

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**Expanding the Wahhabi Mission: Saudi Arabia, the Islamic  
University of Medina and the Transnational Religious  
Economy**

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## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

This thesis offers a historical account of the emergence and evolution of new Islamic educational institutions in Saudi Arabia in the twentieth century which came to sit at the heart of migratory circuits of students and scholars from across the globe. It pays special attention to the Islamic University of Medina (IUM), which was launched by the Saudi state in 1961 to offer fully-funded religious instruction to mostly non-Saudi students. Exploring the history of this missionary project provides a point of departure for interrogating the commonplace claim that Saudi actors have taken advantage of wealth derived from oil rents in recent decades to fund the export of Wahhabism. In order to understand the far-reaching cultural, social and political dynamics that have emerged from this nexus between migration, education, material investment and religious mission, this study develops a historiography grounded in a novel conception of transnational religious economies. These are understood to consist in flows – both within and across national borders – of material capital, spiritual capital, religious migrants and social technologies. While Saudi state spending has been crucial for the operation of institutions like the IUM, its missionary project has also drawn on a far wider range of resources within the terms of these economies, including migrant labour, sources of symbolic legitimation and modes of pedagogy appropriated from beyond the Peninsula. The IUM's syllabuses, whilst firmly rooted in core Wahhabi concerns, have also been shaped by processes of hegemonic engagement with migrant students. Finally, students bearing spiritual capital accumulated on its campus have themselves made divergent uses of these resources in locations around the world. The notion of transnational religious economies developed here shines light on the multiple resources, border crossings, historical contingencies, interests and forms of agency bound up in the articulation of a power-laden, state-led project of “religious expansion”.

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August 2012; the panel on “Transnational Connections and the Reform of Islamic Education, 1820-1950” at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting in Denver in November 2012, organised by Hilary Kalmbach; a public seminar convened by the Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States at the London School of Economics in December 2012; the panel on “Migration, Politics and Contested Identities in the Middle East” at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans in October 2013, organised by H  l  ne Thiollet; and other events at the American University in Cairo, the LSE Department of Anthropology and the LSE Department of Government. I am indebted to Lamiaa Shehata and Ismail Ahmed for advice on some finer points of translation, while Katherine Zebiri has been very generous indeed with her time and Laleh Khalili went very far out of her way to offer important and hugely appreciated counsel and critique in the period when I was first considering embarking on a PhD. To try to individually thank the countless people whose assistance has benefited this project, in the search for sources and in any number of other ways, would be an impossible task and would inevitably lead to embarrassing omissions. Some specific acknowledgements are scattered in footnotes throughout the thesis but there are many others and I am very grateful to all of them.

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## Note on Transliteration and Referencing

Throughout this thesis, I have relied on the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* transliteration system when rendering Arabic words in the Latin alphabet.

With regard to referencing, where a particular primary source or piece of secondary literature is identifiable by the name of the author and the date of its publication, I have included this information in the body of the text. Where more complex referencing is required, or where there is a need for further discussion of a particular source or secondary work, I have used footnotes. Dates are given according to the Gregorian calendar, with Hijri dates also supplied where this may be helpful to the reader. Where the publication date for a given resource is available only as a year according to the Hijri calendar (e.g. 1419 H., with no further details regarding the day or the month), I have converted this into the equivalent range of years according to the Gregorian calendar (e.g. 1998/9) when referencing in the body of the thesis and have given both sets of details in the bibliography.

Referencing of articles from the journal of the Islamic University of Medina is somewhat complex. For the first 44 issues of this journal from its inauguration in 1968, each issue is identified by a volume number (reflecting the number of years that the journal had been in publication) followed by an issue number (reflecting the order of the quarterly issues published in any given year); e.g. 4(3) for the third quarterly issue published in the fourth year of the journal's existence. Subsequent issues are identified by an issue number only; i.e. 45, 46, 47, and so on. In my own referencing, I have stuck to this original system (e.g. 11(4) for the final quarterly issue published in the eleventh year of the journal's existence, but 45 for the subsequent issue). Online records of the IUM journal, which I relied upon heavily in my research, do not always include details of the year and month in which any given issue was published. Where that is the case, I have sought to indicate an approximate timeframe (e.g. mid-1970s) in the body of the thesis text on the basis of the available information.

Where information is drawn from interviews, I have given details of the interviews in question in footnotes. In most cases, I refer to interviewees using a single-letter

pseudonym, in order to protect their identities. This issue is discussed further in the introduction to the thesis.

## Glossary

*‘Aqīda*: creed

*Bid‘a* (pl. *bida‘*): innovation, usually in this context with the connotation of heresy

*Dā‘iya* (pl. *du‘āt*): one who calls or invites; in this context, Islamic missionary

*Da‘wa*: call, summons, invitation; in this context, religious mission

*Fiqh*: jurisprudence

*Ḥalaqa* (pl. *ḥalaqāt*): study circle

*Ḥaram*: sanctuary; the dual plural *Haramayn* is used to refer jointly to the Masjid Haram and the Masjid Nabawi in Mecca and Medina; also denotes the areas around these sites which non-Muslims are not permitted to enter

*Ijāza* (pl. *ijāzāt*): certificate traditionally issued by a scholar to affirm a student’s mastery of a particular subject or text, or several of each

*Ijtihād*: derivation of legal rulings by independent interpretation, on the basis of direct access to the source texts

*Kuttāb* (pl. *katātīb*): traditional Qur’an school

*Madhhab* (pl. *madhāhib*): used primarily here to refer to one of the established schools of Islamic law; may also refer to a school of thought more generally

al-Masjid al-Haram: the Grand Mosque, in Mecca

al-Masjid al-Nabawi: the Prophet’s Mosque, in Medina

*Mawlid*: commemorations of the Prophet’s birthday

Qadi (pl. *quḍāt*): shari’a judge

*Tafsīr*: Qur’anic exegesis

*Ta‘līm*: education, with an emphasis on the transmission of knowledge

*Taqīd*: practice of imitating the legal rulings of a particular *madhhab*

*Tarbiya*: education, with an emphasis on the moulding of character

*Tarīqa* (pl. *ṭuruq*): Sufi order

*Tawḥīd*: the unicity of God

'*Ulama*' (sing. '*ālim*): (religious) scholars

'*Umra*: the lesser pilgrimage to Mecca, performed outside the hajj season

*Uṣūl al-fiqh*: legal methodology

*Uṣūl al-ḥadīth*: the principles of hadith studies

*Vilayet*: (Ottoman) province

*Waqf* (pl. *awqāf*): religious endowment

*Zāwiya* (pl. *zawāyā*): Sufi lodge

## Introduction

In an article published in September 2012 under the headline “How Saudi Petrodollars Fuel Rise of Salafism”, France24 cited Antoine Basbous, head of the Paris-based Observatory of Arab Countries, as explaining that

“the Salafism we hear about in Mali and North Africa is in fact the export version of Wahhabism,” a conservative branch of Sunni Islam actively promoted and practised by Saudi Arabia’s ruling family. Since the 1970s oil crises provided the ruling House of Saud with a seemingly endless supply of cash, “the Saudis have been financing [Wahhabism] around the world to the tune of several million euros” (Daou 2012)

Particularly in the wake of the Arab Spring and the dramatic emergence of Salafi currents onto the political stage in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East, the suggestion that such groups – and the modes of religiosity which they espouse – are in some sense a Saudi export has become common currency in public discourse.<sup>1</sup> However, claims of this kind tend to raise more questions than they answer. What is the supposed “export version of Wahhabism” at stake here, and what is its relationship with the diverse strands of Salafi religiosity that have proliferated in locations around the world – not only in North Africa and the Middle East but also in Europe, North America, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and beyond – in recent decades? Through what channels and frameworks has this process of “export” occurred? Who are “the Saudis” involved in these dynamics? What are their motivations? How have their target audiences responded to these initiatives?

For a historian of the modern Middle East, claims about the supposed export of Wahhabism also raise important questions of a more theoretical nature. What exactly does it mean to speak of “exporting” a particular religious or cultural framework? What circumstances facilitate the movement of persons, ideas, practices and institutions across borders? To what extent might these things undergo transformations as they are translated into new geographical, social, cultural and political contexts? What factors contribute to shaping the outcome of these transformations? How does the availability of material capital - the oft-noted “petrodollars” – feed into processes of cultural change? If it is indeed true that there is

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<sup>1</sup> For comparable examples, see Schwartz 2001; Winsor 2007; Valley 2007; Pabst 2009; Mir 2012; Lavizzari 2013.

a relationship between flows of material capital and processes of cultural change, then how does human agency figure in this picture? And what power relations are established which might variously constrain or facilitate such agency?

A scholar looking to make headway with the moot question of Saudi or Wahhabi “religious expansion”<sup>2</sup> might choose between any number of empirical angles. She or he might focus on the history of Saudi-sponsored missionary organisations like the Muslim World League (est. 1962) or the World Association of Muslim Youth.<sup>3</sup> Another option would be to explore influence exerted by Saudi actors in the sphere of religious publishing, which may or may not have played a significant role in ensuring that Salafi-oriented literature is readily available on the internet and through institutions such as mosques and Islamic bookshops worldwide.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, one might focus on the role of Saudi actors in funding mosque-building and offering financial support to a range of religious institutions and movements the world over; although one would need to allow for the fact that such money has ended up with a range of constituencies both within and outside circles that would commonly be labelled Salafi.<sup>5</sup>

Though many of these issues will be touched upon in the course of this thesis, the thrust of my own approach is to develop a historical account of the emergence of new Islamic educational institutions in Saudi Arabia in the twentieth century which have come to sit at the heart of cross-border circuits of students and scholars from all over the world. Migrants have for centuries travelled long distances in order to perform the hajj and to teach and undertake religious studies in the holy cities of the Hijaz, in what is now western Saudi Arabia. I explore the ways in which the operation of these cross-

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<sup>2</sup> The phrase “religious expansion” is borrowed from Al-Rasheed 2008a.

<sup>3</sup> Though brief treatments of such institutions are found in the English-language literature (e.g. Schulze 1995), such sustained studies as exist are available only in their original German and Russian (Sharipova 1986; Schulze 1990).

<sup>4</sup> In the most focused work of this kind to date, Eleanor Doumato (2008) concludes that “no case can be made” that Saudi religious publications have led to Wahhabi influence penetrating the Muslim community in the United States. The issue is also discussed in Haykel 2004 and touched upon in Birt 2005; Abou El Fadl 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Yoginder Sikand (2007) has explored how Saudi funding has intersected with pre-existing sectarian divisions in India. Such funding is also discussed in Birt 2004; Al-Rasheed 2004c; Abou El Fadl 2007. For a report by a graduate of the Islamic University of Medina on Saudi sponsorship of a wide range of Salafi and non-Salafi institutions in the United Kingdom, see S. Hasan n.d.

border circuits, and the cultural, social and political influence that they have long exerted in locations far beyond the Arabian Peninsula, were impacted by the rise of the modern Saudi state, the access of Saudi state actors to material resources made available in part from oil rents, and their investment of these resources in educational projects geared towards *da'wa* – which may be loosely translated in this context as missionary work – with global reach.

While non-Saudi students and scholars have taught and undertaken religious studies in an array of settings in Saudi Arabia in the period covered by this study, I focus on the history of one especially important institution. This is the explicitly missionary Islamic University of Medina (IUM), which was launched by the Saudi state in 1961. The IUM has been distinguished from the kingdom's other Islamic universities by its primary goal of offering fully-funded religious instruction to young, non-Saudi men, who from the start made up over 80 per cent of its student body. The expectation was that, after graduation, these students would return to their communities of origin or travel on elsewhere as *du'āt* (sing. *dā'iya*), or missionaries. Although they were certainly expected to preach to non-Muslims, the focus was on offering guidance to Muslim communities which were seen as having deviated from orthodox religious belief and practice. Over the half a century that has elapsed since the founding of the IUM, many thousands of young men from all across the globe have passed through its system of instruction. For the first decades of the university's existence, a very large proportion of its staff were also recruited from beyond Saudi Arabia.

Scholars writing on related subjects have singled out these cross-border religious educational circuits as an especially important framework through which Saudi actors have sought to extend their religious influence beyond the kingdom's borders, with Yahya Birt describing the IUM as being “at the centre of the global Wahhabi mission” (2005, 170–71).<sup>6</sup> Studies of Salafi currents around the world have also in passing revealed key roles played in the emergence and consolidation of those currents by

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<sup>6</sup> See also Samer Traboulsi's (2008) passing remark on this subject in the context of a review of David Commins's *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*.

graduates of the IUM.<sup>7</sup> Yet these references in the context of serious academic studies to the role played by the IUM in the spread of Salafism worldwide have been more or less oblique and limited in scope. Moreover, discussion of this issue in journalistic reporting and even in some of what has passed for semi-academic literature has frequently involved basic inaccuracies and a sometimes staggering degree of obfuscation. To give just one example, Dore Gold's polemic work *Hatred's Kingdom* uncritically quotes the "Chechen government's special envoy to Europe, Hajj Salih Brandt" as asserting that:

The whole political agenda of Wahhabi Fundamentalism (what the West now calls Islamism)... [is] a deviation of Islam taught in Madinah University in Saudi Arabia, sponsored by the Saudi government and exported from there... Out of it have come Hamas, the Taliban, Osama bin Laden, the FIS [Islamic Salvation Front], Sudan, and now the gangs roaming Chechnya and Dagestan (quoted in Gold 2003, 4–5)

It is left to the reader to puzzle over the sense in which "Wahhabi fundamentalism" might usefully be considered as equivalent to "Islamism", or how any of these individuals and movements – let alone Sudan – are products of Wahhabism as taught at the IUM.

By focusing this project on one particular aspect of the far broader set of issues that fall under the rubric of Wahhabi "religious expansion" – the intersection between migration, education and religious mission – the hope is that it will be possible to move past generalisations. By pulling on this single thread – a narrow set of cross-border dynamics which have crystallised since the early 1960s around one key institution – vague abstractions like "Salafisation" and "Wahhabisation" can be made to give way to concrete frameworks, and the biographies and memories of identifiable students and scholars. Moreover, it becomes possible to achieve a richer understanding of recent dynamics of Wahhabi religious expansion by bringing a historical perspective to bear, situating them in relation to long-standing processes of migration, religious transformation, and state- and nation-building.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, in his study of Salafism in the Bale region of Ethiopia, Terje Østebø (2012, 148, 204) emphasises the role played by the Salafiyya Madrasa in Robe. This school emerged as a key hub of Salafi proselytising with the arrival of two IUM graduates in 1976, and it has since employed at least 15 other IUM alumni.



I am particularly concerned with exploring the extent to which proselytising within the framework of cross-border religious educational circuits centred on Saudi Arabia in the twentieth century may have contributed to the construction, perpetuation and subversion of power relations both within and across borders, and the ways in which material resources available to Saudi state actors may have figured in such dynamics. Research grounded in the themes of power and resistance can go some way towards explaining what motivates people to engage in revivalist *da'wa* within this framework, how the impact of these processes has played out in diverse locations, and why the Saudi state, 'ulama' and other actors have invested so heavily in this sphere. It also offers a basis for interrogating the commonplace intuition that this religious expansion has amounted in some sense to an extension of Saudi "hegemony", "influence" or "soft power".<sup>8</sup>

The task of exploring such questions is made easier by a growing body of academic research on religion and politics in Saudi Arabia.<sup>9</sup> This literature has served to highlight diversity and conflicts within the Saudi national sphere and has opened up debate regarding the extent to which religious actors, institutions and trends inside Saudi Arabia have themselves been influenced by persons, movements, ideas and practices arriving from outside the kingdom. Stéphane Lacroix has proposed a "Copernican revolution", whereby Saudi Arabia is no longer seen "solely as a power that exports Islam" but also comes to be understood as "the recipient of influences emanating from most currents of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Islamic revivalism" (2011, 1). According to this thinking, such influences have given rise to divisions and debates in Saudi Arabia within and between groupings including: traditional Wahhabi circles; politically activist strands influenced by *inter alia* immigrant Muslim Brothers from Egypt, the Levant and elsewhere, and the Syrian former Muslim Brother Muhammad Surur Zayn al-'Abidin; exclusivist quietists influenced by the Albania-born Muhammad

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Madawi Al-Rasheed's remark that, "From the very beginning, Saudi Arabia pursued an expansionist religious policy, the main purpose of which was to protect the Saudi realm and promote its interests, in both adjacent and far-flung territories. Islam became an important means for the Saudi state to enhance its legitimacy with a hesitant Muslim population worldwide" (2008b, 2).

<sup>9</sup> Important recent examples include Commins 2005; Al-Rasheed 2007; Hegghammer 2010; Lacroix 2011.

Nasir al-Din al-Albani, amongst others; and militants inspired in part by the Afghan conflict of the 1980s. In contrast, Madawi Al-Rasheed (2007) has tended to emphasise the role played by indigenous grievances and influences in catalysing the emergence of the wave of politically-engaged Islamist activism known as the Sahwa, which peaked in Saudi Arabia in the first half of the 1990s, as well as a later surge of more militant currents. Without denying the relevance of transnational connections, she has noted the need to be alert to the ways in which the narrative of the Saudi Islamist scene having been shaped primarily by external influences has been mobilised as “an excuse propagated by official Saudi figures in order to absolve their own indigenous Islamists from any wrongdoing after 9/11” (Al-Rasheed 2013). Whatever role might be attributed to foreigners, it is clear that many of these dynamics of fracture and contestation have played out within and around the IUM, as well as the kingdom’s other Islamic universities.

This project also benefits from a growing body of academic research on contemporary Salafism in other locations around the world.<sup>10</sup> This literature has sometimes touched upon the trajectories of non-Saudi staff members and graduates of Saudi Islamic universities. More broadly, it has provided scope for contextualising the history of Salafi educational institutions like the IUM by highlighting the diversity, local specificities, and cross-border connections and debates, which characterise Salafism today. While Salafi currents around the world are frequently influenced in part by Saudi actors, they have histories of their own which often pre-date institutions like the IUM. Moreover, the social, cultural and political projects pursued by Salafis have taken on contrasting valences within different local and national contexts, and have also given rise to and been shaped by long-distance connections which bypass the kingdom altogether.

When pieced together, the insights offered in these two bodies of literature begin to indicate ways in which institutions like the IUM have both been influenced by and have exerted influence within a lattice of cross-border processes and connections.

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<sup>10</sup> In addition to the works on Saudi Arabia listed in the previous footnote, important examples include Wiktorowicz 2006; Lauzière 2008; Meijer 2009; Lauzière 2010; Bonnefoy 2011; Østebø 2012; Wagemakers 2012a; Gauvain 2013; Pall 2013.

In building on this earlier work, the key contributions of this thesis are twofold. Firstly, I develop an empirical account of cross-border circuits of scholars and students – and corresponding cross-border flows of religious ideas, practices and resources – centred on the Arabian Peninsula in the modern period. I consider how such dynamics played out prior to and immediately after the founding of the current Saudi state but focus in particular on the ways in which they came to crystallise around the IUM from the early 1960s onwards. The sustained treatment of these issues offered in this thesis goes considerably beyond the fragmentary insights that are to be found in the existing secondary literature.

Secondly, I seek to develop a sociology of the ways in which – in the context of the particular dynamics at stake here – material capital possessed by certain Saudi actors has provided for the exercise of power and influence in the religious sphere abroad. This involves an effort to understand how material resources may have contributed to granting these actors privileged status within what are no doubt far more extensive, multivalent cross-border processes involving a diversity of persons and institutions, and an array of local and national contexts. A sociology of this kind is absent from the existing literature. Instead, in studies which have otherwise offered rich insights into the ways in which Salafi currents have developed and evolved in particular locations around the world, any role played by Saudi actors has commonly been glossed in passing in terms of the unsatisfactory “export” metaphor, which leaves many of the questions identified at the beginning of this thesis unanswered.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, to the extent that scholars have sought to address the cross-border processes in question in transnational perspective, this approach has sometimes tended to shine the spotlight away from sustained consideration of the power and influence exerted by the Saudi political and religious establishments.<sup>12</sup> In an effort to address these issues, I argue for the utility of a novel conception of transnational religious economies, consisting in

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<sup>11</sup> For example, Østebø offers valuable insights into the “localisation” of Salafi actors, ideas and practices in the Bale region of Ethiopia but has recourse to the “export” metaphor when it comes to explaining how Salafi ideas first arrived in part from Saudi Arabia (2012, xxi, 131).

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of this issue, see my critical engagement with Laurent Bonnefoy’s impressive study of Salafism in Yemen, in Farquhar 2013.

flows – both within and across borders – of religious migrants, social technologies, and material and symbolic forms of capital.

In what follows, I begin with a brief discussion of Islam, Salafism and Wahhabism, the latter two labels in particular being unavoidable in a study of this nature and yet so ambiguous and contested as to require some dedicated consideration and definition. I subsequently turn to setting out the historiographical framework that guides this study, explaining the bodies of literature on which it draws and developing a theoretical toolbox suited to tackling the questions at hand. I then offer a brief overview of my research methods and sources. Finally, I outline the chapters that make up this thesis and sketch in a little more detail the arguments that tie them together.

### **Islamic, Salafi and Wahhabi Traditions**

As a basis for making sense of the terms Islam, Salafism and Wahhabism – and the relationships which exist between them – I draw on Talal Asad's (1986) conception of Islam as a "discursive tradition". According to this understanding, the notion of tradition does not denote an ossified set of beliefs and practices, endlessly reproduced across space and time. Rather, as usefully paraphrased by Samira Haj, it consists in "historically evolving discourses embodied in the practices and institutions of communities", or "a framework of inquiry within which Muslims have attempted to amend and redirect Islamic discourses to meet new challenges and conflicts as they materialised in different historical eras". For all its internal heterogeneity and transformation over time, the Islamic tradition is held together by Muslims' "pursuit of an ongoing coherence by making reference to a set of texts, procedures, arguments and practices" (Haj 2009, 4–5).

Building on this approach, Salafism may be thought of as a "tradition within a tradition". If the Islamic tradition as a whole is lent coherence by such broad elements as belief in the oneness of God and the mobilisation of arguments legitimated with reference to the Qur'an, then the Salafi tradition as understood for the purposes of this thesis is further distinguished by a more specific overlapping set of methodological principles, texts and practices. The origins, history and shifting meanings of the term "Salafism" are a matter of considerable debate (Lauzière 2010). However, I draw on

work by Bernard Haykel (2009, 38–39) in defining the Salafi tradition as being primarily characterised by six interconnected theological features. The first feature, as outlined by Haykel, is an emphasis on the authentic purity of the beliefs and praxis of the Salaf al-Salih (the “pious ancestors”), often understood to denote members of the Muslim community who lived in the period from the time of the revelation of the Qur’an until the death of the jurist Ahmad ibn Hanbal in 855. The second is a distinctive understanding of the concept of *tawhīd* (the unicity of God), which in turn tends to give rise to a strong emphasis on the importance of correct worship of God alone and the view that many traditional Islamic practices constitute *shirk* (polytheism). The details of this conception of *tawhīd* will be discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis. The third relevant feature of the Salafi tradition is a stress on combating perceived unbelief, particularly any attitudes or practices understood as amounting to *shirk*. The fourth is insistence that the Qur’an, the sunna and “the consensus of the Prophet’s companions” are the only legitimate bases of religious authority. The fifth is an emphasis on purging illegitimate innovations (*bidaʿ*, sing. *bidʿa*) understood to have corrupted Islamic belief and praxis over the centuries since the time of the Salaf al-Salih. The final feature identified by Haykel is a commitment to the view that the Qur’an and the sunna are clear in meaning and that they are “sufficient to guide Muslims for all time and through all contingencies”.

Salafism as defined here is an exclusively Sunni phenomenon; the sunna which is so central to the Salafi tradition being “equated with the canonical Sunni hadith collections” (Haykel 2009, 39). It is also worth noting that Salafism thus defined does not encompass late nineteenth-century reformists like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani or Muhammad ‘Abduh. While al-Afghani and ‘Abduh have often been depicted as representatives of a particular brand of modernist Salafism, their theology differed from that outlined here. Moreover, their ecumenical vision contrasted with the exclusivist attitudes towards non-Salafi Muslims which many contemporary Salafis derive from this theology (Haykel 2009, 45–47).

As with the broader Islamic tradition of which it is a part, the Salafi tradition is again by no means either homogeneous or fixed across time and space. Rather, Salafis draw on this tradition as a basis for engaging with whatever issues present themselves in the

particular social and historical contexts in which they live their lives. The conclusions that they reach about appropriate ways of responding to any given matter can and frequently do strongly conflict. Contemporary Salafis dispute one another fiercely over such issues as the legitimacy of political activism and the permissibility of violent action as a means for effecting political change under current conditions.<sup>13</sup> Yet their sharply divergent views and the heated debates in which they engage are a matter of disputation within a common “framework of inquiry”, the key features of which were delineated above.

While the term Salafi may have positive connotations, evoking the historical and religious authenticity of the Salaf al-Salih, the label Wahhabi is an exonym generally considered derogatory by those to whom it is applied. I opt to use it in the context of this thesis for lack of a better alternative and because of the importance of distinguishing the Wahhabi tradition from the broader Salafi tradition of which it, in turn, is part. While Wahhabism displays all of the features of Salafism outlined above, it has certain further characteristics which justify treating it as a distinguishable sub-tradition within the broader Salafi tradition. These features include the central place given within it to works authored by the eighteenth-century Najdi reformer Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab and certain of his descendants. Another feature of the Wahhabi tradition is a distinctive approach to jurisprudence. In principle, Wahhabism shares with many other modes of Salafism a commitment to rejecting blind emulation of the rulings of any of the four – Hanbali, Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi’i – mainstream Sunni schools of law. The view within the Salafi tradition that the meaning of the Qur’an and the sunna is quite transparent and that these, along with the consensus of the companions of the Prophet, are unrivalled as sources of religious authority often gives rise to an emphasis on deriving legal rulings directly from these

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<sup>13</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz has used these fault lines as the basis for a tripartite categorisation of contemporary Salafis into *purists* (who “emphasize a focus on nonviolent methods of propagation, purification, and education” and “view politics as a diversion that encourages deviancy”), *politicos* (who “emphasize application of the Salafi creed to the political arena”) and *jihadis* (who “argue that the current context calls for violence and revolution”) (2006, 208). While I employ these labels at points in this thesis for the sake of convenience, I generally favour the historical specificity allowed by consideration of particular individuals, movements and institutions rather than ideal types. Any given individual may – both over time and at any given point in time – subscribe to views which span these three categories.

sources rather than relying on secondary works authored by the jurists associated with these schools of law. However, in practice Wahhabism has historically had a very strong – albeit complex – relationship with the Hanbali jurisprudential tradition. While these issues will be unpacked further in Chapter 6 of this thesis, they are mentioned here in order to illustrate the importance of identifying the Wahhabi tradition as a distinctive thread within the broader Salafi tradition. Once again, it is worth emphasising that Wahhabism has been and is marked by variation between its adherents both over time and also at any given point in time. The views expressed by Wahhabis have varied on a whole range of issues; including, for example, the question of how to manage relations with non-Muslims and non-Salafi Muslims (Al-Fahad 2004; Wagemakers 2012b). As with any other discursive tradition, the texts, principles, practices and other elements which make up the Wahhabi “framework of inquiry” are amenable to diverse interpretations and applications.

### **Transnational Religious Economies**

The body of literature that has grown up around Asad’s notion of Islam as a discursive tradition has contributed valuable insights to the study of the beliefs, practices and politics of Muslims, both past and present (e.g. Mahmood 2005; Deeb 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Haj 2009). Conceiving of Islam as a discursive tradition has provided for nuanced understanding of the coexistence of heterogeneity, transformation and coherence in the religious sphere, has problematised longstanding assumptions about the nature of orthodoxy, and has challenged persistent dichotomies such as that posited between the modern and the traditional.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, by conceptualising Islam in terms of a notion of discourse encompassing such elements as moral affect, modes of normative reasoning, knowledge, ethics and embodied practice, scholars working in this vein have developed rich insights into the ways in which Muslims engage with their religion. As part of her work on women’s mosque study circles in Cairo, for example, Saba Mahmood has explored how those involved in such groups train themselves in distinctive modes of moral reasoning which include an emphasis on religious

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<sup>14</sup> Samira Haj, for example, has drawn on Asad’s work in order to reject depictions of the late nineteenth-century Egyptian reformist Muhammad ‘Abduh as either a traditionalist or a Westerniser. Instead, she has explored his struggle to “*reconfigure orthodoxy* by drawing from within the parameters of the Islamic discursive tradition” (Haj 2009, 107 emphasis added).

knowledge and engagement with historical Islamic sources, in constant dialogue with contemporary concerns (Mahmood 2005, 78–116). With regard to the disciplining of moral affect, Charles Hirschkind has considered the ways in which consumers of sermon cassettes in Egypt engage with them not only in terms of the meaning of the words being uttered by the preacher but also as part of an ethical process of moulding “visceral” aspects of their own subjectivities; for example, actively seeking to cultivate a fear of damnation and desire for rewards in the afterlife (Hirschkind 2006). As Samuli Schielke notes, such studies have generated productive ways of thinking about religious phenomena without treating them as merely epiphenomenal of political or economic dynamics, and they have illustrated that “Muslims’ engagement with their religion is neither the outcome of blind adherence, nor the result of coercion, but an active and dynamic process of engagement with ideals of good life and personhood” (Schielke 2010, 1, 5).

However, while the present study builds on insights that have emerged from this line of inquiry, it will at the same time be necessary to move past them. From the perspective of this project, this literature has two primary limitations. The first is that, with its understanding of the beliefs and practices of Muslims in terms of discourse in the sense outlined in the preceding paragraph, it often has little to say about the role of material economies in relation to religious life. It thus offers few tools for understanding how material wealth possessed by Saudi state actors might have contributed to dynamics of religious transformation beyond Saudi Arabia’s borders. To make this point is not to call for a revival of modes of analysis which reduce religious phenomena to economic phenomena. Rather, what is required is consideration of how the two spheres may intersect.

The second key limitation of this line of inquiry in relation to the present study concerns the ways in which questions of power are conceptualised in much of this literature. Power and resistance have an important place in Asad’s notion of Islam as a discursive tradition. For him, argument and conflict are central to the ways in which such traditions operate and evolve. This conflict plays out as struggles to define orthodoxy, which is itself characterised by Asad precisely as “a relationship of power”:



Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy. The way these powers are exercised, the conditions that make them possible (social, political, economic, etc.), and the resistances they encounter (from Muslims and non-Muslims) are equally the concern of an anthropology of Islam, regardless of whether its direct object of research is in the city or in the countryside, in the present or in the past. Argument and conflict over the form and significance of practices are therefore a natural part of any Islamic tradition (Asad 1986, 15–16)

Yet the conceptions of power prevalent in much of the literature that draws on Asad's ideas tend to be somewhat abstract. The focus is frequently on themes such as "discursive power" or disciplinary practices, often with particular attention to their role in more or less introspective processes of pious subject-formation. At least when used in isolation, discourse analysis in this mode offers only limited scope for exploring power as exercised by one identifiable actor or set of actors over another. As Samah Selim (2010) has argued in relation to Mahmood's work, what is lacking is "a notion of *da'wa* as an explicit modality of politics and power that is not only directed inward to a physical embodiment of the spiritual self, but outwards, at a network of *other* bodies".

The concept of *da'wa* – which directly translates as a call, a summons or an invitation – has been invoked in contemporary and historical Islamic discourse with a range of connotations.<sup>15</sup> However, in the context of this thesis I use the term primarily to denote missionary efforts to promote a particular understanding of what it means to be Muslim at the expense of alternative ways of knowing and living Islam. *Da'wa* in this sense involves not only self-oriented projects of moral development but also power-laden struggles between actors, of the kind identified by Asad. It is an inherently political venture in a dual sense. On the one hand, it involves antagonistic, relational struggles over identity in which actors seek to secure recognition of their status as adherents of true, orthodox Islam in the face of efforts by others to contest the definition of orthodoxy at stake and thereby to undermine their claims to this identity. On the other hand, *da'wa* as defined here is also inherently political insofar as it involves efforts to assert and secure assent to normative claims about the proper

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<sup>15</sup> For discussion of the history and shifting valences of the term *da'wa*, which has been employed within the Sunni and Shi'i traditions to capture such varied activities and ideas as the act of prayer, efforts to call non-Muslims to Islam, social welfare projects, or even Islam itself, see Miloš Mendel 1995; Walker, Schulze, and Masud 1995; Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 35–36.

organisation both of social life and of the individual lives of others, in a context where these claims are also contested.<sup>16</sup> Analysis of *da'wa* as a missionary venture must engage with its status as an inherently political project.

The two limitations outlined here intersect at the point at which one wishes to consider – to use Asad's terminology – the economic conditions which make the exercise of power possible. This is crucial if one is to understand Saudi or Wahhabi religious expansion as a project enacted by a particular set of persons and institutions with a view to extending their influence and authority over an array of other actors beyond the kingdom's borders, in ways enabled in part by access to material wealth. If steps in this direction are to build on the idea of Islam as a discursive tradition, it will be necessary to consider the ways in which material resources might figure in the dynamics of power, resistance and conflict involved in the development of such traditions. In order to think through these issues, I suggest efforts to situate discourse – encompassing such elements as knowledge, modes of reasoning, embodied practices, pre-rational intuitions, and registers of affect – within broader patterns of unequal exchange and struggle. It is to this end that I develop a historiography grounded in a particular understanding of transnational religious economies.

This approach is suggested in part by recent work by Nile Green (2011), in which he uses the vocabulary of the market – religious “firms”, “products”, “services” and “franchises”, along with “social technologies”, “(de)regulation”, and so on – to explore a “religious economy” spanning the western Indian Ocean in the nineteenth century. To the extent that Green draws on pre-existing theoretical work as a point of departure for this mode of historiography, he turns primarily to a body of literature by sociologists who have elaborated a notion of religious economies rooted in rational choice theory. Within this paradigm, such economies are understood to consist in the aggregate of the choices made by suppliers and consumers of religious goods, who are

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<sup>16</sup> The definition of “the political” that I employ here draws directly on Mandaville 2001, 9–11. It has been noted that in many historical contexts, including under the Fatimids and the Abbasids, *da'wa* was “used to propagate the specific claims of dynasties”, becoming “virtually synonymous with political propaganda” (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 35). Such direct connections with state power need not necessarily apply in order for *da'wa* to be understood as political in the broad sense outlined here.

in turn assumed to act according to a profit-maximising rationality grounded in cost-benefit analyses.<sup>17</sup> However, this particular body of theoretical literature has limited utility in the context of the present study. Authors working in this vein have developed differing understandings of human needs, preferences and decision-making. Nonetheless, the underlying emphasis on self-interested profit-maximisation is worlds away from the subtle insights offered by the anthropologists discussed above in relation to the forging of different modes of agency within the terms of a discursive tradition, including through the cultivation of pious affect and particular configurations of normative reasoning. Moreover, the essentially liberal conception of religious markets as the aggregate of more or less free choices made by profit-maximising producers and consumers can do little to help achieve the goal at hand; to theorise the ways in which material resources may figure in the exercise of power in the context of struggles to define orthodoxy within a discursive tradition. In order to develop such analysis, it is necessary to pay attention to markets as spheres of activity characterised not only by choice but also by privilege and deprivation, power-laden conflict, and social struggle.

I therefore turn to an alternative understanding of religious economies, informed by ideas whose genealogy ultimately traces back to the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu criticised the distinction commonly made between, on the one hand, material economies and, on the other, areas of life seen as being fundamentally non-economic and somehow “disinterested”, including the arts and intellectual pursuits. Instead, he advocated the study of a broader “economy of practices”, in which social relations are conceived in terms of the accumulation and exchange not only of material capital – economic resources, conventionally understood – but also immaterial capital. The latter includes social capital, “the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”. It also includes cultural capital. Cultural capital may be objectified in the form of “cultural goods”, like “writings, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc.”. It may also be institutionalised, such that a corporate

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<sup>17</sup> Important statements and useful overviews of this rational choice approach to the study of religion include Stark 1985; Stark 1997; Finke and Stark 2003; Lechner 2007.

body acquires the capacity to issue academic and other kinds of qualifications. Finally, cultural capital may be embodied, as “long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”, including such things as knowledge and tastes (Bourdieu 1986, 241–52). In this case, through processes of learning and socialisation, cultural capital is instantiated as an aspect of what Bourdieu termed the habitus, a concept usefully glossed by Loïc Wacquant as “the system of durable and transposable *dispositions* through which we perceive, judge, and act in the world” (Wacquant 1998, 220).

The material and immaterial forms of capital identified by Bourdieu all have in common the fact that they consist in “accumulated labour” (Bourdieu 1986, 241), whether that be work on the factory floor, efforts to build a network of friends and acquaintances, or academic study. Moreover, one form of material or immaterial capital may be translated into another (Bourdieu 1986, 242–46, 252–55). Money, for example, may provide for the purchase of objectified cultural capital in the form of artwork or books, or may be used to pay for a university education with a view to the accumulation of embodied cultural capital and qualifications. By the same token, cultural resources accumulated through a university education may pave the way for access to higher-paying jobs. Such diverse goods as tastes and skills, social relationships, and material resources thus all come to be understood as distinct moments in a single, integrated economy. Within this economy, some actors occupy positions of dominance over others by virtue of their possession of greater quantities of capital, in its various forms, and the control they exercise over the distribution of this capital.

Bourdieu’s model of the economy of practices is of course far more complex than this attenuated summary suggests. It is not my intention to faithfully apply his schema in all its details. Rather, I take from it basic notions such as the existence of both material and immaterial forms of capital, the mutual translatability of these different forms, and the idea of power relations as defined at least in part by the differential distribution of capital. Even more useful for the purposes of this study is work by Bradford Verter, who has adapted Bourdieu’s understanding of the economy of practices in order to develop a model of religion which similarly “treats religious knowledge, competencies, and preferences as positional goods within a competitive

symbolic economy" (Verter 2003, 150).<sup>18</sup> Verter proposes the concept of "spiritual capital", a form of cultural capital which may again be institutionalised ("the power that... religious organisations exercise to legitimate an arbitrary array of religious goods, promote the demand for these goods, and feed the supply by bestowing qualifications on a select group of authorized producers"); objectified ("material and symbolic commodities – votive objects, exegetical texts, and ritual vestments, as well as the theologies, ideologies, and theodices"); or embodied ("the knowledge, abilities, tastes, and credentials an individual has amassed in the field of religion", which are "the outcome of explicit education or unconscious processes of socialization") (Verter 2003, 159–69).<sup>19</sup>

As in Bourdieu's model, Verter understands the accumulation and expenditure of spiritual capital as occurring within broader symbolic and material economies. Indeed, he asserts that such capital "may only be acquired through the exchange of material forms of capital" (2003, 167). Again, an example would be a student undertaking religious studies in order to accumulate religious knowledge and skills. Apart from any possible costs associated with tuition, the student must have access to sufficient material wealth to cover his or her subsistence for the duration of the course of study. The accumulation in question in this case also calls for investment of the student's time and labour, as well as that of any other actors who might be involved in offering instruction. On the other hand, spiritual capital may conceivably be translated in the reverse direction, into material wealth and social advancement. Verter gives the example of figures like L. Ron Hubbard, "religious leaders hailing from the lower or

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<sup>18</sup> While Verter draws on Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital in particular, his work represents a break from Bourdieu's own thinking on the specific issue of religion. While Bourdieu's writings on this topic tended to focus on formally institutionalised modes of religious authority, Verter's model makes room for agency exercised by lay actors and puts more emphasis on the "deregulated exchange of information and cultural resources in late modernity" (Guest 2007, 189–90).

<sup>19</sup> This thesis pays only limited attention to objectified forms of spiritual capital, being more concerned with spiritual capital in its institutionalised and embodied states. However, it is worth noting parallels and connections between Verter's notion of objectified spiritual capital and Gregory Starrett's (1995) work on the production and consumption of "Islamic religious commodities".

middle classes who managed to catapult themselves into the uppermost strata by establishing themselves as spiritual virtuosi" (2003, 168).

In Verter's conceptualisation, the value of any given form of spiritual capital is not fixed but is rather "the object of continuous struggle and is subject to considerable temporal and subcultural variation" (Verter 2003, 150, 161–62). He criticises what he sees as a tendency in Bourdieu's work to assume "a large degree of cultural homogeneity" in any given social space (2003, 162). Instead, he argues that

There exist, not one, but many parallel hierarchies of religious value, and these vary across subcultures... Scales of spiritual capital may vary widely among different groups of analogous social status. The definition of high spiritual capital changes dramatically when one compares media celebrities with Republican members of Congress, or school officials in Brookline, Massachusetts – a progressive, multicultural community – with their evangelical counterparts in Amarillo, Texas (Verter 2003, 162)

To give an example pertinent to the project at hand, memorised knowledge of hadith texts from the canonical collection *Sahih al-Bukhari* may have greater value as spiritual capital within a Salafi milieu than amulets or qualifications issued to mark progression through the rites of a Sufi order, whereas for Muslims situated within some other subcultural milieus that hierarchy might be reversed. These contrasting hierarchies of value may exist within the same social space or even within the same institution, as in an Islamic university in which actors aligned with different subcultural traditions compete with one another for advancement.

At this point, it will be worth pausing to consider how this conceptual schema relates to the other literatures discussed thus far. The notion of the habitus, which may be moulded through learning and socialisation to give rise to differing configurations of tastes, intuitions, modes of reasoning, and so on, offers a far richer understanding of human agency than that suggested by the profit-maximising cost-benefit calculations of rational choice theory. In fact, this understanding is arguably much closer to the ideas advanced in studies of Muslims' engagement with Islam as a discursive tradition, which explore how believers employ embodied practices and religious learning with a view to accumulating new knowledge, mastering new modes of reasoning, and moulding their own instincts and desires. It should be noted that Mahmood, who discusses these dynamics in terms of the shaping of what she also refers to as the

habitus, has sought to distance herself from Bourdieu's understanding of this concept. In her reading, Bourdieu's understanding of how the habitus is forged gives far too much weight to the individual's location in the hierarchy of power defined by the distribution of capital, reducing the notion of the habitus to merely "a theoretical concept to explain how the structural and class positions of individual subjects come to be embodied as dispositions". Instead, she wishes to allow room for the moulding of the habitus as a process involving intentional "moral training and cultivation" on the part of the individual believer (Mahmood 2005, 136–39). However, the precise details of how Bourdieu conceives of the processes by which the habitus of any given subject is forged are open to debate (Jenkins 1992, 90). Moreover, it certainly does not seem necessary either to commit oneself to this idea of the habitus as merely a product of the individual's "structural and class position", or to give up on the idea of the forging of the habitus as at least in part an intentional moral project pursued by the believer, in order to build on Bourdieu's key insight that aspects of habitus constitute forms of immaterial capital which contribute to defining one's position within a power-laden economy of practices. It thus seems perfectly coherent to reconceptualise the processes discussed by Mahmood, Hirschkind and others – including the acquisition of religious knowledge, the learning of particular modes of normative reasoning, and the use of embodied practices to discipline desires and instincts, all within the terms of a discursive tradition – as simultaneously amounting both to a project of self-oriented moral cultivation and also to the accumulation of spiritual capital.

I have already noted that Verter considers that such things as the criteria by which individual subjects evaluate the worth of any given form of spiritual capital may vary even within "groups of analogous social status", suggesting that such dispositions come down to something more than just their position in a class hierarchy. In fact, the idea that religious aspects of an individual's habitus are forged at least in part through engagement with a discursive tradition may help to make sense of the notion of "subcultural variation". As noted previously, this idea is invoked by Verter but it is not particularly unpacked in his work; beyond remarks that "cultural products... are produced and received within specific social contexts" and that habitus is shaped by "microhistories, local and regional histories" (2003, 163). Conceiving of religion in

terms of a heterogeneous discursive tradition encompassing multiple sub-traditions offers an alternative way of thinking about such variation. The fact that Sufis and Salafis engage in projects of learning and socialisation shaped in part by their adherence to different subsidiary traditions within the overarching Islamic discursive tradition may explain the different religious tastes and other dispositions according to which they weigh the value of any given form of spiritual capital.

It is important to note that the economic model of religion outlined here does not entail conceiving of social actors as engaged in an incessantly utilitarian, self-interested pursuit of profit or status for its own sake.<sup>20</sup> I have suggested that spiritual capital may be accumulated through efforts on the part of the believer which are motivated in the first instance by the pursuit of a personal project of moral cultivation. Moreover, to the extent that an individual's efforts to accumulate spiritual capital are informed by an awareness of the social status which may derive from this capital, it need not be assumed that this status is sought for its own sake. Rather, the accumulation of spiritual capital may well be valued by an individual believer as a resource to be mobilised in struggles over what Bourdieu himself termed "the principles of hierarchisation" (quoted in Verter 2003, 158). In this sense, the accumulation of capital is significant insofar as it bolsters the power of any given actor or institution "to define the value of one or another product" (Verter 2003, 158). An individual who, as a result of the investment of time, labour and capital, has accumulated sufficient knowledge, skills and pious dispositions to secure recognition as an Islamic scholar thereby acquires a greatly increased capacity to issue authoritative judgement on the value of any given religious text or ritual, for example. To tie this back to the words of Asad quoted earlier in this introduction, this amounts to an increased "power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones"; in other words, increased sway in the context of struggles to define orthodoxy within the terms of a discursive tradition, and thereby to contribute to shaping the future development of that tradition. Within struggles over the capacity

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<sup>20</sup> Wacquant has suggested that even for Bourdieu, the engine which fundamentally drives the behaviour of actors within these economies is in fact "the thirst for *dignity*, which society alone can quench" (1998, 218, emphasis added).



to speak in the name of “correct” Islam, spiritual capital thus represents both a “medium” of conflict (in the sense that accumulation of capital increases one’s authority to engage in struggles to define orthodoxy) and also an “object” of conflict (in the sense that the value of any given form of spiritual capital is itself subject to contestation) (Verter 2003, 158).

It will be necessary to make one further step in order to tailor these conceptual tools for the purposes of the present study, in this case in order to allow for the significance of cross-border processes. Bourdieu and Verter situate social struggles within fields, a concept defined by Verter as “a hierarchically structured social arena (or market) in which actors compete for money, prestige, and power” (2003, 153). A diversity of fields – including the religious field, the field of artistic production, the academic field, and so on – together make up a social space which in their work appears to be, at least implicitly, national in scope. This conception of social struggles as playing out within a national space is inadequate for the present study, which must be alert to flows of persons, ideas, practices and resources both into and out of Saudi Arabia, and also through cross-border connections which bypass the kingdom. This calls for awareness of struggles which play out in transnational space characterised by “sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states” (Vertovec 2009, 2). For this reason, I draw on Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller’s notion of “transnational social fields”. Defining a field as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed”, Levitt and Schiller identify transnational fields as those which “connect actors through direct and indirect relations across borders” (Levitt and Schiller 2004, 1009).<sup>21</sup>

Throughout this thesis, I opt for the term “transnational” to describe phenomena involving cross-border flows and configurations of persons, ideas, practices, institutions and resources, rather than alternatives such as “translocal”. This is a

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<sup>21</sup> Efforts to apply such ideas in the context of the present study build on growing bodies of literature which have brought an awareness of cross-border processes to the study of the history of the Arabian Peninsula (e.g. Al-Rasheed 2004a; Piscatori and Dresch 2005; Ho 2006; Al-Rasheed 2008b; Bonnefoy 2011) and to the study of religion (e.g. Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Rudolph and Piscatori 1997; Mandaville 2001; Bowen 2004; Bonnefoy 2011).

conscious choice motivated by a concern to emphasise the persistent importance of the national state in the dynamics at stake. I seek to develop a “polycentric historiography” which can allow for the significance of agents, processes and spaces which cut across, are distinct from and at times may challenge the national state but which do not erase its importance, either as an actor within religious economies or as a framework within which transactions play out (Robin 2009, 491). Indeed, one aspect of the argument developed in this thesis is that the globe-spanning historical dynamics which are the subject of study have in complex ways been catalysed and shaped precisely by – and have been put to work in the service of – processes of Saudi state- and nation-building, projects which themselves have also drawn on transversal flows. Part of what is at stake is exploration of how, as noted by Nina Glick Schiller, national state imperialism – in the sense of the “extension of the power of a territorially based regime into the political, economic, social, and cultural life of other territories” – may operate precisely *through* cross-border migratory circuits and networks (Schiller 2005, 443).<sup>22</sup>

Before moving on to discuss how these various conceptual tools are to be put to work in the context of this study, it will be worth briefly considering the common objection that Bourdieu’s model of symbolic economies – and his understanding of the role played by education within these economies, in particular – tends to highlight the reproduction of existing distributions of power and resources, at the expense of attention to dynamics of contestation and transformation (e.g. Eickelman 1992, 644). For Bourdieu, education – within formal institutions, as well as within the family and society at large – plays a key role in “symbolic violence”, summarised by Richard Jenkins as “the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate” (1992, 104). Insofar as the education system in a given social space tends to legitimate a cultural

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<sup>22</sup> Throughout this thesis, I refer to Saudi Arabia as a “national state” rather than a “nation state”, relying on Charles Tilly’s distinction between these two terms (1992, 2–3). Tilly defines national states as “states governing multiple contiguous regions and their cities by means of centralised, differentiated, and autonomous structures”. He distinguishes this from the nation state, “a state whose people share a strong linguistic, religious, and symbolic identity”. Just as Tilly excludes Great Britain from the latter definition, so it is also clear that Saudi Arabia – with its persistent sectarian divides, for example – does not fall under this rubric.

framework within which high value is assigned to the particular forms of cultural capital possessed by the dominant classes, and insofar as it tends to facilitate the accumulation of valued forms of cultural capital by new generations within the dominant classes in particular, education contributes to both reproducing and masking existing distributions of power, status and privilege (cf. Bourdieu 1973; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Jenkins 1992, 103–27).

Several elements of this study may help to disrupt any such tendency towards a picture of social stasis. Firstly, tools for problematising Bourdieu's approach to education and social reproduction – particularly in the context of efforts to apply some of his ideas to the religious sphere – are to be found in work by Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori on the "objectification" of religious knowledge in the modern period (Eickelman 1992; Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 37–45). The notion of objectification has been explicitly framed by Eickelman as a way of building upon Bourdieu's own work whilst seeking an analysis of power and agency which allows more space for contention (1992, 644). He and Piscatori note that recent decades have seen the rise of large-scale debates amongst Muslims about religion, informed by awareness of the existence of multiple modes of Islamic and non-Islamic religiosity. These debates, facilitated by factors including the rise of "mass education and mass communication", have in turn contributed to a new capacity on the part of believers to ask such questions as "'What is my religion?' 'Why is it important to my life?' and 'How do my beliefs guide my conduct?'" (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 38). The ability to engage in enquiry of this kind, rather than simply taking a particular form of religious belief and practice for granted, may create scope for the exercise of critical evaluation and contestation by students in their engagement with any given form of religious instruction; that is, the ability to challenge the legitimacy of the forms of culture which that system of instruction seeks to impose. It might be expected that such dynamics will be particularly prominent within educational circuits which cross national borders, since migrant students will frequently have direct experience of sharply divergent cultural frameworks and modes of religiosity in differing geographical settings.

Secondly, this point might be juxtaposed with Verter's critique of what he sees as an overemphasis on "cultural homogeneity" in Bourdieu's work. Verter suggests that

“even economically and politically subordinate groups maintain autonomous standards of taste” (2003, 162). It is in developing this point that he offers the exploration, noted above, of how differing judgements of the value of any given form of spiritual capital may relate to subcultural diversity even within any given social strata or class within a single, nationally-defined society. Again, this disrupts the notion that education straightforwardly imposes and reproduces a relatively homogeneous cultural framework, according to which the particular forms of cultural capital possessed by the dominant classes are defined as high-value. Insofar as students are able to objectify the religious knowledge on offer in any given educational context and subject it to critical scrutiny, they may evaluate its worth according to differing criteria depending on their own subcultural backgrounds. Once again, this patchwork of subcultural diversity becomes even more complex when one turns to social dynamics which play out not only within but also across national borders, involving actors drawn from profoundly divergent cultural backgrounds.

Lastly, while these two points suggest the possibility of contestation at the moment of students’ engagement with any given form of instruction, the fact of cultural heterogeneity emphasised by Verter may also provide for social and cultural transformations – rather than simply reproduction and stasis – in ways that relate to the articulation of new forms of power through projects such as the *establishment* of new educational institutions. This point, which is central to the arguments that run throughout this thesis, ties back to the idea that material wealth is just one form of capital in circulation within broader material and symbolic economies, and that it may be translated into other forms of capital. According to this understanding, new reserves of wealth made available to the adherents of a given subcultural tradition from sources such as oil rents may serve to empower those actors and bolster their standing within cultural and religious struggles. Through investment in projects such as the founding of new schools and universities aligned with a particular subcultural tradition, material capital may be translated into spiritual capital possessed by the adherents of that tradition. These new reserves of spiritual capital may in turn bolster their capacity to exert authority and influence within struggles over the principles of hierarchisation within a given national or transnational social space; that is, struggles

over the capacity to define the value of any given cultural product, which in the religious sphere is closely related to the capacity to define orthodoxy. If those involved are able to use their newfound power to redefine existing cultural frameworks, this might even lead to lasting shifts in common understandings of what constitutes high-value spiritual capital.

Gathering up the various conceptual elements unpacked thus far, I arrive at the notion of transnational religious economies which underlies the historiography employed throughout this thesis. Transnational religious economies, in the understanding developed here, consist in flows – both within and across national borders – of four elements which may be distinguished for the sake of analytic clarity. These elements are material capital, spiritual capital, religious migrants and social technologies. Material capital and spiritual capital, and the ways in which they relate to one another, have been explored in the preceding discussion. Religious migrants are defined as individuals who make journeys either within or across national borders with a view to engaging in religious projects including, for example, pilgrimage, missionary outreach, and education. Social technologies are arrangements put in place to facilitate the translation, exchange, investment, accumulation and expenditure of differing forms of material and immaterial capital. This includes the techniques of writing, printing and recording used to produce objectified spiritual capital in the form of manuscripts, books or cassette tapes. More pertinently, it also includes the various arrangements for religious instruction used to facilitate the accumulation of embodied spiritual capital by students, from the oral transmission of mosque study circles to the syllabuses, lectures and examinations employed in contemporary Islamic universities.

Whilst it is analytically useful to treat these four “moments” of transnational religious economies as distinct from one another, it is worth noting that from an empirical point of view they may be very closely intertwined. Where migrants bear spiritual capital embodied in their very persons in the form of memorised knowledge or other religious competencies, for example, flows of migrants and flows of spiritual capital are empirically coterminous.

This understanding of transnational religious economies suggests new ways of thinking about how material capital may feature in dynamics of Wahhabi religious expansion exercised through cross-border circuits of scholars and students. It suggests conceiving of the founding and maintenance of institutions like the IUM as a form of investment of material capital which, through a system of pedagogical social technologies, is translated into particular forms of spiritual capital possessed by students. The spiritual capital accumulated by students may be expected to bolster their standing within competitive symbolic economies and struggles to define orthodoxy in their communities of origin or elsewhere. This approach raises a host of questions to be explored. If Saudi educational institutions like the IUM which sit at the heart of these circuits are involved in the translation of material capital into spiritual capital, what specific forms of spiritual capital are involved? How do the forms of spiritual capital in question relate to the Islamic discursive tradition and, more specifically, to the Salafi and Wahhabi traditions? Where does the material capital in question come from? How and by whom is its distribution controlled? What power relations are established as a result of the unequal allocation of capital within these arrangements? What social technologies are involved in the processes of translating material capital into spiritual capital in this context, and what are the genealogies of those technologies? How have these institutions themselves come to acquire sufficient reserves of institutionalised spiritual capital to authorise religious qualifications? How do students engage with these processes and what forms of religious authority might they secure on the basis of spiritual capital accumulated in these institutions? How does the value of this capital, and its worth as a basis of religious authority, vary across time and in different social and cultural contexts? I begin to indicate the answers that I will develop to some of these questions in the chapter outline included in the final section of this introduction.

As a framework for exploring the role of cross-border educational circuits in Wahhabi religious expansion, the notion of transnational religious economies developed here has several advantages. First and foremost, it offers an account of power relations in the religious sphere which allows for the significance of material capital without falling back on deterministic assumptions. Power relations between any given set of actors in the religious sphere, in the sense of their capacity to authorise a particular set of

religious goods or to delegitimize others, are determined in part by their possession of differential quantities of spiritual capital. Reserves of material capital possessed by certain actors – including those available to Saudi state actors from sources such as oil rents – provide for the exercise of power in the religious sphere insofar as they may be translated into spiritual capital and distributed as such both at home and abroad. Other factors will of course come into play in determining power relations. These include discursive forms of power, such as the capacity of any given actor to construct coherent arguments within the terms of a shared discursive tradition. They also include the capacity of state actors in particular to coercively intervene in the religious sphere by banning particular movements, rituals and modes of discourse, or by jailing particular individuals. However, access to capital and control over its distribution represent important factors in defining power relations. That said, it is to be expected that these dynamics – far from being mechanical – will be subject to the agency and evaluation of an array of actors. Spiritual capital, as noted above, is an object as well as a medium of struggle. At the point where material capital is translated into spiritual capital, the value of that capital itself becomes subject to contestation in ways that may be beyond the control of those who possess it or whose material investment provided for its accumulation.

This understanding of religious economies as intersecting with broader spheres of social interaction also offers scope for building on Schielke's observation that research focused on processes of pious self-formation tend to neglect the fact that religion represents only one facet of life, even for especially committed believers; a point captured in his complaint that "there is too much Islam in the anthropology of Islam" (2010, 1). Given the translatability of different forms of material and immaterial capital, the resources in circulation within religious economies may in principle be put to work in the service of an array of projects both religious and otherwise. It would be wise to be alert to the possibility that students, amongst others, may engage in the religious economies which are the focus of this project not only as Muslims but also as sons, fathers and siblings, as Canadians and Indonesians, as youth, and so on.

Moreover, exploring the transnational extension of religious economies may serve to address an additional problem with some of the anthropological literature discussed

earlier, which is a tendency to treat Islamic discursive traditions as distinct from and fundamentally different to “Western” modes of being. Salwa Ismail has noted that studies grounded in a concern with Islamic modes of subject-formation have frequently tended to ignore the many commonalities between Islamist and non-Islamist subjectivities, and the extent to which both have been affected by recent global trends, including “objectification, rationalisation, individualisation and relativisation” (Ismail 2004, 624). In fact, this “othering” of the Islamic tradition in some of this literature – whereby it is contrasted with an equally reified post-Enlightenment “Western” morality and rationality – is often far from incidental. Schielke notes that scholars interested in Islamic modes of subject-formation often advance “a master narrative that posits the Muslim tradition of ethics, affect, devotion and debate in juxtaposition with liberal and secular notions about the state, law, self and so on” precisely because they are interested in developing “a political self-critique of liberalism and secularism” which rests in part on showing that these latter cultural and political frameworks involve “historically specific notions that cannot be taken to be valid for all of humanity” (Schielke 2010, 6). It is only by holding up Islamic traditions as a contrasting alternative to “Western” traditions that such self-critique becomes possible.

The notion of transnational religious economies can help to counter some of these issues insofar as it serves to highlight the ways in which the various elements that make up these economies may flow across supposed civilisational or cultural boundaries, such as that posited between “the West” and “the Islamic world”. This includes flows of migrants, many of whom will themselves have been educated and socialised in both of these allegedly distinct spheres. It also includes the appropriation of social technologies across supposed cultural boundaries. Modes of pedagogy used to mould aspects of students’ subjectivity and to provide for the accumulation of spiritual capital in Islamic educational settings, for example, may well have roots in diverse geographical, social and cultural contexts.

I conclude this section with a brief comment on the use of the language of economics to discuss religion, a sphere of life which holds profound value for many who would see little obvious connection between this value and any question of financial profit.



The use of this vocabulary is not intended to be provocative or to offend. As noted previously, the point is certainly not to posit the religious sphere as merely an epiphenomenal superstructure erected on an ultimately material base, nor to suggest that participants in the religious sphere are fundamentally motivated by the self-interested pursuit of material profit or social advancement. The framework outlined here also entails no specific assumptions in relation either to the sincerity of the faith held by religious actors, or to the truth or falsity of their convictions. Rather, it offers a conceptual schema which may help to highlight more subtle interconnections between material and spiritual aspects of social life, and which may in particular help to make sense of how material resources figure in the struggles of a diversity of actors to uphold, promote and impose upon others their own understandings of religious truth, moral virtue and the good life.

## **Methods**

A researcher seeking to engage with the kinds of historical dynamics which are the subject of this project is presented with both challenges and opportunities deriving from their transnational extension. On the one hand, exploring processes which stretch across national borders calls for complex and time-consuming multi-sited research. On the other hand, the vast extension of these processes gives rise to multiple “ways in”; many different circles of people who might be approached for information, and many different libraries and archives containing relevant materials. In what follows, I outline the sources of data which have been most relevant in the context of the present study.

## **Primary Sources**

The backbone of this project is provided by mostly Arabic-language published sources gathered in libraries in London, Cairo, Riyadh and Jidda. These include a raft of promotional literature produced by the IUM over the past half a century, not least two authorised histories which trace its genesis and institutional development (al-Ghamidi 1998; al-‘Abbud 2004). While these texts must of course be read for what they are – with critical awareness of the particular narratives and tropes they emphasise – they yield crucial names, dates and basic chronologies, which can often be followed up with further investigation elsewhere. They also contain reproductions of original documents,

including statutes, regulations and syllabuses from different periods in the university's lifetime. At certain points in the thesis, I have also engaged with the narratives presented in these histories. Other useful kinds of promotional literature include university prospectuses, annual reports and staff lists.

I have also made use of the IUM's quarterly journal dating back to the first issue published in June 1968. This publication, which is available online as well as in libraries in Saudi Arabia, includes regular updates on university news alongside articles by staff, students and others on topics as diverse as Islamic history, correct creed, class struggle, and the dangers of smoking.<sup>23</sup>

Other sources which inform this project include local newspapers, official publications, published compilations of archive documents, memoirs and other texts authored by participants in the historical dynamics at stake, and several biography collections. The latter include two weighty volumes produced by individuals who themselves moved in the IUM's orbit; the Iraq-born member of the university's Advisory Council 'Abd Allah al-'Aqil and the Syria-born faculty member Muhammad al-Majdhub.

Particularly in relation to the first two chapters of this thesis dealing with earlier historical periods, my research draws on secondary works in Arabic which include a level of detail on education in the Hijaz and elsewhere in the Peninsula at these times that is mostly lacking in the existing English-language literature. I was also able to access the archives of the Saudi Ministry of Education in Riyadh, though my eventual use of sources drawn from that archive in the thesis itself has been limited.

In addition to primary and secondary sources held in libraries and conventional archive collections, this project benefited from expanded notions of "the archive" that have gained greater legitimacy amongst historians in recent decades (Burton 2006). The internet proved an immensely valuable resource, yielding texts produced by and about an array of relevant actors and institutions, as well as multimedia materials such as YouTube videos of IUM graduates' preaching. I have approached such sources with an awareness of issues of credibility which may arise when accessing primary materials

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<sup>23</sup> Online records are found at <http://docportal.iu.edu.sa/iomag/home.aspx>.

online, though I consider that the challenges presented in this regard are often not so different from those involved in research in conventional archives. In either case, one must use the available evidence to assess authorship of any given artefact, the context in which it was produced, and so on. Comprehensive referencing throughout this thesis should ensure that the reader is in a position to independently evaluate the reliability of all materials cited. Finally, I was also granted a certain amount of access to IUM graduates' personal archives, including materials such as essays, lecture notes and past exam papers.

### **Ethnography**

In keeping with the expanded notions of "the archive" touched upon above, this thesis also draws on interviews with over 30 individuals in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Kingdom. Those interviewed included informed observers of the historical dynamics at stake, such as figures closely involved in Salafi movements and Egyptian Muslim Brothers. They also included Egyptian former staff members of the IUM, as well as 16 former and current students in all three countries.

