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The origins and early development of Islamic reform

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Introduction

Early modern Islamic reform can be classified under two general rubrics: the first encompasses the eighteenth century reform activities that preceded the cultural impact of Europe. The second includes a spectrum of nineteenth century reforms that were articulated in response to this impact. Naturally, there can be no single date that marks the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the modern period, as European penetration and domination took hold at different dates in different places. Moreover, since the extent and significance of the encounter with Europe was not simultaneously appreciated in all parts of the Muslim world, the cultural eighteenth century sometimes lingered past the colonial takeover.

Traditional scholarship asserts that the eighteenth century is a century of political and economic decline and of intellectual stagnation, and that an era of political and intellectual revival and reform ensues in the nine teenth century primarily as a result of the growth of European influence in, and the resulting intellectual challenges to, the Muslim world.[1] The reaction or response to Europe became the central criterion for defining Islamic reform.[2] This approach has privileged one particular kind of intellectual activity, namely that which responded to the 'European challenge' by adapting itself to it. While the idea of economic and political decline has been largely discredited in a substantial number of studies, especially by historians of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman

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1 See, for example, H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic society and the West: A study of the impact of Western civilization on Moslem culture in the Near East*, vol. I: *Islamic society in the eighteenth century*, parts 1 and 2 (London, 1950 7); and P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton and B. Lewis (eds.), *The Cambridge history of Islam*, vol. IA, *The central Islamic lands from pre Islamic times to the First World War* (Cambridge, 1970).

2 See, for example, Albert Hourani's introduction to his *Arabic thought in the liberal age, 1798 1939* (Cambridge, 1983).

provinces,[3] the present chapter will focus on the less studied realm of culture. In this realm, the eighteenth century was characterised by inten sive intellectual activities of great cultural significance. These activities continued traditional patterns of thinking but were nonetheless very original and transformative.

Already in the seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century, the central governments of the three major empires of the Muslim world, the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals, were losing some of their control over their provinces and subjects. Changes in the structures of society and economy in each of these states were also coupled with military vulnerability and loss of territory. These gradual changes culminated in the eighteenth century in a number of dramatic events that underscore the historical distinctiveness of this period. In 1718, the Ottomans signed a treaty which forced them to surrender parts of the Balkans; mindful of the weakening of its military position relative to Europe, the Ottoman state attempted to reform its bureaucracy and military by importing some of the organisational and tech nological practices of their European rivals. Around the same period, an Afghan invasion of Iran ended the Safavid dynasty in 1722 and, in 1739, Nādir Shāh, the new ruler of Iran, sacked Delhi and sealed the fate of an already weakened Mughal dynasty. Contrary to common assumptions, the weaken ing or even demise of these centralised and centralising states did not plunge the Muslim world into a period of irreversible stagnation. In the Ottoman Empire, for example, autonomous local powers with vibrant and revived economies emerged in several provinces including Mount Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Egypt.[4]

Almost invariably, historians who adopted the paradigm of decline also treated the Wahhābī movement as the representative movement of the eighteenth century. However, eighteenth century Wahhābism was an iso lated phenomena which emerged out of the Najd, the desert region of Arabia, and managed to overrun Mecca and Medina, the cultured cities of Ḥijāz, due to declining Ottoman control over this region. The brief expansion of Wahhābī power was reversed through the intervention of the armies of

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3 See, for example, H. Islamoglu (ed.), *The Ottoman Empire and the world economy* (Cambridge, 1987); R. Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the world economy: The nineteenth century* (Albany, 1988). See also Beshara Doumani, *Discovering Palestine: Merchants and peasants in Jebal Nablus, 1700 1900* (Berkeley, 1995); Hala Fattah, *The politics of regional trade in Iraq, Arabia, and the Gulf, 1745 1900* (Albany, 1997); and Dina Khoury, *State and provincial society in the early modern Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540 1834* (Cambridge, 1997).

4 Joel Beinin, *Workers and peasants in the modern Middle East* (Cambridge, 2001).

Muḥammad ʿAlī, the autonomous Ottoman governor of Egypt. In addition to being a political exception, Wahhābism was not representative of eighteenth century intellectual trends. Numerous counter trends were prevalent in the eighteenth century and, in contrast to Wahhābism, these more influential movements were thwarted only after the encounter with Europe. Neither Wahhābism, nor decline are emblematic of Muslim intellectual life in the eighteenth century.

None of the revisionist approaches to the eighteenth century, however, questions the validity of using Wahhābism as a model for representing eighteenth century Islamic movements and intellectual activity.[5] Revisionist accounts of the eighteenth century have laid much emphasis on a Sufism void of intellectual or spiritual rigour, and on the so called socio moral use of Ḥadīth, that is, on Ḥadīth as the source providing standards of individual and collective codes of conduct.[6] This emphasis has shifted the focus of examination from the intellectual content of eighteenth century writings of Sufism or Ḥadīth to the social uses of these two disciplines. Although a large amount of the writings of eighteenth century thinkers has been published, revisionist historiography continues to focus on practical and social aspects of eighteenth century activity in a move that confirms the earlier notion that the intellectual value of eighteenth century thought is minimal.

In most regions of the Muslim world, eighteenth century thinkers pre served classical styles of thinking, but also exhibited a great awareness of a need to reorganise religious knowledge and to identify those aspects of Islam that were shared by all. The ideas and activities of some of these thinkers amount to distinct intellectual trends of Islamic thought in the pre modern period, rather than one general trend as suggested by scholarly literature. These thinkers include: Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al Amīr al Ṣanʿānī (1688 1769) of Yemen; Shāh Walī Allāh (1703 62) of India; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb (1703 92) of Arabia; ʿUsman dan Fodio (1754 1817) of West Africa; Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Shawkānī (1759 1834) of Yemen; and Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Sanūsī (1787 1859) of North Africa. These and other eighteenth century thinkers were famous both within and outside their

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5 For an articulation of the revisionist views as represented mainly in the works of Ibrahim Abu al Lughud, Roger Owen, Peter Gran and John Voll, see Reinhard Schulze, 'Was ist die islamische Aufklarung?', *Die Welt des Islams*, 36, 3 (1996), pp. 276 325.
6 See, for example, Fazlur Rahman, 'Revival and reform in Islam', in M. Holt, A. K. S. Lambton, and B. Lewis (eds.), *The Cambridge history of Islam*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1970), vol. IIB p. 640; and John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and change in the modern world* (Boulder, 1982), pp. 38, 54, 58, 60.

respective regions. In India, Shāh Walī Allāh is recognised as the most distinguished Muslim scholar that India ever produced, and contradictory schools claim to derive from and best represent his 'true' thought. Similarly, in Yemen, nationalist Zaydīs and Sunnīs alike claim Shawkānī who, already during his own lifetime, was counted as one of the leading Muslim scholars of Yemen. Partly as a result of his political success in establishing the Sokoto caliphate, dan Fodio is also considered the most central figure in the legacy of Islamic Nigeria and in the Islamist discourse of West Africa.

The ideas developed by these thinkers were decidedly diverse; yet, diver sity notwithstanding, all of them undertook bold and self consciously trans formative intellectual projects. Furthermore, these intellectual projects were coupled with active social and political engagement, a fact that implies a high level of self confidence and ambition rather than utopian idealism. This is further confirmed by the high quality and quantity of the works of eighteenth century thinkers, and the dual role they assumed as reformers of tradition and also as teachers responsible for guiding an Islamic community and affecting changes of great consequence. Their confidence was manifested, among other things, in the grand intellectual synthesis of Shāh Walī Allāh, Ṣanʿānī's bold confrontations with political and intellectual authorities, the successful expan sion of Islam into sub Saharan Africa by Sanūsī, the building of a centralised state and social order in West Africa by dan Fodio and Shawkānī's assertive attempt to illustrate, via theoretical analysis and historical documentation, the superiority and hence authority of later generations of Muslims. Viewed from within their own chronological and spatial boundaries, the under takings of eighteenth century thinkers were quite successful. Subsequent setbacks engulfed the political and intellectual scenes throughout the Muslim world, yet the reasons for these setbacks were not exclusively internal, and were rooted in the stifling effects of the events that took hold of the Muslim world in the course of the colonial period.

For Orientalists and revisionists alike, Wahhābism has provided an accurate illustration of the paradigm of social activism and intellectual impoverish ment. On the one hand, earlier studies on Islamic thought in the eighteenth century argue that there was a Wahhābī influence on Islamic thought and movements in the same and following periods.[7] On the other hand, almost all of the revisionist histories of eighteenth century Islamic thought continue to

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7 See, for example, H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern trends in Islam* (Chicago, 1947); Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in modern history* (Princeton, 1977); Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian subcontinent* (Leiden, 1980); and Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition* (Chicago and London, 1982).

invoke the example of Wahhābism without questioning the validity of using it as a model for other eighteenth century Islamic movements and intellectual trends. In the following section, I will provide overviews of the careers and ideas of some of the main thinkers of the eighteenth century. Given the predominance of the Wahhābī paradigm in scholarship on the eighteenth century, I will underscore the fundamental differences between each of these figures and Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, before proceeding to identify some distinctive features of eighteenth century Islamic thought. I will then proceed to discuss the historical rupture that characterises the rise of new trends of Islamic reform in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the evolution of these trends into the twentieth century.

With its exclusive focus on the single issue of *takfīr* and the determination of what constitutes unbelief, Wahhābism lacks intellectual complexity and thus does not lend itself to much intellectual analysis. In retrospect, attempts made to make political and intellectual sense of the Wahhābī use of the concept of *tawḥīd* (the unicity or oneness of God) have not invalidated the fact that the thought of Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb himself was far narrower than the movement that he initiated. Moreover, Wahhābism, both in its social manifestation and intellectual content, was the exception rather than the norm of eighteenth century Islamic thought. Eighteenth century thinkers probed the boundaries of faith in varying ways, and provided critical evaluations of Sufi thought and practice. But, despite the diversity of their views, all of these thinkers concurred in their rejection of Wahhābī views, as well as the political movement these views inspired. One of the most pervasive discourses of the eighteenth century was a discourse against *takfīr*. In a marked contrast to the simple and direct Wahhābī use of the concept *kufr*, eighteenth century thinkers problematised this concept and ultimately curtailed or undermined it altogether.

Exclusionary puritanism: Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb of Arabia

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb was born in the village of ʿUyayna in Najd in the year 1703. There is little reliable information on his activities during the first four decades of his life. His longest journey was to Baṣra, from which he was eventually expelled. In the early 1740s, after the death of his father, he started preaching his doctrine of *tawḥīd*. Five years later he gained the political support of the head of the Saʿūd family residing in Darʿīya, who used Wahhābī ideology to gradually spread his control over different parts of Arabia. Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb reportedly retired after the conquest of Riyadh and,

according to official Wahhābī accounts, devoted the last decade or two of his life to scholarship and meditation![8]

Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb's writings are almost entirely devoted to a discussion of the concept of *tawḥīd*. In almost every single work he wrote, Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb strove to classify people on the basis of their creed into believers and unbelievers. Political and social concerns were marginal to his agenda. He made a distinction between politics and creed, and although he recognised that in promoting his cause he was indebted to the support of the local rulers, he neither couched his teachings in political language, nor did he consider the seizure of power an aim of his movement. The only time he mentions tolerance is in reference to the excesses of rulers whom, he says, should be advised gently, and in the event that they fail to heed this advice, their injustice should be tolerated patiently. Rulers should be obeyed despite their harm and injustice. Zealotry, on the other hand, is defined only in terms of the intolerant attitude toward the political authority. Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb even distinguishes between what may be termed as injustice because of social and economic inequities, and creedal injustice (*ẓulm al amwāl* and *ẓulm al shirk*, literally the injustice of wealth and that of association). Needless to say, Wahhābī thought is focused on the second kind, whereas the first is tolerable as long as it is accompanied by *tawḥīd*.[9]

Immediate concern for the social is largely absent from the writings of Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb. Not only are tyranny and social injustice minor problems in his view, but numbers are also irrelevant and of no merit. The community may very well be represented by one man, and the Qurʾānic injunction to abide by the community (*jamāʿa*) may refer to an earlier generation of Muslims, rather than a contemporary one. As such, unity is of no importance, and neither are the venues that guarantee the empowerment and participation of the community in deciding its future. Withholding knowledge from the masses is permissible.[10] Similarly, *ijtihād* is not an issue which he seriously addresses. In a couple of instances he denies that he himself was a *mujtahid*, and asserts that in every case where he diverged from a scholar, he relied on

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8 On the life of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb see Amīn Saʿīd, *Sīrat al Imām al Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb* (Beirut, 1384); and A. M. Naṣīr; *Al Shaykh al Imām Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb wa manhajuhu fī mabāḥith al ʿaqīda* (Beirut, 1983).

