *ziyāra* lasts for three days and is typically attended by the major scholars of the valley, with numerous processions, eloquent speeches, Mawlids and sessions of spiritual poetry taking place, a tradition that continues to be led by the Imām's family till this day.[15]

Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim had thirteen sons and four daughters, and his son Ḥusayn would become his spiritual heir after him. The Imām's family line would branch into several well-known and large *sāda* clans, including the families of Āl al-Miḥḍār and Āl al-Ḥamid of his sons ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār and Ḥāmid.[16] Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim died in 992/1583 and was buried in his family's cemetery in ʿĪnāt, where his tomb had a prominent dome erected over it and remains a popularly visted today.

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[14] al-Shillī, *al-Maraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:27.
[15] For more on this annual pilgrimage, see Chapter 3, note 143.
[16] The Āl Miḥḍār are occasionally confused to be descendants of the famous Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (see Chapter 3) who had no male children. Rather, they are descendants of Shaykh Abū Bakr's son and namesake, who was named after the celebrated Imām for the great blessing of his name. Other known *sāda* clans from Shaykh Abū Bakr's progeny include Āl Jindān, Āl ʿAydarūs (not to be confused with Imām al-ʿAydarūs's descendants), Āl Bin Nāṣir, Āl Shaykh, Āl Ḥaydar, Āl al-Haddār, and Āl Bin Ḥafīẓ. See al-Mashhūr, *Shams al-Ẓahīra*, 273-377.

6.1. An Author of Sufi *Ḥaqāʾiq*

Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim continues to be celebrated today among the ʿAlawīs as one of the *sāda*'s most realized gnostics (*ʿārifūn*) and as one of their most accomplished authors of philosophical Sufism (*ḥaqāʾiq*). While his hagiographic biographies make no direct mention of his study of Ibn ʿArabī, it is nonetheless known that he was a contemporary of the scholar Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Balḥajj Bā Faḍl (d. 979/1571), the famous author of Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq* and great admirer of Ibn ʿArabī, who was also known for his intimate relations with the *sāda* as one of their disciples. While there is no clear indication from the biographical sources that these two major Hadhrami Sufis ever met and studied together, this was nonetheless very likely the case, as they were both disciples of the famous ʿAlawī Sufi master of Tarīm Imām Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī Bā Jaḥdab (d. 973/1566).[17] This connection suggests the possibility that they either studied the works of Ibn ʿArabī together or directly with their Sufi master, hinting at the likelihood, once again, that Ibn ʿArabī's works were more widely received within Hadhrami Sufi circles than we are led to believe. In any case, as we shall see below from a thematic survey of Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's two major works, his intimate familiarity with Ibn ʿArabī is unmistakable, where al-Shaykh al-Akbar's terminology, thought, and doctrines take center stage throughout his writings.

Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ wa-l-Manhaj al-Waḍḍāḥ* and *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib wa-Bughyat Maṭlab al-Maṭālib* are among the most sophisticated works of philosophical Sufism within the *sāda*'s intellectual and spiritual canon, exhibiting a thoroughgoing mastery of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings and the highly technical and philosophical lexicon of the Sufi gnostics. Both works are also quite wide-ranging in their scope, though

[17] See al-Shillī, *al-Sanāʾ al-Bāhir*, 531; *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawy*, 2:70.

mostly similar in content, interweaving the familiar Akbarian themes on Sufi ontology, cosmology, theology, epistemology, hermeneutics, eschatology, and soteriology.[18] Given their sophistication, the breadth of their topics, and their overall complexity, it is remarkable that both works continue to remain *terra incognita* within the academic study of Yemeni Sufism.[19]

While this may be the case, an exhaustive analysis of their contents remains beyond the immediate scope and objectives of this project. Indeed, both works are divided into many small subsections on a plethora of topics that were dictated over a period of time in the inspired manner of the realized Sufis,[20] such that offering an independent and systematic analysis of each work would be too cumbersome and less helpful for our purposes. Rather, an attempt will be made here to treat both works holistically and provide a brief synopsis of the major recurring themes constituting the central features of Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's focus and attention. This

[18] The *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ* represents a more expanded discussion on many of the same themes found in *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, which is written in a more brief and summarized style. Both works, however, appear to be authored independently of one another, and the topics they address are not always an exact match.

[19] A couple of factors can partially explain why they have received little to no scholarly attention thus far. Both works were only published in printed editions within the last decade, prior to which handwritten copies of their manuscripts were less accessible to the average researcher. Furthermore, as highly advanced works of *ḥaqāʾiq*, the *sāda* have typically approached them in the same vein that they approach all works of philosophical Sufism, by generally de-emphasizing their reading, exposing them only to their worthy disciples within closed and private circles, a tendency that has been witnessed and confirmed from first-hand conversations with some of their leading students in Hadhramaut. In light of this general tendency, it is unsurprising to note Alexander Knysh's observation during his 1999 sojourn in the valley, where he remarks with a lack of enthusiasm concerning Dār al-Muṣṭafa, one of the *sāda*'s leading public seminaries, "It is in vain that one looks for works on Sufi metaphysics, epistemology or allegorical exegesis along the lines of Ibn ʿArabi and his followers. This initial impression was confirmed by Habib ʿUmar himself, who told me that, in accord with the tenets of the *tariqa al-ʿalawiyya*, they teach Sufism to their disciples primarily as morals and spiritual self-discipline." "The 'Tariqa' on a Landcruiser," 410.

[20] As the editor notes in his description on the book cover of *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, "he dictated it in an inspired manner" (*amlāhu ʿalā sabīl al-wārid*). Indeed, a close reading of these two works does not readily reveal a clear structure guiding the arrangement of their contents. While their inspired and unsystematic style seems to share much in common with the writing of Ibn ʿArabī and may at first glance be compared to his style in the *Futūḥāt*, as Chodkiewicz has masterfully revealed, the *Futūḥāt*, by contrast, does in fact have a clear logic behind its apparently unsystematic arrangement, which aims to closely mirror the structure of the Qurʾān. For more on this topic, see Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore*, 64-76.

approach seems justified in light of the broader aim of this dissertation, which is to lay the groundwork for further research into the intellectual history of Hadhrami Sufism and the ʿAlawīs' intellectual and spiritual legacy in particular by shining a spotlight on their relatively ignored scholarly contributions, which in several cases, as with these two works in particular, demonstrate an intimate familiarity with Ibn ʿArabī's central teachings and doctrines.

From a brief analysis of both works, it becomes readily apparent that Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim is deeply immersed in the Akbarian *weltanschauung*, displaying an intimate knowledge of the *Futūḥāt* and *Fuṣūṣ* in particular. Both of works also reflect Ibn ʿArabī's inspired style, prioritizing the divinely bequeathed supra-rational knowledge of the gnostics (*al-ʿilm al-wahbī* or *al-ʿilm al-ladunnī*) over all other forms of acquired knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-kasbī*). Furthermore, like Ibn ʿArabī, nearly all his writing is consistently and organically interwoven with verses from the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* traditions, which are frequently interpreted in a gnostic or esoteric light.[21] Here, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim displays a remarkable similarity with al-Shaykh al-Akbar's 'scripturalist' hermeneutic, where the Qurʾān and Sunna are taken as the absolute, central, and final authority on every aspect of his Sufi teachings.[22]

More concretely, the Imām employs a great deal of technical Sufi vocabulary throughout both works, regularly providing definitions for his impressive array of terms relating to the Sufi states (*aḥwāl*), stations (*maqāmāt*), and other cosmological, theological, and gnostic concepts,[23] most of which appear to be borrowed from al-Shaykh al-Akbar. To provide but one example,

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[21] Several of these interpretations are likely borrowed from Ibn ʿArabī's own exegesis, though upon closer inspection, one is also likely to find his own novel interpretations and perspectives.
[22] The Imām is sure to stress this point emphatically on several occasions. See, for example, *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 358, 454. For Ibn ʿArabī's 'scripturalism' in terms of his legal thought, see my "Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī's Personalist Theory of the Sharīʿa," 22-39.
[23] For a list of examples of his technical definitions, which is by no means exhaustive, see *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 291-292, 373-375, 377, 389, 391, 403-406, 429; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 41-44, 48, 65.

throughout his ontological and cosmological discussions, he regularly employs Ibn ʿArabī's concept of 'immutable entities' (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), which may be defined as the nonexistent objects of God's knowledge or the nonexistent possible things (*mumkināt*), as contrasted with the existent things (*mawjūdāt*) of the phenomenal world.[24] These 'entities' (*aʿyān*) are 'immutable' (*thābita*) because they never change, just as God's Knowledge never changes, and they are only brought into existence when God gives preponderance to their existence over their nonexistence.[25]

While he relies heavily on Ibn ʿArabī's gnostic terminology, unsurprisingly, there are no direct references made to al-Shaykh al-Akbar throughout his works. Instead, all his central reflections and explications are presented as the fruits of spiritual realization, where references to other notable Sufi authorities are rare and only raised sparingly to illustrate a particular point or provide an example. Be that as it may, upon closer analysis, his writing betrays an unmistakable and direct familiarity with the contents of Ibn ʿArabī's works, to the extent that he occasionally offers passing remarks or reflections which, upon closer scrutiny, appear to closely mimic the *ipsissima verba* of relevant passages from the *Fuṣūṣ*. Two brief examples shall suffice us here to illustrate the point. In a discussion on the Prophet ʿĪsā's revival of the dead, the Imām offers the following explanation,

> And if Jibrīl had not appeared in the form of a human, ʿĪsā would not have been able to revive the dead without first appearing in that natural luminous elemental form in addition to the human form of his mother's side; for it was said of him upon reviving the dead, 'He not He' (*Huwa lā Huwa*), and a state of bewilderment would befall those who gazed upon him.[26]

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[24] "*Ḥaqāʾiq al-mumkināt fī ʿilm al-Ḥaqq Taʿālā . . .*" *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 406.