As noted previously, primary sources form the backbone of this project. However, interviews served to guide my search for such sources and also yielded data of a kind that it would have been impossible to gather from written texts. While much of the information supplied in interviews was primarily useful for informing my background understanding and guiding my reading, I have at points in the thesis directly drawn upon and referenced oral accounts offered by past and current students in particular. Their perspectives help to address certain risks associated with over-reliance on printed sources such as official documentation. The latter approach has frequently given rise to what Benjamin Fortna has termed a "mechanical engineering" model of education, in which schools are depicted as machine-like apparatuses churning out cadres of "like-minded 'products'". "Self-narratives" by students themselves may help to remedy this problem by providing for the possibility of moving past this macro level picture and revealing a degree of diversity in individual trajectories and lived experiences of education (Fortna 2001, 1–5, 30–31). The memories of IUM students

also draw attention to informal and other aspects of education which do not feature in syllabuses or other written records.<sup>24</sup>

Most former and current IUM students interviewed for this project were either British citizens or were living in the United Kingdom, though they also included non-British citizens based in the United Kingdom, the United States and Egypt. They constitute a small number of individuals and it is clear that the sample is to some extent self-selecting, given that my attempts to reach out to IUM graduates were on occasion rebuffed. I sometimes pursued a strategy of “snowballing” interviews, asking one interviewee to introduce me to friends or acquaintances who had also graduated from the IUM. This proved to be a valuable way of identifying IUM graduates in the first place, with introductions through mutual acquaintances also helping to build trust. However, recognising the scope for further bias inherent in this procedure, I combined it with a strategy of arranging interviews by cold-calling IUM graduates identified through other routes, including word-of-mouth and biographies posted on the websites of Islamic educational initiatives and mosques. In light of the issues discussed here, the individuals interviewed for this project are by no means considered to represent all those who pass through these circuits. While the fragmentary accounts of their biographies and experiences that are related in the course of this thesis serve to highlight a degree of diversity amongst students and their experiences, and offer insights that would otherwise not be available, they are to be treated as representing possibilities rather than broadly generalisable patterns. To the extent that I have drawn on students’ personal experiences, I have sought to juxtapose these with evidence from other sources as part of efforts to piece together a bigger picture.

Given the diversity of people with whom I met for the purposes of this project and the wide range of circumstances under which such meetings took place, it was necessary to adopt a flexible approach to interviewing. All interviewees were aware that I was an academic researcher and that the interview was intended to gather information for a doctoral project. As often as possible, I supplied interviewees with a written outline of my research, explaining my interests and the uses that would be made of information

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<sup>24</sup> On the risk that important aspects of pedagogy like peer learning may be obscured because of their absence from written records, see Eickelman 1978, 500.

gathered in the interview. Where encounters took place under circumstances that made this impossible or inappropriate, I have refrained from citing any substantive biographical information from the interview in question. Except in cases where specific interviewees were already relatively well-known public figures at the time when I conducted my research, I have replaced all interviewees' names in footnote references with one-letter pseudonyms, in order to protect their identities. In all cases where an interviewee is referred to by a single letter, that letter is a pseudonym which bears no relation to the actual name of the interviewee. In all cases where a name is used to refer to an interviewee, that name is the actual name of the interviewee.

Most commonly, interviews were semi-structured. Some were recorded using a digital device, always with the permission of the interviewee, whereas in other situations it proved more appropriate and more productive to limit myself to taking notes by hand. Where this was the case, I used these handwritten notes as a basis for typing up a set of notes from the meeting at the earliest opportunity.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, this research also benefited both from briefer, ad hoc encounters and correspondence with IUM graduates and former staff members, as well as multiple meetings with certain interviewees and also much longer, more informal discussions.

### **The Structure of the Thesis**

The first two chapters of this thesis focus on periods prior to the founding of the IUM, in order to set that institution and the cross-border processes which would grow up around it in historical perspective. This provides for the possibility of tracing some of the historical roots of the later dynamics and institutional developments which are the focus of the discussion that follows, as well as building a foundation for diachronic comparative analysis. Chapter 1 explores religious education in the Hijaz in the Ottoman and Hashimite periods, paying particular attention to mosques, madrasas, Sufi lodges and other sites which at that time hosted scholars and students from as far afield as West Africa, the Caucasus, and South, Central and Southeast Asia. Education in these settings was supported by cross-border flows of material capital including imperial spending from Istanbul and private funds from benefactors in locations as

distant as India, and pedagogy was largely personalised and informal. The religious economy constituted by this set-up was marked by considerable diversity, with instruction offered by and for adherents of all of the mainstream Sunni legal schools, and members of an array of Sufi orders. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, however, it is possible to discern significant shifts which would lay the ground for eventual state-led efforts to reconfigure transnational religious economies centred on the Peninsula. New social technologies brought by religious migrants and imperial officials contributed to the spread of increasingly rationalised, bureaucratised modes of pedagogy. These in turn provided for the possibility that private and particularly state actors might exercise more sustained control over the distribution, exchange and translation of material and immaterial capital in religious educational settings.

The focus in Chapter 2 shifts to the period immediately following the invasion of the Hijaz by the Saudis in the 1920s and explores the use of education as a tool for Wahhabi religious expansion within territories over which the Saudi state exercised direct control. At this point in history, the Saudi occupiers appropriated the bureaucratised modes of education which had taken shape in that region from the late nineteenth century and used them as a basis for investing in the promotion of Wahhabi modes of religiosity. Focusing on one flagship school, the Saudi Scholastic Institute founded in Mecca in 1926, I explore how techniques like the use of fixed syllabuses and hierarchical oversight were employed to create spaces in which Saudi state actors could closely monitor and control the processes by which their material investments were to be translated into particular forms of cultural capital embodied in students; including religious knowledge and competencies grounded in the Wahhabi tradition. This project was fraught with tensions, occurring as it did in the context of a process of state-building within an occupied territory with its own religious traditions quite different from those of the Wahhabi heartlands of Najd. It also involved the grafting of Wahhabi religious content into new discursive frameworks. To some extent, the conflicts which emerged were mediated by staff drafted in from Egypt, the Levant and beyond. I argue that this early period saw the consolidation of a number of strategies, including not only material investment but also cultural appropriation,

mediation and hegemonic modification of religious discourse, which would come to characterise the subsequent drive to use education as a means for expanding Wahhabi religious influence beyond the Peninsula.

Turning to the point in history at which Saudi state actors increasingly began to invest in this latter project, Chapter 3 traces the genesis and institutional evolution of the IUM from the time of its inception in 1961 until the present day. I argue that the founding of the IUM at the height of the Cold War must be understood in relation to Riyadh's rivalry with the Nasserist regime in Egypt for influence in the Middle East at that time, as well as the efforts of its ally the United States to counter the perceived threat of Communist expansion in the region. It seems likely to have been further bound up with manoeuvring between the Saudi royals and the Wahhabi establishment, and efforts to bolster narratives of dynastic and national legitimacy. The IUM would over time come to be deeply imbricated within, and would allow Saudi actors to exert influence within, a transnational religious economy. However, by mapping its development onto milestones in Saudi national and dynastic history, this chapter underlines the many senses in which its missionary project was driven, enabled and administered by nationally-situated dynastic actors and interests.

Chapter 4 explores the staffing of the IUM from the time of its founding and over the decades that followed. It builds on and simultaneously moves beyond the nationally-framed history explored in the preceding chapter by situating the university at the heart of cross-border circuits of scholars, educators and administrators from across the Middle East and beyond. I argue that these religious migrants played an important role in enabling and legitimating the IUM's missionary project. Besides offering a pool of skilled labour, they could also mediate between the Wahhabi establishment, the university's eclectic student body, and communities around the world. Their own diverse backgrounds could give concrete shape to the institution's claims to Islamic universality. Finally, they represented a source of spiritual capital in forms which would be widely recognised as legitimate amongst communities to which the IUM was intended to preach, including qualifications earned in established religious educational institutions and often prestigious centres of learning across the Islamic world. Over time, capital possessed by these migrants came to be institutionalised in the university

itself, bolstering its capacity to authorise a particular set of religious goods and to bestow qualifications on its students. Later, as the university's standing consolidated and as foreign actors came increasingly to be seen as a political liability, steps were taken to purge them from its faculty and administration.

The next two chapters explore the modes of instruction that emerged and evolved on the IUM campus. This discussion builds on the accounts of border-crossings explored in earlier sections of the thesis by further unpacking ways in which this intervention in transnational religious economies was itself shaped not only by dynamics within the Saudi national sphere but also by far-reaching flows of migrants, social technologies and resources.

In Chapter 5, the focus is on the social technologies used to achieve the embodying of spiritual capital in students at the IUM from the time of its founding. I argue that pedagogies in this context contrasted sharply with practices that had prevailed in Najd and the Hijaz until very recently. The differences related to such matters as techniques of assessment and certification, the arrangement of bodies, and management of space and time. The methods of instruction and socialisation employed on campus tied back to earlier educational reforms explored in Chapters 1 and 2, and were also influenced by the migratory circuits unpacked in Chapter 4. I consider in particular how the IUM project related to the cultural politics of the post-colonial contexts from which many of its migrant staff members were drawn. The university was valued by many of those involved as a response to colonial intrusions in the cultural sphere seen as threatening Islamic identities and values. However, rather than engaging in an effort to shore up what had come to be seen as traditional modes of religious schooling, they instead sought to appropriate social technologies of education whose own genealogies traced back to European metropolises and to rework them in the name of what was understood to consist in a project of cultural resistance. Although it is only very recently that there has been talk of the IUM accepting female students, this chapter also considers the ideas that circulated on campus in earlier periods with regard to gender and the education of women.



In Chapter 6, the focus shifts from the social technologies in use at the IUM to the particular forms of spiritual capital which – through the implementation of these technologies – were to be embodied in its students. I consider what is arguably the most important form of spiritual capital in question, the specific bodies of religious knowledge delineated in the university's syllabuses. This chapter builds upon and extends the idea that access to capital may provide for the exercise of power within religious economies. I argue that exploring the particular forms of spiritual capital which were to be accumulated by students at the IUM adds another layer to the picture insofar as it suggests a further, more clearly discursive form of power also at work within the overarching terms defined by the differential distribution of capital. Syllabuses in use at the IUM from the 1960s onwards display clear continuities with the Wahhabi tradition. At the same time, exploration of the key subject area of jurisprudence in particular reveals certain subtle shifts away from historical Wahhabi norms. These shifts, which occurred within the terms of the Wahhabi and broader Salafi traditions, may have been linked to factors including the arrival of migrant staff from far beyond Saudi Arabia. However, I argue that they also related at least in part to efforts by actors behind the IUM to construct a position of hegemonic authority over students from around the world, as suppliers of religious goods within a shared moral and intellectual framework. I highlight evidence suggesting that certain aspects of the forms of spiritual capital that were to be distributed by the IUM were adjusted in the course of efforts to articulate its Salafi missionary project with the pre-existing habituses of the array of actors who were its targets, with a view to securing their consent and participation. Such dynamics did not represent dialogue and exchange so much as unequal reciprocity and the construction of hegemonic power within the terms of unequal relations defined by *inter alia* differential distribution of capital.

Finally, Chapter 7 focuses on the role played by students themselves as religious migrants, bearers of spiritual capital accumulated in Medina, and mediators of the university's Wahhabi-influenced message. I further unpack and explore the contention that the IUM's missionary project has functioned through the translation of material resources invested by the Saudi state into particular forms of spiritual capital possessed by its students. I show how at least some students have exercised their own

judgement of the worth of the religious knowledge and competencies made available at the IUM, leading them either to quit the university or to find ways of negotiating desired outcomes without necessarily assenting to the central tenets of its Wahhabi-influenced mission. I then explore how, as spiritual capital embodied in IUM graduates has flowed outwards into transnational religious economies, its worth has once again become subject to contestation by religious authorities and lay actors across the globe. Those graduates who have used their newly acquired knowledge, competencies and qualifications to construct positions of religious authority have done so through processes of conflict and negotiation which play out far from Saudi Arabia. While the projects in which they have invested their newfound spiritual capital have often been strongly informed by their time in Medina, they have frequently taken shape and evolved with considerable autonomy with respect to the university itself and the broader Saudi religious establishment, in ways which can have unpredictable religious, social and political ramifications.

Together, the points made in these chapters add up to the dual contribution of the thesis as a whole. Firstly, from an empirical point of view, it sheds light on the role played in Wahhabi religious expansion by transnational circuits of scholars and students which grew up around one particularly important state-funded missionary educational institution from the early 1960s, the history of which has not previously been subject to any kind of sustained study. Secondly, from a theoretical point of view, this thesis develops the notion of transnational religious economies as a framework for thinking about the ways in which material resources may figure in cross-border dynamics of cultural transformation. In doing so, it offers new tools for considering how Saudi state actors' access to oil rents and other sources of wealth may have contributed to the worldwide proliferation of a spectrum of literalist, morally conservative modes of Salafi religiosity since the mid-twentieth century. These conceptual tools provide for a historiography of such processes which eschews deterministic assumptions and is alert to uneven power relations, agency exercised by an array of actors, and longstanding cross-border flows of persons, practices and ideas.

The point is by no means to suggest that Saudi funding is solely responsible for the spread of Salafism in locations across the globe in recent decades. There is surely

something to Bernard Haykel's argument that Salafism has drawn adherents in part because of the attraction of its "claims to religious certainty... and its seemingly limitless ability to cite scripture to back these up". Haykel has also rightly observed that Salafism predates the founding of the modern Saudi state, that many Salafis are not in receipt of Saudi funds, and that such funds also flow to many non-Salafi actors, institutions and movements. In short, Saudi sponsorship is clearly "neither a necessary nor sufficient explanation for Salafism's presence and entrenchment in Muslim life around the world" (Haykel 2009, 36–37). However, that is not to say that material resources invested by actors associated with Saudi Arabia have not played a significant, albeit contingent, role in the worldwide proliferation of Salafi modes of religiosity. The hope is that this thesis will offer some new ways of thinking about that role and its place within which what is no doubt a far broader, more complex tapestry of social, cultural, political and economic change.

## Chapter 1

### Religious Education in the Ottoman and Sharifian Hijaz

When the Saudis occupied the Hijaz in the mid-1920s, they took control of a region which had for centuries attracted migrant scholars and students from the farthest reaches of the Islamic world. Mosques, madrasas, Sufi lodges and private homes, particularly in Mecca and Medina, had long hosted educational activities providing for the exchange and accumulation of knowledge, skills, qualifications and other forms of spiritual capital. The latter flowed into and out of the Hijaz across a space which stretched from the Atlantic seaboard of Africa to the Indian Ocean islands of Java and Sumatra. The Ottoman state exerted influence within these economies by means of material investment, coercive intervention, and the appointment of religious actors as intermediaries. However, the modes of education and funding arrangements which prevailed at the time seem likely to have placed restrictions on the leverage that could be achieved in this regard. Instruction involved quite informal, personalised modes of pedagogy, grounded in an understanding between individual scholars and their students, seemingly with only limited scope for sustained supervision or regulation by the state. Moreover, many actors in the sphere of religious education were far from dependent on the state for material resources, with funding to support their activities flowing into the region through multiple public and private channels.

In the second part of this chapter I explore shifts which began to occur from the late nineteenth century onwards. From this time, new social technologies began to take root in the Hijaz as a result of Ottoman state-building and flows of ideas and practices through private channels from locations as distant as India. Firstly in a limited number of state schools, then in a wave of new private schools, and finally in key sites of religious education like the Masjid Haram in Mecca, instruction came to operate according to increasingly rationalised and bureaucratised arrangements which were more amenable to regulation by outside actors like the state. Techniques including the use of fixed syllabuses, regular examinations and hierarchical systems of inspection allowed officials to surveil the activities of scholars and students, and to monitor and control the processes by which material and spiritual capital were translated,

exchanged and accumulated in these settings. These shifts contributed to shaping the system of education that the Saudis would inherit when they swept into the Hijaz soon afterwards, and which they would appropriate and rework in the service of their own political projects.

### **Mosques, Madrasas and Sufi Lodges**

In the centuries prior to the Saudi occupation in the 1920s, control of the Hijaz passed repeatedly between various political powers. The region first came under Ottoman authority in 1517, when the empire under Sultan Selim I defeated the Mamluks in Egypt and secured suzerainty over their erstwhile dependents, the Sharifs of Mecca (Haykel 2010, 438–39). The Ottomans remained broadly in control through their Sharifian proxies until the early nineteenth century, when their hold over the region was challenged by the first Saudi amirate. Having initially occupied Mecca in April 1803 and been driven back shortly afterwards, Saudi forces re-entered that city and also took Medina in 1805, and annexed the Hijaz that same year (Vassiliev 2000, 98–104). In 1811, the ruler of Egypt Muhammad ‘Ali responded with a military campaign which, although theoretically launched on the wishes of the Ottoman sultan, was in practice also intended to cement his own political standing and imperial ambitions. By 1813, his forces had taken Mecca and Medina, as well as Jidda and Ta’if. They subsequently penetrated into Najd, capturing the Saudi capital al-Dir‘iyya in 1818 and razing it before withdrawing to the Hijaz, authority over which only passed back to Istanbul in the 1840s (Ochsenwald 1984, ix; Vassiliev 2000, 140–47; Commins 2005, 32–38). The Ottomans continued to rule through their Sharifian proxies until the early twentieth century, their compact temporarily surviving the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the drive for centralisation that followed (Ochsenwald 1984, 216–18; Kayalı 1997, 144–73). However, at the height of the First World War and supported by the Entente Powers, the then Grand Sharif Husayn ibn ‘Ali threw off Ottoman control in the Arab Revolt starting in 1916. The region was then administered by an independent Sharifian state until the time of the Saudi occupation.

Historians offer conflicting evaluations of the standing of Mecca and Medina as centres of religious learning throughout this period. Abdullatif Abdullah Dohaish has spoken of a “decay” in religious instruction in the region from the sixteenth century, in part due

to “the discovery of the new sea route round Africa, leading to the dwindling of the age-old economic function of the Near East, as a zone of transit between the Indian Ocean and Europe” (1974, 28). Atallah S. Coptly, on the other hand, celebrates an increase in the status of Mecca and Medina as centres of learning which began in his estimation under the Mamluks and continued under the Ottomans. He puts this down to funding made available by both dynasties, along with improvements in shipping which allowed greater numbers of scholars to visit the Holy Cities (2003, 321–22).

European travellers who passed through the Hijaz in the early nineteenth century – including the Spaniard Domingo Badia y Leblich who visited under the pseudonym ‘Ali Bey al-‘Abbasi in 1807, and the Swiss Orientalist John Lewis Burckhardt who visited in 1814 – claimed that any lively scholarly scene that might have existed previously was no longer in evidence by that time. Burckhardt commented that, “I think I have sufficient reason for affirming that Mecca is at present much inferior even in Islamic learning to any town of equal population in Syria or Egypt.”<sup>25</sup> However, comments such as his may be usefully juxtaposed with information offered by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch scholar-spy who at least nominally converted to Islam and spent a year in Jidda and Mecca from 1884. Differences between Hurgronje’s evaluation and those of earlier European visitors may in part have been due to changes occurring in the Hijaz in the intervening decades. However, it is more likely that his longer stay simply afforded him a better opportunity to observe and understand. Hurgronje himself made the point that someone like Burckhardt, visiting the Hijaz as a pilgrim during the period of massive disruption brought about by the hajj season, could never have hoped to see a fair representation of the scholarly activity that occurred in the Holy Cities throughout the course of the year (Hurgronje 2007, 227–28). Hurgronje’s uniquely detailed account, when set alongside fragmentary information available from earlier periods, in fact indicates the existence of an often quite vibrant religious educational scene spread across a host of different institutions and sites.

The most prestigious setting for instruction in the region was of course the Masjid Haram in Mecca, also known as the Grand Mosque. In this, the holiest site in Islam and

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<sup>25</sup> The views of these travellers are discussed in Dohaish 1974, 28–35. The quotation from Burckhardt is as cited in Dohaish 1974, 29.

the focal point of the annual hajj pilgrimage, members of the 'ulama' establishment disbursed knowledge and qualifications in study circles, or *ḥalaqāt*. While lack of data makes it difficult to get a sense of the scale of these arrangements in earlier periods, Hurgronje tells us that at the time of his visit in the late nineteenth century, a total of perhaps 50 or 60 scholars were engaged in convening regular *ḥalaqāt* in the mosque's courtyard and colonnades (Hurgronje 2007, 199–200).<sup>26</sup> The Masjid Nabawi, also known as the Prophet's Mosque, in Medina had also long been an important site of religious education. That said, by around the same time the scale of teaching there appears to have been significantly more limited than in the Mecca mosque. The official Ottoman Hijaz yearbook for 1301 H. (1883-1884) listed only 18 teachers working in the Masjid Nabawi (Dohaish 1974, 221).

A further arena of religious education was overseen by Sufi scholars and orders (*ṭuruq*, sing. *ṭarīqa*). Sufis had for centuries been both numerous and influential in the Hijaz, and their activities may well have constituted an even more energetic religious educational sphere than that which existed in the major mosques. At least forty different *ṭuruq* were represented in Mecca and Medina in the seventeenth century (Coptly 2003, 322). As many as 17 orders continued to operate in Mecca alone in the nineteenth century, maintaining a total of 53 establishments known as *zawāyā* (sing. *zāwiya*) (Ochsenwald 1984, 43). Major orders with a presence in Mecca at that time included the Sanusiyya, the Naqshabandiyya, the Qadiriyya and the Shadhiliyya. Some *zawāyā* included residential quarters, while others were used only as meeting places. Sufi shaykhs and their followers also operated out of private residences, sometimes living together in the same building. These homes were used for "dhikr meetings, weekly meals, [and] money doles for poor brethren", as well as monthly feasts to mark the death of an order's founder. *Ṭuruq* which had no access to any such site of their own used mosque space for daily gatherings. While there were sometimes tensions between these Sufi circles and the 'ulama' establishment, there was also considerable

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<sup>26</sup> Other sources suggest that the number of *ḥalaqāt* in the mosque around that time, and also immediately prior to World War I, may have been over 100 (al-Shamikh 1973, 9, 12). Hurgronje notes the existence of a longer list of "professors" working in the Masjid Haram given in the official Ottoman Hijaz yearbook for 1303 H. (1885-1886). However, he claims that many of those named were not in fact actively engaged in teaching but were merely included in order to guarantee them an income.

overlap. Many prominent scholars had affiliations with particular Sufi orders and Hurgronje reports that the Masjid Haram itself was used for instruction in Sufi “mysticism” on quiet days (2007, 216, 222–23).

Other important sites of instruction included dedicated religious schools, or madrasas. These institutions had initially developed elsewhere in the Islamic world from the eleventh century, teaching such subjects as *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tafsīr* (Qur’anic exegesis), hadith and grammar, “alongside more secular disciplines such as history, literature, rhetoric, mathematics and astronomy” (Mortel 1997, 236). They began appearing in the Hijaz in the twelfth century and were commonly located in the immediate proximity of the Masjid Haram (Dohaish 1974, 22–23; Mortel 1997, 236). Richard Mortel (1997) has identified 23 madrasas that existed in Mecca prior to the arrival of the Ottomans in 1517. For the Ottoman period, Dohaish identifies at least one more founded in the sixteenth century, another in the seventeenth century, and three in the eighteenth century (Dohaish 1978, 29).<sup>27</sup> However, by the end of the nineteenth century this traditional madrasa system had collapsed.<sup>28</sup> Hurgronje claimed that mismanagement had sent all such schools into decline, with administrators and officials then moving in or letting them out as lodgings (Hurgronje 2007, 186). Dohaish confirms that none of the sources that survive from this period speak of the survival of any of these institutions (1974, 180).

The status of Mecca as the destination for the hajj ensured that educational settings in the region attracted religious migrants from across the Islamic world. A cohort of important ‘ulama’ who were based in the Holy Cities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries included some, such as the hadith specialist ‘Abd Allah ibn Salim al-Basri (d. 1722), who had been born locally (Voll 2002). However, many others had arrived there following long journeys. They included Ibrahim ibn Hasan al-Kurani (d.

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<sup>27</sup> A list given by Dohaish (1974, 22a–22d) of madrasas founded in pre-Ottoman Mecca is less comprehensive than that offered by Mortel but appears to include two additional schools, the Sharabiyya and the Kinaniyya. Dates for the founding of madrasas and certain other details given by Dohaish sometimes differ from those suggested by Mortel .

<sup>28</sup> I designate these madrasas as “traditional” to distinguish them from a new wave of private and state schools which began to appear in the Hijaz towards the end of the nineteenth century, and which will be discussed later in this chapter.



1689), who was born in Shahrazur in the Kurdish region of what is now Iraq and whose son Abu Tahir Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Kurani (d. 1733) also became an influential figure in the Hijaz (Nafi 2002, 321). They also included the prominent hadith scholar Muhammad Hayya al-Sindi (d. 1750), from the town of Adilpur in what is now Pakistan (Voll 1975; Nafi 2006). The Holy Cities continued to attract influential figures from afar well into the nineteenth century. Particularly notable examples included the Sufi figurehead Ahmad ibn Idris (d. 1837), who was born on the Atlantic coast of Morocco but settled for several decades in the Hijaz in the early part of the nineteenth century (O'Fahey and Karrar 1987). Indeed, this period saw a rapid improvement in transportation to the region, particularly with the growth of steamship routes from South Asia from the 1830s. Where performance of the hajj by Muslims from distant lands had previously been a privilege largely limited to elites, it increasingly became a mass phenomenon. The total numbers taking part in the pilgrimage each year rose from 112,000 in 1831 to 300,000 in 1910 (Low 2008, 269–70, 274).<sup>29</sup> By the time Hurgronje arrived towards the end of the nineteenth century, those teaching in Mecca included 'ulama' who had either been born in or traced their family histories back to Egypt, Central Arabia, the Hadramawt, the Caucasus, India, Central and Southeast Asia, and no doubt many other locations besides (Hurgronje 2007, 197–202). Scholars in the region often maintained connections with communities far beyond the Peninsula, receiving and responding to solicitations for advice. Hurgronje observed that the most senior scholar in the Masjid Haram during his visit, who was affiliated with the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence, received such correspondence from "the Shafi'i parts of India, the East Indian Archipelago, or from Daghestan" (Hurgronje 2007, 195).

These migratory circuits gave rise to cosmopolitan religious educational settings, characterised by interactions not only between scholars but also between students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds.<sup>30</sup> As will be discussed below, those who

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<sup>29</sup> See Ochsenwald (1984, 61) for estimates of the numbers of pilgrims annually between 1853 and 1908. These figures suggest very significant variation year on year, depending on factors such as the political conditions in the Hijaz at any given time. It is worth noting that when numbers of pilgrims are cited in the literature, it is often unclear what proportion were travelling from within the Hijaz, compared with those arriving from beyond the region.

<sup>30</sup> Khaled Fahmy (n.d.) has noted that past European writings on cosmopolitanism in Middle Eastern settings have often been premised on erasing "natives" from the picture in favour of

studied in the Hijaz under figures like al-Basri, al-Sindi, and Ibrahim and Abu Tahir al-Kurani in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries included migrant students from as far afield as West Africa, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Again, this eclectic mix of students remained a feature right up until the late nineteenth century. Describing those attending lessons in Shafi'i jurisprudence in the Masjid Haram at that time, for example, Hurgronje noted that "the great majority... come from abroad", including from "Shafi'i parts of India (Malabar and Coromandel), from the East Indian Archipelago, and from Daghestan" (Hurgronje 2007, 200, 203). Foreign students would often study for several years in Mecca with a scholar from their country of origin, frequently in private homes, until they acquired sufficient mastery of Arabic to join *ḥalaqāt* in the Masjid Haram (Hurgronje 2007, 203, 227). The Sufi *ṭuruq* in Mecca also mostly served religious migrants, particularly "Malays, Turks and Indians", and Hurgronje noted that "pilgrims who stay only a few months are also in large numbers recruited for the *tariqahs*" (2007, 224–25).<sup>31</sup>

Scholars from far afield brought to the Hijaz reserves of spiritual capital – including knowledge, skills and qualifications – accumulated not only in their countries of origin but often also in many other locations besides. To give an example, by the time of his arrival in Medina in the seventeenth century, Ibrahim al-Kurani had already studied not only in his hometown of Shahrazur but also in Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo. Along the way, he had acquired learning in hadith, Arabic language, Sufism and history, as well as the jurisprudence of all four of the mainstream Sunni schools of law and works of theology associated with each of the Ash'ari, Maturidi and Salafi traditions (Nafi 2002, 321–22). Similarly, the West African hadith scholar Salih al-Fullani (d. 1803) – born in what is now the Republic of Guinea – had studied in Mauritania, Timbuktu, Tamgrut, Marrakesh and Cairo before settling in Medina, where he lived out the

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the perceived vibrancy and sophistication of European expatriate communities. Will Hanley (2008) has observed that invocation of the notion of cosmopolitanism in the more recent historiography has often tended to focus on supposed secular elites. In contrast, Mecca and Medina featured a religious sphere characterised by a socially and culturally diverse, polyglot milieu from which Europeans were almost entirely absent.

<sup>31</sup> Hurgronje's discussion of a tussle over leadership of the Naqshabandi order in Mecca not long before his arrival underlines the importance of these cross-border connections. In the course of the dispute, the various participants had written letters to and competed for support in locations as distant as Delhi and East Sumatra (2007, 191–94).

remainder of his days. His students included Meccans and Medinans, as well as Syrians, an Egyptian, a Kurd, a Moroccan and other West Africans (Hunwick 1986, 141, 144). Such flows of spiritual capital into Mecca and Medina through migratory circuits of scholars made them rich destinations for aspiring students. Through studies in settings such as the Masjid Haram, the latter could accumulate knowledge of and certification in subjects as varied as *fiqh*, legal methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), hadith, speculative theology, the fundamentals of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), *tawḥīd*, *tafsīr*, grammar, “style and poetic”, and logic (Hurgronje 2007, 207–09, 213).

The cosmopolitanism of these settings also contributed to considerable diversity in the content of religious instruction within the terms of many of these subject areas. For example, in the late nineteenth century lessons were available in the *fiqh* of all of the four major Sunni *madhāhib* (schools of law, sing. *madhhab*) in the Masjid Haram, with students typically gravitating to a teacher from their own legal tradition. Teachers affiliated with the Shafi’i *madhhab*, which had historically prevailed in the Hijaz, were most common. They numbered perhaps 20 or 30 out of the total of 50 or 60 individuals offering regular lessons in the mosque, and many of them had been born in Mecca. Scholars from the Hanafi *madhhab* favoured by the Ottomans appear to have made up nearly the same proportion. They included individuals not only from Mecca and other parts of the Ottoman Empire but also from India and Russian-ruled parts of Asia. Malikis were fewer and we are not told where they hailed from, although it is likely that they included scholars from the regions of North and West Africa where this *madhhab* predominates. Fewest of all were the Hanbalis, who numbered only one or two and were exclusively from Central Arabia (Hurgronje 2007, 197–200).<sup>32</sup> For all this diversity, also reflected in the wide range of *ṭuruq* present in the Hijaz, there does at this time seem to have been some degree of conformity within the ‘ulama’ establishment with regard to matters of creed. There appears to have been entrenched discrimination against the Shi’a, including those communities which existed as permanent residents of the Hijaz (Ende 1997; Hurgronje 2007, 199–200; Haykel 2010, 446). Furthermore, Hurgronje observed that “in dogmatic doctrine

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<sup>32</sup> For a list of works taught in the Masjid Haram around this time, in *fiqh* as well as in other subject areas, see Dohaish 1974, 211–12.

practically all are Ash'arites" (2007, 209). Historically, the Ash'ariyya has been the dominant creedal tradition within Sunni Islam. Other schools of thought with respect to creed include the Maturidiyya, which is particularly associated with the Hanafi school of law; the Hanbaliyya, which gives less place to human reason and with which the Wahhabis and other Salafis are basically aligned; and the Mu'tazila, whose emphasis on human reason was taken up by modernist reformists like Muhammad 'Abduh. These traditions differ in often quite subtle ways with respect to issues such as: the metaphorical or literal nature of God's attributes as described in the Qur'an; whether the Qur'an is eternal or created; whether standards of justice exist independently of God's will and whether they may be known other than by reference to Revelation; and questions of free will and moral responsibility.<sup>33</sup>

Arrangements for instruction in the Hijaz during this period were seemingly largely personalised and informal, apparently defined more by custom than by any explicit system of regulations. Hurgronje offers a uniquely rich description of practices in the Masjid Haram at the time of his visit, which may cautiously be treated as offering insights into the social technologies of education which had likely prevailed in that mosque and in other settings in the region for some time prior to his arrival. As he describes it, study circles in the Masjid Haram would come together after each of the daily prayers, with particular subjects associated with particular times of day (Hurgronje 2007, 195, 197, 207–09). Teaching often took place in the mosque courtyard in the morning, shifting to the shaded colonnades as the sun rose higher in the sky and then continuing by lantern-light into the evening (Hurgronje 2007, 196, 215). This arrangement persisted throughout most of the year, bar some minor disruption in connection with commemorations of the Prophet's birthday (*al-mawlid*) and his ascension to Heaven (*al-mi'rāj*). It was only seriously disrupted during Ramadan and then in the run-up to and during the hajj season, when teaching ground to a complete halt (Hurgronje 2007, 226–27).

In the context of any given lesson, a scholar would take his place on a cushion facing the Ka'ba and his students would sit on prayer rugs arranged in a circle around him.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Watt 2002a; Watt 2002b; Madelung 2002. On 'Abduh and the Mu'tazili tradition, see Haj 2009, esp. 109–52.

Each would have before him a copper ink stand, reed pens, penknives, writing paper, and a “portfolio holding several sheets of the text treated in the lecture”. A session would sometimes begin with an older student, known as the *muqri*, “chanting” the end of the previous lesson. Occasionally, the teacher would offer “some rhymed prose sentences in praise of the theme”, which would then be repeated by the *muqri* (Hurgronje 2007, 196–97). Discussing the teaching procedures which followed with reference to the example of instruction in Shafi’i law, Hurgronje suggests that all such lessons were based on commentaries by scholars like “Ibn Hajar, Sharbīnī and Ramlī” on texts by earlier authorities like “Abū Shujā, Rāfi’ī and Nawawī”:

A professor of to-day has... to choose one of the following methods: 1) to recite to his scholars one of the above mentioned commentaries with the glosses of a famous bygone professor, so that the sole advantage of oral instruction consists in precise vocalisation and occasional clearing up of small difficulties, 2) to make the reading of the commentary fruitful by oral exposition which he derives from several of the best glosses, or 3) to make and publish out of those glosses a new compilation (Hurgronje 2007, 204)

The first method was common. The second was more difficult, since it required “full mastery of Arabic speech”, particularly if students were allowed to intervene with questions. The third approach was particularly rare (Hurgronje 2007, 204).<sup>34</sup>

By the time of Hurgronje’s visit, the arrival of printed texts had apparently already had a significant impact on teaching. A government press had been opened in Mecca in 1883, prior to which books had come mostly from Cairo (Ochsenwald 1984, 79–80; Hurgronje 2007, 179). According to Hurgronje:

All students now bring to lecture printed copies of the text which is being treated, which circumstance has entirely changed the mode of instruction. Formerly the teacher had first to dictate the text, in the margin of which the students then noted down his glosses. Now, on the contrary, the student notes down only a few oral remarks (*taqārīr*) of the professor, and often has nothing to write at all (2007, 208)

Anyone could join these lessons and students were free to come and go as they pleased, with no need to register (Hurgronje 2007, 203). Most were male, though there was some limited provision for female seekers of knowledge, and instruction in

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<sup>34</sup> Hurgronje offers a similar account of a lesson on the *tafsīr* of al-Baydawi given by one particular scholar, who “always had the work with him and explained it as he went along by a selection of marginal glosses. He seldom added renderings of his own, though he would not be ashamed to explain a word by reference to the current Mekkan speech” (Hurgronje 2007, 213).

the Hijaz had at times also involved influential female scholars.<sup>35</sup> Students who committed themselves to a sustained period of study would acquire the capacity to engage with complex religious texts, learning how to vocalise them accurately or developing new understanding of their content through commentary offered by the scholar. Rote memorisation was also a valued mode of knowledge acquisition in this context.<sup>36</sup> In addition to these embodied capacities, students could also accumulate spiritual capital in the objectified form of *ijāza* certificates (pl. *ijāzāt*). These were traditionally issued by a scholar to affirm a student's mastery of a particular subject or text, or several of each. The form of the certificates reflected the personalised nature of education at this time, typically deriving their authority from the fact that they included a list of the individuals through whom the knowledge in question had been transmitted; starting with the teacher, then his teacher, and so on back in history.<sup>37</sup>

Far less information is available concerning the modes of pedagogy which prevailed in other settings in the Hijaz, and the forms of spiritual capital which were exchanged and accumulated in those settings. However, for the period when madrasas still existed in the region, students of those schools were also free to choose the subjects they wished to study and the teachers from whom they would take their knowledge. As in mosque *halaqāt*, there was no fixed time period defining the start and end of a course of study (Dohaish 1974, 23–24). *Ijāzāt* in the subjects of *fiqh*, *tawhīd*, *tafsīr* and hadith were also issued to students who undertook studies in the context of Sufi *zawāyā* (Dohaish 1974, 25).

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<sup>35</sup> According to Hurgronje, "On Friday morning the... Hadrami dwarf professor, Sa'īd Bâ Besêl, used in 1884-1885 to devote himself to those of the fair sex who had a taste for learning. Girls and women of the better classes were not so much initiated by him into any one or other branch of knowledge as provided with all sorts of useful sentences from the different disciplines (Law, Dogma, Tradition, and also general culture or *adab*). On other days the same Sheikh gave also to a female audience after the afternoon prayer lectures resembling sermons" (Hurgronje 2007, 216). Hunwick (1986, 141–42) mentions Umm al-Zayn (b. 1739/40), a woman who "became one of the leading Meccan teachers of the late eighteenth century".

<sup>36</sup> Hurgronje observed that "all good students" knew Ibn Malik's famous work of Arabic grammar the *Alfiyya* "by heart" and most of those attending *tafsīr* lessons had memorised the Qur'an. He also mentions a Hanafi scholar whose son had memorised the entirety of the famous hadith collection compiled by the ninth-century scholar al-Bukhari (2007, 208, 213–14).

<sup>37</sup> For discussion of the issuing of *ijāzāt* in the nineteenth-century Hijaz, along with examples of such certificates, see al-Shamikh 1973, 18–25; Dohaish 1974, 34–35. For discussion of the *ijāza* as a form of certification more generally, see e.g. Messick 1993, 92–94.

Just as spiritual capital flowed into the Hijaz through circuits of migrant scholars, and came to be distributed there and accumulated by new actors through the arrangements described above, so did education in these settings give rise to outward flows of spiritual capital as migrant students returned to their communities of origin or travelled on elsewhere bearing new embodied capacities and certificates of qualification. Many migrants who undertook at least some of their education in the Hijaz went on to become influential figures in their own right, embarking upon religious, social and political projects with significant ramifications in locations around the world. Students of the seventeenth-century Hijaz-based scholar Ibrahim al-Kurani, for example, included one Shaykh Yusuf, who would later lead a religiously-framed uprising against Dutch colonisers in what is now Indonesia. Al-Kurani's students also included an Achehnese named 'Abd al-Ra'uf (d. 1690), who became "a major influence in the revival of orthodox Sufism in Sumatra" (Voll 1975, 39; Nafi 2002, 307). Those who studied in the Hijaz with al-Kurani's son Abu Tahir in the eighteenth century included the Delhi-born Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi (d. 1762), who later achieved fame as a major religious reformist in South Asia (Voll 1980, 266; Levtzion and Voll 1987a, 10; Voll 1999, 527–28). Students of Muhammad Hayya al-Sindi in Medina around that time included Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), who subsequently established the revivalist tradition in Najd that is today known as Wahhabism and whose alliance with the Al Sa'ud laid the foundation for a series of expansionist political projects which culminated with the founding of Saudi Arabia in the twentieth century.

Connections of this kind have led historians such as John Voll to hypothesise that the Hijaz represented a key focal point of an interconnected wave of religious revival and reform spanning the Islamic world in the eighteenth century, broadly characterised by a synthesis of: hadith studies; a socially activist brand of Sufism; and rejection of the practice of imitating the rulings of the established schools of law (*taqlīd*) in favour of derivation of legal rulings by independent interpretation on the basis of direct access to the source texts (*ijtihād*) (Rahman 1977; Voll 1980; Levtzion and Voll 1987b; Voll 1988; Voll 2002). Such claims are contested by other scholars, who emphasise the enormous differences that existed between the projects of the array of reformists in

question.<sup>38</sup> They have rightly underlined the need for more research into the content of their programmes, taking into account the importance of the particular social, cultural and political contexts in which each of them operated (Dallal 1993; Haykel 2003). While this debate is ongoing, what does seem clear is that knowledge, skills and qualifications accumulated in the cosmopolitan setting of the eighteenth-century Hijaz in at least some instances contributed to both informing and lending legitimacy to major reformist projects around the Islamic world. In the context of this thesis, it is particularly worth noting that there is a strong case to be made for the claim that a period spent studying with Muhammad Hayya al-Sindi in Medina influenced a shift on the part of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab towards criticism of *taqlid* and many popular religious practices (Voll 1975; Nafi 2006).<sup>39</sup>

Transactions which occurred in educational settings in the Hijaz continued to have comparable consequences into the nineteenth century. It was following his studies with the Moroccan Sufi scholar Ahmad ibn Idris in the Hijaz and Yemen, for example, that the North African Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Sanusi founded the Sanusiyya order in Mecca which later spread to North Africa and played an important role in the struggle against European imperialism there (Rahman 1977; Voll 1980, 269). Others returning to their communities of origin following studies in the Holy Cities in the nineteenth century participated in projects including socio-moral reform, state-building and anti-imperialist militancy in locations as distant as Senegambia, Somalia and the Caucasus, which appear to have related at least in part to their initiation in the Hijaz into Sufi orders like the Tijaniyya, the Qadiriyya and the Salihyya (Voll 1999). Again, while it would certainly be naïve to suggest that such projects were simply a product of influences and symbolic resources flowing outwards from the Hijaz, the least that can

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<sup>38</sup> This includes Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, whose own religious project was in fact profoundly hostile to Sufism.

<sup>39</sup> Nafi’s article in particular is an important rejoinder to those historians who had previously been more circumspect with regard to the significance of al-Sindi and others in Medina as an influence upon Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s spiritual and intellectual development (e.g. Cook 1992; Dallal 1993).



be said is that knowledge, qualifications and other forms of capital accumulated there fed into a host of dynamics involved in shaping and legitimating them.<sup>40</sup>

The discussion thus far has explored religious economies centred on educational settings in the Hijaz prior to the twentieth century from the perspective of the migrants who taught and studied there, the forms of spiritual capital which they brought, exchanged, accumulated and took away with them, and the social technologies which facilitated these transactions. The final element which constituted these economies was of course material capital, necessary in order to provide for the upkeep of settings for instruction, to allow the production and purchase of goods such as manuscripts and printed texts, and especially to cover the subsistence costs of scholars and students.

These material resources were made available in part by the Ottoman authorities. William Ochsenwald has gone so far as to argue that religious actors and institutions in the Hijaz in fact drew most of their income “in one form or another from the Ottoman government”. He notes that revenues from religious endowments (*awqāf*, sing. *waqf*) were managed by a specialised official treasury and that funds of this kind which benefited the Hijaz, based both in Egypt and locally, were endowed by Ottoman sultans, as well as by the Sharifian amirs and private benefactors. He also highlights the role of “imperial charities” which channelled far greater quantities of resources to the Hijaz directly from Istanbul (1984, 55–56). In total, Ochsenwald estimates that some 2,000 people were employed in the Masjid Haram and the Masjid Nabawi alone, undertaking roles as diverse as cleaning and lighting candles, carrying water and sweeping floors (1984, 52, 56). At least some of the Sufi orders present in the Ottoman Hijaz also drew on *awqāf* monies or material resources made available by the Ottoman authorities (Ochsenwald 1984, 45, 55).

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Launay has noted that figures who engaged in militant campaigns framed in religious terms in West Africa from the late eighteenth century onwards “attempted to draw their legitimacy from direct study in the Hijaz as opposed to local scholarly traditions”. He makes the important point, however, that such claims to legitimacy were mediated and contested by an array of actors with reference to local structures of religious authority (1990, esp. 179–80).

For the period when the old madrasa system still existed in Mecca, the Ottomans had also invested in that sphere of education. Madrasas founded in the Ottoman period included at least one established by the then sultan Sulayman al-Qanuni in the sixteenth century (Dohaish 1978, 29). Prior to the arrival of the Ottomans, funds for such institutions had come from investments by rulers and other elite actors across the Islamic world, at least partly as a marker of prestige and to display political influence in Islam's holiest city (Mortel 1997, 236). The madrasas identified by Mortel in pre-Ottoman Mecca included institutions founded by an Egypt-based Syrian merchant, an Ayyubid governor of Aden, a manumitted female Abyssinian slave, the ruler of Irbil, Mamluk elites, Rasulid sultans of Yemen, and assorted Indian rulers.

The Ottoman state's role as an investor in the religious economies which ran through the Hijaz contributed to a capacity to exert significant leverage. At the time of Hurgronje's visit in the late nineteenth century, for example, the state authorities exercised some measure of control over who could offer instruction in the Masjid Haram through the figure of the Shaykh al-'Ulama', who was "appointed like other guildmasters by Government" (Hurgronje 2007, 189). Little is known about this post and how exactly it related to the Ottoman and Sharifian frameworks (Ochsenwald 1984, 53). However, Hurgronje tells us that the holder was usually a Mufti and we know that the muftis of Mecca and Medina were appointed from Istanbul (Ochsenwald 1984, 52). While qualification to teach in the mosque was in theory conferred by examination, Hurgronje suggested that in practice the Shaykh al-'Ulama' appointed scholars to teach "according to his pleasure" (2007, 189–190). He could call upon the eunuchs employed to guard the mosque or even the "Government police" to eject any interlopers (Hurgronje 2007, 195).<sup>41</sup> Discussing the latter part of the nineteenth century, Ochsenwald reports that the qadi of Mecca – who represented the Ottoman state – also played a role in arbitrating in conflicts between the representatives of the four *madhāhib* within the Masjid Haram (1984, 41, 50, 84). Similarly, Ottoman state involvement in education in the Masjid Nabawi in Medina

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<sup>41</sup> There were apparently around 50 eunuchs in the Masjid Haram during the nineteenth century and some 120 in Medina in 1853. They were slaves, often of African origin, and "many had chosen to go to Mecca or Medina from Istanbul, seeing in those places an opportunity for a pious retirement from the imperial court" (Ochsenwald 1984, 51).

seems likely to have been facilitated by the fact that it was common for the Shaykh al-‘Ulama’ of that mosque in the nineteenth century to concurrently hold the post of governor of the city on behalf of Istanbul (Ochsenwald 1984, 50). Since the first half of the nineteenth century, there had also existed the post of chief Sufi shaykh. The holder of this office, who was assisted by an advisory council, mediated between the Ottoman state and the many *ṭuruq* in the Hijaz. He sometimes had enough sway to appoint individuals to head particular *ṭuruq*, and Istanbul was even on occasion able to do so directly (Ochsenwald 1984, 53–54).

In addition to exercising leverage through investment, states which ruled the Hijaz also had the capacity to intervene coercively in the religious sphere. As far back as 1633, Istanbul had banned Shi‘a from undertaking the hajj and it was also the case that Wahhabis were prevented from doing so up until the point when the Saudis occupied Mecca in the early nineteenth century (Haykel 2010, 446–47). During their own brief stint in control of the Holy Cities at that time, the Wahhabis tore down domes adorning tombs, put an end to the practice of the imams of the four *madhāhib* each leading the members of their own *madhhab* in prayer, destroyed Sufi texts and works on the discipline of logic, and blocked the arrival of pilgrims from Egypt and Syria (Redissi 2008, 164; Haykel 2010, 448). There were also coercive interventions in the religious sphere by the Ottomans in the nineteenth century, particularly against migrants from India. In 1849, for example, representatives of the ‘ulama’ establishment in Mecca, along with the *vali* and deputy amir, secured Istanbul’s approval for the exile of Indian Muslims accused of offences including renouncing the mainstream Sunni *madhāhib* and denying miracles performed by saints. Similar moves against Indian pilgrims occurred in 1874, 1883, 1885 and 1886 (Ochsenwald 1984, 47–48). At least in the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, coercive state interventions of this kind against non-Indians were apparently rare (Ochsenwald 1984, 48).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Amongst a small number of examples, Ochsenwald mentions the imprisonment of one individual in the 1880s over pamphlets deemed dangerous by the ‘ulama’, in the context of the dispute which occurred at this time over the leadership of the Naqshbandi *ṭarīqa* in Mecca;

In addition to providing for some degree of influence within the religious sphere, material investment on the part of the Ottoman authorities also allowed the state to draw upon the world of religious scholarship and instruction for legitimacy. This could occur in quite direct ways, such as when officials demanded fatwas from the Shaykh al-‘Ulama’ and other top scholars to legitimate political decisions (Hurgronje 2007, 190). Similarly, Hurgronje noted that the Sufi orders were courted by statesmen, who “vie for the favour of sheikhs who have at their disposal such troops of disciples” (2007, 224). Examples of the Ottoman state’s use of the *ṭuruq* for political purposes include the role played by members of the Naqshabandi order in raising funds for the construction of the Hijaz railroad and in lending their backing to the pan-Islamic policies of Abdülhamid II (Ochsenwald 1984, 45).

However, the leverage exercised by the Ottoman state within the religious economies which ran through the Hijaz – both as an investor and as a coercive regulator – appears to have been subject to certain limits. For a start, alternative data set out by Dohaish, while it does not necessarily contradict Ochsenwald’s claims about the scale of Ottoman investment, at the very least raises questions concerning the quantities in question.<sup>43</sup> Dohaish notes that only 54 scholars out of a total of 270 who were listed as teaching in the Masjid Haram in the official Ottoman yearbook for the Hijaz covering the year 1303 H. (1884-1885) were in receipt of a stipend from the state. In itself, this is consistent with Hurgronje’s claim that only around 50 to 60 scholars were actually engaged in regular teaching in the mosque at that time. More importantly, however, Dohaish observes that even in those cases the sums involved were nominal. While the amounts in question varied, even the maximum payment of 500 piastres made to the most senior scholars once every year was less than the 600 piastres paid out on a monthly basis to a teacher in an Ottoman state school in Jidda around the same time. Moreover, the teacher’s salary used here for comparison would itself have been “barely sufficient to cover his basic daily needs” (Dohaish 1974, 89–92, 204–05). It is not clear whether these token stipends paid out to scholars may have been commonly

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and the execution of a Sudanese who declared himself the mahdi and mobilised a small group of slave followers in 1886.

<sup>43</sup> Dohaish’s thesis was completed prior to the publication of Ochsenwald’s book but is not cited in the latter work.

supplemented with other kinds of support controlled more or less directly by the Ottoman authorities, such as payments in kind, state-administered *awqāf*, or access to subsidies of grain and money disbursed to residents of the Hijaz every year as a matter of prestige.

Moreover, the extent of the leverage that could be exercised by the Ottoman state by virtue of its investments seems likely to have been limited by the fact that many of those involved in the sphere of religious education also had access to alternative sources of income. Scholars who taught in the Masjid Haram sometimes engaged in “various trades which make them independent” and received valuable gifts from students or other admirers. They could also draw on donations made to the mosque teaching body collectively by wealthy pilgrims, particularly from India, although the state may have exercised some control over such funds by virtue of the fact that they were distributed by the Shaykh al-‘Ulama’ (Hurgronje 2007, 188–89). Other sources of income for those involved in the religious sphere included “performing marriages, notarizing documents, rendering judgments outside regular court service, [and] opening the Kaba or sections of the Harams outside regular hours”, while muftis were also able to charge foreign pilgrims for the service of authorising their adoption of Arabic names (Ochsenwald 1984, 55). Finally, Hijaz-based ‘ulama’ toured other parts of the Islamic world to seek funding; although it was apparently the state-appointed Shaykh al-‘Ulama’ who nominated individuals to go on such travels and they sometimes carried letters of reference from the Ottoman sultan (Ochsenwald 1984, 49, 53). Beyond the sphere of the ‘ulama’ establishment, the Sufi orders similarly had access to substantial autonomous sources of funding; from a large residential Naqshabandi *zāwiyā* in late nineteenth-century Mecca the cost of which was “entirely borne by the brethren”, to Sufi shaykhs whose residences were “filled to overflow with the costly gifts of their venerators” (Hurgronje 2007, 222). It is also likely that at least some students had access to private sources of income, including from family members and business activities.

Besides the question of funding arrangements, the capacity of the state to exercise leverage in the religious sphere either as an investor or as a regulator appears likely to have been limited somewhat by the informal and personalised nature of education at

the time. For example, while scholars might be appointed to teach in the Masjid Haram by a “precise order” from the state-appointed Shaykh al-‘Ulama’, Hurgronje noted that individuals could also come to be considered qualified to give lessons there as a result of more diffuse customary factors (Hurgronje 2007, 189). Furthermore, it is not at all clear that there was in practice any particularly close supervision of teaching in the mosque. While scholars appointed to offer instruction there were customarily expected to convene at least one lesson per day, they could apparently absent themselves for many months without that hiatus even coming to the attention of the Shaykh al-‘Ulama’ (Hurgronje 2007, 213). Describing part of the role of the Shaykh al-‘Ulama’ as being “to direct the order of teaching in the Mosque”, Hurgronje qualified this with the observation that, “That is to say so far as there can be ‘order’ in things Mekkan, for his authority like that of all the other authorities is limited by custom, or alleged custom. The ‘custom’ is the more readily accepted by all because every one can interpret it at will” (Hurgronje 2007, 195).

Hurgronje’s perception of what apparently seemed to him a certain laxity in the arrangements for teaching in the Masjid Haram cannot be explained away entirely as a reflection of a European colonialist’s disdain. Similar attitudes are found in an account of studies in the Masjid Nabawi in Medina in the early twentieth century, for example, this time penned by a former student in that mosque. The author, ‘Abd al-Haqq Naqshabandi, lamented the absence of “written regulation or responsible administration or supervision or organised examinations”.<sup>44</sup>

Arrangements similar to those described here represented a valued mode of pedagogy, which had served the purposes for which it was intended for many centuries and which would persist in mosque settings for a long time to come. However, these personalised and informal methods of instruction were by this time coming to be seen by many local observers as traditional and somewhat disorderly in comparison with new modes of education which had begun to appear in the Hijaz from the late nineteenth century. In the context of this thesis, the significance of these new, increasingly rationalised and bureaucratised social technologies was that they allowed

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<sup>44</sup> As quoted in al-Shamikh 1973, 63. The original source is an article published in the magazine *al-Manhal* in 1962.

for the creation of spaces in which administrators could exercise more sustained monitoring and control over teaching. This in turn could facilitate closer regulation of the religious sphere by the state. These developments traced back in part to the arrival in the Hijaz of the gradually expanding Ottoman state schooling system.

### **Bureaucratising Education**

While the extension of state-led education had been a concern for the Ottoman authorities since the Tanzimat reforms several decades earlier, it was only during the reign of Abdülhamid II from 1876 that these efforts really took off. With developments such as the emergence of mass education at the primary school level, the empire “came into its own as an ‘educator state’ with a systematic programme of education/indoctrination for subjects it intended to mould into citizens” (Deringil 1998, 93–94). Recent historiography has challenged the longstanding view that these state-led initiatives represented part of a broader process of “Westernisation” of Ottoman cultural and political life. Rather, elements of European-style schooling were actively appropriated, assimilated into the particular social, cultural and political frameworks that prevailed within the empire, and put to new uses; including forging a political community capable of resisting threats which were perceived as emanating from minority populations and neighbouring states, as well as from missionaries and other forms of European encroachment (Fortna 2002).

The Ottoman state education system was late in arriving to the Hijaz. It was not until 1874 that the first state school was founded in the region; a *rushdiyye* (advanced primary) school established that year in Jidda (Dohaish 1974, 74–75). Although legislation introduced in 1869 had provided for the establishment of education councils to administer schools in the provinces, it seems that no such body was established in the Hijaz until 1891 and there is reason to think that it may not have become properly functional until 1908 (Dohaish 1974, 62–71, 76–79; Somel 2001, 100–01, fn. 41). Even by 1908, there were apparently just four schools at the *ibtidai* (lower primary) level, four at the *rushdiyye* (advanced primary) level and a single *idadi* (secondary) school serving the entire region (Dohaish 1974, 74–75). It was only in that year that the first teacher training college was opened in the Hijaz, making it and Basra the last *vilayets* to receive such facilities (Somel 2001, 134). One reason for the delay in

rolling out state education in the Hijaz may have been the weakness of Ottoman administrative structures there and the consequent difficulty of collecting the taxes that would usually fund these new apparatuses (Somel 2001, 100,122).

Nonetheless, this fledgling Ottoman schooling system created new spaces for education which, apart from being more geared towards instruction in secular subjects, were also in many other ways quite different from the mosque study circles and other arenas that had long prevailed in the Hijaz. In contrast with the informality of the mosque *halaqa*, in which students came and went as they pleased and studied for as long as they desired or could afford, the Ottoman system provided for the division of schooling into a set number of consecutive chronological stages according to the age and ability of pupils. Ottoman schools were also expected to operate according to fixed, state-approved curricula, delineating the precise forms of cultural capital which students were to accumulate throughout the course of their attendance. Annual examinations were to be used to gather information about students' acquisition of the knowledge and competencies in question, and to determine their progress through the system. At least in principle, the new Ottoman schools were also to operate within the terms of a hierarchical administrative framework which would provide for regular inspection of each institution (Dohaish 1974, 62–72). It is clear that not all of these provisions were effectively implemented in the Hijaz. As noted above, it was a long time before the proposed administrative framework was put in place. Although detailed syllabuses existed, there is evidence to suggest that these were not actually adhered to in some schools. Moreover, with instruction in Turkish, such Ottoman schools as existed appear to have catered largely for the children of state officials (Dohaish 1974, 85–88). Nonetheless, in terms of ideals even if not always in practice, this system marked a new drive by state actors to create sites of education amenable to direct and sustained monitoring and control, investment in which could allow for quite targeted interventions in the cultural sphere.

The gradual expansion of the Ottoman schooling system also had a broader impact insofar as it helped to catalyse the emergence of a new generation of private schools in the Hijaz around the same time, which became another arena for the development of similarly rationalised, bureaucratised styles of education. The first of them, the



Madrasa Sawlatiyya, was established in Mecca in 1875, very soon after the founding of the first Ottoman state school. In Mecca alone, there subsequently appeared the Madrasa Fakhriyya (est. 1879), the Madrasa Islamiyya (est. 1886), the Madrasa Khayriyya (est. 1908) and Madrasat al-Falah (est. 1911) (Dohaish 1974, 147–49). There were also four new private schools founded in Jidda over roughly the same period; probably at least 12 in Medina, and perhaps considerably more; and possibly two in Ta'if (Dohaish 1974, 147–49). While the content of teaching in these institutions varied, instruction commonly included a very strong religious component alongside secular subjects like grammar and arithmetic, and occasionally history and geography. In at least some cases, the new schools made use of European-style classroom arrangements and innovations in pedagogy including fixed syllabuses and regular examinations yielding quantified results (Dohaish 1974, 168–78; Laffan 2003, 199). From the time of its founding, for example, the Sawlatiyya operated according to a curriculum which would take students at least ten years to complete in full. It was built around detailed lists of the particular texts which were to be studied at each stage in the process. It stipulated that *fiqh* classes, for example, were to be taught from a series of specific works associated with the Hanafi school of law favoured by the Ottomans (al-Saqqa 1978, 37–41). In these administrative arrangements, such schools differed significantly from the madrasas which had existed in the Hijaz in earlier periods, and which by this time had anyway entirely disappeared.

Dohaish has argued that the appearance of this new wave of private institutions was driven in large part by antipathy towards the Ottoman schools, which were resented in particular for their use of Turkish as the main language of instruction. In response, and also desirous of “catching up” with developments in nearby locations like Egypt and Syria, he suggests local actors strove to develop new Arabic-language alternatives. They drew for inspiration on the traditional Qur'an schools of the region (*katātīb*, sing. *kuttāb*) but also on the “improvements” witnessed in the new Ottoman system (Dohaish 1974, 145–46).<sup>45</sup> This narrative of local actors simultaneously resisting and

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<sup>45</sup> At least in theory, the new private schools were further bound up with the Ottoman system insofar as they were subject to regulation and inspection by the provincial governor (*valī*) and local education administration. However, particularly in light of questions about the very

appropriating aspects of an apparatus of imperial intrusion tells part of the story. However, it was also the case that these new private schools were very much tied up with the cross-border flows of migrants, social technologies and resources that had long defined the religious economy of the Hijaz. The seminal Madrasa Sawlatiyya was in fact established by the Indian scholar Rahmat Allah Khalil al-'Uthmani, who had arrived in Mecca in 1857 as an exile fleeing the aftermath of that year's uprising against the British in his country of origin. It was named after the benefactor who provided the funds necessary for its launch, a wealthy woman named Sawlat al-Nisa' Begum from Calcutta who had come into contact with Rahmat Allah whilst in Mecca on hajj (Dohaish 1974, 149–51; al-Saqqā 1978; 'Abd al-Jabbar 1982, 108–12). Of the other schools that were founded in Mecca, all either had direct links to the Sawlatiyya or else strong cross-border connections of their own. The Madrasa Fakhriyya was founded by a former teacher of the Sawlatiyya, 'Abd al-Haqq Qari', partly on the basis of donations by Indian benefactors (al-Shamikh 1973, 50; Dohaish 1974, 154–56).<sup>46</sup> The Islamiyya was established by another Indian immigrant to Mecca, 'Abd al-Khalīq Muhammad Husayn al-Banghali, apparently at the suggestion of the Sawlatiyya founder Rahmat Allah (Dohaish 1974, 156–57). The founder of the Khayriyya was Muhammad Husayn al-Khayyat, a Mecca-born graduate of the Sawlatiyya (al-Shamikh 1973, 50–52; Dohaish 1974, 157–59). Finally, Madrasat al-Falah was established by Muhammad 'Ali Rida Zaynal, described by Dohaish as a "widely travelled merchant" who "had been particularly impressed by the spirited attempts made to extend education in India and Egypt, and... accordingly decided to set up schools in the whole of the Hijaz" (1974, 162–63). In at least some cases, these schools catered not only for Hijazi students but also for significant numbers of Indians, Indonesians, Iranians, Iraqis, Bukharis, Yemenis and Hadramis.<sup>47</sup>

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existence of a local education administration in the Hijaz until 1908, it is not clear to what extent such powers were exercised (Dohaish 1974, 146–47).

<sup>46</sup> Dohaish uses the name Madrasa Tajwidiyya and names the founder as Qari' 'Abd al-Haqq. However, it is clear that he and al-Shamikh are discussing the same institution.

<sup>47</sup> See Dohaish (1974, 153–54) for figures showing the proportion of students from all of these backgrounds at the Sawlatiyya between 1910 and 1913. In 1913, Hijazi students appear to have been significantly outnumbered by those from outside the region.

A history of the Madrasa Sawlatiyya suggests that at the time of its founding that influential school operated “in the style of al-Azhar and the old Islamic schools of India” (al-Saqqā 1978, 37). Muhammad Qasim Zaman has observed that the approach to education employed there had much in common with the Deobandi madrasas of the subcontinent (2007, 256). The Hanafi leanings of the Sawlatiyya, in addition to being amenable in the Ottoman context, may well have related to its connections with India, another region where the Hanafi *madhhab* prevailed. Moreover, sources from the time offer further specific evidence of Indian influences at work in shaping the social technologies in use in this new wave of Hijazi private schools. In a speech at an event organised by the Sawlatiyya in 1912, for example, a teacher noted that examinations that year had proceeded according to methods “known to the scholars of India”. At the same event, it was announced that the school’s director had recently travelled to India partly with a view to observing the results of educational reforms there, particularly those developed by the Nadwat al-‘Ulama’ “upon which we pinned great hopes”.<sup>48</sup> Formally founded in 1898 but only really established in 1908, the flagship Dar al-‘Ulum college of the Nadwat al-‘Ulama’ in Lucknow represented “an attempt at a middle way between the ‘traditionalist’ teaching at the Dar al-‘ulum of Deoband and the more ‘modernist’ ideas on education elaborated at the ‘Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College’ of ‘Aligarh” (Hartung 2006, 140). The Nadwat al-‘Ulama’ movement was known for its emphasis on the Arabic language and had ties to Middle Eastern reformists including Muhammad ‘Abduh going back to the late nineteenth century.

