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EDITORIAL

Editorial Note

This issue of the *American Journal of Islam and Society* comprises three primary research articles, which respectively engage the themes of political obedience, the relationship between religiosity and sustainable behavior, and the interpretation of texts. First, we have Bachar Bakour's article, "Reconceptualizing Political Obedience in Islamic Thought: An Analytical study of Ḥadīth Literature." Bakour examines the highly important question – both historically and today – of obedience to the ruler in the Islamic tradition. He focuses on prominent ḥadīth collections, most notably Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl fī Aḥādīth al-Rasūl*. Through a comprehensive textual and contextual analysis, Bakour extends his exploration to include both classical and contemporary works of Islamic political thought. Significantly, Bakour delineates a three-tiered classification of obedience: normative obedience rooted in love and respect for just rulers, obedience out of necessity (applied to corrupt rulers in Muslim history prior to the collapse of the Caliphate), and a form of emergency obedience to leaders in the contemporary era. Bakour notes that, on the basis of the maxim, "averting harm takes priority over bringing the benefit," Islamic law historically has ordered that the despotism of the ruler, oftentimes viewed as a *fait accompli*, is something that ought to be endured, until the time becomes ripe for change.

Next, we have the intriguing and exhaustively researched work by Sahibzada Muhammad Hamza and Nasim Shah Shirazi, "The Role of Religiosity in Shaping Sustainable Behavior: A Global Perspective." Their article provides an important contribution to the current literature on sustainable behavior and religiosity by moving beyond small studies of local contexts to provide a global analysis over several decades. As they do so, the authors consider the relationship between religiosity,

income, and sustainable behavior in relation to key themes such as environmental dominion and environmental stewardship, both of which are present in religious traditions to varying degrees. As an area of growing interest, which remains understudied, this article provides insightful and thought-provoking conclusions about the ethical relationships between religiosity and wealth in a modern world increasingly threatened by climate breakdown and environmental destruction. Important too is the authors' highlighting of the paradox that economically developed states that in recent years have become ardent champions of sustainable behaviors and practices are typically those that, historically (and also to this day of course), caused major environmental degradation during previous industrial revolutions. Today, these nations, which are also typically more secular, are generally more likely to be proponents of sustainability. In turn, these nations call upon less-developed nations, which typically exhibit higher levels of religiosity, to adopt similar environmental conservation efforts. In this dynamic, religiosity often comes to be labeled an inherently adverse influence on environmental stewardship. The authors argue this is a deeply biased inference, which they address.

Our third research article for this issue is Naveed Anjum's study, "Textual Authority and Modern Urdū Exegetical Interpretations: A Case Study of Q.4:34." Here, Anjum provides a thoroughgoing exploration of key South Asian exegetes writing in Urdu in the modern period, ranging from the 20th century to today. While Anjum's contribution analyzes the work of some figures that readers will likely be familiar with, such as Abū al-Kalām Āzād and Abū al-aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, Anjum also engages contemporary exegetes in South Asia whose work might be less well-known including Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī and Khālid Saif Allāh Raḥmānī. Importantly, Anjum's work also engages scholarship at the cutting edge of discussions of Q.4:34 including recent publications by scholars based in North America including Hadia Mubarak, Ayesha S. Chaudhry and Aysha Hidayatullah, as well as classic studies from the Arab World by the likes of Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿAshūr. Among the study's many insights, Anjum emphasizes the importance of considering contemporary South Asian exegetes' *tafsīr* of a verse like Q.4:34 in the context of

their approach to the text as a whole, which helps contextualize their fine-grained interpretations of this sensitive verse.

Lastly, this issue also includes an insightful forum piece by Ismail Hashim Abubakar on scholarly debates in Nigeria around the phenomenon of the Boko Haram insurgency. Abubakar notes that academic works (especially those published in Europe or the United States) have emphasized the link between Boko Haram and Salafism by branding the former as "Salafi-Jihadist." However, in the Nigerian context, Abubakar highlights that importantly it was Nigerian Salafi scholars who were the ones who successfully engaged the founders of Boko Haram in a range of sophisticated arguments and debates. It is these debates that Abubakar elucidates, focusing in particular on the interactions between the founder of Boko Haram, Muhammad Yusuf, and the Nigerian scholar ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami. Taken together, these contributions offer a wide range of thought-provoking and insightful points of departures for further exploration in a diversity of fields.

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ARTICLES

Reconceptualizing Political Obedience in Islamic Thought: An Analytical Study of Ḥadīth Literature

BACHAR BAKOUR

Abstract

This study examines the concept of obedience to the ruler in Islam focusing on prominent ḥadīth collections, primarily Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl fī Aḥādīth al-Rasūl*. It conducts a comprehensive textual and contextual analysis, extending its exploration to classical and contemporary works of Islamic political thought. The primary objective is to unveil insightful clues

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that contribute to a profound understanding of the concept of obedience, synthesizing original Islamic sources, historical experiences of the ummah, and the current realities of the Islamic world. The study argues that the concept of obedience emerges as conditional and contextual, balancing the rights of the ruler and the people. Also, the term *ulū al-amr*, symbolizing the joint effort of legislation, law enforcement, and adjudication, rejects autocratic power and political tyranny. Rulers are expected to consult with scholars, emphasizing a reciprocal relationship for the benefit of the ummah. The study further identifies a three-tiered classification of obedience: normative obedience rooted in love and respect for just rulers, obedience of necessity applied to corrupt rulers in Muslim history prior to the collapse of the Caliphate, and a form of emergency obedience to leaders in the contemporary era. On the basis of "averting harm takes priority over bringing the benefit" dictum, Islamic law has ordered that the despotism of the ruler, viewed as a *fait accompli*, is something that ought to be endured, and obedience given till the time is ripe for change.

Keywords: obedience, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-Uṣūl*, ruler, community, Ḥadīth, authority.

Introduction

The late year of 2010 marked the commencement of a transformative era in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), characterized by significant social and political disruptions. This period witnessed the emergence of populist movements opposing authoritarian regimes, collectively known as the Arab Spring. These popular uprisings emphasized the critical role of religion in both social and political spheres. The significance of religious settings became evident as Friday sermons, traditionally spiritual gatherings, evolved into powerful platforms for political expression and congregation. Numerous mosques transitioned into arenas for anti-regime demonstrations, reflecting a fusion of faith and political activism.[1]

Influential Muslim scholars, who play key roles in understanding and interpreting the dynamics of the conflict, adopted a range of stances toward the protests. Some ulama, aligning with the protests, openly criticized their respective governments, offering religious legitimacy to the demonstrators' demands. These scholars utilized their influence to mobilize support against the regimes, framing the protests within the context of Islamic principles of justice and resistance against oppression. Conversely, another group of ulama condemned the demonstrations, propagating the official narrative that emphasized stability and obedience to the ruler.[2] These scholars, often backed by state apparatus, argued that the protests were a source of discord and sedition and that maintaining peace and order was paramount. Their sermons and public statements aimed to dissuade the masses from participating in the uprisings, warning of the chaos and instability that rebellion could bring. A third faction of ulama, seemingly uncertain or cautious, opted for a culture of quiescence and silence. This group, perhaps wary of the potential repercussions of either stance, chose to remain neutral, neither endorsing the protests nor fully supporting the regimes. The escalating protests took this ulama vs. the regime dynamic into uncharted territory, as the ulama's roles as religious leaders and political actors are intensely scrutinized and contested.

The debate surrounding obedience to the ruler versus rebellion took centre stage in these debates and formed a basis for their respective arguments. While many religious scholars in the MENA approached the concept of obedience through a lens shaped by a medieval mentality, others opted for a complete departure from traditional perspectives. I contend that amidst the fervour of the discussions there exists a lack of awareness regarding pertinent contemporary socio-political concepts. With the adoption of civic and political ideals such as secularism, democracy, liberty, the sovereignty of the people, parliamentary constitutionalism, and considering the abolition of the Islamic caliphate in 1924, there has arisen a need for a renewed exploration of the question of obedience. This study endeavours to provide a contemporary and balanced analysis of the issue of obedience to a ruler, considering the rights and duties of both rulers and the ruled. In doing so, it seeks to

advocate for values of equality and social justice within today's Muslim community.

Numerous authentic traditions reported from the Prophet command subjects to obey their leader or ruler, be they just or unjust.[3] The Prophet employed various rhetorical styles to emphasize obedience, leaving no room for ambiguity or confusion. Muslims must render "obedience" to their emir as long as the latter adheres to the Shariah and follows the Book of Allah.[4] Nevertheless, other reports, from which this condition is absent, order Muslim subjects to listen and obey their rulers, even if they do evil.[5] In this case, punishment will fall upon the rulers, not their subjects.[6] Thus, these reports create a moral distance between the actions of the rulers and their subjects. As long as Muslims show obedience, they are not held responsible by Allah for the injustice of the rulers. Rulers alone are liable for their own misbehaviour.[7]

The Prophet also warned, "Whoever renounces allegiance, will meet Allah on the Day of Judgment with no excuse for him."[8] According to other reports, Muslims are not permitted to fight against the ruler except in cases of blatant disobedience or disbelief.[9] Furthermore, many Prophetic traditions underscore the importance of maintaining connections within the Muslim community and issue stern warnings against abandoning it, particularly during times of turmoil and civil unrest.[10]

The frequent emphasis of these Prophetic instructions begs the following questions: Why is rebellion discouraged unless in exceptional circumstances? What does the term *ulū al-amr* mean? How does the concept of *al-jamāʿah* contribute to the preservation of obedience and the promotion of Muslim unity? What does the term fitnah mean in the context of rebellion? Is obedience absolute or conditional? Additionally, what are the degrees of obedience that can be inferred from ḥadīth reports and the obedience-verse?

The study focuses on the renowned collections of ḥadīth, specifically Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl fī Aḥādīth al-Rasūl*, which integrates the six fundamental ḥadīth books: al-Muwaṭṭa', al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nasā'ī. With regard to the compilation of reports on the subject of obedience, the study conducts a thorough textual and contextual analysis encompassing both classical and contemporary

works of Islamic political thought. This analysis operates on two levels: the first level examines three interrelated and significant conceptions of obedience. The second level reveals insightful clues that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of obedience by synthesizing original Islamic sources, the historical experiences of the ummah, and the contemporary realities of today's Islamic world.

Following the introduction, the study then conducts an in-depth analysis of three essential concepts frequently referenced in ḥadīth relating to obedience: leadership, the Muslim community (*al-jamāʿah*), and discord/civil war (*fitnah*). Additionally, the study pays particular attention to the concept of *ulū al-amr*, closely related to leadership, examining its meaning, implementation, and defining characteristics. Next, the study shifts its focus to the discussion and analysis of the conditional and contextual nature of obedience to rulers in Islam. It highlights the three-tiered classification of obedience, showcasing their varying degrees and nuances. This is followed by an exploration of the challenges and considerations involved in choosing between enduring oppression and resorting to sedition. Finally, the study concludes by summarizing the key points and emphasizing the overall understanding of obedience in Islam.

Basic Concepts

Understanding the intricate dynamics of political obedience in ḥadīth literature necessitates a thorough exploration of its three foundational concepts: leadership, *al-jamāʿah*, and *fitnah*. These interconnected terms form the bedrock upon which the entire corpus of ḥadīth related to political obedience is built. The following pages provide an examination of these concepts, delineating their interrelations and their pivotal role in shaping the framework of political obedience in Islam.

1. Leadership

The state, according to Plato, arises "out of the needs of mankind; no one is self-sufficing, but all of us have many wants."[11] This was echoed by his

student, Aristotle, who argues in *Politics* that human beings are by nature political animals, who tend to live together.[12] Later, for reasons of protection and security, discussions of power became an established reality among medieval Muslim scholars of literature, political-ethical philosophy, and sociology. These scholars include al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869),[13] Ibn Abī al-Rabīʿ (d. 885),[14] al-Fārābī (d. 950),[15] Ibn Sīnā, Avicenna (d. 1037),[16] and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406).[17] Recognizing the necessity of an organized structure for both political and non-political societies, it is understood that a certain entity is most suited for the fundamental task of organization. This entity, commonly referred to as 'authority,' plays a pivotal role in ensuring the effective administration of people's affairs.[18] Consequently, a form of 'political differentiation' naturally emerges, delineating two distinct groups: a ruling party vested with political authority and decision-making capabilities, and subjects obligated to adhere to directives.[19]

Islam strongly supports the pressing need for authority: (i) A Prophetic tradition states, "It is inevitable for people to have *imārah* (an emirate), whether it is good or bad."[20] (ii) ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib said, "[The affairs] of people are only set right by the existence of an emir, whether good or bad."[21] (iii) When three individuals plan to embark on a journey, it is a religious obligation for them to designate one among them as their leader.[22] The caliphate, taking over the role of Prophethood, "is responsible for guarding the religion and managing the affairs of this world."[23] Without a caliphate or imamate, neither religious obligations nor the objectives of the Shariah can be carried out. Thus, numerous Muslim scholars, throughout the history of Islam, have unanimously called for the imperative of a caliphate.[24]

Among the essential terms regarding leadership is the Qur'ānic reference to *ulū al-amr*, which needs to be examined. The verse where the term is mentioned reads, "You who believe, obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day" (Al-Nisā': 59).[25] Commentators hold varying opinions regarding the identity of *ulū al-amr* (those in authority). Some interpret it as specific groups such as scholars, emirs of military expeditions, or emirs in general.[26]

Others argue that it applies broadly to anyone vested with authority, whether in public or private capacities (such as leaders, sultans, judges, scholars, muftis, etc.), provided that their position of authority is legitimate and valid.[27] Al-Shawkānī for example notes, "*Ulū al-amr* includes leaders, sultans, judges and every one with legally accredited authority, rather than the authority of *ṭāghūt* (Satan/a false deity)."[28] Contemporary thinkers, like Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Ḥasan al-Turābī, are quite explicit about the importance of the ummah freely choosing their ruler.[29]

Given that the term *ulū al-amr* by its very nature is open to multiple interpretations, the choice of emirs or rulers does not take precedence over other choices. In this context, the fixed plural form of *ulū al-amr*[30] may subscribe to the general applicability of the term. It alludes to a sense of corporate responsibility of those of authority to work hand in hand under the umbrella of the Shariah for the promotion of the best interests of the Muslim community in all areas.[31] In other words, the term *ulū al-amr* ultimately refers to the three powers: legislative (i.e., the ulama and muftis as the exponents of Islamic law), executive (rulers, sultans, emirs), and judiciary (judges).[32] On the basis of the obedience verse as well as the previous verse (no. 58),[33] those of *ulū al-amr* are identified with three distinguishing features: fulfilment of trust, maintaining justice, and referring to Allah and His messenger with regard to disputed matters.[34]

Consequently, the Muslim community is obligated to show allegiance to *ulū al-amr* who have fulfilled these three duties, with a particular emphasis on justice. Conversely, rulers who are unjust or corrupt, failing to uphold the specified features outlined in the Qur'ān, cannot be categorized as *ulū al-amr*. Instead, as per the renowned commentator al-Zamakhsharī, they are appropriately labelled as *al-luṣūṣ al-mutaghallibah* (the dominant thieves). [35] In the Sunnah, a ruler - referred to in ḥadīths with terms such as emir, imam, sulṭān - is defined as someone who leads in achieving the objectives of the Shariah, enforcing the *ḥudūd* (fixed penalties), engaging in combat against enemies, and safeguarding the land.[36]

2. Al-Jamāʿah

The term *al-jamāʿah* is challenging to define or delineate clearly, particularly following the demise of the Ottoman caliphate, which had lead to the fragmentation of the ummah into numerous small groups and movements with secular-nationalist and social orientations. In classical Islamic books, there are five interpretations of what *al-jamāʿah* represents, the most appropriate being the one that defines it as a Muslim group following a single imam.[37] This group pledges allegiance to a unified authority responsible for safeguarding their civil and religious rights, administering their affairs, and without which the existence of the community is at risk of collapse. The reason why this interpretation is the most suitable lies in the fact that it elucidates the robust connection established by many reports between 'imam or emir' and *al-jamāʿah*, signifying a close association between the community and a singular political authority. Moreover, the absence of this authority inevitably results in the fragmentation of the community. In such a scenario, Muslims are obligated to distance themselves from all conflicting factions and remain detached.

In the year 41 AH, when al-Ḥasan transferred the caliphate to Muʿāwiyah, it was referred to as "the community year," signifying the reunification under one emir after a period of division.[38] It is crucial to emphasize that the unity of the Muslim community is an unwavering imperative, and anyone attempting to disrupt or dismantle it may be confronted, even to the extent of facing combat or death.[39] A valuable historical lesson teaches us that a nation's political unity, regardless of its strength, acts as a significant impediment to divisive projects and schemes. Despite the weakened and politically disintegrated state of the caliphate, it remained a symbol of collective consciousness for Muslims globally. Consequently, rulers of the Sultan States, situated on the periphery of caliphate territories, fervently demonstrated their commitment to this symbolic union under the caliph.[40]

With respect to the correlation between the ruler and the community, bound by the concept of obedience, al-Jāḥiẓ observes that a leader with sole sovereignty is akin to the imam in prayer, who alone is followed and obeyed. In the absence of political rivals, consensus prevails, harmony is achieved, and the affairs of the community are set in order.

Furthermore, the presence of a united community signifies the absence of adversaries, bringing an end to fanciful thoughts and ideas.[41] Just as individuals in prayer follow their imam, the community ought to obey its political authority and refrain from rebellion. When voluntary obedience is willingly embraced, it results in a unified community. This implies that individual wills merge into the collective will, and personal interests are subordinated to the broader common interest. Consequently, as Rousseau puts it, "Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole."[42]

To sustain both political and social unity and facilitate the smooth execution of numerous religious duties, Muslims are counselled to endure the injustices of their rulers. The ruler, as argued, serves as the thread that binds the beads of a necklace together. If the thread were to break, the beads would scatter. This analogy succinctly elucidates the correlation between the existence of the ruler and that of the community, a connection underscored by many Prophetic traditions.[43] In a historical context, al-Ṭabarī recounts an incident involving Saʿīd ibn Zayd, who was asked about the timing of Abū Bakr's installation as caliph. In response, Saʿīd stated that Abū Bakr assumed the role of caliph on the very day the Prophet passed away. This swift transition was motivated by a collective desire to avoid any prolonged period without a unified leadership.[44] The significance of this event lies in the sense of urgency and unity that characterized the early Muslim community. The companions recognized the potential dangers and divisions that could arise in the absence of a clear leader. Therefore, the immediacy of Abū Bakr's appointment was driven by the communal imperative to maintain cohesion and prevent any fragmentation among the Muslims. This historical account reflects the commitment of the early Muslim community to swiftly establish leadership and ensure the continuity of a united ummah following the death of the Prophet.

3. Fitnah

The rationale for the repeated emphasis on adhering to obedience to the ruler lies in preventing the emergence of *fitnah*. In other words,

attempting to remove the ruler through military means is most likely to cause widespread bloodshed and upheaval. The evil and harm of removing him will be far greater than what occurs if he remains. What does *fitnah* mean in the ḥadīths in the context of obedience? Linguistically, The word *fitnah* means "to burn," referring to the process of melting gold or silver with fire to purify it.[45] This signification has extended to putting to the test, afflicting (especially as a means of testing someone's endurance), disrupting the peace of a community, tempting, seducing, alluring, or infatuating.[46] Therefore, something that causes one to enter *fitnah* signifies a trial, affliction, distress, or hardship, typically an affliction that tests some good or evil quality.[47] According to al-Jurjānī, *fitnah* is "a mechanism by which man's status (good or bad) is identified."[48] Various mundane temptations, such as money, women, offspring, sickness, health, and power, are sources of *fitnah* (tests and trials). Whatever happens to people in this life, whether good or bad, is a test (as in Qur'ān, 2:155; 21:35).[49] However, English dictionaries narrowly define *fitnah* as "a state of trouble or chaos"[50] and "rebellion, especially against a rightful ruler."[51]

Fitnah, as intimately related to anarchy, chaos, and upheaval, is strongly condemned in multiple prophetic ḥadīths. These ḥadīths, seeking to block acts leading to the *fitnah*, order Muslims to obey their corrupt rulers and maintain patience.[52] A Muslim during times of sedition and turmoil is required to extend their compliance to the community and imam.[53] Also, dire warnings and threats of excommunication are directed to those Muslims who, having committed acts of disobedience to their leader, departed from the Muslim mainstream community.[54] ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd provided counsel to those expressing grievances against their unjust governor, al-Walīd ibn ʿUqbah of the Umayyads. He advised them to exercise patience, asserting, "Enduring the injustice of an imam for fifty years is preferable to the chaos and disorder of *harj* persisting for just one month!" When queried about the definition of *harj*, Ibn Masʿūd clarified, stating, "It refers to killing and lying."[55] This advice finds validation in Islamic teachings promoting patience and endurance, while historical context supports the idea that enduring prolonged injustice may, in certain instances, offer a more stable and preferable alternative to

the chaos and devastation brought about by short-lived periods of *harj*. In the event of *fitnah*, Muslims are advised to refrain from participating in or supporting any of the conflicting parties. Instead, they should focus on managing their everyday and religious affairs.[56]

Ḥadīth scholars have compiled ḥadīths on *fitan* (the plural of *fitnah*) in a chapter titled "The Book of *al-Fitan*." This method was first used by al-Bukhārī,[57] followed by his student, Muslim al-Qushayrī,[58] as well as other ḥadīth scholars.[59] To understand the primary meaning of *fitnah* in a revolutionary context, I conducted a linguistic and statistical review of "The Book of *al-Fitan*" in the ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī,[60] Muslim,[61] Abū Dāwūd,[62] al-Tirmidhī,[63] and Ibn Mājah.[64] Based on the context and explanatory notes provided by scholars of ḥadīth, I examined all ḥadīths containing the term *fitnah/fitan* and discovered that *fitnah* predominantly refers to conflicts and wars among Muslim groups. Many ḥadīths closely link *fitnah* with *harj* (civil war, conflict, and mass slaughter), making both terms nearly synonymous.[65] Therefore, in ḥadīth literature, *fitnah* fundamentally means illegitimate fighting or conflict that leads to social chaos and political disorder, resulting in indiscriminate killing and bloody massacres among Muslims.[66]

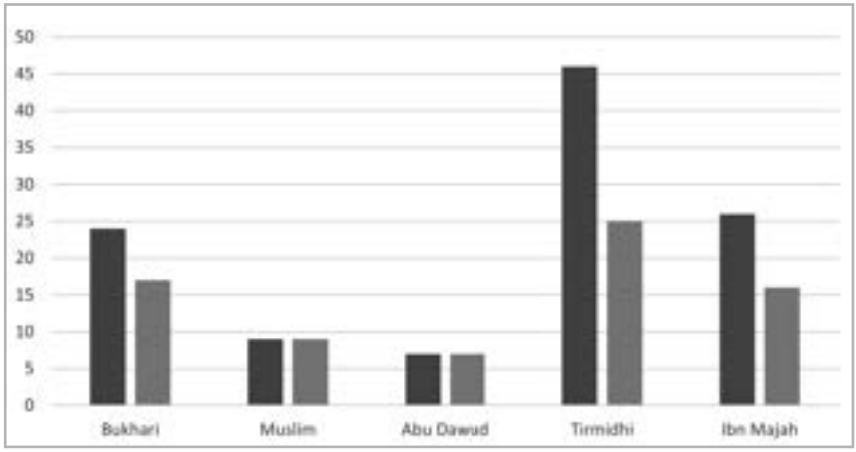

Figure 1. Percentage of chapters related to fighting in the five collections of ḥadīth

Jurists assert that Muslims must avoid engaging in *fitnah*-inducing conflicts under various circumstances: when the distinction between the right and wrong parties becomes blurred;[67] when power is illegally contested in the absence of a legitimate leader;[68] when participants are unaware of the reasons behind the conflict;[69] when unjust parties engage in warfare without credible religious justification;[70] when conflict is driven by tribalism, whims, or worldly interests;[71] and when rebellion against either a just or corrupt ruler is likely to result in greater chaos and bloodshed.[72]

The second, less common, meaning of *fitnah* relates to confusion and perplexity. During times of civil unrest and turbulence, the distinction between right and wrong becomes blurred, allowing conflicting parties to interpret *fitnah* in various ways. This inevitably leads to a state of confusion. Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān, a companion of the Prophet, remarked, "*Fitnah* does not harm you as long as you gain insight into [matters] of your religion. *Fitnah* exists when the distinction between right and wrong is obscured, and you do not know which to follow; that is *fitnah*."[73] To Ḥudhayfa, *fitnah* in the context of civil war signifies a lack of knowledge of Shariah law, which breeds confusion. In another ḥadīth, the Prophet intertwines his fingers to illustrate the feeling of loss and bewilderment experienced during wartime.[74]

Regarding the connection between *fitnah* and admonishing the ruler, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ offered a poignant critique of certain ulama who, in his view, adopted a myopic strategy that undermined the fundamental tenet of "commanding the right and forbidding the evil." This critique is particularly relevant in the context of how these ulama categorized this principle as *fitnah*, especially when armed resistance was involved.[75] They further asserted that the Sultan was beyond reproach, even when committing acts of injustice or killing innocent people.[76] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ argued that the abandonment of this crucial principle led to severe consequences: the rise of ungodly men, the dominance of enemies of Islam, the loss of fortified border cities, the spread of injustice, and the destruction of territories.[77] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ's argument underscores the dangers of a narrow interpretation that regards this principle as *fitnah* when it involves armed resistance. He was particularly concerned with

the implications of this stance, as it effectively placed the Sultan above moral and legal accountability, even when he committed grave injustices, including the killing of innocents. This critique remains relevant today as it invites a reflection on the balance between obedience to authority and the imperative to uphold justice and moral integrity.

Political tyranny should be recognized as the primary catalyst for *fitnah*, as evidenced by the recent Arab uprisings, which have naturally emerged from years of pervasive, systemic injustice, social inequality, and religious persecution perpetrated by regimes and their security forces.[78] The Syrian Islamic revivalist, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (d. 1902), identifies despotic tyranny as the principal cause of revolutions.[79] He advises against responding to tyranny with violence to avoid the *fitnah* that would inevitably devastate the populace.[80] Similarly, Professor Aḥmad al-Raysūnī argues that there is no *fitnah* in combating rampant corruption and injustice when peaceful measures such as advice and patience prove ineffective.[81] He asserts that removing or deposing rulers is necessary to eliminate the root cause of *fitnah*.[82]

To support his argument, al-Raysūnī cites a juristic text from the Ḥanafī school, which states that if a group of people revolts against an imam due to injustices committed by him, they are not considered rebels (*bughāh*). The imam must halt this injustice, and others should not support the imam against the wronged group, nor should they support the wronged group against the imam.[83] Additionally, al-Raysūnī, who rejects the view that popular protests constitute *fitnah*, aptly notes that the true *fitnah* arises from the actions of repressive regimes, such as killing, terrorizing, intimidating, kidnapping, arresting, and torturing. It is not appropriate, according to Shariah, to confuse matters and hold people accountable for actions they neither committed, spoke of, nor accepted. We must attribute the *fitnah* to its actual perpetrators and instigators.[84] Thus, ulama, while discussing rebellion, should recognize their dual responsibility. They need to cite ḥadīths that advocate for obedience to pacify the angry masses, while simultaneously issuing stern warnings to corrupt rulers based on the principle of commanding the right and forbidding the evil.

Obedience Contextualised

The question of obedience undeniably stands as one of the fundamental rights of the state to uphold its existence and stability. Acts of disobedience and rebellion represent significant contributors to the potential dissolution of a state. Ibn Khaldūn astutely observes that lack of obedience posed a hindrance to the establishment of well-organized societies among pre-Islamic Arabs. Their refusal to submit to each other, fueled by their rugged nature, pride, and aspirations for leadership, became a notable obstacle.[85]

Similarly, in the modern context, authority must align with the core ideas and beliefs of its community to maintain legitimacy and gain obedience. People are naturally resistant to submitting their will to others, but they will consent to be governed by an authority that upholds the principles and values they hold dear. This alignment provides the psychological and moral support necessary for their acceptance and obedience.[86] Thus, both historical and contemporary insights emphasize the importance of authority adhering to the belief systems and values of the governed to overcome the natural resistance to obedience and establish a well-organized society.

As mentioned above, the primary function of the state is to maintain the security and protection of its citizens. However, merely establishing peace and order is not sufficient; it must coexist with justice. A system organized to ensure protection, but where people are not convinced they are being treated justly, may secure obedience but never true allegiance.[87] Thus, when the authority becomes corrupt and unjust, the attitude is to uphold obedience.

In the legal context, obedience entails that Muslims, exercising patience, should refrain from initiating armed uprisings against their unjust or oppressive rulers, except in rare circumstances. The Sunnah describes the primary duty of an emir or imam who should "rule according to what Allah has revealed, and fulfil trusts. If he has done that, Muslims have to listen and obey and be responsive to him."[88]

This ruler, having fulfilled his responsibilities, can be either virtuous and morally upright, adhering to the norm of good conduct, or corrupt

and immoral. Historically speaking, leaders of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphate were able, with a position of domination, to fulfil these duties, although some of them seemed to have been despotic and unjust.[89] Also, the sultanate states,[90] which usurped power from the caliphate and were in search of legitimacy, committed themselves to the Shariah, performing jihad, suppressing intra-wars, as well as serving the community's socio-economic needs.[91]

Furthermore, obedience involves enduring patiently and refraining from staging an armed rebellion against unjust or oppressive rulers, unless they exhibit clear and definitive signs of disbelief. From a rational and realistic perspective, this form of obedience is deemed a necessary process aimed at maintaining order and stability within Muslim society, which are crucial for meeting and serving basic human needs. Consequently, enduring the ruler's despotism is considered inevitable, with obedience mandated until the opportune moment for change arises. However, when it pertains to disobeying Allah, there is no room for compromise or concession.[92]

A Contrasting Image

A point of considerable importance to note is that insightful scholars of ḥadīth have strategically placed the chapter on obedience within a broader context, integrating it with other chapters that, in contrast, present materials such as traditions and reports that, to some extent, contrast or balance the concept of obedience. These chapters encompass themes like "the rights of subjects on the ruler," "the punishment of the unjust ruler and lenient treatment of subjects," "the obligation of forbidding evil before emirs," "no obedience to a creature if it entails disobeying the Creator," "speaking the truth before the imams," and "how to advise the imams."[93]

This arrangement is deliberate, aiming to guide readers to comprehend obedience in conjunction with these related chapters, rather than in isolation. Consequently, obedience in the ḥadīth literature is contingent and contextual, involving a careful balance between the rights of the ruler and the rights of the people. The ruler is accountable to the ummah,

and when deviating from established norms, admonition and denunciation of their wrongdoing are warranted. To focus solely on obedience would be a systematic error, suggesting that Islam endorses unrestricted authority for rulers, regardless of their character, while simultaneously demanding unquestioning obedience from their subjects.

A report, narrated by ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit, encapsulates this dual responsibility. It states, "We pledged allegiance to the Messenger of Allah to heed and obey, whether our spirits are high or indifferent, in times of adversity or ease, and even if others are favoured over us. We would not engage in conflict against the ruler unless there is clear evidence of disbelief, supported by proof from Allah. And we speak the truth for the sake of Allah, fearing no one's reproach."[94] Moreover, absolute submission to corrupt rulers directly contradicts a well-known report attributed to the Prophet, "The best Jihad is to speak a word of truth in front of a tyrannical ruler."[95] It also stands in contrast to another narration which asserts, "The prince of martyrs are Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and a person who spoke the truth before a tyrant and consequently got killed."[96] Indeed, classical Islamic literature abounds with accounts of courageous scholars who confronted caliphs, admonishing them for their misdeeds.[97]

Another indication of the non-passive nature of obedience lies in the legal permissibility to engage in self-defence against acts of injustice, even when the wrongdoer is the ruler himself. This defensive action, which is far from rebellion, aligns with a ḥadīth advising Muslims to heed and follow those in authority, "even if they strike your back and confiscate your wealth."[98] The essence of this ḥadīth suggests that while obedience to unjust rulers is required, one should resist the unlawful seizure of property if capable. If this resistance leads to one's death, the individual is granted the status of a martyr, as affirmed in several traditions.[99] Therefore, it is essential to differentiate between the legitimacy of defending oneself, one's honour, and property against any aggressor or tyrant, even if that tyrant is the ruler himself, and engaging in armed rebellion against the corrupt ruler with the intention of toppling his regime. These defined boundaries on obedience to oppressive rulers tend to challenge their authority and undermine their legitimacy, ultimately providing a rationale for those governed to consider rebellion.

Losing sight of these presented facts and juristic rulings, some orientalists argued that the Muslim caliphate is of an autocratic character. For example, Thomas Arnold contended that the caliphate "placed unrestricted power in the hands of the ruler and demanded unhesitating obedience from his subjects."[100] To support his argument, Arnold provided several obedience traditions,[101] with no reference to even a single narration about the counter-obedience traditions! The same opinion was shared by William Muir,[102] and Duncan B. MacDonald.[103] As for rebellion in Islamic jurisprudence, Gibb argued that Muslim jurists adopt quietism and reject any right to rebel against an unjust imam.[104]

It is crucial to emphasize that, since the inception of the first *fitnah* among the Companions and throughout the centuries, the practical stance of numerous scholars toward corrupt political authority has extended beyond mere "obedience and patience" to encompass "opposition and resistance" as well. The disobedient position encompasses a range of approaches spanning from inwardly condemning sinful acts, remaining secluded at home, suspending public lectures, refraining from visiting the ruler's court or accepting prizes, to offering moral support to rebels,[105] or actively participating in opposition movements.[106] In both of these stances, a common thread of obedience to the Shariah is discernible. Those who choose to endure despotic rulers are, in essence, professing their obedience to Allah and His messenger, just as those who uphold the principle of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, each manifesting their commitment through various stages and methods.

What ought to be stressed in this context is that leadership or caliphate constitutes a mutual agreement between two parties: the ummah and the ruler, with the former granting legitimacy to the latter. In addition to being accountable to Allah, the ruler is equally answerable to the ummah, the rightful holders of their own rights. According to the terms of this contract, individuals have the entitlement to offer advice, pose questions, and ultimately remove the ruler if he demonstrates moral corruption and negligence in his duties.[107]

The position of rulership is regarded as a trust.[108] As the guardian of people's rights, the ruler is obligated to be trustworthy and honest,

safeguarding the rights of individuals and refraining from their violation. Upon assuming the role of caliph, Abū Bakr delivered a memorable speech, stating, "O People! I have been appointed as caliph over you, even though I am not the best among you. If I do well, help me; if not, straighten me up… Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger. If I disobey them, then no obedience is due to me."[109] The ruler does not wield authority through an unseen force or divine right; rather, he is simply ordinary individual whose legitimacy stems from the people who have elected him.

