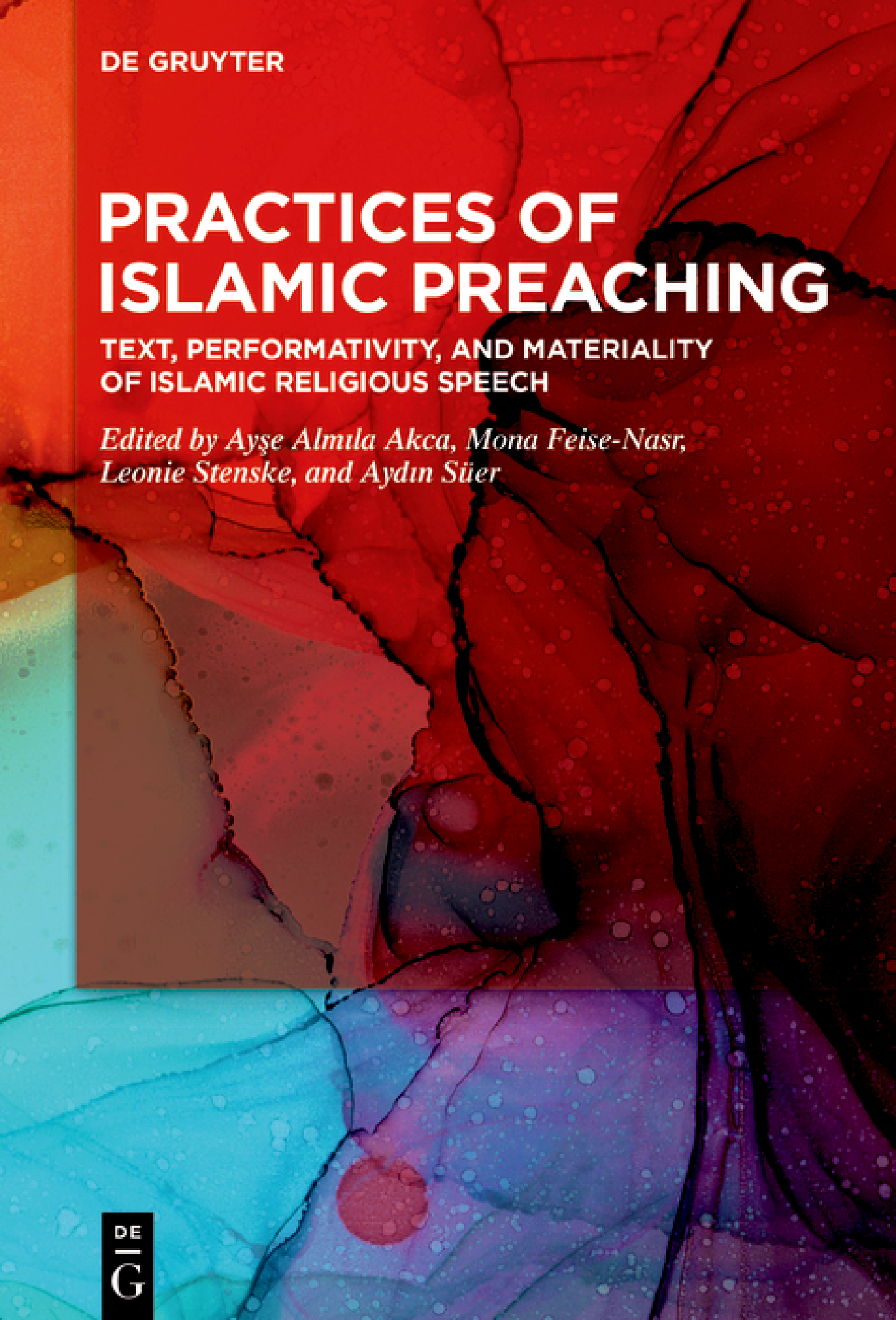
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PRACTICES OF ISLAMIC PREACHING
TEXT, PERFORMATIVITY, AND MATERIALITY OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS SPEECH
Edited by Ayşe Almıla Akca, Mona Feise-Nasr, Leonie Stenske, and Aydın Süer
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Text, Performativity, and Materiality of Islamic Religious Speech

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Ayşe Almıla Akca, Mona Feise-Nasr, Leonie Stenske, and Aydın Süer

Introducing Practices of Preaching

1 Introduction

This book is the outcome of joint debates with international scholars on different aspects of "practices of Islamic preaching." The topic was chosen by the research group "Islamic Theology in Context: Scholarship and Society," based at the Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. We created a platform for exchange by initiating the workshop "Practices of Preaching in the Islamic Context. Text, Performativity, and Materiality of Islamic religious speech," which was held online from March 17–19, 2022. Senior as well as junior scholars from a wide range of disciplines, ranging from history and cultural studies to Islamic theology and Islamic studies, responded to our call for papers. The online scholarly exchanges took place in an intensive atmosphere of friendly communication and academic interplay. The aim of the workshop was to bring together scholars already working on practices of and around Islamic preaching and to elaborate on the necessities and benefits of studying various forms of practice. In a first meeting in January 2022, we created a fruitful common ground for the discussions by acknowledging the different theoretical and methodological approaches to practices. This intensive joint work has resulted in the present book.

Departing mainly from "practice theory approaches" in sociology, our research group investigates different forms of Muslim practices in Germany and Europe. "Practice theory" is not a single social theory but rather a family of theories sharing a common conceptual framework and some key understandings regarding performativity, materiality, space, and corporality.[1] For this reason, we

1 Sociologists and anthropologists as well as scholars of theology and religious studies have contributed to what is known as the family of practice theories. Our concept of practice relies mainly on Pierre Bourdieu, Theodor Schatzki, Andreas Reckwitz, Frank Hillebrandt, Hilmar Schäfer, and Monique Scheer, as well as the theologians Wilhelm Gräb, Birgit Weyel, and Nazila Isgandarova. To some extent we also acknowledge the literature on lived or everyday religion as well as religion in practice, which contributed to a practice approach in the respective disciplines (see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Theodore R. Schatzki et al., eds. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2001); Andreas Reckwitz, "Toward a Theory of Social Practices. A Development in Culturalist Theorizing," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 2 (2002), accessed June 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310222225432; Andreas Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook," *Rethinking history* 16, no. 2 (2012), accessed June 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2012.681193; Frank Hillebrandt, "Die Soziolo-

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110788334-001

were interested in discussing Islamic speech in the past and the present also from that particular perspective. What do we mean when we stress practice and the practice perspective? The starting point of our venture was our fundamental criticism towards prescriptive or essentialist as well as norm-oriented approaches within different disciplines engaged with Islam.[2] By asking what Muslims actually do, as well as how, where, and when they do it, we aim to understand what it is that makes their practices Islamic or religious at all. In contrast to prevalent concepts of Islam, Islamic knowledge, Islamic norms and practices derived from texts, and norms identified as Islamic, we strive to grasp why people do the things they do, and why they ascribe meaning to them, by interrogating the situated temporal actions and the societal framework within which practices take place.[3] In doing so, we go beyond the understanding that practice is a mere implementation of theological/philosophical reasoning or the application of textual exegesis. Consequently, we avoid presuming that religious formations, religious meanings and senses, and theological ideas related to Islam constitute themselves indepen-

gie der Praxis und die Religion—Ein Theorievorschlag," in *Doing Modernity—Doing Religion*, eds. Anna Daniel, Franka Schäfer, Frank Hillebrandt, and Hanns Wienold (Wiesbaden: Springer VS 2012); Hilmar Schäfer, *Die Instabilität der Praxis. Reproduktion und Transformation des Sozialen in der Praxistheorie* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2013); Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotions," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012), accessed June 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2012.00621.x; Wilhelm Gräb, "Praktische Theologie als empirisch gehaltvolle Deutung gelebter Religion" in *Praktische Theologie und empirische Religionsforschung*, eds. Birgit Weyel, Wilhelm Gräb, and Hans-Günter Heimbrock (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013); Nazila Isgandarova, "Practical Theology and Its Importance for Islamic Theological Studies," *İlahiyat Studies: A Journal on Islamic and Religious Studies* 5, no. 2 (2014), accessed June 14, 2023; Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion. Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Nancy T. Ammerman, "Rethinking Religion: Toward a Practice Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* 126, no. 1 (2020), accessed June 12, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1086/709779; Robert Wuthnow, *What Happens When We Practice Religion? Textures of Devotion in Ordinary Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

2 This questioning involves the idea of Islam as a discursive tradition, as set out by Talal Asad in the 1980s, but also encompasses important considerations such as the ambiguity of Islam in the premodern era, as highlighted by Thomas Bauer, or the reflection on the boundaries and meanings of what Islam is, as elaborated on by Shahab Ahmed. See Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Occasional Papers Series* (Washington D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986); Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Thomas Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islam* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen im Insel Verlag, 2011).

3 See Ayşe Almıla Akca, Eyad Abuali, and Aydın Süer, "Bodies, Things, Doings. A Practice Theory Approach to the Study of Islam," in *New Methods in the Study of Islam*, ed. Abbas Aghdassi and Aaron W. Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

dently from the situatedness of human beings in history, society, and local environments. On the contrary, doings, teachings, narratives, meanings, and rituals are shaped, influenced, and constituted in social situations. Given this framework, religion is to be regarded as a form of social practice.[4] Therefore, we stress that practices are not fixed forever but are constantly evolving and changing over time.[5] Against this background, we argue that research on practices can reveal intriguing aspects of sociologically, historically, and theologically relevant topics and issues since "expressions of human subjectivity, such as language, action, belief, knowing and reasoning, exist and transpire within practice."[6]

Against this backdrop, we asked ourselves how Islamic preaching as a part of Islamic speech could be investigated through a practice lens. As an intriguing element of Muslim religious life both within and beyond institutional settings, little is known about preaching as a practice which is composed of and accompanied by a myriad of different activities. Apart from the sermons (*khuṭba*) at the mainly ritualized Friday gatherings, there are many other occasions for religious oration (e.g., *waʿẓ*) and lectures, for example during Ramadan, at religious feasts and commemorations, or on personal occasions such as weddings or funerals. What then are their multiple forms in both the analog and the digital world? Which social actors and artefacts are involved in preaching processes? How do performative, spatial, and temporal aspects relate to each other? How are they associated with the sermons' contents and intertextual references? How does preaching in its different shapes appear (as is often assumed) to be a means of religious promulgation, knowledge transfer and communication, pastoral guidance and uplift, as well as of communication between believers? And in what sense is preaching a site for negotiating religious normativity and relations of power?

4 Ulla Schmidt, "Introduction," in *Practice, Practice Theory, and Theology. Scandinavian and German Perspectives*, eds. Kirstine Helboe Johansen and Ulla Schmidt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022); Frank Hillebrandt, "Die Soziologie der Praxis und die Religion—Ein Theorievorschlag," in *Doing Modernity—Doing Religion*, eds Anna Daniel, Franka Schäfer, Frank Hillebrandt, and Hanns Wienold (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2012).

5 Hilmar Schäfer, *Die Instabilität der Praxis. Reproduktion und Transformation des Sozialen in der Praxistheorie* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2013), 31–32.

6 Ulla Schmidt, "Practice and Theology—Topic in Dialogue with History," in *Practice, Practice Theory, and Theology. Scandinavian and German Perspectives*, ed. Kirstine Helboe Johansen and Ulla Schmidt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 11.

2 State of Research on Islamic Preaching

Current research has demonstrated that Islamic preaching, as a part of Islamic speech and oratory as well as storytelling, has long been a pervasive element of religious and social life. Preaching manuals, sermon collections, treatises on liturgical conditions, and juridical texts on how to conduct proper preaching activities can be traced back to the formative period of Islam.[7] While the scholarly interest in Islamic preaching in modern times lies mainly in Islamic law regulations regarding how to deliver the Friday sermons properly, including the questions of which language the sermons should be in and the development of the sermon's contents,[8] non-Muslim scholars often deal with Islamic preaching as an instrument of *daʿwa* (understood as the call to Islam).[9] One of the earlier studies on the topic was conducted by the British Orientalist Thomas Walker Arnold. In his monography *The Preaching of Islam*, first published in 1896, Arnold's major objective is to demonstrate how the missionary nature of Islam, which he derives from respective passages of the Qur'an, has come to manifest itself throughout history.[10] He avoids posing the question of how preaching events were practically carried out and how the Islamic character became observable. On the contrary, Arnold is impelled to operate with a predefined category of Islam and thus consistently reverts to explaining his subject matter by features of "the Muslim creed."[11] This effort to seek generalizations about *what Islam is* can be found in many other studies on Islamic preaching up to the present day. However, the notion of Islam as a religious system "that regulates man's existence"[12] often downgrades people's behaviors and practices to mere outcomes or representations of an Is-

7 Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Linda G. Jones, *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Hasan Cirit, "Vaaz," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* Vol. 42 (2012).

8 Mustafa Baktır, "Hutbe," in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* Vol. 18 (1998); Omer Faruk Topal, "Friday Sermons and the Complexities of Standardization in the Late Ottoman Empire," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 48, no. 4 (2021), accessed June 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2019.1688643.

9 Julian Millie, "Daʿwa, Modern Practices," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, THREE, eds. Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Devin J. Stewart, accessed June 26, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25922.

10 Thomas Walker Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1913).

11 Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, 413.

12 John E. Acheoah, "Style in Christian and Islamic Sermons: A Linguistic Analysis," *American Research Journal of English and Literature* 1, no. 1 (2015): 23.

lamic *Weltanschauung*. That is why studies on Islamic preaching often focus on the contents of sermons, taking the preachers' assertions solely as representations of an inner belief, motivation, or statement. Analyzing the words used, the Qurʾanic verses quoted, and the topics selected or left out serves therefore to decipher the religious, political, or societal message of preaching.[13] In contrast to these content-focused studies, a social and political contextualization of preaching activities can yield more analytical benefits. It can reveal both the preacher's and the audience's web of relationships and how these interact in a particular preaching situation. The meaning of a sermon, then, is established situationally, as for example Patrick Gaffney's and Charles Hirschkind's studies on contemporary Egypt have shown.[14] In other words, we suggest a closer assessment of the constitutive elements of preaching as an *activity*, their interrelatedness, and their collaborative role in constituting meanings.

Our argument is that conceptualizing Islam as a belief system that manifests itself in preaching incidents creates a blind spot. Since from this perspective Islamic meaning is realized only in, say, a sermon's content, the active role of the audience as co-participants and thus co-constituents of the preaching event is downplayed, if not fully ignored.[15] In the words of Christoph Bareiter, "the content itself is a practice."[16] In order to understand how Islamic meaning is established, articulated, negotiated, reproduced, or scrutinized in preaching, we need to take into account the audience's dispositions and performances within particu-

13 Sarah Carol and Lukas Hofheinz, "Eine Inhaltsanalyse von Freitagspredigten der Türkischen Islamischen Union der Anstalt für Religion e.V.," *WZB Discussion Paper No. SP VI 2021-101* (Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB) Berlin, 2021). Open Access: https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/234527/1/1759171883.pdf; Hande Eslen-Ziya and Umut Korkut, "Hutbelerde Toplumsal Cinsiyet Söylemlerinin Yapılandırılması," in *Kadın odaklı*, eds. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı et al. (Istanbul: KoçKam, 2016); Hanspeter Mattes, "Nicht nur religiöse Unterweisung: Muslimische Freitagspredigten im arabischen Raum," *Herder-Korrespondenz* 59 (2005), 19–24; Serkan Ince, "Religiöse und ethische Elemente in der deutschsprachigen Freitagspredigt," *Praktische Theologie* 57, no. 4 (2022), accessed June 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.14315/prth-2022-570409.

14 See Patrick D. Gaffney, *The Prophet's Pulpit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape. Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2006).

15 See for example Desi Erawati, "The Role of Islamic Preachers in Social Construction of Society of Palangka Raya Central Kalimantan Province (Review of the Islamic Religious Speech Materials)," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 21, no. 11 (2016).

16 Christoph Bareiter, *Content as Practice. Studying Digital Content with a Media Practice Approach* (London: Routledge, 2023), 173. Fatemeh Taheri's linguistic study on semantics in German sermons advances a similar understanding by taking into account the social and practical development of a certain preaching language (see Fatemeh Taheri, *Deutsch als Predigtsprache des Islam: Eine semantische und pragmatische Studie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023).

lar preaching situations. Otherwise, the members of the audience are relegated to the role of passive attendees of a mere conveyance of *Islamic* knowledge[17] or inert witnesses of the establishment of Islamic authority.[18]

Stjernholm and Özdalga's edited volume *Muslim Preaching in the Middle East and Beyond* constitutes one endeavor to overcome both textual biases and essentialist assumptions, seeking instead to treat preaching as a "situated temporal action."[19] The editors' explicit focus "on how Muslim preaching has been practiced"[20] does indeed hint at the shortcomings of regarding preaching as a mere reproduction of texts and discourses. Yet, although Stjernholm and Özdalga do have an eye on the audience and acknowledge the preachers' dependence on the audience's responses, their—as well as the volume's contributors'—"performance-oriented perspectives"[21] are still mainly concerned with the preachers as, as it were, the protagonists of the game.[22] The focus on preachers, or imams, has to be seen as a consequence of the secularization processes of the 19th and 20th centuries, which conferred authority on the preacher as the most important religious leading figure, and not only in the Western context.[23] Specifically, the security and integration framework of migrant societies in the post-9/11 era unintentionally supported preachers' claims to religious authority. Within these discourses, the Friday prayers evolved as the central Muslim

17 As seen in Julian Millie, "The Public Metaculture of Islamic Preaching," in *The Monologic Imagination*, eds. Matt Tomlinson and Julian Millie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Richard A. Nielsen, "The Rise and Impact of Muslim Women Preaching Online," in The *Oxford Handbook of Politics in Muslim Societies*, eds. Melani Cammett, and Pauline Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

18 As seen in Jonathan P. Berkey, "Storytelling, Preaching and Power in Mamluk Cairo," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 4 (2000), accessed June 14, 2023; Bruce M. Borthwick, "The Islamic Sermon as a Channel of Political Communication," *Middle East Journal* 21, no. 3 (1967); Kjetil Selvik, *Religious Authority and the 2018 Parliamentary Elections in Iraq* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2019).

19 Wuthnow, *What Happens When*, 4.

20 Simon Stjernholm and Elisabeth Özdalga, "Introduction," in *Muslim Preaching in the Middle East and Beyond: Historical and Contemporary Case Studies*, eds. Simon Stjernholm and Elisabeth Özdalga (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 2.

21 Stjernholm, and Özdalga, "Introduction," 3.

22 See also Margaret J. Rausch, "Women Mosque Preachers and Spiritual Guides: Publicizing and Negotiating Women's Religious Authority in Morocco," in *Women, Leadership, and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority*, eds. Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Abdulkader Tayob, "Sermons as Practical and Linguistic Performances," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 47, Fasc. 1 (2017), accessed June 14, 2023, doi:10.1163/15700666-12340096.

23 See Richard T. Antoun, *Muslim Preacher in the Modern World. A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Kimberly Hart, *And Then We Work for God: Rural Sunni Islam in Western Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

religious gathering and preaching events, which again resulted in a conception of preachers as guides of state politics, religious leaders, or suspicious agents of religious or national disintegration.[24] Consequently, studies on Muslim preachers investigate the preachers' mindsets, their trainings, and their social as well as religious motivations, but also their role within Islamic communities and mosque congregations, in order to draw conclusions about their intentions and orientations during preaching.[25] While quite a lot has been written on male preachers in different social contexts, and to a lesser extent on female preachers[26], studies on the situational interweaving of audience, preacher, and content remain rare. In this regard, Max Stille's studies on popular preaching in South Asia are outstanding, as they provide insight into what can be called the meaning of practices of preaching. After highlighting the musical and performative poetics of Islamic speech and assessing the role of the senses and religious aesthetics, Stille concludes that Islamic tenets and morals are part of dramatic narrations, vocal art, and affective communication, ranging from immersion and upheaval to laughter about political jokes and parody. In this way, he shows that multilevel analyses of sermons and preaching provide insight into how "[t]he practice of sermon gatherings is significant as a process of public communication that is sensory and pious, imaginative and bodily, emotional and theological." These "forms of Islamic mediation [. . .] are shaped by religious hermeneutics as much as by audiences and communication culture."[27]

3 Analytical Focal Points

Reconsidering our subject matter within this frame of reference, our major starting point is the question of preaching itself: how it is to be defined, what its definitions should encompass, and whether these definitions are suitable for different kinds of

24 Ayşe Almıla Akca, *Moscheeleben in Deutschland. Eine Ethnographie zu Islamischem Wissen, Tradition und religiöser Autorität* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020), 168–186.

25 See for example Rauf Ceylan, *Die Prediger des Islam. Wer sie sind und was sie wollen* (Berlin: Verlag Herder, 2010); Ahmet Cekin, "Stellung der Imame. Eine vergleichende Rollenanalyse der Imame in der Türkei und in Deutschland" (PhD diss., Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, 2003); Melanie Kamp, "Prayer Leader, Counselor, Teacher, Social Worker, and Public Relations Officer—On the Roles and Functions of Imams in Germany," in *Islam and Muslims in Germany*, eds. Jörn Thielmann and Ala Al-Hamarneh (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Ednan Aslan, Evrim Erşan-Akkılıç, and Jonas Kolb, *Imame und Integration* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2015).

26 See for example Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach, eds. *Women, Leadership, and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

27 Max Stille, *Islamic Sermons and Public Piety in Bangladesh: The Poetics of Popular Preaching* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 3.

exhortatory, normative, and devotional forms of speech and text. One of the distinctions made right at the beginning of our discussion was that between formal and informal religious speech, mirroring the distinction between *waʿẓ* and *khuṭba*. *Waʿẓ* refers to the speech that is not specifically connected to a liturgical situation, such as the Friday prayer, and that is therefore mostly not associated with ritual law regulations. On the contrary, the term *khuṭba* often refers to a sermon delivered in the liturgical context of the Friday prayer, and it is therefore subject to ritual law considerations. Departing from this distinction between formal and informal speech, the question of authority arose from the assumption that formal speeches are more liable to involve narrow regulations than informal ones are. The questions discussed included the issue of who is allowed to preach in what situation, in front of what audience, and about what issues. The examples of widely known preachers today, the case of storytellers in medieval times, and the worldwide discussions regarding female preaching are illustrative in this regard.

Other questions that came up included preaching events as a whole, the linguistic content of sermons, individual preachers, audiences, materialities, and spaces, as well as the perception of preaching events. With regard to the social functions of preaching, our discussions have substantiated its major role in (among others) community building, establishing and upholding group identities, evoking and manifesting missionary zeal, and spreading religious (political, economic, etc.) knowledge. Connected to these analytical foci points are questions on methods and methodology, as the selection of particular sets of data has a major impact on how and which research questions are posed and how the research itself is conducted. Empirical research data such as interviews with preachers and audiences, or recordings of preaching events (audio/video, photographs, observation notes etc.) require different analytical methods than textual materials such as manuscripts, print editions, translations, etc. Additionally, language data requires a different approach than objects, descriptions, photographs, etc. Seeking out these different aspects turned out to be quite a challenge, since our notion of preaching as a practice required a multiperspectival strategy aiming to integrate divergent positions and interpretations.

Specifying these broader considerations, the case studies presented in this volume cover three analytical components of practice theories: materiality, space, and embodied knowledge. Although the chapters in this book are not guided by a common theoretical framework, each case study engages in highlighting manifold perspectives of practices of Islamic preaching in the past and the present. They are based on qualitative, ethnographic, textual, and material investigations, and cast a broad range of geographical and historical situations. In doing so, the chapters contribute to a growing field of research on Muslim practices that question dominant notions of Islam, religion, and practices.

4 Practices of Islamic Preaching: Materiality, Space, and Embodied Knowledge

Practices happen in discrete physical and temporal spaces, which in our terminology are specified as *situations*. This approach also implies the practice theoretical outlook commonly denoted as "methodological situationism."[28] By taking this methodological stance, we try to avoid operating with predefined categories, i.e., we do not rely on generalizing concepts such as "society", "context", "the human mind", or "religion" and "Islam", for that matter. As the chapters in this volume aptly illustrate, our methodological focus on situations instead investigates situational interactions and interdependencies. Fatemeh Taheri, for example, observes how sets of discernible practices in a Shiʿi community in Berlin in Germany define and structure the community's respective sermon forms. Similarly, Miriam Kühn describes how in Mamluk manuscript illustrations, momentary depictions of preachers and audiences in a particular setting reveal the variety of preaching formats as well as their respective degree of formal regulation. The focus on situations highlights the diversity and multilayered quality of religious practices and thus allows for the complexity of religious phenomena in general to unfold.

Hence, the paramount motif in practice theoretical conceptualizations of space is that it has a material form. It gains its religious, sacred, or Islamic identities depending on the quality of the concrete practices taking place within a "particular social assemblage of persons and things that are in place and in motion during a span of time."[29] As T. P. Muhammad Ashraf elaborates in his case study on Muslim migrants from Kerala, India in Qatar, forming a recognizable migrant religious space in the diaspora requires a spatial re-configuration of a particular kind and with it "efforts to create a home-like mosque experience" (page 147). In Margherita Picchi's analysis of sermons in Cape Town, South Africa, a rope recreates the distinctly male and female spaces in a delicate situation of their impending diffusion. Taheri evaluates in her chapter how different seating arrangements not only constitute different sermon forms, but more importantly create numerous hierarchical spaces that define and reproduce the situation either as a lecture, a lesson, or as mere conversation. Yet, as Christoph Günther illustrates in his chapter about contemporary Muslim preachers on YouTube, the formation of

28 Karin Knorr-Cetina, "Introduction: The Micro-Sociological Challenge of Macro-Sociology: Towards a Reconstruction of Social Theory and Methodology," in *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an Integration of Micro- and Macro-Sociologies*, eds. Karin Knorr-Cetina and Aaron V. Cicourel (London: Routledge, 2015), 7–15.

29 Wuthnow, *What Happens When*, 45.

space is not limited to immediate face-to-face social interaction. It can include people interacting at a distance as well. In Günther's example, it is the audiovisual composition of YouTube videos that constitute a mosque-like spatial setting, thus enacting both collectively and translocally shared social identities. Besides, Günther aptly analyzes how placing the camera in a certain position and choosing a certain camera angle can create different authoritative spaces and thus influence the interrelation between the preacher and their audience sitting in front of their screens and watching. When Mohammad Waqas Sajjad highlights in his chapter on the performance of religious speech in Pakistan how a preacher interacts with cameras while being recorded, it becomes clear that it is objects which afford participants to act in a certain way and thus render religious practices possible in the first place. As Taheri exemplifies in her analysis of the mutual constitution of space and authority, the significance of materialities is altered by their movement and positioning in specific situations. That means that we have to consider not only materialities in themselves, but materialities as participants of interaction, for religious actions always happen in materially constituted environments that have a direct or indirect impact on a chain of activities.

When we indicate a particular chain of activities as being Islamic, we suggest that both bodies and artifacts actively create religious meaning. They are not just symbols or representations of external meanings that are hidden behind them. In other words: they are not mere manifestations of what religion, as it were, *really* is.[30] We thus need to look at how "techniques of the body"[31] are structured by the specific situations in which they occur and how, conversely, specific situations are defined, reproduced, or altered by bodily performances. Even seemingly small gestures such as changing one's sitting position or getting up can re-define the situation, as Taheri shows in her chapter. Besides, as Sajjad illustrates, raising or lowering one's voice and lifting or lowering one's hand appear to be just a few of the essential elements of bodily repertoires in preaching practices for both preachers and listeners. Silent eye contact and simple nods of the head are gestures that routinely display the harmony in the collective accomplishment of the preaching practice, as well as the participants' mutual recognition of each other as competent co-players of the same game.[32] As Nabeel Jafri clarifies in his chapter on Shiʿi Urdu *khiṭābat* in Pakistan, the same gesture, such as slapping one's

30 Manuel A. Vásquez, *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 220.

31 Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," *Economy and Society 2*, no. 1 (1973).

32 Thomas Alkemeyer and Nikolaus Buschmann, "Learning in and across Practices: Enablement as Subjectivation," in *The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations, Practicioners*, eds. Allison Hui, Theodore R. Schatzki, and Elizabeth Shove (London: Routledge, 2017), 11.

thighs during the course of an oration, can be provoked by different actions. This again can encourage various other actions, each of them giving different meanings to the same gesture. As these examples show, it is not the body per se that we bring into focus, but rather what is often called the "skilled body"[33] or the "socialized body."[34] Therefore, we have various forms of situational embodiment, which can be encompassed by the term "handling body."[35]

The corporeal nature of religious practices includes of course their sensuality as well. Here, we once again emphasize that religion does not take place solely in the minds of the participants. Instead, we claim that sensations such as touching, tasting, and listening are an inextricable part of religious practices. They are not just manifestations of belief, affiliation, or a particular mindset. Günther, Padikkal, and Jafri demonstrate in their chapters how acoustic stimuli in particular can create sacred spaces and thus add to both the authenticity and authority of preaching performances, whether online or offline.

The ways in which bodily categories (in terms of size, shape, sexuality, gender, age, and ableness[36]) permeate space are explored by Picchi in her emphasis on "*Khuṭba* activism." She illustrates that constantly attending community gatherings and Friday prayers in a South African mosque, participating in *tarāwīḥ* nights as Qur'an reciters and lecturers, fighting apartheid as well as permanently giving voice to gender-based violence has enabled women to be seen, heard, and perceived by their own congregation. This resulted in an "amina wadud moment" when the gender jihad activist amina wadud was invited to hold a *khuṭba* in this mosque in front of the whole congregation, which then opened up a space-creating practice for women to deliver sermons from the pulpit of the mosque.

Conceptualizing space as relational and processual also entails questions concerning relations of power and authority: Who is allowed to speak where, what can they say, and who confers legitimacy on them? Mohammad Gharaibeh's investigation of two treatises on the legitimacy of preaching situated in Mamluk Cairo shows that the distinction between scholarly affirmed preachers and non-affirmed popular storytellers or admonishers was a question of authority and not

33 Theodore R. Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory," in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, eds. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001), 12.

34 Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 81.

35 Alkemeyer and Buschmann, "Learning in and across practices," 17.

36 Kim Knott and Myfanwy Franks, "Secular Values and the Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis of an English Medical Centre," *Health & Place* 13, no. 1 (2007): 224–37, accessed June 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2006.01.001; Martina Löw, *The Sociology of Space* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), accessed June 14, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-349-69568-3.

of actual legitimate versus deviating scholarship. Gharaibeh also draws attention to the materiality of knowledge production in historical accounts, demonstrating that information policies in biographical dictionaries and chronicles, as well as the dissemination of books, contribute to the ways in which scholars create a sense of legitimate versus deviating preaching modes. Hence, power reveals itself to be fundamental in a certain network of relations. The same tendency is illustrated in Picchi's concept of "community *tafsīr*," in which not only the imam but also the congregation and visiting lecturers participate in the construction of meaning. Kühn's analysis depicts how the permission to preach on a minbar in a Friday mosque in Mamluk times was perceived as a sign of privilege and distinction. She outlines how instructions in manuals endeavored to shape the behavior of preachers on the minbar, following norms of movement and gesture as expected by the audience. Kühn's analysis concludes that the body is both subject to normative practices as well as a material entity that bears the potential to develop alternative practices. Similarly to Kühn's analysis, Philipp Bruckmayr's chapter on the pioneering *khuṭba* manual of a Malay scholar demonstrates the struggles of a scholar writing sermons in Malay and explores conventions of how to deliver a *khuṭba* in Malay to serve the presumed needs of a congregation. Bruckmayr shows that the composition of the sermons and the explanation the author gave in his manual were related to the challenge posed to traditional forms of religious authority and practice by emerging reformist thought at the beginning of the 20th century. Similarly, T. P. Muhammad Ashraf's contribution on informal religious spaces among Keralite Muslim migrants in Qatar ties space-making processes to relations of power. Ashraf demonstrates how the migrants maintain their indigenous religious practices in the face of Wahhabi state religion by listening to sermons and educational instructions in their native language of Malayalam. This is not an automatic process, as other Keralite migrants take up the new environment's ideas about Islam and practices in Arabic. However, Ashraf describes that some migrants choose to practice in the compound's prayer rooms as well as organize and attend educational offers because of the positive association with and the emotional pull of their native language of Malayalam. This is possible through shared implicit knowledge concerning the meaning which was embodied in Kerala and that contains a shared emotional bond now acting as an incentive.[37]

This last aspect leads to the notion that practices of Islamic preaching involve embodied, implicit, and shared knowledge, which is composed of a "know-how"[38] informing "practical reason."[39] Both are anchored in, acted out by, and directed

37 Reckwitz, "Practices and their affects," 118.

38 Andreas Reckwitz, "Basic Elements of a Theory of Social Practices. A Perspective in Social Theory," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 32:4 (2003): 289.

39 Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 99–100.

toward other human bodies and artifacts.[40] In Jafri's chapter, the audiences in Karachi, Pakistan, attending public *majālis,* commemorative assemblies in which the dead are mourned, know when to nod, when to raise their hands, and when to answer the *khaṭīb* (orator) affirmatively. The knowledge surrounding the proper behavior during this event cannot be gained through reading, but is rather soaked up during this practice and embodied through repetition. It is a "background knowledge,"[41] part of a person's habitus,[42] which acts as an invisible guide through the practice. The habitus then appears as a "kind of practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation—what is called in sport a 'feel' for the game."[43] In general, the habitus is a system of cognitive and motivating structures which are embodied via participation in practices.[44] In Ramzi Ghandour's chapter on the meanings of the (non-)mentioning of a ruler's name, an intelligence and postal service officer prepares for death in the year 207/822 after the governor of Khurāsān fails to mention the name of the caliph in his Friday sermon. Mentioning the name of the caliph served to establish and confirm political alliance and stability. The officer notices instantly what was missing in this specific sermon and what it meant. Consequently, the officer concludes that the governor has renounced his loyalty to the caliph and that a revolt is to be expected. Embodied knowledge often unfolds tacitly and is shared among participants of the same practice, although there may be "significant irritations and disruptions."[45] This kind of knowledge can have a long-lasting effect by forming the base of the habitus' schemes of perception and interpretation.[46] Dženita Karić argues in her chapter on 17th-century Bosnian Khalwati sermon collections that the sermons on hajj rituals invoke the consistency of the rituals while encouraging the hajj "of the heart" by adapting the rituals of a physical pilgrimage to Mecca. The hajj rituals then serve as a "binding glue, which connects Muslims across the world" (page 157). By the periodic repetition of the respective rituals, attaching to them certain

40 Reckwitz, "Practices and their affects," 121.

41 Alfred Schütz, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt. Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie* (Konstanz: UVK, 2004 [1932]), 201.

42 Pierre Bourdieu, *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 100.

43 Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 25.

44 Monique Scheer, "Emotionen als kulturelle Praxis," In *Emotionen: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, eds. Hermann Kappelhoff, Jan-Hendrik Bakels, Hauke Lehmann, and Christina Schmitt (Heidelberg: J. B. Metzler, 2019), 354.

45 Allison Hui, "Variation and the Intersection of Practices," in *The Nexus of Practices: Connections, Constellations, Practicioners*, eds. Allison Hui, Theodore R. Schatzki, and Elizabeth Shove (London: Routledge, 2017), 55.

46 Bourdieu, *Sozialer Sinn,* 105.

meanings and repeating them constantly, the schemes of perception and action regarding the hajj are set.

However, the know-how and practical sense of a practice are usually not codified in books but rather picked up by participation in a practice. This is a learning process in which participants of a practice are increasingly enabled by embodying the skills and knowledge constituting the practice. This enablement works by relating themselves to other participants, identifying the different positionalities in a practice (audience, preacher) and by evaluating one another's sayings and doings.[47] The women and men listening to the imam in Taheri's examples of contemporary German Shi'i mosques learn implicitly through participation when and how to ask the imam questions. They know who writes their question on a piece of paper, who uses their voice to ask, when to switch from listening to asking, which questions are appropriate to address to the imam and which are not. The habitus contains schemes of perceptions and interpretations which, like in the example of Taheri's question-and-answer sessions, yield gender-specific ways of asking questions. These new schemes can shape and change a practice, like in the example of the introduction of new forms of interaction in the German-language Shi'i sermons. The habitus is not an action-determining machine fueled by implicit knowledge.[48] However, it does involve and concern particular aspects, like language, register, gesture, smell, taste, sound and so on. Deliberately addressing the emotional dimensions of a practice to create familiarity can be a powerful tool.[49] Günther argues that the preachers use sensory stimuli intentionally as communicative offers to connect to certain practices embedded in specific discourses around religious beliefs, norms, and values. The preachers use their bodies, space arrangements, and words to appeal to a certain embodied knowledge of the audience. There can, however, be unintentional stimuli as well. The audience watching the sermon in front of their screens takes notice of people who are present at the actual site of the performance and who are audible in some of the videos. Their coughing, whispering, movements, and repetitions of prayer sequences function as reaffirmations of the preacher's performance as a preacher. Similarly, Sajjad illustrates through the example of a prominent Pakistani preacher that his use of different stylistic elements such as poetry, humor, or anger differs between formats. Specifically, recorded videos for online audiences show a serious preacher with a reserved body language and measured speech. In front of a live audience, however, the preacher's engagement with his audience is much more animated. His mood can shift quickly from

47 Alkemeyer and Buschmann, "Learning in and across Practices," 20.
48 Scheer, "Emotionen als kulturelle Praxis," 354.
49 Wuthnow, *What Happens When*, 69–70.

humor to anger, he tells stories, laughs, smiles, gets angry, and rails at things he dislikes. In this way, the discursive dimensions of a practice can be experienced in a bodily fashion by the audience.[50] The skills and knowledge necessary to be evaluated as a competent participant in these practices of preaching need to be embodied in a complex process of relating and evaluating. Therefore, a complex embodiment underlies the questions of how to be an effective speaker, as demonstrated by Günther and Sajjad, how to give an authentic commemorative assembly, as pointed out by Jafri, which language, words, and register to use, as illustrated by Ashraf, Bruckmayr, Ghandour, Gharaibeh, Taheri, and Karić, and which bodily gestures and material arrangements answer to specific situational needs, as discussed by Taheri, Jafri, Sajjad, Kühn, Günther, Ashraf, Ghandour, and Picchi.

Although the eleven chapters of this anthology do not share a common theoretical framework, they are all concerned with the aspect of practices and how the analysis of practice-theoretical tools and frameworks such as space, doings, embodied knowledge, and materialities provide insight on the constitution of preaching and its specific meaning. They are examples of how practices in distinct situations might look like, how they can be studied empirically and historically, and what analytical meaning can be derived from them. With this edited volume on practices, we aim to contribute to the growing field of a methodological inquiry into Islamic studies and religious studies, as well as into the newly established discipline of Islamic theology in Germany.

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50 Reckwitz, "Practices and their affects," 121–22.

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I Bodily Performances, Material Settings

Mohammad Nabeel Jafri

The Somatic and the Sonic in Contemporary Urdu Shiʿi *Khiṭābat*

Abstract: Contemporary scholarship on Urdu Shiʿi *khiṭābat* in South Asia has approached the ritual performance in referential (what does it mean) and pragmatic (what does it do) terms. Drawing upon twenty months of ethnographic fieldwork in Karachi, Pakistan, I argue that Urdu Shiʿi *khiṭābat* must be attended to with a consideration of the rich material cultures that are integral to ritual oratory. In particular, this chapter draws out two specific modalities of the materiality of Shiʿi oratory, namely the somatic and the sonic techniques employed and demonstrated by orators as well as their audiences. Attention to the somatic and the sonic helps us to move beyond a solely discursive approach to ritual oratory. My chapter identifies the central and intertwined character of the visual and the aural in Urdu Shiʿi *khiṭābat*, as well as the importance accorded to non-discursive elements in Urdu Shiʿi practices and theories of oratory.

1 Introduction

"Mr. Turabi's orations will be published, his cassettes played on the *minbars*, but these will not match up to his half-formed smile, the pointing of his fingers, the rolling up of the sleeve, and the undoing of his *shirwānī* buttons. This style of his oration cannot be manifested in excerpts from his speeches . . ."[1]

The epigraph to this chapter is a lament echoed by Nayyar Nadeem (1944–2014), a famous Pakistani television producer and an author of a dozen works on Islam, in his commemorative article on Rashid Turabi (1908–1973), the Urdu *khaṭīb* (orator) par excellence. Turabi, Nadeem opined, will only ever live in the memory of those who had attended his orations. Language, the epigraph notes, cannot capture the materiality of Shiʿi *khiṭābat* (oratory). Though helpful as a literal record of words uttered on a given occasion, the compilations of speeches such as those given by Turabi are devoid of the rich affective and gestural dimensions that lend *khiṭābat* its status as

1 Nayyar Nadim, "Bargāh-yi Turabi meiṅ," in *Minbar kā dūsrā nām*, ed. Agha Amir Chaman (Karachi: Print Media Collections, 1975 [2002]), 155.

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an art form. Nadeem's epigraph lays bare the emic attention to ostensibly insignificant bodily movements, thus highlighting the importance that audiences attribute to somatic techniques of the *khaṭīb*.

Turabi himself would have concurred with Nadeem that language, in and of itself, is insufficient to preserve a given oratorical event. In his will, Turabi expressed his desire that "my orations should not be copied into writing . . . because a speech is different than a text. Sometimes, in an oration, a bodily movement (*ishārah*) does the work of an entire sentence, and a text cannot accommodate this."[2] Turabi's justification for his opposition to transcription evinces his recognition of the centrality of the body and bodily performance to his *khiṭābat*, and to *khiṭābat* as a genre writ large. Turabi, it should be noted, was not against his work being recorded and circulated. Indeed, he actively encouraged his devotees to duplicate the cassettes of his oratorical events, noting that audio recordings of his speeches were already circulating in "America, Europe, Mid East [sic], Hindustan, Burma, and Rangoon."[3] The oral medium could at least capture the modulations of the orator's voice, his strategic silences, and the sounds of the audiences, all integral to *khiṭābat*. There is no doubt that if Turabi were alive today, he would subscribe, with some qualifications, to the supremacy of video recordings as well.

In this chapter, I attend to the material cultures of Urdu Shiʿi *khiṭābat*, paying particular attention to the somatic and sonic aspects of ritual oratory. Drawing upon twenty months of ethnographic fieldwork in Karachi, Pakistan, conducted in 2019, and then 2020–2022, I demonstrate how bodies and sounds, of orators and their audiences alike, shape, and are in turn shaped by, the discursive dimensions of the performance. The discursive (words, lexicons, registers) is only as important and memorable as the sensations that it arouses in the orators and their audiences. The discursive is indelibly linked to the somatic (body movements) and the sonic (voice and cadence) forms in and through which the discursive is expressed. Textual attention to Urdu Shiʿi *khiṭābat* must therefore move beyond the pragmatic (what does *khiṭābat* do?) and the referential (what does *khiṭābat* mean?) to the indexical. By indexical, I mean an approach to language use in which the context of its occurrence is integral to the study of signs, linguistic and non-linguistic, that constitute a given performance or genre.[4] In simpler words,

2 Rashid Turabi, "ʿAllāmah Rashid Turabi kī Waṣṣiyyat," in *Minbar kā dūsrā nām*, ed. Agha Amir Chaman (Karachi: Print Media Collections, 1975 [2002]), 313.

3 Turabi, "ʿAllāmah Rashid Turabi kī Waṣṣiyyat," 312.

4 See Michael Silverstein, "Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life," *Language and Communication*, 23 (2003): 193–95.

attention to the contents of oratory must be concomitant with attention to the material richness of the contexts of oratory. I begin with a brief description of the Shiʿi *majlis*.

2 Ritual Setting and Methodological Observations

The cornerstone of Shiʿi ritual practice in South Asia is the *majlis* (pl. *majālis*), a commemorative assembly in which the dead are mourned. These *majālis* vary in size and visibility, ranging from intimate, immediate-kin only events to massive public gatherings. Yet, what makes the *majlis* the center of Shiʿa ritual practice is the impressive frequency with which these events are organized. In the course of twenty months of doctoral fieldwork, with the exception of a handful of days, such as the two Eid festivals or the birthdays of the Prophet Muhammad and the Twelver Imams, there were always a handful of public *majālis* that could be attended all across the city.[5] This ubiquity of the ritual practice, remarkably consistent throughout the year, is amplified in the Islamic calendrical months of Muharram and Safar, when the Shiʿa commemorate the martyrdom of Husain at Karbala, in 60 AH/680 CE. While the *majālis* for Husain attract the largest crowds, the *majālis* for ʿAli (from 18–21 Ramzan), Fatima (from 13 Jumada al-Awwal to 3 Jumada al-Thani), and Hasan and Muhammad (both on 27 Safar) are also worthy of attention because of their notable size and ideological importance to the devotees. The *majālis* for the remaining Imams attract lesser, but nonetheless significant crowds as well.

The *majālis* for the abovementioned historical Shiʿi figures are important, but not sufficient in capturing their massive everyday scale. To appreciate the full extent of these *majlis* networks, it is important to note that most *majālis* commemorate recently deceased Shiʿa individuals. The two major public commemorations are called the *soʾyam kī majlis*, held on the second or the third day of an individual's death, and the *chihlum kī majlis*, held a few weeks later.[6] The period between

5 Though outside of the purview of this chapter, I observed that there are Shiʿi groups in Karachi that argue for mourning each and every day, including on Eid. It was not uncommon for there to be a *matāmi sangat* (flagellation gathering) right after the Eid prayers in certain parts of the city.
6 While *chihlum* translates to forty, the *chihlum kī majlis* for a deceased Shiʿa generally takes places between three to five weeks after their death. The only Shiʿa historical figure whose *chihlum* is commemorated exactly forty days after his death is Husain—no *chihlum* is commemorated for any other Imam.

these two days is marked by smaller, generally private *majālis* at the deceased's house, attended by immediate and extended family members. With time, depending on factors such as the socio-economic class of the deceased, the deceased individual's place in society, and the specific occasion or context of death, an annual *barsī kī majlis* may or may not be instituted and sponsored by the deceased's family. Together, the *majālis* for the Shiʿa Imams and the *majālis* for the deceased Shiʿa individuals constitute the bulk of the religious and social commitments that devotees juggle in their calendar of ritual commitments.

The structure of an individual *majlis* can be succinctly summarized as consisting of poetic performances, from different genres, that bookend the prosaic *khiṭābat*.[7] Just over half of the *majlis* is devoted to ritual oratory, indicating the importance devotees attribute to the genre. Within the scholarship on Urdu Shiʿi oratory, scholars have attended largely to the discursive elements of the performance. Toby Howarth's *The Twelver Shiʿa as a Muslim Minority in India* (2005 [2011]), for example, consists of ten complete translated orations, an editorial choice that in and of itself indicates the primacy afforded to semantics, accompanied by an analysis of the myriad meaning-making that happens in these orations.[8] Similarly, Vernon Schubel's *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam* (1993) also attends to the contents and contexts of the orations, intertwining ethnographic vignettes with wider textual analysis to help situate and historicize the topics and figures that the orators evoke and that the audiences engage with.[9] The emic scholarship in Urdu follows a similar trend, with a range of authors—including orators, literary critics, poets, intellectuals, and writers—all emphasizing the centrality of the genre as a hermeneutical vehicle.[10] The ideological privileging of *khiṭābat* is reflected in the physical space where the ritual is carried out. Orators sit upon a *minbar* (pulpit) that does not just render them elevated and visible, but also makes them the locus of the audiences attention. Figure 1 demonstrates the orator ʿAli Raza Rizvi addressing a *majlis* in Karachi in September 2019.

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7 For detailed descriptions of the units that constitute the Urdu Shiʿi *majlis*, see Karen Ruffle, *Everyday Shiʿism in South Asia* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2021), 248–56; also, Akbar Hyder, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23–29 and 40–47.

8 Toby Howarth, *The Twelver Shiʿa as a Muslim minority in India: Pulpit of Tears* (London: Routledge, 2011 [2005]).

9 Vernon James Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shiʿi Devotional Rituals in South Asia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

10 As representative examples, see Al-i Muhammad Razmi, "Paighām āshnā khaṭīb ʿallāmah Sayyid ʿAqīl al-Gharavī ke ʿilmī āṣār," in *ʿIlm aur Irādah*, ed. A. H. Rizvi (Karachi: Mahfuz Book Agency, 2005), 9; also, Kalbe Sadiq, "Taqrīz," in *Makārim al-Akhlāq*, ed. Hasan Zafar Naqvi (Lahore: Iftikhar Book Depot, 2009), 8.

Figure 1: ʿAli Raza Rizvi, addressing a majlis in Karachi in September 2019.

My chapter departs from the existing discursive and instrumentalist emphasis on oratory by privileging the somatic and sonic performances of the orators as well as of their audiences. Before I proceed, a quick methodological note is in order. In what follows, I begin and center my analysis within the confines of particular ritual moments. Specifically, I look at the bodies and sounds of the orators and their audiences in the time between the moment the orator takes to the *minbar* and up to the moment the orator leaves the *minbar* at the end of the oration. I want to explicitly note that the bodies and sounds loom large before and after these specific moments as well. For instance, I regularly witnessed the arrival of an orator at a *majlis* being greeted by devotees who would stand up to make way for the orator, with the devotees also bowing their heads curtly and lifting their fingertips to their temples. This respectful acknowledgement was largely reserved for the orators, with the occasional use of the gesture towards other performers. In such an act, the orator and the audience are part of the same communicative framework, centered on the body, even before the oration has begun. I emphasize this methodological point to show that my analytical focus does not, and cannot, overlap with the entirety of the descriptive focus, and that future research could

perhaps turn towards these "informal," but not any less equal, instances of bodily communication.

In addition to my ethnographic observations, I also draw upon interviews with leading orators in the city and upon a specific text—Syed Kalbe Mustafa's *Fann-i Khiṭābat* (1957 [2016])—that was recommended to me by multiple orators.[11] The interviews help demonstrate the importance that orators placed on their own body movements, and their deliberate and careful considerations of their somatic and sonic techniques. Mustafa's *Fann-i Khiṭābat*, or *The Art of Oration*, is a mid-20th century Urdu treatise on rhetoric and performance. Though Mustafa himself hailed from a Shiʿa family in Lucknow, India, the text is devoid of any particular attention to Shiʿi oratory specifically. Instead, the treatise addresses public speaking, across languages, writ large. The fact that the text found favorable reception among Urdu Shiʿi orators indicates that the contents and the concepts of *Fann-i Khiṭābat* resonated well with, and helped cultivate further, preexisting ideas about oration and rhetoric within the Urdu Shiʿi community.

3 The Somatic Techniques of the Orators

"It was not enough to have simply heard Rashid Turabi; one must have been seated close enough to the *minbar* to look at his [Turabi's] facial expressions. Often, he [Turabi] would leave sentences verbally incomplete, his eyes and hands finishing the sentence in lieu of words . . ."[12] These sentiments were echoed to me by Baqar Zaidi, a leading Karachi-based Urdu Shiʿi orator today. Zaidi's quote captures the interplay of words and bodies in Urdu Shiʿi oratory, a mutual dependency that is recognized in emic and etic texts alike. For instance, Mustafa's *Fann-i khiṭābat* notes that "analogous to how thoughts are articulated through words, emotions can be made manifest through facial expressions and through the movement and gestures of body parts."[13] Similarly, the famous Pakistani orator and politician Kausar Niazi wrote that "hand gestures and head and eye movements make speech powerful,"[14] echoing both Mustafa's observation as well as Zaidi's reminiscing about Turabi's oration.

In my ethnographic fieldwork, orators engaged in plenty of bodily movements. For instance, orators regularly slapped their thighs during their oration.

11 Syed Kalbe Mustafa, *Fann-i khiṭābat* (Lahore: Ganj Shakar Press, 2016 [1957]).
12 Interview with Baqar Zaidi, January 12, 2022.
13 Mustafa, *Fann-i Khiṭābat*, 154.
14 Kausar Niazi, *Andāz-i bayān* (Karachi: Shaikh Ghulam ʿAli and Sons Publishers, 1975), 76.

By slapping, I mean that orators hit their thighs with their palms and fingers multiple times in quick succession. By my count, I was able to enumerate at least three distinct oratorical points that merited such a gesture. The first one would occur after the orator had uttered a point or a sentence that they perceived needed a greater reaction from the audience than the one they were getting. Here, the slapping of the thigh served as an orchestra conductor's baton, encouraging the audience to reciprocate vocally and physically to the orator. Occasionally, such a slap was accompanied by a textual exhortation as well, taking the form of stock Urdu phrases that translate as "you have not yet understood what I'm saying," "the matter has not reached you yet," or "are you listening to what I'm saying?" The slapping demonstrated an urgency, one that could not be conveyed by a verbal reprimand alone.

The second type of slap occurred in the moments leading up to a climactic point. In these scenarios, slapping both indicated an impending rhetorical crescendo as well as created the very crescendo that was soon to be reached. This usage, too, retained the urgency from the previous instance and was accompanied by a rising voice and a quickening tempo. It also preceded more extravagant body movements such as raising the arms, swinging the upper body, or adjusting their posture. Indeed, on at least two occasions, I witnessed orators so engrossed in slapping their thighs that their hand movements accidentally knocked over audio equipment such as the standing microphones that the orators were speaking into.

A third instance of orators slapping their thighs occurred in the *masāʾib* section of the oration, where orators recounted the tragic narratives ascribed to events surrounding the battle of Karbala. In contrast to the urgency that was discernable in the other two instances of slapping their thighs, this usage marked a distinct shift in how orators made use of the gesture. In particular, rather than slapping their thighs either in service of recognition or as a way to mark an approaching oratorical climax, the slapping here evinced a certain helplessness at the inability of the orator to help the figures whose tragedies he was narrating. The visibility of the orator in such a setting, in turn, helped to cultivate a similar environment of collective grief and mourning, one in which the audiences then responded through a similar slapping of their thighs, audible crying, and occasionally a slapping of their own heads. Even as the gesture of slapping remained the same in all three instances, the connotations and the effects differed depending on when in the oration such a gesture occurred. Bodily gestures, then, are as polysemous as words and invite a consideration of their usage contexts to achieve a fuller understanding of what they entail.

In addition to their hands, orators also resorted to an impressive array of facial expressions in their orations. For instance, when orating the abovementioned

tragic narratives, orators regularly cried and, in those instances where they didn't, they at least contorted their faces into a crying-like expression. An illustrative example of such an expression, related to *khiṭābat* but outside the purview of the physical setting of oratory, are the posters shared on social media, in February 2022, by the orator ʿAli Raza Rizvi.[15] These posters are publicly available on Facebook and can be viewed by anyone. Here, the poster commemorates the martyrdom of the seventh Shiʿi Imam, with Rizvi's lachrymose expression consistent with the tragedy of the occasion.

When orating the *fażāʾil*, the virtues of the fourteen Shiʿi infallible figures, orators sometimes, but not always, widened their eyes as they approached an oratorical climax. At other times, contingent upon the discussion underway, a whole spectrum of facial expressions could also be witnessed. If addressing the state and making demands, orators would adopt a solemn and resolute expression, perhaps underlining their resolve and determination in the matter. If addressing the audience on a didactic or an exhortative note, orators could either smile kindly or adopt a polite tone of warning, all of this dependent again on the content and the context of the oration. What should be clear is that any approach to such oratory must account for these visual and bodily aspects, which lend the verbal discourse a depth and a complexity that purely textual approaches often omit in their analysis.

These somatic aspects of oratorical performance also become sites of intra-traditional debate over questions of authenticity.[16] My archival and ethnographic research demonstrated a preoccupation with ensuring that such movements of the body or deliveries of voice were "natural." Mustafa, writing in his aforementioned *Fann-i khiṭābat*, states that "where possible, facial expressions should not change often or continuously. Doing so creates an aura of mimicry. The facial expressions should change naturally. The mastery of the voice and delivery, as required, necessarily manifests, in the face, the aforementioned affects."[17] In this rich quote, Mustafa begins by warning the orators about over-performing. He assumes that audiences prefer the orator to act naturally, but he does leave leeway for determining what exactly "naturally" entails. Further, Mustafa notes that a mastery of vocal expressions is a prerequisite for suitable facial expressions, thus hinting at an understanding of the human sensorium where the oral cultivates

15 https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=373276818135356&set=pb.100063591218034.-2207520000.&type=3

16 The anthropology of Christianity literature on sincerity is helpful here, especially the work of Webb Keane. See especially his "Sincerity, 'Modernity,' and the Protestants," *Cultural Anthropology* 17 (2002): 65–92.

17 Mustafa, *Fann-i khiṭābat*, 157.

the visual, or, even more generally, where the form creates the content.[18] Ethnographically, my interlocutors were also quick to note which orators they found to be "dramatic." Here, it is worth commenting that a consideration of the orator as "acting" has significant overlaps with a trend in scholarship that, up until now, has often employed the theoretical lens of theatricality, and thus has created, in my opinion, an arbitrary divide between theatricality and reality.[19]

At first glance, the "natural" expressions that Mustafa refers to, or that my interlocutors have in their minds when they deem some movement to be "acting," seem to contradict the concurrent recognition, by Mustafa and my interlocutors, that such expressions and movements are also a product of practice and skill. After all, it is Mustafa himself who notes that "the human nature consists of many faculties. Through practice and training, some faculties are cultivated, and through a lack of practice, others almost disappear."[20] The best orators, such as Turabi with whose memories I began this section, manage to synergize their vocal and facial expressions such that it becomes almost impossible to perceive the form without content or content without form. My interlocutors' use of terms such as "acting," or Mustafa's cautionary advice against mimicry, therefore arise out a discord between the oral and the visual, resonating with Michael Serres's conception of the human sensorium as an interconnected knot.[21]

4 The Sonic Techniques of the Orators

Another important modality of the materiality of oratory lies in the sonic techniques of the orators. Attention to the sonic dimension illustrates the centrality of cadence and pitch to the oratorical setting. Complementary to the somatic gestures discussed in the previous section, cadence and pitch are influential in determining the ambience of the oratorical setting, and arguably more central to the performance than even the content itself. In my interviews with various orators,

18 Here, I gesture towards the well-known distinction between an Aristotelian positive ethics, where form is central to the creation of content, and a Kantian conception of ethics, where content takes primacy in relation to form, thus rendering the latter derivative to the former. The Aristotelian version therefore allows for a consideration of the physical or bodily acts through which the ethical content is created, whereas the Kantian version deems ethical practices as always signifying or standing in for some other underlying "actual" ethical content.

19 For a good discussion of theatricality in Muharram rituals, see Karen Ruffle, "Wounds of devotion: Reconceiving *mātam* in Shiʿi Islam," *History of Religions* 55 no. 2 (2015): 176–84.

20 Mustafa, *Fann-i khiṭābat*, 155.

21 See, for example, David Howes, ed., *Empire of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2020 [2005]), 9.

they regularly noted that to simply peruse the textual compilations of past oratorical events could never constitute a holistic study of oratory because orations were, first and foremost, intended to be heard rather than read. In a conversation, Kamal Haider, a leading Karachi-based orator, noted that the opportunity to listen to recordings of orators from the early 20th century was invaluable because these recordings captured their orations in a manner that text simply could not.[22] Similarly, Baqar Zaidi also pointed to the value of observing an orator whose body gestures and voice could complement the contents being orated, as in his recollection quoted at the beginning of the previous section, thus indicating the necessity of being attuned to the form and context of oratory.[23]

Over the course of my fieldwork, I did not just witness orators deliver their orations in particular cadences, but I was also part of conversations with devotees who then commented upon their own auditory preferences regarding the types of cadences they found aesthetically pleasing. Nusrat Bukhari, a prominent orator in Karachi during Muharram and Safar, was especially well-known for his slow, whisper-like drawl, one that was devoid of sudden bursts of energy but could, if required, be slowed even further. In contrast, ʿAli Raza Rizvi, who drew the largest crowds in my Muharram fieldwork in 2019 and 2021, spoke in an extremely fast rhythm, so much so that my fieldnotes described the experience of listening to him, after having listened to Bukhari for a few days, as being struck with "a gust of wind."