9 Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, 'Rasāʾil al Daʿwa', in Saʿīd, *Sīrat al Imām al Shaykh*, pp. 43, 116, 139 40; and Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, 'Masāʾil al jāhilīya', in Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Majmūʿat al fatāwā waʾl rasāʾil waʾl ajwiba* (Cairo, 1400), pp. 105, 128.

10 Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, 'Rasāʾil', pp. 57, 112 13, 168; Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Kitāb al tawḥīd*, in Saʿīd, *Sīrat al Imām al Shaykh*, pp. 223, 227; and Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Al Kalimāt al nāfiʿa fī al mukaffirāt al wāqiʿa* (Cairo, 1393), pp. 2 3.

the authority of an earlier one. He also rejects the notion that a *mujtahid* is needed to bypass the authoritative works of the later jurists, in order to go back directly to the tradition of the first generation of Muslims. The Qur'ān, he argues, has ambiguous and unambiguous verses; the latter are straightforward and require neither the explanation of earlier jurists, nor the interpretations of contemporary *mujtahids*. He thus reduces the operativeness of the Qur'ān to its unambiguous verses, and dismisses the need for the intermediary traditions, without replacing them with the empowering tool of *ijtihād*. Elsewhere Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb does not hide his scorn for scholarship that disagrees with his positions, and adds that the enemies of God may have a lot of knowledge and many books.[11]

Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb shared none of the concerns of other eighteenth century thinkers. His enemies were Muslims who held wrong beliefs about God, not tyrants who oppressed Muslims. He separated the creedal and the political, but unlike other eighteenth century thinkers, this separation ultimately benefits the political, and fails to produce alternatives to it. His ideology was generally intolerant of many practices and beliefs of individual Muslims. In his extensive discussion of what constitutes unbelief (*kufr*) and the belief in more than one God (*shirk*), he lists numerous convictions and acts. *Shirk* includes supplicating pious living or dead people, seeking their intercession, making vows to them, offering sacrifices and praying at their tombs and attributing to the dead among them the power to harm or give benefit. *Shirk* also includes the belief in and practice of magic, astrology and divination; the use of amulets and talismans; giving shelter to innovators, and befriending unbelievers; treating rabbis and monks as lords by offering them unquestioning obedience; and worshipping God through intermediaries. In addition, someone who says, for example, 'Take note my brother, may you never know evil', will also qualify for *kufr*, since without knowledge of evil one cannot know *tawḥīd*.[12]

It is through this emphasis on *shirk* and *kufr* that Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb introduces his theory of *tawḥīd*. *Tawḥīd*, he argues, is the exclusive dedication of worship to God; it is worshipping God without *shirk*. The mere profession of faith is not sufficient for Islam because there is a difference

11 Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, 'Rasā'il', pp. 49, 55, 58 62; and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, 'Kitāb Kashf al Shubuhāt', in Sa'īd, *Sīrat al Imām al Shaykh*, pp. 302 3.
12 Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, 'Rasā'il', pp. 46 7, 64 5, 82 4, 93, 105, 108, 136, 145, 155; Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, *Kitāb al tawḥīd*, pp. 232 3, 237 9, 257 8; Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, 'Kashf', pp. 300, 312; Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, *Majmū'at al fatāwā*, pp. 34, 37, 40 4, 109; and Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, *Al Kalimāt*, pp. 4, 6, 45.

between knowing the truth about God (*ʿilm*), actively affirming this truth (*taṣdīq*), and believing in it (*īmān*). The first two kinds of recognition are possible for unbelievers, whereas *īmān* involves full reliance on and fear of God; it also involves loving, hating and making friends or enemies in the way of God.[13]

There are, according to Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, two kinds of *tawḥīd*. The first is the *tawḥīd rubūbī*, the belief that God is the creator and administrator of the universe. This belief is held by most people, and was even held by the Arabs before the advent of Islam. The unbelievers in the pre Islamic *jāhiliyya* (that is, Arabs in a state of ignorance of Islam) knew God, glorified Him, believed that He was the only creator and that He alone could grant sustenance and bring life and death. They were followers of Ibrāhīm, and performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, but they were still guilty of *shirk* because they associated partners with God in worship, and supplicated and sought the intercession of prophets, angels and pious people. They were not driven to oppose the message of Muḥammad until he initiated hostilities against them and cursed their religion and scholars. The second kind of *tawḥīd* demanded of humanity, and required for true Islam, is the *tawḥīd ulūhī*; it entails bearing witness that there is one God and that Muḥammad is His messenger, ridding oneself of *shirk*, abandoning the worship of anything but God, devoting all worship exclusively to God and disowning the unbe lievers and taking them for enemies. Recognising *shirk* is a prerequisite for this second kind of belief, and so is *barāʾa*, dissociating oneself from unbe lievers and unbelief in words and deeds.[14] The concept of *tawḥīd* is thus linked in the thought of Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb to an act of repudiation, which functions as a rite of initiation into Wahhābism. The non initiated remains guilty of *shirk*.

Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb argued that the first battle in Islam (after the death of Muḥammad) was fought by the caliph Abū Bakr (r. 632 4) against people who claimed to be Muslims. They believed in God and in the prophethood of Muḥammad, but refused to pay taxes. This act of disobedience was reason enough for fighting them. The *shirk* of the time of Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, on

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13 Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, 'Rasāʾil', pp. 46, 73 4, 96; Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Kitāb al tawḥīd*, pp. 231 2, 265 7; Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, 'Kashf', p. 299; Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Majmūʿat al fatāwā*, pp. 32, 104; and Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Majmūʿat al tawḥīd*, ed. Rashīd Riḍā (Cairo, n.d.), p. 122.

14 Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, 'Rasāʾil', pp. 46 7, 79, 93, 96; Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, 'Fī tafsīr kalimat al tawḥīd', in *Majmūʿat al tawḥīd*, pp. 106 24; Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Majmūʿat al fatāwā*, pp. 32 44, 56 7, 106 8; Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, 'Kashf', pp. 307, 299; Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Al Kalimāt*, p. 25; and Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, *Kitāb al tawḥīd*, pp. 222, 226, 231 2.

the other hand, is graver than the *shirk* of the first *jāhiliyya*: the people who are supplicated are neither pious people nor objects that are obedient to God, and the *shirk* of the later generations persists in times of plenitude and hardship alike.[15] In this framework, the Wahhābī war against the hidden unbelievers of Islam is not only justifiable, but is itself a condition for proper belief.

Far from the tolerant and rich thought of the vast majority of eighteenth century thinkers, Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb provided a grim and narrow theory of unbelief, which fails to link the creedal to the political or the social, or to generate a meaningful discourse that could justify its perpetuation as a legitimate theoretical reading of Islam. Many, if not all, of the issues discussed by Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb were taken up by other eighteenth century thinkers. A diverse range of views were articulated in the course of either responding to Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb directly, or discussing issues similar to those he addressed. Invariably, however, these views contradicted Wahhābī ideas both in their details and overall spirit. In the following section I will survey some of the anti Wahhābī views of the leading Muslim thinkers of the eight eenth century.

Social tolerance and intellectual radicalism: Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Amīr al-Ṣanʿānī of Yemen

Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al Amīr al Ṣanʿānī was one of the central figures in the tradition of Yemeni reform. He grew up in a Zaydī environment, but early in his life claimed to have become an independent thinker (*mujtahid*). In practice this meant that Ṣanʿānī did not follow one particular school, but relied instead on his independent legal reasoning. For this he came under constant attacks by other Zaydīs accusing him of trying to undermine their school. In auspicious times, he served as the *imām* of the great mosque of Ṣanʿāʾ, but during less fortunate times he was imprisoned by the rulers of the city after his enemies accused him of dropping the name of the Zaydī imams (in this context, rulers) from the Friday sermon. Later, he left his home town and country and travelled to Mecca and Medina where he became more steeped in traditional Sunnī scholarship, especially in the study of the traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad. However, his independent thinking gained him hostility even

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15 Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, ʿRasāʾilʾ, pp. 47, 76, 159; and Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, ʿKashfʾ, p. 307.

there, and eventually he went back to north Yemen where he spent the rest of his life in relative shelter from public criticism.[16]

In every sense of the word, Ṣanʿānī was a persecuted intellectual and social reformer who always managed to antagonise political as well as cultural authorities. This is why upon receiving news of Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb's anti establishment activities, he felt sympathy toward him and his ideas. Ṣanʿānī assumed that the resistance of the religious and political establishments of Arabia to Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb stemmed from the latter's rejection of *taqlīd* and promotion of *ijtihād*. Since these were the main causes that he himself championed, and for which he suffered persecution, Ṣanʿānī also assumed that, as in his own case, the charges levelled against Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb were fabricated by zealous partisans of the schools. The main sentiment expressed by Ṣanʿānī during this first stage was one of self assuring relief at finally finding someone who preached what he himself had preached for years.[17]

Contrary to Ṣanʿānī's first impressions, however, Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb's political views were far from radical, and concern for social and political issues was completely absent from his thought. In contrast, Ṣanʿānī's teach ings had strong social and religious overtones. His political involvement ranged from indirect criticism of the religious establishment working in collaboration with the state, to direct criticism of the rulers of Yemen. On one occasion, Ṣanʿānī wrote to the Imām al Mahdī al ʿAbbās ibn al Ḥusayn (r. 1748 75) to reprimand him for buying *waqf* (endowment) property which, according to Islamic law, is inalienable. In his dīwān, Ṣanʿānī ridicules another imam of Ṣanʿāʾ, al Manṣūr Ḥusayn (r. 1727 48) for turning the Imamate into a plaything in the hands of the tribes. Elsewhere, he calls the Yemeni rulers 'a band that went astray away from truth and guidance, and drifted toward tyranny and corruption'. Ṣanʿānī adds that these rulers surpassed the worst kings in their corruption, and that 'Satan happily con tends and rests assured upon witnessing their actions.'[18] Nowhere in all of his writings does Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb express such concern for social justice or the welfare of the people. Neither does he ever attack rulers for their social and economic policies, or even conceive of assuming the role of a moral authority in relation to them.

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16 Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Shawkānī, *Al Badr al ṭāliʿ bi maḥāsin man baʿd al qarn al sābiʿ*, 2 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), vol. II, pp. 133 6.

17 For discussions based on Ṣanʿānī's first and second poems about Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, see Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al Ṣanʿānī, *Dīwān al Amīr al Ṣanʿānī* (Beirut, 1986), pp. 166 71 and 171 5.

18 Ibid., pp. 244 5.

Ṣanʿānī composed poems on diverse themes; two of Ṣanʿānī's long poems are about Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb. In the first poem Ṣanʿānī maintains that, based on what he heard, the teachings and practices of the ʿNajdī' are ones which he himself promotes. Ṣanʿānī then uses the occasion to express his own views on the doctrinal matters in question. What is notable about this poem is that it says very little about Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, who is the occasion for the poem rather than its subject. The controversy over Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb triggers the discussion, but the substance of this discussion is provided by Ṣanʿānī himself, and the bulk of the poem is about Ṣanʿānī's own views. As years passed, however, Ṣanʿānī learned more about Wahhābī thought, and his initial sympathy gave way to a more cynical attitude. Ṣanʿānī reports that the poem in which he praised Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb was widely circulated, and that he received many criticisms for what he said in it from several people in Mecca, Baṣra and elsewhere. After a period of uncertainty, a Wahhābī shaykh arrived in Yemen, and provided Ṣanʿānī with first hand access to Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb's intolerant writings. Ṣanʿānī then decided that Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb was

> a man who knew a portion of the sharīʿa but did not examine it carefully. Neither did he study under someone who would guide him to the right path, point out to him the useful sciences, and make him understand them. In fact he read some of the writings of Abū al ʿAbbās ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn al Qayyim al Jawziyya and imitated them incompetently, even though they have prohibited imitation.[19]

After realising what the Wahhābīs were doing, Ṣanʿānī felt that he was morally obliged to dissociate himself from their beliefs and acts. He thus composed a second poem which he opens by saying: 'I withdraw the poem which I wrote about the Najdī, for I realised that he is different from what I thought him to be.' He then goes on to chastise Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb for committing atrocities that have no excuse or legal justification. These include violating the souls and wealth of Muslims which God made inviolable, killing Muslims even by assassination, and most outrageous of all accusing the whole Muslim community in all the different countries of unbelief. In the remaining part of the poem Ṣanʿānī distinguishes between two kinds of unbelief: *kufr*, which is a matter of judgement with no automatic legal consequence, and *khurūj ʿan al Dīn*, which entails all the penalties prescribed by the law.