[25] For more on this Akbarian concept, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 11-12, 83-86ff. For examples where this concept is employed by Abū Bakr b. Sālim, see *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 114, 116, 156, 204-206, 223, 256, 406. Additionally, a small section is devoted to '*al-ʿayān al-thābita*' in *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 146-147.

[26] "*Wa law lam yaʾtī Jibrīl fī ṣūrat al-bashar, fa-laysa ʿĪsā yuḥyī al-mawtā illā ḥīna yaẓhar fī tilka al-ṣūra al-ṭabīʿiyya al-nūriyya al-ʿunṣuriyya maʿ al-ṣūra al-bashariyya min jihat ummih, fa-kāna yuqālu fīhi*

Elsewhere, in a brief passage discussing the mysterious Prophetic figure of Khālid, he offers the following remark,

> And Khālid had wanted the entire world to believe in what the Messengers had revealed, in order that he be a Mercy to everyone since he was honoured with the proximity of his Prophethood to that of Muhmmad, God's Peace and Blessings be upon him, and God sent him to all the worlds; even though Khālid was not the Messenger of God, God's Peace and Blessings be upon him, he nonetheless wanted to partake in this Mercy of the Muḥammadan Message and obtain from it the greatest possible share.[27]

Both these passages are nearly identical in wording to passages from the chapters on the Prophet ʿIsā and Khālid in the *Fuṣūṣ*, proving conclusively that the Imām closely studied Ibn ʿArabī's works and must have consulted them diligently.

6.1.1. *The Primacy of 'al-ʿIlm al-Ladunnī'*

Though he is deeply indebted to Ibn ʿArabī, incorporating much of his terminology and teachings, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's style and tone remains nonetheless that of an independent and realized master of spiritual realities, whose knowledge is drawn from experiential tasting (*dhawq*) and spiritual unveilings (*kashf*), which include regular visions of direct communion with the spirits of the Prophets and realized gnostics.[28] In the characteristic fashion of the Sufi mystics, the Imām thus repeatedly asserts throughout his writings that his

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ʿinda iḥyāʾih al-mawtā Huwa lā Huwa, wa-taqaʿ al-ḥīra wa-l-naẓar ilayh." *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 305. Cf. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Cairo: Dār Afāq, 2016), 140-141.

[27] "*Wa arāda Khālid īmān al-ʿālam kullih bi-mā jāʾt bihi al-rusul, li-yakūna raḥmatan lil-jamīʿ; li-annahu ushrifa bi-qurb nubuwwatihi min nubuwwati Muḥammad inna Allahu arsalahu lil-ʿālamīn. Wa-illa lam yakun Khālid bi-Rasūl Illah ﷺ, fa-arāda an yaḥṣil min hādhihi al-Raḥma fī al-Risāla al-Muḥammadiyya ʿalā ḥaẓ wāfir*." *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 240. Cf. *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 213.

[28] On occasion, the Imām discusses his own spiritual unveilings, which include numerous communions with the Prophet, some of which were in a wakeful state (*mushāfaha yaqiḍa*). On one such occasion, after initially leaning towards concealing the knowledge that he had gained, the Prophet commanded him, "Speak of what has emanated from me to you to the rest of creation!" Here, he takes this occasion to stress that all the Divine mysteries spoken of in his book were revealed to him by the express permission (*idhn*) of God and His Messenger. Elsewhere, he mentions his inner witnessing of the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*), which was unveiled to him in the year 991/1582. *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 133; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 196, 244.

words are not mere reflections emanating from one's passion or whim (*hawā*) but are divinely inspired, and such knowledge should remain generally concealed from the masses, who frequently lack the requisite courtesy (*adab*), sincere commitment (*ikhlās*), and intellect (*ʿaql*) to benefit from it; as such, whatever he is permitted to reveal of his knowledge is out of mercy for his disciples and is meant to assist those sincere and worthy seekers on the path.[29]

Given the nature of Sufi metaphysics, it is therefore unsurprising that the concept of '*al-ʿilm al-ladunni*' takes pride of place in both works. This form of supra-rational inner knowledge is only granted to the elect (*al-khawāṣṣ*) by Divine permission (*idhn*), and as a divinely gifted knowledge (*ʿilm wahbī*), it is superior to all the rational Islamic sciences of the exoteric scholars (*ʿulamāʾ al-rusūm*) that are attained through personal training and toil (*ʿilm kasbī*).[30] Like Ibn ʿArabī, the Imām also warns his disciples that the exoteric scholars who have not tasted the knowledge of inner realities are to be generally avoided, for they receive dead knowledge from a dead source, while this knowledge is received directly from the Real (*al-Ḥayy*) who never dies.[31] The only way that the aspiring seeker can hope to attain the reality of inner gnosis (*ḥaqīqa*) is by a strict adherence to the Sharīʿa and an emulation of the Sunna of the Prophet (the *ṭarīqa*), with a deep sense of reverence and courtesy (*adab*) towards God and the knowers of God (*ʿārifīn*), a process that also necessitates submitting oneself fully to a realized spiritual master and guide with full love, devotion, and inner direction (*tawajjuh*); in this sense, the Sharīʿa represents the tree from which the fruit of gnosis is reaped.[32] Such a spiritual journey can only be safely

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[29] See discussions in *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 19, 29, 133, 144, 188-189, 259, 262, 361-362, 419, 427. These discussions are a further indication of the *sāda*'s general pedagogical inclination towards concealment when it comes to the teaching of advanced Sufi realities to the commoners and uninitiated.

[30] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 23, 218, 274; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 115.

[31] "*Wa-lā tanẓur ilā ʿulamāʾ al-rusūm wa-l-athar, fa-innahum akhadhū ʿilmahum mayyit ʿan mayyit wa-akhadhnā ʿilmanā ʿan al-Ḥayy al-ladhī lā yamūt*." *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 261. See also *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 122.

[32] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 23, 87, 170, 375, 385, 397, 410; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 50, 71, 218, 255.

traversed on the boat of love (*markib al-maḥabba*) and with the provision and sustenance of God consciousness (*zād al-taqwā*).[33]

6.1.2. Theology and Ontology

A major cornerstone of this realized knowledge (*maʿrifa*) and among the preeminent themes throughout both works, is an exhaustive explication of the ontological dimension of Ibn ʿArabī's theological doctrine, namely the realization that only God, as the Absolute Existent (*al-Wujūd al-Maḥḍ*) and Necessary Being (*Wājib al-Wujūd*), truly Exists; all other existing things may be said to 'exist' only in the relative and contingent sense as 'Self-disclosures' (*tajalliyāt*) of the Divine Presence. This understanding is affirmed by the Imām experientially through the process of spiritual unveiling and inner-witnessing of the Sufis (*mukāshafa*), but it is also affirmed textually on numerous occasions through his mystical exegesis of several Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīth*. Some of these textual sources are rather explicit and are simply affirmed literally; thus, as the Prophet Muḥammad declares in a known *ḥadīth*, "*The truest verse that the Arabs ever recited is that of Labīd, 'Indeed everything other than God is void (bāṭil)!*"[34] Others are more ambiguous or multivalent in meaning. In this respect, the famous verse "*Everything comes to perish, save for His Face*" is not simply a reference to the pending inevitability of death and the finality of creation but is also a reference to the "the Muḥammadan spring (*mashrab*) of witnessing each thing in its disappearance (*iḍmiḥlāl*) in the Presence of the Real."[35] Similarly, as he explains, God's accompaniment to His creation in the verse "*And He is with you wherever you may be*" must be taken in this gnostic sense of witnessing, and "cannot be understood with

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[33] "*Wa lā yumkin al-tawajjuh illā bi-l-maḥabba al-dhātiyya al-kāmina fī al-ʿabd. Wa-l-maḥabba hiya al-markib, wa-l-zād al-taqwā.*" *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 267-268.
[34] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 296.
[35] Qurʾān 28:88. *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 223.

the meaning of association or comparison (*muqārana*), for how can this be when there is nothing other than His Existence in reality?"[36] Other examples of verses used to affirm this ontological doctrine include "*God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth*," "*He Encompasses all things*," and "*He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, and He has Knowledge over all things*."[37]

Certainly, like other authors of Sufi '*ḥaqāʾiq*,' Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim is sure to stress the transcendence and incomparability (*tanzīh*) of God with respect to His creation, anticipating any potential detractors by emphatically dissociating himself from the usual polemical charges of '*ḥulūl*' or '*ittiḥād*.' Thus, as he states concerning God's transcendent nature,