The choice of cadence is instructive because of how much it dovetails with the contents of each orator's repertoire. Bukhari's contents are best described as *waʿz*, or moral admonishing; Rizvi's contents were largely based on *fażāʾil*, or the virtues of the infallible (*maʿṣūmīn*) figures in Shiʿi religious narratives. The performative predilection for cadence should thus be viewed in relation to the substance of the oration. Bukhari's tone, for example, borrowed heavily from the *murattal* style of Qurʾan recitation in which the "emphasis is on the clarity of the text, and the limited pitch variation and vocal artistry make for a relaxed and speech-bound style accessible to all."[24] Bukhari's aim was therefore to speak in a rhythm where each word allowed the audience ample time to hear and contemplate both the individual word but also the many rhetorical questions with which Bukhari peppered his oration. Rizvi's cadence was quicker because his use of the *fażāʾil* genre meant that he was always orating vignettes that had a narrative climax. Rizvi, in contrast to Bukhari's continuous admonishing, had prepared clear

22 Interview with Kamal Haider, February 7, 2022.

23 Interview with Baqar Zaidi, January 12, 2022.

24 Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qurʾan* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001), xxiii. See also her explication of both styles in Chapter 5.

narrative crescendos for his audience. In both cases, cadence played an instrumental role for each orator's performance.

Similarly, the pitch of the orator's voice figured prominently, if somewhat contradictorily, in the observations of my fieldwork. Bukhari's cadence was suited to, and accompanied by, a low-pitch delivery. Significantly, the adjectives that my interlocutors used to describe Bukhari's speaking—deep, grave, serious—all evinced a particular conception of the default preference for the type of male voice that is preferable in the public sphere. Rizvi's excited high–pitch delivery often became an object of criticism, with my interlocutors reading gendered affects into his style of speaking. This was of course surprising because two of the more popular orators in contemporary Karachi, namely Zamir Akhtar Naqvi (1944–2020) and Ayatollah ʿAqil al-Gharavai (b. 1964), both orated in a fairly high pitch as well, with the latter widely considered by multiple distinctive demographics as constituting an exceptional class of his own within the domain of oratory.

My ethnographic observations of cadence and pitch find resonance in Urdu Shiʿi theorizations of the voice and its role, as in Mustafa's *Fann-i khiṭābat.* The text makes it clear that the sonic must always be accompanied with equal attention to the somatic. In a section aptly titled "Oratorical requisites of appropriate voice and recitational knowledge," Mustafa lays out specific instructions and evaluative schemas to determine context-specific pitch and cadence.[25] The production of the sonic, Mustafa notes, is reliant on the somatic. The orator must "hold the neck high, straighten the body, and breathe such that the chest is full, and only let the breath out slowly."[26] Control of the rhythms of the body is essential to control of the pitch and cadence of the voice. Mustafa writes that "without an up and down of voice, the words are devoid of meaning."[27] Voice is more than just the physical production of sound. Mustafa emphasizes that it consists of strategic silences, emphasis, and deliberate cultivation of expression, among other criteria.[28]

These emic conversations about the sonic are not merely aesthetic preoccupations or theoretical conversations but attend to what Patrick Eisenlohr calls the "durational character of sound."[29] Indeed, the attention to voice in Urdu Shiʿi *khiṭābat* underscores one instance of the production of sonic atmospheres that "act on the felt bodies of those perceiving them,"[30] demonstrating the intertwining of

25 Mustafa, *Fann-i khiṭābat*, 163.
26 Mustafa, *Fann-i khiṭābat*, 165.
27 Mustafa, *Fann-i khiṭābat*, 166.
28 Mustafa, *Fann-i khiṭābat*, 167.
29 Patrick Eisenlohr, *Sounding Islam: Voice, Media, and Sonic Atmospheres in an Indian Ocean World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 13.
30 Eisenlohr, *Sounding Islam*, 9.

the somatic, the sonic, and the discursive. Eisenlohr's observation that the semiotic, or signification, permeates both the sonic and the discursive holds true for my observations as well.[31] The discursive is certainly intertwined with the sonic and the somatic, but each modality operates independently of the other and therefore must be attended to on its own terms.

5 The Somatic and Sonic Participation of the Audience

In June 2021, I attended a *majlis* where the orator, Asad ʿAli Zaidi, explicitly exhorted his audience in the course of his *khiṭābat* to respond to his oration through physical gestures. For example, after having made a point that he felt was not sufficiently appreciated by those gathered, Zaidi said, "The pandemic prohibits the shaking of hands, not the waving of hands."[32] On other occasions during his address, Zaidi asked his audience to nod their heads if they were in agreement with what he was saying. The clarity and directness with which Zaidi outlined the requirements of an engaged audience—the waving of the hands, the nodding of the head—capture well the Urdu Shiʿi *khiṭābat*'s emphasis on, and attention to, the bodies of the audience members. Though scholars have noted the use of the body in the crying aspects of the Shiʿa *majlis*, I want to highlight here the non-mourning uses of the body, especially because of how commonplace and structurally integrated such movements are in the ritual performance. It is not merely the orators whose bodily movements and sonic performances are integral to *khiṭābat*. The audience must also render visible and audible their involvement in the ritual performance underway through various bodily movements and sonic performances.

It is not coincidental that Zaidi asked his audience members to wave their hands and to nod their heads. In fact, Zaidi was referencing the two most common non-discursive communicative acts that I witnessed in my fieldwork. Across a range of occasions, for example the shouting of slogans within a *majlis*, the ritual performance of *tabarrā* (public disavowal of specific non-Shiʿi figures), and aesthetic, substantive, and narrative appreciations of the oration underway, the raising of the hands, as captured in Figure 2 below, was the single most effective way of gauging how the crowd was receiving the orator.

31 Eisenlohr, *Sounding Islam*, 16.
32 Fieldnotes, June 6, 2021.

Figure 2: Shiʿi devotees raise their hands in a Karachi majlis, May 2021.

These raised hands can be read in multiple ways. First, they indicate to the orator before them that the audience is present, not just physically, but also attentively. Second, the raised hands indicate not just an appreciation, but also an approval of the forms and the contents of a given oratorical occasion. Third, raised hands become a way to engage those who may have drifted off or disassociated from the moment in the past few minutes of the oratory. The sudden burst of physical activity that accompanies the raising of the hands jolts the disengaged audience members back to the present moment, and it can serve as an effective mechanism for raising their level of engagement going forward.

Similarly, the nodding of the head by audience members becomes yet another instance through which the orators and their audiences communicate. While this may appear to be an individual bodily act, I noticed that a lot of nodding was accompanied by audience members looking around at their fellow devotees, making spontaneous eye-contact, and smiling at a shared appreciation of the orator and the oratory. Though this physical and non-discursive communicative act was always short-lived, lasting a few seconds, the level of intimacy it entailed was efficacious. The locking of the eyes and the communication between otherwise complete strangers was particularly powerful, especially since these

acts index the concrete processes through which larger-scale mediated identities, whether a nation or a public, are produced. That is, moments such as these become the basis on which the stranger is rendered familiar and imaginable, thereby suggesting that nations and publics can be conceptualized beyond the confines of print culture and within physical crowds, even in this digital age.

It was not enough for the crowd to be visible through their bodily movements. Orators regularly asked their audiences to be audible as well. For instance, orators commonly ended a point they were making by asking for blessing to be sent to the Prophet Muhammad and his family through a recitation of an incantation known as the *durūd*. In the context of an oratorical performance, the *durūd* allows for a momentarily lapse in the oratory, giving the orator time and opportunity to catch their breath and to collect their thoughts. On many occasions, I witnessed the orators insisting, immediately after a *durūd* that the audience had just finished reciting, that the audience repeat the *durūd* with greater fervor and enthusiasm than that which they had just demonstrated. This insistence on repetition of the *durūd* until a desired level of performance has been reached can be read as an instantiation of the orator's authority in getting their crowds to listen to them. A different analytical understanding would be that the orators recognize the centrality, to the event, of a lively and vocal crowd. However, I would suggest that ensuring a certain level of vigor and participation by the audience is not merely a display of authority or instrumental to a memorable event, but indeed necessary for a successful oration.

The emphasis on bodily movements and sonic participation nods to the long-standing theoretical question about the relationship between forms of participation and the contents of participation. One answer to this question is provided by Vernon Schubel in his ethnography of the Karachi Shiʿa in the early 1980s. Schubel draws upon Victor Turner's notion of *communitas* to conceptualize a *majlis* as a liminal period in which "society is either unstructured or rudimentarily structured and the community is relatively undifferentiated."[33] Schubel, following Turner, suggests that in these ritual moments, the hierarchies that otherwise exist between audience members (socio-economic class, for example) are dissolved and eradicated. In such a reading, the only hierarchical relationship that remains is that between the devotees and the "elders" (or the authority figures, the Imams). Schubel's careful excavation of the soteriological dimension of the ritual performance (or, what does a *majlis* do), leaves the door open for specific questions concerning the ubiquitous bodily movements and sonic participations of the audience members that I have highlighted above.

33 Schubel, *Religious Performance*, 126.

This collective participation of the audience members in similar somatic and sonic practices, I venture, is best understood through Durkheim. In his *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim noted that "it is by shouting the same cry, saying the same words, and performing the same action in regard to the same object that they arrive at and experience agreement."[34] That is, communication between individuals only happens through specific signifiers, meaning that an ideological coming together of a society, the reaching of an agreement or the forming of a consensus, must be accompanied by a material coming together of the individuals that constitute a society. The raising of the hands, the nodding of the heads, and the recitation of the *durūd* all help create, and not simply converge at, instances of ritual efficacy. In each moment, the somatic and the sonic continue to be integral to the performance at hand. Consequently, although discursive aspects of the oration have attracted the bulk of scholarly attention thus far, future scholarship must also attend to the rich material cultures that dominate Shiʿi oratory.

6 Conclusion

Lest my ethnographic observations be termed purely local or itinerant, I will mention that my orators' use of somatic and sonic techniques were informed by at least two broader, historical traditions of performance. The first of these concerns the rich and well-documented Indian theories of affect that scholars identify as *rasa*.[35] *Rasa* is an affect generated in an aesthete, or audience, when the performer, or orator, effectively communicates an emotion. Crucially, *rasa* necessitates an enjoyment of the emotion and cannot simply be the emotion itself. For instance, in the abovementioned examples of orators slapping their thighs, the audiences do not merely bracket this oratorical gesture in terms of a given emotion, whether urgency or helplessness. Indeed, the audiences are able to appreciate and thoroughly ingest the emotion, affirming their *rasa* vocally (through applause) or gesturally (through a raising of hands). Viewed this way, the bodily gestures of Urdu Shiʿi oratory also dovetail well with the recent recognition in South Asian Shiʿi studies of a "Hindustani Shiʿism"[36] or an "Indo-Shiʿism."[37]

34 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 232.

35 On this rich field of study, see Sheldon Pollock, *A Rasa Reader: Classical Indian Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

36 Justin Jones, *Shiʿa Islam in Colonial India: Religion, Community and Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 20.

37 Karen Ruffle, *Everyday Shiʿism in South Asia* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2021), 12.

Second, the somatic and the sonic techniques I am discussing invite a further consideration of a more under-explored but equally important relationship between oratory, or public speaking writ large, and Protestant language ideology. Protestant language ideology is a way of theorizing language where the intentions and meanings of a speaker loom large in a people's understanding of how language works. The emphasis on denotation and reference therefore leads scholars, as well as the subjects they study, to emphasize the utterance of words, the use of phrases, and the considerations of linguistic registers. Bernard Bate's posthumous monograph argues that oratory in South Asia is a fairly new phenomenon, attributed to the 18th–century arrival of various European missionaries in India.[38] Oratorical speaking, Bate notes, carries with it the Protestant impulse of reducing language to text, but, as he shows in the case of Tamil political oratory, a purely textual approach to oratory fails to capture the affective dimensions that make speech particularly memorable.[39]

My ethnographic observations reinforce the historical argument that Bate offers. The somatic and the sonic techniques of the orators and their audiences advance, in preliminary ways, a methodological reconsideration of the hitherto pervasive scholarly emphasis on the purely discursive aspects of oratory. My foregrounding of the centrality of the body to oratorical speaking is an attempt to flesh out the modalities of the materiality of oratory, both visual and aural. As lamented by the epigraph to this chapter, and as the many ethnographic observations, interviews, and textual examples in the past few pages have argued, oration must be attended to holistically and with full consideration of the material cultures that undergird the ritual performance.

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38 Bernard Bate, *Protestant Textuality and the Tamil Modern: Political Oratory and the Social Imaginary in South Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 27–41.

39 Bate, *Protestant Textuality*, 17–18.

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Fatemeh Taheri

Mono- and Dialogicity in Islamic Sermons in German

Abstract: Traditionally, verbal interaction between the preachers and the faithful community during an Islamic sermon has been kept to a minimum. As there is no exchange of information or ideas, the preacher establishes an asymmetric communication with his audience. In contemporary sermons of Twelver Shiʿi Islam conducted in German, however, specific changes occur in the form of interaction these sermons are known for ("monologue").

This article investigates the new elements emerging in this empirical field of communication (e.g., question-and-answer sessions after the sermons, writing the material relevant to the sermons on a whiteboard or changing the social form of sitting in the sermons), as well as the elements that are fading. Moreover, I will discuss the extent to which these changes can lead to the development of new forms of interaction in a sermon, the nature of these forms, and the role the sermon's topic plays in determining the form of interaction.

1 Introduction and the Theoretical Approach

Focusing on linguistics, this article investigates Islamic practical theology. More specifically, I will discuss the use of language in the empirical context of Shiʿi contemporary sermons held in German. As I will demonstrate, the interaction between the speaker and the listener is here influenced by the German language and communication in a usual non-religious German-speaking lecture.

The sermon is one of the central types of texts within the domain of religious communication, and it performs various functions. Each sermon text[1] is shaped according to the form of interaction of those involved. Several interdisciplinary factors are responsible for the variation in this interaction between the participants in a sermon. Examples of such factors include the age and sex of the people involved in the sermon communication, especially of the preacher (sociological

1 "Text" is generally meant as a type of linguistic production, regardless of whether it is produced in writing or orally.

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factors), the expectations of those involved in the communication from each other (psychological factors), and the expediencies of the communication topic (communication science factors). These factors influence the production of the sermon content as well as its reception.

In this paper, the term "form of interaction" is used to designate one of the key factors in the pragmalinguistic context model. This theoretic model is one of the three fundamental approaches to specific language research,[2] originating from different conceptions. What distinguishes the pragmalinguistic context model from the earlier systems-linguistic inventory model and the later cognitive-linguistic function model is that it expands the purview from the lexical and syntactic rules of (specific) language utterances to various conditions under which the utterances themselves are undertaken. Current specific language research pursues a realistic conception of language, rather than an idealistic one.[3]

When integrating forms of interaction from a communication science point of view into the research of Islamic sermon language in German, it is not only the linguistic result that is of interest, but also the general conditions of the religious-cultural interaction that permit this result to emerge. The aim of this paper is to cast light on the observable forms of recipient participation by using selected examples of authentic sermon situations and tracing the tension between dialogue and monologue in the environment in which the verbal contribution takes place.

The questions addressed in this article are as follows: What does the hadith literature of Shiʿi scholars say about the forms of interaction that took place during the sermons of the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams? Some famous sermons are taken as examples. Secondly, how does this interaction unfold during contemporary Shiʿi sermons held in German? What kind of communicative interaction takes place between the two parties of a sermon (the religious expert and laypeople)? Which new forms or elements of interaction can be identified in current practices, and to what extent can they be established as a modified form of interaction of the sermon or even as a substitute of it?

Following this introduction, I begin by describing my methodological approach. Next, I examine my observations from the field. Based on these observations, I then discuss four distinct new forms of interaction in the practice of preaching today. Finally, the article closes with a conclusion.

2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Deutsch als Fremd- und Fachsprache (DAFF).

3 Cf. Thorsten Roelcke, *Fachsprachen* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2020), 13–28.

2 The Empirical Field

Shiʿi communities and religious centers in Germany are currently witnessing a proliferation of German-language programs. The Shiʿa is a subdivision of the Muslim faith, and because of their smaller numbers in comparison to the Sunni community, they often come together for collective religious practices such as preaching, regardless of their different nationalities. Sunni communities in Germany generally have better access to the necessary infrastructure to establish their own communities or to carry out their religious community practices. In these settings, communication either takes place solely in a non-German language (especially Turkish), or, if German is used, this happens only in exceptional cases. On the other hand, Shiʿi community members typically speak various foreign languages (for example Persian, Urdu, Arabic, Turkish or Azeri). Therefore, there is a practical need for a common language as a connecting means of communication at religious gatherings that results in the use of German. This is the reason why this study focuses on Shiʿi German-speaking communities.

Berlin is home to one of the largest Shiʿi communities in Germany. Sermons in German are conducted by well-known personalities in the communities who both speak German fluently and have the theological and legal qualifications required for preaching. However, there is considerable variation regarding the second or foreign language(s) they speak, as well as among their stylistic and rhetorical language skills. When choosing the preachers for this study, I took care to ensure that they all had a certified degree in theology, that they had been confirmed by the German Shiʿi umbrella organization,[4] and that their sermons enjoyed a certain degree of popularity. The selected sample of sermons were conducted in the second half of 2018 in different communities in Berlin. The preachers chose the subject of their sermons according to the thematic focus and the historical occasion of the gathering. However, they are not affiliated with one single mosque.

The methodology used in this study was participant observation. The meetings took place not only in mosques, but also in the Islamic centers of Berlin. During the sermons, I sat among the women, who were either separated from the men by a curtain or folding door, or else in the same room with them but on the separate seats to the right or left. In all instances, all listeners had visual access to the preacher.

I recorded the sermons (with permission from the preachers) so that I could review the preachers' speech and the audiences' comments. At the same time, I took notes when I noticed actions, gestures, conversations, physical movements, or relevant information about space and time that bore a relation to the

4 Islamische Gemeinschaft Schiitischer Gemeinden Deutschlands (IGS).

interaction. Finally, for better visualization in this article, I took some pictures of different forms of interaction in the sermons.

Based on empirical research on the environment of Shiʿi collective practices, the present work explores the different forms of interaction that take place between the preacher and the audience of sermons. This research only considers the interaction that took place during the sermons and their social form. It may be the case that the listeners exchanged ideas after the sermon was over, or that they even continued to discuss the sermon's content and topics at meals and in private conversations with each other. This, however, is not the subject of the present analysis. Finally, I will note that the direct quotations from the sermons in this work are taken from the sermon corpus of this study and can be made available if necessary. Unless otherwise specified, all translations from German to English are my own.

3 The Diversity of Forms of Interaction

The Arabic term for the sermon (*khuṭba*) stems from the etymological root *kh-ṭ-b*, placing it in the same word family as the term *khiṭāb* ("to address") in Arabic. The etymology of the word indicates that the Islamic sermon speech is produced in one side and addresses the opposite side. It clearly indicates the juxtaposition of the speakers and listeners. Traditionally, the word implies no mutual exchange of information or ideas.

This etymology of the term *khuṭba* applies to the form of interaction historically practiced in the form of monologue. According to the Shiʿi hadith on the sermons at the time of the Prophet and the twelve Shiʿi Imams, these sermons contained hardly any interrupting comments, reflections, actions, practices, etc. on the part of the audience. The sermon of *Khuṭba al-Ghadīr Khum*,[5] delivered by the Prophet Muhammad on 18 Ḏū l-Ḥijja, 10/March 16, 632, the sermon *Fadakiyya,* delivered by his daughter Fatima shortly after his death on 13 Rabīʿ al-awwal, 11/June 8, 23, 632,[6] and the sermon *Muttaqīn*, delivered by ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 41/661), are examples of sermons preserved in traditional Shiʿi sources.[7] All of these sermons have been written down and passed on as self-contained texts.

5 "Rede des Propheten Muhammad (s.) zu Ghadir Chum," Enzyklopädie des Islam, accessed May 31, 2023, http://www.eslam.de/manuskripte/reden/rede_ghadir_chumm.htm.

6 "Rede Fatimas (a.) nach der Enteignung durch Abu Bakr," Enzyklopädie des Islam, accessed May 31, 2023, http://www.eslam.de/manuskripte/reden/rede_fatimas2.htm.

7 See Fatima Özoguz, *Nahdsch-ul-Balagha. Pfad der Eloquenz. Aussagen und Reden Imam Alis (a.). Gesammelt und zusammengestellt von Scharif Radhi Muhammad ibn Hussain.* 2 vols. Bremen: Eslamica, 2007/2009.

The present analysis of mono- and dialogicity focuses mainly on contemporary forms of interaction that take place during sermons. Nevertheless, it should be noted that according to the Shiʿi sermons of the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams, as well as according to later scholarship up to the present day, it generally appears that they also engaged in various forms of interaction with each other. A well-known example of this is the sermon collection that carries the title "Ask me before you lose me" (Arabic: *salūnī qabl an tafqidūnī*). Although the statements of ʿAli ibn Abī Ṭālib[8] mentioned therein are handed down as part of the 189th sermon in his *Nahj al-balāgha*, they do not themselves constitute a sermon. *Salūnī qabl an tafqidūnī* is not classified as belonging to speeches, letters, or aphorisms. Rather, the collection contains detailed answers to various questions that were asked orally at different times,[9] which is why the editor/publisher of *Nahj al-balāgha,* Sayyid Raḍi, did not include it in his collection of ʿAli's sermons. The questions and answers of ʿAli were only later collected by the Shiʿi commentators to *Nahj al-balāgha* in Persian, such as Ibn al-Ḥadīd, Āyatullāh Javādī Āmolī, and Alī Davānī.

Today, several individually or collectively practiced forms of communication and interaction take place between Shiʿi scholars and the faith community, among which only the forms of interaction during the sermon can be considered within the scope of the present study. Below, I discuss four identified forms of interaction.

3.1 Monologue

In Shiʿi communities in Germany, German-language sermons are not necessarily held as obligatory Friday sermons. Above all, event-related meetings—in many cases, also on weekday evenings or during the weekend—contain corresponding sermons, which constitute the core content of the entire program. In this sense, the program, announced in advance by (online) flyers, begins with Qur'an recitation. This is often followed by congressional prayer, which precedes the sermon. The sermon, in turn, is often followed by celebration or mourning songs. The gathering ends with a shared meal (coffee/cake, catering, breaking the fast, etc.).

The flow of sermon speech in contemporary German-language Shiʿi sermons in Germany, which typically last from 20 to over 60 minutes, is by and large not interrupted by comments or statements from listeners. Thus, the sermon speech remains almost unaffected by external feedback. Similar to a teacher-centered instruction

8 He is said to have made these statements in 37/661 in the mosque in Kufa (Masjid al-Kūfa al-muʿaẓẓam).

9 "Saluni Qabl an Tafqiduni," Wikishia, accessed July 05, 2023, https://en.wikishia.net/view/Saluni_Qabl_an_Tafqiduni

session, there is hardly any opportunity for the audience to balance the material conveyed with their comments since "the balance in the distribution of roles (. . .) can shift very much in favor of the teacher."[10] In rare cases, the sermon might be briefly interrupted by short comprehension or supplementary questions.

If the sermon forms a self-contained unit due to this form of interaction, the sermon corpus has the specific language property of coherence in the area of the text. Although the coherence of the sermons varies according to each preacher's subjective theological and linguistic competence, the sermon topics are almost always introduced first. These topics are then discussed in detail, and a summary is usually provided at the end. The coherence of the sermons becomes a characteristic of the preacher's linguistic production as long as there is no immediate verbal expression by the group of recipients.

The form of interaction in this group of sermons corresponds to a large extent with the classic monological orientation between the participants of communication.[11] The classification of these sermons as a monologue can lead to controversial views about the mono- and dialogicity of the linguistic productions. For example, Per Linell contrasts monologistic with dialogistic attitudes, calling the first an example of "written language bias."[12] Such designations depend on how narrowly or broadly the concepts of dialogue or interaction are understood. The concepts are understood in a narrow sense in isolated cases of linguistic research.[13] In sociological research, on the other hand, we find a rather broad understanding of dialogue.[14] This view perceives every utterance as inherently dialogical simply because it takes place between at least two parties and the receiving party is also considered to influence the shaping of the content.[15]

10 Rosemarie Buhlmann and Annelise Fearns, *Handbuch des Fachsprachenunterrichts. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung naturwissenschaftlich-technischer Fachsprachen* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2000), 159.

11 Christian preaching is often discussed in terms of its monological vs. dialogical character. However, dialogical or interactive elements are also found in the contemporary Christian sermon context (for more details see Carolin Dix, *Die christliche Predigt im 21. Jahrhundert. Multimodale Analyse einer Kommunikativen Gattung* (Bayreuth: Springer VS open access, 2021).

12 Per Linell. *Rethinking Language, Mind, and World Dialogically*. *Interactional and Contextual Theories of Human Sense-Making* (Charlotte: IAP, 2009).

13 On the forms of questions in written sermon manuscripts from a functional-grammatical perspective, see for example Hans Malmström, "What is your darkness? An empirical study of interrogative practices in sermonic discourse," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 19/2, 2015.

14 See for example Ruth Ayaß, *Das Wort zum Sonntag. Fallstudie einer kirchlichen Sendereihe* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1997).

15 Cf. Martin Buber, *Das Dialogische Prinzip* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014), 286.

If we use a narrowly defined concept of interaction where it is considered to be entirely monological, the analysis of sermon practice cannot go far. In this case, a monologue cannot be called an "interaction" because there are no verbal contributions to the conversation from the receiving party. Likewise, it would make no sense to describe monological sermons as "any kind of human sense-making, semiotic practice, action, interaction, thinking or communication,"[16] or in a broader sense as dialogue, simply because it addresses the audience.[17]

The audience is expected to listen to the words of the sermon in uninterrupted silence and without indulging in verbal interaction with the other listeners. At the same time, the preacher-listener-interaction is implicit in the process, even in the monologue sermons, by a minimum of recognizable speaker change sequences like the collective peace greetings (*Salawat*). In addition, eye contact and nonverbal reactions such as shaking the head, nodding, laughing, etc. are essential components of worship (see Figure 1), but they might simply become ritualized, institutionalized, and staged elements of dialogue.[18]

Figure 1: Example of the form of interaction of the monologue.

16 Linell, *Rethinking Language*, 5 ff.

17 Linell, *Rethinking Language*, 13.

18 Cf. Elisabeth Gülich, "Dialogkonstitution in institutionell geregelter Kommunikation," in *Dialogforschung. Jahrbuch 1980 des Instituts für deutsche Sprache*, ed. Peter Schröder and Hugo Steger (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1981), 441.

Although in the Islamic sermon context it is also considered relevant, desired, and promising to foster interaction with the audience,[19] the interactive contribution expected from the audience is reduced to the openness on the part of each listener to the content of the sermon. Active and verbal participation in the sermon is rarely expected.

3.2 Lecture

Parallel to the monologue form of interaction, there are sermons that deviate from this pattern in certain respects and have the characteristics of a conventional (specific) *lecture* that is presented orally. This type of sermon is followed by question-and-answer rounds or separate discussion times (German: *Frage-Antwort/Disskusionsrunde*). They form a regular part of any presentation outside the arena of religious communication.[20] In this way, the listeners become more involved in the sermon situation. Although their comments play no role in shaping the main part of the sermon, such verbal interactions at the end of the sermon have no equivalent in the Shiʿi sermon tradition. During the discussion, the faith community contributes to the sermon's content by providing concrete references relating to everyday topics.

In this interaction, micro-level control over who speaks and when appears to rest with the preacher, though not in the sense that he exercises an authoritarian leadership. Randall Collins describes the sermons as intellectual lectures:

> Controlling who gets to speak is the principal mode of enacting authority on the micro-level; any boss, chief, high-ranking officer, or authoritarian parent also can control such a one-way structure of discourse. Other IRs (interaction ritual) are closer to intellectual lectures: political speeches, sermons, entertainments, and commemorative addresses. A speaker holds the floor for fairly long periods and, he or she hopes, the rapt attention of a large audience.[21]

19 Cf. Sharīatī Sabzevārī and Mohammad Bāgher. *Khotbeh wa khatābeh dar eslām* (Qom: Bustān-e ketāb, 2013), 488.

20 Cf. Holger Doetsch, "Die perfekte Präsentation," in *Medienmanagement. Bd. 4: Gesellschaft – Moderation & Präsentation – Medientechnik*, ed. Otto Altendorfer and Ludwig Hilmer (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 141–45.

21 Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies. A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 26.

The introduction of a question-and-answer session at the end of the sermon does not significantly alter the monological nature of the sermon itself. Nevertheless, the form of interaction of this religious practice changes to a lecture-like gathering as a result of it. The extent to which a particular sermon can be classified as a monologue or a lecture depends on various communicative and socio-cultural aspects. For example, its form raises the question of how men and women should behave during discussion time. While the men raise their hands and speak in turn, small pieces of paper and pens are distributed among the women, who are given adequate time to write their questions. Next, the slips of paper are collected and submitted to the preacher, who reads them aloud and answers them. The members of the faith in various communities adhere to this habitus. In the sense introduced by Pierre Bourdieu, "habitus" is here understood as the behavior that shapes the structure of the entire social environment. The incorporation of this behavior (or how the behaviors of female and male questioners should differ from each other in a sermon) takes place through socialization and therefore happens unconsciously.[22] The fact remains, however, that the listening layperson—even at the end of the sermon—does not seem to have much of a claim to offering critical feedback or contradictions to the sermon's content (or parts of it). The preacher himself does not ask for feedback, opening only for questions.

If the sermon is considered an expert contribution, no evaluation will be attached to it. The sermon's content is not adapted to the wishes of the recipients in advance, so there is no (open) verifiable evaluation immediately after the sermon that would show to what extent the audience felt addressed or was interested in it as they listened to the sermon. The preaching language producer can only get a rough sense of audience approval. The listeners do not express their own opinions openly and directly. Even with sermons that are closer to the lecture format than to the monologue, the relationship of respect and distance to the religious expert ultimately dominates the interaction, and both sides of communication appropriately maintain this professional hierarchy.

Traditional sources in Shiʿi literature highly value obedience and respect for teachers, an ideal which regulates the normative behavior of all sermon participants. The high status of a knowledgeable and wise teacher as well as the tasks/duties of the listeners towards them is explained in some of the most important works. Among other sources, the "Treatise on Rights" (*Risālat al-Ḥuqūq*) states that:

22 Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 280.

> The teacher's right over you is that you value him, show respect to his congregation, listen carefully to what he says, pay attention to him, do not raise your voice to him, and when anyone asks him a question, you do not answer it, rather let him answer, do not speak in his presence (rather let people benefit by listening to him and not you), do not speak behind anyone in his presence, when someone speaks behind him in front of you, defend him, cover his faults, reveal his merits, do not make friends with his enemies, foster no enmity with his friend. If you do so, the angels will testify that you respected your teacher and gathered knowledge for the sake of God and not for the attention of the people.[23]

Based on the religious-cultural relationship between the preacher and those listening to the sermon, the unequal distribution of power/hierarchy and the resulting responsibility of superiors is not only expected and accepted, but is also valued as a virtue.[24]

3.3 Lessons

The question of when the form of interaction in the sermon more closely resembles the classic monologue and under what conditions it is more similar to a lecture followed by question-and-discussion rounds or other forms of interaction is mainly determined by the sermon topic. The field observations make it clear that the topics dealt with in the sermons often have great potential to determine the form of interaction in the sermon. The sermon participants interact with each other through a communication form similar to the form found in teaching contexts.

In the case of the forms of interaction of monologue and lecture (see 3.1 and 3.2), the formal rules of order for public speech apply. In the typology of specific text types, two conceptual dimensions are distinguished within a continuum. While high cohesion and coherence are usually attributed to the written text types,[25] a fairly clear structure can be observed in the sermons. There is the beginning of the sermon, the course of the sermon, and the end of the sermon. These different parts demonstrate a formal and functional connection. While the preacher's commitment to the topic announced in advance is the only measure subject to a limited assessment, the communication topic ultimately presented remains largely self-contained and specific to the respective sermons. In an instructional sermon, one should be cautious about evaluating the cohesion of the

23 ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥussayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (ca. 700 n. Chr./2011), 13. *Risālat al-Ḥuqūq Ḥuqūq* [dt. Sendschreiben über die Rechte], trans. Roland Pietsch (Bremen: Islamica, 2011).

24 Cf. Buhlmann and Fearns, *Handbuch des Fachsprachenunterrichts*, 375 ff.

25 Cf. Roelcke, *Fachsprachen*, 63.

sermon due to more frequent interruptions, turbulent conversation, and the consequent changes in the text type.

While perceiving the form of interaction of some sermons as instruction could until recently (in 2018) only be considered an empirical observation or a conjecture, currently (in 2022) the use of the term "lessons" (German: *Unterricht*) for sermons seems to have found its place among the faith community itself.

Figure 2: Example of the form of interaction of the lesson.

Aḥkām (Islamic rules relating to ritual practices) make up a significant portion of the entire sermon semantics. The manner of the (valid or correct) performing of *wuḍūʾ* and *ghusl* (ritual ablution), the details of the commandment of ritual purification (Ex. 1), and the mandates in cases of doubt about the correct performance of the prayer (Ex. 2) are among the topics of certain sermon passages whose explanation require a two-way preacher-listener interaction. In these cases, the sermon is more engaged with the listeners, leading to openings for questions and comments from the audience in the sermon, if this is still the right term to use for the interaction in this case. The interruptions are also dealt with flexibly. The

transformation from preaching monologue to lecture or lesson constructions[26] affects the form, content and function of the text as a whole. For example, a sermon with the interaction form "lesson" usually lasts much longer than if it takes place in monologue. The effect of the form of interaction on the content is so crucial that, within the same sermon, different forms of interaction appear one after the other as the preacher addresses different topics.

The exemplary Shiʿi sermon begins with more abstract content about the principle of compliance and finding justice in monologue format. After the discussion of this topic and before the sermon arrives at the topic of ritual purification after a slight transition, the interaction gradually transforms into the lesson format.[27] These sections are clearly distinguishable from each other. The communication changes here from the sermon construction to the lecture or the lesson. Buhlmann and Fearns differentiate between lectures within the humanities versus within the natural sciences and claim that the lectures within the humanities are usually purely audio texts (*Hörtext*) that do not require any visual support.[28] If one differentiates between the two above-mentioned thematic sermon parts, it is questionable whether the same can be asserted about the sermons and whether the sermon as a whole can fruitfully be categorized as a humanities text type.

While the speech in the monologue format carries on in an uninterrupted fashion, the preacher leaves his seat (minbar) to change the format. Normally, the preacher stands up to use visual elements, enhancing the comprehensibility of the contents of the sermon. After a short introduction to the topic, the preacher fills in the table he has drawn on the whiteboard, while holding a notebook in his hand and making explanations.[29] Papers, pens, and mobile phones (which are often used to record the sermon) can be seen amongst the audience. This illustrates that the new elements that are added to this communication (such as the use of media) in the transformation from the sermon with monologue format into more of a lecture or lesson situation not only affects the speaker, but also the audience.

What is remarkable about this form of interaction is that the contact between the preacher and the faith community continues *after* the sermon session through the digitization of the content and the photos (see Figure 3) on the Facebook page of the congregation benefits both those who were physically present as well

26 For other microstructural specific language properties in the area of the text, e.g. topic structure, various types of conclusions, as well as recurrence and isotopy, see Roelcke, *Fachsprachen*, 140–42.

27 These two formats are not mentioned in chronological order. Questions regarding *Aḥkām* have sometimes been dealt with at the beginning and other times at the end of the sermon.

28 Buhlmann and Fearns, *Handbuch des Fachsprachenunterrichts*, 65.

29 For various examples, see "al-Irschad Jugend."

as all other interested parties who were absent from the sermon and might visit the Facebook page later. The community organizers mediate this exchange.

Example 1:

> Just as a little introduction so we know what it's all about: How do I ritually clean something? How can I purify something, make it *ṭāhir* [clean, pure]? Then we go straight to this table. It's not the table of the World Cup final match or anything. It's about the water. (. . .) Water is divided into several categories in Islam and I will only go into it very briefly so that we know the technical terms. [Completes the table cells at the same time.] The water is divided into 1. Absolute; in Arabic we call it *mā' al-muṭlaq*: absolute pure clean water. (. . .) We explain everything here theoretically first and then I will go into specific examples. (. . .) Here in the first row and the first box we have the nature of ritual impurity.

Reinigung der Kleider:

Bedingung	Mit Regen	Mit viel/fließend Wasser[2]	Mit wenig Wasser	Art der Unreinheit
Nach dem Entfernen der ursächlichen Unreinheit	**Ein Mal**	**Ein Mal mit Würgen o.ä** (vorsichtshalber verpflichtend)[1]	**Zwei Mal mit Würgen o.ä**	**Urin**
Nach dem Entfernen der ursächlichen Unreinheit	**Ein Mal**	**Ein Mal mit Würgen o.ä** (vorsichtshalber verpflichtend)[1]	**Einmal mit Würgen o.ä**	**Nicht – Urin**

Reinigung des Körpers:

Bedingung	Mit Regen	Mit viel/fließend Wasser	Mit wenig Wasser	Art der Unreinheit
Nach dem Entfernen der ursächlichen Unreinheit	**Ein Mal**	**Ein Mal**	**Zwei Mal**	**Urin**
Nach dem Entfernen der ursächlichen Unreinheit	**Ein Mal**	**Ein Mal**	**Ein Mal**	**Restliche Unreinheiten**[3]

Figure 3: Table drawn on the whiteboard during a Shi'i sermon.[30]

30 Here, *würgen* (strangle) is equivalent to *auswringen* (wring out). Image source: The table is published online. See "al-Irschad Jugend."

Example 2:

> Now I'm coming to this *shak*-story [doubt] because it is asked a lot, so I thought it was important to address it. (. . .) As I have been teaching for the past few years, I've noticed that it's easiest to do everything in the form of a table (. . .) First of all, what does *shak* mean? This means I have doubts as to whether I'm in the third or fourth *rak'a* prayer section. Or am I in fourth or fifth? Or second or third? (. . .) There are only nine cases where there is a solution; in all other [doubts] the prayer would be invalid.

The use of visual support (in this case, using the whiteboard during the sermon) depends to a certain extent on the personal decision of the speaker and their corresponding presentation style.[31] Therefore, other preachers might deal with questions relating to *aḥkām* without recourse to such teaching aids. However, visual support is not limited to the use of media, which figures within the framework of a sermon format similar to that of a lesson. The sermons often contain passages categorized as monologue that seem almost incomprehensible to the listeners without the preacher's visual accompaniment. Physical forms of expression and gestures also belong to the "explicit expression of the available communicative codes."[32] In the third example, the preacher demonstrates a "metaphorical gesture"[33] which not only contributes to supplementing the spoken sermon passage, but also contains information content[34] essential for understanding. It is claimed that when speaking, the Prophet Muhammad used gestures that were then handed down to the preachers, and that these gestures are imitated by the preacher in the same function when quoting the Prophet.

Example 3:

> Then comes the narration on *al-thaqalayn* [the two weighty things]. The Prophet at this point proclaims the inseparability or inextricability of the chosen offspring, the *ahl al-bayt* [the Prophet's family] and the Qur'an. In this narration from al-Qomi, he (the Prophet) puts his fingers together and says: The two [the preacher places two index fingers of both hands side by side] are connected, inextricably intertwined, just as these two fingers are connected to each other. And I don't say like this [places the index and middle fingers of one hand next to each other] but like this [repeats the first gesture]. So not that one towers over the other.

31 Cf. Buhlmann and Fearns, *Handbuch des Fachsprachenunterrichts*, 65.

32 Alexander Lasch and Wolf-Andreas Liebert, "Sprache und Religion," in *Handbuch Sprache und Wissen*, eds. Ekkehard Felder and Andreas Gardt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 486.

33 See David McNeill, *Hand and Mind: What Gestures Reveal About Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

34 See McNeill, *Hand and Mind*.

Regarding the oral communication of the sermon, the effects of several paralinguistic signs (such as facial expressions and gestures) on the recipient are also relevant in addition to the non-verbal signs. These include, for example, speech rate, "intonation, pitch modulation, volume"[35] and other prosodic parameters such as pauses, audible inhalation or stretching of a syllable.[36] In these respects, the preachers differ from one another, using these methods to varying degrees.

Some preachers frequently ask the audience to greet the Prophet and his family (*ṣalawāt*). The preacher pronounces his greeting wish with a melody that is intended to mark the division between two sections of his sermons. With the greeting of peace performed in the choir, the preacher also involves the audience in separating his speech sections from one another and thus structuring the entire contents of the sermon. The sermons by certain preachers are characterized in several instances by more emotionally charged statements. In terms of subject matter, these are often social criticisms that demonstrate a strong appellative function and that are discussed from a religious perspective. In this case, the congregational audience present is considered to be representative of the entire faith community and is addressed from a critical point of view, which requires comparatively more frequent high pitch during the sermon. The increase in the tone of the sermon and the rate of speaking are most common in those cases where a phenomenon affecting the entire faith community is being problematized, for example divisions among Muslim "brothers and sisters" due to different nationalities.

It is not uncommon for the non-verbal elements in the sermons to be ascribed what almost amounts to a priority in relation to the arguments expressed verbally. Charles Hirschkind quotes a preacher interviewed in his empirical field, Muhammad, who argues that even if a preacher's way of reasoning is deficient for certain reasons, he "would judge the tape valuable on the basis of the quality of the sincerity, humility, and pious fear given vocal embodiment by the speaker."[37] In addition, the preacher points out that appreciating a sermon or its recording is not a purely intellectual or cognitive decision: "In the course of listening to a sermon, he would continuously give expression to the sermon's ethical movements through facial expressions, postural shifts, subtle gestures of the hand, even his breathing."[38] Fur-

35 Buhlmann and Fearns, *Handbuch des Fachsprachenunterrichts*, 399.

36 Beatrix Schönherr, *Syntax – Prosodie – nonverbale Kommunikation. Empirische Untersuchungen zur Interaktion sprachlicher und parasprachlicher Ausdrucksmittel im Gespräch* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997), 273.

37 Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape. Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 12 ff.

38 Hirschkind, *Ethical Soundscape*, 12.

thermore, a so-called musicality in the sermons cannot be reduced to the simple aesthetic accompaniment of a discursively formed content. Rather, it is considered to be a "necessary condition for sermonic speech and for ethical action more generally, as the expressive repertoires learned through repeatedly listening to such tapes were integral to the forms of sociability and practical reasoning"[39] by many Muslim sermon listeners.

3.4 Conversation/Panel Discussion/Dialogue

Currently, the congregations in the empirical field are increasingly experiencing new forms of interaction in German-language Shiʿi sermons, where previous forms of interaction are being replaced by new ones. If the form of interaction of a sermon is announced as a "conversation" (*Gespräch*), significant changes in the spatial constellation can be observed at the gathering. These changes can seriously call into question the permanent designation of such meetings in the mosque as "sermons."[40]

Not only is there no hierarchical seating arrangement based on the minbar, whereby the scholar used to be separated from the listeners according to his professional and social status and sits in front of the listeners, but also there is no longer a self-contained speech on his part, since the announced topic (for example the "birthday of the Prophet Muhammad"[41]) is treated in a dialogue with a moderator.

The role of the moderator is filled by one of the community members, who discusses the relevant topic with a scholar in front of the audience. The moderator's questions act as subtopics that divide the scholar's speech into different sections based on the content of each part. The scholar's share of the conversation is significantly higher than that of the moderator. A delicate change in the traditional sermon hierarchy can be observed, particularly when the preacher begins his response to the questions. In this form of interaction, the presence of the moderator enables two social forms: moderator-speaker modality and moderator-two-speakers modality. In the second case, a subject is treated in relation to different thematic emphases by both scholars.

39 Hirschkind, *Ethical Soundscape*, 13.

40 See for example "al-Hadi Jugend-Markaz Rasulullah," Facebook, accessed June 1, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/alhadijugend/photos.

41 See for example "al-Hadi Jugend."

4 Evaluation and Prospects

In the empirical environment of contemporary Shiʿi German-language sermons, one can still find many defining communicative-interactive properties that have been preserved and carried out in the traditional form of Islamic sermons for centuries. At the same time, the demand for efficiency and effectiveness of the sermon speech is increasing, which means that the interaction with the audience has become more important. As a result of this intentional empowerment of the audience, the language of Islamic sermons nationwide has adapted to the needs of the local faith community. These changes demand more efforts on the part of bilingual preachers to improve their capacities to deliver German-language sermons. In addition, they are challenged to enhance their (linguistic) theological skills to adapt themselves to this emerging environment.

Religious practice in this context is currently experimenting with different and new forms of interaction between preacher and listener. The sermon is traditionally performed in the form of a monologue and is known as an uninterrupted speech in which a group of listeners receives a scholar's oral production of speech ("multiple addressing"). At the end of the sermon, there will be a question-and-answer session, similar to a lecture. The whiteboard is sometimes used in the sermon to capture the *aḥkām*-specific, practical quotidian issues in a more systematic and tangible fashion. The preacher leaves his seat and gives the session a lesson-like character. This posture breaks the symbolic hierarchy of the minbar, while the preacher's gestures serve to better convey what is being said. In addition, the seating arrangement of the sermon is modified to incorporate a moderator who conducts a conversation with one or two scholars. The effects of this change of speaker are so noticeable that it seems difficult to create a unified sermon text.

The current transformation in the forms of interaction in Shiʿi sermons is considered a change to the norms of sermon tradition. While the norms and motivations of Shiʿi scholars are largely consistent with the ideals of the technical premise of improving communication,[42] the improvement in communication is limited to the boundaries of monologue and more rhetorical practices, which have shape sermon norms up to the present.

It may be the case that the transformation of interaction forms is a result of the German language of the sermon or the sermon style of the preacher, since the non-German-speaking sermons in the same congregations and even with the

42 For detailed information on the advantages of the technical linguistic integration of interdisciplinary research approaches, see Roelcke, *Fachsprachen*, 27 ff.

same preachers rarely demonstrate the same changes. The interactive form of the sermon is largely shaped by the preacher's decisions and is related to the sermon's topic (e.g. visual support through the use of a whiteboard during the sermon).

Despite the greater involvement of the listeners in what is happening in the sermon, their questions, comments, messages, and contributions do not (yet) play a direct role in shaping the sermon's content (at least not in its main part). The respect and the personal distance from the religious expert continue to be maintained in the communication interaction.

Finally, the transformation of the self-image of this religious practice is remarkable. Nowadays, the faith community uses the following terms to refer to the gathering at which the religious speech discussed in this article is presented: "lesson," "instruction," "program," "seminar," "event," "lecture," "conversation," "presentation," etc. Because the use of the terms "sermon" and "preacher" is becoming increasingly rare, it seems uncertain that the sermon as a form of interaction will subsist in the long run, at least on the level of word usage in the Muslim communitys' everyday lives.

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Christoph Günther

Conceptualizing Contemporary Audiovisual *Daʿwa*

Abstract: This paper addresses the audiovisual composition of contemporary Muslim preachers' videos. Proposing *audiovisuality* as a conceptual approach, I hope to offer a perspective on this emerging field that helps to improve understanding of contemporary Muslim preachers' audiovisual mediations. These intentional and complex communicative offers are—like other practices of preaching and a variety of other social practices—embedded in a discourse surrounding the negotiation of religious beliefs, norms, and values. In the paper, I describe the concept of audiovisuality and then present four examples to demonstrate how this conceptual approach can be used to explore and better understand the ways in which audiovisual mediations allow media *duʿā* (preachers) to not only participate in the above discourse, but also shape the audience's understanding of Islam and Muslimness in a distinct manner.

1 Introduction

Spreading the message of Islam through word and deed is an important part of Muslim religiosity. The call to all people to confess and serve the one God is expressed through the Arabic term *daʿwa*. Deeply rooted in Qurʾan and sunna, the concept not only carries a rich horizon of meanings ranging from invitation to proselytization, but also imbues notions of theology and sociality.[1] Notwithstanding the complexity and history of the concept as well as its diverse interpretations and expressions, *daʿwa* is, as it were, part of everyday Muslim practice. Moreover, it is manifested especially in the work of those who have dedicated themselves to reaching out to humanity and call others to Islam. Whether embedded in sociore-ligious movements, state-funded structures, institutions of higher religious learning, or lay milieus, preachers (*duʿā* /sing. *dāʿī*) have spawned a host of cultures of preaching the religious message, situated in local contexts as much as they are closely linked to issues of religious (often institutionally confined) authority and

1 Matthew J. Kuiper, *Daʿwa: A Global History of Islamic Missionary Thought and Practice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

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the 'right' interpretation of the scriptures.[2] Beyond these individuals, their life-worlds, biographies, and situatedness in specific socio-political contexts, it also appears that the forms and formats they choose to disseminate their messages are equally significant. Their writings can be found in plain treatises as well as in richly illustrated manuscripts full of brilliant rhetoric, photographs of preachers with an outstanding performative presence, recordings of rousing Friday sermons and immersive videos that impressively teach the Qur'anic text.

During the past five decades, audio-visual mediations of Muslim preaching evolved from the distribution of audio cassettes via religious programs on state-owned television channels in Muslim-majority countries to a great variety of programs available across the globe on satellite TV and a wide range of web platforms. Against the background of growing web literacy and a decreasing digital divide, the internet has been described as a structure that enables a great diversification of Muslim religious mediations, interactions between believers unrestrained by religious authorities, as well as entanglements of the local and the global. In this way, the internet helps to transform religious discourses amidst a plethora of Muslim religious online activities.[3]

2 See Matthew J. Kuiper, *Da'wa and Other Religions*: *Indian Muslims and the Modern Resurgence of Global Islamic Activism,* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2018); Itzchak Weismann and Jamal Malik, eds., *Culture of Da'wa*: *Islamic Preaching in the Modern World* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2020); Simon Stjernholm and Elisabeth Özdalga, eds., *Muslim Preaching in the Middle East and Beyond*: *Historical and Contemporary Case Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

3 Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam*: *How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Gary R. Bunt, *IMuslims*: *Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); M. el-Nawawy and Sahar Khamis, *Islam Dot Com*: *Contemporary Islamic Discourses in Cyberspace,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2009); Thomas Hoffmann and Göran Larsson, "Muslims and the New Information and Communication Technologies: Notes from an Emerging and Infinite Field: An Introduction," in *Muslims and the New Information and Communication Technologies: Notes from an Emerging and Infinite Field*, eds. Thomas Hoffmann and Göran Larsson, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013); Göran Larsson, *Muslims and the New Media*: *Historical and Contemporary Debates* (London: Routledge, 2011); Matthias Brückner and Johanna Pink, eds., *Von Chatraum bis Cyberjihad*: *Muslimische Internetnutzung in lokaler und globaler Perspektive,* (Würzburg: Ergon-Verl., 2009); Heather M. Akou, "Interpreting Islam Through the Internet: Making Sense of Hijab," *Contemporary Islam* 4, no. 3 (2010), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-010-0135-6; Jacquelene Gottlieb Brinton, *Preaching Islamic Renewal*: *Religious Authority and Media in Contemporary Egypt* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016); Anna Piela, *Muslim Women Online*: *Faith and Identity in Virtual Space,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

This process has both been stimulated by as much as it shaped an emerging generation of Muslim preachers. Their characteristics and cultural particularities but also the ways in which their preaching parallels forms of teaching in other religious traditions have been described by a host of terminologies.[4] Despite this terminological and conceptual variety, current scholarship on these actors predominantly evolves around their relation to traditionally established institutions of Muslim religious learning, the measures and goals of their cause, their appearance and demeanor, and around their rhetorical and technological abilities.[5] Additionally, the audio-visual mediations of these preachers are a lens for the ways in which critical junctions between communication technologies and religious discourses, beliefs, and practices correlate with a transformation in content, format, and the relationship of preachers to their audiences who engage with, and make sense of, digital

4 Wāʾil Luṭfī, *Ẓāhirat al-Duʿā l-Judud*: *Taḥlīl Ijtimāʿī: al-DaʿWa, al-Tharwa, al-Shahra* (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa al-Misrīya al-ʿĀmma li-l-KitĀb, 2005); James B. Hosterey, "Marketing Morality: The Rise, Fall, and Rebranding of Aa Gym," In *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, eds. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, "In Defense of Muhammad: *ʿUlamaʾ*, Daʿiya and the New Islamic Internationalism," in *Guardians of Faith in Modern Times*, ed. Meir Hatina (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Yasmin Moll, "Islamic Televangelism: Religion, Media and Visuality in Contemporary Egypt," *Arab Media & Society*, no. 10 (2010), accessed June 2, 2023, https://www.arabmediasociety.com/islamic-televangelism-religion-media-and-visuality-in-contemporary-egypt/; Denis Bekkering, "From 'Televangelist' to 'Intervangelist': The Emergence of the Streaming Video Preacher," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 23, no. 2 (2011); Nabil Echchaibi, "Alt-Muslim: Muslims and Modernity's Discontents," In *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013); Marcia Hermansen, "The Emergence of Media Preachers: Yusuf Al-Qaradawi," in *Islam in the Modern World*, eds. Ebrahim Moosa and Jeffrey T. Kenney (New-York: Routledge, 2014); Yasmin Moll, "Divine Cosmopolitanism: A Reply," *Media, Culture & Society* 38, no. 1 (2016), accessed June 2, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715615416; Joe F. Khalil and Marwan M. Kraidy, *Arab Television Industries* (London: BFI Publishing, 2017); Tuve Floden, "Defining the Media *Duʿā* and Their Call to Action," in "New Islamic Media," ed. Project on Middle East Political Science, Special issue, *POMEPS Studies*, no. 23 (2017); Shaimaa El Naggar, "American Muslim Televangelists as Religious Celebrities: The Changing 'Face' of Religious Discourse." *In Faith and Language Practices in Digital Spaces*, ed. Audrey Rosowky (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2018); Shaimaa El Naggar, "'The Eyes of History Are Looking Upon as a Community': The Representation of Islam and Muslims by the Televangelist Hamza Yusuf," in *Aspects of Performance in Faith Settings: Heavenly Acts*, ed. Andrey Rosowsky (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019); Aaron Rock-Singer, "Neoliberal *Daʿwa:* The Egyptian New Preachers (*al-duʿa al-judud*) and the Restructuring of Transnational Religious Preaching and Practice," in *Culture of Daʿwa*, eds.Weismann and Malik; Simon Stjernholm, "DIY Preaching and Muslim Religious Authority," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 8, no. 2 (2019); Richard Gauvain, "Nothing Has Changed/Everything Has Changed: Salafi *Daʿwa* in Egypt from Rashid Rida to the 'Arab Spring,'" in *Culture of Daʿwa*, eds. Weismann and Malik.

5 See Floden, "Media Duʿā," 10.

media and use them in the context of their faith practices.[6] Complementing their work in local communities, a growing number of Muslim preachers have begun to employ formats such as talk shows, reality programs, music and theatrical performances, alongside an elaborate use of social media platforms and a broad variety of orations to orient their mediations more to the lifeworld, daily experiences, and media practices of their audiences.[7] As digital media, chief among them social media and mobile apps, have become an indispensable and ubiquitous feature of these lifeworlds and people's everyday practices, online and offline religious spheres have become increasingly blended and integrated. In this process, the mediations of contemporary preachers constitute elements of a complex communicative environment in which Muslims across the globe access and arrange a host of digital media in everyday social contexts and social relations to express and negotiate religious values and beliefs. Through their ubiquity, the forms, formats, and contents of these mediations thus appear to be embedded in a particular way in the everyday life and media practices of Muslims. In this way, media not only offers *duʿā* new avenues for conveying religious messages to a wide audience, but also facilitates the emergence of new patterns of interaction and complex ways of communicating between all participants.

This paper addresses the audiovisual composition of contemporary Muslim preachers' videos. I hope to offer a perspective on this emergent field that has received little attention in previous research grounded on interviews with media *duʿā* or an analysis of audiovisual material that focuses on spoken text and sidelines other aesthetic means.[8] I propose *audiovisuality* as a conceptual complement to this

6 Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, 'Ritual Is Becoming Digitalised.' Introduction to the Special Issue on Rituals on the Internet," *Online – Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 2 (2006), https://doi.org/10.11588/REL.2006.1.372; Stuart Hoover and Nabil Echchaibi, "The 'Third Spaces' of Digital Religion," https://thirdspacesblog.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/third-spaces-and-media-theory-essay-2-0.pdf; Heidi A. Campbell and Louise Connelly, "Religion and Digital Media," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Materiality*, ed. Vasudha Narayanan, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020); Heidi A. Campbell, "Surveying Theoretical Approaches Within Digital Religion Studies," *New Media & Society* 19, no. 1 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816649912; Pauline H. Cheong, "Tweet the Message? Religious Authority and Social Media Innovation," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 3, no. 3 (2014), https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-90000059; Erica Baffelli, "Charismatic Blogger? Authority and New Religions on the Web 2.0," in *Japanese Religions on the Internet: Innovation, Representation and Authority*, eds. Birgit Staemmler, Erica Baffelli and Ian Reader, (New York: Routledge, 2011); Giulia Evolvi, *Blogging My Religion*: *Secular, Muslim, and Catholic Media Spaces in Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

7 Echchaibi, "Alt-Muslim," 190; Moll, "Islamic Televangelism."

8 E.g. Moll, "Divine cosmopolitanism," Yasmin Moll, "Screening Faith, Making Muslims: Islamic Media for Muslim American Children and the Politics of Identity Construction," in *Educating the Muslims of America*, eds. Yvonne Y. Haddad, Farid Senzai, and Jane I. Smith (Oxford, New York:

research. I argue that the concept of audiovisuality helps to understand contemporary Muslim preachers' audiovisual mediations as intentional and complex communicative offers that—like other practices of preaching and a variety of other social practices—are embedded in a discourse surrounding the negotiation of religious beliefs, norms, and values. The epistemological interest of this paper is thus in the ensemble of (in)audible and (in)visible elements that structure audiovisual practices of preaching. An analysis of these elements can be useful in exploring the ways in which audiovisual mediations enable preachers to participate in the above discourse. I also assume that the audiovisual mediations of contemporary preachers are not merely illustrated texts set to sounds, but that social actors use audiovisual media because they combine a variety of sensory stimuli and thus create specific opportunities to address audiences. Audiovisual media thus allow them not only to participate in the above-mentioned discourse, but also and more specifically to shape the audience's understanding of the topics covered in a distinct manner.

In what follows, I will first describe the concept of audiovisuality and then present four examples to demonstrate how this conceptual approach can be used to better understand audiovisual mediations of media *duʿā*. My contribution does not provide a comprehensive analysis but rather serves as an exploration and suggestion for an additional perspective on contemporary Muslim preaching practices.

2 On Audiovisuality

Audiovisuality describes a social actor's ability to intersect power and audio-visual representation through the creation of images and sounds that 1.) appeal to individual and collective bodies of knowledge as well as modes of sensation and 2.) present an interpretation of reality that does not appear constructed but rather natural, and hence is ascribed the status of evidence or truth and helps to advance aesthetic legitimation of the actor's cause.[9] The concept is inspired by the work of art histo-

Oxford University Press, 2009); Yasmin Moll, "Television Is Not Radio: Theologies of Mediation in the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (2018); Stjernholm, "DIY Preaching,"; Simon Stjernholm, "Brief Reminders: Muslim Preachers, Mediation and Time," in *Muslim Preaching*, eds. Stjernholm and Özdalga.

9 Christoph Günther and Simone Pfeifer, "Jihadi Audiovisuality and Its Entanglements: A Conceptual Framework," in *Jihadi Audiovisuality and Its Entanglements: Meanings, Aesthetics, Appropriations*, eds. Christoph Günther and Simone Pfeifer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 9–14.

rian Nicholas Mirzoeff who, in his insightful paper "On Visuality,"[10] offers a nuanced discussion of the term, which has seen a wide, almost ubiquitous application in the humanities and social sciences since the advent of the visual turn. Mirzoeff suggests that visuality should not be thought of primarily as merely the set of visible traits of a cultural artifact. Rather, he draws our attention to the ideas of the historian Thomas Carlyle, who coined the term in the mid-19th century in his lectures *On Heroes*.[11] Mirzoeff writes that "visuality was, then, the clear picture of history available to the hero as it happens and the historian in retrospect. It was not visible to the ordinary person whose simple observation of events did not constitute visuality." In this perspective, Mirzoeff argues, "claims to visual subjectivity must always pass by visuality. [. . .] As a keyword for visual culture [visuality encompasses] both a mode of representing imperial culture and a means of resisting it by means of reverse appropriation." Visuality thus transcends mere visual representation and is closely linked to social positions, abilities, claims to interpretative sovereignty over social facts and developments, as well as the power to enforce these claims. It also reminds us that texts, speech acts, images, and videos are not random phenomena, but rather intentional and complex communicative offers. It is through these mediations that we can reconstruct the ways in which social actors seek to create meaning and knowledge.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere in more depth, reflections on vision and listening, that is on seeing and not seeing as well as on audition and inaudition, are central to the conceptualization of videos as expressions of audiovisuality.[12] These are all learned capacities that are constantly being honed. Moreover, they help us to make sense of, order, or categorize visual and audible impressions because they are embedded in specific mediating formations, routines, and contexts. In order to attend to these aspects, I propose to combine and expand on notions of scopic regimes[13] and auditory regimes[14] to make sense of the various registers that social actors appeal to by using auditive and visual elements such

10 Nicholas Mirzoeff, "On Visuality," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2006), https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412906062285.