The bureaucratised modes of education described here – including the use of pre-approved syllabuses, fixed-length courses of study, regular examinations, hierarchical systems of inspection, and so on – were thus far limited to Ottoman state institutions with limited local uptake and privately run schools, influenced both by the Ottoman system and connections with locations as distant as India. However, it was not long before political actors seized upon these new social technologies as a means for exerting more sustained monitoring and closer control over key sites of religious instruction. In late November 1913, apparently acting on an order from the Grand

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<sup>48</sup> Speeches reproduced in al-Shamikh 1973, 159–64.

Sharif Husayn ibn 'Ali, a committee of 'ulama' approved a document formally outlining an overhaul of teaching arrangements in the Masjid Haram in Mecca.<sup>49</sup> Once again, these new arrangements differed sharply from the quite autonomous, informal and personalised system witnessed by Hurgronje. Where the latter had emphasised the prevalence of custom in combination with the personal oversight of the Shaykh al-'Ulama', the new document – which appears to have been the first of its kind in this context – outlined detailed regulations geared towards instituting a much more bureaucratised and rationalised system.

Teaching in the mosque was now to be limited to a fixed list of subject areas.<sup>50</sup> It was to be overseen by a council headed by the Hanafi mufti and including also the muftis of the three other mainstream Sunni *madhāhib*, along with three teaching scholars (Section 1, Article 1). The actual work of teaching was to be undertaken by the four muftis, along with 15 salaried teachers (*mudarrisūn*) and an unspecified number of adjunct teachers (*mulāzimūn*) (Section 1, Article 4; Section 3). The latter do not appear to have drawn a regular salary but did have the right to a share in donations made to mosque staff, which were to be divided amongst all of the teachers and adjuncts “according to the old arrangement” (Section 6, Article 1). Where previously scholars offering instruction in the Masjid Haram had enjoyed a great deal of freedom to come and go as they pleased, salaried teachers were now formally expected to give a minimum of three lessons per day and were required to seek prior permission for any absences (Section 3, Article 2; Section 3, Article 6).

Students would be allowed to progress in their studies only by passing an annual examination, which would take place in the month of Rajab (Section 3, Articles 4 and 5). In a further sign of a shift away from the old personalised arrangements and towards a new institutionalised framework, they were now to be issued not with *ijāzāt* by

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<sup>49</sup> The document would later be published as “al-Tawali' al-Saniyya fi Nizam al-Tadris al-Jadid bi-Masjid Makka al-Mahmiyya” 1913, which is the source of the discussion that follows. This document has previously been discussed in Dohaish 1974, 215–21.

<sup>50</sup> They were *tawhīd*, *tafsīr*, hadith, *uṣūl al-ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, syntax, morphology, rhetoric (*al-ma'ānī wa-l-bayān wa-l-badī'*), logic (*al-mantiq*), history, biographies (*siyar*, presumably of the Prophet and other major figures in Islamic history), and mathematics (Section 4, Article 2).

individual scholars but with pro forma certificates, which included a record of their exam grades and bore the stamps of the four muftis and members of the mosque committee.<sup>51</sup> Examinations were also to be used to determine students' attainment of the status of adjunct teacher or their appointment to a post as a salaried teacher (Section 3, Article 7; Section 5, Article 2).

Most significantly, the system as a whole was geared towards the systematic gathering of information about all of those involved, both teachers and students. In addition to the teaching body, the mosque was also to employ a team of salaried administrative staff, comprising two inspectors and a clerk (Section 2). The inspectors were to report to the Hanafi mufti all texts being taught, noting the title of the text in question, the name of the individual teaching it, and the dates on which that teaching began and ended. Although the document did not include a specific fixed syllabus, the inspectors were to draw attention to any individual who "teaches [texts] corrupting of morals and creed, [which are] other than the books of Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jamā'a" (Section 2, Article 2). They were also to note any lack of punctuality and the presence of unlicensed individuals attempting to offer instruction. Information gathered through this system of surveillance was to be fed up a hierarchical administrative framework which was ultimately headed by the amir himself.

Teaching in the Masjid Haram continued to proceed according to this new system following the displacement of Ottoman power by the Sharifian state that was ushered in with the Arab Revolt of 1916 (Dohaish 1974, 293). Many of the new private schools had already shut down by this time and others were converted into state schools by the Sharifian regime. Some, however, including the Sawlatiyya, the Fakhriyya, the Islamiyya and branches of Madrasat al-Falah in both Mecca and Jidda, survived as independent institutions (Dohaish 1974, 281–91). An initial extension of schooling for Hijazi boys under the Sharifian state – with teaching now in Arabic, rather than in Turkish – was eventually reversed as Husayn grew increasingly wary that the expansion of such opportunities might provoke political instability (Dohaish 1974, 229–80).

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<sup>51</sup> See the brief discussion of this issue, along with a reproduction of one such certificate, in Dohaish 1974, 293 and Appendix 1.

At the time of their arrival in the mid-1920s, the Saudis would thus take control of a region in which religious education was fragmented between different systems. On the one hand, many mosques, Sufi lodges and other settings likely continued to operate on more or less informal and personalised lines similar to those which had long prevailed in the Hijaz. On the other hand, a newly bureaucratised set of arrangements which were more amenable to close and sustained regulation by state actors were by this time to be found in the context of the Masjid Haram, as well as in what was left of the newer kinds of private and state-run schools.

## **Conclusion**

For centuries prior to the Saudi occupation in the 1920s, the Hijaz had been an important site for transactions occurring within the terms of continent-spanning religious economies. Pilgrim scholars who had accumulated spiritual capital in their communities of origin and often in many other locations besides brought these resources with them to the region. In the context of mosque study circles and comparable arrangements in madrasas, Sufi lodges and private homes, this capital was distributed in the form of knowledge, skills and certificates of qualification. Migrant students in turn took reserves of spiritual capital acquired in the Hijaz back into cross-border circulation, sometimes putting these resources to work in the service of religious, social and political projects with far-reaching ramifications. The transactions in the Hijaz which sat at the heart of these cross-border patterns of exchange were sustained by long-distance flows of material capital, including investment by the Ottoman authorities and endowments made available by private benefactors many thousands of miles away. The Ottoman state exerted significant influence within these economies, both coercively regulating transactions seen as politically problematic and also leveraging its investment through the appointment of intermediaries.

However, new social technologies which took root in the region from the late nineteenth century onwards were embraced by state actors as affording the possibility of far closer monitoring and control of such matters. Increasingly bureaucratised modes of instruction, which arrived as a result of imperial state-building and through private channels from locations as distant as India, were eventually introduced to the most prestigious site of religious learning in the region, the Masjid Haram. Techniques

such as the imposition of explicit regulations, regular examinations and hierarchical systems of inspection allowed officials to gather information on the activities of students and scholars, to exclude undesirable religious actors, and to veto the exchange and accumulation of particular forms of spiritual capital. Such ends could be achieved in more systematic and intrusive ways than had previously been possible according to the relatively informal, personalised and autonomous modes of pedagogy which had long prevailed in the region. As I explore in the next chapter, these new styles of education could also facilitate efforts by state actors to exert influence in the religious sphere through the targeted investment of material capital.

## Chapter 2

### Education and Wahhabi Expansion Within Saudi-Ruled Territories: Transformations in the Occupied Hijaz

In September 1924, Ikhwan tribal militias loyal to ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al Sa‘ud swept into the mountain town of Ta‘if near Mecca and plundered it over a period of days, massacring many of those residents who stayed behind (Vassiliev 2000, 261). The capture of the remainder of the Hijaz over the months that followed represented a major step in the extension of both Saudi political power and also Wahhabi religious influence across the Peninsula. The violent coercion of the Ikhwan was of course crucial to each of these two intertwined projects. At the same time, the occupied Hijaz would also become the arena for the development of a more consensual – though nonetheless power-laden – scheme for promoting Wahhabi revivalism using new kinds of educational institutions. This chapter explores this early use of education to advance the Wahhabi *da‘wa* within Saudi-ruled territories as a formative precursor to the role subsequently played by state-run educational initiatives in Wahhabi religious expansion beyond the Peninsula.

I begin by moving back in time to outline the institutions, texts and practices which had characterised religious instruction within the Wahhabi tradition in Najd from the eighteenth century. I then explore the Saudis’ use of the occupied Hijaz as a crucible for the forging of a quite new system of education from the mid-1920s, paying particular attention to the flagship Saudi Scholastic Institute founded in Mecca at that time. While the Scholastic Institute and the new schooling system which it represented served a variety of ends, one of their functions was to extend Wahhabi norms into a social milieu in which this tradition had previously enjoyed very little standing. Graduates were expected to form a new elite equipped with the symbolic resources necessary to allow them to engage effectively in struggles to redefine prevailing cultural frameworks, bringing them into line with Wahhabi conceptions of orthodoxy. At the same time, the conditions under which this initiative crystallised contributed to shaping it into something far more complex than simply the reproduction of earlier Wahhabi pedagogical traditions in a new social context. Instead, Saudi state actors set about appropriating elements of the educational infrastructure which had existed in



the Hijaz prior to their arrival and reworking them in the service of this new project of cultural transformation. Their efforts to do so were facilitated, mediated and informed by third parties drafted in from beyond the Peninsula. In the course of this initiative, the Wahhabi tradition itself underwent shifts, as core tenets and texts came to be grafted into a new discursive framework.

The drive to advance the Wahhabi *da'wa* within Saudi-ruled territories at this particular moment in history gave rise to certain new relationships and institutional structures which would feed directly into subsequent efforts to use education as a basis for exerting religious influence beyond the kingdom's borders. More generally, I suggest that these early initiatives consolidated a set of interrelated strategies – including material investment, appropriation of social technologies, mediation and hegemonic modification of religious discourse – which would come to define and lend strength to later projects of Wahhabi expansion.

### **Religious Instruction in the Wahhabi Tradition**

The Wahhabi tradition had from the start included an emphasis on the importance of religious knowledge as an indispensable basis for correct belief, ritual and conduct (Doumato 2000, 71–73). With the expansion of the first Saudi *amirate* in the eighteenth century, state actors took on some responsibility for promoting religious education, contributing funding to support instruction in urban centres in Najd (Commins 2005, 123). At this stage and in the nineteenth century, students in Najd also drew on material support made available by individuals including their own teachers and merchants, as well as income from *awqāf*. It was also common for 'ulama' and students to fund their scholarly endeavours by involving themselves in trade or other commercial projects (Steinberg 2004, 86, 95–97). Core activities in the sphere of religious education included copying manuscripts and memorising texts, the importance of both tasks ensured in part by a lack of printed books (Steinberg 2004, 88–89).

The capital of the first Saudi *amirate* at al-Dir'iyya became a centre of learning within the context of Central Arabia (Doumato 2000, 73). Four schools were established there, in which instruction was offered by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's four sons

(Commins 2005, 123). Theology was taught by the Wahhabi 'ulama' with reference to key works by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab himself, including *Kitab al-Tawhid* and *Kitab Kashf al-Shubahat*. Lessons in jurisprudence were based on texts by authorities associated with the Wahhabis' favoured school of law, the Hanbali *madhhab*, including Muwaffiq al-Din ibn Qudama (d. 1223) and Musa al-Hujawi (d. 1560/61). Instruction in Qur'anic exegesis was grounded in works by Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923), Husayn ibn Mas'ud al-Baghawi (d. 1122), 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar al-Baydawi, and Isma'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kathir (d. 1373). Other subjects taught included Arabic language and arithmetic (Commins 2005, 123–24).

During the period of the second Saudi *amirate* in the nineteenth century, this body of texts was supplemented with polemical works by the Wahhabi scholars 'Abd al-Latif ibn 'Abd al-Rahman and 'Abd Allah ibn Aba Butayn. These were seemingly intended to provide students with tools for use in disputes with the scholarly establishment of the Ottoman Empire (Commins 2005, 124). Riyadh, Burayda, 'Unayza and Ha'il emerged as centres of learning within Central Arabia (Steinberg 2004, 94). Scholars and students also travelled further afield. Those from 'Unayza in particular – who were relatively independent from the Wahhabi establishment in Riyadh – engaged with broader Salafi networks by travelling with merchants to locations including the Hijaz, the Levant and the Gulf. From the late nineteenth century, some Wahhabi students began going to Delhi and Bhopal to study with renowned hadith scholars like Siddiq Hasan Khan and Nadhir Husayn al-Dihlawi (Steinberg 2004, 91, 94–95).

Under the third Saudi state that emerged from 1902, religious functionaries were provided with salaries by the political authorities. As part of the process of shoring up Saudi legitimacy, they were sent out to both sedentary and nomadic communities to offer basic religious instruction, as well as to collect zakat taxes and perform judicial roles (Al-Rasheed 2002, 49–58). Education initially remained under the control of the 'ulama' and organised along traditional lines (Doumato 2000, 79–81). It was only following the occupation of the Hijaz in the mid-1920s that very new arrangements began to take shape.

## Developments in the Occupied Hijaz

The occupation of the Hijaz put the Saudis in control of a region where the Wahhabi tradition not only had little foothold but where it had in fact long been widely considered anathema. During Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s own lifetime and afterwards, Hijaz-based scholars like Ahmad ibn Barkat Tandatawi and Ahmad Zayni Dahlan had written treatises robustly attacking the creed he espoused (Redissi 2008, 164–65). As discussed in Chapter 1, the Ottoman authorities had for a long time banned Wahhabis from performing the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. As was clear from Hurgronje’s account of teaching in the Masjid Haram in the late nineteenth century, scholars aligned with the Hanbali *madhhab* – the school of jurisprudence favoured by the Wahhabis – had represented only a very small minority. Moreover, the Meccan scholarly establishment had been overwhelmingly committed to Ash‘ari creed, as opposed to the Salafi creed which is the foundation of the Wahhabi tradition. Religious life in the region had also long been strongly coloured by Sufi rituals and traditional religious practices like the *mawlid*, which were vociferously opposed by the Wahhabis.<sup>52</sup> It is thus little surprise that Hijazis’ resentment of the occupation came to focus in part on the Saudis’ imposition of Wahhabi norms in the region (Ochsenwald 2009).

The Saudis and their allies amongst the Najdi religious establishment and the tribal militias engaged in a joint campaign to assert Wahhabi strictures in the Hijaz, including by force. In an echo of the previous Saudi incursions into the Holy Cities in the early nineteenth century, the Ikhwan and Wahhabi religious functionaries proceeded to demolish “shrines built on the tombs of the Prophet, his relatives and Companions” and prohibited the smoking of tobacco in public places (Al-Rasheed 2002, 65). The Saudis would go on to proscribe most Sufi rituals and orders, although Sufi modes of religiosity – and also *mawlid* celebrations – persisted in less public forms (Sedgwick 1997; Yamani 2009, 70–75; Ochsenwald 2009, 78–79). They also seized control of key

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<sup>52</sup> It is also instructive in this context to recall the incident discussed in Chapter 1 in which a group of Indian Muslims were exiled from the Hijaz in 1849 in connection with allegations that they renounced the mainstream Sunni *madhāhib* and denied miracles performed by saints. These practices – considered so offensive in the Hijaz that they merited exile – are strongly reminiscent of the Salafi emphasis on *ijtihad* over *taqlid* and commitment to combating “superstitions” seen as having corrupted traditional modes of religiosity.

sites of religious instruction in the region. Initially, 'Abd al-'Aziz appointed the Najdi scholar 'Abd Allah ibn Bulayhid as Grand Qadi of the Hijaz. He headed a committee responsible for supervising instruction in the Masjid Haram, including choosing books and appointing teachers. In a sign of the imposition of Wahhabi concerns, scholars teaching there were enjoined to address the issue of illegitimate innovations and superstitions. In 1927, the post of Grand Qadi of the Hijaz was taken over by 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan Al al-Shaykh, a Wahhabi scholar with a more severe reputation, who also acquired responsibility for overseeing teaching in the Masjid Haram ('Abd Allah 1973, 44–47; 'Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 152–63, 344–51; Ochsenwald 2009, 77).

Alongside the capture of key sites of religious learning like the Haramayn, the occupied Hijaz also became the arena for another, parallel project to employ education as a means for effecting cultural transformation. This involved the creation of new, dedicated spaces for teaching, directly funded and controlled by the Saudi state, which were quite distinct from the sphere of mosque instruction. The unique importance of the Hijaz as the crucible for the forging of new modes of schooling under the Saudis is underlined by the fact that it was in Mecca that they first established a Directorate of Education, in March 1926. The directorate was for a long time concerned with maintaining and expanding schooling solely in the Hijaz. Its remit would only eventually be extended to cover the whole of the Saudi-ruled territories much later, in 1938 (Shalabi 1987, 278–83). While the directorate was initially a very modest affair, the apparatus surrounding it grew over time to include advisory and administrative bodies, as well as staff responsible for inspecting individual schools (Shalabi 1987, 278–83, 289–301). The latter included pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, encompassing both state-run institutions and also private initiatives which came to be subject to Saudi state oversight (Shalabi 1987, 112–15). Higher education in the early years mainly involved study abroad, especially in Egypt, though there later appeared two state-run institutions for more advanced students: the College of Shari'a, opened in Mecca in 1949, and the Teacher Training College established there in 1952 (Shalabi 1987, 205–34). At this stage, there was no state provision for female education,

although there were some limited opportunities in the Hijaz for private schooling for girls.<sup>53</sup>

The new Saudi state-run schooling system which emerged in the Hijaz was partly intended to train functionaries to serve the expanding state bureaucracy, at a time when the Saudis relied heavily for this purpose on personnel drafted in from beyond the Peninsula. By maintaining this system, the Saudis also sought to present themselves to the population of the Hijaz not only as occupiers but as providers of services and enlightened “development”. However, alongside these goals, the establishment and expansion of the new schooling system was very much bound up with efforts to extend Wahhabi norms into this newly conquered territory. Support for the advancement of the Wahhabi *da‘wa* represented an important element of state-building for a dynasty which, ever since the pact forged between Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab and Muhammad Ibn Sa‘ud in 1744, had claimed political legitimacy in part by representing themselves as defenders of the true creed. The ongoing maintenance of the politically important alliance between the Saudi royals and the Wahhabi religious establishment required that the former be seen to be continuing to back this missionary project. Moreover, in the long term, the promotion of Wahhabi norms also stood to contribute to efforts to forge a more or less coherent political community out of the disparate populations that had come to be subject to Saudi rule.

While the new education system overseen by the Directorate of Education would serve to promote the Wahhabi *da‘wa* in the Hijaz, it represented a clear break from the ‘ulama’-led religious educational arrangements which had existed in Najd until this time. This disjuncture may be illustrated by a brief outline of the biographies of those who were selected to run the Mecca-based directorate for the duration of its existence until 1953.<sup>54</sup> The first director of education appointed by the Saudis was the Hijazi Salih ibn Bakri Shata, who had been raised in the late Ottoman Hijaz but had also spent time

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<sup>53</sup> On female education in the Hijaz at this time, see Al-Rasheed 2013, 77–107. This came to include at least one particularly ambitious arrangement run by members of the Southeast Asian community in Mecca from the 1940s, which operated along the lines of a primary school and even offered post-primary teacher training for its female students (Shalabi 1987, 252–57).

<sup>54</sup> Lists of the directors of education are found in Shalabi 1987, 284–89 and also in al-Zirikli 1977, 647–48.

in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, India and Southeast Asia for what one biographer described as “intellectual and cultural tourism” (‘Abd al-Jabbar 1982, 124–27). His replacement was Kamil al-Qassab, a Syrian Arab nationalist who had previously held a senior post in the Sharifian education system (Dohaish 1974, 230, fn. 2; Shalabi 1987, 284–85; Bidwell 1993, 231). Next came the Mecca-born printer and publisher Majid Kurdi (‘Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 435–36; al-Mu’allimi 2000, 800–01)<sup>55</sup> and then Hafiz Wahba, an Azhar-educated Egyptian who had opposed the British occupation of his country of origin and had been involved in the pan-Islamic Khilafat movement in India (Bidwell 1993, 224–25). Wahba was followed by Muhammad Amin Fuda, a Meccan who had previously taught in an Ottoman *rushdiyye* school and a branch of the private Madrasat al-Falah discussed in Chapter 1 (‘Abd al-Jabbar 1982, 278–81; Shalabi 1987, 286). After Fuda came Ibrahim al-Shura, an Egyptian graduate of al-Azhar and the Dar al-‘Ulum college in Cairo (Shalabi 1987, 286–87; Khayyat 2004, 344–45).<sup>56</sup>

While all of those listed thus far served relatively short terms, from the mid-1930s the directorate was run for around a decade by Tahir al-Dabbagh.<sup>57</sup> Born in Ta’if and educated in Mecca and Egypt, al-Dabbagh had served as the director of Madrasat al-Falah before going on to work for the Sharifian state. As a leading activist for Hijazi independence, he appears to have spent a period of exile in Egypt, Yemen, India and Southeast Asia before eventually being brought back into the fold by the Saudis (‘Abd al-Jabbar 1982, 282–85; al-Mu’allimi 2000, 423–24; Vassiliev 2000, 282–85). His successor from the mid-1940s was Muhammad ibn Mani’ who, having been born in ‘Unayza, was the first director of education to hail from the Saudi heartlands of Central Arabia.<sup>58</sup> However, as was relatively common for students and scholars from ‘Unayza, he too had spent a great deal of time abroad, travelling between Iraq, Egypt, Syria and

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<sup>55</sup> Kurdi was formally an agent (*wakīl*) to the directorate but in practice apparently performed the functions of a director.

<sup>56</sup> Although al-Shura was formally only deputy director of education, Shalabi includes him in his list of those who were apparently de facto in charge.

<sup>57</sup> Shalabi (1987, 287) notes that he took over in late 1354 H., which would probably have corresponded to the first quarter of 1936.

<sup>58</sup> Shalabi (1987, 288) notes that he took up the post of director of education in 1364 H., which would put the date sometime in 1944 or 1945.

Bahrain, and then spending over two decades in Qatar ('Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 411–17). Ibn Mani' remained in charge of the directorate until, following the death of 'Abd al-'Aziz in 1953, it was replaced by a new ministry of education based in Riyadh and overseen by the future king Fahd (al-Zirikli 1977, 648).

As is clear from these potted biographies, none of those who directly oversaw the early development of the new Saudi education system came from any kind of straightforwardly Wahhabi background. Although we are told that Shata on his travels had read works by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, he was also apparently engaging with texts by modernist religious reformers like the Egyptian Muhammad 'Abduh and the Persian Jamal al-Din al-Afghani ('Abd al-Jabbar 1982, 125). Wahba is another example of a figure from this cohort who – at least in his widely available later writings – expressed admiration for what he saw as the progressiveness of scholars like 'Abduh and a certain measure of resigned frustration with regard to the “outstandingly fanatical” 'ulama' of Riyadh (Wahbah 1964, 52–63; Wahbah 2001, 1–21). Even the first Najdi director of education Ibn Mani' had studied with leading Salafi figures of his day outside the Wahhabi tradition. They included Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar in Damascus, as well as the Baghdad-based Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi ('Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 412).<sup>59</sup> Rather than clear links between the new Saudi schooling system and the Wahhabi study circles of Najd, what comes through in these biographies are instead continuities with the bureaucratised educational arrangements which had appeared in the Hijaz in the decades prior to the Saudis' arrival; both in the Ottoman and Sharifian state-run systems and also in the wave of new private schools like Madrasat al-Falah. It is also clear from these biographies that the new Saudi system was by no means hermetically sealed from institutions, practices and ideas circulating far beyond the Peninsula.

In order to uncover the dynamics which played out as these diverse influences came together in the service of an educational project which was in part about extending Wahhabi norms across a recently conquered population, it is necessary to move past the level of overarching administrative frameworks and explore developments at the

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<sup>59</sup> On al-Qasimi and al-Bitar, see Commins 1985; Weismann 2001. On al-Alusi, see Fattah 2003.

level of individual institutions and classrooms. To this end, the remainder of this chapter pays particular attention to one seminal school, the Saudi Scholastic Institute (al-Ma‘had al-‘Ilmi al-Su‘udi). Opened in Mecca in 1926 or 1927, the Scholastic Institute was the first school of its kind founded by the Saudis, offering secondary-level instruction to all-male students in both religious and secular subjects.<sup>60</sup> As an elite institution whose first graduates were described in January 1932 by its then director as “the stars of the students of knowledge in the Hijaz”, it was in some ways atypical.<sup>61</sup> Yet its importance as a case study of dynamics playing out in the wider system at this time is multiplied by the fact that the intention was for its Hijazi and Najdi graduates to go on to work as teachers in the emerging network of Saudi state-run primary schools.<sup>62</sup>

The original location of the Scholastic Institute at the site of an old Ottoman *rushdiyye* school is symbolic of its indebtedness to the educational infrastructure which had crystallised in the Hijaz in the decades prior to the Saudis’ arrival, and which they inherited when they invaded.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, instruction at the Institute from the start clearly reflected the new direction in which that infrastructure would be taken under the Saudis. A newspaper article published in February 1927, describing a course of evening classes that had just begun at the Institute at that time, noted that topics covered included Arabic grammar, dictation, reading, discourse (*al-muḥādatha*), composition, oratory, arithmetic, bookkeeping, geography, engineering, “the habits of things created” (*sunan al-kā’ināt*)<sup>64</sup>, morals (*al-akhlāq*), and French language. There were also plans to begin teaching English as soon as the necessary books arrived (al-Qassab 1927b).<sup>65</sup> However, instruction also included religious content and it is clear

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<sup>60</sup> Abu Ra’s and al-Dib (1986/87, 148) note that it is considered to have been the “first Saudi educational institution”. Shalabi (1987, 171) describes it as “the oldest governmental educational institution in the kingdom above the primary level”. The Syrian Khayr al-Din Zirikli, who was employed by the Saudi state from the 1930s, puts the opening of the Institute in 1927 (1977, 636). Other authors suggest that it first opened in early 1345 H., which would correspond with 1926 (Abu Ra’s and al-Dib 1986/87, 148n4; Shalabi 1987, 171).

<sup>61</sup> “Tidhkar al-Wala’ wa-l-Ikhlās” 1932, 4.

<sup>62</sup> “Tidhkar al-Wala’ wa-l-Ikhlās” 1932, 7; al-Zirikli 1977, 636.

<sup>63</sup> On the Institute’s original location at the site of an old Ottoman school, see al-Shura 1979, 276.

<sup>64</sup> My translation of this phrase is borrowed from Jansen 1980. See further discussion below.

<sup>65</sup> See also al-Qassab 1927a.



that this was from the start geared towards promoting the Salafi creed which lies at the heart of the Wahhabi tradition. According to the aforementioned Ibrahim al-Shura, whose stint in charge of the Directorate of Education was preceded by a period in which he served as head of the Scholastic Institute, the school was founded with a view to “spreading Islamic culture and the unadulterated Salafi creed”, along with “mathematical and social sciences”.<sup>66</sup> It was expected that the Institute’s graduates, including those born and raised in the Hijaz, would be equipped to engage in the struggle to legitimise core tenets of Wahhabi religiosity in the region. ‘Abd Allah Khayyat, writing in a piece of promotional literature published in 1932 when he was himself in his third year studying at the Scholastic Institute, emphasised the role that he and his cohort were to play in a characteristically Salafi project of purifying Islamic belief and practice from perceived corruptions:

They [students at the Institute] study [*tawhīd*] in order that they might know that which has entered into people’s religion by way of misleading innovations [*bida’ muḍilla*] and destructive passions, so that they may avoid them. And they strive and expend their energies in advising the people to distance themselves from them and to extricate themselves from their entanglements, in order that they might become like their Forebears [*salafuhum*]; the best *umma*, commanding right and forbidding wrong, and having faith in God<sup>67</sup>

Yet when the Scholastic Institute first opened, it initially proved an utter failure; for reasons which seem to have related in large part precisely to its role as a vehicle for the Wahhabi *da’wa*. Although it began offering instruction to an eclectic mix of Hijazis and Najdis of mixed ages and abilities, their numbers rapidly dwindled over a period of months until, with only five still attending classes, the directorate was forced to admit defeat and announce a temporary closure (A. ‘Ali 1976/7, 71–72). Al-Shura later recalled that, following this setback, he had looked into the reasons for the difficulties faced by the Institute in attracting and retaining students. In what seems likely to have been something of an understatement, he observed that one factor had been that “some of the youth do not wish to study the Salafi – or ‘Wahhabi’, as they say – school of thought” (al-Shura 1979, 276). Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, a Moroccan scholar who would also later teach at the Scholastic Institute, concurred that perceptions of the new

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<sup>66</sup> “Tidhkar al-Wala’ wa-l-Ikhlās” 1932, 6.

<sup>67</sup> “Tidhkar al-Wala’ wa-l-Ikhlās” 1932, 9.

school as a “Wahhabi institute that teaches the Wahhabi doctrine to its pupils” had been a reason for its teething problems.<sup>68</sup>

The Scholastic Institute eventually reopened in September 1928, this time with greater success. Again, students came both from the Hijaz and from Najd.<sup>69</sup> While no clear information is available concerning their average age, over time it came to be expected that incoming students would be in possession of a primary school certificate (Shalabi 1987, 177). Although the Institute focused on training Saudi subjects, it also took on a certain number of students from outside Saudi-ruled territories, including from Southeast Asia.<sup>70</sup> The standard period of study was initially four years, including a preparatory year designed for those who did not already have a primary-level education (Shalabi 1987, 177). By the mid-1940s, the duration of study had been increased to five years, with students earning an initial qualification after the first three years (*shahādat al-qism al-tajhīzī*, or “certificate of the preparatory department”) and then full qualification upon completion of the remaining two years (*shahādat qism al-mu’allimīn al-thānawī*, or “certificate of the secondary department for teachers”).<sup>71</sup> In 1933, a department for training shari’a judges was also opened at the Institute, though this only survived for around three years before closing.<sup>72</sup>

The eventual ability of the Scholastic Institute to attract and retain students, including Hijazis, came despite the fact that instruction there still included religious training grounded firmly in the Wahhabi tradition. This is particularly clear in relation to the teaching of the concept of *tawhīd* which had always been central to Wahhabism.

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<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Lauzière 2008, 152.

<sup>69</sup> Zirikli (1977, 642–43), for example, mentions one group of students who were dispatched from Najd at the behest of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and who arrived at the Institute in 1929.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Abd Allah Khayyat speaks of “Indonesian” students amongst his cohort at the Institute from the late 1920s (2004, 330). His apparent wonder at their eventual proficiency in public speaking in Arabic may imply that they had grown up in Southeast Asia, rather than having been born and raised in Mecca. Ahmad ‘Ali, who also studied at the Institute in its early years, mentions a peer referred to as “the Libyan” who would go on to work in the judiciary in Libya (1976/7, 79). Efforts were apparently made to increase provision of scholarships to non-Saudi students, including Malaysians and Indonesians, in the 1950s (‘Abd Allah 1973, 109).

<sup>71</sup> Shalabi (1987, 179–80) suggests that this change was made in 1366 H., i.e. 1946 or 1947. However, a syllabus from February 1945 shows that this setup was already in place at that time.

<sup>72</sup> “al-Ma’had al-‘Ilmi al-Su’udi: Far’ al-Qada’ al-Shar’i” 1933; Shalabi 1987, 179.

*Tawhīd* was especially important in this context, since the Wahhabis' distinctive Salafi understanding of this concept was intimately bound up with their opposition to many Sufi practices and other modes of religiosity which had long been common in the Hijaz.<sup>73</sup> The aforementioned Hijazi student 'Abd Allah Khayyat later recalled that lessons on *tawhīd* during his time at the reopened Institute from the late 1920s were taught from Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's key manifesto *Kitab al-Tawhid*, along with a well-known commentary on this work titled *Fath al-Majid* (Khayyat 2004, 317).<sup>74</sup> The latter was authored by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's grandson 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Hasan Al al-Shaykh, the most prominent Wahhabi scholar in nineteenth-century Najd. Furthermore, Khayyat recalled that lessons in *fiqh* during the same period were grounded in the Hanbali *madhhab*, the school of jurisprudence favoured by the Wahhabis (Khayyat 2004, 36).

Efforts to understand the growing capacity of the Institute to secure the assent of Hijazi students to a regime of instruction rooted in the Wahhabi tradition must take into account three factors which consolidated in the workings of the school at this stage. These were: Saudi state actors' increased investment of material resources; the appointment of foreign staff to lend credibility to the project and to mediate in conflicts which arose from it; and the ability of the Institute to claim new kinds of legitimacy by virtue of the grafting of Wahhabi-oriented religious content into new discursive frameworks.

The first of these factors, growing material investment by Saudi state actors, allowed the newly reopened Scholastic Institute to offer its students access to a scholarships programme including both a standard allowance and also material incentives to reward good grades. At a meeting of education officials in November 1927, the decision had been made to introduce a daily stipend of three piastres per student as a way of addressing the previous lack of uptake. It had also been decided that students would receive a payment of 1,000 piastres for a first class grade and 500 piastres for a

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<sup>73</sup> Wahhabi and more broadly Salafi understandings of *tawhīd* were discussed in the introduction to this thesis and are considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>74</sup> Khayyat spent two and a half years at the Institute, finishing "at the end of 1349 H.", so probably sometime in the first half of 1931 (Khayyat 2004, 40).

second class grade. The standard stipend was subsequently increased to two gold pounds paid out to every student on a monthly basis (Shalabi 1987, 173–74). Ahmad 'Ali, who had been amongst the first students to join the Institute during its abortive initial phase and who returned again when it reopened, later claimed that the scholarships programme was “the first of its kind in the history of the schools of the Hijaz, or of the entire Arabian Peninsula”. He argued that these stipends were the key factor behind greatly increased enrolment at this stage (A. 'Ali 1976/7, 73). In the mid-1940s, scholarships were extended to cover all of the Institute's students, implying that at least a proportion had not previously been eligible (Shalabi 1987, 180).

The scholarships programme transformed the terms of students' engagement with the Institute. Previously, in addition to the investment of time and labour necessary in order to complete a course of instruction there, it would presumably also have been necessary for the student or his family to invest the material capital required to provide for his subsistence while he withdrew from labour markets for long enough to complete his studies. In return, the student would acquire bodies of knowledge and skills, core aspects of which were anyway considered by many Hijazis to be culturally offensive in the first place. The scholarships now on offer, however, reduced or removed the requirement for any material investment on the part of the student or his family. Moreover, it soon became clear that knowledge, competencies and qualifications accumulated at the Scholastic Institute could serve as valuable cultural capital in the new environment of the Saudi-occupied Hijaz, providing for certain kinds of social advancement including employment in the state apparatus. As had been the intention when the Institute was founded, some members of the first group of students to graduate in 1930 took up positions in the educational administration or as school teachers in places like Mecca, Ta'if and Yanbu'. Others secured jobs elsewhere in the expanding Saudi bureaucracy, including in the judiciary, the foreign ministry, the health system, the police, and the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.<sup>75</sup> A newspaper article promoting the Scholastic Institute some years later, in 1947, promised that those who studied there stood to become “'ulama',

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<sup>75</sup> “Tidhkar al-Wala' wa-l-Ikhlās” 1932, 4. That the first graduates of the Institute completed their education there in 1930 is confirmed in A. 'Ali 1976/7, 80.

men of letters (*udabā'*), shari'a judges (*quḍāt*) and advisers (*murshidūn*)", that they would receive high salaries in keeping with the qualifications that they secured at the Institute, and that they would be given preference in employment and promotion.<sup>76</sup>

As noted above, the forms of cultural capital accumulated by students, through processes enabled by material investment on the part of the state, included knowledge and skills grounded in the Wahhabi tradition. At least in principle, such embodied spiritual capital acquired at the Institute might provide its graduates with bases of social authority which could be put to work in the service of advancing Wahhabi understandings of orthodoxy in a social context in which Wahhabism still represented a marginal subcultural tradition. The capacity of Saudi state actors to channel material resources into this kind of targeted intervention in the region's religious economy was bolstered by the funding arrangements and social technologies in place in schools like the Scholastic Institute. In some of the past arrangements in the Hijaz discussed in Chapter 1, state investment in the sphere of religious education had trickled down to the level of instruction through an array of intermediaries and was often just one revenue stream amongst many. Moreover, instruction had been a quite personalised affair, worked out largely informally between a scholar and his students with considerable autonomy with respect to the state and other funders. In contrast, Saudi state actors could use their status as sole funders of schools like the Scholastic Institute to dictate the terms according to which their material investment was to be translated into spiritual capital, ensuring that this capital took the form of knowledge and skills in line with Wahhabi mores. The use of technologies such as detailed, state-approved syllabuses, regular examinations and a hierarchical system of inspection which fed information up through the Directorate of Education to senior state actors further bolstered their capacity both to set the terms of these transactions and also to closely monitor their progress. In this way, bureaucratised modes of education of the kind used in schools like the Scholastic Institute – modes of education which the Saudis had inherited from their Ottoman and Sharifian predecessors in the Hijaz, and which were no doubt bolstered at this stage by the involvement of administrators and educators drafted in from beyond the Peninsula – could be put to work in the service

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<sup>76</sup> "al-Ma'had al-'Ilmi al-Su'udi fi 'Ahdhi al-Jadid" 1947.

of efforts to channel material capital with some precision into a cultural project geared towards advancing the Wahhabi *da'wa*.

However, these arrangements could not guarantee that the forms of spiritual capital in question would be seen as legitimate and valuable either by students themselves or in wider society. In fact, in the environment of the occupied Hijaz of the 1920s, the legitimacy and value accorded to Wahhabi knowledge, skills and attendant qualifications of the kind accumulated at the Scholastic Institute were deeply contested. Moreover, while Saudi investment in scholarships and the promise of employment could help to encourage students to engage with a Wahhabi-oriented system of instruction, these arrangements could not guarantee students' own assent to the Wahhabi content of teaching, in the sense that they might come to recognise this knowledge as legitimate and might seek to assert it in the context of broader social struggles. In the remainder of this chapter, I suggest that efforts to secure legitimacy for the Scholastic Institute and its Wahhabi teachings were bound up with two further, closely intertwined factors: on the one hand, roles played at the Institute by staff from outside the Najdi scholarly establishment; and on the other, the grafting of core components of Wahhabi religious content into a quite new discursive framework.

Figures from outside Saudi-ruled territories had played important roles at the Scholastic Institute from the start. When it first opened, the individual appointed to run it was Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar, a Syrian who had studied with major Salafi scholars in Damascus including his own grandfather 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Bitar and the aforementioned Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi (al-Mu'allimi 2000, 317–18). Others who taught at the Institute at this early stage included at least three other Syrians and an Egyptian.<sup>77</sup> This was in keeping with the employment of figures from beyond the Peninsula to work in senior roles in the Directorate of Education and also as teachers in the wider schooling system.

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<sup>77</sup> Ahmad 'Ali (1976/7, 71) names the Syrians as Mahmud al-Humsi, Sa'di Yasin and Hasan Zakariya, and the Egyptian as Suliman Abaza al-Azhari.

The policy of bringing in staff from beyond the Peninsula remained in place after the Institute reopened in 1928. Al-Bitar's successor as director was Ibrahim al-Shura, the Egyptian Dar al-'Ulum graduate mentioned earlier in this chapter. Other teaching staff in the early period included individuals who hailed from as far afield as Egypt, Morocco, Syria and India. Some were connected with circles close to the Cairo-based Syrian reformer Muhammad Rashid Rida, who had by this time positioned himself as a prominent supporter of the Saudi political elites and their Wahhabi allies (Redissi 2008, 172–76; Lauzière 2008, 179–81). Indeed, several of these figures appear to have been introduced to 'Abd al-'Aziz by Rida himself. Acquaintances and former students of Rida who taught at the Institute included the Moroccan Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and the Egyptians 'Abd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh and 'Abd al-Razzaq Hamza, as well as the director al-Bitar.<sup>78</sup> Although the evidence is not conclusive, there is also some reason to think that the Institute may have employed another important Egyptian acquaintance of Rida, Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi.<sup>79</sup> Al-Fiqi, who certainly spent some years in the Hijaz around this time, had recently founded a Salafi movement in Egypt known as Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah, with which Abu al-Samh was also linked.<sup>80</sup> Ansar al-Sunna remains a major actor in the religious sphere in Egypt until today and is discussed further in Chapter 4 of this thesis, in connection with its members' subsequent involvement in the Islamic University of Medina from the early 1960s.

Other foreigners came to the Scholastic Institute through different routes. One example is the Ethiopian Muhammad Nur al-Din al-Jimmawi, who arrived in Mecca around the same time that the Institute opened. He appears to have subsequently

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<sup>78</sup> On their relationships with Rida and the latter's role in introducing them to the Saudi establishment, see Lauzière 2008, 114–44. 'Ali (1976/7, 73) also mentions a Moroccan teacher working at the Institute named 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Hajar, who was probably another disciple of Rida's with this same name and nationality who appears to have relocated to the Hijaz during this period. It is worth noting that, having been appointed to teach at the Scholastic Institute by the Consultative Council in the Hijaz in early 1929, al-Hilali and 'Abd al-Razzaq Hamza were removed from their posts by 'Abd al-'Aziz some months later for reasons which are unclear (Lauzière 2008, 172–73).

<sup>79</sup> 'Ali (1976/7, 73) recalls an Egyptian teacher at the Institute named Hamid al-Fiqi. The former Scholastic Institute student 'Abd Allah Khayyat (2004, 336), who was acquainted with Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi, obliquely remarks that "perhaps he was a teacher in the Institute".

<sup>80</sup> On the role played by Abu al-Samh in founding a branch of Ansar al-Sunna in Alexandria, see 'Abd al-Jabbar 1982, 227; Tahir 2006, 226.

been offered a teaching post there after studying in the Masjid Haram under figures including al-Bitar, Abu al-Samh and 'Abd al-Razzaq Hamza, as well as the Saudi-appointed Grand Qadi of the Hijaz 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan (al-Mu'allimi 2000, 345–46). Still others were seemingly recruited by officials from the Saudi Directorate of Education who travelled abroad to identify suitable staff members. Hasan al-Banna, the schoolteacher who launched the Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt in 1928, later recalled having been invited by Hafiz Wahba that same year to teach in the Hijaz. Al-Banna had at the time apparently been keen to take up a post at the "Saudi Institute in Mecca", though in the event this never came to pass (al-Banna 1974, 77–78).<sup>81</sup> Other foreigners teaching at the Institute in these early years, including Egyptians named Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Ghazali and Suliman Abaza al-Azhari, may well have been recruited in this way (A. 'Ali 1976/7, 73; Khayyat 2004, 338–40).

These foreigners taught at the Scholastic Institute alongside Hijazis<sup>82</sup> and what appears, at least in the early years, to have been a comparatively limited contingent of Najdi staff. The latter included Muhammad ibn 'Uthman al-Shawi, a blind religious expert from al-Qasim who had studied with members of the Wahhabi establishment in Riyadh. Al-Shawi had first arrived in Mecca as a religious functionary accompanying the Ikhwan on their campaigns and he also taught at the Masjid Haram ('Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 337–38; Khayyat 2004, 320–22). Another example is Muhammad al-Biz, who grew up in Shaqra and had previously been appointed to undertake religious duties in one of the *hujar* (sing. *hijra*) settlements established with the aim of settling nomadic communities ('Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 430–31; Khayyat 2004, 322–25).

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<sup>81</sup> Al-Banna had first heard about the Saudis' search for teachers via the Cairo-based Syrian activist Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, after Wahba sought advice on suitable candidates from the Association of Muslim Youth (*Jam'iyyat al-Shubban al-Muslimin*) with which al-Khatib was associated. Al-Banna recalls that his own appointment was blocked by the Egyptian authorities and notes that al-Shura was eventually sent instead. He suggests that the obstacle to his own move to the Hijaz was Cairo's refusal to recognise Saudi sovereignty there at the time, which he explains as having been in line with British policy. On fraught relations in this period between Cairo and the Saudis, in part due to a clash between Egyptian pilgrims and 'Abd al-'Aziz's forces in 1926, see Vassiliev 2000, 270, 349.

<sup>82</sup> 'Ali (1976/7, 73, 83) recalls teachers named Muhammad 'Ali Khuqayr, Hasan Katabi and Amin Fuda, without specifying their background. Shalabi (1987, 177) judges them to have been Hijazis.



The presence of foreign staff members at the Scholastic Institute is very much bound up with the second issue under discussion here, the integration of Wahhabi religious knowledge into new discursive frameworks. It is likely that it was these foreign staff who were largely responsible for introducing content onto the Institute's syllabuses which had previously been unknown even in the Hijaz, let alone in the much more restricted pedagogical arrangements which had existed in Wahhabi circles in Najd until this time. This gave rise to a situation where bodies of religious knowledge grounded in the Wahhabi tradition for the first time came to be integrated into programmes of study which also included a host of self-consciously "modern" disciplines.

The earliest full syllabus which is available for the period after the Institute reopened is from February 1945. In keeping with the bureaucratised modes of education in use at the school, it was a detailed, state-approved document published by the Directorate of Education. This syllabus confirms that religious instruction made up a very large proportion of teaching. Even discounting subjects like Arabic grammar and history, which had substantial religious relevance or content, specifically religious subjects like *tawhīd*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr* and its principles (*uṣūl al-tafsīr*), hadith and the principles of hadith studies (*uṣūl al-ḥadīth*), and inheritance law accounted for nearly 40 per cent of weekly classes during each of the five years of study. Moreover, the Wahhabi orientation of this religious instruction was still very clear to see. The important subject of *tawhīd* was still taught with reference to the key Wahhabi work on this subject, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, along with a gloss on this text titled *Qurrat 'Uyun al-Muwahhidin* by the aforementioned nineteenth-century Wahhabi scholar 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Hasan Al al-Shaykh. Also in keeping with Wahhabi norms, *fiqh* was taught from a Hanbali legal manual, al-Hujawi's *Zad al-Mustaqni'*.

However, this Wahhabi religious content sat alongside courses in an eclectic array of more or less secular disciplines. These included topics which had been taught at the Institute in its initial, abortive period of operation, such as grammar, composition, dictation, geography, reading comprehension, arithmetic and engineering. They also encompassed newly added or newly specified subjects, including philology (*fiqh al-lughā*), rhetoric (*al-balāgha*), literature, calligraphy or handwriting (*al-khaṭṭ*), pedagogy,

history, drawing, the principles of science, and health training and physiology (*tadbīr al-ṣiḥḥa wa-waḥāʾif al-aʿdāʾ*).<sup>83</sup>

In addition to their usefulness in the training of potential state functionaries, some of these areas of study may well also have been introduced with a view to equipping students to undertake further training in Egypt and elsewhere. Certainly, when the first students had been sent by the Saudis to Egypt for this purpose, their lack of knowledge of the natural sciences – as well as their lack of knowledge of English – had been highlighted as a problem by educational administrators there (al-Zirikli 1977, 638). However that may be, it seems clear that foreign staff employed both in the overarching Saudi education system and at the Scholastic Institute itself were directly responsible for introducing much of this content.

One example is the topic "*sunan al-kāʾināt*", or "the habits of things created", which had been taught at the Institute during its initial, abortive phase and which was apparently the subject of much public curiosity in the Hijaz at that time (A. ʿAli 1976/7, 71). This not a common phrase in Arabic and it seems probable that it derived in this context from the physician and anti-Christian polemicist Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqi, whose articles on subjects such as chemistry and biology in Rashid Rida's journal *al-Manar* were published in a collection with this exact title. Given the involvement of so many of Rida's acquaintances at the Scholastic Institute – including al-Bitar, who was in charge of the school at this early stage – this collection may well have been used as the basis for teaching this course.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, it seems likely that Egyptians working at the Institute and in the overarching education system were responsible for the fact that the literature course detailed in the 1945 syllabus included consideration not only of modern Hijazi literature but also a string of recent major Egyptian figures and their works, such as the poetry of Ahmad Shawqi and Mahmud al-Barudi, the writings of the modernist religious reformer Muhammad ʿAbduh, and the oratory of the nationalists Mustafa Kamil and Saʿd Zaghlul.

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<sup>83</sup> "Manhaj al-Maʿhad al-ʿilmi al-Suʿudi" 1945.

<sup>84</sup> See Sidqi 1935/6. The full title of Sidqi's book suggests that its contents drew on lectures given at Rida's own Cairo-based missionary training school Dar al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshad. The discussion of Sidqi and his work in this paragraph draws on Jansen 1980, 43–44.

These foreigners may well also have had a hand in shaping a wide-ranging history syllabus, which included not only subjects like Islamic history and Saudi dynastic history but also such topics as the French Revolution, nineteenth-century national “awakenings” in Europe and beyond, the Great War, and the League of Nations mandate system.

A final important example is the discipline of pedagogy included in the 1945 syllabuses, which it seems clear was brought by staff drafted in from abroad. This is particularly significant in light of evidence that the introduction of this discipline was bound up with broader discursive transformations, including a shift in the methods used for teaching Wahhabi religious content. Former student Ahmad ‘Ali recalled that he and his cohort at the Scholastic Institute in the earliest years of its existence were the first in the Hijaz to study “the science of pedagogy and the methods of teaching” (*‘ilm al-tarbiya wa-ṭuruq al-tadrīs*). He specifies that the Egyptian Ibrahim al-Shura was “the first teacher of this discipline in the history of these lands” (A. ‘Ali 1976/7, 74). This sets up a link with al-Shura’s alma mater, the Dar al-‘Ulum college which was founded in Cairo in 1872 as Egypt’s first specialised institution for training teachers and which drew on both religious and civil models of education (Kalmbach 2011). While instruction at Dar al-‘Ulum had initially focused on developing students’ knowledge of the subjects that they were to teach, from 1895 it had begun offering theoretical training in pedagogy as a self-contained area of expertise. Dar al-‘Ulum came to teach a conception of pedagogy rooted in social scientific disciplines like psychology, which was likely influenced by trends that prevailed in France at the time (Kalmbach, forthcoming). The Scholastic Institute’s 1945 syllabus confirms that lessons in pedagogy by that time echoed these shifts. They included not only practical training in how to teach but also consideration of the theory behind different teaching methods and, for more advanced students, lessons in psychology.

The introduction of new theories of pedagogy at the Institute appears to have been very much bound up with the emergence of particular styles of instruction which came to be employed for teaching across the range of subject areas in its own classrooms. These styles of teaching, which were apparently quite novel in the context of the Arabian Peninsula, reflected a shift in ideas about how knowledge was to be acquired

by students. Most obviously, this included a devaluation of the rote memorisation which had until this time been such an important part of instruction both in the Hijaz and also in the Wahhabi study circles of Najd. The 1945 syllabus for lessons in the discipline of pedagogy taught at the Institute makes it clear that successful teaching and learning were understood to involve not just memorisation but also such things as exposition (*al-'ard*), comparison (*al-muwāzana*), inference (*al-istinbāt*), application (*al-taṭbīq*), and questions and answers. Lessons in psychology went further, exploring such matters as the unconscious (*al-'aql al-bāṭin*), emotional life (*al-ḥayāt al-wijdāniyya*), the imagination (*al-takhayyul*), training of the senses (*tarbiyat al-ḥawāss*), and the moderation of impulses (*ta'dīl al-gharā'iz*).<sup>85</sup>

Memoirs written by the former students Ahmad 'Ali and 'Abd Allah Khayyat both include remarks suggesting that the introduction of such conceptions of teaching and learning led to the appearance of quite novel styles of instruction at the Institute, marked in particular by the relative absence of rote memorisation. According to Ahmad 'Ali:

The customary method in the teaching of geography and history and other sciences in schools was dependence on memorisation and the learning by heart of texts and summaries [*al-i'timād 'alā al-ḥifẓ wa-istīẓhār al-mutūn wa-l-khulāṣāt*]. [However], we saw in the Institute a new method of teaching these subjects, the university method. That is to say, the teacher presents his lessons in the form of lectures and the students note down summaries in their notebooks, with none of them required to memorise any lesson other than ten parts of the Qur'an (A. 'Ali 1976/7, 74–75)

This theme is expanded upon in remarks made by Khayyat. By the time he enrolled at the Institute, Khayyat had already studied in the private Madrasat al-Khayyat and Madrasa Fakhriyya, in a Sharifian-era state-run school, and in *ḥalaqāt* in the Masjid Haram (Khayyat 2004, 25–35). Yet despite this wide-ranging experience of different educational settings, his memoirs of his time at the Scholastic Institute suggest that the methods of instruction employed there had seemed to him very novel indeed. He recalled that in this context, rote memorisation was required only of parts of the Qur'an and *al-Rahbiyya*, the text used for the study of inheritance law. Otherwise, instead of memorisation, "that which was relied upon was the ordering of information

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<sup>85</sup> "Manhaj al-Ma'had al-'Ilmi al-Su'udi" 1945, 29–35.

and the embedding of understanding" (*kāna al-mu'awwal bi-hi tansīq al-ma'lūmāt wa-tarkīz al-fahm*) (Khayyat 2004, 36–37). Khayyat found this approach so alien that he had to ask his teachers how exactly he ought to go about achieving "the embedding of information in his mind without [having recourse to] memorisation" (*tarkīz al-ma'lūmāt fī dhihnihi dūna al-ḥifẓ*).<sup>86</sup> They suggested that he should try such things as reading a passage and then testing himself on the information contained in it, or using the solution for one problem in his engineering lessons as a basis for working out how to approach other problems (Khayyat 2004, 37).

What is especially significant, in the context of the arguments being made in the present chapter, is that Khayyat's recollections make it clear that Wahhabi religious content also came to be integrated into this new epistemological and pedagogical framework. To his apparent surprise, students even studied texts like *Kitab al-Tawhid* and works of Hanbali *fiqh* without being expected to commit them to memory (2004, 37). In this sense, Wahhabi pedagogical traditions did not simply sit alongside novel content and modes of teaching at the Scholastic Institute, even if such a juxtaposition would in itself have been a significant development. More than that, modes of teaching grounded in the Wahhabi tradition came to be intertwined with and influenced by these other disciplines. There is a clear parallel here with Dale Eickelman's observation of a shift in styles of religious knowledge in Morocco in the twentieth century, "from that which is mnemonically 'possessed' to material that can only be consulted in books" (1978, 511).

New configurations of Wahhabi content and self-consciously modern disciplines at the Scholastic Institute gave rise to considerable tensions. I have already suggested that conflicts arose as a result of efforts to teach Wahhabi religious content to Hijazi students. It is also the case that many of the other new subjects discussed above proved controversial. The former student Ahmad 'Ali claims that the Institute was the first school in the Hijaz to offer instruction in English; this subject being taught by an Indian named Ahmad Mu'min, whose ability to communicate his excellent knowledge

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<sup>86</sup> It should be noted that this particular passage from Khayyat's memoirs is written in the third person. It is not immediately clear whether the author is Khayyat himself or an editor writing on the basis of Khayyat's memories of this period.

of English was apparently somewhat hampered by his poor grasp of Arabic. While 'Ali recalls that many students were eager to learn this new language, there was a contingent who felt that an "Arab, religious school" like the Scholastic Institute should be "far from the language of the Christians and this gibberish" (A. 'Ali 1976/7, 74). It is worth noting that the 1945 syllabus no longer included instruction in any foreign language. As will be discussed further below, there is also evidence that the teaching of geography at the Institute was controversial amongst Najdi students in particular. These tensions mapped onto broader controversies which arose in relation to the education system as a whole at this time. In June 1930, Najdi 'ulama' mounted sizeable protests in Mecca over the introduction of certain new areas of study to school syllabuses, including drawing, foreign languages, and geography. Lessons in drawing were likely seen by the scholars as violating an injunction on representations of God's creations. Foreign languages were seen as paving the way for the entry of corrupting influences from abroad and geography was considered objectionable because it was taught with reference to such controversial theories as that of a rotating, spherical Earth. On this occasion, 'Abd al-'Aziz overruled the objections advanced by the 'ulama', declaring their positions religiously unfounded (Wahba 1964, 49-51).

While the outsiders hired by the Saudis to work at the Scholastic Institute and elsewhere in the education system appear to have contributed to such conflicts by bringing new subjects with them to the Hijaz, they also played a role in mediating them.<sup>87</sup> On the one hand, at a time when the Wahhabi 'ulama' were protesting against the introduction of new subject matter onto syllabuses, these foreigners – including the contingent of Salafis recruited from the circles around Rashid Rida – were quite open to these new aspects of schooling. We are told, for example, that 'Abd Allah Khayyat was originally urged to enrol at the Scholastic Institute by the aforementioned Egyptian Salafi Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi. Al-Fiqi apparently insisted that it was

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<sup>87</sup> The discussion which follows builds on observations previously made by Henri Lauzière (2008, 151–54) on the mediating role played by foreign Salafis at the Scholastic Institute and in the 1920s Hijaz more generally. It is worth noting that the Saudis' employment of foreigners to work in state institutions could also be a political liability. Examples of dissent organised around such issues included an incident in which a poster appeared on the wall of the post office in Mecca, demanding to know *inter alia* why Syrians should be running affairs in the Hijaz (Ochsenwald 2009, 81).

important for Khayyat to complement his already advanced religious training with an academic qualification which would carry wider prestige in contemporary society. At the same time, he also emphasised that even a student whose primary concern is with religious knowledge ought to acquire at least a basic familiarity with subjects like modern sciences, mathematics and foreign languages, in order not to be ignorant of disciplines which play an important role in contemporary social life (Khayyat 2004, 35).

On the other hand, in a situation in which many Hijazis – under conditions of occupation – were bristling at the imposition of religious frameworks that were profoundly antagonistic to much of what they stood for, foreigners were in a position to promote key tenets of Wahhabi religiosity without themselves being immediately identifiable with the Najdi scholarly establishment. While Najdi staff were involved in teaching Wahhabi religious content like Hanbali *fiqh* at the Institute, foreigners also became directly involved in this process. Lessons on *tawhīd* based on Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s *Kitab al-Tawhid* from the late 1920s were taught by the Egyptian Salafi ‘Abd al-Razzaq Hamza (Khayyat 2004, 317). The Moroccan al-Hilali also later recalled teaching Salafi *tawhīd* at the Scholastic Institute (Lauzière 2008, 151). Particularly in the case of the many figures drawn from circles connected with Rashid Rida, these foreigners were often themselves sympathetic to core elements of the Salafi theology which is the cornerstone of the Wahhabi tradition (Lauzière 2008, 153).

The importance of the mediating role played by foreigners in this context is explicitly emphasised in retrospective comments by Ibrahim al-Shura, the Egyptian director of the Institute who had blamed resistance to instruction in Wahhabi theology for its teething problems. At the time when the Institute was temporarily closed and discussions were underway over the question of re-launching it, al-Shura recalls having told the then director of education Hafiz Wahba that, “I am ready to take responsibility for opening the Saudi Scholastic Institute, on one condition; which is that I personally

undertake the teaching of *tawhīd*, in order to convince the Hijazis of it, and [also] the teaching of geography, in order to convince the Najdis of it" (al-Shura 1979, 276–77).<sup>88</sup>

The various factors touched upon in the preceding discussion intertwined in ways which stood to lend legitimacy both to the Scholastic Institute and also to the Wahhabi content of its teaching. The fact that foreigners taught at the Institute was a point of pride, explicitly emphasised in promotional announcements.<sup>89</sup> Such arrangements could help to frame the Wahhabi content of instruction as something other than simply a particularistic Najdi innovation imposed by the Saudi occupiers in a naked act of symbolic violence. Instead, Hijazi students were invited to view the Wahhabi creed as part of a wider cultural framework assented to and communicated by these ostensibly impartial, non-Najdi outsiders. The Institute, and thereby the content of its teaching, could acquire religious legitimacy not so much from any association with Najdi scholarly personalities and traditions – which were subject to considerable contention in this context – as by the fact that foreign staff members had studied in such illustrious and widely respected centres of learning as al-Azhar and the Qarawiyyin in Morocco.<sup>90</sup> Azharis in particular taught at the Institute from the early days and continued to do so for a long time after its founding, allowing for qualifications and other forms of capital accumulated in such settings – which had far greater cachet in the Hijaz than equivalent forms of spiritual capital accumulated in Wahhabi circles – to be invested in the Scholastic Institute itself, bolstering its institutional capacity to legitimate a particular set of religious goods and to issue authoritative qualifications in this particular social context.

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<sup>88</sup> It is worth noting that al-Shura's recollection that he played the leading role in re-launching the Institute seems at odds with 'Ali's memory (1976/7, 73) that when it reopened, it was initially once again headed by the original director Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar.

<sup>89</sup> One newspaper article in 1947, for example, pointedly noted the role played at the Institute by "a distinguished elite of native and Egyptian professors with skill and competence in the religious and Arabic sciences" ("al-Ma'had al-'Ilmi al-Su'udi fi 'Ahdihī al-Jadid" 1947).

<sup>90</sup> For example, al-Hilali had a degree from the Qarawiyyin (al-'Aqil 2008, 812), while figures like Ibrahim al-Shura, 'Abd al-Razzaq Hamza and Abu al-Samh had all studied at al-Azhar ('Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 514; 'Abd al-Jabbar 1982, 227). That such foreigners were distinguished from the Wahhabi scholarly establishment in part by their possession of such qualifications has previously been noted by Lauzière (2008, 152–53).



Moreover, in part as a result of the influence of these foreigners, core aspects of Wahhabi religiosity for the first time came to be grafted into a corpus of knowledge which included self-consciously “modern” disciplines, even leading to Wahhabi religious knowledge itself being taught according to epistemologies rooted in a new science of pedagogy. In this way, promotion of the Wahhabi tradition could also be presented as an integral part of a broader cultural project associated with a certain kind of progressive modernity.

As a call for students published in the newspaper *Umm al-Qura* in 1947 put it, capturing many of the interconnected dynamics outlined here, one of the features claimed for the Institute was “an integration of the two cultures, the old and the modern, at the hands of the best domestic, Azhari and university professors”.<sup>91</sup> Such statements framed the Scholastic Institute as simultaneously forward-looking and also historically and religiously authentic, whilst eliding the crucial distinction between the historical and religious prestige of al-Azhar, on the one hand, and the far more contentious Wahhabi traditions imbued in the Institute’s syllabuses, on the other.

## **Conclusion**

The Hijri year 1381 (1961/2) saw both the closure of the Saudi Scholastic Institute in Mecca and also the opening of the institution which is the focus of the remainder of this thesis, the Islamic University of Medina (IUM). Certain loose links may be identified between the two institutions. The Scholastic Institute represented the seeds of the modern Saudi education system, which would eventually come to be rolled out from the Hijaz to the remainder of the Saudi territories, and out of which the IUM would in some ways emerge. It is also the case that certain employees of the Scholastic Institute, like the Syrian Bahjat al-Bitar and the Moroccan Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, would later take up advisory and teaching posts at the IUM.

There is a more general sense, however, in which the history of the Scholastic Institute presaged that of the IUM. The Scholastic Institute reflected efforts by the Saudis to train personnel to staff their expanding state bureaucracy. But it also represented an early experiment in using education to extend the Wahhabi *da’wa* beyond its historical

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<sup>91</sup> “al-Ma’had al-’Ilmi al-Su’udi” 1947.

Central Arabian habitat, bringing it under conditions of occupation to a population which had previously not been favourably disposed towards Wahhabism. In pursuing this project as part of a broader process of state-building, the Saudis reached outside the Wahhabi pedagogical tradition, appropriating bureaucratised modes of education which had existed in the Hijaz prior to their arrival. They put these new social technologies to work in the service of an initiative which involved the use of targeted material investment in the name of effecting cultural transformation. However, the power of this project of cultural transformation derived not only from material wealth but also necessarily from a variety of sources of symbolic legitimation. Actors drafted in from beyond the Peninsula brought widely recognised forms of spiritual capital, including qualifications from respected Islamic centres of learning like al-Azhar, which might lend the Institute and its teachings credibility in the Hijazi context. The input of these foreigners also contributed to processes whereby Wahhabi content came to be grafted into a new discursive formation, integrating it with a cultural project which laid claim to a certain kind of progressive modernity and giving it the appearance of something other than simply symbolic violence perpetrated by an occupying power. Finally, these purportedly neutral outsiders enjoyed a certain capacity to mediate in the complex array of tensions and conflicts which erupted out of this endeavour.