> His individual Attributes are that God is One (*Wāḥid*), Existing (*Mawjūd*), Eternal (*Qadīm*), Solitary (*Aḥad*), Unique (*Fard*), Self-Subsisting (*Qāʾim bi-Nafsih*); He is unlike anything, and nothing is like Him. He is God, the One (*al-Wāḥid*), the Subduer (*al-Qahhār*). He is Powerful (*Qādir*) by His Power, He Wills (*Murīd*) by His Will, and He is dissociated (*munazzah*) from any charge of indwelling (*ḥulūl*) or physical touch (*mulāmasa*). He does not dwell in anything, and nothing dwells within Him. There is no God but He; He Encompasses all things in His Mercy (*Raḥma*) and Knowledge (*ʿIlm*), He Communicates with speech (*Mutakallim*), He Hears (*Samīʿ*), and He Sees (*Baṣīr*).[38]

As for the recurring charge of God's union (*ittiḥād*) with His creation, the Imām is sure to appropriate and redefine the meaning of this polemical term on several occasions as follows,

> Union (*al-Ittiḥād*): it is the witnessing of the One, Real, and Nondelimited Existence (*al-Wujūd al-Muṭlaq*), through Whom all things are made to exist in Truth, and each thing is united with Him (*ittaḥada bi-Hi*) in the sense that it exists by Him, while being nonexistent in itself, and not in the sense that it has an independent existence that is united with Him, for this would be impossible (*muḥāl*).[39]

Indeed, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim devotes significant attention to articulating a clear and detailed theological creed (*ʿaqīda*) that emphatically affirms God's transcendence and

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[36] Qurʾān 57:4. *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 266. One can say that the verse can be understood in this comparative sense in a purely metaphorical or relative sense.
[37] Qurʾān 24:35, 41:54, and 57:4. *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 96.
[38] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 117-118.
[39] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 406. See also pp. 154, 172, and 219, 429, and 478 where similar definitions are offered.

incomparability[40] and that is in many ways reminiscent of the Ashʿarī occasionalism of the *Mutakallimūn*, where actions are said to be 'acquired' (*kasbīyya*) from the human perspective and to be created (*khalqiyya*) from God's perspective.[41] Be that as it may, like Ibn ʿArabī and other controversial figures among the realized Sufis before him, the Imām repeatedly affirms that such a negative theology of divine transcendence and incomparability (*tanzīh*) is only half the picture and must simultaneously be balanced by God's comparability (*tashbīh*) with His creation, where the Divine Being is able to relate to His creation without this necessitating any charge of anthropomorphism.[42]

It is here where the Imām's ontology is fully in line with the Akbarian doctrine of the 'oneness of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). As he unequivocally explains,

> And the creation are in reality but imaginal forms (*ṣuwar khayāliyya*) that are moved by the Real, who is the true Speaker on their behalf, for they are directed and controlled by the rulings of (God's) Power (*Qudra*), and they [the forms] are in fact erased (*mahw*) in the state of their presence (*thubūt*), and they are nonexistent (*ʿadam*) in the state of their existence (*wujūd)*![43]

Elsewhere, he states,

> And know and understand what I say to you that every created entity is nonexistent, for all existence belongs to God, the Glorified and Exalted, and every delineated external image is delineated by Him with the affirmation of its nonexistence, and given its state of annihilation in its nonexistence, the Real decided to cloak it with the robe of external existence, and it thus came to exist.[44]

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[40] His theological creed is perhaps most comprehensively detailed in the subsection entitled '*Faṣl fī ʿAqīda Jāmiʿa*' in *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 448-458, where the first three pages are devoted to explicating his views on the nature of the Divine Being. See also, idem., 428 where he argues that God's incomparability is necessitated by the Sharīʿa by virtue of the degree of His Divinity (*Ulūhiyya*).

[41] "*Wa-nisbatu aʿmālik ilayka kasbiyya wa-ilā Allah khalqiyya, fa-Allah Khāliq wa-anta kāsib li-tuthāb aw tuʿāqab*." *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 290. See also, *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 77-78.

[42] For more on Ibn ʿArabī's views on the theological problem of *tashbīh* and *tanzīh*, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 9, 58, 69, 110, 181.

[43] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 259.

[44] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 265.

On this occasion, the Imām is sure to also stress that this realized knowledge is a deep and treacherous ocean, and that none may enter upon it without the express permission of his teacher and spiritual guide, without whom the seeker is exposed to grave dangers.

Given this ontological reality, the multiplicity of creation (*al-kathra*) is in fact but the Self-disclosure or manifestation of God's Names and Attributes (*ẓuhūr al-Asmāʾ wa-l-Ṣifāt*).[45] As such, to speak of the creation as being separate from God is to do so in a purely relative or metaphorical sense (*majāz*), a necessary and logical distinction that helps us account for the degree or station of the Creator (*al-Ulūhiyya*) vis-à-vis His creation.[46] Here, it must also be noted that the Imām is sure to stress, following Ibn ʿArabī, that the Divine Names and Attributes are not in fact ontological in nature, meaning they have no external existence, but we may rather think of them in terms of relationships and correlations (*nisab*) with distinct traces and effects upon the creation.[47]

Interestingly, the Imām also briefly recounts a mythical disputation between the Names that appears to hint at a similar more expansive symbolic tale in the *Futūḥāt* between the 'immutable entities' (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) and the Divine Names in which the Names are personified and wish to manifest their effects within the cosmos. As their discussion unfolds, they gradually come to realize that they must ultimately return to the All-Comprehensive Name 'Allah' as an Arbiter to resolve their dispute and bring a sense of balance and order to the creation by establishing the scale of the Sharīʿa. Here Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim further clarifies that the Divine decree necessitated a just arbiter to govern the Divine Names and their traces and

[45] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 114.
[46] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 435.
[47] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 172, 251. For more on the Divine Names as 'relationships,' see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 35-36, 50, 52, 59, 60, 156.

that this task was granted exclusively to the Prophet Muḥammad as represented in his cosmic and all-encompassing station of al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya.[48]

Given the foregoing considerations, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim argues the case that it is the Sufi gnostics alone who have the most complete realization of the cardinal monotheistic doctrine of God's Unity (*Tawḥīd*). As he explains, a negative theology that is strictly based on God's incomparability with his creation, as is advocated by many among the masses and theologians, is an incomplete and deficient conceptualization of God that leads to His incapacitation (*taʿṭīl*):

> For the weak minds, once they stress the incomparability of the Real, their dissociation leads to a state of incapacitation (*taʿṭīl*), as when one would say: 'God, the Exalted, has no direction and no place, nor is He a body or two, nor is He a substance (*jawhar*) or an accident (*ʿaraḍ*), and nor is He connected to or disconnected from anything.' So understand from this that it leads to incapacitation due to the weak perception of the perceiver and his misguidedness; for the Most Exalted cannot be constrained by these constraints due to His Encompassing of everything. Thus, directions, substances, accidents, and all things exist by the Real and subsist by His Self-Subsisting nature, for He is the source of everything in reality . . .[49]

As such, in the common manner of the Sufis, the Imām identifies two forms of *tawḥīd*: the *tawḥid* of the common people (*al-ʿawām*) and the rationalists, who must rely on rational proofs and demonstrations for their knowledge of God, and the *tawḥid* of the elite (*al-khawāṣṣ*) or the Sufi gnostics, whose knowledge of God is beyond rational proofs and is based on spiritual unveiling, where they come to directly witness the Divine Unity by transcending the external forms of the phenomenal world (*maḥw al-rusūm*).[50] As he thus defines it in a pithy expression,

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[48] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ,* 271-272. Compare this summarized rendition with the more expanded mythical encounter between the Divine Names and the immutable entities in Chapter 66 of the first section (*faṣl*) of Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāṭ al-Makkiyya*, ed. Nawwāf al-Jarrāḥ (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2004), 1:385-389. For more on 'al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya,' see below.

[49] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ,* 423.

[50] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ,* 423; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib,* 34-35.

pure *tawḥid* consists of "casting the gaze away from the realms (of creation) by witnessing the One who is utterly dissociated from any imperfection."[51]

6.1.3. 'Annihilation' and 'Subsistence' in God

The experiential witnessing of this theological and ontological doctrine within the self is at the heart of the seeker's quest for spiritual realization, which is essentially to come to know and witness God as the 'Real.' Central to this process of spiritual realization are the crucial Sufi concepts of 'annihilation' (*al-fanāʾ*) and 'subsistence' (*al-baqāʾ*) in God, which take center stage for Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim as among the most foundational concepts of the Sufi path. '*Fanāʾ*' in this technical context is a reference to the servant's ability to gradually transcend the world of external forms (*rusūm*), of which the greatest veil is none other than the human self, thereby witnessing God as the only abiding Reality (*al-Ḥaqq*) behind the multiplicity of forms constituting the veils (*ḥijāb*) of the phenomenal world.[52] As the Imām explains, the greatest and highest form of witnessing can only be attained through the servant's ability to transcend her attachment to the created forms:

> Proximity (to God) is in proportion to the ability to erase the forms (*maḥw al-rusūm*), and distance (from God) is in proportion to what remains of the forms, for the veil (in reality) is none other than yourself.[53]

As he eloquently expresses it elsewhere in another pithy statement,

> Whoever witnesses that the creation has no action of its own has won, whoever witnesses that they have no life of their own has succeeded, and whoever views them as essentially nonexistent has reached (his destination).[54]

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[51] "*Ghaḍ al-ṭaraf ʿan al-akwān bi-mushāhadat man Huwa munazzah ʿan kulli nuqṣān*." *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 379.
[52] "*Ṣifat al-kamāl lil-ʿabd fanāʾuh ʿan nafsih*." *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 29.
[53] "*Fa-ʿalā qadr maḥw al-rusūm yakūn al-qurb, wa-ʿalā qadr baqāʾuhā yakūn al-buʿd, fa-laysa al-ḥijāb illa ant.*" *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 175, 402; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 38, 72.
[54] "*Man shahida al-khalq lā fiʿla lahum fa-qad fāz, wa-man shahidahum lā ḥayāta lahum fa-qad jāz, wa-man shahidahum ʿayn al-ʿadam fa-qad waṣal*." *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 290.