The Three-Degrees of Obedience

The preceding exploration of obedience in the Qur'ān and Sunnah reveals a nuanced understanding that encompasses three distinct types of obedience, transitioning from an idealistic perspective to a more practical, realistic approach. As mentioned above, the Qur'ān outlines specific features and conditions governing political obedience, particularly regarding *ulū al-amr*, which includes rulers and leaders. According to these guidelines, individuals in authority are deserving of obedience when they demonstrate fairness in their treatment of subjects, fulfill entrusted responsibilities faithfully, and, crucially, make decisions in alignment with the Shariah, using it as a guiding principle.

The ideal form of obedience is one that emanates from a genuine sense of love and respect for just rulers. This echoes the exemplary obedience observed in the actions of the Prophet Muhammad and the four rightly guided caliphs. In this ideal scenario, obedience is not merely a duty but a voluntary and heartfelt response to leaders who embody principles of justice, equity, and adherence to Sharia. This elevated form of obedience envisions a harmonious relationship between rulers and their subjects, grounded in mutual respect and a shared commitment to ethical governance.

Prophetic traditions, nevertheless, have gone beyond this utopian Qur'ānic concept that existed for the first three decades of early Islam and sporadically throughout history.[110] Other traditions speak of three different periods: Prophethood and the caliphate coupled with mercy, kingship

characterized by oppression, followed by powers of despotism, brutality, and open moral laxity.[111] In acknowledging the moral deterioration evident in various aspects of human life, especially within the political realm, these reports offer Muslims a pragmatic and multifaceted approach to navigate the challenges posed by incoming authorities that fall outside the narrow confines of the ideal obedience verse. While the Qur'ān slams the door of obedience in faces of morally corrupt rulers, the Sunnah adopts a more inclusive stance, addressing a spectrum of political scenarios that range from the pristine model of the caliphate to various degrees of adulterated rulership. This wide-ranging approach recognizes the complexities of political power and provides Muslims with diverse strategies and remedies to navigate the intricate landscape of governance, acknowledging the diverse forms and challenges that authority may take over time.

Upon perusing the corpus of literature about obedience ḥadīths, one discerns a nuanced delineation of the boundaries for tolerating bad rulers. These boundaries fluctuate, at times narrowing to cases of unequivocal sin and,[112] on other occasions, expanding to encompass instances of clear-cut disbelief.[113] One ḥadīth explicitly prohibits armed revolt against a ruler who continues to engage in prayer,[114] or emphasizes the sanctity of the prayer.[115] Some Muslim intellectuals interpret this tradition literally, while others perceive the exclusive mention of "prayer" as a symbolic representation of the ruler's overall commitment to the faith,[116] or a practical demonstration of his valid authority under God's law.[117]

Concerning the extent of persecution, the literature underscores that a Muslim is obligated to listen and obey even in the face of physical harm, such as having his back beaten or wealth unjustly seized.[118] This obligation persists because the perpetrators of such persecution are deemed as "people of devils' hearts in human bodies."[119] In this context, obedience is seen as a strategic response, aimed at averting anticipated harm from those wielding ruthless power. It becomes a pragmatic approach to mitigate potential harm and navigate the challenges posed by individuals in positions of authority who exhibit cruelty and oppression.

Here then, three phases of Muslim history emerge:[120] The first phase, represented by the Rightly-Guided Caliphate, and comprising the

leadership of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, Uthmān, and ʿAlī, (631-661), is regarded as the epitome of Islamic governance and ethical rule. This era, immediately following the demise of the Prophet Muhammad, is commended for its adherence to the principles and teachings of Islam as outlined by the Prophet himself. The Rightly-Guided Caliphs, or "al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn," exemplified the values of justice, piety, and humility in their governance, striving to emulate the Prophet's example in both their personal and administrative conduct. Their rule is characterized by the establishment of a just and equitable society, the promotion of communal welfare, and the implementation of the Shariah in a manner that balanced mercy with justice. The Prophet explicitly advised Muslims to follow the path of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, highlighting their role as paragons of Islamic leadership and moral rectitude.[121]

The second phase, spanning from the end of the Rightly-Guided Caliphate until the dissolution of the Caliphate in 1924, witnessed Islam serving as a moral, legal, social, and political anchor for Muslim societies worldwide.[122] Despite ethical and cultural distinctions between the Rightly-Guided Caliphate and subsequent Sultanate States, a thread of continuity existed in their adherence to the Islamic legacy and tradition. Whether the rulers were pious or corrupt, and even in cases of usurpation, Islam retained its status as a comprehensive way of life. Various caliphs and sultans, to differing extents, sought to implement some or all the three defining characteristics of *ulū al-amr*. Importantly, none of them endeavoured to challenge or dismantle the Islamic governance of the state. As John Esposito put it, "Thus, for the believer, there was a continuum of Muslim power and success which, despite the vicissitudes and contradictions of Muslim life, validated and reinforced the sense of a divinely mandated and guided community with purpose and mission."[123] For reasons of necessity and for the seamless functioning of daily life, Muslim subjects were compelled to adhere to the commands of unjust or impious rulers during this period.

The third phase began with Ataturk's abolition of the caliphate in 1924 and the implementation of his secular policies, leading to the removal of Islam as the overarching framework.[124] This shift marked a significant transition, plunging the Muslim World into a period

characterized by disbelief.[125] The impact of this sacrilegious decision was further accentuated during the Western colonial era, which brought about profound transformations across various domains—social, political, educational, cultural, ethical, and religious. In the modern-state era, many Arab leaders replaced an Islamic identity with secular, communist, and nationalistic ideologies. Despite these changes, they often invoked Islam, incorporating religious tones into their messages to maintain legitimacy and ensure stability.[126]

Worse, these rulers have engaged in a range of religious, social, and ethical transgressions. While some openly exhibit disbelief through their ideas or actions,[127] others seem to function as proxies for foreign powers, notably the State of Israel.[128] Their actions include the plundering of natural resources, the promotion of policies fostering bribery, poverty, and obscurantism, among other offenses. Additionally, they actively work to suppress an Islamic awakening using both overt and covert means. The majority of these rulers have seized power through force,[129] and strive to maintain their positions through electoral fraud, with virtually no red lines left to be crossed.

Certainly, the scale of criminality exhibited by this group of people can in no way be equated to the injustices committed by earlier Muslim leaders during the first phase. Bearing this in mind, certain contemporary Muslim intellectuals like Rāshid al-Ghannūshī,[130] ʿAbd Allāh al-Nafīsī,[131] Ibrāhīm Zayn,[132] Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir al-Mīsāwī[133] and Ḥākim al-Muṭayrī[134] contend that obedience should not be rendered to these leaders. According to al-Ghannūshī, they are dictators, morally corrupt, servants of the enemies of Islam, and bloodthirsty. As al-Ghannūshī put it, "Had they been our *ulū al-amr*, we would have obeyed them."[135] Then he aptly notes that, contrary to contemporary presidents and kings, earlier rulers—although deviant—were respecting Islamic teachings and recognizing Islamic law as a general framework.[136] In contrast, a significant portion of traditional scholars considers the term 'ruler' and its implications to be applicable universally to all figures of authority, spanning from the early days of Islam to the contemporary era. They often cite the Qur'ān (specifically, the obedience verse) and the Sunnah (encompassing the traditions of obedience) as supporting grounds for compliance with the ruler.

Consequently, I have two key points to emphasize here**.** Firstly, it is valid to assert that the bulk of current leaders should be excluded from the *ulū al-amr* category, as advocated by al-Ghannūshī and his associates. *Ulū al-amr* represents a superior Qur'ānic designation granted to those who embody essential human moral values such as justice, trust, and dignity, while adhering to the Shariah as their guiding framework. The concept of *ulū al-amr*, integral to genuine Islamic political authority, is grounded in principles of justice, equality, freedom, coexistence, trust, and civilizational advancement. The era of the Prophet and the four caliphs, along with certain subsequent cases, epitomizes the essence of *ulū al-amr*. However, the historical political trajectory of Muslims has given rise to various forms of authority that do not fall within the *ulū al-amr* category. These include leaders marked by tyranny, corruption, despotism, usurpation, secularism, nationalism, or communism. Their proximity to the ideal varies; rulers from the early phase are closer to *ulū al-amr*, while leaders in our current phase remain more distant.

Secondly, I contend that a minimal amount of obedience needs to be considered to contemporary rulers. The Sunnah, as mentioned above, treats rulers' despotism from a broader and realistic perspective. This perspective encompasses rulers from the second phase and extends the possibility of applying it to those in the third phase as well. It becomes challenging to demonstrate that the extensive body of obedience ḥadīths, highlighting common attributes of corrupt rulership, should exclusively pertain to leaders from the first phase. After examining numerous relevant ḥadīths, I did not come across distinctive qualities that are applicable to a specific category of rulers or authorities, nor did I find indications that these qualities are associated with a particular historical period over another.[137] Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes the absolute nature of the obedience ḥadīths, as they do not pertain to a "specific sultan, nor a specific commander, nor a particular group."[138]

The insistence on obedience, as repeatedly stressed, stems from a rational and pragmatic standpoint, grounded in the imperative of maintaining order and stability. These, in turn, are crucial for the pursuit and fulfilment of fundamental human needs. Refusing to comply with

the legitimate and socially sanctioned directives of corrupt leaders is viewed, from this perspective, as a potential precursor to rebellion and insurgency, thereby heightening the ominous possibility of civil conflict. This type of obedience arises not out of affection or respect but is borne of an extreme emergency,[139] akin to obeying someone who holds a gun to your head. This aligns with the concept of *al-luṣūṣ al-mutaghallibah* (the dominant thieves), a term coined by al-Zamakhsharī, aptly characterizing obedience enforced under coercive circumstances. [140]

Oppression vs Sedition

In his exploration of the transition from chaos to the establishment of a state, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes highlights the inclination of people towards order following a period of disorder. He recounts a historical practice in ancient Persia, where, upon the death of a king, the populace was left without a ruler and law for five days, allowing chaos to unfold throughout the country. The intention behind this was that, at the conclusion of these five days, with looting, plundering, rape, and killing reaching their peaks, those who survived the intense chaos would develop a genuine allegiance to the new king.[141]

This ordeal laying bare the dreadful consequences of a society lacking political authority is echoed in a statement attributed to the Companion ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ that reads, "An oppressive ruler is better than ceaseless sedition."[142] This maxim, inspired by Prophetic reports,[143] presents a dilemma with only two choices: enduring the presence of an unjust ruler (an undesirable option) or engaging in rebellion against them, which brings about significant disorder and dire outcomes (also an undesirable option). Should one exercise patience and endure the injustices of the ruler, or should rebellion be pursued, potentially leading to a dystopian nightmare? There is no doubt that "the lesser of the two evils" approach should be taken. Ibn Taymiyyah aptly notes that wisdom lies not in merely distinguishing between good and evil, but in recognizing the preferable option among two goods and the less detrimental choice between two evils.[144] A perceptive doctor initiates treatment by addressing the most critical illnesses.[145]

Historically, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī meticulously documented a multitude of rebellions occurring within the first two centuries of Islam, all led by individuals with ancestral ties to the Prophet.[146] Ibn Khaldūn likewise identified instances where impassioned revolutionaries and religious jurists, driven by a fervor to rectify perceived wrongs, mobilized tribal support for revolts against oppressive emirs. Underestimating or ignoring the significance of *ʿaṣabiyyah* (group solidarity), they ended up either defeated or killed together with their followers and sympathizers.[147] These scholarly perspectives serve as valuable evidence elucidating the historical ineffectiveness and peril associated with many armed revolts in Muslim history. Such revolts, as overlooking the socio-political dynamics and tribal allegiances integral to their success, often resulted in adverse outcomes and fatal consequences.

More importantly, Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, the prominent Islamic thinker, contends that prior to initiating military measures against corrupt governments, revolutionary Islamist movements should possess a thorough understanding of the social and political consequences and assess whether the conditions are conducive to change.[148] This awareness is best articulated through fundamental inquiries: To what extent are people prepared to make sacrifices and actively participate in the rebellion? To what degree have they lost confidence in the ruler? What is the level of their response to the movement's alternative vision? Are living standards significantly low? Does the geographical positioning of the country offer protection to the revolutionaries? Are there social forces (tribes, sects, political parties, unions, etc.) likely to join the revolution? What is the probability of foreign military intervention in support of the existing regime? Are there regional or international forces that might form an alliance with the movement?[149]

Al-Ghannūshī further underscores the importance of the principle of commanding what is right and forbidding what is evil, and how to expand its basic form (i.e., speaking out against an unjust ruler) to more elaborate expressions such as protest petitions, demonstrations, general strikes, boycotting corrupt institutions, tax resistance, and the like.[150] This realistic view, however, does not completely dismiss the notion of rebellion. If there is a certainty that rebellion against an unjust leader could

potentially succeed when taking into account socio-political-military considerations, then it is not only permissible but even obligatory, as emphasized by distinguished jurists such al-Ḥulaymī,[151] and al-Dāwūdī.[152]

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing discussion and analysis, obedience to *ulū al-amr* in the Qur'ānic perception has to be understood in the context of justice, fulfilling trusts, in addition to admitting sovereignty as belonging to Allah alone, and implementing the guidance of His Messenger. Moreover, the common identity of *ulū al-amr* is best embodied in a joint effort of the three powers: legislation, law enforcement, and adjudication. Rulers are expected to consult ulama or muftis about the legal status of various issues. The latter, in turn, obey legitimate commands of the former and help them implement Shariah rules. Judicial power, on the other hand, joins forces with the other two powers for the benefit of the ummah. Viewed as a single entity, *ulū al-amr* decidedly banishes autocratic power as well as other systems of political tyranny.

The concept of obedience is conditional and contextual, delineating the balance between the rights of the ruler and the rights of the people. The ruler is accountable to the ummah, and the principle of commanding the right and forbidding the evil grants the ummah the right to question the ruler's actions. This dynamic interplay underscores the nuanced nature of obedience in the socio-political framework. And the emphasized connection between the community and the political authority underscores the concept of mutual interdependence. This interdependence signifies a reciprocal relationship in which the well-being and effectiveness of each entity are closely tied to the other.

The research findings highlight a three-tiered classification of obedience: normative obedience, driven by love and respect for just rulers; obedience of necessity, applicable to corrupt rulers during the first phase of Muslim history, spanning from Islam's inception until the caliphate's dissolution in 1924, and emergency obedience to leaders in the contemporary era. Despite the different ethical character of rulers of this time, virtuous or corrupt, and even in instances of usurpation, Islam

maintained its position as an all-encompassing way of life. Different caliphs and sultans, to varying degrees, endeavoured to embody some or all of the three defining characteristics of *ulū al-amr*. The second phase, characterized by the abolishment of the caliphate and the rise of secular policies, witnessed the removal of Islam as the reference point in Muslim societies. It goes without saying that enormity of the criminal and unethical conduct exhibited by these leaders stands incomparable to the injustices committed by their predecessors in the earlier periods of Muslim leadership. From a pragmatic and functional perspective, the necessity of maintaining order, stability, and preventing societal discord becomes imperative for upholding elevated moral principles. Therefore, if there is a prevailing concern that rebellion might jeopardize these fundamentals, then the status quo, though repugnant, should be maintained.

Endnotes

1 Thomas Pierret "The Role of the Mosque in the Syrian Revolution," *Near East Quarterly* 7, (2012): 1-5. On the role of the mosque in politics, see Akbar S. Ahmad, "The Mosque in Politics" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, edited by John Esposito. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3: 140-143.

2 Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 216-234; Jawad Qureshi, "The Discourses of the Damascene Sunni Ulama During the 2011 Revolution," *St. Andrews Papers on Contemporary Syria* 4, no. 1 (2012): 59-91.

3 See these reports in Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl, Jāmiʿ fi Aḥādīth al-Rasūl.* (Damascus: Maktabat al-Ḥalwānī, 1969), 4: 61-72; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Miṣriyyah, 1930), 12: 222; Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 112-118.

4 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 61-62.

5 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 64-65; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id.* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1994), 5: 220. E.g., "Listen and obey even if your back is beaten and your wealth is taken." Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 10: 45.

6 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 64-65; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 5: 220.

7 Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 113.

8 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 78.

9 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 1: 253; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī.* (Riyadh, 1421 AH), 13: 8-10; Muhammad Khayr Haykal, *Al-Jihād wa al-Qitāl fī al-Siyāsah al-Sharʿiyyah.* (Beirut: Dār al-Bayāriq, 1996), 1: 122.

10 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 69-70; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 5: 219.

11 Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, (America: Anchor Books, 1980), 63.

12 Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), 1253 a, p. 28.

13 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ.* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Hilāl, 2002), 3: 99.

14 Ibn Abī al-Rabīʿ, *Sulūk al-Mālik fī Tadbīr al-Mamālik.* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1983), 175.

15 Al-Fārābī, *Ārā' ahl al-Madīnah.* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1985), 117.

16 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbīhāt.* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 4: 60-61.

17 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah.* (Tunisia: Dār al-Qayrawān, 2006), 1:69-71.

18 Ibid., 1: 71. For further analysis on security and protection as the original function of the state, see Lesile Lipson, *The Great Issues of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science.* (8th ed.). (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), 47-50.

19 ʿAbd Allāh Nāṣīf, *Al-Sulṭah al-Siyāsiyyah.* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah, 1983), 4.

20 Abū al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr.* (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1983), 10:1620163; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-*Zawā'id, 5: 222.

21 Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Shuʿab al-Īmān.* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2003), 10:15.

22 Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, and Aḥmad. See al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awṭār.* (Lebanon: Bayt al-Afkār, 2004), 1699.

23 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah.* (Kuwait: Dār Ibn Qutaybah, 1989), 3.

24 On the necessity of setting up a caliphate, see a detailed explanation and several quotes of leading jurists in Muḥammad al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah al-Islāmiyyah.* (7th ed.). (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1976), 128-143.

25 All the Qur'ānic quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an.* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

26 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī.* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 2003), 7: 176-182; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān.* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006), 6: 423-433; Ibn al-Qayyim, *I'lām al-Muwaqqiʿīn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn.* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1423 AH), 2:15-16; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi-al-Ma'thūr.* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 2003), 4: 504-506; Hānī al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī.* (Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2014), 112-114.

27 This is Abū Ḥayyān's preference, who puts an emphasis on the legitimate leadership. *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ.* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 2002), 3: 396; and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr.* (Tunisia: Dār Suḥnūn, 1997), 5: 98; also Muḥammad ʿAbduh, who associates *ulū al-amr* with *ahl al-ḥall wa-al-ʿaqd* (emirs, rulers, ulama, military commanders, leaders and so on). Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār.* (Cairo: al-Manār, 1328 AH), 5: 181. Cf. Sayf al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ismāʿīl, *Al-Naẓariyyah al-Siyāsiyyah min Manẓūr Ḥaḍārī Islāmī.* (Amman: The Academic Centre for Political Studies, 2002), 325.

28 Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr.* (4th ed.). (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 2007), 308.

29 Quoted in al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 112.

30 *Ulū al-amr* always comes in the plural form. It has no singular that is derived from the same root. Majd al-Dīn al-Fayrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ.* (8th ed.). (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2005), 1349; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs.* (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Irshād, 1965-2001), 40: 379; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām*, 6: 432.

31 It is important to understand the circumstances that accounted for the revelation of the verse. This contextual information broadens readers' horizon in terms of specifying general words, placing limitation to the absolute, and, more importantly, pinpointing the exact meaning of the verse. The incident that brought about the revelation of obedience verse serves a practical example of how, when differences of understanding

among leaders and their followers occur, the case should be referred to the guidance of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In one of the battles, the emir who has a sense of humor was trying to test the obedience of his soldiers. So, he asked them to collect pieces of firewood and set fire to them. Then, when done, he ordered the soldiers to throw themselves on the fire claiming that his command must be obeyed, according to the Prophet's instruction. After moments of reluctance combined with a dispute, the soldiers decided to disobey the emir and consult the Prophet instead. Later, the Prophet answered, "If you had entered the fire, you would not have got out of it, for obedience is only in that which is (legally) valid and reasonable." The incident is stated in al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl.* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 2002), 80-81; al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl.* (Al-Dammām: Dār al-Iṣlāḥ, 1992), 159. It is also in al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ.* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, 1400 AH), 3: 160; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Miṣriyyah, 1930), 12: 223, and other ḥadīth collections, as well as most of the available books of *tafsīr*, like al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām*, 6: 430-431; al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4: 502. Cf. al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 189-192. There is another incident that caused the revelation of the verse. Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4: 502-503. Yet, according to the rules of the science of ḥadīth, it is rejected for several methodological flaws. See al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 159-160 (editor's footnote). In the light of the story, the verse directs that when a dispute arises among the ruler and the ruled, a referral is to be passed to Allah and His messenger. As a result, obedience to *ulū al-amr* "applies to that which is known of God's law, that which is not covered by a statement of prohibition and that which is not subject to prohibition when referred to God's law." Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an.* Translated into English by ʿĀdil Ṣalāḥī. (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation. 2004), 3:166.

32 The jurist Ibn al-Qayyim, quoting the obedience verse, puts the question of obedience in a new fashion. He argues that the duty to obey the ruler is derived from the duty to obey jurists, and the duty to obey the jurists is derived from the duty to obey the Prophet. Therefore, the jurists are obeyed to the extent that they obey the Prophet, and the rulers are obeyed to the extent that they obey the jurists. Ultimately, the jurists are the ones who must be obeyed, as they are the experts on the religious law. Ibn al-Qayyim, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn*, 2:16. Cf. Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and* Violence, 130-131.

33 "God commands you [people] to return things entrusted to you to their rightful owners, and, if you judge between people, to do so with justice: God's instructions to you are excellent, for He hears and sees everything" (Al-Nisā': 58).

34 Features of *ulū al-amr* are clearly highlighted in Qur'ānic exegeses, such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl.* (3rd ed.). (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 2009), 242; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām*, 6: 423, 428-430; al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 308; Muḥammad Abū al-Suʿūd, *Irshād al-ʿAql al-Salīm.* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 2: 193; and Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr*, 5: 96.

35 Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, 242. Abū al-Suʿūd, 2: 193. For other similar commentators' statements excluding corrupt rulers from *ulū al-amr*, see al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 112-114.

36 Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Ǧāmiʿ*, 10: 15; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 14: 305.

37 See Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām.* (Amman: Dār al-Athariyyah, 2008), 3: 294-311; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13: 37. Al-Shāṭibī identifies the imam of *al-jamāʿah* as one who is dedicated to adhering to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. *Al-Iʿtiṣām*, 3: 311.

38 Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah.* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1998), 11:148.

39 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 242.

40 See al-Faḍl Shalaq, "al-Jamāʿah wa-al-Dawlah," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 3 (1989): 55; 66-67.

41 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il...*, 3: 99. Cf. al-Māwardī, *Adab al-Dunyā wa-al-Dīn.* (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1985), 149.

42 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 1, 6.

43 See these traditions in al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 5:215-225; Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥulaymī, *Al-Minhāj fī Sshuʿab al-Imān.* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2003), 3:179.

44 Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī.* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1962), 3:207.

45 Edward William Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 6: 2334; L. Gardet, "FITNA," in C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, G. Lecomte (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, new ed., 1986- 2004), 2: 930-931.

46 Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 692. The *fitnah* in the Qur'ān has twelve meanings. Majid al-Dīn al-Fayrūzabādī, *Basā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li al-Shu'ūn al-Islamiyyah, 1992), 4: 166-169.

47 Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 6: 2334.

48 Al-Jurjānī, *Al-Taʿrīfāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Fadīlah, 2004), 138.

49 Ibrāhīm Salqīnī, *Qitāl al-Fitna bayn al-Muslimīn* (Damascus: al-Nawādir, 2012), 42-46.

50 http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/fitna.

51 http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/fitna.

52 Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 222; Ibn al-Athīr, *Ǧāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 61-72; Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 112-118.

53 Ibn al-Athīr, *Ǧāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 10, 45.

54 Ibid., 4: 69-70; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 5: 219.

55 Al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, 10: 162-163.

56 Ibn al-Athīr, *Ǧāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 10, 3-101.

57 Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4: 312-327.

58 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2207-2271.

59 Al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 7: 220-350.

60 Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4: 312-327.

61 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2207-2271.

62 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah, 1998), 5: 5-28.

63 Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Beirut: Dār al-Risālah al- ʿĀlamiyyah, 2002), 4: 233-318.

64 Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (Cairo: al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), 1295-1371. Note that the Book of al-Sunan by al-Nasā'ī is excluded because it lacks a chapter on *al-Fitan* and does not reference ḥadīths concerning *fitnah* and sedition.

65 Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4: 312-327; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2207-2271.

66 Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatiḥ al-Bārī*, 13, 34; Haykal, *Al-Jihad*, 1: 146.

67 Ibid.

68 Haykal, *Al-Jihad*,1: 146-147; Salqīnī, *Qitāl al-Fitna*, 203.

69 Ibid.

70 Haykal, *Al-Jihad*, 1: 146; Kāmil Rabbāʿ, *Naẓariyyat al-Khurūj fī al-Fiqh al-Siyāsī al-Islamī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2004), 194.

71 Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth, 1992), 5: 282; Jamāl Abū Farḥah, *Al-Khurūj ʿalā al-Ḥākim fī al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Islamī* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥadārah al-ʿArabiyyah, 2004), 62; Salqīnī, *Qitāl al-Fitna*, 207; Haykal, *Al-Jihad*, 1: 146.

72 Abū Farḥah, *Al-Khurūj*, 62.

73 Salqīnī, *Qitāl al-Fitna*, 114; cf. Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13: 35.

74 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 5: 12; Ibn Abū Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 21: 29.

75 Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 2: 320.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 James Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4-7, 25-27.

79 Al-Kawākibī, *Ṭabā'iʿ al-ʿIstibdād* (Cairo: Kalimāt ʿArabiyya, 2011), 118.

80 Ibid.

81 Al-Raysūnī, *Fiqh al-Thawrah* (Cairo: Dār al-Kalimah, 2013), 39.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid., 38. See more similar citations in al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 255-257.

84 Al-Raysūnī, *Fiqh al-Thawrah,* 44.

85 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 1: 263. For details on the significance of political obedience to authority, see al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭā'ah al-Siyāsiyyah,* 36-40.

86 Ṣubḥī Sa'īd, *Al-Ḥākim wa-Uṣūl al-Ḥukm fī al-Nizām al-Islami*, (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1985), 188.

87 Lipson, *The Great Issues of Politics*, 55.

88 Narrated by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf,* 11: 244; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām*, 6: 429; al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4: 501.

89 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah.* (Riyadh: Imam Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University), 1: 547.

90 On the nature of the sultanate states and their social system, see al-Faḍl Shalaq, "al-Kharāj wa-al-Iqṭā' wa-al-Dawlah," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 1 (1988): 152-174. On discussion about their legal status and the political realism of Islamic law, see al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, 44; al-Faḍl Shalaq, "al-Faqīh wa-al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah: Dirāsah fī Kutub al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 3 (1989): 15-101. See also Riḍwān al-Sayyid, "Ru'yat al-khilāfah wa Bunyat al-Dawlah fī al-Islām," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 13 (1991): 39-45; and Ibrāhīm Bayḍūn, "al-Mamālīk wa Ma'ziq al-Shar'iyyah," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 22 (1994): 39-55; Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry.* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

91 Shalaq, "al-Jamā'ah wa al-Dawlah," 71-80.

92 Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad.* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1993-2001), 1:333; al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 358-359. Other similar traditions are in Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 8:416; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 5: 225-229.

93 See, for example, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 211-230; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī.* (Beirut: Dār al-Risālah, 2002), 3: 500-503; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī.* (Amman: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyyah, n.d.), 437-442; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah.* (Cairo: Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), 954-955; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 5:207-231; al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Jāmi'*, 9: 459; 10: 82; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān.* (Damascus: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1993), 10: 411-431.

94 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 1: 253.

95 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 31: 125; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 1: 333.

96 Muḥammad al-Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak.* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramayn, 1997), 3: 234.

97 See examples in al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 355-358.

98 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 238; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 10: 45.

99 Abū Farḥah, *Al-Khurūj,* 31.

100 Thomas Arnold, *The Caliphate.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 47.

101 Ibid., 48-50.

102 William Muir, *The Caliphate*. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1915), 600.

103 Duncan B. MacDonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 58.

104 Quoted in Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 12.

105 Abū Ḥanīfah, the renowned jurist, sanctions rebellion against corrupt rulers, asserting the obligation to engage in "commanding the right and forbidding the evil" through verbal counsel and warnings. If these measures prove ineffective, the use of force becomes justified. It is reported that Abū Ḥanīfah encouraged the rebellions against the Umayyads by Zayd ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, in the year 122 AH and, later, against the Abbasids by Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, in the year 143 AH. For legal and historical details on Abū Ḥanīfah's opinion, see Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* 1:86-89; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād.* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī), 13:384-386; Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah.* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 348-349.

106 See Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 68-99; Haykal, *Al-Jihād*, 1: 122; al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 352-353; Ḥākim al-Muṭayrī, *Al-Ḥurriyyah aw al-Ṭūfān.* (2nd ed.). (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-ʿArabiyyah li-al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 2008), 141-161; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite.* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 70-81; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Badrī, *al-Islām bayna al-ʿUlamā' wa-al-Ḥukkām.* (Saudi Arabia: al-Maktabah al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1965).

107 See al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 216-219, 338-342. He quotes leading jurists and theologians who agree that the ruler never has privileges elevating him above the law or enjoys immunity from being brought to justice. Cf. Muḥammad Salīm al-ʿAwwā, *Fī al-Niẓām al-Siyāsī li-al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah.* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006), 226-227; al-Muṭayrī, *al-Ḥūriyyah aw al-Tūfān*, 21-26; Muḥammad Ra'fat ʿUthmān, *Riyāsat al-Dawlah fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī.* (Dubai: Dār al-Qalam, 1986), 435-438; Fatḥī al-Duraynī, *Khaṣā'iṣ al-Tashrīʿ al-Islāmī fī al-Siyāsah wa al-Ḥukm.* (Damascus: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1987), 183, 344; Ḥasan al-Turābī, *al-Siyāysah wa-al-ḥukm.* (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2011), 97-120; ʿAlī Ḥasanīn, *Riqābat al-Ummah ʿalā al-Ḥākim.* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1988).

108 The Qur'ān, al-Nisā': 58.

109 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah al-Bidāyah wa*, 9: 415.

110 It says, "The caliphate is thirty years, then followed by kingship." Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 36: 248. Cf. another tradition, 30: 356. On the difference between the caliphate and kingship, see Muḥammad ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Tabaqāt al-Kabīr.* (Cairo: al-Khānjī, 2001), 3:285; Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 1: 332-334; Abū al-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *al-Khilāfah wa al-Mulk*, translated into Arabic by Aḥmad Idrīs. (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1978).

111 Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, *Al-Musnad*. (2nd ed.). (Damascus: Dār al-Ma'mūn, 1990), 2: 177-178.

112 Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13: 10; Haykal, *Al-Jihad*, 1: 122.

113 Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:313; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 1: 253.

114 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 68.

115 Ibid., 4: 66.

116 Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥurriyyāt al-ʿAmmah fī al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah*. (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1993), 183.

117 Al-Nafīsī, *ʿIndamā Yaḥkum al-Islām*. (Kuwait: Āfāq, 2013), 162.

118 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 238; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 10: 45.

119 Ibid.

120 The primary objective of this distinction is to underscore the pivotal shift in the role of Islam in state governance and legal frameworks, rather than to imply a static or unchanging nature within the Islamic historical context. This periodization aims to draw attention to the transition from an era where Islam was the unifying and guiding force in governance to an era where secular ideologies took precedence, fundamentally changing the socio-political dynamics of Muslim societies.

121 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 1: 278.

122 The Prophet described this phase as a period of kingship that follows the thirty-year Caliphate. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 36: 248. This era of kingship was associated with oppression and despotism. See Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, *Al-Musnad*, 2: 177-178.

123 John Esposito, *Islam and Politics*. (4th ed.). (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 28.

124 The dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate precipitated a profound and extensive transformation in the perception and dynamics of the Arab and Islamic realms. The subsequent developments and occurrences in these regions during the initial decades of the twentieth century were significantly shaped by this event. The geo-political landscape of the Islamic world underwent fragmentation and dispersal, with European powers assuming predominant roles in shaping political alignments and affairs. On the collapse crisis and different responses of thinkers of the Arab and Muslim world, see Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*. (Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2001), 78-103; Muḥammad. M. Ḥusayn, *al-Ittijāhāt al-waṭaniyyah fī al-ʿadad al-muʿāṣir*. (3rd ed.). (Cairo: Maktabat al-ʿĀdāb, 1980), 2: 5-93; Zakī al-Mīlād, "Ṣadmat zawāl al-khilāfah al-ʿUthmāniyyah fī al-fikr al-Islāmī fī al-ʿishrīnāt," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 45-46 (2000): 275-294.

125 Haykal, *Al-Jihād*, 1: 138-139.

126 Sonia Alianak's book *Middle Eastern Leaders and Islam: A Precarious Equilibrium*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007) provides examples of Arab leaders using

Islam for expediency, including King Hussein of Jordan, the Saudi Royal family, Saddam Hussein, Hafez al-Assad, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak. John Esposito's *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) discusses Muammar Qaddafi and Jaafar Nimeiri's manipulation of religion. For Tunisian leaders, see Kenneth Perkins' essay in *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution* (2013). On how Saudi Arabia and Iran use Islam in foreign policy, see Peter Mandaville and Shadi Hamid, "Islam as Statecraft: How Governments Use Religion in Foreign Policy" *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, November 2018.

127 Like Qaddafi, who argued that the word "*qul*" (say) at the beginning of the chapter of al-Ikhlās and other verses was unnecessary and advocated for its removal. Similarly, Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia's first President from 1957 to 1987, actively sought to undermine Islamic pillars and ridicule Islamic norms and principles. See Muḥammad al-Zamzamī, *Al-Islām al-Ǧarīḥ fī Tūnis*; al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥarakah al-Islāmiyyah wa Mas'alat al-Taghyīr*. (London: al-Markaz al-Maghāribī, 2000I), 40-41.

128 According to a number of recent media releases, notably from Israeli leaders, and commentators, the Syrian regime seemed to have been involved in a robust relation with Israel, and the destiny of the latter heavily depends on the necessary survival of the former. See evidence at "*Al-Ittijāh al-Mu'ākis*." (January 1, 2016). Al Jazeera. Retrieved February 8, 2016. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXcp3sNFPks*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2McfT4Gbvw.