11 Thomas Carlyle, *The Norman and Charlotte Strouse Edition of the Writings of Thomas Carlyle*: *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993 [1841]), notes and introduction by Michael K. Goldberg, text established by Michael K. Goldberg, Joel J. Brattin, and Mark Engel.

12 Günther and Pfeifer, "Jihadi Audiovisuality."

13 Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*: *Psychoanalysis and the Cinema,* [Repr.] (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 2000 [1977]), trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti.

14 J. Martin Daughtry, *Listening to War*: *Sound, Music, Trauma and Survival in Wartime Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

as postures, "costumes, props, make-up, hairstyle, spaces as a stage or scene (*setting*, in Gofman's terms) to construct images for their sensitive effects."[15] However, I want to stress that our (in)abilities and (limited) horizons of knowledge result in us always perceiving more, and always perceiving less, than what is there to be heard and seen, because our sensations are "rerouted through memory and fantasy, caught up in threads of the unconscious and entangled with the passions."[16] Furthermore, our sensations appear to alter the mediations we encounter and to transform us at the same time. The creation of knowledge and meaning through the sonic and the visual is therefore never static, but rather always in the making, resonating between people and their socially acquired and culturally learned (in)abilities, material artifacts, cultural contexts, and technological mediators. The configurations of people's sensations and their receptivity thus shape the ways in which images and sounds are accorded specific qualities and assume a certain kind of status (e.g. as truth or evidence). This applies regardless of any 'power' inherent in a medium itself to change the social reality by "enchanting or affecting people," that is, to spark emotional, intellectual, and physical responses. It should be remembered, however, that these configurations are contingent on "a recursive feedback loop, subject at any given time to stabilising and destabilising influences."[17]

Against this background, texts, speech acts, images, and videos are understood as intentional and complex communicative offers by media *du'ā* to create meaning and knowledge based on their understanding of how Islam is to be practiced, interpreted, and proclaimed. The concept thus considers that Muslim *da'wa* is a largely actor-centered phenomenon in which individual religious scholarship, performative and rhetorical skills, and social relations are of key importance. At the same time, the concept of audiovisuality facilitates a wider perspective, and a comparative approach emphasizes the relationality characterizing social actors, their mediations, specific religious and social contexts. It also emphasizes the audiences engaging with this material in that it points to the ways in which con-

15 Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*: *Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities* (Aldershot, Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2007), 146.

16 Maaike Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre*: *The Locus of Looking*, Performance Interventions 3 (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1–2.

17 Kyle Grayson and Jocelyn Mawdsley, "Scopic Regimes and the Visual Turn in International Relations: Seeing World Politics Through the Drone," *European Journal of International Relations* 25, no. 2 (2019): 433.

temporary Muslim preachers and their mediations are linked to specific religious and social contexts, how they appropriate the affordances offered by different social media platforms, their modes of media composition and symbolic repertoires, as well as to their interactions with audiences perceiving and interpreting these mediations.

3 Preliminary Case Study: The Audiovisuality of Place

Contemporary Muslim preachers make extensive use of audio-visual mediations as a form of communication, yet they apply different means of pictorial composition in order to place aesthetic mediations at the service of the appeal of divine revelation, Islamic ethics, and devotion.

For this paper, I want to demonstrate this using four examples that are listed as results in a search for a Friday sermon (*khuṭba*) on YouTube.[18] The title of each video contains the Arabic word *khuṭba*. These titles not only indicate the format of this distinct preaching practice, but they also latch onto the horizon of knowledge of the audience about the significance of this markedly formalized practice for the self-understanding of Muslim communities. Beyond this ontological appeal, the categorization of an exhortation as a *khuṭba* may also govern the audiences' expectations as to the procedure of such a sermon, its rhetorical elements and subject matter, the role and conduct of the preacher, as well as the spatial setting. With regards to the latter, that is the choice of space and the positioning of the preacher in it, the selected videos show some of the ways in which contemporary Muslim preachers relate to the conventions of this practice (and the expectations of the audience).

Images from the videos range from a preacher, Muhammad Tim, standing on an ornate minbar in a mosque, via a female preacher, Susanne Dawi, standing in the middle of a plain room in a mosque behind an unadorned lectern, a preacher,

18 At the publisher's express request, no screenshots from the respective videos are reproduced in this article. Interested readers may therefore wish to get an impression for themselves and watch the referenced videos. The URLs are https://www.youtube.com/live/i1lVnT6pqd0, https://youtu.be/hrQ8Dd8CYF8, https://youtu.be/z0o6XrnzMX4, and https://youtu.be/Pwge_NLH2GU. All videos were last accessed on June 2, 2023.

Numan Ali Khan,[19] standing on a modern pulpit with modest wall decorations, to a preacher, Amin Aaser, at a desk in a windowless room that can be used for various functions. While Muhammad Tim, Numan Ali Khan, and Susanne Dawi preach in a space that is identifiable to the audience as a mosque, Amin Aaser addresses his audience in a room that seems to be used for diverse purposes. In addition, we see Muhammad Tim and Numan Ali Khan standing on a minbar, which in the case of the former is perhaps also most clearly recognizable to spectators as a pulpit due to its direct proximity to the prayer niche (*qibla*), while in the second case the preacher stands rather on a spacious gallery. Regardless of the concrete appearance of the podium, in both cases the preacher takes an elevated position.

Three of the four examples suggest that contemporary Muslim preachers (and the people who advise and support them in the production of their media) entitle as *khuṭba* those mediations in which they conform to the convention of a Friday sermon (or homology on the occasion of the two festivals) as a practice of preaching that is tied to a specific space, namely a mosque, where a congregation of believers is present and wherein those delivering the homology take a distinct position in order to address a co-present audience eye-to-eye and likewise receive their attention. These examples thereby conform to and re-affirm what could be called the conventions and standards of this preaching practice, also through the choice of and the position of all participants in an appropriate spatial setting.

At the same time, these examples also demonstrate differences in the interpretation of such standards. Muhammad Tim and Numan Ali Khan standing on a pulpit—regardless of the architectural differences between the two galleries—visually manifest a perhaps conservative understanding of the way a preacher positions himself vis-à-vis the co-present congregation. Both preachers hence shape the knowledge of the audience on site and the mediatization of how a preacher should present himself to the congregation present during a Friday sermon, that is on a prominent spot. It is noteworthy, however, that the camera position resembles this notion only in the case of Muhammad Tim, who is filmed slightly from below, while Numan Ali Khan meets the YouTube viewer almost at eye level. Susanne Dawi's positioning in the room and in relation to the camera's gaze, however, gives the impression that she is meeting the present and mediated audience at the same eye level. She preaches in a mosque and addresses an audience present in the room, but at the same time she does not take an elevated posi-

19 Editor's note: Please find a critical examination of the preacher and scholar Numan Ali Khan in this book's contribution by Margherita Picchi, "Khuṭba Activism against Gender-Based Violence: The Claremont Main Road Mosque's Community *Tafsīr*."

tion in the room and thus certainly—and probably intentionally—enacts what might me be called a more progressive interpretation of the form and function of a Friday sermon. Amin Aaser, on the other hand, performs a disruption with such conventions on another level, as he does not preach to a co-present congregation at all, but addresses a YouTube audience directly, here specifically children in a "khutba for kids." It can be argued that the selected spatial setting and the positioning of the camera accommodate the relationship between the preacher and this specific audience. It seems as if conformity to and re-affirmation of the guidelines for a *khuṭba* had to be secondary in preference to a low-key communicative situation that appears as direct as possible, albeit conveyed through a medium. One may conclude that the channel operators assume that their target audience will acknowledge the specific address as a *khuṭba*, despite the fact that Amin Aaser is seated behind an unadorned desk and positioned in the middle of a windowless room used for multiple purposes. It may also be that the audience is unfamiliar with the conventions of a *khuṭba* and that this term is used synonymously with "sermon" in everyday language. If this is the case, one can demonstrate through this example that the creativity and understanding of contemporary Muslim preachers (and those who help them produce their media) of how best to present the message of Islam to a specific audience has an equal impact on the visual and acoustic composition of videos as well as the messages they convey.

In light of the above reflections on the audiovisuality of these videos, a mosque in this case does not only provide a space that conforms to the conventions of a Friday sermon. As a place where Muslims have gathered since the early days of Islam and constituted themselves as a community through shared and collectively experienced practices, the mosque links the symbolic with the formation and enactment of social identities. This level of meaning is part of the mediation in the videos and is not only conveyed through what is visible, but also through what remains invisible and is audible at the same time. It is not only the sound of the preacher's voice created by the architectural characteristics of a large room and the use of microphones, amplifiers, and loudspeaker systems that can shape the way a YouTube audience perceives and assesses a *khuṭba*. In particular, it is the people, more audible in some videos and less audible in others, who are co-present at the site of the performance. This community of believers confirms through repetition of certain prayer sequences, coughing, whispering, audible movements on the carpet, and many other vocal expressions, that the video is a Friday sermon delivered live to an audience present in a mosque. Their presence thereby reaffirms what is visible on the screen. Secondly, they are an essential

element of a process Victor Turner[20] has termed the creation of *communitas*, in that they give the audience of the mediation, who are likewise, perhaps even equally, the addressees of the sermon, the impression of co-presence and participation in a ritual from which they are separated both in time and space.

Consequently, it is not only the architectural features of the space and other visible elements that create the opportunity for the YouTube audience to recognize and acknowledge this *khuṭba* as such, but also and especially acoustic stimuli and the immersive power they emanate. Visual and acoustic features of the video thus become comprehensible as elements of a composition intended to confirm the claim of the speech act shown here, i.e., a Friday sermon, to legitimacy, authenticity, and authority. For the viewers of the videos, what makes the acknowledgement of this claim possible is the positioning of the preacher in a specific space that conforms to the norms for a Friday sermon, as well as the audible co-presence of a group of people who are both addressees and contributors to the performance conveyed through the digital medium. Whether and to what extent this acknowledgement actually materializes could be explored, for example, through a closer reading of the user comments under the respective videos. This element lies outside the scope of the present chapter.

What media *duʿā* and *dāʿiyāt* allow us to see and hear under the title of *khuṭba* is thus oriented towards the rules for this preaching practice formulated in the works of Muslim scholars and validates these standards both to the audience present and to the viewers of the mediations. At the same time, some contemporary Muslim preachers deviate from these rules, in some cases substantially, and thus shape a divergent understanding of this preaching practice. The ways in which media *duʿā* or *dāʿiyāt* position themselves in a physical space and employ its visual and acoustic features, along with the potential presence of participants, direct the audience's listening and gaze and elicit physical, cognitive, and emotional reactions. Following the theoretical presuppositions of the function of audiovisualities detailed above, we may assume that these elements, among many other variables, shape the ways in which people perceive the practices of preaching described above. The manipulation of audio-visual elements may therefore aid social actors to bolster their audiences' belief in the veracity, authenticity, and authority of their messages.

20 Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*: *Symbolic Action in Human Society*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).

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II **Space and Meaning**

Margherita Picchi

Khuṭba Activism against Gender-Based Violence: The Claremont Main Road Mosque's Community *Tafsīr*

Abstract: This chapter explores Qurʾanic exegesis (*tafsīr*) performed in Friday sermons (*khuṭba*, *khuṭab*) delivered from the pulpit (minbar) of Cape Town's Claremont Main Road Mosque (CMRM) between 2011 and 2020. After a theoretical introduction highlighting the potential and limits of the study of the *khuṭba* as a form of Qurʾanic exegesis, the chapter retraces the historical background and features of CMRM's "community *tafsīr*." It then examines the exegetical framework used in six selected sermons to support the struggle against gender-based violence, an issue that has received a great deal of attention in the last decade, in this mosque and beyond.

1 Introduction

The outbreak of the 1979 Iranian revolution dramatically brought to Western attention[1] the discursive power of the Friday sermon (*khuṭbat al-jumuʿa*) and its rhetori-

1 In line with decolonial criticism, "West" and "Western" are not used in this article to refer to a geographical entity, but rather to the "matrix of power" of Western civilization. See e.g., Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

Note: Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow, Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), University of Freiburg, Centre for Contemporary Islam (CCI), University of Cape Town. Acknowledgments: This chapter arises from the research project: "Khutba Activism in South Africa: A History of the Claremont Main Road Mosque's Community Tafsīr" (2022–2023) funded by the Humboldt Foundation and carried out with the scientific support of the Centre for Contemporary Islam (University of Cape Town) and the Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies (University of Freiburg). The earlier stages of the research leading to this chapter were carried out during a three-year fellowship at the Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose (FSCIRE). I am deeply grateful to the South African Muslim institutions and individuals who granted me access to their archives during my short research trips in Cape Town and Durban: Muslim Views, the Muslim Youth Movement, Fahmi Gameldien, Cassiem Khan, Rashied Omar, Mohammed Groenwald, Mohammed Fakier, Aneesa Vawda and Ashraf Moosa. I am also grateful to those who read or listened to one or another version of this paper and provided me with their constructive criticism: in alphabetic order, Margot Badran (who has graciously suggested the definition of "khuṭba activism"), Andrea Brigaglia, Aslam Fataar, Jaamia Galant, Rashied Omar, Nafisa Patel, Fatima Seedat, and Sa'diyya Shaikh. Naturally, the responsibility for any mistakes or shortcomings still present in this paper is entirely mine.

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cal potential for promoting transformation in Muslim societies.[2] In the following decades, a growing body of academic literature has emerged on the topic of Islamic sermons. An initial preferential focus on the politics of *khuṭab* in Iran rapidly faded during the second half of the 1990s,[3] giving way to a flourishing and diverse literature on Islamic preaching in a wider context.[4] Since the publication of Hirschkind's groundbreaking work on cassette sermons in Egypt,[5] the focus of academic interest has increasingly centered on the aesthetic experience of the practice of preaching. In other words, what matters most to this scholarship is not really *what* the preacher says, but rather *how* he says it.[6] While this approach represents a much-needed departure from the almost exclusive "modern scholarly preoccupation with content over a premodern evaluation of form,"[7] this has meant that the role of the Qurʾan in sermons has been mostly explored through the analysis of the aesthetic dimensions of its recitation, while there is a serious lack of scholarly work on the sermons as a form of Qurʾanic exegesis (*tafsīr*).

This lack of scholarly interest in the exegetical aspect of sermons is hardly surprising. As Johanna Pink has recently remarked, "the interest of Western Islamicists in *tafsīr* [. . .] was not very high until the 2000s,"[8] and this none-too-high scholarly interest has been mostly devoted to *tafsīr* as a *textual genre* (i.e., Qurʾanic commentaries), rather than *tafsīr* as a *textual practice*. There is also little communication between scholars who focus on the intellectual history of Islam, whose methodology is rooted in the Orientalist approach and has little concern

2 See, for example, Patrick Gaffney's seminal *The Prophet's Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

3 E.g., Heidar Azondaloo, "Formalization of Friday Sermons and Consolidation of the Islamic Republic in Iran," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 12–24; Haggay Ram, *Myth and Mobilization in Revolutionary Iran: The Use of the Friday Congregational Sermon* (Washington, DC: The American University Press, 1994).

4 E.g., Richard Antoun, *Muslim Preachers in the Modern World: A Jordanian Case Study in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Jonathan Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Medieval Authority in the Medieval Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Max Stille, *Islamic Sermons and Public Piety in Bangladesh: The Poetics of Popular Preaching* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2021).

5 Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

6 See, e.g., Sabine Dortmüller et al., *Religion and Aesthetic Experience: Drama—Sermons—Literature* (Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2018).

7 Linda Jones, *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.

8 Johanna Pink, "*Tafsīr* as Discourse: Institutions, Norms and Authority," in *Deconstructing Islamic Studies*, ed. Majid Daneshgar and Aaron W. Hughes (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2020), 55.

for anything other than written texts, and those who direct their attention towards the practice of Islamic preaching and explore rituals, material culture, emotions, and bodily practices while generally eschewing content analysis, precisely because this is the almost exclusive focus of text-based approaches. This split reproduces the Cartesian dualism between the immaterial mind and the material body; a paradigm that is still very much alive despite the strong criticisms of it that have emerged in the fields of both neuroscience and the humanities.[9] The increasing compartmentalization of knowledge in Western academia has surely also contributed to this lack of communication. Consequently, "a methodology that can bridge these disciplinary boundaries remains to be articulated," as the editors of this volume have noted in their introductory chapter.

The earliest and most notable exception to this generalized tendency to overlook *tafsīr* in sermons can be found in the work of the South African scholar Abdulkader Tayob. In his 1999 book *Islam in South Africa*, Tayob defined the *khuṭba* as the occasion for a Qurʾanic "re-citation," that "recalls and reproduces, however dimly, the divine irruption in seventh-century Arabia."[10] Throughout the book, Tayob explores the performance of Friday sermons in South Africa, centering his analysis on two mosques which were chosen as representative of their respective local traditions: Cape Town's Claremont Main Road Mosque (CMRM), and the Brits Mosque, which is located in a small town not far from Pretoria. If the latter is described as an example of "orthodoxy" in "its periphery," the former is chosen as a symbol of progressivism (or even "iconoclasm") among South African Muslims.

In his comparison of *tafsīr* performed in *khuṭab* that were delivered during South Africa's momentous years of transition from apartheid to democracy (1989–1994) by Imam Rashied Omar from CMRM and four other regular preachers of the Brits Mosque, Tayob convincingly argues that all *khuṭabāʾ* ("preachers"), despite their different religious and political positions, creatively contextualize Qurʾanic re-citation within South African historical discourses. Tayob concludes that the *khuṭab* represent "an exercise in creative exegesis" that is as "radical" in relation to the form and meaning of the Qurʾan as it is "disruptive" to historical norms, regardless of the ideological positioning of the preacher. In other words, both "com-

9 For criticism of the Cartesian mind-body dualism from the perspective of neurosciences, see Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005). For criticism from the perspective of Islamic feminism, see Sa'diyya Shaikh, "Embracing the *Barzakh*: Knowledge, Being and Ethics," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2021).

10 Abdulkader Tayob, *Islam in South Africa: Mosques, Imam, Sermons* (Jacksonville: Florida University Press, 1999), 18.

pliance to" and "deviation from" the tradition can be found among "progressive" as well as "conservative" preachers.[11]

My own research indicates that although a certain degree of creative exegesis is a defining feature of any kind of sermon, South African contemporary preachers exhibit a particularly high level of playfulness and virtuosity in their exegesis, which is expressed in both their translation of and commentary on Qurʾanic verses and hadith. My hypothesis is that two main factors have contributed to this level of exegetical creativity in South African sermons: first, the lack of any centralized authority capable of controlling the production and performance of *khuṭab*; and secondly, the expansion of discursive possibilities that resulted from the revolutionary situation South Africans experienced in the years that preceded and followed the first democratic elections in 1994.

To begin with the former, while the governments of many Muslim-majority countries have attempted (more or less successfully) to exert their control over the Friday sermon, sometimes creating *ad hoc* institutions to produce homogenous *khuṭab* to be delivered by state preachers in all public mosques, no such control exists in South Africa.[12] Its position at the "periphery" of the Muslim world and its distance from the main centers of Islamic learning also lessens the control these institutions can exercise over South African Muslims' knowledge production. As for the second factor, I suggest that the momentous years of South Africa's transition to democracy fit the definition of the "revolutionary situation" originally elaborated by Lenin, and recently resurrected by Mona El-Ghobashi.[13]

Revolutionary situations transform consciousness and incite experimentations that can expand the limits of what is thinkable. The discursive "Big Bang" that burgeoned during South Africa's revolutionary situation pushed local Muslims to renegotiate their relations not only with state power, but also with traditional authority inside the community. Some youth movements, in particular, began to openly challenge the *ʿulama*'s monopoly over religious discourse. Islamist[14] groups such as the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM, est. 1970), the Muslim

11 Abdulkader Tayob, "Performing *Tafsīr* (Exegesis) in Friday Sermons during South Africa's Transition from Apartheid to Democracy," Presentation, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, October 30, 2014.

12 The most renowned example is represented by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*). See Hakan Övünç Ongur, "Performing through Friday *khutbas*: Re-instrumentalization of Religion in the New Turkey," *Third World Quarterly* 41 (2020).

13 Mona El-Ghobashy, *Bread and Freedom: Egypt's Revolutionary Situation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021), 37–38.

14 I hereby use the term "Islamist" in its broadest sense, defining "Islamism" as the practice of using an Islamic frame of reference to promote social, political, and cultural change, both in the public and personal spheres. This definition purposely does not refer to the specific goals and

Student Association (est. 1974), al-Qibla Mass Movement (est. 1980) or the Call of Islam (est. 1984) "insisted on the 'laity' reading of the Qurʾan (in translation) as opposed to the sole appropriation of its meaning and imperatives by the clerisy."[15] Even those (larger) sections of the Muslim population who looked with preoccupation and fear to the radicalization of the youth were inevitably affected by it and by the country's revolutionary situation in general.

Tayob was part of the Islamic resurgence movement: in his own words, he was "not a classical participant-observer, but a shameless participant," and was personally involved in the mosques and sermons he has studied.[16] His almost unique eye for *tafsīr* in *khuṭab* was shaped by the priorities of the interpretive communities he grew up and was conscientized in. Tayob has not published further on this topic, his research having moved in other directions,[17] but it is from this door he left half-open that my own research has found its point of departure. Accordingly, this chapter is part of a larger project that focuses on *khuṭab* performed in the Claremont Main Road Mosque between September 2, 2011 and March 13, 2020,[18] with the aim of understanding the effects that the democratic transition and the subsequent years had on the mosque's discourse as expressed through the *khuṭba* performances of its preachers. Where did their progressivism lead to, once the revolutionary situation was over?

In writing "preachers" in the plural tense here, I am following a hint given to me by the mosque's imam, Rashied Omar. Since we first talked on March 2020, he has repeatedly insisted that the discourse coming out of the mosque's minbar should be considered the result of a communitarian exegetical effort, rather than simply his own individual work. A preliminary examination of the minbar calendar and the content of sermons led me to conclude that the mosque's discourse indeed looks like the product of inclusivist and dialogical hermeneutics in which not only the imam but also the congregation and visiting lecturers participate in the

strategies adopted by a specific "Islamist" group or individual, which can vary a lot according to the historical and geographical context.

15 Shamil Jeppie, "Amandla and Allahu Akbar: Muslim Resistance in South Africa, c. 1970–1987," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 4, no. 1 (1991), 11.

16 Tayob, *Islam in South Africa*, ix.

17 Abdulkader Tayob, "An Intellectual Journey in Islamic Studies: Navigating Islamic Discourse with *Faltah*," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2021).

18 The starting date coincides with the election of Jaamia Galant as Board Secretary of the *masjid* and the beginning of her systematic archival work on the *masjid*'s sermons, published on their social media accounts. I owe the opportunity to put together the complete list of titles and preachers for this period and a significant number of transcripts and audio/video recordings mainly to Galant's efforts. The end date coincides with the last *khuṭba* delivered in the *masjid* before its closure due to COVID-19-related safety concerns.

construction of meaning: the outcome is what I call a "community *tafsīr*." The concept of "community *tafsīr*" does not reflect the idea that members of the CMRM's congregation physically sit together to compose their *khuṭab,* or that they collectively decide on the contents of the minbar calendar. Rather, my definition of "community *tafsīr*" is grounded in Johanna Pink's argument that "Qurʾanic exegesis is not simply an individual endeavor," but that it takes place in specific "interpretive communities." According to Pink's definition, an interpretive community emerges when some individuals, sharing some common characteristics, "take part in a joint discourse, react to each other, make use of the same resources, and—maybe most notably—refer to the same authorities."[19]

2 Claremont Main Road Mosque's Community *Tafsīr*

The Claremont Main Road Mosque's interpretive community is constituted by its congregation and its preachers. These two groups partially overlap but do not coincide, for not all members of the congregation deliver sermons, and not all preachers are members of the congregation. However, the individual *khuṭab* performed on the minbar represent the culmination of an exegetical effort that is exercised on many occasions that are much less visible—and less formalized—than the Friday prayers, and which includes the *tafsīr* lessons, post-*tarāwīḥ* talks, and discussions held at the mosque, not to mention the study groups and private conversations that take place both inside and outside the mosque's precincts. Even those members of the congregation who have never climbed the minbar have somehow contributed to the community *tafsīr*, although their contribution is difficult for any researcher to retrace and evaluate.

Each preacher has their own individual style and composes their *khuṭab* autonomously. While the mosque's leadership sometimes intervenes with edits and suggestions on draft sermons, especially when it will be delivered by a junior member of the congregation, preachers are allowed and encouraged to freely express their opinion. Ideological homogeneity is neither expected nor searched for.[20] That being said, the list of the most regular Friday preachers reveals quite

19 Johanna Pink, *Modern Muslim Qurʾanic Interpretations Today: Media, Genealogies and Interpretive Communities* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2019), 202.

20 Zoom interviews with Aslam Fataar (December 7, 2020); Mujahid Osman (November 27, 2020); Jaamia Galant, (November 11, 2020); unrecorded interviews with Rashied Omar, on Skype (March 1, 2020), and in person (November 6, 2021).

clearly the common characteristics they share. Beside a common socio-economic background (most of the preachers and congregants are part of the highly educated urban middle class), the most evident "family trait" is a shared commitment to social justice and a past involvement in the Islamic resurgent movements that took part during the anti-apartheid struggle. Rashied Omar's biography is emblematic in this sense. He was arrested in 1976, during his final year of high school, for attending one of the many anti-governmental demonstrations that followed the Soweto uprisings, an event that had a major influence on his political conscientization.[21] He then joined the Muslim Student Association, and later the Muslim Youth Movement, of which he has been the Director since 1983 and President between 1987 and 1990. Tayob credits him, alongside Ebrahim Moosa, for having promoted a "contextualist turn" in the MYM's ideology.[22] Five of the ten preachers who have most regularly delivered sermons in CMRM in the decade under scrutiny, Shuaib Manjra (13 sermons), Rafiq Khan (14), Aslam Fataar (12), Ebrahim Rasool (6) and Sa'diyya Shaikh (6), share a similar background: they were all politically conscientized during the 80s and early 90s, and all joined one or another of the Islamist groups that emerged during those years. It is also worth noting that the sermons delivered by more traditionally trained preachers, like the CMRM's vice-imam Shaheed Gameldien (41 sermons), and guest preachers Sa'dullah Khan (23), Noor Salie (14), Ihsan Taliep (9), as well as those given by Rashied Omar's own son Jihad Omar (9), have been less frequently uploaded on CMRM's social media or printed in their publications.[23] While these preachers significantly contribute to the mosque's ritual performance, they are much less part of the message that the mosque delivers to the external world.

It is also worth stressing that Rashied Omar's commitment to pluralism does not erase the central and leading role he maintains in his congregation. Not only does he deliver about a fifth of all Friday *khuṭab* and the totality of the Eid *khuṭab* (unless he is away); he is the one who has final responsibility for directing the mosque's discourse, upholding the ritual calendar, and ultimately nurturing the spiritual wellbeing of his entire community. The fact that he exerts a strong charismatic authority over the members of his congregation is tangibly clear to any

21 Unrecorded interview with Rashied Omar, Cape Town, November 6, 2021.

22 Abdulkader Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa: The Muslim Youth Movement* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1995).

23 This partition should not be intended as a binary opposition, as there are important overlaps between the two groups and it is common for a scholar to hold both traditional titles and modern academic ones: starting with Rashied Omar, who is a "Dr" but also a certified *ḥāfiẓ* (someone who has committed the entire Qur'an to memory), having being trained in Qur'anic recitation by the traditional Capetonian scholar Salih Abadi.

observer; and yet his imamship does not fit the pattern of absolutist domination outlined by Mohammed Errihani:

> The relationship between the imam and the congregation is one of domination [. . .] the congregation is called upon to acknowledge such a leadership role by making an effort to internalize the message and obey by showing passive submission to the imam's message since it is based on the Qurʾan, Hadith and Sunnah [. . .] [T]here is no room for deliberation or debate [. . .], whether one listens to the sermon with understanding and pleasure is not as important as listening with obedience.[24]

In a far cry from this model, Rashied Omar has positioned himself as a pluralist imam ever since he accepted the position "with one significant proviso, namely, that he be considered as merely the convener of a panel that would exercise collective leadership at the Mosque."[25] This reflects the particular history of the mosque: The CMRM's first imam, Abdoroef (d. 1863), was the youngest son of ʻAbdullāh b. Qāḍī ʿAbdus Salām, better known as Tuan Guru, ("Esteemed Master," d. 1807) one of the semi-legendary founding fathers of Islam in South Africa.[26] The position of imam in the CRMR was passed on on a hereditary basis until 1964, when the congregation contested the hereditary succession. The resulting legal battle went on for thirteen years, until November 21, 1978, when Cape Town's Appeal Court declared in favor of the mosque's congregation and ordered that the keys be returned to its Board of Trustees.[27] Following this, the "liberation of the Mosque from Abderoef domination" became the founding narrative of the new CMRM.[28] Rashied Omar's commitment to pluralism is a direct consequence of this situation and, as a result, he coordinates the minbar more like the director and dramaturg of a theater collective than as a performer monopolizing the stage with his own monologues, to which the audience must passively listen. Like any good theater director, Omar seems to be aware that the effectiveness of his performance is not merely the result of his own personal merit, but rather of the balance of the forces and techniques involved (acting, text, sound, audience), including unpredictable elements like the sudden cry of a toddler, the temperature of the air, or the random shouts and honk-

24 Mohammed Errihani, "Managing Religious Discourse in the Mosque: The End of Extremist Rhetoric During the Friday Sermon," *The Journal of North Africa Studies* 16, no. 3 (2011): 383.

25 Fahmi Gameldien, *The History of the Claremont Main Road Mosque, its People and their Contribution to Islam in South Africa* (Cape Town: Claremont Main Road Mosque, 2004), 53.

26 On Tuan Guru, see Shafiq Morton, *From the Spice Islands to Cape Town: The Life and Times of Tuan Guru* (Cape Town: National Awqaf Foundation of South Africa, Cape Town, 2018).

27 "Abderoef's Appeal Dismissed," front page article in *Muslim News,* November 24, 1978. The trial's history is discussed in Gameldien, *The History of the Claremont Main Road Mosque;* and Tayob, *Islam in South Africa.*

28 Gameldien, *History*, 80.

ing coming from the crowded road outside. When successfully played, this balance of forces can produce the coveted *numinous* effect, so that the performance can reveal the "facts," intentions, feelings, hopes, and ideas of the subject portrayed, "more than reality itself."[29] However, this does not happen because the director "reduces his actors to instruments of his will; [. . .] the director's duty is to coordinate and harmonize different creative autonomies in a specific perspective, aimed at building a model-representation."[30]

In employing a dramaturgical language, I am indebted to Abdulkader Tayob's suggestion that the *khuṭba* is "particularly suited to performance analysis."[31] Apart from his suggestion, my dramaturgical perspective arises not so much from the relatively vast academic literature that has employed performance theory to analyze ritual events,[32] but from the strong yet non-academic influence of my close family, and especially of my father, the theater iconologist, director, and dramaturg Arnaldo Picchi, quoted above.

Relying on a dramaturgical model urges me to deal with my own absence from the actual *khuṭba* performances, which adds to my otherness from the interpretive community that has produced them. I was not there when the *khuṭab* I am studying were delivered. Moreover, until very recently, only a minority of sermons were recorded.[33] Consequently, in most cases all I have is a written text, which may or may not be an exact transcript of the *khuṭba* actually delivered, and which does not contain any reference to the non-textual elements of the performance. What I am working on, in other words, is just the textual footprint of a live performance, the embodied reality of which is over. In this respect, I find myself in the uncomfortable and yet fascinating position of theater historians. Given my awareness that I cannot recreate the reality of the performance, but at best give a "translucent" image of it,[34] my methodology for filling the absence has involved integrating textual analysis with oral and archival history and maintaining

29 Leo Lowenthal, *Literature and the Images of Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), ix–x.

30 Arnaldo Picchi and Massimiliano Briarava (eds), *Glossario di regia: cinquanta lemmi per un'educazione sentimentale al teatro* (Firenze: La Casa Usher, 2015), 89.

31 Tayob, *Performing Tafsir (Exegesis) in Friday Sermons.*

32 Ronald L. Grimes, "Performance Theory and the Study of Ritual," in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion, Vol. 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches*, eds. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004).

33 This policy has changed after the CMRM re-opened its doors in February 2022. Since then, the mosque's administration has consistently video-recorded most of the *khuṭab*, uploading online the video rather than the transcript, as was most often the case before.

34 The concept of translucence as opposed to an (unattainable) transparency is borrowed from Fatima Seedat, "Islam, Feminism and Islamic Feminism: Between Inadequacy and Inevitability," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, no. 2 (2013).

a constant dialogue with "the researchees," mainly conducted through spontaneous conversations rather than structured interviews. The following pages aim to retrace the CMRM's community *tafsīr* in relation to the most famous (or notorious) of the CMRM's ideological tenets: the affirmation of gender equality in Islam. Given the very scarce possibilities for fieldwork I had since the beginning of this project, mainly due to COVID-related travel restrictions, the focus here is exclusively on the preachers. The audience's perspective, unfortunately, had to be left aside.

3 From "Progressive" to "Critical Traditionalist": Trajectories of Gender Jihad

The Claremont Main Road Mosque made world history on August 12, 1994, when the African-American theologian amina wadud addressed the Friday congregation with a talk on "Islam as Engaged Surrender." "When I arrived at the mosque," wadud recalls,

> the air was thick with excitement. People crowded around the mosque entrance. Women came down from their previously assigned section upstairs and were accommodated in a section next to the men on the main mosque level [. . .] I made my way through this large number of people and eventually reached the place where I would deliver the *khutba* in front of the congregation.[35]

Men and women were separated by a simple piece of rope, an arrangement that would henceforth remain in place. The "amina wadud moment" did not happen in a vacuum,[36] but followed South Africa's first democratic elections by less than four months. It was in that triumphant political climate that the bold gesture of having a woman address the Friday congregation was put into action. Yet the decision was not "an isolated incident of a woman suddenly partaking in the religious service at the mosque."[37] Rather, it represented the culmination of a years-long struggle on the part of the women of the congregation that began in the late 70s, right after the CMRM's "democratic turn," when women began attending their own *nikāḥ* ceremonies. The process continued throughout the early 80s, when women started participating in the post-*khuṭba* debates, first in the form of written questions launched from the mezzanine as paper planes, and later via a

35 amina wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad* (Oxford: Oneworld 2006), 168.

36 I am borrowing the definition "amina wadud's moment" from Aslam Fataar (recorded Zoom interview, December 7, 2020).

37 Gameldien, *History*, 80.

proper mic system. The process reached its apex in the early 90s, when women began to actively participate in *tarāwīḥ* nights as Qurʾan reciters and lecturers.[38] However, it is worth mentioning that wadud's speech was formally defined as a "pre-*khuṭba* lecture" and not as an actual *khuṭba* (as she claims), in order to avoid violating the formal traditional requirement for the *khaṭīb* to be male, while attempting at the same time to challenge the substance of the status quo. Despite this precaution, the event provoked what Rashied Omar described as "a massive overreaction on the part of a community not used to having their horizons changed."[39] Both wadud and the CMRM faced a severe backlash. Controversy aside, from that moment on the option of the "pre-*khuṭba*"[40] was consistently used to allow speakers that didn't fit the traditional criteria for performing the role of *khaṭīb* to address the CMRM congregation before the *ṣalāt al-jumuʿa*, and women have continued to deliver pre-*khuṭba*s in the CMRM to this day.

The Claremont Main Road Mosque went through important transformations in the decades that followed the "amina wadud moment." The 1994 democratic elections represented a major discursive event involving a dramatic shift in power: apartheid was (formally) over, and some members of the resistance movement became part of the new ruling class. While the new order was taking form and the revolutionary situation left room for new, ordinary politics, the CMRM's interpretive community also changed. This slow but neat re-positioning of the Claremont Main Road Mosque is perhaps best exemplified by a passage from a post-*tarāwīḥ* talk delivered on July 11, 2014 by the Board's secretary Jaamia Galant and subsequently published on the mosque's social media accounts:

> What kind of *masjid* is this? Are we 'Progressive' Muslims, are we 'Modernists', are we 'Reformers' as some people have called us at various times? It is our opinion that CMRM can best be defined as critical traditionalists. This means that we embrace sound customary or *'urfi* practices but we do not follow these practices rigidly or dogmatically. We embrace all the traditional Muslim schools of law (*madhahib*), but do not adhere strictly to any one *madhab*. We aspire to follow the prophetic traditions (*sunnah* and *hadith*), but also embrace what we consider to be 'good innovations' (*bid'a hasana*).[41]

In terms of the struggle for gender justice ("gender jihad"), this repositioning has meant that further moves that might create scandal and trigger backlash from

38 Recorded Zoom interview with Fatima Noordien, May 3, 2021. See also Gameldien, *History,* 80–81.

39 Quoted in Gameldien, *History,* 89.

40 The definition (as well as the practice) of the "pre-*khuṭba*" is still controversial. It is a ritual device used in the majority of South African mosques as a sermon-type explanation in English of the *khuṭba*, which is delivered in Arabic, a language that few South African Muslims can understand.

41 Jaamia Galant, *CMRM as Critical Traditionalists*, Post-*tarāwīḥ* talk, CMRM, July 11, 2014.

the larger Muslim community, such as having a woman lead the prayer, have been consistently avoided, even when suggested by members of the congregation. However, the gender jihad has remained a pillar of the mosque's discourse, as is clearly apparent from its annual reports and the sermons performed from its minbar. Although their talks are still labeled as "pre-*khuṭba* lectures," women now deliver about a tenth of all sermons, and the pulpit is regularly used to "raise awareness of gender injustice and discrimination and to support campaigns against the scourge of gender-based violence in our society" by preachers of both sexes.[42] In terms of *khuṭba* performances, the campaign against gender-based violence has received far more attention than any other gender-related issue, with 14 sermons specifically dedicated to it and many others incorporating it into their discussions of other subjects. This centrality reflects a tragic reality. Although accurate statistics are difficult to obtain for many reasons (not least because most incidents are not reported), it is evident that South Africa has particularly high rates of gender-based violence.[43] Far from being a concern exclusive to the CMRM community, gender-based violence is the focus of an intense national public debate that began in the midst of the anti-apartheid struggle and increased during the larger post-1994 "truth and reconciliation process" that addressed the violent legacy of apartheid.[44]

The South African Muslim community has not shied away from this debate. To give but a few examples centered on the Cape, the Call of Islam began to publicly address the issue as early as 1990, when their newsletter, *Campus Call*, denounced the fact that "50% of women who report physical abuse to Rape Crisis are Muslims abused by their husbands." Noting that these abusive husbands used the Qur'an to justify their oppression of women, the article called for the application of gradualism (*tadrīj*) to Qur'anic verses dealing with women, focusing on passages instructing husbands to "beat them [lightly]" as a third step in dealing with disobedient wives (Q 4:34), and giving them a "degree of superiority" over women (Q 2:228).[45] Likewise, since May 2008, the monthly newspaper *Muslim Views* has published a column entitled "Stop the Cycle" that addresses the connection between gender-

42 The Claremont Main Road Mosque, *Annual Report,* 2018, 12.

43 Mercilene Machisa et al., *The War at Home: The Gauteng GBV Indicators Research Study* (Johannesburg: Gender Links and South African Medical Research Council, 2011), accessed June 19, 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299627061_The_War_at_Home_The_Gauteng_GBV_Indicators_Research_Study_Gender_Links_and_the_South_African_Medical_Research_Council, doi:10.13140/RG.2.1.4295.0007.

44 Pumla Dineo Gqola, *Rape: A South African Nightmare* (Johannesburg: MFBooks, 2015).

45 "Women in Focus: Quran Liberates You!," *Campus Call* 4:3. The article is anonymous and the issue is undated, but other local and international events mentioned in it occurred in August 1990.

based violence and other forms of violence and abuse. While the editor (Jasmine Khan) has never directly engaged with Qurʾanic exegesis, in October 2008 the column published a "jumuah lecture" by Shaykh Yusuf da Costa, in which "he makes an appeal to the men in our community to afford women the respect they deserve,"[46] and comments on Qurʾanic verses on marriage, specifically Q 30:21 and Q 4:34 (the latter quoted only in its amended first part: "Men are the protectors [. . .] of women, because Allah has given the one more [strength] than the other, and because they support them from their means").[47]

On August 18, 2017, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC, est. 1945), the main organization of *ʿulamaʾ* in Cape Town, issued a unified *khuṭba* on gender-based violence. Quoting again the first part only of Q 4:34, the sermon gave a significantly modified version of the Saheeh International translation. In the MJC variant, the phrase *al-rijāl qawwamūn ʿalā l-nisāʾ* is rendered as "men are the caretakers of women," while the Saheeh international (generally considered a "highly conservative" translation) opts for "men are in charge of women." This choice is revealing of the MJC's will to act as a mediator between "conservative" and "progressive" South African Muslims. In its commentary on the verse, the MJC's *khuṭba* reminds its audiences that this verse "should NOT be seen as license to feel superior or to make others feel inferior," but rather "to indicate constant care and perpetual responsibility."[48] Exegetical discussions of Q 4:34 also dominate the *khuṭab* on the topic of domestic violence that are available on YouTube, most of which were delivered in US mosques.[49] My exploration in this regard confirms what Linda Jones has noted in her recent analysis of two nuptial orations (*khuṭba al-nikāḥ*) from completely different contexts, a pre-modern *mawʿiẓa* ("exhortation") and a contemporary Friday *khuṭba*: "although their vision of marriage and ideal spousal relationship are extremely disparate, the two sermons exhibit parallels in the preachers' selection of Qurʾanic verses and hadith narratives."[50] The hermeneutical approach adopted by the Claremont Main Road Mosque preachers is in this sense unique, in South Africa and be-

46 Yusuf Da Costa, "Three Stations Higher than Men," *Muslim Views*, October 2008. Da Costa is a former member of the MSA and MYM, recruited more or less at the same time as Rashied Omar.

47 Translation by Yusuf Ali. The amended word is "maintainers."

48 The Muslim Judicial Council (SA), "Unified Khuṭba on Gender Based Violence," August 16, 2017.

49 For two extensive discussions, see Yasir Qadhi, *The Taboo of Gender Based Violence in Our Communities* (Memphis Islamic Center, October 21, 2016); Ammar Al-Shukry, *Domestic Violence* (Clear Lake Islamic Centers, October 27, 2017).

50 Linda Jones, "Discourses on Marriage, Religious Identity and Gender in Medieval and Contemporary Islamic Preaching: Continuities and Adaptations," in *Muslim Preaching in the Middle East and Beyond: Historical and Contemporary Case Studies*, eds. Simon Stjernholm and Elisabeth Özdalga (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 186.

yond, with the most noticeable peculiarity being that Q 4:34 is never recited in relation to gender-based violence—not in a single occurrence.[51]

It should be noted that Rashied Omar's "director's choice" on this matter is one of discretion. He delivered only one of the 14 sermons primarily focused on the topic of gender-based violence, "The 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Children: Lessons from the Sirah (24.11.2017)," in 2017. That year, the annual UN led 16-day global campaign of awareness against GBV (November 25–December 10) coincided with the celebration of the Prophet's *mawlid.* Omar took the chance to center his sermon on the prophetic example, narrating how Muhammad was once approached by a group of women complaining about their husbands violently abusing them:

> The Prophet Muhammad was so disturbed by the indignities these female companions (*ṣaḥābiyyāt)* were suffering at the hands of the husbands that he [. . .] asked Bilal ibn Rabah (may Allah be pleased with him), to make the call to prayer, even though it was not time for it [. . . and then] delivered a special sermon calling for an immediate end to the scourge of violence against women.[52]

The lesson offered by this episode was defined by Omar as "crystal clear": the best way to fight gender-based violence is to "publicly speak out and campaign against it." He then invited the audience to search for the "excellent lectures" delivered in the previous years by the mosque's preachers, made available on the CMRM's social media pages and printed newsletter, mentioning specifically those delivered by UCT Professor Sa'diyya Shaikh and the CMRM's former youth coordinator Mujahid Osman. These two names are revealing of the mosque leadership's "casting choice": secular experts and community activists are invited to speak about gender-based violence, rather than religious '*ulama*'. Other than gender studies scholars or students (such as Shaikh and Osman), the guest preachers invited to speak about gender-based violence are mainly social workers. The list includes figures like Nuraan Osman, director of the only Muslim-run shelter for abused women in the country,[53]

51 The only appearance Q 4:34 makes in the 199 CMRM's *khuṭba* transcripts I have analyzed is found in a pre-*khuṭba* delivered by Khadeeja Bassier (on November 22, 2013) with the title of "A Personal Account of Marriage." As the title suggests, this sermon focuses on marriage, not GBV (the word "violence" is never mentioned) and only the first part of Q 4:34 is recited, in Muhammad Asad's translation: "Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions."

52 Rashied Omar, "The 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Children: Lessons From the Sirah," Friday *khuṭba*, CMRM, November 24, 2017.

53 Nuraan Osman, "Fighting Gender-Based Violence," Pre-*khuṭba* lecture, CMRM, February 10, 2017.

and Gabeba Gaildien, a social worker engaged in the Cape Flat townships.[54] Some male activists with no specific expertise but a strong commitment to gender justice have also been invited to share their thoughts, in order not to ghettoize the matter as a "women's issue." The exegesis that results from this communitarian effort looks markedly different from any scholarly discussion of "women's verses" in the Qurʾan. Rather, it can be described as a "*tafsīr* of praxis" that originates from the experiential engagement of the preachers in question with the Qurʾanic text,[55] in which they search for a message "to cajole, persuade, and importantly to sooth, for people to find some comfort; [. . .] what we're trying to do is to puncture, rupture, and change the dominant discourse, ever so slightly—develop new ways of imagining, and new ways of doing."[56]

4 *Tafsīr* and Praxis

To open her 2014 pre-*khuṭba* on "Combating Gender Violence," Nafisa Patel relies on the opening verses of *sūrat al-Takwīr* (Q 81:1–8), commenting how God here "draws our attention to certain signs that characterize a slow yet violent decay of this present world."[57] She focuses on verses 8 and 9, *wa-idhā al-mawʾudatu suʾilat / bi-ayyi dhanbin qutilat*, which she translates as "When the female child is buried alive and *man* is questioned, for what sin was she killed?" This is a creative, non-literal reading of the verses, one that shifts the subject questioned by God from the *mawʾuda*, the female child, to a generic "man." In other words, it is a translation that swaps the responsibility for answering for femicide from the victim of the crime to its perpetrator. The interpretation is implicit in the translation, as Patel does not elaborate on her point. Instead, she goes on to quote Sayyid Qutb's *In the Shade of the Qurʾan* to illustrate how "the violent rhythm in the opening verses of this surah, where everything that is known or familiar is thrown,

54 Gabeba Gaidien, "16 Days of Activism against GBV," Pre-*khuṭba* lecture, November 25, 2016.

55 The concept is borrowed from Sa'diyya Shaikh, "A *Tafsīr* of Praxis: Gender, Marital Violence, and Resistance in a South African Community," in *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religions*, ed. Daniel Maguire and Sadiyya Shaikh (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2007).

56 Aslam Fataar, email commentary on an earlier version of this paper, March 13, 2021.

57 Not formally a member of the CMRM, Nafisa Patel grew up in Johannesburg and moved to Cape Town to attend UCT university. At the time she delivered this pre-*khuṭba*, she was a PhD student at UCT, with Prof. Sa'diyya Shaikh acting as her supervisor. A chapter based on the sermon discussed here is included in *The Women's Khutbah Book*, eds. Sa'diyya Shaikh and Fatima Seedat (Yale: Yale University Press, 2022).

smashed or scattered, is intended to illustrate the effects of the human heart that is being pulled from everything that it associates with safety, security and protection."[58] She then follows the same violent rhythm that is used in this sura in her own speech to illustrate "the current scourge of rape and other forms of gender violence that is presently gripping and crippling our communities," listing eight particularly gruesome cases that had occurred in South Africa and abroad. In doing so, she consciously relies on using crude and even disturbing language to highlight how femicide epitomizes *jāhiliyya*, or pre-Islamic ignorance. Elaborating on that, she specifies that "gender-based violence is not merely a *jāhilī* or a pre-Islamic practice that is mentioned in the Qurʾan for its historical interest. Sadly, such abnormalities *are* very much a part of our present-day realities."

This definition echoes Sayyid Qutb's description of *jāhiliyya,* elaborated in his later works, as a psychological condition that is not confined to a specific time and place, but actually takes place whenever some humans are made servants of others.[59] This affinity is not surprising, as Sayyid Qutb was among the most widely read scholars in South African Islamic study groups in the 1980s, and his language has entered South African Islamic discourse. However, if the concept of *jāhiliyya* is derived from Qutb, the conclusions Patel draws from it are radically different from his. While Qutb conceives Islam and *jāhiliyya* as binary oppositional terms, as two incompatible systems of life that are destined to fight each other, Patel refers to this Islamist *topos* not to identify an outside enemy to be fought, but rather to point at the structures of power internalized within the Muslim community, and to shed light on "the wounded and fractured nature of our collective heart." This appeal for a jihad turned inward, aiming to find compassion and healing though self-interrogation, collective consciousness, and solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, is a defining feature of the CMRM's post-1994 critical traditionalism. In reference to the struggle against gender violence, another instance can be found in Sa'diyya Shaikh's exegesis of *sūrat al-Tīn* (Q 95), as articulated in her 2013 pre-*khuṭba* "Reflections on Ethics and Justice: The Crisis of Violence and Rape of Women."[60] After reciting the verses, which she translated as follows:

58 Nafisa Patel, "Combating Gender Violence," pre-*khuṭba* Friday lecture, CMRM, February 14, 2014. Patel's words are directly inspired by Adil Salahi's English translation of the commentary. See Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qurʾan*, trans. Adil Salahi (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2015), 18:56–7.

59 William Shepard, "Sayyid Qutb's Doctrine of Jahiliyya," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003): 521–45.

60 Born in Durban, Sa'diyya Shaikh has been a member of the CMRM congregation since the early 90s, when she moved to Cape Town to attend university, and is one of its regular preachers.

By the fig and the olive,
By Mount Sinai
And by this land made safe,
Surely we created the human being of the best stature
Then we reduced him to the lowest of the low

Except those who believe and do good works, and theirs is a reward unfailing

So who will then give lie to you about judgment
Is not Allah the wisest and most conclusive of all judges?[61]

Shaikh frames her sermon as a discussion on "the range of human possibilities" these verses speak about. The bulk of her speech is centered on the analysis of three aphorisms on the concept of *ṣabr* by Ibn ʿArabī, which she relies on to argue that *ṣabr* is not equivalent to "passive acceptance" but rather to "perseverance in a time of affliction." Urging the congregation not to be content with a society that has created the violence so common in the present world, Shaikh asserts that having *ṣabr* requires listening to the suffering of other human beings and engaging in work of transformation aimed at fulfilling "our role as khalifatullah on earth." Referring to a previous sermon by Shuaib Manjra (February 22, 2013) that focused on the collective roots of individual acts of violence, Shaikh reminds the congregation that violent men "are not monsters. They are a product of our South Africa and our world, and we are all at least partially implicated in their descent to what the Qurʾan describes as the 'lowest of the low.'"

Shaikh's appeal to interpret *ṣabr* as perseverance, both in listening to women's sufferance and in actively engaging to address it, is echoed in Aslam Fataar's hermeneutics of the Qurʾanic concept of *samʿ* (lit. "the faculty of listening"), as performed in his 2019 *khuṭba* "Active Heart Listening (*samʿa*) as a Response to Femicide and Gender-Based Violence."[62] The focus of Fataar's *tafsīr* is Q 50:37, which he recites first in Arabic and then in Muhammad Asad's translation: "In this, behold, there is indeed a reminder for everyone *whose heart is wide-awake*, that is, [everyone who] lends an

She is currently Professor of Religious Studies and the Director of the Center for Contemporary Islam at the University of Cape Town.

61 This is Shaikh's own translation, mainly based on Pickthall's: the main differences being that *insān* is translated as "human being" instead of "man" (v. 4), and *Allāh bi-ḥukmi-l-ḥākimīn* is rendered as "the wisest and most conclusive of all judges" rather than just "conclusive."

62 Born and raised in Cape Town, Aslam Fataar is a long-time member of the congregation, a former vice-president of the MYM (1991–1993), and one of the CMRM's most regular preachers. He is currently Professor in Sociology of Education at Stellenbosch University. His intellectual and political journey is retraced in Aslam Fataar, "Searching for an Ethical Muslim Self in Conversation with Islamic Studies Scholarship in South Africa and Beyond," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 39, no. 1 (2021): 169–91.

ear with a conscious mind." Asad's translation of the verse is peculiar for its interpretive rendering of *li-man kāna lahu qalbun* as "everyone whose heart is wide-awake," instead of the more literal "who has a heart." Asad's qualification of the heart as "wide-awake" is derived from al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* of this verse, in which the *qalb* ("heart") is described as *wāʿin* ("conscious") "because whoever is not conscious of his heart is like he doesn't have a heart at all."[63] By rendering *samʿ* as "active heart listening," Aslam Fataar builds on Muhammad Asad's reading of al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr*, and combines in one term the semantic implications of *samʿ*, *qalb*, and *shahīd* ("witness"). In Fataar's reading, present-mind heart listening should not be pursued as a spiritual exercise for one's own individual growth, but rather as a device that could "give us some chance to disrupt our intuit[ions], understanding and act" and thus truly understand "the vulnerable position of women in society." The suffering of women, Fataar further explains, is given voice in the Qurʾanic supplication raised by the *mustaḍʿafūn fī l-arḍ* ("the oppressed)" in Q 4:75, which he translates as follows:

> Our Lord! Rescue us from this *habituation and place* whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help.

For this verse, Fataar does not rely on Muhammad Asad's translation but rather on Yusuf Ali's, although he renders the Arabic *qariya* as "habituation and place" instead of as "town." This shift follows the same kind of re-signification outlined earlier for *jāhiliyya*, according to which the *qariya* is interpreted as referring to a psychological state rather than to a physical place.[64] Q 4:75, one of the most ideologically charged verses used by Muslims to support their struggle in the apartheid years,[65] is used here not to frame an oppressive political enemy, but rather to describe the numb state of mind of those who live as if they are "deaf, dumb and blind: and they cannot turn back" (Q 2:18).

The appeals for reflection and action launched from the CMRM's minbar were not conceived as a purely intellectual exercise; on the contrary, they emerged from the mosque's historical praxis. A particularly crucial year in this sense proved to be 2019, when the mosque was directly affected by the global "me too" movement, with an increasing number of gender-based violence survivors publicly sharing their stories of abuse and demanding change.[66] On May 5, 2019, the mosque adopted a sexual harassment policy which provided a definition of what constitutes sexual harassment, instructions on how to report abuse, and a description of the

63 Al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* of this verse is taken from www.altafsir.com.

64 Aslam Fataar, email commentary on an earlier version of this paper, March 13, 2021.

65 Farid Esack, *Qurʾan, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 98–103.

66 Sarah Jaffe, "The Collective Power of #MeToo," *Dissent* 65, no. 2 (2018), 80–7.

CMRM's investigative procedures.[67] Not by chance, the policy was issued in the early days of a visit to South Africa by the popular preacher Nouman Ali Khan, who had been invited as a Ramadan guest speaker by the Masjidul Quds mosque in Cape Town. In late 2017, Khan was accused of spiritual and sexual abuse by multiple women. In a pre-*khuṭba* lecture entitled "Toward a Rupture of Islamic Patriarchy" delivered at the CMRM on March 29 of the same year, community activist Minhaj Jeenah had recalled Khan's history of abuse, reminding the congregation that "the validity of these accusations was upheld by community panels."[68] Quoting the Qur'anic injunction found in Q 2:42 that reads "Do not cover truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth when you know what it is,"[69] Jeenah expressed "great concern" about the invitation, commenting how "this is a crude illustration of the way that, as South African Muslim men, we continue to protect other abusive men in power at the expense of vulnerable women, while hiding behind religious rhetoric."[70]

Four months later, on July 26, Shuaib Manjra delivered a *khuṭba* on "Impunity and the Complicity of Silence."[71] He began with the statement that "the human" was placed at the center of his talk, followed by a rapid exegetical exploration of a few Quranic verses dealing with human nature, some highlighting its dignity (Q 17:70; Q 95:7; Q 15:29) and others its capacity for evil (Q 2:30). On this basis, Manjra declared that the goal of human life on earth "is to serve as counter-balance for good against evil," a purpose God makes explicit in verses such as Q 3:104 ("Let there arise out of you a band of people enjoining what is right and forbidding evil, such are the successful ones") and the above-mentioned "*mustaḍʿafūn*" verse, Q 4:75.[72] After this exegetical introduction, Manjra contextualized these verses in light of four current "case studies" of impunity that were, he said, occurring "only with our complicity of silence." The first three of these were located outside South Africa: the brutal suppression of criticism by the Saudi regime; the "murder of pres-

67 Claremont Main Road Masjid, *Sexual Harassment Policy*, May 5, 2019.

68 Minhaj Jeenah is the South African coordinator of the Fight Inequality Alliance, a transnational network working on social movement building and political education.

69 Yusuf Ali's translation (modernized).

70 Minhaj Jeenah, "Toward a Rupture of Islamic Patriarchy," pre-*khuṭba* lecture, CMRM, March 29, 2019. The Facebook post with the transcript of Jeenah's pre-*khuṭba* was shared 73 times (more than any other sermon on GBV), inside and outside South Africa.

71 Born and raised in Durban, Shuaib Manjra is a former member of the MSA and MYM and has been a member of the CMRM's congregation since he moved in Cape Town. He is a medical sport physician by profession.

72 Apart from Q 15:29, which is re-cited in Arabic and then translated, all other verses are integrated in the body of text in their English translation (Yusuf Ali's, modernized) without reference to their number.

ident Mohammad by the Egyptian regime of General Sisi"; and the persecution of Muslims in China. Finally, Manjra moved to a case "closer to home," one that "has been the topic of a previous khutbah at this mosque." Calling out by name those Muslim institutions that "remained adamant in standing by the invitation [to Nouman Ali Khan]," Manjra concluded that "these acts of impunity will not be possible if there was an outrage. Even if we are designated what has assumed a derogatory meaning: social justice warriors, we have an imperative to act in every case and regardless of the perpetrators."[73]

At some point between Jeenah's and Manjra's sermons, the process of adopting a formal sexual harassment policy led the CMRM's Board to conclude that any speaker who had been found guilty or had unresolved accusations of sexual harassment against them should not be invited to speak. On this basis, the Board decided to stop inviting as a guest speaker the Islamiyya College's CEO Sa'dullah Khan, who had been a regular guest since his return from a long period in the United States.[74] Some congregants had protested against his presence as a speaker after finding out about a 2009 *Los Angeles Times* article exposing him as having being dismissed by two Islamic centers (the Islamic Center of Irvine and Islamic Center of Southern California) on the grounds of "inappropriate misconduct," and as having being arrested on suspicion for sexual battery in 2001.[75] The ongoing debates between these congregants and the mosque's leadership was finally resolved through the anti-harassment policy. Interestingly enough, on November 28, 2019, only a few months after having delivered his last *khuṭba* at the CMRM, Sa'dullah Khan spoke about the struggle against gender-based violence in a *khuṭba* delivered at the Madina Institute in Cape Town that bears strong resemblance to that performed by Aslam Fataar discussed above, without acknowledging any influence.[76]

73 Shuaib Manjra, "Impunity and the Complicity of Silence," Khuṭba, CMRM, July 26, 2019.

74 My informants on the CMRM's internal discussion over Sa'dullah Khan chose to remain anonymous. In the CMRM, Sa'dullah Khan delivered 2 *khuṭab* in 2011; 5 in 2012; 2 in 2013; 3 in 2014; 1 in 2015; 1 in 2016; 5 in 2017; 2 in 2018; and 1 in 2019. In 4 cases only the transcript of the *khuṭba* was uploaded online.

75 The article here mentioned is Raja Abdulrahim, "Mosque Dismissal Stuns Congregation," published in the *Los Angeles Times* on November 10, 2009.

76 The transcript of Fataar's *khuṭba* was made available on the CMRM's Facebook page on September 6, 2019. The video recording of Sa'dullah Khan's *khuṭba* at the Madina Institute is available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fynzr16_UME (accessed June 19, 2023).