This Sufi concept of 'erasing the forms' (*maḥw al-rusūm*) becomes later formalized as a general feature of the Bāʿ Alawī tradition by the major eighteenth century ʿAlawī authority Ḥabīb ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Balfaqīh (d. 1162/1749), who notes in a pithy expression in his popular description of the *sāda*'s spiritual method, "Their formalities consist of erasing the forms" (*rusūmuhum maḥw al-rusūm*).[55]

The process by which 'annihilation' (*fanāʾ*) is attained is through the gradual intensification of one's complete surrender to God and His constant invocation (*dhikr*) until He becomes all that is witnessed in one's vision.[56] As God declares in a popular *qudsī ḥadīth*, "*My servant continues to draw near to me with supererogatory (nawāfil) works until I come to love him. When I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks . . .*"[57] The Imām repeatedly mentions this *ḥadīth* in conjunction with other traditions, such as the following tradition, which is taken as a popular spiritual maxim for the Sufis: "*Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord*" (*Man ʿarafa nafsah ʿarafa Rabbah*). As he explains, in his faithful confirmation of Ibn ʿArabī's ontology, the self does not truly exist but is rather the locus of the Self-disclosure of the Real (*al-*

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[55] al-ʿAṭṭās, *al-ʿAlam al-Nibrās*, 22. The term '*rusūm*' is somewhat ambiguous; while it typically refers to the external 'forms,' the word may also be taken to mean 'formalities' or 'traces.' Hence, the expression is translated elsewhere as, "Their formalities are to erase all formality." al-Badawī, *A Blessed Valley*, 207. Some have thus erroneously interpreted this statement in light of more modern debates to suggest that the the Bāʿ Alawī tradition is distinguished over other Sufi *ṭarīqas* in doing away with their extraneous 'formalities' and excessive prescriptions, in favour of a more authentic adherence to the Qurʾān and Sunna. Given the centrality of the teaching explicated above to the classical Sufi tradition, however, '*rusūm*' is more likely intended in the former sense as a reference to the external 'forms' that are to be transcended in the experience of *fanāʾ*. I am grateful to Shaykh Hamdi Ben Aissa for this insight and clarification.

[56] Here, the concept of 'worship' (*ʿībāda*) in the popular Qurʾānic verse 51:56, "*I did not create the Jinn and humankind except to worship Me (li-yaʿbudūn)*" is interpreted to mean, following Ibn ʿArabī and earlier Sufi authorities, to come to 'know' God. *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 234.

[57] See *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 39, 178, 180, 234, 298. On p. 39, the Imām seems to be quoting a similar variant of this *ḥadīth qudsī*, the more popular rendition of which can be found in al-Nawawī's collection of *al-Arabʿīn al-Nawawiyya*, 26.

Ḥaqq); to overcome this major veil and realize the self's nonexistence is to become realized in God. This understanding is also supported through recourse to several other *ḥadīths,* such as the Prophet's statement, "*I came to know my Lord through my Lord*" (*ʿAraftu Rabbī bi-Rabbī*), in addition to other supporting verses from the Qurʾān.[58]

Given the centrality of this concept and its specialized meaning, the Imām is sure to clarify that the term '*fanāʾ*' is only to be taken in the figurative sense from the perspective of one's experiential witnessing,

> The Prophet, God's peace and blessings be upon him, indicated by this that you are not truly yourself. Rather, it is He without you, for whoever connects the knowledge of God, the Exalted, to the annihilation of existence (*fanāʾ al-wujūd*), this is but a mistake and a clear oversight . . . since the knowledge of God does not necessitate the annihilation of existence . . . for all things have no intrinsic existence in their state, and he did not say, God's peace and blessings be upon him, 'Whoever annihilates himself, knows his Lord.'[59]

Thus '*fanā*' does not refer to an annihilation of the entity of the servant (*inʿidām ʿayn al-ʿabd*), as the servant does not exist in any independent sense to start; rather, given that the human self has two dimensions or faces (*wujūh*), one directed towards its human nature (*bashariyya*) and the other directed towards its Lord (*Rabb*), *fanāʾ* is the process of annihilating the human dimension (*al-jiha al-bashariyya*) in the Lordly dimension (*al-jiha al-Rabbāniyya*) in terms of one's witnessing. In this initial station of *fanāʾ*, the servant becomes fully dissolved in the witnessing of God, such that he becomes a caller through God (*yadʿū bi-Illah*). This is followed by exiting the ocean of 'annihilation' and entering into the ocean of 'subsistence' (*baqāʾ*), whereby the servant returns to his senses with the full knowledge and consciousness that all of creation subsists fully by God. In this latter station, the servant becomes a caller to God (*yadʿū ila Allah*) as a fully realized vicegerent (*khalīfa*) on the earth, and this is the first station that is

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[58] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 234. See also idem., 180, 276; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 140.
[59] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 234. This *ḥadīth* is frequently repeated in both works.

acquired by the servant before coming to acquire some of the other Divine Attributes of his Lord.[60]

6.1.4. The 'Muhammadan Reality'

Aside from his Akbarian ontological doctrine, another major recurring focus of both works is the cosmological and metaphysical doctrine of the 'Muhammadan Reality' (*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*).[61] As Chittick helpfully clarifies, the 'Muhammadan Reality' refers to a complex cosmological doctrine that is widely expounded upon by al-Shaykh al-Akbar using a variety of near-synonymous terms, such as the 'Supreme Isthmus' (*al-Barzakh al-Aʿlā*), the 'Breath of the All-Merciful' (*Nafas al-Raḥmān*), the 'Cloud' (*al-ʿAmāʾ*), the 'Reality of Realities' (*Ḥaqīqat al-Ḥaqāʾiq*), the 'Universal Reality' (*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Kulliyya*), and the 'Reality of the Complete Human' (*Ḥaqīqat al-Insān al-Kāmil*), among other names.[62]

Once again, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's expansive exposition on the metaphysical concept of the 'Muḥammadan Reality' and its centrality in the Islamic cosmological hierarchy is solidly rooted in Ibn ʿArabī's ontological and cosmological scheme. In outlining this scheme, the Imām draws upon variant *ḥadīth* traditions affirming the Prophet Muḥammad's 'Light' (*Nūr*),

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[60] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 58, 267-268, 434. Elsewhere, he provides analogies for the '*fanāʾ*' of servant's dimension (*wajh al-ʿubūdiyya*) in his Lordly dimension (*wajh al-Rubūbiyya*) in the drop of water that ceases to exist upon returning to the sea or the ice that melts away once the sun of Reality has risen. Idem., 433; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 37-38.

[61] For more on the cosmological doctrine of the 'Muḥammadan Reality,' see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 125-143; Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), chapter 4; Mohammed Rustom, "The Cosmology of the Muhammadan Reality," *Ishrāq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 4 (2013): 540–545; Rustom, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī: Notes on His Life, Influence, and Reflections on the Muḥammadan Reality," *Journal of Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 38 (2005): 51-64.

[62] "These are not exact synonyms, since each [term] is employed within a specific context and does not necessarily overlap with the others in all cases." *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 125, 139. See also, Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 68-69.

