

***The Transmission of the Islamic Tradition in the Early Modern Era: The  
Life and Writings of Aḥmad Al-Dardīr***

Submitted by Walead Mohammed Mosaad to the University of Exeter as a  
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## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Background and Methodology .....	16
Review of the Literature .....	33
Political and social climate in Ottoman Egypt at the time of al-Dardīr .....	42
Cultural and Intellectual Climate at the time of al-Dardīr .....	50
Primary Sources .....	55
Al-Dardīr's Writings .....	58
Overview of Al-Dardīr's Biography .....	61
Conclusion.....	68
<b>Chapter Two: Al-Dardīr and the Foundations of the Islamic Educational</b>	
<b>Paradigm .....</b>	<b>70</b>
Introduction .....	70
Intellectual Genealogies, Hermeneutics and Sunni Authoritativeness.....	78
Arabic Hermeneutics.....	88
The <i>Thabat</i> of al-Dardīr and his Education .....	96
Al-Dardīr and the Tradition of <i>Tahqīq</i> .....	107
Definitions .....	111
<i>Tarjīh</i> (weighted preference) of opinions within the Ash'arī school .....	113
Exposition of Differences between Ash'arī and Māturīdī Theologies .....	115
Al-Dardīr's Understanding of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy .....	116
Relationship of Rational Affirmations and Spiritual Realisations .....	120
<b>Chapter Three: Al-Dardīr's Sufi-Theology: Synthesis of <i>Kalām</i> and</b>	
<b><i>Taṣawwuf</i> Epistemologies .....</b>	<b>124</b>
Introduction .....	124
Al-Dardīr's Sources of Knowledge .....	126

The Ontology of the Intellect.....	127
The Epistemology of the Intellect .....	130
<b>The Ash‘arī Tradition in the Later Period.....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>Al-Dardīr’s Understanding of God and His Divine Attributes .....</b>	<b>144</b>
The <i>Waḥdāniyya</i> (Oneness) of God .....	151
Causation and Divine Omnipotence .....	154
Divine Essence and Divine Existence .....	160
<i>Ta‘alluqāt</i> (Cosmic Connections) and <i>‘Ilal</i> (existential causes).....	164
<b>Al-Dardīr’s Synthesis and the <i>Sharī‘a-Ṭarīqa-Ḥaqīqa</i> Paradigm.....</b>	<b>175</b>
<i>Waḥdat al-Wujūd</i> .....	176
Hierarchical Approaches to <i>Tawḥīd</i> .....	181
<i>Ṭarīqa</i> and <i>Ḥaqīqa</i> .....	184
<b>Chapter Four: <i>Tarjīḥ</i> and al-Dardīr’s Methodology Regarding the <i>Fiqh</i></b>	
<b>Tradition .....</b>	<b>193</b>
Introduction .....	193
Jurisprudence and Madhhabism .....	196
The Synopsis-Commentary-Gloss genre ( <i>mukhtaṣar-sharḥ-ḥāshiya</i> ) in the	
Mālikī Tradition.....	203
Al-Dardīr’s Commentary on the <i>Mukhtaṣar</i> of Khalīl.....	221
Khalīl’s Terminology in the <i>Mukhtaṣar</i> .....	223
Other Commentaries of the <i>Mukhtaṣar</i> of Khalīl .....	228
Analysis of al-Dardīr’s Major Commentary on the <i>Mukhtaṣar</i> .....	230
Al-Dardīr’s <i>Mukhtaṣar: Aqrab al-Masālik</i> .....	244
Al-Dardīr’s Methodology of Legal Plurality Minimisation .....	253
<b>Chapter Five: Al-Dardīr: ‘Ālim, Sufi, and Intercessor for the Masses .....</b>	<b>259</b>
Introduction .....	259
The ‘ <i>Ulamā</i> ’ in the Ottoman Egypt of al-Dardīr .....	274
Al-Dardīr: Quietest or Activist? .....	280
Al-Dardīr the Mufti and Leader of al-Azhar .....	290
Al-Dardīr the Sufi <i>Murshid</i> .....	297
Conclusion.....	309

<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>Appendix: Translation of al-Dardīr’s Minor Creed.....</b>	<b>317</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>319</b>

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the role of tradition and discursive knowledge transmission on the formation of the *‘ulamā*, the learned scholarly class in Islam, and their approach to the articulation of the Islamic disciplines. The basis of this examination is the twelfth/eighteenth century scholar, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Dardīr, an Egyptian Azharī who wrote highly influential treatises in the disciplines of creedal theology, Mālikī jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism). Additionally, he occupied a prominent role in the urban life of Cairo, accredited with several incidents of intercession with the rulers on behalf of the Cairo populace.

This thesis argues that a useful framework for evaluating the intellectual contributions of post-classical scholars such as al-Dardīr involves the concept of an Islamic discursive tradition, where al-Dardīr’s specific contributions were aimed towards preserving, upholding, and maintaining the Islamic tradition, including the intellectual “sub-traditions” that came to define it.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to al-Dardīr, the social and intellectual climate of his era, and an overview of his writings. Chapter 2 analyses the educational paradigm that preceded al-Dardīr, and affected his approach to the Islamic disciplines. We then focus our attention to al-Dardīr’s contribution to the Islamic educational paradigm, in the form of *taḥqīq* (verification). Chapter 3 analyses al-Dardīr’s methodology in the synthesis of the rational and mystical approaches to knowledge located within the Islamic disciplines of creedal theology and Sufism. Chapter 4 analyses al-Dardīr’s to

the Mālikī *fiqh* tradition, specifically his methodology of *tarjīḥ* (weighing of juristic evidence between different narrations). Chapter 5 examines his societal roles, and the influence of tradition on his relationships with the ruling elite, the '*ulamā*' class, and the masses. The thesis ends with a conclusion that summarises the results of all of the above.



## A Note on Transliteration

The system of transliteration used in this thesis generally follows that of the Library of Congress. However, I do not distinguish between alif and alif *maqṣūra* (e.g. *lā* vs. *ilā* ), and I use ‘*iy*’ in place of ‘*īy*’ for the medial long vowel plus consonant (e.g. *al-Miṣriyya* vs. *al-Miṣrīya* ). In alphabetical lists, (al-) is ignored at the beginning of a name, but not in the middle. The *tā’ al-marbūṭa* is not delineated, save when in an *iḍāfa* construction, in which case it is represented with a ‘*t*’ (e.g. *zubda* vs. *zubdat al-fann*).

Arabic words are transliterated except when an anglicised word is commonly used (e.g. *imam* for *imām*; *mosque* for *maṣjid*). Likewise is the case of dynasties (e.g. *Abbasid* for ‘*Abbāsīd*’). Familiar geographical names such as *Medina* and *Mecca* are given in their common spelling; other geographical names are transliterated. Transliterated words are italicised, except for proper nouns.

## Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis examines the role of tradition and discursive knowledge transmission on the formation of the *'ulamā'*, the learned scholarly class in Islam, and their approach to the articulation of the Islamic disciplines. The basis of this examination is the twelfth/eighteenth scholar, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Dardīr, an Egyptian Azharī who wrote highly influential treatises in the disciplines of creedal theology, Mālikī jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism). Additionally, he occupied a prominent role in the urban life of Cairo, accredited with several incidents of intercession with the rulers on behalf of the Cairo populace.<sup>1</sup> This thesis argues that a useful framework for evaluating the contributions of post-classical scholars such as al-Dardīr involves the concept of an Islamic discursive tradition. Anjum, in his analysis of Asad's conceptual framework, states<sup>2</sup>:

...the Islamic discursive tradition is characterized by its own rationality or styles of reasoning — couched in its texts, history, and institutions. This is not to say that there is some rationality, logic, or philosophy essentially Islamic and thus impenetrable to the outsiders, but that certain theoretical considerations and premises emanating from the content and form of the foundational discourses (the content and context of the scriptures, the historical experience of Islam in its formative years, etc.) come to characterize the tradition, and so anyone wishing to argue within the Islamic tradition, must start with them, even if only to argue against them.

Considering “styles of reasoning couched in its own texts” is essential to understanding a figure such as al-Dardīr, who did not make ground-breaking insights, in the manner of the juristic methodology of al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820), or the *kalām* doctrine of al-Ash'arī (d. 324/936), or the practical Sufism of al-Ghazālī (d.505/1111), or even that of later scholar such as al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565). Rather, his contributions are best understood via his upholding of tradition, and transmitting it in a manner that would ensure its survival and

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akḥbār* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1998), 2:12-13, 149-50.

<sup>2</sup> Ovamir Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 8.

continuity. Specifically, the notion that Islamic intellectual thought was concerned with uncovering the divine intent in the sacred texts, as well as communicating that uncovered divine intent is tantamount to understanding the writings and societal roles of the *'ulamā'* after the formative and classical periods, two historical eras which have been the focus of much of the literature, with the Ottoman period specifically still largely understudied.<sup>3</sup> Al-Dardīr, as a post-classical scholar, participated in and contributed to several intellectual traditions, as each Islamic discipline developed via paradigmatic shifts that came to characterise the overall trajectory of the transmission and articulation of Islamic knowledge. This thesis argues that such a framework can also be useful for evaluating the relationship of a *'ālim* such as al-Dardīr with various elements of society, for these paradigmatic shifts also characterised the societal roles of the *'ulamā'*. Additionally, this thesis argues that this presents a more useful framework for examining post-caliphal and post-classical Islamic knowledge than the positing of reform/revival motifs (predicated on the notion of a decline followed by a revival), or using creativity/innovation as criteria for determining the significance or lack thereof of an Islamic figure, or essentialising the motivations and roles of the Islamic *'ulamā'* over disparate historical eras and local environments. Furthermore, it is the contention of this thesis that conceptual frameworks within the Islamic tradition itself are useful for identifying

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<sup>3</sup> There have been recent efforts to examine Islamic scholarship in the Ottoman period, such as Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century : Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,, 2015); R. S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint : Ahmad Ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*, Northwestern University Press Series in Islam and Society in Africa (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1990); John Obert Voll, "Abdallah Ibn Salim Al-Basri and 18th Century Hadith Scholarship," *Die Welt des Islams* 42, no. 3 (2002); Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus : 'Abd Al-Ghanī Al-Nābulusī, 1641-1731* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005)., but as is demonstrated later in the introductory chapter, most of these works have focused upon a finite set of particular themes, such as reform/revival, Neo-Sufism, and the individual phenomenon of the atypical scholar. This study endeavours to offer a fresh perspective, namely one that is predicated on evaluation of scholarship as part of a larger diachronic continuum.

scholarly contributions in the post-classical period. Moreover, the tools of tradition transmission and articulation provide a means by which authoritativeness in Sunni Islam can be posited. These tools also developed in a similar trajectory to render authoritativeness subject to the same factors that affected transmission and articulation. In the case of al-Dardīr, these frameworks correspond to the concepts of *taḥqīq* (verification or realisation), *tarjīḥ* (judicial preference), and *tabṣīṭ* (simplification and popularisation). All of these concepts are located within the Islamic tradition, though they may have much in common with their potential counterparts in other knowledge traditions.<sup>4</sup> They developed over the course of the formation of the Islamic disciplines and found their apogee during the time of al-Dardīr in the twelfth/eighteenth century, after which the establishment of the modern nation state and accompanying knowledge/education systems challenged, and to some extent, marginalised the traditional methods of knowledge transmission and acquisition.<sup>5</sup> These disciplines interacted in large part with external environmental factors, particularly in the post-formative period, after the work of canonisation and institutionalising was completed, and the focus then shifted to synopsis, abridgement, verification, and overall re-articulation for successive generations of scholars and students alike. Though political environmental factors cannot be altogether discounted, this study focuses on the factors within the individual traditions themselves, tracing their intellectual histories via successive paradigmatic shifts to arrive at the solidification and culmination of the disciplines in the centuries after the establishment of the madrasa system in

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<sup>4</sup> Such as Shils' notion of "critical intelligence", which shares some connotations with *taḥqīq*. See Edward Albert Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 215. and chapter 2 of this study in the section on *taḥqīq*.

<sup>5</sup> See A.L. Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*, (London: Luzav and Company LTD, 1979); J. Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (London: Luzac, 1939).

post-Ayyubid Egypt. Therefore, al-Dardīr functions as a serviceable representative of the tradition, especially in light of his prominence within al-Azhar, an institution that came to represent the intellectual as well as societal Islamic tradition in Ottoman Egypt.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-‘Adawī al-Dardīr (d. 1201/1786)<sup>6</sup>, in many ways typified the religious scholarly elite of his day. He came from humble beginnings in rural Egypt, as did many, if not most of his scholarly contemporaries. He memorised the Qur’ān at an early age and then went on to Cairo to study at the prestigious Azhar mosque-university. He was trained in the core disciplines, including Arabic language, theology, jurisprudence, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, and *taṣawwuf*.<sup>7</sup> Knowledge transmission in the late twelfth/seventeenth century in Cairo of al-Dardīr was typified in the master/apprentice style of study where the shaykh “read” the synopsis text to his students, usually gathered around him at a particular pillar in the Azhar mosque, or one of the surrounding madrassas. When the student had “mastered” enough of the core texts in the major Islamic disciplines, and given *ijāza*, or certification to do so by his teachers, he could then proceed to have a circle of his own students.<sup>8</sup> In this regard al-Dardīr did not differ from his contemporaries.

However, al-Dardīr’s rise to prominence is such as that within a few decades of his death his books were studied from Morocco to Eastern Arabia, is atypical.<sup>9</sup> Al-Dardīr has also been mentioned as a “renewer” (*mujaddid*)<sup>10</sup> of the

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<sup>6</sup> See biographical entry in: al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim w’al-Akḥbār*, 2:223-25; Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Al-Mu’jam Al-Mukhtaṣ* (Beirut: Dar al-Bashā’ir, 2010), 122-24; Muḥammad Makhlūf, *Shajarat Al-Nūr Al-Zakiyya* (Cairo: al-Maṭba’a al-Salafiyya, 1349 a.h.), 516-17.

<sup>7</sup> See the hagiographical entries of ‘Alī al-Ṣa’īdī, Aḥmad al-Damanhūrī, Muḥammad al-Ḥifnī, etc. in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W’al-Akḥbār*, (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> See Rachida Chih, "Autorité Religieuse Et Rôle Public D’un Ouléma D’al-Azhar Au Xviii Siècle : Vie Et Carrière Du Cheikh Ahmad Al-Dardīr (1715-1786)," (2012); J. Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (London: Luzac, 1939), 25-76.

<sup>9</sup> Muḥammad Ibrahīm ‘Alī, *Iṣṭilāḥ Al-Madḥhab ‘Ind Al-Mālikīyya* (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth l’il-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 2000), 599.

Islamic twelfth century.<sup>11</sup> His contributions are best understood via his approach to the three “core” disciplines that are used as the measure for any scholar: *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *kalām* (creedal theology), and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism).<sup>12</sup>

Al-Dardīr was the foremost scholar of the Mālikī school of law during his lifetime and assumed the position of Mufti of the *Mālikiyya* after the death of his teacher, Alī al-Ṣaʿīdī (d. 1189/1775).<sup>13</sup> Perhaps al-Dardīr’s most notable contribution was his commentary on the principal didactic Mālikī law text of the time, *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*, a terse, but yet verbose and enigmatic text studied by Mālikī jurists from Morocco to Eastern Arabia. Al-Dardīr’s commentary found widespread and broad acceptance; his lucid and simplifying style lifted the veil over Khalīl’s turgidity. Additionally, he focused on identifying and clarifying the dominant opinions, something his predecessors arguably achieved with a lesser degree of success.

Similarly, his approach to *kalām*, or creedal theology, was characterised by lucidity and simplification. His didactic text on theology, *al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya* also found widespread acceptance and was adopted by many Azhar ‘*ulamā*’ as the standard primer in creedal theology. At a time when rival creeds<sup>14</sup> to the dominant Ashʿarī school of theology were emerging in Arabia and parts of India, al-Dardīr’s explication of the standard Sunni creed in post-

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<sup>10</sup> The *mujaddid* tradition is based on the Prophetic ḥadīth that states that at the beginning of every century, a person will be sent by God to renew “*yujaddid*” the matter of their religion. Some Muslim scholars have posited that there can be multiple renewers for the same century. Some of the better-known renewers are al-Shāfiʿī for the second century and al-Ghazālī for the fifth century. See also: Ella Landau-Tasseron, “The “Cyclical Reform”: A Study of the Mujadid Tradition,” *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989).

<sup>11</sup> Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī, *Fihras Al-Fahāris Wʿal-Athbāt*, (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1982), 393

<sup>12</sup> These three correspond in the Gabriel ḥadīth to the “stations” (*maqām*) of *islām*, *īmān*, and *iḥsān*. This is expounded upon in the section concerning al-Dardīr’s Sufism.

<sup>13</sup> See biographical entry 1364 in: Makhlūf, *Shajarat Al-Nūr Al-Zakiyya*, 492-93. al-Kattānī, *Fihras Al-Fahāris Wʿal-Athbāt*, 2:712-13. entry 370 in: Muḥammad Khalīl ibn ʿAlī Murādī, *Kitāb Silk Al-Durar Fī Aʿyān Al-Qarn Al-Thānī ʿAshar*, (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-ʿArabī, 1291), 3:198-99.

<sup>14</sup> Such as the Wahhābī theology in Arabia and Neo-Traditionist (*Ahl al-ḥadīth*) reformism in India. See A. Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750-1850,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no. 3 (1993).

Fatimid Egypt<sup>15</sup> may have been a factor in countering challenges to the Ash'arī creed that materialised in the early nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Sufism, or *taṣawwuf*, was for al-Dardīr, and many others like him, the crowning achievement of the Prophetic mission. It symbolised the essence of the Muhammadan message, as exemplified in the Prophetic tradition: "I have not been sent except to perfect excellence of morals and character."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the spirit of *taṣawwuf* pervaded al-Dardīr's works, even those not specifically concerned with the discipline, such as jurisprudence and *ḥadīth*, to a degree that would cause one to conclude that elucidating *taṣawwuf* was the overriding objective in all of his writings. This seems to be part of a larger intellectual trend that witnessed the re-appropriation of Sufism by the traditional 'ulamā' as a spiritual discipline from whom they referred disparagingly to as the *mutaṣawwiffa* (would-be Sufis) in the eighteenth century, in a manner more closely aligned with the textual precepts of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, a trend not specific to Egypt, but rather extended from North Africa to Arabia<sup>18</sup>. The implications for this phenomenon form the basis for the study of al-Dardīr's approach to Sufism.

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<sup>15</sup> A perusal of the hagiographical entries of the 'ulamā' in Ayyubid, Mamluke, and Ottoman Egypt reveals that they were overwhelmingly Ash'arī in theology, though they had different jurisprudential affiliations. The Māturīdī creed also found its way into Ottoman Egypt in particular, but only found resonance with Ḥanafī scholars, such as Kamāl ibn Humām (861/1457), who were nonetheless always a minority in comparison with the Shāfi'ī and Mālikī Ash'arīs. See: Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat Al-Athar Fī 'Ayān Al-Qarn Al-Hādī 'Ashar*, (Beirut: Maktabat Khayyāt, 1966); Muḥammad Khalīl ibn 'Alī Murādī, *Kitāb Silk Al-Durar Fī A'yān Al-Qarn Al-Thānī 'Ashar*, (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-'Arabī, 1291).

<sup>16</sup> Such as the reformist Wahhābī movement in Arabia and the Salafī movement spear headed by Muḥammad Abduh in Egypt. See chapters 2 and 3 respectively in: Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition : Reform, Rationality, and Modernity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> "*Innamā bu'ithtu li-utammima makārim al-akhilāq*" Narrated by al-Bukhārī. See Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl Bukhārī and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> The *mutaṣawwif* is a term used by "*sharī'a* minded" scholars to characterise Sufi shaykhs, who, in their view, do not uphold the principles of *sharī'a*. See the discussion on Neo-Sufism in: R. S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered," in *Sufism: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); John O. Voll, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered Again," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 42, no. 2/3 (2008). Neo-Sufism is considered more thoroughly in the section al-Dardīr's role as Sufi *murshid* is chapter 5.

## Background and Methodology

The notion of “tradition”, apposite when speaking of the Islamic intellectual disciplines, remains problematic. There is no particular equivalent in the Islamic Arabic lexicon, with *taqlīd* sometimes serving as a surrogate, but failing to encompass the complexities of “tradition” in the Western canon. Tradition in the Western canon is often juxtaposed with “modernity”, another problematic term, whereas *taqlīd* is contrasted with *ijtihād* (independent juristic reasoning), which addresses a limited aspect of the Islamic intellectual tradition. Further complicating matters is the fitness of the decline thesis, which roughly posits that the Islamic intellectual sciences<sup>19</sup> underwent a sort of decline and stagnation in the post-classical period as compared to the creativity and innovation of the formative and classical periods.

Talal Asad, from an anthropological perspective, sought to address the problem of defining Islam by invoking the concept of “discursive tradition”, borrowing somewhat from Alasdair MacIntyre, defined tradition as<sup>20</sup>:

...consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to a past (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and a future (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through a present (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions). An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present.

Related to the issue of Islamic tradition, is the issue of “orthodoxy”, yet another problematic term borrowed from the Western canon, but one that Asad also seeks to address by relating it to the power to enforce, stating: “orthodoxy

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<sup>19</sup> Our concern here is primarily decline in terms of the apparent lack of originality and vitality in the Islamic intellectual sciences since the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century, and less so with decline as relates to the conditions for knowledge production in the 12<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century. While the two modalities are related this study endeavours to offer an alternative to the decline thesis specific to the former. For a thorough critique of the latter modality, see Darling’s introduction entitled “The Myth of Decline” in: Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection Finance and Administration in the Ottoman Empire 1560-1660* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 1-21.

<sup>20</sup> Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington, D.C: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986), 14.



is not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship - 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.”<sup>21</sup>

While the conceptual framework offered by Asad seems to solve some of the inconsistencies in the frameworks of Zein, Geertz, and Gellner,<sup>22</sup> it nevertheless inadequately addresses the motivations of the upholders of the tradition, and by what criteria tradition can be established, challenged, or even dispensed with. This may be due in large part to the limitations of studying Islam from an anthropological perspective. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study, we will attempt to define and utilise the concept of tradition that does address the manner by which the tradition(s) can be formed and subsequently transmitted.

As stated previously, there is no equivalent term for tradition in the Islamic canon. However, from a conceptual standpoint, examining aspects of the Islamic literature can form a worldview regarding the idea of tradition. The oft-quoted *ḥadīth*: “I have left for you two things, that if you hold steadfast to, you will never go astray: the book of God (the Qur’ān) and the *Sunna* of your Prophet.”<sup>23</sup> This direct quote of the Prophet Muḥammad, if taken at face value, indicates that in the absence of a living upholder of tradition (the Prophet himself) then the community is to turn to his scriptural legacy: the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. In another *ḥadīth*, however, he states, “Scholars are the heirs of the Prophets, [as] Prophets have not left behind gold nor silver, but rather

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>22</sup> See Anjum, “Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors.”

<sup>23</sup> Mālik Ibn Anas, *Muwaṭṭa Mālik*, (Cairo: Muṣṭafa Bāb al-Ḥalabī, 1985), 2:480.

knowledge, and whoever takes from it has taken a formidable share.”<sup>24</sup> Taken together, the early Muslim ‘*ulamā*’ emphasised the importance of direct audition with a teacher, and not mere reliance on one’s own understanding of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. The significance of the *sanad* was stated by the scholar of the formative period, ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak<sup>25</sup> (d. 181/797): “*Isnād* is from the *dīn*, and without *isnād*, then anyone can say anything.”<sup>26</sup> The *sanad* represented the price of entry into the realm of formal scholarship and a confirmation of the ability to *uncover* the tradition, and often contribute to it. In contrast to Asad’s notion of orthodoxy existing where the power to enforce it existed, it is our contention that orthodoxy, or authority, or the ability to delineate the tradition i.e. what is Islam, and what is not, is something the ‘*ulamā*’ held to be discoverable, and hence knowable and existing, regardless of societal power structures, but only by those who have the prerequisite level of scholarship to “discover” it.

The early debate amongst Muslim jurists regarding the *mujtahid* and his ability to perceive the truth (*hal kul mujtahid muṣṭib?*) illustrates this point of discoverability of the tradition.<sup>27</sup> Though arguments for whether every qualified *mujtahid* accesses the truth by merely exerting his *ijtihād*, or the “truth” is only one, and hence not every *mujtahid* will be correct in his interpretations, the underlying principle is that the “truth”, at least in matters where no epistemic conclusiveness exists, is something to be discovered by the *mujtahid*. In

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<sup>24</sup> Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-‘Arabī and Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā Tirmidhī, *‘Aṣḥab al-Aḥwadhī Bi-Sharḥ Saḥīḥ Al-Tirmidhī*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, N.D.), 4:414.

<sup>25</sup> For biography, see recent study: Feryal E. Salem, “Abd Allah B. Al-Mubarak between Hadith, Jihad, and Zuhd: An Expression of Early Sunni Identity in the Formative Period” (Thesis (Ph D), The University of Chicago, Division of the Humanities, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 2013., 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Also amongst the first lines of al-Dardīr’s *thabat*: Aḥmad al-Dardīr, “Thabat Al-Dardīr,” ed. Maktabat Jāmi‘at al-Riyāḍ (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1284 A.H.).

<sup>27</sup> See discussion in: Yaḥyā ibn Mūsā Rahūnī, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-Ḥāḥib, and al-Hādī ibn Ḥusayn Shubaylī, *Tuḥfat Al-Mas’ūl Fi Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Muntahā Al-Sūl* (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth lil-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīyah wa-l-ḥyā’ al-Turāth, 2002), 4:253-60.

matters where epistemic conclusiveness does exist, by virtue of the agreement of all *mujtahids*, due to the conclusive and unequivocal reading of the proof-texts (the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*), then this is necessarily known by *mujtahids* and non-*mujtahids* alike. The “tradition”, then is circumscribed by the consensus (at least in the Sunni tradition) of the qualified *mujtahids*. This much is fairly straightforward, and whose argument can be found in any of the classical works of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (juristic methodology). However, the means and methods by which the truth may be discovered, aside from the qualifications of the *mujtahid*, are not as straightforward. Most manuals on *uṣūl al-fiqh* contain introductory sections on the interpretive rules for deciphering the language (Arabic), of the Qur'ān and Sunna. While much attention has been devoted to the four-source theory<sup>28</sup> of Islamic legal reasoning, the rules and principles for interpreting the texts of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* are essential in describing the methodology by which the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* are interpreted. Dichotomous issues such as literal and figurative meanings, general and specific connotations, and pronounced (*maṭṭūq*) and connotative (*mafḥūm*) meanings form the core of these linguistic-interpretive issues. Presumably, scholarly consensus takes as an apodictic foundation the authority of these linguistic-interpretive rules, such as that no secondary *fiqh* ruling or interpretation could clearly contravene these rules. Hence, the “borders” of the Islamic tradition are delineated by consensus on individual legal and theological rulings as well as the rules of interpretation by which these rules are derived. Moreover, authority is not merely a list of theological doctrines and jurisprudential rulings, but also the methodology by which these doctrines and rulings were derived. The authority of consensus lies in the idea, that despite differing methodologies in deriving rulings and

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<sup>28</sup> The Qur'ān, Sunna, Qiyās, and 'Ijma'. See Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories : An Introduction to Sunnī Uṣūl Al-Fiqh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

doctrines, the qualified ‘*ulamā*’ nonetheless reach similar conclusions in their attempts to uncover the divine intent. Similarly, their conclusions that are limited to a set of different, though not at all dissimilar doctrines and rulings, are a form of consensus that circumscribe the Sunni tradition.

Nevertheless, tradition seems to be in opposition to the idea of “reform” or “renewal.” However, if one considers the definition of “reform” or “renewal” within the Islamic tradition itself, the *ḥadīth* narrated in the *Sunan* of *Abī Dāwūd*, commonly referred to as the *ḥadīth* of *tajdīd*, must be referenced: “*Verily Allah will send to this community at the onset of each one hundred years someone who will renew their dīn (religion).*”<sup>29</sup> In his commentary on this *ḥadīth*, al-Ābādī deciphers its meaning as: “*reviving that which has been forgotten and neglected from the practical application of the Qur’an and Sunna, as well as what follows from their commands and principles.*”<sup>30</sup> One can then reasonably infer that *tajdīd*, from the perspective of Muslim scholars themselves, makes two assumptions: 1) that the practice of Islam amongst the faithful is liable to wane and fall in disrepair simply by the passage of time, and 2) that as this happens periodically a divine self-correction takes place by way of individuals who “renew the faith” for the believers. Thus, rather than introduce unprecedented transformations into Islamic practice as some definitions of reform would suggest, renewal in the insider Islamic discourse involves re-establishing a status quo of sustainable practice, not the dismantling of it. In this sense, al-Dardīr could be considered a *mujaddid* (renewer) of sorts, as his efforts in articulating what had become a very large and perhaps unwieldy corpus of Islamic knowledge by the twelfth/eighteenth century in a manner that served not

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<sup>29</sup> Muḥammad Ashraf al-Ṣiddīqī Ābādī, *‘Awn Al-Ma’būd ‘Alā Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2005), 1959.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 1960.

just the specialists, but the masses as well, specifically in the three core disciplines of creed, jurisprudence, and Sufism.<sup>31</sup>

Considering the arguments stated above, our definition of tradition for the purposes of this study is:

*The set of transmitted principles, norms, customs, methodologies, and reflected in the intellectual disciplines whose legitimacy is conferred by their commitment to uncovering the intent of the divine commandments as revealed in the Qur'ān and prophetic ḥadīth, the range and bound of which is circumscribed by scholarly consensus.*

Furthermore, the concept of sub-traditions, as discussed by Anjum, stating that these sub-traditions as: “conscious, rational mode of participating in an Islamic discursive tradition rather than as an unthought or unconscious deep structure waiting to be discovered by modern scholars.”<sup>32</sup> As is discussed later, these sub-traditions, specifically the three core intellectual sub-traditions of creed, jurisprudence, and Sufism came to define authority and orthodoxy in the post-classical period, as reported by al-Dardīr. The principal schools of theology: the Ash'arī and Māturīdī, the four schools of jurisprudence, and the *sharī'a* bound Sufism of the Khalwatī, Qādirī, Shādhilī, and other orders came to define both authority, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy as means to accessing the larger Islamic tradition defined by the principles of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, as well as the hermeneutical structures for their interpretation. Spevak notes “that Sunnī orthodoxy is a methodology as much as it is a set of core creedal and legal points.” He further argues that the “archetypal Sunnī scholar”, such as the focus of his study, al-Bājūrī (d. 1276/1860), is one in a continuum of archetypal scholars, characterised by their mastery of the three core disciplines mentioned

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<sup>31</sup> For more on the *tajdīd* tradition, see: Ella Landau-Tasseron, "The "Cyclical Reform": A Study of the Mujadid Tradition," *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989).

<sup>32</sup> Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors," 662.

above. Spevack, while outlining the broad lines of what he refers to as the “*ikhtilāf-ijma’* spectrum” and the general methodologies of theology, law, and Sufism, does not explore the specific facets of these core disciplines nor the evolving pedagogies in transmitting the Islamic tradition, as this study endeavours to do.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the issue of revival and reform in the eighteenth century specifically, a healthy debate initially arose in German academia concerning the emergence of an Islamic revival based upon a *ḥadīth* propelled “neo-Sufism” spearheaded by such geographically diverse figures such as Shah Walī Allah al-Dihlawī (d. 1176/1762) in India, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) in Egypt, Abdullah ibn Sālim al-Baṣrī (d. 1134/1722) in the Hejaz, and Aḥmad ibn Idrīs (d. 1253/1837) in the Maghreb.<sup>34</sup> Though the debate is far from being settled, with proponents on either side of the “revival” thesis, it is nonetheless revealing that the debate is framed in terms of reform/revival or lack thereof. This revival thesis contrasts with the Islamic ethos towards innovation (*bid’a*) in matters of religion, often seen as corruptive by the ‘*ulamā*’. The ‘*ulamā*’ in the pre-modern Islamic world were primarily concerned with the preservation of tradition, as embodied in the texts of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*, as well as the ancillary tools needed for their interpretation.. Both the content and its method of transmission constituted the authoritativeness of the tradition. Therefore, a complete break, or rejection, of prior textual authority and its interpretive methods would have been anathema to the notion of authoritativeness. In the early nineteenth century a reformer like Muḥammad ‘Abdu was opposed by Muḥammad ‘Ilīsh, a

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<sup>33</sup> See: Aaron Spevack, "The Archetypal Sunni Scholar: Law, Theology, and Mysticism in the Synthesis of Al-Bajuri" (Bston University, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> See Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, vol. 1760–1840* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979). Voll, "Abdallah Ibn Salim Al-Basri and 18th Century Hadith Scholarship."; Stefan Reichmuth, *The World of Murtada Al-Zabidi (1732-91): Life, Networks, and Writings* (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2009).

member of the traditional Azhar vanguard, not for his imperative to introduce reforms in and of itself, but rather the manner by which he sought to do so, by rejection of previous authoritative tradition in the form of the four madhhabs in favour of interpreting the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* by a personal interpretive method, a task that 'Ilīsh thought he was not qualified to do, for his lack of training and deference to his intellectual predecessors.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, the notion of “progress”, in the sense of increasing moral and ethical refinement was one very much alien to pre-modern societies, both in the East and the pre-Enlightenment West. As Shils states: “It is not often that gratitude is expressed to those who have maintained institutions in the state in which they received them. Their founders are praised; innovators are praised, but not those who have maintained what the innovators created.”<sup>36</sup>

Both reformers and traditionalists frequently cite the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muḥammad regarding the superiority of the earlier generations as clear evidence of the inevitability of increasingly decadent times.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the gradual loss of knowledge due to the demise of scholars whose numbers are not replenished, and thereafter replaced by charlatans and demagogues is another theme cited in the Prophetic *ḥadīth*.<sup>38</sup> No doubt this weighed heavily on the minds of successive generations of Muslim scholars and the ruling elite. In the early Islamic period a reliance on oral transmission of both the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* was reinforced with written compilations and transmissions, though the authoritative transmission remained an oral one.<sup>39</sup> As one early scholar

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<sup>35</sup> I. Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam* (London: Taurus Academic Studies, 2009), 93-98.

<sup>36</sup> Shils, *Tradition*, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Narrated in Bukhārī's collection: “*Khayr al-qurūn qarnī thumma al-ladhīna yalūnahum thumma al-ladhīna yalūnahum*” Muḥammad ibn Isma'īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*. (Cairo: Dār al-Sha'b, N.D.), 5:2-3.

<sup>38</sup> See the chapter on *fitan* (tribulations) in: *ibid.*, 9:58-76.

<sup>39</sup> See Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Themes in Islamic History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 176-77.

stated: "Knowledge was in the hearts (*ṣudūr*) and then recorded in lines (*suṭūr*), but the hearts remain its keys."<sup>40</sup>

Gradually the texts came to include not only the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, but also secondary texts that interpreted the meanings of the primary texts. These secondary texts are what Schoeler refers to as *muṣannafāt* (authored books), which included earlier works that informed the later *ḥadīth* compilations that would develop into the canonical books (al-Bukhārī, Muslim, etc.), as well as books in other disciplines such as theology. These books were subdivided by chapter and arranged according to subject matter.<sup>41</sup> A premium was then placed on the veracity of the text via the soundness of the transmission. As for the soundness of the conclusions and judgements documented therein by the author, a different set of criteria was needed. This led to the development of a culture of scholasticism, not unlike its counterpart in Europe.<sup>42</sup> These secondary texts represented the continuous interpretive interaction of Muslim theologians and jurists with the Islamic tradition, as well as forming the basis of the discursive relationship between successive generations of scholars.

While the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* always maintained their pre-eminence, the secondary interpretive texts documented the cumulative and discursive relationship of the human agents – the '*ulamā'*' – with the primary texts. Specific regional traditions and historical factors provided a depth and fluidity to the tradition, so that a polemical theological treatise written in the fourth/tenth

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<sup>40</sup> Abdullah Ibn Abī Jamrī, *Bahjat Al-Nufūs*. (Cairo: Maṭb'at al-Ḥalabī, 1981), 1:194.

<sup>41</sup> Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam : From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 68.

<sup>42</sup> See George Makdisi and American Council of Learned Societies., *The Rise of the Colleges : Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 245-58.



century in Central Asia could be modified and explicated for seminary students in eleventh/seventeenth century Cairo.<sup>43</sup>

For reasons that will become more apparent, renewal in the Islamic discourse, especially during the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, was characterised by a renewal in the manner of the preservation of tradition more than a renewal by way of undiscovered insights into the Islamic disciplines themselves. As Graham notes about societies of the Islamic world: "greater value is...placed upon continuity with perceived traditional norms of great antiquity."<sup>44</sup> For example, Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī (d.1041/1632), the seventeenth century Egyptian theologian, is credited with penning arguably the most authoritative *mukhtaṣar* (didactic text) in *ʿilm al-kalām* (creedal theology), which remains the text of choice in many Islamic seminaries to the present day. In the first few lines, he cites the impetus for writing *Jawharat al-Tawḥīd* (the Jewel of Monotheism) where he states: <sup>45</sup>

The knowledge of the foundational [principles] of religion  
Is compulsory [but] in need of clarification  
But as a result of verbosity aspirations have waned  
So abridgement has become essential

The waning of aspirations that al-Laqqānī refers reflects his evaluation of student proclivities of his age. To ensure the successful transmission of theological knowledge, which he sees as foundational, he deemed it necessary to simplify and abridge the manner by which it was taught. The wide acceptance of al-Laqqānī's text is demonstrated by the abundance of scholars both during his lifetime and even centuries onward that penned commentaries

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<sup>43</sup> Such as in the *kalām* tradition, where most polemical works written against the Mu'tazilites authored by Persian and Central Asian scholars such as al-Taftāzānī and al-Isfārāyīnī, and later epitomised by Egyptian scholars such as al-Laqqānī and al-Dardīr. This is more thoroughly explored in chapter 3.

<sup>44</sup> William A. Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation " *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (1993): 499.

<sup>45</sup> *Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*, lines 5-6 Abd al-Salām al-Laqqānī, *Ithāf Al-Murīd Bi Jawharat Al-Tawḥīd* (Aleppo: Maktabat Dār al-Falāḥ, 1990).

and glosses on the hundred-line poem.<sup>46</sup> As a general trend, the emergence of the *mukhtaṣar* as a pedagogical text was firmly established by the thirteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Though some researchers have argued that the impetus for the *mukhtaṣar* tradition was a desire to codify legal rulings to ensure uniform court verdicts, it remains to be seen how this would apply to the other disciplines (such as theology, grammar, and legal methodology) that were also subject to the *mukhtaṣar* tradition.<sup>48</sup>

The significance of al-Dardīr's contributions is then best characterised as a revival in terms of pedagogy and scholarly transmission, specifically in the disciplines of Mālikī jurisprudence and creedal theology. His contributions to Sufism might be best summarized as a re-appropriation of the *discipline* of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) and its inclusion in mainstream theological discourse regarding epistemology. While classical works of Sufism may have been studied at al-Azhar and the madrassas, such as *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, al-Jabartī documents (and even laments) the proliferation of popular Sufism uninformed by the scholarly circles of al-Azhar.<sup>49</sup> It is demonstrated in the third chapter that al-Dardīr's explication of creed, most emphatically in epistemological terms, is completely synthesised with Sufi erudition and cognition, in a manner that extended beyond the work of his immediate predecessors, such as al-Laqqānī and al-Sanūsī.

Moreover, the alleged renewer of the Khalwatī order in Egypt, the Syrian scholar Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, who was the spiritual guide of al-Dardīr's own guide, Muḥammad al-Ḥifnī, introduced an understanding of Sufism that found wide

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<sup>46</sup> Such as the commentaries of Abdul-Salām al-Laqqānī (d. 1078/1667), Aḥmad al-Ṣawī (d. 1241/1825), and Ibrahīm al-Bayjūrī (d. 1276/1860).

<sup>47</sup> M. Fadel, "The Social Logic of Taqlīd and the Rise of the Mukhtaṣar," *Islamic Law and Society* 3 (1996).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example: al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akhhbār*, 2:154-55.

appeal amongst al-Azhar's educated elite (in addition to being the inspiration for sub-orders in Sudan and North Africa). He condemned what he deemed to be innovative and marginally heretical practices that had found their way into popular Egyptian Sufism. He also was a major exponent of Akbarian Sufism<sup>50</sup>, like 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565)<sup>51</sup>, before him, as he was a direct student of 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731)<sup>52</sup> in Damascus. As a result, a more disciplined *taṣawwuf* emerged informed by creedal theology, as well as informed by Akbarian Sufism. Al-Dardīr expanded upon this in his major work on creedal theology, *al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya* (The Radiant Pearl), where he includes several lines customarily reserved for treatises on *taṣawwuf*.<sup>53</sup> This theme is further explored in its relevant section.<sup>54</sup> In this sense, al-Dardīr can be viewed as a Sufi reformist of sorts, for his efforts in re-appropriating *ṭarīqa* based Sufism from practitioners considered to be lacking in their knowledge of the exoteric disciplines of *kalām* and *fiqh*. From this perspective he is similar to al-Ghazālī before him, who reconciled ascetic Sufism (i.e. prior to the formation of the *ṭarīqas*) with the exoteric disciplines. The main contrast between them can perhaps be summarised in that al-Ghazālī sought to legitimise Sufism according to the precepts of the *sharī'a*, whereas al-Dardīr sought to reform the

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<sup>50</sup> Akbarian Sufism permeates the thought of al-Dardīr and his direct predecessors. The disclosure of God via the microcosm of the human condition and the macrocosm of the celestial world, the equation of God's essence with a sole existence, and literalness of the divine attributes are some of its defining characteristics that al-Dardīr incorporates into his articulation of Islamic theology. For Ibn 'Arabī's system of epistemology and cosmology, see Chittick's: William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge : Ibn Al-'arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989); *The Self-Disclosure of God : Principles of Ibn Al-'arabi's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> See Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of 'Abd Al-Wahhab Al-Sharani* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982).

<sup>52</sup> See Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus : 'Abd Al-Ghanī Al-Nābulusī, 1641-1731*.

<sup>53</sup> He includes repentance, remembrance of God, and spiritual purification – all topics traditionally covered in the realm of Sufism.

<sup>54</sup> Chapter 3.

practice of Sufism as embodied in the *ṭarīqa*, and therefore re-legitimise it according to the *sharī'a*, after a period of perceived manipulation and decline.<sup>55</sup>

Al-Dardīr represents perhaps the final articulation of an intellectual tradition before the paradigm changing effects of modernity shaped the early nineteenth century, and the subsequent trajectory of the Islamic tradition until contemporary times. For the purposes of this study, the concept of the tradition defined above forms the framework by which al-Dardīr's life and writings are analysed, in an effort to answer questions regarding his contributions to the Islamic tradition, his efforts to maintain it and preserve it, and specifically in light of the socio-cultural circumstances of his day. Moreover, when speaking of the intellectual tradition, it may be more useful to speak of traditions, where the use of the plural reflects minor intellectual traditions under the broader concept of a major translocal, and networked transhistorical intellectual Islamic tradition. The foundational texts and their interpretive methodologies form the binding underpinnings of this major tradition, as Sunni Muslims have at least always agreed upon the authoritativeness of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, as well as the need for interpretive methodologies, though they may differ as to the operational principles of these methodologies. These sub-traditions, as reflected in the various Islamic disciplines, each contain their own terminologies, historical development, and scholars.

Indeed, within al-Dardīr, we find all three traditions, i.e. of *kalām*, jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf*, in perhaps their most mature form, owing to the weight of the cumulative tradition, without a sense of inner angst or contradiction, or even syncretism between disparate epistemological systems, as they all share the same epistemology and return to the same overarching

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example, al-Bakrī's critique of Sufis: Muṣṭafā Bakrī, *Al-Suyūf Al-Ḥidād Fi 'Anāq Ahl Al-Zandaqa Wa'l-Ilḥād* (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-'Arabiyya, 2007).

tradition of Islam in general, which includes mechanisms for tolerance in diversity of readings and interpretation of the primary texts of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.

The sub-traditions within the “larger” tradition of Islam underwent different developmental trajectories, though they often share the local and sociological circumstances that influenced said development. It is demonstrated in chapter four, for example, that the tradition of Mālikī *fiqh* underwent a unique developmental trajectory distinctive from that of the Shāfi'ī or Ḥanafī traditions, an important factor to consider when examining al-Dardīr's contributions to the Mālikī tradition. This developmental trajectory was steered by factors unique to the eponymous imam, such as his method of teaching, the city of Medina, as well as the socio-political factors that affected the lands where Mālikī law became dominant. The same can be said of the *kalām* tradition and the *taṣawwuf* tradition, which are also analysed in detail as relates to the works of al-Dardīr.

Furthermore, the use of the conceptual framework of tradition transmission is not limited to the intellectual disciplines but is also useful in analysing the public and social roles of the gatekeepers of tradition, the '*ulamā*'. The role of the '*ulamā*' as a distinct social group has been examined by many, but none in the sense of not merely being upholders of tradition, but rather the tradition of the '*ulamā*' themselves, i.e. their interaction with society, and how society views them. The '*ulamā*' did not emerge as a distinct social identity until after the political schism that affected the tail end of the era of the “rightly guided caliphs” with the Umayyad tribe beginning their dynastic rule in earnest in the aftermath. Consequently, a tradition of alternately shunning and engaging the “sultan” developed amongst the '*ulamā*', who began to form a

distinct identity as several treatises were written advising the approach towards engaging the rulers, with sections of the Sufi pious literature dedicated to the topic.<sup>56</sup>

A tradition developed amongst the '*ulamā*', as regards their roles in their societies, and official roles such as teacher, mufti, *qāḍī*, and the like developed, as well as unofficial roles such as shaykh and Sufi *murshid*. By placing al-Dardīr in the specific narratives for the societal roles he occupied an analysis of his specific contributions are accessed against the cumulative discursive traditions specific to the occupations of the '*ulamā*'.

By examining al-Dardīr's life and works, an important aspect of eighteenth century Islamic scholarship and education can be uncovered, particularly in light of the "decline" thesis, that postulates Islamic learning suffered and waned from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries after reaching its apogee in the high period of the Abbasids. Hence, al-Dardīr's life from birth to death is examined in full, including his formative years (as a window into Islamic learning in the eighteenth century), his rise to prominence in Cairo as a member of the Azharī elite, and role as intercessor for societal grievances. Dardīr's oeuvre of some nineteen works (of which many remain extant in manuscript form) will be examined for style, content, and contribution to the respective disciplines.

Therefore, in order to assess al-Dardīr's contributions and impact, the intellectual and social milieu during his time as well as a period of time before his appearance is necessary. The four main aspects of this study, namely, al-

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<sup>56</sup> See for example: 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Muqaffa' and Zakī Aḥmad, *Al-Adab Al-Kabīr Wa-Al-Adab Al-Ṣaghīr* (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003); 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Māwardī and Muḥammad Jāsim Ḥadīthī, *Kitāb Naṣīḥat Al-Mulūk* (Baghdād: Dār al-Shu'ūn al-Thaqāfiyah al-Āmmah, 1986). For studies regarding the role of the '*ulamā*' with the caliphs and political authorities, see: Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam : Custodians of Change* (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002); Knut S. Vikør, *Between God and the Sultan : A History of Islamic Law* (London: Hurst & Co., 2005).

Dardīr's education and upbringing, his role as jurist, as theologian, and finally as Sufi guide and public servant, are all explored from historical perspectives as well as contemporaneous trends in each respective field. Though each of the three core disciplines of theology, jurisprudence, and Sufism are usually treated as separate and distinct areas of inquiry, it is our assertion that they are inextricably related, especially when viewed from the prism of the Islamic intellectual tradition. This may be particularly relevant in the later Islamic tradition, as much overlap in the Islamic disciplines in the works of the *'ulamā'* attest to this.<sup>57</sup> These themes form the basis of chapters two and three and are further explored there.

To assess the contributions of al-Dardīr, the main research questions are as follows:

- 1) How did al-Dardīr interact with the Islamic tradition, and what degree of influence did the interpretive tradition have in informing this interaction?
- 2) How did al-Dardīr's approach to the transmission of knowledge reflect the educational paradigm established by the discursive Islamic tradition, and in what ways were the means he sought to faithfully and successfully transmit it?
- 3) How did al-Dardīr epitomise the core Islamic disciplines of creedal theology, jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf*?
- 4) To what degree did the societal roles exercised by al-Dardīr reflect a tradition of engagement, collusion, or cooperation with the political elites?

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<sup>57</sup> See the works of al-Sha'rānī and al-Nābulusī, for example: Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, *Al-Kibrīt Al-Aḥmar Fī 'Ulūm Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998); Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Aḥmad Sha'rānī and Abd al-Wārith Muḥammad 'Alī, *Al-Yawāqīt Wa-Al-Jawāhir Fī Bayān 'Aqā'id Al-Akābir*. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998); Abd al-Ghanī Nābulusī, *Al-Anwār Al-Ilāhiyya Sharḥ 'Aqīdat Al-Sanūsiyya*, ed. 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Shaykhli, (Amman: Dār al-Nūr al-Mubīn, 2015).

This study identifies what was typical and indicative of late eighteenth century Islamic scholarship, particularly in the pedagogical method and transmission of knowledge. Al-Dardīr's social commentary comes across occasionally in his works of jurisprudence, and to a lesser extent, his works on Sufism, where he often comments on contemporary violations of Islamic principles, most often directed at the ruling elite, as well as other '*ulamā*' who fail to live up to al-Dardīr's moral and ethical standards. These commentaries form the basis of the final chapter dealing with al-Dardīr's societal roles and relationships.



## Review of the Literature<sup>58</sup>

While it appears that no Western study has specifically explored the life or writings of Aḥmad al-Dardīr, the former rector of al-Azhar, ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, authored a single volume on the subject.<sup>59</sup> Maḥmūd primarily uses the occasion of chronicling al-Dardīr’s life to extol the virtues of *taṣawwuf*, as was his pattern in several other biographies he penned on prominent Sufi figures.<sup>60</sup> He includes mostly anecdotal accounts of al-Dardīr’s exploits and also expounds on al-Dardīr’s positions regarding some of the various Sufi stations and terminology. Therefore, Maḥmūd’s 163-page treatise (of which about half is devoted to excerpts from al-Dardīr’s *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān*) cannot be considered a proper academic study of al-Dardīr’s life and works. Additionally, an unpublished Masters dissertation written by a student of al-Azhar University in Cairo includes only a brief synopsis of al-Dardīr’s life while devoting the bulk of the study to a critical edition of al-Dardīr’s work on *taṣawwuf*, *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān*.<sup>61</sup>

Western scholars have paid scant attention to al-Dardīr and his works. Most references to al-Dardīr in the literature refer to his role as Sufi guide and heir apparent to the revitalised Khalwatī order in Egypt.<sup>62</sup> The dearth of references to al-Dardīr, or his contemporaries, for that matter, is not surprising considering that the Ottoman period is vastly understudied, especially the

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<sup>58</sup> This literature review examines the general secondary literature regarding intellectual and social trends in the Ottoman era from a general perspective. Secondary literature pertaining to specific analyses of the Islamic traditions of theology, jurisprudence, and Sufism is more thoroughly examined in the relevant chapters.

<sup>59</sup> Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *Abū Al-Barakāt Sayyidī Aḥmad Al-Dardīr* (Cairo: Dar al-M’ārif, 2001).

<sup>60</sup> Such as his biographies of Abū Madyan Shu’ayb (d. 594/1198), Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) and Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 675/1260).

<sup>61</sup> Muḥammad Fuḍālī Zaynī, "Taḥqīq Kitāb Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān" (al-Azhar, 1981).

<sup>62</sup> See for example: Rachida Chih, Mayeur-Jaouen, Catherine, *Le Soufisme À L'époque Ottomane, Xvie-Xviie Siècle*, Cahiers Des Annales Islamologiques (Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2007). Chih has also penned an introduction on al-Dardīr specifically: (Rachida Chih, "Autorité Religieuse Et Rôle Public D'un Ouléma D'al-Azhar Au Xviie Siècle : Vie Et Carrière Du Cheikh Ahmad Al-Dardīr (1715-1786)," (2012).

religious and cultural aspects of the Arab Ottoman provinces. Some recent scholarship has begun to lift the cloud surrounding this aspect of Islamic and Near Eastern history, most notably by the French scholar Andre Raymond and his student Nelly Hanna as regards the period's social history.<sup>63</sup> Hanna explores the development of the literary middle class in seventeenth and eighteenth century Egypt, specifically one that progressed outside the customary confines of the scholarly and ruling elite.<sup>64</sup> She notes that the '*ulamā*' of the Ottoman period in Egypt began writing in a looser, more accessible manner so as to appeal to a nascent literate middle class comprised of artisans and traders who were members of the growing Sufi *ṭarīqas*. However, Hanna appears to stretch her conclusions when identifying the "radical intellectual", using the writings of an "Abū Dhākir" from an untitled manuscript as the sole example. She concludes that Abū Dhakir's criticism of the abstract "fatwa" of the '*ulamā*' and their acquisition of knowledge by way of *isnād* only are reason enough to declare the emergence of "modernity" prior to the nineteenth century, in opposition to the dominant narrative.

In this manner she seems to follow a similar path as Peter Gran, who attempted in his much-maligned project to establish an indigenous basis for modernity independent of European influence.<sup>65</sup> Yet the argument seems suspect; in the case of Hanna, the distinction between *fatwa* and theoretical jurisprudential scenarios found in many *fiqh* manuals appears to be lost, thereby weakening her argument, as many of the '*ulamā*' opposed theoretical argumentation. The *fatwa*, on the other hand, is a religious edict issued in

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<sup>63</sup> See for example: André Raymond, *Cairo* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 2000); Nelly Hanna, *In Praise of Books : A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, Middle East Studies Beyond Dominant Paradigms (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> In *Praise of Books : A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*.

<sup>65</sup> See Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840*.

response to a specific case posed by the solicitor. Gran assumes that a parallel enlightenment of sorts in the Arab East began in earnest in the eighteenth century and formed the basis for its own modernity that took hold in the nineteenth century. However, he offers little evidence for this except his perception of increased attention to *ḥadīth* studies, based upon their extant numbers in Cairo's manuscript libraries. He then postulates that the revival of a Māturīdī theology coupled with a renewed interest in *ḥadīth* as a movement away from the highly deterministic Ash'arī Aristotelian theology, and hence, a movement towards a more man-centred and capitalistic cosmology. From there, he posits that the socio-economic factors that precipitated the European Enlightenment were also in effect for the Muslim world. He attributes the emphasis placed on the study of *ḥadīth*, by which he asserts by the virtue of the number of copies of al-Bukhārī's compendium in the Egyptian National Archives, as a shift from a theocentric paradigm to a homocentric one. Notwithstanding the questionable methodology for positing the *ḥadīth* emphasis (al-Bukhārī's compendium was similar to the Qur'ān in that it was a liturgical book that was commonly read in *majālis* and times of crisis), there is no indication that Muslim theology underwent such a shift. Gran also does not fail to make the same assumptions as other Western scholars in search of the Muslim Enlightenment, namely that such a phenomenon exists to begin with.

Additionally, Gran makes numerous historical mistakes, such as claiming that Muṣṭafā al-Ṣawī was the *khalīfa* of al-Dardīr, when in fact it was Aḥmad al-Ṣawī. He also assumes that the shaykh of the branch of the Khalwatī order to which al-Dardīr was affiliated was a fusion of the older Egyptian Khalwatī order and the Bakriyya family of *ashrāf* (descendants of the Prophet

Muḥammad who also had their own order), when in fact they were two separate entities.<sup>66</sup>

Jane Hathaway offers a general overview of the Ottoman provinces, outlining political, economic and religious-intellectual developments during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>67</sup> She cites some of the burgeoning intellectual trends of the late eighteenth century such as “neo-Sufism” and Wahhabism. Yet, like many of her predecessors, she subscribes to the idea of a centuries long tension between Sufism and Islamic orthodoxy that finally reached a “rapprochement” in the late eighteenth century with the rise of the Khalwatī order in Egypt and its subsequent espousal by the majority of the Azharī ‘*ulamā*’. It remains to be seen, however, if the nature of the Egyptian ‘*ulamā*’ justifies such a view of tension and subsequent rapprochement in light of the fact of a continuous adoption and advocacy of Sufism from at least the Mamlūk era.<sup>68</sup> Marsot provides an insightful social and culture history of the various social classes in eighteenth century Egypt; she points to the essential role of the ‘*ulamā*’, and asserts: “economic, social, religious, or even minor daily activities could not be conducted without them.”<sup>69</sup> She also alleges that many of the more prominent members of the ‘*ulamā*’ class were able to enrich themselves via their caretaker roles of religious endowments as well as their

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<sup>66</sup> For a more thorough exposition of Gran’s errors, see: P. De Jong F. and Gran, “Review: On Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840*,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14, no. 3 (1982); Gabriel Baer, “Review: [Untitled],” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25, no. 2 (1982).

<sup>67</sup> Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (Harlow, England ; New York :: Pearson Longman, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> The *athbāt* (scholarly lineages) of scholars such as al-Dardīr and al-Ḥifnī indicate that Sufism was well established amongst the ‘*ulamā*’ from at least the time of the late Mamlūk era scholar, Zakariyyā al-Anṣarī (d. 926/1520), whose epithet of “Shaykh al-Islām” indicates his standing amongst the ‘*ulamā*’. This theme is elucidated further in Chapter 3.

<sup>69</sup> Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Women and Men in Late Eighteenth-Century Egypt*, Modern Middle East Series Texas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

established links with the Mamlūk elites.<sup>70</sup> While such enrichment is not expressly characterised as usurpation, it is nonetheless clearly implied. She does also point out the more noble stances of some of the '*ulamā*', such as Alī al-Ṣaʿīdī al-ʿAdawī, al-Dardīr's teacher and kinsman.

Michael Winter offered a pioneering study of the most significant early Ottoman Egyptian scholar and Sufi master, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565).<sup>71</sup> He describes the relationship between the '*ulamā*' and the Sufi orders, depicting the palpable tension between them. Though many of the '*ulamā*' were themselves members of Sufi orders, or even their leaders, the Ottoman era witnessed the rise of a "popular" or "folk" Sufism that often operated outside of the purview of the scholarly elite. Though Winter does not offer a definitive explanation as to the reason for such a phenomenon, he cites the transformation of the Khalwatī order from "non-orthodox Turkish Sufism" to one characterised as a "bastion of orthodoxy with unrivalled supremacy amongst the '*ulamā*' of al-Azhar."<sup>72</sup> Winter also tempers Marsot's stance on the '*ulamā*' somewhat by declaring: "...few strong-minded ulama [sic], who shunned the company of the rulers and turned down their benefits, were respected and even feared by the emirs."<sup>73</sup>

The "decline and revival" thesis espoused by Gran is not dissimilar to the "reform and revival" thesis of Voll and the German academic, Schulze. Both theses assume a preceding period of dormancy, if not outright decline, coinciding with the onset of Ottoman rule in Egypt in the early to mid sixteenth century. In the case of Voll, scholarly circles in the Hejaz (Mecca and Medina)

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<sup>70</sup> "The Political and Economic Functions of the 'Ulamā' in the 18th Century," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16, no. 2/3 (1973); *Women and Men in Late Eighteenth-Century Egypt*.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Winter, *Society & Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writing of 'Abd Al-Wahhab* (New Brunswick, [N.J.]: Transaction, 2007).

<sup>72</sup> *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule: 1517-1798* (London: Routledge, 1992), 133.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

that sparked a renewed interest in *ḥadīth* sciences and a realignment of Sufism with Sunni orthodoxy were responsible for various Islamic “revivals” in West Africa, North Africa, Egypt, and the hinterlands of Arabia.<sup>74</sup>

Schulze, like Gran, specifically searches for roots of an “Islamic Enlightenment” of the eighteenth century that parallels the European version of the same century. However, as pointed out by Peters, the starting point for such a thesis is suspect as it assumes that similar cultural, social, and intellectual factors affecting the European Enlightenment were also relevant for an Islamic one, when no tangible evidence exists for such an assumption.<sup>75</sup>

Voll, unlike Gran and Schulze, sees the process of reform and renewal as a cyclical one in the Islamic world, echoing the sentiments of the arguably the world’s first social historian, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), who theorised in his *Muqaddima* that civilised societies eventually grow decadent and weaken, opening a vacuum for more intrepid political movements hailing from the less civilised interior and countryside to reinvigorate society and reset the clock until they too become decadent and are replaced by a more zealous movement.<sup>76</sup>

Such a theory could be argued for the so-called decline of the Islamic world after the sixteenth century, but it fails to explain how the more zealous Ottomans managed to precipitate the cultural and intellectual decline in the Arab provinces despite their political ascendancy in Europe and Asia Minor prior to the early eighteenth century. Among Western historians, even those who

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<sup>74</sup> Often referred to as “Neo-Sufism”, a term first coined by Fazlur Rahman. See Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity : Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1982); John Obert Voll, “Islam as a Special World-System,” *Journal of World History* 5, no. 2 (1994).

<sup>75</sup> See Reinhard Schulze, “Das Islamische Achtzehnte Jahrhundert: Versuch Einer Historiographischen Kritik,” *Die Welt des Islams* (1990); Rudolph Peters, “Reinhard Schulze’s Quest for an Islamic Enlightenment,” *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 2004), 167-72.

challenge the Orientalist paradigm, the paradigm of “decline and revival/renewal” remains the dominant motif.

Khaled El-Rouayheb makes a critical point regarding the decline/revival thesis – namely that it assumes a preceding period of decline in order for a revival to occur; he further challenges the notion that the seventeenth century was a period of decline by examining the perceived renewed interest in the Arab world of the rational sciences, including *manṭiq* (logic); as well as the resurgence of hitherto non-Arab Sufi orders in the Arab lands such as the Nakshabandiyya, Khalwatiyya, and Shattariyya.<sup>77</sup> El-Rouayheb also posits that historians have assumed a decidedly “Arab-centric” view on the period between the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries and have virtually ignored the contributions of the ‘*ulamā*’ in Persia and India.<sup>78</sup> Yet, he seems to make two implicit assumptions: 1) that a renewed interest in logic and the rational sciences constitutes a “fluorescence”; and 2) that the decline thesis may still be applicable with a change of dates – from the seventeenth century to the sixteenth century.<sup>79</sup> While intellectual trends in the sixteenth century are outside the scope of this study, it appears that the vestiges of nineteenth century Orientalism remain influential – a “decline” must have occurred sometime – but without definitive evidence to pinpoint either its time or location within the Islamic world. Though it is undeniable that the intellectual and cultural aspects of a region are affected by its political and economic fortunes,

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<sup>77</sup> See Khaled El-Rouayheb, “Was There a Revival of Logical Studies in Eighteenth-Century Egypt?,” *Die Welt des Islams* 45, no. 1 (2005); “Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 2 (2006).

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Logic was studied in Cairo in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and a contemporary of al-Dardīr, Aḥmad al-Damānḥūrī (1192/1778), who also became the Shaykh of al-Azhar, wrote a highly influential commentary on the logic text of the North African logician ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Akhdarī (d. 983/1575). See El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 131-146.

Islamic societies have demonstrated a remarkable resiliency to external disturbances. While it remains the conventional wisdom to consider the influence of the political and economic background of any historical era, exaggerating the significance of such factors while making particular assumptions about their effects will invariably lead to skewed results and faulty conclusions.

Several recent attempts have been made at shedding new light on the late Ottoman period in Egypt via the study of other prominent intellectual figures. Perhaps one of the more comprehensive works is that of Stefan Reichmuth, in his dedicated study of al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, the Indian *sharīf* and prolific scholar of language, *ḥadīth*, and *taṣawwuf*.<sup>80</sup> Reichmuth chronicles al-Zabīdī's life story and travels, his many scholarly and pious networks, and his contribution to eighteenth century Islamic intellectual life via his main two contributions, glosses on the *Ihyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn* of al-Ghazālī and the lexicon of al-Fayruzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*. Reichmuth asserts that al-Zabīdī spearheaded a particular intellectual revival that was characterised by a rededication to *ḥadīth* studies, in particular the neglected art of *ḥadīth* narration in the scholarly salon (*majlis*); and by a renewed focus on expositing the cardinal principles of *taṣawwuf* and reconciling it with the core tenets of orthodox Islam. He also attempts to identify common trends in eighteenth century intellectual life in general, remarking that al-Zabīdī's thought and methodology parallel intellectual trends of the European enlightenment: "Zabīdī's endeavours to harmonise the different strands of religious, literary and naturalist scholarship which were available to him at his time can be compared with the European encyclopaedic and lexicographical enterprises which are

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<sup>80</sup> See Reichmuth, *The World of Murtada Al-Zabidi (1732-91): Life, Networks, and Writings*. And "Murtaḍā Az-Zabīdī (D. 1791) in Biographical and Autobiographical Accounts. Glimpses of Islamic Scholarship in the 18th Century," *Die Welt des Islams* 39, no. 1 (1999).



commonly regarded as the crucial feature of the European intellectual landscape of that period.”<sup>81</sup>

This study endeavours to address the issues of the eighteenth century Muslim world in terms of its intellectual landscape, via the scholarship of al-Dardīr, according to a cognitive framework derived from within the tradition, in an attempt to offer a new perspective on the intellectual value of early modern Islamic scholarship.

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<sup>81</sup> Reichmuth, *The World of Murtada Al-Zabidi (1732-91): Life, Networks, and Writings*, 333.

### **Political and social climate in Ottoman Egypt at the time of al-Dardīr**

The eighteenth century in Egypt was a period of both stability and tumult, a period of both triumph and loss, and a period of both continuation and renewal. Perhaps Dickens's locution referring to the same time period in England and France – it was the best of times and the worst of times – is equally applicable to this land across the Mediterranean.<sup>82</sup> Though Egypt was clearly an Ottoman province, the Ottomans themselves were hard-pressed to maintain sovereignty over their most important and productive possession. The Mamlūk beys had reasserted their authority, establishing the “*shaykh al-balad*” as the de-facto ruler, effectively relegating the Ottoman viceroy to mere tax collector and prisoner of the citadel, rarely venturing out of the royal palace. This development, which was concomitant with costly Ottoman wars in Eastern Europe and weakening of the central authority, left the Egyptianised Mamlūks to fill the power vacuum. They did not fail to seize the opportunity. This arrangement suited both Ottomans and Mamlūks for a time in the early eighteenth century, when a period of relative stability ensued and Egypt enjoyed a surplus trade balance in its role as primary supplier of coffee and cotton to Europe. It is even suggested that eighteenth century Egypt was more profitable to the Porte than the seventeenth, when it fully held the reigns of power without Mamlūk interference. Ottoman officials were able to benefit from illegal and exorbitant tax collecting from a hapless populace as long as a milieu of competition was maintained between the Mamlūk houses, which were the

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<sup>82</sup> The first line from Charles Dickens's famous novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*.

instruments of collection.<sup>83</sup> Al-Dardīr laments this development and declares its illegitimate nature on several occasions.<sup>84</sup>

However, several developments rendered the status quo untenable. Chief amongst these was the increasing hubris and greed of the Mamlūk beys, who began instituting unfavourable tax schemes on both European imports arriving in Egyptian ports, as well as on the hapless peasantry, who were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a living under the *iltizām* tax farm system. This was a direct result of their consolidation of power under the leading Bey, complete with the honorific title of *Shaykh al-Balad*, even gaining recognition from the Porte as the de-facto ruler of Egypt. This regime of state-sponsored oppression climaxed during the duumvirate reign of Ibrāhīm Bey (d. 1232/1817) and Murād Bey (d. 1215/1801) after the death of their master Muḥammad Bey “Abū al-Dhahab” (d. 1189/1775) during a military campaign in Palestine on behalf of the Ottoman sultan against provincial chieftains who had their own designs on autonomy from Ottoman suzerainty. Muḥammad Bey differed from his predecessor, ‘Alī Bey al-Kabīr (d. 1187/1773) in that he pursued a more conciliatory tone with the Sublime Porte and avoided open insurrection, as ‘Alī Bey had done, who had minted his own currency, and more importantly, withheld the annual tribute to Istanbul. Upon the death of Abū al-Dhahab, Ibrāhīm and Murād assumed power along the lines of traditional power as established by ‘Alī Bey with Ibrāhīm assuming the office of *Shaykh al-Balad* and Murād as *Amīr al-Hajj*.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Carl F. Petry and M. W. Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2:76-78.

<sup>84</sup> See for example: Aḥmad al-Dardīr and Aḥmad al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik ‘Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma‘ārif, 1972), 2:305.

<sup>85</sup> See Daniel Neil Crecelius, *The Roots of Modern Egypt : A Study of the Regimes of ‘Alī Bey Al-Kabir and Muhammad Bey Abū-Al-Dhahab, 1760-1775*, *Studies in Middle Eastern History* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1981); Petry and Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*; Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt : The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge :: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

It was during the reign of Ibrāhīm and Murād, which lasted until Bonaparte's invasion in 1798, that Egypt experienced its most oppressive Mamlūk regime during the Ottoman period. Ibrāhīm and Murād pursued a similar policy to 'Alī Bey, seeking outright independence from the Ottoman Sultan, while also evoking the ire of French merchants and Egyptian peasants, who were subject to exorbitant taxes to fund the on-again off-again rivalry between the two beys. Some have even suggested that this was the true motivation for the French invasion that ended the duumvirate reign.<sup>86</sup> Before the French invasion however, the Ottoman Sultan sent his premier admiral, Ghazi Ḥasan Pasha, in 1786<sup>87</sup> to reassert the Porte's suzerainty in Egypt. Ḥasan's forces were able to drive out the two beys and banish them to the marginalised confines of Upper Egypt, and install their preferred Bey, Isma'īl as the new *shaykh al-balad* in Cairo. However, the victory was short-lived, as the admiral was recalled to Istanbul to lead the costly Ottoman campaign against the Russians, and Ibrāhīm and Murād were ultimately able to drive out their rival and re-establish their duumvirate. Thus, their reign of exorbitance and usurpation did not again come to a halt until it breathed its last with Napoleon's invasion in 1798, ushering in a new era of foreign rule in Egypt that would continue until the free officers' military coup in 1952.

Categorising the social classes in Egypt, and more specifically, Cairo, presents a formidable challenge. Most historians allege three broad categories: the ruling elite, who include both the high ranking Ottoman officials and the Mamlūk notables; the large peasant and artisan class; and the intermediary class of the religious elite, the '*ulamā*'. Marsot follows the traditional line of thinking on this issue and posits that the '*ulamā*' formed "a group which though

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<sup>86</sup> See Juan Ricardo Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt : Invading the Middle East*. (New York ; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 55-56.

<sup>87</sup> Also the year of al-Dardīr's death.

belonging to the elite nonetheless had no direct authority in the state, save in religious and legal matters, and which while stemming from the people yet was not identified either with the mass or with the rulers.”<sup>88</sup> Marsot further states that the relationship between the ruling elite and the ‘*ulamā*’ was a tenuous one characterised as a battle of wits, for the ‘*ulamā*’ had no powers of real coercion save for their ability to rouse and placate the crowd.<sup>89</sup> This particular narrative is one that has survived for decades, as scholars who have written more recently more or less uphold its foundations.<sup>90</sup> However, Marsot seems to neglect or underemphasise scholars such as al-Dardīr and al-Ṣa’īdī, whom al-Jabartī considers as examples of scholars of principle who often commanded the respect and admiration of the ruling class, beyond a fear of their ability to rouse the crowd.<sup>91</sup>

Al-Dardīr, his teachers, al-Ḥifnī, al-Ṣa’īdī, and virtually all of the rectors of al-Azhar, as well as those ‘*ulamā*’ who assumed other positions of authority, were all born outside of Cairo. Many came from Lower Egypt, the fertile Nile delta, such as al-Ḥifnī, as well as Upper Egypt, such as al-Dardīr and al-Ṣa’īdī.<sup>92</sup> Al-Ḥifnī, for example, copied manuscripts for a living early in his career. It was only after gathering the attention of a wealthy Mamlūk patron, presumably, was he able to dedicate himself fully to lecturing, writing, and otherwise transmitting that which he had spent decades acquiring.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Marsot, "The Political and Economic Functions of the 'Ulamā' in the 18th Century," 130.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Such as Nelly Hanna and Michael Winter, see Hanna, *In Praise of Books : A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*; Winter, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule: 1517-1798*.