5 Conclusion

Founded in 1854, the Claremont Main Road Mosque remained for more than a century a traditional Cape mosque, led by a "dynasty" of imams descended from Tuan Guru, one of the semi-legendary founding fathers of Islam in South Africa. During the struggle against apartheid, it repositioned itself as a key platform for the elaboration of a progressivist Muslim discourse in South Africa, built through a community *tafsīr* in which not only the imam but also the congregation and visiting lecturers participate in the construction of meaning.

This communitarian exegetical effort did not stop with the end of the revolutionary situation, but was still very much alive when the COVID-19 pandemic imposed a long closure. An exploration of *khuṭab* delivered from its minbar in the last decade confirms that the "culture of mutual consultation" praised by Jaamia Galant in her 2014 *post-tarāwīḥ* talk is not simply a posture, but a defining feature of the Claremont Main Road Mosque's congregation. This "community *tafsīr*" is shaped by the dynamic interaction between an imam who takes his commitment to pluralism seriously, a dedicated Board of Governors, and a lively community of lay preachers who passionately contribute to the mosque's discourse with their diverse creative autonomies.

This chapter has examined the mosque's *tafsīr* in relation to the most famous of the CMRM's ideological tenets, namely the affirmation of gender equality in Islam. It has explored the exegetical framework used to discuss the struggle against gender-based violence, focusing on a few especially apt selected sermons to reveal the ongoing resignification of the Islamic political language elaborated during South Africa's revolutionary situation. This approach has proved to be particularly useful in terms of exploring Rashied Omar's role as the coordinator of a collective exegetical effort, as opposed to an individual *mufassir,* and analyzing the composite interaction between *tafsīr* and *praxis,* theoretical discussions, and actual policies in a historical community like the CMRM.

This chapter is the final version of a paper that has been re-elaborated multiple times and presented in three different talks throughout the process.[77] It is worth noting that in all these occasions, the silence on Q 4:34 has attracted far more questions than any other exegetical choice made by the CMRM's preachers. This emphasizes how much the conversation on gender and Islam is dominated by exegetical discussions over this verse. The CMRM has no specific policy to

77 The 2020 International Quranic Studies Association Annual Meeting (December 2020); Freiburg Conversations on Tafsir and Transregional Islamic Networks (March 2021); and the "Practices of Preaching" workshop (March 2022).

avoid this verse, and all the preachers I interviewed claimed their choice was not deliberate. The silence could therefore be considered as a form of unconscious, implicit resistance to the dominant narratives, and as a means of redirecting attention away from male religious scholars who had monopolized *tafsīr* throughout all Islamic history.

Located at the periphery of both the Western and the Islamic worlds, the CMRM's approach to *tafsīr* holds the potential to break the discursive nexus between current gender hierarchies and verses that seem to legitimize it, like Q 4:34, and to point at escape routes found in the Qurʾanic text itself. In doing so, it seems to confirm Mikhail Bakhtin's intuition that the poetic word fully comes into being only in the margins of recognized culture.[78]

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78 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

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Miriam Kühn

Signifying the Preacher: Preaching Practices on Minbars Depicted in the Illustrated *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī

Abstract: The minbar is a place where preaching is performed. Yet how can this activity be traced in historical sources? The Mamluk period is particularly suitable for pursuing this question, since numerous objects, written sources, and visual evidence have been handed down to us from that period.

Manuals from the Mamluk period specify in writing how the preacher was to behave on the minbar during the Friday sermon and what behavior would be considered inappropriate. At the same time, illustrated Egyptian and Syrian manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī from the 13th–14th centuries make up an extensive visual source reproducing sermon performances and providing interesting insight into the use of minbars.

Written and visual sources alike attest that the main purpose of the minbar was to provide a place for the *khaṭīb* to preach from at a *khuṭba*. However, they also document other, less formally regulated forms of preaching from minbars. Significantly, the artists of illustrated manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt* made a subtle distinction between the varying preaching formats, as becomes evident in the depictions of minbars, preachers, and audiences.

1 Introduction

Minbars are generally perceived to be the "natural" setting or stage for the *khaṭīb* to preach the *khuṭba* from at the Friday noon prayer. *Khaṭīb* and minbar interact closely: The *khaṭīb* uses this structure or furniture to elevate himself above the audience—the Muslim community assembled for the occasion—so that his ad-

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dress or *khuṭba* can be seen and heard better.[1] The minbar is thus an integral part of the *khaṭīb*'s preaching of the *khuṭba* and can be said to afford preaching:[2] Its physical properties, particularly its height, make it relevant for the audience's reception of the preacher's message, and the *khaṭīb* climbs, sits, stands, and descends from the minbar.

Today, we are able to watch preachers performing sermons live or through transmissions in various media, allowing us to evaluate and interpret them comparatively easily. It is more challenging, however, to evaluate historical sermon performances, as these have not been documented using modern standards or by modern media.[3] This makes it more difficult to elaborate on the detailed interaction between preacher and minbar, to judge the interaction between preacher and audience, or to evaluate the role played by the minbar during the performance.

In the following, I will use visual and written sources to address the question of the use of minbars during preaching performances during the Mamluk reign. This period is particularly suitable for this purpose, since numerous objects, written sources, and visual evidence have been handed down to us from this time.[4]

The manuals from the Mamluk period specify in writing how the preacher is to behave on the minbar during the Friday sermon, when and in which manner which movements were suitable, and which behavior was considered inappropriate. Contemporary Egyptian annals add to this picture by describing events considered exceptional, especially curious or warranting disapproval. Another important source is the

1 See M. Hammad, "L'évolution de la chaire dans la vie religieuse en Égypte," *Cahiers d'histoire Égyptienne* 8 (1956), 119; Maribel Fierro, "The Mobile Minbar in Cordoba. How the Umayyads of al-Andalus Claimed the Inheritance of the Prophet," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 33 (2007), 156; Tahera Qutbuddin, "Khuṭba: The Evolution of Early Arabic Oration," in *Classical Arabic Humanities in Their Own Terms. Festschrift for Wolfhart Heinrichs on His 65th Birthday*, eds. Beatrice Gruendler and Michael Cooperson (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 209–210.

2 Cf. Richard Fox et al., "Affordanz," in *Materiale Textkulturen: Konzepte—Materialien—Praktiken*, eds. Thomas Meier, Michael R. Ott, and Rebecca Sauer (Materiale Textkulturen: Schriftenreihe des Sonderforschungsbereichs 933, Vol.1 Berlin, 2015), 67.

3 For general assessments of the difficulties and possibilities of reconstructing the performance of oral preaching, see Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "Medieval Sermons and Their Performance: Theory and Record," in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, edited by Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Augustine Thompson, "From Texts to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event." In *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, edited by Carolyn A. Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047400226.

4 The considerations presented here are based on research conducted for my dissertation dedicated to the documentation and analysis of the structure, decoration, endowment, and use of Mamluk minbars (Miriam Kühn, *Mamlukische Minbare: islamische Predigtkanzeln in Ägypten, Syrien, Libanon, Israel und den Palästinensischen Autonomiegebieten zwischen 1250 und 1517* (Mamluk studies, volume 19. Göttingen, Bonn, 2019).

illustrated manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt* of Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥarīrī (446–516/1054–1122) narrating the story of al-Ḥārith, a traveling merchant whose business ventures take him across the Middle East. Within fifty *Maqāmāt*, al-Ḥārith encounters Abū Zayd of Saruj, the trickster character of the narratives. These illustrated manuscripts depicting selected scenes from the *Maqāmāt* originated completely or partially either in Damascus or Cairo.[5] Dating to the 13th–14th centuries,[6] these present the essential contemporary testimony to Mamluk minbars and their use.[7]

The analyzed written and visual sources attest to the use of minbars by preachers (*khaṭīb*) of the Friday noon *khuṭba*,[8] but also for preaching during the two major festivals and in times of drought.[9] At the same time, minbars were also used by popular preachers (*waʿīẓ*, pl. *wuʿāẓ*) for the less regulated type of

5 See Oleg Grabar, *The Illustration of the Maqamat* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 17; Anna Contadini, "The *Kitāb Manāfiʿ al-ḥayawān* in the Escorial Library." *Islamic Art* 3 (1989): 33–57. https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/4526/, 44; Alain George, "Orality, Writing and the Image in the Maqamat. Arabic Illustrated Books in Context," *Art History* 35,1 (2012), 16.

6 Grabar, *Illustration*, 1. See also Alain George, "The Illustration of the Maqamat and the Shadow Play." *Muqarnas* 28 (2011) 36 footnote 2: London, British Library, Or. 1200 (654/1256 [George, "Orality," 17]), Or. 9718 (before 1310 [Grabar, *Illustration*, 17; George, "Orality," 17]), Or. Add. 7293 (723/1323 [Grabar, *Illustration*, 17; George, "Orality," 17]), Or. Add. 22114 (13th/14th centuries [Grabar, *Illustration*, 17; George, "Orality," 17]); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 3929 (13th century [George, "Orality," 17]: no minbar depictions), Arabe 5847 (634/1237 [George, *Illustration*, 8]), Arabe 6094 (619/1222 [George, "Illustration," 15]); Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, A.F. 9 (734/1334 [Grabar, *Illustration*, 17; George, "Illlustration," 6]); St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, C23/ Russian Academy of Sciences, S. 23 (13th century [George, *Illustration*, 10]); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 458 (738/1337 [Grabar, Illustration, 17; George, *Illustration*, 14]); Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 2961 (1242–1258 [George, "Orality," 17]).

7 Further minbar representations from the Mamluk period, for example in *Kalīla wa-Dimna* manuscripts, are reproduced in Duncan Haldane, *Mamluk Painting* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1978), pl. 1 and pl. 44. Cf. also the list of minbar representations compiled by Dorothea Duda in Fritz Meier, "Der Prediger auf der Kanzel (Minbar)," in *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients. Festschrift für Bertold Spuler zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, eds. Hans Robert Roemer and Albrecht Noth (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 241–244.

8 See for example Abū l-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdi, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, (Cairo, 1933), 4:91; William Popper *History of Egypt 1382–1469 A.D. (Part III, 1412–1422 A.D.) Translated from the Arabic Annals of Abū l-Maḥasin ibn Taghrī Birdī by William Popper* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 3rd part, 73–74.

9 For the two major festivals, see for example Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ʿAlī Ibn al-Qadir Ibn Muḥammad al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār fī Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, edited by Khalīl al-Manṣūr, 4 vols (Beirut, 1998), 2:366. On drought, see Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-anbāʾ al-ʿumr*, edited by Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 2009 [Reprint 1969–1972]), 1:59; Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ʿAlī Ibn al-Qadir Ibn Muḥammad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk*, edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā. 8 vols. (Beirut, 1997), 4:363.

sermon known as the *mawʿiẓa* or *tadhkīr*.[10] However, the majority of references found in the analyzed Mamluk written and visual sources are to the *khuṭba* or the minbar's use during the *khuṭba*, while references to the use of minbars for *mawāʿiẓ* are considerably fewer.

I will argue that although minbars were used by the *khaṭīb* and the *waʿīẓ* alike, a clear, intentional distinction is made between the two in the written and visual sources referred to. It is clear that there was a distinction between the *khaṭīb* and the *waʿīẓ* in Mamluk times, a point that has been elaborated upon by many scholars, for example Jonathan Berkey.[11] The authors of Mamluk *fiqh*, *ḥisba*, and preaching manuals dedicated a lot of ink to characterizing these preachers and defining what was expected of them. Can similar distinctions between the *khaṭīb* and the *waʿīẓ* be extrapolated from depictions of the preacher as well as the audience and its reaction? What behavior was expected of the audience attending a *khuṭba* versus that of a *mawʿiẓa*?

2 The Basis: Mamluk Written Sources

Sources for the use of minbars during the Mamluk period are rather sparse.[12] The minbar as a place of preaching is mentioned randomly in various Mamluk written sources.[13] However, the *ḥisba* manual *Maʿālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba* by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurayshī al-Shāfiʿī (Ibn al-Ukhuwwa)[14] and the *fiqh* treatise *Minhaj ṭālibīn* of Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū Zakariyyāʾ Yaḥyā b. Sharaf

10 For a detailed discussion of the term *waʿīẓ*, see Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 13–15; Jonathan P. Berkey, "Audience and Authority in Medieval Islam. The Case of Popular Preachers," in *Charisma and Religious Authority. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Preaching, 1200–1500*, eds. Katherine L. Jansen and Miri Rubin (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010), 107–108; Linda G. Jones, *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 158–163; for a definition of *mawʿiẓa* see Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 160; for a definition of *tadhkīr*, see Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 16–17.

11 See e.g. Berkey, *Popular Preaching*; Daniella Talmon-Heller, "Islamic Preaching in Syria during the Counter-Crusade (Twelth – Thirteenth Centuries)," in *In Laudem Hierosolymitani. Studies in Crusades and Medieval Culture in Honour of Benjamin Z. Kedar*, eds. Iris Shagrir and Ronnie Ellenblum, and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Aldershot, 2007) Berkey, "Audience and Authority," 2010.

12 Cf. Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 34 for this assessment of preaching in general.

13 Cf. Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 32–33; 233. She also mentions that we rarely find detailed descriptions of sermons in historical chronicles or literary and legal texts.

14 Ibn al-Ukhuwwa compiled detailed information on a wide variety of professions, including the *khuṭabāʾ* and *wuʿāẓ*. Cf. Claude Cahen, "Ibn al-Ukhuwwa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs,

b. Murīʾ al-Nawāwī (631–676/1233–1277)[15] provide insight into the basics of performing the *khuṭba* and using the minbar. Further details on the tasks and duties of the *khaṭīb* during the Mamluk period can be found in the work *Muʿīd al-niʿam wa-mubīd al-niqām* by Tāj al-Dīn Abū l-Naṣr b. Taqī al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Subkī (ca. 727–771/1327–1370).[16] With regard to the office of the *khaṭīb*, al-Subkī's work is particularly interesting, as he himself served as *khaṭīb* in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus.[17] The sermon manual *Adab al-khaṭīb* by Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār al-Dimashqī (d. 724/1324) also contains guidelines for the *khaṭīb* and his sermons (*khuṭba*). In the work *Iʿlām al-sājid bi-aḥkām al-masājid*, the author, Muḥammad al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392),[18] writes in a chapter dealing with the proper behavior in mosques about how a *khaṭīb* should behave on a minbar.[19]

All of the above-mentioned works have a rather normative character. In other words, they reflect an ideal, but do not provide insight into daily life or the actual use of minbars. Information on use can be better inferred from Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥājj's (b. 737/1336) anti-*bidʿa* treatise *al-Madkhal*, which

accessed June 5, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3398; Maya Shatzmiller, *Labour in the Medieval Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 74–75; Kirsten Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action. Authority, Discretion, and Everyday Experiences in Mamluk Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 59.

15 This work examines in detail issues of prayer and Friday prayer according to the requirements of the Shafiʿi school of law. It also mentions the use of the minbar. For the author, see W. Heffening, "al-Nawawī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, accessed June 7, 2023, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5858>; E.C. Howard, *Minhaj-et-Talibin. A Manual of Muhammadan Law according to the School of Shafiʿi by Mahiudin Abū Zakaria Yahya ibn Sharif en Nawawi.* Translated into English from the French Edition of L.W.C. van den-Berg by E.C.Howards (Lahore, 1977).

16 Oskar Rescher, "Tâj eddîn es-Subkis Muʿîd en-niʿam wa mubîd en-niqam. Über die moralischen Pfichten der verschiedenen islamischen Bevölkerungsklassen. Mit Kürzungen aus dem Arabischen übersetzt (1925)," in *Gesammelte Werke. Eine Sammlung der wichtigsten Schriften Oskar Reschers teilweise mit Ergänzungen und Verbesserungen aus dem schriftlichen Nachlass. In V Abteilungen. Abteilung II. Schriften der Adab-Literatur, 691–855* (Osnabrück, 1980).

17 See Joseph Schacht and Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "al-Subkī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. J. Bearman, Th. Bianqus, and Clifford Edmund Bosworth, accessed June 5, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7116, Stefan Leder, "Postklassisch und vormodern. Beobachtungen zum Kulturwandel in der Mamlūkenzeit," in *Die Mamlūken. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur. Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, eds. Stephan Conermann and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Schenefeld, 2003), 307.

18 Andrew Rippin, "al-Zarkashī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, accessed June 7, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8945.

19 Muḥammad b.ʿAbdallāh al-Zarkashī, *Iʿlām al-sājid bi-aḥkām al-masājid* (Cairo, 1384/1964–1965).

condemns certain practices that were perceived by the author as incompatible with the sunna,[20] but which were practiced nonetheless.[21] In addition to these normative sources, minbars and their use are also randomly mentioned in chronicles, biographical collections, topographies, and travelogues. It is not so much the usual weekly Friday sermon on the minbar that attracts the interest of contemporary historiographers,[22] but rather the special occasions on which a *khuṭba* was delivered, such as the opening of a mosque endowed by a sultan,[23] in connection with the inaugurations of caliphs or rulers,[24] or in the case of some other extraordinary occurrence, such as the funeral of a sultan's son,[25] the holding of a rain prayer,[26] or even the loss of the turban on the minbar.[27]

In addition to the works of local authors and their portrayal of unusual events, travelogues provide valuable information, as they document what the traveler deemed worthy of mention from the daily life and rituals observed in the place visited. In this respect, mentions of the minbars in Mecca and Medina are particularly interesting, as we see in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's detailed description of the

20 On condemning certain practices, see James Robson, "bidʿa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, accessed June 7, 2023, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1393>. On compatibility with the sunna, see G.H.A. Juynboll and D.W. Brown, "Sunna," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, accessed June 7, 2023, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1123>.

21 Cf. John Hoover, "Ibn al-Ḥajj al-ʿAbdarī," in *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, vol. 4 (1200–1350), eds. David Thomas and Alex Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 894–895; Linda G. Jones, "'Islām al-kāfir fī ḥāl al-jutba': Concerning the Conversion of 'Infidels' to Islam during the Muslim Friday Sermon in Mamluk Egypt." *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 42/1 (2012), 53–54.

22 Cf. also Paul E. Walker "Islamic Ritual Preaching (Khuṭbas) in a Contested Arena. Shīʿīs and Sunnīs, Fatimids and Abbasids," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 42/1 (2012), 120, who notes for the Fatimid period that the *khuṭba* was considered a customary routine and not perceived as an exceptional ritual.

23 On the inauguration of the mosque of sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 14:91; Popper, *History of Egypt*, 3rd part, 73–74.

24 Cf. for instance the *khuṭba* for the caliph al-Mustanṣir bi-llāh, which was held on the minbars in Rajab 659/June 1261 (Jalāl ad-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara fī akhbār Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, ed Muḥammad Abū Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1967), 2:53).

25 Ibn Taghrībirdī records the sultan's and audience's grief on 16th/17th Jumādā II 823/June 28, 1420, when sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh's son Ṣārim al-Dīn Ibrāhīm was buried in the sultan's mosque in Cairo (Cf. Popper *History of Egypt*, 3rd part, 77).

26 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 14:97; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:220; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, 7:13.

27 Thus, Jalāl al-Dīn Abū Dhar lost his turban during the *khuṭba* on the minbar. (Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī aʿyān al-miʾa al-thāmina*, 6 vols. (2nd ed., Hyderabad, 1929–1931[1972]), 5:450–451, biography no. 1844).

Friday prayer ceremony in Mecca.[28] Although these sources focus more on exceptional events than on ordinary preaching on minbars, a synopsis of these can provide a useful impression of minbar use during the Mamluk period.

2.1 The *Khaṭīb*'s Use of Minbars According to Normative Sources

Various normative sources from Mamluk times comment on how a preacher should behave when preaching on a minbar. This section will refer to relevant passages in order to contextualize the depictions of preaching performances on minbars in the illustrated manuscripts of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*.

First of all—and most importantly in terms of the use of the minbar itself—al-Nawāwī, in his explanation of the lawful performance of the Friday sermon according to Shafiʿi law, states that preaching from a minbar or an elevated location has come to be accepted as in accordance with the sunna.[29] The *khaṭīb* may greet in advance those who are near the minbar, turn to face the congregation when he has ascended the steps, and greet the entire congregation when he takes his seat.[30] Only then should the first call to prayer follow.[31] The *khaṭīb* is not to raise his hands or pray in an upright posture upon reaching the designated step for sitting, as this is a "despicable innovation" (*bidʿa madhmūma*).[32] The *khaṭīb* must, if possible, stand during every sermon and sit in between the two sermons for the duration of the recitation of sura 112.[33]

One specific question goes unmentioned by al-Nawāwī, yet it is not insignificant for the *khaṭīb*'s use of the minbar: What was the position of the preacher on the minbar when preaching? More precisely, was it permissible to use the step or seat of the minbar on which, according to tradition, the Prophet Muhammad had

28 Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Ibn Jobair. Voyages. Traduits et annotés par Gaudefroy-Demombynes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1949, 1951, 1953–1956), 2:114–116; Hamilton Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, A.D. 1325–1354* (*Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharāʾib al-amṣār wa ʿajāʾib al-asfār*), 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1958, 1962, 1971, 1994), 1:231–233.

29 Cf. Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape. Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 143. Ibn al-Ḥajj also disapproved of minbars which were too high (Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥajj, *al-Madkhal* (Cairo, 1929), 2:212).

30 See also ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb [Awwal kitāb ufrid fī ādāb khaṭīb ṣalāt al-jumʿa]*, edited by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulaimānī (Beirut, 1996), 101.

31 See also Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 103.

32 Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 106. Cf. also Jones, *Power of Oratory,* 62.

33 For sitting/standing, see Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 131; for recitation of sura 112, see Howard, *Minhaj-et-Talibin,* 59. See also Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 131.

preached?[34] Several anecdotes from Mamluk annals suggest that this question was subject to debate at the time.[35]

Furthermore, the sermons were to be orated loudly enough for a minimum number of congregation members to hear.[36] Additionally, the *khaṭīb's* sermon needed to be eloquent, understandable, and concise,[37] and his speech calm and dignified. To guarantee this, he was neither to turn to the left nor to the right.[38] In order to avoid nervous hand movements such as waving them around when standing on the minbar, he was to place his right hand on the right side of the minbar and hold a sword or lance or bow in his left.[39] Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār adds a further concern about the sword, namely that striking the minbar with one would be inappropriate.[40]

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34 Meier, "Der Prediger," 236.

35 Cf. Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab fī taʾrīkh aʿyān Ḥalab* (Damascus, 1973), 1:740–741 for a dispute in Aleppo regarding the position of the *khaṭīb*. This report, despite the fact that it dates to Ottoman times, is nevertheless quite instructive for the Mamluk period. The accused Friday preacher of the Khusruwiyyah mosque justifies his position by referring to the preacher of the Great Mosque in Aleppo. This preacher in turn justifies his position by referring to Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405) and his commentary of the *Minhāj al-ṭālibīn* of al-Nawāwī. Al-Damīrī and al-Nawāwī can be dated to the Mamluk period. See also Ibn Taghrībirdi, *al-Nujūm*, 14:43; Popper, *History of Egypt*, 3rd part, 40–41, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:92–93. Cf. also al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍara*, 2:309, where he refers to the sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, who gave the order in 819/1416 that that the *khuṭabāʾ* should step down the stairs when praying for the sultan's welfare in the *khuṭba*, so that the name of God and the Prophet might be evoked from a higher place than the name of the sultan. The controversy is also evident here: the sultan's wish had been followed in the Azhar mosque and in the mosque of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, but not in the mosque of the citadel, where the chief Qāḍī al-Bulqīnī refused to comply out of respect for tradition (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:92–93). Cf. also Julien Loiseau, *Reconstruire la maison du sultan. 1350–1450. Ruine et recomposition de l'ordre urbain au Caire*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 2010), 1:29, footnote 58.

36 Howard, *Minhaj-et-Talibin*, 58. See also Jones, "Prophetic Performances," 233; Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 118; and al-Subkī, who states that the *khaṭīb* must speak at least loud enough for 40 people to hear him. If he speaks too softly, the prayer is invalid (Rescher, "Tâj eddîn es-Subkis Muʿîd en-niʿam wa mubîd en-niqam," 806 [112]).

37 Cf. also al-Subkī, who attaches great importance to the comprehensibility and length of the speech (Rescher, "Tâj eddîn es-Subkis Muʿîd en-niʿam wa mubîd en-niqam," 807 [113]).

38 See also Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 115–116; Rescher, "Tâj eddîn es-Subkis Muʿîd en-niʿam wa mubîd en-niqam," 806 (112).

39 Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 131–132. Cf. Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 61.

40 Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 101. Cf. also Ibn al-Ḥajj, *al-Madkhal*, 1929, 2:267. Cf. also Jones, "Prophetic Performances," 27. In contrast, consider the positive interpretation of hitting the minbar with the stick in Ibn al-Jawzī: "Have you never seen the equipment of the *Khaṭīb* or his striking of the minbar with the sword. This arouses the hearts of the people and prepares them to snatch up the exhortations avidly." (Merlin L. Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzi's Kitāb al-quṣṣāṣ wa-'l-mudhakkirīn. Including a Critical Edition, Annotated Translation and Introduction* (Beyrouth, 1986), 220.

Al-Nawāwī mentions three conditions as mandatory for the validity of the *khuṭba*, one of which is that the *imām* must be dressed modestly.[41] Regarding the garment of the *khaṭīb*, Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār's opposition to the use of a *ṭailasān* (a shawl-like garment that could be thrown over the shoulder or head) or cloak[42] may indicate that such garments were commonly worn.

We learn from descriptions of *khuṭba*s in Mamluk annals that the *khaṭīb* normally wore black garments.[43] However, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa deems it a misconduct for the *khaṭīb* to wear a black robe in which silk predominates, or to hold a golden sword during the Friday prayer. The color black itself was not the main problem here, but it was not recommended, with white robes being preferable.[44]

Furthermore, it is recorded as in accordance with the sunna to fasten a flag to the minbar during the ascent of the *khaṭīb*.[45] Indeed, many Mamluk minbars preserve metal fittings at the top of the railing, which may have been used to hold standards or flags.[46]

Regarding a suitable place for prayer during the two religious festivals, al-Nawāwī notes that such ceremonies, while best held in a mosque, could also be held in an open space.[47] Further, al-Shirāzī states that the Eid sermon—unlike the Friday noon sermon—could be preached while seated.[48]

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41 Howard, *Minhaj-et-Talibin*, 59. On clothing, especially color, see also Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 63 and Walker, "Islamic Ritual Preaching," 126. Walker translates al-Qalqashandī's passage about the *khaṭīb* and refers to the *khaṭīb*'s clothing as garments of high dignity: "He wears proudly the robes of high dignity so that minbars appear properly dressed because of him."

42 Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 131–132.

43 For black robes worn on minbars, see for example Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Die Chronik des Ibn Ijās. Zweite Auflage bearbeitet und mit Einleitung und Indices versehen von Mohamed Mostafa. Vierter Teil A.H. 906–921/A.D. 1501–1515* (*Badāʾī al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr [Chronik bis 928 H.* (2. Fassung)], edited by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā. 4th vol., 2nd edited by (Cairo, 1960), 4:58; Annemarie Schimmel, *Alltagsnotizen eines ägyptischen Bürgers. Aus dem Arabischen übertragen und bearbeitet von Annemarie Schimmel* (Stuttgart, 1985), 62–63.

44 Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qurashī al-Shāfiʿī Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *The Maʿālim al-qurba fī aḥkām al-ḥisba of Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Qurashī al-Shāfiʿī known as Ibn al-Ukhuwwa. Edited, with Abstract of Contents, Glossary and Indices by Reuben Levy* (London, 1938), 62. Cf. also al-Zarkashī, *Iʿlām*, 368, and Jones, "Prophetic Performances," 25, 27.

45 Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Kitāb adab al-khaṭīb*, 103. For a vivid description of the use of standards flanking the *khaṭīb* and the minbar in Mecca, see Gibb, *Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 1:231–233.

46 Compare the minbar in the madrasa of al-Ashraf Barsbay (827/1424) in Cairo.

47 Howard, *Minhaj-et-Talibin*, 64–66.

48 See Arent Jan Wensinck, "Khuṭba," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, accessed June 6, 2023, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4352>; Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 80.

In addition to these clear guidelines for the *khaṭīb* to follow while preaching, the audience also had rules to follow.[49] Al-Nawāwī records al-Shāfiʿī's opinion that it was not entirely forbidden for members of the congregation to speak some words while listening to the sermon,[50] however it was in accordance with the sunna for the congregation to listen to the imam in silence.[51]

2.2 The *Waʿīẓ*'s Use of Minbars

As mentioned earlier, both the *khaṭīb* and the popular preacher (*waʿīẓ; pl. wuʿāẓ*) used minbars for preaching. Some prominent examples of popular preachers in the pre-Mamluk period include Ibn al-Jauzī, who is reported to have preached on minbars.[52] Mamluk sources also refer to the use of minbars for *mawāʿiẓ*, yet these are rather rare when compared to mentions of using the minbar for the *khuṭba*.

While the content and setting of the *khuṭba* is extensively regulated by Islamic law, the *majlis al-waʿẓ* is less so.[53] Without restrictions of time or mosque setting, it could be held at any time and any place.[54] According to al-Subkī, the conditions a preacher must fulfil are nevertheless similar to those placed on a *khaṭīb*, despite the formal differences between two respective sermon types.[55] In his manual for market supervisors, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa lists qualifications that a *wāʿiẓ* should bring. If the *wāʿiẓ* met these conditions, he could also preach on the minbars of Friday mosques.[56] A *wāʿiẓ* without these qualifications, on the other hand, would be prevented from preaching on the minbar. *Wuʿāẓ* with little knowledge of preaching and hadith could be tolerated, but would not be allowed to enter minbars.[57] Ibn Ukhuwwa explains the

49 Cf. also Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 235–241.

50 Howard, *Minhaj-et-Talibin*, 58.

51 Howard, *Minhaj-et-Talibin*, 59.

52 Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr* (Beirut, 1981), 176–177.

53 Merlin L. Swartz, "The Rules of Popular Preaching in Twelfth-Century Bagdad, According to Ibn al-Jawzī," in *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Age. Islam, Byzance, Occident*, eds. George Makdisi, Dominique Sourdel, and Janine Thomine-Sourdel (Paris, 1983), 224.

54 Cf. Swartz, "Rules of Popular Preaching," 224; Talmon-Heller, "Islamic Preaching," 68; Berkey, "Audience and Authority," 108.

55 See Rescher, "Tâj eddîn es-Subkis Muʿîd en-niʿam wa mubîd en-niqam," 807 (113).

56 Cf. also Shatzmiller, *Labour*, 316–317; Jones, "Prophetic Performances," 40–42.

57 Cf. also Meier, "Der Prediger," 235. He emphasizes that preaching on the pulpit was not explicitly forbidden for the *wuʿāẓ*.

reasons behind this as follows: A high level of dignity was required to enter a minbar, as it had once been climbed by the Prophet, the righteous caliphs, and the imams.[58]

The fact that a market supervisor (*muḥtasib*) would watch over whether a *wāʿiẓ* possessed the necessary qualifications for preaching on a minbar indicates that minbars were indeed used by *wuʿāẓ*. For instance, the Maliki jurist Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336) speaks casually of obvious *wuʿāẓ* who preached on minbars.[59] He notes that during a *Mawlid* celebration, women would sit between men and boys and listen to the male (*wāʿiẓ*) or female popular preacher (*wāʿiẓa*) in good faith. Minbars were erected for these popular preachers, which they then climbed and preached from. They would extend or shorten the recitation while swaying, shouting and striking the minbar with their hands or feet and moaning and crying hypocritically.[60] These detailed descriptions of the preachers' gestures and articulation demonstrate a drastic contrast to the behavior set down for a *khaṭīb* on the minbar. Ibn al-Ḥājj also explicitly mentions that there were women in the audience, while somehow criticizing them for sitting between men and boys and listening in good faith.

3 Visual Representations of Preaching Practices: The *Maqāmāt*

In addition to written sources, visual sources can also contribute to understanding the use of the minbar for the delivery of the Friday and penitential sermon (*mawʿiẓa*). The illustrated manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt* by Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥarīrī are a rich visual source for the Mamluk period. Oleg Grabar, who compiled a complete corpus of these illustrated manuscripts, concludes that the miniatures reflect "common practices" by focusing on the interpretation or representation of then contemporary daily life.[61] This reflects the starting

58 Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim al-qurba*, 65–66. See also Johannes Pedersen, "The Islamic Preacher, *wāʿiz, mudhakkir, qāss*," in *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, eds. Samuel Löwinger and Joseph Somogyi, 1st vol. (Budapest, 1948), 250 and Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action*, 59.

59 Cf. also Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 181–182.

60 Ibn al-Ḥajj, *Madkhal*, 1:16. Pedersen, "Islamic Preacher," 249. See the translation in Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 182.

61 Grabar, *Illustration*, 147; Marianne Barrucand, "Architecture et espaces architecturés dans les illustrations des maqâmât d'al-Harîrî du XIIIe siècle," in *The Art of the Saljūqs in Iran and Anatolia. Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Edinburgh in 1982*, edited by Robert Hillenbrand (Costa Mesa, 1994), 80, focusing on architectural representations; and Bernard O'Kane, "Text and Paintings in the Al-Wasitī Maqamat," in *Studies in Islamic Painting, Epigraphy and Decorative Arts* (Edinburgh, 2021), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/staatsbibliothek-berlin/detail.action?docID=6859495, 157.

premise of this essay, namely that these illustrations represent the most extensive contemporary testimony to minbars in use by preachers.

3.1 Depictions of the *Khuṭba* in the *Maqāmāt*

In the following, I will focus on three scenes depicting the use of minbars by preachers. I will start with the depictions of the use of minbars for the *khuṭba.* The illustrated manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī present the minbar primarily as a place of *khuṭba* preaching.

3.1.1 Characterising a *Khaṭīb* Holding a Friday *Khuṭba*: Setting, Performance, Garments, and Accessories

Despite the fact that several illustrated manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt* depict minbars,[62] the actual word "minbar" is mentioned only once in the Arabic *Maqāmāt* text, more precisely as the "minbar of prayer" (*minbar al-duʿāʾ*) in the Friday mosque (*jāmiʿ*) of Samarkand (28th *maqāma*). The text tells the story of a prankster, Abū Zayd, who has disguised himself as a *khaṭīb* and climbs the minbar until he reaches the top. He then greets the audience with his right hand and sits down until the end of the call to prayer. He then stands up and begins to speak.[63]

62 For example, the Friday mosque (*jāmiʿ*) of Basra in the 50th *maqāma* in the Paris manuscript Arabe 5847 is depicted in the form of arcades, a mihrab, a minaret, and a minbar. Since the Arabic text does not speak of a prayer or sermon or of any other action related to the minbar, the minbar here is merely presented as an object designating the Friday mosque (*jāmiʿ*) as such. For the depiction of this scene, see Grabar, *Illustration*, 101–102 and David J. Roxburgh, "In Pursuit of Shadows. Al-Hariri's *Maqāmāt*," *Muqarnas* 30 (2013), 195–197. In addition to the Friday mosques of Samarkand and Basra, another mosque is referred to as a place of action in the *Maqāmāt*, namely the mosque (*masjid*) at Tanis (41st *maqāma*). In the John Rylands University Library manuscript Arab 680 [677], fol. 143a (David James, *A Masterpiece of Arab Painting. The Schefer Maqāmāt Manuscript in Context* [London, 2013], 173 fig. 1.12) and in the Petersburg manuscript (Oleg Georgievič Bolshakov, *Miniatures of the Manuscript of the 'Maqamat' of al-Hariri* [Saint Petersburg, 2018], 219, the space is characterized as the interior of a mosque through the depiction of a mihrab, rows of arcades, and mosque lamps. In both cases, no minbar is indicated, thus underlining the mosque's designation as a *masjid.* Cf. also Grabar, *Illustration*, 90–91.

63 Al-Qāsim ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt* (Beirut, 1873), 271.

This scene is depicted in several manuscripts (Figure 1).[64] The mosque as the site of action is marked by rows of arcades and hanging lamps.[65] The structure of the minbars depicted is reminiscent of preserved minbars known from the Mamluk period, each with a portal and—in some cases—the characteristic division of the flank into a high rectangle below the seat and the triangle flanking the stairs.[66] Most of the minbars depicted also have a railing.[67] Furthermore, the minbar shown in a manuscript in Vienna is topped with a canopy and set with a black flag next to the preacher. Two further minbars, one shown on the London manuscript Add. 22 114 and the other on a manuscript in Oxford, are also flanked by two black flags or standards with gold stripes to the left and right of the front of the seat.

The *khaṭīb*, namely Abū Zayd in disguise, wears a black robe with partly yet clearly recognizable gold embroidered stripes with script and a turban.[68] He stands on the penultimate step, which is the step in front of the seat.[69] In most of the

64 Manchester, John Rylands Library, Arab 680 [677], fol. 90a–89b (James, *Masterpiece*, 2013, 168, fig. 1.7.); Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Arabe 5847, fol. 84b (James, *Masterpiece*, 199, fig. 3.11.) and Arabe 6094, fol. 93r (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8422967h/f197.item> [05.09.2022]); London, British Library, Or. 1200, fol. 86a–85b (James, *Masterpiece*, 210, fig. 4.4.), Add. 22 114, fol. 94r (Richard Ettinghausen, *Arabische Malerei* (Geneva, 1979), 146) and Or. 9718, fol. 107 (Grabar, *Illustration*, 5F7: the representation is hardly recognizable in this reproduction); Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 2916, fol. 105a (James, *Masterpiece*, 217, fig. 5.7.); Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, A.F. 9, fol. 95v (Grabar, *Illustration*, 5G1); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 458, fol. 48 (Grabar, *Illustration*, 5F11: the representation is hardly recognizable in the reproduction). Cf. also Grabar, *Illustration*, 75 and Andrea Lermer, "Öffentlicher Raum und Publikum in den Illustrationen des Maqamat al-Hariris im 13. Jahrhundert," in *The Public in the Picture. Involving the Beholder in Antique, Islamic, Byzantine and Western Medieval and Renaissance Art = Das Publikum im Bild: Beiträge aus der Kunst der Antike, des Islam, aus Byzanz und dem Westen*, eds. Beate Fricke and Urte Krass (Zürich, 2015), 66–67.

65 Exceptions are the London manuscript Ms Or. 1200 as well as the Oxford manuscript, where the mosque is not characterized by these attributes (cf. also Grabar, *Illustration*, 75). For the depiction of architectural spaces, see also Grabar, "The Illustrated Maqamat of the Thirteenth Century. The Bourgeoisie and the Arts," in *The Islamic City*, edited by A.H. Hourani and S. Stern (Oxford, 1970), 212.

66 Exceptions include the illustration in the manuscript Ms Or. 1200, Add 22114, as well as the Vienna and the Oxford manuscripts, which make no distinction between triangle and flank, but do render a uniform pattern covering the entire flank.

67 Exceptions are the minbars in manuscripts Add. 22 114 and Ms Arabe 6094, which instead offer a pronounced depiction of steps in profile.

68 Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Paris, Arabe 5847; Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 2916.

69 Exceptions include the depictions in Ms Or. 1200, where the preacher is standing, and in Paris Ms 6094, where the preacher is sitting on the upmost step or seat.

Figure 1: Abū Zaid as *khaṭīb* preaching the *khuṭba* on a minbar (28th *maqāma*). *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, 1236–1237, Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Arabe 5847, fol. 84v.

illustrations, he holds a sword in his hands.[70] He raises the other hand in a speaking gesture.[71] The audience, on the other hand, is generally portrayed as a group of men sitting on the floor in front of the minbar and facing the *khaṭīb* attentively.

In accordance with the literary model, which specifies the minbar as the place of action and the *khaṭīb* as the actor, the author of the text and the illustrators attached great importance to the depiction of Abū Zayd as a *khaṭīb*. Thus, the author characterizes Abū Zayd as imitating a *khaṭīb* by describing his proper conduct: climbing the minbar, greeting the audience with his right hand and sitting down until the end of the call to prayer before again standing and beginning to speak.[72] The illustrator, for his part, uses pictorial means to present Abū Zayd as observant of proper conduct by depicting him in the required posture, standing on the minbar in front of the seat during the sermon, together with the corresponding attributes of a sword and black clothing.

3.1.2 Characterizing a *khaṭīb* holding an Eid *Khuṭba* on a *Muṣallā*: Setting, Performance, Garments, and Accessories

In the 28th *maqāma*, the place of action is the interior of a mosque. In the 7th *maqāma*,[73] however, the action takes place at the place of prayer (*muṣallā*)[74] of Barqaʿīd, a town near Mosul, which the narrator al-Ḥārith visits on the occasion of the *ʿīd al-fiṭr* prayer.[75] In the Paris manuscript Arabe 5847,[76] the *muṣallā* is marked by a mihrab and a minbar (Figure 2).[77] The Petersburg manuscript C23 depicts a minbar

70 Manchester, John Rylands Library, Arab 680 [677], Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Arabe 5847, Oxford: right hand; Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 2916, Oxford: left Hand; Add. 22 114: both hands.

71 One exception is the depiction in the manuscript Arabe 6094. Here, the preacher sits on the top step and holds both hands bent in front of the upper body. Another exception is found in the London manuscript Or. 1200, where the preacher is shown standing on the top step and holding his hands in a speaking gesture in front of his upper body.

72 Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 271.

73 Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 1873, 68. For this scene, see also Grabar, *Illustration*, 36–37.

74 Shirley Guthrie interprets the setting to be inside a congregational mosque (Shirley Guthrie, "Everyday Life in the Near East: The Evidence of the 7th/13th-Century Illustrations of Al-Hariri's *Maqamat,*" PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1991. http://hdl.handle.net/1842/30239, 12), but also as a *muṣallā* (Guthrie, "Everyday Life," 34). For the interpretation of the scene in a mosque, see Bolshakov, *Miniatures*, 8; O'Kane, "Text and Paintings," 148.

75 Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 68.

76 Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Arabe 5847, fol. 18v–19r (James, *Masterpiece*, 195, fig. 3.3).

77 Another depiction can be found in London, Or. 9718, fol. 25 (Grabar, *Illustration*, 2A7). However, the depiction is hardly recognizable in this reproduction. For other depictions of this scene, see James, *Masterpiece*, 139 Appendix 1.

Figure 2: The *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* sermon on the *muṣallā* of Barqaʿīd (7th *maqāma*). *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, 1236–1237, Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Arabe 5847, fol. 18v.

and a double row of arcades crowned by pinnacles.[78] In both cases, the minbars demonstrate the structure of the portal, railing and division of the flank into a triangle and rectangle below the seat as described earlier in this section.[79] Additionally, the minbar in the Petersburg manuscript is set with a canopy.[80] Two black flags or standards are attached to the seat of the minbar in the Paris manuscript Arabe 5847.

In both cases, the preachers are dressed in black with gold *ṭirāz* stripes and wear a turban—similar to the preacher depicted in the Samarkand mosque—and both stand below the seat, with their left hands raised in an oratory gesture and their right ones resting on their sword or staff.

The illustrators, especially the one of the Petersburg manuscript, depict the assembled audience as less focused on the *khaṭīb* than in the 28th *maqama*: Abū Zayd disguised as an old blind man enters the scene with a female companion and dominates the action within both the text as well as the illustration. In addition to showing the prescribed gestures and position of a *khaṭīb* on the minbar, the illustrators also present the relevant attributes: sword, black clothes, and turban. Further, the depiction of the minbar on the *muṣallā* and not inside a mosque also meets stipulated guidelines for holding the *ʿīd al-fiṭr khuṭba*.

3.2 Depiction of *Mawʿiẓa* in the *Maqāmāt*

In addition to the above-mentioned depictions of the minbars used for the Friday noon *khuṭba* or for Eid, a further custom of minbar preaching is depicted in the illustrated *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī. The illustrations here differ fundamentally from the depictions of the *khaṭīb's* preaching on the minbar described above in terms of how the space, the minbar, and the preacher's gestures are shown.

The 21st *maqama* takes place in Rey. Al-Harith sees a crowd hurrying to listen to a famous preacher (*wāʿiẓ*). This famous preacher is Abū Zayd in disguise,

78 St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, C23/ Russian Academy of Sciences, fol. 41 (James, *Masterpiece*, 177, fig. 2.5; Bolshakov, *Miniatures*, fig. on 83). The mosque depicted in the 50th *maqāma* in this manuscript shows similar rows of arcades. However, the space here is clearly distinguished as a mosque through the depiction of a minaret on the left, a mihrab in the centre of the arcades, and hanging mosques lamps (Bolshakov, *Miniatures*, fig. on 250). See also the depiction of the mosque of Saruj in this manuscript, featuring a single row of arcades, a mihrab in the centre, and hanging mosque lamps (Bolshakov, *Miniatures*, fig. on 255).

79 Cf. Guthrie, "Everyday Life," 21–22.

80 For a list of further depictions of this scene, see James, *Masterpiece*, 139.

preaching in front of the governor in an assembly place (*nadī*).[81] Three manuscripts depict a minbar as the place where Abū Zayd's preaching takes place.[82] However, in all three manuscripts, the characteristic elements of the mosque depiction described above—mosque lamps, minarets, and mihrabs—are missing from the space around the minbar.[83] Instead, the depictions convey the impression of an undefined or open space. The Istanbul manuscript depicts a kind of courtyard into which people are looking down through the round arches of the upper floor of an arcade.[84] In the Paris manuscript Arabe 5847, the scene is spread across two pages, with the illustrator focusing on the depiction of people and reducing architectural elements to a minimum (Figure 3).[85] Here, we see a row of seated women inserted above the preaching scene.[86] On the opposite page, the upper part of the scene shows a governor seated and flanked by guards. Below the governor, three horsemen and a large crowd are assembled, listening to the preacher. The two levels are separated by a brick floor held by two brick posts, with the squinches filled with floral ornaments.[87] Meanwhile, the Paris manuscript Arabe 6094 shows a tiled wall. The minbars in these illustrations also differ from those described so far. The steps are clearly visible, and no portal or railing is shown. Furthermore, there is no characteristic division of the flank into a high rectangular section beneath the seat and a triangular section flanking the stairs.

The preacher wears a blue robe in the Paris manuscript Arabe 6094, a green one in the Paris manuscript Arabe 5847, and a dark greenish robe with *ṭirāz* stripes in the Istanbul manuscript. All three manuscripts show the preacher wear-

81 Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 199–200; Theodore Preston, *Makamat; or, Rhetorical Anecdotes of Al Hariri of Basra* (Cambridge, 1850), 291–292. See for the translation as assembly place Preston, *Makamat*, 252, footnote 3. Cf. Grabar, *Illustration*, 64; Guthrie, "Everyday Life," 101.

82 Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Arabe 5847, fol. 59r–58v (James, *Masterpiece*, 198, fig. 3.9), Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Arab 6094, fol. 64 (Grabar, *Illustration*, 4D12) and Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 2916, fol. 71 a (James, *Masterpiece*, 215, fig. 5.4). For further depictions without a minbar, see James, *Masterpiece*, 142 Appendix 1.

83 For the characterization of the mosque space in the St. Petersburg manuscript, see Bolshakov, *Miniatures*, 31.

84 Grabar interprets this scene as taking place in a mosque because of the arcades and the left border, which seems to imply a minaret (Grabar, *Illustration*, 64). For the interpretation as mosque, see also Lermer, "Öffentlicher Raum," 67.

85 Grabar interprets this scene as taking place in a mosque or in the open air (Grabar, *Illustration*, 65).

86 For further information on this aspect of the scene, see especially Guthrie, "Everyday Life," 347–354.

87 For the interpretation of this architectural elements as depictions of a *sūq*, see Grabar, *Illustration*, 64–65.

ing a turban; both Paris manuscripts show him barefoot. In all of these examples, the preacher is depicted sitting on the seat at the top of the stairs. In the Paris manuscript Arabe 5847, he raises his right hand in a speaking gesture while resting his left hand on his knee. In the Istanbul manuscript, he appears to place his hands on the head of a person kneeling on the steps. In the Paris manuscript Arabe 6094, he holds both hands bent in front of his upper body, with his index fingers raised in an oratory gesture.

Unlike the scenes described so far in the previous sections of this paper, the minbar here is used not only by the preacher but also by other people. The Istanbul manuscript shows two other people on the minbar in addition to the preacher. One appears to be climbing the minbar from the side, touching the knees of the seated preacher, while the other attempts to prevent his ascent.[88] Meanwhile, the Paris manuscript Arabe 6094 shows a listener leaning casually with his elbow upon the second step.

In all three manuscripts, the illustrators made efforts to depict a large audience. The audience of both Paris manuscripts appear to be listening attentively to the preacher. The audience in the Istanbul manuscript is difficult to make out due to the poor preservation of the miniature, yet it appears to be more animated.

Upon comparison with scenes shown on the congregational mosque of Samarkand and the *muṣallā* of Barqaʿīd, the differences in how the preachers, mosque space, minbar, and audience are depicted in these manuscripts indicate that the purpose is not to show a mosque or *muṣallā* with a *khaṭīb* holding a *khuṭba* on a minbar,[89] but in fact a *waʿiẓ* preaching on a minbar in an environment differing from that of a mosque.[90] This is also confirmed by the fact that the manuscripts Paris 3929,[91] Vienna,[92] London 9781,[93] and London 22114 do not depict Abū Zayd preaching on a minbar at all,[94] but instead show him standing or sitting at ground level in front of or amidst the audience. Furthermore, the Arabic text speaks of a *wāʿiẓ* to which people would flock, and describes the setting as a *nadī*.[95]

88 However, the depiction is hardly recognizable because of the poor state of preservation of this manuscript page.

89 This would correspond to the fact that al-Ḥarīrī uses the Arabic word *nadī*, which does not refer to a mosque or *muṣallā*, but rather to a place of assembly (Preston, *Makamat*, 292).

90 For this interpretation, see also Roxburgh, *In Pursuit of Shadows,* 171.

91 Grabar, *Illustration*, fig. 4D9 and 4D10.

92 Grabar, *Illustration*, fig. 4E10.

93 Grabar, *Illustration*, fig. 4E6. The quality of the reproduction is rather poor and the image hardly recognizable.

94 For London 22114, see Grabar, *Illustration,* fig. 4E8 and 4E9.

95 Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt,* 199.

Figure 3: Abū Zaid acting as a *wāʿiẓ* at an assembly place in Rey (21st *maqāma*). *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, 1236–1237, Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, Arabe 5847, fol. 59r–58v.

Figure 3 (continued)

3.3 Distinguishing Different Forms of Preaching in the *Maqāmāt*

The finely differentiated representations of the *khaṭīb* and *wāʿiẓ* correspond to the "documentary" quality that is often noted of the *Maqāmāt*'s representations.[96] But they can also be seen in the context of Roxburgh's interpretation of the al-Wāsiṭī manuscript as representations of "the pragmatics of communication between people."[97] While Roxburgh highlights the depiction of intimate, private moments of communication in his article,[98] the finely distinguished representations of the *khaṭīb* and *wāʿiẓ* on minbars can be taken as two important examples of public or mass communication, or, more precisely, of popular or *khuṭba* preaching.

4 Conclusion

The depictions in the *Maqāmāt* somehow mirror the predominant use of the minbar presented in Mamluk written sources, especially for the Friday *khuṭba* preached by the *khaṭīb*. Nevertheless, they also attest to another use of minbars, namely for the preaching by the *wāʿiẓ*. As the act of preaching had to be seen and heard, typically by a larger audience, both *khaṭīb* and *wāʿiẓ* were profiting from the physical characteristics of the minbar, especially its height. In addition to this practical consideration, contemporary jurists state that great dignity was required of a preacher in order to be allowed to preach on the minbar in a Friday mosque, as the preacher on the pulpit was essentially following in the place of the Prophet, the rightly guided caliphs, and the imams.[99] This honor reflects on the minbars themselves, as they are characterized in written sources as places of special dignity and authority.[100]

96 Grabar, "Illustrated Maqamat," 215–222; Ettinghausen, *Arabische Malerei*, 104; Lermer, "Öffentlicher Raum," 57.

97 Roxburgh, *In Pursuit of Shadows*, 183.

98 Roxburgh, *In Pursuit of Shadows*, 207.

99 Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim al-qurba*, 165–66.

100 Secondary literature also interprets the minbars as *loci* of prophetic authority (Jones, "Prophetic Performances," 38), which thus conferred authority on the speaker/user. In this context, the elevation is said to be of crucial importance. Thus, Hammad notes associatively in connection with the minbar that the Arabic phrase "this man is placed highly" meant that he was "worthy of respect" (my translation) (Hammad, "L'évolution de la chaire," 119). Qutbuddin makes a similar point, highlighting the preacher's elevated position, which not only served to help the audience see or hear him better, but also emphasized his serenity (Qutbuddin, "Khuṭba," 209–10).

Permission to preach on a minbar in a Friday mosque was perceived as a privilege and distinction.[101] Indeed, in his manual on Mamluk administration, al-Qalqashandī notes that the position of holding the *khuṭba* was considered the most exalted and highest office (*ajall al-waẓāʾif wa-aʿlāha*) amongst the various religious offices a jurist or scholar could hope to find, as the Prophet himself had held this office.[102] This, in turn, would shape the behavior of the preacher on the minbar, who would follow certain norms of movement and gesture both accepted and expected by the audience and beholders. These norms and instructions, in turn, served to emulate the example of the Prophet precisely and thus convey dignity.[103]

The written sources give us an impression of what was perceived by the audience as acceptable behavior for a preacher on a minbar in Mamluk times. Through these sources, we can understand how much more elaborate and demanding the requirements for a *khaṭīb* or *khuṭba* were than for a *waʿīẓ*. Equally, the *Maqāmāt* illustrators also depicted the fine distinctions in behavior, clothing, and attributes of the *khaṭīb* and *wāʿiẓ* and their audiences, perhaps in expectation that the beholders of their works would easily recognize these fine distinctions.

By now, the readers of this paper will have realized how challenging it is to identify preaching practices in historical settings. Written and visual evidence provides but a glimpse of preaching practices in Mamluk times. As scattered and subjective as this information may be, it adds to a multifaceted panorama of preaching practices during the era.

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101 Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad Ibn ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1913–1919), 3:587. See also Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm*, 4:95; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Khiṭaṭ*, 2:374; Walker, "Social Elites," 108.

102 Al-Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-aʿshā*, 4:39. Cf. also Berkey, *Popular Preaching*, 12 and 65.

103 On following the example of the Prophet, see also Ibn al-Ḥanbalī, *Durr al-ḥabab*, 1:740–41. See also Jones, "Prophetic Performances," 38; on dignity, see Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 64.

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T. P. Muhammad Ashraf

Preaching Islam in a Migratory Context: Sermons, Migrant Spaces, and Religious Practices among Keralite Sunni Muslim Migrants in Qatar

Abstract: Contributing to an emergent field of scholarship on religious and cultural life among the migrant population in the Gulf, this chapter studies an informal migrant religious space among Keralite Sunni Muslim migrants in Qatar. In doing so, the chapter shows how some migrant religious preachers and itinerant guest speakers among them constitute and configure this space through their *waʿẓ* (indigenous forms of religious sermons), devotional rituals, and religious lectures in Malayalam – a religious space alternative to Qatar's largely Salafi/Islamist public religious landscape. More specifically, this article explores how these religious preachers and their sermons play an instrumental role in sustaining their traditional Islamic practices vis-à-vis the recurrent processes among the migrants adapting to the state-promoted Islamic discourses in the Gulf.

1 Introduction

Migration is a constitutive element of the Arab Gulf states. Migrants and foreign nationals form much of the population in these Gulf states. They comprise more than eighty percent of the entire population in the United Arab Emirates as well as in Qatar.[1] While the Gulf states have a strong state-controlled religious public sphere, their migrant and expat populations practice diverse spiritual practices and uphold various transnational religious connections, even in the case of Muslim migrants in these Muslim-majority Arab states. As far as their religious practice is concerned, multiple strands of religious communications and sermons play essential roles in the everyday life of these migrants as well as in the maintenance of diasporic ties with their homelands. However, the religious aspect of migration, not to mention

1 "Labour Migration," International Labour Organization, accessed June 7, 2023, https://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110788334-007

the preaching practices and sermons, has remained heavily understudied, despite some recent interest in the religious and cultural aspects of their migration experience. A vast majority of the academic scholarship concerning migrants, both in Qatar and the Gulf countries at large, is, nonetheless, focused on larger migration patterns, the sponsorship (*kafālah*) system, state policies, and the socio-spatial effects of labor migration, labor-related problems, and other issues.[2] Whereas the overwhelming focus on the socio-economic aspects of migrant lives has provided crucial insight into the structural challenges faced by migrants in the Gulf, these studies have offered little analysis of the socio-religious or cultural dimensions of migration. While most of the existing scholarship on Gulf migration from South Asia, the region which sends the most significant portion of migrant groups to the Gulf, also focuses on its socio-economic aspects, a growing body of scholarship has begun to explore the cultural and religious dimensions of the South Asian migration to the Arab/Persian Gulf. Contributing to this emergent field of scholarship on religious and cultural life among the migrants in the region,[3] this article thus

2 Paul Dresch, "Foreign Matter: The Place of Strangers in Gulf Society," in *Globalization and the Gulf*, eds. Nada Mourtada Sabbah, M. al-Mutawa, and John W. Fox (New York: Routledge, 2006); Andrew M. Gardner, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain (*Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Jane Bristol-Rhys, "Socio-Spatial Boundaries in Abu Dhabi," in *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf,* eds. Mehran Kamrava and Zahra R. Babar (London: Hurst & Company, 2012), 59–84; Andrew M. Gardner, "Foreign Labour and Labour Migration in the Small GCC States," *NOREF Policy Brief* November (2012); David Mednicoff, "The Legal Regulation of Migrant Workers, Politics and Identity in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates," in *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf*, eds. Meharan Kamrava and Zahra R. Babar (London: Hurst & Company, 2012); Zahra R. Babar, *Labor Migration in the State of Qatar: Policy Making and Governance*, (Brussels: Centre for Migrations and Citizenship, 2013).

3 On the cultural aspects, see for instance Irene Ann Promodh, "FM Radio and the Malayali Diaspora in Qatar: At Home Overseas," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47, no. 9 (2021); Mohamed Shafeeq Karinkurayil, "Reading Aspiration in Kerala's Migrant Photography," *South Asia* 43, no. 4 (2020). See for instance the following works on religion and migration: Stanley J. Valayil C. John, *Transnational Religious Organization and Practice: A Contextual Analysis of Kerala Pentecostal Churches in Kuwait* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Attiya Ahmad, *Everyday Conversions: Islam, Domestic Work, and South Asian Migrant Women in Kuwait* (New York: Duke University Press, 2017); Christophe Jaffrelot and Laurence Louer, *Pan-Islamic Connections: Transnational Networks between South Asia and the Gulf* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, "Muslim Entrepreneurs in Public Life Between India and the Gulf: Making Good and Doing Good," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, s.1 (2009); Irene Ann Promodh, "Cyber-Christianity in Qatar: 'Migrant' and 'Expat' Theologies of COVID-19," *Journal of Arabian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2021); Ginu Z. Oommen, "Gulf Migration, Remittances and Religion: Interplay of Faith and Prosperity Amongst Syrian Christians in Kerala," in *Asianization of Migrant Workers in the Gulf Countries*, eds. S. Rajan and Ginu S. Oommen (Springer: Singapore, 2020).

presents a case study of the emergence of an informal migrant religious space[4] among Keralite Muslim migrants in Qatar and shows how some migrant religious preachers and itinerant guest speakers among them constitute and configure this space through their *waʿẓ* (indigenous forms of religious sermons), devotional rituals, and religious lectures in Malayalam, thereby shaping an alternative religious space in Qatar's largely Salafi/Islamist public religious landscape. Thus, in this paper, I show how religious preachers and their sermons play an instrumental role in sustaining their traditional Islamic practices vis-à-vis the recurrent processes among the migrants adapting to the state-supported version of Islam in the Gulf. In doing so, this paper theoretically follows various scholarly approaches which analyze Islam, both its past and present dynamics, through the lens of practice theory by focusing more on distinct everyday Muslim practice—e.g., sayings, doings, behaviors, performance, embodiments—rather than on the textual aspects of Islam.[5] By "textual aspects," I refer to the normative "grand schemes" of Islamic traditions as stipulated and preached by religious experts and laypeople.[6] The paper also briefly explores the inter-relationship between, and the co-constitution of, both the trades (in the medieval transoceanic space) and the economic migration (in the present-day Gulf migration context) and the preaching of religious ideas in Arab and South Asian regions. Moreover, this study mainly draws upon my ethnographic fieldwork among Keralite Sunni[7] Muslim migrants in an accommodation unit in Doha, which I call the al-Markhiyya complex. The fieldwork consisted of various short stays between 2017 and 2022 in Doha, Qatar.