19 Ibid., p. 172.

Intellectual synthesis: Shāh Walī Allāh of India

Shāh Walī Allāh lived and worked in Delhi.[20] During his lifetime he witnessed the final break up of the Mughal empire, and the rise in its place of a number of smaller and weaker states. The invasion of Nādir Shāh in 1739 and the subsequent sack of Delhi further weakened the Muslims and left them vulnerable to the aggression of the numerous non Muslim communities of India. It is not surprising that Walī Allāh's thought was in some measure a response to his perception of the crisis of the time.

In view of the absence of any direct mention of Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb or Wahhābism in the works of Shāh Walī Allāh, scholars have argued that informal links and influences existed between the two figures. Yet the inad equacy of such assertions can be easily verified simply by reading what Shāh Walī Allāh writes in any of his many books. The most obvious difference between Walī Allāh and Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb is that Walī Allāh is a Sufi, whereas it is hard to conceive of a more hostile attitude towards Sufism than that of Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb. Moreover, Walī Allāh was an advocate of the ideas of Ibn al ʿArabī (d. 1240); the latter, however, embodied in the eyes of Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb all the evils of Sufism. Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb even denounced as unbeliever anyone who refrains from denouncing Ibn al ʿArabī.

Unlike Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb, Shāh Walī Allāh had serious social concerns. He was primarily interested in unity, not just as a doctrinal ideal, but as a social reality. He was thus careful not to antagonise the majority of Muslims nor to pose as a radical reformer crusading against mainstream social trends. Throughout his writings he conveys his belief that renewal does not necessa rily mean going against the trend. In one of his visionary dreams he sees the Prophet who informs him that God wants

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20 For general information on Shāh Walī Allāh and his time see the introductory sections of G. N. Jalbani, *Teachings of Shāh Walīyullāh of Delhi* (Lahore, 1967); J. M. S. Baljon, *Religion and thought of Shah Walī Allah Dihlawi* (Leiden, 1986); Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *Shāh Walī Allāh and his times* (Canberra, India, 1980); also see the chapter on the eighteenth century in Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic revival in British India: Deoband, 1860 1900* (Princeton, 1982). On the momentous influence of Walī Allāh on Islamic thought in India, and on the scholarly views about him, see Marcia K. Hermansen, trans. and introduction to *Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi's Ḥujjat Allāh al bāligha: The conclusive argument from God* (Leiden, 1996), pp. xxxiii xxxvi. On the works of Walī Allāh see Mawlawi H. Hidayat Husain, 'The Persian autobiog raphy of Shāh Walīullah bin ʿAbd al Raḥmān al Dihlavī: Its English translation and a list of his works', *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 8 (1912), pp. 161 75.

to bring about some unity to the blessed community through you (*yajmʻ shamlan min shaml al umma al marḥūma bika*); so beware of the common claim that a truthful person is not truthful unless a thousand friends accuse him of heresy; beware also not to oppose people in the branches [of the law] for this contradicts what the Truth wants [for you].[21]

Whereas Wahhābī doctrine functioned as an inquisition like ideology used against ordinary Muslims, Walī Allāh's thought was meant to further the interests of these Muslims. This is clearly manifested in Walī Allāh's definition of belief (*īmān*), where he makes a distinction between this worldly and other worldly *īmān*. The former is the profession of faith on the basis of which worldly action is decided, whereas a person's status in the hereafter is decided on the basis of other worldly faith. In the hereafter, cardinal hypocrisy may entail eternal residence in Hell, yet *takfīr* in this world cannot be predicated on a person's intention. *Takfīr* is only possible on the basis of an unambiguous scriptural statement. Actions as extreme as prostration to trees, stones, idols and stars, although strictly forbidden, are not final evidence of unbelief because there is no explicit text that defines them as such. The accusation of unbelief is valid only when the person performing such forbidden acts declares them to be acts of worship, or professes his or her belief in, and obedience to, creators other than God.[22] Walī Allāh even uses his own reading of certain historical classifications to support a conciliatory distinction between sin and unbelief. He distinguishes between the first and the second *jāhiliyyas*: while in the first one people denied that God is the creator, in the second one they simply turned away from Him, and failed to obey Him as they should.[23] In contrast to Ibn ʻAbd al Wahhāb who asserts that the second *jāhiliyya* is far more serious than the first pre Islamic one, Walī Allāh clearly downplays the graveness of the errors of later generations of Muslims, and leaves no room for indiscriminately accusing them of unbelief.

In one of many references to the problem of *takfīr*, Walī Allāh goes so far as to distinguish between unbelief on the one hand, and rebellion and association on the other. According to Walī Allāh, prostration to a poisonous fly, a practice he once observed and commented on, is definitely forbidden, but what the people who prostrate to this fly do is not real polytheism. Even *shirk*,

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21 See, for example, Shāh Walī Allāh, *Fuyūḍ al Ḥaramayn*, hand written manuscript with a Persian translation by ʻAbd al Ghanī Jaʻfarī (Delhi, n.d.), pp. 62 3. I am grateful to Professor Marcia Hermansen for providing me with a copy of this manuscript.
22 Shāh Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh al bāligha*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1936), vol. I, pp. 60 2, 162 3, and vol. II, p. 38; Shāh Walī Allāh, *Al Tafhīmāt al Ilāhiyya*, ed. G. M. Qāsimī, 2 vols. (Haydarabad, n.d.), vol. II, p. 49.
23 Shāh Walī Allāh, *Al Budūr al bāzigha*, ed. Ṣ. H. al Maʻṣūmī (Haydarabad, n.d.), p. 252.

he maintains, does not rule out the belief that God is the ultimate source from which emanates the mantle of divinity on to other created objects of wor ship.[24] What is noteworthy here is the circumspect manner in which Walī Allāh argues for the prohibition of standard association practices but leaves the question of the final verdict on the doer open. These actions are considered moulds or formal manifestations (*qawālib*) of association (*shirk*), signs by which it can be anticipated (*maẓān*), rather than expressions of its actuality. Thus, because they suggest the possibility of association, and because the law is concerned with formal considerations, not the reality of things, these acts are prohibited. Once again, although Walī Allāh does not question the prohibition of these acts, the final verdict on the person who commits them remains open.

Political radicalism and social tolerance: 'Usman dan Fodio of West Africa

The most cited and best studied of the jihad movements of West and East Africa is the one led by 'Usman dan Fodio that culminated in the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate in present day northern Nigeria. Dan Fodio's Fulani jihad was often directed against fellow Muslims whose beliefs, he argued, were tainted with innovation and heresy; this combination of militancy and an attempt to restore a pristine Islam has led many scholars to assume an affinity between the Fulani jihad and the Wahhābī movement.[25]

'Usman dan Fodio was born in Gobir (in northern Nigeria) in the year 1754. His father was a learned man, and dan Fodio studied with him and with several renowned scholars of the region. He started his career as a wandering teacher in the 1770s, and through the mid 1790s he instructed people on the proper practice of Islam. By the end of this period he had acquired a wide reputation and his following increased considerably. Around the year 1795 the emphasis of his teachings and writings gradually shifted from personal instruc tion to a broader concern with social and political questions and a jihad, which was declared in 1804 and culminated in 1806 in the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate. He died in 1817 in the newly established capital Sokoto, but the

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24 Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh*, vol. I, pp. 117 21.
25 See, for example, Mervyn Hiskett, 'An Islamic tradition of reform in the western Sudan from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century,' *BSOAS*, 25, 3 (1962), pp. 577 96; and William Roff, 'Islamic movements: One or many?', in William Roff (ed.), *Islam and the political economy of meaning: Comparative studies of Muslim discourse* (London, 1987), pp. 43, 46.

caliphate he built continued to flourish under his successors and to inspire many other movements in West Africa.[26]

In the experience of dan Fodio, communities of Muslims were plagued by two sets of inter related problems: improper practice of Islam and social injustice. It was not uncommon for Muslims to glorify stones and trees, offer them sacrifices and seek them for the fulfilment of their needs. Some claimed to be Muslims while they consulted magicians and soothsayers, claimed knowledge of the hidden, made vows at the tombs of pious people and mocked Islam and Muslims. They neglected performance of religious obliga tions and participated in corrupting and forbidden ceremonies. Corruption also crept into families: men married far more than the four wives allowed by the law, and the first and oldest of these wives was allowed full control of the others; inheritance was usurped by the strongest heir among the descendants of the diseased; Muslims cheated in their commercial transactions; and moral laxity and decadence prevailed. In short, Muslims emulated the customs of unbelievers in their private and public lives.[27]

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26 On the life and writings of dan Fodio, and on the Fulanī jihad movements see, for example, Marilyn Robinson Waldman, 'The Fulani Jihād: A reassessment', *Journal of African History*, 6, 3 (1965), pp. 333 55; J. O. Hunwick, 'Religion and state in the Songhay Empire 1464 1591', in I. M. Lewis (ed.), *Islam in tropical Africa* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 296 317; Murray Last, 'Reform in West Africa: The Jihād movements of the nineteenth century', in J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.), *The history of West Africa*, vol. II (London, 1974), pp. 1 47; Peter B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* (London, 1982); Mervyn Hiskett, *The development of Islam in West Africa* (London, 1984); and B. G. Martin, *Muslim brotherhoods in nineteenth century Africa* (Cambridge, 1976). An excellent study of the development of the thought of dan Fodio is Louis Brenner, 'Muslim thought in eighteenth century West Africa: The case of Shaykh Uthman b. Fudi', in N. Levtzion and John O. Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth century renewal and reform in Islam* (Syracuse, 1987), pp. 39 67. For material relating to the status and role of education before and during the jihad see Louis Brenner and Murray Last, 'The role of language in West African Islam', *Africa*, 55, 4 (1985), pp. 432 46; A. D. Bivar and M. Hiskett, 'The Arabic literature of Nigeria to 1804: A provisional account', *BSOAS*, 25 (1962), pp. 104 49; and Mervyn Hiskett, 'Material relating to the state of learning among the Fulani before their Jihād', *BSOAS*, 19 (1957), pp. 550 78.

27 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, 'The *Wathīqat ahl Al Sūdān*: A manifesto of the Fulani Jihād', Arabic text and translation with introduction by A. D. H. Bivar, *Journal of African History*, 2, 2 (1961), p. 240; 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, 'The translation of the *nūr al albāb*', Arabic text and translation with introduction by Yusuf Wali, *Kano Studies*, 2, 1 (1980), pp. 18 20, 25, 27 30, 33 4; 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, '*Sirāj al Ikhwān*', in Hiskett, 'An Islamic tradition of reform', p. 579; 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, 'Unbelief in the western Sudan: 'Uthmān dan Fodio's '*Ta'līm al ikhwān*', ed. and trans. with an introduction by B. G. Martin, *MES*, 4 (1976), p. 63; 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, '*Bayān al bida' al Shayṭānīya*', in Hiskett, 'An Islamic tradition of reform', p. 594; 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, *Bayān wujūb al hijrā 'alā al 'ibād*, ed. and trans. F. H. El Masri (Khartoum and Oxford, 1978), p. 29; 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, '*Kitāb al Farq*: A work on the Habe Kingdoms attributed to 'Uthmān Dan Fodio', ed. and trans. with introduction by M. Hiskett, *BSOAS*, 23, no. 2 (1960), pp. 560 1, 563; and 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, '*Naṣā'iḥ al Umma al Muḥammadīya*', in 'An Islamic tradition of reform', pp. 586 7.