129 From a realistic point of view, the majority of jurists recognized the legitimacy of the usurper who came to power by force rather than through a proper contract. See Haykal, *Al-Ǧihād*, 1: 165-202; *al-Mawsū'ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaytiyyah*, "al-Imāmah al-kubrā." 6: 224-225; Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 13, 158; al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 353-355.

130 Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥurriyyāt al-'Ammah fī al-Dawlah*, 183.

131 Al-Nafīsī, *'Indamā Yaḥkum al-Islām*, 161-163.

132 Ibrāhīm Zayn, the Dean of Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM, interview by the author, Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia. June 17, 2016.

133 Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir al-Mīsāwī, Associate Professor, Department of Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh, IIUM, interview by the author, Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia. January 27, 2017.

134 Ḥākim al-Muṭayrī, *Al-Ḥurriyyah aw al-Tūfān*, 315-316.

135 Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥurriyyāt al-'Ammah fī al-Dawlah*, 183.

136 Ibid.

137 See these reports in al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 222; Ibn al-Athīr, *Ǧāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 4: 61-72; al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Ǧāmi'*, 10: 5-30; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 5:216-225.

138 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, 1: 556.

139 A tradition describes the relationship between evil-doing rulers and their subjects as that which is based on mutual hatred and curse. When the Prophet was asked whether this tense atmosphere allows rising against those rulers, he answered, "No, as long as the prayer is maintained." Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4:66.

140 Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, 242.

141 Imam ʿAbd al-Fattah Imam, *Thomas Hobbes*, (Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr, 1985), 330.

142 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 36: 184. See a similar statement by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd in al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, 10: 162-163. It is also reported that "A period of sixty years of a tyrant ruler is better than one night without a sultan." These reports hint to the fact that peoples' various affairs are best run under the state authority headed by the ruler and that order and stability are normally ensured by the existence of the ruler or leader, whether just or not. See al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 135-137; al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, 3.

143 The Prophet is quoted as saying, "The corrupt emirate is better than *harj*." When asked about the meaning of *harj*, the Prophet replied, "Killing and lying." Al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, 10:162-163.

144 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmūʿ Fatāwā ibn Taymiyyah*. (al-Manṣūrah, Dār al-Wafā', 2005), 20: 54.

145 Ibid.

146 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*. (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʿAṣriyyah, 1990), 1: 150-176.

147 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 1: 277-282. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah criticized early rebellions that, despite noble intentions, proved misguided and led to detrimental outcomes. See his book *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, 4: 527-530.

148 Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥarakah al-Islāmiyyah*, 80.

149 Ibid., 80-81.

150 Ibid., 108.

151 Al-Ḥulaymī, *Al-Minhāj*, 9: 184.

152 Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13: 8.

The Role of Religiosity in Shaping Sustainable Behavior: A Global Perspective

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Abstract

This study investigates the complex interplay between religiosity and sustainable behavior within the broader context of global sustainability, with a particular focus on income as a moderating factor. Utilizing a comprehensive dataset encompassing 46 countries and 53,000 respondents, we introduce income as a crucial socio-demographic variable, thereby illuminating an unexplored facet of this multifaceted relationship. Our methodological approach employs Pooled OLS regression with robust standard errors to address the central research question. The empirical findings reveal a nuanced relationship: while religiosity in isolation appears to exert a negative influence on sustainable behaviors, its interaction with income paradoxically enhances pro-sustainability tendencies. This study posits that the achievement of sustainability is contingent upon the intricate interplay of personal beliefs, societal norms, environmental attitudes, and economic factors. Our research contributes to the existing literature by elucidating the moderating role of income in the religiosity-sustainability nexus. The findings underscore the importance of addressing basic economic needs and integrating religious values in fostering responsible environmental behavior. These insights have significant implications for policymakers and environmental advocates in designing effective strategies to promote sustainable practices across diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Keywords: religiosity, sustainable behavior, individual income, sustainability and religion

Introduction

In the contemporary era, our world confronts many pressing environmental challenges including, but not limited to, issues such as air pollution, water scarcity, and the ominous specter of global warming.

These concerns seriously threaten our planet's overall well-being and security (Kahle and Gurel-Atay, 2014). A recent survey conducted by Nielsen and D'haen (2014), encompassing 25,000 individuals from 51 different countries, has highlighted a noteworthy trend. It reveals that a substantial 66% of consumers worldwide harbor genuine apprehensions regarding climate change and global warming. Among these concerns, some of the most prominent are anxieties related to water scarcity, excessive packaging waste, and the use of pesticides in food production and agriculture. Furthermore, a staggering three-quarters of the survey's respondents expressed apprehension about the adverse impacts of air and water pollution (Frighetto, 2011). Given the concerns around sustainability within the consciousness of consumers, and the recognition that excessive consumption is a pivotal threat to the sustainability paradigm, comprehending the fundamental drivers of consumer behavior, such as core values, becomes an imperative prerequisite for fostering widespread adoption of sustainable practices.

The proliferation of environmental predicaments and their detrimental impacts worldwide underscores the urgent need for swift and effective solutions. Given that the bulk of today's environmental issues can be traced back to human activities and conduct, the effective deployment of remedies for these burgeoning problems necessitates a fundamental shift in behavior and the active engagement of entire populations (Onel and Mukherjee, 2015). Therefore, the effective resolution of these issues is contingent upon the alteration of said behaviors and the discernment of behavioral remedies, as noted by scholars such as Hirsch (2010), Ramkissoon et al. (2013), and Steg et al. (2014).

Thus, it becomes evident that identifying and comprehensively analyzing the determinants influencing individuals' pro-environmental behaviors hold paramount significance (Mancha and Yoder, 2015; Bergek and Mignon, 2017; Ramkissoon et al., 2013; Karimi, 2019). Researchers have explored a range of external, individual, psychological, and societal factors (Gifford and Nilsson, 2014; Karimi, 2019; Kumar, 2019; Karimi and Saghaleini, 2021). However, it is noteworthy that one pivotal factor, namely religiosity, has been relatively underexplored within this context (Ghazali et al., 2018). Religion stands as one of the most pervasive

and influential social institutions, intricately interwoven within the tapestry of nearly every culture and society, as emphasized by Ives and Kidwell (2019). A report issued by the Pew Research Center reveals that a remarkable 84% of the global populace subscribe to one of the established religions (Pew Research Center, 2017). Another estimate reinforces this overarching influence, indicating that approximately 68% of the world's inhabitants acknowledge the substantial role of religion in shaping their daily lives (Diener et al., 2011). Religiosity, in this context, forms a foundational pillar, giving rise to social norms, molding individual behaviors, and underpinning the very cornerstones of social structures, ethical principles, and legal systems, as shown by Cohen (2009).

Considering the environmental context, then, it is reasonable to anticipate that religiosity wields a profound impact on individuals' pro-environmental behaviors, environmental concerns, and attitudes, as indicated by Greeley (1993), Stern et al. (1999), Bhuian and Sharma (2017), and Hwang (2018). Religiosity, characterized by the belief in the existence of a divine entity and adherence to a set of divine principles that guide human conduct and earthly actions, as defined by McDaniel and Burnett (1990), emerges as a significant wellspring of environmental ethics, as affirmed by Rice (2006) and Vitell (2009). This research builds upon the work of Karimi et al. (2022), who investigated the effect of religiosity on pro-environmental behavior (PEB) among Iranian rural female facilitators. While Karimi et al. (2022) provided valuable insights into the relationship between religiosity and PEB in a specific context, our study aims to broaden this perspective and address a critical gap in the literature by examining the phenomenon on a global scale and introducing an additional crucial factor: income.

Specifically, this research investigates the causal relationship between religiosity and sustainable behavior (analogous to PEB in Karimi et al.'s study) in 46 countries, encompassing 53,877 respondents worldwide. Unlike previous studies, including Karimi et al. (2022), which focused on specific populations or regions, our study examines the phenomenon from a broader perspective, which helps generalize the findings. Furthermore, this study extends the framework by considering religiosity in relation to income to offer insights into how religiosity can

complement income in shaping sustainable behavior amongst the studied individuals. This interaction between religiosity and income represents a novel contribution to the field, addressing a gap in our understanding of how these factors jointly influence sustainable behaviors.

This study pooled data from World Value Surveys conducted by the World Value Survey Association during seven-time periods (1981 – 1984, 1990 – 1994, 1995 – 1998, 1999 – 2004, 2005 – 2009, 2010 – 2014, and 2017 – 2022). This extensive dataset allows for a comprehensive analysis of trends and patterns over time, further enhancing the robustness of our findings. By expanding upon Karimi et al.'s (2022) work and incorporating the income factor, our research aims to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between religiosity, income, and sustainable behavior on a global scale. This approach not only builds upon existing knowledge but also addresses a significant gap in the literature, offering valuable insights for policymakers, environmental advocates, and researchers alike. Our paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the academic literature that substantiates the potential causal relationship between religiosity and sustainable behavior. Section 3 examines the data, empirical models, summary statistics, and the employed estimation strategy. Moving on to Section 4, we discuss the results pertaining to how religiosity influences sustainable behaviors. Finally, Section 5 encapsulates our study with concluding remarks.

Literature Review

In an era characterized by burgeoning population growth and diminishing resources, the imperative to foster sustainable behavior has garnered significant attention within the academic discourse. This study builds upon the work of Karimi et al. (2022), extending their research by introducing income as a moderating variable in the relationship between religiosity and sustainable behavior. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), this investigation seeks to elucidate the complex interplay of factors influencing sustainable practices. Before delving into the determinants of sustainable behavior, it is crucial to establish a clear conceptualization of sustainability. Originally denoting longevity,

the term has evolved to encompass notions of long-term support, acceptance, and assurance. Across various domains—political, technological, economic, and environmental—sustainability entails striking a balance between present and future objectives without compromising future viability (Di Fabio and Maree, 2016). The United Nations' seminal definition, articulated in the Brundtland Report (1987), encapsulates sustainability as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Empirical research has explored both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators for sustainable behavior. Extrinsic factors include cost savings and policy-driven incentives, while disincentives encompass penalties for non-sustainable practices (Thøgersen, 2005). Intrinsic motivators, such as personal satisfaction derived from environmental conservation, have also been examined (Kahle, 1996; Kahle and Xie, 2008; Sheth, 1983). However, it is noteworthy that many studies in this domain rely on student samples or experimental designs, potentially introducing bias and obscuring genuine intrinsic motivations. Stern's (2000) Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory posits that the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviors is underpinned by a strong moral obligation. This comprehensive framework synthesizes value theory (Schwartz, 1992), the New Environmental Paradigm (Dunlap et al., 2000), and norm-activation theory (Schwartz, 1977). The VBN theory delineates a sequential process wherein individuals progress from fundamental values and general environmental concerns to specific beliefs about adverse consequences and personal responsibility, ultimately triggering norms that endorse sustainable behavior.

Numerous studies have provided substantial support for the utility of the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory in predicting a range of sustainable behaviors, as posited by Steg and Vlek (2009). For example, an empirical inquiry involving 112 residents of the Dutch city of Groningen illuminated the efficacy of the VBN model in demonstrating the acceptability of energy policies aimed at reducing household CO2 emissions, as demonstrated by Steg et al. (2005). Similarly, De Groot and Steg (2009) reported that the VBN theory-based model exhibited a commendable fit with the observed data. The VBN framework has also proven instrumental in forecasting attitudes and behaviors related to choices in transportation

modes. De Groot and Steg (2009) disclosed that individuals' recognition of the environmental ramifications stemming from their transportation choices and their sense of responsibility for these outcomes were closely tied to a moral imperative to curtail car usage.

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985). TPB posits that behavioral intentions are influenced by attitudes toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These intentions, in turn, are the immediate antecedents for behavior itself. By incorporating the TPB framework, this research shows the complex interplay between religiosity, income, and sustainable behavior, offering a nuanced understanding of the factors that drive environmentally conscious actions. In a comparative analysis, which integrated variables from the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) and Norm Activation Theory, Abrahamse et al. (2009) revealed that commuters' car selections were shaped by perceived behavioral control and attitudes, while intentions to diminish car usage were strongly associated with personal norms. Moreover, the cross-cultural applicability of the VBN theory was substantiated by its suitability in predicting sustainable behaviors in Argentina, underscoring its cross-cultural pertinence, as demonstrated by Jakovcevic and Steg (2013).

Religion, as one of the most pervasive and influential social institutions, delineates social norms, shapes individual behaviors, and lays the groundwork for ethical principles and legal frameworks (Christopher and Kidwell, 2019; Cohen, 2009). Within the environmental context, religion and religiosity assume pivotal roles, wielding considerable sway over individuals' pro-environmental behaviors (PEBs), environmental concerns, and attitudes (Greeley, 1993; Stern et al., 1999; Bhuian and Sharma, 2017; Hwang, 2018). Contemporary psychosocial research has also illuminated the interplay between religiosity and sustainable behavior (Pihkala, 2018; Shin and Preston, 2019). Individuals' stances on social and political issues often align with the prevailing viewpoints advocated by religious authorities (Djupe and Hunt, 2009; Wald et al., 1988). When religious institutions sanctify and endorse particular beliefs, they can exert considerable influence over a range of matters (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1995; Wald et al., 1988; Djupe and Hunt, 2009; Mathras et al., 2015).

Here, the introduction of income as a moderating variable in the relationship between religiosity and sustainable behavior represents a significant advancement in understanding the complex dynamics of environmental stewardship. Income levels can substantially influence an individual's capacity to engage in sustainable practices, potentially altering the nature and strength of the religiosity-sustainability connection (Gifford and Nilsson, 2014). Higher income often correlates with increased access to resources and information, which may facilitate the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviors (Panzone et al., 2016). Conversely, lower-income individuals may face structural barriers to sustainability, regardless of their religious convictions (Büchs and Schnepf, 2013; Beck and Gunderson, 2016). The moderating role of income is further supported by the concept of post-materialist values, which suggests that as societies become more affluent, they tend to prioritize quality-of-life issues, including environmental concerns, over economic and physical security (Inglehart, 1995). In the context of religiosity, income may influence how individuals interpret and act upon religious teachings related to environmental stewardship. For instance, higher-income religious individuals might have the means to align their faith-based environmental values with concrete actions, such as investing in renewable energy or purchasing eco-friendly products (Minton et al., 2015). Conversely, lower-income religious individuals might prioritize immediate economic needs over long-term environmental considerations, despite potential religious motivations for sustainability (Hope and Jones, 2014). By examining income as a moderator, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how socioeconomic factors interact with religious beliefs to shape sustainable behaviors, contributing to the growing body of literature on the determinants of pro-environmental actions (Stern, 2000; Steg & Vlek, 2009; Bettendorf and Dijkgraaf, 2009). This literature review underscores the complex interplay of factors influencing sustainable behavior, with a particular focus on the role of religiosity. Our findings underscore the multifaceted relationship between religion, belief systems, and sustainable behavior, inviting further exploration into how faith and spirituality can be harnessed to promote a more sustainable future.

Table 1. Summary of the Academic Literature on Religiosity and Sustainable Behaviour

Author(s)	Methodology			Measures	Findings	Control Variables
	Sample Size	Sample Period	Country			
Agudelo and Cortes – Gomez (2021)	1 Country (Columbia) 450 Individuals	1997 - 2018	Columbia	Religiosity (Degree of Religious Commitment). Prosocial Conduct. Environmental Awareness and Knowledge. Sustainable Practices.	This research suggests that belief systems, prosocial tendencies, and environmental awareness influence sustainable behavior.	Age Gender Educational Attainment Income Status Number of Dependents Marital Status Residential Location.
Minton, Kahle, and Kim (2015)	388 Consumers	1994 – 2012	South Korea and USA	Level of religiosity. Eco-friendly purchase and disposal behaviors. Indirect sustainable behaviors. Low-carbon diet behaviors.	The results show that religiosity plays a moderating role, with consumers with stronger religious beliefs being more inclined to engage in sustainable behaviors, such as buying eco-friendly cleaning products, recycling, and purchasing organic foods.	Age Gender Employment Status Household Income Education Marital Status Status as a Primary Shopper

Author(s)	Methodology			Measures	Findings	Control Variables
	Sample Size	Sample Period	Country			
Karimi, Liobikiene, and Alitavakoli (2022)	110 Rural Female Facilitators	2022	Iran	Religiosity. Attitudes. Subjective Norms. Perceived Behavioral Control. Intentions. Pro-environmental Behavior.	The research findings revealed that religiosity had a direct and indirect impact on pro-environmental behaviors within the cohort of rural female facilitators in Iran. These effects were mediated through factors including perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and environmental attitudes. Religiosity emerged as a significant determinant in molding their pro-environmental intentions and subsequent actions.	Age Educational Qualifications Family Size Marital Status
Leonidou, Gruber, and Schlegelmilch (2022)	541 Individuals (USA) 305 Individuals (China)	2000	USA and China	Generativity. Materialism. Religiosity. Family Values. Interdependence. Environmental Sustainability Beliefs. Environmental Sustainability Activism.	The authors establish a correlation between religiosity, interdependence, and beliefs in environmental sustainability.	Gender Age Occupation Education Religion Denomination Marital Status Number of Children

Author(s)	Methodology		Country	Measures	Findings	Control Variables
	Sample Size	Sample Period				
Leary, Minton, and Mittelstaedt (2016)	1,101 Individuals.	2016	USA	Religiosity. Stewardship. Dominion. Willingness to Pay for Eco–Friendly Products. Eco – Conscious Buyer Behaviour. Post-Consumption behavior.	Religious individuals typically embrace "dominion" beliefs, whereas their non-religious counterparts tend to gravitate toward "stewardship" beliefs. Stewardship beliefs exhibit a positive correlation with involvement in sustainable behaviors, whereas dominion beliefs do not demonstrate such a connection. Furthermore, these belief systems serve as mediators in the relationship between religiosity and behavior, with dominion beliefs exerting a weaker and adverse influence compared to the positive impact of stewardship beliefs.	Age Gender Political Affiliation Political Perspective Household Income Marital Status Education.
Muñoz-Garcia and Villena-Martinez (2020)	720 Individual Students.	2019	Spain	Expression of Religion/Spirituality Religious Orientation. Image of God. Sustainability.	The findings support the idea that religion and less conventional forms of spirituality are connected to environmentally friendly actions.	Age Sex Educational Level Income Level

Author(s)	Methodology			Measures	Findings	Control Variables
	Sample Size	Sample Period	Country			
Wahab (2017)	264 Muslim Employees	2017	Malaysia	Religious Work Values. Sustainable Work Behaviors. Sustainable Energy Consumptions.	The findings indicated a notable connection between religious values, represented as IWVs, and both sustainable work behaviors and sustainable energy consumption.	Government Spending on State Personal Income Education Employment
Elshaer, Sobaih, Alyahya, and Elnasr (2021)	1,135 Individual Respondents.	2021	Saudi Arabia	Cultural Patterns of Food Consumption. Religious Commitment. Intentions to Reduce Food Waste.	The results suggested a slight adverse influence of religiosity on the inclination to waste food. In contrast, a robust and statistically significant positive link was observed between food consumption culture and the propensity to waste food.	Gender Marital Status Age Education

Empirical Methodology and Data

In this segment, we delve into our data, outline the empirical model, present summary statistics, and provide a rationale for our estimation approach.

Data

The data utilized for this study is sourced from the World Values Survey (WVS) conducted by the World Value Survey Association. This dataset encompasses seven time periods:

1. Cohort 1 (1981 - 1984): 14,840 respondents
2. Cohort 2 (1990 - 1994): 29,174 respondents
3. Cohort 3 (1995 - 1998): 77,818 respondents
4. Cohort 4 (1999 - 2004): 60,041 respondents
5. Cohort 5 (2005 - 2009): 83,975 respondents
6. Cohort 6 (2010 - 2014): 89,565 respondents
7. Cohort 7 (2017 - 2022): 153,950 respondents

From this extensive pool, a judiciously selected sample comprising 53,877 respondents from 46 countries was chosen, as shown in Table 2, predicated upon data availability for the pertinent variables. The list of countries with individual samples extracted from each country is attached in Table 2 below. This sample constitutes a robust 10.57% of the overall survey population, a proportion deemed sufficient for this study. This selection criterion aligns with the approach taken by Beck and Gunderson (2016) in their examination of the influence of religiosity on income and by Bettendorf and Dijkgraaf (2009) in their analysis of 25 Western countries.

Table 2. Distribution of Data

Countries	No. of Observations	Countries	No. of Observations
Albania	754	Montenegro	172
Argentina	1001	New Zealand	1015
Armenia	1790	Nigeria	1794
Australia	1963	Norway	1113
Azerbaijan	1873	Peru	1047
Bangladesh	1217	Philippine	1165
Belarus	1865	Poland	1075
Bosnia	1086	Puerto	1126
Brazil	1143	Romania	962
Bulgaria	775	Russia	1666
Chile	942	Serbia	1143
China	1247	Slovakia	932
Croatia	1067	Slovenia	913
Czechia	970	South Africa	2662
Dominica	336	South Korea	1230
Estonia	880	Spain	1162
Finland	934	Sweden	937
Georgia	1973	Taiwan	704
Germany	1923	USA	1466
Hungary	621	Uruguay	940
India	1415	Venezuela	1141
Japan	883	Total	53877
Lithuania	753		
Macedonia	783		
Mexico	1318		

In addition to providing data on the variables of interest, the dataset also includes various demographic characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, region, income, and education. The variables of interest were measured through the utilization of the specific survey questions detailed below in Table 3:

Table 3. Measurement of Focus Variables

Latent Variable	Position	Observed Measurements
Sustainable Behaviour	Dependent Variable	I chose products that are better for the environment.
		I prefer recycling products.
		I prefer actions that reduce water consumption.
		I attend meetings and sign petitions that support environmental protection.
		I contribute to environmental organizations that support environmental protection.
Religiosity	Independent Variable	How I rank the importance of religion in life.
		Religion gives me strength and comfort in life.
Income I		The reported income is in bottom 50% of the country's population.
Income II		The reported income is in top 50% of the country's population.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the summary statistics for the studied sample. The dataset encompasses a significant demographic diversity. Firstly, the mean *Age* of the 53,877 observations is approximately 41.02 years, signifying a predominant presence of relatively mature individuals within the dataset. Further examination of the *Gender* distribution reveals a marginal gender imbalance, with a mean value of approximately 0.481 for the *Gender* variable. This indicates a slightly higher representation of individuals coded as male (1) than their female counterparts (0). Moreover, the *Marital* variable exhibits a notable trend, with a mean value of 0.651, indicating that a substantial portion

of the dataset consists of respondents in a married relationship (coded as 1). The *region*, with an average value of around 0.691, suggests a predominant representation of individuals residing in a specific region or category (coded as 1), marking a noteworthy geographical concentration.

To delve into the temporal dynamics, two dummy variables, *C1* and *C2*, representing distinct time periods, warrant consideration. *C1* encapsulates three periods (1990 – 1994, 1995 – 1998, and 1999 – 2004) and is benchmarked against the initial time period (1981 – 1984). This indicates that approximately 46.8% of the sample respondents belong to these three specified time periods. Meanwhile, *C2* corresponds to three time periods (2005 – 2009, 2010 – 2014, and 2017 – 2022) and is similarly benchmarked against the initial time period. The data shows that roughly 49% of the sample respondents align with these three specific time periods.

Turning to economic attributes, the *Income I* variable, with a mean value of approximately 0.436, signifies the substantial presence of respondents within the medium income per capita category (coded as 1), benchmarked against the lowest income per capita stratum. On the other hand, the *Income II* variable, with a mean value of about 0.151, highlights a smaller segment of the dataset falling within a higher income category (coded as 1). Educational diversity emerges as an important dimension. *Education I*, with an average value of 0.229, signifies a subset of respondents attaining a secondary level of education (coded as 1), benchmarked against the lowest education stratum, representing primary education. Conversely, *Education II*, with a mean value of 0.557, signifies a larger segment of respondents achieving a higher level of education (coded as 1), indicating attainment of university education.

Furthermore, the dataset manifests substantial dimensions of religiosity, with the *Religiosity* variable exhibiting a mean value of approximately 0.664. This suggests that, on average, respondents in the dataset demonstrate a relatively high level of religiosity, as inferred from the composite average score of observed measures. Finally, *Sustainable Behavior*, with a mean value of about 0.348, indicates respondents exhibiting moderate, sustainable behavior based on the composite average score of observed measures. These summary statistics provide insights into the central tendencies and characteristics of the dataset, which can inform further analysis and interpretation of the study.

Table 4. Summary Statistics for Demographic and Focus Variables

	Observations	Mean
Age	53,877	41.021
Gender	53,877	.481
Marital	53,877	.651
Region	53,877	.691
C1	53,877	.468
C2	53,877	.490
Income I	53,877	.436
Income II	53,877	.151
Education I	53,877	.229
Education II	53,877	.557
Religiosity	53,877	.664
Sustainable Behaviour	53,877	.348

Note: *Age* denotes the average Age of the respondent(s). *Gender* represents the respondent(s) with 0 representing females and 1 representing males. *Marital* measures the relationship status of the respondent(s) where 0 represents single and 1 denotes married. *The region* represents the regional orientation of the respondents, as 0 reflects rural and 1 for urban. *C1* denotes time cohort 1, representing three cohorts (1990 – 1994, 1995 – 1998, and 1999 – 2004). This dummy variable is benchmarked with the first-time wave 1981 – 1984. *C2* indicates time cohort 2, representing three cohorts (2005 – 2009, 2010 – 2014, and 2017 – 2022). This dummy variable is benchmarked with the first-time cohort in 1981 – 1984. *Income I* denotes the population which falls in the medium strata of per capita income. This dummy variable is benchmarked with the people who fall in the lowest income strata. *Income II* indicates the population that falls in the highest strata of per capita income. This dummy variable is benchmarked with the people who fall in the lowest income strata. *Education I* reflect the respondent from the medium strata of education, which reflects the respondent having attained secondary education. This dummy variable is the benchmark from the first strata, which is primary education. *Education II* imitates the respondent who belongs to the highest strata of education, which reflects the respondent attaining a university education. This dummy variable is also benchmarked from the first stratum, which is primary education. *Religiosity* encapsulates the composite average score of the two observed measures of religiosity mentioned in Table 2. *Sustainable Behavior* represents the composite average score of the five observed measures of sustainable behavior mentioned in Table 2.

Empirical Models

For the purpose of this study, two primary equations have been formulated: a baseline equation and an extended equation. These equations are presented below:

$$Sustainable\ Behavior_i = \alpha 0 + \alpha 1Age_i + \alpha 2Gender_i + \alpha 3Marital_i + \alpha 4Region_i + \alpha 5C1_i + \alpha 6C2_i + \alpha 7IncomeI_i + \alpha 8IncomeII_i + \alpha 9EducationI_i + a10EducationII_i + \alpha 11Religiosity_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Baseline Equation (i)

$$Sustainable\ Behavior_i = \alpha 0 + \alpha 1Age_i + \alpha 2Gender_i + \alpha 3Marital_i + \alpha 4Region_i + \alpha 5C1_i + \alpha 6C2_i + \alpha 7IncomeI_i + \alpha 8IncomeII_i + \alpha 9EducationI_i + a10EducationII_i + \alpha 11Religiosity_i + a12Religiosity{\times}Income_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Extended Equation (ii)

Age denotes the log age of the respondent(s), and for *Gender* 0 represents female and 1 for male. *Marital* measures the relationship status of the respondent(s), where 0 represents single and 1 denotes married. *The region* represents the regional orientation of the respondents, as 0 reflects rural and 1 for urban. *C1* denotes time cohort 1, representing three periods (1990 – 1994, 1995 – 1998, and 1999 – 2004). This dummy variable is benchmarked with the first-time wave 1981 – 1984. *C2* indicates time cohort 2, representing three periods (2005 – 2009, 2010 – 2014, and 2017 – 2022). This dummy variable is benchmarked with the first-time cohort in 1981 – 1984. *Income I* denotes the population which falls in the medium strata of per capita income. This dummy variable is benchmarked with the people who fall in the lowest income strata. *Income II* indicates the population that falls in the highest strata of per capita income. This dummy variable is benchmarked with the people who fall in the lowest income strata. *Education I* reflects the respondents from the medium strata of education, which reflects that the respondents have completed secondary education. This dummy variable is the benchmark from the first strata, which is primary education. *Education II* imitates the respondents who belong to the highest strata of education, which reflects the respondents completing

a university education. This dummy variable is also benchmarked from the first stratum, which is primary education. *Religiosity* encapsulates the composite average score of the two observed measures of religiosity mentioned in Table 3. *Sustainable Behavior* represents the composite average score of the five observed measures of sustainable behavior mentioned in Table 2. ε denotes the Robust error term, assumed to be independently distributed. Furthermore, equation (ii) extends equation (i) with an interaction of *Religiosity×Income,* which represents the level of an individual's religiosity interacting with the per capita income level.

This research investigates the influence of an individual's religiosity on their engagement in sustainable behaviors within the sample countries. There exists a limited body of empirical research exploring the impact of a person's religiosity on their attitudes toward sustainability. In the study conducted by Minton et al. (2015), a systematic examination was carried out to discern how a person's religious beliefs and values shape their consumption behaviors in a sustainable context. The study's results indicated a moderating effect of religiosity, with highly religious consumers exhibiting a greater propensity to participate in sustainable practices. Moreover, Karimi et al. (2022) employed the renounce theory of planned behavior to investigate the relationship between religiosity and the pro-environmental conduct of rural female facilitators in the Qom province of Iran. Their findings illuminated the pivotal role of religiosity as a social influence factor in determining pro-environmental behavior among the sampled individuals. Wahab (2017) investigates the impact of religious work values, specifically Islamic work values (IWVs), on the manifestation of sustainable work behaviors and employees' utilization of sustainable energy within a workplace context. Their findings reveal a statistically significant association between religious values, particularly IWVs, and sustainable work behaviors and energy consumption. Notably, the observed influence on sustainable work behaviors was found to be more pronounced than its impact on sustainable energy consumption.

Studies investigating the impact of religion on sustainable and prosocial behaviors have yielded diverse findings, as demonstrated by the works of Eckberg and Blocker (1996), Kearns (1996), Kirchmaier et al. (2018), and Vaidyanathan et al. (2018). The majority of existing research has primarily

concentrated on the correlation between religious beliefs and eco-friendly attitudes, leaving the underlying mechanisms that connect religion and environmentally responsible actions relatively underexplored. For instance, Greeley (1993) discovered a negative correlation between a commitment to environmental spending and biblical literalism but a positive correlation with being Catholic. Hayes and Marangudakis (2000) conducted a cross-country survey and identified significant inter-denominational variations within the Christian tradition concerning environmental attitudes. In this vein, Robina and Pulido (2018) have highlighted that recent research outcomes have not elucidated the precise mediating factors in the relationship between religiosity and a more favorable attitude toward nature. They advocate for further investigations to investigate this relationship and consider religiosity as a mediator of other constructs, such as prosocial behaviors. This underscores the complexity and importance of understanding the multifaceted interplay between religion and various dimensions of human behavior and attitudes, including sustainability-related ones.

This study possesses a distinctive and pioneering aspect by delving into the role of religiosity in shaping sustainable behaviors, leveraging an extensive microdata repository featuring a substantial sample size of 53,877 respondents hailing from 46 countries across diverse global regions. What sets this investigation apart is its scale. To date, no prior research has comprehensively examined this phenomenon using microdata on such a massive scale. Existing studies in this domain have typically been confined to single-country contexts or limited, relatively homogenous samples (e.g., Wahab, 2017; Karimi et al., 2022; Leonidou et al., 2022). These limitations have constrained the breadth and applicability of their findings. By contrast, our study, characterized by its broad nature, holds the potential to offer insights and implications that transcend national boundaries, making its findings relevant and applicable to countries across diverse sociocultural backgrounds worldwide.

Estimation Strategy

The estimation strategy for both equations employs Pooled Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, supplemented by Robust standard

errors to address potential heteroscedasticity. To validate the suitability of this approach, a Breusch-Pagan Test was first conducted to detect heteroscedasticity in the sample dataset. The test results confirmed its presence, justifying the use of Robust standard errors alongside Pooled OLS regression as a robust corrective measure. This method is particularly beneficial when examining complex relationships across distinct groups or time points. Similar estimation strategies have been employed in prior research, as demonstrated by Lin (2019) and Becerra et al. (2013), further supporting its relevance and applicability in research methodology.

The Robust standard errors approach provides a useful alternative to conventional standard error calculations, effectively mitigating the impact of heteroscedasticity on our statistical inferences. The Robust standard errors operates by relaxing the assumption of homoscedasticity inherent in OLS regression, instead allowing for a more flexible error variance structure. Specifically, it estimates the variance-covariance matrix of the coefficients without imposing restrictive assumptions about the error term's behavior. This method adjusts the standard errors to account for potential heteroscedasticity, ensuring that our hypothesis tests and confidence intervals remain valid even in the presence of non-constant error variance. By implementing the Robust standard errors approach, we provide more reliable parameter estimates and statistical inferences across potentially heterogeneous subgroups within our diverse, multi-country sample. This approach aligns with best practices in econometric analysis for cross-sectional data, where heteroscedasticity is often a concern due to the inherent variability in large-scale, diverse datasets (White, 1980; MacKinnon and White, 1985).

Robustness Check

To ensure the robustness and credibility of our devised model, we conducted a robustness test by substituting our primary focal variable, Religiosity, with Disbelief (measured religiosity inversely). This strategic adjustment enables us to validate the reliability of our findings derived from the main model.

$$Sustainable\ Behavior_i = \alpha 0 + \alpha 1Age_i + \alpha 2Gender_i + \alpha 3Marital_i + \alpha 4Region_i + \alpha 5C1_i + \alpha 6C2_i + \alpha 7IncomeI_i + \alpha 8IncomeII_i + \alpha 9EducationI_i + a10EducationII_i + \alpha 11Disbelief_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Robustness Check - Baseline Equation (i)

$$Sustainable\ Behavior_i = \alpha 0 + \alpha 1Age_i + \alpha 2Gender_i + \alpha 3Marital_i + \alpha 4Region_i + \alpha 5C1_i + \alpha 6C2_i + \alpha 7IncomeI_i + \alpha 8IncomeII_i + \alpha 9EducationI_i + a10EducationII_i + \alpha 11Disbelief_i + a12Disbelief{\times}Inco_i + \varepsilon$$

Robustness Check - Extended Equation (ii)

This robustness test serves as a critical step in affirming the reliability and consistency of our model's outcomes by examining the impact of Disbelief as an alternative focal variable, reinforcing our research findings' credibility.

Results and Discussion

Tables 5 and 6 present the results from the baseline and extended equation estimations, respectively. As explained above, to address the significant variability in the data, robust pooled ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was employed, incorporating Robust standard errors to account for heteroscedasticity.