<sup>91</sup> See al-Jabartī's entries for al-Dardīr and al-Ṣa’īdī: al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akhhbār*, 1:648 and 2:224.

<sup>92</sup> See Muhammad ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Khafaji and ‘Alī ‘Alī Ṣubḥī, *Al-Azhar Fī Alf ‘ām*. (Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya l-il-Turāth, 2012); ‘Alī ‘Abd al-‘Azīm, *Mashyakhāt Al-Azhar Mundhu Inshā’ihā Ḥattā Al-Ān*. (al-Qāhirah: al-Hay‘ah al-‘Āmmah li-Shu‘ūn al-Maṭābi‘ al-Amīriyah, 1978).

<sup>93</sup> Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī Fūwī, "Muntahā Al-‘Ibārāt Fī Ba‘ḍ Mā Li-Shaykhī Min Al-Manāqib W'al-Karāmāt," in *Yahuda*, ed. Princeton University (Cairo: Princeton University), 76.

The ease by which village boys of both Upper Egypt and the Nile delta could enter into the scholarly elite of Cairo underlines the egalitarian nature of Islamic learning, as well as the social mobility provided by Islamic learning, even as late as the latter part of the eighteenth century. In fact, it remained the only institution in Ottoman Egypt, or any of the other Arab provinces for that matter, where such egalitarianism held sway. The structure of the elite Ottoman corps as well as the Mamlūk notables made no provision for such “social mobility.” Even in the Sufi orders, many of which were dominated by particular families, such as the Bakriyya and Wafā’iyya, leadership was determined via hereditary lines. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, and even until the present day, we find that many, if not the majority of Sufi leadership positions are inherited along familial lines. It is perhaps for this reason, even partially, that the Azhar elite commanded great respect from both rulers and the ruled, as well as wielding significant power in influencing public opinion. Additionally, the *‘ulamā’* also composed the sole indigenous elite of Egyptian society, a situation that continued until the Free Officers’ revolution of 1952.

Outside of al-Azhar and the circles of the scholarly elite, there were two main families that formed the aristocracy of Egyptian Sufism: the Bakriyya (not to be confused with branch of Khalwatī Sufism that was founded by Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, though they share the same name), and the Wafā’iyya. The Bakriyya were descendants of the first caliph, Abū Bakr (d. 12/634), and also claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad via his grandson, al-Ḥasan (d. 50/669). The Wafā’iyya were also descendants of the Prophet, but via his grandson al-Ḥusayn (d. 61/680). Winter alleges that the Wafā’iyya were the more prestigious family, but were later surpassed by the Bakriyya, as the title of

*naqīb al-ashrāf*, or head of the sharifan nobles, was monopolised by the Bakriyya in the seventeenth century.<sup>94</sup>

Most studies of the social history of the period concentrate on either the military or the intellectual elites. However, the disposition and nature of the unlearned classes, who formed the majority of the population, remains elusive. Pinpointing literacy rates, for example, is exceedingly difficult. However, as the scholarly population in the late eighteenth century was observed by the French to number around 5000 (who were most certainly literate), and an additional 5000 of the wealthy bourgeoisie (most likely literate), and a further 15,000 artisans, shopkeepers, and retailers (most probably literate), then a minimal literacy rate of 25-33% can be assumed for Cairo's male population (with a total population of 80,000).<sup>95</sup> Reliable figures for the female population and the Egyptian countryside are even more elusive, but Lane remarked that he encountered a *kuttāb* school in every village he visited and that he found some mixed gender *kuttāb* schools as well as others dedicated for girls.<sup>96</sup> Whatever the case may be, it is doubtful that literacy rates for any other segment of the population were higher than the one third to one fourth estimated for Cairo males.

A reading of al-Jabartī as well other anecdotal histories of the same time or similar time period, such as Lane's *Manners and Customs* leaves the reader with the impression that ritual heteropraxy was fairly common amongst the uneducated, especially under the tutelage of Sufi shaykhs. These claims also appear to be substantiated by al-Dardīr in several of his works, especially those pertaining to creedal theology. The spiritual predecessor of al-Dardīr, Muṣṭafā

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<sup>94</sup> Winter, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule: 1517-1798*, 138-40.

<sup>95</sup> Figures taken from Raymond, *Cairo*, 207-8. See also Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 10.

<sup>96</sup> Edward William Lane and Edward Stanley Poole, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: London, 1860), Electronic resource, 63-68.

al-Bakrī, also alludes to this phenomenon in his works on *taṣawwuf*, where he laments the prevalence of false Sufi practitioners who assume the dress and idiolect of the *shaykhs*, and use their position of influence to enrich themselves.<sup>97</sup> Al-Jabartī also does not fail to capture this phenomenon, as his annals are littered with accounts of eccentric individuals captivating the interest of many of Cairo’s urban poor, whom he disparagingly refers to as *awbāsh* (riffraff).<sup>98</sup> Being a member of the scholarly elite, this comes as no surprise; yet similar contempt is not palpable in either the writings of al-Dardīr or al-Bakrī. Rather, their criticism is directed towards the charlatans where they emphasize the need for following authentic scholarship. They speak to the *murīds*, or would-be disciples, urging them to take heed and avoid the pitfalls of the Sufi charlatans. In very much the same style of another Sufi “reformer”, the fifteenth century Moroccan, Aḥmad Zarrūq (d. 899/1493), they enumerate the qualities and attributes of “the shaykh”, listing god-fearingness (*taqwa*) and strict observance of the *sharī’a* as essential to the selection of a proper guide on the spiritual path. This underscores the general mentality and cosmology of the eighteenth century Muslim, namely that religion remained the essential source for making sense of one’s existence as well as living one’s life.

This paradigm was not to be seriously challenged until the advent of the sweeping institutional and educational reforms enacted by Muḥammad Ali Pasha (d. 1265/1849), the Albanian self-declared ruler of Egypt under nominal Ottoman suzerainty after the Napoleonic invasion of 1798-1801. Perhaps the most devastating reform to this existing paradigm was the systematic marginalisation of the ‘*ulamā*’ by usurping their pious and religious endowments and thereby effectively ending their independence of the state. Ironically, it was

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<sup>97</sup> Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, *Al-’Ara’is Al-Qudsiyya* (Cairo: Dar al-Karaz, 2008), 94-95.

<sup>98</sup> al-Jabartī, *’Ajā’ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājīm W’al-Akhhbār*, 2:154.



the '*ulamā*' themselves who clamoured for Ali's ascendancy after the expulsion of the last French troops from Egypt.<sup>99</sup>

Additionally, the '*ulamā*' were the sole vanguard against despotism and tyranny, whether incurred by the Ottoman authorities or the Mamlūk emirs. They were the only segment of society that regularly interacted with both the ruling elites as well as the general laity. They also commanded esteem and respect from both. Thus they were the stabilising force that the ruling elites counted on to maintain order, and the laity counted on to intercede to the ruling elites on their behalf. Napoleon Bonaparte clearly realised this when he sought to curry the '*ulamā*'s' favour by forming an executive *dīwān* that consisted of some of the most respected Azhar '*ulamā*'. Amongst them was Abd Allah al-Sharqāwī (d. 1227/1812), the Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar at the time and fellow Sufi of the Khalwatī order of al-Dardīr.<sup>100</sup>

As trusted interpreters of the *sharī'a*, the upholding of justice and the securitisation of individual and societal rights was viewed as falling squarely within the responsibilities of the '*ulamā*', effectively providing an essential counterbalance to a political system where absolute executive authority rested with the ruler, with no other form of oversight in place to curb its tyranny. Of course, there was a formal process by which to address grievances via the court system, but as only Turks were appointed as judges, it appears as there was a general reluctance on the part of the Egyptians to approach judges for crimes of usurpation of the ruling class. This was most likely due to the fact that the Turkish judges were viewed as either complicit or at the very least ineffectual. In either case, they were not accorded the same esteem as that

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<sup>99</sup> See Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, Cambridge Middle East Library (Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 42-44.

<sup>100</sup> See Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt : Invading the Middle East*, 124-26.

that was reserved for the Egyptian *‘ulamā’*, who were seen as “of the people”, but also as guardians of justice.<sup>101</sup>

The prevalence of less than strict practice of Islamic etiquettes, especially as regards to those associated with the Sufi orders, provoked the ire of several reformers in the Muslim world of the eighteenth century. Lane recounts in detail the particularly curious practices of the Rifā’ī order, such as the eating of glass and the swallowing of whole swords, and an offshoot of the Aḥmadiyya plucking the hair off a donkey at the mausoleum of Aḥmad al-Badawī in Ṭanṭa.<sup>102</sup> The pressures of a vastly weakened central government, the usurpation of the Mamlūk beys, an expanding uneducated urban class, and impending European superiority all contributed to an environment in Egypt and beyond that was ripe for renewalist and reformist projects.

### **Cultural and Intellectual Climate at the time of al-Dardīr**

Only recently has there been a challenge<sup>103</sup> to the prevailing narrative of the decline and stagnation of a glorious Arab-Islamic civilisation that began in earnest after the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols, and with it, the Abbasid caliphate in 1258. The long, hard fall culminated in the ascendancy of the belligerent Ottoman sultanate, having captured Islam’s political and intellectual centre, Egypt, in 1517, from the Mamlūks, Saladin’s inheritors and last upholders of Arab-Islamic culture and intellectualism. This narrative has been prescribed by both Western and Arab intellectuals alike, though they disagree somewhat on the cause and effect. Arab intellectuals such as Georgi Zaydan and even the Azhar chronicler Abd al-Mun’im Khafājī attribute the decline to

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<sup>101</sup> Al-Dardīr’s opinion of the Ottoman judicial system is more thoroughly treated in chapter 5.

<sup>102</sup> Lane and Poole, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, 242.

<sup>103</sup> With studies such as: El-Rouayheb, "Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century : Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb."; Reichmuth, *The World of Murtada Al-Zabidi (1732-91): Life, Networks, and Writings*; Voll, "Abdallah Ibn Salim Al-Basri and 18th Century Hadith Scholarship."

“Turkish occupation” and suppression of the Arab-Islamic intellectual legacy.

Khafājī goes so far as to imply that the Ottomans sought to supplant the Arabic language with Turkish, an assertion for which there is no historical evidence.<sup>104</sup>

Zaydan and Khafājī wrote in a time when the Muslim world was still reeling from the last vestiges of European colonialism and rising Arab nationalism, both of which viewed the Ottoman Empire as an unfortunate misstep that has been traversed and a true Arab renaissance could begin in earnest. Such is the narrative that propels criticism of the culture of al-Azhar, Egyptian Sufism, and the ‘*ulamā*’ class. It is also the same narrative adopted by Islamic reform movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as the Wahhābī and Salafī reductionists, as well as some of the political Islamist movements, such as the Muslim brotherhood.<sup>105</sup>

Western scholars have also adopted a similar narrative – though for different reasons and dissimilar pretences. Traditional Orientalists, such as Lewis and Coulson, posit that the “golden era” of Islam breathed its last at the end of the fourteenth century, precipitated and hastened by the fall of Baghdad, the then greatest city in Islam, to the Mongols, in 1258.<sup>106</sup> Like their Arab counterparts, they associate the Muslim world’s intellectual fortunes with their political ones, a stance which remains the bane of many historians, especially those of the “exotic” Orient. While a contrast in the focus and material of Islamic writings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be readily discerned, whether or not such a contrast represents a decline or stagnation

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<sup>104</sup> See Georgi Zaydān, *Miṣr Al-‘Uthmāniyya* (Cairo: Dar al-Āfāq al-‘Arabiyya, 2002), 90-92; Khafaji and Ṣubḥ, *Al-Azhar Ft Alf ‘ām*, 1:111-15.

<sup>105</sup> See Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis : The Defense, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World*, Routledge Sufi Series (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999), 86-111; Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam* (New Haven, Conn. ; London: Yale University Press, 2012), 1-30.

<sup>106</sup> See Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? : Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Noel J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law*, Islamic Surveys (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964).

remains an open question. These works should be evaluated on their individual merits, rather than holding them up to imagined criteria of a bygone era that vastly differed in terms of their political and cultural aspects.

Scholars have tended to focus on three main themes in seventeenth and eighteenth century intellectual life in the Muslim world: the renewal of *ḥadīth* studies, “neo-Sufism”, and “reductionist reformism”.<sup>107</sup> Certain figures feature prominently in this discourse, such as Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1689), Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), Shah Walī Allah al-Dihlawī (d. 1176/1762), and Muḥammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792). Voll traces the origins of the three themes to a common source – the intellectual salons of the Hejaz during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, where Indian and Arab Islamic scholarship participated in an exchange of ideas forming a “scholarly community” that ostensibly placed more emphasis on *ḥadīth* studies than on *madhhab* jurisprudence, and sought to reorient Sufism to more closely align with orthodox practices.<sup>108</sup>

Dallal has challenged the assertion of Voll that the reformist eighteenth century intellectual trends can be traced to a common origin. He argues that to categorise diverse approaches, such as that of al-Dihlawī, who advocated Sufism, and that of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, who completely rejected it as a heretical practice, under a single rubric, is misleading.<sup>109</sup> This point is driven home in his comparison of the Indian and Najdi scholars, where he states that:

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<sup>107</sup> This latter term I have adopted to refer to the Wahhābī movement in Arabia and the Kadizadeli movement in Ottoman Turkey. I eschew other terms commonly used such as “fundamentalist” or “puritan” reform as they refer to alien European paradigms and are thus a poor fit for characterising Islamic intellectual themes. “Reductionist” seems more appropriate, as the reformers endeavoured to reduce Islam to a stripped down and nondescript set of legalisms, thereby largely marginalising its theological and ethical (Sufi) aspects.

<sup>108</sup> John Obert Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994); *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Dallal, “The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750-1850.”

“It is perhaps safe to state up front that Walī Allah would have disagreed with Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb on every single issue he addressed.”<sup>110</sup>

A more plausible conclusion that does not reject Voll’s single origin thesis, or Dallal’s repudiation of it, is that the Muslim world (specifically the Arab Ottoman provinces of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Hejaz) during the eighteenth century was subject to a common set of political and social dynamics that undoubtedly influenced its intellectual dynamics as well. Politically, decentralisation of power and acceding of it to local authorities by the Ottomans was a common trend across all Arab provinces. Local leaders in Egypt and Syria in the latter half of the eighteenth century even felt emboldened enough to challenge the charade of Ottoman suzerainty and claim outright sovereignty.<sup>111</sup>

The leading ‘*ulamā*’ of all three centres traced their intellectual genealogies (*sanad*) back to common Mamlūk era scholars, such as Zakariyyā al-Anṣarī, Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505) and Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī. This is especially significant in the *ḥadīth* sciences, as the Indian *ḥadīth* scholar, al-Dihlawī, claimed that after examining the *ḥadīth* chains of transmission available to him, he found them to be interrupted except for those of the Egyptian ‘*ulamā*’, the likes of whom previously mentioned above.<sup>112</sup> These common links between scholars of Egypt, Syria, the Hejaz, and to some extent Yemen, North Africa, and the Subcontinent, formed a fellowship and network of Islamic learning that by and large preserved the authority of Islam without the need for a centralised clerical system to validate doctrine and doctors. These scholarly circles exhibited remarkable consistency on matters of creed, jurisprudence,

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>111</sup> As was the case with the alliance formed between ‘Alī Bey al-Kabīr, the Mamlūk leader in Egypt and Ṣāḥib al-‘Umar, the Syrian tribal leader. They revolted against the Sultan and managed to secure Egypt, parts of Syria, and the Hejaz before internal treachery and Ottoman resolve quelled their rebellion. See Eugene L. Rogan, *The Arabs : A History* (London: Penguin, 2010), 48-75.

<sup>112</sup> Usama al-Sayyid al-Azhari, *Asanīd Al-Miṣriyyīn* (Abū Dhabi: Dar al Faqih, 2011), 109.

and methodology, though dissenting views were “tolerated” in as much as they adhered to the broad based creedal and juristic methodologies of classical Sunni Islam. Ash‘arism in the Islamic heartlands and Maturidism in the Indian subcontinent were the accepted creedal articulations amongst Sunni ‘*ulamā*’. The three main schools of law, the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Shāfi‘ī, constituted the main legal traditions to which every scholar of any repute adhered to at least one of, with the Ḥanbalī school finding only few adherents in central Arabia and small enclaves in Syria and Iraq.

Though Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in Arabia was not the first to challenge this normative understanding, his impact and influence were perhaps the most significant. It was he who expressed the notion that Ash‘arism was a non-Sunni creed that did not expressly follow the dictates of the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* – as did Ibn Taymiyya before him. More importantly, however, for Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb were the heterodox practices of the Muslim laity, which included saint veneration, membership in Sufi orders, invoking the Prophet or Muslim saints as intercessors in supplication (*tawassul*), and belief in saintly miracles (*karāmāt*). The creedal text authored by Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb was used as a guiding text by which to evaluate the laity’s conformance with Wahhabism and later served as a foundational text for the nascent Saudi state.<sup>113</sup>

Examining the scholarly works produced during the lifetime of al-Dardīr, it is a fair statement that many of the works were either commentaries (*shurūḥ*) or supra-commentaries (*ḥawāshī*) on works produced during the Mamlūk period or earlier. This phenomenon was not limited to books of law, but rather extended to works on grammar, morphology, rhetoric (*balāgha*), theology, and even

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<sup>113</sup> See Hamid Algar, *Wahhabism : A Critical Essay* (Oneonta, N.Y.: Islamic Publications International, 2002).

Qur'ānic exegesis.<sup>114</sup> Interestingly enough, the lion's share of original writings can be found in the discipline of *taṣawwuf*, where al-Dardīr and his contemporaries authored a number of works dealing with both *ṭarīqa* Sufism, as well as the more esoteric topics of the discipline. Al-Dardīr's immediate predecessors, Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, and al-Nābulusī, authored between them some four hundred works on *taṣawwuf*. Also finding original authorship were small legal treatises covering such topics as the legality of tobacco and the renovation of churches.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless the genre of the era was the many commentaries and glosses on legal and creedal works, Arabic grammar, morphology, and rhetoric, and logic. Many of these works were didactic and did not aim to offer ground-breaking insights heretofore unknown. In fact, many '*ulamā*' chose not to write but rather spend the majority of their days and nights teaching and disseminating that which they had taken sometimes decades to acquire. Thus, any examination of the intellectual legacy of this period must primarily focus upon the many commentaries and glosses on earlier works. They were effectively the dominant genre of the era; in much the same way *ḥadīth* compendiums were the genre for much of the formative period of Islam. Therefore a critical evaluation should be predicated on the contents of these works in the context of their historical time period, rather than dismissing them out of hand as dull imitations.

## Primary Sources

The primary sources that form the subject of this study consist of extant manuscripts of al-Dardīr's works as well as works available in published form.

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<sup>114</sup> Such as al-Dardīr's student's (al-Ṣawī) commentary on the Tafsīr of al-Jalalayn. See Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ṣāwī et al., *Ḥāshiyat Al-'allamah Al-Ṣawī 'alā Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn*..(Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī : Mu'assasat al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī, 1999).

<sup>115</sup> Based upon a perusal of extant manuscripts at the Egyptian National Archives.

Additionally, several manuscripts provided hagiographic material essential to the understanding of al-Dardīr's background. These include biographies of al-Dardīr's main teacher, Muḥammad Sālim al-Ḥifnī, and of his main student, Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī. Additionally, the works of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī proved essential in extrapolating the salient points of al-Dardīr's views on knowledge, gnosis, and enlightenment, as it was the school of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī to which he prescribed regarding these points. Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī's master, Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, popularised the thought of the great Andalusian master, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), and provided intellectual arguments for Ibn 'Arabī's complex and sometimes controversial statements, greatly impacting Sufism in general, and the "school" of al-Nābulusī / al-Bakrī / al-Ḥifnī / al-Dardīr specifically. Al-Nābulusī also chronicled his visit to Egypt in the late seventeenth century in his work *al-Ḥaqīqa wa'l-Majāz fī al-Riḥla ilā Bilād al-Shām wa Miṣr wa'l-Ḥijāz*, which proved highly beneficial in providing background information on the cultural, social, and intellectual climate in Egypt during the late Ottoman period.

The annals of al-Jabartī still remain the premier source for Ottoman Egyptian history. His work is of additional significance in that he himself was a Khalwatī and disciple of al-Dardīr's shaykh, Muḥammad Sālim al-Ḥifnī; he extols the virtues of the Khalwatī order and outlines their methods of initiation and operation. A less cited work by academics, most likely due to scathing criticism by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, is Edward William Lane's (d. 1876) *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, was also referenced for this study.

The sum of al-Dardīr's oeuvre complete the primary sources, particularly his three works in *kalām* theology: *al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya*, his gloss on *Umm al-Barāhīn*, and his commentary entitled *Fawā'id al-Farā'id*. In jurisprudence, his



main works for the study are his commentary on *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*, and his own treatise, *Aqrab al-Masālik*. In *taṣawwuf*, *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān* and the relevant sections in his theology and jurisprudential works constitute the primary sources for this study. Al-Dardīr's political stances and ideas about the political discourse of his day are gleaned from al-Jabartī's chronicles and al-Dardīr's own works, where he often offers social and political commentary in the context of his scholarly expositions.

## Al-Dardīr's Writings<sup>116</sup>

Al-Dardīr was a prolific writer, by the standards of his time, producing some nineteen works.<sup>117</sup> He wrote more than either of his two main teachers, 'Alī al-Ṣā'idī and Muḥammad Sālim al-Ḥifnī, who were arguably the most prominent scholars of al-Azhar of their generation. Al-Dardīr's works span several different religious disciplines, including jurisprudence, theology, *taṣawwuf*, Prophetic biography, rhetoric, Qur'ānic exegesis, and dialectic. However, most of his works, as well as his teaching during his lifetime, focused on the three core disciplines of jurisprudence, theology, and *taṣawwuf*.

His major works may be listed as follows:

- 1) *Manḥ al-Qadīr fī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*: A commentary of the epistle of Khalīl ibn Ishāq al-Jundī (d. 767/1366) in Mālikī jurisprudence. This particular commentary has become the standard manual for training Mālikī jurists from Mauritania to Eastern Arabia. Completed in 1197/1783.
- 2) *'Aqrab al-Masālik 'ilā Madhhab al-Imām Mālik*: A treatise based upon the *mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl that suffices with the mention of only the dominant positions within the Mālikī legal school as determined by al-Dardīr. Most likely completed after the commentary on *Khalīl* in 1197/1783, which would make it one of the last works completed by al-Dardīr.
- 3) *Al-Tawajjuh al-Asnā bi Naẓm al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*: A sixty-eight-line poem of supplications using the ninety-nine names of Allah. Aḥmad al-Ṣawī (d. 1241/1826), a student of al-Dardīr and commentator on the poem mentioned that al-Dardīr composed it in one night and that it was amongst the last of his works.<sup>118</sup>
- 4) *Tuḥfat al-Qārī lī Kitāb al-Bārī fī al-Mutashābih*: A treatise presumably dealing with the verses in the Qur'ān that seem anthropomorphic in nature.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Al-Dardīr's works receive a more formal in-depth treatment in the respective chapters detailing his role as theologian, jurist, and Sufi guide.

<sup>117</sup> I qualify his prolificacy as scholars a few generations before al-Dardīr such as al-Nābulusī and Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī each wrote over two hundred works. Except for Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (who was atypical to the Egyptian milieu of scholarship), I am yet to find anyone of al-Dardīr's generation or of those immediately succeeding him who wrote more.

<sup>118</sup> Aḥmad al-Ṣawī, *Al-Ṣalawāt Al-Dardīriyya Wa Yalīhī Sharḥ Manẓumat 'Asmā' Allāhi Al-Ḥusnā* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 2001).

<sup>119</sup> Extant manuscript in Dar al-Kutub MS 18818.

- 5) *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān fī 'Ilm al-Bayān*: A treatise on linguistic metaphor and simile. Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī mentions in his biographical entry on al-Dardīr that he wrote it upon his recommendation.<sup>120</sup>
- 6) *Sharḥ al-Dardīr 'alā al-Ādāb al-'Aḍudiyya*: A commentary on the treatise of 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355) in the discipline of *waḍ'* (original usage of language), a Sunni Persian scholar and judge of the Shāfi'i school.<sup>121</sup>
- 7) *Manzūmat al-Munfarija*<sup>122</sup>
- 8) *Risalat al-'Iqd al-Waḥīd fī 'Īdāḥ al-Su'āl 'an al-Tawḥīd*: A small treatise in Ash'arī theology.<sup>123</sup>
- 9) *Al-Mawrid al-Bāriq 'alā 'Ashraf al-Khalā'iq*: A litany of Prophetic formulas.<sup>124</sup>
- 10) *Fath al-Qadīr fī Aḥādīth al-Bashīr*: A narration of the first *ḥadīth* from each of the major works of *ḥadīth*.<sup>125</sup>
- 11) *Minḥāj al-Ṣadiqīn wa Tibyān al-Sālikīn*: An incomplete treatise on the essential aspects of *taṣawwuf* following the Ghazalian model with an introductory section on Ash'arī theology.<sup>126</sup>
- 12) *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān fī Ādāb Ahl al-'Irfān*: A treatise on *taṣawwuf* and the various etiquettes of the Sufi path and states of the soul.<sup>127</sup>
- 13) *Asanīd al-Kutub al-Sitta wa Asanīd al-A'imma al-'Arba'a*: The *thabat*, or list of al-Dardīr's scholarly licenses in the major *ḥadīth* works and works of the four imams.<sup>128</sup>
- 14) *Al-Tahqīqat al-Aḥmadiyya Sharḥ al-Dardīr 'alā Manẓumatihi al-Musamma al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya*: Al-Dardīr's commentary on his own text in theology. Written in 1177/1763.<sup>129</sup>
- 15) *Mawlid al-Nabī*: A retelling of the Prophet Muhammad's life in verse.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>120</sup> al-Zabīdī, *Al-Muḥjam Al-Mukhtaṣ*, 123-24.

<sup>121</sup> Two extant manuscripts in the Azhar library, MS 42822 and 45558.

<sup>122</sup> Extant manuscript in Azhar library MS 92568 (haven't see it yet)

<sup>123</sup> Two extant manuscripts in Azhar library MS 42126 and MS 46036 and one in Dar al-Kutub MS 30526

<sup>124</sup> MS 134583 and MS 67060 in Azhar library

<sup>125</sup> MS 50065 in Azhar library

<sup>126</sup> MS 39679 in Dar al-Kutub

<sup>127</sup> MS 5297 in Dar al-Kutub, MS 1372 in Azhar library. This work of al-Dardīr is also known by a number of other titles that are extant in Dar al-Kutub and the Azhar library. After comparing the manuscripts, I found that the works titled *Tuḥfat al-Murīd* (MS 37616 Dar al-Kutub and MS 97489 Azhar), *Tuḥfat al-Sayr w-al-Sulūk 'ilā Mālik al-Mulūk* (MS 22062 Dar al-Kutub), and *Risāla fī al-Sayr 'ilā Allāh* (MS 25601) are indeed identical to the work known as *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān fī Ādāb ahl al-'Irfān*.

<sup>128</sup> MS 131022 in Azhar library

<sup>129</sup> There are well over 30 extant copies in al-Azhar library; which is a testament to the widespread acceptance of the work and use as a didactic text by the Azhar '*ulamā'*'.

<sup>130</sup> Published in Cairo as well as several extant copies in Azhar library.

- 16) *Ḥāshiyat al-Dardīr ‘alā Sharḥ al-Hudhudī ‘alā al-Sanūsīyya*: A gloss on the commentary of ‘Alī al-Ṣa‘īdī on the lesser treatise of the Algerian theologian, Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490), also known as *Umm al-Barāhīn*. The text of al-Sanūsī found widespread appeal in North Africa and later in the Arab East, including Cairo and Damascus. As al-Dardīr relates himself, he wrote this gloss at the behest of his master, Muḥammad ibn Sālim al-Ḥifnī, who thought that an easier explication was needed as the commentary of al-Ṣa‘īdī was deemed too difficult for novices.<sup>131</sup>
- 17) *Sharḥ al-Dardīr ‘alā Fawā’id al-Farā’id fī Dābiṭ al-‘Aqā’id*: A commentary on the treatise in theology of Muḥammad ibn Muṣṭafā Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bakrī (d. 1196/1782), one which al-Bakrī wrote while held prisoner presumably by the Russians.<sup>132</sup>
- 18) *Sharḥ al-Dardīr ‘alā Aqrab al-Masālik*: Al-Dardīr’s commentary on his own treatise in Mālikī jurisprudence, and the most widely studied work on the subject in Egypt even in contemporary times.
- 19) *Ḥāshiyat ‘alā Qiṣat al-M’irāj*: Al-Dardīr’s gloss on the Ascension narrative of the Prophet written by Najm al-Dīn al-Ghayṭī (d. 981/1573).<sup>133</sup>

Of these, his commentaries in Mālikī jurisprudence and *kalām* theology are the most important in accessing al-Dardīr’s legacy.

<sup>131</sup> MS 39656 in Dar al-Kutub and MS 92570, MS 10011, MS 132541, MS 40996 in Azhar library

<sup>132</sup> MS 492 Dar al-Kutub

<sup>133</sup> Aḥmad al-Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat ‘Alā Qiṣat Al-M’irāj* (Cairo: Muṣṭafa al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1948).

## Overview of Al-Dardīr's Biography

Biographical information on al-Dardīr outside of al-Jabartī's annals is quite limited, as most of the *ṭabaqāt* literature copies verbatim from al-Jabartī's entry. Little is known about his life prior to his entrance into the scholarly elite of al-Azhar, as al-Jabartī offers strong praise for al-Dardīr for both his scholarly pursuits as well as his social activism and championing of the cause of the common man. What follows is a brief summary of al-Jabartī's entry.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abū Ḥāmid al-'Adawī al-Dardīr was born in 1127/1715 in the Upper Egyptian village of Banī 'Adī, on the outskirts of present day Asyut. The village of Banī 'Adī was named after the tribe that first settled there, originally from the Arabian Peninsula and descendants of the second caliph of Islam, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 22/644). This particular tribe was renowned for its proclivity in producing Islamic scholars and theologians. These include al-Dardīr's master in jurisprudence, 'Alī al-Ṣa'īdī as well as many of his students and those he presided over as administrator of the Azhar dormitory for Upper Egyptian students. Several of the scholars hailing from this village later became renowned for their willingness to intercede on the behalf of the Cairo townspeople in addressing their grievances with the ruling elite. Al-Ṣa'īdī in particular confronted several of the Mamlūk emirs and it is said that when he approached they would extinguish their water pipes, as he detested smoking and would not fail to rebuke those who partook in it, even in a public forum. Al-Dardīr was clearly influenced by the likes of al-Ṣa'īdī in this regard, as he too on more than one occasion confronted the emirs in order to obtain concessions for the hapless

townspeople, particularly the residents of the impoverished Ḥusayniyya quarter, just north of al-Azhar.<sup>134</sup>

Al-Dardīr received instruction in the elementary aspects of reading and writing, in addition to memorising the Qur'ān, under the tutelage of his father. Al-Dardīr's father, Muḥammad, a local Qur'ān teacher, was held in high esteem and considered saintly as al-Dardīr ascribes to him several saintly miracles. Al-Dardīr relates that his father never accepted remuneration for his teaching duties, and that he would on occasion provide for his poorer students. He also relates that his mother would find light from what appeared to be lighted candles emanating from his father's room at night when darkness had set in. When queried about it, he would reply that it was from the light of offering prayers upon the Prophet. Lastly, al-Dardīr recounts that in times of austerity when little food was available, his father would recite the Qur'ānic chapter of *Quraysh* and subsequently the plate would feed a great number of people. Later on, al-Dardīr would recite the same chapter and open locked doors without a key until he became renowned for such exploits.<sup>135</sup>

It is thus apparent that al-Dardīr from an early age was instilled with the teachings of Sufism. This was not unusual for men of his background and upbringing, as Sufism was a central part of life in both the Egyptian countryside as well as the capital. This early Sufi upbringing was to shape his worldview and approach to knowledge as well as its acquisition. Nearly all of al-Dardīr's works devote at least one section to Sufism, though the genre of the work is other than Sufism, such as in his works on *kalām* and *fiqh*. As al-Dardīr hailed from Upper Egypt, there is no doubt he was instructed according to the Mālikī school of law, as it is the only *madhhab* practised in Upper Egypt. No historians

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<sup>134</sup> See Muḥammad Makhlūf 'Adawī, *Tarīkh Banī 'Adī* (Cairo: s.n., 1990), microform.

<sup>135</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 1:8.

have offered an explanation for this, as after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was able to rehabilitate Sunnism in Egypt after the demise of the last Fatimid caliph, he primarily supported his own Shāfi'ī school, though he patronised madrasas teaching the Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools in Cairo as well. A plausible explanation for the pre-eminence of the Mālikī School in Upper Egypt may be due to its isolation from Cairo and resultant lack of attention from successive Fatimid and Ayyubid rulers. This sense of neglect in the Upper Egyptian psyche still resonates today, as the region historically has served as a sanctuary for fleeing emirs and as points of departure for the launching of rebellions. In the pre-modern context, it is likely al-Dardīr and his cohorts from the countryside felt a small sense of loyalty to the “state”<sup>136</sup>, as it were, in as much as their true loyalties could be more accurately understood via the prism of an Islamic ethos – one that showed concern for the *umma* in its entirety, albeit with more focused concern for those in one's sphere of influence. This is a recurring theme with al-Dardīr, where in both his pedagogical approaches and his social activism the welfare of the common Muslim was paramount.

After completing his primary education in Banī 'Adī, al-Dardīr travelled to Cairo to study at the prestigious al-Azhar. Little is recorded about this period in his life, but it can be assumed that he studied the Islamic canon of the day, which included the Arabic disciplines and the core disciplines of theology, jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf*.<sup>137</sup> Al-Azhar at this point in its history had secured its place as the pre-eminent institution of Sunni scholarship in Egypt, if not the greater Muslim world. The construction of al-Azhar as a mosque was

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<sup>136</sup> “State” as understood in the term *dawla*, where the observance of public and private morals is in large part dependent upon the ability of the “state” to properly govern. The khabar of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, narrated in the *Mudawwana*: “*Limā yaz'a Allāh b'il-sulṭān a'ḏam mim mā yaz'a b'il-Qur'ān*” “That which God enforces via political authority is greater than that which he enforces with the Qur'ān.”

<sup>137</sup> Al-Dardīr's education is covered more extensively in the forthcoming chapter.

commissioned by the Fatimid caliph al-Mu'izz li Dīn Allāh in 359/970 and was completed two years later under the supervision of the Fatimid general, Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī (d.).<sup>138</sup> After the ascension of the Ayyubids, al-Azhar was neglected and closed for Friday congregational prayers, seen as a symbol of the former Fatimid caliphate. It was not until the time of the Mamlūk sultan, Ṣāḥib Baybars, that al-Azhar was rededicated to Sunni Islam. Nevertheless, it remained an institution amongst many educational institutions in Egypt until the Ottoman conquest. It was Mamlūk Bey patronage under Ottoman rule that came to define al-Azhar and elevate it to the status of pre-eminence, as well as neglect of Mamlūk era madrasas by Ottoman authorities.<sup>139</sup>

It was during this time that al-Dardīr embarked on his most formative relationships, namely with his two main teachers, Muḥammad al-Ḥifnī and 'Alī al-Ṣa'īdī. Al-Ḥifnī served as Al-Dardīr's main teacher in *ḥadīth*, as his scholarly *ijāza* indicates as much. Al-Ḥifnī also became al-Dardīr's spiritual guide, by whom which he was initiated into the Khalwatī order. Al-Ṣa'īdī was the foremost Mālikī jurist of his generation, and al-Dardīr was his greatest pupil. Both al-Ḥifnī and al-Ṣa'īdī were renowned for their influence over the Mamlūk emirs, and their lack of hesitation in even rebuking them if the situation so warranted. Al-Jabartī mentions that he was especially critical of smoking of the water pipe and would publicly rebuke an emir if he saw it in his possession.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Bayard Dodge, *Al-Azhar: A Millennium of Muslim Learning* (Middle East Institute: Washington DC, 1961), 5.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 60. Western sources on the development of al-Azhar in the pre-modern era remain sparse. Arabic secondary sources include: 'Alī 'Abd al-'Aẓīm, *Mashyakhat Al-Azhar Mundhu Inshā'ihā Ḥattā Al-Ān*. (al-Qāhirah: al-Hay'ah al-'Āmmah li-Shu'ūn al-Maṭābi' al-Amīriyah, 1978); Muhammad 'Abd al-Mun'im Khafaji and 'Alī 'Alī Ṣubḥ, *Al-Azhar Fī Alf 'ām*. (Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya l-il-Turāth, 2012); Abdulwahhāb al-Sa'idī, *Al-Jām'al-Azhar Wa Shuyūkhuhu Fī Al-'aṣr Al-Uṭhmānī* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Amāna, 1994); Muhammad 'Abd Allah 'Inan, *Tārīkh Al-Jāmi' Al-Azhar* (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Khanji, 1958).

<sup>140</sup> See al-Jabartī's biography of al-Ṣa'īdī in: al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fī Al-Tarājim W'al-Akhhār*, 1:647-50.



After ‘Alī al-Ṣa‘īdī died in 1189/1775, al-Dardīr assumed his two official positions within al-Azhar, namely the position of mufti of the Mālikī school, and rector of the Upper Egypt *riwāq* (residence hall/college). In addition, he continued to teach the disciplines of jurisprudence, theology, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, and Arabic grammar and rhetoric in the Azhar mosque. Though he was not appointed the position of “Shaykh al-Azhar”, al-Jabartī concedes that al-Dardīr was seen as the “Shaykh of all of Egypt”; the Shaykh al-Azhar position was for several generations firmly in the grip of the Shāfi‘īs, thus explaining the reason for overlooking al-Dardīr and al-Ṣa‘īdī. Another plausible explanation is that scholars hailing from Upper Egypt may not have been viewed as loyal enough to the Ottoman Pasha and Mamlūk emirs to be accorded the powerful position. Whatever the case may be, there is no doubt that Cairo denizens viewed al-Dardīr as the main religious authority after the deaths of al-Ṣa‘īdī and al-Ḥifnī.

Al-Dardīr was perhaps the greatest disciple of al-Ḥifnī in the Khalwatī order, with only Maḥmūd al-Kurdī as a possible rival, who in turn was the greatest disciple of the Syrian shaykh who introduced the Syrian branch of the Khalwatī order in Egypt, Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī. This underscores the importance of al-Dardīr in eighteenth century Sufism, in his role as a renewer within the order, as well as his role in the propagation of the order.<sup>141</sup> Al-Dardīr eventually established his own sub-order and *zāwiya*, though after his death, his sub-order, the *Dardiriyya-Khalwatiyya* was absorbed into the *Sibā’iyya* sub-order, named after his student and disciple, Ṣāliḥ al-Sibā’ī (d. 1221/1806).<sup>142</sup> The *zāwiya* itself was built using funds provided by the sultan of Morocco, Muḥammad III (d. 1204/1790).<sup>143</sup> Al-Jabartī recounts a story where the son of

<sup>141</sup> This is covered more extensively in the fifth chapter.

<sup>142</sup> J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 76-78.

<sup>143</sup> Perhaps he is most renowned for being the first world leader to recognise the newly independent United States of America in 1777.

the sultan was in Egypt and had exhausted all of his funds, leaving him destitute in a foreign land. As Sultan Muḥammad was in the habit of patronising several of the Cairo *‘ulamā’*, they were asked to surrender some of their tributes to support his young son. They all refused save for al-Dardīr, who reasoned that it was the sultan’s money to begin with, and as such, his son is more entitled to its use. When word reached the sultan of al-Dardīr’s magnanimity, the sultan increased his patronage the following year ten-fold. This allowed al-Dardīr to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and build the *zāwiya*.<sup>144</sup> Al-Jabartī uses this story to demonstrate al-Dardīr’s integrity and his standing amongst all aspects of society, including the ruling elite, the scholarly elite, and the common people. Al-Dardīr died in 1786, the same year that the Ottoman sultan sent his top admiral to restore Ottoman suzerainty in the light of local Mamlūk usurpation. His funeral prayer was held at the Azhar mosque where a large crowd attended. His body was then interred just a few hundred metres away the *zāwiya* he had established a few years earlier, where he remains until the current day.

The only other hagiographical entry for al-Dardīr written by a contemporary of his is that of the Indian polymath Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), who was a close friend and student of al-Dardīr. He includes him in his hagiography of over six hundred of his teachers and contacts he accumulated over the course of his travels between India, Yemen, the Hejaz, and Egypt. His entry on al-Dardīr is nearly identical to that of al-Jabartī, but as al-Zabīdī was a generation older, the more reasonable conclusion is that al-Jabartī relied on al-Zabīdī’s entry rather than the reverse. Indeed, al-Zabīdī includes personal reflections on his companion and teacher, where he states:<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W’al-Akhbār*, 2:224-25.

<sup>145</sup> al-Zabīdī, *Al-Mu’jam Al-Mukhtaṣ*, 123.

I accompanied him (al-Dardīr) often, and he loved me for the sake of God. I accompanied him on his visits to the *awliyā* on several occasions, and benefitted from him [certain] things. And I may have attended some of his lessons in *kalām* theology and logic.

Al-Zabīdī also describes al-Dardīr as “unparalleled in his time in the rational and transmitted disciplines.” He further mentions that one of al-Dardīr’s works on language – specifically rhetoric – was written on advice from him while they were in each other’s company at the shrine of Aḥmad al-Badawī in Tanta.<sup>146</sup> In addition, the Sufi chronicler, Yūsuf al-Nabhānī (d. 1350/1932) commits an entry in his compendium of saintly miracles, *Jāmi’ Karāmāt al-Awliyā’*, to al-Dardīr, describing him as “the sun of gnostic knowledge, the [greatest] gnostic of his era, and the object of consensus of all Muslims of all the different schools of thoughts and understanding as to his high rank, sainthood (*wilāya*), spiritual guidance, and overall benefit in all Muslim lands.”<sup>147</sup> The entry then mentions an incident involving a son of one of al-Dardīr’s students had where he had applied the doctrine of *tawassul* (intercession) using al-Dardīr during a difficult situation with the authorities in Egypt and then the spirit of al-Dardīr appeared in his dream and led him to safety. After he awoke, he was given complete victory in his ordeal.<sup>148</sup> Finally, a biographical entry was included for al-Dardīr in the *Ṭabaqāt al-Mālikiyya* of Muḥammad Makhlūf.<sup>149</sup> Al-Dardīr is the first entry in the twenty-fifth *ṭabaqa*, indicating twenty-five generations after the eponymous imam of the school, Mālik ibn Anas. The entry quotes al-Jabartī’s entry verbatim, though Makhlūf offers a more thorough treatment of al-Dardīr’s oeuvre.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 122-24.

<sup>147</sup> Yūsuf al-Nabhānī, *Jāmi’ Karāmāt Al-Awliyā’*. (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 2001), 564.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 565.

<sup>149</sup> Not to be confused with Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Makhlūf (d. 1990) the former Grand Mufti of Egypt, his son.

<sup>150</sup> Makhlūf, *Shajarat Al-Nūr Al-Zakiyya*, 516-17.

## Conclusion

Al-Dardīr is an example of the intellectual elite that was entrusted with the interpretation and transmission of the Islamic tradition. The approach of al-Dardīr to the tradition was a critical and interpretive one, rather than a simple rehashing of past scholarly work. This approach was predicated on the absolute veracity and integrity of the Qur'ān and the corpus of *ḥadīth* as a starting point; the tradition, however, is inclusive of the interpretive methods, linguistic hermeneutics, and syllogistic logic of the intellect that formed the overall interpretive method of the inherited Islamic tradition. Chapter 2 examines the education paradigm established from Islam's very beginnings in the Prophetic era to the time of al-Dardīr in the late twelfth/eighteenth century. The Islamic disciplines formed based upon a consistent commitment to maintaining the veracity of the primary texts of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, and the continuous process of unlocking their meanings for practical application. Chapter 3 discusses al-Dardīr's understanding of the basic epistemological issues of the tradition, their relationship to rationality and theology, and the role of supra-rationalism in informing the overall Islamic understanding of knowledge. Chapter 4 examines al-Dardīr's relationship with Islam's legal tradition, analysing its development since the Prophetic era, and later on the specific Mālikī tradition, in order to contextualise al-Dardīr's approach to maintaining and transmitting the legal tradition. Chapter 5 completes the study by analysing al-Dardīr's societal roles, and placing him within the context of a greater tradition of the Islamic intellectual elites' influence on the formation and development of Muslim societies. The primary research questions this study endeavours to address are:

- 1) How did al-Dardīr interact with the Islamic tradition, and what degree of influence did the interpretive tradition have in informing this interaction?
- 2) How did al-Dardīr's approach to the transmission of knowledge reflect the educational paradigm established by the discursive Islamic tradition, and in what ways were the means he sought to faithfully and successfully transmit it?
- 3) How did al-Dardīr epitomise the core Islamic disciplines of creedal theology, jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf*?
- 4) To what degree did the societal roles exercised by al-Dardīr reflect a tradition of engagement, collusion, or cooperation with the political elites?

## Chapter Two: Al-Dardīr and the Foundations of the Islamic Educational Paradigm

### Introduction

The illustration of the paradigm of the transmission of the Islamic tradition is perhaps no more apparent than in the trajectory that Islamic education pursued over the course of its pre-modern history. Al-Dardīr represents the culmination of this tradition, as the Islamic disciplines had matured to a degree in which the terminology and conceptual frameworks were solidified, and adhered to nearly conventional standards. The disciplines of theology, jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf* in particular followed these guidelines. This was a process that took a millennium to reach its apogee in the lifetime of al-Dardīr, and evolving educational paradigms underlie the framework for conceptualising these developments. This chapter analyses these developments in order to assess the process of cumulation and culmination as they pertain to the intellectual contributions of al-Dardīr to the Islamic tradition. It has been our contention that the significance of the *‘ulamā’* and their writings cannot be properly understood outside of the conceptual framework of the transmitted tradition; therefore, the conceptual underpinnings that informed the methodology of al-Dardīr in his writings and articulation of the Islamic tradition are scrutinised in the following sections.

These primarily include the hierarchical classification of the Islamic disciplines (*taqṣīm al-‘ulūm*), the authoritativeness of the *sanad* (intellectual genealogy), and the linguistic hermeneutics that came to define the methodology of interpreting the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* – the primary sources of Islam. These frameworks came to define the authoritative Sunni tradition, as authority was never delegated to a formal clergy or an infallible Imam. Shils

posits that any tradition requires a systematic approach to defining its boundaries – what it is and what it is not, though he admits there is some arbitrariness regarding the whole process:<sup>1</sup>

There is a certain arbitrariness in the definition of the boundaries of the tradition of religious knowledge and in the decision as to what lies outside of them. This problem would not exist if traditions were, as some of their detractors allege, entirely constant and incapable of any change other than complete rejection. The selection and training of the adepts of tradition and their incorporation into institutions which have the responsibility of maintaining the tradition help to keep the interpretation of the tradition within the boundaries which define it and which distinguish it from what it is not.

Al-Azmeh also posits that the delineation of authority, and in turn, orthodoxy, was subject to historical and political imperatives, and that the Islamic disciplines “are historical entities whose boundaries were established and changed by historical circumstances.”<sup>2</sup>

The on-going enterprise of maintaining the tradition is defined by the maintaining of the methodology of interpreting the tradition, as well as maintaining the integrity of the sources of said tradition i.e. in the case of Islam, the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. As a result of this on-going enterprise, a normativeness or orthodoxy<sup>3</sup> was instituted by which spurious and exceptional interpretations could be identified. Underpinning this normativeness are the methodological tools of classification hierarchy, linguistic hermeneutics, and *isnād* – tools which developed over the course of the history of the Islamic tradition and which

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<sup>1</sup> Shils, *Tradition*, 91.

<sup>2</sup> Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies*, Routledge Library Editions Politics of Islam Volume 1 (London: Routledge, 2013), ix, 295 pages, 199.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of “orthodoxy” in religion is a problematic one; every sect or denomination makes a claim of orthodoxy, so the inherent problem is who and by what means is orthodoxy or normativeness determined? For the purposes of this study which is restricted to Sunni Islam, the boundaries of orthodoxy are determined by the consensus of the Sunni *‘ulamā’*; these boundaries have tended to be rather vast, but it is the tools of the tradition – the hermeneutical methods as well as the *ijāza-sanad* paradigm that came to define the parameters of the intellectual tradition in Sunni Islam. The *‘ulamā’* did not determine orthodoxy, but rather *revealed* it, based upon their application of the hermeneutical tools of the tradition, and the verification of the interpreters based upon the *ijāza-sanad* paradigm. Thus, it is our contention that orthodoxy is definable, though it is characterised more by its approach to the interpretation of the primary texts, and their valid use by the interpreters, rather than a regime of delegitimisation or anathemisation of perceived heterodox belief or praxis. The boundaries of orthodoxy no doubt were subject to historical precedent, as al-Dardīr defined his understanding of orthodoxy as direct functions of the core disciplines of creed, jurisprudence, and Sufism. This is analysed later in this chapter.

inform al-Dardīr's methodology. Al-Dardīr's contribution to this enterprise is best understood via the historical inputs that influenced his approach in his writings; this study demonstrates that the concepts of *tabṣīṭ* (simplification), *tarjīḥ* (judicial preference), and *taḥqīq* (intellectual actualisation) define his methodology, yet these concepts themselves were also products of the cumulative discursive tradition, as is demonstrated throughout this study.

The emphasis on the seeking of knowledge by the '*ulamā*' as the primary objective of the Islamic tradition cannot be overstated. The first word revealed to the Prophet Muhammad was "Read!" Though the people of Mecca were a largely unlettered group, the exhortations to learn, read, recite, and pursue intellectual endeavours were emblematic of the new society that initially formed in the Arabian Peninsula and then expanded into lands that possessed their own mature literate traditions, such as Byzantium and Persia. As a result, Islamic education was not monolithic and underwent significant changes in style, content, and pedagogy with respect to varying locales and historical times.

The literature reflects some of these developments,<sup>4</sup> but there has been no comprehensive analysis of Islamic education that extends beyond a sociological approach; the actual underpinnings of the pre-modern educational system have not been thoroughly explored, as in the manner for Western education such as in the works of Durkheim.<sup>5</sup> While such a broad analysis is outside of the bounds of this chapter, and dissertation, the chapter nevertheless attempts to answer the question: what was the nature of al-Dardīr's education,

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<sup>4</sup> See for example: Makdisi and American Council of Learned Societies., *The Rise of the Colleges : Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*; Tibawi, *Islamic Education: Its Traditions and Modernization into the Arab National Systems*; Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo : A Social History of Islamic Education*, Princeton Studies on the near East (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Selected Writings on Education*. Volume 2, the Evolution of Educational Thought (London: Routledge, 2006).



as typical of the early modern era, and how did the cumulative discursive tradition affect and inform the nature of that education? What was his own approach in his writings as he made the transition from student to teacher, and what contribution, if any, did he make to the discourse or conversation that was taking place over the course of the whole of Islamic learning?

The early modern era of the late eighteenth century presents a particular challenge for Islamic studies, as it witnessed paradigm shifting intellectual currents in Europe that sought to marginalise and undermine the influence of tradition. Speaking of the post-Enlightenment period, Shils states:<sup>6</sup>

Rationality and scientific knowledge on the one side and traditionality and ignorance on the other were set against each other as antitheses. The party of progress, which believed that mankind must move forward towards emancipation from arbitrary and oppressive authority and towards the conduct of human affairs by scientifically illuminated reason, abominated the condition of superstition and ignorance in which most human beings lived. It associated that condition with ecclesiastically imposed dogma... Tradition acquired the bad name which had become attached to dogma.

Muslims in general never conceived inherited teachings as arbitrary and oppressive, except after their confrontation with the West in the early nineteenth century in the form of colonialism, with its concomitant cultural and intellectual dominion. Before this, tradition, as well as its preservation, transmission, and articulation, was deemed as essential for all knowledge pursuits.<sup>7</sup>

Islamic education has exhibited a notable resiliency in the face of changing circumstances that were reflective of economic, social, and political realities. Though the suggestion that Islamic culture was at the mercy of its political fortunes is a pervasive one, it is not a particularly fair suggestion, especially in the much-maligned period of al-Dardīr. Muslim societies, beginning with the period of Umayyad rule, developed a distinct “civil” infrastructure that operated semi-independently from the political authority. The

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<sup>6</sup> Shils, *Tradition*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the writings of reformist Arab intellectuals in: Albert H. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

*waqf* (endowment) system provided a means by which civil infrastructure could operate independently (or at least semi-independently) from state supervision.<sup>8</sup> This development was concomitant with the rise of a professional scholarly elite, who were needed as judges, court reporters, and other functionaries of the state. Though the various rulers, emirs, sultans, etc. were usually the endowers of these *waqf* based charitable enterprises that supported mosques and institutions of learning, it is important to bear in mind that governments in pre-modern Islam operated markedly differently than the post-Enlightenment nation-state with its strict separation between private enterprise and public welfare. “State” wealth, as it were, was considered the province of the ruler, to dispense with in a manner that was pleasing to God.<sup>9</sup> There was no inherent system of checks and balances on state appropriations and imbursements, save for the judiciary, usually headed by a chief justice (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*), but as he was state appointed, it was rare for a justice to accuse the ruling elite of financial impropriety. Nevertheless, the relationship between the ruling elite and the intellectual elite (the ‘*ulamā*’) was complex, and is given further consideration in the last chapter.

The intellectual independence of the ‘*ulamā*’ allowed them to instruct in a manner that they saw fit, largely unfettered by state or institutional oversight, at least from a pedagogical perspective. The *ijāza – isnād* system provided the main qualification for instruction appointments at the various pillars of the Azhar mosque, with popularity, familial, tribal, and *madhhab* based connections and affinities playing a secondary role in determining teaching appointments.<sup>10</sup>

*Waqf* designations also played a role, as often the endower (*wāqif*) would

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<sup>8</sup> See Makdisi and American Council of Learned Societies., *The Rise of the Colleges : Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, 35-74.

<sup>9</sup> See Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo : A Social History of Islamic Education*, 66-75, 95-107.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibid.*, 119-27.

stipulate a specific legal school, or regional affiliation as the beneficiary of the endowment.

The case of al-Azhar was unique, as it was the beneficiary of numerous endowments, especially during the period of Ottoman rule, where it eclipsed all other institutions of learning in Cairo as the premier institution. Ottoman chauvinism was probably the principal factor behind al-Azhar's rise to prominence, with many of the Mamlūk era *awqāf* suffering indifferent neglect and losing their lifelines. Al-Azhar, conversely, predated the Mamlūks, and the Ayyubids, and enjoyed a renaissance under the Ottomans, though most of the infrastructure improvements to the mosque and adjacent *arwiqa* (dormitories) were financed by the Mamlūk emirs, the de-facto rulers in the later Ottoman period of al-Dardīr, when the sublime Porte was distracted by its wars in Eastern Europe.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, al-Azhar was not easily categorised – neither solely a mosque – nor a madrasa – but rather something distinctive – a shrine. 'Alī Mubarak reports in his *Khīṭaṭ* that since its inception in the Fatimid era, al-Azhar had always attracted the *mujāwirīn* (pilgrim-travellers), from both within Cairo and outside of it from as far as the lands of the Maghreb, and characterises it as the holiest mosque, after the three holy mosques of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup>

As mentioned above, al-Dardīr received an education that was typical of many of his contemporaries. His early education in the *kuttāb* taught the basics of reading and writing as well as memorisation of the Qur'ān. Showing early signs of promise, he then travelled from his village to Cairo to study in al-Azhar. In this, he followed a model that had remained virtually unchanged since the

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<sup>11</sup> Bayard Dodge, *Al-Azhar: A Millennium of Muslim Learning* (Middle East Institute: Washington DC, 1961), 94-97.

<sup>12</sup> 'Alī Mubārak, *Al-Khīṭaṭ Al-Tawfīqīyah Al-Jadīdah Li-Miṣr Al-Qāhirah Wa-Mudunihā Wa-Bilādihā Al-Qadīmah Wa-Al-Shahīrah* (al-Qāhirah: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub, 1980), 4:33.

times of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 589/1193) after his rededication of the Azhar college-mosque to Sunni Islam, with the Fatimids having initially established al-Azhar centuries earlier. This model was founded primarily on the master-apprentice paradigm that had also characterised education in mediaeval, and to a lesser extent, Enlightenment Europe as well.<sup>13</sup> Students were expected to master a broad-based ancillary curriculum consisting of grammar, morphology, rhetoric, and to some extent logic before moving on to study the essential disciplines of jurisprudence, theology, *ḥadīth*, and *taṣawwuf*.<sup>14</sup>

This chapter explores the nature of eighteenth century Islamic education, via the prism of al-Dardīr's own experience, including issues of "curriculum", transmission of knowledge and pedagogical methods, as well as its relation and progression as compared to earlier and later eras in the history of Islamic education. The accumulation of knowledge until the time of al-Dardīr had a direct effect on the aforementioned issues, as this chapter demonstrates. The questions of innovation and stagnation in the educational field are better addressed via the framework of the cumulative discursive tradition, which in the Islamic context, places a premium on continuity and accessibility to the core tenets and traditions, rather than dedication to pursuit of a programme predicated on innovation and originality.

Al-Azmeh states: "...as truth is one and invariant, the genealogy of philosophical knowledge is not a process of development or improvement, but is the transmission of an invariant in which the past is simply a prior occurrence of the present."<sup>15</sup> Hence, there was no "development" of knowledge in the sense of changing truths for changing times; the tradition restated and rearticulated

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<sup>13</sup> See Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, 398-402.

<sup>14</sup> Dodge, *Al-Azhar: A Millennium of Muslim Learning*, 197; Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 41-65.

<sup>15</sup> al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies*, 160.

axiomatic and apodictic truths based upon a unifying hermeneutical approach to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. Furthermore, the ancillary methods and mechanisms by which these truths are articulated for changing times and circumstances constituted what later came to be referred to as the *turāth* – a neologism for sure, but nonetheless came to refer to the corpus of scholarly literature that made the tradition accessible to successive generations of students and erstwhile '*ulamā*'. This, essentially, was the role of the '*ulamā*' – the restatement and re-articulation of universal truths in a manner commensurate with evolving circumstances. Their ability to do so via the tools of the tradition constituted their authoritativeness.

## Intellectual Genealogies, Hermeneutics and Sunni Authoritativeness

After the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, the issue of authority proved to be a contentious one, and affected the course of the nascent Muslim polity's spiritual and political fortunes until the present day. Within the person of the Prophet, both spiritual authority – the understanding of God's message to man, and political authority – the practical application of the divine message, were contained. However, after his death, the development of political factions over the issue of succession preceded and precipitated the emergence of theological factions. Different criteria emerged over the issue of political authority, i.e. should the khalīfa be from the tribe of Quraysh, or is he limited to the direct descendants of al-Ḥusayn, or can he be any qualified male?<sup>16</sup>

The Sunnis emerged as the dominant group, though they were not immune from theological splintering within their own ranks. Nevertheless, the idea of authority in spiritual and theological matters came to be understood as independent from the political authority after the *miḥna* that arose over the createdness of the Qur'ān during the tenure of the Abbasid Empire. Spiritual authority then came to be inferred from the authoritativeness of the interpreter of the sacred texts – the *ʿālim* – as it were. The *ʿālim*'s authority to speak on matters of religion in the Sunni world was predicated on the soundness of his training, and his ability to conform to issues of broad consensus understood by his predecessors. Hence, spiritual authority vested in individual *ʿulamāʾ* was a direct function of their placement within a continuous diachronic tradition. The placement within this tradition, by way of his scholarly chain of transmission, and by why of his own individual interpretation of the sacred texts that does not

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<sup>16</sup> Corresponding to the Sunni, *Shīʿī*, and *Khawārij* positions, respectively.

diverge from broad issues of consensus, underpinned the authoritativeness of the Sunni tradition.<sup>17</sup>

As has been observed by the likes of Makdisi<sup>18</sup>, Berkey<sup>19</sup>, and Chamberlain<sup>20</sup> the issue of authoritativeness in pre-modern Sunni Islam remains a contentious issue. Makdisi argues for a formal system that arose in Baghdad in the tenth and eleventh centuries that became a forerunner for the university system and conference of formal degrees in Western Europe. The *ijāzat al-tadrīs wa'l-iftā'* (the licence to teach and issue religious edicts) was a written document issued by one's teacher after a number of years of study at a madrasa.<sup>21</sup> Without such a licence, one presumably would not be able to find work at a madrasa or in a judicial court. Berkey and Chamberlain challenge this notion, though their focus of study is Cairo and Damascus respectively. They contend that the Sunni system for transfer of scholarly pedigree was less formal than Makdisi's characterisation of a pedagogical system that was the principal influence for the European university system.<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding, their focus remains confined to social and anthropological analysis, and neither fully considers the hermeneutical or pedagogical aspects of the transmission and articulation of the tradition as a means to confer and preserve authoritativeness, and normativeness. The means of transmission of the Islamic tradition played a major role in the development of the traditions, especially in the early formative

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<sup>17</sup> See also Graham's discussion of the "isnād paradigm" in: Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (1993): 501-7.

<sup>18</sup> In his seminal work: Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges : Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*.

<sup>19</sup> See Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo : A Social History of Islamic Education*.

<sup>20</sup> See Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges : Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, 147-48.

<sup>22</sup> Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo : A Social History of Islamic Education*, 44-45; Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350*, 69-90.

period, when oral transmission was the almost exclusive means by which knowledge was transferred.

The oral tradition, retaining its primacy from the pre-Islamic era, was considered essential by Muslim religious scholars well into the third century.<sup>23</sup> It was not until the *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* compendium of Mālik ibn Anas (d. 97/179) that the written tradition began to take shape.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, the '*ulamā*' continued to insist on the "master-apprentice" mode of transmission of knowledge. Aḥmad Zarrūq, the fifteenth century Moroccan scholar, records the internal dispute between the Sufis of al-Andalus. Some recognised the legitimacy of self-didactic scholarship, on the assumption that one could discern the *mawārid* (reliable sources) of knowledge, while others felt that knowledge of esoteric realities required a shaykh, notwithstanding the intelligence and piety of the student/disciple.<sup>25</sup> Zarrūq further states that the transmission of knowledge – in a general sense, and not just "Sufi" knowledge – is more complete when transmitted from a teacher, rather than a book alone. He cites the verse: "...They are clear signs in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge" to buttress his argument.<sup>26</sup>

The aural transmission was just as significant as the oral transmission, as scholars emphasised the embodiment of the Prophetic teachings, the inculcation of the *Ādāb*, as vital to the realisation of transference of knowledge. The *ḥadīth* often cited in this vein, "*naḍḍara Allāh imri' samī'a maqālātī fa ḥafīzaha wa addāha fa rub ḥāmil fiqh ilā mā huwa afqah minh*" (May God enlighten one who hears my speech, memorises it, and then transmits it, for

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<sup>23</sup> Prior to the earliest surviving authored book, the *Muwaṭṭa'* of Mālik, written in the latter half of the second/eighth century, *ḥadīth* narration was almost most certainly oral in its transmission. See Jonathan Brown, *Hadith : Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Foundations of Islam (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 44-47.

<sup>24</sup> Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam : From the Aural to the Read*, 68-81.

<sup>25</sup> Aḥmad Zarrūq, *Qawā'id Al-Taṣawwuf* (Damascus: Dar al-Bayrūtī, 2004), 96-97.

<sup>26</sup> Qur'ān (29:49)



perhaps a transmitter of knowledge carries it to one more knowledgeable than himself.”<sup>27</sup> It indicates that transmission of knowledge is not equivalent to its embodiment. For knowledge to be valid for transmission to others, its bearer must embody its meanings, thereby ensuring that the aural transmission accompanies both the oral and written transmission. The Ottoman scholar, Tāsh Kubrī Zādā, citing a chain of transmission that includes Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, mentions ten conditions for the successful transmission of knowledge. Amongst them are spiritual purification of the heart, complete sincerity and avoidance of ostentation, reduction of worldly distractions, forsaking of laziness, resolve to acquire knowledge until death, and the selection of only pious teachers.<sup>28</sup> Similar conditions are mentioned for the teacher or transmitter.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, great significance was attached to the mode and method of transmission, in addition to its content.

Though the formalism that was adopted later by Islamic institutions – that in Makdisi’s opinion was the forerunner for the Western college system – is pivotal in understanding the transference of religious authority, a failure to understand the underpinnings of this formalism would neglect an essential aspect of Sunni authoritativeness. The hermeneutics of understanding the primary texts of Islam – the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* – has been progressively defined and circumscribed by the Sunni ‘*ulamā*’ since the death of the Prophet Muḥammad. Though Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi’ī has been acknowledged as the pioneering force that established the Islamic hermeneutic<sup>30</sup> method, a

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<sup>27</sup> Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-‘Arabī and Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā Tirmidhī, *‘Aṣḥab al-Aḥwadhī Bi-Sharḥ Saḥīḥ Al-Tirmidhī*. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, N.D.), 10:123-24.

<sup>28</sup> Tāsh Kubrī Zādā, *Miftāḥ Al-Sa’Āda Wa Miṣbāḥ Al-Sīyāda*. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1985), 1:17-37.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 1:39-51.

<sup>30</sup> The Islamic discipline referred to in al-Shāfi’ī’s work *al-Risāla – uṣūl al-fiqh* – is commonly translated by Western scholarship as “Islamic legal theory” or the more literal “Fundamentals of jurisprudence”; however, in my view a more appropriate term would be Islamic hermeneutics. As the foundation of the Western conceptualisation of the discipline of hermeneutics refers to

more useful characterisation is that he “articulated” the Islamic hermeneutic method. It was his own premise, as well as those of his predecessors and contemporaries, that the other eponymous imams such as Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik also employed a hermeneutical system. Their students later articulated their respective systems after al-Shāfi‘ī had shifted the paradigm with his ground-breaking epistle. Much in the same way that Arabic grammar, morphology and rhetoric did not have formalised realities in the early days of Islam, but whose tenets were nonetheless observed by the Arabs, the hermeneutics of Islam were practiced, though not formally articulated, in many instances.<sup>31</sup>

After the canon compilations of the Prophetic *ḥadīth* in the Muslim third century, by al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875), the narration of *ḥadīth* still maintained an important role, but in a hitherto different aspect. *Ḥadīth* narration before this was focused on establishing the primacy and veracity of the *ḥadīth* itself, where the reliability of the narrators, studied in the discipline of *‘ilm al-rijāl*, was a means to that end. After the formal written compilations obviated the need for establishing the veracity of the corpus of Prophetic *ḥadīth*, focus shifted to the *rijāl* (narrators), as a mechanism of establishing scholarly credential. The concept of *isnād* (literally “the act of support by way of another”) as the premier credential of scholarly pedigree was

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the exegesis and interpretation of the Bible, the parallels are unmistakable. Though *uṣūl al-fiqh* is defined by Muslim scholars as “the knowledge of the general proofs (*adilla*) for the body of legal rulings, these “proofs” preponderantly return to the interpretation of the text of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*, aided by the ancillary proof sources of *qiyās* and *ijma’* both of which are predicated on hermeneutic interpretation. See Ghazzālī, *Al-Mustaṣfá Min ‘Ilm Al-Uṣūl*. (Bayrūt: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1997), 1:35-43.

<sup>31</sup> For a thorough analysis of hermeneutics in the formative period and how it remained an unwritten and informal tradition, and thus a substantial challenge to the notion that al-Shāfi‘ī alone formulated Islamic legal theory, see Umar F. Abd-Allah Wymann-Landgraf, *Mālik and Medina : Islamic Reasoning in the Formative Period* (Leiden: Brill ; Biggleswade : Extenza Turpin [distributor], 2013), 8-22.

established.<sup>32</sup> Beginning in the Mamlūk era, the notion of a written certificate establishing a scholar's teachers and the books that they studied began to take form. This differed from the *ijāza*, which was a license to teach or narrate; the new document came to be known as the *thabat* (literally "record") in the Muslim East, and *fihris* (literally "index") in Morocco and North Africa east of Egypt.<sup>33</sup>

This system of scholarly pedigrees was a "quality control" mechanism that ensured only rigorously qualified individuals could "sit" to teach. This level of informality remained in place until the institutional reforms of Muḥammad 'Ali Pasha in the nineteenth century. The *ijāza* system continued to persist, mainly in the form of ceremonial *ḥadīth* licenses, and the more substantial and less ceremonial Qur'ān licenses.<sup>34</sup> Scholarship has tended to focus on the issue of whether this informal pedagogy was a forerunner of the Western university system. However, the role of this informal pedagogy in shaping Muslim scholars and their societies has received less attention. A scholar like al-Dardīr, who hailed from the countryside and made his mark in Cairo by virtue of his scholarship and affiliations, underwent a particular sort of training that allowed him to digest the Islamic tradition, as understood until that point, and then transmit it to the next generation of scholars. This warrants greater attention, in our view, than the former argument, as it sheds light on the development of the Islamic tradition, especially in such a critical period as the early modern era.

To properly gauge the level of adaptation of a scholar such as al-Dardīr, a review of the underlying Islamic approach to the sacred texts – the objects of continuity and renewal – is essential. As aforementioned, the oral nature of the transmission of Islamic learning was essential and emblematic of the earliest

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<sup>32</sup> Brown, *Hadith : Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 137-42.

<sup>33</sup> Brinkley Morris Messick, *The Calligraphic State Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 115-16.

<sup>34</sup> *Ijāzas* in Qur'ān remain substantially significant. Correct pronunciation via direct audition remains the principal objective.

periods. Many of the earliest texts, such as the *Muwaṭṭaʿ* of Mālik and the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, were almost exclusively comprised of *ḥadīth* narrations and anecdotes that were designed to be read audibly in the *majlis* setting of the *shaykh*, with his explication substituting for the parsimonious level of textual commentary that accompanied these early transmission texts. One of the first authors to depart from the narration style genre was the acclaimed mystic, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857)<sup>35</sup>. His theosophical approach to understanding the Islamic tradition was almost scandalous for his day, especially considering the socio-political climate of state enforced polemical stands, in large part due to the *miḥna* led by the Muʿtazilites. He also managed to provoke the ire of his famous contemporary, Ibn Ḥanbal, for the former's predilection for articulating the spiritual states of the heart in a self-appraising manner, contrary to hitherto normative practice.

The early ascetic texts of scholars like al-Muḥāsibī were pedestrian when compared to the later texts of Ibn al-ʿArabī, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 318/936)<sup>36</sup>, or even the more widely accepted al-Ghazālī. Similar trends can be observed in the other Islamic disciplines, most notably theology and Arabic literature. The maturation of the Islamic disciplines was inevitable, as the austere cultural landscape of Arabia gave way to the sundry panoramas of Byzantine Europe and Persia, and all their attendant philosophies and obfuscated mythologies. The most formidable of these intellectual systems was the Greek philosophical system, one that enamoured the likes of Avicenna, al-Fārābī, and Averroes to the extent that they sought to reconcile this ancient system, which they

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<sup>35</sup> See al-Kattānī, *Fihras Al-Fahāris Wa Al-Athbāt*.