In this article, I show how the Hadrami-diaspora-influenced traditional Sunni Muslim community from Kerala, living in this al-Markhiyya complex, forms migrant religious spaces and maintains their indigenous religious performances and

4 What I refer to here by "religious space" is not just the appropriated use of the mostly private spaces available to the migrants. Rather, I use "space" to refer to a broader and culturally not very specific area where migrants live their religious life, a space which extends beyond the rooms and the local mosque in the al-Markhiyya accommodation complex. Likewise, I have occasionally used "place" in a more culturally specific way, thus for instance in reference to some efforts to configure material spaces such as that of the prayer hall into home-like ones.

5 Ayşe Almıla Akca, Eyad Abuali, and Aydın Süer, "Bodies, Things, Doings. A Practice Theory Approach to the Study of Islam," in *New Methods in the Study of Islam*, eds. Abbas Aghdassi and Aaron Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 3.

6 Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec, *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion* (Oxford, NY: Berghahn Books, 2012).

7 The way I use the term "Sunni" in this article is merely in accordance with popular parlance and is in no way related to the Sunni-Shiʿa binary. On the contrary, as they are popularly addressed in the Kerala Muslim context, the Sunni people are the traditionalist Muslim groups who largely adhere to Shafiʿi *juridical school and practice Hadrami and other Sufi rituals.*

practices vis-à-vis the Wahhabi state religious landscape in Qatar. The al-Markhiyya is a dormitory-like accommodation compound, inhabited mainly by Keralite traditional Sunni community members in Qatar. The complex is said to be owned by a Qatari "Shaykh," as my interlocutors referred to him, residing in a mansion close to the complex and separated from it by a huge wall. The complex houses community members of both major Sunni groups, the EK and AP Sunnis, who exhibit a cross-factional solidarity. They have their prayer room, appropriated as a local mosque, as they call it, to perform religious acts and devotional practices according to the Shafiʿi-Sunni and Hadrami/Sufi traditions.[8] The local mosque is run by the al-Markhiyya complex's management staff, which mainly consists of Sunni migrants from northern Kerala. The mosque, situated in a corner of the compound, also has an imam, himself a staff of the local management, who takes a leading role in almost every religious activity in and around the mosque. There is a story circulating among the residents about the imam: Originally, he was invited from Kerala by the Shaykh's associates to work as a driver for the owner's (Shaykh's) household. Later, he was tasked with leading five daily prayers after having failed to get a Qatari driving license. As per the story, the management's *wāśta* (network based on personal rapport)—comparable to that of job networks[9]—and their intercession on his behalf is believed to have been crucial in this appointment. However, he is also a qualified expert of Islamic law and classical sciences.

Located in a suburban area of the city of Doha, the accommodation unit houses around five people in each dormitory room and exhibits a unique networked-ness and internal sociality, mostly developing along linguistic and regional lines. The residents are mostly cab drivers; the rest of the residents consist mainly of low-income workers, with the exception of some middle-class bachelor migrants. Some of these middle-class laborers also explicitly express their happiness about being able to live in the compound, and practice and carry out religious practices according to their indigenous ways, while choosing not to stay in their free company-accommodation facilities. While several organized migrants in general resort to getting together in private spaces such as private rooms, apartments, and hotel auditoriums for religious and cultural practices, the Muslim migrants living in the complex present a specific socio-spatial arrangement

8 Although this work focuses mainly on this distinct group of people living in this complex, there are diverse Muslim factions and groups among Keralite Muslims in Qatar. Each of these several migrant communities also has a distinct configuration that defines the character of their practices and relationships with the Gulf states.

9 See for a recent work on Keralite migrants' job-networks based on *wāśta*, Mufsin Puthan Purayil, and Manish Thakur, "The Strength of Strong Ties: Wasta and migration strategies among the Mappila Miuslims of Northern Kerala, India," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2022).

exhibiting extensive breadth. This is enabled by the settled migrants' relative agency and is more telling of the roles played by the preachers and religious leaders among them in shaping their migrant religious experience. Before discussing this in detail, I will briefly present below what constituted the religious and cultural repertoires of the above-mentioned Keralite traditional Sunni Muslims, my interlocutors in this article, the historical entanglements of trade and commerce and the spread and preaching of Islam, as well as how present-day economic migration and its related religious circulations are a partial continuation of the medieval religious circulations enabled by the trade diasporas.

2 Continued Religious Circulation in South Asia and the Arab World: Trade, Economic Migration, and the Preaching of Islam

The mobility of people and ideas between the Gulf, South Asia, and the Perso-Arab regions is connected to a very long history of trade and connections. Much of the existing literature on the linkages between these regions, though limited, broadly assumes a rupture between the Indian Ocean transregional mobilities of the early modern period and the interconnections that emerged as part of the post-oil/postcolonial globalized Gulf states. For instance, Elizabeth Chettur claims that there are no direct linkages between the medieval Arab spice trade and contemporary South Indian labor migration to the Gulf.[10] It may be tempting to draw a neat separation between these eras on account of the greater scale and scope of modern migration flows compared to the earlier trade and religious connections. However, both premodern and modern trade/economic networks have always coproduced Islamic religious networks. Some of the premodern religious networks, such as the reformist Sufi Hadrami religious groups like the one discussed by Anne K. Bang, have even continued to exist in varying forms.[11] These networks have historically shaped and reformed religious circuits in the Indian Ocean world, despite their natural ups and downs following the hegemonic rise of European colonial powers. Some of them were revived or even remain functional

10 Elizabeth L. H. Chettur,"Transformations of Transoceanic Relationships: The Gulf Migration and the Nayars of South India," in *Journeys and Dwellings: Indian Ocean Themes in South Asia,* ed. Helene Basu (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Private Limited, 2008), 207.

11 Anne K. Bang, *Ripples of Reform: Islamic Sufi Networks in the Western Indian Ocean* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

today. In the medieval Western Indian Ocean world, maritime trade and commercial imperatives have thus been co-shaping Islamic religious networks, and they mainly propelled the preaching of Islam in these regions. Some studies on the Hadrami Arab diaspora,[12] which constitutes one of the significant networks that left cultural and religious imprints on various places such as Malabar (the synecdoche of pre-modern Kerala) on the shores of the Indian Ocean, have explored, for instance, how their trade diaspora from the Arabian Peninsula paved the way for the spread of Islam in the Indian Ocean littorals.

Moreover, the historical formation of the Shafiʿi legal school in parts of South and Southeast Asia was also very much shaped by such Indian Ocean circulations originating from Arabia, by the related processes of exchanges, encounters, and conversations with the local realities in the periphery, and it was at times even in conflict with Arab-Islamic legal discourses. Thus, the historical specificities and the local realities of the periphery have also contributed to the formation of Islam in these regions. This is one of the major reasons why what Sebastian Prange calls "monsoon Islam,"[13] which was formed in response to the non-Muslim-majority socio-political contexts of the local Malabar, showed distinct features and characteristics due to the adaptations, negotiations, and other contestations it made.[14] Patricia Risso has shown how maritime trade and commerce impacted the development of the socio-cultural dynamics of the Indian Ocean littorals, and in particular how this trade influenced the development and spread of Islam in the region.[15] She notes that, unlike their European counterparts who worked hard to prevent missionaries from coming to India, Muslim "merchants were often missionaries themselves or were accompanied by them."[16] As discussed by Risso, it was the transregional trade as well as its economic imperatives that mainly gave birth to some medieval religious networks and the spread of Islam in the medieval Indian Ocean world.[17]

12 Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2006); Bang, *Ripples of Reform.*

13 Prange's *Monsoon Islam* (2018) discusses the history of Islam in Malabar (Kerala), a South Indian shore of the western Indian Ocean, as being spread through the medium of tradesmen, Sufis, and commercial imperatives.

14 Sebastian Prange, *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

15 Patricia Risso, *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

16 Risso, *Merchants and Faith*, 5.

17 Risso, *Merchants and Faith,* 5.

Such scholarship on Indian Ocean trade/religious networks[18] has emphasized the importance of trade and commercial networks for the spread and preaching of Islam and Islamic practices in these regions during the medieval period. In the post-1970s history of Arabia and South Asia, economic migration seems to have contributed to the increased flow of people and assumed, in part, the earlier role of maritime trade in the perpetuation of religious and cultural circulations alongside other state and non-state actors, although this has remained an understudied subject. Roxanne Euben's comparative study on medieval Muslim travels demonstrated that the sorts of dynamic mobilities typically associated with this increasingly globalized modern world have a long history of their own.[19] While allowing that globalization and technology may have brought historically unparalleled mobilities, Euben's suggestion helps us put into perspective the continuity of religious circulation and religious practice, despite the seemingly radical break between the medieval Arab spice trade and contemporary labor migration in the modern period. Thus, as part of the story of my interlocutors, some South Asian economic migrants bring with them their indigenous Muslim practices when they migrate to the Gulf, while others adapt to and even take with them new ideas about (Salafi) Islam and practices available in the Gulf context when they return. The scholarship concerning Gulf migration from Kerala is, however, mainly focused either on elite individuals, families, small social networks, or on societal transformation linked with a reformist vision of Islam.[20] This leaves several large religious groups who maintain their traditional practices unexplored. Furthermore, the available literature on Kerala's Gulf migration has analyzed modes of social mobility as stemming from the economic and symbolic capital acquired through migration and largely depicted migration as undermining "traditional bases of status and hierarchy," itself "part and parcel of wider processes of reli-

18 See also Ronit Ricci's discussion of literary networks: Ronit Ricci, *Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

19 Roxanne Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

20 Katy Gardner and Filippo Osella,"Migration, Modernity and Social Transformation in South Asia: An Overview," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 37, no. 1–2 (February, 2003); Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella,"'I am Gulf': The Production of Cosmopolitanism in Kozhikode, Kerala, India," in *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean*, eds. Edward Simpson and Kai Kresse (London: Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2007); Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, "Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India," *Modern Asian Studies* (2008); Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, "Muslim Entrepreneurs in Public Life between India and the Gulf: Making Good and Doing Good," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no. 1(2009).

gious reformism."[21] Drawing on this literature, M.H. Ilias has also stressed the heightened practice of so-called "original Islam" among returning Kerala Muslims and portrayed this as if these Muslim migrants' former affiliations and practices have nothing much to do with the field of Islamic affairs in their migratory settings.[22] There are nonetheless large Keralite groups and organizational formations in the present-day Gulf countries which reinforce "traditional bases" of religion and a "*Mappila* identity"[23] which is centered around the Shafiʿi legal school and Hadrami religious practices and repertoires,[24] which evolved as part of maritime Indian ocean circulations. Whereas the existing literature on Kerala-Gulf migration has emphasized processes of *reinventing* religion (along with Wahhabi doctrines) in the migratory context of the Gulf, the stories of migrant religious organizations or mobilization such as the case I am discussing here show various indigenous Muslim practices and devotional performances being maintained by the medium of preachers and leaders among the economic migrants from Kerala in Qatar. This demonstrates a continuation of erstwhile religious circulations and the preaching of Islam that already existed in the medieval Indian Ocean, albeit in varying strength and scope.

3 Islam, Preaching, and the Migratory Context: Al-Markhiyya

As I went in during the time of the *tarāwīḥ* prayer on a day in Ramadan, the vague sounds of people reciting Qurʾanic verses became slowly audible as I reached the inner courtyard of the al-Markhiyya accommodation complex. Most of the residents had already been waiting, seated on the long carpet reciting the Qurʾan and prayers, while waiting for the *iqāma* (the second call of the minaret, before *jamāʿa* (the group prayer) to start in order for them to perform the *ʿishā* prayer. Soon after the *iqāma* had taken place, everyone present stood and lined

21 Gardner and Osella, "Migration, Modernity and Social Transformation," xv.

22 M. H. Ilias, "Malayalee Migrants and Translocal Kerala Politics in the Gulf: Re-Conceptualizing 'Political'," In *Contextualizing the Modern Middle Eastern Diaspora*, eds. Anthony Gorman and Sossie Kasbarian, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 322.

23 See for details on Mappila Muslim identity Engseng Ho, "Names beyond Nations: The Making of Local Cosmopolitans," *Etudes rurales* (2002); Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2006); M. H. Ilias, "Mappila Muslims and the Cultural Content of Trading Arab Diaspora on the Malabar Coast," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 35, no. 4–5 (2007).

24 Ilias, "Mappila Muslims."

up for the prayer, while others were seen rushing out from their rooms to the courtyard. After the *ʿishā* prayer was over, all of them began praying *nafl* (supererogatory) prayers individually until it was time for *tarāwīḥ*. The *tarāwīḥ* prayer was initiated by the imam saying loudly: *al-śalā, al-śalāta jāmiʿa* . . . ("the prayer, the congregatory prayer!"), as heard in traditional Muslim mosques in Kerala. They performed the *tarāwīḥ* prayer as twenty *rakʿa*, as opposed to the eight-r*akʿa tarāwīḥ* prayer in most of the Qatari mosques, and finished this off with an additional three *rakʿa* of *witr* prayer.

Immediately after the prayer was over, the imam stood up to address the people gathered for prayer. As some of them had started to leave, he started off by saying in Malayalam "the sessions of *ʿilm* (knowledge, or religious knowledge) are very precious . . . all should be working hard to acquire as much knowledge as they can, and those who are not very busy may please remain seated and listen to this explanation of only one verse from the Qurʾan that I am going to give".[25] He was employing a technique to appeal to the audience to make some time to listen to the sermon as well as to imply that the sermon will be quick, while anonymously referring to and exhorting those people who were about to leave the courtyard immediately after prayer. He then slowly recited a Qurʾanic verse (the 179th verse, to be precise) from the sura al-Aʿrāf in a poised tone, making pauses in between: "*wa-la-qad ḏaraʾanā li-jahannam* . . ."[26] The imam then started to give a sentence-by-sentence literal translation of the verse, by first reading parts of the verse and then explaining the meaning in Malayalam: "Indeed, I [Allah] have created a lot of human beings and djinns for hell . . . those have hearts that they don't use to understand . . . they possess eyes that they do not use to see . . . and have ears which they do not use to hear . . . they are like cattle . . . no, they are more astray . . . they are the most gullible." Having given the literal meaning of the verse, the imam then began to provide more details and descriptions about the verse, as well as anecdotes from Muslim history, especially from the Prophet Muhammad's life, again in the audience's native language of Malayalam. He was also seen effectively using hand gestures and sound modulations, which I observed to be operative in keeping the audience focused. Specifically, he spoke in a high-pitched voice while reciting and describing the meaning of "*balhum aḍall* . . . (indeed) they are like cattle . . . *no, they are much worse* [implying astray]" (emphasis mine)."[27]

25 Author's fieldnotes from April 2022.
26 Author's fieldnotes from April 2022.
27 Author's fieldnotes from April 2022.

The overarching theme of his talk was the differing ways in which *Shayṭān* (the devil) tries to trick and tempt, and he explained it by giving an example: "*Shayṭān* may tempt you to go take some rest in your rooms after you performed *ʿishā* prayer and let you think (and convince that) you can come back for *tarāwīḥ*, but in fact, he is tricking you to avoid praying *Rawātib*[28] supererogatory prayers (of *ʿishā*) that are more valued than *tarāwīḥ* themselves . . . *be vigilant and careful* . . . *not gullible* as mentioned in the verse . . . *how careless are we!?* the Prophet himself had been reported to have prayed two *rakʿa* taking more than 4 hours . . . such was the case of the Prophet and the great people and the scholars . . . " (emphasis mine).[29]

While delivering the sermon, the imam also seemed to be expressing, as well as experiencing, a sense of helplessness and of deep sorrow, which was visible through the tears dripping from his eyes and the staggering hand gestures. He followed the explanation of the verses with some descriptions of Allah's *raḥma* (mercy) for humanity and of humanity's need for his mercy, and mentioned that it is important that they all seek his mercy and blessings during the first ten days of Ramadan. Additionally, he referred to many severe diseases like cancer and the sorts of physical and mental terrors such diseases would bring forth, and he reminded the audience of why they needed to constantly ask for *raḥma* from God. He ended the gathering with a prayer in Malayalam that lasted several minutes.

The imam seemed to have made the prayer very relatable to the audience, who were migrant workers living far away from their beloved ones in the homeland. Issues that arose in this part included prayers for making their wives and kids *ṣāliḥāt (*virtuous), for their parents to be granted long and healthy lives, for relief from economic distress, for the actualizations of the *halāl murād(ukal)* (permissible desires), for relief and safety from diseases and so on. All of these parts of his sermon, from the rhetorical techniques of inviting attendance and sound modulation to the brief prayer in the end, are representative of a typical *waʿẓ* sermon in the traditional Sunni Muslim community in Kerala. The focus of this paper is, however, not so much on the content, effects, and narrative techniques of these *waʿẓ* sermons, but rather on the maintenance of such preaching practices and religious performances among Sunni Muslim migrants from Kerala as well as the role of Muslim preachers in their migratory setting of the Gulf.

Before I discuss in detail how these residents of the al-Markhiyya complex maintain their traditional religious practices and performances, I intend to briefly clarify this: while the spatial organization of the compound has multiple effects on

28 These are supererogatory prayers associated with five daily prayers.

29 Author's fieldnotes from April 2022.

how people develop sociality, shared feelings, moral dispositions, and other subjectivities, the al-Markhiyya complex is by no means comparable, and rather in contrast, to the other "labor camps" in Qatar as discussed by Thomas Chambers.[30] Such typical labor camps are shown to be very restrictive in terms of migrants' freedom to go out, their access to the outside world, and their limited agency to appropriate their spaces.[31] Unlike the migrant people living in those labor camps, these "organized" migrants from Kerala residing in the complex have all the freedom to go around and choose whichever mosque to go to for prayers, although they prefer in our story to pray together in the local prayer room and attend various rituals and events happening in the compound.

This contrasts with other individual migrants and groups who depend on state-sponsored/controlled religious establishments for receiving spiritual counseling and religious education. Manja Stephan-Emmrich's study of the central Asian Muslim migrants in Dubai,[32] for instance, discusses how some of these migrants resort to and rely on the Emirati Awqaf for spiritual and material religious resources including "special ornamented Qur'ans" and religious learning.[33] The residents of this accommodation complex are not, however, radically opposed to the state religious institutions. While they pray five daily prayers in their local mosque-like prayer room of the complex, they all happily attend the public mosques for the Friday prayer (*jumuʿa*), which are under the supervision of the Qatari Awqaf, the state body for regulating religious affairs. In the al-Markhiyya complex, the migrant Muslim residents perform, except for the Friday prayer, a variety of indigenous rituals and religious practices, in addition to the five daily prayers in the group, mostly inside the mosque. For those big gatherings and mass rituals such as the *tarāwīḥ* prayer discussed above, which the small local mosque cannot accommodate, they also sometimes go and meet outdoors in the courtyard of this accommodation unit.

30 Thomas Chambers, "Continuity in Mind: Imagination and Migration in India and the Gulf," *Modern Asian Studies* 52, no. 4 (2018).

31 Tristan Bruslé, "What Kind of Place Is This?: Daily Life, Privacy and the Inmate Metaphor in a Nepalese Workers' Labour Camp (Qatar)," *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 6, no. 6 (2012); Chambers, "Continuity in Mind."

32 Manja Stephan-Emmrich, "Playing Cosmopolitan: Muslim Self-Fashioning, Migration, and (Be-) Longing in the Tajik Dubai Business Sector," *Central Asian Affairs* 4, no. 3 (2017); Manja Stephan-Emmrich, "A Material Geography of 'Dubai Business': Making and Re-Making Muslim Worlds across Central Asia and the Gulf," in *Claiming and Making Muslim Worlds: Religion and Society in the Context of the Global*, eds. Jeanine Elif Dağyeli, Claudia Ghrawi, and Ulrike Freitag (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

33 Stephan-Emmrich, "A Material Geography," 67.

As my main stay mostly took place during the Islamic month of Ramadan,[34] I observed everyday life in this accommodation unit as one exceptionally replete with special communal gatherings and religious activities. Events and religious practices such as sermons significantly consisted of texts and materials taken from their traditional religious and devotional literatures in Kerala. The list of special events on a usual day of Ramadan starts with the popular iftar (feasts of breaking fast) party, hosted by the owner and management staff. This takes place in the same fashion as in their homeland; the iftar party begins when people are seated in front of food, with the imam's call for reciting *al-Fātiḥa,* the first sura of the Qurʾan, which is followed by the mass recitation of some litanies they used to recite loudly after five daily prayers in Kerala's mosques. After the recitation of *al-Fātiḥa* and the last few suras of the Qurʾan, the session ends with a collective *duʿā* (prayer) in Arabic by the imam, shortly before the adhan, the call to prayer from the minaret. Most often, they collectively invoke a litany starting with saying *subḥānallāḥi wa bi-ḥamdih*, as is common in the local mosques before sunset in Kerala. Iftar is followed by most of the people dispersing back to their dorms for resting, while some others continue to stay in the local mosque and eventually start reciting the Qurʾan and praying supererogatory prayers. Shortly before the *ʿishā* prayer, the Hadrami *waḍīfa* (everyday ritual) named Rātib al-Ḥaddād,[35] which most of the residents took very seriously during Ramadan, is recited collectively by the people gathered in mosques. *Tarāwīḥ* prayers in Kerala have been performed among traditional Sunni Muslims as twenty *rakʿa*, and it has therefore been practiced similarly in the complex. During the pauses between every two and four *rakʿa*, the practitioners collectively recite specific litanies such as the following *ashhadu an lā ilāha illa llāh . . . Allāhumma irḥamnī*. Besides, when the prayer of *tarāwīḥ* is finished, they most often listen to a religious sermon, *waʿẓ*, delivered usually either by the imam, guest speakers from the Sunni community in Qatar, or itinerant speakers from India, almost every day. Such sermons will normally be concluded with the performance of a collective *duʿā*, delivered in Malayalam, mostly either by the imam or the guest speaker towards the end, as shown earlier. In addition, such an eventful day normally ends with the distribution of some snacks that mostly include what Keralite people call *Jeeraka Kanji* (a special cumin-flavored broken-rice porridge).

Their regular rituals and performances, regardless of whether it is Ramadan or not, include weekly gatherings of *ṡalāt* (praise upon the Prophet), usually held

34 In 2018.

35 See for more details Anne K. Bang, "Ritual of Reform – Reform of a Ritual: Rātib al-Ḥaddād in the Southwestern Indian Ocean, c. 1880–1940," In *Islamic Sufi Networks in the Western Indian Ocean (c. 1880–1940)*, 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

in the local mosque (prayer room) on Thursday nights, and devotional rituals of Māla and Mawlūd, which are ritual occasions for the group recitations of distinct devotional prose and poetry concerning the Prophet and Muslim saints, respectively. These regular religious rituals and performances such as Mawlūd and Māla among the traditional Muslim community in Kerala have been shown to be enabling of their traditional Muslim self-formation.[36] Following Saba Mahmood's work on ethical self-formation, A. K. Muneer has argued[37] that the recitation of these devotional texts of Mappilas (traditional Sunnis) should be appreciated not only as literary as well as symbolic of the religious beliefs and ideas they keep close to their hearts but also be accounted as "performative" and ethical practices that produce (traditional Sunni) Mappila selfhoods and subjectivities.[38] One of the biggest Mawlūd sessions that took place inside the Markhiyya complex during my fieldwork was the *Badr Mawlid* program, which was part of the *ʿurs or nercha* (annual religious festival) commemorating the battle of Badr. This program consisted of the recitation of prose and poetry written in classical Arabic in praise of and seeking the intercession of the companions of the Prophet who participated in the historic battle of Badr.

While there were some other itinerant preachers and guest scholars from outside the dormitory facility, it was the imam of the local mosque who mainly led the program. In connection with this devotional performance, he also delivered an hour-long speech in Malayalam and ended the program by delivering an unusually long prayer. Most of my interlocutors began to be more attentive and expressive, in terms of showing and experiencing particular emotions and feelings, when the religious speech and prayer took place in their native language. Charles Hischkind's anthropological study of Islamic preaching has emphasized the relevance of emotions and demonstrated how listening to Islamic sermons forms distinct emotional dispositions in Muslim audiences. For Hirschkind, one of the most important emotions that emerge through preachers' narratives is that of being fearful.[39] As discussed by Hirschkind, the Muslim preachers he studied employed a variety of anecdotes, Qurʾanic verses, and hadith in pursuit of instilling emotions of fear (*khawf)*, terror (*rubʿ*), and sadness (*ḥuzn*) "into the heart of a lis-

36 Aram Kuzhiyan Muneer, "Poetics of Piety: Genre, Self-Fashioning, and the Mappila Lifescape," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26, no. 3 (2016).

37 Saba Mahmood, "Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt," *Social research* 70, no. 3 (2003).

38 Muneer, "Poetics of Piety."

39 Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counter-publics*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2006).

tener so as to steer him or her toward correct practice."[40] While contrasting Hirschkind's ethnographic experience with observations from Egypt, Muneer's above-mentioned study of Mawlūd performances emphasizes pleasant emotions such as love for the Prophet, rather than the emotions of pain and fear, as integral to the processes of self-formation among Keralite traditional Sunni Muslims.[41] Likewise, Max Stille's study of Bengali Muslim w*aʿẓ mehfils* [gatherings] also shows how those sermons aim to "conjure up images to make both preacher and audience experience and express the desired emotions" such as compassion.[42] As shown earlier in the imam's sermon, more emotional dispositions such as that of being utterly helpless and/or of being constantly needy of Allah's mercy seemed to transpire through their peaching narratives in this migratory context, besides these well-explored emotions of fearfulness, pain, love, and so on. The emotions that are elicited here are very much tied in with their migratory, distant-from-home status, as well as with other peculiar conditions, but such detailed inquiries are beyond the scope of this article.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that Stephan Cummins and Max Stille, in their study of religious sermons' reception as a means to further understand the emotional underpinnings, have argued for inquiring into some of the ways preachers and listeners "put preaching to 'use' in [both of] their emotional lives," rather than analyzing emotions, in a purely functionalist sense, as "supporting the preacher's message, enabling (religious) communication, or being the sermon's main effect."[43] As Cummins and Stille also say, the "religious beliefs and values present in sermons are important motivating factors for the aspirations of preachers and audiences . . . one of the notable aspects of most preaching is that it transcends immediate contexts to make reference to pasts and futures beyond the current context . . . (those components) in a sermon often entail a relation-building to emotions of past times and salvation history."[44] One of my interlocutors who did not understand (classical) Arabic, when asked if he was able to stay focused when the devotional literature was read loud, mentioned that "he was attentive to the Mawlūd" and felt "feelings of awe and respect" for those companions who participated in the battle of Badr, as if he understood the meanings, and mentioned, "Ustad's (accompanying)

40 Hirschkind, *Ethical Soundscape,* 74.

41 Muneer, "Poetics of Piety."

42 Max Stille, "Conceptualizing Compassion in Communication for Communication: Emotional Experience in Islamic Sermons (Bengali waʿz mahfils)," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 11, issue 1 (2016), 98.

43 Stephen Cummins and Max Stille, "Religious Emotions and Emotions in Religion: The Case of Sermons," *Journal of Religious History* 45, no. 1 (2021), 18.

44 Cummins and Stille, "Religious Emotions," 13.

speech helps (me) a lot."[45] Yet another interlocutor who compared his emotional experience to that of listening to Qur'an recitation emphasized that he was purely interested in seeking the rewards both in this world and in the hereafter, and said "though, it is also lively and more relatable as Ustad (referring to the imam) gives lectures and prays in Malayalam . . . [and] this specific opportunity [the presence of an imam giving them lectures and praying in Malayalam] is unique about this place . . . I love staying here [also, because of this]."[46]

While Muneer's work pays little or no attention to the role of religious scholars and (or even) layperson leaders who give accompanying descriptions and speeches in Malayalam on such occasions, these performative rituals compiled in a classical language that most of these participants do not understand, I suggest, operate as ethical (transformative) practices and as more functional when combined with the role of preachers and scholars in providing translation (or context), expert advice, and/or explanation. Like the presence of local religious scholars in Kerala, there are also the same madrasa-trained religious scholars and leaders among the Kerala Muslim migrants in Qatar, as seen in the case of the imam of the al-Markhiyya complex, who performs this role in their migratory context in Qatar. Their roles are nonetheless not limited to leading these religious practices and performances, but they also include providing mental support, spiritual counsel, and offering personal prayers in connection with their issues arising from family, workplace, or host country situations. The scholarly literature on modern migration and religion has already studied the role of networks, be they religious, trade-based, or kinship-centered, in various migration trajectories including the perpetuation of migration, in addition to the common push-and-pull factors of migration. While this scholarship focuses on the social roles played by migrant religious networks in the making and maintenance of diasporas,[47] it pays little attention to exploring how economic migration and religious preaching and circulations are entwined, and how these economic migrants, like their maritime

45 Author's fieldnotes, May–June 2018.

46 Author's fieldnotes, May–June 2018.

47 For more details, see the following works: Pnina Werbner, *The Migration Process: Capital, Gifts and Offerings Among British Pakistanis* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1990); Peggy Levitt, "'You Know, Abraham Was Really the First Immigrant': Religion and Transnational Migration," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003); Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2003); Ana Cristina B. Martes and Carlos L. Rodriquez, "Church Membership, Social Capital, and Entrepreneurship in Brazilian Communities in the US," in *Ethnic Entrepreneurship: Structure and Process*, eds. Curt H. Stiles and Craig S. Galbraith, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004); Ron Geaves, *Sufis in Western Society : Global Networking and Locality* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

trader-predecessors, sustain religious networks and the preaching of Islam to various degrees.

Besides the religious practices discussed above, several other rituals included some sort of intervention by the imam or by other guest religious speakers. Nonetheless, the most significant and common practice that stood out was the staging of regular sermons and religious lectures. This ranged from regular short religious instructions, advice, and conversations by the imam of the local mosque to the typical indigenous religious sermons (popularly called *waʿẓ*) by the same imam, itinerant preachers from Kerala, or guest speakers from outside the complex.

These religious lectures and sermons become even more frequent during Ramadan. One of the reasons why this happens is also because many itinerant imams as well as guest preachers start coming to the Gulf to raise funds for several social and educational causes back home, as Muslims tend to generously contribute to charities during Ramadan. As mentioned by Cummins and Stille, the experience and nature of such religious sermons and their effects depend on a variety of variables such as the 'place-making' arrangements as well as on "whether the preacher is a permanent or semi-permanent resident within the community he preaches to or whether they are guest preachers."[48] Despite the preachers' varying status (as residents or non-residents) and their asymmetrical relations to the listeners, they all nonetheless seemed to be moving the audience and imparting various benefits. All other major non-frequent events in the complex also somehow internalized some form of religious communication, sometimes taking the form of a brief *naṣīḥa* (religious advice) inserted between other parts of the program. This advice and other forms of sermons, which should be observed as very important religious (and ethical) practices of the "transformative" and performative nature discussed above, also includes the contents of Shafiʿi jurisprudence, historical and anecdotal narratives, and so on. While delivering the sermon I described above, the imam made several references to the Prophet and the Muslim scholars of the past. He also told the story of a late anonymous Muslim scholar, focusing on his death and burial. He thus narrated a miracle story where some people, who were burying his body, had to look back into his covered grave, in a critical scenario his story does not further describe, and were surprised to find the deceased in the form of praying. These people, as he elaborated, went out to his family inquiring about his life, and found out from the family that he was passionate about praying supererogatory prayers, one after another for long hours, and one of the recurrent prayers he made was that he would have the opportunity to pray even in the vicinity of his

48 Cummins and Stille, "Religious Emotions," 9.

qabr (grave). While describing his story, the imam had slight tear lines and showed signs of light moody emotions and being humble.

Similarly, while asking the audience to be careful to pray five times daily and to perform supererogatory prayers, he also referred to how the Prophet, whom he described first as a chosen one in no need of constantly worshipping Allah anymore, was keen on praying, and often for several hours every day. Faiz,[49] one of my interlocutors, spoke highly of such religious sermons being uniquely offered in the space, which he felt was similar to that of his homeland. The complex's spatial organization made it possible to hold culturally specific religious events, and the presence of familiar rituals and practices very much shaped his emotional experience of attending these religious practices. Scholarship in the field of affect theory has highlighted the simultaneous performative co-production of both feelings and the space (where it takes place), as each of them mutually constitutes and shapes the other.[50] Unlike the public mosques, the spatial organization of the complex, and in particular, some place-making efforts to create a home-like mosque experience, thus seem to shape emotional responses and emergent dispositions among them, which in return help form this space as such. Accordingly, there are booklets such as that of Rātib al-Ḥaddād, mostly brought from Kerala, that are seen in the local mosque, which materially contribute to the making of this place.

The similarity of the speech format, content, and style in the sermons to that of their homeland experience is, however, only part of the larger patterns of continuity in religious learning and practice which are largely observable throughout their everyday life in this space. The case of holding the *tarāwīḥ* prayer in a group with twenty *rakʿa* is an example; the *tarāwīḥ* prayer took place during the whole month of Ramadan in a similar fashion as it is often conducted in Kerala's majority traditional mosques, where some refreshments are also distributed at the end. Thomas Chamber's study on north Indians' domestic migration as well as their migration to the Gulf stresses the roles of continuities as well as of the imagination (especially evolving from previous domestic-migration experience) in the production of emergent subjectivities based on a sense of safety, comfort, and familiarity in new mi-

49 His actual identity has been anonymized. He was a friend I knew from before, who arranged my stay in his room (in this compound), which he shared with other four roommates. For further details about this place, see Muhammad Ashraf Thachara Padikkal, *Transnational Religion in the Gulf: A Study of Kerala's Sunni Community in Qatar* (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019).

50 For details, see Andreas Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook," *Rethinking History* 16, no.2 (2012); Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2013); Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bordieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012).

gratory spaces.[51] Rather than presenting migration simply as a moment of rupture and transition, Chambers sought to show the "encavement" of labor migrants working in the Gulf's industrial areas in their labor camps as a "continuing arrangement of a space" which already existed "in their prior imaginations, partly derived from the former domestic migratory lives."[52] His study shows that continuities help these migrants to adjust, adapt, and even subvert their imaginations in order "to meet the demands of labor markets both domestically and abroad."[53] Likewise, the al-Markhiyya accommodation unit, even though it is very different from a labor camp, is also a spatial configuration, where people are able to form internal socialites, shared group feelings, and comfort zones, along the lines of regional and other sub-linguistic commonalities. As some of my interlocutors revealed, their preference for this accommodation unit over other free and more advanced accommodation facilities provided by their companies was derived from their sense of belonging and shared sentiments, as well as from the fact that this setting, characterized by the religious sermons and the everyday presence of indigenous preachers, enabled their practice of indigenous (or traditional) religious rituals.

One of the remarkable features of the emergent sociality observable among my interlocutors was that it centered on shared moral views, religious ideas, and mutual encouragement. On a Friday when my roommates were late to arrive at the mosque for the Friday congregation, I observed one of them saying politely to other friends, "we all should recite *sūrat al-Kahf* ["The Cave"] as its recitation is one among the recommended virtuous rituals of the (holy) Friday . . . I think that if we do not plan properly, we will miss out on such great fortunes."[54] On yet another occasion, I overheard two of them talking about why they should never miss out on attending the Rātib al-Ḥaddād in the mosque, which the imam often asks them in his sermons and religious advice to recite on an everyday basis. This kind of religion-centered sociality, which is found to be emerging even in such small spaces as four/five-bed dormitory rooms, was also in close and constant connection with the regular religious sermons and advice delivered by the imam in their native language. The presence of performative rituals and sermons among these Keralite Sunni Muslim migrants also thus reveals that their mother tongue of Malayalam plays an important role in their migratory experience with religion as well as in cultivating ethical virtues and moral sensibilities in those

51 Chambers, "Continuity in Mind."

52 Chambers, "Continuity in Mind."

53 Chambers, "Continuity in Mind," 1420.

54 Author's fieldnotes, May–June 2018. For more, see Thachara Padikkal, *Transnational Religion in the Gulf*.

migrant minds and bodies and fashioning their religious selves.[55] These rituals and sermons, as well as the specific spatial and social arrangements, both inside and outside the prayer room, are altogether constitutive of this distinct migrant space which also tells us a story about migrants' emergent relational social power and agency in constructing an alternative spatio-social arrangement. Here they can sustain these traditional practices vis-à-vis the public Salafi religious public in Qatar, while drawing on indigenous works of religious literature, rituals, and practices through the medium of Muslim preachers with the same background from Kerala.

4 Conclusion

This essay sheds light on how migration and mobility not only bring about religious change and reform but also continuity and revival of traditions from the past. This work has examined a spatial and religious configuration of contemporary migrant communities and faith/faction-based networks among South Asians in the Gulf, where religious sermons constitute the core of everyday. This enables the maintenance of their traditional religious rituals and practices in the migratory context of the Gulf. Amidst the eventful everyday lives of these migrants, the religious sermons in their mother tongue and the interventions of the preachers in general offer insight into how these migrants sustain their traditional Islamic practices vis-à-vis the recurrent processes of adapting to the local religious context of the Gulf states. The religious space developed through the al-Markhiyya complex, and in other environments similar to it, not only shows us the relational agency of migrant/itinerant/guest preachers in maintaining their religious practices as well as the circulation of religious ideas, but also that this contemporary mobility of religious preachers and ideas, enabled by labor migration (from South Asia to the Gulf), now largely sustains and further extends the scope of earlier religious networks and its religious circulations in the Indian Ocean world such as that of the Hadrami Arab diaspora into the South Asian shores. While the trade and economic imperatives enabled the formation of medieval Islamic networks in the Indian

55 Although I do not discuss it in this paper, due to its limited scope, it is a fact that many other Muslim south Indian groups other than the ones studied here, who for instance are more aligned with Arab puritan discourses—such as Keralite Salafi and Jamaat-e-Islami migrant groups—conduct most of their classes and events in the medium of the Malayalam language. This further implies that the religious experience of the migrants has in its heart the medium of their native language, without which a significant religious experience would be nearly impossible for them.

Ocean, modern migrant religious spaces and networks among traditional Keralite Sunni migrants in the Arab Gulf are being built, as this case study shows, by economic migrants themselves, with the help and means of already existing connections from home, local and itinerant religious preachers among them, and their sermons. In both cases, the mobility of the people and the religious ideas involved depend first and foremost on economic imperatives, irrespective of whether they sailed the sea or flew by air. This line of inquiry further calls us to appreciate Islam in the medieval and modern Indian Ocean regions as very much contingent upon the religious circulations mediated by the traders and economic migrants who form and sustain transregional and transnational religious networks, although the scope of this essay does not allow for such detailed inquiries. Thus, a more critical focus may be given to further exploring how crucial such religious circulations are in bringing about religious change and continuity as well as in (re-)shaping the historically evolving religious traditions of Islam. Moreover, the performative rituals, religious sermons, and the circulation of religious ideas co-constitute and co-shape this distinct migratory space of the accommodation complex, which further plays a critical role in the continuation of traditional religious practices and the emergence of a shared sociality and pious subjectivities, as well as in the maintenance of this migrant space.

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III **Navigating the Normative**

Dženita Karić

Instructing the Believers: Ottoman Bosnian Khalwati Sermons on Normative and Supererogatory Rituals

Abstract: This chapter examines theological arguments underpinning Ottoman Bosnian Khalwati sermons on normative and supererogatory rituals. By focusing on the sermon collections of a 17th- century Ottoman Bosnian preacher and Khalwati shaykh, Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-Dīn Muʾadhdhin-zāda al-Mostārī, the aim is to show how the discourse surrounding the rituals was cultivated, on the one hand, to point to their Sufi meanings, and, on the other, to point to their normative and binding value. In this way, it is possible to see how sermons contribute to meaning-making processes in Islamic tradition.

1 Introduction

Even a cursory look into some of the manuscript libraries scattered around post-Ottoman spaces reveals the abundance of sources that could be placed under the umbrella term of "sermon," such as the waʿẓ, mawʿiẓa, naṣīḥa, and khuṭba. The sermons are either found as individual works or as short notes written in mecmuas (collections of texts) written in Arabic or Ottoman Turkish. Ottoman sermons, as recent research shows, provided alternative venues for participation in the political sphere of early modernity,[1] as well as for the instruction of the population, being parallel to institutions such as maktabs (elementary schools) and madrasas.[2] Social history has paid considerable attention to the phenomenon of Ottoman preachers throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, focusing on the Kadı-

1 Derin Terzioğlu, "Sunna-Minded Sufi Preachers in Service of the Ottoman State: The Naṣīḥatnāme of Hasan Addressed to Murad IV," in *Archivum Ottomanicum* 27, ed. György Hazai (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010).

2 Aslıhan Gürbüzel points to the alternative spaces of piety and its relation to the practices of preaching in "Citizens of Piety," Special Issue, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2018).

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zadelis, the followers of the Hanafi jurist Mehmed Efendi Birgivi, and their influence in shaping the debate on religious beliefs and practice in the period.[3] The sermons of both the Khalwatis and the Kadızadelis are primarily seen in the light of their political effectiveness, struggle for power, and participation in the public space. Yet we know little about how they functioned in terms of the transmission of knowledge in the premodern period, as well as how they contributed to the conglomerate of meanings and discourses related to the ritual in premodern Islam. By observing the actual arguments in the sermons on the rituals, as well as other aspects of human activities, what we can do is give some of the agency back to the authors, beyond solely explaining their writings in the framework of the political and social conditions of the period. While these conditions are certainly important and exert an influence on the way the arguments are shaped, it is necessary not to lose sight of the underlying motivations, such as devotional piety, that aim to transcend the demands of the daily.

This chapter focuses on the sermons of a Bosnian Khalwati author from the 17th century. It aims to investigate how the sermons contributed to the understanding of ritual, as well as the transmission of the knowledge related to it, among early modern Ottoman Bosnian audiences. I will examine two instances of ritual, one normative and one supererogatory, in the sermon collections of Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-Dīn Muʾadhdhin-zāda al-Mostārī (d. after 1686), in order to show the ways in which ritual could be presented and described for local and scholarly audiences in the Balkans, and how the meanings and importance given to the ritual had to be argued for. In that way, the discourses on ritual could be placed in both the contemporary context of early modern Ottoman realities, as well as on a continuum with the previous modes of piety and religious expression. My underlying assumption is that although the form of normative rituals is fixed and remains unchanged, the ways in which the rituals were upheld, cultivated, and promoted changed throughout time and in different discourses, with sermons being an important channel in shaping them. In that way, the rituals in their basic form served to connect believers across the Muslim world. On the other hand, numerous discourses created around the rituals flesh out the distinctive approaches to the rituals, both spatially and temporally. My aim here is not to ascribe a fixed meaning to the rituals under question, but rather to point to the mechanisms underlying the construction of meanings that are flexible yet have a permanent connection to the discourses of the past. While I draw on the insight of many historical studies on the Kadızadelis and Khal-

3 A recent article dealing with this aspect of Kadızadeli thought is Baki Tezcan, "The Portrait of the Preacher as a Young Man: Two Autobiographical Letters by Kadızade Mehmed from the Early Seventeenth Century," *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire: Halcyon Days in Crete IX*, ed. Marinos Sariyannis (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2019).

watis, my focus is on the theological arguments underlying the discourse on rituals. In that respect, the chapter will only briefly comment on the reception of these discourses, as audiences and readership remain understudied.

Before turning to the sermons and practices of preaching as ways of instilling meanings in the rituals, a few words must be said concerning the academic focus on rituals. The interest in normative rituals in contemporary Western Islamic Studies and studies on Islam in general, beyond the legal discourse, has been sporadic and perfunctory at best, meaning that the rituals have been observed only from a legalistic point of view. The plethora of meanings interwoven around the rituals in a range of scholarly and non-scholarly discourses outside of the framework of the legal aspects has been largely ignored. The reasons for this are manifold, and one of them is the avoidance of normative rituals in the study of Islam or the treatment of the normative as representing the "extraordinary" in Muslim lives as compared to the "everyday."[4] In that academic framework, the normative aspect represents something detached from the common lives of contemporary and historical Muslims, and it is presented as a potentially oppressive force limiting the creative potential of everyday life.

Yet, the rituals, both normative and supererogatory, remain a constant in the lives of geographically and temporally distanced Muslims. In the context of the recent debate on the nature of Islam and the quest for the elements that bind Muslims across the world together, Kevin Reinhart has pointed out that rituals, and especially the hajj (pilgrimage), are a crucial part of "shared" or "koiné" Islam.[5] The term "koiné" is used by Reinhart as a part of his conceptual proposal that Islam could be observed as a language, with its standard, local, koiné, and cosmopolitan variants. In that context, rituals with their form could be seen as a binding glue which connects Muslims across the world, yet also as that which gives rise to a range of different understandings, attitudes and experiences. Despite the modernist desire to flatten the discourse on the hajj and reduce it to its legal dimension, Mus-

4 The framing of the normative as the extraordinary in Muslim lives has been criticized by Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando in the context of the contemporary literature on "everyday" Islam. Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando, "Rediscovering the 'Everyday' Muslim: Notes on an Anthropological Divide," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 2015). This criticism, however, can be applied to the historical study of Islam as well. The research of the normative, apart from the legal framework, has received little attention, with the partial exception of the hajj. In recent years, there has been a rise of studies on multiple aspects of the hajj in different geographical and historical contexts. While otherwise valuable, many of these studies deal less with Muslims' own experience and understanding of the pilgrimage than with the social and political circumstances of these journeys.

5 Kevin Reinhart, *Lived Islam: Colloquial Religion in a Cosmopolitan Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 81.

lims have dealt with its basic ritual structure in myriad ways interlocked with local and colloquial understandings and contexts: "All Muslims share the Koiné commitment to the Pilgrimage, but the meaning, and the experience of the hajj is determined by the colloquial, by the Lived Islam of its participants."[6]

In this context, the digitization efforts of recent decades show that not only did rituals—both normative and supererogatory—constitute a common topic of premodern Islamic literature, but also, sermons represented one of the major modes of writing on the rituals.[7] Sermons were often, but not exclusively, written in Arabic, thus pointing to the central role the language played in the instillation of norms and the meanings attached to the rituals. Sermons were a widely accessible tool and channel for conveying the information on some of the major aspects of human behavior (the regulation of bodily behavior, human relations, spirituality, as well as emotions and sensibilities), enhanced by the context-specific structure that aimed to authoritatively shape the discourse on ritual. Despite their universalizing perspective, sermons also catered to local audiences, and, importantly, to local scholarly classes as well. Additionally, in places like Bosnia, the sermons had to be mediated by a preacher who knew both Arabic and Ottoman Turkish as well as Bosnian, in order to communicate with the audience.

The study of early modern Ottoman religiosity has frequently avoided the closer investigation of exhortatory literature, often succumbing to the dualistic view that pits Sufi rituals and practices against traditional scholarly output. In a recently published study on the Khalwati order in Egypt, Rachida Chih points out how the two-tiered approach that includes Islamic orthodoxy on the one side, and Sufism on the other, is ultimately "simplistic and false, aiming to present Sufism 'as it should be' rather than as it is actually lived."[8] In order to bridge this binary opposition, it is necessary to look into the exhortatory and preaching material in the context of its origins in the period following the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. As Derin Terzioğlu demonstrates on the example of ilmihal, manuals dealing with correct beliefs and practices, these gained their prominence among different strata of society.[9] The processes of Islamization that accompanied the

6 Ibid., 81.

7 In her article on changes brought about by the digitization efforts of the 21st century, Annabel Teh Gallop points to sermons as text genres that were "all but unknown in European collections." Annabel Teh Gallop, "Shifting Landscapes: Remapping the Writing Traditions of Islamic Southeast Asia through Digitisation," *Humaniora* 32, no. 2 (2020): 103.

8 Rachida Chih, *Sufism in Ottoman Egypt: Circulation, Renewal and Authority in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 8.

9 Derin Terzioğlu, "Where Ilmihal Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization," *Past and Present* 220 (2013).

conquests and Ottomanization of Balkan societies were followed by the growth of instructive literature on beliefs and rituals. This process was not limited to the Balkans. As Rachida Chih demonstrates, there was a concomitant increase in the production of manuscript books in Ottoman Egypt, with a special focus on collections of prayers for the Prophet Muhammad.[10]

While the attention of recent scholarship has rightly pointed out the value of such material, we still do not know much about peculiar ways in which normative rituals were popularized and understood in non-legal contexts. In the case of the hajj, Marion Katz has suggested that symbolic interpretations of the ritual in the premodern period invariably are to be understood within a Sufi framework.[11] While this assumption is correct, it is necessary to observe how such discourses arose, were maintained, and adjusted to wider readerships. It is also important to take note of how vastly diverse these interpretations were.

This is where we can turn to a specific case of sermons and preaching in the framework of 17th- century Ottoman Bosnia. By looking at the sermon collections of the Ottoman Bosnian author Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-Dīn Muʾadhdhin-zāda al-Mostārī, I do not wish to indicate a peculiar regional specificity, but rather focus on the participation of a wider network of actors in shaping premodern Ottoman religiosity, which was at least partly focused on normative and supererogatory rituals.[12] Through exhortatory treatises on some of the rituals, such as the hajj and the prayers and fasting in the month of Shaʿban, it is possible to see how discourses that aimed to promote both types of rituals, albeit in slightly different ways, were shaped. In what follows, I will first briefly comment on the Khalwati context in the early modern period, before turning to the work of Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-Dīn Muʾadhdhin-zāda al-Mostārī and the ways in which he tried to promote and prune the discourses on pilgrimage, prayers, and fasting in his collection of sermons.

10 Chih, *Sufism*, 97. Despite being considered as primarily devotional material, prayer books could be also thought of as instructive material because they could offer detailed specifications on the cultivation of preferable emotions and bodily behaviors.

11 Marion Katz, "The Ḥajj and the Study of Islamic Ritual," *Studia Islamica*, no. 98/99 (2004): 125.

12 Recent research points to the alternative ways in which legal debates seeped through and were understood and reproduced by different social classes in the early modern Ottoman Empire. See Nir Shafir, "Vernacular Legalism in the Ottoman Empire: Confession, Law, and Popular Politics in the Debate over the 'Religion of Abraham (millet-i Ibrāhīm)'," *Islamic Law and Society* 28, no. 1–2 (2020). Still, the question of legalism does not fully correspond to the multiple ways in which norms were created in premodern Islamic societies.

2 The Khalwatis in Bosnia

Information about the Khalwatis and their activities in Bosnia and the Balkans in general is scant and impeded by biases common in Islamic studies, as well as in Ottoman studies, which often overfocus on the statist perspective and political entanglements of the Khalwati order and the Ottoman state. Thus, the Khalwatis in the Balkans were the subject of a study by Nathalie Clayer, who focused on their alignment with the Ottoman state and the ways in which they contributed to the Islamization of the region.[13] Furthermore, the Khalwati order is usually perceived in contrast to the "nonconformist dervish groups" of Rumeli and the Balkans.[14] In order to obtain a clearer picture of the place and role of the Khalwatis in early modern Ottoman Bosnia, we can turn to local studies of the Sufi orders in the region which provide some insight into workings of the order.[15]

The Khalwatis were a dominant order in Bosnia in the centuries after the Ottoman conquest. The Ottoman administrators, such as Gazi Husrev-bey, established Khalwati institutions such as khanqas together with madrasas and libraries. Khalwati tekkes spread across Bosnia in the period between the 15th and 17th centuries, and the Khalwati presence was felt among different strata of the society, especially among the scholars. Bosnian Khalwatis were also itinerant, as demonstrated by the case of a 16th century scholar and shaykh, ʿAli Dada al-Busnawī. His career spanned several regions, from Szigetvar in modern-day Hungary to the Hejaz.[16] One of the activities the Khalwati Bosnian scholars engaged in was preaching, as witnessed by the significant material record of their activities, of which sermons constitute a large part. Preaching—understood as both the more formal khuṭba and the more flexible waʿẓ—played a tremendous role in Balkan Muslim communities of the early modern period, since those forms were also the means of religious education beyond the institution of the madrasa.[17]

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13 Nathalie Clayer, *Mystiques, État et Société: Les Halvetis dans l'aire balkanique de la fin du XVe siècle à nos jours* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

14 Grigor Boykov, "Abdāl-Affiliated Convents and 'Sunnitizing' Halveti Dervishes in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Rumeli," in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750*, eds. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

15 Džemal Čehajić, *Derviški redovi u jugoslovenskim zemljama* (Sarajevo: OIS, 1986).

16 On the transregionality of the Khalwati order, see John J. Curry, *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order 1350–1650* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

17 In her unpublished article on education in Ottoman Sarajevo, Kerima Filan points out the necessity of looking into spaces of education that are less studied than madrasas, such as the maktabs. The study of the transmission of knowledge in spaces such as tekkes or private circles is even more underdeveloped. Kerima Filan, "Prosvjetni život u Sarajevu osmanskog doba: dobrotvorno djelovanje građana u 18. i 19. stoljeću u korist mekteba" (unpublished).

The Khalwatis of the early modern period produced different types of normative and devotional material, some of which was dedicated to correct beliefs, and some that focused on the promotion of normative rituals. In that process, the Khalwatis relied on a longer tradition of combining the discourse on the normative and legal aspects of rituals with the insistence on its moralistic and exhortatory dimensions. In some of the Khalwati works, these dimensions were often expressed in a generalized Sufi terminology. More specifically, these aspects were also derived from a tradition of "renunciant piety"[18] that stressed forms of devotion and bodily behavior without a particular allegiance to a specific Sufi order. These forms held the supererogatory prayers and other types of worship in high regard, while requiring a stronger ethical dimension of the performance of normative rituals such as the hajj. In other words, unlike the more specific Khalwati writings and preaching practices that prescribed order-specific dhikr (remembrance formula and prayer), these sermons were framed in such a way as to appeal to a general readership with an emphasis on the ethical dimension. As such, they also reflect the wide presence of Sufi terminology in a variety of premodern discourses.

This is where we turn to Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-Dīn Muʾadhdhin-zāda al-Mostārī, a 17th-century Ottoman Bosnian preacher and Khalwati shaykh. As most Ottoman Bosnian scholars, Muʾadhdhin-zāda was connected to other scholars and Sufis in the region. He was a disciple of Shaykh Ḥasan and ʿIsā Efendi from Užice (modern-day Serbia), themselves sons of Musliḥ al-Dīn Efendi from Užice.[19] He was known as the author of several popular exhortatory works, such as Anīs al-wāʿiẓīn, Muḥarrik al-qulūb ila ʿibādat ʿallām al-ghuyūb, Najāt al-ghāfilīn and Najāt al-muttaqīn. As the name of the preacher indicates, he hailed from Mostar, which was a regional educational center and the location of the Karađozbegova madrasa.

18 See Christopher Melchert, *Before Sufism: Early Islamic Renunciant Piety* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020). Melchert focuses on austere forms of piety before classical Sufism. However, the names and themes that figured prominently in this period reoccur in later periods as well, including the early modern Ottoman period.

19 Most of the information about Aḥmad Muʾadhdhin-zāda comes from the early 20th century-biographical dictionaries. For more, see Ahmed Mehmedović, *Leksikon bošnjačke uleme* (Sarajevo: Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka, 2018), 21. Evliya Çelebi mentions a contemporary mufti from Mostar who established a Khalwati tekke in Buna, and a Bosnian researcher, Hazim Šabanović, suggests that the person in question is Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-Dīn al-Mostārī, whom he identifies as a mufti who had an illustrious legal career (Evlija Čelebi, *Putopis: Odlomci o jugoslovenskim zemljama*, ed. and trans. Hazim Šabanović (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1967), 454, note 9). Recent findings, however, suggest that there has been a long-standing confusion of this author with Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Mostārī, who was a 17th century-mufti of Mostar (Mehmedović, *Leksikon bošnjačke uleme*, 18–20).

2.1 Muḥarrik Al-Qulūb: Promoting the Hajj With a Mystical Bent

The work Muḥarrik al-qulūb (The Mover of the Hearts) by Aḥmad Ḍiyā al-Dīn Muʾadhdhin-zāda al-Mostārī, a mid-17th century-exhortative collection of sermons, contains several chapters related to the promotion of the hajj, respectively the fourteenth, fifteenth, and the sixteenth chapters.[20] All three chapters dedicated to the pilgrimage aim to show the ritual through a different perspective, with the chronologically first one establishing the moral and spiritual necessity of the hajj, the second one dealing with the qualities of Mecca, and the third one presenting different exhortatory stories in order to urge the listener to go on a pilgrimage.

The first chapter related to the pilgrimage frames it in the context of the Abrahamic origins of the ritual, and it includes parts of the related Qurʾanic verses, such as "Purify My House for those who circle around it, those who stand to pray, and those who bow and prostrate themselves" (al-Hajj, 26, trans. M.A. Abdel Haleem). After quoting the relevant verses, the author gives a short explanation of them, such as in the example of the verse "They will come to you on foot and on every kind of swift mount, emerging from every deep mountain pass" (al-Hajj, 27, trans. Abdel Haleem) where "every deep mountain" is followed by the explanation that it means "long distance."[21]

The focus of the sermon quickly turns to the observations of the types of pilgrimages. In a standard Sufi vein, the hajj of the body (ḥajj al-abdān), which pertains to the independent and the rich (ḥajj al-aghniyā), is juxtaposed with the hajj of the heart (ḥajj al-qulūb) which happens every hour (fī kull al-sāʿa), and belongs to the gnostics (al-ʿurafā). Likewise, the Kaʿba is the place of forgiveness (bayt al-maghfira), while the heart of the gnostics is the place of love (bayt al-maḥabba). The value of the heart measures against the value of the Kaʿba: people look at the Kaʿba, but God looks at the heart.[22]

It is possible to understand this symbolic vision of the hajj in its concrete Bosnian context as well. The hajj was an endeavor that remained out of reach for most premodern Muslims. It required time, money, and considerable effort, and a large number of pilgrims also perished on the way.[23] Providing a Sufi interpreta-

20 While the entirety of the collection and its autograph is preserved in the library of the Provincialate of Herzegovina Franciscans in Mostar (Provincijalat hercegovačkih franjevaca), I am using the later copy of the three sermons which is preserved in the Ghazi Husrev-bey Library in Sarajevo.

21 GHB R-3731/5 86b.

22 GHB R-3731/5 87a.

23 On the cultural history of the Bosnian hajj tradition, see Dženita Karić, *Bosnian Hajj Literature: Multiple Paths to the Holy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

tion of the ritual, which stressed the value of the heart, allowed everyone to participate in it at some level, regardless of their physical or financial circumstances.

Still, while the physical hajj seems lesser than the one of the heart, its obligatory nature is undisputed. Muʾadhdhin-zāda stresses that in absence of a well-justified reason (such as sickness or an oppressive ruler), the negligence of the ritual leads one to die like a Jewish or a Christian person. The same idea is repeated in Muʾadhdhin-zāda's work Anīs al-waʿiẓīn, where dying without performing the hajj is akin to a conversion to another religion and becoming Christian or Jewish (naṣrāniyyan aw yahūdiyyan).[24] To illustrate what the neglect would mean, Muʾadhdhin-zāda quotes Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (7th/8th century) and his refusal to pray the funerary rites (janāza) for anyone who had the means to go on a pilgrimage, yet died without performing it.[25] Despite this, the hajj depended on a number of other factors as well, such as duties towards one's family and community, and especially those who were wronged, which takes precedence over the accomplishment of a journey. The intention had to be clear as well—Muʾadhdhin-zāda relates a narration on types of "wrong" travels, such as travels for amusement, trade, fame, or hypocrisy, to make the reader ponder their true motivations.[26]

The hajj journey is closely connected to the cadence and rhythm of time. Apart from the fact that the hajj is performed within a specific time period during the Hijri year, Muʾadhdhin-zāda includes narratives on the auspicious times in which less rigidly fixed events, such as the setting out on a journey, should be performed. Together with the knowledge of the temporal conditions that might enhance the religious experience, the pilgrims were advised to acquaint themselves with the rules of the pilgrimage (manāsik) and to pray certain types of prayers, but to be aware not to follow the masses of Mecca.[27] The latter were depicted as ignorant and after the pilgrims' money. The temporal and the spatial were combined with the bodily requirements, in the sense that the pilgrim was supposed to spend time in Mecca during Ramadan.

The second sermon in relation to the hajj focuses on the virtues of Mecca and the blessings of residence in it (mujāwara). Muʾadhdhin-zāda mentions the question of rivalry between Mecca and Medina, and points out how the Hanafi school (asḥābunā) and the Shafiʿis preferred Mecca over Medina.[28] The author quotes Ibn ʿArabī to show how proximity to the Kaʿba, and the possibility of its frequent

24 GHB R-3731/5 87a; GHB R-590, 95.
25 GHB R-3731/5 87b.
26 GHB R-3731/5 87b-88a.
27 GHB R-3731/5 88a-88b.
28 GHB R-3731/5 89b.

circumambulation, is equal to liberating a slave.[29] However, a large part of the sermon is dedicated to the virtues of Medina as well, with author assuming that the pilgrim will visit both cities.