'Spirit' (*Rūh*), or the First 'Intellect' (*ʿAql*)[63] as the first entity to be created by God, which are generally recognized by the Imām and the Sufi gnostics as near-synonymous terms used to express the same reality.[64] This is also supported in yet another famous tradition in which the Prophet declares, "*I was already a Prophet while Adam was still between water and mud*."[65] As the first conscious creation and the most complete receptacle of the Divine Names, even the leader of the archangels Jibrīl is created from the Light of the Prophet Muhammad's Intellect, and it is also his Spirit (al-*Rūḥ al-Muḥammadī*) that God blew into Adam and before which the angels fell prostrate (Qurʾān 38:72).[66]

As the first creation and primary locus for the Self-disclosure of God's All-Comprehensive Name 'Allah,' the Muḥammadan Reality stands as the 'Supreme Isthmus' (*Barzakh*) that is the principal intermediary between God and the phenomenal world. As Mohammed Rustom summarizes this intermediary function and its cosmological significance,

> the Divine Essence cannot be diffuse throughout the cosmos, and, in Its manifest aspect, It requires an intermediary of some sort, who is none other than the Prophet. In other words, the function played by the Prophet is of the utmost significance. He manifests the Name Allah and acts as the intermediary through whom the Divine Names become diffuse throughout the cosmos.[67]

This intermediary function is reiterated by Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim as follows,

> Know that the Realities of all the realms are but loci of manifestation for the Human Reality (*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Insāniyya*), which is the locus manifesting the Name 'Allah,' the Exalted; thus, their

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[63] Shaykh Abū Bakr on numerous occasions associates the 'First Intellect' (*al-ʿAql al-Awwal*) with the Muhammadan Reality. See *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 306-307, 336, 443, 457-458; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 19-20. While the term is more commonly associated with the Neoplatonic cosmology of Avicenna and Farabi, it must be borne in mind that the Sufi cosmological scheme differs in significant ways from the traditional Neoplatonic model articulated by the Islamic philosophers. The term's appropriation by the Sufi gnostics is thus primarily intended to highlight the role of the Light of Muḥammad as the first created entity and conscious intelligence. Sitting at the apex of the cosmic hierarchy, it is the most complete receptacle of the totality of the Divine Names, frequently identified with the 'Breath of the All-Merciful' (*Nafas al-Raḥmān*), out of which all the bodily forms were brought into existence. Rustom, "The Cosmology of the Muhammadan Reality," 542-543; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 159.

[64] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 84, 90, 94, 110, 306-307, 457-458; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 19-20, 155, 168-169.

[65] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 116, 207.

[66] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 15, 94, 110, 167. See also, Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 68-69.

[67] Rustom, "The Cosmology of the Muhammadan Reality," 542-543.

> spirits are also but partial embodiments of the Great Human Spirit (*al-Rūḥ al-Aʿẓam al-Insānī*), be it the spirit of an angel or otherwise. It is for this reason that the 'Intellect' (*al-ʿAql*) is also called the 'Great World' (*al-ʿĀlam al-Kabīr*) according to people of the way (*ahl al-ṭarīqa*) . . .[68]

As he further elaborates elsewhere,

> And the Divine Attributes must return to an essence (*dhāt*) to which they must be ascribed, for the essence is prior in existence, and the Messenger of God, God's Peace and Blessings be upon him, was the first in existence, as he is a pure essence (*dhāt maḥḍ*), and all the realms are but Attributes of this essence; this is what is meant by God creating the world from him, and his Spirit is thus referred to as the 'Great Pen' (*al-Qalam al-Aʿlā*), and the 'First Intellect' (*al-ʿAql al-Awwal*) is but another aspect of this meaning.[69]

As is the case with Ibn ʿArabī, the Imām also employs several near-synonymous terms to describe the Muhammadan Reality and its cosmic role within the creation. Thus, the Prophet's Reality is variously described as 'the Locus of the Greatest Secret' (*Maẓhar al-Sirr al-Aʿẓam*), the 'Spirit of the World' (*Rūḥ al-ʿĀlam*), the 'Greatest Spirit' (*al-Rūḥ al-Aʿẓam*), the 'Epicenter of the Circle of Existence' (*Markaz Dāʾirat al-Wujūd*), the 'Great World' (*al-ʿĀlam al-Kabīr*), the 'Human Reality' (*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Insāniyya*), and the 'Image of the Greatest Name' (*Sūrat al-Ism al-Aʿẓam*), among other descriptive names.[70] In terms of its central purpose, the Prophet's Reality in the cosmic hierarchy also functions as the 'Heart of Existence' (*Qalb al-Wujūd*), just as the *sūra Yā Sīn* is known as the 'heart of the Qurʾān.'[71] Finally, the Imām also describes the Muhammadan Reality using the familiar Akbarian image of the 'Cloud' (*ʿAmāʾ*), which emanates from the 'Breath of the All-Merciful' (*Nafas al-Raḥmān*).[72]

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[68] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 110. See also idem., 457-458.
[69] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 306.
[70] See *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 64, 110-111, 124, 131, 443-445; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 26, 59.
[71] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 306-307. It must be noted in this context that *Yā Sīn* is also one of the celebrated names of the Prophet Muḥammad.
[72] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 124. The printed edition uses the term *ʿamā* to describe the Prophet's Reality before God's creation of the phenomenal world, which spelled in this way indicates 'blindness' or 'darkness.' This is likely a minor typographical error of the more commonly used Akbarian term *ʿamāʾ* (heavy cloud), which is vocalized with a *hamza* at the end. For Ibn ʿArabī's description of the Muhammadan Reality as a 'Cloud' and its association with the 'Breath of the All-Merciful,' see the discussion in Chapter 371 of the fourth section (*faṣl*) of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 6:149-150. See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 125-132. For Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim's discussion on the 'Breath of the All-

Like Ibn ʿArabī, the Imām draws upon several *ḥadīth* traditions and the Qurʾān in identifying the Prophet's Spirit with God's All-Inclusive Mercy. As God declares in the Qurʾān, "*My Mercy encompasses all things*" and "*We have not sent you but as a Mercy to the worlds.*"[73] The Reality of Muḥammad thus represents the immutable entity that is the locus of God's All-Inclusive Mercy, and this Mercy stems from God's original love for Muḥammad, out of which the phenomenal world was created. As the Imām explains, God's Mercy is the primordial and ontological foundation of the cosmos, and it is manifested in an all-inclusive (*ʿāmm*) as well as an exclusive (*khāṣṣ*) form, the former of which is identified with the Muhammadan Reality,

> The exclusive Mercy (*al-Raḥma al-khāṣṣa*) is what is dispensed by God to His servants during certain specific moments, and the all-inclusive Mercy (*al-Raḥma al-ʿāmma*) is the Reality of Muhammad, God's Peace and Blessings be upon him, for he is the locus of manifestation for all the creation . . . and for this reason, God's Mercy precedes His Wrath, because the entirety of the phenomenal world is a replica (*nuskha*) of the Beloved, and the Beloved is bestowed with (God's) Mercy; thus, the ruling of (God's) Mercy in existence is necessary (*lāzim*), while the ruling of (His) Wrath is accidental (*ʿāriḍ*), as Mercy is among the Attributes of the Divine Essence, while justice is but a (Divine) act.[74]

Given the cosmic significance and primordial function of the Muhammadan Reality, it follows that all the realized knowledge of the Sufis, and even the knowledge of the Prophets, is but the fruit of being synchronized with the Prophet (*al-muwafaqa lil-Nabiyy*), for he is the most complete and singular source of all realized knowledge. Accordingly, the Prophets and the saints (*awliyāʾ*) are able to draw from the Light of Muḥammad in accordance with their differing capacities, for their self-disclosures (*tajalliyāt*) are those of the Divine Attributes (*Ṣifāt*), while

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Merciful,' see *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 54, 111, 116-117, 229, 230, 239, 256, 258, 285, 382, 392-393, 398, 443; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib,* 39, 105-106, 198-199, 295.

[73] Qurʾān 7:156; 21:107.

[74] *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib,* 105-106. See also idem., 198. The all-inclusive Mercy is ontologically prior and is represented by the Name '*al-Raḥmān*,' while the exclusive Mercy is represented by the Name '*al-Raḥīm*' and is granted to God's worthy servants and the believers. As the Imām and Ibn ʿArabī point out, both Mercies are alluded to in verse 7:156. See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 130-132.

Muḥammad's self-disclosure is that of the Singular Divine Essence (*al-Dhāt al-Aḥadī*). As the Imām explains,

> The Muhammadan Reality unites all the Prophets, Peace be upon them, for each of them manifested some of the Names and Attributes, and if you were to consider their Reality, and upon realizing that they all return to the Singular Presence (*al-Ḥaḍra al-Wāḥida*) on account of your being overpowered by the rulings of this Unity, you would uphold their unity and the unity of that with which they came: "*We make no distinction between them*" (Qurʾān 2:285).[75]

It thus follows that Muḥammad is not only the seal of the Prophets but is also the seal of absolute sainthood (*al-wilāya al-muṭlaqa*), and all knowledge stems from his knowledge.[76] As such, his realized spiritual inheritors (*al-waratha al-muḥaqqiqīn*) inherit from him in varying degrees, according to their different spiritual openings (*fatḥ*), etiquettes (*adab*), and levels of spiritual preparedness (*istiʿdād*), and in their reality, they are no more than translators or interpreters for the Messenger (*tarjumān Rasūl Allah*).[77]

Given that Muḥammad is the only Prophet able to be manifest the Reality of the All-Comprehensive Name, he is also distinguished above the Prophets and saints in one other fundamental respect: the traces of his human quality (*bashariyya*) are completely neutralized and effaced (*maʿdūma*) before the Light of God, making him the most complete receptacle and reflection of the Divine Names. As for the Prophets and saints, on the other hand, traces of their human quality always remain, and the disappearance of this quality before God's Self-disclosures is likened to the disappearance of the stars before the Sun once it has risen. As such,