<sup>36</sup> See Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, Bernd Radtke, and John O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism : Two Works by Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī*, Curzon Sufi Series (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996); Bernd Radtke, *Al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidī : Ein Islamischer Theosoph Des 3./9. [I.E. 8./9.] Jahrhunderts* (Freiburg: K. Schwarz, 1980); ʿAbd al-Muḥsin Ḥusaynī, *Al-Maʿrifah ʿInda Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī* (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Kātib al-ʿArabī, 1968).

nominated as *ḥikma*, a term borrowed from the Qur'ānic lexicon, with the revealed knowledge of the Qur'ān. This project was challenged by al-Ghazālī, in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifa)*. Averroes' apologetic response, the *Incoherence of the Incoherence (Tahāfut al-Tahāfut)* challenged al-Ghazālī's contentions, and the Greek philosophical stream persevered, albeit in a renovated form, and found its place in the works of the Ash'arī theologians, who made ample use of syllogistic logic and categorical propositions to counter balance the arguments of the Mu'tazilites.<sup>37</sup>

Al-Ghazālī's legacy largely lies in three main accomplishments: the issuance of his challenge of the Arabic Neo-Platonic philosophy project, the reconciliation of Sufism with mainstream Islamic thought, and providing the impetus for a logic based pedagogical approach to transmitting the Islamic disciplines. It is the last accomplishment that is most informing here. As aforementioned, the logic based approach (*ṭarīqat al-mutakallimīn*) found its way into virtually all the disciplines, including Arabic grammar, legal theory, rhetoric, and theology. The faith neutral project of reconciling reason with revelation found a comfortable surrogate in the post-Ghazalian iteration of the transmission of the Islamic tradition. It was here that Islamic hermeneutics reached its most mature form, as most Muslim scholars from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries accepted the logic-based pedagogy as an essential element of the Islamic curriculum.<sup>38</sup> A few dissenters appeared, the most famous of them the prominent Damascene theologian and jurisconsult, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328)<sup>39</sup>. However, despite his objections to

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<sup>37</sup> See Frank Giffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford university press, 2009), 97-110.

<sup>38</sup> See John Walbridge, *God and Logic in Islam : The Caliphate of Reason* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 107-20.

<sup>39</sup> See Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Ibn Taymīyah : Ḥayātuhu Wa-'Aṣruhu - Ārā'uhu Wa-Fiqhuhu* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1952); Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic*

rational discourse and the presence of metaphorical device in language, he nonetheless conformed to the pedagogical style of his day in his writings, deploying logical constructs to buttress his arguments.<sup>40</sup> The fact that he often appeared to contradict himself by using rational constructs in his own arguments was not lost on his detractors, such as Sa'd al-Dīn Mas'ūd al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390)<sup>41</sup>, the polymath whose commentaries became the standard reference in the disciplines of theology, Arabic rhetoric, and Ḥanafī jurisprudence. Al-Taftāzānī refuted the perceived monism of Ibn al-'Arabī, utilising a theological approach propelling Ash'arī epistemology to counter Ibn 'Arabī's theosophical supra-rational discourse.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding the tension between strict scholasticism based upon a rational reading of the revelation, and more theosophical readings of the same, ultimately the scholastic approach came to characterise the mode of transmission of the Islamic disciplines, though more mystical and theosophical readings remained upon the boundaries of orthodoxy.

After al-Ghazālī, and the subsequent fall of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad over a century later, the pendulum of Islamic intellectualism shifted west, primarily to Cairo, and secondarily to Damascus and the North African centres of Fes and Kairouan. The discursive style of writing favoured by the intellects of the Muslim East gave way to a more streamlined and concise style based upon didactic texts (*mukhtaṣar*), commentaries (*sharḥ*), and later on, glosses and supra-commentaries (*ḥāshiya*). The first *mukhtaṣars* appeared around the thirteenth century, a period coinciding with the establishment of the

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*Thought : The Taymiyyan Moment*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> For an example, see: Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Īmān* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> Despite his prolific body of work, no Western study of al-Taftāzānī has been undertaken. See brief biography in: Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ Al-Maqāṣid*. (Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub, 1989).

<sup>42</sup> See *Risāla Fi Waḥdat Al-Wujūd* (CairoN.D.).

first Islamic seminaries (*madrasa*) in Cairo by its new Sultan, Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī.<sup>43</sup>

The discursive style employed in the seminaries of Baghdad, characterised by courses in dialectic (*al-jadal*) and disputation (*al-khilāf*), was not adopted in the same form in Cairo. The main objective of Ṣalāh al-Dīn's madrasa project was to re-establish Sunni authoritativeness in the wake of over a century of active propagation of Isma'īlī doctrine. He also seemed to be concerned with the disposition of the general populace, and not just the scholarly elite. Hence, the creedal *mukhtaṣar*, pronounced from the city's minarets, was used to re-establish Sunni doctrine.<sup>44</sup> The result was a new pedagogy inaugurated during the Ayyubid period, and reached maturation in the Mamlūk era. It was characterised by a dedicated focus on an Islamic hermeneutic based upon linguistic semiotics, authoritative transmission, discipline mastery via memorisation of concise, didactic texts, and the modified scholastic method that was borrowed from the seminaries of Baghdad and its environs. These are all examined in the following sections.

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<sup>43</sup> Fadel, "The Social Logic of Taqlīd and the Rise of the Mukhtaṣar."

<sup>44</sup> For an analysis regarding Ṣalāh al-Dīn's motivations behind his "anti-Fatimid" measures and patronage of Sunnism, see: Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1325*, Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 38-41.

## Arabic Hermeneutics

One of the most oft-cited verses of the Qur'ān extolling the virtues of the Arabic language is: *Indeed, We have revealed an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may understand (innā anzalnāhu qur'ānan 'arabiyyan la'allakum t'aqilūn).*<sup>45</sup>

Before the advent of Islam, the Arabic language was primarily a spoken tradition, as there is no evidence to suggest the Arabs of Arabia had engaged in any literary endeavours worth mention. The sole genre they engaged in of literary merit was the ode (*qaṣīda*); poems of varying lengths but generally not exceeding a hundred verses. The majority of the classic theologians, such as Mālik, al-Shāfi'ī, and al-Ash'arī considered the Arabic language to be both sacred in its wording as well as its meanings. Only the scholars of the Ḥanafī School permitted the ritual prayers to be recited in a language other than Arabic.<sup>46</sup>

Al-Jaṣṣāṣ al-Rāzī (d. 370/980), the renowned Ḥanafī jurist and exegete, argued that knowledge of the semantic meanings of the individual Arabic words of the Qur'ān was sufficient, as only the Arabs of the seventh century would be privy to precise meanings of resulting from metaphor, idiom, or simile.<sup>47</sup> On the latter point the majority agreed, and thus the disciplines of Arabic language, including grammar, morphology, rhetoric, prosody etc. were studied in earnest as a means to “freeze” the seventh century language, considered the period in which the language was in its most pristine form.

Language formed the basis of Islamic thought; words were not merely the effects of social constructs and conventions, but are rather divine in origin.

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<sup>45</sup> Qur'ān (12:2)

<sup>46</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Jazīrī, *Al-Fiqh 'Alā Al-Madhāhib Al-Arba'a* (Cairo: Dār Ibn al-Haytham, N.D.), 134.

<sup>47</sup> 'Abd Allah Ibn Bayyah, *Amālī Al-Dalālat Wa Majālī Al-Ikhtilāfāt* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2007), 62.



The tenth/fifteenth century scholar, al-Suyūṭī, reports the near consensus position that language is *tawqīfī* (divine in origin) rather than *tawfīqī* (effect of convention), though language developed from its divine primordial state when revealed to the primordial man, Adam, to later adapt and accept new words by way of convention.<sup>48</sup> The underlying principle of Arabic hermeneutics was one based on the premise that meaning – specifically in the sacred texts of the Qur’ān and Prophetic *ḥadīth* – reflects intent, and since it was revealed to man, is ultimately accessible and knowable by him, via the preserved usages of the words. Hence, the ‘*ulamā*’ took great pains in preserving the language of the Qur’ān. This was specifically referred to as ‘*aṣr al-iḥtijāj*’ (period of “proof”), when the Arabic language continued to retain its pristine form, before expansion led to the introduction of foreign words at around 150/767, thus losing its ability to provide the “proof” for systematic rules of grammar, morphology, and lexicography.<sup>49</sup>

Hence, the interpretation of the Islamic tradition has always been predicated on its Arabic underpinnings and the necessity of a hermeneutic that forms part of the tradition in and of itself. Some Muslim theologians have even asserted that one of the root causes of disbelief and apostasy amongst Muslims is an inadequate understanding of the Arabic language, and this point in particular is often cited regarding the aberrant theology of splinter sects, such as the Kharijites.<sup>50</sup> The Arabic language was of primal interest during the early theological debates with the Mu’tazilites. Specifically, the inimitability of the Qur’ān, provoked debate, with some Mu’tazilites adopting the position that its

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<sup>48</sup> Suyūṭī, *Al-Muzhir Fī ‘Ulūm Al-Lughah Wa-Anwā’ihā*. (al-Qāhirah: ‘Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1945), 1:7-30.

<sup>49</sup> For a through discussion of the formation of the Arabic disciplines and nature of the language see: Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Grammatical Tradition : A Study in Ta’līl* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Suyūṭī et al., *Al-Muzhir Fī ‘ulūm Al-Lughah Wa-Anwā’ihā*, 1:26-70.

<sup>50</sup> See Sanūsī’s roots of disbelief in: Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Sanūsī, *Sharḥ Al-Muqaddimāt*, ed. Nizār Ḥamādī (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Ma’ārif, 2009), 123-26.

inimitability was to due to the divine hand incapacitating anyone who would attempt to counter the Qur'ān. Conversely, Ash'arī theologians such as al-Bāqillānī, argued that the Qur'ān was inherently inimitable, as it reflected the divine attribute of God's speech.<sup>51</sup>

The tradition of preservation of Arabic hermeneutics was practiced throughout all of the disciplines, most notably in the ancillary Arabic disciplines, such as grammar, morphology, and rhetoric, as well as *uṣūl al-fiqh* (juristic methodology).<sup>52</sup> In the latter period of al-Dardīr, the emphasis on Arabic hermeneutics found its way in the commentaries and glosses of seemingly unrelated disciplines such as *fiqh*. However, an argument can be made that the impetus behind the inclusion of grammar, morphology, and rhetoric in the commentaries on *fiqh* manuals was an attempt at training students in applying the Arabic hermeneutic to understand the texts, rather than the oft-repeated accusation that such inclusions were useless filler.

One of al-Dardīr's contemporaries, al-Amīr, devoted a commentary to the subject, entitled "*Ghāyat al-Iḥkām fī Ādāb al-Fahm wa al-Ifhām*."<sup>53</sup> As the title suggests, the book explains the etiquettes of understanding the text and commentary, as well as the etiquettes regarding text and commentary production. This, no doubt, reflected the pervasiveness of the text-commentary genre that dominated the pedagogical landscape in the era of al-Dardīr. Al-Dardīr likewise took a keen interest in preserving the traditional Arabic hermeneutic, as evidenced in his commentaries in theology and jurisprudence, as well as dedicated works to the subject.

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<sup>51</sup> Al-Bāqillānī devoted an entire book to the subject, see: Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib Bāqillānī, , *I'jāz Al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977).

<sup>52</sup> For a recent study of literalism in Islamic hermeneutics, see: R. Gleave, *Islam and Literalism : Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012). The work focuses exclusively on the concept of literalism in legal theory, and largely ignores its implications in theology and Arabic rhetoric.

<sup>53</sup> Muḥammad al-Amīr, *Thamar Al-Thimār Sharḥ Ghāyat Al-Iḥkām Fī Ādāb Al-Fahm W'Al-Ifhām* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2009).

Al-Dardīr thus contributed to the on-going scholarly struggle to preserve the language of the Qur'ān in a work entitled *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān fi 'Ilm al-Bayān*, a small didactic treatise on the Arabic discipline of *bayān* (rhetoric), specifically the literary devices of *majāz* (figurative expression), *tashbīḥ* (simile), and *kināya* (metaphor). Al-Dardīr in a similar pedagogical style to his other works, authors both the *matn* (text) and *sharḥ* (commentary) for this particular work. He also chooses the same title, *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān* (the Treasure of the Brethren) as he did for his seminal work on *taṣawwuf* (Sufism).<sup>54</sup> Al-Zabīdī, who describes himself as a close confidant of al-Dardīr, mentions that he wrote this particular work in *bayān* at his behest.<sup>55</sup> It is likely, then, that al-Dardīr may have been disposed to contributing to the larger project at hand at al-Azhar in the late eighteenth century of making the Islamic disciplines more accessible to newer generations of students, and secondly, of standardising and canonising the rules of interpretation of the Islamic tradition for these newer generations.

The latter project was exemplified in al-Zabīdī's encyclopaedic work in language, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, as well as al-Dardīr's *Tuḥfat* in *bayān* and to some degree in his manual of *taṣawwuf* of the same title. The attention to the rules of Arabic grammar, morphology, and rhetoric, was emblematic of the commentaries and glosses that exemplified this era. Al-Dardīr was not alone in this, as *fiqh* works of all schools as well as other works in *kalām* often spend considerable space in deciphering the linguistic purports and connotations of the basic didactic text. For example, in al-Dardīr's own commentary on the *Kharīda*, he states in his commentary on the following line:<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Aḥmad al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," in *Majāmrī* (Dar al-Kutub, 1968).

<sup>55</sup> al-Zabīdī, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mukhtaṣ*, 123-24.

<sup>56</sup> Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī and Aḥmad al-Dardīr, *Hāshiyat Al-Shaykh Aḥmad Al-Ṣāwī 'Alā Sharḥ Sayyidī Aḥmad Al-Dardīr Lī Risālatihī Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī 'Ilm Al-Bayān* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā Bāb al-Ḥalabī, 1935).

*Aqsām ḥukm al-‘aql lā maḥāla haya al-wujūb thumma al-istiḥāla*

(The divisions of the rational ruling indisputably

Are: obligation then impossibility)

[This is] a subject with its predicate omitted – [namely] three, as the flowing line indicates; and the sentence “are: obligation..” is a *jumla isti’nāfiyya* (new sentence) that clarifies “divisions”, as it is [equally] correct that [the phrase beginning with] “are” is the predicate. *Aqsām* (divisions) is the plural form of *qism* (division) with a *kasra* and *sukūn* (diacritical marks of “i” and “unvoweled”), and it refers to that which it and something else falls under a whole or universal. A whole is that which consists of two or more substances, [whereas] the universal is that which is common to many instances. That which falls under the whole is known as a part, and that which falls under the universal is known as a particular...

Notwithstanding the cryptic nature of the commentary, it is clear that al-Dardīr in this particular passage incorporates multiple disciplines - grammar, morphology, and Aristotelian logic - to demonstrate a particular point. He does this throughout this commentary on the *Kharīda*, as well as his other commentaries in *fiqh*, *taṣawwuf*, and rhetoric. This particular interdisciplinary style of commentary came to be emblematic of the *sharḥ - ḥāshiya* (commentary – supra-commentary) genre favoured by Muslim scholars of the Mamlūk and post-Mamlūk period.

The maturity of the pedagogical model reached its fruition in the late Ottoman period of al-Dardīr, and invariably all works produced were done so for the express purpose of pedagogical use in the many circles of learning in al-Azhar and greater Cairo. The linguistic aspect of the texts was given special consideration, and it would appear that there was a renewed interest in the documentation of the Arabic language, not unlike the period in early Islam when the formal disciplines of the language were first being formulated. This coincided in the eleventh/seventeenth century with a renewed interest in the discipline of *manṭiq* (Aristotelian logic), specifically in North Africa, as has been suggested by El-Rouayheb.<sup>57</sup> A predecessor of al-Dardīr and al-Zabīdī, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī (d. 1093/ 1682) authored an encyclopaedic work on Arabic literature, which he appropriately called *Khizānat al-Adab* (the Treasury

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<sup>57</sup> El-Rouayheb, "Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century : Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb."

of Literature).<sup>58</sup> In this masterful work, he ostensibly offers commentary on the one thousand citations used by the thirteenth century polymath, Ibn al-Ḥājjib (d. 646/1249) in his twin works on grammar and morphology, the *Kāfiyya* and *Shāfiyya*, respectively. Though there is little in the literature about Ibn al-Ḥājjib or his works, there is little doubt that the *Kāfiyya* and *Shāfiyya* were highly influential, especially in the period before the emergence of Ibn Mālik's thousand line didactic poem, *al-Alfiyya*. This later work became the standard pedagogical text for Arabic grammar and morphology in the Arab speaking lands of North Africa and Egypt, though the *Kāfiyya* and *Shāfiyya* retained their pre-eminence in the non-Arab lands of Anatolia and Persia.<sup>59</sup>

Al-Dardīr's contribution to this renewed interest in the Arabic disciplines, as aforementioned, came in the form of his work in *bayān* (Arabic rhetoric). In his introduction, al-Dardīr states that this small treatise is dedicated to three main subjects: 1) *majāz* (figurative expression), 2) *tashbīh* (simile) and 3) *kināya* (metaphor).<sup>60</sup> The common theme of the three subjects is their juxtaposition to literal meaning; this is significant, as al-Sanūsī states that one of the root causes of heterodox theology is a failure to interpret meanings of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* outside the confines of literal meaning. The contrast between literal meaning and figurative meaning is predicated on the concept of *waḍ'* (original usage)<sup>61</sup>, where the delineator of original usage is God himself, as already mentioned regarding the *tawqīfī* theory of language. This is a further testament to the intertwining of language and theology, and hence the attention of the 'ulamā', such as al-Dardīr, who was primarily a theologian and jurist. He

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<sup>58</sup> 'Abd al-Qādir ibn 'Umar Baghdādī et al., *Khizānat Al-Adab Wa-Lubb Lubāb Lisān Al-'Arab*, Turāthunā (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Kātib al-'Arabī lil-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1967).

<sup>59</sup> Based on conversations with Kurdish and Syrian madrasa students in Damascus, 1998.

<sup>60</sup> al-Ṣāwī and al-Dardīr, *Hāshiyat Al-Shaykh Aḥmad Al-Ṣāwī 'Alā Sharḥ Sayyidī Aḥmad Al-Dardīr Lī Risālatihī Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī 'Ilm Al-Bayān*, 7-8.

<sup>61</sup> al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies*, 115-16.

summarises the incidence of *majāz* (figurative language) in 1) singular words, 2) between subject and predicate, and 3) compounded between singular words and subject-predicate relationship (the two varieties being *tashbīh* and *kināya*).<sup>62</sup> Al-Dardīr's use of theological constructs to illustrate the Arabic hermeneutic comes into sharp relief when he enumerates the causes for an expression to be interpreted figurative rather than literally, what he refers to as *qarīna ṣārifa 'an al-ma'na al-ḥaqīqī* (indicator that precludes the intended meaning to be taken literally). In this, al-Dardīr reiterates the near-consensus position that the default interpretation of any text returns to the divinely designated *waḍ'* (original usage) meaning, unless there is a clear indicator that the literal meaning is not intended. In this aspect, he concurs with the theory of hermeneutics posited by Hirsh, namely that the "verbal meaning" (correlating to *waḍ'*) of a text does not change, whereas its "significance" (roughly correlating to the figurative devices of *majāz*, *tashbīh*, and *kināya*) can vary based upon "evidence" predicated on rules of logic.<sup>63</sup> For al-Dardīr, this "evidence" or indicators take into consideration the status of the utterer of the expression as they do the feasibility of a literal understanding of the expression. As far as feasibility of the literal meaning of the expression, the indicator can be rational, legal, or empirical. For example, the expression: "His day is fasting and his night is praying", the literal meaning is clearly not intended as on the basis of rationality as the day cannot literally fast nor can the night pray. An example of a legal indicator would be the believer's utterance "The season of spring brought about the sprouting of the crops", as God is the sole cause of all occurrences. The expression "The ruler built the city" would not be understood

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<sup>62</sup> al-Ṣāwī and al-Dardīr, *Hāshiyat Al-Shaykh Aḥmad Al-Ṣāwī 'Alā Sharḥ Sayyidī Aḥmad Al-Dardīr Lī Risālatihī Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī 'Ilm Al-Bayān*, 11-12.

<sup>63</sup> E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven,: Yale University Press, 1967), 38-39, 57.

literally, as empirical evidence indicates that a single person cannot build an entire city but rather would be the one to issue the order.<sup>64</sup>

The subset of Arabic hermeneutics outlined above form part of a larger set of hermeneutical theory that defines authoritativeness in Sunni Islam, which also includes the other epistemic sources of the rational intellect and empirical observation. Thus, the hermeneutic rules underlying the interpretation of scripture incorporate aspects of the logical intellect as well as empiricism, in as much as that language, after its initial primordial divinely prescribed state, is subject to usage by generations of native speakers that define and inform the meanings associated with its semantic expressions. The method by which one avails of these established usages is predominately empirical, as it consists of careful and recorded observation of the incidences of these usages. Hence, the Arabic disciplines of grammar, morphology, rhetoric, lexicography, etc. are all empirically based. This is significant, as the perennial debate of reason versus revelation in the Islamic paradigm rings hollow when one considers the methodology by which revelation is interpreted, which incorporates fundamental aspects of reason, as has been demonstrated above.

Al-Dardīr sees language as the basis by which the primary sources are interpreted, as well as a pre-requisite to accessing the Islamic scholarly tradition in the form of its varied and discursive disciplines. Furthermore, mastery of the Arabic language is an essential element for claiming intellectual authority, as it forms part of the overall methodology of interpretation by which authority is conferred. Furthermore, the gap between the spoken language and the written language in the time of al-Dardīr most likely necessitated the perhaps over-emphasis on issues of language, even in the works of theology and

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<sup>64</sup> al-Ṣāwī and al-Dardīr, *Hāshiyat Al-Shaykh Aḥmad Al-Ṣāwī 'Alā Sharḥ Sayyidī Aḥmad Al-Dardīr Lī Risālatihī Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī 'Ilm Al-Bayān*, 10-14.

jurisprudence, as a means of practical application of the principles learnt in the principle Arabic genres of *naḥw*, *ṣarf*, *balāgha*, and *adab*.<sup>65</sup> Al-Dardīr, in the *muḥaqqiq* tradition, summarises the work of his predecessors to produce for the aspiring *‘ālim* the keys to a tradition that would have been otherwise unnavigable. For al-Dardīr to arrive at a position of being able to summarise the tradition, he would have necessarily been fully acquainted with it in a profound way. The following section outlines his education, as gleaned from his *thabat*, or scholarly pedigree.

### The *Thabat* of al-Dardīr and his Education

The *thabat*<sup>66</sup> of al-Dardīr enumerates the books he has studied with their appropriate genealogies that extend back to the original authors, or in the case of *ḥadīth*, to the Prophet Muḥammad himself. The *thabat* obtained from the Egyptian National Archives in Cairo appears not to be exhaustive, as it does not mention any of the works of theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), or Sufism, that al-Dardīr studied with his teachers. A contemporary of al-Dardīr, who appeared to have studied in the same circles and with the same teachers despite being nearly thirty years younger than al-Dardīr, Muḥammad al-Amīr (d. 1232/1817), wrote an extensive *thabat* that included such diverse disciplines as astronomy, geometry, as well as the traditional disciplines of theology, jurisprudence, Qur’ānic exegesis, and *ḥadīth*.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See al-Dardīr’s introduction to his treatise in Arabic rhetoric (*balāgha*): Aḥmad al-Ṣawī and Aḥmad al-Dardīr, *Hāshiyat al-Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ṣawī ‘alā Sharḥ Sayyidī Aḥmad al-Dardīr li Risālatihī Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān fī ‘Ilm al-Bayān* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā Bāb al-Ḥalabī, 1935), 3.

<sup>66</sup> “*Al-thabt bi sukūn al-muwahḥada al-thābit al-qalb w’al-lisān...wa ammā b’īl-fath famā yuthbit fīhī al-muḥaddith masmū’ahu ma’ asmā’ al-mushārikīn lahū fīhī lannahu k’al-ḥujja ‘ind al-shakhṣ...*” Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī, *Fihras Al-Fahāris Wa Al-Athbāt*. (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1982), 1:68.

<sup>67</sup> Aḥmad; al-Ṣawī al-Dardīr, Aḥmad, *Hāshiyat Al-Ṣawī ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Hījāzī, N.D.), 29.



The discrepancy between the two credentials can likely be attributed to a difference in purpose. Whereas al-Dardīr mentions in the first few lines of his *thabat* that he wrote it in response to his students' requests, al-Amīr makes no such remark, but appears to have attached a title to his *thabat*, thereby making it a scholarly work, as he does include some anecdotal comments in reference to his teachers.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, his work seems to have meant more for posterity than to assuage a request of a group of students, as in the case of al-Dardīr. Whatever the case may be, al-Dardīr begins his *thabat*<sup>69</sup> by declaring that the knowledge of *isnād* is a fundamental aspect of religion, and is the mainstay of Islamic scholars from amongst the earliest generations as well as the latter ones. In this he follows nearly the exact wording of his main teacher, al-Ḥifnī, leaving little room for doubt that he was in possession of his *thabat* and took it as an exemplar. His *thabat* confirms his biographical entries of al-Jabartī and al-Zabīdī, in that his main teachers were 'Alī al-Ṣa'īdī and Muḥammad al-Ḥifnī, the rector of al-Azhar. Most of al-Dardīr's genealogies in the discipline of *ḥadīth* are from al-Ḥifnī, though on some occasions he mentions genealogies going through both al-Ṣa'īdī and al-Ḥifnī. Not mentioned in the *thabat* is the fact that al-Ṣa'īdī was al-Dardīr's main teacher in Mālikī jurisprudence; they both hailed from the same tribe and region in Upper Egypt, Banī Adī. Al-Ṣa'īdī is also the first teacher mentioned by al-Amīr in his *thabat*, bolstering the idea that while al-Dardīr and al-Amīr were contemporaneous and may have attended similar circles, they might have had a frosty relationship. This would be insignificant except for the fact that tribal affiliations may have had influence on the hierarchy amongst the scholarly elite at al-Azhar, for it was al-Dardīr who

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<sup>68</sup> Such as when he mentions that Muḥammad al-Ḥifnī died while teaching a book on Prophetic characteristics. See Muḥammad al-Amīr, *Sadd Al-Arab Min 'Ulūm Al-Isnād Wa 'L-Adab* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Hijāzī, N.D.), 34.

<sup>69</sup> al-Dardīr, "Thabat Al-Dardīr."

assumed al-Ṣaʿīdī's mantle after his death, assuming the positions of both Mālikī mufti and head of the Upper Egypt student body, and not al-Amīr.

After the small prologue, al-Dardīr begins with the books he read or studied in the discipline of Qurʾānic exegesis (*tafsīr*). He most likely begins with this rather than *ḥadīth*, even though in his own words it is what is “specifically intended with the disciple of intellectual genealogies (*‘ilm al-asānīd*)” due to the greater rank assigned to the Qurʾān, the word of God, as opposed to the *ḥadīth*, the words of the Prophet. He mentions four specific works, namely *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Ḥusayn al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122)<sup>70</sup>, the *Tafsīr* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210)<sup>71</sup>, the *Kashshāf* of the Muʿtazilite theologian Maḥmūd al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144)<sup>72</sup>, and the *Anwār al-Tanzīl and Asrār al-Taʾwīl* of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286)<sup>73</sup>. All four of the *tafsīr* works were theological commentaries on the Qurʾān, sometimes even polemical, as the purpose of the work of al-Bayḍāwī, a renowned Ashʿarī theologian, was to present the best of al-Zamakhsharī's exegesis, specifically by excising the Muʿtazilite polemics contained therein. Nevertheless, al-Zamakhsharī's *tafsīr* is primarily a rhetorical one, which seeks to highlight the Qurʾān's use of the various Arabic literary devices. One would be hard-pressed to find a *tafsīr* written after al-Zamakhsharī's *Kashshāf* that did not borrow in some form or fashion from his pioneering work. The fact that it is still studied today in Islamic seminaries and institutions of learning despite its purported sectarian leanings is a testament to its genius.

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<sup>70</sup> See al-Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd Baghawī, *Tafsīr Al-Baghawī Al-Musammā Maʿālim Al-Tanzīl*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah, 1993).

<sup>71</sup> See Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Rāzī, *Tafsīr Al-Fakhr Al-Rāzī Al-Mushtahir Bi-Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr Wa-Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb*. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1985).

<sup>72</sup> See Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqāʾiq Ghawāmiḍ Al-Tanzīl Wa-ʿuyūn Al-Aqāwīl Fī Wujūh Al-Taʾwīl*, ed. ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd, and ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ (al-Riyāḍ: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 1998).

<sup>73</sup> See ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar Bayḍāwī, *Anwār Al-Tanzīl Wa-Asrār Al-Taʾwīl, Al-Maʿrūf Bi-Tafsīr Al-Bayḍāwī*. ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Marʾashlī (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī : Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 1998).

The common theme between the four works, namely language and theology, emphasised the application of Arabic hermeneutics to unravel the multi-layered meanings of the Qur'ān. In contrast, the “report-based” exegeses such as those of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) and al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), trained traditionists who approached the discipline of *tafsīr* with a focus on Prophetic traditions to extrapolate meanings of the verses. Additionally, these four *tafsīrs* are steeped in methodological issues, specifically in Arabic hermeneutics and interpretive theology. Al-Zamakhsharī, who also authored the lexicon *Asās al-Balāgha*<sup>74</sup>, was a master of the Arabic disciplines trained in the Khwārazm tradition of the *‘ulūm al-‘aqliyya* that emphasised grammar and logic. Though he was supporter of the Mu'tazilite doctrine, Sunni scholars accepted his *tafsīr* as authoritative despite its Mu'tazilite leanings.<sup>75</sup>

Terse texts that emphasised linguistic and theological aspects were emblematic of the late *tafsīr* genre. It is not coincidental that the four *tafsīr* works included in al-Dardīr's *thabat* were works of Persianate scholars. Theological polemics flourished in the Persian intellectual centres of Ray, Shiraz, Tabriz, and Samarkand in the high mediaeval period. The Ash'arī – Mu'tazilite polemics produced a vibrant discourse that re-formed the way the Islamic tradition was transmitted. In subjects as diverse as Arabic grammar and rhetoric, hermeneutics, and of course, theology, the method of the *kalām* theologians (*ṭarīqat al-mutakallimīn*) became the standard discourse for presenting the Islamic tradition. This scholastic method was marked by a systematic approach that was characterised by “exhaustive investigation and disjunction” (*al-sabr wa'l-taqsīm*), an approach championed by the likes of al-

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<sup>74</sup> This work may be one of a kind in that it cites the literal meaning(s) of the word entries followed by the figurative usages with illustrative examples. See Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar Zamakhsharī, *Asās Al-Balāghah* (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir : Dār Bayrūt, 1385).

<sup>75</sup> See Andrew J. Lane, *A Traditional Mu'tazilite Qur'ān Commentary : The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh Al-Zamakhsharī (D.538/1144)* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

Ghazālī and al-Rāzī, who established this thoroughgoing approach in response to Mu‘tazilite polemics.<sup>76</sup>

This method appears to have borrowed heavily from Aristotelian syllogistic logic, but also referenced Avicennan philosophical constructs to establish a more or less unified approach to the classification and study of the Islamic disciplines. This methodology came to be characterised in the form of the “ten foundational principles” (*al-mabādi’ al-‘ashra*), which defined for each Islamic discipline their starting ten principles. They are summarised in the following table, including al-Dardīr’s designations from the *Kharīda*:<sup>77</sup>

Principle	Example – ‘ <i>Ilm al-‘Aqā’id</i> (Creedal Theology)
Definition ( <i>al-ḥadd</i> ): of a discipline: the essential attributes or objectives of the subject of inquiry	The discipline by which one is enabled to affirm religious beliefs by way unassailable proofs
Subject ( <i>al-mawḍū‘</i> )	The divine essence and attributes
Name ( <i>al-ism</i> )	‘ <i>Ilm al-Tawḥīd</i> , ‘ <i>Ilm al-‘Aqā’id</i>
Benefit ( <i>al-thamara</i> )	Knowing God and eternal bliss
Relationship to other disciplines ( <i>al-nisba</i> )	Foundation of all other disciplines and a prerequisite
Merit ( <i>al-faḍl</i> )	The most noble of all Islamic disciplines
Originator ( <i>al-wāḍi‘</i> )	God or the Prophet originally, and al-Ash‘arī in terms of formal discipline
Sources ( <i>al-istimdād</i> )	The Qur’ān, <i>ḥadīth</i> , and scholarly consensus
Issues ( <i>al-masā’il</i> )	The necessary beliefs regarding God, the Prophets, and the realm of the unseen
Legal ruling ( <i>al-ḥukm</i> )	Personal obligation, with detailed apologetics a communal obligation

Al-Dardīr next enumerates the *ḥadīth* works he “took” (*akhadha*), beginning with the first narrated report (*al-ḥadīth al-musalsal bi al-awwaliyya*): “Those who exhibit mercy are shown mercy by the Merciful, show mercy to

<sup>76</sup> See Ghazzālī, *Al-Mustaṣfā Min ‘ilm Al-Uṣūl*; Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar Rāzī, *Al-Maḥṣūl Fī ‘ilm Al-Uṣūl*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Bayrūt: Manshūrāt Muḥammad ‘Alī Bayḍūn, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1999).

<sup>77</sup> Aḥmad; al-Sibā’ī al-Dardīr, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Al-Sibā’ī ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya* (Cairo: al-sharika al-dawliyya li ṭibā‘, 1423), 137-44.

those on earth, and you will be shown mercy from He in the heavens.”<sup>78</sup> The tradition of the first narrated report appears to extend as far back as to the time of Sufyān ibn ‘Uyayna (d. 196/811)<sup>79</sup>, an early *ḥadīth* scholar who was a contemporary of al-Shāfi‘ī. The condition is that the report must have been the first *ḥadīth* heard from the particular transmitter, throughout all of the transmitters of in the chain of transmission (*sanad*).<sup>80</sup> Al-Dardīr claims to have heard this as the first *ḥadīth* from both of his teachers, al-Ḥifnī and al-Ṣa‘īdī. Though neither al-Bukhārī nor Muslim include this particular *ḥadīth* in their collections, it is nevertheless considered a sound and authentic tradition, due to the unbroken chain of direct transmission. Also referred to as the “*ḥadīth* of mercy”, the tradition of initiating erstwhile *ḥadīth* scholars with an admonition reminding them of God’s mercy, as well as the importance of showing mercy to others, appears to be the impetus for the selection of this particular *ḥadīth* as the first to be heard.

The tradition of this style of narration is extensive, with over two hundred *musalsal ḥadīth* narrated in a similar fashion.<sup>81</sup> The common thread between all of them is the accompaniment of a particular act upon narration of the *ḥadīth*. Of these, al-Dardīr also includes in his *thabat* the tradition of the reciting of the sixty-first chapter of the Qur’ān (*al-Ṣaff*), mentioned in the *ḥadīth* stating the Prophet Muḥammad was asked by a group of his companions about the most pious deeds one can undertake; the aforementioned chapter was then revealed with the opening verse: *O ye who believe! Those in the heavens and the earth*

<sup>78</sup> Narrated in the *ḥadīth* collections of al-Tirmidhī and Abū Dawūd.

<sup>79</sup> See Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī and, *Taqrīb Al-Tahdhīb*, ed. Khalīl Ma’mūm Shīhā (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1997), 1:303.

<sup>80</sup> This tradition is still alive today, as this researcher was once part of a gathering with the prominent Syrian *ḥadīth* narrator, Ḥasan Hītū, where he refused the *ijāza* because he had already mentioned another *ḥadīth* in the conversation prior to us soliciting the *ijāza* (Kuwait, 2006).

<sup>81</sup> See Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Bāqī Ayyūbī, *Al-Manāhil Al-Salsalah Fī Al-Aḥādīth Al-Musalsalah* (Dimashq: Dār Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn, 1976). al-Amīr, *Sadd Al-Arab Min ‘Ulūm Al-Isnād Wa ‘L-Adab*, 13.

*exalt God and He is the Most Wise, the Eminent. O ye who believe! Why do you speak of that which you do not practice?*<sup>82</sup> Al-Dardīr includes only one other of these traditions, which he chooses to conclude his *thabat*, known as the tradition of the “handshake” (*ḥadīth al-muṣāfaḥa*), which, as the name suggests is narrated with the accompaniment of a handshake, in an unbroken chain of transmission extending back to the Prophet himself. These inclusions appear more indicative than exhaustive. The fact that he would preface and conclude his intellectual genealogy with these types of traditions indicates that *ḥadīth* studies in the later Islamic tradition were more ritualistic and ceremonial than didactic. This is sometimes referred to in the Islamic literature as *tabarruk* – seeking blessings via ritualistic practices – and a mainstay of Sufi oriented Muslim societies throughout the pre-modern and early modern periods. The *ḥadīth* collection of al-Bukhārī was read publicly in times of strife as a means of *tabarruk* and warding off suffering and tribulation.<sup>83</sup>

Al-Dardīr lists all of the major *ḥadīth* compendiums, including those of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Mājah, Abū Dawūd, and the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik. The manner by which he “received” these collections varies from one to the next. For the collection of al-Bukhārī, he uses the term “narrated with authoritative chain” (*arwīhi b’il-sanad*); the term *riwāya* in the terminology of the *ḥadīth* specialists is a general term that can refer to any number of eight different methods of accepting *ḥadīth* narration (*taḥammul*).<sup>84</sup> Al-Dardīr also uses the term “narrated with authorization” (*arwīhi b’il-ijāza*) when listing the collections of Abū Dawūd and al-Nasāʾī. For the other *ḥadīth* collections, such as the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik and the *Musnad* of al-Shāfiʿī, he uses no particular term and

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<sup>82</sup> Qurʾān (61:1).

<sup>83</sup> Still practiced to this day in al-Azhar and Medina.

<sup>84</sup> See al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Al-Ilmāʾ Ilā Maʾrifat Uṣūl Al-Riwāya Wa Taqyīd Al-Samāʾ* (Cairo: Dar al-Turāth, 1970).

merely refers to the chain of transmission. An argument can thus be made that *ḥadīth* studies in the early modern period were largely ceremonial; the works listed by *ijāza* would imply that they were not necessarily received by audition, and that the license to narrate was given on account of the piety and scholarship of the receiver, and not necessarily via a direct audition. Though this mode of transmission was known in the earlier periods, it was considered a weaker and less reliable form of transmitting sacred texts, though a legitimate one nonetheless. The subject of *ḥadīth* studies in the late eighteenth century has received some attention from Western scholarship, with the particular assertion that there was some sort of revival, which began outside of Egypt, most notably in the Hejaz and interior India.

The figure of Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1791/1205), a polymath Indian scholar, and contemporary and self-described friend of al-Dardīr, has been characterised as a leading figure in this regard.<sup>85</sup> He initiated *majālis* in the narration of *ḥadīth*, often attended by al-Azhar's leading scholars. Al-Jabartī, a contemporary and admirer of al-Zabīdī, attributes the latter's popularity to style more than content. Al-Zabīdī wore his turban and kaftan in a style uncharacteristic of the Azhar '*ulamā*'. He also adopted an antiquated style in his narration of the Prophetic reports, focusing on the narrators themselves and the more arcane aspects, as well as utilising a reader for reports, in a throwback style reminiscent of earlier periods that al-Jabartī was able to identify from its description in older books.<sup>86</sup> When al-Zabīdī progressed from merely narrating the reports to offering commentary on them, the Azhar '*ulamā*' discontinued attending his *majlis*. Al-Jabartī does not explicitly state why this happened, but

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<sup>85</sup> Reichmuth, *The World of Murtada Al-Zabidi (1732-91): Life, Networks, and Writings*, 11-16; Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840*, 54-56.

<sup>86</sup> Reichmuth, "Murtadā Az-Zabīdī (D. 1791) in Biographical and Autobiographical Accounts. Glimpses of Islamic Scholarship in the 18th Century," 79-80.

it can be inferred that such commentary was not novel, and well established within al-Azhar, and therefore of little value to them. The *majlis* culture that al-Zabīdī initiated continued to be quite popular, and the Azhar *‘ulamā’* remained supportive, though they only attended thereafter on special occasions, such as the completion of al-Zabīdī’s lexicon, *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, his magnum opus.

It is difficult to determine if there was a revival of *ḥadīth* in the twelfth/eighteenth century, as there is a dearth of studies regarding the previous centuries.<sup>87</sup> However, judging by al-Dardīr’s *thabat*, consistent attention to the reading and narrating of *ḥadīth* was maintained as far back as the Mamlūk era, specifically with the commentator of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) and his most famous pupil, Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520). A sampling of various intellectual genealogies of scholars of the eighteenth century in Egypt reveals that nearly all of them trace their scholarly lineages to these two scholars.<sup>88</sup>

Al-Dardīr also mentions some of the *aḥzāb* (pl. of *ḥizb*) he was authorised to recite. The *ḥizb* was generally a litany of formulas and invocations that were to be recited by the spiritual aspirant daily. These were often associated with specific Sufi orders, but not necessarily so. One of these non-specific litanies was that of the *ḥizb* of al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), the famous Shāfi‘ī jurist. Al-Dardīr includes a *sanad* for this particular litany, and it appears to have held special significance for the Khalwatī order of al-Dardīr, though al-Nawawī was not known to have been an adherent of this particular order. Muṣṭafā Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī, the Syrian master who reintroduced the

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<sup>87</sup> John Obert Voll, "Abdallah Ibn Salim Al-Basri and 18th Century Hadith Scholarship," *Die Welt des Islams* 42, no. 3 (2002): 357.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example: al-Amīr, *Sadd Al-Arab Min ‘Ulūm Al-Islām Wa’l-Adab*; Aḥmad al-Dardīr, "Thabat Al-Dardīr," ed. Maktabat Jāmi‘at al-Riyāḍ (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1284 A.H.).



Khalwatī order in Egypt, penned a commentary on the litany of al-Nawawī and included it in the daily recitations of his disciples.<sup>89</sup>

Additionally, al-Dardīr includes his authorisation to recite the litanies of the Shādhilī order, included the famous collection of Prophetic panegyrics by the Moroccan Berber mystic Muḥammad al-Jazūlī (d. 870/1465). It was not uncommon during this later period after the maturation of the Sufi orders for an established master, such as al-Dardīr, to be initiated into multiple orders, though generally speaking the memberships in these orders were more ceremonial, in order to acquire the blessing of the *sanad* connection to the order and/or its original master. Al-Dardīr was a staunch supporter of the Wafā'iyya order, an Egyptian offshoot of the Shādhilī order; he penned a commentary on one of Muḥammad Wafā's formulaic invocations, using the opportunity to expound upon his integrated understanding of Sufism and its salient points as relates to non-*ṭarīqa* specific universals.<sup>90</sup> Al-Dardīr received this particular *ijāza* from his Khalwatī master, al-Ḥifnī, rather than from a Shādhilī master.

As aforementioned, the totality of al-Dardīr's education, including all of the works he studied, cannot be gleaned in its entirety from his *thabat*. However, its analysis supports the thesis of Sunni authoritativeness bound to a transmitted tradition, as the books studied confers the notion of consensus bound interpretative methods, and the teachers mentioned with their *isnād* confers the notion of appropriate training from certified teachers.. Though many of the post-Ayyubid Egyptian scholars studied in al-Azhar, their teachers conferred authoritativeness in the transmission and explication of the tradition. The Azhar served as the physical institution by which authority was conferred.

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<sup>89</sup> Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī, *Al-Maṭlab Al-Tām Al-Sawī Sharḥ Hizb Al-Imām Al-Nawawī*, ed. Muḥammad Abd al-Qādir Naṣṣār (Cairo: Dār al-Karaz, 2008).

<sup>90</sup> al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akhhbār*, 3:308. See also: Aḥmad al-Dardīr, "Mishkāt Al-Asrār Lī 'Ārif Al-Waqt Abī Al-Anwār," in *Taymūr*, ed. Dar al-kutub (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1921).

The pedagogy of transmission of texts via audition was paramount to the *ijāza* system. Autodidactism was largely illegitimate in the eyes of the ‘*ulamā*’, as the paradigm of *isnād* served to close the loop not only in terms of the veracity of the texts, but just as importantly the integrity of the interpretive method and set of apodictic principles, that, as a whole, ensured the soundness of the tradition.

## Al-Dardīr and the Tradition of *Tahqīq*

*Tahqīq* (verification or realisation) has a number of different usages in the Islamic tradition. One usage that has gained traction amongst the Sufis is the meaning of realisation and witnessing of the divine will and presence in all things. Al-Shaʿrānī refers to this meaning in a number of his Sufi manuals, referring to the manner by in which one can worship God. One may worship Him by way of *taslīm* (acquiescence), or by the higher form of *tahqīq* (realisation) and *kashf* (unveiling), a more immediate and potent form, where the worshipper gains access to the unarticulated divine wisdoms.<sup>91</sup> While al-Dardīr also makes reference to this usage, particularly in his Sufi discourse, his contribution to the significant corpus of literature in the Islamic disciplines lies in another usage of the *tahqīq* term, namely that denoting verification. El-Rouayheb refers to its usage in this manner, albeit in the context of the Persianate-Islamic tradition of *tahqīq* amongst their *ʿulamāʾ*, where texts are not merely the subject of commentary, but rather challenged and critiqued using the intellectual and rational sciences.<sup>92</sup> Wisnovsky refers to a “spectrum of *tahqīq*”, ranging from philological analysis, which examines a text for authorial authenticity, to the more advanced philosophical analysis, subjecting the author’s arguments to a more critical analysis.<sup>93</sup> He further delineates this spectrum, postulating that there are seven types that can be gleaned from a reading of the post-classical philosophical commentaries, such as al-Rāzī’s *Jawābāt* on the *Ishārāt* of Avicenna.

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<sup>91</sup> Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, *Al-Qawāʿid Al-Kashfiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat Umm al-Qura, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> El-Rouayheb, "Opening the Gate of Verification: The Forgotten Arab-Islamic Florescence of the 17th Century."

<sup>93</sup> Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicennism and Exegetical Practice in the Early Commentaries on the *Ishārāt*," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 354.

Asad Ahmad, in the same issue of *Oriens*, states that:<sup>94</sup>

..*taḥqīq* appears to be much more than independent verification. In the course of tracing the arguments presented in the body of texts, we have seen that, even when an author claims to be doing *taḥqīq*, he is doctrinally accepting positions of past scholars. Indeed he calls such adoption of ideas as doing philosophy “by way of *taḥqīq*.” This is especially and paradoxically true in cases where the *mas’ala* is controversial i.e. where one would expect an entirely independent proof to be forthcoming. However, the demonstration in such cases is not entirely based on doctrinal commitments either; only certain key and controversial premises are granted as *taḥqīq*. This gives the impression that *taḥqīq* straddles tradition and scholarly factionalism, on the one hand, and independent reasoning and verification, on the other, in a complex fashion.

Thus, the positions of El-Rouayheb, Wisnovsky, and Asad on the issue of *taḥqīq* can be summarised as follows:

- 1) *Taḥqīq* is the use of the rational sciences (logic) to evaluate and criticise the inherited tradition (El-Rouayheb).
- 2) *Taḥqīq* is the commentator’s use of a form of textual criticism that examines the cogency of the original author’s arguments, and then either reconciles them with the author’s earlier work(s), repairing them if they are faulty, or presenting new arguments in opposition if the author’s arguments are untenable (Wisnovsky).
- 3) *Taḥqīq* is the use of both independent verification, and eclectic selection of one’s particular factional doctrines to buttress and solidify philosophical arguments (Asad).

Al-Dardīr’s practice of *taḥqīq* does not appear to fit conveniently into any of the aforementioned definitions. Rather, what al-Dardīr, and other ‘*ulamā*’ like him in the Sunni tradition appear to do is use the various epistemological tools at their

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<sup>94</sup> Asad Q. Ahmed, "Post-Classical Philosophical Commentaries/Glosses: Innovation in the Margins," *ibid.*: 346.

disposal to arrive at a singular “truth” on any particular issue. In other words, al-Dardīr is not so doctrinally committed to the Ash‘arī school, for example, to preclude him from declaring a position in the Māturīdī school, or in the Sufi-theology of Ibn al-‘Arabī to be the “*muḥaqqaq*” position. Furthermore, al-Dardīr’s practice of *taḥqīq* is not solely concerned with the identification of the “truth” on any given issue, though this is a priority, but also includes issues of doctrinal precision and clarity, which address pedagogical concerns more than epistemological ones. These epistemological tools include identification of the stronger *riwāya* and of the more cogent logical arguments, as well as reconciliation of seemingly opposing viewpoints across different disciplines. For al-Dardīr, this is most apparent in his treatment of *kalām* and Sufism, and to a lesser degree his treatment of *fiqh* and *manṭiq*.

From another perspective, al-Dardīr’s *taḥqīq* resembles Shil’s notion of “critical intelligence”, where he states:<sup>95</sup>

In each generation a further step forward from the point previously reached is possible; it is a step which could not be taken without the prior steps having been taken...Thus, within a setting of determined devotion to the tradition and with the desire to uphold it and without any intent to be original or to refute anyone, except perhaps some minor commentator, an alert critical intelligence will first sense that all is not as it should be with the tradition which it possesses. Although the tradition seen as a whole may be regarded as self-evidently correct and capable of demonstration should the need arise, the critical intelligence will attempt to improve the tradition by refining it. This refinement consists in making ostensibly minor reformulations, clarifying definitions, differentiating categories, or grouping them under more general categories, resolving apparent contradictions, and restoring the unity of the body of belief, which had been diminished by critical analysis.

Thus, a figure like al-Dardīr, considered a *muḥaqqiq*, or the “critical intelligence” that refines the tradition, neither reformulates it or challenges its structural underpinnings, but redefines and rearticulates core meanings and principles to facilitate transmission of said meanings and principles to a newer generation. This, in essence, is what defines the process of *tajdīd* (renewal) from the perspective within the tradition rather than without.

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<sup>95</sup> Shils, *Tradition*, 215.

Al-Dardīr's paradigm of *taḥqīq* is best understood in his approach to the disciplines of *ʿaqīda* and *taṣawwuf* as the two disciplines share a common objective – to know reality, defined as the manner by which things truly exist unencumbered by the conceptual frameworks that while necessary, are also a barrier. Thus, the conceptualisation of God via His attributes is a necessary framework, but for the Sufi seeking a “truer” knowledge of God, the methodology of *taṣawwuf* is the only avenue by which merely rational conceptualisations can be transcended, as in the Islamic epistemology the rational intellect (*ʿaql*) is by nature apophatic, whereas the active intellect (*qalb*) is cataphatic. The vicissitude of the apophatic and cataphatic approaches comes into its sharpest relief in the positive divine attributes and the doctrine of *qadr* (destiny). The maturation of the two approaches did not reach their zenith until the post Akbarian period, coupled with the revivification of Ashʿarī creed in Egypt and North Africa in the post Fatimid period.

The salient features of the *taḥqīq* of al-Dardīr in the rational disciplines (creedal theology and logic) and the spiritual discipline of *taṣawwuf* can be summarised via the following:

- 1) Definitions
- 2) *Tarjīḥ* (weighted preference) of opinions within the Ashʿarī school
- 3) Exposition of differences between Ashʿarī and Māturīdī theologies
- 4) Al-Dardīr's definition of orthodoxy
- 5) Relationship of rational affirmations and spiritual realisations

## Definitions

The Islamic tradition, after its encounter with the classical philosophers of Greece, most notably Aristotle, has been concerned with *ḥudūd* (definitions). Al-Ghazālī spends considerable time on this in his logic introduction in his book on juristic methodology, *al-Mustafṣā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*. In it, he states that the main method by which *taṣawurrāt* (conceptualisations) are evaluated is via the preciseness of their definitions.<sup>96</sup> Specifically, the manner by which essential concepts in the disciplines are defined in order to arrive at what is characterised by the “perfect” definition of having the twin attributes of being both *jāmi’* (all inclusive of relevant particulars) and *māni’* (all exclusive of irrelevant particulars). Thus, the classic definition of man as the “rational animal”, and later slightly modified by the Muslim scholars as *al-ḥayawān al-nāṭiq* (the articulate animal), is inclusive of all human beings while excluding all other creatures. It was in this vein that al-Dardīr did not suffice himself with the definitions of his predecessors, but rather sought to improve upon them by coming closer to the ideal of *al-jāmi’ al-māni’*.

Al-Dardīr appears to emphasise the importance of precise definitions, most significantly in his works on theology, including creedal theology and *taṣawwuf*. For example, he defines *‘aql* (intellect) as “a secret of the spirit by which the soul can understand immediate (a priori) and demonstrative knowledge.”<sup>97</sup> His predecessors defined intellect without reference to the spirit (*rūḥ*), as either a *‘araḍ* (accident), such as al-Ash‘arī who defined it as knowledge of some of immediate knowledge, whereas others, such as the Arabic philosophers, defined it as a *jawhar* (substance) devoid of materiality in

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<sup>96</sup> Ghazālī, *Al-Mustafṣā Min ‘Ilm Al-Uṣūl*, 45-47.

<sup>97</sup> Aḥmad al-Dardīr, Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Su‘ūd al-Sibā’ī, *Hāshiyat ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, ed. al-Sayyid ‘Alī al-Ḥāshimī, (Cairo: al-Shārika al-Dawliyya, 1423 a.h.), 176-79.

its essence, but concomitant with it in its active aspect. A third group avoided the question of definition altogether, as it is of the realm of the unseen, and a proper definition consisting of a genus and differentia is unattainable.<sup>98</sup> Thus, al-Dardīr appears to reconcile between the three approaches, by acknowledging the unknowable aspect of the intellect, but affirming its purpose, in understanding a priori and demonstrative realities.

In his definition of *taklīf* (moral responsibility), al-Dardīr prefers the meaning of *ilzām mā fīhi kulfa* (morally compulsive) to *ṭalab mā fīhi kulfa* (moral demanded), as the former does not include the legal categories of *mandūb* (recommended) and *makrūh* (reprehensible), both of which are not compulsory under the *sharī'a*. This definition is more accurate as it excludes *taklīf* for pre-pubescent children, as though the precepts of the *sharī'a* are applicable in their case, but in a non-compulsory fashion.<sup>99</sup>

In another instance, al-Dardīr defines the three categories of the *ḥukm al-'aqlī* (rationality), *wujūb* (rational necessity) as “that which does not accept negation as a matter of its essence”, and *istihāla* (rational impossibility) as “that which does not accept affirmation as a matter of its essence” and *jawāz* (rational possibility) as “anything that accepts either negation or affirmation.”<sup>100</sup>

Al-Dardīr states that these definitions are “more concise, clear, and correct” than the more popular and standard definitions of “that which the intellect cannot conceive of its existence”, and “that which the intellect cannot conceive of its negation” for the meanings of impossibility, and necessity, respectively.<sup>101</sup> Though al-Dardīr does not explicitly state the reason for this position, al-Sibā'ī states in the gloss that the popular definitions neglect the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 172-74.

<sup>99</sup> al-Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Ṣāwī 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 34.

<sup>100</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyat 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 208-20.

<sup>101</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyat 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 184-86.



necessity of non-existence for certain things, such as a partner to God. Additionally, they exclude the attributes of *aḥwāl* (positive attributes such as God *being* omniscient, omnipotent, etc.)<sup>102</sup>, as they do not truly exist, but rather are affirmed by necessity of the existence of the attributes of *maʿānī* (positive attribute such as God' omniscience and omnipotence), and therefore are rationally necessary, despite not existing extra-mentally.<sup>103</sup>

### ***Tarjīḥ* (weighted preference) of opinions within the Ashʿarī school**

The Ashʿarī school, like any methodology based school within Islam, is defined by its diversity of opinions as it is defined by its issues of consensus.<sup>104</sup> Al-Dardīr, in the tradition of *taḥqīq*, seeks to include, in his view, only the soundest of opinions, especially as they relate to the nature of reality and the world, and as a result, several instances of his exercise of *tarjīḥ* are discernable in his works.<sup>105</sup> For example, he affirms the validity of the *īmān* (faith) of the *muqallid* (imitator), defined as one who accepts the words of another regarding matters of faith without definitive proof, though his *ʾitiqād* (conviction) is unwavering.<sup>106</sup> In connection with this issue, al-Dardīr stipulates that *naẓar* (intellectual consideration) is obligatory for those who have the mental faculties. However, one's faith is not affected by one's exertion of one's intellect to arrive at *maʿrifa* (knowledge of God), as it is sound in either case i.e. whether one merely imitates, or believes, based upon personal conviction via exertion of intellect.<sup>107</sup> This latter issue was a point of contention between the Ashʿarīs, with al-Ghazālī stating that *naẓar* is not obligatory, but merely *sharṭ kamāl*

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<sup>102</sup> See next chapter.

<sup>103</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibāʾī, *Hāshiyat ʿAlā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 208,16.

<sup>104</sup> This topic is discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.

<sup>105</sup> *Tarjīḥ*, as relates to jurisprudence, though somewhat related, is an entirely different topic and is treated in chapter 5.

<sup>106</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibāʾī, *Hāshiyat ʿAlā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 211-12.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

(condition for completeness).<sup>108</sup> The position adopted by al-Dardīr is supported by his preference regarding the issue of the primary obligation, which he cites as *ma'rifa* (knowledge of God), specifically knowledge of that which is rationally necessary, possible, and impossible for God. This reflects the position of al-Ash'arī himself. Nonetheless, others within the Ash'arī school stated that *naẓar* is the primary obligation upon which all others rest.<sup>109</sup> Hence, in this instance, al-Dardīr preferred to return to the roots of the school by favouring the opinion of its eponymous founder.

Furthermore, on the issue of the anthropomorphic attributes of God, such as *yad* (hand), or *sāq* (shin), a highly contentious issue amongst the Ash'arī theologians and the Ḥanbalī/Wahhābī counterparts, al-Dardīr explicates the position of al-Ash'arī, negating the contention that he understood the references in the Qur'an to *yad* and *sāq* as anthropomorphic. He explains a verse from the didactic poem of his predecessor, al-Laqqānī: *wa kull naṣ awḥam tashbīḥan fa awwilhu aw fawwiḍ wa rum tanzīhan* (and every text that would appear to imply similitude: interpret it or consign, and affirm transcendence). He asserts that both positions i.e. those of the *salaf* (predecessors) and the *khalaf* (later successors) consist of interpretation and reject the literal meaning. In the case of the former, the interpretation beyond negation of the literal meaning is *ijmālī* (general and unspecific), whereas the interpretation of the latter is *tafṣīlī* (specific), such as *yad* denoting divine power, and *wajh* denoting the divine essence.<sup>110</sup> In this case, al-Dardīr does not express a preferred opinion, but elects instead to clarify the commonalities between the two positions, in an

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 200-02.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 327.

effort to contrast them with whom he refers to as *al-mujassima* (anthropomorphists), who insist on a literal interpretation.<sup>111</sup>

### **Exposition of Differences between Ash‘arī and Māturīdī Theologies**

Al-Dardīr considered the Ash‘arī and Māturīdī schools of theology the sole representatives of Sunni Islam.<sup>112</sup> While the Ash‘arī and Māturīdī theological schools are similar in their general approach to the divine attributes, there are several differences in matters that are deemed less than absolute from an epistemological perspective, and hence, not required for basic belief, and thus subject to interpretation and diversity of opinion. While al-Dardīr is an avowed Ash‘arī (whom he refers to as “our imam”<sup>113</sup>), his knowledge of the Māturīdī school is apparent and more than cursory, which bolsters his credentials as a *muḥaqqiq* of the Islamic disciplines.

The sharpest difference between the Ash‘arī and Māturīdī theologies is the issue of the pre-eternalness of the divine attributes of creation, life giving, and sustenance. Al-Māturīdī posits that they are pre-eternal (*qadīm*), whereas al-Ash‘arī posits that they are cosmic connections (*ta‘alluqāt*) of the divine attribute of omnipotence (*qudra*), and attributes of action (*ṣifāt al-af‘āl*), and therefore *ḥādith* (temporal). Al-Dardīr presents the argument for the Māturīdī position, asserting that the divine attribute of omnipotence merely signifies the validity of bringing the non-existent into existence or vice versa, not the actual execution of creation, which requires another attribute which the Māturīdīs refer to as *takwīn* (formation). Al-Dardīr then states that the *muḥaqqiqūn* of the Ash‘arīs posited that there is no evidence for a third attribute in addition to the divine will and power. Hence, the omnipotence of God denotes the validity of

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<sup>111</sup> For a thorough study of the phenomenon of literalism in interpretation of Islamic texts see: Gleave, *Islam and Literalism : Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory*.

<sup>112</sup> See next section on orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

<sup>113</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Hāshiyat ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 390.

rendering the existence or non-existence of entities (as the Māturīdī position asserts); the divine will is the *mukhaṣṣiṣ* (specifier) of whether existence or non-existence will be the disposition of potential entities.

### **Al-Dardīr's Understanding of Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy**

The idea of orthodoxy is one that has stoked considerable discussion in the literature. The term itself is a borrowed one from Christian polemics, presenting significant challenges for an apposite rendering in Islam. Nevertheless, the notion of sound and legitimate religious belief and/or practice is one that is recognised by all three Abrahamic religions. Calder attempted to arrive at a notion of the outer limits of “right belief” for either the Sunni or Shia traditions, without judging if one of the two traditions is orthodox and the other not.<sup>114</sup> Essentially, he arrives at the conclusion that Sunni orthodoxy can be gleaned from the discursive genre traditions of *qīṣāṣ al-anbiyā'*, *ṣirāṭ al-nabī*, the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, *kalām*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and *sharḥ*.

One of the most significant works in prescribing correct belief is al-Ghazālī's *Fayṣal al-Tafrīqa*, a treatise he penned as a rejoinder to the various theological schools, including the Ash'arīs, for their propensity to prescribe unbelief to any school that opposes them. He achieves this by asserting that *īmān* is to hold as true all that the Prophet Muḥammad conveyed, and more specifically, to assert that all he conveyed *exists*. He then postulates five forms of existence: ontological (*dhātī*), sensory (*ḥissī*), conceptual (*khayālī*), noetic (*'aqlī*), and analogous (*shabahī*). Thus, anyone ascribing any of the five forms of existence to anything conveyed as true by the Prophet Muḥammad cannot

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<sup>114</sup> Farhad Daftary, *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London ; New York New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies ; in the United States of America and Canada distributed by St. Martins Press, 2000), 66.

be considered an unbeliever.<sup>115</sup> Thus, he ascribes the differences amongst the various Islamic schools of theology, including the Mu'tazilites, as predicated on different understandings of existence, and hence, not fundamental differences in perceptions of reality that would render any of the schools outside of the fold of Islam.

Al-Dardīr adopts a different approach than al-Ghazālī, narrowing the definition of proper Islam. Though there is no exact and precise term for orthodoxy in the Islamic tradition, al-Dardīr nevertheless references two broad concepts to epitomise correct belief: (orthodoxy) and correct practice (orthopraxy). As regards the former, where he defines *imān*, he invokes the concept of *taṣdīq mā 'ulima min al-dīn bi'l-ḍarūrā* (affirming that which is known from Islam necessarily).<sup>116</sup> While this is not an original concept of al-Dardīr, it is worthy to note that the definition rests upon epistemological grounds.

Necessary knowledge here does not refer to the *kalām* perspective of a priori necessity, but rather necessity from the perspective that even an untrained Muslim who has not studied the Islamic disciplines should be expected to have such knowledge as a minimum requirement to identify as a Muslim. This assumes no knowledge of *kalām* or *fiqh* terms, but basic elements of *tawḥīd*, such as the oneness of God, the truthfulness of His messenger, and the legal obligation to pray five times a day and avoid alcoholic beverages, all form part of minimum necessary knowledge for the believer.

Conversely, al-Dardīr defines orthopraxy in the context of the three core disciplines of practical legal rulings (*fiqh*), the explication of creed (*'aqīda*), and

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<sup>115</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam : Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal Al-Tafriqa Bayna Al-Islām W'al-Zandaqa*, trans. Sherman Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 92-95.

<sup>116</sup> al-Dardīr, *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān*, 2

spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*, *taṣawwuf*), corresponding to *‘ilm*, *‘itiqād*, and *‘amal*.<sup>117</sup>

He notes that the objective is to follow the way of the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the righteous predecessors), and this can only be achieved by following the scholarly conclusions of the jurists, the *kalām* theologians, and those who applied their conclusions in “busying themselves with righteous deeds and spiritual struggle/purification”, such as al-Junayd, and those who follow his way. He delimits the valid applications of *fiqh* to the four *madhhabs* of Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī and Ibn Ḥanbal, stating that other schools are potentially valid, but none has enjoyed the stability of the four schools. As regards to creed, he delimits valid application to the schools of al-Ash‘arī and al-Māturīdī, and those who follow them.

Al-Dardīr mentions the theological school of the Ḥanbalīs in disparaging terms, as he equates them with the *mujassima* (anthropomorphists), specifically in their belief that God’s speech is an accident of sound and letter.<sup>118</sup> As regards the last discipline, *taṣawwuf*, al-Dardīr stipulates that one must master the first two disciplines as a prerequisite, after which one should seek the way of al-Junayd (d. 297/910)<sup>119</sup>, and those who follow him. He then enumerates those whom he considers have fulfilled this criteria: Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī (d. 578/1182)<sup>120</sup>, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), Aḥmad al-Badawī (d. 675/1276)<sup>121</sup>, Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (d. 696/1296)<sup>122</sup>, Abū Ḥasan al-Shādhilī

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<sup>117</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Hāshiyat ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 654-55.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>119</sup> Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd ibn Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, the Persian mystic widely accredited in the Islamic literature as the father of the discipline of *taṣawwuf*. See: Abū al-Qāsim Junayd ibn Muḥammad and Aḥmad ibn Farīd ibn Aḥmad Mazīdī, *Al-Imām Al-Junayd Sayyid Al-Ṭā‘ifatayn : Mashāyikhuhu, Aqrānuhu, Talāmidhatuhu, Aqwāluhu, Kutubuhu Wa-Rasā’iluh*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2006).

<sup>120</sup> See Yūsuf Khattār Muḥammad, *Al-Badr Al-Munīr Fī Sīrat Al-Sayyid Aḥmad Al-Rifā‘ī Al-Kabīr Wa-Atbā‘ihi Ahl Al-‘ilm Wa-Al-Tanwīr*, (Dimashq: al-Kunūz, 2005).

<sup>121</sup> See Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, *Al-Sayyid Aḥmad Al-Badawī : Un Grand Saint De L’islam Égyptien*, Textes Arabes Et Études Islamiques, (Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1994).

(d.656/1258)<sup>123</sup>, Muḥammad al-Khalwatī (d. 751/1350)<sup>124</sup>, and ‘Abd Allāh al-Naqshabandī (d. 792/1389).<sup>125</sup> Al-Dardīr emphasises the importance of aligning with a reputable shaykh of one of the aforementioned *ṭarīqas*, and one who has traversed the path of spiritual wayfaring and *mujāhada*, otherwise such a person should be avoided. Though he does not anathemise those who do not follow one of the four legal schools or two theological schools, he describes them as people of *ḍalāl* (misguidance).<sup>126</sup>

Al-Dardīr appears to address students of knowledge and those seeking spiritual training rather than issuing a fatwa to the general populace. His narrow definition of acceptability betrays his commitment to traditional methods and his rejection of tampering with the core disciplines of *‘aqīda*, *fiqh*, and *taṣawwuf*. One can also theorise that al-Dardīr, like other theologians of his era, such as Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, constricted theological acceptability in favour of theological integrity, as a reaction to perceived unorthodox practices. In the case of al-Dardīr, unqualified imams were the main culprit behind these practices, where as for Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in Arabia uncritical acceptance of community practices and traditions marred by reprehensible innovations (*bid‘a*) and polytheistic tendencies (*shirk*) were the main impetuses.

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<sup>122</sup> See Helena Hallenberg, *Ibrahim Al-Dasuqi (1255-1296) : A Saint Invented*, Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia Humaniora, (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2005).

<sup>123</sup> See Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Qāsim Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh, Elmer H. Douglas, and Ibrahim M. Abū-Rabi’, *The Mystical Teachings of Al-Shādhilī : Including His Life, Prayers, Letters, and Followers : A Translation from the Arabic of Ibn Al-Sabbagh’s Durat Al-Asrar Wa Tuhfat Al-Abrar*, Suny Series in Islam (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

<sup>124</sup> Sometimes referred to as Muḥammad Nūr al-Khalwatī, acknowledged in the *silṣila* of the Khalwatī *ṭarīqa* as its founder, though little is now about him as later scholars articulated the principles of the *ṭarīqa*. See: Earle H. Waugh, *Visionaries of Silence : The Reformist Sufi Order of the Demirdashiya Al-Khalwatiya in Cairo* (Cairo ; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 26.

<sup>125</sup> Al-Dardīr is most likely referring to Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshaband, the eponymous founder of the Naqshabandī *ṭarīqa*. See: Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 62-64.

<sup>126</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā’ī, *Hāshiyat ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 655-56. See also Trimingham’s treatment of the origin of the Sufi *ṭarīqas* in: Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 31-66.

For al-Dardīr, the manner of remedy included a sharper definition of legitimacy in terms of belief and practice, but also included facilitated access to the legitimate tradition. This forms part of a broader theme of al-Dardīr's motivations, namely *tabṣīṭ* (simplification and accessibility) and *tarjīḥ* (juristic preference), where he facilitates access to the Islamic tradition by choosing the soundest paths to said tradition, and by avoiding the enumeration of all possible paths in the wider Islamic tradition. The synthesis between the rational and mystical traditions also features prominently in al-Dardīr's approach the Islamic disciplines, as is analysed below.

### **Relationship of Rational Affirmations and Spiritual Realisations**

Perhaps al-Dardīr's most significant contribution to the *taḥqīq* tradition is his synthesis of multiple disciplines to arrive at a coherent unified theology. While the synthesis of metaphysical Sufi and Ash'arī doctrines are more thoroughly analysed in the following chapter, it bears to note here that such a synthesis can be attributed to al-Dardīr's pursuit of *taḥqīq*. More specifically, the conclusions reached by the rational intellect as regards the nature of reality tend to uncover that reality to a certain depth. However, in the final summation, it is the *kashf* (unveiling) of reality via *taḥqīq* (spiritual actualisation) that offers the truest and most faithful manifestation of *taḥqīq* (in the sense of ascertaining the truth via the most veritable means).