Table 5. Pooled OLS (with Robust Standard Errors) Regression Results – Baseline Equation

	Pooled OLS Regression with Robust Standard Errors
Sustainable Behavior	Coefficient
Age	.0004***
Gender	-.0244***
Marital	.0101***
Region	.0190***
C1	-.0035

	Pooled OLS Regression with Robust Standard Errors
C2	.0588***
Income I	.0774***
Income II	.1353***
EducationI	.0121***
EducationII	.0128***
Religiosity	-.0456***
Constant	9.653***
Observations	53,877
R2	0.0533

Note: *** denotes significance at 0.01 - ** denotes significance at 0.05 - * denotes significance at 0.10

Table 6. Pooled OLS (with Robust Standard Errors) Regression Results – Extended Equation

	Pooled OLS Regression with Robust Standard Errors
Sustainable Behavior	Coefficient
Age	.0004***
Gender	-.0245***
Marital	.0105***
Region	.0192***
C1	-.0045
C2	.0584***
Income I	.0434***
Income II	.1025***
EducationI	.0119***
EducationII	.0126***
Religiosity	-.0759***

	Pooled OLS Regression with Robust Standard Errors
Religiosity×Income	.0490***
Constant	9.653***
Observations	53,877
R2	0.0533

Note: *** denotes significance at 0.01 - ** denotes significance at 0.05 - * denotes significance at 0.10

Non – Focus Variables

Apart from C1 *(Coefficient Estimate: -.0035, p value: >0.05)*, all other factors substantially affect the sustainable behavior of individuals in the studied sample. *Age (CE: .0004, p value: <0.01)* has a significant positive impact in determining sustainable behavior amongst the studied individuals in the study. This finding denotes that people are more responsible in making sustainable choices with increasing age. Older individuals tend to have accumulated knowledge and life experiences, which often include a deeper understanding of the long-term consequences of their actions on the environment (Piligrimienė et al., 2020; Quoquab et al., 2019). With *Age*, people become more aware of environmental issues through exposure to information and firsthand experiences, further motivating them to engage in sustainable practices. Additionally, as individuals age, they typically achieve greater financial stability, allowing them to make more sustainable choices, even if these choices involve higher upfront costs but yield long-term savings (Sheoran and Kumar, 2022).

Furthermore, *Gender (CE: -.0244, p value: <0.01)* has a significant negative impact in defining sustainable behavior amongst the studied data observations. The findings suggest that being female has a negative significant impact on sustainable behavior, a complex issue that can be understood through various socio-cultural and economic lenses. Traditional gender roles and responsibilities often assign to women the bulk of household chores and childcare duties, which may limit their time and opportunities to engage in sustainability-related activities

outside the home (Panzone et al., 2016). Gender disparities in education and access to information can further compound this issue, with men potentially having greater exposure to sustainable practices. Economic disparities and gender wage gaps can hinder women's ability to invest in sustainable technologies or practices that may require initial financial investments (Bhutto et al., 2021).

The *Marital (CE: .0101, p value: <0.01)* variable represents that married individuals are more responsible with regard to sustainability. Marriage often fosters a sense of shared responsibility between spouses, including household tasks and decision-making. In the context of sustainability, this shared responsibility can lead to joint efforts to adopt eco-friendly practices, such as energy conservation, waste reduction, and sustainable consumption. Couples may find encouraging each other to make environmentally conscious choices easier, creating a positive influence within the household (Saphores et al., 2012). Moreover, the economic stability often accompanying marriage can significantly impact sustainable behavior. Married couples typically pool their financial resources, resulting in a higher combined income. This economic stability allows them to invest in sustainable technologies and practices that may have initial upfront costs, such as solar panels or energy-efficient appliances. This financial capacity empowers them to make choices that align with sustainability goals (Wan et al., 2014). Family values and the prospect of starting or raising a family can also play a pivotal role. Many couples who plan to have children develop a heightened sense of responsibility toward the environment. They aspire to create a sustainable and healthy environment for their offspring's future, which serves as a powerful motivator to engage in sustainable behaviors (Boztepe, 2012).

The observation that people from *urban (CE: .0190, p value: <0.01)* areas exhibit a positive and significant impact on sustainable behavior can be explained by several factors. Urban residents typically have better access to resources and services conducive to sustainability, including public transportation and recycling facilities (Topal et al., 2021). Environmental awareness is heightened in cities due to visible pollution and resource scarcity. Higher levels of education, greater economic stability, and the convenience of sustainable practices in urban

environments further encourage eco-friendly choices (Soopramanien et al., 2023). Moreover, time cohort 2 (*C2*) *(CE: .0588, p value: <0.01)* significantly shapes sustainable behaviour of the studied respondents. When comparing the time cohort 2 (2005 – 2009, 2010 – 2014, and 2017 – 2022) with the benchmark time cohort (1981 – 1984), a clear elevation in individuals' sustainable behavior can be observed. This phenomenon is attributed to several factors. During the C2 period, there was a notable rise in global environmental awareness, driven by increased attention to issues like climate change and resource depletion (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Vainio and Paloniemi, 2014). Advances in information dissemination, educational initiatives, and technological innovations facilitated greater access to sustainability-related knowledge and eco-friendly practices (Radziszewska, 2019). Moreover, the implementation of supportive policies, evolving social and cultural norms, and the influence of younger generations prioritizing sustainability have collectively contributed to a discernible elevation in sustainable behavior within the C2 cohort (Wan et al., 2014). This empirical evidence underscores the dynamic nature of sustainable behavior and the profound influence of temporal and contextual factors on individual'' proclivity towards sustainability.

Income dummy variables (*Income I and Income II*) *(CE: .0434, p value: <0.01 ; CE: .1353, p value: <0.01)* show a significant positive impact of income in determining sustainable behaviors amongst the studied population. This outcome aligns with existing empirical literature that has consistently classified income as a paramount factor in influencing sustainable practices among households (Panzone et al., 2016; Sheoran and Kumar, 2022). The reasoning behind this correlation is rooted in the fact that higher income levels provide individuals and households with the financial means to invest in sustainable technologies, products, and lifestyle choices (Bhutto et al., 2021). With greater economic resources at their disposal, individuals are more capable of adopting eco-friendly practices, such as purchasing energy-efficient appliances, opting for renewable energy sources, and engaging in environmentally responsible consumption patterns (Wu et al., 2016). Therefore, the observed positive relationship between income and sustainable behavior underscores the

pivotal role that economic prosperity plays in promoting sustainability within a given population, substantiating the academic consensus on this matter.

Lastly, the results of *Education* dummy variables (*Education I* and *Education II*) *(CE: .0121, p value: <0.01 ; CE: .0128, p value: <0.01)* suggest that an increase in the level of education has a significant positive impact in promoting sustainable behaviors amongst the studied population. This outcome aligns with the established body of research that underscores the crucial role of education in fostering sustainability. The reasoning behind this correlation is that higher levels of education equip individuals with greater knowledge, critical thinking skills, and awareness of environmental issues. Educated individuals are more likely to comprehend the long-term consequences of their actions on the environment and society, thus motivating them to engage in eco-conscious practices (Pimdee, 2020). Furthermore, education often exposes individuals to sustainability-related information and encourages them to adopt responsible consumption patterns, energy-efficient practices, and eco-friendly technologies (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002; Vainio and Paloniemi, 2014). Hence, the observed positive relationship between education and sustainable behavior reaffirms the scholarly consensus on the significance of education as a catalyst for promoting sustainability within a given population, highlighting the pivotal role of knowledge and awareness in driving pro-environmental actions.

Variable of Interest

Examining the result that religiosity *(CE: -.0456, p value: <0.01)* has a significant negative impact on sustainable behavior is a complex issue, as it involves the intersection of personal beliefs, cultural norms, and environmental attitudes. To discuss this result in detail, we can consider various factors and provide analysis, while also recognizing that individual interpretations and practices of religion can vary widely. How individuals interpret religious texts and teachings can greatly influence their views on environmental stewardship (Steg et al., 2005). Some interpretations may emphasize human dominion over nature, potentially

leading to a perception that environmental concerns are less important (James, 2004; Rice, 2006). However, it is crucial to note that religious texts can be interpreted in multiple ways, and some religious traditions emphasize the importance of caring for the earth as part of their faith. Secondly, cultural practices and traditions that are intertwined with religious beliefs can also affect sustainable behavior. For example, certain cultural practices may involve rituals or ceremonies that produce waste or consume resources, potentially conflicting with sustainability principles. However, many religious traditions also have rituals emphasizing respect for nature and promoting environmental conservation (Corraliza and Berenguer, 2000; Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002).

Religious leaders and authorities wield considerable influence over the beliefs and conduct of their followers. When religious leaders fail to prioritize environmental concerns or actively discourage sustainable practices, it can shape the behavior of their congregants, as indicated by Sarre (1995). Conversely, some religious leaders strongly advocate for environmental stewardship and endorse sustainable living as an integral aspect of their faith, as demonstrated by Minton et al. (2015). Empirical investigations examining the relationship between religiosity and sustainable behavior have yielded varied results. Some studies have identified a negative association between religiosity and pro-environmental actions, while others have uncovered no significant connection or even a positive correlation in certain instances, as evidenced by Agudelo and Cortes-Gomez (2021), Karimi et al. (2022), Leary et al. (2016), Leonidou et al. (2022), and Muñoz-Garcia and Villena-Martinez (2020). These disparities underscore the intricate nature of this issue and highlight the significance of taking into account additional contributing factors.

The interaction between religiosity and income introduces a nuanced dimension to our analysis, revealing a complex interplay between these factors in shaping sustainable behavior *(CE: .0490, p value: <0.01)*. This finding suggests that the influence of religiosity on sustainable behavior is not uniform across socioeconomic strata, but rather is moderated by individuals' income levels. This relationship can be developed through the lens of Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, a theoretical framework that posits a hierarchical structure of human motivations. At the

foundation of Maslow's hierarchy lies physiological needs—fundamental requirements such as nutrition, hydration, and shelter—which are essential for basic survival. These needs take precedence over higher-order concerns, including environmental stewardship. Consequently, the fulfillment of these elemental physiological needs is a prerequisite for individuals to engage in sustainable practices, which often require additional resources, both cognitive and material.

Higher income levels typically correlate with enhanced access to resources that facilitate sustainable living. This improved access can manifest itself in various ways, such as the financial capacity to invest in energy-efficient appliances and technologies, the ability to afford organic or locally-sourced products (which often come at a premium), increased educational opportunities leading to greater environmental awareness, and residential choices that offer proximity to recycling facilities or public transportation. Thus, as income increases, individuals are better positioned to overcome the economic barriers that might otherwise impede the adoption of sustainable behaviors (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). The positive interaction between religiosity and income in our model suggests that at higher income levels, the previously observed negative effect of religiosity on sustainable behavior is mitigated. This mitigation effect could be attributed to several factors. First, higher-income individuals may have the means to align their religious values with sustainable practices, even if such practices require additional investment. Second, increased income often correlates with higher education levels, potentially leading to a more nuanced understanding of religious teachings in relation to environmental stewardship. Third, higher-income religious communities might place greater emphasis on environmental responsibility as part of their social doctrine. Lastly, with basic needs met, individuals can focus on higher-order concerns, including environmental sustainability, without any perceived conflict with religious obligations.

The interaction between religiosity and income in shaping sustainable behavior can be further considered through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985), particularly in relation to Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC). Within the TPB framework, PBC represents an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of

performing a particular behavior, taking into account past experiences and anticipated obstacles. In the context of our findings, income emerges as a critical factor influencing PBC with respect to sustainable behaviors. Higher income levels are likely to enhance an individual's PBC by increasing their access to resources and opportunities that facilitate sustainable practices. For instance, higher-income individuals may perceive greater ease in purchasing energy-efficient appliances, investing in renewable energy sources, or choosing eco-friendly transportation options. This increased PBC, in turn, may mitigate the potential negative effects of religiosity on sustainable behavior. As individuals with higher incomes feel more capable of engaging in sustainable practices, they may be more likely to align their religious values with environmental stewardship, regardless of the specific tenets of their faith. This interpretation aligns with recent research by Pieters et al. (2023), who found that improved access to sustainability-enabling amenities indirectly bolsters environmentally responsible behaviors. Our study extends this understanding by demonstrating how such access, proxied by income levels, interacts with religiosity to influence sustainable behavior through the mechanism of enhanced PBC. This insight contributes new knowledge to the field of religion and ecology, deepening our understanding of the complex interplay between religiosity, socioeconomic factors, and pro-environmental behaviors.

Existing scholarly literature posits that individuals with pronounced religiosity tend to possess lower income levels (Bettendorf and Dijkgraaf, 2009; Bettendorf and Dijkgraaf, 2005; Heath et al., 1995; Lipford and Tollison, 2003). Therefore, it is arguably unrealistic to expect that individuals contending with the challenges of meeting basic survival needs will simultaneously demonstrate a sincere dedication to environmental preservation. It is imperative to emphasize that characterizing religiosity as inherently antagonistic to sustainable behaviors represents an overly reductionist assertion, as the primary factor frequently influencing an individual's inclination towards sustainable practices tends to be their foundational income level. For instance, it is worth noting that nations that have ardently championed sustainable behaviors and practices have, in fact, precipitated significant environmental degradation during past

industrial revolutions (Martinez, 2005). Paradoxically, these nations, having attained requisite levels of development and living standards, are now proponents of sustainability, calling upon less-developed nations, many of which espouse higher levels of religiosity, to adopt similar environmental conservation efforts. Labeling religiosity as an inherently adverse influence on environmental stewardship is a biased inference.

Consequently, a more prudent conclusion is that the inclination toward sustainable practices within a society is intricately tied to the prevailing level of economic development and living standards. Furthermore, the interplay between religiosity and these sociodemographic factors may potentially serve to augment, rather than diminish, the impetus for sustainable behavior (Steg et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2016). For example, religiosity often includes values of compassion, charity, and generosity. Higher-income individuals who are also religious may feel a stronger moral obligation to engage in sustainable and charitable acts. Their religious values might align with the idea of responsible stewardship of resources and assisting those in need, encouraging them to support sustainability initiatives and engage in philanthropy (Muñoz-Garcia and Villena-Martinez, 2020). Income levels significantly affect an individual's ability to afford sustainable practices and technologies. Higher-income individuals have greater financial resources to invest in renewable energy sources, energy-efficient appliances, and sustainable transportation options (Panzone et al., 2016; Sheoran and Kumar, 2022). Religious values may further motivate them to make these eco-conscious choices, knowing they have the means to do so.

Robustness Analysis

For increased robustness in our analysis, we have replaced our primary focal variable *Religiosity* with its inverse counterpart *Disbelief*. The outcomes of this substitution are illustrated in Table 7. The replacement of religiosity with disbelief has substantiated the results obtained from our principal empirical models. Notably, the coefficients associated with disbelief exhibit a statistically significant positive impact on sustainable behavior and a significant negative impact when interacting with income

levels. These findings support our overarching analysis, suggesting that when income levels are held constant among individuals with high religiosity and those with a high degree of disbelief, the former tend to exhibit a greater propensity toward sustainable behavior than the latter. Notably, these findings align with the conclusions of previous studies by Filippini and Srinivasan (2019) and Mo et al. (2023). Therefore, it can be inferred that providing economic support to individuals with high religiosity can contribute positively to achieving sustainable environmental goals.

Table 7. Pooled OLS (with Robust Standard Errors) Regression Results for the Robustness Check– Baseline and Extended Equations

	Pooled OLS Regression with Robust Standard Errors	Pooled OLS Regression with Robust Standard Errors
Sustainable Behavior	Coefficient	Coefficient
Age	.0003***	.0003***
Gender	-.0209***	-.0209***
Marital	.0094***	.0095***
Region	.0214***	.0214***
C1	-.0033	-.0035
C2	.0597***	.0596***
Income I	.0802***	.0856***
Income II	.1399***	.1454***
Education I	.0135***	.0135***
Education II	.0132***	.0132***
Disbelief	.0225***	.0290***
Disbelief×Income	-	-.0111***
Constant	.2082***	.2054***
Observations	53,877	53,877
R2	0.0509	

Note: *** denotes significance at 0.01 - ** denotes significance at 0.05 - * denotes significance at 0.10

Concluding Remarks

This study examined the impact of religiosity on sustainable behavior using extensive data from 46 countries and 53,877 respondents, making it one of the most comprehensive investigations of its kind. It has introduced an innovative perspective by incorporating income as a crucial socio-demographic factor and demonstrated that the relationship between religiosity and sustainability is nuanced. While religiosity alone appears to have a negative impact on sustainable behavior, when religiosity is considered alongside income, it positively influences sustainable behavior. This underscores the complexity of the interaction between personal beliefs, cultural norms, and environmental attitudes. It suggests that achieving sustainability goals requires addressing basic physiological needs and creating conditions where religious values can guide individuals toward environmentally responsible actions.

In summary, this research significantly advances our understanding of how religiosity and income intersect to shape sustainable behavior. It emphasizes the importance of improving individuals' well-being to a level where basic needs are met, allowing religious principles to play a constructive role in fostering a sustainable future. Rather than attributing environmental challenges solely to impoverished religious communities, policymakers should focus on creating an environment where religious values can positively contribute to sustainability efforts.

Statements and Declarations

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Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the World Value Survey Website: https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSOnline.jsp (accessed on 08 June 2023).
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Endnotes

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Textual Authority and Modern Urdū Exegetical Interpretations: A Case Study of Q.4:34

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Abstract

As a result of modernity and the emergence of gender studies, Islamic texts that discuss women and their status in Islam's broader world-view have been revisited and re-interpreted.

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Traditional modes of interpretations and cosmologies have been questioned and re-interpretations have been attempted. Modern subcontinental *tafsīr* literature has also experienced the impact of modernity, which in turn has led to the production of exegetical trends of a diverse and competing nature. Against this backdrop, this article takes up Q.4:34 as a case study because it is one of the most contested of these texts. The article critically evaluates some of the most significant and impactful Urdū exegetical trends in the literature of the modern subcontinent and analyze their methods and conclusions in relation to Q.4:34. This analysis provides us with a greater appreciate of the dynamics of textual authority, text reception and exegetes' role in the process of meaning making. The article deliberates upon an important yet unexplored modern subcontinent exegetical trends, and attempts to fill the gap in context of Q.4:34.

Keywords: subcontinental *tafsīr*, *al-qawwāmūn*, *nushūz*, wife-beating

Introduction

Urdū exegetical literature, which emerged in the twentieth century on the subcontinent, abounds with the exegetical diversities. At the same time, it also presents a tremendous amount of unity. This exegetical diversity owes its origin to different contexts like school affiliations, religious polemics, personal leanings, target groups, the encounter with modernity etc. One of the most important themes of this exegetical endeavour pertains to the treatment meted out to women/wives in relation to men/husbands. In this context, this article aims to critically study the interpretations of the Q.4:34. For this purpose we have selected key exegetical contributions which have been instrumental in framing public opinion on the subcontinent to date. Some of the major exegetes include: Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Āzād (d.1958), Muftī Muḥammad Shafī (d.1976), Mawlānā Mawdūdī (d. 1979), Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (d.1997), and Mawlānā Khālid Saif Allāh Raḥmānī (b.1956). The reasons for selecting

these exegetes are that they represent different exegetical schools, impact popular opinion, and are continuously being published. The main target-group for all these exegetical works are the general public. However, it is important to note that the basic idea behind the democratization of exegetical productions such as these in the modern subcontinent is not to lift the general public up to the level of high scholarship, but rather to help the public orientate their thinking and values along Islamic religious lines. These works also help to spread, and reinforce the orientations of particular schools. Thus, religious polemics within subcontinental Islam is one of the reasons for the rich exegetical heritage from the past to present. We now turn to the contested verse, and then consider its competing interpreters and interpretations. Q.4:34 reads:

> Men are the protectors and maintainers (*al-qawwāmūn*) of the women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other (*bi-mā faḍḍala Allāh baʿḍahum ʿalā baʿḍ*), and because they spend from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard. As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (*fa-ʿiẓūhunna*), refuse to share their beds (*wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ*), beat them (*wa-ḍribūhunna*); but if they obey you, seek not against them means. Surely, Allah is Ever Most High, Most Great.[1]

Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Āzād: *Tarjumān al-Qurʾān*

Born in 1888 in Mecca to a highly traditional family, Āzād completed his religious education under the strict eye of his father. After returning to India this precocious child born with an inquisitive, sometimes rebellious, spirit moved beyond his family-imparted religious education, and began to intellectually wrestle with the ideas of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d.1898) during his childhood years until 1910. As he grew older, he continued his exploration of Islam's intellectual heritage. Āzād's journalistic endeavour in the form of al-Balāgh, and al-Hilāl boosted his profile enormously within the socio-religious and political horizons of

colonial India. His tempestuous political career in British colonial India did not hamper his writing, or his discussion of religious topics, which he considered pivotal to his wider thought. Āzād's exegetical writings, particularly *Tarjumān al-Qurʾān*,[2] are particularly conspicuous among the subcontinental exegetical annals from the first-half of the twentieth century.[3] It is interesting to note that, unlike other commentaries analysed here, we have found that publication of *Tarjumān al-Qurʾān* has diminished somewhat. The reasons behind this decline seems to be related to his ideological position, which have both admirers and critics, and the misreading of the theme Unity of Religion in the *Tarjumān al-Qurʾān*. This needs further research.

As this is not the place to address Āzād's exegetical work in full, or to critically re-asses its reception, here we restrict ourselves to discussing his distinct and radical interpretation of Q.4:34. Āzād briefly contextualizes the verse in relation to the preceding verse, and argues that the Qurʾān stood against the notion that women do not have fully-fledged personalities of their own. He states that it is both men and women together who create a complete life. Regarding the hierarchical cosmology which the verse being studied here conveys, Āzād qualifies men/husbands as the source of economical sustenance for women/wives, and this hierarchy is established by Allah. Thus, proceeds Āzād, the authority/family headship is naturally held by men/husbands. Quick to sense the disheartening impact this verse may have upon women/wives, Āzād states that women should not feel disheartened that they are not like men, and notes they do not have any share in men's work. Consequently, women must have a firm faith that all roads of activity (*ʿamal)*, and divine grace (*faḍīlat*) are equally open to both genders, writes Āzād. In accordance with the verse, Āzād qualifies that pious women are those who are obedient, and guard the interests of their husbands. Again, in conformity with the subsequent verse Āzād states that if discord emerges between a couple, then elders and betters from among the family should be the ones to redress the balance.[4]

This is Āzād's interpretation of Q.4:34. Additionally however, our study of his *Tarjumān* has led us to some distinct findings which are also of consequence for the verse under discussion. When we consider

Āzād's interpretation of Q.2:228 in relationship with Q.4:34, we find that Āzād offers some radical understanding when he is compared to those whom he admired within the *tafsīr* genre. Indeed, he seems reluctant to accept all the exegetical material which cement the authority of husbands over wives. The text of Q.2:228 states, amongst other things, that men (husbands) have an advantage/*daraja* over women (wives). This *daraja* should be understood in context of men being *al-qawwāmūn*, and *al-qawwāmūn* itself should be understood in context of economic sustenance/maintenance of wives by their husbands, and this economic sustenance is subject to socio-economic changes. If sometimes the economic-administrative reins happen to be in the hands of women/wives, then in this situation, writes Āzād, men/husbands loses the distinctiveness of being *al-qawwāmūn* in relation to women/wives. And wives can become the head of the family. I have not found any historical precedent wherein the exegete shifts this status of family headship to a wife if a husbands fails to take care of her maintenance. Put simply, the office of family headship is subject to socio-economic changes, and consequently family headship can switch to wives, as per Āzād.[5] To give a representative example, this shift is diametrically opposite to the views of the exegete Ibn Kathīr in particular,[6] and indeed Sunnī thought in general. One more pertinent point for Āzād is that men's status of being *al-qawwāmūn* is the *only* distinctive (the urdū word used is *imtiyāz*) quality husbands have over wives. The concept of *al-qawwāmūn* is also qualified more in terms of administrative responsibility, a burden (the word used by Āzād is *buwjh*), but not in an authoritarian sense. Our stress on Āzād's interpretation of *al-qawwāmūn* being the *only* distinctive quality should be understood in context of his paltry exegesis of the first part of the verse which reads *bi-mā faḍḍala Allāh baʿḍahum ʿalā baʿḍ*, ("because Allah has made one of them to excel the other," see above). Here, Āzād neglects all the ḥadith traditions mentioned by exegetes such as Ibn Kathīr, and others. Āzād does not explain the verb *faḍḍala ʿalā* and takes the word verbatim in his translation. The question of engaging the multiple interpretations of the verb *faḍḍala ʿalā*, for example, through which exegetes have explored the biological status of women in comparison to men (and concluded that men are superior to women) seems unimportant to Āzād. For Āzād,

al-qawwāmūn is mostly rooted in an economic privilege-cum-administrative responsibility, not an ontological status of one (the husband) being higher than the other (the wife). Any discussion of the biological privilege of men over women goes undocumented in the *Tarjumān*.

In his approaching the reference to *nushūz* in the last part of Q.4:34, Āzād faithfully follows and accepts the text as it stands. There are no elaborate discussions of the different disciplinary steps. All we have is one line of explanation and some scanty parenthetical notes. If the wife does not respect the rights of her husband, and shows disobedience, the husband ought to make her understand. If wife does not comply, the husband can use a soft or hard method to bring her back to the straight path,[7] writes Āzād.

1 The word *fa-ʿiẓūhunna* ("admonish them," see translation above) is qualified in terms of softness and love.

2 There are no explanatory parentheses to interpret *wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ*, just a translation, i.e., no bed-sharing.

3 The word *wa-ḍribūhunna* is qualified in terms of warning, not harming.

Āzād raises no questions about the text itself. A purely confessional approach is applied. Yet, the exegetical incoherence we find in Āzād's work is that he does not address the capacity that the husband would have, in terms of this disciplinary right over his wife, if he were to lose his headship of the family to his wife. As mentioned above, for Āzād *al-qawwāmūn* is only a conditional administrative responsibility, yet he does not engage the unanticipated consequences of such an assertion. This is a radical shift, but also an incomplete exegesis, as Āzād does not appreciate the relationship between *al-qawwāmūn* and any disciplinary rights.

Āzād's qualifying the office of *al-qawwāmūn* specifically in terms of one's access to economic resources gives him a distinct place as an exegete of the modern Subcontinent. Also, it is significant here to deliberate over Āzād's relationship with Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d.1905), and Rashīd Riḍā (d.1935) both of whom he admired. Both Āzād and ʿAbduh had the same

understanding of exegesis as the approach to the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān. Their exegetical affinity can be easily gleaned from the introductions to their respective exegeses. Like *Tafsīr al-Manār*,[8] *Tarjumān* is also a public *tafsīr*. Although Āzād had a high regard for ʿAbduh, and Riḍā, Āzād even calls ʿAbduh a sign of God (*Āyat ilāhī*),[9] he does not appear to be simply a passive recipient of ʿAbduh and Riḍā's thought. For instance, unlike *al-Manār*, *Tarjumān* does not explain gendered distinctiveness in Q.4:34 (as in, *bi-mā faḍḍala Allāh baʿḍahum ʿalā baʿḍ*) in terms of an ontological privilege of men vis-à-vis women. Similarly, conditioning of *al-qawwāmūn* solely in economic terms distinguishes Āzād's *Tarjumān* from *al-Manār*. Recent work by Hadia Mubarak on the interpretations of Q.4:34, particularly that of *al-Manār*, is also important to consider in this regard.[10]

In contrast to Āzād, it seems pertinent to allude to another legal opinion, as shared on the Shariah council website of Jamāʿat-e-Islāmī, India, by Jalāl al-Dīn al-ʿUmrī (d.2022).[11] The petitioner asks that, if husband is not earning, and does not support the maintenance of wife, or he is physically not well and can give no physical protection to her, does he still hold the status of *qawwām*? In response, Jalāl al-Dīn al-ʿUmrī writes that the Qur'ān has called man *qawwām* in respect of his *being* (*nawaʿ*). This is for two reasons, writes al-ʿUmrī. One is that men have a God-given privilege (*faḍīliyat*), and superiority over women. This superiority is in terms of body, mind, and knowledge. It is because of this superiority that men have more political, social, and economical responsibilities than women. The second reason for man having the status of *qawwām* is that he spends his own money on his wife. Al-ʿUmrī states that this is a general rule, and cases wherein a woman outclasses a man in terms of mind or body, or a woman is affluent and spends on behalf of her husband, are exceptions. Even in this context, a man still has the status of *qawwām*. Comparing this understanding of *qawwām* – being eternally associated with a man, with that of Āzād we can find some kind of exegetical elasticity in the *Tarjumān al-Qurʾān* in that the office of family headship/ *qawwām* is understood more in terms of socio-economic contexts, and not in terms of biology. The wisdom behind men being eternally considered *qawwām*, despite the economic status of some women, is to fend off any serious disagreements, which can be disastrous to the institution

of the family, observes al-ʿUmrī. Attributes like *qānitāt* ("devoutly obedient," see above translation) and *ḥāfiẓāt* reserved for women in Q.4:34 not only establishes the position of women in relation to men, but also strengthens the superiority of the husband over the wife.[12]

Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ: *Maʿārif al-Qurʾān*

Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ (d.1976), an eminent scholar, a product of Dār al-ʿUlūm Deoband, India, who settled in Pakistan after Partition and authored the famous exegetical work, *Maʿārif al-Qurʾān.*[13] The reason for selecting Shafī's *Maʿārif* over the much respected *Bayān al-Qurʾān* by his teacher Ashraf ʿAlī Thānvī (d.1943) is that the *Maʿārif* is more widely circulated. Consequently, it acts as a vehicle via which Ḥanāfī-Deobandi thought is spread amongst the wider publc. Also, as per Shafīʿ himself, the *Bayān al-Qurʾān* is the foundation upon which his *Maʿārif* stands. Like Āzād, the intended audience for the *Maʿārif* is the wider public. One of the distinct features of the *Maʿārif* is that subtle scholarly discussions (*mabāḥis ʿilmīya*, which according to Shafīʿ himself are beyond the intellectual grasp of the ordinary public) are left aside.[14] This makes the *Maʿārif al-Qurʾān* a public *tafsīr*.

Like Āzād, Shafīʿ quotes part of Q.2:228 to provide a context for his discussion of Q.4:34. Shafīʿ states that this verse signifies the resemblance/equality (the word used is *mamāthilat*) of rights between men and women. Shafīʿ adds that it is not necessary that these rights be identical however. Illustrating this point, Shafīʿ states that if a woman is duty-bound to do something, then in comparison a man is equally duty-bound to carry out the complementary act. For example, if women are duty-bound to look after household issues and raising children, then men are duty-bound to address their needs through their earning. Furthermore, Shafīʿ mentions one distinct quality that gives man a special privilege – *daraja* – over women as alluded to in the last part of verse Q.2:228. This brief treatment of Q.2:228, by Shafīʿ, contextualizes Q.4:34.[15] Here, *daraja* is qualified in terms male ascendency (*tafawwuq*), and sovereignty (*ḥākmīyat*). In this context Shafīʿ, cites a precedent from ʿAbd Allāh bin ʿAbbās, which states that since men have a *daraja* over women, they

(men) should show greater forbearance to women if they err, and men should also tolerate with patience any kind of violation of their rights by their wives.

Unlike Āzād, Shafīʿ spends significant time explaining Q.4:34, and he appears more coherent than Āzād. First of all, Shafīʿ addresses the lexical meaning of the word *qawwām* as signifying someone who is responsible for any institution or any kind of work. A *ḥākim*, in other words, meaning that man is a *ḥākim* over a woman. Since every institution stands in need of a head whose judgement marks the final word over any disagreements, the family as an institution, is also no exception to the principle. God has chosen man over woman as the *ḥākim* because of man's greater potential for knowledge and action.[16] Being a *ḥākim* (a word not used by Āzād) is man's distinct and eternal quality. Shafīʿ adds that the man-as-*ḥākim* does not have absolute authority, which is constrained by the authority of sharīʿa. Man is not free to abide by his whims, as there are checks and balances which elevate the fragile genus (*ṣinif nāzuk*, i.e., woman) to a respectable position vis-à-vis the man/husband. Verses Q.4:19, and Q.2:233 restrict the absolute authority of the husband as the *ḥākim/qawwām*. According to Shafīʿ, these verses give importance to female voices (wives), and simultaneously direct husbands to include them in any family-related issue.[17]

Accepting the possibility that wives may become disheartened as a result of their husbands' privileged positions, and commenting upon its divine wisdom, Shafīʿ stresses that being *qawwām* is a God-bestowed (*wahbī*) quality, and is not earned. In his explanation of *faḍḍala Allāh* in Q.4:34, Shafīʿ states that there is divine wisdom behind making one superior to another. Similarly, if husband is qualified in terms of being *al-qawwām* a wife must not be disheartened as this distinction comes purely from God. A husband is simply bestowed with it; he has not earned it. Commenting upon the wording of this God-bestowed (*wahbī*), distinct quality, i.e., *baʿḍahum ʿalā baʿḍ*, Shafīʿ writes that this Arabic expression alludes to the fact that both man and women are a part of each other.[18] For Shafīʿ, this connection helps to generate love, not animosity. Regarding the maintenance element of the verse, Shafīʿ states that this verse also alludes to another principle in life that woman, due

to her creation (*kilqat*) and nature (*fiṭrat*) cannot earn her own livelihood. For this reason, God has made man responsible for her maintenance. By contrast, she is made an agent of procreation, and looks after the children and household tasks. However, this should not lead one to think that making a wife subordinate to her husband, in terms of maintenance (*nafaqāt*), denigrates her. Rather, it should be understood as a division of labour within the family.[19] Those women who accept men as *al-qawwāmūn* are qualified in terms of being *ṣāliḥāt* (righteous), *qānitāt* (obedient), and *ḥafiẓāt* (those who guard). These qualifications intend to praise, not denigrate, writes Shafīʿ. Indeed, hādīth qualify women with such attributes with praise and admiration.[20] In his discussion of the *nushūz* element of Q.4:34, which Shafīʿ defines in terms of a disobedient wife and her reform (*iṣlāḥ*):

1 *Fa-ʿiẓūhunna*: This means making a wife understand with care/gentleness

2 *Wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ*: This does not mean to leave her alone in a house, for this will hurt her more, and will only increase animosity. It only means not to share the same bed as a symbol of displeasure.

3 *Wa-ḍribūhunna*: If these two reformatory measures fail, then a husband can beat their wife lightly. The beating should not hurt her, her body should not receive any kind of bruises, and her bones should not break. Face beating is strictly prohibited.