As I argue in the remainder of this thesis, the intertwined set of strategies which underlay the promotion of the Wahhabi *da'wa* at this early stage in the history of the modern Saudi state – including material investment in scholarships to support study in state-controlled institutions, the appropriation of new social technologies of education from outside the Wahhabi pedagogical tradition, the use of non-Wahhabi actors as sources of spiritual capital and as mediators, and the modification of religious discourse in ways which might help to secure recognition of its legitimacy by an array of actors – would remain important as this *da'wa* later came to be extended beyond the kingdom's borders through initiatives like the IUM.

## Chapter 3

### **National Politics and Global Mission: The Founding and Expansion of the Islamic University of Medina from 1961**

The establishment of the Islamic University of Medina in 1961 represented the beginning of a new era in which Saudi state actors' efforts to mould religious belief and practice within the territories over which they exercised sovereignty would be accompanied by novel initiatives geared towards exerting religious sway far beyond the kingdom's own borders. Over the subsequent decades, the IUM would come to sit at the heart of cross-border flows of actors, resources, ideas and practices. It would host staff from across the Middle East and beyond who would help to legitimate and shape its operation. Through its provision of fully-funded, Wahhabi-influenced instruction to thousands of students from across the world, it would contribute to religious and cultural transformations in far-flung locations. However, in this chapter I explore the extent to which both the university's genesis and its evolution over the half a century that followed were driven and shaped by actors, material resources and concerns located firmly within the framework of the Saudi national state.

I begin by situating the inception of the IUM in its historical context, a period in which the future of Saudi rule was called into question by vigorous challenges emanating both from within and from outside the kingdom's territories. Across the wider Middle East, the momentum was very much with various brands of radical republicanism, the proponents of which decried and actively sought to end the hereditary privileges of monarchy. Within Saudi Arabia itself, the ruling family was fractured by the competing claims of the then king Sa'ud, his brother Faisal and other, more junior princes. In this context, the new missionary project represented an effort on the part of Saudi dynastic actors to bolster their positions of power and privilege within the state framework, and to shore up that framework itself. Firstly, the IUM stood to counter the transnational extension of leftist republican projects by advancing a competing programme grounded in claims to historical and religious authenticity, in ways which dovetailed with the Cold War policy of Saudi Arabia's ally the United States. Secondly, insofar as the IUM represented an award to the Wahhabi religious establishment, it

served a purpose in the maintenance of patronage relations between dynastic actors and this key political constituency. Thirdly, coverage of the founding of the IUM in the contemporary Saudi press underscores the ways in which the project was woven into narratives of national and dynastic legitimacy for consumption by domestic audiences.

In the second part of the chapter, I move on from the founding of the IUM to trace some basic aspects of the university's institutional history and its relationship with the Saudi state over the following decades. I argue that university staff stood in a clientelistic relationship with state actors, who provided the economic capital necessary for the project's functioning. I demonstrate how state actors consolidated the position of strength that derived from this arrangement through the bureaucratic mapping of rights and responsibilities formally granting themselves and their 'ulama' allies oversight and control over the use that was to be made of this material investment. Finally, I explore how this relationship between university and state – in terms of both material support and regulation – evolved over time in ways that map directly onto developments in Saudi national and dynastic politics. This chapter thus underscores the importance of national state actors and resources within the broader transnational religious economies that are the subject of this thesis.

### **Geopolitics, Domestic Discord and a New Missionary Project**

Both the official historiography of the IUM and Saudi media coverage from the time tend to frame the founding of the university in 1961 as having been driven primarily by piety. Saudi monarchs are presented as having established and later continually maintained this missionary project purely on the basis of an earnest desire to offer Muslims across the world the gift of enlightenment, knowledge of eternal truths, and the capacity to live their lives in line with God-given moral imperatives. There is surely no doubt that many of those who would become involved in the university were indeed driven by an understanding that it could serve such ends. Yet to be fully understood, the project must also be situated in relation to the particular historical juncture in which it emerged. This was a time when the Saudi regime was mired in serious crisis, facing challenges to its legitimacy and stability from actors both at home and abroad, as well as deep divisions within its own ranks. In this context, the founding of the IUM stood to serve a variety of political ends.

On the regional stage, there had emerged various modes of radical republicanism which at least in principle were committed to sweeping away what were seen as retrograde dynastic regimes like the Saudi monarchy. While particularly influential political projects of this hue took shape in Syria, Iraq and later also in Yemen, in the 1950s relations with Egypt were especially critical. Sa'ud had initially made the pragmatic decision to recognise the new regime brought to power in Cairo by the Free Officers coup of 1952. Sa'ud maintained friendly relations with Gamal Abdel Nasser after he emerged as leader of the new Egyptian regime, both of them sharing a view of Hashimite Iraq and Jordan as adversaries. Saudi Arabia subsequently backed Cairo's opposition to the 1955 Baghdad Pact, fearing the consequences of Iraq and Iran joining the British-led military alliance. It also supported Egypt during the invasion by Israel, France and the United Kingdom which followed Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1956 (Vassiliev 2000, 349–51; Al-Rasheed 2002, 114–15). However, this honeymoon of sorts did not last long. As early as 1955, an attempt by Egyptian-trained Saudi officers to topple the Saudi monarchy underscored the gravity of the challenge emanating from Cairo (Al-Rasheed 2002, 112). Relations soured in the second half of the decade, particularly in the wake of allegations of another Egyptian-backed effort to bring down the Saudi regime in 1957 (Vassiliev 2000, 351–53). In 1958, Sa'ud was in turn publicly accused of conspiring to have the Egyptian president assassinated (Vassiliev 2000, 354). Following the toppling of the imamate in Yemen in 1962, the two countries fought a proxy war there, with Egypt sending troops to support the new republican regime and Saudi Arabia backing the royalists. A rapprochement would only eventually come about with the new strategic situation that arose with the 1967 conflict against Israel, and particularly following the death of Nasser in 1970 (Vassiliev 2000, 372–77, 384–85).

Throughout this period, differing projects of moral and intellectual leadership – and their transmission across borders – were an important factor in regional politics (Chalcraft 2010). The socialist, pan-Arab and anti-imperialist politics of Nasser's Egypt struck at the very foundations of Saudi dynastic legitimacy, and were promoted with considerable success across the region by Cairo's *Sawt al-'Arab* (Voice of the Arabs) radio station from 1953. *Sawt al-'Arab* initially focused its attention on issues of neo-

imperialist interference in the Middle East, including the presence of British troops in the Suez Canal Zone, the role of the British head of the Arab Legion in Jordan John Glubb, and the British-led Baghdad Pact. From the end of the 1950s onwards, however, with these salient issues to some extent resolved, its energies were increasingly directed at “reactionary” regimes in the region like the Saudi monarchy (Boyd 1975, 647–53).

As will be discussed further below, circuits of students travelling from their countries of origin to Cairo for studies at al-Azhar were also at the time seen as playing a role in the diffusion of Nasserist politics beyond Egypt’s borders. In June 1961, just a few months before the IUM opened its doors, the Egyptian regime tightened its grip on al-Azhar. This involved the introduction of new legislation which, apart from paving the way for faculties teaching secular subjects like medicine, engineering and business administration, also ensured that the holders of top posts were to be government appointees (Crecelius 1966). This move thus consolidated the degree of control exercised by Nasser’s republican regime over an institution which exerted considerable ideational sway both within Egypt and also across the Islamic world.

Tensions with Egypt fed into the second major threat facing the Saudi monarchy at this point in history, which was the jostling that had begun between three factions within the royal family itself: one centred on the incumbent King Sa’ud; another mobilised by his brother Crown Prince Faisal; and a third consisting of a group of younger princes including Talal ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, who shifted their loyalty between Sa’ud and Faisal according to circumstances and leant somewhat towards Nasserist politics (Al-Rasheed 2002, 109–10). The public scandal surrounding Sa’ud’s alleged plot to assassinate Nasser in 1958 – at a time when the latter enjoyed immense popularity across the region and considerable support within Saudi Arabia itself – was one step in a string of events that led to Faisal wresting effective power from his brother in March of that year (Vassiliev 2000, 354). It exacerbated what were already much more entrenched tensions relating to Sa’ud’s failure to rein in spending during a period of financial difficulty, and unresolved issues concerning the balance of power between the king and the Council of Ministers which had been created just prior to the death of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz in 1953 (Al-Rasheed 2002, 106–09). In March 1958, Sa’ud was forced to grant

Faisal extensive sway as prime minister. Through a mixture of obstruction and alliance-building, the king managed to claw back authority from his brother in December 1960 (Vassiliev 2000, 354–58). However, he prevailed only until March 1962, at which point he once again had to pass de facto power back to Faisal (Vassiliev 2000, 358–62). Sa'ud was eventually deposed in favour of Faisal in 1964 (Vassiliev 2000, 366–68).

Throughout this period, the various actors seeking to secure the stability of the Saudi state and to consolidate their own positions within it sought ways to mobilise the support of potential allies and to bolster their political legitimacy both at home and abroad. The founding of the IUM must be understood in relation to this manoeuvring. On the one hand, with Egypt and other states in the region proactively promoting radical republican politics beyond their own borders through platforms such as Sawt al-'Arab, and with Nasserist ideas diffusing abroad through conduits including cross-border religious educational circuits centred on al-Azhar, the IUM stood for the possibility of countering these dynamics by advancing an alternative, Saudi-led counter-project of moral and intellectual leadership grounded in claims to religious authenticity and calls for Islamic solidarity. Efforts to pursue such a strategy were not limited to the IUM but would gather pace through the 1960s and beyond, with Saudi Arabia taking a leading role in initiatives including the founding of the Muslim World League in 1962, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference from 1969, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth in 1972. The religiously-framed style of foreign policy that such projects represented would come to be associated especially with the figure of Faisal (Sindi 1980; Piscatori 1983; Schulze 1995).

In the Cold War context, the Saudis' investment in the IUM and other state-backed missionary endeavours dovetailed with the Middle East policy of the kingdom's ally the United States. The years immediately preceding the founding of the IUM were marked by Washington's commitment to the Eisenhower Doctrine, promising US military aid to any country in the region seen as threatened by the forces of "international Communism". Washington was keen to bolster Saudi Arabia as a bulwark against Nasserism and other forms of leftist politics, the spread of which was viewed as undermining US interests in the Middle East. It was hoped that religion would play a certain role in this initiative, with US president Dwight Eisenhower in 1956 noting his

jejune hope that, given Saudi sovereignty over Mecca and Medina, the then king Sa'ud might usefully be "built up as a spiritual leader". This reflected Washington's broader "Islamic strategy" for the region, which Nathan Citino locates within a US policy establishment imbued with the Orientalist prejudice that "religious faith was the essential, defining characteristic of Muslims and that a monolithic 'Islam' could somehow be manipulated to shape the political future of the Middle East" (Citino 2002, 95–98).<sup>92</sup> Some US policymakers were convinced that "Western" advances had left the Middle East in a state of "social fragmentation", by eroding the firm foundation formerly provided by religious faith and institutions. If left unchecked, this supposed breakdown of social and moral order might leave the region's hapless peoples quite unable to resist the seductions of communism (Citino 2002, 125–27). Faith-based projects like the IUM were just the sort of prophylactic measures required. In this light, it is worth noting that the IUM is still viewed in some quarters in Saudi Arabia as having originally emerged as a creature of the Cold War, shaped by "the international struggle against Soviet atheism" (al-'Askar 2011).

It is especially revealing that in 1956, shortly before the IUM project began to gather momentum, British officials were themselves engaged in discussions over the possibility of establishing a directly comparable initiative, which they hoped might receive material support from the US and states in the region which were signatories to the Baghdad Pact. What they had in mind was the founding of a Centre for Advanced Islamic Studies, "in a British or at least politically reliable territory" – with Aden, Sudan, Libya, Pakistan, and British colonial dependencies in East Africa all mooted as possible locations. The hope was that such an institution might compete with al-Azhar as a centre of religious learning for students from across north and east Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and perhaps beyond, with the provision of a scholarships programme suggested as one way of helping to bolster its capacity to do so. The purpose of the plan was explicitly to counter "Egyptian nationalism, in its present expansionist stage", which was understood to represent "a threat to Middle East stability only second to Soviet pressure"; and which was specifically seen as imperilling

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<sup>92</sup> For a journalistic account of the US position on such matters at the time, see Dreyfuss 2005, 120–46.



“the security of those British dependencies and protectorates in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula where the inhabitants are either wholly or in large part Moslems”. The problem, as these British officials viewed it, was that the effects of Egyptian radio “propaganda” were bolstered by Cairo’s capacity to use its “virtual monopoly of training facilities for advanced Islamic studies” to build a far-reaching network of “influential sympathisers on the ground”:

At present, for lack of alternative, students wishing to pursue the higher Islamic studies necessary to qualify them as teachers in Moslem schools, Qadis etc. must go to El Azhar, or to lesser but hardly less notorious centres, where no effort is spared to indoctrinate them. They return thence to take up posts in British territories with a wide range of local influence, providing the direct contact required. An already serious situation seems likely to take a particularly sinister twist if the U.S.S.R. succeeds in gaining its intended foothold in Cairo.<sup>93</sup>

It is not clear that these British ambitions to counter Nasserist influence through the establishment of an alternative centre of religious learning ever came to fruition, and it is certainly the case that concerns were raised at the time about the expense and practicality of such a project. Against this background, these same officials would surely have taken some succour from the founding of an equivalent initiative like the IUM, sponsored by a Saudi administration which maintained close relations with Washington and which was soon to resolve its longstanding rift with London over border disputes with British protectorates in the Gulf.<sup>94</sup>

From the perspective of Riyadh, in addition to serving political ends beyond Saudi Arabia’s borders in the context of struggles for moral and intellectual leadership which were playing out across the region and beyond, the IUM also stood to bolster the domestic standing of individual dynastic actors and the Saudi state system as a whole. At a time when the Saudi state looked distinctly fragile, the new university represented both patronage for the Wahhabi religious establishment whose political support was

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<sup>93</sup> This and the quotations in the immediately preceding paragraph are taken from “Proposal for the Establishment of an Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies,” an undated document circulated by officials at the Colonial Office in April 1956. This document and other relevant items of correspondence which inform the discussion here are reproduced in Burdett 1998, 4:371–94.

<sup>94</sup> On Saudi relations with Washington and London in this period, see Vassiliev 2000, 342–48, 380; Al-Rasheed 2002, 117–20.

so important to Saudi rule and also a means for bolstering narratives of pious leadership which had long been promulgated with a view to legitimating that rule.

As will be explored in more detail below, while a large proportion of staff would ultimately be drafted in from outside Saudi Arabia, key posts at the IUM – particularly in the early days – went to figures at the heart of the Wahhabi establishment. The university thus afforded leading Wahhabi scholars an opportunity to extend their influence and authority over ever greater audiences. While the use of state funds to make a gift of this kind to the ‘ulama’ was characteristic of the longstanding patronage relations which bound this important political constituency to the Saudi monarchy and helped to ensure their ongoing support for Saudi rule, the timing is once again significant. Judging by local press coverage, plans for the IUM appear to have really gathered pace around 1958, just as Faisal seized effective power from his brother Sa‘ud and the conflict between the two became particularly fractious. The views and loyalties of the ‘ulama’ were an important factor that had to be taken into consideration and managed by all parties to this power struggle in the upper echelons of the monarchy. Sa‘ud’s victory in reclaiming power from Faisal in December 1960 followed a year in which he had toured the kingdom, meeting and distributing patronage to an array of constituencies. This included regular meetings with scholars and the provision of funds for the construction and maintenance of mosques both at home and abroad (Vassiliev 2000, 357). Sa‘ud’s relationship with the ‘ulama’ became more tense after he took back power that year and brought reformists like Talal ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and the nationalist ‘Abd Allah al-Tariqi into his new government. The Grand Mufti Muhammad ibn Ibrahim wrote to the king “reminding him of the mufti’s right to examine all laws and government orders before they came into effect and to give rulings on whether they corresponded to the *sharia*”, and he secured concessions on significant issues including labour legislation (Vassiliev 2000, 358–60). The ‘ulama’ joined princes in pressuring the increasingly unpopular Sa‘ud to reappoint Faisal to the post of prime minister in 1962 (Vassiliev 2000, 364). During the end game of the power struggle, senior scholars initially dragged their heels on whether or not to back the outright removal of Sa‘ud – a king who had over the years tended to fold quite readily to their demands – before eventually being persuaded to issue fatwas lending

important legitimacy to the handover of effective power to Faisal and then ultimately to Sa'ud's deposition (Yizraeli 2012, 86–93).

In this context, the award of the IUM to the Wahhabi establishment stood to shore up the patronage relations which bound them to the Saudi monarchical regime, and which over the decades would increasingly serve to direct their attention away from politics and towards the social sphere, at a time when the regime was at its most vulnerable and was deeply in need of support. It has specifically been suggested that the IUM was offered to the 'ulama' as compensation of sorts for the founding of the University of Riyadh in 1957, which was expected to be a broadly secular institution (Commins 2005, 126). It is plausible to go further and to speculate that the new Islamic university may have been backed by one or other of the individual actors who were then vying for influence within the state framework, as a way of bolstering his own personal standing. As will be discussed further below, source materials available from the period overwhelmingly attribute credit for the IUM project to Sa'ud, and it is certainly the case that the formal royal decrees which confirmed the founding of the IUM in September 1961 were issued in Sa'ud's name and at a time when he had temporarily managed to claw power back from Faisal. However, the fact that Faisal exercised so much authority for much of the period leading up to the launch of the new university, and the lack of source materials offering insights into the murky behind-the-scenes wrangling of this period, means that any such suggestions must remain speculative. It is worth noting that Faisal paid personal visits to the IUM in its early years, once prior to becoming king and again immediately after he secured the throne at the expense of his brother (al-Ghamidi 1998, 90). Whether or not any particular royal was uniquely responsible for backing the IUM project, the imbrication of university staff in the politicking of this period is highlighted by the curious fact that, when the country's top scholars did finally give the go-ahead for the replacement of King Sa'ud by Faisal in 1964, the person they dispatched to break the news to the deposed monarch was Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti. Al-Shinqiti, whose biography is discussed in Chapter 4, was a Mauritania-born scholar who had resided in the kingdom for many years, had become close to the Wahhabi establishment, and had been teaching at the IUM from the time that it opened (al-Majdhub 1992, 1:185).

Finally, in addition to serving a function in political struggles at the regional level and in the consolidation of patronage relations with the Wahhabi scholarly establishment, investment by state actors in the IUM stood to affirm narratives of Saudi political legitimacy directed at broader constituencies within the kingdom. The ways in which the founding of the university was bound up with the promulgation of such narratives is plain to see in contemporary Saudi press coverage of the project.<sup>95</sup> The years immediately prior to the opening of the IUM saw a series of public calls for the establishment of just such an institution, concentrated particularly in the Medina-based newspaper *al-Madina al-Munawwara*. These were written by a number of individuals, most if not all of whom appear to have been Hijazis by birth and family background. The circumstances surrounding the publication of these articles calling for the founding of an Islamic university in Medina is not clear. It certainly cannot be ruled out that they were choreographed to pave the way for a plan that had already been put in motion by state actors, perhaps to help secure local legitimacy for an institution which was to be dominated by the Najdi Wahhabi establishment. However that may be, these articles offer insights into the ways in which the new university was at the time presented to audiences within Saudi Arabia, and the kinds of political rewards that state actors could hope to reap from their investment. Above all, they illustrate how the founding of the IUM was framed simultaneously in terms of narratives of Saudi dynastic beneficence – generosity, pious leadership, religious mission, and the guardianship and nurturing of the Holy Cities – and also of national pride.<sup>96</sup>

Many of these threads are illustrated in two linked articles published in consecutive issues of *al-Madina al-Munawwara* in May 1960, written by ‘Abd Allah al-Fasi (al-Fasi 1960b; al-Fasi 1960c). Al-Fasi claimed to have been the originator of the campaign to found an Islamic university in Medina at this time and he was certainly one of the most

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<sup>95</sup> The discussion that follows is informed by coverage of the initiative to establish an Islamic university in Medina found in: *al-Madina al-Munawwara* issues 816, 818, 821, 827, 830, 860, 861, 880, 883, 887, 891, 893, 901, 940, 971, 975, 978, 993, 994, 1012, 1015, 1016, 1020, 1027, 1030, 1032, 1037, 1038, 1042; *al-Bilad* issue 349; *al-Nadwa* issues 320, 322; and issues of *al-Manhal* published in Rabi’ al-Akhir 1380 H. and Ramadan 1381 H. I have cited specific examples of such coverage in instances where these relate directly to a point being made.

<sup>96</sup> On the role of historical narrative in the construction of Saudi political legitimacy, see e.g. Al-Rasheed 1998; Al-Rasheed 2004b; Determann 2012, 44–90, 136–83.

prolific of the authors writing in support of such a project.<sup>97</sup> He was himself a Mecca-born graduate of the Saudi Scholastic Institute discussed in Chapter 2. He had also studied in Egypt and had subsequently penned volumes of poetry and worked in various roles for the Saudi state in the Hijaz, including for the government printing house and radio (Yusuf 2002, 2:132).

The headline that tops these pieces, “The Concern of the Father of the People for the Founding of the Islamic University”, reflects the fact that most of those who were penning newspaper articles of this kind at the time depicted Sa’ud himself as personally responsible for establishing the IUM.<sup>98</sup> It also captures the prevailing tendency to portray this act as one of paternal munificence, to be received with gratitude by the king’s subjects.<sup>99</sup> Elsewhere in these same two articles, al-Fasi weaves the issue of benevolent paternalism with that of the pious ruler, linking the IUM project to Sa’ud’s role as “the father of the people, the guardian of its renaissance, the vigilant protector of the eternal Islamic heritage, and the combatant fighting for the defence of the essence of the [Islamic] religion and the widening of its *da’wa*”.

He also invokes another very common theme, Sa’ud’s guardianship over the sacred geography of the Hijaz and the importance of returning to Medina its historical status as a hub for the spread of Islam to the peoples of the world. He celebrates Sa’ud’s recognition of

the necessity of restoring the glory of these lands, and not simply their glory but what they were like in the era of the Prophet and his Companions. That is to say that His Majesty will make [these lands] into a centre of radiation [of the Islamic *da’wa*] once

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<sup>97</sup> On al-Fasi’s claim to have originated the call for an Islamic university in Medina, see al-Fasi 1960b. Elsewhere, al-Fasi, ‘Ubayd Madani, Muhammad Sa’id ‘Amudi and Amin Madani are identified as “the writers who were the first to call for the founding of the Islamic University of Medina” (“Amal al-Muslimin al-Kabir Yatahaqqaq ‘ala Yadd Hami al-Haramayn Jalalat al-Malik Su’ud” 1960). In authorised histories of the IUM, the university is depicted as having been established in response to these requests from public figures (al-Ghamidi 1998, 27–34; al-‘Abbud 2004, 229–40).

<sup>98</sup> In the run-up to the founding of the IUM, some also addressed themselves to the then education minister and future king Fahd (e.g. ‘Ubayd Madani 1960). Faisal’s name was mentioned in connection with the project, but only rarely (e.g. al-‘Amudi 1960).

<sup>99</sup> In other articles, the IUM was described as “a gift from the Father of the People to his people and to the Muslims” and as “one of the eternal works of His Majesty King Sa’ud” (al-Fasi 1960a; “al-Jami’a al-Islamiyya min al-‘amal al-Khalida li-Jalalat al-Malik Su’ud” 1961).

again; that His Majesty carries the flag and lights the torch, that flag and that torch which were carried by Muhammad and his Companions

In this way, Sa'ud is presented as the inheritor of the religious mission first launched in Medina by the Prophet himself.<sup>100</sup>

The themes of sacred geography and the need to emulate the example set by the Prophet are in turn interwoven by al-Fasi with the invocation of national pride. In this mode, he uses vocabulary like “we” and “our” to frame the call for an Islamic university in Medina in terms of a sense of collective identity, privilege and responsibility distinct from the appeals to the individual person of the king. Expressing his own hope that such an institution would itself then be in a position to open institutes in other, disadvantaged Islamic lands, al-Fasi asserted that:

I know that *we* are more deserving than any Arab country to assume this mission and to carry it out. Some Islamic states have stirred up the issue of these remote lands, and some of them have sent missionaries to the True Religion, while some have opened institutes in those countries. I saw and read about this and I said to myself that *we* are more worthy and that the constitution of *our* king is that *our* lands [once again] assume the standing that they had in the era of the Prophet and his Companions (italics added)

In a further twist, several authors suggested that the founding of an Islamic university in Medina by the Saudis would represent the fulfilment of plans that had first been put in place in the late Ottoman period.<sup>101</sup> On 19 April 1913, the then Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V had decreed the establishment of the Salah al-Din al-'Ayyubi University in Medina, which was intended to exist alongside similar institutions in Baghdad, Damascus and Yemen.<sup>102</sup> Instruction was to be in Arabic and while the intention was for the university to recruit primarily from the graduates of a secondary school in Medina, it also received applications from as far afield as Morocco, Algeria, Iraq and Syria. Its mission was “to spread the knowledge of Islam”, although it was also to

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<sup>100</sup> Efforts to bolster the political legitimacy of a contemporary head of state by constructing claims to historical continuity with prestigious bygone eras are not unique to Saudi Arabia, of course; one directly comparable example being the steps taken in Saddam Hussein's Iraq “to link the Ba'ath to ancient Mesopotamia”, epitomised in a “reconstruction of the ancient city of Babylon” with “Saddam's initials... inscribed on every brick” (Davis 2005, 17).

<sup>101</sup> See especially 'Ubayd Madani 1960, but also “al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya fi al-Madina: Tawhid al-Thaqafa” 1959; “Amal al-Muslimin al-Kabir Yatahaqqaq 'ala Yadd Hami al-Haramayn Jalalat al-Malik Su'ud” 1960.

<sup>102</sup> This paragraph draws on Dohaish 1974, 98–101.

include colleges offering training in agriculture and commerce. The individual lined up to take charge was 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish, an Egyptian graduate of al-Azhar and Cairo's Dar al-'Ulum who had previously been selected to work as a professor of Arabic literature at Cambridge University. He had been jailed in Egypt for his public stance against the British occupation and would go on to co-found the Association of Muslim Youth (al-Zirikli 1980, 4:17). Other prominent figures involved in the project included Shakib Arslan, a Lebanon-born activist who based himself in Switzerland and whose platform has been characterised as "Islamic nationalist" (al-Zirikli 1980, 3:173–75; Lauzière 2008, 235–86). In the end, the eruption of World War I in 1914 ensured that the plans for the Salah al-Din University came to naught. It thus remained for the Saudi state, some of the authors of these contemporary newspaper articles suggested, to make good on these ambitions on the part of their predecessors in Medina.

Again, the connection between the hoped-for Saudi initiative and these earlier Ottoman plans could be presented as an issue of national pride. The writer Amin Madani, for example, invoked a comparison between the stature and capacities of the contemporary Saudi polity, on the one hand, and those of its erstwhile Ottoman competitor, on the other:

If Constantinople responded positively not long ago to the idea of founding the university in the Home of the Revelation [i.e. Medina], we today are worthier of bringing this idea to fruition, with the widest scope and the strongest system [possible] to achieve its great objective

For Madani, the need for this project was all the more pressing in the Cold War context in which he was writing. Giving an account of the recent history of the Arab world marked by colonialism and the encroachment of "destructive socialism from the East and Zionist capitalism from the West", he underlined the importance of resisting both of these two competing frameworks. Tying the founding of the IUM now to Arab nationalist themes, he asserted that the idea to establish the university

was built on a profound study of the history of the Arab world, which will not achieve strength and dominion, just as its nationalism will not have significance or sovereignty, until the Arabs adhere to Islamic principles and proceed according to the guidance of the Muhammadan legislation (A. Madani 1960)

It is thus clear that the decision by Saudi state actors at this point in history to invest economic resources in a project that was primarily intended to effect change abroad must be understood in relation to political developments that were playing out within and around the Saudi national sphere. The founding of the new university was bound up with the need for the Saudi monarchy as a whole – and also for individual actors who were competing for influence within the monarchy – to build alliances with key constituencies within this national space, and to communicate broader claims to political legitimacy grounded in narratives of pious leadership, religious mission, guardianship of the sacred geography of the Holy Cities, royal beneficence, and the protection and nurturing of national prestige. It was furthermore linked to struggles between national states, as those in power in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and elsewhere mobilised their respective state apparatuses to advance antagonistic projects of moral and intellectual leadership as part of what was at the time a particularly high-stakes regional competition for authority and influence. The remainder of this chapter explores the important role that Saudi national politics continued to play as the IUM took shape and subsequently evolved in the decades that followed.

### **Resources and Regulation: The Evolving Relationship between the Islamic University and the Saudi State**

In addition to emerging in part out of a particular juncture in Saudi national politics, the IUM was from the start in principle also subordinated to the Saudi political authorities. It was reliant for resources upon dynastic elites and the national state. Furthermore, bureaucratic frameworks were installed to ensure that state actors and their allies within the Wahhabi establishment maintained oversight and influence over the processes by which material and spiritual capital were to be translated and distributed under its auspices.

The IUM was formally established on 6 September 1961 by a royal decree attributed to King Sa'ud, during a period when he had temporarily managed to regain effective power from Faisal. Setting the university budget for its first year of operation at 3 million Saudi riyals, the decree noted that the institution would draw its resources



from “our royal property”.<sup>103</sup> It had earlier been announced that the university would be housed in a palace personally donated by Sa‘ud. The king was thus from the start placed in a position of patronage over the IUM, insofar as it was he who was projected as the provider of the economic resources upon which its operation depended. The quantities of material goods required for any such educational project to operate were multiplied by the missionary nature of the IUM and its global ambitions. There would be all the usual expenses associated with maintaining premises, purchasing equipment, paying staff, and so on. There would also be the additional costs involved in recruiting students from across the globe, facilitating their travel to and from Medina, and paying out stipends such that they would be able to remove themselves from economic markets for the several years required to complete their education there. The provision of the necessary funding by national state actors established a clientelistic relationship between those state actors and the university, grounded in “asymmetric but mutually beneficial, open-ended transactions based on the differential control by individuals or groups over the access and flow of resources”.<sup>104</sup> As I explore in what follows, the position of strength that dynastic and state actors derived from their place in this relationship was further consolidated through the bureaucratic mapping of rights and responsibilities, ensuring that they were in a position to exert influence over the processes by which this investment was to be translated into spiritual capital and distributed.

The decree founding the IUM was followed by another on 19 September 1961, which approved statutes outlining how the university would function.<sup>105</sup> This founding document again situated the IUM firmly as a royal project, undertaken by King Sa‘ud out of his “consideration for the affairs of Islam and his striving to champion the fortunes of Muslims in the East and in the West”.<sup>106</sup> As “the founder of the Islamic

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<sup>103</sup> “Royal Decree No. 11,” reproduced in al-Ghamidi 1998, 38.

<sup>104</sup> This definition is adapted from a conference paper by Luis Roniger, quoted in Hertog 2010, 21. Roniger’s definition specifies that the transactions in question occur within “stratified societies”, a feature which is not especially relevant to the particular set of institutionalised relationships described here.

<sup>105</sup> “Royal Decree No. 17,” reproduced in al-Ghamidi 1998, 50; “al-Nizam al-Asasi li-l-Jami‘a al-Islamiyya bi-l-Madina al-Munawwara,” reproduced in al-Ghamidi 1998, 52–58.

<sup>106</sup> “al-Nizam al-Asasi,” Article 2.

University and the guarantor of its resources", King Sa'ud was named personally as its Supreme President.<sup>107</sup> This title not only gave him symbolic sovereignty over the institution but also came with substantive powers. As Supreme President, he in principle retained the right to review recommendations made by the university's Advisory Council – made up of prominent Islamic personalities from around the world, who were to offer counsel on its operation – before passing them on for further action. He also had the right to ratify the appointment of the initial cohort of teaching staff, and to approve the initial distribution of places to students from different countries.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, his input would be required in the event that any changes were to be made to the university statutes themselves.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to outlining this personal role for the king himself, the same founding document also defined the IUM in national terms – as a "Saudi religious scholarly foundation" – and set up regulations that would serve to stitch it more broadly into the apparatus of the national state.<sup>110</sup> The university's revenues, no matter what their source, were to be treated as public funds; its staff were to be subject to the same rulings as government functionaries; the university was to be headed by the nation's Grand Mufti, as University President; and the latter's powers in relation to university personnel were explicitly described as equivalent to those of a minister in relation to the employees of his ministry.<sup>111</sup>

Although the university statutes were amended substantially in September 1966 and again in August 1975, senior royals and other state actors retained far-reaching oversight powers.<sup>112</sup> It is worth noting that from the time of the 1966 statutes, the university was described as receiving its funding not from the king personally but from

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<sup>107</sup> "al-Nizam al-Asasi," Article 4.

<sup>108</sup> "al-Nizam al-Asasi," Articles 17 and 18; and "Nizam al-Majlis al-Istishari al-A'la li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya bi-l-Madina al-Munawwara," Article 3. This latter document is reproduced in al-Ghamidi 1998, 146–48.

<sup>109</sup> "al-Nizam al-Asasi," Articles 26 and 27.

<sup>110</sup> "al-Nizam al-Asasi," Article 1.

<sup>111</sup> "al-Nizam al-Asasi," Articles 3, 23 and 25.

<sup>112</sup> The second statute and the royal decree approving it are reproduced in al-Ghamidi 1998, 62–66. The third statute and the royal decree approving it are reproduced in al-Ghamidi 1998, 72–81.

“that which the state allocates to it in its general budget”.<sup>113</sup> By the time of the revisions introduced in 1975, organs within the university had taken charge of certain important tasks. This included drawing up syllabuses, whereas the original statutes had themselves included a pre-approved programme of study. By 1975, the university was also permitted to supplement the funding allocated to it by the state with monies derived from sources such as *awqāf*, bequests or donations.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, the formal status of the king – at this time, Khalid – in relation to the university was now reduced to Honorary President, a title which in itself conferred no clear powers. The university’s Advisory Council was replaced by a new body. While it still included a significant proportion of prominent figures drafted in from outside the kingdom, it was now renamed the Supreme Council and was granted a certain amount of executive power. These developments notwithstanding, state actors retained scope for a very considerable degree of influence over the university. Royal decrees were still required for key matters, including filling the important post of University President and approving the university budget.<sup>115</sup> For other issues, such as the allocation of financial support to associations and organisations that worked in cooperation with the university, approval was required from the country’s Council of Ministers.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, the choice of international figures to sit on the university’s Supreme Council was to be ratified by the king and the council itself was to be headed by a Supreme President; with Crown Prince Fahd duly appointed to this post by royal decree.<sup>117</sup> In practice, Fahd only attended a handful of council meetings in all the years that this body existed, with others usually deputised to attend on his behalf (al-Ghamidi 1998, 164–90). Nonetheless, his role as Supreme President was symbolic of the continuing prerogative of Saudi state actors to exercise influence over the university insofar as they chose to do so.

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<sup>113</sup> Article 4.

<sup>114</sup> Article 26. The 1966 amendments had also permitted the university to derive funding from sources other than the state. However, it had included a requirement for prior approval from the king which was no longer present in the 1975 document.

<sup>115</sup> Articles 14 and 17.

<sup>116</sup> Article 14.

<sup>117</sup> Article 10; al-Ghamidi 1998, 69.

Besides being subject to oversight by actors and institutions at the heart of the royal family and the state framework, the IUM was from the start also put in the charge of key figures from the loyal Wahhabi 'ulama' establishment. As noted above, the IUM's founding statutes issued in September 1961 asserted that the post of university president would automatically go to the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, by virtue of his status in that role. The Grand Mufti at the time was Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al al-Shaykh, who was no mere state functionary but was in religious standing also the pre-eminent Wahhabi authority of the period ('Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 169–84; Al Bassam 1998/9, 1:242–64; al-Majdhub 1992, 247–54; al-'Aqil 2008, 763–70). In practice, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim was not very involved in the running of the university. That task went to the person appointed as his deputy; 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz, another figure born in Riyadh who was very much a part of Wahhabi scholarly circles there and would also later be appointed Grand Mufti (al-Majdhub 1992, 1:77–106; al-'Aqil 2008, 444–56). At an early stage prior to the opening of the IUM, it was decided that the post of secretary general – with responsibility for the university's administrative staff – would go to Muhammad ibn Nasir al-'Abbudi, who came from the Wahhabi stronghold of Burayda and was at that time in charge of a state-run Scholastic Institute there (al-Majdhub 1992, 2:331–41; al-'Abbad 2010).

The division of the presidency between Ibn Ibrahim and Ibn Baz, two doyens of the Wahhabi establishment, does not seem to have been planned from the start. Interestingly, two figures who were apparently originally considered to run the IUM both stood in more complicated relationships to the Najdi religious establishment. We are told in the memoirs of 'Abd Allah Khayyat (b. 1908), the graduate of the Saudi Scholastic Institute in Mecca who was discussed in Chapter 2, that he had in fact originally been appointed by royal decree to be the IUM's founding president, having been nominated for the role by Muhammad ibn Ibrahim (Khayyat 2004, 15, 235–42). Although we are not given an exact date for this decree, it is clear from the context that it was issued at least as early as September 1960. The appointment apparently did not take place only because he declined it, citing personal reasons. As a Mecca-born scholar from a Hanafi background who had passed through the private and Hashimite schooling systems in the Hijaz, 'Abd Allah Khayyat was far from being an archetypal

representative of the Najdi Wahhabi establishment. However, his trajectory had been powerfully shaped by the environment created in the Hijaz following the Saudi invasion in the 1920s. His teachers both at the Scholastic Institute and in the Masjid Haram included many of the foreign Salafis drafted in by the Saudis to perform religious and educational functions at that time, including the Egyptians Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi, 'Abd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh and 'Abd al-Razzaq Hamza, the Syrian Bahjat al-Bitar and the Moroccan Taqi al-Din al-Hilali.<sup>118</sup> He also studied in both sites with Wahhabi scholars, including the then Grand Qadi of the Hijaz 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan Al al-Shaykh, and he had subsequently been hired by 'Abd al-'Aziz to school the king's sons. He was therefore far closer to the political and religious establishment than the circumstances of his birth might suggest, a fact later underlined by his appointment as one of the founding members of the official Council of Senior Scholars in 1971 (Khayyat 2004, 13–17). It is possible that he may have been seen as a potentially useful mediator between the Najdi Wahhabi establishment, the Hijazi setting in which the university was to take root, and what was expected to be a diverse, international student body.

The same goes for Muhammad 'Ali al-Harakan, another figure who was early on apparently seen as being in the running to take charge of the IUM (al-'Abbad 2010).<sup>119</sup> Although he was also born and raised in the Hijaz, in his case in Medina shortly before the collapse of Ottoman rule there, al-Harakan's background was similarly complex. His genealogy traced to Najd, and his family had only been settled in Medina from the time of his grandfather, a merchant who had traded between that city and 'Unayza (Al Bassam 1998/9, 6:317–25; al-Qar'ani 2009, 183–89). His teachers as a young man in the Masjid Nabawi included both Najdi scholars who were resident in Medina and the prominent Mali-born scholar Muhammad al-Tayyib al-Ansari.<sup>120</sup> Prior to being considered to run the IUM, al-Harakan had worked in the judicial system and his

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<sup>118</sup> All of these figures are discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>119</sup> It is worth noting that Muhammad al-Harakan was amongst the small number of Saudi scholars who sat on a committee convened in 1960 to discuss proposed plans for the IUM. This committee is discussed at the start of Chapter 4.

<sup>120</sup> Al-Zirikli's biography of what seems to be the same Muhammad al-Tayyib al-Ansari describes him as having been Maliki in jurisprudence but "Salafi in creed" (al-Zirikli 1980, 6:178–79). For another biography, see al-Qar'ani 2009, 33–42.

relationship with the Saudi political and religious establishments was such that he would become Saudi Arabia's first minister of justice in 1970 and would later be appointed secretary general of the Muslim World League.

In the event, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim remained president of the IUM until the time of his death in 1969. In November of the following year, Ibn Baz was formally promoted to the presidency. He remained in that post until October 1975, when he left to take charge of one of the top Saudi state religious agencies, the Permanent Committee for Scholastic Research and Legal Opinion (al-Ghamidi 1998, 216–17; Al-Atawneh 2010, 24–29, 32). In the years that followed, he remained a degree of involvement in the university as a member of its Supreme Council, over which he frequently presided in place of the formal head of that body Crown Prince and later King Fahd (al-Ghamidi 1998, 164–90). From the time that Ibn Baz departed as university president, the IUM was run for four years by 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Abbad (b. 1934), who had taught at the institution since it first opened and had until this time been Ibn Baz's deputy. Al-'Abbad himself hailed from the town of Zilfi, north of Riyadh. He had studied as a young man in new-style educational institutions overseen by the Wahhabi establishment in Riyadh – including the country's second Scholastic Institute, founded there in the early 1950s – and he counted Ibn Baz amongst his teachers (al-Qar'ani 2009, 373–79; al-'Abbad 2010). The IUM was subsequently run by a series of graduates of the system of Islamic universities which had grown up in the kingdom by this time. The first was 'Abd Allah al-Zayid from al-Aflaj in Najd, a graduate of the Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud Islamic University, which had been established in Riyadh in 1974 and had absorbed the various Islamic educational institutions which had existed in the capital until that time. The IUM presidency was then taken over in the early 1980s by 'Abd Allah ibn Salih al-'Ubayd (b. 1941) from al-Qasim, who combined a bachelor's degree from the Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud University with a doctorate in human resources management from Oklahoma State University (Al-Obaid 1979; al-Ghamidi 1998, 222–23). He would later go on to become minister of education. His successor at the IUM from 1995 was Salih ibn 'Abd Allah al-'Abbad, another figure from al-Qasim. He had been one of the last students to graduate from the Mecca-based Saudi Scholastic Institute discussed in Chapter 2 before it closed its doors in the early 1960s, and his own education had

culminated with a doctorate from the IUM (al-Ghamidi 1998, 224–25). Since 2007, the IUM has been run by the Mecca-born Muhammad ibn ‘Ali Farraj al-‘Uqla (b. 1959), who holds a PhD in Islamic economics from King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz University.<sup>121</sup>

It is thus clear that the IUM project was from the start in many ways stitched into the Saudi national state apparatus. It was founded by state actors using dynastic and national resources. From the position of strength afforded to them by their access to the material capital necessary for the project to function, those state actors were able to map out bureaucratic regulations which at least in principle gave them considerable sway over the processes by which this investment was to be put to work, translated into spiritual capital, and distributed beyond the borders of the kingdom. They ensured that the university was at least initially put in the charge of scholars from the heart of the loyal Wahhabi establishment in Riyadh. Though the backgrounds of later IUM heads varied, they had in common that they were all royal appointees.

This close relationship between university and state is reflected in the fact that many other basic aspects of the institutional history of the IUM from 1961 until today can quite clearly be mapped onto political and economic milestones in and around the Saudi national sphere, including: the 1973 oil boom; the challenges posed to the regime by the 1979 Haram siege, the Iranian revolution and protests by the kingdom’s own Shi’i population; the 1980s recession; the emergence of a domestic Islamist opposition; and the early-1990s Gulf crisis. Throughout this period, state actors continually modified their behaviour towards the IUM – in terms of the provision of economic capital and the exercise of bureaucratic regulation of the use of this investment – in response to such developments.

When it first opened, the IUM had consisted of only a school-level Secondary Department (*al-qism al-thānawī*) and a university-level Higher Studies Department (*al-qism al-‘ālī*). In 1963, the latter department was renamed the College of Shari’a and the following years saw the founding of a range of additional colleges: a College of Da’wa and the Principles of Religion in 1966; a College of the Qur’an and Islamic Studies in 1974; a College of Arabic Language in 1975; and a College of Hadith and

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<sup>121</sup> “Mu’ali al-Ustadh al-Duktur Muhammad al-‘Uqla” 2013.

Islamic Studies in 1976 (al-Ghamidi 1998, 290, 301, 312, 323, 336).<sup>122</sup> The university also acquired a new Department of Higher Studies in 1975, which would go on to offer training at masters and doctorate level (al-Ghamidi 1998, 282). Pre-university level training came to be divided between a secondary institute and an intermediate institute geared primarily towards students from countries where opportunities for Islamic education were lacking even at this basic level, in addition to a standalone department offering Arabic language instruction to non-native speakers.<sup>123</sup>

In 1964, the IUM absorbed a pre-existing educational institution in Medina known as Dar al-Hadith. This had been founded in 1931 by Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Dihlawi from Delhi, who was associated with the South Asian Salafi movement the Ahl-i Hadith and had settled in the Hijaz in the wake of the Saudi occupation of that region. The school offered a ten-year programme starting at the primary level. Prior to being incorporated into the IUM framework, the Medina Dar al-Hadith had been given Saudi state funding and had been managed for a period by Dar al-Ifta.<sup>124</sup> In 1971, the IUM absorbed another institution in Mecca, also known as Dar al-Hadith. The Mecca Dar al-Hadith had been founded in 1933 by the same Ahmad al-Dihlawi, this time in cooperation with ‘Abd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh and ‘Abd al-Razzaq Hamza, two of the Egyptian Salafi associates of Rashid Rida whose involvement in the Mecca-based Saudi Scholastic Institute was discussed in Chapter 2 (‘Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 514–16; ‘Abd al-Jabbar 1982, 227–28; al-Ghamidi 1998, 367–74). In addition to incorporating these schools into its framework, the IUM also cooperated with the Muslim World League in the running of a Saudi state-funded Institute of Islamic Solidarity (Ma‘had al-Tadamun al-Islami) in Mogadishu, Somalia. The Mogadishu school used the same syllabuses prepared for the IUM’s secondary-level institute in Medina and the strongest of its students, the first cohort of whom graduated in the early 1970s, were given scholarships to study at the university.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The dates given here correspond with the issuing of royal decrees approving the various colleges, which may in fact have begun work a little later.

<sup>123</sup> “Dalil al-Jami‘a al-Islamiyya” 1971, 87, 111; al-Ghamidi 1998, 347–60.

<sup>124</sup> “Dalil al-Jami‘a al-Islamiyya” 1971, 127; al-Ghamidi 1998, 361–66; Lacroix 2011, 88–89, fn. 36.

<sup>125</sup> “Dalil al-Jami‘a al-Islamiyya” 1971, 125–26.



The dates for the establishment of the three new colleges at the IUM focusing on Qur'anic and hadith studies and Arabic language reflect a rapid expansion of the university in the 1970s. At the beginning of that decade, the two colleges that made up the core of the university at that time had employed a total of 33 professors and lecturers.<sup>126</sup> By early 1982, the total number of staff at the university's five colleges and in its higher studies department had increased to a total of 234 professors, associate professors, assistant professors and lecturers, in addition to 142 teaching assistants.<sup>127</sup> The total number of students in the university's colleges, which had grown from 85 at the time of its founding to 575 in 1391/1392 H. (circa. 1972), reached 2,179 by 1399/1400 H. (circa. 1979).<sup>128</sup>

Expansion of the IUM had been in the offing for some time. An article published in the university journal in February 1969 outlined an ambitious ten-year plan that was already in place at that stage, which included the construction of accommodation for 4,000 students (al-Hariri 1969). Nonetheless, the growth of the university must also be understood in relation to developments in the Saudi national economy. The oil embargo put in place by Saudi Arabia and other Arab states against the United States and Europe in 1973, in solidarity with Egypt in the conflict that had erupted with Israel that year, led to a sharp rise in oil prices and an enormous boost to the Saudi economy, which translated directly into a very marked increase in public spending (Al-Rasheed 2002, 136–40; Hertog 2010, 84–136). A huge leap in the IUM budget at this time, relative to its previous size, maps so directly onto the timing of the broader increase in public spending as to leave little doubt that it was a direct upshot of the oil boom. Having risen only gradually since 1961, in the wake of the spike in oil revenues the IUM's annual budget suddenly grew nearly five-fold over the space of just two years; from not much more than 40 million Saudi riyals in 1394/1395 H. (circa. 1975) to over 196 million SR in 1396/1397 H. (circa. 1976) (al-Ghamidi 1998, 281).

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<sup>126</sup> "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 45–46, 71–72.

<sup>127</sup> "Dalil A'da' Hay'at al-Tadris wa-l-Muhadirin wa-l-Mu'idin" 1981/2, 7, 11.

<sup>128</sup> Figures for the total number of students in each of the colleges are given in al-Ghamidi 1998, 295, 305, 317, 329, 341. These figures exclude students in the university's various other institutes and departments.

Following a slight drop, the university budget shot up again from a little over 180 million SR in 1399/1400 H. (circa. 1979) to a peak of over 381 million SR in 1402/1403 H (circa. 1982), which would have been equivalent to nearly 111 million US dollars according to the exchange rates of the day (al-Ghamidi 1998, 281).<sup>129</sup> The scale of student recruitment also peaked at this time, with the total number enrolled in the IUM's colleges in the same year reaching over 3,100, although it is worth noting that the IUM was still dwarfed by the kingdom's other major universities which catered mainly for Saudis.<sup>130</sup> Again, these developments map directly onto twists and turns in Saudi national political economy in this period. This second massive boost in the IUM budget coincided with a period of soaring revenues and public spending nationwide, at a point in time when oil prices were again ascending in the wake of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. It also came in the context of a renewed emphasis on religious discourse in the public sphere and increased spending on religious projects across the board in Saudi Arabia around this time (Prokop 2005, 61; Okruhlik 2005, 194–96; Hertog 2010, 126–28).

These latter moves were intended to burnish the image of the monarchy and shore up its foundations in the face of a host of new challenges that had emerged right at the end of the 1970s. The first of these was the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which gave rise to a regime that was stridently critical of the Saudi monarchy, including its alliance with the United States. It became common for Iranian pilgrims to mount protests and to clash with Saudi police during the hajj season, with one particularly serious incident in July 1987 resulting in the deaths of more than 400 pilgrims and injuries to thousands more (Al-Rasheed 2002, 156–57; Matthiesen 2009). On the other hand, the Iranian regime was also intent on promoting its revolutionary politics amongst Shi'a across the region, including the sizeable Shi'i population in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province (Al-

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<sup>129</sup> The rough figure in US dollars given here for comparison is calculated using <http://fxtop.com/en/historical-exchange-rates.php>.

<sup>130</sup> The enrolment figures cited in this paragraph are based on data given in an authorised history of the IUM (al-Ghamidi 1998, 295, 305, 317, 329, 341). Sarah Yizraeli (2012, 248), citing state documents, suggests that there were 3,271 students at the IUM in 1982 and 3,395 in 1983; numbers which may well include students enrolled in the university's pre-undergraduate level institutes. In comparison, she suggests that in 1983 there were 20,061 students at King Sa'ud University, 20,546 at King 'Abd al-'Aziz University, 8,757 at the Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud Islamic University and 7,721 at Umm al-Qura University.

Rasheed 2002, 156–57). The revolutionary politics emanating from Tehran represented one dynamic feeding into a major uprising by Shi'a of the Eastern Province in 1979, even if these events at root had much more to do with entrenched grievances stemming from socioeconomic inequities, cultural discrimination and political repression. Neither the Saudi authorities' initial response of brutal military suppression nor their subsequent promises of reforms were enough to put down the unrest, which continued with riots in 1980 and the mobilisation of the dissident Organisation of the Islamic Revolution (Al-Rasheed 2002, 146–47; Jones 2010, 179–216).

A distinct challenge arose with the occupation of the Masjid Haram in Mecca in 1979 by a militant Salafi group led by Juhayman al-'Utaybi, who charged the Al Sa'ud with corruption and impiety. Juhayman himself had in fact previously attended classes at the IUM-affiliated Dar al-Hadith. Furthermore, prior to embarking on a militant trajectory, he had started his activist career in a proselytising and vigilante movement known as the Jama'a Salafiyya Muhtasiba (Salafi Group that Commands Right and Forbids Wrong), which had ties to major IUM scholars including Ibn Baz and the Algeria-born Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri (Hegghammer and Lacroix 2007). In the wake of the Haram mosque siege, the IUM journal ran a number of articles on the events, including one by Ibn Baz himself condemning the actions and ideology of Juhayman and his comrades (Ibn Baz n.d.). Nonetheless, the IUM was viewed in some quarters as a part of the problem, its very project of drawing in foreigners for missionary purposes seen as being inherently bound up with the potential for religious and political corruption.<sup>131</sup> Such views notwithstanding, the peak in IUM budgets at this time suggests that the university at least initially benefited from the regime's broader strategy of seeking to bolster its alliances with key parts of its support base by upping financial backing for actors and institutions in the religious sphere.

The IUM's budget then dropped sharply over a period corresponding with the recession that hit Saudi Arabia from 1982 before broadly levelling out in the mid-1980s, around the same time that the most dramatic phase of the economic crisis came to an

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<sup>131</sup> One Riyadh-based imam quoted at the time in the newspaper *al-Riyadh* suggested that, "An atmosphere favourable to heresy existed [in Medina] because of the presence of large numbers of foreign students" (quoted in Buchan 1982, 123).

end. Following these same trends in national revenue, national public spending and IUM budgets, student numbers in the IUM's five colleges dropped off to a little over 2,000 in the depths of the recession in 1406/1407 H. (circa. 1986) before creeping up again to some 3,500 by the late 1990s.

As will be discussed in Chapter 4, in the first decades of its existence the IUM – like the Saudi higher education system more broadly – had come to host non-Saudi staff from a whole range of geographical, social, cultural and political backgrounds. Amongst them were members and sympathisers of the Muslim Brothers and other politically engaged groups who seem clearly to have played a certain role in the rise of a wave of Islamist activism within Saudi Arabia's own borders that became known as the *Sahwa*, or "The Awakening".<sup>132</sup> In the early 1990s, in the wake of dissent over matters such as the appeal to US troops to defend the kingdom during the Gulf War, and following the issuing of political demands by *Sahwi* activists in the form of petitions, the Saudi regime increasingly came to see the movement as a threat. In this context, the IUM was caught up in a drive by state actors to take a tighter grip on the country's higher education system. This included the introduction in 1993 of new legislation regulating the internal affairs of all universities across the kingdom, which replaced the IUM's existing statutes left over from 1975 and strengthened such provisions as had already existed for official oversight.<sup>133</sup> Under the new regulations, it remained the case that university heads were to be appointed by royal decree.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, each university was now to be overseen by a council headed by the minister of higher education himself, and including several other officials or official appointees, which would be responsible for such crucial tasks as setting syllabuses and deciding on appointments of teaching staff.<sup>135</sup> Deans of individual colleges within universities were now required to be Saudi and were to be put in post by the minister of higher education; whereas such appointments at the IUM had previously been dealt with

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<sup>132</sup> The debate between scholars like Madawi Al-Rasheed and Stéphane Lacroix concerning the importance of this role is discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

<sup>133</sup> "Nizam Majlis al-Ta'lim al-'Ali wa-l-Jami'at" 1993. For an earlier discussion of these moves, see Lacroix 2011, 207.

<sup>134</sup> Article 23.

<sup>135</sup> Articles 19 and 20.

internally.<sup>136</sup> A body made up of figures from around the world who would lend their advice and prestige to the IUM – like the earlier Advisory Council and Supreme Council – was no longer in evidence. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, steps were also taken to replace figures at the IUM seen as sympathetic to politically activist modes of religiosity with supporters of an exclusivist, politically quietist Salafi tradition whose figureheads included the IUM scholars Muhammad Aman al-Jami and Rabi' ibn Hadi al-Madkhali, and the university was already well into the process of being purged of non-Saudi staff.

As of February 2011, the IUM was reported to have 13,000 students from 160 countries (al-Dhibyani 2011). At the time of writing, preparations are underway for the launch of new colleges specialising in computer studies, medicine, applied sciences, engineering and pharmacy. The university is said to have received approval to accept female students for the first time, to be planning to implement distance learning programmes amid efforts to expand student numbers, and even to be preparing to employ non-Muslim staff at new sites outside the Medina *ḥaram* boundary (al-Salih 2010; al-Dhibyani 2011). The IUM has also recently hosted conferences on topics such as “extremism” and “the combating of terrorism”.<sup>137</sup> The latter development must surely be understood not only in connection with the wave of religiously-framed militancy that hit Saudi Arabia from 2003 but also the kingdom’s strategically important alliance with the United States and its role in the production of a “reformed Islam” in the context of the US-led War on Terror (Ismail 2008).

All of these moves have occurred against the backdrop of what has been hailed in some sections of the Saudi press as an “opening up” (*infitāḥ*) in recent years of an institution that had previously been seen as an enclave of exclusivism (al-Ansari 2010; e.g. al-‘Askar 2011). This has involved the creation of space for a wider range of viewpoints than had been found within the university at the height of its domination by the strongly exclusivist, quietist currents associated with al-Jami and al-Madkhali. This wider range of viewpoints includes the reappearance of a certain amount of room

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<sup>136</sup> Article 36. Cf. Article 32 of the 1975 statutes.

<sup>137</sup> “Mu’tamar al-Irhab Bayna Tatarruf al-Fikr Wa Fikr al-Tatarruf” 2013; “al-Mu’tamar al-Duwali al-Thani li-Mukafahat al-Irhab” 2013.

for voices associated with more activist modes of Islamism. This development is to be understood in connection with the release of activist figureheads like Salman al-'Awda and Safar al-Hawali from prison in 1999 and the regime's subsequent cooption of the Sahwa, as allies and mediators in its growing confrontation with domestic Islamist militants (Al-Rasheed 2007, 81–95).

This purported "opening up" of the university has not been without controversy. Former IUM head 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Abbad for one has spoken out very strongly against what he views as the disastrous corrosion of what had been a venerable institution. He has argued *inter alia* that the founding of colleges teaching "worldly" subjects will dilute the university's religious specialisation and will detract from its pursuit of the goals for which it was founded. He has derided what has been depicted elsewhere as a new lease of life for the university as in fact representing "a period of old age and senility" (al-'Abbad 2011).

## **Conclusion**

This review of the institutional history of the IUM underscores the extent to which it was, from the time of its founding, deeply imbricated in a politics that was distinctly Saudi, in both the dynastic and the national senses of the term. It was established and maintained using Saudi state resources, by state actors who were devoted to shoring up the political legitimacy of the Riyadh regime and their own places within it. The founding of this new missionary project served their interests in relation to a range of concerns, including: the geopolitical manoeuvring of the Cold War and the rivalry with Nasser's Egypt; the maintenance of patronage relations with the politically important Wahhabi establishment; and the promulgation of narratives of dynastic and national legitimacy for broader domestic audiences. Moreover, the university continued to evolve over the subsequent decades in ways that clearly map onto the shifting fortunes and interests of the Saudi monarchy.

Saudi state actors enjoyed a certain position of strength in relation to others involved in the IUM project by virtue of their access to and control over the material capital necessary for its very functioning. This status was consolidated insofar as the bureaucratised, rationalised modes of education which had emerged in the Saudi

context in previous decades facilitated efforts to stipulate, monitor and otherwise exert influence over the processes by which their material investment would be put to work and distributed within the university's ambit. Certainly there were limits on the extent of direct state involvement; but to a certain degree, this came down to state actors choosing to grant autonomy to the university and to those who operated within its confines. As the 1993 reordering of the Saudi higher education system showed, state actors could tighten their grip on institutions like the IUM when it suited them to do so.

Yet while funding made available by state actors played a crucial role in the project of religious expansion institutionalised in the IUM from the early 1960s, a series of further transactions would be required in order for this material wealth to translate into cross-border dynamics of religious transformation. The remainder of this thesis explores how these resources were put to work in the accumulation of new reserves of spiritual capital, the injection of which into globe-spanning religious economies would contribute to the construction of new relations of religious authority within and across national borders in far-flung locations. In the process, the IUM's missionary project came to draw on a far broader range of resources than material wealth alone, and its impact came to be mediated by the agency of a far more diverse array of actors than just Saudi political and religious elites.

## Chapter 4

### Migration and the Legitimation of the Islamic University

In 1960 Abul A'la Mawdudi, the head of the South Asian Islamist movement the Jamaat-i Islami, had arrived in Saudi Arabia carrying with him proposed plans, apparently drawn up at the request of King Sa'ud, for the institution that would open its doors the following year as the Islamic University of Medina (IUM). His travelling companions included Khalil Ahmad al-Hamidi, a long-standing member of the Jamaat and its point man for relations with Islamic movements in the Arabic-speaking and wider Islamic world. Sa'ud convened a committee to discuss the proposals which, besides Mawdudi himself, included: Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, the Saudi Grand Mufti and future IUM president; the Medina-born Muhammad 'Ali al-Harakan, who at one stage was seemingly considered to run the new university and who would later go on to become Saudi justice minister and head of the Muslim World League; the Indian scholar Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi of the reformist Nadwat al-'Ulama' movement, who would join the IUM's founding Advisory Council; and one 'Abd al-Latif ibn Ibrahim, who seems likely to have been the individual of this name – a brother of the Grand Mufti – who was charged with overseeing a new system of religious colleges and institutes founded by the Saudis in Riyadh and elsewhere since the early 1950s.<sup>138</sup> The committee apparently approved Mawdudi's proposals with only minor amendments. Having performed *'umra*, Mawdudi travelled on to Medina, where he visited the site at Wadi al-'Aqiq that had already been earmarked as the location for the new missionary institution (al-'Aqil 2008, 263).<sup>139</sup>

While the IUM's founding and its evolution over the decades that followed relied on material support made available by the Saudi state to which it was bureaucratically

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<sup>138</sup> On 'Abd al-Latif ibn Ibrahim Al al-Shaykh, the brother of the Grand Mufti discussed here, see Al Bassam 1998/9, 3:553–54. It is also at least possible that this last attendee was in fact 'Abd al-Latif ibn Ibrahim Al 'Abd al-Latif, a scholar from Shaqra' who had studied under both Muhammad ibn Ibrahim and 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz and who would teach hadith at the IUM, seemingly from the time that it opened its doors (Al Bassam 1998/9, 3:555–59).

<sup>139</sup> 'Abd Allah al-'Aqil, the Iraq-born Muslim Brother upon whose account of the meeting this paragraph is based, was acquainted with several of the participants and himself later joined the IUM Advisory Council.



subordinated, the meeting described here is emblematic of the ways in which its operation also depended on the cooptation of a diversity of actors hailing from far beyond the kingdom. Constructing a project intended to effect religious transformations in locations around the world required a much broader array of resources than money alone. An initiative of this kind called for staff with the know-how to undertake the spiritual labour of tuition and pastoral care, and to administer what was to be a relatively large-scale, bureaucratised institution. It would benefit from actors who could mediate between the Wahhabi establishment, the IUM's diverse student body, and the communities to whom it hoped to project its message. Equally importantly, it required that this missionary university be endowed with the institutional capacity to issue judgements on religious beliefs and practices which would be considered authoritative by a student body made up of young men from divergent backgrounds. It also called for the capacity to issue qualifications and bestow other symbolic resources upon students which would hold weight in a wide range of social contexts across the globe, such that its graduates might themselves come to be seen in those contexts as authoritative arbiters in matters of religious truth and moral virtue. In short, what was required was that the IUM be endowed with reserves of institutionalised spiritual capital in forms that would be recognised as legitimate and valuable by a very diverse range of actors outside Saudi Arabia.

In this chapter, I explore how this search for the skilled labour and spiritual capital necessary to run and legitimate a project like the IUM led Saudi state actors and their allies in the Wahhabi establishment to hire staff from far beyond the kingdom. I begin by outlining the large-scale involvement of non-Saudi staff at the university from the time of its founding and for many decades afterwards. I then develop a more detailed account of the different kinds of cross-border pathways that brought these religious migrants to Medina, dividing them loosely into sojourners, immigrants and itinerants. I go on to explore some of the overlapping continent-spanning circuits and social fields which helped define the contexts within which their journeys took place. I argue that those in charge of the IUM drew upon these transnational formations as a pool of resources to bolster a missionary project which was itself, as I have suggested, in many ways a distinctly Saudi national endeavour. The involvement of migrants bearing

spiritual capital accumulated in established religious educational institutions around the world stood to lend the IUM a broader legitimacy than it could ever have derived solely from its association with a Wahhabi scholarly establishment which in the mid-twentieth century remained relatively introspective and marginal on the global stage.