Clearly, then, dan Fodio attacked what he considered non Islamic practi ces. However, despite his emphasis on the proper practice of Islam and on rejecting non Islamic practices that lead to *kufr*, dan Fodio's primary concern was social. In contrast to Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, creed for dan Fodio was not an aim in itself, but was an integral part of his larger scheme of social reform. Dan Fodio's main objective was to create the kind of Muslim defined by this creed. In the first stage of his career, dan Fodio envisioned a solution for the problems of Muslims by modelling a society after the Islamic ideal. His concern for the community and his tolerance in dealing with individual Muslims fuels the positive and constructive articulation of notions of belief and *kufr*. He insists that unbelief can be discerned only through deeds, and not through what is in the heart. On numerous occasions he warns of the great danger in accusing Muslims of unbelief on account of sins, and implies that it is definitely *kufr* to accuse the whole community of unbelief. The sanctity of a Muslim's blood and dignity is unequivocally protected by the law, and judgement about unbelief can only be made on the basis of a transmitted tradition that is not the subject of speculation or analogy. He further distinguishes between prohibited and reprehensible innovations. Muslims are discouraged and not prohibited from the latter. He strongly condemns denying the blessings (*karāmāt*) of pious people, and argues that such denials are themselves prohibited innovations. He maintains that it is permissible to seek these blessings by visiting the tombs of saints, and that this permission is confirmed by the actions of the companions of the Prophet.[28]

Dan Fodio's initial move to institute an alternative order based on Islam was at least partly successful; it clearly alarmed the authorities and provoked them to take measures against the growing autonomous communities of Fulānī Muslims. In the second phase of his career, dan Fodio led his community in a confrontation from which he emerged victorious. The ideological position of dan Fodio was also transformed in conjunction with changes in his political strategies. He considered the gravest problem facing Muslims in this new stage to be the hegemony of the un Islamic rule. To lead an Islamic life, he argued, Muslims had to seize power. His ideas were increasingly influenced by the belief that social ills were exacerbated by the rule of unbelievers, who forced Muslims to abide by un Islamic customs

28 Ibn Fūdī, *Nūr*, pp. 21, 28; Ibn Fūdī, '*Naṣā'iḥ*', p. 588; Ibn Fūdī, '*Sirāj*', p. 585; and Ibn Fūdī, '*Ta'līm*', pp. 54 5, 60 1, 69; Ibn Fūdī, '*Bayān al bida'*', p. 594. Dan Fodio also criticises his teacher Jibrīl ibn 'Umar for his excessive zeal and harsh evaluation of Muslims, '*Naṣā'iḥ*', p. 589.

and laws. The targets of dan Fodio's attacks included, as before, unjust laws and customs that sharply contradict Islamic norms. What is new in this formulation is that the rulers are held responsible for the perpetuation of this corruption. The status of a town, dan Fodio added, is the status of its rulers, and it is obligatory for Muslims to leave towns ruled by unbelievers for a land where Islam prevails. A Muslim should also refrain from commercial exchange with these towns, should not support them in any way against other Muslims and, if possible, he should participate in the obligatory jihad against them. A capable Muslim who fails to emigrate from a land of unbelief chooses to belong to that land and must bear the consequences of his or her choice.[29]

The apparent contradiction between dan Fodio's early tolerance and his later sweeping *takfīr* is an issue which he confronted and creatively resolved. In contrast to the creedal *takfīr* of Ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb, *takfīr* on the basis of the ruler is a political *takfīr*, which is not equated to individual unbelief. Dan Fodio wrote extensively on the difference between the laws that apply to a genuine unbeliever in enemy territories, and a Muslim residing therein. These laws addressed such questions as whether it is permissible to continue fighting a retreating Muslim as opposed to a retreating unbeliever, and the status of the person, his family and wives and his wealth once captured by Muslims. It is significant that, legally, the treatment of Muslims guilty of political *kufr* or loyalty to the unbelievers is similar to the treatment of Muslim criminals, and not apostates.[30]

The incorporation of tolerant and inclusive formulations from the first stage of his career through the ideological scheme of a radically different stage clearly indicates the seriousness with which dan Fodio treated ideology, and how his early thought, together with the transformed conditions of the later phase of his struggle, were important in shaping his later ideas about society and politics. In contrast to Wahhābī political neutrality and social inflexibility, both dan Fodio's thought and his actual practice exhibit a model of political radicalism and social tolerance.

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29 'Uthmān ibn Fūdī, 'An early Fulani conception of Islam', trans. of *Tanbīh al ikhwān* with introduction by H. R. Palmer, *Journal of the African Society*, 13 (1913 14) and 14 (1914 15), part 1, pp. 53 54, 414; Ibn Fūdī, 'Al Farq', pp. 560 3; Ibn Fūdī, 'Wathīqat', pp. 239 40; Ibn Fūdī, *Bayān wujūb*, pp. 12 20, 21 4, 46 9; Ibn Fūdī, 'Ta'līm', pp. 53, 65, 70, 73; and Ibn Fūdī, 'Sirāj', pp. 584 5.

30 For example, while the person, children, wives and wealth of an unbeliever can be seized, the same measures can only be applied to the wealth of a Muslim captured in enemy territory; Ibn Fūdī, *Bayān wujūb*, pp. 107 8 and passim. See also Ibn Fūdī, 'Wathīqat', p. 242; Ibn Fūdī, 'Nūr', p. 22; and Ibn Fūdī, 'Ta'līm', pp. 61, 72.

The empire of the jurists: Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Shawkānī

Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Shawkānī was another Yemeni scholar of Zaydī back ground; he served as chief judge under three of the imams of Ṣanʿāʾ. He belonged to a long tradition of Zaydism in Yemen which was open to Sunnī Islam, not in politics alone, but in serious efforts to rework the doctrines and the laws of the school. Shawkānī witnessed the changes in the international and regional political scene of his time, and was directly involved in dealing with the political ramifications of these changes. He was an erudite, prolific and original writer, who wrote over 150 books. The influence of Shawkānī's thought extended beyond Yemen and his own lifetime. His professed fol lowers include Ṣiddīq Khān al Qanūjī (d. 1890) in India and Sanūsī of North Africa.[31]

Like Ṣanʿānī before him, Shawkānī had limited initial sympathy for some of the puritanical Wahhābī doctrines; yet, ultimately, he was at radical odds with Wahhābism. Wahhābīs are discussed in several biographies in Shawkānī's *Al Badr al ṭāliʿ* in connection with individuals who were politi cally involved in the unfolding events of Ḥijāz under the Saʿūd family. Significantly, there is no separate entry for Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb in this book which is devoted to celebrate the virtues of Muslims after the seventh century of *hijra*; it would seem that, in Shawkānī's assessment, Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb did not merit inclusion in this book. One individual involved in the politics of Ḥijāz in the Wahhābī period is Ghālib ibn Musāʿid, the *sharīf* of Mecca and its governor.[32] Ghālib's authority was challenged by the ruler of Najd, ʿAbd al ʿAzīz ibn Saʿūd. After some attempts to fight back, Ghālib eventually gave in and joined the Wahhābīs, but kept on oscillating between them and the Ottomans. Shawkānī notes that tribal groups that come under the control of the Wahhābīs observe the rituals of Islam; he further notes that many of the Syrian nomads living between Ḥijāz and Ṣaʿda have pledged obedience to Ibn Saʿūd, either willingly or out of fear, and have since started to observe the religious obligations, whereas before the

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31 Aside from the recent book length study by Bernard Haykel, *Revival and reform in Islam: The legacy of Muhammad al Shawkānī* (Cambridge, 2003), there is little scholarship in European languages on Shawkānī; see Husayn ibn ʿAbdullah al ʿAmri, *The Yemen in the 18th and 19th centuries: A political and intellectual history* (London, 1985). Also see ʿAbd al Ghanī Qāsim Ghālib al Shirajī, *Al Imām al Shawkānī: Ḥayātuhu wa fikruhu* (Beirut and Sana, 1988).
32 For the following analysis based on Ghālib's biography see Shawkānī, *Al Badr al ṭāliʿ*, vol. II, pp. 4 24.

Wahhābī takeover, they hardly knew anything about Islam, and barely knew how to profess the *shahāda* (bearing witness that there is no God but God and that Muḥammad is His Prophet). Clearly, therefore, for this change the Wahhābīs are to be credited.

Any positive assessment of the role of the Wahhābīs implied from this account is quickly dissipated when Shawkānī abruptly remarks that 'they [the Wahhābīs] believe that anyone who is not under the authority of the state of the leader of Najd and who does not obey his commands is outside the pale of Islam (*khārij ʿan al Islām*)'. Shawkānī adds that despite his success in spreading their control over new territories, he has received disturbing reports about the behaviour of Ibn Saʿūd. Foremost among these is that Ibn Saʿūd considers violable the blood of a person who pleads for help from anyone but God, be it a Prophet, saint or anyone else. Shawkānī agrees that if such pleading comes from someone who truly believes in and worships the dead person to whom he or she supplicates, or from someone who relies on the dead more than God, then this pleading is tantamount to unbelief. He further maintains that if a person does not repent, then his blood and wealth are violable like other apostates. Yet this seeming con firmation by Shawkānī of the Wahhābī stand on intercession in effect amounts to a rejection of this stand: in contrast to the qualifications stipulated by Shawkānī, Ibn ʿAbd al Wahhāb had devoted most of his meagre writings to prove that no qualification whatsoever would vindicate a person who invokes the dead, irrespective of the actual intentions and beliefs of this person.

Shawkānī's criticism of Wahhābī ideas takes more direct forms. Immediately following the above discussion, he reports that the leader of Najd 'considers lawful the shedding of the blood of a person who does not attend the congre gational prayer; if this is true', Shawkānī adds, 'then it is in disagreement with the rules of the divine law'. All along, it seems that Shawkānī tries to maintain a distance and to air critical views of extreme Wahhābī ideas while avoiding a direct confrontation with the threatening neighbouring power of Ibn Saʿūd. Shawkānī, it seems, was trying to disarm the Wahhābī state, by depriving it of creedal ideological claims against the imamate of Ṣanʿāʾ, while pointing out the problematic ideological claims of the Wahhābīs. Generally, Shawkānī's assessment of the Wahhābīs was conditioned by two considerations: that their opponents were not necessarily better than them; and that his response to the Wahhābīs must be carefully worded to allow him to diffuse the political tensions arising from ideological and political differences between the Saudi state and the imamate of Ṣanʿā.

An additional factor that conditioned Shawkānī's assessment of the Wahhābīs was his own dislike of nomads, and his positive disposition toward disciplining them. The Wahhābīs, therefore, represented to Shawkānī a possible means of imposing such discipline over the unruly nomads of Najd. Shawkānī maintains that nomads pose a continuous threat to the social order of Muslim cities, are fundamentally alien to urban Islam and are a source of zeal and social strife. It is thus understandable that Shawkānī should turn against the Wahhābīs when it became evident that, instead of controlling it, they were imposing the hegemony of vulgar nomadism on urban Islam.

In one exchange with a scholar from Najd who came to Ṣanʿāʾ and presented him with a set of questions, Shawkānī discusses the juxtaposition of the words *imān* (belief) and *shirk* (association) in the Qurʾān (Sūrat Yūsuf 12: 106). After a long theoretical discussion, Shawkānī concludes that 'it is correct to say that true belief (*imān*) can coexist with hidden association (*shirk*) in some believers, and that belief in the general sense of the word can coexist with true association as was common among the people of the *jāhiliyya*'.[33] This view is diametrically opposed to the Wahhābī negative definition of faith as the absence of any practical trace of association or unbelief. Thus, despite his pragmatic engagement with Wahhābīs, Shawkānī unambiguously opposed the central premise of Wahhābi ideology. This opposition applies equally to the evaluation of the living as well as the dead. In contrast to the Wahhābī dissociation from alleged unbelieving Muslims, even after they die, Shawkānī maintains that 'One who scrutinizes his own religion and busies himself with his own faults has enough to keep him busy from slandering dead people and cursing those whose status before the Creator of all creation he does not know.'[34]

In further opposition to the Wahhābī use of the concept of *tawḥīd*, Shawkānī ascertains that a person who freely utters the word of *tawḥīd* right before s/he dies is definitely destined to paradise. This, Shawkānī adds, is the result of the 'benevolence of God which he assigns to whomever He desires. If anyone denies this, we say to him this has been established to be true on the authority of the Prophet of God … despite your nose.' Shawkānī then adds that 'Some people went out of their way to no avail in order to reject this sound tradition, and other sound traditions with similar meanings … Some

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33 Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Shawkānī, *Fāʾiq al kisā fī jawāb ʿalim al Ḥasā*, ed. M. Ismāʿīl (Amman, 1994), pp. 43 50.