Shafīʿ states that the first two reformatory punishments are noble (*sharīfāna*) in character, and prophets/noble men have acted upon them. But the third, *Wa-ḍribūhunna*, is allowed only in extreme conditions under duress. He cites a *ḥadīth* stating that *good men will never beat women. Prophets never did it,* writes Shafīʿ.[21] Restrictions like these dilute the literal-cum-legal functioning of the term *wa-ḍribūhunna*. Here it is quite evident that, for Shafīʿ, hitting a wife is a quite reprehensible action, and is in fact discouraged by the example of all the prophets. If the relationship between a couple becomes strained, either because of a wife's fault or because of a husband's unjustified injustice, then elders from both sides must step in and try to redress the balance.

Here, it is significant to compare Shafīʿ's interpretation with his contemporary exegete, namely Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. ʿĀshūr (d.1973), who served as Grand Muftī of Tunisia. His exegetical work, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*[22] has a distinct place in modern exegetical literature because of its stress on philology. In fact, this stress on philology is a common emphasis shared by both Ibn ʿĀshūr and Muftī Shafīʿ. Like Ibn ʿĀshūr, Muftī Shafīʿ categorically states that philology stands as the first piece of important work to be done by exegetes. For Shafīʿ, philology is the key to understanding the Qurʾān, and, at the same time, he laments the diminished attention that philology receives during his time.[23] But, unlike Ibn ʿĀshūr who rigorously engages in philological analysis while interpreting Q.4:34, especially regarding the disciplinary steps,[24] Shafīʿ does not get involved in these same philological dynamics. For Shafīʿ, the three disciplinary steps are to be exercised by the husband alone, and external legal authorities can not intrude upon the husband's jurisdiction (which Ibn ʿĀshūr allows for). By contrast, it should be noted that Shafīʿ does not discuss the possibility of external legal authorities' intervention in the application of the three disciplinary steps. For him, *al-qawwāmūn* signifies husbands, and disciplinary steps are to be exercised by husbands alone.

It is appropriate to add here another exegesis of Q.4:34 by one of the leading living Ḥanāfī-Deobandī *fiqh* scholars Mawlānā Khālid Saif Allāh Raḥmānī (b.1956). He has produced a significant amount of legal works, including a two volume exegesis of the Qurʾān, his *Āsān Tafsīr Qurʾān Majīd*.[25] Like Shafīʿ, he takes man as the head of the family (*sadr-i-khāndān*). The reasons behind this headship are the same as for Shafīʿ in his *Maʿārif*. One, *faḍl Allāh*, is natural. The word used by Raḥmānī is *ṭabʿī*. As noted above, Shafīʿ and Thānvī use the term *wahbī*, meaning God-given, bestowed without any intention or efforts on the part of the man/husband. For Raḥmānī, the natural/*ṭabʿī* qualities due to which the man/husband has the capacity to head a family are greater physical power, and having more mental and psychological potential as compared with the woman/wife.[26] Raḥmānī, unlike Āzād and Shafīʿ, also includes Biblical references to support his view that the man is a *ḥākim* over the woman, and she is admonished to stay obedient to her husband.[27] For Raḥmānī,

another reason for the man/husband being the head of the family is economical, i.e., the husband must ensure the maintenance of his wife, and this injunction is permanent. To Raḥmānī, these are the two reasons that determine that the man is the head of the family, which should be understood in terms of the man/husband's responsibility towards the family. Raḥmānī criticises the Western concept of equality, wherein no one is taken as a head of family, and both are accepted on an equal footing. According to him, this approach is disastrous to the family as an institution, and has had a deleterious impact upon society at large.[28]

Raḥmānī defines *nushūz* in terms of disobedience (the Urdū word used is *nafarmānī*), and transgression. He also touched upon examples of *nushūz* in his voluminous legal work *Qāmūs al-Fiqh*. For example, he states that when the wife goes out of the house without the consent of her husband this is considered to be *nushūz*. Likewise, not accepting her husband's request to share a bed is tantamount to *nushūz*. Even talking to strangers without her husband's consent amounts to *nushūz*.[29] In the case of a strained relationship between a couple, one should not move straight to divorce, but rather should take a three-step reformatory (*iṣlāḥī*) approach to address differences. In essence, these steps stand for reform and reconciliation (*iṣlāḥ* and *mufāhamat*), not coercion and intimidation. In Raḥmānī's interpretation:

1 *Fa-ʿiẓūhunna* means admonition with love and tenderness.

2 *Wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ* means the avoidance of bed-sharing for some days while sharing the same room. The man is not allowed to force his wife to leave the home, and go to her father's house.[30] If the *nāshīza*/disobedient wife leaves home of her own accord, then the husband is not legally bound to provide for her maintenance.[31]

3 *Wa-ḍribūhunna* means that, if the above two reformatory approaches do not bear fruit, then the husband is allowed to beat his wife, though it is discouraged. Since divorce is one of the most abhorred actions in the social structure of Islam, it allows for restricted wife-beating in order to keep the family and overall social fabric of society intact. Restricted wife-beating means not harming her skin, beating must not lead to bruises, and it must not humiliate the wife. In other

> words, beating itself should not be the goal. It should help to make her understand that she is doing *nushūz*. If these three-steps fail, and relationship becomes bitter, then the elders of both families should step in.[32]

Interestingly, Raḥmānī makes a bold statement by saying that *beating one's wife is not a good thing as the messenger of Allah declares it the most reprehensible thing to do.*[33] It is pertinent to note here that this emancipatory statement must not lead one to consider Raḥmānī as someone who privileges their own understanding over the text of the Qurʾān, especially with regard to the meaning of the word *ḍarb* (beating). But, Raḥmānī should be seen as one who utilizes the nuances of Islamic intellectual heritage to reach a certain conclusion. This is an approach which we can observe above in the work of Muftī Shafīʿ, and also Ibn ʿĀshūr, as discussed by Hadia Mubarak. One common feature among Āzād's, Shafīʿ's, and Raḥmānī's work is that they all ignore recourse to medical science with regard to highlighting any differences between men and women in terms of psychological or physical features and potentials. The text of the verse is definitive for them.

Sayyid Abū al-aʿlā al-Mawdūdī (d.1979) and *Tafhīm al-Qurʾān*[34]

Mawdūdī is a distinct thinker in the modern Islamic world, and his writings have a visible impact to this day.[35] His *Tafhīm al-Qurʾān* remains a very popular exegetical work. Mawdūdī defines the Qurʾān in terms of *daʿwat* (call) and *taḥrīk* (movement), not just a text to be read in an armchair.[36] Mawdūdī's works became widely circulated and earned both him and his party the Jamāʿat-e-Islāmī both admirers and critics. In fact, the Deobandī School has a range of opinions about him and his party.[37] Here, we will focus on Mawdūdī's treatment of Q.4:34. For Mawdūdī, *qawwām* means an administrator/guardian/supervisor of any individual, office, or institution. The *faḍīlat* should not be defined in terms of honour, respect, and nobility of men with regards to women. *Faḍl Allāh* means that man is by nature (*ṭabīʿī*) bestowed with some qualities, which are present in woman either in a lesser degree or not at all, making her

unsuited to head the family as an institution. The second reason for men being *qawwāmūn* is due to their maintenance of their wives, and it is taken as such. There is no further deliberation here by Mawdūdī. Wifely attributes like *ṣāliḥāt*, *qānitāt* and *ḥāfiẓāt* are explained with reference to a ḥadīth, which states that the best wife is one whom when you see her your heart is pleased; when you order her, she obeys, and behind you she guards your property and her own honour. For Mawdūdī, the wife's obedience is limited inasmuch as no right of God can be violated in her obedience to her husband. In the case of supererogatory (*nawāfil*) acts of worship, a husband my prevent his wife from performing them, and if she were to continue to carry out supererogatory forms of worship then they would not be accepted by God.[38]

Mawdūdī translates *nushūz* as recalcitrance (*sarkashī*), and the three-steps of disciplinary actions is accepted and is to be followed in a prescriptive sense. Mawdūdī too explains this disciplinary action in terms of reform (*iṣlāḥ*). He writes that whenever the Prophet allowed someone to beat the wife, the Prophet did so reluctantly, with a heavy heart, and with a sense of displeasure.[39] Yet, *there are some women who cannot be made right without beating*, writes Mawdūdī.[40] In those cases, the Prophet prohibited slapping, unkind beating, and beating with anything that could leave bruises. Mawdūdi here is terse in his exegesis, and is less comprehensive than Shafīʿ in his treatment of the verse. In his discussion of men's status as *qawwāmūn*, Mawdūdī is not interested in any insights from modern medical science regarding the mental or physical abilities of the two sexes. Like Shafīʿ, Thānvī and Raḥmānī, for Mawdūdī *faḍl Allah* is simply bestowed. The text has the ultimate authority.

It is also important to mention here that Mawdūdī, being a prolific writer, produced some books which add to his exegetical thought as discussed here. In particular, his books *Ḥuqūq al-Zawjayn* and *Pardah* are relevant. In his *Ḥuqūq* he translates *qawwām* in terms of being a sustainer, provider, *ḥākim* (governor), *muḥāfiz* (guardian), administrator, head, and protector. Mawdūdī raises the question as to why man was made a *qawwām* over woman, and states that this is not a question of law, but of sociology (*falsafa ijtimāʿ*). Mawdūdī is categorical in stating his view that nations who consider both sexes to be equal to one another suffer

dreadfully. Mawḍūdī writes that Islam complies with human beings' natural attributes, and consequently assigns the role of *qawwām* to one, and of *muṭīʿ* (the obedient wife) to the other.[41] Thus, for Mawḍūdī *faḍl Allāh* is a natural fact (*fiṭrī ḥaqīqat*) that gives a special *daraja* (2:228) to men. In this way, Islam accepts the biological and psychological difference between the two sexes while assigning compatible roles to both of them.[42] For men, being *qawwām* necessitates their having certain powers (*ikhtiyārāt*), with some conditions. These powers include: counselling (*naṣīḥat*), admonition (*tadīb*), and punishment (*taʿzīr*). In this regard, Mawḍūdī writes that a man may resort to these steps if he finds his wife not obedient or violating his rights. The second reformatory step, *wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ* means avoiding intercourse. The time-limit for this period of non-intercourse relationship is four months. After that, if the wife is still in a state of *nushūz*, the husband will be under a legal obligation to dissolve the marriage. Here, Mawdūdī criticises the explanation of *wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ* given by Imām Sufyān al-Ṯhawrī (d.778), who understands the term *hijir* as meaning "to tie." The *hijār* is the rope one uses to tie a camel. On the basis of this philological argument, Ṯhawrī states that when a wife fails to heed a husband's counselling then she must be tied up in the home. Mawdūdī dismisses this argument, and states that this goes against the Qurʾān.[43] With regard to the last reformatory step, *wa-ḍribūhunna,* which should be used in extreme cases, Mawdūdī's understanding is similar to Shafīʿ and Raḥmānī both of whom reference the same *ḥadīth* as an exegetical source.[44] The other significant power is the right to divorce. Here, Mawdūdī connects this right to the husband's provision of maintenance to his wife.

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī and *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾan*

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī's (d.1997) contribution to Islamic thought particularly in the field of *tafsīr* have earned him a reputation as an important scholar and authority in the field of Qurʾānic studies. The influence of his teacher ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Farāhī (d.1930), was also instrumental in shaping his approach toward the Qurʾān, and Islam at large. His voluminous exegetical work, *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾān*[45]continues to earn a respectable readership, not

only among the wider public, but also among scholars. At the same time, his work has also received significant criticism despite his popularity.

Iṣlāḥī likens the family to a state, which is in need of a head for its establishment and continuity. For Iṣlāḥī, headship is accorded to the man because of two reasons stated in the Qurʾān. The first argument (*dalīl*) is that God has bestowed man with a distinctness/*faḍīliyat*. In some regards man has a definite superiority (*tafawwuq*) over woman which, therefore, qualifies him to the role of headship of the family. Attributes like guardianship (*muḥāfiẓat*), and defence (*mudāfaʿt*) or the ability to earn a living are more apparent in men rather than women. Iṣlāḥī opines that this distinctiveness (*faḍīliyat*) is not overall (*kullī*), but only in the respect that it justifies men being *al-qawwāmūn*. By contrast, Iṣlāḥī says that women have certain attributes that make them better suited to home-making and looking after children. For these reasons, writes Iṣlāḥī, there is a some ambiguity (*ibhām*) in the text (i.e., *faḍḍala Allāh baʿḍahum ʿalā baʿḍ*) inasmuch as both sexes have a distinctiveness in relation to each other.[46]

Iṣlāḥī defines *nushūz* in terms of recalcitrance and resistance of wife against her husband. Minor actions like heedlessness, or expressing an opinion or taste are not considered *nushūz*. Yet, any step on the part of the wife the challenges the husband's authority as *qawwām*,[47] and which could disturb a family structure is considered to be *nushūz*. And, if such a situation arises wherein wife does carry out an act of *nushūz*, then the husband has the right to recourse to the three disciplinary steps in a gradual manner as the text of the Qurʾān suggests.

1 *Fa-ʿiẓūhunna* also means admonition for Iṣlāḥī. Though he notes that there is room for interpretation as the root *wa-ʿa-ẓa* includes other meanings like reprimand or rebuke (*zajir*, *tawbīkh*).

2 *Wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ* means no bed-sharing.

3 *Wa-ḍribūhunna* means that, if the above two approaches fail, then Iṣlāḥī accepts the beating of the wife. This is, of course, qualified by a ḥadīth that includes that such disciplining much be non-injurious (*ghayr mubarriḥ*).[48]

Like Ibn ʿĀshūr, Iṣlāḥī adopts a philological approach. However, unlike Ibn ʿĀshūr Iṣlāḥī does not discuss any changes in who the text is

addressing in Q.4:34. Iṣlāḥī's hermeneutical heir, Jawaīd Aḥmad Ghāmdī (b.1952), also considers the family a mini-state and attributes man's status as *qawwām* due to his biological makeup, and his provision of maintenance.[49] Regarding *Nushūz* and reformatory three-step approach Ghāmdī has no different opinion than his teacher. Other scholars of the Iṣlāḥī School such as Sulṭān Aḥmad Iṣlāḥī (d.2016) have referenced Q.4:34 to discuss the etiquette of intercourse and positioning. Sulṭān Aḥmad Iṣlāḥī stated that Q.4:34 demands that a man should be on top of a woman during intercourse. He also quotes other texts to cement his opinion.[50]

Textual Authority and Exegetes' Role in its Interpretation

In the Muslim intellectual heritage, exegetes' engagement with the text has always been considered more than simply an interpretative endeavour (which is itself a diverse and complex business), but also a work closely related to the exegete's own belief system. It is in this context that the issue of textual authority, and exegetes' role in its interpretation becomes important. An exegete's particular epistemic stance vis-à-vis the text may lead him/her to a diametrically different conclusion when compared to another who has a different approach. Not only does this enrich the exegetical discourse, but it can also give rise to serious rifts within contending schools of thought. It is with this point in mind that we will critically reassess the exegetes/writers discussed above.

Text Reception and Meaning Generation

All our exegetes discussed above approach the text of Q.4:34 in a prescriptive sense, rather than for example as a description from the context of the times when the text was being revealed. The verse is there to be obeyed. Most of the above exegetes wrote during the post-colonial period (i.e., in modern times). We also find a complete agreement on the meaning of the text with pre-colonial authorities on the subcontinent, notably Shāh Walī Allāh (d.1762). Walī Allāh also takes the text of Q.4:34 as prescriptive. For him, the husband has the status as *qawwām* of the family due to his natural composition (*bi-l-jibilla*), and his provision of

maintenance (*bi-l-māl*). The three step disciplinary process is equally accepted, also with recourse to *ḥadīth* in which *wa-ḍribūhunna* is explained in a more restricted sense.[51] Indeed, if we go back to the classical legal commentaries such as the *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* by al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d.981) we can generally see the same understanding of the verse.[52]

We have also observed the historical continuity in interpreting Q.4:34 on the modern subcontinent. Classical scholars, as well as those who take *ḥadīth* as a genuine source of knowledge give utmost attention to continuity of interpretation. This continuity of interpretation, in modern times, has become a bone of contention. Modern writers, particularly Muslim feminists/womanists, challenge the importance of continuity of interpretation.[53] Amongst the exegetes discussed above, only Āzād considers the text in an elastic sense. He stands alone in his radical, but incoherent understanding. In this context, he appears somewhat independent in his thinking, which has some affinity with modern Muslim feminist hermeneutics. Āzād's stance has a hermeneutical affinity with Ayesha S. Chaudhry's argument for approaching the Qurʾān as a performative text.[54] Taking the text as *performative* means that readers determine/generate the meaning of any Qurʾānic text. I tend to think that since there are clear signs of reader-response theory in such an approach, as well as hints of new historical criticism, some serious work needs to be done on the impact of critical theories on modern Muslim writers who do not follow the Islamic tradition's methodologies strictly. Similarly, when it comes to interpreting the meaning of the advantage/step (*daraja*) in Q.2:288, our exegetes discussed above are unanimous in their defining of *al-qawwāmūn* in terms of *daraja*. This is diametrically opposite to the understanding of exegetes like Sayyid Quṭb, as discussed by Hadia Mubarak, or amina wadud who treats *daraja* as the advantage men have of being able to divorce wives without the intervention of a third party.[55] Even Iṣlāḥī, who takes the coherence (*naẓm*) of the Qurʾānic text as his main hermeneutical approach, considers *al-qawwāmūn* in relation to *daraja*. This whole process of interpretation on the part of our exegetes demonstrates not only their unity, but also the genealogical nature of the exegetical tradition.[56]

Another relevant theme in the context of the reception of the text, which needs to be explored more, is whether a text is contingent or

permanent (*ṣābit*). With regard to Q.4:34 our exegetes are in unison about its permanence. Also, in the process of interpretation both the method used to arrive at a particular meaning, and the meaning itself must not ignore the precedents of the early authorities. This is particularly the case with those injunctions which are definitive in evidence and reportage (*qaṭʿī al-dalāla wa-qaṭʿī al-thubūt*) like Q.4:34. There can be a change in a fatwa, but not in a *sharīʿa* injunction (*ḥukm*). This epistemological-cum-methodological stance is another bone of contention between the Muslim modernists/feminists and traditional scholars.[57] Raḥmānī also touches upon the understanding of the modern day *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* theory (the higher intentions and purposes of the *sharīʿa*), and critically analyses how some scholars have come to bypass definitive injunctions in order to arrive at a particular meaning couched in terms of public interest (*maṣlaḥa*). He elaborates on this pertinent issue in his bold critique of the book *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* by Najāt Allāh Ṣiddīqī.[58] The leapfrogging of definitive injunctions to arrive at a particular interest is a break with the *sharīʿa* in the name of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*.[59]

Historical Contextualization and Legal Rulings

Understanding the historical context is another pertinent factor that not only helps us to understand the text itself, but also the legal and non-legal functions of a verse. Modern day Muslim feminist scholars use historical contextualization as a hermeneutical tool to determine whether a text is general or specific, or descriptive or prescriptive. In the context of Q.4:34, feminist scholars stress that historical context to determine its meaning.[60] It is in this regard that we should deliberate upon the legal-cum-exegetic principle that reliance is to be placed on the generality of words, and not on the specificity of cause of revelation (*al-ʿibra li-ʿumūm al-lafẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab*).[61] Muftī Shafīʿ references the occasion of revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) of Q.4:34 wherein a lady, namely Ḥabība, came to Muḥammad and complained about her husband who had slapped her. Muḥammad ordered retribution, that was immediately abrogated by Q.4:34 just before Ḥabība and her father were about to leave.[62] Other exegetes like Āzād, Mawdūdī, Raḥmānī, Iṣlāḥī and Ghāmidī do not mention the *sabab al-nuzūl*

of the verse under discussion. But they all, as we have discussed above, take the verse in a general (*ʿāmm*), and prescriptive sense. Given the importance of the verse, it is obvious that these exegetes, like Shafīʿ, knew of the specific occasion (*sabab*) of revelation of the verse. Since these commentaries generally had a specific target-group, i.e., the wider public, they are restricted to discussing issues which are important for the public to understand, and act accordingly. The complex legal methodologies such as those that cause a particular verse Q.4:34 to move beyond the specificities of the occasion of revelation to act as a general injunction are not discussed in these commentaries in detail. But, one thing that is clear is that in the interpretation of Q.4:34 in our discussed commentaries, for the authors the aforementioned legal-cum-exegetical principle of reliance being placed on the generality of words (*al-ʿibra li-ʿumūm al-lafẓ*), rather the specificity of the occasion of revelation is at work in the background, although not a single exegete mentions it. Due to this principle, the occasion/*sabab* of revelation does not restrict the interpretation of Q. 4:34 to the socio-economic environs of the Arab society at the time. Given the impact of this principle on exegetical-cum-legal traditions of the Islamic heritage more work needs to be done to better understand its formation and complexities.

Reading Conventional *Tafsīr*

Writing *tafsīr*, for any Muslim exegete, is not just a literary venture but a deep-seated matter of their belief system. The literature discussing how to approach the texts testifies to the degree that Muslim exegetes/jurists were involved in developing a measured methodology to arrive at a particular meaning. Interpretation was never an ivory-tower exercise, but rather was a deed-oriented intellectual activity with ontological underpinnings. Ignoring the subtleties and complexities of conventional exegetical traditions, and disregarding them as atomistic is not a well-considered opinion. Reading conventional *tafsīr* demands that a reader integrate themselves into the overall exegetical approach of any given *tafsīr*. At the same time, he/she must appreciate the genealogical nature of the *tafsīr* tradition. Simply selecting a *tafsīr* of one verse to read in isolation is not appropriate. Our assertion can be made more clear by taking the example

of Q.4:34. Muftī Shafīʿ, as discussed earlier, does not approach the verse independently or in an atomistic sense. His interpretative process is not to focus on Q.4:34 alone. He contextualizes Q.4:34 with Q.2:228, and qualifies it with Q.4:19 and Q.2:233. Throughout this process he regularly references *ḥadīth*, and also draws on classical *tasfīr* works to support his own interpretation. Similarly, Q.4:34 is alluded to in his interpretation of Q.4:128, wherein *nushūz* on the part of husband is mentioned.[63] Likewise, we find in Iṣlāḥī's reading and interpreting the verse in a holistic manner as he also interprets Q.4:34 in relation to Q.2:228. Here, Iṣlāḥī also discusses *nushūz* by the husband,[64] as do Āzād, Maudūdī, and Raḥmānī. Reading closely, we also find that these exegetes were conscious of the legal significance of Q.4:34 in their interpretations of other verses related to family as an institution. Therefore, the onus is on the reader to fully appreciate any authorial intent. At the same time, he/she must also understand the overall working of the *tafsīr* genre, as well as its close relationship with other Islamic knowledge traditions like *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* etc.

Ḥadīth and its Role in the Interpretative Process

All the exegetes and authors discussed above accept the *ḥadīth* in their interpretive-cum-legal capacity. Nevertheless, we do find some distinct understandings that each subcontinent exegete has in their treatment of some *ḥadīth* narrations, which needs to be explored. With regard to Q.4:34, we observe that some of the exegetes reference *ḥadīth* in order to generate interpretations, while others rely on other Qurʾānic verses. Beginning with Āzād, he relies less on *ḥadīth*, and more on the intra-textual method of interpretation. In fact, Āzād does not mention a single *ḥadīth* in his interpretation of Q.4:34. Unlike Āzād, Shafīʿ generates meaning not only via the intra-textual method, but he also references *ḥadīth* narrations as well as exegetical opinions from past commentaries that make his work richer and more complex. For example, while defining pious wives (*al-ṣāliḥāt*) he references the aforementioned *ḥaḍīth* that reads that the best woman/wife is one whom when you see her you become happy; when you command her, she obeys you; and when you are away, she guards her property and person. Shafīʿ also quotes another

ḥadīth praising the obedient wife that says that beasts, angels, fish, and birds pray for her forgiveness. We see an absolutely devotional approach to these *ḥadīth* texts by Shafīᶜ,[65] and it is evident that he does not restrict these texts, like Q.4:34, to any specific period. Similarly, as discussed above Shafīᶜ explains *nushūz* using *ḥadīth* as an interpretative tool. Likewise, *ḥadīth* are important for Raḥmānī, Mawdūdī, and the Iṣlāḥī School.

Conclusion

In this article, we have examined different exegeses from modern Urdū *tafsīr* literature focusing on their methodologies and interpretations of Q.4:34. We selected a number of influential figures who have had a significant impact on public opinion. In fact, we found that most of these exegetical works were written for the general public as the target-audience. This popularization of exegesis serves a range of purposes like cultivating Islamic values among the public, defending a school of thought, combating the impact of modern philosophies etc. The case study of Q.4:34 led us to some important findings, and we discovered that different epistemic positions impact exegetes' approaches. The case of Mawlānā Āzād helps to understand the point. His exegesis of Q.4:34 in which he advances the idea of family-headship potentially reshuffling as a result of socio-economic changes reveals his exegetical elasticity in comparison to other exegetes. Since the other discussed authors share an epistemic position inasmuch as most of them belong to the Ḥanafī School,[66] we found that they shared interpretative methodologies and conclusions. In this regard we found the *Maᶜārif* to be more complex and legalistic in relation to the Ḥanāfī School. We then discussed the principle of text reception and interpretation and compared subcontinental exegetes with some modern feminist voices. We observed that interpretation is not just a question of following the text, but also a matter of one's overall hermeneutical epistemology. We also endeavoured to understand background workings of the exegetical-cum-legal principle that reliance is to be placed on the generality of words, not on the specificity of a cause of revelation. We also noted that *tafsīr* reading is a complex endeavour, particularly its legal content, which should be approached in tandem with other Islamic knowledge traditions like *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, and philology.

Endnotes

1 The translation is taken from *The Noble Qur'ān*, co-authored by Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān and Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥilālī, published by Maktaba Darussalam, 1996. The parentheses have not been included.

2 Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Āzād, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, (Islāmī Academy: Pakistan, n.d.).

3 For more on Āzād's work see I.H. Douglas, *Abdul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1988); Ziya ul-Hasan Faruqi, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Towards Freedom*, (Delhi: B.R Publishing Corporation, 1997); Syeda Saiyidian Hameed, *Islamic Seal on India's Independence: Abul Kalam Azad – A Fresh Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); S. Irfan Habib, *Maulana Azad – A Life* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2023).

4 Āzād, *Tarjumān*, vol. 1, p. 410.

5 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 351.

6 Hāfiz ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAẓīm* (Cairo: Dar al-Ḥadīth, 2011) pp. 205-207. The works of Walid Saleh, and Younis Mirza should be approached for more exegetical-cum-hermeneutical understandings of Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Kathīr.

7 Āzād, *Tarjumān*, vol. 1, p. 410.

8 Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā. *Tafsīr al-Manār*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 1911).

9 Āzād, *Al-Hilāl*, no.1, July 1912, (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy, 2010).

10 Hadia Mubarak, *Rebellious Wives, Neglectful Husbands: Controversies in Modern Qur'anic Commentaries* (Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 135-138

11 Jalāl al-Dīn al-ʿUmrī was JIH President from 2007 till 2019.

12 See Jamāʿat Islāmī India's recently launched website in which al-ʿUmrī responds to the above-mentioned query http://www.shariahcouncil.net/ Accessed March 21, 2022. For a more detailed understanding of al-ʿUmrī's work, see his *ʿAwrat awr Islām* (New Delhi: Markazī Maktabah Islāmī Publishers, 2018).

13 Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ, *al-Qur'ān Maʿārif*, (Deoband: Kutub Khānā Naʿīmiya, 2019)

14 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 82.

15 Shafīʿ, *Maʿārif*, vol. 2, pp. 446-447.

16 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 447.

17 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 448.

18 Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 448-449. Shafīʿ writes that this excellence of men over women is in general sense, and there are always exceptions.

19 Shafīʿ, *Maʿārif*, vol. 2, p. 449.

20 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 450.

21 Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 451-452.

22 Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿAshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa'l-tanwīr* (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1984).

23 Shafīʿ, *Maʿārif*, vol. 1, p. 81.

24 Hadia Mubarak, "Change Through Continuity: A Case Study of Q. 4:34 in Ibn ʿĀshūr's al-Taḥrīr wa'l-tanwīr," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20.1 (2018): 1-27. DOI: 10.3366/jqs.2018.0318

25 Mawlānā Khālid Saif Allāh Raḥmānī, *Āsān Tafsīr Qurʾan Majīd*, (Deoband: Kutub Khānā Naʿīmiya, 2015). Raḥmānī is the General Secretary of Islami Fiqh Academy, India, and founder member of All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

26 Raḥmānī, *Āsān*, vol. 1, p. 307.

27 Here, it is interesting to note that Raḥmānī states that material coming from Judeo-Christian traditions (*Isrāʾīliyyāt*) are to be measured against the Qurʾān and if they accord with the Qurʾān then they can be accepted. See *Āsān Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 98-99.

28 Raḥmānī, *Āsān*, vol. 1, p.307.

29 Khālid Saif Allāh Raḥmānī, *Qāmūs al-Fiqh*, (Deoband: Kutub Khāna Naʿīmiya, 2007), pp. 196-197.

30 *Āsān*, p. 307.

31 Raḥmānī, *Qāmūs*, vol. 1, p. 197.

32 Raḥmānī, *Āsān*, vol. 1, p. 307.

33 Raḥmānī, *Āsān*, vol. 1, p. 307.

34 Sayyid Abūʾl-aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qurʾān*, (Delhi: Markazi Maktabah, 1981)

35 On Mawdūdī, and the dynamics of his religious thought see Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Muḥammad Yusuf, *Mawlānā Mawdūdī par iʿtirāḍāt ka ʿilmī jāʾzah* (Delhi: Markazī Maktabah Islāmī Publishers, 2015); Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan: A History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

36 Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm*, vol. 1, p. 33.

37 See Saʿīd Aḥmad Pālanpūrī's (d.2020) commentary, *Raḥmāt Allāh al-wāsiʿa* (UP: Maktabah Ḥijāz Deoabnd,2002) vol. 2, pp. 740-744.

38 Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm*, vol. 1, p. 349.

39 Ibid., p. 350.

40 Ibid., p. 350.

41 Sayyid Abūʾl-aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *Ḥuqūq al-Zawjayn*, (New Delhi: Markazī Maktabah Islāmī Publishers, 2004), p. 26.

42 Sayyid Abūʾl-aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *Pardah*, (New Delhi: Markazī Maktabah Islāmī Publishers, 2015), p. 173.

43 Mawdūdī, *Ḥuqūq*, pp. 38-39.

44 Mawdūdī, *Ḥuqūq*, p. 39.

45 Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾān*, (Delhi: Tāj Company, 2009).

46 Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur*, vol. 2, p. 291.

47 Iṣlāḥī translates the word as *sarparast*/patron.

48 Islāhī, *Tadabbur*, vol. 2, pp. 292-293.

49 Jawaīd Aḥmad Ghāmidī, *al-Bayān*, vol. 1 (n.p.: al-Mawrid Hind Foundation, 2019), p. 487.

50 Sulṭān Aḥmad. Jimāʿ ke Ādāb, *Tahqīqāt-e-islāmī*, (January-March:1990), pp. 60-89.

51 Shāh Allah Walī, *al-Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, vol. 2, (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathīr, 2020), pp. 420-428.

52 Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin ʿAlī al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ,, *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, vol. 2, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, Beirut, 2013) pp. 236-238.

53 Aysha. A Hidayatullah, *Feminist edges of the Qur'an*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). This is a very serious work which discusses and critiques Muslim feminist discourses. A must read.

54 Ayesha S. Chaudhry, *Domestic Violence and the Islamic tradition: Ethics, Law, and the Muslim Discourse on Gender*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

55 amina wadud, *Qur'an and Woman; Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 66-69.

56 For an understanding of the genealogical nature of the *tafsīr* tradition, see Walid Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition; the Qur'ān Commentary of the Tha'labi (d.427/1035)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003) p. 14. Also see his, "Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of tafsīr in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach," *Journal of Qur'ānic Studi*es 12 (2010), pp. 6-40.

57 Saif Allāh Raḥmānī, *Muḥḍarāt Usūl Fiqh*, (Deoband: Naʿīmīya Book Store, 2020).

58 Najāt Allāh Ṣiddīqī, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa*, (New Delhi: Markazī Maktabah Islāmī, 2017).

59 Saif Allāh Raḥmānī, *Matāʿ Fikr wa-Naḍr*, (Hyderabad: al-Maʿhad al-ʿālī, 2015).

60 Tak, *Feminist Edges*, pp. 65-78.

61 Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, (Cairo, Dār al-ḥadīth, 2001), vol.1, pp. 110-121.

62 Shafīʿ, *Maʿārif*, vol. 2, p. 452.

63 Shafīʿ, *Maʿārif*, vol. 2, pp. 626-636.

64 Iṣlāḥī, *Taddabur*, vol. 2, pp. 397-399.

65 Shafiʿ, *Maʿārif*, vol. 2, p. 451.

66 Mawdūdī and Iṣlāḥī are not strict in their adherence to the Ḥanafī School. A study exploring how these two writers challenge canonical authorities would be revealing.

BOOK REVIEWS

On the Scale of the World: The Formation of Black Anticolonial Thought

OAKLAND: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 2022. 286 PAGES.

MUSAB YOUNIS

"Interplanetary war, interplanetary shame, interplanetary disgrace, interplanetary crime, interplanetary murder."

– Alpha Blondy, Interplanatary Revolution (1984)

Musab Younis, originally from Manchester, completed his MPhil (2012) and DPhil (2017) in International Relations at Oxford, under Andrew Hurrell,[1] where he later served as a College Lecturer in Politics at St Peter's College. From 2018 to 2024, he was a Lecturer and then Senior Lecturer in Politics at Queen Mary University of London before returning to Oxford in 2024 as an Associate Professor of Political Theory. His research focuses on international political thought, theories of race and racism, empire, and anticolonialism during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, connecting historical perspectives on empire with contemporary political theory. His work explores anticolonial political

thought, especially Black and African anticolonialism, the history of race and racism, and issues of space, scale, and globality such as the North vs. South division of the world. He is currently working on a monograph about the intellectual history of global inequality, tentatively entitled *The Pillage of Distant Worlds*, while also simultaneously pursuing projects on the intimate politics of imperialism, demographic catastrophism, settler colonialism, and the concepts of speed and self in anticolonial thought. He has published academically on anticolonialism, race, nationalisms, transnationalism, internationalisms, labor, etc. Moreover, Musab Younis has published articles in the *London Review of Books*, the *Guardian*, *Prospect*, *Baffler*, and *n+1*, among other outlets.