El-Rouayheb refers to these different "connotations" of *taḥqīq* i.e. "verification" as in "critical engagement with received scholarly views, often by applying the rules of logic or dialectic" and in the context of Sufism, "verification typically denoted the mystical-experiential authentication of the truths"<sup>127</sup>. El-Rouayheb alludes to the tension between the two methods of "verification",

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<sup>127</sup> El-Rouayheb, "Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century : Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb," 235.



referring to the “exoteric theologians” as amongst the “ordinary believers” in their assenting to the mystical verification of the Sufis, though they may never directly experience it.<sup>128</sup>

Al-Dardīr, in the tradition of al-Sha'rānī and al-Nābulusī before him, believed that both the rational and mystical ways of knowing were complementary, and as a result asserts the equal significance of both, in order to realise the meaning of *taḥqīq* in all of its connotations. He states that those who err in the exoteric rational aspects of theology will remain hopelessly deprived of experiencing *taḥqīq* in its mystical form, such as the Mu'tazilites and other non-Sunni sects.<sup>129</sup> He further elaborates, synthesising the exoteric and esoteric routes, regarding the issue of the acts of creation, stating: “and the command [of God] to the slave [of God] of “do!” or “do not!” is only upon the casting of the veil (*sad al-ḥijāb*) and their belief that they are the [true] authors [of their acts], for the veil of the Mu'tazilite is dense, whereas the Sunni contemplates and knows the Truth by way of proof (*dalīl*), and the *walī* (gnostic) witnesses (*shāhada*) when he ascends to the [station of] *‘ayn al-yaqīn* (the eye of certainty).”<sup>130</sup>

Al-Dardīr's overture to *dalīl* is most certainly of the rational kind, presumably via the usual manner of logical syllogisms, whereas witnessing refers to spiritual realisation, a concept often expressed via other terms, such as *kashf* (unveiling) and *dhawq* (tasting). For al-Dardīr, the two are inextricably linked and form part of a unified metaphysics that asserts the multi-layered nature of the world, whose reality is one, though approached and understood from multiple knowledge sources. These ideas are not new, and have been articulated by al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'Arabī before him, albeit with slight differences.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," 10.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

Al-Ghazālī, like al-Dardīr, is committed to Ash‘arism, but al-Dardīr’s *taḥqīq* is expressed in his ability to summarise and clarify in a manner that was brought forth in a didactic text, whereas his predecessors works were often inaccessible except to the most erudite of scholars and theologians.

Al-Dardīr’s style in exposition, integrating traditional topics of *taṣawwuf* into his manuals on creed, such as the *Kharīda*, and his manuals in *fiqh*, such as in *Aqrab al-Masālik*, represented a departure from his predecessors. They were hesitant to refer to matters of an esoteric nature, as is the case with many issues in *taṣawwuf*, with issues that were generally exoteric, such as matters of creed and jurisprudence. Their reluctance to do so could be attributed to the epistemological ramifications of doing so, as the exoteric theologians were loath to include matters in theological treatises that rested on less assured epistemological foundations, as is the perception with esoteric Sufism.

Consider this following passage from his commentary on the *Kharīda*:<sup>131</sup>

...and this represents the beginning of the matter regarding *taṣawwuf*, the life of the hearts; he arranged it [the subject of *taṣawwuf*] topically after the knowledge of the creed of *īmān* as it is not possible to travel to God except after knowing it.

Hence, from an epistemological perspective, the rational foundations of creedal theology are a prerequisite for knowledge gleaned from direct mystical experience – both are equally legitimate, yet mystical knowledge is restricted to those who perfect the rational foundations, in addition to knowledge gleaned from authority based reports of the unseen from revelatory scripture (the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*). Thus, whereas the dominant paradigm before al-Dardīr treated the discipline of exoteric theology and of esoteric *taṣawwuf* as discrete and not comingled with one another, al-Dardīr reasserts the essential unity of the Islamic disciplines by affirming their common epistemology and terminology. Furthermore, he elects a style of lucidity that makes no assumptions of the

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<sup>131</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Hāshiyat ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 599-600.

reader, seeking to offer the “*zubda*” (quintessence) of the disciplines, especially creedal theology, *taṣawwuf*, and jurisprudence.

The next chapter demonstrates the manner by which al-Dardīr approached the rational and mystical disciplines under a unified theory of knowledge, as an effort to rearticulate the Islamic tradition to assure its continued transmission.

## Chapter Three: Al-Dardīr's Sufi-Theology: Synthesis of *Kalām* and *Taṣawwuf* Epistemologies

### Introduction

This chapter analyses al-Dardīr's theology, specifically in his synthesis of *kalām* and Sufi approaches to knowledge. As noted by many, there is a history of tension between the rational exoteric approach to knowledge, and the Sufi esoteric approach in the Islamic tradition.<sup>1</sup> This may be due to the dissonance between the very personal approach of Sufism, and the impersonal, cerebral approach of *kalām*. When reading al-Dardīr's works in theology, or those specifically committed to Sufism, one is left with the impression that there is no tension or dissonance between the two approaches. One may even conclude that they are complementary, and could not reasonably exist independent of each other.

This apparent "synthesis" may appear at first glance an apologetic effort justifying Sufism using the logical constructs of *kalām* theology. This occurred in an earlier era; some Sufis wrote manuals of creed to allay suspicions about Sufism after the trial and execution of al-Ḥallāj.<sup>2</sup> However, it is our contention that al-Dardīr reoriented *kalām* theology to address the discourse of his day. The Islamic discipline of ascertaining reality, specifically in terms of God and His attributes, has used various terms throughout the history of the Islamic tradition, including *kalām*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, *al-fiqh al-akbar*, and *'aqīda*. These terms represent historical and contextualised discourses. For example, at the height of

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<sup>1</sup> See Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis : The Defense, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World*, ix; Ayman Shihadeh, *Sufism and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 1-7; Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition : The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Ayman Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī," in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 2.

polemical discourse in the fifth/eleventh century, theology was referred to as *kalām*, and *jadal wa munāẓara* (disputation and debate).<sup>3</sup>

This chapter demonstrates that al-Dardīr's synthesis of the Sufi and *kalām* streams was not apologetic, but rather symbiotic. Al-Dardīr was influenced by Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics, and this is reflected in his treatment of creedal theology. Al-Dardīr considered sound creed an essential prerequisite to realising deeper understandings of God and reality. Sufism is the cognitive discipline by which these deeper meanings can be unlocked. Consequently, al-Dardīr reoriented the theological discourse by focusing less on disputative polemical issues, and more on the understanding of the divine attributes, in order to reach a *maʿrifa* (spiritual knowledge) of God. In his main work devoted to creedal theology, *al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya*, al-Dardīr prefaces his treatment of the divine attributes with his understanding of epistemology. This chapter analyses his understating of the sources of knowledge and its relationship to his Sufi-*kalām* synthesis.

We then analyse the development of the Ashʿarī tradition, and explore the historical and contextual factors that influenced al-Dardīr's discourse as an Ashʿarī theologian. Al-Dardīr's understanding of God and His attributes is analysed in the following section, as the basis for his Sufi-*kalām* synthesis. Finally, al-Dardīr's understanding of the *ḥaqīqa* (ultimate reality) and the nature of divine existence from the *ḥaqīqa* perspective are addressed, in order to comprehend the influence of the Akbarian tradition on al-Dardīr's theological methodology.

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<sup>3</sup> See the titles of the works of al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), and al-Shirāzī (d. 476/1083), for example: ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAbd Allāh Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, *Al-Kāfiyah Fī al-Jadal*, ed. Khalīl Maṣṣūr (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Manshūrāt Muḥammad ʿAlī Bayḍūn ; Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1999); Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf Fīrūzābādī al-Shīrāzī and, *Kitāb Al-Maʿūnah Fī al-Jadal*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Turkī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988).

## Al-Dardīr's Sources of Knowledge

Al-Dardīr's epistemology can be gleaned from his works on *kalām* and *taṣawwuf*. Though Sufi shaykhs before him posited spiritual cognition as a valid source of knowledge, such inferences were rarely integrated into the works of 'aqlīda (creedal theology). Al-Dardīr endeavours to integrate the two knowledge streams into a single cohesive epistemology.<sup>4</sup> Al-Dardīr states plainly in his commentary on his main theological text, *al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya* that the purpose of the text is to furnish the believer with unequivocal proofs for the authenticity of Islam, and to guide him from the "yoke of [unmindful] imitation" to the "light of verification."<sup>5</sup>

*Taqlīd*, in this sense, is diametrically opposed to *taḥqīq*, and should not be confused with the *taqlīd* / *ijtihād* binary in jurisprudence. *Taḥqīq* in the realm of theology refers to the verification of one's personal convictions of the divine reality, independent of authoritative transmission, unlike the case in the *taqlīd* / *ijtihād* binary of jurisprudence. The manner by which these independent convictions can be obtained are by way of the 'aql (rational intellect), or *dhawq* (spiritual cognition).<sup>6</sup> For al-Dardīr, the rational intellect represents the key by which higher spiritual cognition can be realised.

Al-Dardīr, like all Ash'arī theologians before him, adhered to Aristotle's tripartite ontology, in which all conceptualisations are either necessary, merely possible, or impossible. Furthermore, he relies heavily upon syllogistic logic when offering rational proofs for the existence of God, utilising the syllogism's

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<sup>4</sup> Whether they are indeed, two knowledge streams, remains an issue for debate. Some have posited that the Sufi, or esoteric approach to reality, developed in parallel with the exoteric approach, characterised by reliance on the ostensible purport of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, and the deductions of the rational intellect, the mainstay of the *kalām* theologians. See various contributions in: Shihadeh, *Sufism and Theology*; al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies*, 178-79.

<sup>5</sup> *Min rabaqat al-taqlīd ilā nūr al-taḥqīq* see al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyat 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 131.

<sup>6</sup> See William C. Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul : The Pertinence of Islamic Cosmology in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 45-47.

conclusion to deduce unequivocal certainties regarding God and His attributes. To buttress his arguments, al-Dardīr builds upon the Aristotelian notion of activities of the mind, namely conceptualisations (*al-taṣawwur*) and judgements (*al-taṣdīq*). Ultimately, *īmān* is defined as acceptance and declaration as “real” all that the Prophet Muḥammad conveyed in his message as an emissary from God. The rational mind, thus, is held responsible for recognition of the ultimate reality, as long as it maintains its sanity. Unlike the Muʿtazilites, and to some degree the Māturīdīs, al-Dardīr does not consider one morally responsible (*mukallaf*) unless, in addition to sanity, a clear conveyance of Islam’s message has been communicated.<sup>7</sup>

### The Ontology of the Intellect

Al-Dardīr considers the three sources of knowledge, at least from a theological perspective, as the (1) *ʿaql* (rational intellect), (2) (*ʿāda*) experience gleaned by repetition, and (3) (*sharʿ*) divine revelation. He appears to conflate the ontological and epistemological aspects of intellect in his definition of it, stating that the *ʿaql* is “a *sirr rūḥānī* (spiritual enigma) by which the soul can perceive knowledge via both self-evidentiary and demonstrative means, with its place in the heart, and its light in the mind.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, in a single line he addresses the issues of mind-body duality, logical reasoning, and cognition of the heart and/or mind. It would appear that he attempted to straddle the line between the unknowability of the human soul and intellect, in as much as a proper definition consisting of genus (*jins*) and specific differentia (*faṣl*) is untenable. However, he attempts a definition nonetheless, characterising the

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<sup>7</sup> For the Muʿtazilite position on the issue, addressed as the ability of the rational intellect to perceive *al-ḥusn wʿal-qubḥ* (good and evil), see Sophia Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts : The Character of Muʿtazilite Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 6-8. For the Māturīdī position, see Muḥammad Ibn Abī Sharīf al-Maḥdāsī and Kamāl Ibn Humām, *Al-Musāmara Sharḥ Al-Musāyara* (Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 2004), 162-63.

<sup>8</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibāʿī, *Ḥāshiyya ʿAlā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 172-79.

‘*aq̣l*’ as a secret of the spirit, and hence of the world of *malakūt*, imperceptible and unknowable, and negating the assertion of earlier theologians and philosophers that it is either a *jawhar* or ‘*araḍ*’, both of which constitute ‘*ālam al-shahāda*’ (the perceptible realm). .

Other theologians, not known for particular Sufi leanings, and from the Persianate intellectual school, such as Abū Ishāq al-Shirāzī (d. 476/1083) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), defined the intellect as a ‘*araḍ*’ (accident) that performs the function of *idrāk* (discernment).<sup>9</sup> Al-Dardīr quotes Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), who defined the intellect as “some of necessary knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> The “some” here refers to an acknowledgement of a minimum level of discernment that would render one morally responsible. This includes, for example, the knowledge that objects occupy space, and that objects must either be moving, or at rest. Under this definition, intellect and knowledge are mutually interdependent; one cannot claim to have intellect without this basic necessary knowledge, and similarly, one cannot lay claim to knowledge without this basic definition of intellect. It is in this sense that the intellect is deemed an accident, in need of the body to contain it, rather than a substance, as knowledge is an accident and cannot be considered a substance. Hence, al-Dardīr prefers the position of Sufi-theologians like al-Ghazālī to the position of Ash‘arī theologians who offered more rationalistic explanations.

Al-Dardīr also adopts another position of al-Ghazālī, positing that the terms ‘*aq̣l*’ (intellect) *rūḥ* (spirit), *nafs* (soul), and *qalb* (heart) are essentially synonymous when understood from their purely metaphysical meanings, though each term indicates a different and unique aspect of the human reality.<sup>11</sup> To al-Dardīr, the intellect (‘*aq̣l*’) serves as the instrument of the soul (*nafs*) by which it

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<sup>9</sup> See: Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad Rāzī, *Ma‘ālim ‘Uṣūl Al-Dīn* (Kuwait: Dār al-Ḍiyā’, 2012), 145.

<sup>10</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Ḥāshiyā ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyā*, 181.

<sup>11</sup> al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 3:4-6.



can recognise necessary and demonstrative forms of knowledge. It is then, that the *nafs* is the essence of the human condition. The *nafs* condemned in the Sufi literature is of a different connotation, the sum of lower and carnal desires. The heart, then, in al-Dardīr's view, is the place of the intellect.

Another commentator on al-Dardīr's *Kharīda*, Muḥammad Bakhīt al-Muṭīrī, one of the Grand Muftis of Egypt (d. 1354/1935), states that "al-Ghazālī, al-Rāzī, and al-Rāghib, as well as many Muslims, as well as that preferred by all the *hukamā'* (philosophers), and the Sufis, is that it (the intellect) is an independent, absolute essence neither confined to space nor physically tangible."<sup>12</sup> The implication is that the intellect does not occupy a particular place in the physical body, where the "heart" in al-Dardīr's definition is a metaphysical heart, not the bodily organ in the chest. Nevertheless, al-Dardīr's student, al-Ṣawī, states that the heart in al-Dardīr's definition refers to the physical organ.<sup>13</sup> The two opinions can be reconciled by adopting the Ghazalian position that the metaphysical heart is connected to the physical heart in some fashion, but not in way knowable via the rational intellect.

Based upon the previous discussion, it appears that al-Dardīr's definition of the intellect is not based solely on rational argument as expounded in *kalām* theology, underscored by his attempt at a definition from an ontological perspective. Indeed, it would appear that elements of Sufi metaphysics inform his selections and influence his stance on other theological issues as well, as is demonstrated more thoroughly below.

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<sup>12</sup> Muḥammad Bakhīt al-Muṭīrī, *Ḥashiyat Al-Muṭīrī 'Alā Kharīda Al-Tawḥīd* (Cairo: Maṭb'at al-Islām, 1314 a.h.), 17.

<sup>13</sup> al-Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Ṣawī 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 32.

## The Epistemology of the Intellect

Al-Dardīr further elaborates on the rational intellect from an epistemological perspective, stating that both necessary knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-ḍarūrī*) and demonstrative knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-naẓarī*) are the means by which the intellect acquires its knowledge. Necessary knowledge is defined as that which is irrefutable and requires no evidence or proof. Essentially, the proof lies within itself with no external verification outside of the constructs of the intellect required. Al-Dardīr exemplifies this by citing the necessity of knowing the corollaries: (1) that all effects require a cause, (2) the impossibility of the coexistence of non-binary contraries (*al-ḍidayn*), and (3) the impossibility of the absence of both binary contraries in a single object of identical time and place (*al-naqīdayn*).<sup>14</sup> These necessary truths form the underpinning for establishing the existence of God and His attributes. Thus, the proof of God’s existence and His attributes using demonstrative knowledge is based upon logical arguments that return to necessary self-evident “truths.” Hence, knowledge of the existence of God is necessary, but not self-evident, at least by way of rational inquiry.. For al-Dardīr, the existence of God via self-evident knowledge can only be realised via Sufi cognition.

Hence, al-Dardīr, while fully acknowledging the irrefutability of the Ash‘arī rational arguments, also acknowledges and fully endorses the veracity of spiritual realisations. They are, to him, no less reliable than rational necessary and demonstrative forms of knowledge. Indeed, knowledge informed by spiritual realisations is considered a form of necessary knowledge, as they have

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<sup>14</sup> According to Aristotle, there are two types of contraries: 1) those with no intermediates, such as odd and even (a number must be one or the other); and 2) those with intermediates, such as blackness and whiteness (an object may be one or the other, or an intermediate between blackness and whiteness) with intermediates such as grey or yellow. For simplicity, we refer to contraries without intermediates as binary contraries (*al-naqīdān*) and those with intermediates as non-binary contraries (*al-ḍidān*). See Adler et al., *Great Books of the Western World*, 7: 16-17.

no proofs but themselves, and are irrefutable to the one who experiences them. The crucial distinction between the two sources of knowledge is that rationally derived truths are apparent and irrefutable to anyone of sound rational intellect, whereas spiritually informed knowledge is only apparent and irrefutable to its bearer. Nevertheless, both routes form the cornerstones of al-Dardīr's epistemological system. He posits that certainty in God and the Islamic view of reality is attainable, either by *burhān* (rational proof), or *mushāhada* (witnessing), or both.<sup>15</sup>

Al-Dardīr includes empirical knowledge as a valid source, and defines it as the affirmation or negation of a proposition via observed repetition, i.e. fire burns, and food satiates.<sup>16</sup> However, al-Dardīr negates the premise that this observed correlation is indicative of ontological causation (*ta'thīr*).<sup>17</sup> Rather, observed empirical phenomena by way of repetition merely indicate an association (*rabṭ*) between the two sequential occurrences. The ontological (or efficient) cause cannot be informed by empirical observation, as its reality is within the realm of metaphysics. In this regard, al-Dardīr does not deviate from the standard Ash'arī position, yet he does not categorically negate the "nature" of things, rather only their efficacious ontological causality.

This correlation between *observed* (i.e. only perceptible in the sensory realm) cause and effect is a function of the *ḥukm al-'ādī* (empirical judgement), though God is constantly intervening to effect all acts in creation, remaining the sole ontological cause (*mu'aththir*).

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<sup>15</sup> See al-Dardīr's definition of *taṣawwuf* in: al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyā 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyā*, 602-03.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>17</sup> Our translation of al-Dardīr's term: *ta'thīr*, as "ontological cause" attempts to draw a distinction between another term he uses for causation: *tasabbub* (observable causation). The former is used to indicate causation as regards the divine, ultimate reality, which is imperceptible to man, and unfathomable by way of rational inquiry. The latter term refers to the observed realm of experience, whilst not "unreal", but nevertheless conceals the divine, ultimate reality that cannot be realised by either rational inquiry or sense perception. This is more thoroughly discussed in the sections on *waḥdāniyya* and causation.

A third source of knowledge, and perhaps the most obvious when discussing matters of faith, cited by al-Dardīr, as well as countless other Muslim scholars before him, is revelation (*waḥy*). Revelation includes both the literal word of God as revealed in the Qur'ān, and the Prophetic *ḥadīth*. In his treatise, *al-Kharīda*, al-Dardīr defines knowledge acquired via revelation as “the speech of God that addresses the actions of the morally responsible, via either a command, or [mere] permissibility, or a [divine] designation for either of them (a command or permissibility).”<sup>18</sup> Al-Dardīr cites the definition used most often by jurisconsults, demonstrating his command of multiple disciplines, most notably jurisprudence and theology.

Revelatory texts are classified according to the categories of *qaṭ'ī* (conclusive) and *ẓannī* (presumptively authoritative). The verses of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic *ḥadīth* fall into one of the two categories. The *thubūt* (veracity) of a text is the level of confidence in its utterance by the Prophet Muḥammad. The *dalāla* (denotation) is the possibility of a text to have more than one valid interpretation. Most verses of the Qur'ān and most of the *ḥadīth* texts are categorised as *ẓannī al-dalāla* (presumptively denoted). Thus, the logical possibilities regarding the dual aspects of *thubūt* and *dalāla* are four: 1) *qaṭ'ī al-thubūt wa al-dalāla*; 2) *qaṭ'ī al-thubūt wa ẓannī al-dalāla*; 3) *ẓannī al-thubūt wa qaṭ'ī al-dalāla*; 4) *ẓannī al-thubūt wa ẓannī al-dalāla*.

In matters of essential creed,<sup>19</sup> only proofs from *mutawāṭir* sources are accepted. Creed, however, is not limited to only essential aspects, as most of

<sup>18</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Hāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 154-61.

<sup>19</sup> I draw the distinction between “essential creed”, sometimes referred to by theologians as *ma'ulima min al-dīn bil-ḍarūra* and between “auxiliary creed.” If one refutes anything of the former, then their belief system is said to be incompatible with that of Sunni Islam. Refutation of the latter, while sinful, does not render one outside the pale of Islam. Auxiliary creed is based upon sound solitary *ḥadīth*. Hence, the belief of the punishment of the grave, based upon solitary *ḥadīth*, while is considered obligatory to believe in, its denial does not exclude one from Islam. The Mu'tazilites refuted this particular belief, but nevertheless most Ash'arī theologians found this to be heterodox (*fisq*), but not heretical (*kufṛ*).

the transmitted revelatory reports that describe the day of judgement and the afterlife come from the solitary *ḥadīth*, and not from the *mutawātir* Qur'ān or *ḥadīth*. Thus, in matters regarding the order of events on the day of judgement and the physical descriptions of eschatological phenomena, there is a considerable level of disagreement, on a level commensurate with that of jurisprudential dissent.<sup>20</sup>

Al-Dardīr, in the section on *sam'iyāt* (eschatology), cites the different opinions regarding the exact nature and sequence of the events of the afterlife. For example, concerning the nature of the *ṣirāṭ* (bridge crossing over Hell), he mentions the disagreement over its width, with some alleging the impossibility of it being narrower than a hair, and sharper than a sword.<sup>21</sup> Al-Dardīr asserts that the *aẓhar* (more apparent meaning) is that the *ṣirāṭ*'s width and ease of traversal is commensurate with the degree of one's deeds. Thus, the *ṣirāṭ* for the worst sinners will be narrowest and sharpest.<sup>22</sup> Others, cited by al-Dardīr, as disagreeing with this notion, include the Ash'arī theologians, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1285) and al-'Izz ibn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1262), likely dissenting due to the impossibility of a physical structure having such dimensions. However, al-Dardīr follows the methodology of Sufi-theologians, like al-Ghazālī, who posits that empirical propositions are not applicable at the intersection of the physical and metaphysical realms.<sup>23</sup> Al-Dardīr applies this methodology consistently, such as in the issue of the Prophet Muḥammad's

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<sup>20</sup> See for example the various opinions concerning the *ṣirāṭ* in al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyā 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 477-82.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 480-81.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 481.

<sup>23</sup> See al-Ghazālī's discussion on the punishment of the soul in the grave in: al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*, 5:246-58.

body and soul ascending to heaven, and his vision of God during the *Mi'rāj* (night ascension).<sup>24</sup>

The theological foundations by which al-Dardīr draws his proclamations is deeply rooted in the Ash'arī tradition – a tradition that arose as a result of a rationalist strand within Islam that began with their most formidable opponents, the Mu'tazilites, but ultimately informed the course of theological debate for centuries after the initial confrontations. The following section analyses the development of the later Ash'arī school, with the objective of contextualising the contributions of al-Dardīr to the tradition in light of the foundational history that preceded him.

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<sup>24</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 414-15.

## The Ash'arī Tradition in the Later Period

Al-Dardīr was a dedicated Ash'arī theologian, characterising himself as *al-mutaḥaqqiq b'il-'aqa'id al-ash'ariyya* (verifier of the Ash'arī creed).<sup>25</sup> He follows the methodology of many of his predecessors, such as the Egyptians Zakariyyā al-Anṣarī (d. 926/1520), Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), and Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī, as well as others considered the main proponents of Ash'arī theology, such as al-Ghazālī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210).<sup>26</sup> The eponymous “founder” of the school, Abū Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/936)<sup>27</sup>, was an Iraqi scholar dedicated to the Mu'tazilite school early in his career, but later abandoned it for a creed that closely resembled that of a Samarkand contemporary of his, Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944).<sup>28</sup> Though there are no reports that the two men ever met or corresponded, they shared similar positions on matters of creed, specifically in the areas of divine attributes, the divine will, and ontology. Due to their similarities, as well as their numbers of adherents, the Ash'arī and Māturīdī theologies have been accepted as the normative theologies of Sunni Islam, as reported by al-Dardīr.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Aḥmad al-Dardīr, "Minhāj Al-Ṣādiqīn Wa Tibyān Al-Salikīn," in *Ilm al-kalām* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1920), 2.

<sup>26</sup> For biographical information, see: Yasin Ceylan, *Theology and Tafsīr in the Major Works of Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996); Ayman Shihadeh, "Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī on Ethics and Virtue" (D Phil, University of Oxford, 2002); Ayman Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī*, Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science : Texts and Studies, (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> See Daniel Gimaret, *La Doctrine D'al-Ash'arī*, Patrimoines (Editions Du Cerf) Islam, (Paris: Cerf, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> See Mustafa Cerić, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam : A Study of the Theology of Abū Manṣūr Al-Māturīdī (D. 333/944)* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995); Ulrich Rudolph and Rodrigo Adem, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand*, Islamic History and Civilization (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> A third school, known as “Atharī” or “traditionalist” is based upon the early theology of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, characterised by the rejection of the use of rational arguments to affirm God's attributes.

The Ash'arī school was reintroduced into Egypt by Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 589/1193)<sup>30</sup>, upon the demise of the last Fatimid ruler, Al-'Aḍid li Dīn Illāh in 567/1171. The creed of al-Naysabūri, an Ash'arī theologian the new Sultan had studied under in his childhood, was promoted as the standard creed of the new sultanate under the auspices of the Abbasid caliphate.<sup>31</sup> Other sources have pointed to the creed of Ibn Tumart (d. 524/1130), the founder of the Almohad dynasty in the Maghreb, as the one adopted by Ṣalāh al-Dīn and ordered read from the minarets.<sup>32</sup> That the impetus for the establishment of the Ash'arī creed amongst the masses should come from North Africa does not come as a great surprise, as the political environment following the period of Fatimid rule was conducive to such an intellectual trend. The vassals of the Fatimid caliph, the Zirids, effectively ended Fatimid rule in North Africa before Ṣalāh al-Dīn's appearance, having pledged allegiance to the Abbasid caliph, and announcing their return to Sunnism in 1048. As in Egypt, Isma'īlī propaganda proved largely ineffective and won few followers. Nevertheless, in the wake of the Fatimid departure, a concerted programme of indoctrination to Sunni Ash'arism was pursued by succeeding dynasties in North Africa and Egypt. The Almohads, Zirids, and Hafsids (vassals of the Almohads) instituted projects to promote Sunni pietism, serving as the catalyst for a similar programme in Ayyubid Egypt.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Known in the West as Saladin, the Muslim conqueror of Jerusalem. An important aspect of his legacy is his establishment of Sunni theology in Egypt after the reign of the Fatimids, who adhered to an Isma'īlī Bātinī theology of Islam.

<sup>31</sup> Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā'iz W 'Al-l'tibār Fi Dhikr Al-Khiṭaṭ W'al-Athār* (London: Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2003), 4: 440.

<sup>32</sup> Muḥammad ibn Tumart, otherwise known as the "Mahdi" of the Almohad dynasty in Morocco. See Wilyam Sharīf, *The Dearest Quest : A Biography of Ibn Tumart* (Tranent: Jerusalem Academic, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1325*, Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 38-41.



The Muslim East was in a state of disarray due to the continuing Mongol threat and the vacuum left in the wake of the dissolved Baghdad caliphate. As a result, intellectual trends, after the fall of the Fatimids in Egypt, generally travelled from West to East. This can be legitimately demonstrated with the adoption of Ash'arī texts of North African origin, such as the creed of al-Sanūsī, and the logic text of al-Akhḍarī in the Egyptian syllabus.<sup>34</sup> This phenomenon is also reasonably demonstrated through the spread of Sufi orders in Egypt that were of North African origin, such as the Shādhilī order, which found wide acceptance and adoption in Egypt.<sup>35</sup>

Consequently, the *'ulamā'* in the post-Fatimid period were overwhelmingly Ash'arī. A perusal of the Egyptian scholars in the hagiographic literature reveals that virtually all of them from the time of Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, the premier scholar of the late Mamlūk and early Ottoman eras, followed the Ash'arī school.<sup>36</sup> The uniform dedication to Ash'arī theology at the exclusion of all others can be explained by the strong Sunni rejection of Isma'īlī propaganda carried out by the Fatimid state in North Africa and Egypt. As the vassal states of North Africa declared their independence from Fatimid rule decades before the unseating of it by the Ayyubids in Egypt, the dissemination of standard creeds explicating the Ash'arī positions appeared in North Africa before they did in Egypt.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed study of Moroccan logic texts and their entry into Egypt, see: Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Sunni Muslim Scholars on the Status of Logic, 1500-1800," *Islamic Law and Society* 11, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>35</sup> See Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 272, 78; Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-1325*, 105-73.

<sup>36</sup> See for example, the Shāfi'ī and Mālikī hagiographies: Tāj al-Dīn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Alī Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Shāfi'īyah Al-Kubrā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Ṭanāḥī and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad Ḥulw, (al-Qāhirah: Maṭba'at 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1964); Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī Ibn Farḥūn, , *Al-Dibāj Al-Mudhahhab Fī Ma'rifat 'Ayān 'Ulamā' Al-Madhhab*, ed. Muḥammad al-Aḥmadī Abū al-Nūr (al-Qāhira: Dār al-Turāth lil-Ṭab' wa'l-Nashr, 1975).

<sup>37</sup> The most well known of these creeds are those of al-Sanūsī. See Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Sanūsī, Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Ibrāhīm Tilimsānī, *Umm Al-Barāhīn / Li-Abi Abd Allah Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf Al-Sanūsī Al-Tilimsānī. Wa-Yalīhā, Sharḥ Umm Al-Barāhīn Li-Muḥammad Ibn 'umar Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Mallālī Al-Tilimsānī*, ed. Khālīd Zahrī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah,

The most famous Ash‘arī creed, a text still widely studied today, is that of the North African scholar Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 895/1490). He penned a minor, a major, and a redacted minor creed (*al-Sughrā*, *al-Kubrā*, and *Sughrā al-Sughrā*). The *Sughrā al-Sughrā* found widespread acceptance in North and West Africa, popularly known as *Umm al-Barāhīn* (*The Quintessence of All Proofs*). This succinct text is primarily responsible for the spread of the Ash‘arī creed in North and West Africa in the wake of the dissolution of the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt.<sup>38</sup> The *Umm al-Barāhīn* also found its way to the Malay Archipelago, more popularly known as *al-Durra*, often translated into Malay and Javanese, with accompanying commentaries.<sup>39</sup>

The creeds of al-Sanūsī, as well as that of the Egyptian scholar, Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī, *Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*, represent a departure from earlier theological works penned in the Muslim East. The standard works of Ash‘arism before these later works included the commentaries of the Samarkandian theologian Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390) on the *‘Aqā’id al-Nasafiyya* and the *Maqāsid* of al-Ījī (d. 755/1355). These are polemical works in the tradition of the *kalām* dialectic, exploring theological issues and refuting counterclaims. This is in stark contrast to the North African treatises of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which dispensed with the majority of the polemics, and focused almost entirely on delineating the basic creed of Sunni Islam.

The fourteenth century Egyptian scholar and “shaykh of Islam”, Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, in his work on the classification of the sciences, *Khizānat al-‘Ulūm*, makes a distinction between *‘ilm al-kalām* and *‘ilm al-‘aqā’id*. Small

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1423); Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Sanūsī and Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Alī Bannānī, *Sharḥ Sughrā Al-Sughrā Fī ‘Ilm Al-Tawḥīd*, (Miṣr: Maktabat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1373).

<sup>38</sup> El-Rouayheb, "Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century : Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb," 188-93.

<sup>39</sup> Sanūsī and Tilimsānī, *Umm Al-Barāhīn / Li-Abi Abd Allah Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf Al-Sanūsī Al-Tilimsānī. Wa-Yalīhā, Sharḥ Umm Al-Barāhīn Li-Muḥammad Ibn ‘umar Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Mallālī Al-Tilimsānī*, 6.

treatises such as that of al-Sanūsī represent the latter, whereas the longer works of al-Taftāzānī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) represent the former.<sup>40</sup> The sixteenth century Tunisian scholar and judge, Muḥammad ibn Abī Faḍl al-Kūmī (d. 916/ 1510), in his commentary on the preeminent creedal text of his era, *‘Aqīdat Ibn al-Ḥājib*, stated that works of *‘ilm al-kalām* delve into the subject from a general viewpoint, concerning knowledge in and of itself (*al-ma‘lūm min ḥayth huwa ma‘lūm*), i.e. epistemological issues; whereas *‘ilm al-‘aqā’id* explores the subject from the specific standpoint of required beliefs.<sup>41</sup>

It would seem that al-Dardīr, in the *mukhtaṣar* tradition, merely lists the required beliefs. However, a closer examination of his commentaries, most notably his commentary on the *Kharīda*, reveals that he expounded upon complex epistemological issues. He addressed the basic tripartite Islamic sources of knowledge: the intellect, experiential observation, and revelation. A cursory look at the fatwa literature of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries appears to show that many urban and agrarian Muslims in Egypt asked questions of an epistemological nature, such as the existence of the jinn and angels, the claim of immortality for al-Khiḍr, and the veracity of saintly miracles.<sup>42</sup>

The simplification sought by al-Dardīr in the explication of essential creed appears to be partially due to the relative ignorance of the masses regarding such matters. For example, he includes amongst the obligatory articles of faith

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<sup>40</sup> Zakariyya al-Anṣārī, *Khizānat Al-‘Ulūm Fī Taṣnīf Al-Funūn Al-Islāmiyya Wa Maṣādiruhā*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Nadhīr Aḥmad (Bayrūt: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> Muḥammad al-Kūmī, *Taḥrīr Al-Maṭālib* (Beirut: Mu’assat al-ma’ārif, 2008), 37.

<sup>42</sup> See Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ‘Illaysh and Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Alī Ibn Farḥūn, *Fatḥ Al-‘alī Al-Mālik Fī Al-Fatwā ‘alā Madhhab Al-Imām Mālik*, (Miṣr: Sharikat Maktabat wa-Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlādh, 1378).

belief in the jinn, the *awliyā'* (saints), and their *karāmāt* (saintly miracles).<sup>43</sup> His other work in *'aqīda*, sometimes referred to as *'aqīdat al-'awām* (The Creed of the Masses), addresses this phenomenon directly.<sup>44</sup> Al-Dardīr was not alone in this regard, as other scholars of the post-classical period also penned simple creeds for the masses.<sup>45</sup>

The polemical *kalām* tradition, as it flourished in the classical Muslim East, especially amongst Persianate scholars adhering to the Shāfī'ī school of jurisprudence, was one that never found major currency in North Africa or Egypt. This can perhaps be explained by the dominance of the Mālikī school of jurisprudence at the exclusion of all others in North Africa and Upper Egypt. It is often boasted in Mālikī hagiographical literature that no Mālikī scholars were known to have diverged from the Sunni creed except for what has been attributed to Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), otherwise known as Averroes.<sup>46</sup>

Before al-Sanūsī, Mālikī jurists in North Africa favoured the creed of Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386/996). This creed was hardly Ash'arī in its composition and methodology; instead, it paraphrased verses from the Qur'ān without enumerating the specific attributes of God, as do the Ash'arī texts. The originally intended audience were Qur'ān schoolboys, but it quickly became a standard text for studying basic theology.<sup>47</sup> This was likely because it formed the introduction to a larger text on Mālikī jurisprudence, *al-Risāla*, which remains a standard text studied by Muslim jurists until this day. Its style and

<sup>43</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyā 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyā*, 507-08, 36-42.

<sup>44</sup> Aḥmad al-Dardīr and Muṣṭafā al-'Uqbāwī, *Ḥāshiyat 'Alā Sharḥ 'Aqīdat Al-Dardīr* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1939).

<sup>45</sup> Such as Aḥmad Marzūkī, *Manzūmat 'Aqīdat Al-'Awwām* (Indonesia: Ma'had Nūr al-Ḥaramayn, 1416); Aḥmad Maqqarī, *Idā'at Al-Dujna Fī 'Itiqād Ahl Al-Sunna* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1996); Sanūsī and Bannānī, *Sharḥ Sughrā Al-Sughrā Fī 'ilm Al-Tawḥīd*.

<sup>46</sup> The implication that Ibn Rushd (Averroes) adopted aspects of Neo-Platonist philosophical tenets at odds with Ash'arism. See Majid Fakhry, *Averroës (Ibn Rushd) : His Life, Works and Influence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 12-30.

<sup>47</sup> See editor's introduction in: Muḥammad Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, *Al-Risāla Al-Fiqhiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), 38-56.

presentation were similar to the creeds favoured by Ḥanbalī scholars in Iraq, avoiding any use of rational argument or specialist terminology. Additionally, the Ayyubid post-classical intellectual tradition in Egypt was less concerned with refuting the now defunct Muʿtazilites than with re-establishing Sunnism, specifically amongst the masses, after a long period of Fatimid rule.

Though al-Sanūsī appeared to have Sufi leanings, and occasionally employed Sufi terminology, his creeds are largely devoid of any underlying Sufi methodologies.<sup>48</sup> The order in which he enumerates the divine attributes follows that of most of the Ashʿarī theologians before him, such as al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), al-Rāzī, and al-Ghazālī, where God's omnipotence (*al-quḍra*) is discussed first, thereby alluding to its primary significance in relation to the rest of the divine attributes.<sup>49</sup> Contrastingly, al-Dardīr begins with God's divine life (*al-ḥayāt*), then knowledge (*al-ʿilm*), then Will (*al-irāda*), and then omnipotence (*al-quḍra*).<sup>50</sup> Though al-Dardīr uses a slightly different order in his *al-Kharīda*, beginning with the divine attribute of knowledge, and then the divine Life, it remains unmistakable that his departure from previous theological texts by enumerating omnipotence behind Life and Knowledge cannot be explained as merely incidental. A further perusal of his other works reveals a conscious and purposeful approach to his enumeration of the divine attributes predicated on a Sufi understanding of the relation of the attributes to the *maqām* (spiritual station) of the Sufi aspirant. The significance of this order preferred by al-Dardīr is noted by Reichmuth in his study of al-Zabīdī, who also preferred to list divine knowledge before divine power and will, even attributing this preference to al-

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<sup>48</sup> Based upon a close reading of his main work in creed, Sanūsī and Tilimsānī, *Umm Al-Barāhīn / Li-Abi Abd Allah Muḥammad Ibn Yūsuf Al-Sanūsī Al-Tilimsānī. Wa-Yalīhā, Sharḥ Umm Al-Barāhīn Li-Muḥammad Ibn ʿumar Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Mallālī Al-Tilimsānī*.

<sup>49</sup> Rāzī, *Maʿālim ʿUṣūl Al-Dīn*, 62-65; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm Al-Dīn*, 1:126; Ibrāhīm Bājūrī, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Bājūrī ʿAlā Maṭan Al-Sanūsīyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Bayrūtī, 1994), 62.

<sup>50</sup> Aḥmad al-Dasūkī and Muḥammad al-Sanūsī, *Ḥāshiyat ʿAlā Umm Al-Barāhīn* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1939).

Dardīr's influence on al-Zabīdī, his contemporary and friend.<sup>51</sup> This may return to the Sufi notion that divine knowledge is the origin of the universe, as the universe "existed" in the knowledge of God before He willed and caused it to exist in the external realm.<sup>52</sup> This point is explicated further in the section below.<sup>53</sup>

The first Egyptian successor to al-Sanūsī in Ash'arī creed authorship was Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī (d. 1041/1632). Like al-Sanūsī, he was a Mālikī jurist and Sufi practitioner. He is most well known for his creed in verse *Jawharat al-Tawḥīd* (*The Jewel of Oneness*). It is a one hundred and forty four line poem succinctly delineating the Ash'arī creed in much the same manner as al-Sanūsī's *Umm al-Barāhīn*. Al-Laqqānī's text enjoyed wide appeal, especially in Egypt, and is still studied in al-Azhar's secondary schools, along with al-Dardīr's *Kharīda*. Unlike *Umm al-Barāhīn*, the *Jawhara* includes the traditional third chapter of *kalām* theology, transmitted revelatory knowledge of the unseen (*al-sam'iyāt*). Additionally, some polemical issues are included, such as the belief of the imitator (*īmān al-muqallid*), the capacity of belief to increase and decrease, and the first legal obligation (*awwal wājib*).

Al-Dardīr's main text in creedal theology, the *Kharīda*, represents the culmination and epitome of the discipline. No other text after the *Kharīda* achieved its renown and ubiquity, attested to by its use in the circles of al-Azhar as the pre-eminent didactic text in theology. It was al-Dardīr's engagement with the long history of *kalām*, as well as his incorporation of Sufi principles, that distinguished his work from that of his predecessors. This methodology's salient features are brought into sharp relief by al-Dardīr's treatment of the

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<sup>51</sup> See: Stefan Reichmuth, *The World of Murtada Al-Zabidi (1732-91): Life, Networks, and Writings*, 315.

<sup>52</sup> See: William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God : Principles of Ibn Al-'arabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 20-22.

<sup>53</sup> In the section entitled "Al-Dardīr's synthesis of *kalām* theology and "mystical" knowledge."

divine attributes. The divine attributes for the Sufi-theologians were not merely an abstraction by which the enigma of divinity could be appreciated, but additionally represented the highest form of *tawḥīd*, and the essential unity of reality. The following section analyses al-Dardīr's understanding of the divine attributes, and specifically the influence of Sufi metaphysics on that understanding.

## Al-Dardīr's Understanding of God and His Divine Attributes

Al-Dardīr states early on in his principal creed, *al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya*, that the obligation to know God is an individual one, and, more importantly, the primary one. Hence, al-Dardīr makes clear that God cannot actually be *known*, in the sense that a full conception of the divine mind is unknowable by man, lacking the faculty of perceiving God as he really is (*fi nafs al-amr*). Instead, man's intellect is the faculty by which divine signs are to be understood and interpreted as proofs of God's existence. God, therefore, makes Himself known via His signs, but only to the extent that He decrees is humanly possible. Therefore any conception of God's essence is deficient, and in fact conceptualising His essence is patently discouraged. Creation, and the manifest effects of the divine names upon creation, then serves as the means by which illumination of the intellect and the soul can take place by reflection upon these signs.

The essential "unknowability" of God's essence is a central theme amongst the Sufi-theologians. Al-Sha'rānī, quoting Ibn 'Arabī, states:<sup>54</sup>

Know that all of creation [is a product] of a cause (*ma'ūla*), and that the modality of God's essence is unknowable. Moreover, it is necessary that the proof (*dalīl*) and the proven (*madlūl*) share a common aspect in issues of rationality. As the Truth (God) is unknowable by proof, it follows that there is no way of knowing His essence.

In this, they do not depart from the position of the more traditional theologians, such as al-Rāzī, but the issue of "knowing God" becomes a function of recognising the essential unity and manifestation of the divine attributes in creation. The *āthār* (effects) are the means by which their causes, the manifestations of the divine attributes, can be discerned, and hence, God "known." The "reading" of these effects as signs of the divine is a central theme in al-Dardīr's theology.

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<sup>54</sup> al-Sha'rānī, *Al-Qawā'id Al-Kashfiyya*, 55.



Al-Dardīr devises a tripartite rendering of the realm of signs: the celestial world, the terrestrial world, and the human anatomy. In this, he forwards the teleological argument (or argument by design) for the existence of God, which more or less corresponds to the arguments mentioned in the Qur'ān.<sup>55</sup> He offers a lengthy exposition of the teleological argument in his commentary on the *Kharīda*:

...And you may prove [the temporality of the universe] as it consists of divergent species and different types, as is indicated by the Qur'ān. Wherein some [of creation] is celestial, some is terrestrial, some is illuminated, some is dark, some is hot, some is cold, some is moving, some is still, some is ethereal, some is material, some whose existence has been witnessed after its nonexistence, and some whose nonexistence has been witnessed after its existence...and all of these different types consists of categories, individuations, and attributes that are innumerable, and thus indicate that [all] is contingent upon a Wise Creator (*mukhaṣṣiṣ ḥakīm*).<sup>56</sup>

After this exposition, al-Dardīr is careful to point out that the wondrousness of the universe does not mean its contemporaneousness with God, but its existence and creation *ex nihilo*. This point is significant, for it is by which al-Dardīr, taking al-Ghazālī as his example, anathematizes the *Falāsifa*, no doubt referring to some of the Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) (d. 427/1037) and al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), affirmers of the co-eternality of the universe with God. He does not mention them by name, but does report that the bearer of such a belief is a *kāfir* by consensus of the Muslims.

Al-Dardīr then deals with the negative divine attributes first; stating the concept of *takhliya* (voiding) precedes *taḥliya* (sweetening).<sup>57</sup> His invocation of the *takhliya/taḥliya* binary, a concept borrowed from Sufi ethics, betrays his motivation for learning creedal theology. The understanding of God by what He is not aligns with the Sufi ethic of avoidance of vices as prerequisite to embodying of virtues (*taḥliya*). As he emphasised in his Sufi works, sound

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<sup>55</sup> See for example, Qur'ān (88:17-20)

<sup>56</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 236-37.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 328-29.

creed is an essential aspect and necessary requirement for *sulūk* (spiritual wayfaring).

The importance of the negative or apophatic theology as a precedent to its positive counterpart lies in its nature. Negative theology is ultimately more absolute than its counterpart of positive or cataphatic theology. As the logical maxim states, a negative proposition always distributes its predicate, so stating that God is one in essence is akin to stating that there is none but He, an absolute statement. Not coincidentally, the first formula to be given by the master to his disciple is the first part of the testification of faith, an absolute negation.<sup>58</sup> Al-Dardīr's utilisation of Sufi terminology when speaking of the divine attributes, specifically as concepts of *sulūk* (spiritual wayfaring), further reveals his methodology in his works of creedal theology.

Unlike his predecessors who penned longer commentaries, such as al-Taftāzānī, al-Dardīr's primary objective is to explicate essential creed as a prerequisite to spiritual purification, and not to specifically dispel the perceived misconceptions of the Mu'tazilites, *Falāsifa*, *Jabriyya*, or *Qadariyya*. Hence, the issues al-Taftāzānī discusses in great detail in his commentary on al-Ījī's *Maqāsid*, such as the difference between *māhiyya* and *wujūd*,<sup>59</sup> or the particulars of the Mu'tazilite argument for their rejection of the positive attributes,<sup>60</sup> are referenced by al-Dardīr as concluded arguments, without revisiting in detail the deliberations by early Ash'arīs.

The negative attributes of beginninglessness (*qidam*) and eternalness (*baqā'*) are mentioned in tandem, as God existed before He created time and space, and will continue to exist after time and space. These are considered negative attributes as all beings other than God have a definite beginning

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<sup>58</sup> This concept is explored further in the chapter dealing with al-Dardīr's role as Sufi guide.

<sup>59</sup> Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ Al-Maqāsid*, (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1989), 1:310-16.

<sup>60</sup> See *Ibid.*, 4:72-87.

(*ḥudūth*) and will meet a definite end (*fanā*). Thus, *qidam* and *baqā* are the opposites of *ḥudūth* and *fanā*. As God's attributes are unique to Him, no other being can have a share of beginninglessness or eternalness. The human soul, though posited to exist before and after bodily death, is granted immortality either as a favour of divine grace (for the dwellers of Paradise), or as a punishment meted out by divine justice (for the denizens of Hell).

Al-Dardīr then expounds the negative divine attribute of aseity or self-sufficiency (*al-qiyām bi al-nafs*), which he defines as the absolute lack of need for an essence within which His essence can reside, and hence exist (*al-maḥall*), or an essence which is the direct cause for His essence (*al-mukhaṣṣiṣ*). Hence, God is not an attribute, which would require an essence to reside in, nor does any agent cause Him, as He is uncaused. The use of the term *mukhaṣṣiṣ*, whose verbal form literally means "to specify" or "to particularise", is used here in the context of specification or particularisation of that which is only logically possible, thereby excluding the specification or particularisation of the existence of an essence logically necessary. Out of an infinite number of logical possibilities, the *mukhaṣṣiṣ* determines that is which to actually exist.<sup>61</sup> Hence, as God's existence is logically necessary and uncaused, the determinant (*al-mukhaṣṣiṣ*) is inapplicable when referencing the divine essence. Thus, the negative attribute of aseity negates the notion that God can be an attribute, or that His existence is only logically possible and is subject to an external cause.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of the development of the *takhṣiṣ* (particularisation) argument for the existence of God, specifically in the thought of al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī, see: Herbert Davidson, "Arguments from the Concept of Particularization in Arabic Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 18, no. 4 (1968).

<sup>62</sup> The Ash'arī argument for *takhṣiṣ* (particularisation) as articulated by al-Dardīr, likely originated with al-Juwaynī, who modified the argument from earlier Ash'arism to dispense with atomist physics. See Shihadeh, "The Existence of God," 211.

The fourth negative attribute mentioned by al-Dardīr is dissimilitude to temporal beings. Though it can be surmised that, as a rule, all of the divine attributes are dissimilar to the attributes of temporal beings, the context here is specific to the three types of temporal beings: bodies (*ajsām*), substances (*jawāhir*), and accidents/attributes (*‘arāḍ*). Bodies can either be physical, which are then defined by height, width, and depth; or logical, such as the taxonomic categories that are defined by genus and species. Thus, God cannot in any way be defined or limited by physical height, width, and depth; or by logical categorisations such as genus and species. Similarly, substances are defined by in their indivisibility on an atomic level, and as parts that make up a whole of an essence. Thus, God cannot be a substance since His essence does not make up a part of a whole, nor can His essence be deemed indivisible, as even an indivisible object is subject to the constraints of time and space, both of which are inapplicable to the divine existence. Accidents are either times, places, directions, or dimensions. Al-Dardīr states this explicitly:<sup>63</sup>

[God] Most high is neither a substance, nor a body, nor an accident, nor moving, nor still, nor described as large or small, nor above, nor beneath, nor residing in space, nor united [with temporal objects], nor immanent, nor transcendent, nor right, nor left, nor behind, nor in front, nor any other attribute specific to temporal beings, for if He was similar to them, then that which is necessary for them would be necessary for Him such as being created and needing a creator; and all of this is logically impossible.

Ibn al-‘Arabī essentially affirms the position of the Ash‘arī theologians on a basic, exoteric level, but on an esoteric level, he upends the paradigm. God’s attributes in the Akbarian cosmology are all literal (*ḥaqīqī*), whilst all human attributes, deficient and contingent, could only be interpreted as figurative (*majāzī*). True power, will, knowledge, sight, hearing, etc. are for God alone; human beings only possess a faint shadow of reality, as God is the Reality, and all other *realities* are contingent upon His grace. He states in his treatise on the

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<sup>63</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Hāshiyya ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 280-82.

*mutashābihāt: Radd al-Mutashābi ilā al-Muḥkam (Returning the Ambiguous to the Authoritative):*<sup>64</sup>

There is no actor in existence except for God, and all human action – according to the people of the *Sunna* – is attributed to God in terms of both existence and conception, without partner or aid, and it is *literally* (*‘alā al-ḥaqīqa*) His action.

In this assertion, Ibn al-‘Arabī does not diverge from the standard position of the Ash‘arī theologians, as the doctrine of *kasb* (acquisition) asserts that God is the creator of all actions and that human beings merely acquire the created act, and it is that acquisition by which they are held accountable (*manāṭ al-taklīf*).<sup>65</sup> Ibn al-‘Arabī goes on to speak of the dual manifestation (*tajallī*) of the divine attributes: a terrestrial experiential manifestation (*mazhar ‘ādī suflī*), and a higher celestial real manifestation (*mazhar ḥaqīqī ‘ulwī*). The former is attributed to human action, via forms and bodily movements, while the latter is attributed to God. The “attribution” of human acts to human beings themselves is a means by which they can comprehend the incomprehensible, and to “assuage their hearts”, but the real actor and creator in both attributions is God alone.

Ibn al-‘Arabī cites the Qur’ānic verse: (Fight them and God will punish them by your hands)<sup>66</sup> to illustrate his point. In this regard, Ibn al-‘Arabī summons the well established outward-inward (*ẓāhir – bāṭin*) doctrine that attributes ostensible and observed phenomena to a terrestrial realm. Though this may be incontrovertible in its occurrence and perception by man, it is nonetheless a superficial realm that does not indicate the true reality, which is ultimately unobservable, and only intelligible via rational construct, submission to revelation, or intuitive cognition (*dhawq*).

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<sup>64</sup> Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Radd Al-Mutashābih Ilā Al-Muḥkam* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, 2007), 81.

<sup>65</sup> See for example: al-Dardīr and al-Sibā’ī, *Ḥāshiyā ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 297-99.

<sup>66</sup> Qur’ān (9:14).

Ibn al-‘Arabī’s cosmology allows for the notion of “multiple depths” to the same reality, though the overarching and only true reality is the unobservable realm of the divine, which, nevertheless, manifests itself via the divine names and attributes and the resulting realm of creation. This duality has Qur’ānic roots, in the concept of *‘ālam al-shahāda* (the witnessed realm) and *‘ālam al-ghayb* (the unseen realm). The tripartite cosmology of al-Ghazālī, as well as that of Ibn al-‘Arabī, are similar, with the lowest realm, *‘ālam al-mulk* (the corporeal realm), the middle realm, *‘ālam al-malakūt* (the angelic realm), and the highest realm, *‘ālam al-jabarūt* (the divine realm).<sup>67</sup> The corporal realm is accessible to all rational beings; the angelic realm is closed to all but the prophets and saints; and the divine realm is accessible to none, even the prophets and saints.

One can then reasonably infer that the innermost reality is ultimately unknowable by man, and that there are divine secrets that are not divulged even to the greatest of the prophets and saints. This forms the underlying premise of the highly developed theology characteristic of the post-classical period synthesised with Sufi epistemology, where it is admitted that God is ultimately unknowable, and that *kalām* theology can at best offer limited approximations.

This theme is found in some aspects of al-Dardīr’s theology, most conspicuously in his explanation of the Ash‘arī doctrine of acquisition (*kasb*), discussed further below. Thus, the superior form of knowing, accessible only to God’s chosen servants, is the way of intuitive cognition (*dhawq*), but such a path requires the basic key of sound creed followed by sincere devotions. It is not fortuitous that al-Dardīr prefaces nearly all of his works on Sufism with

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<sup>67</sup> Binyamin Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism : The Teachings of Al-Ghazālī and Al-Dabbāgh*, Routledge Sufi Series (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 108; Richard McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), 98-102.

introductory sections on basic creed, outlining the negative and positive divine attributes according to the standard Ash'arī doctrine. His possible reasons for doing so are discussed below, but one plausible explanation is that he too was part of the larger reform movement that the late eighteenth century witnessed, where heterodox excesses and general civil malaise precipitated a greater attentiveness on the part of the '*ulamā*' to creedal issues.

### **The *Waḥdāniyya* (Oneness) of God**

The final negative attribute cited by al-Dardīr is God's absolute oneness (*al-waḥdāniyya*). Al-Dardīr explicates the doctrine of oneness by asserting that God is one and without partner in essence, in attributes, and in actions. His oneness in essence proscribes His consisting of parts, or multiple essences. His oneness in attributes proscribes multiple incidences of the same attribute i.e. God can have only one attribute called knowledge, one called life, etc. This particular doctrine is the Ash'arī response to the Mu'tazilite insistence on refutation of all positive divine attributes, as in their view that would amount to a form of polytheism, where multiple pre-eternal (*qadīm*) attributes are akin to multiple deities.

Al-Dardīr responds to this concern by distinguishing between multiple deities and multiple attributes that are neither equivalent to the divine essence (*lays ayn al-dhāt*), nor are they other than the divine essence (*tughāyir al-dhāt*). He then concludes that the Mu'tazilites would have to admit that their view of the divine essence consists of attributes residing in the divine essence, and not divisible from it; thence the divine essence is indistinguishable from its attributes.<sup>68</sup> If this is the case, then each positive attribute, in as far as the definition of a positive attribute is that which has a reality "outside of the mind",

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<sup>68</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Hāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 282-90.

and an essence, must then have its own set of attributes recursively, to ad infinitum. Thus, God's positive attribute of knowledge must have a will, power, life, and intent<sup>69</sup> all of its own, and then those attributes must also have the same essential attributes of their own, and so forth.<sup>70</sup>

Of course, al-Dardīr here utilises the "coercion" (*ilzām*) argument, the mainstay of polemical theological argument. Whether the Mu'tazilites would accept his definition of essence (*dhāt*), and all of the ramifications that accompany it, is unclear, but nonetheless al-Dardīr does not fail to make a cogent argument. In addition to the standard double preventative (*al-tamānu'*) argument, which states that if there were multiple gods, they could either agree, or disagree, both possibilities are posited as inconceivable. If they agree then they are incapable of affecting the other, and hence no longer an omnipotent god, and if they were to disagree, the created world would cease to exist. Yet, he also takes care to refute the possibility of multiple positive attributes, as well as multiple efficient actors. He utilizes in this regard the Aristotelian category of quantity (*al-kamm*), in both variants: connected (*al-muttaṣil*) and unconnected (*al-munfaṣil*). The connected quantity refers to God's indivisibility i.e. He is not made up of parts, whereas the unconnected quantity refers to His oneness in essence i.e. he has no partners or others like Him. These two categories also extend to his attributes and actions, thereby adding to six in total.

The measured use of Aristotelian logic to this degree appears unique to al-Dardīr, when compared to other theological works of the early modern era, as commentaries on the *Umm al-Barāhīn* of al-Sanūsī, and the *Jawhara* of al-

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<sup>69</sup> The other positive attributes of hearing, seeing, and speech are not included in the argument because their proofs are by way of transmitted tradition (*naqlī*), rather than rational construct (*'aqlī*), and thus would not be requisite for the definition of a positive attribute that is indistinguishable from the definition of an essence.

<sup>70</sup> al-Dardīr, "Sharḥ Fawāyid Al-Farāyid Fī Ḍabīṭ Al-'Aqāyid," 28.



Laqqānī do not specifically utilise, a fact that al-Dardīr implicitly notes.<sup>71</sup> This strengthens the thesis that logic enjoyed a sort of revival in eighteenth century Egypt, despite the ambivalent stance taken by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, a cohort of al-Dardīr. Al-Dardīr's primary master, 'Alī al-Ṣa'īdī, penned a commentary on the *Shamsiyya*, a primary text in logic. The brother of his other master, Muḥammad al-Ḥifnī, was of the opinion that logic was a communal obligation (*farḍ kifāya*).<sup>72</sup>

However, whether there was a "revival" of logical studies in the eighteenth century remains to be seen. A decline in logical studies prior to the eighteenth century is a questionable thesis, especially in light of the fact that al-Dardīr's own intellectual genealogy (*thabat*), indicates theological studies imbued with logic (*kalām*) go back to at least the time of Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, a scholar of the tenth century.<sup>73</sup>

The treatment of God's oneness in essence, attributes, and actions, inevitably leads into a discussion of the Ash'arī doctrine of acquisition (*kasb*). Perhaps no other particular doctrine has generated as much discussion, as issues of theodicy are inextricably linked. Occasionalism is a term generally prescribed for the Ash'arī doctrine that proscribes any causation apart from God, for He is both the primary cause, and only cause. Recent scholarship has offered different perspectives regarding the position of the primary articulator of this doctrine. Reading al-Ghazālī, especially in his treatment of the subject in the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*), it appears that the position of the Ash'arī theologians is that all acts in the universe are direct and

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<sup>71</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 283-84.

<sup>72</sup> El-Rouayheb, "Was There a Revival of Logical Studies in Eighteenth-Century Egypt?," 5-6.

<sup>73</sup> See previous chapter.

continuous creations of God, and that any apparent cause and effect relationship outside of this paradigm is merely occasional.<sup>74</sup>

### Causation and Divine Omnipotence

Al-Dardīr lays a careful argument when discussing the topic of ontological causation (*al-ta'thīr*), stating emphatically that God alone causes, in the sense of origination (*al-ikhtirā'*) and creation ex nihilo (*al-ījād*). While he does acknowledge the existence of human power (*qudra*), he negates any possibility that human action is the *mu'aththir* (ontological cause) of any human voluntary act.<sup>75</sup> He then poses the inevitable question: how, then, can humans be held accountable for their actions if they are not the originators of their own actions? Al-Dardīr then invokes the standard acquisition (*kasb*) defence; namely that God alone creates; humans and all other created beings “acquire” the created act. To answer the anticipated question of human accountability, he invokes the concept of *ta'alluqāt* (cosmic connections)<sup>76</sup>. He defines the *ta'alluq* as the extension of the attribute to a matter in addition to its essential connection to its possessor.<sup>77</sup> In the case of the *ta'alluq* of divine omnipotence, it is defined as that which manifested (*abraza*) all things in accordance with the divine will. Human acquisition (*kasb*) is defined as the *ta'alluq* of human power affecting human voluntary acts. The manifestation of voluntary human acts is then a product of two connections: the divine and the human.

In positing the *qudra* of created beings, al-Dardīr acknowledges the legitimacy of sense perception as a legitimate epistemological source, but also demonstrates its limitation in ascertaining the ontological reality i.e. the way

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<sup>74</sup> Edward Omar Moad, "Al-Ghazali on Power, Causation, and 'Acquisition'," *Philosophy East and West* 57, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>75</sup> The implication being that human involuntary acts, such as the function of the internal organs, is not a point of contention as far as the lone efficacy of divine omnipotence is concerned.

<sup>76</sup> I translate *ta'alluq* as “cosmic” connection as it is defined by al-Dardīr as the connection or effect of the divine attribute on the created world, i.e. the cosmos.

<sup>77</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'i, *Hāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 354.

things really are – the *ḥaqīqa*. Indeed, al-Dardīr asserts that created beings are subject to coercion ontologically (*majbūr fi'l-bāṭin*), whilst appearing as voluntary actors according to mere sensory perception (*mukhtār fi'l-ẓāhir*).<sup>78</sup> The ontological reality then, is unequivocal in that God is the creator and author of all acts, whether voluntary or involuntary. He presents this position as the authoritative Sunni position, though admitting that it was reached after a long and difficult period of polemical argumentation. Al-Dardīr appears to concede that the issue cannot be fully understood via the toolbox of the *kalām* theologian, but must, nevertheless, be acquiesced to as a matter of orthodox creed. The question of reconciling human accountability with the ontological reality, however, remains. Al-Dardīr attempts to mollify this persistent issue from epistemological and mystical perspectives rather than from a purely rational one.

He addresses the epistemological perspective by invoking the concept of cosmic connection (*ta'alluq*), as previously mentioned. Though from an ontological perspective, God's omnipotence (*qudra*) is cosmically connected to all that occurs in the universe (that is of course within the realm of the logically possible), the power (*qudra*) of created beings is cosmically connected to their own voluntary acts. This human power, exerted in conjunction with human will, is what is known as acquisition (*kasb*). Hence, the created human act has two cosmic connections (*ta'alluqāt*): the creating and originating pre-eternal divine cosmic connection, and the temporal (*ḥādith*) acquisitive cosmic connection.

The latter has no efficacious power, being the sole province the former; yet, the latter remains the basis for human accountability. Al-Dardīr then mentions that involuntary or coerced acts are outside the bounds of

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<sup>78</sup> al-Dardīr, "Sharḥ Fawāyid Al-Farāyid Fī Ḍabīṭ Al-'Aqāyid," 26.

accountability, as any rational person would attest to. It is here that he posits the main distinction between the Ash‘arī position on the matter, and the positions of the heterodox *Jabriyya* and *Qadariyya*. Al-Dardīr claims that the *Jabriyya* deny the created power (*qudra*) of human action, and hence, humans are subject to divine coercion, (*majbūr*) from both ontological (*bāṭin*) and sense perception (*ẓāhir*) perspectives. It is because of this stance that al-Dardīr declares their sect unequivocally heretical (*kuffār*), in addition to being heterodox, as he reports that their theology categorically denies accountability (*taklīf*), and thus, is tantamount to denial of the Prophetic message.

Regarding the *Qadariyya*, however, he reports a difference of opinion, though he cites their inclusion as believers as the sounder opinion. The reasoning for this softer stance is that the *Qadariyya* merely posit the efficacy of created human acts and wills. Though they have admitted a partner with God, the fact that they also admit human power and will are creations of God, and hence, admit implicitly that the human act is also a creation of God, albeit in an indirect manner.<sup>79</sup> This position is similar to that largely associated with the Mu‘tazilites, who theorise human efficacy via an invested power (*al-quwwa al-mūda‘a*) by God in the created being. Thus, the human act is a function of an efficacious intrinsic power without a direct dependence on the divine efficacy. Again, al-Dardīr finds this stance heterodox (*bid‘ī*), but short of heretical. It appears that the Mu‘tazilite position is functionally identical to that of the *Qadariyya*, the difference in wording only. The *Qadariyya* dispense with the formality of an invested power, and postulate the efficacy of human will and power without referencing the source of that power, though one can conclude it is divine in origin.

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<sup>79</sup> al-Dardīr, and al-Sibā‘ī, *Ḥāshiyya ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 296-301.

Al-Laqqānī, in his treatise on creed, the *Jawhara*, confirms the functional concurrence of the two positions, as he assigns the position of self-created acts to the Mu'tazilites, with no mention of the *Qadariyya*.<sup>80</sup> Al-Dardīr also acknowledges the similarity of the two positions in a subsequent section in the *Kharīda*.<sup>81</sup> He also addresses the question of whether some of the Sunni theologians adopted a similar position vis à vis the efficacy of the invested power. He mentions specifically al-Ghazālī and al-Subkī adopting this position, as does Frank regarding al-Ghazālī in his work *al-'Iqtisād fi'l-'Itiqād*, stating that “the thesis that God “creates” a particular event – is uniquely the cause of its existence – does not formally dent the efficacy of secondary causes”.<sup>82</sup> Though al-Dardīr denies the efficacy of secondary causes, he addresses the contention here by Frank by differentiating between the Mu'tazilite position and the Ash'arī position by clarifying the difference between *ta'thīr* (efficacy) and *sabab* (secondary cause).

He states “the position of efficacy by way of [secondary] power with some of our imams is that God has sole efficacy and is the sole actor by way of this [secondary] power that He created in these things. Hence, efficacy is for God alone, though by way of an intermediary. As for the *Qadariyya*, they attribute efficacy to these intermediate causes by way of these secondary causes.”<sup>83</sup>

It is on this occasion that al-Dardīr addresses the issue of natural dispositions and their efficacy, or lack thereof. While he negates any efficacy associated with natural dispositions (*al-ṭabī'a*), and assigns sole efficacy to God, it is not apparent that he would refute the existence of natural dispositions

<sup>80</sup> al-Laqqānī, *Itḥāf Al-Murīd Bi Jawharat Al-Tawḥīd*, 152.

<sup>81</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 306.

<sup>82</sup> Richard M. Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arite School*, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994), 37.

<sup>83</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Ḥāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 309.

altogether. Such a stance is attributed to al-Ghazālī, by virtue of the fact that Occasionalism, as an Islamic doctrine, denies any form of causal power in all creatures, and hence, by definition denies any intrinsic natures in said creatures.<sup>84</sup> The crux of this argument is that in the absence of logical necessity i.e. causal efficacy for other than God, the only conclusion one can deduce would be the illegitimacy of intrinsic or dispositional natures in created beings. Such a conclusion would be understandable, considering al-Ghazālī's use of the word *sabab* (cause) in different contexts that could be easily conflated with other sub-contexts.

Nevertheless, an essential distinction should be made between the ontologically based *ta'thīr* (ontological cause) and the sense perception based *sabab* (observable cause). The term *ta'thīr* appears in al-Laqqānī's *Jawhara: wa 'indana kasb li-al-'abd kullifa bihi wa lam yakun mu'aththiran* (and in our [school] the slave [of God] has an acquisition that he has been made accountable [though] he possesses no ontological cause).<sup>85</sup> Earlier works in Ash'arī theology centre the discussion around the issue of the "creation of acts" (*khalq al-af'āl*) and dispense with the terms *sabab* and *ta'thīr*. Al-Bāqillānī presents in the dialectical style of his intellectual age and region (tenth century Iraq) and does not use the terms *sabab* and *ta'thīr*, but rather refutes the Mu'tazilite / Qadariyya argument of the self-creation of human acts by referencing a series of Qur'ānic verses and pointing out the "fallacies" of the Mu'tazilite thesis in each verse.<sup>86</sup>

Al-Bayḍāwī reports that al-Bāqillānī took the unique position amongst Ash'arī theologians in defining acquisition (*kasb*) or the human act itself as the

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<sup>84</sup> Edward Omar Moad, "Al-Ghazali's Occasionalism and the Natures of Creatures," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 58, no. 2 (2005).

<sup>85</sup> al-Laqqānī, *Ithāf Al-Murīd Bi Jawharat Al-Tawhīd*, 152.

<sup>86</sup> Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd Al-Awā'il Wa Talkhīṣ Al-Dalā'il* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-kutub al-thiqāfiyya, 1987).

determining factor in its classification as either an act of obedience or disobedience. This is in contrast to the earlier position of al-Ash'arī, who stated that all human acts are caused solely by God's efficient power, and completely devoid of any other factor.<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, both Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286) and Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, who each wrote in the compendium style of their era<sup>88</sup>, cite the opinion of the Shāfi'ī judge Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 412/1021), stating that human acts are cosmically connected (*ta'allaqa*) to both divine and human power.<sup>89</sup> A third opinion is attributed to the teacher of al-Ghazālī, "Imām al-Ḥaramayn" (the imam of the two sacred mosques) 'Abd al-Malik ibn Yūsuf al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), stating that human acts are a product of a power that God creates within them.<sup>90</sup> Al-Dardīr introduces the concept of *ta'thīr* as *ikhtirā'* and *ījād* (creation ex nihilo), specifically as the *ta'alluq* of divine power with human beings' voluntary acts. Human power is also "connected" (*ta'allaqa*) with their voluntary acts, but by way of *kasb* (acquisition), rather than *ta'thīr*. Hence, human voluntary acts have *two ta'alluqāt*: one divine and pre-eternal, referred to as *ta'thīr*, and another human and temporal, referred to as *kasb*. This argument of al-Dardīr resembles that of al-Isfarāyīnī, who also posited the dual *ta'alluq* doctrine. Thus, *taklīf* (moral responsibility) is conferred by way of *kasb*, not self-creation of human acts.

*Kalām* works of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries were more polemical than the later texts of al-Sanūsī and al-Dardīr, and included in their text a range of dissenting opinions, from both within the Ash'arī tradition, as well as without. It therefore not surprising that some eight to nine positions are recorded within the Sunni tradition for this issue alone. Al-Dardīr, in the *muḥaqqiq* tradition,

<sup>87</sup> Nāṣir al-dīn al-Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawālī' Al-Anwār Min Maṭāli' Al-Anzār* (Beirut: Dar al-jīl, 1991), 197.

<sup>88</sup> See previous chapter.

<sup>89</sup> al-Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawālī' Al-Anwār Min Maṭāli' Al-Anzār*, 301-305; al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ Al-Maqāṣid*, 4:263-4.

<sup>90</sup> Nāṣir al-dīn al-Bayḍāwī, *Ṭawālī' Al-Anwār Min Maṭāli' Al-Anzār* (Beirut: Dar al-jīl, 1991), 197.

takes an eclectic approach to arrive at the position that best suits his *weltanschauung*, one particularly informed by Sufism, and especially Akbarian cosmology. Hence, his position that creatures are coerced inwardly – another manner of saying in the ultimate reality or ontologically, and yet, voluntarily choose outwardly, is consistent with Sufi metaphysics and the Sufi *sharī'a* - *ḥaqīqa* paradigm.