Finally, the third sermon refers to various stories (ḥikāyāt) related to the virtue of the hajj and miraculous events that have happened to people on the pilgrimage. These stories often describe the extreme forms of piety related to the hajj, and they serve to indicate the virtue of reliance on God as a central part of the journey. In this, Muʾadhdhin-zāda relies on sayings and anecdotes relayed by the early Islamic renunciants, such as Sufyān al-Thawrī. These are stories about people who went on a hajj and released slaves in order to be released themselves from their own worldly servitude, as well as multiple narratives about people who did not have sustenance or a riding beast, yet managed to successfully reach Mecca.[30] Many of these stories are related to ascetic lore, focused on bodily discipline and even extreme control of the senses. The unifying theme, however, seems to be an ever-present invitation to visit the holy place, expressed in the terms of love: "Visit your beloved no matter the distance/Even should veils and screens come between you."[31]

Through the analysis of these connected sermons, it is possible to discern the persistence of normative rituals even in a devotional Sufi context. Their importance was never diminished, but they were given a layer of different meanings, some of which even suggested the validity of substitution rituals, such as the pilgrimage of the heart.[32] The hajj was placed in a network of connections: to family, community, legal schools, non-Muslims, and oneself. While the hajj, as a normative ritual, was interpreted in multiple Sufi layers in Muʾadhdhin-zāda's sermons, a different movement is at play with his understanding of the supererogatory practices of fasting and prayer, especially those in the months of Shaʿban and Rajab. The following section will focus on Muʾadhdhin-zāda's treatment of the non-obligatory practices in his sermon collection titled Anīs al-waʿiẓīn (The Friend of the Preachers), in order to show how the author employed different methods to promote a ritual that, although it did not have a secured general approval, was nevertheless widely practiced.

29 GHB R-3731/5 89a-89b.

30 GHB R-3731/5 92b.

31 GHB R-3731 95a.

32 On substitution rituals in the framework of the hajj in Chinese Muslim tradition, see Kristian Petersen, *Interpreting Islam in China: Pilgrimage, Scripture, and Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 105–108.

3 Following the Prophet Through the Supererogatory

In the Anīs al-waʿiẓīn, different aspects of human behavior are the subject of a preacher's scrutiny. In more than one hundred and fifty chapters, the sermons tackle various aspects of popular devotional piety, which includes both the devotion to the Prophet as well as the rituals connected to the months of Shaʻban, Rajab, and specific nights of miʻrāj, raghāib, and barāt.[33] The sermons also deal with more normative rituals, such as the Friday prayer or fasting in the month of Ramadan, as well as the regulation of emotions, including the fear of death and the reliance on God (tawakkul). Some of the topics reveal common preoccupations with environmental challenges facing early modern Ottoman Muslims, as testified to by the sermons on the benefits of prayers for rain (istisqāʾ) and the causes of the plague (ṭāʿūn). Finally, the collection also contains several sermons dedicated to the classical Sufi topics of the necessity of a shaykh and the importance of specific prayers (awrād).

The supererogatory prayers and fasting make up a significant portion of the sermon collection. They refer to the practices performed in the months of Rajab and Shaʻban, as well as particular days and nights like yawm al-ashūra, laylat al-miʿrāj, the six blessed days after Ramadan, as well as the days of Dhu al-Hijja. The collection proceeds chronologically following the Hijri year, and it also treats the days of the two Eids, yawm ʻArafa, as well as related rituals. In this way, the obligatory and the supererogatory are placed on the same level, laying out to the reader the range of normative possibilities against a carefully worked out temporal schedule (see Photo 1). The outline of the sermon collection could also be observed in its function as a semi-calendar, which orders and normativizes human actions, "orchestrating the group's activity."[34] Futhermore, it can be presumed that this temporal ordering of sermons corresponded to the active preaching activity in a tekke or a mosque where the preacher addressed certain topics in a timely manner, and that such a collection of sermons could be used throughout the generations.

33 The supererogatory prayers in these nights were a frequent topic of discussion during the early modern Ottoman period, together with other themes such as invoking the blessings on prophets and pilgrimages to tombs. For one of the most famous examples, see: Kâtip Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth*, translated with an introduction and notes by G.L. Lewis (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957), 97–100.

34 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 97.

Photo 1: The table of contents of the Anīs al-wa'iẓīn (GHB R-590).

In what follows, I will focus on the ways in which the supererogatory rituals of the nights of Shaʿban (layālī shahr Shaʿbān) were presented to the readers and listeners of Muʾadhdhin-zāda's sermons. These rituals have been seen as non-obligatory by both historical and contemporary Muslim practitioners, and were at times even discouraged and debated, as has been shown by Derin Terzioğlu's treatment of the congregational performance of supererogatory prayers among the early modern Ottoman *ʿulamaʾ*.[35] Terzioğlu lays out the terrain of debates which either attacked or defended the non-obligatory congregational prayers, and emphasizes how these debates show the permutability of legal arguments and their dependency on the local context. The various sides of the debate, pertaining to the Kadızadelis as well as to their opponents, form a background against which the discourse on the supererogatory rituals developed. Yet, the discourse on the rituals also developed in terms of the prevalent modes of devotional piety, in close contact with the legal rhetoric, but also perusing a variety of arguments that might appeal to a wider Sufi-oriented audience, such as the devotion and obedience to the Prophet. In this way, the discourse on rituals, both obligatory and non-obligatory, remained normative, but was not limited only to the legal sphere.

The elaboration of the non-obligatory rituals of prayers in the nights of Shaʿban in Muʾadhdhin-zāda's collection starts with Qurʾanic verses and their elaboration in support of the congregational prayers. The chapter on the revival of the nights of Shaʿban (iḥyā layālī Shaʿbān) frames the rituals as good deeds (thawāb) and brings forth the Qurʾanic verse from the surat al-Nisāʾ ("if anyone opposes the Messenger"[36]). The verse sets the tone of the chapter: opposing the Prophet means contradicting divine guidance (hudā), which the author clarifies is the monotheism (tawḥīd) or Truth (al-ḥaqq).[37] The person who "follows a path other than that of the believers," meaning that he does not follow the believers in belief and action, will be punished with hellfire. This strong admonishment is given to emphasize the importance of obedience, especially to the Prophet, expressed through the concept of the ṭāʿa.[38] The concept of ṭāʿa could be used in a variety of

35 Derin Terzioğlu, "Bidʿat, Custom and the Mutability of Legal Judgments: The Debate on the Congregational Performance of Supererogatory Prayers in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire," in *Dimensions of Transformation in the Ottoman Empire from the Late Medieval Age to Modernity*: *In Memory of Metin Kunt*, ed. Seyfi Kenan and Selçuk Aksin Somel (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 323–66.

36 Trans. Abdul Haleem.

37 GHB R-590 55a.

38 GHB R-590 55b.

contexts, referring both to the obedience to God and the Prophet, but it also—often related to the obedience to other people in a negative sense.[39]

The idea that obeying the Prophet proceeds from obedience to God is framed in strong Sufi terms: the Prophet was extracted from his human characteristics (al-rusūm al-bashariyya) and remained in the Truth outwardly and inwardly (ẓāhiran wa-bāṭinan).[40] Thus, contradicting the Prophet means cutting the path of the servant to the Divine. Other types of obediences proceed from the one to the Prophet, such as the obedience to the people of the Truth (ahl al-ḥaqq). Furthermore, in order to remain on the right path and reach the spiritual stations, one should follow the guide (murshid).[41]

Likewise, as much as it is important to remain on the right path, it is necessary to avoid the path which leads one astray, towards the illicit desires of the lowly self and unlawful innovation (hawā al-nafs wa-l-bidʿa).[42] There is a reversal of expectations in this phrase: the accusation of the unlawful innovation is used against those who aim to prohibit the congregational praying of the nawāfil. In the same manner we see the use of the term "sunna." As if to wrangle the term from the hands of the Kadızadeli opponents, the term is used to confirm the allegiance to the Prophet's words and deeds, to which the non-obligatory acts in the month of Shaʿban were deemed to belong.

The argumentation in favor of the pious activities during this auspicious time also includes a number of narratives that emphasize how following a certain custom, regardless of how insignificant it seems, leads to the promise of the forgiveness of sins. To illustrate his point, the author relates a hadith transmitted by Abu Hurayra on the prostitute who gave water to a dog and thus earned forgiveness.[43] This all leads the author to declare that whoever wants to attain the grace (faḍl) and honor (karāma) in the afterlife, should practice the non-obligatory acts in the month of Shaʿban.[44]

The treatise then elaborates on how the rituals in the month of Shaʿban should look like, enumerating the number of prayer cycles and the Qurʾanic chapters which should be recited. The instructions also emphasize the need to combine the temporal conduciveness with ritual as an effective tool. For example, one of the rituals that Muʾadhdhin-zāda suggests as effective in this month is the ṣalat al-

39 Kecia Ali, "Religious Practices: Obedience and Disobedience in Islamic Discourses," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Practices, Interpretations and Representations*, vol. 5, ed. Suad Joseph (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 309.

40 GHB R-590 55b.

41 GHB R-590 55b.

42 GHB R-590 55b.

43 GHB R-590 56a.

44 GHB R-590 56a.

tasbīḥ.[45] The description of the ritual is concise and concrete. For example, the range of temporal options are given to practitioners, such as praying on Friday, once a year, or at least once in a lifetime, in order to obtain some of the blessings.

The argumentation in the sermon turns to the emotional effect which the rituals in the month of Shaʿban would have on a believer. The author emphasizes the love towards God and paradise as a precondition for the revival of the nights of Shaʿban, which then functions as a way to increase the same love. Through this, it is possible to see the interdependence of the emotion and devotional practice, which results in an established norm: The emotion of love is what will lead a believer to perform non-obligatory rituals, and in return obtain forgiveness and salvation, as well as the increase of love in this world.

Finally, the sermon uses a range of other arguments to support the case of the rituals in the month of Shaʿban, from lettrist explanations of the word of the month itself (where each letter corresponds to a quality or a benefit which a believer could derive from fasting during this month), to concrete bodily benefits, such as the cure for manifest and hidden diseases.[46] The sermon concludes with the insistence on fasting, praying, and reciting the Qurʾan during Shaʿban.

If this sermon is observed in the context of the entire collection, it can be seen that although the work aims to preserve the argumentative framework and uphold the legitimacy of the non-obligatory rituals, it is also framed in Sufi terms, through which the familiar terms such as ahl al-sunna or bidʿa obtain an additional normative meaning outside of the legal sphere. The Sufi framework is further emphasized by the insistence on the connection to a shaykh and the importance of the shaykh approving the additional non-obligatory practices.

It is not entirely clear who the intended addressees of works such as the one by Muʾadhdhin-zāda were. The work itself was written in Arabic. However, just like Muḥarrik al-qulūb, it was peppered with interjections in Ottoman Turkish. It would seem that rather than being a scholarly or polemical treatise, the exhortatory works such as Anīs al-wāʿiẓīn and Muḥarrik al-qulūb were intended for active preaching among Sufi devotees. The Ottoman Turkish interjections, moreover, would suggest that the audience had to be local: educated enough to understand the text in Arabic, yet relying on Ottoman Turkish for further clarification. What is certain, however, is that preaching remained a prominent social activity in the following centuries as well, as testified to by notes on problematic preachers in the 18th-century mecmua of Mula Mustafa Bašeskija.[47]

45 GHB R-590 56b.

46 GHB R-590 56b.

47 See, for example, Mula Mustafa Bašeskija, *Ljetopis (1746–1804)* trans. and commentary Mehmed Mujezinović (Sarajevo: Sarajevo Publishing, 1997), 71.

Jonathan P. Berkey's study on popular preaching and religious authority in the Mamluk period points to the constant tension between the *ʿulamaʾ* and popular preachers. In contrast, we do not see such a tension here. Berkey's study also stresses the eventual dominance of a Sufi thematic framework in preaching, and this is where we can see a certain type of continuity within the Ottoman period as well.[48] Sufi interpretations of the rituals, even when subdued and proverbial, remain the dominant mode in devotional and exhortatory works. However, as we saw with the example of the treatment of two rituals, the Sufi discourse was not monolithic. Rather, it could be expressed in both narrative and normative ways, depending on the urgency of the claim.

4 Conclusion

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of normative and non-obligatory rituals presented in Muʾadhdhin-zāda's two sermon collections. The discourse on rituals was created by different actors in the early modern Ottoman period. The expanding audiences needed religious instruction, and one of the means of obtaining it was through the sermons of Sufi authors. Preaching was also a popular activity within Sufi circles, yet the slightly polemical tone indicates that the sermons were meant to be read by potential detractors as well. In any case, what we can notice is the effect the contemporary debates had on the choice and argumentation of topics, as well as a peculiar need to defend and coach one's rituals and practices in terms of the acceptable frameworks. In the case of supererogatory prayers and practices in the month of Shaʿban, this is reflected in the insistence on following the Prophet's example and efforts in proving that these practices have to be firmly grounded in the sunna.

The focus of the sermon collections on the rituals proves the continuous relevance of religious practice both horizontally and vertically. The rituals described in Muʾadhdhin-zāda's works connected believers across societal lines. The idea of the hajj belonged equally to the poor and the rich, and the congregational practices of the month of Shaʿban concerned both the practitioners and their opponents. The investigation of the exhortatory ways in which these rituals were propagated speaks about the enduring mechanisms that maintained their normativity throughout the time.

48 Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2001), chapter "Storytelling and Preaching in the Late Middle Period" (esp. 48–52) and throughout the book.

Sermon collections such as the one by Muʾadhdhin-zāda point to the venues of norm creation beyond the sphere of the legal. While non-binding, the sermons still affected the listeners' ethical, spiritual, and emotional sensibilities through a network of carefully crafted arguments. The obligatory rituals such as the hajj were given layers of Sufi interpretations, including a somewhat relaxed approach to the physical pilgrimage. The non-obligatory rituals such as the prayers and fasting in the month of Shaʿban, on the other hand, are presented in the unifying terminology of the allegiance to the Prophet and the range of soteriological exhortations aiming to show how rituals are connected to one's fate in the afterlife. The normative aspect, in this context, arises from the ethical and emotional commands aimed to affect the reader's body, practice, and mood.

Finally, works like Muḥarrik al-qulūb and Anīs al-wāʿiẓīn are embedded in other types of mechanisms of the cultivation of body and soul; these are ritual manuals that not only describe duties and obligatory rites but also make an effort to situate this ritual in its particular place and time, and in relation to other bodily and spiritual practices. For example, in Anīs al-wāʿiẓīn, the chapter on the hajj is juxtaposed with the chapter on the virtues of seclusion and refusal of this world. Simultaneously, these manuals aim to connect the audience to the greater body of believers through the emphasis on the Muslim community. This is not an isolated case. The early modern period testified to a variety of writings on the rituals in different Muslim contexts, but it seems that writing on the hajj does have a peculiar resonance. The very shape of the ritual, implying a journey and a fixed set of rites, could be adapted to different interpretations, opening a set of possibilities for the early modern Ottomans, rich and poor, capable of travel or not, to maintain the ethical attachment to Mecca and Medina. The research into early modern Ottoman sermons and exhortatory material can shed light on ways in which the normative rituals were propagated and spread among various social strata.

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Philipp Bruckmayr

Theory, Practice, and Tradition in the Malay *Khuṭba* Manuals of Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī

Abstract: This contribution focuses on the pioneering Malay-language *khuṭba* manuals of the Bangkok-born scholar Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī (d. 1376/1956). In his works, al-Faṭānī combined expositions of the conventions of different types of liturgical sermons with model *khuṭba*s intended for practical use by other preachers. In addition, he included various supplications and ritual formulas related to mortuary practices in his manuals. I argue that a closer analysis of his writings indicates that they were not only intended to educate aspiring scholars and preachers about the conventions of the *khuṭba* and other ritual practices, but also to defend a larger edifice of scholarly and ritual traditions against the growing challenge of Islamic reformism. However, the analysis also shows that the tradition defended was not stagnant. Rather, al-Faṭānī's manuals are important testimonies to the gradual shifts in the contents of local *khuṭba*s towards a more practical orientation as well as to the major sea-change represented by the shift from Arabic to Malay as the preferred language of the liturgical *khuṭba*.

1 Introduction

In the 1900s and 1910s, the Malay scholar Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī (1293/1876–1376/1956) wrote several works on the Friday, Eid, and other liturgical or canonical sermons (sg. *khuṭba minbariyya* or *khuṭba sharʿiyya*).[1] These *khuṭba* manuals were all subsequently published, either in the Hejaz or in Cairo, and included expositions on the elements and conditions of a valid *khuṭba* as well as standardized templates for Friday and other types of canonical sermons in either Arabic or Malay.[2] These works apparently not only represented the first Malay-language *khuṭba* manuals,

1 On this term and the traditional categorization of different types of sermons, see Linda G. Jones, *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15–18, 38–43.

2 Malay terms will be transliterated according to present Malay spelling. Where necessary, the source language of transliterated words will be specified in abbreviated form, using "Ar." for Arabic and "Ml." for Malay.

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but also—on the practical level—the earliest instances of the distribution of printed Malay model sermons for wider local Muslim audiences.[3] This naturally raises the question of why this development occurred at this specific point in history. The present contribution therefore not only introduces and analyzes al-Faṭānī's sermons and his theoretical elaborations on the conventions of different kinds of *khuṭbas*, but also inquires into the possible reasons for the emergence of such literature among Malay Muslims at that particular time. In this regard, it additionally scrutinizes the materials accompanying some of al-Faṭānī's *khuṭba*-focused texts. Interestingly, two of his manuals include instructions on the use of ritual formulas, such as supplications for ritual feasts (Ml. *kenduri*) and instructions for the recently deceased (Ar. *talqīn al-mayyit*). Both practices became subject to criticism by Islamic reformists in the early 20th century, as was the case with the traditional style of Friday sermons in the region.

It is therefore argued that two opposing processes were underpinning al-Faṭānī's efforts. Initially, his composition of standardized model sermons was the expression of a wider growing tendency to firmly anchor local Malay ritual within Shafiʿi parameters. This drive towards closely aligning local ritual practices with the tradition of the Shafiʿi school of law, which predominates in the region, first manifested itself in the production and wide distribution of prayer and marriage manuals. In this regard, early Malay key texts such as *Munyat al-muṣallī* and *Iḍāḥ al-bāb li-murīd al-nikāḥ bi-l-ṣawāb*, respectively, both authored in the first half of the 19th century by Dāʾūd b. ʿAbdallāh al-Faṭānī (d. 1263/1847), played a central role.[4] With Maḥmūd Zuhdī's works, this process finally extended to the sphere of *khuṭba* handbooks as well. By that time, however, such texts were apparently no longer only intended as codes of ritual practice for believers. They were additionally used as vehicles to defend an overall edifice of *madhhab*-adherence and traditional ritual practices against the challenge posed by the emerging local reformist movement. Hereby standardized sermons, supplications,

3 Proudfoot's survey of early Malay printed books lists no *khuṭba* manuals and only one published Arabic model Friday sermon. The latter was distributed in 1313/1895–6 by the official publishing house of the sultanate of Riau-Lingga and was explicitly intended for usage in all congregational mosques of the realm. Ian Proudfoot, *Early Malay Printed Books. A Provisional Account of Materials Published in the Singapore-Malaysia Area up to 1920, Noting Holdings in Major Public Collections* (Kuala Lumpur: Academy of Malay Studies and the Library, University of Malaya, 1993), 310–11.

4 See Francis R. Bradley, "Sheikh Da'ud al-Fatani's *Munyat al-Musalli* and the Place of Prayer in 19th-Century Patani Communities," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 41 (2013), 198–214; Francis R. Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place. The Legacy of Shaykh Dāʾūd bin ʿAbd Allāh al-Faṭānī in Mecca and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016).

and other ritual formulas were among the tools intended to preserve a religious tradition now called into question by certain segments of the community.

2 The Author

Maḥmūd Zuhdī b. Tengku ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Faṭānī was born in Bangkok (Siam, i.e. present-day Thailand) in 1876. His father was the former ruler (*raja*) of Jambu in the Malay sultanate of Patani in present-day southern Thailand, which had been broken up into smaller principalities by its Siamese overlords. After participating in an uprising with other local rulers in Patani in 1832, Tengku ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was captured and sent into captivity in Bangkok. There he was placed under house arrest, far removed from his native Patani. His son Maḥmūd Zuhdī therefore personifies a key development in the history of his ancestral region. Since 1785, Patani had gradually lost its independence, its political power, and a significant part of its population, as large numbers of Patani Malays were either killed or deported to Central Siam during successive conflicts between 1785 and 1838.[5] This situation propelled the emergence of new sources of authority in the form of religious capital, as Patani developed into a major center of Islamic learning on the Malay peninsula in the 19th century.[6] This dynamic is well captured in the figure of Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī, who, even though born into the Patani diaspora in Bangkok and hailing from a ruling rather than from a scholarly family, would directly tap into the networks of Patani scholars established from the mid-century onwards.

Maḥmūd Zuhdī received his early education from his father. Subsequently he studied under the prominent Patani scholar ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Faṭānī in Tha It near Bangkok before proceeding to Mecca at the tender age of eight or nine. There he was educated in both the traditional teaching circles of the Masjid al-Ḥarām as well as in one of the emerging modern institutions of Islamic learning. As far as the former system is concerned, his main teacher was the most prominent Patani scholar of his day, Aḥmad al-Faṭānī (d. 1908), the founder of the Ottoman Malay printing press in Mecca.[7] Regarding the modern madrasa system, he studied at

5 Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place*, 39–62.

6 Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place*, 84–137.

7 Hj. Wan Mohd. Shaghir Abdullah, *Al 'Allamah Syeikh Ahmad al-Fathani Ahli Fikir Islam dan Dunia Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, 1992); Ahmad Fathy al-Fatani, *Ulama Besar dari Patani* (Bangi: Penerbit UKM, 2002), 52–61; C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 306–307.

the *Madrasat al-Ṣawlatiyya*, established in 1875 by the Indian exile Raḥmat Allāh al-ʿŪthmānī al-Kayrānāwī (d. 1308/1891), which had a diverse student and teaching body of South Asians, Southeast Asians, and Arabs.[8] From 1895 or 1899 onwards, Maḥmūd Zuhdī himself taught there. After further studies in Cairo, he returned to Mecca, where he received official permission to teach at the Masjid al-Ḥarām in 1905. In 1923, the worsening conflict between the Sharif of Mecca and the Saudis prompted Maḥmūd Zuhdī to return to Southeast Asia. In 1929 he settled down in the sultanate of Selangor in present-day Malaysia, following an invitation by Sultan ʿAlā' al-Dīn Sulaymān Shāh (r. 1315/1898–1357/1938) to become his advisor and teacher. Subsequently, he rose to the position of *shaykh al-islām* of Selangor. In 1953 he travelled to Mecca once more to re-establish himself as a teacher. He died there in 1956.[9]

2.1 His Works

Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī left nine works. Of these three were on Arabic language and grammar, and one each was on the articles of belief (*ʿaqīda*) and Islamic law (*fiqh*). Most noteworthy for the present purpose, however, is that one third of his output was concerned with the *khuṭba*. This includes his first small work, *al-Farīda al-saniyya wa-l-khuṭba al-bahiyya*, completed in 1321/1903 and printed at the Ottoman Malay printing press in Mecca in 1331/1912–13. In 1335/1916 he finished his largest work on the subject, *Thimār al-khuṭab al-maḥbara al-minbariyya*, which was published by the famous Cairene printing house Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī and Sons. The undated third book in this category, *Dua Khutbah bagi Dua Hari Raya Fithrah dan Adhha* (Two Sermons for the Two Festive Days of Fiṭr and Aḍḥā), published in Jeddah in 1327/1909–10, must have been written in the intervening period. Apart from the respective dates of publication, the clearest evidence for this is that

8 On the school, see Seema Alavi, "'Fugitive Mullahs and Outlawed Fanatics': Indian Muslims in the Nineteenth Century Trans-Asiatic Imperial Rivalries," *Modern Asian Studies* 45 (2011): 1367–75; Michael Farquhar, *Circuits of Faith: Migration, Education, and the Wahhabi Mission* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 38–41. By 1912, Southeast Asians constituted 30 per cent of the school's student body. M. F. Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia. The* Umma *Below the Winds* (London: Routledge, 2003), 200.

9 The biographical information in this section was drawn from two accounts, which present more or less the same information, although sometimes with slightly conflicting dates as far as his first stay in the Arab world is concerned. Wan Mohd Shaghir Abdullah, *Ulama-ulama di Serambi Istana Sultan ʿAlauddin Sulaiman Shah (Sultan Selangor ke-5)* (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, 1441/2020), 16–19; al-Fatani, *Ulama Besar*, 278–80.

Thimār al-khuṭab contains a revised version of an *ʿīd al-fiṭr* sermon, which was first published in *Dua Khutbah*.[10]

All three texts are in Malay, although they contain large portions in Arabic as well. They are now available in facsimile versions in a compilation of Maḥmūd Zuhdī's works.[11] His last remaining book, *Tazkiyyat al-anẓār wa-taṣfiyyat al-afkār*, is likewise of great interest for our inquiry. It is a refutation of two fatwas by the Malay reformist scholar Wān Mūsā b. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad (d. 1357/1939) on the question of sustaining the *niyya* (intention) as a necessary condition of valid prayer.[12]

3 The Contents of his *Khuṭba*-Related Writings

After a brief introduction in Arabic, *al-Farīda al-saniyya* sets out to enumerate and explain the obligatory elements (*arkān*) and conditions (*shurūṭ*) of a valid *khuṭba*, including the behavior and succession of ritualized actions of the *khaṭīb* and the audience. Hereby, it reflects certain specifically Shafiʿi doctrines, such as the obligatory quorum of 40 believers, which is prominently placed as the first condition of a valid Friday prayer.[13] Another typical Shafiʿi practice, introduced by the author as an established tradition (sunna), is that of the imam formally greeting the audience for a second time, immediately before commencing with his sermon.[14] The remainder of the work consists of two Malay Friday sermons (i.e., the *khuṭbatān* of the

10 Maḥmūd Zuhdī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab al-maḥbara al-minbariyya* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1335/1916), 44–54; Maḥmūd Zuhdī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Faṭānī, *Dua Khutbah bagi Dua Hari Raya Fithrah dan Adhha* (Jeddah: Maṭbaʿat al-Iṣlāḥ, 1327/1909–10), 2–16. Without specifying the prior publication, the heading in the later work explicitly describes the *khuṭba* in question as a revised version of one printed before. Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 44.

11 Maḥmūd Zuhdī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Faṭānī, *Himpunan Karya Tengku Mahmud Zuhdi Al-Fathani* (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, 1440/2019). It is the facsimile editions contained therein which have been consulted for this study. References are always to the original pagination.

12 Maḥmūd Zuhdī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Faṭānī, *Tazkiyyat al-anẓār wa-taṣfiyyat al-afkār* (Pattani: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Islāmiyya, 1339/1920). On the overall debate, see Marion Holmes Katz, *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44–55.

13 Maḥmūd Zuhdī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Faṭānī, *al-Farīda al-saniyya wa-l-khuṭba al-bahiyya* (Mecca: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Mīriyya al-Kāʾina bi-Makka, 1321/1903), 4.

14 al-Faṭānī, *al-Farīda al-saniyya*, 6. On this as a point of inter-*madhhab* dispute, see ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Adab al-khaṭīb*, ed. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulaymānī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1996), 101–102.

Friday prayer), which are each introduced as the first and second sermon "for every Friday prayer" (*bagi tiap-tiap jumaat*), respectively.[15]

Al-Faṭānī's second work on the subject, *Dua Khutbah*, which is intermediate in length, is completely practical in orientation, leaving out any theoretical discussion. It begins with a Malay first *khuṭba* each for *ʿīd al-fiṭr* and *ʿīd al-aḍḥā*, followed by a single second one for both occasions.[16] Next up is an Arabic supplication (*duʿā*ʾ) for the completion of the recitation of the entire Qurʾan (Ar. *khaṭm al-qurʾān*) or for a ritual feast (Ml. *kenduri*). The context and the following text suggest that both practices are associated with the commemoration of the dead.[17] Indeed, the next section consists of a *talqīn* formula, designed to address a male corpse,[18] and an accompanying *duʿāʾ*. This is then followed by a supplication for the middle of the month of Shaʿban.[19] Then the book returns to the subject of the *khuṭba* and closes with two Arabic Friday sermons "for every Friday."[20]

Whereas these two works are both rather short, the later *Thimār al-khuṭab* is significantly longer and a much more comprehensive work. It can therefore be regarded as Maḥmūd Zuhdī's definitive manual on the *khuṭba* and related ritual practices. After a brief introduction, *Thimār al-khuṭab* reproduces the expositions on the conventions of the *khuṭba*, as found in *al-Farīda al-saniyya*.[21] Then come the two Malay Friday *khuṭba*s already contained in the latter work, albeit now "newly embellished with some additions," followed by two new Malay Friday sermons and the Arabic originals from which they were derived.[22] The next chapter is devoted to Eid sermons. First their specific elements and conditions are discussed,[23] and

15 Al-Faṭānī, *al-Farīda al-saniyya*, 14.

16 Al-Faṭānī, *Dua Khutbah*, 2–28.

17 On such contested commemorative practices in South and Southeast Asian contexts, see Shahrul Hussain, *What the Living Can Do for the Dead: According to the Qur'ān and Sunna and the Opinions of the Classical Scholars of Islam* (London: White Thread Press, 2016), 89–90; John R. Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 70–71, 259–72.

18 For an anthropological perspective on this practice and the continuing debates around it in Sumatra, see Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse*, 252–59.

19 Al-Faṭānī, *Dua Khutbah*, 28–35.

20 Al-Faṭānī, *Dua Khutbah*, 35–40.

21 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 5–13; *al-Farīda al-saniyya*, 1–6 (rest of section missing).

22 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 13–36 (pages 16–34 are missing, quotation from 5). Due to missing pages in the facsimile editions, a full comparison was only possible with reference to a later edition of the work. Maḥmūd Zuhdī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab al-maḥbara al-minbariyya* (Penang: Maṭbaʿat al-Hudā, n.d.), 11–31. I am indebted to Wan Jumanatun Nailiah binti Wan Mohd Shaghir (Kuala Lumpur) for supplying me with a digital copy of this edition. Citations are to the Cairo edition throughout.

23 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 37–44.

then two *ʿīd al-fiṭr* and one *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* sermon are provided for the first *khuṭba* of each canonical feast. The first of the *ʿīd al-fiṭr* sermons is a corrected version of its counterpart in *Dua Khutbah*,[24] whereas the much longer second one and the *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* sermon are new. They are followed by one second sermon, applicable to both occasions.[25] All these *khuṭba*s are in Malay.

The third chapter deals with the *khuṭab* for the solar and lunar eclipse prayers and features two Malay sermons.[26] The fourth chapter revolves around the *khuṭba*s of the prayer for rain (*ṣalāt al-istisqāʾ*).[27] Going beyond merely reproducing the sermons, the sequence is here interrupted during the second sermon to indicate the moments in which—following the example of the Prophet Muhammad as conveyed in hadith—the *khaṭīb* should face towards the *qibla* and turn his cloak inside out, or turn to the audience, respectively.[28] It is noteworthy that all sermons in these three chapters are in Malay, clearly testifying to Maḥmūd Zuhdī's privileging of the vernacular over Arabic.

The remainder of the work is concerned with prayers of need (Ml. *sembahyang hajat*) and various Arabic *duʿāʾ*s, including for guarding against the "red wind" (*rīḥ al-aḥmar*, i.e., a sickness associated with demons or *jinn*).[29] As in *Dua Khutbah*, there is a section on mortuary practices. Thus, it includes an Arabic *talqīn* for a female as well as the appropriate *duʿāʾ* for the *khatm al-qurʾān* ceremony in commemoration of the deceased.

4 *Khuṭba* Manuals and Sermon Collections: Genres Between Theory and Practice

Two of Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī's works on the *khuṭba*, namely *al-Farīda al-saniyya* and *Thimār al-khuṭab*, fulfill a dual function as both *khuṭba* manuals and sermon collections. As noted, the contained *khuṭba*s were hereby explicitly in-

24 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 44–54; al-Faṭānī, *Dua Khutbah*, 2–6.

25 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 55–101.

26 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 102–116.

27 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 117–139.

28 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 136–137. On the respective report, see Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū Zakarīyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Ḥilyat al-abrār wa-shiʿār al-akhyār*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Arnāʾūṭ (Alexandria: Dār ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, n.d.), 151–152.

29 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 139–156. On the "red wind," see Tobias Nünlist, *Dämonenglaube im Islam: Eine Untersuchung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung schriftlicher Quellen aus der vormodernen Zeit (600–1500)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 145–46; Susan M. Kenyon, *Spirits and Slaves in Central Sudan: The Red Wind of Sennar* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 77–90.

tended as model sermons for practical use. *Khuṭba* manuals have not been a widespread genre in Arabic, let alone in Malay. When Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 724/1324) composed his *Adab al-khaṭīb*, he asserted that he was not aware of any preceding books in the field.[30] The conventions of liturgical sermons were rather covered in hadith collections and commentaries and in general *fiqh*/*furūʿ* works instead.[31] This also applies to the Malay world, where the *arkān*, *shurūṭ* and traditions of the *khuṭba* were commonly discussed in the field of *furūʿ*, beginning with the first Malay work in the field, Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī's (d. 1068/1658) *Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, and, on a more limited scale, in primers on Shāfiʿī-Ashʿarī ritual practice and creed.[32] As far as Malay *khuṭba* manuals are concerned, Maḥmūd Zuhdī's works are the only ones I have encountered so far. Even though others may well come to light, it is sufficiently clear that prayer or marriage manuals were much more popular genres. The Bangkok-born scholar was thus undoubtedly among the pioneers, if not the pioneer, in the field.

Contrastingly, *khuṭba* collections were a more popular genre in the Arabic language sphere. Some of these collections, or at least certain sermons contained therein, acquired a canonical status. Employed as standard sermons across the centuries and in different parts of the Muslim world, they became locally institutionalized. These books were thus, as was clearly also envisioned by Maḥmūd Zuhdī, compiled for practical use by other preachers. In addition, *khuṭba* collections were at times assembled as pedagogical texts to teach the art of oratory.[33] Of particular relevance for the present inquiry are the *khuṭab* of the Syrian/Anatolian Ibn Nubāta (d. 374/984–5), which were widely distributed in the Maghreb and Andalusia way into the 15th century, and used not only as model sermons but also as the standard to judge those of later preachers.[34] What is more, Ibn Nubāta's collected sermons are organized according to the months of the Islamic calendar as well as topically. Therefore, they lend themselves very well to recurring

30 Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Adab al-khaṭīb*, 86. Even the modern print edition relied upon here advertises the work as the "first stand-alone book on the rules of conduct of the preacher" on its cover.

31 Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 30–31.

32 Nūr al-Dīn b. Muḥammad Jaylānī al-Rānīrī, *Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, in the margin of Muḥammad Arshad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Banjārī, *Sabīl al-muhtadīn li-tafaqquh fī amr al-dīn*, 2 vols. (Patani: Maṭbaʿat Ibn Halābī, n.d.), 1: 225–30. Other examples from among general *fiqh* works are Muḥammad Arshad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Banjārī, *Sabīl al-Muhtadīn li-tafaqquh fī amr al-Dīn*, 2 vols. (Patani: Maṭbaʿat Ibn Halābī, n.d.), 2: 48–51; and Dāʾūd b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Faṭānī, *Furūʿ al-masāʾil*, 2 vols. (Patani: Maṭbaʿat Ibn Halābī, n. d.), 1: 120–23. For a primer written at the same time as Maḥmūd Zuhdī's manuals, see Muḥammad ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib al-Khālidī, *Miftāḥ al-Dīn li-l-Mubtadī* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1340/1922), 63–64.

33 Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 201–205, 251–56.

34 Jones, *Power of Oratory*, 207.

use. They were still very popular in South India and Southeast Asia during Maḥmūd Zuhdī's time and continue to be so until today.[35]

Al-Faṭānī's approach to enhancing his *khuṭba* manuals with model sermons appears rather unique and very modern in the Southeast Asian setting and gives his works a very practical orientation. Indeed, not many *khuṭba* collections have been preserved in the region, either from earlier or contemporaneous times.[36] The small number of relevant manuscripts from different parts of Indonesia held in Dutch collections, for instance, which includes at least one larger collection of *khuṭba*s that are explicitly introduced as model sermons, contains hardly any Malay *khuṭba*s.[37] Likewise, the only earlier published *khuṭba* collection by a Southeast Asian scholar, the Mecca-based Muḥammad al-Nawawī al-Bantanī (d. 1314/1897), is entirely in Arabic.[38] This overwhelming reliance on Arabic stands in stark contrast to the majority of Maḥmūd Zuhdī's sermons. This brings us to another point of consideration.

5 The Practice of Preaching in the Vernacular

It has long been a point of dispute whether it is valid to give a liturgical *khuṭba* in any other language than Arabic. The idea was swiftly rejected by Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, who deemed a Friday sermon in any other language than Arabic to be invalid.[39] Other Shafiʿi scholars, including his teacher al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), were more pragmatic as they considered *waʿẓ* (exhortation) to be the main function of the *khuṭba*, which could be achieved in any language.[40] In the Malay world, Muḥammad Arshad al-Banjārī (d. 1287/1812) noted already in the late 18th century that it

35 Tellingly, the edition consulted here was an official one, published under the auspices of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Muḥammad Ibn Nubāta, *Dīwān khuṭab Ibn Nubāta*, ed. Yāsir al-Miqdād (Kuwait: al-Waʿī al-Islāmī, 1433/2012). Late 19th and early 20th-century editions were published in Cairo, Beirut, Tunis, and Bombay, testifying to the lasting importance of his sermons. I am indebted to Mahmood Kooria (Leiden/Delhi) for drawing my attention to the continued relevance of Ibn Nubāta's sermons in South India.

36 Further research is necessary to verify this assumption. For an analysis of more recent Indonesian *khuṭba* collections, see M.B. Hooker, *Indonesian Syariah: Defining a National School of Islamic Law* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008), 129–203.

37 P. Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and Other Collections in the Netherlands: Second Enlarged Edition* (The Hague: Leiden University Press, 1980), 162–63.

38 Hooker, *Indonesian Syariah*, 134, 187–88.

39 Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Adab al-Khaṭīb*, 134.

40 Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Adab al-Khaṭīb*, 134–35 n. 3.

would be permissible to give the *khuṭba* in the vernacular in the absence of anybody who knows Arabic, as long as there has been no possibility to comply with the obligation to learn it.[41] Maḥmūd Zuhdī, however, evidently had no such reservations, which clearly differentiates his texts from the bulk of earlier Southeast Asian collections. Even though he displayed mastery of Arabic, and it was claimed that even Arabs were impressed by his Arabic poetry,[42] Maḥmūd Zuhdī clearly privileged the successful exhortation of the audience over the use of the original language of revelation. Thus, he disregarded the rigid Shafiʿi position espoused by his forerunner Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār.

By explicitly allowing the use of vernacular languages in the *khuṭba* among non-Arab audiences, except for the Qurʾanic verses, he also significantly circumscribed the communal duty to learn Arabic. In his view, the entire community would only be sinful—and the Friday prayer consequently invalid—if it failed to educate at least one member to recite the respective verses in their original language.[43] On the practical level, his affirmation that both his Malay as well as his Arabic sermons could be used for every given Friday shows that he envisaged them equally as potentially canonical. Contrastingly, his focus on distributing his manuals and sermons primarily in Malay reflects his conviction of the necessity to reach a broader local audience of scholars and common believers through the vernacular. In this regard, he also consistently translated the standard tripartite introductory formula of the *khuṭba*, consisting of the praise to God (*taḥmīd*), the profession of faith (*shahāda*) and the calling of blessings upon the Prophet (*taṣliya*), after first providing them in Arabic.[44]

Whereas the question of the validity of Friday sermons in local languages is still a source of vehement dispute, for instance, among the Muslims of Kerala in South India, where *khuṭba*s in Malayalam are the almost exclusive purview of the reformist and Salafi movements,[45] this is much less so in Southeast Asia. More research is necessary, however, to estimate Maḥmūd Zuhdī's role in this develop-

41 Al-Banjārī, *Sabīl al-muhtadīn*, 2:49. This closely echoes an earlier legal opinion by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Qādirī al-Ṭawīl, Shafiʿi Chief Judge of Egypt in the early 16th century. Cf. P.S. van Koningsveld and G.A. Wiegers, "The Islamic Statute of the Mudejars in the Light of a New Source," *Al-Qantara* 17 (1996): 21, 48.

42 Al-Fatani, *Ulama Besar*, 278.

43 Al-Faṭānī, *al-Farīda al-saniyya*, 5.

44 Al-Faṭānī, *al-Farīda al-saniyya*, 14.

45 Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends* (Madras: Orient Longman, 1976), 233–34; Jose Abraham, *Islamic Reform and Colonial Discourse on Modernity in India: Socio-Political and Religious Thought of Vakkom Moulavi* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 109–10, 160–61; Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, "Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India," *Modern Asian Studies* 42 (2008): 325, 333.

ment.[46] His straightforward approach to the question, however, suggests that a kind of consensus on the validity of sermons in Malay had been reached among scholars on the Malay peninsula and in Sumatra in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This must have occurred prior to or concomitantly with the emergence of reformist and traditionalist factional identities in the region, commonly known as *kaum muda* (young group) and *kaum tua* (old group), respectively, in the early 20th century.[47] The enhanced status of Malay for identity politics in the face of the Siamese subjugation of Patani and the nascent independence movement in British Malaya may well have influenced this process.

Even though circles rejecting the validity of non-Arabic sermons have survived in the region until today, the language question was, in contrast to similar conflicts in Kerala, not generally part of the repertoire of emblematic contested issues between the local factions in Southeast Asia at that time.[48] By the 1920s, even the newly founded traditionalist Nahdlatul *Ulama* (NU) organization, which had its power base on Java, while prescribing the use of Arabic, advocated this to be accompanied by a summary in the vernacular.[49] Maḥmūd Zuhdī and even the NU were more open in this regard than some of the Arab key figures confronting the growing reformist trend in the Middle East. Yūsuf al-Dijwī (d. 1365/1946), a vocal Egyptian critic of the latter current from Cairo's al-Azhar,[50] responded to a question sent from a Shafiʿi mosque in Bombay in 1350/1931 with the more rigid of the school's positions. He stated unequivocally that only an Arabic *khuṭba* would be valid and that its translation could be provided after but not before the prayers following the sermon.[51]

Even though Maḥmūd Zuhdī's propagation of Malay as a liturgical language in addition to Arabic tallied with the demands of the reformist *kaum muda* move-

46 Malay sermons by Mecca-based scholars of Patani background, perhaps including Maḥmūd Zuhdī, were still circulated and copied in manuscript form in Islamic schools in Patani in the 1910s and 1920s. Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place*, 123, 128–29.

47 Mohammad Redzuan Othman and Abu Hanifah Haris, "The Role of Egyptian Influences on the Religious Dynamics and the Idea of Progress of Malaya's *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction) before the Second World War," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (2015): 465–480.

48 Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse*, 297.

49 Hooker, *Indonesian Syariah*, 129–30. This was already the position of al-Nawawī al-Bantanī, the teacher of the NU's founder, Hasyim Asyari (d. 1366/1947). See Alex Soesilo Wijoyo, "Shaykh Nawawi of Banten: Texts, Authority, and the Gloss Tradition" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1997), 285.

50 Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 117.

51 Yūsuf al-Dijwī, *Maqālāt wa-Fatāwā* (Cairo: Majmaʿ al-Buḥūth al-Islāmiyya, 1401/1981–1402/1982), 2: 422–424.

ment, he showed himself to be an ardent defender of the local expression of the Shafiʿi school and the traditional ritual practices associated with it. Indeed, both the dating and contents of his *khuṭba* texts, as well as some of his other writings, strongly suggest that their composition was related to the challenge posed to traditional forms of religious authority and practice by emerging reformist thought.

6 Standardization and Preservation of a Scholarly Tradition

Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī's Malay *khuṭba* texts were in many ways "translations," if not in the literal, then in the broad sense of the word. This is not meant to belittle either his scholarly contribution or his originality. After all, at their time of publication, his texts on the subject most probably represented the most encompassing, if not the only, specialized guidebooks to the *khuṭba* in all its different facets ever produced in the Malay language and for Southeast Asian audiences.[52] As part of this effort, he transmitted and translated Arabic normative writings from the Shafiʿi tradition as well as *khuṭba*s into Malay and the Southeast Asian context. In this regard, not only the format but also the contents of his *khuṭba*s closely follow established patterns: exhorting believers to fulfill their religious obligations, world renunciation, fear of judgment, the merits of particular days and months; the relevance of fasting and *zakāt al-fiṭr* in the *ʿīd al-fiṭr* sermon; Ibrāhīm's story and instructions for ritual sacrifices (*qurbān*) for *ʿīd al-aḍḥā*, etc.

Whereas al-Faṭānī's 1321/1903 *al-Farīda al-saniyya*, with its exclusive focus on the *khuṭba*, was most likely still exclusively intended to provide Southeast Asian readers with a *khuṭba* manual and ready-to-use sermons in the regional *lingua franca*, his two later works, with their inclusion of ritual formulas for practices such as *talqīn al-mayyit* and *kenduri*, seem to reflect the broader goal of expanding, and perhaps defending, a larger scholarly and ritual edifice. By 1920, Maḥmūd Zuhdī had clearly positioned himself within the *kaum tua* traditionalist camp. This is most conspicuous in *Tazkiyyat al-anẓār*, his refutation of two fatwas on the role of intent (*niyya*) in prayer by the former mufti of Kelantan, Wān Mūsā

52 The earlier *khuṭba* collection of al-Nawawī al-Bantanī is, with 52 sermons, much more encompassing than any of Maḥmūd Zuhdī's works. Yet, apart from the fact that it was only translated into Indonesian in 1988, it could clearly not function as a *khuṭba* manual. Cf. Hooker, *Indonesian Syariah*, 187.

b. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad.[53] The book was printed together with endorsements (*taqārīẓ*) by eight other scholars based in Mecca and the Malay world. These *taqārīẓ* provide a clear perspective on the factionalism that was underway at that time, the related quest for scholarly authority, and the transnational character of the debates. Thus, they describe Wān Mūsā and his community as a deviant group that agrees with the views of the Cairo-based reformist figurehead Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1354/1935), "a journalist who does not belong to a specific *madhhab*." In contrast, Maḥmūd Zuhdī is commended for his effort to defend common Malays from the likes of Riḍā and Wān Mūsā.[54]

Besides the specific questions related to Shafiʿi doctrine about sustaining the *niyya* during particular stages of prayer, another major bone of contention was the ritual verbalization of the *niyya*. Indeed, the verbal expression of intent was regarded as a sunna by the traditional Shafiʿi scholars but labeled as a blameworthy innovation by the *kaum muda*. Hj. Abū Bakr al-Muʾarī (d. 1357/1938), the chief *qāḍī* of Muar in the sultanate of Johor, for instance, was engaged in an exchange of diverging views on this point with Rashīd Riḍā.[55] Maḥmūd Zuhdī himself consistently included the appropriate *niyya* formulas in his expositions of the different canonical rituals that preceded his model sermons and supplications, thereby leaving no doubt about his affirmation of the validity of the practice.[56]

Apart from *niyya*-related practices, Wān Mūsā and other Southeast Asian reformists, including prominently the *kaum muda* of West Sumatra whose influence was also felt on the Malay peninsula, vehemently denounced *talqīn al-mayyit* and the commemorative feasts for the dead as *bidʿa*.[57] In 1914, Wān Mūsā even sent a fatwa request to Rashīd Riḍā on the validity of *talqīn*. In the resulting fatwa, Riḍā

53 On Wān Mūsā and his role as a representative of the *kaum muda*, see Muhammad Salleh b. Wan Musa (with S. Othman Kelantan), "Theological Debates: Wan Musa b. Haji Abdul Samad and His Family," in *Kelantan: Religion, Society, and Politics in a Malay State*, ed. William R. Roff (Melbourne: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), 153–70; Philipp Bruckmayr, *Cambodia's Muslims and the Malay World: Malay Language, Jawi Script, and Islamic Factionalism from the 19th Century to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 203–209.

54 Al-Faṭānī, *Tazkiyyat al-anẓār*, 43–47 (quotation from p. 46).

55 Hj. Wan Mohd. Shaghir Abdullah, *Koleksi Ulama Nusantara*, 2 vols. (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, 2009), 1: 10–13.

56 See, for example, al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 38, 102, 118, 140.

57 On these topics as featuring among emblematic debates between the two factions in Minangkabau, see HAMKA (Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah), *Ayahku: Riwayat Hidup Dr. H. Abd. Karim Amrullah dan Perjuangan Kaum Agama di Sumatera* (Jakarta: Penerbit Widjaya, 1958), 79–80. For a mid-20th-century defense of *kenduri* by a scholar from Patani, see Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Kalābāwī, *Cermin Suluhan* (Patani: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-Islāmiyya, 1381/1961).

fully confirmed the Malay scholar's reservations towards the practice.[58] Against this background it is certainly not coincidental that Maḥmūd Zuhdī's two later works on the *khuṭba* reserved such a prominent place to ritual formulas relative to increasingly contested practices such as *talqīn*, *khatm al-qurʾān*/*kenduri* or supererogatory devotions in the middle of the month of Shaʿban.[59] It is also noteworthy that, whereas his earlier *Dua Khutbah* merely introduces a *talqīn* text, the later *Thimār al-khuṭab* includes an introductory discussion that connects the practice and specific expressions in the following *talqīn* and *duʿāʾ* to several prophetic traditions.[60]

What is more, by the late 1900s the conventions and contents of *khuṭba*s had become a serious bone of contention as well. Thus, in 1327/1909, two fatwa requests (sg. *istiftā*ʾ) from Singapore were submitted to Riḍā in Cairo. Both were concerned with the permissibility of a *khuṭba* given at the local congregational mosque by the young preacher Hj. ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad Ṭaha (d. 1370/1950), who had been involved in the publication of *al-Imām* (1906–1908), a Singaporean journal modelled after Riḍā's *al-Manār*.[61] The reformist scholar's sermon, ostentatiously delivered in Arabic, had stirred wide controversy. In a break with traditional norms of content, it criticized the state of contemporary Muslim society and its perceived backwardness vis-à-vis the West. One of the two *istiftā*ʾs complained that Hj. ʿAbbās had denigrated the actions of the Muslims and praised the ways of the unbelievers. In addition, it asserted that the *ʿulamaʾ* had forbidden Friday sermons like this.[62] Contrastingly, the other, which clearly sympathized with the *khaṭīb*'s approach, lamented that nowadays Muslims would "hear nothing else in their mosques but the sermons of Ibn Nubāta or the like, so that they are only used to hearing about the merits of the months, the nearing of the hour and calls to renounce the world."[63]

58 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Fatāwā al-imām Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid and Yūsuf Q. Khūrī, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1970–1971), 4: 1270–1275. Cf. Bruckmayr, *Cambodia's Muslims*, 206–207.

59 Just as Mahmūd Zuhdī provides the appropriate *duʿāʾ* and brief instructions on how to ritually mark this date, the Minangkabau *kaum tua* and Sufi leader Khaṭīb ʿAlī (d. 1355/1936) included similar pointers and even a Malay translation of the supplication into his primer on ritual and doctrine. Cf. al-Faṭānī, *Dua Khutbah*, 34–35; al-Khālidī, *Miftāḥ*, 95–96.

60 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 156–57.

61 Alijah Gordon, *The Real Cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hadi* (Kuala Lumpur: MSRI, 1999), 75–79; Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of *al-Manār*'s Reformism to the Malay-Indonesian World," in *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, Transformation, Communication*, eds. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Komatsu Hisao, and Kosugi Yasushi (London: Routledge, 2006), 145–53; Othman and Haris, "Role of Egyptian Influences," 468–71.

62 Riḍā, *Fatāwā al-Imām*, 2: 782.

63 Riḍā, *Fatāwā al-Imām*, 2: 779.

This second inquirer also submitted a long extract from the incriminated *khuṭba*, which decried increasing superstition among Muslims and called for comprehensive reform in religious and worldly affairs.[64]

Against this background, it is tempting to see al-Faṭānī's later collections, *Dua Khutbah* and *Thimār al-khuṭab*, as scholarly responses to such challenges by providing local preachers with authoritative model sermons as tools to guard against the intrusion of this new style of *khuṭba* and the critical views on local Muslim tradition which they—as in the example from Singapore—routinely conveyed. In the face of this challenge, liturgical sermons acquired a new urgency, which went beyond the already enhanced function of congregational and festive prayers as manifestations of communal identity in the context of Siamese occupation and British colonialism. Thus, it seems perfectly reasonable to rely on Malay, a language readily understood by the audience, in the quest for listeners and followers. Moreover, this defense against both Islamic reformist influence and Siamese/British encroachment on Malay religious life also entailed efforts to perpetuate—now contested—practices such as *talqīn* and *kenduri* as integral to the ritual tradition.

This is not to say that al-Faṭānī's writings in the field were exclusively apologetic in nature. After all, being among the small circle of Southeast Asians permitted to teach at the Masjid al-Ḥarām, he was part of a Malay scholarly elite, and his *khuṭba* guides were certainly responding to a popular demand in an era of a substantial increase in mosques in his home region. Similarly, the expansion of Islamic schooling on the Malay peninsula and the greatly enhanced outreach of religious literature, prominently including primers and ritual manuals, which was propelled by the late 19th-century full-scale appropriation of print culture, was still underway and led by figures such as Maḥmūd Zuhdī and other Malay scholars.[65] In addition, providing preachers with standardized ready-to-use sermons was, arguably, a strong claim to scholarly authority. On a practical level, this meant that not only his descriptions of the rules, conventions, elements, and conditions of liturgical *khuṭba*s were to be put into practice by the users of his

64 Riḍā, *Fatāwā al-imām*, 2: 780–781. Other aspects of these two *istiftā'*s are discussed in Jajat Burhanudin, "Aspiring for Islamic Reform: Southeast Asian Requests for *Fatwā*s in *al-Manār*," *Islamic Law and Society* 12 (2005): 24–25.

65 On the expansion of Islamic schooling and religious book printing on the Malay peninsula, see Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place*, 119–37; V. Matheson and M.B. Hooker, "Jawi Literature in Patani: The Maintenance of a Tradition," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 61 (1988): 1–86; Abdullah Alwi Haji Hassan, "The Development of Islamic Education in Kelantan," in *Tamadun Islam di Malaysia*, ed. Khoo Kay Kim (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980), 190–227.

manuals, but also that his own words were—in the form of his sermons—to literally resonate among the believers.

7 Maḥmūd Zuhdī's *khuṭba* Manuals Between Theory and Practice

Maḥmūd Zuhdī's *khuṭba* manuals not only function as codes of practice through their delineation of the conventions of sermons. Rather, if we take a closer look at the *khuṭab* themselves, it becomes evident that they are also replete with practical implications and, at times, even detailed instructions. In contrast to the much more expansive collections of classical orators, such as Ibn Nubāta, or of Maḥmūd Zuhdī's Southeast Asian forerunner al-Nawawī al-Bantanī, his small selection of sermons consists exclusively of *khuṭba*s designed and selected for practical use. Their potential for direct reuse by other preachers is frequently emphasized. This is not only reflected in the headings introducing the following sermons as appropriate "for every Friday." Indeed, the most striking and, arguably, highly innovative feature of this practical orientation is the simultaneous structuring of the sermons in *Thimār al-khuṭab* in extended (or full) and shortened versions. Thus, on the book's title page, the author gives instructions "for those who want to shorten all of the *khuṭba*s contained herein." This option of using either the longer and more detailed or the shorter version of the same sermon is provided through a specific lithographic device: Passages of a given sermon which may be skipped are indicated by a bracketed letter *bā'* at the beginning. What follows can be skipped over until a bracketed *mīm* highlights the return to the necessary core of the *khuṭba*.[66]

Especially Maḥmūd Zuhdī's Eid sermons are rich in practical instructions to the believers, thereby strongly bringing out the pedagogical orientation of his *khuṭba*s. Whereas the famous Ibn Nubāta, for instance, refers only briefly and generically to the giving of *zakāt al-fiṭr* in his *khuṭba* for *ʿīd al-fiṭr*, the Malay scholar's sermons include detailed instructions on why, how, and when to perform this obligatory act of almsgiving.[67] Subsequently, the rules and merits of the six days of supererogatory fasting in the following month of Shawwal are discussed.[68] Similarly, his *ʿīd al-aḍḥā* sermon in *Thimār al-khuṭab* reviews the elements of the pil-

66 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 1.
67 Ibn Nubāta, *Dīwān khuṭab*, 317–323; al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-khuṭab*, 51–53, 70–73.
68 Ibid., 53, 75.

grimage ritual and provides detailed instructions on the ritual sacrifice (*qurbān*).[69] More importantly, given Maḥmūd Zuhdī's purported return from Mecca due to the looming Saudi/Wahhabi threat as well as his strong opposition to the *kaum muda* challenge, he also presents the visitation of the Prophet's tomb and of the graves of his family members and his companions in Medina as an inextricable part of the pilgrimage.[70] Not only was the debate about the legitimacy of visits to tombs among the key issues debated between the *kaum muda* and the *kaum tua* in Southeast Asia and their representatives in Mecca and Cairo when Maḥmūd Zuhdī wrote his work,[71] but the far-ranging destruction of tombs and mausoleums during the first Saudi/Wahhabi occupation of the Hejaz was also deeply engrained in the collective memory of Southeast Asian Muslims.[72] It is against this background that the author's seemingly casual remark about the tradition of ritual visitation, embedded between strings of *takbīr*s, is to be understood.

Of practical importance were also Maḥmūd Zuhdī's clear descriptions of the rules and conventions of individual and congregational prayers and liturgical *khuṭba*s. It has already been noted, for example, that the second sermon for the *ṣalāt al-istisqā'* is interrupted to indicate the points at which the *khaṭīb* should face either the *qibla* or the audience and at which to turn his cloak inside out.[73] This is naturally aimed at the preacher reusing his *khuṭba*, just as is his admonition that the *khaṭīb* may not turn right or left during preaching, something already discouraged as misplaced theatrical conduct by his forerunner Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār.[74] Contrastingly, the instructions for the appropriate formulas of intent for different situations, something to be estimated against the backdrop of the reformist critique of the verbalized *niyya*, were directed at both religious leaders and common believers. The same goes for the inclusion of the *talqīn* texts. While there is a multiplicity of quasi-canonical texts for the purpose, the availability of a written (or printed) version is of utmost importance for the believers, as they are commonly read rather than recited from memory to guard against any mistakes.[75] With his inclusion of—notably gender-specific—*talqīn* texts in his manuals, Maḥmūd Zuhdī thus provided his readers with an essential tool to guarantee the safe passage of their dead into the next world, in accordance with their traditions.

69 Ibid., 88–93.

70 Ibid., 78.

71 HAMKA, *Ayahku*, 81.

72 Ondřej Beránek and Pavel Ťupek, *The Temptation of the Graves in Salafi Islam: Iconoclasm, Destruction and Idolatry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 98–114.

73 Al-Faṭānī, *Thimār al-Khuṭab*, 136–37.

74 Al-Faṭānī, *al-Farīda al-saniyya*, 6; Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, *Adab al-khaṭīb*, 115.

75 Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse*, 255.

8 Conclusion

Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī was apparently the first Malay scholar to write extensively on the conventions of the *khuṭba* in Malay and to include sermons in that language in his respective works. His *khuṭba*s are therefore early testimonies to two significant developments in the region: 1) the emergence of a specialized literature on the *khuṭba*, which indicates an increased importance attached to this central element of communal ritual; and 2) the gradual shift from Arabic to Malay/Indonesian and other vernaculars as the preferred medium of the liturgical *khuṭba*. It is especially through a closer look at the specific content of his model sermons as well as at the additional materials of his manuals, many of them related to traditional mortuary/commemorative practices, that it becomes obvious that the transmission and expansion of the established, albeit—as seen in the important changes in the field of language use—in no way stagnant *madhhab* tradition, was not the only driving force behind his efforts. Indeed, the content and shape of his *khuṭba* manuals was just as much influenced by the intensifying intra-Muslim contestation between the defenders and opponents of the *madhhab* as a frame of reference and of the ritual tradition—simultaneously local and global in nature—associated with it.