On the Scale of the World begins with a map of the Atlantic, including but not limited to: the United States of America, Canada, Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, Tobago, Central America, Cape Verde Islands, coastal West Africa, the Sahel, the Maghreb, and Western Europe. Younis explores the concept of "the Black Atlantic" (2). From the late 19th century through the Interwar period of the 20th century, Black writing developed a planetary "counter-narrative" (3, 12) to the colonial drive to omnipotence, omniscience, and consequently panopticism. Younis wrote that Black Atlantic writers were "skeptical of claims to national or imperial uniqueness" (4). This inevitably meant reframing how geography scales the world, and how nationalistic and imperialistic ideologies create space on "the scale of the world (*l'échelle mondiale*)," as described by Henri Lefebvre.[2] Race, which "operated in starkly temporal ways," meant "to be sealed in the past, alienated from the present, written out of the future, or seen as always slipping back to a prehistoric state" (4). The colonized subject is, thus, stuck in "an immobilization in both space and time," which was "essential to imperial power" (ibid.). Therefore, anticolonial thought sought to escape these "spatial and temporal fixities of imperial discourse" (ibid.). In other words, the imperial world necessarily was built upon a scaling within which the ideology of race was premised. Therefore, Black Atlantic writers of this period focused on the scale of the global and the planetary, which was a prerequisite to accessing overrepresented Euro-American racial theory, so that it may be "turned against itself" (5). Younis, on the other hand,

proposes even further "a set of scalar perspectives at once embodied and global, thus questioning the notion that positioned critique is antithetical to the planetary" (8). The impetus behind this method is "provincializing discourses of colonial rule" (ibid.) that cause "planetary dysphoria" (156). Even in the here and now, the United Nations (successor to the League of Nations) is predicated upon colonial universalisms, as well as Euro-American cosmological and cultural assumptions (15), which became "an enforcer and legitimator of a world order that remained fundamentally imperial" (16). One Lagos-based journalist wrote in the *Comet* in 1935, "Ours may be a voice crying aloud in the wilds of the African Bush. But in the African Bush, away from the turmoil of super-civilization, one has time for mature reflection" (19). According to Younis, "Black writers identified race as a form of global hierarchy rather than a natural division of humanity," which consequently created a "hierarchical turn" in Black Atlantic international theory (ibid.). Younis reminds us that according to Frantz Fanon, decolonization "sets out to change the order of the world" (21). This global project of decolonization could include many different, contradictory approaches to nationalism and internationalism for worldly reconfiguration (20-21), that is, "a counterpolitics of scale," which is not forged "in an abstract setting but precisely in the face of the provincializing strategies adopted by the rulers of the world" (159).

The first chapter, "The Nation and the World," explores Marcus Garvey and his *Negro World* newspaper, highlighting the contradictions in Garvey's ideology, which oscillated between racial essentialism and Black cosmopolitanism; his belief that economic conditions, rather than color, are the root of racial prejudice; and his resistance of Euro-American imperialism through a vision of Black nationalism that emphasized both a global solidarity among colonized peoples and a focus on national sovereignty, all while acknowledging Garvey's complex views on race, colorism, and the promotion of Blackness as a means of planetary cosmological transformation.

Chapter two, "The Structure of the World," examined the *Gold Coast Leader's* West African writings, which argue that race is integral to Africa's exploitation within the imperial system, identifying white supremacy as its ultimate goal and calling for African nations to unite

in anticolonial resistance on a planetary scale; this resistance, rooted in traditional West African thought, challenged imperialism's spatial and economic confinements that immobilize Africa, critiqued colonial capitalism for perpetuating Africa's underdevelopment, and framed WWI as Europe's own self destruction in "competition to dominate a globally bifurcated system erected upon the exploitation of colonized peoples" (69).

"The Whiteness of the World" is the title of the third chapter, which begins by explicating how American eugenics were adopted in Europe, where even Marxists said not to "forget that the first waves of Orientals and Slavs that are breaking on France presage the invading flood which threatens to submerge that which is left of our civilization and health of our race" (71-72). This was during a time when France was the foremost destination for immigrants in the industrialized world, and "over the course of twenty years, its foreign-born population almost tripled—a demographic shift unknown to other European nations until after the Second World War" (72). During the expansion of "indirect rule," the spread of "scientific" racism was resisted by Black francophone writers based in Paris on a planetary scope, which meant that Whiteness was "an instantiation of a planetary structure" (74). In other words, chapter three, "examines how Whiteness became a world-gesturing category in France and anglophone West Africa," in which Whiteness "disoriented the spatial and temporal underpinnings of assimilationist hopes" (ibid.). Black Atlantic critiques of colonialism became "optimism with suspicion," aspiring to transcend the "scalar bounds" and "spatial limits" of an imperial Whiteness "that shaped the lives of those involved in the colonial encounter on an intimate scale" (98).

On the other hand, chapter four, "The Body and the World," begins with the *Gold Coast Leader* expressing alarm at "the great influx of Europeans into our country" (100). The English, on the other hand, writing in the London *Outlook*, said, "except for the nomadic savage, [Kenya] lies empty of mankind, as did the Western prairies of America fifty years ago" (101). It is as if the Black body is erased from the world "and the *dolce far niente* of the African native is doomed to disappear" (102). In other words, Younis examines, in this chapter, "colonialism's

corporeality" and "one's own personhood in relation to the vast and apparently impersonal scale of global order" (103). He contends that conceptions of the Black body and the process of settlement in "spatiotemporal and comparative terms" (127) undermined colonialism's corporeality, and thus, *homo œconomicus*' position in the planetary order.[3] Finally, in chapter five, "The Time of the World," Younis suggests "that we consider more carefully the ambivalences we find in anticolonial writing on time" (129), which "focuses on the racial-temporal matrix that sapped the sovereignties of Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia, the interwar period's only officially recognized 'Black states'" (132) "… within a global racial order" (133).

Despite all that the book aims to cover, there are some myopias and lacunae that can be identified. Most notably, despite his digression on gender and sexuality (123-127), Younis' engagement with gender theory appears to be a tertiary and peripheral afterthought, rather than an overarching approach to the archive. Younis' critique of "mothering" (126) puts it in contradistinction to Marxist-feminism, yet fails to acknowledge mothering's planetary anti-imperialist collectivist orientations.[4] In spite of his fourth chapter being about bodies, his monograph is marred by a disengagement with negative stereotypes about Black femme corporeality, such as the full-figured "jezebel" trope.[5]

Also, despite conceding that Younis' own archive is "within a tradition of patriarchal anticolonialism" (123), a more detailed outline of the patriarchal nature of the archive earlier in the monograph could have further elucidated Black Atlantic femme and queer resistance during the interwar period. In addition, Younis' focus on print culture was to the occlusion of contemporary oral histories of the interwar period. Print culture can be frozen in time, but what Younis does well is to thaw these texts for theoretical exploration in the *here* and *now*.

Moreover, a further explication of the narrow archive chosen would have assisted in understanding the omission of important interwar Black Atlantic texts relevant to this period, such as W.E.B. Du Bois' "The Souls of White Folk," or his large project on WWI, intended to be as large as *Black Reconstruction*.[6] This would have bolstered his arguments regarding African troops in the Rhineland and Marcus Garvey's move to include

North Africans within Blackness (23-37). Additionally, why *only* focus on the Black Atlantic at the expense of interwar East African and South African thought? Did they not have a global and planetary vision? Why exclude West African lusophone authors?[7]

While Younis arguably overrepresents Marcus Garvey's role during this period, what he does well is challenge the notion that Garveyism is mere pseudomilitaristic "Black Nationalism" or "self-help and capitalist uplift" (29). According to Younis, inherent to Garvey's oeuvre are his contradictory notions of "nationalism and internationalism" (ibid.), his oscillation "between the narrow and the expansive, the particular and universal" (28). In other words, Musab Younis convincingly argues that Garvey's "colored cosmopolitanism" destabilizes "racial essentialism, and push[es] at (even dissolve[s]) its boundaries" (ibid.). Therefore, destabilizing—even dissolving—arguments that Garveyism is merely an "American Black nationalist movement."[8]

While the archive that was used is described by Younis as "anticolonial," his monograph marks a welcome addition to contemporary postcolonial theory, which is widely applicable across various academic disciplines.[9] This is evinced by the way in which Younis closes his book, "The concerted attacks on the three sites of Black sovereignty, [Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia], in the interwar order foreshadowed the ways in which formal decolonization could exist alongside global stratification. This contradicted the idea that decolonization constituted a true normative revolution in world politics… the international order

Figure 1. Algerian premier Ahmed Ben Bella (left) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (right), 1962.

that emerged after the Second World War in fact drew profoundly on the stratifications of political time that had emerged during the colonial period" (153-3). Put differently, "Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia proleptically showed that statehood represents no easy escape from the hierarchizing temporal power of race" (155).[10] Younis suggests that "we now live in a planetary age rather than a global one. The globe is 'a humanocentric construction'; the planet is a concept 'that decenters the human'" (156). He concludes by stating, "…the pan-African project for a united polity on the continent represents the clearest attempt at maneuvering Black Atlantic critique into international politics" (158). In the Post-war period after WWII, the Amazigh people (Berbers) claimed nationalistic African indigeneity, while also adopting both pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism, despite the tensions between the two.[11] Muʿammar Qaddāfī (1942-2011) famously expanded his earlier notions of pan-Arabism to also include pan-Africanism, a pivot that caused further retaliation from the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), leading up to the infamous 2012 Benghazi scandal.[12] Perhaps, some lessons from Musab Younis' monograph—such as the interwar solidarity between the "pan-Oriental" and "pan-African" (32) movements—could do us some good in the *here* and *now*, as alleged "plausible intent to commit genocide," "war crimes," and "crimes against humanity," continue in Palestine, East Turkistan, the Rakhine, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Azerbaijan, in sharp defiance of the United Nations' International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.[13]

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Endnotes

1 University of Oxford, Professor Emeritus Andrew Hurrell specializes in theories of international relations, global governance, comparative regionalism, the history of the globalization of international society, and, more precisely, the international relations of Brazil.

2 Henri Lefebvre, *La production d'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974), 31. « l´État se consolide à l´échelle mondiale; » cf. Edward W. Said, "The Scope of Orientalism," *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 31-110.

3 Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *The New Centennial Review 3*, no. 3 (2003): 282. https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2004.0015; cf. idem., "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 5-57.

4 Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens and Mai'a Williams, eds., *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* (Oakland: PM Press, 2016).

5 Sabrina Strings, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia* (New York: New York University Press, 2019); Tamura Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged: Loosing the Black Female Body in Religion & Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

6 W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, "The Souls of White Folk," in *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, 1920), 29-52; cf. idem., *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Russel & Russel, 1935); idem., "The black man and the wounded world outline," February 22, 1936. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, ttp://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b218-i039; idem., "The Black Man and the Wounded World: A History of the Negro Race in the World War and After" in *Crisis* 27, no. 3 (1924): 1-6; Chad L. Williams, *The Wounded World: W.E.B. Du Bois and the First World War* (New York: Farrar, 2023).

7 Amílcar Cabral, *Tell No Lies, Claim No Easy Victories* (Johannesburg: Inkani Books, 2022).

8 Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Marcus Garvey," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 3, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marcus-Garvey. Accessed October 5, 2024.

9 Cf. Leela Gandhi, *The Common Cause: Postcolonial Ethics and the Practice of Democracy, 1900-1955* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014); idem., *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

10 Cf. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Daniel Boyarin, *The No-State Solution:*

A Jewish Manifesto (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022); Mohamed Abdou, *Islam and Anarchism: Relationships and Resonances* (London: Pluto Press, 2022); Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

11 Mokhtar Ghambou, "The 'Numidian' Origins of North Africa," in *Berbers and Others: Beyond Tribe and Nation in the Maghreb*, ed. Kathrine E. Hoffman and Susan Gilson Miller (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 153-170.

12 Allison Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 121, 127, 235, 257; *CIA's 30-Year Plot To Take Down Americas Deadly Enemy: Gaddafi | CIA Declassified*, directed by Ned Parker (2013, WMR productions and IMG: 2024), YouTube, https://youtu.be/UAvIxICQxNY?si=S39gZF_0S1kfHadn; "CIA Backed Qaddafi Assassination Try," Central Intelligence Agency, Freedom of Information Act, June 12th, 1985, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp90-00965r000100120080-3; Edoardo Totolo, "Gaddafi's Grand Plan," *Center for Security Studies—Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich*, https://css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/articles/article.html/101447. Accessed October 10th, 2024; Guy Martin, *African Political Thought* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 59. "After the death of Kwame Nkrumah in 1972, Muammar Qaddafi assumed the mantel of Leader of the Pan-Africanist movement and became the most outspoken advocate of African Unity, consistently calling—like Nkrumah before him—for the advent of a 'United States of Africa;'" Moussa Hissein Moussa, "Muammar Gaddafi: From Pan-Arabism to Pan-Africanism," *Afrika Koordinasyon ve Eğitim Merkezi* (AKEM), February 13, 2023, https://www.akem.org.tr/post/muammar-gaddafi-from-pan-arabism-to-pan-africanism; "Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC: Applications for arrest warrants in the situation in the State of Palestine," International Criminal Court, May 20th, 2024, https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-applications-arrest-warrants-situation-state.

13 Amnesty International, "Amnesty International investigation concludes Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza," December 5, 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/; Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), January 1, 2024, I.C.J., https://icj-cij.org/case/192; Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security, "Active Genocide Alerts," https://www.lemkininstitute.com/active-genocide-alert, accessed October 10, 2024.

The Golden Calf between Bible and Qurʾan: Scripture, Polemic, and Exegesis from Late Antiquity to Islam

NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020,
499 PAGES.

MICHAEL E. PREGILL

Michael Pregill's *The Golden Calf between Bible and Qurʾan* draws from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources to understand how the story of the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf has been understood across scriptural communities. This book marks the first time that the story has been the subject of a comprehensive comparative treatment. Drawing from Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew primary and exegetical sources, Pregill seeks to revive the earliest approach of Western scholarship towards the Qurʾan, that it should be understood as Biblical literature, or rather, late antique religious discourse. To this end, Pregill argues that the story's employment in both the Hebrew Bible and the Qurʾan can be understood as a "continuities of discourse" rather than a communication of specific influences.

After laying out his methodology in the introduction, Pregill divides his book into three parts. The first concerns the ancient traditions that formed the basis for understanding the narrative of the Golden Calf in

the Hebrew Bible (pp. 13-103). In chapter 2, Pregill analyzes the story as it is told in Exodus and Deuteronomy. He explores the polemical imperatives surrounding each, and concludes that they markedly differ. In the latter text, worship of the Calf was no longer being presented as a cultic infraction, but rather as idolatry, a strictly unorthodox practice. In chapter 3, Pregill examines the earliest exegetical traditions of the Calf, looking at how pressures in the Greco-Roman period – especially from the Christian movement – induced rabbinical exegetes to write apologetic explanations of the story meant to mitigate the impression of idolatry.

The second part concerns the Jewish and Christian contestation of the legacy of Israel through the narrative (pp. 104-207). In chapter 4, Pregill charts the development of rabbinical apologetics concerning the story, as the Christian movement emerged as an imperial religion, and Christian writers sought to use the story to emphasize their own covenantal priority over the Jews. This led to more "imaginative" and "evasive" Jewish apologetics concerning the Prophet Aaron's and the Israelites' culpability in the worship. In chapter 5, Pregill focuses on the corpus of Christian literature in Syriac, which continued in its anti-Jewish polemics surrounding the story but took a milder approach to Aaron's culpability. While these reinterpretations paralleled rabbinical writings, they were employed towards opposite ends.

The third part concerns the Qurʾan's narrative, as well as its reception in classical exegetical and Western scholarship (pp. 208-438). In chapter 6, Pregill looks at how the story of the Calf has been understood in both the Muslim exegetical tradition and Western scholarship beginning with the earliest Qurʾanic translations, showing the clear and sometimes undiscerning reliance of Western scholars on Muslim tradition. In chapter 7, Pregill proposes reinterpretations of key aspects of the Qurʾanic story, mainly concerning the animate nature of the Calf and the figure of *al-Sāmirī*. In chapter 8, Pregill figures his conclusions on the Qurʾanic story of the Calf into its equivalent in Exodus, towards reifying an account that had been subject to polemics and apologetics. He also identifies possible motivations for the Qurʾanic stories related to Samaritan and Judean rivalries, projecting them onto seventh century Medina. In the conclusion, Pregill summarizes the book's major findings

and reiterates the need to reinterpret the Qurʾan in light of late antiquity polemics and the "continuities of discourse." We will focus on this section, specifically Pregill's case for *al-Sāmirī*, as it accounts for his most radical reinterpretation, with the farthest-reaching implications for the fields of Islamic exegesis and theology.

Beginning with his introduction, Pregill identifies a problem where the vagueness of the story as presented in the Qurʾan has led to fundamental misunderstandings both of its details and of its higher objectives. In the exegetical tradition, metaphorical and literal language has been misread, baseless reports have been used to make those readings feasible, and key characters have been misidentified. And according to the author, the vagueness of the Qurʾanic story has meant that Western scholars have relied on the classical exegetical tradition, and thus willingly participated in the confusion.

Pregill thus makes the case for a radical reinterpretation of the story from the Qurʾan. Before assessing it, it is worth applauding one of his conclusions regarding a phenomenon in Western Qurʾanic scholarship. Pregill discusses how Abraham Geiger – whose 1833 *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen* was widely considered to have inaugurated the discipline of Islamic Studies in Europe – harbored some flawed assumptions that would influence the field for the next 150 years. The chief assumption was that elements in the Qurʾanic stories distinct from their Biblical counterparts represent "a conflation of themes and characters known from diverse sources from Jewish tradition," which include the Bible, Talmud, and the Midrash (p. 294). Subsequent scholars looked to rabbinical texts to understand why, for example, the Qurʾanic narrative gives the impression that the Golden Calf was animate (although, contrary to Pregill's characterization, this by no means has been a consensus in the Muslim exegetical tradition). Scholars looked to texts such as *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, and *Midrash Tanḥuma* to establish rabbinical influence on this Qurʾanic variance from the Hebrew Bible. Owing to the fact that the earliest of these manuscripts date centuries after the Qurʾan, Pregill criticizes the rather gratuitous assumption that they must have existed as oral traditions pre-dating Islam. Rather, he insists that these rabbinical

works should instead be characterized as "Islamicate," that is, reflecting Islam's cultural impact on non-Muslim communities brought under Arab dominion. Pregill thus encourages a much-needed paleographic sobriety in the rush to identify Qurʾanic influences.

As for his reinterpretation of the Qurʾanic story, Pregill claims that it was actually the Prophet Aaron who led the Israelites to worship the Golden Calf. This would make Aaron the same person as al-Sāmirī, the traditionally understood culprit. The author makes his claim by laying out a narrative from Sūrah XX, in which the Prophet Moses leaves his brother Aaron in charge of the Israelite camp while he goes to the Mount to meet with God (p. 338). There, God asks Moses why he has hurried away from his people. Moses then explains to the effect that the people "are upon my tracks" (*ʿalā atharī*) – a metaphor for prophetic guidance – because they have been left in Aaron's care (v. 84). God then tells Moses that this is not the case because "*al-Sāmirī*" (the author's "Aaron") has led them astray (v. 85). Moses returns angrily and asks Aaron what kept him when he saw them going astray from "following me" (*āllā tattabiʿani*) – an expression traditionally understood literally, but understood by Pregill as metaphorical to render synonymous with "being upon my tracks" (vv. 92-3). Aaron says that he did not disobey Moses' command, but rather sought to obey it. "However," Pregill says, "he is vague about exactly what happened." Then Moses says "so, *al-Sāmirī*, [that is, Aaron] what do you have to say for yourself?" (v. 95). That is, "what about my *athar*, which you should have upheld?" Rather than two dialogues, Pregill thus argues that there was only one – between Moses and Aaron, who halfway through is called *al-Sāmirī*.

Here, we can point out some of the flaws in this argument. As Pregill's reading indicates, his case for a single al-Sāmirī-Aaron character rests largely on the theme of following prophetic guidance, which, the author claims, Aaron failed to do. But in highlighting this, which he does by rendering two different expressions metaphorical and synonymous (*ʿalā atharī* and *āllā tattabiʿani*), he also downplays the visibly prominent theme of lieutenancy, or discharging a leadership trust. It is in this respect that Aaron is culpable. In Sūrah VII's narrative of the story that the author gives far less attention, Moses says to his brother before departing the Israelite camp for his appointment with God, "Lead in my place amongst

my people and do right and do not follow the way of the corrupters." (v. 146). The verse giving Aaron instructions to lead implies that corrupt elements among the Israelite camp were already known. Indeed, calf-worship was foreshadowed in v. 138, which states that the Israelites, fresh from the parted sea, came across a people worshipping their idols, and asked Moses to make for them a god just like theirs. And any vagueness Pregill ascribes to Aaron's defense in v. 94 is supplemented with his rather clear explanation in Sūrah VII, v. 150, "Indeed, the people overcame me and were about to kill me, so do not let the enemies rejoice over me, and do not place me among the wrongdoing people." This account of Aaron being overpowered by a group of wrongdoers is difficult to square with his being the initiator of the Golden Calf worship. That claim is further problematized by the exchange in Sūrah XX, vv. 90-1 (that oddly the author only addresses in a Biblical context) in which Aaron tells the calf-worshippers, "Oh my people, you are only being tested by it, and indeed your Lord is the Most Merciful, so follow me and obey my order." The people reply, "We will not stop being devoted to the calf until Moses returns to us." In Moses' angered return to the camp, never does he accuse Aaron of worshipping the calf. Rather, he asks him about those who did. So, if Moses first directed his anger towards Aaron, it was for failing in his lieutenancy to keep the Israelites upon prophetic guidance. This is quite different from any suggestion that he had initiated the calf worship.

When read together, the Qurʾan's narratives do not support a single al-Sāmirī-Aaron character. The narratives as told in both Sūrah VII and Sūrah XX are concluded in ways that show that Aaron and al-Sāmirī are two distinct characters. In Sūrah XX, v. 97, Moses says to al-Sāmirī, "Then go. And it is for you to say in this worldly life, 'no contact.' And you have an appointment you will not fail to keep. And look at your god that you tarried in worship. We will certainly burn it and scatter its ashes in the sea.'" But in Sūrah VII, v. 151, Moses says, "My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy, for You are the most merciful of the merciful." These are two completely different responses. Furthermore, the Qurʾanic portrayal of Aaron following the episode of the Golden Calf differs greatly from the fate meted out to al-Sāmirī. It is clear that the "no contact" decreed for al-Sāmirī was not applicable

to Aaron, who was evidently alongside his brother a while later when the Israelites refused the command to enter the Holy Land and Moses said, "My Lord, indeed I do not possess but myself and neither does my brother, so part us from the defiantly disobedient people." (Sūrah V, v. 25). Not only is Aaron still very much part of the Israelite community, but again he is being distinguished from its wrongdoers.

At a fundamental level, it is important to keep in mind that Aaron is described in the Qurʾan as a "messenger" (*rāsūl*). This description carries a certain moral weight, and involves certain parameters. In the Islamic tradition, there exists a lively debate about whether messengers are infallible or can commit minor sins. Worshipping other than God (*shirk*) is considered the worst of the major sins. While there is nothing wrong with examining the Qurʾanic text in ways that could revise doctrine, this ought to be done with some consideration that the parameters of doctrine have also been informed by the Qurʾanic text. Thus, regarding Pregill's claim that Aaron led the Israelites to worship the Golden Calf, there is a sequence of verses in Sūrah VI naming 18 prophets and messengers – among them Aaron. The sequence ends with, "And if they had worshipped other than God (*ashrakū*), then worthless would be anything they were doing." (v. 88). And, "Those are the ones whom God has guided, so from their guidance take an example." (v. 90). In several other places in the Qurʾan, the Qurʾan places Moses and Aaron in the same moral league. Moses and Aaron together are the recipients of the Torah (Sūrah XXI, v. 48). This honorific would be hard to fathom if the Torah was being revealed at the same time that Aaron was allegedly leading the Israelites into the worst sin. Then there is mention of the two being guided by God on the straight path, and having a favorable mention amongst later generations as a reward for their good-doing (Sūrah XXXVII, vv. 114-121). While the Qurʾan allows for the possibility of a messenger miscarrying a trust, as indicated in the story of Prophet Jonah prematurely escaping his community's impending punishment (vv. 139-148), nowhere does it remotely imply that a prophet or messenger would engage in polytheism.

Even if we overlook Pregill's neglect of key verses within his chosen narrative, his claim shows the dangers of constructing a complete account by choosing one Qurʾanic narrative out of multiple ones. Perhaps knowing

better, he seems to betray a broad documentarian persuasion in doing this. In that methodology, scholars consider the distinct sources in which Biblical stories are "doubled" to identify source-authors' motivations or higher objectives for casting characters in certain ways. It is perhaps unsurprising that Pregill's primary gain in identifying Aaron as al-Sāmirī is to associate Aaron with Biblical Samaria. Pregill mentions that in Deuteronomy, the practice of worshipping golden calves in the Samarian cities of Bethel and Dan is attributed to Jeroboam, a blame designed for anti-priestly polemics (though Pregill glosses over what is a far more approximate regional precedent for calf-worship in Sūrah VII, v. 138). Pregill claims that the rationale or higher objective of the story's inclusion in the Qurʾan is to shame the Jewish tribes of seventh century Medina, whom the early Muslim historian Ibn Isḥāq identified as Aaronites – and delegitimize "their claims to the prestige associated with priestly descent when they had come to oppose Muḥammad." Fortunately, Pregill admits that such an interpretation is "completely conjectural," but not until selectively choosing verses from the Qurʾanic narrative to make it possible (p. 427).

While Pregill warns of the dangers of reading Qurʾanic stories through the lens of classical exegesis and rabbinical sources, he seems to fall into the trap of reading them through the lens of the Hebrew Bible. After all, he does frame the Qurʾan as a continuation of its discourse. But the tools that have been effective for understanding the Hebrew Bible, its objectives and polemics, might not all be transferable to the Qurʾan. The urge to project those polemics onto the Qurʾan without first considering all of its relevant texts, let alone the parameters of doctrine that have formed around them, can lead to some unpalatable narrative reconstructions. Nonetheless, Pregill does a commendable job in synthesizing sources across scriptural communities, and on the way, making critical observations on both classical exegesis and Western scholarship.

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Muslim Prayer in American Public Life

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272 PAGES.

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The volume *The Practice of Islam in America,* edited by Edward E. Curtis, was released in 2017. It was an important work because it was a volume that took American Muslim ritual life as an primary source of study. It helped explain rituals and explored their manifestations in a variety of American Muslim contexts. Since then, there have been very few works on American Muslim ritual life. In the interests of transparency, I should note that both Rose Aslan and I contributed chapters to that volume. Aslan's piece was on prayer, based on the work she was doing for the volume under review. Her monograph is a welcome addition to the exploration of American Muslim ritual life.

Aslan's work is primarily focused on questions of prayer in the context of the United States. It is not about the history or formation of American Muslim identities, although those invariably come up in a text of this nature. As the first book of its kind, there is also an encyclopedic quality to it, where emphasis is on breadth over depth. These are not critiques of the book, but expectation setting as to the work the book does. One of the overall strengths of the book is that it draws on a variety of different sources to create a multidisciplinary exploration

of how prayer functions in the US context. It uses historical documents, survey data, interviews, internet postings, personal experience, and light ethnography. The book is partially historical, with a strong emphasis on the post-9/11 experience, especially in the 2010s, partially sociological, and engages with questions of *fiqh*, theology, and individual meaning-making.

The first chapter is very strong. It introduces to a history of the struggles that Muslims have had with prayer in the US, starting with narratives of enslaved peoples. As with most chapters, there are places where an instructor could bring in more theoretical emphasis depending on the type of course they are teaching. An American religious history course could focus on the normalization of Christianity as an American understanding of religion, or questions of race. Someone focusing on Muslims in the US could focus on the long history of Muslims in the US, and the differentiated treatment of enslaved people and their prayer compared to the deference given to Ambassador Mellimelli by Thomas Jefferson during Ramadan. The chapter sets the terms of the monograph well, stating early that it is invested in *salah*/*namaz*, as opposed to other types of prayer. It goes through differences between Shiʿi and Sunni forms for prayer, without belaboring details. Most significantly, it treats particular Ismaʿili prayers in a sophisticated and nuanced way, without dismissing them, or the community, as most of the literature does. Although the author does suggest YouTube videos to show how prayer is performed, I would have liked in text illustrations. This chapter would work well in a variety of classes because it is clear and comprehensive in its introduction to prayer, and illustrations would have elevated the work.

The following chapter involves survey data about American Muslim practices of prayer and makes the linkage between public performance of prayer and Islamophobia. There is some very useful data here that provides a snapshot of American Muslim life. The data itself is well presented and analyzed. However, only 10% of the respondents were African-American, which is a sizable difference from the estimated African-American Muslim population of around 30%. In a chapter focusing on data, I find it notable that there is no discussion as to why that

discrepancy exists and what it means for how the data is interpreted. The use of the data then begins a discussion of the impact of Islamophobia on the public performance of prayer is well-handled, and transitions nicely to the next couple of chapters on media representations of prayer.

If we borrow from peace studies and articulate three forms of violence - direct, structural, and cultural - then it makes sense to look at media as a space for both cultural violence and peace. Aslan divides this work over two chapters between non-Muslim creators and Muslim creators. With this division, there is still some nuance as to how prayer is presented. Muslim consultants are involved in shows run by non-Muslims, and still prayer is presented improperly. And non-Muslim producers may get the performance of prayer wrong, but are still invested in showing it with reverence. Aslan's work shows the nuances in presenting Muslim prayer. Of particular note is the careful reading she gives to all her examples. She focuses not just on the performance of the prayer, but the physical and social context, and the soundscapes used in these specific scenes. This attention to detail adds depth to chapters that could otherwise simply be descriptive.

Chapter 5 is focused on the structural violence that prevents American Muslims from performing prayer publicly. It focuses on accommodations in schools, universities, and the workplace. The survey of cases focuses on US law and adaptations that must be provided. One of the things that Aslan highlights is that even with mandatory accommodations there is a variety of practical responses that can happen in individual contexts. This chapter is the first to stop focusing on differences in Shiʿi and Sunni practices. In many ways this omission makes sense, as US law does not make a distinction between different types of Muslim prayer, it is all simply "Muslim prayer." However, in discussing how different universities are creating spaces for Muslims to pray, there is no discussion of how different centers are creating inclusive prayer spaces for different types of Muslims. It is a notable omission in these detailed case studies.

In looking at how religious leaders respond to questions of how Muslims can and should respond to limits, both structural and cultural, on prayer in the next chapter, Aslan is more explicit that she is only looking at Sunni opinions. Her reasoning is that "because of the wider

[Shiʿi] acceptance of flexibility in ritual practices, partly due to Shiʿis' historical experience of often living as persecuted minorities among Sunnis" (p. 131) it is the Sunni *fatwas* that are dealing with these community issues as somewhat new. I read this positioning as a short-hand for the broader flexibility in Shiʿi *fiqh*, as there are numerous historical precedents for Sunnis living as minorities and having to deal with similar questions. The chapter does a good job at looking at different responses from different types of religious leaders and some of the community politics involved. It is also a good introduction to the physical, mental, and emotional limits that may keep someone from praying or opting not to pray. One of the areas where this chapter feels a bit rushed is in the discussion of the "Shaykh Google" phenomenon, where Muslims go online to find answers to their religious questions. I think a pointer to some of the literature on this tool could help deepen the work.

The internet, as the book continually shows, is a powerful space for American Muslims to find community, and that theme continues in Chapter 7 on protest. A large part of the chapter focuses on the connection between prayer and protest in modernity. The historical context is useful, but too long for this chapter, and takes us outside of the context of the US in ways that are jarring. It is also unfortunate that we do not return to differences between Shiʿi and Sunni and the connection between prayer and protest in a meaningful way. In a survey work, these sorts of examples should be included. Having said that, the discussion of the "Border Mosque" is an incredible case study that covers a wide range of issues and illustrates many of the earlier points in the book very well. The inclusion of first-person experiences helps to add texture and meaning to the experience that is welcome in a discussion of the power of prayer in public.

The last chapter provides a good record of some of the issues facing the American Muslim community during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This record also brings together some key points throughout the book, and frames through the lens of internal American Muslim concerns, rather than external concerns. That mirror framing is a useful way to end the book. This book is a significant contribution to our understanding of American Muslim ritual life. As a piece of research, it exemplifies the

variety of tools that are needed in the subfield, using archives, ephemera, online sources, and narratives as a way to build a more complete pictures of dynamic and living communities. The book itself reads well for the purposes of research, and I think could be taught as chapters for different types of courses.

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The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Women

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XII + 627 PAGES.

ASMA AFSARUDDIN (ED.)

There is no doubt that the topic of Islam and women has received a great deal of scholarly attention from different vantage points that serve competing interests and claims. Amidst this plethora of discourses, Asma Afsaruddin's edited volume *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Women* sheds light on the multi-faceted and diverse nature of Muslim women's lives in the past and in the present. As Afsaruddin points out in the introduction, the volume is in conversation with some of the politicization and the idealization that the topic has encountered in both lay and academic circles, and attempts to provide a more nuanced and historicized approach that better reflects Muslim women's lived experiences, perspectives, and manifold contributions to the Islamic tradition. It makes for a valuable reference work that helps readers navigate the minefield of political and other ideologies that revolve around Muslim women.

The volume consists of six sections, beginning with Section A, which contains Afsaruddin's introduction, titled "Deciphering Muslim Women's Lives: Religion, Agency and Diversity." The remaining sections comprise

thirty-two chapters. The contributing authors are carefully selected, many of them leading authorities in the field as well as emerging scholars with established expertise in their respective areas. Although they do not always state their positionalities, they include Muslims and non-Muslims, conservatives and "progressives," women and men, mimicking the multiplicity of voices that is characteristic of research in this area. Most are women, reflecting the field's authorial demographics on the one hand, but also showcasing women's voices, especially those of Muslim women, on the other. The chapters are carefully collated to include broad overviews, literature reviews, geographic analyses, and in-depth treatments of key themes, providing a rich resource for university teachers as well as general readers.