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[75] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 130. See also idem., 249. "*Wa huwa al-jāmiʿ lil-ḥaqāʾiq al-Dhātiyya al-Aḥadiyya, fa-lā takūnu mashārib al-awwalīn wa-l-lāḥiqīn illa min hadhā al-maʿdin al-Muḥammadī.*" Idem., 94.
[76] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 28, 30-33, 53, 86, 249, 280; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 111-112, 125. For more on Abū Bakr b. Sālim's doctrine of sainthood (*wilāya*) and its Akbarian parallels, see *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 53, 67-68, 78-79, 347-348, 412-413,458-462, 475-476; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 26-28, 92-93, 111-112, 120-121; cf. Ibn ʿArabī's views in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, chapters 3, 5, 7 and 9.
[77] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 58, 208-209, 214, 218.

in the case of Muḥammad alone, his knowledge of God is equated with God's Knowledge of Himself.[78]

6.1.5. The 'Complete Human'

In discussing the Muhammadan Reality, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim also expounds upon the associated and complementary doctrine of the 'Complete Human' (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*), which is commonly associated with the function of the spiritual pole (*quṭb*) in any given age.[79] In explicating this classic Sufi doctrine, the Imām employs various titles to describe the Complete Human. Thus, as the microcosmic representation of the macrocosm, he is the 'replica of the great world' (*nuskhat al-ʿālam al-kabīr*). He is also the 'image of God' (*ṣūrat al-Ilāh*), the 'shadow of God' (*ẓil al-Ilāh*), and the 'fount of the world' (*ʿayn al-ʿālam*), for being realized in the Divine Names and being able to reflect them throughout the creation, while in his intermediary role between God and the creation, he represents the 'Reality of the Great Isthmus' (*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Barzakhiyya al-Kubrā*).[80] Elsewhere, the Imām seems to use the terms '*al-Insān al-Kāmil*' and '*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*' interchangeably, which is likely meant to affirm the Complete

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[78] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 436; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 185-186.

[79] '*Al-insān al-kāmil*' is more frequently translated as the 'perfect' or 'universal' man. I prefer here the 'Complete Human,' as '*kamāl*' in Arabic has the primary meaning of arriving at a sense of completion or fulfilment, where one becomes realized in their full human potential. In this sense, the ideas of 'perfection' and 'universalism' would appear to be secondary and derivative connotations of this understanding. For more on this classic Sufi doctrine, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 27-30, 276-278; idem., "Jāmī on the Perfect Man," in *In Search of the Lost Heart*, eds. Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 143-152; Masataka Takeshita, "Ibn ʿArabī's Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought" (PhD Diss., Tokyo Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1987); R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), chapter 2; Joseph Lumbard, "Al-Insān al-Kāmil: Doctrine and Practice," *Islamic Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (January 1994): 261–282.

[80] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 118-9, 217, 283, 292, 386, 401, 426, 443; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 26, 48, 59.

Human or spiritual pole (*quṭb*) as the only adequate individual capable of fully assuming the cosmic function and attributes of the Muhammadan Reality.[81]

Among these descriptions, the Imām also expounds upon Ibn ʿArabī's view of the Complete Human's intermediary position within the cosmic hierarchy as the 'confluence of the two seas' (*majmaʿ al-baḥrayn*), an expression borrowed from verse 18:60 of the Qurʾān. This title is intended to highlight the Complete Human's uniqueness in his ability to encompass and assume the two realities of Lordship (*Rubūbiyya*) and servitude (*ʿubūdiyya)* as the Supreme Intermediary (*Barzakh*) between the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) and the creation (*al-khalq*);[82] it is this unique capacity that qualifies the human being to become God's vicegerent (*khalīfa*) and steward of the earth.

This unique intermediary capacity is particularly attributed to the potential of the believer's heart to experience and contain God's Self-disclosure and to reflect the Divine Names, where the Prophet's heart is the most vast and complete human archetype. This doctrine is grounded via frequent recourse to the popular *ḥadīth* wherein God declares, "*Neither My earth nor My Heaven can contain Me, yet the heart of the faithful servant does contain Me*." In this sense, even the delimited nature of Muḥammad's humanity (*bashariyya*), which is necessarily subject to the same limitations and dictates of the created world, is itself a sign of the Prophet's

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[81] As Chodkiewicz helpfully explains, "the terms *ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya* and *insān kāmil* are not purely synonymous but express differing views of man, the first seeing him in terms of his primordiality and the second in terms of his finality." *Seal of the Saints*, 69. This understanding is indirectly alluded it to by the Imām when he states, "The pole (*quṭb*), who is at the epicenter of the circle of existence (*markiz dāʾirat al-wujūd*) since pre-eternity and forever, is one when the ruling of unity is considered, and he is also the Muḥammadan Reality when the multiplicity in all its numerousness is considered." *Miʿrāj al-Arwāh*, 280-281; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 60-61.

[82] These two dimensions of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* are reminiscent of the two connoted meanings of 'intimacy' (*walāya*) and 'authority' (*wilāya*) found in the Arabic term '*walī*', as noted by Cornell and Kugle, where the Muslim saint's 'servitude' (*ʿubūdiyya*) is reflected in his status as God's protégé (*walāya*), while his 'lordship' (*rubūbiyya*) as God's vicegerent (*khalīfa*) is reflected in his role as a patron (*wilāya*) of the people. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, xvii–xxv, 272–73; Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 32.

completeness and ontological perfection since it reflects his ability to experience and relate to both the higher and the lower realms as the most complete and conscious being at the epicenter of the cosmic hierarchy.[83] Given this unique ontological status of the Complete Human as the finality and microcosmic representation of the Muhammadan Reality, every living thing draws its life from his life, and through gazing upon his heart, God bestows His Mercy upon all of existence. As the Imām, thus, asserts on numerous occasions, "The Reality of the Complete Human necessarily courses (*tasrī*) through all the worlds and existent things, just as the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) runs through His creation."[84]

Conclusion

As one of the ʿAlawīs' most celebrated exponents of philosophical Sufism, the famous *manṣab* of ʿĪnāt Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583) represents a high point in the *sāda*'s intellectual tradition, and his two major works of Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq*, *Miʿrāj al-Arwāh* and *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, have remained practically unknown within the academic study of Yemeni Sufism. While traditional biographies do not mention much about his immediate family and early spiritual training, it is nonetheless known that he was a contemporary of the famous shaykh Ḥusayn Bā Faḍl (d. 979/1571), the famous author of Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq* and great admirer of Ibn ʿArabī. Since both of them were disciples of the famous ʿAlawī Sufi master of Tarīm Imām

[83] *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 262, 280, 306-307, 415; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 26, 59, 255.
[84] See *Miʿrāj al-Arwāḥ*, 56, 71, 77, 84, 110, 443, 458; *Fatḥ Bāb al-Mawāhib*, 24-25. This understanding is frequently supported with reference to the Complete Human's ability to reflect the encompassing Reality of the Divine Names in verse 57:3, "*He is the First (al-Awwal) and the Last (al-Ākhir), the Outermost (al-Ẓāhir) and Innermost (Baṭin), and He has Knowledge (ʿAlīm) of all things*." While, more precisely, this is a reference to the function of the Muḥammadan Reality, which is occasionally referred to as the 'Reality of the Complete Human' (*Ḥaqīqat al-Insān al-Kāmil*), elsewhere, the Imām appears to drop this subtle distinction and to describe this all-encompassing feature as a quality of the Complete Human himself. It is quite likely that in such instances, however, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* is employed as a synonym for *al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*.

Aḥmad b. ʿAlawī Bā Jaḥdab (d. 973/1566), it is highly conceivable that these two major Hadhrami Sufis would have met and studied with one another. Thus, aside from his studies and spiritual training with Shaykh Maʿrūf Bā Jammāl, this connection suggests that Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim had received his exposure to Sufi *ḥaqāʾiq* and the works of Ibn ʿArabī through these contacts, pointing once again to the likelihood that Ibn ʿArabī's works were more widely received among Hadhramaut's scholarly elite than we are initially led to believe.

Both of Shaykh Abū Bakr's works on theoretical gnosis are remarkable in their intellectual breadth and sophistication and their technical Sufi vocabulary, displaying an intimate and unmistakable mastery of Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥat* and *Fūṣūṣ*. The bulk of this chapter was devoted to a synopsis of both works' major overarching themes, with a special focus on the Imām's Akbarian vocabulary, his gnostic epistemology that privileged the inspired knowledge of the Sufi mystics (*al-ʿilm al-ladunni*), his ontology and theology that expounded upon the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd,* and his explication of the major Sufi doctrines of '*al-Ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*' and '*al-Insān al-Kāmil*.' Once again, building upon the findings of Chapters 4 and 5, this foray into this celebrated Imām's intellectual and spiritual contributions highlights the need to review our current academic understanding on the intellectual reception of Ibn ʿArabī within Yemeni and Hadhrami Sufism, and the Bā ʿAlawī tradition in particular. As a major sixteenth century Sufi authority in Hadhramaut, this finding further complicates Rouayheb's conclusions on the absence of 'monistic' receptions of Ibn ʿArabī's thought in the Arab East prior to the seventeenth century, since the Imām's Akbarian ontological doctrine would be clearly classified by Rouayheb as an example of 'mystical monism.'