34 Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Shawkānī, *Nayl al awṭār min aḥādīth sayyid al akhyār, sharḥ muntaqā al akhbār*, ed. M. S. Hāshim (Beirut, 1995), vol. II, pt 4, p. 118.

have tried hard to make it conditional on the absence of an impediment, yet none of these [attempts] have even a trace of knowledge in them.'[35]

To be sure, Shawkānī was strict in delineating what constitutes unbelief, but he was equally adamant in restricting the practical legal implications of this delineation. Put differently, Shawkānī exhausted all possible ways of restricting the possibility of taking legal action against a Muslim who may be accused of unbelief or other major religious offences. An imam, Shawkānī argues, is not required to impose the ḥadd penalty on a person merely on the basis of reports that he did what is punishable by this penalty. Furthermore, as a general rule, the sanctity of the privacy of a Muslim should deter the imam from further investigation of alleged violations of the divine law. Moreover, according to Shawkānī, textual evidence whose import is to avert the imposition of penalties is stronger than evidence in support of their imposition (awlawiyyat mā yadra' al ḥadd 'alā mā yūjibuhu). Shawkānī also notes that the execution of a ḥadd penalty requires both the confession of the doer of the act that is punishable by this penalty, and the legal testimony against him. Therefore, the divine law, as Shawkānī understands it, militates against the condemnation of individual Muslims. Moreover, it is possible to pass a theoretical judgement that a certain person is not a Muslim while at the same time desisting from executing the legal implications of this judgement. In fact, according to Shawkānī, this is the universal rule that governs the treatment of Muslims unless a particular individual expressly denounces Islam and publicly pronounces his or her unbelief.[36]

Sufism: the old and the new

One aspect of Islamic culture that has been commonly invoked in revisionist histories of the eighteenth century is the so called neo Sufism: a kind of Sufism characterised by the tendency to emphasise a Muḥammad oriented mysticism, and to harmonise Sufism with the formal, legal teachings of Islam. The term is used to refer to a demysticised Sufism which, in the words of Fazlur Rahman, is 'nothing else but the postulates of the orthodox religion'.[37]

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35 Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al Shawkānī, *Tuḥfat al dhākirīn bi uddat al ḥiṣn al ḥaṣīn* (Beirut, 1984), pp. 347 8.
36 Shawkānī, *Nayl al awṭār*, vol. IV, pt 7, p. 158.
37 See Rahman, 'Revival and reform in Islam', pp. 635, 637; and Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 153 202, 205 7, 220, 237 9, where Rahman speaks of a Sufism stripped of its ecstatic and metaphysical character. For similar arguments see J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 103 4. Also see Voll, *Continuity and change*, p. 55. For additional examples of the use of the concept of

Following Rahman, numerous historians have asserted that this neo Sufism is central to all pre modern reform movements. Various studies characterise neo Sufism in terms of the rejection of popular Sufi practices; rejection of the philosophical mysticism of the great Sufi thinker Ibn al ʿArabī; rejection of the strict Sufi hierarchy (the *murshid murīd* / teacher disciple relationship); and the rejection of imitation (*taqlīd*) in legal matters. On the other hand, this neo Sufism supposedly is characterised by initiation into mass organisa tions; union with the Prophet and a Muḥammad oriented mysticism (*Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*); legitimation through chains of authority (*silsila*) going all the way to the Prophet; willingness to take political and military action in defence of Islam; emphasis on Ḥadīth; and the right to exercise independent legal reasoning (*ijtihād*). In short, the term neo Sufism is used to refer to Sufi movements that make deliberate efforts to distance themselves from excessive Sufi practices, and to conform to 'orthodox' beliefs and practices. As such, eighteenth century Sufism is viewed as void of its spiritual dimensions, and as merely a mass movement in the service of legalistic Islam.

While these assertions about neo Sufism are stated without evidence, several elaborate studies have been written to illustrate the inadequacy of the paradigm of neo Sufism for understanding actual developments in eighteenth century Sufism, both at the social and the intellectual levels.[38] Among the many criticisms levelled against this concept is the evidence for a continuing and pervasive influence of Ibn ʿArabī both at the levels of high as well as popular Sufism. These studies also point out that the said anthropo centric tendencies of the Muḥammad oriented Sufism were already intro duced by Ibn ʿArabī himself in the thirteenth century, and that this kind of Sufism can be, and in fact most of the time was, a deeply mystical principle that reinforces rather than undermines the spiritual, imaginative dimension of Sufism. Critics of the concept of neo Sufism have also noted that the rejection of imitation (and of legal schools or *madhhab*s) which accompanies the emphasis on the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* is not replaced by personal legal

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neo Sufism see Martin, *Muslim brotherhoods in nineteenth century Africa*, p. 202; the introduction to Levitzion and Voll (eds.), *Eighteenth century renewal and reform in Islam*, pp. 3 20; Edmund Burke III and Ira M. Lapidus (eds.), *Islam, politics and social movements* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 20; and Michael Gilsenen, *Recognizing Islam: An anthropologist's introduction* (London, 1982), pp. 157 63.

38 See, for example, R. S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic saint: Ahmad ibn Idris and the Idrisi tradition* (Evanston, IL, 1990); and more fully in R. S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke, 'Neo Sufism reconsidered', *Der Islam*, 70, 1 (1993), pp. 52 87; and Bernd Radtke, 'Sufism in the eighteenth century: An attempt at a provisional appraisal', *Die Welt des Islams*, 36, 3 (1996), pp. 326 64. See also Bernd Radtke, 'Lehrer Schuler Enkel. Aḥmad b. Idrīs, Muḥammad ʿUthmān al Mīrganī, Ismāʿīl al Walī', *Oriens*, 33 (1992), pp. 94 132; and Bernd Radtke, 'Warum ist der Sufi orthodox?' *Der Islam*, 71, 2 (1994), pp. 302 7.

judgement which has recourse to reason; in other words, this kind of mysti cism does not represent a shift from a notion of authority which stands above individual reason to one which is personal; rather, the alternative is the notion of personal access to God.

To be sure, Sufism continued to thrive in all of its varieties in both popular and elite circles. A wide spectrum of Sufi writings was also produced in this period. Yet, despite some innovation in Sufi thought, there were no radical departures from older patterns of Sufi thinking and practice. With the excep tion of Walī Allāh, the attempts of eighteenth century reformers to confront the crises of their societies did not rely on a reformulation of Sufi thought. For example, the great Sufi master of the early eighteenth century, ʿAbd al Ghanī al Nābulsī (d. 1731), was aware of critiques of Sufism, but did not attempt to reformulate it or reform it from within; rather, he defended commonly held esoteric beliefs and practices as well as more complex philo sophical Sufi concepts. Additionally, he attempted to reconcile Sufism with orthodox, legalistic understandings of Islam.[39] At the other end of the long eighteenth century, Sanūsī relied on traditional Sufism to mobilise and organ ise Muslims, but reserved his intellectual reformative views for the subject of Ḥadīth. At a much later period in the long eighteenth century, ʿAbd al Qādir al Jazāʾirī (d. 1883) propounded a model of political radicalism and traditional Sufism.[40] The foundations of eighteenth century reforms, therefore, were not strictly related to Sufism. In this sense, neither the emergence of so called neo Sufism, nor the Wahhābī rejection of Sufism was characteristic of eighteenth century reform. In contrast to what is implied in the term neo Sufism, eighteenth century Sufism was neither void of spiritualism, nor was it subservient to the dry legalistic forms of Islam. Many of the reformers were either active Sufis or had some affinity with Sufism, which they practised in traditional ways. Yet, those reformers who criticised prevalent Sufi beliefs and practices did not conform to the Wahhābī model for this critique. In fact, despite their different views on the subject, all of the main reformers of the period distanced themselves from Wahhābī like hostility toward Sufism.

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39 For biographies of Nābulsī see Muḥammad Khalīl al Murādī, *Silk al durar fī aʿyān al qarn al thānī ʿashar*, vol. III (Baghdad, 1301), pp. 33 7; and Muḥammad Amīn al Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al athar fī aʿyān al qarn al ḥādī ʿashar* (Cairo, 1284), p. 433. For a comprehensive study of Nābulsī see Barbara Von Schlegell, 'Sufism in the Ottoman Arab world: ʿAbd al Ghanī al Nābulsī (d. 1731)', Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley (1997).
40 For a contrast between his traditional Sufism and radical politics see, for example, ʿAbd al Qādir al Jazāʾirī, *Al Mawāqif*, 3 pts in 2 vols. (Damascus, 1966); ʿAbd al Qādir al Jazāʾirī, *Ḥusām al dīn li qaṭʿ shubah al murtaddīn*, manuscript Landberg MSS 405, Beineke Library, Yale University.

In the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, both Shāh Walī Allāh and Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Sanūsī attempted to reconcile Islamic lega lism and spirituality. Yet despite their comparable final objectives, each had his own distinct method of recasting Sufism in the course of an attempt to vindicate it and establish its legitimacy. Walī Allāh's defence of Sufism did not prevent him from criticising Sufi excesses.[41] His creative interpretations, however, were far more important than his criticism. To start with, he argued that the silence of the law on such subjects as Sufism does not mean they cannot be pursued. The common sciences of his time, Walī Allāh maintains, are the demonstrative sciences (*burhān*) used especially in theology, the transmitted sciences (*samʿ*), that mark the sciences that are specifically Islamic such as Ḥadīth and the gnostic or mystical sciences (*wijdān*). This third subject, Walī Allāh adds, is universally accepted among Muslims; it either stands above other sciences in the authority it commands amongst Muslims, or, when not explicitly recog nised, has penetrated the contents and idioms of all other forms of religious knowledge.[42] Sufism, therefore, is not just legitimate but also unavoidable.

Yet despite this argument in defence of the possibility of higher Sufi knowledge, Walī Allāh's reform project was not primarily concerned with establishing the legitimacy of Sufism and the superiority of mystical know ledge. Rather, his main aim was to resolve conflicts resulting from exclusive claims of intellectual authority, and to demonstrate the relative legitimacy of each of the various intellectual disciplines. His discourse on Sufism, therefore, was neither meant to establish the superiority of the Sufis over the jurists or the traditionalists, nor to produce a 'neo Sufism' which is subservient to legalistic Islam.

Another purpose of Walī Allāh's reform project was to resolve the internal conflicts within Sufism itself. On one of several similar occasions, Walī Allāh describes a visionary encounter with the Prophet Muḥammad in which the Prophet informed him that, as in the case of the legal schools, all the Sufi orders (*tarīqas*) are equal. Walī Allāh further describes similar 'general provi sions' which were bestowed on him from the Prophet; the translation of these general provisions in specific cases constitutes, according to Walī Allāh, the substance of revival. Walī Allāh also maintains that in this encounter, the Prophet appointed him imam and confirmed the theoretical as well as practical validity of both his particular Sufi *tarīqa* and his legal school. The

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41 See, for example, Shāh Walī Allāh, *The sacred knowledge of the higher functions of the mind: Translation of alṭāf al quds*, trans. G. N. Jalbani and revised by D. Pendlebury (London, 1982), p. 82; and Walī Allāh, *Tafhīmāt*, vol. I, pp. 282 5.
42 Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat Allāh*, vol. I, p. 18; Walī Allāh, *Tafhīmāt*, vol. I, pp. 110 12, 266 7.

Prophet however, informed Walī Allāh that this new *tarīqa* and school of law which are suitable for all Muslims and not just a select few are only acceptable on the condition that they do not constitute an added cause of disagreement and conflict among Muslims.[43]

The writings of Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Sanūsī represent yet another distinct project of revival. Sanūsī was born in 1787 in Mustaghānim in Algeria.[44] He received his early education in his home town and later in Fās before he went on pilgrimage to Mecca; there he met and became a loyal disciple of Aḥmad ibn Idrīs al Fāsī, founder of the Idrīsīyya order. After Fāsī's death in 1836, Sanūsī founded his first *zāwiya* (Sufi lodge) on Mount Abū Qubays outside Mecca, but he had to leave it because of opposition and pressure from local scholars and politicians. In 1840 he headed back to North Africa. In the year 1842 he established his first headquarters on al Jabal al Akhḍar, halfway between Tripoli and the Egyptian border. From this *zāwiya*, Sanūsī dispatched missionaries to the southern and western parts of Libya, where the presence of Ottoman or French authorities, the strong orders of North African cities and the influence of the Azharite scholars were minimal. Between the years 1846 and 1853 he went on a second long pilgrimage to Mecca, and soon after his return he moved his headquarters further south to Jaghbūb, where he spent the final years of his life. Upon his death in 1859, tens of *zāwiya*s were already established throughout Libya and elsewhere in Egypt, Algeria and the Sahara. The spread of the Sanūsiyya continued under the leadership of the founder's two sons, and was only halted by the expanding French power.

Sanūsī provides a third example of a strong and active commitment to Sufism, although with a much different emphasis than Walī Allāh or Nābulsī. Sanūsī led a movement organised largely along Sufi lines. He wrote exten sively on Sufism, yet although he dedicated some of his writings to a dis cussion of its intellectual content, he was more interested in formal descriptions of Sufi orders, and in defending some Sufi related notions and practices.[45] In one of his books on Sufism, he describes the rituals of initiation

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43 Walī Allāh, *Fuyūḍ al Ḥaramayn*, pp. 30 2, 49.