Generally, Maḥmūd Zuhdī's manuals exhibit a strong practical orientation, which is most strongly reflected in mechanisms designed to provide future preachers relying on his *khuṭba*s with the option to choose between extended and shortened versions of his sermons as well as between Arabic and Malay ones. This tendency is also perceptible in his clear instructions for various religious obligations and ritual practices, and—more strikingly—in the content of some of his sermons. In this regard, the promotion of the vernacular as the preferred language for liturgical sermons broadened their function to a significant degree. It was only due to this change that the *khuṭba*'s aspect of exhortation and of instructing the believers on religious and social affairs could acquire practical relevance.

The reception of Maḥmūd Zuhdī's manuals is unfortunately hard to gauge. Anecdotal evidence, however, indicates that the practice of using model sermons was widespread on the Malay peninsula.[76] The fact that *Thimār al-khuṭab* witnessed a local re-edition in Penang testifies to a lasting demand for the work, just as its author's growing fame is reflected in his invitation to Kelantan by the state's prime minister to partake in local debates about the verbalized *niyya* in the

76 Personal communication with Nik Abdul Aziz Bin Haji Nik Hassan and Wan Jumanatun Nailiah binti Wan Mohd Shaghir, Kuala Lumpur, February 19 and 21, 2023.

1920s.[77] Moreover, in his capacity as teacher and advisor to Sultan ʿAlā' al-Dīn Sulaymān Shāh of Selangor, Maḥmūd Zuhdī also wielded outstanding influence on a Malay ruler and his religious and educational policies. Under his tutelage, the sultan became a scholar and, most notably, a *khaṭīb* in his own right, with three works to his credit. All three, two of which were designed as textbooks for new state Islamic schools, were written under the supervision of Maḥmūd Zuhdī.[78] What is more, the sultan regularly read the Friday and Eid sermons in the congregational mosque of Kuala Langat in Selangor.[79] It is thus not unlikely that even the sultan was among those putting Maḥmūd Zuhdī al-Faṭānī's *khuṭba* manuals, and perhaps even his model sermons themselves, to practical use.

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77 Nik Abdul Aziz Bin Haji Nik Hassan, "Islam dan Masyarakat Kota Bharu di antara Tahun 1900–1940," in *Islam di Kelantan*, ed. Nik Abdul Aziz Bin Hj. Nik Hassan (Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1983), 19.

78 Abdullah, *Ulama-ulama di Serambi*, 6–12.

79 Abdullah, *Ulama-ulama di Serambi*, 6.

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IV **Negotiating Authorities**

Mohammad Gharaibeh

Preaching, Admonishing, and the Struggle over Authority and Normativity between Scholars and Popular Preachers in Mamluk Society

Abstract: In this article, preaching and other forms of admonishing are understood as interactive rituals that bind communities together and create identity. Preaching therefore, does not only unite people in a shared reality, it also helps the preachers to gain authority among their followers. In a larger societal context, this leads to a competition among different social groups such as scholars and popular preachers. The present study presents a debate in the Mamluk society between two representatives of different groups, one as a representative of the normative textual scholarly elite and the other as a representative of what is often called popular culture.

1 Introduction

Preaching and admonishing have been an integral part of Islamic scholarship and an important religious practice from the beginning of Islamic history. The references in biographical dictionaries, hagiographies, and chronicles to individuals who were charismatic preachers and admonishers are numerous. Although preaching was certainly a crucial practice and part of scholarship for all schools of Islamic thought, some groups took particular pride in identifying themselves as admonishers and preachers who reached the masses. Among them were the Ḥanbalī scholars or mystics, for example.[1] However, despite this importance, few preaching texts have survived from pre-modern Muslim societies. Despite the more formal structure of the sermons, such as beginning with a Qurʾanic verse, one can only assume how preaching texts looked like and speculate over their topics and themes, which probably resembled the themes of other devotional texts.

The right to preach, however, seems to have been a hotly debated topic. Treatises on this subject demonstrate a higher survival rate, such as the famous book of

1 For an emphasis on the charismatic authority Ḥanbalī scholars gained through their preaching practices, see Stefan Leder, "Charismatic Scripturalism. The Ḥanbalī Maqdisīs of Damascus," *Der Islam* 74 (1997).

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Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) entitled *Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa-l-mudhakkirīn*. These writings often criticize a certain group, often identified and labeled as *quṣṣāṣ*, for their supposedly illegitimate preaching practices. These writings display a discourse of contesting claims about normativity and the struggle over authority that must have taken place between different groups of scholars. In this way, these writings prove that preaching was a means for scholars to gain authority. In order to cast light on these debates, preaching, in this paper, shall be understood as an interaction ritual that creates a sense of belonging and group identity for individuals participating in it. Interaction rituals temporarily unite individuals in a shared reality, construct group identity, and lead to a moral obligation to one another, while the relationship between group members becomes symbolized by whatever they focused on during the interaction.[2] Seen as an interaction ritual, preaching can be a powerful tool for individuals to bind people together and gain authority and social status, which explains why it was such a contested topic in the literature.

Since we don't have access to the actual preaching practices of pre-modern societies, this paper discusses two writings on the legitimacy of preaching. The interesting thing about these writings is that the two authors were acquainted with each other, permitting us to analyze how the two authors' mutual criticism appears as mutually contesting claims about what is correct and right and how they drew upon different sources and constituencies. While one of these authors addresses normative textual scholarship and comes from a position of judicial power, the other makes more mystical claims to knowledge (while acknowledging the normativity of foundational texts) and charismatic power. The case study is situated in Mamluk Cairo and places the two individuals, al-Zayn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1403) as the representative of the normative textual scholarly elite and ʿAlī Ibn Wafāʾ (d. 807/1405) as a representative of what is often called popular culture, in the center of its analysis.

2 Preaching, Storytelling, and the Struggle Over Authority

In Arabic pre-modern sources, preaching is usually expressed by one of three terms. These are *khaṭaba*, often translated as preaching, *waʿaẓa*, or admonishing, and *qaṣṣa*, or storytelling. Although all three terms refer roughly to the same thing, i.e., to giving a speech that admonishes and enjoins good in front of a

2 See Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies, A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2002), 21–22.

crowd, the sources differentiate between them. Usually, the term *khaṭaba* and *khuṭba* refers to the Friday sermon, which is held every Friday in a mosque, but can also occur on other occasions in which an individual gives a speech or preaches. *Waʿaẓa* is often used in the context of devotional practices and the admonishment of the masses, while *qaṣṣa* almost means the same thing, but seems to involve a negative connotation.

Most secondary sources on the topic show an interest in individuals that engage in the practice of popular preaching, which is mostly expressed in the primary sources as either *waʿẓ* (admonishment) or *qaṣṣ* (storytelling). On the earlier periods of Muslim societies, the studies of Johannes Pedersen,[3] Khalil ʻAthamina,[4] and more recently Lyall R. Armstrong[5] give a good overview and a thorough examination of the sources. Moving to the Middle Islamic Period and especially the Mamluk period, the available studies increase in number. Figures such as Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) receive special attention in studies that focus on Bagdad in the 12th century,[6] while Daniella J. Talmon-Heller focuses mostly on the Ḥanbalī community in Damascus during the Zangid and Ayyubid periods,[7] and Jonathan P. Berkey,[8]Erina Ota-Tsukadaa,[9] as well as Boaz Shoshan[10] place popular culture and popular preaching in the Mamluk period in the middle of their studies.

These studies contribute significantly to our understanding of devotional practices, both within popular culture and the so-called scholarly elite. They also show that storytelling (*qaṣṣ*) seems to have negative connotations, often being criticized

3 See Johannes Pedersen, "The Islamic Preacher: Wāʻiẓ, Mudhakkir, Qāṣṣ," in *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume,* Vol. 1, eds. S. Löwinger and J. Somogyi, 226–51. Budapest, 1948; Johannes Pedersen, "The Criticism of the Islamic Preacher," *Die Welt des Islam* 2, 1953.

4 See Khalil ʻAthamina, "al-Qaṣaṣ: Its Emergence, Religious Origin and its Socio-Political Impact on Early Muslim Society," *Studia Islamica* 76, 1992.

5 See Lyall R. Armstrong, *The Quṣṣāṣ of Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

6 See for example Merlin L. Swartz, "The Rules of the Popular Preaching in Twelfth-Century Baghdad, According to Ibn al-Jawzī," in *Predication et Propagande au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident,* eds. George Makdisi et al. (Paris, 1983); Merlin L. Swartz, *Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa-l-Mudhakkirīn* (Beirut, 1986).

7 See Daniella J. Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146–1260)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

8 See Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Jonathan P. Berkey, "Storytelling, Preaching, and Power in Mamlūk Cairo," Mamlūk Studies Review 4, 2002.

9 Erina Ota-Tsukada, "A Popular Preacher in Late Mamlūk Society: A Case Study of a Prominent Wāʻiẓ, Abū al-ʻAbbās al-Qudsī," *Orient* 48 (2013).

10 Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge, 1993); Boaz Shoshan, "Popular Sufi Sermons in Late Mamluk Egypt," in *Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honour of Michael Winter*, eds D. Wasserstein and A. Ayalon (New York, 2006).

and opposed by the scholarly elite. The oft-repeated argument against storytelling is that storytellers would include unreliable material in their speeches and proclaim deviating beliefs. Therefore, storytellers especially are criticized by normative textual scholarship. However, as will be shown below, storytelling can also be found in *waʿẓ* sessions led by members of the scholarly elite themselves and within their works. This begs the following question: Why does the scholarly elite oppose storytellers so strongly? The answer to this lies in the struggle over authority, social capital, resources, and power. It is a fact that storytelling (*qaṣṣ*) as an interaction ritual produces the same kind of authority and normativity as the Friday sermon (*khuṭba*) does, for example.

In the following, the treatise of al-Zayn al-ʿIrāqī is analyzed in greater detail. His *al-Bāʿith ʿalā l-khalāṣ min ḥawādith al-quṣṣāṣ* criticizes the practices of storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*) in a similar manner to Ibn al-Jawzī's treatise *Kitāb al-Quṣṣāṣ wa-l-Mudhakkirīn*, or al-Suyūṭī's (d. 911/1505) *Taḥdhīr al-khawāṣṣ min akādhīb al-quṣṣāṣ*. What makes this treatise so interesting, though, is the fact that ʿAlī Ibn Wafāʾ has written a counter-treatise to it and was similarly entitled as *al-Bāʿith ʿalā l-khalāṣ min sūʾ al-ẓann bi-l-khawāṣṣ*. In this treatise, Ibn Wafāʾ answers to each point of al-ʿIrāqī's treatise. An analysis of these two treatises can therefore show how both groups justify their criticism and their position, respectively. Moreover, the existence of Ibn Wafā"s treatises indicates that he and his Sufi order might have been the reason why al-ʿIrāqī had written his treatise in the first place. Unfortunately, not much is known about the context of both treatises. It is certain, however, that the two individuals knew each other and that their treatises were reacting to each other.

In what follows, the two individuals shall be introduced first, before analyzing their treatises. Before presenting the biographies of al-ʿIrāqī and Ibn Wafāʾ, it is important to note that information policies in biographical dictionaries and chronicles contributed to the ways in which scholars created a sense of "legitimate" versus "deviating" scholarship. Authors of biographical dictionaries and historiographies select their material consciously, leave out some material and include other types of material, and choose a specific narrative to tell a story (not a history) that stands in line with their intention and worldview.[11] With this in mind, the next two subchapters shall not only introduce the two characters that

11 For more detail, see Mohammad Gharaibeh, "Narrative Strategies in Biographical Dictionaries. The *ad-Durar al-Kāmina* of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī – A Case Study," in *Mamluk Historiography Revisited: Narratological Perspectives*, ed. Stephan Conermann (Göttingen: Bonn University Press 2018); Mohammad Gharaibeh, "Social and Intellectual Rivalries and their Narrative Representations in Biographical Dictionaries – The Representation of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ. A Case Study," in *New Readings in Arabic Historiography from Late Medieval Egypt and Syria. Proceedings of the*

stand in the middle of the conflict, but also draw attention to the narratives that form a sense of legitimate and deviating scholarship.

2.1 Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (725–806/1325–1403), the *ʿālim*

Biographers such as Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449), al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 874/1470), and al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) included entries in their biographical dictionaries on al-ʿIrāqī's life. The biographies are almost all structured in a similar manner and provide the image of a scholar who is well integrated in the scholarly system.

They begin with the full name of al-ʿIrāqī, which is Abū l-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm b. Abī Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-ʿIrāqī. He was born in a village close to Cairo, while his father was from Irbil. All biographers list an impressive number of scholars from whom al-ʿIrāqī received an early education and heard hadith. Moreover, they give a detailed list of books he had read, studied, and memorized, that include almost all disciplines with a clear focus on hadith studies.[12] Some of these he had even memorized. Al-ʿIrāqī traveled to Damascus, Mecca, Aleppo, and other cities to study with many scholars there before eventually settled in Cairo.[13]

The works written by al-ʿIrāqī are numerous, and biographers name many of them. Among them were many versifications of works that were usually taught in the schools at that time, such as the *Muqaddima* of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, the *Minhāj* of al-Bayḍāwī, the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (*sīra*), and even a versification of the strange words of the Qurʾān (*gharīb al-Qurʾān*). Moreover, al-ʿIrāqī also authored many commentaries, for example on the hadith collection of al-Tirmidhī, which also indicates that he was probably concerned with the education of his students for a large part of his scholarly career. This is also reflected in the fact that at a certain time in his career, he began to transmit hadith himself, and many stu-

Themed day of the Fifth Conference of the School of Mamluk Studies, eds. Jo van Steenbergen and Maya Termonia, Leiden: Brill 2021.

12 See Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfī wa-l-mustawfī baʿda l-wāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, 12 vols. (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kutub, 1984), 7:247; Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, n.d.), 4:173; Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīda fī tarājim al-aʿyān al-mufīda,* ed. Maḥmūd al-Jalīlī, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī 2002), 2:236.

13 See al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 4:171–73; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal*, 7:246–47; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 2:234–35; Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar, *Dhayl al-Durar al-kāmina*, ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh (Cairo: al-Munaẓẓama al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Tarbiya wa-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-ʿUlūm), 143–44.

dents studied with him and heard hadith from him. He also compiled hadith collections of various kinds and included valuable and short chains of transmission.[14]

During his life, al-ʿIrāqī was appointed to be a judge over Medina. He also led the Friday prayer and sermon there for a while until he returned to Cairo, where he taught in several schools. Among these were the Kāmiliyya, the Fāḍiliyya, the Qarāsunqūriyya, and the Ibn Ṭūlūn Mosque.[15]

The biographers also include descriptions of his appearance and traits. For example, he was of a beautiful stature, had bright grey hair, did not use unnecessary words, was shy, humble, and used to pray during the nights (*qiyām al-layl*).[16] Even his death seems to be tied to good deeds. According to al-Maqrīzī, he died shortly after he had led the rain prayer (*ṣalāt al-istisqāʾ*) for the city during a heavy drought in 806.[17]

2.2 Ibn Wafāʾ (759–807/1358–1405), the Sufi and Challenger

For the life of Ibn Wafāʾ, we can rely on almost the same sources as in the case of al-ʿIrāqī. However, we have to assume that there will be a bias against Ibn Wafāʾ in at least two of these sources. The first of these is Ibn Ḥajar, who identifies al-Zayn al-ʿIrāqī as his principal teacher, and the second is al-Sakhāwī, who in turn was the closest student of Ibn Ḥajar. And indeed, both scholars depict Ibn Wafāʾ quite negatively and include anecdotes designed to discredit him further. One additional source can be used here, though, that was even written in favor of Ibn Wafāʾ, and that is the biographical dictionary of al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565), *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, which contains Sufi individuals from Egypt.

Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn Wafāʾ al-Qurashī al-Anṣārī was born in 759/1358 in Cairo. Since his father passed away only years after his birth, ʿAlī Ibn Wafāʾ and his brother were brought up by their guardian, Shams al-Dīn al-Zaylaʿī. They studied with and were educated by him, so that they grew up, as al-Sakhāwī notes, with good manners and beautiful moral conduct (*ʿalā aḥsan al-ḥāl wa-ajmal al-ṭarīq*).[18] Under the guardianship of al-Shams al-Zaylaʿī, the two boys grew into respected young men. At the age of seventeen, Ibn Wafāʾ took over the place of his father in leading the order. He organized the meetings,he became

14 See Ibn Ḥajar, *Dhayl al-Durar*, 144; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 2:236; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal*, 7:248–49; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 4:173 and 175.

15 See al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 4:174; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal*, 7:248; Ibn Ḥajar, *Dhayl al-Durar*, 145.

16 See for example al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 2:236; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal*, 7:249–50.

17 See al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 2:237.

18 Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 6:21.

popular, and his followers grew more numerous. He was praised for his awareness, his sharp mind, his eloquence, and his preaching.[19]

Ibn Ḥajar and al-Sakhāwī emphasize that Ibn Wafāʾ managed to attract many followers with almost no effort. According to them, people felt attracted to Ibn Wafāʾ's preaching skills, on the one hand, and his remembering sessions (*dhikr*) on the other. As Ibn Ḥajar tells us, Ibn Wafāʾ compiled a *dhikr* specifically for his order, which was sung with a specific melody and rhythm in chorus.[20] Moreover, Ibn Ḥajar narrates a story that he himself was a part of. He states that he once visited one of Ibn Wafāʾ's sessions. In the middle of the session, his followers bowed down in his direction while Ibn Wafāʾ turned on his own axis, reciting the Qurʾanic verse "[. . .] so wherever you turn yourselves or your faces there is the Face of Allah." Ibn Ḥajar reacted with criticism to this situation and these actions. Some of the other attendees agreed with him and accused Ibn Wafāʾ of unbelief (*kafarta*). Ibn Wafāʾ then left the session with all his followers.[21]

Ibn Ḥajar counts among the writings of Ibn Wafāʾ a work entitled *al-Bāʿith ʿalā l-khalāṣ min aḥwāl l-khawāṣṣ*, the treatise in which he reacted to al-ʿIrāqī's criticism of the storyteller. Among his writings there is also a work on Islamic law called *al-Kawthar al-mutriʿ min al-abḥur al-arbaʿ*. His poems, though, were full of the belief of *ittiḥād* (unity of God and the creation), which leads to apostasies and unbelief (*ilḥād*).[22] Notably, Ibn Ḥajar adds that, on top of his bad condition, he erected a pulpit (*minbar*) in his house where he used to perform the Friday prayer with its obligatory preaching.[23]

Al-Sakhāwī adds to this that Ibn Wafāʾ compiled several prayers which were meant to be sung and that the masses tended to fall for them and like them. His followers felt strong loyalty and love for him and praised him excessively. Moreover, his father was also said to have compiled poems in praise of the controversial Ṣūfī Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235) and other individuals who proclaimed belief in the *ittiḥād* doctrine. Ibn Wafāʾ, along with his brother and their children, followed their father in this endeavor.[24]

The entry on Ibn Wafāʾ by al-Maqrīzī is slightly more positive. He does not mention any false belief that Ibn Wafāʾ allegedly followed, nor any anecdote that

19 Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 6:21.

20 Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr fī abnāʾ al-ʿumr*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī, 4 vols. (Cairo: Lajnat Iḥyā al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1969), 2:308; Ibn Ḥajar, *Dhayl al-Durar,* 159; and al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 6:21, who quotes Ibn Ḥajar here.

21 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ*, 2:308; and al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 6:21, who quotes Ibn Ḥajar here.

22 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ*, 2:308–309; *Dhayl al-Durar*, 159.

23 Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ*, 2:309.

24 al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ*, 6:22.

hints at illegitimate practices during the *samāʿ*- and *dhikr*-sessions of his order. He states that Ibn Wafāʾ was of a good *ṭarīqa* (order) and that he compiled innovative and good poems. Moreover, he had many followers who respected and loved him. Al-Maqrīzī shares his impression that Ibn Wafāʾ's followers might have exaggerated in the veneration of their master since they would perceive glancing at him as form of worship (*ʿibāda*). They followed everything Ibn Wafāʾ said or did and donated their money to him. Despite his popularity, Ibn Wafāʾ seemed to spend most of his time in isolation and was only seen among people when he organized his sessions and when he visited the grave of his father. Moreover, al-Maqrīzī was impressed by the crowed that attended his burial, saying that he had never seen such a sorrowful crowd, and that his followers were permanently praying to God.[25]

Similarly, Ibn Taghrībirdī's entry is also more positive than the entries of Ibn Ḥajar and al-Sakhāwī. The introductory section is highly positive, as Ibn Taghrībirdī mentions Ibn Wafāʾ's phenomenal poems, his wonderful melodies, and the prayer (*ḥizb*) that his family compiled and transmitted through generations. To the abovementioned biographies, Ibn Taghrībirdī adds that Ibn Wafāʾ was a jurist (*faqīh*), versed in many other disciplines, an outstanding expert of Sufism, an exegete of the Qurʾan, a man of letters, and a poet. However, Ibn Taghrībirdī also emphasizes that Ibn Wafāʾ's followers tended to exaggerate in the praise and veneration of their master. This, however, is the only negative description we can find in Ibn Taghrībirdī's biography of Ibn Wafāʾ.[26]

Al-Shaʿrānī's entry differs significantly from the ones that have been discussed so far. Given the fact that the biographer himself was a Sufi and his biographical dictionary is dedicated specifically to Sufi personalities, this does not come as a surprise. Already the entry on Ibn Wafāʾ's father is full of praise and respect. Al-Shaʿrānī calls him a friend of God (*walī*) whose mystical wisdom is as deep as the sea.[27] The entry on ʿAlī Ibn Wafāʾ is as positive as it can get. Al-Shaʿrānī begins with praising the beauty of Ibn Wafāʾ, saying that Egypt has not seen a more beautiful and handsome man. He has written many excellent works, phenomenal poems, and literary writings. His words contain many deep secrets of the mystical truth that only few friends of God (*awliyāʾ*) can keep up with.[28] Al-Shaʿrānī compiles on the following twenty pages of the entry of Ibn Wafāʾ some of the latter's wisdoms and writings.

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25 Al-Maqrīzī, *Durar al-ʿuqūd*, 2:473–74.

26 Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Manhal*, 8:163–65.

27 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, also known as *al-Lawāqiḥ al-anwār fī ṭabaqāt al-aḫyār*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1897), 2:19–20.

28 Al-Shaʿrānī, *Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 2:20.

The comparison of the entries on Ibn Wafāʾ demonstrate the extent to which opinions on him were divided. It comes as no surprise that the entries of Ibn Ḥajar and al-Sakhāwī are the most negative ones. While we can identify a certain neutrality in the entries of al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrībirdī, the entry of al-Shaʿrānī goes to the other extreme. What is interesting, though, in all entries, is the fact that none of them mentions any teacher–student relations. It seems as if Ibn Wafāʾ had not received any scholarly education, which seems very unlikely. Even al-Sakhāwī and Ibn Ḥajar mention his works on jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and exegesis (*tafsīr*), which one could not compile without having studied these disciplines properly. Besides the negative descriptions and the inclusion of anecdotes that are meant to demonstrate an individual's negative qualities, omitting information about teachers and students seems to be a means to undermine the authority of certain individuals. Moreover, especially Ibn Ḥajar and al-Sakhāwī, but also Ibn Taghrībirdī and al-Maqrīzī, highlight how attractive Ibn Wafāʾ's religious practices were. This is an indication that he knew how to make effective use of interaction rituals to gain status and authority, and also to construct normativity.

In comparison to the information on al-ʿIrāqī's life, the lack of any information related to the education of Ibn Wafāʾ is striking. It is clear that his biographers did not want to depict him as part of the leading scholarly elite in Cairo. Apparently, Ibn Wafāʾ did not hold any administrative or teaching position and was not a judge, which might have contributed to his lack of recognition as a scholarly figure by other scholars. The constant reference to the scholarly contacts of al-ʿIrāqī implies that he was embedded in the scholarly network and in line with leading opinions. In contrast to this, especially Ibn Ḥajar and al-Sakhāwī highlight several times that Ibn Wafāʾ held false beliefs. However, what none of the entries could deny was the authority he gained among the masses and his followers through his preaching and *dhikr* sessions. Ibn Wafāʾ must have gained so much authority among the masses that it was not possible for the scholarly elite to ignore his influence. The fact that al-Zayn al-ʿIrāqī saw himself forced to compile a treatise against him and other authoritative individuals that did not belong to the scholarly elite demonstrates how challenged he saw himself by them.

What makes "speaking to people" a sermon or storytelling, and who has the right to speak? There are certainly many forms of interactions spread among popular figures (popular preachers) that could raise protest among the scholarly elite. However, none of them are as strongly opposed as the *qaṣṣ*, i.e., popular preaching or storytelling. This is for good reason. Other forms of devotional practices are usually easier to dismiss if they deviate from the practices that already existed during the time of the Prophet. Sufis invest some effort in justifying the practice of visiting graves of pious people or their gatherings in which poetry is recited or songs are sung. These examples are new phenomena that could be jus-

tified by some of the Prophet's deeds, but that did not exist in that form during his time.

Preaching, however, had been an integral part of the Prophet's actions and a way for him to attract the attention of his followers. Therefore, the opposition against popular preachers usually doesn't focus on the practice itself, but rather on the circumstances surrounding it. The treatise of al-Zayn al-ʿIrāqī is no exception here. His explanations, criticism, and statements aim to draw boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate practices of preaching. It does not speak about preaching itself, rather it tries to convince the reader that certain individuals do not have the right to preach. Therefore, the treatise gives valuable insight into the social impact of popular preachers as well as the struggle over social capital, authority, and power that takes place between actors of different social layers. In the following, some of al-ʿIrāqī's arguments and Ibn Wafā'ʾs counter-arguments are presented.

3 The Debate between al-ʿIrāqī and Ibn Wafāʾ

3.1 Storytelling as an Innovation Requiring Permission

At the beginning of his treatise, al-ʿIrāqī starts with an attempt to define the practice of storytellers as an illegitimate innovation. He cites the prophetic saying stating that Muslims must beware of "[. . .] illegitimate innovations, since they lead to a false path." Al-ʿIrāqī goes on to explain that the practices that the group of storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*) introduced were rejected by the Companions of the Prophet.[29] By this he first implies that popular preachers fall under a different category than learned scholars, namely that of the storyteller (*quṣṣāṣ*), which carries negative connotations. And secondly, he implies that there was already a strong reaction against them immediately after the death of the Prophet. In this context, the Companion Tamīm al-Dārī plays a significant role. It is told that he, after the death of the Prophet, asked ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who was the caliph at the time, for permission to preach (or tell stories? Arabic: *qaṣṣ*). Apparently, Tamīm had asked ʿUmar multiple times before. Before ʿUmar eventually gave him permission, he refused the request a couple of times. Al-ʿIrāqī takes this as proof that even individuals such as the Companions of the Prophet, who were all deemed trustworthy and pious, did not take lightly the task of preaching or storytelling. Moreover, it

29 Abū l-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith ʿalā l-khalāṣ min ḥawādith al-quṣṣāṣ*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṣabbāgh (Jeddah: Dār al-Waqqār, 2001), 124–25.

would also demonstrate that individuals (*al-raʿiyya*) who do not belong to the elite – political or educated? – are allowed to perform any preaching or storytelling without obtaining the permission either of the political elite (*man waliya umūr al-muslimīn*), if he is able to make an educated decision by himself, or of judges and scholars who were appointed to make the decision for the political elite.[30] In addition, he cites a number of prophetic sayings in which the Prophet has said that only a leader (*amīr*) or someone who has been chosen to lead (*maʾmūr*) should preach or tell stories (*lā yaquṣṣ illā amīr aw maʾmūr*). Al-ʿIrāqī then adds that those two are the only legitimate preachers and that anyone else is basically a talker, either arrogant or a pretender.[31]

Here, Ibn Wafāʾ already counters that the Prophet's saying concerning the illegitimate innovation (*bidʿa*) actually only applies to those innovations that have no basic root in religious practice. This is obviously not the case with regard to preaching and storytelling, so that these forms are at worst only voluntary (*mandūb*). Basically, these practices gather people together and educate them and teach them what is good.[32] Moreover, Ibn Wafāʾ also explains that the story of Tamīm al-Dārī that al-ʿIrāqī was citing only shows that Tamīm asked ʿUmar, which does not necessarily mean that the permission of the ruler is a religious prerequisite (*ishtirāṭ sharʿan*). His asking would only indicate that Tamim respected the opinion of ʿUmar since he was a respected man and known for his wisdom.[33]

3.2 Preaching and the Unity of the Muslim Community

Besides the legitimacy of preaching and storytelling, al-ʿIrāqī introduces the aspect of the unity of the Muslim community that he sees at stake. He supports his argument with a story of Muʿāwiya who performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. When he reached the city, it was brought to his attention that a storyteller was preaching to the people of Mecca. Muʿāwiya, then, sent a messenger to the storyteller to ask him whether he had been ordered to do so. The man, who was a client (*mawlā*) of an Arabic tribe in Mecca, denied having been ordered to preach, and instead stated that he was teaching others what God had taught him. Muʿāwiya, who was not pleased with this answer, then turned to the masses and said

30 Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 126–27.

31 Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 127–30.

32 Alī Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith ʿalā l-khalāṣ min sūʾ al-ẓann bi-l-khawāṣṣ*, British Library MS Or. 4275, 1v–1r and 3v.

33 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 3v–3r.

that the Prophet had once said that the People of the Book would divide into seventy-two groups, while the Muslim community would divide into seventy-three. Only one of them would enter paradise. Even though the story itself brings together storytelling and the division of the Muslim community (*umma*), there is no direct link between the two aspects. However, al-ʿIrāqī seems to intend precisely this. In the following pages of his treatise, he cites the saying of division in several versions with different chains of transmission, only to conclude that storytellers are the reason for such a division. Moreover, al-ʿIrāqī even states that the religion of the Jews entered a decline because of storytellers.[34]

Ibn Wafāʾ reacts to this in the following manner. First, he points out that if there were a religious cause (*dāfiʿ sharʿī*) to preach, then the storyteller would not have to ask for permission because it would be an obligation to preach. Hence, Muʿāwiya would not have asked him whether he was ordered to preach. Since Muʿāwiya had asked the man, this means that he had asked just out of precaution. The act of preaching in this case falls under voluntary acts, so that a permission is not a prerequisite for the act.[35] Secondly, Ibn Wafāʾ doesn't see in Muʿāwiya's citation of the Prophet's saying regarding the division of the *umma* that Muʿāwiya intended to denunciate storytellers. Rather, Ibn Wafāʾ understands Muʿāwiya's statement as criticism of the Arab tribes who seemed to have been careless with knowledge so that a client—and not themselves—needed to preach, teach, and educate the masses. For him, this explanation makes much more sense, since ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb had already confirmed that storytelling was not harmful by agreeing to Tamim's preaching. Moreover, in some variations of the story of Muʿāwiya, it is reported that Muʿāwiya actually began his exhortation by addressing the Arab tribes explicitly with the phrase *yā maʿshar al-ʿarab*. Third, for Ibn Wafāʾ, the division of the *umma* therefore results from a lack of knowledge and, most importantly, a lack of applying the knowledge. Therefore, he counterargues that if the religion of Jews entered a decline while they were storytelling, than this is an indication that they no longer applied their (religious) knowledge, but only talked without any action.[36]

34 Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 130–37.
35 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 9v.
36 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 9v–9r.

3.3 Using Weak Traditions

The next argument that al-ʿIrāqī brings forward is a very interesting one. He states that, although most storytellers are or pretend to be pious, righteous, and upright, they tend to use weak narrations without really verifying them. This could have one of two reasons. It could be that they trust the people who narrate the hadith to them, so that they do not verify them additionally. Alternatively, they are only pretending to be pious. If they were, they would be more cautious to narrate hadith in fear that they might narrate something falsely. In addition to this, al-ʿIrāqī mentions some individuals who pretend to be pious, but even admitted that they had fabricated hadith in order to lead people to pious and charitable behavior.[37]

Ibn Wafāʾ answers this with a smart observation. He says that it is difficult to make such a general claim and accuse all people who urge others to pious behavior and tell stories in this manner of being careless with narrations. This is all the more true considering that prophetic companions such as Tamīm al-Dārī were also called storytellers. It would certainly be difficult to claim that he was also careless with narrations. More likely, in his opinion, al-ʿIrāqī must have meant to only target those storytellers that were indeed careless in what they narrated from the Prophet.[38] But in this case, there is no real argument against storytelling in general, since the narration of weak or even fabricated hadith can be found in all layers of learned and unlearned individuals. As Jonathan Brown has shown convincingly, even the *ahl al-ḥadīth* had a tendency to narrate weak and sometimes even fabricated hadith in order to motivate laymen to engage in pious behavior.[39]

In fact, many genres of the so-called post-canonical hadith culture contain weak narrations. This is because the focus mostly layed on *isnād* variations or were concerned with the shorter chains of transmission. Finding a short chain to a hadith that is characterized for example by having only seven links of transmission or by only being narrated by individuals from Damascus or by narrators named Muhammad was almost impossible to achieve if scholars restricted themselves only to trustworthy narrators.[40] As a matter of fact, al-ʿIrāqī himself composed many collections of these genres, some of which also contain weak traditions. In

37 Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 142–45.

38 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 14r–15r.

39 See Jonathan Brown, "Even If It's Not True It's True: Using Unreliable Ḥadīths in Sunnī Islam," *Islamic Law and Society* 18 (2011), where he lists many respected scholars who used weak or even fabricated hadith and mentions many examples of this phenomenon.

40 See for the characteristics of the post-canonical hadith culture and the various genres Garrett Davidson, *Carrying on the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of Hadith Transmission across a Thousand Years* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

his *al-Arbaʿīn al-ʿushāriyya*, a collection of forty hadith that only include chains of transmission of ten links, narrations number eighteen, thirty-one, thirty-six, thirty-eight, and forty are labeled as having strange chains (*gharīb*). Al-ʿIrāqī adds after each of these hadiths a lengthier discussion about the chains and lists also opinions that label some of them as having weak chains.[41] Al-ʿIrāqī, of course, was no exception. Other famous scholars also included weak traditions in their collections. Ibn Ḥajar, for example, included in his collection of ten-linked chains also two narrations that had a weak chain.[42] Even those scholars who took pride in their adherence to hadith, such as the Hanbali community of the Ṣāliḥiyya in Damascus, the Maqdisī family, included many weak and even fabricated hadith within their devotional literature, for example in Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī's *Kitāb al-Riqqa wa-l-bukāʾ*,[43] *Kitāb al-Mutaḥābbīn fī Allāh*,[44] or *Kitāb al-Tawwābīn*.[45] The examples are certainly many, and one could go on and list more of them. Even though Brown describes a tendency of rising opposition towards the practice of using unreliable hadith in the context of devotional literature and practices especially in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods,[46] the important point for this article is that the question of what kinds of narrations were being used seems to have been less important than the question of who could use them. Certainly, individuals who did not belong to the established scholarly community were in a much more difficult position when using weak material. This becomes obvious in the fact that al-ʿIrāqī criticizes the storytellers for something that he and his disciple Ibn Ḥajar occasionally also did.

41 See Abū l-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-ʿIrāqī, *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn al-ʿushāriyya*, in ʿAfīf al-Dīn Abū l-Faraj Muḥammad al-Maqarrī, *Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn fī l-jihād wa-l-mujāhidīn*, ed. Badr b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Badr (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm 1995), #18, 171–76; #31, 205–207; #36, 216–17; #38, 220–23; #40, 226–35.

42 See Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-Faḍl Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar, *al-ʿAshara al-ʿushāriyya al-ikhtiyāriyya*, ed. Firās Muḥammad Walīd Wuyas (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2003), #7, 36–37; # 8, 38–40.

43 Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *al-Riqqa wa-l-bukāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf (Beirut: al-Dār al-Shāmiyya, 1994), for example the chapter *Dhikr min akhbār al-anbiyāʾ, Adam*, where he narrates weak and fabricated hadīth, 58–62.

44 See Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Mutaḥābbīn fī Allāh*, ed. Majdī al-Sayd Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qurʾān, n.d.), for example the chapter *al-Murūʾa fī l-safar wa-l-ḥaḍar*, where he narrates weak and fabricated hadith, 29–30.

45 See Muwaffaq al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *Kitāb al-Tawwābīn*, ed. Khālid ʿAbd al-Latīf al-Sabʿ al-ʿĀlamī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, 2001), for example the chapter *Tawbat Yūnus*, where he narrates weak hadith, 70–75.

46 Brown, "Even If It's Not True," 20–30 and 49–51.

3.4 Acquiring Knowledge Only Through Education

The next arguments that al-ʿIrāqī brings forward all focus on the source of legitimate knowledge. His main argument is that storytellers have not acquired the knowledge they teach the masses from acknowledged scholars. Some of them even claim that they have received knowledge directly from God or from individuals that lived a long life (*muʿammarūn*), such as Khiḍr. They claim to be the heir of the prophets. With that, storytellers would narrate and teach false knowledge and beliefs to the masses or narrate prophetic sayings that are difficult to understand for non-educated people. Some of them even claim that the Prophet has come to them in dreams and ordered them to speak to the masses.[47]

Ibn Wafāʾ opens his refutation of al-ʿIrāqī's arguments and claims with the statement that no individual has the right to claim knowledge from God that nobody else has received. The reason for this is that such a claim would also include the Prophet and all other knowledgeable individual on whom God has bestowed knowledge. This would be a difficult claim indeed. However, Ibn Wafāʾ emphasizes that it is possible for an individual to receive knowledge from God that only God could give him.[48] Another argument that Ibn Wafāʾ agrees with al-ʿIrāqī on is that nobody can seriously claim to be the heir of Khiḍr, as some individuals apparently do. However, he does not exclude the possibility that God grants pious and righteous individuals' knowledge in the form of inspiration (*ilhām*), as he did with Khiḍr, and that he teaches him wisdom similarly to Khiḍr as well. Similarly to the first two arguments, Ibn Wafāʾ also agrees with al-ʿIrāqī that educated individuals (*ʿulamaʾ*) are the heirs of the prophets, as opposed to individuals who maintain false beliefs and interpret God's words wrongly.[49]

In addition, Ibn Wafāʾ takes up al-ʿIrāqī's criticism that if storytellers really did have legitimate religious knowledge (*ʿilm sharʿī*), they would actually pursue it for the sake of the knowledge itself instead of as a means to being seen by the people. Ibn Wafāʾ answers that not everybody who has acquired religious knowledge has done this for the sake of knowledge itself, which can be read as a criticism of the established scholars and the educational system. The most valuable knowledge is the knowledge about the inner state, the condition of the soul, and the illumination of the heart with the truth. This knowledge is only acquired by a few.[50]

One of al-ʿIrāqī's crucial arguments seems to be that storytellers claim to be knowledgeable without having studied properly, since there is no knowledge with-

47 See al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 146–57.
48 Ibn Wafāʾ, 22v.
49 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 22r–23v.
50 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 26r–27v.

out learning and studying.[51] This argument is certainly intended to strengthen the legitimacy of the *ʿulamaʾ* system by emphasizing the importance of studying properly. It also implies that those who claim any knowledge without learning are certainly impostors.

Ibn Wafāʾ gives an interesting response to that by replying that this is true, though only for newly acquired knowledge (*ʿilm ḥādith taḥṣīluh*), which always requires learning and studying. Learning and studying, however, are only the obvious, outer means (*asbāb ẓāhira*). In addition to them, there are other ways of achieving knowledge, or, to be more precise, of receiving knowledge. Ibn Wafāʾ relies on a Qurʾanic statement in which God ask his believers to fear him so that he can educate them (Q 2:282, *wa-ttaqū Allāh wa-yuʿallimukum Allāh*). For him, receiving knowledge follows the fear of God. Moreover, knowledge could be imagined as some sort of light with which God illuminates the hearts of a believing servant.[52] To support this opinion, Ibn Wafāʾ relies on a narration that al-ʿIrāqī himself quoted to prove the opposite. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib was once asked whether the Prophet had favored him with anything over the others. He answered that he had only given him and all the others the Qurʾan. An exception would be someone who had received from God an (additional or extended?) understanding of his book. Ibn Wafāʾ finds in this narration a confirmation of his position that pious and God-fearing individuals can receive additional knowledge from God.[53]

3.5 Seeing the Prophet in Dreams

A fairly large section of Ibn Wafāʾ's treatise also deals with al-ʿIrāqī's accusation that storytellers claim to see the Prophet in their dreams, but that they don't really see him. This argument again clearly demonstrates that al-ʿIrāqī doesn't see storytellers as equal to scholars (*ʿulamaʾ*) and that they do not belong to this group, which is a recurring theme in his work. Among others, al-ʿIrāqī states that in order to see the Prophet in a dream it is necessary for the individual to have an upright character, be trustworthy, pious, and be able to differentiate between right and wrong.[54] With that, he basically excludes storytellers by his definition and only grants scholars the ability to see the Prophet in their dreams.

Ibn Wafāʾ begins, again, by supporting al-ʿIrāqī's argument under the premise that he, al-ʿIrāqī, was referring to those individuals who obviously held false be-

51 Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 151–52.
52 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 28v–28r.
53 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 29v–29r.
54 Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 153–57.

liefs and taught them to the masses. However, Ibn Wafāʾ also highlights that generally, whoever sees the Prophet in his dreams has really seen him, according to a famous saying of the Prophet himself. And once this is true, whatever the individual has heard the Prophet saying in his dream requires serious consideration, provided that what he has heard lies in the realm of the possible and is within the boundaries of the shariʿa. The dream and the content of it is therefore valid, even though the dreamer falls under the category of individuals that Islamic law does not perceive as accountable for their actions (*ghayr mukallaf*). Moreover, the one seeing the Prophet actually has to testify to it and tell others what he saw, since this kind of happening counts as good news (*bushrā*) that a Muslim should share with others. Regarding al-ʿIrāqī's implication that storytellers don't belong to the trustworthy and reliable individuals, Ibn Wafāʾ responds with a differentiated answer. He states that al-ʿIrāqī could only mean the narrator who reports from such a dream. The characteristics that al-ʿIrāqī has listed are those of transmitters. They are not and cannot be prerequisites of dreams that God grants who he wishes to.[55]

3.6 The Clothes and Behavior of the Pious

With another aspect of criticism, al-ʿIrāqī tries once more to separate storytellers from the class of "official" scholarship. He quotes Abū Ḥayyān Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Andalusī and his *tafsīr* work *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, saying that there are people who have started naming themselves mashāyikh, wearing pious clothes, composing prayers (*adhkār*) that had previously not existed (*fī l-sharīʿa*) and that they read out loud in the mosques. People gather for them servants who serve them and collect money for them, who witness miracles performed by them, who write down their dreams. They encourage people to ignore knowledge and the prophetic tradition (*tark al-ʿilm wa-l-ishtighāl bi-l-sunna*). They proclaim that the only way to God is through isolation (*khalawāt*) and the prayer (*adhkār*) they teach, which has no basis in any book or in what any prophet has proclaimed. Moreover, they exhibit strange behavior, such as stretching out their hands so that their followers can kiss them. They speak rarely, let their head fall, and let one of the servants say "the shaykh was busy in isolation, he indicated, he said, he saw something or was mentioning you yesterday." With that behavior they mislead the masses. According to al-ʿIrāqī, this is already harmful behavior. On top of that comes the fact that the Ṣufis of the day also hold false beliefs such as the belief of the *waḥdat al-wujūd*

55 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 29r–33r.

(unity of exience)and *al-ḥulūl wa-l-ittiḥād* (God's indwelling within and joining with creation).[56] Moreover, al-ʿIrāqī finds most irritating how those individuals can be appointed for paid positions, how special houses (*ribāṭ*) are built for them, how endowments are established, and how people serve them although they lack the qualities to deserve this. Additionally, al-ʿIrāqī again cites Abū Ḥayyān, who emphasizes the false beliefs that Sufis hold, saying that they proclaim them while preaching on the minbar without anybody intervening.[57]

Ibn Wafāʾ has multiple replies to al-ʿIrāqī's and Abū Ḥayyān's criticism. First, he states that what al-ʿIrāqī describes in addition to what he cites from Abū Ḥayyān's work are phenomena that certainly exist. However, they occur rarely, and only a few individuals follow them. Therefore, he states, one should consider Abū Ḥayyān's description with caution and should beware of generalizations and defamations without proof. Another of Ibn Wafāʾ's arguments is concerned with the concrete wording of Abū Ḥayyān's criticism. In his *tafsīr*, the latter speaks of those who dedicate themselves to wool (*ṣūf*). In Ibn Wafāʾ's opinion, those are, however, a different group than the Sufis, since they attribute themselves to purification (*muṣāfāt*). In addition to that, Ibn Wafāʾ even gets a bit personal by stating that al-ʿIrāqī attempts to manipulates his audience with false arguments and general conclusions instead of being honest about what he accuses storytellers of. Even individuals such as al-Shāfiʿī and Abū Ḥanīfa faced harsh criticism in their time, but none of it stopped them from doing their good work.[58] In general, Ibn Wafāʾ criticizes al-ʿIrāqī's way of generalizing his critics by using collective terms such as *the* Sufis and *the* storytellers, although he notes the misconduct of individuals.[59]

4 Concluding Remarks

The case study presented in this chapter demonstrates how preaching as an interactive ritual is an effective way for individuals to bind followers in a shared reality and construct a group in which members feel morally obligated to each other. As a result, preachers are seen as authorities and their teaching as normative (for this very group). Preachers from different scholarly groups profit from this effect. This also explains why normative textual scholars see other preachers as a challenge to their authority, since the latter gain authority among the masses in the

56 Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 157–58.
57 Al-ʿIrāqī, *al-Bāʿith*, 158.
58 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 33r–36v.
59 Ibn Wafāʾ, *al-Bāʿith*, 36r.

same way, perhaps to an even greater extent. As a result, both parties develop strategies to claim their space and defend their stance.

As for the normative textual scholars, their strategies can be described as powerful and effective. This is because most of the chronicles and biographical dictionaries are compiled by them. These sources constitute almost the only windows to the past that modern researchers have access to. Moreover, they not only write treatises against those they name as storytellers, they are also responsible for the transmission of theses treatises through generations. In both of these ways, they significantly shape the image modern researchers have of Islamic intellectual history.

The case study shows how powerful these means are. Al-ʿIrāqī is depicted as a productive "legitimate" scholar with a sound and legitimate education, many scholarly contacts, important writings, an upright character, and good intention. The biographers of Ibn Wafāʾ, on the other hand, want us to believe that he had no education—or at least no educational ties—whatsoever, that he engaged in unorthodox practices and held false beliefs. This image is contradicted by another biographer, who saw Ibn Wafāʾ as one of his own and gives a positive impression of him.

Al-ʿIrāqī's treatise against storytellers clearly demonstrates that the problem itself is not preaching—or as al-ʿIrāqī labels it, storytelling. The real issue of al-ʿIrāqī and probably other scholars of the system is the authority that storytellers gained through their activity. The arguments al-ʿIrāqī brought forward could, in most cases, be convincingly countered by Ibn Wafāʾ. Al-ʿIrāqī's arguments aimed above all for an exclusion of storytellers from the group of legitimate scholarship, and they constitute an attempt to discredit and delegitimize those who disagree with him.

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Ramzi Ghandour

“May God Bless the Caliph”

The Mentioning of Rulers in Friday Sermons of the Abbasid Era

Abstract: The present paper examines the significance of mentioning the ruler’s name in Friday sermons (*dhikr al-ḥākim*) of the Abbasid era and the possible repercussions of this ritual’s absence. In this discussion, I emphasize how contemporary historiographers (namely al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Khaldūn) dealt with this phenomenon and how they included it into their general worldview. The paper focuses on the early Abbasid era (132/750–447/1055) and exclusively concerns itself with examples from the Sunni tradition.

After a brief general discussion of the ritual, the paper deals with the concrete example of Kulthūm b. Thābit b. Abī Saʿd (d. 207/822), whose failure to mention the caliph’s name in his sermon was unambiguously interpreted as an attempt at open rebellion. Based on this, the discussion is broadened to address the overall issue of the Friday sermon as a medium of political communication. The main argument is that the sermon in general—and the ritual of mentioning the (legitimate) ruler’s name in particular—can be understood as a means through which the alliance between religious and political or between central and regional elites could be communicated to the wider society and thus be constantly reinforced. To emphasize this point, the text draws parallels between this ritual and the formal oath of allegiance (*bayʿa*) and sheds light on its underlying power dynamics.

1 Introduction

Recently, a number of books and articles dealing with the contemporary and historical role of Islamic Friday sermons have been published. The most prominent examples are probably *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* by Jonathan P. Berkey and *The Prophet’s Pulpit: Islamic Preaching in Contemporary Egypt* by Patrick D. Gaffney. However, most scholars focus on the content and form of the two main parts of the sermon, while less attention

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is given to both the introduction and the final invocations. However, these two sections in the classical period—and to some extent up until today—included a feature that had the potential to constitute the most important piece of information sent out during the sermon. What is meant here is of course the ritual of mentioning the name of the legitimate ruler.[1]

This study aims to examine the importance of this ritual and the repercussions of its absence. The main question it raises is: Did mentioning the ruler's name during Friday sermons signify an alliance between the religious and political elites in pre-modern Islamic societies? If so, how stable was this alliance, and what were the benefits each side could expect to gain from it? Furthermore, emphasis is laid on how historiographers of the time dealt with this phenomenon and how they included it into their general conception of the world. This paper will mainly focus on the early Abbasid period (132/750–447/1055). Due to several limitations, it will deal exclusively with the Sunni tradition; even though there are of course also Shiʿi and Khārijite traditions of giving Friday sermons that include the ritual of mentioning the (at least spiritual) ruler that clearly deserve further research.

From a methodological standpoint, the present study owes much to Constantin Rieske and Lucas Haasis, who developed the notion of a "historical practice theory" (*Historische Praxeologie*).[2] Following this approach, the present study aims to shed light on how the performance or the omission of the ritual of mentioning a ruler's name during a Friday sermon shaped a given audience's perception of political authority. This is in line with the overall objective of historical practice theory to analyze "sense-making processes" (*Sinnbildungsprozesse*) over the course of time with regards to possible adaptions, nuances, readjustments, irritations, and justifications.[3] From this perspective, all social and political settings are understood as being in a process of constant renewal and adaptation. This happens by means of various reoccurring practices—in our case the weekly mentioning of a ruler's name—that form a system of patterns of collective behaviors, knowledge, routines, and values. Thus, rather than focusing on isolated actions of individual actors, historical practice theory allows us to see the larger cultural and religious framework in which these actors operate.

1 A notable exception can be found in Marion Holmes Katz's groundbreaking study *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice*. See: Marion Holmes Katz, "The Community at Prayer," in *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 128–76.

2 See Constantin Rieske and Lucas Haasis, *Historische Praxeologie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2015).

3 Rieske and Haasis, *Historische Praxeologie*, 42.

2 An Eye-Witness Report

In the "History of al-Ṭabarī," we find the account of Kulthūm b. Thābit b. Abī Saʿd, who had overseen the intelligence and postal service in the province of Khurāsān. It was a Friday in the year 207/822 when he entered the great mosque and took his regular seat in the first row. The governor of Khurāsān, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, delivered the sermon. In a departure from custom, he refrained from pronouncing the name of the caliph in Baghdad. Instead, it is said that he prayed: "O God, secure the welfare of the community of Muhammad as you have secured it for those who are your close supporters [*awliyāʾaka*], and relieve them of the crushing burden of those who would oppress and band together against them by repairing the disorder of affairs, preventing the shedding of blood and restoring harmonious relations between people."[4] Thereupon, Kulthūm left the mosque, performed the ablutions and took on a burial shroud (*kafan)*. He then sat down and wrote a letter to the caliph in which he described what had happened in the sermon. Although Ṭāhir sent for him later that day, the governor mysteriously suffered a seizure and died an abrupt death. Kulthūm's life was saved and Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir (the son of the dead governor) assumed power with the blessing of the caliph.[5]

This story is remarkable from several angles. On the one hand, Kulthūm b. Thābit, a representative of the caliphate, starts to fear for his life (and actually prepares himself for death) as soon as the governor does not mention the name of the caliph at the appropriate point in his sermon. On the other hand, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn, who personally delivers the inflammatory *khuṭba,* dies on the same day due to an unpredictable "attack in his eyelids and the interior corner of his eye."[6] Finally, we have the governor's son, Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir, who refrains from executing the Abbasid official and, allegedly, endows him with "five hundred thousand (dirhams) and two hundred sets of clothes."[7] He is thereupon appointed as the new governor of the province through an official decree from the caliph.

To better understand al-Ṭabarī's report, it is necessary to further contextualize it. As mentioned before, the events are said to have taken place in the region

4 Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: The Reunification of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate,* trans. John Alden Williams, Vol. 32 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), 133; for an edited version of the Arabic original, see Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī—Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, ed., Vol. 8 (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi-Miṣr, 1967).

5 Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 133–34.

6 Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 133–34.

7 Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 133–34.

of Khurāsān in 207/822. Although no concrete site is mentioned, it is very likely that they took place in the provincial capital of Marw.[8] Situated at the periphery of the Abbasid empire, Khurāsān was particularly suitable for attempts to resist Baghdad's domination. Thus, it was no surprise that Khurāsān was to be the first Eastern region to break away from Abbasid rule (in 213/828, the "Great Khārijite rebellion" broke out and in 247/861, the Ṣaffārids declared their realm independent from the caliphate).[9] As far as Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn is concerned, it is important to bear in mind that he was a long-time supporter of al-Maʾmūn, the same caliph whose authority he defied in his last *khuṭba*. He had fought alongside al-Maʾmūn against his brother, al-Amīn, and his soldiers even killed the latter in 198/813.[10]

For the present study, the most significant aspect of al-Ṭabarī's report is the way the governor revoked his loyalty to the caliph. Although the introduction sets a revolutionary tone, it is essential to concentrate on what he did *not* say, rather than just focus on his actual words. By not mentioning the name of the caliph in his *khuṭba*, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn publicly violated one of the key privileges of al-Maʾmūn who, as *amīr al-muʾminīn* (commander of the faithful), was the only legitimate leader of the Friday prayer and hence, had authority to delegate this function to other people. In his *Muqaddima*, Ibn Khaldūn explains the genesis of this privilege as follows: "As to the prayer from the pulpit (*minbar*) during the (Friday) sermon, it should be said that the caliphs at first directed the prayers themselves. Therefore, they used to say a prayer (for themselves), after the obligatory one for the Prophet Muhammad and the men around him had been spoken."[11] He then goes on to say:

> When pomp came into being and caliphs came to be prevented from (personally delivering) the sermon and leading the prayer, they appointed delegates for both (tasks). The preacher mentioned the caliph from the pulpit. He mentioned his name in praise and prayed for him, because God had appointed him in the interest of the world, and because a prayer at such an hour was thought likely to be heard. Also, the ancients had said: "He who has a good

8 See: Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1151.

9 See: Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Ṣaffārids," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6442.

10 See Bosworth, "Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn."

11 Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, Vol. 2 (New York: Princeton University Press, 1958), 70; for an edited version of the Arabic original see Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī, *Muqaddimat al-ʿalāma Ibn Khaldūn*, ed. Ḥajar ʿĀṣī (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1991).

> prayer shall say it for the ruler." The first to pray for the caliph during the sermon was Ibn ʿAbbas. As ʿAli's governor in al-Basrah, he prayed for ʿAli during his sermon. He said: "O God, help ʿAli, (who represents) the truth."[12]

The point Ibn Khaldūn makes here is that the caliph, as representative of the Prophet (or even God),[13] rules over the *umma* in accordance with divine will. He therefore has the authority to lead the communal prayer and deliver the Friday sermon. This is a distinct reference to the practice of the Prophet, who used to perform both tasks. However, it is particularly noteworthy that Muhammad appointed the later first caliph Abū Bakr to represent him as leader (*imām*) for the communal prayers when he was sick.[14] The later caliphs invoked this as a prophetic example to claim the right to deliver the Friday sermon as well as to delegate this task to other people who would do that in their name. The "chain of authority" was thereby expressed within the sermon itself. Through the order in which the different authorities were mentioned, the preacher connected himself to the ruling caliph, the *ṣaḥābah* (especially the first four caliphs), and, finally, to the Prophet. However, the chain did not end with the caliph. As Ibn Khaldūn points out, "when the time came that the caliphs were secluded and under the control of others, the men who were in control of the (various) dynasties often shared the (prayer) with the caliph, and their names were mentioned after his."[15]

However, one does not need to go all the way back to the times of the Prophet and his companions to make sense of the official's reaction to Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's sermon. For a much more recent event—at least from the perspective of the individuals in the account—holds high significance for our understanding of the situation. What I refer to here is the conflict between al-Maʾmūn and his brother al-Amīn, which took place in the same area roughly a decade before the events described in al-Ṭabarī's account. According to André Clot,

> "[n]either Mamun nor Amin doubted that their quarrel would end in armed confrontation. The break became inevitable when Amin displaced Mamun as heir to the throne in favour of his own two-year-old son, Musa. Mamun's name was no longer pronounced at

12 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah,* 71.

13 For information about the controversy surrounding the question of whether the early caliphs understood themselves as representatives of God *(khalīfat Allāh)* or of the Prophet Muhammad (*khalīfat rasūl Allāh)*, see Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

14 See: William Montgomery Watt, *EI* 2, "Abū Bakr," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed online June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0165.

15 Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 71–72.

> Friday prayer and was replaced by Musa's on coinage and on the embroidery of the royal cloak. (. . .) Mamun responded in kind. He removed Amin's name from his coinage and the Friday sermon."[16]

Here again, we see that the act of not mentioning the (prospective) ruler's name in the sermon was not only understood as an act of public degradation but as a direct precursor to open violence. Given that this episode was still part of people's living memory, it is safe to assume that Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's action, ten years later, could not be seen as anything but an unequivocal sign of open revolt.[17]

3 The Political Nature of the Friday Sermon

The premise that worldly authority is legitimized through religious rituals—in our case the Friday sermon—is not exclusively an Islamic notion; on the contrary, it is one that occurs in many other traditions as well. From a cultural studies perspective, the *khuṭba* is a medium of political communication.[18] This categorization can be made based on Jan Assmann's concept of "the political" (*das Politische*), as laid out in his book *Herrschaft und Heil: Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa.* In this book, Assmann defines "the political" as a cultural practice which can be distinguished from other action spaces (*Handlungsräume*) through its publicness (*Öffentlichkeit*) and relevance for social coexistence.[19] As far as Friday prayers (and sermons) are concerned, they include both features. On the one hand, they are public—in fact, it is a religious obligation for every healthy male Muslim to attend the Friday communal prayer[20]—and on the other hand, they influence social coexistence within a given community. This is a fact well illustrated by al-Ṭabarī's account of the rebelling governor, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn. According to S. D. Goitein, "the *Friday* service had a political connotation [from its

16 André Clot, *Harun al-Rashid and the World of The Thousand and One Nights* (London: Saqi Books, 2005), 144.

17 Another example of this would be the case of ʿAbd al-Raḥman b. Muʿāwiya who, in 756, ordered his preachers to drop the name of the Abbasid caliph from their sermons and thus *de facto* severed all ties between his realm of al-Andalus and the Abbasid empire. See Rosamund McKitterick, *The New Cambridge Medieval History II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 261.

18 See Asghar Fathi, "The Islamic Pulpit as a Medium of Political Communication," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20, no. 2 (1981): 163–172.

19 Jan Assmann, *Herrschaft und Heil: Politische Theologie in Altägypten, Israel und Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2002), 26.

20 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jazīrī, *Islamic Jurisprudence According to the Four Sunni Schools* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2009), 491–93.

very inception]. In early Islam it was a proof that the participants had joined the Muslim community; later, it implied a manifestation of allegiance to the caliph or governor who conducted the service, or whose name was mentioned in the sermon."[21]

While the political nature of the Friday sermon explains why Muslim rulers aspired to have their names mentioned in it, this approach is to an extent insufficient to demonstrate why the preacher's abstention from pronouncing that name was understood as tantamount to open rebellion. To answer this question, it is necessary to turn to the functions Muslim thinkers of the classical period ascribed to the position of the ruler (*walī al-amr*). Traditionally, the ruler was expected to carry out both *sharʿī* as well as non-*sharʿī* duties. These *sharʿī* obligations include the execution of the law (particularly the application of the *ḥudūd* punishments), dispatching the armies, marrying off (female) orphans and distributing booty (*fay'*).[22] Patricia Crone mentions a number of further tasks that, although not regulated by the shariʿa, were still expected to be shouldered by the ruler and his administration. Among them were providing internal security, free trade, and medical services, as well as improving infrastructure and promoting the arts.[23] Taking all this into consideration, it is striking that, in the classical period, the functions of a ruler hardly exceeded the position of someone who sustains and secures a system on which he has very limited influence and may additionally provide certain other services. For, at least in theory, the ruler was not permitted to exercise legislative or judicative powers as they steadily shifted into the realm of the *'ulama'*.[24] Practically, this balance of power created an implicit constitutional order which would only be called into question after the arrival of the Mongol armies.[25]

Bearing the practical limitations of the ruler's power in mind, the symbolic meaning and importance of the *khuṭba* becomes more apparent. Being mentioned in the Friday sermons was one of the main privileges Muslim rulers enjoyed in

21 See: S.D. Goitein, "Djumʿa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmung Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed online June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2111.