Section B follows the introduction and is titled "Foundational Texts and Their Interpretations." It consists of five chapters, covering both Qur'an and Hadith. Hibba Abugideiri's chapter introduces the methodologies of amina wadud, a pioneer of Islamic feminist hermeneutics, and applies them to the stories of Mary, the Queen of Sheba, and Zulaykha in the Qur'an. It is a fitting beginning for the volume, explaining wadud's Tawhidic paradigm and thereby some of the distinctive aspects of Islamic theology that inform women's scholarly and other activism. Hadia Mubarak does an excellent job analyzing how leading classical male Sunni and Shiʿi exegetes have addressed Q. 4:1, 2:228, 4:34 and 4:128, key Qur'anic verses in Islamic feminist discourse. By digging into the distant past, Mubarak demonstrates the *tafsir* genre's open-endedness, hermeneutical diversity, and adaptiveness to socio-cultural contexts, thereby implicitly arguing that the capacity to read the Qur'an in new, contextually sensitive ways is part and parcel of the tradition. Afsaruddin presents an overview and evaluation of Islamic feminist discourse focusing on the foundational figures, wadud and Asma Barlas, as well as its foremost critics, Kecia Ali and Aysha Hidayatullah. She evaluates pro-egalitarian and pro-hierarchical stances vis-à-vis the Qur'an and through careful cross-referential analysis of primary texts, she arrives at the conclusion that the Qur'an does not support patriarchy.

While Islamic feminist engagement with the Qur'an is a well-established trend, Muslim women's Hadith scholarship is in its early stages. Feryal Salem's chapter touches on some of the most important points related to women in Hadith, including the classification of hadiths and

the problem of hadiths composed of opaque "short statements" that can be read positively or negatively vis-à-vis women. While Salem presents a skillful array of primary sources from some of the most important Sunni collections (but not Shiʿi ones), Khaled Abou El Fadl's chapter is more analytical and synthesizes the state of contemporary Muslim women's critical engagement with Hadith. Altogether, the chapters in this section provide an excellent foundation of primary texts and their analysis for readers wishing to orient themselves on the topic of Islam and women.

Sections C and D are titled "Women and Islamic Law" and "Deciphering Women's Lives: Women in History and Texts" respectively. Together, they cover the areas of law, biographical representation, transmission of knowledge, devotional life, literature, and economic agency. Similar to the above section, they each contribute important content to the evolving picture of Muslim women's lives and their engagement in various disciplines, both as scholars and as subjects of study. Mariam Sheibani provides an excellent overview of marriage, divorce, and inheritance laws and examines their practical application in reference to court cases in Mamluk Egypt and Ottoman Turkey. This trend has started to gain ground in the study of Islamic law and highlights the gaps between the prescriptions of Sharia (or, to be precise, *fiqh*) and their real-life applications on the ground. Of note is also Maria Dakake's chapter that provides important Shiʿi perspectives on Fatima, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, and Zaynab, his granddaughter. It serves to counterbalance the more Sunni-focussed essays.

So far, the sections have presented well-established Islamic disciplines and women's scholarly engagement with them from a largely North American lens, catering to the interests and diversity of Muslim women in this continent, although, to be sure, they do include scholarship from outside the North American or European milieus. Section E, titled "Women's Lived Realities and Their Religious and Social Activism in the Modern Period" is more global, providing geographical treatments of Muslim women's activism in the Levant, North Africa, Iran, Turkey, South and South-East Asia, China, South Africa, the United States, Western Europe, and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. Transnational networks are briefly mentioned here and there, most notably in Nelly van Doorn-Harder's chapter on South-East Asia, home to the important Malaysian organization Sisters in Islam

that has birthed the global Musawah movement. Together, these chapters provide a well-rounded picture of Muslim women's activism in many parts of the world and some of their key interests.

The final two sections are titled "Modern Narratives of the Gendered Self: Women Writing about Women" and "Islam, Women and the Global Public Arena" respectively. They are each composed of two articles: one delving into a key topic in that general area and one presenting a broad overview. In Section 5, Ruqayya Khan focuses on modern treatments of the Prophet Muhammad's wives, while Miriam Cooke reviews contemporary Muslim feminist literature, showing how writers critique misogynistic representations and restrictions through the medium of poetry, short stories, novels and other forms of literature. In Section 6, Anna Piela probes into the topic of veiling, while Katherine Bullock examines Muslim women as a cultural trope, showing how they are politicized within global discourses. Her chapter makes for an excellent conclusion to the book and takes us squarely from the multifarious epochs that preceding chapters have addressed and into the present-day context, highlighting the crux of what all preceding chapters have demonstrated: Muslim women are not victims but are powerful agents that have helped shape the Islamic tradition in significant ways. She criticizes the trope that makes of Muslim women victims in need of saving by "the white Western male and his female accomplice," (p. 390) one that has functioned in orientalist discourses since nineteenth-century European colonialism, and which continues to justify and perpetuate Islamophobia today. Her chapter incidentally also provides context for the book, analyzing continuities and discontinuities between nineteenth-century orientalist discourses and their contemporary permutations. Of concern is her conclusion that rather than improving, Islamophobic trends are worsening, which underscores the importance of this volume.

Bullock's chapter also underlines the problems associated in the label "feminist" as applied to Muslim women's activism, because of its use in what she and others term "Imperial feminism," "gendered orientalism" and other descriptions (p. 595), forms of feminism that go hand-in-hand with colonialism to make Muslim women "victims" and thereby justify colonial oppressions. One thing that the book does well is to illustrate

the varying degrees of comfort that Muslim women have with the label "feminist": while some Muslim women embrace it, either on its own or with the qualifier "Islamic," others reject it outright with "everything in between," as Julianne Hammer has pointed out in her chapter on the North American context (pp. 490-91). Whether one chooses to use "Islamic feminism" (Arabic: *niswiyya islāmiyya*) for the phenomenon or other terms, the book highlights the embeddedness of Muslim women's pro-women activism in an Islamic theological worldview and its deep-rootedness in Muslim history. As Maria Jaschock and Man Ke's essay on Chinese Muslim women's activism demonstrates, even the term "activism" can be disputed, the authors more comfortable describing women's "activities" in the religiously restrictive Chinese context. The variegated uses or lack thereof of terms such as "feminism" and "activism" illustrate the diverse forms that women's engagement with Islam has taken in different geographical, historical and political contexts.

A volume of this size cannot possibly hope to cover all the areas of Muslim women's activism and scholarly contributions. The most important areas deserving of further consideration are probably Islamic psychotherapy, spiritual care, and chaplaincy, which fall under the emerging discipline of Islamic practical theology in Western academia, and to which Muslim women have made foundational contributions. Notwithstanding this lacuna, together, the authors of this volume have produced an invaluable resource for educators and researchers in fields related to the intersection of Islam and women. From all the books devoted to the topic, this volume is probably the broadest, and has provided an impressive array of scholarship both in terms of quality and scope. All in all, this volume has accomplished its aims, the rich repertoire of authors, themes, and bibliography contributing to an exceptional resource that will be of interest to both lay audiences and specialists.

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Following Similar Paths: What American Jews and Muslims Can Learn From One Another

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SAMUEL C. HEILMAN AND MUCAHIT BILICI

As the dust settled on the 2024 U.S. presidential election, a few demographic trends came into focus. Perhaps one important trend saw that the war in Gaza was an incredibly divisive issue for Democrats. Frustrated by what they perceived to be as President Biden's indifference toward Palestinian suffering and political self-determination, many Arab and Muslim American activists decided not to vote for the Democratic nominee for President, Vice President Kamala Harris. Traditionally, Muslim American communities such as those in Dearborn, Michigan, which were Democratic strongholds, interpreted the atrocities in Gaza as a genocide and refused to support the Democratic candidate. They did not fill in a vote for either presidential candidate. Interestingly, only twenty percent of Jewish Americans did not vote for Vice President Harris. Yet, unlike most of their Muslim American neighbors, this twenty percent voted for President Trump, primarily because of his unequivocal support for the

state of Israel and his support of its current right-wing, authoritarian nationalist government there. Most of these Jewish Americans were members of Orthodox Jewish communities, who were both fearful of and outraged by Hamas' murderous rampage on October 7, 2023. These two communities seem to be living in two starkly separate political and religious realities.

At first glance, then, it might be difficult to see how Muslims and Orthodox Jews in the United States as sympatico sojourners on a potentially joint spiritual path. Yet in their book *Following Similar Paths: What American Jews and Muslims Can Learn From One Another*, Samuel Heilman and Mucahit Bilici make precisely this assertion: that "religiously observant Jews and observant Muslims walk similar paths." (p. 1) Despite the similarities of their experiences and orientations toward the preservation of traditionalist lifestyles and values in the face of a relentless cultural power to assimilate to an "American" way of life, Orthodox Jews and observant Muslims rarely interact with one another. The authors understand this fact as a problem and yet see opportunities for important cultural and religious exchanges. Anyone who has participated in interreligious dialogue probably has noticed more than once that Jews and Muslims share similar religiosities and orientations to ritual, law, and tradition. In a culture dominated by Christianity, these similarities stick out. Jews and Muslims eat differently. They pray differently, in different directions, and often in different languages. In fact, they believe in sacred languages. Their sacred languages Hebrew and Arabic are semitic and share many qualities. The metaphor "family semblances" has often been used in describing the relationship between these two traditions (p. 234).

Despite the current political and cultural chasm separating these communities, Heilman and Bilici's book seeks to develop these "family semblances." It also serves as an important introduction to these communities, their traditions, and their experiences in the United States. In so doing, the book contains seven chapters that focuses on these essential similarities: law, diet, identity, religious leadership, study, prayer, and how both communities experience and suffer from religious bigotry. While hoping to preserve the integrity and distinctiveness of both

religious communities, the authors create a framework for evaluating how each community considers participation in the civic domain, while also tracing how these communities acculturate religiously. The deeper question here is to consider how both communities experience the complicated realities informing American society on their own terms—i.e., how each community navigates the dynamic domain of American religious culture—while also considering how their experiences may blaze a joint civic path toward deeper engagement with American social, religious, and political life.

Informed by a similar commitment to orthopraxy and how each community orients to law, faith, and tradition, the lives of Orthodox Jewish and Muslim American communities, for the authors, provide a unique opportunity to think about how to build bridges across tacitly and artificially constructed social and political barriers. While similar, the authors stress that Orthodox Jewish and Muslim communities contain important differences. For example, due to anxieties regarding assimilation and loss of faith, many Orthodox Jewish communities often separate themselves from broader populations. They tend to live in isolated communities within neighborhoods to preserve their traditionalist lifestyles, while at the same providing a protective barrier from what they perceive to be nefarious cultural influences and norms. Living on the margins is obviously a delicate dance, since to live in this society, communities often participate in some manner within mainstream American culture. American Muslims face similar challenges. For the authors, both communities have developed interesting and important ways of living in a conflicting "hybrid" culture of both secular norms and traditionalist lifestyles. Balancing these influences is essential for both communities, since both fear losing the fundamental aspects of everyday religious life. The authors assert: "Both believed in their capacity to restrict cultural assimilation into modern American life, a consequence they saw as ideologically dangerous." (p. 96)

Part of preserving this balance, then, requires wearing religious attire in public. Orthodox Jews and Muslims, interestingly, according to the authors, have sought to elevate the religious power and status of head coverings, as well as other aspects of modest religious clothing within

their communities. How people in these communities wear their clothing has become an essential part of their religious identity. This act is purposeful. In fact, Orthodox Jews and Muslims continue to identify themselves through their religious attire even in the face of persistent and ferocious religious bigotry and physical threats to their respective communities. Both communities have embraced the symbolic power of separating themselves through clothing from the general public. The authors also find this shared desire to use clothing as a way to separate themselves from American society as having an unintended positive influence on the public: both communities have made the symbols of their religious life acceptable by simply reimagining their theological meaning. Even though, for both communities, religious attire plays a marginal role in the domains of theology and religious law, it has emerged as a powerful force critical to the formations of both communities' religious identities. It has even become a source of pride. Orthodox Jews and Muslims are able to navigate this precarious separation of religious and secular life by asserting who they are without imposing it onto others. They are able to live their religious lives without compromising their theological sensibilities. Both communities, in the authors' view, can remain separate from and an essential part of the social fabric of American cultural life.

Unfortunately, one byproduct of this cultural achievement is the prevalence of Islamophobia and antisemitism in the United States. The identities of members of these communities are inexorably related to their experience of religious bigotry. Both communities experience hatred, yet each responds differently: each with very limited success. How these communities may rally together to combat the ubiquity of this religious hatred is indeed to see how, in many instances, their religious lives are similar. They need to build interreligious solidarity networks despite their differences and mutual distrust simply because Islamophobic and antisemitic incidents continue to proliferate. In that context, this book is an important guide for both communities. Because these groups share so many similarities, in the authors' view, they will be in a unique position to learn from one another's differences, which will yield many important social, religious, and political possibilities about living as a religious

minority within a Christian hegemonic, though pluralistic society. This is a daunting, yet critical challenge facing all religious minorities at this current political moment.

While most readers of this book will most likely be less sanguine about these dialogical possibilities than its authors, I hope they will still consider one unavoidable truth: as the country enters a Trump 2.0 presidency, Muslims and Orthodox Jews will need to find ways to organize, learn from one another, and build resilient interreligious networks if they—indeed we—are to meet these challenges and build a robust pluralistic society that protects all minorities from the threats posed by this potent rise in national and global hatred and religious bigotry. This book is an important roadmap to this goal. Even though, as I write now, I am less optimistic for such a moment, I admire and am incredibly grateful to have this work in the world.

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Traces of the Prophets: Relics and Sacred Spaces in Early Islam

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IX + 276 PAGES.

ADAM BURSI

Last year, I had the opportunity to pay my respects to a hair of the Prophet. It was brought in reverently in a glass case, and people queued for at least an hour to kiss it. Clearly, Muslims still have an interest in relics, and, despite popular stereotypes, Islam is not wholly iconoclastic.

Some might say that such things are merely folk practice, not 'real' Islam. Others might say that they are really only endorsed by Shiʿis (even though only a handful of Shiʿis were there). This book challenges those stereotypes. Today, sharp boundaries are projected onto the past, dividing Muslim from non-Muslim, Sunni from Shiʿi, the educated from the uneducated, and deviancy from orthodoxy. However, in *Traces of the Prophets*, Bursi argues that, in the formative era of Islam, those boundaries were far more fluid, at least when it came to tombs and relics.

In many ways, *Traces of the Prophets* is a product of our times. This book would have been unlikely without the material turn in Religious Studies – studying religion as embodied practices, and things, rather than as disembodied beliefs. In fact, this is one of the few studies to apply

this approach to early Islam, despite the fact that "Muḥammad's world and that of his rival heirs was alive with objects and images as well as words" (quoted from Fowden on p. 13).

Furthermore, treating texts as artefacts is broadly accepted today. Rather than passing judgments about the authenticity of various narratives, Bursi treats them as products of their times. That is, stories about the Prophet or other luminaries say more about the times they were written down in than what actually happened. (He also extends this approach to contemporaneous Jewish and Christian writings). He also treats stories as relics themselves, noting that the word *āthār* and its cognates may be applied to both accounts of the Prophet and physical relics. While some assume that Muslims were only interested in oral *āthār*, he notes that the Prophet's physical *āthār* – like his hairs – are mentioned in the collections of narrations themselves. Along these lines, he integrates some archaeological findings into this study, although the primary focus is textual.

Although Bursi does not dwell on it, many readers will come to this book understanding that the subject is politically and ideologically charged. Reading between the lines, one can consider what other changing tides of our times facilitated this study. One is the fading shadow of Orientalism. The drive to distinguish the colonizer from the colonized (not to mention the legacy of the Crusades) encouraged some European scholars to present Islam as fundamentally different from Christianity. One way this was done was through tombs and relics: Christians interred skulls in walls, Muslims did not. This follows a similar trajectory to the study of Islamic art. Until recently, it was taken as axiomatic that depicting humans or animals was wholly antithetical to Islam, despite the fact that some Islamic manuscripts do just that. Today, there is more appreciation of the shared culture of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – even if this shared sacred history was sometimes used to draw dividing lines.

Second, in the 20th century, Salafi voices overshadowed all others in publicly defining the 'correct' Islam, and tomb veneration did not make the cut. In the Western academy, this was compounded by a tendency to treat a certain interpretation of Sunnism as the 'real' Islam, and other interpretations – especially Sufi or Shi'i interpretations – as deviancies.

Today, there is a greater scope for a diversity of voices and an understanding that, as with other faith traditions, there is not just one Islam but many 'Islams,' past and present. With this approach, it is easier to accept that early Muslims also enjoyed a plurality of views.

This plurality is illustrated by an instructive story which opens the introduction. Here, Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 812) narrates a hadith saying that, after the Prophet died, his belly swelled and his little finger bent. This seemingly innocuous act nearly gets him stoned. As Bursi observes, "Wakīʿ's experience illustrates how these differing conceptions of the Prophet's body were not mere curiosities or obscure academic debates, but could be closely connected to vital issues of Islamic belief and identity" (p. 3). Additionally, the mere recording of this story demonstrates that such matters were subject to debate. Interested parties in this story were not limited to Muslims; rather, a Coptic Christian fuels the fire by taunting, "Poor Muḥammad! He tells you that you will be in heaven, but is he there now? Poor man, his wealth did not help him when the dogs were eating his legs!" (p. 3) Methodological considerations follow, after which there is a discussion of the Prophet's hair. For instance, the son of the renowned scholar, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), is quoted as saying, "I saw my father take a strand of the Prophet's hair and place it upon his mouth and kiss it. I believe I saw him place it upon his head or eyes, then plunge it into water and drink, seeking a cure through it" (p. 19). This lets us know that interest in Prophetic relics was not limited to the uneducated or heterodox, but rather was shared by the scholarly elite.

Chapter 1 discusses how Jews, Christians, and Muslims venerated (or did not venerate) the sacred dead. While some might argue that tomb veneration was less prominent among Jews, Bursi notes that contemporaneous rabbinic literature indicates that Jews also venerated holy bodies and sacred gravesites – creating, as it were, a common ground. The textual artefacts in this chapter both vindicate and pontificate against tomb veneration. For instance, an anonymous Abbasid-era interlocutor polemicises against Christian relic practices, saying, "You entomb your dead in your worship places – which God commanded you to keep pure – and heal your sick [in them]" (p. 29). At the same time, this chapter also features liminal spaces, such as the Church of the Kathisma, south of

Jerusalem, where the Virgin Mary was said to have rested on the way to Bethlehem. Water was piped over the stone she had sat on and collected for blessings. These apparent contradictions lead Bursi to conclude that "[t]ombs, relics, and early Islamic identity were thus bound together in important and sometimes conflicting ways that are lost when we solely focus on – and accept as exclusively 'Islamic' – the evidence of rejection and iconoclasm" (p. 46).

Chapter 2 addresses a relic hidden in plain sight: the footprints of Abraham (*maqām Ibrāhīm*) near the Holy Kaʿbah. The mere fact that a relic rests at the centre of Islam's sacred geography shows that relics were important historical and ritual markers of identity, not merely folk add-ons. This chapter features George, a Jewish or Christian convert who steals the *maqām Ibrāhīm* to take it back to his king – a story which Bursi likens to relic translation stories popular throughout late antique and medieval texts, in which believers transfer a saint's body or holy object to a place where it might be more properly venerated (p. 49). George "thus treats this piece of Islamic sacred history as a relic […] used to accrue spiritual power for their Christian capital" (p. 50) – thereby vindicating Islam. This chapter also covers debates over seeking blessings from the *maqām Ibrāhīm*, from Ibn al-Zubayr (d. 692) saying "you were not commanded to stroke it, but only to pray nearby it!" (p. 63) to the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (d. 785) pouring water over it to drink (p. 64).

Chapter 3 discusses stories of Muslims "finding and hiding" (that is, reburying) Jewish and Christian holy bodies. Much of this chapter centres on the Prophet Daniel, and why the victorious Muslim armies chose to hide rather than display Daniel's remains. While some read these stories as examples of iconoclasm, Bursi interprets them as ways in which Muslims expressed dominance: by burying the sacred dead in their own lands but not disclosing where, they both sanctified Islamic geography and kept an upper hand. This chapter also features giants: the ancient prophets are described as unusually large, reinforcing an antique view that holiness corresponded with bigness.

Chapter 4 addresses the Prophet's body itself. Are the Prophet's remains in his tomb in Medina, or were they raised to heaven? This alludes to the theological point raised by the Coptic Christian in the

introduction: how could the Prophet intercede for his flock if his body were not intact? In this chapter, we see a particularly strong geographic divide. For instance, Basrans tend to maintain that the prophets were alive praying in their graves, whereas Kufans tend to maintain that the Prophet was lifted to heaven. Chapter 5 follows by discussing the ritualization of places where the Prophet prayed in and around Mecca and Medina. Although this chapter focuses on early and classical Islam, it is particularly relevant to contemporary history given that some of these sites were eliminated or repurposed in the 20th century.

If nothing else, this work amply demonstrates that everyone from the commoners to the caliphs had opinions; thus, I will add mine. While the book excels at the job it sets out to do, it would also have been interesting to hear about other regional religious traditions, outside the Abrahamic box. Second, while the writing is academically sound, a more engaging manner with an extra sprinkle of literary finesse might better showcase the interesting stories it already contains. However, these are only suggestions (possibly for future works), and the book successfully accomplishes its task, letting us know that, even in times past, Muslims of many stripes took an interest in Prophetic hairs.

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Qiṣṣat ḥayāt al-Bukhārī: Sīra tārīkhiyya jadīda

JEDDAH: MARKAZ IḤSĀN, 2024, 1ST ED. 536 PAGES.

AḤMAD AL-AQṬASH

Few works in Islamic intellectual history have received as much attention as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. With hundreds of premodern and modern studies dedicated to its name, one might assume that little room remains for groundbreaking insights. Khaldūn al-Aḥdab's recently revised study and the introduction to the Bayt al-Sunna edition of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* have made significant contributions to our understanding of Imam al-Bukhārī's life and works. Yet, Aḥmad al-Aqṭash's highly anticipated monograph manages to push the boundaries of an extensively studied subject even further. If al-Aqṭash's gloss on Abū Masʿūd al-Dimashqī's *Ǯawāb* is any indication, he possesses an exceptional mastery of the hadith sciences and is thus well-equipped to engage with the subject at hand.

Qiṣṣat ḥayāt al-Bukhārī: Sīra tārīkhiyya jadīda represents a significant contribution to the field, offering a meticulously researched and critically engaging biographical account of Imam al-Bukhārī. The impetus for writing this book stemmed from conversations with other scholars, particularly regarding when al-Bukhārī compiled the *Ṣaḥīḥ*

and when al-Tirmidhī met al-Bukhārī. While these may seem like minor points, they carry significant academic implications for understanding other aspects of al-Bukhārī's life and evolving views. Spanning over 500 pages and structured into twenty-nine chapters, this volume systematically reconstructs al-Bukhārī's life, travels, and intellectual oeuvre. The detailed twenty-two page table of contents offers an accessible reference and a helpful summary of both significant and peripheral discussions. Excerpts of the book were previously published in *Majmūʿat al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Islāmiyya* (pp. 35-36: 2022).

As its subtitle suggests, the book provides a revised historical account of al-Bukhārī's life, which serves as its greatest strength. Al-Aqṭash endeavors to establish a coherent, linear narrative of al-Bukhārī's movements. This is a particularly challenging task given the fragmentary nature of early biographical sources. The complexity of this undertaking is heightened by al-Bukhārī's extensive travels, the animated nature of his scholarly life, and the proliferation of certain misconceptions. To address these challenges, al-Aqṭash categorizes the sources on al-Bukhārī's life in chronological order and employs a rigorous analytical approach to seemingly minor reports to elucidate al-Bukhārī's precise whereabouts at different junctures. An important approach used in the book is citing lost early sources through secondary works, such as al-Warrāq's *Shamāʾil al-Bukhārī* and al-Ḥākim's *Tārīkh Nīsābūr* via Ibn ʿAsākir's *Tārīkh* and al-Dhahabī's *Siyar*. While experts may readily recognize early authors in the chains of transmission of later works, this method might not be as apparent to others, let alone utilized. As the author notes, the advantage of this approach is that it helps identify the earliest available source, providing the most likely unadulterated account of a given event. The author's consultation of Persian and Sogdian dictionaries adds a distinctive dimension to the book's scholarship (pp. 38, 373).

We can consider two examples to get a sense of how the author employs unintuitive sources and tactics to "fill in the blanks." He argues that al-Tirmidhī met al-Bukhārī before 241 AH in Firabr by meticulously examining reports related to the movements of one ʿAbd Allāh b. Munīr, a mutual associate (pp. 196-201). This argument has broader implications, as it helps determine whether al-Tirmidhī's transmission of al-Bukhārī's

opinions reflect his earlier or later views (p. 204). Second, al-Aqṭash cites the contemporaneous Ibn Faḍlān's travelogue to estimate the most plausible route al-Bukhārī took from his hometown to Baghdad enroute to the Hajj (pp. 64, 270). These and other examples help spatially and chronologically animate al-Bukhārī's travels for readers, which is an aspect that other biographers seem to have overlooked. To be sure, some Western academic treatments of al-Bukhārī's travels have employed a similar approach.[1]

A particularly complicated aspect of al-Bukhārī's biography is the composition, recension, and correct ascription of his books. Perhaps the most innovative argument in the book is al-Aqṭash's assertion that *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* was completed in 253 AH, shortly before al-Bukhārī's death (pp. 377–86). He also spends considerable effort in chronologically plotting the different recensions of al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh* works (p. 216, 235). The final chapter, dedicated to al-Bukhārī's extant and lost books (twenty-three proven titles and four of dubious ascription), provides valuable insights into the chronology of their compilation and various recensions.

A key limitation when attempting to detail an uninterrupted linear narrative is the inevitable degree of conjecture involved in positioning certain events. To his credit, al-Aqṭash frequently acknowledges this challenge, making clear that his interpretations are well-founded but not necessarily conclusive (p. 8). For example, he argues that al-Bukhārī's temporary blindness occurred when he set out for the Hajj rather than during his childhood, but he notes that this is merely a more plausible reading of the extant data (p. 67). He also corrects widely held misconceptions, such as the claims that al-Bukhārī presented his *Ṣaḥīḥ* to his teachers (p. 152), obtained ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī's *Kitāb al-ʿilal* without permission (p. 116), and saw *Musnad Aḥmad* (p. 126). In the process, he occasionally consults multiple manuscripts of a text to determine the most accurate rendition of a passage (pp. 23, 106, 189).

Al-Aqṭash also provides insightful historical context, such as his discussion of how Ibn Rāhawayh described *Tārīkh al-kabīr* as sorcery to the local emir. He explains that this reaction stemmed from the groundbreaking nature of the work: it was the first attempt to systematically

gather narrators from various chains into an independent, alphabetically ordered biographical dictionary—a method that later became standard (p. 258). Readers will appreciate the stage setting for the final years of al-Bukhārī's life and the controversy surrounding the *lafẓ* debate in Transoxiana (p. 342). Based on my reading of the subject, the author offers the most vivid retelling of these pivotal events.

An area of unease for some readers may be al-Aqṭash's critique of earlier historians, such as al-Ḥākim (p. 70), and contemporary scholars, like al-Muʿallimī (p. 223) and Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr (p. 200). His critique also extends to al-Bukhārī himself. Al-Aqṭash argues in one instance that al-Bukhārī misidentified the name of his teacher's father due to an error by his student Muslim (p. 106). While some may view these critiques as contentious, al-Aqṭash presents well-argued cases with a tone that remains professional and respectful. These points of critique, along with the author's often speculative conclusions, have drawn responses from the hadith expert Sharīf Ḥātim al-ʿAwnī, who recently shared some critical reflections on the book.

The conclusion feels somewhat rushed and would benefit from a more detailed synopsis, along with proposals for further research. While numerous topics are addressed, some would have been enriched by additional details such as the precise identity of al-Dākhilī, a more comprehensive discussion of al-Bukharī's children (including an analysis of claims that he had no offspring), and greater specificity regarding the recensions of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Regarding the reasons why al-Nasafī's recension did not gain lasting traction (p. 459), it would be beneficial to include a discussion on how, prior to its decline, al-Nasafī's recension was favored by many commentators. This topic is explored by Fuat Sezgin. The appended maps intended to illustrate al-Bukhārī's travels (pp. 32, 62, 101) would have been more effective had they been clearer and less visually cluttered.

Qiṣṣat ḥayāt al-Bukhārī is a commendable work that offers fresh insights into al-Bukhārī's life and numerous related topics. Given its depth of research, critical engagement with sources, and revisionist approach to common scholarly assumptions, this book is likely to spark considerable academic debate. Any serious student of hadith studies

would greatly benefit from reading this work, not only for its subject matter but also as an exemplary model of meticulous research, critical reassessment of established views, and illumination of the scholarly milieu of the third-century AH through the life of its most iconic figure.

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Endnotes

1 Jonathan A.C. Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) p. 47.

FORUM

The Discourse of the ʿUlamā' on the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Northern Nigeria: An Appraisal of the Debate between ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami and Muhammad Yusuf, the leader of Boko Haram

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Abstract

Prior to the nominal suppression of the Boko Haram group and the subsequent killing of its founder, Muhammad Yusuf, in 2009, many Nigerians (including the majority of Muslims) knew very little about the extremist organization. Likewise, it was not widely known that some Muslim scholars, especially mainstream Sunnis, had engaged the spiritual leaders of the group in an ideological dialogue a few years after its emergence. Yet, interested parties had sought to link Boko Haram's militancy to the increasingly prominent, Salafi style of religious propagation. Fortunately, those attempts were nullified by the emergence of well-documented debates and dialogues advanced by Sunni scholars. This article presents the discourse of Nigerian scholars about Boko Haram's ideology. In particular, it analyses a debate that took place between ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami and Muhammad Yusuf. Using a video recording of the debate and key academic literature, this essay finds that a weak and misguided perception of the objectives of the Islamic Sharīʾah and the desire of undue fame, among other factors, are the main issues that led to the emergence, growth and militancy of the organization.

Keywords: Boko Haram, extremism, Muhammad Yusuf, ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami, Nigeria

Introduction

Though endless wrangling and goalless disputations are strongly discouraged in Islam, meaningful, purposeful and value-laden debates are not only permitted, but encouraged. Purposeful debate is that conducted in order to deliberate over almost all the issues of spiritual, political, moral, intellectual or social significance. It seeks to correct misperceptions and wrong views, and arrive at positive and sound judgments of differing opinions. Importantly, debate is not meant to force participants to withdraw their positions, surrender to the supposed appropriate conclusions or repudiate

their proofs. Rather, it is a means of making a distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong and strong and weak or baseless standpoints, at least for the benefit of a shrewd audience. Yet, in some instances there are sincere and truth-seeking debaters, who submit to their co-debaters when they discover that they have been holding a flawed and deficient opinion. In Nigeria's religious arena, debates among Islamic sects, groups and movements on both minor and major issues, which at times on take polemical dimensions, are a common feature of intra-Muslim relations in the country. This is exemplified by the debates between Sunni scholars and the pioneers of the militant group known as Boko Haram.

Founded in the early 2000s by Muhammad Yusuf,[1] a charismatic young preacher based in Maiduguri in north-eastern Nigeria, Boko Haram is an extremist movement that declared that seeking a Western education was forbidden. It also condemned working under Nigeria's bureaucratic system, and did not recognize Nigeria as a country that is governed according to a non-Islamic system and man-made laws. After the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf in 2009 following a deadly riot that the group launched, disciples of Yusuf then took over and regrouped. Since then, Boko Haram has unleashed waves of violence against the Nigerian state and its citizens. Since the emergence of Boko Haram, before it was fully organized and spread to other parts of Nigeria, some Sunni scholars, including Salafis seriously engaged its leader in debate.

Some of these scholars, like Shaykh Jaʿfar Mahmud Adam (d. 2007),[2] had not only preached against the group's motives, but also predicted the threat it would pose both to Muslims and Nigerians more broadly. For a long time, Nigerian *'ulamā'* have criticized Boko Haram's extremism in debates and teaching sessions, which have been extensively transmitted within Muslim spaces. Even as many Nigerians were seeking to avoid becoming targets of the group, Muslim scholars' were condemning its atrocities. However, efforts to tackle Boko Haram's ideology were often poorly represented and rarely amplified in Nigeria's mainstream media. Other scholars that also criticized the group included Dr. Ahmad Gumi, Dr. Ibrahim Jalo, Dr. Sani Umar Rijiyar Lemo, Shaykh Alhasan Said, Shaykh Mansur Ibrahim Sokoto, Shaykh Muhammad Auwal Albani,[3] Dr. Idris ʿAbdulʿAziz Bauchi, and Shaykh Nazifi Yunus to name only a few.

However, despite these efforts to disassociate Boko Haram from Islam, there were interest parties that, due to doctrinal grudges, that sought to link its militant approach to Salafism, which has been enjoying increasingly success in Nigeria. For example, authors like Dr. Yinka Olomojobi tried (unsuccessfully) to link the teachings of Muslim scholars like Ibn Taimiyyah with Boko Haram. Olomojobi appears to have based his conclusion on the fact Yusuf's mosque was named after Ibn Taimyyah.[4] It is in this context that this article presents an appraisal of the debate that took place between the Sunni scholar Shaykh ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami[5] and Muhammad Yusuf the founder of Boko Haram. The paper begins by presenting a general overview of the role of debate in Islam. This is then followed by a short discussion of Boko Haram group and its emergence. Then, the article provides an overview and analysis of this important debate between Pantami and Yusuf.

Religious Debate and Dialogue in Islam: An Overview

As a religion that is built upon proofs and always encourages scrutiny, rationalization, investigation and searching for the truth, Islam has always been open to peaceful dialogue, not only at the doctrinal and sectarian levels, but also at the level of schools of jurisprudence. Doctrinal debates often occur between adherents of different faiths. The main points discussed concern creeds, dogmas and other highly important matters that represent the edifice of the faith. The Qur'ān has, in numerous places, narrated how different messengers of Allah engaged their people in rigorous religious discourses. For example, the Prophet Nuh used every opportunity to discuss faith-related matters with his people.[6] Though he was the son of an idol-worshipping father, the Prophet Ibrahim did not feel reluctant to debate his father and his polytheistic people, who were also the passionate custodians of idols. The trend can also be seen with other prophets like Salih,[7] Hud[8] and Shu'ayb.[9] In the course of their prophetic missions, they also used dialogue as a means to convey Allah's message and guidance.

In this same vein, the Prophet Muhammad also debated some of the powerful Meccans, who were regarded as masters of oratory at the

time. It can be inferred from the history of the Companion's migration to Abyssinia that one of the influential factors in the Abyssinian King's conversion to Islam was a debate that took place in his palace between the Muslims' spokesman, Jaʿfar b. Abi Talib and the Quraysh emissary, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAs.