44 On the life of Sanūsī see Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Sanūsīyah: A study of a revivalist movement in Islam* (Leiden, 1958); E. E. Evans Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (London, 1954). For a study that covers both the life and works of Sanūsī, see Knut S. Vikør, *Sufi and scholar on the desert edge: Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al Sanūsī and his brotherhood* (Evanston, IL, 1995).

45 Muḥammad ʿAlī al Sanūsī, ʿKitāb al masāʾil al ʿashr al musammā bughyat al maqāṣid fī khulāṣat al marāṣidʾ, and Muḥammad ʿAlī al Sanūsī, ʿIqāẓ al wasnān fī al ʿamal bi al ḥadīth waʾl Qurʾānʾ, both in M. A. ibn Ghalbūn (ed.), *Al Majmūʿa al mukhtara* (Manchester, 1990).

and the prayer formulas of some forty Sufi orders, suggesting that they are equally valid ways to reach the same objective.[46] Unlike Walī Allāh, he does not try to justify or reconcile the differences between the various contra dictory Sufi concepts, and attempts instead to resolve contradictions between Sufism and legal Islam.

In his writings, Sanūsī focuses on the formal task of legitimising Sufi practice against Wahhābī like criticisms, and on the organisational aspects which formed the backbone of the Sanūsiyya enterprise. Sufi knowledge is construed not in terms of discussions of the substance of the Sufi experience, but as a systematically rationalised conduct. Beyond his organisational ingen uity, however, Sanūsī's main reform ideas are in the field of Ḥadīth and not intellectual Sufism. It is thus understandable that, despite all of his praise of Sufi knowledge, he does not confer the title 'the inheritors of the prophets' (*warathat al anbiyā'*) on fellow Sufis, but bestows it instead on the traditionalist scholars of Ḥadīth.[47]

On the opposite end of the spectrum of reformative attitudes towards Sufism, Shawkānī was adamant in his critique of many Sufi practices, but he reflected on his own position regarding individual Sufis and reformulated this position over the course of his intellectual career. In one such instance of self reflection, Shawkānī intimates that earlier in his life, while still in the prime of his youth, he had written an anti Sufi poem, but that he retracted what he said in that poem in his mature days. In this account, Shawkānī attributes his change of heart to the realisation that the proper worship of God is not done through accusing other Muslims of unbelief (*lam yata'abbadnī Allāh bi takfīr man kān*), and that it is far better to busy oneself with one's own faults than with those of others (*ṭūbā li man shaghalathu 'uyūbuhu*). This moral stand aside, however, Shawkānī justifies his change of mind by reverting from the criticism of individual actors to the criticism of the committed acts, from the specification (*takhṣīṣ*) to the generalisation (*ta'mīm*) of rulings.[48]

The regional character of eighteenth-century reform

One of the most central ideas asserted by revisionist historians of the eighteenth century is that of continuity between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One view maintains that eighteenth century reform

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46 Muḥammad ʿAlī al Sanūsī, *Al salsabīl al muʿīn fī al ṭarāʾiq al arbaʿīn*, in M. A. ibn Ghalbūn (ed.), *Al majmūʿa al mukhtara* (Manchester, 1990).
47 Al Sanūsī, 'Iqāẓ', p. 133.
48 Shawkānī, *Al Badr al ṭāliʿ*, vol. II, pp. 37 9.

and modern fundamentalism are linked by virtue of a shared 'fundamentalist mode of Islam' which presumably continues to unfold from its formulations in the eighteenth century to the modern period. Proponents of this thesis maintain that several Islamic, 'socio moral' reform movements were active in the eighteenth century, that these movements were not inspired by the encounter with Europe and that they laid the foundation for an indigenous 'fundamentalist' tradition which continues till today.[49] To be sure, advocates of this view do not deny the effect of the encounter with the West on modern reform, but they still maintain that the eighteenth century had its autonomous agents of innovation and its own brand of original renovation and renewal, and that this indigenous tradition is partly responsible for modern renewal and fundamentalism. However, this attempt to trace the roots of modern Islamic reform to the eighteenth century fails to recognise that the problems that informed the reform ideas of the eighteenth century bear no resemblance whatsoever to those that inspired and drove later reforms. The most noticeable absence from the thought of all the major thinkers of the eighteenth century is Europe. Even when some of these thinkers were aware of infringements on Muslim lands, they did not appreciate the extent of the threat these infringements presented, nor did such events influence their thought: Europe, as a cultural challenge, was completely absent. Of course, the exact opposite is true of later Islamic thought, where the challenge of Europe drives all the famous thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The responses to Europe echoed in the ideas of these thinkers ranged from rejecting Europe in all of its political and intellectual dimensions, to striking a compromise and adopting some of the European institutions, and all the way to embracing these institutions wholeheartedly. In all cases, they were responses or reactions to what became the ever present reality of European hegemony.

To substantiate the continuity thesis, reference is often made to an informal network of teachers and students in the Ḥaramayn (Mecca and Medina). Advocates of this view further maintain that, although there were no formal

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49 For uses of the term 'socio moral' see, for example, Rahman, 'Revival and reform in Islam'; Rahman, *Islam and modernity*; and Voll, *Continuity and change*. The main scholar ship on the continuity thesis is by John Voll; see, for example, *Continuity and change*; 'Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab world: Egypt and the Sudan', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms observed* (Chicago, 1991), pp. 345 402; 'Muḥammad Ḥayyā al Sindī and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al Wahhāb: An analysis of an intellectual group in eighteenth century Madīna', *BSOAS*, 38, 1 (1974), pp. 32 9; 'The Sudanese Mahdī: Frontier fundamentalist', *IJMES*, 10 (1979), pp. 145 66; and 'Hadith scholars and tariqahs: An ulama group in the 18th century Haramayn and their impact in the Islamic world', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 15, 3 4 (1980), pp. 264 73.

organisational links between eighteenth century movements, the ideas of the scholars in this network were preached in various parts of the Muslim world, providing a measure of intellectual coherence and family resem blance among these movements.[50] In contrast to this focus on transregional networks of scholars, I note the development of regional reform traditions that drew heavily on local learning and canons. The various universal visions of eighteenth century thinkers had their roots in earlier regional traditions. Along with many peripatetic scholars who travelled in the eighteenth century in pursuit of knowledge, the major thinkers of the eighteenth century either travelled after their ideas matured and their views were articulated or they did not travel at all, and they were educated within deeply rooted regional traditions. It is thus possible to speak of an Indian school of thought, a Yemeni school and a West African one. It is perhaps even possible to claim that ground breaking intellectual contributions were made within the context of mature and erudite regional traditions, whereas the intellectual contributions of travelling, apprentice scholars, important as they were from a social perspective, were derivative. The regional rootedness of the main reform traditions, however, does not imply that their intellectual horizons were limited or parochial. Quite the contrary, regional traditions were revitalised by opening them up to the legacies of other Muslim regions and schools of thought. Although eighteenth century thought introduced significant departures from traditional epistemolo gies, these departures were generated from within the tradition and did not derive from alternative cultural systems.

Despite their shared anxieties, the reformers of the eighteenth century proposed to address the problems of their time in diverse ways. Within the context of a shared and universal Islamic intellectual tradition, each of the reform projects of the eighteenth century had its distinct regional character. To be sure, the cultural specificity of various regions of the Muslim world was not a novel development of the eighteenth century. However, acquisition by various intellectual traditions of a specifically regional character reinforced the territoriality and specific political conditions of each geographical region. Moreover, the emerging reform projects as well as ideologies of political reform were shaped by and geared toward the specific traditions of their respective regions of origin. Thus, peculiar and distinct cultural undertakings reinforced the proto political identities, starting in the regional states which had developed local traditions of governance as well as set traditions of interacting with their surroundings, and on to local jihad movements that

50 See, for example, Voll, *Continuity and change*, p. 38 and passim.

attempted to replace regimes accused of specific kinds of disorder. This is not to say, however, that the regional character of eighteenth century thought amounted to the formation of national identities. Contrary to many contem porary assertions in both scholarly works and nationalist discourse, the reformers of the eighteenth century were not national heroes, nor were they the precursors of the later ideologues of the nationalist movements.[51]

More important than the emerging regional, proto political identities was the fact that the education of the most notable thinkers of the eighteenth century was local. Shawkānī, for example, did not travel outside Yemen,[52] and Walī Allāh travelled to the Ḥaramayn as a mature scholar and exchanged information with local scholars he met on his trip.[53] Both thinkers were educated within deeply rooted traditions and, above all, articulated their views in relation to the problems and potentials of these traditions. Furthermore, the teachers of these thinkers were almost exclusively local. Of course, all drew on a shared Islamic intellectual legacy, yet this legacy was vast, and the choices were always informed by local experience even as they attempted to open up and transform regional traditions. What applied to eighteenth century thought applied equally to the practical aspects of movements and ideologies. For example, dan Fodio did not travel outside of a relatively small part of West Africa, and his peculiar mélange of ideas was carefully customised to deal with a specific set of social and political problems.

This is not to say that travel and networking did not exist in the eighteenth century as it always had in previous centuries. Rather, what characterised the eighteenth century was that, alongside the age old pattern of travel for the pursuit of knowledge, there emerged movements and intellectual traditions which were primarily regional in character. The most compelling scholarship of the eighteenth century was produced within these regional traditions. It is even possible to posit a dichotomy between major traditions, which were mature, self confident and decidedly local, and minor traditions, which were promoted by wandering scholars and which, despite their social significance,

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51 For an excellent corrective to the common historical narratives that portray the reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha as the beginning of Egyptian nationalism see Khalid Fahmy, *All the pasha's men: Mehmed Ali, his army and the making of modern Egypt* (Cambridge, 1997).

52 See Shawkānī, *Al Badr al ṭāliʿ*, vol. I, pp. 360 9.

53 Walī Allāh's main scholarly exchange in the Ḥaramayn was with Abū Ṭāhir al Kūrānī al Kurdī, the son of the famous scholar/teacher Ibrāhīm al Kurdī. In the licence he issued to Walī Allāh, Abū Ṭāhir writes that the former requested authorisation to report parts of Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī and other classics although he had no need for it, since he had already achieved mastery over the texts and contents of these works from what he learned from his father and teachers in his own homeland. Quoted in ʿUbayd Allāh al Sindī, *Al tamhīd li taʿrīf Aʾimmat al tajdīd* (Haydarabad, 1976), p. 443.

were intellectually derivative. The main intellectual contributions were made by scholars who, in addition to their direct and deep involvement in the political and social affairs of their own regions, were locally educated;[54] their ideas were definitely hybrid and heavily indebted to diverse elements of the vast Islamic legacy, but were not the product of a universal pan Islamic intellectual movement.

While the aims of defending and empowering larger sectors of society were shared by many eighteenth century thinkers, the reform ideas of these thinkers as well as the practical mechanisms employed to effect these ideas were highly localised. Aware of the radical nature of their interpretations of religious doctrines, these thinkers attempted to spread their innovative ideas by intensely engaging the dominant local traditions of the regions in which they lived and operated. Thus, for example, both Ṣanʿānī and Shawkānī directed a disproportionate amount of their critical ideas against Zaydism, the dominant tradition of highland Yemen, although the implications of their ideas as far as traditional Sunni thought is concerned were at least equally radical. Similarly, the peculiar issues addressed by Walī Allāh are explainable in terms of intellectual developments specific to Indian Islam.

Some eighteenth century thinkers also resorted to networking to rein force their ideas. However, whether their founders travelled or not, the most influential networks established in the eighteenth century were regional. The prime examples of network building are the Sokoto school networks of dan Fodio, the Sanūsī network of settlements stretching from the Mediterranean coast of present day Libya into sub Saharan Africa, and the network of Shawkānī's students who were appointed throughout Yemen in influential positions in courts, schools and other institutions.