### **Divine Essence and Divine Existence**

The essence versus existence argument is an old one, first mentioned by Aristotle, and subsequently discussed by Mu'tazilite and Ash'arī theologians.<sup>91</sup> Though at first glance the existence/essence issue appears to be a *kalām* issue regarding divine simplicity, it has a substantive basis in the controversial Sufi doctrine of *waḥdat a-wujūd* (unity of existence), attributed to Ibn al-'Arabī and his followers. Most notably, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī attempted to reconcile al-Ash'arī's view affirming the coincidence of essence and existence with the putative view of Ibn al-'Arabī regarding the unity of existence.<sup>92</sup> It has been already pointed out that al-Dardīr, like al-Ḥifnī, al-Bakrī, and al-Nābulusī before him, was one such follower. Yet, he was also a dedicated Ash'arī theologian and a recogniser of the scholarship of al-Taftāzānī, an opponent of Ibn al-Arabī's doctrine of the unity of existence.

Al-Dardīr takes the side of al-'Ash'arī, declaring that the divine essence and existence are one in the same and indistinguishable. On this point he contravenes later Ash'arī theologians, such as al-Taftāzānī, whom al-Dardīr quotes often, who devoted a large section of his commentary on the *Maqāsid* of

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<sup>91</sup> For a discussion of Avicenna's treatment of the subject, and its Aristotelian and *kalām* origins see: Robert Wisnovsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (London: Duckworth, 2003), 145-60.

<sup>92</sup> Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century : Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,, 2015), 325-26.



his teacher, al-Ījī, refuting the attributed opinion of al-Ash‘arī that claims God’s essence (*māhiyya*) is indistinguishable from His existence (*wujūd*). Al-Dardīr states in the *Kharīda*:

...And the veritable truth (*al-ḥaqq*) is that there is no intermediate state [of existence] (*ḥāl*)<sup>93</sup>, and thus [God’s] existence is identical to [His] essence and is not a distinguishable attribute separate from it.

Al-Dardīr’s justification for postulating the identicalness of divine essence and existence is his rejection of the “intermediate state.” The doctrine of the “intermediate state” (*ḥāl*) is a highly contentious one that was accepted and rejected by various Ash‘arī theologians. It is a noetic construct that was utilised to account for divine attributes that could not be characterised as existing outside the mind, hence a state between existence (*wujūd*) and non-existence (*‘adam*). In the traditional theology, these included the positive attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-ma‘nawiyya*)— the notion that God is wilful, omniscient, omnipotent, seeing, hearing, speaking and alive. These “attributes” are considered secondary to the positive attributes (*ṣifāt al-ma‘ānī*), which are merely their nounal forms. Post-Ash‘arī theologians who sought to counter the Mu‘tazilite assertion that God is characterised via His positive attributes postulated these attributes, but they are circumscribed to His essence, as positing them distinct from His essence would amount to positing multiple deities. Hence, seven additional attributes were theorised by Ash‘arī theologians; but to counter claims of double attributes, since God can only have one attribute of omnipotence, omniscience, etc., the notion of “intermediate state” was born. These secondary positive attributes do not have a distinct existence from their primary counterparts, and hence are in an “intermediate state” between

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<sup>93</sup> The “intermediate state” is postulated on the premise that objects can be neither existing nor non-existing, at least in the conceptualisation of the mind. This is indirectly related to Ibn al-‘Arabī’s concept of *thubūt*, which posits that objects in the realm of divine knowledge before they are brought into actual existence neither exist nor not exist, but instead are referred to as “fixed” (*thābit*). This doctrine is explored to greater detail in the following section on monism.

existence and non-existence. Al-Dardīr rejects the doctrine of the *ḥāl*, and thus dispenses with the secondary attributes altogether in most of theological works.<sup>94</sup>

Al-Dardīr considers the *attribute* of divine existence to be in the same category as the *ṣifāt al-maʿānī*; they are non-existent outside the constructs of the intellect. He uses the term *thubūt* (mental confirmation) to denote this category, distinguishing it from *wujūd*, which denotes extra-mental reality. Since the notion of a distinct existence from the divine essence is a mental construct that cannot be materially conceptualised, it then follows that rejection of the intermediate state necessitates the rejection of a distinct divine existence not identical to the divine essence. Hence, al-Dardīr claims this as the preferred opinion, as this is reflected in his counting the divine attributes as thirteen, and not the more widely held twenty. Furthermore, the enumeration of *wujūd* (divine existence) amongst the thirteen is attributed to *tasāmuḥ* (concession), as the *ṣifa nafsīyya* (ontological attribute) is not an attribute at all, but rather a purely mental construct that has *thubūt* (mental confirmation) without an existential reality, unlike the *ṣifāt al-maʿānī* (positive attributes), which have a true *wujūd*.<sup>95</sup>

Returning to the issue of the efficacy of human acts, al-Dardīr's reconciliation from an ontological perspective is reserved for his advanced works in theology. The notion of inward coercion and outward volition is not mentioned in his *Kharīda*, an intermediate text designed for primary students of the Azhar mosque-college. Indeed, he moderates the divisive doctrine:<sup>96</sup>

...and they are the voluntary acts, those that we have volition and intent without origination and creation; and this cosmic connection that conforms to our volition is called acquisition (*kasb* or *iktisāb*). Thus, the cosmic connection of God's power in conformity with our volition is one of origination (*ījād*), whilst the cosmic connection of our power in conformity with our volition is one of acquisition, not origination. Hence, our voluntary acts are cosmically

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<sup>94</sup> The exception the works where he offers commentaries on texts that include them, such as al-Dardīr, "Sharḥ Fawāyid Al-Farāyid Fī Dābiḥ Al-'Aqāyid."

<sup>95</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibāḥī, *Ḥāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 244-45.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 244.

connected to both powers: the pre-eternal power, and the temporal [human] power. The latter has no efficacy (*ta'thīr*)...and thus, the servant [of God] is volitional; and in the case that God creates the act in the servant without an accompanying power of his own, then he is coerced and compelled, and God has showed His favour upon us in this case by removing accountability.

Al-Dardīr carefully words the explanation here, avoiding using the phraseology he used in *Tuḥfat al-lkhwān*, a work primarily on Sufism, where he characterises the divine omnipotence as coercing and compelling in both voluntary and involuntary human acts. Such a stance is more indicative of the *ḥaqīqa* aspect of the tradition, which can only be fully reconciled via a Sufi perspective, as admittedly, the rational intellect can fail to fully comprehend the metaphysical implications of the divine will and omniscience.

Al-Dardīr can hence be characterised as addressing two distinct audiences on the issue of divine will and omniscience: mainstream students of Islamic creed, where arguments largely remain within the realm of the rational; and a more elite audience of advanced students and spiritual aspirants who recognise the limitations of their own intellectual perceptions. This individualised approach allowed someone like al-Dardīr to navigate between various intellectual circles that, to the outside observer, may be seen at odds with each other.

The Azhar vanguard of the elite '*ulamā*', while proponents of Sufism in a general sense, was not necessarily supportive of a discourse promoting overt Sufi terminologies and mystical cognition. Notwithstanding, al-Dardīr's reputation as a preeminent jurist and theologian, as well as social critic, assured him certain latitude from his peers regarding some of his more particular stances on issues of theology and Sufism.

Nevertheless, al-Dardīr also utilises the doctrine of *ṣifāt al-af'āl* (divine attributes of action) to buttress his argument for the efficacy of the divine will and omnipotence at the exclusion of human will and power. This doctrine is one

of the few where the Ash‘arīs and Māturīdīs diverge, where the latter postulate a single, pre-eternal attribute known as formation (*takwīn*). This attribute in the Māturīdī scheme is closely associated with omnipotence and will, and theorised as the attribute that executes the specific instances of the divine will and omnipotence, in as much as that will and omnipotence are the ability and potential of the divine efficacy. *Takwīn* (formation) is the execution of that ability and potential, in creating existence from non-existence. Formation is a pre-eternal attribute, as are will and omnipotence, and the Māturīdī theology does not recognise *manifestations* of the divine will and omnipotence as attributes, such as giving life, death, sustenance, eternal felicity or misery, etc. as temporal, but rather as pre-eternal.<sup>97</sup> The *muḥaqqiqūn* (verifiers)<sup>98</sup> amongst the Ash‘arīs, conversely, do not posit a divine, pre-eternal attribute of formation, but rather consider all of the above manifestations of the pre-eternal divine will and omnipotence, as temporal.

### ***Ta‘alluqāt* (Cosmic Connections) and ‘*illa* (existential causes)**<sup>99</sup>

The doctrine of the *ta‘alluqāt* in the Ash‘arī scheme appear to serve as an answer to the *Falāsifa*’s assertion that God is an ‘*illa* (existential cause) for the existence of the universe, as noted by Ibn al-‘Arabī.<sup>100</sup> Al-Dardīr, following his predecessors, negates the notion that God creates by ‘*illa* (existential cause) as such an assertion establishes a necessary relationship between the ‘*illa* and the *ma‘lūl* (caused), so that the existence of the ‘*illa* – God in this case – is existentially connected to the *ma‘lūl* - the universe in this case. According to al-Dardīr such a doctrine constitutes *kufr* (heresy), as it renders the divine will

<sup>97</sup> See Ibn Abī Sharīf al-Maqdasī and Humām, *Al-Musāmara Sharḥ Al-Musāyara*, 103-06; al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Ḥāshiyya ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 391-94.

<sup>98</sup> Ḥāshiyya ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya, 394.

<sup>99</sup> We have chosen the term “cosmic connections” as the translation for *ta‘alluqāt*, as the divine attributes, according to al-Dardīr and other Ash‘arī theologians, are understood to have their manifestations in the universe, or the “cosmos” via these connections.

<sup>100</sup> Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Al-Futuḥat Al-Makkiyya*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1997), 1:315-16.

ineffectual.<sup>101</sup> It also follows that if God is necessary for the existence of the universe, then the universe is also necessary for Him, and hence is co-eternal with God - a doctrine of the *Falāsifa*. However, the negation of creation via *'illa* introduces the problem of the relationship of the pre-eternal Creator to the temporal creation, with the Ash'arī rejection of essential natures and assertion of Occasionalism, and the rejection of God being an existential cause for the universe.

Additionally, the early rationalist theologians were divided regarding the relationship of the divine essence to the divine attributes, with some eliminating the attributes altogether, such as the Mu'tazilites, and others, such as the *Karrāmiyya*, asserting some and eliminating others.<sup>102</sup>

The Ash'arīs solve this issue with the concept of the *ta'alluq*. It is not clear when this was introduced, but al-Ghazālī mentions it in his *Iqtisād* in a general sense, not a technical one, when discussing the attribute of divine omnipotence (*qudra*), specifically the issue of the relationship between human power and divine power. As is the style of the *Iqtisād*, he posits the question of an adversary, who asks: if human power is to have any meaning, then how can the Ash'arīs state that only God has the power to create, and human power is ineffectual? Here al-Ghazālī responds by asserting that God is the Originator and Creator of single acts, as well as the power within humans to effect those acts, and hence, human power can only be understood as subservient to divine power. A further objection may then be raised, namely, how is God the Creator before the appearance of creation, If the divine attributes are co-eternal with the divine essence, and considering the Ash'arī claim that God's attributes are co-eternal with His essence?

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<sup>101</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā'ī, *Hāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 303.

<sup>102</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa-Al-Niḥal*, ed. Muḥammad ibn Fath Allāh Badrān (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Anjū al-Miṣrīyah, 1956).

Al-Ghazālī responds to this objection by invoking the concept of *ta'alluq*, namely that the attribute of divine power has two *ta'alluqāt*, one by which creating beings come to be in-time, and another, no less significant, that he states as the “waiting” (*intizār*) for the *ta'alluq*, since the “actual” *ta'alluq*, i.e. at the moment of in-time creation (*ḥudūth*), has yet to take place. Al-Ghazālī does not assign a particular term for this “different” type of *ta'alluq* other than to say it is a *ta'alluq* in-waiting.<sup>103</sup> Al-Rāzī, a century after al-Ghazālī, refers to the two *ta'alluqāt* as *al-qudra al-qadīma* and *al-qudra al-ḥadītha*, without specifically referencing the term *ta'alluq*.<sup>104</sup>

The doctrine of the *ta'alluq* in a more formalised manner appears to be a later addition of Ash'arī theologians in North Africa and Egypt, as the earlier works of al-Bāqillānī, al-Rāzī, and al-Ghazālī make no explicit reference to it as a technical term. However, al-Sanūsī, who popularised short creeds in the later tradition, appears to be the first Ash'arī theologian to mention the term in a technical sense:<sup>105</sup>

It is necessary for God seven attributes, known as the positive attributes, and they are power and will, *mut'alliqān* (both cosmically connected) to all logical possibilities, and knowledge, cosmically connected to all logical necessities, possibilities, and impossibilities, and life, not cosmically connected to anything...

Al-Laqqānī, the Mālikī jurist and Ash'arī theologian who penned the popular *Jawharat al-Tawḥīd*, also mentions the *ta'alluq*, in the same manner as al-Sanūsī.<sup>106</sup> Al-Dardīr, however, extends the doctrine of *ta'alluq* by specifically defining it – something his predecessors appeared not to do – and also further categorising the *ta'alluq* into distinct categories, as is discussed below.

<sup>103</sup> Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād Fi-L'ʿItiqād* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2008), 158-62.

<sup>104</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Rāzī, *Al-Ishāra Fī ʿIlm Al-Kalām* (Cairo: Al-Maktaba Al-Azhariyya 2009), 147-49.

<sup>105</sup> Ibrāhīm Bājūrī, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Bājūrī ʿAlā Matan Al-Sanūsīyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Bayrūtī, 1994), 16.

<sup>106</sup> Abd al-Salām al-Laqqānī, *Ithāf Al-Murīd Bi Jawharat Al-Tawḥīd* (Aleppo: Maktabat Dār al-Falāḥ, 1990), 120-24.

Al-Dardīr defines the *ta'alluq* as: *iqṭidā' al-ṣifa amran zā'idan 'alā qiyāmiḥā b'il-dhāt k'aqṭidā' al-'ilm ma'lūman yankashif bihi* (the requirement of the attribute a matter above and beyond its connection with the essence, such as the requirement of divine knowledge the object of its discovery).<sup>107</sup> The *ta'alluqāt* are not attributes, but rather mental constructs postulated in order to understand the manifestations of the divine positive attributes. For example, the attribute of *irāda* (divine will), coupled with God's omnipotence, enacts the external manifestation of the logically possible (*takhṣīṣ al-mumkin*), and, hence precludes the need for the attribute of formation (*takwīn*).

Al-Dardīr, however, does assign specific terms to the variants of *ta'alluq*: validity/actualisation (*ṣulūḥiyya/tanjīziyya*) and temporality/pre-eternality (*ḥudūth / qidam*). Consequently, the cosmic connections to the divine attributes in al-Dardīr's scheme are of four types and are summarised in the following table:

Cosmic Connection	Attribute(s)
No cosmic connection save for connection to the divine essence	Life
All that is logically possible, impossible, and necessary	Knowledge, Speech
Only to what is logically possible, at the exclusion of the impossible and necessary	Will, Omnipotence
All that is existent	Hearing, Seeing

The cosmic connections are then further categorised into three distinct categories according to validity/actualisation (*ṣulūḥiyya/tanjīziyya*) and temporality/pre-eternality (*ḥudūth / qidam*). The logical possibilities are thus four; the corresponding attributes are summarised in the following table:

Valid or Actualised	Temporal or Pre-	Corresponding
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<sup>107</sup> Ḥāshiyya 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya, 354.

	<b>eternal</b>	<b>Attributes</b>
Valid	Temporal	None
Valid	Pre-eternal	Will, Omnipotence, Speech, Hearing, Seeing
Actualised	Temporal	Omnipotence, Speech, Hearing, Seeing, Attributes of action
Actualised	Pre-eternal	Will, Speech, Omniscience, Hearing, Seeing

Divine speech is the only attribute to fall into the three categories. It has a potential, pre-eternal connection from the aspect of its potential to address man before his existence, and is pre-eternal as the Ash'arīs hold divine speech as uncreated. Additionally, it has an actualised, pre-eternal connection from the aspect of its indication of the logical categories (possibility, impossibility, and necessity), and an actualised, temporal connection from the aspect of its address to man after his creation. The actualised, temporal connection is also equally applicable to the attributes of action i.e. giving of life, death, sustenance, etc., and forms one aspect of the divine omnipotence, as in temporal realisation of the pre-eternal divine decree (will) and the potential divine omnipotence.

The divine omnipotence does not have an actualised pre-eternal connection, as it would necessitate the pre-eternalness of the universe (*qidam al-ālam*), a notion championed by the Arabic philosophers, and patently rejected by the *kalām* theologians. The potential pre-eternal aspect of omnipotence circumvents this doctrine somewhat elegantly, as it leaves the absolute possibility of God to enact what He wills, though not all that He is capable of will come to be.

Al-Dardīr's student, al-Sibā'ī, answers the expected question as to how the divine may interface with a temporal attribute under this scheme by equating the cosmic connection of the divine omnipotence with the temporal attributes of



action, and not the divine attribute itself. Hence, God can be Creator, Giver of Life, Providence, etc. as cosmic connections to the divine omnipotence, but not the divine omnipotence itself.<sup>108</sup>

This distinction also has ramifications in al-Dardīr's mystical degrees of oneness (*marātib al-tawḥīd*), where the spiritual aspirant's perception of the oneness of the divine attributes is a higher degree than the perception of the oneness of the divine names (or attributes of action).<sup>109</sup> Al-Dardīr also posits the divine order of the cosmic connections, beginning with divine omniscience, then will, and then omnipotence. It thus becomes clear why al-Dardīr broke from tradition and cited knowledge before will and power, as divine knowledge not only uncovers the reality of all things, but it also determines it. Hence, nothing can exist without a cosmic connection to divine knowledge.

Having only one cosmic connection, the actualised pre-eternal, unlike hearing and seeing, which have three, brings to bear the important distinction of God's omniscience in that it is a principal cause of all reality, in a way more primal than will and omnipotence. One can infer that the principle reason behind this is al-Dardīr's synthesis of Sufi metaphysics with *kalām* rationality, where in the former, knowledge, and more specifically, knowledge of the divine is the fundamental goal of Sufi based spirituality. *Kalām* rationality, on the other hand, as exemplified in the works of the early Ash'arī theologians such as al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī and al-Rāzī, was primarily concerned with establishing Sunni orthodoxy by refuting the putative heterodox postulations of the Mu'tazilites and the *Falāsifa*.

While al-Dardīr does not neglect the refutation of the Mu'tazilite nemesis – though its ideology no longer posed a significant threat at least five centuries

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 298-300.

<sup>109</sup> This concept is further elucidated below in the relevant section.

before – his explication of the Ash‘arī creed is directed towards the spiritual aspirant (*murīd*) searching for the keys to knowledge of the divine (*ma‘rifa*). This argument is bolstered by the fact that al-Dardīr prefaces his dedicated works to Sufism with sections on basic creed.<sup>110</sup> Conversely, he also summates his dedicated works on creed with sections on Sufism.<sup>111</sup> His teacher’s teacher, Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī posits this stance outright:<sup>112</sup>

Knowing the Lord is of three types: for the laity, the elite, and the elite of the elite. The laity’s knowledge consists of knowing what is logically necessary, permissible, and impossible for God as well as His prophets...The knowledge of the elite consists of knowing the effects of the divine names and attributes...The knowledge of the elite of the elite consists of knowing the treasures of the secrets of the divine essence.

Hence, al-Bakrī repositions essential creed as the first step towards unlocking the secrets of more esoteric knowledge. The synthesis of epistemologies is unmistakable; knowing the treasures of the secrets of the divine names cannot be construed as a rational exercise, as such “secrets” are firmly planted in the realm of the esoteric mystical tradition. The common knowledge of the laity however, follows the standard epistemology of rational construct.

A similar theme is struck by Ibn al-‘Arabī in the introduction to his *Futūḥāt*, which he prefaces with the “creed of the laity”, which according to al-Bakrī, is standard Ash‘arī creed.<sup>113</sup> This synthesis of Sufism with creed would have most likely dismayed the likes of al-Taftāzānī, while a supporter of Sufism, was a purist who did not like to mix his rational epistemologies with their mystical counterparts. Yet, al-Taftāzānī represented an Islamic ethos that was still finding itself and contending with diverse streams of Islamic thought. The

<sup>110</sup> See for example: al-Dardīr, "Minhāj Al-Ṣādiqīn Wa Tibyān Al-Salikīn."; "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-‘Irfān."

<sup>111</sup> Such as in: al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Ḥāshiyya ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*; al-Dardīr, "Sharḥ Fawāyid Al-Farāyid Fī Ḍabīṭ Al-‘Aqāyid."

<sup>112</sup> Muṣṭafā Bakrī, *Al-Suyūf Al-Ḥidād Fī ‘Anāq Ahl Al-Zandaqa Wa ‘L-Ilḥād* (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-‘Arabiyya, 2007), 37-38.

<sup>113</sup> Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥat Al-Makkiyya*, (Cairo: al-Hay‘a al-Miṣriyya, 1985), 1:161-73.

maturation that would define the later Islamic tradition of al-Dardīr had not yet taken hold.

After the stunning victories the Egyptians attained on the battlefield against both the Mongol and Crusader armies, a certain steadiness in intellectual pursuits, if not in political ones, was achieved, and defined the Mamlūk years, and extended after the Ottoman conquest in 1517. Just as the early ascetic Sufism of Abū Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857)<sup>114</sup> and Bishr al-Ḥāfī (d. 227/850)<sup>115</sup> at the beginning of the Abbasid era was a response to perceived palace excesses, the recalibration of Sufism, and final reconciliation with Sunni orthodoxy – specifically the integration of Akbarian Sufism - was precipitated by active Ottoman acceptance of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s ideas.

Winter argues, that, unlike in the Arabic speaking lands, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s viewpoint was adopted and protected by the Ottoman authorities. Their impetus for taking such a stance might have been to install a Sunni oriented Sufism to counter the Alid esotericism threat from the Safavid Empire.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, opposing viewpoints in the Ottoman capital were not absent, but few scholars, who had hopes for securing the Sultan’s patronage, were willing to launch public polemical campaigns against the newly appointed patron-saint of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>117</sup> It is probable that the support of Ottoman officialdom, at least from a sociological perspective, accounted for the acceptance of Akbarian cosmologies amongst the ‘*ulamā*’ class, specifically the Khalwatī disciples of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, such as al-Ḥifnī, Maḥmūd al-Kurdī (d. 1194/1780)<sup>118</sup>, ‘Abd al-

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<sup>114</sup> See Gavin N. Picken, *Spiritual Purification in Islam : The Life and Works of Al-Muḥāsibī* (London: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>115</sup> See Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of Al-Ma'mun* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 154-87.

<sup>116</sup> Bruce Alan Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918 : A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 115-18.

<sup>117</sup> Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus : ‘Abd Al-Ghanī Al-Nābulusī, 1641-1731*, 126.

<sup>118</sup> See F. de Jong, *Ṭuruq and Ṭuruq-Linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt : A Historical Study in Organizational Dimensions of Islamic Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

Raḥmān al-Jabartī (d. 1241/1825) the chronicler, and disciple of al-Kurdī, and al-Dardīr.

The larger intellectual project of reconciling Akbarian Sufism with Sunni orthodoxy, however, fell on those who were respected as jurists and theologians. The Mālikī mufti and Azhar doctor, al-Dardīr, was part of a larger trend amongst the students of al-Bakrī who sought to recapture Sufism from its perceived demagogues and charlatans. His shaykh, al-Ḥifnī, rector of al-Azhar, also fulfilled the role, but his literary production was too paucy to leave a lasting impression. They were preceded in this by one of their master's most celebrated teachers, 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, who infused his works of creedal theology with Sufi metaphysics, such as in his commentary on the creed of al-Sanūsī, where he states:<sup>119</sup>

Believers are of three types: (1) Believers of a belief based upon *taqlīd muṭābiq wa idh'ān* (precise imitation and acquiescence)...and they are sinful for forsaking that which is obligatory – *al-ma'rifa* (knowledge of God). (2) Believers of a belief of rational argument and proof; there is no difference of opinion regarding the validity of their belief, but the question is: are they knowers of God or not? The preferred opinion is that they are people of intellect, contemplation, and acquiescence, and not of knowledge and inspiration. (3) Believers of a belief based upon valid unveiling and witnessing, and there is no difference of opinion regarding the validity of neither their belief nor their knowledge of the divine.

Furthermore, he cites the over-reliance of the various sects, such as the Mu'tazilites, Naturalists, *Qadariyya*, and *Jabriyya* on the *'aql* (rational intellect), as well as their abandonment of *tawakkul* (reliance) upon God in understanding the divine, as inhibitors to *tahqīq*, and adherence to the Muḥammadan Sunna.<sup>120</sup> Deviation from normative theological positions prevents higher spiritual realisations, as the rational intellect, if corrupted, will not redeem what appear to be sound conclusions, but nonetheless faulty, due to caprice.

The theme al-Nābulusī invokes is one shared by al-Dardīr, where he mentions the *ḥijāb* (spiritual veil) of the Mu'tazilites as opaque, due to their

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<sup>119</sup> Nābulusī, *Al-Anwār Al-Ilāhiyya Sharḥ 'Aqīdat Al-Sanūsiyya*, 63.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

perceived deviance in matters of creed, specifically the doctrine of the creation of human acts.<sup>121</sup> This recalls the famous anecdote recorded by Ibn al-‘Arabī when he warns Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī of the perils of relying on *naẓar* (rational inquiry) alone, without the certainty that can only be accorded by the path of spiritual discipline.<sup>122</sup>

Arguably, the most contentious aspect of Islamic theology has been the various understandings regarding the very nature of God, His essence. Negative theology in both its Islamic and Catholic variants was largely successful in prescribing what God is not, but the tools at the disposal of the theologians seemed ill equipped to prescribe what He *is*. Competing with the theologians in this aspect were the ascetics – the Sufis, who often suffered the onslaught of accusations of antinomianism and heresy because of their unfiltered proclamations of divine love and union. Chief to this dilemma between the theologians and the Sufis was the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of existence) – an issue often the principal dividing line between the rationalist (Ash‘arī or Māturīdī), and Sufi theologians.

Yet, there appeared to be a marked shift in the tradition when theologians of repute attempted reconciliations between the exoteric demarcations between the divine and the corporeal on one hand, and the esoteric immanence of the divine in all things corporeal, of the Akbarian Sufis on the other. This is what Ibn al-‘Arabī referred to as *tanzīh* (incomparability) and *tashbīh* (similarity).<sup>123</sup> The tension between the seemingly diametrically

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<sup>121</sup> al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-‘Irfān," 9.

<sup>122</sup> Shihadeh, "The Mystic and the Sceptic in Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī," 102.

<sup>123</sup> I prefer Chittick’s translation to transcendence and immanence, as it is more faithful to the etymology of the Arabic terms *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*, and avoids the perhaps problematic connotations from Christian theology. See William C. Chittick et al., *In Search of the Lost Heart Explorations in Islamic Thought*, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2011).

opposed terms defines the exoteric / esoteric basis for understanding the existence of God.

Al-Dardīr perhaps represented a synthesis of the two bases, as he was an Ash‘arī theologian in the *muḥaqqiq* tradition, as well as a proponent of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Sufi metaphysics, via his line of teachers that extended back to al-Nābulusī. The following section analyses the manner by which al-Dardīr was able to make this reconciliation, as well as the degree of success, if any, he had in doing so.

## **Al-Dardīr's Synthesis and the *Sharī'a-Ṭarīqa-Ḥaqīqa* Paradigm**

While early Western scholarship on Sufism has shown a propensity to characterise it as a fringe movement within Islam, to the extent of having foreign origins, more recent scholarship, beginning with Massignon's magisterial study of al-Ḥallāj, has thoroughly refuted this thesis.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, certain dichotomies remain ubiquitous, and have come to characterise scholarship in the field, such as the binary frameworks of sober vs. intoxicated variants of Sufism, and stoic, existential monism vs. dynamic, testimonial monism.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, the Sufi/Anti-Sufi cognitive frame, where orthodox Islam is fundamentally at odds with Sufi readings of Islam, or, at the very least, with certain Sufi readings, remains persistent.<sup>126</sup>

The most virulent of the Anti-Sufi criticisms can be traced to the interpretations of Ibn al-ʿArabī, and to "intoxicated" manifestations of Sufism, such as that of al-Ḥallāj<sup>127</sup> (d. 309/922), and Ibn Sabʿīn<sup>128</sup> (d. 669/1269). Most notably, in the later Islamic period, the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* has been the object of the most violent of these criticisms, though Ibn al-ʿArabī is not recorded to have ever used the term.

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<sup>124</sup> Louis Massignon and Herbert Mason, *The Passion of Al-Hallāj : Martyr and Mystic of Islam*, Bollingen Series (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>125</sup> Chittick et al., *In Search of the Lost Heart Explorations in Islamic Thought*. 88. The latter binary refers to Massignon's attribution of *waḥdat al-wujūd* vs. *waḥdat al-shuhūd*.

<sup>126</sup> See for example: Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis : The Defense, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World*; Andrew Newman, "Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran," *British Institute of Persian Studies: Iran* 37 (1999).

<sup>127</sup> Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj was one of the most controversial figures in Islamic history. His ecstatic utterance: "I am the Truth (God)", as well as palace intrigue, earned him a death sentence. See Massignon's seminal work: G. Makdisi, "Ash'arī and the Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History I," *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 38.

<sup>128</sup> See Govert Westerveld, *Ibn Sabʿīn of the Ricote Valley* (Murcia: Academia de Estudios Humanísticos de Blanca, 2014); Vincent J. Cornell, "The All-Comprehensive Circle (Al-Iḥāṭa): Soul, Intellect, and the Oneness of Existence in the Doctrine of Ibn Sabʿīn," in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

## ***Waḥdat al-Wujūd***

The central question that pertains to the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is whether or not the realisation of the unity of existence by the Sufi is a religious experience where all other existent beings pale next to the utmost reality of the divine existence, or whether, in addition to the aforementioned, an ontological reality. If the former, then few would find trouble with such a definition, as it is non-controversial in that it tacitly acknowledges the division between man and God, and hence, accusations of pantheism or monism ring empty.

Chittick posits that some used the term *waḥdat al-shuhūd* as an alternate to *waḥdat al-wujūd* as a means to offset criticism of the doctrine by rendering it a purely subjective experience rather than an ontological reality.<sup>129</sup> Al-Taftāzānī, in his polemical response to *waḥdat al-wujūd*, affirms as much, and is careful to avoid a general anti-Sufi position, but rather directs his criticism towards his perception of the thoroughly heterodox assertion that fails to distinguish between man and his Creator. He acknowledges the mystical state of *fanāʿ* (annihilation), reached by the *ʿārifūn* (knowers of God), and also described by al-Taftāzānī as *al-waḥda al-muṭlaqa* (absolute unity), where the mystic arrives to a final state of *shuhūd* (witnessing) that the ultimate reality is God.

He contrasts this orthodox view, in his estimation, to that of the “*wujūdiyya*”<sup>130</sup> who equate even the lowliest creatures with God, and negate any concrete existence to created beings as merely illusory.<sup>131</sup> Thus, al-Taftāzānī, one of the foremost *kalām* theologians of his era, rejects the notion of

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<sup>129</sup> Chittick et al., *In Search of the Lost Heart Explorations in Islamic Thought*. 87.

<sup>130</sup> Apparently his manner of referencing the proponents of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

<sup>131</sup> al-Taftāzānī, *Risāla Fī Waḥdat Al-Wujūd*. Aladdin disputes the authorship of the *Risāla* to al-Taftāzānī, citing al-ʿAlā al-Bukhārī (841/1438). Knysh makes no mention of the disputed authorship. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that al-Taftāzānī rejected the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* regardless of his authorship of the *Risāla*, as he rejected the unity of divine essence and existence in his *kalām* works. See: Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Al-Wujūd Al-Ḥaqq W'al-Khiṭāb Al-Ṣidq* (Damascus: L'Institut Français d'Etudes Arabes de Damas, 1995), 16; Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition : The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 141-66.



unity of existence as an ontological reality. It does bear to note, however, that his critique is entirely directed at the *Fuṣūṣ*, with little direct reference to the work. No mention is made of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s other works, the most notably absent reference the *Futūḥāt*, emulating previous polemical critiques, such as the works of Ibn Taymiyya and al-‘Izz ibn Abd al-Salām (d. 660/1261).<sup>132</sup> One can only speculate as to why the *Futūḥāt* was ignored with such regularity in the Mamlūk era especially, or as to why the emphasis was on the *Fuṣūṣ*, but one possible explanation points to the polemics of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s apologists and interpreters, and not to the greatest master himself.

Amongst the most well known of the interpreters of *al-Fuṣūṣ* was the Anatolian theologian, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnāwī. It has been theorised that al-Qūnāwī’s reading of Ibn al-‘Arabī, which was heavily influenced by Avicennan cosmology, largely shaped his legacy, and left him open for criticism from more accomplished theologians such as al-Taftāzānī, whose impression of Ibn al-‘Arabī was largely informed by his interpreters, specifically of his *Fuṣūṣ*, more than the words of the greatest master himself.<sup>133</sup> This mixed attitude towards him seemed to last well into the late Mamlūk and early Ottoman periods, until the Ottoman conquest of Damascus in 1516, when patronage of the master’s tomb marked the beginning of a renewed dedication to his thought and legacy.<sup>134</sup>

Scholars, such as al-Sha‘rānī, interpreted Ibn ‘Arabī with an emphasis on the *Futūḥāt*, and an almost complete disregard for the *Fuṣūṣ*, the earlier work

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<sup>132</sup> See Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition : The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*, 49-113.

<sup>133</sup> See "Ibrāhīm Al-Kūrānī (D.1101 / 1690), an Apologist for Waḥdat Al-Wujūd," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 5, no. 1 (1995).

<sup>134</sup> See Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918 : A Social and Cultural History*, 112-19.

that caused so much indignation.<sup>135</sup> The one work he published in defence of Ibn al-‘Arabī focuses entirely on refuting the concepts of *ittiḥad*, *ḥulūl*, and the pre-eternality of the universe from his doctrine.<sup>136</sup> In Damascus, where Ibn al-‘Arabī was buried and received a patron-saint status after the Ottoman conquest, it was Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī who became his most celebrated interpreter after al-Sha‘rānī. He dedicated a singular work to the defence of doctrine of the unity of existence, *al-Wujūd al-Ḥaqq wa’l-Khiṭāb al-Ṣidq*.<sup>137</sup>

In this polemical work, it is obvious that al-Nābulusī is tackling a contentious subject that was at the forefront of the religious issues of his day.<sup>138</sup> The tone is aggressively apologetic, with al-Nābulusī referencing various Qur’ānic verses, Prophetic *ḥadīth*, and scholarly quotes, culminating in support of his *wujūd al-ḥaqq* thesis. He takes a particularly critical stance of al-Taftāzānī, oftentimes pointing out logical inconsistencies in his arguments, a rather bold move, considering al-Taftāzānī’s reputation as a theologian and master of polemical argumentation. Nevertheless, al-Nābulusī advances his argument with confidence, painstakingly establishing an orthodox position for understanding the unity of existence.

On a basic level, the thrust of al-Nābulusī’s argument is to draw a distinction between *wujūd* (existence) and *al-mawjūdāt* (things that exist). Existence can only be one, as God *is* existence. In other words, the broad concept of true existence (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*) can only belong to God, as He is the Originator of all things, and as all things owe their existence to Him, their

<sup>135</sup> See for example: al-Sha‘rānī, *Al-Kibrīt Al-Aḥmar Fī ‘Ulūm Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar*, Sha‘rānī, *Al-Yawāqīt Wa-Al-Jawāhir Fī Bayān ‘Aqā'id Al-Akābir*.

<sup>136</sup> See Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī, *Al-Qawl Al-Mubīn Fī Al-Radd ‘an Al-Shaykh Muḥyī Al-Dīn* (Cairo: Dārat al-Karaz, 2008).

<sup>137</sup> Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *Al-Wujūd Al-Ḥaqq Wa’l-Khiṭāb Al-Ṣidq* (Damascus: L’Institut Français d’Etudes Arabes de Damas, 1995).

<sup>138</sup> See also Rouayheb’s reading of al-Nābulusī’s apologetic treatise: El-Rouayheb, "Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century : Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb," 332-43.

“existence” is understood metaphorically (*al-wujūd al-iḍāfī*). Hence, a plethora of existent beings is obvious and undeniable, but their “existence” does not equate “The Existence”, who can only be God. “The Existence” is uncreated, indivisible, unique, and singular. Al-Nābulusī resurrects the early Ash‘arī position of the imam himself, in that existence is not an ontological attribute of God, but rather is identical to the essence of God. Any reference to it as an attribute is understood metaphorically, or as in al-Dardīr’s vocabulary “an indulgence.”<sup>139</sup>

In answering the critics – primarily al-Taftāzānī – al-Nābulusī alleges that the deniers of the doctrine of the unity of existence worship a form (*ṣūra*) that they imagine to be God, though this “form” remains nondescript and unknowable, but a form nonetheless. By acknowledging a separate essence to a unique existence, it is implied that God is existent (*mawjūd*), and hence, an existence that has a form. Al-Nābulusī directly quotes al-Taftāzānī where he admits that the notion of absolute non-existence (*al-‘adam al-muṭlaq*) has no conceivable form, as it is identical to the logically impossible. However, in order to subscribe to the parallel notion, namely “absolute existence” (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), then the same must hold true, i.e. no form can be conceptualised. This can only be realised with the necessary existence (*al-wujūd al-wājib*), which is unique to God. Thus, God has no form, neither within the mind nor outside of it. A third category, then, “absolute possibility” (*al-imkān al-muṭlaq*), is the realm of all possible existents (*mawjūdāt*), and hence, cannot apply to God for the aforementioned reasons.<sup>140</sup>

God can then be “known” via theophanies (*tajalliyāt*), divine manifestations, while multiple in number, only point to the one, true, undivided

<sup>139</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā’ī, *Hāshiyya ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 261.

<sup>140</sup> al-Nābulusī, *Al-Wujūd Al-Ḥaqq Wa’l-Khiṭāb Al-Ṣidq*, 75-78.

existence of the One (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqq*).<sup>141</sup> Thus, all existents (*mawjūdāt*) are forms (*ṣuwar*) that are actually divine manifestations (*tajalliyāt*) of the one true Existence. The ability to recognize these forms as pointers to this central reality is the essence of *maʿrifa* ("knowing God"), and only the spiritual aspirant can arrive to such stations.

This thesis of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* offered by al-Nābulusī, one predicated on drawing a clear distinction between existence (*wujūd*) and existents (*mawjūdāt*) is not merely a question of the Sufi aspirant reaching the station of *fanāʾ* (annihilation). It is a given that the realisation of this spiritual station is key in realising the reality of the unity of existence, yet it is not confined to a realisation of the triviality of creation in light of the Creator. Al-Nābulusī's premise is that it is also an ontological reality. However, if such a reality cannot be fathomed by the rational intellect, can it truly be real in the conventional sense?

Such is the overarching question that not only informs this issue, but the larger question of spiritual gnosis and its epistemological implications. Not only al-Nābulusī, but also al-Ghazālī, and countless others before him, and even al-Taftāzānī, would acknowledge the potency of spiritual training as a means to acquiring knowledge of the non-empirical world. The discourse on such issues represented a dividing line between the *kalām* theologians and the Akbarian Sufis. Al-Dardīr, with impeccable credentials as *kalām* theologian as well as a Bakrī-Khalwatī Sufi, represented a synthesis and reconciliation between the two streams. This is best demonstrated in his writings and approach to actualising *tawḥīd*.

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<sup>141</sup> The translation of *tajalliyāt* as theophany may provoke some consternation, as a theophany has different connotations in other faith traditions. Nevertheless, the notion of God revealing himself via various manifestations is consistent with both the Arabic term *tajallī* and the original Greek etymology.

Where al-Dardīr stands on this issue, namely the *wujūdī/shuhūdī* debate is not expressly stated in the works, but it can be inferred that he does not stray from the position adopted by al-Nābulusī before him. However, al-Dardīr more explicitly reconciles the position of al-Ash‘arī, noting that divine existence is not an attribute, but rather equivalent to the divine essence. This then is an ontological reality, rather than a mere “witnessing” based upon spiritual cognition (*dhawq*). However, this ontological reality – the oneness of true existence, where all other existences are contingent upon the divine existence, and therefore not “true” existences, cannot be fully realised by rational means. Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī states in his treatise on *waḥdat al-wujūd*: “Some of these (*adhawq*) spiritual realisations cannot be realised except by spiritual striving and industriousness in the matter that is known, and not by way of mere rational knowledge, as spiritual cognition is several levels higher than rational knowledge.”<sup>142</sup>

Al-Dardīr follows al-Bakrī in this fashion, but also reconciles the Ash‘arī doctrine of the oneness of divine acts, names and attributes, and essence, by relating it to spiritual cognition of the reality of these “levels of *tawḥīd*.” The highest level, *tawḥīd al-dhāt*, corresponds to the *maqām* (spiritual station) of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the epitome of *ma‘rifa* (spiritual gnosis).<sup>143</sup> This is explained further in the following section.

### **Hierarchical Approaches to *Tawḥīd***

Unlike al-Nābulusī and Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, al-Ḥifnī and al-Dardīr were members of the Cairo and Azhar elite – the “establishment *‘ulamā*”. They were accomplished theologians, jurisprudents, and champions of the urban poor and

<sup>142</sup> Muṣṭafā Bakrī, “Risālat Al-Mawrid Al-‘Adhb Lidhī Al-Wurūd Fī Kashf Ma‘Na Waḥdat Al-Wujūd,” in *Aḥmad Ḥilmī*, ed. Cairo National Archives (Cairo N.D.), 10.

<sup>143</sup> Aḥmad al-Dardīr, “Mishkāṭ Al-Asrār Lī ‘Arīf Al-Waqt Abī Al-Anwār,” in *Taymūr*, ed. Dar al-Kutub (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1921), 4-6.

disenfranchised. Appreciating the dissimilarity between the *khawāṣ* and the *ʿawām*, expounding upon such doctrines such as the unity of existence did not comprise their public discourse. Nevertheless, in the private circles of their disciples and gatherings of spiritual audition, elucidating the finer points of the spiritual stations and the realisation of divine unity would not have been out of place.

In his own treatises, al-Dardīr does not offer detailed refutations of polemical attacks against Ibn al-ʿArabī or his doctrines. Rather, he refers to the unity of existence when expounding upon the highest rank of *tawḥīd* – *tawḥīd al-dhāt* (the oneness of the divine essence). The true nature of acts affiliated to creation is revealed to be merely metaphorical, God the one true Actor. All acts in the universe are merely shadows of the one true Actor, without whom they would have no existence whatsoever; thus, there is no existence except for the One.<sup>144</sup>

Al-Dardīr treads carefully in his *kalām* manuals, avoiding the issue of unity and existence altogether except when discussing the divine attribute of the same name (*wujūd*), known as the ontological attribute (*al-ṣifa al-nafsiyya*). He confirms his preference for al-Ashʿarī's opinion of God's existence (*wujūd*) as indistinguishable from His essence (*dhāt*). Taken with the concept of God's necessary existence, al-Dardīr forwards an argument for an ontological unity of existence. If God's existence is necessary, and the existence of all others is contingent on the necessary existence, then ontologically, their existence resembles God's existence in name only.

Hence, the *ḥaqīqī* existence is the sole province of God, in the same manner that the positive divine attributes are *ḥaqīqī*, whilst their human

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<sup>144</sup> al-Dardīr, "Mishkāṭ Al-Asrār Lī ʿĀrif Al-Waqt Abī Al-Anwār," 4.

counterparts are *majāzī*, as posited by Ibn al-‘Arabī.<sup>145</sup> Earlier Ash‘arī theologians, such as al-Rāzī, would take issue with this. However, as they predicated the validity of speaking of both the *wujūd* of God and *wujūd* of created beings upon the notion that it represents a true dichotomy – either something exists, or it does not, and hence the same term can be used to address both divine and created existences.<sup>146</sup>

Further to this, *wujūd* is understood by al-Rāzī to be other than the *māhiyya* (quiddity) of a thing; with the example that one is able to claim: “the universe exists” or “the universe does not exist” whereas it would be unintelligible to say “existence exists” or “existence does not exist.”<sup>147</sup> Al-Dardīr counters this by arguing that differentiating between the existence and the quiddity of God occurs in the mind but need not occur externally, as one can conceptualise the quiddity of a thing without conceptualising its existence, and vice versa.<sup>148</sup> Al-Bājūrī (d.1276/1860)<sup>149</sup> disagrees with this interpretation, stating that al-Ash‘arī’s original statement of equating divine existence to quiddity is understood figuratively, as it is sufficient than an attribute is differentially conceptualised from its possessor. In this scheme, it is irrelevant if the attribute and possessor are differentiated externally outside of the mind.<sup>150</sup> He mentions other opinions, such as that of al-Dardīr, but summates the issue by declaring that knowing whether or not God’s existence is equivalent to His essence is from amongst the perplexities of *kalām* theology, and it is sufficient

<sup>145</sup> See discussion regarding anthropomorphic divine attributes and theomorphic human attributes in: Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God : Principles of Ibn Al-‘arabī’s Cosmology*, xviii.

<sup>146</sup> See, for example, al-Rāzī’s argument in: Rāzī, *Ma‘ālim ‘Uṣūl Al-Dīn*, 32.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Al-Dardīr quotes al-Taftāzānī to buttress his argument. See al-Dardīr and al-Sibā’ī, *Ḥāshiyya ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 261.

<sup>149</sup> See PhD study: Aaron Spevack, “The Archetypal Sunni Scholar: Law, Theology, and Mysticism in the Synthesis of Al-Bajuri” (Bston University, 2008).

<sup>150</sup> Ibrāhīm Bājūrī, *Ḥāshiyat Ibrāhīm Al-Bayjūrī Al-Musammā Bi-Tuḥfat Al-Murīd ‘Alā Jawharat Al-Tawḥīd* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba‘a al-Azhariyya, 1924), 33.

for one to know that God merely exists, without contemplating the relationship of His essence to that existence.<sup>151</sup>

### ***Tarīqa and Ḥaqīqa***

The influence of Sufi metaphysics on al-Dardīr is also discernable regarding his position on “seeing” God. All Ash‘arīs affirm the beatific vision – seeing God in the afterlife – albeit via a non-physical manner commensurate with His majesty. Conversely, the Mu‘tazilites reject this position on the premise that vision is limited by its physical constraints, and hence impossible in terms of the divine. However, al-Dardīr also allows the possibility of seeing God in this life in the form of dreams.<sup>152</sup>

He also prefers the opinion that Muḥammad saw God in an awakened state the night of Ascension. He qualifies the vision of God in dreams by stating that it is a vision of the heart, not of the eyes, and by defining the *ru’yā* as “a type of *idrāk* (realisation) created by God in any place he wishes”, and thus not limited to physical sighting of the eyes.<sup>153</sup>

Al-Dardīr elaborates on the meaning of *ma‘iyya* (being “with” God) in some of the verses of the Qur’ān,<sup>154</sup> where he affirms the possibility of God being “with” creation in essence, and not merely by the attribute of his all-encompassing omniscience. He mentions that there are those from amongst the people of *‘ilm* who anathemise anyone who upheld such a contention. Indeed, the Ash‘arī understanding of *ma‘iyya* is necessarily figurative and metaphorical, as the Arabic preposition *ma‘* (with) coupled with the essence of God is rationally inconceivable.<sup>155</sup> Al-Dardīr raises this objection and counters

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Ḥāshiyya ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 399-415.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>154</sup> Such as Qur’ān (9:40), (20:46) and (57:4)

<sup>155</sup> See for example al-Rāzī’s *tafsīr* of verse (57:4) in: Rāzī, *Tafsīr Al-Fakhr Al-Rāzī Al-Mushtahir Bi-Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr Wa-Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb*.



the Ash‘arī insistence on *ta‘wīl* of the verse by offering a rational argument of his own, as follows<sup>156</sup>:

It can be said to them: do you not admit that God is the Master of creation with His Will and Power, and that he maintains the heavens and the Earth? To which they must acquiesce, and then said to them: is the Will, Power, and Knowledge by which God maintains the universe disconnected from His essence? To this, they must also acquiesce, and then said to them: then He is with us by His essence, and without *ittiḥād* (unification) or *ḥulūl* (incarnation).

The attempt at a rational explanation for a mystic concept may not be very convincing, but it does display al-Dardīr’s commitment to Ash‘arī rationalism, and his commitment to spiritual cognition, both as a means to understanding God and the universe, and his attempt at reconciliation between the two. He further pursues this line of inquiry in his explanation of the *mutashābihāt* verses and the *ḥadīth* “Verily God has created Adam in his *ṣūra* (form).”<sup>157</sup> Image here is understood by al-Dardīr in metaphysical terms, in as much as humans are endowed by their creator with will, power, knowledge, etc. all essentially divine attributes in their true realisation, but the reciprocation of these attributes in human form is the means by which humans are held accountable by God. He reiterates the lack of efficacy for anything but the divine attributes, as the *ẓāhir* (outward) semblance of acquisition of divine creation is the *manāṭ al-taklīf* (basis of accountability).<sup>158</sup>

In his apologetic treatise on the formula of ‘Alī Wafā (d. 807/1405)<sup>159</sup>, *My Lord! The One! My Lord! The Everlasting! The Most High! The Wise!* (*yā mawlāya yā wāḥid yā mawlāya dā‘im yā ‘alīyy yā ḥakīm*), al-Dardīr does not hesitate to exposit on the finer points of Sufi metaphysics, specifically the spiritual stations corresponding to levels of beholding of God’s oneness, and

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<sup>156</sup> al-Dardīr, “Minḥāj Al-Ṣādiqīn Wa Tibyān Al-Salikīn,” 6-7.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> See “Mishkāṭ Al-Asrār Lī ‘Ārif Al-Waqt Abī Al-Anwār,” 8.

the ultimate beholding (*shuhūd*) of the unity of existence.<sup>160</sup> The link between Ash'arī cosmology, and the ranks and levels of God's self-disclosure to the spiritual aspirant is unmistakable, and hardly a coincidence. *Kalām* for al-Dardīr was not merely a polemical tool by which to vanquish the Mu'tazilite nemesis, but was in fact the ingress to greater spiritual realisation and beholding of God and the true Reality.

The tripartite taxonomy of *tawḥīd*: unity of action, unity of divine names and attributes, and unity of the divine essence forms the basis of the aspirant's uncovering of the multi-layered reality. The Ghazalian cosmology of the divine names as a sub-genus of the divine attributes finds its way here, though little attention has been given to the subject of the divine names in most Ash'arī manuals, including al-Dardīr's *Kharīda*. Nonetheless, many of the Ash'arī theologians offered dedicated works to the issue of the divine names, including al-Rāzī, al-Ghazālī, Zarrūq, and al-Dardīr.<sup>161</sup> The apparent appropriation of the divine names as a matter for Sufi metaphysicians rather than *kalām* theologians is likely due to the primacy of the Prophetic tradition that mentions their enumeration as a means of salvation, and the spiritual implications of *iḥṣā'*, the word used by the Prophet to describe the significance of the names – *wa man aḥṣāhā dakhala al-janna*.<sup>162</sup> The word *aḥṣāhā* has been alternatively translated as “preserved”, “memorised”, “realised”, and so forth, but none seem to capture the meaning comprehensively. The ambiguous nature of the word, even in its

<sup>160</sup> For a more thorough analysis of the Wafā'iyya order and its founders, see: McGregor, *Sanctity and Mysticism in Medieval Egypt*.

<sup>161</sup> See al-Ṣawī, *Al-Ṣalawāt Al-Dardīriyya Wa Yalīhī Sharḥ Manẓumat 'Asmā' Allāhi Al-Ḥusnā; Aḥmad Zarrūq, Al-Maqṣad Al-Asmā' Fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh Al-Ḥusnā* (Damascus: Dār al-Bayrūtī, 2004); Ghazzālī, *Al-Maqṣad Al-Asnā Fī Sharḥ Ma 'ānī Asmā' Allāh Al-Ḥusnā*, Recherches Publiées Sous La Direction De L'institut De Lettres Orientales De Beyrouth Nouv Sér a, Langue Arabe Et Pensée Islamique (Bayrūt: Dār al-Mashriq, 1971); Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar Rāzī, *Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh Al-Ḥusnā Lil-Rāzī : Wa-Huwa Al-Kitāb Al-Musammā Lawāmi' Al-Bayyināt Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh Ta 'ālā Wa-Al-Ṣifāt*, ed. Ṭāhā 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sa'd (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azharīyah, 1396).

<sup>162</sup> Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj al-Nishapurī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, (Cairo: Dār al-Sha'b, N.D.).

original Arabic, has prompted many of the commentators to offer their own understanding of what, indeed, is needed in terms of the believer's relationship with the Names in order to be granted the highest spiritual reward of eternal felicity.

Al-Dardīr characterises the station of *tawḥīd al-asmā' wa'l-ṣifāt* as the second station after that of *tawḥīd al-aḥ'āl*. In this second station, the aspirant realises by way of *dhawq* (spiritual cognition) that the divine names are exclusive to God, to the degree that he does not perceive anyone but God to be the bearer of benefit or cause of harm.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, the divine attributes are realised as exclusive to God, to the degree that the human attributes of power and perception (such as hearing and seeing), though they share a name with the divine attributes, are *idāfī* (auxiliary) and thus devoid of any real efficacy.

Hence, if the aspirant realises his true contingency by disavowing any efficacy except for God by way of *dhawq* and *shuhūd*, then his heart becomes purified and receptive to the *tajallī waḥdānī ṣifātī* (theophany of oneness of attributes), by which he is able to encompass the true meaning of all power and perception.<sup>164</sup> It is at this point he realises that any power or perception that was attributed to him in his state of *ḥijāb* (veiling) was auxiliary; the ontological reality is that the attribution is to the essence of this *tajallī* (theophany), from the aspect of its manifestation in the lowest of stations (the realm of acts). From this *maqām*, the aspirant can reach the final and highest station, that of *tawḥīd al-dhāt* (the oneness of the Essence). In this station, the aspirant witnesses none except God by excluding any essences save the divine essence. It is devoid of multiplicities, and that the perceived multiplicities are existent and sustained by the existence of God, and not by their own self-sufficiency. Thus,

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<sup>163</sup> al-Dardīr, "Mishkāt Al-Asrār Lī 'Ārif Al-Waqt Abī Al-Anwār," 7.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

they are mere shadows that would have no existence without the Being that casts the shadows; this contingent existence is not existence at all, and the true existence is the sole province of God.

From this perspective, that of the divine, there is only one existence, *waḥdat al-wujūd* (unity of existence).<sup>165</sup> Thus, al-Dardīr sees the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* as the culmination and final stage in the spiritual realisation of the 'ārif (gnostic), essentially a *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (unity of disclosure), but also an ontological reality, if understood from the perspective of the divine. This is predicated on the Ash'arī concept of *ta'thīr* (causality), where exclusive causality and sole efficacy for God are tantamount to ontological unity of the divine essence. This combines the dual epistemic sources of rationality and spiritual cognition, where sole efficacy is realised by the former, and ontological unity is realised by way of the latter.

The three levels of *tawḥīd* in al-Dardīr's Sufi discourse correspond to those in his *kalām* discourse: the oneness of acts (*tawḥīd al-af'āl*), the oneness of the divine Names and Attributes (*tawḥīd al-asmā' wa'l-ṣifāt*), and the oneness of the divine Essence (*tawḥīd al-dhāt*), in ascending order.<sup>166</sup> The first level is attained when the aspirant ceases to attribute any act to anyone other than God. Thus, all acts are created, which the traditional *kalām* theology posits, but al-Dardīr differentiates between the demonstrative proof (*dalīl*), and saintly or intuitive cognition (*dhawq*). The spiritual realisation of oneness of acts cannot be attained by demonstration, but only via *dhawq*. It is the first stage of enlightenment (*fath*), and thus is not accessible by purely rational means.

Al-Dardīr is careful to point out that such a state could lead to heresy (*ilhād*), declarations of physical unity with God (*ittiḥād*), or failure to make a

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 6.

distinction between the lawful and the prohibited (*al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām*).

Therefore, such a path should not be attempted except under the guidance of an experienced and well-qualified guide (*shaykh*). Al-Dardīr implicitly makes allowances for ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥāt*), which are not to be understood in a literal sense when uttered by the truly “intoxicated” aspirant. Spiritual openings elicit powerful responses and the one overcome by them is akin to the temporarily insane, and therefore not legally responsible for their utterances or their actions.

In this regard, al-Dardīr also differentiates between the recondite symbolism employed by the likes of Ibn al-‘Arabī and his supporters, and the indiscriminate ecstatic utterance of the aspirant. The former is abstruse by design, for two primary reasons. The first is that the nature of ascribing divine realisations to words is by nature an exercise of shadows and approximations; the words can never do justice. This has more to do with the nature of language than it has to do with the nature of the spiritual experience. For pre-modern Islamic scholars like al-Dardīr, the experience is a window into the ultimate reality; such a reality cannot be circumscribed by language, as though language may be divine in origin<sup>167</sup>, it nevertheless contains connotative and conventionalist aspects that are decidedly non-divine, and thus remains forever limited in its ability to express higher meanings.<sup>168</sup>

Consequently, the Sufis devised a complex terminology that would provoke condemnations of heresy and corruption of the faith, if understood ostensibly. Following this line, all non-divine forms and attributes are metaphoric, and ultimately unreal. This follows from the concept of *waḥdat al-*

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<sup>167</sup> A view espoused by many Muslim scholars, most notably Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). See Suyūṭī, *Al-Muzhir Fi ‘Ulūm Al-Lughah Wa-Anwā’ihā*, 1:20-31.

<sup>168</sup> See discussion in: Ibrāhīm Kurānī, *Al-Maslak Al-Jalī Fi Ḥukm Shaṭḥ Al-Walī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Naṣṣār (Cairo: Dārat al-Karaz, 2011).

*wujūd* as essence and existence are the sole province of God, and thus all other perceived essences and existences are “less real” due to their contingency, as opposed to those of God, which are aseitic. Hence, the divine attributes are literal – even from a linguistic perspective – and *real*, though a reality not realisable by rational or transmitted avenues of knowledge. The *ḥaqīqa* can then be only expressed in words insofar as language is also “less real”, and thus insufficient to articulate such matters, and hence occasionally produces seemingly heretical or incomprehensible utterances by its bearer.

The second reason is to prevent the erstwhile but uninitiated novice and dilettante from claiming states described symbolically in the text, for himself. The notion of an elite form of knowledge not appropriate for public consumption is promoted by Ibn ‘Arabī and mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayra, commonly referred to as the *ḥadīth* of the “two vessels.”<sup>169</sup> Exoteric commentaries on the *ḥadīth* in question claim that the knowledge that would have put Abū Hurayra in danger was of the prophecies concerning the tribulations of the Umayyads. However, Ibn al-‘Arabī, as well as al-Dardīr,<sup>170</sup> cite it as proof of an elite esoteric knowledge of the Prophet Muḥammad that was disseminated to some and not to others. Ibn Ḥajar criticises this interpretation as specific to the *Bāṭiniyya* (Isma‘īlī) sect<sup>171</sup>, accused of dismissing the exoteric meanings of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* whilst positing esoteric meanings that only they could understand.<sup>172</sup>

Al-Dardīr, like many theologians before him, appears to reconcile this issue by affirming the duality of exoteric and esoteric meanings, and by

<sup>169</sup> “I preserved two vessels from the Messenger of God, one that I disseminated, and the other, if I were to do so, this neck would have been severed.” See in: al-Dardīr, “Mishkāṭ Al-Asrār Lī ‘Ārif Al-Waqt Abī Al-Anwār,” 10.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 8; al-Dardīr and al-Sibā‘ī, *Ḥāshiyā ‘Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyā*, 441-42.

<sup>171</sup> See discussion of *Bāṭiniyya* in: Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Shahrastānī, *Al-Milāl Wa-Al-Niḥāl*, 1:170-87.

<sup>172</sup> See Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath Al-Bār Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1989), 1:216.

negating any mutual exclusion between them. He further posits that the *ahl al-ma'rifa* (folk of gnosis) know the secrets of the unseen world, such as the modality of the descent of the angels. He refers to this theophanic knowledge as *asrār al-ālam* (secrets of the universe) and *asrār al-Qur'ān* (secrets of the Qur'ān). Borrowing a concept from creedal theology, al-Dardīr states that just as the Arabic letters of the Qur'ān reflect the meanings of the pre-eternal attribute of God's speech, the sum of creation reflects the pre-eternal divine attributes of will, knowledge, and power.<sup>173</sup> Despite the ability of the gnostic to unveil some of the divine secrets, it is but a drop in the ocean compared to the knowledge that is the exclusive province of God. This includes the reality of the divine essence, attributes, and the reality of divine *tawḥīd*, referred to as *al-ta'ayyun al-awwal* (the primary entification).<sup>174</sup>

Therefore, the *ḥaqīqa* that is accessible to the gnostic consists of two major parts: 1) the knowledge of the unseen realms made accessible by God, and 2) the knowledge that the true *ḥaqīqa* of all things is only known by God, just as true essence, existence, knowledge, power, will, etc. are also the sole province of God. Hence, for al-Dardīr the *sharī'a - ṭarīqa - ḥaqīqa* paradigm, while firmly rooted in Sufi metaphysics, is the crowning epitome of the Islamic tradition as a whole, as all roads eventually lead to actualizing the *ḥaqīqa* as explained above. "The *sharī'a* is the sum of the legal rulings and obligations, the *ṭarīq* is the embodiment of the Muḥammadan virtues, and the *ḥaqīqa* is drinking from the glasses of pure monotheism."<sup>175</sup>

<sup>173</sup> al-Dardīr, "Mishkāt Al-Asrār Lī 'Ārif Al-Waqt Abī Al-Anwār," 8.

<sup>174</sup> A reference to the unknowable knowledge of God, from which forth all other knowledge emanates, hence its reference as the "primary entification." See discussion in: Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn Al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*, 83.

<sup>175</sup> al-Dardīr, "Sharḥ Fawāyid Al-Farāyid Fī Ḍabīṭ Al-'Aqāyid," 29. "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," 44.

Al-Dardīr's understanding of this paradigm extended into the realm of jurisprudence – representative of the *sharī'a* – an essential prerequisite for embodying the *ṭarīqa* and realising the *ḥaqīqa*. Just as he leveraged the tradition to inform his understanding of creedal theology and *taṣawwuf*, the tradition of jurisprudence before him played a pivotal role in the methodology of *taḥqīq* he applied to the discipline. The following chapter analyses this methodology in light of the greater question of al-Dardīr's utilisation of the tools developed and preserved by the tradition itself to maintain its vibrancy and relevance for changing times and circumstances.



## Chapter Four: *Tarjīh* and al-Dardīr's Methodology Regarding the *Fiqh* Tradition

### Introduction

This chapter addresses the scholarly contribution of al-Dardīr to the discipline of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and his efforts towards maintaining the *fiqh* tradition. His methodology of *taḥqīq*, as mentioned in the previous chapter regarding the synthesis of *sharī'a*, *ṭarīqa*, and *ḥaqīqa*, follows a similar pattern in the tradition of jurisprudence, representing the practical aspect of *sharī'a* and *ṭarīqa*. However, the *fiqh* tradition is not fraught with issues of an ontological nature, in contrast with the disciplines of theology and *taṣawwuf*. Instead, it is more concerned with issues of epistemology and hermeneutics, specifically the relationship of the primary texts of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* to legal rulings, and the manner of interpretation of the texts to derive those legal rulings that inform all aspects of a Muslim's life.

The *fiqh* tradition developed discursively over a millennium, and underwent periods of shifting focus. The early modern era of al-Dardīr represented the final iteration of this discursive tradition, representing both a culmination and cumulation of all that had transpired before it. This chapter analyses the methodology of al-Dardīr towards interpreting this inherited tradition, as well as towards its transmission.

This chapter also challenges a long standing assumption in the literature that the post-classical period (roughly after the sixth/twelfth century) produced little in the way of creativity and merely rehashed previous works, typically in the form of the *sharḥ* and *ḥāshiya* (commentary and gloss). This questions relates to the overall thesis of this study – the exploration of early modern Islamic

intellectual history as exemplified in al-Dardīr – by evaluating his two main works in Mālikī *fiqh*: his commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl, informally referred to as *al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* (the major commentary), and his own *mukhtaṣar* entitled *Aqrab al-Masālik ilā Madhhab al-Imām Mālik*, as well as the commentary he wrote upon this *mukhtaṣar*, informally referred to as *al-Sharḥ al-Ṣaghīr* (the minor commentary). To properly evaluate and understand the significance of these two works it is necessary to put them in their proper context as regards the discursive tradition. The cumulative nature of this time period's intellectual activities dictates that a paradigm of *fiqh* works, specifically in the Mālikī tradition, is established in order to properly evaluate the contributions by al-Dardīr.

This chapter begins with a brief analysis of the background knowledge regarding the transmission and discipline of jurisprudence, and specifically as they relate to the Mālikī school. The early development of the Mālikī school is then discussed with specific reference to its unique formation and its implications for how the Mālikī tradition was subsequently understood and transmitted in later years. The synopsis-commentary-gloss genre in the Mālikī tradition, a development that initially took place in the seventh/thirteenth century, and affected the approach that al-Dardīr in his writings, is analysed in light of the predominate view that this particular genre offered little, and was a mere rehash of earlier and more creative works. The chapter then moves on with an analysis of al-Dardīr's commentary on the synopsis of Khalīl, and al-Dardīr's synopsis, *Aqrab al-Masālik*, in an effort to place them within the discursive tradition, and offer a fresh look at the significance of the late stage development of *fiqh* jurisprudence and its transmission. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the most distinctive and overarching characteristic of the

Mālikī tradition in its later stages, the elimination or minimisation of plurality of legal opinions, primarily via the jurisprudential concept of *tarjīh* (juristic weighing narrations and evidence), and its relation to the social and intellectual conditions of the early modern era.

## Jurisprudence and Madhhabism

. After the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, a formative period for the canonisation of Islam's laws and precepts began in earnest. Before that, Islam's faithful had depended entirely upon their Prophet for understanding God's commands and prohibitions, whether via the revelation of the Qur'ān or the Prophet's pronouncements and exemplary actions. The death of the Prophet presented a significant challenge to the integrity of Islam's authoritativeness. What had been nearly absolute and unequivocal during the Prophet's lifetime now became a negotiation of the sacred texts, subject to varying hermeneutics based upon reason, cultural practices, and to some extent, Arab sensibilities. Whether regional schools arose within the early Abbasid era, the Iraqi cities of Kufa and Basra becoming the intellectual centres of the new empire, in addition to the Hejaz, and then transforming into the "personal schools" of Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik, or whether the level of internal dissent within these "regional schools" would preclude their existence, remains an open question.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding, the internal dissent within regional centres such as Medina and Kufa cannot be characterised to be as polemical as which typified the theological debates regarding doctrine and ontology. While the political and theological schism that gripped Islam is discussed elsewhere, it is well worth remarking that jurisprudence – the set of laws, precepts, principles and corollaries that inform all aspects of human action – was less acrimonious than the discourse between *kalām* theologians. Al-Shāfi'ī was reported to have discouraged his followers from engaging in *kalām*, whilst encouraging them to

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<sup>1</sup> Wael B. Hallaq, "From Regional to Personal Schools of Law? A Reevaluation," *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 1 (2001); Wymann-Landgraf, *Mālik and Medina : Islamic Reasoning in the Formative Period*, 21.

concentrate on *fiqh*, stating: “It is better to be said you have erred rather than you have disbelieved (*kafart*).”<sup>2</sup> The issues were fundamentally different – doctrinal theologians such as al-Ash‘arī and al-Māturīdī were concerned with ascribing and negating attributes to God based upon rational arguments, whereas the jurists were endeavouring to articulate God’s law for their particular times and circumstances based upon close reading of Islam’s primary texts of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*.

Dissent regarding jurisprudential matters was entirely acceptable, perhaps even mundane. Non-polemical comparative works that include Shī‘ī (Ja‘farī), Zahirī, and Ibādī jurisprudence, in addition to the Sunni four, while not common, nonetheless exist.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, non-polemical works in *kalām* theology are nearly non-existent, as the subject of the ascertainment of the universe’s reality leaves little room for polite discussion. Though the jurisprudential schools were not immune from polemical rhetoric, nevertheless they have largely adopted the attitude articulated by al-Shāfi‘ī: “I consider my opinion to be correct and yours to be incorrect, though the opposite holds out as a legitimate possibility.”<sup>4</sup> Hence, there never was any anathematisation in the realm of jurisprudential works, though panegyrics and apologies for specific *madhhabs* were not uncommon.<sup>5</sup>

The “formative period” of jurisprudence has been the primary focus of Western scholarship.<sup>6</sup> The dominant paradigm in most of these studies

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Aḥmad al-Sha‘rānī, *Al-Yawāqīt Wa-Al-Jawāhir Fī Bayān ‘Aqā'id Al-Akābir*, (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir, 2003), 30.

<sup>3</sup> Such as: Ibn Rushd, *Bidāyat Al-Mujtahid Wa-Nihāyat Al-Muqtaṣid*, (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Al-Shāfi‘ī: Ḥayātuhu Wa-‘aṣruhu - Ārā'uḥu Wa-Fiqhuh*, (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1996), 37.

<sup>5</sup> Such as Muḥammad Andalusī Al-Rā‘ī, *Intiṣār Al-Faqīr Al-Sālik* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: Norman Calder, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964); Crone and Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge

postulates that the formation of “Islamic law”<sup>7</sup> began in earnest at least a century after the Prophet’s death, making the search of an authentic Prophetic *Sunna* at the outset of the formative period elusive. In the realm of jurisprudence, much has been made of the notion of the “closing of the gates of *ijtihād*.” More recent scholarship has thoroughly challenged this notion<sup>8</sup>, but the overall narrative of decline remains ubiquitous. Moreover, the period of al-Dardīr, characterised by the synopsis-commentary-gloss genre, has been routinely dismissed by most Western (and quite a few Arab) scholars as tedious and consisting of nothing more than a rehash of previous creative works<sup>9</sup>, or as “a patchwork of excerpts from earlier sources” rendering it a “rather unrewarding literature to discuss at length.”<sup>10</sup>

Using the transmission of tradition paradigm, it will be demonstrated that a more justified assessment of al-Dardīr’s specific contributions to Islamic jurisprudence can be obtained. The Islamic tradition, when specifically referring to jurisprudence, is fundamentally concerned with the divine intent as regards rulings that inform all human action. The five basic rulings of obligation, reprehensibility, permissibility, meritoriousness, and prohibition constitute the essential framework for interpreting the divine commandments and prohibitions. Thus, the occupation of the jurist has always been characterised by interaction with the tradition in an effort to apply juristic methodologies to acquire new

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University Press, 1977); Christopher Melchert, *The Formation of the Sunni Schools of Law, 9th-10th Centuries C.E* (Leiden ; New York: Brill, 1997); Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> I use the quotation marks for reasons that will become apparent below.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: Wael B. Hallaq, *Sharī’a : Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> See various entries in: Roger Allen and D. S. Richards, *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period / Edited by Roger Allen and D.S. Richards*, The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 374.

rulings for unprecedented circumstances.<sup>11</sup> While this formative effort was the bulk of the work carried out by the *mujtahid* imams such Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik, the work of the later jurists of their respective schools involved sifting through a multiplicity of opinions and fatwas. These narrations had accumulated during previous years, and the *fuqahā'* identified the soundest of these opinions, declaring them as such, sometimes referred to as the *mu'tamad* (the most reliable opinion), or the *mashhūr* (most noted), or *rājiḥ* (most preponderant). It will be demonstrated that al-Dardīr, in his capacity as a master of the Mālikī *madhhab*, and educationalist with his own specific ideas, was able to take the understanding and practice of the *fiqh* of Mālik to a hitherto unknown level of clarity and accessibility.