Finally, I consider steps underway by the early 1990s to purge foreign actors from the IUM, which had by that time become quite self-sufficient in its operation. This shift occurred as the forms of spiritual capital which had been brought in part by migrant staff came to be institutionalised in the fabric of the university itself.

### **Reaching Abroad**

At the time of the founding of the IUM in 1961, the Wahhabi scholarly establishment remained in some respects somewhat limited in capacity. Madawi Al-Rasheed has noted that the majority of religious experts within the Wahhabi tradition in Najd had historically been concerned largely with questions of jurisprudence and correct worship, at the expense of the many other disciplines which make up the Islamic canon. These actors, who “practised their expertise in conjunction with agriculture and trade” and were known as the *muṭawwaʿa*, are to be distinguished from the far smaller number of individuals with broader learning who merited the label ‘ulama’ (Al-Rasheed 2002, 49–50). Writing in the first half of the 1960s, Hafiz Wahba – the Egyptian whose employment by the Saudi state from the 1920s onwards was touched upon in Chapter 2 – noted that:

Very few of the Arabian *Ulema* have a complete knowledge of the Arabic language and its literature, of rhetoric, etymology, or elocution, and not one of them knows Moslem history properly. Historical knowledge is limited to the Life of the Prophet, and the Caliphs to the end of the Abbasides Dynasty, and, in ancient history, to Tabari and Ibn Alathir. News of the recent discoveries which have contributed so much to our knowledge of ancient times has not yet penetrated to Arabia. Since the deaths of Sheikh Abdulla Ibn Abdul Latif and Sheikh Said Ibn Atik, Nejd has had almost no *Alam* who is really thoroughly versed either in the *Haddith* or in Moslem Jurisprudence. With the death of Hamad Ibn Faris, Nejd lost a great authority on the Arabic language (Wahbah 1964, 62)<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> For biographies of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abd al-Latif (d. 1920) and Hamad ibn Faris (d. 1927), see ‘Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 129–41, 288–89. The scholar referred to as Said Ibn Atik is presumably in fact the famous Sa’d ibn ‘Atiq (d. 1930) (‘Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 323–28).

By this time, the new Saudi state-run education system, the emergence of which in the 1920s Hijaz was discussed in Chapter 2, was being rolled out to Najd and other parts of the country. This led to the supplementation of Wahhabi study circles offered by individual scholars in Najd with growing opportunities for instruction in new-style religious educational institutions. These were overseen by 'Abd al-Latif ibn Ibrahim Al al-Shaykh, the brother of Muhammad ibn Ibrahim who seems likely to have been in attendance at the meeting with Mawdudi discussed at the start of this chapter. They included an expanding network of Scholastic Institutes, the first of which outside of the Hijaz was founded in Riyadh in the early 1950s (Shalabi 1987, 198–99). They also came to include Colleges of Shari'a and Arabic Language, founded in Riyadh in 1953 and 1954 respectively, which were intended to offer further training to graduates of the Scholastic Institutes (Abir 1986, 231; Al Bassam 1998/9, 3:553–54). Nonetheless, while this system would eventually begin to produce new generations of religious experts, it remained in its infancy when the IUM first opened.

It was also the case that the Wahhabi scholarly establishment at this time remained relatively inward-looking and marginal with respect to the rest of the Islamic world. Although there had always been internal debate concerning how to deal with non-Muslims and non-Wahhabi Muslims, Wahhabism had on the whole been characterised by a unusually harsh attitudes on such matters (Al-Fahad 2004; Wagemakers 2012b). Conversely, earlier attempts to spread Wahhabi thinking and practices beyond Najd, including the dispatch of letters to “‘ulama’ and political leaders” in Iraq, Syria, North Africa and Persia from the eighteenth century onwards, had routinely been met with derision (Redissi 2008, 157–72). The international reputation of Wahhabism began to improve somewhat by the 1930s, as the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance won the support of high profile figures like Rashid Rida (Redissi 2008, 172–77). Around the same time, the 1929 suppression by 'Abd al-'Aziz of the exclusivist Ikhwan militias which had previously served his cause consolidated the standing of those sections of the Wahhabi establishment which displayed relatively pragmatic attitudes in regard to dealings with non-Wahhabi Muslims (Lacroix 2011, 13). Backed by material resources made available by the Saudi state, projects like the IUM now allowed this Wahhabi establishment to engage with Muslim communities around the world from a new position of strength.

Nonetheless, such proactive engagement remained a relatively novel development in the early 1960s. The founding of the new university came just a few years after Muhammad ibn Ibrahim had first chaired a formal meeting between senior Wahhabi scholars and non-Wahhabi religious dignitaries from beyond the Peninsula in 1954 (Lacroix 2011, 14).

The missionary project that was to be institutionalised in the IUM thus faced clear challenges: on the one hand, a lack of skilled personnel and, on the other, the likelihood of difficulties securing recognition from many of the audiences upon whom it was expected to exert influence. In this chapter, I argue that these problems were addressed through the cooptation of staff from far beyond Saudi Arabia. These migrants would bring the knowledge and skills seen as necessary to operate the kind of relatively large-scale, self-consciously “modern” institution that the IUM was to become. They could also connect the university to communities around the world and play a mediating role between the Wahhabi establishment and non-Wahhabi students, with their own diverse backgrounds lending credence to its claims to speak on behalf of a universal Islam rather than a particularistic sub-tradition. Finally, these migrants brought spiritual capital in forms which would be recognised in Muslim communities across the Islamic world. Their presence could thus lend crucial legitimacy to a missionary institution which was intended to address the entire *umma* but which might otherwise have been exceedingly vulnerable to charges of exclusivist parochialism.

For decades after the IUM's founding, non-Saudis from divergent geographical, religious, social and political backgrounds were numerically dominant both amongst its teaching staff and also on its senior Advisory Council. The Advisory Council functioned broadly like a board of directors. According to its founding document, Council members were to be selected to achieve geographical breadth and a range of expertise, and they were to meet regularly to discuss the university's structure and functioning.<sup>141</sup> Their recommendations were to be communicated to the IUM's supreme president, originally King Sa'ud, who would then forward them to the

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<sup>141</sup> “Nizam al-Majlis al-Istishari al-A'la”. Reproduced in al-Ghamidi 1998, 147–48.

institution's working president.<sup>142</sup> Issues discussed by the Council included syllabuses, amendments to the university's statutes, and the establishment of new colleges (al-Ghamidi 1998, 149–58).

The first Advisory Council included just two Saudis, the de facto head of the IUM and future Grand Mufti 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz; and 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Abbad, who had taught at the IUM since it opened and would also later take charge there. Alongside these two Saudis sat three prominent scholars and activists from South Asia: Mawdudi and Nadwi, who attended the meeting described at the start of this chapter, and also Muhammad Dawud al-Ghaznawi of the Ahl-i Hadith Salafi movement in Pakistan. Two Egyptians on the first council were 'Abd al-Razzaq 'Afifi, who had just given up his post as president of the Salafi movement Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah to settle in Saudi Arabia, where he had taught in the past; and Hasanayn Muhammad Makhluḥ, a prominent Azhari and former Grand Mufti of Egypt. The body also included three Syrians: Muhammad al-Mubarak, a co-founder of the Syrian Society of Muslim Brothers; the scholar 'Ali al-Tantawi, who would shortly afterwards settle in Saudi Arabia; and Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar, the reformist scholar whose role in the Saudi Scholastic Institute in 1920s Mecca was discussed in Chapter 2. Two Iraqis on the council were Muhammad Mahmud al-Sawwaf, a senior Muslim Brother who relocated to Saudi Arabia around this time; and Muhammad Bahjat al-Athari, a student of the prominent turn-of-the-century Iraqi Salafi scholar Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi. The remaining members were the Indonesian modernist educational reformer Mahmud Yunis; the Salafi scholar Muhammad Salim al-Bayhani from Aden; Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti, a Mauritanian scholar who had been living in Saudi Arabia for some time and was teaching at the IUM; Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, a hadith specialist born in Albania who was also teaching at the IUM; and the Jordanian 'Abd Allah al-Qalqili and Tunisian Muhammad al-Tahir ibn 'Ashur, each of whom would at some point in his career serve as Grand Mufti of his country of origin.<sup>143</sup> Through this diverse

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<sup>142</sup> Article 3. Initially, members were to be appointed by the Saudi government, with the Council then free to review its own make-up (Article 5). However, amended statutes passed in 1966 and 1975 gave the king ongoing control over appointments.

<sup>143</sup> Founding members of the Advisory Council are listed in "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 31–32; al-Ghamidi 1998, 149–50. It is worth noting that Muhammad al-Tahir ibn 'Ashur and

collective of individuals, the IUM could lay claim to the backing and input of “the leaders of Islamic thought and scholars of religion in the main Islamic countries”.<sup>144</sup>

In practice, the Advisory Council’s membership overlapped with teaching staff and – as will be touched upon later in this chapter – there is at least circumstantial evidence that the setup of the Council also contributed to shaping broader patterns of staffing, through use of these scholars’ existing networks. Since the language of instruction at the IUM was Arabic, non-Saudi teaching faculty were hired mainly from the wider Middle East and North Africa. According to an authorised history of the IUM, at the time of its founding the faculty was made up of twelve Saudis and seven non-Saudis (al-Ghamidi 1998, 274). However, these figures almost certainly obscure the involvement of scholars from outside the kingdom who had settled there and had taken Saudi citizenship. By 1971, faculty lists described just eight of the 33 faculty members as Saudi. Of the remainder, 15 were Egyptian nationals and others were listed as Jordanian, Syrian, Moroccan and Pakistani.<sup>145</sup> In this case, enough information is available to confirm that, even out of the staff members listed as Saudi at this point, more than half had in fact acquired citizenship after relocating from their home countries.<sup>146</sup> These non-Saudis brought with them a range of qualifications, which were publicly displayed in university promotional literature. Many held the *shahāda ‘ālamīyya*, equivalent to a master’s degree, while others had undergraduate and master’s degrees or doctorates from their countries of origin or elsewhere. Their qualifications covered subject areas including jurisprudence, Qur’anic studies, hadith studies, grammar, literature and pedagogy.

In the early 1980s, non-Saudis still outnumbered Saudis amongst IUM staff. In lists from that period, only 149 of 376 staff members were identified as Saudi; and it is clear from the available information that this category included scholars born outside

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Mahmud Yunus are named in al-Ghamidi 1998 as Muhammad al-Fadil ibn ‘Ashur and Muhammad Yunus. This appears to be an error. I am grateful to Jeff Hadler for sharing his expertise on the professional biography of Mahmud Yunus.

<sup>144</sup> “Nizam al-Majlis al-Istishari al-A’la,” Article 1.

<sup>145</sup> “Dalil al-Jami’a al-Islamiyya” 1971, 45–46, 71–72.

<sup>146</sup> They included the Mauritania-born Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti, the Algeria-born Abu Bakr Jabir al-Jaza’iri, the Mali-born Hammad al-Ansari, the Egypt-born ‘Abd al-Qadir Shaybat al-Hamd, and the Pakistani ‘Abd al-Karim Murad.

the kingdom who had since settled there and taken citizenship. Those listed as non-Saudi were made up of 137 Egyptians, forty-eight Sudanese, eighteen Syrians, eight Jordanians, four Iraqis, four Indians, two Pakistanis, two Moroccans and one person from each of Palestine, South Yemen, Mauritania and even Australia. The vast majority of staff at this stage bore university qualifications ranging from bachelors degrees to doctorates. As will be discussed later in this chapter, an especially large proportion of foreign staff were graduates of al-Azhar. Significant numbers also came from 'Ayn Shams University, Alexandria University and Cairo University in Egypt; and Khartoum University and the Islamic University of Umm Durman in Sudan. Others held qualifications from the University of Damascus, the University of Baghdad, King Muhammad V University in Morocco, the Libyan University, the University of the Punjab in Pakistan, the University of London, and the University of Edinburgh.<sup>147</sup>

While the IUM was always headed by Saudi scholars, it is nonetheless the case that many of these non-Saudis and naturalised citizens held prominent positions within the university framework. The Syrian Muslim Brother Muhammad al-Majdhub spent 15 years as a member of the editorial board of the university journal, a publication that included contributions from countless non-Saudi staff and which bore the stamp of foreign social movements whose members were involved in the IUM project.<sup>148</sup> Foreign members of the university's teaching staff and Advisory Council would later claim to have exercised influence over its syllabuses and, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, reading lists in use in the early 1990s display evidence of their impact.<sup>149</sup> As well as being numerically dominant on the university's Advisory Council and amongst teaching staff, non-Saudis and naturalised citizens were represented on the University Council, a separate body which had more direct oversight of operational matters. They also sat on the councils which advised on the operation of the university's constituent colleges and served as heads of departments within the colleges.

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<sup>147</sup> "Dalil A'da' Hay'at al-Tadris wa-l-Muhadirin wa-l-Mu'idin" 1981/2.

<sup>148</sup> Just two examples include an article in the first issue of the journal by the recently executed Sayyid Qutb (Qutb 1968) and later a laudatory obituary of Mawdudi (al-Zi'baq n.d.). On al-Majdhub's role on the journal, see al-Majdhub 1992, 3:355.

<sup>149</sup> For example, such claims were made by Council member Muhammad al-Mubarak and faculty members 'Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan and Muhammad al-Majdhub (al-Majdhub 1992, 1:250, 2:331, 3:355; U. Hasan 2009).

## **Flows: Sojourners, Immigrants and Itinerants**

Most of the remainder of this chapter is devoted to considering how these migrants arrived in Medina and the ways in which their presence benefited the IUM's missionary project, followed by a brief discussion of steps that would eventually be taken to purge them from the system. I begin here by exploring the diverse array of journeys that made up the migratory circuits which contributed to sustaining – and which were in turn shaped and sustained by – the emergence of this missionary initiative. These journeys included brief sojourns, as well as instances of permanent immigration and more convoluted itinerant pathways. In what follows, these issues are considered with reference to the biographies of some especially prominent staff members who hailed from outside Saudi Arabia.

A proportion of those from beyond the kingdom who became involved in the university stayed for a limited period before returning to their countries of origin. For some sojourners, including Advisory Council members who had no other long-term business in Saudi Arabia, visits to Medina might simply have been long enough to attend a meeting. For others, the stay could be very lengthy indeed. The leading Ahl-i Hadith scholar 'Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan recalled that after being hired by an IUM delegation which had travelled to his home in Pakistan probably in 1963 or 1964, he had hoped to spend the rest of his life in Medina. In the event, he taught hadith studies there for 16 years before returning to Pakistan and taking up a position as an Ahl-i Hadith representative on the official Islamic Ideological Council charged with advising the government on matters of shari'a (U. Hasan 2009). Similarly, Muhammad al-Majdhub, who been a teacher, an active Muslim Brother and something of a litterateur in his home country of Syria prior to arriving in Medina around 1963, spent two decades teaching at the IUM. He only finally returned to Syria in 1996, where he settled down to an isolated life of writing in Latakiyya until his death in 1999 (al-Majdhub 1992, 3:345–57; al-'Aqil 2008, 1014–26). Particularly as the university expanded and its teaching body grew, it is likely that a great many staff fell into the sojourners category, often delegated temporarily from institutions like al-Azhar in



Egypt.<sup>150</sup> These circuits of sojourners were facilitated in part by deputations of IUM staff who travelled abroad – including to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Pakistan – with a view to contracting new employees.<sup>151</sup>

Other migrants who became involved at the IUM had either already settled permanently in Saudi Arabia or would do so following their arrival at the university. They remained for the duration of their lives, frequently becoming naturalised citizens and otherwise integrating into the new social, cultural and religious milieu in which they found themselves. Such immigrants included the aforementioned Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti, who had made the epic overland journey to the Hijaz from his home in Mauritania to perform the hajj in the 1947 or 1948. We are told by his colleague and biographer al-Majdhub that as a student prior to arriving in Saudi Arabia, al-Shinqiti had held reservations about the Wahhabi tradition. However, after meeting Saudi scholars in the Haramayn, reading major works of the Hanbali law school for the first time, and encountering the writings of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim, he apparently underwent a religious transformation, putting his Maliki upbringing behind him and dedicating himself to re-studying hadith collections in light of his new understanding of their status as a key source of *fiqh* derivation. Al-Shinqiti was subsequently granted Saudi citizenship and taught in the Masjid Nabawi, as well as in the new Scholastic Institute and religious colleges opened in Riyadh in the 1950s, before being invited to join the IUM at the time of its opening. He was later appointed to Saudi Arabia's Council of Senior 'Ulama' ('Atiyya Muhammad Salim n.d.; 'Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 517–20; al-Majdhub 1992, 3:179–91; al-Qar'ani 2009, 133–53). Another prominent immigrant was Abu Bakr Jabir al-Jaza'iri, who taught at the university from its opening. Al-Jaza'iri had similarly arrived in the Hijaz as a pilgrim nearly a decade earlier from Algeria and had spent the intervening period studying and teaching in a number of the kingdom's institutions (al-Majdhub 1992, 3:27–39; al-Qar'ani 2009, 353–60). A final example is 'Abd al-Fattah al-Qari', who was born in Kokand, in the Fergana Valley in what is now Uzbekistan, around 1911 but had relocated to the Hijaz

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<sup>150</sup> Interviews with Egyptians who had taught at the IUM and in other Saudi Islamic universities, Cairo, April, May and October 2011.

<sup>151</sup> "Akhbar al-Jami'a" 1969a; "Akhbar al-Jami'a" 1972.

as a young man.<sup>152</sup> He studied and taught at the Madrasa Sawlatiyya in Mecca, mentioned in Chapter 1, before taking up posts at various other schools including the Scholastic Institute in Riyadh. He was transferred to teach Qur'an and Qur'anic recitation (*tajwīd*) at the IUM from the time of its establishment (al-Qari' 2008).

These immigrants put down family roots in Saudi Arabia. In several cases, their integration and that of their families in the Saudi milieu was reflected in the appointment of their sons to teaching posts at the IUM. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Qari', a son of 'Abd al-Fattah al-Qari', studied at the IUM and went on to become a senior and longstanding member of its staff, including serving as dean of its College of the Qur'an (al-Qari' 2013). Two sons of Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti – the *uṣūl al-fiqh* scholar Muhammad al-Mukhtar and the *tafsīr* specialist 'Abd Allah – would also become prominent figures at the university. Other examples include 'Abd al-Bari' al-Ansari, who teaches in the College of Hadith and is the son of the Mali-born Hammad al-Ansari mentioned elsewhere in this chapter; and a son of Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri.<sup>153</sup>

For a final category of migrants, a stint in Medina represented just one stage on far longer and more convoluted cross-border pathways. Such itinerants included the Moroccan reformist scholar Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, whose earlier stay in the Hijaz in the 1920s was discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Al-Hilali was invited back to Saudi Arabia by Ibn Baz to join the IUM faculty in 1968. By this time in his life, he had also spent periods studying and teaching in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, India and Germany. During these peregrinations, he had made contact with Rashid Rida in Cairo, taught Arabic literature and studied English at the Dar al-'Ulum college run by the Nadwat al-'Ulama' in Lucknow, earned a doctorate from the University of Berlin during the Nazi era and been arrested by the Spanish colonial authorities in northern Morocco over his work as a correspondent for the newspaper published by the Egyptian Muslim Brothers (al-'Aqil 2008, 811–22; Lauzière 2008). Perhaps the best-known example of such itinerant trajectories is that of Nasir al-Din al-Albani, the Albania-born hadith scholar who moved to Syria with his family at a young age and,

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<sup>152</sup> He was born in 1329 H., which would probably correspond with 1911.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with IUM graduate A, London, 2 December 2011, and subsequent email correspondence.

having come under pressure there, later joined the faculty and Advisory Council of the newly-opened IUM. While his thinking would have a major impact at the university, his distinctive religious outlook – which included a strident emphasis on independent legal reasoning and rejection of adherence to the established schools of Islamic jurisprudence, in tension with the de facto faithfulness to the Hanbali *madhhab* which had long characterised the Wahhabi tradition – proved controversial in Saudi Arabia.<sup>154</sup> The resulting friction led to his departure from the university and from the kingdom in 1963. His trajectory thereafter included stays in Syria, where he was jailed twice, a second period serving on the IUM's advisory board in the mid-1970s, and relocation to Jordan at the end of that decade (Lacroix 2009, 63–67). Rather than necessarily standing for a kind of rootless mobility that flouted national borders and the sovereignty of national states, such roaming trajectories were sometimes in fact facilitated precisely by migrants' involvement in multiple national state projects. Prior to taking up a teaching post at the IUM in 1976, for example, the Egyptian Azhari Mu'awwad 'Awad Ibrahim had already been officially deputised by al-Azhar to teach in the Shari'a College of Beirut, had worked in a girls' school in Aqaba, and undertaken *da'wa* tours through the West Bank. He had also held positions at the state-run College of Shari'a in Riyadh and in the central offices of the Saudi religious bureaucracy. He would later go on to head a Department of Preaching established by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Religious Endowments, a role that involved further travel beyond the Gulf state's borders (al-Majdhub 1992, 3:269–77).

### **Structures: Transnational Circuits and Social Fields**

As is clear even from these potted biographies, the IUM in its early days sat at the intersection of a diverse array of cross-border circulations. As I have suggested, a simple hub-and-spokes set-up, whereby staff were deputised from their countries of origin to teach in Medina for a fixed period before returning home, did exist. However, it represented only one part of a more complex picture which also involved immigrants making new lives for themselves in Saudi Arabia, as well as itinerants for whom Medina was just a way station on much longer journeys which took them back and

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<sup>154</sup> Wahhabi positions on jurisprudence, and their relevance in the IUM context, are discussed further in Chapter 6.

forth across the Islamic world. This section considers some of the overlapping transnational circuits and social fields – built around pilgrimage routes, scholarly networks, exile politics, social movements and the efforts of individual energetic entrepreneurs – which contributed to structuring and fostering the broader web of relationships within which the university was situated. These circuits and social fields often pre-dated the IUM and represented a valuable resource for those behind the university who were concerned with bolstering its credibility and networks.

To some extent, pre-existing pilgrimage and educational circuits – the two frequently intertwined – led to actors from across the Islamic world effectively turning up independently on the Saudis' doorstep. Mention has already been made of a number of prominent IUM scholars like the Algerian Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri and the Mauritanian Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti, who arrived through such circuits. Another Mauritanian, Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Shinqiti, who took up a teaching post at the IUM soon after it opened and continued to work there until the early 1980s, had similarly left his country of origin in his late teens, apparently travelling most of the 5,000-kilometre journey on foot and arriving in 1939 to perform pilgrimage and study. Between arriving in the Hijaz and beginning work at the IUM, he had studied with scholars in Mecca and Medina, and had taught in the Masjid Nabawi, the private Madrasat al-Falah in Jidda, and at the Scholastic Institute in Riyadh (al-Majdhub 1992, 3:251–60; al-Qar'ani 2009, 193–99). 'Umar ibn Muhammad Fallata, who headed the IUM-affiliated Dar al-Hadith in Medina and served as secretary general of the IUM itself between 1978 and 1983, had himself been born as his parents were approaching Mecca at the end of a long migration from Nigeria in the 1920s. That journey in turn built on pilgrimage links to the Hijaz tracing back to his grandfather. He arrived in Medina as an infant with his parents and remained in Saudi Arabia until his death in 1999 (al-Majdhub 1992, 3:151–64; al-Qar'ani 2009, 283–94).

On a local level, the configuration of individuals who came together to staff the IUM was shaped in part by educational networks in Najd and the Hijaz which overlapped with these transnational pilgrimage and scholarly circuits. Numerous members of the IUM faculty in the early days had already studied under or taught alongside Muhammad ibn Ibrahim or Ibn Baz or both, at earlier stages in their careers. Students

or colleagues of these Wahhabi figureheads who worked at the IUM from around the time of its inception included Saudis, like the hadith scholar ‘Abd al-Latif ibn Ibrahim Al ‘Abd al-Latif and the future university head ‘Abd al-Muhsin al-‘Abbad. However, they also included non-Saudi migrants, like the Egyptian ‘Atiyya Muhammad Salim and the Mauritanian Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Shinqiti. The new institutions overseen by the Wahhabi establishment in Riyadh from the early 1950s, like the Scholastic Institute and Colleges of Shari‘a and Arabic, appear to have been particularly important focal points for the forging of such connections. Their students and staff included not only Saudis but also foreigners like the aforementioned Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti and Abu Bakr al-Jaza’iri, as well as an Egyptian named ‘Abd al-Qadir Shaybat al-Hamd, the Malian Hammad al-Ansari and the Ethiopian Muhammad Aman al-Jami, all of whom were later hired by the IUM.

Nonetheless, the educational circuits upon which the IUM drew were not limited to those which intersected directly with the Arabian peninsula. Al-Azhar and the patterns of migration which had long revolved around that institution – both within Egypt and from beyond its borders – were particularly important in this regard. Staff lists from the beginning of the 1980s show that at least forty out of the 131 teaching staff at the IUM’s College of Shari‘a at that stage were graduates of al-Azhar. They included 27 Egyptians but also individuals from Jordan, Sudan, Syria and Saudi Arabia itself. Although the deans of the university’s five colleges at that time were all Saudi citizens, at least three of them were also al-Azhar graduates.<sup>155</sup> The existence of links between Wahhabi scholarly circles and al-Azhar was not unprecedented. Scholars descended from Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab who were exiled to Egypt following the invasion of Najd by Muhammad ‘Ali’s forces in the nineteenth century had spent time at al-Azhar. One of them, ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Hasan Al al-Shaykh, had risen to the top of the Wahhabi establishment upon his return to Najd in 1825 at least partly off the back of his studies there (Commins 2005, 42, 45). Some of those sent by the Saudi regime to undertake their education in Egypt from the 1920s onwards had also enrolled at al-Azhar (Shalabi 1987, 212–18). Significant numbers of staff at the IUM in the early 1980s had been trained at the Islamic University of Umm Durman in Sudan, an institution which itself

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<sup>155</sup> “Dalil A‘da’ Hay‘at al-Tadris wa-I-Muhadirin wa-I-Mu‘idin” 1981/2.

had strong historical ties both to al-Azhar and also to Cairo's Dar al-'Ulum (Reid 1990, 198).

In addition to pre-existing educational and pilgrimage circuits, exile politics also played a part in shaping the emergent IUM faculty. The role played in the Saudi education system by Muslim Brothers fleeing jail, torture and wider political pressures in their home countries is particularly well known. Since the earliest days following the founding of the Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt in 1928, key figures in the movement had held ambitions to use the Hijaz as a platform for outreach to the wider Muslim world and had maintained warm relations with the Saudi state (Tammam 2006, 69–71). As was discussed in Chapter 2, Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna had himself apparently pursued an offer to work in the Mecca-based Saudi Scholastic Institute, though this plan never came to fruition. Crackdowns on Muslim Brothers in Egypt in 1954 and again in the mid-1960s, the release of many members of the organisation from jail under Anwar al-Sadat in 1971, and periods of concerted repression in Syria and Iraq from the late 1950s onwards contributed to driving large numbers of Muslim Brothers from across the region into employment in the Saudi education system and wider economy (Lacroix 2011, 38–42).

The biographies of many of those who would take up roles at the IUM broadly fit this pattern. The Egyptian judge 'Ali Juraysha, for example, taught first at the University of Riyadh and then at the IUM, having been imprisoned and tortured in his country of origin for his connections with the Brothers (al-Majdhub 1992, 1:155–70). As has already been mentioned, the IUM's founding Advisory Council included the prominent Muslim Brothers al-Mubarak and al-Sawwaf, from Syria and Iraq respectively. The Council would later include the Sudanese Hasan al-Turabi, the Iraqis 'Abd Allah al-'Aqil and 'Abd al-Karim Zaydan, and the Egyptians Muhammad al-Ghazali, Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Muhammad Qutb, all of whom were also in one way or another seen as being close to the movement. Some of these figures were employed at educational institutions elsewhere in the kingdom, and some settled permanently there. The leading Iraqi Muslim Brother al-Sawwaf, for example, had fled Iraq in the wake of the 1958 coup there. Besides taking up a position on the IUM's founding Advisory Council, he also taught at the College of Shari'a in Mecca, became a founding member of the

Muslim World League, worked as an advisor to the Saudi education ministry, and undertook missions for King Faisal, including heading a delegation to Pakistan charged with reconciling Afghan factions (al-'Aqil 2008, 1040–51).

At the same time, it is worth noting that the role of exile politics in driving migration to the Hijaz and to the IUM did not start and end with the crackdowns on the Brothers. The prominent IUM scholar Hammad al-Ansari recalled that he was originally compelled to leave his home in Mali for the Hijaz as a result of increased pressure exercised by the French colonial authorities during the Second World War (al-Majdhub 1992, 1:49–61). Similarly, IUM secretary general 'Umar Fallata had himself been a devoted student of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ifriqi, a scholar from the French Soudan colony in West Africa who settled in the Hijaz, apparently after fleeing a run-in with the colonial authorities in his country of origin. Along with Mohamed Ali Ag Ataher, al-Ifriqi was viewed by the French as a key expatriate leader of anti-colonial contention (Brenner 2001, 96–102, 146–9). Al-Ifriqi succeeded the founder of the Medina Dar al-Hadith, the Indian Ahmad al-Dihlawi, in running that institution prior to its absorption into the IUM. It was after al-Ifriqi died in 1957 that charge of the Medina Dar al-Hadith passed to 'Umar Fallata.

These cross-border circulations of pilgrims, exiles and scholars, involving patterns of migration driven by religious traditions, the ebb and flow of nation-state politics, and institutions like universities, schools and mosques, go some distance towards explaining how the IUM's diverse Advisory Council and faculty came together. In other ways, however, the process of staffing the university tapped into and fostered more intensive and extensive sets of transnational social fields, involving sustained and multivalent cross-border relationships between social movements and individual activists spanning the Arabic-speaking world, South Asia and beyond, and often going back decades.<sup>156</sup>

To some extent, this wider set of transnational social relations that helped to undergird the IUM traced back to networks that had grown up around the Cairo-based

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller's definition of a transnational social field, discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

Syrian reformist Muhammad Rashid Rida, who died over a quarter of a century before the university opened its doors. Certain individuals who would become involved at the IUM had originally been recommended to the Saudi political establishment by Rashid Rida back in the 1920s. They included Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar, who had run the Saudi Scholastic Institute in 1920s Mecca and later became a founding member of the IUM's Advisory Council. They also included Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, the Moroccan scholar who had also taught at the Mecca Scholastic Institute and who would become a key link in networks connecting individuals, movements and institutions in Saudi Arabia, the wider Middle East and South Asia (Lauzière 2008, 137–38, 141–42; al-'Aqil 2008, 812). Other high-profile figures involved at the IUM in its earliest days had long been party to shared debates through transnational participation in and distribution of Rashid Rida's journal *al-Manar*.<sup>157</sup>

The networks that grew up around Rashid Rida were, however, just one small part of a much wider framework of globe-spanning relationships facilitated by new transportation and communications technologies, shared concerns and social movement structures. In addition to Muslim Brothers, discussed above, the IUM also involved figures associated with a range of other movements including the Egyptian Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah, and the South Asian Jamaat-i Islami and Ahl-i Hadith. In what follows, I unpick some of the relations that linked these movements to Saudi Arabia and to each other, both prior to the university's founding and also in the course of its evolution and expansion.

Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah, a Salafi *da'wa* movement established in Egypt in 1926, already had a long-standing relationship with the Saudi religious and political establishments by the time the IUM emerged. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the organisation's founder Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi, himself a student of Rashid Rida, had settled in the Hijaz in the 1920s and had forged a close relationship with the Saudi

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<sup>157</sup> Al-Majdhub recalls being inspired by *al-Manar* as a young man and says that it was in that journal that he had first heard of Muhammad ibn Ibrahim (al-Majdhub 1992, 2:253, 3:347). *Al-Manar* also had an important influence on the young al-Albani (Lauzière 2008, 340; Lacroix 2009, 63–65). Just some of those involved in the IUM whose work had been published in its pages included Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar, Muhammad Amin al-Husayni and Muhammad Bahjat al-Athari (Yashushi, Ibish, and Khuri 1998).



political establishment. ‘Abd al-Zahir Abu al-Samh, who had taught at the Saudi Scholastic Institute in the occupied Hijaz and played a leading role in founding the Mecca Dar al-Hadith which would later be absorbed by the IUM (cf. Chapters 2 and 3), was also close to Ansar al-Sunna. When the IUM was founded, the movement secured an effective presence on the first Advisory Council in ‘Abd al-Razzaq ‘Afifi, an Ansar al-Sunna stalwart who had previously taught in Saudi Arabia and ended a brief stint as president of the organisation in Egypt in order to settle permanently in the kingdom around 1960. ‘Afifi was subsequently appointed to top religious bodies there, including the Council of Senior ‘Ulama’ (Al Bassam 1998/9, 3:275–79; Younus 2006, 196–200; Tahir 2006, 173–84; al-‘Aqil 2008, 435–43). A number of Egyptian scholars associated with Ansar al-Sunna would take up teaching positions at the IUM. They included Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Banna and his younger brother Hasan ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Banna, as well as Sa’d Nida and ‘Abd al-Fattah Salama. The latter had spent some years deputised to the Libyan Ministry of Religious Endowments prior to arriving at the IUM in 1977. As was sometimes the case for members of Ansar al-Sunna, whose Salafi creed was considered sound by the Wahhabi establishment, he was trusted not only to teach *tawhīd* but even to take part in setting syllabuses on this sensitive subject.<sup>158</sup> The network of relations linking the IUM and Ansar al-Sunna is further illustrated by the range of figures associated with the university whose work was published in the movement’s journals *al-Hady al-Nabawi* and *al-Tawhid*.<sup>159</sup>

The South Asian Ahi-i Hadith movement for its part had ties to the Arabian peninsula going back even further than those of the relatively young Ansar al-Sunna. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Najdi ‘ulama’ – including Sa’d ibn ‘Atiq, a future teacher of Ibn Baz – had begun travelling to Delhi and Bhopal to study with Ahi-i Hadith scholars like Siddiq Hasan and Nadhir Husayn al-Dihlawi (‘Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 323–28; Al Bassam 1998/9, 2:220–27; Steinberg 2004, 94–95; al-‘Aqil

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<sup>158</sup> “al-Shaykh al-Duktur ‘Abd al-Fattah Salama, 1358-1418 H., 1938-1998 M.” 1998.

<sup>159</sup> They included individuals mentioned earlier in this chapter, such as Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, Ibn Baz, al-Bitar, al-Hilali, al-Bayhani, Sa’d Nida, al-Ansari, al-Albani, al-Jaza’iri and ‘Abd al-Qadir Shaybat al-Hamd, as well as the IUM teacher ‘Abd al-Qadir Habib Allah al-Sindi (Tahir 2006, 289–94, 319–21).

2008, 444–56; Lacroix 2011, 84).<sup>160</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, the movement’s Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Dihlawi had founded the two institutions each known as Dar al-Hadith in Medina and Mecca – the latter in cooperation with the abovementioned Ansar al-Sunna scholar Abu al-Samh – which would later be absorbed into the IUM.

In addition to the appointment of the Ahl-i Hadith’s Muhammad Dawud al-Ghaznawi to the founding Advisory Council, the relatively small number of texts included in syllabuses in use at the IUM at the time of its establishment included work by the forefather of the movement Siddiq Hasan.<sup>161</sup> Ahl-i Hadith scholars who would subsequently take up teaching posts at the IUM included Hafiz Muhammad Gondalavi, ‘Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan and ‘Abd al-Karim Murad.<sup>162</sup> Besides his status as a prominent scholar in the Ahl-i Hadith, it is worth noting that ‘Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan had also earlier been involved in the Jamaat-i Islami, taking responsibility for its educational initiatives and even accepting a brief appointment as amir of the movement during a period when Mawdudi was jailed. He had eventually left the Jamaat in 1957 over internal disputes linked at least in part to Mawdudi’s resolve to participate in elections. ‘Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan himself believed that the correct path to establishing an Islamic state is through education of the masses (Nasr 1994, 29, 31, 34, 36, 38, 123–24; U. Hasan 2009).

Mawdudi’s own involvement in the IUM should perhaps not be overstated. He does not, for example, appear to have attended any further sessions of the university’s Advisory Council after its second meeting in 1963 (al-Ghamidi 1998, 149–51). However, it is worth noting that his role in planning for the university, as discussed at the start of this chapter, also likely built on earlier encounters linking his Jamaat-i Islami movement to the Saudi religious and political establishments, as well as lateral

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<sup>160</sup> Metcalf (1982, 277–78) also notes links between the Ahl-i Hadith and the Wahhabis in the nineteenth century, with Indians meeting the latter whilst performing hajj and also “in the courts of Bhopal”. However, her description of the Yemeni reformist scholar Muhammad al-Shawkani as one Wahhabi scholar who was particularly influential in South Asia suggests that she uses the label very loosely indeed.

<sup>161</sup> An advanced hadith studies course was to be taught from *Bulugh al-Maram*, a collection compiled by Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani (d. 1448), with reference to a commentary by the Ahl-i Hadith’s Siddiq Hasan (al-Ghamidi 1998, 52–58).

<sup>162</sup> Interview with IUM graduate B, London, 27 June 2011.

connections with other actors who would become involved in the university. Important points of contact included a 1949 tour of Arab states by Mas'ud 'Alim Nadwi, a former student of Taqi al-Din al-Hilali at the Lucknow Dar al-'Ulum who had since taken part in the founding of the Jamaat and would also take charge of the Dar al-'Uruba publishing house responsible for promoting the movement's ideas in Arabic (al-'Aqil 2008, 813, 1123). During this trip, Mas'ud Nadwi had met with the future Saudi Grand Mufti and IUM president Muhammad ibn Ibrahim in Riyadh (Nadwi 1954, 23). With introductions from the Moroccan Taqi al-Din al-Hilali, under whom he had studied during the latter's stint at the Lucknow Dar al-'Ulum, Mas'ud Nadwi also met in Basra with 'Abd Allah al-'Aqil, an Iraq-born Muslim Brother who would subsequently take up a place on the IUM's Advisory Council. The encounter was later remembered by a Jamaat insider as the first occasion on which links were forged between the two movements. They discussed their respective organisations and swapped books by Mawdudi and al-Banna, and when al-'Aqil travelled to Egypt later that same year to enrol at al-Azhar, he took Mawdudi's writings with him and helped to get them published there (al-'Aqil 2008, 262, 1121–1128).<sup>163</sup> From the mid-1950s, as his fame spread in the Middle East, Mawdudi visited and gave lectures in Cairo, Damascus, Amman, Mecca, Medina, Jidda, Kuwait and Rabat (Ahmad and Ansari 1979, 364).

Besides mutually interacting social movement structures, the transnational social fields within which the IUM came to be situated had also been bolstered by the activities of energetic brokers like Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, whose peripatetic pathways connected individuals and institutions the world over. The Indian Nadwat al-'Ulama', within which Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi was a key figure, had links to the Middle East going back to the nineteenth century when its Muhammad Shibli Nu'mani had toured the region meeting major scholars like Muhammad 'Abduh. It subsequently developed contacts with Rashid Rida through introductions offered by the globetrotting al-Hilali (Hartung 2006, 140–45). As discussed in Chapter 1, by the early twentieth century the Nadwat al-'Ulama' was an influence on the important Madrasa

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<sup>163</sup> It is worth noting that the Egyptian Muslim Brother Sa'id Ramadan was also subsequently an influence on the Jamaat-supervised student organisation the Islami Jami'at-i Tulaba (IJT) in Pakistan between 1952 and 1955, during a period in which he lived in Karachi (Nasr 1994, 64).

Sawlatiyya in the Hijaz. Links with the Hijaz are further underlined by the fact that at least one of the first group of graduates of the Scholastic Institute founded by the Saudis in Mecca in the 1920s departed immediately for India, in order to undertake further studies with scholars of the same movement.<sup>164</sup>

Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, himself also a former pupil of al-Hilali at the Lucknow college (al-'Aqil 2008, 813), had begun to put himself forward as a key point of contact between scholars and movements in South Asia and the Middle East well before the opening of the IUM. He had made his first trip to Saudi Arabia to perform the hajj in 1947, staying for six months and making overtures to the Saudi religious and political establishments (Nadwi 1979, 23–24). In early 1951 he used another visit to the kingdom as a stepping stone to a tour of Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Jordan and Jerusalem. A diary that he kept of this journey makes it clear that his books were already being read and published in the Arabic-speaking world at that time, and that he had himself long been familiar with the works of a wide range of contemporary scholars and activists from the region. While in Cairo, and apparently with the help of Ansar al-Sunna founder Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi, he paid a visit to the future Saudi Grand Mufti and IUM president Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, who was in Egypt for medical treatment (Nadwi 1954, 18, 22–23). Others that Nadwi spent time with who would later join the IUM either as teaching staff or as members of its senior advisory bodies included in Egypt Hasanayn Muhammad Makhlef, Muhammad al-Ghazali, 'Abd Allah al-'Aqil, Yusuf al-Qaradawi and the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husayni; and in Syria Muhammad al-Mubarak and Muhammad Bahjat al-Bitar. He also consolidated his relationship with the Muslim Brothers, a movement he held in high regard. Furthermore, Nadwi met regularly during his time in Egypt with Ahmad al-Sharbasi and Sayyid Qutb whose brothers al-Sa'id al-Sharbini al-Sharbasi and Muhammad Qutb would later be involved at the IUM, the former as a member of its faculty and the latter as a member of its Advisory Council. Nadwi's efforts to construct transnational relationships at this stage continued to build on the earlier energies expended by people like Rashid Rida and Taqi al-Din al-Hilali. We know, for example, that he had first heard of al-Bitar from al-Hilali (Nadwi 1954, 221). The young Nadwi had also

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<sup>164</sup> "Tidhkar al-Wala' wa-l-Ikhlās" 1932, 4.

translated works by Mawdudi into Arabic, helping to get the latter's thinking known in the Middle East, although he subsequently became more critical of Mawdudi in the 1960s (Lauzière 2008, 208, 371 fn. 46).

Many who moved within these continent-spanning circuits and social fields, including many of those who took up places at the IUM, operated as "transmigrants", building and maintaining multivalent networks of social relations that traversed national borders – including those of Saudi Arabia, their countries of origin and often multiple other nations besides – and frequently making concurrent use of local, national and global resources and platforms to advance ambitions that they held both for themselves and for others.<sup>165</sup> As Jan-Peter Hartung has suggested, for an individual like Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, involvement in Saudi-backed missionary initiatives offered both a way of acting on concerns about the rise of secular Arabism and Nasserist Egypt's nationalisation of al-Azhar, and simultaneously a source of prestige and leverage in manoeuvring within the religious scene in the Indian national context (2006, 15–46, 153). Saudi connections also brought material support for the local projects of movements whose members were involved at the IUM (Sikand 2007). On one occasion in the mid-1970s, the IUM made a donation of 50,000 riyals to the Nadwat al-'Ulama' (al-'Abbud 2004, 841). In the few years after the Ahl-i Hadith founded a madrasa known as the Jami'a Salafiyya in Banaras in 1966, the IUM sent teachers to support the fledgling institution.<sup>166</sup> The Banaras Jami'a Salafiyya also happened to be part-funded by Saudi Arabia and to have been opened by the Saudi ambassador. In addition, the IUM maintained formal relations with an Ahl-i Hadith madrasa of the same name which had been opened in Faisalabad in 1955, graduates of which have progressed to further studies in Saudi universities and have often subsequently returned to work as teachers in Ahl-i Hadith schools (Zaman 2002, 175).

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<sup>165</sup> The first element of my usage of the term "transmigrant" draws on Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc's definition of transnational migration as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 1995). My own usage is broader, allowing for border-crossings that traverse more than two states. The second element of my usage of the term – the simultaneous exploitation of local, national and global platforms and resources – draws on Saunier 2009, 461.

<sup>166</sup> "Akhbar al-Jami'a" 1969a. See also al-'Abbud 2004, 840.

On a more workaday level, for many teaching staff a spell at the university offered an opportunity to combine employment seen as benefiting the global *umma* with career advancement and the chance to take advantage of relatively high wages to support projects in their countries of origin like accumulating the funds necessary to set up a home and start a family. Egyptians interviewed by the author in Cairo in 2011 who had previously worked at the IUM or in Saudi Arabia's other Islamic universities frequently emphasised the material remittances made possible by these circular migrations, as well as the value associated with spending time in the proximity of the Holy Cities.<sup>167</sup> Muhammad al-Majdhub, on the other hand, recalled his time at the IUM as the happiest period of his life thanks to a sense of harmony with the atmosphere in which he was working and the opportunity that his teaching position offered to build spiritual relationships with Muslims of all nationalities (al-Majdhub 1992, 3:355–56).

This talk of harmony and collaborative service to the *umma* should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there were many schisms within this project. Nadwi, for example, had to work to overcome tensions with the Ahl-i Hadith in the South Asian context. He also seems to have fallen out of favour with the Saudi religious establishment, as well as figures associated with the IUM like his own former teacher al-Hilali, particularly following the assassination of his erstwhile backer King Faisal. These tensions related both to Nadwi's relative ecumenism and to his close links with the Islamic missionary movement the Tablighi Jamaat, which had roots in the South Asian Deobandi tradition and was considered misguided by these Salafis (Hartung 2006, 146–47, 149). A comparable example is that of Muhammad al-Ghazali, the prominent Egyptian scholar who taught at Umm al-Qura University in Mecca and served briefly on the IUM's Supreme Council in the mid-1970s. In 1989 al-Ghazali caused a storm by publishing a book which, although he was careful in his choice of language, effectively slated the Wahhabi tradition for narrow-minded literalism (Abou El Fadl 2007, 88–94; Al-Rasheed 2007, 7n8).

The point of the preceding discussion is not to suggest that the individual migrants, social movements and transnational formations addressed here each necessarily

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<sup>167</sup> Interviews conducted at Dar al-'Ulum and al-Azhar, Cairo, April, May and October 2011.

wielded a unique degree of influence over the IUM. Rather, it is to illustrate some of the ways in which the emerging university established a place for itself within, and also served to foster, a capillary network of radial and lateral cross-border connections. These cross-border connections linked it to the communities around the world upon which it sought to exert influence, through individuals and movements which were already themselves established and recognised actors in those communities. These connections also provided for cross-border flows of spiritual capital, brought to the IUM by individual staff members who were often educated in well-established universities and longstanding, prestigious centres of Islamic learning, and who were therefore in possession of qualifications recognised as valuable in social contexts across the Islamic world. Over a period of decades, this capital would come to be institutionalised in the very fabric of the IUM, until the university eventually enjoyed sufficient prestige to do away with migrant staff.

### **Domesticating the IUM**

By the early 1990s the era of non-Saudi staffing at the IUM was already coming to an end. Near the beginning of the decade, 336 of the 385 members of the university's teaching council were reported as being Saudi and towards its end, this proportion had risen to 360 out of 369. An authorised history of the university frames this development as part of countrywide efforts to "Saudise" the national economy, depicting the IUM as being at the forefront of a drive to remove obstacles to the employment of young Saudi citizens (al-Ghamidi 1998, 277).<sup>168</sup>

This effort to replace foreigners with Saudi staff became possible as know-how brought by migrants over the preceding decades came to circulate within the confines of the IUM and the broader Saudi education system, and as the reserves of spiritual capital that they possessed came to be institutionalised in the fabric of the university itself, lending it a standing and authority of its own. Within years of opening its doors, the IUM had begun hiring its own graduates to teach in its affiliated secondary- and intermediate-level institutes.<sup>169</sup> Even by the early 1980s, the 131 staff working at its

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<sup>168</sup> On the relative success of efforts to "Saudise" public institutions, in contrast with the chaotic failure of equivalent measures in the private sector, see Hertog 2010, 185–222.

<sup>169</sup> "Akhbar al-Jami'a" 1969b; "Akhbar al-Jami'a" 1973.

flagship College of Shari'a had included 37 IUM graduates, almost all of them drawn from the small minority of Saudis who were given places to study at the university.<sup>170</sup> The IUM was also by that time employing graduates of other relatively new Saudi institutions, including King 'Abd al-'Aziz University in Jidda, Umm al-Qura University in Mecca, and the Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud Islamic University in Riyadh. In this way, Saudis trained and certified by a faculty including a very large proportion of foreigners – whose own capacity to offer such training and certification very often rested on their education in institutions outside the kingdom – came to secure recognition as suitably qualified to undertake teaching roles themselves.

Besides economic considerations, the drive to reduce foreign staffing at institutions like the IUM – now that it was possible to do so – seems likely to have been linked in part to efforts to limit political dissent at home. Given the perceived role of non-Saudi Muslim Brothers and others in helping to mobilise Islamist political activism in the kingdom, the Saudi authorities would surely have been glad to see the back of foreign faculty from potential hotbeds of dissent like the IUM. They had received an early reminder of the political challenges that might emerge from such contexts with the seizure of the Masjid Haram by Juhayman al-'Utaybi and his followers in 1979 which, as discussed in Chapter 3, had been framed by some at the time as an upshot of corrupting influences brought by foreign IUM students. In the wake of the Gulf War and increasing nervousness on the part of the Saudi authorities about Islamist mobilisation turning against the state, the Saudi authorities undertook the reorganisation of the country's university system discussed in Chapter 3. There were also efforts to purge politically activist staff from institutions across the country, including the IUM.<sup>171</sup> Such moves helped to ensure that the IUM came increasingly under the sway of adherents of the politically quietist tradition most prominently associated with the Saudi scholar Rabi' ibn Hadi al-Madkhali, himself a graduate of the IUM who had gone on to work in its College of Hadith. This mode of Salafism,

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<sup>170</sup> "Dalil A'da' Hay'at al-Tadris wa-I-Muhadirin wa-I-Mu'idin" 1981/2, 34–44.

<sup>171</sup> This included the replacement of IUM staff Musa al-Qarni, 'Abd al-'Aziz Qari' and Jubran al-Jubran, all with reputations for alignment with Islamist political activism, with perceived quietists Tarahib al-Dawsari, Sulayman al-Ruhayli, and 'Abd al-Salam al-Suhaymi (Lacroix 2011, 214). Other staff known for an inclination towards activism were transferred to research posts, away from contact with students. Interview with IUM graduate A, London, 1 December 2011.



stridently exclusivist and opposed to politically activist modes of Islamism, came to strongly colour the IUM's missionary project in the 1990s and would spread through its graduates to locations around the world.

Representatives of this trend did not look kindly on the past involvement of foreigners associated with the Brotherhood and other politically activist strands at the IUM and in the wider Saudi universities system. Al-Madkhali himself, who remained at the university until the late 1990s, had risen to prominence in part off the back of his criticism of Mawdudi, one of the very people who had originally drawn up plans for the university (Lacroix 2011, 212). Others associated with this current, like 'Abd al-Salam al-Suhaymi of the IUM's College of Shari'a, have condemned foreign Muslim Brothers who previously worked in the Saudi education system for supposedly exploiting their naively generous Saudi hosts with a view to spreading political and religious corruption (al-Suhaymi 2005). By advancing this view in the context of a discussion of the roots of Islamist militancy in Saudi Arabia, al-Suhaymi echoes the tendency in official circles to depict domestic Islamist contention as having resulted from foreign influences rather than indigenous frameworks and grievances.<sup>172</sup>

At the same time, although it rose to prominence during a period when the IUM was being thoroughly "Saudised", the genealogy of the pietist tradition associated with figures like al-Madkhali itself also reflects the broader pattern discussed in this chapter, whereby persons and resources drawn in part from outside the kingdom came to serve projects operated by and for Saudi actors; whether as part of general efforts to legitimate the IUM's missionary drive, or in this case specifically as part of an attempt to build up political quietists as a bulwark against Islamist challenges to the regime. This quietist tradition itself has a far-reaching genealogy, tracing back in part to the influence of al-Albani, born in Albania and raised in Syria, and to the Indian Ahl-i Hadith (Lacroix 2009). Its diverse roots come through in the biography of Muhammad Aman al-Jami, a founding staff member of the IUM, the first head of its College of Hadith until 1985 and a teacher of al-Madkhali, whose association with this mode of religiosity is so strong that its adherents are commonly referred to pejoratively by their critics as

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<sup>172</sup> Cf. the discussion of this issue in the introduction to this thesis.

"Jamis". Born in eastern Ethiopia in the early 1930s and educated in the Shafi'i environment of his village and nearby settlements, al-Jami had made the journey to Saudi Arabia via Somalia and Yemen, arriving in Mecca in time to perform the hajj in 1950. He stayed on to study in the Masjid Haram, came into contact with Ibn Baz and accompanied him to Riyadh, where he enrolled in the city's new Scholastic Institute and College of Shari'a amongst peers including the future IUM head 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Abbad. During his time in Mecca and Riyadh, al-Jami associated not only with Najdi scholars like Ibn Baz and Muhammad ibn Ibrahim but also with an array of migrants already mentioned in this thesis, including the West African future IUM faculty members 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ifriqi, Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti and Hammad al-Ansari, the Egyptian Ansar al-Sunna scholars 'Abd al-Razzaq 'Afifi and Muhammad Khalil Harras, and the Egyptian Salafi 'Abd al-Razzaq Hamza. He would subsequently earn a masters degree from the University of Punjab and a doctorate from the Cairo Dar al-'Ulum (al-Qar'ani 2009, 225–35). Al-Jami, a migrant whose own thinking was shaped by these far-reaching connections and whose religious standing was legitimated with reference to his studies with this broad array of Saudi and non-Saudi scholars, as well as qualifications acquired in both Saudi and non-Saudi institutions, remained an important point of reference at the IUM long after his death in 1996. His biography is emblematic of the ways in which, even as the university came to be largely purged of foreigners in line with the shifting interests of national state elites, its operation continued to be in part influenced and legitimated by earlier cross-border flows of migrants and capital.

## **Conclusion**

From the early 1960s until at least the 1980s, the IUM was a hub for religious migrations undertaken not only by students from all over the world but also by staff who hailed from across the Middle East and beyond. The sojourners, immigrants, and itinerants brought together on its campus were hired in part directly from existing educational institutions like al-Azhar. The university also tapped into cross-border circuits and networks, built around *inter alia* pilgrimage routes, interacting social movement structures, and the efforts of individual brokers. These border-spanning formations often considerably pre-dated the existence of the IUM and even that of the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. To a large extent, these staff members were drawn to Medina as labour migrants, seeking to access material capital distributed from the coffers of the Saudi state in the form of generous salaries. However, they could also benefit from proximity to the Holy Cities, political asylum, the opportunity to be involved in a project seen as serving the global *umma*, and sometimes material and moral support for broader projects in their communities of origin or elsewhere.

In return for their salaries and these other benefits, they performed the labour of instruction and administration necessary for the university's functioning. More than that, however, their presence helped to legitimate its missionary endeavour. The very diversity of the IUM faculty stood to lend an appearance of universality to a project which was fundamentally about promoting a quite particular set of religious tenets, to which some but by no means all of these staff members were themselves committed. These outsiders were well positioned to mediate between the Wahhabi establishment and a student body drawn from far and wide, and their own pre-existing links in communities across the world facilitated the university's efforts to establish global reach. Furthermore, they brought spiritual capital accumulated through far-reaching scholarly networks or in often venerable centres of learning like al-Azhar, as well as in newer but nonetheless established Islamic educational institutions like the University of Umm Durman. Their relatively widely-recognised qualifications and reputations stood to bolster the capacity of the IUM to legitimate a particular array of religious ideas and practices with broad audiences beyond Saudi Arabia, and to issue qualifications to its own students which might similarly be widely recognised as bases of religious authority. Over time, the know-how and spiritual capital brought by these migrants came to be institutionalised in the IUM itself, until the university was eventually able to function self-sufficiently and their presence was no longer required. As I explore further in the following two chapters, these migrant staff members had by that time also come to exert a certain amount of – often lasting – influence over the styles and content of instruction that prevailed on the IUM campus.

## Chapter 5

### Post-Colonial Contestation and Social Technologies of Education at the Islamic University

Born in al-Sharqiyya in Egypt in the late 1920s, 'Atiyya Muhammad Salim had relocated to the Hijaz in his youth. He began studying with scholars in Medina in the mid-1940s and would later travel to Riyadh to enrol in the Scholastic Institute and the Colleges of Shari'a and Arabic Language there, before being appointed to teach at the Islamic University of Medina from 1961. In a later nostalgic recollection of his studies as a young man in *halaqāt* in the Masjid Nabawi, he implicitly invoked the contrast between that style of instruction and what he had subsequently come to witness in new-style institutions like the IUM:

That [mode of] study [in the Masjid Nabawi] was the basis for knowledge acquisition; linked to the book being studied, not to the course or the curricula. The goal was not completion of a curriculum in a specific time; what was sought was understanding of what was being read without chasing time. The objective was not success in a test in order to obtain a degree certificate; it was equipping oneself with learning, knowledge and devoted study of God's religion. For this reason, the student wasn't compelled to disengage himself and occupy himself exclusively with the quest for learning. Rather, everyone who was brought together by the study circles in the evening had different, diverse jobs in the daytime. But in the lesson they were equal, with nothing distinguishing them from each other except excellence in learning. They were truly brothers in sincerity [*fa-hum bi-ḥaqq ikhwat ṣidq*].<sup>173</sup>

This chapter considers the social technologies of education that came to be employed at the IUM from the early 1960s; the institutional arrangements and pedagogical techniques used to achieve the embodying in students of various forms of spiritual capital, including religious knowledge but also modes of comportment, attitudes and dispositions. The methods employed in pursuit of these ends at the IUM differed markedly from practices that had prevailed in Najd and the Hijaz even just a few decades earlier. As 'Atiyya Muhammad Salim's recollections suggest, the disparities related not only to the selection and organisation of the knowledge that was to be transmitted, but also to the ways in which education at the IUM came to be structured around the "chasing of time" according to curricula and fixed schedules, the use of

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<sup>173</sup> Quoted in al-Majdhub 1992, 2:201. The details of 'Atiyya Muhammad Salim's life are based on al-Majdhub 1992, 2:201–226; al-Qar'ani 2009, 303–06. He died in 1999.

systematic examinations, and a greater degree of disengagement from life outside the educational institution.

In order to pave the way for understanding this shift, I begin this chapter by locating the IUM in relation to struggles in the post-colonial contexts from which so many of its early staff were drawn.<sup>174</sup> The new missionary university was valued by many of those involved as a response to colonial and neo-imperial intrusions in the cultural sphere in parts of the world with Muslim populations; infringements which were viewed as presenting an existential threat to Islamic identities, lifestyles and values. However, many were clear that this response could not involve a retreat into newly-barricaded traditional modes of schooling.

Instead, as I argue in the second part of this chapter, the spirit of pedagogical innovation prevalent amongst many of those behind the university led them to consciously and actively appropriate social technologies whose own genealogies were bound up with what they understood as “Western” history and values. These included techniques which were arguably strongly coloured by disciplinary market culture. In the IUM setting, efforts were made to recalibrate these pedagogies in the name of producing industrious, activist and pious *du‘āt* equipped to engage effectively in contemporary cultural politics; precisely as part of what was understood to amount to a project of resistance to the “Western” aggressor.

### **Rethinking Religious Education**

The time of upheaval in religious educational structures during which those who designed and staffed the emergent IUM had come of age was reflected in their own varied backgrounds. A great many had started their education in traditional *katātīb* schools, commonly focused on basic literacy and rote memorisation of the Qur’an. However, beyond this point their paths diverged considerably. At one end of the spectrum, many major figures who joined the IUM early on had completed their

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<sup>174</sup> The term “post-colonial” is used advisedly in the context of this chapter to refer to the period following formal independence in countries which had previously been subject to the direct sovereignty of foreign powers. It is not intended to deny the reality of the forms of material exploitation, clientelism, violence and cultural sway which former colonial powers continued to exercise beyond this point in time (cf. Duara 2011), and which remained a matter of considerable concern for many of those involved in the IUM.

advanced training in mosque study circles. One example is the prominent scholar Muhammad al-Amin al-Shinqiti, who taught at the university and served on its Advisory Council from the start. He had been educated as a young man in rural Mauritania by members of his family, scholars of his tribe and marabouts.<sup>175</sup> A former student recalled that, playing on the fact that the Arabic word for a university or school certificate also refers to the formula by which Muslims avow their faith, al-Shinqiti used to declare, "I have only one *shahāda*: '*lā ilāha illā Allah*'."<sup>176</sup> Under quite different circumstances, the Syrian Muslim Brother Muhammad al-Mubarak, who sat on the IUM's Advisory Council for some fifteen years from the time that the university first opened, had started out pursuing a two-track education in Syria encompassing "regular schools" (*madāris niẓāmiyya*) alongside "old-style education" (*al-dirāsa al-qadīma*) in mosque study circles. He subsequently enrolled at Damascus University and the Sorbonne in Paris (al-Majdhub 1992, 1:232–235, 250; al-'Aqil 2008, 990–91). Saudi staff who joined the IUM faculty in its earliest days had also studied and taught both in mosque study circles and in the new-style institutions founded in recent decades by the state, including the Scholastic Institute and the College of Shari'a in Riyadh. Later on, university backgrounds became increasingly prevalent amongst IUM faculty. Staff lists from the early 1980s show that by that time the vast majority bore university qualifications ranging from bachelors degrees to doctorates.<sup>177</sup>

Particularly in the IUM's formative years, prior to the overwhelming influx of university-trained faculty, staff thus brought with them a diverse range of experiences and ideas about how education, religious and otherwise, could and should function. Nonetheless, one view agreed upon by many was that educational reforms initiated by colonial officials and local client elites across the Islamic world had come to represent a profound threat in Muslim communities in their lifetimes, contributing to moral degradation and an imbalance of power between Muslims and what was often

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<sup>175</sup> Al-Shinqiti's biography is discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis. His education is discussed in some detail in al-Majdhub 1992, 1:172–74.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with IUM graduate B, London, 24 June 2011. This first part of the Islamic declaration of faith translates as "there is no God but God". The full declaration of faith finishes with "and Muhammad is the messenger of God".

<sup>177</sup> "Dalil A'da' Hay'at al-Tadris wa-l-Muhadirin wa-l-Mu'idin" 1981/2. The universities at which staff had earned such qualifications were discussed in Chapter 4.

referred to as “the West”. Such views were given particularly full expression in an article by Abul Hasan ‘Ali Nadwi, the Indian scholar who would become a founding and exceptionally longstanding member of the IUM Advisory Council (Nadwi 1969a). In that document, in turn based on a memorandum that Nadwi had presented to a conference of Arab education ministers in Kuwait just a few years before the IUM opened, he argued that any given education system has “a soul and a conscience”, which is “a reflection of the doctrines and mentality of its creators, their goal in knowledge and the study of existence, and [their] view of life, and a manifestation of their morals”, and which pervades its entire structure across all branches of knowledge (1969a, 26). The imposition of “Western” educational systems as a result of colonialism and cultural imperialism, he argued, had transformed the mentality of Muslim youth such that they were no longer able to accept “correct Islam” or to integrate into an Islamic society (1969a, 40–41). Moreover, it had produced a generation of rulers acculturated in the same vein (1969a, 42–43). In his view, “Western”-style secular schooling had shattered forms of social solidarity which might be found in religion, giving rise instead to a Manichean conflict – a zero-sum struggle between “two mentalities, two philosophies, two points of view” – within Islamic societies, pitching those who remained fully committed to Islam against those who had effectively abandoned their faith (1969a, 43). In this supposed corruption of shared Islamic identities and moral frameworks by “Western”-inspired educational reforms, Nadwi and others thought they discerned an explanation for the success of colonial and neo-imperial subjugation of Islamic societies; the result of such reforms being that “the emotion of the Muslim peoples, their sacrifices, their efforts, their sincerity and their fidelity (which are the direct, fundamental motivation for the founding of Islamic governments and the liberation of colonised countries) became wretched fuel in the fire of modernisation and Westernisation” (1969a, 44–45).<sup>178</sup>

This perceived threat was frequently located as part of a broader *ghazw fikrī*, or intellectual invasion, a campaign of cultural imperialism seen as threatening the very

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<sup>178</sup> Similar views were expressed in works by other prominent members of the Advisory Council (e.g. Mawdudi 1956; Mawdudi 1977), and also in articles published in the IUM journal (e.g. Mahmud 1972; Mahmud 1971; Qadiri n.d.).

foundations of Islamic belief and practice. A particularly full discussion of the *ghazw fikrī* appeared in the university journal in 1969, authored by Mamduh Fakhri, a teacher in the IUM's College of Da'wa. He defined it as including the spread of national and other kinds of particularistic identities which had shattered an erstwhile Islamic solidarity; the exclusion of religious values from the political sphere; the "liberation" of women, which really amounted to separating them from their faith; and the proliferation of a misguided notion of progress entailing the celebration of all things new and the rejection of all things old. While pernicious educational reforms were the key factor driving such developments, other instruments of the *ghazw fikrī* included the media and the capture of centres of power like the military (Fakhri 1969). The actors behind this aggression were variously defined by Fakhri and others at the IUM as "the West", "Europe", "Crusader" forces, Jews and Christian missionaries, in league with local client politicians and intellectual classes (al-Qadmani 1968; Fakhri 1969). It was also commonly related to the intrusion of political and intellectual schools of thought associated with both sides in the Cold War. A course on the *ghazw fikrī* that was being taught at the IUM by the early 1990s listed in this regard: pragmatist philosophy, existentialism, secularism, nationalism, capitalism, socialism, Zionism, and Westernisation (al-'Abbud 2004, 542–45).