The vital characteristic of the post jihad state of ʿUsman dan Fodio and its indispensable requisite was the network of schools and administrative

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54 In some cases, the regional character of education was consciously advocated in pedagogy; for example, Shawkānī speaks of books and intellectual traditions which are specific to each region that ought to be consulted by the students of these regions. Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Shawkānī, *Adab al ṭalab wa muntahā al irab* (Dār al Arqam, 1981). In a kind of social and economic regionalism, Shawkānī recognises and suggests solutions for the particular problems of Yemen. Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Shawkānī, 'Al Dawāʾ al ʿajil fī dafʿ al ʿaduw al ṣāʾil', in *Al Rasāʾil al salafiyya* (Beirut, reprint of the 1930 edition), pp. 27 38; he also argues that 'the imam ought to spend (*yarudd*) the alms taxes (*ṣadaqāt*) (paid) by the rich (members) of a (certain) region on the poor (members of this same region)'. Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al Shawkānī, *Al Darārī al muḍiyya sharḥ al durra al bahiyya* (Cairo, 1986), pp. 214 16. Thus Shawkānī recognises, in theory and not just in practice, the existence of regional knowledge, regional politics and regional economic interests.

centres spread throughout the realm of the Sokoto caliphate. The jihad led by dan Fodio culminated in the formation of a central state on the ruins of an old social and political order. The Sokoto caliphate was a state in which political power was delegated, but whose unity was guaranteed by the diffusion of a heterogeneous body of legal and administrative professionals. The key to this uniformity was education, a strategic weapon dan Fodio deployed on several levels.[55] Through his efforts to spread literacy among his followers, dan Fodio sought to forge a common social identity which included and superseded the preceding fragmented identities of the region. As part of his educational programme, he provided training for a team of legal and administrative professionals, who allowed the new state to function in accordance with its ideals. All of the sources of dan Fodio's intellectual inspiration belong to the classical heritage of medieval Islam, which he refers to and quotes extensively and uncritically. Dan Fodio did not lack erudition but, unlike other eighteenth century thinkers, he was not interested in reforming the received intellectual traditions: his emphasis was on reviving or reforming actual Islamic society. He did not study classical Islamic political theory to resolve its contradictions, but to derive from it a model for individual and social life. He sought not to reform the content of Islamic education, but to employ it in the reformation of his own local society.

Sanūsī's small empire provided yet another example of a unique, regional networking system. Tens of settlements spread along a trail which started in present day Libya and extended into sub Saharan Africa. During his own lifetime, Sanūsī founded some sixty lodges in which the religious and worldly affairs of the community were managed. The religious obligations of the members of the community were defined to include, in addition to expected spiritual activities, education, labour, defence and trade. Typically housing fifty to a hundred members, and often considerably more, the lodges were also integrated into the larger communities in the midst of which they were established. Tribes invited the Sanūsiyya to establish these orders, and donated the lands for the lodges as well as surrounding agricultural land for

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55 On the organisation of the Sokoto state, and the role of scholars and professionals in the pre and post jihad periods see Hiskett, 'An Islamic tradition of reform', pp. 592 3; Murray Last, *The Sokoto caliphate* (London, 1967), pp. 57 60, 149, 178, 185, 226 9, 330 2; and Hiskett's conclusions in his edition of Ibn Fūdī's *Kitāb al Farq*, p. 579. On the role of the state in introducing social change see Last, 'Reform in West Africa', pp. 25 9; also see Humphrey J. Fisher, 'Conversion reconsidered: Some historical aspects of religious conversion in Black Africa', *Africa*, 43 (1973), pp. 36 7.

economic sustenance; they also sent their children to study at the lodges. Equally significant is that authority in each lodge was shared between the Sufi shaykh, who was sent by Sanūsī to oversee religion and education, and the *wakīl*, who represented the local tribal authority. The organisational break through that is responsible for the success of the Sanūsiyya order was an innovation not just in the context of African society but also in relation to earlier Sufi organisations. The Sanūsī settlements were thus integrated into local communities but also formed a coherent whole which shared economic interests, patterns of social and political organisation and authority, as well as religious doctrine and practice. The lodges mediated between tribes and, more important, provided organisational principles that superseded tribal loyalties. Moreover, while accommodating local traditions, the Sanūsiyya order introduced the Islamic model of quasi urban, settled communities into regions still under tribal sway.[56]

This physical network of settlements bore little resemblance to the intel lectual network emanating from the Ḥaramayn or to the educational and administrative network of the Sokoto caliphate. It is noteworthy that, although Sanūsī travelled and lived many years in Ḥijāz with his teacher Aḥmad ibn Idrīs, he did not study with the Ḥaramayn scholars. Moreover, although the two never met, Sanūsī was greatly influenced by Shawkānī's thought, especially in the views on *ijtihād* and Ḥadīth. In all likelihood, Sanūsī became familiar with Shawkānī's ideas during his stay in Ḥijāz; this however, did not happen through direct contact, or via a Ḥaramayn network of scholars. More important is that Sanūsī translated Shawkānī's intellectual influence into a distinctive social experiment which could not have been imagined by Shawkānī. While the latter's only interest in Sufism was critical, Sanūsī was primarily a Sufi, and a network of settlements organised along the lines of Sufi orders provided the main vehicle for achieving his reform objectives.

Eighteenth century Islamic pedagogy was also regionalised. The local character of teaching subject matter and methodologies was reflected in the advocacy of regional curriculums and in a tendency to generate, either through translation or new composition, a local corpus of Islamic educational literature written in local languages. In fact, a first step towards the promotion of regional education was the recognition that travel was no longer necessary

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56 On sources for the study of Sanūsī, and on Sanūsī's organisational activities in Cyrenaica see Vikør, *Sufi and scholar on the desert edge*, pp. 4 19, 132 60, 181 217. For more on the life and education of al Sanūsī see Aḥmad Ṣidqī al Dajānī, *Al Ḥaraka al Sanūsiyya: Nash'atuha wa numuwwuha fī al qarn al tasi' 'ashar* (Cairo, 1967).

for the pursuit of knowledge.[57] This subject is systematically treated in Shawkānī's *Adab al ṭalab*, a book which deals exclusively with various aspects of all levels of education. In his discussion of the requisite education of a *mujtahid* who issues rulings, Shawkānī lists a number of disciplines and suggests specific books that are useful in this regard. Shawkānī is careful, however, to remind his reader that none of the recommended books has authority in and of itself, and that these sources, which are familiar to Yemenis, may have counter parts in other parts of the Muslim world; he further maintains that these books are recommended to the Yemeni student because he is likely to 'find experts on these books and not other books … unless he relies on self instruction and not on studying with teachers. If this [student] grows up in a region where [scholars] specialise in other than these books, then he ought [to study] what the specialists of this region work on'. However, according to Shawkānī, the emphasis on the regional character of various institutions of learning and of canons is not meant to endow any particular set of texts with ultimate authority; rather, the regional character of the tools of learning underscores their relative authoritativeness, or rather utility, while the knowledge deriving from these parochial traditions remains, in Shawkānī's view, universal.[58]

The emergence of regional traditions is also evident from translations into and compositions in vernacular languages. Both dan Fodio and Walī Allāh promoted the study of Arabic as the indispensable requisite for the study of all the other religious sciences. Dan Fodio's schools taught Arabic, and competence in the language was a distinguishing trait of the experts that manned the educational and administrative centres of the Sokoto caliphate. Moreover, all of dan Fodio's numerous treatises in which he advanced his own legal and political views were written in Arabic. In addition to these relatively advanced works, dan Fodio also wrote many tracts in the language of Fulfulde, in an attempt to promote basic Islamic education among a population that did not speak Arabic.[59] Many of these texts were written in a rhyming style to facilitate their memorisation. Both his Arabic and Fulfulde works were based on and derived from classical Islamic writings in Arabic. However, both kinds of writings acquired peculiar regional characteristics: the Arabic writings on account of their treatment of problems specific to West Africa, and the standard Islamic writings on account of their composition in the local language of Fulfulde.

57 See, for example, Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al Ṣanʿānī, *Irshād al nuqqād ilā taysīr al ʿamal bil ijtihād* (Beirut, 1992), pp. 11 12, 22 4.
58 See, for example, Shawkānī, *Adab al ṭalab*, pp. 107 8, 113 24.
59 See Brenner and Last, 'The role of language in West African Islam'. See p. 444 for reference to 500 poems in Fulfulde that were composed in nineteenth century West Africa.

Likewise, Walī Allāh's extensive œuvre was produced in two languages. Many of his books are written in a mix of Arabic and Persian, with alternating paragraphs or sections. More revealing than this alternating style, however, is his translation of what he considered to be the main scriptural sources of Islam into Persian, the language of the educated elite in India; these are the Qurʾān (*Fatḥ al Raḥmān fī Tarjamat al Qurʾān*), the Muwaṭṭaʾ of Mālik (d. 796) (*Al Muṣaffā*) and sections of the Ṣaḥīḥ compilation of Prophetic traditions of al Bukhārī (d. 870). In content as in form, Walī Allāh gave a major impetus to the shaping of a distinct regional Islamic tradition.

The ruptures of the nineteenth century: Islamic reform in the shadow of the West

In contrast to these independent reform activities, a different breed of Islamic reform emerged in the course of the nineteenth century in response to Europe. For the most part, eighteenth century reforms were precipitated by gradual, long term changes. However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, most reforms were in response to sudden social changes and ruptures. Shaped, as it were, by the encounter with Europe, nineteenth century reform was first triggered by the increasing material threat of expanding European powers, but gradually reflected an increasing awareness of the cultural and intellectual challenges brought about by this encounter. In most instances, the first such reforms reflected the desire of Ottoman political elites to reform the state and its institutions in order to contain the European threats to the Ottoman Empire. In the 1840s, new laws regulating commerce and land ownership were introduced in Istanbul and Cairo, and in 1857, the Ottoman, administrative Tanzimat reforms were primarily concerned with strengthening the institutions of the state. In this early phase, many Muslim thinkers viewed the institutional and legal reforms introduced by the Ottoman state with suspicion. One of the main reasons for this apprehension was that many of these reforms were capitulations by the Ottoman state surrendered under the pressure of European consuls and diplomats; furthermore, as a consequence of some of these reforms, Christians enjoyed a preferential treatment that was denied to the Muslim subjects of the empire.[60]

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60 For example, an increasing number of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire were treated as subjects of various European consulates, and were thus exempt from paying taxes that were imposed on Muslims. See, for example, Roderic Davison, 'Turkish attitudes concerning Christian Muslim equality in the nineteenth century', *American Historical Review*, 59, 4 (1954), pp. 844 64. On Ottoman reforms in general, see Roderic Davison, *Nineteenth century Ottoman diplomacy and reform* (Istanbul, 1999).

To some extent, therefore, the attitudes towards the reform of state elites, on the one hand, and religious thinkers, on the other, were not identical. In response to this discontinuity, religious reform was advocated by some Ottoman elites as a way of accelerating the pace of political and institutional reform. However, some of the earliest ideas about reform were articulated by Muslim scholars dispatched by the state on official educational or diplomatic missions to Europe. One of the earliest systematic reflections on reform in the context of the encounter with Europe was articulated by the Egyptian scholar Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al Ṭahṭāwī (d. 1873). In 1826, Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha, the autonomous Ottoman governor of Egypt, sent a group of students to study in France, partly in response to a French request, but primarily as part of his efforts to acquire French practical knowledge which he could then use to modernise the Egyptian military and other state institutions. Al Ṭahṭāwī was charged with providing religious guidance to the Egyptian delegation during its stay in Europe. Upon his return five years later, al Ṭahṭāwī wrote an account of his observations and impressions of France, and outlined a vision of reform derived from these observations.[61]

The young al Ṭahṭāwī received traditional religious education, but his ideas about reform suggest no need for reforming religious thinking and education, and focus exclusively on the need to build a modernised state whose institutions are modelled after the French ones. Put differently, al Ṭahṭāwī was not concerned with religious reform. Instead, he provided extensive discussions of the desired forms of organising the state, as well as the various sectors of the economy, including industry, commerce and agriculture. To a great extent, al Ṭahṭāwī's approach mirrors the modernising project of Muḥammad ʿAlī's state, which did not concern itself with reforming the traditional Islamic education of al Azhar University, and focused instead on building a parallel, modern educational system independent of it.