The synopsis-commentary-gloss genre enjoyed its greatest prominence in the period after the dissolution of Fatimid rule in Egypt. The emergence of Egyptian Islamic scholarship as the preeminent standard bearer in scholarly production began in the twelfth century. To properly evaluate the scholarly worth of works produced during the early modern era of al-Dardīr, a paradigm of Islamic intellectual development and history, specifically in the field of jurisprudence must be established. Similarly to chapter three, an analysis of earlier periods of *fiqh* works, specifically those corresponding to the Mālikī *madhhab* is presented. Though the four major schools of jurisprudence developed concomitantly, it is our contention that they did so in relative isolation, especially in the formative period. This is especially relevant for the

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, al-Ghazālī's introduction on juristic methodology in: Muḥammad Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustaṣṣā Min 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl*, (Damascus: al-Risāla al-'Ālamiyya, 2012), 1:31-44.

Mālikī school, in particular, as it was the sole and virtually unopposed school in North Africa and Upper Egypt for much of its development.<sup>12</sup>

*Madhhab* jurisprudence had been established and become the normative practice of Sunni Islam at least five centuries before al-Dardīr's birth.<sup>13</sup> This coincided, and perhaps was even precipitated by the appointment of the four state judges in Egypt representing the four Sunni schools of law by Baybars in 660/1262, initially the Mālikī, Ḥanafī, and Ḥanbalī as deputy judgeships to the preeminent Shāfi'ī judge, and then later promoted to chief judgeships in 663/1265.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the establishment of numerous religious seminaries dedicated to disseminating Sunni *madhhab* jurisprudence during the Ayyubid and Mamlūk regimes solidified the normality of *madhhab* affiliation. No scholar of repute could afford to affiliate with anything other than the four schools as far as jurisprudence was concerned. This trend continued well into the eighteenth century, until challenged by the reformist movement of Ibn Abd al-Wahhāb in Arabia, as well as the reformist movements of the twentieth century that took him as their inspiration.

The *madhhab* paradigm that defined al-Dardīr's scholarship in jurisprudence was not significantly challenged in Egypt during his lifetime. However, the state of Islamic scholarship in general was an issue on many of the 'ulamā's minds. The traditional syllabus now included thousands of lines of terse prose and verse, and lengthy expositional commentaries were needed to

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<sup>12</sup> See Muḥammad al-Mukhtār Muḥammad Māmī, *Al-Madhhab Al-Mālikī : Madārisuhu Wa-Mu'allafātuh, Khaṣā'isuhu Wa-Simātuh*, (al-'Ayn: Markaz Zāyid lil-Turāth wa-al-Tārīkh, 2002), 62-78.

<sup>13</sup> By "established and normative", I refer to the practice of Muslim scholars' affiliation with one of the four jurisprudential schools of law, which, for Egyptian scholars, coincided with the dissolution of the Fatimid caliphate and its replacement with the Sunni Ayyubid sultanate, which pursued an ambitious programme of Sunni institution building and a rededication to *madhhab* jurisprudence. See Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā'iz W'al-I'tibār Fī Dhikr Al-Khiṭaṭ W'al-Athār*, 4:362-97.

<sup>14</sup> Sherman A. Jackson, "The Primacy of Domestic Politics: Ibn Bint Al-A'azz and the Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in Mamlūk Egypt," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 1 (1995).



“decipher the code” (*fakk al-rumūz*). Jurisprudence in particular became a highly specialised discipline and was easily the most demanding of all the subjects in the Islamic curriculum. The Mālikī curriculum in particular, which was aimed towards mastering the capstone text of *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*, a fourteenth century manual on Mālikī jurisprudence, written by the Egyptian scholar Khalīl ibn Ishāq al-Jundī (d. 767/1365). This text was eventually accepted as *the* authoritative text in the Mālikī School, virtually at the exclusion of all others. Numerous commentaries were penned to elucidate the terse yet verbose text. The commentaries themselves often added a layer of complexity that also rendered the original *Mukhtaṣar* still inaccessible except to the brightest of students. Ibn Khaldūn laments the pedagogy of the synopsis-commentary genre, stating that: <sup>15</sup>

This has a corrupting influence upon the process of instruction and is detrimental to the attainment of scholarship. For it confuses the beginner by presenting the final results of a discipline to him before he is prepared for them. This is a bad method of instruction. It also involves a great deal of work for the student. He must carefully study the words of the abridgement, which are complicated to understand because they are crowded with ideas, and try to find out from them what the problems of the given discipline are.

It is difficult to conclusively determine if Ibn Khaldūn had the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl in mind when making his critique, but it must have already been circulating amongst the students of al-Azhar by the time Ibn Khaldūn arrived in Cairo in 1382, nearly twenty years after Khalīl’s death. It is also possible that Ibn Khaldūn was referring to Ibn al-Ḥājjib’s *mukhtaṣar*, which was the first major synopsis of the *Mudawwana* and other early works written in the pre-synopsis *nawāzil* style. The nature of abridgement and synopsis required new technical terms and shorthand symbols to refer back to the primary works.

This added level of required proficiency may have been the source of Ibn Khaldūn’s ire, where he might have felt the burden of learning specific terms and symbols added an unnecessary level of abstraction. Whatever the case

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<sup>15</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, 489.

may be, there is little doubt that studying *madhhab* jurisprudence in mediaeval and early modern Islam was a serious endeavour that required exceptional dedication in order to be qualified to issue fatwas according to one's particular *madhhab*.

Al-Dardīr, like his predecessors, participated in the pedagogy of the synopsis-commentary tradition, but unlike his predecessors, eliminated the specialist technical terms, simplified the synopsis language to make it more readable, and integrated his own commentary with the synopsis so that it read as one contiguous text, likely mitigating the inherent difficulties of the genre criticised by Ibn Khaldūn. This is demonstrated further in the following sections.

## The Synopsis-Commentary-Gloss genre (*mukhtaṣar-sharḥ-ḥāshiya*) in the Mālikī Tradition

The Mālikī tradition underwent several iterations before arriving at its final form in the form of the synopsis-commentary-gloss genre. This phenomenon was no means unique to the Mālikī tradition, as the other three schools of Sunni jurisprudence were subject to similar developments.<sup>16</sup>

The Mālikī jurists, for the most part, did not follow their counterparts in the Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī schools in producing works that outlined the principles and methodological tools upon which the *madhhab* is understood. For the Shāfi'ī school, this approach began with the eponymous imam himself, whose two major works, the *Risāla* and the *Umm*, both expound on his methodological principles, and specifically how he diverged from the schools of both Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa. Notwithstanding the fact that he studied with Mālik directly, and with Abū Ḥanīfa indirectly, via al-Shaybānī, one of his two main companions.

As for the Ḥanafī school, the intellectual climate in Iraq where it developed, and found a stronghold via Abbasid patronage, was highly polemical. The works of al-Shaybānī, such as *Kitāb al-Hujja 'alā Ahl al-Madīna* (The Book of Proofs Against the [Scholarly] Folk of Medina) is polemical in nature, often using rational methodologies to buttress an argument. Some have

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<sup>16</sup> Most studies for the other schools have focused on the specifics of the use of interpretive reasoning to establish legal authority throughout the life of the *madhhab*. I am unaware of any specific published study in Western academia that examines the progression of the transmission of the *madhhab*'s rulings over the course of its development. For an example of the former for the Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī traditions respectively, see: Brannon M. Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam : The Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Ḥanafī Scholarship*, Suny Series, toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Halim, *Legal Authority in Premodern Islam : Yaḥyā B. Sharaf Al-Nawawī in the Shāfi'ī School of Law*.

mentioned that the early works of the Mālikīyya in Iraq were similar in nature, having obviously been affected by the context of their intellectual milieu.<sup>17</sup>

Instead, the Mālikī jurists focused on ascertaining, and transmitting Mālik's authoritative legal opinions. The final stage of this focus came in the form of the *mukhtaṣar*, a pedagogical genre adopted by the other *madhhabs* at least a century earlier. The pedagogical shift to the *mukhtaṣar*, however, was not without its detractors, within the Islamic tradition and without. Ibn Khaldūn has been mentioned as an early critic of the *mukhtaṣar* tradition in general; through he praised the compendium of Ibn al-Ḥāḥib specifically, calling it the index (*barnāmij*) of the Mālikī madhhab<sup>18</sup>. However, there were others, some even who had authored their own short treatises, such as Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī who reportedly ordered the burning of a copy of al-Barādhī's *Tahdhīb* when it was presented before him.<sup>19</sup> A recent scholar, the Moroccan jurist and historian, Muḥammad al-Ḥijawī (d. 1376/1957), offers a scathing critique.<sup>20</sup>

When they immersed themselves in synopses, the wording of the text became unintelligible and only understood with the aid of a commentary, or a commentary and a gloss [and] as a result the [original] purpose was lost by which synopses were [first] written, which was to summarise many volumes into one, to facilitate [learning], to ease burdens, to reduce time spent, and to increase knowledge. [Yet], the opposite was achieved, as the time was spent to unlock the impassable, and time was lost with no [perceivable] recompense.

The compendium of Ibn al-Ḥāḥib also won praise from scholars from other schools, such as Ibn Daqīq al-ʿId (d. 702/1302) and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), amongst others.<sup>21</sup> Such a strong reaction, whether positive or

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<sup>17</sup> Māmī, *Al-Madhhab Al-Mālikī : Madārisuhu Wa-Mu'allafātuh, Khaṣā'isuhu Wa-Simātuh*, 67-68.

<sup>18</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, 417.

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that Ibn Abī Zayd's *Risala* was originally intended as a child's primary manual, though it became part of the standard curriculum for the transmission of the Mālikī tradition. The purported burning of the *Tahdhīb* is somewhat disputed, as other reports claim that he praised the book. See: Abū Sa'īd al-Barādhī, *Al-Tahdhīb Fī Ikhtīṣār Al-Mudawwana*, (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth li al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya wa lḥyā' al-Turāth, 1999), 1:146-8.

<sup>20</sup> Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥijawī, *Al-Fikr Al-Sāmī Fī Tārīkh Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmī*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995), 2:459.

<sup>21</sup> Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Salām al-Umawī and 'Alī al-Jazā'irī, *Tanbīh Al-Ṭālib Li-Fahm Lughāt Ibn Al-Ḥāḥib* (Kuwait: Dār al-Ḍiyā', 2011), 6.

negative, indicates that the compendium of Ibn Ḥājib presented a fundamental shift in the manner that the Mālikī school was perceived, as well as transmitted from both within and without.

The success of the *Mudawwana* as the premier Mālikī manual did not preclude the arrival of the *mukhtaṣar* (synopsis or abridgement) genre amongst the Mālikī scholars, but perhaps delayed it to some degree. Unlike the trajectory of the development of the other schools, the *Mudawwana*, – essentially a second hand report of Mālik’s legal opinions – as well as its associated commentaries and glosses, remained the main pedagogical text in the Mālikī tradition until the appearance of the *mukhtaṣar* of Ibn Shās, and to a greater degree the appearance of the *mukhtaṣar* of Ibn Ḥājib.

Al-Ghazālī, renown for his exploits in *kalām*, was also one of the premier jurists of the Shāfi’ī school. He authored the most authoritative works in the Shāfi’ī *madhhab* at the time: the encyclopaedic *al-Basīṭ*, its synopsis: *al-Wasīṭ*, and its synopsis: *al-Wajīz*. The *Basīṭ* was a commentary on al-Juwaynī’s *Nihāyat al-Maṭlab*, which in turn was a synopsis of al-Shāfi’ī’s original work, *al-Umm*.<sup>22</sup> The Mālikī school took a decidedly different direction and did not produce the first *mukhtaṣar*<sup>23</sup> until the twelfth century, a century after al-Ghazālī. Ibn Shās, who was inspired by al-Ghazālī’s *Wajīz*, wrote the first Mālikī *mukhtaṣar* in the style of the Shāfi’ī jurists, as evidenced by the author’s own admission in his introduction:<sup>24</sup>

I was inspired to write this book as a compilation of the *madhhab* of the savant of Medina Mālik ibn Anas...Because of what I have found in regards to many of those affiliated to the [Mālikī

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<sup>22</sup> See Ghazzālī, , *Al-Wajīz Fi Fiqh Al-Imām Al-Shāfi’ī*, ed. ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd, and ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwad (Bayrūt: Dār al-Arqam, 1997), 1:65-69.

<sup>23</sup> In the sense of a synopsis of larger earlier works arranged according to jurisprudential subject. The “*mukhtaṣars*” of the student of Mālik, Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam were of an entirely different nature and cannot be considered synopses in the same sense as they were still arranged in the *nawāzil* style, and thus are more properly understood as selections rather than comprehensive synopses or compendiums.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Abd Allāh ibn Najm Khallāl, *‘Iqd Al-Jawāhir Al-Thamīnah Fī Madhhab ‘Ālim Al-Madīna*, Sharīf Mursī, (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-‘Arabiyya, 2011), 1:27-28.

*madhhab*] in our time abandoning occupation with it, and turning towards others. [They have done so] to the point that it has become emblematic of many who consider themselves jurists, or are considered distinguished. I have not heard from any of them, nor has it reached me that they have turned away except for its repetition, and lack of order. Some of them have posited that it is nearly impossible to order, or to be organised according to select criteria...and their abandoning of the [*madhhab*] has been caused by the neglect shown by the imams of the *madhhab* in organising it in a manner that highlights precise meanings and derives practical principles...

Thus, it would appear that Ibn Shās sensed the inherent difficulty in learning, teaching, and transmitting the legal rulings of the Mālikī *madhhab* as compared to other schools, such as that of the Shāfi‘ī school, as evidenced by the highly structured *Wajīz* of al-Ghazālī. This difficulty was due to the outdated style of the *Mudawwana* – a text that reflected the work of several different scholars, and did not enjoy the structure and organisation of the later Shāfi‘ī works. Indeed, it is quite remarkable that nearly half a millennium after its appearance the *Mudawwana* and its commentaries remained the dominant legal and pedagogical texts for the Mālikī *madhhab*.

Some have suggested this was due to the unchallenged dominion the Mālikī *madhhab* held over North Africa and Andalucía, aided by the endorsement of state authority.<sup>25</sup> The Umayyad caliphate from its early days in the eighth century officially sanctioned the Mālikī legal rulings in their courts, particularly those reflected in narrations of Ibn al-Qāsim in the *Mudawwana*.<sup>26</sup> Brockopp alleges that the charismatic nature of the eponymous imams, specifically Mālik, conferred upon them a divine like quality. However, as Wymann-Landgraf points out, it was the legal school of Medina, as represented by Mālik, that carried the greater sway as regards the authoritativeness of his legal opinions, especially in the early formative days of the intellectual learning centre of Kairouan.<sup>27</sup> Whether the *madhhab* of Mālik, as understood by his

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Alī, *Iṣṭilāḥ Al-Madhhab ‘Ind Al-Mālikiyya*, 191-92.

<sup>26</sup> Oussama Arabi, David Stephan Powers, and Susan A. Spector, *Islamic Legal Thought : A Compendium of Muslim Jurists*, Studies in Islamic Law and Society, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 221.

<sup>27</sup> Wymann-Landgraf, *Mālik and Medina : Islamic Reasoning in the Formative Period*, 80-81.

students and successors was understood to be more of a function of a specific Medinese school of law where Mālik was its most famous proponent, or if it was indeed a function of Mālik's personal school, is a matter of scholarly debate.

While this is perhaps a fruitful argument regarding the formative years of the *madhhab*, it is clear that by the time of consolidation of the *madhhab*'s regional schools in the era of Ibn al-Ḥājjib, this is a moot point. In this period, the *fiqh* of Mālik is specifically referenced, as well as some of the main jurist-consults of the school, without particular regard for an Iraqi, Egyptian, or Andalusian derivative of a larger Medinese methodology. The method adopted by Ibn al-Ḥājjib, in his *mukhtaṣar*, also later adopted to some degree by Khalīl, was the extensive use of epistemic designations,<sup>28</sup> rather than specifically citing the names of the scholars who held those opinions.

Ibn Farḥūn, the Mālikī hagiographer and contemporary of Khalīl, analyses these epistemic designations in descending order of veracity.<sup>29</sup> The following table summarises Ibn Farḥūn's sixteen designations:

#	Epistemic Designation	Meaning	Alternate terms	Contrasting Designation	Meaning
1	<i>Mashhūr</i>	(1) The strongest evidence or (2) The largest number of reporters	<i>Ma'rūf</i> , <i>aṣaḥḥ</i> , <i>ṣaḥīḥ</i> ,	<i>Shādh</i> , <i>Munkar</i> , <i>Takhrīj</i>	Exceptional, rejected, and alternate (weaker) opinions
2	<i>Ashhar</i>	The more reliable opinion of two or more <i>mashhūr</i> opinions	<i>Mashhūr</i> , <i>aṣaḥḥ</i> , <i>ma'rūf</i>	<i>Mashhūr</i>	The less reliable of two or more <i>mashhūr</i> opinions

<sup>28</sup> "Epistemic designations" is our term for the referencing of terms such as *rājiḥ*, *mashhūr*, *ṣaḥīḥ*, etc. that attach an epistemic value to certain legal opinions based upon their human source.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Farḥūn, Abū Fāris, and Sharīf, *Kashf Al-Niqāb Al-Ḥājjib Min Muṣṭalaḥ Ibn Al-Ḥājjib*.

3	<i>Aṣaḥḥ</i>	The more sound of two or more <i>ṣaḥīḥ</i> opinions		<i>Ṣaḥīḥ, takhrīj</i>	The less sound of two or more <i>ṣaḥīḥ</i> opinions
4	<i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i>	The “sound” opinion as opposed to an “unsound” opinion		<i>Fāsid, shādh, mashhūr</i>	Unsound opinion (based on juristic evidence), larger number of reporters (but less sound according to one or more jurisconsults)
5	<i>Zāhir</i>	(1) That which is apparent without reference to a specific proof-text ( <i>naṣṣ</i> ) or (2) apparent from juristic evidence		None	
6	<i>Wāḍiḥ</i>	The same as <i>zāhir</i>		None	
7	<i>Aẓhar</i>	(1) The more apparent of two or more apparent opinions or (2) two or more proof-texts		<i>Zāhir</i>	The less apparent of two or more apparent opinions or proof-texts
8	<i>Manṣūṣ</i>	(1) The documented opinion (to Mālik or one of the earlier scholars) as opposed to an opinion derived used juristic reasoning		<i>Takhrīj, manṣūṣ (of a scholar other than Mālik)</i>	An opinion not specifically attributable to Mālik or his companions but deduced by later scholars from earlier opinions



		( <i>takhrīj</i> ) or (2) a opinion of a later scholar in the absence of a documented opinion from an earlier one			
9	<i>Ma'rūf</i>	The well-known opinion of Mālik or one his direct students, as opposed to one falsely attributed ( <i>munkar</i> ) to them		<i>Munkar, takhrīj</i>	A falsely attributed opinion to Mālik or his direct students (though the opinion may be legitimate nonetheless), or an opinion of a later scholar where Mālik has no documented opinion
10	<i>Ijma'</i>	The consensus of all (1) jurisconsults or (2) all Mālikī jurisconsults		<i>Khilāf</i>	A dissenting opinion (as regards to (2) only as regards to (1) is inconceivable
11	<i>Ittifāq</i>	Same as <i>Ijma'</i>		<i>Khilāf</i>	A dissenting opinion (as regards to (2) only as regards to (1) is inconceivable
12	<i>Madhhab</i>	(1) The same as <i>mashhūr</i> or (2) the authoritative opinion of the school despite weak juristic		<i>Shādh, khilāf, takhrīj</i>	Exceptional, dissenting, or un-attributable opinion to Mālik

		evidence or (3) the authoritative opinion of the school from amongst several <i>takhrīj</i> opinions			
13	<i>Jumhūr</i>	The majority opinion of those who directly narrated from Mālik		<i>Shādh</i>	Exceptional opinion
14	<i>Akthar</i>	The majority opinion of narrators from Mālik (whether direct or indirect)		<i>Aqall</i>	Minority opinion of fewer narrators
15	<i>Aḥsan, Awlā</i>	That which has been found praiseworthy by Mālik		None	
16	<i>Mukhtār</i>	Opinion favoured by some jurisconsults, despite it being in variance with the <i>mashhūr</i>		<i>Mashhūr</i>	Dominant or majority opinion

As evidenced by the table above, the epistemic designations are not used uniformly or consistently by Ibn al-Ḥājjib, as some of the designations are used interchangeably, underscoring the need for a manual like that of Ibn Farḥūn, to decipher the “code.” Additionally, Ibn al-Ḥājjib uses a shorthand for expressing two, three, or up to four different opinions on a single legal issue. If an issue concerns a ruling of permissibility or lack thereof then he omits an

explicit reference to the two obvious opinions i.e. prohibition or permissibility, whilst making an explicit reference to a third opinion that usually indicates prohibition under some circumstances and permissibility under others.<sup>30</sup>

For example, when reporting the ruling on the permissibility of wages for a prayer leader in a mosque (imam), he states “and the third [opinion] is that if is solely for [leading the prayer] it is impermissible, but if the [role] includes the call to prayer (*adhān*) or maintenance of the mosque, it is permissible.”<sup>31</sup> The use of pronouns also figures in this shorthand, such as *fi-hā* (in it) where the reference is to the *Mudawwana*.<sup>32</sup> For example, regarding the same issue, Ibn al-Ḥājjib states: “And in it [the *Mudawwana*]: and it is permissible to receive wages for the *adhān*, as well as for the *adhān* and prayer together.”<sup>33</sup>

Such complex shorthand renders Ibn al-Ḥājjib’s compendium all but inaccessible except for trained specialists. The widespread use of this text, as reported by many Mālikī jurists<sup>34</sup>, posed a monumental shift in the pedagogical method by which the school’s legal opinions were transmitted. Before the compendium of Ibn al-Ḥājjib, students studied the *Mudawwana* or one of the abridgements of it, which still fell in several volumes.<sup>35</sup> While the *Mudawwana* was explicit in its language and did not use specialised terms, it was nonetheless a difficult work to master, as it was essentially the work of several authors, and required some commentary. Mālikī jurists authored several commentaries, but most of those would be classified as *ta’līqāt* (annotations),

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<sup>30</sup> For an example, see below in the discussion regarding Khalīl’s commentary on Ibn al-Ḥājjib’s compendium and the issue of natural and processed salt as regards the purifying state of water.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Farḥūn, *Kashf Al-Niqāb Al-Ḥājjib Min Muṣṭalaḥ Ibn Al-Ḥājjib*, ed. Abū Fāris, and Sharīf (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 149.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-Ḥājjib, , *Jāmi’ Al-Ummahāt*, ed. Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Akhḍar Akhḍarī (Dimashq: al-Yamāmah, 1998), 436.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldūn*, 417.

<sup>35</sup> The *Mudawwana*, published by Dār Ṣādir, is in seven volumes, whilst the abridgement of the *Mudawwana* of al-Barādhī and published in Dubai, comprises four volumes.

rather than the full commentaries that came to characterise those penned on the later compendiums and synopses.

As early as the fifth/eleventh century, jurists in North Africa were contemplating abridging and reorganising the *Mudawwana* in some fashion, as the chief abridger of the *Mudawwana*, al-Barādhī'ī (d. 438/1047) states his impetus for abridging the *Mudawwana* in his introduction:<sup>36</sup>

I intended this book as an abridgment of the subject matter of the *Mudawwana* and the *Mukhtalifa*<sup>37</sup> at the exclusion of all others, as it is the noblest book to have been written from amongst the compilations. I have relied in it on brevity and synopsis over long-windedness and expansiveness to be more appealing to aspirations of the student, more easily understandable, and as aid to memorisation.

As a result, Ibn al-Ḥājj's treatise cannot be seen as an accessible reference for determining the school's dominant opinion – that by which the fatwa is to be issued – in the entirety of its jurisprudential issues. His work is more of a compendium for accessing the legal opinions reflected in the *Mudawwana* as well as the other *ummahāt* of the Mālikī tradition. It was the work of the teachers and jurisconsults who taught the *Jāmi' al-Ummahāt* as a pedagogical text to explicate its meanings and designate the dominant opinions.

One such jurisconsult was Khalīl ibn Ishāq al-Jundī, who penned one of the more authoritative commentaries on *Jāmi' al-Ummahāt*, titled: *al-Tawḍīḥ fi Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar al-Far'ī l-ibn al-Ḥājj*. Despite the objections of those who favoured the elongated style (*al-mabsuṭāt*) of the *Mudawwana* over the *mukhtaṣar* genre as a whole, such as Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn al-Ḥājj's compendium found wide scale acceptance and attracted the attention of Mālikī scholars in North Africa and Egypt. Najīb, the critical editor of *al-Tawḍīḥ*, counts thirty-nine

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<sup>36</sup> al-Barādhī'ī, *Al-Tahdhīb Fī Ikhtisār Al-Mudawwana*, 1:167.

<sup>37</sup> The *Mudawwana* and the *Mukhtalifa* are both references to the *Mudawwana* due to its multi-authorship as it resembles an edifice with many add-ons, rather than a single coherent work.

known commentaries on Ibn al-Ḥājjib's compendium written between the eighth/fourteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries.<sup>38</sup>

Like al-Dardīr, Khalīl penned a commentary on the premier pedagogical text of his time, the compendium of Ibn al-Ḥājjib, and then wrote his own *mukhtaṣar*. Though al-Dardīr's *mukhtaṣar* did not find the widespread appeal of that of Khalīl, nevertheless, the "project" of reforming the Mālikī school to enhance its accessibility, and bring it in line with the standard established by the other jurisprudential schools began with Ibn Shās and Ibn al-Ḥājjib, and ended with al-Dardīr in the early modern era. The focus of Khalīl's commentary was to unlock Ibn al-Ḥājjib's text, as the abbreviation of names and references to epistemic designations by terms and pronouns necessitated explication.

For example, when commenting on the ruling regarding the usability of water contaminated by dirt blown by the wind for ritual ablution, Khalīl mentions the "rules" (*qawā'id*) of Ibn al-Ḥājjib's terminology, in a manner similar to Ibn Farḥūn as demonstrated in the table above. Khalīl does not preface his commentary with any sort of introduction that explains the methodology of his commentary, and in this he has not departed from the style of most of his predecessors.<sup>39</sup> One is left to piece it together by reading through the entire commentary. Nonetheless, it is apparent that Khalīl did indeed have a particular methodology in his commentary, and one that reflected the intellectual paradigm of his era and local circumstances.

For instance, he cites opinions of other schools regularly throughout his commentary. When in agreement with the Mālikī opinion, such as the issue of performing the devotional acts of fasting, and the pilgrimage to Mecca on behalf

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<sup>38</sup> al-Jundī Khalīl ibn Ishāq , *Al-Tawḍīḥ Fī Sharḥ Al-Mukhtaṣar Al-Far'ī Li-Ibn Al-Ḥājjib*, ed. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Karīm Najīb (al-Qāhirah: Markaz Najībawayh lil-Makḥṭūṭāt wa-Khidmat al-Turāth, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> As is mentioned later regarding the commentary of al-Dardīr on Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*, he breaks from tradition and does provide a useful introduction.

of the dead, of which both the Shāfi‘ī school and Mālikī school deem invalid. Additionally, he cites the issue of the intention for prayer preceding the opening invocation, upon which the Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī schools agree.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, Khalīl makes judicious use of citation of relevant verses from the Qur’ān as well as Prophetic reports to buttress some of the legal rulings of the compendium. For example, he cites the verses of divorce [2:228-234] regarding the waiting period of divorced women, and such as the *ḥadīth* regarding the permissibility of elongating of a woman’s garment despite its propensity to gather filth.<sup>41</sup>

However, it is difficult to support the claim of Najīb that Khalīl’s methodology in his commentary is based upon providing supporting *dalīl* (juristic evidence) for the rulings of Ibn al-Ḥājib’s compendium. Indeed, this represents a sore spot for students and practitioners of the Mālikī *madhhab*, as unlike their Shāfi‘ī and Ḥanafī counterparts, most works of the *madhhab* do not make mention of *dalīl*, preferring instead to present legal rulings attributable to Mālik or other jurisconsults of the Mālikī tradition – and most glaringly the *mukhtaṣars* of Ibn al-Ḥājib, Khalīl, and al-Dardīr. Najīb offers the *Tawḍīḥ* as a testament to the inaccuracy of this premise, stating that Khalīl’s commentary is an “encyclopaedia of positive jurisprudence, juristic foundational principles, and *ḥadīth*, the likes of which can hardly be found in other juristic schools.”<sup>42</sup>

Nonetheless, his claim remains unsubstantiated, as Khalīl’s use of supportive references are mostly in the form of attribution to the Mālikī jurisconsults; his citation of primary references are for illustrative purposes only, the overwhelming majority of rulings in Ibn al-Ḥājib’s compendium are explained without reference to the Qur’ān or *ḥadīth*.

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<sup>40</sup> Khalīl ibn Ishāq, *Al-Tawḍīḥ Fī Sharḥ Al-Mukhtaṣar Al-Far‘ī Li-Ibn Al-Ḥājib*, 70.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

Khalīl's commentary, however, is not without value, and was a necessary step before Khalīl could pen his famous *mukhtaṣar*. The preoccupation with *dalīl* in jurisprudential works is a modern phenomenon, as even Ibn Khaldūn's criticism of the *mukhtaṣar* genre does include any reference to the idea of lack of juristic proofs in the Mālikī literature. The modern Muslim however, heavily influenced by the reformist discourse, specifically the introduction of what were traditionally issues of scholarly concern into the public discourse, has rendered the layman a critic and evaluator of centuries old traditions. The resulting pressure precipitated by the need to conceptualise all Islamic tradition with direct reference to the mere literal meanings of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* has left contemporary scholars of Islam scrambling to justify *madhhab* legitimacy in terms that the Muslim layman can understand.

Hence, the recent efforts of at least one research house in Dubai<sup>43</sup> to produce the *Mukhtaṣar* of al-Dardīr with textual evidence, as well as the work of the Moroccan scholar, Aḥmad ibn Ṣiddīq al-Ghumārī (d. 1961) and his students to republish Mālikī works with textual evidence.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, the four-source theory of Islamic juristic reasoning and its extension of generalisation to legal schools besides the Shāfi'ī school has bolstered an intellectual environment within Muslim intellectual circles and without that frowns upon the use of *madhhab* based legal rulings not easily conforming to this theory.

Fadel raises the question of whether the Mālikī *madhhab* specifically can always directly draw from "revelatory sources" for all its legal rulings, as evidenced by his study of the legal issue concerning collateral for debt

<sup>43</sup> Dār al-Buḥūth lī al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya – now defunct, but produced several research monographs in the late 90's and early 2000's dedicated to the study of the Mālikī *madhhab* and its juristic methodology. Several of those works have been cited in this study, such as 'Alī, *Iṣṭilāḥ Al-Madhhab 'Ind Al-Mālikiyya*.

<sup>44</sup> See Aḥmad Ibn al-Ṣiddīq and 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, *Masālik Al-Dalālah Fī Sharḥ Matn Al-Risālah* (Dimashq: Dār al-Fikr); 'Abd Allāh Talīdī and Aḥmad Ibn al-Ṣiddīq, *Itmām Al-Minnah Bi-Sharḥ Minhāj Al-Jannah Fī Fiqh Al-Sunnah*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, 1999).

securitisation.<sup>45</sup> He alleges that the Mālikī *madhhab* makes copious use of the juristic principle of *istiḥsān* (juristic preference), based upon the alleged quote of Mālik that “*istiḥsān* is nine tenths of [legal] knowledge.”<sup>46</sup> However, it appears that Fadel restricts the meaning of “revelatory sources” to literal meanings, and, as a result, overstates the use of *istiḥsān* to account for the lack of direct references to the literal purports of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. This is concluded based upon his (mis)translation of Ibn Rushd the Grandson’s qualifying statement regarding the basis for understanding his comparative *fiqh* manual, *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*:<sup>47</sup>

Ibn Rushd himself is aware of the limited scope of his book, and in his (very brief) introduction he reminds his readers that the purpose of the book is limited to “cases having a textual basis in revelation or are closely related thereto” (*wa ḥādhihi al-masā’il fī al-akthar hiya al-masā’il al-manṭūq biha fī al-shar’ aw tata’allaq bi al-manṭūq bihi ta’alluqan qarīban*). While not surprising, his failure to explain rules that are not “closely related” to revelatory sources is disappointing because it certainly must be the case that, at least in purely quantitative terms, rules derived from non-revelatory sources make up the vast majority of actual Islamic law...at least in the Mālikī school.

It appears that Fadel fails to appreciate the juristic term of *manṭūq* (explicit meaning), as he completely disregards it in his translation of Ibn Rushd’s statement, and limits its meaning to “textual basis”. Ascribing all legal rulings that do not fall within the *manṭūq* as falling under the principle of *istiḥsān* is an egregious error. Scriptural hermeneutics found in the classical discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh* often uses dichotomies to illustrate the rules for extrapolating meanings. The *manṭūq-mafhūm* (explicit-implicit) dichotomy is one such dichotomy, and it cannot be reasonably argued that implicit meanings are akin to non-revelatory sources, as Fadel alleges.

However, Ibn Rushd demonstrates the inherent limitations found in the discipline of comparative *fiqh*, as legal rulings based upon disparate

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<sup>45</sup> Mohammed Fadel, “*Istiḥsān* is Nine-Tenths of the Law: The Puzzling Relationship of *Uṣūl* to *Furū’* in the Mālikī *Madhhab*,” in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, ed. Bernard G. Weiss, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 161-76.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.



methodologies – perhaps even disparate paradigms, as may be the case in the Mālikī *madhhab*, in comparison to the other schools– is limited to very basic explicit textual inferences. The *mafḥūm dalīl* is based upon revelatory sources, albeit via an implicit inference, rather than an explicit rendering of the textual wording. For example, the Qur’ānic injunction against reviling one’s parents: *wa lā taqul lahumā uffan wa lā tanharhumā* (and do not say to them [one’s parents] a word of contempt, and do not revile them)<sup>48</sup> denotes an implicit understanding that one should also not strike or kill them.<sup>49</sup>

The discussion above underscores the uniqueness, as well as difficulty that both the ‘*ulamā*’ and Western academics alike, face in determining the dominant legal rulings in the Mālikī school, as well as the basis upon which these legal rulings can be identified and justified in light of textual evidence. Implicit or “soft” hermeneutical tools that employ judicious use of nuance and context are not easily comprehensible to a mind-set looking for explicit, if not literal, overtures to Islam’s primary sources. Ibn al-Ḥājj, Khalīl, and al-Dardīr were not subject to this particular paradigm, and their works reflect the discursive tradition of Islam – namely that they were in a conversation with one another as well as their other predecessors and contemporaries. A closer analysis of the Mālikī tradition reveals that rather than forgoing the notion of a text-proof based methodology, as with the Shāfi‘ī school, certain social, historical, as well as contextual factors led to the way that the Mālikī tradition developed in the manner that it did.

First and foremost, examining the teaching style and personality of Mālik himself reveals that he was a *muḥaddith*, steeply committed to the compilation

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<sup>48</sup> Qur’ān (17:23)

<sup>49</sup> Yaḥyā ibn Mūsā Rahūnī, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Umar Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Tuḥfat Al-Mas’ul Fī Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Muntahā Al-Sūl*, ed. al-Hādī ibn Ḥusayn Shubaylī. (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth lil-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīyah wa-lḥyā’ al-Turāth, 2002), 3:324.

and criticism of Prophetic reports. His book, the *Muwatṭa*, is arguably the first book of *ḥadīth* ever written. Yet, his manner of transmitting the Prophetic reports clearly differed from the way that he transmitted his legal opinions. ‘Iyāḍ narrates that when a person would come to his house looking for him, his servant would be instructed to ask: “Are you interested in legal issues (*masā’il*) or *ḥadīth*?” If the former, Mālik would answer the person’s query without any further delay. However, if the latter, he would take a purificatory bath, apply his finest scents, wear his finest white cloak and turban before narrating any *ḥadīth*.<sup>50</sup>

The different chains of narration also reveal a distinction between *fiqh* and *ḥadīth* transmission. There are several narrators of the *Muwatṭa*, including Ibn al-Qāsim, Mālik’s most renowned student in *fiqh*, Ibn Wahb, another prominent Egyptian student of Mālik. However, there are many other narrators of the *Muwatṭa*, some of whom were not students of Mālik’s jurisprudence, such as al-Shaybānī, the companion of Abū Ḥanīfa. The most widespread narration of the *Muwatṭa* throughout its history has been that of Yaḥyā al-Laythī (d. 224/839), an Andalusian scholar who spent much less time with Mālik than the main propagators of Mālik’s jurisprudence. This indicates that the *masā’il* were transmitted without mention of juristic evidence. Such was the respect and deference accorded to Mālik; though this was more of a function of the era and place he lived in – second/eighth century Medina, where the stories of the early followers of the Prophet Muḥammad were still fresh in the collective mind-set. The historian Ibn Ishāq, a contemporary of Mālik, was able to piece together his famous biography of the Prophet, based upon such memories.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> See introduction in: ‘Iyāḍ, *Tartīb Al-Madārik Wa-Taqrīb Al-Masālik*, 1:10-35.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām and Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *Al-Sīrah Al-Nabawīyah Al-Ma‘rūfah Bi-Sīrat Ibn Hishām*, (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1996).

The polemics and theological tensions that were rife in Iraq were virtually non-existent in Medina. Providing supportive evidence and articulating methodology were simply uncharacteristic of the monastery like environment of Mālik's Medina. Nevertheless, as Wymann-Landgraf asserts, Mālik indeed did have a constant and consistent methodology, which he demonstrates in his analysis of the *Muwatṭa*.<sup>52</sup> As was demonstrated above, the *Mudawwana* played a larger role in the transmission of Mālik's legal opinions; a document at its core a transcript of Mālik's *majālis* in the style of *nawāzil* (question and answer), and devoid of supporting proof-texts.

The *madhhab* was then transmitted in this fashion in North Africa and to some extent in Egypt, where there was no tradition of *jadal* and *munāẓara* as there was in the intellectual centres of the East: Kufa, Basra, and later Baghdad. The Iraqi Mālikī school did indeed adopt the style of its intellectual environment, but as was noted earlier, died with the passing of its greatest exponent, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Baghdādī in the fifth/twelfth century.<sup>53</sup>

This discussion is germane to the overall question of al-Dardīr's *fiqh* as it is imperative to identify the paradigm that preceded al-Dardīr in order to understand the one that he played a role in establishing. This is further analysed in the sections dealing with al-Dardīr's two specific works in *fiqh*, *al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* and *al-Sharḥ al-Ṣaghīr*. To further establish this paradigm, it is important to look at the work of Ibn al-Ḥājib and Khalīl. He established the *mukhtaṣar* paradigm in the Mālikī tradition, whilst Khalīl wrote its authoritative commentary. Khalīl later extended that paradigm to its fruition in the form of his

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<sup>52</sup> Wymann-Landgraf, *Mālik and Medina : Islamic Reasoning in the Formative Period*, 273-93.

<sup>53</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see: Badawī 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Ṭāhir, *Manhaj Kitābat Al-Fiqh Al-Mālikī Bayn Al-Tajrīd Wa Al-Tadlīl* (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth li al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya wa lhyā' al-Turāth, 2002), 43-79.

own *mukhtaṣar*, which became the standard manual at the near exclusion of all others in the Mālikī tradition.

## Al-Dardīr's Commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl

The *mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl ibn Ishāq al-Jundī (d. 776/1374) represents the most comprehensive and authoritative source of Mālikī legal rulings in the period after the seventh/fourteenth century, and is easily the most commented upon Mālikī legal text, with known commentaries numbering over sixty.<sup>54</sup> The most famous of these are the commentaries of Bahrām ibn ‘Abd Allāh (805/1403), Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 954/1547), ‘Alī al-Ujhūrī (d. 1066/1656), ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī (d. 1099/1688), Muḥammad al-Kharashī (d. 1101/1689), and al-Dardīr.<sup>55</sup> The *Mukhtaṣar* essentially replaced the treatise of Ibn al-Ḥājjib, *Jāmi’ al-Ummahāt*, as the premier didactic text for the Mālikī *madhhab*, in the same manner that *Jāmi’ al-Ummahāt* replaced *Tahdhīb al-Mudawwana* before it.

The discursive tradition – as exemplified by the progression from the “mother texts” (*al-ummahāt*), pre-eminently the *Mudawwana*, to its abridgement (the *Tahdhīb*), to the *Jāmi’ al-Ummahāt* of Ibn al-Ḥājjib, to the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl, to the *Aqrab al-Masālik*<sup>56</sup> of al-Dardīr – exemplifies a continuous transhistorical conversation, as well as a progression, by which textual authority was conferred. Undoubtedly the waning political fortunes of the Muslim world played a role in the way that didactic and legal texts were produced, but they were a factor amongst many, and cannot be singularly specified as the sole reason for the intellectual trajectory. Other, not less significant factors were the influence of other intellectual currents in the various Muslim lands, such as the North African trend of re-establishing Sunnism in the post-Fatimid period. Additionally, the relative dominance the Mālikī *madhhab* enjoyed in North and

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<sup>54</sup> Khalīl ibn Ishāq, *Al-Tawḍīḥ Fī Sharḥ Al-Mukhtaṣar Al-Far’ī Li-Ibn Al-Ḥājjib*, 1:49-50.

<sup>55</sup> All of who were Egyptian except for al-Ḥaṭṭāb, who was Moroccan.

<sup>56</sup> Discussed in the next section.

West Africa contributed towards the lack of polemical discussion in many Mālikī legal texts, unlike their Ḥanafī and Shāfi'ī counterparts.

The *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl was such a widely acclaimed and ubiquitous text in the colonised lands of the Maghreb that it piqued the interest of the Europeans. It was translated into French, Italian, and English, all before the end of the nineteenth century, save for the English translation which was completed in 1919, based upon the earlier French translation.<sup>57</sup> Islamic courts in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Sudan, Nigeria, and Senegal still refer to the *Mukhtaṣar* as the primary legal manual for issuing rulings in personal and family courts.<sup>58</sup> The popularity of the *Mukhtaṣar* as a manual for Islamic life in North and West Africa has prompted some to remark that the book has supplanted the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* as the primary source of Islam.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, many young seminary students in Mauritania and other areas of West Africa commit the *Mukhtaṣar* to memory using the traditional *lawḥ* (wooden tablet) system.<sup>60</sup>

Khalīl ibn Ishāq al-Jundī was a soldier in the Mamlūk army and renown for wearing his soldier's uniform, even during his lessons at al-Azhar. Though his father was a Ḥanafī, he preferred to study the Mālikī *madhhab*, at the behest and encouragement of his teacher, 'Abd Allāh al-Manūfī (d. 749/1358).<sup>61</sup> The Mālikī hagiographer, Ibn Farḥūn, a contemporary of Khalīl, reports that his *Mukhtaṣar* gained wide acceptance and popularity amongst his students during his lifetime, as he "attempted to report only the *mashhūr* (most agreed upon

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<sup>57</sup> Aḥmad Bābā al-Tinbaktī, *Kifāyat Al-Muḥtāj Fī Ma'rifat Man Lays Fī Al-Dībāj* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2002), 126.

<sup>58</sup> Shamil Jeppie, Ebrahim Moosa, and Richard L. Roberts, *Muslim Family Law in Sub-Saharan Africa : Colonial Legacies and Post-Colonial Challenges* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 143.

<sup>59</sup> al-Ḥijawī, *Al-Fikr Al-Sāmī Fī Tārīkh Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmī*, 2:493.

<sup>60</sup> I personally witnessed this on a trip to one of the open-air seminaries (*maḥḍaras*) in southern Mauritania in July 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Musa Ali Ajetunmobi, "A Critical Study of Mukhtaṣar Khalīl," *Islamic Studies* 25, no. 3 (1986): 276-77.

opinions), and avoid mention of dissenting opinions.”<sup>62</sup> Al-Tinbaktī, reporting over two centuries later, states that the *Mukhtaṣar* became virtually the only Mālikī text studied in learning centres such as Fez and Marrakesh. He also cites this phenomenon as evidence for the waning of knowledge, despite his praise for Khalīl and his works.<sup>63</sup>

As has been noted by the *Mukhtaṣar*’s critics, the language of the text is cryptic, and routinely ignores the grammatical axioms of proper Arabic, such as the usage of double prepositional particles like the *bāʾ* followed by the *kāf*. For example, in the passage dealing with marriage annulment, Khalīl mentions: “*wa lahā faqaṭ al-radd bil-judhām al-bayyin waʾl-baraṣ al-muḍirr al-ḥādithayn baʾdahu la bikaʾtirāḍ wa bi junūnihimā*”<sup>64</sup> (and she is allowed to annul [the marriage] in the case [of the husband] having clear leprosy, or open and contagious skin sores that occur after [the marriage contract is concluded], not [to be annulled] with something like male impotence.” The awkwardness of the language is obvious, if not by the necessity of extensive use of brackets to fill in contextual meaning that would otherwise leave the text unreadable. It is for this reason that it is said that not a single word of the *Mukhtaṣar* can be omitted or substituted without affecting the integrity of the text.<sup>65</sup>

### Khalīl’s Terminology in the *Mukhtaṣar*

Like his predecessor, Khalīl also employs a specialist terminology, albeit much simpler, as illustrated in the following table:<sup>66</sup>

Term	Meaning
<i>Khilāf</i> (Difference)	Indicates a difference amongst the

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Farḥūn, *Al-Dībāj Al-Mudhahhab Fī Maʾrifat ʾAyān ʾUlamāʾ Al-Madhab*, 1:358.

<sup>63</sup> al-Tinbaktī, *Kifāyat Al-Muḥtāj Fī Maʾrifat Man Lays Fī Al-Dībāj*, 158.

<sup>64</sup> al-Jundī Khalīl ibn Ishāq, *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl Fī Fiqh Al-Imām Mālik* (Miṣr: Maṭbaʾ at ʾĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Shurakāhu), 132.

<sup>65</sup> Bahrām ibn ʾAbd illāh al-Dimīrī, *Al-Durar Fī Sharḥ Al-Mukhtaṣar*, ed. Ḥāfiẓ ibn ʾAbd al-Raḥmān Khayr, and Aḥmad ʾAbd al-Karīm Najīb (Qatar: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shiʾūn al-Islāmiyya Qatar, 2014), 90.

<sup>66</sup> See Khalīl’s introduction: Khalīl ibn Ishāq, *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl Fī Fiqh Al-Imām Mālik*, 3-4.

	Mālikī jurists as regards to the <i>mashhūr</i> for a given legal issue
<i>Taraddud</i> (Hesitation)	Hesitation amongst the later Mālikīs to cite a specific opinion due to a hesitation on the part of the earlier scholars or to an absence of a narration from one of them indicating a particular ruling
<i>Qawlān, Aqwāl</i> (Differing opinions)	Indicates where Khalīl was unable to determine which of the cited opinions is the <i>mashhūr</i>
<i>Fī-hā</i> (In it)	In the <i>Mudawwana</i>
<i>Uwwil, ta'wīl, ta'wīlāt</i> (Interpreted)	Indicates a difference in interpretation amongst the earlier scholars for the extension of a particular ruling
<i>Ikhtiyār</i> (Individual selection)	Individual selection of al-Lakhamī (d. 498/1092)
<i>Tarjīh, arjah</i> (Juristic Preference)	Juristic preference of Ibn Yūnus, commentator on the <i>Mudawwana</i> (d. 451/1059)
<i>Ẓuhūr, aẓhar</i> (Apparent)	The legal opinion of Ibn Rushd the grandfather
<i>Qawl, qāl</i> (Opinion)	The legal opinion of al-Māzirī (d. 536/1142)
<i>Ṣuḥḥih</i> (Verified)	Verified contrary to the opinion of either al-Lakhamī, Ibn Yūnus, Ibn Rushd, or al-Māzirī
<i>Ustihsin</i> (Preferred)	Same as <i>ṣuḥḥih</i>
<i>Law</i> (If)	Indicates an opinion contrary to another <i>madhhab</i>

As the table illustrates, Khalīl dispenses with most of the terminology that characterises Ibn al-Ḥājjib's compendium. In doing so, he sought to reflect the opinions by which the fatwa is issued, stating: "And so it was that a group, may God guide them and me to the milestones of [intellectual] verification, and to the most beneficial of paths, requested a synopsis according to the *madhhab* of Imam Mālik ibn Anas, designating that by which the fatwa should be issued."<sup>67</sup> Khalīl manages to do this by primarily limiting his scholarly sources to four: al-Lakhamī, Ibn Yūnus, Ibn Rushd, and al-Māzirī. None of these four were amongst the direct students of Mālik, such as Ibn al-Qāsim or Ashhab, having

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 3.



lived a few centuries after them; they all lived in the period the Mālikī tradition was in its “developmental” phase, so they were akin to the critical evaluators in the *ḥadīth* tradition, such as al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Al-Dasūqī, in his gloss on al-Dardīr’s commentary on Khalīl, states:<sup>68</sup>

These four were specifically mentioned because none of the other later scholars (*muta’khhirīn*) exerted as much effort as they did in critically analysing and synopsising the *madhhab* as they did. Ibn Yūnus is mentioned specifically with *tarjīḥ* because most of his efforts were towards the opinions of those before him and that which he chose for himself was minimal. Ibn Rushd is mentioned specifically with *zuhūr* because he relies on the ostensible purport of the [older] narrations...al-Māzīrī is mentioned specifically with *qawl* because of his adroitness in the disciplines and his ability to navigate them like the *mujtahids*; he became someone who can issue his own opinions (*ṣāhib qawl*) that can be relied upon. Al-Lakhamī is mentioned specifically with *ikhtiyār* because he was the boldest amongst (*ajra’hum*) to do that [issue a personal selection].

The oldest of the group, Ibn Yūnus, a Sicilian jurist, wrote an encyclopaedic work appropriately entitled *Kitāb al-Jāmi’ li Masā’il al-Mudawwana wa al-Ummahāt*, which as the title suggests, encompasses the legal rulings cited in the *Mudawwana*, the *Mukhtalifa*, the *Mustakhrija* (‘*Utbiyya*), the *Mawwāziyya*, and the compilative work of Ibn Abī Zayd, al-Nawādir wa al-Ziyādāt.<sup>69</sup> Al-Lakhamī, who wrote an annotation (*ta’līq*) on the *Mudawwana* entitled the *Tabṣira*, is easily the most controversial of the four. His “boldness” in sometimes dissenting from the dominant opinions of the *madhhab* earned him this reputation, but apparently, the Mālikī tradition looked more favourably upon him by the time Khalīl wrote his *Mukhtaṣar*.<sup>70</sup> Al-Māzīrī was a polymath who also excelled in medicine, and was known for his precision in connecting the positive law (*furu’*) with their foundational principles (*‘uṣūl*), to the degree he was considered an “imam” in the *madhhab* capable of deriving legal rulings based upon Mālik’s juristic methodology. He wrote an annotation of the *Mudawwana* as well as primer in *uṣūl al-fiqh*.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Dasūqī, ‘Ilāyish, and Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Dasūqī ‘alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 1:22

<sup>69</sup> ‘Alī, *Iṣṭilāḥ Al-Madhhab ‘Ind Al-Mālikīyya*, 289-90.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Iyāḍ ibn, *Tartīb Al-Madārik Wa-Taqrīb Al-Masālik*, 359.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Farḥūn, *Al-Dībāj Al-Mudhahhab Fi Ma’rifat ‘Ayān ‘Ulamā’ Al-Madhhab*, 2:250-52.

Ibn Rushd, the most renowned of the group, is unanimously agreed upon as the greatest jurist of his generation. His famous grandson of the same name, but more commonly referred to as the Philosopher, Averroes, was also a jurist, but not of the calibre and prestige accorded to his grandfather. Ibn Rushd the grandfather was considered to have reached the level of *mujtahid madhhab*.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, Khalīl's methodology can be summarised as taking the compendium of Ibn al-Ḥājjib as a general guide, but then using the four juristic sources where the *mashhūr* was not explicitly cited by him or where he thought that the selection of the one of the four sources was the *rājiḥ* or stronger opinion. Despite his considerable efforts, Khalīl acknowledges that he was not always able to designate the dominant opinion for a given legal issue. The following table demonstrates the number of times he uses a term designating two or more dominant opinions in the *madhhab*:

Term	Number of Occurrences
<i>Khilāf</i>	67
<i>Taraddud</i>	73
<i>Uwwil, etc.</i>	107
<i>Qawlān, Aqwāl</i>	118
<i>Arjaḥ</i>	26
<i>Aḥzar</i>	15
<i>Aṣaḥḥ</i>	37
<i>Mukhtār</i>	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>

While the table above is not exhaustive (by omitting the rulings where Khalīl does report a single opinion), it does demonstrate that Khalīl does not always

<sup>72</sup> 'Alī, *Iṣṭilāḥ Al-Madhhab 'Ind Al-Mālikiyya*, 316.

specify a single fatwa opinion. It was presumably left to the teacher in the *majālis al-ta'lim* to do so while reading the *Mukhtaṣar*.

Additionally, there is an inherent level of ambiguity in the *extension of legal rulings or lack thereof* as al-Dardīr mentions in the opening lines of his commentary on his own *mukhtaṣar*, *Aqrab al-Masālik*<sup>73</sup> (*taqyīd mā aṭlaq wa iṭlāq mā qayyad*). This refers to the tendency of Khalīl in some instances to extend a legal ruling to a larger group of actions, when there may be qualifying factors that render the ruling applicable to a smaller subset of that group. Conversely, he sometimes delimits rulings when they apply to a larger group. Presumably, Khalīl might have been aware of these issues and purposefully left them ambiguous on the reasonable assumption that the *Mukhtaṣar*'s didactic value cannot be fully realised except as a text to be read in the *majlis al-ta'lim*, and not as a standalone text to be read alone, as that was never the paradigm established in the *mukhtaṣar* tradition.

Alternatively, it has been noted that Khalīl actually wrote about one third of the *Mukhtaṣar*, and that his students based upon his first draft (*musawwada*) completed the remaining two thirds. This leaves the possibility, however remote, that these were issues that would have been addressed had he lived to oversee the production of the final draft.<sup>74</sup> Whatever the case may be, the need for authoritative commentaries on the *Mukhtaṣar* was an acute need, for both its brilliance, as well as its difficulty. The number of Mālikī jurists who penned commentaries and glosses on the text is a testament to this fact, as there is no likely no other *mukhtaṣar* of any discipline that have had as many commentaries and glosses dedicated to it.

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<sup>73</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 1:19.

<sup>74</sup> See introduction in: al-Dimīrī, *Al-Durar Fī Sharḥ Al-Mukhtaṣar*, 69-70.

### Other Commentaries of the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl

The *Mukhtaṣar* enjoyed a level of attention not accorded to any other book in the Mālikī tradition, save for the *Muwaṭṭa* and the *Mudawwana*. It can even be argued that after the seventh/thirteenth century, the attention accorded the *Mukhtaṣar* via commentaries and glosses surpassed that of the *Muwaṭṭa* and the *Mudawwana*. Some of the main commentaries considered authoritative include the following:

- 1) The minor, major, and middle commentaries of Bahrām al-Dimīrī (d. 805/1402). Considered the first commentaries written on the *Mukhtaṣar*, as well as the first multiple commentaries by a single author in the Mālikī tradition.
- 2) The commentary of ‘Abd Allāh al-Afqahsī (d. 823/1420), a student of Khalīl.
- 3) The incomplete commentary of Muḥammad ibn Marzūq (d. 842/1438) covered only the beginning of the text and two sections near the end.
- 4) The major and minor commentaries of Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Mawwāq (d. 897/1492). Popular short treatment of the *Mukhtaṣar* available in published form in the margins of al-Ḥaṭṭāb’s commentary.<sup>75</sup>
- 5) The major commentary of the Moroccan jurist Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 953 or 954/1546 or 1547), *Mawāhib al-Jalīl*. Considered the most thorough treatment of the *Mukhtaṣar*, and second only to the commentary of al-Dardīr in its level of authoritativeness in the Mālikī tradition. Widely available in published form.<sup>76</sup>
- 6) The major, minor, and middle commentaries of ‘Alī al-Ujhūrī (d. 1066/1656). Is generally credited with applying an “Egyptian” approach in

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<sup>75</sup> Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥaṭṭāb, al-Jundī Khalīl ibn Ishāq, and Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Mawwāq, *Mawāhib Al-Jalīl Li-Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1422).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

his commentaries that was adopted by his students, al-Zurqānī, and al-Kharashī. Moroccan Mālikīs, despite their appreciation for his vast scholarship, took issue with the lack of precision in his encyclopaedic like commentaries, which also affected the work of his students. This led them to discourage their students from reading the books of the “Ujhūriyya” without one of the glosses of either al-Bannānī on al-Zurqānī’s commentary or that of al-Ṣa’īdī on al-Kharashī’s commentary.<sup>77</sup>

- 7) The commentary of ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī (d. 1099/1688). A summary of his teacher’s commentary, al-Ujhūrī, that found wide acceptance except for the perceived mistakes that were carried over from the original.
- 8) The major and minor commentaries of Muḥammad al-Kharashī (d. 1101/1690). A contemporary of al-Zurqānī and student of al-Ujhūrī. His minor commentary found broad appeal and was the principal didactic text used in the Maghreb and Egypt before the appearance of the commentary of al-Dardīr.

These commentaries essentially aimed to unlock the meanings of the *Mukhtaṣar*, some in an encyclopaedic manner, others very brief, but the last two mentioned became the standard commentaries used over a large area from the Maghreb to Egypt. The *ḥāshiya* (gloss) was a later development tradition that apparently addressed the putative imperfections in the commentaries of al-Zurqānī and al-Kharashī.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See al-Ḥijawī, *Al-Fikr Al-Sāmī Fī Tārīkh Al-Fiqh Al-Islāmī*, 2:279.

<sup>78</sup> See El Shamsy’s treatment of the *ḥāshiya* in the Shāfi’ī tradition in: Ahmed El Shamsy, “The Ḥāshiya in Islamic Law: A Sketch of the Shāfi’ī Literature,” *Oriens* 41, no. 3/4 (2013).

The following sections provide an analysis of al-Dardīr's methodology in his commentary as well as a comparison between the commentaries of al-Kharashī of al-Dardīr to illustrate this point further.

### **Analysis of al-Dardīr's Major Commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar***

Similar to the reception of his predecessor, Ibn Ḥājib, upon releasing his compendium, Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar* was virtually adopted by all Mālikīs to the degree that almost no other synopses were given much attention in the way of commentary or gloss. Al-Dardīr's commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl, often referred to as "*al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr*" (the major commentary), has found wide acceptance until the present day and is considered the premier text for the most authoritative Mālikī legal opinions.<sup>79</sup> He finished writing the commentary in 1197/1783, only three years before his death. There is no doubt that he regularly taught the *Mukhtaṣar* in his regular classes at al-Azhar and elsewhere, indicating the likely possibility he based his commentary on "classroom" experience with his students. This would also lend credibility to the argument that al-Dardīr's primary motivation in writing the commentary was pedagogical, rather than legal i.e. producing a work that would aid judges in their court edicts.

In his introduction, he states his intended outcomes for potential beneficiaries of the commentary, namely to "elucidate that which is obscure, to qualify that which needs qualification, and to include only the *mu'tamad* (relied upon opinions) from the legal rulings of the Mālikī jurists." He further mentions that when he mentions a single opinion on any given issue, then that opinion represents the *rājiḥ* (preponderant opinion), and it then becomes obligatory to

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<sup>79</sup> This I heard directly from Dr. Aḥmad Ta Ha Rayyān, the former dean of the Sharī'a college at the Azhar University in Cairo, widely regarded as one of the foremost scholars of Mālikī legal rulings in the world.

issue fatwas based upon this *rājiḥ*.<sup>80</sup> In this language of authority, al-Dardīr departs somewhat from the style of his predecessors.

The commentary of Muḥammad al-Kharashī (d. 1101/1690)<sup>81</sup>, the premier commentary studied in al-Azhar before that of al-Dardīr, does not invoke such language. In his introduction to his minor commentary, al-Kharashī states his reasons for penning the major commentary<sup>82</sup>, which refer to *ḥill al-alfāz* (deciphering of the text), and including explanation of the original *matn*'s *taqyīdāt* (qualifying purports), and *fawā'id* (supporting notes). No mention is made of producing a result that reaches a single fatwa conclusion on each legal issue. Al-Ṣa'īdī, one of the two principle teachers of al-Dardīr, penned a gloss on al-Kharashī's commentary. Al-Zabīdī claims that it was the first gloss (*ḥāshiya*) to be written by the Mālikī 'ulamā'.<sup>83</sup> The commentary of Muḥammad al-Ḥaṭṭāb (d. 954/1547)<sup>84</sup>, considered one of the most comprehensive commentaries of the *Mukhtaṣar*, also does not invoke such an authoritative stance, but was written as a compendium of several commentaries, including the three commentaries of Bahrām. Al-Ḥaṭṭāb mentions in his prologue to his commentary that his major objective was to explicate only those passages that might be deemed *mushkil* (unclear) from the *Mukhtaṣar*. However, he then realised that clarity is a relative phenomenon, and that it was more beneficial for

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<sup>80</sup> Dasūqī, 'Ilāyish, and Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Dasūqī 'alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 1:20.

<sup>81</sup> He was the first *shaykh* of al-Azhar, and was renowned for both his piety and scholarly credentials. See Makhlūf, *Shajarat Al-Nūr Al-Zakiyya*, 317.

<sup>82</sup> Al-Kharashī authored a major commentary, which he references often in his minor commentary. He offers as a rationale for the writing of the minor commentary the inability of less capable students of grasping and understanding the subtleties of the major commentary. See Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh Kharashī, al-Jundī Khalīl ibn Ishāq, and 'Alī ibn Aḥmad 'Adawī, *Sharḥ Al-Muḥaqqiq Al-Jahbidh Al-Fāḍil Al-Mudaqqiq Sīdī Abī 'abd Allāh Muḥammad Al-Kharashī 'alā Al-Mukhtaṣar Al-Jalīl Li-Abī Al-Ḍiyā' Sīdī Khalīl ; Wa-Bi-Hāmishihi Ḥāshiyat 'alī Al-'adawī*, (Miṣr: al-Maṭba'ah al-Khayrīyah, 1307).

<sup>83</sup> al-Zabīdī, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mukhtaṣ*, 489.

<sup>84</sup> For biographical reference see: al-Tinbaktī, *Kifāyat Al-Muḥtāj Fi Ma'rifat Man Lays Fi Al-Dībāj*, 468-70.

him to author a complete commentary on all of the issues of the *Mukhtaṣar*, rather than just the passages he deemed ambiguous.<sup>85</sup>

An analysis of al-Dardīr's commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl reveals that his focus centres upon three main areas:

- 1) Linguistic explication to unlock the terse text of Khalīl,
- 2) Designation of the most reliable opinions (*al-mu'tamad*), and
- 3) "Correcting" Khalīl's lack of precision in his citing of some legal opinions.

These three areas correspond to the concepts of *tabṣīṭ* (simplification), *tarjīḥ* (weighing of evidence to arrive at the most reliable opinion), and *taḥqīq* (verification). These concepts define the work of al-Dardīr in general, and can be extended to the other disciplines, most notably *'aqīda* and *taṣawwuf*.<sup>86</sup> For the most part, al-Dardīr's commentary, along with the text of Khalīl, reads as one contiguous text, focusing on deciphering the words and phrases of the text by interlaying his commentary in between them, as in the following:<sup>87</sup>

(*Sunna*) *sunnatan mu'akkada (lī musāfir) rajul aw imra'a (ghayr 'āṣin bihi) ay bi al-safar fa 'umn'a qasr 'āṣ bihi ka ābiq wa qāṭi' ṭarīq wa 'āq fa in tāb qaṣar in baqiya ba'dahā al-masāfa wa in 'aṣa bihi fī athnā'hi atamm wujuban ḥīna'idh fa'in qaṣar lam yu'id 'alā al-aṣwab*

It is a confirmed (*sunna*) (for the traveller), whether male or female, (who is not sinning) with his travel, for otherwise it would be prohibited to shorten prayers for someone such as a runaway [slave] or highway robber or insubordinate [son or daughter to a parent]. If he commences such a sin while traveling, then he must by way of obligation pray the un-shortened prayer at that point; if he shortens the prayer [nonetheless] then he does not repeat the prayer according to the more correct [opinion].

The interlay style of the commentary is emblematic of al-Dardīr's approach to his commentaries, as it is also the technique used in *Aqrab al-Masālik*, and his commentary on his *'aqīda*, *al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya*. Compared to earlier commentaries on the *Mukhtaṣar*, such as the major commentary of Bahrām, and the commentary of al-Kharashī, al-Dardīr's style exemplifies his

<sup>85</sup> Ḥaṭṭāb, Khalīl ibn Ishāq, and Mawwāq, *Mawāhib Al-Jalīl Li-Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Khalīl*, 1:3.

<sup>86</sup> Discussed at length in chapters 2 and 4.

<sup>87</sup> Dasūqī, 'Illaysh, and Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Dasūqī 'alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 1:358.



commitment to simplicity, where the lines of separation between text and commentary become blurred, facilitating the reading of the commentary in a *majlis ta'lim* like environment.

Stylistically, al-Dardīr also follows the internal division of the *Mukhtaṣar* into *abwāb* (chapters) and *fuṣūl* (sub-chapters), but additionally assigns names to the headings, something that the original fails to do.

A comparison between al-Dardīr's commentary and the commentary of al-Kharashī, his principal predecessor, reveals similarities as well as differences in style and technique. Most significantly, al-Kharashī focuses his commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar*'s sentences. Al-Dardīr focuses primarily on the individual words. Interestingly, al-Zurqānī also focuses on words and phrases rather than sentences. Al-Dardīr's teacher, al-Ṣa'īdī, in his gloss of al-Kharashī's commentary, also tends to focus on the words of the commentary rather than whole sentences. This style is also adopted by Muḥammad al-Dasūqī (d. 1230/1815), the author of the gloss on al-Dardīr's commentary. This may be a reflection of a later development in the Mālikī tradition, in an effort reminiscent of the early *ummahāt* works which were much more readable than later *mukhtaṣars*, specifically those of Khalīl and Ibn al-Ḥājib. It may also demonstrate the intention on the part of al-Dardīr for both the text and commentary to be read in the *majlis al-'ilm* without differentiation between them.

In terms of pedagogy, this signifies al-Dardīr's desire to shift the focus from a largely unintelligible *mukhtaṣar* to a more readable and accessible text-commentary combination. He also follows a similar pattern in *Aqrab al-Masālik*, as well as the *Kharīda*, though he is the author of both text and commentary in both works. For al-Dardīr, the *matn* and *sharḥ* were predominant genres that he may have felt somewhat beholden. However, this did not preclude him from

shifting the paradigm in the audition of the lesson, audibly reading the *matn* and *sharḥ* as if they were a single text. The *ḥāshiya* then replaced the *sharḥ* of the earlier period as the “commentary” on the new “combined” text.

Though he does not expressly articulate his methodology, it can be gleaned by comparing al-Dardīr’s commentary to those of his predecessors, especially to the commentary of al-Kharashī, which al-Dardīr used as a baseline. The commentary of al-Kharashī was the standard commentary of the *Mukhtaṣar* until al-Dardīr wrote his own commentary. Al-Kharashī was the first *shaykh* of al-Azhar, and was the recipient of wide praise from al-Ṣaʿīdī, who penned a gloss on his commentary. He mentions that at the end of his life, there only remained his students and students of his students, as well as his pious devotion and sense of humour as amongst his particular characteristics.<sup>88</sup> Al-Kharashī’s main teacher in Mālikī *fiqh* was ‘Alī al-Ujhūrī (d. 1066/1655), who in addition to al-Kharashī, was the principal teacher of ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī (d. 1099/1687), and Ibrāhīm al-Shabrakhītī (d. 1106/1694), both of whom penned commentaries on the *Mukhtaṣar*.<sup>89</sup> The three students’ commentaries of the *Mukhtaṣar* did not depart from the style and methodology of their master, al-Ujhūrī, and became the standard commentary for the Mālikī scholars of al-Azhar, particularly those of al-Zurqānī and al-Kharashī.

However, these commentaries were not without their detractors, specifically the Mālikī scholars of the Maghreb. Their main gripe with the Ujhūrīan methodology was the issue of the *mashhūr* or *rājiḥ* opinions cited by al-Ujhūrī and his students. Their distrust of this particular Egyptian school of jurisprudence led them to censure the use of the commentaries without

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<sup>88</sup> Kharashī, Khalīl ibn Ishāq, and ‘Adawī, *Sharḥ Al-Muḥaqqiq Al-Jahbidh Al-Fāḍil Al-Mudaqqiq Sīdī Abī ‘abd Allāh Muḥammad Al-Kharashī ‘alā Al-Mukhtaṣar Al-Jalīl Li-Abī Al-Ḍiyā’ Sīdī Khalīl ; Wa-Bi-Hāmihi Hāshiyat ‘Alī Al-‘adawī*, 1:2.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Alī, *Iṣṭilāḥ Al-Madhhab ‘Ind Al-Mālikīyya*, 575.

accompanying elucidating glosses that would point out where the “Ujhūrīs” had erred. The most renown of these glosses was by the Moroccan jurist from Fes, Muḥammad al-Bannānī (d. 1194/1780), a contemporary of al-Dardīr, who penned a gloss on al-Zurqānī’s commentary, aptly titled *al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī Fīmā Dhahal ‘Anhu al-Zurqānī* (The Divine Opening in that which al-Zurqānī has Overlooked).<sup>90</sup>

The gloss penned by al-Ṣa’īdī on the commentary of al-Kharashī was more charitable, simply titled *Ḥāshiyat al-‘Adawī*.<sup>91</sup> The Moroccan discomfort with the Ujhūrīan commentaries underlies the difficulty in ascertaining the Mālikī *madhhab*’s most relied upon opinions, as well as the regional bias involved regarding the approach to ascertaining those opinions. It is for this reason that al-Dardīr departed from the *modus operandi* of his predecessors by dispensing with the inherited terminology and conventions of the Khalīl commentaries by providing the legal opinion without reference to a particular authoritative source. This phenomenon is even more apparent in his *mukhtaṣar*, *Aqrab al-Masālik*, discussed further below.

As far as his commentary on Khalīl’s *Mukhtaṣar* is concerned, however, al-Dardīr sought to simplify access to the school’s legal rulings by avoiding the use of divergent opinions and mentioning only the *mu’tamad* or *muftā bi-hi*.

Al-Dardīr’s methodology can be gleaned from the matter of his engagement with the *Mukhtaṣar*. It can be summarised in the following ways:

- 1) *Linguistic analysis* – including grammatical, linguistic, and rhetorical analyses

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 579.