On occasion, the *ghazw fikrī* was framed in terms of an age-old conflict between truth and falsity (cf. al-Qadmani 1968). More commonly, however, it was presented as both a legacy and a continuation of the recent history of direct European colonisation of Islamic lands. According to the then IUM president 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Baz, writing in the IUM journal in 1973, the shift to the use of new "weapons" like books, newspapers and magazines represented nothing more than a change in styles of imperialism. This move had been made only when old-style direct colonialism came to be judged by its perpetrators as ill-equipped to deal with popular resistance in the modern period (Ibn Baz 1973).

Without denying the role played in various forms of colonialism and neo-imperialism by factors like coercive violence, administrative social control and economic domination, the discourse of the *ghazw fikrī* shifted the focus instead to questions of culture, communal identity and moral rectitude. Understanding the problem of



“Western” political expansion in these terms meant searching for analogous solutions. Just as malicious, “Western”-inspired educational reforms were seen as having been integral to the *ghazw fikrī*, figures associated with the IUM saw education – with the scope it offered for the remaking of Islamic societies through the transmission of correct knowledge and the proper training of attitudes, instincts, preferences and other aspects of subjectivity at the level of the individual – as a key weapon with which to respond. This thinking was bound up with a view that youth ought to be a special focus of such efforts. On the one hand, youth were viewed as an internal threat to Islamic societies and the *umma*, an impulsive and potentially subversive element especially vulnerable to corruption. On the other hand, they were seen as a potential source of the strength and vitality that was so badly needed in order to bring about a desired religious revival.<sup>179</sup> Proper education was necessary in order to ensure that they would serve as a force for positive change rather than further degradation.

When it came to training this new generation, IUM figures insisted on the need for a strongly activist approach to religious schooling. In the words of ‘Abd Allah ibn Ahmad Qadiri, a Saudi citizen with a masters from al-Azhar writing as dean of the IUM’s College of Arabic Language in the late 1970s, ties to God are strengthened through “learning for the sake of acting on knowledge” rather than “for the sake of culture and scholastic and intellectual luxury” (Qadiri n.d.). While it may be the case that as a consequence of such an activist education, “the horizons of thought of the actor will broaden”, this was effectively a contingent benefit rather than the primary goal. As things stood, Qadiri suggested that a lack of commitment amongst scholars and students to applying their religious knowledge in the real world had gone so far as to transform them into more of a corrupting influence than ordinary Muslims. It was the duty of every person working in the teaching profession to realise the necessary

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<sup>179</sup> Such views come through in numerous articles on the subject of youth in the IUM journal, including Babelli 1969; al-‘Abbadi 1970; Abu Farha 1971; Mahmud 1971; Bahzad 1972; Maghribi n.d.; ‘Abd al-Rahman Billah ‘Ali n.d.; Butrush n.d.. Omnia El Shakry (2011) has observed the emergence of very similar views of youth as simultaneously “peril and promise” in 1930s Egypt, “partly as a response to the widespread student demonstrations of 1935 and 1936 that ushered in the figure of youth as an insurgent subject of politics”.

activist epistemology “in his own self and in the selves of his students”.<sup>180</sup> His words echoed the insistence of the IUM teacher Mamduh Fakhri a decade earlier that learning (*al-taḥṣīl*) should never be allowed to become disconnected from proactive conveyance of the Islamic message (*al-tablīgh*) (Fakhri 1968).

It was in this spirit that university statutes stipulated that its graduates were to be not merely passive religious experts but *du‘āt*, a term best translated in this context as missionaries.<sup>181</sup> In an open letter to graduates in 1976 the then de facto head of the university, the Saudi scholar ‘Abd al-Muhsin al-‘Abbad, emphasised this activist ethos using militaristic imagery that was common in university literature. He reminded them that they had secured their qualification in order to embark upon “the stage of struggle (*marḥalat al-jihād*) in the battalions of the *da‘wa* to your Lord: as a guidance to the people, a rectification of the programmes of their lives, a realisation of their happiness in their world and their triumph in their hereafter.” This, he reminded each individual reader, “is the mission of your university; it is the goal for the purpose of which you came from your country and shunned your people, and exerted yourself for years in order to reach it, and you have arrived; it is the loftiest of goals in your life” (al-‘Abbad 1976). The prevalence of such martial language in IUM literature may well have related in part to the perception of the university as representing a response to a form of “intellectual colonialism” which was itself directly continuous with “military colonialism”.<sup>182</sup> It is also worth noting that military metaphors were by no means limited to this particular educational context. They had also historically been found, for example, in Ottoman educational discourse and in the language of Christian missionaries in the region (Deringil 1998, 100; U. Makdisi 2008, 67, 84).

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<sup>180</sup> Qadiri cites two passages from the Qur’an to support his position that religious knowledge should be treated primarily as a basis for action: Q. 61:2-3 (“O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not.”); and part of Q. 62:5 (“The similitude of those who were charged with the [obligations of the] Mosaic Law, but who subsequently failed in those [obligations], is that of a donkey which carries huge tomes [but understands them not].”). The English-language renderings of these verses here are quoted from Yusuf Ali 1997.

<sup>181</sup> “Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-I-Jami‘a al-Islamiyya,” Article 1.

<sup>182</sup> See, for example, use of these two parallel terms in al-Qadmani 1968.

At least for the first half a century of its existence, women were to have no role either as teachers or as students in this project as it played out at the IUM.<sup>183</sup> That is not to say that the notion of educating women was in itself taboo. However, views expressed in the IUM journal in the university's formative years suggested that their own training should be directed towards their role in the private sphere, in contrast with this public missionary endeavour. According to the Syrian Ibrahim al-Salqini, a teacher in the IUM's College of Shari'a, the primary responsibility of women is to raise children, a task for which they are suited by virtue of their nature (*fitra*). Using language familiar from nationalist and other forms of twentieth-century reformist discourse, both religious and otherwise,<sup>184</sup> he argued that with this role comes great responsibility: "The woman, by concerning herself with the cradle and taking care of her children correctly, builds the future of her nation" (al-Salqini 1969). This responsibility necessitated that women should themselves be educated; however, this education should focus on skills and bodies of knowledge suited to their role as homemakers and shapers of the next generation, including child psychology, "the methods of caring for [children] morally and bodily", and housekeeping. While al-Salqini also emphasised the need for women to receive religious education, this was to be geared towards the same priorities; religious training was valuable insofar as it "cleanses her soul and elevates her emotions, purifies her heart and stamps her with the character of correct motherhood and proper [moral] nature, and informs her about her rights and duties in relation to her husband and children".<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Recent talk of providing facilities for female education at the IUM is discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>184</sup> For example, on broader debates in colonial and post-colonial Egypt concerning the relationship between the education of women, their role in the private sphere, and the implications of this for the proper ordering of the public sphere and the nation, see e.g. Noorani 2010, 107–47.

<sup>185</sup> In a comparable example, the Moroccan scholar Taqi al-Din al-Hilali argued against those who suggest that women should be given only an absolute minimum of education for fear that even literacy might expose them to corrupting influences like newspapers and magazines. He suggested that a certain amount of correct education might in fact protect women from corrupting influences. However, he railed against those "Europeanisers" who suggest that women should have full access to education and should be free to become lawyers, politicians and presidents. Like al-Salqini, he argued that women's education should be tailored to suit "that for which she was created"; housekeeping, the raising of children and supporting her husband (al-Hilali 1970).

Such views on female education – grounded in a strictly binary conception of gender as mapping directly onto morphological sex, with men and women having clearly distinguished roles tied to what were understood to be their distinct physical, mental and moral natures – left little scope for women undertaking the kind of advanced, activist, socially-engaged religious training offered at the IUM. Moreover, they combined with concerns about the moral corruption that would certainly ensue from coeducation (‘Atiyya Salim 1968; al-‘Umari 1968).

As far as the campaign to counter the *ghazw fikrī* through education was concerned, when it came to the methods that were to be used many were convinced that what they understood to amount to effective resistance would require something other than simply a retreat into what had now come to be seen as the “traditional” instruction of mosque study circles. Rather, what was required was a fundamental reconfiguration of how education operated.

The Pakistani Jamaat-i Islami leader Abul A‘la Mawdudi, who was involved in planning for the IUM, was one figure who had long called for efforts to apply such sentiments in the area of educational reform.<sup>186</sup> He was concerned to replace or transform existing Islamic educational institutions, which he saw as “rigid” and as being bogged down in the delusion that the only legitimate knowledge is “that which is passed down to us by [our] forebears”. The new institutions he envisaged would embrace what he saw as a cumulative process of advancement of human understanding of the world, grounded not only in preserving acquired knowledge but also in embracing new knowledge developed through observation and inference. This was not to involve wholesale importation of existing “worldly sciences” into syllabuses, imbued as these disciplines were with an irreligious Western view of existence (1956, 20). Rather, the new institutions would seek to narrow the gap between these sciences and religious knowledge, and would channel students’ and teachers’ energies towards the goal of building a new way of life grounded in faith and obedience to God (Mawdudi 1956, 5–7, 18–35).

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<sup>186</sup> Mawdudi’s views on educational reform have previously been discussed in connection with the IUM in Zaman 2007, 254–56.

In the event, the IUM would remain devoted to specifically religious subjects and would not undertake the critical engagement with the “worldly sciences” that Mawdudi envisaged, at least for the first decades of its existence.<sup>187</sup> As a missionary institution with the goal of imbuing its students with religious knowledge, skills and other forms of spiritual capital which they would take with them when they returned to their home societies or travelled on elsewhere to offer spiritual and moral guidance, this was not within its remit. However, its focus on the transmission of religious knowledge certainly does not mean that it took the form of a traditional *madrasa*; rather, the spirit of openness to pedagogical innovation found in Mawdudi’s work took root at the IUM more broadly. Accounts of Salafi belief and practice frequently reference efforts to combat illegitimate innovations (*bida’*, sing. *bid’a*) seen as having corrupted Muslims’ lifestyles and religious beliefs and practice in the centuries since the time of the Prophet and his Companions. This was indeed a matter of profound concern for many who became involved at the IUM. However, there appears to have been a consensus on the belief that this would be best achieved through openness to legitimate innovations in the sphere of pedagogical practice. This attitude is reflected in an article published in the university journal around 1980 by Muhammad al-Majdhub, the Syrian Muslim Brother who had previously worked in a Christian college in Latakiyya. Apparently addressing himself to students who might consider entering into teaching themselves after graduation, al-Majdhub discussed styles of instruction with reference to the Qur’an and the practices of the Prophet. However, what he really sought to emphasize was an understanding of teaching as a living practice, informed by experience of what works and involving an open-ended process of adaptation and improvement (al-Majdhub n.d.).

This spirit of pedagogical innovation was juxtaposed with a broader willingness to appropriate thinking, practices and technologies drawn from what was identified as “Western” culture, as long as this was done critically and the specific elements in question were judged to be compatible with Islamic values. In the words of the Sudanese assistant professor ‘Abd al-Rahman Billah ‘Ali in the early 1980s, “That which

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<sup>187</sup> Recent steps to establish colleges offering instruction in medicine, information technology, applied sciences, pharmacology and engineering are discussed in Chapter 3.

comes from the West is not all evil; rather, there are [also] splendid, benevolent aspects. We must stop, scrutinise and distinguish" ('Abd al-Rahman Billah 'Ali n.d.).

For many of those involved in its formative years, the IUM represented an opportunity to rethink existing religious educational practices, including appropriating ideas and methods from the "West". This was to be done in part as part of a process that was understood to offer a way of resisting colonial and neo-imperial cultural intrusions seen as emanating from precisely that same source.<sup>188</sup> As I explore in the remainder of this chapter, such attitudes gave rise to a Wahhabi missionary university which in many regards – from the spatial discourse of its campus to the modes of instruction employed in its classrooms – was not only a "modern" institution, in the simple sense of being very much a product of the era in which it existed, but was also quite self-consciously so.

### **Forging Industrious Du‘at**

Before exploring the methods of education implemented at the IUM, it will be worth considering what education itself was understood to involve in this context, in the abstract. The notion of education is commonly denoted in IUM discourse and in Arabic more generally by two words – *ta‘līm* and *tarbiya* – each with differing valences. *Ta‘līm* derives from the same root as the word *‘ilm*, meaning knowledge. According to Muhammad al-Sharbini, an educational expert employed at the IUM in the 1970s, *ta‘līm* may be defined as follows:

It is the process of the acquisition of information, knowledge, experiences and skills... *Ta‘līm* is a process continuing from the cradle to the grave. *Ta‘līm* is an individual duty, not a collective duty. *Ta‘līm* is not mere dictation of knowledge; it is a process of training, studying [*ta‘allum*], cultivation of the mind [*tathqīf*], and exercise. *Ta‘līm* is not based on quantity so much as it is concerned with the how and the what [*al-kayf wa-l-naw*]. *Ta‘līm* is not for the purposes of knowledge for the sake of a job, or knowledge for the sake of knowledge, or knowledge for the sake of society; but rather all of these aspects together, such that the individual is turned into an enlightened and devout person who upholds his duties to his Lord, to his family, to his society and to his nation [*naḥw mujtama‘ihi al-ṣaghīr wa waṭanihi al-kabīr*] (al-Sharbini 1976)

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<sup>188</sup> Cf. Benjamin Fortna's (2002) argument that the appropriation of pedagogical methods from Western Europe in the late Ottoman Empire was partly precisely about mounting a defence against perceived Western European cultural and political encroachment.

Al-Sharbini's conception of *ta'lim* is very much bound up with the same activist epistemology expounded by Qadiri earlier in this chapter, in which individual learning is intimately linked both to one's relationship with God and also to one's action as a member of society. Moreover, while the concept of *ta'lim* entails a particular emphasis on the transmission of knowledge, it is clear that for al-Sharbini it means more than this, also implying such things as the acquisition of skills and the "cultivation of the mind".

These latter aspects of education are even more strongly associated with the notion of *tarbiya*. *Tarbiya* is characterised by al-Sharbini as being "more general and more comprehensive" than *ta'lim*:

It is linked to the development of the life of the individual in terms of body, reason [*'aql*], sentiment [*wijdān*], society, behaviour and morals. This comes about by means of the family, the school, and the environment in which the student lives. Through this, he is influenced by and he influences what is around him in terms of circumstances and natural and unnatural conditions, such that a process of interaction and adaptation occurs which has a major influence on his formation [*takwīn*], behaviour, inclinations [*ittijāhāt*], thoughts and various aspects of his life [*mukhtalaf hayātihī*] in the series of stages of his development in general (al-Sharbini 1976)<sup>189</sup>

This definition of *tarbiya* further underscores concern in the IUM context with the role of education not only in the transmission of knowledge but also in the training of other aspects of subjectivity, including modes of normative reasoning, instinctual dispositions and registers of moral affect.<sup>190</sup> For example, IUM staff spoke about the need – generally, not only in the university context – to imbue students with deep faith in God, love of the Prophet, desire for Paradise and fear of Hell (e.g. Nadwi 1969b, 92; Naghash 1977). In the remainder of this chapter, I suggest that the pedagogical technologies in use at the IUM were also geared towards efforts to instil in students an internalised sense of industry in the acquisition of religious knowledge and pious self-betterment that would facilitate their studies and equip them to venture out into the contemporary world as activist agents of social, cultural and political change.

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<sup>189</sup> Elsewhere, *tarbiya* is defined by the IUM College of Shari'a staff member Muhammad Naghash as "the development of rational, moral and bodily faculties" (Naghash 1977).

<sup>190</sup> Cf. recent anthropological work discussed in the introduction to this thesis, by scholars like Saba Mahmood (2005) and Charles Hirschkind (2006).

To a certain extent, the embodying of spiritual capital at the IUM was to involve a quite personalised, performative process which put university staff in a paternal position as role models to be emulated by students. According to the IUM teacher Salih Rida, people

cannot, by their nature and disposition, assimilate abstract truths and follow moral systems unless they are displayed before them in men who are endowed with them and who call them into being in themselves then in their society. If teachings and morals do not rise up in men, they remain letters that blacken books... (Rida 1969)

Naturally, Rida identified the Prophet Muhammad as the ideal human exemplar, as did others writing in this context (e.g. M. al-M. M. 'Ali 1972). However, he and others also emphasised the importance of finding virtuous contemporaries to emulate. This was to include the university's staff themselves, who – as it was put in the IUM's founding documents – were to be not only qualified in their areas of expertise but also “venerable, known for praiseworthy conduct, righteousness and piety”.<sup>191</sup> The personalised, paternal nature of this aspect of education at the IUM is underlined by the frequency with which students were referred to in its publications as “sons” of the university and its staff.<sup>192</sup>

However, the ways in which the university operated to achieve the embodying of spiritual capital in its students also involved a quite different set of pedagogical techniques. From the earliest days, this included features in common with schools and universities in Europe, North America and many other locations around the world, which in turn were informed by the basic principles underlying an approach to education popularised by Joseph Lancaster in early nineteenth-century England. Lancaster's methods have been discussed at length elsewhere and the details of his approach are not of primary concern here; it is certainly not the case that those behind the IUM were engaged in studying, adapting and implementing his techniques, which were by this time well over 150 years old and had long since gone out of vogue even in the English context in which they had first gained a foothold. Rather, what is observable at the IUM is a broader application of two key principles that underlay his

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<sup>191</sup> “Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya,” Article 16.

<sup>192</sup> E.g. “Akhbar al-Jami'a” 1970; “Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya” 1971, 11; “Dalil al-Talib al-Jami'i” 2013, 47.



influential approach and which retain traction in so many educational contexts to this day: regulating students' behaviour through the implementation of a system of continual observation, normative judgement and periodic correction; and promoting in them a sense of competitive industry by integrating their performance into an economy of rewards and punishments. Efforts to discipline students' minds and bodies in these ways in the IUM context, as elsewhere, were necessarily incomplete and by no means gave rise to a totalising system. Yet, for all their limitations and interstices, they reflect a significant shift in approach from the ways in which instruction had been conducted in the mosque study circles which had been the most important sites of advanced religious education in Najd and the Hijaz just a few decades earlier

In what follows, I explore efforts to implement these basic principles at the IUM with reference to two interrelated themes: firstly, the arrangement of students' bodies in space and time; and secondly, provisions for surveillance, examination, reward and punishment.

A concern for fixing students' bodies in space was most clearly to be seen in the campus model put in place at the IUM. Whereas 'Atiyya Muhammad Salim at the start of this chapter described a system in which the norm had been for students to move back and forth between lessons, economic pursuits and other spheres of life beyond the mosque, at the IUM students were mostly to be engaged full-time during the academic year as members of a residential community. In the early days of the university, students were accommodated in buildings that had formerly served as barracks, without even electricity in the daytime to power fans.<sup>193</sup> Later, the university expanded into a purpose-built campus, with input from the Canadian architect Arthur Erickson who had previously designed the Simon Fraser University in British Columbia.<sup>194</sup> Although some students report having lived away from the campus – including but not limited to those who were able to bring their families to Medina – the default expectation has always been that students should be accommodated on-site, ensuring that the agents, processes and objects of education are confined to a

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<sup>193</sup> Interview with IUM graduate B, London, 17 December 2010.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. "Arthur Erickson" 2013.

single, dedicated location.<sup>195</sup> Within the campus environment, students were further partitioned through assignation to the university's growing number of specialist colleges, as well as individual dormitory rooms and classrooms. A graduate who arrived in Medina in the early 1990s recalled that he and his peers were assigned numbered desks at which they would sit for the duration of the academic year, a system that he suggested helped to ensure that attendance could be easily monitored.<sup>196</sup> Although students are of course free to leave the campus site and have long been provided with transport to and from the Masjid Nabawi, there have also been efforts – at least in theory – to contain their interactions beyond the campus setting. According to the letter of current regulations, for example, they are expected to avoid spending time unnecessarily in places like cafes and markets, and are subject to a curfew requiring them to be in their accommodation by 11pm.<sup>197</sup>

Pedagogy at the IUM was also from the start marked by a system of temporal distribution that contrasted with the ways in which religious education had long operated in mosque study circles. Time was structured around academic years – at least three for the secondary level and four for the advanced level, according to the 1961 arrangements. These were to last nine months each, with lessons taking place every day of the week, excluding official holidays; six classes per day at the secondary level and four per day for university-level students.<sup>198</sup> Where mosque *halaqāt* had historically operated according to the shifting rhythm of the five daily prayers, at the IUM lessons came to be fixed according to the profane clock. Where any given series of *halaqāt* had historically finished when the teacher came to the end of the text at hand, the IUM's nine-month academic year had a finality to it marked by an examination, which determined whether the student would re-sit the same year or

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<sup>195</sup> The expectation that all staff and students would live on campus was stipulated in Article 24 of the original university statutes. At least according to the letter of current regulations, any non-Saudi student wishing to reside off campus is expected to submit handwritten confirmation from a guardian that the student is living with that guardian ("Dalil al-Talib al-Jami'i" 2013, 39).

<sup>196</sup> Interview with IUM graduate C, London, 14 July 2011.

<sup>197</sup> "Dalil al-Talib al-Jami'i" 2013, 39, 48.

<sup>198</sup> "Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-I-Jami'a al-Islamiyya," Articles 7 and 8.

progress to the next in a succession of temporal segments that made up the duration of the course and which would conclude with the certificate of qualification.

Within this overarching timetable, specific teaching activities were scheduled according to fixed curricula. When the university first opened, undergraduate-level instruction was limited to a single, generalist programme within what was then known as the Higher Studies Department. The syllabuses in place at that point were quite minimal. Most courses were built around one or two texts, with the syllabus listing how many lessons per week were to be dedicated to each course during each year of the four-year programme. Sometimes the syllabuses specified a few further details, such as the key issues to be covered, the particular parts of the text which were to be dealt with in particular years, or the particular quantities of material that were to be taught or memorised. As the IUM expanded and acquired new colleges, it began to offer a much larger number of increasingly specialist programmes, with each programme further divided into increasingly specialised courses. Curricula in use by the early 1990s were much more elaborate, including not only specifications for the time to be spent on each course at each stage in the process but also lists of teaching objectives, set texts and additional texts for further reference.<sup>199</sup>

Making campus life a compulsory part of education for most students at the IUM captured their bodies for the purposes of moralisation. According to the founding statutes, students were required “to observe the principles of the Islamic University of Medina, derived from the spirit of the true religion, to behave according to excellent Islamic morals within and outside the university, and to submit to all rulings of the shari’a.” Any who were considered to have strayed into “apostasy, deviation in creed or deviation in morals” were to be expelled.<sup>200</sup>

While the IUM’s Advisory Council did consider the possibility of distance learning (*al-intisāb*) within the first decade of the university’s existence, according to the then secretary general Muhammad ibn Nasir al-‘Abbudī this option was rejected precisely because “the goal of founding the university is not merely the attainment of a

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<sup>199</sup> The content of instruction is discussed further in Chapter 6.

<sup>200</sup> “Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-I-Jami’a al-Islamiyya,” Articles 12 and 19.

scholarly qualification; rather, what is intended is that the student lives in an Islamic atmosphere, which will impart to him decent morals and excellent manners” (al-‘Abbudi 1970). Although there remained acknowledged reasons for considering distance learning as an option – staff member Muhammad al-Sharbini argued a few years later that it would help the IUM to achieve expanded reach abroad (al-Sharbini n.d.) – provision for this would not be made until several decades down the line, following a decision to do so in 2007.<sup>201</sup>

The task of moralising students within the campus space was to be performed in part by a dedicated system of social supervision, set up soon after the founding of the university and responsible for “guidance of students, spurring them to be distinguished by excellent morals, the fulfilment of religious rites, [and] the abandonment of the pursuit of that which violates masculine virtues [*mā yukhill bi-l-murū’a*] or harms health”. Its monitoring efforts were facilitated by direct ties to those university employees who were routinely on duty outside of normal working hours, including night supervisors, drivers and doormen.<sup>202</sup> The Syrian Muslim Brother Muhammad al-Majdhub, who was responsible for overseeing the system of social supervision for eighteen months, recalled that he was occupied “night and day” with reports of quarrels and students who were lax with their prayers. He blamed the intensity of the role for driving him to serious illness (al-Majdhub 1992, 2:331–32).<sup>203</sup>

From very early on, the system of social supervision also involved regular trips, during which students would be taken to visit locations like the sites of major battles from the

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<sup>201</sup> When distance-learning was eventually introduced, it was on a fee-paying basis, in contrast with the scholarships system which had always been the bedrock of the IUM. There had also been an earlier IUM-linked initiative to launch online study programmes with international reach; however, this project ended up breaking away from the IUM and becoming affiliated to a university in Malaysia. Interview with IUM graduate A (London, 1 December 2011) and subsequent email correspondence.

<sup>202</sup> “Dalil al-Jami‘a al-Islamiyya” 1971, 140.

<sup>203</sup> It should be acknowledged that students themselves have differing perceptions of the extent to which they were subject to such moral surveillance during their time at the IUM, a fact which may depend in part on the periods when they studied there. One who graduated from the IUM in the early 1990s spoke of a feeling of being constantly watched and said he knew of students being expelled for reasons such as repeated laxity in performing their prayers (Telephone interview with US-based IUM graduate D, 30 November 2010). Another, who was there through most of the 1990s, felt that matters such as prayer had been entirely voluntary (Interview with IUM graduate C, London, 14 July 2011).

time of the Prophet. During these trips, they would hear lectures from staff members, and would practice their own preaching skills by delivering talks themselves and offering guidance to local people. Students also took part in regular seminars on campus. According to arrangements in place in the early 1970s, all students resident on campus were divided into four groups. In any given week, one of these groups would attend a seminar, such that every student would attend a seminar at least once a month.<sup>204</sup> During these sessions, they and staff members read poetry and gave presentations on themes from Marxism and the *ghazw fikrī*, to hadith studies, the notion of fraternity, or the situation of Muslims in their respective countries of origin. Such occasions thus helped to expand the presence of teaching staff beyond the classroom setting, allowing them a greater role in observing and correcting students' behaviour and expressed views. An account of one such seminar notes that staff presented towards the end of the session, in order that they could first observe "their sons, the students" and would be in a position to offer necessary guidance.<sup>205</sup> By the early 1990s, the IUM also hosted authorised student societies devoted to such themes as Qur'an studies, hadith studies, creed, legal methodology, inheritance law, *da'wa*, history, oratory and Arabic calligraphy (al-'Abbud 2004, 689–709).

For long periods of the IUM's history, figures associated with the Muslim Brothers played particularly important roles in these extra-curricular spheres of university life. Besides al-Majdhub, another example is al-Sayyid Nazili, who was freed from jail in Egypt and relocated to Medina in the mid-1970s, where he was responsible for student activities at the IUM for nearly a decade.<sup>206</sup>

It is worth noting that in addition to this system of social supervision operated by university staff, students have also been subject to the surveillance regime of the modern state. Some former students interviewed for this project spoke of a feeling of being – as one put it – "surrounded" by the Saudi intelligence services during their

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<sup>204</sup> "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 140–41.

<sup>205</sup> "Akhbar al-Jami'a" 1970.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with al-Sayyid Nazili, Cairo, 9 November 2011. See also "al-Ustadh al-Sayyid Nazili" 2013. Al-Sayyid Nazili's role at the IUM is also touched upon in S. al-D. Hasan 2012, 90.

time in Medina.<sup>207</sup> IUM students who have been arrested in Saudi Arabia include Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, a United States citizen who was picked up by the Saudi authorities on the university campus in June 2003 over his alleged links to an al-Qa'ida cell in the city. He was subsequently sent back to the United States, where he was convicted on charges including providing material support to a foreign terrorist organisation, conspiring to destroy aircraft and conspiring to assassinate the US president.<sup>208</sup>

Observation and normative evaluation of students on the IUM campus was further achieved through the regular examinations upon which depended their progress through the system, which also served the purpose of instilling a sense of meritocratic competition. In keeping with this goal, exams were organised in such a way that students' performance could be surveilled, evaluated and put on display not only individually but also in comparison with that of their peers. From an early stage, the results of these examinations were calculated in quantitative terms and were then converted into a hierarchical grading system; ranging from "acceptable" for a score of between 50 and 70 per cent, to "excellent" for a score of between 91 and 100 per cent.<sup>209</sup> This mechanism for calculating evaluative judgement was in turn integrated into an economy of rewards and punishments. In extreme cases, students who failed to perform satisfactorily could be made to re-sit an academic year or could be expelled from the university.<sup>210</sup> On a more routine basis, the quantified outcomes for exams were given further import insofar as they were put on public display as a source of pride or shame. Annual reports published by the IUM sometimes included full lists of students studying in each of its colleges, along with their exam results, ordered according to their relative success.<sup>211</sup> Exam results also came to be routinely tied to financial rewards: by the early 1990s, students who earned top grades were eligible for an award of 1,000 riyals, which was paid out in addition to the routine financial support made available under the university's scholarship programme and which

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<sup>207</sup> Interview with IUM graduate E, London, 17 January 2011.

<sup>208</sup> "United States of America V. Ahmed Omar Abu Ali (No. 06-4334 and No. 06-4521)" 2008.

<sup>209</sup> "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 162.

<sup>210</sup> "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 161; "Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya," Article 13.

<sup>211</sup> "al-Taqrir al-Mujaz 'an al-'Amm al-Dirasi 1404/1405 H."; "al-Taqrir al-Mujaz 'an al-'Amm al-Jami'i 1418/1419 H.".

amounted to more than a whole month's stipend.<sup>212</sup> In at least some cases, outcomes of exams were given further import by means of being rendered visible in the distribution of bodies. A student who arrived in Medina in the early 1990s recalled that not only were he and his peers assigned to a hierarchical spectrum of classes according to their exam results from the previous year, but that the allocation of individual students to numbered desks within the classroom was also organised according to a corresponding system. The student with the strongest exam results would be assigned table one, at the front of the room, while the student with the weakest results would be made to sit at the highest-numbered table at the back, with the rows in between, as well as the ordering of students within rows, arranged on the same principle. The distribution of students' bodies thus had inscribed upon it a visible display of relative achievement.<sup>213</sup> In addition to the implicit sense of rivalry engendered by such practices, the university also organised regular competitions focused on such themes as oratory, and memorisation of the Qur'an, poetry and hadith (al-'Abbud 2004, 689–709).

None of the above is intended to suggest that pedagogical arrangements at the IUM by any means constituted a seamless disciplinary regime. It is certainly the case that there were innumerable interstices which allowed for students to escape this system of order and surveillance, such as it was. A student who was at the IUM in the 1980s and who recalled a sense of being constantly under observation, for example, also remembered that he used to evade a ban on televisions in student accommodation by going to the lobbies of hotels in Medina to watch FA Cup matches, and that he and others would form closed circles of trusted friends to discuss "injustices in Saudi Arabia" and other topics which were felt to be taboo on campus.<sup>214</sup>

Yet the incorporation of these basic techniques into university life reflected a significant shift in approaches to religious education which was the outcome of the openness to pedagogical innovation expressed by many of those behind the university

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<sup>212</sup> al-'Abbud 2004, 396. The monthly stipend for undergraduates at the time was 800 riyals.

<sup>213</sup> Interview with IUM graduate C, 14 July 2011. This has not always been the practice; other students asked about this arrangement recall having experienced no such thing.

<sup>214</sup> Telephone interview with US-based IUM graduate D, 30 November 2010.

in its formative years, and their willingness to reach beyond any narrowly-defined Islamic tradition in their quest to develop new ways of embodying and distributing the religious knowledge, skills and other forms of spiritual capital needed in order to drive the hoped-for religious revival. This was not a case of a pristine and self-contained Islamic pedagogical tradition being corrupted or reinvigorated by a distinct and equally self-contained Western pedagogical tradition. The “West” imagined by many of those at the IUM was of course a construct. Furthermore, the kind of disciplinary techniques of surveillance, normative evaluation and periodic correction which had originally been popularised in the field of education by Lancaster had far-reaching genealogies, such that it would be far too narrow to depict his method as simply a product of the England of his day. Historically, the use of disciplinary techniques of timetabling, observation and periodic correction in the training of moral subjects has a history going back at least to the Middle Ages, when they had featured in Christian monastic life (Foucault 1979, 149–50; Asad 1993, 125–67). Geographically, disciplinary methods of controlling and managing persons and their labour that would later become entrenched in industrial modes of production in Europe were arguably to be found earlier on the sugar cane plantations of the colonised Caribbean (Mintz 1986, 48–52). Indeed, Lancaster was himself engaged in an intense rivalry with the Reverend Dr Andrew Bell, who claimed credit for developing very similar methods of disciplinary schooling; in his case, whilst working as an Anglican missionary in Madras from the late eighteenth century (Sedra 2011, 19–20). Over time, Lancaster’s disciplinary approach to education had been put to work in the name of countless differing projects. Lancaster himself had sought to use his system to promote Christian values amongst the lower classes, and his methods had subsequently been taken up and spread to the Middle East and elsewhere by actors including utilitarian reformers, state functionaries and evangelicals, with its manifestation and impact in each case mediated by their respective goals and concerns (Mitchell 1991; Sedra 2011).

However, as David Hogan has suggested, the particular configuration of principles underlying Lancaster’s approach was arguably informed by the sociohistorical context in which he himself lived; in the context of the market revolution and the concomitant consolidation of bourgeois values. On the one hand, methods like the capturing of



bodies in time and space, and provision for pervasive monitoring, evaluation and correction, reflected a capillary extension of power which could be put to work in the name of training morally disciplined subjects. On the other hand, the integration of these techniques with methods like classification, examination, and gratification-punishment according to results represented the "*embourgeoisement*" of the classroom, tied to the rise of the market as an organising principle of society. By levelling the playing field within any given group of students, assigning them to the same tasks and subjecting them to the same standards of evaluation geared to produce comparable results which were in turn correlative with pride, shame, rewards and punishments, these techniques encouraged them to contend against each other in a purportedly meritocratic manner; thereby channelling their energies, generating a desire for relative advancement, and encouraging the internalisation of competitive industry (Hogan 1989).

Disciplinary aspects of education in modern Saudi institutions like the IUM may trace in part to the emergence in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Hijaz of techniques like the division of instruction into seamless consecutive stages, the development of detailed syllabuses, the use of examinations producing quantified results, and so on. As was explored in Chapter 1 of this thesis, such methods appeared first in Ottoman state schools and in private schools shaped in part by influences from the Indian Subcontinent, before taking root in locations like the Masjid Haram. They subsequently became central features of instruction in the new Saudi state-run institutions which first took shape in the Hijaz, as explored in Chapter 2. Their role at this stage was no doubt consolidated by the input of teaching staff from Egypt and other locations in which such techniques had long been widely used. The genealogies of certain disciplinary aspects of instruction at the IUM also trace quite directly to US universities, which had a major impact on the higher education system in Saudi Arabia. Connections between the two systems built up through routes including the early involvement of employees of the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) in the development of the Saudi education system, the dispatch of employees of the Saudi education ministry to the US for training, and proactive efforts by US officials to extend

such influence as a matter of political expediency.<sup>215</sup> As noted in Chapter 3, the IUM was from the early 1980s headed by ‘Abd Allah al-‘Ubayd, an alumnus of Oklahoma State University. In the IUM context, such influences played out through developments like the introduction of the US-style Grade Point Average system as a way of quantifying, ranking and publicly displaying students’ academic performance.<sup>216</sup>

While Lancaster’s own project was strongly shaped by the market revolution and bourgeois values of the time and place in which he lived, at the IUM the basic principles of disciplinary instruction were to be adapted and put into the service of a missionary project within the terms of which the expansion of capitalism as an organising framework for society was itself understood as an element of the broader imperial and neo-imperial campaign glossed as the *ghazw fikrī*. The moral disciplining achieved through continual observation, evaluation and correction was in this context to be geared towards the forging of pious Islamic selves, as part of a collective project of religious revival; and the industry generated through meritocratic competition was to be channelled into the acquisition and missionary dissemination of particular bodies of Islamic knowledge. This would involve not only tailoring the content of instruction but also seeking to link the classroom psychology of desire, competition and ambition to ends other than the pursuit of material profit which defines capitalist market culture.

The dynamic of appropriation at work here is illustrated by the IUM teacher Mamduh Fakhri, in an instance in which he touches upon the sense of time-consciousness that became a notable feature of the pedagogical technologies in place at the university; the “chasing of time” in the pursuit of the completion of curricula and the passing of examinations, as identified by Salim at the start of this chapter. Fakhri reminded his readers of six basic duties that are incumbent upon the Muslim university student. These included continual repentance (*al-tawba*), remembrance of God, attachment to Islamic heritage old and new, performing all action on the basis of intention dedicated to God, and a firm grounding in the real world and the problems of the age. A sixth

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<sup>215</sup> Marks 1980, 126–47; “Notes on Educational and Cultural Exchange Between the United States and Countries in the Middle East” 1977.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. ranked display of student grades measured according to the GPA system in “al-Taqrir al-Mujaz ‘an al-‘Amm al-Jami’i 1418/1419 H.,” 91–124.

duty, he suggested, is “utilisation of time in all its fragments, in righteous and beneficial deeds”. However, he was quick to emphasise that this sense of time-consciousness was to be detached from any sense of bourgeois productivity in the pursuit of material profit:

He who said that “time is money” [*al-waqt min al-dhahab*] greatly diminished [the value of] time. This is the logic of the worshippers of gold and material possessions. As for the logic of the worshippers of God, time in their eyes is more exalted and more important than that. It is that by which he reaches the proximity of God, the sight of His noble face, and life in paradise (Fakhri 1968)<sup>217</sup>

Another example is found in a piece penned by one Mahmud Babelli, published in the IUM journal in 1970, in which he played on the notion of the ranked exam grades which were now such a central feature of the pedagogical technologies used to discipline students at the IUM and to instil in them a sense of competitive industry. Babelli urged students to strive not merely for a pass mark (*al-najāh*) but for excellence (*al-tafawwuq*) in the pursuit of knowledge, as a basis for excellence in other areas of life. He reminded his readers that it is only through a continual quest for self-betterment on the part of the individual – to be achieved through endeavour, determination, enterprise and perseverance – that there could be hope for collective advancement of the Islamic *umma* (Babelli 1970).

## Conclusion

For many of those involved in the university’s formative years, the IUM was in part valued because it was understood to offer a potential means of resistance to various brands of Cold War-era cultural imperialism which they saw as standing in the way of the formation of pious individuals, the constitution of pious societies and the establishment of truly sovereign polities. The discourse of the *ghazw fikrī* often lent itself to the construction of a stark binary between what were understood to be Islamic civilisation and values, on the one hand, and what were understood to be Western civilisation and values, on the other.

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<sup>217</sup> In the same spirit, current university guidance reminds students that they are expected to respect the scholarship granted to them by the university and to repay it with the diligence and exertion that it deserves. A concomitant duty is “the preservation of time, realisation of its importance, and occupying it with that which pleases Almighty God by way of pious deeds and beneficial knowledge” (“Dalil al-Talib al-Jami’i” 2013, 47).

However, those who shaped the project – both in practice and often also quite consciously and explicitly – were perfectly willing to draw on social technologies with genealogies which stretched far beyond the Islamic tradition. While the IUM by no means represented a seamless disciplinary machine, it did come to operate on the basis of broad pedagogical principles informed by disciplinary market culture. These processes of appropriation helped to give rise to an institution which was partly built around techniques of partitioning, timetabling, pervasive surveillance, systematic evaluation, gratification-punishment, and the implicit promotion of competition, which differed significantly from styles of instruction in the mosque *halaqāt* that had been the core sites of advanced religious instruction in the Peninsula just a few decades earlier. At the same time, those involved in shaping the IUM engaged critically with these technologies, seeking to adapt them to new ends; the embodying of religious knowledge, skills, pious dispositions and other forms of spiritual capital, and the production of self-motivated and activist Islamic missionary subjects.

Exploration of the social technologies of education which took shape at the IUM, and the discourse which surrounded these, serves to emphasise ways in which this intervention in transnational religious economies was shaped not only by the interests and resources of Saudi state elites but also by a broader set of logics of cultural othering and antagonism, on the one hand, and intertwining and appropriation, on the other.

## Chapter 6

### Unequal Reciprocity and the Construction of Correct Religious Knowledge at the Islamic University

From the time that the Islamic University of Medina opened its doors, one of the most important forms of spiritual capital distributed to and through its migrant students was religious knowledge, or *'ilm*, transmitted via processes of instruction referred to as *ta'lim*. As might be expected, the bodies of knowledge which made up the content of teaching at the IUM from the early 1960s onwards were in many ways strongly bound up with the Wahhabi modes of religiosity which dominated the Saudi national sphere. Yet they were also marked by significant departures from past modes of Wahhabi instruction and spiritual practice. In this chapter, I argue that the particular bodies of knowledge which came to sit at the core of the university's *da'wa* evolved within the terms of the Wahhabi and broader Salafi discursive traditions, in ways shaped in part by struggles for influence and authority between actors occupying positions of varying strength within transnational religious economies.

This chapter begins with an overview of the subjects taught at the IUM from the early 1960s onwards. I then consider ways in which knowledge transmitted to students served to mark the external boundaries of the university's *da'wa* through processes of othering. This knowledge went some way towards defining the project negatively, in contrast to those who were considered to fall beyond the pale of a correct understanding of Islam. I go on to explore two core areas of religious knowledge which helped to make up the positive content of the IUM's mission; creed and jurisprudence. In all of these aspects of teaching, it is possible to discern ways in which the boundaries and content of the IUM *da'wa* were influenced by interactions between the Wahhabi establishment figures behind the university, on the one hand, and staff and students who arrived there from all over the world, on the other. However, creed was a particularly crucial subject area for the Wahhabi scholars and it is clear that they used their position of strength within the IUM context to press a particular understanding of God and worship which had always been the bedrock of Wahhabi reformism. When it comes to the subject of jurisprudence, on the other hand, it is

easier to trace dynamics of unequal reciprocity at work between the IUM and its foreign staff and students; subtle, power-laden processes of give and take which saw these migrant actors influencing the content of the university's *da'wa* at the same time as they were influenced by it.

These dynamics of reciprocity were bound up with power relations in two ways. On the one hand, they were in the first place unequal insofar as they occurred within the context of institutional and social relations which placed foreign staff and especially students in subordinate positions relative to the key Wahhabi scholars and Saudi state actors involved in the project, in terms of access to capital and control over its distribution. On the other hand, these processes of reciprocity also had a role to play in forging power relations, in that they were part and parcel of the construction of the IUM's missionary enterprise as a hegemonic project. The bodies of knowledge – as well as skills, modes of comportment, embodied virtues, and other kinds of spiritual goods – distributed by the IUM were part of a heterogeneous, mutable Salafi tradition. Within the terms of this tradition, there was space for those behind the university to adjust the precise content of instruction in ways intended to help secure the consent of students and those to whom they would preach, in the sense of facilitating a process by which they would come to value the forms of spiritual capital in question. It was hoped that such moves would help to channel their energies into the missionary endeavour to distribute these resources to communities worldwide.

### **Delineating the Content of Teaching**

When the IUM first opened its doors, advanced instruction took place only in its single, generalist, undergraduate-level Higher Studies Department (*al-qism al-'ālī*). The subjects taught there were *tawhīd*, Islamic sects, *tafsīr*, hadith studies, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Arabic grammar, reading, composition and rhetoric (*al-inshā' wa-l-khiṭāba*), literature (*mukhtārāt adabiyya*), and the art of good linguistic style (*al-balāgha*). Students in this undergraduate-level department were presumably expected to already have a solid grounding in a number of other subjects which were taught in the secondary school-level department which also existed at that stage. These subjects included

memorisation of the Qur'an, calligraphy or handwriting (*al-khaṭṭ*), inheritance law, and Arab and Islamic history.<sup>218</sup>

The founding documents also provided for a special department to teach languages other than Arabic outside of the usual hours of study.<sup>219</sup> Advertisements for a teacher of English and French which appeared in the local press as early as November 1961 were presumably answered, since contemporary newspaper reports show that a department dedicated to teaching English as a foreign language did indeed open at the IUM, seemingly in early 1962.<sup>220</sup> Within a decade of the university's founding, English was being taught as an integrated part of the main study programmes in the intermediate school-level institute, the secondary school-level institute and in the College of Da'wa that had all come into being within the IUM by that time.<sup>221</sup> This is a noteworthy development in an institution controlled by Wahhabi scholars, given the extent of 'ulama' resistance to the teaching of European languages at the time of the emergence of the new Saudi state education system just a few decades earlier.<sup>222</sup> Previously, the study of European languages had been seen as a route by which corrupting influences might enter into society. Now, mastery of foreign languages came to be viewed as important precisely in order to exert influence in the other direction. In the months running up to the opening of the IUM, the local newspaper *al-Madina al-Munawwara* had published an article urging that the university's students should be trained in foreign languages in order to facilitate their *da'wa* and their disputations with Christian missionaries (Mana' 1961). In the university's founding documents, the teaching of European languages was justified with reference to "the need for conveyance of the Islamic *da'wa*".<sup>223</sup> It is worth noting that by the early 1970s English was being taught in the College of Da'wa, which was especially geared towards training missionaries, but not in the College of Shari'a.

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<sup>218</sup> "al-Nizam al-Asasi li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya," Article 14.

<sup>219</sup> "al-Nizam al-Asasi li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya," Article 11.

<sup>220</sup> Ibn Baz 1961; "Akhbar al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya bi-l-Madina" 1962.

<sup>221</sup> "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 74–77, 92–94, 116–18.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Chapter 2.

<sup>223</sup> "al-Nizam al-Asasi li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya," Article 11.

Over time, as the IUM took on more staff and expanded to include multiple colleges, it began to offer a greatly expanded range of subjects structured into increasingly specialised courses of study. By the early 1990s, this included separate programmes devoted to Qur’anic studies, hadith studies, creed, *da’wa*, the Prophetic biography and history, jurisprudence and Islamic judicature (*al-qaḍā’ al-shar’ī*), Islamic education, and Arabic language.<sup>224</sup> Each of these programmes included numerous specific areas of focus; the flagship programme of jurisprudence and Islamic judicature, for example, encompassing classes in *inter alia* jurisprudence, inheritance law, the history of Islamic legislation (*tārīkh al-tashrī*), *uṣūl al-fiqh*, judicature in Islam, Islamic politics (*al-siyāsa al-shar’iyya*), and the history of judicature.

These broad subject headings give a sense of the range of teaching that took shape at the IUM and how this changed over time. However, in order to better understand the nature of the university’s missionary endeavour, it is necessary to explore more specific aspects of the religious knowledge that circulated in class and on campus.

### **Knowledge of Others**

The university’s founding document framed its mission in generically Islamic terms, as a project undertaken by and for Muslims without further specification. Its graduates were to be “callers to the religion and followers of the truth, to give lectures and write in reply to the atheists, and to protect the territory of religion and solve problems that befall Muslims in their religious and worldly affairs”.<sup>225</sup>

In reality, however, it is clear that the IUM was set up to promote a very particular understanding of Islam, adhered to only by a portion of those worldwide who would consider themselves to be Muslims. In an account of the goals of the IUM attributed to its then president Ibn Baz in 1971, the university was described as promoting “a *correct, complete* understanding [of Islam], as it was understood by the Salaf al-Salih and the first Muslims” (italics added). Its graduates were to undertake not only to “explain the merits of Islam” but also to “purify it from that which has become linked to it by way of superstitions and errors, and that which has become attached to it by way of the lies

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<sup>224</sup> al-‘Abbud 2004, 461–83, 484–521, 522–35, 536–46, 547–59, 560–98, 599–617, 618–63.

<sup>225</sup> “Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-I-Jami’a al-Islamiyya,” Article 1.



and innovations which have been spread by its enemies and those who are ignorant of it". It was hoped that the university's efforts would serve to draw new converts to Islam. However, more importantly, these efforts were "a means of enlightening Muslims with regard to their religion".<sup>226</sup>

Similarly, writing in the IUM journal in the late 1970s, the then de facto head of the IUM 'Abd Allah al-Zayid noted that

The goal [of the IUM] is to strive to produce 'ulama' who follow in the footsteps of the Pious Ancestors [*al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ*] and who drink from the correct religious sciences, which are based on the creed of *tawḥīd* and which turn in its orbit; far from the falsity that has duped Muslims into mistaking untruth for truth. [The IUM] returns these graduates... to their countries in order for them to assist the Muslims, many of whom have been led by illegitimate innovations [*bida'*] in every *madhhab*, and have been carried away by superstitions [*khurāfāt*] in every school of thought, and many of whom have become like feathers blown in the wind (al-Zayid n.d.)

The boundaries of the correct understanding of Islam promoted by the university were demarcated in part through processes of othering, whereby students were informed and warned about those who were considered to fall beyond the pale of orthodoxy. To this end, the original syllabus from the early 1960s provided for students in the fourth year of the university-level department to receive three classes per week on the genesis, teachings and principles of "the sects which trace their genealogies to Islam". While little further information is available about the precise content of this course, the spirit of it is clear from the title of what appears to have been a two-volume text used as its basis: *The Godless Modern Doctrines and Their Principles, with an Explanation of Their Falsity with Reference to Proofs both Rational and Handed Down*. At least from the title and the context in which it featured on the syllabus, this appears to have been a work geared towards mobilising evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunna, and also evidence derived from thinking independently of these source texts, to prove the illegitimacy of certain minority sects whose adherents claim allegiance to Islam.

By the early 1990s, various classes taught at the IUM served to define correct spiritual belief and practice in opposition both to other religions and also in opposition to

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<sup>226</sup> "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 9–11.

Islamic sects which were understood as having strayed from orthodoxy. A course on religions taught to third-year undergraduates enrolled on the creed programme was intended to impart the awareness that anyone who subscribes to a faith other than Islam will be “amongst the losers in the afterlife”.<sup>227</sup> Students were to be taught about the extent of the distortion which Christians and Jews have inserted into the Torah and the Bible, and they were to learn the “truth” about Judaism and Christianity, past and present. The course was based in part on *Hidayat al-Hayara*, a refutation of Judaism and Christianity by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), the Damascene student of Ibn Taymiyya who is an important influence within the Wahhabi tradition.<sup>228</sup> Two other core texts on Judaism and Christianity were polemical works authored by well-known contemporary Egyptian authors, both trained at Cairo’s Dar al-‘Ulum. One of these is *Lectures on Christianity* by Muhammad Abu Zahra (b. 1898), which was originally written as an aid for students at a time when the author was teaching on this subject at al-Azhar. It contrasts Christian beliefs with understandings of the life and legacy of Jesus grounded in the Qur’an and the Islamic tradition.<sup>229</sup> The other is *Judaism* by Ahmad Shalabi, who was born in the early 1920s and had also studied at Cambridge University under such figures as Arthur John Arberry. This work depicts Moses as the first Zionist, portrays *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as a Jewish holy book, and in later editions details supposed Jewish conspiracies aimed at world domination.<sup>230</sup>

*Protocols of the Elders of Zion* also appeared on the IUM syllabus for the same course as further reference material. Other texts which were listed for further reference included works by the Syrian activist Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib (d. 1969), a close associate of Rashid Rida and co-founder of the Salafiyya Bookstore in Cairo in 1909, and the Egyptian Muhammad ‘Abd Allah Diraz (b. 1894), who was trained at al-Azhar

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<sup>227</sup> Details of this course are found in al-‘Abbud 2004, 529–31.

<sup>228</sup> On Ibn al-Qayyim, see Laoust 2002a; Abderrazzaq 2009.

<sup>229</sup> This discussion of Abu Zahra’s biography and his *Lectures on Christianity* draws on Brodeur 1989, 19–21, 28, 35–41, 91–105.

<sup>230</sup> This discussion of Shalabi’s biography and his book *Judaism* draws on Brodeur 1989, 25–26, 28, 46–56, 118–31.

and the Sorbonne.<sup>231</sup> Also listed for reference was the famous nineteenth-century refutation of Christianity *Demonstration of the Truth* by an author named here as Rahmat Allah al-Hindi (d. 1891). The latter was in fact the same Indian scholar, actually from a Shi'i background, who had eventually settled in the Hijaz and had founded the Madrasa Sawlatiyya discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis. This particular text had become very influential right from the time that it was first published, partly because of the author's engagement with what was then a quite new European tradition of Bible criticism.<sup>232</sup>

Many authors have drawn attention to the phenomenon of anti-Semitism and hostile attitudes to adherents of faiths other than Islam in Saudi educational institutions. Such discourse was indeed entrenched in IUM syllabuses and was also common in the university journal, and it played a role in marking the outer limits of the institution's *da'wa*. It is worth remarking that the literature drawn upon in this context derived not from a specifically Wahhabi corpus but from a broader tradition of anti-Christian and anti-Jewish polemic by non-Wahhabi Muslim authors, as well as the European anti-Semitism found in documents like *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It is also worth noting that at least some of the literature cited here, including *Demonstration of the Truth*, had originally been produced in response to polemic refutations of Islam by European Christian missionaries.<sup>233</sup> Through the inclusion of these texts on the IUM's syllabuses, profoundly hostile forms of othering which had long been deeply embedded in the Wahhabi tradition came to be fleshed out and related to broader discursive frameworks, both Islamic and otherwise.

In addition to being distinguished from faiths other than Islam, in the early 1990s the IUM's *da'wa* also continued to be defined in contrast to forms of religious belief and

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<sup>231</sup> On Muhammad 'Abd Allah Diraz and his work, including the book *al-Din* which was set on the IUM syllabus, see Brodeur 1989, 22–24, 42–45, 111–17. The book by Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib included on this part of the IUM syllabus is titled *The Attack on the Islamic World*.

<sup>232</sup> For a discussion of al-Hindi and his *Demonstration of the Truth*, see Schirmacher 1999, 271–73, which is the source of the information here. For confirmation that the author of this work was the same Rahmat Allah who founded the Madrasa Sawlatiyya, see al-Saqqa 1978, 29.

<sup>233</sup> For example, Rahmat Allah al-Hindi had written *Demonstration of the Truth* at the behest of the Ottoman sultan Abdülaziz I, in response to a refutation of Islam by the German Christian missionary Karl Pfander (Schirmacher 1999, 272).

practice which were in one way or another related to the Islamic tradition. It is possible to get a sense of the kind of discourse that circulated on such issues from the outline of a separate course on “sects”, taught to fourth-year students on the creed programme.<sup>234</sup> At first sight, the works set as core texts for this course seem somewhat surprising. One is *The Book of Sects and Systems of Thought*<sup>235</sup>, an epic and historically quite unique study of Islamic sects and other religions and philosophies by Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani (d. 1153). This scholar from Khurasan in what is now Iran described himself as adhering to Ash’ari creed, which is mainstream within Sunni Islam but is generally understood as standing in a position of antagonism with the Salafi creed which is at the core of the Wahhabi tradition.<sup>236</sup> Moreover, al-Shahrastani was even accused – both during his lifetime and later – of Isma’ili Shi’i leanings which would certainly not sit comfortably with Wahhabi understandings of orthodoxy (Monnot 2002; Esposito 2003a). The other core work on the same IUM course at that time was *Maqalat al-Islamiyin*, a survey of the varying views of Muslim thinkers on key issues of theology written by Abu al-Hasan al-Ash’ari (d. 935), who was in fact the originator of the Ash’ari tradition of creed (Watt 2002c; Leaman 2009). The inclusion of these works as core texts on IUM syllabuses must be understood in terms of their historical importance as part of the broader Islamic corpus. It is also possible that these texts may have been valued insofar as they helped to frame critique of what were considered to be heterodox factions in such a way that this critique would not be perceived by students as a mere expression of narrow Wahhabi or Salafi exclusivism. Finally, the use of a work by Abu al-Hasan al-Ash’ari in particular ought also to be understood in connection with broader efforts to undermine contemporary Ash’aris by emphasising arguments that the views of al-Ash’ari himself were in fact much more in line with Salafi understandings of orthodoxy;

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<sup>234</sup> al-‘Abbud 2004, 531–33.

<sup>235</sup> This English-language rendering of the original title *Kitab al-Milal wa-l-Nihal* is borrowed from Esposito 2003a.

<sup>236</sup> The various creedal traditions are discussed briefly in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

and that it was only his later followers who – at least partly because of the corrupting influence of Greek philosophy – led the Ash‘ari tradition into deviation.<sup>237</sup>

The description of the specific goals of this course make reference to familiar Salafi themes. Amongst its objectives were “that students know the Islamic sects and that all but one of them are in Hell”, and “that students know the saved sect, which is al-Jama‘a”. The latter term is presumably used here to refer to those believers understood as being faithful to the original beliefs and practices of the Prophet and his Companions; those who claim this status commonly referring to themselves in Arabic as “Ahl al-Sunna wa-l-Jama‘a”. Students on this course were also expected to come to understand “that the basis of division is *bid‘a* and that the basis of al-Jama‘a is the Sunna”.<sup>238</sup>

A series of works listed for further reference included more predictable candidates. Among them were a text by Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib condemning Twelver Shi‘ism.<sup>239</sup> Students were also directed to an anti-Sufi tract by ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Abd al-Khaliq, an Egyptian who had studied at the IUM and subsequently became a leading, Kuwait-based proponent of fusing Salafi religiosity with politically-engaged activism.<sup>240</sup> Also listed was *The Phenomenon of Postponement in Islamic Thought* by another IUM graduate, the Saudi Sahwi figurehead Safar al-Hawali. After completing his undergraduate studies at the IUM, al-Hawali had written this text as his PhD thesis under the supervision of Muhammad Qutb, the brother of Sayyid Qutb, at Umm al-Qura University in Mecca. It dealt with the Murji‘a movement in the early centuries of Islam, which over time came to be criticised for “emphasising ‘faith’ over ‘works’” (Zaman 2002, 156). Building on his earlier work critiquing secularism, al-Hawali used the Murji‘a as a point of reference to censure those today who think it possible to

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<sup>237</sup> On the evolution of the Ash‘ari tradition in ways which strayed from the positions of its eponymous founder, see Watt 2002b.

<sup>238</sup> The term Sunna refers to “established custom, normative precedent, conduct, and cumulative tradition, typically based on Muhammad’s example” (Esposito 2003b).

<sup>239</sup> The text in question is *al-Khutut al-‘Arida li-l-Usus allati Qama ‘alayha Din al-Shi‘a al-Imamiyya al-Ithna ‘Ashariyya*.

<sup>240</sup> The text in question is *al-Fikr al-Sufi fi Daw’ al-Kitab wa-l-Sunna*.

remain faithful to Islam in belief whilst eschewing fulfilment of their religious duties in practice (Zaman 2002, 156–57; Alshamsi 2007, 69–71).

Articles published in the university journal confirm a propensity on the part of those involved to engage in strident refutations of sects considered unorthodox. It is worth noting that the ways in which these processes of othering played out at the IUM were very much bound up with the particular sociohistorical context in which the university existed, as well as its status as a site for the gathering together of scholars and students from a whole array of geographical and cultural backgrounds. Some who came under attack in the university journal, like the Shi'a, had long been targets of criticism within the Wahhabi tradition.<sup>241</sup> However, other attacks focused on groups – such as the Ahmadis and the Baha'is – which had originated and remained concentrated in locations far beyond the Peninsula, and which had not even existed at the time when Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab first embarked on his revivalist mission.<sup>242</sup> The role of long-distance connections in shaping the particular processes of othering that occurred at the IUM is neatly illustrated by an article published in the university journal in the mid-1970s refuting the Ahmadi movement, which had emerged in the late nineteenth-century Punjab on the basis of claims to prophecy made by its leader Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.<sup>243</sup> The article in question was framed as having been written in response to a letter sent by Thai Muslims to a Thai student at the IUM, concerning efforts by Ahmadis to proselytise in that country ('Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan n.d.). It was written by the hadith specialist 'Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan who, as a South Asian scholar associated with the Ahl-i Hadith Salafi movement in Pakistan, would have been particularly well-placed to engage with the claims of the Ahmadis. Before arriving at the IUM, 'Abd al-Ghaffar Hasan had in fact been jailed in Pakistan for 11 months in 1953 in connection with anti-Ahmadi sectarianism by Mawdudi's Jamaat-i Islami movement, with which he had also for a time been affiliated (U. Hasan 2009).

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<sup>241</sup> Examples of articles on the Shi'a in the IUM journal include al-Muhaysin n.d.; al-Ghamari 1971.

<sup>242</sup> For an example of an article in the IUM journal portraying Baha'ism as the product of Russian espionage, Masonic conspiracy and international Zionism, see Shaybat al-Hamd n.d.

<sup>243</sup> Ghulam Ahmad "claimed to be a 'nonlegislating' prophet (thus not in opposition to the mainstream belief in the finality of Muhammad's 'legislative' prophecy) with a divine mandate for the revival and renewal of Islam" (Esposito 2003c).

The extent to which these processes of identity formation were bound up with the particular sociohistorical context within which the university emerged and evolved is further illustrated by a section in the IUM journal catalogue on “contemporary schools of thought” (*al-madhāhib al-mu‘āṣira*). Articles grouped together under this heading deal with a whole range of topics including not only religiously-defined groups like the Ahmadis but also Orientalists, the Masons, communism and socialism, secularism and Zionism. Thus heterodox religious groups are treated alongside contemporary social and political movements as illegitimate – and often threatening – “others”. Such discourse may well have been introduced into the IUM context by foreign staff members associated with the Muslim Brothers, and those influenced by them. Stéphane Lacroix observes that a course on “contemporary schools of thought” was first introduced onto the creed curriculum at Umm al-Qura University in Mecca thanks to the efforts of the Syrian Muslim Brother Muhammad Amin al-Masri, and that it was taught at different times by the Egyptian Muhammad Qutb and the Saudi Sahwi figurehead Safar al-Hawali (Lacroix 2011, 48). In that light, it is notable that al-Masri served on the IUM’s Advisory Council from 1974 and that a similar course on IUM syllabuses included texts by both Qutb and al-Hawali as further reading.<sup>244</sup>

In the ways outlined here, knowledge transmitted to students through course content and the university journal went some way towards defining the IUM’s mission and constructing a sense of identity in opposition to non-Muslims, perceived heterodox sects, and various contemporary social and political trends which were presented as being incompatible with a correct understanding of Islam. In many ways, these processes of othering were not particularly distinctive to the IUM. Groups like the Shi‘a, and especially the Ahmadis and the Baha’is, might equally come in for strident criticism in many Sunni contexts. However, the special attention given to the issue of recognising and condemning heterodox sects – and particularly the inclusion of anti-Sufi material on the syllabus – points in the direction of the university’s Wahhabi-influenced mission. In order to understand this mission more fully, it is necessary to explore not only its external boundaries but also its positive content. In what follows, I

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<sup>244</sup> The course in question was that focusing on the *ghazw fikrī*, as discussed in Chapter 5. Cf. al-‘Abbud 2004, 1:542–45.

do so with reference to two areas of religious knowledge that were considered particularly important in this context, creed and the jurisprudence.