22 See Patricia Crone, *God's Rule: Government in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 286.

23 See Crone, *God's Rule,* 305–14.

24 See István T. Kristó-Nagy, "Reason, Religion and Power in Ibn Al-Muqaffaʿ," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 62, no. 3 (2009).

25 See Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 37–73.

pre-colonial times (and sometimes even under colonial rule.)[26] This privilege as well as the right to mint coins (*sikka*) bearing the ruler's name was a marker of sovereignty.[27] Thus, the *khuṭba* can be considered to have been the primary medium to communicate the ruler's authority and legitimacy. It was, furthermore, a source of prestige that should not be underestimated. One could therefore argue that the ritual of mentioning the caliph, sultan or emir in the sermon was a weekly reaffirmation of the *bayʿa*, the oath of allegiance, according to which the ruler had initially been proclaimed and recognized as head of the Muslim state. *Bayʿa* is a practice which predates Islam but was used by the Prophet Muhammad to bind the Arab tribes to his authority and to the Muslim *umma*.[28] Although the *bayʿa* was traditionally understood to be just a pledge of personal loyalty, it soon changed into an act by which a whole collective submitted itself to the authority of the new leader.[29] In accordance with the prophetic example, this originally pre-Islamic ritual found its way into the succession ceremonials of the following dynasties.[30]

If one accepts the idea that the mentioning of the ruler during the *khuṭba* stands in relation to the succession ritual of *bayʿa*, the Friday prayer as such acquires even more significance. The establishment of a weekly ritual which is performed to legitimize the current government entails by its very nature the risk of undermining the system's legitimacy as soon as the ritual is not performed in accordance with the official protocol. It is, therefore, remarkable that although the ritual of mentioning the ruler was initially "designed" to legitimize his exercise of power, it to some extent, did the exact opposite. Thus, by relying on this ritual, the ruler ultimately lost power to the preacher, who—like in al-Ṭabarī's report—could refuse to mention his name.[31] Historically, this fact became even more ap-

26 For example, in British India, the name of the Ottoman caliph was mentioned in every *khuṭba* until the abolishment of the caliphate in 1924. For further information, see Blain H. Auer, *Symbols of Authority in Medieval Islam: History, Religion and Muslim Legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2012).

27 See Aziz al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Polities* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1997), 149–51.

28 See: E. Tyan, "Bayʿa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0107.

29 See Andrew Marsham, *Rituals of Muslim Monarchies: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 61.

30 For further information, see al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*.

31 This phenomenon goes back to the days of the Abbasid revolution, when preachers often switched sides in order to stay on good terms with the new rulers. See Muhammad Qasim

parent as soon as the preachers were no longer directly appointed by the rulers but were "automatically" recruited from among the *ʿulamaʾ*.

4 The Turbulent Emergence of a Successful Alliance

The aforementioned shift in the power dynamics is easiest understood within the general context of the marginalization of the office of the caliphate with the decline of Abbasid power. This was a creeping process, which was spurred by the Buyid invasion of Baghdad in 334/945 as well as by the emergence of the Fatimid and Seljuq dynasties that eventually led to a further strengthening of the orthodox religious elites.[32] This development was furthermore linked to the rise of the Ashʿarite school of theology, which gradually replaced the Muʿtazilite School. It was under the rule of the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn (whose name Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn left out from his sermon) that the Muʿtazila became the dominant theological doctrine of the empire. Al-Maʾmūn, who claimed the right to interpret the Qurʾan himself, promoted the Muʿtazila to curb the influence of the *ʿulamaʾ*. He went even so far as to establish the *miḥna*, an institution often compared to the Inquisition of the Catholic Church.[33] However, when the political situation changed, the Muʿtazila became more and more marginalized. It was under the rule of the Seljuq sultan Alp Arslān and his vizier Niẓām al-Mulk that the Ashʿarite school reached its zenith.[34] Thenceforward, the powerful position of the *ʿulamaʾ* as legitimate interpreters of the divine will would—at least in theory—rarely be contested until the advent of the modern era.

This does not mean that the political and religious elites were principally unable to cooperate. In fact, as soon as the conflict over the spiritual and legal suc-

Zaman, *Religion and Politics Under The Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 193–94.

32 See: Bernard Lewis, "ʿAbbāsids," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition,* eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0002.

33 See Martin Hinds, "Miḥna," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition,* eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0732.

34 Harold Bowen and Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "Niẓām al-Mulk," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5942.

cession of the Prophet was settled, the ʿ*ulama*ʾ effectively became a backbone for the authorities all over the Islamic world. As part of the urban upper class, they were personally interested in tranquility and stability. The ʿ*ulama*ʾ were the main beneficiaries of a system which guaranteed them substantial influence.[35]

With reference to the Qurʾanic condemnation of *fitna* (disturbance),[36] most Muslim scholars (by the 5th/11th century at the latest) agreed upon the general principle that upheaval should be avoided by all possible means.[37] In order to maintain the unity of the *umma*, the ʿ*ulama*ʾ usually sided with whomever could guarantee the stability of the system. Not unlike Christian Europe or Confucian China, the Islamic world developed its own divine-right theory of rulership. This notion can be found for instance in the last sentence of the above-quoted passage by Ibn Khaldūn.[38] Although this stance led to the emergence of a very robust form of political quietism, it still entailed one rule which became a powerful tool in the hands of the ʿ*ulama*ʾ. As rulers claimed to occupy their leading position in accordance with the divine will, they were expected to comply with the rules God had laid out in the revelations to the Prophet. However, these rules were subject to interpretation by the ʿ*ulamā*ʾ, and it was also the ʿ*ulamā*ʾ who decided whether or not the ruler was governing as required by the shariʿa. Otherwise, he would be considered to be unjust (*ẓālim*), which was seen as one of the legitimate reasons for resistance to him.[39]

5 In Favor of Stability

With the decline of caliphal power, the Friday sermon became the most important and sufficient instrument for the repertoire of the ʿ*ulamā*ʾ. All over the Muslim world, these sermons constituted the "mass medium" that could reach vast

35 See István T. Kristó-Nagy, "Conflict and Cooperation between Arab rulers and Persian Bureaucrats at the Formation of the Islamic Empire," in *Empires and Bureaucracy from Late Antiquity to the Modern World*, eds. Peter Crooks and Timothy Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

36 Variants of the word "*fitna*" appear sixty times in the Qurʾan. All of them have a negative connotation. See "Tanzil.net," accessed June 12, 2023, http://tanzil.net/#search/root/فتن.

37 See: Louis Gardet, "Fitna," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_2389.

38 See: Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 71.

39 See*:* Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

segments of the population. As such, they were throughout history subject to government attempts to control or censor them. As Berkey points out: "The issue of authority and control, in relation to the activity of popular preachers and storytellers, was extraordinarily complex, as it was in all aspects of medieval Islamic religious life. There were at least sporadic, and not altogether unsuccessful, efforts to exert formal, if not systematic, control."[40] However, Berkey goes on to argue that direct interference was seldom necessary due to the "self-censoring" system which defined the quality standards of sermons.[41] This calls into question the image of unilateral censorship attempts. Berkey argues that the rhetorical, ethical, and political guidelines that developed throughout history limited the scope of individual preachers and thus protected the whole profession from strict governmental interference. It is furthermore expedient to assume that the cooperation with state authorities was in general much more lucrative than open resistance to them. As the ruler generally had the last say on issues of public spending, command over the army and police forces, and the allocation of influential posts, open confrontation was rarely a considerable option for ambitious preachers.

One example of the overall policy of the *ʿulamāʾ* in relation to the powerful is detailed in a story that can be found in Ibn Miskawayh's *Tajārib al-umam*. At a time when the Abbasids were little more than the puppets of their Buyid emirs, the caliph al-Qāhir tried to emancipate himself from his advisors' supervision. But when his attempts failed, the vizier decided to replace the rebellious caliph with another puppet. To legitimize the ousting of the "Commander of the faithful," he asked senior qadis to issue a fatwa declaring that the caliph had been removed from his post. However, they refused and stated that it was not their function to produce a new situation, but rather to evaluate a given one. Thereupon, the vizier ordered the caliph to get blinded and then consulted the qadis again. When they arrived at court and found the blinded ruler, they decided that a blind man could never be "Commander of the faithful" and thus al-Qāhir was deposed.[42]

Although this account cannot be historically verified, it is still quite telling with regards to how the relationship between Muslim rulers and the *ʿulamaʾ* looked like. As long as those in power accepted the formal authority of the sharīʿa, there was a lot of space for compromise and mutual agreement. In reference to this story, it might be noteworthy to mention that at least three Abbasid caliphs were blinded

40 Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 63.

41 See Berkey, *Popular Preaching,* 63.

42 See Ibn Miskawayh, *Tajārib al-umam* (Leiden: Brill, 1913), 457.

and later imprisoned.[43] They could not be executed because of their bloodline, which connected them to the untouchable authority of the Prophet. It is, however, remarkable that the famous chronicler Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, who wrote about these three caliphs (al-Qāhir, r. 320–322/932–934; al-Muttaqī, r. 328–332/940–944 and al-Mustakfī, r. 332–334/944–946) was very keen to point out their cruelty and incompetence as well as the natural disasters that took place during their reigns.[44] Thus, he retrospectively takes up the common motif of rulers who are deposed because of their injustice. The ousting is, therefore, seen as legitimate and in accordance with the divine will. To portray them as victims of circumstances was not an option, as this would have undermined the authority and legitimacy of the whole system. To put it in the words of Christian Morgenstern: "That which must not, cannot be."[45]

6 Al-Ṭabarī's Bias

There is a striking correlation between al-Ṭabarī's account of the rebellious governor and the account in the book of al-Suyūṭī. When Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn delivered the Friday sermon and thereby failed to mention the name of the caliph, he died later that day from of an "attack in his eyelids and the interior corner of his eye."[46] Although, it seems to be quite a remarkable coincidence that the governor would suffer a deadly attack the very day he refused to obey the caliph, al-Ṭabarī makes no effort to explain the situation further. Instead, he leaves it to the reader to speculate about the cause of the governor's sudden death. One could argue that al-Ṭabarī's version of a natural death was in fact motivated by his desire to point to a kind of divine interference. Hence, it was the "hand of God" which punished the disloyal governor who dared to question the authority of God's/the Prophet's representative on earth. This account issues a clear warning against the consequences of rebelling against a legitimate caliph. Thus, like the earthquake in al-Suyūṭī's report, the death of the governor can be attributed to God, who interferes to assure the welfare of the Muslim community which is to be led by a righteous imam.

43 William Muir, *The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1924), 572–76.
44 Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *History of the Caliphs*, trans. H. S. Jarrett (Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 1881), 393–408; for an edited version of the Arabic original, see: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-khulafāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tārīkhiyyah al-Bakrī, 1964).
45 Christian Morgenstern, "The Impossible Fact," *Galgenlieder: A Selection*, trans. Max E. Knight (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 35.
46 Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 133.

This interpretation of al-Ṭabarī appears to be quite reasonable, as he spent most of his lifetime in close proximity to the ruling elite. He was born around the year 224/839 in the coastal town of Amol in today's Iran. Due to his great talent (he had memorized the Qurʾan by the age of seven, was leading the public prayers at eight, and was transcribing hadith at nine) al-Ṭabarī was soon acknowledged to be an outstanding scholar.[47] He soon became tutor to a son of caliph al-Mutawakkil's vizier in the Abbasid capital of Baghdad. However, in his later years, al-Ṭabarī also served as advisor to al-Mutawakkil's successor, al-Muktafī.[48] From this standpoint, he of course had little interest in portraying Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn's death as an assassination, but rather portrayed it as divine intervention.[49] Moreover, he emphasizes the great generosity of Ṭāhir's son toward the Abbasid caliph's official through which he earns the affection of the ruler and thereby the governorship over Khurāsān.

7 Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to illustrate how mentioning the ruler's name during Friday sermons was an important medium of political communication during the classical period of Islam. Thus, through the application of historical practice theory, it could be shown that this ritual was not just an isolated expression of allegiance and submission, but that in itself it points to a normative structure that would leave an imprint on the Muslim world until the advent of modernity. Therefore, we can say that it was this very part of the Friday sermon through which the alliance between religious and political as well as central and regional elites was, at least under normal circumstances, constantly reinforced and communicated to the wider society. This was mainly due to the emergence of a political quietism on the side of the religious scholars as well as to the ruler's acknowledgement of the *ʿulama*'s role in society. Despite severe political, eco-

47 Elton L. Daniel, "Ṭabari, Abu Jaʿfar Moḥammad b. Jarir," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Columbia University, accessed June 12, 2023, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/tabari-abu-jafar.

48 Clifford Edmund Bosworth, "al-Ṭabarī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. Peri J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford Edmund Bosworth, Emeri J. van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, accessed June 12, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1133.

49 Other sources, however, are of the view that the governor was poisoned. See Dominique Sourdel, "Les circonstances de la mort de Ṭāhir I^{er} au Ḫurāsān en 207/822," *Arabica* 5 (1958): 66–69; Martin Forstner, "Abu'l-Ṭayyeb Ṭāher," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Columbia University, accessed June 12, 2023, https://iranicaonline.org/articles/abul-ayyeb-tiher-b.

nomic, or ecological crises, this alliance was remarkably robust, as both parties highly benefited from its maintenance.

As stated in the introduction, this paper has only studied the Sunni practice of mentioning the ruler's name during Friday sermons in the early Abbasid period. Further research is needed to contribute to a deeper understanding of that time and society. The role of Friday sermons within Shiʿi or Khārijīte/Ibadi contexts also deserves more academic attention. The same is true for the practice of non-Islamic preaching under Muslim rule. As of today, a comprehensive study about the attitude of Medieval Jewish or Christian preachers towards the Muslim state authorities that governed them remains to be written. Another possible field of inquiry would be to evaluate how the above-described alliance of the *ʿulamāʾ* and the political authorities was perceived by other elite and non-elite groups of laypeople and how this perception affected the overall social climate.

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Mohammad Waqas Sajjad

Mufti Tariq Masood and the Performance of Religious Speech: Social Media and Religious Discourses in Pakistan

Abstract: Mufti Tariq Masood, a Deobandi scholar with a special interest in issues of gender and a vocal critic of liberals in Pakistan, is a prominent name in religious discourses in the country. Much of his fame comes from social media and videos of his sermons and lectures. There are also specially recorded videos in which he answers people's questions. Masood's videos often go viral because of the provocative nature of his themes. At the same time, his appeal is also due to his mannerisms, body language, demeanor, and skills as a speaker—or his performance of religious speech. When speaking to a live audience, for instance, he is expressive, humorous, angry, given the context, and requires the participation of the people. He asks them rhetorical questions, repeats himself often, and berates them if they are inattentive. Some of the most important issues to Masood concern women's rights and the dangers of liberals in Pakistan. He creates a strict liberal and religious dichotomy in his speeches, and given the importance of this dichotomy to Pakistan, understanding the appeal of scholars such as Masood and the way they use social media becomes essential to understanding Islam in the country.

1 Introduction

The '*ulama*', religious scholars, perform several roles as authority figures in Pakistan. They write, teach, preach, participate in politics, manage religious institutions, and give legal opinions. Effectively, they are the primary drivers of religious discourses in the country. Indeed, as Muhammad Qasim Zaman has noted, they not only contribute to public discourses but also set the terms for them.[1] Many are public figures in their local communities, within religious circles, or nationally.[2] But effec-

1 Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

2 Every Muslim tradition has several notable '*ulama*' who become de facto representatives and gain immense popularity. Some important '*ulama*' and the movements or organizations they represent include Maulana Tahir Ashrafi (Pakistan *Ulama* Council), Maulana Tariq Jameel (Tablighī Jamā'ī), Maulana Tahir-ul-Qadri (Minhaj-ul-Quran), Mufti Taqi Usmani (Darul Uloom Karachi), among several others.

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tively disseminating their message requires both knowledge and the performance of religious authority, for example through physical appearance and speechmaking.

The *ʿulama*'s speaking styles change with the context of their engagement with people, and traditions can become known for particular approaches. For instance, the proselytizing *Tablighī Jamāʿt* is described as soft in its methods and the demeanor of its members.[3] In other contexts, the *ʿulama*'s speech may be characterized by other traits: humor, harshness, emotion, and so on, as they become known for certain qualities. Through lectures, weekly sermons, political events, and television shows, they speak to diverse audiences and adapt their performances to the context. Indeed, speechmaking and debate are often part of their education as well.[4] After all, a major purpose of their religious activity is to communicate their knowledge to others.

In addition to traditional institutions and sites, there are now multiple platforms the *ʿulama* use to reach new audiences. A proliferation of television channels, for instance, has permitted many of them to become religious celebrities and household names.[5] The success of their outreach from television is insignificant compared to social media, however, and many *ʿulama* have established popular online personas and become known for distinct styles. Their sermons, lectures, and speeches are no longer meant only for local mosque-goers. At times, the fame they garner through social media has been accompanied by criticism from competing religious traditions and liberal segments of society. Given their fame online, they often "go viral" as snippets of their recorded speeches become topics of debate. Consider for instance the revered Maulana Tariq Jameel, who has faced intense criticism based on his views on multiple issues, even as he remains arguably the most influential religious personality in Pakistan.[6]

With the increasing use of social media, several *ʿulama* have gained prominence for their knowledge, style of preaching, and expertise in certain themes. In this chapter, I explore the performance of religious speech and impact of one such scholar, Mufti Tariq Masood. I am interested in the way he combines speech

3 Arsalan Khan, "Pious Masculinity, Ethical Reflexivity, and Moral Order in an Islamic Piety Movement in Pakistan," *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 91, No. 1 (Winter 2018): 53, 66.

4 See Tariq Rahman, "Munāẓarah Literature in Urdu: An Extra-Curricular Educational Input in Pakistan's Religious Education," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Summer 2008): 197–220.

5 Tahmina Rashid, "Social Media, Religion and Religiosity in Pakistan in the Era of Disruption," *Hamdard Islamicus* Vol. XLII, Nos. 1 & 2 (2019): 45.

6 See for instance "Maulana Tariq Jameel Stokes Controversy with Toxic Religo-Political Mix," *The Friday Times,* August 9, 2022, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.thefridaytimes.com/2022/08/08/maulana-tariq-jameel-stokes-controversy-with-pernicious-religo-political-mix/.

and performative elements through videos on social media about the themes of women and liberals in Pakistan. Masood is a popular figure with an exuberant social media team bringing him to diverse audiences, but this also means he has his share of critics. His authority is reflected in, and heightened by, his performance of religious speech. After all, religious authority depends not just on knowledge, but also its performance.

1.1 Mufti Tariq Masood: The *ʿUlama*'s Spokesman

While knowledge through a tradition of learning may be the primary source of religious authority,[7] the *ʿulama*'s influence and appeal depend on multiple attributes, including their charisma as speakers. Aspects such as sartorial choices, beard styles, body language, and use of certain terms become parts of their identities. Masood represents the Deobandi tradition of Sunni reformist *ʿulama* and is affiliated with a large seminary in Karachi. The reformist movement of Deobandis emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century and became known for its scholarship, network of madrasas, and preaching.[8] While Masood's Deobandi identity is evident, his interests make him a representative of the *ʿulama* in general, as he highlights liberals as the key oppositional category. Transcending institutional boundaries within religious scholars, he defends Islamic values as opposed to the westernized tendencies of liberals.

Often dressed in plain white *shalwār qameez* (long shirt with loose pajamas) with a white *imāmā* (turban) on his head, Masood has the physical appearance of a serious scholar. He frequently travels all over the country and abroad, giving lectures and making appearances at religious events. He is known for his special interest in issues of gender relations, marriages, and the effects of liberals on Pakistani society. He is among the *ʿulama* who have ably used social media so that his work and life, his mission as a reformist *ʿalim*, are now accessible to millions of Pakistanis. His persona, then, is of a scholarly *ʿalim* invested in rectifying society who is using all means to do so.

Masood is one of the most active *ʿulama* on social media, as videos of his lectures and sermons are uploaded regularly. These take one of two formats. The first one involves videos of him answering people's questions or discussing some topic while looking into the camera, and the second type is that of recordings of

7 Zaman, *Ulama in Contemporary Islam,* 10.

8 For the history of the Deobandis, see Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

sermons and speeches to an audience. His speech, expressions, movements, body language, and gestures change given the spatial configuration, as do the harshness or levity in his words and tone. More than most others, he stands out due to his performance of religious speech. This endears him to his followers, both in his live sermons and on their computer or phone screens.

2 Religious Performance and Speech

Given their varied objectives, the *ʿulamaʾ* engage in distinct performances of speech. For instance, the Barelvi preaching organization *Dāʿwat-e-Islāmī* is characterized by the white *shalwār qameez* and green turbans of its members, as well as by the use of a green flag and the term *madnī* in its discourses, referring to the city of Medina.[9] Its leader, Ilyas Qadri, speaks informally and expresses emotions by crying and laughing during his lectures. His approach gives him, and by extension his organization, a soft identity in public perception. Part of *Dāʿwat-e-Islāmī*'s appeal comes from social media, where love for the Prophet Muhammad is highlighted as its essential attribute. This was also essential in the rise to fame of another Barelvi scholar, the late Khadim Hussain Rizvi, whose performances were decidedly different as his fiery sermons often included harsh language and threats.[10] Both represent the Barelvi tradition of love for the Prophet and the association with shrines, and yet, they demonstrate drastically different performances of speech given their separate objectives, despite their shared Barelvi identity. Similarly, Masood's Deobandi peers—such as Tariq Jameel—have their own individual styles, which may be copied by others as well.[11]

Speech has a long and powerful history in Islam, and there are precedents for the *ʿulamaʾ* to follow. Preachers and orators in the early centuries of Islam are

9 Thomas K. Gugler, "Daily Piety Drills for Lay Preachers in South Asia: The Tablighi Jamaʿat and Daʿwat-e Islami," in *Culture of Daʿwa: Islamic Preaching in the Modern World*, eds. Itzchak Weismann and Jamal Malik (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2020), 104.

10 Ihsan Yilmaz and Kainat Shakil, "Religious Populism and Vigilantism: The Case of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan," *European Center for Populism Studies*, January 23, 2022, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.populismstudies.org/religious-populism-and-vigilantism-the-case-of-the-tehreek-e-labbaik-pakistan/.

11 For instance, a young man by the name of Azad Jameel became a well-known speaker at religious events due to his speech, which closely resembled Tariq Jameel's. It was even assumed he was the elder preacher's son — causing significant consternation when his supporters found this to be untrue. See "Fact-check: Azad Jameel is not Maulana Tariq Jameel's son," *The Namal*, February 25, 2019, accessed June 13, 2023, https://thenamal.com/latest/fact-check-azad-jameel-is-not-maulana-tariq-jameels-son/.

said to have understood the "transformative power of eloquent speech" with Friday sermons as the most important public events for learning and preaching.[12] John Bowen has rightly asserted that hearing and writing have "quite specific values in Islamic knowledge (. . .) [as] Muhammad's aural reception of Gabriel's speech began a chain of verbal witnessing, linking hearers across the centuries." As a result, he continues, there was even a privileging of speech over text as the spoken and heard word was recognized as reliable since "you know something because someone has witnessed it, and that person has orally passed on the knowledge to a second, and so forth, down to you. Reliable knowledge involves aural witnessing."[13] Subsequently, it is almost a religious responsibility for a scholar to effectively bring his knowledge to the masses through the powerful performance of speech.

The '*ulama*' today are aware of the need to cultivate speechmaking skills. The Deobandi scholar and debater Ilyas Ghumman notes for instance that a religious debater must be knowledgeable and bold, he must speak in a loud voice, be respectful and polite, and have the ability to use both formal and informal language.[14] The performances of speakers like Masood who have these and other qualities can create an environment to control the participation and emotions of laypeople, many of whom are in already awe of them as authority figures.

An effective speaker can rely on multiple qualities. He uses poetry, humor, and sarcasm, as well as suitable body language and gestures that accompany the spoken word, as he has to keep people's attention directed towards him.[15] After all, as Carla Petievich and Max Stille note, a sermon is a performance in which "factors beyond language shape the reception process: via rhetorical protocols, by spatial and technical staging, and through the gestures, voice and antics of both speaker and audience."[16] Moreover, religious orators often use language and concepts that are not known to the people even if they know their reverence, thus confirming the prestige of the speaker due to his knowledge.[17] For Muslim audi-

12 Linda G. Jones, *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2.

13 John Bowen, *A New Anthropology of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21–22.

14 Ilyas Ghumman, *Asool-e-Munazara* (Sargodha: Maktaba-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat-wal-Jamat, 2011), 11–12.

15 Eric Hoenes del Pinal, "Towards an Ideology of Gesture: Gesture, Body Movement, and Language Ideology Among Q'eqchi'-Maya Catholics," *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 84, No. 3 (Summer 2011).

16 Carla Petievich and Max Stille, "Emotions in Performance: Poetry and Preaching," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* Vol. 54, No. 1 (2017): 69.

17 Webb Keane, "Religious Language," *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol. 26 (1997): 48.

ences, this means the speaker will know when and how to quote from the Qur'an or hadith as part of his performance.

Muslims have held the Prophet's modes of communication as a model to follow when presenting the message of Islam.[18] There are descriptions of the Prophet's gestures and facial expressions in his sermons,[19] and there is a sense that his successors "were expected to inform, inspire, and motivate the community of the faithful, or appoint others to do so."[20] This provides further impetus to the modern speaker to make use of all opportunities such as social media and tackle the challenges they present, since communication of the message is itself a religious exercise.

Religious speech can also be instrumental in creating communities of believers. As Ruth Conrad and Roland Hardenberg note, "a group of listeners is created, legitimized and transformed into a community, sometimes by actively excluding others" during the speech process.[21] Different layers of audiences might then be created and multiplied. Those directly witnessing the preacher form a local community, but those who subscribe, watch, and share videos online add an integral layer of a believing community with an identity that forms around the speaker they follow from afar. Social media is an important part of the way people "imagine" themselves as communities. Here, social media permits an imagined community of believers to form around popular speakers who become leaders of their traditions.[22]

After all, effective religious speech is not just about interpreting and knowing texts, but also about understanding congregations and their contexts. Conrad and Hardenberg note that preachers have different kinds of styles, with either esoteric, formal, or practical knowledge giving them their authority, so that "only an approach based on multidimensionality can adequately reflect the difficult relations between preacher and congregation." This means the popular sermon understands the cultural context of the audience.[23] Similarly, as Max Stille notes, the popular preacher "appeals to the wider population rather than a specialist who adapts his preaching style accordingly...[and] has to be a good reader of trends and tastes

18 Amal Ibrahim and Abd El-Fattah Khalil, "The Islamic Perspective of Interpersonal Communication," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* Vol. 4, No. 2 (December 2016): 24.

19 Bünyamin Erul, "Muhammad (Pbuh) and the Body Language," *Journal of Islamic Research* Vol. 1 No. 2 (December 2008): 55–58.

20 Abdulkader Tayob, "Sermons as Practical and Linguistic Performances," *Journal of Religion in Africa,* Vol. 47, Fasc. 1 (2017): 137.

21 Ruth Conrad and Roland Hardenberg, "Religious Speech as Resource. A Research Report," *International Journal of Practical Theology* Vol. 24, No. 1 (2020): 166.

22 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 2016).

23 Conrad and Hardenberg, "Religious Speech as Resource," 176, 180, and 186–87.

among his recipients."[24] This is where Masood excels, as his attention to social issues, including social media itself, displays his awareness of the Pakistani context. When discussing issues of gender and liberals, he often invokes ideas of Pakistani values and the evils of westernization, giving examples his audiences understand. The efficacy of his speech depends more on cultural knowledge and the creation of a religious body of followers, rather than formal knowledge of Islam. Religious speech is performed through cultural knowledge, which enhances the emotional participation of the audience.

Stille also highlights the combination of popular culture and Islam, as well as the need to interpret "performative poetics of Islamic speech" in his study of sermons in Bangladesh. As he notes, they cut across "entertainment, religious teaching and political mobilization. . . [creating] a space with its own dynamics, common characteristics and rules of discourse."[25] Understanding the religious speech performance of *'ulama'* is therefore essential to understanding how their authority stems from aspects beyond formal knowledge. Recently, Ayşe Almila Akca, Eyad Abuali, and Aydın Süer have also noted the need to move beyond texts to "discourses, practices and social contexts and settings, through which ideas come to life." Advocating for a practice theory of Islam to understand the religion and its social formations, they point to the importance of "activities and actions, the body and embodiment, and the material aspect of religious practices" and thus a practice theory.[26] The study of social media videos and the performance of religious speech takes inspiration from these concerns.

Masood's knowledge is shared with thousands of *'ulama'*. It is in the performance of his religious speech, including his body language, awareness of popular culture, focus on everyday matters, humor, and awareness of contexts, that he distinguishes himself and becomes part of a smaller group. The widespread audience he achieves through social media makes him one of the most impactful *'ulama'* in the country. Exploring the content and performance of his religious speech thus becomes important in order to understand the practice of religion and its impact on society in Pakistan.

By the "performance of religious speech," I mean the myriad ways in which Masood engages with the audience, through his body language, humor, use of emotions such as anger, and use of colloquial speech and popular culture, while

24 Max Stille, *Islamic Sermons and Public Piety in Bangladesh: The Poetics of Popular Preaching* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 34.

25 Stille, *Islamic Sermons*, 3.

26 Ayşe Almila Akca, Eyad Abuali, and Aydın Süer, "Bodies, Things, Doings: A Practice Theory Approach to the Study of Islam," in *New Methods in the Study of Islam*, eds. Abbas Aghdassi and Aaron W. Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 306–307, 310.

compelling them to participate. It is this performance of religious speech that makes Masood an effective speaker for Islam, both for his physical audiences and those he speaks to directly and indirectly through social media. Exploring his attributes as a speaker—the language he uses, his mannerisms, and his approach to his audience—enables us to better understand the relationship between the '*ulama*' and the society they seek to reform, and how they reach out to people in order to do so.

3 Mufti Tariq Masood, Social Media, and the Performance of Religious Speech

In terms of the volume of uploaded content, Masood's visibility on social media far outweighs that of most other '*ulama*'. His digital team regularly uploads videos on multiple channels on YouTube and Facebook, allowing his followers to have access to his sermons and lectures as well as glimpses of his personal life—all to become better Muslims. I focus on videos on specific themes uploaded to his channels, where clickbait titles and thumbnails add to the appeal of his social media output. In this context, the settings, captions, and images on thumbnails become as important to the online persona of the scholar as the content and performance of his speech.

Masood's hard work in curating his online persona has paid dividends. As of September 2022, his official Facebook webpage had over 700,000 likes and over a million followers.[27] This is where snippets of videos and livestreams of his sermons may be shared. He is more active on YouTube, with at least five official channels that are updated almost daily with new content, with millions of subscribers and regular viewers. The channels *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood* and *Mufti Tariq Masood Speeches* have 1.24 million and over 3.2 million subscribers respectively.[28] On the former, he responds to questions submitted by people in mostly short videos recorded in a studio for online audiences, with Masood speaking directly to the camera while seated on a large chair in an elegantly decorated setting, as some effort has clearly gone into creating an attractive studio. Almost

27 "Mufti Tariq Masood," Facebook, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/muftitariqmasood.

28 See "Ask Mufti Tariq Masood," YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/c/AskMuftiTariqMasood/featured and "Mufti Tariq Masood Speeches," YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/c/MuftiTariqMasoodSpeeches.

every video's thumbnail includes an image of Masood, the title of the video in Urdu or English, and a graphic relevant to the subject.

The channel *Mufti Tariq Masood Speeches* contains longer videos, including recordings of sermons and lectures on a range of topics. Here, he is speaking to an audience in front of him, and not constrained by time. In many videos, he goes into different trajectories and presents his views on politics and culture. In addition to complete lectures, snippets are shared that focus on particular themes such as women and liberals, for which Masood is well-known. These often make use of his popularity and willingness to court controversy, and they carry provocative titles. For instance, one eight-minute video titled *Liberal Auntiyan Aur Mardon Ke Huqooq*, or *Liberal Aunties and the Rights of Men* contains a mere thirty seconds that deal with what the title suggests.[29]

This is quite a common phenomenon, even in the short videos. Consider the video *Baeuty Parlour Se Tayyar Shuda Khawateen Ka Be Parda Ghomna* [sic] or *Unveiled Women who are Dressed up from a Beauty Parlor* on *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood.* The three-minute video includes answers to three questions: one about divorce, another about money, and a third ostensibly more scandalous question that gives it the title.[30] Similarly, another video is called *Social Media Par Larky Larkion Ki Baat Cheet* or *Girls and Boys Talking to Each Other on Social Media*, while it actually addresses questions on multiple issues.[31]

There are many differences in his performances between the videos recorded for social media and those in which he speaks to a live audience. But in both, given the nature of the theme of gender, a specific kind of religious community is created among the audiences. Below, I examine some videos relating to this theme, the performance of religious speech that makes Masood an effective communicator, and finally, his impact on religious discourses in Pakistan through social media.

3.1 Masood's Themes: Women, Liberals, and Pakistani Values

As a scholar, Masood deals with a range of issues. But some of his major interests can be gauged from the three authored books listed on his website: *Family Planning*, and two volumes of *Aik se za'id shadiyoon ki zaroorat* or *The Need for More*

29 "Liberal Auntiyan Aur Mardon Ke Huqooq." *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood,* YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIQUyRmrBVA&t=1s.

30 "Baeuty Parlour Se Tayyar Shuda Khawateen Ka Be Parda Ghomna," *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood*, YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkPyYkXG9PM.

31 "Social Media Par Larky Larkion Ki Baat Cheet," *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood,* YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eg-Inchh_Rg.

than One Marriage.[32] Moreover, over a period of six weeks starting in May 2022, around 180 videos were uploaded on *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood*. Their titles indicate that at least 45 deal in part with issues of gender relations and roles.

In one infamous viral video that brought Masood to the national spotlight, he describes the benefits of early marriages. This includes a particularly controversial joke about finding four four-year-old girls or two eight-year-old girls if a man cannot find a sixteen-year-old girl to marry.[33] While this led to outrage and an explanation—though not an apology—from the preacher,[34] Masood has continued to emphasize the benefits of early marriages and polygamy, highlighting that he practices what he preaches and has arranged for his own thirteen-year-old niece to be married.[35] He targets the liberals who oppose him, accusing them of being influenced by western culture, destroying Pakistani society, and maligning the *'ulama'*.[36]

Given his strong views and the desire to educate people about how westernization is harming Pakistani and Islamic values, it is not surprising that Masood has given significant attention to the *Aurat March* (Women's March). Since 2018, this has been a prominent women's rights movement with an annual gathering in the month of March. Masood is among its most vocal critics, with a focus on the slogans and posters at the event.[37] This is a subject he takes very seriously, and for which he uses extreme language. In a sermon following the 2019 event, he singled out a poster that read *Shadi Nahin, Azadi* or *Freedom, Not Marriage*. Declaring angrily that proponents of such messages simply want to fulfill sexual desires outside marriage, he labeled such women prostitutes who would rather work in brothels.[38] The next year, he toned down his rhetoric but remained a staunch op-

32 Available for download on the website of Mufti Tariq Masood. See "Mufti Tariq Masood," accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.muftitariqmasood.com/books.php.

33 "Marry three widows and I'll get you a fourth wife. . . one 16yo, two eight-year-olds or four four-year-olds," *The Current,* Nov 14, 2020, accessed June 13, 2023, https://thecurrent.pk/marry-three-widows-and-ill-get-you-a-fourth-wife-one-16yo-two-eight-year-olds-or-four-year-olds/.

34 Zehra Batool, "'I Was Joking': Mufti Masood Gets Software Updated After Endorsing Child Marriages In Viral Video," *Parhlo,* November 16, 2020, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.parhlo.com/mufti-tariq-masood-explanation/.

35 "Mufti Tariq Masood defends child marriages, forces 13-year-old niece into marriage," *MM News*, November 6, 2021, accessed June 13, 2023, https://mmnews.tv/mufti-tariq-masood-defends-child-marriages-forces-13-year-old-niece-into-marriage/.

36 "Liberal Auntiyan Aur Mardon Ke Huqooq."

37 For one article that owns and defends these posters, see Sadia Khatri, "Should feminists claim Aurat March's 'vulgar' posters? Yes, absolutely," *Dawn,* March 15, 2019, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.dawn.com/news/1469815.

38 "Mera Jism Meri Marzi/8 March/Aurat March/Women Day Special Bayan/Mufti Tariq Masood," *Islamic Group*, YouTube, March 11, 2019, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YHkluFzc44. See also: "Women's Day aur Ghatia Banners/Mufti Tariq Masood Reply/

ponent of the march, focusing on the destruction of the proverbial family system when women step away from their natural and traditional roles and begin earning for themselves, ignoring their marriages. For Masood, this was another example of liberals bringing western culture to Pakistan, encouraging divorce, and causing women to disobey their husbands.[39]

Masood's focus on the theme of gender is closely linked to his criticism of liberals. In another video against liberals, titled *Motorcycle Me Khawateen Ka Mardon Ki Tarah Baithna?* or *Women Sitting Like Men on Motorcycles*, he deals harshly with liberals for immodesty in society, such as in changing the way women ride behind men on a motorcycle.[40] These liberals, he declares in another video titled *Liberal Log Moulaviyo Ko Kyun Pasand Nahi Karte?* Or *Why do the Liberals Dislike Maulvis?*, simply dislike the very appearance of religious men. He sarcastically argues that they hate everything the '*ulama*'teach, such as being kind to people, taking care of elders, and giving wives their rights.[41]

Masood's fame and tendency to "go viral," especially when it comes to controversial opinions, shows the capacity of social media to amplify divisive issues and social anxieties. His opinions regarding the *Aurat March*, for instance, may not be entirely uncommon. But their resonance on social media, including the reactions of others—both his supporters and opponents—means that his opinions are then sought and waited for, with audiences almost anticipating his next comments on a similar theme.

In expressing these opinions, then, Masood may not be very different from many others. What distinguishes him is his performance, to which I will now turn.

3.2 Masood and the Performance of Religious Speech

While part of Masood's authority comes from his knowledge and scholarly tradition, his appeal also lies in his performance of speech. This changes with the context. When recording videos for online audiences, he is less animated. His body language is reserved and his speech measured. He rarely smiles, and he does not

Aurat March – Mera Jism Meri Marzi," *MessageTV,* March 11, 2019, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP38--O2KZQ.

39 "Mera Jism Meri Marzi/Aurat March/Mufti Tariq Masood," *Islam Tube,* March 6, 2020, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3vqok-IiFo.

40 "Motorcycle Me Khawateen Ka Mardon Ki Tarah Baithna?," *Mufti Tariq Masood Speeches,* YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_PsP7nAcx4.

41 "Liberal Log Moulaviyo Ko Kyun Pasand Nahi Karte?," *Mufti Tariq Masood,* accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieB_t2by1fo.

show anger. He engages with the online audience through his body. His hands emphasize his words, as he points with his fingers, makes fists, and gestures strongly, moving constantly. But there are few theatrics. He commits to a particular topic and does not go off at any tangents. This is the case with short videos on *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood*, where he answers people's queries. He begins by reading the questions aloud from a device, often rhythmically. He then gives brief answers, and sometimes refers to longer videos where he has tackled the topic in greater detail. Once he is done reading, his attention shifts to the camera as he gives the response in unadorned, but loud and authoritative speech.

His performance changes drastically when he is in front of a live audience. Here, Masood's mood can shift quickly from humor to anger, depending on the topic. He tells stories, gives examples from his own life, and engages with his audience. He looks around at them and uses his hands to emphasize his points. He laughs and smiles, gets angry, and rails against things he dislikes. There is a frankness in his words, and his examples can be dramatic and even provocative. Masood requires audience members to participate, asking them rhetorical questions, chiding them for not participating. He repeatedly presses them to speak up—*bolo bhai*, he says often—to make sure they are paying attention, and requires them to give yes or no answers, or complete his sentences. He is irritated when they do not reply. He plays his audience, regularly asking if they understood his point—*samajh aayi,* he asks, before shaking his head and muttering that perhaps they did not understand if their response is not loud enough, which gives him another opportunity to repeat himself.

Consider for instance his video on the rights of men and criticism of liberal women (which is only a few seconds of the longer video).[42] He is perched on a high chair before his audience. Wearing a headset, his hands are free to move constantly, making his body more expressive. He gestures repeatedly, pointing at the audience, raising his fist, as he condemns free gender relations in the west. His speech is frank, and in such subjects, he can often be harsh as he ridicules the west and Pakistani liberals. He constantly turns his face and attention towards all directions to engage with people on all sides. Masood's words reach a crescendo when he accuses liberals of destroying society and unfairly criticizing the '*ulama*', and at this point he asks, or rather demands, that the audience participate by agreeing loudly with his opinion about men's rights. This is how he often adds emphasis to a simple point through repetition and audience participation as they answer questions or complete his sentence. Speak, he tells them, and they dutifully obey. He is

42 "Liberal Auntiyan Aur Mardon Ke Huqooq."

frank and sarcastic, and completely comfortable in shifting the mood from humor to anger in the space of seconds. The audience remains enthralled.

When discussing issues of gender, Masood is deliberately provocative, for example in making the accusation that husbands use their wives as vloggers to attract young boys who then subscribe to their social media pages. He is visibly agitated and does not mince his words. His language can thus be crude as he accuses such men of selling their wives' honor, blaming the sexual frustration of society. In these moments, he gestures wildly, seeks audience participation, and repeats himself several times. Here too the anger quickly shifts to comedy, as he laughs and suggestively notes that everyone knows the purposes of such videos.[43]

In his criticism of the 2019 *Aurat March* banners, Masood's performance included language that was clearly meant to shock the audience. Angrily lamenting the liberals' message of *Freedom, Not Marriage*, and calling such women prostitutes, he was at his most belligerent as he went to the extent of comparing them to wild animals. Just like twenty male goats fulfill their sexual desires with one female goat, one such woman will visit the beds of ten men, he declared, asking his audience if any other meaning can be taken from the banner.[44] They of course could only agree. These may be extraordinary opinions, and not many '*ulama*' are as tactless in their criticism, especially when their comments are being uploaded online. But Masood's star has only risen due to his reactions to the movement. With such comments, he has taken his fight to the liberals with gusto, speaking to them as much as he was speaking to his followers. And yet, when he discusses the same issue without an audience, he is much calmer and measured.[45] He remains critical of liberals for rejecting the traditional family system, supporting divorces, and destroying Pakistani women's lives. But his expressions and gestures are restrained. Perhaps to make sure that he remains calm, he clasps his hands together so his body becomes compact. The performance is not as theatrical, but this in no way undermines his stance against liberals.

Indeed, liberals are among the favorite targets of his sermons, and in such topics his performance is enhanced. When he describes the liberals as haters of religious people, he goads the audience to keep agreeing with him.[46] He grins and

43 "Female Muslim Vloggers," *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood,* YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYssrFZ84I4.

44 "Mera Jism Meri Marzi/8 March/Aurat March/Women Day Special Bayan/Mufti Tariq Masood." See also "Women's Day aur Ghatia Banners/Mufti Tariq Masood Reply/Aurat March – Mera Jism Meri Marzi."

45 "Mera jism meri marzi | Khalil ur rehman," *Mufti Tariq Masood Speeches,* YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6kOTOTOStg.

46 "Liberal Log Moulaviyo Ko Kyun Pasand Nahi Karte?"

proudly calls himself the "new *maulvi* in the market" who has caused fear among liberals as he is calling children to be married as soon as they reach puberty, while feigning horror at this thought. In repeating this jovially many times, he ensures the audience is entertained but understands the seriousness of his words as they complete his sentences several times. Masood is characteristically frank here, gesticulating repeatedly, pointing to the audience, the sky, himself, waving his hands and ensuring that all eyes remain on him. And then he immediately shifts gears, and gets angry as he describes the un-Islamic practice of Pakistani courts that allow women to divorce their husbands. Shaking his head, he states softly that this riles him up a great deal—colloquially, *meter short kar diya bilawaja*.

Built into Masood's performance is the role of social media itself. He uses his lectures for example to highlight the liberals' online comments about *maulvis*, which he sees as their inferiority complex. He also uses such comments for humorous purposes.[47] In one video, before the regular sermon, he grinningly informs the audience that he needs to talk about a topic they must be tired of discussing. His purpose is to explain some comments from a previous lecture that had gone viral online. This was when he was discussing the way liberals prefer for women to sit with their legs on either side of motorcycles, where he had commented that if they could have it their way, the women would be riding nude. He notes he had realized his mistake and instructed his team to edit out these words when uploading the lecture on social media, but eventually the entire video was uploaded, went viral, and caused backlash. This is not an apology video. Rather, Masood's purpose is to clarify and perhaps re-emphasize his opinions, as he notes that even if his language was unsuitable, the concern was important. So passionate is he about the topic that he gives further provocative examples to make his case. Imagine a daughter-in-law sitting like a man behind her father-in-law on a motorcycle, her breast smashed up against him, dramatically asking the audience whether the father-in-law will be right to get angry. He gets the intended reaction. Clearly, this is important for Masood, who only stops this clarification to make an announcement that a car parked outside the mosque has its windows down. This might be a good opportunity if someone wants to steal something from it, he jokes without smiling. The audience erupts in laughter. And only then does he get to his regular lecture for the day.[48]

With such themes, and with his performance that includes humor and sarcasm, everyday examples and provocations, and audience participation, Masood ensures that even long lectures are as entertaining as they are serious. He shows his anger and delight, ridicules those he wants to and grimaces when he gets agi-

47 "Liberal Log Moulaviyo Ko Kyun Pasand Nahi Karte?"

48 "Motorcycle Me Khawateen Ka Mardon Ki Tarah Baithna?"

tated. His performance of religious speech is effective, especially for the kinds of issues he deems important, as he is not afraid to be controversial and is aware of the controversy he causes. This means that his speeches often result in viral videos, making Masood one of the most popular '*ulama*' in Pakistan today, even if this means he is reviled by his critics—the liberals—as well. Masood would likely not have it any other way.

3.3 Impact on Pakistani Religious Discourses

Masood's numerous videos focusing on gender relations and Pakistani liberals include his many strong opinions. In having such views, he may not be very different from many other '*ulama*'. But through social media, he provides a particularly passionate and boisterous voice. In doing so, he also creates an ethical and religious community pitted against godless liberals spreading westernized culture and harming the Islamic values of Pakistan.

Emrys Schoemaker describes how young Pakistanis develop and express a religious identity on social media, communicate with others in their communities, and engage with scholars and followers. Predictably, he notes, enacting an online identity appears easier for the majority Sunni community. This online performance of identity includes highlighting one's own scholars, and social media algorithms aid in this by promoting content geared towards specific users.[49] Scholars such as Masood have a significant role to play in this regard, with the nature of their content, clickbait titles, and tremendous visibility online ensuring that they become for religious followers in general, and Deobandis in particular, key voices through whom to enact identities.

While all '*ulama*' with a presence online are important in this regard, three aspects of Masood's output make his impact on Pakistani religious discourses stand out. One of these is the sheer volume of videos he produces through an active social media team. The second of these is his particular interest in contemporary society and his willingness to delve into subjects deemed controversial, through which he engages with people including the liberals he calls out. The third is his performance of religious speech, which leads to his popularity as a speaker and the viral nature of many of his videos. Many other online preachers who generate controversy or have distinctive styles lack the high scholarly cre-

49 Emrys Schoemaker, "Digital Faith: Social Media and the Enactment of Religious Identity in Pakistan" (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2016), 130–40.

dentials of Masood, with whom these strands come together. His impact on religious discourses thus comes from a position of religious authority.

Based on his scholarly knowledge, he is a mufti who responds to people's questions and a regular preacher and teacher. But he uses his other knowledge, of contemporary social issues and social media, to develop the kind of performance that enhances his impact. This means that when broaching concerns about the dangers of liberals and westernization, he does not need to rely on Islamic texts to make his point. His knowledge of the Qurʾan, hadith, and the history of Islamic scholarship is already proven, and it has provided him with his stage. Now, he is able to use his performance in order to produce an essentially religious discourse without invoking religious texts, and by focusing solely on traditional Pakistani cultural values and everyday examples and language. The religious discourse becomes further accessible and understandable to the masses as a result. His comprehensive criticism of the *Aurat March*, then, does not need evidence from the Qurʾan, as he uses contemporary examples, his own life, and popular culture references to frame the issue as religious discourse. This is ensured also by the aura he generates through his clothes, mannerisms, language, and sites of his speech. In doing so, Masood also helps to create a dichotomy in Pakistani society that divides religious people from liberals, presenting them as two monolithic entities, with little in common.

Masood's use of, and constant references to, social media further has a major impact on religious discourses. Not only is his popularity due in part to social media, but he also follows online content and speaks about it, responds to controversies generated by viral videos, and uses online comments to frame his arguments. Indeed, he has also used social media as a site of religious debate. Consider for instance his long-standing conflict with the popular speaker Engineer Ali Mirza, including Masood's travel to Mirza's home city where he recorded further videos at the site of his supposed victory over his rival.[50] Social media thereby becomes a subject, a site of debate, and the means to achieve religious stardom, and thus an essential aspect of the performance of religious speech. It also engenders a debate within followers as to which one is the *correct* religious community, which is an unwitting result of the social media performances of *ʿulamaʾ* such as Masood that are now accessible to millions across the country.

As a serious but approachable scholar, Masood engages with his audiences in myriad ways. He can be frank with them, but his performance ensures that the boundary between the teacher and student, the venerated scholar and the follower, is never crossed. In fact, he can also be curt and dismissive with them, and

50 There are numerous videos of the two discussing these and several other matters over which they debate.

show his displeasure with their questions. For instance, in one video on *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood*, he reads aloud a question from someone about marrying for love and the issues that arise in families because of this. While this is a topic he has engaged with numerous times in his lectures, here he sighs in exasperation, runs his hand though his beard and rhetorically asks why this question is important. And yet, he then gives an answer.[51] This reaction to a question also becomes part of the performance, as his attitude demonstrates how the answer is so axiomatic, further increasing its importance as a result. The religious discourse becomes richer by the lack of response and the dissatisfaction with the question in the first place, and social media plays a big role in this new dynamic.

Finally, Masood is perhaps the most important religious personality in the country for his emphasis on issues of gender roles, marriages, and women. Repeatedly, he calls for Muslims to maintain distance between genders, lauds Pakistan's traditional values regarding gender roles and identities, and warns against the deterioration of the family unit and the dangers of liberal influence. He is somewhat unique in that he gives examples from his own household—for instance about interactions between the men and women.[52] He also discusses his multiple marriages as he encourages men to practice polygamy. He is arguably best known in Pakistan for controversial statements regarding early and multiple marriages, both of which he sees as part of preserving the ideal traditional family structure. He regularly refers to his opponents, the liberals, and speaks directly to them, responding to their criticisms of his opinions. This inclusion of liberals in the religious discourse as a regular target has been one of Masood's most important impacts on Pakistani religious discourses.

Many clips from Masood's lectures have gone viral and led to significant opposition to him, opposition that he has emphatically countered. When it comes to such issues, Masood's frankness with the audience and his harsh language and humor can exacerbate his already problematic opinions. But he also provides a strong voice to the religious discourse. This is a voice that may have been present in local settings, but that comes out strongly on social media to millions through his interventions. That Masood has not been criticized by his own peers, or even by other religious competitors, shows that his opinions are shared with religious voices in the country. He has assumed the responsibility of becoming the leading authority to highlight them through his performance of religious speech.

This also means that religious discourses in the country become deeply interested in social concerns such as the *Aurat March* movement. Moreover, Masood's

51 "Muhabbat ki Shadi," *Ask Mufti Tariq Masood,* YouTube, accessed June 13, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrfFWuTzYdY.

52 "Social Media Par Larky Larkion Ki Baat Cheet."

description from his pulpit of the women as prostitutes at brothels, whom he compares to animals fulfilling sexual desires, leads to these discourses becoming more controversial than before. This is almost entirely new. While the *'ulama'* may never have seen eye to eye with liberals, with Masood their conflict reaches a new and heightened point as society itself becomes divided, simplistically, along religious and liberal lines. Perhaps no other scholar has taken up this responsibility with the confidence of Masood, whose opinions are no longer confined to the mosque or madrasa, but enter millions of households through social media. The impact of Masood on religious discourses in Pakistan, and on society at large, should thus not be underestimated.

4 Conclusion

Further understanding the appeal and impact of Masood, as well as the appeal and impact of similar scholars preaching online, would require analyses covering multiple areas of social media. This includes, for instance, a study of viewers' comments in order to show demographic and other trends amongst followers. As a scholar with the weight of educational and religious institutions behind him, Masood is in a position of power even in the seemingly democratic social media domain. He has almost proudly taken upon himself the responsibility to protect Pakistan from liberals, and he wears the criticism he receives for this almost as a badge of honor. After all, despite opposition, he has a platform to speak from, sufficient support online, and an admiring audience. His performance as a speaker further adds to his credibility and popularity. Effective communicators like Masood read their audiences and change their style and language with context. They quote enough religious texts to show their superiority and create the dangerous "Other" their followers need to be wary of—in this case, the liberals, who need to be countered through religious leadership. And just as social media videos provide an understanding of the dangers of liberals through the performance of religious speech, they also provide the right kind of religious leader to follow. Masood has capitalized on the way online platforms enable scholars to build brands and develop support, for themselves and for Islam, through apparently non-religious activities as well. There are videos for instance showing his daily activities, as he has a social media presence like an influential celebrity, driving around town, meeting fans, traveling to famous sites, interacting with showbiz personalities, feeding animals, and exercising in a gym. This becomes part of the performance of the modern scholar equipped to face the challenge of westernization.

Masood's performances show his adaptability and his willingness to engage with diverse audiences. In all his videos in front of the audience, he engages with them, asks questions, and shows a heightened level of frankness and intimacy. The participatory voices add to a completely autocratic speech as the audience becomes part of the speaker's performance, and he controls their movements and voices. He makes it known when audience feedback is expected or when he is in an impassioned or relaxed mood. He repeats himself often, compelling the audience to join in. At times, individuals in the audience are chastised for being inattentive. This is thus a powerful performance that includes the audience in the world of the celebrity speaker, who remains the only star of the show.

It would be easy, and perhaps tempting for his critics, to simply label Masood as an eccentric religious speaker and a misogynist unaware of the diverse roles of women in society. And indeed, this is how he has been written about. But reducing his discourse to just this aspect ignores how he has skillfully used social media, his own charisma, and the power of the pulpit to neatly divide society into liberal and religious communities, those who follow the west and those who follow Islam, respectively. Masood is thus concerned with the deep cleavages in a divided Pakistani society, with the role of women central to his ideas of an ideal Islamic world. Reducing him to a meme to highlight his misogyny simply plays into his own hands, as he is able to capitalize on this kind of criticism and turn it once more into a liberal versus religious dichotomy—a dichotomy that is becoming more important for Pakistan given the impact of scholars and preachers such as Masood.

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List of Contributors

Ayşe Almıla Akca heads the Junior Research group “Islamic Theology in Context: Scholarship and Society” at the Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. She received her PhD from Freie Universität Berlin in 2018. She has received the 2019 Dissertation Prize of the German Association of Middle Eastern Studies (DAVO) for her ethnographic study on Islamic knowledge, tradition, and religious authority in mosques in Germany. Following a practice theory approach, Akca’s post-doctoral research focuses on religious practices in the framework of Islamic practical theology, specifically investigating fasting and Ramadan practices, social work, and environmentalism/sustainability.

Philipp Bruckmayr has studied Arabic and Islamic Studies, Turkish Studies and History at the University of Vienna/Austria. Currently serving as Visiting Professor in Islamic Studies at the University of Freiburg/Germany, he has held fellowships and lectureships at the International Research Center Cultural Studies (Vienna), Passau University, National University of Malaysia, and the University of Exeter. He was awarded the Dissertation Prize of the German Association of Middle Eastern Studies (DAVO) in 2015 and the Dr. Hermann Stieglecker-Scholarship for Christian-Islamic Studies of the Forum of World Religions (FWR) in 2017. Much of his research has focused on Islam in Southeast Asia and its linkages to other regions of the Muslim world.

Mona Feise-Nasr is a PhD candidate at the Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her doctoral research is on situated religiosity and subjectivized beliefs – social practices of Muslim-mixed-faith couples in Germany. Feise-Nasr is a member of the Junior Research Group “Islamic Theology in Context: Scholarship and Society”. Her research interests include the areas of Islam & Gender, Space & Body, Interreligiosity, Concepts of Authority, Lived Religiosity & Intimate Relationships.

Ramzi Ghandour holds a B.A. in Oriental Studies (University of Marburg/ Germany) and a M.A. in Islamic Studies (University of Exeter/UK). He has started a Ph.D. at the Institute for Islamic Theology at the University of Osnabrück/Germany on Muslim conceptions of history and suffering.

Mohammad Gharaibeh is professor for Islamic Intellectual History at the Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. He received his PhD from Bonn University with a thesis on the divine attributes in Wahhabī modern thinking. In his post-doctoral project, he analyzed the commentarial tradition on the Muqaddima of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ and set it in the context of scholarly and educational networks in Damascus and Cairo in the Mamluk period.

Christoph Günther currently holds a Heisenberg position for Islamic Studies at the Department of Religious Studies/Universität Erfurt in Germany. Trained in Islamic Studies, History, and Arabic, his research and teaching touch upon issues of religion and digital media, visual culture, as well as social change and the role of religio-political actors therein. His current research focuses on the ways in which contemporary Muslim preachers design their audiovisual mediations and how Muslim practitioners engage with such videos in the course of their daily (religious) practices.

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Mohammad Nabeel Jafri is a PhD candidate at the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. His doctoral research is funded by a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in Canada. His dissertation focuses on Urdu Shiʿi oratory (khiṭābat) in contemporary Karachi. He is broadly interested in scholarship on semiotics, ritual practice, authority, and language use.

Dženita Karić is assistant professor in Religious Studies and Cultural Heritage at the University of Amsterdam. She is the author of "Bosnian Hajj Literature: Multiple Paths to the Holy" (EUP 2022) which explores the meaning making processes related to the Hajj in Bosnia across centuries. Her research focus is currently on the interrelations between devotional piety and environmentalism.

Miriam Kühn received her PhD from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München/Germany. She is a curator at the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin. She is also part of the team planning the reinstallation of the galleries, scheduled to re-open in 2027. Her main research interests are Mamluk art and material culture as well as sacred art and its social contexts.

Margherita Picchi (Ph.D. University of Naples "l'Orientale", 2016) is a Humboldt experienced research fellow at the Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies (FRIAS) of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg/Germany (2022–2023), and an honorary research affiliate at the Centre for Contemporary Islam (CCI) of the University of Cape Town/South Africa (2021–2026). Her research interests include modern Muslim intellectual and exegetical history, decolonial and postcolonial theory, as well as gender and queer studies in Muslim contexts. Her current research project focuses on Quranic hermeneutics in sermons delivered in Cape Town's Claremont Main Road Mosque in the post-Apartheid period.

Mohammad Waqas Sajjad is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Liberal Arts, University of Management and Technology, Pakistan. His research focuses on Muslim traditions of South Asia, and the developments in their institutions, polemics, and approaches to ideas of Sufism. He is also interested in the use of social media by religious actors, as he explores the many ways in which the ulama of Pakistan enhance their discourses.

Leonie Stenske (M.A.) is a research fellow at the Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and a member of the Junior Research Group "Islamic Theology in Context: Scholarship and Society". In her reseach, Leonie Stenske focuses on materialities and performances of food practices in the intersection of religion, knowledge, and social participation. She is currently pursuing a dissertation on Muslim's incorporation, reproduction, and performance of eating practices in early childhood education institutions.

Aydın Süer is a postdoctoral researcher at the Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and a member of the Junior Research Group "Islamic Theology in Context: Scholarship and Society". He holds a PhD in sociology and is currently working on a project on "Constituting Islam through Art. A Praxeological Study on Contemporary Muslim Artists".

Fatemeh Taheri received her doctorate in the field of German as a Foreign and Specific Language at the Technical University of Berlin. In her dissertation, she analyzed the semantics and pragmatics of Islamic sermons. Since 2020, Taheri works at the Berlin Institute for Islamic Theology, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and pursues research on the various aspects of the Islamic sermon text and context.