Al Ṭahṭāwī invokes Islam only to disparage the religious beliefs of the French, or to assert that Muslims are not prohibited from availing themselves of French practical and scientific knowledge. Like al Ṭahṭāwī, the writings of the Tunisian vizier Khayr al Dīn al Tūnisī (d. 1890) advocate a vision of organisational modernisation and reform; unlike al Ṭahṭāwī, however, al Tūnisī articulates an Islamic rationale for this reform. In his book *Aqwām al masālik li maʿrifat aḥwāl al mamālik*, al Tūnisī provides

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61 See Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al Ṭahṭāwī, *Al Aʿmāl al kāmila*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAmāra, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1973 81). See also Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al Ṭahṭāwī, *An imam in Paris: Account of a stay in France by an Egyptian cleric (1826 1831); Takhlīṣ al ibrīz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz*, trans. Daniel Newman (London, 2004).

a model of reform which is based on an elaborate description of the structure and organisation of the modern European states. However, according to al Tūnisī, this reform has an Islamic component, one which is rooted in the concept of public interest or benefit (*maṣlaḥa*). The modernisation of the institutions of the state is thus conceptually legitimised as a necessary means of preserving the collective interests of Muslims, and procedurally as an exercise of independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) in matters pertaining to public affairs. As such, religious reform becomes a perquisite of political reform.[62]

Elsewhere in the Muslim world, alternative visions of engaging Europe in the course of the modernisation project were articulated. In India, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (1817 98) championed the establishment of modern institutions, including the Aligarh College modelled after British educational institutions. Aḥmad Khān also advocated the collaboration with British colonial rule as a way of preserving the privileges of the Muslim minority in India. Furthermore, he maintained the need for a modern interpretation of Islamic scriptures in the light of the findings of modern science, and undertook a new interpretation of the Qurʾān which is consistent with the laws of nature.[63]

More than any of the above thinkers, however, Islamic reform in the nineteenth century is associated with the names of Jamāl al Dīn al Afghānī (1838 97) and Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849 1905), along with their junior asso ciate Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865 1935). In contrast to Ṭahṭāwī who claimed the authority to propose a reform project on the basis of his knowledge of the structure of the modern French state and society, these men fashioned their careers and wrote as religious scholars, and asserted the authority of their reform projects on the basis of the religious authority they claimed. Moreover, both Afghānī and ʿAbduh were able to attract a significant following amongst Muslims, and to utilise the press to spread their ideas all over the Muslim world. Both were also familiar with European modernity and progress, as well as the momentous impact of European colonial policies in the Muslim world.

Many aspects of the life of al Afghānī are shrouded in mystery.[64] By most counts, he was born and raised in Shiʿī Iran, but he probably adopted the name

62 See Khayr al Dīn al Tūnisī, *Aqwam al masālik li maʿrifat aḥwāl al mamālik*, ed. al Munṣif al Shannūfī, 2 vols. (Tunis, 2000).

63 See, for example, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *The causes of the Indian revolt*, with an introduc tion by Francis Robinson (Karachi and New York, 2000). See also Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857 1964* (London, 1967).

64 For a concise overview of the life and career of al Afghānī, and a sample of his important writings, including his writings on philosophy, response to Renan and critique of the Neichiri sect, see Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic response to imperialism: Political and religious writings of Sayyid Jamāl al Dīn ʿal Afghānī'* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1983).

Afghānī to conceal his background and to bolster his chances of appealing to Sunnī Muslims. Despite numerous seeming contradictions in his wri tings and intellectual posture, a number of constants characterised the career of al Afghānī. Right from the beginning of this career, al Afghānī was consistently opposed to colonialism in general, and British colonialism in particular; furthermore, he was a political agitator advocating an Islamic solidarity which would empower Muslims in their struggle against coloni alism. Al Afghānī's attempts to mobilise against foreign occupation of Muslim lands was usually coupled with political intrigues and instigations against Muslims rulers. His political activism recurrently brought him into contact and conflict with authorities, whom he boldly criticised and plotted against, and these conflicts invariably forced him to move from one country to another in search for receptive audiences and following. He took resi dence in virtually all the major capitals of the Muslim world, and was an active player in the political life of Iran, India, Afghanistan, Egypt and Turkey.

For most of the 1870s, after he was expelled from Istanbul, al Afghānī lived in Egypt; there he cultivated a circle of associates and followers, including his closest associate Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and in 1879 he was expelled from Egypt after two years of intensive instigation against the British occupation. In the opening years of the 1880s, al Afghānī landed in India where he wrote a critique of the Neichiris, the followers of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān. In this critique, al Afghānī comes across as a defender of religion and pan Islamic sentiments. However, between 1882 and 1884, he travelled to Paris and wrote a famous apologetic response to the French thinker Ernest Renan in which he concedes that all religions, including Islam, are obstacles to social progress. During his stay in Paris, al Afghānī met up again with ʿAbduh, after the latter was exiled from Egypt in the wake of the anti British ʿUrābī revolt (1879 82); for about a year, al Afghānī and ʿAbduh published *Al ʿUrwā al Wuthqā*, arguably their most influential publication.[65] In the mid 1880s, al Afghānī travelled to Iran from which he was eventually expelled in 1891; and in 1892 he was invited to Istanbul by the pan Islamist Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II, but he soon fell out of favour with his patron, and had to contend with significant constraints on his political activities for the remaining years of his life.

Al Afghānī lived in a period of continued efforts to modernise the Muslim states and their institutions under the political and intellectual influ ence of Europe. Simultaneously, however, European colonialism continued

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65 Jamāl al Dīn al Afghāni and Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al ʿUrwā al Wuthqā* (Beirut, 1980).

to undermine the political independence of Muslim countries. Al Afghānī's reform project, both at the intellectual and political levels, was articulated in response to these two currents. At the intellectual level, he did not undertake a systematic reconstruction of religious thought, and his views on religion were often random and contradictory. For example, in his writings on philosophy and science, and in his response to Renan, he underscores the role of reason in the revival and progress of Muslim societies, and even suggests that this positive role of science and reason is needed to overcome the negative effects of religion. However, in his response to the Neichiris, he opposes the natura listic interpretations of Islam advocated by the followers of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān on the grounds that these interpretations undermine the unity of Muslims. Yet, despite this seeming contradiction, a common thread in the analysis of al Afghānī is his contention that Islam, reformed or otherwise, is the key shaper of the identity of Muslim societies and the primary force in their struggle against colonialism. Once again, al Afghānī's primary concern was not with an abstract reconstruction of Islamic religious thought, but with the tangible interests of actual historical communities of Muslims. Throughout the many stages of his career, he promoted Islamic solidarity in the face of colonialism, and while his religious ideas betray some contra diction, his political objectives were remarkably consistent. Above all, the legacy of al Afghānī is his ability to mobilise a popular as well as elitist awareness of the need for political and religious revival, and to politicise Islam in the modern context of colonialism.

Muḥammad ʿAbduh[66] was raised as a traditional Egyptian religious scholar at a time when religious education was losing ground to the newly estab lished secular educational institutions. His early, relatively modest professio nal trajectory took a turn in the 1870s when he cultivated a close relationship with Afghānī during the latter's residence in Egypt. In this period, whatever his convictions may have been, ʿAbduh assumed a junior role to Afghānī and embraced the pan Islamic political project of his senior associate. Especially in the last two years of his residence, Afghānī delivered a series of public, anti British speeches which drove the authorities to expel him from Egypt. ʿAbduh was implicated by his association with Afghānī, an association which contin ued after the latter's expulsion, and subsequently after ʿAbduh's exile in the wake of the anti British ʿUrābī revolt in 1882. After his exile, ʿAbduh travelled

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66 On his life and writings see Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al Aʿmāl al kāmila*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAmāra, 6 vols. (Beirut, 1972 4). Also see Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tārīkh al ustādh al Imām al Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbdu*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1906 31).

to Tunisia and Beirut, and eventually met up with Afghānī in Paris. There, the two men published *Al ʿUrwā al Wuthqā*, a popular pan Islamic periodical that attempted to raise awareness amongst Muslims about the nature and dangers of colonialism, and ways of combating it. The publication addressed Muslims collectively as a united national entity, and posited European (specifically British) colonialism as the primary threat facing the Muslim world.

Whereas Afghānī's fortunes declined after this period, ʿAbduh moved on to a different phase in his career. The two men parted ways in 1887, at which time ʿAbduh went back to Cairo and, with the support of his British friend Lord Cromer, he was appointed grand *muftī* of Egypt. After an intense partnership with Afghānī, ʿAbduh's return to Egypt marked a change of heart and a definite transformation in his political and intellectual outlook. Contrary to Afghānī's consistent stand and to the views he himself advocated in his early career, after his return to Egypt ʿAbduh adopted an internalist approach to reform which diverted the focus of his activity from resistance to colonialism towards reforming the self, even if this were to be achieved with the aid of the British colonisers. Colonialism, ʿAbduh now contended, was a symptom of the intellectual decline of Muslims and not the cause of this decline.

Modern scholarship often asserts that a primary objective of ʿAbduh's reform activities was directed at reforming the religious educational system in general, and the al Azhar University in particular. Much of this reform effort, however, was aimed at securing financial support for religious education, a sector which was neglected ever since Muḥammad ʿAlī Pasha invested the bulk of the relevant state resources in the building of alternative, secular educational institutions. In contrast to this focus on fiscal reform, ʿAbduh paid less attention to the structure of the religious educational system or to the content of this education. A somewhat clearer articulation of an intellectual agenda of reform can be gleaned from works such as ʿAbduh's *Risālat al Tawḥīd* (Treatise on the Oneness of God), published in 1884. The subject of this book was Islamic theology (*kalām*), and it represented a divergence from treatments of this subject in traditional Islamic scholarship; however, this divergence was primarily in the organisation of the book and the presentation of its material, and not in the ideas expounded in it. In fact, towards the end of his life, ʿAbduh published another treatise on theology which, in form and in content, conformed to traditional Islamic scholarship in this field.

Perhaps the clearest articulation of ʿAbduh's reform ideas can be found in his Qurʾānic exegetical work, published serially in the journal *Al Manār*, and later collected under the title *Tafsīr al Manār*. This work was not meant as an exhaustive interpretation of all of the Qurʾān, and ʿAbduh's primary focus was

on selected verses that deal with the natural order as well as human nature. In his exegesis, 'Abduh argues that Islam is a religion which conforms with and reinforces the natural order. Here too, 'Abduh does not present many original metaphysical ideas, and what makes his discourse somewhat distinct is the primacy he gives to the ethical aspects of Islam. Above all, however, the primary drive that animates much of 'Abduh's reform project in the post Afghānī phase of his career is his systematic attempt to reconcile traditional and modern institutions; providing new interpretations of Islamic law and scriptures to give Islamic legitimacy to secular, European institutions intro duced by the nation state. It is in the course of this undertaking that 'Abduh invoked the principle of public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) as a source of legislation in Islam, and as a means to modernise Islamic thought and enable it to meet the challenges of modern life. One effect of this idea was to justify systematically all the new institutions of the modern state on the grounds that it is religiously incumbent on Muslims to borrow these institutions, since public interest is tantamount to law (*al maṣlaḥa sharʿ*).

'Abduh's particular mode of reconciling tradition and modernity in the interest of the latter had one unanticipated result: in effect it expanded the functional domain of religion into areas which were not previously covered by Islamic law. Ironically, the initial purpose of 'Abduh's efforts was to find a way around the restrictions of the law; however, his insistence on providing Islamic legitimation for each and every institution of the modern, European nation state in effect produced a pervasive and all encompassing Islamic discourse that claims, without historical justification, to cover all aspects of life, the discourse of 'Islam as a complete way of life'.

Many of 'Abduh's ideas were published in *Al Manār*. This journal was published for about four decades, and had a wide readership amongst Muslim intellectuals throughout the Muslim world. Its chief editor was Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, a loyal disciple of 'Abduh and the compiler of his history and much of his ideas.[67] Riḍā went from Lebanon to Egypt to work with 'Abduh, and he published *Al Manār* under his direction. Despite his unwavering loyalty to his teacher, however, Riḍā's ideas underwent signifi cant transformations after the death of 'Abduh, in yet another sign of the fluid character of what is often termed modern Islamic reform. After the death of 'Abduh, Riḍā continued to publish *Al Manār*, but not without significant

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67 On the political thought of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā see Malcolm Kerr, *Islamic reform: The political and legal theories of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā* (Berkeley, 1966). Also see Mahmoud Haddad, 'Arab religious nationalism in the colonial era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā's ideas on the caliphate', *JAOS*, 117, 2 (1997), pp. 253 77.

changes in its tone and focus. With its entrenched penetration of Muslim lands, Riḍā expressed increased concerns about the threat of colonialism to Muslim identity, a threat no longer limited to the military and political spheres, but one that extended to the cultural sphere as well. Initially, Riḍā put much of his hope in the revival of the power of the Ottoman caliphate as the primary defence against an expanding Europe. The ending of the caliphate, however, delivered a major blow to the hopes and aspirations of Riḍā and many of his Muslim contemporaries. And as a result of this dis appointment and intensified sense of insecurity, the focus of Riḍā's writings shifted from 'progress' and intellectual reform to the preservation of the Islamic identity.

In contrast to the openness and confidence of the intellectual projects of the thinkers of the eighteenth century, the twin legacies of Islamic reform at the beginning of the twentieth century were the idea of Islam as a complete way of life, and the defensive focus on the preservation of the cultural identity of Muslim societies. In the nineteenth century, Muslim reformers articulated a project of reforming the state and its institutions as a way to reform and revitalise their societies. The failure of this project and its multiple offshoots provided the context for shaping the main trends in the twentieth century Islamic politics of identity.