Conclusion

This dissertation has sought to offer a multifaceted account of the intellectual and social history of the Banū ʿAlawī *sāda* of the Hadhramaut valley in Yemen from the migration of their ancestor Imām Aḥmad b. ʿĪsā from Basra, Iraq in the early tenth century up to the life and spiritual legacy of their foremost spiritual authority of the late sixteenth century, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim (d. 992/1583). While recent decades have witnessed a growing and steady academic interest in the Banū ʿAlawī *sāda* and the Islamic and political history of Yemen and the Hadhramaut valley, much of the recent wealth of anthropological and historical literature has focused on the history of the last two centuries and the *sāda*'s large and influential diasporic communities across the vast Indian Ocean region. By contrast, the few academic studies that have touched upon the *sāda*'s earlier origins and the premodern history of Hadhramaut are far from exhaustive. Furthermore, the studies of scholars like Knysh and Peskes have to various extents raised serious questions surrounding the dearth of available historical materials and the biased nature of the surviving hagiographical sources, putting to doubt our ability to reconstruct a reliable account of the *sāda*'s early history in Hadhramaut.

This dissertation has sought to fill this general lacuna in the literature by offering a more exhaustive academic investigation of the *sāda*'s early history in Hadhramaut from their origins in the early tenth century up to the late sixteenth century. In doing so, I have sought to build upon the questions raised by the existing academic scholarship as my point of departure. A major recurring concern for the historiography of Hadhramaut, and for the history of the ʿAlawīs in particular, has been the general dearth of early historical materials, the earliest of which appear to date back to the fifteenth century. As this study has hopefully demonstrated in its close examination of the *sāda*'s traditional hagiographic biographies, despite pessimistic assertions to

the contrary and the inherent limitations of the hagiographical genre, such works remain nonetheless highly informative as sources of history, offering significant historical details concerning the general social, economic, and political conditions in the valley, the *sāda*'s various travels across Hadhramaut and the Hejaz, their scholarly contacts and networks, and the intellectual and spiritual works that they studied.

Aside from closely consulting the available ʿAlawī biographical works, this dissertation has also argued that there are in fact other near-contemporaneous and corroborating non-Hadhrami historical sources that offer some elucidating, even if limited, details concerning the *sāda*'s ancestry and their early settlement in the valley. For instance, as several modern ʿAlawī historians have noted, many of the surviving manuscripts of non-Hadhrami genealogical works (*ansāb*) on the Ahl al-Bayt, the earliest of which date back to the fourth/tenth century, list the progeny of Imām Ḥusayn up to Aḥmad al-Muhājir's generation or that of his children, with a few making direct mention of the Imām's descendants in Hadhramaut. Furthermore, the Yemeni historian Baḥāʾ al-Dīn al-Jundī's (d. 732/1332) important work *al-Sulūk fī Ṭabaqāt al-ʿUlamāʾ wa-l-Mulūk*, authored less than a century after the death of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*'s founder, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam (d. 653/1255), makes mention of some of the earliest *sāda*, where it also significantly notes the famous incident of al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam's decisive turn to Sufism that led to his fallout with his famous teacher Bā Marwān, noting that he was the first member of the ʿAlawī family to formally identify with Sufism.[1] Such sources appear to corroborate the general contours of the *sāda*'s historical narrative in their biographical literature

[1] As explored in this dissertation, the formal identification with Sufism more accurately refers to his identification with organized Sufism and the founding of a distinct Sufi *ṭarīqa*, as there is sufficient evidence pointing to the existence of a rudimentary form of Sufism among the *sāda* and the valley's scholarly elite prior to al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam.

concerning their Prophetic ancestry and early settlement in Hadhramaut against the lingering skepticism from among contemporary academics and the *sāda*'s modern Hadhrami detractors.

In addition to offering a narrative of the *sāda*'s early religious history and the evolution of their spiritual tradition, this study has also sought to simultaneously advance a survey of the major socio-political developments across Yemen and Hadhramaut, so as to provide a more cohesive and contextualized account of how, as a major scholarly family, the ʿAlawīs responded to and were in turn shaped by the constraints and opportunities of their immediate historical moment. Thus, instead of relying on purely material and economic motivations in accounting for the *sāda*'s expanding social influence and temporal power throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which witnessed their gradual emergence as an influential stratum in Hadhrami society, I attempted to contextualize their expanding social roles and responsibilities as an adaptation to the unique challenges imposed by political and economic conditions in Hadhramaut, which were sharply contrasted with the more favorable and stable conditions experienced by their scholarly peers under the wealthy and powerful Sunni dynasties in western Yemen.

While the Sufi elites of bbid, Rasūlid, and Ṭāhird Yemen were generously patronized by the sultans, who in many cases were learned men and took a keen and sustained interest in the generous promotion of Sufism and Islamic scholarship more generally, these favorable conditions rarely extended to the politically and economically troubled Hadhrami interior, which remained plagued by recurring invasions and tribal violence. The turbulent and precarious political scene in Hadhramaut further meant that political rule over its territories had remained for the most part indirect, where instances of patronage of the valley's scholarly elite would have been the exception rather than the rule. As for the valley's local ruling tribes, the turbulent

competition between the Āl Yamānīs and their Kathīrī rivals, in addition to the continuously looming threat of external invasions, meant that Hadhramaut's relatively impoverished local rulers were too preoccupied with directing their resources and focus against their political rivals and enemies.

This view seems to be corroborated by the *sāda*'s own accounts in their biographical sources, which note that the construction of their many mosques and *ḥawṭas* was privately funded by the wealth accruing from their many plantations. It is, therefore, this combination of weak local rulers, the general state of political and economic instability, and the absence of state patronage that largely motivated the *sāda,* among other Hadhramis, to migrate across the Indian Ocean in search of opportunity and better fortunes. These conditions also help to account for their expanding temporal roles in Hadhramaut, where, as an unarmed, wealthy, and respectable scholarly family, they consciously assumed and cultivated a more prominent role in the mediation of the valley's tribal disputes, in the construction of various mosques, endowments, and autonomous *ḥawṭas*, and in alleviating the economic hardships of the valley's impoverished population.

As this study has also attempted to argue, such an expansive host of social and temporal commitments towards the valley's diverse tribal populations need not be explained through a purely materialist lens, where they are seen to generally fall outside the pale of an idealized notion of Sufi 'sainthood.' In order to move beyond the inherent biases of such a cliched dichotomy between the domains of the 'temporal' and the 'spiritual,' this dissertation has drawn inspiration from the more expansive paradigms of Sufi 'sainthood' proffered by scholars like Vincent Cornell and Scott Kugle, where the Sufi 'saint' is not merely construed as the passive

custodian of a spiritual tradition, but is conceptualized in more dynamic terms as a patron of the people and an active agent of social and even political change.[2]

In addition to better situating the *sāda*'s motivations for their expanding social roles within the economic and political challenges and constraints of their immediate Hadhrami context, this dissertation has attempted to build upon Enseng's Ho's observations on the consolidation of a Sufi 'institutional complex' among the *sāda* by the early-fifteenth century, with the emergence of Imām ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Saqqāf (d. 819/1416) and his son Imām ʿUmar al-Miḥḍār (d. 833/1429), both of whom played an instrumental role in consolidating the Bā ʿAlawī tradition's spiritual praxis and Sufi *habitus*. In expanding upon Ho's analysis of the defining textual, ritual, and geographic features of this 'institutional complex,' this study has identified the defining features of Bā ʿAlawī Sufism in the early fifteenth century to include the formation of a distinct curriculum of scholarly study, in which al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ* took pride of place, the emergence of a ʿAlawī hagiographical canon beginning with al-Khaṭīb's *al-Jawhar al-Shaffāf*, the growing importance of spiritual poetry and Sufi auditions, as can be seen with Imām al-Saqqāf's famous *Ḥaḍra*, and the emergence of a new sacred geography, in which the *sāda*'s early mosques and graves came to be elevated as major landmarks and timeless relics, where the spiritual memory of their ancestors was more readily accessed and revisited. In adopting a phenomenological lens in my analysis of each of these features of the Bā ʿAlawī tradition, this study has also sought to articulate the Sufi 'technologies of the self,' to use a Foucauldian term, that were instrumental to the ʿAlawīs' identity formation, highlighting how the *sāda*'s aspirations and growing temporal roles were in many ways shaped and constrained not only by the dictates

[2] Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law*, 36.

of their more immediate economic and political context but also by the inherited ideals and Sufi *habitus* of their spiritual and intellectual tradition.

In addition to these contributions, this study has also attempted to revisit and deepen our current academic understanding of Hadhramaut's scholarly and intellectual milieu of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in its expansive appraisal of the valley's intellectual and cultural revival since the mid-fifteenth century, which witnessed a flourishing of scholarly literature across a number of disciplines. This intellectual and cultural efflorescence was in in many ways aided by the emergence of the first Kathīrī sultanate in the early fifteenth century, which ushered in a new period of relative political stability and economic prosperity for Hadhramaut, with improved relations between the sultans and the scholarly elite, including notable instances of state patronage and the building of new educational institutions, such as al-Ṣulṭāniyya al-Badriyya college of the celebrated Abū Ṭuwayriq (*r*. 922-77/1516-70) in al-Shiḥr. Towards this end, I attempted a broad survey of the scope of scholarly productions across the fields of historiography, Islamic law, and Sufism between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, with a special focus on Sufism and the *sāda*'s intellectual and spiritual contributions to this field.