Sectarian discourses emerge between people who profess the same faith and are bound by its central creeds. It is, in other words, an intra-faith dialogue. The history of Islam shows that there have been many of these kinds of intra-faith debates, especially between mainstream Sunni Muslims and the followers of sects like the Jahamīyah, the Muʿtazilites, the Rāfiḍah, the Khawārij, etc. A cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbbas, was reported to have engaged the militant Khawārij in a serious debate, which at its conclusion markedly reduced the number of the sect's followers.[10] Abu al-Hassan al-Ashʿari, a famous debater who left the Muʿtazilite camp and joined the mainstream Sunnis, engaged his step-father (a Muʿtazilite), Abu ʿAli al-Jubba'i, in a heated sectarian debate that ultimately silenced the latter.[11] Likewise, Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal's conflict with the authorities and his persecution were also a result of his unwillingness to compromise on his position that the Qur'ān was the uncreated, eternal word of Allah.[12] The same thing can be said with some other later scholars like Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim who were both imprisoned.

Debate at the level of the legal school is mainly confined to *fiqh*-related matters. It is mostly a good-natured discussion and an attempt to generate ideas and come to a sound judgment within the available textual proofs. Varying jurisprudential understandings as a result of *ijtihād* are what gave rise to the different Sunni Schools of *fiqh*. More ideological debates are those that occur with a movement that looks more political, albeit dressed in religious, which is what the debate between Pantami and Yusuf resembles.

Here, it is worth reiterating that religious debates are not necessarily the main reason that one changes their position and accepts the truth. Rather, debate can also serve as a means of discharging the duty of admonition within the framework of enjoining good and forbidding evil (*al-amr bi-al-maʿrūf wa-al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*). This is evident in the story the Qur'ān provides about a group of believers among the

Jews who admonished their countrymen, who, despite being warned against fishing on a certain day, went ahead anyway and fulfilled their desires. When the group of believers who admonished their fellows was dissuaded by another group that considered itself liberal by maintaining a neutral position, the former reasoned that their goal was to be able to have an excuse before Allah.[13] While the main substance of any serious and meaningful debate is the availability of strong resources of proofs and the skill to use them as the Qur'ān indicates, those factors alone enough cannot guarantee their acceptance.

Boko Haram at a Glance

In Nigeria, the first two decades of the 21st-century have witnessed the emergence of an unusual religious group that differs markedly from mainstream Muslims and other sects. Popularly known as Boko Haram, the organization, would later prefer to be called the *Jamāʿat Ahl al-Sunnah Li-al-Daʿwat wa-al-Jihād.* This roughly translates as "the society of followers of the Sunnah for ("Islamic") propagation and *jihād.*" The term "Boko Haram" is a combination of a Hausa word and an Arabic one. The word "boko" refers to the "Western form of education," while "haram" in Arabic means forbidden. Boko Haram therefore entails that "the acquisition of knowledge or pursuing a system of education said to have been brought by the West is prohibited." Founded by Muhammad Yusuf, a charismatic youth, the group is said to have emerged in 2001, while others maintain that it emerged in 2002.[14] However, from the group's activities since its emergence, and upon examining its leaders' speeches, Boko Haram's ideologies are not restricted to merely seeing the pursuit of west-modelled knowledge as forbidden, but also that western education itself is an evil undertaking that amounts to an act of *kufr*, or unbelief.

The Boko Haram movement passed through three distinct phases of development: the propaganda phase, the militancy phase, and the phase of stalemate. The propaganda phase, which ran for almost the whole first decade of the group's emergence, concentrated on preaching, propagation, dialoguing, debating and recruiting members. This phase

was characterized by the gradual spread of the group's ideology. It was during this phase that a number of youths in the North-eastern part of the country (especially from its stronghold in the, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states) were persuaded by Yusuf's preaching against Western education, which was transmitted via a range of modern media. Many of these youths answered Yusuf's call by abandoning everything they considered to be related to Western education. For example, those who were attending schools immediately left. In their efforts to integrate with the group, others who had already graduated and obtained diplomas in various disciplines publicly tore up their certificates. Even those who were working at public and private establishments cursed their jobs and withdrew themselves from employment. Instead, they resorted to selling dates, perfumes, chewing sticks (*siwāk*), shining shoes, nail-cutting and other low-income trades.

It is important to mention that the leader of Boko Haram, Muhammad Yusuf, had also passed through different stages in his career, which shaped his ideological formation before he founded Boko Haram. Yusuf's earliest stage of ideological development and activism began with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) led by Ibrahim El-Zakzaky that emerged in the 1980s, which Yusuf joined in 1987. The movement was famous for its opposition to non-Islamic political systems, and its goal was to capture political power and turn the state into a theocracy. The leader of the movement, El-Zakzaky, was popular for his rejection of Nigeria's constitution and political system. El-Zakzaky called on Nigerian youths to leave the school system, and many graduates tore up their certificates in compliance with his urgings. As a member of the MB, Yusuf had held important positions as El-Zakzaky's mouthpiece in Maiduguri, serving as an imam. He was also active preaching lecturing as early as 1992.[15]

After breaking away El-Zakzaky's network (like many other activists), when it became public that El-Zakzaky had embraced Shiʿism, Yusuf joined the *Jamāʿat Tajdīd al-Islamī* (JTI), a splinter group the had been formed between 1994 and 1995 by members of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria and the MB. In late 1998, Yusuf was dismissed from the JTI due to some of his views. Afterwards, he maintained close ties with another group called the *Jamāʿat Izālat al-Bidʿah Wa-Iqāmat al-Sunnah*

(JIBWIS but also known simply as Izāla). This group formed with a sole purpose of eradicating religious innovations in the light of the Prophet's teachings. However, Yusuf also had disputes with members of JIBWIS on a range of issues, and he later denounced them as infidels and government stooges.[16]

Some accounts reveal that the main cause of the split between Yusuf and the JIBWIS was Yusuf's radical ideas that attempted to introduce into some Izala affiliated mosques, especially after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, which left an indelible mark on his psyche.[17] This led to the disengagement of Yusuf from the Izala. Yusuf eventually became more authoritative, commanding the respect of his followers and virtually running a mini-state within Borno. Yusuf then began to travel across the North-eastern states to lecture and debate. Yusuf's views, which form the core of Boko Haram's ideology, have been outlined by Sani Umar[18] and can be summarized as follows:

1 Modern (secular) education is forbidden.

2 Democracy and contemporary politics in general are *kufr*.

3 Working in institutions and establishments manned or guided by the government is a form of apostasy.

These ideas characterized the group's beliefs and activities during the first phase of its emergence. From 2003 up to mid-2009, Yusuf's movement was chiefly committed to proselytization and was largely peaceful, albeit Yusuf employed fiery language in his preaching and accused Muslims who did not share his ideology of unbelief. Yusuf was also arrested and interrogated several time by the security forces. Surprisingly, in almost all of these arrests, including that which led to his trial and being charged with terrorism in a federal high court in Abuja, Yusuf was bailed out by influential Nigerian Christians.[19] Abdullahi Hamisu Shehu has narrated that the former minister of information, and one of the top Christian elites in Nigeria, Jerry Gana "had repeatedly paid for the bail of Boko Haram founder and first leader Mohammed Yusuf after his several arrests during the 2000s, and that Yusuf's last phone call, shortly before being killed while in police custody in July 2009, was to Jerry Gana's number."[20]

Though the first phase of Boko Haram's development had some sporadic instances of violence, the group had been relatively peace until its bloody fight with the security agencies in 2009, which led to the extrajudicial killing of Muhammad Yusuf and hundreds of his followers. This battle marked the end of the peaceful phase of the group's movement, and opened a new phase in its history. The second phase can be termed its militancy phase. This phase, which can be said to have started after the killing of Yusuf, was dominated by wanton attacks and disregard for human life. Yusuf's remaining followers retreated to peripheral zones in North-eastern Nigeria. In 2010, the group's second-in-command, Abubakar Shekau appeared in a recording to announce Boko Haram's resurgence. Armed with an AK-47, Shekau declared war on Nigeria. Shekau said the group's targets were the security forces (i.e., the army and the police), Christians and whoever supported the group's enemies (i.e., the government and security forces). However, the events that later unfolded showed that the group had declared war, not only on Nigerian state, but also on Nigerian society. In particular, the North-eastern region became a warzone with people trapped between Boko Haram insurgents on the one hand, and Nigerian soldiers on the other. By 2014, Boko Haram had overrun a sizable rural population and captured at least 17 local government areas in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. It declared the captured territories, which equaled the size of Belgium, to be a caliphate where it applied its stringent version of penal law in the name of Islam.[21]

The insurgent activities of Boko Haram then spilled over to border countries like Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Between 2014 and 2015, the group launched raids in Nigerien towns like Bosso and Diffa, while in Chad it launched attacks and bombings in N'Djamena, the country's capital. This eventually led to a multinational counterinsurgency commitment where Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger formed a joint military front to fight the group. Although this initiative was to some extent effective, it did not bring to an end the incessant attacks, especially in Nigeria.

Many Nigerians were dismayed by the attitude of the Jonathan administration, which governed from 2010 to 2015, and which they

considered to be disinterested in the crisis, which helped in turn to bring the Buhari administration to power. Initially, the Buhari administration attempted to fight the insurgency and was to some extent successful. Meanwhile, the third and hopefully final stage of Boko Haram's trajectory seems to been the schisms that have broken Boko Haram fighters into different factions. In 2012, senior commanders from rebelled against Shekau's leadership and formed the *Ansār al-Muslimīn fī Bilād al-Sudān*, known as the Ansāru. In 2015, Shekau's faction declared loyalty to Islamic State, which led to the renaming of Boko Haram to *Wilāyat Gharb Ifrīqiyah* "Islamic State in West Africa Province" (ISWAP),[22] and Shekau was confirmed as the leader. A year later, Shekau was removed and replaced with Yusuf's eldest son, Habib Muhammad Yusuf, known popularly as Abu Musʿab al-Barnawi who continued to lead the group. Shekau protested this removal and continued to operate independently.[23] In May 2021, news emerged that Shekau had been killed in a clash with the ISWAP faction. Media reports confirmed that he had committed suicide by blowing himself up with explosives. A few months after Shekau's suicide, the leader of ISWAP was then also reported dead as a result of wounds he sustained in a clash with Shekau's fighters.

The Boko Haram crisis has seriously impeded Nigeria's progress and caused a humanitarian disaster. Since the eruption of the fighting in 2009, about 350,000 Nigerians have been killed and more than 310,000 have been made refugees, with an additional estimated number of 3 million people displaced in area of the Lake Chad Basin.[24] The recent factional conflicts have led some to hope that the Boko Haram insurgency will soon end. Indeed, it has been reported that since Shekau's death, over 8000 Boko Haram members have surrendered to the authorities.[25] This development has given the authorities the opportunity to apply different de-radicalization strategies to deal with the remaining Boko Haram members, either those still hiding in rural enclaves or those in prison. Apart from the more typical vocational rehabilitations, which usually end in parole or even recruitment into Nigeria's security establishment, there also seems to have been some highly effective initiatives aimed at the de-radicalization of Boko Haram prisoners through rigorous ideological engagement. Meanwhile, the role of the *'ulamā'* in the fight against

Boko Haram cannot be ignored. As a strategy to counter the Boko Haram ideology, in 2009 the military began to distribute pamphlets and CDs containing lectures of scholars like Shaykh Jaʿfar who opposed Boko Haram. Now that the insurgency is hopefully coming to an end, it is important for authorities to continue supporting these counter-ideological efforts.[26]

The *'Ulamā'* and Boko Haram

Although Boko Haram has been fought by the Nigerian military since 2009, attacks on the group's ideology began much earlier. Scholarly works (especially those in the West) have emphasized the link between Boko Haram and Salafism by branding the former as

"Salafi-Jihadist." However, in the Nigerian context, it was the Salafi scholars that successfully engaged the founders of the sect in sophisticated debate. During his lifetime, before the Boko Haram sect did not yet pose any serious threats, the prominent Sunni scholar Jaʿfar Mahmud Adam consistently criticized the group and dissected its ideology. Idris ʿAbdulʿAziz Bauchi[27] and ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami,[28] are two other prominent Salafi scholars who also challenged Muhammad Yusuf to debate, while Auwal Albani Zaria delivered a series of lectures against the Boko Haram ideology and gave a series of seminars in the north-eastern region aimed de-radicalizing Nigerian youths. Shaykh Mansur Ibrahim Sokoto also facilitated a workshop organized by JIBWIS in Bauchi where he engaged Boko Haram's discourse on western education.[29]

In April 2009, Shaykh Sani ʿUmar Rijiyar Lemo arrived at Maiduguri and presented a two-day public lecture at the Indimi Mosque,[30] in which he surveyed key figures and trends in contemporary jihadi movements, and the religious and socio-political factors that informed their rise. Even though Rijiyar Lemo did not portray jihad as an abrogated injunction, and indeed identified a few instances where contemporary Muslims were (or are) pushed by circumstances to wage a legitimate jihad in the form of self-defence, Rijiyar Lemo's central thesis was that radical activism would always fizzle out as it lacked religious legitimacy.[31] During their debates with Muhammad Yusuf, Sunni scholars demonstrated Yusuf's

lack of an intellectual command of Islamic texts. Similarly, on many occasions they stressed the link between Yusuf's ideas and the *khawārij*, an extremist militant sect that emerged in early Islamic history. This phenomenon is acknowledged in a few academic works that argue that some of Boko Haram's views "mirror *khārijī* inclinations."[32] Another article argus that there is a correlation between Boko Haram and the *khawārij* in terms of their theological conception of *īmān* (faith).[33] In the case of Boko Haram, one can say that the group has theorized what makes one a true Muslim according to its own exclusive interpretation and Boko Haram has operationalized this theory according to the socio-religious and political context of today. On this basis, then, like the *khawārij*, Boko Haram fought and killed their fellow Muslims. However, the academic works on Boko Haram typically overlook or evade contextualizing Boko Haram in relation to the *khawārij* partly because that would endorse the Salafi claim to be a moderate form of Islam, which is indeed the fastest growing stream of Islamic thought and practice in contemporary Africa.[34]

Indeed, to argue that Boko Haram drew much or some of its militancy from "Sunni" literature is too narrow a framework to give us an adequate understanding of its nature. After all, Islam is the central unifying factor among all the different and diverse movements, groups and denominations, including the orthodox, the traditional, the mainstream on the one hand, and on the other hand, the fringe, the peripheral, the extremist and the unorthodox. Thus, there must be something in common that binds them together and which every group considers a basic aspect in its doctrinal composition. To justify their violence, Egyptian armed Islamist movements (just like other groups including Boko Haram), utilized Ibn Taimiyya's fatwa endorsing armed resistance against the the Mongols to validate their militant struggles against Muslim leaders. Ironically, when in later years these groups revised their positions and recanted violence, they used the same fatwa but re-interpreted it to mean that militant resistance was permitted only against foreign invaders and not Muslim leaders.[35] This point highlights that the views of the Damascene theologian, just like other theologians and, by extension, Islamic texts, could be interpreted differently and exploited to serve particular purposes. It is in this context that one can understand the weakness in limiting our

analysis of the theoretical motivations of Boko Haram to some valid interpretations of texts and authorities since these views are oftentimes acceptable not only by the Salafis but also other groups within the Sunni Islam more broadly.

One common feature that does link Boko Haram with the *khawārij* is the unconventional interpretation of Islamic sources to suit their ideological interests. The popular motto of the *khawārij* "*lā ḥukma illā li-Allāh*" (there is no judgment except Allah's) is a valid expression to which no Muslim would object. Yet, in the words of Ousman Murzik Kobo, "Boko Haram leaders distinguished themselves from mainstream Salafi by their selective appropriation and manipulation of the canon to justify violence against the Nigerian states and fellow Muslims who refused to subscribe to their brand of Salafism."[36] Likewise, Andrea Brigaglia also notes that Boko Haram insurgents were fond of manipulating Islamic scripture as evidenced in their "contorted reading of Qur. 9:12."[37] The conceptual correlation between the khārijites and Boko Haram is easily discernible in the definition of each of the group. As Alexander Thurston notes, the term "khawārij came to be associated with several stances: declaring people unbelievers on the basis of their sins (rather than through a more conservative definition that focuses on whether a person has actually declared something unlawful to be lawful), assassinating Muslims, rejecting legitimate Muslim authority, and causing chaos."[38] Boko Haram, especially under Shekau, had consistently stated "that any Muslim who did not join Boko Haram's fight against the Nigerian state was a *de facto* unbeliever."[39] Considering the acquisition of western education to be haram is perhaps a major different between Boko Haram and the *khawārij*, which is clearly tied to the specificity of its socio-religious context. Now, let us consider the debate between ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami and Muhammad Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram

The Pantami-Yusuf Debate

The debate took place on the 29th of Jimādā ʿUlā, 1427 (2005) in the Bauchi State of North-eastern Nigeria at the invitation of ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami. The debate, which lasted for about three hours, was videotaped by the media

team of the Dārul Islam Foundation based in Bauchi. The main points of discussion of the debate are the issues of Western education and working under the Nigerian government, which includes joining the civil service and holding political appointments.

On Western Education

Responding to a question about his position on Western education, Yusuf gave an interesting background discussion in which he classified knowledge into three categories. According to Yusuf, all forms of knowledge fall into one of these categories:

1. Knowledge that conforms to what has been established by the Glorious Qur'ān and Sunnah. In other words, this refers to knowledge that is either found in the Qur'ān or Sunnah or supported by them.
2. Knowledge that contradicts what which has been established by the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.
3. Knowledge that neither contradicts the Qur'ān and Sunnah nor affirms any fact that is found in them.

Here, Yusuf was trying to provide a theoretical framework upon which the group's ideology was based. A closer look at Yusuf's classification above suggests that Muslims in Nigeria would have had little reason to be concerned with Boko Haram had the group actually relied upon this postulation. After all, there are two different Prophetic traditions that give credence to this view. One of the prophetic traditions asks Muslims not to wholeheartedly affirm whatever comes from the People of the Book, i.e., Jews and Christians, nor should they wholly dismiss it.[40] This means that they should rather subject anything that comes from these sources (and by extension all the categories of people who propose anything that has to do with knowledge and scholarship) to careful examination and scrutiny. The other hadith is more explicit when it says that there is no harm that Muslims could report from the Jews.[41] Yusuf, then, appeared to agree that modern sciences like medicine,

chemistry, physics, engineering, agriculture and many other forms of knowledge may not in themselves be forbidden provided that they do not contradict the Qur'ān and Sunnah. However, Yusuf then elaborated on his views. He said that his concern with modern sciences was that they were based on the Western model. In other words, what made them prohibited was the fact that they were fashioned according to a Western system. He then added that there are subjects that are built on conjectures that categorically contradict the Qur'ān. In particular, he argued that geography was linked to the theories of Darwinism and evolution (which he, somewhat confused, called the "theory of revolution"). Yusuf also mentioned the theory of the big-bang, the geographical time scale etc. It was on bases such as these that Yusuf said that the entire Western education in Nigerian context was prohibited.

When responding, Pantami argued whether the existence of some conjectures that contradict Islamic viewpoints would render a system completely haram in its entirety, even though Muslims are well aware of them and do not in any way accept them as facts. Moreover, it is a well known fact that Islam prohibits people to talk about issues about which they have little or no knowledge,[42] which is why Yusuf almost became an object of ridicule when he answered negatively the question of whether or not he had even attended even a primary school. Nevertheless, proofs are a major ingredient of debates, and both Pantami and Yusuf presented some proofs to support their positions. The first proof advanced by Pantami was a fatwa issued by *al-Islām al-Yaumī*, which is a scholarly body made up of 290 highly acclaimed Muslim scholars drawn from various Muslim countries around the world. The fatwa addressed the question of acquiring modern education on the premise of the Western system, and actually argued for the necessity of active societal investment in and commitment to it for the collective interest of the Muslim community. Meanwhile, in an effort to respond, Yusuf read out a fatwa issued by the Permanent Committee on Research and Fatwa based in Saudi Arabia, which resolved that the acquisition of knowledge brought by the *ajnabī* (foreigner) was haram.

Taken at face-value, one may think that this fatwa was delegitimizing the acquisition of knowledge developed by foreigners i.e., the West

etc. However, as Yusuf read the ensuing notes, it could be discerned that the fatwa was only emphasizing that which was entirely incompatible with Islam. Moreover, the fatwa was referring to the types of schools and colleges that were purposely established in order to enhance missionary activities and woo Muslims to deviate from their religious path. Indeed, this same committee had issued a fatwa encouraging Muslims to go to non-Muslim environments like America to study. Nevertheless, it became clear Yusuf considered institutions like Bayero University, Kano and the University of Maiduguri (dominated by Muslims) as deviant and faith-damaging despite the fact that no could say they were established to rob Muslims of their religious identity. In fact, Yusuf even condemned institutions like Islamic schools that had been modernized and modelled in accordance with the Western system.

On the Nigerian Government and its Institutions

The other key part of this debate was with regard to working in the Nigerian civil service. Yusuf had argued that since Western education is largely the gateway to joining the civil service, it must be haram also. He then added that the Nigerian system of government was not established on any Islamic principles. As a result, according to Yusuf, working for the Nigerian government was not only a mere "sin" but also "unbelief," since "registering" loyalty to any system other than the Sharia is tantamount to worshipping a *ṭāghūt* (idol). In response, Pantami took a long time point to Qur'ānic references to the permissibility of playing a role in a government established by systems other than that of the Sharia. Notable among that was the Qur'ānic account that the Prophet Yusuf had accepted a ministerial appointment to work in a government of idolaters. Had Muhammad Yusuf wanted to reject this powerful proof, he might have reminded Pantami that the Prophet Yusuf's case could be different since the Qur'ān says that for Prophets, "for every one of you We have ordained [a different] law and an open road."[43] Yet, Yusuf was also likely aware differences and specificities in the messages of earlier revealed religions and prophets were confined to minor and subsidiary issues of life and not concerning supreme matters like registering loyalty to a

system founded completely by people that used to commit *shirk*. As the Qur'ān affirms in other instances, Allah's Messengers all share a belief system.[44] In other words, Yusuf was trapped between two positions. He could either regard the Prophet Yusuf's role in a non-Islamic government as a matter of secondary importance in Islamic jurisprudence and over which divergences of opinions are legitimately entertained, but this then would render his group's excommunication of Muslims who participated in Nigeria's bureaucracy as baseless. Or, he could suggest that a prophet had committed an act of unbelief.

Ignoring the precedent of the Prophet Yusuf's ministerial position, Muhammad Yusuf continued to dogmatically make clear his stance that loyalty to any system not based on the Sharia was synonymous to *shirk* by relying on Q.26:151-152. His conclusion was that working under the Nigerian bureaucratic system amounted to *kufr*. However, if mere loyalty to the system was equal to disbelief, then Boko Haram itself could be accused of *kufr*. This was because, as Pantami aptly stated, Boko Haram never abandoned the use of Nigerian currency, whose coins and notes are symbols of the state. There was no time when Yusuf ever called on his followers to disavow the Naira (which carries the images of Nigerian heroes) and attempt to produce an alternative currency compatible with the group's ideology. Moreover, Yusuf was also known to have undertaken frequent travels abroad, while of course obeying all the regulations of the Nigerian Immigration Service. He denounced the use of passport for travel, nor was there any record of his non-compliance with the airport authority or security officers. In his criticism of Yusuf's beliefs, Ja'far ridiculed his selectivity and compared him with a man who refuses to "enter the government through the door but gets in through the window."[45]

Pantami might also have highlighted a number of contradictions in Yusuf's approach, as Jaʿfar did. However, Pantami chose to maintain a sense of decorum and tried to avoid subjecting Yusuf to public shame. Right from the very beginning of the debate, Pantami had established a safe space for Yusuf and behave in a respectful manner. Pantami even gave Yusuf the honour of prefixing his name with the scholarly title of *Ustaz* and suffixing it with the heartfelt prayer of well-wishes "*hafiẓahu*

Allah" (may Allah protect him). Yusuf, however, did not care to reciprocate the gesture. Indeed, throughout the debate, Pantami continued to use the affectionate term "brotherhood" in order to dissuade Yusuf from viewing the occasion as a cause for enmity. Not knowing that the movement founded by Yusuf would years later become extremely militant, Pantami did not highlight any textual emphases on peace and the religious imperative to good relations between Muslims and non-Muslims with special reference to Nigeria.

Conclusion

To provide some initial background, this article began by highlighting the importance of debate in Islam. The paper established that debates took place during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the era of his Companions and the subsequent generations. The article also traced the emergence and activities of Boko Haram, and divided the group's history into three distinct phases: the phase of its emergence and propagation of ideology, the phase of militancy, and the last phase of stalemate, which is still in progress. The article also discussed the more general discourse of Sunni scholar in northern Nigeria vis-à-vis the Boko Haram phenomenon. It then reviewed the debate that ensued between ʿIsa ʿAli Pantami, a prominent Nigerian Sunni scholar, and the founder of the Boko Haram movement, Muhammad Yusuf. The major points in the debate were the permissibility of modern (secular) education in Islam, and the permissibility or otherwise of working in institutions and establishments manned or guided by infidel governments. While Yusuf vehemently rejected any loyalty to the Nigerian state and anything that was associated with it, nevertheless he continued to use a range of services provided by Nigeria as a state. It could be argued that what might have led him to his positions was a misguided perception of the objectives of the Islamic Sharia, short sighted-ness of sight and a desire for fame. Meanwhile, scholars like Pantami should not only be encouraged to continue their debates and offers of dialogue, but also supported.

Though one writer dismissed them as "useless debates,"[46] Nigerian Salafis intellectual engagement with Boko Haram has had a significant

impact in the ideological war against the extremist sect. As pointed out by Audu Bulama Bukarti, "winning the war of ideas and working to immunise populations from radicalisation is more important today than it has ever been."[47] Yusuf obviously did not renounce his views, even though these scholarly debates and polemical exchanges appeared to go against him. This was because conceding defeat would probably have marked the end of his rising popularity. Had he lived longer, Yusuf might have recanted his ideologies. Be that as it may, the fact that Boko Haram withdrew from intellectual engagement, which initially it participated in enthusiastically, speaks volumes to the magnitude of the defeats it suffered in the realm of public debate. Indeed, there were no popular debates recorded between Boko Haram and mainstream Muslim scholars since the group resorted to arms after Yusuf's murder. This might suggest that the Nigerian authorities made a mistake in their overreliance on military force. It can be observed that, during its first phase, Boko Haram was relatively peaceful while it was being fought ideologically by scholars. Nigerians now all too well what occurred once this avenue was closed and Boko Haram was fought by the Nigerian military.

An insistance on attributing Boko Haram's radical tendencies to the fatwas of Ibn Taimiyya will, in all likelihood, cloud the issue further. Unlike in Middle Eastern and other predominantly Muslim countries where leaders are typically Muslims, the Nigerian case is quite different in that power rotates between Muslims and Christians. This makes any arguments that a leadership can be fought in the light of Ibn Taimiyya's fatwas regarding aggressions against Muslims somewhat irrelevant. Boko Haram regarded all leaders who ruled Nigeria (Muslims and non-Muslims alike) since its uprising in 2009 as being *kuffār*. Moreover, the failure to juxtapose Boko Haram ideas and views against the thoughts of the *khawārij* explains why many attempts to find an angle to locate Boko Haram's ideological violence within Sunni Islam end up in very murky conceptual waters.

Endnotes

1 Muhammad Yusuf was born in 1970 in Yobe State in North-eastern Nigeria. He was the founder of the Boko Haram group and was killed in the year 2009 following a clash with security forces. He was captured alive by the military and handed over to the police, who killed him without trial.

2 Shaykh Ja'far Mahmud Adam was a popular Muslim scholar known in Hausa-speaking Africa. He was a powerful preacher and eloquent interpreter of the Qur'an. Shaykh Ja'far was assassinated on April 13, 2007. His criticism of Boko Haram's ideology became more widely known, especially after the armed group's clash with authorities three years after his murder.

3 Shaykh Auwal Albani was an ardent critic of Boko Haram. His condemnation of the sect cost him his life and that of his wife and a son on February 1, 2014. Boko Haram insurgents claimed responsibility for his murder.

4 Yinka Olomojobi, *Islam and Conflict in Northern Nigeria* (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 2013): 222.

5 Born in Pantami town in Gombe State, Shaykh 'Isa 'Ali Ibrahim Pantami is a renowned Muslim cleric. He had been living in Bauchi for some years where he taught computer software at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, and he had also taught at the Islamic University of Madina. He served as the Director General of National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) from 2015 to 2019 and he is currently the Minister of Communication and Digital Economy in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

6 Q.11:25-49.

7 Q.11:61-68.

8 Q.11:50-60.

9 Q.11:84-95.

10 Uthman al-Khamis, *Hiqbatun min al-Tarikh* (Egypt: Maktabat al-Imam al-Bukhari, 2006): 195-197.

11 Abu al-Hassan al-Ash'ari, *al-Ibanah 'an Usul al-Diyanah* (Cairo: al-Nahar for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 2003): 9.

12 Al-Imam al-Maqdisi, *Kitabu Mihnat al-Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Egypt: Maktabat al-Hady al-Muhammadi, 2007): 47-48.

13 Q.7:163-165.

14 Habu Galadima and Aluaigba M. (eds.), *Insurgency and Human Rights in Northern Nigeria* (Kano: Centre for Information Technology and Development, 2013): 1.

15 Abdullahi Abubakar Lamido, "Book Review: Boko Haram: The History of a West African Jihadist Movement, by Alexander Thurston," *The CCI Occasional Papers: Debating Boko Haram*, No. 2 (March 2019): 6, 4-9.

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18 Sani Umar, *Salafi Narratives against Violent Extremism in Nigeria* (Zaria: Centre for Democracy and Development, 2015): 6-7.

19 International Crisis Group, "Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II)": 13.

20 Abdullahi Hamisu Shehu, "Chibok Girls Abduction: Too Many Unanswered Questions," *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, Issue No. 12/1 (2013-2104): 29; 23-30.

21 Audu Bulama Bukarti, *Violent Extremism in Sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons from the Rise of Boko Haram* (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2021):. 35. Accessed via https://institute.global/sites/default/files/2021-07/Tony%20Blair%20Institute%2C%20Violent%20Extremism%20in%20Sub-Saharan%20Africa%2C%20July%202021.pdf, October 25, 2021.

22 Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018): 17-18.

23 Abdulbasit Kassim & Jacob Zenn, "Justifying War: The Salafi-Jihadi Appropriation of Sufi Jihad in the Sahel-Sahara," in *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology,* Volume 2 (March 2017): 91, 86-114.

24 Council on Foreign Relations, "Global Conflict Tracker," Last updated October 25, 2021. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/boko-haram-nigeria, accessed October 26, 2021.

25 Bulama Bukarti, "This Looks Like The Beginning Of The End Of Boko Haram — We Should Accelerate It," *Daily Trust,* October 20, 2021, https://dailytrust.com/this-looks-like-the-beginning-of-the-end-of-boko-haram-we-should-accelerate-it. Last accessed October 24, 2021.

26 Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Gazali* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963): 102.

27 Part of the debate titled, "MUQABALA Stsakanin Iman Dr idris Abdul'aziz Bauchi' Muhammad yusuf" is available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0hqxXg-MAMs. Another part is titled "Imam Dr Idris Abdul'azeez vs Muh'd Yusuf Shugaban boko Haram" available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46CYh-DTn3U. Last accessed November 13, 2021.

28 The largest part of the debate is titled "Muqabalar Dr Isa Ali Pantami da Shugaban Kungiyar Boko Haram Muhammad Yusuf" and is available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QuGXdE-09eg. Last accessed November 13, 2021.

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Bidʿah Wa Iqamatus Sunnah and held between May 08-10, 2009. See also Thurston, *Boko Haram*, 100.

30 See Thurston, *Salafism in Nigeria*, 15-17, 171-172, 230-231.

31 The first lecture is titled "Waiwaye Adon Tafiya part 1- Dr. Muhammad Sani Umar Rijiyan Lemo.wmv," and is available on *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GvrCZ1jHGg*. The second is titled "Waiwaye Adon Tafiya part 2 Dr Muhammad Sani Umar Rijiyan Lemo" and available on is https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sL7hyS9WyG8. Last accessed October 26, 2021.

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36 Ousmane Murzik Kobo, "Alex Thurston: *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching and Politics*" Book Review, *Journal for Islamic Studies*, Vol. 36 (2017): 276-285.

37 Andrea Brigaglia, "Abubakar Shekau: The Boko Haram Leader Who Never Came "Back from the Dead" *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, No. 12, (2013-2014): 43-48.

38 Alex Thurston, "Abū Muṣʿab al-Barnāwī's Interview with the Islamic State's Al-Naba' Magazine," *Journal for Islamic Studies: Special Issue on Islam and the Politics of Religious Dissent in the History of Northern Nigeria*, Vol. 36 (2017): 257-275.

39 Thurston, "Abū Muṣʿab al-Barnāwī's Interview," 259.

40 Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī, Ḥadīth number 4485.

41 Ṣaḥiḥ Bukhārī, Ḥadīth number 3461.

42 See Q.17:36.

43 Q.5:58.

44 Q.42:13.

45 Anonymous, "The Popular Discourses of Salafi Radicalism," 138.

46 Andrea Brigaglia, ""Slicing off the Tumour": The History of Global Jihad in Nigeria, as Narrated by the Islamic State," *The CCI Occasional Papers: Debating Boko Haram*, No. 1 (2018): 1-17.

47 Bukarti, *Violent Extremism in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 10.

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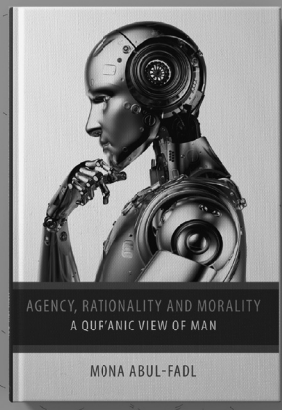

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Modernity or modernism as a system of thought purporting to be enlightened and universal, has brought with it a crisis of values and a secular perspective that has undermined its own foundations and is provoking a universalized state of existential angst or anomie and moral anarchy. This treatise provides a reading of the Qur'anic view of man as insan against a background of the preoccupations of modernity. The author critiques the rapid devolution of society divorced from spiritual tradition in the modern context. The emphasis is on rationality, freedom, and morality and the goal is the reintegration of man and the recovery of community through a reconciliation of self and the rediscovery of the essential meaning of divine guidance in so far as it relates to human life in this world. The main message is one of relevance, urgency, and opportunity. The urgency and the opportunity lie with man, and the relevance shines through the light of the eternal message and comes from God.

Mona Abul-Fadl (1945-2008) was an Egyptian scholar of contemporary western thought and women's studies. Her research interests included political theory, comparative politics, Islam and the Middle East, epistemology, and feminist scholarship.

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- Conduct theoretical research to renew the role of Islamic thought as an impetus to advancing education in Muslim societies.

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