### **Knowledge of God**

In many ways, the setting of boundaries as described in the preceding section related directly to the issue of creed (*al-'aqīda*), a field of inquiry which – within the Islamic tradition, broadly conceived – encompasses debates over such issues as the attributes of God, the uncreated nature of the Qur'an, the Last Day and the afterlife, the infallibility of the prophets, the question of whether or not there exist standards of good and evil independent of God's will, and the conceptual tensions between free will, determinism and moral responsibility (Watt 2002a). As was mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, one particularly significant aspect of creed in Wahhabi or more broadly Salafi contexts like the IUM is a distinctive understanding of the fundamental concept of *tawhīd*, or the unicity of God. The understanding of *tawhīd* in question pre-dated Wahhabism but became the cornerstone of the Wahhabi mission from the time of its emergence in the eighteenth century.

The Salafi conception of *tawhīd* to which Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab subscribed encompasses three distinct aspects to God's unicity: *tawhīd* of lordship (*tawhīd al-rubūbiyya*), *tawhīd* of divinity (*tawhīd al-ulūhiyya*), and *tawhīd* of names and attributes (*tawhīd al-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt*).<sup>245</sup> In the context of a broader discussion of Salafi creed, Bernard Haykel explains these three terms as follows: *tawhīd al-rubūbiyya* implies "that God has certain powers as the Lord of Creation and to attribute any of these to other than Him constitutes unbelief"; *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya* "implies that all forms of worship must be directed exclusively towards God and no one else, and to worship other than God constitutes unbelief"; and *tawhīd al-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt* entails "believing in the depiction of God as it is presented in the texts of revelation without inquiring about modality or metaphorical interpretation" (2009, 39, fn. 14). As Haykel notes, the particularly significant distinction is that between *tawhīd al-rubūbiyya* and *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya*, terms which he suggests appear to have been in use since the time of Ibn

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<sup>245</sup> On Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's understanding of the concept of *tawhīd*, see DeLong-Bas 2004, 56–61. The translations of the particular Arabic terms used for the three types of *tawhīd* here are borrowed from DeLong-Bas and Haykel 2009, 39.



Taymiyya (d. 1328), a scholar who was a key inspiration for Wahhabi revivalism. The Wahhabis' commitment to distinguishing between these two forms of *tawḥīd* helped to lay the ground for their fierce opposition to many popular religious practices. This is because a person who asserts their commitment to *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* by standing by the declaration that "There is no God but God" can still be understood as violating the principle of monotheism – specifically, *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* – if they engage in practices seen as in effect constituting worship of entities other than God. Even if they fulfil other key Islamic duties such as performing the five daily prayers, undertaking the pilgrimage and paying zakat taxes, they may nonetheless thereby be understood as straying into *shirk*, or polytheism. Insofar as practices perceived as violating *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* might be understood to amount to *shirk*, this could result in condemnation not only of the act but also of the actor in question – as a *mushrik*, or polytheist, and therefore outside the fold of Islam.

Common practices that came to be forcefully condemned in light of the Wahhabi understanding of *tawḥīd* included certain kinds of visitation of shrines and tombs, where this was seen as amounting to worship of the deceased; seeking the intercession of saints; use of charms and amulets; and sorcery and fortune-telling (DeLong-Bas 2004, 61–77; Haj 2009, 30–66).<sup>246</sup> The anti-Sufism that became a hallmark of Wahhabism – and which distinguished it from many other forms of eighteenth century revivalism – was also bound up with the view that many common Sufi beliefs and practices similarly violated the principle of *tawḥīd*, correctly understood. Related concerns underlay the Wahhabis' condemnation of the Shi'a, while some scholars within the tradition were even prepared to write off whole populations of self-professed Sunni Muslims – such as the Ottoman forces which invaded Najd in the nineteenth century and those local residents who allied with them – as polytheists (Al-Fahad 2004; Wagemakers 2012b, 95).

As was discussed in Chapter 2, from the eighteenth century theology was taught in Wahhabi circles in Najd with special reference to core works by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab;

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<sup>246</sup> It is worth noting that the DeLong-Bas text cited here has been criticised as an apologetic for Wahhabism, written "under the patronage of Saudi princes and research centres" (Al-Rasheed 2007, 10). It is cited in the present thesis advisedly and sparingly.

these included his key treatise *Kitab al-Tawhid* and a polemical tract which he had written to counter his opponents titled *Kitab Kashf al-Shubahat* (Commins 2005, 123–24).

When the IUM opened its doors some two centuries later, correcting creed and combating perceived polytheism remained of paramount concern for the Wahhabi establishment. It was thus to be anticipated that Wahhabi scholars like Muhammad ibn Ibrahim and ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz would use their positions of strength within the university – deriving from their close relationship with the state actors who disbursed the material capital that made the project possible and their own bureaucratically mapped influence over the processes by which capital was distributed – to ensure that the teaching of this subject dealt with these core concerns.

At the time when the IUM began operation, it did so on the basis of founding statutes which included a pre-approved syllabus listing the specific works that were to be used for teaching and offering some further details about what were to be the goals and methods of instruction. According to this document, students were to be taught about “the three parts of *tawhīd*, and they are *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya* and *al-rubūbiyya*, and *tawhīd al-asmā’ wa-l-ṣifāt*”.<sup>247</sup> It is thus clear that the university was indeed explicitly committed from the start to the tripartite Salafi conception of *tawhīd* that is so central to Wahhabi theology.

In line with this approach, the study of *tawhīd* in the IUM’s secondary school-level institute at that time was to involve memorisation of text from Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s key manifesto *Kitab al-Tawhid*. Students were also expected to engage with *Fath al-Majid*, a famous commentary on *Kitab al-Tawhid* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s grandson ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Hasan which had earlier been taught in the Scholastic Institute in 1920s Mecca. In the third year, students were to study *al-‘Aqida al-Wasitiyya* by Ibn Taymiyya, a scholar who was a key influence on Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab. In fact, *al-‘Aqida al-Wasitiyya* was itself such an important work in this context that it has been suggested that at least one text on the subject of creed penned by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab – a letter to the populace of al-Qasim – was basically a paraphrased version of

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<sup>247</sup> “Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-I-Jami’a al-Islamiyya,” Article 15.

it (Al-Fahad 2004, fn. 12). It is thus abundantly clear that the knowledge of fundamental aspects of correct creed transmitted to students at this basic level of study at the time when the IUM first opened was situated very firmly indeed within the Wahhabi tradition.

The content specified for lessons on *tawhīd* that were to be delivered to students at the undergraduate level at this early stage in the university's history is at first sight somewhat less obviously "Wahhabi" in character. The equivalent course at this level was to last three years and this entire period was to be devoted to the study of a commentary on *al-'Aqida al-Tahawiyya*, an important statement of creed by Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi (d. 933).<sup>248</sup> The commentary in question was authored by Ibn Abi al-'Izz, a fourteenth-century qadi who lived in Damascus and Egypt.<sup>249</sup> It merits some brief discussion, since it remained an important reference for the teaching of creed at the IUM for decades. What is initially slightly surprising in relation to the inclusion of this text in an IUM course concerned with creed is that al-Tahawi and apparently also Ibn Abi al-'Izz came from Hanafi backgrounds. Those who adhere to the Hanafi *madhhab* in jurisprudence are commonly committed to Maturidi or Ash'ari creed, rather than the Salafi creed which is such an important component of the Wahhabi tradition and which is far more closely associated with the Hanbali *madhhab*.<sup>250</sup> However, on closer inspection the genealogy of Ibn Abi al-'Izz and his commentary on *al-'Aqida al-Tahawiyya* actually turn out to be quite closely interwoven with that of the Wahhabi tradition. An edition of the same commentary had been published in Mecca as far back as 1930, under the supervision of a committee headed by 'Abd Allah ibn Hasan Al al-Shaykh, the Wahhabi scholar who was at that time the Saudi-appointed Grand Qadi of

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<sup>248</sup> On Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi, see Calder 2002.

<sup>249</sup> The syllabus names the text to be taught as *Sharh al-Tahawiyya*, without specifying the author. However, individuals who studied at the IUM in this early period confirm that the text in question was the commentary authored by Ibn Abi al-'Izz. E.g. interview with IUM graduate Suhaib Hasan, London, 14 January 2013. Details of the author's biography, along with an overview of the work itself and its location within the broader canon, are given in the front matter in 'Ali ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi al-'Izz n.d.; 'Ali ibn 'Ali Ibn Abi al-'Izz 2000.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Al-Fahad 2004, 489n10. Al-Fahad notes that the Hanbali *madhhab* is distinguished from the other mainstream Sunni *madhāhib* in that it is tightly bound up with positions on matters of both creed and jurisprudence, rather than just the latter.

the Hijaz (‘Abd Allah ibn Hasan ibn Husayn Al al-Shaykh 1930).<sup>251</sup> While the editors of that edition were somewhat circumspect about the precise identity of the author, they noted that the text itself makes it clear that he was a student of the Syrian Shafi’i scholar ‘Imad al-Din Isma’il Ibn Kathir (d. 1373).<sup>252</sup> The latter was in turn a student of the influential Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyya, who was such a key reference for Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab and his successors (Laoust 2002b). Ibn Kathir’s own work, particularly his *tafsīr*, was also given considerable weight in Wahhabi circles (Commins 2005, 48–49, 124; Williams 2009).

One early graduate of the IUM suggested that this particular work by Ibn Abi al-‘Izz may have been included on syllabuses – in place of creed texts more commonly associated with the Wahhabi tradition, by Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab himself and others like Ibn Taymiyya – partly because it would have been more readily accepted by the wide range of people travelling to the university from far beyond the Peninsula.<sup>253</sup> This text has the virtue of communicating a Salafi approach to creed amenable to the Wahhabis, whilst establishing a link with broader Islamic scholarship beyond the confines of the Wahhabi traditions of Najd. Ibn Abi al-‘Izz approvingly cites work by the founder of the Hanafi *madhhab*, Abu Hanifa, whilst distancing himself from the creedal views developed by many of Abu Hanifa’s later followers in the Hanafi tradition<sup>254</sup>; the implication being that Ibn Abi al-‘Izz’s own Salafi positions on matters of creed are more authentically orthodox – and more in keeping with the views of Abu Hanifa – than those of many contemporary Hanafis. There is a clear parallel here with the ways

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<sup>251</sup> It was published by the Salafi Press, a printing house founded in Mecca in 1928 by the Syrian ‘Abd al-Fattah Qatlan and the Hijazi Muhammad Salih Nasif, apparently emulating the Salafiyya Press established earlier in Cairo by Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib with Qatlan’s involvement (Lauzière 2008, 162–63). I am grateful to Saud al-Sarhan for drawing my attention to this connection.

<sup>252</sup> It is worth noting that the editors of the 1930 edition suggest that the most likely candidate to have authored the text is Sadr al-Din ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-‘Izz al-Adhra’i al-Dimashqi al-Hanafi (d. 746 H.) (cf. ‘Abd Allah Al al-Shaykh 1930). Ahmad Muhammad Shakir, editing a later edition, identifies the author as Sadr al-Din ‘Ali ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abi al-‘Izz al-Hanafi (731-792 H.) (cf. ‘Ali ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Ibn Abi al-‘Izz n.d.). It is clear that there are some discrepancies here, particularly in the dates given.

<sup>253</sup> Interview with Suhaib Hasan, London, 14 January 2013.

<sup>254</sup> This point is made in the translator’s preface in ‘Ali ibn ‘Ali Ibn Abi al-‘Izz 2000, xx.

in which the works of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari are "reclaimed" from contemporary Ash'aris, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

While such considerations are worth taking into account, it should be noted that another more recent graduate suggested that Ibn Abi al-'Izz's commentary on *al-'Aqida al-Tahawiyya* is a common enough reference in Salafi scholarship that he saw no need to think that its inclusion on the IUM's syllabuses had anything specifically to do with the university's efforts to reach out to non-Wahhabi Muslims.<sup>255</sup> At the time of writing, I am unable to offer any more conclusive view about the context of the inclusion of this particular commentary as the key work for teaching *tawhīd* at the IUM. However, it is worth noting that I have been unable to locate any reference to this work in *al-Durar al-Saniyya fi al-Ajwiba al-Najdiyya*, the several-thousand-page compendium of Wahhabi scholarship going back to the eighteenth century, suggesting that it may not historically have been an important point of reference in the Wahhabi tradition.<sup>256</sup> On the other hand, it is also significant that another edition of the same text appears to have been produced prior to the founding of the IUM specifically for use in the system of Saudi Scholastic Institutes, which were not primarily concerned with training non-Saudis, suggesting that it was not only introduced at the IUM in order to appeal to foreign students.<sup>257</sup>

Syllabuses in use for *tawhīd* courses at the IUM in the early 1990s show many continuities with this earlier set-up. In the intermediate school-level institute linked to the university, the subject was again to be taught with reference to Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's own *Kitab al-Tawhid*, as well as an introduction to *Risalat Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani*.<sup>258</sup> The original author of this text, Abu Muhammad 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani (d. 996) was a north African Maliki scholar who wrote in opposition to perceived excesses of mysticism and claims of miracle-working, concerns which were

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<sup>255</sup> Interview with IUM graduate A, London, 24 January 2013.

<sup>256</sup> I am grateful to David Commins for correspondence on this issue.

<sup>257</sup> I am grateful to Saud al-Sarhan for sending me an image of the front cover of this edition. The title is *Sharh al-'Aqida al-Tahawiyya* and it appears to have been published in Damascus, although the name of the publisher is unclear.

<sup>258</sup> The intermediate institute *tawhīd* syllabus is reproduced in al-'Abbud 2004, 1:427–8.

of course later of paramount importance in the Wahhabi tradition (Idris 2002).<sup>259</sup> Students enrolled in the secondary school-level institute were again to study the whole of 'Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh's *Fath al-Majid* and the whole of what seems to be a commentary on Ibn Taymiyya's *al-'Aqida al-Wasitiyya* written by Muhammad Khalil Harras, a contemporary Egyptian Azhari with links to the Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyya Salafi movement.<sup>260</sup>

At the undergraduate level, a list of objectives set for the teaching of *tawhīd* included that students should acquire a detailed knowledge of the distinction between *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya* and *tawhīd al-rubūbiyya*, as well as being informed about *tawhīd al-asmā' wa-l-ṣifāt*. Furthermore, they were expected to know "the sound Salafi method for the determination of creed", as well as the methods employed by those who transgress from this creed and how to go about critiquing them (al-'Abbud 2004, 1:524–5). The main texts taught on *tawhīd* at this level were a series of works by Ibn Taymiyya; *Shifa' al-'Alil* by Ibn al-Qayyim; the same commentary by Ibn Abi al-'Izz on *al-'Aqida al-Tahawiyya*; and *Taysir al-'Aziz al-Hamid*, another commentary on Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's *Kitab al-Tawhid* by his grandson Suliman ibn 'Abd Allah.<sup>261</sup>

These main texts at the undergraduate level were backed up by a long list of additional texts to be used for further reference. These included many works by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and the earlier scholars who had always been key touchstones in the Hanbali tradition, including Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Kathir and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the originator of the Hanbali *madhhab*. They also included works by recent and

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<sup>259</sup> The syllabus is unclear but appears to suggest that the introduction in question was itself actually penned by one Ahmad ibn Mushrif al-Maliki al-Ahsa'i, whose name intriguingly implies origins in the Maliki community in the al-Ahsa region of what is now Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. I am grateful to Stéphane Lacroix for drawing my attention to this possible significance.

<sup>260</sup> The secondary institute *tawhīd* syllabus is reproduced in al-'Abbud 2004, 442. Confusingly, the syllabus as reproduced here lists "*al-'Aqida al-Wasitiyya* by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya" amongst the texts to be studied but includes a footnote attributing authorship of this text to Muhammad Khalil Harras. Since the latter's published works include a commentary on *al-'Aqida al-Wasitiyya* (cf. Tahir 2006, 201), it seems safe to assume that this is the text in question.

<sup>261</sup> The key texts taught on *tawhīd* at the undergraduate level are listed in al-'Abbud 2004, 1:525. On Suliman ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab and his *Taysir al-'Aziz al-Hamid*, see 'Abd al-Rahman Al al-Shaykh 1974/5, 44–47.

contemporary Saudi scholars like Hafiz al-Hikmi, the strongly exclusivist Hammud al-Tuwayjri, and the IUM's own 'Abd Allah al-Ghunayman.<sup>262</sup> In addition, there are some further signs of at least a limited opening up beyond the Wahhabi corpus. For example, the list includes works by Rashid Rida and the South Asian forebear of the Ahl-i Hadith Muhammad Siddiq Hasan.<sup>263</sup>

It is clear, then, that the teaching of *tawhīd* at the IUM – both at the time when the university opened its doors and also according to the syllabuses in use in the early 1990s – was strongly influenced by the Wahhabi tradition. It was grounded in the tripartite understanding of this concept which had since the eighteenth century been the foundation of the Wahhabis' opposition to a whole host of popular religious practices and perceived heterodox sects, including but not limited to those discussed in the preceding section of this chapter. It is true that works by quite recent figures from outside the Wahhabi tradition like Rashid Rida and Muhammad Siddiq Hasan were in use as secondary references. These seem likely to have arrived via earlier transnational connections or through the influence of the non-Saudi scholars who became involved in the IUM project, as discussed in Chapter 4. However, most of the works set as core readings on the subject of *tawhīd* were either by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab himself, his Najdi successors, or the circle of scholars influenced by Ibn Taymiyya in fourteenth-century Damascus who were the central inspiration for Wahhabi reformism. Where the syllabuses gave important places to texts by scholars like Ibn Abi al-'Izz and al-Qayrawani who might not be immediately associated with the Wahhabi corpus, such figures turn out to have had spiritual genealogies and commitments which overlap in significant ways with those of the Wahhabis. Overall, it seems quite clear that the Saudi scholars who dominated the university right from the start used their position of strength to ensure that teaching of this subject remained firmly in line with their key concerns. At least in terms of the fundamentals that have been the focus of the discussion here, the conception of *tawhīd* that they sought to

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<sup>262</sup> For a biography of Hafiz al-Hikmi, see al-Zirikli 1980, 2:159. On al-Tuwayjri, see Lacroix 2011, 103–09.

<sup>263</sup> The names given in this paragraph are examples only. The list includes many other authors, including a substantial number who I have not been able to identify at the time of writing.

promote would also have been congenial to many of the foreign Salafis who became part of the project.

This situation with regard to the teaching of *tawhīd* contrasts with other areas of instruction at the IUM, where there is clearer evidence of shifts driven by dynamics of power-laden give-and-take between the university's Wahhabi backers, on the one hand, and staff and students recruited from around the world, on the other. This dynamic is reflected particularly neatly in the teaching of jurisprudence, or *fiqh*, which is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

### **Knowledge of God's Law**

Whereas the concept of shari'a denotes "God's will expressed as an ideal reflecting perfect justice and equality", *fiqh* is "a human attempt to know the shari'a". *Fiqh* encompasses substantive legal rulings on both "ritual law or acts of devotion (*'ibādāt*)"; including "issues associated with ritual purity, performance of prayer, charity and almsgiving, fasting during the month of Ramadan and at other times, and performance of the pilgrimage (*hajj*)". It also encompasses substantive legal rulings on "commercial transactions and other matters (*mu'āmalāt*)"; which may include "personal status law (*munākaḥāt*), penal law (*jināyāt* or *'uqūbāt*), public law and political theory (*siyar* or *aḥkām al-sulṭāniyah*), and judicial procedure and evidence (*qaḍā'* or *mukhāṣamāt*)" (Rabb 2009). *Fiqh* is in turn distinguished from *uṣūl al-fiqh*, "the body of principles and the investigative methodology through which practical legal rules are derived from their particular sources" (Ziadeh 2009).

There has long been a tension within the Wahhabi tradition in matters of jurisprudence. On the one hand, Wahhabi scholars have tended to be critical of *taqlīd*, the practice of simply imitating the substantive legal rulings laid down by any one of the four – Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi'i – mainstream Sunni *madhāhib*. Instead, there has been an emphasis on the derivation of legal rulings through *ijtihād*, or independent interpretation on the basis of direct access to the source texts. On the other hand, Wahhabi scholarship has in practice been associated very closely indeed with the Hanbali *madhhab* which had already prevailed in Najd prior to Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's lifetime. Wahhabi positions on these issues merit some discussion here,



since they are important for understanding the significance of the ways in which *fiqh* came to be taught at the IUM.

One way of making sense of this tension is in terms of the assertion by ‘Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, a son of the eponymous figurehead of the tradition, that the Wahhabis followed the Hanbali *madhhab* in legal methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), rather than necessarily emulating the actual substantive legal rulings issued by earlier Hanbali scholars. According to an important statement of Hanbali *uṣūl al-fiqh* by Ibn al-Qayyim, this particular methodology for deriving legal rulings gives priority to the Qur’an and the Sunna as bases of law. Where clear rulings do not present themselves in these sources, the views of the Companions of the Prophet are considered next, taking the position closest to the Qur’an and the Sunna in cases where the Companions differed on a given issue. Where these routes are not available, Hanbali legal methodology then provides for use of “certain weak or technically deficient hadiths”. Only when all of these options have been exhausted does it make space for the use of *qiyās* (analogy) (Vogel 2000, 73). At least in principle, the approach described by ‘Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab would have provided for the possibility of departures from established legal rulings by earlier Hanbali scholars where the application of this Hanbali methodology was in fact found to give rise to alternative positions; for example, where it was judged that an existing ruling by earlier Hanbali scholars was actually at odds with a clear text in the Qur’an or the Sunna.

However, Frank Vogel has suggested that such departures from Hanbali substantive law in early Wahhabi scholarship were in practice few and far between. This may have been partly because early Wahhabi authorities introduced further, even more restrictive conditions on the practice of *ijtihād*. These included suggesting that *ijtihād* is only legitimate in cases where there is found to be divergence on a given issue amongst scholars *within* the Hanbali *madhhab*, or that the final ruling on any given matter may not be unprecedented but must rather be selected from amongst the rulings already established according to the other mainstream Sunni *madhāhib*. In practice, Vogel suggests, early Wahhabi authorities “preached *ijtihād* more consistently than they practiced it”; “deviations from the late Hanbali school are

reportedly rare, and most of these turn out to be opinions advocated by Ibn Taymiyya” (Vogel 2000, 74–76).

This situation is illustrated by the legal theory of the early Wahhabi qadi Hamd ibn Nasir ibn Mu‘ammar (d. 1810), a student of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab. In the absence of dedicated works of legal theory by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab himself, for whom *fiqh* always took second place to the priority issue of correcting *tawhīd*, the work of Ibn Mu‘ammar has been treated by historians as a particularly important representation of early Wahhabi legal practice. Ibn Mu‘ammar argued against the practice of blind *taqlīd*, where it is assumed that the one being emulated is infallible even in the face of contradictory evidence. He argued that those who are sufficiently qualified should perform a limited kind of independent reasoning which he referred to as “*ijtihād* mixed with *taqlīd*” (*ijtihād mashūb bi-l-taqlīd*). For Ibn Mu‘ammar, this only came into play when the rulings of the various *madhāhib* differed on a given issue. In that case, the scholar should compare the evidence and arguments behind the existing rulings associated with the different *madhāhib* in order to identify and select the strongest. Even this limited form of *ijtihād* was only to be performed by a select few. Laymen and even scholars and judges without the requisite skills and knowledge were permitted to perform *taqlīd* of one *madhhab*. Furthermore, Ibn Mu‘ammar, like other Wahhabi scholars, was himself strongly inclined towards the Hanbali *madhhab* (Peters 1980; Steinberg 2004, 92–93). Steinberg has suggested that Ibn Mu‘ammar’s conservative approach was a practical adaptation to the situation in Najd at the time, where the performance of even this limited kind of *ijtihād* was made difficult by factors including simply a lack of the necessary legal texts setting out the rulings of the different *madhāhib* (Steinberg 2004, 93).

While the Hanbali *madhhab* remains very important in Saudi Arabia, some have noted a shift in the kingdom in the twentieth-century, with judges and scholars becoming somewhat less constrained by adherence to Hanbali law (Vogel 2000, 77–81; Al-Atawneh 2010, 55–81).<sup>264</sup> Vogel has explained this shift in terms of an increasing

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<sup>264</sup> Al-Atawneh emphasises the extent to which this has involved not just shifts in attitudes to the substantive legal rulings of the various *madhāhib* but also a more fundamental opening up in the methodology used to arrive at rulings, beyond traditional Hanbali *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

integration of Wahhabi scholarship with mainstream Sunni scholarship worldwide (Vogel 2000, 77–81). Steinberg (2004, 93) has noted the significance of the increasing availability of the books necessary for more involved kinds of legal reasoning, to which one might add the increasing availability of advanced religious instruction.

Historically, religious education in Wahhabi circles reflected the Hanbali leanings that were so characteristic of the tradition. Mohamed Al-Freih, citing Najdi chronicles, has suggested that in parts of the Peninsula that came under Wahhabi control in the early period of the movement, “they ordered that all books of law, accepted by the four Sunnite legal schools should be taught” (Al-Freih 1990, 343). However, other historians are agreed that in Wahhabi circles in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Najd, *fiqh* was taught from Hanbali manuals, as it had been in Central Arabia prior to the rise of the reform movement. According to Commins, Wahhabi scholars in this period taught *fiqh* from “standard works” by Hanbali figures like the Levantine Muwaffiq al-Din ibn Qudama (d. 1223) and Musa al-Hujawi (d. 1560/61) (Commins 2005, 124).<sup>265</sup> According to Steinberg, there was an effort on the part of Wahhabi scholars to effect a shift in the texts used for the teaching of *fiqh*; but this was to be a shift entirely within the Hanbali canon. Works by more recent Hanbali authorities – like *al-Muntaha* by Ibn al-Najjar and al-Hujawi’s *al-Iqna’* – were to give way to more of a focus on earlier Hanbali works by Ibn Qudama – like his *al-Muqni’*, *al-’Umda*, *al-Mughni* and *al-Kafi* – “from which all later Hanbali writings had derived” (Steinberg 2004, 90).

The syllabuses put in place at the time of the founding of the Islamic University in 1961 show that *fiqh* – in the sense of substantive law – was to be taught entirely from works by Ibn Qudama. In the secondary school-level department, the text used was Ibn Qudama’s *al-’Umda* and at the undergraduate level it was his *al-Muqni’*. This use of Hanbali legal manuals – moreover, manuals by Ibn Qudama, in particular – as a basis for instruction makes it clear that at this very early point in the university’s history the arrangements for teaching substantive law closely reflected the Hanbali leanings that had historically been very strongly characteristic of Wahhabi legal practice and education. It is worth noting that in the earliest days of the IUM, separate courses on

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<sup>265</sup> On Ibn Qudama, see G. Makdisi 2002.

*uṣūl al-fiqh* were to be taught at the secondary level from a book authored by staff from the Colleges of Arabic Language and Shari'a in Riyadh, and at the advanced level from Ibn Qudama's *Rawdat al-Nazir*.

In a contemporary description of the teaching of *fiqh* at the IUM at this early stage, published in the local newspaper *al-Madina al-Munawwara* in January 1962, Ibn Baz sought to downplay these strong Hanbali leanings in the syllabus. In practice, he insisted, teaching staff took a comparative approach to this subject that went beyond just this one *madhhab*:

Teaching of the subject of *fiqh* in the university... is not restricted to explaining the matter of that *madhhab* the teaching of which is stipulated [on the syllabus]. Rather, the teacher expands as if he is teaching [multiple] *madhāhib*, not one *madhhab*, and he acquaints the student with the best interpretation according to evidence from the Book and the Sunna, or from one of them (Ibn Baz 1962)

That there was at least a limited comparative component in the teaching of *fiqh* at this very early stage in the university's history is also evidenced by an explanatory note in the original syllabus, which stipulates that – where possible – instruction in this subject should include exploration of cases where there is disagreement between the *madhāhib* and declaration of the preponderant position (*tarjih*) on the basis of evidence.

However that may be, changes were soon made which took things much more clearly in the direction of an opening up beyond Hanbali jurisprudence. An IUM alumnus who was amongst the first group of students from Pakistan to enrol at the university in 1962 recalled that his cohort at the undergraduate level had studied *fiqh* partly from Ibn Qudama's *al-Muqni'*, as set in the original syllabus. However, they had also studied another work altogether; *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* by Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd (d. 1198), the Cordoba-born polymath who became known in Latin as Averroes and who is perhaps most famous in European scholarship for his works on philosophy (Arnaldez 2002).<sup>266</sup> The title of this text, which would subsequently become the key reference for the teaching of *fiqh* at the IUM, has been rendered in English by Yasin Dutton as "The beginning for the one

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<sup>266</sup> Interview with Suhaib Hasan, London, 14 January 2013. For an English translation of *Bidayat al-Mujtahid*, see Averroes 1994.

who would exercise *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) and the end for the one who would limit himself [to a basic knowledge of the shari'a]" (Dutton 1994, 191). Ibn Rushd, who himself came from a Maliki background, wrote it in part as a resource for "those who want to understand the basics of the shari'a so that they will then be in a position to think for themselves and exercise *ijtihād* on new matters that may arise about which there is no clear ruling" (Dutton 1994, 191). In the words of Dutton, Ibn Rushd in this text criticised *fiqh* scholars of his day "for too strong an attachment to the opinions of their predecessors (*shiddat al-taqlid*)", accusing them of "measuring knowledge by quantity rather than quality and thus being like shoe-sellers who, although they have plenty of shoes for sale, are not able to actually make a shoe themselves when the need arises" (Dutton 1994, 193).

What is especially significant about *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* in the context of the present discussion is that it is an example of *ikhtilāf* literature, meaning that it is dedicated to presenting the differences between the rulings of the various schools of Islamic law. In *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* Ibn Rushd uses this comparative approach to consider not only the four mainstream Sunni *madhāhib* – Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi'i and Hanbali – but also the Zahiri school of jurisprudence which was influential in the Iberian Peninsula during his lifetime, and even the views of "the founders of old schools of law that eventually disappeared, as well as Muslims of the first generations" (Fierro 1999, 241; cf. Dutton 1994, fn.20). In fact, *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* goes further than many other examples of the *ikhtilāf* genre in that it explores not only the differences between the rulings of these various schools of jurisprudence but also the reasons behind those differences (Dutton 1994, 192). Although further research would be required to arrive at a conclusive judgement, it is not immediately obvious that there is any substantial history of *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* being used for the study of *fiqh* within the Wahhabi tradition.<sup>267</sup>

Syllabuses in use in the early 1990s show that by that time, *fiqh* was still being taught in the IUM's intermediate school-level institute from Ibn Qudama's '*Umdat al-Fiqh*'.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> I am grateful to Saud al-Sarhan for correspondence on this issue.

<sup>268</sup> This text had replaced al-Hujawi's *Zad al-Mustaqni'* for teaching at this level in 1982 (al-'Abbud 2004, 1:428).

In the secondary school-level institute, students were to study *fiqh* from a commentary on this text titled *al-'Idda Sharh al-'Umda* by Baha' al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ibrahim al-Maqdisi. At this level, they were to study *uṣūl al-fiqh* from a work produced by a number of scholars including the IUM's own 'Atiyya Muhammad Salim, titled *Tashil al-Wusul ila 'Ilm al-Usul* (al-'Abbud 2004, 1:443). However, at the undergraduate level, it was now established practice for *fiqh* to be taught from Ibn Rushd's *Bidayat al-Mujtahid*. What is more, this text was to be studied alongside the most important works from each of the four mainstream Sunni *madhāhib* (*ummahāt kutub al-fiqh fī kull madhhab min al-madhāhib al-arbi'a*) (al-'Abbud 2004, 1:565). *Uṣūl al-fiqh* was to be taught primarily from Ibn Qudama's *Rawdat al-Nazir wa Jannat al-Manazir*, along with a commentary on this text titled *Nuzhat al-Khatir al-'Atir* by the prominent modern Syrian Hanbali scholar 'Abd al-Qadir Ibn Badran (d. 1927) (al-'Abbud 2004, 1:572).<sup>269</sup>

It is thus clear that Hanbali texts remained important in the teaching of legal methodology at the IUM well into the 1990s, and that Hanbali manuals were also in use at this time for the teaching of substantive law at the less advanced levels. Some graduates suggest that it remains the case that the experience of studying *fiqh* at the IUM even at the undergraduate level tends to leave the student with a better grasp of Hanbali jurisprudence than that of the other *madhāhib*.<sup>270</sup> However, even allowing for any such residual Hanbali bias and even allowing for Ibn Baz's insistence that *fiqh* teaching at the IUM in its earliest days had included a comparative component, the introduction of *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* as the primary text for the teaching of *fiqh* at the university level soon after the university's founding nonetheless reflected a significant change at that very early stage. In appearance and framing, at the very least, it represented a shift towards a much more emphatically comparative approach, far less obviously wedded to Hanbali substantive law.

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<sup>269</sup> On Ibn Badran, see Commins 1985, 116–17.

<sup>270</sup> One graduate suggested that studying the various *madhāhib* in Saudi Arabia is comparable with travelling to the United Kingdom to study both English and Spanish; one would certainly depart with better English than Spanish. Interview with IUM graduate F, London, 25 January 2011.

This shift towards a greater emphasis on comparative *fiqh* is further reflected in the goals set for the teaching of *fiqh* at the university level by the early 1990s. Students were expected to understand “the emergence of the various juristic *madhāhib* and the factors behind the survival of only the *madhāhib* of the four imams: Abu Hanifa, Malik, al-Shafi’i and Ahmad, may God have mercy upon them”. They were to learn “the reasons for difference of opinion between the scholars of *fiqh*, and its status as an enrichment to the juristic discipline”. They were to graduate with a honed “juristic aptitude in deduction from the Book and the Sunna” and “the capacity to instruct the people and to issue them with fatwas regarding juristic issues and problems”. They would represent a “new generation each year which resists the trends of man-made laws creeping into the lands of the Muslims” (al-‘Abbud 2004, 1:564–5).

The approach eventually settled upon at the IUM – teaching *fiqh* from the comparative text *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* whilst teaching *uṣūl al-fiqh* from Hanbali works – is in many ways reminiscent of the ideals advanced by early Wahhabi authorities like Ibn Mu‘ammar. Such figures had defended Hanbali legal methodology whilst advocating consideration of the substantive rulings of the other *madhāhib* under certain circumstances; even if, in practice, they tended to cleave to the rulings of the Hanbali school. The eventual choice of methods for teaching *fiqh* at the IUM should also be seen in the context of a period in which Wahhabi scholarship more broadly was undergoing a shift away from narrow adherence to Hanbali substantive law, as discussed above. It is worth noting that the IUM was not unique in this regard; other institutions founded in Saudi Arabia in the twentieth century also came to offer instruction in the *fiqh* of the various *madhāhib* and in the practice of selecting the strongest position from amongst their rulings (*tarjih*) (Vogel 1993, 197; Vogel 2000, 79).

Nonetheless, the move at the IUM from use of Hanbali legal manuals to use of a work of *ikhtilāf* like *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* represents a specific and clearly identifiable shift, occurring at a particular point in time and in a particular context. Furthermore, it is significant that the decision was made to teach *fiqh* from an *ikhtilāf* work authored by a Maliki scholar. It would have been equally possible for those behind the IUM to select an *ikhtilāf* work by a Hanbali scholar, such as *al-Mughni* by the Wahhabis’ long favoured legal authority Ibn Qudama. On further inspection, evidence emerges that

such shifts were very much bound up with the IUM's imbrication in cross-border circuits of scholars, as well as its functioning as an explicitly missionary organisation.

On the first of these issues, it seems very likely that the Wahhabis' longstanding – if somewhat ambiguous – criticism of the practice of *taqlīd* would have been encouraged by influences arriving at the IUM from beyond the Peninsula. The university operated with the involvement of representatives of the South Asian Ahl-i Hadith, a movement which had long been much firmer than the Wahhabis in its rejection of the practice of *taqlīd*.<sup>271</sup> Ahl-i Hadith scholars urged that legal rulings should instead be derived from direct reference to the Qur'an and the Sunna, along with limited use of the principles of *qiyās* (analogy) and *ijmā'* (consensus) (Metcalf 1982, 265, 270–72). Their views had become known in Wahhabi circles through Najdi students and scholars who travelled to India from the late nineteenth century, and major Wahhabi scholars of the modern period, including Ibn Baz, came to be influenced by their positions on this particular matter (Lacroix 2009, 61–62). Such influences would surely have been consolidated by Ahl-i Hadith figures who joined the IUM's Advisory Council and teaching faculty. Another likely influence are Egyptian Salafis, including those linked to the Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah movement whose members also studied and taught at the IUM. The former president of Ansar al-Sunna 'Abd al-Razzaq 'Afifi sat on the IUM's founding Advisory Council and was apparently involved in drawing up syllabuses. Muhammad Hamid al-Fiqi, who founded Ansar al-Sunna in Egypt in 1926, had been full of praise for the Wahhabis but had been simultaneously critical of what he saw as their inappropriate allegiance to the Hanbali *madhhab* (Gauvain 2010, 813). In 1949, following a visit to Saudi Arabia, the Ansar al-Sunna-linked Egyptian scholar Ahmad Muhammad Shakir (d. 1958) had written to King 'Abd al-'Aziz with recommendations for how to organise the country's judicial and education systems.<sup>272</sup> In that report, he had specifically insisted on the importance of *Bidayat al-Mujtahid* and its treatment of the differences between the *madhāhib*. He noted that this crucial work had first been

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<sup>271</sup> The movements mentioned in this paragraph and their members' roles at the IUM are discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>272</sup> On Ahmad Muhammad Shakir, including his views on *ijtihād*, see Shaham 1999. On his links with Ansar al-Sunna, see Tahir 2006, 202–14. He is the same Ahmad Muhammad Shakir who edited one of the editions of *Sharh al-Tahawiyya* mentioned in an earlier footnote.



published in Egypt in the early 1920s in an edition edited by his own father, the scholar Muhammad Shakir (Shakir 2009). Individual scholars at the IUM may also have had a substantial impact on approaches to teaching *fiqh*. The Albanian-born Nasir al-Din al-Albani, for example, a formidable figure who arrived at the university to teach very early on and was a member of its founding Advisory Council, held a profound commitment to the rejection of *taqlīd* which may well have contributed to pulling the university away from its early Hanbali leanings.<sup>273</sup>

Quite apart from any such dialogical engagement with staff brought from beyond the kingdom, however, what is even clearer is that the shift in approaches to teaching *fiqh* was also tied to a certain dynamic of unequal reciprocity between the university and its students. In the earliest days of the university's existence, various voices coming both from within and from outside the IUM were explicitly critical of what was perceived to be the teaching of Hanbali *fiqh* there at that time and called instead for more serious engagement with all four *madhāhib*. These calls appealed to the ideal of rejecting *taqlīd* as a matter of principle. However, they also specifically emphasised the need for the university to adapt to the attitudes and expectations of its students. While the influence of the Hanbali *madhhab* was restricted mainly to the Arabian Peninsula in the mid-twentieth century, the IUM's students were of course to include migrants from across the Islamic world. They would come from regions dominated by the Hanafi *madhhab*, like former Ottoman territories in the Middle East and the Balkans, along with "South Asia, Central Asia, and western China"; from regions where the Maliki *madhhab* prevails or is an important presence, like North Africa, West Africa, Bahrain and Kuwait; and from regions where the Shafi'i *madhhab* is influential, including Iraq, Yemen, Southeast Asia, and "parts of East Africa, South Asia, and Central Asia" (Rabb 2009). It was necessary to make allowances for these migrant students' diverse backgrounds, some suggested, in order to secure their consent to and their active participation in the IUM's missionary project, and in order to facilitate their own missionary engagement with members of their home communities after graduation.

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<sup>273</sup> On al-Albani's approach to *fiqh*, see Lacroix 2009.

An example of this kind of argument is found in an article published in the newspaper *al-Madina al-Munawwara* in December 1961 by the Hijazi intellectual Ahmad ‘Abd Allah al-Fasi, who had been a vocal public advocate of the founding of an Islamic university in Medina in the years immediately prior to its establishment.<sup>274</sup> Writing a few months after the passing of the university’s founding statutes which included the original Hanbali-oriented syllabuses, he urged that the university should teach all four *madhāhib* rather than just one. He argued that none of the law schools contradicts the Qur’an and the Sunna. He also raised practical considerations stemming from the need to appeal to a diversity of actors. He reminded his readers that, “the students who come to the university have studied from *madhāhib* other than that which is taught to them in the university – and that is what they aspire to.” Later in the article, he added

In addition, the penetration of these *madhāhib* in the Islamic regions makes it difficult for graduates of this university to guide the public there. It is hard, as we know, for a person to be able to convince the public to change their *madhhab*. This is something that is admitted and it must not escape our consideration, especially given that our guiding principle is offering religious guidance to Muslims and providing them with that which illuminates for them the way and clears for them the path towards knowledge of their *madhāhib*, as well as their ability to explain to the people in their homes the issues of their religion (al-Fasi 1961)<sup>275</sup>

Ibn Baz took this critique seriously enough to produce a lengthy response, which was published in the same newspaper the following month. In it, he insisted:

All of us realise what profound benefit and great utility there is in teaching *fiqh* according to the four *madhāhib*, as long as they are taught according to a correct procedure and as long as the teacher possesses penetrating vision with regard to the horizons of the shari’a and the ability to dive into its beloved depths (Ibn Baz 1962).

It was in this context that he offered the description of *fiqh* instruction at the university quoted earlier in this chapter, in which he insisted that IUM staff did in practice include a comparative element in their teaching.

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<sup>274</sup> On al-Fasi and his public calls for the founding of an Islamic university in Medina, see Chapter 3.

<sup>275</sup> It is tempting to speculate that al-Fasi may be raising these objections as a Hijazi and that his talk of the difficulty of convincing people to change their *madhhab* may be a reference to the imposition of Wahhabi norms in parts of Saudi Arabia, like the Hijaz, where these had historically not been prevalent.

Ibn Baz gave assurances that the issue would be examined by the university council and that a decision would be made according to what would best serve the common interest (*al-maṣlaḥa al-‘amma*). Although the phrase is apparently being used here in a quite non-technical sense, it is worth noting that the word *maṣlaḥa* may refer to a principle of public interest which can serve as a basis of legislation in Islamic law.<sup>276</sup> Ibn Baz concluded the article with a critique of what he saw as an unhelpful generalisation in al-Fasi’s remark that none of the *madhāhib* contradict the Qur’an or the Sunna and that all of them proceed according to the guidance offered by these two sources. If al-Fasi meant that the four imams all strove to base their work upon these sources, then of course that is true. However, if al-Fasi meant that all of the *madhāhib* are free from anything which contradicts Revelation, then that is obviously incorrect, “for in matters of disagreement there is one truth and that is what accords with the Book and the Sunna.”

This lengthy, very public response from Ibn Baz did not put the matter to rest. As long as the texts on the syllabus remained Hanbali *fiqh* manuals, the dissenters do not appear to have been satisfied with his claim that teachers went beyond these core works to offer a wider perspective. In a memorandum presented to the first session of the IUM’s Advisory Council which began in late May 1962, council member Abul Hasan ‘Ali Nadwi – the high-profile revivalist scholar associated with the Indian Nadwatul ‘Ulama – again urged that all four *madhāhib* should be taught at the university. He asserted his own support as a matter of principle for a programme of study free of the practice of *taqlid*. However, he also made the separate argument that

if the student graduates from this university ignorant of his [own] *madhhab*, or of the *madhhab* of the society in which he will live and in which environment he will undertake his *da‘wa*, the performance of the burdens of *da‘wa* will not be fitting and there will not be a connection between him and his environment that will make it possible to exert influence within it and to win trust.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Al-Atawneh (2010, 63–64, 80) has suggested that the concept of *al-maṣlaḥa* acquired unprecedented importance in Wahhabi legal practice in the twentieth century, as scholars sought ways of adapting their rulings to cope with rapidly changing realities.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. memorandum to the Advisory Council reproduced in Nadwi 1969b, 93–94.

An authorised history of the IUM includes a retrospective account of discussions which took place at that same session of the Advisory Council concerning the issue of how to teach *fiqh*, which merits quoting at length:

The Council considered... that the reality of the university necessitates that it should proceed according to a precise method in the teaching of Islamic *fiqh*, because the sons of the university – by virtue of their affiliation to all Islamic countries and societies – belong to all of the *madhāhib*. In order to avoid that which might stir sensitivity and disagreement, the Council suggested... that teaching of the subject of *fiqh* at the university level should be in accordance with the four *madhāhib*, with proofs. [This is] in order to train the students in the derivation of legal rulings from the Book and the Sunna, and to accustom them to independence in examining the Book and the Sunna. This has been the method followed by the university from the time of its founding until now, due to that which it affords in terms of esteem and respect for the Imams and a connection for students to the two original sources [the Qur'an and the sunna], from which the Imams drew legal matters. All of them [the Imams] emphasise adherence to evidence [from the Qur'an and the sunna] [*al-akhdh bi-l-dalīl*] and do not overstep it. They advise their followers to set aside their view [the view held by any given Imam on any given matter] in favour of that of the Prophet of God (SAWS). In this way, the university limited the excessiveness of the chauvinism of some of the adherents to these *madhāhib*; because the method of these Imams [themselves] was to follow the evidence from the Book of God and the sunna of His Prophet (SAWS) (al-Ghamidi 1998, 150–51)

The contemporary articles cited above offer fragmentary insights into the debates that surrounded the shift towards a more emphatically comparative approach to *fiqh* at the IUM in the very early days of the university's existence. They reveal that at least one thread in these debates related to an explicit recognition on the part of actors who moved in the IUM's orbit that being seen to adapt to the needs and attitudes of students and those to whom they were intended to preach was important if it was to be hoped that these people would invest themselves in the university's religious mission. It was only in this way that those behind the university could hope to secure their consent, and the consent of those to whom they would preach, to its missionary project. The notion of consent was sometimes invoked in minimal terms as an absence of active resistance, as when al-Fasi emphasised the need to avoid the difficulties involved in seeking to convince people to "change their *madhhab*". It also took on more positive connotations, suggesting articulation with existing worldviews and the channelling of existing energies; as when al-Fasi spoke of aligning teaching at the university with students' existing aspirations, or when Nadwi raised the issue of

building connections and winning trust.<sup>278</sup> Such considerations appear to have been one of a range of factors at play in the subtle but significant shift in the teaching of *fiqh* which occurred at the IUM soon after it opened its doors. In the retrospective account offered in the authorised history outlined above, these considerations were interwoven seamlessly with an affirmation of the longstanding commitment in principle within the Wahhabi tradition – and the broader Salafi tradition within which it is located – to treat direct, unmediated reference to the source texts as the ideal final arbiter in any matter of law.

## **Conclusion**

The bodies of religious knowledge which represented one of the most important forms of spiritual capital distributed to and through students at the IUM from the early 1960s did not straightforwardly instantiate an entirely ossified, timeless set of Wahhabi texts and practices. Rather, I have argued in this chapter that they were a product of a particular historical conjuncture, the university's location at the nexus of an array of cross-border connections, and also its functioning as a missionary institution.

Certainly, there are very clear continuities between the bodies of knowledge explored here and the Wahhabi tradition which had existed for two centuries prior to the founding of the IUM. One sees processes of condemnatory othering which had always been an important part of Wahhabi identity-formation, here elaborated under new circumstances and with the insertion of new actors into the project from beyond the Peninsula. One also sees a related ongoing commitment to the same fundamental ideas about the meaning of *tawhīd*, with only relatively limited signs of an opening up of the Wahhabi corpus on this issue. Even in the area of *fiqh*, where I have suggested that there were clearer transformations, these shifts were bound up with concerns and principles – regarding the legitimacy of *taqlīd* and modalities of *ijtihād* – which had long been very much present in Wahhabi discourse. What is clear, however, is the capacity of the Wahhabi tradition in this context to undergo transformations within the terms of a broader Salafi discursive framework; including in this case the

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<sup>278</sup> On the different forms that consent may take within hegemonic relations, from “active commitment to the established order” to far more grudging or ambivalent forms of compliance, see Lears 1985, 569–70.

incorporation of new texts and subtle shifts in discourse concerning the status of the *madhāhib*. I have argued that such transformations came about in part as a result of the IUM's employment of representative of religious currents and social movements hailing from far beyond Saudi Arabia, as well as its project of catering for a similarly diverse student body.

To the extent that the construction of the university's *da'wa* involved the evolution of a discursive tradition, this was not limited to the organic incorporation of new ideas and practices, or simply the reinterpretation of existing ideas and practices under new conditions. Equally, the transformations which the university underwent in the course of its interaction with staff and students from beyond the Peninsula did not occur as the result of open debate between participants on an equal footing. Rather, the discursive tradition within which the pedagogical practices described here were located was continually thrashed out in part through struggles for influence and authority between individuals, social movements and state actors occupying positions of varying strength within transnational religious economies. As explored in earlier chapters of this thesis, these struggles occurred within a framework of unequal relations defined by disciplinary social technologies, uneven distribution of material and symbolic capital, and bureaucratic structures mapping out control over the processes by which this capital was to be distributed. In this chapter, I have argued that – within the terms of these existing, uneven power relations – actors behind the IUM sought to consolidate a position of hegemonic authority as suppliers of religious resources within a shared moral and intellectual framework. Whilst operating within the terms of the heterogeneous, mutable Wahhabi and broader Salafi traditions, the university underwent carefully managed transformations through processes of unequal reciprocity with staff and students, which were in part about the perfecting of power. Through adjustments of the precise content of the university's missionary project – the precise nature of the religious resources which it was to distribute – efforts were made to articulate this project with the worldviews and commitments of the diversity of actors who were its targets. These moves constituted an effort to secure their consent for and their active participation in its missionary endeavour through a power-laden process of hegemonic expansion.

## Chapter 7

### **The Islamic University and Its Students: Facilitating, Mediating and Contesting Wahhabi Religious Expansion**

This final chapter turns to the students who were expected to bear the Wahhabi-influenced teachings of the Islamic University of Medina beyond Saudi Arabia's borders, and whose mobility, networks and local knowledges were expected to give its missionary project both geographical reach and traction in diverse settings. I begin by unpacking the contention that – at the point of interface between the university and its students – the IUM's missionary project can be understood in terms of a process whereby considerable new resources came to be injected into transnational religious economies. Material capital made available through the university's scholarships programme has allowed students to direct their labour towards the acquisition of religious knowledge, skills and forms of certification grounded in the Wahhabi and broader Salafi traditions. These competencies and qualifications have significance as spiritual capital; positional goods which may be put to work in struggles for status and authority within the religious sphere in the contexts in which students find themselves after graduation. The expectation from the start was that this capital, and the influence which may derive from it, would be used to advance the university's mission. In the decades following the IUM's founding, the promise of access to such resources helped to bring many thousands of young men to Medina from all over the world.

However, once in Medina and acquainted at first hand with the particular array of religious resources on offer, not all students would arrive at the same conclusions in regard either to their worth as positional goods or to their legitimacy as elements to be put to work in personal projects of pious self-betterment. As I explore in the second section of this chapter, migrant students themselves have entered into these transactions on campus already equipped with their own tastes and dispositions forged in divergent social and cultural contexts. They have engaged with the university's teachings not only as aspiring Salafi *du'āt* but also on the basis of many other overlapping identities and concerns; including as Nigerians and Westerners, Sufis and Shi'a, and young men seeking adventure. As such, they have made their own evaluations of the religious learning available there, and have arrived at their own

conclusions about whether and how to engage with the various kinds of material and immaterial resources on offer.

Finally, I consider the pathways that students have followed after leaving Medina, taking resources acquired there into transnational circulation. Graduates who have put these resources to work in securing and maintaining positions of religious authority have done so through processes of ongoing accumulation, investment and contestation which play out far from Saudi Arabia. They have used their newfound authority and influence to advance a diverse array of initiatives which, while often strongly informed and enabled by their IUM education, have taken on contrasting valences and have often operated with substantial autonomy with respect to the Saudi religious establishment and state actors.

At each stage in this process, the IUM's missionary project has been variously facilitated, mediated and contested by students themselves, as well as by an array of lay actors and established religious authorities in locations around the world.

### **The IUM as a Site of Investment, Exchange and Accumulation**

From the start, the primary purpose of the IUM as an institution of Islamic education was of course to provide for the acquisition by students of particular bodies of religious knowledge, skills and qualifications. The learning of these religious competencies by individual students was valued in its own right, insofar as they were understood to afford access to higher truths, the bases for correct worship and tools for implementing a divinely ordained moral order in the context of personal belief, choices and action. However, it was also anticipated that they would serve a social function, bolstering students' standing within the religious sphere after graduation, either in their communities of origin or in other locations in which they were to settle around the world. This was particularly important in light of the IUM's missionary ambitions. Those behind the university anticipated that its students would emerge from their time in Medina not only as pious subjects but also with the competencies and qualifications necessary in order for them to secure recognition as *du'āt*, jurists



(*fuqahā'*, sing. *faqīh*), teachers and judges (*quḍāt*, sing. *qāḍin*).<sup>279</sup> These labels denote social roles, involving positions of authority and influence over others; the status necessary in order to issue authoritative guidance on their future choices or to pass authoritative judgement on their past actions. Insofar as they might serve students' attainment of such religious status, competencies acquired at the IUM constituted not only elements in introspective processes of pious self-formation but also spiritual capital.

Whilst students' engagement with the IUM will be discussed further in the second section of this chapter, it is worth noting that several graduates interviewed for this research framed their motivations for studying in Medina in comparable terms. One British graduate recalled that he had gone with the aspiration of becoming "a scholar of knowledge".<sup>280</sup> Another said that his decision to join the IUM's College of Shari'a, rather than pursuing hadith studies as he had previously intended, had been partly informed by his views about which discipline would be of most benefit in *da'wa* in a country like the United Kingdom.<sup>281</sup> Yet another, who was still in the process of working towards his degree at the IUM when interviewed, said that he aspired to continue to develop his language skills such that he would be able to become a link between lay Muslims in the United Kingdom and "people of knowledge"; the implication being that those indicated by this phrase were Arabic-speaking scholars in the Middle East.<sup>282</sup> In one way or another, all of these aspirations suggest recognition of the possibility that an IUM education might contribute to a certain repositioning in the social sphere, allowing the individual to attain status as a scholar, as an authoritative source of religious guidance, or as a trusted intermediary between laypersons and a clerical class. This does not mean conceiving of students as necessarily chasing resources in the name of social mobility or status for its own sake. Indeed, several of those interviewed for this project had given up prestigious

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<sup>279</sup> "Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya," Article 1; "Nizam al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya bi-l-Madina al-Munawwara" (Article 2), reproduced in al-Ghamidi 1998, 63–66; "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 63.

<sup>280</sup> Interview with IUM graduate G, London, 19 January 2011.

<sup>281</sup> Interview with IUM graduate C, London, 14 July 2011. His feeling was that hadith studies might be too technical to be of primary concern in this context.

<sup>282</sup> Interview with current IUM student H, Riyadh, 15 March 2012.

educational opportunities in their own countries of origin in order to go to the IUM, or had already completed degrees at distinguished secular universities which in themselves would have offered solid bases for social advancement. Rather, prospective students may also value resources available at the IUM insofar as those resources are understood to provide for a strengthened position within social struggles over the power to speak in the name of Islam; that is, to authoritatively advocate what are understood to be correct practices and to authoritatively undermine those understood to be incorrect.

The notion of the translatability of different forms of material and immaterial capital can help to make sense of the role played by economic resources in the IUM's mission. As Bradford Verter has noted, "spiritual capital, like other forms of immaterial capital, may only be acquired through the exchange of material forms of capital" (Verter 2003, 167). In the case of full-time religious study of the kind undertaken at the IUM, students must largely withdraw from wage labour for several years, a possibility which in other circumstances commonly depends on the ability and willingness of family members to offer economic support.<sup>283</sup> Such formal religious education also calls for other forms of material investment, including that required in order to pay for the labour of staff, and the construction and maintenance of the system of social technologies within which learning and socialisation are to occur. At the IUM, all of these costs were to be met not by students or their families but by the university itself. In this sense, material capital made available by the Saudi state would be translated into spiritual capital possessed by students.

From the beginning, the university demanded no tuition fees to pay for the labour of staff and other expenses. Moreover, it offered a comprehensive scholarships programme to all students arriving from abroad, covering their living costs and transport between Medina and their countries of origin.<sup>284</sup> Over time, scholarships would come to include accommodation, monthly stipends to cover everyday expenses, medical care, allowances for clothing and books, and trips to perform hajj and *'umra*.

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<sup>283</sup> Cf. Bourdieu's (1986, 49–50) discussion of comparable dynamics in relation to secular education.

<sup>284</sup> "Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-I-Jami'a al-Islamiyya," Article 24.

Although the real value of this support and the standard of living conditions on campus have varied over time, for much of the university's history the amounts involved were generous. In the latter half of the 1970s (1397/1398 H.), the monthly stipend was 525 Saudi riyals for most undergraduate students and 900 SR for those at the postgraduate level. The 525-riyal monthly stipend, which was to be used only as spending money by young students whose major expenses were all already covered, amounted to nearly 150 US dollars at a time when the average monthly income in the United States was only around 480 US dollars.<sup>285</sup> It was supplemented with an annual clothing allowance which alone amounted to 1,500 SR. In addition, students who passed their exams would be flown back to their countries of origin for the summer vacation and those who achieved top grades came to be eligible for a further award equivalent to more than a whole month's stipend (al-'Abbud 2004, 390–401).

With all material costs met by the university, the only thing that students were required to invest in the process of their accumulation of symbolic resources at the IUM was their own time and labour. For those prepared to apply themselves, the forms of spiritual capital that they could acquire there would include embodied competencies, such as: familiarity with the liturgical language of Arabic, which may be displayed through practices like quoting texts or even simply scattering one's speech with individual items of Arabic vocabulary when speaking in one's own first language; the ability to consult and cite complex works of classical scholarship; memorised knowledge of scripture and other religious texts; and skills such as the capacity to apply principles of *fiqh* derivation or hadith analysis. Students would also acquire spiritual capital in objectified forms, including collections of leather-bound religious texts, degree certificates, and in some cases letters of recommendation from individual members of staff.<sup>286</sup> Furthermore, time in Medina would afford the opportunity to accumulate spiritual capital through processes which extended beyond the remit of university study programmes. Many students would spend a great deal of their spare time in the Masjid Nabawi and other mosques in the city; socialising, engaging in self-

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<sup>285</sup> These very rough figures are calculated using <http://fxtop.com/en/historical-exchange-rates.php> and <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/people/>.

<sup>286</sup> Interview with IUM graduate I, London, 19 January 2012.

study and attending *ḥalaqāt* by often very prominent scholars. While the issuing of formal *ijāza* certificates attesting to a student's progress in such study circles may be relatively rare in this context, students may informally list the names of the scholars under whom they have studied as a further means of affirming their religious credentials.<sup>287</sup>

The prospect of fully-funded religious education in the Prophet's city made the IUM an attractive destination for aspiring students from all over the world. Scholarships made study in Medina accessible to large numbers whose economic circumstances would not otherwise have permitted it. They also made Medina an appealing destination to many who, even if they might in principle have had access to the funds required for several years of full-time religious education, were attracted by the opportunity to embark on a programme of study which freed them from the necessity of making that investment and thereby left those resources available for other purposes. This includes students who are keen to pursue religious education but might not otherwise have considered the IUM as an ideal or an obvious place to study.<sup>288</sup>

From the early 1960s onwards, the material and symbolic resources made available at the IUM drew many thousands from around the world into migratory circuits which grew up around its campus. From the start, the university was committed to giving the vast majority of its places – over 80 per cent – to non-Saudi citizens.<sup>289</sup> In keeping with

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<sup>287</sup> For example, in the context of a rejoinder to his critics within the Salafi fold, the prominent Jamaica-born IUM graduate Bilal Philips reminds his readers that: "I studied in the University of Madeenah, and I used to sit in the circles of Shaykh al-Albaanee, Shaykh Bin Baaz, Sh Abdul Muhsin al Abbaad, Sh Ghunaymaan, Sh Muqbil, Sh Umar al Fulaataa and others, whose circles I attended during the six years that I studied there. I personally went to Shaykh Muqbil's house and asked him to teach me takhreej (authentication of hadeeths), which he did, alhamdulillah" (Philips n.d.).

<sup>288</sup> Two interviewees said that they had previously been considering undertaking religious studies at al-Azhar or elsewhere, and that the generous terms on offer at the IUM had been one factor in their eventual decision to apply to study in Medina. Telephone interview with US-based IUM graduate D, 30 November 2010; and interview with IUM graduate J, London, 20 January 2011.

<sup>289</sup> A newspaper article published in the year the IUM opened noted that 80 per cent of places were allocated to non-Saudi students ("al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya min al-A'mal al-Khalida li-Jalalat al-Malik Su'ud" 1961). University regulations put in place in 1977 and still current in the early 1990s included a formal stipulation that 85 per cent of students were to come from outside Saudi Arabia. "al-La'iha al-Tanfidhiyya li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya bi-l-Madina al-Munawwara"

the emphasis on youth as agents of moral and social transformation, discussed in Chapter 5, it enforced an upper age limit on incoming students. This was originally set at 35 years old for those entering the undergraduate level and was later reduced to 25 years old.<sup>290</sup>

The administrative challenges involved in recruiting students from across the globe to this fledgling institution were met in a variety of ways. The diplomatic apparatus of the national state was put to work, with Saudi embassies called upon to facilitate flows of young men to Medina.<sup>291</sup> The university also built up relationships with Islamic schools and organisations outside the kingdom which were in a position to send students. From the early days, as news of the opportunity for fully-funded religious instruction in the Prophet's city spread, representatives of such organisations approached the IUM in the hope of securing allocation of places. A newspaper report published as early as 1962, for example, told of a visit to the campus by representatives of an Islamic organisation in the Philippines referred to in Arabic as *Jam'iyyat Iqamat al-Islam*, requesting places for graduates of their affiliated Islamic school in that country.<sup>292</sup> Over time, such institutional relations would be further strengthened by Saudi sponsorship of Islamic organisations abroad through bodies like the Muslim World League. Indonesian students, for example, commonly took up places at the IUM and other Saudi universities through the Saudi-backed Indonesian Da'wa Council (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyyah Indonesia*) and Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic in Jakarta (N. Hasan 2010, 682–83). As the IUM's reputation grew, many would even pay their own way to Saudi Arabia, seeking the chance to apply in person and secure an interview on the spot. Several British Muslims interviewed for this project had won places at the IUM after applying during trips to Saudi Arabia to perform *'umra*. Ghanaian and other African students have often borrowed the funds necessary to undertake trips to Saudi Arabia on *'umra* or tourist visas in order to apply to Islamic

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(dated Rajab 1397 H.), Article 57, reproduced in "Nizam al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya bi-l-Madina al-Munawwara wa-Lawa'ihaha al-Tanfidhiyya" 1990/91.

<sup>290</sup> "Al-Nizam al-Asasi li-l-Jami'a al-Islamiyya," Article 21; and al-'Abbud 2004, 381–82.

<sup>291</sup> "al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya min al-A'mal al-Khalida li-Jalalat al-Malik Su'ud" 1961.

<sup>292</sup> "Akhbar al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya bi-l-Madina" 1962.

studies programmes there, and similar journeys have been undertaken by aspiring students from Ethiopia (Iddrisu 2009, 169–70; Østebø 2012, 146–49).

With university staff in the early days conscious of their lack of knowledge of the situation on the ground in many of the countries which they hoped to target, they also began sending delegations abroad which would come to serve a particularly important role in building the networks necessary for student recruitment. Some of the earliest examples of these delegations headed to sub-Saharan Africa and often included members of IUM staff whose own genealogies traced back to the African continent.<sup>293</sup> These tours could last several months at a time and took in large numbers of countries. The first, in 1964, was charged not only with gathering information and forging relationships with local Muslim leaders and Islamic organisations, but also distributing some 13,000 publications with the help of the Saudi embassy in Mogadishu and dispensing funds allocated by the IUM and the Muslim World League.<sup>294</sup> Later, such tours would extend to locations around the world.