Among other things, this broad survey revealed that far from representing a relatively impoverished intellectual climate, the ʿAlawī *sāda*, and Hadhramaut's scholarly elite more generally, were well-integrated and active participants in the wider regional intellectual currents of Yemen and the Hejaz. This general finding should hardly be surprising since as a generally well-travelled scholarly community, the valley's Sufi elite maintained regular links with the scholarly elites of western Yemen and the Hejaz. As their biographies make amply clear, Hadhrami scholars among the *mashāyikh* and the *sāda* sought out the intellectual capital of Zabīd as a regular destination, among other major Yemeni cities, such as Taʿizz and Aden, especially

during the Hajj season, where many of them would sojourn for extended periods along their journeys to and from the annual pilgrimage. Many of these scholars would also regularly settle in Mecca and Medina for significantly more extended periods, not only due to the two cities' obvious spiritual and devotional appeal, but also to benefit from their more diverse scholarly populations. Such travels point to a well-integrated scholarly network, where major intellectual and spiritual works and ideas were able to travel across a large geographic expanse within a relatively short period and with a significant degree of predictability.

As my foray into the scholarly backgrounds and contributions of the preeminent ʿAlawī saintly authorities of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries thus reveals, the ʿAlawī *sāda* were very much a product of their time, and though their Sufi tradition developed its own distinctively Hadhrami textual and ritualistic features, it nonetheless remained well-integrated within the scholarly networks and intellectual currents of its regional milieu. As can be gleaned from the scholarly works and profiles of the major saintly authorities of ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs, Abū Bakr al-ʿAdanī, and Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim, all three preeminent figures were active participants in the wider spiritual and intellectual trends of their day. It is thus unsurprising to find that their scholarship, to varying extents, exhibits a clear awareness and engagement with the thought and doctrine of the towering and controversial Sufi authority of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī, whose intellectual and spiritual influence continued to be widely diffused and ubiquitously felt, especially within the specialized and elite works of philosophical Sufism.

As my examination of the *sāda*'s intellectual and spiritual contributions has attempted to demonstrate, the ʿAlawīs' spiritual tradition, and their wider Ḥadhrami Sufi context, exhibited more than a passing familiarity with the teachings and works of al-Shaykh al-Akbar, challenging our received academic understanding on the intellectual history of Hadhrami Sufism, which

continues to portray the valley's scholarly reception of the Shaykh as being marginal at best.[3] Aside from the clear indications in the biographical literature that various *sāda* had displayed a keen interest in the works of '*ḥaqāʾiq*,' and those of Ibn ʿArabī in particular, this was made demonstrably clear with the major example of Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim, whose advanced works of theoretical gnosis distinguish him as an independent and highly sophisticated author of '*ḥaqāʾiq*' in his own right, displaying his clear mastery and thoroughgoing assimilation of Ibn ʿArabī's thought and doctrine. As was also hopefully demonstrated, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim was far from an anomalous ʿAlawī and Hadhrami example in this regard for the sixteenth century; this was similarly the case with the famous Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah b. Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah al-ʿAydarūs (d. 990/1582), who settled in Gujarat and whose gnostic work *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tawḥīd* also exhibits unmistakable traces of Ibn ʿArabī's thought and doctrine. Given that he was born in 919/1513, Shaykh b. ʿAbd Allah would have been thirty-nine years of age by the time of his migration to India, suggesting that his exposure to Ibn ʿArabī's works was more likely established during his formative years in Hadhramaut and the Hejaz.

Here it is also noteworthy to highlight that, as two major sixteenth-century Sufi authorities, Shaykh Abū Bakr b. Sālim and Shaykh b. ʿAbdullah not only exhibited a strong assimilation of al-Shaykh al-Akbar's thought and doctrine, but their mystical reading of Ibn ʿArabī's ontology would be classified by Khaled El-Rouayheb as clear examples of 'mystical monism.' Such a finding suggests the potential need to revise Rouyheb's conclusions on pre-seventeenth-century Arab receptions of Ibn ʿArabī's ontological doctrine, where he generally

[3] For examples of the inaccurate academic perception on the marginal reception of Ibn ʿArabī among the *sāda* and within Hadhrami Sufism, see Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*, 15; Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*, 127n8; Peskes, *al-ʿAydarūs*, 49, 190, 274-275; idem., "Der Heilige," 57. See also Knysh's generally critical assessment of the *sāda*'s Sufi tradition and his views on its relative lack of intellectual depth and sophistication in "The Sāda in History" and "The 'Tariqa' on a Landcruiser," 410.

identifies such 'monistic' interpretations as a later seventeenth-century development that was largely influenced by the 'ontological monism' of the Persian Akbarian tradition and the mystical thought of major seventeenth-century figures in the Arab East, such as Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1091/1690) in the Hejaz and ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nabulusī (d. 1143/1731) in Syria.[4]

In conclusion, this broad survey of the intellectual and spiritual contributions of the major ʿAlawī saintly authorities up to the late sixteenth century, which in many ways represents a high point for the *sāda*'s intellectual Sufism, has hopefully served to revise and nuance our current academic understanding on the reception of Ibn ʿArabī within Hadhrami Sufism, and further examinations of the unpublished manuscripts of the *sāda*'s Sufi treatises and their relatively neglected Sufi poetry are likely to reveal more extensive engagements with philosophical Sufism. It is thus hoped that this contribution has helped to lay the necessary groundwork for such future investigations in this direction.

Moving into the intellectual developments of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this general tendency and openness to the works of Ibn ʿArabī in particular begins to gradually diminish among the *sāda*, and possibly within their wider Hadhrami milieu, largely on account of the teachings of the highly influential seventeenth/eighteenth-century reviver of the Bā ʿAlawī *ṭarīqa*, Imām ʿAbd Allah b. ʿAlawī al-Ḥaddād (d. 1132/1720), whose de-emphasis of the Shaykh's works has had a more lasting legacy on modern ʿAlawī attitudes towards the intellectual concerns of theoretical gnosis and Sufi metaphysics (*ḥaqāʾiq*).[5] Be that as it may, and despite the general dominance of Imām al-Ḥaddād's position, occasional ʿAlawī engagements

[4] See Chapter 4, note 102.
[5] See al-Ḥabshī, *ʿIqd al-Yawāqīt*, 1:264-270; Zayn b. Ibrāhīm Bin Sumayṭ, *al-Manhaj al-Sawy: Sharḥ Uṣūl Ṭarīqat al-Sāda Āl Bā ʿAlawī* (Tarīm, Yemen: Dār al-ʿIlm wal-Daʿwa, 2005), 268-271; al-Ḥaddād, *ʿUqūd al-Almās*, 101-124. As can be seen from the latter work, the modern historian ʿAlawī b. Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād seems to break with most earlier authorities in displaying a clear distaste for the works of *ḥaqāʾiq* and a general rejection of the 'heterodoxy' of '*waḥdat al-wujūd*.'

with the works of Ibn ʿArabī continue to be witnessed well into the nineteenth century. Thus, the prolific, highly celebrated, and well-travelled ʿAlawī scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muṣṭafā al-ʿAydarūs (d. 1192/1778) was known for his study and defense of Ibn ʿArabī, authoring a short treatise on *waḥdat al-wujūd*.[6] To note another example, ʿAydarūs b. ʿUmar al-Ḥabshī's *ʿIqd al-Yawāqīt* makes mention of a more obscure ʿAlawī scholar and '*quṭb*,' Mushayyakh b. ʿAlawī Bā ʿUbūd, who, judging from what can be gleaned of his students, likely resided in Medina during the early-nineteenth century and is praised for his clear explication of difficult and obscure passages from Ibn ʿArabī's *Futūḥāṭ*.[7]

These general observations and conclusions concerning the reception of Ibn ʿArabī within the history of Hadhrami Sufism ought to be unsurprising to the intellectual historian, given that, despite his historically controversial status, al-Shaykh al-Akbar's outsized influence on the Sufi tradition, and the elite works of philosophical Sufism more specifically, is in many ways analogous to Avicenna's towering position within the field of Islamic philosophy; one cannot be considered a serious scholarly inheritor of these two respective intellectual traditions without having mastered the works of their preeminent and most influential intellectual authorities.[8] Such observations suggest a need for further research, so as to revise and refine our current academic understanding on the reception of Ibn ʿArabī and the scope of his historical influence and impact on the intellectual and spiritual landscape of Yemen and the Hejaz.

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[6] See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muṣṭafā al-ʿAydarūs, *Laṭāʾif al-Jūd fī Masʾalat Waḥdat al-Wujūd* (MS: Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya 7038 Tawḥīd, 4 fols.). For more on this accomplished ʿAlawī figure who settled in Cairo, see Peskes *al-ʿAydarūs*, 154-168, 256-268.

[7] al-Ḥabshī, *ʿIqd al-Yawāqīt*, 1:265.

[8] As Chodkiewicz insightfully observes, the Shaykh's work continues to be taken seriously and exhibit a global influence over the spiritual heritage of Sufism, despite all the controversy surrounding his figure, due to its one abiding characteristic: "it has a response to everything." *An Ocean Without Shore*, 18.

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