<sup>91</sup> Kharashī, Khalīl ibn Ishāq, and ‘Adawī, *Sharḥ Al-Muḥaqqiq Al-Jahbidh Al-Fāḍil Al-Mudaqqiq Sīdī Abī ‘abd Allāh Muḥammad Al-Kharashī ‘alā Al-Mukhtaṣar Al-Jalīl Li-Abī Al-Ḍiyā’ Sīdī Khalīl ; Wa-Bi-Hāmishihi Ḥāshiyat ‘Alī al-‘Adawī*.

- 2) *Textual clarification* – addition of words in the interlay style to render the *Mukhtaṣar* more readable
- 3) *Illustrative examples of legal rulings* – practical scenarios used to illustrate an abstract ruling
- 4) *Legal ruling clarification* – where he finds that Khalīl has unnecessarily or unwittingly delimits the extension of a ruling, or the opposite, where Khalīl generalises the extension of a ruling where it should be delimited
- 5) *Tarjīḥ* (selecting or designating the more reliable opinion) where the text does not expressly do so

The following sections provide several illustrative examples of each.

### ***Linguistic Analysis***

Al-Dardīr's commentary employs grammatical as well as rhetorical analysis on a need basis, and not as a general rule throughout the commentary, such as is the case in the commentary of al-Kharashī. For example, in commenting on Khalīl's introduction, which includes an acknowledgement of his shortcomings and a plea for others to correct the text as needed, he states: *wa as'al bi lisān al-taḍarru'* (and I ask with the tongue of entreaty). Al-Dardīr comments: "He omitted the direct object i.e. them [the scholars] as they are the people he is asking; [and tongue] as in a tongue of entreaty, or he himself is the entreaty in an hyperbolic sense, or the intent is "the entreating and reverent one" the same principle [when one says] Zayd is justice, or the intent is with "the tongue of entreaty" is "my humility", in which case there [is use of the rhetorical device of] metaphor by the way of metonymy."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Dasūqī, 'Illaysh, and Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Dasūqī 'alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 1:28.

In another instance, he defines terms such as *al-fajr al-ṣādiq* (true dawn):<sup>93</sup>

...and it is the diffused light (*mustaṭīr*) that encompasses the whole horizon, as opposed to the *al-kādhīb* (false dawn), which is oblong (*mustaṭīl*) and does not diffuse [into the whole horizon], but rather appears in the middle of the sky as a thin [strand] that resembles a wolf's tail. It does not appear [the false dawn] all times of the year but only in winter, and after it darkness appears followed by the appearance of the true dawn.

An example of grammatical analysis occurs when explaining the legal rulings for zakat, specifically what is payable on repaid debts in a scenario when one has received repayment of a debt that, when combined with other cash holdings, meets the minimum “zakatable amount” (*niṣāb*). However, for whatever reason, part of that is lost or spent, rendering it below the *niṣāb* level before paying the zakat. One is still required, nonetheless, to pay zakat on that amount assuming all other conditions have been met. The *Mukhtaṣar*'s wording for this scenario is *wa law talaf al-mutamm* (and even if the completing amount is lost). In the Arabic, the word *mutamm* can be read as *mutimm* or *mutamm*, the first denoting the meaning of the actor and the latter the recipient. Al-Dardīr confirms the latter meaning, namely the recipient, as the former meaning would change the ruling cited by Khalīl, as if the original holding - not from the repaid debt – in this case the *mutamm*, then one is still obligated to pay the zakat. However, al-Dardīr confirms that whether the original holdings are lost, or the repaid debt or both is immaterial, as the zakat would be obligatory in all three scenarios, despite Khalīl's wording to the contrary.<sup>94</sup>

### ***Textual Clarification***

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 1:178-79.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 1:467-68.

Examples of textual clarification are copious and make up the bulk of al-Dardīr's commentary. The following passage from the chapter on divorce illustrates this point (*Mukhtaṣar* within parentheses and commentary without):<sup>95</sup>

(Chapter: *Sunna* Divorce) As in the divorce that the *sunna* conferred as permissible, as the intent is not that divorce is *sunna*, as it is the most detested of permissible acts to God, even if only once. What he meant was *sunna* as opposed to [reprehensible] innovation, and that which is of an innovation is deemed *makrūh* or *ḥarām* as will be demonstrated. ..And he demonstrates its conditions with the following: (one) complete [pronouncement of divorce] (in a period of purity where he has not touched her) as in not had sexual intercourse (without) adding [another divorce pronouncement] in the (waiting period [from a previous divorce]) and there remains one more condition, that the pronouncement should fall on the woman in her entirety not part of her [not something like "your left arm is divorced"] (or otherwise) if the pronouncement of divorce does not entail all of these qualifiers as if some are ignored like if he pronounces more than one, or part of one or during the menstrual cycle or post-partum bleeding or in a period of purity where he had sexual intercourse with her or he pronounced another divorce during the waiting period of a revocable divorce (then it is an innovation).

As demonstrated with the previous example, even with the commentary of al-Dardīr, the text remains somewhat inaccessible for the average reader. As mentioned earlier regarding the comments of Ibn Khaldūn, Khalīl's text was not intended to be read as a stand alone pedagogical tool, but rather sought to function as an index of the *madhhab*'s rulings. Al-Dardīr in his commentary seeks to eliminate the need to refer back to the larger works by supplying enough commentary to obviate the need to refer back to the larger works. Nevertheless, scholars like al-Dardīr and others were writing for the students of their day in an effort to ensure continuity of the particular tradition they aimed to transmit. In the case of the Mālikī tradition, the paradigm of Khalīl defined it during the time of al-Dardīr and as such, his efforts were focused towards working within that paradigm of commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar*. His *Aqrab al-Masālik* sought to shift that paradigm somewhat, as is demonstrated in the next section.

### ***Illustrative Examples of Legal Rulings***

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 2:361.

The terse nature of the *Mukhtaṣar* leaves little room for illustrating abstract or obfuscatory passages. The *ummahāt* works were encyclopaedic in their length, but virtually all legal rulings mentioned therein were expressed via practical examples, as they originated in the form of question and answer. Khalīl, in “indexing” the rulings of the *madhhab* was forced to dispense with most examples, thereby precipitating the need in the commentaries. For example, in the chapter on usurious sales, Khalīl states in a few words the conditions for gold and silver exchanges, namely that the exchange should be immediate without undue delay, except in a few situations where it is permissible, such as *muwāda‘a* (mutual agreement to meet). Khalīl does not expound further than the single word, but al-Dardīr provides an explanation and example:<sup>96</sup>

...(mutual agreement) whereas it is the cause [of the delay in exchange] for then they [functionally] declare it [the mutual agreement to meet] a binding contact where one says: “come with me to the market where we can exchange the dirhams or weigh them, and if they are acceptable I will conclude the deal by paying you one dinar for X amount of dirhams”; the second party then accepts. However, it is said [in the *Mudawwana*] that in order [to make the transaction acceptable] the second party is accompany the first to the market, but without promise or agreement [to conclude the transaction]; as in both parties must not agree, as that is the definition of mutual agreement, so one would say to the other: “come with me to the market to exchange”, and the second party proceeds with him, at which point they renew their agreement to exchange after the coins have been processed – then this is permissible.

This also illustrates how al-Dardīr, on occasion, will return to one of the *ummahāt* texts to illustrate what may have been otherwise obtuse from the text of the *Mukhtaṣar*. He uses the same preposition-pronoun construct as Khalīl to refer to the *Mudawwana* (*fī-hā*), as a citation from the *Mudawwana* in the Mālikī tradition. This is akin to citation of a Prophetic report in the *ḥadīth* tradition or an Aristotelian syllogism in the *kalām/aqīda* tradition. As was demonstrated earlier, Mālik played a formative role in both the *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* traditions, thus accounting for the two different approaches, and later two distinct trajectories in the development of the *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* traditions.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 3:30.

### ***Legal Ruling Clarification***

Legal ruling clarification is the area by which the commentary of al-Dardīr found wide acceptance, unaided by a *ḥāshiya* (gloss). Though the student of al-Dardīr, al-Muḥammad ‘Arafa al-Dasūqī (d. 1230/1815), wrote a gloss on al-Dardīr’s commentary. It was unlike the glosses of al-Bannānī and al-Ṣa‘īdī, both of which provided critical editions of the commentaries of al-Zurqānī and al-Kharashī, respectively. Al-Dasūqī was renowned for his mind-mapping like illustration of commentary texts, whether the commentary of al-Dardīr in *fiqh*, or the magisterial book of Ibn Ḥishām (d. 761/1359), *Mughnī al-Labīb*, in Arabic grammar and linguistics.<sup>97</sup> He rarely, if ever, corrects or mitigates the understanding of al-Dardīr in his commentary. Al-Dardīr, in terms of legal rulings, does not correct Khalīl, but rather issues authoritative opinions where Khalīl declined to do so, when he uses the terms of *taraddud*, *khilāf*, *qawlān*, etc.

For example, on the issue of facing the *qibla* (prayer direction), Khalīl reports a *khilāf* between the Mālikī jurists as to whether the person who omits ascertaining the *qibla*, out of sheer forgetfulness, but then recalls after the prayer is finished, should repeat the prayer as long as its time is valid, or is required to repeat the prayer outright due to its invalidity. Al-Dardīr reports that Ibn al-Ḥājib reported the latter as the *mashhūr*. However, he reports the former as the *mu‘awwal alayhi* (the reliable opinion), thus declaring his personal preference.<sup>98</sup>

On rare occasion, al-Dardīr will point out inconsistencies in Khalīl’s use of his own terminology. For example, in the ruling regarding the purificatory bath (*ghusl*), Khalīl uses the term *khilāf* when citing two opinions regarding a

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<sup>97</sup> See Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Dasūqī and ‘Abd Allāh ibn Yūsuf Ibn Hishām, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Shaykh Al-Dasūqī ‘alā Matn Mughnī Al-Labīb Li-Ibn Hishām Al-Anṣārī*, (Būlāq: Dār al-Ṭibā‘ah, 1301).

<sup>98</sup> Dasūqī, ‘Illaysh, and Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Dasūqī ‘alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 1:228.



fourth washing of a limb beyond the recommended three as either reprehensible (*makrūh*), or prohibited (*ḥarām*). As noted earlier, Khalīl uses the term *khilāf* when there is a difference of opinion regarding the *mashhūr*, which, according to al-Dardīr, in this case is inappropriate as the more appropriate term would have been *taraddud*, indicating a difference regarding the transmission of a narration from the early Mālikī scholars. Though he does not expressly state why he believes this to be the case, the glossator of al-Dardīr's commentary, al-Dasūqī, explains that the first opinion is Ibn Rushd's narration, and the second is that of al-Lakhamī, hence the appropriateness of *taraddud* over *khilāf*.<sup>99</sup>

### ***Tarjīh***

*Tarjīh* is a term that al-Dardīr uses in his commentary when he expresses an opinion that runs contrary to the text of the *Mukhtaṣar*. The following examples are illustrative of this singularity:

**Example A:** Al-Dardīr expresses an opinion that differs with other commentators, specifically on the issue of removal of a state of ritual impurity. The Mālikīs view ritual impurity of as of two types: (1) that which affects the person performing a ritually devotional act, and (2) that which affects his body, clothing, and place of prayer. He disputes the notion that purifying water is the sole agent that removes ritual impurity, whether of type (1) or (2), based on the notion that dry ablution (*tayammum*), a method of removing ritual impurity of type (1), and tanning and fire are methods by which impurities of type (2) can be removed. It appears that his reasoning here is purely based on logic, because the opposing opinion states that dry ablution merely makes devotional acts such as prayer permissible, despite the fact that the state of impurity is not

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 1:102.

lifted. Al-Dardīr finds this argument fallacious because of its logical impossibility, as something cannot be both permissible and impermissible simultaneously, as in the case of the prayer here.<sup>100</sup>

**Example B:** In the chapter on water used for ritual purification, Khalīl states that a copious amount of water, when mixed with a ritually impure substance that does not alter one of its three properties of colour, taste, or smell, remains ritually purifying, and retains its use for ritual ablutions. Al-Dardīr states that this is also true for a small amount of water, as the criteria is the alteration of the water, regardless of amount. Al-Dasūqī in his gloss states that the former opinion, upon which Khalīl followed in this ruling, was the opinion of Ibn al-Qāsim, whose opinion normally would be considered authoritative. In this particular instance, al-Dardīr preferred to follow the principle i.e. the criteria being the alteration of the properties or lack thereof, rather than follow the opinion of the most authoritative scholar in the tradition after Mālik.<sup>101</sup>

**Example C:** On occasion al-Dardīr will mention that al-Khalīl should have cited merely one opinion instead of two, due to the precise meaning of the ruling. For example, in the chapter on conditional divorce pronouncements, Khalīl mentions *qawlān* (two opinions) regarding the issue of negative conditional divorce pronouncements using a third party, such as if a husband were to say to his wife: “If Tom (a third party) does not enter the house, then you are divorced.” In this case, with an unspecified time expiry, the judge would either (1) allow a time period equivalent to that reserved when a husband forswears intimate relations with his wife i.e. four months, after which if the condition does occur i.e. Tom enters the house then his pronouncement is fulfilled and no divorce occurs or (2) allow a time period at his discretion based upon his

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 1:34.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 1:35.

reading of the husband's intent, after which if the condition does occur i.e. Tom enters the house, then the pronouncement is fulfilled and no divorce occurs. According to both opinions, if Tom enters the house within the allotted time, then a divorce occurs. Al-Dardīr states that there was no need for Khalīl to mention the first opinion, as the narration of Ibn al-Qāsim in the *Mudawwana* only mentions the second.<sup>102</sup> Al-Dardīr makes this statement, as amongst the principles of determining the *mashhūr* or *rājiḥ* opinion in the Mālikī tradition is that the opinion of Ibn al-Qāsim in the *Mudawwana* takes precedence over other opinions in the *Mudawwana* (save for Mālik's opinion), as well as other opinions, including his own, in other *ummahāt* sources other than the *Mudawwana*.

**Example D:** Regarding the issue on dissolution of marriage due to a lost husband during a battle between two Muslim armies<sup>103</sup>, where the body was not recovered, a woman is either to start her waiting period from the day of the battle (characterised as the *mu'tamad* in the *madhhab* by al-Dardīr) due to the narrations from Mālik and Ibn al-Qāsim, or from the day the two armies separated, indicating the end of the battle (characterised as the *aḥwaṭ* (more religiously precautionary) opinion). The latter opinion was the one favoured by both Ibn al-Ḥājib and Khalīl, and al-Dardīr follows them in that regard.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 2:482-83.

<sup>103</sup> As opposed to a battle between a Muslim and non-Muslim army, where the assumption is that he might be held captive, in which case the Muslim authority must exhaust all efforts to recover him. In a battle between two Muslims armies the assumption apparently is that he would not be held captive and would be either executed or returned. See *ibid.*, 2:399.

### **Al-Dardīr's *Mukhtaṣar: Aqrab al-Masālik***

Though the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl has received substantial attention from Western academics, by contrast, no mention is made of al-Dardīr's *mukhtaṣar*, despite its prominence in the Mālikī tradition, specifically in Egypt, and to a lesser extent in the Maghreb. Some have even claimed that there were no “*mukhtaṣarāt* published for the Mālikīs after Khalīl, only commentaries on him.”<sup>104</sup> It would be easy to dismiss al-Dardīr's synopsis as a simple, uneventful rehash of Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*, as many have alleged regarding the entire synopsis-commentary-gloss genre itself, but few have actually undertaken a close analysis of the texts to reach such conclusions. The following analysis reveals incremental, yet significant departures of al-Dardīr from Khalīl's text, with viable justifications for doing so that are best explained by the salient features of the transmission tradition paradigm that provides the theoretical framework to advance such claims.

Despite the claims that Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar* sufficed itself with noting the *mashhūr* legal opinions, the analysis in the previous section demonstrated this not to be case. One would have to wonder if it were, why would al-Dardīr feel compelled to pen his own *mukhtaṣar*, after his commentary on that of Khalīl received widespread acceptance and dissemination, if notoriety could be considered a possible motivation. Al-Dardīr does not specifically mention when he wrote either the *mukhtaṣar* or its commentary – referred to as *al-Sharḥ al-Ṣaghīr* (the minor commentary), but it would appear they were both written after he wrote the commentary on Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*, as al-Ṣāwī refers to it in his *ḥāshiya* (gloss) as *al-aṣl* (the original) of the *Sharḥ al-Ṣaghīr*.<sup>105</sup> This would

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<sup>104</sup> Knut S. Vikør, *Between God and the Sultan : A History of Islamic Law* (London: Hurst & Co., 2005), 162.

<sup>105</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Ṣāwī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 1:5.

indicate he wrote them in the few last years of his life, as the *Sharḥ al-Kabīr* was written three years before his death.

Additionally, the commentary on *Aqrab al-Masālik* was written sometime after it, as al-Dardīr mentions his *mukhtaṣar*, referring to “his copy” regarding a particular legal ruling differing from another available copy. This indicates that the synopsis had circulated for some time amongst students at al-Azhar, before he wrote the commentary, a point that al-Ṣāwī confirms.<sup>106</sup> In writing a commentary on his own synopsis, he follows a similar path pursued with his commentary on his text in *‘aqīda, al-Kharīda al-Bahiyya*.<sup>107</sup> A general survey of synopses in the *‘aqīda* tradition and Mālikī traditions reveals that no other scholar penned their own commentaries on synopses they composed, except for al-Sanūsī and al-Laqqānī.<sup>108</sup> This is a significant point, since it would lend credence to the theory that the *mukhtaṣar-sharḥ-ḥāshiya* genre had reached a crossroads by the time of al-Dardīr, and may have been suffering under its own weight, losing sight of its original purpose, as had been warned by critics of the genre.

Al-Dardīr may have been submitting to the dominant paradigm of his day, releasing his most important works in the *mukhtaṣar-sharḥ* form, when, from a practical point of view, he could have more easily released them in a different form. This form would not be bounded by the synopsis-commentary genre, especially in light of his interlay commentary style, as his works read as one contiguous text. Therefore, *Aqrab al-Masālik* and its commentary, were

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> See chapter 3

<sup>108</sup> In the *‘aqīda* tradition, see: Sanūsī and Bannānī, *Sharḥ Sughrā Al-Sughrā Fi ‘ilm Al-Tawḥīd*; Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī, *Sharḥ Al-Nāzim ‘Alā Jawharat Al-Tawḥīd*, (Cairo: Dār al-Baṣā’ir, 2009).

perhaps an attempt at shifting the pedagogical paradigm to a more accessible form.<sup>109</sup>

Like his introduction to his commentary on Khalīl, al-Dardīr expresses similar sentiments about his motivations:<sup>110</sup>

...this is a noble book that I picked from the fruit of the *Mukhtaṣar* of Imam Khalīl in the school of the Imam of imams of the abode of revelation; I restricted it to [encompass only] the most preponderant (*arjaḥ*) of legal opinions, substituting therein the opinions that are not dominant with those that are, in addition to qualifying that which he stated categorically, as well as the opposite [categorising that which he qualified] to facilitate [accessibility].

This statement resembles his statement regarding the impetus for his major commentary (*al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr*), except that it would appear al-Dardīr wished to facilitate easier access to the Mālikī tradition by eliminating dissenting opinions except where two opinions were equally acceptable. He also sought to explicate rulings within the *mukhtaṣar* itself, rather than in the commentary, as he did with the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl.

The positions that al-Dardīr occupied at this point in his life when he wrote his *fiqh* works, namely the muftiship of the Mālikīs, the rectorship of the Upper Egypt dormitory at al-Azhar, the professorship at al-Azhar, the leadership of the Khalwatī *ṭarīqa*, and the conscience of the ruling elite, accorded him a unique perspective on the status of social and religious life in Cairo. Therefore, it is reasonable to surmise that changes in students' aptitudes and aspirations, as well as the growing gulf between ruler and the ruled – contributing to greater instability in society – would impel him to leave a legacy that would facilitate accessibility to a tradition that seemed to be in danger of losing its ability to redefine itself, and adapt to circumstances that were now resisting the old assumptions.

The notion of the intellectual and economic pre-eminence of the Muslim world was now clearly no longer viable, with the Napoleonic invasion less than

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<sup>109</sup> Al-Dardīr's educational method and legacy are more thoroughly treated in chapter 2.

<sup>110</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 1:19.

two decades away, and the Ottoman hold on its Arab provinces more ceremonial than functional. The following sections analyse al-Dardīr's methodology in the synopsis and commentary known as *al-Sharḥ al-Ṣaghīr*, with reference to the objectives mentioned in his introduction.

### **Structure**

The overall structure of *Aqrab al-Masālik* closely follows that of Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar* in terms of subject order, with slight changes that appear to be borne out of a desire to commit to a more logical presentation than that of the *Mukhtaṣar*. For example, al-Dardīr in the chapter on ritual purification and water departs from Khalīl by placing the subsection on bathroom etiquettes immediately after the section on removing physical impurities and before the section on ritual ablution, whereas Khalīl places this section after the section on ritual ablution. From a logical perspective, al-Dardīr's order is sounder for obvious reasons.<sup>111</sup>

Al-Dardīr applies themes from logic (*manṭiq*) via his *ḥudūd* or *ta'rīfāt* (logical definitions) for juristic concepts to arrive at precise definitions. He prefaces nearly every chapter with a definition of the subject at hand. For example, he defines ritual purity (*ṭahāra*) as: "a designated attribute (*ṣifa hukmiyya*) by which permissibility [is conferred] for that which ritual impurity (*ḥadath*), or the ruling of physical impurity (*khabath*), has prohibited."<sup>112</sup> He explains in the commentary his reasoning behind the definition, explaining that ritual purity is an attribute possessed by the ritually pure object, and only perceived by the intellect. It follows that it is then considered from amongst the

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<sup>111</sup> As in one relieves oneself first before performing ritual ablution. Improperly washing after relieving oneself could nullify the ritual ablution if urine or other bodily excretions continue to flow.

<sup>112</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 1:25.

attributes of *aḥwāl* (states),<sup>113</sup> being a purely mental construct devoid of an extra-mental reality. He also offers an alternate explanation for those who do not affirm *ṣifāt al-aḥwāl* but still assert the notion of extra-mental construct, referring to ritual purity as a *ṣifa ʿitibāriyya* (mentally designated attribute). The difference being the two terms is that *ṣifāt aḥwāl* do exist, albeit in a state between extra-mental and merely mental existence, whereas *ṣifāt ʿitibāriyya* do not exist at all – as existence can only be extra-mental in this scheme – and therefore is a mentally designated construct, with no real existence.

Al-Dardīr borrows from rational theology, in a manner he favours in his works of *ʿaqīda*, such as the *Kharīda*, and employs them here for a discussion on ritual purity. While this may seem oft-putting – to mix disciplines, as it were – for al-Dardīr, the precepts of the *taḥqīq* tradition demand the unity of the Islamic disciplines and the sub-traditions that proceeded from them, an essential concept, though it may occasionally be obfuscated within the multi-layered complexity of terminologies and conceptual frameworks that shape the Islamic tradition as a whole. Therefore, the use of frameworks from the *kalām* tradition is not out of order in al-Dardīr’s universe, as the same epistemological framework that informs the understanding of the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth*, and articulates the meanings of divinity and prophecy, is also the one that informs and articulates the actions of the morally responsible (*afʿāl al-mukallafīn*), the subject matter of *fiqh*.

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<sup>113</sup> *Ṣifāt al-Ḥāl* is an attribute assigned by the intellect, though it has no existence outside of the intellect. It was affirmed by some Ashʿarī *ʿulamāʾ* of *kalām*, specifically when referring to the positive divine attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-maʿnawīyya*), such as God’s essence being omnipotent, knowledgeable, and wilful. These attributes cannot be seen extra-mentally, but exist as exclusively mental constructs. Others, such as al-Dardīr, did not prefer a state between “existence and non-existence”, and therefore dispensed with the notion of *ṣifāt aḥwāl* altogether, though he mentions it in his works as a contrasting opinion. See al-Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Ṣāwī ʿAlā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahīyya*, 354.



Other instances of this approach include his definition of buying as “a transactional exchange for other than [right of] use.”<sup>114</sup> In the section regarding criminal punishments, he defines *sariqa* (theft) as: “the taking of a morally responsible person something of value equal to or greater than the minimum amount for designated punishment (*niṣāb*) from someone whose property is inviolable, without a strong mitigating factor [on the part of the thief], doing so surreptitiously from a secured area without permission [of the owner].”<sup>115</sup> Al-Dardīr then goes on to specify what each qualifier from the definition is meant to exclude, such as usurpation (*ghaṣb*), which although a form of theft, is accompanied by a claim of ownership, and hence not punishable by the *ḥadd* (mandatory) punishment.

Al-Dardīr also includes an extra section at the end of the synopsis, entitled: “Addendum of Various Issues and an Auspicious Conclusion”, which he begins by: “Gratitude to God is a legal obligation.”<sup>116</sup> This addendum comprises primarily of *taṣawwuf* related issues, such as the importance of *dhikr*, supplicating for one’s parents, visiting the sick, the permissibility of cupping (*ḥijāma*), the affirmation that God alone is the author of all acts, and the virtue of true dreams. In this, he appeals to an earlier style in the Mālikī tradition, initiated by Mālik himself, where a chapter of seemingly disparate issues are combined into a single chapter, usually called *bāb jāmiʿ* (chapter of various issues), as was in the case in the *Muwaṭṭaʿa*, and the *Risāla* of Ibn Abī Zayd.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> In the broader sense, as it also includes other transactions that include *tamlīk al-ʿayn* (transfer of ownership of property) for exchange, such as exchange of currency, whilst excluding leasing as it is an exchange for use, not ownership, and gift giving, as there is no exchange though there is transfer of ownership. See al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik ʿAlā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 3:12.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 4:470-71.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 4:729.

<sup>117</sup> See Mālik Ibn Anas, *Muwaṭṭaʿa Mālik*, ed. Muḥammad Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Muṣṭafa Bāb al-Ḥalabī, 1985); al-Qayrawānī, *Al-Risāla Al-Fiqhiyya*.

This section appears primarily as a plea for basic etiquettes and benevolence to others. Al-Dardīr even mentions the importance of kindness and refraining from harming non-Muslim minorities. The addendum to the *Kharīda* is strikingly similar, as if al-Dardīr is endeavouring to communicate the message that though these disciplines are important for the preservation and continuity of the tradition, it is equally, if not more important, to remember the basic values and principles that epitomise the tradition. In this he is not dissimilar to al-Ghazālī, who wrote his magnum opus, the *Iḥyāʾ*, on the premise that peoples' religious commitments had waned, and that a commitment to learning the Islamic disciplines as a mere matter of vocation is no guarantee that one will actualise the moral behaviours and principles that they are meant to instil.

### ***Departure from the Mukhtaṣar of Khalīl***

As al-Dardīr meant Aqrab *al-Masālik* to be an improvement upon Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*, his legal clarifications and repositioning of textual references reveal his methodology. As mentioned in his opening introduction, al-Dardīr states that the *Mukhtaṣar* suffered from ambiguities in the extension of its legal rulings i.e. whether a legal ruling encompasses all those who should be subject to it, as well as excluding all those who should not. The following examples clarify the manner in which al-Dardīr endeavoured to make those clarifications.

**Example 1:** In the chapter on the ownership of gold and silver vases, a distinction is made between (1) Vases made from gold and silver, (2) Vases made from gold or silver but plated on its surface with another substance such as brass or copper, (3) Vases made from wood or some other permissible substance, but pieced and held together by either gold or silver, and (4) Vases made from a permissible substance such as copper or iron, but plated with gold

or silver. Khalīl mentions two opinions for each of the four cases, prohibition and reprehensibility, without claiming the *rājiḥ* (preponderant opinion). Al-Dardīr states that the two opinions do not apply to all four cases, but only the last one (4), as the single dominant opinion for the first three cases is prohibition, and the *rājiḥ* for the last case is prohibition as well.<sup>118</sup>

**Example 2:** In the chapter on wiping over leather socks in lieu of washing the feet for ritual ablution, Khalīl mentions that this is only permissible in travel not sanctioned by the *sharʿa* i.e. a highway robber or runaway slave would not be permitted to do so. Al-Dardīr counters this by refuting this qualifying factor as weak (*ḍaʿīf*), stating the general principle: “every dispensation permissible while resident is also permissible during travel”, and “every dispensation not permissible while resident is only permissible during lawful travel, such as breaking one’s fast during *Ramaḍān*, permissible only during lawful travel.”<sup>119</sup>

**Example 3:** In the chapter on conditions of validity for the ritual prayer, specifically facing the direction of Mecca, Khalīl mentions this as an obligation on the condition that one faces no danger in doing so i.e. from an animal or assailant and the like, whereas as al-Dardīr adds an additional condition, the ability to turn towards the prayer direction. Thus, someone infirm or incapacitated, and unable to turn towards Mecca is not obligated to do so, and their prayer remains valid.<sup>120</sup>

**Example 4:** In the chapter on jihad, specifically the spoils of war, Khalīl mentions that a soldier who becomes separated from the army in enemy territory before the battle will nonetheless receive his share from the spoils, whereas if the separation happens in friendly territory, he forfeits his share. Al-

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<sup>118</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 1:61-62.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 1:153.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 1:293.

Dardīr counters that even if separation occurs in friendly territory, he receives his share nonetheless, based upon Mālik's ruling in the *Mudawwana*.<sup>121</sup>

**Example 5:** In the chapter on attestations for debts (*iqrār*), Khalīl states that if two or more attestations exist, whether oral or written, and the debt amounts are identical, then the attester is only bound by the single debt amount. Al-Dardīr counters that this is the case only for verbal attestations. For written attestations, each one is counted separately, and the attester is responsible for the sum, as the opinion of Ibn al-Qāsim and Aṣḥab is that written attestations are equivalent to monetary notes, and thus uniquely identified.<sup>122</sup>

**Example 6:** In the chapter on endowments (*awqāf*), al-Dardīr mentions that an animal, food, or gold and silver are eligible to be dedicated to an endowment, though Khalīl reports *taraddud*, indicating lack of a clear opinion on the issue. Al-Dardīr counters this by stating that the *Mudawwana* is clear in its endorsement of the opinion of permissibility. He favours this interpretation despite the fact that Ibn Rushd reported reprehensibility and Ibn Shās prohibition, reiterating that the narration in the *Mudawwana* takes precedence over the interpretations of later scholars.<sup>123</sup>

**Example 7:** In the chapter on the forswearing a husband of his wife he suspects of adultery, the normal procedure is for the husband and wife to swear four times with the fifth invoking the curse of God and the wrath of God, respectively. The husband is to begin, as he is the claimant. However, if the wife begins before the husband, Khalīl, citing the opinion of Ibn al-Qāsim, posits that she need not repeat her disavowal swearing. Al-Dardīr counters that even though it is the opinion of Ibn al-Qāsim, no one made *tarjīḥ* of his opinion, and

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 2:299.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 3:537.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 4:102.

thus, the dominant opinion is that her first disavowal is disregarded, and she must repeat the initial disavowal.<sup>124</sup>

### **Al-Dardīr's Methodology of Legal Plurality Minimisation**

Al-Dardīr's approach to legal rule determination by minimising, and in most cases eliminating all legal opinions except the *muftā bi-hi*, as he declares in both his commentaries (*al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* and *al-Sharḥ al-Ṣaghīr*), is best defined as *tarjih*. This is a legal term used by jurists across the four schools to weigh often conflicting opinions of a *madhhab*'s jurisconsults – those who are recognised as capable of using the eponymous imam's methodology to derive legal rulings from the primary sources of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.

Hallaq posits that the process that created legal pluralism i.e. the discovery of the law by both purely hermeneutical and completely individualistic means led to the realisation that a similar process had to be adopted to reduce plurality to a minimum. *Tarjih* is the process by which these different opinions on a given legal issue were evaluated in order to determine the soundest or the weightiest from an epistemological perspective.<sup>125</sup>

It has been demonstrated that the Mālikī tradition employed a sophisticated system predicated on the use of terms such as *mashhūr*, *rājih*, *ṣaḥīḥ*, etc., to assign epistemic values to conflicting legal opinions. This work was largely done by Ibn al-Ḥājj in *Jāmi' al-Ummahāt*, but reached its cumulative pinnacle in Khalīl's *Mukhtaṣar*. The overall process by which these values are assigned is known in the larger *fiqh* tradition as *tarjih*, notwithstanding the specific term used by the Mālikīs, i.e. the *rājih* in ascribing a specific epistemic value to the "weightiest" opinion in terms of the preponderance of the juristic evidence supporting it (*mā qawīya dalīluhu*). It

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 2:664.

<sup>125</sup> Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law*, 127.

should not be conflated with the same term used in the *uṣūl al-fiqh* tradition, where *tarjīḥ* is defined as “favouring some juristic evidentiary indications over others to produce a higher probabilistic outcome.”<sup>126</sup>

Juristic evidentiary indications (*amārāt*) are words carefully crafted to avoid the notion that the texts of the primary sources of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth* could possibly contradict one another. The process of *tarjīḥ* in the *uṣūl al-fiqh* tradition is the means by which human limitations in interpretations of the texts can be minimised using a set of epistemological rules. This process, while similar to the *tarjīḥ* in the *fiqh* tradition, is not identical, and it appears that Hallaq conflates them, where, in the discussion of *tarjīḥ* in the *fiqh* tradition (positive law) he lists the hierarchy of juristic evidence: consensus, Qur’ān, multiply transmitted traditions, solitary traditions, and *qiyās*.<sup>127</sup> This epistemic hierarchy clearly refers to *tarjīḥ* in the *uṣūl al-fiqh* tradition.

While the *fiqh* tradition shares a similar objective – the weighing of evidence – the nature of that evidence is markedly different. In the Mālikī tradition, *tarjīḥ*, as defined by Ibn Farḥūn, is the weighing via a set of epistemic rules of two or more legal opinions attributed to the early Mālikī jurisconsults. These rules are based on the value of specific narrations of specific scholars in the *ummahāt*. These rules, which crystallised in the Mālikī tradition after Ibn al-Ḥājjib, are summarised as follows:<sup>128</sup>

Hierarchal Priority	Rule
1	Mālik’s opinion as narrated by Ibn al-Qāsim in the <i>Mudawwana</i>
2	Malik’s opinion as narrated by others in the <i>Mudawwana</i>
3	Ibn al-Qāsim’s opinion in the <i>Mudawwana</i>
4	Others’ opinions in the <i>Mudawwana</i>
5	Mālik’s opinion as narrated by Ibn al-Qāsim in other than the

<sup>126</sup> Aḥmad ibn Zikrī al-Tilimsānī, *Ghāyat Al-Marām Fī Sharḥ Muqadimmat Al-Imām* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2005), 2:749.

<sup>127</sup> Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law*, 127-28.

<sup>128</sup> ‘Alī, *Iṣṭilāḥ Al-Madhhab ‘Ind Al-Mālikiyya*, 387.

	<i>Mudawwana</i>
6	Mālik's opinion as narrated by other than Ibn al-Qāsim in other than the <i>Mudawwana</i>
7	Ibn al-Qāsim's opinion in other than the <i>Mudawwana</i>
8	The opinions of other jurisconsults in the <i>madhhab</i>

Despite the Mālikīs agreement on the rules of *tarjīh*, there remained several issues where they did not reach agreement. Chief amongst these is the definition of the *mashhūr*. Despite their general consensus on the obligation of issuing fatwas according to the *mashhūr*, they differed about its precise meaning along three broad lines: (1) The opinion with the most voices in support of it, (2) the opinion with the strongest evidence (*dalīl*), and (3) the narration of Ibn al-Qāsim in the *Mudawwana*. Of the three, al-Dardīr and others report the first opinion as the *mu'tamad* (most relied upon). The second opinion equates the *rājiḥ* with the *mashhūr*. Al-Dardīr mentions in his commentary on Khalīl that the fatwa should only be issued with either the *mashhūr* or *rājiḥ*, thereby clarifying his opinion on the matter, as al-Dasūqī confirms in the gloss.<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, there remains disagreement amongst the Mālikīs regarding the reporting of the *mashhūr*, and the legal opinions where there is no identifiable narration from either Mālik, Ibn al-Qāsim, or any of the other jurisconsults of the first degree. Khalīl mentions this in his introduction to the *Mukhtaṣar*, where he uses the term *khilāf* for difference of opinion regarding the *tashhīr* (the reporting of the *mashhūr*). Khalīl designated the four scholars mentioned in the previous section as his sources for reporting the *mashhūr*, but as has been demonstrated, he was often not successful in ascertaining the *mashhūr* or *rājiḥ* opinion, hence the need for his epistemic terms to indicate the reason that prevented him from doing so.

<sup>129</sup> Dasūqī, 'Illaysh, and Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Dasūqī 'alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 1:20.

Al-Dardīr, conversely, reports the *mashhūr* or *rājiḥ*, on every single issue. The question remains as to what methodology, if any, did he avail himself to arrive at single fatwa legal opinions. Based upon the examples in the previous two sections, it is our contention that a methodology of minimisation of plurality of legal rulings can be discerned as follows:

- 1) ***Taṣḥīḥ al-Riwāya (Correction of the narration)***: Al-Dardīr eliminates plurality of opinion by correcting the narration as cited in the *Mudawwana*. Where Khalīl reports difference of opinion, al-Dardīr corrects him when the narration from the *Mudawwana* is explicit. See example 6.
- 2) ***Takhrīj ‘alā al-Qā’ida al-Fiqhiyya*** (Extrapolating based upon a Positive Law Maxim): The legal maxim, based upon a holistic reading of positive law (*furū’*), differs from the juristic maxim (*qā’ida uṣūliyya*). The latter is a hermeneutical principle for the interpretation of the primary sources of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*, whilst the former is a universal maxim that combines particular instances of positive law.<sup>130</sup> Al-Dardīr resorts to this when a reading of legal opinion is imprecise, according to the primacy of the legal maxim. See example 2.
- 3) ***Application of Logical Principles***: When the recorded opinion defies a logical principle, al-Dardīr prefers the logical principle, such as the example regarding the alteration of a small amount of water in the commentary on Khalīl.
- 4) ***Takhrīj*** (Extrapolating a legal opinion based upon another legal opinion that resembles it): Al-Dardīr does not use this term in his *fiqh* works, but instances of its functional use are abundant. Hallaq mentions the dearth

<sup>130</sup> For a thorough discussion of the differences see Aḥmad ibn Idrīs Qarāfī, *Al-Furūq*, ed. Qāsim ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Shāṭṭ, and Muḥammad ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn Mālikī (Bayrūt: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1985), 1:2-3.



of research on this particular term.<sup>131</sup> It was demonstrated above that Ibn al-Ḥāḥib refers to this term in juxtaposition to the epistemic term *manṣūṣ* (documented), referring to the existence of a documented opinion of Mālik, or one of the early jurisconsults. The *mukharraj*, as defined by Ibn Farḥūn, is of three types: (1) the extrapolation of a ruling (where no documented ruling from the early Mālikī jurisconsults exists) from a documented ruling, (2) the extrapolation of a ruling, where a documented ruling exists, from another documented ruling contrary to it, and (3) the extrapolation of a ruling, where a documented ruling exists, from an identical documented ruling contrary to it, to produce two opinions each for the two rulings: one *manṣūṣ* (documented), and the other, *mukharraj* (extrapolated).<sup>132</sup> Al-Dardīr makes use of the first type (1) regarding his ruling on the facing of the direction in prayer as being conditional on the ability to turn towards it, extrapolating the ruling from the removal of filth from one's clothing, person, and place of prayer, and the covering of one's nakedness, both of which are conditional on one's ability to do so. Since both are conditions of the validity of the prayer, and require action on the part of the performer, then the third aspect – namely the physical ability for performance, is also extended to facing the prayer direction. See Example 3.

- 5) ***Al-Akhdh bi-al-aḥwaṭ*** (Preference for the more religiously precautionary opinion): On occasion where multiple opinions are present in the *madhhab* on a single issue, al-Dardīr will favour what he refers to as *al-aḥwaṭ*, without specific reference to a textual reference or jurisconsult. See example D.

<sup>131</sup> Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity, and Change in Islamic Law*, 45.

<sup>132</sup> Ibn Farḥūn, *Kashf Al-Niqāb Al-Ḥāḥib Min Muṣṭalaḥ Ibn Al-Ḥāḥib*, 104-05.

Hence, al-Dardīr's methodology, while similar to his predecessors regarding the pre-eminence of Mālik's opinion and Ibn al-Qāsim's narrations and opinions, also includes application of logical principles, as well as legal maxims, and corrections of narrations by returning to the *ummahāt* sources, rather than relying on the interpretations of later jurisconsults. Al-Dardīr did not simply rehash, but rather approached the inherited cumulative knowledge with a discerning eye, in the tradition of *taḥqīq* (verification), in a manner similar to his approach to the inherited *kalām* tradition. This approach also characterised his political and social relationships, as the cumulative tradition informed the nature of the societal relationships of the '*ulamā*' with the ruling elite and the masses. The manner by which al-Dardīr applied his understandings of the tradition in his societal roles as a member of the '*ulamā*' is analysed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Five: Al-Dardīr: ‘Ālim, Sufi, and Intercessor for the Masses

### Introduction

This chapter analyses al-Dardīr’s societal roles, specifically his relationships with the ruling elite, and the greater populace. Its purpose is to evaluate the role of an early modern *‘ālim*, such as al-Dardīr, in order to address the question stated in the introduction, as to what degree the societal roles exercised by al-Dardīr reflect a tradition of engagement, collusion, or cooperation with the political elites. This is significant to the purposes of this study, as the overarching contention is that the changing relationship of the spiritual elite – the *‘ulamā’* – with the ruling elite, as well as the general populace over the course of the post-classical period, was subject to the dictates of tradition, in that the *‘ulamā’* sought to ensure the transmission of the Islamic tradition and its intellectual sub-traditions, and engagement with both the ruling elite and the general populace was essential to succeeding in doing so. Zarrūq cites as the eighty-ninth principle of Sufism the following:<sup>1</sup>

The preservation of order is obligatory, and the maintenance of the public interest is necessary. For this reason, they reached consensus on the prohibition of rebelling against the ruler, either by word or deed, to the degree that they sanctioned prayers behind every just or corrupt leader, provided their corruption was not in the [acts] of the prayer...and the Prophet Muḥammad stated: “a people have not cursed their leader except that they are deprived of his good.”

The preservation of order and maintenance of the public interest was the primary motivation (at least for *‘ulamā’* of integrity, as appears the case with Zarrūq and al-Dardīr), and not necessarily more personal motivations such as currying favour with the political elite or maintaining a monopoly on knowledge production, though such might have been the case with lesser known members

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<sup>1</sup> Aḥmad Zarrūq, *Qawā'id Al-Taṣawwuf*, 125-6.

of the '*ulamā*'. For the purposes of this study, al-Dardīr is analysed as a representative of a particular tradition amongst the '*ulamā*', not as a unique case, nor as a typical example of all the '*ulamā*' of his era.

Al-Dardīr enjoyed a number of official positions within the Azhar hierarchy, as well as unofficial roles as defender and interlocutor for Cairo's disenfranchised classes. The extent to which the '*ulamā*' form a distinct social class and their level of collaboration, collusion, or opposition to the ruling elites, has been widely debated in the academy, with no particular consensus reached.<sup>2</sup> Following the framework of this thesis, it will be demonstrated that it is essential to examine the roles of the '*ulamā*' under the construct of historical context. Moreover, the transmission tradition paradigm provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the continuity as well as departures of a figure such as al-Dardīr with and from his predecessors. This chapter endeavours to address the question of the effect of his historical circumstances on his societal roles, as well address the larger question of the lacunae regarding the position of the '*ulamā*' in the pre-colonial eighteenth century.

The positioning of the '*ulamā*' as a distinct, or even essential social class in pre-modern Muslim societies is one that has been widely adopted, and consequently, assumed by the majority of Western scholarship.<sup>3</sup> The '*ulamā*' in this paradigm functioned as guardians and interpreters of the *sharī'a*, and their legitimacy amongst the masses facilitated their roles as interlocutors with the political elite, as well as defenders of the disenfranchised. Their dependence

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Meir Hatina, '*Ulama*', *Politics, and the Public Sphere : An Egyptian Perspective*, Utah Series in Turkish and Islamic Studies (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010); Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam : Custodians of Change* (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002); Chih, "Autorité Religieuse Et Rôle Public D'un Ouléma D'al-Azhar Au Xviii Siècle : Vie Et Carrière Du Cheikh Ahmad Al-Dardīr (1715-1786)."; I. Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam* (London: Taurus Academic Studies, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Winter, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule: 1517-1798*; Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies / Ira M. Lapidus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

on the sultans and emirs for patronage, however, curbed the *'ulamā'*'s ability to act as foil to the excesses of the rulers; some even alleged that they actively colluded with the ruling elite to pacify otherwise restive populations who often suffered under the stresses of authoritarian rule.<sup>4</sup> The problem with this particular generalisation is that it assumes an essentialist nature to the social classes, including that of the political and scholarly elites in pre-modern Muslim societies that span several centuries as well as several languages and geographic regions. Indeed, some, such as al-Azmeh, has challenged the assumption that the *'ulamā'* constitute a distinct corporate group:

The *'ulamā'* were not, sociologically speaking, a corporate group. Moreover, they neither represented 'society' as such, nor the state, but different denominations had positions within both...Prior to the establishment of the Colleges, scholarship was not always a profession, and was most often combined with a different occupation...

The division of Muslim societies that often accompanies this characterisation is composed along three major classes: (1) the ruling elite, (2) the scholarly elite, and (3) the masses (essentially everyone else). Furthermore, the Islam practiced by each is often generalised into a sort of nominal Islam for the political elite, "orthodox Islam" for the scholarly elite, and "popular" or "folk" Islam for the masses, of which most Sufi practices would fall, sometimes encompassing overtures to the occult.<sup>5</sup>

For example, Gellner posits a framework of a "literate great tradition" of that included urban elites and the *'ulamā'*, and an "emotive and ecstatic little tradition" that included the Sufi *ṭarīqas* and the general masses that followed them.<sup>6</sup> These two traditions were often in periods of tension with one another. Though Gellner ostensibly uses Morocco as a case study, he does not identify what era he refers to, and he assumes his theories work for all Muslim

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<sup>4</sup> See Marsot, "The Political and Economic Functions of the 'Ulamā' in the 18th Century."

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Lane and Poole, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*.

<sup>6</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 80-81.

societies, leaving one with the impression that “Muslim society” for him is an essentialist category that pervades *all* Muslim societies. Furthermore, he draws a clear distinction between the “legalistic, restrained, arid Islam of the ‘*ulamā*” citing “urban Sufi mysticism” as its “alternative”, and “rural and tribal Sufi mysticism” as its “substitute”.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the essentialising of Muslims extends to geography, class, and educational levels for Gellner. The inherent difficulty, as Talal Asad has noted, is found in conceptualising a framework for Islam’s diversity – in all its facets – spanning geography, history, religious practice, scriptural hermeneutics, and language. An often over looked fact is that the “Muslim world” has sizable Christian, Jewish, Druze, and Zoroastrian minorities, who constituted the majority in the early centuries of Islam.<sup>8</sup>

As the framework of a transmission tradition has been the conceptualising method of this study in terms of inherited literary and scholarly traditions, this same framework is more useful for understanding a figure such as al-Dardīr, a ‘*ālim* of the early modern era, and placing him in historical context with his predecessors, specifically in the different societal roles he assumed. Asad outlines a conceptual framework that can be used as starting point for the exploration of a figure such as al-Dardīr and his relationship to his society:<sup>9</sup>

- 1) Narratives about culturally distinctive actors must try to translate and represent the historically-situated discourses of such actors as responses to the discourse of others, instead of schematizing and de-historicizing their actions.
- 2) Anthropological analyses of social structure should focus not on typical actors but on the changing patterns of institutional relations and conditions (especially those we call political economies).
- 3) The analysis of Middle Eastern political economies and the representation of Islamic “dramas” are essentially different kinds of discursive exercise which cannot be substituted for each other, although they can be significantly embedded in the same narrative, precisely because they are discourses.
- 4) It is wrong to represent types of Islam as being correlated with types of social structure, on the implicit analogy with (ideological) superstructure and (social) base.
- 5) Islam as the object of anthropological understanding should be approached as a

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See Bulliet’s study on conversion to Islam in: Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period : An Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*.

discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges.

For our purposes in the analysis of al-Dardīr's societal roles as a member of the '*ulamā*', points 1,2, and 5 are apposite. Specifically, by analysing the development of the concept of the '*ālim*', which took on distinct meanings over different historical periods is essential to understanding al-Dardīr and his relationships with different elements of late eighteenth century Egyptian society. The complicated relationship of the '*ulamā*' with political authorities, for example, cannot be de-historicised without committing to an essentialisation of the '*ulamā*' "class" (point 1). Understanding the changing nature of religious and political authority in the period that led up the paradigm of confrontation in al-Dardīr's context is crucial to analysing his "political" stances and motivations (point 2). Noting that the primary concern of '*ulamā*' such as al-Dardīr was the preservation of the tradition and its transmission, the analysis of his pedagogical approaches may be viewed in that light, rather than essentialising the behaviour of the '*ulamā*' according to some form of their own self-interest, such as self-preservation (point 5). While such a position may not be justifiable for all who were considered to be members of the '*ulamā*', it is our contention that al-Dardīr, regardless of whether we consider him to be typical in that respect, or an exception to the rule, was indeed at least partially motivated by the aforementioned aims, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapters as regards his methodology in his works of theology, Sufism, and jurisprudence.

Asad criticises Gellner and Geertz for their essentialisation of the social classes in Muslim societies, principally in the notion of the contrast between the heterodox village Islam spearheaded by the Muslim saint, and the orthodox

urbane Islam of the city, anchored by the state aligned *‘ulamā’*.<sup>10</sup> This criticism seems entirely appropriate when considering al-Dardīr, who seems to defy the rigidity of these social structures. Al-Dardīr was undoubtedly amongst the elite urban *‘ulamā’* of Cairo, but also a Sufi *murshid* and patron saint of the less “orthodox” urban poor. Whether al-Dardīr was atypical in crossing these posited structural lines is beyond the scope of this study, but it appears that the Sufi *‘ulamā’* of the Ottoman period, beginning with Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, and including his pupil, al-Sha’rānī, as well as al-Nābulusī, and al-Bakrī, all represented a tradition of a strong commitment to Sufism, especially Akbarian Sufism, coupled with an equally strong commitment to the Ash‘arī / four *madhhabs* understanding of orthodoxy / Sunni Islam. Of these five figures, al-Dardīr was most likely the most “establishment” *‘ālim*, having occupied official positions at al-Azhar, but also most likely had the most antagonistic relationship with the political elite, having led urban protests against them on multiple occasions.

Yet, it would be difficult to attribute the apparent paradoxes with al-Dardīr to purely social or historical factors; following Asad’s line of reasoning stated above, it would be apt to investigate al-Dardīr’s motivations by looking within his inherited traditions, rather than correlating typical social structures, such as the heterodox Sufi / orthodox *‘ālim* dichotomy posited by Gellner and Geertz.

Towards this end, a useful starting point may be to utilise a frame of reference expressed by the *‘ulamā’*, namely the notion of hierarchy. Though the Qur’ān emphasises the equality of all humans before God in terms of the manner of how they will ultimately be judged by God in the afterlife,<sup>11</sup> it also

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See Qur’ān (2:253), (3:163), (6:165), (12:76), (58:11) for example.



speaks of varying ranks and degrees, for Prophets<sup>12</sup>, as well as for believers.<sup>13</sup> These ranks and degrees are based upon behaviour and moral excellence, not tribal or ethnic affiliations, or even gender. The Prophet Muḥammad is reported to have proclaimed: “There is no degree for a white over a black, or a black over a white ...except [in the realm] of understanding (*taqwa*) of God.”<sup>14</sup>

This hierarchical taxonomy permeated Muslim worldviews of the Islamic disciplines as well as societal roles. For example, depending upon a scholar’s level of mastery of the tools of juristic reasoning, he was ranked from *mujtahid muṭlaq* – the highest rank, to *muqallid*, the lowest. The classification of *ḥadīth* narrators, Qur’ān exegetes, and the juristic, grammarian, and Sufi *ṭabaqāt* literature all are a further testament to the deep-seated nature of hierarchical consciousness in Islamic thought. Al-Azmeh alleges that this hierarchical consciousness begin with the notion of *being* itself, with God occupying the highest category, in that His being is necessary, self-sufficient, timeless, endless, and indivisible, a notion obviously shared by the ‘*ulamā*’ of *kalām*.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the taxonomy of hierarchies was applied to societal roles. Nāsir al-Dīn Ṭūsī’s quadripartite hierarchy in the seventh/thirteenth century of (1) people of knowledge and wisdom, (2) soldiers, (3) merchants, and (4) agrarians, corresponding to the four elements of water, fire, air, and earth is an example of hierarchical consciousness applied to societal roles.<sup>16</sup> Ibn Khaldūn posits that

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<sup>12</sup> Qur’ān (2:253)

<sup>13</sup> See Qur’ān (4:96), (6:165), (46:19) for example.

<sup>14</sup> Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Miṣr: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1972), #23972.

<sup>15</sup> Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies*, Routledge Library Editions Politics of Islam Volume 1 (London: Routledge, 2013), ix, 295 pages, 1-9.

<sup>16</sup> Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam, Being the Second Edition of the Sociology of Islam* (Cambridge Eng.: University Press, 1957), 228-31.

the interdependent nature of societal relationships falls along hierarchal lines, with statesmen and scholars occupying the highest category.<sup>17</sup>

Though this hierarchical consciousness, in keeping with the Qur'ānic and prophetic imperative, was based on meritocratic principles, and largely observed by the direct companions of Muhammad, the paradigm shifted with the onset of dynastic rule with the Umayyad Empire. Authority, at least in the realm of political leadership, was conceded, even if acquired by force, in the interest of preserving societal harmony and in keeping with the *maqāsid* principle of “repelling of harm takes precedence of acquisition of benefit.”<sup>18</sup> In an earlier period it would have been untenable to acquiesce to a violent and corrupt seizure of power, but in the interest of avoiding a greater harm, consensus amongst the '*ulamā*' was reached regarding the prohibition of rebelling against even a corrupt ruler, provided the basic tenets of his Islamic practice were not contravened.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the division along meritocratic lines for the imamate, or spiritual authority, and the caliphate, along dynastic lines, crystallised, and the '*ulamā*' emerged as a separate entity from the political leadership. They additionally formed their counterpart as part of the category of the *khawāṣṣ*, or elite.

In the commentary on the *ḥadīth* of *al-naṣīḥa* (counsel), al-Shabrakhīṭī (d. 1106/1694), an Egyptian scholar who wrote a commentary on the *Mukhtaṣar* of Khalīl in addition to the forty *ḥadīth* of al-Nawawī, states that the imamate is of four types: (1) of revelation i.e. prophethood, (2) of [spiritual] inheritance i.e. knowledge, (3) of ritual devotion i.e. prayer, and (4) community and general

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<sup>17</sup> Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>18</sup> This particular issue of political authority made its way into the *kalām* literature due to the early civil strife brought about over the issue of succession. See Josef van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology* (Cambridge, MA ; London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 125-28.

<sup>19</sup> See quote of Zarrūq cited at the beginning of this chapter.

interest i.e. *khilāfa*. He further lists the responsibilities specifically towards (2) and (4), stating that from amongst the rights of the rulers upon the people are to help them to uphold the truth, to remind them gently about matters they may have overlooked regarding the affairs of the Muslims, to supplicate for their success and uprightness, and to abandon openly rebelling against them. As for the '*ulamā*', one should accept that which they narrate, follow their juristic rulings, publicise their virtues, and maintain a good opinion of them.<sup>20</sup>

Hence, the role of the '*ulamā*' in the post-caliphate period was viewed primarily as a foil to counter the excesses of the rulers, but in a manner that would not bring about a greater harm. Al-Shabrakhītī also mentions some supporting statements from Sahl ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), the renown Persian mystic and scholar who stated: "People will remain in a state as long as they revere the ruler and the scholars, and if they revere these two, God will rectify their worldly life and their afterlife, but if they belittle these two, He will ruin their worldly life and their afterlife."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it appears in addition to the concerns of societal harmony and protection of life, a theology of acquiescing to the ruler, even if unjust, was pleasing to God, and that the manner by which their rectification could be courted was via pious supplication and provision of counsel, and not via open rebellion.

Talal Asad alleges that the concept of "religion" as an anthropological category was one defined in post-Reformation Europe, where religion was a "transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon." Religion was infused with politics and held mass ramifications for society as well as the individual. Now it

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<sup>20</sup> Ibrāhīm ibn Mar'ī Shabrakhītī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥijāzī Fashnī, *Kitāb Al-Futūḥāt Al-Wahbiyah Bi-Sharḥ Al-Arba'īn Ḥadīthan Al-Nawawīyya*, (Miṣr: Maṭba'ah al-Khayrīyah, 1304), 115.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

is the sole province of the individual, but essentially the same as it was before.<sup>22</sup>

The challenge is not merely exposing this historical and conceptual anachronism, but rather conceptualising categories such as religion, legitimacy, authority, and the like, in distinct pre-modern Muslim societies over a period of centuries. While this study is particularly concerned with the early modern period and specifically the figure of al-Dardīr, it is necessary to make some reference to the aforementioned categories over these historical periods and the manner by which they developed leading into the last period of rule in the Muslim world before the incursion of foreign occupying armies. The demise of the Prophet Muhammad signified the end of an absolute, unmitigated union of legitimacy and authority, as subsequent periods were often defined by conflict between these themes. Without legitimacy, one cannot claim authority, and without authority, legitimacy is impotent.

The relationship between the ruling elite and scholarly elite in the Islamic world is a complex one that has witnessed periods of cooperation, confrontation, and measured parleys to achieve political and societal equilibriums. The influence of theological polemics and societal discourse on political authority cannot be ignored. Early sectarianism in the Islamic world that grew out of conflict over succession eventually developed into theological divides as well, where sectarian rebellions challenged the authority of the state throughout the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, and Ottoman empires. Such divides, were unknown during the Prophetic era. The Prophet Muḥammad was the sole source for interpreting scripture and implementing its practical application across all realms, including social, moral, and political spheres. Even throughout the period of the “rightly guided” caliphates of Abū Bakr,

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<sup>22</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion : Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 28.

‘Umar, and to a lesser extent those of ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī, authority as regards to the responsibility for interpretation of scripture and executive power were united in the office of the Caliph. As the four caliphs were all senior companions and lieutenants of the Prophet Muḥammad, their authority as leaders of the faithful, both outwardly (*al-khilāfa al-ẓāhira*) and inwardly (*al-khilāfa al-bāṭina*) were never seriously challenged.<sup>23</sup>

The *fitna* that began towards the end of ‘Uthmān’s reign, and continued after his assassination into the reign of ‘Alī, was of a strictly political nature. It did not evolve into a theological one, questioning the religious legitimacy of the caliph, until armies were assembled on both sides of the political divide and sectarian offshoots emerged to challenge the appropriateness of Muslims bearing arms against each other. Thereafter, distinct theological groups appeared, such as the *Ahl al-Sunna w’al-Jamā’a*, the *Khawārij* and the *Shī’a* (Party) of ‘Alī.

Thereafter a paradigm with distinct political and religious lines replaced one of a single political and religious authority. The fortunes of one did not always follow the fortunes of the other, but there is little doubt that the two were inextricably linked. The era of al-Dardīr witnessed a complex relationship, where the ‘*ulamā*’ retained their position as vanguards of societal justice, but were dependent upon the ruling elites’ patronage for survival. As al-Jabartī laments, some of the ‘*ulamā*’ actively sought to avail themselves of the emirs’ patronage, while others, such as al-Dardīr and al-Ṣa’īdī, openly resisted and deemed it an affront to subject themselves to such indignities. Such stances bolstered their credibility and sway with the masses, earning the respect of the emirs who realised their counterparts could not be bought or trifled with.

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<sup>23</sup> *Al-Khilāfa al-bāṭina* and *al-khilāfa al-ẓāhira*: terms used by the Andalusian scholar and mystic, Ibn ‘Arabī to denote the split between the two that occurred after the assassination of ‘Alī. This concept is expanded further below.

Napoleon realised the significance of the Azhar *'ulamā'* upon his invasion of Egypt in 1798 (twelve years after al-Dardīr's death) and hastily formed a "*dīwān*" council, consisting of members of the Azhar elite, such as the then rector of al-Azhar, 'Abd Allah al-Sharqāwī (d. 1227/1812).<sup>24</sup> The Azharīs in all likelihood made a calculated decision that cooperating with the invading force was preferable to risking complete annihilation. The cooperative era, however, was short-lived, as the urban population grew restive and outright rebellion became a more tenable option. On the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 1798, the Egyptian uprising began in earnest.<sup>25</sup> Napoleon aimed his canons at al-Azhar itself, the apparent source of the uprising. After the quelling of the rebellion, some five or six thousand people were killed in or around al-Azhar; its *'ulamā'* were then routinely executed by Napoleon's orders for months thereafter.<sup>26</sup>

The succeeding period, beginning with the ascendancy of Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha, witnessed the emergence of a new paradigm where the *'ulamā'*s pre-eminence in intellectual and societal circles began to be seriously challenged by the instruments of modernity: enlightenment, industrialism, and nationalism.<sup>27</sup> A parallel educational system was instituted to train a cadre of civil servants to run the new bureaucracy, while the religious endowment infrastructure that had for centuries safeguarded the scholarly class's interest and separation from the ruling class, was now usurped under the pretext of a systematic nationalisation regime.<sup>28</sup> The *'ulamā'* did not capitulate without a

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<sup>24</sup> Petry and Daly, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 2:125.

<sup>25</sup> Muḥammad Jalāl Kishk, *Wa-Dakhalat Al-Khayl Al-Azhar*, (Bayrūt: al-Dār al-ʿIlmīyah, 1972).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> See Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*. Though this three-pronged paradigm shift is used to characterise Europe's foray into the Modern age from 1600-1800, a similar phenomenon occurred in the Muslim world, specifically Egypt, albeit about one hundred years later.

<sup>28</sup> See Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*.

fight, as has been documented by Hatina<sup>29</sup> and Gesink<sup>30</sup>, but the old paradigm was gone forever. No longer would the ruling elite pander to the demands of the *'ulamā'* as advocates for social justice. The urban masses that had heretofore depended upon the moral and political influence of the Azhar elite, had to now forge new heroes. Thus, the liberal age was ushered in and the secular public intellectual made his first appearance. Figures such as Taha Ḥusayn, who were Azharīs by training, nevertheless engaged with the public on a completely new level, via print, in a matter that openly challenged the obsolescent ways of the Azhar vanguard, with their flowing robes and country accents.

The new exemplar was urbane, and complemented his fluency in French with English tailored ensembles, though he retained the fez as a gesture to Egyptian nationalism. Others, such as Rifā'a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (d. 1290/1873), learned the French tongue, but retained the flowing robes and turban, in an effort to reconcile the political and military superiority of the European colonist, and the pre-eminence of the sacred Islamic texts and divine favour of the Muslim community.

Muḥammad Abdu (d. 1905), perhaps the most iconic figure of the Egyptian nineteenth century, took up the mantle of reform, specifically that of the Azhar institution itself, in an effort to modernise and cast off the traditional methods, a leading contributor of Islamic and Arab backwardness, in his estimation.<sup>31</sup> His reformist agenda was opposed by Muḥammad 'Ilīsh (d. 1299/1882), the heir apparent of the *'ulamā'* of pre-Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha Egypt, with more than a passing resemblance to al-Dardīr (subscribing to the

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<sup>29</sup> Hatina, *'Ulama', Politics, and the Public Sphere : An Egyptian Perspective*, 28-39.

<sup>30</sup> Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam*, 89-109.

<sup>31</sup> See Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, 130-60.

Mālikī school and having penned a gloss on al-Dardīr's main treatise in jurisprudence), who openly questioned Abdu's scholarly credentials.<sup>32</sup> His more conservative peers viewed Abdu not as a challenging peer, but rather an illegitimate interloper and upstart. To what extent the lack of respect accorded to him by the Azhar elite fuelled his reform project may never truly be known, but there is little doubt he harboured more than an insignificant amount of resentment to the "club" that never endorsed his membership.

This chapter analyses the question of the societal role of al-Dardīr, in terms of his contemporaries, as well as within the historical narrative of a distinct category of the *'ālim*, a figure invested with spiritual authority and inheritor of the Prophetic tradition, but also a member of society's elite, a status shared only with the rulers. In order to properly contextualise al-Dardīr's position as both scholar, a member of society's elite, and patron saint and champion of the disenfranchised, a paradigm establishing the relationship of Muslim scholars with their societies in preceding eras is in order.

The traditional taxonomies of "intellectual Islam" and "popular Islam", of "arid and rigid *'ulamā'*" and "emotive Sufi shaykhs" are questioned in this chapter as a useful approach to understanding the diversity within Islam, both in its breadth of locales and history, as well as the practices and motivations of its adherents. The discursive tradition that theorises the motivations and actions of Islam's intellectual elite is also a viable framework for the evaluation of their societal roles. The period of Prophetic revelation, of the four caliphs, of the Umayyad dynasty and the Abbasid dynasties, of the Ayyubid and Mamlūk dynasties, and of al-Dardīr, are analysed, in order to demonstrate the evolving response to contextual circumstances. It is our contention this developed in a

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<sup>32</sup> See Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam*, 94-95.



similar manner to their approach in preserving and transmitting the Islamic disciplines.

Indeed, the succeeding period marked the paradigmatic shift of the millennium, in the era of nation-state formation and the ascendancy of institutionalised government, as well as the emergence of intellectual elites outside of the Islamic literary tradition. This chapter demonstrates that al-Dardīr occupied a unique period in Islamic history, a transitional one, where the intercession of the *‘ulamā’* proved ineffective, though the general deference and respect to the *‘ulamā’* was preserved. Furthermore, it challenges the prevailing paradigm and makes the case for an alternative framework to assess the role of the Muslim scholar as one of response to a set of complex societal and intellectual factors, rather than an essentialist “Islamic” response.

## The '*Ulamā*' in the Ottoman Egypt of al-Dardīr

When Sultan Selim deposed the Mamlūk authorities in 1517, as part of a broader campaign that saw Islam's traditional centres of scholarly influence, Cairo, Damascus, and the Hejaz, come under Ottoman suzerainty, he was no doubt aware of the scholarly heritage he was inheriting. Today, the Suleymanie library in Istanbul remains the largest depository of Islamic manuscripts in the Muslim world, with 68,000 manuscripts of mostly Arabic and some of Ottoman Turkish origin. Many of these manuscripts were carried from Cairo and Damascus; recognition of the scholarly production and calibre of the newly acquired provinces was emblematic of the new Ottoman regime. Nevertheless, the Ottomans wasted little time in installing a chief judge - appointed in Istanbul – to oversee all judicial affairs in Egypt.

This represented a break from the Mamlūk tradition of appointing native Egyptians to the post. Additionally, the *qāḍī* '*askar*' was always of the Ḥanafī school, where in Egypt the dominant schools were the Shāfi'ī and Mālikī schools.<sup>33</sup> It appears that the Egyptian '*ulamā*' had little respect for the scholarly credential of their Turkish counterparts sent to Cairo. Al-Dardīr on several occasions laments the state of the judicial system.<sup>34</sup> The Ottomans also instituted other unpopular measures at the outset of their rule, in ways that incensed the local Egyptian '*ulamā*', as well as the general populace.<sup>35</sup> Ottoman authorities collected new taxes on marriages and divorces. Most circumvented these new levies by electing to not record their marriages and

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<sup>33</sup> Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule : Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo (16th and 17th Centuries)*, Islamic History and Civilization Studies and Texts (Leiden ; New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 69.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example: al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 4:191-92.

<sup>35</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule : Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo (16th and 17th Centuries)*, 70-75.

divorces with the state.<sup>36</sup> The Ottomans also attempted to install some borrowed cultural practices from Istanbul in Cairo, such as the prohibition of women riding donkeys or leaving their homes, or visiting the *ḥammām* or the cemetery.<sup>37</sup> These prohibitions were a product of the strict Ḥanafī code that the Ottomans abided by and reproduced for the newly acquired Egyptian province in the *Qānūn Nāma*.<sup>38</sup> Most Egyptians, on the other hand, adhered to either the Mālikī or Shāfi'ī schools of jurisprudence, and were unaccustomed to the stricter Ḥanafī precepts, especially in matters concerning women and public morality.

Abd al-Ghānī al-Nābulusī is one of the most celebrated scholars of the Ottoman era. Al-Dardīr traces his Sufī pedigree to him via his direct student, Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī. He offers a glimpse into the international scholarly culture that developed in the Ottoman period, recounting his longest excursion outside his native city of Damascus in his travel journal: *al-Ḥaqīqa wa'l-Majāz fī al-Riḥla ilā Bilād al-Shām wa Miṣr wa al-Ḥijāz* (Literalness and Metaphor in the Journey to the Lands of Greater Syria, Egypt, and the Hejaz).

Al-Nābulusī visited Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt and the Hejaz over a period of 388 days, making it the longest continuous trip of his life.<sup>39</sup> His accounts mostly include *majālis* with local Egyptian 'ulamā' and *ziyārāt* to the various mausoleums in the vast cemetery in central Cairo known as *al-Qarāfa*. However, he offers a glimpse into the 'ulamā' interactions with the ruling elite, whom he refers to as the "wazīr of Egypt" – most likely a reference to the Ottoman viceroy. He mentions that his host in Cairo, Shaykh Zayn al-'Abidīn al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī, the leader of the influential *sharīfan* Bakrī clan, was summoned

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>38</sup> The *Qānūn Nāma* was a comprehensive set of laws aimed to regulate the Egyptian population. See Galal H. El-Nahal, *The Judicial Administration of Ottoman Egypt in the Seventeenth Century*, Studies in Middle Eastern History (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979).

<sup>39</sup> 'Abd al-Ghānī al-Nābulusī, *Al-Ḥaqīqa Wa Al-Majāz Fī Al-Riḥla Ilā Bilād Al-Shām Wa Miṣr Wa'l-Ḥijāz* (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-'Āmma al-Miṣriyya li al-Kitāb, 1986).

every Saturday by the Ottoman viceroy for consultative talks. Al-Nābulusī accompanied the shaykh on one of these appointments, by the shaykh's request, and makes a comment about the experience much more telling than the sum of its words:<sup>40</sup>

As I used to go with him (Shaykh al-Bakrī) and we would spend our day [discussing] scholarly issues as well as jurisprudential ones and all that which would be appropriate for consultation with the State that are of benefit according to consensus. [This] is done with honest counsel, eloquent and gentle words, taken from the [maxim] of "use the words of the speaker" and "use gentle persuasion as long as you are in their home" (*dārihim mā dumta fī dārihim*) and "please them as long as you are in their lands" (*arḍihim mā dumta fī arḍihim*) and "salute them as long as you are in their neighbourhood" (*ḥayyihim mā dumta fī ḥayyihim*); as direct verbal censure is more difficult on the souls than the stab of a dagger, especially when dealing with the elite (*akābir*), for the admonition of sincere states is more articulate than the pronounced words of the pulpits.

Al-Nābulusī summarises the attitude of the '*ulamā*' of his time (and one would suspect shortly before his time as well) as regards to their relationship with political elites. Despite his outward admiration for the Ottomans, it was not lost on al-Nābulusī the fickleness of authoritarian rule; his reference to proverbs that are reminiscent of Bedouin tribal relations offers a glimpse into the understanding of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in pre-modern Muslim societies: the concept of *rāʾ* and *raʾiyya* (shepherd and flock). The ruler was entrusted with the fulfilment of the rights of those he rules (which more or less amounted to dispute adjudication and dispensing of criminal justice), and it is by his good graces that such rights could be fulfilled.