The first group of students to graduate from the IUM in the mid-1960s hailed mostly from states with Muslim-majority populations, particularly in the Middle East and Arabic-speaking parts of Africa.<sup>295</sup> Even by the end of that same decade, however, students graduating from the IUM came from a growing number of countries across the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and Africa.<sup>296</sup> The geographical reach of recruitment – measured in terms of the numbers of countries from which students were drawn – continued to increase in the decades that followed and the university also eventually began to make inroads into minority Muslim communities in Europe,

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<sup>293</sup> They included the Algeria-born Abu Bakr al-Jaza'iri; the Egypt-born 'Atiyya Muhammad Salim; 'Umar Fallata, of Nigerian descent; and an individual referred to as Muhammad Aman ibn 'Ali, who seems likely to have been the Ethiopia-born Muhammad Aman ibn 'Ali al-Jami. The biographies of all of these individuals are discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>294</sup> "Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 157–60; al-'Abbud 2004, 364–70.

<sup>295</sup> The countries listed are Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Yemen, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Indonesia, India and "Turkistan" ("Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 59).

<sup>296</sup> Ninety graduates in 1388/9 H. included individuals from nearly all of the same countries (except Tunisia and Turkistan) and also from Lebanon, Morocco, the Federation of South Arabia (al-Junūb al-'Arabī), Qatar, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, Burma, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Mauritania, Eritrea, Cameroon, Mozambique and Zanzibar ("Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya" 1971, 61).

North America and elsewhere. By around 1993 (1413/1414 H.), only seven British students and only thirteen from the United States had attained undergraduate qualifications (al-'Abbud 2004, 718–24). Nearly a decade later (1421/1422 H.), it was still the case that only twenty-one British students and only twenty from the United States had done so. Yet by around that time (1422/1423 H.), the university had offered 251 scholarships to students from Britain and 285 to students from the United States (al-Maghamisi n.d.). Even allowing for the phenomena of declined places and high drop-out rates discussed later in this chapter, this suggests that recruitment from these countries was gathering pace. As will also be touched upon below, IUM graduates who had themselves been born elsewhere would also settle in Europe and North America.

By around 2001 (1421/1422 H.) the number of students who had secured an undergraduate qualification had reached nearly 14,400, of whom nearly 11,600 – just over 80 per cent of the total – came from outside Saudi Arabia. The number of those leaving with undergraduate qualifications annually had grown from just forty-three in the mid-1960s (1384/1385 H.) to over 700 in the early 2000s (1421/1422 H.) (al-Maghamisi n.d.).

### **Student Responses: Assent, Rejection and Negotiation**

Such figures only tell part of the story, however. In practice, students have arrived at the IUM already equipped with their own religious dispositions and resources forged in diverse settings around the world. It is on those bases that they have engaged with its teachings, not necessarily as self-evidently valuable spiritual goods but as elements which might or might not be assimilated into pre-existing habituses, and which might or might not be judged to have personal or social value in the context of their own lives.

It is certainly the case that a significant proportion of students have embraced the IUM's teachings, seeing the knowledge and skills that could be acquired there as providing for the possibility of their own pious self-betterment and as bases for establishing the authority required in order to effectively call others to what they understand to be the true path. In some cases, this assent relates to the fact that they

have already been moving in Salafi circles in their countries of origin or elsewhere prior to travelling to Medina. This is partly a matter of self-selection; that is to say, students who self-identify as Salafi choosing to apply to the IUM on the basis of their prior knowledge of it as a Salafi institution. It has also been a matter of institutional ties, with the university conducting some of its student recruitment in cooperation with Salafi institutions, movements and personalities outside Saudi Arabia. IUM staff who come to the United Kingdom to recruit students, for example, have sometimes done so in cooperation with the London branch of the Saudi-sponsored Muslim World League, the Salafi organisation al-Muntada al-Islami in London, and the Green Lane Masjid in Birmingham, which is itself linked to the South Asian Ahl-i Hadith Salafi movement.<sup>297</sup> At the time of writing, both the Green Lane Masjid in Birmingham and the mosque run by al-Muntada al-Islami in London have imams who are themselves graduates of the IUM. In the case of students recruited through such networks, it is no doubt more likely that the university's teachings will broadly cohere with their pre-existing religious preferences and that these teachings might be readily assimilated into the bodies of knowledge and pious practice that already structure their religious lives.

However, it is by no means the case that all IUM students have been signed up through existing Salafi networks. Indeed, partly as a result of the vast geographical breadth of recruitment from the start, the student body quickly came to be very diverse indeed and staff soon came to recognise the challenges which presented themselves as a result. This is evidenced in a memorandum to the IUM's Advisory Council by the Indian scholar Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, which was published in the university journal in the mid-1970s. Invoking the case of the IUM, Nadwi noted the "disarray in thinking, action and goals" which had manifested itself in an Islamic university which brought together students from across the world, giving rise to a "medley of cultures, languages and backgrounds". He lamented that

It [the Islamic University] didn't find sufficient time or strong, impressive personalities to unite these different elements, this mixture of youths, and to give them a single character. It was unable to fuse them in the melting pot of a single creed and a single goal. The matter increased in complexity and criticality when these enfeebling factors

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<sup>297</sup> Interview with IUM graduates A (London, 1 December 2011) and C (London, 14 July 2011). On earlier links between the IUM and the Ahl-i Hadith, see Chapters 4 and 6.



were joined by the factor of materialistic temptation; for the motivation for many of these youth was the generous scholarship which they grant in this university (Nadwi n.d.)

Setting aside the question of material temptation as a motivation for studying at the IUM for the time being, it will be worth considering some of the diversity of ways in which students' own social and cultural backgrounds have informed their responses to the university's teachings.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from those who embraced the IUM's mission with enthusiasm, there have been those who have rejected it outright. Although the IUM had turned out nearly 11,600 non-Saudi graduates at undergraduate level by the early 2000s, by around the same time (1422/1423 H.) it had in fact offered more than 28,000 scholarships to prospective students from overseas (al-Maghamisi n.d.). Even allowing for those who had accepted these offers and were still undertaking their studies without having yet graduated at the time when these figures were drawn up, and even allowing for the possibility that this figure includes scholarships offered to students who would begin their studies in the IUM's various pre-university level institutes, the disparity is striking. In fact, a problem of very high drop-out rates is confirmed anecdotally by former students, who cite a variety of reasons for their peers or themselves having left prior to graduation. These include workaday issues such as marriage, family circumstances, difficulty adapting to the academic regime and tough living conditions in Medina.<sup>298</sup> However, others have left as a result of a sense of profound conflict between their pre-existing worldviews and the religious discourse that they encountered on campus. Despite having been drawn to the IUM by the promise of free Islamic education in the Prophet's city, once there they found that "Islam" in this context denoted something quite different to the modes of religious belief and practice into which they had been socialised in their communities of origin.

This issue arose as soon as the university opened its doors. In 1962, for example, the IUM offered scholarships to eighteen students from northern Nigeria. Of these, sixteen would walk out before graduating. Alex Thurston (forthcoming) notes that the dissatisfaction of members of this group related in part to practical matters, such as

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<sup>298</sup> Interviews with IUM graduates C, H and K, and with former IUM student L.

the perceived inadequacy of maintenance payments. However, other issues also arose, including negative attitudes in Medina towards the Sufi modes of faith which were such a central part of religious life in the context in which these students had been raised. Thurston quotes from a letter by some of these students to the Northern Regional Government in Nigeria, in which they pleaded to be transferred to an alternative institution where they might be able to study “without being separated from our creed, respecting our rulers and religious leaders, without our good traditional customs, which Islam does not forbid, being attacked”.

Quotations such as this one point to the extent to which the capacity of students to critically assess the IUM’s teachings was facilitated by their ability to “objectify” them. Rather than taking those teachings as simply a natural and inevitable part of religious life, they could achieve a degree of critical distance and ask questions about their legitimacy and value by comparing them with alternative ways of knowing and living Islam; setting up a distinction between “our creed”, “our rulers and religious leaders” and “our good traditional customs”, on the one hand, and on the other hand, implicitly, “their” creed, leaders and customs (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 37–45). To the extent that the IUM sought to recruit from around the world and from outside the Salafi fold, as part of the missionary project which was its *raison d’être*, this ability on the part of its students to compare and contrast its teachings with alternative Islamic traditions was built into the system. Moreover, students’ evaluations of the forms of spiritual capital available to them at the IUM – evaluations made possible in the first place by this process of objectification – would in turn be coloured by outlooks informed by their own widely differing backgrounds. For students whose own religious tastes and dispositions had been forged through processes of learning and socialisation within the terms of divergent religious fields and traditions, the competencies and qualifications on offer in Medina could seem more or less legitimate and more or less valuable, either as resources to be put to work in personal projects of pious self-betterment, or as positional goods which might be used to secure religious authority in their communities of origin or elsewhere.

Certainly, the large-scale walkout by this first group of northern Nigerian students was not an isolated episode. Intriguingly, a graduate who was at the IUM from the early

1960s recalled the arrival of its first cohort of some 25 Iranian students, of whom he suggested the vast majority were in fact Shi'a. Again, all but one of them would quit. This graduate explained their departure as being due to disappointment at the small scale of the university at that stage and the absence of women on campus. However, the alternative interpretation that it may in fact have come down to a clash between their own pre-existing religious dispositions and the content of teaching that they experienced at the IUM – the teachings of which were profoundly inimical to Shi'ism, as discussed in Chapter 6 – would appear to be consistent with his recollection that only the one Sunni in the group had chosen to stay.<sup>299</sup>

Responses of this kind to the IUM's teachings have not been limited to those who arrived with no previous experience of the Salafi tradition, just as they also have not related solely to what might be most readily identified as specifically religious elements of students' pre-existing habituses. More recently, the Guyana-born convert to Islam Qays Arthur has described a comparable experience of a jarring encounter with the IUM which occurred in spite of the fact that he had already been moving in Salafi circles in his country of origin prior to enrolling there in the second half of the 1990s (Arthur 2009; Arthur 2013). Once in Medina, Arthur found himself faced with a feeling of disjuncture "between my identity as a Muslim and a westerner". His narrative of his plight suggests that he was particularly uncomfortable with an emphasis in at least some quarters at the IUM on opposition to *isbāl*, the wearing of garments which hang below the ankle, a practice criticised by many Salafis as being contradictory to the sunna. His account illustrates the complexity of the many overlapping identities which students may inhabit prior to, during and after their studies in Medina. It suggests how tastes and dispositions which have much to do with social and cultural norms – in this case, the sympathy of a self-described "westerner" for those who "simply fancy trousers or jeans at normal length" – may inform students' assessments of the legitimacy and value of the IUM's teachings. In the end, Arthur left the IUM for the University of Jordan – which, "with its multitudes of Jeans and Tee shirts busy at work and play was more of what I was accustomed to" – and gravitated towards the Jordan-based American Sufi scholar Nuh Keller.

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<sup>299</sup> Interview with IUM graduate B, London, 27 June 2011.

While all of those described thus far abandoned the IUM, a final example illustrates that even decisions to stay until graduation do not necessarily signal assent to the university's missionary project and do not necessarily result in a thoroughgoing transformation of the students in question. A South Africa-born Muslim of South Asian origin who arrived at the IUM in the 1980s, recalled that he had gone there as "a very religious young man" but one whose upbringing had left him inclined towards Sufi modes of belief and practice.<sup>300</sup> He and a circle of friends at the IUM already had strong backgrounds in religious studies prior to arriving on campus, which contributed to a feeling that "how we viewed Islam and the message of Islam, we didn't need to come to Saudi Arabia to undo everything we learned... we were secure, we didn't feel any insecurity". Yet he valued the opportunity to live in the proximity of Medina and Mecca. Despite his lack of sympathy for the IUM's Wahhabi-influenced message, he also nonetheless viewed his training there – and particularly his acquisition of advanced Arabic language skills – as standing to advance his own personal spiritual development:

I wanted to study and read a lot about Islam but I wanted to do that on my own. I wanted to open the old manuals and the old texts – the classical texts – by myself and make up my own opinions. But I knew I first had to, you know, get a better understanding of the language... I guess one of the reasons I also went there was to know Islam better... but I wanted to be able to do that by my own reading, through my own readings of Arabic texts.

Over time, he even began to hope that the skills and qualifications that he could accumulate in Medina might offer a path towards a career as an Arabic-language specialist in secular academic institutions. The fact that he did in fact achieve that goal, going on to complete a PhD and secure academic jobs in Europe and the United States, illustrates how resources acquired in a religious setting like the IUM may also be put to work as cultural capital in other spheres of life. Finally, he spoke frankly about the attraction of the material capital made available through the university's scholarships programme, which allowed him to buy "fancy watches" and gifts for family members. He recalled that he had been able to use free flights during the summer vacation – which were intended for visits home but at that time could also be claimed for trips

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<sup>300</sup> Telephone interview with US-based IUM graduate D, 30 November 2010.

elsewhere – to see the world, including North America, East Asia and India. The knowledge that this would be possible had been one factor informing his decision to go to the IUM in the first place, rather than to al-Azhar. During his own time in Medina, he suggested, stipends were generous enough that students from developing countries could even become comparatively wealthy and save their maintenance payments towards the cost of building a home in their communities of origin.

This graduate's recollections illustrate the ways in which students may be drawn into the migratory circuits which built up around the IUM not only as aspiring Salafi *du'āt* but on the basis of a host of other overlapping identities and considerations. Material resources made available through the scholarships programme have no doubt been an attraction for some students, as noted critically by Nadwi in the passage quoted earlier in this chapter. Yet, even for those who are sceptical of the IUM's Wahhabi-influenced mission, this motivation for studying there may coexist and intertwine with the attraction of acquiring competencies and qualifications which may prove useful both in personal projects of pious self-betterment and also as positional goods in social life within and outside the religious sphere.

I have argued for an understanding of the IUM's missionary project in terms of the injection of new resources into transnational religious economies. Material capital made available by the Saudi state was to be translated into spiritual capital possessed by students, who were expected to take it into circulation around the world and to put it to work in the service of the Salafi *da'wa*. Yet in practice, the processes by which these resources are exchanged and accumulated on campus have been subject to the agency and evaluative judgement of those same students. As with any educational institution, the IUM must contend with students' pre-existing knowledges, tastes and dispositions, which in this case have been forged through learning and socialisation in a particularly diverse array of social, cultural and religious contexts. For all the disciplinary aspects of education at the IUM explored in Chapter 5 of this thesis, its system of instruction can by no means hope to simply "kill off the old man" and turn every student into a pious Salafi *dā'iya* ex nihilo (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 44). The ways in which students' educational, social, religious and cultural backgrounds have informed their responses to the IUM also indicate the limits of the hegemonic

dimensions of its missionary project, explored in Chapter 6. Far from becoming articulated into this project, at least some have rejected its message. They have either removed themselves from Medina altogether or have found ways of negotiating pathways through the IUM system and benefiting from the many different kinds of resources made available there whilst maintaining a certain detachment. As I argue in the next, final section of this chapter, the agency exercised by students – as well as that exercised by a far broader array of actors in locations far from Medina – has continued to play an important role in mediating the impact of the university's missionary project well past the point of graduation.

### **Leaving Medina**

While graduates may depart Medina in possession of newfound reserves of spiritual capital – including religious knowledge, competencies and qualifications – the value of this capital becomes subject to fierce contestation within and across the social spaces through which they later pass and in which they settle. For those who seek to use this capital as a basis for achieving status as an authoritative point of religious reference, achieving this goal becomes a matter of ongoing accumulation, careful investment, and struggle with an array of religious and lay actors. These processes give rise to forms of authority which, while built on the foundation of an IUM education, may subsequently be negotiated quite autonomously with respect to the kingdom and its scholars. This status may in turn be used to legitimate projects with divergent social and political ramifications, which by no means necessarily coincide with the concerns or interests of the Saudi state and religious establishment.

A proportion of graduates of the IUM have engaged in exerting religious influence across the globe in ways which remain institutionally bound to the kingdom and its scholars. This includes employment by Saudi state or state-funded bodies to undertake preaching or other religious responsibilities overseas. By the early 1970s, IUM alumni had already been sent by the Saudi state agency Dar al-Ifta' to more than 20 African countries "extending from Rhodesia and South Africa in the south to Somalia in the north, and to Ghana and Niger in the West". They remained in touch with the university, receiving supplies of publications for distribution amongst the populations of those countries, sending reports on their activities, and corresponding with staff to

seek clarification and solutions for “scholastic problems” which they faced in the course of their work.<sup>301</sup> Some graduates have also been employed on a similar basis by Saudi-sponsored organisations like the Muslim World League.<sup>302</sup>

However, most have travelled on from Medina independently and have forged their own paths after graduation. They may return to their countries of origin or settle in new locations, whether for *da'wa*, further studies, or paid employment outside the religious sphere. IUM graduates in the United Kingdom at the time of this research, for example, included not only British Muslims but also individuals from the United States, Ghana, Liberia, India, Libya, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), and no doubt many other countries besides. Many graduates are neither prominent figures nor engaged in full-time religious undertakings, either not viewing this as the future that they desire for themselves or else concluding that any such ambitions that they might have must inevitably give way to the need to provide materially for themselves and often for families. Those contacted for this research in the United Kingdom included people working not only within the religious sphere but also in computing, the secular education system, and in different forms of blue collar employment.

Even those who either do not seek or do not achieve prominence as religious figures may nonetheless still exert authority on an informal, local basis in ways that are legitimised by their IUM background. A British Muslim from a South Asian background who returned to London after graduating from Medina in recent years explained that it was now common for acquaintances and friends of friends to telephone him seeking advice on religious matters.<sup>303</sup> Two British converts to Islam who were still in the middle of their studies at the IUM suggested that this status as a perceived source of authoritative religious guidance can become noticeable long before one graduates, even when one is still only studying Arabic at the IUM in preparation for entering undergraduate studies.<sup>304</sup> Those whose focus is on employment or further education

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<sup>301</sup> “Dalil al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya” 1971, 63. At least two IUM graduates interviewed for this project were at one time employed to undertake such work by Dar al-Ifta'.

<sup>302</sup> Interview with IUM graduate F, who was himself employed by the Muslim World League to work in Europe. London, 25 January 2011.

<sup>303</sup> Interview with IUM graduate J, London, 20 January 2011.

<sup>304</sup> Interview with current IUM students H and K, Riyadh, 15 March 2012.

outside the religious sphere may also play roles in religious institutions on a part-time or occasional basis, including delivering Friday sermons, teaching classes in mosques or making appearances on Islamic media.<sup>305</sup>

Competencies and qualifications accumulated at the IUM thus commonly form the bases for recognition as a source of religious guidance in informal, sporadic and localised ways. However, other graduates have been able to use this capital as a basis for securing far wider-reaching authority and influence. Over time, a great many IUM graduates have achieved prominence as high-profile figures both within and outside circles which are commonly labelled Salafi. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, the university itself has during different periods – and often at any given time – hosted staff sympathetic to a broad range of viewpoints. It should thus come as no surprise that its alumni within Salafi currents around the world are situated across the spectrum on key issues of debate including the permissibility of political activism and the legitimacy of using violent means to achieve political change under current conditions. Saudi IUM graduates range from Safar al-Hawali, a key figurehead in Sahwi political activism, to Rabi' ibn Hadi al-Madkhali, who went on to teach at the IUM after graduation and whose name became synonymous with the staunchly quietist brand of Salafism which became a fierce rival of the Sahwa. Just a few examples of the diverse range of Salafi figures beyond the kingdom who are IUM alumni include Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi'i, the father figure of contemporary Salafism in Yemen who negotiated an ambivalent path between pietist mission and strident positions on key political issues; Ja'far Mahmud Adam and Muhammad Sani 'Umar, who became prominent in new forms of anti-Sufi activism in northern Nigeria after their return to their country of origin; and the Egypt-born 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Khaliq, who subsequently based himself in Kuwait where he was associated until the 1990s with Jam'iyyat Ihya' al-Turath al-Islami (The Association for Reviving Islamic Heritage) and has been a key representative of efforts to promote a politically-engaged brand of Salafism.<sup>306</sup> Others with looser links to the IUM include the Jordan-based Palestinian jihadi scholar 'Abu

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<sup>305</sup> Interviews with IUM graduates C, J and F, all of whom were engaged in such activities.

<sup>306</sup> On these individuals, see respectively Bonnefoy 2011; Thurston, forthcoming; Pall 2013, 79–97.



Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who never enrolled at the university but was informally granted use of its facilities as a young man (Wagemakers 2012a, 36); and Juhayman al-'Utaybi, the leader of the 1979 Masjid Haram siege who, as mentioned previously, had taken classes at the IUM-affiliated Dar al-Hadith in Medina.

The authority and influence exercised by many prominent graduates extends far beyond any single national sphere. After his own time in Saudi Arabia, where his studies in various locations culminated in a master's degree from the IUM, the Yemeni scholar Muqbil al-Wadi'i returned to his country of origin in 1979 with sufficient religious standing to found the Dar al-Hadith school in Dammaj in the early 1980s. With support from sources including Saudi 'ulama', "rich Saudi businessmen of Yemeni origin" and "charitable organisations linked to the Saudi government", the Dammaj Dar al-Hadith became an important centre of Salafi instruction in the Yemeni context. By the late 1990s it boasted nearly 1,000 students (Bonney 2011, 54–59). It and other schools which grew up around al-Wadi'i in turn attracted migrants from far beyond Yemen's borders. Al-Wadi'i himself claimed that Dar al-Hadith came to serve students "from Egypt, Kuwait, from the Land of the Two Holy Places, the Najd, Aden, the Hadramawt, Libya, Somalia, Belgium and from other countries, Islamic and non-Islamic" (quoted in Bonney 2011, 58–59). After the Indonesian Salafi figurehead Ja'far Umar Thalib spent time in Yemen in the 1990s, "hundreds" of young Indonesians began travelling to study at schools linked to al-Wadi'i there (N. Hasan 2010, 692–97).

Such transnational influence has also been achieved by graduates through flows of publications and other media across borders. Noah Salomon has shown that works authored by 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Khaliq have played an important role in informing and legitimating political activism undertaken by the Sudanese Salafi movement Ansar al-Sunna al-Muhammadiyah. The latter movement had itself earlier been influenced by the Egyptian organisation of the same name, whose links with the IUM were discussed in Chapters 4 and 6 of this thesis (Salomon 2009). As with many such figures, 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Khaliq's Arabic-language website makes his books, articles, fatwas, sermons and other materials available across the globe.<sup>307</sup> A brief account of his

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<sup>307</sup> "al-Shabaka al-Salafiyya" 2013.

scholarly credentials on this site lists only the degree in shari'a that he secured from the IUM in 1965, thus emphasising the centrality of spiritual capital made available by the IUM in legitimising his status as a source of transnational religious authority.

Other IUM graduates have exerted considerable influence amongst English-speaking Muslims through entrepreneurial investment of symbolic capital acquired partly in Medina in novel organisational structures. One example is AIMaghrib Institute, a religious educational project founded by the Canadian IUM graduate Muhammad Alshareef in 2002. Its dean of academic affairs is the United States-born IUM graduate Yasir Qadhi, a prominent figure discussed further below. With chapters in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Ireland and the United Arab Emirates, AIMaghrib Institute claims to have taught over 33,000 students, who pay fees which help to make it sustainable.<sup>308</sup> Another comparable project is AIKauthar Institute, headed by the IUM graduate Tawfique Chowdhury, which has websites in English and French, addresses in the UK, Canada, South Africa and Australia, and claims to offer instruction in nine countries.<sup>309</sup> These institutional structures provide for transnational coordination of instructors, course content, seminars and qualifications across multiple national spaces. Graduates have also used new online learning technologies to achieve comparable reach through projects like the Islamic Online University. Founded in 2007 by the Jamaica-born IUM graduate Bilal Philips, who was by that time already a prominent figure through his publications, speaking tours and media appearances, this project has offices in Qatar and the Gambia. It offers no-cost diploma programmes and other more advanced fee-paying courses through virtual campuses operating entirely on the basis of online tuition. By 2012, it claimed to have 50,000 students from across the globe.<sup>310</sup> In addition to their founders and heads, each of these organisations employs multiple IUM graduates as instructors, albeit alongside individuals from other educational backgrounds, and all of them cite IUM qualifications in online staff profiles as a way of attesting to their credentials. In this way, as with al-Wadi'i's Dar al-Hadith in Yemen, capital accumulated in part at the

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<sup>308</sup> "About AIMaghrib Institute" 2013.

<sup>309</sup> "AIKauthar Institute" 2013.

<sup>310</sup> "Islamic Online University - About Us" 2013.

IUM may be invested in new institutions, contributing to their capacity in turn to legitimate a particular set of religious goods and to certify qualifications for students across the globe.

An IUM graduate may rarely secure or even seek recognition as a scholar in his own right, deserving of the label *'ālim*, at least without considerable further training. However, graduates do more commonly secure other forms of religious standing reflected in honorific titles, including most commonly “shaykh”. They may come to be widely recognised as *du'āt* or *ṭalabat 'ilm* (students of knowledge), denoting a capacity to offer religious guidance to the lay masses with reference to the rulings of those who are recognised as scholars. Such religious status as may be achieved by graduates neither derives automatically from IUM qualifications, nor is it in any way a matter of linear promotion through any kind of formally institutionalised hierarchy. Rather, in addition to careful investment of one's existing reserves of spiritual capital, it involves ongoing accumulation and often intense contestation.

Particularly for those whose own influence comes to extend transnationally, these struggles to secure and to constantly renegotiate positions of authority play out not only within but also across multiple local and national spaces, connected by migration and cross-border communications including YouTube, online discussion forums, websites and flows of publications. Together, these connections give rise to a transnational religious field of the kind defined in the introduction to this thesis, connecting actors in multiple local and national spaces. Struggles over the evaluation and ordering of spiritual capital within this field involve an array of actors, including scholars based at the IUM and elsewhere in Saudi Arabia but also other Medina graduates, established religious authorities across the world from both within and outside the Salafi fold, and lay audiences.

As might be expected, non-Salafi religious figures – who view the university's mission as a threat to their own ways of knowing and living Islam – have engaged in energetic efforts to devalue both the spiritual capital institutionalised in the IUM and also that embodied in its graduates. A particularly forceful illustration of this dynamic is found in a text penned by the Kuwaiti Sufi public figure Yusuf al-Sayyid Hashim al-Rifa'i, titled

“Advice to Our Brothers the Scholars of Najd”. A sub-section of this text – titled “The Sham(e) of Madina University” – merits quoting in full, as an artefact of these broader transnational struggles. Addressing the Saudi scholarly establishment, al-Rifa’i charges that

You built a university in al-Madina al-Munawwara and named it the Islamic University, near the Master of Prophets, peace and greetings be upon him. People and scholars then flocked to it with their cherished children and sons, rejoicing at the chance of drinking from [sic] this spring, thinking it would increase them in love and followership of their Beloved, peace and greetings be upon him, his dear Family, his Companions, and the Successors. But there you were teaching them how to deprecate him and all of them! You also had the students spy on and surveil one another so as to report to you the names and activities of those you named grave-lovers (*al-quburiy-yun*)! Namely, those who made frequent visits and salutations upon the Master of Messengers and the Mercy of Allah to the worlds so that you might wage war against them, ostracize them and expel them! You would only keep whoever became your client and obeyed you – for those alone are truthful and trusted according to you.

Whoever graduated successfully at your hands, having drunk in the gamut of your beliefs, you sent back to their countries as your representatives to sound out your warnings and announce your glad tidings that their misguided fathers and wayward nations must renew their Islam. Such graduates you pampered with lavish salaries, opening offices for them and every conceivable opportunity. As a result, dissensions and enmity flared up between them and the Ulema and pious Muslims of the generations of their fathers and past Shaykhs. Such graduates resemble the time bombs you manufactured and filled with all kinds of bad opinions of others and deep-seated contempt. This has transformed Muslim countries, especially Africa and Asia, into battlefields of perpetual dissensions among Muslims. This condition has even spread to the Muslim countries that gained their independence from Russia only recently, all the way to Muslim minorities and communities in Europe, America, Australia and elsewhere! To Allah is our complaint (al-Rifa’i n.d.)

Al-Rifa’i’s alternative narrative of the IUM project contrasts sharply with the university’s own self-presentation. In place of the themes of beneficence, enlightenment and universal truth, he offers an account of symbolic violence, divisiveness, religious deviation and patronage. More to the point, his narrative strongly contests the value of the spiritual capital accumulated by its students. Rather than *du’āt* equipped with correct knowledge and skills grounded in scripture, the latter are presented as subservient clients and products of Saudi machinations (“your representatives” and “time bombs you manufactured”) endowed only with particularistic, misguided opinions (“your beliefs”, “your warnings” and “your glad tidings”). This text has been made available in both English and Arabic on the author’s

website, and has been reproduced and discussed on numerous other websites and online discussion forums by Muslims in locations around the world.

Moreover, such contestation also rages within the Salafi fold, where the respective religious statuses of the IUM as an institution and of its graduates as individuals have been robustly disputed. At the militant end of the Salafi spectrum, for example, the IUM has been strongly criticised by Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Athari, a fellow countryman and student of the Jordanian militant Salafi ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. Advising aspiring students against studying at the IUM, al-Athari makes accusations concerning not only poor teaching and consequently a poor calibre of graduates but also that most of its staff are in his view “from the Madakhila and the Jamiyya”, a reference to politically quietist Salafis aligned with the former IUM staff members Rabi’ al-Madkhali and Muhammad Aman al-Jami. He also charges that its students are divided into factions like Sufis, groups inspired by the Syrian ex-Muslim Brother Muhammad Surur Zayn al-‘Abidin, and followers of al-Madkhali; and that anyone who went to the IUM and revealed himself to be “from the people of the true programme”, presumably here a reference to a more militant brand of Salafism of the kind espoused by al-Athari himself, would quickly find himself pilloried, excluded or possibly even jailed. He makes these arguments despite his acknowledgement that IUM syllabuses may include some worthy content, including knowledge of correct creed on such issues as *tawhīd al-asmā’ wa-l-ṣifāt* (cf. Chapter 6).<sup>311</sup>

Even al-Madkhali, himself a graduate and very influential former staff member of the IUM, has criticised other students and graduates of his own alma mater. Whilst praising the university and recommending that aspiring students should enrol there, he has warned about those “people of innovation” who have brought moral and religious corruption to its campus; giving the example of Indian Muslims who bring to the IUM their commitment to the Hanafi *madhhab* and to Maturidi creed, and who fail to see the error of their ways throughout their many years of study in Medina (al-Madkhalee 2008). Al-Madkhali’s views ultimately come down to a defence of the IUM as an institution and only go so far as to suggest that an IUM qualification is not in

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<sup>311</sup> “Muntada al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad: Su’al hawla al-Jami’a al-Islamiyya fi al-Madina” n.d. On al-Athari and his relationship to al-Maqdisi, see Wagemakers 2012a, 175–76.

itself sufficient grounds for religious authority, since there are those who pass through its system without coming to accept the sacred truths imbued in its syllabuses. The Yemeni Salafi scholar Yahya al-Hajuri, a student of the IUM graduate al-Wadi'i, has gone further, stridently attacking the university for what he suggests are *hizbī* influences amongst its faculty; the term *hizbī* in this context being used pejoratively to denote a tendency towards activist political engagement (al-Hajuri 2008).

Like the statement by al-Rifa'i quoted above, the views on the IUM expressed by al-Athari, al-Madkhali and al-Hajuri have all been issued in statements posted online. In the case of the views expressed by al-Madkhali, this includes translation and distribution online in English by the United Kingdom-based Salafi Publications. In this way, they once again become part of a transnational debate over the religious standing both of the institution itself and also of its graduates.

Just as the religious authority of the IUM and its graduates as a collective body are contested through such interventions, so do equivalent struggles play out concerning the standing of individual graduates. Scholars associated with the IUM and the Saudi religious establishment may become involved in this contestation. They may intervene directly, in instances where a particular Saudi scholar praises or criticises a particular graduate, with a view to legitimating or delegitimating them and the projects in which they are engaged. Alternatively, their involvement may be indirect, where Saudi scholars' past works or statements are cited in order to critique or defend a particular graduate, or where graduates cite their previous studies under specific Saudi scholars, in order to affirm their own credentials. However, whilst the views of Saudi scholars carry weight in these struggles, particularly within the Salafi fold, they are by no means the only actors involved. Contestation over the religious authority of particular IUM graduates may also be engaged in by other IUM graduates and established religious authorities, who may release written tracts or other forms of online statements criticising particular graduates' statements, actions or religious credentials. It can also involve laypersons with varying degrees of religious knowledge, far from Saudi Arabia, who are able to air and debate their views on platforms such as internet discussion forums. IUM graduates, like other religious figures, may be commended for their learning and perceived character traits such as erudition, sincerity or humility. At least

as often, individual graduates are strongly attacked, in ways which again tie in with broader struggles within and beyond contemporary Salafism. This frequently involves the use of value-laden labels. Discussion forums dominated by the pietist trend of Salafism associated with al-Madkhali – such as *salafitalk.net* – feature lengthy attacks on IUM graduates, amongst others, using derogatory terms such as “Outbi”, “Ikhwani”, “*hizbi*” or *mubtadi*. These terms denote sympathy towards the thinking of Syed Outb, Muslim Brothers-style tendencies, factionalism and religious innovation, respectively. Similarly, individuals aligned with the pietist trend may be derided as “Madkhali” or “Jami”, denoting devotion to the pietist figureheads al-Madkhali and Muhammad Aman al-Jami, or as *murji*, suggesting a failure to take action on the basis of religious conviction. Graduates’ statements and actions may also be publicly attacked online by a range of religious and lay actors over their alleged inconsistency with scripture or with the views of classical or contemporary scholars. Indeed, to the extent that Saudi scholars become engaged in contestation over the religious status of individual IUM graduates, their involvement is often mediated by actors beyond the kingdom; their interventions occurring not infrequently at the behest of Salafis outside Saudi Arabia, who then record, translate and frame the scholar’s response for wider audiences. In all of the ways suggested here, spiritual capital represents not only a medium but also an object of conflict.

In the context of this contestation, individual graduates may pursue a variety of strategies to negotiate their own credentials. While this includes citing their IUM qualifications as a way of attesting to their spiritual capital, these qualifications are rarely the sole bases of their authority. Facilitated by their knowledge of Arabic and capacity to engage with classical works, graduates engage in self study. They may also accumulate further formal qualifications which serve to bolster their spiritual capital, autonomously of the IUM. In keeping with contemporary modes of religiosity more generally, this ongoing accumulation occurs not within the terms of formal institutional structures but rather through more diffuse social networks (Guest 2007, 190). These may be local but they may also have border-spanning reach, including in ways which tie in with the IUM’s own role in bringing together staff and students from across the globe. One British former student interviewed for this project, who had left

the IUM in the 1990s before graduating, noted that the Arabic language skills that he had acquired there had given him access to a whole new array of religious texts, facilitating his own subsequent independent studies. After returning to the United Kingdom, he moved in networks which connected in part to a circle of prominent Jordanian Salafi scholars, including Muhammad Musa Al Nasr, Salim ibn 'Id al-Hilali and 'Ali ibn Hasan al-Halabi. Since these men had studied under the former IUM staff member Nasir al-Din al-Albani in Jordan following his expulsion from Saudi Arabia, and since al-Albani's thinking and works remained a palpable influence in Medina during this former student's own time there, he suggested that this had been a quite natural transition.<sup>312</sup>

It is worth noting that cultural capital may even be accumulated from outside the religious sphere in ways which serve to bolster graduates' religious standing, underlining the porosity of different social fields. Many graduates, for example, go on to enrol on postgraduate and doctoral programmes in Islamic studies in secular universities, and they may display these achievements alongside their IUM qualifications in contexts like online profiles on the websites of religious projects. Here, in ways which parallel the earlier discussion of a South African graduate's use of resources accumulated at the IUM as a foundation for a career in secular academia, it is clear that symbolic resources may transfer across different social fields and may have value in different spheres of life.

Even to the extent that IUM graduates rely on spiritual capital accumulated at the IUM to bolster their religious authority, they may do so in a variety of ways. This includes not only displaying their IUM qualifications or legitimating their own views with reference to the positions of contemporary Saudi scholars but also drawing on embodied capacities like knowledge of scripture, classical works and the Arabic language, in order to back up their own stances and projects. Indeed, they may shift between registers, drawing on these various bases of authority when addressing different audiences or issues.<sup>313</sup> They may also cite worldly experience as legitimating a

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<sup>312</sup> Interview with former IUM student L, 18 January 2011.

<sup>313</sup> Alex Thurston (forthcoming) has shown how northern Nigerian IUM graduates move between registers to legitimate their authority, tending to appeal to scripture and the



capacity to arrive at their own conclusions on the basis of their knowledge of scripture and classical works, even if these positions differ from those of contemporary Saudi scholars. ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Abd al-Khaliq, for example, has emphasised his own knowledge of current affairs and claimed that those Salafi scholars who reject engagement in political activism – including major Saudi scholars – are hamstrung by their own ignorance of such matters (Wiktorowicz 2006, 224). Similarly, graduates may emphasise their experience of social life outside Saudi Arabia as a way of legitimising their capacity to interpret and apply religious principles in the particular environments in which they live.

Through the processes described here, those IUM graduates who succeed in negotiating and maintaining positions of religious authority do so through dynamics of ongoing accumulation, investment and contestation which may play out locally but which also frequently span national borders. While actors linked directly with the IUM or the broader Saudi religious establishment exercise considerable weight in the context of these struggles, they are joined by laypersons and a diversity of religious authorities spread across countless local and national spaces. Through their engagement in these dynamics, IUM graduates – whilst utilising spiritual capital accumulated in Medina – may come to establish bases of authority with substantial autonomy with respect to the Saudi religious establishment.

I conclude this section with a discussion of two artefacts which serve to illustrate the dynamics discussed here and which help to show how graduates may make use of religious authority deriving in part from an IUM education in ways which do not necessarily coincide with the ambitions of Saudi scholars or the Saudi state.

The first of these artefacts is an article posted on the MuslimMatters.org website in 2007 by Yasir Qadhi, the United States-born IUM graduate who is dean of academic affairs at AIMaghrib Institute, in which he announces that he has put his signature to a Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation with dozens of Sunni figures both inside

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“classical Salafi canon” when addressing lay audiences, but invoking their knowledge of the positions held by modern scholars like al-Albani and Ibn Baz in the context of more involved debates about orthopraxy with audiences including “rival Salafis”.

and outside the United States (Qadhi 2007). The signatories include other IUM graduates like his AIMaghrib colleagues Muhammad AlShareef and Yaser Birjas, and Tawfiq Chowdhury of AlKauthar Institute. They also include dozens of other figures from within and outside the Salafi fold, including some who are widely considered anathema in Salafi circles for their perceived creedal deviations. Qadhi's assent to the pledge may be understood in the context of his broader self-declared project of promoting a form of religiosity amenable to life as part of a Muslim minority community in the United States and simultaneously grounded in core aspects of the Salafi creed taught in Medina.<sup>314</sup> It is worth noting that he has in recent years repeatedly distanced himself from the label "Salafi", noting in another context that while he is in agreement with Salafis on most matters of theology, "I have departed from that movement in many issues, most importantly in how it has traditionally viewed and dealt with opposing groups" (Qadhi 2011).<sup>315</sup>

The lengthy comments thread which follows Qadhi's announcement of his involvement in the Pledge of Mutual Respect and Cooperation on the MuslimMatters.org website includes remarks by an array of actors, including other regular contributors to the same site, lay Muslims and *du'āt*. Many are strongly supportive of the pledge and of Qadhi's involvement in it. Others, however, charge that it legitimises the beliefs and practices of Muslims who are not committed to Salafi creed and that it will represent an obstacle to open critique of their positions. Those leaving comments express their own views, sometimes citing texts from the Qur'an or the Sunna, or the expressed views of contemporary scholars. Several critics of the pledge also question whether it has been approved by senior scholars, suggesting that mere *du'āt* like Qadhi are not qualified to take such a step of their own accord. In the penultimate intervention before the thread is closed for fear of "creating more ill-will and going around in circles", Yasir Qadhi once again defends his decision to sign. He advances several arguments in response to the points raised, including emphasising his belief that the document does not trivialise the differences between the various

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<sup>314</sup> Cf. Qadhi 2011. This article is a response to Elliott 2011, a profile of Qadhi published earlier in the New York Times.

<sup>315</sup> See also "Salafi Muslims: Following the Ancestors of Islam" 2013, a recent interview with Qadhi in which he discusses the label "Salafi".

theological traditions, and that it will not stand in the way of measured discussion of those differences in appropriate, scholarly settings. He also argues that it is legitimate for *du'āt* operating in contexts like the United States to make judgements and decisions on such matters based on their experience of life in these settings:

five years ago, I was the senior-most American student at the Islamic University of Madinah, and the most active Western student as well... Yet, if I had been approached with this very document, in all likelihood I would have raised many of the same concerns that these brothers (most of whom are presently oversees) have raised, and I would have refused to sign it. Yet, here I am, five years later, signing such a document and seeing this as a good matter for the Muslims of N. America. Experience teaches one just as much as books do, and in these last years that I have been giving dawah, I have softened greatly in the harshness that I used to exhibit against the Asharis and moderate Sufis. Yes, they still have mistakes, some of them very serious, but seeing the entire context of our Western situation first-hand has made me realize that there is little to be gained by such harshness, especially in the times and place we live.... My theology hasn't change one iota, but my attitudes towards specific groups has. And it is well known that *mu'amalah*<sup>316</sup> with other groups is a context-based matter, and not one that has specific rulings in the Sharee'ah.

Addressing the question of whether he ought to refer the matter to senior scholars, Qadhi emphasises that he has "conferred with the people of knowledge whom I look up to and who are more aware of our situation than overseas Mashayikh".<sup>317</sup> However, he asserts that this is not a matter in which it is necessary to defer to the judgement of the religious establishment either in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere:

If I myself, having experienced first-hand the Western situation for the last few years, have changed my own views, and I am from the West, how would I then expect an *alim*<sup>318</sup> who has lived his entire life in India or Saudi to understand our situation? Sometimes we place our *ulamaa* above the level they deserve, and that is a fact that needs to be said plainly and clearly. I say this with the utmost respect to them... But, in the end of the day, they are human beings, and a product of their own culture and civilization, just like I am a product of mine.

Taken as a whole, the article and the exchange of comments which follow it illustrate the extent to which the authority exercised by IUM graduates – just like that exercised by other religious figures – is a product of constant negotiation and renegotiation with a diversity of actors. The decision to invest one's spiritual capital in any given project, like the pledge of cooperation at stake here, is always attended by the risk that this

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<sup>316</sup> *Mu'amalāt*, matters pertaining to relations between people, are contrasted in Islamic law with *'ibādāt*, matters pertaining to conduct towards God.

<sup>317</sup> *Mashāyikh* is the plural of shaykh.

<sup>318</sup> *'Ālim* is the singular of 'ulama'.

capital may be squandered if the initiative in question is not well received (Verter 2003, 169). The outcome may depend in part on positions taken by senior religious figures like the Saudi scholarly establishment. At the same time, the outcome may also depend on the responses of a host of other less weighty religious and lay actors. Such people may voice their own views in an array of in public settings, including online discussion threads, and may justify those views in a diversity of ways, including with reference to scripture or relevant statements by established religious authorities. In the context of these struggles, IUM graduates may be able to combine capital accumulated in Medina with other claims to authority – such as practical experience of life as a member of a Muslim minority community in the United States – to establish a position of religious influence with some degree of autonomy with respect to the scholarly milieu in which they attained their own qualifications.

In other instances, this dynamic of IUM graduates exercising authority autonomously of the Saudi religious establishment can take on even starker forms. As Nina Glick Schiller has observed, imperialist projects like that instantiated in the IUM – which seek to exert influence over life within the territories of other states without exercising direct sovereignty over them – are “fraught with contradictions from which people can learn”. Migrants who find themselves imbricated in such projects may find ways of prising open such fractures (Schiller 2005, 444, 454). Narratives of religious legitimacy and universal mission of the kind institutionalised by the Saudi state in projects like the IUM, whilst they serve political ends, simultaneously pave the way for criticism grounded in religious discourse. IUM graduates mentioned earlier in this chapter, including the Yemeni Muqbil al-Wadi'i, have at points in their careers used the positions of religious authority that they negotiated partly on the basis of capital accumulated in Medina in order to advance strident critiques of the Saudi political or religious establishments.<sup>319</sup> As high-profile figures, located beyond the reach of the Riyadh regime but exerting authority within transnational debates which also span the borders of the kingdom itself, such individuals may prove significant antagonists. The

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<sup>319</sup> On the fractious relationship between al-Wadi'i and the Saudi establishment, see Bonnefoy 2011.

second artefact put forward for discussion here illustrates how such dynamics may play out.

This artefact is a video of a lecture given by another United States-born IUM graduate, Ahmad Musa Jibril, which was posted on YouTube in March 2013 and which by November 2013 had received around 11,100 viewings.<sup>320</sup> Another version posted on YouTube ten days after the first one, this time with Arabic subtitles such that it might potentially be accessed by non-English speaking audiences inside Saudi Arabia, had by November 2013 received some 7,200 viewings.<sup>321</sup> A website described as being set up by students of Ahmad Musa Jibril states that he “spent part of his childhood in the city of Madina... when his father, Sheikh Musa Jibril, was a student of the Islamic University of Madina”. Having returned to the United States and finished high school there in 1989, Ahmad Musa Jibril apparently went on to himself secure a degree in shari’a from the IUM before settling once again in the United States.<sup>322</sup> In the video, speaking in English, he advises his students that they may put away their notes from the class that has just finished – on Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s *al-Usul al-Thalatha* – because the lecture will deal with a separate subject. He goes on to speak about recent protests undertaken by women in the Saudi town of Burayda, calling for the release of their relatives detained in Saudi jails, and addresses in particular the arrests and treatment of some of these female protestors in turn. He invokes earlier times in Muslim history when he claims that women were treated as untouchable and contrasts this with the actions of the Saudi state, alleging that women arrested in the Burayda protests have been ill-treated and beaten in jail. He criticises Saudi scholars who have failed to speak out on the matter and describes the Saudi royals as *tawāghīt* (tyrants) and “bums that rule by an iron fist”. Urging his audience to feel solidarity with the arrested protestors, he concludes by expressing the hope that God will paralyse, destroy and humiliate “any hands that touch them... or those mouths who order those to touch them”. Throughout this lecture, Ahmad Musa Jibril lends religious legitimacy to his arguments by drawing on his ability to cite hadiths and statements by the Prophet, to invoke

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<sup>320</sup> *Free Our Sisters!! Shaykh Ahmad Musa Jibril* 2013.

<sup>321</sup> *al-Shaykh Ahmad Jibril Hafizahu Allah Nusra li-l-Hara’ir* 2013.

<sup>322</sup> “About AhmadJibril.com” 2013.

specific episodes in Islamic history, and to appeal to works by past scholars like al-Dhahabi, Ibn Kathir, al-Biruni, Ya'qut al-Hamawi, al-Mas'udi and al-Baladhuri, along with the views of modern figures like al-Albani. The video is illustrative of ways in which knowledge and other kinds of embodied capacities accumulated at least in part at the IUM may be used to construct an authoritative political critique of the very state and religious establishment which funded and operated that project in the first place.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that material investment channelled into the IUM project has fed into far-reaching dynamics of cultural transformation. The significance of this investment is that it has provided for new cross-border flows of religious migrants bearing particular forms of spiritual capital, flows which have in turn contributed to the emergence and consolidation of Salafi currents in locations around the world. Whether or not they were already inclined towards Salafi modes of religiosity prior to travelling to Medina, time spent studying at the IUM has offered many of its graduates new bases of religious authority and influence grounded in bodies of knowledge and skills rooted in the Wahhabi and broader Salafi traditions.

Yet far from proceeding mechanically, these dynamics have been refracted through the agency of an array of actors. While this chapter can by no means claim to present a comprehensive account of the trajectories of the many thousands of migrant students who have passed through these circuits, or to identify generalisable patterns in their behaviours, the insights that it offers are sufficient to establish a significant degree of diversity and fluidity within the overarching dynamic of Wahhabi religious expansion. Students themselves have evaluated the IUM's teachings on the basis of tastes and dispositions forged prior to their arrival in the kingdom. While many have embraced the university's missionary project, others have rejected it outright or have negotiated more subtle forms of engagement, finding ways of benefiting from the material and symbolic resources available on and around the IUM campus without necessarily assenting to its Wahhabi-influenced message. Moreover, in addition to functioning as resources in struggles to define Islamic orthodoxy, the forms of spiritual capital institutionalised in the IUM and embodied in its graduates have also in themselves become objects of struggle, as lay actors and established authorities around the world

have fiercely debated their value. Graduates who have succeeded in using these resources as bases for securing positions of authority in their communities of origin or transnationally have done so through processes of negotiation, contestation and ongoing accumulation which have played out far from Saudi Arabia. The forms of authority which emerge from these struggles may often be exercised with considerable autonomy with respect to the Saudi religious and political establishments.

Investing in bringing religious migrants to Medina and providing them with a particular array of symbolic resources has allowed the Saudi state and its Wahhabi allies to exert considerable influence in far-flung locations. At the same time, migrant students themselves have found a certain amount of room for manoeuvre within the terms of these dynamics. Saudi elites have been faced with an inability to determine the precise ways in which resources made available in Medina are put to use, or to predict or control the ultimate social, cultural and political ramifications of their investment.

## Conclusion

That Saudi “petrodollars” have played a role in the spread of Salafi currents in locations around the world since the 1970s has long been a commonplace assumption amongst scholars of the Middle East and media commentators alike. This thesis has explored just one aspect of the far broader array of ways in which these dynamics are said to have played out; that is, through developments which have occurred at the intersection between migration, education and state-backed religious mission. With a view to historicising these issues and moving past broad generalisations, I have developed a focused narrative of the role played by Saudi state-funded educational institutions in the extension of religious influence outwards from Najd and ultimately to locations across the globe from the 1920s onwards. Seeking a non-deterministic and non-reductionist account of how material investment by Saudi state actors has fed into dynamics of cultural transformation in far-flung locations, I have suggested understanding this history with reference to a conception of transnational religious economies consisting in flows – both within and across national borders – of material capital, spiritual capital, religious migrants and social technologies. Whilst taking into account the importance of material wealth, a historiography grounded in this approach can help to bring to light the complex tableau of actors, resources, power relations, historical contingencies, multivalent border crossings, and discursive shifts involved in the efforts of Saudi actors to exert religious influence far beyond the kingdom’s own territories.

Education has served as a tool for promoting Wahhabism ever since the inception of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’s revivalist mission in eighteenth-century Najd. However, this project underwent a pivotal transformation in the occupied Hijaz of the 1920s, with the assembling of a bureaucratised education system directly funded and administered by the Saudi state. As part of ongoing processes of state- and nation-building from that time onwards, material investment in this apparatus was employed as a means for systematically advancing Wahhabi influence across and ultimately beyond the Peninsula. State-funded religious instruction offered to Saudi subjects and later to non-Saudis acquainted them with tenets rooted in the Wahhabi tradition. But this material investment also made possible the accumulation by students of spiritual



capital, including certificates of qualification and an array of embodied competencies. At least insofar as the forms of capital in question might come to be recognised as legitimate and valuable in any given social context, these resources offered potential bases of religious authority that could be used to assert an understanding of Islam in keeping with Wahhabi norms. In this sense, material wealth represented a source of power in the context of ever-unfolding social struggles to define Islamic orthodoxy. Social technologies of education appropriated firstly from the vestiges of the Ottoman and Sharifian Hijaz, and later from further afield, offered new means for facilitating, monitoring and managing these transactions in material and immaterial capital.

At the same time, the question of legitimacy helped to ensure that these processes were always, inevitably about far more than material investment alone. In the context of the Saudi-occupied Hijaz, the legitimacy of the Wahhabi tradition and the value of spiritual capital accumulated within the terms of that tradition were profoundly contested. The same was true from the early 1960s, when domestic politicking and geopolitical considerations in the Cold War context led the monarchy to sponsor a concerted drive to extend religious influence beyond the Arabian Peninsula. Strategies which addressed the problem of legitimacy to some extent in the 1920s Hijaz reappeared in new forms in connection with later projects like the Islamic University of Medina. The institutions in question in each case co-opted religious migrants from across the Middle East and beyond, who not only performed the skilled labour of instruction and administration but also brought legitimating symbolic resources of their own; lent a veneer of Islamic universality to projects which were at root concerned with the promotion of a very particular set of beliefs and practices; could mediate in the conflicts which arose from this contentious endeavour; and, in the case of the IUM, helped to connect the university to the far-flung communities to which it was to preach. The use of education to promote Wahhabi concerns in the Hijaz and then later beyond the Peninsula also involved adjustments to religious discourse which could go some way towards securing legitimacy for those traditions with new audiences. The extension of Wahhabi influence was further complicated insofar as it was refracted through the agency of students themselves.

While there is a growing body of serious research on religion and politics in Saudi Arabia, the empirical account offered in this thesis goes substantially beyond the existing secondary literature in unpacking the history of the particular set of institutions and dynamics at stake in these processes. To the extent that the missionary projects of institutions like the IUM have been treated in academic works and media coverage to date, these discussions have been at best quite fleeting. At worst, they have been characterised by broad generalisations, ill-founded assumptions and often elementary inaccuracies.

The most basic way in which the present study contributes to the existing literature discussed in the introduction to this thesis is by offering considerable evidence to corroborate and add detail to earlier suggestions, invariably made more or less in passing, that cross-border religious educational circuits centred on institutions like the IUM must be taken into account as an important factor in any effort to understand the worldwide proliferation of Salafi modes of religiosity since the mid-twentieth century. This is not to suggest that the spread of Salafism in recent decades is nothing more than a product of Saudi machinations. Salafi currents around the world often have at least partially indigenous roots – tracing back to movements like the Ahl-i Hadith in South Asia and Ansar al-Sunna in Egypt, or to individuals like Muhammad al-Shawkani in Yemen – which may pre-date even the founding of the contemporary Saudi state. Salafis have flourished in situations where direct Saudi involvement is not an obvious factor. Moreover, Salafi currents are frequently shaped and reshaped in part by long-distance connections which bypass Saudi Arabia altogether, as communication and transportation technologies increasingly facilitate the circulation of scholars, students and literature across borders. Nonetheless, this thesis has emphasised the scale of missionary projects like the IUM, which alone has absorbed many hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of investment and has drawn in many thousands of students from the furthest reaches of the globe.<sup>323</sup> It is not the case that all IUM graduates self-identify as Salafi or that all would be identified by others as such, and it would be unwise indeed

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<sup>323</sup> A rough calculation based on figures given in al-Ghamidi 1998, 281 suggests that the amount spent on the IUM between 1961 and 1998 alone had already reached a total that would be equivalent to well over 1,400 million US dollars at today's exchange rates.

to pigeonhole all of those who have passed through these migratory circuits. Nonetheless, it is certainly true that, upon their return to their countries of origin or in the other locations in which they have settled, many graduates have put resources accumulated in Medina to work in bolstering existing Salafi movements and circles. Many have also succeeded in setting themselves up as authoritative points of reference in their own right, either as individuals or through newly established religious educational institutions. In this way, whether as recognised scholars or as lesser *du'āt* or *ṭalabat 'ilm*, they have in turn often brought instruction grounded in Salafi theology to very large new audiences. Others still have engaged in similar processes in less eye-catching ways, at the level of individual communities and mosques.

As much as these dynamics have involved flows of persons and resources outwards from Saudi Arabia, they have clearly also involved flows into the kingdom. With regard to the ongoing debate concerning the extent of the role played by foreign Muslim Brothers and other migrant actors in influencing the Islamist scene in Saudi Arabia, this study raises a number of relevant points. It would be overstating the case to suggest that migrant staff members represented nothing more than units of labour within the circuits which grew up around the IUM, merely delivering course content prepared for them by the Wahhabi establishment. Many migrants in fact claimed to have contributed to shaping instruction there, and these claims are corroborated by the fact that the university's syllabuses came to include texts from well outside the Wahhabi tradition. Amongst them were works clearly associated with the Islamist social movements whose members took up roles in Medina.<sup>324</sup> I have also highlighted at least circumstantial evidence to suggest that migrant staff members may have played a certain role in broader shifts in teaching, including the early move away from the Hanbali *fiqh* historically associated with the Wahhabi tradition towards a more explicitly comparative jurisprudential approach. Furthermore, foreign staff held important posts like overseeing the system of social supervision on campus and editing

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<sup>324</sup> Just a few examples include works by the Ahl-i Hadith forebear Siddiq Hasan Khan, Ansar al-Sunna's Muhammad Khalil Harras, the Egyptian Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb and his brother Muhammad Qutb (al-Ghamidi 1998, 55; al-'Abbud 2004, 442, 543, 603, 638, 649).

the university journal, a publication which approvingly published articles by and about Islamist movements and thinkers from around the world.

Nonetheless, this thesis has underlined the extent to which such contributions were made within a system which was funded and administered by, and which was ultimately answerable to, the Saudi religious and political establishments. To admit the importance of the involvement of migrant actors is not to shift responsibility for the anti-Semitism, sectarianism and xenophobia that so often marked university syllabuses and literature. The IUM from the start was not a product of cosmopolitan interactions between actors from diverse backgrounds on an equal footing; it was a project designed to serve the political interests of the Saudi regime upon which it relied for its very existence, and to promote core tenets in line with those of the Saudi religious establishment. Even if migrant actors participated as more than just units of skilled labour, their labour was indeed an important resource in the service of this Saudi project. These migrants also represented a resource for Saudi elites in a more complex sense, insofar as they brought symbolic resources including qualifications acquired in established centres of learning around the world. The fact that these resources were drawn from outside Saudi Arabia, and held cachet in the world beyond the kingdom, was important for legitimating a missionary project which aspired to be taken seriously by audiences far and wide.

Even to the extent that the presence of foreign staff members and also foreign students from diverse backgrounds appears to have influenced the content of teaching at the IUM, this need not be understood as a dilution or weakening of the institution's Wahhabi missionary drive. Rather, it may be understood in terms of a process whereby the absorption of resources, actors and discourses from beyond the kingdom in fact served to strengthen the capacity of a Wahhabi missionary project to exert influence over diverse audiences. Core tenets, like the tripartite Salafi conception of *tawhīd* which has always been at the heart of the Wahhabi tradition, were not allowed to slip. To the extent that shifts in teaching are discernable, as in relation to *fiqh*, these occurred within the terms of the Wahhabi and broader Salafi discursive traditions. Importantly, there is clear evidence that these shifts were understood as contributing to the capacity of the university to position itself as a supplier of religious resources to

migrant students within a shared moral and intellectual framework. These adjustments to the content of teaching were seen as advantageous partly because it was understood that they might remove barriers to securing students' assent to and active participation in the university's missionary project, which ultimately rested on the core matter of creed rather than jurisprudence.

Considerations such as these problematise the metaphor of the "export of Wahhabism". This metaphor serves a purpose insofar as it draws attention to increasing religious influence exerted abroad by Saudi actors in recent decades. However, in suggesting the straightforward transposition of a pristine set of ideas and practices from one location to another, it distracts attention from the complex ways in which this influence has been achieved. It is certainly true that the missionary project institutionalised in the IUM may legitimately be described as Wahhabi, insofar as it was from the start managed by figures from the heart of the Wahhabi establishment and insofar as its syllabuses – particularly in relation to the key issue of *tawhīd* – were rooted in principles in keeping with the Wahhabi framework of inquiry. However, the export metaphor fails to capture the fact that the IUM drew heavily on personnel from social and religious backgrounds which had little at all to do with Wahhabism, and that its syllabuses simultaneously came to feature texts, disciplines and ideas which had far more to do with the broader Salafi and Islamic traditions than with Wahhabism per se. If one is to reach for a metaphor to describe what is going on here, the idea of expansion is more appropriate than that of export. This metaphor makes room for the fact that what was occurring through these processes was a dynamic of hegemonic expansion of the Wahhabi mission. This involved transformations of the missionary project itself through the very process of its appropriation of persons, resources and discourses from outside the Wahhabi tradition and from outside the Saudi national sphere, and in the very course of efforts to articulate the core concerns of that project with the dispositions and aspirations of a diversity of actors from around the world.

There are many senses in which all this has involved an extension of "soft power", as earlier commentators have suggested. That said, it is necessary to be nuanced about who has wielded this power and what precisely this power has consisted in. By drawing thousands of migrants into its orbit, the IUM forged new networks of relations

both within and across borders, between the university's state funders, the Wahhabi establishment which oversaw its functioning, the foreign staff who played a large role in implementing teaching, the foreign students who filled its classrooms, and the communities within which those students have made lives for themselves after graduation. Most fundamentally, the historiography employed in this thesis draws attention to the ways in which the terms of these relationships were defined by the uneven distribution of resources. Whether staff members were genuinely committed or not to the IUM's teachings, as migrant workers seeking access to a share of the material resources which flowed downwards from state actors through the university apparatus their options for introducing radical changes were clearly limited. Similarly, migrant students arriving in Medina as recipients of scholarships were in no position to bring about major changes in how the system operated; meaning that those who objected strongly to the university's teachings had little option but to remove themselves from the situation. On the other hand, those who stayed could accumulate resources in the form of spiritual capital which could then contribute to setting the terms of relations of power and authority between them and members of their communities of origin or other actors with whom they would come into contact after graduation. As I have suggested, the balance of relations as defined by the distribution of resources was in many cases further bolstered by other kinds of power, including discursive and bureaucratic forms.

What emerges from this picture is not a realist image of a unitary state seamlessly extending its power outwards over an ever-increasing array of actors, according to some coherent grand design reflective of national interests. Rather, it is the proliferation of a far more complex network of power relations between an array of state and non-state actors, both within and across borders. Saudi state actors and the Wahhabi religious establishment have certainly exerted a great deal of sway within this network of relations by virtue of their privileged access to both material and immaterial resources, and their capacity to control the distribution of those resources. Yet non-state actors including IUM graduates have also had a certain amount of room for manoeuvre, in some instances even using resources acquired within these networks as foundations for attacks on the Saudi state itself. By injecting new reserves

of capital into transnational religious economies, Saudi state actors have been able to exert considerable influence within the territories of other states around the world; but that influence has not necessarily constituted control.

The heuristic framework developed in this thesis offers tools for making sense of the ways in which economic conditions may impact on the capacity of actors to exercise power within always-unfolding struggles to define orthodoxy, and thereby to shape the evolution of religious traditions. This conceptual framework could be further developed with the introduction of the notion of social capital, which has not been a focus of analysis here. In its existing or developed form, this mode of analysis might be used as a basis for exploring other phenomena which have been identified as possible aspects of wider processes of Wahhabi religious expansion, including the funding of Islamic charities, movements and missionary organisations like the Muslim World League, or the sponsorship of certain kinds of religious publishing. It might also be used as a starting point for exploring the cross-border influence exerted by other religious educational institutions, Islamic or otherwise. If a broader conception of cultural capital were to be reintroduced in place of spiritual capital, a notion of transnational symbolic economies might even help to account for comparable dynamics relating to secular institutions. One might think of the Patrice Lumumba University, the founding of which by the Soviets at the height of the Cold War in 1960 with a view to training students from developing countries bears direct comparison with the genesis of the IUM.<sup>325</sup>

In relation to the topic at hand, it is clear that the present study represents only a point of departure. The IUM as an institution and the broader processes of religious expansion within which it is situated have undergone many changes over the past half a century and will certainly continue to do so into the future. To move past the often shrill discourse that surrounds the issues at stake in this thesis, to arrive at historical detail and nuance where previously there have been sweeping generalisations and innuendo, will inevitably require a great deal of further work. It is hoped that this

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<sup>325</sup> I am grateful to John Chalcraft for suggesting this parallel.

project may at least have laid some foundations and suggested some possible avenues for ongoing enquiry.



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The Arabic definite article al- is discounted for purposes of alphabetisation, as are diacritics. The only exception to this rule is the case of authors of works in European languages who capitalise the first letter of the definite article when rendering their names in Latin alphabet (e.g. Al-Rasheed). The Arabic word Al (as in Al Su'ud, the House of Sa'ud) is not discounted for purposes of alphabetisation. Where Arabic words or names have been rendered by the author or publisher in non-standard ways (e.g. AlKauthar Institute, Alshamsi), they are treated here as if they were English words.

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