There was no inherent system of checks and balances to limit the ruler's power, with the only restraint being the counsel and influence of the '*ulamā*', who acted as guardians and interpreters of scripture and tradition. As a guest, al-Nābulusī, was interested in urging him to uphold justice and moral principles, rather than having a fear of the ruler's wrath. This was part of the broader understanding of communal benefit and harm (*maṣlaḥa* and *mafsada*). Others have posited that the '*ulamā*' were in collusion with the ruling elites, as the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 181.

exchange of patronage for help in governance and quelling the public defined the symbiotic relationship between them.<sup>41</sup> While even al-Jabartī acknowledges the presence of unscrupulous pretenders amongst the ranks of the scholarly elite, one is left with the impression that this was the exception rather than the rule, especially at the highest levels of the scholarly elite, such as the muftiships and the rectorship of al-Azhar. Al-Jabartī mentions ‘*ulamā*’ such as al-Ḥifnī, al-Ṣa’īdī, and al-Dardīr as figures that commanded the respect of the Mamlūk emirs, if not outright fear. While many of the ‘*ulamā*’ were dependent upon the graces of the political elite for survival, the relationship withstands further scrutiny. Al-Dardīr, for example, and his teacher before him, al-Ṣa’īdī, were beneficiaries of the expansion of the Azhar mosque (which nearly doubled its size) and establishment of the Upper Egypt dormitory (*riwāq al-ṣa’ida*) by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Katuhkdā (d. 1190/1776), a Mamlūk emir who eschewed political squabbling for major infrastructure works. The extent of his spending easily made him the most prolific patron of mosques, madrasas, and *sabīls* in the Ottoman era.<sup>42</sup>

Al-Jabartī does not fall short in praise of Katuhkdā, and blames factional squabbling for his failure to command the political authority in Egypt. Whether he was trying to acquire political capital via his various building projects, or forge a new legacy outside of politics, it appears, in any case, that Katuhkdā was not necessarily trying to curry favour with the ‘*ulamā*’ as a means to procure their loyalty and raise his political standing. Al-Jabartī does not insinuate that the ‘*ulamā*’ ever interfered in issues of succession and Mamlūk factionalism, so such a motive on the part of this particular Mamlūk emir

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example: Marsot, "The Political and Economic Functions of the 'Ulamā' in the 18th Century."

<sup>42</sup> See al-Jabartī's biographical entry: al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akhhbār*, 2:5-11; Crecelius, *The Roots of Modern Egypt : A Study of the Regimes of 'Ali Bey Al-Kabir and Muhammad Bey Abū-Al-Dhahab, 1760-1775*.

appears unlikely. Al-Dardīr was also the beneficiary of the patronage of the Sultan of Morocco as previously noted. Such a relationship could not have been predicated on any ability of al-Dardīr to legitimise the Sultan's rule in Morocco. Al-Dardīr was not the only beneficiary, as other Mālikī scholars received yearly stipends, due to their jurisprudential affiliation, as the school of Mālik was the dominant school in North Africa. An argument could be made for religious legitimisation, as the Sultan of Morocco at the time of al-Dardīr was facing entanglements with his own *'ulamā'*, and sought to dictate the curriculum to be taught at Morocco's counterpart to al-Azhar, al-Qarawiyyīn. He even sent a questionnaire to the Egyptian *'ulamā'*, almost certainly including al-Dardīr, soliciting their opinion as regards to the curriculum he selected for Morocco's most prestigious institution of learning.<sup>43</sup>

The same Sultan also had a notable encounter with al-Dardīr's friend and contemporary, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, where he rebuked him for wasting his time penning a commentary on al-Ghazālī's *ḥyā'*, even penning a polemical treatise against the book. This particular attitude of Sultan Muḥammad "was related to his struggle against the religious autonomy of the Fez scholars whom he saw as a challenge to his claim as caliphal ruler and who were at the same time strongly committed to that book."<sup>44</sup> Thus, it would seem that in the Ottoman period there was a diversification of both the ruling elites and the religious scholars. The Mamlūks of Egypt, after resurging to prominence after their disastrous defeat at the hands of the Ottomans, retained their relative ignorance of Islamic intellectual sensitivities and had no designs on divesting the *'ulamā'* of their political and social influence. The Ottoman rulers were more attuned to the significance of the *'ulamā'* and may have had a genuine appreciation,

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<sup>43</sup> See biography in: Sulṭān Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh 'Alawī and 'Abd Allāh ibn Idrīs Mīghā, *Ṭabaq Al-Aṭṭāb* (Rabat: Wizārat al-Awqāf wa al-Shi'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Reichmuth, *The World of Murtada Al-Zabidi (1732-91): Life, Networks, and Writings*, 273.

underscored by their commitment to patronising cultural institutions in their Arab provinces, such as the mausoleum and complex of Ibn al-‘Arabī in Damascus and the Khusrawiyya madrasa and complex in Aleppo.<sup>45</sup> Yet, the Mamlūk renaissance, as it were, would be short lived. The weakening of the Ottoman hold on Egypt in the face of growing conflicts at home, left a quasi-sanctioned transference of power to the Mamlūks, who were growing in despotism as well as incompetence due to political ambitions and infighting.

The older paradigm of measured engagement on the part of the ‘*ulamā*’ was no longer sustainable in the wake of wide-scale suffering and loosening of morals on the part of the common populace. Scholars such as al-Ṣa‘īdī, al-Ḥifnī, and most notably al-Dardīr, adopted more aggressive stances towards Mamlūk malfeasance, as well as greater engagement with the beleaguered population, most significantly via the propagation of the Sufi brotherhoods, and intercession on their behalf to address grievances with the Mamlūk elites. The following sections analyse al-Dardīr’s roles in these areas, in light of the paradigm shift that rendered the older paradigms obsolete.

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<sup>45</sup> Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918 : A Social and Cultural History*, 111.

### **Al-Dardīr: Quietest or Activist?**

Al-Dardīr represented the last generation of '*ulamā*' who wielded considerable societal influence in multiple spheres, in addition to their traditional scholarly output. After the Napoleonic invasion, and subsequent evacuation of the French forces by combined Anglo-Ottoman forces, a new era was ushered in with the ascendancy of the Albanian army officer, Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha, as ruler of Egypt. Though the Azhar elite initially supported his campaign to be sole ruler of Egypt, likely due to their belief that he would be able to restore economic and political order in the wake of the tumult of the past decade, as has been suggested,<sup>46</sup> it became apparent that their pre-Napoleon levels of influence would end with the new leadership. Often touted as the "founder of modern Egypt", Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha would go on to institute reforms that directly challenged the authority of the Azhar '*ulamā*', such as establishing a parallel education system. This included an institution that was a clear challenge to the monopoly on Islamic higher learning that the Azhar enjoyed, in the form of Dār al-'Ulūm, and more significantly, the appropriation of the Azhar's lifeline, its many charitable endowments.<sup>47</sup>

Al-Dardīr had a notable relationship with the ruling elite of his time. This relationship was primarily with the Mamlūk elites, as the provincial governor sent by Istanbul, or "*wazīr* of Egypt" as referred to in an earlier epoch by al-Nābulusī, carried little influence or power, and was a titular figurehead. The real political authority rested with *Shaykh al-Balad*, a Mamlūk emir vested with the supervision of revenue from tax farms (*iltizāms*) and the appointment of the emir al-hajj as well as other positions of prestige and influence. At the time of al-Dardīr, after he had assumed *his* main positions of influence, namely the Mufti

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<sup>46</sup> Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, 44-45.

<sup>47</sup> See Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, 103-11.



of the Mālikī school, the supervisor of the Upper Egypt dormitory at al-Azhar, and the shaykh of the Khalwatī Sufi *ṭarīqa*, the Mamlūk balance of power disintegrated into a duumvirate between two competing Mamlūk emirs: Ibrāhīm Bey (d. 1816) and Murād Bey (d.1801). The period preceding the duumvirate by their master, Muḥammad Bey Abū Dhahab (d. 1775) was one of relative stability. The “dispenser of gold” was well liked by the public and the elite alike. It was upon his demise, and the splitting of authority between Ibrāhīm and Murād that the question of political authority, as well as legitimacy, were brought to the forefront once more.

The duumvirate’s refusal to pay their yearly tribute to the Sublime Porte precipitated its wrath and prompted a military invasion led by the Ottoman admiral Ḥasan Ghazi Pasha in 1786, the year of al-Dardīr’s death. Perhaps one of al-Dardīr’s last acts as patron saint was his request of the admiral to reconsider the military operation, so as to spare the Cairo populace further instability and bloodshed, a request that was denied.<sup>48</sup> Ibrāhīm and Murād Bey fled to the hinterlands of Upper Egypt, a place considered the traditional province of self-exile. Yet, upon the admiral’s return to Istanbul, they quickly deposed the Mamlūk emir installed by the Ottoman suzerainty and reassumed the reins of power, until their final deposition fourteen years later by Napoleon Bonaparte.

Al-Jabartī, the near exclusive authority on the historical period of al-Dardīr, records several notable interactions with the Mamlūk emirs. In 1191/1777, a dispute arose between two factions of Moroccans from the *mujāwirīn* at the Azhar mosque regarding a charitable endowment (*waqf*) that one faction had usurped at the expense of another. The issue was resolved in

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<sup>48</sup> al-Jabartī, *‘Ajā’ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājīm W’al-Akhabār*, 2:174.

the courts for the faction with the proper *waqf* deed, but the losing faction had solicited the help of one of the Mamlūk emirs, Yūsuf Bey. Unable to prove effective in the dispute, he became indignant and sent a party of his men to arrest a man referred to as Shaykh ‘Abbās, the leader of the winning faction and the object of his scorn. Consequently, he and his group of Moroccans – who had won their right in the Ottoman court – were forcibly removed from al-Azhar by Yūsuf Bey’s men.

Consequently, they informed al-Dardīr, who then sent a letter to Yūsuf Bey advising him to honour the court ruling and to desist from molesting the people of scholarly knowledge and repute. Yūsuf Bey met his letter with anger as he imprisoned the carriers of the letter. The next morning, after informed of Yūsuf Bey’s actions, al-Dardīr interrupted all activities at al-Azhar, including congregational prayers, and locked the doors to the mosque-compound. He and a number of other Azharī shaykhs sat in the old prayer niche while the younger students stood atop the *manāra* (raised platform to call the *adhān*) and raised their voices in supplication against the emirs. Traders in the surrounding shops also closed and the escalation initiated by al-Dardīr forced Yūsuf Bey to free the prisoners. Other Mamlūk emirs became involved and after some bloodshed, and the death of three of the Moroccans, the situation calmed, as one of the emirs, Ibrāhīm Bey, one of the two leaders of the duumvirate, offered terms of truce between them and the shaykhs.

This offer was predicated on the assumption of the security affairs of al-Azhar in lieu of the Agha, the security representative of the Ottoman vizier (pasha), as well as denying access to Ottoman officials from using the access street to al-Azhar. The shaykhs, including al-Dardīr, presumably, rejected this offer, voicing their objection aggressively by proclaiming: “There is no basis for

this!” and stating that the street is open to all, both the upright and corrupt, and no one has the right to deny passage. After some time, al-Jabartī mentions that both the Agha and the Pasha accessed the street, thereby rendering the Mamlūk request a moot point.<sup>49</sup>

This anecdote is particularly telling, as it demonstrates the degree of influence and interaction of the scholars of al-Azhar, specifically for al-Dardīr, as he was viewed as their de-facto leader. Though the rector (Shaykh) of al-Azhar was a powerful figure, and ostensibly should have wielded greater influence, it was al-Dardīr that the disenfranchised populace of Cairo would seek out for intercession on their behalf for the egregious trespasses of the Mamlūk emirs. The extent that al-Dardīr was willing to act on their behalf appears initially shocking; some modern Arab historians have referred to his actions as “uprisings”, which, when viewed in light of the disruption that they caused may not seem far fetched.<sup>50</sup>

However, when taken in light of the view that al-Dardīr held of the Mamlūk emirs, that of usurpers and *muḥāribīn* (enemy combatants), then the extent of his actions seems commensurate with his convictions. In the chapter on *ḥirāba* in the *Sharḥ al-Kabīr*— defined as the prevention or terrorising of a person or group from using a public road [or any public place where public access is assumed], whether for forced robbery, rape, or otherwise, in a manner where repelling them by force, law, or otherwise is of no avail. Al-Dardīr then proceeds to provide an example, where he states after the previous definition: “and the despots from amongst Egypt’s rulers and others of their ilk usurp the wealth of the Muslims and prevent them from their livelihoods, negatively

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 2:12-13.

<sup>50</sup> See Abduljawwād Ismail, *Dawr Al-Azhar Al-Siyāsī Fī Miṣr Ibbān Al-Ḥukm Al-‘Uthmānī* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 1996).

impacting their country; and the seeking of intercession from the *'ulamā'* or others proves futile.”<sup>51</sup>

Al-Dasūqī, in his gloss, states that the *'ulamā'* are *ahl al-ḥall wa'l-'aqd* (the people of dissolution and accord). The concept of *ahl al-ḥall wa'l-'aqd* traces its origins to the early days of Islam, specifically when a *khalīfa* was chosen after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad. The people recognised as leaders and of power and influence – they alone were the deciders of succession. As the term indicates, theoretically they could also “dissolve” leaders and remove them from power. However, after dynastic rule supplanted the caliphate, this in effect, never occurred. Nevertheless, the notion of declaring the Mamlūk emirs as “enemy combatants” is predicated on two developments that were emblematic of al-Dardīr’s Egypt: (1) the Mamlūks were viewed as illegitimate usurpers of the Ottoman vizier’s authority, and (2) where once the respect accorded to the *'ulamā'* was enough of a deterrent for political elites to at least ostensibly abide by the precepts of the *sharī'a*, in the case of the Mamlūk Beys, and more specifically Murād and Ibrāhīm Bey, this was clearly no longer the case.

With the death of both Muḥammad Abū Dhahab, whom al-Jabartī describes as one of the best emirs he knew in valour, courage, determination, wisdom, magnanimity, forbearance and as a lover of the *'ulamā'* such as 'Alī al-Ṣa'īdī<sup>52</sup>, the old paradigm of benevolent, if flawed, ruler, and intrepid scholar to keep him in check had ended. The fickle and destructive duumvirate of Murād and Ibrāhīm Bey had begun, and a new paradigm emerged. Al-Dardīr and his fellow Azharīs felt fully justified in causing severe public disruption, if not disorder, in order to secure the rights of the hapless Cairenes who were at the

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<sup>51</sup> Dasūqī, 'Ilaysh, and Dardīr, *Hāshiyat Al-Dasūqī 'alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 4:348.

<sup>52</sup> See al-Jabartī’s biographical entry in: al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akhhbār*, 1:651-55.

mercy of the Beys, their continuous infighting, and their unsanctioned taxes to fund their internecine rivalry. The malfeasance reached its apex in 1785, months before al-Dardīr's death, but not before several significant events occurred that would come to define his legacy among the inhabitants of Egypt's most populous city.

The first, as narrated by al-Jabartī, occurred when a group of marauding emirs ravaged the countryside of the delta region in northern Egypt, pillaging the cities of Rashīd, Dasūq, and Zanklūn, amongst others, in addition to the burning of churches and Coptic villages razed to the ground. Amongst these emirs was Ḥusayn Bey, who then advanced his reign of pillage to Cairo, specifically the Ḥusayniyya district. There he came upon the household of one of the servants of the shaykhs of al-Azhar and he emptied the house of everything in it, including bedding and the unmentionables of the female members of the household.

The following morning the residents of the Ḥusayniyya district, armed with rods, sticks, and drums, marched to al-Azhar to speak to al-Dardīr. Al-Dardīr listened and assuaged them by saying: "I am with you." They then proceeded outside of al-Azhar, closing its gates behind them, and then forcing all surrounding shops to close as well in a manner that al-Jabartī describes as contemptible (*munkara*). Al-Dardīr then proclaimed to the crowd: "Tomorrow we will summon the people of the surrounding areas in Bulāq and Old Cairo (al-Fuṣṭāṭ); then I will ride out with you and we will plunder their houses as they plundered ours; we will either die as martyrs or God will grant us victory over them."<sup>53</sup> This attracted the attention of the emirs as well as the Ottoman aghas, who rode out to al-Dardīr and requested a list of all the stolen items and then

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 2:149-50.

promised to return it all to its proper owners. When Ibrāhīm Bey spoke to Ḥusayn Bey about returning the stolen items, he replied sardonically: “We are all plunderers; you plunder, Murād Bey plunders, and I plunder.” Al-Jabartī then reports that the tensions dissipated, but with nothing resolved, and the items remaining unreturned.<sup>54</sup>

A few days later, a similar incident occurred, where a ship carrying foodstuffs for the residents of the Upper Egypt dormitory at al-Azhar one of the Mamlūk beys appropriated the shipment. The dormitory residents rebelled and solicited the intercession of al-Dardīr, the official leader of the Upper Egypt dormitory. He then rode out with two other Azhar shaykhs, and after some heated negotiations, some of the foodstuffs were returned, while the Mamlūk Bey kept most of the cargo.<sup>55</sup>

Another incident narrated by al-Jabartī occurred during the annual *mawlid* festival in the Delta city of Ṭanṭā, where al-Dardīr attended to visit the tomb of Aḥmad al-Badawī, the city’s patron saint. The *kāshif* (local administrator) imposed a duty of half a French riyal on each camel sold at the market; in the last days of the *mawlid*, some agents of the *kāshif* seized some camels belonging to some *sharīfs* (people who share lineage with the Prophet Muḥammad). They complained to al-Dardīr seeking his intercession; he rode out personally to the *kāshif* and rebuked him, proclaiming: “You do not fear God!” A large group formed behind him, and one of the *mawlid* attendees attacked the *kāshif* with a club, and received a beating by his guards. The situation calmed after al-Dardīr withdrew, with Ibrāhīm Bey making a personal visit to reassure him of their commitment to peace and security.”<sup>56</sup> This incident highlights the social currency of a figure such as al-Dardīr, but also the failure of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 2:150.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 151.

that currency during the reign of the duumvirate to prove effective in contributing to societal solidarity, as it had done in years before.

Al-Dardīr's interactions with the political elite were not limited to Ottoman and Mamlūk officials. He was one of the recipients of an annual stipend that Sultan Muḥammad III of Morocco sent to Azhar *'ulamā'* of the Mālikī tradition. He was a reformist monarch particularly interested in the Mālikī tradition, writing his own treatise on the subject.<sup>57</sup> Egypt was a rest stop for pilgrims coming from North and West Africa on their way to the pilgrimage in Mecca, and thus the exchange of ideas carried with returning pilgrims indicates there were extensive relations across the Muslim world, specifically in circles of Islamic scholarship.<sup>58</sup> Sultan Muḥammad III actively participated in the intellectual life of the land he ruled, and his book, *Ṭabaq al-Arṭāb*, is a compilation of legal opinions from the major books in the Mālikī tradition, with specific emphasis on the works of Ibn Abī Zayd and al-Ḥaṭṭāb.<sup>59</sup> The origins of his relationship with al-Dardīr are unclear, but it is likely that the reputation of al-Azhar in tandem with al-Dardīr's pre-eminent position as the Mufti of the Mālikiyya in Egypt contributed to his patronage of al-Dardīr, by which al-Dardīr was able to fund his pilgrimage to Mecca and build his *zāwiya* behind the Azhar mosque.<sup>60</sup>

Al-Jabartī's anecdotes challenge the characterisation by some that the *'ulamā'* of eighteenth century Egypt were in some form either collaborators or colluders with the political elites.<sup>61</sup> Others have been more charitable, positing that the *'ulamā'* were "more generally occupied in placating an irate population

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<sup>57</sup> See 'Alawī and Mīghā, *Ṭabaq Al-Arṭāb*.

<sup>58</sup> This phenomenon during the eighteenth century is extensively documented in Reichmuth, *The World of Murtada Al-Zabidi (1732-91): Life, Networks, and Writings*.

<sup>59</sup> 'Alawī and Mīghā, *Ṭabaq Al-Arṭāb*.

<sup>60</sup> Already mentioned in chapter 1.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, al-Jabartī's necrology of al-Dardīr's teacher, 'Alī al-Ṣa'īdī: al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akhbār*, 1:647-50.

than occupied wresting justice from the Mamlūks.”<sup>62</sup> This was because they were dependent on the Mamlūks for their livelihoods, and thus found themselves in a “weak position.”<sup>63</sup> While undoubtedly there were some associates of al-Azhar who fit Marsot’s characterisation, it is a tenuous depiction of al-Dardīr. For al-Dardīr, wresting justice appears to be the primary motivation and impetus for his repeated intercessions on behalf of Cairo’s downtrodden with the Beys – to the extent of putting his own life at risk in an effort to do so.

After limited success in his intercessions, when previous Azhar ‘*ulamā*’ like his teacher, al-Ṣa’īdī, were more effective with more benevolent and forgiving Mamlūks, al-Dardīr concluded that the emirs were no more than lawless brigands, fitting the legal prescription of *muḥāribīn*. As part of the definition of *muḥāraba* stipulates that its victims pleas for help are futile, al-Dardīr concludes that even the intercession of the ‘*ulamā*’, which in previous eras were heeded, were now limited, if not completely ineffective in curbing the excesses of the Mamlūk emirs, the effective rulers in light of the Ottoman Pasha’s figurehead role.

Thus, al-Dardīr resigned himself to the fact that his intercessions and calling to account of the political leadership had entered a new, unprecedented era of ineffectiveness. He made several personal efforts to quell the infighting between Murād and Ibrāhīm Bey, only to see agreements rescinded unilaterally and interruptive hostilities renewed.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, he continued his admonitions of the Mamlūk emirs when requested by Cairo’s denizens. He appeared to be willing to take the risk of provoking armed insurrection in the

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<sup>62</sup> Marsot, "The Political and Economic Functions of the 'Ulamā' in the 18th Century," 135.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājīm W'al-Akhhār*, 2:151.



face of a recalcitrant and essentially lawless ruler class that continually challenged the legitimate authority of the Ottoman suzerainty.

The state of Ottoman frustration with the Mamlūk duumvirate, stemming largely from their refusal to pay the Egyptian tribute to Istanbul and the holy cities, as well as their continuous feuding, reached a fever pitch when the Sublime Porte dispatched its most effective general, Admiral Ḥasan Ghāzī, in June of 1786. In the previous year, he had successfully quelled the open rebellion in Palestine and restored Ottoman suzerainty, killing the leader of the rebellion, Ṣāḥīr Āl-‘Umar (d.1189/1775).<sup>65</sup> He was now tasked with doing the same with Murād and Ibrāhīm Bey. From al-Jabartī’s description, it appears the Egyptians were somewhat relieved at this news, but had reservations about the extent of destruction the Ottoman invasion would bring.<sup>66</sup> This led to al-Dardīr making his last major intercession of his life, to convince the admiral that peaceful means would bring about a more salutary result, but the admiral was sent to quell a rebellion, not to offer concessions, and the request was flatly denied.

Despite the incidents mentioned, al-Dardīr never called for open rebellion against the Mamlūk emirs. It appears that securing the diminishing rights of the disenfranchised was his main concern, using coercive means to do so. This was in reaction to a judiciary system that was corrupt and failing. ‘*Ulamā*’ intercessions were no longer effective, and the threat of civil disruption took its place as foil to the ruling elites’ excesses. In the final summation, al-Dardīr was neither a quietest nor a fomenter of rebellion, but an influential and concerned member of a society in political turmoil. Thus the nature of al-Dardīr’s relationship with the political elites of his day seemed to be of a genuine interest

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<sup>65</sup> David Kushner, *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period : Political, Social, and Economic Transformation* (Jerusalem Leiden: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi ; Distributed by E.J. Brill, 1986), 259.

<sup>66</sup> al-Jabartī, ‘*Ajā’ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājīm W’al-Akḥbār*, 2:131-32.

towards the amelioration of the conditions of the common people of Cairo's urban quarters, in turn earning him his famous epithet *Abū al-Barakāt* (the dispenser of blessings).

### **Al-Dardīr the Mufti and Leader of al-Azhar**

Al-Dardīr never became *Shaykh al-Azhar*, the position bestowed with the supervision of al-Azhar's many lucrative endowments (*awqāf*). Al-Azhar was unique in this aspect, as the madrasas founded by the Mamlūks invariably had a single *waqf*, often founded by an emir for the study of a particular legal school (with the exception of Sultan Ḥasan as cited above).<sup>67</sup> However, al-Azhar was entirely different and did not fit into the mould of madrasa, or pure mosque. It enjoyed shrine like status, though there are no associated mausoleums of Muslim saints, as is the case with the mosque of al-Ḥusayn, or al-Shāfi'ī. Nevertheless, 'Alī Mubarak, commenting on al-Azhar in the nineteenth century, describes it as a place of immense blessing (*baraka*), and mentions the prevalence of *al-mujāwirīn* (pilgrims), those who spend their days from amongst the Cairo residents as well as visitors, listening to the lectures at the pillars, praying, reciting the Qur'ān, or merely sitting in contemplation.<sup>68</sup> The Ottomans perceived al-Azhar a pre-Mamlūk institution that subsequently enjoyed the respect and admiration of the '*ulamā*', a group they did not wish to antagonise, and hence not a major threat to their authority. Other pre-Ottoman institutions were allowed to decline, and fall into disrepair and decrepitude.

The dormitory residences (*arwiqa*) were a distinguishing aspect of al-Azhar. These were organised primarily according to geographic region, such as

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<sup>67</sup> Based upon a reading of al-Maqrīzī's catalogue of madrasas and mosques: Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā'iz W 'Al-l'Tibār Fī Dhikr Al-Khiṭaṭ W'al-Athār*, 4:451-689.

<sup>68</sup> 'Alī Mubarak, *Al-Khiṭaṭ Al-Tawfiqīyya Al-Jadīda Li-Miṣr Al-Qāhirah Wa-Mudunihā Wa-Bilādihā Al-Qadīmah W'al-Shahīrah*, ed. Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah (Egypt). Markaz Taḥqīq al-Turāth. al-Qāhirah: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub, 1980, 4:29-36.

for the Levant, North Africa, Upper Egypt, etc. but there were occasional endowed residences for special groups such as the blind, or those studying a particular legal school.<sup>69</sup> Senior scholars at al-Azhar were assigned supervision of these dormitories, with the main responsibility the overseeing of food rations and stipends, as well as maintaining the general order. Al-Dardīr was assigned this position for the Upper Egypt dormitory, after the passing of his mentor, al-Ṣaʿīdī (also inheriting the muftiship of the Mālikīs, to be discussed below). This was an influential role that carried with it not only influence over a significant body of students, but also provided an anchor into the restive neighbouring Ḥusayniyya district, whose denizens would march upon al-Azhar seeking intercession from the *shaykhs* for the address of grievances with the ruling elite. The dormitories served as safe houses where students (and probably the *mujāwirīn* as well) could find a place to congregate and commiserate. This also added to al-Azhar's reputation as more than mosque, madrasa, or shrine – but the very pulse of Cairo itself. Its role as a potential centre of resistance during the French occupation was recognised by Bonaparte and therein lies the reasoning by his attempted co-opting of the Azhar *ʿulamāʾ* by including them in the executive *dīwān* and insisting upon their donning of sashes bearing the French tricolours during official ceremonies.<sup>70</sup>

Al-Dardīr's role as head of the Upper Egypt *riwāq* raised his profile amongst the Azhar elite as well as the urban residents of Cairo. On more than one occasion, as al-Jabartī documents, he was the sole scholar of Azhar solicited to address grievances against one of the Mamlūk emirs. Al-Dardīr commanded a particular authority, as he was able to close the marketplace neighbouring al-Azhar in an effort to apply pressure for redress of these

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 4:49-58.

<sup>70</sup> Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt : Invading the Middle East*, 118-20.

grievances. Al-Jabartī notes that in earlier times, marching upon the Pasha's residence occurred routinely. No doubt, the impotence of the Pasha to exert much influence upon the Mamlūk emirs led the populace to seek intercession from somewhere else.<sup>71</sup> Al-Dardīr's supervisory role of the Azhar students enabled him to appreciate their daily struggles. His attempts at simplification and facilitation of the core disciplines (*tabṣīṭ*) in his pedagogical style were likely influenced by this daily interaction. He was close to the masses in a more than superficial sense. He was thus not merely a scholar of Islam, but also a patron-saint, and a fulfiller of needs.

Al-Dardīr, in his capacity of mufti of the Mālikī tradition, also brought him closer to the masses. The mufti is defined by the classical tradition as the scholar capable of issuing a fatwa, or nonbinding advisory legal opinion. This is contrast to the *ḥukm* (binding legal opinion), issued by a *qāḍī* (judge), and whose ruling has the investiture of state enforcement, as opposed to the fatwa, which developed independent of the state for most of its history. However, they both share a common source of legal opinions, namely the substantive law literature, which include the *mukhtaṣars*, commentaries, and glosses by which the dominant legal opinions may be determined.

Winter alleges that as the Mamlūks grew in their retention of control in Egypt, the number of Turkish judges diminished proportionally to the increase in Egyptian judges.<sup>72</sup> Winter fails to cite any primary sources for this allegation, insisting also that Arabic replaced Turkish as the language of the courts, and further alleging that by 1798, only six Turkish judges remained. El-Nahal, one of the secondary sources cited by Winter, examined Ottoman court records from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries cites another secondary source

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<sup>71</sup> al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akḥbār*.

<sup>72</sup> Winter, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule: 1517-1798*, 110.

that the *nā'ibs* (deputy judges) were mostly Egyptian, though the primary judges were always appointed by Istanbul. Furthermore, al-Jabartī does not mention in his necrologies judgeships for any of the Egyptian '*ulamā*' save for three judges of Moroccan origin.<sup>73</sup> Al-Dardīr also expresses his lack of confidence in the judges of his day, though he does not mention their ethnic origin.<sup>74</sup>

Whatever the case may be, it remains highly uncertain if Egyptians assumed substantial roles in the Ottoman court system as judges invested with authority from the Pasha; the more likely scenario is that they functioned in some role of court officiating, more as deputies and assistants to the Ottoman judges.<sup>75</sup> This point is significant, for it would indicate a parallel system to the official Ottoman judiciary, where the three Egyptian muftis resolved disputes in unofficial capacities, specifically in matters where state authority was not required to adjudicate payments and fines or transfers of ownership. These public muftiships further blurred the lines of separation between the elite '*ulamā*' and the general populace.

Since the time of al-Ẓāhir Baybars, the rulers in Egypt have recognised muftis for each school of jurisprudence. Though Baybars inaugurated a Ḥanbalī muftiship, it appears that sometime before the Ottoman conquest of Egypt that the office fell out of use, most likely due to a dearth of adherents, as the Ḥanbalī school never found currency outside of Iraq and central Arabia. Thus the other three schools remained, namely the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Shāfi'ī, with each finding footing for disparate reasons. The Ḥanafī school, the official school of the Ottoman empire, grew in prominence with the Ottoman conquests

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<sup>73</sup> al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akhhbār*.

<sup>74</sup> Dasūqī, 'Illaysh, and Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Dasūqī 'alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 4:129.

<sup>75</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule : Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo (16th and 17th Centuries)*, 73.

of the Arab provinces and was generally the school by which the Ottoman judges ruled in their courts.

The Shāfi'ī School, having found initial footing in Cairo with al-Shāfi'ī himself, grew in prominence after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's ambitious programme of institution building in the wake of the dissolution of the Fatimid Empire. As for the Mālīkī school, it is the oldest in Egypt, with the students of Mālīk, namely Ibn al-Qāsim, Ashhab, and Ibn Wahb institutionalising a *fiqh* tradition that hitherto did not exist in Egypt in the second/eighth century.

As for the muftiship in the time of al-Dardīr, it is clear that the three schools were represented. The Ḥanbalī school fell out of favour some time after the Ottoman conquest.<sup>76</sup> The muftiship was not an official Ottoman office, but appears to have received Ottoman recognition, in a manner similar to the office of *shaykh al-balad*. Al-Jabartī's anecdotes reveal that with the arrival of new Pashas to the citadel, all people of rank would be in attendance, such as the heads of the Bakrī and Wafā'ī families, later represented by the *naqīb al-ashrāf*, as well as the three muftis and the Shaykh of al-Azhar.<sup>77</sup> All of these "offices" were Mamlūk in origin (or Ayyubid in the case of the muftis), but nevertheless of substantial influence in Ottoman Egypt. Al-Jabartī relates that Muḥammad Bey Abū Dhahab built a school and mosque to house the offices of the three muftis, al-Dardīr the Mālīkī representative, and that they would receive people on a daily basis to answer their religious questions. This was completely outside of the purview of Ottoman officials, indicating that the spiritual authority rested with the Egyptian '*ulamā*', rather than any Ottoman office. The Ottomans did not interfere with such affairs, and indeed, perhaps they even encouraged it, as little could be gained from co-opting the Azhar, or its scholars. They were

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<sup>76</sup> Winter, *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule: 1517-1798*.

<sup>77</sup> al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājīm W'al-Akhbār*.

also the sole interlocutors who could be relied upon to temper the Mamlūk emir excesses.

The muftis, including al-Dardīr, may have even assumed the role of judge on some issues where state enforcement was unnecessary. In *Aqrab al-Masālik*, al-Dardīr expressly lists the issues a just and trustworthy person (*‘adl*) may arbitrate between disputing parties without the validation of state authority as including: (1) issues of financial disputation, specifically evaluation of buying, selling, and debts, as to their permissibility and completion, not in contractual validity or lack thereof of, and (2) personal injury retribution. He may not arbitrate in mandatory criminal punishments, murder, manslaughter, conservatorships, divorce, annulments, or issues concerning anything that cannot be brought to the arbitration table, due to its absence. All of the preceding affect the rights of others or the “rights of God”, and therefore require state authority to adjudicate.<sup>78</sup> As indicated earlier, the Ottoman administration introduced certain judicial measures borne out of the *Qānūn Nāma*, placing arbitrary difficulty in registering marriages and the like. This upset many Cairenes, likely leading to them seeking the “unofficial” offices of the muftis to preside over cases they preferred not to subject to Ottoman bureaucracy.<sup>79</sup>

As for the interaction between the muftis and the Ottoman judges, al-Dardīr maintains that judges should seek the counsel of the *‘ulamā’*, especially on matters that are not easily referenced in the *fiqh* manuals. He proclaims, “...he should not unilaterally depend upon his opinion, even if he is a *mujtahid*, as what is correct is not limited to him, as perhaps it may even be found with an ignorant (unlearned) person.”<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the *ahl al-‘ilm* are recommended

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<sup>78</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Şawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik ‘Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Şaghīr*, 4:198-99.

<sup>79</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule : Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo (16th and 17th Centuries)*, 67-85.

<sup>80</sup> Dasūqī, ‘Illaysh, and Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Dasūqī ‘alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr*, 4:131-32.

to be present at the judiciary hearings, so that the judge can easily solicit their opinions in order to make a just ruling.<sup>81</sup> Whether this actually happened in practice seems circumspect, as al-Dardīr laments the state of the judges of his time – most likely referring to the Egyptian deputy judges – as he comments:<sup>82</sup>

Egypt's judges spend money [to buy their judgeship] in order to usurp peoples' wealth unjustly, seemingly under the auspices of the law, especially from orphans and the weak. And thus, the judges leave nothing for them of their wealth except very little, so we ask God for well-being. Thus, their rulings are illegitimate, as "the judge of Cairo"<sup>83</sup> rarely hears a complaint and is oblivious to its reality. A court witness from amongst the court witnesses records [the proceedings] of the case and brings it to the judge [of Cairo] to sign and validate, without adding anything [to the case file].

Al-Ṣāwī, in his gloss in reference to the illegitimacy of the judges' rulings, remarks: "The muftis have remained silent on this [issue] due to their inability to speak the truth [openly] as some of the *'ārifīn* (knowers of God) have said: 'The time [we are living in] is a time of silence, of remaining in one's house, and of contenting oneself with the most meagre of sustenance, as the one who states the truth in this [time] dies.'"<sup>84</sup> Clearly, al-Ṣāwī was invoking the principle of avoidance of the greater of two evils, and it provides insight into the minds of the Egyptian *'ulamā'* who felt that the system of governance and justice had all but completely broken down because of Ottoman powerlessness and Mamlūk usurpation.

In the face of this inability of state authority to competently address the communal needs of an increasingly disenfranchised population, the Sufi *ṭarīqa* expanded its role by emphasising the merits of reconciling everyday obstructions with the divine will and power, as well as providing a space where the rights of community and brotherhood could be re-established. Al-Dardīr made a significant contribution in these areas, as analysed in the following section.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 4:132.

<sup>82</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 4:191-92.

<sup>83</sup> Referring to the Qādī Askar, the chief judge appointed by Istanbul.

<sup>84</sup> al-Dardīr and al-Ṣawī, *Aqrab Al-Masālik 'Alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Ṣaghīr*, 4:188.



## **Al-Dardīr the Sufi *Murshid***

Sufism as a social phenomenon has received a great deal of attention in the literature.<sup>85</sup> Neo-Sufism was discussed earlier, as a post-classical phenomenon, hence the qualifying prefix.<sup>86</sup> It is predicated on the traditional dichotomy of “sober Sufism” and “ecstatic Sufism”, where the former is the province of the “orthodox” ‘*ulamā*’, whilst the latter affiliated with “folk Islam” or the heterodox peasant class and urban dwellers. Neo-Sufism, as a concept, was coined by Fazlur Rahman to conceptualise the late eighteenth century surge of North African Sufism, characterised by an emphasis on social reform rather than individual piety, often associated with figures such as Aḥmad ibn Idrīs (d. 1253/1837), Muḥammad al-Sammān (d. 1189/1775), and Aḥmad al-Tijānī (d. 1230/1815). O’Fahey and Radtke question the utility of term, given that many of its core assumptions, such as rejection of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings, rejection of the *murshid/murīd* relationship, as well as rejection of *taqlīd* and the assertion of *ijtihād*, do not hold under scrutiny.<sup>87</sup>

Additionally, the French colonial prejudice in their encounters of militant Sufi brotherhoods in the colonised North and West African lands contributed to the categorisation of these brotherhoods as reactionary and as a social phenomena, in a manner where this dichotomy between quietest and reactionary Sufi brotherhoods became emblematic of the literature on the

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<sup>85</sup> See Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*; Nikki R. Keddie, "Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions in the Middle East since 1500," in *The Ulama of Cairo in the 18th and the 19th Centuries*, ed. Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Massignon and Mason, *The Passion of Al-Hallāj : Martyr and Mystic of Islam*; O’Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint : Ahmad Ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*. F. de Jong, *Ṭuruq and Ṭuruq-Linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt : A Historical Study in Organizational Dimensions of Islamic Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

<sup>86</sup> See O’Fahey and Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered."; Voll, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered Again."

<sup>87</sup> O’Fahey and Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered," 4-5.

subject.<sup>88</sup> Voll counters their arguments by claiming they exclusively referenced the Idrīsī tradition, where many of their assertions may be true, but failed to consider other Sufi traditions that were prominent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Additionally, he defends the use of the term Neo-Sufism, as new structures in the brotherhoods were introduced and not merely a continuation of pre-modern Sufi devotional practices. Furthermore, the rejection of Ibn ‘Arabī may be an exaggeration, as he suggests his thoughts may have enjoyed less attention as compared to al-Ghazālī, who features prominently in the thought of al-Zabīdī, also considered a Neo-Sufi.<sup>89</sup>

The literature has not sufficiently addressed where al-Dardīr fits in the so-called neo-Sufi revival of the eighteenth century. Levtzion and Voll give scant mention in their edited volume “Eighteenth Century Renewal and Reform in Islam”. He is neither addressed in the context of the Sufi backgrounds of the West African anti-colonial secessionist movements by the likes of ‘Uthmān Dan Fodio nor in the context of a claimed Khalwatiyya revival in Egypt, led by the students of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, such as al-Ḥifnī, and al-Ḥifnī’s student, al-Dardīr.<sup>90</sup> For example, Dan Fodio was initiated into the Khalwatiyya by Jibrīl ibn ‘Umar, who accepted the *wird* in Cairo from al-Dardīr.<sup>91</sup> De Jong gives more significant attention in the same volume to the merits of a Khalwatiyya revival in the eighteenth century by the leadership of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī. He concludes that according to the criteria of (1) number of adherents, (2) geographical expansion, (3) reorganisation of the order, (4) increased political significance, and (5) intellectual production of writings on the precepts of the order or related

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 7-9; Alexander D. Knysh, "Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm: The Issue of the Motivations of Sufi Resistance Movements in Western and Russian Scholarship," *Die Welt des Islams* 42, no. 2 (2002).

<sup>89</sup> Voll, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered Again."

<sup>90</sup> Nehemia Levtzion and John Obert Voll, *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 32.

themes, that al-Bakrī was neither a reviver or reformer, and that such a notion should be discarded.<sup>92</sup>

Al-Dardīr's place in the Sufi tradition is known primarily via his writings, as al-Jabartī makes little mention of al-Dardīr in the Khalwatī tradition, even though he himself was a disciple of al-Ḥifnī, as was al-Dardīr.<sup>93</sup> Al-Dardīr defines *taṣawwuf* as: "The knowledge of the principles by which the heart can be rectified, as well as all of the senses."<sup>94</sup> Additionally, he maintains that *taṣawwuf* from a practical standpoint entails "choosing the religiously precautionary path in terms of fulfilment of obligations, avoidance of prohibitions, and sufficing oneself with only that which is necessary from permissible acts."<sup>95</sup> Al-Dardīr advocates a Sufism predicated on the outward observance (*ṭarīqa*) of the *sharī'a* (Islam's legal rulings) in order to arrive at the *ḥaqīqa*. He defines *ḥaqīqa* in this context as "secrets of the *sharī'a* and the results of the *ṭarīqa* - knowledge gained by the hearts of the *sālikīn* (spiritual wayfarers), after they have become purified from the impurities of human shortcomings."<sup>96</sup>

The emphasis on following the precepts of the *sharī'a* is a theme shared by his teachers, most notably Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, who blamed the would-be Sufis or *mutaṣawwiffa*, for the loss of religious piety amongst the masses.<sup>97</sup> Al-Dardīr voices a similar concern, warning his students to avoid those who merely dress and speak the language of the true Sufi guides, as they are opportunistic

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 117-28.

<sup>93</sup> Al-Jabartī offers his most thorough treatment of the Khalwatī tradition in his biographical entry for al-Ḥifnī. See al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib Al-Āthār Fi Al-Tarājim W'al-Akḥbār*, 1:460-82.

<sup>94</sup> al-Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Al-Sibā'ī 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 600.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 602-03.

<sup>97</sup> See Bakrī, *Al-Suyūf Al-Ḥidād Fī 'Anāq Ahl Al-Zandaqa W'al-Ilḥād*.

charlatans who take advantage of peoples' good will to fill their coffers.<sup>98</sup>

Hence, the importance of a legitimate guide as a path to God, without which one would be helpless to realise their own shortcomings and incapable of reaching God alone.<sup>99</sup> The importance of the shaykh or guide takes a central role in al-Dardīr's writings. The putative malfeasance of the false guides has heightened the essentiality of the legitimate guide. As a result, ultimate spiritual cognition is not normally possible without the guiding hand of the shaykh.

Al-Dardīr's main work in *taṣawwuf*, specifically in the form of the genre of the etiquettes of the *murīd* (disciple), is *Tuḥfat al-Ikhwān fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl al-'Irfān* (The Treasure of the Brotherhood in the Elucidation of the Way of the People of Gnosis). He describes it as a short treatise on the elucidation of the path to God, written as a guide for his *ikhwān* (students) and as a reminder for his *khillān* (peers).<sup>100</sup> It is relatively short, only forty-four manuscript folios, but it was designed as a primer for the aspiring disciple. Its contents consist of an introduction on divine commandments, where al-Dardīr posits they are of four types: the (1) Outward (*ẓāhir*) command, (2) Inward (*bāṭin*) command, (3) Outward (*ẓāhir*) prohibition, and (4) Inward (*bāṭin*) prohibition.

Examples of (1) is the ritual prayer and the remaining four pillars of Islam, and all associated with those pillars; examples of (2) include belief in God and His Prophet, accepting the legal rulings of the *sharī'a*, patience in the face of adversity, and relying upon God in all of one's affairs; examples of (3) include the avoidance of fornication, intoxicating drink, backbiting, spreading of false rumours, and harming people in general; examples of (4) include removal of avarice, envy, self-aggrandisement, and love of power, status, and prestige.

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<sup>98</sup> al-Dardīr, *Ḥāshiyat Al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Al-Sibā'ī 'Alā Sharḥ Al-Kharīda Al-Bahiyya*, 659-60.

<sup>99</sup> See *ibid.*, 660; al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," 5-6.

<sup>100</sup> "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," 2.

Deviating from these four imperatives will rob one of *taqwa* (God consciousness), the key to attaining the '*irfān* (gnosis) of the elite.<sup>101</sup>

This state of *taqwa* cannot be realised in its most complete sense except by availing oneself of six foundational principles: (1) voluntary hunger, (2) voluntary isolation, (3) silence outwardly and inwardly except for the remembrance of God, (4) night vigil, (5) maintain the *dhikr* that one receives from one's shaykh, and (6) the shaykh, who has already traversed this path to God.<sup>102</sup> In these six principles, al-Dardīr follows al-Ghazālī in the first four, but adds the latter two, namely those principles that are specific to the *ṭarīqa*, a concept that generally appeared after the seventh/thirteenth century, at least a century after al-Ghazālī.<sup>103</sup> The emphasis on the essentialness of the shaykh/*murshid* for attaining higher spiritual realisations is predicated on the notion that one cannot rid oneself of the hegemony of one's lower passions and appetites on one's own, a prerequisite for attaining these spiritual realisations. The ego will always make excuses for one's shortcomings, so the guidance of a third party in the form of the shaykh becomes necessary.<sup>104</sup> As a result, certain etiquettes must be observed in order for the main objective of the shaykh/*murīd* relationship to be realised. Al-Dardīr counts amongst these etiquettes the following:<sup>105</sup>

- 1) Complete respect and veneration for the shaykh, to the degree that none of his actions should be questioned, and if something appears to contravene the *sharī'a*, then if it is an ambiguous issue it should be interpreted in a manner that does not contravene the *sharī'a*.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>103</sup> Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 10.

<sup>104</sup> al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," 5.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

- 2) Preferring the shaykh to all others from amongst the *ṣāliḥīn*, including refraining from attending their circles, visiting them and listening to them until one has maximised their benefit from one's shaykh. Al-Dardīr notes that this etiquette is specific for those who are serious in their spiritual wayfaring, not those who receive the *ṭarīqa*'s litany for purposes of *tabarruk* (merely seeking blessing).
- 3) One should not stand while the shaykh is sitting, or sleep in his presence except by his permission, or speak unnecessarily, or sit in his place, or to travel, marry, or do anything of consequence in their life without the shaykh's permission.
- 4) To protect the shaykh in his absence as in his presence, to recall him in one's heart at all times to receive his *baraka* (blessing), and to love those he loves and reject those he rejects.
- 5) To perceive that all blessings that come to him are a result of the *baraka* (blessing) of the shaykh, and to understand that the shaykh may test his resolve from time to time to ascertain if they will remain on the path
- 6) To maintain the recitation of the litany prescribed by the shaykh, as the *madad* (spiritual increase) of the shaykh is in the recitation of his prescribed litany (*wird*), so one becomes remiss in its recitation will be deprived of the shaykh's *madad*.
- 7) To refrain from spying on the shaykh to see his ritual devotions or general habits, for this will lead to the *murīd*'s destruction.
- 8) To love the shaykh and always maintain a good opinion of him.

The points noted by al-Dardīr are not specific to the Khalwatī *ṭarīqa*, but they do reflect his personal convictions regarding the relationship between master and disciple. The degree by which the *murīd* is to surrender his will to that of the

shaykh appears imprudent and potentially rife for abuse. Al-Jabartī's annals are full of tales that recount such abuses, but al-Dardīr, as others before him, draws a distinction between the "true" shaykh and the "false" one. Al-Bakrī devotes an entire book to drawing this distinction,<sup>106</sup> as the proliferation of whom they considered false Sufis was emblematic of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Al-Dardīr mentions that the true shaykh would not insist that all who receive the *wird* from him to devote themselves exclusively to him; one who does so is not a "shaykh for the path to God."<sup>107</sup> Indeed, it was not uncommon for scholars of this period to affiliate with multiple *ṭarīqas*, as al-Dardīr appears to have also been affiliated with the Aḥmadī-Shanawī, Shādhilī, and Naqshabandī *ṭarīqas*.<sup>108</sup> His initiation into these other *ṭarīqas* may have been more than ceremonial, as he reportedly was initiated into the Aḥmadī-Shanawī *ṭarīqa* by his principal Shaykh, 'Alī al-Ṣa'īdī, who in his *ijāza*, gave permission for al-Dardīr to hold gatherings of *dhikr* and to take on *murīds* (disciples).<sup>109</sup>

The rest of the section on *ādāb* outlines the etiquettes towards one's brothers in the *ṭarīqa*, towards oneself, and towards the 'awām (general populace). Etiquettes towards the *ṭarīqa* brothers include preferring them to oneself in mundane matters, loving them, visiting them when they are sick, and forgiving them of any perceived offences. He also lists his recommendations of books that should be read in order to avail oneself of "the etiquettes of the [Sufi] folk"; they include the books of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī al-Ṣidīqī, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, the *Iḥyā'* of al-Ghazālī, the *Risāla* of al-Qushayrī, and the *Hikam* of Ibn 'Aṭā' illāh al-Sakandarī.

<sup>106</sup> Bakrī, *Al-Suyūf Al-Ḥidād Fī 'Anāq Ahl Al-Zandaqa W'al-Ilḥād*.

<sup>107</sup> al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," 12.

<sup>108</sup> 'Adawī, *Tarīkh Banī 'Adī*, 40.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

The diverse selection of books from various Sufi paths demonstrates al-Dardīr's commitment to eclecticism in method, as well as his dedication to *taḥqīq*, by incorporating the best of sources, regardless of juristic or esoteric affiliation. Most significantly, al-Dardīr demonstrates this in the manner by which the *dhikr* of the *ṭarīqa* is conducted. He emphasises the importance of *dhikr*, stating that the aforementioned etiquettes comprise the warp of the path to *dhikr* that comprises its weft.<sup>110</sup> The *dhikr* consists of the following etiquettes<sup>111</sup>:

- 1) To be in a state of physical and ritual purity
- 2) Facing the *qibla* (prayer direction) if alone
- 3) Sitting in a circle if in a group, or in lines if space is limited
- 4) Recalling the shaykh during the *dhikr* so as to be his companion on the path
- 5) Emptying the heart of all except God, including thoughts of Paradise, Hell, and even illumination
- 6) Closing of the eyes
- 7) Sitting in complete darkness
- 8) Saying "*lā ilāha illā Allāh*" in complete contemplation and swaying the head from right to left, pausing at the chest
- 9) Repeating the same with the second name "*Allāh*"
- 10) Avoidance of drink during the *dhikr* or immediately after, as the *dhikr* is akin to heat and water extinguishes it
- 11) Awaiting the *wārid* (spiritual inspiration) that accompanies a successful *wird* (*dhikr*). This can take the form of an enlightening for a particular spiritual station, such as *maḥabba* (love), *riḍā* (contentment), etc. Once

<sup>110</sup> al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," 10.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 11-12



the *wārid* appears, one should remain motionless so that it may penetrate all aspects of his spiritual being and take hold, otherwise it dissipates

The preceding etiquettes al-Dardīr mentions as general to the Sufi path, and not particular to the Khalwatī *ṭarīqa*, for which he includes a separate section that details the daily *awrād* (litanies) that are to be recited by the Khalwatī aspirant. These litanies consists of specific chapters and verses from the Qur'ān to be read within the supererogatory ritual prayers as well without. Al-Dardīr mentioned the *wird al-saḥar* of Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī as essential for the Khalwatī aspirant, recited in the early morning hours before dawn, and after the night vigil prayer.<sup>112</sup> More importantly, the Khalwatī method of initiation and shaykh-aspirant relationship is emphasised by al-Dardīr. These include the seven litanies that correspond to the seven degrees of the soul, as outlined in the following table:<sup>113</sup>

Degree of the Soul	(English)	Maqām	Litany
<i>Al-Nafs al-Ammāra</i>	The Inciting Soul	<i>Dhulumāt al-Aghyār</i>	<i>Lā ilāha illā Allāh</i>
<i>Al-Nafs al-Lawwāma</i>	The Reproachful Soul	<i>Al-Anwār</i>	<i>Allāh</i>
<i>Al-Nafs al-Mulhama</i>	The Inspired Soul	<i>Al-Asrār</i>	<i>Huwa</i> (Him)
<i>Al-Nafs Al-Muṭma'inna</i>	The Serene Soul	<i>Al-Kamāl</i>	<i>Ḥaqq</i> (Real)
<i>Al-Nafs al-Rāḍiya</i>	The Contented Soul	<i>Al-Wiṣāl</i>	<i>Ḥayy</i> (Alive)
<i>Al-Nafs al-Marḍiya</i>	The Found Pleasing Soul	<i>Tajalliyāt al-Af'āl</i>	<i>Qayyūm</i> (Sustaining)
<i>Al-Nafs al-Kāmila</i>	The Perfect Soul	<i>Tajalliyāt al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt</i>	<i>Qahhār</i> (Compelling)

This classification of the souls with the corresponding litanies predates al-Dardīr, as well as al-Bakrī, found in one of the reference works recommended by al-Dardīr, *Al-Sayr wa'l-Sulūk ilā Mālik al-Mulūk*, by Al-Qāsim al-Khānī (d. 1109/1697).<sup>114</sup> Little biographical information is available on al-Khānī, except

<sup>112</sup> al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-'Irfān," 11-12.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 42-44.

<sup>114</sup> Qāsim ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khānī, *Al-Sayr W 'Al-Sulūk Ilā Malik Al-Mulūk*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2002).

that he was a former merchant who travelled for ten years between Istanbul, Iraq, and the Hejaz before returning to Aleppo and dedicating his life to religious study.<sup>115</sup> Al-Dardīr recounts his own experience with the seven names and states and the *talqīn* (induction of the divine names) of his master, al-Ḥifnī, who authorised him to induct others in the Khalwatī path on the 18<sup>th</sup> of Muḥarram 1172 / 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1763, at approximately 43 years of age.<sup>116</sup>

Al-Dardīr mentions he received the litany of the Khalwatī path from al-Ḥifnī in 1760 and the first divine name – *Lā illāh illā Allāh* – which he continued to recite for six months until the divine remembrance “burned his body and removed his flesh until he was nothing more than skin on bones.” He then received the second name - Allāh – after six months and in Ramadan of 1163, he received the third name – *Huwa* – after which he was in a state of spiritual ecstasy infused with periods of deep contemplation. A few months later, al-Dardīr received the fourth name - *Ḥaqq*; cited by al-Ḥifnī as the first *maqām* of the *murīd* towards the path of the folk of Allāh. In 1164, he received the fifth name - *Ḥayy*. In the same year, he received the sixth name – *Qayyūm*. During these last few stations, al-Dardīr mentions that he was in a complete state of spiritual intoxication and not fully cognisant of his state or surroundings, though outwardly he appeared normal to all those who spoke to him. This is a “strange matter, only known to those who have tasted it.”<sup>117</sup> Two years later, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan 1165, he received the seventh and final divine name – *Qaḥḥār* - after which al-Dardīr returned to a state of *ṣaḥw* (awakening) and arrived at the

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<sup>115</sup> Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 247; Murādī, *Kitāb Silḥ Al-Durar Fī A‘yān Al-Qarn Al-Thānī ‘Ashar*, 4:9-10.

<sup>116</sup> al-Dardīr, "Tuḥfat Al-Ikhwān Fī Bayān Ṭarīq Ahl Al-‘Irfān," 39.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

*ḥaḍrat al-ḥaḍrāt* (the epitome of divine awareness), after which there is no further level of awareness.<sup>118</sup>

In addition to al-Dardīr, al-Ḥifnī authorised a few others to initiate others into the Khalwatī way, the most notable of which was Maḥmūd al-Kurdī, who went on to initiate Aḥmad al-Tijānī (d. 1230/1815), who formed his own *ṭarīqa*, and Muḥammad al-Sammān (d. 1189/1775), who did the same in the Sudan.<sup>119</sup> Al-Dardīr appeared to have authorised two major figures, both of whom were fellow clansmen from Banī ‘Adī. They were his main pupil and glosser of his commentaries in theology and jurisprudence, Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī, as well as his main disciple who propagated the Khalwatiyya-Dardīriyya after him, Ṣāliḥ al-Sibā‘ī (d. 1221/1806). The spiritual heirs of al-Dardīr, including Ṣāliḥ al-Sibā‘ī, and his son, Muḥammad, continued the inclusion of al-Dardīr’s litanies in their gatherings, such as the *Ṣalawāt al-Dardīriyya* and *Naẓm fi Asmā’ Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, though most of the activities of this sub-order of the Khalwatī *ṭarīqa* were centred in Upper Egypt.<sup>120</sup>

Therefore, it appears that much of al-Dardīr’s focus in the propagation of the *ṭarīqa* was on his direct students at al-Azhar who went on to bring the rituals and teachings to their villages in Upper Egypt. This would fit into a similar pattern that al-Dardīr followed in his writings, namely to facilitate the accessibility of the tradition, whether in *fiqh*, *‘aqīda*, or *taṣawwuf*, for a greater number of adherents. His concise and simple litanies seem designed to be recited in a group, with language and metre easily memorised. His readiness to

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> The Tijānī and Sammānī *ṭarīqas* were part of a wider trend of revivalist movements in Africa that countered the uncertainty brought about as a result of European colonialism. See: Jamil M. Abun-Nasr and Royal Institute of International Affairs., *The Tijaniyya : A Sufi Order in the Modern World* (Oxford University Press: London, 1965); Abdul Muthalib, "The Mystical Teachings of Muḥammad ‘Abd Al-Karīm Al-Sammān, an 18th Century Sufi" (McGill University, 2007).

<sup>120</sup> I attended a gathering of the Khalwatī-Dardīrī order in al-Dardīr’s *zāwiya* in Cairo in the winter of 2012 (now a mosque) where both of these litanies were recited during the group *ḥaḍra*.

intervene on behalf of Cairo's disenfranchised when the situation warranted thus appears to be part of a larger project, if such a term suffices, on the part of al-Dardīr, to preserve a tradition that was under stress if not direct threat from external forces, by making it more easily accessible and applicable.

## Conclusion

The central focus of this study analyses the relationship of the early modern scholar Aḥmad al-Dardīr with the encapsulation of the teachings of Islam in tradition. The role of the interpreters and gatekeepers of the tradition, the intellectual elite, is to use the tools of the tradition to arrive at the same conclusions as regards the essential unity of truth and reality as their predecessors. In keeping with this objective, the manner by which these conclusions are reached will necessarily change and adapt to different historical and local contexts.

This process is also manifested in the realm of social relationships, as all religions are communal to some degree, and thus the preservation of the tradition in the individual does not equate to its preservation throughout society's members. Hence, the changing relationship between the political and scholarly elites, as well as the general populace, proved to be a central element in the manner by which the tradition was interpreted and practiced. Therefore, in the Prophetic and early caliphal period, there was a general unity of the political and intellectual/spiritual elite in the person of the Prophet Muḥammad and the office of the caliph. The gatekeepers of the tradition in that period focused on the preservation of the archetype – whether the Sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad or the practice of his companions.

At the onset of the Umayyad Empire, the disillusionment over the departure of Prophetic practice as regards succession in the nascent community precipitated the emergence of political sects. Positions ranging from open rebellion to collusion with the Umayyads, and later, the Abbasids, were found amongst the *'ulamā'*. This diversity of opinion, brought about by the spectre of political tyranny, divided the scholarly elite as regards to the optimal

tools and criteria for keeping the tradition alive, whether the rarefied tools of the intellect or the ostensible textual purport of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. A third set of tools emerged during the Abbasid Empire, spiritual cognition, touted by the likes of al-Ghazālī. These tools neither fit into the strictly delineated regime of rationality, nor conformed to the more literalist methodology of interpreting the sacred texts.

On the social front, the emergence of sects likely strengthened dynastic rule, as the ideal of a moral caliph sanctioned by the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* (the people of dissolution and accord) was hopelessly abandoned, as the scholarly and spiritual elite no longer represented a unified political force. As a result, a new paradigm emerged after the maturation of Abbasid rule, one characterised by a weariness on the part of the '*ulamā*' to engage with the rulers for fear of manipulation or co-optation, but yet a realisation that a return to moral caliphal rule was unlikely, and that attempts to bring about such a return by force almost always ended in failure.

Thus began a long period of mutual if not always cordial symbiosis between the '*ulamā*' and the dynastic rulers where the unwritten rule stated that the '*ulamā*' would honour their rulers as long as they did not contravene the main tenets of Islam in a manner that would put their commitment to Islam in question. Concomitantly, the rulers continued to patronise madrasas and build mosques and other endowed institutions, not concerning themselves with the educational activities hosted within them. The Ottomans in particular did not attempt to influence the manner by which the tradition was taught or interpreted in their Arab provinces, leaving these affairs to the indigenous '*ulamā*'.

The Sufi *ṭarīqa* emerged in the seventh/thirteenth century as a new social institution in the wake of declining political fortunes after the de-facto dissolution

of the Abbasid Empire in 1258. Merchant guilds also began to grow in the intellectual centres of Cairo and Damascus, and it would appear that the urban based *ṭarīqa* was closely associated, if not modelled, after the nascent guilds.<sup>121</sup> Amid the flourishing of this new social order centred on *ṭarīqas* and institutions of learning, the gap between the dynastic rulers and the common populace widened, such as that Egypt did not witness indigenous rule from the time of the last Fatimid caliph until the military coup that removed King Fārūq in 1952.

The cultural and linguistic divide between the rulers and the ruled, in addition to corruption and usurpation, fuelled tensions in the eighteenth century. It appears, that for al-Dardīr, the ancient symbiosis between the scholarly and political elites was no longer justified as Cairo's poorer population suffered under the yolk of often arbitrary and rash decision making, as well as damaging infighting during the days of the duumvirate of Ibrāhīm and Murād Bey. As a result, al-Dardīr adopted a more aggressive stance towards the ruling class, not hesitating to cause minor civil strife to see grievances addressed.

He also lamented the state of some his colleagues, those who "would sell their soul" in order to apprise themselves of a judiciary post, despite their lack of qualifications. The social aspects of al-Dardīr's position as Sufi *murshid*, with the recitation of group litanies and emphasis on accessibility further underscores his commitment to the maintaining of the tradition, even under less than ideal conditions. Furthermore, the old thesis of scholarly stagnation and decrepitude must be re-evaluated in light of the social and political changes that not only altered the rituals and practices of Muslim societies, but also the means and methodology by which the gatekeepers of tradition, the '*ulamā*', adopted to insure its survival and relevance.

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<sup>121</sup> Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, 28.

## Conclusions

This study endeavoured to address the subject of early modern Islamic scholarship and its relationship with the transmission and articulation of the Islamic intellectual traditions in the broader sense, and the role of Aḥmad al-Dardīr in upholding and sustaining those traditions in the more specific sense. Al-Dardīr is an important figure worthy of study despite the fact that his “originality” is unconventional in that his intellectual contributions were more pedagogical and synthesising of previous intellectual currents within Islam, rather than new and ground-breaking. He made the Islamic intellectual disciplines of theology, jurisprudence, and Sufism in a way more accessible to the perhaps less driven and cognitively acute students of his day, to the degree that his works form the canon of madrasas from Morocco to Indonesia, including al-Azhar in Cairo. Additionally, he arguably revitalised the study of Islamic theology by synthesising its epistemological underpinnings with that of the Sufi cognitive tradition, and was part of a process of reorientation of the discipline that started a few centuries earlier with al-Sanūsī by rendering it an essential subject of study for all Muslims as an ingress to higher spiritual practice, after it mainly served as a polemical tool for addressing dissenting points of creed. As regards his public role as a ‘ālim of the Azhar, Mufti, and Sufi *murshid*, he broke with previous tradition to some degree and pushed the envelope as regards public opposition to the ruling elite, to the degree of leading public protests and delegitimising their judges’ rulings due to perceived malfeasance and incompetence.

Moreover, the specific research questions addressed as mentioned in the opening chapter were:



- 1) How did al-Dardīr interact with the Islamic tradition, and what degree of influence did the interpretive tradition have in informing this interaction?
- 2) How did al-Dardīr's approach to the transmission of knowledge reflect the educational paradigm established by the cumulative discursive Islamic tradition, and in what way did he represent its culmination?
- 3) How did al-Dardīr epitomise the core Islamic disciplines of creedal theology, jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf*?
- 4) To what degree did the societal roles exercised by al-Dardīr reflect a tradition of engagement, collusion, or cooperation with the political elites?

To address these questions, the Islamic tradition was defined, building upon some of the concepts in the theoretical frameworks of MacIntyre, Asad, and Shils, as one that was subject to historical and contextual factors. The old trope of essential juxtaposition of reason and revelation, and tradition and innovation, is less useful for assessing the contribution of '*ulamā*' such as al-Dardīr to the intellectual production of Muslim societies. In order to illustrate this point, paradigms for the eras preceding al-Dardīr were established to contextualise the value of scholarly production by the likes of an early modern scholar such as al-Dardīr, when the Islamic tradition was at the apex into its maturity. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that the societal roles of the '*ulamā*' followed a similar trajectory, in as much as that these also were subject to episodic paradigms that were affected by historical inputs, rather than adopting an essentialist leitmotif as to what a '*ālim*' is or should be.

Therefore, the contribution of al-Dardīr to the Islamic disciplines, as were products of and subject to the needs of transmitting the tradition, was in the form of epitomisation, verification, weighted preference, and facilitation, corresponding to *ikhtiṣār*, *taḥqīq*, *tarjīḥ*, and *tabṣīṭ*. These four terms are

meaningless outside of a discursive framework, as they could only exist after several iterative paradigms of formation, compilation, and stratification.

In the disciplines of creedal theology and *taṣawwuf*, both of which developed from a broader narrative of the development of the Islamic disciplines analysed in chapter 2, the final episodic paradigm came in the form of *taḥqīq* (verification). This is a tradition that al-Dardīr used to exposit the synthesis of Akbarian metaphysics with Ash‘arī theology, in the form of the *sharī‘a* - *ṭarīqa* - *ḥaqīqa* paradigm. The discipline of jurisprudence, after several episodic paradigms, matured to a degree where al-Dardīr applied a methodology of *tarjīḥ* to weigh a plethora of opinions. He arrived at a single fatwa opinion; this also had the intended objective of epitomisation and *tabṣīṭ* (facilitation), two themes that ran throughout all of al-Dardīr’s works. Access to the scholarly tradition was encumbered under its own weight. The need for such a project at the time is evidenced by the durability of his works in the three core disciplines, as they remain widely studied in the circles of al-Azhar and elsewhere in the Muslim world. The objective of *tabṣīṭ* also was prevalent in al-Dardīr’s societal roles, though of a different mode and degree. The continued suffering and disenfranchisement of Cairo’s denizens rendered the existing social contract – to borrow a term from Rousseau, a contemporary of al-Dardīr – precipitated the departure from previous paradigmatic schemes of political quietism to a more aggressive engagement to address grievances by way of intercession and threats of civil strife. While this cannot be construed as advocacy of open rebellion, it is nonetheless a significant departure from a paradigm where the ‘*ulamā*’ acted as the de-facto counterweight to authoritarian excesses, but never resorting to provoking potential civil unrest to do so.

This study does not claim to have exhausted the topic of post-classical Islamic scholarship, or provided a history of Islamic theology, Sufism, or jurisprudence, or the commentary-gloss genre. What I believe it has done is originally contributed to the methodology of study of Islamic scholarship, by challenging some of the prevailing paradigms regarding the post-classical period, as well as the application of such methodology to a heretofore unstudied figure in the person of Aḥmad al-Dardīr. Furthermore, the application of the tradition based methodology adopted for this study has not been applied towards the social and political realm in the existing literature, as it was in interpreting and analysing al-Dardīr's societal roles in this study. As a result, I believe our understanding of Islamic scholarship in pre-colonial societies in particular has been enriched by the conclusions reached in this study, specifically in the interdependence and symbiosis between the various Islamic disciplines united by a single ontology and epistemology, despite the diversity and breadth of articulations of their various facets. Much work in these areas remains to be explored, specifically in the works of the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries, in the disciplines of theology, jurisprudence, and *taṣawwuf*, as well as the functions of the '*ulamā*' in various historic and regional societies. Furthermore, the alternative methodology utilised in this study for evaluating al-Dardīr's intellectual legacy and contributions is by no means unique, nor does this researcher make the claim that it is without its limits and detractions. However, it is hoped that other methodologies may be used in future research as part of the continuing attempt to reassess Islamic intellectual history without being beholden to previous methodologies extrapolated from historical currents foreign to Islam. While innovation, originality, and creativity are important aspects of any worthy research project, it should not preclude us

from recognising the importance of tradition and continuity within the Islamic ethos, so as not to overlook significant aspects of Islamic intellectual history.

## **Appendix: Translation of al-Dardīr's Minor Creed**

1. It is obligatory for the religiously responsible to know that which is necessary for God, His Prophets, and His Angels
2. Thus, there are twenty necessary attributes of God
3. And they are: Existence, Pre-existence, Everlastingness, Dissimilarity from temporal things, Self-sufficiency, Oneness, Life, Knowledge, Will, Power, Hearing, Seeing, and Speech.
4. And that He is Alive, Knowledgeable, Wilful, Powerful, Hearing, Seeing, and Speaking.
5. These are twenty attributes, the first is an ontological attribute, the next five are negative attributes, the next seven are of substance, and the last seven are substantive attributes.
6. Hence, God's existence is necessary
7. And He is Eternal without beginning,
8. Eternal without end,
9. Dissimilar in His essence from all of creation,
10. Thus, He is not a body, or an accident;
11. And [the concepts of] place, time, right, left, behind, or in front cannot describe Him.
12. He is self-sufficient;
13. One in His essence, attributes, and actions.
14. He is Alive,
15. Knowledgeable of all that has been, all that ever will be, and all that will ever not be in the worlds that only God knows the true number of which;
16. Wilful of all of all that occurs and appears in the worlds
17. Sole Enactor and Nullifier of all possible things.
18. He is Hearing, Seeing, and Speaking with pre-eternal speech exclusive of sound and letter.
19. And it is necessary for all the Prophets: Infallibility, that no transgression against God in his commandments and prohibitions is possible, and the same for the Angels.
20. And it is necessary for all the Messengers to convey all that they have been commanded to convey to creation, including legal rulings, and other things such as the events of the Last Day and what it entails of the Reckoning, the Chastisement, the Path, The Scale, Paradise, Hellfire, the Throne, the Chair;
21. And the Revealed Books, the Messengers, and what happened between them and their nations.
22. And it is obligatory to believe in the Houris,
23. And it is obligatory to believe in the Children of Paradise,
24. And it is obligatory to believe in the saints
25. And it is obligatory to believe in the Night Journey and Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad.
26. It is obligatory to believe in the intercession of our Master Muhammad,
27. And it is obligatory to believe in the Signs of the Hour:
28. The first: the release of the Antichrist
29. The second: the descent of our Master Jesus the son of Mary,
30. The third: the release of Gog and Magog,
31. The fourth: the release of the Beast,

- 32. The fifth: The rise of the Sun from the West for three days.
- 33. It is from amongst the obligatory [acts] to renew repentance.
- 34. It is obligatory to believe in and be content with the Decree and Destiny.

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